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B'nai B'rith Housing's 33Comm development wins ULI Award; Reception to be held at Newton City Hall on Dec. 6th

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B'nai B'rith Housing New England will honor the city on December 6th, for its part in the successful creation of the mixed-income 33Comm housing development project, which won the Urban Land Institute's Jack Kemp Workforce Housing Models of Excellence Award.

B'nai B'rith Housing will hold a reception at Newton City Hall at 7 p.m. on Dec. 6th to present the award to mayor Setti Warren, the Newton Board of Aldermen, and the Newton Community Preservation Committee.

Because of the success of the project, B'nai B'rith Housing is also returning to the city \$300,000 of the substantial affordable-housing assistance grant that was provided.

The event will begin with a community reception, and Warren and other officials will be part of a brief speaking program. Immediately following, B'nai B'rith Housing's executive director Susan Gittelman will present the award at the beginning of the evening's board meeting.

Residents, neighbors, and community and interfaith leaders who supported the project will join B'nai B'rith Housing New England and city officials at the celebration.

"We are proud of this accomplishment and are proud of the unique relationship that we built with the city and the community to achieve housing of this quality," Gittelman said.

The Urban Land Institute's Jack Kemp award recognizes developers who demonstrate leadership and creativity in providing expanded housing opportunities for working families in America. The award recognizes in particular projects that meet workforce housing needs in high-cost communities.

Developed by B'nai B'rith Housing, 33Comm was designed by Sheskey Architects of Quincy, and built by Pilot Construction of Portsmouth, N.H. The construction was managed by Kevin Maguire of Building Initiatives of Boston, and Michael Jacobs of MHJ Consulting in Brookline, supervised the project's financing. Engineering was done by Stantec.

"These developments are highly successful in making workforce housing a reality," said ULI Terwilliger Center Founder Ronald Terwilliger, chairman emeritus of Trammell Crow Residential in Dallas.

"They are making a positive contribution to their communities and are setting an example of what can be achieved with creativity and commitment."

The Jack Kemp award is named in memory of the former U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development and former U.S. Congressman from New York for whom housing was a priority.

The award is made based on achievements in affordability, proximity to centers of employment and transportation access, quality of design and site planning, involvement of public-private partnerships, use of regulatory reform to reduce costs, energy efficiency, sustainable construction and land use, innovative technologies, and whether the development model can be used again.

"Every day I see clearly Newton's pressing need for affordable housing," said Marina Breydo, a longtime resident and social worker. "I am so glad that B'nai B'rith Housing has worked successfully with our City officials to come up with a creative solution."

The successful 33Comm housing development, at 27-29 Commonwealth Ave. and 35 Commonwealth Ave. in Chestnut Hill, includes new construction of 44 one and two-bedroom condominium units with 88 on-site parking spaces. The project, also referred to as Covenant House on Commonwealth Avenue, included reuse of an existing building into 13 units.

All of the 33Comm units have been sold, in part under guidelines taking into consideration that the 2009 median income for the Boston metropolitan area was \$81,000 for a family of three. The 15 workforce units sold under those guidelines for in between \$138,000 to \$192,000. The Newton complex contains 42 market-rate units.

B'nai B'rith Housing's latest completed project, 33Comm is located near the MBTA's Green Line Boston College station and near commercial neighborhood establishments. It is adjacent to a 71-acre public golf course and is in easy walking distance of jogging trails around the reservoir near Cleveland Circle.

B'nai B'rith Housing acquired the site in February 2007, started construction in March of that year, and completed the project in June 2008.

The project received grant funding from local and state agencies, including \$1.2 million from Newton under the Community Preservation Act, to assist in achieving affordability and satisfy other municipal goals. Because of the remarkable success of the project, Newton was repaid \$300,000 of the funds it had made available.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts made a \$750,000 grant from the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. The Commonwealth was also repaid about \$300,000 when the project was done based on the project's success.

The development was permitted with enthusiastic support from Newton under the state's Chapter 40B law, which allows local zoning boards to approve affordable housing as long as at least 25 percent of the units remain affordable in the long term.

The 33Comm residence complex was the first affordable-housing development in the relatively affluent Chestnut Hill neighborhood of Newton.

B'nai B'rith Housing New England is a regional nonprofit organization whose mission is to create much needed affordable housing in the communities of Greater Boston, both rental and for ownership, for young families and older adults regardless of religion or background. B'nai B'rith Housing developed and operates the three Covenant House properties located in Brighton, which include in 242 units of affordable housing occupied by low-income elderly and disabled individuals. B'nai B'rith Housing is in the early stages of planning an affordable residential complex in Sudbury.

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