

# Adaptive Reuse of MotherHouse

## **MaineHousing**

Rental Housing: Preservation and Rehabilitation

### **HFA Staff Contact**

Denise Lord

[dlord@mainehousing.org](mailto:dlord@mainehousing.org)



## Background

Originally built in 1906, the Motherhouse at 605 Stevens Avenue in Portland’s Deering Center Neighborhood was home to the Sisters of Mercy until 2005. It closed in 2005 due to a dwindling number of Sisters living at the nearly 116,000 square foot property located on an 18.98 acre campus. Developers Collaborative chose The Motherhouse as the first building in the multi-phase redevelopment of the Sisters of Mercy site. The order, founded in 1856, has focused on helping people through volunteer work in schools, hospitals and other community institutions, and continues to serve the community today.

Many original features have been restored and preserved, including grand stairways, stained glass windows, a three-story chapel with altar and grand organ. Adjacent areas of the building have been redeveloped into 88 apartments for adults 55 years of age and older, 66 targeted to tenants making 50-60% of Area Median Income. Every unit (studios and one-bedrooms) has a unique view and layout. The project has two elevators, an onsite library, community room, two laundry rooms and sitting areas throughout. Three days a week, an onsite Resident Service Coordinator is available to assist tenants with procuring services and coordinate onsite health and wellness programs.

St. Joseph’s Convent is one of the most well-known historic location in Portland, Maine. Some of the new residents actually attended school there.

## Meeting the needs of the community

Maine has some of the oldest housing stock in the country, and is home to the oldest population in the country. The estimated need for affordable housing units for older Mainers hovers around 10,000. As our population and housing stock grows, Maine organizations and developers are coming together to ensure that older adults have access to quality, affordable housing – including the historic Motherhouse.

## Why an NCSHA Award for Motherhouse?

### **Innovative:**

The level of restoration and preservation is unsurpassed. There are names on the stained glass in the chapel of old Portland families and well-known citizens of the past. It allows the community to maintain a piece of their history and a familiar and comforting sight while meeting a growing need for quality, affordable housing for older adults.

### **Replicability**

There are myriad historic religious and school properties in Maine that are ripe for adaptive reuse, and the lessons learned from the Motherhouse will support us in continuing to expand similar opportunities.



**Response to an important state housing need:**

An estimated 10,000 affordable units are needed for older adults in Maine. Additionally, we know that people want to stay in their communities. Preserving historic buildings and converting them into housing provides tremendous social benefit while ensuring we honor the history of important Maine institutions.

**Measurable benefits to HFA targeted customers:**

Motherhouse provides 66 units of affordable housing in a historic building for older Maine adults to stay and remain active in their tight-knit community.

**Have a proven track record of success in the market place:**

MaineHousing has been helping Maine people buy, rent, and heat their homes for 50 years. The Motherhouse is testament to our commitment to assist Maine people in obtaining and maintaining quality affordable housing and services suitable to their housing needs. Developers Collaborative has partnered with MaineHousing on many affordable housing developments, has four such developments in the pipeline right now, and more on the way.

**Provide benefits that outweigh costs:**

The community strongly supported the preservation and conversion of the Motherhouse into affordable housing for older adults. This project provides much-needed housing supply while preserving a historic structure.

**Effectively employ partnerships:**

Support from the City of Portland, MaineHousing, Maine Preservation, Greater Portland Landmarks, the students and staff of the former McAuley School, the Deering Center Neighborhood Association, Sea Coast Management, and Developers Collaborative were all essential to making this project a success. Financing involved 10 public and private entities.

**Achieve strategic objectives:**

Increasing the supply of housing for Maine people, and in particular older adults, is one of MaineHousing's top priorities.





**MaineHousing**  
**Entry:** Adaptive reuse of Motherhouse – Developers Collaborative  
**Category:** Rental Housing – Preservation and Rehabilitation

## More about the project

Developers Collaborative:

<http://www.developerscollaborative.com/dcprojects/motherhouse/>

Maine Preservation 2018 Honor Awards: <https://www.maine Preservation.org/2018-honor-awards/2018/11/8/the-motherhouse-portland>

Greater Portland Landmarks: <http://www.portlandlandmarks.org/st-josephs-convent>

Mainebiz, Six developers to be recognized by Maine Real Estate & Development Association (MEREDA): <https://www.mainebiz.biz/article/six-developers-to-be-recognized-by-mereda>

Chanel 13 WGME, Former Portland convent repurposed into senior living community: <https://wgme.com/news/local/former-portland-convent-repurposed-into-senior-living-community>





**MaineHousing**  
**Entry:** Adaptive reuse of Motherhouse – Developers Collaborative  
**Category:** Rental Housing – Preservation and Rehabilitation

## About MaineHousing

MaineHousing is an independent quasi-state agency that also is one of the top mortgage lenders and affordable housing development lenders in the state. The authority is a \$1.8 billion financial institution with a staff of 150+ whose mission is to assist Maine people in obtaining and maintaining quality affordable housing and services suitable to their housing needs.

On an annual basis the agency assists more than 90,000 Maine households and invests more than \$300 million in Maine’s economy, most of it from the sale of tax-exempt revenue bonds, private capital generated by the low income housing tax credit, and federal funds.

MaineHousing provides financing and administers programs to assist first-time homebuyers; to develop affordable rental housing; to create housing for people with special needs; to provide housing for people who are homeless; to provide low income households with heating assistance; and to repair or weatherize homes of low-income homeowners.

*MaineHousing does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, national origin, ancestry, physical or mental disability, age, familial status or receipt of public assistance in the admission or access to or treatment in its programs and activities. In employment, MaineHousing does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, ancestry, age, physical or mental disability or genetic information. MaineHousing will provide appropriate communication auxiliary aids and services upon sufficient notice. MaineHousing will also provide this document in alternative formats upon sufficient notice. MaineHousing has designated the following person responsible for coordinating compliance with applicable federal and state nondiscrimination requirements and addressing grievances: Louise Patenaude, Maine State Housing Authority, 353 Water Street, Augusta, Maine 04330-4633, Telephone Number 1-800-452-4668 (voice in state only), (207) 626-4600 (voice) or Maine Relay 711.*

### For more information about MaineHousing programs please contact us at:

Maine State Housing Authority  
353 Water Street | Augusta, Maine 04330-04633  
207-626-4600 | 800-452-4668 | Maine Relay 711 | Fax 207-626-4678  
www.mainehousing.org  
May 2019

