

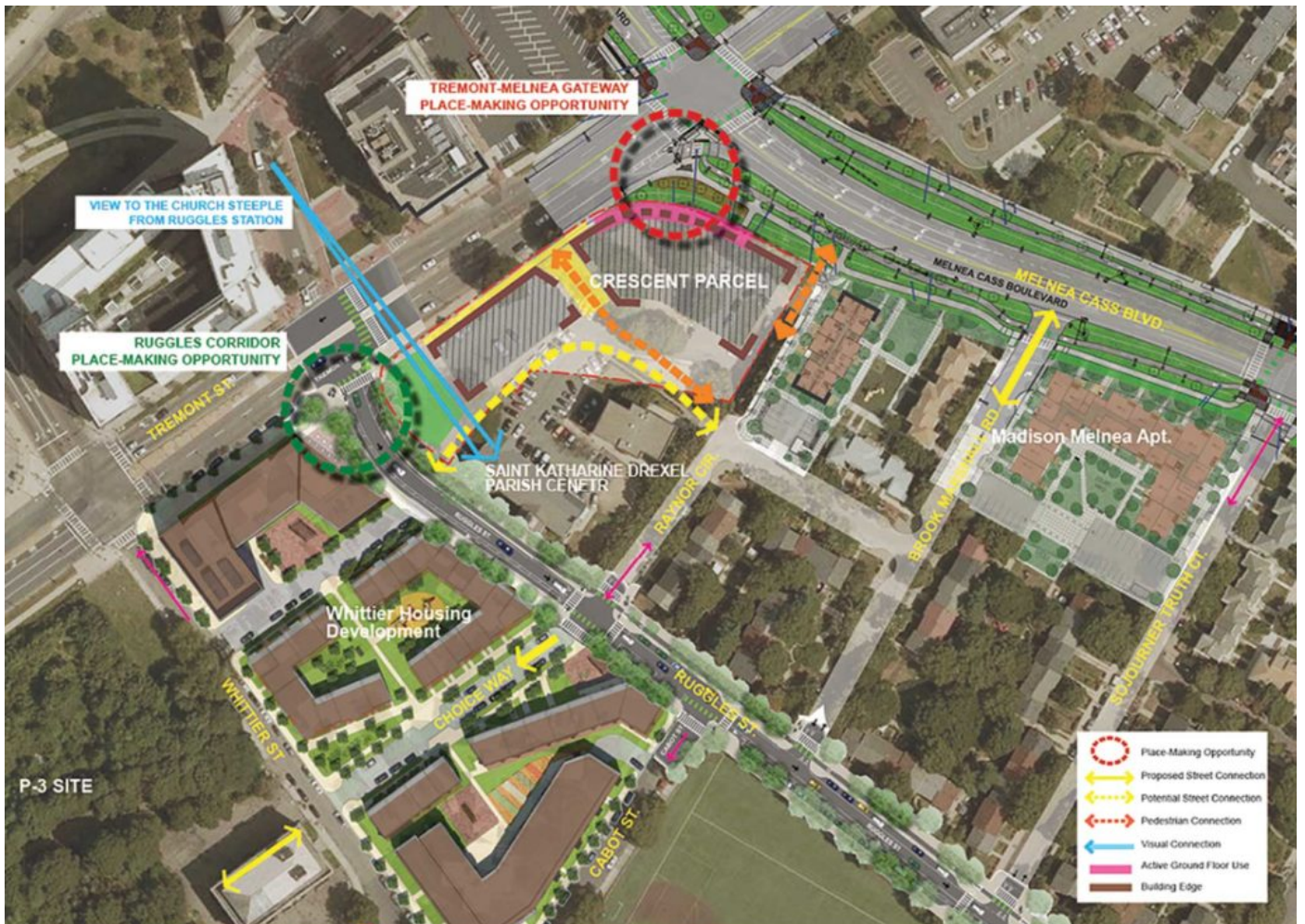
LOCAL NEWS

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# Developer tapped for Crescent parcel

## Team will construct affordable housing on long-vacant land

Anna Lamb



Crescent parcel

Roxbury's long-vacant 'Crescent Parcel' is set to be transformed with new housing units, green space and new church parish space as the city's development agency moves forward with one of several plans proposed this past spring.

The land, located at 1125 Tremont St., has around 73,000 square feet of undeveloped space left empty after unrealized plans for the extension of interstate 95 and an inner belt highway razed parts of the neighborhood in the 1960s. The parcel is now jointly owned by the Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA), the City of Boston and the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT).

In May 2021, the BPDA heard proposals from several developers interested in bringing new life to the more than 1.5-acre property. All included plans for affordable housing units and spaces aimed at achieving strategic goals included in PLAN: Nubian Square, an ongoing effort to develop neglected land in Roxbury.

Ultimately, the BPDA Board voted earlier this month to tentatively designate Drexel Village, LLC, a joint venture between the Planning Office of Urban Affairs (POUA) branch of the Archdiocese of Boston, and architect Jonathan Garland. The plan includes a two-building complex — the first with 217 residential units, at least 150 of which will be income-restricted, and the second with 31,000 square feet of community space for social service agencies and parish space for Roxbury-based St. Katharine Drexel Church. The plan also includes 11 homeownership units and green space aimed at protecting and increasing native tree growth.

Back in May, Garland told the Banner that the setup of the project is in a unique position to build and strengthen the local community.

"Some of those folks that use that facility may in fact live in the building. So it really is creating a family-focused, community-focused development," he said. The community space facility is set to house early childhood, adult education and other services already provided by St. Katharine's.

Garland's company, J. Garland Enterprises, is a certified minority-owned business and has worked with POUA previously on revitalizing religious and community spaces.

The initial request for proposals (RFP) for Crescent Parcel, released in January 2021, called for projects to "support local, small, and disadvantaged businesses, and create opportunities for people of color and women," according to the BPDA. It also required a minimum of two-thirds of residential units to be targeted to households with a range of incomes from 60% to 100% of Area Median Income (AMI), with the average not to exceed 80% of AMI.

"We are committed to facilitating a future for Crescent Parcel that supports the surrounding community, creating affordable housing and supporting local small businesses," said BPDA Director Brian Golden in a statement announcing the venture. "We look forward to working with the development team to bring life to the community's vision."

Vacant for almost 60 years, the Crescent Parcel has presented challenges in getting development off the ground. According to BPDA Senior Real Estate Officer Morgan McDaniel, the Crescent Parcel as it is today is actually made up of eight smaller parcels — two owned by the BPDA, three owned by MassDOT and three owned by the City of Boston. She said consolidating those pieces of land legally and coordinating with the different parties has been difficult.

"But all of the parties are on board with this vision," McDaniel said, "for putting this land that was originally taken and cleared to build a highway that was stopped by the members of this community, back into use by the community that suffered through that displacement."

Prior to final designation to the selected proponent, the BPDA will acquire rights to the parcels owned by the city and MassDOT.

To make their selection, BPDA staff consulted throughout the review process with the Roxbury Strategic Master Plan Oversight Committee (RSMPOC) — a group of 15 community representatives who volunteer to oversee projects

that fall under the 2004 Roxbury Strategic Master Plan, and in turn collaborate on much of the PLAN: Nubian Square process.

Norman Stembridge, a member of RSMPOC, said that after many months of deliberation, the group is happy with its final decision.

“As far as I know, people see it as a positive step forward,” he said. “They had the most amount of housing. They had the most amount of affordable housing at various income levels, and most importantly ... affordable homeownership.”

Stembridge also said he believes that the Drexel Village developers will be good partners in the long run.

“We grill these people as best we can. There’s not going to be any flipping here,” he said.

**affordable housing, BPDA, Crescent Parcel**