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Redevelopment

Building Better Communities

Casa Dominguez—Los Angeles:

Innovative and sustainable affordable housing community by Los Angeles County and Adobe Communities.



California Redevelopment Association



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PROPOSITION 22 WINS!

Casa Dominguez: Sustainable, Affordable Housing Brought to Life

by Robin Hughes, President, Abode Communities

A collaborative effort between Los Angeles County and Abode Communities made possible the highly successful application of public agency resources which brought sustainable, affordable housing to a Southern California community. Designed, developed, and managed by Abode Communities, Casa Dominguez is an award-winning development which integrated much-needed affordable housing and a Family Resource Development Center in East Rancho Dominguez.

“Never before has there been an affordable housing development that includes a health clinic, daycare and secure, permanent housing for transition-aged youth, in a LEED Platinum-certified, energy efficient building,” said Sean Rogan, Executive Director for the Community Development Commission of the County of Los Angeles.

The Casa Dominguez community serves low-income families and offers a variety of services, including child care, healthcare, and parent resources. It is also the first permanent affordable housing complex in Los Angeles County for young adults transitioning out of the foster care system. Working families are given the tools necessary to sustain healthy, successful lives: affordable, safe housing; affordable, accessible childcare and medical care; access to technology and information; and a lifestyle that supports environmental stewardship.

Assessing Community Need

The 3.58-acre former brownfield site in the East Rancho Dominguez redevelopment project area was completely vacant before Abode Communities began its work. Blight had persisted in the form of unauthorized use of the site for squatting and illegal dumping. Abode Communities was selected by the Community Development Commission of the County of Los Angeles to develop the site for a mixed-use building with affordable rental housing. After

conducting a market assessment, Abode Communities discovered a greater need for community services such as child care and health care, rather than commercial use.



In addition, the discarded site offered a prime opportunity to address important issues such as affordable housing and overcrowding. Abode Communities sought to alleviate financial pressure for families earning at or below 50 percent of the Area Median Income, or less than \$39,650 per year for a family of four, by offering rents ranging from \$396 to \$1,279 per month at Casa Dominguez, as compared to market rents in the area of \$916 to \$1,800.

Funding partners for the \$28 million development included Citi Community Capital, the Community Development Commission as well as the Housing Authority of the County of Los Angeles, Federal Home Loan Bank of San Francisco, US Bancorp Community Development Corporation, Enterprise Green Communities, Southern California Edison New Solar Homes Program, Southern California Gas Company California Advanced Home Program, County of Los Angeles Homeless Service Center, and The Ralph M. Parsons Foundation.

Urban Infill Meets Sustainable Living

Casa Dominguez is a commendable example of smart growth and infill development, having earned the LEED for Homes Platinum certification. The community



promotes a plethora of sustainable practices, including the first commercial gray water irrigation system in Los Angeles County; an 84.87 kW (DC) Solar Energy System that provides 100% of the energy needs of the common-areas; ENERGY STAR® appliances; High Efficiency-Low E windows; blown-in insulation; natural lighting and ventilation; formaldehyde-free cabinetry; low-VOC paints and floor coverings; and low-flow plumbing fixtures.

To enable residents of Casa Dominguez to participate in the green movement, information on green living, including custom “green guides,” seminars on energy usage, and tutorials on the energy-efficient appliances, are available. The community room houses a video monitor detailing the property’s energy usage, providing the residents with up-to-date information regarding energy consumption.

Safety-Net of Supportive, Place-Based Resident Services

The robust resident services program at Casa Dominguez offers families the comfort and confidence to care for and educate their children, while providing necessary skills for survival in today’s job market. As part of the resident-services programming, Abode Communities employs a full-time coordinator and computer lab instructor to provide programs such as after-school tutoring, college preparatory courses, parenting classes, job skills workshops, career counseling, computer training, and English as a Second Language (ESL) classes.

The Family Development Center offers on-site child care and medical care to Casa Dominguez residents and members of the surrounding community. The Children’s Collective, a high-quality preschool, and St. John’s Well Child and Family Center, a Federally Qualified Health Center that provides medical, dental and mental health services to the uninsured and economically disadvantaged, are fundamental pieces of this project, as these facilities were lacking in the community.

A Place to Call Home

In addition to the resident services at Casa Dominguez, Abode Communities partnered with United Friends of the Children to become the first permanent supportive affordable housing in Los Angeles County for transition-aged foster youth, a demographic that is plagued by homelessness and housing instability. Through housing and education programs, foster youth are provided with the opportunity to graduate from high school, attend and graduate from college, find employment and housing, and have a support system that moves them gradually towards independence.

“Having the opportunity to have housing that is not only affordable but also offers so many advantages like onsite childcare, health and dental clinic, is a blessing that I wish every former foster youth could have. It’s great knowing you have a place to go home, a place you can call your own, especially when it’s as nice as Casa Dominguez,” says Rionnisha Bryant, Youth Advocate and Alumnus of the Pathways Transitional Living Program of United Friends of the Children.