



Caritas Communities

Preventing Homelessness with Affordable Housing

www.caritascommunities.org



Homeless Prevention Program

"I have lived at Alaska Street for five years. Caritas is my home and where I plan to stay. It is the first place I have lived in a long time that has been safe, clean and affordable. I have always worked, but two months ago, my shift was cut. If I lost my room I would be homeless." — BYRON, ALASKA

STREET RESIDENT

Sometimes it is not enough to get someone into affordable housing. Sometimes, we need to help them keep that housing.

Caritas' Safety Net Program supports the organization's overall mission of creating affordable housing for people who cannot earn a living wage in the Boston area with its high cost of housing. Most of our residents work full-time, but at low-paying jobs. Other residents are on disability or social security. Without the availability of affordable housing, these people would have few housing options other than a shelter. As it is, they are still vulnerable: a few weeks of missed work due to unemployment or illness, or an unexpected expense, means they have to choose between eating and paying

their rent. The Safety Net Program helps keep tenants in their homes by providing emergency funds to cover their rent during a crisis.

Being on a very low or fixed income means not having the luxury of being able to save money for periods of underemployment, unemployment, or unexpected emergency bills. At Caritas, we believe that our obligation is not just to create, provide and maintain affordable housing. We believe we must take into consideration the challenges and obstacles that our residents face. For that reason, we provide a safety net so that responsible people do not lose their housing due to circumstances beyond their control. Our name means "charity" – an act of kindness and understanding toward others. If we started the eviction process every time one of our residents missed a rent payment, we would belie our name and fail at our mission.

By making a contribution to the Safety Net Program, you are helping people stay in their homes while they experience a setback in their lives. At a time when people are facing uncertainty and stress in other areas of their lives, the last thing they need is to fear losing the roof over their heads. A minor crisis would then turn into a downward spiral of events that would be difficult to recover from. Our nearly 30-year history of providing affordable housing—and compassion—has taught us that most people do not want a handout and do not abuse the help we provide. Rather, they are very grateful and feel supported and cared for. Residents understand that their housing costs money, and that during a crisis their missed rent is being paid by Caritas' generous supporters. Our experience is that the Safety Net Program does not encourage idleness or dependence. It expresses good will, and at Caritas we believe that good will is contagious.

Because no one should be homeless.

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Direct Care Program

“My case manager helps me anyway he can. He helped me navigate getting health insurance and now we are focusing finding me a home.”

— STEVE, CENTRAL HOUSE RESIDENT

In order to provide comprehensive services to our residents, Caritas Communities has launched a new initiative to provide onsite case management to our residents. The Direct Care Program provides licensed social workers and case managers, onsite, to help residents identify and address needs and challenges that they are facing and that impact their ability to function at their highest levels.

Historically, Caritas has provided support services through collaborations with agencies that align with our mission of preventing homelessness and stabilizing neighborhoods. Caritas and its partners work together to help place residents in affordable housing and preserve their ability to remain in housing. And because housing is just one of many needs that our residents have, we collaborate with the best service providers to ensure residents have access to quality health care, mental health and substance abuse counseling, and assistance with employment and financial issues. This model will continue, but we recognize the need for onsite case management professionals who establish long-term, trusting relationships with residents, and serve them exclusively. These onsite professional social services will enhance our mission of providing quality affordable housing and preventing homelessness among the working poor.

By addressing issues that can affect employability, such as physical and mental health, we are helping to ensure that residents are able to stay in their homes. By financially supporting the Direct Care Program, you are providing dedicated, onsite care that Caritas manages and adapts to the specific needs of our residents. Thus, Caritas is able to offer much more than clean, safe, affordable housing: We are able to provide residents with a sense of community and the assurance that, whatever situation they may be facing, there is someone there to assist them.

Caritas' mission is not simply to provide the working poor in Greater Boston with affordable housing. It is to provide safe, stable, quality affordable housing. Homey housing. The Home Improvement Program ensures that residents live in safe housing, where the exteriors and interiors are in good repair, safe, up to codes and standards, and have fixtures, appliances and furnishings that are functional and attractive. This means we do not wait until things break, wear out, or look hopelessly outdated.

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Overview

“At Caritas, we believe that every person deserves a safe, clean place to call home.”

— CARITAS COMMUNITIES

Caritas is the largest non-profit owner and manager of affordable permanent veteran and Single Room Occupancy housing in Greater Boston. Caritas provides very low- and extremely low-income, disabled and homeless individuals safe, clean, and stable housing in its 895 rooms in 29 buildings in Greater Boston.

OUR STORY

P. Leo Corcoran, a partner in the real estate firm John M. Corcoran & Company, founded Caritas Communities in 1985 at a time when the number of homeless people in Greater Boston increased in record numbers. Mr. Corcoran organized a Board of Directors who shared his belief that homelessness could be prevented through affordable housing. The Board chose the Single Room Occupancy (SRO) as its housing model with a focus on low- and extremely low-income working people. Conceptually, the Board felt that if Caritas were able to offer housing that was newly renovated, well-managed and geared to meet the needs of the residents, then a stable living environment could be created for people who can't make a living wage.

Caritas prides itself on providing safe, well-maintained, stable housing. Each house is supervised by a live-in resident manager responsible for the well-being of the residents and the upkeep of the property. Caritas partners with several direct care agencies including Heading Home, Project Place, Pine Street Inn, AIDS Action Committee, Veterans Northeast Outreach Center, and New England Center for Homeless Veterans. The Caritas model creates sustainable properties that lessen the need for homeless shelters. By running our properties on a not-for-profit basis and renting at below market rent, we make it possible for our residents to have a permanent home – and to maintain dignity and stability in their lives.

Our work is supported by public/private partnerships with the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), the City of Boston Department of Neighborhood Development and other public entities, as well as area foundations, corporations and individuals.

Our ongoing goal is to acquire, develop, renovate and manage vital low-income housing projects to prevent homelessness.

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