



Church Community Housing Corp.

Sandywoods Farm

Image: Rupert Whiteley

Background & Context:

In 2004, the owner of a 174-acre low-intensity farm approached the Town of Tiverton with the vision of developing the site into a rural arts community. The town brought the project to Church Community Housing Corporation (CCHC), who agreed to develop the site to achieve the town's comprehensive planning goals of preserving open space, maintaining rural character, creating affordable housing, and supporting the local arts community.

Implementation:

Using a clustered development approach, CCHC created 24 market-rate and affordable homeownership lots and 50 affordable rental units on 26 acres. Another 97 acres were transferred to a conservation land trust for ecological conservation. The remaining acreage went towards preserving farmland and creating a community garden, orchard, and community spaces. The buildings are eco-friendly and powered partially by a wind turbine.

“Partnerships are really important if you are venturing into something highly specialized like farming. It's not just putting seed in the ground.”

Challenges

CCHC quickly found that specific soil conditions, product processing, transportation and markets have to be taken into consideration. CCHC was fortunate to connect with strong partners, including members of the Eastern Rhode Island Conservation District, who brought additional capacity and expertise.

Benefits

Sandywoods Farms leased up quickly and has a long waiting list for rental housing units due, in part, to demand for the community garden and rural agricultural context. The development was initially marketed solely as an arts community, but prospective renters expressed so much interest in agricultural that the project was rebranded as an 'Art and Agriculture' development. The project has won many awards and garnered media attention, serving to increased organizational visibility.

Project at a Glance

Location:	Tiverton, RI
Project Category:	Urban/ Rural Agriculture
Year Completed:	2010
Agricultural Acreage:	174 Acres
CLT Role	Securing Land
Agricultural Activities:	Farmland Preservation, Community Garden, Orchard
Tenure Arrangements for Securing Land:	Fee Simple Ownership, Ground Lease, Conversation Easement
Major Partners:	Town of Tiverton, Rhode Island Housing, Eastern Rhode Island Conservation District
Website:	www.sandywoodsfarm.org
Staff Contact:	Brigid Ryan, Senior Project Manager bryan@cchcnewport.org

Lessons Learned

Local planning and knowledge are crucial. CCHC was presented with a large parcel of land and worked with the community to develop opportunities outside the 'highest and best' use. CCHC was willing to look at the variety of needs identified by the community (through the town's comprehensive plan) in addition to traditional housing. By taking this comprehensive approach, CCHC was able to integrate housing with other significant community goals like preserving agricultural open space and creating opportunities for the arts.