



Residents of St. Michael's discuss their experiences.



Tour of Amethyst apartment unit.

OCTOBER: COMMUNITY & GOVERNMENT

In October, Pillars explored the intersection of architecture, social impact, and community development through a session focused on Kansas City's efforts to support veterans and families. The afternoon began at St. Michael's Veterans Center, where participants were welcomed with an overview of the organization's history, mission, and outreach efforts. Panelists shared stories of how the center has evolved into a holistic campus offering not only housing, but also access to additional community resources. The discussion highlighted how intentional design decisions - such as accessibility, shared gathering spaces, and phased development - contribute directly to residents' sense of dignity and belonging.

Following the presentation, attendees had the opportunity to speak directly with veterans about their experiences living at St. Michael's. Their stories offered a moving perspective on the role of the built environment in supporting stability, recovery, and connection. Edward English, Project Manager at Rosemann & Associates, then led a guided tour of the facility and Phase 3 construction, sharing insight into the technical and logistical challenges of expanding a campus while maintaining daily operations and community continuity.

The group next visited Amethyst Place, a nonprofit organization providing housing and wraparound services for women and children recovering from trauma, substance

use, and poverty. Starla Wulf Brennan, Executive Director, and Sarah Knopf-Amelung, Director of Strategy & Growth, led a discussion on how thoughtful design supports healing and empowerment. They described the organization's recent \$16.5 million expansion, which includes new residential units and dedicated spaces for therapy, education, and family engagement. The conversation emphasized the deep connection between architecture, advocacy, and social change, illustrating how built environments can reflect and reinforce an organization's mission.

The day concluded with a happy hour at Tower Tavern, where members continued their conversations about community-focused design, leadership in the nonprofit sector, and the architect's role as an advocate for equitable and resilient development.

Through this session, Pillars members gained firsthand understanding of how collaborative partnerships and intentional design can transform lives and strengthen Kansas City's social fabric - one building, and one story, at a time.