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WinnCompanies to transform Worcester Boys Club - \$52 million redevelopment into 80 affordable apartment homes

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Rendering Credit Cutler Design

Worcester, MA Massachusetts housing secretary Edward Augustus, mayor Joseph Petty and city manager Eric Batista joined WinnCompanies executives to celebrate plans to transform the historic Worcester Boys Club building and property into 80 affordable apartment homes for adults 55 and older.

The WinnDevelopment project will employ adaptive reuse techniques to preserve and renovate the 93-year-old Boys Club building as 16 apartment homes and a variety of community spaces, while erecting a new five-story apartment building alongside it to house 64 new apartments. The two buildings will be connected on the ground floor by a single-story glass walkway.

The new community will feature 19 studio apartments, 46 one-bedroom units and 15 two-bedrooms apartments. 68 of the apartments will be leased to households earning up to 60% of Area Median Income (AMI) and 12 units will be available to those earning up to 30% AMI. Eleven of the apartments will be set aside as housing for residents with disabilities.

“We’re pleased to be moving forward with this development after persevering through a variety of challenges over the years,” said WinnCompanies CEO Gilbert Winn. “By combining our adaptive reuse and new construction expertise, this project will give new life to a magnificent historic building,

provide much-needed senior housing in a great location and reinvigorate a key gateway to Worcester's downtown."

The Massachusetts Executive Office for Housing and Livable Communities has authorized the bulk of the funding through the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program, with additional monies coming from MassDevelopment's Underutilized Property Program, HOME and Affordable Housing Trust funds from the city, and federal and state Historic Tax Credits from the U.S. National Park Service and Massachusetts Historic Commission.

"Building more affordable housing is one of the most urgent and important issues in Massachusetts and across America," U.S. representative James McGovern said. "By restoring this iconic building, Worcester will soon be home to 80 more affordable apartments for seniors. I'm thrilled this partnership between local, state, federal, and private stakeholders will deliver new accessible homes for the most vulnerable in our community. Projects like this are driving Worcester's renaissance and helping us build a world-class city."

The estimated total construction cost for the project is \$52 million. Financing is expected to close in the first quarter of 2024.

"This amazing redevelopment is a testament to the perseverance of WinnCompanies, the city and the state to save a historic building and bring much-needed affordable housing to downtown Worcester," secretary of Housing and Livable Communities Ed Augustus said.

"This is the first downtown affordable housing specifically targeted to older residents and it marks another step forward in the continued rebirth of North Main Street. When more people move downtown, businesses benefit."

The project is fully permitted and approved by the Worcester Historical Commission and the city planning board. The property qualified for Opportunity Zone federal tax incentives and is located in a Commercial Corridor Overlay District designed to encourage the preservation and redevelopment of historical, cultural and architectural assets in the city.

"Affordable housing has been a significant need in the city of Worcester," said mayor Petty. "We have seen an uptick in unhoused elders, and I'm excited about the possibilities that will come from these 80 new units. I want to thank WinnCompanies for its decision to keep investing in our great city, and for the people who have worked hard to make this project into a reality."

The preservation and renovation of the Boys Club will make the building handicapped accessible and create several community meeting spaces for resident, public and civic uses, with public programming overseen by the non-profit Preservation Worcester. The existing basement-level basketball court gym inside the Boys Club will be converted into a fitness center for residents and their guests.

"This project is a great example of the innovative and creative tools we can implement – in this case

adaptive reuse – to create more affordable housing,” said city manager Batista. “Thank you to WinnCompanies and to our state and federal delegations, who were instrumental in bringing this project to fruition, allowing the city to preserve an iconic Worcester building while adding affordable housing units for our senior population.”

The 63,000 s/f new construction apartment building will be designed and built to Passive House standards, the most rigorous energy sustainability requirements in residential development. The windows in the Boys Club building will be replaced with state-of-the-art replicas specifically designed for modern environmental performance.

Once completed, residents of the new development will have walkable access to mass transit, downtown businesses, and entertainment, as well as medical and academic institutions. The property, situated on the northern edge of the city’s downtown, abuts the World War One Memorial at Lincoln Square, which city officials plan to renovate in the years ahead.

Worcester was on one of the first U.S. cities to start a Boys Club in 1889 and, by 1929, its program was earning national recognition for keeping local youth out of trouble. As membership grew, the organization moved to larger locations. Recognizing the need for a suitable, permanent space, local philanthropist George F. Fuller bought the property at 16 Salisbury Street in 1928, which he then donated to the Boys Club and to the City for a World War I Memorial. Some 15,000 citizens donated \$448,612 to finance construction of the Boys Club during a five-day fundraising drive in May 1928.

Designed by the Worcester architectural firm of Frost, Chamberlain & Edwards, the Boys Club building opened for use in 1930. The four-story, 48,000 s/f structure also served students of the Worcester Vocational High School for several decades before becoming vacant in 2006. WinnDevelopment acquired the property in 2019.

WinnCompanies currently owns and operates five apartment communities in Worcester, totaling 548 units. Its portfolio includes the 137-unit Coes Pond Village, one of the developments that helped establish the company after its founding 52 years ago, as well as the award-winning Voke Lofts, an 84-unit affordable housing community located just to the north of the Boys Club property.