

2014 MFE Awards

Best Reuse of Land, Grand: Arlington 360

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GRAND WINNER: BEST REUSE OF LAND

Location: Arlington, Mass.

Developer: Jefferson Apartment Group and Upton + Partners

Builder: NEI General Contracting

Architect: The Architectural Team

Opened: September 2013

Number of units: 176

Unit mix: Studios; one-, two-, and three-bedroom apartments; and two- and three-bedroom townhomes

Rents: \$1,900 to \$3,660

Development at the site of the defunct Symmes hospital was a long time coming. The town of Arlington purchased the land in 2001, after which point several building efforts were unsuccessful. The land's steep grade and strict conservation requirements presented challenges for Arlington 360 developer Jefferson Apartment Group (JAG), as well. However, those initial obstacles allowed for some of the project's biggest assets: 11 acres of green space and spectacular views of the Boston skyline.

An extensive, three-month bedrock blasting process and carefully structured building plans helped mitigate the hurdles posed by the hillside. The large apartment buildings are situated in a radial configuration and shrink as they move down the slope, with townhomes along the perimeter. This layout optimizes views for the majority of units and helps the property scale down to the surrounding neighborhood.

Geared largely toward young families and downsizing Baby Boomers, the units are spacious, and most are multibedroom. In addition to amenities such as a pool, fitness center, and community room, the site emphasizes outdoor recreational space, with two parks, walking trails, a playground, and a community garden.

The added green space is a benefit for all of the town's residents, a major selling point for the Symmes Neighborhood Advisory Committee, which initially opposed the development.

JAG also partnered with Shelter Inc. to develop two acres of the property into a 90-room assisted-living community, satisfying the city's initial requirement that a medical function be maintained at the former hospital site. To further honor the hospital, historic markers made from salvaged wall slabs and a series of panels depicting the facility's history are displayed in the community parks.