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REAL ESTATE

Worcester celebrates state's largest office-to-housing conversion



Dave Greaney, founder and CEO of Boston-based real estate firm Synergy,, speaks at a ribbon-cutting ceremony for Altitude Worcester, 24 Elm St. – the largest office-to-residential conversion in Massachusetts - and 22 Elm St. on Thursday. Photo courtesy Synergy

BY **PAULA OWEN**

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Surrounded by high-end furnishings, sculptures and art, a comfortable conference area with a record player and warm color scheme, Massachusetts Housing Secretary Juana B. Matias said she felt like she was standing in the lobby of a high-end Washington, D.C. hotel.

But Matias was speaking in the lobby of Altitude Worcester in the heart of the city – the largest office-to-residential conversion in Massachusetts – renovated from the staid offices of Fallon Health's former headquarters into welcoming housing. The once-vacant 11-story former office building at 24 Elm St. was swiftly transformed into 198 market-rate residential apartments by Synergy to help alleviate the downtown housing shortage.

Juana B. Matias, secretary of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities, speaks at a ribbon-cutting ceremony for Altitude Worcester, 24 Elm St. – the largest office-to-residential conversion in Massachusetts – and 22 Elm St. on Thursday. Photo I Paula J. Owen

Dave Greaney, founder and CEO of Boston-based real estate firm Synergy, City Manager Eric D. Batista, and state and city officials attended the Thursday morning ribbon-cutting to mark the completion of Altitude Worcester and the conversion of the adjacent 22 Elm St. building into 22 income-restricted condominiums.

The $14 million condominium project, formerly known as Two Chestnut Place, has been rebranded as 22 Elm. The affordable homeownership project is restricted to residents making 80% of the area median income with assets up to $155,000. Synergy co-developed the four-story building with the Planning Office for Urban Affairs, a nonprofit housing developer.

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Greeney said 16 condominiums have already sold or are in the process of being sold. He said the condos are being sold at a fraction of what it cost to renovate them utilizing funding from local, state and nonprofit sources including the MassHousing CommonWealth Builder program; City of Worcester Affordable Housing Trust Funds; private foundations and Synergy, which provided an interest-free loan to the project during construction. Prices range from $209,300 to $261,650.

The lobby at Altitude Worcester, 24 Elm St. – the largest office-to-residential conversion in Massachusetts – on Thursday. Photo courtesy Synergy

"Altitude Worcester set out to prove that large-scale office-to-residential conversion could work in Massachusetts and to do it with real, lasting affordability," Greaney said. "Today, residents are calling 24 and 22 Elm home and downtown Worcester has new neighbors supporting its restaurants and businesses every day.

"Conversions are one of the fastest tools we have to add housing and this project shows what's possible when the public and private sectors pull in the same direction."

'We're proud of that.'

"They (Synergy) saw the need for residential housing and the potential for this space and helped fill that need," Batista said.

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City Manager Eric D. Batista, speaks at a ribbon-cutting ceremony for Altitude Worcester, 24 Elm St. – the largest office-to-residential conversion in Massachusetts – and 22 Elm St. on Thursday. Photo I Paula J. Owen

As demand for office space has decreased in Worcester and across the state following the pandemic, the demand for housing has continued to rise significantly, Batista said. Because of Synergy's efforts, he said, the project became the largest office-to-residential conversion in state history.

“We’re proud of that. We’re proud of being the first and largest,” he said.



A bedroom in a model unit at Altitude Worcester, 24 Elm St. Photo I Paula J. Owen

The 198 market-rate units in the former office tower include 74 studios, 84 one-bedroom units and 40 two-bedroom apartments with various layout options and amenities in the building. The complex features a rooftop deck, swimming pool, fitness center and pet spa with an eye toward attracting working-class professionals from area businesses, especially those looking for luxury amenities.

The conversion project was swiftly completed in 16 months. Synergy started work on 24 Elm St. in 2025 after Fallon vacated the building in March of that year when its lease expired and moved to its new headquarters at One Mercantile. By the end of summer 2026, tenants began moving into Altitude Worcester.

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The kitchen and living area in a model unit at Altitude Worcester, 24 Elm St. Photo I Paula J. Owen

Greaney emphasized that the timeline for completing the $73 million renovation was notably aggressive and told WBJ that the project was completed on budget. He said a comparable ground-up development typically takes at least two years.

The first residents moved into condos earlier in October.

‘Something bigger’

“I had the opportunity to tour these buildings earlier this year and walk through some of the completed apartments,” Matias said. “Seeing that transformation firsthand, from old office space to new homes, was really something special.

“These projects are big and complicated, but when we come together to make them happen, they yield incredible results.”

The condominiums at 22 Elm St. offer first-time homebuyers the opportunity to own a home they can afford, build equity and create financial security for themselves and their families, she said.



Altitude Worcester, 24. Elm St. Photo courtesy Synergy

“But these developments also represent something bigger for Worcester,” she added. “Instead of vacant office space, we’re going to have hundreds of people living downtown, walking to restaurants, shopping at local businesses and bringing new energy to these streets.

“And with Union Station just a short walk away, residents will have access to public transportation and commuter rail connections to jobs and opportunities across the region.”

The Commercial Conversion Tax Credit Initiative helped make Altitude Worcester possible, she said, and has supported more than 1,000 new rental homes so far, and MassHousing’s CommonWealth Builder program is “supporting affordable homeownership next door.”

Officials said both projects created lasting affordable homeownership opportunities in downtown Worcester for the first time in more than 30 years.

Funding

Synergy, which also owns The Glass Tower at 446 Main St., overcame funding challenges for its adaptive reuse of the former Fallon Health headquarters, receiving extensive local and state support for the project from both public and private entities. The Rhode Island-based Washington Trust provided $47.57 million in financing and MassDevelopment provided a $3.6-million Housing Development Incentive Program tax credit bridge loan.

Other public incentives included a $4-million HDIP award and a $3.6-million Commercial Conversion Tax Credit from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities. The City of Worcester provided a 15-year tax increment exemption.

Rents range from $1,895 a month for certain studios to $4,100 for certain two-bedroom apartments, according to the leasing website. Layout sizes vary from 404 square feet to 1,211 square feet.