

## PROTECTING THE PROTECTORS

New affordable housing project for local veterans includes sustainable building design

**PRODUCT FEATURED:** Slicker MAX Rainscreen



## Introduction

According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness's 2016 State of Homelessness in America, "On a single night in January 2015, 564,708 people were experiencing homelessness [...]." Roughly 8.5 percent of those individuals were veterans, which amounts to almost 48,000 persons across the country without a place to call home. Although metropolitan areas such as Washington D.C. see larger homeless populations, this is not a just big city problem.<sup>1</sup> Small towns like Spring City, Pa. also seek solutions to this same issue. This challenge presents unique opportunities for meaningful impact as the architectural and design community discovers new ways to further advance populations through new approaches to multi-family building designs.

## An Impactful Solution

Benjamin Obdyke joined forces with The Mission First Housing Group, a collection of non-profit organizations dedicated to creating safe and affordable housing for all, to create an impactful solution for the city of Spring City, Pa. Veterans in the community were experiencing difficulties finding housing to accommodate the challenges they face including building accessibility for those with disabilities.

With help from the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA) and the Veterans Administration (VA), Mission First Housing Group set out to design and restore what would become The Whitehall Project in Chester County. Architectural Concepts PC and RAM Siding Company also became involved to help increase the impact and longevity of the building and to address sustainability considerations and building codes specific to disabled persons as well as the impact of moisture.

"The design is an apartment style layout, but with historic restoration allowing us to keep the character of the building," said Tanya Millet, AIA, NCARB, Project Architect at Architectural Concepts. "However, there are standard guidelines set in place by which we were able to design to ensure the safety and security of the building occupants."

Development began on The Whitehall Project with a renovation of the existing structure and continued with the inclusion of a wood-stud framed Passivehaus addition, wood roof trusses, and wood floor/ceiling truss assemblies. As a rigorous standard for energy efficiency and ecological footprint reduction, Passivehaus requires intensive structural planning and detailed product specification to achieve. The project plans also sought to meet a reduced Home Energy Rating System (HERS) Index of 55 or less as specified in the 12/15/2014 Energy Efficiency Goals as well as Enterprise Green Communities standards.



<sup>1</sup> "State of Homelessness in America 2016." National Alliance to End Homelessness. June 21, 2016. Web: <http://www.endhomelessness.org/page/-/files/2016%20State%20of%20Homelessness.pdf>. The Whitehall



*“We were able to mitigate the risk of moisture damage to the structure on the front end, rather than needing to address those issues through remediation further down the road.”*

**Bill Griffith,  
Benjamin Obdyke Field Specialist**

## A Protective Solution

Project would require a product to control airflow and moisture, an asset to the building owner and ultimately, the once-homeless veterans as occupants. As a proactive solution against swelling and moisture development, Benjamin Obdyke provided their product Slicker MAX, from their established rainscreen line. The product's unique, vertical channels create a ¼ inch gap that is ideal for drainage and ventilation behind fiber cement, stone veneer, and stucco applications. Slicker MAX also incorporates a filter fabric that provides enhanced UV and compression resistance.

“We were able to mitigate the risk of moisture damage to the structure on the front end, rather than needing to address those issues through remediation further down the road,” said Bill Griffith, a Field Specialist at Benjamin Obdyke. In addition to meeting drainage goals and addressing potential moisture obstacles, Benjamin Obdyke's Slicker MAX is a critical piece of the building envelope, keeping water and weather outdoors and providing peace-of-mind for Whitehall residents who will be settling into their new home.

Built in 1762, the historic building began as a two-story inn and provides plenty of living space and amenities. The Whitehall facility will provide 48 affordable apartments<sup>2</sup> for at-risk veterans and one unit for the on-site superintendent. Residents will also be able to take full advantage of community rooms, kitchens, computer rooms, a fitness room, and a laundry facility. Creating a sense of community was an important objective, as many veterans will now have the opportunity for increased social activities with others who may have had similar experiences while enlisted. The facility will open its doors to future residents on the expected date of March 31, 2017.

By offering a protective solution to potential climate challenges, Benjamin Obdyke was able to assist with critical updates to the Whitehall's building envelope. The restoration of the Whitehall building is an essential example of the possibilities that emerge when sustainability and architectural design come together to provide accessible housing. Benjamin Obdyke hopes to continue participating in similar projects with products that create solutions for the construction industry while positively impacting current and future occupant communities.

### About Mission First Housing Group

Mission First Housing Group's mission is to develop and manage affordable, safe and sustainable homes for people in need, with a focus on the vulnerable. We ensure our residents have access to resources to help them live independently. We deliver housing that provides long-term benefits to residents and neighborhoods, alike.

[www.missionfirsthousing.org](http://www.missionfirsthousing.org)  
215-557-8414

### About Benjamin Obdyke

Since 1868, Benjamin Obdyke has been a leading designer and provider of moisture management solutions. Our founder, Benjamin P. Obdyke, pioneered the first-generation corrugated downspout. This innovation ultimately led to the modern day Benjamin Obdyke. Benjamin Obdyke's pioneering spirit remains the hallmark of our company today.

[www.BenjaminObdyke.com](http://www.BenjaminObdyke.com)  
215 672-7200

<sup>2</sup> “The Whitehall.” Mission First Housing Group. Web: <http://missionfirsthousing.org/properties/the-whitehall/>.