

Jacobson Silverstein Winslow/Degenhardt weaves outdoor spaces into its special-needs housing. Concord House (right) shelters homeless people with HIV/AIDS; Dwight Way apartments (below and opposite page, center) houses individuals with physical disabilities; Laurel gardens (opposite page, bottom) will accommodate both the physically and the mentally disabled.



Photos: Top: Jacobson Silverstein Winslow/Degenhardt Architects; above and opposite page, center: William Heisel

## spotlight

### barbara winslow: voice of experience

**B**erkeley, Calif., architect Barbara Winslow practiced as a social worker before becoming an architect. So for her, using design to meet residents' psychological as well as physical needs comes naturally. "I've always been interested in the impact of places on how people experience them," she says. "Special-needs is at the extreme end of that." In addition to co-authoring the book *Design for Independent Living* with Ray Lifchez in 1979, Winslow has designed many special-needs housing projects as a partner at Jacobson Silverstein Winslow/Degenhardt Architects.

Her background and experience inform her perceptive views on such topics as creating calming environments for the mentally ill. "They need to be in a supportive, secure situation that offers a sense of reprieve," she says. "We try to create a psychological home. There's a fireplace in the living room and window seats or bay windows. We try to make zones on the fringe of activity, nooks so people can have different degrees of social involvement. It lets them observe and control their entry into a situation." Over the years she's learned that gardens and well-landscaped outdoor spaces have a healing effect on those with physical and mental ailments. And at housing for residents with AIDS, she feels that a balance of private bedrooms and baths and communal kitchens and living spaces usually works best. "It means people are not isolated from one another," she says. "You know there are other people there if you need them."

For the physically disabled, Winslow likes to incorporate easily adaptable or universally appealing features. "There are some simple things, like making windows low enough so people in a wheelchair can see outside," she says. "Lever door handles are probably easier for everyone. A wider hall for a wheelchair can be used later for something else, like bookcases or storage." In addition to overseeing most of JSW/D's special-needs housing, Winslow also applies her expertise to custom homes for private clients with disabilities.—*m.d.*

