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Temecula officials are responding to a public backlash over plans to build below market rate apartments and temporary housing for families in need by holding a town hall meeting.

The forum scheduled for 6 p.m. Thursday at the Community Recreation Center, 30875 Rancho Vista Road, will feature city staff and representatives of the Temecula Murrieta Rescue Mission, which wants to build 20 units for homeless families at Temecula Parkway and Margarita Road.

A nonprofit developer plans to construct another 90 units for low- and moderate-income families. The City Council on Aug. 11 approved an agreement for the 90 apartments and will take up the transitional housing component on Sept. 8.

Construction of the 110-unit Summerhouse senior condominium development stopped in 2008 and the property fell into foreclosure.

Council members and supporters maintain the apartments will provide homes for local families who work hard, but lack the financial resources others enjoy. The other part of the development, places for those who need temporary shelter to live, will give local families reeling from the recession a chance to get back on their feet, supporters say.

Officials say the transitional housing is not a shelter and that families living there will be screened and won't stay there forever. They add that there will be no drug rehab clinic or soup kitchen, and the dwellings will look like any other apartments in Temecula.

That does little to quell the concerns of nearby residents in the Paseo del Sol and Paloma del Sol communities, who say the project will be a magnet for crime and blight.

For some residents, the project comes on top of worries about the conversion of Sparkman Elementary School into a headquarters for alternative education programs. Critics say the move could lead to older students causing problems in the area.

A "Stop Summerhouse" Web site has started up, and an anonymous flier circulated near Summerhouse prompted more than 100 residents to attend a city workshop Tuesday on Temecula's overall strategy for providing affordable housing. So many showed up the meeting had to be moved to the council chambers.

The forum became a sometimes-heated question-and-answer session on the project. Many residents accused the city of keeping them in the dark. City officials replied the project has been the subject of media coverage as well as public notices.

Rosemary Davis was among those at the forum. The Paseo del Sol resident has lived in Temecula since 2006.

"Once you start something, then you get the bad seeds," Davis said. "What if we have a murder down the line. What are you going to do then?"

"I feel the city violated us and we pay our taxes," she added. "... This can't happen to us. Not in a good city like this."

Another resident, Rob House of Paloma del Sol, rejected the notion he lacks compassion for opposing the project, noting he received a medal for community service while in the Marines.

"I decide whom I want to help, when I want to help," he said. "I don't like it being forced on me. ... I don't want (Temecula Parkway) to become 'Oh, that's the wrong side of town.'"

Temecula Mayor Maryann Edwards said she continues to get e-mails from residents about the project. She noted the city has around 600 affordable housing units, and by state law, it needs 800 more.

If the project isn't run the way it's supposed to be, the city has the power to intervene, Edwards said. "Once you have all the facts, I think that will alleviate a lot of people's fears," she said.