

THE GREENING OF SCH AND BEYOND

Contractors and architects trying to impress South County Housing better be green—or go green fast.

After 28 years of conventional home building, SCH and its affiliate, South County Community Builders, are up to their roofs in green construction technology. And they want companies that design, supply, and build for them to go green, too.

“If they can’t adapt to these improved ways of building, it will force us to look for other subcontractors who can.” said **Seth Capron**, SCCB Construction Program Manager. “The whole market is changing really fast. We’re a big player, so we’re working with our subcontractors, vendors, and architects to make sure they incorporate these new technologies.”

Don Ponzini, of Ponzini Insulation, Inc. in San Juan Bautista, CA, enjoyed a good business relationship with SCH for 15 years before things turned green. He adapted rather than face the alternative. “If we didn’t get the wet cellulose insulation, we would not be doing South County Housing’s work anymore,” he said. In 20 years in business, he added, he has never experienced a product change of this magnitude or that swept the industry so quickly.

JASMINE SQUARE TENANT GROUP

A MODEL FOR OTHERS

Even among South County Housing’s long record of successes, the story of Jasmine Square stands out as unique.

At SCH, we like to think we can teach folks a thing or two about building communities and neighborhoods that care and about empowering people. And we do. But we often learn as much or more than we teach. And Jasmine Square, a 72-unit, low-income apartment commu-



Dennis Lalor, SCH CEO/President (far left) joins Morgan Hill Mayor Steve Tate (center, blue shirt), city council members Greg Sellers, Marby Lee (to the mayor’s left), project manager Candace Koo (10th from left), and other partners for the Sept. 27, 2007 groundbreaking for Madrone Plaza, a milestone in SCH’s move into green technologies.

And future building plans are just part of the on-going greening of SCH. The rest of the story: SCH will retrofit some developments with green technology, such as solar heating that saves energy and cuts utility bills for low-income households.

SCH introduced green technologies slowly in multi-family developments in recent years. Technologies such as efficient furnaces save energy, while the use of non-toxic adhesives fosters healthy living environments. Those

and more advanced methods are now common in SCH apartment construction and single-family developments. The trend will intensify until “things that are green today will be standard tomorrow,” said **Capron**.

SCH was spurred in part to go greener by a \$60,000 grant from the Enterprise Foundation for energy-saving and healthy-living-environment features in some of its below-market-rate homes at Madrone Plaza in Morgan Hill, CA. But the grant also inspired SCH to reexamine all of its building practices, create an internal “Green Committee,” and begin to track and analyze the cost benefits of green technology.

“It’s an education process and it’s going to take time and a huge team effort,” said SCH project manager **Candace Koo**. “There are new things happening all the time and we want to be able to stay ahead of the curve.”

Setting the green bar high has not gone unnoticed. In April, the Morgan

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NeighborWorks & SCH—A Perfect Fit

NeighborWorks® America is a Congressionally-chartered nonprofit that uses taxpayer dollars to provide financial support, technical assistance, and training to revitalize communities across the nation. Its mission is to create opportunities for people to live in affordable homes, improve their lives and strengthen their communities, according to **Richard Castro**, who handles communications and public affairs for the NeighborWorks Pacific District.

Castro was the driving force behind the SCH-NeighborWorks partnership – but not as a NeighborWorks employee. He



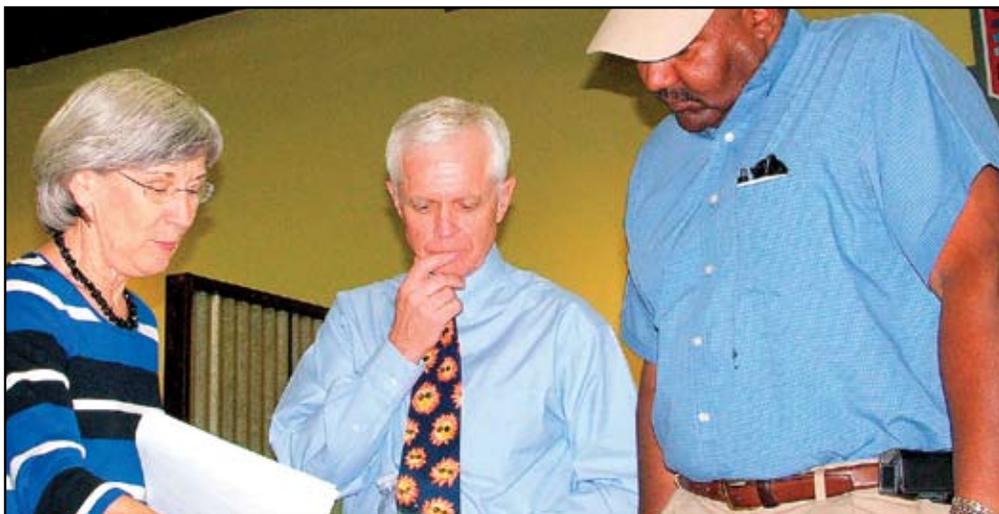
Cynthia Iwanaga

did communications and fund development work for SCH in the late 1990s and approached NeighborWorks for a grant. Convinced the nation-wide organization—then with 169 members—and SCH would be

a perfect fit for each other, he persisted in his drive to bring SCH into what he saw as a terrific network of like organizations and a long-term funding source for SCH, he said.

Then, shortly before NeighborWorks chartered SCH in October, 2000, **Castro** left SCH and took a position with the national organization.

Since 2001, NeighborWorks® America has increased its member organizations by 65, invested more than \$4 million alone in support of SCH's mission to provide affordable housing and improve lives and communities. The funds come in small amounts and large—from \$20,000 for a resident leadership training program,



NeighborWorks® America CEO Kenneth D. Wade (right) and Management Consultant-Relationship Management specialist Joe Dabek view plans for SCH's downtown Gilroy CA Cannery District project with Senior Project Manager Nancy Wright.

“The NeighborWorks grant was crucial in getting the project started,” said SCH project manager, **Cynthia Iwanaga**. “Without it we would have had to borrow expensive predevelopment funding.” Royal Court targets very low- to moderate-income families and has 12 single-family homes and 55 apartments. Residents celebrated the grand opening on October 30.



Margaret Frisbee

“We’re proud to be part of an organization with the reputation and history of accomplishment that NeighborWorks has, and we’re doing our part to keep that legacy going,” said **Dennis Lalor**, SCH President/CEO.

According to **Margaret Frisbee**, Pacific

District Director of NeighborWorks® America, SCH is exactly the kind of community development group the national organization needs in its ranks to fulfill its Congressionally-chartered mission to revitalize neighborhoods and communities throughout the nation.



Richard Castro

“NeighborWorks® America is proud of our role in providing financial resources

to South County Housing Inc. (SCH). Because of their expertise in producing quality housing developments, SCH is a shining example of the type of organization that we are proud to embrace as a NeighborWorks affiliate.”

NeighborWorks’ assistance goes way beyond dollars, to include vital support in the form of technical assistance and training, according to **Lalor**.

“NeighborWorks is 236 of the most accomplished community development corporations in the county and being part of that network has been a tremendous advantage to us in refining and implementing our mission,” **Lalor** said. “The capital help has had a big impact on our ability to pursue our mission and the technical assistance and training are extremely valuable.”

Castro said, “To achieve our mission, NeighborWorks partners with the best of the best, 236 locally-controlled community development corporations in all 50 states – including South County Housing Corporation – that are highly efficient and effective. SCH is one of our exemplary organizations.”

NeighborWorks and SCH partner through a charter agreement that sets forth standards for performance to ensure a consistently high level of productivity. NeighborWorks mandates annual reviews, data reporting, and submission of independent audits from members to protect the taxpayer’s investment in NeighborWorks® America, **Castro** said.



for example, to \$200,000 to help cover predevelopment costs our new mix-income Royal Court Community in Morgan Hill, CA.

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benevolent Jasmine Square Resident Council—one small community’s way to take control of their neighborhood and take care of their neighbors.

Council members and residents actively reach out to existing and new SCH communities with everything from advice on how to create their own councils to clothing, food, furniture, and holiday toy giveaways. And they’ve engaged members of the larger, and largely affluent, Morgan Hill community to participate through donations of clothing, furniture, and toys.

So dedicated is the Jasmine Square RC to helping others that on Oct. 30 its five members, three handicapped

and in wheelchairs, traveled a mile or two up the road to be part of the Grand Opening ceremonies for Royal Court, a SCH mixed income community of low-income apartments and single-family homes also in Morgan Hill.

“They are truly a group that exemplifies what a community can do if they set their mind to it,” said **Rachael Castro**, a SCH Neighborhood Development Department expert who, with colleague **Daniel J. Chavez**, helped prepare Jasmine’s council.



Rachael Castro



Daniel J. Chavez

Council President **Elaine Hays**, a 40-year-old mother of five, expressed the council’s overall approach this way: “This job is about not doing for self, but doing for others and creating a community that is safe for our kids to grow up in.”

Said Vice President **Evan Meeker**, 60, “The

resident council turned out to be a fantastic thing; we are so proud of our community... [And] South County Housing is the backbone of our resident council; it’s there when we need help.”

Other council officials include Evan’s wife, **Glenda Meeker**, a director; Secretary **Karla Sewell**; and treasurer **Gabriela Mejia Leal**.

Among the council’s other successes have been community barbecues, car washes, a successful grant application to the prestigious Silicon Valley Community Foundation, movie nights, well-attended council meetings that include free dinners for all participants and, in all, more than 50 successful community events in the past year alone.

For **Meeker** and **Hays** it’s all about mutual respect, inclusion, sharing, helping one another, maintaining a clean and safe environment, and turning neighbors into friends—because, as Hays explains, “We are all in this together, we are all alike, we are all in low-income housing, and if there are blessings to be shared, we share them with everyone.”



Jasmine Square Resident Council, from left: Evan Meeker, vice president; Glenda Meeker, director; Gabby Mejia Leal, treasurer; Elaine Hays, president; Karla Sewell, secretary.

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Hill, CA, Chamber of Commerce honored SCH with an Excellence Award for Stewardship of the Natural Environment.

And close to home, too. Madrone Plaza in Morgan Hill is a 95-home, mixed-income development that broke ground in late September. It will be SCH’s first completed green-by-design, single-family homeowner community—and its most ambitiously green single-family project to date. SCH’s 210-unit homeownership development now under construction in downtown Gilroy, CA, the Cannery District project, uses easy-on-the-earth practices, too, all designed to save energy, money, and resources and benefit homeowners, the larger community, and the planet.

They include some or all the following: 90 percent efficient high-energy

furnaces, low VOC paint and adhesives, Energy Star appliances, water-saver toilets and shower heads, super low-E glaze windows, blown-in cellulose insulation made from recycled newspapers, formaldehyde-free cabinetry, and manufactured lumber products.

Add to the list linseed oil-based linoleum instead of petroleum-gobbling vinyl, insulated water lines, hot water recirculation pumps, super duct seals, aluminum-faced roof sheathing, and humidity-controlling bathroom fans. The new approach also calls for fluorescent lighting, and water- and energy-miser landscaping. And attached town homes in both projects save energy by reducing exterior wall area.

At the 14-unit Nuevo Sol project-for the chronically homeless and disabled-in Santa Cruz, CA, SCH used even more green technology, including photovoltaic power generation and



Candace Koo

recycled-content carpets. Undertaken in partnership with the city and Santa Cruz County, the development shows just how far beyond the curve SCH is with planet-pleasing construction. Under the city’s project rating system, proposals need at least 37 green points for permit eligibility; Nuevo Sol earned 108 green points.

What’s next? Perhaps the ultimate in green technology, Hillview Homes, an entire development of affordable, passive solar houses planned for Hollister, CA.

The Hillview project represents yet another step along the path to what **Capron** said is the green dream, zero-energy-consumption homes. “We will get there,” he said. “Our staff is committed to building a quality product and when we bring in these technologies they get excited. Everything we build going forward will incorporate some level of attention to green awareness.”



Seth Capron

Rah, Rah, Siss, Boom, Bah, Go Kids!

In our quest to help low wage families better their lives and futures, one of our most successful partnerships is with Go Kids (CQ), Inc.

Go Kids provides affordable, often subsidized, child care for working families in nine centers and through a network of 200 licensed home providers that reach as many as 1,400 children a year in the same California counties served by SCH—Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Monterey, and San Benito.

“The partnership makes all the sense in the world,” said **Larry Drury**, Go Kids’ executive director. “It was a natural, logical evolution of our collaboration” to provide housing and child care to low-income families.

“We tend to help the same [low-income] folks,” said Go Kids Deputy Director, **Cathy “CB” Boettcher**. “Housing and child care are so closely related in that they take a huge percentage of the household income every month.”

So close is the relationship that two modern, stand-alone Go Kids child development centers are located by design within SCH-built communities where they are able to provide first-priority services for qualified SCH families. One center is at the 72-unit Jasmine Square low-income apartments in Morgan Hill, CA. The other, in Gilroy, represents a watershed in a partnership that previously had



SCH family Veronica Correa with children Maritza and Everardo at the Go Kids® Los Arroyos Child Development Center in Gilroy CA. The Correas live in the nearby Monticelli Apartments, part SCH’s 373-unit mixed-income, mixed-use Los Arroyos master planned development completed in Gilroy in 2003.

been limited to one child care provider in a small SCH shared-housing development.

Located in the center of SCH’s largest development, the 373-unit mixed-income, Los Arroyos community, the two-story facility in Gilroy combines a child care center on the first floor and Go Kids’ corporate offices upstairs.

Go Kids has provided services in south Santa Clara County for 27 years and

prior to March 2001 was called Growth and Opportunity, Inc. Its programs serve preschool and school-age children and include health and nutrition education, social service referrals, computer learning, and parental involvement. Through its Learning Independence for Tomorrow (LIFT) program, Go Kids also provides child care scholarships, family strengthening classes, parenting and budgeting seminars, and access to a variety of community resources.

SCH Mission Statement:

“To promote viable neighborhoods that enhance healthy, sustainable communities by collaboratively providing affordable housing and neighborhood services.”



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“How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world”.

— Anne Frank