

## SUMMER STREET APARTMENTS

# CTI cuts ribbon on new housing

19 new permanent supportive housing units for city's most vulnerable residents







A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held on March 22, 2024, to celebrate the opening of the Summer Street Apartments, a permanent supportive housing project managed by Community Teamwork Inc. MELANIE GILBERT — LOWELL SUN



Each unit has its own bathroom and kitchenette. MELANIE GILBERT — LOWELL SUN

BY MELANIE GILBERT

[MGILBERT@LOWELLSUN.COM](mailto:MGILBERT@LOWELLSUN.COM)

LOWELL >> In the next couple of weeks, some of the city's most vulnerable residents will move into a building with 19 new permanent supportive housing units. It's a bold new approach in Lowell to a housing and homelessness crisis that has impacted municipalities across the commonwealth.

The ribbon-cutting ceremony was held on Friday at 275-277 Summer St., in the Back Central neighborhood, and celebrated the completion of two years of planning and construction on the Community Teamwork Inc. project.

"It is a very happy day for us," CTI CEO Karen Frederick said. "And I think a very special day. How proud I am to be part of this community where so many people came together to help us."

The Lowell-based nonprofit community action agency works in 70 different communities, and has been providing shelter and other services to families since 1983. It expanded into individual adult housing in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Friday's ribbon cutting represents another bold expansion of CTI's supportive services with outplacement housing for unhoused and other vulnerable, low-income adults. "This is not easy work," Frederick said. "It's challenging. Traumatic sometimes. And you have to have the heart and passion to do it. I'm very proud of the staff that we have that do this work every day."

The ceremony was attended by city and state leadership, including the state delegation of Sen. Ed Kennedy and Reps. Vanna Howard and Rodney Elliott; Assistant City Manager/Director Department of Planning and Development Yovani Baez-Rose and Assistant City Manager Shawn Machado; former state Sen. Steve Panagiotakos; and City Council Vice Chair Paul Ratha Yem and Councilor Rita Mercier.

The renovated building has historically served vulnerable populations in the city for decades, said CTI Chief Program Officer Carl Howell. He cited the many hands and donors who made the project possible, such as Santander Bank, Eastern Bank Charitable Foundation, the Parker Foundation, United Way of Massachusetts Bay, the Massachusetts Alliance for Supportive Housing, the Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance and the city of Lowell.

“Today we gather to celebrate a remarkable milestone — a testament to the power of collaboration, community and spirit,” Howell said. “It is with immense gratitude and heartfelt appreciation that I extend my thanks to each and every one of you who have played a instrumental role in bringing this extraordinary project to fruition.”

He also thanked all the board members in attendance as well as the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities, saying CTI was “grateful for the strong relationship we have with the state.”

Howell said the support at all levels across the community is “shaping a brighter future for those we serve.”

It’s a brighter future that needs lots of funding, an issue that Kennedy addressed, noting that a massive \$4.13 billion housing bond bill was currently making its way through the state Legislature.

“It is a big bill that should provide a big increase to the housing inventory over the next several years,” he said.

Kennedy chairs the Joint Committee on Bonding, Capital Expenditures and State Assets, which is expecting to hold a public hearing on the bill on April 2. The bill then goes to the Joint Committee on Ways and Means before coming before the Legislature for a vote.

“The 19 units is a small step but an important step,” Kennedy said. “Each step is going to be important as we move towards making sure that we have enough housing inventory in Massachusetts and going into the future.”

Yem presented a citation to Frederick on behalf of the city, describing the Summer Street project as “an exciting time for the city.” Lowell is investing a total of \$2 million in American Rescue Plan Act funding for CTI’s supportive housing projects.

“This council and this administration are committed to produce more housing including lowering the zoning requirement for housing production and also working with partners such as CTI to produce more affordable housing,” Yem said.

While acknowledging that 19 units was a small solution to a big problem, Elliott said other communities needed to do their part, too.

“If we can get the other communities throughout the commonwealth to do the work that we do in Lowell, we’d be in a better place,” Elliott said. “We do a great job and our fair share here in Lowell.”



Part of CTI's housing vision includes a 15-bed emergency shelter for youth in the city. It also announced plans to open the Lotus House for Women, a 50-bed shelter for homeless women on Church Street. Howell joked that there will lots "more ribbon cuttings."

Before inviting the assembled group to tour the facility, Frederick closed out the presentation by asking attendees to do a visualization exercise of putting themselves in the shoes of an unhoused person.

"Think about if you were living on the street and had the opportunity to get your very own swipe card and be in a place that is not only safe, but is beautiful and respectful," Frederick said. "I think we all know how important home is to everyone."

CTI is accepting donations of bedding and other essential items for the Summer Street residents. Visit [bit.ly/3vkKffE](https://bit.ly/3vkKffE) for more information.