

TexasArchitect



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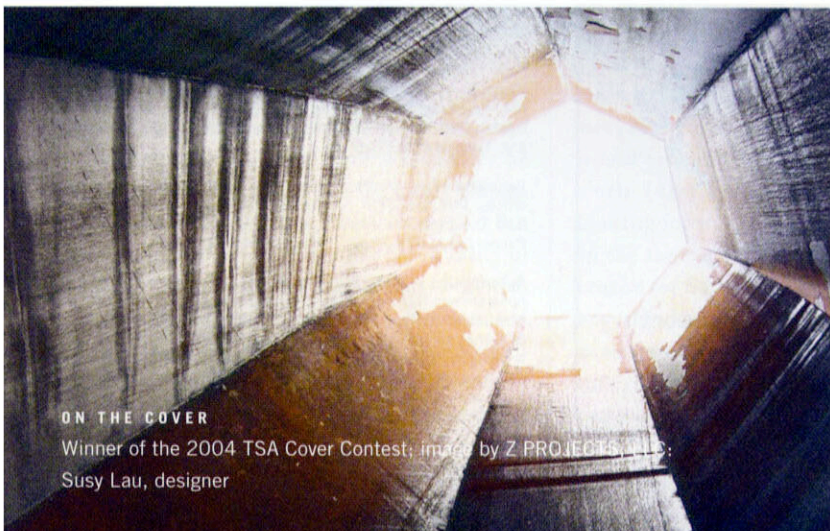
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ON THE COVER

Winner of the 2004 TSA Cover Contest; image by Z PROJECTS, LLC

Susy Lau, designer



PROTOTYPE INFILL HOUSING: THROCKMORTON SITE, DALLAS

Innovative by Tradition

by NESTOR INFANZÓN, FAIA

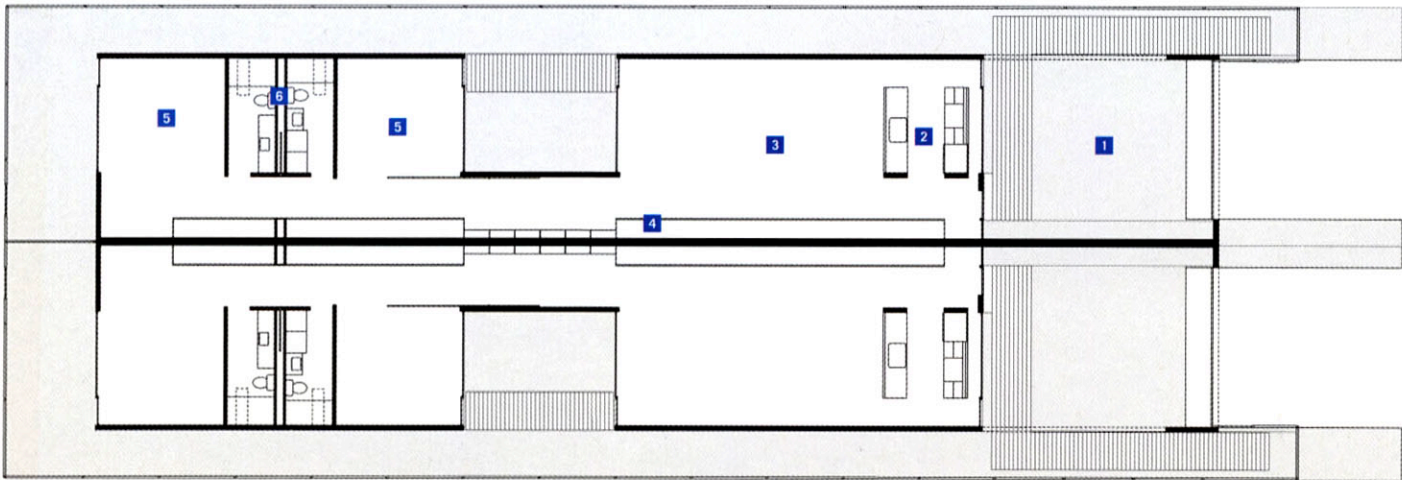


NESTLED in one of Dallas' most socially blended neighborhoods, a new quad-plex of infill housing follows the tradition of maverick architects whose modernist work during the mid-1950s through the late 1970s challenged this city's expectations about residential architecture. The project is located at the core of the Oak Lawn community, an area once known for its innovative housing designs as well as its eclectic mix of musicians, artists, and other uninhibited inhabitants. Oak Lawn experienced tremendous deterioration of its urban fabric during the late 1970s and early 1980s, although just two decades earlier it was a thriving laboratory for edgy architects exploring modern design and its symbiotic relationship with urban living. Numerous examples of housing experiments by the likes of Bud Oglesby, Arch Swank, and Howard Meyer filled this area of Dallas with a unique stock of modernist houses. Fortunately, following years of slow decline, Oak Lawn is now experiencing the beginnings of what may be another architectural renaissance.

This complex of new infill housing benefits both from local historical precedents and the strong roots in modernist architecture of its designer, Edward Baum, FAIA. The former dean of the University of Texas at Arlington's School of Architecture, Baum was educated at Harvard and afterward worked for Josep Lluís Sert. As a young architect, Baum embraced the core values of modern archi-

CLIENT Urban Edge Developers, Ltd and Edward Baum
ARCHITECT Edward M. Baum FAIA
CONTRACTOR Urban Edge Developers, Ltd and CCM General Contractors
CONSULTANTS Structural Studio (structural); MEP Systems (HVAC)
PHOTOGRAPHER Hester+Hardaway






FLOOR PLAN
 1 CARPORT
 2 KITCHEN
 3 LIVING/DINING
 4 STORAGE
 5 BEDROOM
 6 BATHROOMS

tecture and investigated related concepts of construction technology and the use of mass-produced materials. When asked about his infill prototype, Baum recalls his student days, saying, “My fascination with the courtyard prototype as a vehicle for blending community and privacy led to the ideas for the development of the planning and aesthetics of the project.”

The approach from the street provides few clues about the true nature of residences. Four large garage doors comprise the front facade, their dark gray metal surfaces framed by the rich reddish tone of cypress siding, with four thin, wing-like roofs appearing to hover over the carports. The curbside composition is well thought out and includes manicured jasmine-covered medians and chain-link fencing that will form a green enclosure to the spaces as the vines mature, providing privacy for the occupants. The floor plans follow through with this design attitude. A long spine – a 80-foot-long storage wall – threaded through a series of spaces creates the basic *parti* for the four units. This allowed the designer to capture the outside while providing for two main family areas linked by three courtyards. Each unit is then wrapped with a vine-covered chain-link fence connecting the outdoor spaces with the interior areas. The result is a sequence of private spaces: the front courtyard serves as the carport, the second courtyard as a flex space between the living/dining area and the bedroom/study, and the third courtyard becomes a private zone off the master bedroom. The main interior spaces that face outdoor areas have large windows, as well as clerestories, that allows for constant visual connection to the outdoors and the opportunity for cross ventilation. White walls, delicate detailing, and plentiful natural light imbue the interiors with monastic qualities. In keeping with the spine *parti*, the bathrooms are arranged in a simple linear fashion that acts as a central plenum for AC distribution to the bedroom.

The designer’s desire to build this project with off-the-shelf materials runs directly counter to the current method of building today. That maverick approach to construction further complements the nonconformist traditions of the Oak Lawn community. ■

RESOURCES SIDING: Jimmys-Cypress; WOOD AND PLASTIC DOORS AND FRAMES: Wilson Plywood & Door; METAL WINDOWS: J&M Glass Company; UNIT SKYLIGHTS: Dryco Skylights

A TA contributing editor, Nestor Infanzón, FAIA, practices with Jonathan Bailey Associates in Dallas.