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## BRIDGE(ing) the Affordable Housing Gap

San Diego County is in the midst of an affordable housing shortage — and more units could be lost as government-aided housing agreements expire over time. And the state of California isn't fairs much better based on a report released by the California Housing Partnership Corporation.

BRIDGE Housing, a firm formed in 1983 to address the affordable housing shortage, is doing their part to fill the gap. One of their recent developments, COMM22, is a mixed-use, mixed-income, transit-oriented development located at Commercial and 22nd streets. The development combines much-needed affordable family and senior rental housing with day care facilities, commercial and retail space, affordable townhomes that are currently under development, and future market-rate flats.



Set within a blighted urban neighborhood, this redevelopment project is much more than just the building of affordable housing, "it's about building community," said David Alvarez, San Diego City Councilmember for the area. "The site sat in the middle of the community untouched for years. It is a long time coming."

BRIDGE Housing knew that it faced some interesting environmental challenges as the site was previously used as a bus maintenance facility. Before construction on the phased project development could begin, there were a number of environmental issues to investigate and overcome.

To ensure the health of workers and future residents, as well as protect the environment, BRIDGE Housing contracted SCS Engineers, a national environmental engineering firm, to develop and conduct an investigative and design project to address the change in use from the former bus maintenance facility to the mixed-use affordable housing development.

The environmental issues that needed to be remediated included leaking underground storage tanks associated with a former bus maintenance facility and fill soils laden with toxic metals — including lead. During the initial investigation into the site history some interesting facts were discovered. In the early 1900s, a stream ran through the site, which was filled in and leveled for development. That fill material, as was often the case at the time, included contaminants. Lead impacted soil or even "burn ash" is a common problem with downtown and urban properties — the COMM22 site was no exception.

Even though the site soils didn't result in a risk to environmental or human health, the issues were regulated and potentially very costly to address. However, SCS developed several three dimensional soil models, which were refined with careful soil profiling. This, combined with the SCS team's extensive regulatory knowledge reduced the soil disposal costs by almost \$500,000 and resulted in the prevention of 151.52 tons of CO2 emissions.

In the end, groundwater issues resulting from the leaking underground storage tanks were successfully addressed and issued a closure letter from the Department of Environmental Health prior to breaking ground. The Soils Management Plan for impacted soil was approved prior to construction and all project phases have now been issued a closure or "no further action" letter for the residential uses.

From the beginning, BRIDGE Housing and its partners met with community leaders, neighbors and others to gather input, rework designs, and address other community issues. The final design supported the social and business goals of the surrounding community, as well as BRIDGE Housing.

### **The Results**

Paseo at COMM22, one of the initial phases of the project, provides 130 affordable housing units including 13 one-bedroom supportive housing units. The remaining units are a mix of one-, two- and three-bedroom homes.



Victoria at COMM22 offers another 70 affordable units specifically for seniors 62 years and older.

During the summer and fall of 2016, the third phase of the project broke ground. Following mitigation activities, BRIDGE Housing transferred ownership to Habitat for Humanity to develop the remaining site with affordable residential units that will be complementary to the adjacent mixed-use affordable housing development completed by BRIDGE Housing in 2015. Habitat for Humanity expects to begin development at the site during spring 2017.

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