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**Innovative Permanent Supportive Housing for U.S. Veterans Designed by The Architectural Team, Serves Those Who Have Served**

*Valley Brook Village, located on the Lyons, NJ campus of the VA New Jersey Health Care provides homes for 62 veterans at-risk for homelessness. The community's design is based on expert healthcare design principles and new concepts in supportive residential planning.*

**BOSTON, MA—August 28, 2013** - Recognizing the all-too-common challenges facing veterans returning home from overseas tours of duty – disability, depression, post-traumatic stress, lack of employment, and homelessness – experts from the affordable housing industry have been collaborating with veterans' advocacy groups to provide supportive residential communities for returning servicemen and women.

The most recent example, Valley Brook Village in Lyons, N.J., designed by The Architectural Team in a continuing partnership with developer and property manager Peabody Properties, will open its doors to residents in September 2013.

With the “supportive housing” development nearing completion, 62 veterans who might otherwise find themselves homeless and without vital support services are scheduled to take up residency upon the project's opening. Unlike transitional homes, Valley Brook Village is a permanent housing model, designed to address veterans' physical, wellness and emotional needs, addressing the complex requirements of this diverse resident population. Its turnkey delivery has been led by The Architectural Team, Peabody Properties, Windover Construction, and the not-for-profit Affordable Housing & Services Collaborative (AHSC), which will oversee the property's operations. The group of companies is building four such communities for the VA Supportive Housing (VASH) program led by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

“These new residential housing models are unique in that they are providing a combination of healthcare principles for both physical and emotional trauma with new concepts in design, creating a sense of community, collaboration and cohesiveness,” says Michael D. Binette, AIA, principal at The Architectural Team. “Today, unlike in years past, servicemen and women have a higher survival rate which results in their returning home with myriad physical and emotional challenges that need to be addressed. Our aim is to design an engaging environment where each individual enjoys a sense of belonging, has community support, and has access to the services they require to aid in their recovery.”

### Design Innovations, Neighborhood Appeal

Valley Brook Village includes a number of design and planning innovations – the project is anticipating Silver level certification under the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED for Homes program – and also represents a unique arrangement of partnerships among private, public and not-for-profit stakeholders. The project will be the subject of a documentary short film by North Carolina-based Susie Films.

The Architectural Team is responsible for the design of three additional veteran supportive housing developments in Massachusetts. These HUD-VASH sponsored projects include the historic adaptation of a building in the town of Beverly, which opened to residents in June. Pleasant Street Apartments, as the project is now known, provides 32 units of permanent supportive housing, similar in concept to Valley Brook Village, and developed in partnership with Windover Construction of Manchester, Mass.

Unlike transitional housing developments, which provide temporary or semi-permanent homes for veterans, Valley Brook Village, Pleasant Street and others like them provide permanent supportive housing for residents. "It has been proven how effective permanent supportive housing is in ending homelessness for persons with multiple barriers to housing stability," says Betsy Collins, senior project manager, Peabody Properties. In fact, communicating to the development's neighbors that the property is supportive, permanent housing did much to overcome objections arising from the stigma and fears associated with transitional residences.



As both developer and service provider for Valley Brook Village, Peabody will staff and manage on-site counselors to aid veterans with programs such as crisis intervention, job training, work readiness programs, physical health care, and community building activities, making the development more than mere housing.

Support services fall within the purview of the AHSC, in the not-for-profit group's role as operator. The Valley Brook

property also features design techniques and planning strategies that are just as supportive of veterans' particular needs. "Our job was to hone in on optimal design strategies that would effectively address the needs of this particular population," notes Binette of his firm's role in designing and planning. "The facility's design addresses the psychological needs of all veterans."

Binette points out that the master plan of the property creates a non-institutional, "village-style" setting, so the residents feel less isolated, and have the opportunity to feel part of a larger community. The design of the residences themselves incorporate plentiful daylighting and exterior views – clinically proven to improve recovery from trauma and anxiety – plus residential-looking solutions and highly integrated universal design techniques that support health care delivery while avoiding the "institutional" quality associated with hospitals and post-acute care centers.

The population of applicants for the residences include recently deployed Iraq and Afghanistan veterans, career servicemen (some of whom served in Vietnam), and approximately 5% female service members -- indicative of the recent increase in women veterans needing supportive services and/or housing.

Until these most recent efforts, women veterans have typically had little or no access to permanent, supportive housing in a co-ed environment. Valley Brook Village represents one of the first such housing facilities to provide residence and support to a population of both male and female vets.

The Architectural Team's design solution for Valley Brook Village and the other properties has focused on reducing the environmental impact of the new development. Binette brought to bear his firm's considerable experience with high-performance sustainable design, creating a largely walkable community comprised of energy- and water-efficient homes that feature healthy interior environments. The partners are anticipating Silver-level certification under LEED for Homes, and the project participated in New Jersey's Pay for Performance program, which further verified the new community's energy efficiency.

### Support Through Partnership

"A community like Valley Brook would not be possible through design acumen alone," adds Collins. "All four of our HUD-VASH projects are the result of strategic partnerships of public and private entities, all of whom want to support our nation's at-risk veteran population."

With all four developments, The Architectural Team provided design and planning services to Peabody Properties, the developer and property management/service provider, and general contractor/development partner Windover Development. Also essential to the project was the previously mentioned nonprofit AHSC, and Community Hope, a nearly 30-year-old nonprofit engaged since 2004 in providing residential recovery programs and transitional housing to returning servicemen and women.



Other partner groups include the Corporation for Supportive Housing, National Equity Fund, and the MetLife Foundation. Alongside federal support from HUD-VASH and the Department of Veterans Affairs, state and local agencies such as the NJ Department of Community Affairs, NJ Housing Mortgage Financial Agency, the VA NJ Healthcare System - Lyons, and Somerset County Community Development contributed vital support, planning and financing.

The team also includes a number of local builders and contractors, working under out-of-state general contractor Windover Construction. "Many of our contractors have family and friends who have served in the armed forces," says Collins, "and all of them are quite proud of their contribution to a development that will help to care for returning vets." Since the project involves many groups from various regions of the Northeast, and helps an underserved veteran population, interest in documenting the new development initiated the engagement of production company Susie Films, based in Charlotte, North Carolina. Director Pete Vandall and Executive Producer Scott Galloway interviewed local leaders, development partners, homeless veterans and others involved with Valley Brook while capturing the community-building project on film. The result will be an approximately five-minute documentary.

"The film will shed light on the issue of homelessness among U.S. veterans," says John Woodall, Susie Films' CFO, "as well as the good works that so many are doing to make positive changes...and more so, how the VA, non-profits, business leaders and politicians are working together to make a long-lasting impact on this underserved population."

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#### **About The Architectural Team, Inc.**

Founded in 1971, The Architectural Team, Inc. is a 70-person master planning and architectural firm that has grown through its commitment to design excellence and responsive, 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 90 awards for design excellence. These include the new construction of large urban mixed-use developments, multifamily residential, senior housing, assisted living, commercial, hospitality, healthcare, 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](http://www.architecturalteam.com).

#### **About Peabody Properties, Inc.**

Headquartered in Braintree, MA, Peabody Properties—a full-service real-estate firm—manages in excess of 10,000 units of housing, primarily in New England, with a divisional office located in Florida. An award-winning privately held corporation, Peabody Properties was incorporated in 1976 and is under the direction of Karen Fish-Will and Melissa Fish-Crane. In 1995, Peabody Properties recognized its long-term commitment to Resident Services as a unique area of expertise within the field of property management and established a new and separate entity. Peabody Resident Services, Inc. is dedicated solely to the development of support services and programs for residents of affordable housing. Peabody Properties is designated as a Woman Business Enterprise (WBE) and is certified by the Massachusetts State Office of Minority and Women Business Assistance (SOMWBA). For more information please visit [www.peabodyproperties.com](http://www.peabodyproperties.com).