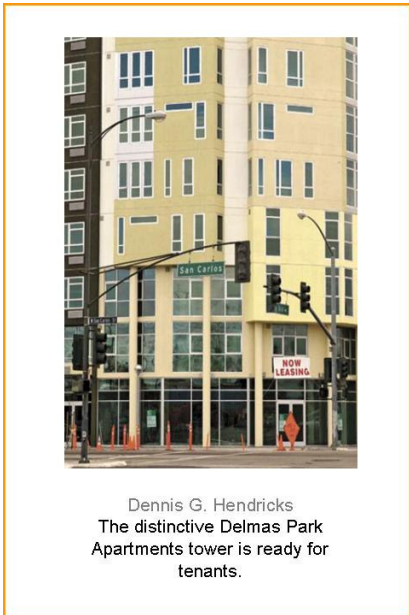


Delmas Park project wins design accolades

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by [Sharon Simonson](#)



Some five years since their conception, the Delmas Park Apartments, a capstone to redevelopment of San Jose's Delmas Park neighborhood, are complete.

The \$36.2 million, eight-story mid-rise at Bird Avenue and San Carlos Street has been seen as a landmark redevelopment for the tiny, mixed-use community of older homes and light industry on the western fringe of downtown. It has also been proposed as a significant milestone in the redevelopment of San Carlos Street itself, which, along with Santa Clara and San Fernando streets, is a gateway to downtown.

The apartment development is being recognized by the Bay Area chapter of the Urban Land Institute for its architect, savvy land use and adherence to smart-growth principles. The 123 below-market-rate units are a stone's

throw from Interstate 280 and within walking distance of light rail and Caltrain. The apartments, along with a five-story parking garage and 5,000 square feet of shop space, are sandwiched on less than a single acre of land.

The project is a joint venture of San Jose's Core Development Cos., a private developer, and non-profit EHC LifeBuilders, also of San Jose. The development is intended as an affordable housing project to help new teachers, but its units will be open to any who meet the means tests. Stephanie Schaaf, an advocacy manager for EHC, which is to provide the on-site programming, says early notions include a teacher resource center and home-ownership workshops. EHC also intends to survey new residents for their programming ideas.

The annual income ceiling for two people to live in a Delmas Park apartment is \$50,940. For four people, the limit is \$63,660, she says.

Financing for the project combined loans and grants from the city of San Jose and Santa Clara County and includes \$11.6 million from the sale of federal tax credits. The complex is leasing now.

David Neale, president of Core, which acted as both the general contractor and developer for the job, says tenant reception has been strong.

"The first weekend (leasing started) about three weeks ago, we had people lining up around the block," he says. "It looks like a market-rate building, and they are getting a heck of a deal. We are very happy with the finished product."

Kathy Sutherland, a Delmas Park resident and the former president of a city-sponsored neighborhood association, says the community wanted "signature" re-developments on the northeast and southeast corners of San Carlos Street and Bird Avenue. Residents believed it would help create a "gateway" not only for downtown but also for their neighborhood. The apartments represent the first half of that proposed grand entrance.

The Delmas Park neighborhood is bounded by I-280, Bird, Santa Clara and state Highway 85, she says. It includes the surface parking lots immediately south of the HP Pavilion recently acquired by Adobe Systems Inc. for expansion of their downtown headquarters.

"We hope the apartments become a catalyst to start redevelopment elsewhere in the area and help people look at the neighborhood with a different eye," she says.

Now, she concedes, Delmas Park is a sometimes rough mix of industrial uses such as auto-body shops smashed against single-family homes. The neighborhood has embraced re-development of some of its land into high-density housing like the Delmas apartments as San Jose implements the vision of bringing housing close to the urban core as part of a strategy to enliven downtown. At the same time, she says, the community also plans to ask the city to set aside certain areas for preservation as historic districts, primarily because of their older homes.

Kate White, the executive director of ULI San Francisco, the Bay Area chapter of the Washington, D.C., advocate for great cities worldwide, says the Delmas Park development captured his group's interest for a number of reasons. "I think it is a unique product in that they are targeting teachers... These are people who really have very few housing options within the core Bay Area and are often commuting from far away," she says.

In addition, she has been favorably impressed by the work done elsewhere by this project's architect, Kevin Wilcock of David Baker + Partners in San Francisco.

"The architect is great," she says. "(In other projects they've done) they are combining new urbanist features of store-front retail on the ground floor and a friendly face of the building to the street. But it's also contemporary and modern... This is pioneering and new."

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