

INDOOR AIR QUALITY

Inert materials. From the tile floors with unsealed grout to the unpainted or zero-VOC painted plaster ceilings, indoor air quality (IAQ) governed interior materials selection. This meant avoiding or substituting for many of the conventional building products that offgas potentially harmful chemicals. Ecology House was built without using adhesives indoors. Stainless steel counters were installed instead of laminate counters, which offgas formaldehyde and are normally used for affordable housing projects. In order to avoid VOC emissions after installation, many items such as metal kitchen and bath cabinets were factory finished.

Ventilation. A key component in maintaining a healthy environment for the residents of Ecology House is being able to quickly exhaust indoor air and exchange it for fresh outdoor air should the need arise. Powerful whole house fans and kitchen and bathroom exhaust fans are installed in all the units. The whole house fans can refresh the air in the entire complex within a few minutes and the kitchen and bath fans keep fumes, mold, and moisture at bay on a daily basis.

OUTDOOR AIR QUALITY

Landscaping. Plants were selected for being fragrance-free and for having very low pollen counts. In addition, they were selected for being hearty, drought-and pest-resistant. No fertilizers, pesticides or herbicides are used, and there is no lawn to mow. Further, additive-free concrete was used for all paved areas instead of the more commonly used asphalt.

Pest Resistance. The project uses physical pest deterrents instead of chemical treatment to inhibit termites and other insects. A gravel buffer zone between the building and plantings eliminates many of the common entry routes of pests. Plants in contact with buildings are especially problematic as they provide both a bridge from the ground to the building and a screen that hides potential problems.

Building Orientation. The building was built to take advantage of natural breezes for ventilation. The parking area, laundry/utility room and trash enclosure are located downwind and as far away as possible from the living spaces.

"The Ecology House has been like a miracle to me. It's amazing how a few simple changes in building materials and building maintenance practices can make such a drastic difference in IAQ. Having a place to live where I'm exposed to fewer volatile chemicals has definitely improved my health."

—Connie Barker, Ecology House resident

BUILT: 1994

SIZE: 11 units, 540 SF each

ARCHITECT:

KodamaDiseno Architects and Planners

CONTRACTOR:

Joseph DiGiorgio & Sons

DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANT:

Katherine Crecelius

SPONSORS:

Marin Homes for Independent Living,
Ecumenical Association for Housing

DIRECTIONS

From US-101 North

Take the RICHMOND BRIDGE/
FRANCISCO BLVD exit toward
BELLAM BLVD

Turn LEFT on BELLAM BLVD
Turn LEFT on CATALINA BLVD

From US-101 South & I-580 East

Take the I-580 EAST exit toward
BELLAM BLVD

Turn LEFT on BELLAM BLVD
Turn LEFT on CATALINA BLVD

From I-580 West

Take the US-101 S/FRANCISCO
BLVD/SAN FRANCISCO exit toward
BELLAM BLVD

Turn RIGHT on BELLAM BLVD
Turn LEFT on CATALINA BLVD

ADDRESS

375 Catalina Blvd, San Rafael

PARKING

Street parking available.

