



Davis rules made project better, builders say

The city of Davis has a reputation for being particular about development and how buildings are designed. That didn't faze the architect and not-for-profit group proposing an affordable housing complex, which opened in February.



The New Harmony affordable housing project in Davis, shown above, opened in February.

Photo by Domin Photography

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.

If anything, those involved with the 69-unit project said they embraced the opportunity to make the project better, in consultation with city staff and residents.

"It takes a little longer, but there's a lot of good conversations along the way," said Bob Kuchman of Sacramento's Kuchman Architects PC, which designed the New Harmony Mutual Housing Community.

To meet green-building requirements, they positioned the building to allow for natural light into apartments from both the north and south, depending on the time of day, and to give the best exposure to solar panels on the roof, Kuchman said.

Kuchman and the Yolo Mutual Housing Association went beyond the state requirement of five percent to make 20 percent of the apartments accessible to the disabled.

Because putting in an elevator triggered a state requirement to make all units adaptable, the remaining apartments were constructed so that each unit could be made accessible with a few modifications.

Rachel Iskow, executive director of the Mutual Housing Association, said the 20-percent accessibility requirement was an easy transition because her association already makes the modifications necessary to some apartments to comply with state law. "To do it on such a large scale was new for us," she said.

She added, "actually the standards set for us were really good social goals. It was different, but it was something we cared about."

Founded in 1988, Mutual Housing California develops and operates well-designed rental housing for the diversity of the region's households. The communities have 3,000 residents, nearly half of whom are children.