

MEMORY CARE

**Freedom House at Blue Skies of Texas** San Antonio, Texas

Submitted by: **LWDA Inc.** Concord, Mass.



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Freedom House was ahead of its time in 2000, when it was constructed as a “small house” assisted living memory-care residence on the campus of Blue Skies of Texas, a Life Plan Community in San Antonio, Texas. When it opened its doors, the 72-bed single-story free-standing structure was introducing a new residential approach to living with dementia, consisting of eight households, each with nine residents in private rooms. However, with few updates since 2009, the spaces reflected a dated and somewhat institutional design aesthetic that needed to be upgraded to better personify the exceptional resident centered care program found within. Freedom House was ready to benefit from the abundance of Age Friendly environmental awareness developed in the years since it opened.

A collaborative project team consisting of residents, care and support staff, management, and the design team, was able to enhance and refine the original small-house design by making strategic





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and functional improvements to neighborhood commons, dining rooms, living areas, bedrooms, hallways, and bathing spaces, with Leonard Contracting Inc. working as the general contractor.

The new design infused innovation and evidence-based knowledge specific to Memory Care and created comfortable, residential, therapeutic environments.

The interior was brought to life with new finishes, textures, and elder friendly furniture. Household kitchens and dining rooms were joined to create a residential open-kitchen experience, found in one's own home, to encourage residents' engagement during mealtimes. Living rooms that were oversized and poorly lit have been transformed into residential scale havens accommodating familiar social gatherings, games, conversations, or quiet reading. Interior design choices were made to delineate and differentiate between spaces, highlight their intended use, and expected behavior. New color schemes were created to carefully use hue, saturation, and contrast to address the specialized needs of residents living with dementia.

In collaboration with BIOS Lighting, cutting edge circadian lighting technology was strategically applied in Common residents' spaces. Bios Circadian Lighting provides improved daytime alertness, mood, brain function, and strengthens circadian rhythms. The BIOS Human-Centric lighting system uses LEDs that provide dimmable non-visual sky-blue light signals at the same wavelength as the sun (490 nanometers), mimicking the day-night cycle, to biologically regulate the circadian rhythms of residents and staff promoting wellness, encouraging normal sleep habits, and reducing agitation and negative behaviors.

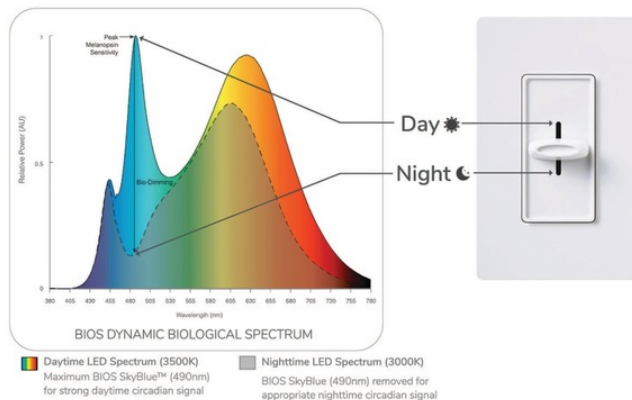
The Bio-Dimming system creates brighter days and darker nights with Circadian lighting, dimming BIOS lights 2-3 hours before bedtime to provide enough relaxation to promote a restful night's sleep. This provides more consolidated sleep and less nighttime wandering, by using an optimized spectrum for visual comfort. Simplified controls provide automated intuitive day/night transitions.



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**PROJECT CATEGORY:**  
Remodel/renovation

**CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR:**  
Kurt Riedel, BSN, RN,  
director, Freedom House

**FIRM:**  
LWDA Inc., LWDA.com

**DESIGN TEAM:**  
Ruth Neeman, principal,  
director of senior living;  
Christine Lucido, senior  
designer and project  
manager; Willa Codkind,  
interior designer (LWDA);  
Robert Soler, vice president  
biological research and  
technology (BIOS); Amber  
Gass, project manager  
(Clearly Zimmerman  
Engineers); LPA Design  
Studios (landscape  
architecture)

**PHOTOGRAPHY:**  
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**NUMBER/TYPE OF HOUSING  
UNITS:**  
72-bed small house  
assisted living memory care

**TOTAL BUILDING AREA  
(SQ. FT.):**  
56,035

**CONSTRUCTION COST/  
SQ. FT.:**  
\$99

**TOTAL CONSTRUCTION COST  
(EXCLUDING LAND):**  
\$4.6 million

**COMPLETED:**  
August 2021