

Affordable housing project opens doors



Written by

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Stefani Lott is ready to tackle a new phase in her life and a new home.

Lott and her 17-month-old daughter, Ilana, will be the first family to move into the CARE Housing development in the Provincetowne neighborhood in south Fort Collins.

Lott, 23, will move in to the city's latest affordable housing project, which is designed to be environmentally friendly, later this month. She'll pay \$675 a month for a two-bedroom townhouse.

CARE Housing will help Lott out by covering her security deposit from a special fund dedicated to assisting residents since she doesn't have the money to pay that and the first month's rent.

It's a great deal, Lott said, and unlike anything else she's seen around Fort Collins.

"I'm pretty excited to see them today; they are extremely nice," she said prior to ceremonies marking the opening of the

complex. "I wasn't expecting wood floors and a washer and dryer."

Provincetowne is southeast of the intersection of Trilby Road and Lemay Avenue. The CARE Housing development will have 64 two-bedroom units and 21 three-bedroom units.

Sixteen units will soon be ready for move-in with more on the way, said Mark Holmes, executive director of CARE Housing. The development was five years in the making and required bringing together a network of partnerships that included lenders, investors, contractors and government agencies.

Pulling the project together was a challenge, Holmes said in an interview, especially in a difficult funding environment. The units will be available for working families that earn 30, 50 and 60 percent of the area median income, or AMI, which is about \$65,000 a year.

The development required multiple funding

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sources, Holmes said, and is designed to be as sustainable as it is affordable. The townhouses have low-energy features as well as low-flow water fixtures and carpeting made from recycled materials.

The complex includes a community center that features a playground, a study area and a computer lab for residents. The buildings were designed by John Dengler and Associates and were built by Drahota Construction.

CARE is a nonprofit organization started in 1992. A founding member and its first director was Sister Mary Alice Murphy, a longtime advocate for low-income residents in Fort Collins.

Murphy told the crowd gathered to celebrate the grand opening that many community members have helped the organize through the years, and it "stands on their shoulders."

Provincetowne represents a new phase for CARE and another way for it to offer opportunities to low-income residents, she said.

"If you have a place to live that's decent and you have a job, you can make it," she said. "Those are your two principal ingredients; and if either one of those is lacking, it's very difficult."

Lott, who works for Poudre Valley Health System as a patient account representative, said having a place in the new development will open new opportunities

for her. She'll be able to afford child care for Ilana and be able to go to college while still paying her rent.

Without her new home, it might be a different story, she said.

"I would be stuck in a not-so-nice place in a not-so-nice part of town," she said. "But I wouldn't any other choice. I could keep living with my parents; but being a mom myself and having my own life, that's not an option."

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