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Peabody Properties and The Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Dev. Corp. team up to tackle energy efficiency together

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Jamaica Plain, MA In 2014, The Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation (JPNDC) committed to the federal government's Better Buildings Challenge, setting the goal of 20% energy use reduction in its affordable housing portfolio. The savings goal is set on a 2012 baseline, to be achieved by 2022. Today, three years ahead of schedule, JPNDC achieved this goal of 20% energy use reduction.

Since joining the Better Buildings Challenge, JPNDC's team worked with Peabody Properties, Inc., their full-service real estate and property management firm, to identify buildings with the greatest potential for energy and water efficiency and to benchmark their portfolio for energy and water expenses. Through this partnership, JPNDC reached its Better Buildings Challenge goal sooner than expected by implementing a variety of measures throughout the portfolio, including LED upgrades, high-efficiency boilers, outdoor reset controls, and solar hot water.

For the Better Buildings Challenge, JPNDC and Peabody Properties concentrated on a selected portfolio of nine properties and 337 apartment units, which totaled more than 300,000 s/f. (JPNDC's overall portfolio includes 16 sites and 671 units.) To support this effort, JPNDC and Peabody Properties secured \$1.3 million in grants primarily through the Massachusetts-based Low Income Energy Affordability Network (LEAN). LEAN's funding provided extensive electrical retrofits and boiler upgrades at several of JPNDC's Boston-based properties. Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD) manages the LEAN program. Additionally, JPNDC and Peabody participated with the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) in the MA Green Energy Retrofit, which yielded benefits including implementation of a solar hot water system through the MA Clean Energy Center.

JPNDC and Peabody Properties subscribe to WegoWise, a software tool that tracks energy and water use in real-time. WegoWise is the portal through which JPNDC properties' data qualified many properties for free, cost-effective efficiency measures funded by utility companies' rate-based efficiency programs. In 2017, WegoWise began issuing weekly emails alerting clients on use spikes (as well as savings). Peabody downloads reports with raw data and sends alerts to on-site staff for troubleshooting. Resolving issues promptly avoids energy and water waste and, by reining in overall energy use, maintains the persistence of energy savings over the long run.

"We could not have accomplished this without a tool like WegoWise or without the array of strong relationships we've cultivated over the years. We're especially appreciative of our management partners at Peabody Properties, who work with us on cost-effective and comprehensive approaches

to each retrofit,” said Marianne McLaughlin, JPNDC’s senior asset manager. “JPNDC is committed to improving energy efficiency across our entire portfolio. Resident engagement is a critical component to achieving ongoing success. Peabody Properties’ staff works with us to show our residents how their actions support sustainability, lower their individually-paid utility bills, and improve their comfort levels.”

Laurie McGrath, Peabody’s vice president of affordable housing, directs the company’s team on JPNDC’s portfolio. “We are thrilled with the JPNDC portfolio performance and proud of Peabody’s Facility Management Team and its work to assure the persistence of energy savings, consistently evaluate emerging technologies for reliable performance, and maintain our ongoing communication and collaboration with JPNDC.”

“We are thrilled to have created this culture of conservation awareness in partnership with JPNDC,” said Elizabeth Merzigian, a key member of Peabody’s facilities management team. “It’s great to see an organization like JPNDC commit to this level of energy efficiency and see such tremendous results realized earlier than projected. They set a model for other communities to consider.”

Peabody Properties is a full-service real-estate firm which manages more than 13,000 units of housing, primarily in New England. The privately held corporation and Accredited Management Organization (AMO) was incorporated in 1976 and is under the direction of Karen Fish-Will and Melissa Fish-Crane, who were recently ranked #31 (out of 50) on Glassdoor’s 2018 SMB Top CEOs list. In 1995, Peabody Properties recognized its long-term commitment to Resident Services as a unique area of expertise within the field of property management and established a new, specialty sector. Peabody Resident Services, Inc. is dedicated solely to the development of support services and programs for residents of affordable housing. Peabody Properties is designated as a Woman Business Enterprise (WBE), is certified by the Massachusetts State Office of Minority and Women Business Assistance (SOMWBA) and was recently ranked #49 on the 2019 National Affordable Housing Management Association (NAHMA) Affordable 100 List, as well as a 2017 and 2018 Top Place to Work by the Boston Globe and 2018 and 2019 Glassdoor Best Place to Work (most recently ranked at #10).

Founded in 1977, JPNDC is a nonprofit community development corporation with a demonstrated track record of developing and operating high-quality, permanently affordable housing for seniors, families, and those who need supportive housing. Among JPNDC’s notable achievements is its redevelopment of a five-acre, 19th century brewery complex into a nationally renowned small business complex. JPNDC is a lead provider of economic prosperity services to Boston’s Latino immigrants and other low-income Boston families as well as a unique source of free technical assistance to small businesses and aspiring entrepreneurs.