

NURTURE

Prioritizing community this design for a six-unit project on an 80-foot by 300-foot (large lot) tract of land embodies a holistic approach that integrates recreational, social, and environmental elements while balancing efficiency for the everyday person. Central to this development is a vibrant open space that features a variety of amenities aimed at fostering community connections. The open space area includes thoughtfully located fire pits that create inviting spaces for gatherings, storytelling, and shared experiences throughout the day. Adjacent to the fire pits, vast open grasslands offer plenty of space for picnics, outdoor yoga, or simply unwinding in nature. The playground nearby allows kids to have a safe and fun place to play, letting families to enjoy quality time together. North of the site lies a multi-use sports court to accommodate various activities, from basketball and pickleball to casual gatherings for friendly games, promoting physical activity and encouraging social interaction among residents of all ages.

This vibrant outdoor setting is further enhanced by a community garden, where residents can grow fruits, vegetables, and herbs, reinforcing ownership and engagement with the community. Sustainability is achieved actively and passively through five implementation strategies – a below ground whole house rainwater harvesting to minimize disturbance to the landscape design while maintaining usable space, ballasted PV panels, selection of native plant species, utilizing energy recovery units (ERV) to continuously supply fresh air and incorporating natural daylighting and ventilation. The whole house rainwater harvesting system both collects and stores rainwater in addition to being utilized as a dedicated water source for each unit, the irrigation of the community garden and surrounding landscape.

This significantly reduces a reliance on municipal water and promotes responsible water usage. The building design concept incorporates ballasted PV panels, located on the south facing roof of each building to allow this community to generate its own power while minimizing carbon footprint. In conjunction with the overall orientation of the units, the two buildings are sited to take advantage of natural sunlight, with large windows on the south, west, and east sides of the building that maximizes solar exposure in the colder months and mitigates excessive heat ingress and open layouts to promote passive solar heating. This optimizes resident comfort to reduce the need for energy intensive heating and cooling systems. This is reinforced by utilizing structural insulated panels.

Each unit is designed with energy efficiency in mind, utilizing 2x8 structural insulated panels (SIPS) with OSB skin and expanded polystyrene foam core for speed and ease of construction and standard dimensional lumber for sill and top plates and a SIP roof supported on the structural members. By designing a robust thermal envelope that minimizes heat transfer between indoor and outdoor spaces, a consistent temperature gradient is maintained. Coupled with incorporating energy-efficient appliances and lighting, and local sustainable building materials contribute to a lower ecological footprint. Additionally, by integrating native plant species in landscaping, which not only requires less water but also attracts local wildlife, enhancing the ecological richness of the area.

The careful integration of these sustainable practices prioritizes empathetic design by putting the resident first while acknowledging the changing yet timeless architecture of suburban Bellingham. As you walk around the site, each unit has a patio that interacts with the street or with the vast open space on the site. Pops of color at the unit entry door compliment the warm color palette and pitched roofs with modest changes in materiality. This design is an example of environmental responsibility within the community that can be modified to fit a variety of sites throughout Bellingham. This six-unit project not only maximizes the potential of the 80-foot by 300-foot tract of land but also sets a precedent for future developments that prioritize community well-being and environmental stewardship. By creating spaces that encourage connection, recreation, and sustainability, we envision a thriving community where individuals come together to support one another, share their resources, and cultivate a deep appreciation for both their neighbors and the natural world around them.