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## **Project of the Month: Chestnut Hill Realty completes resident activity center at Norwood Gardens - Part of \$12 million improvement program**

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Chestnut Hill Realty (CHR) has completed a new Resident Activity Center at Norwood Gardens, a 344-unit apartment community. In addition to numerous resident amenities such as an Internet cafe and fitness center, the new clubhouse complex introduces an innovative leasing office that doubles as a model apartment.

The project, designed by Lowe Associates-Architects, continues both an ongoing program of improvements CHR has implemented at Norwood Gardens over the past five years, as well as the company's overall efforts to create vibrant, social communities at all of its properties in the Greater Boston area.

In a separate but related project, Chestnut Hill Realty also is putting the finishing touches on 12 new one-bedroom apartment homes at Norwood Gardens. Housed in a 2-story building and located just steps from the new Resident Activity Center, the units will be ready for occupancy in October. The new apartment homes feature open floor plans, central air conditioning and heating, walk-in closets, in-unit washer/dryers and deluxe kitchens.

On September 19, Chestnut Hill Realty held a grand opening celebration for the new 12,600 s/f clubhouse complex, which includes an Internet cafe, fitness center, resident lounge, conference room, movie theater and activity/function room. Also included in the project are several new outdoor resident amenities such a resort-style pool, tennis court and putting green.

Chestnut Hill Realty acted as its own general contractor in the construction of the Resident Activity Center and the new units, hiring, supervising and coordinating the outside sub-contractors.

In addition to the many resident amenities, the new Resident Activity Center houses CHR's leasing office. The first-floor office is directly below a second-floor, fully furnished model of a two-bedroom apartment home at Norwood Gardens.

"Of course, prospective residents ultimately will want to tour the actual units that will be their homes, but the model apartment at the new Norwood Gardens Resident Activity Center make that initial contact between residents and CHR staff more productive and interesting," said David Risko, vice president of property management at CHR. "The inclusion of a model apartment within the leasing office is a very unique set-up."

Risko said that CHR expects that the many new resident amenities will help diversify the resident demographic at the apartment community, which previously was skewed toward empty nesters and others nearing retirement age.

"We expect that the new Activity Center will help attract a whole new demographic to Norwood Gardens, especially couples in their late 20s and early 30s," said Risko. "We've seen a gradual transition to a younger demographic at the community already and anticipate that the Resident

Activity Center will deepen Norwood Garden's appeal to younger families." Risko said that CHR has been making continual improvements to the units at Norwood Gardens over the past five years, including kitchen and bathroom upgrades, and new appliances. Norwood Gardens was built in three stages on 27.3 acres. Construction began in 1973, a second phase was built in 1976 and a third in 1980. The development, purchased by CHR in 1983, has apartment homes ranging in size from 810 to 1,300 s/f with walk-in closets, eat-in kitchens and oversized living rooms.

"The new clubhouse building is just another step in that improvement process," Risko said. "We've done a lot of interior work, but the new clubhouse gives us a visual aid to help market these many improvements."

Risko said that the second floor resident function room, especially, stands out in the new facility. Featuring a kitchen and highly detailed millwork, the room leads to a second-floor balcony with views of the new pool and putting green, as well as the 600 acres of conservation land that borders the community. In addition to being available as a function room for private resident events, the CHR team plans to offer ongoing activities such as yoga and bridge tournaments for residents in the space.

A resident open house in July drew more than 100 people to the new Resident Activity Center, while an ice cream social in September drew about 50 attendees. In keeping with its mission to build strong communities with a rich social fabric, CHR staff will be offering numerous new events and programs at the new Activity Center, Risko said.

Reaction to the new Resident Activity Center has been overwhelmingly positive, according to Marc Levin, director of development at CHR. "Residents love it, and the management team is thrilled," said Levin.

"Chestnut Hill Realty's motto and mission is 'Managing people's homes with pride,'" said Edward Zuker, founder and chief executive officer of CHR.

"Adding to the richness of life at Norwood Gardens with this new Resident Activity Center is an endeavor of which everyone at our company is extremely proud."

Norwood Gardens project team:

Manager/Owner/Developer: Chestnut Hill Realty

Architect: Lowe Associates

Cabinets & Countertops: Metropolitan Cabinets & Countertops

Landscaping: GroundsKeeper, Inc.

Drywall and Framing: New Age Construction

Electric: Ben Steverman, Inc.

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