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\$40 million in federal money to bolster city housing developments

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(Suzanne Kreiter/Globe Staff)

Mayor Thomas Menino speaks to Ruth Barkley, a tenant and activist at the Cathedral development in the South End. The city said about \$11 million will be used to upgrade 56 units across three buildings through an "innovative greening program."

By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

City officials announced Monday that \$40 million in federal stimulus funds will be used to improve four development projects.

The city housing authority projects, which are expected to create nearly 200 jobs, will upgrade two Jamaica Plain developments, along with one in the South End and another in South Boston, according to a city news release.

"This is an excellent opportunity for us to improve our residents' quality of life and to put people back to work," Mayor Thomas M. Menino in a statement. "The City of Boston is leading the way in developing green affordable housing opportunities."

In South Boston, \$22 million will go toward developing a portion of the Old Colony development site into "innovative, high-efficiency affordable housing for current residents," the city said.

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The first phase of the project entails demolishing 164 existing distressed units and constructing 116 new affordable rental units. A 10,000 square foot community center and outdoor recreation space will also be built in phase one, which is expected to be complete in 2012.

At the Cathedral development in the South End, around \$11 million will be used to upgrade 56 units across three buildings "through an innovative greening program," said the release.

"Improvements will include new kitchens and baths, a new high-efficiency heating and hot water system and other energy efficient enhancements," city officials said, adding that work should be complete about one year from now.

Around \$4 million will go toward creating a Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly Service Center for Frail Elders at the Armory Street housing development in Jamaica Plain.

The project will build a "full-service center serving the needs of frail elders and people with disabilities who are over the age of 55," the release said.

Services, which will be free for residents, will include primary care, specialty care, dental and eye care, prescription drugs, home health services, rehabilitative services, nutrition, respite care, and transportation assistance.

The project will also include renovating approximately 7,000 square feet of former city housing authority administrative offices into common space and the creation of 12 apartments for an on-site, 24-hour care center to support the needs of frail elders, city officials said.

The remaining \$3 million will be used to rehabilitate "a severely distressed building at the Bromley-Heath development in Jamaica Plain.

The development's 15 units, including three handicap-accessible units, will receive green upgrades and new floor plans. Work at the development will begin Wednesday and should be completed about two years afterward, the release said.

The city has received \$73 million in stimulus funding for housing authority projects to date. A \$33 million formula-based grant funded several other projects, including \$10 million for the construction of 100 affordable, energy-efficient units at Washington Beech in Roslindale, as well as \$4 million for the renovation of 213 bathrooms in Charlestown and \$3.8 million for 152 bathrooms and kitchens at the Mary Ellen McCormack development in South Boston, the release said.

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