

North Philly Rising...

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CICADA ARCHITECTURE PLANNING, INC.

We specialize in projects for education, arts & culture and community

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Revitalizing North Central Philadelphia



North Philly Rising

Much has evolved over the years in North Philadelphia where Gilded-Age opulence and industry yielded to factory closings, poverty and crime. Making it great again is possible, but not easy. And so the Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA) pushes on with another herculean effort to revitalize a formerly forlorn neighborhood east of Temple University. The North Central Phase II rental housing development will be built by **Shoemaker/Synterra** with **CICADA Architecture/Planning, Inc.**, as the designer.



Filling In

This “infill” project weaves surviving remnants of the past with today’s gritty reality into a tapestry of future rebirth, safety and economic stimulation. Twenty-nine vacant parcels on nine, ultra-urban blocks will be transformed into 89 homes for families in 53 new rental buildings. The new buildings fit within a mix of occupied older rowhomes, vacant lots, other newly developed homes, playgrounds, churches, small businesses and parking lots. It’s like piecing together a giant puzzle... with complications. Conditions on the scene range from hazardous materials from former factories, to organic debris and as much as 18 feet of urban fill. Working from a preliminary concept by KSK Architects, CICADA’s team tackled the daunting task of meeting with project stakeholders, refining the design and fleshing out the myriad details and approvals.



Measuring Up

Because the project is funded by PHA and HUD (U.S. Housing and Urban Development), stringent requirements impact each new piece of the puzzle. This makes things more interesting for Project Manager Daryn Edwards as he shepherds the tangle of parcels through reviews by City Zoning, Planning Commission, PHA and HUD. Other moving parts were juggled... alleys were moved, lot ownerships were sorted out, a few squatters were relocated. The goal: residences that meet contemporary standards for size and accessibility within a re-established rowhouse rhythm.

Fitting In

New rental housing ranges from single-family townhouses to larger, multi-family buildings that are accessible and **visitable** with community rooms to activate streets and discourage crime. CICADA worked with PHA and a tenants' council to design urban, contemporary façades that look great next to existing rowhomes. Brick in varying earth-toned hues is complemented by angular siding panels and a sleek mix of window shapes. Fenced-in backyards will have lawns or concrete patios. On the inside, bedrooms, living rooms and spacious kitchens with modern amenities are brightened by daylight streaming in through windows on all levels.



Rising Up

Because of the project's enormity, construction will be accomplished in waves during 18 months beginning for those who will live in this newly energized and vibrant community rising out of the blight of the past. And, it's an opportunity for CICADA to deliver, on a grand scale, the promise of everyday, good design for everybody.
