

# Builder/Architect



**Feinberg &  
Associates P.C.**

Supporting Homes for Our Troops

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## Supporting Homes for Our Troops

By Joseph Di Bernardo

### BUILDERS TAP ARCHITECT'S MARKET-BASED APPROACH TO HOME DESIGNS

This September will mark the 20th anniversary of Feinberg & Associates, a firm that has grown over the years into what is today one of the most respected architectural design firms

**Homes for Our Troops has built over 20 homes across the country for disabled veterans. The returning disabled vet and his wife here are pictured in front of the home that Homes for Our Troops built for them in Montana. In New Jersey, two homes are currently "in the works."**



PHOTO COURTESY HOMES FOR OUR TROOPS

servicing residential, commercial and mixed-use builder/developers up and down the East Coast.

Bill Feinberg recently looked back at the growth and expansion of his firm, and felt very proud of what he and his staff, many of them longtime veterans with the company, have accomplished. The company's professional history is a story filled with so many firm-designed award-winning projects. Feinberg & Associates has provided comprehensive design services for just about every one of the major residential real estate development companies and builders in the East. From initial site design and the important role the company played in approval processing, to their market-based approach to the refinement of product lines, they have made a major mark in the industry through the ups and downs in the market's cycles.

As the company approached the start of its third decade in business, Bill Feinberg wanted to do something to show appreciation for all of the successes he and the company have had in working on so many high-profile development projects with their clients. When he inquired about a worthwhile charitable cause, that was in some way related to the housing industry, Rick Van Osten at the Builders League of South Jersey; Maritza McGhee, the show manager of the Atlantic Builders Convention; and several individuals from the New Jersey Builders Association all pointed to the same organization: Homes for Our Troops.



PHOTO BY GEORGE MOORE PHOTOGRAPHY

This attractive dining room is a Feinberg design featured in the Eaton III model at Wildflowers at Walkill by Orleans Homebuilders in Orange County, NY.

## HOMES FOR OUR TROOPS: A WORTHWHILE CAUSE LINKED TO HOUSING

Many people in our business have not heard of this extraordinary nonprofit organization. As Bill and his associates learned more and more about the Taunton, MA-based group, and read about how they are now active in 30 states doing their good works for disabled veterans, they decided this would be the right group to assist.

In 2003, John Gonsalves had an idea to build homes, one house at a time, for veterans of the armed forces who were returning from either Iraq or Afghanistan severely disabled—many of them as amputees or blind. “It is not the military that was attacked, it’s us—the citizens of the United States,” said Gonsalves. “We need to take notice, and we needed to stand up for the people that are standing up, fighting for us.” That was the beginning of Homes for Our Troops.

As John carries his message to the public, his team has been busy building or retrofitting 23 homes and has another 20 in the planning stages in numerous states. In New Jersey, two residences are now in the planning stages, one in the New

Milford area of Bergen County and one in the Wrightstown area near Trenton.

Homes for Our Troops now has a staff of 11 and has been recognized nationally from the White House to the state and local levels. They have been featured on *Extreme Home Makeover*, and their efforts continue to receive support and recognition from the building industry.

## REDESIGNING, REPOSITIONING, REPACKAGING—A TREND FROM FEINBERG’S BUILDER-DEVELOPERS

One of the longtime relationships that Feinberg & Associates has enjoyed has been with Jeffrey Orleans and Orleans Homebuilders. Gary Stefanoni, Senior Executive Vice President of the firm, recently reviewed how Orleans is facing the challenges of this current real estate market. He described how the company is working with Feinberg’s market-based design approach to redirect its sales and marketing efforts as it looks to the next cycle in the market.

“In order to succeed in this current market, we, at Orleans,



**Sharbell's Washington Town Center in Robbinsville, NJ, is a special mixed-use development featuring a great combination of retail and residential components.**

are working hand in hand with Feinberg's architects to redesign, repackages, reposition and reintroduce new products that are specifically directed at the individual buyers and their needs," commented Stefanoni. The company now focuses on a home site-to-home site, buyer-to-buyer, house-by-house and community-by-community approach, where in the past, a broad-stroke generic basis worked. He went on to say, "We started our redesigning at the curb to enhance each house and added personalization as a means of attracting buyers, and we are, indeed, selling! The company has now developed, with Feinberg & Associates, new products and new price points that are achieving acceptable absorption rates in our communities."

Orleans has added amenities such as a hearth room that is larger than the former breakfast nooks and morning rooms that were attached to kitchens. This new concept allows for a larger, longer table where the family can gather around a fireplace. It is family space or quiet space for reading or relaxing. The firm has also sometimes added bedroom options, or in an upper loft area, a gathering place for family members. Buyers have been given more flexibility and more choices.

Bill Feinberg added, "In working with Orleans, we got their message. What used to work as 'one size fits all' is no longer acceptable in this current marketplace. Our company now works with the staff of Orleans to recognize the sensitivities

of local markets, and that is how we approach our designs." Gary Stefanoni concluded, "We will continue to make improvements and feel that this is the way our business and the industry is going to work in the future. With a philosophy like this, everyone benefits—from builders to buyers."

## **WHAT WORKS NOW IS WHAT YOU BUILD AND HOW YOU BUILD IT!**

Another longtime Feinberg & Associates client relationship has been with Sharbell Development Corporation. Thomas Troy, Senior Vice President, and an architect by profession, has enjoyed working with Bill Feinberg and his staff over the years. Troy also recently discussed with Bill Feinberg how his firm is working the current market.

"We have found that if we give good value, combined with a good location, we do well not only in pre-sales but once we are into the full-blown marketing and sales position with respect to any development. What helps spur this market along is what you build and how you build it," commented Troy.

Sharbell's Washington Town Center in Robbinsville, NJ, is a prime example of what is working well for this company. The mixed-use development currently includes 672 completed units at the site, with a total of 875 planned units for the site when it reaches completion. There are currently about 1,800 residents already living at Washington Town Center. From great eateries to fine clothing boutiques, the development is thriving. And there is such a great variety of good places to eat—from Maggie Moo's Ice Cream & Treatery to fine dining at Santino's Bar One or the more casual, and very popular, DeLorenzo's Tomato Pies, which often has a line out the door!

"At Washington Town Center and another Sharbell mixed-use development, Eastampton Village Center in Burlington County, offering quality homes in great neighborhoods and at fair prices is continuing our success," added Troy. "We are optimistic about the future of the housing market and continue to plan for future communities with diligent market research in order to provide our buyers with the best homes possible. We are focusing on mixed-use and age-targeted

neighborhoods, as well as working with Feinberg to bring the best product lines to the marketplace.”

## **PRC RE-MARKETS WITH THE “ULTIMATE PERSONALIZATION”**

The PRC Group of Monmouth County, headed by Bob Kaye, has also worked for many years with Feinberg & Associates on a host of development projects. Greg Lentine, Vice President of Sales, like other representatives of residential development companies, echoed the same sentiment when asked about how PRC is dealing with the current market.

“We have been retooling our product lines with Feinberg’s architects so that buyers can purchase homes more efficiently,” said Lentine. “In the past,” he explained, “buyers bought much

larger homes in the 4,000 and 5,000 square foot range with so many features and design elements that they really did not need. Plus, they were paying a higher tax rate and spending dollars to heat and air-condition homes that were really oversized.” He went on to say that the new PRC homes on the market have been reengineered, and these new designs allow buyers to start with a basic core and add only those features that they feel are important. “Buyers can now work within their budget and can customize their homes. This is the ultimate personalization of a residence,” he concluded.

## **A UNIQUE TEAM LOCKS ARMS**

For many years Joe Di Bernardo had worked with Feinberg & Associates as he led many of the region’s largest privately

**Heather Glen in Scotch Plains, NJ, features very attractive single-family residences designed by Feinberg & Associates in this PRC Group’s Active Adult Community.**





PHOTO BY JOHN MARTINELLI PHOTOGRAPHY

**He's got dirt, deals and divestitures. Real estate development consultant Joe Di Bernardo unearths a lot of interesting sites for builder-developers and works with Bill Feinberg on repackaging properties.**

held development firms in the construction of many large re-development projects. Now, this former client of the company works, in close association with his former architect, to bring targeted sites to the acquisition teams of local, regional and national development companies.

Di Bernardo recently stated, "This is such a natural relationship that has developed. Bill Feinberg and his staff are excellent site designers, and when a property is initially being evaluated by a development firm, Feinberg & Associates are excellent in calculating density factors and suggesting product lines and a

unit mix. Their knowledge of the marketplace, due to their constant and broad exposure to so many builder-developers, is what gives them the ability to make constructive comments on property—even at the pre-due diligence stage."

Another current trend Di Bernardo noted recently, that was more rare, is the growing trend of development companies to share financial risk by entering into joint venture partnerships and setting up affiliations in the marketplace.

"As a developer, with land so scarce and the approval process so expensive and time consuming, I never would have dreamed of sharing projects with my competitor, yet here I am making these corporate marriages happen," added Di Bernardo.

There is also a lot of divestiture of property from company's portfolios as they sell off sometimes approved and improved development sites in order to increase cash flow and reduce debt. "Many of these properties come to my attention each week and I spend a great deal of time showing these sites for one development company to another," Di Bernardo said.

## **LOOKING FORWARD TO THE NEXT DECADE**

Bill Feinberg and his staff are gratified that their accomplishments have been well recognized over the years as exemplified by the display cases in the company's lobby featuring dozens of

MAME, SAM and NAHB industry awards. But more important than the trophies on the shelves is the personal sense of satisfaction Bill and his staff have in knowing that their efforts in fine design have resulted in the successful construction of thousands upon thousands of single-family homes, townhouses, condominiums and mixed-use retail developments. And as Bill says, "The best is yet to come!"

*For further information, call Feinberg & Associates, P.C. at (856) 782-100 or click on to their website: [www.feinbergdesign.com](http://www.feinbergdesign.com). ■*