



## Housing projects get major grants Salem, Beverly developments to benefit

By Dustin Luca Staff Writer | Posted: Sunday, December 28, 2014 10:30 am

It's a massive Christmas gift for locals young and old who need supportive, affordable housing, though the gifts won't be available for some time.

The state's Department of Housing and Community Development has announced a \$15 million cash infusion for supportive housing projects around the state, and Harborlight Community Partners in Beverly and the North Shore Community Development Coalition in Salem are among the 15 projects getting a piece of the pie.

Both organizations pursue the same mission, though they support opposite ends of the age spectrum.

North Shore CDC has received support for its Harbor and Lafayette Street project, which will preserve and renovate two buildings in the Point Neighborhood. The work will create 26 affordable apartments, 16 of which will be for tenants between 18 and 24 years old, according to Mickey Northcutt, the agency's CEO.

"We've noticed that about half the young people in our Youth Build program have experienced homelessness at some point in their lives," Northcutt said. "We've been surprised how prevalent an issue that is, so for the last few years we've been thinking of ways that, over the long run, we could create housing opportunities to accommodate those folks."

Harborlight Community Partners, meanwhile, is getting support for major renovations at Harborlight House, an affordable assisted living facility at the corner of Monument Square and Abbott Street in Beverly.

All of the projects focus in some way on supportive housing, a key platform for Gov. Deval Patrick, according to department Undersecretary Aaron Gornstein.

Supportive housing "is a key part of the solution to reducing homelessness over the long term," Gornstein said. "By providing a range of support services — which may include workforce development, education, child care or mental health services — our local, non-profit partners can help to ensure a successful and sustainable tenancy."

### Bigger rooms

Harborlight House, which now has 35 rooms, will create larger rooms for residents, in line with their changing needs.

"From the mid-60s to the mid-90s, the needs of the people have evolved," said Andrew DeFranza, executive director of Harborlight Community Partners. "It has since evolved again."



KEN YUSZKUS/Staff photo: Andrew DeFranza, executive director of Harborlight Community Partners, speaks about Harborlight House in Beverly, which will get more than \$2 million in improvements over the next couple of years.



KEN YUSZKUS/Staff photo: Harborlight House manager Karen Estey stands in the dining room at the Beverly assisted living facility. It will get more than \$2 million in upgrades over the next couple years.



KEN YUSZKUS/Staff photo Harborlight House manager Karen Estey, right, and resident Brenda Baker show off Baker's room, which is about 200 square feet in size. Room size will increase when the assisted living facility undergoes more than \$2 million in upgrades.

In short, the residents take up more space than before — more of them use larger walkers, wheelchairs and more -- but the current rooms are small. The smallest of them is about 200 square feet — not much larger than a walk-in closet with a tiny bathroom on the side.

Brenda Baker, a 72-year-old resident, lives in one of those rooms. She has space for a small bed, a modest TV and a dining room chair. She watches TV by leaning against her headboard, she said.

Baker says she doesn't need a lot more.

"The only thing I would do different if the room was larger is get a lounge chair," she said. "Other than that, this room is nice for me."

The largest rooms have an additional 100 square feet of space.

Five rooms will be removed, and the space will be distributed with other layout changes to increase the size of several rooms, according to DeFranza. Other upgrades will focus on handicapped access, roof work and the dining room.

The project is expected to cost between \$2 million and \$2.5 million, but a restructuring of debt brings the overall cost to about \$6 million, DeFranza said.

Harborlight will receive more than \$3 million, along with 30 rental vouchers.

Construction could start next summer and will take about a year, DeFranza said.

### **A youth community**

North Shore CDC's renovated Point neighborhood properties will contain 26 studio apartments, which will rent for \$425 to \$850 per month, according to Northcutt. Heat and hot water will be included.

The state support will provide vouchers for 16 of the units — 12 for ages 18-24, and four without age restrictions. In those units, the tenant will pay rent equal to 35 percent of his or her income, and the state would pay the rest, according to Northcutt.

"It's so expensive to live here that there aren't any housing options that are an affordable and healthy living environment," Northcutt said. "There are so many effects that come out of that. Without a single place to call home, it's hard for the other aspects of their life to be stable."

One building will contain the 16 apartments for young people plus an apartment for a property manager. Rent for that space will be free, and the tenant will receive a stipend, because as manager, the person will be "on-site eyes and ears, 24/7," Northcutt said.

Overall, the project will cost North Shore CDC \$1.5 million, the balance of which will be covered by a private mortgage, low-income housing credits, tax-exempt bonds and additional state subsidies, he said.

Construction is expected to start and end in 2016.

For more on this story or other story-related inquiries, email [dluca@salemnews.com](mailto:dluca@salemnews.com), call 978-338-2523 or message @DustinLucaSN on Twitter.

[http://www.salemnews.com/news/local\\_news/housing-projects-get-major-grants-salem-beverly-developments-to-benefit/article\\_d1a53903-11e0-5aea-b777-79d28cb68a14.html?mode=story](http://www.salemnews.com/news/local_news/housing-projects-get-major-grants-salem-beverly-developments-to-benefit/article_d1a53903-11e0-5aea-b777-79d28cb68a14.html?mode=story)



KEN YUSZKUS/Staff photo Harborlight House manager Karen Estey and Andrew DeFranza, executive director of Harborlight Community Partners, look over one of the unoccupied smaller rooms at Harborlight House in Beverly. The facility stands to get more than \$2 million in upgrades over the next couple years.