

Frequently Asked Questions

Town Place Suites Conversion to Cedar Community Apartments through the Homekey Program

Towne Place Suites is a 125-unit, existing hotel located at 39802 Cedar Blvd., in Newark. It currently is an extended-stay hotel, constructed in 2000, with studio, 1-bedroom and 2-bedroom units. The hotel units are designed for longer-term, temporary occupancies and are set up as apartments with full kitchens and fully furnished living spaces. The site is close to grocery stores, transit, parks, and schools.

Allied Housing is partnering with the City of Newark to apply for California Housing and Community Development Homekey funding, along with local funding commitments from the City of Newark, the County of Alameda, the Housing Authority of the County of Alameda, the Veteran's Administration, and the Alameda County Health Care Services Agency. The Homekey program allows for converting the property to a residential apartment building with streamlined legislative and environmental approvals. After the property is purchased and renovated, it would be known as Cedar Community Apartments and will contain 124 apartment units, plus one unit for an on-site resident manager. It also will have property management and services offices, meeting rooms, a community room, exterior amenities and open spaces for the residents.

Funding for Cedar Community Apartments through the Homekey program is an opportunity for Newark to quickly create 124 homes that are affordable, for households experiencing homelessness, including veteran households, and households that are at risk of becoming homeless. It is also an opportunity to secure unprecedented state and county funding that will make a significantly positive impact on fulfilling the affordable housing needs of Newark and provide homes to vulnerable households in our community.

Frequently Asked Questions

l've heard that this will be a homeless shelter. Is that correct?

This will not be a homeless shelter. This will be an apartment building offering permanent, supportive housing where everyone will have a lease and will be paying rent. Residents will be able to stay as long as they continue to pay rent and follow the rules of the lease.

Why was this site chosen?

This site is ideally located within walking and biking distance to amenities like transit, grocery stores, parks, and retail uses. This site is particularly suited to conversion to an apartment building because it was essentially built as an apartment building with studios, one bedroom,

and two bedroom units that will allow families to live here (instead of a typical hotel that would be largely converted to single room occupancy or studio units).

Will the existing hotel be demolished, and a new building constructed in its place?

No. The building will remain essentially as-is, other than some interior renovations to enhance accessibility and to provide for more effective use of lobby space for property management and social service offices.

Where are the funds coming from to pay for acquisition, conversion, and services?

This project has City of Newark funding from its Affordable Housing Fund and some Newark-controlled federal funding from the American Rescue Plan Act. The Affordable Housing funds are restricted solely for the production of affordable units within the City of Newark. These funds are provided by developers as a condition for development within the city.

Funding would also be provided from the County of Alameda, the Alameda County Health Care Services Agency for social services, the Housing Authority of the County of Alameda, and Veteran's Administration for operating support. The project was awarded Homekey grant funding from the State of California.

What happens when this money runs out? Where will the residents go?

As is typical for a project like this, there is sufficient committed funding for at least 15 years of operations, and it is expected that sufficient funding will be available in the future as the current funding comes up for renewal. The property will be restricted as affordable housing for 55 years, so there is no plan for the residents to go anywhere before that.

Will there be enough money to provide supportive services over the long-term?

Yes. This property will pay for some of the social services out of the project operating budget in the same way it pays for property management and maintenance of the building. The remainder of the social services will be paid for by a direct contract between the Alameda County Health Care Services Agency (HCSA) and Abode Services which has had such contracts with HCSA for more than 20 years.

Why should my tax dollars be spent on supporting the homeless? Doesn't that provide incentive to remain homeless?

Homelessness is a community problem that is the result of unjust housing policies that have been in place for decades, resulting in insufficient housing being built to accommodate the need. It is actually much more cost effective to provide a stable and dignified home for someone experiencing homelessness than treating it as a crime. Those living in the apartments will no longer be considered homeless as they will all have a home.

How many apartment homes are there?

There will be 124 apartments, each with a kitchen and a private bathroom, plus a community room, meeting rooms, property management and services offices, and exterior amenities for residents. One apartment is reserved for an on-site resident manager.

Will this project have a parking impact in the neighborhood?

There would be approximately 80 parking spots for the residents and staff which is typical for similar projects based on parking studies conducted at existing projects in the local community. As such, parking issues are not expected. The parking area would be gated to prevent unauthorized use of on-site parking.

What about on-site staffing and security?

During extended business hours, generally 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Friday, there will be up to five supportive services staff on-site, as well as up to four on-site property management staff to support the tenants of the Cedar Community Apartments. In addition, the project will contract with a 24/7 security guard service to monitor the property and specifically the entrances to the buildings to ensure that residents and guests are behaving in a manner that is conducive to community living and in accordance with the lease the residents have signed. Property managers and supportive service staff will participate in neighborhood meetings and can provide answers to any other questions of members of the greater community.

What happens if a tenant doesn't follow the rules and is evicted?

Property management and services will work with tenants to the maximum extent possible to prevent eviction, but sometimes a person or household insists on living in a way that is not conducive to other residents peacefully enjoying their home. Just like in any other apartment building, eviction is an option to remove tenants from apartment units. Even in those cases, the service team would attempt to help that household find housing somewhere else.

What supportive services will be provided?

Abode Services provides services to promote positive outcomes for tenants, tenant communities, and their surrounding neighborhoods. Abode Services recognizes that community building is an essential part of the services offered to tenants and will strengthen both the residence and neighborhood. Community building in and around supportive housing settings is a recommended practice by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development because empowering tenants to impact their living environments also empowers them to take action in other areas of their lives, such as work, family, and health. Furthermore, the neighborhood benefits by becoming a more inclusive, friendlier environment with increased mutual support, sharing, and mechanisms for promoting common interests and addressing problems.

While the services offered on site will be tailored to the needs of the specific tenants that live there, the following is a list of typical services that are offered to all residents:

- Employment assistance and referrals to job training
- Benefits enrollment assistance, counseling and advocacy
- Housing retention and housing stability support
- Computer training
- Peer-to-Peer support
- Individualized service plan development

- Life skills training like “cooking on a budget” classes
- Community activities
- Referrals to community resources like food pantry, transit passes, medical care
- Financial literacy training
- Educational services
- Recreational activities and community building events
- Health education & wellness activities

Two philosophies drive Abode Services’ approach to services:

Housing First: The model is designed to quickly and successfully connect individuals and families experiencing homelessness to permanent housing. Supportive services are offered to maximize housing stability and prevent returns to homelessness. Abode was an early adopter of the Housing First philosophy and has fully integrated Housing First principles into its programs and into the structure of its organization.

Self Determination: Abode’s service plan places the resident at the center of the care planning process. The core philosophy is - people experiencing homelessness are capable of defining their own goals.

What experience does Abode Services have to manage the day-to-day operations for this project? Has Abode Service done this before?

Abode Services is the Bay Area’s largest housing and service provider to people experiencing homelessness and has more than 30 years of experience doing so. Abode Services is recognized as an expert in homelessness services regionally, statewide, and even nationally. On any given night, Abode Services is providing services to more than 7,000 formally homeless people who have been placed into their own homes. Abode Services uses two primary metrics to determine success: housing placement of unhoused people and their retention of that housing. Abode maintains a 96 percent housing retention success rate.

How will residents be selected?

About half of residents of Cedar Community Apartments who have experienced homelessness will be referred through Alameda County’s Coordinated Entry system or through the Veteran’s Administration. Residents for the remaining apartments will be filled through a referral system managed by Abode Services with city oversight. The City’s intent is to promote a “live/work” preference (subject to compliance with fair housing regulations) to provide priority for community members who either live or work in Newark. The details of the city referral process will be finalized once the Homekey funding is secured. All residents will have their own apartment, sign a lease, be subject to apartment community rules, and be required to pay rent.

When will people move in?

The project depends on a successful Homekey grant award. On August 24, 2022, the governor announced new Homekey grant awards. The Cedar Community Apartments project was awarded a \$38.2 million grant. If City Council approves the various grant and operational agreements, site acquisition and hotel conversion activities would begin in October 2022.

New residents could move in before the end of 2022.

Will tenants have to pay rent?

Yes, all residents will pay rent based on their income, and the balance of their rent will be subsidized from various sources. The maximum income that a household can make will depend on the household size and will range from \$28,800 to \$44,400 based on the 2021 area median income (AMI) for Alameda County. That is generally someone working full time and earning roughly \$14 to \$20 per hour, which is typical for many retail, restaurant, or service industry jobs in Newark. Even if a resident has a permanent disability and they only get disability insurance from SSI or SSDI, they will still be required to pay about 30 percent of their income for rent.

How long can a resident stay?

Just like in any other apartment building, tenants can stay as long as they continue to be income eligible, pay their rent, and follow the rules of the lease. Tenants will start with a year-long lease that they will have the option to renew.

How are new residents screened?

Property managers and/or the Housing Authority will do background checks and screen for program eligibility. The Housing Authority screens to exclude sex offenders, felony meth producers, and arsonists. Property managers screen for felonies. The Housing Authority and property management teams will use the required reasonable accommodation process to address disability related infractions.

How do I ask further questions about this project or be put on an interest list to be able to apply to live here when it is opened?

Please contact Abode Services with this email. newarkhotel@abodeservices.org

<https://www.abodeservices.org/cedar-community>