

On May 20th Over-the-Rhine Community Housing celebrated the opening of Over the Rhine's only affordable senior housing; Elm Street Senior Housing, located at 1500 Elm Street. Many seniors live in the neighborhood but this is the only project to meet their needs of accessibility, affordability, and support services. The project was the complete rehabilitation of an historic building built in 1864 by Christian Moerlein and owned by the Moerlein Brewing Company until 1919.

Elm Street Senior Housing includes 15 new 1-bedroom units, a new elevator, a resident lobby, two community spaces, a laundry room, and a new outdoor courtyard. A part-time service coordinator and live-in resident manager will provide the necessary support services for the residents. As of June 7, all apartments have been rented and are occupied.

This project was made possible by the hard work from our staff and our partner agencies; Ohio Housing Finance Agency (OHFA), U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Model Group, Ohio Capital Corporation for Housing (OCCH), The City of Cincinnati, CR Architects, and Sol Design and Consulting. It was a momentous occasion to celebrate the completion of a project that had been in the making for over five years. It is truly incredible how far the building has come over the past year of construction. It was in extremely bad condition from years of vacancy. Over 60% of the joists in the building had to be replaced, two times more than was expected. The rear, two-story masonry building even had to be rebuilt brick for brick from the ground up. All of the hard work truly has paid off in the preservation of this gorgeous building into a wonderful new home for seniors of Over-the-Rhine, and is an asset to the community.

The celebration started with opening songs from Dan Dorff, OTR resident and friend. Our speakers included OTRCH Executive Director Mary Burke Rivers and OTRCH Project Manager Ashleigh Finke, Kevin Clark from OHFA, Joe Pimmell from OCCH, Jim Cunningham from HUD, our new residents Thomas Fields and Burkes Menefield, long-time neighbor Sweet Pea, and Yvette Simpson from Cincinnati City Council. Annette Wick spoke on behalf of her and her husband Mark Manley who donated the funding for the garden, in honor of her father, a life-long advocate of affordable housing. Gail Greenwell, dean of Christ Church Cathedral, led the blessing of the building. The ribbon cutting ceremony was followed by a tour of the building, entertainment from Matthew Meldon and Benjamin Thomas, and refreshments provided by Coffee Emporium, OCCH, and Power Inspires Progress.

It was a beautiful day to celebrate the success of our latest development. We enjoyed sharing this day with our friends and champions for affordable housing in Over-the-Rhine.

HISTORY OF THE BUILDING

According to Robert J. Wimberg's Cincinnati Breweries (1997), before the construction of Moerlein's ice house (a cool place to store beer before it was sold), the company stored full beer barrels in various cellars including three houses at Fifteenth and Elm Streets built by the brewery in 1864. The building contains a sub-basement that would have been used for storage and fermentation, as German lagers require a cool temperature and longer fermentation times.

The building has an elaborate, arcaded store front and two interior, end chimneys that extend above the built-up roof. The building is noted for its Italianate structure that contributes to the

late 19th century architectural significance and homogeneity of Elm Street. Regarding its operation, Wimberg notes that the 1884 City Atlas shows this building as being divided into three separate parts. The corner third was owned by Christian Moerlein and may have been operated a saloon for dispensing his beer. The middle third was owned by John Heine and operated as a saloon in what was (in 1893) 498 Elm. Heine may have dispensed Hauck beer ... there is an open passageway leading to a courtyard that was probably used as a beer garden.