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The Baker-Polito Administration presents \$1.73m in awards to support energy efficient new construction

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Boston, MA The Baker-Polito Administration has placed \$1.73 million in awards to support energy efficient new construction for affordable housing developments in six cities and towns built to Passive House standards. The grants, awarded to eight affordable housing developments in Cambridge, Gloucester, Hanson, Northampton, Holbrook and Boston totaling 540 high-efficiency units, provide energy savings and improved indoor air quality for low-income households. The announcement was made by state and local officials at the Old Colony Housing Development in South Boston.

“Massachusetts is proud to lead the nation in energy efficiency, which helps to reduce energy use and cut greenhouse gas emissions which in turn promotes cost savings for residents and businesses,” said governor Charlie Baker. “Our administration is committed to supporting the development of additional affordable housing, and by embracing innovative design to maximize efficiency we can provide quality housing solutions for residents while reducing carbon emissions.”

“Our Administration is committed to helping Massachusetts’ low-income households reduce energy costs while creating better, more affordable housing options,” said lieutenant governor Karyn Polito. “Passive House standards offer one of the best options to promote high efficiency housing solutions for families, and better position the Commonwealth to extend energy efficiency benefits of the homes to families in cities and towns across the state.”

The funding was awarded through the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center’s Passive House Design Challenge program, part of the Baker-Polito Administration’s \$15 million Affordable Access for Clean and Efficient Energy (AACEE) initiative. The program seeks to demonstrate that multi-family affordable housing can be built to high efficiency Passive House standards in Massachusetts at a low-to-no cost premium.

Passive House is a green building certification that ensures extremely high levels of energy efficiency and the provision of fresh air for ventilation. Multi-family buildings built to the Passive House standard generally use 40% less total energy than energy stretch code-compliant buildings. The annual energy use of 8-12 Passive House multi-family apartments is roughly equivalent to the average existing single-family suburban home in Massachusetts. The Passive House energy efficiency standard ensures new buildings are built with high levels of insulation and air tightness, generous provision of fresh air with heat recovery for ventilation, and better windows than would normally be required.

Earlier this year, Massachusetts was named the most energy efficient state in the nation by the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy for the ninth consecutive year.

“Building to energy-efficient Passive House standards is the first step in ensuring buildings are on a path to becoming net-zero,” said Kathleen Theoharides of Energy and Environmental Affairs. “To meet Massachusetts’ 2050 greenhouse gas reduction goals, energy efficiency in new construction must continue to be promoted, and it is great to see affordable housing leading the way for the Commonwealth.”

“Passive House buildings are more efficient, durable, healthy, and resilient than typical buildings,” said MassCEC CEO Stephen Pike. “Through these projects, the Commonwealth is supporting better housing for low-income families and reducing greenhouse gas emissions in our most vulnerable neighborhoods.”

“The Passive House Design Challenge program is one of the many innovative ideas in the Commonwealth that contributes to moving us forward in achieving our shared clean energy and emission reduction goals,” said Department of Energy Resources commissioner Judith Judson. “This program coupled with our new Mass Save incentives for Passive House go a long way towards enabling deep energy efficiency.”

“As we work to build more affordable housing throughout the state to meet our current crisis, it is vital we build high-quality, future-proofed housing that takes current and future energy needs into account,” said Housing and Community Development undersecretary Janelle Chan. “Today’s awards will advance eight affordable housing developments, which will provide more than 500 units for low and middle-income households. We are thrilled to be supporting housing development that is safe and affordable for families, and is built to Passive House standards, reducing carbon emissions and lowering households’ energy costs.”

The eight developments, four of which have secured low income tax credit financing and three which are applying to the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) for affordable housing tax credits, are:

- Finch Cambridge - Cambridge (\$147,000) - A new 98-unit affordable housing project designed for resiliency to allow for potential flooding and low energy consumption using efficient heat pump heating and cooling technology. Shading features are included to lower cooling demands. The building will also include a 100 KW Solar Photovoltaic array to generate electricity for heating and cooling.
- Preservation for Affordable Housing Mattapan Station – Mattapan (\$540,000) - An urban-centric housing complex with 135 apartments designed to promote the Neponset River Greenway and bike paths, while reducing energy consumption. The building will use efficient electric heat pump technology for heating and cooling and is exploring innovative heat pump technology to heat hot water.

- Beacon Communities Old Colony Phase Three C – South Boston (\$120,000) - As part of the third phase of the redevelopment of Old Colony, the project provides affordable housing for vulnerable seniors at extremely low energy use and 55 new apartments. The building will feature much less drafty apartments with at least four times lower air infiltration rates than would be required by code, high levels of ventilation with heat recovery equipment, and attention to creating thermal breaks in the walls and roof to improve energy performance.
- NorthShore Community Development Corporation's Harbor Village – Gloucester (\$120,000) - A 30-unit affordable housing construction will include retail spaces, bike storage, and gallery space as well as being in the heart of downtown Gloucester and will feature efficient heat pumps for heating and cooling.
- Dakota Partners - Hanson (\$192,000) – A new construction housing project for families. When completed, Depot Village, located near an MBTA commuter rail stop, will create 48 new rental units. The building will utilize balanced ventilation with heat recovery, heat pumps for heating and cooling, and reduced heat loss. The project is creating a template for Dakota Partners to use on future developments that will be designed for Passive House construction and certification.
- Community Builders North Commons – Northampton (\$212,000) – The project will increase insulation levels, air sealing, and ventilation levels to meet Passive House Standards for 53 apartments. It will provide mixed-income, new construction family rental housing development on the Village Hill campus in Northampton, Massachusetts and will include both affordable and workforce housing units, serving households with a broad range of incomes.
- Preservation of Affordable Housing Bartlett Station Lot D – Roxbury (\$168,000) - Bartlett Station Lot D includes the construction of 52 senior housing units. Lot D is a part of the master planned Bartlett Station, an 8.6-acre former MBTA bus yard. The building will include shading features, higher levels of air sealing, balanced ventilation with heat recovery, and a central efficient heat pump systems for heating and cooling.
- NeighborWorks Southern Mass's Holbrook Center Senior Housing – Holbrook (\$131,200) - A 100% affordable rental housing will cater to seniors aged 65 and over with one-bedroom apartments and common amenities such as a library and fitness center, this housing development will provide support services that aim to accommodate residents' changing needs as they age. The design will offer seniors more comfort, make for quieter apartments, and less noise from the street and adjacent apartments.

The Passive House Design Challenge awards are complemented by the recent addition of MassSave Passive House incentives for multi-family buildings. Multi-family new construction buildings above four stories, both market rate and affordable, may be eligible for Passive House energy modeling funding and up to \$3,000 per unit if they certify to the high-efficiency Passive House standard.

“I applaud the Baker-Polito Administration for their continued work in addressing barriers for low- and moderate-income residents in Massachusetts to access cost-saving, clean energy technologies, including awarding grants for MassCEC’s Passive House Design Challenge program,” said State Representative Thomas A. Golden, Jr. (D-Lowell), Chairman of the Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities, and Energy. “This program has the exciting goal of seeking to demonstrate that Passive House construction can not only provide significant bill savings, air quality improvements, and energy efficiency gains for affordable housing projects, but also that it can be built at a low-to-no-cost premium.”

“We are very encouraged by the grants being awarded by the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center today,” said State Representative Kevin Honan (D-Boston), Chairman of the Joint Committee on Housing. “Massachusetts has been, and will continue to be, a national leader in energy efficiency policies, and these eight new developments built to Passive House standards are an excellent addition to our affordable housing stock. As we continue to focus on housing production issues at the state level, these are the kind of projects and investments we hope to see more of.”

“These state grants will support energy efficient construction projects at affordable housing developments across the Commonwealth, helping low-income households save on energy costs while improving air quality in their homes,” said State Representative David Biele (D-Boston). “I’m proud that the Anne Lynch Homes at Old Colony received a grant to build high-efficiency units, and I thank the Baker-Polito Administration and MassCEC for making these important energy efficiency investments in affordable housing.”

The Baker-Polito Administration has shown a deep commitment to increasing the production of housing across income levels. Since 2015, the administration has invested more than \$1 billion in affordable housing, resulting in the production and preservation of more than 17,000 housing units, including 15,000 affordable units. In 2018, Governor Baker signed the largest housing bond bill in Massachusetts history, committing more than \$1.8 billion to the future of affordable housing production and preservation. Legislation filed by Governor Baker in February, An Act to Promote Housing Choices, calls for targeted zoning reform to advance new housing production in Massachusetts and support the Administration’s goal to produce 135,000 new housing units by 2025. The Baker-Polito Administration has also advanced the development of more than 11,000 mixed-income housing units through the successful MassWorks Infrastructure Program, reformed the Housing Development Incentive Program, and worked with communities to implement smart-growth development and planning efforts.