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AVESTA HOUSING & PREBLE STREET ANNOUNCE NEW SITE-BASED HOUSING FIRST PARTNERSHIP IN PORTLAND

PORTLAND, ME — **Avesta Housing**, the largest nonprofit affordable housing provider in northern New England, and **Preble Street**, a nonprofit social work agency serving the most vulnerable people in Maine, have announced plans to provide Site-based Housing First permanent housing with on-site support services to chronically homeless people on the site of the former Oxford Street homeless shelter in Portland.

Avesta Housing has secured an option agreement to purchase the ½-acre parcel. Avesta is considering plans to develop a diverse, mixed-income community consisting of two components — Site-based Housing First and multifamily residential — with approximately 30 to 50 affordable apartments. If appropriate funding and municipal approvals can be secured, Avesta would begin construction in 2025.

Avesta Housing's and Preble Street's headquarters are both located a few blocks from the Oxford Street site, and Avesta operates more than 1,000 affordable homes at 25 properties in the city of Portland. As longtime members of the Bayside community, both organizations look forward to continuing to be community stewards and working with city staff, elected officials, and local residents.

Site-based Housing First has proven to be a cost-effective, permanent solution to ending homelessness nationwide. It provides safe, quality, affordable housing with 24/7 supportive services to people experiencing chronic homelessness without preconditions such as mandatory treatment programs, sobriety, or other services. Studies have shown that by removing such barriers to housing, chronically homeless people have a greater chance of succeeding and have fewer encounters with law enforcement and emergency services.

Avesta and Preble Street collaborated on the first three Site-based Housing First properties in the state of Maine — Logan Place, which opened in 2005; Florence House (2010); and Huston Commons (2017). Avesta owns and operates the properties, and Preble Street provides 24/7 onsite support services, harm reduction, and crisis intervention to maximize housing stability and prevent returns to homelessness. The Oxford Street development will be a continuation of that partnership.

“For almost 20 years, Avesta Housing has been providing Site-based Housing First homes in partnership with Preble Street to address chronic homelessness,” said **Avesta Housing President & CEO Rebecca Hatfield**. “That service is needed now more than ever. We are committed to ending homelessness throughout Maine, and the Oxford Street development will provide dozens of safe, quality, affordable homes to people who are in most dire need of them.”

“Site-based Housing First is based on a simple concept — everyone deserves housing and the support necessary to maintain it. In the almost 20 years we have been running Site-based Housing First programs, we have seen time and again chronically homeless individuals with complex needs find safety and a place to call home,” said **Preble Street Executive Director Mark Swann**. “With the current unsheltered homelessness crisis facing our state and the more than 150 people already on the waiting list for apartments at Logan Place, Florence House, and Huston Commons, this project is one critical part of the solution to ending chronic homelessness in Maine.”

If approved and funded, the Oxford Street development would also be one of the first new Site-based Housing First developments in Maine following a landmark budget package signed by Gov. Janet Mills in July 2023 that created the Housing First Program to address homelessness throughout the state.

“Housing First is a successful and cost-effective way to address the needs of people experiencing chronic homelessness,” said **Gov. Janet Mills**. “I’m proud that the biennial budget I signed this year fulfills a promise from my State of the Budget Address to adopt a Housing First model and will expand the number of Housing First units from 85 to approximately 500 across the state through important projects like this one proposed by Avesta Housing and Preble Street.”

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About Avesta Housing

Avesta Housing is a nonprofit affordable housing provider with more than 50 years of experience as a leader in affordable housing development and property management in Maine and New Hampshire. The organization is headquartered in Portland, Maine, and operates 100 affordable properties, more than 3,000 apartments and two assisted living facilities, providing safe, affordable homes for more than 4,000 people every day. An additional 800 new homes are in the real estate development pipeline. Avesta’s mission is to improve lives and strengthen communities by promoting and providing quality affordable homes for people in need. www.AvestaHousing.org

About Preble Street

Preble Street is a nonprofit human service agency serving the most vulnerable people in Maine since 1975 through innovative, best-practice, client-centered programs. In addition to the largest direct service emergency food program in northern New England, Preble Street operates low-barrier programs throughout Maine providing 24/365 services for individuals and families, including homeless youth, women, veterans, and survivors of human trafficking, driven by its mission to meet urgent needs, empower people to move beyond the crises in their lives, and advocate for solutions to homelessness, hunger, and poverty. www.PrebleStreet.org