



Historic Chicago Schools Become Affordable Housing

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A joint venture led by Housing for All undertook the adaptive reuse project.

Housing for All, together with Visionary Ventures, Cordogan Clark & Associates and JTE Real Estate Services, has wrapped up construction on Fox Valley Apartments, a 47-unit affordable workforce housing project in Aurora, Ill.



Built to replace a school facility that burned in 1927, Mary A. Todd takes its name from a former school principal. *Image courtesy of McShane Construction*

McShane Construction Co. served as the general contractor, while Cordogan Clark & Associates provided design services for the redevelopment involving the adaptive reuse of two historic schools, as well as the construction of a new building. The Aurora City Council approved the project in October 2021.

Development costs totaled \$22.8 million. Funding included 9 percent LIHTC equity, a permanent mortgage, a donation tax credit, a construction note, a bridge loan, as well as several incentives from the City of Aurora.

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Designed to achieve NGBS Silver Certification, the community comprises studio and one- to three-bedroom floorplans ranging between 400 and 1,173 square feet. Fox Valley Apartments includes an 815-square-foot computer lab, a 415-square-foot tenant storage room, as well as two community rooms measuring 832 and 2,300 square feet.

Of the 47 units, 15 are reserved for households earning at or below 30 percent of the area median income, while 32 are restricted for households earning at or below 60 percent of AMI. Additionally, 8 units will receive permanent supportive housing status.

Turning schools into affordable housing communities

The redevelopment involved the Abraham Lincoln School at 641 S. Lake St. and the Mary A. Todd School at 100 Oak Ave. The former debuted in 1891 and had two additions in 1926 and 1928. Those later constructions included a gymnasium and an auditorium.

Having served the West Aurora School District 129 until it closed in 2009, the 39,000-square-foot Abraham Lincoln School building now provides 14 affordable workforce housing units following its redevelopment. Adjacent to the Lincoln school, the developers constructed a new 28,000-square-foot building encompassing 22 units.

The Mary A. Todd School opened in 1934 and was used as an early childhood education center until 2019. Measuring 25,000 square feet, the former school now comprises 11 affordable apartments and a health clinic for low-income families in the area.

The two properties are within 2 miles of each other, with Fox River running parallel to the pair. Downtown Chicago is roughly 42 miles northeast, while several parks and transit stops are within 3 miles.

Another recent school-to-multifamily redevelopment took place in Buffalo, N.Y. A joint venture between Community Services for Every1 and Edgemere Development transformed a 57,870-square-foot school into a 42-unit affordable community now dubbed Apartments at the Lyceum.