Contemporary affordable homes are designed and built with the character and style of the neighborhood in mind. Many have won design awards! Chances are you have walked right by an affordable home and not even known it.

Bay Area families face high costs of living, and housing is generally the greatest single expense. Not only do Bay Area families spend more of their income on housing costs than anything else, the proportion of their income that they spend on housing is lowering their overall quality of life.

WHAT Does It Mean For Housing To Be “Affordable”?
By federal government standards, housing is considered “affordable” if households pay no more than 30% of their gross income for rent and utilities.

More than half of California’s low income households pay more than 50% for their gross income for housing. Such severe overpaying creates bigger problems for lower-income and middle-income families. With a large portion of their household income going toward housing every month, it leaves less for essentials like food and medicine, forcing these families to make difficult choices.

WHO Lives In Contemporary Affordable Housing?
People who earn less than their region’s median income, from all walks of life, can apply. Affordable housing developers must certify specific income limits for their prospective residents as a condition of funding. Housing for “very low income” for example, is only available to households earning less than 50% of the area’s median income. In the Bay Area this would include minimum-wage earners as well as entry level professions such as teachers and nurses.

WHO Builds Contemporary Affordable Housing?
It is built by private developers, mostly non-profits, many of which are local, community or faith-based organizations. The buildings are funded through a combination of rental income, private funding and government subsidies.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
The Online Guide to State and Local Housing Policy, Center for Housing Policy:
www.housingpolicy.org

Myths and Facts About Affordable and High-Density Housing, California Planning Roundtable & California Department of Housing and Community Development:
www.hcd.ca.gov/hpd/mythsnfacts.pdf

Busting the Five Myths of Affordable Housing, The Campaign for Affordable Housing:
www.tcah.org/pdf/5Myths.pps
WHAT does contemporary affordable housing look like?
These homes come in a variety of shapes and sizes, include single family homes and apartments, and are available through ownership or rental. Affordable housing developments are safe and healthy homes because they meet local building standards and design requirements; they have professional on-site management; and there are high standards for tenant selection.

HOW Is Contemporary Affordable Housing Planned And Built?
Local governments are required to provide an adequate number of affordable homes for their population. They plan for it in their Housing Element process which includes public participation. Over the past few decades, many communities in the San Francisco Bay Area have created effective public/private partnerships among local government, non-profit housing developers, community leaders and private financial institutions to build attractive, successful affordable housing developments.

WHY Do Communities Need More Contemporary Affordable Housing?
• Affordable housing takes care of the local workforce who might otherwise be priced out of the market. This includes minimum wage earners like food servers and retail clerks, as well as salaried public service workers like nurses, teachers and police officers.

• When people live near work, they reduce commute time thereby reducing regional traffic and air pollution. They also have more time to spend with their families and communities.

• Affordable housing can improve the neighborhoods and reduce sprawl. New or rehabilitated affordable homes revitalize an area because they are clean, safe and well-managed, often including attractive landscaping and play areas. Studies have shown that contemporary affordable housing not only serves its residents, but is an asset to the broader community.

• Studies demonstrate that children perform better academically and socially in school when they have a stable housing situation. Improving the quality of housing reduces stress for adults which improves employment stability and success as well as physical and mental health.

• In the past ten years the number of new rental homes has not even kept up with the number of rentals lost through conversion and demolition.

• Recent home foreclosures have pushed more people into the rental market. Combined with limited supply, this has led to steadily rising rents increasing the need for more contemporary affordable housing.