

San Francisco, California

Work Force Housing Today

Columbia Square, Baker Vilar

Columbia Square is a low-rise, fifty unit multi-family development in a mixed-use area of San Francisco. In response to its context, the development integrates affordable family housing with commercial establishments on the street level. Concrete, wood and galvanized steel are just a few of the industrial materials used to reflect the neighboring light industrial workshops and warehouses. To respect the building massing of its context, this four-story apartment building maintains an urban edge along Folsom Street while reducing in mass toward the main entry on Columbia Square, a small alley.

The tenants of Columbia Square are primarily working families who have previously lived in overcrowded conditions or who have paid an extremely high proportion of their income to rent.

Columbia Square responds to the building types of Folsom Street, which is lined with various commercial establishments, most with residences above, as well as to the neighboring narrow alleys which are scattered with light industrial workshops and warehouses. Ground floor offices are accessed from Folsom Street, while the residential entrance on Columbia Square is buffered from the traffic by a forecourt.

Columbia Square is designed to provide a safe and secure place for adults and children to relax and play. The central courtyard, which steps up to the second floor level, provides a protected environment for adults and children to meet and socialize. Its location also provides parents with a clear view of their children at play.



Project Data

Owner Client:	Mercy Charities Housing California
Project Cost:	\$75 per square foot
Project Type:	Multi-unit housing, with Commercial on the ground level
On-site Amenities:	Central Courtyard, Commercial Space, Parking Garage
Date of Completion:	1996
Number of Units:	50 Units: 4 One Bedroom, 12 two Bedroom, 30 Three Bedroom, 4 Four Bedroom
Site Area / Density:	0.5 Acres/ 100 D.U.A.



The Stardust Center
for Affordable Homes and the Family