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LAND AND SPACE

This \$12 million effort builds homes for Milwaukee child care workers. It won a \$1 million grant



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Key Points

- A plan to build more than 40 houses near five Milwaukee childhood education centers started in 2024.
 - The \$12 million effort subsidizes the construction costs to keep the prices affordable for lower income buyers.
 - The development's funding, which includes a federal grant, is being boosted with \$1 million from Herb Kohl Philanthropies.
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An effort to build affordable [homes for Milwaukee child care workers](#) is getting a boost with a \$1 million foundation grant.

It also might receive city funding.

The \$12 million development was launched in 2024 by two nonprofit groups: the [Community Development Alliance](#) and [Acts Housing](#).

The initial plan was to build more than 40 houses near five early childhood education centers: COA Goldin Youth & Family Center, 2320 W. Burleigh St.; Malaika Early Learning Center, 125 W. Auer Ave.; Next Door, 2545 N. 29th St.; Growing Tree Children's Center, 3940 W. Lisbon Ave., and United Community Center Ricardo Diaz Early Learning Academy, 2130 W. Becher St.

Six have been built so far on the south side, with five homes sold, said Teig Whaley-Smith, Community Development Alliance chief alliance executive.

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Five more houses will be completed in May in the Washington Park neighborhood, he said, with around 30 more houses to be finished in spring 2026 in the Amani, Harambee and Metcalf Park neighborhoods.

The three-bedroom houses are being sold for around \$105,000 each – well below their \$250,000 to \$300,000 construction cost – to early childhood educators earning up to \$49,920 annually.

That affordable price helps provide stable housing for early childhood educators, said Malaika President Tamara Johnson and Amy Pechacek, state workforce development secretary.

Home ownership also can help bridge [Milwaukee's racial wealth gap](#).

The project's funding includes a \$4.5 million federal grant along with \$4.2 million from lower-income home buyers.

\$1 million grant comes from Herb Kohl Philanthropies

That's being supplemented with a \$1 million grant from Herb Kohl Philanthropies, which was announced on April 23 during an event at Malaika Early Learning Center.

That gift will support construction of eight homes in the Harambee neighborhood, Whaley-Smith said. The Harambee homes are being developed by Envision Growth LLC, a firm led by Oby Nwabuzor.

Also, a tax incremental financing district to help fund some of the Harambee houses is in the works. It would use property tax revenue generated by the new homes to help pay for them.

The financing district, which would need Common Council approval, would be bordered roughly by North Holton Street, North Seventh Street, West Burleigh Street and West Randolph.

It would include sites for homes being developed through a separate program operated by [Milwaukee Habitat for Humanity](#).

That financing district is supported by Alderwoman Milele Coggs, whose district includes Harambee.

Developing affordable homes for early childhood educators helps create a more stable workforce within an industry that has trouble providing adequate pay, said JoAnne Anton, president and CEO of Herb Kohl Philanthropies.

"It's a broken system," she said.

(This story was updated because an earlier version included an inaccuracy.)

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