



## Section 8 Makes Housing Affordable

"This [place] has really been a blessing," says Peter Payne, a senior citizen and Veteran who lives in Corde Terra Senior Apartments, a 201-unit seniors' apartment complex with 199 units for extremely low-income seniors receiving project-based Section 8 rental subsidies. The project was developed by ROEM Corporation, a housing developer based in Silicon Valley.

As he sits in a cozy chair in the lovely California Mission-style community room, Peter shares the inspiring story of his life—including his time in the United States Air Force, and his survival on the streets as a homeless person.

Born in New Orleans, Peter quit high school at the early age of 17 to enlist in the Air Force. After four years of active duty, he returned to Louisiana where he was able to find a job at Kaiser Aluminum. Unfortunately, his job was short-lived. Soon after leaving Kaiser, he became a drifter, traveling through California and many other states for several years. Learning that his G.I. Bill education benefits were going to run out, Peter decided it would be in his best interest to obtain an education, so he enrolled in the City College of San Francisco. He then was able to land a job with Hewlett Packard as a technician. However, after a few years working with Hewlett Packard, Peter lost his job and began drifting again, ultimately becoming homeless.

The last place Peter lived prior to finding his home at Corde Terra Senior was in a house shared by six other men. "When I was living in the house, I was paying \$485 a month in rent," sharing a room with one other person and living on Social Security. As Peter continues his story, he grins and says "I applied and was accepted [to the Section 8 Program]. The process was really easy." After waiting for a long time for a Section 8 voucher to become available, he finally received a letter stating he was eligible for a voucher at Corde Terra Senior. The rent he currently pays at Corde Terra Senior for his one-bedroom apartment is less than half the amount he paid when sharing a room in a house. This reasonable rent—he pays 30% of his income, and the Section 8 vouchers cover the rest—enables him to buy food, clothes, and survive on his extremely-limited income.

"Since I've been living here, I've really enjoyed it," Peter enthuses. As a tenant at Corde Terra Senior, Peter enjoys the benefit of a free Valley Transportation Authority bus pass, which allows him mobility and access to the shopping complex about one mile away. This transit amenity has been vitally important for the seniors' apartment complex, as the development is located in close proximity of major bus routes and close to a major North/South artery in San José.

In addition, since stabilizing his living situation, this Veteran has continued to serve his community by volunteering to provide blood pressure screening for tenants in Corde Terra Senior and the nearby Corde Terra Village family apartments. "That is one of the things I like about this place – everybody jumps in and volunteers whenever there is a function going on. Everybody volunteers and chips in and does whatever is necessary."

As Peter shares his happiness about his new home, he is appreciative of his good fortune and the community he has found at Corde Terra Senior. "The people living here are very friendly and it is a very safe environment. Without this place, I don't think my living situation would have been very good. I feel like this is home."

Corde Terra Senior has received awards including the 2009 Redevelopment/Reuse project of the Year in the Silicon Valley Business Journal's Structures Award, and a 2010 National Award of Excellence from the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO).

Corde Terra Senior was made possible by a combination of several financing sources, including a long-term project-based Section 8 contract, private equity derived from an award of federal Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTCs), commercial bank loans, local redevelopment tax-increment funds from San José, a long-term ground lease from the County of Santa Clara, and tax-exempt bond loan proceeds from an issuance by the City of San José. Without any one of these sources, these opportunities for Peter Payne – an extremely low-income senior – would not have been possible.