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Building Memphis: Best Public / Private Project (small)

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From innovative conversion and renovation projects to the construction of large new facilities from the ground up, construction is a driving force in the Greater Memphis economy.

Memphis Business Journal is proud to highlight the best projects annually, and the finalists for this year's Building Memphis Awards are very impressive.

Below are the finalists for the Best Public / Private Project small category

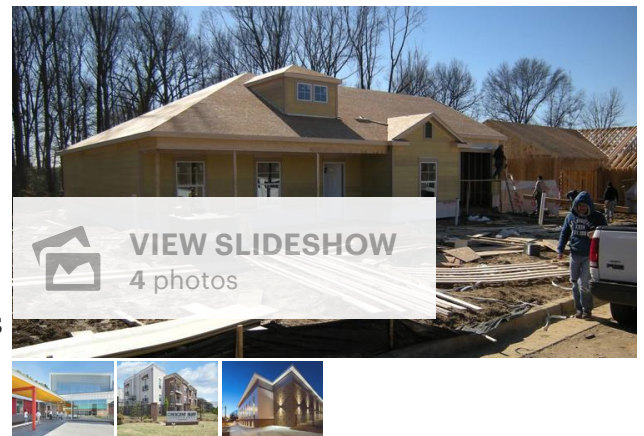
This program seeks to recognize all of the professionals who collaborate to make these projects successful.

A panel of independent judges considered numerous factors – from the functionality of design and attention to sustainability to how many jobs a project created – to select the winners in each category.

Building Memphis is presented by CB Richard Ellis Memphis and sponsored by Bass, Berry & Sims, Chuck Hutton Chevrolet, State Systems Inc., BOMA and Draper's Catering of Memphis.

CRESCENT BLUFF APARTMENTS

The Downtown residential market is growing hotter the further back the recession gets in Memphis' rearview mirror. In particular, the rental submarket is ablaze, with new projects going up all over the place.



Wolf River Bluffs

The only real downside to such a strong market is that barriers to entry have appeared for people with lower incomes.

There simply aren't many options for working class people who want to live Downtown.

Two developers who identified that need and came up with a plan to rectify it are Cary Rosenblum and Hunter Nelson – executives of Nashville-based Elmington Capital Group who formed TOV Virginia Partners LP to develop a property Downtown at the corner of Virginia Avenue and Florida Street.

The result is Crescent Bluff Apartments, a 72-unit community built with high-end finishes reminiscent of higher-end market rate Downtown apartments – but with an affordable sticker price.

"Our mission for the development was to utilize federal, local and private financial support to create a quality of housing typical of Class A apartment communities at a price point that is affordable for working families," says Rosenblum.

Before Crescent Bluff, the 4-acre city block saw commercial buildings from the 1880s through the 1990s before they were torn down and the property was left empty.

Rosenblum and Nelson were awarded Low Income Housing Tax Credits in 2012 to redevelop the property for affordable living.

Today, Crescent Bluff features 36 two-bedroom units and 36 three-bedroom units that run from 1,150 to 1,350 square feet and start at \$650/month. Other features include a

The hypothetical demand for affordable housing was proven, because Crescent Bluff was pre-leased with a waiting list before the project was even completed.

"The amenities and unit finishes include granite countertops, stainless appliances, 9-to-13-foot ceilings, tile showers, large spacious units and hardwood-like floors while offering a rental rate that is half of a typical comparable unit in the South Main district," Rosenblum says.

It worked well enough that a second phase was greenlit for an additional 172 units in a \$10 million investment.

"It was a true collaborative effort to bring the project to fruition," says Rosenblum.

MEMPHIS BUSINESS ACADEMY GYM

The school was simply getting too big for its square footage.

That was the problem confronted by Memphis Business Academy. The charter school formed in 2005 in Frayser had grown to accommodate nearly 900 students covering grades 6-12.

Memphis Business Academy works to combine business, economics and financial literacy into the core curriculum of Shelby County Schools. The charter school aims to prepare "young executives" for the real world, and to hopefully one day be able to contribute more to the local economy.

With an evolving need for better wellness facilities, Memphis Business Academy and its executive director, Anthony Anderson, commissioned Self Tucker Architects in 2012 to design a building that could hold the school's athletics activities.

The result is the 22,000-square-foot gym, with an elevated walking track on the mezzanine level, which was completed in time for the 2014-15 school year. It features an outdoor learning area, an outdoor play area with recycled rubber play surface – and tons of environmentally conscious amenities.

"At Self Tucker Architects, we firmly believe each building we design should enhance the quality of life of its occupants and enrich the architectural fabric of the community in which it is located," says Jimmie Tucker, principal with Self Tucker Architects. "Consequently, we were committed to achieving a new building that is aesthetically pleasing, well-planned and makes a positive statement for the Memphis Business Academy and the community of Frayser."

STA designed the building and worked with contractors Montgomery Martin and Bricks Inc. The pre-engineered/pre-fabricated structure was created to control costs without harming the aesthetic quality of the final product. The gym is far more than just what that sounds like, though. "The new facility is a safe haven for young people for academic, sports and other extracurricular activities," Tucker says.

SOULSVILLE CHARTER SCHOOL MULTIPURPOSE BUILDING

The Soulsville Charter School has become the hub of renewal for the neighborhood that surrounds it.

The school, which stands adjacent to the site of historic Stax Records, now the Stax Museum of American Soul Music, began with 60 sixth grade students in 2005 and has since grown to serve more than 500 students in sixth through 12th grade. That growth sparked the need for

new construction.

The school needed a new multipurpose building where its students can eat lunch, socialize and participate in sports. Before the new building, students ate lunch in their classrooms, and physical activity was highly limited.

As with any large education project, funding is key. The school began to raise money for the new building, but when a new FEMA grant became available, progress really began. The grant was to be awarded for the building of a community safe room, which could withstand a tornado or excessive flooding and be a place of safety for the surrounding communities in case of natural disasters.

"The big challenge was to design a storm shelter that looked like just another campus building," says Frank Ricks, principal of Looney Ricks Kiss, which designed the project. "Now, the structure can withstand an F5 tornado."

LRK architect Juan Sanford was forced to completely reconfigure the multipurpose building to fit the FEMA guidelines, but aside from the benefit to the school itself, the building now can serve the entire community in an emergency. With FEMA funding in tow, construction began in July 2013.

Soulsville's students now have three sports teams: girl's volleyball, girl's basketball and boy's basketball, and the new commercial kitchen has also significantly improved meals for the students. Previously, the school's lack of a kitchen forced the school system to drive delivery trucks every day to the school to deliver meals. Now, the school's cafeteria staff cooks on-site.

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