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MPZ Development transforms BHA property into affordable housing

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Boston, MA Mayor Michelle Wu joined Boston Housing Authority administrator Kenzie Bok to welcome home the new residents and celebrate the opening of 34 East Springfield St., a 100% affordable veteran housing community located in the South End neighborhood. The house warming celebration marks the transformation of a formerly vacant, four-unit Boston Housing Authority (BHA) Public Housing property into five deeply affordable, one-bedroom apartments for formerly homeless veterans.

In May of 2020, affordable housing developer MPZ Development LLC (MPZ) was selected by the Boston Housing Authority to lead the redevelopment of 34 East Springfield St. MPZ was tasked with balancing the principles of affordability, historic preservation, and accessibility through the design, development and construction process.

34 East Springfield St. was funded through a mix of state, local, and private funding sources, including HOME funding through The City of Boston Mayor's Office of Housing. Other funders include the Neighborhood Housing Trust, The Boston Housing Authority and Dedham Institution for Savings and the purchase of State and Federal Historic Tax Credits by members of the Grossman Family. The units will be permanently affordable thanks to the HUD Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) Program which provides project based vouchers for all five apartments, as well as ongoing supportive services for the residents.

34 East Springfield St.'s residents enjoy immediate proximity and access to a wide array of community services including Boston Medical Center and other healthcare facilities, the MBTA Silver Line and nearby grocery and dining options.

The redevelopment was supported by the Worcester Square Area Neighborhood Association and the project abutters. The project abutters at 32 East Springfield St. collaborated closely with MPZ, with all three condo owners in the building agreeing to temporarily relocate for a period of time and to reconstruct 32 East Springfield's façade.

MPZ worked with The Narrow Gate Architecture, Epsilon Associates and ZVI Construction to preserve and restore historic features of this mid-19th century Italianate-style rowhouse, which is included in the South End National Historic District. Simultaneously, MPZ made necessary and important modernization and accessibility updates to 34 East Springfield St., allowing its veteran residents to live comfortably and sustainably in the 100% electric, solar-ready building with green upgrades included throughout.

34 East Springfield is a 150-year-old brick rowhouse acquired by the Boston Housing Authority as Federal Public Housing in the 1980s and operated as public housing until a fire fifteen years ago.

"Today, we're here to celebrate a win for Boston's homeless veterans, and to welcome five new residents into their homes," said BHA administrator Kenzie Bok. "This project restores a historic South End Brownstone and gives its residents the housing stability and supportive services that they need to thrive here in Boston."

"As part of an effort to ensure that all of our veterans are stably housed, the mayor's Office of Housing was pleased to partner with the Boston Housing Authority and MPZ Development, on the redevelopment of 34 East Springfield St.," said Sheila Dillon, Boston's chief of housing. "We want to extend a warm welcome to the veterans who are moving into these beautiful South End homes."

"Today's grand opening of 34 East Springfield St. is a major achievement and represents a critical commitment to building affordable housing for veterans at risk of homelessness," said Mathieu Zahler, principal of MPZ Development LLC. "Through great collaboration, we have transformed a once vacant and blighted building into a place where its residents can not only live but thrive. I'm

thrilled to deliver this project with our many project partners to the South End neighborhood and look forward to seeing the impact it makes within the community.”

“I am blessed to be a part of this opportunity that is giving me the platform to affordably live comfortably in a community alongside other veterans,” said Anthony Magnole, a resident at 34 East Springfield St. “I’m incredibly grateful to leverage this chance to progress towards my goals.”

“This affordable housing development for veterans in the South End meets a critical need,” said Doug Shaw, executive vice president and senior lending officer at Dedham Savings. “As a community bank, Dedham Savings is proud to support such a project that further strengthens the local community.”

“We’re excited to see this vacant space come to life in such a meaningful way and are pleased to fund such an important project for the City of Boston,” said Martin Connors, first vice president, commercial real estate lending at Dedham Savings.

“The Grossman Family was thrilled to be a small part of this wonderful project which has restored beauty to a historic building, provided affordable homes for our valued Veterans, and proved that hard work by a passionate and committed developer who overcame many unanticipated challenges is well worth the time and effort required for the success of this project,” said Louis Grossman, a historic tax credit investor.

“Collaborations like this between HUD, VA, the City of Boston and private sector partners like MPZ Development are helping ensure Veterans have a safe place to call home,” said Vincent Ng, director of VA Boston Healthcare System. “That foundation combined with ongoing support from HUD-VASH staff can have a life-changing and lasting impact on Veterans’ lives.”

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