

‘Investment in future’: Mixed-income affordable housing complex to open in Ludlow

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Housing advocates, Way Finders employees and lawmakers attend ribbon cutting for Greenstead Grove, a mixed-income affordable housing complex in Ludlow, on Friday. (Namu Sampath / The Republican) The Republican

LUDLOW — In Ludlow, where nearly all of the available affordable housing is restricted to older adults, a new complex not limited by age will open later this summer.

More than 2,000 people applied to live at Greenstead Grove, a 43-unit development in the southeastern part of Ludlow, offering one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments. The first tenants will get to move in by mid-August.

“We now have 43 new units of quality, affordable homes that can bring safety, stability, opportunity and community to families in town,” said Jim Broderick, a board member for Way Finders, the nonprofit organization that funded the build, and chair of its real estate investment committee, at the ribbon cutting for the complex.

The development is a mixed-income group of apartments: 16 apartments for households that are at or below 30% of the area median income, and 27 slated for households at or below 60% of the area median income.

Six units are considered “accessible”: three for sensory-impaired residents and three for disabled residents.

Amenities like heating, cooling, electricity and hot water are included in the rent. There will be on-site laundry; proximity to schools, including Harris Brook Elementary School, which is right across the street; shopping centers; and transportation.

“This is about the long haul. This is an investment in the future,” said Keith Fairey, president and chief executive officer of Way Finders, a housing and human services organization.

The project, from purchase to opening, Broderick explained, has been underway for almost a decade — which is not uncommon for projects funded by nonprofit groups.

“An affordable housing development project (is) many times more complicated than the typical commercial real estate development project, and it takes much, much longer to complete,” he said. That’s because organizations have to source multiple avenues of funding and receive approvals from the state before finally building the housing itself.

State Sen. Jacob Oliveira, D-Ludlow, said he grew up very close to where this complex is located. He and fellow lawmaker state Rep. Aaron Saunders, D-Ludlow, went to the elementary school across the street.

“There was this true sense of bringing people together, regardless of background, regardless of age, regardless of where you came from. That’s what Ludlow brings to so many families,” said Oliveira.

Oliveira spoke about the need for less age-restricted housing in Ludlow.

“Here in the commonwealth, the fastest migration out of Massachusetts are 25 to 40 year olds, and many of them (are) families,” Oliveira said.

In November, the \$43 million rehab and reconstruction of historic Mill 8, the Clock Tower building, opened 95 mixed-income apartments for those age 55 and older.

Earlier this year, Housing Navigator, a nonprofit agency that advocates for equitable and quality rental housing in Massachusetts and offers a search tool for people to find affordable places to live, reported that 96% of Ludlow’s existing affordable housing is restricted to adults over 55-years-old.

When asked how it was decided that this housing complex would be open to people of all ages, Fairey said, “The need for housing without age restrictions is there.”
