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Cruz Cos. completes build-out of Harvard Commons, a model for creating wealth through affordable homeownership

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Dorchester, MA One of the country's oldest and largest 100% Black-owned construction and real estate development and management enterprises, Cruz Companies, has announced the completion of the final sites for Residences at Harvard Commons, an innovative 99-home development acclaimed for creating value on a long-vacant plot of land where a defunct state hospital previously stood for decades.

After two decades of planning, development and construction, the \$25 million venture stands as a national model for creating wealth through homeownership and integrated affordable housing within new residential subdivisions, say public officials and independent observers. The legacy of Harvard Commons, as it is known, also shows "how one development strengthens a neighborhood's multicultural identity," wrote the Boston Globe when the first phases were unveiled.

According to Cruz Development and John B. Cruz Construction Co., which completed the work, Residences at Harvard Commons has created a new mixed-income community of 54 market-rate single-family homes and 45 affordable apartments. The neighborhood plan, with its suburban feel

within one of Boston's most diverse urban districts, offers greenery and access to an array of local services and amenities. According to the Bay State Banner, the development "helped revitalize a corner of Dorchester and Mattapan that has for decades been dominated by the vast expanse of vacant lots and the decaying [hospital] buildings."

With a design by Michael Washington Architects marked by colorful one- and two-family wood-framed homes with gabled roofs, off-street parking, and large front and back yards, Harvard Commons has drawn applause for its aesthetics and quality as much as its progressive take on urban diversity. As the Banner praised it, "The traditional New England housing design blends in with the existing single and multifamily buildings in the Dorchester and Mattapan neighborhoods, as does the income mix."

In the 1990s, plans to develop the parcels arose from a citizens advisory council working with the state's Division of Capital Asset Management and the Boston Redevelopment Authority. At that time, Cruz Companies was named to develop Harvard Commons, the largest site awarded. Later, the project also received a \$1.9 million MassWorks grant from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development to extend roads and utilities, expanding opportunities for attainable, high-quality homes in a convenient location.

"Looking back on this development, we are so proud of the achievements of our team, the architect, and our champions in the community and in the region's key agencies, many of them people of color," said Cruz Companies CEO John Cruz III. "It only took 20 years to arrive here, with a relentless focus on the meticulous design, sophisticated living, and cultural diversity that make the most of a central location in a world-class metropolitan center. We encourage everyone – Build Black!"

A third-generation company founded in 1948, Cruz Companies has focused on high-quality affordable housing as a key to economic empowerment and building community equity and wealth. Among the most venerated and largest U.S. Black-owned integrated real estate enterprises, Cruz Companies is active in New England, the Mid-Atlantic and Southeastern United States.

It has earned awards for its "enduring impact through dedication to affordable housing, community service, and nurturing 50-plus minority suppliers and contractors," according to Fast Company Magazine.

Today, Cruz Companies drives change in real estate, construction, and property stewardship—shifting the narrative for historically underserved urban neighborhoods, including dozens bustling with new life and promise. Their 170-unit, mixed-use campus 135 Dudley is set to rise in Boston's Nubian Square, not far from their headquarters in the historically Black area of Roxbury, Massachusetts. The companies' newest mixed-use multifamily building, Michael E. Haynes Arms — named for the famed Roxbury civil rights leader, minister, and political force — opened its 55 residences earlier this year, with over 80% designated affordable, offering various layouts and bedroom counts.

A strong voice for equity and opportunity spurring national conversations, Cruz Companies offers proven and increasingly relevant roadmaps for building a better world. They are committed to accessible, high- quality rental and homeownership opportunities where needed most.

“Cruz Development is committed to bringing affordable, quality housing to Black and Brown communities, and we look forward to contributing to more U.S. cities so that neighborhoods may flourish,” says Justin Cruz, COO of Cruz Companies. “Our own director of maintenance and a company manager live in Harvard Commons, giving us a close perspective on the community’s success. Harvard Commons residents have built up considerable equity in their properties, some gaining as much as \$300,000 to over \$450,000 over the last few years alone.”

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540