

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

The following FAQ elaborates on responses to questions that RCD received about the proposed development in the past few years. For more information, please contact Gabriel Borden at gborden@rcdhousing.org.

Timeline

When is construction of the development expected to start?

If RCD succeeds in receiving all necessary financing sources, construction is projected to start in the fall of 2024.

Maintenance and Security

What is RCD doing about the current security and maintenance concerns at the site?

To date, RCD has installed and implemented the following security and maintenance measures:

- Security camera system equipped with motion detection and accompanying voice commands,
- On-site guard during 4th of July and New Years Eve to help prevent firework activity,
- Motion-detection solar lights,
- Boarding-up all entryways to fire-ridden existing buildings,
- Weekly site maintenance (hauling away debris and patching cut fences, etc.),
- Monthly landscape maintenance to eliminate fire hazards,
- Smell abatement of burned buildings,
- Planning a temporary mural to surround fire-ridden buildings and reduce blight, and
- Exploring the possibility of creating a temporary community garden and program in the empty lot area.

Why haven't the fire-ridden buildings been demolished?

All developments receiving federal funding, such as Project Based Voucher (PBV) rental subsidies, must undergo a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review. Since the Santa Clara County Housing Authority conditionally committed PBV, no 'choice-limiting action' can be taken without risking losing the federal funding (vouchers) until the NEPA review is complete. The demolition of the existing fire-ridden buildings is considered a "choice-limiting action" within the NEPA guidelines.

Since the spring of 2022, RCD has been working diligently with the City of San José, who is conducting the NEPA review, to advance the review wherever possible. The City's most recent projection had the review scheduled to be complete by October 2023. There are further potential obstacles relating to federal regulations that limit what types of work can be done prior to executing a Housing Assistance Payments Contract, and relating to the City of San José Conditions of Approval. RCD is proactively working to address both of these potential obstacles while concurrently completing the aforementioned NEPA. RCD's goal is to demolish the fire-ridden buildings as quickly as we can whenever we obtain the approval to do so.

How often and who will maintain the cleanliness of future apartments and building exterior?

The housing development will be staffed with a full-time maintenance professional, as well as a full-time janitorial staff person. In coordination with the property manager and assistant property manager, they will be responsible for maintaining the cleanliness of the common areas, open space, and exterior areas of the building.

Residents will be responsible for maintaining the cleanliness of their individual rental home. Property management also conducts annual inspections of each apartment.

Will it be RCD's responsibility to provide security at the future development during planning, construction and after people move in?

RCD will ensure that the property is secured during planning, construction and after residents move into their new rental homes. During construction, RCD uses cameras and security guards to secure the property during times when workers are not at the site, including at night, weekends, and every holiday. Once in operation, the property manager, assistant property manager and desk clerk will be responsible for securing the property. RCD and our property management partner create a safety and security plan for every RCD property, and every property is monitored with a security camera system and exterior lighting.

Who will be responsible for policing and what is the protocol for background checks?

The Police Department will be responsible for policing all criminal activity in the neighborhood. The on-site property management team will cooperate with the Police Department as needed to ensure the security of the property and its residents.

To ensure the safety and security of every RCD housing community, RCD conducts criminal background checks on all adult applicants going back seven years. Felony offenses and/or continued and ongoing criminal activity are grounds for rejection if such offenses involve physical violence to persons or property, domestic violence, sexual abuse, arson, sales of narcotics, illegal weapons possession, any form of assault, breaking and entering, burglary or drug related criminal offenses.

Site Selection

How did this area/property get on your radar? Can you explain how RCD learned of the property and decided to target this project there?

As a Bay Area-based, nonprofit developer of affordable housing, our mission is to address the need for affordable housing by providing high-quality, sustainable housing to families and neighborhoods most in need. Consistent with this mission, we are continually searching for new development sites. RCD staff chose this site based on its proximity to the Virginia VTA light rail station and Downtown San José, which will provide residents with access to a variety of local and regional amenities and work opportunities. Additionally, because this site is vacant and underutilized, it is a great candidate for redevelopment, which can bring vibrancy back to this corner of the neighborhood and provide much needed affordable housing in San José.

Will there be any more of these (affordable housing buildings) in this neighborhood's future?

RCD is one of multiple affordable housing developers that are active in San José. While RCD does not anticipate developing any additional projects in the neighborhood at this time, future affordable housing development will depend on the availability of land and funding for affordable housing.

Application Process

What is the application process?

Two weeks prior to the pre-application portal going live, RCD will begin marketing and outreach throughout Santa Clara County, including with the City, County and Housing Authority offices, as well as numerous social service and neighborhood agencies. For two weeks, the pre-application will be available on-line. RCD will not accept any faxed, emailed, or hand-delivered pre-applications. After the pre-application period closes, an electronic lottery will select and rank prospective residents, and RCD will mail lottery rankings to all applicants. RCD's property management partner, The John Stewart Company, will screen all applicants and verify their incomes, as well as conduct both a background and credit check before prospective residents are offered a rental home. From time to time, as residents move out and rental homes become available again, applicants that were waitlisted during the initial electronic lottery will be contacted and offered rental homes.

What is the application process for homeless applicants?

Approximately a quarter of the rental homes will be reserved for formerly homeless households. These applicants are referred directly by the Office of Supportive Housing of the County of Santa Clara in partnership with the Housing Authority of Santa Clara County via its Chronically Homeless Direct Referral Program. If you know of people who are experiencing homelessness, please refer them to the Office of Supportive Housing:

<https://www.sccgov.org/sites/osh/ContinuumofCare/coordinated-assessment/Pages/home.aspx>

Are undocumented households eligible to apply for a rental home at the property?

Yes. Undocumented households are eligible to apply for a rental home in the new property.

Will the Guadalupe Washington Neighborhood Association (GWNA) have the opportunity to refer residents, housed or unhoused for this housing?

In order to comply with Federal Affirmative Fair Housing Marketing Guidelines, prospective residents must be recruited in a strategy designed to ensure equal access to apartments at the property for all persons in any category protected by federal, state, or local laws governing discrimination. Given that, GWNA may encourage residents to apply for housing, but the rental homes must be made available to all residents in all communities throughout San José and Santa Clara County.

Which organization will be responsible for screening and choosing applicants?

RCD and our property management company—The John Stewart Company—will be responsible for screening and choosing applicants through the process described above.

Will RCD accept written applications?

No. Only online applications will be accepted. RCD will coordinate with local community organizations to ensure access to the online application, including the Guadalupe-Washington Neighborhood Association, Santa Maria Urban Ministry, Catholic Charities, The Health Trust, and Santa Clara County.

Are seniors eligible to apply for housing?

Yes. The application process will not discriminate against any individual or family because of race, color, creed, national or ethnic origin or ancestry, religion, sex, sexual preference, gender identity, gender expression, age, disability, genetic information, handicap, military status, source of income, marital status, or presence of children in the household.

How can potential applicants ensure that they have all the necessary information needed to apply?

Prior to the pre-application portal going live, RCD is committed to working with local community organizations to ensure that the application requirements are shared in advance with eligible households so that applicants have time to secure any necessary documentation.

Rent and Income Limits / Household Size

What are the rent and income limits for eligible households?

The household income limits are based on the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)'s 2023 income and rent limits. These limits are subject to annual adjustment. More information can be found on the City's website: <https://www.sanjoseca.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/98136/638204322384030000>

Will the property ALWAYS be affordable housing or does that designation expire after a certain number of years?

Generally, the designation expires after about 55 years. However, RCD owns and operates its affordable housing for the long-term and intends to operate this community as affordable housing indefinitely.

What are the minimum and maximum number of people per unit size?

Household size must be appropriate for the apartment. The size of the unit that an applicant qualifies for is dependent on their household size and any verifiable special needs. In general, maximum occupancy is calculated as two people per bedroom, plus one additional person. All household members, including children, count toward the number of persons allowed.

Bedroom Size	Minimum Number of Persons in Household	Maximum Number of Persons in Household
Studio	1	2
1 Bedroom	1	3
2 Bedroom	2	5
3 Bedroom	4	7

Parking

What are parking stackers and do the parking stackers require an attendant to retrieve cars?

The parking stackers are semi-automated and do not require an attendant. Each car owner will be designated a key fob that will recall the car to a position where it can be driven out of the stacking system by the owner. Multiple parking stacking systems will be used to allow multiple owners to recall their cars at the same time. For more information on car stackers: <https://cityliftparking.com/solutions/puzzle-mechanical-parking>

Are you providing guest parking so that individuals who come to visit will not need to park on the street?

We plan to provide guest parking for caretakers and social workers. No additional guest parking is anticipated at this time.

Traffic and Circulation

How will the project address traffic impacts to the neighborhood?

This project is a transit-oriented development (TOD), which is the creation of compact, walkable, pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use communities that are located near high-quality transit. TODs have been shown to reduce dependence on driving, due to walkability and proximity to transit. As a result, neighborhood impacts to traffic are much less than other project types, as residents are more likely to walk, bike and take transit to work than commute by car.

Additionally, we will explore the potential to provide transit passes to residents, which can further encourage residents to reduce their dependence on driving.

What traffic safety precautions can be added on these streets since there is also a high-speed and traffic accident history here?

Most funding sources used to build affordable housing do not permit the funding of off-site improvements, such as transportation improvements.

That said, RCD has had a lot of success with California's Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities (AHSC) funding program which does provide funding for both housing and transportation improvements, including bicycle, pedestrian, and other safety improvements. RCD applied for AHSC funding for the proposed development on Almaden Ave. and should learn by fall 2023 if it is awarded.

RCD can also work with the community to advocate for safety and transportation improvements at City Hall.

Would RCD be open to closing off the alley with a gate that only other residents have access to from either their property or other homes that live in that corridor?

We are not sure this is a viable solution given the number of property owners that need access to the alley, however; RCD will ensure that the alley area behind our building is well-lit and is monitored by security cameras. On-site property management will also coordinate with the Police Department to ensure this area is policed as necessary.

Open Space and Common Areas

Has there been any suggestion for a community garden, or could the roof of the building be used as a garden?

While we understand the benefits of community gardens, it was determined that a community garden would not be feasible from a design or property management standpoint. Prior to construction, RCD is considering partnering with a local urban gardening organization to provide temporary gardening beds and program in the currently empty lot.

Generally, property management avoids rooftop open space in our properties, as the space is difficult to monitor and secure for staff.

Who has the ability to use the community room? Will it be open to neighbors who live in GWNA but not this development?

The community room is an amenity for those living at the property and will only be available to residents.

Could a community kitchen be big enough for residents to use it for small business purposes?

The proposed common kitchen is not suitable for commercial purposes. Likewise, it needs to be generally available to all residents. It cannot not be used for small business purposes.