

# LOCAL

## Sustainable apartments destined for Prairie Center

DEVELOPERS TAUT SOLAIRE'S SUSTAINABILITY, ANNOUNCE NEW SUSTAINABLE PROJECT

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**BRIGHTON** — Brighton officials are excited about a new sustainable project that will be coming to the Prairie Center. The final plat and development agreement, along with the sustainability agreement, for Elements at Prairie Center was approved unanimously Oct. 20, by Brighton City Council.

The 90-acre apartment complex, which is being developed by the same team who completed Solaire, will be located in the southeast corner of Eagle Boulevard and South 27<sup>th</sup> Avenue, and will consist of 12 buildings with 24 apartments in each building, totaling 288 apartments. The "exoluxe" apartments will utilize geothermal heating; low flow faucets, showers and toilets; energy star appliances; and have conduit and junction boxes that could be used to connect solar panels in the future.

"We feel it epitomizes Brighton's value of sustainability and growth on that matter," said Jared Carlon, of Norris Design. "We think it's really, truly sustainable, smart growth and it's a lot like Solaire — it's kind of the extension of Solaire. We've taken it, in many aspects, to the next level."

Some of the key factors in making the project so sustainable are the reduction in the amount of water and electricity usage. Senior Planner Cathy Sexton said the project is anticipated to consume 45 percent less water than similar projects, and that it will also reduce wastewater generation by 34 percent. Carlon added this is the first EPA compliant project they know of, and they're anticipating saving 19,000 gallons of water per day by installing their low-flow appliances.

The project is also designed to meet Energy Star certification, and is estimated to perform 42 to 50 percent more efficient than code, according to Treading Lightly founder, Paul Kriescher. Kriescher said they're also anticipating heating and cooling will perform 77 percent better than code standards,

and pointed out the use of sustainable materials as another notable aspect of the project.

In addition to its sustainability focus, the developers wanted to create a "wow factor" for the site, so that people will want to live there before they've even seen it, and decided to really focus on the clubhouse and pool deck.

The pool deck will overlook the apartment complex and will hold a swimming pool larger than the one at Solaire, as well as a spa pool. In addition to the pool deck, Carlon said there will be a central green, 13 community garden plots and a completely fenced-in, off-leash dog park for residents, in addition to a new neighborhood park.

"It's very resort style," he added. "It's a place I hope a lot of residents are going to want to spend their day relaxing. It's going to be their home and something, hopefully, that they're proud of."

One way to estimate the impact the project will have is to compare it the Solaire apartment project, which has garnered a tremendous amount of success since it opened in June of 2014.

Kriescher said they estimated code

compliance performance for utility bills would cost \$98.25 a month at Solaire, which was a code-compliance project. As they've been monitoring the project, they were able to pull data showing there is a two bedroom, two bathroom apartment at Solaire whose tenants are averaging \$10.48 per month.

"A big part of that comes from this ground source heat pump, the geothermal heating system that's been incorporated into this project, is going to be in the project at the Elements," he said, noting he's never seen something like this done in multi-family homes, as it usually done in high end, custom homes.

Developer David Pretzler said the property's management company, Gray Star, leased out the Solaire complex in six months, which is "practically unheard of" — and their fastest lease out ever. He said a market study showed an additional 319 units of demand per year for the next three years.

Pretzler also noted they're hoping the Elements project will help the city

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as it pursues the Georgetown University Energy Prize, and that Solaire is a finalist for most sustainable apartment community in a competition sponsored by the Metro-Denver Apartment Association.

After sharing the good news with council, Pretzler added, "The icing on the cake really is that just yesterday we found out that Solaire is the winner of the National Association of Homebuilders 2015 "Pillars of Industry award" for the best example of green concepts. So, pretty cool, and we couldn't do it without you and your support."

According to the sustainability agreement, by incorporating these sustainable measures into the project, the city will be giving the developers a number of fee reductions and rebates, including:

- Building permit fees with a 50 percent reduction;
- Plan check fee charged at actual cost of consultant, and in-house plan review, including administrative costs;
- Use tax charged at full at time of permit issuance, with a 50 percent reimbursement when the geothermal loop is installed;
- Water plant investment fee with a 45 percent reduction, based on the overall water savings percentage;
- Water plant investment

fee, with a \$153,703 credit for excess water dedication;

- Sewer plant investment fee, with a 34 percent reduction, based on projected water savings for wastewater usage;
- Community park impact fee, with a \$101,500 fee reduction for excess open space dedication.

Councilman Ken Kreutzer was curious about how much an apartment would cost, and Mayor Pro Tem Kirby Wallin asked why the solar panels weren't included in the project at this time. Pretzler said the apartments average about \$1,300 per month, which he said is a "typical" cost throughout the metro area.

In regard to solar panels, Pretzler said, although costs associ-

ated with solar panels have come down tremendously, the timing isn't right. He said they did the same thing at Solaire, where they did pre-wiring for the solar panels, but when the cost comes down and the time is right they will install solar panels.

Councilwoman Joan Kniss said she was not in favor of a multi-family residential unit during a previous council meeting, but that this was a whole different type of multi-family development.

"When we think about planning for our future, this is the type of sustainability efforts that we really need to support and we really need to come before us: I am so excited about what this is going to become,"

she said, and also thanked them for supporting School District 27J's Capital Facility Fee Foundation, and its current bond issue.

Councilman JW Edwards, who knows several people living at Solaire, said he is very impressed with the project. He thinks this project will kick start development for THF Realty out at the Prairie Center, and is looking forward to the project being bigger and better than Solaire.

Concurring with his fellow council members, Councilman Mark Humbert was also glad to see the project at the Prairie Center will go beyond what has been done at Solaire.

"I think you hit a home run, all of you," he said to the team of developers and city staff.