Trolley Square

Cambridge, Massachusetts

Developer: Homeowner’s Rehab, Inc.

Total Units: 8 for sale, 32 rental

Description: Trolley Square was built on a vacant lot, formerly the site of a bus storage facility. It includes 40 affordable rental and for sale units, 2,800 square feet of office and community space, an underground garage and 14,000 square feet of open space. Building facades were designed to enhance the streetscape and enliven a previously blank stretch of Massachusetts Avenue. A rhythmic pattern of windows, doors, canopies and bays suggests individual townhouses. Multiple entries make for more lively engagement with the street. Entries to the townhouses are raised above grade to provide privacy within the units and stoops, planters and pavers create a transitional space between the street and the buildings. The development includes a plaza with a garden providing sheltered open space for the residents above the underground parking. The site directly abuts a public park and a bike and walking path that goes through five communities.

A Green Advantage: Trolley Square was designed to achieve Smart Growth Principles. A Living Green Manual is provided for all residents to help them take advantage of all the features of the project and save energy, water, and money. Some of the many environmentally friendly features are:

- Low flow showerheads, dual-flush toilets and sink aerators in bathrooms and kitchens
- Chemical-free carpets, hypoallergenic carpet cushions and Marmoleum® flooring
- Damp blown-in cellulose insulation in walls and rigid insulation in the roof and floors, exceeding code by 30 percent.
- Windows are insulated, argon-filled glazing and low-E coating
- High efficiency boilers, thermostats and variable speed fans throughout
- Energy-efficient lighting, appliances and controls, including a gearless traction elevator and common area lights controlled by occupancy sensors, daylight sensors and timers
- Storm water retention tanks slow the flow of storm water into the city system as well as help irrigate the drought-tolerant native plants on the grounds
- Photovoltaic array installed on the roof provides solar energy for the underground garage -- which is under a central courtyard to minimize surface asphalt and create more space for plants
- Low-VOC paints and sealants throughout

Rental: Trolley Square has been built to serve households with average incomes less than 60 percent of area median income (AMI). Seventeen rental apartments are made available to households at less than 30 percent of AMI. Of the eight homeownership units, five are for families at less than 80 percent AMI and three for less than 90 percent AMI.
Amenities  Trolley Square has been built to serve households with average incomes less than 60 percent of area median income (AMI). Seventeen rental apartments will be made available to households at less than 30 percent of AMI. Of the eight homeownership units, five are for families at less than 80 percent AMI and three for less than 90 percent AMI. Thistle Community Housing provides financial and homeownership counseling for residents in its service area.

Developers  Homeowner’s Rehab, Inc. (HRI) believes that it is the responsibility of affordable housing developers to address environmental issues such as air pollution, global warming and landfill shortages. Drawing on years of experience and creative thinking, HRI works to combat these issues during the construction and renovation process so that families can enjoy healthy, energy efficient and less expensive homes that help preserve the surrounding local environment and the planet. HRI continually seeks new ways to lessen buildings’ environmental impacts through smarter decision-making, design, construction and operations that help conserve resources.

Architects  Mostue & Associates Architects, Inc., in Somerville, Mass., is affiliated with the Citizens’ Housing and Planning Association, the Environmental League, the Northeast Sustainable Energy Association, and the U.S. Green Building Council, among other organizations. Sustainability and energy efficiency were the foundations of this project. It exemplifies Mostue & Associates’ long-standing commitment to environmentally responsible design that enhances the surrounding neighborhood.

General Contractor  Columbia Construction, North Reading, Mass.