

# First-of-its-Kind Community Boasts Zero Net Energy

Sacramento, Calif.—Renters have long lacked the opportunity to reside in a 100 percent-certified zero net energy apartment. They have until now, that is.

U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Certification of the nation's first multifamily Zero Energy Ready Home (ZERH) for a rental development has been awarded. The certification goes to Mutual Housing at Spring Lake California.

The development, which has already welcomed its first families, features 62 apartments and townhomes for agricultural workers. The energy needs of all residents are expected to be met by the development's photovoltaic solar energy system and water-based heating and air system.

“We had a few motivations for making Mutual Housing at Spring Lake our first, and the nation's first, certified ZERH rental property,” Rachel Iskow, CEO of Sacramento-based Mutual Housing California, told MHN.

“First, we have been gradually accumulating experience and expertise in sustainable housing development. Mutual Housing developed the first multifamily property in Sacramento County to produce solar energy back in 1992.

“Since then, we have been developing solar communities and making our properties much more energy efficient. The housing community we developed just prior to Mutual Housing at Spring Lake was in Davis, Calif., and we designed that to produce 80 percent of energy used at the property. So we felt we had the expertise to go to the next level after that, [which is} zero net energy. Also, Mutual Housing at Spring Lake is targeted to agricultural workers and their families. We felt that agricultural workers often suffer more than the general population from environmental contaminants, and we felt they deserved to have the healthiest homes possible, with the least energy costs. These families should not have to pay at all for electricity in this all-electric property.”

Each apartment at Mutual Housing at Spring Lake offers a color-coded energy monitor. The monitor displays real-time energy use, with green for efficient, yellow typical and red above normal.



The development at Spring Lake is the first multifamily rental community to be certified under the DOE Zero Energy Ready Home program.

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](http://mutualhousing.com).

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According to estimates, Spring Lake's incorporation of high-tech innovations added just 4.07 percent to the development cost, an outlay that should be recouped by savings over the first few years.

The innovations cited include solar panels, well-sealed and insulated buildings, a water-based HVAC system and energy monitors. Also helping save energy are low-flow toilets and shower head cutoffs that shut off when water goes from cold to hot, drought-resistant landscaping and other water-saving features.

It is expected that Mutual Housing will capture a Platinum LEED certification, the highest awarded, for the development. An additional 1.86 acres are available next to Mutual Housing at Spring Lake for the community's second phase.

The general contractor was Sunseri Associates, Inc., based in Sacramento. The ZERH program has certified more than 14,000 energy-efficient homes, saving millions of dollars in energy since its launch in 2008. But this is the first time renters have been able to live in 100 percent certified zero net energy units.

"Before we designed the property, we surveyed agricultural workers at their place of employment about their housing conditions and needs," Iskow said. "We found that next to rent, the biggest housing-related concern was high utility bills. This property addresses that concern and eliminates it."