

# **Dorchester Reporter**

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## An old eyesore gives way to homes, peace garden at Morton Station Village

By Seth Daniel, News Editor  
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*Cardinal Sean O'Malley greeted Kim and Ron Odom, parents of the late Steven Odom, with a bouquet at last Friday's dedication of Morton Station Village. Seth Daniel photo*

For more than two decades, it was a symbol of decay and disinvestment – a once-bustling, but now-abandoned Boston Police station house left to rot when officers moved to new quarters a few blocks away in 1988.

Last Friday, as elected officials and dignitaries from across the city gathered for a ribbon-cutting of a new housing complex dubbed Morton Station Village, the celebration took on special meaning for those who could recall the quarter century of squalor that has now been replaced with a vibrant collection of homes across the street from a conveniently located commuter rail station.

The new, 40-unit building, which includes a mix of rental and homeownership units, is the result of a joint venture between the Archdiocese of Boston's Planning Office for Urban Affairs, and the non-profit developer Caribbean Integration Community Development (CICD), led by Donald Alexis.

In remarks made before a crowd of about 50 people on Friday, Alexis said it was a challenging project both in terms of getting consensus, and in building it on a site that includes a very steep ledge next to the commuter rail right-of-way.

"It was just 16 months ago that we were on this construction site breaking ground and many people couldn't picture what this would look like," said Alexis. "I got many questions that day. I'm hoping today that the big smiles I see say it all."

Cardinal Sean O'Malley was also present — as he was 16 months ago at the groundbreaking. He called the new homes part of a solution to a crisis in Boston — particularly the displacement of long-time residents from neighborhoods like Mattapan. Morton Village marks the second completed project in Mattapan by the Archdiocese of Boston and CICD, which built the Cote Village complex on Cummins Highway that opened in 2022 on what had been an abandoned car dealership.



*Rev. Jack  
Abern, state  
Rep. Russell  
Holmes,  
Cardinal  
Sean  
O'Malley,  
state Rep.  
Brandy  
Fluker  
Oakley, Bill  
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the Planning  
Office for  
Urban  
Affairs, state  
Sen. Liz  
Miranda,  
CICD  
Donald  
Alexis, and*

*Miceal Chamberlain of Bank of America. Seth Daniel photos*

*An MBTA Commuter Rail train cruises by Morton Station Village on its way to the adjacent train station. The new building is steps from the Fairmount Commuter Rail line.*

"Morton Station Village is really a manifestation of our understanding of the dignity of every human person," O'Malley said. "We hope to be able to provide future residences...here in Mattapan. Boston's housing crisis is more



than an economic challenge. It's a crisis of equity and human rights. People want to stay in their communities where they've lived and that ability to stay is threatened."

State Rep. Russell Holmes, who has

been involved in finding a replacement use for the old police station throughout his career, noted it took longer than he had hoped.

"On a day like today, we look at this building and wonder who could ever be against this," said. "The answer is almost everybody; almost everybody was against this. This finished building represents a lot of tough decisions. The challenge is change. Everyone wants things to get better, but no one wants things to change...We saw with this we are a community willing to continue having these hard conversations."

Redefining Our Community (ROC), a neighborhood association that includes many nearby neighbors, will manage an on-site job training and wellness center in the building to be run by neighbor Juwan Skeens. There are also plans to carve out space for a "serenity garden" dedicated in memory of Steven Odom, a 13-year-old boy who was murdered nearby in 2007.

*The former Boston Police stationhouse on the same Morton Street site as seen in 2011 when it remained a crumbling eyesore. Reporter file photo*

*The open space at the back of Morton Station Village will become the Steven Odom Serenity Garden, with access to the public.*

Prior to the ribbon cutting, Cardinal O'Malley and others paused to remember Odom, and to recognize his parents, Ron and Kim Odom, for their advocacy of the project. O'Malley presented Kim Odom with a bouquet of flowers.

Councillor Brian Worrell praised ROC for helping to refine the project along the way. "You helped build a model for the nation in that homeownership and rental housing can co-exist in the same building and we need more of



that in the city,” he said. “This project will be able to produce more generational wealth for the people today that buy these homes and hand them down to the next generation.”



Other speakers at the ribbon cutting included state Sen. Liz Miranda, state Rep. Brandy Fluker Oakley, Boston’s Housing Chief Sheila Dillon, Mass Housing’s Mark Teden, Bank of America’s Mical Chamberlain, and State Housing

Secretary Edward Augustus.

The four-story building contains 28 units of affordable housing from 30 to 100 percent of AMI, and 12 affordable homeownership units. The application deadline for the complex’s lottery concluded last month, with more than

4,000 applications submitted, though applications to be placed on the waitlist are still being accepted.

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