

The Motherhouse at Baxter Woods

605 Stevens Avenue, Portland



Significance

The St. Joseph's Convent, also known as the Motherhouse, is a significant architectural landmark in Deering Center. Completed in 1909, Classical Revival building was designed by the Boston architectural firm of Chickering and O'Connell, one of New England's preeminent ecclesiastic design firms. The building was the principal residence for the Sisters of Mercy until it closed in 2005 due to a dwindling numbers of Sisters residing in the building. The Motherhouse is a key feature of the neighborhood and for almost 100 years serves as an important educational, residential, and spiritual center for the Sisters of Mercy in the local community.

Project Scope

The adaptive reuse of the former St. Joseph's Convent in Portland into eighty-eight units of efficient and sustainable senior housing has preserved much of the character and history of the property. Its grand stairways, stained glass windows, three-story chapel with altar, and grand organ have been restored and preserved. Interior window trim, wainscoting, and ceiling details were removed and reinstalled after the application of insulation and utilities.

Recognition

The complexity of adaptively reusing nearly 116,000 square feet of historic building space required creativity and perseverance by John Wasileski and Matt Teare of Seacoast Management and Kevin Bunker of Developers Collaborative. A project of this scale required funding from a variety of federal, state, local and private sources, including federal and state historic tax credits. The development team successfully transformed the Motherhouse in a manner that honors the legacy of the Sisters of Mercy, preserves an iconic neighborhood landmark, and provides much-needed affordable senior housing in the city.