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Trolley Quarter Flats
Photo: Don Wong

AIA Minnesota & The McKnight Foundation Announce that MSR & MetroPlains Development, LLC received the **2015 Affordable Housing Design Award** for Trolley Quarter Flats

MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA - AIA Minnesota and The McKnight Foundation proudly announce that **MSR and MetroPlains Development, LLC are the recipients of the 2015 Affordable Housing Design Award for their Trolley Quarter Flats project**. This project, located in Wausau, WI, is a historic former trolley shed that was given new life as part of a 40-unit affordable housing complex.

Recognized for the award is **Paul C.N. Mellblom, AIA**, principal-in-charge, MSR, and the project team from MetroPlains Development, LLC. Both the architectural and development firms are twin cities based, focusing much of their work within the state of Minnesota.

Tim Dufault, AIA, president of AIA Minnesota said, "*We are pleased to have this opportunity to partner with The McKnight Foundation on this outstanding award, now in its fourth year, to recognize innovative, high-quality designs for affordable housing. AIA Minnesota architects seek meaningful ways to recognize those who are creating more affordable housing design. This award is one way we can help support our community.*"

"This annual award underscores our conviction that high-quality design is crucial in building communities that are functional, beautiful, and livable for all," said **Kate Wolford**, president of The McKnight Foundation. *"This project has multi-faceted relevance to our region — as a former brownfield site, as an adapted re-use project, and as a catalytic project creating economic development opportunities in a previously overlooked area of the community."*

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All of the award submissions were reviewed, and the recipient project selected, by an esteemed panel of jurors, including: **Daniel Hernandez**, Deputy Commissioner, Neighborhood Strategies, New York City; **Ann Panopio, Assoc. AIA**, Associate Director, bcWORKSHOP, Houston; and **Marcy Schulte, AIA**, Project Manager, Gensler, Minneapolis.

Jurors remarks included the following: *"The spaces are amazing, the designs of the housing units are fantastic. This project presents a lot of those amenities that signify 'we have arrived' for the residents. This is a very handsome building. This project includes some super-interesting touches that help reveal the building's history, rather than cover it up. The design hits the criteria that are in the spirit of this award."*

Jurors were instructed to evaluate award submissions using the following criteria:

- **Responsiveness.** How creatively and successfully has the project responded to the needs of the client and the population served? How responsive is the project to demographic shifts and regional housing needs for affordable housing?
- **Community connection.** Was the project developed through a strong, collaborative project team? Did it show participation from the larger public, including neighbors, future users of the building, or citizens at large?
- **Long-term asset.** Did the project provide a long-term asset to the client, occupants, and the community? How did design contribute to the project's long-term financial and social viability? Did design choices support community interaction and enhance community networks?
- **Excellent design quality.** Did the project demonstrate exceptional design quality - responsive to physical and social contexts as well as to any constraints imposed by funding and regulatory agencies?

Award recipients will be featured throughout the following year and receive their award at the annual 2015 AIA Minnesota Awards Dinner in December. The Trolley Quarter Flats project will be included in an AIA Minnesota's Housing Advocacy Committee 2016 Search for Shelter event. Project boards will be displayed at the AIA Minnesota's 2015 Convention in November. A feature article with photographs will be written, to include award juror responses, for an issue of AIA Minnesota's magazine *Architecture Minnesota*.

To learn more about the award program at

<http://www.aia-mn.org/get-involved/aia-minnesota-awards/affordable-housing-design-award/>

See all the past Affordable Housing Design Award recipient videos at
<http://www.aia-mn.org/features/podcasts-videos/>

The American Institute of Architects Minnesota, founded in 1892, is dedicated to strengthening our communities, improving our built environment and providing exceptional design. For more information on the organization and Minnesota architectural firms, reference our Web site at www.aia-mn.org, visit www.facebook.com/aiaminnesota, and pick up a copy of Architecture Minnesota, the award-winning architectural magazine of the Midwest.

The McKnight Foundation, a Minnesota-based family foundation, seeks to improve the quality of life for present and future generations. Founded in 1953 and independently endowed by William and Maude McKnight, the foundation had assets of approximately \$2.2 billion and granted about \$88 million in 2014. Learn more at mcknight.org.