



Apartment demolition under way

'Eyesore' to make way for low-income housing

By David Mark
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WEST COVINA — With the start of demolition, a long-vacant apartment tower will soon give way to a series of low-rise affordable housing complexes.

Destruction began in earnest Friday, with a wrecking ball bashing walls and windows at Lark Ellen Village on San Bernardino Road. The 10-story building has been vacant since 1986.

The demolition could not have come sooner for some West Covina residents, who have long considered Lark Ellen an eyesore and a waste of space.

Sometime next week, construction will begin on a 122-unit, low-rise affordable housing complex costing \$13 million.

On Thursday, Mayor Ben Wong led the ceremonial dropping of the 5,000-pound wrecking ball. Officials welcomed what they said would be an important addition of housing for low-income and senior residents.

"This is neighborhood housing," said City Councilwoman Kathy Howard.

Please turn to TOWER / A5



Staff photo by MIKE MULLEN

A WRECKING BALL slams into the Lark Ellen building Friday. The long-vacant complex is being torn down to make way for housing.

TOWER Vacant apartment finally coming down

Continued from A1

Wang said the cost of rehabilitating the existing building would have been nearly the same as demolishing it and putting up a new one.

In a public-private partnership, the city will pay about \$4 million of the project's cost. The remaining funds will come from federal and state sources, along with the real estate firm of Thomas Safran & Associates.

Howard said the project will satisfy West Covina's federal set-aside requirements for low-income housing. Leases are being reserved now, even though the new building will not be ready for another year.

The demolition could not have come sooner for some West Covina residents, who have long considered Lark Ellen an eyesore and a waste of space. The building, with faded aqua and white tiles, has stood out in a neighborhood of single and two-story houses and apartment complexes.

Richard Cellian, who lives near the project, said the site should be put to some use after 11 years of being vacant.

"It's been standing here empty, so it's probably a good thing," he said.

Howard said it was time for the old building to go for aesthetic reasons.

"The building has been look-

ing bad for some time," she said.

The demolition is scheduled to last about four days. Workers plan to recycle the concrete and steel salvaged from the old building.