

Public Rite

DJArchitects keeps adding affordable housing projects to its portfolio.

By Christine Benedetti

FORTY-FIVE NEW units came onto the affordable housing rental market in the past two years thanks to decades of planning and a successful private-partnership between the city of Aspen and Aspen Housing Partners. And though it took years to get the final product, once the bureaucracy and planning was done, it's the final product that people will remember.

That's where DJArchitects comes in. The Aspen-based firm worked between the confines of community dreams and council limitations to deliver one- and two-bedroom rental units dedicated to people employed in the Aspen area. "We do a ton of high-end residential, so it's nice to balance it out with giving back to the community with architecture that everyone can enjoy, and we are proud that we can help be a part of the solution," says Brian Beazley, principal architect for DJA.

The developments, located on Castle Creek Road, Park Circle and Main Street, are just three of the eight multi-family housing units DJA has now designed, with three more in process.

"We know it's a hard course to navigate, but it's really rewarding when it does work," he says. "There are lots of team members and everybody gets their say. It can't be some developer

who comes to town, throws up some units, cashes in and leaves. ... They've got to be quality and attractive."

And they have to be livable. The city of Aspen already has rigid design codes when it comes to what units must include: a minimum of 700 square feet for one person (900 square feet for two), private access to outdoor space (such as a patio or balcony) and proper storage. "Gone are the days of teeny units where people are shoe-horned in," says Beazley.

But meeting the green-energy standards and using unique but durable features is where the firm had fun. It's the parking, he said, that most people complain about. To that end, they're always looking for creative transit solutions; easy answers involve being near bus stops and WE-cycle stations.

DJA includes Red Mountain residences and riverfront properties in its portfolio, which can match public housing in size and scale, but not in process. Recent affordable-housing projects went through rezoning and rounds of commission and council hearings before getting approval, something that takes a long time but often results in a better product. "Through design you can get it all to work some way, somehow, and that's what we're charged to do," says Beazley. #

From top: The project on Castle Creek has 23 units; there are 10 apartments on Main Street; at Park Circle, there are 11 units.



PHOTOS BY DALLAS HARRIS COURTESY OF DJARCHITECTS.