

Project Name: Emerald Vista – A Successful Public-Private Partnership to Create an Integrated Residential Neighborhood
Applicant: City of Dublin, California
Award Category: Community Partnership Award

The Challenge:

Throughout the United States, thousands of aging public housing units have fallen into disrepair, and limited funding has made it extremely challenging — if not impossible — for communities to upgrade this important source of affordable housing. In many cases, the inability of communities to revitalize this housing has resulted in units being demolished without replacement. At the same time, costs of developing infill parcels have increased and have impacted the production of affordable housing even further.

Rather than ignore these challenges and pressures, the City of Dublin showed leadership and vision in its approach to revitalizing and re-imagining the one public housing development in its community: Arroyo Vista. Built in the early 1980's, Arroyo Vista was comprised of 150 garden apartments that served low-income households. Over the years, the development had fallen into significant disrepair. The residents and the City Council wanted to improve the property, but had virtually no funding options in the public housing system to upgrade the units and improve the quality of life for the residents. Scarce available federal resources, like the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)'s HOPE VI program, were targeting big city projects.

Yet, City leaders were resolute and clear: Figure out a way to preserve the affordable housing; create a more vibrant mixed-income community; and provide amenities for the whole neighborhood — all with an eye towards creating a greener, more sustainable community. The project site has a lot of benefits: it is a conveniently-located neighborhood with nearby schools in the high-performing Dublin Unified School District; it is close to parks and shopping; and it benefits from easy access to the Dublin/Pleasanton Bay Area Rapid Transit District (BART) commuter rail station via the nearby Iron Horse Regional Trail.

To meet our community's goals, Dublin established a partnership with both a non-profit and market rate builder with the goal of creating a vibrant new neighborhood with open space, links to resources, and on-site community amenities, in a new development called Emerald Vista. The approach used with Emerald Vista could be replicated in any community that has publicly-owned property that it would like to see repurposed as a mixed-income community.

The Solution:

Once it was realized that the cost to repair and rehabilitate the existing neighborhood was infeasible, the wholesale redevelopment of the site was chosen as the path forward. Together, the City and the Housing Authority of Alameda County worked with the existing Arroyo Vista residents to formulate a plan to create a new neighborhood that would continue to serve the low-income residents that relied on rental units, as well as create new opportunities for home ownership. The City and the Housing Authority selected a development partner that shared their values for long-term, high-quality affordable housing. Eden Housing, one of California's oldest and most successful non-profit developers, had previously built a successful project in Dublin, and they were the preferred choice.

In addition to leadership and forward-thinking policies, the City made a substantial financial investment - \$7.6 million - utilizing nearly 80% of the City's overall housing fund. On top of the City funds, KB Home, the

market-rate, home-builder partner in the project, paid the Housing Authority \$12 million for the land. \$11 million of this was reinvested into the replacement of affordable housing units. Eden Housing also secured \$24 million in Low-Income Housing Tax Credits.

At the federal level, HUD played a key role by approving the Housing Authority's disposition of the old project so that the 150 units of public housing could be redeveloped as *privately owned* affordable housing. Changes to HUD's regulation of the Housing Choice Voucher Program also made it possible for the Housing Authority to provide project-based Section 8 contracts for 100% of the senior apartments and 25% of the family apartments (81 total vouchers).

The construction phasing required that all of the existing tenants temporarily relocate, but the City worked with the Housing Authority to ensure that every tenant had access to vouchers in order to maintain their current level of rent affordability. This provided residents the ability to move to housing that was newer and with more amenities than the existing Arroyo Vista complex. The former Arroyo Vista residents were given first priority in returning to the Emerald Vista development, and many chose to come back to the renewed community.

The four main project proponents (City, Housing Authority, non-profit builder, and market-rate builder) worked collaboratively throughout the process to hire an excellent design team and to ensure that the concepts that were created could be carried forward into construction and implementation. The planning process included all key stakeholders, including existing residents, so that the resulting project would truly reflect the needs of the community.

This team worked hard together — through the recession and real estate market crash — crafting and re-crafting plans to make this unique project possible. The final development plan called for a number of key components, but perhaps most important was the partnership with a market-rate home builder who would help subsidize the replacement of the public housing units by purchasing land for their own residential development. KB Home stepped into this role and provided critical capital and construction assistance.

The Results:

Construction started at Emerald Vista in 2012, and prior to January 31, 2015, construction, occupancy, and the sale of all homes had been completed. 150 units of dilapidated public housing were replaced with 180 affordable apartments – a net gain in critically needed affordable housing for the region. Fifty of these units serve seniors and 130 units serve families. All of these homes are targeted to households with incomes between 30 – 50% of the Area Median Income. In addition to these affordable apartments, 198 for-sale single family and townhomes offer a range of housing choices to Dublin families and residents. Fourteen of the for-sale units were reserved for moderate income households.

The neighborhood components and amenities are described below:

- Carlow Court. 50 affordable apartments for seniors that are operated and maintained by Eden Housing. Programs offered to the residents include those designed to help seniors “age in place” and live independently for as long as possible.
- Wexford Way. 130 affordable apartments for families that are operated and maintained by Eden Housing. The apartments have been developed using the latest green building techniques and

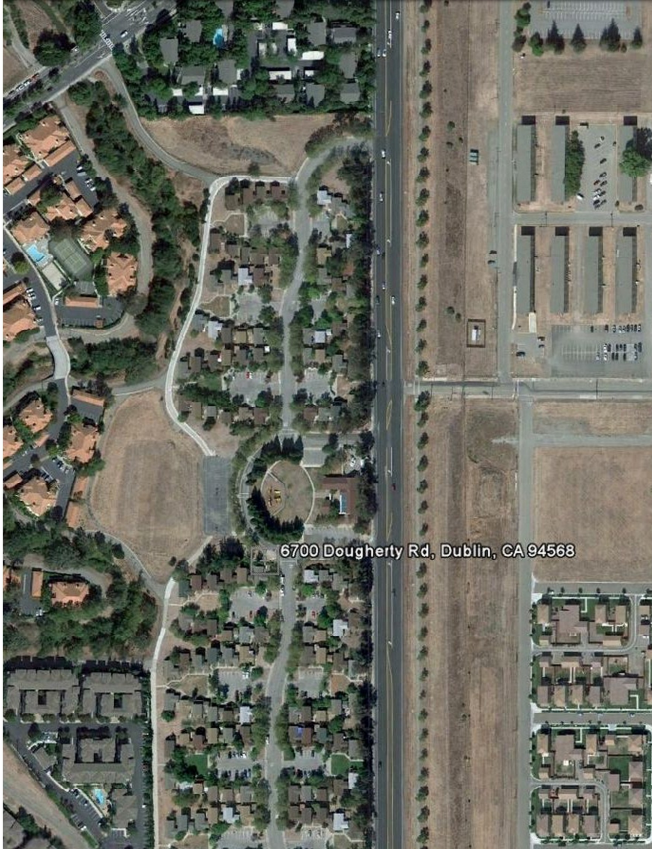
materials -- including solar hot water and solar photovoltaics scoring over 100 points on Build it Green's GreenPoint Rating system.

- For sale housing. 184 market rate and 14 below market rate for-sale single family homes and townhomes that were built by KB Home. All of the new homes are both ENERGY STAR® qualified and GreenPoint Rated, designed and built to help reduce energy bills.
- Emerald Vista Community Center. Through Eden Housing's free services, residents of Emerald Vista can benefit from technology training, financial literacy, community involvement, and classes on health, wellness, and safety. Additionally, the Dublin Unified School District and the YMCA of the East Bay have formed a partnership to serve youth residing at Eden's Wexford Way apartments with comprehensive on-site after-school activities. A full array of YMCA programming is available, including homework tutorials, recreational programs and technology support in the computer lab.
- Kidango Childcare Center. Kidango's Emerald Vista Center serves pre-school aged children from both within the neighborhood and throughout the area.

The Public Agency/Private Developer team was able to complete the transformation from the Arroyo Vista public housing project to the Emerald Vista neighborhood without forcing any of the existing residents to be permanently displaced.

All of the single-family and townhome market rate units sold at a very brisk pace. This illustrates that, with a well-designed and well-integrated neighborhood, it is possible to overcome the stigma associated with affordable housing, and demonstrates that market-rate buyers are willing to purchase homes immediately adjacent to an affordable development. The City of Dublin and its development partners — including the Housing Authority of the County of Alameda, Eden Housing, and KB Home — are extremely proud of Emerald Vista. Emerald Vista has been recognized by such organizations as: League of California Cities, with its distinguished Helen Putnam Award; Silicon Valley Leadership Group, Red Tape to Red Carpet Award; the Urban Land Institutes' Jack Kemp Award; Growing Smarter Together Award (Association of Bay Area Governments); and the 20th Annual Charles L. Edson Tax Credit Excellence – Public Housing from the Affordable Housing Tax Credit Coalition. We believe that this development exemplifies an innovative approach to providing housing for all income levels within a cohesive community.

Arroyo Vista Public Housing Project (Pre-Development)



A New Residential Neighborhood Takes Shape at Emerald Vista

