

New-Home Construction is on the Upswing in Davis

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By Jeff Hudson



With new homes being built by three companies at The Cannery, and local builder Don Fouts having broken ground for the first of three home building projects he has planned in Davis, this year has seen an uptick in residential construction.

It also appears that UC Davis is getting ready to reactivate plans to build faculty and staff housing in its West Village neighborhood west of Highway 113.

Davis voters also rejected Measure A in the June 7 election, stopping the annexation of the Nishi property and bringing the proposed Nishi Gateway project to a halt. Here's a rundown on the various residential projects that have been in the news:

As of mid-June, 111 new homes have been sold at The Cannery, according to Kevin Carson, Northern California president of The New Home Company, which is The Cannery's principal builder and planner. The new neighborhood is at J Street and Covell Boulevard in North Davis.

Plans for The Cannery call for 547 homes on the 100-acre site, and Carson said "we're about 20 to 25 percent of the way there after nine months of home sales. We are right on schedule, maybe even a little ahead of where we thought we might be at this time. ... Traffic has been strong" in terms of prospective buyers coming to check out model homes, he added.

Carson said the pace of building "is dependent on demand. We don't spec build, we build as sales warrant. Cal Atlantic and Shea (the other home builders at The Cannery) have the same approach."

He said the builders expected about three or four sales per month per neighborhood. Four neighborhoods are currently underway.

"Obviously, things slow down in September," Carson added.

Asked about what sort of people are buying homes in The Cannery, Carson said he's seeing "people from all sorts of walks of life. ... The common trend is that they are highly educated, and they've done a lot of research before they buy a home — even more than we had anticipated."

New homes at The Cannery start in the \$400s for townhomes and rise to more than \$1 million for homes up to 3,700 square feet.

Carson added that in October, construction will start on the mixed-use site known as Cannery Marketplace just north of Covell Boulevard, which will include “a little retail space, some office space and some live/work units.”

Going in next to the mixed-use site will be a 62-unit affordable apartment complex called Bartlett Commons, coordinated by CFY Development of Sacramento, which specializes in this type of project. Mogavero Architects will do the design. These apartments are expected to open in August 2017.

In June, the Davis City Council approved a proposal by The Cannery to allow construction of an additional 36 units — 12 in the mixed-use residential area, and 24 in the stacked flats condominium portion of the project.

And on June 23, The New Home Company was honored at the annual PCBC building industry conference in San Francisco with a Grand Award in the Residential Community of the Year Master Plan category, as well as a Grand Award for Best Community Site Plan, both for The Cannery.

Local builder Don Fouts has three projects that are moving toward construction. The Villas in El Macero, a 16-unit project adjacent to the El Macero Golf Course, has broken ground, with site improvements underway through late September and home deliveries sometime in the spring. An initial sales presentation for The Villas was held in late June.

Fouts also is preparing to start Grande Village, a 41-home project in North Davis that is expected to break ground in late July or early August. He said the market-rate homes in Grande Village will be custom-built.

The third project he has planned is Chiles Ranch, a 96-home project (with 19 different floor plans) on East Eighth Street in East Davis that is expected to break ground in late fall or early winter.

It looks like UC Davis is finally getting ready to move ahead with the long-planned faculty and staff housing in West Village, as well as on-campus residence halls and student apartments for more than 6,800 students.

West Village was approved by the University of California Board of Regents in 2003. In 2005, UCD partnered with Carmel Partners Inc. of San Francisco to build the student housing portion of the neighborhood, including apartment complexes known as The Ramble, Viridian and Solstice. They opened in phases starting in 2011 and are home now to 2,000 students.

Until now, student quarters at West Village have been rented on a one-person-per-bedroom basis. But this fall, roughly 624 of the larger bedrooms in West Village are being made available on a “double up” basis for students who want to share the bedroom with a roommate.

While the student apartments went up quickly, the faculty and staff homes at West Village were placed on indefinite hold during the long recession that began in 2007-08.

But in May, UCD released a preliminary scenario for its Long Range Development Plan for 2017-27, which includes faculty and staff homes for up to 475 people in West Village. Some units will be built for sale and some as rentals.

Thus far, the university has not identified the company with which it will partner to build those homes, which will be subject to a number of covenants and price controls (similar to existing covenants in the 25-unit Aggie Village just south of downtown Davis).

Sources on campus indicated that construction of model homes could get underway in 2017.

The LRDP preliminary planning scenario also includes new residence hall capacity for some 1,550 students as well as on-campus apartments for another 4,650 students. UCD is planning for an enrollment of 39,000 students by 2027.

In the June 7 election, Davis voters rejected Measure A, with 51.5 percent voting no on the Nishi Gateway project. Measure A would have annexed the 45-acre Nishi property on the south side of the UC Davis campus, just north of Interstate 80.

Backers proposed to build 650 apartments and condominiums plus 325,000 square feet of office and research space and 20,000 square feet of retail space.

The Davis City Council had approved the project, but without voter approval of the annexation, it will not move forward. It is not clear yet whether the developers will ask voters to consider a revised version of the project in a future election.

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