

THE BAY STATE Banner

Former St. Kevin's Parish reborn as 80 units of affordable housing

[Jule Pattison-Gordon](#) | 11/4/2015, 11:38 a.m.



State Rep. Evandro Carvalho, POUA president Lisa Alberghini, State Sen. Linda Dorcena Forry, Mayor Martin Walsh and Archbishop of Boston Cardinal Sean Patrick O'Malley cut the ribbon on 80 new units of affordable housing. Banner photo

St. Kevin's Parish in Upham's Corner, Dorchester was a treasured part of the fabric of the community until it closed in 2008. The community celebrated its reincarnation last Thursday as a new facility that will house 80 families.

"Today we stand on sacred ground that again is being used for sacred purpose," said Right Reverend John J. Ahern, pastor of Holy Family Parish at the ceremony.

New buildings were constructed at 530 Columbia Road and 35 Bird Street. The building at 516 Columbia Road was adapted for residential use as well. Together, they provide 80 units of housing. Twenty units will be kept permanently affordable for families that were formerly homeless. The other 60 are designated for families making up to \$65,000 according to the Archdiocese Office of Risk Management's website.

The development also will include a community center with computers, a fitness center and support services provided by St. Mary's Center for Women and Children.

The site, known as Upham's Crossing, is across the street from the Strand Theater and located near UMass Boston, public transit and the Main Streets district.

"To me, [Upham's Crossing] is wonderful because it preserves the spirit of St. Kevin's and helps build community by giving people space to raise their families and stay in Dorchester," said Susan Terrey assistant undersecretary of the Department of Housing and Community Development, who grew up in the neighborhood.

The Planning Office of Urban Affairs developed the property and owns and operates it. Funding came from a combination of source: approximately \$6.7 million from the state, \$4.7 million from the city, \$19 million from Bank of America, and \$2.2 million from Massachusetts Housing Partnership. In addition, federal and state tax credits were provided and sold to Bank of America for over \$22 million in equity, according to David Aiken, project manager for POUA.

Homeless services

A full-time staff member from St. Mary's will be located there to work with each of the 20 families transitioning from homelessness, connecting them with services ranging from day care to nutritional advice, said Lisa Alberghini, president of POUA. St. Mary's also will provide on-site programs; ideas for these range from homework help to parenting aid sessions.

Harry Smith of Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative said such services are critical to ensure families moving in are able to remain stable and retain their housing. DSNi, along with other neighborhood associations, participated in the planning process, which also included discussions with abutters.

"For formerly homeless families it's key to not just leave them in their apartments, but also offer them the kinds of supports that would help them be successful," he said. "We don't want to have situation here lots of families move in and then move out after a year."

New beginning

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The children's choir from Saint John Paul II Catholic Academy and the Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta Youth Parish Choir sang before the ceremony.

Christine Wright moved into the housing with her eight-year-old daughter after staying at Casa Nueva Vida homeless shelter. At the ribbon cutting, she spoke tearfully of the trials that brought her here.

"We bounced around from house to house and couch to couch," Wright said. "I saw the ill effects on my daughter. I heard too many times her wish for her own bed, her own home."

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