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Beacon Communities and The Architectural Team complete The Homes at Old Colony - LEED Platinum certified

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Located in South Boston, redevelopment of the Old Colony public housing community continues to provide healthy, energy efficient apartments for low-income individuals and families with 40 more new apartments completed in June.

Beacon Communities Development, a nationally recognized developer of affordable housing, and The Architectural Team, a master planning and architectural design firm, recently completed the 40 residential apartments. These 40 units are the completion of Phases One and Two, totaling 169 apartments. South Boston's Old Colony public housing development had become a symbol of poor housing conditions, until the introduction of federal funds and an innovative master plan and green-building design approach began to undertake redevelopment of the community.

The master plan, which includes new streets and view corridors, as well as the new buildings that have been certified at the Platinum level under LEED for Homes and LEED for Homes Mid-Rise standards for the earlier phases, has knit Old Colony back into the fabric of the South Boston neighborhood. The energy-efficient, high-performing residences and neighborhood designed to also meet the LEED for Neighborhood Development standards (pursuing LEED Gold certification) have turned this community into a national model for sustainable multifamily design and desirable urban living.

"The continuing redevelopment of Old Colony reflects our commitment to building sustainable, affordable housing communities and neighborhoods. We love being part of the redevelopment of Old Colony as well as the broader South Boston community," according to Pam Goodman, CEO of Beacon Communities. Old Colony Phase One, completed in December 2011, included 116 housing apartments divided among a six-story midrise residential building and four groups of townhouses topped with photovoltaic panels. All the homes achieved Platinum certification under the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED for Homes program. Phase One also included a learning center awarded LEED-NC Gold. Up and running since 2012, the Tierney Learning Center (TLC) works with partners to provide well-coordinated programming that advocates for educational intervention and support at every age. The on-site programs include early childhood education, youth enrichment, and adult education, including a computer learning center for all ages.

Phases Two A and B included 129 apartments completed in summer 2014 that achieved LEED for Homes and LEED for Homes Mid-Rise Platinum level certification, the highest available, with the final 40 apartments under Phase Two C just reaching completion and tracking to get LEED Platinum as well. Old Colony is also designed to EPA's Energy Star and HUD Healthy Homes Guidelines, and the revitalized site is anticipating a LEED for Neighborhood Development certification.

A list of sustainable design features utilized in all phases of The Homes at Old Colony and that helped the project to achieve LEED and Energy Star ratings follows:

- * Sustainable Sites: Permeable concrete pavers and infiltration leaching galleys;
- * Water Efficiency: Efficient irrigation system, low-flow plumbing fixtures;
- * Energy: High-performing water pipe insulation, non-HCFC refrigerants;
- * Materials: low-VOC flooring, sealants and paints; No Added Urea-Formaldehyde, locally produced aggregate and drywall, and 85% of construction waste diverted from landfill;
- * Indoor Air Quality: Closed and vented combustion; Outdoor air and local exhaust meet ASHRAE 62.1 and 62.2 (2007); and
- * Non-smoking - Since its inception, Old Colony has been a non-smoking community (throughout the buildings as well as on site). The entire Beacon Communities housing portfolio, over 12,000 apartments, went 100% smoke free on August 1.

"Phase Two is taking advantage of a combination of renewable energy approaches including solar panels on buildings that are property oriented and the purchase of 20-years of Renewable Energy Credits," said Darcy Jameson, development director with Beacon.

Michael Binette, AIA, principal at The Architectural Team notes that the homes also incorporate energy-efficient mechanical systems, appliances and lighting, as well as high recycled content and healthy materials. Facilitated by New Ecology, Inc., Binette noted that the foundation for the sustainable design started with a "Green Charrette," including the design and development team and residents.

Among the many strategies employed to get the most environmental and economic value for the buildings and site while meeting the LEED for Homes program requirements, the team focused on quality construction practices for durability and indoor air quality, and a well-sealed and highly insulated envelope (walls, doors and windows, roof and floor slabs) to maximize energy efficiency. The Beacon management team has worked hard to educate residents about how to help save energy from turning off lights to lowering the heat when they aren't home.