

The City of Boston and the Fenway Community Development Corporation Celebrate the Acquisition and Renovation of the Newcastle Saranac Apartments

The renovation preserves 97 units of income-restricted housing in the South End



BOSTON – Tuesday, June 7th, 2022 - Building on the City of Boston’s commitment to preserving affordable housing in Boston, Chief of Housing and Director of the Mayor’s Office of Housing Sheila Dillon today joined the Fenway Community Development Corporation (CDC), their development partner Schochet Companies, and South End/ Lower Roxbury residents to celebrate the ribbon cutting on the renovations that preserved 97 units of affordable housing at the Newcastle Saranac Apartments located on Columbus Avenue and Northampton Street in the South End/ Lower Roxbury.

“I am proud that together with our partners, we were able to save the tenancies of the people living here,” Sheila Dillon said. “We are continually designing new programs and strategies to help renters in Boston, and I am proud that the Acquisition Opportunity Program helped preserve these affordable homes. This is a huge success for this neighborhood, and I look forward to continuing to work with Fenway CDC, MassHousing, and other partners here today to protect and preserve Boston’s affordable housing stock. Together, we have protected these residents from displacement, and revitalized the character of this building while preserving affordability in this community.”

“It took the City of Boston, the Commonwealth, and numerous quasi-public entities, banks and investors to rescue these apartments,” said Leah Camhi, Executive Director of the Fenway CDC. “The families at Newcastle Saranac are guaranteed affordable homes for years to come due to all their Herculean efforts.”

"We are thrilled to have had the opportunity to work with Fenway CDC to preserve and rehabilitate this critical, affordable housing resource," said Richard Henken, President of Schochet Companies. "None of this could have been done without the incredible support and creativity of the Mayor's Office of Housing, Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, CEDAC, and the Boston Housing Authority."

In 2019, with 13A affordability restrictions on the property expiring, the Mayor's Office of Housing worked with the Fenway CDC and Schochet Companies to acquire the building and fund the renovation of its 97 units. Support from the City of Boston's Acquisition Opportunity Program allowed the Fenway CDC to purchase the building, protecting existing tenants from displacement and preserving the long-term affordability of this mixed-income property. Without this long-term preservation strategy, the whole property was at risk of conversion to market-rate housing, with only minimal protections for the current tenants.

Launched in 2017, the City of Boston's Acquisition Opportunity Program offers affordable housing developers the ability to pre-qualify for a set amount of funding, allowing them to be more competitive in Boston's fast-moving real estate market. The Acquisition Opportunity Program has successfully acquired at-risk units of housing from the open market, preserved tenancies, and created new long-term income-restricted housing.

Of the 97 units, 82 are affordable to households earning at or below 80 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI), with eight of those units being supported by project-based Section 8 rental subsidy and 30 supported by Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program vouchers. 69 units are affordable to households earning at or below 60 percent of AMI.

The renovations on the Newcastle Saranac Apartments included extensive masonry repairs, roof and window replacement, kitchen and bathroom upgrades, and mechanical, electrical, and plumbing system overhauls.

"The deep affordability of these apartment homes for nearly a hundred households, contrasted with the rents of market-rate housing in the area, made their preservation especially critical for maintaining the vibrancy and diversity of the neighborhood," said MassHousing Executive Director Chrystal Kornegay. "Thanks to a strong collaborative effort by the Commonwealth, the City of Boston, the Community Economic Development Assistance Corporation, the Fenway CDC, the Schochet Companies, and especially the residents of Newcastle Saranac, the community saw these affordable homes preserved and substantially renovated."

The acquisition and preservation of this building were made possible through significant support from the Mayor's Office of Housing, the Boston Planning and Development Agency's (BPDA) Inclusionary Development Program, the State's Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), MassDevelopment, MassHousing, Massachusetts Housing Investment Corp (MHIC) and the Community Economic Development Assistance Corporation (CEDAC).

Mayor Michelle Wu believes that increasing affordable housing opportunities is the foundation of an equitable recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. Towards that, she recently announced studies to assess the current Linkage fee and inclusionary development levels and updated transfer fee legislation. She has started an audit of City-owned property and recently announced a rent stabilization advisory group, led by the Mayor's Office of Housing. The updated transfer fee legislation, if passed by the Massachusetts Legislature, would give Boston the ability to implement a transfer fee of up to two percent of the purchase price of any private real estate sale over \$2 million as a means to generate additional funding for affordable housing.

Mayor Wu's housing security legislative package proposes new tools in addition to strengthening current ones to leverage Boston's prosperity and create sustainable wealth opportunities that make Boston a more inclusive and equitable city. The proposed housing security bills seek to help tenants, particularly the elderly, to remain in their homes, and create additional funding for the renovation of affordable housing developments like Newcastle Saranac Apartments.

About the Mayor's Office of Housing (MOH)

The Mayor's Office of Housing is responsible for housing people experiencing homelessness, creating and preserving affordable housing, and ensuring that renters and homeowners can obtain, maintain, and remain in safe, stable housing. The department develops and implements the City of Boston's housing creation and homelessness prevention plans and collaborates with local and national partners to find new solutions and build more housing affordable to all, particularly those with lower incomes. For more information, please visit the MOH [website](#).

About Fenway Community Development Corporation

Fenway CDC is a 49-year-old organization that works to preserve the Fenway as a vibrant and diverse neighborhood by developing affordable housing, providing programs that enrich lives, and ensuring that community voices shape decisions about the neighborhood. Fenway CDC helps community members not only find affordable housing, jobs and educational opportunities but also access fresh food, financial coaching, and wellness programs. The CDC's community planning and organizing efforts advocate for policies that address housing insecurity and affordable housing shortage across the city.

About the Schochet Companies

The Schochet Companies is a full-service real estate development and management company founded by Jay R. Schochet more than forty years ago. Since that time the company has developed, owned, and/ or managed more than 7,000 apartments, the bulk of which are affordable, and more than 600,000 square feet of retail and commercial space throughout New England and on the West Coast. Today, Schochet Companies owns and/ or manages more than 5,000 apartments and 100,000 square feet of commercial space throughout New England. Headquartered in Braintree, the company employs more than 170 people. For more information about Schochet please visit www.schochet.com.