

History Highlights

Colony Retirement Homes

1961-62: Worcester City Missionary Society (United Church of Christ) set as a priority a study of housing needs of senior persons and appointed a committee with Reverend Louis E. Higgins, Chairman. The Study Committee Report recommended forming a corporation to develop elderly housing.

1963: Colony Retirement Homes, Inc. was established with a charter from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, as a private, non-profit corporation.

1965-66: A six-acre site on Grove Street was located and an option signed. Seed money was received from the WCMS and the Massachusetts UCC Conference. The Rev. Louis E. Higgins was appointed Executive Director. Grove Street land was purchased and a loan for \$715,000 was secured from the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD).

1968: Sixty-one new apartments were completed and occupied by March 1st. \$34,000 in land costs were recovered and returned to the WCMS.

1969-72: With a waiting list of over 150, an application was made to HUD for Colony II. Feasibility was established for a second apartment complex for seniors, but no 202 funds were available. Mission Advance funds for \$36,000 were received from the Massachusetts UCC Conference for development costs. Application was made to HUD for Section 236 F.H.A. insured mortgage loan. Final commitment for \$1,562,600 was secured from HUD for Colony II.

1970: The Rev. Louis E. Higgins passed away. The lounge at building 21 was named in memory of his great service to Colony Retirement Homes. The Rev. Paul Bush, Jr. was appointed Executive Director.

1974: Seventy-eight apartments were completed, and residents began moving into Colony II on April 1st, with full occupancy in June. Seed money of \$50,000 was returned to the WCMS.

1975-77: With over 300 applications on the waiting list, an application was made to HUD for Congregate Housing on three acres of land of Immaculate Conception Church off Chadwick Street. Conditional commitment for \$3,565,700 was approved for Colony III, and church land was purchased with a \$28,000 loan from Worcester Cooperation Council, Inc. Colony IV began with HUD awarding a fund reservation to construct 150 apartments for \$5,726,700. Holden Housing Development Committee requested Colony Retirement Homes to construct 80 of the units in Holden.

1978: Construction of Colony III began September 29th. HUD commitment is now \$4,692,400.

1979: Construction finally begins on Colony Holden, 80 apartments on Reservoir Street. Search for site for Colony IV begun.

1980: The 100 congregate apartments of Colony III and the 80 units of Colony Holden are completed and occupied. Search for Colony IV site continues. Constance Trombley was hired as Assistant Executive Director.

1981: Construction of 70 apartments of Colony IV begun.

1982: Constance Trombley was appointed Executive Director. Colony IV opened in September.

During the three years, 1980 to 1982, Colony Retirement Homes changed dramatically. We went from 139 units to 389 units; from 3 employees to 45; from a budget of \$250,000 to one of \$2,013,568. Our mortgages went to over \$12,000,000. Foreseeing the problems this expansion would create, in the mid-1970's the directors decided to put their efforts toward managing the several sites and improving the quality of life of our residents rather than building more buildings.

1994: The total budget of Colony Retirement Homes exceeds \$3,000,000.

2009: Constance Trombley retired from Colony. In 2011 the library at Colony III was named in her honor. Marianne Delorey was hired as the new Executive Director.

2014: After three years of effort, Colony III is refinanced, allowing us to start rehabilitating the building to help house the next several generations of seniors.

2015: A \$1.7 million renovation at Colony III was completed. The board, with the assistance of a strategic consultant, is looking to secure the long-term stability of other Colonies. The mortgage for Colony II matures.

2016-17: Colony IV is refinanced. Colony IV completes almost \$1.6 million in renovations and improvements. HUD grant funds service coordination and wellness nursing services at Colonies I, II and IV as part of a demonstration project called IWISH. The mortgage at Colony I matures.

2019-20: Colony Holden is refinanced, rehab to be completed in 2020. Colony Holden rehab is completed. World faces COVID 19 pandemic, Colony adapts operations.

2021: Colony III is re-refinanced. The Board officially establishes a standing committee to address Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion as a landlord and as an employer. Service coordination is extended to Colony Holden, the last Colony to not have this essential service.

2022: Colony board and staff start working in earnest to develop a plan to modernize Colonies I and II. Colony hires Affirmative Investments to prepare for an application for low-income housing tax credits through the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development.

2023: The Board has embarked on a strategic planning exercise to determine our priorities going forward given that all our saving will not be needed for the rebuilding of Colonies I and II.