

The Bandera PROPHECY

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Silver Sage Cottages project pivots, vision expands

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The Bandera Prophet

After a brief regrouping, the Silver Sage Cottages project has picked up momentum. Contrary to innuendo, the serendipitous stall allowed planners to pivot toward a bigger and better community layout.

The project began four years ago, when Silver Sage Executive Director Art Crawford initiated a land purchase on Buck Creek Drive to build affordable housing for Bandera County's senior citizens, ages 60 years and older.

"We started drawing plans, making designs, raising money, doing studies..." Crawford said yesterday during the first of three planned public meetings.

Last year, after planning firm Simplecity.Design rewrote Bandera's city codes as part of its Master Plan, the work Crawford and his team completed was nulled.

"All the due diligence we had done did not apply," Crawford said, clarifying the City of Bandera did not stop the project. "My brain started working. We realized this building is too small. There's no room here." Crawford said the Silver Sage kitchen, built in 2003, was not equipped to cook 715 meals a day as it does now. There is nowhere to build onto the dining room, which is often filled to capacity at lunchtime. With no room for expansion, the facility is landlocked.

"We need a bigger pantry. We need new office space," Crawford said. Last month, the Silver Sage secured the purchase of 30 acres on FM 3240, 7/10ths of a mile outside of town, which will be the new site for

the Cottages. Throughout January, an advisory committee and development team were formed, and meetings were held with the Bandera County River Authority and Groundwater District (BCRAGD), the City of Bandera, TCEQ (the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality), TxDOT (the Texas Department of Transportation) and the Bandera County engineer.

Following a year of master planning, development and infrastructure, groundbreaking is set to take place in January 2024, with a Grand Opening in January 2025 - though Crawford said he hopes to have residents moved in by Thanksgiving of 2024.

Discussions to secure water are underway, though it is not yet decided whether a well will be drilled, or the facility will purchase water from the city.

Sixty total cottages will be built, including 30 one-bedroom 600-square-foot homes, 10 one-bedroom 800-square-foot homes, 10 one-bedroom 600-square-foot homes reserved for veterans, and 10 two-bedroom 1,100-square-foot homes.

Included amenities will be water, sewer, garbage and WiFi; appliances will include washer/dryer units, full-size stove, oven and refrigerator. All cottages will be ADA compliant with walk-in showers, level sidewalks and no steps. Pets will be allowed, within certain criteria. Other features will include green spaces for parks and walking, picnic areas, outdoor grills, a community garden, and a small playground for visiting grandchildren.

All of the cottages will be for rent, at the market rate of \$1.10 per square foot. Rental assistance based on income will be available, and applicants may apply through the Silver Sage.

Currently, more than 130 people are on the waiting list. Formal applications will be accepted in September 2024.

“I’m glad we stopped the process,” Crawford said. “It just makes more sense to be able to build more, bigger and better, and serve the community in a more productive way.”

The next scheduled public meetings are set for March 2 and March 9, at 4 p.m., in the Silver Sage dining room.