

TANNERY ON TRACK

Despite economy, first phase on time, on budget



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

Artists will soon call the Tannery Arts Center home.

Apartment to open in February; future plans might be delayed

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SANTA CRUZ — About 100 county artists will have new homes come mid-February, when completion of live-work lofts at the new Tannery Arts Center is expected.

Hundreds of painters, sculptors, dancers and other artists already have interviewed for the studio to three-bedroom apartments, which will rent from \$450 to \$1,131 per month. So many more have applied, organizers said, they likely won't take applications again for years.

"These people want it, they know what to do to get it, and they're working for it," said Heather Fender, an onsite property manager with The Jon Stewart Co. who has been interviewing applicants. "We hope that sets the standard for living here."

Crews are about six weeks away from finishing the construction of 100 apartments at the new arts center on the River Street property that once housed Salz Leathers, said Cathryn Vandenbrink, regional director for Artspace, the Seat-



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Construction on the first phase of the Tannery Arts Center in Santa Cruz is nearly complete and ready for tenants.

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tle nonprofit that's building the project. When complete, the center will house artists of various mediums, work studios, a gallery and a performance center, among other amenities.

State and federal housing funds, which helped pay for the project, came through before the economic crunch hit in recent months, so construction will not be held up, Vandenbrink said.

The next phase, turning historic Tannery buildings into art studios, could be stalled about six months due to the economy and should finish next fall, Vandenbrink said.

Organizers say housing is the most critical — and expensive — component of the Tannery Arts Center, which has been in the works since 2005.

Santa Cruz artist Kirby Scudder, who has acted as caretaker during construction and hopes to score an apartment, expects the lofts to serve as an "incubator" for those who move in.

"In a sense of community they start to share ideas, and ideas lead to solutions," Scudder said.

Artists who do land one of the prized dwellings will have worked for their new home: many camped out overnight in November to ensure they were the first to hand in applications. Staff also is checking financial statements, residency and that potential residents really are artists before allowing them to move in.

The 100 units are expected to cost \$36 million to build, and Vandenbrink said the project remains on budget. Of that, the city's redevelopment agency provided \$1.9 million, the city's Housing Trust Fund contributed \$1.2 million, and the county's housing fund gave \$500,000. The rest comes from Artspace and state and federal housing grants.

The entire project should run about \$50 million. Apartment size will range between 550 and 1,100 square feet.

To live in the center, residents must prove they earn an annual income of no more than \$30,450 for one person, \$34,800 for two people or \$43,500 for a household of four, according to Artspace.