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PROJECT WATCH

# San Jose Housing Project Knows the Way to Green Design



Seventy-six new family apartments on a 3.87-acre site in San Jose, Calif., along the banks of a riparian preserve of the Penitencia Creek offer their lucky tenants an informal Craftsman-style architecture plus public transportation just a few steps from their front doors. Designed by OJK Architecture and Planning, Betty Ann Gardens provides one- to four-bedroom

apartments for households earning 50-60 percent of the median income in Santa Clara County, Calif., which has reached an all-time high of \$105,500 for a family of four. Residents enjoy below-market rents and free "EcoPasses" from the developer to encourage use of public transportation, as well as lower monthly utility bills thanks to the many energy-saving features incorporated into their new homes.

reference  
Photos courtesy of First Community Housing



The flats vary in size and orientation. Ground-floor units of the four three-story structures look into private courts, while the upper units look east toward Mt. Hamilton or west into the preserve along the creek. Each air-conditioned apartment contains a full kitchen and a 60-square-foot private deck or enclosed courtyard.

The number of green-building features incorporated into this affordable housing venture has garnered particular praise and awards for the project. Jeff Oberdorfer, AIA, executive director of First Community Housing, the project developer, notes that the Betty Ann Gardens exceeds the California energy-efficiency requirements by more than 27 percent, and is “notable for its use of recycled and recyclable materials that reduce energy consumption and promote resident health and good indoor air quality by minimizing use of products containing formaldehyde, vinyl, VOCs, and other potential toxins.”

Specifically, the units feature:

- All gas appliances
- Hydronic heating and cooling
- All fluorescent light fixtures
- Low-flow water fixtures
- Linoleum and recycled-content carpet floors
- “Meditate” no-VOC/no-formaldehyde cabinets with water-based varnish finish
- Vinyl, double-glazed windows and sliding doors
- Fiber-cement-board siding
- Non-formaldehyde insulation
- Engineered structural lumber
- Sustainable-harvest teak site benches and lobby furniture
- Wheat-composite office and computer room furniture and 99-percent recyclable office chairs
- “Eco-shake” recycled-content roof shingles on the community building roof.



The community celebrated its grand opening on September 4 and is featured in the *Green Affordable Housing Coalition* newsletter for demonstrating what can be achieved when the developer, architect, and general contractor work together as a team committed to sustainability.

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