



Media Contact: Patrick Dostine

313. 224.5228

News Release

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Wayne County brownfield project wins prestigious Phoenix Award

(Detroit) – It's been compared to Hollywood's Oscar.

It's called the Phoenix Award and it's given annually to groups or individuals who transform blighted and contaminated areas (brownfields) into productive uses again.

Piquette Square in Detroit, a 150-unit residential complex built to house and treat U.S. military veterans returning from war was awarded the Phoenix Award, as well as Runner-Up for the Grand Prize Phoenix Award at this year's national Brownfield Conference (April 3-5), in Philadelphia, PA.

The property was once the former site of the historic Studebaker factory.

Southwest Housing Solutions, a non-profit organization based in Detroit, spearheaded the Piquette Square project.

Fourteen different funding partners, including the Development Corporation of Wayne County (DCWC), the Detroit-Wayne County Port Authority (DWCPA) and the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA), and other 30 organizations and individuals collaborated on the \$23 million project.



“Piquette Square is a great example of leveraged collaboration,” said Wayne County Executive Robert Ficano. “It’s an admirable project which had great partners starting with Southwest Housing Solutions and their demonstrative ability to attract other committed partners that made this important project a reality.”

DCWC, created under the leadership of Executive Robert Ficano, was one of the first partners on the project.

When environmental contamination was found on the site, Wayne County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority provided \$500,000 in grants and loans to remove underground storage tanks and dangerous soil.

The DWCPA was another key partner in the Piquette Square development, utilizing among other things, its EPA grant for the project’s environmental assessments.

“The Piquette Square project is a model example of sound community-based development and response to the serious issue of homelessness amongst our local veterans,” said John Kerr, Director of Economic Development for the DWCPA. “This project demonstrates what happens when you pair a sophisticated non-profit, community development partner in Southwest Housing Solutions, with dedicated representatives from the public and private sector in one of Detroit’s most vibrant sections of downtown.”

Piquette Square is a full service facility for homeless veterans in the New Center area of Detroit. With 150 apartments, a job training facility, computer center, multi-purpose space, and a variety of counseling offices the project is the largest of its kind in the United States.

More than 4,000 homeless veterans are in the Detroit area. One out of three homeless men in Detroit and across the country is a veteran.

The project took five years to complete.

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