As the baby boom generation ages and people are living longer, there is a growing need to provide living facilities to retirement-age seniors and those requiring additional care. California is home to the largest number of persons aged 65
or older, with the greatest number of seniors residing in temperate climates such as Los Angeles, San Diego and Orange Counties. Based on the expectation of the elder population nearly doubling between 2000 and 2020, there has been a growing need for building additional retirement communities.

The Covington, a nonprofit progressive retirement community, was planned for development in Aliso Viejo, Orange County, Calif. The facility is a continuing care retirement community, one of about 75 in the state that offer three levels of care: independent living, assisted living and skilled nursing care. The tiered system allows residents the ability to advance to higher levels of care if their
needs change without completely changing their environment.

Construction on the Covington began on Feb. 4, 2002. This $81.9 million project consists of a Continuing Care Retirement Community with 24 Independent Living Cottages (units from 1,350 to 1,945 square feet), Independent Living Facility with 150 units (each unit is 827 to 1,615 square feet in size), a 30 unit Assisted Living Facility and a 24 unit Skilled Nursing Facility. There is also a two-story subterranean garage below the Independent Living Facility.

The Los Angeles office of The Steinberg Group, an architecture firm affiliated with the California Association of Homes and Services for the Aging with a focus on sustainability and social consciousness, was hired to design the facility and specify materials. “A lot of what we do is about sustainability and indoor air quality,” said David Mitani, AIA, partner and principal architect for The Steinberg Group. “We have considerable experience working with the elder community and are familiar with their potential sensitivities and weaknesses.”

According to the American Lung Association, most Americans spend an average of 90 percent of their time indoors. Seniors, especially those with limited mobility, spend even more time indoors, often in environments more polluted than outdoor air. Seniors may also have compromised immune systems and greater sensitivity to pollutants and toxins.

solution

Plans for The Covington called for using sustainable building products containing few or no volatile organic com-
pounds. “We used low-VOC paint and carpets—anything that would contribute to overall indoor air quality,” Mitani said.

Johns Manville Formaldehyde-free fiber glass insulation was specified for the residences as well. Instead of using formaldehyde as a binder for the fiber glass, the manufacturer uses a nontoxic acrylic binder. The result is an insulation product that reduces concerns about indoor air quality, while also offering acoustical and thermal benefits. Additionally, because the insulation does not contain formaldehyde-based binders, hazardous formaldehyde emissions are reduced during manufacturing and after installation by more than 100 tons each year.

The Covington is currently under construction and will be open to residents this spring.

About the Author
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