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'Journey' a positive step for affordable housing

If there is one dream that most Americans hold dear, it is to have the opportunity to buy and own a home.

While affordable housing continues to be a problem in the Pensacola Bay Area, we are encouraged by the Interfaith Housing Coalition of Northwest Florida's effort to help families realize their dream of owning a home.

That includes an assist from the Escambia County Commission, which approved \$2.78 million to provide infrastructure for the development, a sound investment of public dollars.

The dream of owning a home is one Americans value highly.

Aptly named "Journey," the 250-plus-unit housing development off Avery Street will include townhouses and apartment-style homes, bringing together a good mix of household incomes, age groups, ethnic groups and lifestyles. It is designed to create a neighborhood feel, with sidewalks, narrow lots, houses set close to the street, front porches and with parking in the rear.

Journey models the way communities should work together regardless of racial or religious differences.

What makes the development so attractive and appealing is that it will fit into the hopes and dreams of working people who desire affordable housing - teachers, police officers, firefighters and health-care workers - the backbone of the community and its economy.

It is good news for people who are having a hard time finding affordable housing that the development will focus on families who make under \$52,000 a year and have been priced out of the local housing market.

The lack of affordable housing in our area is something that affects all of us, regardless of where we live. Residents across the Pensacola Bay Area are feeling the effects of rising housing costs.

The reality of high housing costs and insufficient wages today are that many people who desperately want to own a home can't afford to, at least not without some help.

Hurricanes Ivan and Dennis worsened the problem. Many low-cost homes and apartments were destroyed or damaged. So-called "affordable" housing was priced up by spikes in labor costs and the price of materials

This housing development plan is the kind of collaborative solutions that are needed to address the affordable housing crisis.

Initiatives like Journey, together with other proposals dealing with affordable housing, are critical as this community proceeds with plans for economic growth and future development.

While there is no silver bullet for ending the affordable housing crunch, we believe this housing plan goes a long way in providing immediate relief.