



## 2017 BLUE RIBBON AWARD *Winner*

▲ Ribbon cutting at Francis House of Peace Ping An House with funders, residents, and elected officials.

### Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation and Project HOME Partner to Create a Combined Vision in the Francis House of Peace Ping An (平安) House

"If we had organizations in a room saying what partnerships would make good ones, this idea never would have come up," says John Chin, Executive Director of the Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation (PCDC), about the collaboration between community-based organizations PCDC and Project HOME. However, the idea for the culturally integrative affordable housing project Francis House of Peace Ping An (平安, which means peace in Chinese) House was the perfect collaboration to bring their two visions into one.

When Project HOME came upon the block that was then primarily parking lots looking for land to build affordable housing for persons who are homeless, formerly homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless, it led them to PCDC. "PCDC had always looked at that parcel for affordable senior housing," says Chin. "What really intrigued me was the idea that two very different non-profit organizations and of the potential if they came together. The missions are clearly very different. I saw this as an opportunity to think outside the box."

Thinking outside of the box for this creative project has led the Francis House of Peace Ping An House to tremendous success. Once they decided to partner, everything moved quickly. "The uniqueness of it really attracted people that fund these types of projects," says Chin, with the Francis House of Peace Ping An House receiving the highest tax credit award ever granted by the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency.

The Francis House of Peace Ping An House:

- Provides 94 units of low-income housing: 50 for persons who are homeless, formerly homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless; 20 for seniors; and 24 for the general low-income population
- Employs many bi-lingual staff

- Drew significant public and private support, raising \$24.3 million for development of the project
- Features local artists' work in common spaces

The Francis House of Peace Ping An House creates its own unique community with a diverse population that includes formerly homeless persons, native Chinese speakers, members of the LGBTQ community, young adults, and seniors. Both Janet Stearns, Vice President of Real Estate Development and Asset Management at Project HOME, and Chin recall a Chinese New Year celebration of residents about a month after they began moving in. Stearns describes seeing adults new to the neighborhood, formerly homeless young adults, seniors, and those who had lived in Chinatown for a long time all gathering together around the table in Francis House of Peace Ping An House's community room to tell their stories and work on projects. "Everyone loved the building and loved to be there, and that seemed to be a common ground for building community right away," says Stearns. "The inclusion of everyone is very successful," adds Chin.

The residents, neighborhood, Project HOME, and PCDC are happy to see the culture and community that the Francis House of Peace Ping An House brings. Without the partnership between Project HOME and PCDC, the project would not have been possible. "The essence of this project is mindful cooperation," says Rachel Mak, Deputy Director of PCDC. As Chin states, "In today's world where resources are scarce, collaboration is an opportunity to achieve success."