

Nonprofits to turn Fenway rooming house into affordable housing



The complex is located at 20 Charlesgate West. GOOGLE EARTH

By **Greg Ryan** – Senior Reporter, Boston Business Journal, Mar 24, 2023

A pair of affordable-housing nonprofits have signed a preliminary agreement to buy a Fenway rooming house and turn it into 100% income-restricted housing.

Fenway Community Development Corp. and the Planning Office for Urban Affairs, a nonprofit affiliated with the Archdiocese of Boston, revealed the agreement for Our Lady's Guild House shortly after the state attorney general's office announced a settlement with the complex's owners and managers over age and disability discrimination claims.

Our Lady's Guild House, a 140-unit building located at 20 Charlesgate West, has been in operation since the 1940s, when the Archdiocese bought it to provide inexpensive housing for women in the city. In recent years, management at the building has been renting more rooms to college students. Some longer-term residents filed legal claims after the building's management sought to evict them. An investigation by the attorney general's office found that elderly long-term residents had been targeted for eviction.

Under the settlement, the building's owner, Our Lady's Guild House Inc., and its manager, MRR Management, will pay \$115,000 in penalties, drop eviction claims against the tenants and put restrictions into place to enable new owners to operate the building as affordable housing.

Richard Giordano, Fenway CDC's director of policy and community planning, called the preliminary agreement a "monumental" step in what he described as a "years-long" process. The two nonprofits have been interested in buying the property but were waiting for the AG's office to wrap up its investigation.

There is still likely at least six months of work before the parties sign a purchase-and-sale agreement, according to Giordano. He declined to share an acquisition price. The nonprofits must still figure out financing and renovations, among other steps, he said. However, he expressed excitement about turning such a large property into permanently affordable housing with support from the Mayor's Office of Housing.

"Right now, unfortunately, it's become a de facto dormitory," Giordano said. "It's certainly going to be affordable housing and it certainly won't be a dorm, de facto or otherwise."