

Codman Square NDC honors two as it celebrates 35th year

BY CHANIE INFANTE
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Codman Square Neighborhood Development Corp (NDC) celebrated its 35th anniversary last week with a gala awards dinner that reviewed the organization's track record of successful work in and around Dorchester, while honoring two key partners: Alyce J. Lee and Gilbert J. Winn. More than 300 people gathered at the "Codman at a Crossroads" celebration at the Sheraton Boston Hotel. The event included a silent auction and a panel discussion led by Callie Crossley of WGBH with panelists Kim McLarin, associate professor at Emerson College; Tony S. Smith, founder and executive director of New Start Project; and Ron L. Walker II, secretary of the Massachusetts Labor and Workforce Development. The discussion hinged on one of the key questions driving Codman Square NDC's work over the last several years: "How do you manage gentrification when you have many things now in place that are contributing to displacement?"

Gail Latimore, executive director of Codman Square NDC, highlighted the history and accomplishments of the last 35 years. The organization has its roots in the 1981 formation of Codman Housing Development Corp., led by Arthur Young, Cynthia Younger, Jim Keefe and many other community leaders. The organization presently owns 1,400 affordable housing units in and around Dorchester.

Gilbert Winn, Chief



Alyce Lee (center) was honored for her role in the success of the Codman Square Neighborhood Development Corporation during the group's 35th anniversary event last week. At left is Brian Kean of WinnManagement; at right, Codman Square NDC executive director Gail Latimore.

Photo courtesy Codman Square NDC

Executive Officer of Winn Management — and one of the night's honorees — manages the properties. "Codman Square is a place that anybody should want to live in. It has a sense of community and partnership that can only do great things," Winn said.

Brian Kean, executive vice president of Winn Residential, introduced former Codman Square NDC director Alyce J. Lee, who was honored alongside Winn.

Lee started her speech with a sobering reflection on current issues.

"This is a time in our country where lack of compromise, empathy, mass incarceration, greed and bigotry are preventing us from moving forward and destroying families; putting financial pressure on low and working class income families; limiting educational opportunities, and therefore limiting

life opportunities for our young people," said Lee.

"The Codman Square NDC is as important today as it was when it started 35 years ago. [It] is working against all of the tides that will destroy our humanity and make us a country far less than our commitment and our possibility," added Lee.

Latimore pointed to some of the key accomplishments of Codman's more recent past, including efforts to leverage the expansion of the MBTA Fairmount commuter rail line. For years, the train corridor that connects Readville to Boston largely bypassed the communities of Dorchester and Mattapan. Three new stations has been built in the last decade, partly due to the advocacy of groups like Codman Square NDC and partners like Four Corners Action Coalition, whose member Mela Miles was one of the community

members acknowledged at the dinner.

"Thirty-five percent of residents work downtown and cannot get downtown within 15 minutes on the Fairmount Commuter

rail line, an economic umbilical cord, compared to 45 minutes to one hour," said Latimore.

Other initiatives created through the organization include: an urban agriculture project on Ballou Avenue dubbed "Opportunity Affirmation Sustainability Inspiration Success" (OASIS). With the help of neighbors on the street, Codman Square NDC cultivated a 2,600 square foot formerly vacant lot last year and produced 600 pounds of produce that was distributed to the community. Codman Square is one of the top ten most obese neighborhoods in Massachusetts, according to Latimore, making healthy food options a priority.

The group's Men of Color Initiative — developed with a grant through the Prevention Institute's Making Connections for Mental Health and Wellbeing among Men

and Boys — takes aim at mental health, workforce development and financial wellbeing.

Latimore shared news of an upcoming project planned with the support of LISC and the Barr Foundation to begin a solar installation program at properties owned by Codman Square NDC. The plan is for the generated excess energy to be fed back into the accounts of the Talbot/Norfolk neighborhood and assist in reducing energy costs.

District 4 City Councilor Andrea Campbell presented a proclamation recognizing the organization's 35 years of service. Representative Russell Holmes brought a similar citation from the Massachusetts State House.

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