

# Chelsea 40R Developments

**Site Details:** 40R District, 2.7 acres  
**Zoning:** 40R, Special Permits, Vari-  
ances  
**Funding:** 40R Funding, City, Devel-  
oper, State TOD grant

**Date(s):** June 2005  
**Goals:** Provide Affordable Housing;  
Develop Underutilized Parcel; Spur  
Development of the neighborhood.



## Background

In Chelsea, the non-profit Chelsea Neighborhood Developers (CND) wanted to convert two buildings in a vacant mill complex into housing. They partnered with private developer Mitchell properties and approached the city with their proposal. This initial idea resulted in an application for a 40R district that would support a much larger project. The district includes three complexes: Janus Highlands, Box Work Homes, and Atlas Lofts. Janus was completed in February of 2008 and includes 41 units in four 2-3 story buildings. This development was constructed on a vacant lot at the sites of two former industrial buildings. Box Work Homes was completed in March 2008 and includes 26 mixed-income units. Atlas Lofts is a mixed-income rental development with 54 units that has recently been completed. It is 60% leased and the first residents moved in August 1, 2010.



Box Works Homes

## Site Development

In order for the new developments to progress, most of the old industrial buildings had to be demolished as they did not meet current industrial standards. Atlas Lofts however did incorporate adaptive re-use by utilizing a former mill building for their residences. The town determined to keep the 40R district as housing only and decided not to incorporate any retail. They had conducted a study prior to the development that identified Broadway, another street in Chelsea, as the best place for a retail presence because of a high amount of foot traffic. Open public meetings were held during the permitting process and the plan involved input from residents and the CND advisory committee. At this time, all 3 projects are built and occupied. The town is currently working with CND and the developer

of some additional affordable housing units to turn a nearby 13,000 square foot area into a park. They are also interested in re-using an abandoned railroad in the area for bus, bicycle, and pedestrian circulation.



Atlas Lofts—Old Industrial Building

## Development Process

Until 1986, the area was zoned industrial. In an attempt to encourage developers to bring residential development, the area was rezoned residential in the late 1980s, but the market for this type of development did not yet exist in Chelsea. After several years of financial distress, the town consulted with the nonprofit CND who in turn partnered with Mitchell Properties in order to build the current developments.

The developers applied for a 40R district right away and used special permits and variances to get the first project off the ground while waiting on their application.

The 40R process not only promoted affordable housing in the area, but also paid out bonus payments that the town used to make necessary infrastructure improvements in the area. These included water, drainage, and street improvements. The project also attained funding for housing through the city's Department of Housing and Community Development. They were also the first to receive funding from the state Transit Oriented Development Program, obtaining a \$500,000 grant for a pedestrian walkway, and \$2 million for rental developments.

## 40R District and MetroFuture Goals

### *Sustainable Growth Patterns*

The development includes the reuse of various old factory buildings and also promotes high density at 43 units/acre.

### *Transportation Choices*

The community is serviced by 5 bus routes and the MBTA Commuter Rail Stop.



Janus Highlands



Sketch of Atlas Lofts  
Source: Cable Mills

### *Housing Choices*

The development includes both affordable and mixed income housing so that people from diverse income levels can live together in the same area.

### *Community Vitality*

Chelsea Neighborhood Developers is a neighborhood oriented organization and wanted to involve as many community members in the process as possible. They worked hard to encourage people to attend public meetings and to gather public input for the process.

## Contact Information

For more information about the Chelsea 40R district contact developer John DePriest, Director of Planning and Development, at [jdepriest@chelseama.gov](mailto:jdepriest@chelseama.gov)

*"The 40R process actually strengthened the planning board and made people more comfortable in voicing their opinions which was a real advantage".* John DePriest, Director of Planning and Development, Chelsea