



# CALIFORNIA RETIREMENT COMMUNITY SPEEDS COMPLIANCE WITH CONCRETE

Lessons learned from earlier construction benefit \$10 million, 66-unit addition.

The Spanish word for “hidden” is escondido. So it may be ironic that the 25-acre Meadowbrook Village Christian Retirement Community in Escondido, Calif., is anything but hidden: An 86-foot-tall working Dutch windmill towers over the campus, providing instant public recognition.

Meadowbrook Village opened its doors in 2009 with 50 independent housing units, 54 assisted living apartments, and a full-care facility of 40 beds.

In 2019, a 66,000-square-foot, \$10 million apartment building was added with 66 units and underground parking. Hidden is one way to describe the unseen advantage embedded in the new building’s interior walls and envelope. The family foundation that owns and operates Meadowbrook Village weighed their options and chose insulated concrete forms (ICFs) to build the new structure.

## CAUTIONARY EXPERIENCE

“Our experience building the full-care facility with OSHPD (California’s Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development) oversight showed us how difficult it is for stick-built to comply with code and fire regulations,” explains Brent Cooper, part of the apartment project management team and vice president of construction/owner of Superior Ready Mix Concrete.

“We would have been better off with ICF and steel studs to begin with,” Cooper says, reflecting on the compliance issues with the construction of the original building. The team also considered masonry construction but opted for ICF in light of its inherent advantages.



Photo Credit: Erik Isakson

## FAR SUPERIOR

Those advantages were abundantly clear when Cooper’s brother-in-law built his home with ICF. That experience was an eye-opener, especially for former bricklayer Cooper. The decision to go all-in on ICF was surprisingly easy.

“We saw firsthand how ICF is far superior to other construction methods,” says Cooper. “It offers more fire safety and a quieter environment. It’s built to last.”

## SENIOR CENTER-FRIENDLY

The “built to last” idea is especially appealing for the owner, a nonprofit foundation. “The last thing you want is water damage with rental units. It’s wise to build with materials that require no maintenance. With ICF, we don’t worry about a leaky pipe or a sink overflowing,” explains Cooper.

Multifamily property owners also like ICF’s

- **Energy Savings.** Foam-insulated blocks are used to construct cast-in-place concrete walls. The foam remains part of the envelope, providing a thick blanket of continuous insulation. An equivalent stick-built structure would require 2-inch by 12-inch studs.

- **Superior Acoustics.** Noise is the No. 1 tenant complaint. ICF all but ends that hassle with an STC (Sound Transmission Class) rating of 55 versus an STC rating of 35 for traditional interior wall construction.
- **One-and-Done Envelope.** ICF construction creates an all-in-one envelope requiring less labor, minimal training, and no extra trips around the structure to install air, vapor, and moisture barriers and continuous insulation.
- **All-Hazard Resilience.** California is no stranger to fires, wind, rain, and seismic extremes. Steel rebar-reinforced concrete is extra peace of mind when nature strikes.

The one minor caveat for Cooper was getting the subcontractors on board. “Once the MEP (mechanical, electrical and plumbing) subs understood to approach it like a commercial structure, everything was fine,” says Cooper.

The new apartment community opened in 2019, and “the residents love it,” reports Cooper. As for Cooper and the owners, their endorsement stands across the street: A 14,770-square-foot church sanctuary built with ICF opened in early 2020.

**Owner:** Stewardship Foundation

**Project Management Team:** Jack Brouwer, President/Owner, Superior Ready Mix; President of the Board, Stewardship Foundation; Steve Gjeltema, Superintendent; Brent Cooper, Vice President/Owner, Superior Ready Mix

**General Contractor:** SRM Contracting and Paving

**ICF Installer:** Penna Construction

**Form Distributor:** Forming Solutions ICF

**Architect:** Marcatects

**Engineer:** Innovative Structural Engineering

**ICF System:** Fox Blocks

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