

Manchester Journal - Architect addresses green affordable housing

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MANCHESTER - Ramsay Gourd Architects with offices in Manchester and Burlington, in collaboration with four other Vermont design firms has worked over the past year on the conundrum of Green Affordable Housing. Along with 2morrow Studio, Watershed Studio, Line Sync Architects and GVV Architects, Ramsay Gourd Architects have a submission in an exhibit at the Metropolitan Gallery in Burlington from Nov. 1 through Nov. 15. There will be a panel discussion and reception at the Metropolitan Gallery on Nov. 7 from 5:30 p.m. The Exhibit is sponsored in part through the generosity of rk Miles Building Supply in Manchester.

The colloquium, developed by the Vermont chapter of the Congress of Residential Architecture, of which each participant is a member, teamed up with a modular or structural insulated panel manufacturer to come up with an affordable, systematized, green solution. Designs were analyzed for energy efficiency, affordability, and the integration of green materials and practices in a manufactured product.

According to Ramsay Gourd, "Our approach was two-fold. We wanted to develop a passive solar, super-efficient house, while creating an environment people would be happy to call 'home.' So much of what we see in the 'green' marketplace looks and feels foreign to our collective notion of what a house is."

Ramsay Gourd Architects' solution employs eight three-bedroom homes and twelve studio units to define a central green space intended for community agriculture. The vernacular-inspired 1,850 square-foot house received the highest possible Energy Star rating, with total projected energy costs of \$2,112 per year, per unit.

Green materials such as Fly Ash concrete mixtures, recycled aluminum, and post-consumer recycled paper products were chosen not only for their low impact on the environment, but also for their inherent beauty. Therefore, Ramsay Gourd had the following to say: "We talked a lot in the office about what sustainable design is. Ultimately, we wanted to create beautiful buildings that would be worth preserving. So much of what is cutting-edge is trendy, and therefore has a built in aesthetic obsolescence. By drawing from the context of Manchester and Dorset's small gable-roofed farmhouses, we tried to create a building form that would last."

An actual site for the conceptual community was provided by local developer, Ben Hauben, who is passionate about developing green construction practices.