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ROXBURY

Mixed-used development to be unveiled at formerly vacant plot

Posted by Matt Rocheleau November 30, 2010 02:23 PM [E-mail](#) | [Print](#) | [Comments \(0\)](#)

By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

After a 25-year vacancy, a Roxbury site formerly occupied by a two baking companies over a 40-year span will become home to a mixed-use development building unveiled Wednesday.

The completion of the \$22-million, private and publicly-funded development led by Nuestra Comunidad Development Corporation was celebrated at a ribbon-cutting ceremony today with Governor Deval Patrick, Mayor Thomas Menino, other officials and local residents.

Formerly home to Kasanof Bakery, the site on Blue Hill Avenue comprises a 72,000 square-foot, four-story building with 48 affordable rental housing units, 3,650 square feet of commercial space and a community room, the development corporation said.

The organization hopes to find a retailer to lease around 1,200 to 1,300 square feet of the commercial space, while a larger portion of the ground-floor commercial space has been leased for offices by a property management company, said Nuestra Comunidad's Executive Director David Price.

The project was first announced over five years ago including a two-year community-input planning period, city officials said. It received \$4 million in city funding and \$6.7 million in state subsidies including with \$3.8 million in tax credit assistance from federal stimulus money. Plans to construct 23 additional homeownership units on the property have been put on hold until there is greater demand in the housing market.

The development corporation which primarily serves Roxbury and North Dorchester saw heavy demand – around 1,600 applications – for the 48 new two- and three-bedroom apartment units.

"It shows how much there's still a real need out there," Price said in a phone interview Tuesday.

"During construction, this project brought much-needed jobs to the area with 38 percent of those hired from the three surrounding zipcodes," he added in a city release Wednesday. "Now this beautiful development will provide housing for 48 families for generations."

Applicants selected for an apartment through a lottery process are expected to begin moving in around mid-December and the units should be fully occupied

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The nearly three-acre site at 233 Blue Hill Ave. was occupied by Kasanof's Baking Company from around 1965 to 1988, which had taken the space over from the Paramount Baking Company that operated there from 1950 to 1964, according to the city's redevelopment authority. That plot has also been used for leather manufacturing in the late 1800's, for a laundry facility, and for a warehouse.





The development will be dedicated in honor of **Thomas I. Atkins**, a former Roxbury resident who fought for racial justice. Boston's first African-American city councilor and a local and national NAACP leader, Atkins died two-and-a-half years ago after a being diagnosed of Lou Gehrig's disease 15 years prior.

"The Thomas Atkins Apartments will further strengthen this community and serve as a long-lasting tribute to the life of a man who worked so hard to ensure equal opportunity for all," Gov. Patrick said in the release.

The city's Blue Hill Avenue Revitalization Initiative was launched in 1994, and has benefited from more than \$1 million of public and private investment toward areas such as housing, commercial development, and infrastructure improvements, according to the mayor's office.

"The Atkins Apartments adds much-needed housing and retail space to this block, but even more so – this building replaces a void in the community that we've been working to fill for many years. It signifies the latest success in our ongoing revitalization of the Blue Hill Corridor," Mayor Menino said in the release.

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