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Peninsula's first Jewish senior center in pipeline Campus expected to take two years to build

By Kristina Peterson / Daily News Staff Writer

The first Jewish-sponsored senior living center on the Peninsula began lining up future residents in Palo Alto earlier this year.

Though construction of the "899 Charleston" center, actually located at 901 San Antonio Road, will not begin until this summer, the center began taking reservations for its 193 apartments Jan 2.

The 8.6-acre Taube-Koret Campus for Jewish Life, which will include both 899 Charleston and a new Oshman Family Jewish Community Center, will cost \$635 million and likely take two years to build, spokeswoman Stephanie Rees said. The collaborative project is being funded and developed by the Jewish Home of San Francisco, Palo Alto's Jewish Community Center, the Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco, local counties and by individual donations.

"To build a Jewish community center on the same campus (as the senior center) is unique to the industry. It's never been done before anywhere," Rees said.

Rees said combining older adult apartments with a community center equipped with a performing arts space, child care, classes and a fitness center will allow the generations to mingle.

"The campus will be the hub of Jewish life in the Palo Alto area," Rees said. But she noted that 899 Charleston is not limited to Jewish residents.

"We want to get a mix," she said.

"I hope that the preschoolers and young families and elders of our community could interact quite often in a campus like this," said Rabbi Josh Zweiback of Congregation Beth Am.

"It's important that we try to provide a community where our elders continue to lead active lives and receive the care that they need," Zweiback said.

The senior living center includes 182 apartments designed for "independent living" and 11 "memory support" units, appropriate for those with Alzheimer's or dementia, Rees said.

Clustered in eight buildings around courtyards, the apartments come with housekeeping services, valet parking, a selection of restaurants and a fitness center. When residents require more health care, assisted living can be arranged, as well as priority access to nursing care at the Jewish Home of San Francisco, Rees said.

Daniel Ruth, president and CEO of the Jewish Home, said that Palo Alto was chosen to host the campus at the urging of board members who had been lobbying for senior living in the city for "almost 20 years."

"This project is a dream realized by community leadership who felt very strongly about having Jewish senior living services available to a rapidly expanding population in the south Peninsula," Ruth said.

Construction will begin this summer if the center can pre-sell 70 percent of its units, in order to get bank financing, Rees said.

"This is a new industry, a new concept in senior living," she said.