



by John Hoerster, *Chair of the Affordable Housing Committee*

AT A SPECIAL Cathedral Commons forum on May 21, 2025 we were delighted to announce a Memorandum of Agreement with Redwood Housing to serve as Saint Mark's development partner on the St. Nicholas affordable housing project. We are not yet near the finish line, but this is a major and exciting step forward.

BRIEF BACKGROUND ON THE PROJECT AND DEVELOPMENT PARTNER SELECTION

The Vestry formed our committee in November 2022 to explore and, if feasible, pursue an affordable housing project on the Cathedral's St. Nicholas site. Working with highly experienced professional advisors, we undertook a detailed year-long feasibility study at the end of which we concluded that (a) affordable housing is the highest and best missional use of the St. Nicholas site, (b) the preferred project is a multi-generational housing

development with about 130 rental units supporting tenants whose incomes are no more than 60% of area median income, and (c) with public financing and a well-established development partner, it is feasible to develop a project meeting our goals.

In light of these conclusions, last year the Vestry approved moving to the stage of selecting an affordable housing development partner that would bring expertise, credibility, and financial strength to the project while being aligned with our mission and project criteria.

The selection process took a year longer than expected due to systemic issues affecting affordable housing developers, but in March of this year the Vestry selected Redwood Housing as the Cathedral's development partner and in early May Redwood and Saint Mark's entered into a Memorandum of Agreement outlining goals for the project, roles and responsibilities, and timelines and milestones.

REDWOOD HOUSING

Redwood Housing has a national portfolio of affordable housing projects, but they are based in Seattle and have a significant and growing presence on Capitol Hill. To

1. Current Committee members are Karen Maeda Allman, Maria Do, Stone Fennell, Greg Hamm, John Hoerster, Bryan Pansing, Bethany Hoy, Re Knack, Scott Kovacs, and Dean Steve Thomason.

date they have sponsored more than \$2 billion of impact development/investment with a particular focus on the preservation and rehabilitation of affordable housing communities. They are highly experienced, share our vision, have experience in adaptive reuse of historic buildings, and have been excellent to work with so far. In making the decision to recommend Redwood Housing to the Vestry, our Committee considered the following factors: ability to communicate; clarity of vision; alignment with Saint Mark's vision; relevant experience of the firm; relevant experience of the team; financial strength; organizational capacity and depth; history of working in partnership with mission-driven organizations or religious institutions; and cultural fit. We evaluated Redwood Housing very positively across all of these factors.

MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

The Memorandum of Agreement provides for negotiation of a true partnership in good faith and with open books based on both Redwood and Saint Mark's receiving a fair and reasonable return during the life of the project for their contributions. Importantly, the Agreement gives Saint Mark's approval rights for the design, sustainability, and affordability of the project and provides assurance that the St. Nicholas property will **permanently** further the mission of Saint Mark's.

The Memorandum of Agreement also sets important goals for the project, including:

- ◆ Focusing on independent rental housing for members of communities that have been harmed by the history of housing discrimination on Capitol Hill and throughout Greater Seattle.
- ◆ Creating a "third place" on site that provides opportunities for residents, parishioners, and community members to interact as part of daily life.
- ◆ Working with BIPOC-led Community-Based Organizations to (a) ensure that BIPOC communities harmed are represented in the development, (b) learn the needs of the communities harmed and how the project design and "third place" can best serve those needs, and (c) work toward significantly reducing housing disparities and advancing housing justice.
- ◆ Preserving the historic St. Nicholas building.
- ◆ Designing the project so it fits architecturally with the rest of the campus.
- ◆ Meeting "Core Green Building" standards of the International Living Future Institute and using building materials, construction methods, and operational

systems that contribute positively toward the Saint Mark's campus becoming carbon neutral by 2030.

- ◆ Preserving tree canopy and greenspace and incorporating green passageways into the architectural design.

NEXT STEPS TO IMPLEMENT THE MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

The Memorandum of Agreement includes a timeline that calls for reaching agreement on financial terms and entering into a Development Agreement this September, launching the Master Use Permitting process in the fourth quarter of 2025, applying for public funding in the third quarter of 2026, beginning construction in early 2028, and completing the project in the third quarter of 2029. **(This is the best case scenario and there are likely to be some hiccups along the way.)** While still working out the partnership arrangements, Redwood and Saint Mark's have been full speed ahead to meet the timeline for launching the permitting process, including selecting the project's architects, general contractor, and community engagement consultants.

CONCLUSION

We have reached a major milestone with the selection of Redwood Housing as our development partner.

Thanks to all who have made this possible, including past and present members of the Vestry and the Affordable Housing Committee, former co-chair Emily Meeks, our professional advisors and especially Tory Laughlin Taylor, and all of the parishioners who have provided input as we have explored the possibilities.

There is much more information to share, not only about the affordable housing project but also about the Cathedral's multi-faceted engagement in issues of housing justice, but this update focuses on Redwood Housing and implementation of the Memorandum of Agreement. Our committee looks forward to providing ongoing updates and holding additional forums to introduce the key players, keep parishioners informed of our progress, and obtain further input. In the meantime, we encourage you to visit the affordable housing page on the Saint Mark's website, chat with members of the Affordable Housing Committee, and email affordablehousing@saintmarks.org with any questions, suggestions, or concerns. ◆

Find more information and updates from the Affordable Housing Committee at: saintmarks.org/affordable-housing