

South Sacramento Communities Re-open After Major Green Rehab



Three Mutual Housing California communities recently re-opened after a \$6.3 million rehab that emphasized water and energy efficiency. The upgrades of the South Sacramento developments, purchased nearly 20 years ago by the Sacramento-based nonprofit, took more than a year to complete.

“By renovating Mutual Housing at Greenway, Glen Ellen and Sky Park, Mutual Housing has brought physical renewal that builds a stronger community in this at-risk neighborhood,” said Patrick Kennedy, Sacramento county supervisor for District 2. “This renewal helps establish a high standard for housing in the area.”

Rain gardens, drought-tolerant landscaping and a drastic reduction in lawn were just a few of the changes made to save water and to help keep local water-quality high. Piped from roof drains—and landscaped areas—rain gardens filter storm water before it goes to storm drains, cleansing it.

“They didn’t have to do these changes,” said Niki Crucillo, project engineer at Davis, Calif.-based Cunningham Engineering. “If a developer is not required to make changes, they usually don’t because of the extra cost. But, it was driven by the nonprofit’s sustainable goals.”

During the landscaping, 25,000 sq. ft. were turned into planting areas while grass was reduced to 19,000 sq. ft.

“We put sedges and rushes—plants you would normally see in inundated areas—in the rain garden while we used deer grasses and other drought-tolerant species throughout the site,” said Olga Garzon, landscape designer at Cunningham Engineering.

Basketball and tetherball courts were added to an expanded playground and picnic areas with new benches, BBQ pits, and fountains. To save water, the developer also installed automatic shower head cut-offs and high-efficiency water heaters that supply hot water faster.

“We started this during the drought, so we were very conscious of water use and water waste,” said Keith Bloom, Mutual Housing senior project manager.

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Shown here is an aerial photo of one of the three Sacramento communities at Mutual Housing.

Mutual Housing California 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.

Solar panels were installed on roofs to reduce the nonprofit's operating costs—and resident utility costs. The HVAC system was upgraded to a high-efficiency, forced air, split system. Exteriors were replaced with environmentally sustainable siding. Roofs and windows roofs also were replaced with more durable materials.

Interior cabinets, countertops, bathroom and kitchen fixtures, tubs and tub surrounds, appliances and floor and window coverings were updated with healthier, more efficient materials.

Some families were temporarily relocated.

“Because we started developing and purchasing properties 25 years ago—and have since greened a number of them during rehabs—we have a lot of experience in working with residents to make sure they understand how the remodels will help their lives,” said Rachel Iskow, Mutual Housing chief executive officer.

“By adding the photovoltaic system and other energy-efficient measures, resident utility bills should go down considerably, so people are willing to deal with some constructions and displacement for the long-term benefits.”

Mutual Housing has focused on green issues since 2003 when it became the first multifamily developer to install solar electricity in the Sacramento Municipal Utility District and has been known for bridging the green divide ever since.

In 2012, Mutual Housing started a community-wide Green Leaders Program for residents to learn more about energy consumption and saving. Grants from NeighborWorks America and the Home Depot Foundation helped residents begin collecting energy use data, start worm composting and other programs.

“The renovation not only lowered utility bills for residents, but inspired them to learn more about green lifestyles by participating in our Green Leaders Program.”

In 2013, Mutual Housing received a coveted Green Organization Designation from NeighborWorks America, a Congressionally-chartered nonprofit that also helps with project start-up funds.

“The designation means that we consider sustainability issues in everything we do throughout the organization,” said Iskow.

Mutual Housing should receive for a Build It Green certification and rating from the Oakland-based nonprofit in a month. The rehabilitation was partially funded by the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency, Raymond James, Bank of the West, Sacramento Bank of Commerce and Sacramento Municipal Utility District.

Mutual Housing's housing development work is underwritten by NeighborWorks America.

Founded in 1988, Mutual Housing California develops, operates and advocates for sustainable rental housing for the region's diverse households. A member of NeighborWorks America—a congressionally chartered nonprofit that supports community development nationwide—Mutual Housing has more than 3,000 residents, nearly half of whom are children.

Through its focus on leadership, the nonprofit provides training and mentoring as well as educational programs, community-building activities and services for residents and neighbors.

For more information, go to www.mutualhousing.com