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JAMAICA PLAIN

Judge allows plans for JP homeless housing, medical facility to advance

Posted by Matt Rocheleau January 26, 2012 01:00 PM

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By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

A judge has declined to block a \$10-million, city-approved plan to convert a vacant Jamaica Plain building into a respite care and housing facility for medically vulnerable and disabled homeless.

The decision came more than one year after nearly a dozen JP residents filed a lawsuit against the project developer and the city's redevelopment authority to halt the project.

The nonprofit Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation in partnership with the Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program won a Superior Court judge's ruling to move forward with their project for 461 Walnut Ave., according to [court documents](#).

In the suit, 11 residents who live near the project contended the redevelopment plan would decrease their property values, increase traffic, noise, artificial light, vehicle emissions and improper disposal of medical waste, and reduce on-street parking spaces, the documents show.

"Since I conclude that the lead plaintiffs' alleged injuries are based on speculation, conjecture, and unsubstantiated personal opinions, their alleged injuries are insufficient," Judge S. Jane Haggerty ruled two weeks ago, according to the court documents, posted online by the JPNDC and first reported by the [Jamaica Plain Gazette](#).

The judge also ruled that the lawsuit's co-defendant, the Boston Redevelopment Authority, had provided legally sound and "substantial evidence" in [its decision to approve the project](#) the month before the residents' complaint was filed.

Originally built as a nursing home in the 1960s, the building most recently housed the homeless program's inpatient medical respite program. the Barbara McInnis House, for 15 years before it moved from Jamaica Plain in summer 2008 to an expanded, state-of-the-art headquarters at Jean Yawkey Place in the South End. The program was the first and among the largest medical respite programs for the homeless, [the Globe reported](#).

Under the current plans, the building will be substantially renovated to provide

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and operate a 20-bed respite care facility for homeless people on the first floor, city officials have said. That facility will be owned and operated by the Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program.

Approximately 30 studio rental units intended for medically vulnerable and disabled formerly homeless individuals and a one-bedroom manager's unit will be built on the second and third floors. That space will be owned and managed by the Pine Street Inn.

The project's developers hope to start construction in the fall and complete the redevelopment by late 2013 or early 2014, according Richard Thal, director of the JPNDC, which is listed in the court proceedings under the sub-entity name it is using to develop the project, Walnut Avenue Apartments Limited.

In the meantime, project leaders will continue to seek funding for the plan that is expected to cost between \$10 and \$11 million, half of which is expected to be paid for in low-income housing tax credits and the rest in public sources and philanthropic support, Thal said this week.

The residents who filed the lawsuit were Walter S. Pollard, Jr., Kingsford R. Swan, Catherine M. Fitzgibbon Pollard, David Nagle, Siana LaForest, Jason Heinbeck, Stephanie Heinbeck, Luis Prado, Alex Rhem, Kristen Patzer and Judy Sullivan.

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