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Homes at Old Colony receives Best Urban Project award from Affordable Housing Finance magazine

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According to architecture and master planning firm, The Architectural Team Inc., The Homes at Old Colony - Phase One, an affordable multifamily neighborhood, has won the 2012 Readers' Choice Award from Affordable Housing Finance magazine (AHF). The Best Urban Project award will be presented in November to the development team, Beacon Communities Development LLC and Boston Housing Authority (BHA).

"Old Colony is proof that affordable housing can also be green and sustainable," said Bill McGonagle, administrator of the BHA, owner of the development. "We're pleased that the architectural and development teams have been honored with this prestigious award - it is well deserved."

The Architectural Team, which has a long history of master planning, architecture and interior design for successful affordable housing around the country, was twice named a finalist in the Readers' affordable housing Choice Awards, given to "the nation's top developments of 2011-2012. According to editor Christine Serlin, "The finalists showcase some of the best in green technology, innovative financing, community revitalization, and social services, And they serve a variety of populations." Winning the top award for an urban site, The Homes at Old Colony - Phase One has been promoted as a model for extensive and sustainable redevelopment of an aging public housing community.

"We are extremely proud of our team's work on Old Colony Phase One, and want to thank everyone that voted for us. This is a transformational project that will make a difference in people's lives," said Pamela Goodman, president, Beacon Communities.

Planning for the redevelopment of Old Colony began in 2009 with the BHA and master planner Chan Krieger NBBJ. Later that year, BHA engaged Beacon Communities as developer and hired The Architectural Team as master planner and architect, and Suffolk Construction as general contractor. The Architectural Team's innovative design approach created an inviting and approachable streetscape with 116 units comprised of LEED certifiable townhomes and midrise building, and a 10,000 s/f LEED Gold certified learning center, named after late Boston city council president, Joseph Tierney.

"Developments like Old Colony are about knitting the fabric of a neighborhood together and making residents feel safe and valued both in their homes and part of a larger community," said Goodman. "Today, as a result of the entire development team - and the creative collaboration between Mercedes Farrando, director of design services at Beacon Concepts and Ed Bradford, project designer, and Jay Szymanski senior project manager, both from The Architectural Team - people have a new place to call home."

A national model:

Chosen from among approximately 140 nominated projects from around the country, The Homes at

Old Colony represent the reinvention of formerly distressed public housing buildings on a 16-acre site. A low-income community since 1941, the area was selected for a grant for "environmentally sustainable public-housing transformation" given by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). Using insightful yet pragmatic design solutions and cost-effective means, The Architectural Team devised a range of affordable, sustainable techniques for reinventing the site and context.

Today, the development is an award-winning neighborhood comprised of quality, healthy and cheerful buildings built to achieve LEED for Homes Platinum certification.

"After 41 years of designing more than 75,000 units of multifamily housing, we have the expertise and understanding of the social and economic impact a turnaround like this can have on a community. Our design solution's goal was intended be a beacon of hope for all who live there," said Michael Binette, AIA, NCARB, principal at The Architectural Team. "Further, this redevelopment does more than merely rejuvenate a large Boston site, the new Old Colony introduces ambitious green-building and energy-efficient measures, making it an important example of how affordable housing projects can rise to the challenge of meeting major national criteria and certifications for sustainability."

Phase Two, also designed by The Architectural Team, will add 169 new apartments to the housing development. It is slated to start construction next month.

Winners of the Affordable Housing Finance 2012 Readers' Choice Awards will be featured in the November/December issue of the magazine. An awards luncheon honoring the winners will be held during AHF Live: The 2012 Affordable Housing Developers' Summit, to be held in Chicago, November 14th - 16th.

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