



Exploring Affordable Housing on Campus *Vision and Background*

A Strategic Vision Guided by Vestry

The Vestry has identified affordable housing as a missional initiative worthy of consideration for Saint Mark's to explore further. The continued rise in the cost of buying and renting homes in Seattle has exacerbated a housing crisis. Growth in the private market housing sector does not address the needs of those with lower incomes. More housing is needed that will remain affordable to lower-income households for the long term.

St. Nicholas Site

The St. Nicholas site includes the original St. Nicholas building, the "new" wing built in the 1950s, and the real estate itself. The Cathedral faces extraordinary financial challenges with the St. Nicholas building that revenue from the current tenant leases will not solve, including extensive maintenance, a new roof, and seismic and mechanical upgrades that will cost millions, plus substantial costs are necessary to remodel and modernize the building to ensure accessibility and energy efficiency. As Saint Mark's seeks the highest and best use of the St. Nicholas property, there is an opportunity to respond to the needs of a growing Seattle community through affordable housing.

Formation of Affordable Housing Committee

In September 2022, the Vestry charged the staff and Vestry leadership to explore and, if feasible, pursue an affordable housing project on the St. Nicholas site. This led to the formation of the Affordable Housing Exploratory Committee, now called the Affordable Housing (AH) Committee. The first stage of the AH Committee's work was to test the proposition that affordable housing was the highest and best mission-related use of the St. Nicholas site.

In this early phase, members spoke with more than 15 organizations that were actively engaged in various aspects of affordable housing and then reached a conclusion that affordable housing was a strong mission fit and seemed likely to be feasible. The Vestry concurred in this assessment, and the AH Committee shifted to a more formal pre-development feasibility analysis, guided by a highly skilled development consultant, Tory Laughlin Taylor. In late spring of 2024, the formal feasibility phase ended, and Saint Mark's began seeking expressions of interest from development partners. Due to the current saturated affordable housing market pipeline and financing challenges, the timeline to select a development partner will likely be delayed by two years. In the interim time, Saint Mark's will focus on key aspects of its community engagement plan while also continuing work on some predevelopment aspects of the project.

Exploring Affordable Housing on Campus

The St. Nicholas site offers a compelling setting for families: centrally located, urban green space, access to transit and proximity to commercial services. The site is also in a part of the city that has not been tapped for affordable housing. The development is intended to help counter the effects of past racial and economic exclusion woven into the neighborhood's history.

Guiding Criteria

The AH Committee developed and the Vestry approved criteria to guide project development, subject to reasonable adjustment as needed. The vision of the development project would:

- Meet community need, fulfill the Cathedral's mission objectives, and be supported by the congregation.
- Fit architecturally with campus, incorporate elements of the original St. Nicholas site, and be climate impact neutral or better.
- Ensure that Saint Mark's, to the greatest extent feasible, retains control of the property permanently, meets the Cathedral's mission objectives long-term, and incurs limited financial and liability risk.
- Include a "third" place that provides opportunity for residents, parishioners, and community members to interact as part of daily life.

Continued Commitment to Cathedral Mission and Ministries

Saint Mark's commitment to the ministry areas of Restorative Justice and Systemic Change, Intergenerational and Innovative Community and Creation Care and Carbon Reduction continue to inform the Committee's work.

- *Restorative Justice and Systemic Change:* It is a foundational human need to have a secure and safe place to call home.
- *Intergenerational and Innovative Community:* Communities thrive with the opportunity and space for all ages to gather and interact.
- *Creation Care and Carbon Reduction:* Caring for and stewarding campus buildings and property to minimize carbon impact is a commitment Saint Mark's takes seriously.

Key Steps Ahead in Pre-Development Phase

The AH Committee values the Vestry's strong missional commitment stewarding the St. Nicholas building. In its adapted development timeline, the Committee will focus on:

1. Connecting with developers and community partners to discuss the project in more depth and continue to stay updated on the affordable housing market.
2. Deepen and expand a robust communications community engagement plan to engage the parish, neighbors and communities harmed by housing disparities.
3. Continue key aspects of predevelopment work such as exploring questions related to historic rehab and land transaction modeling.
4. Continue to support Saint Mark's ongoing commitment to addressing housing insecurity in the City of Seattle, recognizing affordable housing on campus is one part of this work.

No decisions have been made. If you have questions, please email affordablehousing@saintmarks.org. Learn more at www.saintmarks.org/affordablehousing.