

Cabin in the Woods

MaineHousing

Special Needs Housing: Housing for Persons with Special Needs

HFA Staff Contact

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Background

Through a combination of a mortgage loan, subsidy, and Low Income Housing Tax Credits, MaineHousing financed the construction of Cabin in the Woods on the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Togus Medical Center campus in Chelsea, Maine. Cabin in the Woods houses veterans who were once homeless. Twenty-one units or cabins are sited in a quiet, wooded area on the VA campus with access to a community building and case management services.

Veterans moved into homes fully stocked with linens, dishes, and furniture purchased through donations. Those who gave to this effort join an expansive list of mission-driven developers, financiers, construction crews, supportive staff, and volunteers who have made this unique project a reality. All 21 cabins are occupied and tenants have told MaineHousing staff how happy they are to live in a beautiful place with easy access to the VA medical center.

Volunteers of America Northern New England approached MaineHousing for financing of this project which is the only one in Maine that provides homes for both male and female veterans. A few of the units are occupied by families.

Construction was mostly financed through the 9% Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program administered through MaineHousing, and the project passed final inspections by our Construction Services team in mid-August 2018. Tenants moved in at the end of August and the beginning of September and are excited about the upcoming addition of an outdoor community space where they can have barbeques and group events.

“It’s the best thing that’s ever happened to me.”
– Ernie, Resident of Cabin in the Woods

Partnerships

Cabin in the Woods brought together:

- A nonprofit housing developer and service provider,
- Two federal government agencies,
- The state housing finance agency
- A private foundation, and
- Private sector financial investment.



Volunteers of America Northern New England worked diligently with the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) to secure a 75 year lease on the VA Maine Healthcare System’s Togus campus under their Enhanced-Use Lease program. MaineHousing, with approval from the U.S. Department



of Housing and Urban Development, ensured that 16 of the cabins had rental assistance from Veterans Affairs' Supportive Housing Vouchers. The financing needed to make this project a reality was provided by MaineHousing, Bangor Savings Bank, Northern New England Housing Investment Fund, and The Home Depot Foundation.

Why an NCSHA Award for Cabin in the Woods?

Innovative:

Utilizing the Enhanced-Use Lease program from the VA, our developer partner was able to link healthcare and housing for veterans experiencing homelessness. Cabin in the Woods is the first project in Maine to provide special needs housing for both male and female veterans.

Replicability:

With only one VA medical center in Maine, Cabin in the Woods has the potential to expand in the future or utilize other underutilized land or buildings on the Togus campus. Additionally, this project can serve as a national model for housing veterans who are homeless on VA campuses across the nation.

Response to an important state housing need:

Research has shown the likelihood of having persistent and severe mental or physical illnesses is higher among individuals experiencing homelessness. Integrating housing and health care addresses health issues more efficiently and effectively. Cabin in the Woods successfully partners housing and medical providers, increasing access to VA-provided healthcare and services for now formerly homeless veterans.

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. Cabin in the Woods is testament to our commitment to assisting Maine people in obtaining and maintaining quality affordable housing and services suitable to their housing needs.

Provide benefits that outweigh costs:

For a total development cost of just over \$240,000 per unit, the benefit to the 21 formerly homeless veterans and their families is priceless.

Demonstrate effective use of resources:

Often first of its kind projects run into unforeseen issues. Cabin in the Woods is no different. Though the project exceeded cost limits established in MaineHousing's Qualified Allocation Plan, our developer partner and our flexibility



ensured the completion of the project with aid from the Home Depot Foundation and other non MaineHousing sources.

Why an NCSHA Award for Cabin in the Woods?

Effectively employ partnerships:

As illustrated in the above Partnerships heading, this project would not have been completed without the partners' ability to come together in support of this project. A 75-year land lease on a VA medical center campus, project-based rental assistance from MaineHousing, private sector investment and foundation support, and a developer partner with the vision to see it through was what made Cabin in the Woods a reality for veterans who want to live the rest of their days in their cabins.

Achieve strategic objectives:

Cabin in the Woods was the first project of its kind in Maine, and enables both male and female veterans who previously experienced homelessness to seamlessly access the benefits and treatment available on the Togus VA campus.

In the news

Portland Press Herald, [*After years of work, cabins for homeless veterans open on Togus campus*](#), September 21, 2018.

News Center Maine, [*Cabin in Woods Preview*](#), September 20, 2018.

Kennebec Journal, [*Cabin in the Woods project for homeless vets starts construction at Togus*](#), May 19, 2017.

Partners

[Volunteers of America – Northern New England](#)

U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs

- [VA Maine Healthcare System – Togus](#)
- [Enhanced-Use Lease](#)

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

- [Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing](#)

[Northern New England Housing Investment Fund](#)

[Home Depot Foundation](#)



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. MaineHousing is a \$1.8 billion financial institution with a staff of over 160 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, 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, 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:

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