Chrysanthemum Building
Affordable residential urban infill development, Boston, MA, USA

Main authors
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Summary by the jury
The design for the Chrysanthemum Building in Boston offers a viable solution to the “housing question” – promoting an affordable model for residential development in a dense urban neighborhood. The ten apartments include four micro-units and six adaptable family lofts. The structure, a wooden construction with a layered metal screen, takes its identity from its immediate surroundings through set-back terraces, the transformation of wrought iron fire escapes into digitally fabricated shading elements, and a commercial space at street level. The proposal integrates mobile phone applications for bike sharing and building-systems monitoring and promotes the use of social media to enhance user participation and communication.

Appraisal by the jury
The submitted entry addresses – in a subtle and not exceedingly overstated manner – the manifold criteria set forth by the Foundation’s “target issues”. Economic, social, contextual, and environmental aspects are combined to form a sophisticated and handsome building – an extraordinary and, in a certain sense, innovative approach for an ordinary, everyday structure. The design gives due credit to an understanding of sustainability as a “common sense” culture, one contributing to an architecture based on fundamental and real principles, an architecture nonetheless poetic in its expression.

Project data
Context Architecture, building and civil engineering
Client Collin Yip, Rafi Properties, Boston, MA, USA
Background Private investment
Planned start July 2014

Image 1: The project creates an affordable, sustainable new model for residential development in a dense urban infill site. The project includes 4 micro-units and 6 adaptable family lofts. FSC wood framing, shaft and party walls sequester 32 M tons of CO₂. The building uses mobile app and social media networks integrated with efficient building systems to create a user culture that supports local sustainable services. Construction cost is USD 2,360/m² at 50% CD’s, meeting the developer’s ROI goals.

Image 2: The project integrates an innovative and adaptable unit design using available light, sun and water with low carbon wood construction framing, shaft and party walls. Efficient building systems support a sustainable ownership culture that extends to green business in the city. Physical and digital building networks are linked by design. NEST app is configured to minimize energy use and maximize energy savings. A smart building app manages resources and promotes local urban food and bike networks.

Further authors
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Image 3: Urban infill: A sustainable model for mixed-use housing in the built-up city.

Image 4: Street life: A layered façade.

Image 5: Wrought iron façade: CNC fabrication process.

Image 6: Wood construction.

Image 7: Natural light and ventilation.

Image 8: Micro-unit living.

Image 9: Adaptable lofts.

Image 10: Multi-tasking maisonettes.

More at www.holcimawards.org/projects/chrysanthemum-building