

Bankruptcy sale of five buildings preserves homes for tenants

Brian Dowling Friday, October 28, 2016



Credit: Patrick Whittemore

FORCED SALE: Buildings at 25-35 Orlando St. in Mattapan were among those sold as part of a bankruptcy action. Staff photo by Patrick Whittemore.

Five problem-plagued apartment buildings in Mattapan and Dorchester changed hands in a \$5.6 million deal that staved off the specter of homelessness for many of the tenants as a bankruptcy trustee sold the properties over the landlord's protests.

Codman Square Neighborhood Development Corp. closed on the purchase of two apartment buildings on Orlando Street in Mattapan and three buildings on Waldeck Street in Dorchester for \$5.6 million, according to Joseph Butler, the court-appointed bankruptcy trustee for Uwa Lawrence, who owned the run-down properties.

In July, city inspectors scoured the properties as part of a coordinated push to force Lawrence to fix up the buildings.

Tenants in the buildings had claimed \$3.5 million in damages from Lawrence's estate for the apartment's squalid conditions. But they passed on the payouts to instead push the sale of the property to Codman Square Neighborhood Development, because it pledged to keep the apartments affordable and accept housing assistance, according to bankruptcy attorney Robert Sable of Greater Boston Legal Services.

"A part of it was, in fact, that they would be facing homelessness," Sable said, noting other developers could have sent the tenants packing to find the increasingly rare Boston landlord who accepts housing assistance.

"The reality is because of the housing market in Boston, you can't find Section 8," Sable said.