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Cardinal christens housing project

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LOWELL -- The project will lift the burden for seniors struggling with the high cost of living.

New affordable housing units are being built at D'Youville Senior Care on Varnum Avenue.

"There's such a great need for affordable housing, particularly for our seniors," said Cardinal Sean O'Malley, the archbishop of Boston.

Yesterday, O'Malley joined city and state leaders to break ground on the project, which promises 42 rental units for seniors over age 62.

With more seniors facing homelessness this year, the need for affordable units has become critical, officials say.

"The sad thing is we're seeing an increase in senior homelessness," said state Sen. Steven Panagiotakos, D-Lowell, who called D'Youville "synonymous with excellence in senior care."

The Catholic facility offers short and long-term care for seniors, while the new units will be built next to existing senior affordable housing called the D'Youville's Bruyere Gardens.

The project will cost about \$8.4 million, and is being overseen by POUA, a non-profit real estate developer affiliated with the Archdiocese.

The new housing units are being funded by the following sources:

- \$5.7 million from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.
- \$750,000 in Housing Stabilization funds (state Department of Housing and Community Development).
- \$200,000 in Community Based Housing funds (DHCD).
- \$494,895 from the state's Affordable Housing Trust Fund (administered by MassHousing).
- \$350,000 in grant money from the Federal Home Loan Bank of Boston's Affordable Housing Program.
- \$350,000 line of credit from Bank of America.
- \$125,000 in funds from the City of Lowell.

Construction for the units is expected to start in the next few weeks, and will be completed in January 2009.

"It's nice for the elderly to know they have a warm apartment to go to, and don't have to worry about the landlord raising the rent," said Lowell Mayor Edward "Bud" Caulfield.

"Our seniors have worked all their lives and made the city what it is today -- and I'm very happy for whoever utilizes these apartments," Caulfield said.

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