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### Innovative, multigenerational housing for seniors and families adopting children from foster care in Easthampton completed and occupied

March 10, 2015 by **MacArthur Foundation**

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The award-winning Treehouse at Easthampton Meadow is the first of its kind in Massachusetts

BOSTON – March 10, 2015 – (RealEstateRama) — A socially innovative, 13-year process to build mixed-income housing for senior citizens and families with foster or pre-adoptive children has been completed and fully occupied. Not only do the homes and apartments of Easthampton Meadow in Easthampton house a unique, multi-generational blend of populations, but the buildings also employ some of the most innovative energy-saving technology available.

Easthampton Meadow is a master-planned community developed by Beacon Communities of Boston and the Treehouse Foundation in collaboration with the City of Easthampton beginning in 2002. This 46-acre village with 17 acres of shared, permanently deed-restricted open space, combines three interconnected neighborhoods and housing options. Permitted in part under Chapter 40B, Easthampton Meadow consists of Treehouse at Easthampton Meadow, The Homes at Easthampton Meadow and seven single-family lots that were sold to buyers to build custom homes. The community addresses local goals and integrates many sustainable development principals, including, deeded open space, higher density development than zoning allowed, a walking/pedestrian system, wetland replication, and Energy Star rated homes.

The state Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and MassHousing provided approximately \$16 million in financing and other direct financial support though federal and state Low-Income Housing Tax Credits. MassHousing specifically provided approximately \$5.2 million in loans for Treehouse at Easthampton Meadow and The Homes at Easthampton Meadow.

#### Treehouse at Easthampton Meadow

An award-winning, socially innovative, mixed-income rental community, Treehouse at Easthampton Meadow is the brainchild of Judy Cockerton, Founder/Executive Director of the Treehouse Foundation. A teacher and businesswoman turned community developer; Cockerton based the idea for the Treehouse community on Hope Meadows, a similarly planned neighborhood in central Illinois. The mission of the Treehouse Foundation is to “inspire a re-envisioning of foster care in America,” with a vision of

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“every child rooted in family and community.”

The Massachusetts Department of Children and Families has recognized Treehouse at Easthampton Meadow as a new community-based permanency model.

Occupied since 2006, Treehouse at Easthampton Meadow has matured into a stable mixed-income rental community. Treehouse was designed to help move children out of foster care into permanent loving families, provide enhanced post-adoption support to their families, and ensure that elders have the opportunity to live connected, engaged and purposeful lives. Over the past nine years more than 100 people, ranging in age from newborn to 96, have invested in one another’s health and well-being.

Treehouse at Easthampton Meadow offers 60 apartment homes, comprised of 48 one-bedroom cottages for people ages 55 and older, and 12 multi-bedroom townhouses for families. Of the 12 family townhomes, six are affordable and six are rented at market rates. All of the one-bedroom apartments are affordable.

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A vibrant Community Center serves as the heart of the community, providing space for neighborhood gatherings, social, educational and community building activities and support services. It includes a Library/Computer Center, commercial kitchen, a multipurpose activity room, and office space for Beacon Residential Management, Treehouse Foundation and the Berkshire Center for Families and Children staff. BCFC is a licensed child welfare agency that provides daily on-site support to children and families as well as the elders who support them. There are also two playgrounds and a community garden.

The Treehouse community received broad support from the City of Easthampton, the Department of Children and Families, and the Commonwealth’s affordable housing agencies. The state agencies recognized the innovative and cost-effective approach to providing housing as well as programs and services for seniors, families, and children in the public foster care system.

Treehouse at Easthampton Meadow and Treehouse Foundation founder Cockerton have received numerous awards as well as local and national media coverage. The development has been honored by the Affordable Housing Tax Credit Coalition, the National Apartment Association and the Massachusetts Rental Housing Association.

Cockerton has been recognized as a Congressional Angel in Adoption and an Encore.org Purpose Prize winner. She has also received Lesley University’s Margaret A. McKenna Community Service Award for her innovative work on behalf of children whose lives have been impacted by foster care.

“We are profoundly grateful to Beacon Communities, the Department of Children and Families and MassHousing and DHCD for believing in the value of the Treehouse community mission and vision. Their investment in the development of a multigenerational Treehouse community model helps move children out of foster care into permanent loving families and communities that invest in their lives, their dreams and their futures. Children living at Treehouse have access to the same opportunities that their peers who have not been placed in foster care are offered. Treehouse is changing life trajectories,” said Cockerton.

### The Homes at Easthampton Meadow

In 2010, Beacon Communities approached Transformations, Inc. to develop energy-efficient single-family housing at Easthampton Meadow and to make the homes capable of attaining Net Zero energy consumption.

Between January 2011 and February 2015, 33 homes were built and sold, including 9

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designated as affordable for first-time buyers. The homes were built utilizing a high-tech building envelope, designed and proven by Transformations to help minimize not only the heating and cooling loads but the loss of heat by using advanced insulation specifications. Homes were all outfitted with Energy Star compliant fixtures and appliances as well as Water Sense plumbing fixtures. The heating and air conditioning systems were optimized for both efficiency and comfort.

Homebuyers of 11 of the 33 homes also opted to install solar panels on their dwellings. The homes are designed to generate as much electricity as they consume when a PV system is installed. The project provided the benefit of highly energy efficient homes to buyers at a range of income levels and price points. All of the homes have achieved Home Energy Rating Service (HERS) indexes in the 0 to low 40's. A home built in a community adhering to the stretch code standard must be HERS 70 or below in comparison.

The Life Initiative, a community development fund created by the Legislature with support of the life insurance industry, provided both the initial predevelopment acquisition loan for the land and the construction financing for the ownership homes. DHCD and MassHousing provided ongoing financial support to facilitate the development of the homes which included 9 homes for first-time homebuyers at affordable prices.

"Although it took us longer to complete this project than we anticipated, this is a project that was well worth doing and we are very proud of what we have accomplished. This community has and will continue to have a profound impact on the lives of many, many people," according to Pam Goodman, CEO of Beacon Communities.

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"The completion of this multi-phased community is a remarkable accomplishment on many different levels," said MassHousing Executive Director Thomas R. Gleason. "Beacon Communities and its development team created top-quality, highly energy efficient housing for senior citizens and families, particularly for those who have selflessly taken mentoring, fostering and adoption roles in the lives of foster children who are among the most vulnerable members of our society."

### About Beacon Communities, LLC

Beacon Communities LLC is a multi-family housing development, investment and management company that develops and manages multifamily communities and presently owns or manages 70 communities that provide 12,000 residences throughout Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Maryland.

### About MassHousing

MassHousing (The Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency) is an independent, quasi-public agency created in 1966 and charged with providing financing for affordable housing in Massachusetts. The Agency raises capital by selling bonds and lends the proceeds to low- and moderate-income homebuyers and homeowners, and to developers who build or preserve affordable and/or mixed-income rental housing. MassHousing does not use taxpayer dollars to sustain its operations, although it administers some publicly funded programs on behalf of the Commonwealth. Since its inception, MassHousing has provided more than \$17 billion for affordable housing. For more information, visit the MassHousing website at [www.masshousing.com](http://www.masshousing.com), follow us on Twitter @MassHousing, subscribe to our blog and Like us on Facebook.

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