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New affordable housing development to offer dozens of units for homeless Bostonians

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Karen LaFrazia, St. Francis House CEO, speaks during the groundbreaking ceremony on Tuesday, Sept. 24, 2024.

Nancy Gonzales / GBH News



By **Saraya Wintersmith**

September 24, 2024

Officials with the nonprofit day shelter St. Francis House and the Planning Office for Urban Affairs — the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston’s nonprofit housing developer — broke ground Tuesday on a 19-story affordable housing development. The downtown Boston complex will include 126 units, 70 of them reserved for people transitioning out of homelessness.

“Amidst all the luxury housing being built in downtown Boston, they too can find an affordable home,” said Karen LaFrazia, St. Francis House CEO.

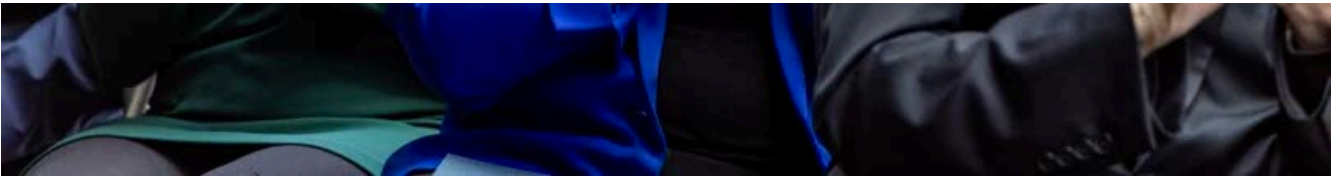
The development, which will cost about \$675,000 per unit to build, will bring together a mix of incomes and backgrounds, LaFrazia said at the groundbreaking ceremony.

“We’re going to ensure that our neighborhood is rich with diversity and welcoming to all,” she said.

The development comes as Massachusetts copes with an affordable housing crunch and a steady stream of outmigration. An influx of international migrants has also fueled the state’s struggle to house its growing population. The development comes, more locally, as Boston deals with a **swelling homelessness problem** that has spilled over into public spots near Downtown Crossing as many struggle to cope with renewed prohibition on tent encampments on public streets.



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Lt. Gov. Kim Driscoll claps while listening to remarks at the groundbreaking ceremony for an affordable housing development in Downtown Crossing on Tuesday, Sept. 24, 2024.

Nancy Gonzales / GBH News

William Grogan, president of the Archdiocese's Planning Office for Urban Affairs, noted these challenges and said the building will arrive at a critical period amid high housing costs and zoning restrictions.

"Facing this crisis, 41 La Grange St. [the development] provides hope ... and it's a type of an example of housing that must be built: a vibrant residential community to meet the needs of a variety of people, including those who need supportive services," Grogan said.

Officials said they expect to be back to open the building for operation with a ribbon-cutting by 2026.

St. Francis House, founded in 1984, is the state's largest operator of daytime shelter for people experiencing homelessness and poverty.



Saraya Wintersmith X

Saraya Wintersmith covers Boston City Hall for GBH News and is the host of the "What Is Owed?" podcast.

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