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Rudy Nos adds names of contributing artists to a mural painted by Burbank seniors and high school students that will decorate the perimeter of the Senior Artists Colony construction site, and later hang inside the completed building. *Evan Yee/Staff Photographer*

Artists Colony gets under way

By Naush Boghossian
Staff Writer

BURBANK — City officials broke ground Wednesday on the \$22 million Senior Artists Colony — a housing and studio project intended to lure entertainment-industry retirees or creatively inclined seniors.

The 141-unit development that is slated to open next summer will include a 40-seat theater and projection room; video- and film-editing bays; a studio for fine-arts activities such as painting, sculpture and poetry; and live-performance spaces along with a computer lab, game room and library.

"In its simplest form, they're senior citizen apartments, but it's not only that," said John Huskey, president of Meta Housing Corp., the developer of the facility. "It isn't enough to build quality housing. It's what you do in addition to the housing that gives people a place to stay and a place to thrive."

Seniors who live at the colony — the minimum age is 55 — will have the opportunity to take part in a resident theater group and film-production company.

"This is much more important than we all realize at this moment. A person more famous than I said, 'If you take away art, people suffer,' but the San Fernando corridor will not suffer anymore," said senior artist David Connell. "It's probably a wonderful feeling to roll out of bed and walk a couple of steps to a theater space."



An artist's rendering shows the outside of the completed Senior Artists Colony, which will include 141 housing units.

The location of the development in downtown Burbank will also allow future residents to have easy access to shopping, services and entertainment with the Media City Center mall, theaters and restaurants a few blocks away, officials said.

The facility will be adjacent to the Miller kindergarten facility, allowing seniors the opportunity to read aloud to children and kids to visit the seniors.

"How fortunate are we to have the freshman class on one side of the property and the senior class on the other side at the Artists Colony?" said Greg Bowman,

superintendent of the Burbank Unified School District.

At San Fernando Boulevard and Verdugo Avenue in a predominantly industrial area in Burbank, the building is the first project in the South San Fernando Redevelopment Project area. In fact, the city loaned the developers \$3.25 million to help the project get under way.

"The Artists Colony typifies the benefits of redevelopment — where old, blighted buildings will make way for a more meaningful place," said Burbank City Manager Mary Alvord. "It increases the housing

stock for seniors and is a catalyst to bring about future redevelopment projects in the South San Fernando area."

Thirty percent of the units will be set aside as affordable housing for low- and very-low-income seniors, and the remaining units will be rented at market value.

In February, the design won a Gold Award at the Best of Seniors Housing Design Awards as the nation's most outstanding "on the boards" design for service-enriched senior housing.

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