

La Estancia Farmer Housing

Florida

Location: Wimauma, Florida
Type: Greenfield Village/
Affordable Housing
Year Design: 1995
Status: Built
Size: 15.5 Acres



The project's program was to provide 84 rental units for migrant farm workers on a rural site in West Central Florida. The desire was to create a comprehensive plan for a safe, affordable, traditional neighborhood complete with a community center containing daycare facilities. Through interviews with community members, the design team determined that courtyard housing similar to that found throughout the Central American/Caribbean region would best address issues such as security, privacy, and access to useful outdoor space. The courtyard type is well suited to creating urbanism; its effectiveness can be seen in the 1750 city plan of La Plata, Bolivia, which was the source of inspiration for the oblique elevation/plan of this project. The site plan provides a project density of 7 units per acre, including sufficient parking and generous common areas. The interior courtyards serve as private outdoor living areas for family use, and the outdoor landscape and public space systems serve as a focus for community social interaction. The four-bedroom design can be arranged as three bedrooms and a family room and may accommodate either families or unrelated single individuals. The Community Center has provisions for childcare, laundry facilities, and a town meeting room.

Emphasis was placed on creating housing units that were simple and economical to build and maintain. The economies of scale realized by a modular design allowed for greater attention to detail within the project. The units are designed for energy efficiency through the minimization of air-conditioned space, the emphasis on cross ventilation, and the use of ceiling fans. The courtyard type provides a secure, well supervised play area for young children, while the units' close proximity allows for front stoop evening gatherings, promoting social interaction between neighbors. Much of the thinking for the site plan and unit designs was based on study and analysis of failed public housing projects across the United States, with particular attention being paid to creating safe, maintainable, durable, and useful common areas coupled with beautiful units that would inspire a long term sense of responsibility in the residents. There is none of the loosely defined, poorly maintained, unsupervised space typical of public housing, which often poses security problems. A security consultant proposed several modifications in unit orientation, common facility location, and lighting design to maximize the potential for residents to create a safe community.