

From the Washington Business Journal:
<https://www.bizjournals.com/washington/news/2021/04/22/best-redevelopment-of-2020.html>

Best Redevelopment of 2020: Carpenter's Shelter and The Bloom at Braddock

Apr 22, 2021, 7:30pm EDT

It's not often that a real estate deal feels a little bit like Hollywood magic, particularly in 2020.

But when Carpenter's Shelter and the Alexandria Housing Development Corp. cut the ribbon — via video, of course — on a glittering 97-unit affordable housing complex built above an equally sparkling 60-bed homeless shelter in December, you had to wonder just how they pulled off that trick.



EMAN MOHAMMED

Carpenter's Shelter is located at 900 N. Henry St. in Alexandria. It was redeveloped as a 60-bed shelter with 97 apartments on top.

To hear Shannon Steene, executive director of Carpenter's Shelter, tell it, the journey from a decommissioned motor vehicles bureau to temporary quarters at Landmark Mall to its new permanent, custom-built home just north of Old Town Alexandria was "sort of one interesting twist after another, involving Hollywood film crews, carnivals and Amazon delivery trucks."

"It was full of some quirky storylines," Steene says. "We joke that we should write a book about it, but no one would believe it."

The original Carpenter's Shelter opened in a Catholic church in 1988 and moved into a donated warehouse the same year. In 1999, the nonprofit organization acquired the former motor vehicles site and quickly transformed it into a functional shelter for the roughly 600 chronically homeless individuals who cycle through each year.

It wasn't perfect, but it suited its purpose and, more important, it was home. The organization owned the property outright, guaranteeing it space near the Braddock Road Metro station regardless of what fortune might ultimately bring the area.

As these things go — in Hollywood, at least — fortune brought Potomac Yard's boom and then Amazon.com Inc.'s HQ2 and a Virginia Tech campus to that side of the Potomac River, pumping up the value of the 36,000 square feet of land sitting beneath the outdated shelter.

"We knew that one of our greatest assets was the property we owned," Steene says. "It was a safe and suitable neighborhood, but the building had lived its life, and we knew a higher and better purpose was there."

Enter Jon Frederick, stage right, president of the Alexandria Housing Development Corp., a nonprofit developer created by the city council.

Over the years, for-profit residential developers had been unable to strike a deal with the shelter because they couldn't

make the rents pencil out, Frederick says. But because AHDC planned to build low-income and affordable housing, it would be able to claim \$22.5 million in tax credits.

The deal was struck: Carpenter's Shelter would contribute its land to the \$52 million project; in exchange, AHDC would build a new 17,000-square-foot shelter full of support services and amenities for shelter clients. Carpenter's would own that part of the development outright, along with eventual ownership of 10 of the 97 affordable units in The Bloom at Braddock, a six-story apartment building to be built atop the shelter.

Carpenter's has the right to buy those 10 studio apartments for \$1 at the end of 15 years. In the meantime, the units are designated as "permanent supportive housing" for the region's most challenged residents, those who need ongoing services and counseling to establish a viable path forward. In addition to shelter and sustenance, the new facility offers counseling services, computer and laundry facilities, an on-site medical clinic, expanded winter sheltering and new offices for the shelter staff. Both organizations share access to an outdoor playground and a produce garden.

During the 29-month construction process, the shelter moved to the second floor of the Macy's in the defunct Landmark Mall. From its perch there, Steene and his crew watched an HBO Films crew prep extras for shooting "The Plot Against America" scenes in downtown D.C., and were entertained by the carnival crews and Amazon drivers who congregated in the parking lots.

As the ribbon was finally cut on the new shelter and the confetti guns were popping, Steene was caught on camera dancing a full-bodied jiggy jig of joy.

"Our lineage is a church basement, two warehouses, a DMV and a defunct shopping mall, so this feels like a dream come true," Steene says. "It was a little bit of serendipity and a little bit of Carpenter's magic, but we pulled it off, and we're grateful to AHDC for walking this path with us."

BEST REDEVELOPMENT: Carpenter's Shelter and The Bloom at Braddock Apartments

Location: 900 N. Henry St., Alexandria

Developer: Alexandria Housing Development Corp.

Development partner: Carpenter's Shelter

Size: 163,168 square feet; 60 beds in shelter; 97 apartments

Project cost: \$51.9 million

Delivery date: December 2020

FINALISTS

Takoma Theatre

Location: 6833 Fourth St. NW

Developer: Rock Creek Property Group

Architect: Cunningham & Quill

Interior architect: Clockwork Architecture & Design

General contractor: Silva Construction

Tenant: Children's National Hospital

Size: 23,000 square feet

Project cost: \$20 million

Delivery date: June 2020

About the deal: In 2020, Rock Creek Property Group delivered its renovation of D.C.'s Takoma Theatre. The 1920s-era building was used for film and then, later, performing arts, according to the D.C. Preservation League. Rock Creek transformed the vacant building, long in disrepair, into a commercial property that now includes leases to Children's National Hospital for a pediatric behavioral health and medicine facility. Retail spaces have also been leased to coffee roaster Lost Sock Roasters and Turning Natural cafe.

Why it matters: After the Takoma Theatre Arts Project ended its lease at the theater in 2005, the historic building had remained vacant, with raze permits denied by the Historic Preservation Review Board, according to the Preservation League. Rock Creek's proposal to develop a commercial

space won approval, as Children's National's innovative space takes advantage of the renewed building's new design features, including added skylights, windows and soaring, 20-foot ceilings.

Riggs Washington D.C.

Location: 900 F St. NW

Developers: Global Holdings, Lore Group

Size: 181 rooms

Project cost: Not disclosed

Opening date: Feb. 3, 2020

About the deal: London hospitality company Lore Group entered the D.C. market in 2020, co-developing the Riggs Washington D.C. hotel with Global Holdings. The team took more than a year to transform the former Courtyard by Marriott in Penn Quarter, which had been housed in the historic Riggs National Bank property. The massive renovation added a new lobby restaurant and basement cocktail bar in the old bank vault. Also added: a new rooftop events space with 2,500 square feet of interior and 1,500 square feet of outdoor space. Room count dropped from 188 to 181 during the overhaul, accounting for the building's 15 new suites.=

Why it matters: Lore Group is the name behind some of Europe's top hotels, and the decision for that brand to invest in the District as its first U.S. market is noteworthy. The renovation seemed to have paid off, at least in accolades: A year after its opening, Riggs received a gold badge and landed at No. 141 on U.S. News and World Report's annual ranking of the top hotels in the country. Gold badges go to the top 10% of hotels in the U.S.