



## Fr. Bach Haven

Spokane, WA

From the very beginning, the Fr. Bach Haven building in downtown Spokane, Washington was built on years of dreams and limited funds. When project architects from Spokane-based Heylman Martin Architects set out to design a building that could both support those dreams and come within budget, they needed a material that could be durable, fireproof and inexpensive. "There was no better choice for the exterior material for the project than concrete masonry units", architects wrote of their building which received an award in the Eastern Washington Masonry Design Awards Program. The jury commented, "This is an unusual, creative use of CMU - a new idea. The building was constructed with a high level of cooperation and coordination".



The Fr. Bach Haven was a project of Catholic Charities Spokane, named for Frank Bach the 56-year Spokane-area Monsignor with a heart for the poor. A dedication plaque in the building acknowledges him as a pastor, leader, builder and dreamer. The dream was to tackle Spokane's chronic homelessness by providing long-term, low cost apartments for men and women who found themselves stuck on the streets. The 35,000 square foot building with 51 apartment units, was constructed using low-income housing tax credit funding. It was important for the design to be budget conscious while providing durability and simplifying long-term maintenance.

"Concrete masonry provides a great opportunity for the building to perform like a tank but have some unique aesthetics," said project architect Ryan Bollinger. "CMU ties nicely into the urban fabric. It provides the opportunity to stand out from the neighboring brick buildings while still looking like it belongs".





The building currently offers what architects term a “sculptural quality” by using not only different colors (including charcoal, desert tan and burgundy red), but a mix of smooth face, split-face and ground-face masonry units to vary the look of the building.

The project site used to be simply railroad frontage in a poor part of town. Now, for 51 men and women in need, it is simply home, a change Heylman Martin attributes to the perfect match of building material and need.

“The building is efficient, pragmatic and economical in every sense,” the architects wrote of the project. “It’s a winning equation to be able to achieve elegance through simplicity; this is what concrete masonry achieved for us in this project.”



The major factor for architects was masonry’s durability, which they called the “sole litmus test” for the choice of building material. Masonry would survive the tests of time well and keep tenants from suffering the ill effects of a building in need of maintenance. Smoking is not allowed in the units, but due to the heavy cigarette use among prospective tenants, the possibility of fire was considered as well. While fire will destroy wood frame construction, masonry will not burn.

“The practical choice of concrete masonry units delivered the project within the requisite budget in a high-quality structure, while providing dignity and community to the homeless in an economically depressed neighborhood in Spokane,” Heylman Martin said.

The choice of masonry proved not only practical but beautiful, as architects allowed the masons the creative freedom to work with the color and texture possibilities of their medium. The split-face, three color blend was laid at random by the masons and the ground-face section was laid in a repeating pattern.

**CREDITS**

**OWNER** Catholic Charities Spokane

**ARCHITECT** Heylman Martin Architects

**STRUCTURAL ENGINEER** Structural Design Northwest

**GENERAL CONTRACTOR** Garco Construction

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