

**Buildings at Strathern Park, developed for low income residents in Sun Valley, California, are sited around separate courtyards.**

# Family-Friendly

Function weds affordability in housing designed with kids in mind

**A**ssignment: design a secure low-income rental development for big families with young kids in a tough neighborhood. Result: Strathern Park, located in a largely Hispanic enclave in Sun Valley, California, north of North Hollywood, a recent PCBC Gold Nugget Grand Award winner in the Best Affordable Housing Development category.

Five years in planning, the 241-unit, \$25.5 million infill development was financed by a unique combination of funds from HUD, the Community Redevelopment Agency of Los Angeles and private sources. Construction started in the middle of 1990, and first move-ins were in December 1991.

Developer Thomas Safran built the property with the intention of keeping it and managing it. "The design criteria were set by the kind of project he wanted to run," said Dan Withee, partner in the architectural firm Withee Malcolm.



## PROJECT AT A GLANCE

PROJECT: Strathern Park Apartments  
DEVELOPER: Thomas Safran & Assoc.  
ARCHITECT: The Withee Malcolm Partnership, Architects  
LAND PLANNER: The Withee Malcolm Partnership, Architects  
CONTRACTOR: Strathern Park Builders  
TYPE OF PROJECT: Low-income apartments  
TOTAL ACREAGE: 8.68  
NUMBER OF UNITS: 241 in 18 buildings  
TARGET MARKET: Low-income (50-60 percent median), mostly Hispanic families  
PRICE RANGE: Very low income: \$340 - \$571/monthly; low income: \$426 - \$669  
SQUARE FOOTAGE PER UNIT: 605 - 1420  
OCCUPANCY: 100 percent  
DEVELOPMENT COST: \$48/sq.ft.  
PHOTO CREDIT: Steve Keating

## PRODUCT SOURCES

ROOFING: Celotex Dimensional IV  
SIDING: Shakertown Cascade Classic Siding/Contemporary  
WINDOWS: Sunair Aluminum Corp.  
ENTRY DOORS: Thermo-Tru  
INTERIOR DOORS: Thermo-Tru  
HARDWARE: Schlage  
FLOORING: Design Weave/Hampshire II  
**KITCHENS:**  
CABINETS: Valley Casework  
APPLIANCES: General Electric  
COUNTERTOPS: Wilsonart  
SINKS, FAUCETS: Norris double bowl #822  
FLOORING: Armstrong - Cambrey  
**BATHS:**  
CABINETS: Valley Casework  
TUB, SINKS, FAUCETS: Tub - Hessco Industries Medley DL-2017-SR; sink - Kilgore; faucet - Delta # 520  
FLOORING: Armstrong - Cambrey

For more information on these products, Circle No. 50 on product card.



**I**ndoors, that meant one to five bedrooms centered around the kitchen area as a focus for family socializing during food preparation and mealtimes. Pantries next to the dining areas add storage space. "The biggest challenge in affordable housing is to build as much function as possible into limited space," said Withee. Large closets were part of the solution, as were decks and patios that could also accommodate storage. Most of the units are two- and three-bedrooms.

Vaulted ceilings in second-floor apartments add a sense of openness. Every upstairs unit has a balcony and all first-floor apartments have fenced-in patios surrounded by concrete planters. "We focused on keeping the rooms as flexible as possible," Withee said.

Outside, buildings are sited around different courtyards with tot lots and children's play areas that

function as activity and social centers for the kids and their mothers. Each courtyard also has laundry rooms that look out on the play areas, and picnic tables, barbecues, and other seating. Walkways connect the various courtyards.

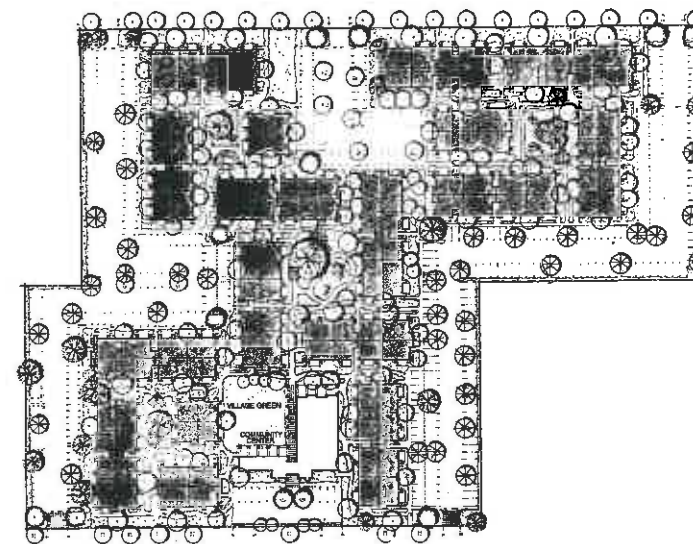
The developer also wanted Strathern Park to blend with the two-story character of the surrounding neighborhood. At a density of 27.8 to the acre, the 241 apartments are arranged in 18 eight- and 16-plexes, so that there are no interior corridors. "The trick was to get the density without stringing out the buildings," Withee explained.

The site was graced with several 50-year-old trees, and Withee Malcolm saved as many as possible, moving the largest into the courtyards to provide shade. Cedar shingles complement the landscaping.

The entire site is gated, and residents have to buzz in visitors. Strathern Park was completely rented within the first day of leasing, and has a waiting list of 5,000.



First-floor apartments have fenced-in patios; second-floor units have balconies. Interiors maximize storage and seem spacious.



Each courtyard has tot lots. Laundry rooms look out on children's play areas, and seating and picnic tables make comfortable and secure areas for mothers to watch youngsters.