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JAMAICA PLAIN/ROXBURY

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## Development planned to be green and clean

By Andreae Downs, Globe Correspondent | July 8, 2007

It's not only the largest community-planned development in Boston, but it is now at the vanguard of environmentally friendly, "smart growth" neighborhood development.

The plans for 11 weed-choked acres near the Jackson Square MBTA Station on the Jamaica Plain-Roxbury line took another step forward last month with the filing of its draft project impact report with the Boston Redevelopment Authority.

The filing means the Jackson Square project, which will include 14 buildings, as well as parks and street improvements, is on track to break ground in September 2008.

In addition, the US Green Building Council, last month told the nonprofit Jackson Square development team that it had qualified to be part of a pilot program for green neighborhood development, establishing a benchmark under the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design certification program.

The result will be a "national standard for green neighborhood design," said Jen Faigel, community development director of Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corp. The corporation is on the development team along with Urban Edge and the Hyde Square Task Force.

Noah Maslan, real estate director of Urban Edge, agreed. "This means they recognize us nationally as a model project," he said.

The team has plans to install green roofs -- which are planted to reduce storm-water runoff, keep buildings cool, and improve air quality -- as well as energy-saving measures for the planned buildings, wind and solar power.

It is also an example of so-called smart growth, which aims to cluster development near existing buildings and public transportation. At Jackson Square, all buildings will be within a quarter-mile of the Jackson T stop, and the development will include bike paths and connections, wider sidewalks, street plantings, and traffic-calming measures.

"We need to solve pedestrian issues in Phase I, so people can cross Columbus safely and we create a destination that is safer," Faigel said.

The green measures will also ensure that the development's long-term operating costs are lower, a plus for a project in which 59 percent of the 372 housing units will be affordable for low- and moderate-income households, Maslan said.

The \$250 million project, scheduled for completion in 2013, will be developed in phases to manage costs and funding cycles, Faigel explained.

Of that cost, an estimated \$5 million is to clean up contamination.

The area was home to several gasoline stations and light industrial concerns, as well as housing, before it was razed to make way for an Interstate 95 extension in 1976. The highway was stopped, and the land has lain fallow since.

The area is next to Bromley-Heath public housing, has an average annual household income of less than \$14,000, and has one of the highest rates of asthma in the state. Thus, the promise of 160 new jobs and efforts to improve air quality are especially welcome.

The subject of innumerable community planning meetings for more than a decade, the development is among the largest ever undertaken by a nonprofit community development corporation in the country, Maslan said.

Besides street improvements to enhance pedestrian safety, the \$90 million first phase will include utility work and

construction of four buildings: 225 Centre St., a six-story building with 103 rental units over ground-floor retail spaces; a 30,500-square-foot Youth and Family Center; a relocated Department of Youth Services facility near Marcella Park; and 1562 Columbus Ave., 39 condominiums for low- and moderate- income owners, over ground-floor retailers, Faigel said.

The pilot-program designation should help the developers raise more funds for its higher-profile green expenses, Maslan said.

The project has already attracted funds from the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative and the Green Building Production Network, among others.

The green roofs, Maslan said, will cover most of the buildings and attract lots of attention.

"People will see the green roofs" from higher buildings or from Columbus Avenue, and be able to access some of them as a kind of elevated park, he said. "It will be a symbol in Jackson Square." ■

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