

Overhaul in the works for La Hacienda Apartments



Written by Brent Ruffner/News-Bulletin

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La Hacienda Apartments hardly resemble an estate or a ranch.

But the 22-unit complex at 400 N. Second St. in Belen could get a \$1.7 million face-lift if YES Housing Inc. has its way.

The nonprofit group, which acquires and renovates properties, is in the process of buying the property for \$240,000 and revamping each unit with items such as new appliances and flooring.

YES Housing is a subsidiary of Youth Development Inc. and will get the money from the New Mexico Mortgage Finance Authority for the project.

"(The apartments) are in severe disrepair," said Michelle Den Bleyker of YES Housing. "We are working to acquire them and come in and do energy-efficient improvements and renovations."

Den Bleyker said the company could acquire the property as soon as September, and said renovations would take four to six months to transform the property into a suitable environment.

The complex has boarded up and broken windows in a property that has about four current residents. The nonprofit company would help temporarily move residents who are in good standing and current on their rent.

Andrew DiCamillo, the city's planning and zoning director, said the city of Belen started looking into options after neighbors brought up the issue at a regular city council meeting in May.

"The neighbors were seeing all of the commotion and drug dealing," DiCamillo said. "There was a lot of that going on. They were living in fear."

Police were called out to the property in the past and have made arrests that involved damage to property and on outstanding warrants. Active gang members have also been seen on the property, according to police.

"There were people sitting on a couch outside in the parking lot," said Interim Police Chief Dan Robb. "That disturbs the whole neighborhood."

But Joseph Ortega, vice president of YES Housing in Albuquerque, said he wants to change that.

"We want this to be a good place," said Ortega. "We want it to be family housing."

Ortega said the units will be leased to residents who are at about 50 percent or below the area median income, and the property would be owned by the nonprofit for the next 20 years.

He said the nonprofit would look to add a gate for residents to feel safe while blocking off a portion of the property to eliminate unwanted people from coming in and out of the area.

Neighbor Regina Griego said she is glad the area will be cleaned up. She said she has seen people dealing drugs and fights break out two to three times a week since the property changed management about a year and a half ago.

"It was pretty bad," Griego said. "It got as bad as it could. But now, I'm very happy."

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