

### ROLLINS SQUARE

Visitors to Rollins Square in Boston's thriving South End are struck by the development's impressive design. Attractive balconies jut out from many units. Garden spaces are planted with flowers and greenery. An underground garage provides plenty of spaces for residents and visitors to park. A bevy of retail shops serves as a hub of activity.

Visitors are also struck by the story behind the complex.

Rollins Square is the product of a marriage between social justice and sound commerce. The Planning Office for Urban Affairs (POUA), a nonprofit developer of affordable homes affiliated with the Archdiocese of Boston, developed the 184-unit, mixed-income complex using working capital made available through an unusual partnership with FleetBoston Financial. POUA also partnered with the City of Boston, which contributed land for the affordable homes and deferred payment on other property acquisition costs.

The seeds for this unique partnership were planted in April 2001, when POUA released a study funded by a \$50,000 grant from FleetBoston Financial on

Boston's housing market. The study reported a disturbing fact: The greater Boston area would need an additional 36,000 homes, including 15,000 affordable units, to meet residents' housing needs over the next five years.

In a unique call to action, FleetBoston offered POUA \$1 million in working capital for the development of affordable

homes and challenged POUA and the business community to match the funds.

The offer proved too good to turn down: POUA agreed to develop 2,000 units in partnership with FleetBoston over seven years. As part of this arrangement, POUA provides access to scarce surplus property formerly owned by the Archdiocese and develops the housing. In turn, FleetBoston provides up to \$2 million in working capital as a forgivable loan, \$1 million of which has also been matched by State Street Corporation. For every affordable unit POUA develops, FleetBoston forgives a small fraction of the loan. Since the announcement, the City of Boston, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the AFL-CIO, and many other organizations have provided financing for six POUA housing developments (five of which are on former church property), totaling 656 homes.

Rollins Square, the first development completed as part of the POUA-FleetBoston partnership, is a model of mixed-income housing. Located near downtown Boston, the 400,000-square-foot facility features eight buildings on approximately two acres. The complex reserves 37 homes for formerly homeless people and 73 homes for moderate-income, first-time home buyers. Rollins Square also has 74 high-end units that sell for up to \$750,000 each.

It's a recipe that works. The mix of residents—families getting back on their feet; service workers, nurses, and teachers working hard to get ahead; and dual-earner couples who can afford market-rate homes—create a diverse, vibrant community that captures the spirit of Boston's South End.

