



CITY OF BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS
Office of the Mayor
Martin J. Walsh

For Immediate Release
Monday, June 16, 2014

Contact:
Lydia Agro, BHA, 617-988-4109,
Lydia_agro@bostonhousing.org

Dom Slowey, Nurtury, 781-710-
0014, dslowey@comcast.net

Mayor Walsh Announces Opening of \$17 Million Learning Lab at Bromley-Heath

*New community based lab school will serve public housing and neighborhood
children and their families*

BOSTON – Mayor Martin J. Walsh is pleased to celebrate the opening of a new learning center that will provide over 20,000 square-feet of classroom space and 14,000 square-feet of outdoor learning and play areas. The Nurtury Learning Lab, located at the Boston Housing Authority’s (BHA) Bromley-Heath public housing development in Jamaica Plain, will anchor a campus of services for children and families that integrates early education, family and community learning opportunities and support, and professional development activities for early educators throughout Boston and eastern Massachusetts.

“All children should have access to the best learning and school readiness opportunities we can provide,” said Mayor Walsh. “The Nurtury Learning Lab at Bromley-Heath is a great example of a service that will greatly impact childrens’ lives and start them on a path for success.”

A collaboration between the BHA and Nurtury, the new center will feature a community-based lab school for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and after-school programming. The education curriculum makes full use of the spacious, creatively-designed LEED Gold certified facility and children are encouraged to interact with the environment, which features an abundance of natural light and materials.

Nurtury Learning Lab features:

- The Lab will serve 175 children throughout the day, including 63 infant/toddlers, 60 preschoolers, and 52 children ages five to eight in the STEM-focused after school programs to be launched in the fall.
- Ten age-specific classrooms designed to acknowledge how one's physical environment can enhance the learning experience while reducing stress.
- Natural outdoor playgrounds with rich vegetation and gardens and developmentally-appropriate play structures.
- An art studio and science-related classrooms that are designed for interactive technology and group activities.
- A multipurpose community room for exercising children's indoor gross motor skills and for community meetings and workshops for early education professionals.

"We really wanted to work with Nurtury to provide a better place for our kids to learn and play and prepare for their futures," said BHA Administrator Bill McGonagle. "We're excited to have the Learning Lab open and looking forward to its success."

In addition to educational components, Nurtury has taken a holistic approach to meeting the needs of families and the community by incorporating comprehensive programming with the state-of-the-art space, including family nutritional cooking classes in the Teaching Kitchen, and a Family Resource Room that houses family engagement activities and connects families with access to prevention services. Additional family and community engagement programs will include parenting workshops, adult education courses, and health and wellness programming.

The Lab will also serve as a professional development hub for early educators from throughout Boston and eastern Massachusetts. Relevant features of the Lab include a technologically-compatible documentation room, which will allow educators to document work with the children and share their findings with other educators at the Lab and with the field, and two observation rooms will allow early educators to observe children's activities and development.

"The Learning Lab embodies the shared vision of Nurtury, BHA, and our many partners in higher education and the community who worked so hard to make this day possible," said Nurtury President and CEO Wayne Ysaguirre. "Together, we spent years dreaming, planning, and building a place where the community can come together to nurture a love of learning in children and provide a variety of essential services to support families."

Spearheaded by a \$5 million grant received by the BHA from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, Nurtury and BHA partnered to make the Learning Lab a reality. BHA is leasing the land for the Learning Lab to Nurtury for \$1 per year. Nurtury has provided child care services at the Bromley-Heath development for many years but was housed in inadequate space. The new Learning Lab allows Nurtury's program to grow and provides opportunities to better and more holistically serve the neighborhood's children and families.

Known as a pioneer and leader in the early education field, Nurtury incorporated the most creative thinking and evidenced-based practices in developing the Learning Lab and intends for it to be a replicable, national model for delivering early education and comprehensive family services in urban areas.

Partners include: ABCD, Boston Children's Museum, Boston Nature Center, Boston University, the residents of Bromley-Heath, The Commonwealth of Massachusetts' Department of Early Education and Care, Family Service of Greater Boston, Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation, Jumpstart, Life is good Playmakers, Martha Eliot Health Center-Children's Hospital Boston, Thrive in 5, United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley, Urban College, Urban Edge, Wheelock College, and other Boston cultural organizations and affiliated early education programs at local colleges and universities.

The total project budget of \$17.1 million included all costs for acquisition, design, construction, and financing. Construction costs of \$11.3 million included the building, playground areas, and playground equipment.

In addition to the HUD funding, \$1.5 million was provided by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development, along with substantial private funding raised by Nurtury, including \$600,000 from Barr Foundation, \$500,000 from United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley, support from the Arnold family, Lisa Zankman Burke and Ed Burke, Franklin Square House Foundation, Highland Street Foundation, Jessie B. Cox Charitable Trust, Tamaki and Jonathan Lonske, New Balance Foundation, Richard and Susan Smith Family Foundation, and many others.

Financing and funding provided by Bank of America Merrill Lynch, Boston Housing Authority, Children's Investment Fund/CEDAC, Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development/MassWorks, Massachusetts Housing Investment Corporation, RBS Citizens, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The facility was designed by studioMLA Architects and constructed by CWC Builders.

###