

The St. Aidan MFE Awards 2010: Project of the Year/ Mixed-Income

By Chris Wood
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When tasked with redeveloping the St. Aidan church in Brookline, Mass., into a mixed-income multifamily community, Boston-based Planning Office for Urban Affairs knew they were going to have their hands full. For starters, the canopy of a landmark, 200-year-old copper beech tree takes up one quarter of the site's 1.8 acres. And then there's the history: President Kennedy didn't just sleep here—he was baptized here.

"This has been a preeminent public space for centuries," says Peter Roche, project consultant for the Planning Office for Urban Affairs. "The town was insistent on a density and design that reinforced the continued use of this site as a community asset. Between the church and the tree, we were really left with little acreage to create the density necessary to respond to the aim of creating a mixed-income development. That was the real challenge."

Even with incorporating conservation easements and preserving the beech tree, the developers were still able to achieve a for-rent and for-sale mixed-income tour de force that includes housing options ranging from affordable rentals at \$804 a month to a \$1.9 million luxury condo, with workforce housing and market-rate condominiums making up the rest of the 59-unit community. The church itself was adapted into nine three- and four-bedroom luxury units, while elsewhere across the property unit types were mixed so as not to economically segregate resident access to either design or amenities.

"Delivering a new construction product in a location as strategic as this one, while also achieving the attention to quality and detail in responding to each market segment is a unique statement," Roche says.



Credit: Greig Cranna/POUA