



Mithun

Balboa Park Upper Yard

A Healthy Solution to Multi-Family Housing in Outer Mission, San Francisco

Building Design + Construction, Residential

In 2016, Anne Torney at Mithun and project owners at Mission Housing Development Corporation and Related California engaged sustainability consultants at Bright Green Strategies to build an affordable housing development in Outer Mission, San Francisco called Balboa Park Upper Yard (BPUY).

The team utilized the LEED Health Process to promote population health for low-income families and formerly homeless individuals through multi-family residential housing design, construction and operation.

An end-result of many years of community organizing and advocacy efforts by grassroots political groups such as Communities United for Health and Justice (CUHJ) to build affordable housing, the Balboa Park Upper Yard Affordable Housing Development (BPUY) is soon to be a vibrant new feature of the Outer Mission neighborhood of San Francisco. Developed on land owned by the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency, BPUY is part of a city-wide equity strategy among municipal agencies to

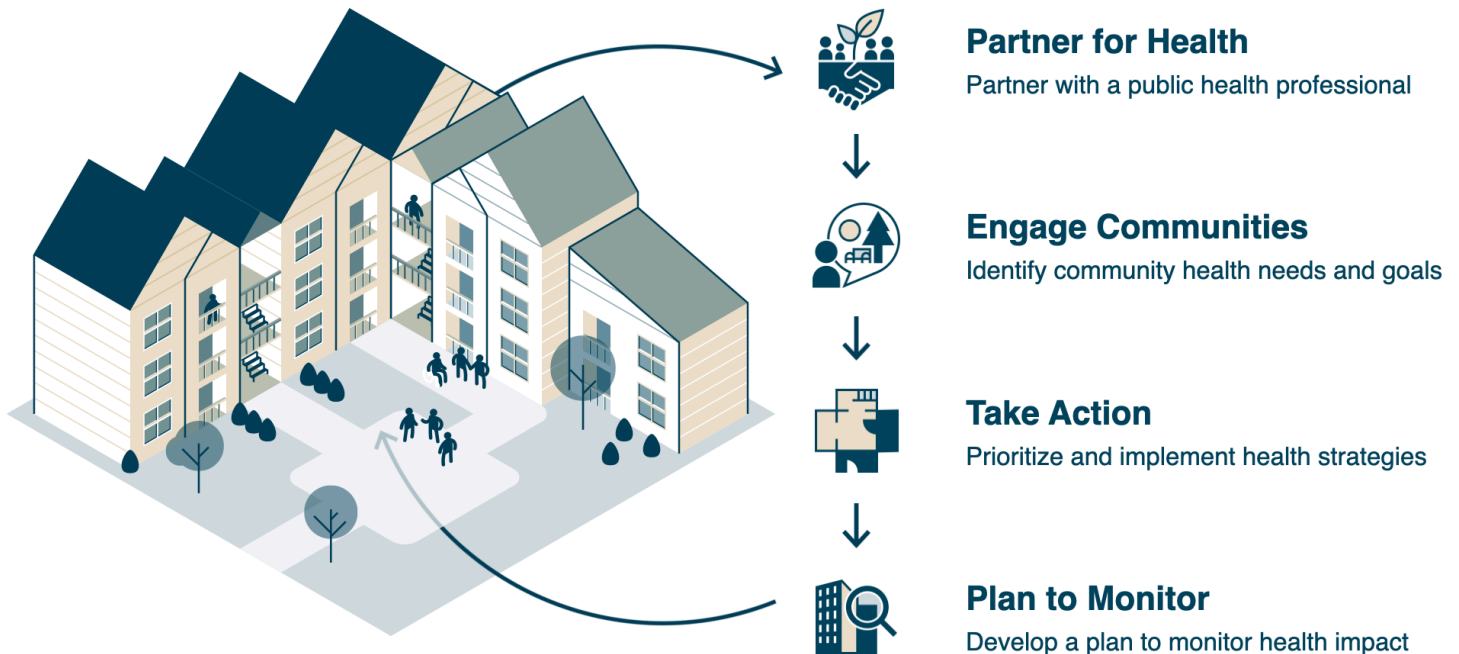
prioritize land use for housing in a growing affordable housing crisis.

The Outer Mission and the surrounding neighborhoods that make up San Francisco's District 11 are commonly referred to as the last affordable neighborhoods for working-class families. Many displaced and evicted families move to the neighborhood when they are priced and pushed out of rapidly gentrifying neighborhoods like the nearby Mission District. Traditionally made up of single family homes, other multi-story housing buildings are concurrently being developed in the neighborhood, raising concerns for current residents and community members about increased population density and impact on quality of life. Catalyzed by decades of advocacy for a more equitable community, BPUY will serve the Outer Mission neighborhood by bringing affordable housing, amenities, services and important new open space to a busy transit hub.

The project concept included building infrastructure and community services that promote community health and well-being as well as plans for neighborhood revitalization. The co-owners selected Mithun to champion this effort, a firm with documented experience designing

spaces to create positive change. To formalize the project’s approach to health, Mithun advocated for application of the LEED Integrative Process for Health Promotion (LEED Health Process) pilot credit. Although formal LEED certification was not pursued for the BPUY project, the team agreed to utilize the LEED Health Process to guide health-oriented implementation of the GreenPoint Rated program.

The LEED Health Process



The LEED Health Process helps built environment project teams consider and promote population health and well-being as a formal part of their green building strategy.

The LEED Health Process is available as the **LEED v4 Integrative Process for Health Promotion pilot credit** and within the LEED v4.1 Integrative Process credit. The process is also aligned with 2020 Enterprise Green Communities Criterion 1.5, Design for Health and Well-Being. The Green Health Partnership, an initiative of the University of Virginia School of Medicine and the U.S. Green Building Council, developed the process in collaboration with Enterprise Community Partners and the Health Impact Project, a collaboration of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and The Pew Charitable Trusts.



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Partner for Health. While the BPUY project team had robust sustainability, community development and design knowledge, the team partnered with a public health professional to provide insight on community health and well-being. Thanks to the research and development partnership between Mithun and the Green Health Partnership (GHP), the team enlisted Daniel Lau of the GHP - a public health professional with experience in community and economic development. As all the involved stakeholders for the BPUY are mission-driven organizations committed to improving well-being, many members of the team have experience working with health-promoting projects.

Daniel was able to use his public health knowledge to facilitate deeper discussions on health and well-being and encourage the team to apply more holistic definitions of health, often going beyond physical health to include the social determinants of health and mental health benefits of stable housing and placemaking.

PROJECT TEAM

The interdisciplinary BPUY team included stakeholders from the following departments and disciplines:

- **CO-DEVELOPERS.** Mission Housing Development Corporation & Related California
- **LAND OWNER.** San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency.
- **TRANSIT AGENCY, ADJACENT LANDOWNER.** Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART).
- **STAKEHOLDER.** San Francisco Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development (MOHCD).
- **ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN.** Mithun.
- **SUSTAINABILITY.** Bright Green Strategies.
- **HEALTH PARTNER.** Green Health Partnership, Daniel Lau.

BALBOA PARK UPPER YARD PROJECT STATISTICS

LOCATION	PROJECT TYPE	CERTIFICATIONS	SITE USERS	UNITS	SQ. FOOTAGE	ARCHITECT
Outer Mission, San Francisco, CA	Multi-Family Affordable Housing, New Construction	GreenPoint Rated, LEED Health Process	Low-Income and Formerly Homeless Individuals + Families	131 (Mix of 3br, 2br, 1br, and Studios)	29,000 sq. ft (Lot) 175,000 sq. ft (Structure)	Mithun

Engage Communities. After recruiting a public health partner, the interdisciplinary team set out to engage members of the Outer Mission community and learn of the most pressing health challenges affecting the population. Owners and designers held two separate community engagement meetings to discuss both health concerns and proposed design solutions. Although conflicting opinions arose in several circumstances - often concerning population density and traffic flow - the meetings gave residents the opportunity to respond to the proposed design strategies. The needs-based community health and well-being framework helped facilitate health-oriented discussions and set project goals that satisfied all parties involved.

The design and development team posed key questions and offered a variety of design alternatives to the assembled stakeholders on project design features. For instance, many of the community members expressed a strong preference for a scheme that maximized pedestrian over auto access to the station. This scheme created a new transit plaza with dedicated space for the health-supporting features like farmer’s markets, seating, green space and access to transit by promoting more walkability and safety.

Reviewing options for height and density, the majority of community stakeholders voiced their support for the maximum number of units possible in response to the housing crisis in San Francisco and the Bay Area. One community member even urged the development team to pursue the state of California’s affordable housing density bonus to add even more floors and units. As a result of this advocacy, the development team was able to increase the number of stories from six to nine and the number of apartments from 80 to 131, an increase of over 50%. Housing affordability is one of the key measures for a health-promoting environment, and this increase meant stable, healthy housing for 50 additional low-income households.

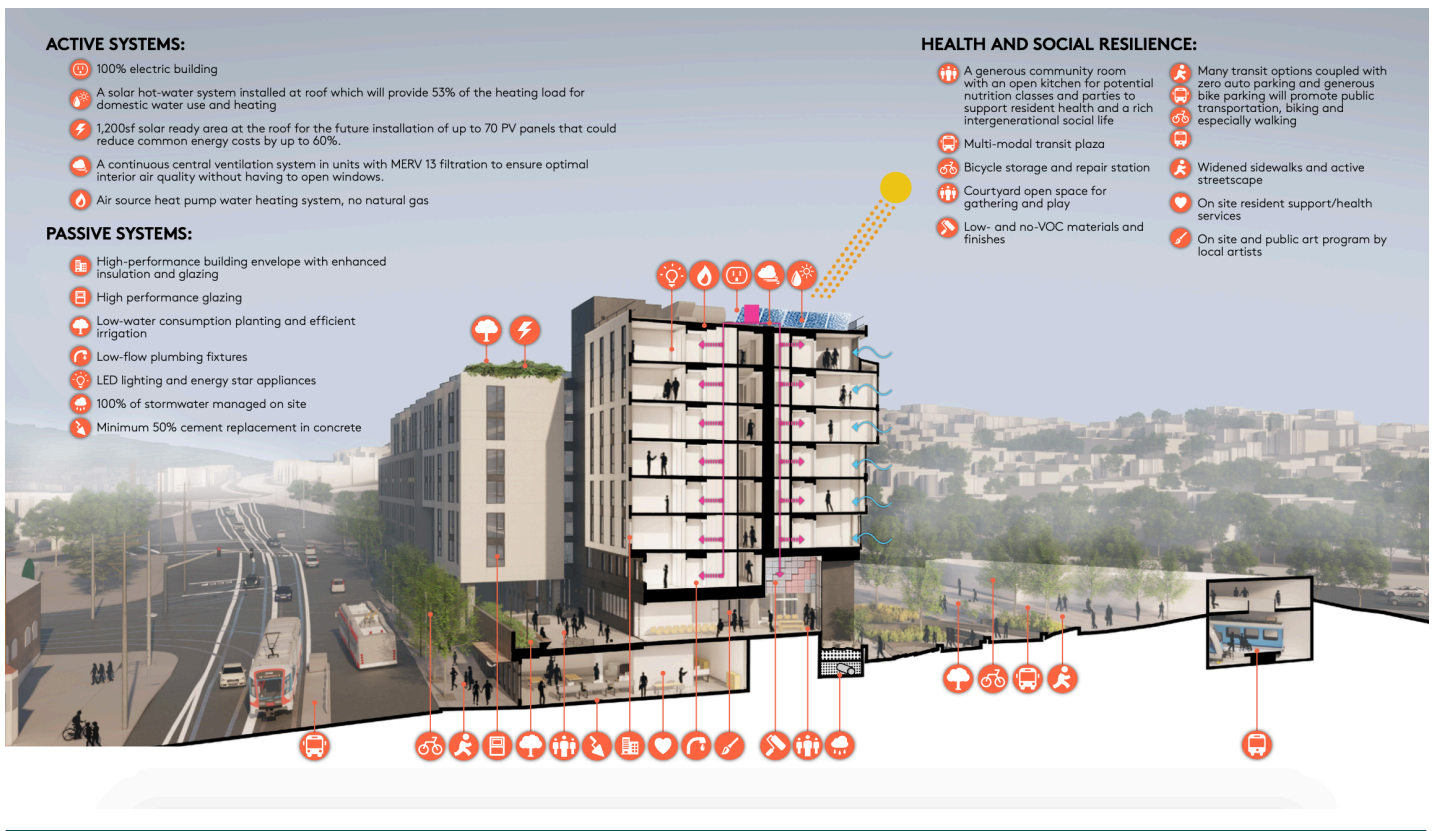
The community health needs and goals for Balboa park demonstrate the value of a more holistic definition of health; had the project team never considered placemaking and neighborhood identity factors that influence health and well-being, many aspects of the housing development would have been less tailored to the unique community and therefore less beneficial for their health.

BPUY SUSTAINABILITY GOALS

- Energy efficiency.
- All-electric, fossil-fuel-free building.
- California GreenPoint Rated.
- Committed to monitoring and improving air quality.

BPUY HEALTH GOALS

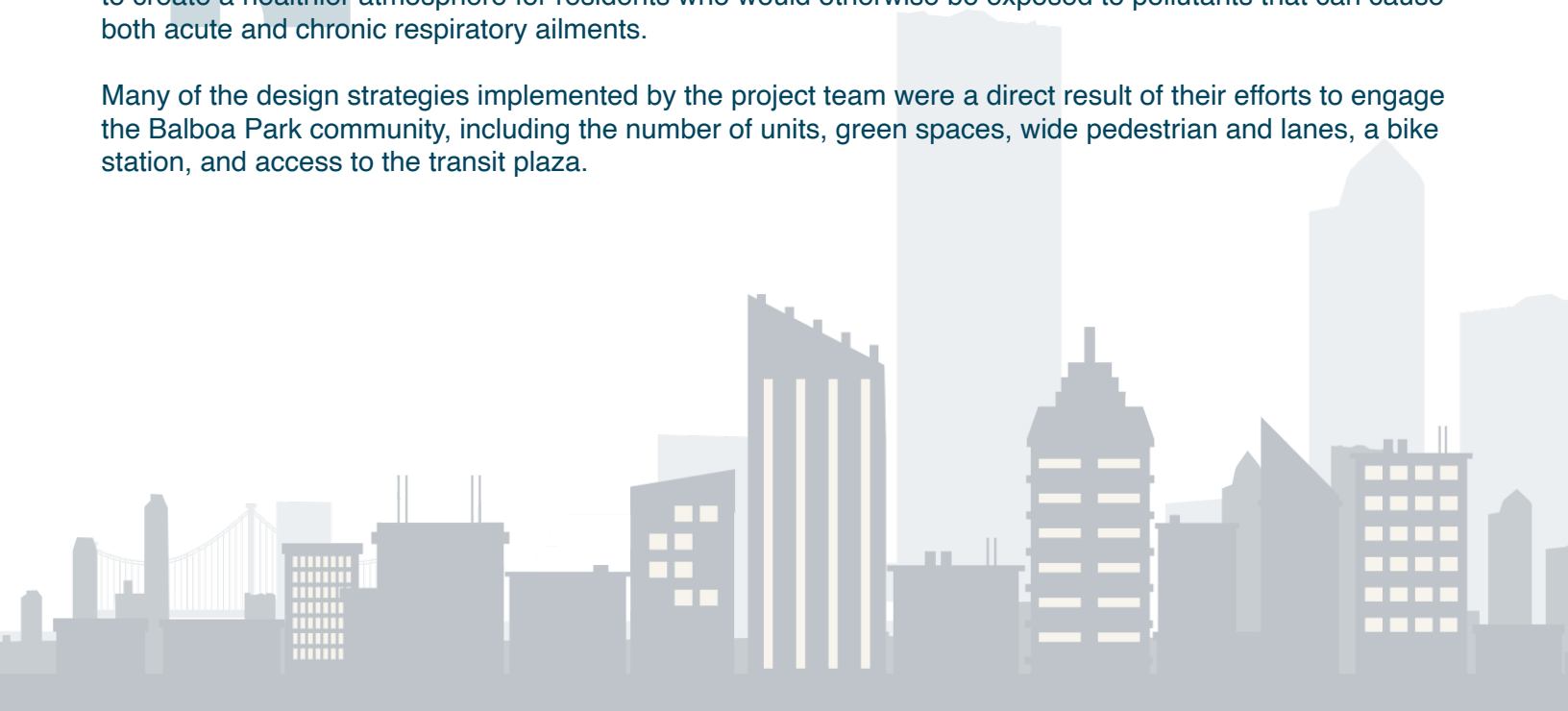
- Safe, high-quality, stable affordable housing for low-income families.
- Community-building, healthy placemaking, and a stronger sense of neighborhood identity.
- Safer, more walkable streets for pedestrians.
- Decreasing exposure to hazardous materials.
- Encouraging physical activity and social connection with community-accessible indoor and outdoor spaces.



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Take Action. Utilizing information gathered through the community engagement meetings, the project team considered various design strategies to address the project’s established health goals. To meet the goal of mitigating air pollution, design strategies included low-emitting materials, thoughtful landscaping and vegetation, continuous central ventilation with MERV 13 filtration, and, most importantly, the physical placement of the building. As community members overwhelmingly supported the location of the mid-block resident open space facing east, towards neighborhood streets and away from the adjacent I-280 eight-lane freeway, taking advantage of the housing structure itself as a physical shield from noise and air pollution. Reducing air pollution aligns with the energy efficiency and sustainability goals of the project, but it also helps to create a healthier atmosphere for residents who would otherwise be exposed to pollutants that can cause both acute and chronic respiratory ailments.

Many of the design strategies implemented by the project team were a direct result of their efforts to engage the Balboa Park community, including the number of units, green spaces, wide pedestrian and lanes, a bike station, and access to the transit plaza.



Needs-Based Solutions at Balboa Park Upper Yard

Health Need

Healthy Placemaking

Health Solution

Building Neighborhood Identity and Safety

Ground-level neighborhood services including a bike station, a non-profit community wellness center, and childcare, will be easily accessible for residents, community members and commuters. New active, multi-use open space and public art will help transform this former parking lot into a vibrant community hub. These strategies, along with generous landscaped sidewalks and transit waiting areas, create a safe and welcoming environment for pedestrians and cyclists.

Community Connection

Welcoming and Interconnected Social Spaces

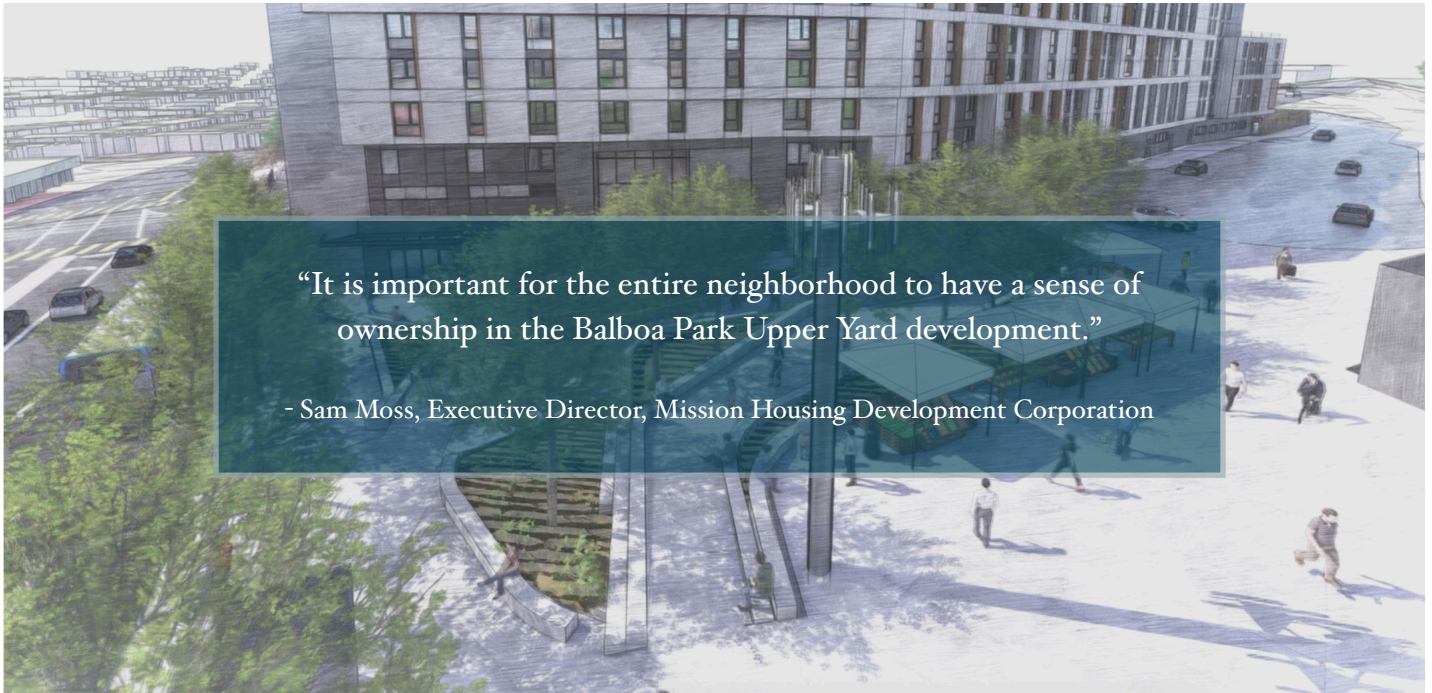
Both indoor and outdoor spaces designed to foster community interaction will be featured in the BPUY development, creating increased opportunities for connection among its residents and the neighborhood. For example, corridors include lounge areas and openings connecting 2 floors, increasing social interactions.

Improved Air Quality

Design for Mitigation

To improve air quality for the neighborhood, transit users, and the residents of BPUY, designers considered landscaping and vegetation, building materials, building location to shield open spaces from the nearby freeway, and provided MERV 13 filtration in all units. The team also applied for a grant from the BAAQMD to monitor the efficacy of their strategies.





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Plan to Monitor. As the construction of the project is currently underway, owners and project team members plan to focus their monitoring and evaluation plan around their goals to connect the community, establish a sense of place for residents, and improve air quality. To determine the impact of their healthy design strategies, the BPUY team plans to distribute a post-occupancy evaluation that will provide data on health and well-being amenity usage (like the childcare center, the nonprofit community wellness center, bicycle stations, and use of nearby transit) and resident’s overall satisfaction with the housing development (feelings of safety and security, connectedness with other residents and community, and general comfort).

As improving air quality was an enormous priority for the BPUY project, the team, with the leadership of Mithun, applied for a Community Science grant through the Bay Area Air Quality Management District to bolster efforts to improve air quality monitoring. This decision was influenced by a health and well-being framework that centered around the needs and concerns of the future residents and community members and their anticipated lived experience in the building. The monitoring and evaluation plan for BPUY will allow owners to make any needed adjustments to programming to continue supporting community health for residents of BPUY.

Conclusion. When the development and BART plaza open in 2023, BPUY will aim to build community placemaking and stabilize vulnerable families and individuals from housing insecurity and displacement. BPUY will not only create a community identity for itself, but will also create a distinct sense of place at an important transit hub while improving the health and well-being of its residents and of the community at large. Closely aligned with the mission-driven goals of its owners and designers and guided by a needs-oriented approach to health and well-being promotion, the BPUY team implemented designs that will support the targeted community and individual health goals for the populations and will contribute to a more equitable, vibrant, and safer San Francisco neighborhood.

Even in the absence of formal certification, application of the LEED Health Process within the Balboa Park project demonstrates how a health process can help mission-oriented owners and practitioners further manifest their mission within their approach to individual projects. Use of the LEED Health Process within the context of a robust community outreach process helped the team identify and prioritize specific strategies to create a healthier and more secure sense of place among the intended residents and for the neighborhood.

Though San Francisco is a frequently changing and evolving city, the team responsible for BPUY made efforts to maintain the Outer Mission neighborhood identity while improving the economy, health, and well-being of the community and its members for many years to come.

BPUY's Application of the LEED Health Process

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- **HEALTH PARTNER.** Green Health Partnership, Daniel Lau.



Partner for Health. The BPUY team used their own experience working with health-related projects and called upon GHP team member Daniel Lau to facilitate deeper discussions on health and well-being.



Engage Communities. The project team set health and well-being goals for BPUY based on the needs of future residents and community members. Clean air, placemaking, and community connection were priorities.



Take Action. The team selected design and programmatic strategies - like communal outdoor spaces, wide pedestrian and bicycle lanes, and the physical placement of the building to shield residents from the freeway - that would address health needs.



Plan to Monitor. The team at BPUY will continue to monitor the effectiveness of their chosen strategies throughout the life of the housing development. The health process will help them reassess their priorities in the face of new health challenges.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

2016, FALL	2017, WINTER	2017, SPRING	2017, SPRING	2017, SUMMER	2017, SUMMER	2017, WINTER	2021 / 2023
San Francisco MOHCD awarded development to a partnership between Mission and Related California for BPUY.	Mithun and GHP host a conversation with Mission Housing to discuss short, medium, and long-term population health impacts of the development.	Mithun and Mission Housing host their first community workshop to discuss health needs and goals. Health charrette expands team's definition of health.	Project team hosts their second community workshop, including San Francisco Municipal Transit Agency, BART, and community.	Project owners formalize their interest in the LEED Health Process. The team applies for an air quality monitoring grant through the BAAQMD.	Related and Mission Housing gain partial management of BART public transit plaza, increasing outdoor space and boosting holistic placemaking.	Finalization of health design and development goals. Action plan for BPUY is finalized.	Construction begins 2021 / Estimated project completion and new residents move into BPUY 2023.



Who we are

Founded in 2013, the Green Health Partnership (GHP) is an academic research and development group between the University of Virginia School of Medicine and the U.S. Green Building Council with funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. GHP utilizes the green building movement as a platform and blueprint for creating a self-sustaining, scalable market for health promotion within the real estate industry.

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