

Tahiti Housing | Daly Genik

Project Data

Location: 2405 Centinela Avenue, Santa Monica, California (West LA)
 Project Type: Affordable Multi-family Residential
 Unit Count: 36 (2 and 3 bedroom units)
 Resident Profile: low-income working families
 Total Square Footage: 38,575
 Financing/Cost: \$6,000,000
 Architect: Daly Genik
 Date of Completion: 2008
 Client: Community Corporation of Santa Monica (non-profit organization committed to developing and managing affordable housing in the Los Angeles metropolitan area.)
 Cost: ~\$569 to \$1,315

Home Qualities

Tahiti Housing was designed to maximize open space while keeping that space in tight scale to the buildings, allowing for multiple levels of privacy. Each unit has sufficient access to natural light and ventilation. Two types of living units are available: two or three bedroom units, all merely identical to one another. The series of central ramps and garden features allow for a pleasing experience for tenants. Parking for the complex is pushed underground, unlike the previous and next-door apartments which use surface street-facing parking. Though affordable and repetitive, the units accommodate everything the tenant might need while being characteristic with spaces: The balance of public and private levels built into the form of the design allowed the final product to be simple in plan diagram yet unique and enticing at the scale of the human.

Sustainability

"Designed to exceed LEED standards, the site is organized so that all storm water is directed to a central water retention and recharge basin. Over this reservoir is a timber bamboo forest that is the central landscape element, crisscrossed by bridges at two levels. The cool microclimate established by this bamboo grove enhances natural ventilation in the units and enhances the ecology and natural environment by reclaiming site area that was formerly basic asphalt paving. Designed to facilitate extremely low energy use, each unit has access to daylight on three sides, allowing natural light to fill the units throughout the day." - Daly Genik

Context + Community

Tahiti Housing replaces an old dingbat (insensible 3-story "stucco boxes" with overhangs sheltering street-front parking; 1950s-1960s) apartment. The density of the previous building has been doubled, while proving to be more efficient in all aspects. Unlike other projects of this nature which tend to have an open community courtyard at the center, much like Daly Genik's 2602 Broadway affordable multifamily housing project, the stream of circulation that runs between housing masses creates a more private atmosphere. While the community space feels safer and the unit spaces more privatized, a semi-public central space still exists where tenants may run into one another. This creates the essence of a community without having any large open areas where one may feel as if they are being watched. While Tahiti Housing sits in close proximity to an interstate highway between Santa Monica and Los Angeles, sound is blocked off by the masses that surround the inner community space. A bus stop for The Big Blue Bus, for local and regional rapid public transit, is conveniently located across the street from the site. For tenants who own a vehicle, they may park their cars in the underground lot - The entrance is located on the street side of the site.

Organization

Located in a tight urban setting, the design for Tahiti Housing takes advantage of the space in a manner that accommodates high density housing while remaining a comfortable, movable space for tenants. In diagram, the project is divided into six three-level masses, each an extruded version of one another: flipped, staggered, mirrored, and duplicated. The buildings are arranged side-by-side, three on the north end and three on the south end with bridges that connect the spaces in between. The design does not take on the "donut" configuration of most projects of this type. Instead of including a central courtyard, the design encompasses the idea of a stream of semi-public circulation and semi-private balconies at the center. The scale of this central space, is appropriate to the footprint of the buildings. The bridges that float across the central space all tenants to walk to any part of the housing complex, and on all levels, thus creating a sense of community via organization of paths. In the unit plan, service spaces are located at the core. Bathrooms are tucked into the center to maximize privacy, while frequently used spaces such as the bedroom and living room, are located on the outer portion of the plan to allow proper daylighting.

Materials + Assemblies

The method of extruding one building after another allows for simple and affordable construction, while adding a dynamic element to the design and avoiding much monotony. Tahiti Housing uses site-cast and precast concrete to form the frame of the ramps and floors, while using simple materials, such as prefabricated metals, for cladding, railings, and finishes.

