



2300-2352 W. JEFFERSON STREET, PHILADELPHIA

HELP Philadelphia VI

HELP DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

HERITAGE CONSULTING GROUP; KRAMER + MARKS ARCHITECTS; DOMUS; DCI+MACINTOSH ENGINEERS;
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The adaptive reuse of vacant school buildings is a perennial favorite of Preservation Alliance Grand Juries. This year's lesson in class is an Art Deco elementary school in the Sharswood neighborhood of North Philly, designed in 1926 by the School District's go-to architect, Irwin T. Catharine. Decommissioned in 2013, the former General John F. Reynolds School has returned to active duty as 55 apartments for homeless and low-income veterans, seniors, and people with disabilities. Accessibility was a primary focus of this public / private venture. A new main entrance and the insertion of elevators in place of a stairwell were necessary, but the building has good bones and the classrooms, corridors, offices, and auditorium were well-suited for conversion to residential use. The team, led by HELP USA, which has opened six affordable housing projects in Philadelphia, was committed to restoring the fluted columns, classical entablature, limestone parapet, and terracotta ornamentation of the original entrance and many interior features. Historically appropriate windows were inserted throughout, and existing interior storefront windows were retained and fire-rated on the classroom side, as were existing transoms. Now called the Brigadier General Hazel Johnson Brown Veterans Center, after the first African American female general in the U.S. Army, the project is a five-star part of the revitalization of the Sharswood Blumberg neighborhood.

