

## Avian Glen: low rent, but high standards

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A new apartment complex in Vallejo may change your view of certain types of "affordable housing." Prospective tenants not only will have to pay rent, they also are subject to criminal background and credit checks.

Vallejo's new Avian Glen Apartments, which officially opened Wednesday, will evict tenants who engage in illegal activity, an official said.

There are reasons for the restrictions.

"A lot of people are scared by the term 'affordable housing,' " said Laura Barlow a spokeswoman for the project's builders, San Diego-based Affirmed Housing Group, a for-profit affordable housing developer and **Las Palmas Foundation**, a nonprofit affordable housing company. "They think of the old-fashioned 'projects.' But our communities are, in my opinion, of higher quality than many market-rate complexes."

Mayor Anthony Intintoli agreed, calling the project "a great asset to the community," though acknowledging it makes only a dent in a "huge" need for local workforce housing.

"We have about 6,000 people on a waiting list for subsidized housing, so the need is huge," Intintoli said. "And I think the beauty of the buildings may motivate some of the surrounding, privately owned neighbors to spruce up their properties."

Located on about 2.6 acres on Avian Drive off Springs Road, Avian has 87 one-, two- and three-bedroom units for rent only to lower-income households meeting certain criteria. Rents range from \$380 to \$1,200 monthly. There is a waiting list.

"I was living in another apartment complex in town when I passed by this and saw it looked like a whole new community," said Everett Robinson, 45, a personal trainer, martial arts and aerobics instructor. "It looked so peaceful and tranquil."

Robinson said he expects his daughter to live with him and needed a larger place, so he contacted Avian's management, and was impressed.

"They have no tolerance for drugs or violence or trafficking. They really stressed that," he said. "They were kind, straightforward, encouraging and very professional."

All apartment applicants must qualify based not just on income and family size, but

also on credit and criminal history.

"A credit check is done on all applicants over the age of 18, but also a criminal background check," Barlow said. "Any offense above a misdemeanor automatically disqualifies you, and so does any offense involving domestic violence, drugs or alcohol."

Criminal behavior from tenants or even tenants' visitors could result in eviction, Barlow added.

Avian tenant Sabina Ridgle said she's optimistic that Avian will remain as nice, in part because of the strict screening.

"I was in an apartment building in Fairfield, and this is a better environment. There were cops called there frequently, and high-speed chases through the complex. It was not kid-friendly," said Ridgle, a 22-year-old single mother of two. "I really have high hopes for this community, that it won't become like Sereno Village, which also started out quiet, but now people are getting shot there."

Sereno Village is another of the city's more recent affordable housing complexes.

Avian Glen will stay nice if its management has anything to say about it, Barlow said.

The reason, she said, is the firm's partnership with the city. "We have an agreement with the city to maintain, manage and qualify residents at stricter levels," she said.

The project cost more than \$22 million, including about \$2.5 million in loans from the city, Barlow said.

The complex boasts several laundry areas, a playground, a picnic area and a community building featuring a full kitchen, TV area and a free computer learning center with a scanner, fax and copier.

For information on Avian Glen, call 556-3172.

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