

## Foothill Farms affordable housing poised for energy upgrades

Mutual Housing California is getting some starter money to upgrade energy efficiency at one of its older affordable-housing communities.

The nonprofit will use a \$15,000 grant from U.S. Bank to craft a plan for boosting the energy performance of 98 apartments at Foothill Plaza Mutual Housing Community. The grant will be a prelude to applying for more money to do the work itself.

“Interestingly, this is one of the harder things to get,” said Rachel Iskow, executive director and CEO of Mutual Housing California, which specializes in affordable housing. “Early grant money makes moving forward possible.”

Proposed upgrades will include renovating interiors to incorporate green building materials, install more energy-efficient appliances and put low-emission finishes on walls, floors, doors, cabinets and fixtures, according to Mutual Housing.

Iskow said the estimated cost of the upgrades to Foothill Plaza, which the nonprofit acquired and renovated in the 1990s, is about \$5 million. The U.S. Bank grant is leveraged through other pre-development funding from a national nonprofit, NeighborWorks America.

The upgrades will not only improve efficiency but also will lower bills for Foothill Plaza residents, Iskow said. For now, those upgrades won’t include adding solar panels. Sacramento Municipal Utility District doesn’t have a program for adding solar to affordable multifamily projects, though Iskow said she’s hopeful her agency can convince SMUD to restart one.

At a Mutual Housing community in Davis, 80 percent of the electricity comes from solar power, while one being planned for Woodland would be net-zero energy. Not only do residents in such communities have virtually no electric bill, in some cases they actually generate revenue by selling excess electricity back onto the grid, Iskow said.

Founded in 1988, Mutual Housing California develops, operates and advocates for sustainable rental housing for the diversity of the region’s households.

A member of NeighborWorks America—a congressionally chartered nonprofit organization that supports community development nationwide—Mutual Housing has more than 3,000 residents, nearly half of whom are children.

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

For information, visit [www.mutualhousing.com](http://www.mutualhousing.com).