

Business section

Fresno housing complex for low-income disabled people opens

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By BoNhia Lee / The Fresno Bee

Finding an affordable apartment that is handicapped accessible has always been difficult for Rene Potter, paralyzed on the left side of her body from two strokes. The bathroom is often the most challenging room in an apartment because it's hard to move in and out of the tub, Potter said.

Potter has no problem now that she's living at Arbor Court. On Wednesday, Fresno's first-ever housing community for low-income people with disabilities had its grand opening. Arbor Court is a 20-unit development on East Laurel Avenue in southeast Fresno. The one- and two-bedroom units comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The apartments are designed with 30-inch doorways that allow wheelchairs to easily move in and out of the units. There are roll-in showers, grab rails, low sinks and counters and lowered light switches in each apartment.

"The accommodations are so much more beneficial to me," said Potter, who was among the first residents to move in last month.

The demand for a development of this kind is high because it gives disabled people the opportunity to be independent, said Jenine Breedlove, the property supervisor. Leasing began in October and the complex is already full with a waiting list of at least 15 families, Breedlove said.

That's exciting for the developers who didn't know whether the project would happen after introducing the plans more than seven years ago. The declining economy put a halt on construction when a \$1.5 million state grant that the project depended on was frozen.

But developer **EAH Housing**, a Marin County nonprofit, kept pushing and was able to find other ways to complete the project. The company reassessed its design plans and construction costs, said Mary Murtagh, president and chief executive officer for EAH. The project also qualified for state and federal grants through the city of Fresno and the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development.

New resident Anna Ross wasn't planning to move from the Cypress Apartments, half a block away, where she lived for 21 years. Her family insisted she try to get into the new apartments.



Anna Ross, 76, walks in front of Magdalena Zamora on their way to the grand opening celebration at Arbor Court, a new assisted-living development in Fresno. Leasing began in October and the complex is full.

They knew it would be helpful for Ross, whose left arm is paralyzed from a stroke she suffered in 1985. Ross walks slowly with a cane.

"I love it," Ross said. "It feels like home."

On the other side of the complex, Jerry Smith is happy with his decision to leave Senior Citizen Village on Chestnut Avenue for a new one-bedroom apartment.

Smith, who suffers from chronic back pain and has had multiple back surgeries, enjoys walking his dog, Boogie, around the complex picking up trash and keeping the area clean.

"It's nice to have something new," Smith said. "If we all work together, we can help keep it great."

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Read more: <http://www.fresnobee.com/2011/04/06/2340270/fresno-housing-complex-for-low.html#ixzz1IxNatjaY>