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WALLACE ROBERTS & TODD A PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

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A Plan for the Future

Produced by Chuck McKenna & Written by Tony Ware

“A lot of firms operate with a big ‘A’ and a little ‘p,’ doing architecture with some planning,” explains Richard Bartholomew, a principal of sustainable design firm Wallace Roberts & Todd (WRT). “At Wallace Roberts & Todd we are at the core a consummate architecture firm, but we also have planning with a big ‘P,’ as well as landscape architecture.”

“We’re involved in physically planning where things should be from an urban design perspective, and this can lead to and support architecture,” continues Bartholomew. “But we’re also involved in comprehensive policy-related community planning – identifying where growth should be, assisting zoning, and consulting with communities on how to deal with new sustainability initiatives, such as energy conservation, reducing water runoff, laying and maintaining green streets, dealing with transportation issues, etc. Both architecture and planning are professions unto themselves, and we provide comprehensive services for both.”

Founded in 1963, WRT has established itself throughout the past 47 years as a nationally and internationally recognized pioneer dedicated to

not just buildings but overall site and landscape development for a diverse roster of clients. With nearly 200 employees (including 25 principals) spread between offices in New York, San Francisco, San Diego, Dallas, Lake Placid, Coral Gables and Philadelphia (home to over 130), WRT has garnered a broad perspective and respect for natural resources that imbue the resulting habitats with both local heritage and national relevance.

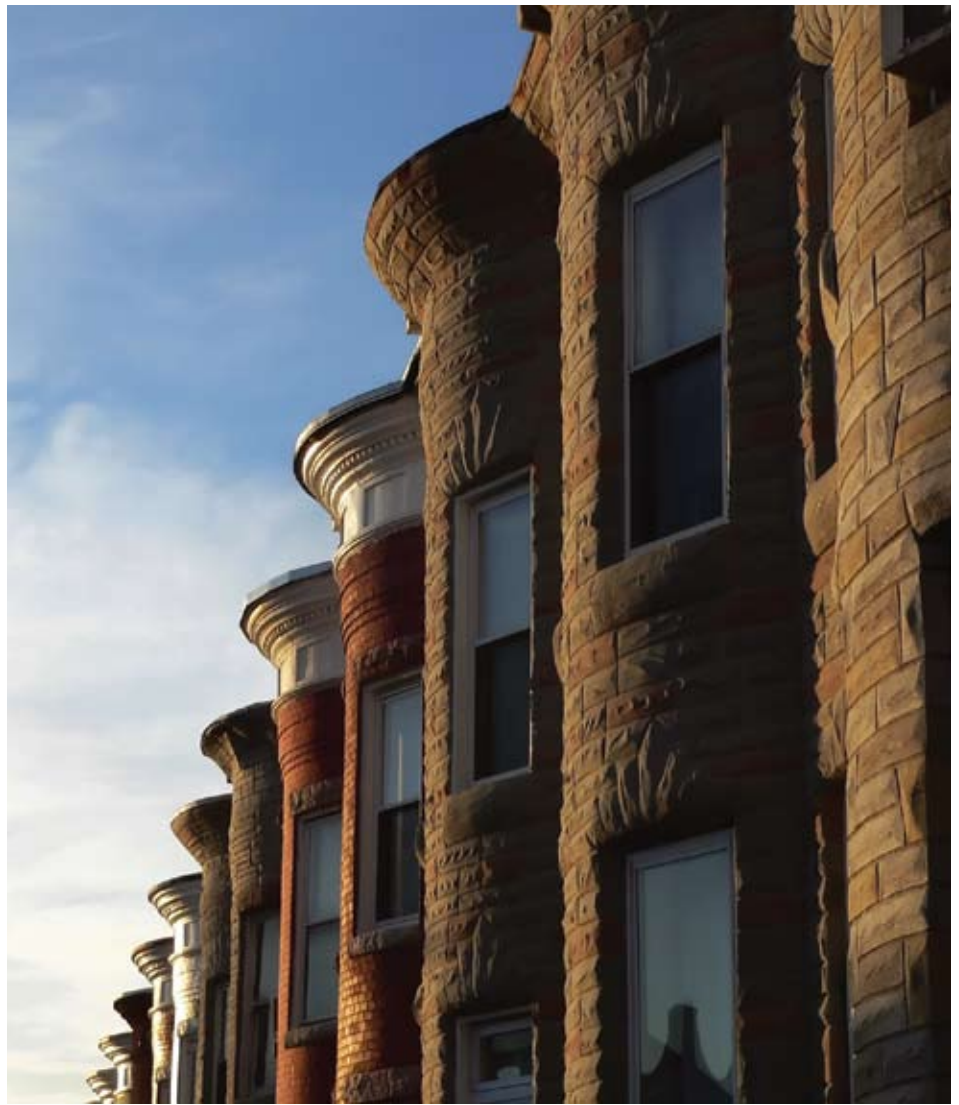
The firm’s work extends across virtually every sector – K-12 and higher educational, healthcare, cultural & civic, affordable multi-family housing, urban/waterfront/open space landscapes, mixed use, and more – and this expansive foundation has assured the firm’s capability to weather economic storms, generating upwards of \$23 million in annual revenue.

Naturally Disciplined Designs

Wallace Roberts & Todd began as WMRT, an acronym for founders David A. Wallace, Ian L. McHarg, William H. Roberts and Thomas A. Todd. And from initiation the firm has proven its commitment to interdisciplinary and ecological design [in 1969 McHarg even published *Design with Nature*, an ecological study on how to reconcile the built environment with nature to establish a self-renewing relationship]. For example, WRT’s heritage award-winning master plan for the Baltimore, Md., Inner Harbor offered this facet of the city a lasting identity that integrated traffic-sheltered public space that was both stylistic and logical. Additionally, the firm did the environmentally oriented Plan for the Valleys located north of Baltimore.



To Bartholomew, director of the Philadelphia headquarters (notably, the first LEED Gold project in Philly), this engagement with enriching urban planning has been a lifelong occupation. Bartholomew came to WRT in 1978 with 10 years previous experience and a master's in architecture from the University of Pennsylvania. Bartholomew had benefited from a fellowship to study abroad in the 1960s, during a period when new town development outside of London and in Scandinavia was still experiencing a post-post-WWII boom. On his return to the States, Bartholomew began work with David Crane and Associates, through whom he found that the federal government was showing much interest in this movement of suburban environmental design, which would result in Bartholomew working on settlements expanding around Washington, D.C., in both Maryland and Virginia, as well as throughout New York State, among other locations.



After a few more years in the mid-1970s of studying abroad and teaching, Bartholomew returned to the States in the employ of WMRT, which was part of a joint venture called the International Planning Associates. A number of firms, including WMRT, were completing a master plan for the new capital of Nigeria (now called Abuja), which would be a city planned for three million and developed on virgin, politically neutral territory in a similar manner as Brasilia. This experience was just the beginning of Bartholomew's further insight into the many aspects of infrastructure to keep in

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consideration during large-scale urban development, an insight that has helped lead WRT to where it is today.

“The firm works across nine market sectors, and is always working through committees within the firm to cut across the offices and allow people in different disciplines to work in multiple areas of interest,” reflects Bartholomew. “Disciplines don’t operate as separate cost or business centers within the firm; in order to inspire collaboration, we allow strategies to develop from several perspectives.”

WRT’s highly respected master plans and urban revitalization stratagems have resulted in work ranging from a campus design for the Germantown Academy in Fort Washington, Penn., to the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative in Washington, D.C., and from restoring landscape in and around the Jefferson Memorial and Georgetown Waterfront Park to facilities for the U.S. House of Representatives. The projects that WRT undertakes are far from minor, and can involve everything from complete conceptual control to reestablishing missing pieces of a historical proposal, as was the case in implementing some of L’Enfant’s plans for the South Capitol area, mixed with contemporary sustainable landscape architecture. The firm’s expertise in use of space is paramount, with only engineering not being handled in-house.

As an example of master-planning, WRT recently designed the Ursinus College Residence Halls in Collegeville, Penn., drafting a building containing 143 beds in a mix of suites, plus traditional single and double rooms, as well as flexible common spaces



Since our founding in 1968, JMA has been on the leading edge in the specialized fields of historic preservation and cultural resource management. JMA enjoys a national reputation for assisting a wide variety of clients in restoration and energy-efficient retrofit, Tax Act certification, geo-scientific prospecting, and archeological/historical regulatory compliance support, among other services. We are proud of our role in melding the needs of contemporary development with a respect for our historical antecedents, and look forward to meeting similar challenges in the future.

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that can double as overflow seminar facilities. Future phases will ultimately result in three residential villages offering 500 new student housing units constructed in increments that don't disrupt current occupancy.

In the realm of mixed-use development, the David Brower Center & Oxford Plaza in Berkeley, Calif., showcases WRT's ability to achieve a high-level LEED rating (in this case Platinum) in a project combining office, conference, low-income family housing, retail, restaurant, gallery and parking space. This was achieved through a combination of technologies and techniques related to siting, daylighting, natural ventilation, structure, photovoltaic power generation and solar hot water.

While the Fraser Centre at State College in State College, Penn., mediates the relationship between campus planning and urban mixed-use building, offering an advanced structure to the community that features high-performance enclosure systems, a green roof, a water collection tank for irrigation of the roof, high-efficiency HVAC system, low VOC and high recycled content materials for the interior finishes, and other features.

Blending Many Schools of Thought

When helming these multi-faceted projects, WRT benefits from having a diverse staff, members of which originally hail from 20 different countries and five continents. Additionally, many of the WRT offices are located in academic areas for architecture, and many principals are faculty at universities. This facilitates a beneficial relationship, where WRT staff is involved in workshops, and internship programs can help when recruiting for the ever growing and greening staff (over half of which is made up of LEED Accredited Professionals, a number always on the up).

WRT also enjoys being involved in charter school programs, engaging students across ethnic and economic groups to show them the opportunities that are available (as well as helping direct administrations of all sorts to programs that can be fundable and promote sustainability). Another association that benefits the firm is the American Institute of Architects (AIA), through whose nonprofit arm WRT offers pro bono services and earmarks funds for community design collaboratives. In general, WRT promotes problem solving across all strata.

As exhibited throughout decades of decorated service, Wallace Roberts & Todd continues to lay the blueprint for firms that provide a sense of community both in the physical and philosophical sense, both within and without. ■


COMPANY AT A GLANCE

ESTABLISHED : 1963
PRINCIPLE: RICHARD BARTHOLOMEW
ANNUAL REVENUE : \$23 MILLION
EMPLOYEES : 200

WWW.WRTDESIGN.COM

"Best wishes Wallace Roberts & Todd for your continued success."

The Charlottesville Transit Center is one of many successful LEED (GOLD) projects, which have been achieved through the collaboration of the architects from Wallace Robert & Todd and the structural engineers of David Chou & Associates. For over fifteen years, DC&A has provided structural engineering services on a wide range of institutional, commercial, and housing projects. DC&A structural engineering services include all aspects of a project, with the goal being to provide overall cost-effective buildings.



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