

BHA Marks Completion of Infills

Mayor Thomas M. Menino cut the ribbon to officially declare the completion of the first group of 54 new infill units. The event, held at 71-73 Moreland Street, featured housing redeveloped by Nuestra Comunidad, one of a number of Community Development Corporations (CDCs) that agreed to revamp what were once BHA public housing units.



Several years ago, the Boston Housing Authority chose to dispose of the properties to local CDCs that could redevelop the 54 homes in scattered site duplex and single-family houses in Dorchester and Roxbury. The BHA's decision to divest its stake in the infills was predicated on the fact that the city was in need of additional affordable housing options but the Authority lacked the resources needed to redevelop the properties itself. The plan required that the refurbished homes remain affordable and that current BHA residents be offered an opportunity to purchase them as first-time homebuyers.

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Washington-Beech Celebrates FFUN Day

Residents and volunteers at the Washington-Beech complex in Roslindale hosted a Friends and Family Unite Neighbors (FFUN) Day on Saturday, May 22. The day was billed as an afternoon for “friends, families, and neighbors to share and celebrate the accomplishments over the past year and to meet new residents, get to know their neighbors, and become active in the community.”

(See photos page 7)



<div> <div>Dedicated to John Young (1934-2004)</div> <div> <p>The staff of the Boston Housing Authority would like to dedicate this issue of the BHA Today Newsletter to John Young who passed away on April 26 at the age of 69. Mr. Young served as President of the Franklin Field Elderly Task Force and positively impacted many lives throughout the BHA community.</p> </div> </div>	<div> <div>CONTENTS</div> <div> <div>Get Out The Vote.....2</div> <div>Mother’s Day at Walnut Park.....3</div> <div>BHA Monitoring Commitee.....4</div> <div>Leading the Way II.....5</div> <div>Wait List Update.....5</div> <div>Accessible Units.....8</div> <div>Volunteer Opportunity.....8</div> </div> </div>
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Getting Out the Vote

The Power Of Our Vote

by Philip Askew
Co-Chair, Boston RAB

Civic duty: Of or relating or belonging to a city; of or relating to or befitting citizens or individuals.

As Co-Chair of the Resident Advisory Board (RAB) for the Boston Housing Authority, I feel that it is very important for all citizens in public housing to register to vote and vote in the November election. October is the deadline to get registered for the 2004 election.

Here are some reasons to vote. First, the present administration in Washington is cutting funding from public housing programs. One example is the proposed cutting of 250,000 Section 8 vouchers which would include more than 7,000 vouchers being cut in Massachusetts alone. Prior to this, the Public Housing and Drug Elimination Program was completely eliminated. This program provided security and after-school programs for public housing residents across the country. On the state side, there are proposals to charge public housing tenants minimum rents. One proposal would set this amount at \$50 per apartment and another proposal would set the minimum rent at \$50 per bedroom. And the list goes on.

It is important to set a goal in your community to get a minimum of fifty per cent new voters to the polls this year. We are asking you to do it for our young people, for our elderly and for our own families' well being. Unless we change things, all public housing will be a thing of the past. Those of us living on low-income will be experiencing the hardest times of our lives.

For any help with voter registration and getting out the vote call me, Phillip Askew at 617-988-4093 between the hours of 9am-noon, Monday through Friday. Voting does not always give instant results. It is a lifetime civic endeavor.

Let's work together for this much needed change and see the power of our vote.



Members of the National Low-Income Housing Coalition recently met with Massachusetts Senator Edward Kennedy in Washington D.C.

Register to Vote!

The right to vote is an important right. We at the Boston Housing Authority urge you to take first step toward exercising that right – registering to vote.

To request a Voter Registration Form visit <http://www.state.ma.us/sec/ele/elestu/stuidx.htm> Completely fill out the information requested and submit. A form will be mailed to you. You can also call 617-727-2828 or 1-800-462-VOTE

You will **not** be registered to vote until you return the completed voter registration form to your local city/town hall. If you live in the City of Boston, you should send the form to:

Boston Election Department
One City Hall Plaza, Room 241
Boston, MA 02201

Walnut Park Celebrates Mother's Day

Walnut Park resident mothers recently received a little pampering as staff members hosted a special Mother's Day Celebration. Attendees received a flower and Manager Mari Benzan provided them with a meal and presented each of them with gifts.

"It's an idea I brought over here from when I was working for Cambridge Housing," explained Benzan. "We've had a great turnout for the events here. The residents are always calling asking when we are going to have another [party]."

The ladies chatted and enjoyed each other's company in the community room. For many of the residents, whose families are no longer around, it was a special event.

"This is something very important," said Walnut Park resident Marta Viera. "We never had anything like this before our new manager and social worker came."



(L to R): Manager Mari Benzan, resident Lousie Michaux and social worker Donna Scott

"We appreciate them very much," Viera added. "Most people just go in to make a pay check, but they care for people."

The event also served as a chance to say goodbye to a longtime resident of the development. Lousie Michaux, a tenant of Walnut Park since 1980, is moving to North Carolina and many of her friends took the opportunity to bid her farewell.

Asked of her favorite memories of the development, the resident and volunteer praised the people that make the site what it is. "I just enjoyed working with everybody," she said.



(L to R): Residents Lousie Michaux, Muriel MacKenzie and Marta Vier

Benzan has been at the development for three years now and has made the Celebration an annual event.

Viera noted that Benzan and Donna Scott, from Urban Edge, have done a lot to contribute to the genial atmosphere around the site.



BHA Monitoring Committee Sworn In

The Boston Housing Authority has a new Monitoring Committee. Members Sadie Savage, Edna Bynoe, Ruth Capone, Claudio Martinez, Shirley Ann Lee, Bruce Bickerstaff, Joanne McCormack, Deborah Farnam and Edward Agro were sworn in recently by Boston City Clerk Rosaria Salerno.

The nine-member group serves in place of an executive board, which is the more common structure found at many other housing authorities. Monitoring Committee members have very specific duties. They must meet quarterly at a minimum, but are free to meet more often if they so choose. All members must be residents of the City of Boston and at least five members must be public housing residents.



Edna Bynoe officially joins the Committee

It is their duty to “review matters relating to the management and performance of the Boston Housing Authority and to report thereon to the Mayor,” according to the governing legislation. “All principal federal and state annual operating budgets, principal annual modernization applications and all property dispositions which would reduce the total number of housing units,” by the BHA are to be reviewed and approved by the Monitoring Committee. Members are designated special municipal employees and serve two-year terms.

The Mayor must appoint the members of the group and the members who are not public housing residents are also be subject to confirmation by the Boston City Council. The Mayor nominates the chair of the committee, subject to ratification by a majority vote of all of the members of the committee.



(L to R): Edna Bynoe, Sadie Savage and Shirley Ann Lee are sworn in by Boston City Clerk Rosaria Salerno

The first monitoring committee was formed by the Massachusetts Senate and House of Representatives on May 23, 1989. The Monitoring Committee was formed after the Housing Authority had been placed into receivership and the Board of Directors abolished. Prior to that time, the BHA operated for many years at the direction of a Board of Directors. The legislation that created the Monitoring Committee also gave management and control of the Authority to an Administrator who is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the Mayor. The BHA was established in 1935 in accordance with the provisions of Mass. General Laws, Chapter 121B.



John Breen, president of the first board of directors, shakes hands after a dedication in Charlestown in 1941

Boston *Still* Leading the Way

With new homes from the original Leading the Way program serving as the backdrop, Mayor Thomas M. Menino announced the beginning of the City of Boston's Leading the Way II campaign.

"Together we will keep Boston a city open and affordable for everyone," promised Menino to the crowd of elected officials, residents and housing partners in attendance.

The four-year initiative includes the production of 10,000 new units, renovation of 2,000 distressed properties, expansion of home buying opportunities, homelessness prevention, and a requirement that developers of new housing set aside 15 percent of their units for affordable housing.

The first Leading the Way campaign, introduced in 2000, resulted in significant gains for the City of Boston. The project produced more than

7,900 units of new housing, 2,200 of which are affordable.

"We met and exceeded our goals for Leading the Way," noted Mayor Menino. He lauded the partnership the City enjoys with Bank of America, Keyspan and Citizens Bank, while also applauding the efforts of the Department of Neighborhood Development, the Boston Redevelopment Authority and the Boston Housing Authority who all play an important part in the implementation of the Leading the Way campaign.

Despite a soft economy and shrinking local, state and federal budgets, the Mayor continues to consider housing a top priority.

"We want to pick-up where we left off," said Menino of the program. "We want to preserve our gains and set ambitious goals."

**"Together we will
keep Boston a city
open and affordable
to everyone"**

-Mayor Thomas M. Menino

BHA Implements Site-Based Wait List, Suspends Section 8 Applications

The BHA has stopped accepting new applications for its public housing and Section 8 rental assistance program waiting lists. The closing of the public housing waiting list is a temporary measure designed to allow the BHA to implement a site-based waiting list for all applicants throughout the City of Boston. It is anticipated that the public housing waiting list will reopen in the late fall of 2004. The closing of the Section 8 waiting list is due to the current lack of available Section 8 vouchers and the sizeable number of applicants already on the waiting list.

"The closing of these lists represents both good and bad news for public housing and Section 8 applicants in the City of Boston. We will now be able to offer public housing applicants choice in where they would like to live and raise their families. The temporary closing of the public housing waiting list will free up the administrative resources necessary to implement this important policy change," explained Henriquez. "Unfortunately, the closing of the

Section 8 priority one waiting list is due to the lack of resources and the approximately 9,000 applicants who are already on the waiting list."

The BHA has utilized all of its available Section 8 subsidies and currently subsidizes approximately 11,000 families in its Section 8 program. In addition, due to current funding constraints and proposed federal cuts to the program, the BHA does not expect to receive additional funding or vouchers for this program. The BHA will continue to process Section 8 vouchers for those applicants currently on the list if and when vouchers become available through annual turnover.

It is important to note that the closing of these lists contain the following exceptions. For public housing, the BHA will continue to accept applications from persons with disabilities who require wheelchair accessible apartments (see back page). Due to an initiative to increase the number of handicapped accessible apartments in

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BHA Marks Completion of Infills

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Lessie Harris, a former BHA Infill tenant, recently purchased her new home on Whiting Street, a redeveloped duplex that was once her public housing apartment.

At the ceremony, Ms. Harris excitedly pronounced: "Finally I got my house!"

"I got my home and I want to thank you all," she continued. "God bless you!"

The event came on the heels of the kickoff to Boston's Leading the Way II program (see page 5) and is another example of the City's commitment to finding innovative ways to provide residents with quality, affordable housing.

Mayor Menino said that when it comes to housing the state and federal government make a lot of "promises, but there is no commitment." He explained: "Here in Boston we do it."

Other CDCs redeveloping Infill properties in Roxbury and Dorchester are Urban Edge Housing Corporation, Dorchester Bay Economic Development Corporation with Quincy Geneva/New Vision CDC, and Codman Square Neighborhood Development Corporation.

Due to the complexities of coordinating such a redevelopment project, it took a number of years to redevelop and offer the properties to homebuyers.

"It takes time to get things right sometimes," admitted BHA Administrator Sandra Henriquez. "But sometimes it's worth the wait."



Taking A Closer Look

- ✓ Construction of the 54 units began in the spring of 2003.
- ✓ The units are being developed by five different Community Development Corporations (CDCs): Nuestra Comunidad Development Corporation (20 units), Dorchester Bay Economic Development Corporation in collaboration with New Vision/Quincy Geneva CDC (18 units), Urban Edge Housing Corporation (14 units) and Codman Square Neighborhood Development Corporation (two units).
- ✓ Ten of the units are being redeveloped under the offsite portion of the Orchard Garden Hope VI initiative.
- ✓ Many of the units are being sold to former BHA tenants.
- ✓ The units are mixed rental and ownership housing.
- ✓ All of the new homes are affordable.

Pictured: BHA Administrator Sandra Henriquez presents new homeowner Lessie Harris with an orchid as Mayor Menino and Director of the Department of Neighborhood Development Charlotte Golar Richie look on. Lessie is one of many former Boston Housing Authority tenants who will be moving into new homes thanks to the infill project.

FFUN Day

(Continued from page 1)

Tenants of the development embraced the event, showing up in large numbers to participate in the many activities on display. Kids got their faces painted, bobbed for apples, and even got a tour of a fire engine. Residents also enjoyed folk singers, a rapper and a dance show. They were also able to visit the many tables set up with job, medical and other information.

The day also marked the end of City Year's service to the Washington-Beech Development. The crew of volunteers spent the past several months working with W-B staff to improve the complex and work with residents. Among other accomplishments, the group helped set up a newsletter, restored the basketball court and painted apartments.

The event was a collaboration between the BHA Community Services Department, Washington-Beech Resources and Development Center, Washington-Beech City Year Team, W-B Friends and Families Uniting Neighbors Committee, W-B Maintenance Office and W-B Management Office.



Wait List *(Continued from page 5)*

public housing, the BHA expects to have a number of wheelchair accessible apartments of varied bedroom sizes becoming available in the near future. The BHA will also continue to accept applications from current residents who need emergency transfers.

In addition, the BHA will continue to accept Priority 1 applications for the Project Based and Moderate Rehabilitation Voucher programs. Many of the developments subsidized by the Project Based and Moderate Rehabilitation programs serve special populations (e.g. persons with disabilities, persons needing assisted living, or persons who are homeless and are mentally ill). Because of the limited number of persons on the Authority's Section 8 waiting list who qualify for these developments, it is necessary that the BHA continue to accept these applications.

The Boston Housing Authority is in the process of creating more than 300 new wheelchair accessible apartments in public housing developments throughout the city. Therefore, the BHA expects to have such apartments available in the future and invites anyone who is looking for a wheelchair apartment to apply at the Housing Service Center at 56 Chauncy Street in downtown Boston. Below are some photos of new wheelchair accessible units at the Cathedral Development in the South End. For more information, please call 617-988-4200 or visit us on the web at www.bostonhousing.org.



Volunteer and Fulfill Community Service Requirement

Generations Incorporated is seeking older adult volunteers to be part of the national Experience Corps organization, as reading coaches, classroom mentors, lunchtime mentors, and more. Volunteers work with young children in the first through third grade in the Boston Schools and Boys & Girls Clubs in Dorchester, Roxbury, and South Boston. Training is provided, so no prior teaching experience is needed.

Volunteers can serve as little as 2 hours/week, or for those capable of committing to 12 to 15 hours/week, a modest monthly stipend is provided. Vol-

unteers can also serve in other ways, as assistant program coordinators, or in community outreach to recruit other older volunteers. There are liberal time-off policies for those receiving a stipend and social events for all our volunteers. Trainings are held frequently, please call for times.

Visit www.generationsinc.org, call the Volunteer Recruitment Office at (617) 778-0553 or email volunteerinfo@generationsinc.org and learn for yourself about the wonderful opportunities and the difference you can make as a mentor.

BHA Today is a Boston Housing Authority publication and a BHA 2001 initiative.

Editor: *Lydia Agro* • Stories & Layout: *Jim Bentubo* • Printing: *Bostonian Press*

Comments and story ideas are welcome.

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Visit the BHA on the web at www.bostonhousing.org.

