

## **Boulder Mobile Manor redevelopment moves forward Construction starts on permanently affordable Red Oak Park**

**By Alicia Wallace** Camera Business Writer

Posted: 07/02/2010 11:43:29 PM MDT

As a hydraulic excavator ate through the earth at 2637 Valmont Road on Friday, it was a sign that Romelia Guardado soon could be returning home.

The 32-year-old mother of four lived at this central Boulder address for several years as a resident of Boulder Mobile Manor. In late 2008, she and other inhabitants of the 60-year-old, 66-unit mobile home park were relocated to other rental units as Boulder's housing authority moved forward with its plans to redevelop it into a 59-unit site consisting of permanently affordable single-family, duplex and triplex rental homes. Thanks to an economic meltdown that rocked the financing world and tied up low-income housing tax credits, the conversion of Boulder Mobile Manor into Red Oak Park was set back a year, said Stuart Grogan, director of development for Boulder Housing Partners, which serves as Boulder's housing authority.

"One of our goals was to extend the affordability," Grogan said. "The more affordability required more financial complexities."

After pooling the funds, landing the credits, securing the construction loan and getting the city's fiscal help and its eventual OK on permits, Boulder Housing Partners this week started construction at the 5-acre site that sits just east of Folsom Street and Valmont Road.

"We're very thankful" to be moving forward, Grogan said.

To be able to give some of the former residents "first dibs" at Red Oak Park, Boulder Housing Partners increased its affordability plans, he said. Originally, only Boulder residents earning up to 50 percent of the area median income -- or a family of three with an annual income of roughly \$36,250 -- would have been eligible to rent the homes. Now, about one-quarter of the project will be available for those who earn up to 30 percent or 40 percent of the area median income.

Boulder Housing Partners is contacting former Boulder Mobile Manor residents to gauge their interest in returning to the site after the \$13 million redevelopment's expected fall 2011 completion.

"It took us a little longer, but we're staying in touch with those folks," Grogan said.

Guardado said Friday she's looking forward to moving back, making note of the planned park and community areas.

The impetus for Grogan, Kevin Knapp and the rest of the Boulder Housing Partners team was to improve on what was there before. The ground was so thick with roots that they pierced through 3/4-inch copper pipes, making for a sluggish water flow.

"It needed some attention, so that was probably the biggest driver for us," Grogan said.

Retaining the community-building character also was key, he said.

"We recognized very, very quickly that (Boulder Mobile Manor) was a really tight community," he said. "We really wanted to create a new community that mimicked that and enabled that kind of interaction."

The neighborhood design includes two outdoor green spaces, a community center and a potential second phase that could include 8,000 square feet of commercial and retail uses to serve Red Oak Park and the surrounding community.

Integrated into the development will be sustainability-minded touches from energy-efficient windows; tight building envelopes; Energy Star appliances; solar panels; and an RTD Eco-Pass given to each unit, said Knapp, Boulder Housing Partners' project manager. Additionally, contractor Wyatt Construction and Lafayette-based The Diversion Connection Inc. this week reached an agreement to provide construction waste management and recycling for the project.

Terry Benjamin, executive director of Boulder's Emergency Family Assistance Association, said he was pleased to see Red Oak Park moving forward. However, much more is needed on the affordable housing front, he said, especially considering what has happened since the recession hit.

There's a "staggering" shortfall between the supply and the demand, he said. About 15,280 more permanently affordable rental units and 22,272 permanently affordable ownership units need to be added in Boulder and Broomfield counties to meet the expected demand in 2014, according to the Boulder/Broomfield Regional HOME Consortium's 2010-2014 plan.

"It's just a staggering gap between the need and the availability," Benjamin said. "And the gap is growing pretty significantly. The data was gathered before the recession."

*Contact Camera Business Writer Alicia Wallace at 303-473-1332 or [wallacea@dailycamera.com](mailto:wallacea@dailycamera.com).*