

Best Projects 2023: Friends Homes Wellness Center & Bistro, Hospitality/Restaurant category



The Friends Homes project required careful coordination, but also caution as crews worked during the pandemic surrounded by seniors considered at high risk for Covid-19.

FRIENDS HOMES

By [Lloyd Whittington](#) – Editor in Chief,
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The Triad Business Journal continues the rollout of our 2023 Best Commercial Real Estate Projects today with the Hospitality/Restaurant category, which was won by Friends Homes Wellness Center & Bistro in Greensboro.

[Six Hundred^o](#), a restaurant in downtown Winston-Salem, was the runner-up in the category.

We'll reveal the winners and the runners-up in one of the seven categories each weekday until Nov. 17, when the project winners will also be featured in the CRE Awards print edition that publishes that day.

FRIENDS HOMES WELLNESS CENTER & BISTRO

Winner, Hospitality/Restaurant category

Why selected: Part of a broader campus expansion, the Wellness Center and Bistro moved forward through the Covid-19 pandemic as an addition to the continuing care retirement community's West Campus. Centrally located amongst the independent living apartments and cottages, the larger facility replaced the campus' original wellness center and provides multiple enhancements to the existing amenity offerings. With this new building, Friends Homes is able to increase the number and capacity of resident engagement activities. The nearly 33,000-square-foot facility cost more than \$14.8 million and involved between 160 and 180 workers.

Date of completion (certificate of occupancy): May 2022

Project address: West Campus of Friends Homes, north of West Friendly Avenue in Greensboro

Project owner/developer: Friends Homes

General contractor: Landmark Builders Inc.

Architect: Stewart & Conners PLLC

Engineer: Stimmel Associates PA

Highlights of the project: Situated between a group of independent living apartments, the facility is accessible for all living on the campus. Residents can come to the two-story building to gather over a meal, express their creativity, get pampered at the spa, engage in games, exercise, and maintain their overall health. It features a fitness center, indoor pool, indoor sports court, spa/salon, boardroom, art space, activity rooms, and a health clinic. A bistro dining area with serving space and small market are also included. An outdoor gathering space with a fire pit, shelter, and walking path around the Wellness Center and Bistro helps the campus maintain a balance of nature and green space on the property.

Challenges overcome to complete this project: Site logistics were challenging, as the site is surrounded on three sides by existing and occupied independent living apartments, with the new facility connecting to one of these buildings. That provided little space for various construction equipment and materials to be maneuvered. It was also near an existing pool on the site, where Friends Homes previously had an activities center. Close coordination of the entire project team from design and preconstruction through construction allowed the project to successfully overcome these challenges. Built during the height of Covid-19, the project had to overcome material availability issues and long lead times, while the team navigated unprecedented concerns as a job site surrounded by individuals categorized as high-risk of catching the disease.