

Riley House construction to commence next week

Archbishop to attend ground breaking for senior housing development

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Archbishop Sean O'Malley and Mayor Thomas Menino will be on hand on Maple Street this

Tuesday at 11 a.m., for a ground breaking ceremony marking the start of construction of the Riley House, a 40-unit affordable elderly housing complex on the site of the former Most Precious

Blood church convent.

Worksite preparations for the \$6.7 million project, which is being overseen by the Archdiocesan Planning Office for Urban Affairs, have already begun. Construction will begin in earnest by the first of June, according to David Armitage, director of design and construction at the planning office.

Needy elderly residents could be moving into the facility as early as June of 2005, Armitage said.

The project is being financed through five different sources, including the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Boston's Department of Neighborhood Development, the state's Department of Housing and Community Development, the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, and the Federal Home Loan Bank, through Hyde Park Cooperative Bank.

Access to the new units, Armitage explained, would be granted via a lottery system,

with a priority for residents of the city of Boston.

Asked if Most Precious Blood parishioners, or Hyde Park residents, would be given preference, Armitage cited fair housing laws that require the development to be open and available to people throughout the city. He does expect Hyde Park residents to have a good shot at living in the Riley House.

"People want to live where they are used to living, so the majority of applicants are from the community," Armitage said. "The odds you would get in [as a local resident] are fairly high."

He added that the rental opportunity would be announced in numerous community newspapers. Maloney Properties, an affordable housing specialist founded by current BRA director Mark Maloney, will be the property manager.

The outside façade of the former convent, facing Maple Street, will remain intact, but the interior will be gutted.

The new building will not be

owned by the archdiocese, as the land has been sold by the parish to a specially-created non-profit – the Riley House Not For Profit Housing Corporation – whose sole purpose will be to manage and maintain the facility.

"Any time we can help provide affordable opportunities, we're thrilled," said Beth Bresnahan, spokeswoman for the state's Department of Housing and Community Development, which contributed roughly \$850,000 to the project. "We're in a dire situation for housing across the board, and the bottom line is we need to increase the supply of housing across the state."

According to Armitage, Father Peter Nolan, pastor at Most Precious Blood church, initiated the redevelopment of the former convent by approaching the planning office with the idea.

Nolan was out of town and unavailable to comment on the apparent fulfillment of his vision.