

Poly Canyon Village - Project Narrative

Project Summary

The Poly Canyon Village project is a multi-building, mixed-use student housing community located on the central coast of California in the city of San Luis Obispo, on the campus of California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly). The site is situated on approximately thirty-eight acres of gently to moderately sloping land in Poly Canyon, north of Brizzolara Creek at the southwestern edge of Caballo Peak. The Village consists of nine buildings with 618 apartment units, as well as retail spaces and other resident support services. Two parking structures provide a total of 1,926 parking spaces. The project provides 2,670 additional on-campus beds, almost doubling the previous residence hall bed count. Implementing Cal Poly's mission of environmental responsibility, Poly Canyon Village promotes a healthy living environment for its students and respect towards Poly Canyon and Brizzolara Creek. This 1,405,118 SF design-build project had a total project cost of over \$240,000,000.

Background

Although originally envisioned by the University as a developer financed and delivered project, in an effort to reduce costs, the University decided to put the Poly Canyon Village project out to bid as a design-build project in Fall 2004. The Clark Construction and Niles Bolton Associates design-build team worked carefully to bring the project within budget parameters and, at the same time, satisfy the complete scope of the project. Building systems and materials were analyzed and refined, unit plans were modified, building configurations were efficiently re-assembled, construction schedules were shortened, parking structure layouts were refined, and the site plan was re-worked, while still fulfilling the University's programmatic needs.

In the spring of 2005, the final proposal submitted to the University eliminated two buildings, reducing the buildings' impact on the site, while still providing the total bed-count required for the project. The design-build team committed to delivering the project one year earlier than requested in the RFP, and established a goal of achieving LEED certification.

Project Details

The Site

The project is located at the northeast perimeter of the Cal Poly campus. Prior to its use as a residential community, the land was used by the College of Agriculture as a cow pasture, a feed mill, and a storage area. These previous uses had a negative impact on the site soil, as well as the adjacent Brizzolara Creek, which runs along the southern and eastern project edge. The development of this site provided an opportunity for the remediation of the damaged brownfield land, as well as reparation of the creek, permitting native flora and wildlife to prosper in non-developed site areas.

Poly Canyon Village was envisioned in the University's Master Plan as a way to provide additional sophomore student housing on campus, as housing resources within the city of San Luis Obispo continued to pose difficulties for the growing student population. The site is generally separated from the campus core development by temporary support

facilities, topography and other physical features. Therefore, it was vital to design Poly Canyon Village as an autonomous community, where residents could have easy access to necessary services, while still living a short walk away from the rest of the college campus and other amenities.

The Village

A community hub was created for residents of the project in the Village Center, which includes Housing Administration facilities, a recreational swimming pool, exterior and interior recreation activity areas, study rooms, a knowledge center, conference rooms, and the Canyon Post mail center. The Plaza, at the heart of the Village Center, includes outside seating and lawn areas with Wi-Fi and electrical service. Plaza retail amenities include a juice store, a bagel shop, a coffee and tea establishment, a market, and an ATM. Strong connections between the indoor and outdoor activity spaces on the Plaza have been provided through the use of large, operable, storefront windows, taking advantage of the mild climate.

The Poly Canyon Village residential buildings are comprised of three neighborhoods, each neighborhood being designed with a distinct architectural style: Urbane, Rustic Lodge, and Agrarian. The three neighborhoods allow smaller communities to grow within the fabric of the larger Village context. Both active and passive outdoor gathering spaces framed by buildings and landscaping are provided in each neighborhood. Each building contains a common lobby with services available to students, such as laundry rooms and intimate study areas intended to provide an array of learning and social opportunities.

The Sustainable Elements

Some key concepts of sustainability were incorporated early in the design of the project. The project team sought to capitalize on the mild, temperate climate of the California coast. The residential units utilize natural ventilation as the main source of cooling in order to reduce energy use. For the cooler winter months, these spaces utilize radiant heating panels. A desire to minimize intrusion on the natural beauty of surrounding Poly Canyon was an additional objective. Through the use of drought tolerant, native plants, the project's landscape design sought to significantly reduce the use of irrigation, while still promoting outdoor activity and gathering spaces for the residents. Connection to the canyon from within the buildings was enhanced through views to the surrounding hills. Another important goal was to discourage the use of automobiles and promote alternative methods of transportation to the rest of campus. Covered bicycle storage for over 25% of the village's occupants has been provided, as well as a bus stop next to the Village Center. Inside of the buildings, a priority was placed on achieving a high indoor environmental quality. Low VOC products are used throughout, and natural light is a key design feature.

Through attention to programmatic elements, awareness of budgetary constraints, and promotion of environmental stewardship, Poly Canyon Village has accomplished the university's vision to provide a new student housing center, while addressing the challenges of a large-scale project and serving as a regional model for sustainable design.