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Collaborative effort produces unique building

By: Alex Jensen in CONSTRUCTION July 29, 2022 11:55 am



The Chiles House is located near the Catholic Charities of Oregon headquarters in Portland at 2740 S.E. Powell Blvd. (Alex Jensen/DJC)

The first affordable housing development in Portland to use cross-laminated timber (CLT) has opened its doors.

The **Chiles House**, formerly known as **The Annex**, has 27 units that will serve individuals who are emerging from homelessness or are at risk of experiencing it. The complex is located along Southeast Powell Boulevard adjacent to the headquarters of **Catholic Charities of Oregon** – the project owner.

The development is Catholic Charities' first to feature mass timber. CLT was used for the roof and the floors, but traditional wood framing was used for the walls.

All Hands Architecture designed the four-story building and **Truebeck Construction** served as the contractor.



"In my 28 years of providing services, I have not seen a housing project this innovative," said Natalie Wood, executive director of Catholic Charities of Oregon.

Sister City, a real estate developer in Portland, collaborated with Catholic Charities on the project and spurred use of the CLT. Travis Phillips, director of community development and housing at Catholic Charities, said that decision ultimately lowered the project's cost and shaved three months off the construction timeline.

The development team signed a fixed price contract with CLT supplier **Kalesnikoff** in spring 2021 – narrowly missing the **record-high lumber prices** that soared to \$1,670 per thousand board feet.



A 27-unit affordable housing complex has opened in Portland's Creston-Kenilworth neighborhood. Cross-laminated timber was used in the development. (Alex Jensen/DJC)

The panels were prefabricated at a factory in British Columbia, Canada. Once they arrived on-site in the spring, a three-person crew needed roughly one day to complete each floor section, Phillips said. In traditional construction, a 10-person crew would have needed a week to complete a section, he noted.

While installation can be speedy, however, the panels do require prefabrication of most of the connection points and holes.

"It ended up being a little bit more complicated than (we) had initially envisioned," Phillips said.

There were construction aspects the team has not needed to think about previously, he said, like what to do when mechanical, electrical or plumbing systems must pass through one floor to another or how to install the junction boxes and lighting. Such issues would usually be figured out on-site, he said.

In the end, the project's total development cost was around \$6 million, Phillips said. The CLT cost about 10 percent more than regular joist framing would have cost. However, the team also reaped savings in time and labor, he said.

Chiles House was funded privately through a capital campaign. The project team received three substantial donations exceeding \$500,000; they came from the **Chiles Foundation**, the **M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust**, and private citizens Mark and Leslie Ganz. A \$150,000 Metro grant was the only direct public money received, though the city of Portland did waive two fees – System Development Charge and Construction Excise Tax – because the housing units will be rented to households earning less than 60 percent of the area median income.

"Chiles House is an example of an intentional and collaborative affordable housing model" between for-profit and nonprofit developers, Sister City principal Anna Mackay said.

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Early Registration - ACEC Oregon Fall Confe
I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project Design
1:00pm Safety and Health Management
Thursday, August 18
OROSHA Grant Applications
Early Registration - ACEC Oregon Fall Confe
I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project Design
Oregon OSHA Silica Safety Training Course
8:30am Essential Skills: Emotional Intelligi
12:00pm AIA Oregon COTE meeting
5:00pm IIDA Oregon Chapter August So
5:00pm Path to Fellowship: Refining You
Friday, August 19
OROSHA Grant Applications
Early Registration - ACEC Oregon Fall Confe
I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project Design
Saturday, August 20
OROSHA Grant Applications
Early Registration - ACEC Oregon Fall Confe

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