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# Affordable housing can look like this: Frost Terrace Apartments opens in Cambridge

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*[A Home for Everyone: From rising rents to barriers to home ownership, part of MassLive's ongoing coverage of housing issues in Massachusetts.](#)*

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A new family-oriented affordable housing complex in Cambridge's Porter Square neighborhood has had a unique journey toward its opening: the building itself traveled more than 15 feet to get there.

Frost Terrace Apartments, a 40-unit development at 1791 Massachusetts Ave., held a grand opening Tuesday, seven years after the project's developers first purchased the property. The complex consists of three historical houses each containing four apartments and a modern addition containing an additional 28 units.

Developer Sean Hope, who partnered with Newton-based Capstone Communities, said at the event that the project took perseverance and intentionality.

"You don't get this type of building, you don't get this type of design, unless everybody on the team is intentional about seeing something special happen," Hope said. "I love it when I tell my friends and neighbors that I built affordable housing with my partner, and they can't figure out where it is. I love that because (they think) it couldn't be this beautiful historic building. It couldn't be this very modern building that meets all these standards for environmental design."

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All of the units at Frost Terrace are income-restricted to families making between 30 and 60% of the Area Median Income, which in Cambridge in 2023 is \$122,950 for a two-person household, according to the [Massachusetts Housing Partnership](#). Of the 40 apartments, 26, or 65%, are two- and three-bedroom units, which Capstone Communities Principal Jason Korb said was in response to needs voiced by city officials and advocates.

"If you look at the market around us, everybody's building one-bedrooms and studios. They're not building for families," Korb said. "The city said to us, 'We want three-beds. We want two-beds. We want families to live here. We we don't want Cambridge to be all

sort of young professionals and people living in one-beds. So that's what this represents. It represents an urban environment."

### House is moved more than 15 feet during Frost Terrace Apartn



The property, which consists of three separate parcels, contains three historic homes, one built in 1865 and two in 1895. In order to fit the new construction, the main house was transported 15 feet west toward Massachusetts Avenue and 8 feet north.

The developers also had to build around several mature trees that they wanted to preserve, and included only three parking spaces on the property in order to use as much space as possible for the apartments. Instead, they included 44 indoor bicycle parking spaces, and expected residents to rely on the MBTA just a short walk away.

"This is an incredible model of infill development, infill affordable housing development, introducing higher density into existing built neighborhoods in a way that is thoughtful and tasteful and respectful, and that will clearly be very successful," said Rick Muraida, senior vice president at Rockland Trust, which provided financing for the project. "It's great to have an example like this to point to.

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Over the years, the three houses had been redesigned so they no longer reflected the historic character of the neighborhood. However, with help from the city's Historical Commission and historic images of the area, the developers were able to replicate the structure's original look, even installing copper gutters and downspouts as would have been used at the time. The new addition was also designed to mimic the features of the historic structures so it would blend in.



1791 Massachusetts Ave. in Cambridge in October 2017, before construction began on the Frost Terrace Apartments. (Google)

The complex also includes private outdoor green space, a community room, electric vehicle chargers, a laundry room and on-site management.

State Rep. Marjorie Decker praised Hope and Korb for creating housing that anyone, regardless of income level, would want to live in.

“I’m so thankful to live in a community that understands that you deserve to live in a really beautiful place, a place that’s accessible to public transportation, a place that’s accessible to grocery shopping ... and that recognizes the dignity of everyone in our community, including people who need to live in subsidized housing,” Decker said. “As someone who grew up in public housing, I can tell you, it makes you really uncomfortable. The experience of living in poverty and living in public housing for so many people is one that has very little dignity for people who aren’t lucky enough to live in beautiful homes like this.”

She pointed out that as of last year, 22,000 people were on the wait list for public housing in Cambridge.

The complex received more than 900 applications during its initial leasing cycle and has been fully occupied since 2021.

- **Read more:** [Mass. needs more affordable housing; So why don't developers build more?](#)

State Sen. Pat Jehlen said Cambridge was lucky that it has the resources, infrastructure and zoning to make projects like Frost Terrace possible.

“We need to make that possible in other places. Not everybody can live in Cambridge, and not everybody that needs an affordable home can live here,” she said. “There is nothing more important in this state and more urgent than preserving, protecting and building affordable housing. A lot of people focus just on building our way out and they think building anything anywhere is going to help, but it’s not fast enough and not enough. We can’t stop displacement and disruption to the community by just building more luxury, single-person homes.”

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