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MassHousing closes on \$1 million loan for Forest Park Apartments

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MassHousing has closed a \$1million loan for the Forest Park Apartments which has revived a vacant, crime-plagued property with more than 100 new apartments.

WinnDevelopment of Boston developed the Forest Park Apartments on the site of the former Longhill Gardens condominiums, a vacant, troubled property that for years was a constant source of frustration for city officials and neighborhood residents. Of the 109 apartments involved in the MassHousing financing, 88 are affordable and 21 are being rented at market rates. The new apartment community opened to rave reviews in July 2010 following a \$21 million renovation effort by WinnDevelopment. It is now fully occupied.

"The Forest Park Apartments are a sterling example of how quality affordable housing can revitalize a neighborhood for its residents," said MassHousing executive director Thomas Gleason. "The developer took vacant, blighted buildings that attracted criminal activity and transformed them into a vibrant apartment community that has drawn praise from city officials, residents and neighbors, who also played a major role in this success story."

Longhill Gardens was built in the 1950s as a 211-unit rental development and was converted to condominiums in the late 1980s before falling into disrepair and ultimately being left boarded up and vacant. In addition to reducing the unit density, WinnDevelopment completed a total renovation of the property, including new roofs, windows, kitchens, bathrooms, appliances and brick repointing. The development also received a new playground, parking lot, landscaping, fencing, lighting and security cameras.

"The word 'transformative' is used often, mostly in the hope of things to come," said Gilbert Winn of WinnDevelopment. "In this case it has become a reality. As a result of hard work and imagination, and thanks to our ongoing partnership with MassHousing, the Forest Park Apartments have successfully transformed both this property and the surrounding neighborhood."

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