



FilBen Group, RSF Partners, McAlpine and H2M construct \$54 million residence

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Montebello, NY Owner/developer FilBen Group, equity partner RSF Partners, general contractor McAlpine Contracting (McAlpine), and designer H2M Architects + Engineers (H2M) have completed the structural system and building enclosure, or “envelope,” for Braemar at Montebello. Upon full completion in 2024, the Braemar property will be a 200-resident, four-level, 133,675 s/f, assisted living residence located on 6.2 acres at 250 Lafayette Ave.

The property is close to Harriman State Park in Rockland County. The property is adjacent to a larger site that includes the town commercial center, which will offer Braemar’s residents access to retail, entertainment, dining, and medical services within close proximity of their home. The Braemar

property also neighbors the Good Samaritan Hospital – Suffern in Montebello, a part of Bon Secours Charity Health System (BSCHS), a member of the Westchester Medical Center Health Network (WMC Health).

The total development cost of the project is \$54 million, including \$36 million in construction cost. The owner/developer is a partnership between FilBen Group and RSF Partners. M&T Bank provided a \$34.8 million construction loan. The development will receive sales tax exemption of up to \$1,976,809 for state and local sales taxes as well as a mortgage recording exemption in the amount of \$360,055.

Braemar is a brand of FilBen-owned and operated senior living communities. The first property, the Braemar at Medford, opened its doors in 2008. The Braemar at Wallkill in Middletown, the second property to open under the brand, welcomed its first residents in 2015. The Montebello community will be the third Braemar-branded residence when it opens in 2024. H2M designed the Braemar Wallkill property and is currently working with FilBen on the design of the Carmel development. FilBen plans to begin construction of its fourth property, a 152-bed assisted living community in Carmel, in the coming months.

Additional team members include site engineer Booker Engineering, landscape designer Robert Torgersen, LA; mechanical/electrical/plumbing (MEP) engineer Fellenzer Engineering LLP; and structural engineer Mulhern+Kulp Residential Structural Engineering.

“The development site is long, narrow, and sloped, which created design challenges as well. The building footprint is elongated and fairly shallow to match the property configuration,” said Mark McKee, AIA, H2M senior architect. “Large areas of glazing will draw natural light into all of the interiors and will offer grander views than those typical available in other senior residences.”

Project design drawn from site and local architectural influences

“Today we celebrate an important construction milestone for the new Braemar Montebello community. We expect senior residents of Rockland County, the Lower Hudson Valley, as well as the greater New York area and northern New Jersey, to be attracted to the active lifestyle and luxurious amenities that this community will offer. The property will open to residents next year,” said Richard Filaski, managing director of FilBen Group.

“This \$54 million project will add a beautiful, high quality senior care residence for the Montebello and Rockland County communities,” said McAlpine vice president John Nolan. “Because of the location of the building on a sloping site, which will offer breathtaking views to the residents, the project presented several technical and logistical challenges to the construction and design team. For example, construction of foundations and the structural system had to proceed in a phased, staggered manner to accelerate the schedule, while addressing access and site engineering complexities.”

“The property slopes significantly from a high point at the south toward a low point at the north, and

the linear building plan has been placed perpendicular to the line of the slope, with three levels above grade to the south and an additional lower level above grade to the north,” said Nolan. The building plan has a central section and two symmetrical wings that bends from that section toward the north. A port cochere and circular vehicular drop off will be centered in the south façade on the main level, on grade with the main parking lot to the south and a staff parking lot and service entrance to the east. Active outdoor resident areas will be located at both the north and south building facades, while hiking paths will span the grounds.

Victorian-era buildings in the surrounding area provided the design inspiration for the building façade. Simulated wood look horizontal beveled siding in a neutral palette will be combined with stone veneers at the main level facing the outdoor patios and on the upper levels above the entrance. Columns with stone veneer bases will support the pitched roof of the porte-cochère. Windows will be in a traditional double-hung style. The roof will feature pitched mansard sections on the perimeter and reverse gables with decorative trim to invoke a Victorian aesthetic.

Proactive construction modifications expedited project schedule and reduce costs.

McAlpine has developed a phased process of excavation, starting at the east and moving west, in order to accelerate the project. A poured concrete foundation supports exterior load bearing concrete masonry unit (CMU) walls, concrete plank floors and roof, and light gauge metal stud interior walls. The slope was excavated in order to place the structure. “Once the first section was excavated and foundations were poured, the structure above that foundation section was installed. The process was repeated and continued as excavation proceeded on to the next section, and then repeated again down the entire length of the building footprint,” said David Nicklas, McAlpine’s project executive. By applying this logistical solution, McAlpine has shortened project completion by four weeks.

“Several façade and structural systems were considered for the project. The McAlpine team worked with H2M to select the most economical solution that would also be impervious to supply chain delays. The joined teams selected bearing concrete masonry unit (CMU) walls and concrete plank floors to meet the budget and to expedite the construction schedule,” said McAlpine project manager Vitrag Shah.

McAlpine’s project team also includes Superintendents Diego Portillo and Balfore Brown.

Interior spaces are designed for interactive community living

The building will feature shared public spaces on the main, second, and third levels. A total of 133 residential units – 66 private, one-person studio units of approximately 400 s/f each, 14 one-bedroom units with open concept living room and 53 two-bedroom semi-private “Friendship” units both approximately 600 s/f each – will be located throughout the community’s four levels. Of these, 12 private and 10 Friendship units will be located on the lower level in a memory care section. The private units are studios with kitchenettes and private baths. The Friendship units have two bedrooms that share a kitchenette and bathroom. All kitchenettes and bathrooms are barrier-free

and include roll-in showers.

The visitor entrance on the main level will lead from the south parking lot into a two-story, 22-foot high cathedral-ceilinged atrium with a stone and wood reception desk, a tiled fireplace, and comfortable seating. Behind the desk, a feature wall in a curved wood pattern will evoke the Braemar logo. Beyond the reception area, a C-shaped grand staircase with metal balusters in a geometric pattern, a wood handrail, decorative trimwork and wall art will extend to the second level. A corridor will lead past the grand stair to the main double loaded corridor that bisects the floor. Two passenger elevators, one service elevator, and two additional stairs will provide vertical access and emergency egress to all levels.

Administrative offices will be located adjacent to the reception area, but the majority of the remaining spaces in the central section and east wing of the main level will be occupied by common spaces. The primary public space is the 3,500 s/f main dining room that extends out from the north façade to offer stunning 180-degree views of the surrounding vistas. A private dining room will also be available for celebrations and private dinners.

Along the south façade, a 1,200 s/f pub and game room will offer lounge seating, game tables, a fireplace, televisions, and direct access to a billiard room. The pub will open onto the south terrace, where residents will be able to enjoy outdoor seating surrounded by a pergola, gazebo, and raised planting beds; stroll along walking paths; and even play a game of giant chess. Additional shared spaces include a billiard room, café, business lounge, general store, arts and crafts room with a sink and art tables, family lounge with an adjacent kids' room, beauty salon, and coffee shop. The fitness center will be located adjacent to the wellness center, which will be equipped with a waiting area, exam room, medication room, offices for the director and staff, and a records storage room.

The east wing will also include a commercial kitchen and food preparation area that services the entire property, as well as a receiving area for deliveries, a service lobby, and a staff lounge. The west wing will contain eight private and five Friendship rooms for a total of 26 beds.

On the second level, common areas will include a 940 s/f parlor that will open onto a 1,000 s/f outdoor terrace with a pedestal paver system, decorative planters and comfortable seating for enjoying the views. The parlor will share a double-sided fireplace with the adjacent 510 s/f library. A 1,080 s/f cinema and a chapel will complete the public spaces. The floor will contain 22 private rooms, six one-bedrooms and 18 Friendship rooms for a total of 70 beds.

A large number of common spaces were included in the design to encourage social interaction and provide multiple options for entertainment and engagement. The private dining room, family room and kid's room will allow residents to include their families in their lifestyle. Lectures and other special events, some of which will be open to outside attendees, will connect Braemar residents to

the neighboring community.

The third level floor plan is similar to the second, with a lounge and shared laundry room as well as 24 private rooms, eight one-bedrooms and 20 Friendship rooms for a total of 80 beds.

A portion of the lower terrace level will house the memory care unit. This level will offer views to the natural landscape down the slope and beyond the property, with full exposure to natural light that will permeate the building interior. The level will contain 12 private units and 10 Friendship, two-bedroom units for a total of 32 beds. A dining and activity room will be centered in the footprint directly under the main level dining room above and will be wrapped with glass to provide similar views. Two lounges – one with an exit to the north terrace, the other a quiet space – will provide additional social interaction. A circular staff desk with an integral medication room will provide oversight of the dining room and corridors. An exam room and therapy room complete the unit. The exterior terrace will be provided with comfortable lounge and dining furniture and will be protected by secure fencing.

Maintenance and staff areas, separated from the residential units by dedicated service corridors, will occupy the north side of the lower level. These spaces include men's and women's locker rooms, laundry center, housekeeping storage, and medical waste room. Mechanical equipment rooms, maintenance shop, and server room area also located in this area.

Interior design mirrors the surrounding landscape

FilBen's in-house designer, Jessica Cotellese, was responsible for the interior design and aesthetic of the facility. According to Cotellese, "The interior design inspiration came from the environment, including the water and proximity to the Hudson River and lush greenery of the various local state parks." The intent is to create a visual landscape connecting all the elements - the environment, community, and the residents. The wall finishes and flooring in the common areas will include wood-look LVT, commercial grade carpeting, sheet vinyl, wallcovering, and a palette of nature-inspired colors. There will be accents of ceramic tile, and reclaimed wood fireplace mantels.

"The materials will provide a soft visual background to layer upon with organic and geometric patterns. This will be seen in the decorative architectural elements, including focal walls and wood screening to furnishings, fabrics, and artwork. The patterns will mimic what one sees in the local landscape, such as river stones, the ripple of water, or a view through the trees," continued Cotellese. Saturated pops of greens, blues, oranges, and purples will provide accents and offset the neutral paint tones and natural materials. The common area spaces are designed so that residents will have visual connections to the activities around them, even if they are not personally engaged.

Residences are also designed to be bright and welcoming with large windows that will provide natural light and expansive views. Bedrooms will feature wood-look LVT flooring in neutral tones to match the soft blues and beiges of the walls and provides seamless transitions and flow throughout the units. Kitchens will feature the same LVT flooring, wooden cabinetry, refrigerators, and microwaves. Ceilings will be a combination of drywall and finished concrete plank. Bathrooms will

have sheet vinyl flooring with a stone texture and accessible fixtures, including roll-in showers. Furniture will be provided, however residents will be able to either replace or complement the provided fixtures with cherished pieces from their previous homes and install their own window treatments.

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