

Sanderson Place Affordable Senior Housing Celebrates Its Grand Opening *LifePath Provides Resident Support*



by Janis Merrell,
Editor of
The Good Life

On Friday, May 19, community members gathered on the back deck at 120 North Main Street in Sunderland to celebrate the grand opening of Sanderson Place, an affordable housing community. Standing in front of a backdrop of a beautiful, wind-blown field and trees, Gina Govoni, Executive Director of the Franklin County Regional Housing & Redevelopment Authority (HRA) and Rural Development, Inc., said, “It’s so nice to see this building occupied after it was just green grass and hay bales. We are truly grateful to everyone who has helped us get to this moment today. It takes a village to make a development project like Sanderson Place happen.”



Gina Govoni, Executive Director of the Franklin County Regional Housing & Redevelopment Authority (HRA) and Rural Development, Inc. (left), with Charity Day, Associate Director of Client Services at LifePath (right).

Marie Blake, a previous Sunderland resident, told the gathering how she returned to the area to care for her mother and brother in the early 2000’s, then developed health issues of her own and could no longer maintain the family home. In 2014, she couldn’t find an affordable place in the community, so she moved elsewhere. With tears in her eyes, she described how family and friends kept her posted, and “by luck and chance” she was able to come back to Sanderson Place to live.



Sanderson Place residents (and their dogs) socializing.

With an aging population with decreased household income; rent-burdened households; and a lack of affordable housing, senior housing, and accessible housing; Sunderland was an ideal location for Sanderson Place, which offers 30 one-bedroom apartments and 3 two-bedroom apartments. One building is a restored historic house with a new

addition containing 3 ground-floor units, called the Village House. The other “Apartment Building” is newly constructed, has an elevator, and houses 30 units. There are three, 812 square foot, two-bedroom apartments and thirty 600-612 square foot, one-bedroom apartments. Three of the units are fully accessible, all units are visitable by persons using wheelchairs, and two units are sensory-adapted, which means they have unique blinking smoke detectors for the hard of hearing. Heat, hot water, AC, and electricity are included in the rent, there is a community room with a lounge and dining area, the aforementioned outdoor deck with expansive views, a fully-equipped fitness center, on-site laundry, locked mailboxes, secured building access including security cameras and an intercom with video screens, and ample on-site parking.

A LifePath coordinator is also onsite to help residents find the support services they need. According to Govoni, “LifePath is orienting the Sanderson Place residents to their new community by locating nearby resources and services.

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LifePath’s social events are also creating community for these new neighbors.”

Diane Robie, Director of Client Services at LifePath, said, “We are thrilled to have affordable housing options at such a beautiful site. Services such as meals, access to community resources, educational sessions, and care coordination will help residents maintain housing stability and age in place.”

Charity Day, Associate Director of Client Services at LifePath, added, “LifePath is excited to partner with HRA to coordinate those activities and services for residents at Sanderson Place.”

In addition to the amenities and LifePath’s support services, green building and sustainability features are also incorporated into Sanderson Place. Highlights include preservation of the wetland area on the property, energy-efficient buildings, efficient electric-fuel mechanical systems, PV solar panels for production of clean energy, an EV car charger station, and a back-up generator.

Sanderson Place was developed

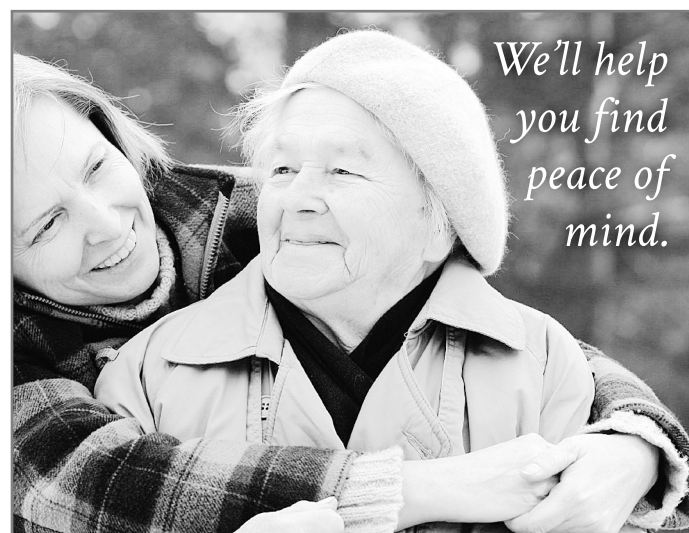


A view of Sanderson Place and surrounding lands.

during the pandemic, with a 22-month construction timeline, supply chain delays, and associated cost overruns due to those delays. Govoni recognized the patience of all involved, including the organizations that funded Sanderson Place, saying, “The pandemic elongated this project for all of us, and we are glad to have entities at the state level, particularly the Community Economic Development Assistance Corporation and Massachusetts Housing Investment Corporation, and Greenfield Savings Bank at the local level, who have worked with us through extensions, amendments, and increases.” She also recognized the patience of the tenants—some who waited over 9 months to move in from the time they applied to the lottery.

In addition, Govoni spoke about the power of partnership, thanking Valley Community Development Corporation for taking the lead in making this project happen. She mentioned town support was also critical—stating neighbors, the town CPA, and elected officials have all been tremendously supportive.

Eligibility for all Sanderson Place units is limited to households with at least one household member at or over the age of 62. Homes are affordable for households earning up to 30%, 50%, and 60% Area Median Income (AMI) and fourteen of the units have project-based vouchers. Visit <https://fcrhra.org/properties/sanderson-place-sunderland/> to learn more or to download an application for the waitlist. Applications for the waitlist can also be picked up in person at the HRA office at 241 Millers Falls Road in Turners Falls, Massachusetts.



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