

Renaissance Veterans Apartments at Fitzsimons
Category 1 – Contribution to the Community
Contractor - Alliance Construction Solutions

According to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), national homelessness among veterans has decreased nearly 50% since 2010. A notable achievement, without a doubt, but this still leaves 37,085 veterans homeless each year, according to the most recent January, 2019 “Point-in-Time” count conducted by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). In an effort to further combat this issue, organizations continue to partner on programs designed to provide housing and supportive services. One such organization leading the charge is Colorado Coalition for the Homeless (CCH), whose most recent endeavor was completed on the Fitzsimons Campus in Aurora.

Renaissance Veterans Apartments at Fitzsimons was completed in November 2020 and began welcoming residents in January, 2021. According to a report by Affordable Housing Finance, “The opening of the Renaissance Veterans Apartment represents the 18th development created by the organization and its development subsidiary, Renaissance Housing Development Corp., over the past 25 years, representing over 2,000 housing units, making the Coalition the largest supportive housing developer and operator in Colorado.” Renaissance Veterans Apartments at Fitzsimons provides 60 units of supportive housing for veterans and their families experiencing or at-risk of homelessness. Additionally, the complex provides a wide variety of amenities, all designed to provide resources and opportunities for the residents. Among these amenities are supportive services, including primary care and behavioral health care, through an on-site medical exam room and case management offices. Staff will be able to support residents with obtaining medical care, behavioral health care, substance treatment services, peer support, job training, and employment opportunities.

Renaissance Veterans Apartments at Fitzsimons is a testament to how a team mentality can ensure success. This project required extensive coordination between numerous stakeholders, and without the commitment from everyone involved, the project would never have come to fruition. The project received CHFA tax credit funding, as well as additional funding from affordable housing funding sources, including Colorado Division of Housing, City of Aurora,

Federal Home Loan Bank of Topeka, Home Depot, National Affordable Housing Trust and Bank of the West. Mercy Loan Fund, Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS), Fitzsimons Redevelopment Authority, and Department of Veterans Affairs were also partnering organizations. The housing development sits on land owned by the Colorado Department of Human Services, who donated the land for the project through a ground lease. Alliance Construction Solutions (Alliance) worked diligently with the architect, Studio Completiva, and the owner to design and construct a building that provided the greatest value to future residents without sacrificing schedule, budget, or quality.

Renaissance Veterans Apartments at Fitzsimons has had a tremendous impact on the community. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, Colorado only has 31 available and affordable rental units per 100 extremely low-income households. Furthermore, the 2020 “Point-In-Time” count for the Denver Metro Area revealed that at least 627 veterans experienced homelessness on a single night in January. Not only does Renaissance Veterans Apartments at Fitzsimons combat this shortage by providing much needed affordable housing to veterans, the project also offers bonding and community for residents through its community garden, kitchen and cooking classes, library, workshops, and other offerings, which have helped to improve self-sufficiency and quality of life for residents. The project has the added effect of reducing the strain on shelters, detention centers, emergency rooms, and other emergency services. The building itself has enhanced the Fitzsimons Campus by replacing an empty parking lot and blending beautifully with the existing architecture on the campus. Lastly, Governor Jared Polis spoke at the virtual groundbreaking for Veterans Renaissance Apartments at Fitzsimons to congratulate all parties for their efforts to bring the project to fruition and reiterate the importance of affordable housing in shaping the future of Denver. In this way, the project has served as a symbol for hope and the power of community in creating meaningful and long-lasting change.

The origin of the Fitzsimons Campus dates back to 1917. A U.S. Surgeon General’s officer by the name of Colonel George E Bushnell visited Denver in hopes of finding a location for a military hospital that could serve soldiers returning from World War I that were suffering from respiratory and pulmonary problems. The land was purchased in May, 1918 by the Denver Civic

and Commercial Association and by October, 2018, Army Hospital #21 was dedicated and the first patient was treated. In 1920, Army Hospital #21 was renamed Fitzsimons General in honor of Lt. William T. Fitzsimons, an Army medical officer who was the first official military death in WWI. In that same year, Fitzsimons became the Army's sole tuberculosis hospital. Over time, the hospital expanded to include military barracks and housing for staff at the hospital and in the VA building that still stand today. Given this rich and vibrant history, Alliance Construction Solutions and the design team at Studio Completiva had the unique challenge of constructing a modern building that was centrally located between these mid-century structures and complemented the existing architecture. The team proudly tackled this challenged- the majority brick structure, (featuring four different types of brick) with metal accents will stand the test of time both structurally and aesthetically, all while providing the necessary care and housing for the veterans that live there.

Alliance was a committed partner throughout the project. The team was determined to meet the budget that CCH laid out without sacrificing quality of design. This was achieved by offering ownership a range of value engineering opportunities including a lighting package, HVAC systems changes, and flooring and finishes options. Alliance also worked to provide as many opportunities to minority and disadvantaged businesses local to the community as possible. The team was able to get several of these subcontractors on board and with exceptionally successful results. Finally, Alliance coordinated with CCH to determine a gift donation that would best serve future residents. Ultimately, Alliance gave each resident a \$100 gift card to help get them settled into their homes.

Alliance integrated safety into every aspect of this project, as the firm does on each and every project. This included a site-specific safety plan, regular safety meetings and toolbox talks, third-party safety inspections, and pre-planning for potential hazards. Consequently, there were zero construction accidents or loss-time accidents over the twelve-month construction schedule. In essence, Alliance was able to create a safe working environment while maintaining the schedule required by CCH.

ACS was also able to minimize the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic by acting quickly and efficiently to provide a safe workplace for its employees and subcontractors. Specific actions Alliance took included scheduling changes to maintain separation of work crews, enforcement of mask policies, daily temperature and symptom check-ins, and the creation of a material procurement and tracking logs to ensure that products were not delayed due to the pandemic. This was all done to ensure the safety and protection of the workers on-site, and to ensure Alliance could complete the project for the originally planned opening date.









