INNOVATION IN DESIGN OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING
REPORT TO THE MCKNIGHT FOUNDATION

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Becky Yust, Ph.D., Professor
Marilyn Bruin, Ph.D., Associate Professor and Extension Specialist
Sarah Bellefuil, Graduate Research Assistant
Housing and Community Collaboratory
Housing Studies Program

COLLEGE OF DESIGN
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

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Executive Summary

This report is an assessment of ways in which design of affordable multi-family housing could be advanced in Minnesota. We interviewed participants from 16 organizations involved with affordable multi-family housing development including funders, municipalities, developers and managers, and architects. Their offices were all located in the Twin Cities, but some do work statewide. While each participant identified some type of design standard, the most frequently mentioned and publicly available are the Minnesota Housing design criteria and the Green Communities Criteria. Design standards include the overall exterior of the structure, the interiors of the units, materials used, and the site design. There are limited resources available for work in this field and each participant struggles on every project to maximize funding and the number of housing units, while maintaining integrity of the design to serve families. Barriers in achieving well designed projects are funding for the project and funding allocated for architectural design fees, the intermittent timeline of project development, neighborhood aesthetics and support, zoning codes and housing standards, and climate. Climate cannot change, but there are strategies to reduce the other barriers. The development process, particularly the funding application process, should be reassessed. The Minnesota Housing Super RFP model is among the best in the nation, but reconsidering the process should be a high priority. Exposing policy makers, funders, and community staff to models of effective affordable housing developments in similar climates would help to educate them in and assist them in working in partnership with architects who desire to advance the design threshold in Minnesota. This assessment did not allow for the inclusion of evaluations by residents and on-site managers. Such post-occupancy evaluations would allow for research based dissemination of information to identify design features of housing environments in which families can thrive.

Introduction

In the summer of 2008, the McKnight Foundation contacted the College of Design at the University of Minnesota to produce an assessment of the supports and resources available for local architects, non-profit, and for-profit developers to pursue innovative affordable housing design. As they stated, the McKnight Foundation "wishes to promote the 'state of the art design excellence' in the affordable housing sector in the State of Minnesota." The McKnight Foundation recognized that:

> The design of affordable housing has an impact on families in the housing based on the internal design of the unit materials used, operational costs of the housing, the external appearance and the relationship the housing has with surrounding amenities and community in which it is located. Quality design can also have an impact on the acceptance of affordable housing in many communities.

To achieve their goal to draw attention to and raise the bar of design excellence in the affordable housing field, the McKnight Foundation contracted with us to document the current status of the affordable housing field. This report is based on interviews with stakeholders involved in designing, funding, developing, and managing affordable multi-family rental housing. The key questions provided by the McKnight Foundation to be addressed in this assessment were:

1. *To the degree to which they can be identified, what are the current design standards and typical practices of the affordable housing field related to the design of affordable housing units?*
2. *What resources are available to the affordable housing field for improving the design—both internal and external—of affordable housing stock?*
3. *What are the barriers to and gaps in available resources (both financial and technical) that inhibit the affordable housing field from establishing higher standards and achieving greater excellence in design?*
4. *How can these barriers and gaps be addressed in ways that promote the greatest opportunities for the affordable hosing field to advance excellence in the affordable housing design?*

Process

Principle investigators, Drs. Becky Yust and Marilyn Bruin, established a list of key stakeholders involved in affordable multi-family rental housing. After approval was received from the University of Minnesota Institutional Review Board to conduct interviews with individuals, our research assistant, Sarah Bellefuil, contacted the individuals to set up appointments.

The key questions provided by the McKnight Foundation formed the basis of the structured interview protocol. Additional questions asked of all interviewees were: how they address cultural issues; whether they conduct post-occupancy evaluations; which projects they would identify as well designed, both aesthetically and functionally; and, their own educational and career backgrounds.

To ensure a comprehensive exploration of the key questions, interviewees were selected from four types of organizations involved in affordable multi-family rental housing: funders, municipalities, non-profit developers and managers, and architects. Twenty-five individuals were interviewed representing 16 organizations. The interviews took place over a nine-week period from September through November 2008. In all but two instances, the interviews were scheduled at the interviewee's office with one or both of the principle investigators and the graduate research assistant. The interviewees received a copy of the questions before the interview, and each interview was approximately 90 minutes in length. Notes were taken by the researchers and the graduate assistant; a staff member in our unit word-processed the sets of notes; the compiled notes were reviewed for accuracy with the original notes; and, the final interview notes were reviewed to compose this report. Some interviews were conducted with one individual participant; while others were with groups of two or three individuals from the office of the primary contact. In one case, the interview occurred over the phone, and in another case, the representative answered the questions electronically.

The discussion that follows is framed based on the key questions provided by the McKnight Foundation. At the end of the report is a list of projects in the Twin Cities that participants identified as being well designed, and the interview questions that were posed to participants.

Responses to McKnight's Key Questions

1. To the degree to which they can be identified, what are the current design standards and typical practices of the affordable housing field related to the design of affordable housing?

Participants indicated that design standards are generally driven by the funding agencies and the local communities. Minnesota Housing design standards, posted on their website, have been in place for 30 years. They are updated continuously to reflect policy and design trends in accessibility, sustainability, visitability, Green Communities Criteria, and housing tax credit design standards. The standards specifically focus on parking and garages, play areas and equipment, signage, laundry rooms, elevators, unit size and materials, patios, and mechanical and electrical systems.

Because Minnesota Housing is a major funder of many affordable housing projects, their standards are represented in the majority of affordable housing developments in Minnesota. However the implementation of the Minnesota Housing standards is sometimes fragmented. If they have a minor role in a project they defer to the design standards of the major funder. Furthermore, architects and developers must also conform, when applicable, to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requirements, specific municipal zoning requirements and community design standards and expectations.

Counties and municipalities also have standards and/or site plan review processes. Depending on the size of a project, the project may go to the planning commission and the city council for approval. Large municipalities require review of projects by many departments, e.g., the fire department, construction management, heritage preservation, etc.

Local standards include details such as facade articulation and percentage of window area in a facade. Neighborhoods within the Twin Cities also have comprehensive plans that encourage traditional neighborhood design for infill developments and incorporating crime prevention into site and building design. One public agency that builds and owns affordable housing stated that they have used the same architect since 1992. The interiors of each project are similar but the exterior is changed to reflect the neighborhood aesthetics.

Some developers had written internal "do this"/"don't do this" lists to facilitate their design and decision-making processes. The lists include both general and specific guidelines, for example, which trees grow best in which soils, which type and brand of toilet is easiest to maintain, etc. These are reviewed and revised upon the completion of each new development in which they are involved. Developers mentioned that they have to balance aesthetics with functionality including ease of maintenance. One developer stated that they wanted their buildings to last 150 years, which required a focus on durable materials. They stated that the design of a building has to work for the residents, community, and management team. To achieve this goal, they incorporated ideas from various sources including the Design Advisor (http://www.designadvisor.org/), Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED), transit-oriented development, sustainability, and Green Communities Criteria. Books mentioned as references for design ideas and methods of development included *Creating Defensible Space* by Oscar Newman, *The Not So Big House* by Sarah Susanka, and *A Pattern Language* by Christopher Alexander.

Architects, while following the programmatic standards of funders, communities, and developers, also subscribe to their own aesthetic standards. The architects have individual styles and their work represents their identity. They described a variety of strategies to incorporate the design standards set by funders and developers, which are more programmatic, with their own aesthetic standards, which are more visual and functional performance oriented to develop quality housing. One architect stated that they use materials and color to make facades and interior spaces exciting. Another architect stated that they want the project to fit the neighborhood. They also wanted to design a building that anyone would want to live in by incorporating facade bump outs, quality windows, and an abundance of natural light. It was important to them that the features they design evoke a feeling of home rather than an institutional aesthetic. Another architect mentioned that it was counterproductive to building positive neighborhood support to present innovative features in the conceptual design that are likely to be eliminated when the project receives funding and budgets are adjusted. There was concern that neighbors who appreciate and look forward to significant and innovative design features are disappointed with the completed development if it is "missing" a feature.

2. What resources are available to the affordable housing field for improving the design – both internal and external – of affordable housing stock?

Developers with whom we spoke did not have a significant pool of resources or financial incentives to improve design. Funding agencies have set design criteria and set architectural fees for funded projects but do not have additional funding to enhance a project. Green Communities was cited as a source of grants and loans for projects that incorporated their criteria. Sometimes cities have been able to fund amenities for projects beyond the subsidized funding available. And, in adaptive reuse developments, historic tax credits have been used to increase the funding available for a project, although those projects are typically more complex and expensive compared to new construction. In general, resources for design innovation were creatively gathered by developers and architects through personal contacts and perseverance. Architects were self-motivated to be leaders in design, but were frustrated by the overall cost limitations.

Funders mentioned that Green Communities provides planning and construction grants, charrette grants, and post-construction sustainability training grants. One community mentioned that they have a tax levee that is dedicated to building attractive, high quality affordable housing. Minnesota Housing has staff architects who provide technical assistance to developers applying for funds. St. Paul is part of the St. Paul on the Mississippi Design Center, which provides expertise to developers looking to build in St. Paul.

Developers stated that they had received pro-bono interior design work and graphic art consultations. They also participated in the Twin Cities Home Tour and the American Institute of Architects Minnesota Chapter Search for Shelter, an annual design charrette held at the University of Minnesota focused on affordable housing and the prevention of homelessness. Developers also searched for products at reduced costs and discounts from materials suppliers. One developer mentioned having a Rose Fellow on their staff who is helping them by focusing on project designs. The Rose Fellowship partners architects with community service providers to promote good design in the development of affordable housing.

Architects self-funded professional development activities to learn of other well designed projects. One firm sent each of their architects to a different city to visit sites of innovative building design; the information was then shared in-house with all members of the firm. In another case, architects participated in an international tour to visit innovative housing sites.

3. What are the barriers to and gaps in available resources (both financial and technical) that inhibit the affordable housing field from establishing higher standards and achieving greater excellence in design?

Minnesota Housing is central to the development of affordable housing. They have design standards for projects, set architectural fee rates, and manage the Super RFP. Minnesota Housing policies, priorities, and funding methods influence development outcomes of affordable housing. Agencies interviewed cited examples of barriers that affect design excellence. Funding limits, complexity in securing funds, and lengthy processes increase financing, labor,

and material costs. Architects and developers mentioned that when funding is finally in place, budgets are adjusted and often innovative design features and high quality materials in the original concepts are eliminated. This was most evident in the substitution of less expensive materials, such as vinyl siding instead of HardiePlank® Lap Siding in order to finish projects within budget.

Funding barriers

Developers stated that affordable housing is financially difficult to produce. The profit margins are small and many developers are competing for the same pool of funds through the Minnesota Housing Super RFP. Developers expressed concern related to the cost of holding property for several funding cycles before a project is fully funded. Funds spent on the property are therefore not available for innovative features and materials. Other barriers included limitations in producing feasibility studies and the time needed to develop positive community relationships to support affordable housing.

In order to raise sufficient capital, developers apply for funds from multiple sources including the state, counties, the Metropolitan Council, and Green Communities; this lengthens the timeline of a project. This problem is exasperated by projects that include both commercial (such as first floor retail) and residential components because it increases the number of funding sources and complexity of the projects. The different funding sources also have various requirements tied to unit size and affordability criteria. The complexity of multiple funding sources will continue as developers seek funding to replace housing tax credits that are decreasing due to the national economic crisis.

Other financial concerns from developers were an emphasis by funders on "first" costs rather than "lifecycle" costs. Lifecycle costs include operating costs so that the long term impact of choices made in the design and construction of the building are factored into the total cost. Additionally, developers feel constrained in making a tradeoff between producing as many units of affordable housing as possible (to meet the funders' goals) with the use of high quality materials and innovative design. Substituting lower cost materials for more durable but more expensive materials saves money during the production cycle, but often increases operating expenses and future redevelopment costs.

Developers noted that the Minnesota Housing fee structure has been increased for architectural services to address costs related to the inclusion of visitability and Green Communities Criteria. However, architects mentioned that they may provide feasibility studies early in project development for little or no fees. Before funding is assured, developers need architects to create preliminary site layouts because developers and funders need to know how many units can fit on the site. Additionally, building perspectives and elevations are completed because the Minnesota Housing Super RFP requires the conceptual design to be developed at the time of application. Because pre-design fees must be calculated into the final fee structure if funding is received through Minnesota Housing, and because of the risk involved in not receiving funding, this limits the investment of time that architects and developers can devote to pre-design.

Timeline barriers

A major barrier mentioned by architects is related to the timeline of the development process. The process was described as beginning with a short predevelopment stage without adequate time to reflect and generate innovative concept designs. For example, a developer will contact an architect and ask for a feasibility study of a site in order to prepare an application for the Minnesota Housing Super RFP. The feasibility study focuses on specific parameters, defined by funders and policy, including site utilization, parking requirements, visitability, sustainability, Green Communities Criteria, unit size, and affordability. In addition, projects in urban areas are often located on brownfield sites or infill sites with site challenges making it difficult to estimate the cost of solutions. On the other hand, some architects mentioned that the challenge of designing for awkward infill sites inspired their creativity.

Because developers are not assured of funding until grants are awarded, architects may not get paid, or get paid very little for a feasibility study. The predevelopment phase or feasibility study is followed by months of waiting to hear the outcome of the Super RFP and can create financial hardships if there are not sufficient other projects in the architectural office. Developers and architects mentioned that often applications to a variety of funding sources are needed before a project is fully funded. Once funded, projects are again fast tracked. The short timelines allocated to feasibility studies and final design for funded projects, strict design parameters, and lack of funding create a less than optimal environment for creativity.

Architects reported that if they spent considerable time on design prior to the project receiving funding, communities are sometimes extremely disappointed if the final project built did not match the project that was originally presented. The reason for the discrepancy may be due to budget cutbacks, either because the project cost more when it finally received all of the funding necessary or that there was insufficient funding and changes had to be made.

Finally, architects and developers expressed their frustrations with the point scoring of their proposal applications evaluated by Minnesota Housing. At times, they did not receive points for aspects of their proposals when they felt they should have, and other times they felt that the point assignment was somewhat arbitrary. This situation extends the timeline of project completion if their proposal is not awarded funds.

Contextual barriers

In many communities and neighborhoods, architects and/or developers present the preliminary concept designs for community discussion and support. Both architects and developers stated that neighborhood resistance to affordable housing is a barrier to production. Typically, neighborhoods in both the Twin Cities and surrounding suburbs are resistant unless the development will replace blight. The time devoted to developing community relationships was mentioned by several developers as important to completing a project in a timely manner. However, architects and developers also mentioned that community representatives can sometimes become so involved with the design, requiring or vetoing particular features, that it limits innovation; but, without the community's support, the project may not receive support from the city.

Additionally, developers mentioned that many communities desire housing that is similar in style to existing designs of housing in their neighborhoods. That is, the neighborhood residents do not want the affordable housing to look different from their existing housing. Participants mentioned the contradiction that, although Minneapolis is lauded nationally for design, residents seem to accept design innovation in institutional buildings (e.g., the Walker, the Guthrie) more so than in housing.

Climate and zoning codes also create barriers for innovation in design. Architects mentioned that when underground parking is desired and/or required, the dimensions to accommodate the parking sets the "footprint" for the building and limits innovation in unit size and layouts. And, zoning codes may require more than one parking stall per unit (in a garage or in surface parking). Developers are reluctant in some communities to request a parking variance because it could jeopardize the entire development, even though the developers know that the likely residents will be single headed households with one car. And, architects mentioned that minimum unit sizes tend to be larger here than in other parts of the United States so the cost per unit is higher and limits funding available for innovation.

Finally, during the interviews, participants were asked if residents' cultures of origin influenced their design decisions or created barriers. Participants stated that they do not design to a specific cultural group because rental housing experiences influxes of people from various countries over time and the appropriateness of a specific cultural design may not work for another family of a different culture. However, they also identified household practices that do create maintenance issues for the building over time. The ways in which they have addressed these practices through design are covered in the next section.

4. How can these barriers and gaps be addressed in ways that promote the greatest opportunities for the affordable housing field to advance excellence in affordable housing design?

Reducing funding barriers

Architects felt that predevelopment fee allocations should be increased because the Minnesota Housing fee schedule is not adequate to support innovative design related to affordable housing. The length and complexity of affordable multi-family projects can be a financial disaster for architectural firms because of the low fee and long timeline. Currently, architects designing affordable housing have little time and receive minimal fees at the beginning of a project. The result is that architects modify designs that they have used before and that are accepted by Minnesota Housing; they do not have the time or resources to push the design envelope.

Developers recommend that funders make policy changes that increase funds for long-lasting durable materials, that is, focus on "life cycle costs" as well as "first costs." This would address sustainability, lower maintenance and operating costs, and decrease future requests to renovate existing properties.

Reducing the timeline

Streamlining the predevelopment and development timeline was seen as important to improve opportunities for advancing design; it would free more funds toward design and sustainability. Developers suggested providing 0% loans to secure and hold properties during the Super RFP process. They also suggested that Minnesota Housing set aside a pool of funds for "expert" developers with an established record of providing exceptional products on a timely basis. These funds could be allocated directly to those developers outside of the annual competitive process. Alternatively, modifying the point system used by Minnesota Housing to reward a record of exceptional performance might shorten the development timeline for the "experts." These suggestions would need to be developed so that they do not eliminate opportunities for new developers to compete for funding.

Developers stated that the development process needs to be more integrated with all stakeholders—e.g., funders, architects, community, and property managers—to ensure that everyone understands project goals and what it will take to produce quality developments. Putting more money into production will result in a building with a longer life cycle, lower operating costs, and avoid renovation costs.

Overcoming contextual barriers

Architects suggested that policy makers, officials, and architects take national and international field trips together to see affordable multi-family developments. For example, visiting developments where parking requirements were modified to reflect specific project locations and resident needs, developments in which units are smaller or of higher density than is typical in Minnesota, and creative use of materials in comparable climates.
Participants stated that they have responded to cultural practices and integrated features that could be applicable to any residents. Some of these features have included improved ventilation systems in kitchens and bathrooms, compartmentalized bathroom designs, and daylight control mechanisms. One developer mentioned that they had originally designed a project to include a kitchen that was closed off from other parts of the unit to meet the needs of Muslim households. Before construction began, the kitchen plans were opened up to the living area of the unit because the developer was noticing a shift in occupants in the neighborhood they serve. However, they did provide for the installation of shutters to enclose the kitchen, if desired. Architects were very concerned with providing healthy environments for occupants. The solution was to provide flexibility in the design so that the unit can be adapted to a variety of users. They also stated that occupants need to be educated on how to use their environments. For example, not installing heavy draperies which cause moisture build up on windows and how to change filters in heating systems.

Participants were asked if they conducted Post Occupancy Evaluations (POE) of their affordable multi-family housing developments. POEs are used to evaluate a completed development by collecting information from people living or working in the buildings or by systematically observing building users. The goal of a POE is to determine how the building is used as well as what works well and aspects that could be improved. Often information is gathered by asking residents and property managers what they like and don't like about the

building, if it is a good place to raise children, if it is safe and secure, if it provides residents with pride of place, if it is affordable, and is close to amenities, transportation, and necessary support services. POEs can also focus on management policies, materials, and the operation of the building. Finally residents and managers can provide opinions on the design features in each unit, building, and neighborhood surrounding the development.

Surprisingly, POEs were not commonly conducted by those interviewed. Architects indicated that they may tour a building after completion but not as a systematic evaluation process. They also mentioned that during the design stage they work with the developer and interact with the community through neighborhood meetings, but they do not talk to property managers or future residents. Architects stated that they "know what works" based on their experience.

Nonprofit developers were more likely to conduct a form of POE to reaffirm agency goals and help improve future projects but they were neither systematic nor shared their findings with other developers or architects. One non-profit developer stated that they do not conduct POEs regularly but involve the property management team in the development process and collect feedback from residents through property managers.

Municipal agencies and funders did not conduct POE's routinely although funders may inspect projects to insure that the projects are completed as funded. Funders indicated that a POE that focused on aesthetics would be useful because they could determine what materials and environments were most desirable for residents. POEs would also provide evidence to neighborhoods to be more accepting of designs that work well.

Conclusions

All participants that we interviewed expressed the desire to work on and support innovative, well designed, and high quality projects. Several mentioned that good design is imperative for the individuals and families who reside in their developments. Several expressed the critical need to provide healthy supportive environments for these families. Everyone is cognizant that community relationships are critical in the development of affordable housing in a variety of neighborhoods. This influences both the design that developers propose in order to fit into neighborhoods and architects who avoid promising features that ultimately won't be funded.

We heard several comments regarding the need for additional education through formal workshops and through field trips to other markets, and for additional research and evaluation after projects are completed. It is important to include the perspectives of residents and neighbors to inform the design of future projects. We feel the participants in this assessment are highly motivated to continue working in affordable housing and want to produce the types of developments that are viewed as exemplary at national and international levels. The most consistent comment was that a lack of funding forces compromises between what architects and developers wish could be built and funders' responsibility to provide more units of affordable housing. Our assessment did not include interviews with market rate developers who have not ventured into affordable housing; such a study might help identify incentives to deepen the pool of professionals involved in affordable housing.

The interview results indicate that funders, communities, and architects focus their time and efforts on design decisions up to the time of occupancy. Developers tended to have a broader focus that included post occupancy concerns. An important next project would be to conduct systematic POEs examining the developments mentioned by participants. The purpose would be to learn about the aesthetic and functional features from the point of view of residents, property managers, and the neighbors in the surrounding communities. The properties listed below could be considered for evaluation to provide comparisons and baseline data to measure the impact of design and Green Communities criteria.

Examples of Local Projects

"Innovative design" was not defined by the McKnight Foundation, so we asked the participants to identify projects in the metropolitan area that they feel are designed well. In these cases, the participants included projects that they considered aesthetically pleasing, functional, and creative in their execution. These are listed in alphabetical order within the category heading. Photographs were taken by the researchers or used with permission from the developer; we were unable to visit every site.

Projects located in Minneapolis and St. Paul included:

Center for Changing Lives
Architect: BKV Architects
Developer: Lutheran Social Services
Location: Minneapolis
http://www.centerforchanginglives.org/progress

East Village
Architect: Miller Hanson Partners
Developer: Aeon
Location: Minneapolis
http://www.aeonmn.org/East_Village.html

Jackson Street Village
Architect: Cermak Rhoades Architects
Developer: RS Eden
Location: St. Paul
http://www.rseden.org/index.asp?Type=B_BASIC&SEC={1FDC2F4F-BE9D-437C-B880-0A880B39B2DC}

The Jourdain
Architect: UrbanWorks
Developer: Hope Community and Aeon
Location: Minneapolis
http://www.hope-community.org/RealEstate/phaseIIjordain

Ripley Gardens

Architect: LHB, Inc.
Developer: Aeon
Location: Minneapolis
http://www.lhbcorp.com/housing/ahpf1.html

St. Anthony Mills Apartments

Architect: Elness Swenson Graham Architects, Inc.
Developer: Brighton Development
Location: Minneapolis
http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/CPED/st_anthony_mills.asp

Van Cleve Development

Architect: UrbanWorks
Developer: PPL
Location: Minneapolis
http://www.vanclevedevelopment.com/plans.html#

The Wellstone

Architect: UrbanWorks
Developer: Hope Community and Aeon
Location: Minneapolis
http://www.hope-community.org/RealEstate/phaseIIIwellstone

Several suburban projects were mentioned including:

Belle Haven Townhomes

Architect: Cermak Rhoades Architects
Developer: RS Eden
Location: Princeton
http://www.cermakrhoades.com/bellehaven.html

Burnsville Heart of the City Townhomes

Architect: LHB, Inc.
Developer: Dakota County CDA
Location: Burnsville
http://www.lhbcorp.com/housing/ahpf2.html

Carbury Hills Townhomes

Architect: LHB, Inc.
Developer: Dakota County CDA
Location: Rosemount
http://www.dakotacda.org/townhome_program.htm

Clover Field Marketplace
Architect: UrbanWorks
Developer: Aeon
Location: Chaska
http://www.aeonmn.org/cloverfield.html

Emma's Place

Architect: Cermak Rhoades Architects
Developer: Emma Norton Services
Location: Maplewood
http://www.cermakrhoades.com/emmas_place.html

Linden Place Apartments

Architect: Miller Hanson Partners
Developer: PPL
Location: New Hope
http://www.ppl-inc.org/housing/unit/linden-place-apartments

Trails Edge Family Community
Architect: Pope Associates, Inc.
Developer: CommonBond Communities
Location: Maplewood
http://www.commonbond.org/findhousing/property_details.asp?id=100

Additional projects mentioned that serve specific population households were:

7th Landing

Architect: Cermak Rhoades Architects
Developer: RS Eden
Location: St. Paul
Serving: Homeless youth
Type of project: new construction
http://www.rseden.org/index.asp?Type=B_BASIC&SEC=
{CA9C0C20-52A8-49F0-80F6-540B94674F35}

Camden Apartments

Architect: Rapson and Associates
Developer: PPL
Location: Minneapolis
Serving: Long-term homelessness
Type of project: new construction
http://www.ppl-inc.org/housing/development/supportive-housing/camden-supportive-housing

Carty Heights

Architect: Trossen Wright Plutowski
Developer: Episcopal Homes
Location: St. Paul
Serving: Elders
Type of project: new construction
http://www.ehomesmn.org/CartyHeights.html

Heritage Park

Architect: Elness Swenson Graham Architects, Inc. (Phase 1 rental); LHB, Inc. (for sale component)
Developer: McCormack, Legacy (rental); Heritage Housing (for sale)
Location: Minneapolis
Serving: Rental, for sale, elders
Type of project: Mixed-use, mixed-income
http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/cped/heritage_park.asp

Kensington Park Condominiums and Townhomes

Architect: Elness Swenson Graham Architects, Inc.
Developer: The Cornerstone Group
Location: Richfield
Serving: Home buyers
Type of project: new construction
http://www.kensingtonpark.info/Default.htm

Kingsley Commons Special Needs Community

Architect: Miller Hanson Partners
Developer: CommonBond Communities
Location: Minneapolis
Serving: People with multiple sclerosis
Type of project: New construction
http://www.commonbond.org/findhousing/property_details.asp?id=57

Linden Park Condominiums

Architect: Miller Hanson Partners
Developer: PPL
Location: New Hope
Serving: Affordable condos
Type of project: New construction
http://www.lindenparkcondominiums.com/index.html

St. Barnabas Apartments

Architect: Cermak Rhoades Architects
Developer: Aeon
Location: Minneapolis
Serving: Homeless and at risk youth
Type of project: Rehabilitation
http://www.aeonmn.org/St_Barnabas_Apartments.html

Interview Questions

1. Design standards and development process:
   - Does your agency, or do you as an individual, follow a specific set of design standards in the production of multifamily affordable housing? This would include the aesthetics, functionality, and quality of the interior and exterior space. What are those design standards?
   - Does your agency follow a standard development process? For example, does the design of the project occur before or after funding has been secured?

2. When and how is design discussed when working with communities or municipalities?

3. Are you aware of any financial or technical resources that are available for improving the design of new or existing multi-family affordable housing?

4. What financial or technical barriers limit your ability to produce aesthetically and functionally pleasing design of multi-family affordable housing?

5. In thinking about the development process for multi-family affordable housing, what part of the process limits or frustrates the design outcome?
   - When design comes into the development process?
   - Resident needs or goals?
   - Neighborhood or community goals?
   - Site suitability?
   - Architect or architectural team?
   - Funding?
   - Material quality or costs?
   - Bidding results?
   - Construction?
   - Zoning and building requirements?
   - Other?

6. What percent of the total cost of a project goes toward design (architectural fees)?

7. What changes to the process would improve the design outcome?

8. What changes or opportunities in the process would create opportunities for greatly advancing affordable multi-family housing design?

9. Does residents' culture of origin influence design decisions?

10. What could the McKnight Foundation do to increase the level and opportunity for high quality affordable housing design?

11. Do any funders (public, private, or philanthropic) focus on design considerations when determining who they will fund?

12. Do you complete a post-occupancy evaluation (POE) on projects that you are involved in? Does the POE ask questions about the aesthetically and functionality of the development? Can we have an example copy of your POE questionnaire and results?

13. Please provide your education and career background.

14. In thinking about multi-family affordable housing projects built in the seven county metro area, which projects stand out in your mind as aesthetically and functionally pleasing. Why do those projects stand out?

Acknowledgments

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