

# Casa Feliz Studios CASE STUDY



**Casa Feliz Studios**, located in downtown San Jose, is a 60 unit Single Room Occupancy (SRO) residential building serving extremely low income tenants (20-35% AMI) which will remain at affordable rents for a period of 55 years. These energy-efficient efficiencies provide private bathrooms and kitchens on this infill site near transit. The four story building has one level of parking below, a courtyard with a front porch, and landscaped common areas front and back. The Architect is **Rob Wellington Quigley, FAIA**, an award-winning architectural firm that designed this building to replace an existing SRO and to enhance the existing neighborhood.

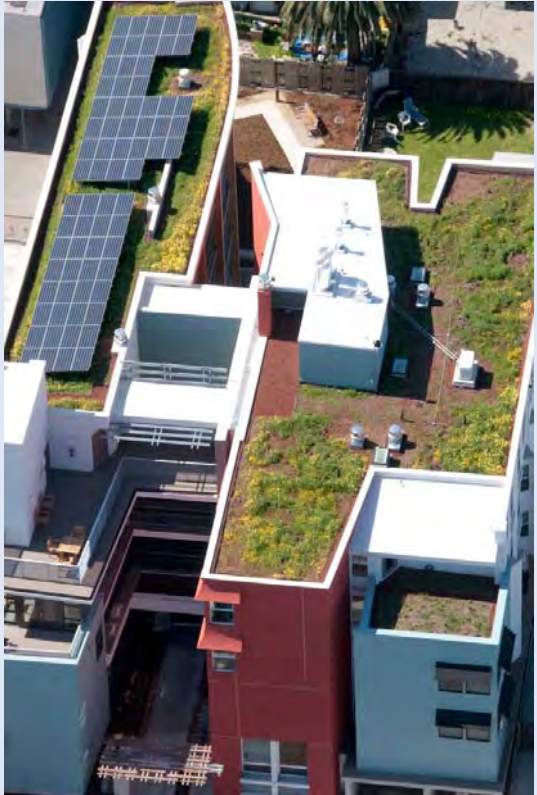
Twenty-one (or 35%) of the units are set aside for residents with developmental disabilities. Services for Casa Feliz residents with developmental disabilities are provided through the **San Andreas Regional Center. Housing Choices Coalition** provides Resident Services Coordination to Casa Feliz residents with developmental disabilities, and facilitates communication between these residents and property management.



**Construction Lenders**  
Construction was financed by tax credits, tax-exempt bond financing from U.S. Bank (\$10.5 million) and residual receipts loans and grants from the City of San Jose (\$1,000,000 w/a \$150,000 grant), AHP (\$400,000), and the State of California (\$1,171,000). The General Partner contributed to the construction budget in the form of deferred developer fee to ensure that the required \$15.6 million of construction funds were available.

- Permanent Financing**
- Tax credit equity \$6.2 million.
  - Residual receipts loan from MHP \$7,000,000.
  - Residual receipts loan and grant from the City of San Jose \$1,150,000.

Casa Feliz was completed in April of 2009 for a total construction cost of \$15.7 million.



**Casa Feliz Studios** is one of the larger MHP supportive housing developments designed to mainstream developmentally disabled residents. Residents have access to a computer learning center and are provided with services tailored to support low income tenants, such as financial literacy training, and computer literacy programs. **Housing Choices Coalition** provides resident services coordination for residents who have developmental disabilities, and facilitates communication between these residents, their individual case managers and other support staff, and the property management team. Individual tenant's case managers and other support staff are funded through the **San Andreas Regional Center**.

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www.firsthousing.org

**Building Community First.**

**Casa Feliz Studios**  
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## Project Overview

### History:

The original Casa Feliz was built in 1960 as one of the first privately developed fraternity houses in the City of San Jose. In the 1990's, it was converted to a 60 unit SRO with group bathrooms and communal kitchen to serve low income recipients of mental health services. The non-profit group who was General Partner of Casa Feliz went into bankruptcy in the late 1990's and the building was managed for over seven years in this condition. The building fell into severe disrepair and became a blight on the host neighborhood.



The original Casa Feliz

### Turning Point:

In 2003, First Community Housing formed a partnership with the John Stewart Company, who was managing the building, to replace the existing building with a new SRO residential structure and to continue providing housing to at-risk populations. Owing to state law that requires a unit to unit replacement in affordable housing, Casa Feliz was re-designed with 60 units including a one bedroom Manager's Apartment and 59 SRO units averaging 255 square feet each. Each unit has a full bath, easily adapted to full accessibility at a tenant's request, and a kitchenette and built in cabinets. Because the zoning in this neighborhood limited building height to three stories, a special zoning variance was required in order to construct a four-story building that could house 60 units. All former residents were relocated with assistance from the City of San Jose Housing Department and The John Stewart Company.

FCH held community outreach and focus group workshops in anticipation of the design effort because there had been some neighborhood concern about how the building would affect the historic fabric of the neighborhood. After several neighborhood meetings with architect Rob Quigley FAIA, it was decided that a more contemporary building would add new energy to the neighborhood.

### Building Concept:

The tight, 0.4 acre infill site with a requirement of 60 replacement units dictated an extremely creative, efficient design. In addition, the owner, First Community Housing was committed to producing a sustainable building that would receive at least a LEED for New Construction 2.2 Silver Rating.

Because the original building served special needs tenants, it was decided that the new Casa Feliz should serve tenants earning 20-35% of County Average Median Income [AMI] and that 35% of the tenants should be persons with developmental disabilities.

This population is in extreme need of housing, and the developmentally disabled tenants rely upon public transit and do not drive automobiles. First Community Housing provides all tenants with a free, annual Eco Pass for county-wide buses and light rail transportation, and therefore the buildings' parking requirement is for twenty-two parking spaces. These parking spaces are provided below the building in a naturally ventilated below grade garage.



### Green features:

Casa Feliz green building strategies include:

- Forbo Linoleum ("Marmoleum") Floors
- Shaw "Ecoworx" recycled content Carpet
- Bamboo floors in common area
- Over 90% construction waste recycling
- All low flow plumbing fixtures
- All water based low-VOC emitting adhesives
- Recycled content "Fiber Force" fence boards
- Non-formaldehyde, and low-VOC emitting cabinets
- Forest Stewardship Council certified sustainably harvested ironwood ["Ipe"] site benches
- 99% recyclable Steelcase office chairs
- 16.1 Kw Photovoltaic System
- Casa Feliz is a non-smoking building
- Vegetated roof supplying a wildlife habitat

The small, tight parcel required taking advantage of every opportunity to provide natural light, particularly into the interior core, common spaces. Another priority was the provision of as much natural ventilation and toxic-free building materials as possible. Each unit has its own ventilation system with linoleum flooring, low VOC-emitting adhesives and non-urea formaldehyde built in cabinets.

Casa Feliz won two water conservation awards in 2009 from the Santa Clara Valley Urban Runoff Pollution Prevention Program and the Silicon Valley Water Conservation Awards.

## Sustainability

A grant from the City of San Jose Housing Department provided for the installation of a photovoltaic system on the south roof.



### The Living Roof:

Preliminary meetings with the City Public Works Department resulted in a requirement to replace and upgrade the existing storm sewer to a 100 year flood capacity for an estimated cost of over \$300,000. FCH became interested in using a vegetated roof as a way of mitigating the storm sewer requirement. Paul Kephart of Rana Creek provided FCH with design assistance using this "revised" technology.

Preliminary analysis showed that the installation of a living roof could reduce the storm water runoff to such an extent that only a new 10 year event pipe would be required and this could be accomplished, equivalent to or less than the 100 year storm sewer "upgrade".



Additionally, the living roof provided other benefits, including:

- Increased roof insulation and cooling to the top floor,
- Reduced ambient heat reflected from the roof,
- Increased life to the roof substrate due to the blocking of ultraviolet wavelengths of light,
- A planting palette that attracts pollinating insects.

Rana Creek grows the plants it installs, they are all native and organically grown, and the planting medium does not contain pesticides.

At Casa Feliz, the north living roof is sewn with scattered seeds. The living roof on the south roof is under the photovoltaic system racks and is planted with ferns. Several lower roofs at Casa Feliz are planted with sedum grown by Rana Creek and placed in 18" x 18" patented coconut shell, four inch deep "baskets".

Both planted areas will be maintained for approximately two years until they are established and can be left unattended. The living roofs on the rooftop are not intended for tenant recreation or public viewing due to their size and lack of pedestrian capacity.



### LEED:

Casa Feliz is certified LEED NC 2.2 Gold. The living roof contributed to five LEED credits and two innovation points.

## The Casa Feliz Team

### Owner/Developer:

#### First Community Housing

Jeff Oberdorfer, FAIA, Executive Director  
Shelley Ratay, Project Manager  
Marty Keller, Director of Construction Management

### Co-Developer:

#### The John Stewart Company

Jack Gardner, President

### City of San Jose:

#### Housing Department

Leslye Krutko, Director

### Architect:

#### Rob Wellington Quigley Architects, FAIA

Rob Quigley, FAIA Principal  
Wendell Shackelford, Project Architect  
Maryanne Welton, Project Manager

### General Contractor:

#### Branagh Construction, Inc.

Tom Branagh, Principal  
Alan Heikkinen, Project Estimator  
Mark Manuel, Superintendent

### Green Building Consultant:

#### Simon & Associates

Lynn N. Simon, AIA, LEED AP, Principal  
William Worthen, AIA, LEED AP, Project Manager  
Marian Keeler, Associate AIA, LEED AP, Project Manager

### Living Roof Consultants:

#### Rana Creek Habitat Restoration

Paul Kephart, Executive Director