

Twin Rivers receives massive federal grant for redevelopment

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Ben van der Meer | Sacramento Business Journal

Lourdes Castro Ramirez, principal deputy assistant secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, announced Monday \$30 million for redeveloping public housing in Twin Rivers.

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Big changes, including hundreds of new housing units, are coming to a public housing project near the railyard in Sacramento.

City and Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency officials announced Monday they've received \$30 million in federal grants to [begin a transformation](#) of the Twin Rivers housing project.

Beginning with those dollars as seed money, SHRA plans to begin work within 18 months

to tear down existing housing in Twin Rivers. Over the long term, the existing 218 housing units will be replaced with the same number of new public housing units as well as 625 new market-rate and workforce housing units on-site.

"Today is really about joy," said SHRA executive director [La Shelle Dozier](#) at the announcement at Twin Rivers, west of 12th St. and south of Richards Boulevard. "We have had a lot of successes in the last few years, but this really is the capstone."

[Lourdes Castro Ramirez](#), a principal deputy assistant secretary with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, said it was obvious during the award process that the Twin Rivers effort had backing and support from several quarters.

"I have seen where you're at, and I've seen the power of investment by the federal government," said Castro Ramirez, who worked in public housing for San Antonio before joining HUD. "I also want to remind you the work starts now."

After the announcement that featured remarks by Mayor [Kevin Johnson](#), Sacramento County Supervisor [Phil Serna](#) and others, Dozier said attention now turns to leveraging the \$30 million into more money. The complete rebuilding of Twin Rivers has an estimated cost of \$100 million, and Dozier said other federal funds, state cap-and-trade dollars and other sources will be targeted.

But the grant requires work to start in 18 months, Dozier said. The entire project will be in a series of phases over five to seven years, with existing residents temporarily relocated as single-story units are destroyed and new, multistory buildings replace them.

Of the \$30 million, \$21 million is for actual construction costs, Dozier said. The rest is for a connected campaign to improve education, health and employment outcomes for existing Twin Rivers residents. Dating to the 1940s, Twin Rivers is the county's oldest public housing project, Serna said in his remarks.

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Grant funding for site redevelopment also will be tied to establishing a new light-rail station along 12th Street to the east, and acquiring some land for more housing, Dozier said. A small amount of commercial development is possible around the station, she said, but the bulk of the redevelopment is for housing.

Though the project is likely to mean big changes for existing residents, one said they'll be welcome. [DeCoe Gilmore](#), a longtime Twin Rivers resident, said Twin Rivers' current population supports the project because local and federal officials asked them what they wanted from redevelopment and encouraged them to think big.

That meant everything from building units with the electrical capacity to handle today's more plugged-in world, she said, to looking at ways to make it easier for children in Twin Rivers to walk to a nearby school or Boys and Girls Clubs. Surrounded by busy streets and highways as well as the county's probation department and Loaves & Fishes, Twin Rivers residents often have felt isolated, she said.

"Once you open it up to other people, it gives you another perspective of what's going on outside of this island," she said. "You might be interested in something and never have the opportunity to be around someone who does that."