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**City of Cambridge**  
Housing Department

**Vail Court, 139 Bishop Allen Drive**  
**Community Update Meeting**

May 20, 2026



# Virtual Housekeeping



Use the **Raise Hand** function to speak during the community feedback portion of the presentation

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Submit questions or comments to the panelists about the project through the **Q&A**



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May 20, 2026

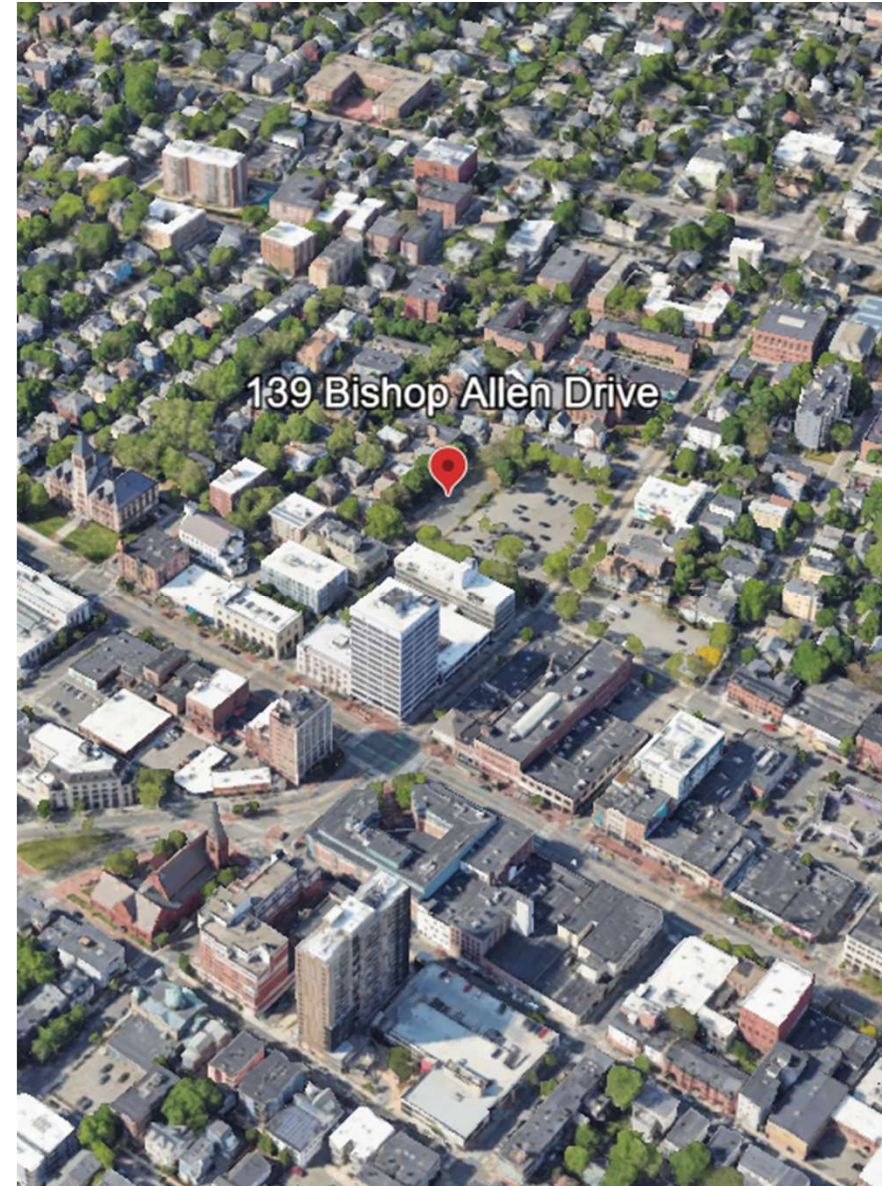
CITY OF CAMBRIDGE | HOUSING DEPARTMENT

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# Purpose of the Meeting

- 1 Introduce the Vail Court project
- 2 Provide updates and next steps on the process to create affordable housing at the Vail Court site
- 3 Hear from the community to get input to assist the Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust in selecting a developer for this affordable development project

May 20, 2026



# Meeting Agenda

- 1 Brief History & Introduction of Vail Court Site
- 2 About the Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust
- 3 About the Housing Department
- 4 Anticipated Development Process & Timeline
- 5 Community Feedback

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# Vail Court Site Information

**Owner:** City of Cambridge

**Neighborhood:** Mid Cambridge

**Lot Size:** 28,201 square feet

**Existing Condition:** Vacant Land

**Future Use:** 100% Affordable Housing

May 20, 2026



# History of the Site

<b>September 2016:</b>	Site is acquired by the City.
<b>June 2017:</b>	City Council votes to transfer the site to the Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust for redevelopment as affordable housing.
<b>Summer 2017:</b>	City and Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust host public meetings about demolition and development planning process.
<b>Fall 2017 – Summer 2025 :</b>	Process is paused pending resolution of litigation related to the acquisition of the site. Buildings on the site are demolished in 2018.
<b>Summer 2025:</b>	Litigation is resolved. Planning for redevelopment can recommence.
<b>Fall 2025 - Present:</b>	Trust restarts its process to seek and select an affordable housing developer for Vail Court.



*Site at acquisition in 2016*



*Site as of 2026*

# About the Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust

Established in 1989 by City Council

Mission to expand and protect affordable housing opportunities in Cambridge

Nine member Board, appointed and chaired by the City Manager

## How the Trust helps address housing needs:

- Acts as a public lender; reviews requests + commits funding for creation of new affordable housing + preservation of existing housing
- Advises on City housing policy & program design
- First-time homebuyer assistance
- Guides the redevelopment of City-owned properties designated to become affordable housing



# About the Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust

- Trust has funded multiple types of affordable housing but prioritizes affordable housing for **families**, as well as **service enriched housing**.
- Trust funding requires long-term affordability
- Trust expects its funds to be leveraged by other affordable housing funding sources

Since its inception, Trust has committed over **\$400 million** to assist in creating and preserving more than **4,200** affordable homes, both rental and homeownership units.



*16-18 Wendell, 26 permanent supportive housing units for formerly homeless*

# About the Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust

Supports the **creation of new** affordable housing through:

- New construction
- Acquisition + conversion of market-rate multi-family to affordable use
- Adaptive reuse of non-residential structures
- Acquisition of condominiums by first-time homebuyers to expand affordable stock

Supports the **preservation of existing** affordable housing through:

- Housing with expiring use restrictions
- Housing in need of rehab or revitalization



*78-80 Porter Rd, 26-unit formerly market-rate building converted to affordable*

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# About the Housing Department

**What we do:** Housing Department coordinates efforts to meet the housing needs of low, moderate, and middle-income residents through administration of initiatives and programs which create, preserve and offer access to affordable housing, programs and services

## **How we do it:**

- Staff and support the Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust
- Underwrite and present requests for funding to the Trust
- Partner with affordable housing developers and providers
- Manage affordable housing development and programs
- Oversee the use of City funds and Trust funds



# Examples of Trust-Funded Projects



## **116 Norfolk Street:**

Creation of 62 units of permanent supportive housing (PSH) through combination of new construction, historic preservation and reconfiguration of an existing affordable property



## **4 Mellen:**

Creation of 29 new affordable apartments, mostly for families, through combination of new construction, historic preservation, and adaptive reuse



## **52 New Street:**

Creation of 106 new affordable apartments, mostly for families, through new construction.



## **Fresh Pond Apartments:**

Preservation of 504 existing affordable apartments which had been at risk due to expiring use restrictions.

# Examples of Trust-Funded Projects



## **87-101 Blanchard Road:**

Construction about to begin on the new construction of 110 affordable one-bedroom apartments for seniors



## **1791 Massachusetts Ave (Frost Terrace):**

Completed in 2021, creation of 40 affordable apartments through combination of new construction, historic preservation, and adaptive reuse



## **Jefferson Park Federal**

Construction is underway to create 278 new deeply affordable apartments through demolition + replacement of 175 former public housing units and increase of 103 new units



## **671-675 Concord Ave (Finch Cambridge):**

Completed in 2020, creation of 98 affordable apartments through new construction

# Affordable Housing Overlay (AHO)

- Adopted by City Council in 2020, amended in 2023 and 2025
- Helps affordable housing developers create new, 100% affordable housing more quickly, predictably, and efficiently
- AHO projects can move forward without discretionary permit approvals
- AHO requires an advisory design review process which includes opportunities for input from the community and the Planning Board to encourage good design and development outcomes



*Rendering of 52 New Street, the first project permitted under the AHO*

# Affordable Housing Overlay (AHO)

The AHO helps affordable housing developers by:

- Streamlining the review process
- Allowing for incremental increases in density and height
- Relaxing other zoning requirements and dimensional standards

Housing created by the AHO must be fully affordable

Affordability is protected by permanent use restrictions

Residents of AHO housing must be income-eligible



*Rendering of 2072 Massachusetts Avenue, recently approved under the AHO*



# Affordable Housing Overlay (AHO)

## Vail Court Site Zoning:

Located in Residential C-1 District (but outside of Mass Ave Overlay District)

Considered an “AHO Corridor Lot” due to its location on Bishop Allen Drive

- This means that an AHO development at Vail Court would be allowed to be as tall as 12 stories
- This does not mean that an AHO development WILL be 12 stories
- Other requirements such as 30% open space and 5’ rear setbacks apply

Actual design and development plan will be determined by selected developer in conjunction with Trust, staff and community input and subject to Trust approval

# Anticipated Process & Timeline

**Spring/Summer 2026:** Staff works with Trust to develop Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for development team

**Fall 2026:** Trust issues Request for Qualifications (RFQ)

**Winter 2027:** Trust selects a development team through RFQ process

**2027 onward:** Selected development team works with Trust, City and community on advancing design and development plans, moving the project forward through the Affordable Housing Overlay process, and assembling necessary funding to begin construction



# Request for Qualifications (RFQ)

- The Trust has elected to use a “Request for Qualifications” process for the Vail Court site
- The RFQ process will enable the Trust to select a developer based on the developer’s capabilities, track record, and capacity
- The Trust will be determining what selection criteria to include in the RFQ in order to screen, rank and select a development team who will best meet the redevelopment expectations of the Trust, City and community for Vail Court



*Active construction of Jefferson Park Federal*



# Request for Qualifications (RFQ) Process

## Selection criteria which will be included:

- Experience of the developer and development team, for example architect, engineers, and property management company
- Successful track record building, operating, and managing affordable housing
- Evidence of team's history creating affordable housing that is high-quality, financially feasible, and reflects good urban design
- Capacity and readiness of the development team
- Demonstrated commitment to conducting effective community engagement and being responsive to feedback provided on development proposal during public processes
- Other criteria to include?

# Community Feedback



The Housing Department and Trust are listening to comments on:

- Affordable housing needs in Cambridge
- How new housing at Vail Court could address those needs
- Considerations for the developer RFQ selection process

Press **Raise Hand** to get in line to speak

Press **Q&A** to provide written feedback to the panelists



# How to Stay Involved

- Information, news, and updates can be found on the project page at: [www.cambridgema.gov/vailcourt](http://www.cambridgema.gov/vailcourt)
- Sign up to receive email updates by subscribing to the Vail Court mailing list
- Share comments, suggestions + questions by emailing: [vailcourt@cambridgema.gov](mailto:vailcourt@cambridgema.gov)

**The project will be discussed at the Trust meeting on May 28, 2026 at 4PM.** To provide comments, email [affordablehousingtrustcomment@cambridgema.gov](mailto:affordablehousingtrustcomment@cambridgema.gov)

Following this meeting, staff will create a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) section on the project page

- will share answers to questions asked tonight
- will maintain + update FAQ throughout process



Scan this QR code with your phone camera to **visit the project** webpage and **sign up for the email contact list**