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Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción breaks ground on 41-unit Casas Borinquen in South End

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Shown (from left) are: Francine Lyons, director of community development at Santander; Spencer Thornley, VP of Hudson Housing Capital; Mark Teden, VP of multifamily programs at MassHousing; Sheila Dillon, chief of housing for the city of Boston and director of the mayor's office of housing; Vanessa Calderón-Rosado, CEO of IBA; Ed Augustus, secretary of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities; and Mayra Negrón-Roche, chief operating officer of IBA.

Boston, MA Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción (IBA), broke ground on Casas Borinquen, a redevelopment project that will preserve and modernize 36 affordable housing units across nine historic brick townhomes and add five new affordable units within 403 Shawmut Ave., the former site of IBA's administrative offices.

Casas Borinquen will be the fifth addition to the housing developments that make up Villa Victoria, IBA's community-led housing portfolio in the South End. The nine townhouse-style buildings, located along Upton, Shawmut, Aguadilla, and West Brookline Sts., feature a mix of one- to four-bedroom units that have long served low- and moderate-income families. Through this project, IBA is making meaningful investments in the long-term stability of these families, ensuring that current residents can remain in the neighborhood, and new ones can move in, while benefiting from modern, sustainable, high-quality homes.

"IBA acquired this building in 1973, and ever since we've used it for delivering high-quality programs to our residents and as our operational offices. About five years ago we moved out of it as we continued to grow, and our vision was always to convert it to more needed housing for our neighborhood. Today, we make that vision a reality," said Dr. Vanessa Calderón-Rosado, CEO of IBA. "This project represents more than just housing, it's a reflection of our mission to preserve community, prevent displacement, and invest in homes where families can thrive. At a total cost of \$49 million, we are showing our commitment to equity while also investing in climate-resilient development."

The Casas Borinquen redevelopment will fully electrify all existing and new units, replacing outdated systems with energy-efficient heat pumps, electric appliances, and modern HVAC. The project also includes roof replacements, masonry repairs, and the installation of a groundwater recharge system to enhance climate resilience. A new ground-floor community space will foster resident connection and support future programming. The five new two-bedroom units, developed within IBA's former headquarters, represent a creative, mission-driven reuse of space in service of housing equity.

"At IBA, we often say that we are the community, not just in it – and Casas Borinquen is a powerful reflection of that belief," said Mayra Negrón-Roche, COO of IBA. "With Casas Borinquen, we honor our history while building a future where residents can continue to feel safe, proud, and rooted in the place they call home. It's about creating much needed affordable housing in Villa Victoria to address the needs of the city and in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts."

"Every single day Massachusetts is threatened with losing individuals and families to the affordability crisis that is hitting the entire Commonwealth. So, your work is consequential. It's meaningful, it's important. And on behalf of Governor Healey, Lieutenant Governor Driscoll, I want to say thank you. Not just for what you're doing on this project, but for what you do across your portfolio," said Ed Augustus, secretary of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities.

"I want to congratulate Vanessa and her team on what they've accomplished with this development. The preservation of critically important housing in a very, very, very expensive neighborhood, but

also looking for opportunities to increase the portfolio, to increase this project,” said Sheila Dillon, chief of housing for the city of Boston and director of the mayor’s Office of Housing.

“I want to congratulate [IBA] on your stewardship of the assets in your portfolio. This is a very expensive part of the city and you have tended these assets in a way of that means the affordability will be here five years from now, ten years from now, fifty years from now, and we really appreciate that commitment,” said Mark Teden, vice president of multifamily programs at MassHousing.

Expected to be completed in 2026, the project is being developed in collaboration with Social Impact Collective and Davis Square Architects and is made possible through funding and support from MassHousing, Santander, Hudson Housing Capital, the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC), and the Massachusetts Historical Commission.

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