

TECHO unhappy over turnout on housing project

The registration deadline for the self-help Victorian Village townhouse development at Brentwood and Lake Village drives passed uneventfully Monday afternoon, to the disappointment of project backers. Jose Ruiz said Monday that 36 persons had applied to participate in the development, which will be built almost entirely by the homeowners themselves.

Ruiz is executive director of The Environmental Community Housing Organization (TECHO), which is promoting the 24-unit project. The development is aimed at "middle-income" families earning \$25,000-\$35,000 annually.

Ruiz said Monday that TECHO had hoped to receive at least 100 applications for the project and said he was "a little disappointed" by the relatively low number received so far. TECHO, he explained, has calculated that it needs four applicants per unit to be sure of ultimately finding 24 eligible homebuyers.

Ruiz said incomes of the families that applied range from \$18,000 to \$40,000 a year. He said TECHO would begin analyzing their finances next week.

The TECHO director said it is possible that 24 eligible families willing to commit themselves to the so-called "sweat equity" housing program might be found from among the first batch of applicants. But, Ruiz said, that seems unlikely.

He said TECHO would consider reopening registration for the Victorian Village development, if necessary. Participants in the project must donate 1,000 hours of labor toward its completion. Home buyers will work in teams, building eight units at a time under the supervision of technical experts hired by TECHO. Home buyers' donated labor will constitute their downpayments on the townhouse units, which are expected to cost about \$55,000 each.

Ruiz said the non-profit agency hoped to begin construction by December.