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The Community Builders celebrates grand opening of \$52 million 225 Centre development: joint venture between the Community Builders and Mitchell Properties

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The Community Builders, Inc. (TCB) celebrated the grand opening of 225 Centre, the first phase of the 14-building, transit-oriented \$250 million redevelopment of the Jackson Sq. community that will reconnect Jamaica Plain and Roxbury neighborhoods. The event also marked the start of construction by Urban Edge on the second phase of development, Jackson Commons.

Local and state officials were on hand to mark the occasion, including mayor Thomas Menino; Barbara Fields, regional administrator of HUD; Gregory Bialecki, state secretary of Housing and Economic Development; state representative Elizabeth Malia; and city councilors Tito Jackson and Matt O'Malley. Officials from the Mass. Housing Investment Corp., RBS Citizens and MassHousing also joined the program.

Almost 40 years ago, a failed highway expansion program disrupted the Jackson Sq. community by bulldozing homes and businesses, leaving much of the neighborhood vacant or underutilized for decades. With the hope of restoring Jackson Sq., several community groups, including the Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corp., Urban Edge and the Hyde Park Task Force came together in 1995 with a private developer to plan the comprehensive redevelopment of this area, which today is known as the Jackson Sq. Redevelopment Initiative.

"I am proud the city of Boston has invested more than \$7 million into the redevelopment of these once vacant and underutilized public and private parcels right here adjacent to the Jackson Sq. MBTA station," said mayor Thomas Menino. "Working together, we have begun the work of knitting back together these neighborhoods once torn apart by the threat of highway expansion."

225 Centre represents the latest example in the Boston market of a mixed-income, mixed-use, transit-oriented development. The completed project features 103 apartments, including 35 much-needed affordable units, as well as more than 16,000 s/f of commercial space and an underground parking garage with 86 spaces.

Located near the Jackson Sq. MBTA station, 225 Centre includes one-, two- and three-bedroom floor plans, with market rate rents ranging from \$1,700 to \$2,850. Amenities include central air conditioning, in-unit washer-dryer and climate-controlled bike storage. Of the 35 apartments designated as affordable, 25 are reserved for residents making up to 60% of area median income (AMI) and 10 are reserved for extremely low-income families. The four commercial spaces are now being shown to a variety of interested retailers.

TCB completed major landscape improvements to the outside of the 225 Centre property, including the planting of 44 new trees along Columbus Avenue and Centre Street and a landscaped plaza across from the neighboring MBTA station. Throughout construction, TCB invested \$8.5 million in women- and minority-owned business enterprises, utilizing 12 minority-owned firms and four

women-owned firms. Construction workers on the project included 279 people of color, 226 Boston residents and 43 women.

"We are thrilled to celebrate the first completed project at Jackson Square with our partners and the community," said Bart Mitchell, president and CEO of TCB. "225 Centre and the other buildings in the Jackson Sq. master plan provide mixed-income apartments and commercial space that will be instrumental to spur economic development and help reconnect the Jamaica Plain and Roxbury neighborhoods."

The 225 Centre project received tremendous support from the community, as well as city, state and local officials. The project financing included \$2.3 million in state-issued low-income housing tax credits, \$2 million in Department of Housing & Community Development (DHCD) program subsidies and \$503,988 in federal low-income housing tax credits.

225 Centre is joint venture between TCB and Mitchell Properties.

The grand opening also marked the beginning of the second phase of the Jackson Sq. initiative, Jackson Commons, which broke ground today. Developed by Urban Edge, Jackson Commons is a green, mixed-use, mixed-income, brownfield, transit-oriented project. The project will include the adaptive reuse and gut renovation of the existing 100-year-old, three-story Webb Building, as well as a newly-constructed four-story addition. Once complete, Jackson Commons will consist of 37 mixed-income rental apartments and approximately 13,000 s/f on the ground floor that will function as Urban Edge offices and a Neighborhood Learning Center. In addition, 2,000 s/f of space on the ground floor will be rentable to retailers or other nonprofit organizations.

"Our start on Jackson Commons, affordable housing on the site of the former headquarters of Urban Edge, signifies the realization of our vision and the longtime dreams of the community," said Kornegay, president and CEO of Urban Edge, the nonprofit community development corporation.

"The completion of 225 Centre across the street is proof for all that Jackson Sq. is here."

The Jackson Commons project received financing from the Mass. Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), the City of Boston, Boston Redevelopment Authority and the Mass. Historic Commission. Urban Edge was also awarded Brownsfield Redevelopment Funds from MassDevelopment that will go toward environmental remediation and infrastructure work.

Once construction is complete, the new Jackson Sq. will include more than 430 units of housing (half of which will be affordable), 60,000 s/f of retail space, 13,000 s/f of office space and 50,000 s/f of much-needed community facilities.

Additionally, the Master Plan was certified silver by the U.S. Green Building Council under the LEED for Neighborhood Development (LEED ND) pilot program. It is the first silver certified plan in the Northeastern U.S.

The Community Builders, Inc. (TCB) is the leading nonprofit developer of mixed-income housing in the United States. Our mission is to build and sustain strong communities where people of all incomes can achieve their full potential. We realize our mission by developing, financing and operating high-quality housing and implementing neighborhood self-help initiatives to drive economic opportunity for our residents. Since 1964, we have constructed or preserved over 320 affordable and mixed-income housing developments and secured over \$2.5 billion in project financing from public and private sources. Today, we own or manage more than 10,000 apartments in 14 states and Washington, D.C. We are headquartered in Boston with regional hubs in Chicago and Washington.

The mission of Urban Edge, now in its 40th year, is to help develop and sustain stable, healthy and

diverse communities. Urban Edge accomplishes this mission through the development and preservation of high quality, affordable rental and ownership housing. Urban Edge's educational and recreational facilities and programs increase opportunities for families and individuals to own or rent homes they can afford, to improve their quality of life, and to build generational wealth. Green Housing at Urban Edge (GreenHUE), a strategic effort to design and implement green affordable housing development and operations at Urban Edge, is an important part of this mission. Urban Edge is an affiliated agency of the United Way of Mass. Bay and Merrimack Valley and is one of 240 member organizations nationwide that make up NeighborWorks America.

Shown (from left) are: Noah Sawyer, 225 Centre project manager; Bart Mitchell, CEO of The Community Builders; Chrystal Kornegay, president and CEO of Urban Edge; Ana Duarte, 225 Centre resident; mayor Thomas Menino; Barbara Fields, HUD regional administrator; city councilor Matt O'Malley; state representative Elizabeth Malia; city councilor Tito Jackson; Mass. Housing Investment Corp. president and CEO Joseph Flatley

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