



Proposed Workforce-Focused Studio Apartments

1438 Stefko Blvd, Bethlehem, PA 18017

A City Housing Initiative for More Affordable, Sustainable Living

"Building More Affordable Futures, One Home at a Time"

Prepared for the City Planning Department

City of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

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Executive Summary

This brochure presents a proposal for the development of new, purpose-built workforce studio apartments within the City of Bethlehem. Designed to address the critical shortage of more affordable housing, the proposed development features compact, energy-efficient studio units ranging from 478 to 488 square feet — optimized for livability, sustainability, and cost control. The project aligns with city housing goals, federal affordable housing policy frameworks, and the community's commitment to equitable, inclusive growth.

The United States faces a shortage of **7.2 million** affordable and available rental homes for extremely low-income households, with only 35 affordable units available for every 100 extremely low-income renter households nationwide. Only one in four households who qualify for housing assistance currently receive it. This proposal offers a concrete, actionable step toward closing that gap locally.

7.2 Million National shortage of affordable rental homes (NLIHC, 2026)	478–488 sq ft Optimized studio living space per unit	1 in 4 Qualifying households currently receiving assistance
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Project Overview

The proposed development consists of **18 compact**, thoughtfully designed studio apartments built specifically for working individuals.

Each unit ranges from **478 to 488 square feet**, featuring a single-room, open-concept layout that maximizes functional living within a smaller footprint.

Every apartment is equipped with a **kitchenette** including a compact **refrigerator** and a **four-burner stove**, providing residents with the ability to prepare meals affordably at home. Every floor includes a shared **laundry facility**, offering residents convenient access to **full-size washers and dryers**.

The design philosophy centers on delivering dignified, comfortable housing while controlling construction and operating costs — passing those savings on to residents through lower rents.

The project is designed to **meet or exceed all local building codes and accessibility standards**, including ADA compliance. By incorporating energy-efficient materials and construction methods, the development ensures reduced utility costs for residents and a lower environmental footprint for the community.

Site Plan Rendering:



Building Features:	Parking Features:
Total Floors: 3	Handicap Spaces: 1
Units Per Floor: 6	Standard Parking Spaces: 16
Total Rental Units: 18	Total Parking Spaces: 17

Design Philosophy

Every design decision in this development is guided by a single principle: **maximizing livability while minimizing cost**. Compact, efficient floor plans mean lower construction costs, reduced utility bills, and less maintenance — translating directly into more **affordable rents** for the residents who need them most.

Unit Features & Design



First Floor Plan: a modern, compact studio apartment with efficient use of space.

Studio Layout: 478–488 Square Feet

Each unit features a carefully planned open-concept floor plan that integrates living, sleeping, cooking, and dining functions into a cohesive, comfortable space.

Key features include:

- **Open-concept single-room floor plan** optimized for spatial efficiency and natural light
- **Kitchen** with standard size appliances for at-home meal preparation
- **Low-maintenance finishes** designed for durability and ease of upkeep
- **Energy-efficient construction** including high-performance insulation and efficient HVAC systems to reduce monthly utility costs
- **ADA-accessible units** included in the development plan to ensure inclusive access for residents with disabilities

Interior Renderings



Living Room & Kitchenette area featuring natural light designed to create a warm, inviting feel.

Interior Renderings (Continued)



Spacious, naturally lit bedroom designed to support comfortable, efficient living.



Modern, well-appointed bathroom designed for everyday usability.

Design Feature	Resident Benefit	Management Benefit
Smaller footprint (478–488 sq ft)	Lower utility bills — less space to heat, cool, and light	Reduced construction cost per unit
Kitchen with standard size appliances	Ability to cook at home, reducing food expenses	Fewer appliances to maintain and replace
Durable, low-maintenance finishes	Minimal upkeep responsibility for tenants	Lower long-term maintenance and turnover costs
Energy-efficient systems	Projected 20–30% reduction in monthly energy costs	Supports sustainability goals and reduces operating expenses
ADA-accessible units	Inclusive living for residents with mobility needs	Compliance with federal and state accessibility requirements

Community Benefits

More affordable, stable housing is one of the most powerful interventions a city can make to improve the well-being of its residents and the health of its community. The proposed development delivers broad and lasting benefits:

Addressing the Housing Shortage

The national shortage of affordable housing has reached crisis levels. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition's 2026 *Gap* report, the United States faces a deficit of **7.2 million** affordable and available rental homes for the 11 million extremely low-income renter households nationwide. No state has an adequate supply. This development directly adds to Bethlehem's more affordable housing stock, helping to close that gap at the local level.

Strengthening Health, Education, and Economic Mobility

- **Improved health outcomes:** Research shows stable housing leads to a **60% reduction** in emergency room visits and hospitalizations, easing the burden on local healthcare systems.
- **Reduced homelessness:** Purpose-built more affordable units directly reduce homelessness and housing instability, lowering the social and fiscal costs borne by the municipality.
- **Safer neighborhoods:** Stable tenancy fosters more cohesive, connected communities and is associated with lower rates of crime and social disruption.
- **Greater financial flexibility:** When housing is more affordable, residents can allocate more of their income to essentials — food, healthcare, transportation, childcare, and education.

Research Spotlight

The 2026 PAHRC Housing Impact Report found that affordable housing programs support **6.62 million households** nationwide. Among non-disabled, working-age assisted households, **86% were employed** at some point during the year — demonstrating that more affordable housing supports working families, not dependency.

Economic Impact

Investing in more affordable housing is not merely a social obligation — it is a proven economic strategy. Research consistently demonstrates that every dollar invested in more affordable housing generates substantial returns for local economies.

Construction Phase

- **Local job creation:** Construction of more affordable housing generates significant employment for local contractors, tradespeople, and suppliers. The Stewards of Affordable Housing for the Future (SAHF) report that new construction and rehabilitation projects generate over **\$995 million** in annual wages and business income nationally, supporting thousands of jobs in the supply chain.
- **Contractor and supplier spending:** Materials, equipment, and services sourced locally create a multiplier effect across the regional economy.

Broader City Economic Benefits

Economic Factor	Projected Impact
Property tax revenue	New development generates ongoing property tax income for the city
Increased local spending	Residents with reduced housing costs have more disposable income, boosting spending at local businesses
Reduced emergency service costs	Stable housing reduces demand for emergency shelters, ER visits, and crisis intervention — avoiding average public costs of \$35,000–\$50,000 per person annually for homelessness
Return on investment	Research indicates every \$1 invested in affordable housing yields a return of \$2.50–\$3.00 through reduced public costs and increased economic activity

Key Economic Insight

Supportive housing programs that cost **\$15,000–\$25,000** annually per resident prevent far more expensive outcomes — homelessness (\$35,000–\$50,000/year), incarceration (\$30,000–\$60,000/year), and untreated chronic health conditions (\$20,000+/year) — generating net savings of **\$20,000–\$50,000 per person per year**.

Alignment with City Housing Goals

The proposed studio apartment development is designed to advance the City of Bethlehem's strategic housing objectives and align with broader federal and state policy frameworks. This project demonstrates the city's commitment to proactive, equitable, and sustainable community development.

Next Steps

We respectfully request the City's Planning Department review and endorsement of this proposal to advance the development through the approval process.

Invitation for Discussion

We welcome questions, feedback, and further discussion from the planning department. This proposal is intended as a starting point for collaborative planning — and we are committed to refining the project based on community input and city guidance.

More affordable housing is not just a policy priority — it is an investment in the health, stability, and future prosperity of our community.

We urge the City of Bethlehem to take this decisive step forward.

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