



Metro Phoenix is a growing hub for new housing for adults with specialized needs

Catherine Reagor, The Republic | azcentral.com Published 6:00 a.m. MT March 24, 2018



(Photo: Sean Zimmerman)

A new community is going up in north Phoenix, different from any other neighborhood in Arizona — and maybe the U.S.

Luna Azul will have 30 cottage-style homes, 24-hour staff and a clubhouse for adults with specialized needs.

Unlike in other similar communities, these homes aren't rentals. They are for sale, something developer Mark Roth believes makes the community unique.

Since residents will own their own homes, they will be able to customize their houses to fit their needs, and hire whatever level of help they need, he said.

Roth, a Seattle attorney, began working on Luna Azul a few years ago after looking for a home for his teenage daughter Emma. Emma was born with a genetic condition that impacts her physically, cognitively and emotionally.

"My wife and I would be up at night terrified about where Emma would live as an adult," said Roth, a Phoenix native. "We didn't want her to be isolated in a condo on her own and couldn't find a group home that we felt would work."

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The community, at 16th Street and the Loop 101, will have homes with two or three bedrooms, large porches and smart-home technology. They will be priced from the mid \$300,000s to mid \$500,000s.

Luna Azul will also be gated and have a full-time director.

Roth said he chose the Valley for its quality medical care, particularly for people with special needs, and because finding available land is easier and less expensive than in Seattle and other parts of the country.

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First Place will open this summer at Third Street and Catalina Drive. It will have 55 apartments with varying layouts, a training academy for residents and a leadership institute for medical professionals and researchers once complete. (Photo: DRA Collective)

Not the first

Metro Phoenix is becoming a hub for innovative housing developments for adults with specialized needs, and parents looking for homes for their aging children are leading the charge in building them.

"I believe today we are with housing for special populations in metro Phoenix where [Del Webb \(/story/news/local/history/2015/05/15/125-republic-anniversary-important-people-events-arizona-real-estate/27291673/\)](#) was 50 years ago with Sun City and senior living," said Denise Resnik, a prominent Valley leader whose son Matt has autism.

She has been working with others to create [First Place \(/story/news/local/phoenix/2016/12/06/breaking-ground-work-begins-first-place-complex-phoenix-adults-autism/95046774/\)](#), with 55 apartments for adults with autism. It will have a training academy and institute for medical researchers. It opens in central Phoenix this summer.

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[Work begins on First Place complex in Phoenix for adults with autism \(/story/news/local/phoenix/2016/12/06/breaking-ground-work-begins-first-place-complex-phoenix-adults-autism/95046774/\)](#)

[Treasure House will help adults with disabilities be independent \(/story/news/local/glendale-contributor/2016/04/28/treasure-house-building-independence-young-adults-disabilities/83591720/\)](#)

The project has been held up internationally as an innovative development and helped garner Phoenix the title "most autism-friendly city in the world."

"For special populations, there is no one size fits all," said Resnik, who has been worrying about where her son would live as an adult since he was a toddler. "We need pioneers to create different types of housing for our diverse population. Phoenix is a collaborative community for doing it."

Last year, Brenda and Kurt Warner, the retired Arizona Cardinals quarterback, opened [Treasure House \(/story/news/local/glendale-contributor/2016/04/28/treasure-house-building-independence-young-adults-disabilities/83591720/\)](#). Their son Zachary was the first resident to move into the Christian-based residential home in Glendale with studio apartments for young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Brenda Warner said the family checked out many residential places looking for an adult home for Zachary and were always disappointed.

"So many times, we came home distraught and upset that anyone had to live like that," she said in 2016.



A rendering of Treasure House, a home for young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities planned near 75th Avenue and Loop 101 in Glendale. (Photo: Treasure House Phoenix)

Emma's new home

Construction of Luna Azul is planned to start in the next few months with the first residents, including 18-year-old Emma Roth, moving in during mid-2019.

"Luna Azul is a community suitable for adults with disabilities, providing them and others convenient access to services, vocational opportunities and urban amenities," said Roth. "We have designed the community for people with a wide breadth of disabilities."

Other residents who have signed up to buy in Luna Azul include a mom with a son who is able to drive and works at Home Depot and a young man who will live with his sister while she goes to Arizona State University.

Sean Zimmerman with LaunchPAD Sales & Marketing said initial interest from buyers in Luna Azul "has been overwhelming."

Roth said he wants to build a community where his daughter will not be alone.

"I envision a community where Emma gets invited to swim parties and makes lifelong friends," he said.

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