

# Fairmount Apartments

## *Top-to-Bottom Rehabilitation of a Dilapidated 1960's Building*



Photography courtesy of digitED Image Co.

In early 2010, Affordable Housing Associates, a nonprofit developer that creates high-quality homes for low-income families, got started on a top-to-bottom rehab of a dilapidated 31-unit building they had acquired in the Adams Point area of Oakland. Their goal was to make it not just habitable but beautiful, green and permanently affordable.

AHA repaired, rebuilt or replaced much of the building's structure and exterior, including making seismic improvements, replacing the deteriorated stairway and walkway, improving wheelchair accessibility, replacing the roof, and installing a new elevator, windows and a central water heating system. They also upgraded the façade and landscaping.

Apartments were remodeled as necessary with new carpeting, resilient flooring, cabinets, light fixtures, appliances, plumbing fixtures and paint. Completed in Spring 2011 and fully leased, the building now provides affordable, attractive homes to 31 families, including people with mental health disabilities and other special needs.

**“The GreenPoint Rating system is really easy to work with.”**

“This renovation was especially challenging due to unknowns about existing conditions and due to budget constraints,” said Teresa Clarke, Senior Design & Construction Manager with AHA. “We could not gut everything and start from scratch so we had to carefully choose cost-effective solutions which maximized our goals for health and safety, tenant comfort and convenience, energy efficiency, durability, and conservation of resources.”

### COST

\$12.3 million

### LOCATION

401 Fairmount Avenue  
Oakland, California

### SITE AREA

0.46 acres

### BUILDING SIZE

21,000 sq. ft.

### NUMBER OF DWELLING UNITS

31

### DENSITY

67 dwelling units/acre

### BUILDING TYPE

Permanently affordable rental apartments, including units for individuals with special needs

### COMPLETION DATE

Spring 2011

### OWNER/DEVELOPER

Affordable Housing Associates

### ARCHITECT

Asian Neighborhood Design

### GREEN BUILDING CONSULTANT

KEMA

### GENERAL CONTRACTOR

J.H. Fitzmaurice, Inc.

AHA is pursuing a green building label for Fairmount Apartments through the GreenPoint Rated Existing Homes Multifamily program. The building was one of the program’s pilot projects, and AHA helped guide the program’s development by evaluating potential measures for greening existing multifamily housing, testing verification methods, and setting credible and accessible thresholds for the program. Green Building in Alameda County provided funding to assist AHA’s participation in the program.

“The GreenPoint Rating system is really easy to work with. Build it Green has done the homework for you by pulling together the green building measures that are most current and relevant to multifamily housing, and the manual and checklist make it easy to incorporate the green measures into the renovation,” said Clarke.

■ What Makes It Green ■

**ENERGY & CLIMATE PROTECTION**

**Energy Efficiency.** AHA significantly improved the overall energy efficiency of the building by replacing single-pane windows with dual-pane ones, adding weatherstripping and insulation, and increasing the efficiency of the hot water system. The centralized domestic water heating system works in conjunction with a rooftop solar hot water system that preheats water and stores it in an insulated tank. The preheated water is then fed through high efficiency condensing boilers and distributed through a recirculation pipe system throughout the building.



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**GREEN at a GLANCE**

**PLANNING & DESIGN**

- High density, urban rehabilitation project
- Pedestrian access within ½ mile of many community services and bus lines
- Secure bicycle parking
- 3,700 sq. ft. renovated garden and patio; new 500 sq. ft. community room
- 100% of units are affordable housing for low-income residents

**SITE**

- Construction Environmental Quality Plan was written and followed
- Construction and demolition debris were recycled or reused
- Cool site has high-albedo surfaces to reduce heat island effect
- Landscaping plants grouped by water needs and mulched to conserve water
- Turf minimized and drought-tolerant native plants used

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## GREEN at a GLANCE

### STRUCTURE

- Durable construction materials minimize replacement and demolition waste in the future

### SYSTEMS

- Efficient domestic hot water system with solar pre-heat
- Low water-use fixtures installed
- Humidistat-controlled exhaust fans installed in bathrooms
- High efficiency forced-air furnaces installed

### FINISHES & FURNISHINGS

- No-VOC paints used for all common areas and majority of residential units
- Interior trim, shelving, and flooring are mostly environmentally preferable materials and low in formaldehyde and toxic fumes

### OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE

- Green operations and maintenance manual developed for facility staff and residents

**Energy- and Water-Efficient Appliances.** The central laundry facility has been upgraded with new Energy Star–qualified clothes washers. Refrigerators within the units are also Energy Star–qualified. Bathrooms and kitchens were retrofitted with low water-use fixtures.

**Cool Site.** The roof and paved surfaces are light in color, which reflects sunlight and keeps the site cool. Paving was reduced and planting areas increased. This minimizes the heat island effect, which can occur when concentrations of dark roofs and asphalt collect heat in developed areas. Cool site design strategies help keep the surrounding area cooler, reducing energy use by those buildings that use air conditioning.

### COMMUNITY DESIGN

**Walkable and Transit-Friendly Location.** By investing in a centrally located urban property, AHA has made it easier for low-income families to walk, bicycle and take public transit instead of having to rely on cars. It’s a strategy that’s good for the environment and good for household budgets. Located on a residential street less than a mile from Lake Merritt and two miles from downtown Oakland, the building is close to many amenities and services, including employment options, local and regional public transportation routes, schools, health care facilities, libraries and parks, and grocery stores.



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**Affordability.** Eleven of the 31 units are reserved for households or individuals with special needs, and all units are dedicated affordable housing for households with income levels of 20% to 50% of the area median income.

**Community Spaces.** Fairmount Apartments has been redesigned to enhance community life, with attractive common areas including a spacious, renovated 3,700-square-foot landscaped garden and patio area. A new 500-square-foot community room at the courtyard level includes laundry facilities, a communal kitchen, a computer area and lounge. The courtyard level also includes offices for the property manager and service providers.