

HAWS plans more homes Low-income housing proposed outside city

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The Housing Authority of Winston-Salem is embarking on a development project in Walkertown to provide more low income housing outside the city limits.

MV Communities of Durham is proposing to build a brick complex called Pine Crest Apartments, with 80 two- and three-bedroom apartments next to the Walkertown Commons Shopping Center.

The company got \$1.8 million in federal and state tax credits that will allow it to charge lower rents. In addition to the tax credits, the housing authority awarded the company 20 vouchers that can be used by residents who want to live in low-income apartments and houses that are not in poor areas.

Under the housing authority's tenant-based program, people get rent vouchers from the agency, and can choose apartments from a list released monthly by HAWS, or negotiate with private landlords.

A smaller number of Section 8 vouchers are tied to specific units. In those apartments, the landlord gets a housing-assistance payment each month from HAWS to help cover a part of a tenant's rent. The tenant also pays rent based on income, said Karen Durell, the housing authority's director of housing services.

HAWS has converted a number of vouchers in the tenant-based program to be used for specific apartments, such as the proposed complex in Walkertown.

One of the agency's long-term goals is to create more places with inexpensive rent in mixed-income areas, Durell said.

If approved by the Walkertown Town Council, the apartment complex will be the second such project in Forsyth County.

The first was Mountain View Senior Living, a two-story complex with one- and two-bedroom apartments for residents 55 or older off Mountain View Drive in Kernersville.

Although such projects are helping the housing authority reach its goal of expanding low-income housing outside the city, the people in the areas where they are being built do not always embrace them.

In Walkertown, for example, town-council members have said they don't like the idea of subsidized apartments going up next to the town's fanciest shopping center near the intersection of N.C. 158 and U.S. 66.

"What town are you going to go to where people think it's a good fit?" Durell said. "There's a stigma to it. Right away they don't want it in their backyards."

But the bottom line is that there are many low-income residents who want to live outside the city limits and have nowhere to go, she said.

"I'm not a discriminatory person," said Walkertown Town Council Member Dot Duggins. "But in this particular area I don't think this is a good idea."

There are a couple of other areas of the town in which low-income complexes would work, areas with sidewalks and stores where residents could shop and their children could walk to school, Duggins said.

The shopping-center developer had promised council members that an "upscale" apartment complex would be built next door, she said.

"I'm holding him to the fire," she said. "I'd like it to be a little more upscale out there."

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