



Published by the Boston Society of Architects  
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**November/December 2007, Vol. 10 No. 6, "Clients"**

"Graphic Essay: The Innovative Client"

Pages 32–40

In the most innovative projects, creativity begins long before the architect is hired. Here are five profiles of clients who have made a difference.

Barons Place, London, UK. Architect: Proctor and Matthews Architects.  
Modular manufacturer and contractor: Spaceover Group Ltd.  
Photo by Len Cross.

# The Innovative Client

# The Peabody Trust

A chic glass-box housing complex, a carbon-neutral development, and a demountable, re-configurable, modular housing prototype for temporary workers: are these the imaginings of a hip, 20-something designer? Not quite. These projects are real and comprise the newest chapters of the Peabody Trust's development portfolio, a 150-year-old, nonprofit developer and community-building organization based in London. Founded in 1862 by Massachusetts native and philanthropist George Peabody, the Trust works to curb poverty and improve communities in greater London by developing housing and community programs.

One recent focus of the Trust is housing for "key workers" — such as teachers, healthcare workers, police, and firefighters — which will ensure that those who serve a community can afford to live there. The Trust has a knack for tackling projects on multiple fronts, balancing the social, technical, and environmental impacts of its projects and pushing for innovative design solutions that benefit both the tenants of its properties and the communities that contain them. In 2004, the Trust was recognized by the Royal Institute of British Architects with a "Client of the Year" award, which noted the organization's "pioneering work in off-site construction [and] the realization of truly sustainable housing," in reference to its Raines Court project.

The Trust's most internationally recognized project is BedZED, or Beddington Zero-Energy Development, in the Borough of Sutton. Completed in 2002, the 82-home, mixed-use site uses a range of technologies and environmental strategies to maintain its carbon-neutral footprint. Thermal-mass walls and passive solar orientation reduce or eliminate the need for mechanical heating and cooling. Tree-pruning waste helps to fuel a combined heat and power plant, which supplies the site with hot water and electricity.

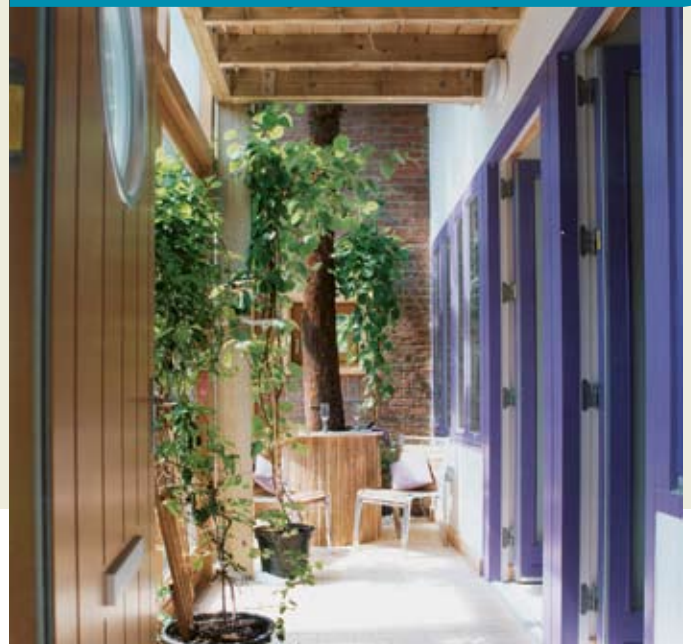
One of the Trust's most interesting experiments in modular construction is Barons Place. Envisioned to house some of the city's temporary health workers, the project uses modular technology to achieve a demountable, reconfigurable housing development, which can be rapidly disassembled and redeployed with the ebb and flow of land values and employment economies. Barons Place is a compact apartment complex of one and three-bedroom rental units and was completed in just 14 weeks; the pre-finished, steel-frame boxes were placed in less than two days.

While the term "temporary worker housing" in the US suggests rural, migrant-worker housing, in the UK, it describes a program for housing key workers who are temporarily assigned to the city. Rarely has the concept of temporary, mobile housing been tested at the level of design requisite for making it successful in urban environments.

The Peabody Trust's work in modular development is serving as a benchmark for other housing associations (nonprofit developers) in London, says architect Andrew Matthews, whose firm, Proctor and Matthews Architects, designed Barons Place. As nonprofits seek new ways of reducing construction time and



**BedZED, Sutton, UK. Architect: Bill Dunster of ZEDFactory/Bill Dunster Architects. Environmental consultants: BioRegional Development Group. Photos courtesy, BioRegional.**



costs without sacrificing the quality of the development, he notes, Trust projects have suggested new design approaches and methodologies.

The Trust is a sophisticated provider of homes that "foster social and economic regeneration" through its commitment to sustainability, innovation, and respect for the people it serves. With its ability to identify and solve social, technical, and environmental development issues, the Peabody Trust is raising standards for affordable housing throughout London.

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