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## ‘Catalyst’ North Richmond apartment project moves forward



Courtesy Contra Costa County

Funding for the Heritage Point Apartments, a 42-unit project on Fred Jackson Way in North Richmond, was approved last week by the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors.

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**NORTH RICHMOND** — County leaders hope a 42-unit apartment building, almost a decade in the planning, will help spur a revival of this unincorporated community’s main business district.

On Tuesday, supervisors approved the sale of six parcels along Fred Jackson Way for construction of the Heritage Point Apartments, an affordable housing complex. The supervisors also unanimously approved a patchwork of funding to help pay the anticipated \$27 million cost of construction, and issuing the first of a maximum of \$17 million in multifamily housing revenue bonds to pay for building the project.

It’s a development that Annie King-Meredith said has been a long time coming.

“We’ve been working on this for so long, at least 10 years,” said King-Meredith, a board trustee of project developer Community Housing Development Corp., and a member of the North Richmond Municipal Advisory Council. “This project is to revitalize the community ... It will be a beacon of light for people to see the beauty of North Richmond.”

The six parcels, between Grove Avenue and Chesley Avenue across the street from the Community Heritage Senior Apartments, sit empty, closed off behind chain-link fencing. The last empty building on the properties was knocked down about two years ago, King-Meredith said.

The total county cost is anticipated to be \$7.37 million, from varied sources including the Housing Successor Low Moderate Income Housing Funds, Community Development Block Grant and the Livable Communities Trust Fund.

“It’s a perfect example of the blending of different funding sources to develop affordable housing,” County Supervisor John Gioia of Richmond said.

That \$7.37 million figure could still rise, depending largely upon what final form the Republican-sponsored federal tax reform bill takes, said Maureen Toms, deputy director of Contra Costa County’s Department of Conservation and Development. The value of the tax credits that are factored into construction costs could decrease depending on how some aspects of the tax bill are finalized. The lower the federal corporate tax rate, the lower the value of tax credits. If tax credit values drop significantly, the county would have to spend more money to make up for that. That money, Toms said, is available if needed, from reserves.

“We’re just too far down this road to let anything scuttle this project,” Toms said. But Gioia and others warn that future affordable housing projects could be much more difficult to develop should federal tax changes adversely affect tax credits.

Toms described Heritage Point as a “catalyst project” that could help spur other development in this struggling corridor, now anchored by the senior apartment complex and by the Contra Costa Health Services’ North Richmond Center for Health.

The Rev. Dana Keith Mitchell said he’s looking for a spark, and for redemption.

“We’ve had some people who’ve been displaced from homes here and who would like to come back,” said Mitchell, pastor of the North Richmond Missionary Baptist Church, about a block from the Heritage Point site. He also hopes that catalyst effect will attract some new businesses, most importantly, a grocery store.

“Every community needs to feel good about itself, have hope,” Mitchell said. “I believe this project will bring hope.”