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## **Factory-to-housing development set to open Sept. 1**

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HAVERHILL — The latest downtown factory-to-housing development is set to open the doors to its first tenants next week.

William Grogan, chief operating officer for the nonprofit Planning Office for Urban Affairs, which is building the homes in the Hayes Building on Granite Street, said the complex will open with at least half of its 57 apartments spoken for. The agency is an affiliate of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston.

"Interest has been increasing significantly since we have started to walk people through the units," Grogan said. "Even in the down economy we've been very pleased how the marketing has been going. People are excited to move to downtown Haverhill. There's a lot here and lot going on."

The new homes are among more than 500 apartments and condominiums built downtown in the last few years, most in old, vacant factories. The building is next door to the Washington Street commuter rail station and near the city's bustling restaurant district.

It's also across the street from the future home of a new, \$11 million parking facility in Railroad Square, on which site work began this month.

The development, called The Hayes at Railroad Square, includes one- and two-bedroom apartments, most of which will be reserved for low- and middle-income renters. There also is space set aside on the ground floor of the seven-story building for three businesses. One of the commercial spaces is in the process of being leased to an optometrist, Grogan said.

When the building opens to tenants in about two weeks, Jose Arroyo, 51, will be one of the first to move in. Arroyo, an unemployed Navy veteran who lives in temporary housing in Haverhill, won a lottery for one of the affordable apartments.

"I was looking for a mill building with a loft-style apartment," said Arroyo, who is single and from New Jersey. "I wasn't planning on living in Haverhill, but I've come to really enjoy the small-town feel while at the same time you get the diversity of a city. I also like the architecture of the downtown and the train station being right outside my front door because I take the train to Boston regularly."

Arroyo, who was in the Navy from 1982 to 1988, said he lost his job as a medical interpreter, then got sick and was living in a Veterans Administration apartment in Springfield prior to moving to Veterans Northeast apartments in Haverhill.

"I knew I was being transferred here, part of the process of getting back on my feet," he said. "I checked Craigslist and came across the Hayes at Railroad Square and learned about the lottery. I'm looking to go back to school full time and maybe work part time."

Arroyo said he entered the lottery "on a whim" and "not expecting to win."

"Lo and behold, I was the first one picked out of a hat," he said. "My number (in the lottery) was above 100, so a lot of people were in it."

Rent for the affordable apartments will be between \$750 and \$1,075 per month for the one-bedroom apartments and \$900 to \$1,275 for the two-bedroom apartments, according to brochures on the development.

The affordable apartments are for people and families who make 50 percent to 80 percent of the median income for the Greater Haverhill area, Grogan said. Eighty percent of the median income for a family of four in the area, for instance, is \$64,000 a year, Grogan said. So to qualify for one of the discounted apartments, a family of four must make less than \$64,000 a year, he said.

The agency also has opened a management office around the corner at 13 Railroad Square for anyone who wishes to tour the 81,000-square-foot building or inquire about a unit.

The apartments have large wooden beams overhead and some have brick walls. All of them have oversized windows overlooking downtown. The units are between 700 and 1,500 square feet each.

The Hayes building, originally a box-making factory that served the city's shoe industry, was built in 1894. The property at 14-44 Granite St. is actually two historic mills — one built in 1894 and a taller addition built in 1911.

The project was one of the state's first under a new law called Chapter 40R. That law makes it easier and faster for developers to obtain permits for housing projects near transportation hubs in urban centers.

The developer also has secured 57 spaces for tenants in the new parking garage. Until that facility is ready, they are leasing spaces from the city on nearby Locke Street.

There also are 19 spaces in a lot at the corner of Granite and Essex streets and six spaces in a lot on the opposite side of the building. The developer recently cleaned, hot-topped and landscaped the 19-space lot, which was polluted.

The Planning Office for Urban Affairs has built more than 2,400 units of housing to date. Those developments account for more than \$400 million invested throughout metropolitan Boston, according to agency's website.