

Construction begins on affordable housing

By GREG BEEBE

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WATSONVILLE — Construction is under way on a \$1.8 million affordable-housing project that features a "Spanish courtyard" for a greater sense of community, developers say.

Pajaro Court at 170 Pennsylvania Drive is the future home of 10 rental townhouses. The units are intended for low- and very-low income residents of Watsonville, with priority given to households displaced by the 1989 earthquake.

The courtyard design affords maximum use of the odd-shaped lot, near Main Street behind Happy Burro Market, said Ann Hebenstreit of the Pajaro Valley Affordable Housing Corp., the project's developer.

The non-profit agency's other projects include apartments on Ford Street and Tierra Linda, and an 18-unit complex at Beck and Rogge.

By using the courtyard design instead of the traditional "row" of homes, Hebenstreit said, developers were able to make room for two more housing units.

More important, said Hebenstreit, the courtyard creates a safe, enclosed area

in which young children can play, and "the neighbors can watch each other's property and feel more unity as a group."

Each unit includes a small outdoor area of its own, as well as the central community courtyard. Nine of the units feature a two-story townhouse design, with living area above and three bedrooms below; the 10th, a two-bedroom unit, is designed with a disabled resident in mind.

To qualify, prospective tenants must earn no more than 35 percent (very low) or 60 percent (low) of the county median family income of \$43,130. Rents will range from \$360 to \$719 a month, depending on income.

Construction funds were provided by Watsonville Federal Savings and the state Rental Housing Construction Program.

The project is expected to be ready for tenants in February 1994.

The public is invited to Pajaro Court's official ground-breaking at 4 p.m. Thursday, 170 Pennsylvania Drive, with a reception to follow at Pajaro Valley Affordable Housing Corp., 1110 Main St., Suite 3, Watsonville. For more information, call 722-9461.