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Redlands could get a 228-unit housing development

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By MELANIE C. JOHNSON
The Press-Enterprise

REDLANDS - A cluster of public housing duplexes built in the 1940s may soon get a makeover.

The Housing Authority of San Bernardino County has submitted a proposal with the city to replace them with a 228-unit residential development.

The 19-acre project, on the northeast corner of Orange Street and Lugonia Avenue, would be a mixture of single-family homes for first-time homebuyers and multi-family rentals.

Representatives from the Housing Authority presented a report last week to the City Council and went before the Planning Commission on Tuesday seeking a recommendation of approval.

The project is on a fast track, as proponents plan to apply in August for federal grant funding. The county hopes to begin construction in late 2010.

The Planning Commission postponed its recommendation until July 14 to give city staff more time to compile some needed documents. The proposal is expected to go to the City Council in July as well.

Mario Saucedo, a representative of the North Redlands Visioning Committee and chairman of the Housing Authority's commission, told the Planning Commission members that the project would be a plus for the area.

"It will certainly become an attractive component to North Redlands," he said. "It's an opportunity to revitalize an area that needs infrastructure."

Stephen Rogers, a north Redlands resident, said at last week's council meeting that he felt the development needed a more extensive environmental review since because the entire project is changing.

Planning Commissioner Carol Dyer said she has concerns about the large number of mature oak, cypress and eucalyptus trees on the property that will be lost with demolition. The plan calls for the entire site to be graded.

Other commissioners asked about the relocation of residents.

Pat Meyer, a consultant with Urban Environs, said that the residents who live there now will be moved to other Housing Authority properties while the project is built and will have first rights of return when it is complete.

Amenities on the site include a park, a tot lot and a recreation building. A Head Start office now at the site would remain, proponents said.

A cost-benefit analysis limited to the single-family homes that would be sold showed minimal impact on city services. For every dollar the city spends providing services, it would get 93 cents in tax revenue, said Manuel Baeza, project planner.

Planning Commissioner John James said he and other commissioners visited a similar project in the Los Angeles area and were impressed.

"This project was just phenomenal," he said. "It's a sense of pride. It's a sense of community."

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