

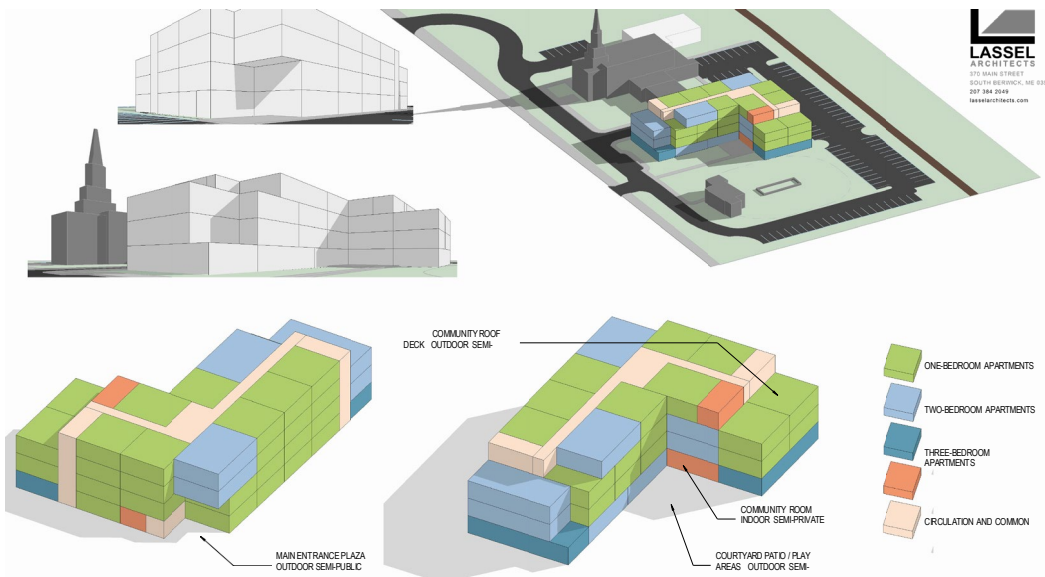


Christ Church Workforce Housing Development 1035 Lafayette Road, Portsmouth, NH

In the spring of 2023, Bishop Robert Hirschfeld of the Episcopal Diocese of New Hampshire, to fulfill the Church's mission of serving people in the community, contacted the PHA to solicit our assistance with redeveloping this 3.5-acre property at 1035 Lafayette Road in Portsmouth into workforce housing. Working together with the Bishop and his staff, PHA entered into a short-term agreement with the Diocese to create a master plan for developing the property for workforce housing and other uses. That was the genesis of the Christ Church Workforce Housing Development.

Through thoughtful planning, communications, and gathering a team of experts including leadership of the parish, local development experts, members of the St. John's Episcopal Church in Portsmouth, and other social service agencies, we embarked on an ambitious project that would add 44 units of badly needed workforce housing in Portsmouth, a new headquarters and transitional housing for HAVEN, a regional provider of services to victims of domestic violence, a modernized Little Blessings Child Care Center, while maintaining a sanctuary operated by the Christ Church parish.

In January 2024, the Episcopal Diocese of NH officially named PHA the project's developer partner. The PHA assembled a development team for site, and new building design, and subsequently received all land-use permits from the City of Portsmouth in August 2024.



Financing Success

This project has had remarkable success securing funding, starting with a \$10 million award from the federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program (LIHTC), a \$500,000 award from the NH Community Development Finance Authority, and a coveted \$850K capital grant and \$3,950,000 subsidized advance from the Federal Home Bank of Boston Affordable Housing Program.

PROJECT AWARDS TO DATE	
LIHTC Award	\$10.08 million equity contribution
NH CDFR Award	\$500,000 in state tax credits
FHLBB AHP Award	\$850,000 grant
FHLBB AHP Award	\$3,950,000 Subsidized Advance

Property

The subject property is bounded to the west by a major commercial artery (Rt 1), providing access to a rich array of commercial services and employment opportunities. Fortunately, the site is largely insulated from the bustle of this densely developed thoroughfare by the presence of an 182-acre Urban Forestry Center to the east and south of the campus and by the extensive Sagamore Creek Headlands to the north.



The site is also home to a nationally significant historic resource, the 18th century African Burial Ground at Langdon Farm. In collaboration with the Black Heritage Trail of NH, the project plan includes public access improvements, preservation, and continual care of this sacred place.

Purpose

The Christ Church Workforce Housing Project (initially referred to as the Urban Forest Workforce Housing Project) is a high-priority endeavor in the community to help solve the most intractable problem facing our state and nation: the extreme shortage of affordable housing for our citizens. This shortage has resulted in skyrocketing housing costs for millions of Americans. Increasing housing costs are a primary driver of inflation, impacting not only the people who cannot access housing but also others who feel the impacts of rising costs throughout our economy.

These high housing costs are making the *inequities in our community prevalent*. These costs result from having underbuilt affordable housing here for decades, while all the new housing we have added has been for more affluent renters and buyers. It is mainly the low- and moderate-income members of our workforce who are cost-burdened by housing, and many are extremely so. Here in Portsmouth, a complete 15% of our renters are paying more than 50% of their income in rent, making them highly vulnerable to becoming unhoused, unemployed, experiencing declining health, displacing children from local schools, and economic growth because of the lack of skilled people in the local workforce.

This housing crisis has also led to stagnant career development for low—and moderate-income citizens because they cannot afford to invest in education and skill development, increase income, build assets, and better serve their community and the economy. Tragically, the increasing prevalence of food insecurity is also partially a result of high housing costs.

Extremely high costs and the lack of availability of high-quality childcare are choking families. This is partially because childcare workers are also displaced by the local economy due to high housing costs. Childcare workers are the workforce supporting the workforce, so prohibitive costs and lack of ability put strain on families and the economy.

Benefits

Permanent Affordability

PHA and the Diocese's commitment to permanent affordability, including a 99-year ground lease, with provisions for extension, and agreement to a LURA of at least 75 years.
A commitment to serve a broad spectrum of needs, with more than 85% of units serving households earning < 50%AMI, including 14% of units for ELI households.

Sustainability

Our commitment to building for long-term sustainability includes adhering to Passive House design standards, using renewable energy, improving public transportation, and installing stormwater management systems that will improve the water quality of the adjacent Sagamore Creek.

Historic Preservation

The adaptive reuse of Christ Church and the preservation/enhancement of the African Burying Ground at Langdon Farm are key components of the project, as both resources have been determined historically significant by the New Hampshire Division of Natural and Cultural Resources.

About the Developer

PHA Housing Development Ltd. is a Portsmouth Housing Authority (the PHA) nonprofit affiliate (collectively known as PHA) serving as the General Partner of PHA's tax credit portfolio and recipient of private funds that support PHA programming. The City of Portsmouth established the PHA in 1953 to address its safe, sanitary, and affordable housing shortage for low-income people. The PHA built its first development in 1959. Today, PHA is a dynamic organization that has developed and manages 682 permanently affordable rental apartments, housing over 1,000 people.

PHA's Tax Credit portfolio includes 60 units of senior-only housing, 100 units of family housing, 64 units of workforce housing, and 24 units reserved exclusively for people with physical disabilities. Three properties in PHA's Housing portfolio, the Atlantic Heights School, Lafayette School, and the former Cottage Hospital, preserved critical historic resources in the city.

As a skilled developer, PHA effectively leverages LIHTC and public and private financing to create affordable housing. The organization's highly efficient Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) Program allocates 462 vouchers for Housing Choice, Project, Tenant Protection, and Foster Youth to Independence Vouchers.

PHA has a skilled development team comprised of professionals with experience in affordable housing development, finance, construction, and operations. PHA employs 32 full-time staff, including specialists providing asset and property management for our tax-credit portfolio. The credentials of this team include Certified Credit Compliance Professional (C3P), Blended Occupancy Management, National Standards for Physical Inspection of Real Estate Specialist, Housing Choice Voucher and Public Housing Rent Calculation, & Tax Credit Certifications.

PHA's most recent success was the development of the award-winning Ruth Lewin Griffin Place workforce housing project in downtown Portsmouth. Ruth's Place was named the 2022 Building of the Year by the US Green Building Council NH Chapter as the highest-scoring LEED project in New Hampshire. PHA's achievements have also been recognized with the prestigious Plan NH Merit Award of Excellence, the Visionary Leadership Award from the Workforce Housing Coalition of the Greater Seacoast, and the Chamber Collaborative of the Greater Seacoast Building a Better Community Award—Chamber Collaborative 2022 award, underscoring our commitment to excellence and innovation in affordable housing.

PHA's \$106 million in real estate assets are a critically important piece of the city's infrastructure, significantly contributing to the city's housing needs. Its residents and staff are at the heart of the city's civic and social fabric. The PHA is the largest public housing authority per capita in New Hampshire, housing nearly 4.5% of the city's population.

The PHA is the City of Portsmouth's largest landlord, a lead participant in the conversation about the need for additional affordable housing, and a resource identified by the elected and appointed officials, the business community, the thriving arts community, and the general public who have been calling on the city to address the pressing community need for affordable housing.