



## EDITORIAL

# City of Homes initiative helps affirm dreams

**T**HE CITY OF HOMES RECEIVED A WELCOME boost to its effort to live up to its nickname.

The MassMutual Foundation's \$2 million donation to City of Homes initiative strengthens Way Finders' financial ability to bid on, and acquire, blighted single-family homes in Mason Square and North End neighborhoods.

Springfield has always been distinguished by its neighborhoods and improving these areas will bring pride in home ownership to first-time buyers and encourage a sense of community throughout the city.

Way Finders, a Springfield nonprofit agency, plans to rehab the homes and create a lottery, through which qualified potential homeowners can purchase them. The initiative has been supported with \$500,000 from government funds and \$300,000 from Baystate Health. Turning receivership properties into opportunities for home ownership and upward mobility is more than just a sound economic strategy, it's an affirmation of the American dream.

This program will also have a ripple effect. When neighbors see formerly blighted properties restored they'll be motivated to develop their own properties, too. That will have an all-around beneficial effect upon the entire neighborhood.

This is an ambitious program. Way Finders can currently afford to rehabilitate 15 to 20 homes and is already looking at potentially suitable properties.

About half the residents of Mason Square and the North End live below the poverty line, and three-quarters are Hispanic or Black. As MassMutual Foundation president Dennis Duquette aptly put it, opening the prospect of first-time homeownership to this constituency speaks to the very essence of "the American dream," which is built upon the premise that everyone should get a chance.

Nothing delivers the message of a positive future and growth better than the reemergence and restoration of neighborhoods that represent the history and heritage of a community, while encouraging new residents to join their ranks and existing citizens to stay. That is at the heart of the City of Homes initiative, a program being approached in a doable, manageable manner with specific and reachable and realistic goals. The MassMutual Foundation's gift represents a major step toward creating brighter futures for two neighborhoods that represent the fabric of Springfield, while providing opportunity for homeowners who will help shape the city's future.

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