



7933 Tree Lane

Madison, WI

Architecture

Completed July 1, 2018

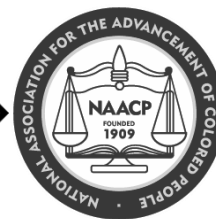
<https://www.buildordie.com/7933-tree-lane>

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NOMA-NAACP-SEED Awards

Based on common foundations and a shared vision, NOMA, NAACP, and the SEED Network announced the [2020 Awards for Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion](#) (JEDI) in design, architecture, and land development. Seven projects were selected through a competitive process and by a distinguished jury. This case study profiles one of the winning projects.

About the National Organization of Minority Architects

The National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA) mission is to champion diversity within the design professions by promoting the excellence, community engagement, and professional development of its members. NOMA is committed to creating a pipeline to the architecture profession to a more diverse spectrum of students and cultivate a more inclusive profession that reflects the communities served by design: all communities. As architects, we acknowledge that our professional duty is to protect the health, safety and welfare of the public and as NOMA members, we seek to fulfill this duty by ensuring that we help to facilitate diverse teams that can optimally address the needs of increasingly more diverse communities. Our signature annual event is our national conference that attracts students and professionals from nearly every corner of the building industry to converge, exchange ideas, network and support one another professionally to create a better build environment for everyone.

About the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

The mission of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is to secure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights in order to eliminate race-based discrimination and ensure the health and well-being of all persons. Environmental injustice, including the proliferation of climate change, has a disproportionate impact on communities of color and low-income communities. The NAACP Environmental and Climate Justice Program supports community leadership in addressing this human and civil rights issue. With the launch of the Centering Equity in the Sustainable Building Sector (CESBS) Initiative, the NAACP seeks to universalize access to safe, affordable, healthy, energy-efficient, regenerative, and resilient buildings for all people.

About the SEED Network

Established in 2005, the Social Economic Environmental Design (SEED) Network provides a common standard to guide, evaluate and measure the social, economic, and environmental impact of design. SEED is premised on the belief that design can play a vital role in the most critical issues that face communities and individuals, in crisis and in everyday challenges. To accomplish this, the SEED process guides professionals to work alongside locals who know their community and its needs. This practice of “trusting the local” is increasingly recognized as a highly effective way to sustain the health and longevity of a place or a community as it develops.

Award Jury

Carl Anthony, Architect, author and urban / suburban / regional design strategist

Kim Dowdell AIA, NOMA, NCARB, LEED AP BD+C, 2019-2020 National President of NOMA

Maya Henderson, Sustainability Professional

Christopher Lee, AIA, Architect, Mark Cavagneo Associates

Tiffany Mayhew, NOMA

Marquis Miller, Chief Diversity Officer, City of Chicago, Office of the Mayor

Jacqui Patterson, Senior Director of Environmental and Climate Justice at the NAACP

Paloma Pavel, President of Earth House Center

Laura Shipman, Director of Community Development and Planning, One Treasure Island

Jimmie Tucker FAIA NOMA LEED AP, Managing Principal, Self + Tucker Architects

Barbara Brown Wilson, Associate Professor, Author, University of Virginia

How would you know if a project supports JEDI?

Justice: “A project must first be grounded in truth about the most vulnerable and the historically disenfranchised for the geographic location of the project. Second, the project must articulate and clearly document the evidence of historically-biased decisions and resulting impact until today... Last, the project must visually, numerically and geographically demonstrate the setting of a foundation that rectifies or acknowledges the past and provides a permanent institutional and architectural grounding for a new emergent future.”

Equity: “It should emphasize it’s barrier-free design with regard to physical, moral, financial, and ethical boundaries.”

Diversity: “The project’s design, construction, and operations teams, as well as occupants, are representative of the larger community (at the appropriate scale, such as neighborhood, city, state, etc.) and do not uphold disparities in access to opportunity.”

Inclusion: “Inclusion is not just a numbers game, but should clearly show an understanding of multiple perspectives and how they are incorporated and infused together. It may be a response to preexisting tensions that somehow creates a solution, or a space to develop a solution, to opposing viewpoints.”

To view even more reflections on the definitions of JEDI, visit [the summary](#) of survey responses from NOMA, NAACP, and SEED Network members.

Executive Summary

In 2015, Heartland Housing and YWCA of Madison answered the city's second RFP as part of the Homeless Services Consortium of Dane County's Community Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness. The plan takes a "Housing First" approach, placing "homeless families and individuals in permanent housing as quickly as possible," then providing supportive services to support growth, quality of life, and self-sufficiency. Valerio Dewalt Train joined this design team as an experienced contributor to the creation of multi-family housing.

Engagement of community partners played a crucial role in making sure that the project could successfully serve its future residents. The team worked closely with the local Alderman to participate in public meetings, and held design conferences with citizens of the YWCA homeless shelter to better understand personal challenges.

The 1.3 acre project site is located within an established middle-class neighborhood with easy-access to community resources. While the shape of the building is influenced by the natural site restrictions and required codes, the form and material attributes emulate the characteristics of a typical Wisconsin neighborhood: pitched rooflines, clapboard siding, window shape, and color palette.

The 60,000 sf building is organized around the main entry and support staff offices. The front and center location of these services seek to forge friendly relationships and encourage engagement. The main circulation stair is generously sized and sculptural to encourage use and to promote health and community amongst residents. Each floor is distinguished through playfully colored finishes. The 45 apartments range from 2-4 bedrooms. Large windows let light into the living spaces and fully equipped kitchens are open in plan. In-unit appliances, sustainable and healthy materials, and high-quality finishes provide the comfort and durability that a family can be proud to call their own. Building amenities including a fitness center, computer lab, bike storage, and library act as a continuation of this living space.

Watch their story!



Who are the communities involved in and impacted by the project?

7933 Tree Lane Apartments are located in the Walnut Grove district, on the west side of Madison, Wisconsin, in an established residential and amenity-rich neighborhood.

	City of Madison, WI (per 2010 census)	Walnut Grove District (per 2010 census)	Tree Lane Housing (2019)
Owner-occupied residences	49%	50%	89% (40 of 45 units) designated for families experiencing homelessness, rent is proportionate to income
Average value of residence per square foot	\$165	\$137	\$137 (cost of construction)
Subsidized residences	5%	13%	11% (5 of 45 units) designated as affordable housing
Household median income	\$62,906	\$77,809	
Racial demographics	76% White, 7% African American, 7% Asian, 7% Hispanic, 3% Other or Multi-racial	66% White, 9% African American, 16% Asian, 5% Hispanic, 3% Other or Multi-racial	81% African American, 12% White, 3% American Indian, 4% Multi-racial
Youth population ages 0-17	17%	20%	66% (total population of 52 adults & 100 children)
Kindergarten readiness	76%	80%	
Parents have college diploma	53%	57%	

7933 Tree Lane directly serves one of the most disadvantaged and overlooked populations in our country: the chronically homeless. The traditional approach to addressing homelessness follows the model of first providing temporary shelter, and then, providing resources that allow that person to work towards self-sufficiency. What this approach historically overlooks is the

distraction and instability that shelter-life often imposes on people and on families, especially children. In fact shelter-life often negatively impacts families, increasing dependence on support services to stay afloat, and isolating individuals from those outside the system. Homelessness is almost always a symptom of a larger personal crisis, trauma, or lack of opportunity. Providing a permanent home first allows people the chance to fully commit to addressing their personal challenges, without the simultaneous pressure of searching for permanent private shelter. Vanessa McDowell, CEO of YWCA Madison said that, “For us, it was really important that...we provide trauma informed care services, which is very important when you’re serving any population, but particularly the population that we have here in Tree Lane.”

The racial disparities that exist in chronic homelessness are substantial; African Americans make up half of the homeless population, while only representing 7% of the Madison population. Additionally, families constitute 40% of the homeless population, placing further disadvantage on children and perpetuating the system of homelessness for future generations. Addressing the needs of the chronically homeless community is a primary goal of the Homeless Services Consortium of Dane County and the City of Madison, and it is a key step towards addressing equality at a city-wide scale.

Project Pre-Planning



Project Stakeholders

City of Madison:

Dane County Homeless Services Consortium (HSC); United Way - HSC member, financial supporter, and resource advocate; Community Development Division (CDD) - allocates funding and issued RFPs; Common Council, District 9; Alderman, Paul Skidmore; District 9 Residents and Community Members; Heartland Housing - Developer & Property Manager: Michael Goldberg (Executive Director);

On-Site Social Service

Provider:

YWCA (July 2018 - March 2019) & YWCA Homeless Research Groups; The Road Home (Interim March 2019 - August 2019); Sankofa Behavioral and Community Health - (August 2019 - Current): 1 Full Time Supervisor & Lead Case Manager 2 Full Time Case Managers Youth Coordinator Mental Health Services

Design Team:

Valerio Dewalt Train - Architects & Interior Design: David Jennerjahn

(Design Principal), Brad Pausha (Project Manager), Chris Amt (Project Architect), Nina Cackovic (Project Designer); McGann Construction Inc. - General Contractor: Lucas Zick; Ayres Associates - Civil Engineering & Landscape Architect: Jacob Blue; Pierce Engineers, Inc. - Structural Engineer: Seth Pfeil; McGann Construction Inc. - General Contractor; WMA Consulting Engineers - MEP/FP Engineer.

How were each of these communities involved in the process and project?

On a typical market-rate multi-family housing project the developer often presents a hypothetical vision of the future resident to the architect. These hypothetical residents become the guide to unit design and building program. For Tree Lane, the design team knew this approach would short-change the community that would benefit most from a successful project: chronically homeless families. In the Spring of 2016, the design and development team sought direct input from families currently in the shelter system, from service providers aiding the Madison homeless community, and from the management of existing affordable housing developments in Madison.

From the families we learned how important it is to design for the children: provide safe and secure playgrounds, make sure each unit has a bathtub (have you ever had to bathe a kid in the shower!?!), provide space for the family to gather for meals. We heard a desire for education and access: provide a library/study room and provide a high quality computer room.

From the service providers we learned which amenities are important to residents: the fitness center is used less frequently but the support services and community rooms are in high demand.

While the design team was engaging with potential future residents, a parallel effort was underway with the City of Madison. Multiple meetings with the Alderman and Planning Commission focused on surrounding community input and the City's own metrics for a successful project. Not-in-my-backyard (NIMBY) opposition was expected, but as Alder Skidmore noted, "while there were a few very loud opponents there were many, many people that were in support and still are in support." This community support is crucial to the City's hopes that Tree Lane residents "become part of the neighborhood and part of the community. That all the kids play together, or play in the park, and everybody is comfortable. That [the residents] just fit in just like the other neighbors have been fitting in with each other for decades."



How does the project support...?

Justice

Madison's formal Community Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness was originally launched 15 years ago, with the primary guiding principle being that "housing is a human right." Additional principles stress that it is necessary for those who have experienced homelessness to help define appropriate solutions, and that there must be shared "ownership and responsibility for preventing and ending homelessness." This shared ownership includes government officials, healthcare providers, and everyday citizens. The Tree Lane apartments have been successful precisely because of the advocacy and support of stakeholders at all levels.

The "Housing First" approach allows citizens the dignity they deserve, while simultaneously providing resources that all people should have access to by right. Students have regular and constant access to an education. Children have access to neighborhood parks and greenspace,

and protected on-site playgrounds. “It’s really nice, my kids love it.” says Christina Tully, resident at Tree Lane. “They love that they can run to the neighbor’s and get their friends and go to the park. My kids absolutely love it here.”

Families have access to medical and mental health support, including: therapy, youth programming, and family education. Residents with disabilities have equitable and safe building access and infrastructure. All residents and guests have access to a secure environment, safe building structure, and healthy building materials. Providing these basic decencies to the chronically disadvantaged is the first step in Madison’s plan to reduce and end homelessness in the city.

Exterior Design

Left Image: Residents gather outside building main entry.

Top Right Image: Building west facade, clapboard siding, color palette, and window shape/size emulate surrounding neighborhood.

Bottom Right Image: South facade with undulating roofline, board & batten siding.



Equity

Not only does the “Housing First” initiative eliminate the daily struggle to find and retain shelter, but it allows residents the opportunity to address other barriers that have prevented them from obtaining stability. Tree Lane’s affordable housing means that no one living in the building will ever pay more than 30% of their income towards rent: no family will have to make the call between paying for groceries, prescriptions, or rent each month. Residents can be proud of their

own space. This initiative not only provides homes, but also assists residents with personal empowerment and provides resources to combat traumas and obstacles. Sylvia Mallett, Tree Lane resident, said “You know that if anything happens, you’ve got someone you can...talk to.” Providing on-site services allows tenants easy access to resources that may have been previously denied to them.

One key attribute of Tree Lane is that it’s located in a community with easy access to transportation, public schools, shopping, healthcare, and fresh food. Parks, greenspace, libraries, bus-stops, shops, and medical care are all within walking distance. Tree Lane Apartments’ integration in an amenity-rich and easily navigable neighborhood means that residents have equitable access to a plethora of resources. The ease of access to basic necessities, and the support of a local community can dramatically aid in integration and upholding self-worth.

Community Services



Top Left Image: Computer room

Bottom Left Image: Building main entry, security and social services staff offices

Right Image: East playlot



Diversity

Disparities in race are clearly present in Madison’s homeless population. The Walnut Grove District, where the Tree Lane apartments are located, has a racially diverse population

compared to Dane County collectively. However, there exists at all levels a continued imbalance of economic prosperity among races. The strategy of using integrative supporting housing aims to break down some of the barriers of privilege, and provide equity in opportunity.

Integrative supportive housing is not a new strategy used to eliminate socioeconomic inequalities. The integration of disadvantaged adults and children into thriving, stable communities, rich in resources, has for years been proven to improve education, lower crime, and increase tolerance in diversity. When the struggle to obtain and retain housing is eliminated, people have the opportunity to work towards personal stability, engage in their communities through local religious affiliations, youth programming, or community recreation. Reducing and eliminating homelessness also works to eliminate some of the discriminatory socioeconomic stigmas that are often associated with the less privileged.

Housing Units

The building consists of 2-4 bedroom units for families. All apartments are built with high quality finishes designed for durability.



Inclusion

For a city-initiated project such as this, inclusion is warranted on both sides of development. The City of Madison has worked for years to address local homelessness and has attempted to integrate disadvantaged citizens into supportive communities. The local community, however,

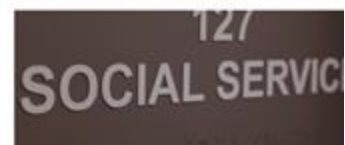
has had its concerns. This is why neighborhood engagement is vitally important. Through a series of formal Aldermanic meetings and more casual neighborhood gatherings, the city, the developer, the service providers, and the design team were able to answer questions, consider concerns, and then make adjustments regarding building size, height, number of residents, amount of parking, and where residents would get services. Inversely, the development and architectural team engaged with low-income and homeless citizens at the YWCA and other outreach programs to gauge the needs and comforts of those who are struggling most to understand how a project like Tree Lane could best cater to these needs and their efforts to gain independence.

The effort for continued inclusion doesn't end with a completed project. Luckily, Tree Lane's partner Sankofa BCH, fully understands the importance of integrated support when looking towards the success of this movement. The engagement of community members, increased volunteer efforts, and mentoring opportunities are important efforts to achieve community buy-in and have been successful in dispelling negative perceptions and increasing tolerance. Sankofa's services extend beyond health and empowerment as well - their partnerships with community programs like Lussier Community Education Center and the Wisconsin Youth Company at Elver Park allow additional inclusive programming to Tree Lane residents.

Connections



Clustered by the lobby and the main stair are offices for the building manager and social workers. All support staff are located by the entrance to provide support and connect with residents throughout the day.



The main stair is a point of connection for the entire residence. It is intended to promote wellness and foster spontaneous encounters between residents and staff. The cables are an artistic design feature within the space.

Project Journey

How did the project evolve in response to intentional JEDI strategies?

During the design phase, information gleaned from conversations with potential residents and the service provider helped physically shape the building: front-and-center location of services, communal space, multiple play areas, and even the fit and finish of the dwelling units. Post occupancy, the resident's input continues to shape the project. For example, program elements from the original Tree Lane design were adapted to fit the needs of residents: a library became an office space and the fitness center became a highly utilized youth room with a library.

Key to prolonged success of a project like Tree Lane is effective communication between the property manager and the service provider. The property manager is not only a liaison to the development team, but can be an advocate and an ear for the residents. The service provider can adjust program needs as the resident population changes over the years.

If we zoom out, we can see how Tree Lane is evolving as it becomes an established entity within the Walnut Grove District. Relations with the surrounding community were strained initially. Tree Lane had disorderly conduct and violence issues in the first years of occupancy which resulted in a chronic nuisance designation by the City of Madison. This designation prompted weekly meetings with city officials and stakeholders (health department, security, supportive services, and the developer) to ensure that the project and residents were on the right track and were provided with all the services needed. Over time these meetings became biweekly occurrences and have recently ceased due to Tree Lane's progress. Throughout this process, Tree Lane has actively communicated with nearby condo associations to foster meaningful connections between Tree Lane residents and the community.

Tree Lane continues to support diversity and inclusion by looking through some of the typical barriers to permanent housing: criminal background, past evictions, etc. Heartland Housing understands the need for second chances and that stable housing and on-site supportive services can afford tenants the space, time, and tools to work through their existing challenges.

What are the critical measurements of the success or failure of the project?

The success of this project is a moving target and is almost entirely subjective, as it depends on what each resident needs Tree Lane to be. For those who view it as a stepping stone, its success is measured by how many residents are able to move out of supportive housing into a stable home of their own. Over the last three years, Tree Lane has averaged 2-3 of these move-outs per year. For those who see Tree Lane as a permanent opportunity for a home, its success is measured in the longevity of the residents' occupancy. In that regard, Tree Lane

currently has 20 original residents from 2018 -- and while there have been a few non-renewed leases due to policy violations, there have been no forced evictions.

According to another leading voice for diversity and inclusion, Chicago's Chief Diversity Officer Marquis Miller, one of the key elements for building equity is engaging and partnering with communities historically disconnected from city hall and city decisions. Tree Lane is a bridge connecting the City of Madison with its homeless population. Madison's strong support for a Housing First approach and the dedicated work of partners such as YWCA and Sankofa BCH can cultivate the resources necessary for successful relationship building. Tree Lane provides a home first and through partnerships with service providers and local government, it provides a voice as well.

“Permanent Supportive Housing for those who have experienced homelessness is crucial not only to the outcomes of residents but to the health of the community. In particular this project addresses the systemic economic imbalance caused by racial inequity in this community. From a design perspective the project nods to the materials and form of the surrounding residential context within a minimal and functional form. The predesign and ongoing engagement process is an encouraging aspect of the project.”

NOMA-NAACP-SEED Jury Member