



AIA RICHMOND CHAPTER 2007 DESIGN AWARDS MERIT AWARD WINNER

RIVERVIEW GARDENS URBAN DWELLINGS (Un-built Work)
Wilmington, NC
SMBW Architects; Richmond, Virginia

Project Narrative:

Wilmington, NC holds the largest concentration of antebellum residential architecture in North Carolina. The site is a seam between the city's 19th and 20th century commercial core to the North, and the dense antebellum neighborhood to the South. The Cape Fear River flows just west of the site. The challenge was to create a 58 unit residential community on a very tight site which serves to mediate two very distinct scales on adjacent blocks. Orange Street forms the Southern edge of the site, and is home to the oldest brick house in Wilmington, among other prominent 18th and 19th century dwellings. Twentieth century brick warehouses and taller office buildings occupy the immediate areas north of the site. An existing 1930's modernist bakery building will be preserved as retail along Front Street - the site's western edge.

The project is divided into two primary building volumes stretching west-east across the block. The north bar contains the bulk of the program and is clad in zinc shingles with a masonry base, generous glazing and wood sunscreens or "shuttered walls." Structured parking occupies two partially below-grade levels along Church Alley to the north.

Townhouse units define a primary garden level, while single story "flats" occupy the top three floors with penthouse lofts at roof level. The units will offer expansive views toward the river and city skyline. The smaller south bar at Front and Orange Streets references the scale of the adjoining antebellum neighborhood. It will be finished in concrete, brick, stucco, zinc, and wood. An urban garden of existing site walls, terraces, and a tree-lined mews will be planted with indigenous low country specimens. A language of restrained Modernism will make a place that is at once in harmony with its context, its city, and its time.





The jury had the following comments regarding the project:

“This project embodies a strong idea as an effective mediator between scale conditions. It takes excellent advantage of its opportunities to establish view corridors to the surrounding context and the river. The scheme creates good social spaces through the positioning of site and building entrances.”

Project Team:

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