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Lincoln's largest eco-conscious construction project takes shape

August 15, 2025 - Construction Design & Engineering



Lincoln, MA The 28-unit expansion at The Commons in Lincoln, a not-for-profit continuing care retirement community (CCRC), is beginning to transform the campus. The project, which also includes renovations to existing residential buildings and enhancements to the grounds, is the largest to take place in town since they adopted the Massachusetts Specialized Energy Code.

Voters at Lincoln's 2023 Town Meeting opted in to the state's Specialized Code, which ensures new

construction is consistent with achieving a net-zero Massachusetts economy by 2050. The code, which took effect on January 1, 2024, covers residential low-rise construction as well as commercial and multi-unit construction in town. The Specialized Code includes a set of net-zero performance standards to address a building's energy efficiency, heating loads, and electricity use. The Specialized Code goes beyond the state's Stretch Code, which Lincoln had previously adopted in 2012.

"Our project shows that you can build environmentally friendly projects at scale to both address housing needs and meet ambitious carbon reduction goals," said The Commons in Lincoln campus executive director Reynaldo LeBlanc. "We're enhancing the campus for our current and future residents to meet their active lifestyles and refined expectations. But we're also investing in the future with a thoughtful project that reduces our carbon footprint."

The expansion includes two three-story additions to the main building, Russell House, an addition to Flint House, and eight new cottage-style homes. Three of the new apartment units are designated affordable. Upgrades to common areas, new resident gardens, and other sustainable amenities are also part of the project.

Features of the new units that comply with the Specialized Code include:

- High performance building envelope;
- Eco-friendly, cellulose wall cavity insulation;
- Triple-pane, high performance windows with a U-value of .16;
- LED lighting;
- Solar-ready roofs;
- All electric units that meet efficiency standards; and
- Electric heat and energy efficiency mechanical systems with integral ERVs.

The Commons in Lincoln is committed to reducing the community's carbon footprint in a wholistic, meaningful way. As such, the project also incorporates sustainability measures outside of the new units, including:

- Electric vehicle chargers;
- Dark sky-compliant exterior lighting; and
- Planting plan to complement the campus' natural ecosystem and surrounding conservation land.

The commitment to a greener campus is an extension of The Commons' environmentally minded residents, who maintain gardens, lead recycling efforts, and run a composting program.

Of the 28 new units 19 are already under deposit. The first residents are expected to move in spring 2026.