

New Harmony receives green certification

There's green, and then there's green.

New Harmony Mutual Housing recently received 197 points from the Oakland-based nonprofit Build It Green (BIG), which certifies green building in California. That's more than twice the required 70 points for new developments to be considered green in Davis.

"Because of our local green goals, Davis has higher requirements for sustainability and green aspects than the usual state thresholds for Build It Green," said Joe Krovoza, mayor of Davis. "There is every indication that New Harmony will not only meet those goals, but easily surpass them."

Added Vanessa Guerra, Mutual Housing California project manager, "Our 197 points for a multifamily development is unique to California, not just Davis. We have received extremely high ratings in the past and that's what we are hoping for."

Points are awarded for energy efficiency, resource and water conservation, indoor air quality and livable communities.

Mutual Housing California became the first developer to install solar photovoltaic systems for rentals in a multi-family development in Sacramento County when it did so in 2002. Since then, the affordable housing developer has realized that using the green methods and adding photovoltaic systems raised construction costs only by 4.07 percent.

"Any savings we realize in utilities will go a long way toward making the community affordable to residents of very modest means as well as contributing to the economic stability of the property itself and our nonprofit corporation," said Rachel Iskow, Mutual Housing California's executive director.

The community got points for being livable because it makes use of land that is in a redevelopment area as well as within a half-mile of neighborhood services such as schools, parks, restaurants, banks and entertainment. Mutual Housing's general contractor, Chico-based Sunseri Construction Inc., also developed the bike path between the New Harmony and Owendale Mutual Housing Community nearby.

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Green building practices help residents of New Harmony Mutual Housing on Cowell Boulevard in South Davis save money on their energy bills.

Domin Photography/Courtesy photo.

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.

New Harmony exceeds California energy conservation requirements by almost one-third, has south-facing windows with protective awnings and overhangs, and raised-heel roof trusses to provide extra insulation. Each unit also has energy-efficient appliances to lower utility bills for residents.

Solar roof panels on most of the roof were designed to offset 79 percent of the electric energy for the community, reducing utility costs to residents as well as the nonprofit. Tankless water heaters that heat only when needed also help reduce energy use.

“Green features, like the solar at New Harmony, will not only make New Harmony a more sustainable community, but also help Davis work toward its carbon reduction goals and efforts to cool Davis,” said Danielle Foster, superintendent of housing and human services.

Build It Green began certifying multi-family development in 2007 and has certificated more than 8,000 units to date as well as 8,800 single-family homes since that program started in 2005.

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.

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

For more information, visit www.mutualhousing.com.