

Nonprofit

Herb Kohl Philanthropies donates \$1 million to CDA affordable housing efforts



By **Samantha Dietel**
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Image from Milwaukee Habitat for Humanity

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Herb Kohl Philanthropies is giving \$1 million to help build affordable homes in Milwaukee's Harambee neighborhood, the foundation announced at a Wednesday press conference.

The donation will support the **Community Development Alliance**, which plans to propose a tax incremental district to build 60 affordable homes on vacant, city-owned lots in Harambee. The CDA plans to build 15 houses each year for four years.

A TID allows future property taxes to help repay investment costs.

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JoAnne Anton, president and CEO of Herb Kohl Philanthropies, speaks at a press conference on Wednesday, April 23, 2025, inside Malaika Early Learning Center.

Of the 60 homes, eight will be designated for early childhood educators. They will be sold for \$105,000 each. The rest will be **Milwaukee Habitat for Humanity** homes that will be sold at about \$146,000 each. Habitat for Humanity, **Acts Housing** and **Envision Growth** are partners for the project.

“This is a housing project, but it’s also a workforce project because it’s helping stabilize people here in working with our kids,” said **Teig Whaley-Smith**, chief alliance executive at the CDA.

At the press conference, which was held inside **Malaika Early Learning Center** at 125 W. Auer Ave., Herb Kohl Philanthropies president and CEO **JoAnne Anton** said the foundation’s investment “is a really important moment for our foundation to share our passion for early childhood education and bring in our commitment to finding further collaboration in the community.”

“A million dollars is a good start,” Anton said. “We’re also here not just to make that announcement, but to also encourage other people to join the effort to support what’s happening here in this neighborhood, as well as across Milwaukee, because there’s more work to do. We view this as a workforce initiative investment and a housing investment. We

Considering that many early childhood educators do not make a livable wage, home ownership is often beyond their reach, Anton said.

“We want to do all we can to support teachers, including early childhood educators,” she said.

The CDA is also **working to build 40 affordable homes for early childhood educators** in five Milwaukee neighborhoods. Those homes will be built within walking distance from Malaika Early Learning Center, COA Youth & Family Centers, Next Door Foundation Early Childhood Education, the United Community Center Early Learning Academy and the Growing Tree Children’s Center of United Methodist Children’s Services.

The homes are being offered for about \$105,000. Each home costs over \$250,000 to build. Funding for the project has come from a \$5 million American Rescue Plan Act grant from the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development.

To qualify for the ECE housing, an applicant must:

- Be an employee or owner of a licensed ECE provider.
- Directly provide or supervise classroom instruction.
- Earn at most \$49,920 per year.
- Be a first-time homebuyer.

“We can’t continue to increase the out-of-pocket costs for our families because they are paying as much as they can pay,” said **Tamara Johnson**, executive director of Malaika Early Learning Center. “For us to increase the wages for ECE professionals and sometimes our

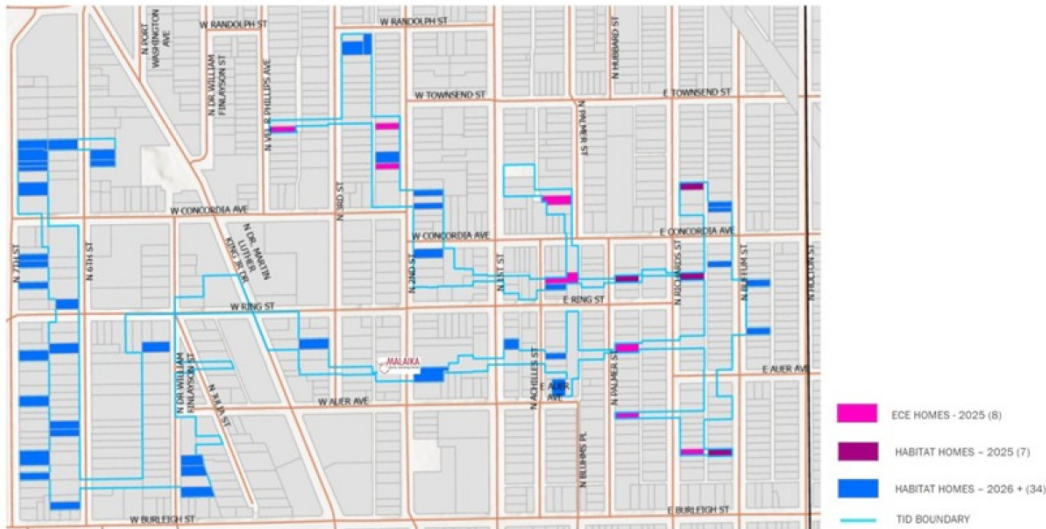


and resources that support it will become a game changer for professionals in our field.

HARAMBEE COORDINATED BACKBONE TID



EnvisionGrowth



A map of the Community Development Alliance's proposed tax incremental district in Milwaukee's Harambee neighborhood. Submitted by the Community Development Alliance.