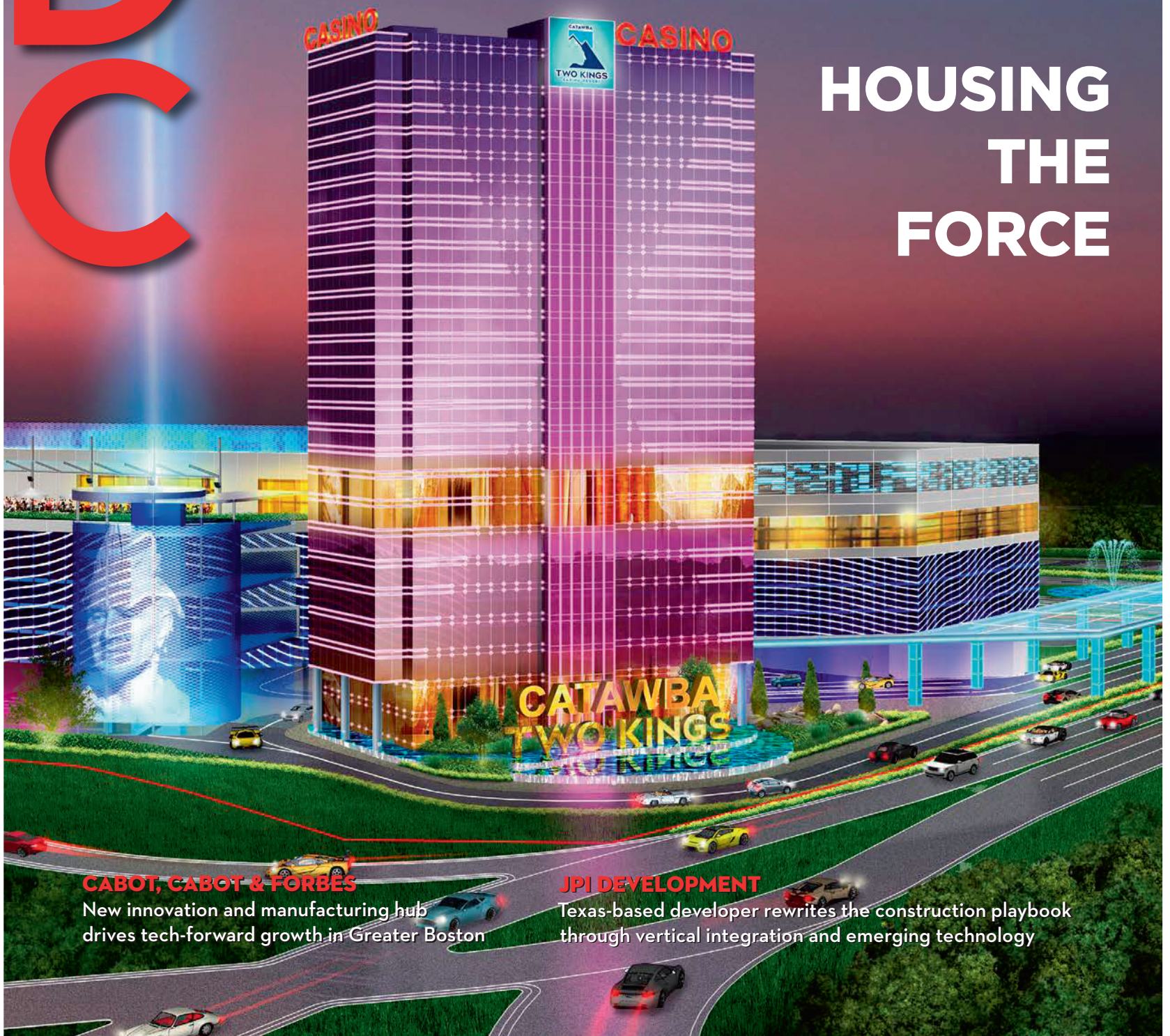


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# HOUSING THE FORCE



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## JPI DEVELOPMENT

Texas-based developer rewrites the construction playbook through vertical integration and emerging technology



# Housing the Force

Residential developer brings resort-style living to Fort Irwin's junior service members

## The Michaels Organization

VP, INVESTMENT  
MANAGEMENT  
& PROJECT DIRECTOR  
Branden Clemens

SVP, INVESTMENT  
MANAGEMENT  
John Zurlo

LOCATION  
Camden, New Jersey

For the junior, unaccompanied soldiers stationed at Fort Irwin—a remote U.S. Army training installation in California's Mojave Desert—on-base housing has long meant traditional barracks. The Michaels Organization is in the process of changing that in a significant way.

Fort Irwin Apartments is a 276-unit residential development designed specifically for single and junior-ranking servicemembers. The project broke ground in September 2025 and is targeting an April 2028 completion. It's the Army's first privatized barracks housing—a pilot program that Michaels and the Army hope will set a new standard for military communities nationwide.

"We really think that Fort Irwin Apartments is going to elevate our on-base living for our service members," says Branden Clemens, Vice President of Investment Management at The Michaels Organization and Project Director for the development. "This innovative project re-



**WE REALLY THINK** that Fort Irwin Apartments is going to elevate our on-base living for our service members. This innovative project really represents a new era in military housing, where design meets comfort—ensuring our service members can build a future with confidence and unwavering support.

**-Branden Clemens**

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The project has been nearly a decade in the making. Formal feasibility work began around 2022, when the Army—satisfied with how Michaels had managed the existing family housing and senior unaccompanied housing community at Fort Irwin—began exploring whether a private partner could address the housing needs of its junior unaccompanied population. After roughly three and a half years of legal, financial and governmental groundwork, the project reached financial closing in June 2025.

John Zurlo, Senior Vice President of Investment Management at Michaels, credits the grassroots origins of the effort.

“The Army’s Garrison and Michaels leadership at Fort Irwin really came together when they identified the need to improve barracks on their base,” Zurlo says. “It was that team who came up with this idea, escalated it, got buy-in and took the project from concept to groundbreaking. That’s unique and very impressive of both the Michaels side, but especially the Army side—identifying the need and figuring out how to make it happen with a private partner.”

#### **DESIGNED TO FOSTER COMMUNITY**

As the military works to attract and retain the next generation of soldiers, the quality of on-base housing is increasingly viewed as a competitive factor.

“These soldiers are now getting a resort-style student living experience,” Zurlo says. “I think that should really help



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with recruitment and retention as this pilot kicks off and hopefully gets adopted more broadly by the Army.”

That ambition is reflected in the project’s specs. The Fort Irwin Apartments will rise three stories, with an architectural character that draws from the Santa Barbara-influenced palette of the surrounding base while introducing a distinctly resort-like presence.

Each of the 276 units will feature two bedrooms and two bathrooms—configured as dual primary suites—along with a shared living room, full kitchen and in-unit washer and dryer. Community amenities include a clubhouse, pool and pool house and 563 parking spaces covered by a 3-megawatt solar carport system. The all-electric development is designed so the solar carports will meet the community’s full electrical demand. The project is also targeting LEED® Silver, with



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Riverstone Structural Concepts is proud to work alongside Michaels and the entire team to produce structural drawings and design that is both beautiful and functional.

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**ALLEGION**

Allegion's partnership with The Michaels Organization reflects a shared drive to elevate security, access, and design consistency across their national portfolio. By collaborating closely with Michaels' in-house architect and third-party design teams, Allegion has helped establish a national standard for Division 8 specification writing and Division 28 coordination—bringing clarity, efficiency, and real momentum to every project. For the Fort Irwin Apartments development, Allegion delivered code consultation, specification services, and access control coordination to align hardware, safety requirements, and open-architecture technologies from the start. Their expertise streamlined decisions and ensured this pilot for modernized Army housing is built on a secure, scalable foundation. The collaboration highlights Allegion's enthusiasm for solving complex challenges and supporting visionary developers with more than a century of leadership in security and access.

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Urban Practice, Michaels' preferred architect with expertise in student, affordable and military housing, led the design by prioritizing shared green spaces and pedestrian-friendly pathways to encourage community among residents. The consultant team includes Edge Design Studio for interior design, Riverstone Structural Concepts for structural engineering, RICK Engineering for civil engineering, and Holstein White for MEP and fire protection. Clark Realty Builders is serving as general contractor.

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**BUILT ON PARTNERSHIP**

Navigating the shift from concept to construction required Michaels to contend with a substantially



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**I ALWAYS THINK ABOUT THAT QUOTE:** ‘If you want to go fast, go alone, but if you want to go far, go together. I’m honored to be part of this team that is working so hard to improve the quality of life of the servicemembers of today and tomorrow.

**-Branden Clemens**

**EDGE DESIGN STUDIO**

Edge Design Studio, founded in 2009 by designers Jessica Bauer and Malou Santana-Stage, specializes in thoughtfully designed amenity spaces for condominium and apartment communities, supporting both new construction and renovation projects. The studio leads the full interior design process—from concept development through final installation—working closely with architects, contractors, and project partners to ensure efficient delivery and seamless execution. Licensed in the District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia, New Jersey, New York, and California, Edge brings strong regional expertise and a market-driven perspective to multifamily, military, and student housing developments. Services include site surveying, programming, design analysis, space planning, finish and material selections, lighting design and specifications, comprehensive construction drawings, construction observation, and installation oversight. Furnishings services encompass furniture selection, custom millwork design, artwork and accessory curation, procurement, and installation coordination—resulting in cohesive, durable interiors that enhance marketability and elevate the resident experience.

changed economic environment. Between the project’s initial underwriting in 2022 and its June 2025 financial close, interest rates and construction costs had both increased considerably. The team responded by optimizing site efficiency, tightening procurement and leaning into accretive investments. Chief among them is the solar carport system, which functions as both a sustainability initiative and a long-term economic offset.

Zurlo frames the nimble pivot as a direct expression of Michaels’ public-private partnership philosophy.

“Our public partner—in this case, the Army—came to us with a problem, and we figured

out a creative, private solution for them,” Zurlo says. “Hopefully, we’re delivering a better product faster and cheaper than our public partners could otherwise achieve on their own. And I think that is really well-represented in this project.”

For Clemens, who has been involved with the project since 2016, the highlight is the collaboration that made it possible.

“I always think about that quote: ‘If you want to go fast, go alone, but if you want to go far, go together,’” Clemens says. “I’m honored to be part of this team that is working so hard to improve the quality of life of the servicemembers of today and tomorrow.”

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