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SAN PEDRO



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Musician Joe McGuire and his family relocated from the Bay Area to take advantage of lower rents and live-work spaces at the Pacific Avenue Arts Colony in downtown San Pedro. Rentals range from \$500 to \$1,300 a month.

An outlet for creativity

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San Pedro is getting a fresh shot of creativity as a new 49-unit arts colony complex fills up fast with professional artists ranging from painters and sculptors to actors and musicians.

And with that kind of in-house lineup, the summer barbecues at Pacific Avenue Arts Colony will be guaranteed to rock.

In the works for about seven years, the \$20 million Meta Housing Corp. project has pretty much filled up, although ground-floor live-work spaces are still undergoing finishing touches.

The one-, two- and three-bedroom rental units — ranging from \$500 to \$1,300 — are priced especially for artists and their families and are designed

to connect to San Pedro's Arts, Culture and Entertainment District in the nearby historic downtown and waterfront area.

"Creative people can be an incredible force in terms of revitalizing an area," said Chris Maffris, senior vice president of Meta Housing. "But what happens so often is that as creatives come in and areas are revitalized, the values of properties go up, the rental rates go up — and then the creative force has to leave."

Pacific Avenue Arts Colony, constructed where an old gas station and recycling center stood at 303 S. Pacific Ave., began as a proposal under the Community Redevelopment Agency before that state program went bust in 2012.

Because plans that dated back to about 2008 were already making their way through the design review

process — and Meta managed to free up \$2.5 million in CRA money that already had been pledged to the project — Pacific Avenue Arts Colony stayed on the books, with construction finally getting started in 2013.

Among the changes made from the early proposals: It was downsized from some 100 to 49 units and opened up to all professional artists, not just seniors.

It's not in the best part of town. But new residents say that doesn't matter.

Musician Joe McGuire, 33, said the timing to get one of the units was perfect.

He and his wife, Kuyumi, and their two young children were looking to relocate from the San Francisco Bay Area.

"We'd been looking to come to Los Angeles for a while because it has such a large entertainment community," said McGuire whose

talents include solo performing and organizing dance parties and other entertainment events for bands.

Meta worked closely with the Affordable Housing Partnership for Artists and other groups to recruit residents who responded to ads late last year. While many of the residents hold down regular jobs as well to make ends meet, applications had to include artist resumes and samples of artistic work.

Musician Daniel Pohnke, 38, and his wife, Mai Segev-Pohnke, 37, will be working on their Full Moon Rising music and meditation project from their new home at the arts colony.

"We couldn't be happier," he said. "I've been a California resident my entire life and I don't think I'd ever been to San Pedro. It has this wonderful dynamic. It's a place that's just ready to be rocked."

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