

Hoosier Uplands Economic Development

Corp. has transformed the 84-year-old Paoli High School into the 24-unit College Hill Apartments in Paoli, Ind. Financing for the \$6 million project includes:

\$5 million in federal Neighborhood Stabilization Program funds from the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority (IHCDA);

\$470,000 from the Federal Home Loan Bank of Indianapolis' Affordable Housing Program through member Old National Bank; and

\$419,000 in HOME funds from IHCDA.



HISTORY

Recent school conversions have involved some of the most significant buildings in their communities.

There's an emotional attachment to the old schools, where generations have gone to class, made friends, and attended Friday night football games. In reusing the buildings, developers and communities keep the history alive.

That's why the Stanislaus Apartments is such a big deal for West Rutland, Vt., a town that used to revolve around the marble industry. Italian, French-Canadian, and Polish families all immigrated to the community to find work in the mid- and late 1800s.

Built in 1924, St. Stanislaus School served the Polish Catholic students. The nuns who taught at Stanislaus lived in the convent next door. Eventually, the once-busy quarries began to shut down as did the school, which sat largely untouched for 30 years after closing in the 1970s. Desks and books were still in the rear classrooms when the Housing Trust

of Rutland County acquired the property in 2010.

The nonprofit rehabilitated the buildings into 17 affordable housing units last year. "For there to be life again rounds out that neighborhood feeling," says Elisabeth Kulas, executive director of the Housing Trust.

When members of the local historical society arranged to take a tour of the new apartments, Kulas expected a handful of people. Instead, when she arrived, 70 people were waiting to see the building.

"With schools, people identify with them as community buildings," she says. "I hear, 'I went to school there. I remember going to kindergarten.' They hate to see the buildings torn down."

There are three more shuttered schools within a two-mile radius of the Housing Trust office. Kulas is looking at converting one of them into affordable housing.

In Paoli, Ind., the Hoosier Uplands Economic Development Corp. adapted a 1927 school into 24 affordable apartments. The building served as the local

high school for decades until it was converted into a middle school.

The school was eventually sold in the mid-1980s and used as a furniture factory. In recent years, the building had become abandoned and run-down, with broken windows and pigeons nesting inside.

"During the open house, there were people walking around and crying because they had graduated from there and thought they would never be back in the building again," says David Miller, CEO of Hoosier Uplands.

The \$6 million project saves a historic building that will remain part of the community forever, he says.

In Waynesboro, Ga., a long-vacant high school reopened last year with 32 apartments for seniors. Photos of the school's Purple Hurricanes football team, which won a state championship in 1957, and other memorabilia decorate the halls.

To create Waynesborough Academy Senior Residences, which utilizes the old spelling of the community, Bridgeland Development and RHA Housing reno-