

Nuevo Amanecer Apartments



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The development of the Nuevo Amanecer Apartments provides an affordable and healthy environment for families who previously lived in unhealthy, deplorable conditions. This project involves the redevelopment of three contiguous rundown properties in Pajaro, California, a rural, agricultural community of approximately 3,500 residents in unincorporated Monterey County, just across the Pajaro River from the City of Watsonville. Twenty-six units are restricted to farm worker households. Units in the new development are designed as both flats and townhouses, with a mix of 1, 2, 3, and 4 bedroom apartments. The project features a 1,500 sq. ft. community center with a computer room and space for health and education services. South County Housing (SCH), the developer, worked with Global Green USA to integrate several green building features into the new buildings, including solar panels to offset the common area energy needs. SCH is responsible for maintenance of the property in perpetuity and provides staff to coordinate resident services including after-school programs, health education, ESL classes, job training, and safety programs.

Greening Goals:

The general goals of this redevelopment project were to provide safe, healthy, sustainable homes for families who previously lived in substandard, hazardous and unaffordable conditions. SCH's integrated design process included coordination with Global Green USA to incorporate green building systems and materials into the Nuevo Amanecer Apartments. Green building goals identified by the design team included integration of solar energy, use of recycled content building materials, healthy indoor air quality, water conservation, and minimization of erosion and negative environmental impacts. Nuevo Amanecer serves as a prime example of in-fill housing that enhances the environment by providing healthy and attractive buildings, improving dilapidated storm drainage and sanitary sewer systems, and removing potentially dangerous underground storage tanks.

Project at a Glance

Location: Pajaro, California

Project Type: Housing Redevelopment

Ownership/Rental: Rental

Size:

63 units (1-4 BR)

60,209 total sq. ft. in total

1,500 sq. ft. community center included

2.6 acres

24 units/acre

Project Completion Date:

October 2006

Affordability:

- 49 units for families earning 50% Area Median Income (AMI) or less
- 13 units for families at 51-60% AMI
- 26 units are restricted to farm workers

Project Team:

- Developer: South County Housing
- Architect: KTGy Group, Inc.
- Contractor: Segue Construction
- Civil Engineer/Landscape Architect: Ifland Engineering/Dillon Design

Development Cost:

Land cost/acquisition:	\$5,074,137
New construction costs:	\$13,131,437
Soft costs (development):	\$5,109,414
Syndication costs:	\$102,500
Total:	\$23,417,488

Cost/Savings of Greening:

Total cost of greening:	Not available
Net cost of solar PV system:	\$98,000
Central boilers cost savings:	\$315,000
Annual PV energy savings:	\$10,000

Standards Used:

Energy Star Homes

Key Green Features:

- Buildings orientated to maximize solar access and energy generation potential
- Multiple fresh air ventilation and energy efficient measures included in the design
- Energy Star appliances
- Careful material selection to minimize off-gassing, maintain healthy indoor air
- On-site stormwater treatment system

Green Features



Integrated Design Process:

The development team comprised architects, a green design specialist, a landscape architect who is a member of the U.S. Green Building Council, the general contractor, and civil, electrical, and mechanical engineers. Several members of the project team had significant green building experience. Team members attended major charrettes, as well as meetings with local residents, to organize and track the integration of green building measures. Although the project design was not formally certified as green, the goals of the community and design team were met by integration of as many green measures as economically feasible. Technical assistance in analyzing the feasibility of green measures was provided primarily by Global Green USA and affiliated consultants.

Site Design/Landscape Planning:

The project was built on a flat 2.6 acre infill site surrounded by residential, commercial and agricultural uses. Twenty-eight dilapidated structures were demolished and the site was raised over two feet to ensure that the new structures would be out of the floodplain. Flooding previously occurred on site due to the proximity of the Pajaro River, approximately 1/4 mile to the north. A geotechnical assessment was performed by consultants in 2002 and concluded that the site was suitable for the proposed redevelopment project, including no adverse drainage conditions.

Location & Linkages:

Residents of Nuevo Amanecer Apartments are within walking distance of a bus stop that has regional connections. Restaurants, convenience stores, shopping, health services, and schools are also within 1/4 mile. The project also contains a central paseo or walkway that connects all residents to the playground area and community room. The vehicle circulation was placed at the perimeter of the site and does not cross the pedestrian paseo.

Building Design Greening:

Energy: Several ventilation and energy efficiency measures were incorporated into the design to save long-term operating costs, provide greater comfort to residents, and minimize the project impact on natural resources. Some of these measures are: upgrading the wall and ceiling insulation, installing double pane low-e windows, venting all range hoods to the exterior, incorporating natural cooling with fresh air intake vents, installing fluorescent light bulbs, exterior photocell lighting controls, Energy Star appliances, and installing solar panels. Computer modeling was used to determine the heating and insulation needs, and resulted in the installation of efficient electric wall heaters that provide heating on a room by room basis.

Indoor Environmental Air Quality: Several measures were incorporated into the project to address indoor air quality including the use of low/no VOC and formaldehyde-free paint, solvent-free adhesives, sealing all exposed particle board or medium density fiberboard, and finger-jointed trim. All range hoods are vented to the exterior and all bedrooms and living rooms contain fresh air intake vents. These help ensure fresh air is circulated throughout the units, thereby preventing excess moisture and mold development.

Green Highlights

- Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan developed to prevent contaminants and sediments from leaving the project site
- Installation of on-site stormwater management system to remove contaminants, sediment and other debris before releasing into the public system
- Water conserving plant material and landscaping installed to minimize water use
- Bubble/vent tree irrigation system to encourage natural deep rooting, less water use over time, and less maintenance of adjacent planted areas
- Buildings and units oriented on an east/west axis to maximize solar access
- Solar photovoltaic panels on roof
- Large overhangs provided to help shade the buildings
- Optimal value engineering techniques, engineered lumber and wood I-joists for floors and ceilings used to reduce material consumption
- 30% fly ash used in the foundation concrete
- Ventilation and energy efficiency measures incorporated
- Upgraded wall and ceiling insulation
- Double pane low-e windows
- Outside venting of all range hoods
- Fresh air intake vents in bedrooms and living rooms provide natural cooling
- Fluorescent light bulbs and exterior photocell lighting controls
- Energy Star Appliances

Green Features



Water Conservation: To minimize water use, the project team selected plant material recommended by the East Bay Municipal Utility District for summer dry climates. Trees were placed on a bubbler/vent system to encourage natural deep rooting which results in less water use over time and lower maintenance of adjacent planted areas.

Commissioning: Formal commissioning was not performed for the Nuevo Amanecer Apartments.

Operations and Maintenance: Maintenance staff undergo standard training in all systems at the project site by the property supervisor. Arrangements are made periodically to meet green specification vendors and other professionals to ensure that project-specific equipment and systems are maintained correctly and that new and more efficient products are integrated where possible.

Resident Education: All residents are provided with an overview of the ventilation and heating systems in their units when they sign their lease and are assisted in optimizing their operation as needed.

Occupant Satisfaction:

“Our home is now a healthy environment, pretty, safe, and affordable for us. To see our children happy and in safe living conditions is a total change. We owe it all to the dedication of SCH to help make our homes livable.”

– Nuevo Amanecer Resident

Measurable Benefits

Solar PV System:

Energy savings due to the installation of solar panels is valued at about \$16,000 per year.

Dual Flush Toilets:

Dual flush toilets save approximately \$1,500 annually per building, which pays off the fixtures in less than 4 years.

Energy Efficiency:

All units exceed the California Title 24 Energy Efficiency Standards by over 20%. The project’s energy efficiency performance was verified by a licensed HERS rater.

Wood Waste Reduction:

Lumber use was reduced by 50% by optimal value engineering and the innovative spacing of joists, which avoided many old-growth solid sawn beams.

Project Financing

South County Housing helped offset the cost of integrating green features by obtaining several grants from sources such as the California Energy Commission, the Cowell Foundation, Global Green USA, and NeighborWorks® America. A Tax Credit Basis Boost was obtained for the net cost of the Solar Panel system. Funding sources included:

- California Housing Finance Agency
- County of Monterey
- Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)
- National Equity Fund
- NeighborWorks® America
- Redevelopment Agency of the County of Monterey
- Rural Community Assistance Corporation
- Santa Cruz Community Credit Union
- South County Housing Equity
- State of California Department of Housing and Community Development
- State of California Joe Serna, Jr. Farmworker Housing Grant
- USDA Sections 514 and 521 loans and grants for Farm Labor Housing

The multiple layers of funding made it possible for the apartments to be rented to families that earn between 40% and 60% of the area median income.





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Affordable Housing Built Responsibly Case Study

Looking Ahead

Challenges:

South County Housing had to overcome several environmental, regulatory and budgetary barriers to complete Nuevo Amanecer Apartments. The project site was located in a floodplain, existing structures contained lead and asbestos materials, an unknown vault with diesel fuel needed to be removed, there was a lack of staging area during construction, and 55 families had to be temporarily or permanently relocated. The largest budgetary barrier was the high cost of property acquisition, over \$4 million, due to the inflated cost of the dilapidated units that had been rented at market rates, the lack of other available sites, and the need to piece together multiple parcels. All these barriers were overcome through careful negotiations with all parties involved and favorable financing commitments from several funding partners. Creative solutions were identified and implemented including raising the entire site out of the floodplain, removing all hazardous materials while maintaining a streamlined redevelopment schedule, and partnering with local community groups to assist with the complicated resident relocation effort.

Partnerships:

Nuevo Amanecer is the result of collaboration among non-profit, government, community advocacy and private and public funding organizations to solve what appeared to be a hopeless farm worker housing situation. SCH worked with KTG Architects, the residents and the County of Monterey to design apartments that contained parking on the ground level and two additional stories of townhouse and flat style apartments above the garages. The design process included coordination with Global Green USA to incorporate green building systems and materials into all aspects of the development. A design charrette outlined potential green building features and follow-up meetings produced a comprehensive checklist to track and implement the green building goals. The design further included inputs from the residents, who requested a central green space to enhance their sense of community.

Policy/Practice Implications:

This project had a profound impact on the local community and has the potential to be a national model. This project serves as a powerful example of self-empowerment. The existing residents lived in deplorable, unaffordable conditions for decades. By taking the initiative and working closely with SCH, they were instrumental in the development of Nuevo Amanecer, radically improving their housing conditions. Residents are now proud of where they live. The success of these new, healthy, affordable homes will be sustained through the Health Collaborative, a joint effort involving the County Health Department, the local school district, the Center for Community Advocacy and others, to provide targeted health and social services to farm worker households.

“The Nuevo Amanecer Apartments developed by South County Housing overcame tremendous challenges to provide attractive, efficient and healthy workforce housing to farm worker households, some of the most marginalized members of the local community. Transforming the project site from a dilapidated brownfield to a vibrant community is a remarkable accomplishment.

-Member, Awards Advisory Committee



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