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Nauset Construction completes mixed-use development in Porter Sq.

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Cambridge, MA Nauset Construction has completed St. James Place, a mixed-use, transit-oriented development that links the historic St. James Episcopal Church to 46 condominiums, 2,000 s/f of retail space, and a new parish hall that includes a neighborhood food pantry. Located at 1991 Mass. Ave. in Porter Sq., the development has a Walk Score of 93 and is close to the MBTA Red Line station, shopping and dining options, as well as three local parks. The new community also adds much-needed housing stock to the city, while providing stability to an institution that provides critical services to those in need.

St. James Place was developed by Acorn Holdings in partnership with the St. James Episcopal Church, transforming the site of a shuttered car wash into housing and replacing an inaccessible and deteriorating parish hall with a new 11,400 s/f structure. The hall houses classrooms for children's programs, a nursery, library, and music practice rooms as well as a commercial kitchen and the neighborhood food pantry. The development also includes a private courtyard that is open to the public, providing welcoming greenspace – which is in short supply in Porter Sq.

The stone veneer-lined foundation of the condominiums creates a seamless connection to the historic church (built in 1888 in the Richardsonian Romanesque style and listed on the National Register of Historic Places). The three floors of condominiums situated above the parish hall consist of 11 one-bedroom, 34 two-bedroom and two-bedroom/den, and 1 three-bedroom units, including five affordable units. The condominium units feature quartz countertops in kitchens and bathrooms, Bosch stainless steel kitchen appliances, and energy efficient LED lighting, as well as additional energy saving features designed to meet the city's LEED-based construction standards for energy efficiency and sustainability. Building amenities include an entry-level common entertainment room with wet bar, a guest suite for exclusive use by residents, a pet spa, and electric vehicle charging stations located in the below-grade parking garage.

“This project creates an architectural highlight for the neighborhood that ties directly into the history of Porter Square,” said Phil Terzis of Acorn Holdings. “The condominiums help to meet the demand of this supply-constricted market, while the courtyard re-creates that historical feel of a classic cloister. And it's one of the few if not the only – publicly accessible, privately-owned greenspaces in Porter Square.”

St. James Place was a challenging development from many perspectives, and its success is directly correlated to all of the firms involved. One of the many construction challenges was connecting the new structure to the historic church, as well as excavating for the below-grade parking garage, all while ensuring that its cobblestone foundation was properly supported and not compromised throughout construction.

“This was a project that played to our strengths as a construction manager – historic renovation, midsize multifamily housing and working in tight urban infill locations,” said Benjamin Goldfarb, vice president of Nauset Construction.

St. James Place is the third Cambridge multifamily project on which Nauset and Acorn have partnered. Nauset constructed 7 Cameron, a 37-unit apartment community near Davis Sq. in 2012, and recently completed Park 77, a 93-unit apartment complex near Alewife Station. Nauset has completed numerous multi-unit residential projects in Cambridge and throughout Greater Boston's inner suburbs in recent years, including Point 262 Condominiums, a 55-unit community in East Cambridge for the MINCO Corporation; The Bradford, a mixed-use project in Belmont, featuring 112 apartments and 38,000 s/f of Commercial Space for Toll Bros.; and Hancock Estates, an 88-unit apartment complex in Chestnut Hill for Chestnut Hill Realty.