



Press Photo by Katherine Grandstrand

Gary Collett, co-president of California Commercial Investment, addresses a crowd of about 20 on Friday at Peaceful-Pioneer Havens Senior Apartments in Dickinson.

Affordable senior housing gets update

Owners fly in from Calif. for grand opening

By Katherine Grandstrand
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Some of Dickinson's most vulnerable residents have a remodeled place to live at Peaceful-Pioneer Havens Senior Apartments.

The owners of California Commercial Investment, along with representatives from the state and city governments, celebrated the grand re-opening of the apartments Friday at the complex's community center at 1043 Enterprise Ave.

The 106-unit apartment complex is income-based for individuals who are at least 55 years old. The investment company worked with the North Dakota Housing Finance Agency to renovate all units in the complex.

"We're so proud that we were able to get this community upgraded," said Gary Collett, co-president of California Commercial Investment. "We felt it was time."

The complex, which consists of several one-level buildings with easy access for seniors, was built about 30 years ago.

"It was time to get it ready for the next 30 years," Collett said.

The renovations include new plumbing, electrical, appliances, windows and flooring, updated kitchens and bathrooms, fresh paint, new doors, weather stripping and energy-efficient lighting, according to a press release. The community center and laundry facilities were updated and a new security system was installed.

California Commercial Investments, which specializes in senior housing — 44 of its 45 prop-

erties are for the 55-plus crowd — purchased the apartments in 2006.

"We're really proud to be part of this project and to be part of the city and to help our residents," said Lou Mellman, co-president of California Commercial Investment. "To provide affordable housing so that they all have a place to live that is not just affordable but also something to be proud of."

Housing has been one of the largest concerns as people have flooded the Bakken, Dickinson Mayor Dennis Johnson said. Those with a fixed income, like seniors, have been hit hardest by the climb in market-rate rent.

"Housing is so important," Johnson said. "Quantity of housing, affordable housing and quality of housing. I'm really excited about your project here because you have affordable housing and, with your renovations, I know you have quality housing now too."

Peaceful-Pioneer Havens is one of seven projects in Dickinson to be built or rehabbed with NDHFA help, said Sylvia Burgess, housing development officer for the state agency.

"We all know Dickinson has a tremendous need for quality affordable housing options for all of its residents," Burgess said.

The project utilized more than \$400,000 worth of tax credits allocated — about one-third of the total project funding, Burgess said. The rest of the funding came from owner input and a new loan, according a press release. The tax credits were the only public funding used.

Sens. John Hoeven and Heidi

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Heitkamp were invited. Hoeven sent a statement, which was read at the event. Shirley Meyer, Heitkamp's Dickinson-based western North Dakota representative, planned to attend but was unable due to the federal government shutdown.

Collett, Mellman and Janna Chambers flew in from California, only to be greeted with snow.

Mellman is California born and raised, but his partner, Collett, grew up in Winnipeg, so October snow wasn't a surprise to him.

"I think it's a little warm here actually, right now," Collett said as a joke as an audience of about 20 gathered at the facility.

Even with the snow, Mellman was excited to be in Dickinson.

"One of the things we love about this town and about this state is the people of the state and the city take pride in everything they do," Mellman said.

"You can see it in all the houses and our residents take pride, and we take pride in this facility."