

HOMELESSNESS

New ‘Attainable’ — Not Necessarily Affordable — Housing Coming to Downtown Phoenix

KATYA SCHWENK APRIL 27, 2023 2:23PM



Greenlight Communities broke ground on a new apartment complex in downtown Phoenix. Katya Schwenk

Developers broke ground on a new apartment complex near downtown Phoenix on Tuesday, touting the project as a much-needed source of "attainable" — if not affordable — housing in an increasingly squeezed housing market.

The project, spearheaded by developer Greenlight Communities, is a 208-unit apartment complex on 16th Street and Polk Street in downtown Phoenix. It is set to open in April 2024.

Greenlight promised that the rents at the Polk Street complex — called "Streamliner" — will be “attainable,” unlike those in the flood of high-rise apartment complexes cropping up around downtown Phoenix. Rent will range from \$950 for a studio to \$1,500 for a two-bedroom, which is below average for the area.

Still, there's no guarantee that projected rental rates will always remain low.



There will be 208 units in the new complex. Katya Schwenk

'A Step in the Right Direction'

Newly elected Phoenix City Councilmember Kesha Hodge Washington appeared at the groundbreaking to support the development. Hodge Washington represents District 8, which includes the new development. She replaced former City Councilmember Carlos Garcia, who was often a dissenting liberal voice, on April 17 and became the first Black woman elected to the council.

In her remarks at the groundbreaking, Hodge Washington emphasized her focus on affordable housing, calling the new project a step in the right direction.

"I believe that we have neighborhoods where people can live. And you guys are bringing the live component," Hodge Washington said, nodding to the developers.

Hodge Washington said she believed that Phoenix's rising rents were a supply issue and that encouraging further development would help meet new demand and bring housing costs down. She also said that she hoped the Greenlight project would spur new development in east Phoenix, where empty lots and rundown warehouses are common.

Robbyles, a partner at Greenlight, told Phoenix New Times that the developer had selected the location for the new apartment complex for one key reason: "all the jobs around here." Robbyles noted that the project is close to Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport, hospitals, and downtown businesses.

Greenlight has focused on creating attainable housing—housing accessible to middle class workers—for the past six years, Robbyles said. However, the developer does not partner with local government on projects, nor does it provide truly low income housing. The project will require renters to have income of 1.5 times the rent. The average monthly rent at the project will be \$1,000, according to the developer, meaning occupants would need to make at least \$8,000 a year.

Robbyles said that Greenlight's developments provide housing for the "missing middle," including nurses, teachers, airport workers, and other essential workers. However, Robbyles said that turnover among renters at the developer's other projects is between 50 percent and 60 percent annually. Robbyles speculated that a high turnover rate is expected given the demographic that the housing serves.

The Streamliner complex will include 90 studios, 54 one-bedroom units, and 64 two-bedroom units, as well as a pool and fitness center.



Patricia Watts, a cofounder and partner at Greenlight, spoke on Tuesday. Katya Schwenk