

Why Maplewood?

To better serve the housing needs of its graduate and professional students, Cornell University has contracted with a developer - EdR - to develop and manage a new graduate student housing community at Maplewood that will compliment the neighborhood character of the site and leverage its close proximity to campus. The current housing at Maplewood was constructed in 1989 to a 25-year building standard and Cornell has closed the site due to its deteriorating physical conditions.

Neighbors have expressed questions about why the University is seeking to redevelop the Maplewood site with 887 beds. The following points summarize the goals of Cornell University and its development partner, informed by community and government input:

A Forward-Looking Solution

The redeveloped Maplewood will provide a forward-looking, environmentally sensitive solution for both Cornell graduate students and the wider community. The new housing will allow graduate students to live in a planned, walkable neighborhood near the University, minimizing the need to drive and use fossil fuels. It provides an alternative to competing with other residents for housing throughout the surrounding neighborhoods, which drives-up rents and housing prices.

For Our Graduate and Professional Students

Providing quality housing for its students is critical to Cornell's core mission as an educational institution.

- Multiple surveys indicate **the inability for graduate students to find quality, affordable housing within walking distance** of Cornell. As a result, 40% of Cornell's graduate students live farther than a 30-minute walk from campus.
- Living close to campus is **critical to the academic success of a graduate student**. Graduate students engage in research and group activities, requiring a presence on campus, often during weekend and evening hours. Living far from campus puts significant stress on their ability to complete their work and maintain a healthy school/work/life balance.
- In addition to ease of access to campus, **graduate students value affordability** more than anything else when it comes to finding a place to live. Many are living on modest stipends.
- Purpose-built student housing in Ithaca – especially in Collegetown – overwhelmingly targets undergraduates. There are currently no housing communities within walking distance of campus that are **tailored to fit the unique needs of graduate students, who prefer a quiet neighborhood setting** that encourages academic focus and a sense of community.
- **The new Maplewood is designed to meet these graduate student specific needs.** Residents will be able to walk, ride a bike or take public transportation to campus. (Those with cars prefer not to drive to campus, as parking is difficult and is usually restricted to lots that are no closer to central campus than Maplewood). Community spaces at the new Maplewood will allow for social interaction, co-working and collaboration. Separation from undergraduate housing will foster an atmosphere conducive to a focus on academic study. Finally, rental rates are required to be set lower than those charged at comparable developments, equal to what graduate students paid at Maplewood previously or what they would pay for on-campus housing.
- Graduate students have also clearly expressed the desire for proximity to grocery and dining options, the ability to keep pets, proximity to nature and outdoor recreation, the ability to live alone if desired, adequate utilities that are provided as part of rent, in-unit washers and dryers, bicycle parking, storage, responsible management and responsive maintenance. **Every one of these features and services will be provided at the new Maplewood.**

For Our Neighborhoods

There is a real and well documented **shortage of housing** – especially housing that is affordable to working class families and graduate students – in the City and Town of Ithaca.

- This shortage **drives-up rents and housing prices** and creates few incentives for landlords with student housing in our neighborhoods to invest-in and improve these properties.
- The short supply of graduate housing near campus also creates an incentive for the **conversion of single-family homes into student housing** in residential neighborhoods like Belle Sherman/Bryant Park and Fall Creek.
- The provision of additional purpose-built student housing communities is therefore **critical to the preservation of Ithaca's residential neighborhoods**. The new Maplewood is seeking to do so on a site that has been used for student housing for more than half a century.
- The new Maplewood is designed in a way that **respects the adjacent properties**. Surrounded by a residential neighborhood, industrial buildings, campus facilities and a cemetery, the site plan places lower density buildings adjacent to existing residential buildings, and carefully steps-up the density as the site moves away from existing housing.
- By providing student housing in a location where students can walk, bike or take a bus to campus, **traffic impacts are mitigated** as students will be able to commute without automobiles.
- The new project will enhance landscaping along the East Hill Recreation way and provide **additional community green space** throughout the site.
- Maplewood is currently tax exempt, meaning that Cornell does not pay any real estate taxes on the property. The redeveloped Maplewood will be taxable, **generating new, ongoing and predictable tax revenue** for the Town of Ithaca and the Ithaca School District.

For Our Environment

Smart growth principles call for responsible development that **discourages sprawl and encourages residential density in locations that are near the places where the population works, shops and plays**. For this reason, the Town of Ithaca's Comprehensive Plan – adopted by the Town Board in 2014 after extensive community feedback – recommends High Density Residential development for the Maplewood site.

- With 40% of Cornell's graduate students living farther than a 30-minute walk from campus, creating more than 500 new beds at Maplewood will significantly **reduce vehicle miles driven by students** who currently live farther from campus, thereby reducing carbon emissions.
- The existing Maplewood development was not built to **modern energy efficient standards**. With newly-constructed, highly-efficient buildings and mechanical equipment, fixtures, and practices the new development will significantly reduce the site's environmental impact – despite an increase in population.
- **No natural gas will be used** in the new Maplewood development, consistent with the new Tompkins County Energy Road Map. The electric-supplied heating and cooling equipment that will be utilized reduces carbon emissions when compared to gas-supplied alternatives. Additionally, electricity can be provided by renewable sources like solar, and the developer is currently pursuing renewable electricity suppliers in an effort to further minimize carbon emissions.