



2007 Award of Excellence
AIA Montana Design Awards Program

Merit Award



Architect of Record:

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Orchard Gardens

Project Description & Goal: To Meet the User's Needs

The 35 Units at Orchard Gardens include a mix of one, two and three bedrooms in three distinct building types. This combination creates places for a variety of family types: seniors, large families, and singles all call Orchard Gardens home. Nine of the two and three bedroom units are located in Row houses, each of which have their own washers/dryers, second floor and backyard. A Farmhouse building contains six units, some with their own private porches. A large Main Building contains 20 one and two bedroom units and four fully accessible units. A Community Barn also provides a community room kitchen for the residents' use.

Orchard Gardens' neighborhood, located on the edge of town, has a charming semi-rural feel. The design of Orchard gardens originated from neighborhood design charrettes. The architects carefully incorporated the neighbors' input to produce a design that was inspired by a traditional rural farm. Four apartment buildings and a community building are clustered around a common outdoor space. Each of these buildings is designed to resemble traditional homestead buildings, including a farmhouse and several barn-like structures. A two acre open space was preserved for a working garden, and a public bike trail on site connects Orchard Gardens to downtown Missoula.

Orchard Gardens' semi-rural neighborhood is rapidly losing its farming tradition as nearby parcels are developed into suburban single family homes on quarter-acre lots. Orchard Gardens preserves the neighborhood tradition through specific design elements such as corrugated metal roofing, lap siding, and wood fencing. The common space is decorated with public art that brings color and life to the central space. A parking garage houses 18 spaces, eliminating the need for parking lots on site and blending the development into the neighborhood. Amenities such as a community room and a bike trail on site were made available for the entire community.

Because the owner is an affordable housing developer, long-lasting, durable materials are important to the continuing positive presence of Orchard Gardens in its neighborhood. The architects can share a list of examples. The durability of Orchard Gardens, however, has much to do with the tenants appreciating their dwelling places; the residents have developed a sense of ownership and are volunteering minor maintenance and upkeep for the project.