



Structures

## KEY FACTS

### ADDRESS:

275 Blomquist St.,  
Redwood City

### SIZE:

Four buildings with 240 private units for singles and couples; 108,900 square feet

### COST:

\$51.3 million

### STATUS:

Opened in April

### GREEN FEATURES:

LEED Silver Certification by the U.S. Green Building Council; Photovoltaic panels which generate 60% site energy consumption, EV chargers and green infrastructure

### CHALLENGES:

The project was driven by a 12-month schedule mandated by project funding through California's HomeKey program.

## KEY PLAYERS

### OWNER:

County of San Mateo

### CONTRACTOR:

XL Construction

### ARCHITECT:

Office of Charles F. Bloszies FAIA

### LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT:

CMG Landscape Architecture

### STRUCTURAL ENGINEER:

BKF

### FINANCIAL PARTNERS:

\$46.1 million from California's Homekey program; a \$5 million donation from John Sobrato; \$500,000 federal Community Project Funding grant

## KEY SUBS

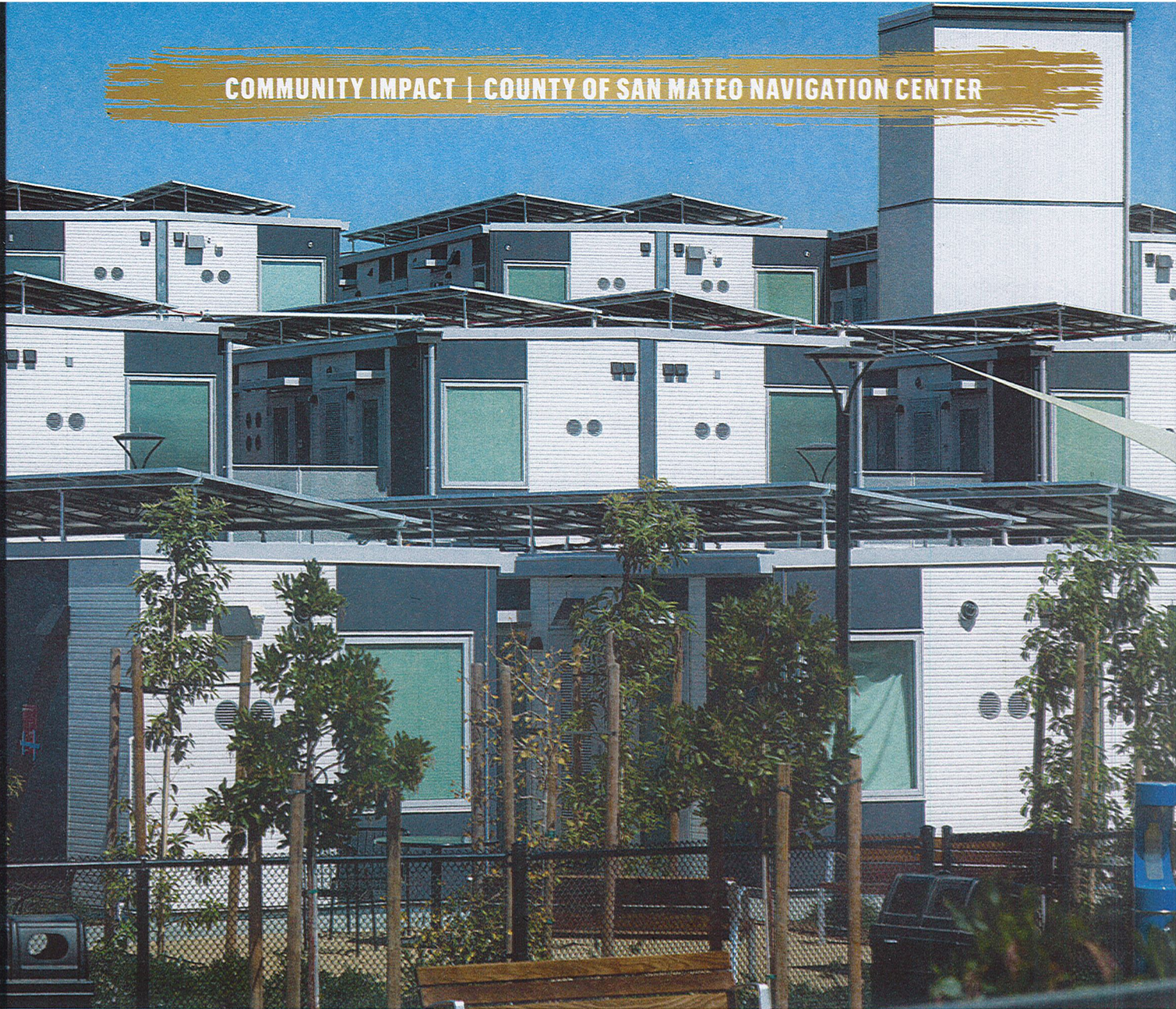
### ELECTRICAL AND PHOTOVOLTAIC SYSTEMS:

Rosendin Electric

### PLUMBING AND MECHANICAL:

Air Systems Inc.

## COMMUNITY IMPACT | COUNTY OF SAN MATEO NAVIGATION CENTER



STAN OLSZEWSKII FOR SVBJ

# THE MOST-APPRECIATED AMENITY FOR THE RESIDENTS HERE: A DOORBELL

**W**hat would a world without homelessness look like? ¶ Such a vision may seem too lofty to imagine, but officials at the County of San Mateo are doing their best to make it a reality. The county's Navigation Center in Redwood City offers 240 private shelters to individuals experiencing homelessness. And as these residents transition to permanent homes, they'll be moving the county closer to its goal of eradicating homelessness completely. ¶ "We really understood that folks were more inclined to come in off the street if they had privacy, if they had a place to call their own," said Mike Callagy, the County of San Mateo's CEO. "We can give people a hand up so they can really get stabilized." ¶

The construction of the center was largely funded by a \$46.1 million grant from California's Homekey program, an initiative to quickly shelter the state's growing number of unhoused residents. In order to receive the grant, the county had to complete the project within a limited timeframe. This put the Navigation Center on a fast track: the county received the grant in December of 2021, broke ground in April of 2022 and completed construction roughly a year later.

The relatively quick building pace was one of the project team's greatest achievements, according to Adam Ely, deputy executive for the County of San Mateo.

"We thought it was import-

ant because it would demonstrate an ability to rapidly construct this housing for folks who are experiencing homelessness," Ely said. "The hope throughout the process was that we would do something that was replicable by other cities and counties."

This faster pace, combined with the use of modular units, posed a coordination challenge, according to Craig Ellis, senior vice president of business for XL Construction, the general contractor for the project. Luckily, the county's development teams were able to collaborate very quickly to ensure that all the necessary pieces came together.

"There are complexities with modular construction ... One of

the main things is you bring utilities to a certain point, but you can't connect them to the units until the units arrive," Ellis said. "If it's off by two inches, that could be an issue."

The Navigation Center offers an array of amenities, including a dog run and a basketball court. The center also has dental, medical and mental health staff available on site to assist tenants with specific needs.

But the amenity most appreciated by the center's tenants is one that's taken for granted by most county residents: a private doorbell.

"It's really symbolic of something that many of these people have never experienced in their life, and that is their own place," Callagy said.

Solving the problem of homelessness and alleviating the suffering that comes with not having adequate shelter is a goal that should unite residents, rather than divide them, he added.

"This is not a liberal or conservative issue; this is one of humanity," Callagy said. "This is something that we can do – and anyone can do – within a year, if you totally focus on it." ¶

– Sonya Herrera, Contributor