



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 architectural designer, 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. Editor's note: This article was updated on Sept. 2, 2025, to clarify Perkins Eastman Senior Associate Brandon Dilla's role on the project.



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

Firm Contact: Brad Fanta, senior associate | marketing & business development, (737) 273-3814, b.fanta@perkinseastman.com, perkinseastman.com

Photos: Andrew Rugge. © Perkins Eastman

The Davis Community [Wilmington, N.C.]

Submitted by: **LB/A**

AS WILMINGTON'S OLDEST senior living community, The Davis Community set out to transform its identity for a new generation of residents. The result, completed in June 2023, is a bold repositioning that balances hospitality, wellness, and community connection. At the heart of this evolution is The Promenade—a vibrant, public-facing hub that includes a state-of-the-art fitness center, a full-service salon and spa, an event space, an amphitheater, and two dynamic dining spaces: Cornelia's and Nibbles.

Complementing this, The Residences, a four-story, 141-unit independent living building, introduces a suite of amenities designed to support resident wellness and social engagement. Among these are the dining venues Cascade and Cocktail Club, which together provide elevated everyday dining experiences tailored for resident comfort and choice.

The four dining and hospitality spaces—Cornelia's, Nibbles Café, Cascade, and The Cocktail Club—are each uniquely programmed to serve distinct but interconnected functions. Cornelia's is an upscale, community destination restaurant offering elevated Southern cuisine. Its bold, circular design and striking metal-clad exterior



make it a community landmark. Nibbles Café, located just down the hall in The Promenade, serves as a casual counter-service bistro and café offering lighter fare and grab-and-go options, all prepared in Cornelia's kitchen. Cascade, the main IL dining venue, offers multiple zones including a central dining room, a Chef's Dining Room, private dining rooms, and an outdoor patio. And The Cocktail Club, adjacent to Cascade, acts as a social hub—serving beverages and light meals in a lounge-like setting, with easy access to an outdoor patio.

JURY COMMENTS:

- *This project exemplifies the future of senior living design by seamlessly blending innovation, functionality, and emotional resonance. It stands out for its exceptional ability to create a vibrant, inclusive, and meaningful environment for residents, families, and the broader community.*
- *A masterful use of lighting, texture, and color achieves a dynamic yet calming environment that supports a range of needs, from energetic engagement to quiet retreat. The open kitchen concept elevates the culinary experience into a central feature of daily life, emphasizing wellness, choice, and community.*



Design team: LB/A

(architecture and interior design); Bowman Murray Hemingway (associate architect); Monteith Construction (builder/general contractor); Mihaly Land Design (landscape design)

Cost per square foot: \$209

Photos: Peak Visuals
(peakvisualsus.com)

Contact: Gamble Scrantom,
marketing director, (303) 217-
8270, gscrantom@lantz-boggio.
com, lantz-boggio.com



The Farmstead by Resthaven [Holland, Mich.]

Submitted by: THW Design



WHEN DESIGNING The Farmstead by Resthaven, the client's goal was to create an innovative, new construction Life Plan Community on the site of a 39-acre local family farm. The main priority was to bridge the gap between the quaint living of downtown city life and provide a nature-rich rural environment with the backdrop of endless fields and farmland. Unique challenges involved balancing the needs of residents and families across the continuum of care, integrating a large-scale development into an established

residential neighborhood, and maintaining a sense of community.

When residents choose to dine in, they enjoy a variety of inviting options tailored to their mood and preferences. The Café offers a relaxed setting for a quick lunch, coffee, or tea, which can be enjoyed while unwinding in the library or soaking in the fresh air by the outdoor covered living room, complete with a cozy fireplace and direct views of the tranquil campus pond.

For those seeking a more formal dining

experience, the Dining Room provides an elevated atmosphere with floor-to-ceiling windows that showcase the surrounding natural beauty. Here, residents can savor thoughtfully prepared meals crafted by a state-of-the-art chef, all while enjoying the serene views that make The Farmstead feel like home.

JURY COMMENTS:

- *Warm spaces and ample natural light. Light fixtures blend seamlessly into the spaces with the gold and white tones. Woodwork and ceilings are well deployed. The project story meets the design work.*
- *The Farmstead is an excellent example of innovative, quiet innovation. The design feels intentional and restrained, well executed. The modern farmhouse aesthetic is carried through cleanly, and the integration of features like food delivery robots, open kitchen views, and acoustic control demonstrates that the team has really thought about both resident experience and staff flow. It's a thoughtful, well-rounded project.*

Design team: THW Design (architecture, interior design, land planning, master planning, and landscaping); EV Construction (contractor); Camacho Associates Inc. (food service); Phillips Gradick Engineering, P.C. (engineers, MEP)

Cost per square foot: Not available

Photos: Geoff Shirley Architecture Photography

Contact: Kristi Anderson, administrative coordinator, (770) 916-2217, kristianderson@thw.com, thw.com



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Photos: Jeffrey Totaro

Cornerstone of Weymouth

Cornerstone of Weymouth is a new construction 147-unit independent living community offering a luxury lifestyle to residents of Massachusetts' South Shore. There are three dining venues on-site: a multifunction bistro/pub, a market, and a full service restaurant with a 21-foot ceiling, two-story windows, and access to an outdoor patio.

Meyer
(610) 649-8500
meyerdesigninc.com



Photos: © Nathan Cox Photography

Cypress Cove

Captains Table transforms a dated nautical-themed restaurant into a serene, modern coastal dining destination. Featuring lakefront views, a sunken bar, open expo kitchen, and flexible indoor-outdoor seating, the reimagined space blends sophistication and coastal charm for an elevated, yet casual, dining experience tailored to today's residents.

RLPS Architects

(717) 560-9501

rlps.com



FINALIST

EverTrue Luther Crest

Transitioning from a traditional buffet, Luther Crest revitalized its community with five vibrant, hospitality-style venues. This bold shift prioritized resident choice, comfort, and community. Guided by resident input, the redesign delivered stylish, flexible spaces offering unique dining experiences—redefining mealtime to a more engaging, personalized experience.



Photos: RDB Imaging, LLC

Noelker and Hull Architects

(717) 263-8464

noelkerhull.com



Photos: Caroline Sharpnack

The Heritage at Brentwood

The Corner Market renovation transforms a once-underutilized space into a vibrant, boutique-style destination. Designed for flexibility, comfort, and connection, it now supports resident independence, encourages social engagement, and enhances everyday experiences. With inviting seating, personalized touches, and increased usage, the Market has become a beloved hub for the community.

Spellman Brady & Company

(314) 862-0070
spellmanbrady.com



Photos: Caleb Tkach, AIAP

HumanGood Regents Point

This 4,820-square-foot renovation encompasses the dining area, bistro, bar, lounge, and outdoor patio of Regents Point, creating multiple dining and socialization options for residents. A timeless, sophisticated aesthetic provides seamless cohesion with the existing architecture, creating a fusion of classic and modern sensibilities.

Boulder Associates

(800) 499-7796
boulderassociates.com



Photos: Timothy Brumbeloe, BFA Commercial Photography

Kauhale Vista Grande Villa

The design team collaborated with Vista Grande Villa to renovate two dining areas for residents of the independent living community. Cohesive elements reinforced the connective flow of spaces, providing a welcoming atmosphere. A coffee area and a bar were incorporated to designate areas and provide a variety of gathering options.

MKM architecture + design

(260) 422-0783
mkmdesign.com



Photo: Baxter Imaging, LLC



The Mather

We understand that food is community, culture, and comfort; and eating well is among life's greatest and simplest pleasures. At The Mather, residents experience global epicurean delights with bold flavors and culinary artistry, complete with an atmosphere certain to make any occasion truly unforgettable.

Mather

(847) 868-5930
themathertys.com



Photos: LCP Media

Merrill Gardens at Greenville

Blending design innovation with operational efficiency, this independent living community features centralized dining, serving robots, and flexible kitchen venues to support lean staffing and active resident lifestyles. Thoughtful materiality, curated local art, and hospitality-inspired details create a fresh, welcoming environment that fosters connection, functionality, and a strong sense of place.

Direct Supply Aptura

(844) 4APTURA

aptura.directsupply.com



Moorings Park Grey Oaks

This renovation redefined two restaurants and a new flexible lounge space within the clubhouse with a coastal vineyard-inspired design and an upscale elegance. A new glass wine wall, custom art, and strategic lighting enhance the modern, functional layout, to create fun gathering and socialization opportunities for residents.

Wegman Design Group

(239) 596-8551

wegmandesigngroup.com



Photos: Christopher Wegman



Photos: David Patterson, david@davidpattersonphotography.com

MorningStar at Observatory Park

This senior living community delivers a hospitality-driven lifestyle through thoughtfully designed amenities and standout dining experiences. Multiple venues offer flexibility, choice, and connections supporting wellness and engagement. Set in a vibrant urban neighborhood, the community blends elevated design with everyday comfort to enrich residents' lives in meaningful, memorable ways.

Thoma-Holec Design

(480) 671-9307

thoma-holedesign.com



Photo: North Hill

North Hill

The new Intermission Lounge at North Hill is a reimagined dining and gathering space that allows programmatic and operational flexibility. Over the course of the day, it transforms from coffee shop to pub, and its automated features require minimal staff involvement.

EGA Architects

(978) 462-5515

ega.net

WDC Interiors

(978) 965-8185

wdcinteriors.com

SCOPOS Hospitality Group

(717) 733-5810

scoposhospitalitygroup.com



Photo: Shoot2Sell Photography

Orchard Pointe at Creek Valley

Orchard Pointe at Creek Valley blends Southwest-inspired design with hospitality-driven spaces that foster connection and flexibility. Anchored by a vibrant Bistro/Pub and interactive dining areas, the layout emphasizes indoor-outdoor flow, engagement, and adaptability—supporting a dynamic lifestyle and creating a central hub for residents, families, and staff.



Photo: Matthew Niemann Photography

Direct Supply Aptura
(844) 4APTURA
aptura.directsupply.com



FINALIST

Royal Oaks Retirement Community

Within an active senior living campus, Royal Oaks redefines dining through six purposefully designed venues. Each space blends hospitality and innovation, featuring self-order kiosks, robotic bussing, and exhibition cooking. Phased construction, flexible layouts, and thoughtful details transform dated operations into engaging, resident-driven experiences that elevate both function and community life.



Photos: © Michael Duerinckx

SCOPOS Hospitality Group
(717) 733-5810
scoposhospitalitygroup.com

The HUB Design Innovation
(404) 665-7675
thehubdesign.com



Photos: Rimo Photo

Senior Living Bellingham at West Chester

Bellingham's culinary trio—Taboon, Washington's Tavern, and the Clock Bar—reimagines senior dining through adaptive reuse, sensory-rich storytelling, and hospitality-driven design. From the hearth-centered warmth of Taboon to the historic charm of the Tavern and the elegant energy of the Clock Bar, each space invites connection, comfort, and everyday delight.

Saguez & Dash

(718) 383-2225

saguezdash.com

The Seville

Serrano is a California Coastal-inspired dining room that captures the essence of the Pacific coast—where the land meets the sea in effortless harmony. The design celebrates laid-back luxury, natural materials, and the serene beauty of the shoreline, offering guests a dining experience that feels like a warm ocean breeze. The design is rooted in simplicity, comfort, and connection to nature, mirroring the California lifestyle that's equal parts refined and relaxed.



Photo: John Ellis Photo

RVD

(323) 857-0900

rodrigovargasdesign.com/menu



Photos: Bldg Architecture

Vitality Living Preston Hollow

This renovation transformed a single dining room into four unique venues, enhancing resident choice, staff efficiency, and community connection. Thoughtful design—integrating natural light, ADA features, and flexible layouts—creates a warm, engaging environment that supports daily living, social interaction, and a vibrant, hospitality-driven dining experience.

Senior by Design
(833) 773-3744
seniorbydesign.com

Bldg Architecture
(214) 244-8432
bldg-arch.com



Photos: Dave Burk Photography

Waterford Gardens

Waterford Gardens Assisted Living's renovation features The Waterfall Cafe, blending sophistication and comfort; Floyd's Place, a modern, masculine dining space; and Ina's Cafe, a bright, artisanal coffee spot. Inspired by Monet's Water Lilies, the design revives Impressionist art through color and atmosphere in a fresh, contemporary setting.

ADG Design
(773) 286-1546
adg-design.com



Photos: Jack Gardner

Watersound Fountains

Watersound Fountains offers a hospitality-driven dining experience within a vibrant senior living community. Multiple venues, from grab-and-go to fine dining, provide variety and choice. Thoughtful design, fresh coastal aesthetics, and interactive culinary features create a welcoming, engaging environment that fosters connection, comfort, and a true sense of community.

Chancey Architecture & Interior Design

(813) 248-9258
chanceydesign.com

Willow Valley Manor Community

This renovation reimaged a buffet into a dynamic, upscale food hall featuring five unique venues. Thoughtful spatial planning balances individuality and flow, while open kitchens and strategic back-of-house design enhance guest experience and efficiency. Culinary collaboration optimized operational efficiencies across a cohesive, multi-venue dining destination fostering variety, community, and connection.

RLPS Architects

(717) 560-9501
rlps.com

CCS Building Group

(717) 490-8090
ccsbuidls.com



Photo: Mark Buckwalter Photography