



## Federal, State and City Leaders Mark the Start of Construction to Redevelop Mary Ellen McCormack Public Housing Complex

### *Resident Task Force Gains Ownership in Boston's First Public Housing Community*

**BOSTON (June 30, 2025)** – Officials from all levels of government today joined with residents of the Mary Ellen McCormack public housing complex to celebrate the start of WinnCompanies' long-awaited effort to redevelop the historic community, breaking ground on the first phase of construction for the 3,300-unit mixed-income and mixed-use project.

With 200 people looking on, the groundbreaking marked a milestone for residents as it triggered provisions for the Mary Ellen McCormack Task Force to gain an ownership stake in all 1,016 affordable housing apartments planned for the 30-acre site. The project also features the first-ever underground geothermal heating and cooling system installed by WinnCompanies and the Boston Housing Authority.

Massachusetts Congressman Stephen F. Lynch, Governor Maura Healey, Boston Mayor Michelle Wu and other dignitaries spoke near the newly poured footings and foundations for the first apartment building of the project, known as Building A. The 112,000-square-foot structure will provide 94 modern apartments for low-income families currently living at the Mary Ellen McCormack community when it is ready for occupancy in the fall of 2026.

"This is a proud moment for our partnership with Winn, the Boston Housing Authority and our elected representatives. The Task Force and the residents of this community have been preparing for this day for a long, long time. We have shaped every aspect of this first project from the playground equipment in Veterans Park to the layout of the apartments and the interior finishes. We cannot wait to see the smiles on residents' faces when they move into their new, affordable homes," said **Carol Sullivan, president of the Mary Ellen McCormack Task Force.**

In addition to the \$62 million apartment building, construction of Building A features \$8 million in public infrastructure improvements designed to strengthen climate resiliency and connect the community to surrounding South Boston neighborhoods. It will include a new Veterans Park with an accessible tot lot and splash pad, two-way, separated bike lane, reconfigured public streets and associated intersections with pedestrian enhancements, new street trees, planting areas and pedestrian zones.

"I am genuinely excited that we are at last breaking ground on the long-awaited redevelopment of Mary Ellen McCormack (MEM) Housing Complex," said **Congressman Lynch.** "The vision for the redevelopment started decades ago at a meeting with U.S. Rep. Joe Moakley, Councilor Jim Kelly, Mayor Tom Menino, Rep. Jack Hart, Councilor Michael Flaherty, Boston Housing Authority Director Sandra Henriquez, and members of the MEM Tenant Task Force. That was a long time ago. When fully completed, this project will not only provide new and much-needed housing to residents of one of the oldest public housing developments in the United States, but it will also double the number of units on site, provide senior housing, and allow the MEM Task Force to gain an ownership stake in the new apartments. It will also include a new YMCA Community Center on the property, for which I helped secure \$850,000 in Congressional Community Project

Funding, named in honor of our friend, former BHA Administrator Bill McGonagle. I would like to thank Gilbert Winn and his colleagues at WinnCompanies for their leadership throughout this process, as well as my colleagues in Government - Governor Maura Healey, Secretary of Housing and Livable Communities Ed Augustus, Mayor Michelle Wu, BHA Administrator Kenzie Bok, State Senator Nick Collins, State Representative David Biele, City Councilor Ed Flynn, and City Councilor Erin Murphy."

Built during the Great Depression and opened in 1938, the Mary Ellen McCormack is Boston's first public housing development and one of the oldest in the United States, consisting of 1,016 deeply subsidized apartments across 35 buildings.

"This is going to be absolutely spectacular for our residents to be in healthy, clean, beautiful, state-of-the-art housing, with what people deserve to raise their families," said **Mayor Michelle Wu**. "Housing is the most intrinsic part of how we think about our lives because it's not really about the buildings. It's about the place where you feel safest and most yourself and at home with the people that you love. So, with every building that we're building, with every unit we are adding to our count, that is another family, another generation, that this city, this Commonwealth and this country cares about and values what they are giving to the community."

"For 90 years, the Boston Housing Authority has worked to create and provide quality affordable housing to Boston families. That work began right here at Mary-Ellen McCormack," **BHA Administrator Kenzie Bok** said. "It is impossible to overstate how the legacy of this community, once called the Old Harbor Housing Project, has shaped the BHA, the South Boston neighborhood, the City of Boston and the thousands of families who have called it home across generations. I'm excited to not only see that legacy secured through mixed-income redevelopment, but to know that Boston's oldest public housing community will now be one of its greenest, safest, and most modern. Our residents deserve no less."

The redevelopment will replace all 1,016 public housing units on site, and all current residents in good standing have a right to return. Existing buildings will be demolished in phases in a complex relocation strategy choreographed to maximize existing households moving directly into new apartments. The tenant-paid portion of the rent will not change. WinnCompanies will pay for basic utilities for affordable households. The BHA will retain ownership of the land to preserve permanent affordability for low-income families while management, ownership and maintenance of the buildings will be provided by WinnCompanies.

"The Mary Ellen McCormack Complex redevelopment is a great example of the impact our Affordable Homes Act is having to jumpstart construction of housing, rehabilitate public housing, and lower costs across the state," said **Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey**. "Thanks to the leadership of WinnCompanies, thousands of Boston residents will soon have reasonably priced, modern homes in a vibrant community."

"This is an ambitious and inspired undertaking that has been discussed in Boston for decades. Now, after eight years of intensive planning and permitting, we are starting work on creating a Community of Opportunity that will serve as a national model for fostering long-term economic social and environmental success," said **WinnCompanies CEO Gilbert Winn**. "Working households across the income spectrum will reap the benefits as we transform this 30-acre site, standing alongside our federal, state and city supporters, our nonprofit allies, and our partners at the Boston Housing Authority and the tenant-led Task Force."

Building A will feature 37 one-bedroom units, 44 two-bedroom units, 12 three-bedroom units and one four-bedroom unit. It is being built about 600 feet from the Andrew Square MBTA Red Line subway station, using an efficient U-shaped design with heights that step down from six to four stories, responding to the Andrew Square neighborhood of South Boston.

"Rebuilding New England's oldest public housing development ensures that our commitment to affordable housing in South Boston will endure for generations," said **State Senator Nick Collins**. "I am proud to have collaborated with my colleagues in supporting the Boston Housing Authority and WinnCompanies to turn this vision into reality."

"After years of careful planning and engagement, this transformative project represents a substantial investment in affordable housing and workforce housing," said **State Representative David Biele**. "I have been proud to support this project with my colleagues in government in partnership with the residents of the Mary Ellen McCormack and its Task Force to make this groundbreaking a reality."

Building A will be constructed to meet Passive House certification standards. In addition, the building will be 100% electric with a geothermal system for heating and cooling. A network of 22 closed-loop wells, installed 800 feet beneath the building site in the last few months, will connect heat pumps in apartments and common areas. The geothermal system, combined with the building's Passive House envelope, will achieve energy savings of 25 percent compared to the performance of typical new construction buildings.

"Today, we celebrate years of tireless dedication from the Mary Ellen McCormack Task Force, neighborhood advocates, and community leaders resulting in the long-awaited groundbreaking of 1,016 new affordable housing units. The much-needed redevelopment is critical to providing stable homes and improving the quality of life for all neighbors in public housing - including our seniors, persons with disabilities, veterans and young families - for generations to come," said **Boston City Councilor Ed Flynn**. "With infrastructure upgrades like the Bill McGonagle Community Center and a new Veterans Park, this new Mary Ellen McCormack community will be accessible to all of South Boston. I couldn't be more excited to see it through to completion in 2026."

Work on Building A is expected to create 300 construction jobs. It will be performed under a Project Labor Agreement with significant goals for participation from local residents, low-income residents (known as Section 3 labor), and Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprises (MWBs). Targets are set to direct 40 percent of construction work hours to people of color, 25 percent of work hours for Section 3 laborers and 12 percent of hours for women. There are goals for Minority Business Enterprises to 25 percent construction contract value and Women Business Enterprises 15 percent. The project has a goal to direct 51 percent of construction work hours to City of Boston residents.

"MassHousing is excited to see ground broken for the first phase of the redevelopment of the Mary Ellen McCormack public housing community that is going to replace hundreds of obsolete and distressed units with brand new apartment homes for the residents there," said **MassHousing CEO Chrystal Kornegay**. "This redevelopment effort by the BHA and WinnCompanies is not only going to replace the existing housing, but will add more than 2,200 additional new, mixed-income rental homes and revitalize this entire South Boston neighborhood."

Once Building A is completed, financing will be secured for, and construction will begin on, Building B, which will offer 300 mixed-income apartments, and Building C, which will offer 196 mixed-income apartments, with 172 units reserved for seniors who are 62 or older with on-site resident services and programming.

The project was made possible thanks to a construction loan from the Bank of America; Federal Low Income Housing Tax Credit and Energy Tax Credit equity from Bank of America, a tax-exempt bridge loan and tax-exempt first mortgage loan from MassHousing; a subordinate loan from the Affordable Housing Trust Fund maintained by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing & Livable Communities; a subordinate loan from the BHA; and State Low Income Housing Tax Credit equity from Bank of America with a loan from BlueHub Capital. The Commonwealth and the City of Boston have also committed significant funding toward future buildings and infrastructure in the redevelopment.

"At Bank of America, we know there is a direct link between secure, affordable housing and financial security," said **Miceal Chamberlain, president of Massachusetts for Bank of America**. "Working together with WinnCompanies and Boston Housing Authority, we are creating the opportunity for many in our community to be set on a path to success."

"The AFL-CIO Housing Investment Trust is proud to invest union pensions in the redevelopment of Mary Ellen McCormack," said **AFL-CIO HUT CEO Chang Suh**. "We chose to work with WinnCompanies because they work side-by-side with their residents, and because of their commitment to hiring and training the next generation of union tradespeople."

In all, eight new residential buildings will be built over the course of a decade during Phase One of the redevelopment. There will be 1,310 apartments built, replacing 529 aging public housing apartments for BHA households and creating 781 additional apartment homes for middle income and market rate renters.

Phase One construction will redevelop the northern 18 acres of the property, increasing open space by 73 percent with new pedestrian walking paths, bike infrastructure and gathering spaces. In addition, 33,000 square feet of ground-floor retail space will be created for local small businesses, including a possible grocery retailer. Twenty-five (25) percent of retail space will be offered at below-market leases.

The new community will also include a new Community Center named after former BHA Administrator Bill McGonagle and operated in partnership with the Greater Boston YMCA.

Because the site is susceptible to current and future flooding from nearby Boston Harbor, construction work will raise the grades of the property by 5 to 7 feet. All new buildings will be constructed above the 2070 projected flooding scenario projected by Climate Ready Boston.

WinnDevelopment Vice President Andrew Colbert is leading permitting and overseeing the construction effort – the largest in the company's 54-year history. Lee Kennedy Company, of Quincy, MA, is serving as general contractor for the construction in a joint venture with H. J. Russell & Company (MBE), of Atlanta. The Architectural Team of Chelsea, MA, is the architect for the project.

WinnCompanies expects to begin seeking permits for Phase Two in 2026 so that the remaining 2,000 apartments and open spaces can be developed as soon as Phase One is completed. When the entire project

is completed the Mary Ellen McCormack property will offer 1,016 units of low-income and affordable housing and 2,284 units of workforce and market rate housing.

### **About WinnCompanies**

WinnCompanies is an award-winning owner, developer and manager of high-impact, quality apartment homes, supported by 4,500 team members in 27 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. The company is known as a leading manager of multifamily apartment communities, operating the nation's largest portfolio of affordable housing with a groundbreaking resident services platform. Its community development work focuses on creating and revitalizing mixed-income properties through environmentally sustainable new construction and pioneering adaptive reuse techniques. The company has also been a top manager of privatized housing for members of the U.S. Armed Forces and their families since 2001. Founded in Boston in 1971, WinnCompanies is a family-owned, private company. Learn more at [www.winncompanies.com](http://www.winncompanies.com).

### **About the Boston Housing Authority**

Boston Housing Authority provides quality affordable housing for low-income families and individuals through the public housing and Section 8 rental assistance programs. We foster vital communities that are essential to our city's economic diversity and way of life. As the largest housing provider in Boston, we bring stability, opportunity, and peace of mind not only to the thousands of low-income families we support, but to the city as a whole. Learn more at [www.bostonhousing.org](http://www.bostonhousing.org).

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