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The Congress Companies enters Phase 3 of 102,000 s/f Bel Air Health Care Center

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According to The Congress Companies, the \$17 million renovation of the 102,000 s/f Bel Air Health Care Center has entered the third of six phases of construction.

Headquartered in Peabody, Mass., Congress provides a full continuum of pre-construction strategy, construction management, design/build, and development services, specializing in the senior living and health care markets.

While Congress typically serves clients throughout New England, New York, and New Jersey, Elite Senior Living, the Operator of Bel Air and a repeat client, brought Congress to Milwaukee for its construction expertise and full service capabilities for the project. "The decision to engage in a project in Milwaukee was totally client driven," said Congress CEO William Nicholson. "For valued, repeat clients, we are committed to servicing their needs," he added.

Through a custom-tailored and cost effective turnkey leaseback solution, Congress handled everything from construction, acquisition, and HUD financing, to the architecture, interior design, and engineering of the Bel Air project, including installation of interior furnishings and equipment.

Projected for completion in March 2012, The Bel Air Health Care Center renovation will result in a fully furnished and equipped 102,000 s/f, 185-bed rehabilitation and nursing building to be leased by owner Milwaukee Health Care Properties I LLC to the nursing home operator. The Bel Air Health Care Center renovations were designed by Brommer Architects and financed through a HUD 232 Loan from Oppenheimer & Co. Inc.

"Our HUD experience and strategic ability to coordinate with Bel Air to allow them to maintain full systems and nursing operations are just some of the ways in which we were able to accommodate our client's needs," said Peter Nicholson, project manager for Congress. "We were also able to expedite and coordinate a fast-track schedule and bring our intuitive, experienced, and dedicated construction management to the table, with a successful result for the client. And we selected a great team of subcontractors, who should also be congratulated," he said.

The six-phased strategy developed by Congress covers both full interior and partial exterior renovations of Bel Air Health Care Center, while allowing for the continued occupancy of the facility during construction.

"It was key for us to create a phasing plan, ensuring that the building could remain occupied in areas in which work was not occurring. It was also important for us to have a method of phasing in the new building systems, and to ensure that all occupied areas are safe and fully functional, as we complete each Phase" added Nicholson.

Phase One of the Bel Air renovation was completed at the end of April 2011. The building's east wing was converted into 24 private rooms, and the lower level of the facility's three-story tower was renovated with 16 new double patient rooms, a new lobby area, and a kitchen and laundry facilities

upgrade. During this first phase, the building received a primary electrical upgrade, and the installation of a new HVAC system, fire protection and alarm systems, nurse call systems, CCTV security systems, generator, telephone, CATV systems, wireless Internet, and flat screen TV's.

In addition to the Phase One interior work, all exterior renovations were completed, including minor roofing repairs, the installation of new windows, new roof deck patio, siding, exterior doors, a new ambulance entrance, and a porte cochere. The entire facility parking lot and driveway were rebuilt with new sidewalks, curbing, and landscaping, and topped off with a brand-new facility sign.

At the beginning of September 2011, Phase Two was completed and approved for occupancy. This portion of the renovation created 26 additional private patient rooms in the building's west, one-story wing.

Phase Three is now underway, with renovations beginning on one half of the middle floor of the three-story facility tower, scheduled to be completed by early November. The remaining wing of the middle floor and the top floor of the tower will be completed in Phases Four, Five, and Six, with each renovation scheduled for two-month intervals, resulting in the March 2012 completion date.

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