

Oregon Life

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(This is an excerpt from the article titled “The Nature of Design”.)

Architect Richard Shugar, principal in 2fORM Architecture, experienced the clash between tradition and innovation in his own project. His design for David’s House - a residential facility in Roseburg for people with traumatic brain injuries - won the Public / Institutional category in the American Institute of Architects competition.

At first, the building was designed to be in a historic neighborhood near downtown Roseburg, “but the neighbors fought the development on the grounds that it didn’t fit,” Shugar said. “We were asked to redesign (the exterior) to look more historical, and we did, making it look like a group of small houses, and the historic preservation committee approved it, but it turned out to be a NIMBY (not in my back yard) issue, and the neighbors still objected.

At that point, the city of Roseburg offered the project’s developer, the Umpqua Community Development Commission, a piece of city-owned land in a more rural setting with sloped grounds, a creek and a small oak grove on the ground, “and we had to start over completely on the design to fit the new location. We had to educate ourselves all over again.”

Shugar said he didn’t approach the building design “in a stylistic way, at least consciously.” Instead, he started with the site, concentrating on its views, accessibility, topography and the sun exposure. “Then we worked with the requirements for room layouts and the need to make this building like a home, not something institutional,” he said.

Hallways to resident’ rooms, which can often feel sterile and mundane in a

group living situation, run along a courtyard, with sitting bays to bring the outdoors as close as possible to the living quarters. The change in location allowed Shugar and his team to open eating areas to the outside, and vaulted ceilings make the residents’ private bedroom-bath areas seem more spacious.

If he has a design mantra, it is that “architecture captures the relationship between people and the environment,” and Shugar views his work as a process rather than an end product.

In setting up his own firm, he chose not to put his own name in it, to remind himself that “I am just the vehicle to help the client get what is needed and wanted,” he said.

