



Then and Now: Mass. Architects Honored for Adaptive-Reuse Work

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Exterior of the Curtain Lofts in Fall River, Mass., an affordable active-adults housing community for residents

For The Architectural Team Inc. of Chelsea, Mass., historic restoration and adaptive reuse aren't concepts that get trotted out occasionally as a portfolio novelty.

They constitute the heart of the firm's philosophical and professional mission.

And it shows—all over Massachusetts.

The Architectural Team's work in transforming a former shoe-packing factory into a mixed-use, multifamily, transit-oriented development, and its conversion of one of the most historically significant buildings in Worcester, Mass., into a LEED Silver-certified, mixed-income multifamily housing community are just two of seven historic adaptive-reuse housing projects that recently received the Preservation Massachusetts' 2012 Paul E. Tsongas Awards.

The awards recognizing work to "help preserve Massachusetts' architectural history while also providing affordable, quality housing to families and seniors," the firm said in its announcement.

"We believe in finding new life for these older structures—the abandoned industrial and long-shuttered public buildings that line our rivers, harbors, canals, and city streets and town centers," said Robert Verrier, FAIA, NCARB, co-founder and managing principal.

The award-winning adaptive reuse projects converted into new housing include Canal Lofts in Worcester, Mass., a mixed-income, multifamily housing community; Curtain Lofts in Fall River, Mass., an affordable active-adults housing community for residents aged 55 and over, developed by Boston-based WinnDevelopment; and Linwood Mill in Northbridge, Mass., also an affordable active-adults housing community for residents aged 55 and over, developed by Boston-based EA Fish Development.

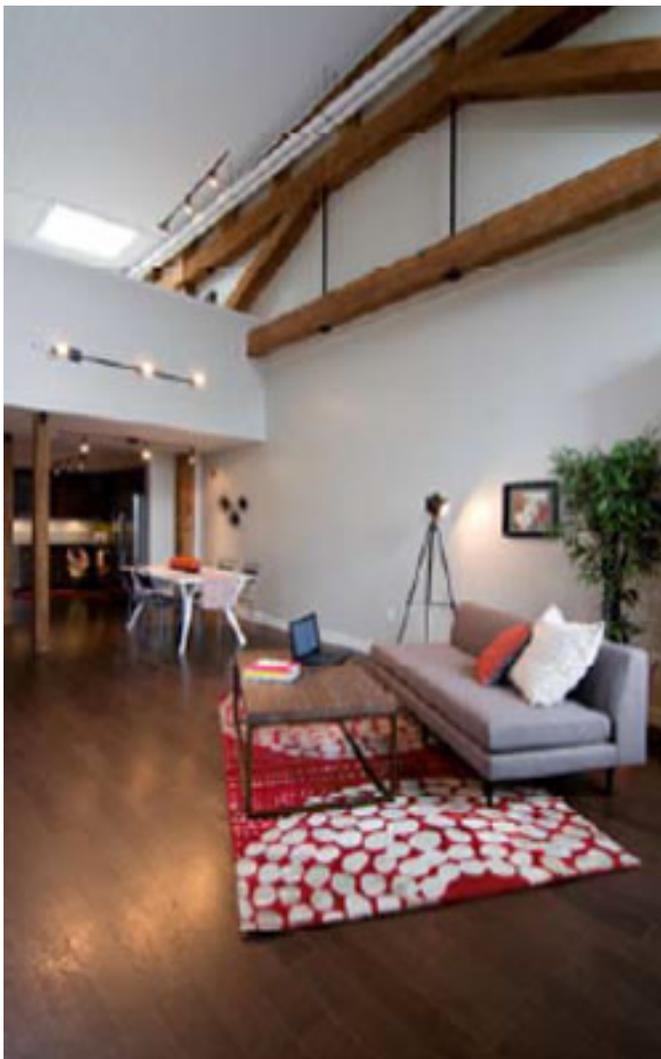
Also cited for their successful adaptation of historic landmarks into housing communities were City View Commons I Apartments in Springfield, Mass., an affordable and modernist rehabilitation of 20th century historic buildings by the First Resource Companies; The Hayes at Railroad Square in Haverhill, Mass., a mixed-income multifamily transit-oriented development (TOD); Union Street Lofts in New Bedford, Mass., an urban style apartment community comprised of five individual historic buildings developed by HallKeen and WHALE; and Nashoba Park Assisted Living in Ayer, Mass., developed by the Volunteers of America.

The Paul E. Tsongas Awards, Preservation Massachusetts highest honor, recognizes those who have played an extraordinary role in promoting the preservation of the commonwealth's past for the benefit of its future.

More information: [Preservation Massachusetts](#).

Project Details

Verrier said that with each project, the firm aims to achieve the client's vision of providing quality, affordable housing for hundreds of residents while preserving "the architectural fabric that connects us to our common past."



The firm provided a closer look at the honored projects in its announcement of the awards. Portions appear below.

Canal Lofts, formerly the Hill Envelope/Chevalier Furniture building, is one of Worcester's most notable and architecturally significant historic buildings. Today, the former mill has been transformed into a LEED Silver-certified, mixed-income multifamily housing community, the firm said.

The property offers 64 loft-style units—complete with the architectural detailing characteristic of these building types, such as expansive windows, exposed brick and vaulted wood-beamed ceilings and ample resident amenities.

Photo by Josh Falk

Interior of the Canal Lofts in Worcester, Mass., a mixed-income, multifamily housing community.

Located in Fall River's historic district, Curtain Lofts, formerly the Wampanoag Mill—an iconic granite mill—has been artfully converted into a LEED-certifiable contemporary apartment community for active adults ages 55 and over.

Scheduled to open in June, Linwood Mill will soon become home to active adults ages 55 and over. Situated in a serene setting adjacent to the Mumford River and within close proximity to the downtown area, Linwood Mill will provide a mix of 75 affordable studios, one- and two-bedroom units, the firm said. The historic adaptation also includes commercial/retail space on the ground level.

The renovation, directed by The Architectural Team, involved restoring the building's clock tower and repairing the brick masonry to ensure that the historic structure's distinctive architectural heritage was preserved.

The design of Linwood “strives to retain many of the building's historically authentic features such as exposed beams and columns, oversized windows—offering many units with scenic views of the river—and other detailing throughout,” the firm said.

An affordable and modernist rehabilitation of a historic building, City View Commons I, in Springfield, is a 152-unit affordable multifamily development that won a Springfield Preservation Trust Award in June 2011 for the restoration of the 20th-century apartment blocks. The Architectural Team also worked on City View Commons II, an adjacent, 144-unit affordable housing property.

The Hayes at Railroad Square in Haverhill, Mass., located adjacent to the former Washington Street Shoe District in downtown Haverhill, is a historic adaptive reuse of a former shoe packing factory into a mixed-use, multifamily transit-oriented development.

The project is also reported to be the first Chapter 40R development to be permitted in Massachusetts, and serves as an extension of the existing historic industrial neighborhood. The Massachusetts Chapter 40R law provides for smart growth and housing production in defined districts in a community.



Photo by The Architectural Team

The Architectural Team also designed Atlas Lofts in Chelsea, Mass., which received the 2011 Preservation Award from the Massachusetts Historical Commission.

The Hayes development offers a mix of 57 one- and two-bedroom apartments, with 33% dedicated as affordable units, as well as 5,000 square feet of commercial space. The units are designed to have a loft-style feel, boasting original features such as exposed wood beam ceilings and decking.

It was also the recipient of the 2011 Jack Kemp Workforce Housing Models of Excellence from the Urban Land Institute and the 2011 Project of the Year for Adaptive Reuse from Multifamily Executive Magazine.

Union Street Lofts, located in downtown New Bedford, Mass., is comprised of five individual turn-of-the-century buildings located in the city's historic district. The firm converted these structures into 35 new urban-style loft apartments that are designed to provide the maximum amount of natural light as a complement to high ceilings and open floor plans.

Nashoba Park Assisted Living in Ayer, Mass., formerly the Ayer Community Hospital built in 1928, now serves as a 72-unit assisted-living community. The building received historic designation from the Massachusetts Historic Commission in 2004 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Believing in Preservation

Verrier was the architect of record for Canal Lofts, City View Commons I, Curtain Lofts, and Union Street Lofts, and was recently elevated to the 2012 American Institute of Architects' College of Fellows in recognition of his work in preservation and adaptive reuse of historic buildings during his career. The Fellow designation comes on the heels of the firm's 41-year anniversary.

Principal Michael Binette, AIA, NCARB, was architect of record for Linwood Mill and The Hayes at Railroad Square. Principal Michael Liu, AIA, NCARB, was architect of record for Nashoba Park Assisted Living.

Founded in 1971, The Architectural Team has completed more than 150 historic-preservation, restoration and adaptive-reuse projects. The firm says it is sought out for expertise in converting some of the most complex historic mills, hospitals, schools, and factories in the country into new uses.