

# Phoenix Commons Senior Cohousing Community Breaks Ground on the Shores of the Oakland/Alameda Estuary

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Noel Gallo and Lauren Zimmerman Cook, CFO of Elder Communities

The latest building project to grace Oakland's newly energized shoreline – the Phoenix Commons senior cohousing community – kicked off in grand style during a groundbreaking ceremony that featured Oakland City Councilmember Noel Gallo and Mayor Jean Quan.

The event on Thursday, Jan. 9 marked the start of the construction phase for the 41-unit, \$21 million project, which is expected to open its doors to residents in early 2015.

"Our vision at Alameda Elder Communities ... has always been to empower and older adults as they age," said Lauren Zimmerman Cook, CFO of Elder Village Communities, which is spearheading the design and construction of Phoenix Commons. "The Phoenix Commons cooperative lifestyle community takes that vision to that next level by offering a new independent living option that supports active adults to age in community rather than aging alone."

Phoenix Commons is the Bay Area's very first cohousing community and is being built on a spot along the Oakland-Alameda Estuary right next to the Park Street Bridge. The four-story building will feature one- and two-bedroom units that range in price from \$350,000 to \$650,000. Residents will share 7,000-square-feet of communal space, a large, commercial-grade communal kitchen and large outdoor spaces that overlook the water, including a deck and a boat dock.

"I'm really glad that (Phoenix Commons) is here," said Oakland City Councilmember Noel Gallo, within whose district Phoenix Commons is being built. "I think this is going to be one of the most attractive locations in Oakland."

Phoenix Commons is designed using eco-friendly technology and green design, such as solar panels, recycling water and vegetation screens to help regulate indoor temperature, and incorporates the principle of universal design for ideal accessibility.

Cohousing communities, like Phoenix Commons, are a type of collaborative housing in which residents actively participate in the design and operation of the community. The physical design of Phoenix Commons is intended to encourage both social connection and individual space. Private homes contain all the features of conventional homes, but residents also have access to extensive common facilities. The cost of some meals, transportation, future care, community maintenance, and other administrative and operational duties are shared among community members. Unlike traditional senior living communities, cohousing residents decide together the amenities and services they want and need.

Phoenix Commons appeals to people because of the "idea that community is there by choice, that people participate at all times," said Mildred Brown, a Berkeley woman who attended the groundbreaking and is considering taking up residence at Phoenix Commons. "Everyone is there for each other."

Mayor Quan noted that the location, along the estuary in the eclectic Jingtletown neighborhood, is the scene of great activity for new economic development activities, including new business and homes that are attracted by the area's proximity to transit corridors, good weather and walkability.

"The (Oakland-Alameda) Estuary is the place to be ... Big things are happening in Oakland and a lot of them are happening on the estuary," said Mayor Quan. "I really want to thank (Elder Village Development) for your investment in Oakland."

She also thanked Phoenix Commons for adding to Oakland's housing mix and "making the Bay Area a cool place to retire."

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