



# Community Building

Nonprofit affordable housing developer aggressively combats chronic homelessness on the Upper East Coast



Home City Development

Executive Director :: Thomas P. Kegelman

Location :: Springfield, Massachusetts

As a nonprofit, mission-driven real estate development company with a passion for creating socioeconomic equality amongst minority groups, Home City Development has facilitated the creation of thousands of affordable housing units in the Springfield, Massachusetts, area. Home City's portfolio includes 402 units within the City of Springfield and 18 units in Northampton, Massachusetts, which combine to serve more than 1,000 residents.

Founded in 1968 when the Chamber of Commerce of Greater Springfield sought to home in on an area that had experienced heavy disinvestment over the course of 20 years, Home City



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-Thomas P. Kegelman



initially purchased one to two homes each year to renovate and resell to homebuyers. As the company began to evolve in the mid-1990s, property management was added to its scope, and the organization began exploring the use of additional resources like the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program to take on larger projects.

“The initial group was buying up older properties, renovating them and reselling them to homebuyers,” says Home City’s Executive Director, Thomas Kegelman. “It was a fairly slow pace initially, buying up a couple of houses a year and renovating them and turning them around. Slowly taking on other roles, my predecessor, who had been in property management, also added a role of managing properties for tenant organizations and other nonprofits, [with] the continued accumulation of properties.”

To celebrate 50 years of development in Mason Square—the neighborhood where the company’s first units were developed—Home City partnered with several local organizations, including award-winning NEI General Contracting, to rehabilitate the E. Henry Twiggs Estates in 2019.

#### HOLISTIC PROGRAMMING

Leading a comprehensive attack against the multi-layered housing crisis, Home City has cultivated meaningful partnerships with key community service providers to engage with residents through supportive services and programming. A seed fund of retained earnings has also been directed to provide support for the in-house facilitation of additional programs for residents lacking access to professional mental health, drug recovery and literacy services.

Supplementing these connections with development, Home City also strives to include

multi-use community space to host services and events of all kinds with each new property. At Home City’s most recent adaptive-reuse development, the rehabilitation of the former Elias Brookings School, a portion of the building will be retained to provide a community educational space for meetings and youth activities.

“[With] the Brookings School conversion, there is a gymnasium that we are retaining to serve as not only a gymnasium, but also an educational, meeting [and] youth activities space,” Kegelman

#### NEI GENERAL CONTRACTING

NEI General Contracting is honored to be a partner of Home City Development, Inc. Since 1998, NEI General Contracting has provided a full spectrum of general contracting and construction management services to clients throughout the Eastern United States. Offering owners and developers a fast-paced and quality approach to construction, NEI has extensive experience with residential developments, senior living facilities, historic renovations and restorations, moderate rehabilitation, and institutional projects with a concentration in affordable and market-rate housing. Whatever your project type or need, NEI has the expertise and capacity to meet any construction challenge. With offices in Boston and Orlando, NEI is well-situated to service projects up and down the East Coast. For more information, please visit [www.neigc.com](http://www.neigc.com).

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says. "We have already reached out to the Boys and Girls Club, YMCA and many other agencies in the area who are interested in providing services in that space."

Vacant since sustaining tornado damage in 2011, the historic Springfield public school will soon be transformed into 42 affordable units for low- to moderate-income residents, with 35 of the apartments reserved for those earning up to 60 percent AMI. The remaining seven are designated as workforce housing for households earning up to 80 percent AMI. Construction for the Brookings School conversion began in early 2021 and is expected to be completed within a year.

#### EXPANDING THE IMPACT

While the Greater Springfield area has remained a key focal point since the company's inception, Home City's growth has created increased opportunities to strategically branch out into new neighborhoods. With two Hampshire County rehabilitation developments in the pipeline, Home City will continue addressing housing needs in rural communities while looking to take advantage of openings to bring affordable housing to some of the area's more exclusive neighborhoods.

Home City is currently underway on a major overhaul of the New South Street Apartments in Downtown Northampton, originally built in 1891. Expected to be completed before the end of




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the year, the renovations will refresh the historic building with upgraded heat and hot water systems, electrical and fire protection improvements and kitchen and bathroom updates. Of the 18 units at the New South Street Apartment building, seven are reserved for homeless families. Specializing in fine architecture that is responsive to client's needs, Longmeadow, Massachusetts, architectural firm Architecture Environment Life Inc. will serve on the design team for the redevelopment.

Additionally, on an 8.73-acre site in Pelham, Massachusetts, the Amethyst Brook Apartments will soon join the community as Pelham's first-ever affordable housing development. When construction begins in 2023, the site of the former Montague Fly Rod Factory will be adapted to accommodate a three-story building that will hold 28 multifamily apartments. An additional building with six more units will be developed on a portion of an adjacent Amherst Road property.

"The COVID-19 crisis is deepening income inequality, making it harder and harder for people to afford decent places to live," says Kegelman. "The demand is overwhelming, and in some ways, the biggest challenge is just maintaining a positive attitude against what [can] often appear to be a pretty tragic and overwhelming future. We are working as hard as we can to do as many projects as possible—using the resources available as economically as possible—and encouraging public action." 



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