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**ARTISTS BREAK GROUND ON CITY'S FIRST
SPECIALLY DESIGNED LIVE/WORK COMMUNITY**
*Surreal Estates features affordable housing built
with the help of artists who will buy the homes*

North Sacramento, Calif. Ten years after a group of artists established Surreal Estates Ink, their dream to develop a live/work community for artists in the North Sacramento area has come true. The artists joined Vice Mayor Sandy Sheedy, non-profit housing developer Mercy Housing California, and the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency (SHRA) in a groundbreaking ceremony on the vacant 1.3 acre lot at Calvados Avenue and Oakmont Streets in the Dixieanne area. North Sacramento is home to small art galleries and specialty furniture shops making it the perfect location for creative professionals.



“The artist community is not new in North Sacramento,” said Kim Scott, one of the artists who expects to help build her own home in Surreal Estates. “This neighborhood has a tradition of artist live/work spaces, artist studios and working artists and galleries at least since the mid-70’s.”

The City of Sacramento adopted an Artist Live/Work ordinance in 1990 which encourages the development of affordable housing for local artists. In addition to serving as housing, such developments would also be utilized as the artists’ work space. Surreal Estates is located in District 2 represented by Vice Mayor Sandy Sheedy who says this project is all about working together.

“Envision this empty lot with 11 homes on it with live/work space,” said Vice Mayor Sheedy, “and artists in there working and the kids walking by to see what’s happening and the artists working with the kids. Everybody makes the community come together and it adds warmth to the community.”

The development is the first live/work single family detached affordable housing community specifically for artists. Its design reflects a strong vision by the artists that the housing be environmentally friendly. The homes will utilize structural insulated panels that will help exceed standards for energy efficiency. “The materials that we’ll be using in this development make it more complicated and challenging,” said Lisa Bates, City Community Development Director, “but at the end of the day, will hopefully make it something that we can look back to as a model for additional developments in the future.”

Mercy Housing California is the developer for Surreal Estates. Director of Housing Development Chris Glaudel says the project epitomizes what non-profit housing development is all about. "This is going to be one of the capstone events to bring in not only the artistic component but the ownership component in taking what is currently a vacant field and transforming it into a lively arts community."

Surreal Estates is also unique in that both financially struggling and established artists will be eligible to buy an affordable single family home by participating in its construction through a "Self-Help Program." Each artist, working with family members or friends, will be required to work with a specific number of hours each week until the homes are completed. The homes will have three bedrooms, a kitchen with an open living and dining area, and an 800 square foot detached studio to be used as their artistic work space.

The \$2.4 million project is funded in part by SHRA which provided \$710,000 in tax increment from the North Sacramento Redevelopment Area. Other funding sources include a \$50,000 grant from SMUD and \$180,000 in CalHOME funds from the State Housing and Community Development Department. Farmers' and Merchants provided a construction loan and US Bank provided a permanent loan.

SHRA officials say Surreal Estates addresses a need to increase homeownership in the Dixie area as a way to stabilize the community. Infill projects like this one also help to reverse the cycle of numerous poorly maintained vacant lots that also attract illegal dumping and create blight in the neighborhood. While there is a significant amount of rental housing in the neighborhood, Surreal Estates housing will be sold to very low, low, and moderate income artist homebuyers. The development of live/work space within an area using the arts as a way to attract people and new investments to the neighborhood enhances the creation of a viable art community. Surreal Estates furthers the revitalization of efforts by dovetailing with other arts related economic development activities on and around Del Paso Boulevard. Its location just off the Boulevard is near other sites being redeveloped by arts-based businesses and thus will help form a larger neighborhood of sustainable arts-related activity. Construction is expected to begin in January and the anticipated completion date is late fall 2005.

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SHRA is a Joint Powers Authority created by the City and County of Sacramento to represent both jurisdictions for affordable housing and community redevelopment needs. SHRA oversees residential and commercial revitalization activities in 13 redevelopment areas throughout the City and County. The Agency is the leading public developer of affordable housing. SHRA has a FY 2004 budget of \$196 million and approximately 328 employees. The Agency owns 3,200 units of public housing and is one of the largest landlords in Sacramento. SHRA also administers about 11,000 rental assisted vouchers per month.