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Hillside Place Offers New Look and High Performance for Affordable Housing

Dietz & Company Architects' Design Challenges the Housing Development Stereotype

Springfield, Mass. – The recent completion of Hillside Place ushered in a new era of sleek and sustainable mixed income housing at Village Hill in Northampton. Hillside Place is part of a master planned community of affordable and market rate housing mixed with commercial space at the former site of the historic Northampton State Hospital.

Marc Sternick, AIA, LEED AP and vice president of Dietz & Company Architects, was the architect for Hillside Place. This \$6 million project consists of six new buildings that total 40,800 square feet and house 40 units in a combination of town houses and flats. The designs feature one, two and three bedroom units with open floor plans and large windows for natural light and ventilation.

But the significance of Hillside Place reaches well beyond aesthetics. The high performance of these buildings is critical to their sustainable mission. EnergyStar® certified, Hillside Place features one of the largest arrays of roof-mounted photovoltaic panels on any affordable housing project in the region. With a 43.4 kW capacity, these panels provide a portion of the overall electricity to reduce operating costs and lower carbon dioxide emissions.

Other energy efficient details include dense-packed cellulose insulation, high-quality windows, airtight construction and EnergyStar-rated appliances, space and water heating systems. Dietz & Company Architects also used green materials wherever possible, such as fiber cement siding and wood laminate floors. Building materials and finishes containing formaldehyde or volatile organic compounds (VOCs) were avoided. According to Sternick, “With an EnergyStar® home energy rating system (HERS) of 40, these units will save renters 60 percent on energy costs in comparison to the average home..”

Buildings were sited to create both private and open public areas that will foster a sense of community in this pedestrian oriented neighborhood. Sternick also designed the Hilltop Apartments and Ice Pond subdivision during Phase I of the Village Hill master plan. “Our goal,” says Sternick “is to develop a new look for sustainable, affordable housing that people can embrace in their neighborhoods.”

According to Northampton Mayor Clare Higgins, “Hillside Place and Hilltop Apartments create community at Village Hill. They contribute essential affordable housing units for our community, blending the historic architecture of the site with the new village it is

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becoming.” She adds, “And the buildings also incorporate sustainable design features. Combine this with pedestrian and bike paths connecting to permanently preserved open space, and to our nearby downtown, and we have a model of truly sustainable design!”

Dietz & Company Architects

Dietz & Company Architects, Inc., one of the largest full-service firms in Western Massachusetts, is a woman-owned business that opened its doors in 1985. Areas of practice include large-scale housing, education and healthcare institutions, commercial projects, historic preservation, LEED design services and high-performance buildings.

Since its inception, the firm has been designing energy efficient housing projects throughout Massachusetts. Dietz & Company Architects is committed to Smart Growth housing, which needs fewer resources to build and maintain than conventional housing. At the same time, the firm focuses on building affordability and better housing for all.

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* The LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Green Building Rating System™ is a voluntary, consensus-based national standard for developing high-performance, sustainable buildings.