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## **Old apartments' new owner has some big plans**

### **Bay Vista getting \$9 million upgrade**

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LINCOLN PARK – A stream of repair requests arrives daily in the management office at Bay Vista Methodist Heights Apartments, where tenants often report clogged garbage disposals, leaky sinks and broken toilets.

The 268-unit complex, off Logan Avenue and 49th Street in Lincoln Park, is one of the largest exclusively low-income rental properties in the city, and it's nearly 40 years old.

So it was welcome news when a private company acquired the complex last month and committed to spending \$9 million to upgrade every unit and add services such as nutrition education and youth tutoring without raising the rent.

Until now, “we've just been able to put up Band-Aids on the property,” apartment manager Gwen Dolyn Hayes said.

Amerland Group, a San Diego company that owns nearly 3,000 units of affordable housing in California and elsewhere, agreed to keep rents restricted for an additional 55 years because it obtained a favorable financing package with government help.

The company partnered with the San Diego Housing Commission to raise money to buy and rehabilitate the complex. The commission helped Amerland borrow money at a low interest rate through tax-exempt bonds. In addition, the company obtained \$12 million in federal tax credits that it could sell to investors.

Amerland bought Bay Vista for \$21.4 million from a nonprofit affiliate of St. Paul United Methodist Church. The nonprofit, led by the Rev. Grandison M. Phelps Jr., now deceased, built the apartments in 1969 with a loan from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Renovation plans call for new appliances, cabinets, countertops, sinks, faucets and windows in every unit. Roof repairs, exterior painting, retrofits of laundry and community rooms, and new landscaping are planned.

The makeover will include a name change for the complex. Tenants have been asked to make suggestions.

Brenda Dickey, who has lived at Bay Vista since 1999, is eager to see the remodeling start. “It sounds really good. I can't wait,” she said.

While her two-bedroom apartment is in good condition, the refrigerator, stove top, cabinets and other items are outdated, Dickey said.

Renovations have already begun on the 16.5-acre property. The contractor is working on the roofing. Workers recently removed chain-link fences that surround lawns and many of the 32 buildings in the sprawling complex.

Gloria Bailon of Logan Property Management, which manages Bay Vista for Amerland, said residents shouldn't have to feel like they live in a prison.

"We told them this is their home. It should be safe," she said.

As part of the upgrades, new security gates and more lighting in common areas will be added.

Crime has long been a concern in the Lincoln Park neighborhood where the complex is. In 2006, a 17-year-old girl from Murrieta was shot dead by a teenage gang member while sitting in a car in Bay Vista's parking lot. After that incident, video cameras were installed and a new security company hired. Police worked with local residents and businesses to improve safety.

Capt. Tony McElroy of the Police Department's Southeastern Division said crime is down in the area.

Councilman Tony Young, whose district includes Lincoln Park, said he's hopeful that the change of ownership will improve the living conditions of tenants, some of whom have called Bay Vista home for many years.

"I am really concerned the people who are there are healthy and safe," Young said.

The complex, which has a day-care program and computer center, takes only those tenants who qualify for the federal Section 8 housing subsidy. Rent is restricted to 30 percent of a tenant's income.

Young worked with Amerland to ensure that it develops social services for residents. Amerland has committed to spending about \$100,000 a year on programs, such as nutrition and health education, tutoring, gang prevention and intervention services.

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