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Project of the Month: Groom Construction completes new 18,049 s/f residential facility for youth in foster care in Mass.

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Salem, MA Groom Construction Co., Inc. recently celebrated the ribbon cutting for a new residential facility at Plummer Youth Promise - a transformative project designed to support youth in foster care and strengthen families. The ceremony was attended by congressman Seth Moulton, the honorable Amy Nechtem, senator Joan Lovely, representative Manny Cruz, Salem mayor Dominick Pangallo, Salem Ward 1 councilor Cindy Jerzylo, Salem Ward 5 councilor Jeff Cohen, Salem councilor at large Alice Merkl, and other distinguished guests, marking the completion of a milestone project that represents a significant step forward for Plummer Youth Promise and the young people it serves.

The new residential facility provides dignified, trauma-informed living spaces for youth and visiting spaces for families, aligning with Plummer's standard of excellence in care. For more than 150 years, the organization operated out of a historic building on Winter Island, originally constructed in 1870. While the building was a testament to Plummer's legacy, it had long struggled with outdated infrastructure, including a temperamental heating system, small, double-occupancy bedrooms, and locker room-style bathrooms that lacked privacy and comfort.

The newly completed 18,049 s/f residential building prioritizes dignity, privacy, and healing. Youth now have single-occupancy bedrooms where they can rest and study. Private bathrooms and apartment style kitchens create a more home-like atmosphere, allowing young people to cook and do laundry in an environment that feels welcoming and supportive. Ample personal storage ensures their belongings are secure and respected, helping to foster a sense of ownership and stability.

“It’s such a significant milestone that youth have now moved into the new building, and into their own spaces,” said Nicole McLaughlin, Plummer’s executive director. “For many, it’s the first time in years they can experience a space of their own - a place to unpack, rest, and begin to heal on their journey toward reunification with family or connection with new family.”

The new building also includes thoughtfully designed family visiting spaces: comfortable rooms with furniture and televisions where youth can spend time reconnecting with loved ones in privacy. These spaces replace the former limited options, which included either a busy shared living room or a small office. Living and administrative areas have been thoughtfully separated to reinforce a true sense of home for residents, while quiet common areas and walking paths provide calming, restorative outdoor areas.

Sustainability was also a key priority. The facility is now heated and cooled by a solar-powered geothermal system, installed by drilling nearly 50 geothermal wells over 300 ft. into the ground. This renewable system captures the earth’s constant underground temperature to efficiently manage the building’s climate year-round, significantly lowering operational costs and reducing the carbon footprint.

The building’s exterior features durable, high-quality finishes including Hardi clapboard siding, Hardi trim, a PVC water table, and red cedar shingles that provide long-lasting protection while complementing the overall design. Landscaping, hardscaping, and paving give the campus a polished, welcoming appearance. Inside, all wall finishes, flooring, mechanical systems, and cabinetry are in place, and the building is fully furnished, and residents are enjoying their new home!

“We’re deeply grateful for the opportunity to partner with Plummer Youth Promise, Michael Whitmore of Roundel 47, and OPM Jonathan Lavash on such a meaningful project,” said David Groom, principal at Groom Construction. “It’s been an honor to help bring their inspiring vision to life and contribute to creating a space that offers dignity, privacy, and a true sense of home for the youth and families it serves. We’re proud of what’s been accomplished and excited to continue the journey with Phase 2.”

This new facility is part of Plummer Youth Promise’s broader three-building master plan, developed in 2021 with project architect Michael Whitmore of Roundel 47. The master plan includes the new residential facility (Building 1), the future renovation of the original 15,866 s/f building (Building 2), and a later-phase Campus Center (Building 3). Phase 2, set to begin next, will transform the historic structure that dates back to the late 1860s into a state-of-the-art space that continues the mission of offering stability and healing for youth. Plans include creating an administrative hub from which staff can collaborate on Plummer’s six programs located across Massachusetts. In addition, a new overnight family visiting apartment will provide a space for rest and reconnection when loved ones visit their teen or young adult resident.

The renovated building will reflect the same commitment to privacy, dignity, and a sense of home that defines the new facility.

The project team included:

Groom Construction- Construction Manager
Lynco Fire Protection, Inc. - Fire Protection
Metropolitan - Cabinets
FloorCraft - Flooring
Form-Up Foundations - Foundation
AHA Consulting Engineers, Inc. - Commissioning | MEP/FP Design
Meridian Associates - Layout / Survey | Landscape Architecture
Electrical Design and Control Inc. - Electrical

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