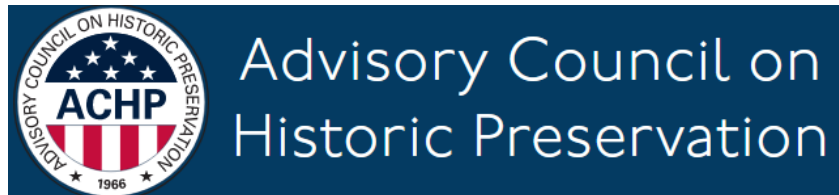


<https://www.achp.gov/news/rehabilitation-historic-milwaukee-soldiers-home-veterans-housing-honored-achp-and-hud>



## Rehabilitation of Historic Milwaukee Soldiers Home into Veterans Housing Honored by the ACHP and HUD

Wednesday, December 15, 2021



*Dale Darrow for HUD, Dr. Dan Zomcheck for Zablocki VAMC, Fernando Escobar for WHEDA, Mayor Tom Barrett, Jim Cunningham for HUD, and Jonathan Beck for the Alexander Company*

[View Commemorative Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bqL2syK41yk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bqL2syK41yk)

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) today announced the Milwaukee Soldiers Home, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, as the recipient of the 2021 ACHP/HUD Secretary’s Award for Excellence in Historic Preservation.

This annual award recognizes developers, organizations, and agencies for their success in advancing the goals of historic preservation, while at the same time providing affordable housing and/or expanded economic opportunities for low- and moderate-income families and individuals.

ACHP Vice Chairman Jordan Tannenbaum led the award ceremony along with Arthur Jemison, HUD Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Community Planning and Development, during the virtual ACHP Fall Business Meeting. James Cunningham, HUD Deputy Regional Administrator for the Midwest, presented the award at an in-person ceremony at the Soldiers Home, part of the Clement J. Zablocki VA Medical Center. Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett, appearing for the Housing Authority of the City of Milwaukee, and Jonathan Beck, development project manager for The Alexander Company, accepted the crystal awards.

“This extraordinary project was a true labor of love that brought together a community for the benefit of America’s veterans,” ACHP Vice Chairman Jordan Tannenbaum said. “The goal was not only to provide quality housing for veterans but to retain the historic integrity of the buildings, right down to rehabilitating the original pool table and the elaborate mailboxes in the post office. This project is a shining example of collaboration, creativity, and perseverance in preserving significant historic buildings.”

“This year, HUD, in partnership with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, is proud to present the ACHP/HUD Secretary’s Award for Excellence in Historic Preservation to the Milwaukee Soldiers Home for their work in providing affordable housing to our nation’s veterans and their families,” HUD Secretary Marcia L. Fudge said. “Homelessness is a major crisis facing our veterans, and because of this work, more than 100 veterans and their families in Milwaukee will have access to a safe, quality, and affordable home.”

The Milwaukee Soldiers Home project, completed in March 2021, included the rehabilitation of six buildings into 101 housing units for veterans and their families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Established in 1867, the Milwaukee Soldiers Home is one of the earliest branches of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, created by Congress and President Abraham Lincoln to care for volunteer Union soldiers disabled during the Civil War. The Milwaukee Soldiers Home is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is a National Historic Landmark.

In 2010, when efforts began to find a use for six historic buildings on campus, the most prominent building, known as Old Main, had been vacant for 20 years and was in disrepair. The other historic buildings included the Administration Building, the Catholic Chaplain’s Quarters, and three duplexes. In 2011, the National Trust for Historic Preservation named the Soldiers

Home to its 11 Most Endangered Historic Places list and elevated it to a National Treasure in 2012.

Ultimately, through consultation, it was determined these buildings could be reused through the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Enhanced-Use Lease Program, which allows private developers to lease and rehabilitate underutilized VA property for veteran-related purposes. A Community Advisory Council of veterans and related organizations met regularly to explore preservation solutions. Committed stakeholder engagement ensured public involvement throughout the process.

Under the leadership of real estate developer The Alexander Company, many partners contributed to save the Soldiers Home. VA was involved in all aspects of the project and continues to provide supportive services. The Housing Authority of the City of Milwaukee is a co-lessee and operator; National Equity Fund is a Federal Tax Credit Investor Member; the Department of Housing and Urban Development provides HUD-VASH vouchers; and the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority provided many financing options.

The Alexander Company creatively financed the \$44 million project through use of no less than 13 different capital sources, including federal and state historic tax credits. Many other partners, including more than 650 individuals and organizations, donated to the project through a fundraising campaign.

“This incredible preservation success demonstrates the benefits of historic restoration and what can be achieved through a successful public-private partnership,” said Joe Alexander, president of The Alexander Company. “It serves as proof that strategic partnerships, visionary leadership, and creative funding cannot just save buildings, but tackle homelessness, ignite a community, and serve as a national model.”

All stone, brick, tin ceiling and wall tiles, and historic doors and windows were repaired and restored. Slate was sourced from a quarry in Vermont to match the original slate roof tiles. The wood and terrazzo floors were repaired and refinished, and matching recycled historic wood flooring was used in select areas. The wide central corridor of Old Main and the Administration Building's tower clock were restored to their historic appearance.

Historic preservation, adaptive reuse, affordable housing, community engagement, and economic development were the pillars of the redevelopment project.

See gallery next page:



*Jon Beck, Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett, and Jim Cunningham*



*Dale Darrow, Dr. Dan Zomchek, and Fernando Escobar*



*Crystal Award*