

## DEVELOPMENTS

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AFFORDABLE HOUSING FINANCE

# AHF Announces 2020 Readers' Choice Awards Winners

The Tyler in East Haven, Conn., wins overall best development.

By [Christine Serlin](#)



*Gregg Shupe*

After two decades, the halls of the East Haven High School in East Haven, Conn., will come alive as residents begin to move in to The Tyler next week.

The high school, which was built in phases between 1936 and 1973, shuttered its doors in 1998 and fell into a state of disrepair. Wanting to breathe new life into the historic building and create a community asset, the city of East Haven tapped WinnDevelopment to transform the main wing of the building into critical affordable housing for seniors 55 and older. In exchange for a reduction in the purchase price, the city retained ownership of and will be able to finance a multimillion renovation of the rear building wings containing a pool, auditorium, and gym.

The Boston-based developer has repurposed the four-story, 104,871-square-foot brick building, which comprised the academic core of the structure, into 70 units—40% are at 40% of the area median income (AMI), 10% are at 80% AMI, 30% are at market, and the remainder are set aside for households who are currently homeless or at risk of homelessness.

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Due to some COVID-related material and labor shortages, the project was delayed slightly over the summer with a certificate of occupancy being issued this week for the 1936 building and slated for mid-October for the 1964 building. However, interest has been strong. The Tyler is 68% pre-leased for the 50 affordable units and 15% for the 20 market-rate units.

“This building has been sitting vacant for over 20 years, and the town and its residents are very happy that this landmark structure is being saved,” says Adam Stein. “The school is a symbol of the community and connects to the people

who worked there or attended as kids, and the residents are drawn to the fact that we are making it viable again.”

In addition to meeting a community need, The Tyler also is a standout for its above-and-beyond sustainability features. It is said to be the first multifamily project in the nation to use historic rehab tax credits and meet the Germany-based Passive House Institute’s stringent EnerPHit standard for energy efficiency. It also is expected to be the first EnerPHit-certified multifamily project in Connecticut and one of the largest in the U.S.

“It will be the first of its kind, and I see it as transformative for the entire industry,” says Christina McPike, director of energy and sustainability at WinnCompanies.

The renovation includes upgraded HVAC and utilities; super-efficient exterior wall, slab, and roof insulation; and Energy Star LED lighting and appliances. The apartments are expected to use approximately 20% less energy on average than an Energy Star equivalent home would consume. In addition, by preserving the historic structure, which is considered the most sustainable form of development, the project will avoid 18,000 metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions.



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“We are meeting the performance targets with heating, cooling, and ventilation, but not getting there with the normal checklist of items because of its historic character,” says McPike. “We can achieve the energy performance and satisfy historic requirements.”

Financing for the \$31.7 million development includes low-income housing tax credits allocated by the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority as well as federal and state historic credits through the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office and National Park Service. Bank of America provided the equity for all three tax credits. Additional financing partners include the Connecticut Department of Housing, the Federal Home Loan Bank of Boston, Citizens Bank, BlueHub Capital, and Energize Connecticut.

Other partners on the development include Steven Winter Associates, which helped integrate the Passive House EnerPHit standards; architect The Architectural Team; and general contractor Keith Construction. Columbus House will provide on-site economic empowerment programming, including financial self-sufficiency, fraud avoidance, health preventative education, and medication management, for residents.

The adaptive reuse of the historic school will not only benefit the residents and the environment for years to come, but it also will continue to give back to the community.

“The Tyler will not only provide quality, stable housing for residents 55 and older but also provide an economic benefit to the community in the form of stable neighborhood housing, ongoing real estate taxes, and continued investment in the area,” says Stein.