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JOSEPH WONG DESIGN ASSOCIATES

This rendering shows the Millenia affordable housing development with 210 units scheduled for completion this winter in Chula Vista.

What's the solution to the housing crisis?

You need leadership from the public sector that can set a strong social policy. If you look at other industrial countries, you see that they provide affordable housing. We need to provide a minimum of 10 percent affordable housing. And city officials need to look at efficient zoning and planning guidelines. The design guidelines are sometimes so rigid that you cannot afford a project in terms of the density. The planning codes are dated, and I think we need to really look at that.

What's the role of the architect in this?

As design professionals, we should have our thinking hats on to come up with creative solutions that are also cost effective. We should consider how we might be able to work together with structural engineers and construction teams to look at more cost-effective, prefabricated housing solutions, as well as nonprofit organizations that can operate them to make sure the place is well maintained and creates opportunities for people to live and learn. As architects, we want to do our best to come up with good design, and hopefully each project we do is a small victory.

There was an article in *The New York Times* last year that said the reason there's a lack of affordable housing in San Diego is the NIMBYism of San Diegans. Do you agree?

Perhaps San Diegans should be more open-minded in terms of looking at new affordable housing. I think that — with special care,

attention to detail and creating a more human scale in a cost-effective way — an affordable housing project could be a good example of showing that diversity and mixed-use housing in any neighborhood can be a really great form of what I call "place making."

Should San Diego be looking beyond downtown for these kinds of projects?

We should look at other areas besides downtown — like now we are developing a project in Chula Vista. It's part of a master-plan community called Millenia that mixes market-rate, lower-density townhouses for sale with retail and offices. I think that's probably the future. We should see more of this type of mixed-use community development. North Park and the College area also should be explored to see how we can have well-designed projects that fit into the neighborhood.

Do you think more architecture firms should get involved with affordable housing?

Yes, absolutely. I think not only more architecture firms should be involved, but also we should see private development firms and other professionals like landscape architects involved so that we can all work toward one goal to provide good housing for all incomes. It's a challenging crisis, especially for San Diego and California. I feel this is a social responsibility for architects, city leaders and the private sector. It just takes a great effort from everybody to overcome this issue. ❖