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2Life Communities celebrates opening of \$37 million 68-unit Leland House for older adults in Waltham, MA

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Waltham, MA Senior housing developer, owner, operator, and advocate 2Life Communities celebrated the completion of Leland House, joined by partners and advocates that helped make the \$37 million development possible. The new 68-apartment community for older adults at 21 Newton St. replaces the former Leland Home, a 38-bed rest home that provided compassionate care to older adults for over 100 years. All Leland House apartments are affordable to households with incomes up to 60% the area median income (AMI).

2Life purchased the property adjacent to the William F. Stanley Senior Center in 2022 and broke ground in 2023. Residents began moving in in December 2024.

Welcoming guests, 2Life president Lizbeth Heyer noted the property's 140-year history of caring for the city's older adults and providing a place where residents can "live with connection, care, and dignity," adding, "There is no better place to age in community than right here in Waltham. The loving kindness of our new neighbors, both within the building and in the community that surrounds us, has already made Leland House a very special place to live."

On hand for the ribbon-cutting celebration were Leland House residents, 2Life staff and board members, project partners, funders, and elected officials, illustrating the power of public-private partnerships to address the region's growing housing crisis.

Mayor Jeanette McCarthy highlighted this in-depth collaboration before introducing Leland House resident Cissy Spear, who spoke movingly about the challenges she and Bill, her husband of 46

years, faced upon retirement. A former middle school math teacher, Spear explained how rising costs, a finite income, and a house that had become a financial burden caused the couple to move to a 500 s/f, one-bedroom apartment two miles away. When the landlord increased the rent 48%, even that tiny space became unaffordable. Understanding the unlikely odds of being selected, Cissy and Bill applied to live at Leland when they saw it being built next to the senior center.

“We were desperate. We were cold, and we couldn’t afford to turn on the heat,” Spear told the crowd. “Now, instead of choosing between which utilities to forgo paying or figuring out how to stretch a food budget even further, I get to spend my days here thinking about what I want to do, which programs to look forward to. Now we’re not only going to survive, but really live the rest of our lives.”

She urged the crowd to commit to ensuring more seniors have access to opportunities like this. “We’re not the only ones who need it. Now that I know a place like Leland can and does exist, I implore you to invest so that more of this model exists throughout Massachusetts. I am so grateful to everyone here who helped bring Bill and I this blessing, and I invite you all to continue fighting for more communities like Leland House so that it becomes much, much more probable for seniors everywhere to know this joy.”

Event attendees included U.S. representative Katherine Clark (MA-5), mayor McCarthy, state representatives John Lawn (10th Middlesex) and Thomas Stanley (9th Middlesex), secretary Edward Augustus of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities, secretary Robin Lipson of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Aging and Independence, and Kathy McMenimen, president of the Waltham city council, as well as other council members.

Rep. Clark, clearly moved by Spears’ story, echoed the intense need for more affordable housing and expressed strong commitment for the urgent work ahead. “When you are in the middle class or trying to get or stay there, a wonderful place to live, with access to activities and healthcare, should be an expectation, not a lottery win. We know the challenges ahead. But this project is beyond inspiring that we are on the right course and that we have the right vision, and that when we are helping people put together these fundamentals in their lives, there’s no better investment.”

Secretary Augustus explained that housing “underpins everything else that we’re trying to accomplish as communities and as a society. The Healey-Driscoll administration is leaning in, making sure that we’re doing everything that we can at every kind of housing intersection, whether it be regulations, whether it be funding and subsidies, whether it be tax credits, whether it be using the bully pulpit to try to talk about the importance of housing. I want to acknowledge the City of Waltham, the significant dollars that they put up to make this project possible. I’m proud that the Commonwealth was able to put in \$6.5 million of state resources to partner with the City of Waltham. And I am very proud of 2Life.”

Secretary Lipson reflected on the energy, vibrancy, and joy she experienced in talking with residents

at Leland House. “What strikes me most about this moment and this wonderful community is that you have done everything here that matters most to people. Older adults do not want to be isolated. They don’t want housing opportunities seven miles out of the center of town, or in the middle of a parking lot, or at the end of some long Rd.. They want to be in town, close to transportation, entertainment, food, the pharmacy, the senior center, the library, and the list goes on. They want to be part of a thriving community, and that is exactly what has been created here. So to 2Life and the City of Waltham and all the amazing partners, you’ve got it right. We look forward to working on many more projects like this one.”

The beautiful three-story Leland House has been designed and built to the highest standards of universal design, adaptability, resiliency, and sustainability. The 100% electric building meets Passive House standards, bringing improved health, economic, and environmental benefits to residents and addresses the important objective of reducing the building’s carbon footprint. Universal design elements (particularly in bathrooms and kitchens) enable residents to remain in their homes even as their physical abilities change. The new building also thoughtfully incorporates features from the original Leland Home, including the front door, a beautiful arched window, two fireplace mantles, and many decorative accessories.

Leland House serves as a model of affordable, service-enriched living that addresses the two biggest threats to optimal aging: economic insecurity and loneliness. The ground floor of Leland House features a vibrant, universally designed Village Center, including a welcoming lobby, reception area, library, lounges, game room, wellness room, and classroom. Residents benefit from the wide variety of programs and services typical of every 2Life community. Leland House offers on-site maintenance staff, care coordination services, and 24-hour emergency staff response.

Funders of and donors to the project include the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities, City of Waltham Community Preservation Committee, Massachusetts Housing Partnership, MassDevelopment, MassHousing, RBC Capital Markets, Community Economic Development Assistance Corporation (CEDAC), Mass Save, Brookline Bank, and Global Partners and the Slifka family. The project team includes architects PCA, general contractor Dellbrook|JKS, landscape and civil engineer Stantec, sustainable development consultant New Ecology, and attorneys Klein Hornig LLP.

2Life develops, owns, operates, and provides supportive services to each of its 11 communities across seven campuses in Massachusetts, totaling over 1,600 apartments under management. The nonprofit has an additional project under construction in Newton and five properties currently in pre-development in Lynn, Mattapan, and Devens.

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