



CDC Head Marks His 1st Anniversary



Reflecting on his first year as the executive director of the Fenway Community Development Corporation (FCDC), Steven Farrell was grateful for taking the wheel of a well-oiled machine and for experiencing the close-knit community firsthand, with a little help from his 74-pound Rhodesian Ridgeback, Colby.

It was at Fenway Porchfest last year that Colby helped Farrell make a natural connection.

“We’re walking towards Ramler Park and we pass by a woman who’s coming out and she’s like, ‘Oh what a lovely dog. I bet she’s a very good girl,’” Farrell said in an interview over the phone. He happened to recognize the dog appreciator as a community leader he had been looking to connect with during his first months leading the FCDC. “I meet her in the middle of Porchfest, in a very opportune way at a neighborhood event in a beautiful spot in the neighborhood. It was just striking to me at that moment how lucky I was to have the job I have.”



decade and handed over a widely successful track record of creating affordable housing opportunities for Fenway residents during an ongoing housing crisis. The FCDC has, in partnership with other community organizations, developed over 600 affordable homes that have housed thousands of residents over the past four decades.

“I was very fortunate to be the leader of an organization that was in very, very good shape. So, my first priority was to listen.” Farrell said. “The long-term challenge for the Fenway CDC is the availability of future projects. There is no vacant land in Fenway, buildable lots, those opportunities are minimal. Suneeth John is the real estate director here. He and his team have done an exemplary job of squeezing water out of rocks, squeezing homes out of parking lots.”

One of the first projects Farrell saw to completion was the 27 affordable units at 72 Burbank Terrace, right next door to the FCDC offices. Its first ground up development in decades, the project was nearly complete when Farrell took over, but the building is now at 100% occupancy.

The biggest success for Farrell, although the project is still ongoing, has been the acquisition of 112 Queensberry Street, where the FCDC is planning to build 24 units of affordable housing at 60% average medium income or below. Seeing a project through those early stages was a vital learning experience on achieving level of community involvement that has given the FCDC the goodwill of its neighborhood.

“We haven’t had a shovel in the ground yet but [I’ve seen] the importance of being in communication with our neighbors and what it takes to finance affordable housing at this stage, in this economy, in this city.” Farrell said.

Community advocacy has also been a major focus for the FCDC. One of its recent initiatives is a postcard campaign supporting rent control, aiming to highlight the issue for both local and state officials. Because Boston can’t enact rent control on its own, it has to come at the state level. The FCDC is supporting an initiative put forward by Senator Pat Jehlen, Senator Adam Gomez, Representative Dave Rogers, Representative Sam Montañó that would lift the statewide ban on rent control and allow local municipalities to impose a cap on rent increases that can’t exceed the rate of inflation in a given year. For Farrell, the past year has been a journey of listening, problem solving and deepening his connection to Fenway.



advocacy, or simply walking Colby through the neighborhood, he has an optimistic vision of a future this community shapes proactively.