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CITY OF SAN RAFAEL APPROVES WHISTLESTOP HEALTHY AGING CAMPUS

Whistlestop Campus to Provide Medical Services, Social Engagement, Learning Resources, Transportation, and Programs Designed to Promote Healthy Aging for All Marin Residents

Whistlestop Healthy Aging Campus Will Be the First Car-Free Community in Marin County

San Rafael, Calif. (March 24, 2020) – [Whistlestop](http://www.whistlestop.org), a San Rafael-based nonprofit that promotes the independence, well-being and quality of life for older adults and people living with disabilities, is pleased to announce the approval of the Whistlestop [Healthy Aging Campus](#) by the City of San Rafael. The San Rafael City Council unanimously voted on March 23, 2020 to approve the Whistlestop, [Eden Housing](#) and [BioMarin](#) downtown development plan that will include 66 affordable and safe housing units for older adults. The Healthy Aging Campus will also include a healthy aging center with an onsite integrated health clinic and a variety of programs and services that will be available to all older adults in Marin County.

Whistlestop, Eden Housing and BioMarin filed a joint application with the City of San Rafael Planning Division in October 2018 to develop BioMarin's 999 Third Street property (the former PG&E site) in downtown San Rafael. The San Rafael Design Review Board advanced the project in June 2019 and the San Rafael Planning Commission voted unanimously in support of the project in January 2020. The new Whistlestop Healthy Aging Campus is projected to open in 2022.

A New Model of Care

Studies show that isolation and loneliness among older adults is closely linked to health issues and early mortality. In Marin County nearly 50% of households have older adults living alone, and a focus on social connection and support is lacking from the traditional model of care for many older adults. Marin is also the fastest aging county in the Bay Area. It is estimated that by 2030, one in three people in Marin will be over the age of 60. When Medicare was enacted in 1965, the average life expectancy was 70, but now the fastest growing segment of the population is over 85 years of age. A new model for providing vital services is required to meet the needs of this new and growing demographic.

In response to this need, Whistlestop's new Healthy Aging Campus will combine traditional medical services with coordinated care, social engagement, learning opportunities, nutrition services, and a myriad of activities and programs designed to promote healthy aging. "We felt it was time for a community-based solution to this growing community crisis," said Whistlestop CEO Joe O'Hehir. "We did our research, consulted experts, and carefully crafted what we believe will be a game-changer for San Rafael and for all of Marin. We are thrilled and grateful that the City of San Rafael and Marin residents support our vision for the creation of this landmark project."



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Affordable Homes

The recent report “Older Adult Housing in Marin: Planning for 2030,” estimates that 7,000 older adults in Marin are in need of affordable homes, and according to Census data, over 16,000 people in Marin over the age of 60 don’t have the income to meet their basic needs.

In March 2013, Whistlestop selected Eden Housing as its partner for the housing portion of the Healthy Aging Campus project after an extensive vetting process. Whistlestop’s new Healthy Aging Campus will be the first development in Marin County that features 100% affordable units with 66 one-bedroom and studio units for older residents (age 62 and up), who earn less than 60% of the area median income, at affordable rents ranging from \$770 to \$1,650 per month. Eden Housing plans to fund the estimated \$38 million construction of the apartments through loans, and local, state and federal grants.

“Marin’s older adults deserve the dignity of being able to remain in Marin and have access to housing, healthcare and other services that provide them with a high quality of life,” said Linda Mandolini, president of Eden Housing. “We are thrilled to be partnering with Whistlestop on this innovative solution that combines high-quality housing with high-quality services. The project will be a model for others to replicate.”

Community-Backed

Without traditional government funding, Whistlestop looked to the community for financial backing. A group of visionary Marin philanthropists came together under a common cause, stepping up to fund this innovative landmark. Thanks to their forward-thinking generosity, Whistlestop’s \$10 million capital campaign leadership phase is complete. Additional funding will be sourced through a community campaign.

Design and Sustainable Features

Designed by award-winning architecture and urban design firm [Van Meter Williams Pollack LLP](#), the new Whistlestop Healthy Aging Campus will feature 66 one-bedroom and studio units, plus one additional for a manager, for a total of 67 units. Each residential unit will include kitchen, bathroom, living, dining, and sleeping spaces. The campus will also feature community rooms, a computer center, resource center, library, classes, and landscaped courtyards.



Courtyard View of Whistlestop’s Healthy Aging Campus in San Rafael, as depicted in a design rendering. The new project is expected to be completed in 2022.

The Healthy Aging Campus will encompass a sustainable design that features solar panels, EnergyStar appliances that reduce electricity and water consumption, low flow sink and shower fixtures to conserve water, and landscaping using native and drought tolerant plants that will save water. Additionally, the campus will be the first car-free community in Marin, promoting civic responsibility, healthy air quality, and reduction of carbon emissions. Transportation for Whistlestop members and residents will be provided by [Whistlestop Transportation Services](#).

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For more information about the Whistlestop Healthy Aging Campus and the donors who support the project, visit www.healthyagingcampus.org.

MEDIA PLEASE NOTE: To request an interview with Joe O’Hehir, please contact Gus Nodal at (415) 609-3438 or gus.nodal@gmail.com.

ABOUT WHISTLESTOP

Founded in 1954 as Marin Senior Coordinating Council, Whistlestop promotes the independence, well-being and quality of life for older adults and people living with disabilities in Marin County. Whistlestop’s Active Aging Center provides delicious meals, nutrition services, education and exercise classes, multicultural gatherings and helpful information and referral services. Whistlestop also provides special needs transportation services through both the Golden Gate Regional Center and Marin Access, a partnership of Whistlestop, Marin Transit and Golden Gate Transit. Whistlestop provides medical and grocery transportation through its CarePool program and operates Marin’s Meals on Wheels and Whistlestop Nourish programs, serving meals to over 315 homebound older adults and people with chronic illness each week in the Marin community. For more information about Whistlestop and its services, please visit www.whistlestop.org.

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