



POAH Basis of Design: A Building Design Resource

Narrowing product choices delivers efficiency

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Pairing a development organization and a property management company under one roof creates operational challenges that many buy-and-sell developers typically don't face. But for affordable housing developers with no plans to sell their newly rehabbed/built properties, the focus on long-term building performance becomes critical to their continuing success. Specifying and installing quality products and systems provides consistency in design, durability, and maintenance. It also presents opportunities for energy and water savings across the portfolio. By including low water and energy use products and systems, architects, builders, and site staff will always make the right choice in saving energy and water.

With a portfolio of nearly 9,000 units spread across 85 properties in nine different states, there are many characteristics that distinguish Preservation of Affordable Housing's buildings from one another. POAH's portfolio contains senior and family housing, high-rise, mid-rise, low-rise, and walk-up building types in all climate zones, and construction dates that span an entire century. With all this variability, it is important to limit options for building materials and systems that work across the portfolio and maximize performance.

The selection of materials and systems happens at two intervals in a project's life - when the project is built or rehabbed and when upgrades are made by the site staff. Our department created the "Basis of Design" website (BOD) so architects and builders can incorporate the POAH standards during the development phase and site staff can select and install from the same product source during unit turns. When the design/construction team uses the BOD, the hand-off to the site staff is more efficient, allowing the site staff to easily make upgrades during unit changeovers and during capital planning.

The BOD includes product and performance-based specifications. Including these creates two key advantages from an owner's perspective: The owner doesn't have to obsess over staying current with the construction industry's ever-changing building trends, products and technologies; and site staff can implement more innovative solutions appropriate for that property. The architect, contractor, property manager, or maintenance personnel are free to choose a specific product within a range of choices or propose alternates that meet the performance requirements established in the BOD.

POAH's Basis of Design website is easily accessible to anyone. This means the information can be viewed by the construction supervisor during an on-site meeting, or by a maintenance technician in the field on a mobile device. Since the information on the website is never downloaded by its users, the issue of version control (outdated iterations) is avoided. The website is always current, and specifications can change over time without rolling out large overhauls. POAH's Basis of Design is at www.poahbod.org

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