

CHELSEA 40R DEVELOPMENTS

Site Details: 40R District, 2.7 acres
Date(s): June 2005
Zoning : 40R, Special Permits, Variances

Funding: 40R Funding, City, Developer Commonwealth Capital Grant Program, State TOD grant.
Goals: Provide affordable housing; Develop underutilized parcel; Revitalize Chelsea.



Background

In Chelsea, the non-profit Chelsea Neighborhood Developers (CND) wanted to convert two buildings in a vacant mill complex into housing. They partnered with private developer Mitchell properties and approached the city with their proposal. This initial idea resulted in an application for a 40R district that would support a much larger project. The district will eventually include three complexes: Janus Highlands, Box Work Homes, and Atlas Lofts. Janus was completed in February of 2008 and includes 41 units in four 2-3 story buildings. This development was constructed on a vacant lot and the sites of two former industrial buildings. Box Work Homes was completed in March 2008 and includes 26 mixed-income units. The third complex, Atlas Lofts, is expected to be a mixed-income rental development and has not yet been completed.



Box Works Homes

Site Development

In order for the new developments to progress, most of the old industrial buildings had to be demolished as they did not meet current industrial standards. Atlas Lofts however is incorporating adaptive



Atlas Lofts—Old Industrial Building

re-use and utilizing a former mill building for their residences. The 40R district is primarily housing because Broadway, a street with more foot traffic, was determined to be the ideal place for retail and commercial establishments. Open public meetings were held during the permitting process and the plan involved input from residents and the CND advisory committee. Due to the relative poverty and cultural and language barriers, there are always some challenges achieving high attendance at public meetings in Chelsea. However, the town planner was impressed with the number of community

members in attendance at these meetings. At this time, all 3 projects have received plan approval and Janus and Box Works are built and occupied. The town is currently working with CND and the developer of some additional affordable housing units to turn a nearby 13,000 sf area into a park. They are also interested in using an abandoned railroad in the area as a potential trail or site for mixed use.

Development Process

Until 1986, the area was zoned industrial. In an attempt to encourage developers to bring residential development, the area was rezoned residential in the late 1980s, but the market for this type of development did not yet exist in Chelsea. After several years of financial distress, the town consulted with the nonprofit CND who in turn partnered with Mitchell Properties in order to build the current developments. The developers applied for a 40R district right away and used special permits and variances to get the first project off the ground while waiting on their application.

The 40R process not only promoted affordable housing in the area, but also paid out bonus payments that the town used to make necessary infrastructure improvements in the area. These included water, drainage, and street improvements. The project also attained funding for housing through the city's Department of Housing and Community Development. They received a Commonwealth Capital Grant for the Janus development and for additional streetscape improvements. They were also the first to receive funding from the state Transit Oriented Development Program, obtaining a \$500,000 grant for a pedestrian walkway, and \$2 million for rental developments.



Rendering of the completed Atlas Lofts



Janus Highlands

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40R and Metro Future Goals

Sustainable Growth Patterns:

The development includes the reuse of various old factory buildings and also promotes high density at 43 units/acre.

Transportation Choices:

The community is serviced by 5 bus routes and the MBTA Commuter Rail Stop.

Housing Choices:

The development includes both affordable and mixed income housing so that people from diverse income levels can live together in the same area.

Healthy Communities:

Chelsea Neighborhood Developers is a neighborhood oriented organization and wanted to involve as many community members in the process as possible. They worked hard to encourage people to attend public meetings and to gather public input for the process.

Contact Information

For more information about the Chelsea 40R district contact developer John DePriest, Town Planner, at jdepriest@chelseama.gov info@forbeslofts.com.

"The 40R process actually strengthened the planning board and made people more comfortable in voicing their opinions which was a real advantage"- John DePriest, Director of Planning and Development, Chelsea