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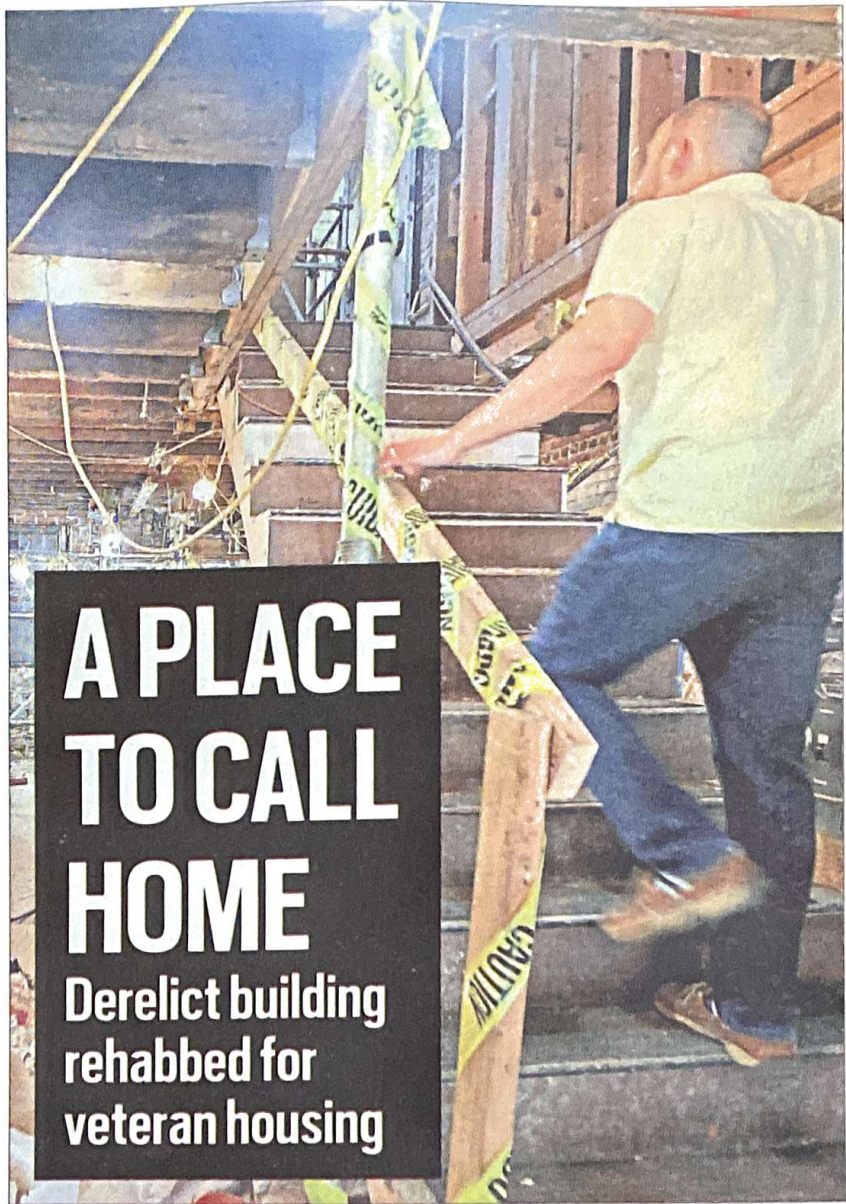
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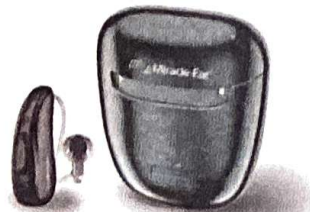
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A LONG-AWAITED MAKEOVER: Developer Mathieu Zahler is rehabbing the building at 34 East Springfield St. for homeless veteran housing. The building is 'beautiful in its own right,' he said.

From vacant to veterans

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Long-deserted South End building gets some TLC to provide affordable housing for veterans

By Marie Szaniszlo
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A long-vacant South End building where a body was once found is getting a complete makeover and will be turned into five permanently affordable apartments for veterans.

The developer, Mathieu Zahler, owner of MPZ Development LLC, bid on 34 E. Springfield St. in February 2020, and the previous owner, the Boston Housing Authority, sold it to him later that year.

"I thought this was a great opportunity to do something exciting, to make a place that some veterans

could call home," Zahler said. "We're in a housing crisis, so every unit helps."

The city's annual homeless census found that there were at least 158 homeless veterans this year.

The building previously held three units of public housing, said Brian Jordan, a Boston Housing Authority spokesman.

"However, due to the need for extensive capital upgrades to the property and lack of sufficient federal funding, it had been vacant for several years," Jordan said. "This project will restore the property to good brick condition and provide a safe, modern and affordable home for Boston-

area veterans who desperately need housing assistance."

Although the five 1-bedroom apartments will be modern, the brick facade will be redone to look like it did when it was built in 1880, Zahler said.

"It is beautiful in its own right," he said.

Most importantly, the building will remain affordable in perpetuity, a requirement of the Mayor's Office of Housing, Zahler said. Veterans will pay 30% of their income, with a cap of \$49,100, 50% of the area's median income, he said.

Construction began on June 3 and should be complete by June 2023. Zahler



said. The total cost of the project is \$3.7 million, which will be paid for in a public-private partnership.

"The new development at 34 E. Springfield St. is a win for veterans and for the South End neighborhood," BHA Administrator Kate Bennett said. "We're transforming an aging, vacant property into a resource

that will bring housing affordability to Boston-area veterans."

At the moment, there's scaffolding in the front, and the inside has been gutted. But Tom Downard, who lives a few doors away, said the project, once finished, will be a welcome addition to the neighborhood.

The building had been vacant for years, and the

body of a man was found in a hallway in 2000, shortly after Downard moved into his home.

"This will be a really positive change and feels really good for the street," he said. "Veterans are a group of people who are often overlooked."

We think they're home, and that's enough. But it's never enough."