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News

University Helps Fund Affordable Housing

For 50 families, new Allston apartment complex will become home

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By **CHARLES J. MCNAMARA** and **MATTHEW R. NAUNHEIM**
Contributing Writers

University President Lawrence H. Summers helped break ground on a new affordable housing project in Allston yesterday, reiterating his support for the continued development of Harvard's new neighborhood.

As light snow fell, Summers, Boston Mayor Thomas M. Menino and Rep. Michael J. Capuano—who sits on the Housing and Urban Development Committee in Washington, D.C.—tossed small piles of sand with shiny shovels to signal the beginning of construction on the Brian J. Honan Apartment Complex.

The complex will be composed of nine new buildings on 33 Everett St., with the capacity to provide homes for 50 families, including five housing units for the homeless and three for disabled individuals.

The site is currently occupied by an abandoned, dilapidated Legal Sea Foods fish processing plant. Menino said that a housing project of this size requires the support of the whole community and thanked Harvard for “stepping up to the plate” and offering to help.

Harvard provided 20 percent of the project's funding, which was developed by the Allston Brighton Community Development Corporation (ABCDC), an urban development organization dedicated to improving the quality of neighborhoods.

The University owns hundreds of acres of land in Allston, and plans to build a new campus there.

ABCDC President Chris Clamp, who led the ceremony, said in her speech that the project is designed to provide cheaper housing alternatives for Allston families.

A family of four must currently spend \$70,000 a year in rent for a three-bedroom apartment in Allston, she said, and less than one third of Allston families can pay that price. Clamp said Harvard's support was crucial to the project's successful start.

Summers—who joked that Menino had used his “capacity to twist arms” to get the project realized—said that it is important for Harvard to be a part of the future of Allston and Brighton.

“It was once famously said that it takes a village to raise a child. I would say also that it takes capital to build a village,” he said.

Jane Wallis-Gumble, director of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, reminded the crowd of the importance of providing housing to low-income families.

“As we stand here and shiver, at least we know we have a place to go home to,” she said as the crowd stood in the below freezing temperatures.

The apartments are being built in memory of Brian J. Honan, an active member of the Neighborhood Housing Trust of Allston who died last year.

Honan's brother, State Representative Kevin G. Honan, who was there with other members of his family, said his brother would be pleased to see more affordable housing being built in the neighborhood. He remembered that the neighborhood used to smell like fish when he was a child—and this development would be a big improvement.

“This will provide decent and affordable housing in our neighborhood,” he said.

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