

COURTYARD HOUSE



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A semi-retired couple required their new home resolve tensions between harmoniously “ageing in place” with nature on one hand while maintaining an urban desire for community on the other.

Relocating from Eugene, Oregon to a more remote site overlooking protected wetlands, the clients realized the home itself, through innovative architecture, should become a destination, drawing out-of-town family and friends to visit. It was crucial the new home not only maintain, but also cultivate a connection to both nature and community.

On the outskirts of a small town known for antique stores and historic homes, the project respects its context: burrowing the house into the land so that it remains unseen from the main street. To the west and north, this strategy minimizes the visual and acoustic connections between adjacent structures and increases thermal insulation. Spanning a terrace escarpment, however, the structure is only partially underground. To the east, the concrete floor slab cantilevers over the hillside, and through floor-to-ceiling windows, frames

expansive views of the wild river and wetlands below.

Anticipating the need for a walker or wheelchair, the clients sold their previous home that divided daily life into rooms isolated by hallways across multiple floors. The clients desired a new way of life organized on a single level by a more open and flexible plan. Environmentally and economically conscious, the couple would not accept an over-scaled home with bedrooms that remained unoccupied throughout most of the year. Here, every living space doubles as a bedroom as to welcome as few as two or as many as eight overnight guests with grace and intention. Departing from the compartmentalized “room-and-corridor” plan found in conventional homes, the interior flows in a continuous loop sculpted by a decagonal courtyard and two L-shaped storage cores. Piercing the center of the home, the fully-glazed courtyard planted with native deciduous trees conceives landscape as partition, shaping the interior through more porous and dynamic boundaries that transform with the seasons. In wintertime, the courtyard’s position increases passive solar heating, while in summertime, the courtyard stimulates passive cooling and natural ventilation.



PROJECT
Private residence

SIZE
277 m² (2,981 ft²)

CLIENT
Confidential

LOCATION
Aurora, OR

COLLABORATION
WBS Construction Inc., Madden & Baughman Engineering, Inc..

STATUS
Commission, completed 2013

VALUE
\$ 635,000

KEY PERSON
Andrew Heid, Christopher Purpura, Jack Hogan, Noa Peer

DISTINCTIONS
2018 Courtyard House receives highest Honor Award for 2017 Boston Society of Architects/ AIA New York Housing Award

2016, Courtyard House nominated for the MCHAP.emerge, Mies Crown Hall Americas Prize at the IIT



1. View south. 2. View east from courtyard. 3. Plan.