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Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción breaks ground on \$33m La CASA

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Shown (from left) are: Ed Augustus, Housing Secretary for the Commonwealth; Kenzie Bok, Boston Housing Authority administrator; Edward Flynn, Boston City councilor; representative John Moran; Elias Torres, of the Elias Torres Family Foundation; Vanessa Calderón-Rosado, CEO of IBA; Mayra Negrón-Roche, COO of IBA; Maureen Bleday, CEO of the Yawkey Foundations; Aixa Beauchamp, La CASA Capital Campaign co-chair and founder of the Latino Equity Fund at The Boston Foundation; Thomas Melendez, La CASA Capital Campaign co-chair; and Nancy Huntington Stager, president and CEO of the Eastern Bank Foundation break ground on La CASA.

Boston, MA Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción (IBA), held a groundbreaking ceremony commemorating the start of construction on La CASA: The Center for Arts, Self-determination, and Activism on West Newton St. in the South End. IBA is a national model of community development that offers affordable housing and supportive programming to increase social and economic mobility, including early education, youth development, financial empowerment, resident services, and arts programs. La CASA will embody and fortify IBA's mission by creating a hub for Latinx arts; providing a place for IBA's programs to centralize and expand; and offering surrounding communities access to a multipurpose space for events, convenings and more.

The La CASA Capital Campaign, which is IBA's first campaign in its 55-year history, is the driving force behind funding the center. The project's total cost of \$33 million is being met through a combination of public and private funding, with the La CASA Capital Campaign goal being set at \$10 million. So far, \$7.5 million of the funds needed to complete the facility have been raised and the project is expected to be completed in late 2025.

The capital campaign began in 2023, with a lead gift from the Yawkey Foundation, and has since garnered the support of major capital gifts from Amos and Barbara Hostetter, the Eastern Bank Foundation, the Elias Torres Family Foundation, State Street, Maloney Properties, capital campaign co-chairs Aixa Beauchamp and Thomas Melendez, and a \$1 million earmark from senators Elizabeth Warren and Ed Markey, and congresswoman Ayanna Pressley.

The four-story building is the latest addition to IBA's real-estate portfolio, which currently encompasses 667 units of affordable housing and the organization's operational facilities. La CASA will allow IBA to expand its program offerings and operational capacity at a central location, and to redevelop its current offices into 40-50 units of affordable housing.

The project, designed by STUDIO ENÉE and to be constructed by The Community Builders and MassDevelopment, will feature an inclusive and welcoming design that honors IBA's history.

La CASA promises to address the absence of a central Latinx cultural focal point in the city, creating a permanent venue for the expression of Latinx art and stories.

It aims to encourage artistic collaboration, performance, and the exploration of Latinx heritage and culture. This development signifies both a new chapter in IBA's rich history, and an exciting glimpse into the organization's future as an even greater influential force in New England, where La CASA will be the largest facility of its kind.

La CASA will include galleries and spaces for arts education, performance, and community gatherings with a multi-purpose community arts space on the first level that will seamlessly connect to the adjacent O'Day Playground and amphitheater, thus fulfilling a multitude of community needs.

The groundbreaking ceremony took place in Boston's South End neighborhood at 85 West Newton St., La CASA's future location. The gathering was attended by 200 supporters from across the art,

civic, philanthropy, real estate, business and local communities including: Edward Flynn, Boston city councilor (2nd District) representative John Moran (9th Suffolk); representatives from the office of mayor Michelle Wu and representatives from Massachusetts senator Ed Markey's office, who presented IBA with a proclamation commemorating the groundbreaking.

"From [IBA's] youth development and financial empowerment programs to its resident services and diversity in the arts, we are grateful to be working with an organization that is so deeply entrenched in every aspect of its local community," said Michael Cooper, President of TD Community Bank.

"Latinos are the fastest-growing population in Massachusetts and will play a crucial role in the economic future of Boston and the state," Elias Torres of the Elias Torres Family Foundation. Torres, who is a Nicaraguan immigrant, entrepreneur and philanthropist, continued, "Today, we are not just laying the foundation for a building, we are laying the foundation for a future filled with opportunity and empowerment for the Latino community. This center will be a place where dreams are nurtured, cultures are celebrated, and potentials are realized."

"At IBA, our mission has always been guided by the principle that a building is more than its walls. It is a place where pathways to building community, culture and generational success are created," said Dr. Vanessa Calderón-Rosado, CEO of IBA. "It is true that La CASA will be a brand new, flexible 26,000 square foot building—but perhaps most importantly, it will transform the lives of countless individuals, families and community members. La CASA represents our enduring commitment to empowerment, equity, creativity and social justice."

Aixa Beauchamp, La CASA Capital Campaign co-chair and founder of the Latino Equity Fund at The Boston Foundation, said, "This groundbreaking is a testament to the strong partnerships and unyielding support we've already received from Eastern Bank Foundation, TD Bank North, Yawkey Foundation and others, emboldening us to continue IBA's legacy of empowerment and cultural celebration. This project is the embodiment of IBA's mission and gives a glimpse of what's to come as IBA continues its growth as a driving force in Boston's art scene."

"We view the foundation's investment in La CASA as more important than ever given that the Latino community is now the fastest growing population in Boston and the Commonwealth," said Maureen H. Bleday, CEO of the Yawkey Foundations. "And we are deeply honored that the Yawkeys will be a lasting part of this exciting and vital new cultural beating heart of your community."

"The work IBA does every day provides support to countless individuals and families who are trying to navigate finding affordable, high-quality housing in our state," said Ed Augustus, Housing Secretary for the Commonwealth. "And it's places like La CASA that allow our communities to thrive. We need more community-centric facilities throughout Massachusetts."

"The Eastern Bank Foundation is delighted to support the deep roots of community and socioeconomic opportunity that will form at La CASA and we are delighted to continue in our partnership with IBA," said Nancy Huntington Stager, president and CEO of the Eastern Bank Foundation. "Eastern Bank Foundation's \$1 million donation is a demonstration of our belief in this

project and the impact it will have for decades to come, and our confidence in IBA's continued impact as a community development corporation and community builder.”

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