



AFFORDABLE HOUSING with sustainable techniques is not just “talk” *IT’S HAPPENING!*

By Tyler Polk



Victor Rodriguez, president of a.m. RODRIGUEZ ASSOCIATES inc. (AMR) believes that community development and providing safe, affordable, well designed housing, that is also energy efficient, go hand in hand.

“Meeting with the community is a priceless experience because their input is invaluable,” said Rodriguez.

AMR was founded in the 1970s by Victor’s father, Anthony, an architect who has developed multifamily projects in Pennsylvania and Ohio. Victor joined the company in 2004 and was elevated to president in 2012.

“He’s [Anthony] still involved with the company but has taken a step back”, said Rodriguez. “He’s heavy on design and taught me that what we build for these communities is going to last.”

AMR creates affordable housing with a focus on independent living for seniors and sustainable construction techniques (i.e. LEED- and Passive House-certified). As the landlord, AMR pays for all the utilities in its senior properties.

During his tenure with the company, Rodriguez has developed most of AMR’s projects with the design and build team of Laura Nettleton, founding principal of Thoughtful Balance and Ernie Sota and Phil Ford of Sota Construction Services. As a team, this triumvirate has pushed the envelope, whenever feasible, in its green construction techniques.

“They are the greenest in Pittsburgh”, said Rodriguez. “They bring in new technologies that are affordable, keeping rents low.”

In addition to housing units and amenity spaces, AMR has incorporated commercial spaces and two event spaces into three of its projects. The Joe Negri Auditorium is located in a refurbished assembly hall in the former Prospect Elementary School on Mt. Washington; commercial spaces occupy the first floor of the ONE Homestead apartment building on E. 8th Avenue and an outdoor event space, primarily for music acts, is located adjacent to Rodriguez’s recent side project, Enix Brewing Co. (Enix) in Homestead. While building ONE Homestead, Victor and his brother David started working on Enix. The brewery serves Spanish inspired food and has a beer garden and a music stage with a bowling alley on the second floor.

“I wanted to start one in the 90s, but it didn’t work out,” said Rodriguez. “People expect a selection of beer.”

AMR recognizes the demand for senior housing and always looks to create innovative properties. Their two newest properties, Morningside Crossing and Retirement Residence of Glassport, plan to continue this trend.

Morningside Crossing was awarded the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency’s (PHFA) award for Innovation in Design. Rodriguez says the award is awarded to only one project per funding round and must show special innovative construction.

“It’s one of our most ambitious projects,” said Rodriguez. “Using our ‘Passive House’ construction technique and the focus on energy usage and air quality helped us rise above the competition.”

Passive House is a super-insulated housing strategy that needs a small burst of heat or air conditioning to get going. Once it reaches a preferred temperature, it stays there. Morningside Crossing also has SPECK air quality monitors that tell the seniors if it’s okay to keep their windows closed or opened.

“When the building is sealed really well, you can filter the air coming in,” said Rodriguez. “We can demonstrate that the seniors are healthier when they live in the building.”

AMR’s next development is in Penn Hills. It will be a net zero project and Pennsylvania’s first affordable housing community that will generate all energy onsite.

“Pittsburgh is very community-oriented and neighborhood-oriented,” said Rodriguez. “We work hard to develop projects that stir pride within the communities we touch through our work.”