

**Paul D. Merritt Center**

59 East Militia Heights Drive
Needham, MA 02492
Ph: 781-972-1000

John Grugan Center

989 Central Avenue
Needham, MA 02492
Ph: 781-972-1000

4 Strathmore Road

Natick, MA 01760
Ph: 781-972-1000

www.charlesrivercenter.org

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**FAQs for Charles River Heights**

May 2025

Who is Charles River Center partnering with to develop the housing project?

Charles River Center (CRC) is partnering with the nonprofit developer Planning Office for Urban Affairs on this project. The Planning Office for Urban Affairs (POUA) is a non-profit housing developer affiliated with the Archdiocese of Boston. POUA has developed over 3,000 units of affordable, workforce and mixed-income housing in the greater Boston area. www.poua.org

How many housing units are planned for the development?

The proposed project will create 86 new affordable housing units to attract and retain households earning at or below 30% to 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI), including elderly residents, individuals with disabilities, young professionals, and public/private employees essential to the town's services.

How many of the units will be set aside for CRC?

Studies indicate that only about 5% of autistic adults live independently, while 37% require overnight care. This underscores a significant gap of 58% of individuals who need support services necessary to foster autonomy among this population.

To address this gap of services for people with intellectual disabilities, **38** of the new housing units will be occupied by individuals with intellectual disabilities who will receive intermittent support services, no more than 30 hours per week from the Charles River Center. This model is called In-home Supports. Referrals to Charles River Center are determined by the Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services (DDS), which also provides funding. Private pay options may be available based on space availability.

5 of the new housing units will be occupied by CRC employees.

In addition, Charles River Center currently supports 150 individuals in 24/7 residential homes. In FY2026, Charles River Center will be adding 2 additional 24/7 residential homes.

What additional facilities will be included in the design?

The core of this inclusive community includes a community center and green outdoor space that is accessible to the surrounding neighborhood and open to the greater Needham community.

How does the project integrate individuals with autism and intellectual disabilities with the broader community?

The project provides inclusive housing integrated with traditional affordable and workforce housing and a full spectrum of supportive services that empower individuals with intellectual disabilities to live independently, achieve their personal goals, and actively participate in their communities.

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**FAQs for Charles River Heights****May 2025****Is the project required to go before the Planning Board?**

No, we propose using a Friendly- 40B process, or Comprehensive Permit, which will require a Project Eligibility (PEL) application to the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) and then an application to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Will there be any units for Needham residents?

Yes, subject to permission from EOHLC, we will set aside up to 70% of the units for Needham residents and town employees.

Why does the project need CPA funds before you apply for the State Funds?

Yes, EOHLC requires a local commitment of funds as part of the application for both a Project Eligibility Letter and state funding sources. It is critical that local support is demonstrated by June to keep the funding timelines.

Can Charles River Center use fundraising or a capital campaign instead of town funds?

No, as part of our application to the state, we are required to provide a local commitment of funds. It will significantly, negatively impact the likelihood of State funding for this project without a local commitment of funds. Additionally, the funds are required for the project to be financially feasible.

Do you need the capital campaign funds to complete the construction of the units?

No, the development budget includes all funding sources necessary to begin construction. Capital campaign funds will be used to enhance CRC units with unique environmental adaptations and assistive technology that is generally not permitted by public resources yet is necessary to accommodate the unique needs of this specialized housing project.

What is the scope of the CRC capital campaign?

The capital campaign for this affordable housing project is designed to meet the unique needs of individuals with developmental disabilities including autism by incorporating specialized features and assistive technologies that go beyond state-funded standards. With sensory-friendly design elements, adaptive layouts, and advanced communication aids like speech-generated devices and smart home technology, this housing will provide safe, supportive, and inclusive environments where residents can live independently and thrive. These adaptations, though not typically funded by the state programs, are essential to ensuring that people with autism and developmental disabilities have access to affordable housing that fosters dignity, independence, and community integration.



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FAQs for Charles River Heights

May 2025

The capital campaign has not started, will that negatively impact the project's timeline?

No, the capital campaign will not negatively impact the project's timeline as the funds are outside the scope of the development budget and specific to the CRC units. Typically, capital campaigns extend through and beyond the construction of a development which may necessitate obtaining a bridge loan.

What are the phases of a capital campaign and projected timelines?

There are three phases of a capital campaign:

Planning phase (year 1)-includes setting goals, creating a case for support, developing a budget, identifying prospective donors, strategies for solicitation developed and implemented, and organize and train a campaign team.

Quiet phase (year 2)-Cultivation and solicitation begins; significant portion of the funds is secured from major donors and foundations. Multi-year donations are typically desired by the donor.

Public Phase (year 3+)-Continue cultivation and solicitation until the goal is met. The goal is to raise \$3M with a stretch to \$5M. This will be achieved in 3-5 years, or until the goal is met.

Will the CPA funds be a grant or a loan?

These funds must be a grant, and a commitment must be obtained now, so we can submit a Project Eligibility Letter to The Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) by June. This application will put us on track to apply for financing to EOHLC in its November round later this year. There is no mechanism in place for a loan program in Needham.

What are the benefits to the town of Needham?

- **The Needham Housing Plan**- adopted in 2023 acknowledges the compelling need for additional housing opportunities for the disabled. The plan called for special needs housing with barrier free units and supportive housing as a priority.
- **Special Needs Housing**-38 accessible units with integrated supportive services that help people live independently.
- **Local Preference for Needham Residents and Employees**-subject to approval of EOHLC, up to 70% of the non-CRC units will have a local preference for Needham Residents and Employees.
- **Workforce Housing**- 5 units for workforce housing to CRC employees
- **Long-Term Affordability**-ensuring affordability in perpetuity to serve underserved populations sustainably.
- **Payment of Real Estate Taxes**-the project will convert a property that is currently tax-exempt from real estate taxes to a property that will pay annual real estate taxes.
- **Model Community**-Established a creative, inclusive model that other municipalities across the state can replicate.