

Group home to be built for the disabled

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— DANVERS — With the help of federal and state grants, a five-bedroom group home will be built in Danvers for developmentally and physically disabled people.

Bridgewell, a Lynnfield-based nonprofit, received a \$690,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development on Jan. 29 to build a five-bedroom, 2,500-square-foot, fully accessible ranch home for five residents with disabilities.

The house will be built on Bridgewell-owned land on Coolidge Road. Currently, the Greater Lynn Start Respite home, a ranch built around 1960 by Bridgewell, occupies the land totaling about two-fifths of an acre. When construction begins in 12 to 18 months, the existing house will be demolished, said Bob Stearns, chief executive officer of Bridgewell. "The new house will include many more features than the existing house," Stearns said.

Retrofitting an existing home can be difficult and is too expensive, said Elaine White, director of housing at Bridgewell. To be more cost-efficient, Bridgewell is starting from scratch. "The house will be entirely handicap-accessible," White said.

The one-story house will have five oversized bedrooms, two roll-in bathrooms, a large kitchen and dining room, as well as a spacious living room. It will also have a garage for the on-hand wheelchair-accessible van. Nurses and caretakers will be present 24 hours a day, seven days a week. When the home is completed, it will be occupied by individuals referred to Bridgewell by the Massachusetts Department of Mental Retardation, where a waiting list has already started. Bridgewell manages 60 other group homes on the North Shore and Merrimack Valley.

"This type of housing allows people with disabilities to live independently in the community and lead a full quality of life," White said.

Congressman John Tierney said the funding for the project couldn't have come at a better time. "Like many communities across the nation, Danvers is facing a shortage of affordable housing, and especially housing for adults with disabilities," Tierney said in a prepared statement.

Danvers Building Inspector Richard Maloney said no permit applications have been filed yet for the project. Bridgewell will not need a special permit, as the building will be treated as a single-family home.

The federal government has approved the project, and Bridgewell is going through the final process of securing a state grant of \$350,000.

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