



Charlottesville's Catholic Worker community
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Preserving and expanding affordable housing in Charlottesville

Our vision to acquire Carlton House and expand hospitality

WHAT IS CARLTON HOUSE?

BACKGROUND



Located in Charlottesville at 300 Carlton Road, Carlton House consists of 10 units: single bedrooms with a private bath. The house has a common living room and kitchen on each floor and a shared laundry room. Carlton House is situated on a bus line, approximately one mile from the downtown mall and only half a mile from Casa Alma's houses of hospitality and urban homestead.

Carlton House was constructed in 1986 as a Group Care Home and served as senior housing for the next eighteen years. Converting the home to meet modern accessibility standards was too costly so it was sold to a private landlord in 2004 and Carlton House became rental units for single adults.

When the property went up for sale years later in 2015, a local developer (Chris Murray) approached Casa Alma and proposed that we purchase the building as a means of expanding our mission of hospitality and community support for families who would otherwise be homeless. Casa Alma entered into a year-long discernment and exploration process, and even put Carlton House under contract. We did not proceed with the sale, however, as it seemed beyond our volunteer and financial capacities at the time.

Carrying forward the vision that Carlton House could serve people in need, Chris Murray coordinated a unique partnership among his development company (Murray + Co LLC), BMC Property Management, and a local nonprofit (Virginia Organizing) to purchase the house. With these owners and with support from the Charlottesville Affordable Housing Fund, Carlton House began serving low-income single adults in 2016. The average tenant income in 2020 was \$17,500, approximately 22% of the area median income; monthly rent ranged between \$660-700 with all utilities included. Carlton House, though small in scale, became an important part of the city's available affordable housing stock.

AN OPPORTUNITY

In March of 2020, Chris Murray approached Casa Alma to communicate that both his company and BMC Property Management are preparing to exit the Carlton House project and move on to other efforts. They would like Casa Alma to purchase their 99% share of the building so that Carlton continues to serve people who cannot afford market rate housing.

OUR VISION: A thriving community focused on women; increased affordability for the long term

Casa Alma volunteers and our board of directors have spent the last year refining a vision for the purchase of Carlton House. Bringing together our mission of hospitality, our practice of radical generosity, our depth of experience and our community partnerships, we would convene a supportive community at Carlton which focuses on low-income single women and women with children.

Casa Alma would reduce existing rents to as low as \$500/month for seven of the rooms. Three rooms would be reserved for hospitality for residents with extremely low to no income.

Casa Alma would increase the number of residents from 10 (maximum in the existing model) to closer to 20 (maximum occupancy) to increase impact. We would bring an ethic of care to help transition existing residents who are not eligible for or not interested in participation in the new community. We would also improve the rooms and common spaces to make them more welcoming and comfortable, and make long-needed repairs to the exterior of the building.

RESIDENT COMMUNITY and PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

Casa Alma volunteers will coordinate the transition of the community at Carlton House. For the long term, we aim to hire a part-time community coordinator. Together with Casa Alma volunteers, the Community Coordinator would engage Carlton residents to develop an empowered and mutually supportive culture within the house, and respond to their interests for on-site programming which could include community meals, ESL classes, or mentoring.

Casa Alma will contract a local professional for property management services (rent collections, repairs and maintenance). Participation from Casa Alma resident volunteers and extended community members will reduce the labor costs of landscaping, painting, and other basic repairs. Capital improvement projects, coordinated by Casa Alma, will be undertaken in partnership with local nonprofits whenever possible.

OUR PLAN: Fundraising and Partnerships

Casa Alma aims to acquire Carlton House by the end of 2021. Since retiring our mortgage in 2016, Casa Alma has set aside funds for "hospitality expansion." By raising an additional \$60,000 we would:

- Buy a 99% stake in the ownership of Carlton House, assuming existing project debt.
- Seed a small, initial capital improvement fund of \$20,000.
- Reserve three rooms for hospitality for at least one year.
- Reduce the rent of the remaining seven rooms.

Existing and prospective Casa Alma donors will be invited to contribute to this fundraising campaign. We will explore grant possibilities with local foundations, and invite partner congregations to help us preserve and maintain affordable housing in Charlottesville by donating funds or by sponsoring or furnishing a room.

To learn more, please contact Laura or Steve Brown at cvillecw@gmail.com. *Thank you!*