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A ground breaking ceremony on Morton Street in Mattapan on Tuesday served as a backdrop for the Baker administration to announce a new round of funding for affordable housing starts — including several in Boston. Rowan Walrath photo

At a groundbreaking ceremony at Mattapan's Olmsted Green development site on Tuesday, Gov. Charlie Baker announced \$72 million in state funding for 25 housing projects across the Bay State, eight of them in Boston. In addition to Olmsted Green, another long-awaited project in Mattapan, the mixed-use development called Cote Village <sup>[2]</sup>, will now move forward.

Once completed, the Village will comprise 76 units of new housing on the site of a long-abandoned car dealership on Cummins Highway. The city-owned site was awarded to a development team that

includes Caribbean Integration Community Development and the Planning Office for Urban Affairs of the Archdiocese of Boston. The units will be divided into 56 affordable units, 8 units for formerly homeless individuals or families, and several units for persons with disabilities.

The funding, which comes from housing subsidies and state and federal tax credits, will be used in the creation, rehabilitation, and preservation of 1,970 housing units across the state, including 402 units for families that are very low-income or are making the transition from homelessness, according to a statement from the governor's office.

In addition to the Mattapan projects, the funding will benefit Burbank Gardens in the Fenway, General Heath Square Apartments in Jamaica Plain, Talbot Commons in Codman Square, the Clarion in Roxbury, Washington Westminster House in Roxbury, and Wilshire Westminster in Dorchester.

Baker was joined onstage on Tuesday by Mayor Martin Walsh, New Boston Fund director Jerry Rappaport, Lena Park CDC chair Rev. David Wright, Housing and Community Development Undersecretary Chrystal Kornegay, executive director of MassHousing Tim Sullivan, and state Sen. Sonia Chang-Diaz.

"It takes a village to build a village," Rappaport said in his opening remarks. He was the first of several speakers to credit teamwork for the development of affordable housing in Massachusetts. "The commonwealth and the city of Boston need more affordable housing,"

Rappaport added in noting that it bolsters the economy and directly helps homeless and low-income individuals and families.

Rev. Wright spoke for the Lena Park Community Development Corporation, thanking Mayor Walsh for "good leadership in the city."

The ceremony and announcement came a day after Baker and Walsh held a joint press conference on City Hall Plaza to condemn the violent actions of white nationalists in Charlottesville, Virginia, over the weekend. Wright said he was glad to have a mayor who denounced "racism, bigotry, and the KKK."

Walsh acknowledged that Monday had been difficult, but he said he was glad to get back to the everyday business of government. "It's great that we can turn the page to the next day," Walsh said. "Just worrying about building housing for folks."

The mayor went on to say, "You don't get this stuff done unless you work together," explicitly calling out state Sens. Linda Darcena Forry and Chang-Diaz for their collaboration.

For Walsh, an important aspect of affordable housing is cooperation with private developers who can create affordable units designed to be owned rather than rented, which Walsh said helps build equity in the long run.

In introducing the governor, Walsh called him his "partner in crime" not only at the previous day's joint conference but overall as they work together at advancing Boston and the Commonwealth in general. When he took the stage, Baker also thanked state legislators for their work on the housing front.

Several times during his remarks, Baker alluded to a housing bond bill his administration had filed on April 24, seeking \$1.287 billion in additional capital authorization for affordable and public housing. "I look forward to having that bill at my desk to sign by Labor Day," Baker said, clearly directing his comments at nearby lawmakers.

Baker said that the \$72 million in funding that he was announcing on Tuesday would lead to \$180 million in created equity. “It’s not just about the money, and it’s not just about the construction, but it is, as the mayor said, about the opportunity,” Baker said.

For Sen. Chang-Diaz, the juxtaposition of the racial violence in Charlottesville and the announcement of funding to house the Bay State’s vulnerable populations struck a chord. She said that over the last few days, she has had several phrases on her mind, including Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “hate cannot drive out hate” as well as the general idea of prayer. “When you pray, you have to move your feet,” she said, adding that the development of affordable housing across Massachusetts is an important step.

“I think this is what love incarnate looks like,” she said. “This is the antidote to what we saw in Charlottesville this weekend.”

After the formalities were over, Housing and Community Development undersecretary Chrystal Kornegay, speaking for Baker and Jay Ash, the state Secretary of Housing and Economic Development, said, “The amount of work that goes into this is not lost on the governor, the secretary, or me. Thank you.”

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