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HARVARD GAZETTE ARCHIVES

Summers, Menino break ground for new units

It takes a village to build affordable housing in Allston

By Beth Potier
Harvard News Office

In a show of community partnership, Harvard President Lawrence H. Summers stood shoulder-to-shoulder and shovel-to-shovel with Boston Mayor Thomas Menino and community, city, and state leaders Thursday (Dec. 4) to break ground for 50 future units of affordable housing in Allston. The Brian J. Honan Apartments, named to honor the late city councilor from Allston-Brighton who died in 2002, will comprise nine buildings on a site once occupied by Legal Seafood's fish processing plant.

Harvard helped enable this project with a \$2.8 million grant, one of the largest grants ever made by a single private institution to an affordable housing project in Boston. But the array of politicians and community activists who delivered remarks, including U.S. Congressman Michael E. Capuano, repeatedly demonstrated that the housing success was a collaborative effort.

"It takes a whole community to get this housing done, and that's what we have here today," said Menino, recognizing the Allston Brighton Community Development Corporation, which developed the project, as well as the support of Harvard and state and city organizations. Allston-Brighton, with a significant student population living alongside long-time family residents and newer immigrants, has long felt the

squeeze of the high housing costs that burden the region.

Summers reiterated the University's commitment to the neighborhood.

"It is very important for Harvard, which is going to be a larger part of Allston-Brighton's future than it has been of Allston-Brighton's past, to do our part as partners in making this a wonderful place for all to live and to work," he said. Summers praised the work of the Allston Brighton Community Development Corp. as well as Menino's efforts.

"There is no mayor in this country who cares more about his city, who does more every day, bit by bit, place by place, to make it a better place," he said.

Harvard's contribution, a gap financing grant in support of Menino's "Leading the Way" affordable housing program, made it possible for the Allston Brighton Community Development Corporation to purchase the 70,747-square-foot industrial property. Among the apartments, several will be three-bedroom units suited to families, four will be for people with disabilities, and five will be designated for homeless people.

Summers lauded the development's namesake, city councilor and Allston-Brighton resident Brian J. Honan, who died suddenly at age 39. "It gives me particular pleasure that we are able to name these apartments after someone whose life is a powerful example to all the students at Harvard today," he said.

Honan, whose political career was marked by a strong commitment to community and particularly to affordable housing, was represented at the event by many family members, including his parents and his brother, State Rep. Kevin G. Honan.

"Brian loved politics, but more than that, he loved people," said Kevin Honan. "This building will embody dignity, stability, and the notion of a community taking care of its own people. ... Brian would be so proud that this is his legacy."

Harvard's investment in Allston, which includes other affordable housing and education initiatives, helps solidify the University's role as a community partner in its future neighborhood. In the coming decades, Harvard will extend its campus onto the 200 acres it currently owns in the Boston neighborhood.

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