

Old Haverhill school becomes homes

By Mike LaBella mlabela@eagletribune.com | Posted: Tuesday, November 3, 2015 5:55 am

HAVERTHILL — People looking for affordable housing in Haverhill have in recent years turned to the Boston Catholic Archdiocese.

In 2010, the Archdiocese converted the old Hayes factory building on Granite Street into 57 one-and two-bedroom apartments.

The Archdiocese is creating even more housing in the city as a partner in the Harbor Place development on Merrimack Street, which will eventually include 80 residential units, plus a UMass Lowell satellite campus.

On Monday, Cardinal Sean O'Malley was in Haverhill to bless the latest housing accomplishment of the Archdiocese. It's called The Apartments at 165 Winter St. — an old school converted to housing.

O'Malley participated in a ribbon cutting ceremony for the building and toured the apartments. It was only his second visit to the city since 2010, when he was here to bless the Hayes at Railroad Square building.

O'Malley, along with Mayor James Fiorentini and Chrystal Kornegay, state undersecretary for housing and community development, joined in celebrating the redevelopment of the former Winter Street School.

Under a tent set up in a parking lot next to the building, O'Malley addressed a large crowd, saying his message was a simple one — to "care for each other" and "serve one another."

"The Holy Father and all his teaching reminds us we have a responsibility to care for one another," O'Malley said before blessing the new apartment building.

Lisa Alberghini, president of the Archdiocese's Planning Office for Urban Affairs, said the former public school was transformed into 12 units of affordable housing, three of them for extremely low-income households and the rest for middle-income people.

The one- and two-bedroom apartments were offered to the public through a lottery this summer.



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Cardinal Sean O'Malley talks with Nicole Carter during a tour of her apartment at the old Winter Street School.

Alberghini said her office had to stop accepting applications after receiving more than 400 of them.

Officials with her office said the overwhelming majority of those applications were for the units set aside for households earning less than 30 percent of the area's median income. After the lottery, some of the apartments set aside for households earning less than 60 percent of the area median income remained available. Those apartments were filled after additional marketing, including advertising on Craigslist.

Alberghini said that as a school, the building served the community and that as an apartment building, it will continue to do that and also support the growth of the the downtown. The building is next to St. James Church and two blocks north of downtown.

Alberghini joked that many of the building's apartments still have the blackboards used years ago by teachers and students at the old Winter Street School.

"You can write your grocery list where kids used to do their math," she said.

Emotional mom gives thanks

Nicole Carter, 31, who recently moved into one of the new apartments with her new husband and her one-year-old daughter, addressed the crowd. She said she was living in a nearby Emmaus shelter apartment when she saw construction happening at the former Winter Street School building.

"My daughter Adrianna was two days old when we moved into the shelter," said Carter, who added that when she married her husband, Gregory, in the spring, he was not allowed to stay with her in the shelter because he works in Boston at night and the shelter has curfews.

In a trembling voice, Carter thanked O'Malley and others who made it possible for her family to obtain an affordable apartment.

"Thank you and God bless," she said.

The old elementary school was built after the Civil War and thousands of Haverhill residents attended school there until it closed in the mid-1970s.

More recently, the city leased the building for 32 years to Career Resources Corporation, which finds work for disabled people. When Career Resources moved to its new home in Ward Hill, the city was left with an aging, blighted vacant property, city officials said.

Last December, the Planning Office for Urban Affairs bought the building from the city for \$303,250.

Kornegay told the crowd that the governor's administration is committed to Haverhill, which she called "a place that is welcoming to all folks."

Kornegay noted the importance of building affordable housing at a time when housing prices

continue to rise."There are a lot of folks who work every day who are being squeezed out of the market," Kornegay said.

Building nominated for historic register

Fiorentini talked about "compassion" for those in need of a home and thanked O'Malley for his leadership in creating affordable housing.

Fiorentini said it took a "tremendous team" to make the project happen, noting the support of the City Council. Several councilors attended Monday's ceremony.

Renovations that spanned eight months took the building's original Italianate style architecture into account, which allowed the Planning Office to submit an application to the National Park Service for the building to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places because it educated Haverhill's workforce. Officials said the nomination is pending, but they expect it will be approved.

The mayor said the Archdiocese development team received more than \$750,000 in Historic Tax Credits for the project from the state, in addition to money from the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, the federal Affordable Housing Trust Fund, the Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency and federal HOME funds through the North Shore HOME Consortium.

The project also received money from the state, the North Shore HOME Consortium, the city, Bank of America, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the Massachusetts Historical Commission and National Park Service.

Prior to putting the property on the market, the city used federal Community Development Block Grant money to clean the site.

Alberghini noted state Rep. Brian Dempsey's efforts that helped create the housing bonds that provided \$740,000 for 165 Winter St., and that he passed the State Historic Tax Credit that enabled the Planning Office for Urban Affairs to raise another \$700,000 in equity, totaling over \$1.4 million that Dempsey had a direct role in providing to the project.

"At the Hayes, his work resulted in even greater state funding and tax credit equity," Alberghini said about Dempsey, who was unable to attend Monday's ceremony.

She said Dempsey also helped the city obtain \$30 million in a variety of state money for the \$70 million Harbor Place project, which is a partnership between the nonprofit Greater Haverhill Foundation and the Planning Office for Urban Affairs.

"That's an incredible commitment to Harbor Place and to the city of Haverhill," Alberghini said about Dempsey.

The Apartments at 165 Winter St., are managed by Peabody Properties Inc. The one- and two-

bedroom apartments are equipped with major appliances. A laundry room is on the first floor and entry into the building is through a coded keypad. Security cameras are in place, as well.