



Sausalito's Barbara Brown Architecture firm was awarded a 2007 San Rafael Design Award for the design of the new DeHaan Community Center in San Rafael's Pilgrim Park Apartments, an affordable-housing development. Courtesy photo

# Sausalito architects tops in design awards

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If the 2007 San Rafael

Design Awards are any indication, Sausalito is a bastion of architectural excellence. Three of the six winning firms this year are from Sausalito.

Among the winners, Sausalito's Barbara Brown Architecture was awarded for the "exceptional architectural design" of the new DeHaan Community Center at 33 Merrydale Road in the Pilgrim Park Apartments, a 61-unit affordable-housing development in San Rafael.

The housing complex is sponsored by First Congregation Church of San Rafael, whose leaders decided to create a gathering place for residents of the pre-existing apartments, which have also been spruced up.

"They encouraged us to be really creative in design," said Barbara Brown. The resulting 2,000-square-foot building, nestled among pine

and redwood trees, is clad in stucco and cedar, and features a bridge crossing over a formerly neglected seasonal creek.

"It's a modern building but we tried to respond to the feeling of the housing around," Brown said, referring to the neighboring '70s-era apartments. "We wanted some dialogue, some relationship to the existing buildings."

The new community center plays host to after-school programs such as tutoring and computer classes, and weekly movie nights are held for residents.

"The simplicity and elegance of the design enhances the apartments next to it, and inspires a sense of community," the panel wrote in a statement, adding that "by making the creek an integral part of the design, the project evokes complete enjoyment of the landscaped surroundings."

The project's landscape architect, D.J. Johns of Zone 17 Landscape Architecture,

is also Sausalito-based. Brown said she was very honored to receive the recognition from the city of San Rafael. "Getting the award was like the cherry on the cake," Brown said. "We were all so happy with the way it turned out."

The winners of this year's awards were chosen by a panel that included San Rafael City Councilman Cyr Miller, Planning Commissioner Gayle Mills and Design Review Board member Ann Crew, as well as residents Fred Divine, Julie Garner, Peck Drennan and Greg Knell.

Other Sausalito firms awarded for San Rafael projects include Elida Doldan Schujman of Architecture Studio for the design of the Burt residence, 1637 Fifth Ave., and Jerry Kler Architects, which won the Merit Award for the Martin Loft Design for the Martin Lofts at 50 Cresta Drive.

Others winners for design excellence include Robert