

# Builder/Architect

**The Bedford Group**  
Building for the Next Generation in Urban L.A.



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## Building for the Next Generation in Urban L.A.

By Carr Winn

George Washington Carver, an African-American scientist, said, “How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving, and tolerant of the weak and strong. Because some day in life you will have been all these.”

Carver’s quote identifies every type of client that The Bedford Group hopes to serve. The Bedford Group is a vertical company that specializes in urban infill developments, with projects catered to every possible type of client — from young professionals to empty nesters/seniors looking to downsize their homesteads. Serving clients in an urban area requires The Bedford Group to consider the lifestyle, the community and the financing that clients will need to purchase such unique products.

While there are plenty of companies that have the financial resources to attempt similar types of urban developments, few other businesses have The Bedford Group’s in-house capabilities or the high regard that comes with the company’s homegrown history. The company

was founded by Los Angeles native Charles Quarles, who began his development career in the early ’80s after receiving his MBA from Harvard University in 1974. Prior to attending Harvard, he earned his bachelor’s degree in business administration from California State University, Los Angeles, following his tour of duty as a medic in a MASH unit of the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War.

After earning his MBA, Quarles gained a thorough understanding of financing through his work at United California Bank, now known

*“I’ve been living at Athens Terrace for exactly a year and I love it! The Bedford Group has delivered a great product and I look forward to purchasing my second home at Bedford Parc.”*

—Pauline McGee, Bedford Buyer

**Bedford’s Legacy: father and daughter Charles Quarles, President, and Starlett Quarles, Marketing Director.**



PHOTO BY JEN BROOKMAN AND JIB BROOKMAN



**The Bedford Group specializes in changing urban landscapes. The Terra Nova Townhomes, Bedford's first new home development in L.A.'s Baldwin Hills community.**

as Wells Fargo Bank. He completed the bank's management training program and was assigned to the special credit department to handle problematic loans. This was an assignment he requested, and Quarles worked in the department until it was dissolved, at which time he went to work in the bank's loan department. Quarles credits this experience as being the catalyst for venturing out on his own. "I came to the realization that I should attempt to complete projects similar to those I was doing at the bank ... so I went out on my own."

In 1980, Quarles created The Bedford Group in order to secure financing for joint ventures with his father's construction company, EAC Construction. This was not the first time he had worked with his father's firm; as a teenager he spent summers as an assistant to EAC's team of carpenters. At that time, EAC specialized in framing, and as an assistant it meant that Quarles had to hand-deliver lumber to the carpenters. This time around, Quarles was still going to do heavy lifting, but it would be with a suit, tie and completely different set of tools.

Fast-forward a few decades and Quarles' vision of opportunities in urban development continues to be realized with each new piece of land the company acquires for its next project. Quarles remains convinced that the Los Angeles market presents a unique development environment, and one of The Bedford Group's current projects in South Los Angeles is addressing what may almost seem like Development 101 — a tremendous need for housing.

Starlett Quarles, one of Charles Quarles' three children and Marketing Director for The Bedford Group, explains, "At Bedford, we see opportunities where others see obstacles. For example, we have a wonderful new-home community in the Baldwin Hills area

where we're building 172 condominiums on a lot that stood vacant for over 20 years." Ms. Quarles continues, "There are actually two developments on this one site, one is called Bedford Parc and the other's called Bedford Promenade." Ms. Quarles explains that the Bedford Parc building contains 70 units, offering two and three bedrooms, geared towards young professionals and small, growing families. While the Bedford Promenade building has 102 units, offering one(s) and two(s), catered more towards first-time home buyers.

Ms. Quarles is also quick to point out that the motivation behind the development is to create opportunities for young professionals that grew up in the area. "We're very excited because in the Baldwin Hills community, there's an opportunity for young professionals

and people who grew up in the area to still be able to buy where they live, work and pray, and not have to be displaced outside of the community in which they were raised."

Bedford Parc/Bedford Promenade is the second development for The Bedford Group in the Baldwin Hills community, one of Los Angeles' upscale urban enclaves. Terra Nova, the firm's first project in the area, is located less than a mile from the current Bedford Parc/Bedford Promenade community and offered 55 townhomes to Baldwin Hills buyers. Forty-four of the units were purchased by single households, 34 of which were African-American women. Ms. Quarles explains, "Given the success of Terra Nova, we're seeing our primary buyer profile shift from families to single, black, professional women. We also noticed there was a pent-up demand for new product in this area ... in fact, our waiting list for Terra Nova had well over 500 people."

***"The Bedford Parc/Bedford Promenade community is a bold and timely concept that raises the level of excellence in the arena of urban infill development. This development is a new style of urban living that will strongly appeal to young affluent buyers and empty-nesters alike."***

—Sharon Sumpter, Executive Vice President

Of course, demand doesn't immediately translate to homes being sold, but the Terra Nova project was a tremendous success. "There had been nothing developed within the Baldwin Hills area, or anywhere near Baldwin Hills, for well over 10 years. Our Terra Nova project, which was sold out before project completion, showcased the extent of the demand for this type of product within the community."

Given the buyer profile of the Terra Nova project, The Bedford Group made sure to include new amenities in the Bedford Parc/Bedford Promenade community to appeal to buyers. Of course, safety is always a consideration for singles and Bedford Parc/Bedford Promenade residents can feel secure knowing that all visitors will appear on a closed-circuit television channel via their own television before being granted access by a resident of the community. Aside



**The Bedford Group likes to create warm and welcoming spaces in their living rooms. The Bedford Arbors Condominiums, North Hollywood/ Toluca Lake.**



**The featured outdoor atrium area at Bedford Arbors allows home buyers to enjoy the beautiful California weather while also entertaining family and friends.**

from controlled access, convenience was another consideration. The community will offer on-site concierge services designed to help residents balance their active daily lives, such as dry cleaning and travel arrangements.

Quarles explains why these types of amenities are important to this type of development: “We really cater to the urban buyer. For those who live in an attached product, it’s definitely a different type of lifestyle. We understand that we’re dealing with home buyers that don’t necessarily want to deal with large backyards and all the responsibilities that are associated with a single-family home.” In addition to convenience, buyers will also enjoy spacious floor plans offering larger closets and living spaces while still remaining competitively priced in the market.

Despite the enormous demand for a new housing product in the Baldwin Hills area and the remarkable amenities included in the Bedford Parc/Bedford Promenade development, getting someone to sign the paperwork and commit to a home ranging from \$300,000 to over \$600,000 may seem like a tough sell, especially given the recent cooling in the housing market. However, this is where The Bedford Group has a clear advantage over companies that have to rely on outside consultants for financing, marketing and property management. Because of its vertical business structure, The Bedford Group has the freedom and flexibility to customize all of its services to each project’s unique client demographic.

Quarles explains that The Bedford Group became the full-service firm that it is today out of necessity: “We really cater to the urban buyer. It started with the price points on construction; ultimately, we realized we had to build our own product. Furthermore, we were not happy with the property management that was put in place after a project was

completed, so we created TMC Management. The same was true in the financing department. So we brought it all in-house.”

For clients interested in purchasing a Bedford home, Bedford Mortgage Corp., The Bedford Group’s financing affiliate, has developed several innovative solutions to provide 100% financing that caters to first-time home buyers. Quarles continues, “We’re very community oriented, and we understand the deficit within the urban marketplace in terms of education, so we make a concerted effort to provide first-time home buyer education and training to ensure that the buyer is not only qualified, but that they are also empowered during the home buying process.”

From his perspective, this is the most effective approach to demonstrate to the community that profit is not the primary motivation behind a development — it’s an investment in the community. “We

**Building beautiful dreams. The Bedford Group is dedicated to creating urban home ownership opportunities. The interior courtyard of the Athens Terrace Townhomes in South L.A.**





**Building for the next generation. The Bedford Parc Condominiums in Urban Los Angeles' Baldwin Hills community.**

recognize that wealth is created intergenerationally through asset accumulation, so we like to make sure and teach this to our clients. We let them know the value in what they are buying and how the condo purchase is an equity purchase, as well as a wealth-building strategy.” This type of educational outreach goes hand in hand with the company’s marketing efforts, which utilizes nontraditional channels to communicate with buyers.

Ms. Quarles elaborates, “Our outreach strategy has been more grassroots. We don’t do traditional advertising. We partner with local churches, advertise in community papers, as well as launch aggressive online marketing campaigns to ensure that we reach our target audience of technologically savvy Internet buyers.” While larger public development firms may question the use of marketing to such a finite customer base, the results more than validate the strategy. She continues, “We just recently completed our first-time home buyer program with Crenshaw Christian Center’s Vermont Village Community Development Corporation, and were able to get nine buyers. We are still selling out all of our phases. We [had] our third-phase release on Christmas Eve and we already [had] at least 15 buyers interested in purchasing at [that] time of the year in this marketplace.”

With plenty of interested buyers and the potential to have placed the keys to a new home under the Christmas tree this last year, it would seem that the community would welcome The Bedford Group with open arms to celebrate this project as well as future developments, but that isn’t exactly the case. In fact, Quarles explains how the very community you’re hoping to serve could

**Located behind Bedford Parc, the condominiums at Bedford Promenade are a perfect place for first-time home buyers to call home.**



present somewhat of an obstacle. “I think when you’re dealing with urban markets, one thing that you have to be sensitive to is their fear of displacement and having to educate them on the value of redevelopment.”

To his point, historically, housing developments in urban markets can unfortunately price locals right out of the market, pushing people into neighboring communities. Quarles continues, “I think it’s a continual educational process to learn how to sell ourselves to the community . . . just because we’re local and we’re homegrown doesn’t mean we get an automatic pass.”

In order to earn the trust of the community, The Bedford Group had to assure locals that the company was receptive to their needs, especially their complaints. “We had to educate people on what it is we’re doing and why we’re doing it, because regardless of whether we’re black or we’re white or we’re public or we’re private, people are still going to be concerned with what’s happening next door to them. And they want to make sure their concerns and desires are being taken into consideration, because at the end of the day, regardless of our ethnic makeup, when you’re working in urban communities, it’s all about respect,” says Quarles.

Responding to community concerns about the Bedford Parc/Bedford Promenade development, The Bedford Group made multiple concessions based on public feedback. Originally, the development was going to include some market-rate apartment units, which the community feverishly rejected. There were also

**“Our goal is to provide the highest level of quality customer service in all facets of the home buying process.”**

—Darren Gooden, Sales Agent

concerns about the height and the density of the development, so the building was lowered and the number of units was decreased. With the changes in place, The Bedford Group was issued a building permit, and yet opposition still persisted within the community, culminating with a lawsuit.

“We had to fight that battle. And we eventually won that suit, but still, after we took into consideration the community’s concerns and made the necessary changes, we were still met with some opposition. And some of their concerns had to do with the height of the buildings,” Quarles continues. Since the development is a hillside project, it offers amazing views, and some of the local homeowners had issues with the new development blocking their views. He elaborates, “They had concerns about the increase in traffic and how that would congest Santa Rosalia Drive and the Stocker Street corridors.”

Ms. Quarles adds, “On the flip side of those concerns, we asked the community, ‘How are you providing opportunities for the next generation and your aging residents who want to downsize?’” To Ms.

**The Sales and Marketing Team for Bedford Parc and Bedford Promenade (from left to right): Darren Gooden, Sales Agent; Starlett Quarles, Marketing Director; and Trini Bevans, Sales Agent.**





**The Bedford Group is lead by its Executive Team (from left to right): Darius McGee, Head of Construction; David Lich, Chief Financial Officer; John Brown, Associate; Jane Klein, Director of Risk Management; Starlett Quarles, Marketing Director; Charles Quarles, President; Mike Andersen, President, Innovative Sales Group; Sharon Sumpter, Executive Vice President; Barry Richlin, Controller; Sy Fountaine, Head of Special Projects; Steven Burt, Corporate Counsel; Barry Richlin, Controller; John Allen, Director of Property Management (not pictured).**

Quarles it comes down to a simple fact: “The truth of the matter is, you still need to be able to provide home-ownership opportunities for this next generation of urban home buyers. We build with the next generation in mind.”

When asked about The Bedford Group’s ultimate secret to success, Quarles is quick to emphasize the group’s commitment. “There is nothing new out there. There are marketing gimmicks, but I prefer to stay away from things like that. Instead, it’s about quality, it’s about service and it’s about need.” It seems like another Development 101 lesson — commitment. And the ultimate extension of The Bedford Group’s commitment quite possibly lies in its latest expansion of services — a development fund. Once established, this fund will allow The Bedford Group more financial flexibility and to further its ability to turn vacant lots into redevelopment opportunities for communities so desperately in need of new housing.

With more than two decades of experience, with everything handled in-house — construction, property management, financing, marketing and sales — and with a staff over 100 strong,

The Bedford Group is definitely positioned to take its talent and experience and continue to create housing opportunities for clients of all ages for decades to come. Just as George Washington Carver equated success with never ignoring or judging a person, The Bedford Group has taken that lesson a step further by making it their mantra, branding itself as South L.A.’s one-stop shop for urban renewal. ■



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## The Bedford Group Portfolio

### Bedford Arbors (Toluca Lake, CA)

Come live like a star! Located in the Toluca Lake — North Hollywood area of Los Angeles, CA, this quiet neighborhood is nestled between the communities of Burbank, Universal City and Studio City.



Close to major movie and television studios, Bedford Arbors consists of 21 spacious three-bedroom condominiums featuring an outdoor atrium and community lounge.

### The Hamptons (Compton, CA)



Built with families in mind, The Hamptons is a gated townhome community of 48 individual units located in Compton, CA, one of L.A.'s urban enclaves. The Hamptons will offer buyers three- and four-bedroom homes with attached garages. Amenities include a formal entry, fireplace, balcony and access to a social pavilion for both private gatherings and community social events. Featuring Egyptian-style architecture with lush landscaping, The Hamptons is designed to provide home ownership opportunities to families within this traditionally overlooked urban community.

### Neo Zoe at Pine (Long Beach, CA)

An example of The Bedford Group's vertical structure is Neo Zoe in Long Beach, CA. Serving as the general contractor, Bedford built this 22-unit private community featuring a mix of two- and three-bedroom townhomes with open floor plans. Reflecting classic Cape Cod architecture, each townhome has a spacious master suite with private study, 9- inch vaulted ceilings,



a private patio and stainless steel appliances. Handsome Beech Wood cabinetry and recessed lighting accent the gourmet kitchens and living/dining areas.

### Cathedral City (Cathedral City, CA)

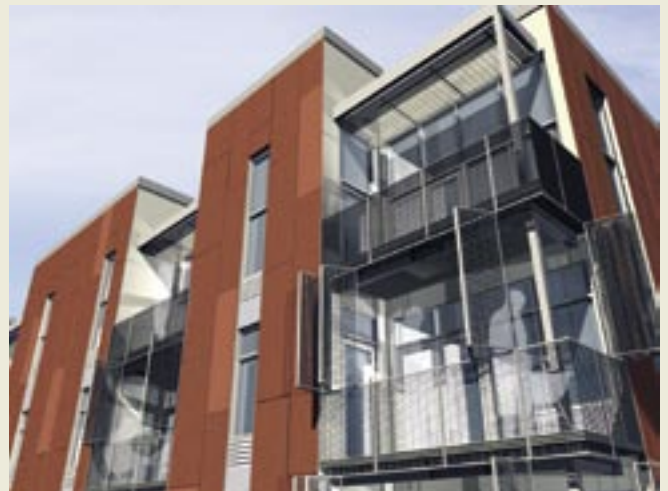
Adjacent to the desert community of Palm Springs, CA, sits Cathedral City, the location of The Bedford Group's 110 condominium project that rests along a beautifully landscaped golf course. Catered to professional singles, couples and second home buyers, the new home community will offer a mix of one- to three



bedroom units. Community amenities include a pool, with a media and exercise room for all residents to enjoy. Expected to be the first mid-rise development in Cathedral City, this exciting project offers a unique opportunity for affordable home ownership to the working professionals of the Coachella Valley and for those looking for golf resort condominium properties.

### The Square at Thomas Berkley Way (Oakland, CA)

The Square at Thomas Berkley Way is one of Bedford's out-of-city developments. Located in Downtown Oakland, this mixed-use



community offers 88 luxury condominiums and townhomes set above 5,000 square feet of retail space. The Square is designed to capitalize on Oakland's vibrant and artistic downtown lifestyle, while also offering modern conveniences and amenities that cater to urban living. In addition to private patios and stunning views, each home boasts an elegant master suite with master bath, gourmet kitchens and spacious living/dining areas.