

Housing Continuum
in the Gateway

**30-50%
AMI**

This project serves the
needs of residents in the
Very Low Income (VLI)
category.



One Affordable Housing Community Changes Many Lives

Zinnia Apartments

Key Stakeholders

- City of Signal Hill
- Architect: Studio One Eleven
- Developer: Meta Housing Corporation

Project Timeline

February 2015 submitted to planning department. Opened December 2017.

Project Budget

\$29,830,000

Project Background

Zinnia is a 72-unit **affordable housing** family-oriented community located within walking distance to numerous amenities including the Signal Hill Civic Center, schools, parks, and retail. Zinnia is the second affordable housing community in the city of Signal Hill. The previous development was completed over 10 years prior.

After a thorough Request for Proposal process, the project to bring Zinnia Apartments to life began. This affordable community was designed at a neighborhood village scale with three varying scaled buildings framing the quarter acre of open space. The open space was located along the street edge to reduce the scale of the project. Amenities include a tot lot, open play field, community room, dog park, and communal gardens. The units vary from two-story townhomes to 1, 2 and 3-bedroom flats and the architecture was inspired by agricultural and warehouse buildings in the area.

Key Terms:

Affordable Housing – In the United States, “affordable housing” refers to housing, rent or a mortgage plus utility payments, totaling 30% or less of a household’s gross income. Affordable housing developments are often subject to a covenants or deed restrictions that preserve the property as affordable by creating rent limits and qualifying standards for residents, and restrictions on selling the property.

Objectives/Goals

The goal of the Zinnia was to provide a needed haven that residents, especially those in the lower-end of the income spectrum, could call home. The cost of housing throughout southern California is rising exponentially. The lack of wage increases, especially on the lower end of the income spectrum, is one of the major components leading to the increase in homelessness. Due to the extreme lack of affordable housing, there is a significant gap between the number of families that need housing and the availability of housing options. Therefore, it is not uncommon for it to take years for an individual or family to find and secure proper housing. That is exactly the need that the Zinnia sought to fill.

Awards and Recognitions

Zinnia is recognized for its location in the affluent community of Signal Hills as well as the openness of its site layout onto the street. As a highly successful affordable housing project, it has been honored with the following awards:

- 2019 PCBC Gold Nugget Merit Award
- Westside Urban Forum Award
- 2018 Homes Within Reach Award-Honorable Mention
- 2018 City of Signal Hill Beautification Award
- SCANPH Design Awards-Honorable Mention



Success Stories



Rathana's Story

Like many of Zinnia's residents, Rathana had difficulty finding not only a job, but an affordable place to live. While looking for

a job, Rathana came across the Community Manager position at Zinnia. Being hired not only meant she would be employed, but the position came with an apartment. Since becoming manager of the complex, Rathana was provided with the stability she needed for both herself and her children.

“ My heart is filled with compassion and hope that more communities like Zinnia will inspire others to do more good in this world.



David's Story

David Carter's priority was doing what was best for his children. He is a single father of a five-year-old daughter and a four-year-old son. After a worrisome year-long application process, David was over the moon when he got the call that he and his family were accepted. Today, David and his children live in a three-bedroom apartment. For the first time his children have their own bedrooms. David is very appreciative of the opportunity he was given since he knows how difficult the process can be.

“ Just being able to have my own keys, open my door, and lock the door. Feeling free.



Keishalle's Story

Keishalle Barrow is a single mother of six living in one of Zinnia's beautiful three-bedroom apartments. Keishalle

saw Zinnia being built across the street from her children's school and registered on the waiting list. Since moving to Zinnia, Keishalle's children are excelling in school and the family no longer struggles with having to put a roof over their heads.

“ I cried for two days. We live in a safe area, we know our neighbors, and we're close to everything. This was exactly what we needed.





Key Takeaways

Zinnia Apartments is the first affordable family housing community to be completed in Signal Hill since 2007 and consists of seventy-two units. At the time of Zinnia's official ribbon-cutting event, all units were fully occupied meaning nearly 200 people, about half of whom are children, were already living in the complex. Zinnia has demonstrated the community relief that is achievable through the provision of affordable housing, which brings residents peace by giving them a greater disposable income and by reducing their financial stress.

Although the 1.6 acre property provides eighty-two residential parking spaces and forty-two bicycles spaces, the development is located within walking distance of retail, dining, parks, civic amenities such as City Hall and the Library, public transit, employment opportunities and schools - contributing to a convenient and healthy lifestyle for residents.

Results

In order to evaluate the social impact of the design, the architects met with many of the residents to discuss how living at Zinnia has influenced their lives. Consistent comments included the high quality finishes in their home, the ample open space, the ability to easily watch their children play outside, and an appreciation for the excellence of the building design. Residents felt like they did not live in an institutional "affordable" housing complex. This has resulted in a higher quality of life, successful employment, happier children and increased volunteerism in the neighborhood.

By applying quality typically seen in market rate developments, the project harmoniously interacts with the existing neighborhood and is LEED Gold certified. The City of Signal Hill Planning Commission awarded Zinnia Court its Beautification Award for excellence in architecture and landscape design.



GATEWAY CITIES
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS