



Work under way to convert Alameda motel to affordable housing

By Peter Hegarty
phegarty@bayareanewsgroup.com

Posted: 02/02/2012 01:39:20 PM PST

Updated: 02/02/2012 01:39:21 PM PST

It was a motel more known for attracting transients with its cheap nightly rates than for offering a convenient place to stay near Alameda's Park Street shopping district. But now workers are transforming the former Islander Motel into affordable housing, which city officials hope will boost their ongoing efforts to revitalize the neighborhood.

Along with the construction of an office building and new community room, the \$17 million project calls for greening the 40-year-old building with specially insulated windows and the installation of water-heating solar thermal collectors.

When the work is wrapped up in about a year, the property at 2428 Central Ave. will have 62 affordable studio apartments that will each serve one or two individuals.

"It's a positive change," said Melissa Lakkee, 24, who lives in the neighborhood. "With housing so expensive in the Bay Area, this will allow some people to live in a good area that is within walking distance of shops and restaurants."

Construction at the former Islander comes as a makeover is also under way on Park Street, where crews are busy on a streetscape project that calls for planting trees and installing historic-style streetlights as well as new bus shelters and bicycle racks and replacing parking meters with kiosks.

The current phase of the work is taking place between Central and San Jose avenues, including about a block from the Islander site.

"It's encouraging that work

is getting done when so many cities are having financial problems," said Oakland resident Jonathan Tenn. 36, who was visiting the neighborhood for

lunch on a recent afternoon. "I think it's also good for businesses that are nearby."

The city's Housing Authority and Resources for Community Development, a nonprofit that builds low-income housing, are behind the housing project.

"The rehabilitation of the Islander Motel helps meet the city of Alameda's need for more affordable workforce housing," said Dan Sawislak, executive director of the Berkeley-based group. "It's a great reuse of an existing building, in this case an old motel in a downtown area."

About 15 households that have been displaced due to the construction are expected to be eligible to return when the job is finished. Fourteen others will likely need to find another place to live.

Financing for the project includes about \$6 million in federal tax credits and \$2 million in state tax credits. The city has also committed about \$8.6 million in redevelopment funds.

The official groundbreaking at the Islander took place Tuesday, or just a day before redevelopment agencies throughout the state were officially dissolved.

Mayor Marie Gilmore called the project "an excellent example of our redevelopment dollars at work" and said it would help revitalize the downtown neighborhood.

Union Bank is the project's investor and



Print Powered By FormatDynamics™



construction lender.

The city's Housing Authority was established in 1940 and subsidizes rent for 1,800 low-income households on the Island. It also owns and manages more than 600 affordable housing units in 13 complexes.

Reach Peter Hegarty at 510-748-1654 or follow him on Twitter @Peter_Hegarty.



Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™