

# The Alamedan

## A new direction in senior living, just over the bridge

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Friday, July 26, 2013 - 00:05

### *Rendering courtesy of Phoenix Commons.*

On the Oakland side of the Park Street bridge, in the neighborhood known as Jingtletown, a new senior living community will be built on the site where the restaurant Tiki Tom's burned

down in 2010. The project, Phoenix Commons, is the latest endeavor of Alameda Elder Communities, which also operates the Waters Edge Lodge on Harbor Bay and the Elders Inn on Webster Street.



Phoenix Commons will be the first senior community of its kind in the Bay Area, according to Chris Zimmerman, chief executive officer of Alameda Elder Communities. Described as a “cooperative lifestyle community,” the complex will be comprised of 41 one- and two-bedroom units and communally shared areas.

“Cohousing is a co-op without the co-op label,” said Zimmerman. “The ideal of living together and sharing risk and everything else is really a co-op model.”

Zimmerman said the model is a common one in the Midwest and on the East Coast. In Minnesota, there are 35. In California, he said, there's only one – the Wolf Creek Lodge in Grass Valley, which opened in 2012.

The main concept behind Phoenix Commons is the ability to “age in place” in a home that has senior-friendly universal design. Open floor plans, accessible bathrooms and kitchens are featured in each unit.

“The environment is not full of barriers, unlike the traditional home,” said Zimmerman.

Residents at Phoenix Commons will share 7,000 square feet of common spaces designed for group living.

“People are now often living thirty years past retirement, and in the aging process there are different levels, each requiring more support to remain independent,” Zimmerman said. “Successful aging requires community. If you're living in a community where you are required to participate, you're going to bump into people, and have casual contact which will lead to more social engagement which will lead to friendship.”

Unlike traditional senior living communities, cohousing residents decide together the amenities and services they want and need. In practice, said Zimmerman, this means “the residents have the advantage of group purchasing,” which he said is always thought of as a way to save money, but is really a way to maintain quality.

That service provider knows that residents are attached to a group, and therefore there's more at stake for them, he said.

Residents may desire to hire a professional chef to cook communal meals in the community kitchen, or hire an on-site maintenance worker. As the community ages, "the residents can make decisions on what kind of care to bring in," added Zimmerman. "Because they will be linked to Alameda Elder Communities, they have the option of coming to one of our other facilities for care, and then returning to their home in Phoenix Commons once they are physically able to."

The price range for the one- and two-bedroom homes will be \$350,000 to \$650,000, depending on the model, and there will be an annual homeowner's association fee of about \$450, Zimmerman said. Groundbreaking is planned for this fall and Phoenix Commons will be ready for occupancy in late 2014 or early 2015.

For more information about Phoenix Commons, visit: <http://www.phoenixcommons.com/>.