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For Immediate Release
Watertown News

WATERTOWN HOUSING AUTHORITY SELECTS DEVELOPMENT PARTNER TO TRANSFORM AND REVITALIZE ITS WILLOW PARK PROPERTY

The Watertown Housing Authority (WHA) announced this week that it will be partnering with the Preservation of Affordable Housing (POAH) to redevelop the Willow Park State Public Housing property located in East Watertown. The POAH team was selected earlier this month by the WHA's Board of Commissioners and Selection Committee after reviewing the proposals.

"I want to thank everyone on the pre-development team for their hard work. Our goal at the WHA has always been to preserve and maintain affordable housing. State Public Housing funding has been unable to address the needs of the property for decades and our Watertown families deserve better. I look forward to our partnership with POAH and am grateful to our city administrators, elected officials, Willow Park residents, and the surrounding community for their continued support." said Michael Lara, WHA's Executive Director.

POAH's proposal is seeking to replace the 60 existing family apartments while also adding new affordable housing apartments that would be targeted to a mix of income ranges. The proposal also calls for enhanced amenities, open space, a more inviting connection to surrounding neighborhoods, and overall site accessibility which is currently lacking at the development.

"We are honored to partner with the Watertown Housing Authority on the redevelopment of Willow Park. This important project will not only deliver 60 new, accessible and energy-efficient apartments for the current residents of Willow Park, we also hope to create a significant number of additional affordable apartments for a range of different residents and household types. This affordable, mixed-income property will offer new community spaces and outdoor recreation areas to both residents and the surrounding community. We look forward to our collaboration with the Watertown Housing Authority, Willow Park residents, and Watertown community members on this transformative project." said Aaron Gornstein, President and CEO of Preservation of Affordable Housing Inc.

In the coming months, POAH and the WHA will begin to schedule meetings to receive resident, neighbor, and community leader input which is invaluable at this early stage in the process.

"As Watertown's City Manager, and a member of the Affordable Housing Trust, I am committed to working with the Watertown Housing Authority to provide affordable housing opportunities in Watertown. The proposed Willow Park redevelopment has the potential to deliver new apartments for current residents while also opening new affordable housing opportunities. POAH is a partner that has extensive experience working with existing public housing tenants and doing the hard work of financing complex affordable housing developments, thereby making them a great partner for WHA in this project. We look forward to working with POAH and WHA to refine this project, introduce the project and the team to the community, engage with the existing Willow Park residents, the neighbors and other stakeholders, address community benefits and impacts and work through a permitting process for a new Willow Park." shared Watertown City Manager, George Proakis

[Willow-Park-Development-Partner-Summary-1.pdf \(watertownha.org\)](#)

POAH is a Boston-based nonprofit developer, owner and operator of more than 13,000 affordable apartments in 11 states and the District of Columbia including more than 3,500 in Massachusetts. While POAH's roots are in developing and managing low to moderate-income housing, an increasing number of its projects are mixed-income with a higher income, workforce, or market-rate component. POAH has successfully developed eleven mixed-income properties. Most recently, POAH partnered with the Somerville Housing Authority to redevelop the Clarendon Hill Apartments. Construction for this project is underway and aims to replace 216 deeply affordable State Public Housing units with 591 units of affordable and market rate housing.

Mass Design was founded on the understanding that architecture's influence reaches beyond individual buildings. Mass Design believes in expanding access to design that is purposeful, healing, and hopeful. Mass Design will be collaborating with WHA and POAH throughout the design process, from early visioning through project completion, to develop and implement a shared vision. In 2022, Mass Design was awarded the American Institute of Architects Firm Award, the highest honor bestowed by the institute, Mass Design is headquartered in Boston and Kigali, Rwanda.

Copley Wolff is a Boston-based landscape architectural studio that believes in the power of designed open spaces in mitigating the effects of climate change, improving public health, supporting communities, and addressing racial and social inequity. The firms' work is focused in New England, allowing them to serve the communities in which we live and create designs which reflect the specific materiality and ecology of the region. Copley Wolff is working with POAH on the Clarendon Hills Apartments redevelopment.

