

Housing Texans

HOW QUORUM IS IMPROVING AFFORDABLE HOUSING DESIGN



Over the past decade, the cost of housing has risen dramatically, especially as population growth in Texas communities continues to skyrocket, driving up rental costs. Now, faced with even more economic uncertainty, the need for quality affordable housing across the state has never been greater.

Quorum's housing team has recently been boosted by collaboration with professionals from Cameron Alread, Architect Inc., a firm with HUD-related housing experience dating back to the 1970s.

“Every single person on the team goes above and beyond on every project”

Nikki Brennan, Georgetown Housing Authority

The group brings energy and a true team spirit to Texas housing authority new builds and improvements to existing structures, many of which were built in the 1950s and 1960s. They tackle major challenges that include bringing structures up to current code requirements and ensuring compliance with the Americans With Disabilities Act.



“They listen to our concerns, pull together, say what they're going to do, and then they do it,” says Nikki Brennan, Executive Director of the Georgetown Housing Authority. Brennan says she takes great comfort in having Quorum's experts keeping an eye on virtually every aspect of housing upgrades so she and her staff can focus on taking care of their tenants, over 60 percent of which are senior citizens.

Collectively, Quorum's staff has handled over 100 projects for more than a dozen housing authorities across Texas. The firm's ethic is driven by a focus on durability and helping clients. “It's not about high design, but about human design,” says David Lee, a principal at Quorum. “What's gratifying is that what we do has an immediate impact.”



This factor holds tremendous meaning to all the team members. "It is an honor to do this work that helps people in the way they live," says Wendy Dyba, project manager at Quorum. "What may seem small to most people is a huge change for many tenants."

"... it is very easy to see the dedication and professionalism, despite any obstacles that may arise to challenge you or your team members."

John Carter, Gatesville Housing Authority

Every detail can make a difference. With a significant number of tenants requiring accessibility, details like grab bars and well-paved parking lots can drastically improve quality of life.

Tania Lecona, architectural intern at Quorum, described a project in Temple, where she worked to carve out a workable space in each unit for a dryer. "For older tenants and those with disabilities, being able to dry clothes in their own apartment is a luxury that most of us take for granted."



Key to the entire process is managing the many moving parts involved in an affordable housing refurbishment. Candice Puente's official title is project coordinator, but she calls herself "air traffic controller." Working with Cameron Alread and now Quorum, she has been in the field for 18 years and says one of her favorite things is visiting housing authority properties and "seeing all the lives we are affecting with our work."

Whether it's helping handle project bids from contractors, navigating HUD and other funding source requirements or meeting budget and spending deadlines, the team handles projects from soup to nuts. "They handle all of kinds of things beyond architecture and design," says Nikki Brennan. "Every single person on the team goes above and beyond on every project."

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