

News

SENIOR HOUSING SITE HAS SUPPORT

INITIAL EAST SIDE PLANS FELL THROUGH

By **Daniel Thigpen**

May 31, 2009

Record Staff Writer

LODI - Renewed plans for an affordable housing project for seniors are sprouting in the west end of Lodi, months after a protracted effort to develop an abandoned railroad site across town collapsed.

The proposal is far from a done deal, but already critics of the old site are hailing the decision to explore a parcel away from the city's more crime-saturated East Side. And the new location is appealing because of its proximity to drugstores, supermarkets and other amenities.

"The problem in the other location was the concentration of crime," City Councilwoman JoAnne Mounce said. "The new location offers all the services that a senior would require within walking distance. ... It just makes way more sense to place a senior housing project in a safer location."

City officials are in talks with Hayward-based affordable housing developer Eden Housing to build a senior complex on a 3.4-acre, city-owned parcel off Tienda Drive, just northeast of the major commercial district at West Kettleman Lane and Lower Sacramento Road.

The site is adjacent to a wooded area that was designated years ago as a city park but has remained undeveloped. Officials hope to work out a plan to develop that park simultaneously with the proposed senior facility, said Joseph Wood, Lodi's community improvement manager.

There are still many details in the works.

Because Eden Housing must secure the land before it can receive federal funding to finance the project, Lodi likely will sell its parcel to the developer but give Eden the \$1 million or so in federal subsidies already at the city's disposal to back that purchase, Wood said.

Eden's purchase, in turn, could fund the adjacent park's development, he said.

"It's a win on a number of fronts," Wood said.

Other details, such as the size, number of units, a design and total cost estimate for the complex, aren't fleshed out, officials said.

The project could be Lodi's first city-subsidized affordable housing project in 13 years. A recent proposal fell apart late last year.

Plans had called for 71 units of single-story, affordable senior rental housing near the Union Pacific Railroad tracks across from the Lodi Grape Festival Grounds, south of Lockeford Street. The city partnered with Lodi-based PAM Development, which has developed low-income housing in Stockton, Ceres and other Valley communities.

The property is owned by Union Pacific, and the city had the first right to buy the land.

The city had planned to contribute about \$1.2 million in federal subsidies and income from repaid housing assistance loans toward the project's cost, while PAM would have funded the rest.

But a series of obstacles complicated the proposal, city officials said at the time. The economic downturn and stalled negotiations with the railroad slowed the project, Wood said in November.

The last time the city helped pay for an affordable housing project was 1996, when city officials committed nearly \$700,000 of housing funds to rehabilitate the 76-unit Hotel Lodi downtown.

Contact reporter Daniel Thigpen at (209) 546-8254 or dthigpen@recordnet.com.