



environments
for aging DINING
COMPETITION



WELCOME TO EFA'S 2025 DINING COMPETITION

DINING SPACES IN senior living communities have become so much more than just places to eat. They serve as hubs for connection, enjoyment, and identity within a community. Recognizing this, *Environments for Aging* is proud to present the winners of its third annual Dining Competition. This annual program celebrates excellence in creating spaces that cater to the diverse needs of residents, support community engagement, and deliver operational efficiency, all while maintaining a high-design aesthetic.

We invited firms and communities to submit recent dining design work. From there, our jury of industry professionals (listed at right) reviewed narratives and images that shared the background on these projects, the resident needs they serve, architecture and interior design strategies, and how the design supports efficient dining operations. Our jury awarded Platinum, Gold, and Silver to the winning submissions. In this special supplement, you'll find a Q+A with members of the Platinum award project team, profiles of the three winning projects, and a gallery of all projects submitted to the program. Dive in for ideas and inspiration! —*Anne DiNardo, editor-in-chief*

THANK YOU TO OUR 2025 DINING COMPETITION JURORS

Matthew Butler, senior design manager, LCS Development

Tom Dillenbeck, executive vice president, Hobbs+Black Architects

Stacy Peters Gardner, principal, Faulkner Design Group

Todd J. Hageman, architect, EverTrue

Ana Impellizeri, capital projects manager, 2Life Communities

Faith Marabella, CEO, principal interior designer, registered architect, Wellesley Design Consultants Inc.

Alisa Pallister, evidence based design advocate, Pallister Nurse Consulting

Lara Pinchbeck, design anthropologist + universal design specialist, Lara Pinchbeck:Research+Design

Amy Smith, senior associate, LRS Architects

Karen Smith, senior interior designer, LNB Studio, Architecture + Interiors

Tanya Snow, regional director, operations, Bria Communities

Galen Vassar, associate principal, Lawrence Group

About the submissions: The Dining Competition submissions come from across the U.S. and cover a variety of construction costs and project scopes. A multidisciplinary panel of invited jurors from *Environments for Aging* reviews the submissions. The panel includes architects, interior designers, providers, and industry consultants. Jurors view the submissions according to their areas of expertise, then rate the submissions and provide comments to help clarify the rationale for the rating before selecting winners. Jurors are excluded from reviewing projects that they or their firms were involved with; jurors who are associated with projects in the finalist round are not permitted to vote for winners. All participants pay a small entry fee and receive coverage of their project in the EFA Dining Competition Digital Download. The top three projects receive expanded coverage on the pages that follow. All write-ups were provided directly by the submitting firms and were not edited for content by the *Environments for Aging* editorial staff.



John Knox Village’s replacement of an outdated, cafeteria-style dining room with five distinct dining venues and a centralized kitchen earns the top Platinum award in *EFA*’s 2025 Dining Competition

by Robert McCune

WHEN JOHN KNOX Village in Pompano Beach, Fla., set out to replace its cafeteria-style dining room to better suit seniors’ needs, the continuing care retirement community wanted to deliver more than a space for dining—it sought a hospitality-driven destination that created moments of connection, autonomy, and joy for residents.

Opened in February 2024, the new dining facility on John Knox’s campus is part of a “experience district” at the heart of the community, connecting dining, wellness, and activities along a new lakefront promenade. The renovation project includes five distinct dining venues that offer variety while also seamlessly blending a cohesive and elevated design to support resident choice and comfort.

The project, submitted to the awards program by Perkins Eastman (New York), received the top Platinum award in *Environments for Aging*’s 2025 Dining Competition, with jurors remarking that the new dining program mirrors the offerings of a high-end resort.

“More than just a selection of beautiful venues, the innovative service model places control in the hands of the residents, empowering them to dine where, when, and how they choose. This level of personalization not only enhances daily living but also supports independence and dignity, setting a new standard for senior living communities,” a juror commented.

Here, Senior Associates Brandon Dilla, project manager and architect, and Shannon Kobistek, interior designer on the project, at Perkins Eastman, discuss planning and design strategies for the dining project and how it delivers both variety and operational flexibility.



Brandon Dilla, senior associate,
Perkins Eastman



Shannon Kobistek, senior associate,
Perkins Eastman

***Environments for Aging*: What goals were set initially for this dining renovation project?**

Brandon Dilla: John Knox Village celebrated its 75th anniversary in 2017. In its master planning and growth strategy, the organization had set the all-encompassing goal of making its



Barton's Nautilus Bar

campus sustainable and resilient for the future through an extensive campus transformation and rebranding effort.

For the dining component of the project, our aim was to replace a single, outdated cafeteria-style venue with five distinct, hospitality-driven destinations, each tailored to today's active, discerning resident. We spent time listening to both residents and the leadership team. With a new executive group at the helm, there was palpable energy and appetite for change. Residents wanted variety, flexibility, and spaces that reflected their lifestyles. That insight shaped every decision—from the diversity of service models to the emotional tone of each venue.

The location of the venues, all alongside the lakeside promenade, was important. We were creating a place that allowed for multiple experiences. The interior designs had to be distinct yet also speak to each other, creating an overarching sense of place.

How did that understanding help guide design and planning decisions?

Shannon Kobistek: We approached this project as five opportunities for variety—the spice of life. We carefully crafted branding, materials, and layouts so that each venue felt fresh and unique, while still belonging to one unified experience.

For The Pearl, we drew on the theme of the ocean depths, layering antique mirrors and glowing light fixtures to create a refined, immersive atmosphere. Seaglass, by contrast, is breezy and nautical, inspired by yacht clubs and coastal living. Westlake Eatery is fresh and energetic, with an open kitchen and polished terrazzo flooring. BV's French Press & Wine Bar is designed as a bookend to the Eatery by utilizing similar materials but adding a warm and welcoming feeling via a live edge wood counter

allowing residents to sit within the action of the café.

Choice is everything. Residents were very clear that they wanted dining options that matched their lifestyle—whether they were grabbing a morning coffee before a class, having lunch with neighbors, or celebrating with family over dinner. By designing five distinct venues, we gave residents the freedom to choose not just what to eat, but how they want to feel. It's about dignity, autonomy, and creating joyful moments every day.

How did you approach the interior design to create a unified aesthetic while asserting the brand identity of each venue?

Kobistek: We saw this as an opportunity to blend harmony with individuality. Across the board, we used natural woods, soft lighting, clean-lined casework, and high ceilings to evoke a coastal-modern vibe. Then we layered in venue-specific touches: sculptural lighting at The Pearl, the accessory and planter wall at Seaglass, and a sunset-inspired fabric on the banquettes at Westlake Eatery.

The indoor-outdoor connection was important to our concept. We designed each venue to open up to the lakefront, using operable glass walls, outdoor terraces, and framed views of the water. The result is a seamless indoor-outdoor experience where residents can enjoy breezes, sunshine, and spontaneous interactions.

The five venues share a centralized kitchen. How did you plan for this layout to fit it within the existing site?

Dilla: This was one of our favorite design challenges. We worked within the existing master plan and carefully placed the main kitchen in a location that allows it to serve a nearby assisted living building while also directly neighboring

The Pearl, Barton's Nautilus Bar, and Seaglass. That decision maximized the connectivity to each venue while creating a high-functioning back of house that even contains a catering pantry that services the adjacent performing arts center during large banquet events.

Staffing is always a concern with our clients. To help with that, Barton's Nautilus Bar not only acts as a social hub for residents but also the host station for The Pearl and Seaglass. This lessens the need for a host at each venue and, at certain times during the day, it can allow for a dual-service bartender/host. Westlake Eatery's grille and open-hearth cooking and BV's baking capabilities were able to be more self-sufficient via the creation of pantry support areas at each venue. With staggered peak hours and a thoughtful layout, staff can move between spaces with ease, creating a seamless and consistent experience for residents.

What challenges did you have to overcome in delivering a new dining program on an existing community?

Dilla: We were stepping into a living, breathing community with history, habits, and high expectations. When we began, we were asked to implement a building within the confines of a master plan that was focused on the “what are we going to do?” but we quickly realized that we needed to take a step back with the client and ask “why?”

In taking this step back, the team realized that what was missing on the campus was a “heart.” After finding that “why,” we could focus on working on the “what?” A dining report was then created through focus and discussion groups to help guide the team on everything from service models, venue concepts, and suggested hours of operation to recommended enhancements to the existing program. This allowed for a more comfortable approach to such a significant shift in dining operations.

Simultaneously, the team crafted a Campus Character Book to help ensure the new project and the existing campus come together cohesively. The team consistently referenced this style guide during the decision-making process for items such as interior design direction, building exterior color schemes, and building massing and forms. It was a balancing act—and one we're incredibly proud of. *eja*

Robert McCune is senior editor of Environments for Aging and can be reached at robert.mccune@emeraldix.com.



John Knox Village [Pompano Beach, Fla.]

Submitted by: **Perkins Eastman**



JOHN KNOX VILLAGE reimagined its campus heart as a hospitality-driven “experience district”—uniting dining, culture, wellness, and connection along a new lakefront promenade. This transformation replaces a long-serving cafeteria-style venue with five distinctive dining destinations, each designed to reflect residents’ evolving preferences and support a more personalized, choice-driven daily rhythm.

The Westlake Eatery introduces a flexible food hall concept with open-hearth cooking and multiple made-to-order stations. BV’s French Press & Wine Bar offers all-day service—from coffee and pastries to wine and small bites—in a setting that encourages casual connection. The Pavilion’s two full-service venues—The Pearl and Seaglass—are linked by Barton’s Nautilus Bar, a sculptural centerpiece that acts as both shared host station and lively social hub.

Informed by extensive resident engagement and detailed operational planning, the design emphasizes efficiency and experiential variety. A centralized kitchen discreetly supports all venues, while diverse spatial character, branding, and indoor-outdoor options give residents freedom to choose how and where they dine. Shared infrastructure and strategic adjacencies—especially to the Cultural Arts Center—create a cohesive environment where dining is deeply integrated with social and cultural life.

By elevating dining into a multi-venue destination, John Knox Village reinforces its identity as a forward-looking community that meets residents where they are—socially, physically, and emotionally—while supporting long-term campus vibrancy and operational resilience.



JURY COMMENTS:

- *This project exemplifies the pinnacle of luxury senior living, seamlessly blending elevated design with a refined hospitality experience. Drawing inspiration from its picturesque waterfront setting in Florida, the thoughtful integration of subtle nautical elements and the distinct branding of each of the five dining venues creates a cohesive and memorable atmosphere.*
- *The community's multi-venue dining program mirrors the offerings of a high-end resort, providing residents with a range of culinary experiences that cater to diverse tastes and preferences. The variety of seating options—from intimate two-tops to cozy booths, and both indoor and outdoor settings—further elevate the dining experience, offering residents flexibility, comfort, and choice. This attention to detail reinforces the community's commitment to hospitality-driven design, making each meal an experience tailored to personal preference and social engagement.*
- *More than just a selection of beautiful venues, the innovative service model places control in the hands of the residents, empowering them to dine where, when, and how they choose. This level of personalization not only enhances daily living but also supports independence and dignity, setting a new standard for senior living communities.*
- *The beautiful light wood wall treatments, arched door trims, and flowing casework create a strong visual continuity throughout the community, seamlessly connecting each space back to the original hospitality-driven design concept. These architectural details not only enhance the aesthetic but also convey a sense of warmth and sophistication.*
- *Lighting plays a pivotal role in the overall experience, from subtle ambient layers to the exquisitely selected decorative fixtures, each element is thoughtfully curated. These fixtures go beyond function; they serve*

as sculptural art pieces that elevate the environment and contribute to the project's luxurious, hospitality-inspired atmosphere.

Design team: Perkins Eastman (architecture and interior design); Moss Construction Company (general contractor); Emerald Engineering (MEP); Hilbish McGee Lighting Design (lighting); Food Facilities Concepts (food service); EDSA (landscape architecture)

Cost per square foot: \$265

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