

# Gloucester- Pond View Village (LePage Glue Factory)



**Site Details:** 21 acres with 7 acre pond. Phase 1: 43 affordable rental units; Phase 2: 42 Condominiums - 15 affordable and 26 market rate units; Phase 3: 34 units (currently in progress by different developer).

**Zoning:** Rezoned as village/business.

**Goals:** Affordable housing; redevelopment of unused warehouse; retain town's character.

**Funding:** Private funding; MassHousing Partnership; Massachusetts Housing Investment Corp.; DHCD low-income housing tax credits; North Shore Housing Consortium; City of Gloucester; Federal Home Loan Bank; Fleet Boston Financial Foundation; MA Affordable Housing Trust Fund.

**Date(s):** 2002-present.



Site of the LePage Glue Factory, Gloucester, MA

## Background

The LePage Glue Factory is located in Gloucester, MA. It was founded in 1876, produced liquid glue from fish waste until 1951, when it moved to Toronto. The site has pond and river views, green space and is close to downtown Gloucester, public beaches, parks and recreation areas. In 2001, the city of Gloucester finished its ten-year comprehensive plan, which identified housing for people who worked and lived in Gloucester as the most critical issue at the time. The community and local authorities felt that residents should have the choice to live within the community and in neighborhoods that maintain their unique identities.

## Site Development

In November of 2001, the LePage site became available for purchase. Members of Wellspring House, Inc. a North Shore non-profit organization, were active members of the Mayor's Housing Task Force. At the request of the task force, the board of Wellspring voted to create Cape Ann Housing Opportunity (CAHO) to raise community money to make an offer on the site. The offer was accepted because CAHO agreed to complete the due diligence on the site in three months. CAHO closed on the purchase of the property in August 2002. After purchasing the property CAHO held an Open House for the community and welcomed ideas for the uses of the site. During the course of the fall and winter of 2002 CAHO held several open meetings in order to inform the community, continue to get ideas, and to give people updates on the progress of pre-development.

The project had strong political support and by December 2003 CAHO had received Major Project Comprehensive Permit for the development of up to 118 units of housing. They would rehabilitate of some existing buildings as part of the construction process. The zoning was changed from industrial to Village/Business, a new type of zoning that allows for small business to be run from homes.

## Development Process

Designed by Bergmeyer Associates, Inc., the development had 3 phases: phase 1 was the construction of 43 units of rental housing, all affordable; phase 2 had 41 condo units, 15 of them affordable to first time home buyers. Phase 3, scheduled for 2006, involved 34 units for sale, some affordable, some market. Macomber Builders was engaged as the general contractor early in 2004. However, because of rising construction materials, Macomber resigned in May 2004 and after some months, CAHO engaged Cutler Associates as the general contractor at the beginning of 2005. Cutler provided jobs to Gloucester and Cape Ann residents by hiring local contractors as sub-contractors. CAHO broke ground in April 2005 and the first two phases were completed a year later in 2006.



Birds-eye view of the Pond View Village (along the right side)

Although rental units were occupied according to schedule, the condos were slow to sell because the housing market was in serious decline at the time. A further obstacle challenged the project and that was a legal situation. In January 2006 Gloucester City Council approved CAHO's request for an amendment to the special project comprehensive permit for height exception for the building that would be Phase 3, for 34 condos. Immediately, the owners of 276 units of housing that abuts the Pond View Site appealed the city council's decision and this litigation further delayed the project. Because of this lawsuit, Pond View suffered loss (and time in development is money), and potential buyers because they were unsure about the stability of the development. However in September 2006 a settlement was reached, and three years later the rental housing was fully occupied and condos of phase 2 were completely sold. MHIC

awarded the third phase to Caleb Foundation; a non-profit in Swampscott with experience in developing and managing affordable rental housing and phase 3 is under construction, as LePage Apartments. There will be 34 rental units.



Pond View Village, source: Equal Housing Opportunity, Essex Pond, LLC, need permission.

## Pond View Village and MetroFuture Goals

### *Sustainable Growth Patterns*

Pond View Village is an example of how affordable housing can successfully be mixed with market-rate units and how rental housing and condominiums for ownership make a village. Reusing factory buildings allows for distinctive architecture. CHAPA designated the redevelopment of the LePage site into community housing, some affordable, some market, as Smart Growth Demonstration Project.

### *Housing Choices*

When all 3 phases are completed, Pond View Village will offer a total of 77 rental units to families making 60% or less of the area median income. In addition there are 41 condos, 15 of which are for first time homebuyers. All of this adds to Gloucester's affordable housing options.



Construction of development and nearby commuter rail

### *Community Vitality*

The project has created a new village center on Essex Avenue, with residents walking to the West Gloucester train station or working from home. The Caleb Group will also provide social service coordination for residents, as well as community space and a computer learning center. Additionally, the historical commission is planning to incorporate a walking museum that will tell the story of the LePage glue factory in Gloucester.

### *Transportation Choices*

Pond View Village is close to downtown, public beaches, parks and recreation areas, retail and entertainment venues. It is also a mile from the commuter train into Boston. In addition, Massachusetts Housing Partnership (MHP) provided a grant to help plan a sidewalk improvement project to link the housing with the nearby rail and bus transit.

### **Contact Information**

For more information about the development of Pond View Village, contact Nancy Schwoyer, president of CAHO and President Emerita at Wellspring House, at [nschwoyer@gmail.com](mailto:nschwoyer@gmail.com).

*"In terms of smart growth, it's important to find out what adaptive reuse can really cost. Having good engineering investigations beforehand along with active community input were key aspects to this project." - Nancy Schwoyer, president of CAHO and President Emerita of Wellspring House.*