

A new, green start

New mutual housing town homes in North Highlands save energy, lives

If you are simply trying to make ends meet—feed your kids, pay rent—going green is probably a distant afterthought. Yet a new Sacramento-area housing project that is both affordable and also eco-conscious is opening its doors this month to a select group of low-income families and chronically homeless individuals.

Sacramento|Yolo Mutual Housing Association, a regional nonprofit that develops housing for low-income individuals, just completed its first Build It Green certified multifamily development in North Highlands. The nonprofit, which has been around since the 1980s, abides by an altruistic mission to build, improve and maintain housing that is affordable and safe throughout Sacramento and Yolo counties.



**Sacramento | Yolo
Mutual Housing
Association**

Transforming Lives...Building Community

Sacramento Mutual Housing Association develops housing that is affordable to a diversity of households. Our housing builds strong and stable communities through resident participation and leadership development.

For more information, call (916) 453-8400 or visit our website at mutualhousing.com.

And, for the organization, the North Highlands project is a landmark. The development meets green-certification standards established by Oakland-based nonprofit Build It Green, which created one of the first GreenPoint rating systems in California to encourage resource- and energy-efficient multifamily housing.

But there's more: For Jennifer Fields, Daniel Rosenzweig and their two children Savannah and Dillon, their new home at the North Highlands site offers a second chance.

"I'm hoping a new start can be a new life," Rosenzweig said.

Over the past 10 years, the couple has overcome addictions to methamphetamine and heroin, in addition to winning their children back after a Child Protective Services intervention. But an allergic reaction to a flu shot left Rosenzweig paralyzed three years ago, and now he is simultaneously fighting an addiction to his methadone prescription while being a stay-at-home dad.

"Life is hard enough without being an addict," he explained. "The most important thing in my life is to be clean again."

Soon he will begin a 21-day detox program. Meanwhile, he and Fields have vowed to stay together as a family. And now, the family is scheduled to move into one of the



Left to right: Dan Rosenzweig, Dylan Rosenzweig, Jennifer Fields and Savannah Rosenzweig sit in a courtyard near their new home at Mutual Housing. PHOTO BY RON NABITY

12 three-bedroom townhouses at the new mutual housing in North Highlands.

Prior to resident move-in day, all of the units were "flushed" for a two-week span to ensure clean-air quality. Low volatile organic compounds paint, glues and adhesives were also used, in addition to low-level formaldehyde insulation and cabinets.

Other green features also include solar panels on the community building—which heat the water used for laundry—and solar tubes on the ceilings that allow rooms to be lit with sunlight only during the day.

"You get really nice light in the room," said Holly Wunder Stiles, director of housing development. "You wouldn't feel you need to turn on the light."

Each unit has a tankless water heater—this means that water is heated only when in use, as opposed to all the time—and is equipped with Energy Star appliances.

Energy efficiency was another important consideration in the design, which includes as many south-facing roofs as possible. “What’s the use of generating solar power if your building is going to waste that power?” Stiles asked.

The buildings at the North Highlands complex exceed the state’s building code energy-efficiency requirements by an average of 24 percent, she added. And, after Mutual Housing crunched the numbers, it cost a

mere 3 percent more to take the “green” development route.

“It scares us when we approach something like this, because you hear all this stuff about [greening] being so expensive,” executive director Rachel Iskow said. “But adding 3 percent to a large construction budget just isn’t that much.”

And in the long run, these green features will save residents like Fields and Rosenzweig a lot of money in energy costs—which they can instead spend on family.

For more information on housing, programs and services at Mutual Housing, go to <http://www.mutualhousing.com>.