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Developer to break ground on \$11.2M residential community for adults with special needs

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With \$11.2 million construction financing in place, Luna Azul is breaking ground in north Phoenix on a housing project for adults with special needs.

Construction financing is being led by The Disability Opportunity Fund of New York for the 30-home development at 16th Street and Loop 101. The contractor is Tempe-based [Fortress General Contracting Inc.](#)

[Mark Roth](#), president and CEO of Scottsdale-based ECC Management LLC, got the idea for the [project](#) when he started researching group homes for his [daughter Emma](#), looking for a safe environment for her once she became an adult. But homes for adults with special needs were a nightmare, creating a need for him to develop Luna Azul, a 30-home residence in north Phoenix.

Each home will range in size between 1,152 and 1,956 square feet, with pricing ranging from mid-\$300,000s to mid-\$500,000s. The pocket neighborhood is located at 1500 E. Wahalla Lane in Phoenix. It is expected to open in mid-2019.



LUNA AZUL

A rendering of Luna Azul, a new community in north Phoenix to provide safe housing for adults with special needs.

The project sits on 4.73 acres, according to [filings with the city of Phoenix](#) initially submitted in April 2016.

Roth said the project has been a long time coming.

"You have no idea," he said. "When I started out, I didn't have gray hair."

He said he plans to buy a home for his daughter. She won't move in for a couple of years, so he'll rent it out until she's ready, he said. Because it will be their own home, they are free to move in with her for awhile, or spend a night or a week with her.

"Maybe her sister lives with her part time," he said. "It's all up to us. The transition is up to us."

Community amenities will include a clubhouse with a living room, a multi-purpose flex room and kitchen, and will be built around large public gathering spaces and a pool. The community also will have a perimeter wall, gated, controlled entry, a full-time director and 24/7 onsite staff.

Launch Real Estate has been selected to handle sales and marketing of the homes.

The Luna Azul concept is based on the idea of pocket neighborhoods made famous by noted Langley, Washington, architect Ross Chapin, who described a pocket neighborhood as providing a setting for neighbors to develop meaningful relationships beyond family and housemates. Chapin is designing the project.

Each cottage will include a front porch facing the commons, making it easier for residents to connect with each other and foster relationships, Roth said.

A groundbreaking ceremony is scheduled for May 2.

Luna Azul isn't the first project to focus on adults with disabilities.

In December 2016, Hardison/Downey Construction Inc. broke ground on a \$15 million apartment complex called [First Place-Phoenix](#) for young adults with autism.

That project at Third Street and Catalina Drive in midtown Phoenix was the brainchild of First Place AZ Founder/President/CEO Denise Resnik, when she was thinking about how her [adult son Matthew](#) — who [owns his own company](#) — could live on his own.

Resnik could not be reached to determine if her son will move in.

First Place-Phoenix — which will feature 56 apartment units ranging from studio to four bedrooms — is expected to open this spring.

Also on that campus will be The First Place Transition Academy, which will offer opportunities for residents to participate in training programs on independent living and career preparation, while the First Place Leadership Institute will provide training for support providers and medical personnel to gain experience.

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