

NATIONAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

# NAHMANews™

PROTECTING THE INTERESTS OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROPERTY MANAGERS AND OWNERS

## NAHMA Salutes Developers and Managers of High-Quality Affordable Housing

*Alexandria, Va., Aug. 28, 2018* — The National Affordable Housing Management Association (NAHMA) announces the winners of its annual Affordable Housing [Vanguard Awards](#). These awards recognize newly developed or significantly rehabbed affordable multifamily housing communities that showcase high-quality design and resourceful financing.

The excellence exhibited throughout these multifamily developments belies the notion that affordable housing cannot be assets to their communities. Vanguard Award winners deliver powerful proof that affordable housing done well can transform neighborhoods as well as the lives of individual residents.

Winners of the Affordable Housing Vanguard Awards will be recognized at an awards ceremony at the NAHMA Biannual Top Issues in Affordable Housing 2018 Fall Conference in October in Washington, D.C.

The 2018 winners are:

### **Vanguard Award for New Construction:**

Small Property (less than 100 units):

**The Branches at Centerville, Camden, N.J.;** Management Company: Interstate Realty Management; Owner: The Michaels Organization, Marlton, N.J.

Large Property (more than 100 units):

**Villas on the Strand, Galveston, Texas;** Management Company: McCormack Baron Management Inc.; Owner: Villas on the Strand LLC, St. Louis, Mo.

### **Vanguard Award for Major Rehabilitation of an Existing Rental Housing Community:**

**St. Stephen's Tower, Lynn, Mass.;** Management Company: Beacon Residential Management Limited Partnership; Owner: St. Stephen's Preservation Limited Partnership, Boston, Mass.

### **Vanguard Award for Major Rehabilitation of a Nonhousing Structure:**

**Union Eagle Senior Apartments, Bordentown, N.J.;** Management Company: Columbus Property Management, a member of Mission First Housing Group; Owner: Mission First Housing Group, Philadelphia, Penn.

### **Vanguard Award for Major Rehabilitation of a Historic Structure into Affordable Housing:**

**Duck Mill, Lawrence, Mass.;** Management Company: First Realty Management Corp.; Owner: Lawrence Community Works, Lawrence, Mass.

The Vanguard Awards:

- Demonstrate that exceptional new affordable housing is available across the country;

- Demonstrate that the affordable multifamily industry is and must be creative and innovative if such exceptional properties are to be built given the financial and other challenges to development;
- Highlight results of the private/public partnerships required to develop today's affordable housing; and
- Share ideas for unique design and financing mechanisms with industry practitioners to further stimulate creative development in the affordable multifamily industry.

The judges of this year's Vanguard Awards were distinguished NAHMA members from across the country: George Caruso, SHCM, NAHP-e, CEO, The Cooper Companies, Fort Washington, Md.; Nancy Evans, SHCM, NAHP-e, general manager, CSI Support & Development, Warren, Mich.; Steve Henderson, NAHP-e, chief operating officer, Prospera Housing Community Services, San Antonio, Texas; James McGrath, SHCM, NAHP-e, chairman, PRD Management Inc., Cherry Hill, N.J.; and Gianna Solari Richards, SHCM, NAHP-e, president, Solari Enterprises Inc., Orange, Calif.

About the winners:

The **Branches at Centerville** is a three-story, 50-unit apartment development in Camden, N.J., that was completed in November 2017. The project was completed swiftly, efficiently and with minimal community resistance.

The Branches represents the first phase of a larger scale Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Choice Neighborhood Implementation development intended to jump-start the final development efforts in the Centerville neighborhood of Camden. The Branches at Centerville provides new housing for Camden citizens who have been living in substandard public housing for decades.

Funding sources for this project were limited, so developers had to implement a creative financing plan to take advantage of numerous funding sources. The development was completed on time and well within budget.

Three former public housing buildings, known as Branch Village, had to be demolished in order to accommodate the Branches at Centerville, which was built in the same space. The new Branches is a contemporary building with striking colors that provide great energy and aesthetics into a formerly blighted community that was built as barrack-style housing in the 1930s.

Amenities include approximately 5,000 square feet of community space for resident services, wellness and recreation as well as quiet areas, flex lounges on each floor, new flooring, common veranda spaces on the second and third floors and laundry rooms. The units include Energy Star-certified appliances and fixtures, as well as Juliet balconies. An on-site rain garden helps manage stormwater runoff. The Branches at Centerville also provides Americans with Disabilities Act accommodations for aging renters and residents with physically disabilities.

**Villas on the Strand** is 160 units consisting of a mix of corridor-style and townhouse buildings on Galveston Island, which is a long and narrow piece of land just off the coast of Texas. The first buildings were completed November 2016. Of the 160 total homes built across 15 buildings, 82 affordable units were blended with the remaining 78 market-rate units.

In September of 2008, Hurricane Ike made many of the island's residential and commercial structures

uninhabitable. All 975 public housing units operated by the Galveston Housing Authority prior to Hurricane Ike were vacated and condemned after the hurricane.

Traditional financing was not available for the development, so a new financial model was created out of partnerships between various local, state and federal agencies. The total cost of the development was about \$43 million. Villas was completed within budget, though roughly six months later than expected due to a lack of available laborers and weather delays during construction.

To combat the widespread flooding, contractors brought in soil to raise the land elevation. All of the homes in Villas are elevated at least 10 feet off the ground and 17 feet above sea level, with ground level floors only being used for resident parking and stairwell entryways. Storm-rated windows were installed that do not require shutters and storm-rated roofing and doors can withstand even the harshest of weather. When Hurricane Harvey hit Galveston in August 2017, the streets surrounding Villas flooded, but the water did not reach the foot of the buildings and there was only minimal wind damage to the property.

A full-time social worker has an office on the property. All activities sponsored by the management team and on-site social worker are open to all residents. As a result, market rate and lower income residents socialize together without any sense of socio-economic disparities.

Villas on the Strand incorporates a number of welcoming community spaces such as a business center, community room and fitness center inside, and a pool, playground, open green space and picnic areas with grills outside.

**St. Stephen's Tower Apartments** is a 10-story elevator building containing 130 apartments that originated as the vision of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Lynn, Mass. The church recognized the community need for affordable elderly housing and partnered with a housing nonprofit who helped realize the vision in 1976 when St. Stephen's Tower was completed. At the time, amenities included two community rooms with kitchens, laundry, storage stalls, a patio, green space and ninth-floor terrace. The church formed a board that included residents and community members to provide oversight of property operations.

Thirty years later, the building systems were aging and would require replacement. Life safety systems were outdated; the building did not meet accessibility codes; finishes were worn-out; and there were concerns about the building's brick exterior. It became clear that a rehabilitation would soon be necessary. Project finances complicated matters.

The scope of the rehab included new windows, roofs, renovated apartment bathrooms and kitchens; reworking all common and management areas; adding a fitness and wellness center; making structural repairs; and extensive site work, including expanding the patio, creating raised garden beds and a new bocce court.

A dedicated Wellness Office was built as part of the renovation and is staffed by an Element Care Registered Nurse four hours per week. The nurse can provide nutritional, physical and psychological assessments, coordinate health screenings, flu clinics, podiatry clinics, wellness education on managing chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, respiratory conditions, pain management and home safety.

Underutilized basement space was rehabbed to create a space for a variety of uses, including community rooms with kitchens, computer lab and fitness center. The fitness center includes specialized fitness equipment such as elliptical treadmill and recumbent bike for low-impact workouts. Training is offered monthly on how to properly use the equipment. The new computer lab offers individualized and group instruction on topics of interest including using social media and connecting with service providers online. All residents are provided with an e-mail address to connect them with family and friends. The computer lab has three touch-screen computers with large-type keyboards and a printer/scanner.

**Union Eagle Senior Apartments:** The brick three-story warehouse on Spring Street had once housed a clothing factory in the city of Bordentown, N.J. The factory operated for nearly a century before it was abandoned in 1980.

Today, the long vacant building, along with a newly constructed three-story addition, has been reborn as Union Eagle Senior Apartments, which provides much-needed affordable senior housing in an area targeted for redevelopment.

Built in 1882, the former Eagle Shirt Company—and later Union Pants Manufacturing Company—building now includes 21 apartments, as well as 27 units in the addition, all for households at or below 60 percent of the area median income (AMI). Five units provide supportive housing for homeless veterans at or below 20 percent of AMI. The remaining units are targeted to seniors age 55 and over.

The original building was incorporated within the Bordentown Historic District in 2014, and was extensively rehabilitated to adhere to its historic components. The project was completed in August 2016.

Union Eagle is the first New Jersey project for Mission First Housing Group, a Philadelphia-based nonprofit developer. The development is located among single-family homes, small commercial sites, and a public ballpark. As part of the project, the developer provided for expanded parking for the ballpark.

Because of the historic nature of the original building, the developer retained several exterior brickwork details and careful attention was paid to maintain, restore and preserve the components, including low thermal emissivity insulated windows matching the historic documents. Preservation of the masonry facade was completed by repointing 65 percent of the facades using tooling, colors and textures matching existing conditions.

The complex is adjacent to a large public park and is situated among other residential housing, close to the downtown retail area. There is easy access to a nearby highway with its large commercial and retail strips. The development is also near the Bordentown stop on the River Line light rail service from Camden to Trenton, which offers connections to other rail service.

Case management services, including referrals to community resources such as employment services, educational and life skills training, and health care linkages, are provided to all residents through a resident services coordinator.

**Duck Mill:** Located 30 miles north of Boston on the banks of the Merrimack River, the city of Lawrence, Mass., was once the center of New England's textile manufacturing industry. Mills provided jobs to

thousands of people who came to work and raise families; however, by the 1970s, the industry had dwindled, and good-paying jobs vanished, leaving the city with many vacant mill buildings.

The \$29 million rehabilitation project at Duck Mill added 73 residential units of affordable housing. Thirty percent of the apartments are reserved for families that meet extremely low-income guidelines. Duck Mill is large enough to accommodate seven one-bedroom, 37 two-bedroom and 29 three-bedroom apartments.

Lawrence CommunityWorks (LCW) brought together a variety of private and public local, state and federal entities and methods to finance the project. Shortly after the Duck Mill purchase was completed in 2008, the economy stalled, funding sources dried up and tax credit yields diminished. LCW had already borrowed \$1.6 million for the project and it took twice as long to secure all required financing. As a result, the original 2013 target completion date was pushed back three years.

An innovative design feature of the property is the extent to which the original architecture was integrated into the new design. The original features include preserved wood floors, posts and beams, high common area ceilings, and multiple window openings in residences. The building's detailed exterior facade, ornate brick work and granite-lined entrances were preserved in tribute to its industrial history.

New heating and ventilation systems were installed throughout the building. All seven of the one-bedroom apartments are fully accessible to facilitate independent living for adults with physical disabilities. The units are outfitted with wide entryways, a walk-in shower and height-appropriate fixtures for residents. There is also a fitness center on the property and indoor bicycle storage.

The property utilizes an initiative that assists families with education, financial planning and more. This approach consolidates a range of services under one roof, brings people together to build a community not just within Duck Mill, but also within the neighborhood. Programs include community planning, leadership training, family health programs, afterschool/tutoring programs, English as a Second Language classes, job training/youth employment project, financial education, foreclosure prevention training and more.

For additional details on the NAHMA Vanguard Award winners and program, visit <https://www.nahma.org/awards-contests/vanguard-award/>.

NAHMA is the leading voice for affordable housing management, advocating on behalf of multifamily property managers and owners whose mission is to provide quality affordable housing. NAHMA supports legislative and regulatory policy that promotes the development and preservation of decent and safe affordable housing, is a vital resource for technical education and information and fosters strategic relations between government and industry. NAHMA's membership represents 75 percent of the affordable housing industry, and includes its most distinguished multifamily owners and management companies. Visit [www.nahma.org](http://www.nahma.org) for more information.

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