

FCHA plans \$42.2 million in affordable housing projects



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(Photo: Elliott Foust/For the Coloradoan)

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A new \$18.4 million affordable housing complex approved by Fort Collins Planning and Zoning Board on Thursday will add 72 affordable housing units to the 1,043 units the Fort Collins Housing Authority currently owns or operates in Fort Collins.

Village on Redwood will be located in north Fort Collins near the intersection of Redwood Street and Nokomis Court. It is one of four projects totaling \$42.2 million in affordable housing construction and renovations undertaken by FCHA since the construction of Redtail Ponds, a 60-unit permanent supportive housing and affordable housing development in south Fort Collins completed in March and that now is completely leased.

Village on Redwood was made possible through disaster recovery fund grants available to Larimer County and will serve families at 30 to 60 percent of the area median income. The median household income for Fort Collins is \$53,780, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Though Village on Redwood is the only new construction on FCHA's docket, three revitalization projects focus on making existing affordable housing properties more livable, energy efficient and visually attractive.

FCHA Executive Director Julie Brewen said renovations help sustain current levels of affordable housing, updating buildings that would otherwise be at the end of their "useful lifespan" and putting them back into use for decades.

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A \$1.1 million renovation to the Village on Matuka Court, 1200-1207 Matuka Court in north Fort Collins, is expected to be complete in early October. FCHA plans to start \$17 million in renovation projects at Villages on Cunningham Corner, located on the northeast corner of Horsetooth Road and Shields Street, in summer 2016.

Brewen said that while renovations improve the structural integrity of the building, they also focus on cosmetic updates.

"The appearance of the building is really important for residents to have a sense of pride and ownership and home," she said. "It creates community. We've also seen that when we do a major revitalization, other property owners in the area follow suit. It re-energizes an entire neighborhood.

"Affordable housing should be beautiful. It should contribute to our community in that way."

FCHA recently completed a \$5.7 million renovation to Village on Plum, 927 Glenmoor Drive west of the Colorado State University campus, an affordable housing complex for families at 30 to 50 percent of the area median income.

Renovations to the property included redesigned landscaping, parking lot upgrades, interior home improvements, an updated pool and clubhouse and new pitched roofs.

Resident Barb Lattin, 45, said the property's previous roofs, which were flat, led to frequent flooding problems. Lattin lives on the second of three floors in her building, but said she still experienced flooding when the apartment above hers flooded.

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She's been living in the property with her three children and dog, Treat, for six and a half years. She said the apartment complex has been a great community to raise her children.

Though it was "extremely frustrating" to live in a construction zone during renovations, Lattin said the new roofs, redesigned landscaping and centrally located play area that came with the project have made the complex "beautiful" and more utilitarian.

"It's not the ghetto. I don't know how to put that more nicely," Lattin said. "People have a negative view of affordable housing. ... We're more like everybody else than people think."

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