

Real Estate Roundup

Salvation Army plans 6-acre urban community center

Michelle Hillman/ Journal staff
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One of the largest community centers in Boston is being planned for one of the poorest neighborhoods in the city. The lead developer, The Salvation Army, hopes the 90,000-square-foot center will help change the neighborhood and give the entire community a place to gather.

Set for Dudley Street just outside of Uphams Corner on the Dorchester/Roxbury line, the Ray and Joan Kroc Corps Community Center of Boston will serve a population of 58,000 -- of which 19,000 are children -- who live within a one-mile radius of the future center. Most of the families living in the area live at or near the poverty line and need public assistance to make ends meet.

"You have to go beyond the 6 o'clock news to see what's really there," said Drew Forster, planning coordinator for The Salvation Army Boston. "This neighborhood has seen its share of violence and its one of the reasons we're so anxious to get this center open and operational."

The center is named for the Ray and Joan Kroc Foundation (Ray Kroc founded the McDonald's burger franchise), which donated \$1.5 billion to The Salvation Army in 2004. The Salvation Army then doled out money to plan, develop and build 25 to 30 corps centers across the country. The Dorchester center won out against 29 other applicants and is the only center being constructed in New England as part of the Kroc award.

The massive corps center is planned for a 6.1-acre site in the middle of a dense urban center where extra land is hard to come by. The Salvation Army assembled 54 parcels -- 24 of which were city-owned -- from 13 different owners at a cost of \$15 million.

In addition to assembling six acres in six months, The Salvation Army and the Dorchester/Roxbury community still need to meet a fund-raising goal to make their dream a reality.

While the majority of the center is being paid for with an \$85.5 million gift from the \$1.5 billion gift the Krocs made to The Salvation Army, the community must come up with \$20 million. So far about \$10 million has been raised, said Forster, who said the project will not break ground until all the money is raised.

Forster said the community has backed the project. He said the corps center will provide youth with ways to come together that would never happen on a street corner. The center is being designed with everyone in mind.

Unlike the Salvation Army's typical 20,000- to 30,000-square-foot "box" buildings, the Kroc Center will be a state-of-the-art facility that will "cause people to stop and take notice," said Forster.

Among the extras included in the Kroc Center are a full fitness center; two full basketball courts; a swimming pool with water slides; running track; an auditorium; a 250-seat community performance center and chapel; classroom space; and a test kitchen.

"The community right now does not have a central space where all of the members of the community feel comfortable coming together," said Mark Rosenshein, a project executive with The Architectural Team, which has been working on the design of the project for a year and a half.

Movers and shakers

Newer real estate firms in Boston are attracting some of the region's talent from major investment and development firms.

First up is Duncan Gratton, who was hired by DTZ FHO Partners to work in the asset advisory group as a partner. Gratton was previously with Equity Office Properties Trust, an affiliate of The Blackstone Group.

Gratton joins former Equity colleague Glenn Verrette, who was hired to lead DTZ FHO's property services group in May. Both Gratton and Verrette work with owners of commercial real estate. Gratton was previously managing director of leasing at Equity.

BPG Properties Ltd.'s Albert Corr accepted a position with Ivy Freedman's group Suffolk Advisors in Lexington. Corr will join Suffolk as an adviser and will be involved in the acquisition and management of assets in New England. As a vice president at Philadelphia-based BPG, Corr was responsible for the company's real estate investment portfolio throughout the New England Region. Corr starts with Suffolk Advisors Oct. 1.

Meanwhile, Eastdil Secured LLC's Boston office has hired Anthony Soldi from one of its competitors, Holliday Fenoglio Fowler LP. Soldi joins the capital markets group of Eastdil Secured as a vice president. During his four years at HFF, Soldi secured capital for more than \$2 billion in real estate deals.

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