

# Dorchester Reporter

## Work to begin on St. Kevin's project

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Mayor Thomas Menino and officials from the Boston Archdiocese on Monday dug into the Columbia Road courtyard of the former St. Kevin's campus, breaking ground on a project aimed at providing 80 units of affordable housing in Uphams Corner.

The project will include two new buildings on the site, which occupies 2.63 acres bounded by Davern Ave., Bird Street, Columbia Rd., and Virginia St. The former school building located at 530 Columbia Rd. will be demolished, and a five-story building, with 47 units, will go up. The building will also have 1,000 square feet of community space, instead of a replacement for the Uphams Corner Branch Library, which city and project officials had initially considered.

The former convent and office building at 35 Bird St. will also be demolished, and will have 12 units. The third and last building on the campus, at 516 Columbia Rd., will remain, rehabbed into 21 apartment units. The building will also receive a third story.

Once a school, the campus was closed in 2008, after the creation of a Pope John Paul II Academy system. Three Archdiocesan groups collaborated on the bid to turn the property into housing, which was announced in 2010: The Planning Office of Urban Affairs, Inc., which handles development projects; St. Mary's Center for Women & Children, which will provide some of the services to people who will live in the units; and the Holy Family Parish, which used to own the property.

Cardinal Sean O'Malley said across the state, families have faced foreclosure and unaffordable rents while on fixed incomes. "The need for this housing is very great," he said.

"We're turning these vacant buildings into quality living conditions," Menino said.

Aaron Gornstein, Gov. Deval Patrick's housing undersecretary cited the project as an example of combating the homelessness crisis, given its focus on permanent housing, coupled with social services. "This is the solution," he said. In October, at a forum in Boston, Gornstein said there had been a "huge increase in homelessness in Massachusetts among families," according to the State House News Service. The number of families living in motels hit 2,038 in November, an increase from 1,230 in April, the news service reported.

The St. Kevin's development is being funded through federal and state housing tax credits, the city's Department of Neighborhood Development, the Massachusetts Housing Partnership Fund, and a construction loan and equity financing from the Bank of America, among others. In early 2013,

project officials said they would be receiving \$2.7 million in state Department of Housing and Community Development subsidies, along with \$768,950 in federal low income housing tax credits.

The project initially struggled to gain traction in funding. But the project leaders were persistent. “Stubborn, in a good way,” was how Judy Jacobson, deputy director of the Massachusetts Housing Partnership, put it.

The project is expected to provide 200 construction jobs, with construction slated to start in Feb. 2014. Construction is scheduled to be complete in Jul 2015.