

AFFORDABLE HOUSING SUCCESS STORY



LANTERN TERRACE

103 N. CHAPEL AVENUE, ALHAMBRA, CA 91801

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KEY STATS

Developer: The Related Companies of California, LLC

Architect: BSB Design

Contractor: Walton Construction

Financing: 9% tax credits/bonds, City of Alhambra residual receipts loan, San Gabriel Valley Regional Housing Trust residual receipts loan, Los Angeles County Development Authority residual receipts loan, 22 Project-Based Section 8 vouchers

Income Range: 30% to 60% AMI

Total Units: 44

PROJECT OVERVIEW

This mixed use affordable multifamily building is an innovative response to challenging site constraints. An efficient corridor design and uniquely nested unit layouts deliver required fire access and incredible light and air for such a narrow infill location.

Successful collaboration with the city eliminated on-site parking requirements by allocating resident parking within the adjacent municipal garage. The required side setback was designed as a buffer courtyard with niche seating, play structures, a colorful mural, and a pedestrian bridge connection to the garage.

Architectural pattern breaks the building into elemental components: ground-floor retail, brightly-clad residential floors, and top-floor cap and eyebrow effect. Then, street-level retail steps down from the primary building mass to establish a strong commercial presence that integrates the building with its surroundings. Finally, window and balcony projections and recesses insert and subtract with visual variety to reduce potential monotony across the building elevation.

Units are interlaced to take advantage of the full building width and push exterior bedroom walls to the perimeter for increased light and air circulation. Then an open balcony feeds shorter double-loaded corridors, each serving two units to maximize rentable square footage.

Lantern Terrace offers support services, and furnished units accommodate special needs households, including formerly homeless and transition-age youth.



COMMUNITY IMPACT

Lantern Terrace offers thoughtful design, community-focused impact, and bold solutions to today's affordable housing challenges. It transformed an underutilized city-owned surface parking lot into a beacon of stability, support, and sustainability for low-income households and individuals facing homelessness.



The design's most remarkable achievement lies in how it responded to the site's dimensions. The team employed a single-loaded corridor configuration with nested unit layouts, enabling deeper, narrower one-bedroom units that preserved light and air access. Bedrooms were oriented toward an open corridor, and short secondary corridors were carefully placed along unit centerlines to serve two units each – maximizing rentable space while maintaining efficiency and livability.

Lantern Terrace's community impact is both immediate and far-reaching. With 15 supportive housing units reserved for Transition Age Youth and formerly homeless residents, the project directly addresses Southern California's urgent housing crisis. But it doesn't stop there. Through on-site services, Lantern Terrace empowers residents to build stability and thrive.



The project is innovative and creative through its dual-purpose design. Not only does it provide a diverse unit mix, but it effectively intertwines with the adjacent parking garage and surrounding commercial context via retail mixed use space at the street front. This smart, space-efficient model brings economic activity and walkability to the neighborhood.

Lantern Square residents have access to jobs, transit, and amenities, which aligns with the state's goals for sustainable, transit-oriented housing. Earning GreenPoint Rated Gold certification, the building provides effective environmental stewardship.

Design matters, and Lantern Terrace delivers. A bold, modern architectural treatment makes a statement among the neighbors. The amenity plan makes great use of the tight infill site by incorporating a rooftop terrace and unique covered playground that are welcoming, inclusive spaces that foster dignity and connection.

SOLVING CHALLENGES

The design process for Lantern Terrace was marked by exceptional complexity, creativity, and collaboration. From the outset, the design team faced a highly constrained site: a long, narrow infill lot hemmed in on three sides by existing buildings, with no space for onsite parking or standard fire access. Despite these constraints, the team delivered an innovative solution that maximized the site's potential without compromising functionality, aesthetics, or code compliance.

To overcome the parking challenge, the design incorporated a bridge connection to an adjacent city-owned parking structure, eliminating the need for driveways or ground-floor parking. This move freed up the site for housing and community amenities, while satisfying the City of Alhambra's desire to leverage its public infrastructure.

Fire access posed another major hurdle. With limited access points, the team worked closely with the fire department to engineer a system of hose pulls and ladder access that met safety requirements. The





city installed a new hydrant at the rear of the property, enabling compliance despite the challenging configuration.

Architecturally, the team strategically broke down the building's massing to reduce its perceived scale. They introduced visual rhythm through color, window placement, and recessed square elements to mitigate the building's height and length. A vibrant orange accent, along with articulated storefronts and a stepped-back roof terrace, helped humanize the street frontage and enliven the public realm.

In short, Lantern Terrace turned every obstacle into an opportunity. It transformed an unusually shaped, technically difficult parcel into a vibrant mixed use community that prioritizes livability, affordability, and thoughtful urban integration.