

OPINION > EDITORIALS

Editorial: Devenscrest's affordable housing victory



Devenscrest residents and their supporters hold a protest rally on Littleton Road to raise awareness about looming evictions if residents don't vacate for renovations that will result in much higher rents. Front, from left, residents Lee Sprague, Denise Perrault, and Amy Lombardo. Julia Malakie/Lowell Sun



By **EDITORIAL**

PUBLISHED: August 12, 2025 at 12:22 AM EDT

In the midst of all the discouraging news about the increasingly unaffordable cost of housing in this state, we'd like to highlight a small victory in that seemingly unwavering uphill battle.

To the winners, Devenscrest Village, go the spoils of retaining their homes at a price they can afford.

Four years ago, a group of tenants took on a luxury residential and commercial property developer that wanted to “revitalize” their affordable community.

Affordable housing describes units that working families can afford without a subsidy, a description that would no longer apply to their apartment complex if the new owner had its way.

The acquiring concern, Brady Sullivan Properties, a New Hampshire-based development firm of luxury apartments and high-quality commercial spaces, began renovating units, which substantially increased rents and resulted in numerous evictions of those who could no longer afford to live there.

Notices followed, informing other residents they needed to leave their homes within 60 days, what state Sen. Jamie Eldridge described at the time as “scorched-earth tactics to clear out a neighborhood....”

[Read More](#)

00:00

02:00

Devenscrest Village, a historic post-World War II housing development consisting of 110 apartment units located in an enclave off Littleton Road, had offered affordable two- and three-bedroom apartments for low- and moderate-income tenants for many years.

In the throes of a severe housing crisis of its own, state government initially offered only moral support to the plight of this small group of priced-out renters.

In a meeting in early February last year, Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities Secretary Ed Augustus met with Devenscrest Tenants Association members to “talk about efforts to save their housing from real estate speculators,” according to the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute (MLRI), an organization supporting the Devenscrest group.

MLRI attorney Ann Jochnick said at the time that Devenscrest is a “perfect example of why affordable homes in Massachusetts are disappearing, and why we need Gov. Healey’s Housing Bond bill to protect homes like this and the families who live there.”

But other than further publicizing the housing crisis being exacerbated in part by predatory developers like Brady Sullivan, there wasn’t much of a “helping hand” the state could lend.

It appeared that only an intervention by another private entity could save Devenscrest from becoming another affordable-housing casualty.

That potential white knight surfaced in the name of Schochet Companies. By 2023, the Braintree-based developer, known for preserving affordable housing and working with tenants to remain in their homes, had partnered with DCTA in an effort to purchase Devenscrest and retain its current tenants and affordable rents.

Schochet President Richard Henken had proposed a plan aimed at finding a firm that would buy and manage Devenscrest and keep the rents affordable. He even offered to buy the complex, but at first Brady Sullivan expressed no interest in selling.

Jochnick said MLRI would keep trying to come up with a price that Brady Sullivan finds acceptable. In her view, it could be a win/win for both parties, including the developer, who could “make a profit and do the right thing at the same time.” she said.

Schochet's and Jochnick's persistence paid off. Schochet signed a purchase and sales agreement for the development in March.

And thanks to a significant commitment from the state, the Devenscrest Village Tenants Association, the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute and state housing officials announced on Aug. 5 that the new buyer will keep families in their homes with rents they can afford.

"We are so grateful to the Commonwealth for its funding commitment as we've been working tirelessly with our public and private partners to figure out a way for our families to stay in the community we love, with neighbors we know, at prices that we can afford," DCTA President Elizabeth Sheriff said in a statement.

Gov. Maura Healey recently announced a funding award that will help make the transaction possible.

Her administration unveiled \$182 million in low-income housing tax credits and subsidies to 21 rental housing developments — including Devenscrest Village — that will create or preserve 1,245 homes across Massachusetts.

These awards, made possible in part through the Affordable Homes Act and Healey's tax-cuts package, raised the low-income housing tax credit to \$60 million annually, a \$20 million increase that allows the state to support more affordable housing production.

Devenscrest Village Tenants Association, an affiliate of Schochet Companies, will purchase the property, undertake necessary rehabilitation, and add affordability restrictions to multiple units in several different Devenscrest buildings.

Schochet's president said while some details are yet to be finalized, the state action is a critical milestone moving his company close to consummating the agreement with current property owner Brady Sullivan Properties.

Eldridge, whose district includes the Devens' communities of Ayer and Harvard, also should also receive credit for standing by Devenscrest residents in their time of need.

In a January 2024 opinion piece published in the newspaper, he affirmed his commitment to maintaining affordable housing in the commonwealth.

“The people who live at Devenscrest take care of their homes and want to stay in their community,” Eldridge said. “If we’re going to make Massachusetts an affordable place for working families to live, we need to help them.”

We agree.

Columnist's Cut: Get our latest columns, including expert opinions, Ask the Psychic, and more—delivered straight to your inbox!

SIGN UP

By signing up, you agree to our [Terms of Use](#), [Privacy Policy](#), and to receive emails from Lowell Sun.

And in the end, a public-private partnership made that commitment a reality.

Around the Web

REVCONTENT

