

Builder seeks more time to meet affordability rules

By Brian Seals
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The company building homes and apartments at the Williams Ranch project in northeast Salinas is seeking extra time to comply with affordable-housing requirements while meeting hot demand for new full-price homes. The request by Flick Inc. will be aired Tuesday in a public hearing at a joint meeting of the Salinas City Council and Planning Commission. When council and Planning Commission. When council members approved the 466-acre Williams Ranch development in 1993, it insisted that the developer complete 36 affordable-housing units for every 300 market-rate units. Williams and Boronda roads in eastern Salinas bound the development. Flick, Inc. has so far completed 1,199 market-rate units and 100 affordable-housing units on the land, bordered by Williams and Boronda roads. Under the current formula, the company would have to build 44 more affordable units in order to keep building market-rate units as long as affordable units are under construction, though not ready for occupants.

"It's just a temporary delay," said Tara Hullinger, assistant planner with the city. "They still have to comply with all the requirements." Another provision of the Flick proposal could benefit low-income

residents. After applying for final inspection of the 1,200th market-rate housing units, the company would pay \$1,000 a day until those 44 affordable units are completed and ready for occupancy. That money would be used by the city for affordable housing initiatives. "It's to bridge the gap in the temporary delay," Hullinger said. The completion of the Salinas Senior Apartments project now under construction would fill the 44 affordable unit quota. The apartment complex will have 132 units, 70 of which are counted as affordable.

Robert Lok of Flick, Inc. said construction of Salinas Senior Apartments began later than planned. Construction started in January rather than last July because of delays in obtaining financing for that project, Lok said. He said he is unsure when the company will be ready for its 1,200th market-rate inspection.

John Prader of Community Housing Improvement Systems and Planning (CHISPA), an organization that has built affordable units in Williams Ranch, said a combination of strong demand for new homes and some financing delays contributed to Flick's request. "The sales have been far in excess of expectations," Prader said. He lauded Flick, Inc. for donating a piece of land valued at \$1 million to CHISPA so it can build 68 affordable units. Construction on those is set to begin this fall. CHISPA built the first 100 affordable units in Williams Ranch in 1994. Affordable housing is based on the median Salinas income of \$50,300 per year. It is aimed at households earning 80 percent or less of the median income, with the rent or payment accounting for no more than 30 percent of that household income.

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