



## Entry Form 2018 Annual Awards for Program Excellence

**Entry Deadline: Friday, June 15, 2018, Midnight ET**

Each entry must include a completed entry form. Please complete a form for each entry your HFA is submitting. The completed entry form will become the first page of your entry.

This form is a fillable PDF. Type your information into the entry form and save it as a PDF. Please do not write on or scan the entry form. **Questions: Call 202-624-7710 or email [awards@ncsha.org](mailto:awards@ncsha.org).**

**Entry Title:** Enter your entry's title exactly as you wish it to be published on the NCSHA website and in the awards program.

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**Category:**

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**Subcategory:**

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**Entry Summary:** A 15-word (max) summary of the program, project, or practice you are entering.

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**HFA:**

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**HFA Staff Contact:**

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**Phone:**

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**Email:**

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**Visual Aids:**

Are you mailing to NCSHA 10 copies of any visual aids that cannot be included in your entry PDF?    Yes        No

**Payment:**

My HFA is mailing a check to NCSHA.  
My HFA is emailing the credit card authorization form to [awards@ncsha.org](mailto:awards@ncsha.org).

**2018 NCSHA Annual Awards for Program Excellence**  
**Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA)**  
**Rental Housing – Preservation**  
**The Restoration of the Germania Building in Milwaukee**

Germania history

“This is today one of Milwaukee beautiful buildings and stands at a spot destined to be the future center of Milwaukee.” Author Ellis Baker Usher wrote those prophetic words about the Germania Building in 1914. There’s a tremendous amount of history all around the Germania Building, and plenty inside. In the 1890’s George Brumder opened a German bookstore in Milwaukee. The Germania was his headquarters. Milwaukee had 6 newspapers at the time; three were in English, three in German.

Brumder bought newspapers from other parts of the country and built a German news publishing empire that required a larger building which led to the Germania, the largest office building in Milwaukee at the time. The building housed Germania Publishing Co. that accommodated the needs and demands of Milwaukee’s large German population for books, newspapers and magazines in their own language. Germania has been a Milwaukee landmark since it opened in 1896.

The historic elements of those early days of the Germania remain here today. You notice the Kaizer domes on the roof. Up near the top there’s the date 1896. Next to the date are two cherubs. How fitting that one is reading a newspaper. The other is reading a book.

Financing a challenging restoration

In 2015 the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA) awarded \$161,445 in Low-Income Housing Tax Credits to the Germania development. WHEDA also provided a permanent loan of \$13,113,000 and a construction loan of \$18,000,000. The Germania project also combined State and Federal Historic credits with the traditional LIHTC program. Additional financial resources through a Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) district provided by the city of Milwaukee helped offset extraordinary costs associated with rehabilitating the façade of the building to historic standards. The TIF also provided streetlights on Plankinton Avenue and improved Postman Square on the north side of Wells Street that were enhancements to the neighborhood.

This project had more than one great idea behind it. There was the *idea* to historically restore the Germania which was no easy task. There was the *idea* to place housing near where people work. And there was the *idea* to create housing that would encourage people to live in Milwaukee’s booming downtown.

Painstaking efforts were made to address many challenges: The stairwells, elevators, fire sprinklers, sidewalks, tearing down the ceilings, preserving the old woodwork and the generous size of the windows. The developers literally saved the Germania from falling apart and from being torn down. By using unemployed and underemployed city of Milwaukee workers to meet city and WHEDA standards they also helped people create careers.

### Significant step for Milwaukee

Of the 90 units, 44 are affordable and 46 are market rate. This is a unique mix – we rarely see properties that are evenly split between affordable and market rate units. The Germania also will feature around 7,000 square feet of street-level commercial space. This project is the latest in a series of buildings on or near W. Wisconsin Ave. that have been converted from underused offices to apartments in recent years.

The Germania development represents a major milestone for development in the city of Milwaukee. The downtown has experienced a record level of development over the past decade but the majority of the over 10,000 units that have been constructed in and around the Central Business District (CBD) have been market rate units. The need for additional affordable housing in the CBD and greater downtown district is acute and the Germania demonstrates that high quality adaptive use developments can help fill that need.

### Workforce critical to Germania success

Workforce requirements by WHEDA and the city of Milwaukee were monitored throughout the construction process. Over 44% of the construction contracts were awarded to Small Business Enterprise (SBE) contractors in an amount of \$3.46 million. Likewise, over 39% of the total man-hours were utilized by employees through the Request for Proposal process at a time when both the Northwestern Mutual Life skyscraper (550-foot tower) and the new Milwaukee Bucks arena projects were competing for these same employees. Unemployed and underemployed laborers contributed to the success of the project with 2 full-time employees joining Cardinal Capital Management after project completion. We consider the 44 LIHTC units to be 'work-force' housing for the city of Milwaukee allowing first-class housing at a rent-capped rate.

### Utility provisions

The HVAC system at the Germania represents an innovative and cost-effective way for utilities to be provided to the 90 units. City steam through a new heat exchanger provides the heat and hot water for the building. Ten stainless steel, indirect water heaters, have life-time warranties and provide the necessary hot water for the units. Four rooftop chillers provide the air conditioning to the building. The heat, hot water and air conditioning are all included in the tenant's rent. Only unit electricity and cable are paid separately.

### Award-winning effort

A Grand Opening ceremony for the Germania was held in September 2017. Exquisitely executed, this dramatic revitalization of a long neglected class C office building (a foreclosed property at one time owned by Equitable Bank) is an inspiration to other developers that affordable housing is both viable in Milwaukee's CBD as well as a vital part of filling the workforce needs of the expanding downtown marketplace.

On May 24, 2018, the Historic Germania Building Redevelopment was one of the winners in the 21<sup>st</sup> annual Mayor's Design Awards in Milwaukee, WI. The Germania was awarded in the Test of Time category as a project that has added value to the city by restoring or reusing their property in a way that preserves and enhances the character of their neighborhood and reinforces the traditional

## The Restoration of the Germania Building in Milwaukee

neighborhood fabric. This project will help preserve the city's built environment and architectural legacy for future generations.

The redevelopment of the Germania Building also won a Milwaukee Business Journal 2018 Real Estate Award on April 12, 2018. The awards focus on the best real estate deals and projects completed in 2017 covering Milwaukee, Kenosha, Ozaukee, Racine, Walworth, Washington and Waukesha counties.

Visual aids provided

1. Photos of the development
2. Media stories about the Germania Building:

**Building Wisconsin Documentary - August 2017:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fr0SJGCD7EE>

**2017 CBS 58 TV news report – October 2017:**

<https://cbs58.com/news/historic-germania-building-represents-new-history-in-downtown-milwaukee>

**Milwaukee Journal Sentinel news video with photos – June 2017:**

<https://www.jsonline.com/videos/money/blogs/land-and-space/2017/06/22/land-and-space-new-apartments-germania-building/103110132/>

**Milwaukee Independent – December 16, 2016:**

<http://www.milwaukeeindependent.com/articles/germania-restoration-a-template-for-building-a-better-milwaukee/>

**Milwaukee Independent photo essay - December**

**2016:** <http://www.milwaukeeindependent.com/photos/photo-essay-inside-the-germania-building/>

The Germania was referenced in an article in Affordable Housing News Magazine, winter of 2017.

Article begins on Page 38:

<http://www.affordablehousingnews.com/issues/winter2017/>



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