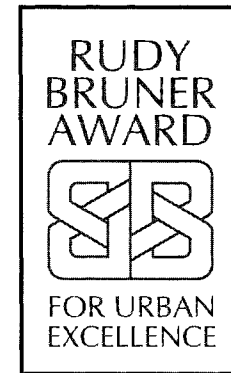


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**silver**  
MEDAL 1997



Hismen Hin-nu  
Oakland, California



This is an excerpt from:

# **Visions of Urban Excellence**

**1997**

**Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence**

**Jay Farbstein, PhD, FAIA**

**Richard Wener, PhD**

**Emily Axelrod, MCP**

**Bruner Foundation, Inc.**

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## Hismen Hin-Nu at a Glance

### What is Hismen Hin-Nu?

- A mixed use development with 92 units of housing for low income residents and 14,000 square feet of retail space on a main commercial artery in a transitional neighborhood.

### Who Made the Submission?

- East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation (EBALDC – pronounced “Eee-Bald-Cee”). The project’s co-sponsor is the San Antonio Community Development Corporation.

### Major Goals and Accomplishments of Hismen Hin-Nu

- To transform an underutilized site into an attractive, mixed use project.
- To build experience and encourage cooperation among local community developers.
- To improve the immediate neighborhood.
- To integrate multi-cultural art into the project.
- To complete construction at reasonable cost and within budget
- To achieve full occupancy and successful operation in both residential and retail operations.

### Reasons For Including Hismen Hin-Nu as a Finalist

- Exemplary for small scale community development project;
- Good design process and site assembly;
- Use of local contractors;
- Appears to have good ethnic mix.

### Selection Committee Questions and Concerns for Site Visit

- Who lives in the project, how diverse is the population, and how do they get along (e.g., various ethnic groups or life stages)?

- Were/are residents drawn from a pool of local applicants or did they come from outside the area? How are tenants selected? Screening? Criteria?
- Is the commercial space occupied? Working well?
- The submission admits to a lack of usable open space. What is done to compensate for that, either by the project or the residents?
- What is the impact of the project on the neighborhood and vice versa?
- Were local contractors used in construction?
- What is the quality of the design, including image and appearance, artwork, etc.? Do residents and neighbors perceive the place as being special?
- What is the quality and durability of materials? Are details appropriate or too elaborate? Is maintenance (and its budget) adequate?



Hismen Hin-nu from International Way, formerly East 14th Street

- What special resources were applied to the project (University of California at Berkeley or others) and how were they used? What did they contribute?
- Have any follow-up studies (e.g., a post-occupancy evaluation) been done?

#### Final Selection Committee Comments

- The participatory planning process, collaboration between two community development organizations, and the architectural design were considered exemplary.
- The project was the work of a mature and effective organization, (EBALDC).
- The Committee speculated that some additional pre-development work on the issue of retail design and mix might have benefited the retail component of the project.

### Project Description

#### Chronology

**1988** Architecture and planning students from several schools, under the direction of Michael Pyatok (later the design architect for the project), study the development potential of sites along East 14th Street and identify this one, among others, as underutilized with good potential for a dense, mixed use project. Findings are reported to the city.

**1990** EBALDC purchases the property with the help of the city and forms a partnership with the San Antonio Community Development Corporation, which has stronger roots in the neighborhood, for its development.

**1991** Design workshops are held under the auspices of the San Antonio CDC.

**1993** Construction starts in July.

**1995** Construction completed in March.

#### Key Participants *(persons interviewed are indicated by an asterisk\*)*

Lynette Jung Lee,\* *Executive Director of EBALDC*

Joshua Simon,\* *Senior Project Manager of EBALDC*

Ted Dang,\* *member of EBALDC board and local realtor and property manager*

Vince Reyes,\* *chair of EBALDC board*

Don "Little Cloud" Davenport,\* *Executive Director of San Antonio Community Development Corporation*

Eric Cone\*, *Board of Directors, San Antonio Community Development Corporation*

Margaret Jackson,\* *Resident Property Manager*

Roosevelt Johnson,\* *Maintenance Supervisor*

Michael Pyatok,\* *(design architect) and The Ratcliff Architects (architects of record).*

Artists: Reynaldo Terrazas\* *gates*, Horace Washington *tiles*,

Daniel Galvez *mural*, Mia Kodani *frieze panels at tops of towers*

Elnora Gay,\* *director of on-site Headstart program*

#### The Project

Hismen Hin-Nu Terrace is a mixed use, affordable housing and retail project in an ethnically and economically diverse neighborhood of Oakland, California. Hismen Hin-Nu consists of 92 housing units distributed as follows:

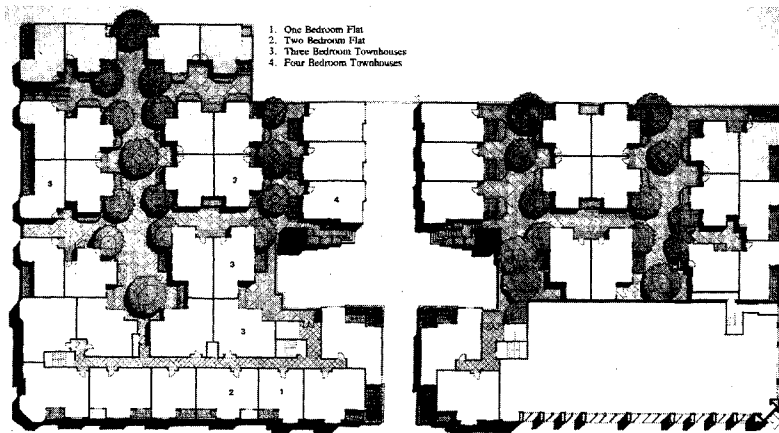
Size	Units
1 bedroom	17
2 bedrooms	35
3 bedrooms	30
4 bedrooms	10

The considerable number of larger units responds to the needs of families, including multigenerational ones, in this area. In addition to the housing, there are about 14,000 square feet of commer-

cial space which includes a larger retail area (with a convenience market), a market hall for smaller merchants, some stalls along the street (which were abandoned after the site visit), and a Headstart school. There is also a community meeting room and some office space for the property managers. Due to its rather high density, and the city's requirement for a significant amount of parking, the housing is built over a parking garage.

At Hismen Hin-Nu, the largest tenant group is African-Americans (64%), followed by Asian-Pacific Islanders (21%) and Latinos (13%); Caucasians make up only about 2%. Tenants report that they get along well together and that the racial mix has not resulted in conflicts.

Income levels at Hismen Hin-Nu show 44% earning less than 30% of median income with another 43% earning between 31% and 50% of median income. This is less skewed toward the lowest income residents than other EBALDC projects (where 56% to 100% of tenants have incomes below 30% of median). Generally, the income mix is dictated by requirements of the funding program (such as low income tax shelters).



Plan of Hismen Hin-nu at upper courtyard level

## Project Origin

### Identifying and Obtaining the Site

Well before the project started, the site was identified as one among several with potential for supporting this type and scale of mixed use project. This finding came from a study conducted for the city by a group of students from U.C. Berkeley and other schools led by the architect, Michael Pyatok, who eventually became the project's designer. Following this report, EBALDC did a feasibility study showing that a viable project could be built there.

The site was a vacant supermarket which had been the subject of a foreclosure auction. The Oakland City Council and Redevelopment Agency agreed to fund a loan to EBALDC to purchase the property, though a competing proposal for a new supermarket was also being considered. At the auction, the supermarket chain started with their high bid (\$950,000) and allowed EBALDC to buy the property for only \$100 more without bidding again. EBALDC acquired the building and parking lot, which covered a half block – just under one and one-half acres. Prior to building the new project, EBALDC operated an indoor “flea market” there, many of whose vendors later relocated to the new building.

### The Neighborhood

East 14th Street is a prominent and busy commercial artery which connects downtown Oakland to many of its southerly neighborhoods. Along its length, there are areas that are highly mixed and in transition; some are run down and some are bustling with activity.

In the immediate vicinity are housing, retail, commercial, and fast food outlets. There is another rather dense mixed-use project directly across 14th Street, built by the San Antonio CDC, a partner in Hismen Hin-Nu. Just across the street to the west (behind Hismen Hin-Nu) is an elevated rapid transit line (BART). Toward

the south lies the Fruitvale neighborhood, a lively area which is largely Hispanic and the location of the nearest BART station.

Housing in the vicinity is generally in decent to good condition and we saw many pleasant blocks with modest single family houses, duplexes, and moderate-size apartment buildings. Property was described as being too valuable to allow it to deteriorate. We were told that there has been considerable investment in local real estate by recent Asian immigrants. There is reported to be rather little neighborhood open space in the area, with only two parks for 60,000 people.



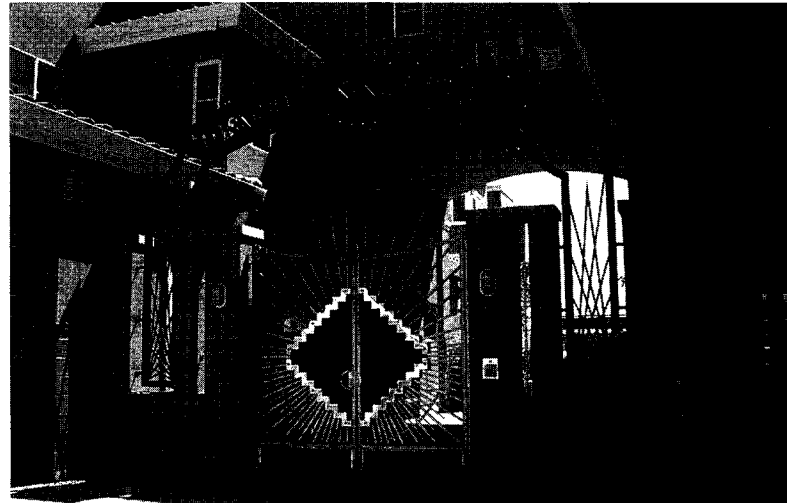
Standard Brands store adjacent to the site, with Jack-in-the-Box in background



BART track behind Hismert Hin-nu

### The Name

The co-sponsoring agency, San Antonio Community Development Corporation, is led by Don Davenport, a member of the Seminole tribe. He assembled the tribal elders who named the project Hismert Hin-Nu which means “Sun Gate” in the language of the Indians native to this area (the Muwekma Ohlone). He reported that the artist selected to design the gate incorporated the sunburst motif based on the name, although the artist recalled that he had already done the gate, which provided the image for the name. This difference in perception suggests broad ownership of the name and design.



The Sun Gate itself serves both security and decorative purposes.

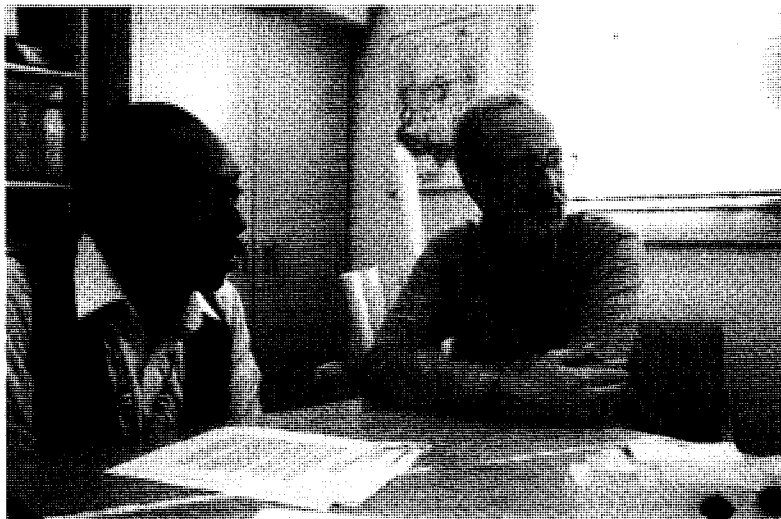
### Design Process

The project was designed by architect Michael Pyatok, who works locally but is nationally known for his experience with low income housing. He was selected by EBALDC as part of a joint venture with The Ratcliff Associates, another local firm of more substantial size. The design evolved through a participatory process, described in the following paragraphs.

The San Antonio CDC, which was more closely tied than EBALDC to the immediate community, was instrumental in providing the forum for community involvement. Such an approach was said to be a standard part of any planning process they would undertake and is also typical of the way the city, EBALDC, and the design architect work – thus, everyone expected a participatory design process. This process ensures that any opposition will surface, that useful suggestions will be received, and that the neighborhood will endorse the resulting project.

To locate participants, San Antonio sent out fliers and called people they thought would be interested. Many of these were “stakeholders” rather than representatives of future project residents, though some were said to be at similar income levels as future residents.

As many as 50 to 60 people came to some meetings, with approximately 20 to 30 typically attending each of the three design workshops. The workshops were highly structured by the architect in a manner that is more or less standard for him. Much of the work



Don Davenport and Eric Cone of San Antonio Community Development Corporation

was hands-on, done by smaller groups of up to 10 who would meet for about two hours at each session, using blocks to make models. The workshops covered site design, the living units, and image.

For the site workshop, the architect prepared model kits which allowed participants to explore alternative parking arrangements (e.g., at the unit, away from the unit, or mixed), although the architect already knew that, at over 50 units per acre, it would be necessary to have a parking garage under most units. The small groups worked with the model for about an hour, then presented the advantages and disadvantages of their scheme to the whole group. For parking, the preferred scheme was to have two garages with some ground level open space (and the project was, in fact, designed this way).

Key neighborhood concerns related to the density and scale of the project. Some neighbors were afraid that it might be too massive or have too great an impact on the schools. The project started by testing how to fit 100 units on the site, while some wanted as few as 50 units. All participants liked the plan that grouped units around a series of courtyards. At the second workshop, the teams studied density and massing. They found that if they put the taller building along East 14th (the north side of the site), they got better sunlight into the balance of the project. While some had been concerned about the scale and mass on the street, the decision to put the taller building on East 14th was made by consensus. In the end, the group was comfortable that the 92 units would fit properly on the site and in the neighborhood.

Many other important design decisions were aired and resolved at the workshops, including the location of various elements, how to handle access, and where to place entries. The architect’s perception is that participants compromised, accepting the plan for one main entry (even though many had advocated multiple entrances) since, once inside, the design divided the project in two, reducing the number of people who would share each open space.



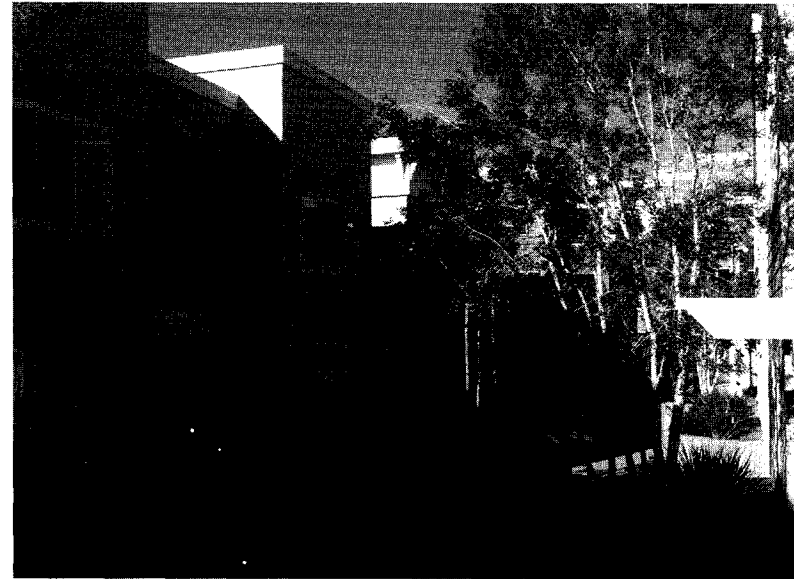
The final workshop dealt with image; here the architect showed slides of many apartment houses of similar size from the area. These included Craftsman and Mission styles, with the latter particularly liked by participants because it reflects the history of the area. This greatly influenced the actual design, as the architect felt that he could work in almost any relevant architectural style (see next section).

EBALDC also does a “post-occupancy evaluation” (assessment of the success of the project after it is occupied) of each project to gain insights for future work. They cited many examples of things they had learned from a recent project, many of which were incorporated into or improved upon at Hismen Hin-Nu. One finding indicated the need for excellent visibility into the laundry room – thus, large windows were provided. The documentation that EBALDC provided, while valuable and insightful, was more an audit of the process and the achievement of organizational goals than an assessment of the design. There was no feedback from tenants, nor was the architect involved. On the other hand, the audit reported that the project met or exceeded many goals (e.g., for minority and local hiring during construction) and had many useful suggestions for improving project management.

### Design

For the architect, a key design challenge was how to break down the massive scale and potentially monolithic appearance of a project that is over 400 feet long and four stories tall at the street. This was done through subdividing the mass (dividing the length and giving relief with vertical elements and trellised balconies). Red tile roofs on portions of the project and a variety of colors (selected with the clients) further define these elements. The principal finishing materials are stucco and cement fiber siding.

There is a carefully planned hierarchy of open spaces which is intended to both limit and reinforce social interactions. The



Residential courtyard at upper level



Central interior courtyard

residential areas have a single, central entrance from the street which gives access to a shared space treated as a symbolic town square where all residents meet on their way in and out. In this space are mailboxes and shared facilities such as the manager's office, laundry, and community meeting room. From here, there are four other entries: two give access to the elevators serving the smaller apartments and two give access to the stairs serving the family-oriented townhouses. The townhouses, with no more than 20 on each side, share an upper level courtyard intended for use by small children. These spaces do, indeed, present the feeling of an urban street, with entrances and frequent activity.

Pyatok, the architect, says that as a result of efforts to break down the building's scale and mass, they ended up with 25 different plans for housing units – a lot of work in design, but offering considerable variety and choice in living arrangements. In some larger units the intent is to accommodate multi-generational families, with a bedroom on the ground floor for grandparents who might have difficulty with stairs. Many units were able to have balconies, in part because FHA standards, which would have severely limited them, did not apply to this project – and such niceties were affordable within the budget.

The dwellings themselves are well-liked by tenants we talked to (we visited three or four and spoke with others). They found them to be spacious, liked the abundant cabinets, and the balconies were appreciated and reported to be used.

### Retail Design

A Headstart facility and retail spaces are located on the ground floor, with direct access from the street, on either side of the main residential entrance. The retail component consists of one larger store which is at one corner (occupied by a family-run business called Dollars and More), a market hall for up to 140 smaller merchants at the other corner, and five niches along the street facade.

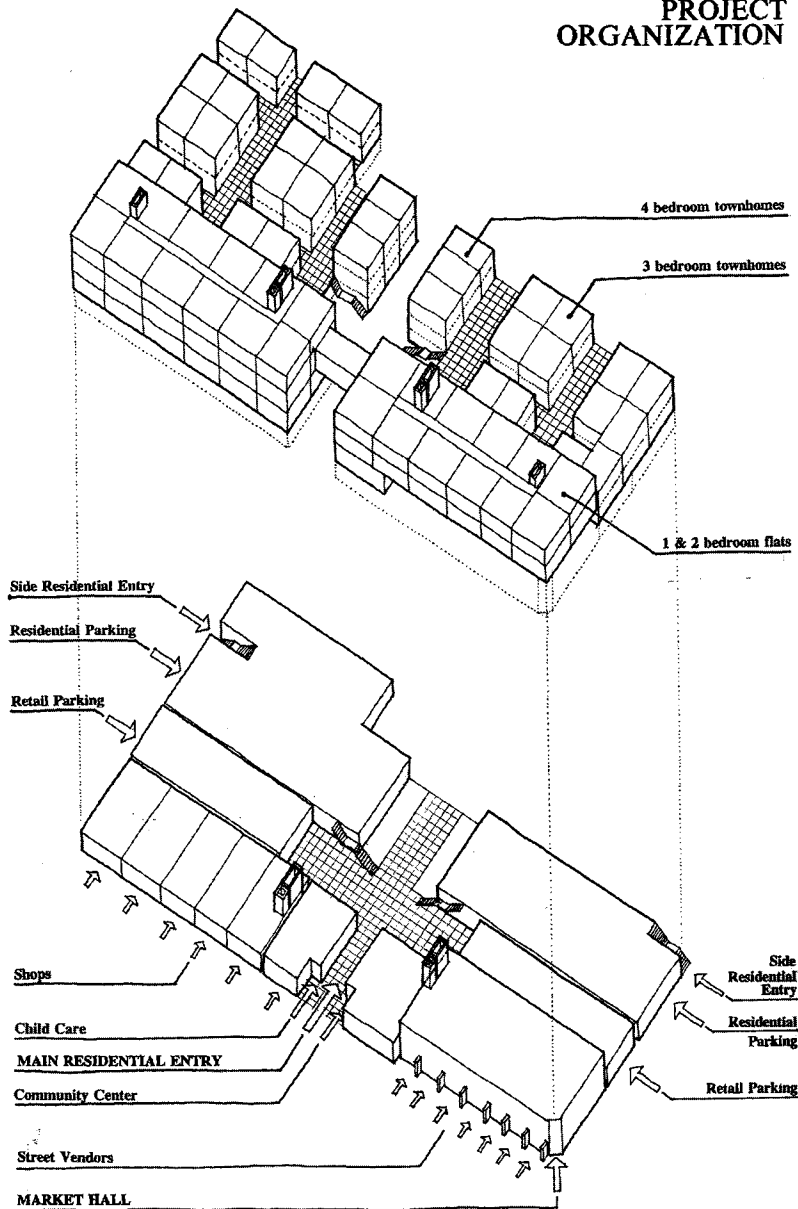
There is a separate portion of the parking garage dedicated to the retail area; it is used mostly by the vendors themselves and for service access rather than for customer parking.

During the planning phase, merchants wanted only one entrance to the market hall, partly for security. The architect, however, feared that would kill the street and so suggested street niches for vendors, setting the glass back five feet. While this gives excellent exposure to those vendors, it blocks the view of the market hall interior. There were many discussions about having roll down doors for these vendors. A trip to Pike Place market in Seattle (which does not have them) confirmed for the vendors that they wanted the roll downs so they could leave their merchandise in place and be sure it was safe. The merchants also wanted the main entrance to the market hall to be close to the intersection that had two fast food restaurants (though one was closed at the time of our visit). After our site visit, the vendor stalls were vacated (in part to give the rest of the merchants better visibility from the street), the vendors relocated to underutilized space inside, and a second door was opened into the market hall.



Street vending stalls on East 14th Street

## PROJECT ORGANIZATION



## Design Details and Maintenance

Overall, design and construction are of high quality and an active maintenance program has kept the project in good condition, a fact well appreciated by tenants with whom we spoke. An example of good detailing is the provision of oak wainscoting in the community meeting room, which otherwise would undoubtedly have shown wear and tear from its high level of use. Other quality features are the programmable central locking system and the appliances, which have required little maintenance. The feature most liked by tenants is the bay window with bench that is provided in many units. Tenants report that they sit and watch the street from these windows (and also from balconies in other units).

There are some minor problems including staining and mildew on some stucco surfaces, which may be a problem with the paint. There have also been minor problems with the water-conserving toilets because tenants have had to learn to hold the handles down when they flush. At the interior corridor, hall lights had to be changed from open sconces to closed fixtures because children had thrown debris into them. Some of the added maintenance is the result of wear and tear due to having twice the anticipated number of children. Despite this fact, maintenance costs appear to be reasonable.

There is also a very active maintenance program directed at removing graffiti. The resident maintenance manager tours the building each morning and has any graffiti removed that same morning so that the appearance is never allowed to deteriorate.

## Art in Architecture

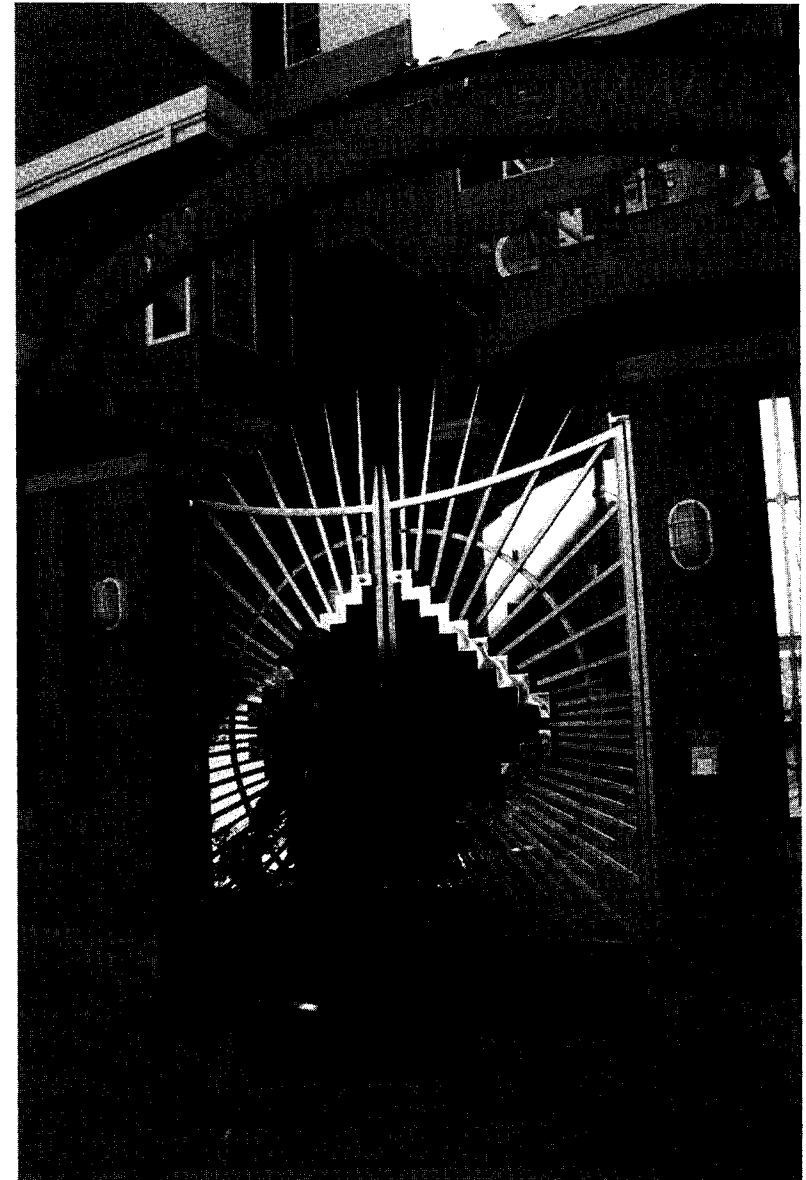
A hallmark of this project is the incorporation of art into the design. This was the architect's concept and he spearheaded a successful effort to get \$50,000 from the National Endowment for the Arts. His intent was to use the art not only as decoration, but to symbolize the racial and cultural diversity and unity of the area.

To that end, he invited artists representing various racial groups to submit portfolios and participated in their selection with EBALDC. He says: "The coexistence of art from these diverse traditions inspires a spirit of cooperation not only among the tenants but in the community." Examples of this expression include Mia Kodani's frieze panels at tops of the towers which weave together patterns from many cultures, and the tiles by Horace Washington which represent 22 distinct cultures, some of which are African.

We met with Reynaldo Terrazas, artist of the sunburst gate and entry arch. He is a local sculptor and this was his first public art commission. His charge in designing the gate was to provide an image that could be appropriate and inclusive to the entire community, as well as lending physical security. He appears to have provided a highly imageable solution (see *The Name*, above).



Mia Kodani's freize at entrance

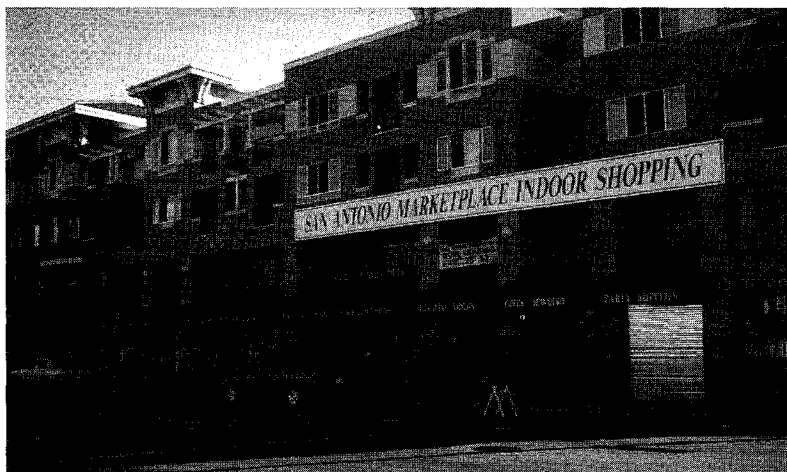


Reynaldo Terrazas, artist and neighborhood resident, standing at the Sun Gate he designed.

### Accommodating Children

As stated above, there are twice the anticipated number of children living in the project, in a neighborhood which suffers from a lack of recreational space. The project houses 54 children aged five and under and 100 aged six through 17.

In theory, the spaces provided for children include both the ground-level central courtyard and the upper level courtyards in front of the townhouse units for younger children (under five). While the upper level spaces are close to parents, they are of irregular configuration, broken up by planters, and not very easy to supervise. Children over about five years old can use play equipment shared with Headstart in the central courtyard on the street level. We also saw a few kids riding bikes in this area, but there is not much space available for this activity. There is really no provision for teens, but EBALDC hopes to obtain the use of an adjacent empty lot for basketball and “hang out” space. It would be possible to gain direct access to this space by cutting a hole in a rear wall; this would go a long way toward solving the problem.



Hismen Hin-Nu from International Boulevard (formerly E. 14th Street)

### Retail Operations

The 8,000 square feet of retail space was fully leased at opening, but is currently only 60% occupied (about 3,200 square feet are vacant). Merchants have faced a variety of challenges, many related to general changes in retailing as well as to changes in the immediate area. Sales volume at Dollars and More, the largest single tenant, was reported to have dropped 40% since opening and there were rumors that it was likely to be closing in the near future.

While 14th Street is major commercial thoroughfare, a new Kmart, McFrugal's, and a large supermarket opened six months after Hismen Hin-Nu and only about a mile away, drawing potential customers away. In addition, a paint store next door went bankrupt and is empty, further reducing the traffic volume. It has now been replaced by a 98¢ store which sells the same goods as the Dollars & More store located in the Hismen Hin-nu development. While this is a transitional time and place, there are other projects which will eventually help to improve the situation, including the redevelopment of a large parcel a few blocks away.

According to the architect, the retail space is “an experiment that will evolve.” EBALDC had more retail experience than most non-profits, and is gaining more through this project. The architect describes the space as “flexible and correctable.” If given the opportunity to redesign it from scratch, he would not separate the retail elements, but would centralize them for greater synergy and flexibility.

The site visit team spent some time in the store, “Elle's,” operated by EBALDC. It is run with help from their retail specialist (DeLynda DeLeon) who trains staff and oversees operations by visiting about three times per week. Elle's is a women's clothing shop opened in response to requests. It employs (and trains) three EBALDC residents, two of whom are from Hismen Hin-Nu. Open since Christmas, when it did more business, it was just breaking

even (and had not yet started paying rent) at the time of RBA's visit. Capital and operating shortfalls are covered by EBALDC's other profit-making ventures.

The tenant employee we interviewed described the importance to her of this opportunity. In recovery from drug abuse, lacking even a GED, and the mother of a 15 year old, this is her first job. She has real responsibilities, is learning a great deal about retailing, and now has another part time job at one of the other shops. She could not say enough in praise of the program and the positive impact it has had on her self-esteem. She now gets dressed up every day, is trusted, is very active as a tenant and uses the special services that are offered (she's a Home Alert captain, takes budgeting classes, and so forth).

### **Parking**

Eighty-three residential and 30 interior retail parking spaces are provided to satisfy city requirements, representing a negotiated reduction from parking standards. However, there are differences of opinion about the number of parking spaces needed by the project. Some people we interviewed felt that the parking was underutilized because the lower income population served by the project has fewer cars or can't afford California's mandatory insurance (proof of which is required in order to park in the garage).

Pyatok claimed that, in his experience, residents like these have less than one car per unit – he would estimate 0.7 to 0.8 as an appropriate ratio, while the city typically requires one parking space per unit. The project's actual ratio is about 0.85 cars per unit and Pyatok claims that, with a further reduction in parking requirements, it would have been possible to have stoops on the side streets by dropping some of the housing half a floor.

However, the property manager reports that one side of the garage has all its spaces assigned, while the other has only about five spaces available. Spaces are assigned on a first come, first served basis and only one tenant has requested a space when none was available on the side they wanted. Several tenant households appear to own more than one car.

### **Security**

Overall, everyone we talked with (including management, tenants, and the police) felt that the complex was quite, if not perfectly, safe and secure. One mother we interviewed was pleased to have enclosed outdoor space where her younger children can play. She finds it to be safe, especially from vehicular traffic.

There is considerable physical security provided, including lighting, gates, a computerized key card access system, and surveillance cameras. The office is next to, and has a view of, the entrance. Personal security services have been increased greatly since opening and now include weekend coverage. It is operated on contract to a group affiliated with a Black Muslim organization. They are reported to be professional and well trained, respectful, but also streetwise and firm.

A police officer who patrols this area said that they get very few calls to come to Hismen Hin-Nu. While the neighborhood has some crime problems, the officer said that it is located between two improving areas.

There has been some destruction of property, including two doors kicked in, possibly related to drug traffic (these tenants have been evicted — see Management, below). There has also been at least one incident of domestic violence. Overall, that is a very acceptable record for a project of this size and type in its location.

### Development Costs

For the **residential** portion of the project (and its parking), the costs were:

Item	Cost
Site Acquisition (with off-site improvements)	\$854,829
Construction	\$9,994,693
Fees (permits, A/E, inspection)	\$1,284,575
General Development Costs (incl. interest, loan fees, insurance)	\$1,764,543
<b>Total Development Costs (before syndication costs and dev. fee)</b>	<b>\$13,898,640</b>
Interest on Tax Credit Bridge Loan	\$2,023,481
Syndication Costs	\$904,978
Development and Operating Fees	\$2,084,550
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$18,911,648</b>

The architect felt that the construction budget for the residential portion was adequate at about \$77 per square foot.

For the **commercial** portion of the project (and its parking), construction costs were approximately \$900,000 for the shell plus about \$350,000 for tenant improvements. The total development cost for the commercial space was about \$1.8 million.

### Financing

As is typical of projects of this type, there were many sources of financing, though this project was made somewhat more complex than usual due to its mixed uses. Funds could not be mingled between the residential and commercial portions which, as a result, also had to be physically separated. Complex legal negotiations and documentation were required to establish inter-creditor agreements.

Permanent financing for the residential portion was provided as follows (not including construction period loans or advances against tax credits not yet received):

Residential Financing Source	Amount
Calif. Community Reinvestment Corp.	\$1,210,000
State Rental Housing Construction Program	\$3,720,386
City of Oakland	\$1,775,127
Merritt Community Capital (tax credits)	\$3,153,487
Fannie Mae (tax credits)	\$8,926,124
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$18,785,124</b>

For the commercial portion of the project, financing was provided as follows:

Commercial Financing Source	Amount
City of Oakland (CDBG)	\$650,000
Ford Foundation	537,346
Irvine Foundation	500,000
EBALDC Investment (From Tax Credit Development Fee)	107,900
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,795,246</b>

In terms of ongoing revenues and expenses, the housing appears to operate within budget, generating a very small distribution to its sponsors. The retail space would operate at close to break even with a lower vacancy rate and is thus still struggling (see section above on Retail Operations). Rents (some including common area charges which also cover utilities) range from \$0.82 to \$1.15 per square foot per month.

### Profile of EBALDC

EBALDC was founded to serve the Asian community in the East Bay. However, it has now expanded its mission to serve low income residents of all races, while retaining part of its focus on the needs of Asians. The Asian community itself has been changing considerably; it was mostly Chinese, but more recently there has been a dramatic increase in Southeast Asian and other Asian populations.



Lynette Jung Lee, Executive Director of EBALDC

EBALDC was formed in 1975 to develop a multi-service center in downtown Oakland (the Asian Resource Center) which now generates cash to subsidize non-profit operations and youth programs. Other EBALDC projects use profits from commercial rents to subsidize such services as a child care center that might get free rent.

EBALDC has considerable development experience, including large scale projects. It owns \$75 million worth of real estate and has \$2 million in the bank and another \$2 million line of credit. Its other current projects and plans include redeveloping a historic market building in downtown Oakland. EBALDC has expanded its organization to include a community planning section which is currently preparing a neighborhood plan for the area. Despite these strong capabilities, EBALDC often works with other organizations, as it did on this project (see the section below on the joint venture with San Antonio).

EBALDC is evolving from property development and management toward economic development, and now has a department

dedicated to this function. Its recently prepared long range plan will make economic development its new focus. EBALDC operates its own businesses and invests in others. Among its businesses are property management and construction management, which tap into its core experience. It operates a revolving loan fund for “micro lending” which, working with only \$12,000 capitalization, has made 26 loans in 10 years. It also helps individuals and families with personal finances, savings, shopping, and computer orientation. EBALDC uses its own funds to match one-for-one a participant’s contributions to a savings plan (called an individual development account).

#### **The Joint Venture**

While EBALDC initiated this project, they realized that they lacked strong connections in the immediate neighborhood of the project. As a remedy, they proposed a joint venture with the San Antonio Community Development Corporation. Not only did San Antonio take the lead in organizing the community participation process, but they also assisted with getting Head Start in the building and in getting the city to contribute \$650,000 in CDBG funds for the commercial space.

#### **The City’s Role**

The City of Oakland played an important part in this project. They claim to have conceived of the project (probably referring to an early study done for them by the architect and a team of students in which the site was identified as having the potential for this type of project). They also provided funding for it at an early stage, when they perceived it as still being only partly defined and posing considerable risks. The fact that the city had a long track record with EBALDC and considerable confidence in them allowed the city to offer this support which, in turn, made possible a quick purchase of the property at a favorable price.



### Management, Tenant Selection, and Eviction Of Problem Tenants

EBALDC provides full-time on-site management at Hismen Hin-Nu. As part of its agreement with San Antonio CDC, it will train them to take over management in the next few years.

Central to management is a rigorous tenant selection process. There is a long waiting list, a written application, income verification, written contact with the prior landlord, and a home visit. Income is re-certified each year, though the income trend is reported to be generally downward for tenants. Five tenants were evicted when it was discovered that their incomes were above the acceptable limits. One tenant we interviewed had been on the waiting list for a year before getting in, which was said to be typical.

There have been three evictions in 15 months for violations such as drug use or prostitution. In general, if tenants are struggling, management tries to work with and help them to resolve their problems, including establishing a flexible rent payment schedule. Eviction is a last resort.



Detail of freize panel on residential elevation

### Social Programs and Supports

There is a considerable number of on-site services available to tenants. Kids' House is an after-school program for 6 to 12 year olds. We visited the program, talked with its director, and saw about 12 kids doing a variety of activities, including reading, doing homework, playing, and having a snack.

Head Start is a rent-paying tenant on the ground floor, with direct street access and use of courtyard play space. It runs two classes of up to 17 children each, for two half-day sessions, serving a total of 68 children. Less than half the children live at Hismen Hin-Nu, though not all of Hismen Hin-Nu's children are able to participate – this depends on their parent's ability to make arrangements for their care for the other half of the day. It is perceived to be an excellent facility, with adequate outdoor space.

Three units at Hismen Hin-Nu are contracted to a program called Shelter Plus Care that provides drug and alcohol treatment as well as aftercare to people who live in the complex. The tenant we interviewed who was working in EBALDC's retail shop was part of this program.

EBALDC also has other programs to help individuals and families including employment and job training (see the list in the section profiling the organization).

### Assessing Project Success

#### How Well It Meets Its Own Goals

- *To provide a substantial, high quality, mixed-use project.*  
It has fully met this goal.
- *To provide supportive services to tenants.*  
Several useful services are provided on site (daycare, Headstart, economic development support), while others are available through EBALDC off site.

### How Well It Meets Selection Committee Concerns

- *Who lives in the project, how diverse is the population, and how do they get along?*  
The tenant mix is reflective of the surrounding neighborhood. It is largely African-American, with smaller numbers of Asians and Latinos, and very few whites. Tenants report that the ethnic groups all get along well together.
- *Is the commercial space occupied? Working well?*  
Of the market hall, about 60% is occupied. While there are some design problems of access and visibility, much of the difficulty derives from the general economic situation and competition from large scale retailers.
- *How do they compensate for the lack of usable open space?*  
EBALDC is attempting to get the use of an adjacent property for conversion to a teen recreation space. This would solve a significant part of the problem.
- *What is the impact of the project on the neighborhood?*  
The project has had a very positive impact on the neighborhood. It has transformed an underutilized, unattractive site into an attractive, vibrant, mixed use project, bringing life to the street, people to the neighborhood, and retail and social service opportunities. We were told that the “community is proud of it.” Its theme of unity among diverse ethnic groups focuses the diversity of the neighborhood.
- *Were local contractors used?*  
The prime contractor is a local Danville firm who met or exceeded agreed-upon goals for hiring from the neighborhood and from among minority groups.
- *What is the quality of the design, image, appearance, and artwork?*  
Hismen Hin-Nu is one of the most attractive projects of its type and for its budget. It interprets a historically relevant local

style (Mission Revival) and uses that design vocabulary to moderate its bulk and scale. The incorporation of culturally meaningful and diverse artworks enhances the appearance and is appreciated by residents and neighbors, who do perceive the place as being special.

- *What is the quality and durability of materials?*  
Materials and details are well chosen and executed. They are holding up well and can be expected to continue to do so, given the high quality of maintenance that is being provided.
- *Have any follow-up studies been done?*  
EBALDC has conducted a post construction assessment, focusing mainly on the process. They also appear to learn a considerable amount from prior projects and have a mechanism for ensuring that improvements are incorporated into subsequent ones.
- *What special resources were applied to the project (e.g., U.C. Berkeley or others) and how were they used; what did they contribute?*  
Students from University of California at Berkeley and University of Oregon, in a summer studio under the direction of the project architect, studied the site as part of an examination of a long stretch of East 14th Street, identifying it as having potential for dense, mixed use development.

### Other Measures of Success

- *Leadership Effectiveness*  
EBALDC, together with their joint venture partner, San Antonio, provides an excellent example of an effective community developer. Well organized and apparently well managed, they have shown the ability to develop and operate projects like Hismen Hin-Nu and many others.

▫ *Prospects for Sustainability*

There is every reason to believe that this project is sustainable financially and managerially, even though retail is struggling and not carrying its own weight. EBALDC has the financial strength to carry it, and the growing retail expertise to assist merchants with their operations.

▫ *Is This a Model Project?*

While not unique for its medium to high density, this project is an excellent example of the successful integration of mixed uses (housing and commercial) along with on-site services. The quality of design is very high, with a very attractive image, appropriate and meaningful use of art, a good sense of open space and light, and a pattern of access and open space that encourages resident interaction. The process, while also not unique, was very strong, and included meaningful community participation resulting in real design decisions.

### Selection Committee Comments

In the words of one Selection Committee member, this project “did a lot of things well.” The Committee was particularly impressed with process and design; another Committee member asserted that “the process and the quality of the design are exemplary in comparison with other affordable housing.” What the Committee liked so much about the process was the ways it found to include significant input from the community and from people like those who would live there. A relatively simple device, using modeling kits in a workshop setting, was viewed as a tremendous learning experience, both for the participants and the design professionals.

The theme of learning was echoed by the Committee’s recognition of the fact that EBALDC actually follows up on its projects and, in an iterative process, tries to improve each one based on

prior experience — it does not simply repeat a formula from the last project. “They’re learning from this” was a committee member’s observation. In addition, the collaboration between two community development corporations was viewed as an example of something that should happen more often and appears to have been very successful here, benefiting both organizations as well as the project.

The project’s design was highly appreciated by the Committee, which found it unique and “stunning for the cost.” Factors that were singled out included the appropriateness of the historical stylistic references (Mission style) to its local context and the generous and meaningful incorporation of art in the form of tiles, murals and the gate — which figured importantly in the project’s name. The provision of larger apartments was found to be a proper response to the needs of residents and the Committee was impressed with the real ethnic mix, which they also found to be



Decorative street level exterior tile with African motif

positive, if somewhat unusual. However, given the level of understanding of, and sensitivity to, occupant requirements, the committee was a bit disappointed that the outdoor space needs of children had not been better anticipated and met.

There was a great deal of discussion about the difficulties being experienced by the retail outlets and, while the committee was very understanding of the problems posed by changes in the broader retail environment, they were also concerned about whether enough study of demand had been done and about certain aspects of the design — especially visibility. While recognizing that the project is located on a major retail thoroughfare, the committee commented that in many projects (not necessarily this one) there seems to be an over-reliance on retail in response to the need for economic development and, in many cases, other strategies and facilities (such as workshops, catering kitchens, light industry, or services) may be more appropriate. The committee noted that, if the project had received more conventional financing, lenders likely would have required a retail consultant who might have helped avoid or lessen the impact of some of the problems this project has experienced.

Finally, the committee was greatly impressed by EBALDC as an organization, representing what they saw as the best of a local nonprofit developer, with real ties in the community, an excellent relationship with the city, an evolving role in economic development, and strong, dynamic leadership. One Selection Committee member praised them by saying that EBALDC is “an organization that does what it does very well.”

**For More Information**

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