

Do You Remember?

By Anne Homan
Livermore City Historian



Hillcrest Gardens: 41 Years

At the corner of Hillcrest Avenue and California Way in a quiet residential neighborhood, a large sign to the east says “Hillcrest Gardens.” Rose bushes decorate the walks. The senior housing complex here begins with a parking lot; the buildings are hidden from the road. The largest is the community building, which houses a main lounge, kitchen, and two laundry rooms, as well as the offices of the managers and the managers’ apartment. Recent additions of double-paned windows at one side of the lounge and sliding doors at the entry bring in natural light. To the east of the main building is a grass courtyard with shade trees. The senior apartments are in one-story fourplexes that zig-zag about the area, with high fences providing privacy. Lucille Bruskin wrote in 1983, “Each apartment has its own patio, but there is a sense of community at this complex and residents often gather in the laundry

administer its first project. The 54-unit Hillcrest Gardens opened in May 1971, when the first tenant moved into his apartment. Today, the Interfaith Housing board meets monthly and is composed of sixteen members, two from each of eight organizations—St. Michael’s Catholic Church, Congregation Beth Emek, Asbury Methodist Church, St. Bartholomew’s Episcopal Church, First Presbyterian Church, Holy Cross Lutheran Church, St. Charles Borromeo Church, and Unitarian Universalist Church. Interfaith Housing, a non-profit agency, continues to work with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to develop affordable housing for people on fixed incomes.

Hillcrest Gardens will celebrate its 41st birthday this year. Paul Weiss remembered the early days of organizing the project. He insisted that he was not on the original board but joined soon after its inception. The members

the construction, and Paul talked Wells Fargo into giving a mortgage to Interfaith Housing. The board’s next project was to look for an architect. Paul characterized the board as “a wonderful group of people who worked together.” He described the initial signing of papers with HUD as taking several hours. The original mortgage was paid off this year, but the board is seeking another mortgage to finance renovations to the 41-year-old complex.

Judy and George Monostory are the current property managers; they have been with Hillcrest Gardens for 12 years. Their jobs are to make sure everything works, hire the right vendors, keep track of expenses, and care about the residents. On a yearly basis, they must keep track of their clients’ incomes and medical care. The average renter is about 80 years old. Each must be at least 62 and able to live independently. Judy sees senior housing as a good idea. She said, “A lot of



Old entrance to Hillcrest Gardens (1983).

inspection of the complex every three to four years, and Judy was proud to say that they have always gotten good reviews. In each resident’s apartment there is an emergency cord, and the Monostories have a board in their apartment that corresponds with a light and buzzer so that they can respond immediately to any emergency.

Last year, the Interfaith Housing board was in a difficult position as it tried to keep track of the intricate medical coverage for many employees—the

the members of Interfaith Housing and also several representatives from AB-HOW. One of their current concerns is about hiring two service coordinators who will visit with the seniors in the three housing complexes, working with them to assess their health, psychological, and social needs. Sometimes residents can no longer live independently. A service coordinator will try to connect them with resources that can help them “age in place.”

On Sunday, September 9, Hillcrest Gardens

will have a reception for its board and residents to celebrate 41 years of operation. Anna Bartle, one of the earliest residents, wrote in a scrapbook of photos, “Time goes on and residents change with its passing and may all that come after those who first walked and left part of their heritage here know that grateful appreciation is ever due to dreamers who give time and labor to achieve good for others.”

(Readers can reach me at am50homan@yahoo.com.)

room or the lounge to pick up mail, play cards, enjoy potluck suppers, and attend programs by speakers and entertainers."

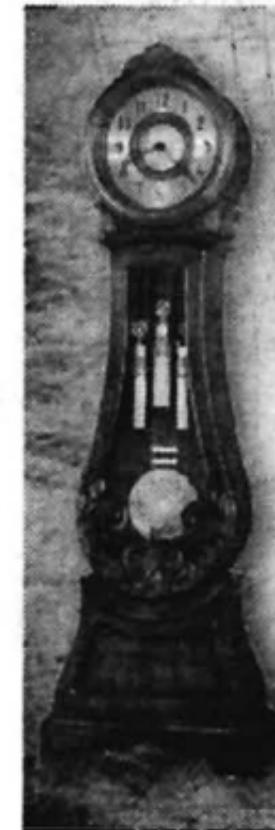
Hillcrest Gardens is the oldest of three senior housing complexes in Livermore. The second was Vineyard Village, and the third Arbor Vista. They are all run by Interfaith Housing, which incorporated in 1968 to develop and

were looking for a site and looking for funding. The Hillcrest Avenue location appealed to them, but the owners wanted to sell immediately, and the board did not have any money for the sale. Paul, determined to make the project successful, paid for the property with his own money, but he was eventually repaid. HUD did come through with its support for

people work hard all their lives, but the cost of living has gone up. Many seniors are forced to live on their social security income and must often choose between buying food or medication."

Such subsidized housing is definitely needed—there is a two to three year waiting list for a place at Hillcrest Gardens. HUD sends people to make an

managers, the maintenance workers, clerical help, and others. The board finally decided in January to hire a non-profit, nonsectarian management organization based in Pleasanton to handle the situation. All three senior housing projects in Livermore are now managed by American Baptist Homes of the West (ABHOW). I attended a board meeting last week and met



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