

# **AIA Awards**

## Housing 2023



AIA Awards  
Housing 2023  
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# Table of Contents

Foreword	
Letter from the Chair (Melissa R Daniel, Assoc. AIA)	<b>01</b>
Introduction	
Housing and Community Development, an AIA Knowledge Community	<b>03</b>
AIA Awards – Housing	
Award Categories	<b>05</b>
Jury List + Bios	
Jury List and AIA Staff	<b>07</b>
Jury Bios	<b>08</b>
Award Recipients	
AIA Housing Awards	<b>11</b>
Appendix	
Housing and Community Development Advisory Committee Members	<b>52</b>

# Foreword

# Letter from the AIA HCD 2023 Chair (Melissa R Daniel)

It is my pleasure to present the 2023 winners of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) Housing Awards on behalf of the AIA Housing and Community Development Knowledge Community. These awards recognize outstanding projects and best practices in the field of housing and community development, and it is an honor to celebrate the exceptional work of this year's recipients.

Since 2000, the AIA Housing Awards have highlighted sustainable, responsive, and innovative residential designs, showcasing a diverse range of housing types and architectural practices. The ten award-winning projects and firms selected this year represent a diverse array of housing types and architectural practices, spanning categories such as Residential, One- and Two-Family Custom Residences, Excellence in Affordable Housing, Multifamily Housing, Specialized Housing, and Mixed Use Community Connection.

The AIA Housing and Community Development community joins me in extending our congratulations to the winners for their outstanding contributions in raising the bar for excellence in housing design. They are now part of a distinguished group of past award recipients. This publication is an excellent resource for anyone interested in exploring best practices and exceptional design in housing.

I want to personally extend my appreciation to the committed jury and all the project submitters for their hard work and dedication.

Congratulations!



*MRDaniel*

Melissa R Daniel, Assoc. AIA  
2023 Chair, Housing and Community Development Knowledge Community  
The American Institute of Architects

# Introduction

### **The American Institute of Architects**

Founded in 1857, members of the American Institute of Architects consistently work to create more valuable, healthy, secure, and sustainable buildings, neighborhoods, and communities. Through nearly 300 state and local chapters, the AIA advocates for public policies that promote economic vitality and public well being. Members adhere to a code of ethics and conduct to ensure the highest professional standards. The AIA provides members with tools and resources to assist them in their careers and business as well as engaging civic and government leaders, and the public to find solutions to pressing issues facing our communities, institutions, nation and world.

### **Housing and Community Development, an AIA Knowledge Community**

The AIA Housing and Community Development Knowledge Community (HCD) is a network of architects and allied stakeholders that promotes equity in housing, excellence in residential design, and sustainable, vibrant communities for all, through education, research, awards, and advocacy.

# **AIA Awards**

## Housing

It is a life necessity, a sanctuary for the human spirit, and many people's first and most personal encounter with architecture: the house. By recognizing the best in home design, the AIA Housing Awards show the world how beauty, safety, sustainability, and comfort can come together.

The jury for the 2023 Housing Awards includes: Catherine Baker, FAIA, Chair, Nowhere Collaborative, Chicago, IL; John DeForest, AIA, DeForest Architects, Seattle, WA; Brian Lane, FAIA, Koning Eizenberg, Santa Monica, CA; Amit Price Patel, AIA, DIALOG, Vancouver, British Columbia; Michael D. Robinson, AIA, Robi4 Architecture & Planning, San Diego, CA.

The jury recognized ten projects from five categories:

**One- and Two-Family Custom Residences:** recognizes outstanding designs for custom and remodeled homes for specific client(s).

**Multifamily Housing:** recognizes outstanding multifamily housing design, both high- and low-density projects for public and private clients and mixed-use projects.

**Specialized Housing:** recognizes outstanding design of housing that meets the unique needs of other specialized housing types such as single room occupancy residences (SROs), independent living for disabled, residential rehabilitation programs, domestic violence shelters, residential halls/student housing, and other special housing.

**Excellence in Affordable Housing:** recognizes architecture that demonstrates excellent design responses to the needs and constraints of affordable housing at a variety of scales.

**Mixed-Use Community Connection:** recognizes projects that integrate housing with other community amenities for the purposes of neighborhood transformation, meeting resident needs and/or supporting community objectives such as transit-oriented development.

# Jury List + Bios

# Jury List

## 2023 AIA Housing Jury

**Catherine Baker, FAIA, Chair**  
Nowhere Collaborative  
Chicago, IL

**John DeForest, AIA**  
DeForest Architects  
Seattle, WA

**Brian Lane, FAIA**  
Koning Eizenberg  
Santa Monica, CA

**Amit Price Patel, AIA**  
DIALOG  
Vancouver, BC

**Michael D. Robinson, AIA**  
Robi4 Architecture & Planning  
San Diego, CA

## AIA Staff

**Bruce Bland**  
Sr. Director, AIA Knowledge Communities  
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**Maggie Brown**  
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The American Institute of Architects

**Vickie Lindsey**  
Sr. Manager, Honors & Awards  
The American Institute of Architects

# Jury Bios



**Catherine Baker, FAIA, Chair | Nowhere Collaborative**

Catherine Baker is the founder of Nowhere Collaborative - a woman-owned and place-based architecture practice formed in 2022 that addresses sustainability, incremental development, and community-based design. Her work is rooted in the intersection of the social and technical disciplines of architecture. Catherine has over 30 years of experience in community-based design in Chicago and she is now focused on applying this experience to understanding people and problems, making connections, and developing holistic solutions to the design of buildings and built-environments.



**John DeForest, AIA | DeForest Architects**

John DeForest, AIA, received architectural degrees from Yale and Harvard then gained experience working for firms in San Francisco and Seattle and on the East Coast before starting his own practice in 1999. DeForest Architects is recognized for making the design process more engaging and inclusive and has projects in eight states ranging from 15 to 15,000 square feet. John cofounded CORA NW, a peer network and discussion forum for residential architects in the Pacific Northwest then helped launch AIA Seattle's Small Practice and Residential Committee (SPARC) in 2016. For the last five years, he has been a member of the Advisory Group for the AIA's Custom Residential Architects Network (CRAN). Most recently, John served on the jury for the Cincinnati CRAN Housing Awards.



**Brian Lane, FAIA, LEED AP | Koning Eizenberg**

Brian Lane, FAIA, LEED AP, Principal uses his keen eye for detail and focus on what it is to be a good neighbor to raise the bar on expectations for community architecture. Brian fuses practical knowledge of design and constructibility to anchor experimentation across a range of budgets. He draws upon planning knowledge and strong visualization skills to assist cities and agencies across the LA region in the evaluation of guidelines and regulations, particularly in relation to housing. He is frequently called upon to share his expertise in community forums and public programs, and is a member of the Hollywood Sign Board of Trustees.



### Amit Price Patel, AIA | DIALOG

Amit is an architect and city planner committed to making inclusive cities of opportunity and human connection. Amit has led the design of complex projects at many scales, including several award-winning mixed-use urban housing projects and neighborhood master plans for public agencies, developers, and non-profit organizations. Committed to creating dignified and healthy housing, Amit has created hundreds of homes for those in need and is a passionate advocate for social impact design. A Partner of Architecture and Planning at DIALOG, Amit leads multi-disciplinary teams in California and Canada on transformative urban projects. Amit is currently designing several urban infill buildings including a new community center with supportive housing for Indigenous residents and a modular, net zero, mass timber prototype for multi-generational housing. Before joining DIALOG, Amit was a Principal at SITELAB urban studio and Principal/Urban Design Lead at David Baker Architects in San Francisco.



### Michael D. Robinson, AIA, NCARB, NOMA | Robi4 Architecture & Planning

Michael is Principal Architect of Robi4 Architecture & Planning, Inc. Michael co-founded the firm with his wife and partner, Carolyn D. Robinson. The firm specializes in the design of single and multi-family residential projects, but has received commissions to design various other project types. The firm's design philosophy incorporates elements of clarity, simplicity, and sustainability for people, places, and spaces. The firm strongly believes that "Good design survives the test of time."

Michael received his Master of Architecture degree from the Executive Master of Architecture program at the NewSchool of Architecture & Design in San Diego in 2015. He received his Bachelor of Science degree in Architectural Engineering from Tennessee State University in Nashville in 1986. He is a National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB) certificate holder and is licensed to practice architecture in the states of California and Tennessee.

Michael serves on several local boards in the San Diego area including as President of the San Diego chapter of the National Organization of Minority Architects (SDNOMA), Ex-Officio member & SDNOMA liaison for the American Institute of Architects (AIA) - San Diego chapter, Balboa Park Committee of 100, and the Alumni Advisory Board at the NewSchool of Architecture & Design.

# Recipients

01 Alta Vista Residence  
Alterstudio Architecture

02 The Rambler  
GO'C

03 Flex House  
Johnsen Schmaling Architects

04 Woodward Lofts  
Trivers

05 Canyon Drive  
Lorcan O'Herlihy Architects [LOHA]

06 Argyle Gardens  
Holst Architecture

07 Gramercy Senior Housing  
Kevin Daly Architects

08 Sister Lillian Murphy Community  
Paulett Taggart Architects with Associate Architect: StudioVARA

09 MLK1101 Supportive Housing  
Lorcan O'Herlihy Architects [LOHA]

10 The Block  
ISA - Interface Studio Architects



# Alta Vista Residence

ONE- AND TWO-FAMILY CUSTOM RESIDENCES



Photography: Casey Dunn

## Jury Comments

*The way the home fits among and takes advantage of the relationships to the heritage oaks on-site makes being at home something of a continual rediscovery and delight.*

*This project represents a studied and clever use of zoning to maximize the size of the project and provide opportunities for multiple living arrangements.*

**alterstudio**

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Tucked nonchalantly into Austin's Travis Heights neighborhood, this single-family home offers a recently relocated family the opportunity to live just a few blocks from some of the city's most popular restaurants and music venues. In the pre-war, tree-lined neighborhood, where rising property values have encouraged a much higher density for its 7,000-square-foot lots, the Alta Vista Residence is a counterproposal for the immodesties of such urban transformation.

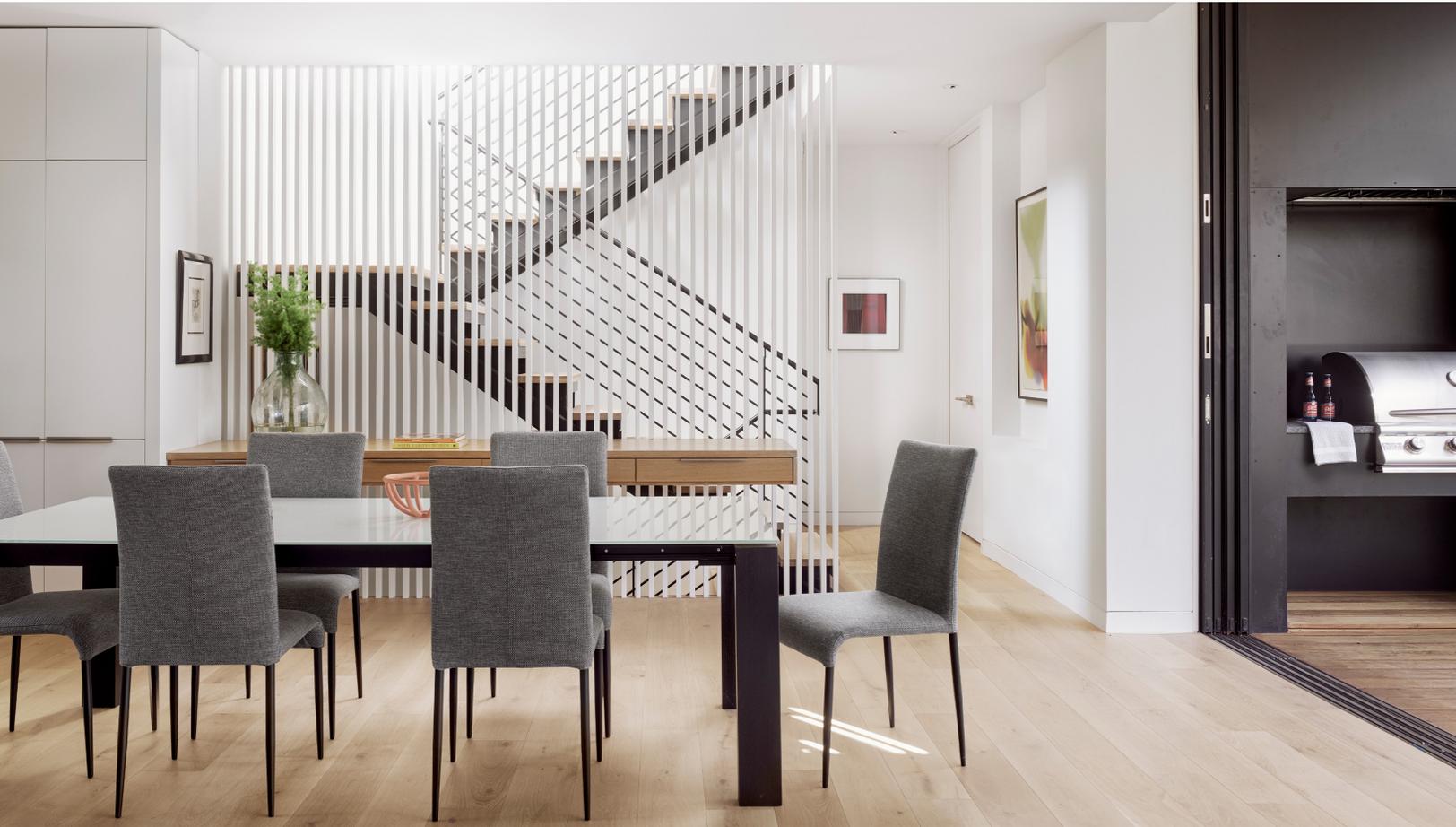
An efficient plan for a compact volume formed the foundation of the home's design, which is oriented to maximize energy efficiency and to prompt stronger relationships with its natural surroundings. The team relied on affordable strategies for energy savings, which include an airtight envelope and engineered variable refrigerant flow air conditioning systems with dedicated dehumidification and ventilation. Its concrete walls and the steel paneling that clad the exterior are dexterous and tough enough to age gracefully and resist weathering.

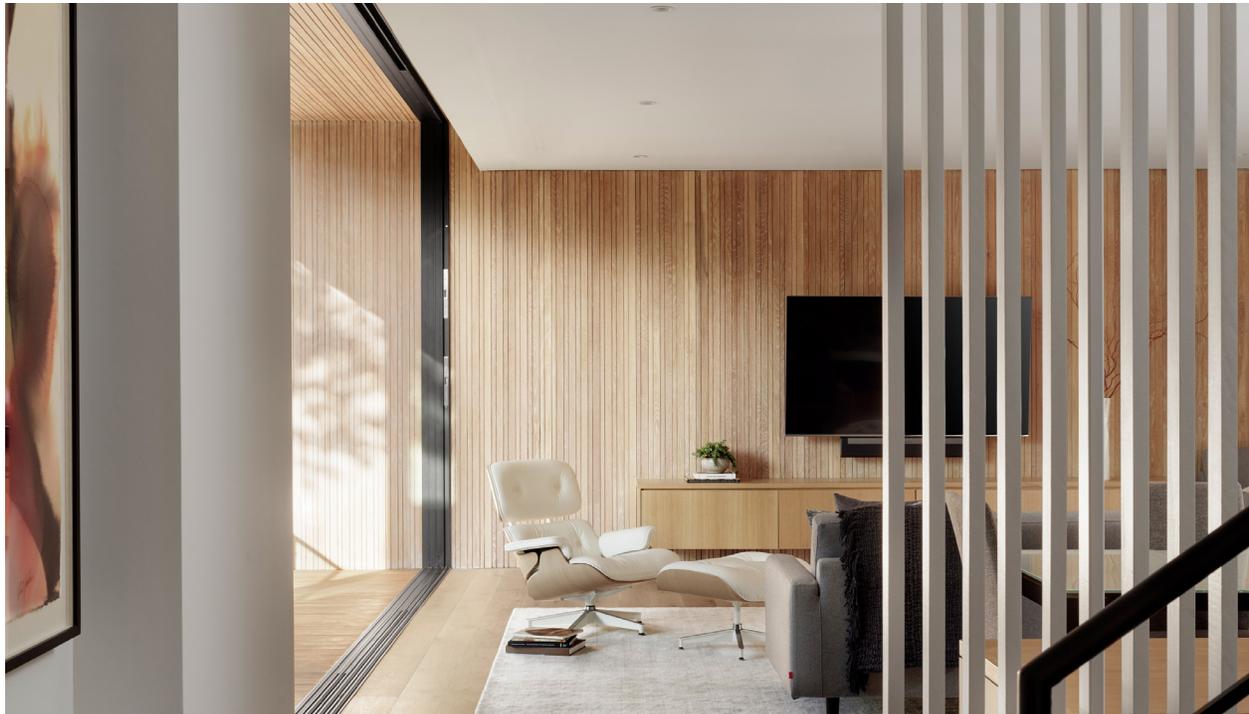
The home is perched between a creek escarpment and several towering live oak trees. One of the trees is foregrounded to intrigue and delight visitors who enter beneath its limbs and across a modest bridge. Once inside, the carefully choreographed series of spaces signal the team's attention to detail. Throughout, abstraction is harnessed to focus attention on the subtlety of light and materials, and board-formed concrete and rift-sawn white oak anchor the interior against the constant pull of the outdoors.

The primary interior spaces also open to the outdoors and two additional live oak canopies. Large sliding panels disappear into an adjacent wall to open up the main room, which sits 10 feet off the ground, to an engaging private landscape. A separate 600-square-foot accessory dwelling unit and another 1,300 square feet below capitalize on Austin's floor area ratio exemptions. Nestled into the hillside, these units open directly onto the landscape. A room on the home's third floor boasts views beyond the private world cultivated by the design team.

"This project represents a studied and clever use of zoning to maximize the size of the project and provide opportunities for multiple living arrangements," noted the jury. "The way the home fits among and takes advantage of the relationships to the heritage oaks on-site makes being at home something of a continual rediscovery and delight."







# The Rambler

ONE- AND TWO-FAMILY CUSTOM RESIDENCES



Photography: Kevin Scott

## Jury Comments

*This is a beautifully designed house with a small budget. It demonstrates that good design does not have to rely on a significant cost per square foot but rather using all resources available. In this case, the resources were community members and local artists.*

**GO'C**

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Surrounded by the immense trees of Indianola on Washington's Puget Sound, The Rambler is a home shaped by intimate familial connections. The concept for the home was inspired by the client, who grew up in the village-like setting and was gifted the site by her grandparents. Her stories and personal history merged to form the home's narrative and reinforced the design team's responsibility to honor the community and the site itself.

Much of the owner's life is centered on music and family, so from the outset, it was clear that the home would need to be an instrument that bolsters the musical activities in her life, which span writing and playing music, offering lessons, and sharing music at social gatherings. The everyday functions of a home also needed to be integrated into its small footprint. The team thoughtfully zoned all of the site's areas, maximizing space for an abundant vegetable garden, a future shop building, and opportunities to gather around the fire pit.

The overarching design concept emerged from a solid rectangular volume running east to west across the site like a typical one-story Rambler. Sections of the volume have been carved away to create gathering spaces and open axial views, and additional perforations draw in light and provide natural ventilation while still maintaining privacy. The home examines the relationship of ground-to-roof planes as it stretches horizontally, emphasizing its connection with earth. The singular vertical element that disrupts its overall horizontal nature is a site-cast fireplace and chimney that marks the heart of the living space where family gathers and music is written and played.

Strong connections between the interior and exterior spaces are evident throughout, especially where brick screen walls extend into the surrounding landscape and create semi-enclosed rooms. The landscape itself is invited up to the perimeter walls and, in cases like the entry garden, directly into the center of the home. Low-maintenance materials that age gracefully are critical components of the project. Douglas firs that made way for the home were milled and dried during construction and were used for the roof plane's finish lid, open shelves in the kitchen, and a custom coffee table. Cedar milled on-site was used to create the main entry door, benches, and a privacy fence to the east.

Like the owner, the lead builder grew up near the site and maintains connections that stretch back generations. The team identified more than 30 local collaborators to make The Rambler a truly local effort. Last summer, the client hosted a celebration to recognize the more than 80 individuals that helped realize her home.

"This is a beautifully designed house with a small budget," noted the jury. "It demonstrates that good design does not have to rely on a significant cost per square foot but rather using all resources available. In this case, the resources were community members and local artists."







# Flex House

ONE- AND TWO-FAMILY CUSTOM RESIDENCES



Photography: Justin Lopez

## Jury Comments

*The expression of this home in both plan and form is unique and expresses an innovative solution within a tight urban context.*

JOHNSEN SCHMALING ARCHITECTS

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Flex House is a vital three-story infill project that mends a decades-old gap in the fabric of Sacramento's Boulevard Park neighborhood, an important district that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The home, designed for a young family of four, was envisioned as a building that can adapt to the ever-changing circumstances of life and familial composition while also generating income and accommodating future growth.

The home pairs the family's primary dwelling on the upper two floors with a separate but programmatically reciprocal unit on the ground floor that can be adapted for residential or commercial use. The fully accessible unit served as the client's corporate home office during the COVID-19 pandemic but has since become a rental apartment. In the coming years, the owner plans to convert the space to accommodate her aging mother.

Flex House's program is expressed through two interlocking forms. An L-shaped plinth clad in steel houses the ground-floor unit as well as a tandem garage, and it rises as a service spine against the two-story box that contains the family residence. A continuous C-shaped channel shapes a deep horizontal reveal that separates the steel and wood volumes before it transforms into louvered apertures that enhance the vertical separation between the two.

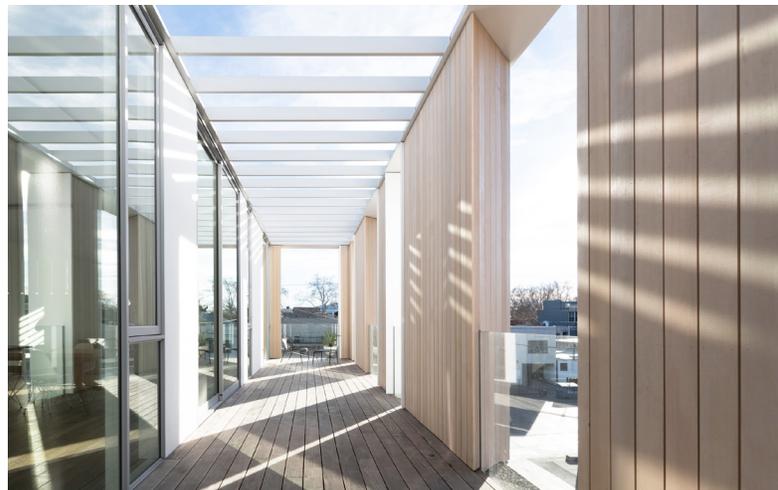
From the street, slender columns and beams extend from the horizontal facade to create a trellised portico. From there, visitors can enter the main vestibule, where stairs lead to the upper floors, or step through a perforated metal gate that opens onto a separate entry for the ground-floor unit. Inside, the team upended convention for the main dwelling's program, placing the living hall and kitchen on the top floor and the home's three bedrooms beneath. The living hall, which serves as the center of family life, boasts broad views of city, and a terrace that runs parallel provides a shaded outdoor extension.

"The expression of this home in both plan and form is unique and expresses an innovative solution within a tight urban context," noted the jury. "It redefines what infill housing can be."

The building sits on a former brownfield that was used as a surface parking lot and was covered with impervious asphalt. The new, muscular building repairs the street edge but only occupies 42% of the property. The remainder was xeriscaped with gravel, drought-tolerant native grasses, permeable pavers, and a bioswale.

Flex House addresses just one of a number of vacant lots that dot the neighborhood and have sat idle for decades. This project offers a contemporary and engaging addition to Boulevard Park.





# Woodward Lofts

MULTIFAMILY HOUSING



Photography: Sam Fentress

## Jury Comments

*This is a thoughtful adaptive reuse of an existing historical building.*

## Trivers

**Trivers**  
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trivers.com

In 2016, when St. Louis faced a 20,000 housing unit shortfall, this project's developer turned to the Woodward & Tiernan Printing Company, a massive factory that landed on the National Register of Historic Places for its pioneering application of the daylight factory style. Today, the building contains 164 loft-style apartments that both honor its industrial legacy and meet the developer's financial model.

When the factory originally opened in 1925 at Tower Grove and Vandeventer avenues, its innovative design included five clerestory monitors and mushroom-capital concrete floors. The building was still considered modern as late as 1959, when Woodward & Tiernan was absorbed for expansion. In the 1980s, however, the building's presence in the neighborhood shifted drastically, and while the concrete structure withstood the march of time, its brick facades and terra cotta ornamentation fell into disrepair. It became a hulking and uninviting presence at the edge of a struggling neighborhood.

Maximizing its residents' connections to the building's history was the primary goal of the factory's redevelopment. The team excised the low roofs between the clerestory monitors to boost daylight in the living spaces and shifted the floor area to new lofted bedrooms to increase the building's usable square footage. A series of gardens engage the senses, creating intimate outdoor rooms where vestiges of the original structure serve as an implied ceiling.

"This is a thoughtful adaptive reuse of an existing historical building," noted the jury. "The factory's renovation has been done thoughtfully and within a tight budget. It also takes important historical issues into consideration."

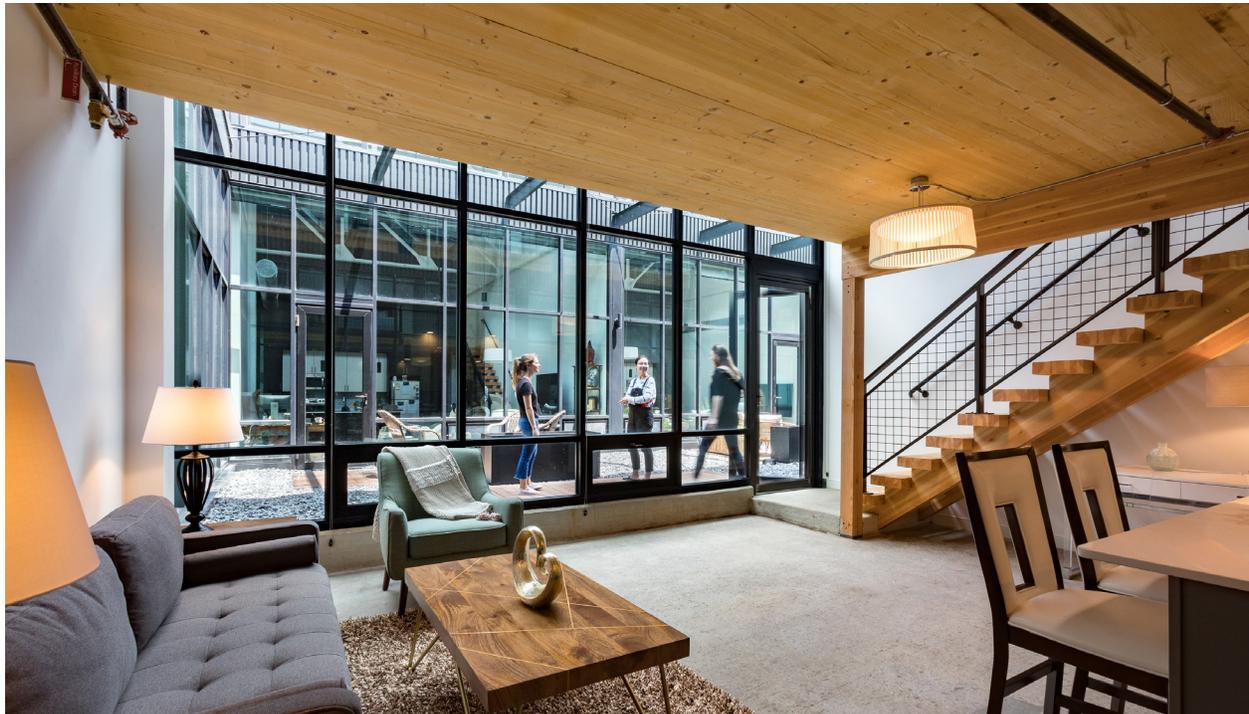
Echoes of the overarching design concept are embedded in numerous project details. The new garden facades evoke letterbox trays used in old printing processes, murals of which adorn the walls at key entrance points. Ink-like tones for carpet and paint selections and reprints of original Woodward & Tiernan products create an additional series of wall murals. Above, the original sprinkler penthouse now functions as a rooftop lounge where two tanks serve as banquette seating areas.

Adaptive reuse of the original structure is highlighted by steel purlins and trusses, timber decking, mushroom-capital columns, and board-formed concrete. Several elements of the open floor plates persist, including original oak office partitions that now shape co-working spaces and original terrazzo floors (a surprising discovery) that now shine after hiding beneath decades of dirt.

The factory's reuse resulted in a 60% reduction in new construction costs at the time, a financial success for the client. With its historic foundation, Woodward Lofts is a substantial and compelling bookend to the Forest Park Southeast neighborhood at one of its busiest intersections.







# Canyon Drive

MULTIFAMILY HOUSING



Photography: Here And Now Agency

## Jury Comments

*This project fits well into an established neighborhood but is fresh at the same time.*

*Fitting five homes and still maintaining a sense of privacy on a single-family lot is great for Los Angeles.*

L  
OH  
A

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When it was adopted by Los Angeles in 2005, the city's Small Lot Subdivision Ordinance was envisioned by smart growth proponents as a viable solution to the city's extraordinarily tight housing market. Situated just south of LA's Beachwood Canyon community, Canyon Drive is an exemplar of the new typology spurred by such ordinances whose homes are shaped by light and air.

Adding density by constructing faceless apartment complexes with little consideration for their context can sometimes alter a neighborhood's character. This project boosts density while retaining the community's values and identity.

Beginning with the maximum allowable envelope, Canyon Drive's single mass is divided by a series of tilting exterior walls that define the five individual homes and offer opportunities for solar exposure and natural ventilation. Expanding from their initial A-frame shapes, the center of each homes' volume maximizes square footage while maintaining the angular end facades. This tactic helps reinforce a sense of individuality missing in other small-lot subdivision developments.

Each of the homes' ruled exterior facades, which appear somewhat nautical, were achieved through an innovative but simple framing strategy that relies on angle wall studs and strategic wood shear walls. Inside, the expressive wood framing ensures the overall geometry remains legible throughout the home. On the first floor, which contains two-car garages, cedar cladding contrasts with the aluminum panels and storefront glazing above. The team's material choices help filter natural light into the living spaces while maintaining privacy, an essential strategy when building so close to other properties.

"This project fits well into an established neighborhood but is fresh at the same time," noted the jury. "Fitting five homes and still maintaining a sense of privacy on a single-family lot is great for Los Angeles."

Increasing density in a car-centric city like Los Angeles raises concerns about adding even more cars to the street and a loss of parking. Each of Canyon Drive's homes includes two standard parking spaces, consistent with single-family home requirements, though one is designated as a flexible guest space to minimize overflow parking in the neighborhood. For residents who are reconsidering their dependency on cars, the project is located within walking distance of two Metro stations.

The project represents the first step in a long process for the city as it considers densifying former single-family plots in other neighborhoods. As life during COVID-19 revealed, there remains a need for both personal space and community, and projects like Canyon Drive offer both.





# Argyle Gardens

SPECIALIZED HOUSING



Photography: Christian Columbres, Josh Partee, Portlandrone, Josh Kulla, or Transition

## Jury Comments

*The buildings have joy in color, light, and community.*

*They fit their program well and are a nice addition to the neighborhood, especially for a use that gets a lot of pushback generally.*

## H O L S T

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Argyle Gardens is the first implementation of a modular, low-income single-adult housing model developed by the design team and Transition Projects, an organization dedicated to providing life-changing assistance to Portland's most vulnerable residents. The first modular housing project permitted by the city, this new community of 72 housing units in the Kenton neighborhood stands as a new co-housing model whose residents share community space and other support systems. It represents a crucial step forward in the effort to design, build, and maintain affordable housing across the nation.

As a development, Argyle Gardens comprises four different buildings, the largest of which contains 35 220-square-foot studio apartments as well as a community room, laundry facilities, and support services that make it a central hub for the community. The three separate cohousing buildings contain two units with six bedrooms, two bathrooms, and a large kitchen. Argyle Gardens opened at a pivotal moment in 2020, providing critical housing for formerly homeless and low-income Portlanders during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

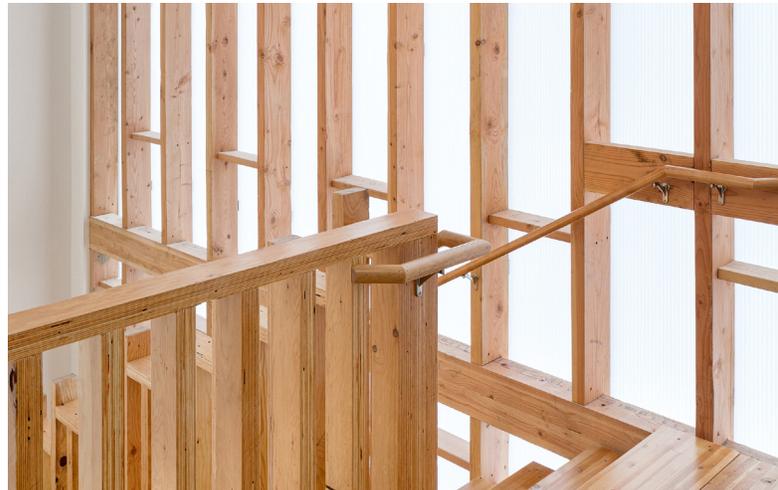
The overarching design concept offers maximum impact for minimal cost. To that end, the buildings are formed by modular units that were constructed off-site and further enhanced by gabled roof trusses, shingled roofs, and durable cladding that obscure the modular components from the exterior. Each of them takes on a simple rectilinear form with a bold slice removed to reveal the color and light that passes through polycarbonate panels. This approach, supported by low-income tax credits from the state of Oregon, allowed the team to reduce development costs by 31% compared to typical affordable housing projects. Those savings are passed on to residents who pay as little as \$300 monthly rent.

"The buildings have joy in color, light, and community," noted the jury. "They fit their program well and are a nice addition to the neighborhood, especially for a use that gets a lot of pushback generally."

Existing vegetation and steep topography on the formerly industrial site challenged the team to arrange the buildings in a way that accommodated ADA access requirements, environmental considerations, and the large staging area required for modular construction. But the resulting calibration of the siting addresses those issues successfully while minimizing direct solar heat gain on the polycarbonate walls. The project also garnered an Earth Advantage Platinum Rating because of its numerous features that reduce its impact on the environment, including drought-resistant landscaping, LED fixtures, and a rooftop photovoltaic array.

From the outset, the design team engaged Kenton's supportive and progressive community, which recognizes that the transformation of the site, once plagued by illegal dumping, has boosted the neighborhood's vitality. With its efficient construction techniques and aesthetic typology, Argyle Gardens can be scaled up or down and easily adapted to suit a variety of locales, providing similar benefits for communities across the country.





# Gramercy Senior Housing

EXCELLENCE IN AFFORDABLE HOUSING



Photography: Joshua White / JWPictures.com, Here And Now Agency

## Jury Comments

*This project features interesting massing, and the spine creates a compelling social space for its residents.*

**kdA**

**Kevin Daly Architects**

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Built on a block-length lot that was once owned by the city of Los Angeles and served as a towing yard, Gramercy Senior Housing is one of the first developments in the city to capitalize on supportive housing funds. The project, guided by extensive public outreach, delivers 64 sorely needed apartments to low-income and homeless seniors in one of the country's most expensive housing markets.

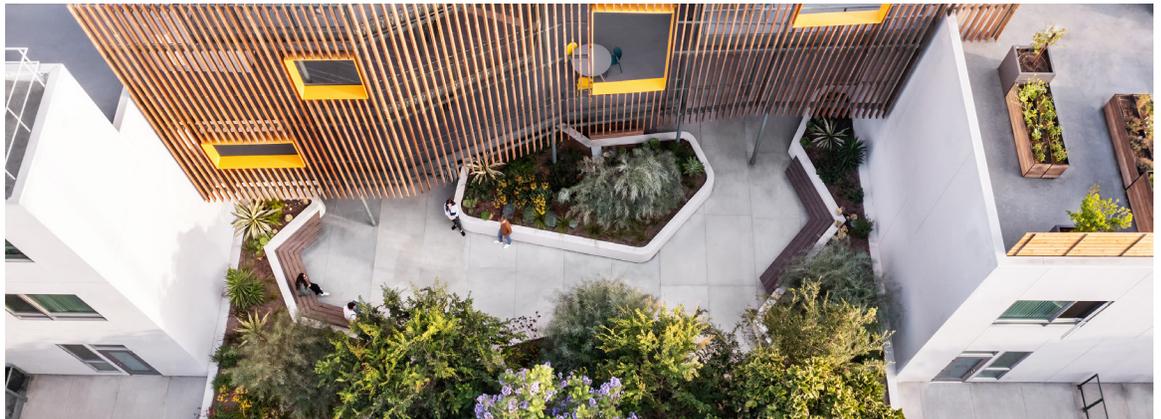
Across 70,000 square feet, Gramercy Senior Housing accommodates residents who make less than 50% of the area's median income and includes a commercial cafe, ample community spaces, and a public plaza on the entry level. The team's design emerged as six discrete buildings that reflect the scale of the single-family homes that surround it. With bustling Washington Boulevard to the north and a swath of Craftsman homes to the north, the complex is an array of structures connected by an exterior walkway system finished with an organic trellis that contrasts with mirror steel hoods that protect windows from southern exposure.

Along the boulevard, the buildings' massing is taller to shield those on the other side, granting residents an extra measure of privacy and maximizing the light available to the surrounding parcels. The project was optimized for modular construction, and its highly efficient floor plans draw in natural light and ventilation from either end. Courtyard spaces just outside the apartments function as shared living rooms, while an edible garden on the roof provides additional community space.

"This project features interesting massing, and the spine creates a compelling social space for its residents," noted the jury. "Its unique details give it character and enliven the street."

The project offers residents a sense of place that is particular to the site, differentiating it from typical affordable housing projects in Southern California. The team's focus on establishing connections to the outdoors across multiple levels ensures residents can engage with their surroundings and neighbors without feeling crowded. Instead of relegating outdoor space to an unused corner of the roof, only accessible by elevator or interior stairs, the team has woven connections through all levels to reach users regardless of their age or mobility.

In addition to adding affordable housing in a city facing increasing homelessness, the project also activates Washington Boulevard, originally built to serve as Los Angeles' first avenue to the sea. It was once a thriving commercial corridor but has more recently been marked by a mix of small businesses and shuttered storefronts. Prior to construction, the brownfield site was leased to a towing company, which stored its fleet there. The complex's plaza has helped inject life into the once-abandoned block.







# Sister Lillian Murphy Community

EXCELLENCE IN AFFORDABLE HOUSING



Photography: Bruce Damonte

## Jury Comments

*In this project, solutions to the Framework for Design Excellence principles are so thoughtfully and graciously integrated into the building design that it should be recognized for quality instead of quantity.*

*This is a complicated building program, but the design solution is extremely thoughtful and elegant.*

PAULETT TAGGART ARCHITECTS STUDIO VARA

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ptarc.com / studiovara.com

Shaped by community concerns about the large mixed-use and industrial buildings that characterize the Mission Bay redevelopment area in San Francisco, this project cracks the perimeter block typology into four articulated wings. The building exceeds the clients' goals of offering equitable and affordable housing for the city's disadvantaged families while also contributing significantly to the overall transformation of the neighborhood.

At just over 300 acres, Mission Bay was once marked by rail yards and industrial buildings that were built on top of a landfill. Its redevelopment, which began in the 1990s, incorporates a mix of market-rate and affordable housing, business and employment opportunities, and enhanced infrastructure. The nonprofit client for this project was an early supporter of Mission Bay's transformation, opening the neighborhood's first affordable housing project for low-income seniors there.

This new addition to the neighborhood, named after a champion and developer of affordable housing, offers 152 homes, from studio apartments to five-bedroom units, for households that annually earn up to 80% of the area median income. Its easily identified wings are connected by open-air circulation and multilevel landscapes that offer residents visual connections to the surrounding neighborhood while maximizing daylight in outdoor areas.

Input from the community also shaped the program placement and the design of each wing's facade to reflect those area's contexts. The building's main entry and ground-floor child development center face Mission Bay Kids Park. The building's south entry fronts Mission Bay Commons, viewed as the neighborhood's "backyard" park, and contains a children's music school, courtyard, and community room. The final wing is lower in height to respect the scale and intimacy of a mid-block pedestrian passage.

"In this project, solutions to the Framework for Design Excellence principles are so thoughtfully and graciously integrated into the building design that it should be recognized for quality instead of quantity," noted the jury. "This is a complicated building program, but the design solution is extremely thoughtful and elegant."

The project's interiors are open and airy, warmed by the wood elements throughout. A corner stair tower at the main entry is a new beacon for the neighborhood with a dynamic pattern of light shaped by its unique window configuration. It provides sweeping views for residents, encouraging them to use the stairs as part of an active and healthy lifestyle.

Outdoor spaces on the ground floor and the upper-level courtyards work in concert with other vignettes as an extension of the indoor common areas. They all boast a range of seating options and vibrant landscaping. The perforated patterns of the bicycle pavilion, an additional enticement for healthy living, casts playful shadows in the sunlight and glows as a lantern in the evening. These spaces and the building's outdoor circulation offer ample fresh air, a critical consideration that was spotlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic.





# MLK1101 Supportive Housing

EXCELLENCE IN AFFORDABLE HOUSING



Photography: Here And Now Agency

## Jury Comments

*This project takes standard building methods and makes a unique environment and building form.*

*It makes the most of a tight site and the four-story configuration while responding to the site. Its landscape and community outdoor space also create a neighborhood within.*

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Just a short jaunt from Los Angeles' famed Coliseum and the University of Southern California, the LEED Gold-certified MLK1101 Supportive Housing shapes an environment that nurtures health and community. Accommodating families and individuals through 26 one- to three-bedroom units, the project has transformed a vacant lot and improved an aesthetically impoverished block.

The project is a part of a wider strategic plan by the city to address homelessness, an effort championed by the United Way of Greater Los Angeles, which aims to tackle poverty by focusing on housing as a primary solution. MLK1101 Supportive Housing supports the city's goals by offering a safe and healthy community with services tailored to residents' individual needs.

The new building's California contemporary style complements the surrounding neighborhood and is filled with open and functional spaces for residents to enjoy. The design reflects the local context, and its careful massing does not overwhelm the surroundings and allows for a generous mix of indoor and outdoor community spaces. To prioritize social equity and the well-being of residents, the team opted for an L-shaped typology that offers every unit daylight and cross-ventilation, which eases the burden of providing heating, cooling, and artificial light.

"This project takes standard building methods and makes a unique environment and building form," noted the jury. "It makes the most of a tight site and the four-story configuration while responding to the site. Its landscape and community outdoor space also create a neighborhood within."

Sitting along the bustling and wide Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, the building's required on-site parking is at street level with an elevated community garden and social hub above it. To bolster its street presence, the team tucked the parking behind a storefront space and wide staircase that connects to the community spaces on the second level. The resulting stoop is both a gathering space and a public gesture that encourages resident and neighborhood interactions not often found in supportive housing projects. Additionally, two retail units on the street level generate income that helps subsidize the housing costs while also providing workforce training for residents.

Each of the units includes its own bathroom, kitchen, and living spaces. Residents are encouraged to access amenities in the community room, which has a shared kitchen that hosts cooking classes, potlucks, and group therapy sessions. The outdoor garden, which is filled with drought-tolerant plants and raised beds designed for edible gardens, connects to the community room and living spaces, encouraging residents to socialize and relax.







# The Block

MIXED USE COMMUNITY CONNECTION



Photography: Sam Oberter

## Jury Comments

*The use of conventional construction with tweaks on geometry and color has enlivened both its context and the life of tenants.*

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Along one of Philadelphia's major north-south connectors, The Block adds 49 apartment units through a building that successfully navigates the rift between the pedestrian-focused and car-centric realms. At a moment when many cities are struggling with soaring land and construction costs, The Block demonstrates an innovative low-rise and high-density approach to urban housing with potential applications for communities, both urban and suburban, across the country.

Though Philadelphia is known for its walkability and dense urban fabric, there still exist car-centric commercial developments where big-box buildings on former industrial lots deliver retail amenities to historically underserved neighborhoods. This project bridges the gap between both conditions by supporting walkability and capitalizing on existing car-centric development. In place of high-rise luxury towers and their steep costs, the project probes the upper limits of lower-cost wood-frame construction types.

The Block was developed by the owners of a single-story warehouse that's been transformed into a local brewery and retail space and sits immediately to the new building's north. The owners approached the design team in 2017 seeking a concept that would add value and activity to the southeast edge of the parcel. To address the challenge of shaping a compelling living experience for city residents within a sea of surface parking, the team envisioned a broad mix of programming, including 11,000 square feet of ground-floor commercial space sized to welcome smaller, local tenants.

The new building, set along the site's southern edge, occupies the majority of the existing parking lot and lines 5th Street with live-work units. Taking cues from Philadelphia's low-rise rowhouse typology, the team employed an unusual approach to circulation throughout the building. The Block's interior corridors are minimized, relying instead on an elevated terrace as the primary access point for the walk-up apartments. The terrace buffers the apartment entries from the surface parking lot and retail operations below and includes outdoor amenities off the central lobby and the building's club room. From its decked seating areas, gravel lounge pits, and a turfed dog park, residents can enjoy views of the city's skyline.

"This project does a lot with a little," noted the jury. "The use of conventional construction with tweaks on geometry and color has enlivened both its context and the life of tenants."

Since its completion last year, all of The Block's apartment units have been occupied, and numerous commercial leases have been signed. The owners remain committed to Philadelphia's entrepreneurs and offer retail spaces for weekend pop-ups that attract nearly 100 vendors and makers. The apartments add much-needed pedestrian-friendly housing adjacent to transit and the city's vibrant Old City and Chinatown neighborhoods.





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