

# REBUILDING LIVABLE, ENDURING COMMUNITIES

## Using Rehabilitation as Framework for Revitalization



*Historic*



*Before*



*After*

### THE CHAMBERLIN

Fort Monroe / Old Point Comfort, VA

#### SYNOPSIS

The Chamberlin, built in 1928, was once a grand hotel facing the Hampton Roads harbor at the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay. Located on the Army Post at Fort Monroe, its strategic placement and panoramic water views are unmatched. The hotel was once a thriving tourist destination with tourists arriving by steamship at an adjacent wharf. Today, the wharf is gone and with it, tourist traffic has diminished over time. In the early 1990s, the hotel ceased operation, leaving 200,000 square feet vacant. Concurrently, BRAC (Base Realignment Commission) was considering the closure of Fort Monroe as an active Army Post. Knowing of the potential for closure, it became incumbent to find a new vibrant use for the former hotel that could also serve as a catalyst for the re-development of the surrounding 565 acre post.

As a former resident of the community, Robert Mills was actively engaged with the development team, the Fort Monroe Authority and City leaders in finding a new and sustainable reuse for the former hotel. It was determined that a senior living use best fulfilled the unusual requirements and unique circumstances surrounding the project. With a commitment to his community, a dedication to the reuse of this historic landmark, a respect for its history and a keen interest in the future of Fort Monroe, Mills served as the project principal in charge of the adaptive reuse.

In 2008, the rehabilitation of the Chamberlin (phase I) was completed for use as the Independent Living component of the Senior Living Community. On an adjacent, vacant lot, a new, compatible infill building (phase II) has been designed for a future Assisted Living component with parking deck. In 2010, the Army vacated Fort Monroe and through an Act of the Virginia General Assembly, assigned control to the Fort Monroe Authority. In 2011, President Obama made the fortress, which is steeped in some of our nation's pivotal history, a National Monument. The rejuvenated Chamberlin is serving as the centerpiece for the conversion of Fort Monroe to civilian use and as a catalyst for the repopulation of the immediate village adjacent to the hotel.

#### DESIGN FIRM

#### COMMONWEALTH ARCHITECTS

#### COMPLETION DATE

2008

#### ROLE OF NOMINEE

Project Principal

#### AWARDS

2009 Design Excellence Award – Multi-Housing News  
2009 APVA Preservation Award – Outstanding Commercial Project Award  
2008 Hampton Association for Commercial Real Estate – Best Renovated Historic Rehabilitation Excellence in Design  
2008 National Active Retirement Association – Gold Award for Small Active Adult Retirement Community

#### PUBLICATIONS

2008 The Virginian Pilot "A New Lease on Life"  
2008 National AIA "Projects of Note"  
2008 The Daily Press "A Grand Restoration"



*"A grand restoration. When it comes to ranking Hampton Roads most prominent landmarks, it's hard to beat the historic Chamberlin Hotel"*

Mark St. John Erickson  
The Daily Press





"A long-neglected and crumbling landmark has been carefully restored to its former glory and given a new and productive reuse. Moreover, the Chamberlin project comes at a critical time, setting an example of the highest standards of work and of the possibilities ahead at Fort Monroe as that National Historic Landmark property is transferred out of the hands of the Army in 2011."

Kathleen S. Kilpatrick, Director of the VA  
Department of Historic Resources

