

NEWS > HOUSING • News

Berkeley church breaks ground on affordable housing

It's North Berkeley's first affordable housing project in almost 30 years



A rendering shows what Jordan Court, an affordable housing project for seniors, will look like in North Berkeley. (Image courtesy of Satellite Housing and Affordable Housing Associates)

By **MARISA KENDALL** | mkendall@bayareanewsgroup.com | Bay Area



News Group

PUBLISHED: September 30, 2020 at 1:27 p.m. | UPDATED: October 1, 2020 at 3:38 a.m.

BERKELEY — It was not a typical sermon for Reverend Phil Brochard of All Souls Episcopal Parish. For one thing, he gave his talk Wednesday from an empty construction site, standing in front of a pile of shovel-ready dirt.

That's because Brochard and his congregation were celebrating an unusual church milestone: Breaking ground on their first affordable housing development. The project, dubbed Jordan Court, will provide 34 affordable studio apartments for low-income seniors — right on All Souls' North Berkeley property.

The apartments will be next door to the building where churchgoers worship, and will include new administrative offices for the clergy, as well as two residences for church staff.

As it moves forward with its affordable apartments, All Souls is part of a growing number of religious institutions [donating their excess land for affordable housing](#).

"In the end, it was the growing pressures from the lack of housing that every person can afford," Brochard said. "We were feeling this on the one hand, and we were reading the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth on the other, and that led us to this day."

The \$25 million project on Oxford Street received funding from the city of Berkeley, Alameda County, the state, low-income tax credits and bank loans.

Jordan Court will serve seniors whose income is between 20% and 60% of the area median income — 60% comes out to \$78,300 for a family of four in Alameda County. Residents will get Section 8 vouchers from Berkeley Housing Authority that will ensure they pay no more than one-third of their income in rent. And 12 of the apartments will be set aside for formerly homeless seniors with serious mental illness, through the state's No Place Like Home program.

Satellite Affordable Housing Associates, the developer on the project, also will provide an onsite manager and other services for residents.



The project will help fill a vital need in Berkeley, where the senior population is expected to double in the next 10 years — at which point one in five city residents will be over 65, said Mayor Jesse Arreguín.

Jordan Court is the first affordable housing project to break ground in North Berkeley in almost 30 years, he said.

“That’s a tremendous thing,” Arreguín said. “And this project demonstrates our city’s commitment to providing needed affordable housing to our growing senior population.”

It wasn’t an easy road. Members of All Souls first got the idea to build affordable housing on their land more than five years ago — and they were not prepared for how long and difficult the process would be, Brochard said.

When a group of neighbors opposing the project appealed a key zoning ruling in 2018, All Souls suddenly faced the risk of missing the deadline to apply for \$5 million in funding from Alameda County. So the church [employed SB 35](#) — a state law passed in 2017 that allows developers to expedite certain residential projects and bypass most appeals. It worked, and the project continued forward.

Councilwoman Kate Harrison lauded the housing law and its impact Wednesday.

“SB 35 has made an enormous difference in our ability to get affordable housing projects approved and built,” she said.

Susan Friedland, CEO of Satellite Affordable Housing Associates, agreed. It took just three years for Jordan Court to go from planning to groundbreaking, which she called “pretty miraculous.”

Despite the celebratory air Wednesday, Brochard recognized more must be done to address the region’s affordable housing crisis.

“There is still a long way to go. A building must still rise from this ground,” he said. “And there are hundreds and hundreds more homes that must be built, so shelter from the storm and a place to call home is not just for those who currently have the privilege to benefit from it.”

