



**GISH APARTMENTS  
SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA**

**25.7%** improved energy efficiency over California's Title 24 standards, base on third-party testing

**36%** builder's projected indoor water use reduction, compared to a conventional home

**92%** of construction waste diverted from the landfill

**LEED® Facts**

**Gish Apartments  
San Jose, California**

LEED for Homes  
Certification awarded January 8, 2008

**Gold 74.5\***

Sustainable Sites 13/14

Water Efficiency 11/12

Energy & Atmosphere 8.5/29

Materials & Resources 20/26

Indoor Environmental Quality 7/14

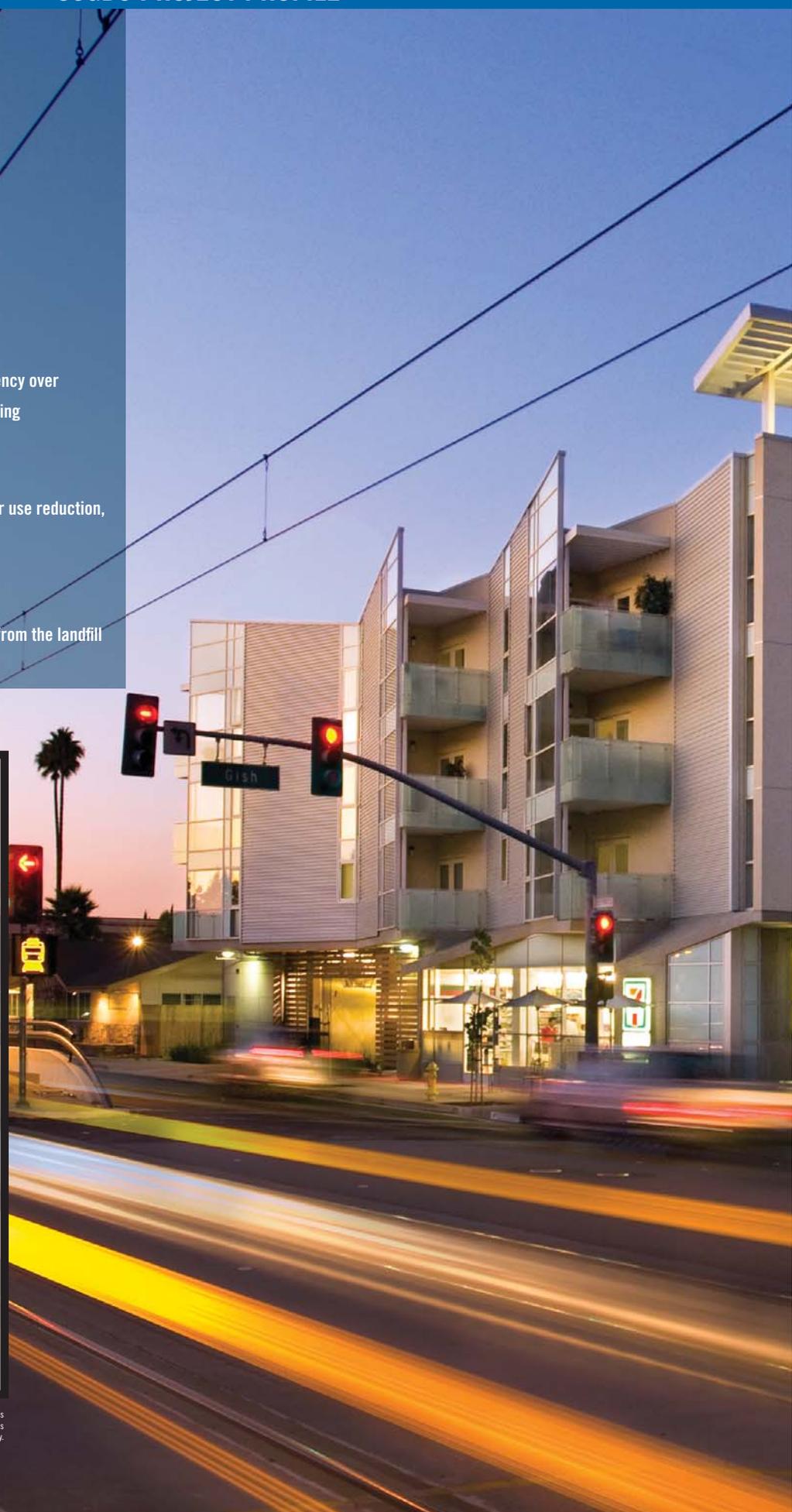
Locations & Linkages 10/10

Awareness & Education 1/1

Innovation & Design 4/4

*\*Out of a possible 110 points*

The information provided is based on that stated in the LEED® project certification submittals. USGBC does not warrant or represent the accuracy of this information. Each building's actual performance is based on its unique design, construction, operation, and maintenance. Energy efficiency and sustainable results will vary.



GISH APARTMENTS

# A Healthy, Economical Lifestyle

California's first LEED for Homes Gold-certified apartment building serves those most in need

## PROJECT BACKGROUND

Since 2000, First Community Housing (FCH) has been committed to working sustainability into its affordable housing projects, combining the complementary goals of human health, social equity and environmental responsibility into one coherent driving passion. It was a natural fit, then, for the San Jose, Calif., nonprofit to participate in the LEED for Homes pilot program when building Gish Apartments, a stylish 35-unit complex offering affordable housing to tenants earning 30-50% of the area's median income. FCH knew the building's improved energy efficiency would help residents in the years to come through reduced utility costs, and that the comfortable, healthy indoor environments found in homes that achieve LEED certification would be especially beneficial in the 13 units devoted to tenants living with developmental disabilities.

## A HOLISTIC APPROACH FOR A GOLDEN OUTCOME

Gish Apartments is California's first multifamily housing development to earn Gold certification under LEED for Homes. A key to its success was the integrated, holistic approach the LEED certification program fosters. LEED provided the framework for FCH to document the building's sustainable features systematically and has motivated the organization to build even greener buildings. FCH integrates new green building features into every one of its projects, and the decision to go for LEED certification led the designers and builders to stretch themselves even further, ensuring outcomes that would truly benefit Gish's residents.

FCH faced some specific challenges in its quest for LEED certification because of the nature of Gish Apartments. For example, financial considerations required individual energy metering for each of the building's units, reducing its ability to score points in the Energy & Atmosphere category. FCH responded by focusing on other green strategies that were better suited to the project and would have a greater positive impact on residents' lives. FCH strategically locates all its developments in urban infill locations close to public transit, and its projects are built at high densities, so a perfect score in the Locations & Linkages category was easy. And an emphasis on the Indoor Environmental Quality category was essential as FCH wanted to do everything possible to alleviate tenants' health-care expenses.

## STRATEGIES AND RESULTS

Gish Apartments received a nearly perfect Sustainable Sites score. Hardscape was reduced by locating all parking beneath the building, and the building's grounds were landscaped with drought-tolerant plants and no turf. The building was built on a rehabilitated brownfield site.

The building's common area receives 30% of its electricity from a rooftop photovoltaic system. Gish's location near public transportation reduces residents' need to drive, and all tenants receive free annual EcoPasses for unlimited use of the county's light-rail and bus systems. The project was built with locally produced materials and environmentally preferable products whenever possible. Construction waste was cut by more than 75%, and some 90% of the waste produced was diverted from the landfill, the builders reported.

First Community Housing estimates implementing Gish's green features increased the project's overall cost by about 1-2%, but because they built green they were able to qualify for several sources of funding assistance. A loan from the California Recycle Underutilized Sites (CALReUSE) Program helped pay for environmental investigation of the brownfield site. Orphan Site Cleanup Account funding helped cover the costs of site remediation. And a grant from the City of San Jose helped pay for the rooftop photovoltaic system.

## ABOUT FIRST COMMUNITY HOUSING

First Community Housing was founded in 1986 by David Neale and John Brezzo, two developers in San Jose, and by July 2008 had developed housing for more than 1,000 households.

"Ever since Christopher (who has severe autism) moved into the Gish Apartments, I've noticed that he is calmer. The green environment helps him cope and process more easily. He really likes the building structure itself and is very happy there."

Kim Dodd, mother of resident Christopher Dodd



**Owner/Developer:** Jeff Oberdorfer, FAIA, First Community Housing  
**Provider:** Davis Energy Group  
**Contractors:** Alan Heikkinen, Branagh Construction Inc.  
**Architect of Record:** Jerome King, OJK Architecture and Planning  
**Landscape Architect:** Dennis Taniguchi, Cottong & Taniguchi  
**Commissioning Agent:** Maia Speer, Guttman & Blaevoet Engineers  
**Mechanical Consultant:** Steve Murphy, P.E., Monster Mechanical, and John Allen, P.E., VAO Consulting Engineers  
**Energy Consultant:** Kevin Brummel, Energy Compliance Systems Inc., and Maia Speer, Guttman & Blaevoet Consulting Engineers  
**Plumbing Consultant:** Roger Campbell, W.L. Hickey Sons  
**Electrical Consultant:** Skip Bowen, H.A. Bowen Electric  
**Structural Engineer:** Michael Hubley, S.E. Vertech Engineering  
**Civil Engineer:** Pete Smith, Charles Davidson Company Inc.  
**Green Building Consultant:** Lynn N. Simon, AIA, LEED-AP, Simon & Associates Inc.

**Project Size:** 37,000 residential square feet  
**Construction cost per square foot:** \$145  
**Photography Courtesy of:** Bernard Andre

## ABOUT LEED

The LEED® Green Building Rating System™ is the national benchmark for the design, construction, and operations of high-performance green buildings. Visit the U.S. Green Building Council's Web site at [www.usgbc.org](http://www.usgbc.org) to learn more about LEED and green building.



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