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The Architectural Team Announces Major Milestones for Longwood Medical Area Development—Boston Urban Revitalization Success Story

Chelsea, MA, February 2, 2012 – The award-winning Boston-based architecture, preservation and master-planning firm The Architectural Team has announced completion of the first phase of a major mixed-use neighborhood redevelopment on a prominent site in Boston. The multiple-building project promises to provide significant new clinical and research facilities for the medical community while returning an important mental health institution to its historical location and expanding the reach of a major affordable housing community.

Located between the Brigham and Women’s Hospital campus and the Riverway, within a quarter-mile of four other hospital campuses, the revitalization is the product of a unique collaborative partnership that has brought together Brigham and Women’s Hospital, Roxbury Tenants of Harvard (a 1,500-unit affordable housing community), the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health and the state’s Division of Capital Asset Management (DCAM), the agency responsible for disposition of public property.

The Architectural Team, in consultation with Linea 5, a Boston-based architectural firm, developed the master plan, which involved the demolition of the existing abandoned 184,000-square-foot state mental health hospital. Four new buildings were designed in its place, and the first phase, now completed, consists of The Binney Building, a clinical and office facility, as well as “The Partial Hospital and Fenwood Inn” – a clinical and residential mental-health center that marks the long-anticipated return of the state’s Department of Mental Health to the neighborhood. As part of its Master Planning role, The Architectural Team, Inc. designed the exterior architecture of the two first-phase buildings with the hospital’s architect, Linea 5.



Clad with terra-cotta panels and curtain wall, the new Binney Street building is part of phase one. (Photo credit ©Andy Ryan)

These two new buildings, which broke ground in 2010, will be followed by two more: a 350,000-square-foot clinical and research facility for Brigham and Women's Hospital and a 16-story, 200,000-square-foot residential building with 156 living units for the Roxbury Tenants of Harvard. The Architectural Team will serve as Architect-of-Record.

"This is a truly remarkable outcome which accommodates the needs and goals of multiple stakeholders who might otherwise be anticipated to be competitors rather than collaborators," says Michael Liu, AIA, a partner with The Architectural Team and lead Urban Designer of the MMHC project. "There is a premium on real estate in the Longwood Medical Area (LMA). At two-and-a-half acres, the site is among the largest and last to become available in this desirable area."

Boston's Emerald Necklace

Aside from its size, the site is unique in that it borders on the Riverway, a significant open space and part of the Emerald Necklace, Frederick Law Olmsted's famous linear parkland. Rather than let differing institutional agendas put them at odds with one another, a partnership was formed to build a vibrant mixed-use community with affordable housing components alongside high-value research facilities, office space and community-based mental health care.

The firm's work on the development reinforces The Architectural Team's growing national reputation for both healthcare architecture and master planning of large-scale, mixed-use communities with urban revitalization aims.

In 2003, says Liu, just after Massachusetts officials closed the mental hospital, DCAM issued a request-for-proposals (RFP) for a long-term lease on the site.

Brigham and Women's Hospital, along with the large affordable housing development, Roxbury Tenants of Harvard, joined together as partners in a comprehensive proposal for redevelopment. The ambitious plan



A new mental health day hospital, Fenwood Inn, opened in late 2011 as part of phase one of the redevelopment. (Photo credit ©Andy Ryan)

was to advance each institution's service mission while restoring the Department of Mental Health's presence on the site.

The Architectural Team proposed a four-building master plan, which envisioned a lively neighborhood attractive to residents and healthcare providers alike. Further modifications were made during the City of Boston's Article 80 permitting process, which allows public review of a project's impact on its neighborhood and the city as a whole.

Collaborative efforts by development team members advanced public support for the plan, easing its path through key approvals. Among the project's champions was Boston Mayor Thomas M. Menino, who saw in the Longwood Medical project a unique combination of economic stimulus – the development would create at least 500 permanent new jobs – as well as affordable housing and the opportunity to create a rich new urban fabric. Development rights under the master plan were granted in February of 2010.

Eliminating barriers, joining unique uses

The Architectural Team's master plan reclaims an abandoned and important corner of the Longwood Medical area, creating an animated mix of uses and activities with the four new buildings. In addition, the master plan called for eliminating the old facility, a contiguous collection of structures over the entire site that acted as a physical and visual barrier between the LMA and the Riverway. Instead, The Architectural Team's design replaced this barrier with a porous ensemble of buildings allowing views and pedestrian access to and from the Riverway.



A view of Phase Two - Roxbury Tenants of Harvard residential building.
(Rendering by The Architectural Team)

The Architectural Team's design of The Binney Building exterior projects a sense of the hospital's present and future technical leadership while the Fenwood Inn combines an approachable residential scale and massing with materials that suggest both permanence and a public mission. Along the Riverway, The Architectural Team designed the residential tower as an iconic gateway marker to the LMA, visible from important vistas along Brookline Avenue as well as the Riverway itself.

"While most mixed-use projects combine residential and commercial uses, the Mass Mental Health redevelopment is unique in its blend of residential and *institutional* programs," says The Architectural Team's Liu. "This approach has proven that such uses can not only coexist successfully, but even enhance one another."

Liu adds that this kind of urban revitalization option can be strategic from the points of view of both planning and land use, because it allows for programmatic juxtapositions that might previously have been considered infeasible. The key to making such juxtapositions work well, says Liu, is to employ tactical, sensitive solutions to both massing (building shape) and circulation (spaces for people to move in and around). Both massing and circulation must support social interaction and the interconnectivity of diverse constituent uses in some instances, while keeping them separate in other places.

"It is essential to establish both boundaries and connections between area housing and new hospital facilities," explains Liu. "We explored the question of how to define a residential edge versus an institutional edge. Residential neighborhoods have unique traffic patterns and street activity, so we needed to analyze not only the environmental impact of the master plan but also the social and urban impacts, and mediate the edges between those very distinct uses."

A strategy that works everywhere

The ideas implemented in the Longwood master plan can be adapted to other, larger-scale projects in many U.S. cities where proposed uses may have previously been considered mutually exclusive, according to John Messervy, Director of Capital and Facilities Planning for Partners Real Estate.

"Key to the success of the Mass Mental Health Center redevelopment was conceiving it as a joint development strategy and ensuring the successful resolution of both institutional and residential needs," Messervy explains. "Many cities could apply this kind of joint strategy as a model of how to develop the no-man's land where residential and institutional worlds meet."

Just as important, the project points to the opportunities and challenges of redeveloping state mental hospitals around the United States, many of which have been reduced in size or shut down as part of a revamping of care delivery.

At Boston's Longwood, the hospital closure was seen as an opportunity to create a better neighborhood.

“This is a story about revitalization, growth, quality of life and redevelopment of dense urban settings, often where there are struggles between large institutions and neighborhoods,” says Liu, whose firm has worked on revitalization projects in Detroit, Chicago, Pennsylvania and Washington, D.C., with its largest footprint in Boston and New England.

In the process, The Architectural Team has developed a reputation for assisting government and development teams in converting hospital sites to non-institutional and private uses. Such projects by the firm have included the redevelopment of numerous hospital sites including St. Luke’s in Chicago, Symmes Hospital in Arlington, Massachusetts, and three former mental hospital campuses, two in Massachusetts and one in Rhode Island. In the case of the former Massachusetts state hospital campuses in Lexington and Danvers, developed by AvalonBay Communities, the redevelopments have saved a number of beautiful but deteriorating historic

buildings, converting them into new, vibrant multifamily housing communities.

This specific building type is an area of extensive expertise for The Architectural Team, with a long record of historic adaptive reuse projects, having completed over 150 developments of this type.

“There are unique structural and dimensional characteristics common to 19th century state mental-health hospitals, which pose unique adaptive reuse challenges,” says Michael Binette, AIA, a partner at The

Architectural Team. “One of these was the practice of framing from interior demising wall to interior demising wall, rather than from exterior wall to corridor, which makes removal of interior partitions more difficult.”

Another major issue, says Binette, is the often-narrow building depth, which relates to the small size of the patient rooms.

“On top of these technical issues that we see time and time again, there is often the daunting public-relations challenge in altering a site which represents a legacy of health care,” adds Liu. “Many local communities have a deep emotional and psychological attachment to the historic buildings and the institutions that occupied them.”



An aerial view of the Longwood Medical area master plan, showing the project’s second and third phases. (Rendering by The Architectural Team)

A strategy that works everywhere

The Longwood Mass Mental Health Center was an exception, in which the actual buildings were less psychologically meaningful to the community than the return of the institution itself.

On January 31, the designers, public officials and stakeholders celebrated the official ribbon cutting of the completed first phase of the project.

The project marks another major urban transformation project led by The Architectural Team (www.architecturalteam.com), a firm known for major waterfront, master planning, multifamily housing, mixed-use, commercial, institutional and historic adaptive reuse projects. Liu and the firm's staff of 60 professionals have designed hundreds of large-scale urban developments, many including social programs, public buildings or affordable housing. Many of the projects have become national models for high-quality, mixed-income development approaches to transform and revitalize blighted areas. ###

About The Architectural Team, Inc.

Founded in 1971, The Architectural Team, Inc. is a 60-person master planning and architectural firm that has grown through its design excellence and commitment to responsive and collaborative client relationships. The firm has developed a portfolio of distinctive design solutions for a broad range of building types and programs, and has earned more than 80 awards for design excellence. These include the new construction of large urban mixed-use developments, multifamily residential, commercial, hospitality, recreational, and academic facilities, as well as a national reputation in the area of historic preservation and adaptive reuse. The firm is located in the restored 1840s-era Commandant's House in Chelsea, Mass. Visit the firm's website at www.architecturalteam.com.