

## Sales launch at East Bay city's biggest downtown housing project in 15 years

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Roland Li



A rendering of New Home Co.'s Garden Flats at Woodbury in downtown Lafayette. The largest... [more](#)

The largest downtown housing project in 15 years has been completed in Lafayette, adding momentum to what could be the biggest building boom in the small East Bay city's history.

New Home Co. (NYSE: NWHM) is starting sales this week on a 56-unit condo project called Woodbury at 3740 Mt. Diablo Blvd. The project has two unit types. Thirty-six

"garden flats" range from 1,457 to 3,001 square feet and are spread through six three-story structures. The units' prices start around \$1 million. The project's 20 one-story "terrace flats" range from 1,111 to 1,703 square feet and start around \$800,000.

The project is part of more than 300 housing units in Lafayette that developers are planning or have completed in the past year. Lafayette's 2012 Downtown Specific Plan called for development closer to retail and the BART station, with around 700 new homes anticipated for over the next two decades.

The trend is another sign of the strength of the Bay Area's housing market and would represent a big shift in Lafayette's population, which has been virtually unchanged for the past two decades. The city had 23,893 people in 2010, up slightly from the 23,501 people it had in 1990, according to U.S. Census data.

**New Home Co.** bought the site from Branagh Development in March 2013, after it was entitled in 2006. The company's local office is in Walnut Creek, and it has been searching for sites to build on in the East Bay amid tough competition from other developers, said **Kevin Carson**, Northern California president of New Home Co.

"Our philosophy is we do much better where land is more difficult to obtain, so you provide unique projects for buyers," said Carson.

New Home, which went public in January 2014, provided all of the equity for the \$60 million project, said Carson, who expects the project to attract both empty nesters and families. Lafayette-based Ward-Young Architecture designed the project.

It is New Home's first project in Lafayette. It also has properties in Fremont, San Jose, Marin County and Southern California and has a pipeline of another 500 units in the Bay Area.

New Home has plenty of company in Lafayette, including some of the country's biggest homebuilders. KB Home (NYSE: KBH) had 69 condos on Dewing Ave. approved last year. Lennar Corp. (NYSE: LEN) seeks city approvals for a 66-unit project. Adjacent to the Woodbury, Branagh Development, which sold the site to New Home, will present plans for a new project on Tuesday, said Niroop Srivatsa, Lafayette's planning and building director.

In the last year, Eden Housing built a 46-unit senior housing project and SRM Development completed the 72-unit assisted living senior facility called Merrill Gardens. Homebuilder Taylor Morrison also completed 23 townhouses at Pleasant Hill Rd. and Mount Diablo Blvd.

Many of the projects in the current wave were approved prior to 2008 downturn — stalled when capital markets froze — and are now moving forward. "At that point in time, it was difficult to secure funding," said Srivatsa. "The economy is picking up and banks are willing to lend."