

Stakeholders celebrate housing, health campus groundbreaking in Live Oak



A rendering of the 3.7 acre campus on Capitola Road shows that it will, by the conclusion of 2023, feature six new buildings. Two buildings will be health clinics meant to serve low-income residents in the area. The remaining four buildings will be residential buildings with affordable units. A community plaza in the center will connect the campus. (Courtesy of Dientes Community Dental)

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SANTA CRUZ — Around 200 people, masked and socially distanced, were to celebrate the groundbreaking of a new health and housing complex at 1500 Capitola Road on Saturday morning.

“One hundred and eighty people have RSVP’d, which I think is a testament to the fact people are really hankering to celebrate good news,” Chief Development Officer Sheree Storm said Friday.

Alongside local contractors at Bogard Construction, representatives of Santa Cruz Community Health, Dientes Community Dental and MidPen Housing will present their vision turned reality of a two-phase project oriented toward bringing resources to a community that vitally needs them.

According to data from the public relations firm representing Bogard Construction, Studio PR, 15% of Live Oak School District students are homeless. Thousands of

adults in the neighborhood have no doctor. Those who do have health care near the campus site, specifically Medi-Cal, have no dental care. These figures may have worsened after the COVID-19 pandemic.



A closer rendering shows the community plaza feature of the campus at 1500 Capitola Road. The area, meant to connect people and give them a place to gather, is indicative of the spirit to offer as many resources as possible in one space. For example, MidPen Housing intends to provide after school and supportive services in its housing facilities. (Courtesy of Dientes Community Dental)

“We are proud to be starting construction on this community serving project,” Bogard Construction president Jared Bogaard said in a statement about the event.

Phase one, a large medical clinic and an 11-chair dental clinic, is expected to be constructed over 14 months — bringing its completion to late summer or early fall of 2022. There, Santa Cruz Community Health will offer behavioral and mental health services as well as medical, specialty and pediatric care. Dientes will offer treatment from preventative care and regular checkups for children to treatments and oral surgeries for adults and seniors.

“We are committed to improving access to quality care for those who need it most,” Santa Cruz Community Health CEO Leslie Conner said in the statement.

Quality care is what Dientes wants for those in Live Oak, too, Storm said.

“If you haven’t had good oral health care growing up, that has a ripple effect when you’re an adult and senior. It leads to high instances of dentures, especially in the low-income community,” Storm said. “We want to back that up, to focus on prevention and get the kids the care they need.”

Phase two, four three-story buildings with a total of 57 units nicknamed the “Live Oak buildings,” will start in the spring of next year and conclude in late 2023. There, one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments will be offered to the same demographics MidPen serves at its other 13 properties across the county — families, seniors and those with special needs.

“We are so excited for this mixed-use community, which centers on the health outcomes of Live Oak residents,” chief real estate development officer Jan Lindenthal said in the same statement. “We recognize that providing an affordable roof over one’s head is just a start. Our resident-centered services programming provided at our communities is where the real magic happens.”

The project is slated to provide 375 new jobs between the new clinics operated by Dientes and Santa Cruz Community Health, according to impact studies conducted by New York-based investor relations firm Capital Link.

Getting to the groundbreaking

The project, in motion since 2017, was largely financed by investments from health providers or health care advocates. This includes the central California Alliance for Health, Dominican Hospital, Sutter Health, Kaiser Permanente, Community Foundation Santa Cruz County, Monterey Peninsula Foundation and other private donors. The State Department of the Treasury donated [two separate \\$1.5 million loans in February of this year](#) to the health entities that went toward the project. Additionally, the project would not have happened had former supervisor John Leopold not suggested that both housing and health care could coexist, even thrive, at the site, according to Storm. With his leadership, the Board of Supervisors [approved the mixed-use development](#) in November 2019.

“The county had to disburse their redevelopment agency land after the state-level redevelopment agency disbanded,” Storm explained. “The county needed to sell the land through the new redevelopment successor agency ... Leopold held a community meeting (where it was obvious) people were interested in housing, as that was a really big need, but also interested in commercial.”

At the time, Santa Cruz Community Health and Dientes were interested in expanding their health center on Portola Drive but complications around the lease led to a failure to do so where they already existed. Leopold’s connection inspired Conner to reach out to Lindenthal.

“Lo and behold, the project was born,” Storm said.

To learn more, visit 1500capitolroad.org.