



Owner: Sustainable Comfort, Inc. | Location: Worcester, MA | Completion Date: 2018

The Next Phase of the Stanton Loop Neighborhood Revitalization

Revitalizing triple-decker apartments provides triple the benefits for residents, the Worcester community, and the environment. The completion of 24 and 30 Stanton Street has created shared housing, restored and upgraded dilapidated buildings for health, sustainability, and function, and preserves rich neighborhood history for the next century.

Providing Shared Housing for Worcester

Worcester is brimming with colleges and universities. These institutions attract talent, emerging professionals, and local businesses, which help power Worcester's economy. The housing shortage for this demographic, however, doesn't incentivize students to stay after graduation.

SCI President Albert LaValley has experienced this problem firsthand. As a graduate of Worcester Polytechnic Institute, LaValley says, "It's rare for people to actually stay in Worcester after they complete their degree. There isn't a ton of housing for recent graduates with entry-level salaries who don't have a family but still need a way to split costs. Worcester needs to compete for young people if it wants to continue to grow. As the city works to entice more graduates to stay, the demand for affordable, shared housing will only increase."

Upgrades to 24 and 30 Stanton Street are projected to save tenants an average of \$800 per year. The savings residents pocket from reduced utility bills can be used to pay off their student loan debt, save to start a family or buy a home, or reinvest into the local community as business owners, employees, and patrons—helping to improve Worcester's economy overall.

Providing efficient and modern amenities is only one part of attracting residents to shared housing. Building a sense of community—something these triple-deckers did so well historically—remains of equal importance.

"If we restore enough of these properties, making design decisions that help to establish a vibrant community, we can help to create a neighborhood vibe that entices residents to stay long term."

— Taylor Bearden, Development Partner





The Stanton Loop development team plans to purchase and restore more clusters of homes throughout the area to strengthen this neighborly attitude. The hope is that by improving residential housing block by block, individuals and the entire community will prosper.

Modernizing Century-Old Homes for Health, Sustainability, and Comfort

Homes built over 100 years ago contain remarkable craftsmanship—architecture that truly stands the test of time. However, triple-deckers like 24 and 30 Stanton Street also come with fire hazards, energy inefficiencies, and outdated layouts for modern needs.

LaValley says, “We expect older properties to have mold, lead paint, and possibly asbestos we need to abate. However, our biggest safety concern is usually fire. Because of the way triple-deckers are framed, fire spreads very quickly to the rest of the building. To prevent this, we do something called fire-blocking that makes it very difficult for a fire to spread to other units. We also replace old style wiring and strip out lead paint.”

In addition to safety upgrades, 24 and 30 Stanton Street feature low-flow water fixtures, high-efficiency heating, cooling, and domestic hot water equipment, new windows, and air sealing so that moisture, pests, and energy are not exchanged between apartments.

SCI uses low-VOC products and add ventilation to help keep indoor air quality healthy and make the home more energy-efficient. Most of these homes are not insulated at all, so we use the Mass Save program. The Mass Save energy efficiency program is offered through the utility companies and helps economically insulate the homes from the basement all the way to the attic.

The newly remodeled triple-deckers also contain two bathrooms, an eat-in kitchen, and two or three bedrooms,

including a large master with a walk-in closet. Bearden says, “Triple-deckers often have awkward layouts, limited cabinetry and storage, and a single bathroom. We make tweaks to how existing spaces are used—turning the dining room into a living room, converting the kitchen into an eat-in kitchen, and adding a second bathroom. We know from experience that the majority of people moving into our housing will be unrelated housemates. We create spaces that are comfortable and more suitable for these residents’ needs.”

Preserving Worcester History While Updating for the Future

Preserving and restoring the integrity of historical buildings are of utmost importance in Stanton Loop. It also makes these buildings more sustainable—reusing what can be saved and replacing other features for safety and efficiency when necessary.

Marc Levitt is a documentarian who is currently shooting a historical film called Triple Decker: A New England Love Story—a project SCI has been honored to be a part of. Levitt explains, “The story of affordable housing is complex. I’ve spoken with very sincere developers like Sustainable Comfort who are doing what they can to preserve these buildings for the next 100 years. I have a lot of respect for them. They’re doing what they can within the limits they’re facing to keep these homes as they found them.”

While carefully working on 24 and 30 Stanton Street, SCI carpenters were amazed at the quality of workmanship and detail that went into the construction of these centennial homes.

LaValley says, “Part of any renovation requires taking the building apart. Our carpenters witnessed the work that someone in their position had done 100 years ago and have developed tremendous respect for the care and craftsmanship that went into it. We wanted to



acknowledge this and maintain some of the character of the building and the details. We took a lot of time to restore the pass-through and the double-sided cabinets in the kitchen as well as reused many of the beautiful pine clapboards we stripped from outside structures.”

Encouragingly, local residents are pleased with the juxtaposition of old and new. Bearden says, “We’re making the neighbors happy because they no longer have to drive by a condemned home that’s falling apart or to look at porches falling off homes. Beyond exterior aesthetics, we take construction measures to reduce the energy consumption of these homes. It’s something good not only for the current tenants of the building, but also for the future owners and our environment.”

An Overall Positive Impact in the Stanton Loop Neighborhood

Joe Volpe, a neighbor who lives in the triple-decker next to 24 and 30 Stanton Street, has nothing but great things to say. He has high hopes that future renovations in his area will restore the neighborhood to the way he remembers it from his childhood.

Volpe says, “I’m 74 years old, and my parents bought this home back in 1954 when I was about 10 years old. At that time the triple-decker homes were owned by the families that lived there, and they took meticulous care of their properties. Over the years, people passed away and absentee ownership occurred with the owners just collecting rent and not maintaining the homes. Many of the properties are now in disrepair and need a lot of work to restore. Sustainable Comfort has done a tremendous job of getting the homes back up to environmental code, and it’s started to take the neighborhood back to what it used to be.”



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— Joe Volpe - Long Time Neighbor

Volpe is also impressed with how conscientious the SCI team has been about cleaning up after themselves during construction. He says, “Sustainable Comfort has been very good to me. I had a great relationship with the company and with the crew that worked there every day, understanding full well that there are always going to be disruptions on a construction site like trucks and noise. I let them use my driveway for deliveries to make things easier for them. When they’re done, they clean it all up for me and make it the way it was before they used it.”

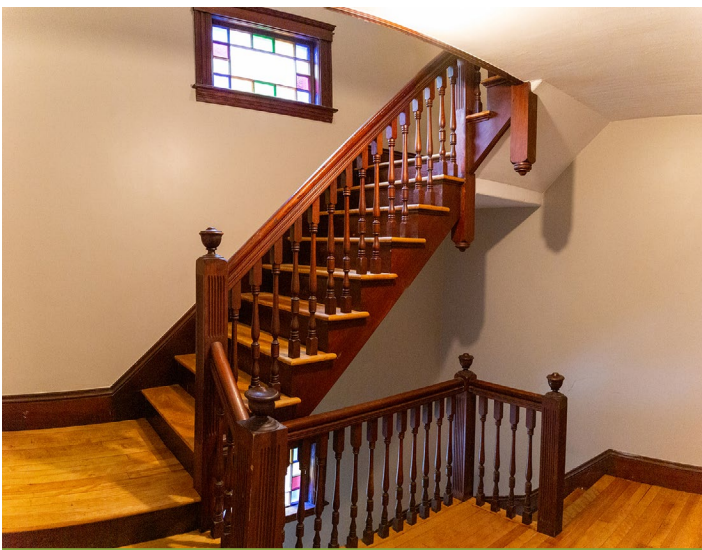
While the Stanton Loop revitalization project has been positive for most, some residents feel differently. Asking residents to vacate their homes is one of the most difficult aspects of renovating. To make this transition easier for everyone, SCI offers relocation assistance and the ability to reapply to lease the apartments once construction is complete.

“We work pretty hard at being good neighbors. We shovel our neighbors’ sidewalks when there’s a snowstorm. We clear debris from demolition as quickly as possible. We’re wary of noise and extra people at a construction site. We provide resources and complimentary services to tenants who need to move. Time spent contributing positivity to our community is important to us.”

— Albert LaValley, SCI President

Investing in the Future

Being a responsible part of the community is a core aspect of SCI’s founding principles. That’s why Stanton



Street properties are renovated with longevity, safety, sustainability, historical preservation, and comfort in mind.

Bearden says, “A lot of people who get into real estate do it because you can make a lot of money quickly. They look at development strictly transactionally. I’m not a believer in this, because at the end of the day, all residential real estate is someone’s home. When we do a project, we make decisions in the interest of the long-term health of the neighborhood—not extracting profit.”

LaValley agrees that investing wisely has a greater return for everybody in the long run. He says, “My hope is that we can continue to develop small pockets of neighborhoods like this throughout the city. It increases property values in the area and incentivizes the other owners in that area to do some repair work and do a good job of maintaining their properties. We have found that a lot on Stanton Street.”

Project Information

24 Stanton Street

The original three-family apartment building was renovated to add an additional bathroom, bedroom, and walk-in closet to each apartment along with a new brightly lit, inviting, basement laundry room. The building features open front and back porches on each level to encourage neighborhood engagement. Energy upgrades included a fully updated electrical system with LED lighting, a fully updated plumbing system with low flow fixtures and new higher efficiency heating system, new windows, new exterior doors, and full insulation.

Square Footage	4,269 sf
No. of Units	3
Year Built	1910
Year Renovated	2018



30 Stanton Street

Each apartment was renovated to add an additional bathroom, bedroom, and office space. Siding was replaced on the entire building with an accented section to showcase the front barrel. Energy efficiency upgrades included new windows, exterior doors, and a fully insulated envelope. Each unit was fully renovated to include stainless steel appliances and granite countertops in the kitchen, along with new plumbing and light fixtures throughout. The original trim and hardwood floors were salvaged wherever possible to reduce construction waste.

Square Footage	4,234 sf
No. of Units	3
Year Built	1910
Year Renovated	2018

Property Management

At SCI we don’t just help construct greener buildings, we also want to understand and assist in what it’s like to live in them. To that end, each building SCI renovates also gets managed by us. Our property management team works to ensure a healthy and comfortable living situation for each tenant, while linking them to community resources around Worcester.