

# HISTORIC PROPERTIES REDEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

## Affordable Housing & Density

### CASE STUDY

#### SUMMARY

This case study demonstrates how historic preservation nonprofit, The L'Enfant Trust (Trust), launched Washington, D.C.'s first Historic Properties Redevelopment Program (HPRP) to preserve community, history, and affordable homeownership in Historic Anacostia. Anacostia is a predominantly Black neighborhood in D.C. endangered by decades-long disinvestment and the tension between the need for economic investment and the risk of displacing longtime residents.

#### DESCRIPTION

The Trust's HPRP rehabilitates vacant, neglected properties in Washington, D.C.'s Historic Anacostia neighborhood for workforce housing. Since the launch of its HPRP in 2013, the Trust has successfully rehabilitated five endangered buildings in Anacostia facing demolition by neglect.

By focusing on very distressed historic properties, the Trust brings vacant buildings back to productive use, generates high-quality housing stock for the community, and takes on historic rehabilitations that would not be economically feasible for a homeowner or a for-profit developer because the rehabilitation costs exceed fair market value.

The Trust received a State Historic Preservation Officer's Award in 2015 from the District of Columbia for creating housing through preservation.

#### NUTS AND BOLTS

- In 2018, after a robust community-led effort, D.C. City Council passed [D.C. Act 22-379](#) transferring four City-owned properties to The L'Enfant Trust to be rehabilitated and sold as workforce housing.
- In [testimonies](#) before D.C. Council, Anacostia residents voiced their desire for preserving the architectural legacy of Anacostia and creating new affordable homeownership opportunities for families.

The project:

- Retained as many historic building elements as possible, such as original spindle work, cornices, windows and doors, and wood siding.
- Made an effort to use local, minority-owned businesses and vendors whenever possible.



*The Johnson family in front of their home, 1326 Valley Place, SE, one of the Trust's five completed rehab projects. Photo courtesy The L'Enfant Trust.*

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“Despite these being technical and expensive projects, at the end of the day, it’s not just about the building – it’s about the people who live in and around the building.”

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Lauren McHale, President & CEO,  
The L'Enfant Trust

- Marketed homes to first-time homebuyers and workforce families – teachers, healthcare workers, police, and firefighters.
- Partnered with local affordable housing organization, Manna, Inc. to list, market, and sell the properties to eligible buyers who meet the required minimum family size and maximum income requirements.
- Protected each property with a preservation easement to ensure the property is maintained and the historic integrity of the property is preserved in perpetuity.
- The Trust’s HPRP would not be possible without the support of The 1772 Foundation.



*Lauren McHale gives a tour of one of the Trust’s upcoming rehabilitation projects in Historic Anacostia. Photo courtesy The L’Enfant Trust.*

## KEY LESSONS

- Collaboration with local community members is essential to understanding the wants and needs of neighborhood residents.
- Set expectations with the community that these projects can be long and tedious.
- In-kind material and appliance donations go a long way in offsetting expensive rehabilitation costs.
- Continue to fundraise throughout the project as rehabilitation costs, in expensive and competitive real estate markets like D.C., will likely exceed any profit from the sale.
- Working with a government affordable housing program can be arduous and convoluted. Learn about affordability regulations, down payment assistance programs, and lending practices to better prepare yourself and the buyer for the sale process.

## IMPACT/ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- **Community Revitalization**—Reduces the number of vacant, neglected properties in the community by bringing uninhabitable residential properties back to use.
- **Preservation**—Ensures that the architectural heritage of Anacostia, D.C.’s original suburb and the chosen community of Frederick Douglass, is preserved.
- **Anti-Displacement**—Creates affordable homeownership opportunities, enabling community members to afford to remain in their neighborhood.
- **Equitable Development**—Prioritizes selling rehabilitated houses to the *missing middle*—teachers, nurses, and government employees who are often priced out of D.C.’s expensive housing market.

## LEARN MORE

[The L’Enfant Trust](#)

[HPRP Video](#)

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