

Fort Collins affordable housing plans unveiled for Heart of Rockies Christian Church land

Pat Ferrier

Fort Collins Coloradoan

March 31, 2021

A novel partnership between a Fort Collins church and three nonprofit agencies to provide more affordable housing is beginning its trek through the city's planning process.

CARE Housing, Habitat for Humanity and Friends of L'Arche will review preliminary designs for what they are calling "Next Big Thing" with city planners April 7.

The plan is a mixture of 72 affordable apartments in six buildings, 10 single-family homes, two group homes and a community center on 11 acres owned by Heart of the Rockies Christian Church.

The site is at the northwest corner of Trilby Road and Lemay Avenue in southeast Fort Collins.

The church sought partners to develop its excess land with the focus on affordable housing. It chose Habitat for Humanity, CARE Housing and Friends of L'Arche, an international organization that serves people with intellectual disabilities.

According to plans, the 10 Habitat for Humanity homes and two L'Arche buildings would be sited along the north side of the site fronting on Brittany Street. Four of CARE Housing's six apartment buildings would front on Trilby, with the other two on the interior of the property.

The two-story community building would go next to the church sanctuary and be shared by the various entities.

The preliminary design review is the first step in the city's development review process. There will likely be at least one neighborhood meeting before formal plans are filed.

The church has already sent out letters to neighbors to let them know about plans for the property, said Steve Kuehneman, executive director of CARE Housing.

"We want to make sure the surrounding neighborhood has a good idea of what we are hoping to do," he said.

Realizing the affordable housing vision could be a three- to five-year process. The partners are still working through the legalities of their partnership, and the preliminary meeting with the city will give them an idea of what they need to do to the site, Kuehneman said.

If all goes according to plan, the apartments likely would be available to those making between 30% and 80% of the city's area median income, which in 2020 was \$65,900 for a single person, according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

A person earning 30% of AMI would make about \$19,800 per year. Someone earning 80% would make about \$52,700. That could change when new AMI numbers are released later this spring.

Affordable living for seniors takes next step

While the Heart of the Rockies project is just beginning the long development process, construction has begun on 55 apartments for lower-income older adults two blocks west of the intersection of Drake and Timberline roads.

The nonprofit group Volunteers of America expects to complete its project called Cadence in about a year and expects it to be fully occupied by Christmas 2022.

Cadence includes one- and two-bedroom apartments for people earning 20% to 80% of AMI, ranging from about \$13,000 to \$60,000. Rents are expected to range from \$350 to \$1,500 per month, depending on the renter's income.

VOA says the site will feature raised garden beds, bike storage and sidewalk connections to nearby trails, the Transfort bus stop and the King Soopers-anchored shopping center on the southeast corner of Drake and Timberline roads.

Financing for the project is being provided by low-income housing tax credits from Colorado Housing and Finance Authority, along with funding from Enterprise Community Investments, the city of Fort Collins and a partnership with Housing Catalyst, the local housing authority.

VOA will provide property and case management services as well as a full-time service coordinator to connect residents to programs and resources in the city and county.

Pat Ferrier is a senior reporter covering business, health care and growth issues in Northern Colorado. Contact her at patferrier@coloradoan.com. Please support her work and that of other Coloradoan journalists by purchasing a subscription today.