Two Alternative Education Programs Partner with Habitat for Humanity Santa Cruz County

Natural Bridges High School and Ponderosa High School, which both have Green Careers Training Programs, have begun a partnership with Habitat for Humanity to perform community service helping build Habitat homes. Students from the ROP Construction Technology courses at both schools joined forces to work at the Blake Lane site in September and will continue to work on these homes through the spring. Natural Bridges and Ponderosa High Schools serve students in grades 10-12 who want career training while completing coursework toward a high school diploma. The program offers Regional Occupational Program courses in Construction Technology, CAD, Bike Repair, Sustainable Agriculture, Green Energy and Horticulture. Students in the Construction Tech program study all aspects of residential construction. Community service is an important program component and permits students to gain important “soft skills” to make them successful on the job.

Community service is a requirement for Natural Bridges and Ponderosa students, who are gaining valuable work site training while applying the skills they have learned in their Construction Technology courses to real life situations and projects. The students at both school programs hope to continue their partnership with Habitat after the Blake Lane site is completed and move to the next Habitat site on Harbor Drive in the Fall.

Naming Los Esteros Court

When Habitat for Humanity proposed to subdivide the acre parcel, donated by the County of Santa Cruz, into seven lots, the design included a new Cul-de-Sac street. This new street needed a name. Out of respect for the Live Oak neighborhood, and the idea of maintaining and enhancing neighborhood identity, we were looking for an historic name that would connect to Live Oak’s past. The area was originally occupied by the Awawas Indians, a subgroup of the Ohlone. During the Rancho period the land was divided into two ranchos owned by two brothers, Francisco and Alejandro Rodriguez. The ranchos were known collectively as the Rodeo Ranchos and were used for running cattle for the Villa Branciforte settlement. Rancho Arroyo del Rodeo was about 1,500 acres and ran from the Live Oak area to Soquel and included rodeo grounds that ran along Rodeo Creek. Rancho Los Esteros (the estuaries in English) also around 1,500 acres, included the lagoon areas–Twin Lakes and what is now the small craft harbor. Our site was most likely part of Rancho Los Esteros. The current street that our site is located on is Rodriguez Street, one of the few names left in the area that related to the Ranchos from that period. Construction for this project will begin in 2014.

Habitat Embraces ADU’s

Particularly in Santa Cruz the cost of land is one of the largest stumbling blocks to building affordable housing. As one response to the problem the City of Santa Cruz has embraced the idea of allowing small second units to be built in the back yards of existing single family homes. Accessory Dwelling Units, or ADUs, allow for a slight increase in density without heavily impacting the look and feel of our existing neighborhoods. Santa Cruz County’s Habitat has also embraced this idea and we now have two ADUs that will be coming up for sale soon. One of the units was built by Habitat in 2006 as a part of a four unit project on Rooney Street. It has recently been repurchased by Habitat and will be available for sale soon. The second ADU will be built on the Harbor Drive site behind the main house. Construction is scheduled to begin in early 2014. Both homes will be about 500 square feet in size and will be available for single or two person households.

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