



Committing to Best Practices for Quality Homes

“The seamless integration between development, construction and property management enhances the quality of our projects. So when we make decisions, we really make the 50-year decision for products that last.”

JOHN SHAY
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT
OF CONSTRUCTION
FOR CORVIAS

For active duty soldiers, there is no such thing as part-time service. It is a lifestyle commitment for enlisted personnel and their families. Over the last 17 years, the Services, with authorization from Congress' Residential Communities Initiative (RCI), have made a commitment to provide safe, attractive, affordable, modern communities and amenities for soldiers and their families. However, planning, funding and implementing the nearly constant cycles of renovation necessary to keep homes in large-scale communities up-to-date also requires commitment. Which is why, in 1996 RCI opened the door for partnerships with private companies that can dedicate resources, expertise and capital to long-term housing projects. Since its inception, the program has been a success, transform-

ing dilapidated neighborhoods into thriving communities. As private companies take on the responsibilities of managing military housing, they build relationships with vendors and service providers that continually streamline the building and renovation processes. Along the way, best practices for specification, application and use of materials are established. In the end, a higher quality of lifestyle is being created for service members and their families.

PRIVATE/ PUBLIC PARTNERSHIP

There are many privatization companies that work diligently to define and standardize best practices for sustainable military housing across a broad spectrum of fronts. From creating walkable/bikeable communities to installing high-efficiency appliances, military housing companies are creating communities that help

soldiers to “Live Army Green.” While the homes themselves play an important role in conscientious development, so does the construction process. With many thousands of homes being constantly built and renovated, what materials are specified, and how they are applied, provide builders with opportunities to reduce waste on a grand scale. It is impossible to record every best practice in place for all housing projects, but examining a single strategy from one company provides insight into how best practices run throughout the process. Corvias Military Living, the privatization company formerly known as Picerne Military Housing, provides a good example. As a vertically-integrated group of companies, Corvias implements conscientious strategies that extend from the conceptualization stage through the logistics of construction and maintenance. “The seamless integration between development, construction and property management enhances the quality of our projects,” says John Shay, senior vice president of construction for Corvias. “So when we make decisions, we really make the 50-year decision for products that last.”

LARGE SCALE, HIGH QUALITY

Over the past 14 years, Corvias has partnered with the U.S. military to build, renovate and manage more than 21,000 homes and 30 million square feet of space on more than 25,000 acres of land. However, housing is not just about numbers, it is about the people who are committed to building quality. Even large scale projects function on relationships and trust. Zooming in to look at the work being done at one installation provides a sense of the cooperative efforts and details that makes a house a home.

Fort Sill is located in Lawton, OK and is a designated National Historic Landmark. It is the only active Army installation of all the forts on the Southern Plains built during the Indian Wars. 888 of the existing 1,411 houses were in desperate need of renovation. “We’ve been up here for about two years,” says Steve Ingersoll, director of strategic accounts for Armstrong Cabinetry, the vendor that supplies and installs cabinetry and countertops for Corvias at Fort Sill, as well as many other military housing projects. “Unless they are historic buildings, the existing homes are transformed through renovation,” says Ingersoll. “There are another

2-3 years projected for the initial full build out at Fort Sill because Corvias is also in the process of building 432 new homes and state-of-the-art Community Centers.”

Ingersoll uses materials specified by Corvias’ in-house design team. “Our ultimate goal is to ensure that our families and fellow team members find their respective living and working environments to be comfortable, functional and appealing,” says Kerrie Iemma, senior vice president of design with Corvias Group. “In a nutshell, we are a support function because we branch across every business line to ensure that all our military posts are aligned with prescribed standards and specs. Then we tie into regional influences for exteriors and community spaces.” Part of that support function is to make certain that homes are available and complete when they are expected. “Basically, they are turning the rehab units in 40 days,” says Ingersoll. “Once they get the notification from the sales and leasing office that a home is becoming vacant, they only have it under renovation for 45 days. So the companies that do business with Corvias either have to have product in stock, or have very short lead times for timely turn around and minimal waste.”

According to Ingersoll, an average of 10 medium renovations, 6 historic renovations and 18 new homes are completed monthly at Fort Sill.

In addition to being readily available, the materials that go into the homes on Fort Sill must also be of a high quality that will last through a typical eight to ten year life cycle. Armstrong supplies the cabinetry built from renewable wood. Engineered materials, supplied by Wilsonart, offer great durability and long life cycles. High Pressure Laminate (HPL) contains recycled materials, while solid surface is both repairable and renewable. They offer great durability and a long life cycle. Designating reliable suppliers that can commit to a partnership is an important practice. “HPL, in general is a great product,” says Ingersoll. “But really, at the end of the day, if everything is on a level playing field, Wilsonart provides the best service. They are very responsive as far as taking care of us as their customer, but they also take care of our end user.”

project:
Corvias Military Housing, Fort Sill

location:
Lawton, Oklahoma

architects:
Corvias Military Housing

Wilsonart® Laminates:
Natural Nebula, Silicon EV

Wilsonart® Solid Surface:
Khaki Brown Tempest



“Our ultimate goal is to ensure that our families and fellow team members find their respective living and working environments to be comfortable, functional and appealing.”

KERRIE IEMMA
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF DESIGN
WITH CORVIAS GROUP

“But really, at the end of the day, if everything is on a level playing field, Wilsonart provides the best service. They are very responsive as far as taking care of us as their customer, but they also take care of our end user.”

STEVE INGERSOLL
DIRECTOR OF STRATEGIC ACCOUNTS
FOR ARMSTRONG CABINERY



Considering the scope of the projects managed by Corvias, dependability is crucial for vendors and service providers. “The team at Wilsonart just gets it done, day in and day out. And they have for years. We don’t have clients waiting for them to get back to us,” says Ingersoll. “If I ask them to do something, I can cross it off my list and not have to follow up. That is big because spending time chasing other subs down can eat through your day.”

HOMES SWEET HOMES

The other aspect that Corvias takes into consideration is that while they are indeed managing large communities for military installations, they are still building homes, and those homes should feel, well homey. Although military families sometimes move through installations frequently, Corvias’ designers and community planners are dedicated to creating a comfortable lifestyle for residents. “Two of the things that are very important to our designs are that they are consistent across installations and in alignment with rank,” says Iemma. “When soldiers PCS (receive orders for a Permanent Change of Station) we want all the interiors to look the same. So one of the best practices we developed is to have relationships with select manufacturers. That helps us to provide predictable amenities for different ranks, and it also benefits when purchasing materials.”

Part of that is creating designs that are in sync with the structure of military culture. While all homes are safe and comfortable, the standard of size and finishes reflect the soldier’s rank. For example, entry-level cabinetry may include 30-inch upper cabinets with Armstrong’s Siena™ Birch picture frame doors, while cabinetry for the upper echelon is 42-inches and finished with full maple overlay. The same holds true for countertops; ranks JNCO receive Wilsonart® Laminate in [Natural Nebula](#) and SNCO/CGO receive the [Silicon EV](#) design. On the higher end, ranks FGO are appointed with Wilsonart® Solid Surface [Khaki Brown Tempest](#). This sort of attention to detail reinforces the structure that is the traditional foundation of the military lifestyle.

Beyond making the commitment to develop, construct, manage and maintain physical edifices, Corvias is dedicated to building communities where residents enjoy quality of life and a sense of belonging. This includes such amenities as family support services, pools with lifeguards, playgrounds, bark parks and Community Centers where activities and events are held. “Through the

process of development, construction and management we are always mindful of the end user, our military families,” says Iemma. “We develop our design and construction practices so that we can give our residents something they can live in and use and be proud of. We take a lot of pride in that. We are not just building homes, we are building communities, and that feels great for all of us involved.” At every level, from the Services to private management group to subcontractor to supplier, trusted relationships and dedication to quality are the best practices for providing safe, attractive, modern homes to military members committed to serving our great country.

At every level, from the Services to private management group to subcontractor to supplier, trusted relationships and dedication to quality are the best practices for providing safe, attractive, modern homes to military members committed to serving our great country.