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GRAND
Archer Studios,
San Jose, Calif.

// Workforce housing, market
rate looks //

Near San Jose airport and nearby public transportation, Archer Studios fills an increasingly urgent need: workforce housing in Silicon Valley, one of the highest-ticket real estate markets in the United States. And if that weren't impressive enough, there's more: It may be subsidized, but Archer Studios has the appeal of a nifty new apartment complex. "Income-restricted housing that doesn't look like it," with color, texture, and good-looking doors and windows, said the jury of Archer Studios, who added that the project's quality and details are "as good as in any market rate project."

The project contains one two-bedroom apartment and 41 studio apartments, each with a living, dining and sleeping space, a kitchen, and a bath. Many of the micro-flats also have a balcony or a patio.

The total area of the studios had to top out at just under 300 square feet. To design them, architect John Sheehan and his design team got to work studying cruise ship cabins and the boutique hotels and pied-à-terre apartments of Europe. Unlikely—make that counter-intuitive—inspiration, but "everything has to count," says Sheehan of those compact and efficient places. When it comes to single-room occupancy dwellings, also known as SROs, "you can't waste space," he explains. "You have to make it feel like a great place to be, not an inexpensive place to live."

Taller wall studs were sped for the units because the project team pushed for 9-foot ceilings. "A few more inches makes huge difference in a small unit," Sheehan insists. Quality finishes help make a difference, too. Kitchen counters are made of handsome stone composite ("Nothing holds up better over the long haul," says the architect), and aluminum windows, rather than vinyl ones, were chosen for their simple, modern appearance.

Sheehan also credits developer Dan Wu of Charities Housing, who splurged on a fountain for the public outdoor space. It's a smart move that adds value and dignity to the income-restricted project.

If you need further proof that Archer Studios looks anything but subsidized, consider this: as construction was wrapping up, Sheehan recalls, "strangers were driving by and inquiring about the sales prices for the cool new condos." —A.A.

ON SITE Many of the residents at Archer Studios don't own cars and rely on public transportation to get to work. Nevertheless, the project had to satisfy parking

ratios imposed by the city, even though they're typical of higher-income housing. The challenge, says architect John Sheehan, was to design a parking place without letting the cars overwhelm the site. "We shoved

them in back and hid them from street view using a thin veneer of active uses like the meeting room, lounges, lobby, and offices," says Sheehan.

CATEGORY Affordable or Workforce Housing

**ENTRANT/ARCHITECT/
INTERIOR DESIGNER** Studio
E Architects, San Diego

BUILDER Johnstone Moyer,
San Mateo, Calif.

DEVELOPER Charities Housing
San Jose, Calif.

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT Ivy
Landscape Architects, San Diego

PHOTOGRAPHY Jeff Peters/
Vantage Point Photography