

# John Cloyd (Resident)

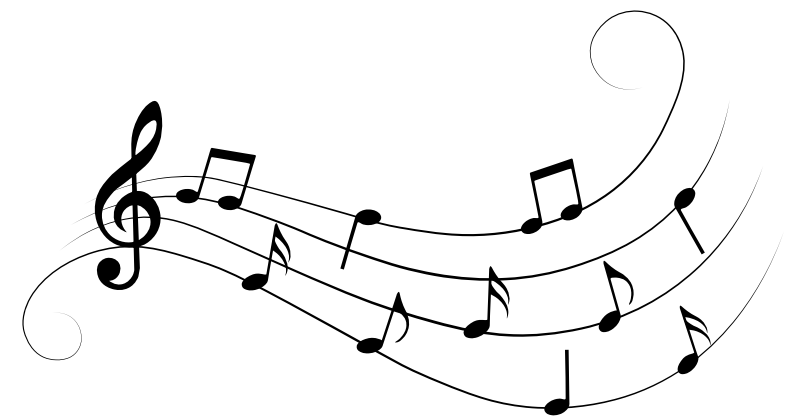


**My Dad, Doug,** was musician who taught me how to play musical instruments.

I worked at my father's Academy of Modern Music as a music teacher in Salem, MA and I loved it.

*Message of Hope:*

Follow your dreams.





*Barbara (Resident)*



After losing both of my parents a **close family member** supported me through my journey. Having someone to talk to helped me get through difficult times.

*Message of Hope:*

Helping others can help you.



## *Cassandra Aylward (Resident)*

My journey began when my **Great Aunt Nancy O'Connell** pushed me to pursue a college education. It gave me the confidence I needed to be the first in my family to attend college.



*Message of Hope:*

**ANYTHING** is possible, if you believe in yourself.



## *Kristin Carlson (Staff Member)*

**My parents, and my mom, Judy Simonson** in particular, always listened to me and treated me like a real person with ideas, not “just a kid.” She gave me the confidence to apply to grad school many years after college, and that led me to my work in affordable housing development today. From her, I learned to value and pursue my dreams.



## *Message of Hope:*

Always put your hat in the ring, because you never know how life will go!

# Dane & Anne Poeske (Board Member)



Ann and I grew up in working-class neighborhoods in the Midwest, where families struggled with bills, rent, and daily survival. We were among the lucky few—**through family support, scholarships, and aid**—we gained an education and good jobs.

Now in 2025, we see essential worker families facing the same hardships, with many paying over 60% of their income just for rent. Our journey reminds us of the importance of giving back and paying it forward so the current and next generation can have a better life.

## Message of Hope:

We can all make a **LASTING IMPACT. NOW!**



## *Aida Alamillo (Resident)*



**Harborlight Homes** opened their doors for me and my kids. We love this community, everything we need we have here. Now my daughter is going to college at Northeastern. My boys have muscular dystrophy, and they can move around, use the stove and have an elevator. I have taken the classes they had here, like EKG and phlebotomy. Harborlight gave us hope and a place to share my story and the struggles we faced in our journey.

*Message of Hope:* Don't ever give up!

# Charlie Wear (Board Member)



I grew up in the 1960's in a home on Lyman Street in Beverly that my great Uncle Jim Murphy bought for my family using his GI Bill instead of for himself. It brought many

challenges but if not for Jim's generosity, I would have grown up in a very poor part of Charlestown instead of Beverly and my opportunities in life would have been significantly reduced.

## Message of Hope:

There is far more good in the world than we realize, we just need to look below the surface.

# Margaret Ris (Supporter)



**My brother, Greg,** developed schizophrenia in his early twenties and my widower father had no idea how to handle him. After several painful hospitalizations, Greg became homeless on the streets of Syracuse, NY.

By the Grace of God, he was picked up by the **Rescue Mission** and has been sheltered in safety there for five decades. Blessings on those who house the homeless. This experience showed me how much difference a mission driven non-profit can do.

## Message of Hope:

I consider it a priority and a privilege to support the excellent work Harborlight Homes does.

# Andrew McKenzie-Defranza (Staff Member)



My parents **Angelo and Barbara DeFranza** were stalwart examples of sharing what they had to do to house others who were vulnerable. It led to it giving me a sense of ethical direction and vision about putting your energy into doing what you believe...not talking about it. It also gave me a matching set of ethical ballast and resilience to persist in the direction of that vision to help others have homes.



## Message of Hope:

You are welcomed and wanted. We are grateful to be in community with you. Hardship is universal; so is our courage.

# Tracey Armstrong (Board Member)



My parents Jan and Ed Armstrong were very active in The First Baptist Church of Beverly, and this shaped my life in so many ways. The church has been a thorough line in my life, and I am so grateful to my parents for that. It gave me community. Through the church I connected with Harborlight House where I started work at age 15 with a work permit. My Mom was on the first Board of Harborlight House and my grandmother was the cook for 18 years. I loved visiting the residents.

## Message of Hope:

There is a community out there for you. Whether it is a church, or an organization like Harborlight Homes, there are people who care and who will love you for who you are.

# Bob Gillis (Board Member & Supporter)



I had **loving parents** in a big family. **My father, Bob Gillis Sr.**, was passionate about fairness and that influenced me most on my journey with Harborlight Homes. In addition to the importance of fairness, my father taught me how to deal with people and to respect them all.

These lessons strongly influenced my career and family life. I learned the value of hard work early on and how to interact with people.

## Message of Hope:

It's never too late. I've been fortunate in my life, and I want to see others have the same opportunities.



*Anonymous (Resident)*

I was brought up in foster care and moved around a lot! I grew up in the inner city of Dorchester and Roxbury. I didn't have guidance, had to figure it out alone. Even though I had my child at 17, I knew I did not want to be a statistic. I didn't want to raise kids or live there. I wanted better for kids and me. **My mother** was also a young teen mother - God rest her soul. She showed me strength, to stand on my two feet and figure it out!

When I became a young teenage mother, **my grandmother** made sure I still enjoyed life. I worked hard, graduated high school, and college! She was always in my corner cheering me on! She knew I wanted to be a nurse and encouraged me to pursue my dream! I also want to thank **Tiffany Baskin** for being a listening ear and encouraging me to do the CNA program through NSCC to pursue that path to becoming a nurse.



*Message of Hope:*

Every day is a new day to do something great and not to give up! You may not always be where you want to be but when it's time, it will happen! Struggles echo across lives, unity answers.

*Kevin Noyes (Board Member)*



Back in the 60s, when **my parents** were looking for a house, a local bank told them no home in their neighborhood was “worth that much” and denied them a loan. It makes you think about how deeply perceptions shape opportunity, and how vital it is for those perceptions to change.

In my career, I’ve had the privilege of seeing beautiful, affordable homes built for people who need them. I wish more could see these spaces, because they challenge preconceived notions about what affordable housing looks like and who lives there.

This experience has given me a deep appreciation for the work of Harborlight Homes and other CDCs, and the chance to be part of changing the conversation around the importance of these homes for essential members of our community.

### *Message of Hope:*

Everyone has to start somewhere—so why not give people what they need to succeed? Our support is essential. Having a stable roof overhead is the foundation for success; without it, people face health challenges, unemployment, and anxiety, not to mention the toll on children and their performance in school.

*Lorinda Visnick (Supporter & Elected Official)*



My mother was married at age 16, never graduated High School and had my oldest sister at age 17. My father was a mechanic, and I am 1 of 6 children. It was my High School basketball coach and history teacher, **Carlous Haney**, who not only encouraged me to go to college, but helped me with the process, from searching to applying. Education was, and continues to be, transformational in my life. Without Carlous, I wouldn't have gone to college or met the man with whom I share a life and 4 wonderful children, and I wouldn't live in Beverly. Grateful for all the above for having shaped my life.

### *Message of Hope:*

Like raindrops, one may seem inconsequential, but when put together, a great flow of water is possible! It starts with one drop.

“You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself in any direction you choose.” ~ Dr. Seuss



## *Anna Siedzik (Staff Member)*

My grandfather, **Henry Burke**, was raised by a single mother (**Marcellina Burke**), widowed twice before he turned eight. My grandfather, Henry Burke, grew up with a widowed mother, Marcellina, who worked tirelessly as a housekeeper and later ran a boardinghouse to support immigrant families. His brother left school at 13 to work, and the family endured the Great Depression. With perseverance and support from public programs, my grandfather went to college through the Army, served in WWII, and built a veterinary practice. Their perseverance, and the opportunities created by education and public programs shaped my belief that housing is a basic human right, because to sleep is to make yourself vulnerable. Without a safe and consistent place to sleep, unlocking access to all other human rights and basic needs is impossible. Remembering their hardships keeps me grounded and empathetic toward the families Harborlight serves. Determination matters, but true advancement depends on opportunities created by society.

## *Message of Hope:*

Never forget your roots, but don't let them limit your growth. Stay humble yet confident, never judge others by their circumstances or perceived abilities. Recognize dignity in all and seek to advance the common good as broadly as possible.

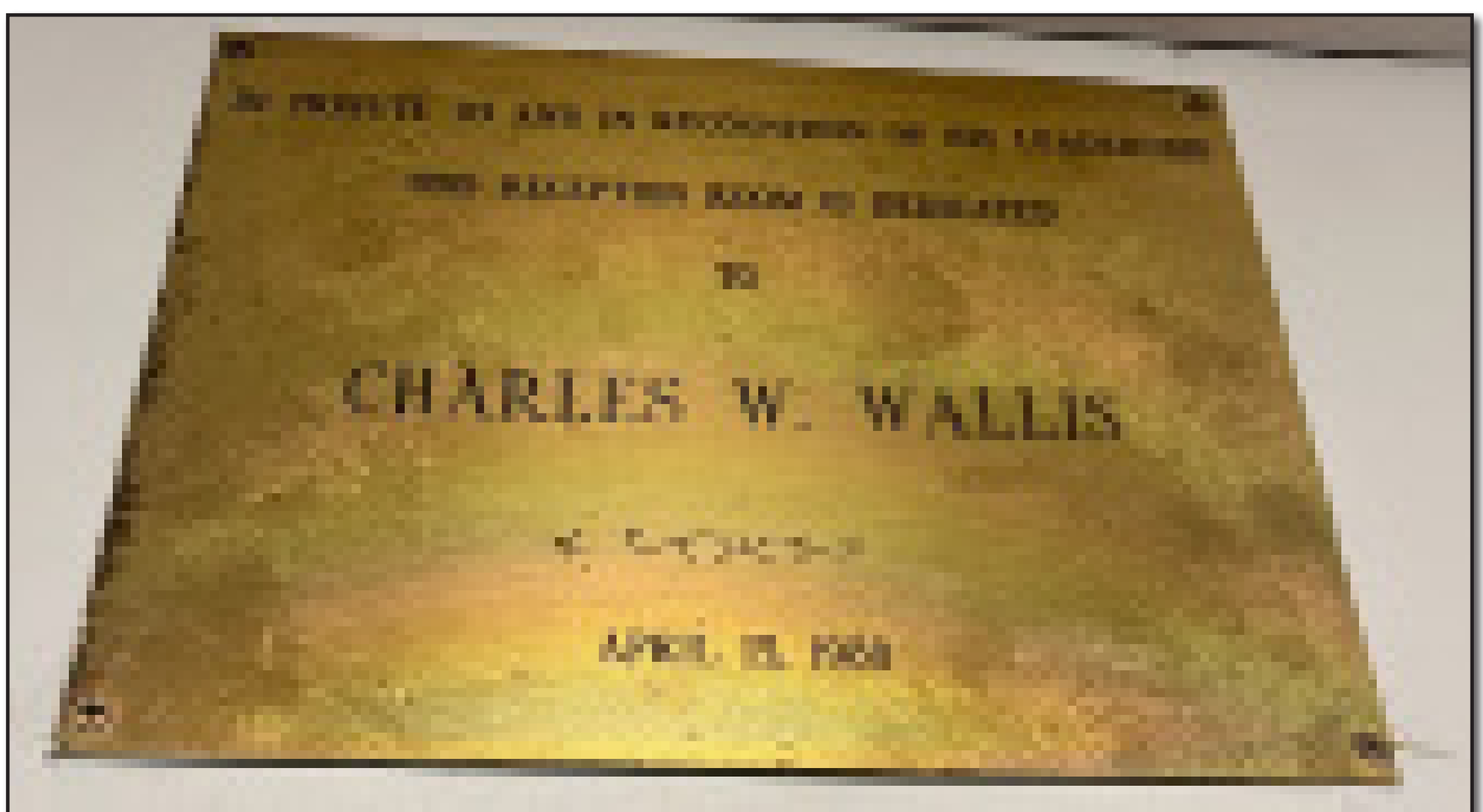


*Patricia Bowen (Resident)*



On September 21, 1981, I stood at the phone booth outside First Baptist Church on Cabot Street to tell my mother I had just dropped off her application for a handicapped-accessible apartment at Turtle Creek. My mother had been disabled for 20 years, requiring many supportive services that did not exist at that time. A few months later, I moved her into her Turtle Creek home, where she lived for six years until her passing in 1987.

At that time, I lived on Wallis Street in Beverly. I would frequently run into **Charlie Wallis**, one of Turtle Creek's founders, by the same phone booth outside of First Baptist Church. He once shared a story about attending his WWII squadron reunion in San Francisco, where he jokingly thought slamming his hotel door had caused the earthquake that shook the city. His humor and spirit stayed with me.



As fate would have it, Turtle Creek has also been my home for the past 14 years. The plaque honoring Charlie over the community room reminds me daily of the vision and character that made this place possible.

*Michael (Supporter & Friend)*



I got a **financial “helping hand”** that enabled me to completely realize my potential. I grew up a working-class kid in a racially mixed community. We had a decent house, mostly regular meals, but no fat in the budget nor resources for youthful exploration. I was a good student in high school and received a **state scholarship**, the big “helping hand” that funded 4 years of tuition at a prominent university, where I graduated Cum Laude. This was a platform for a graduate degree, for which I also received public support. And this was a platform for continuing my education and building a satisfying career in community development.

The public sector invested in a working-class kid (me). With this, I was the first person in my family to go to college, where I vastly broadened my experiences.



*Message of Hope:*

I have worked hard in my life to realize my dreams. The scholarship was crucial in uplifting me, but my hard work made me ready. Pursue your dreams with vigor and passion, while enjoying this and Life.

## *Anonymous (Staff Member)*

When my family immigrated from Shanghai to New York, I began learning English at a community college and met **Lana**, a volunteer communication partner who had retired from her museum job.

She was 78 then, with a slight tremble in her walk but full of energy and passion for life.

Lana knew the city inside out, kept a busy schedule, and generously helped newcomers like us adjust. She took us to museums, state parks, and hiking trails.

Meeting her gave me a whole new picture of retirement. I once thought it meant staying home, caring for grandchildren, and supporting your children. Lana showed me it could instead be a time of freedom, activity, community, and truly meaningful living.



## *Message of Hope:*

Don't let age limit your passion- embrace every stage of life and make it meaningful and wonderful.



*Isis Patterson (Board Member & Past Resident)*

Meeting **Andrew DeFranza** and **Bethany Blake** when I was just a college student opened more doors for me than I can count! It included providing me with educational support, housing support, and the mentorship that I needed to thrive and unleash my hidden potential. I owe my success today to them!

With their guidance, my pursuit led me to attend Harvard University, becoming a Harborlight Board Member and moving on to the home I have today.



*Message of Hope:*

It's not about the quantity of support you have but the quality within. Find the people in your life that will speak highly of you when you're not in the room.

*Nancy Sanchez (Staff Member)*



As first generation American, I had the many **teachers** along the way notice my potential and nominate me for programs. Nonprofits such as **Summer Search and The Posse Foundation** really changed the trajectory of my life. I am a child of public housing and acknowledge that having an income-based rent helped my parents provide for their 4 children. The Posse Foundation, a national non-profit, awarded me a merit scholarship which in turn helped me become the first and only person in my family to attend and graduate college. After receiving so much help and kindness along my way, it was very important for me to dedicate my life to helping others as a way of paying back.



*Message of Hope:*

Never stop dreaming and reaching. There is always someone out there that sees your potential.

## Bethany Blake (Staff Member)

I was raised by three generations of strong women and a crazy determined grandfather. My great-grandmother, **Elmere**, widowed in 1919, supported her daughter, Elaise (my grandmother), as a domestic worker in NY; **Elaise** went on to be a dental hygienist, built a stable home for her husband and three children; my mother, **Simone**, with grit and determination, earned multiple advanced degrees starting at age 48. My grandfather, **Pierre Chevigny**, with only a sixth-grade education, worked multiple jobs to buy and renovate our family home, turning it into a lasting asset, while instilling the value of education. His children went on to professional careers, and my upbringing was shaped by humor, kindness, education, and perseverance. They taught me the importance of being determined, compassionate, and giving.



### Message of Hope:

Do not let your circumstances define you or convince you that obstacles are insurmountable.



## *John Thomson (Board Member)*



**My parents** taught by example, specifically the obligation we each must “give back.” When I came to Beverly, I joined the First Baptist Church, which under the leadership of **Rev. John Wilbur** actively lived out this concept by forming and nurturing organizations like Harborlight House, Turtle Creek, Turtle Woods, Bootstraps, Harborlight Nursery School, and the Anchorages. Rev. John Wilbur was a charismatic preacher and networker, who did not let obstacles stop what needed to get done.

### *Message of Hope:*

Each of us can play a role, no matter how small, in getting good things done. All it takes is commitment and perseverance.

## Mary (Resident)



**My mother** was a great influence on me. At almost 70 years old, she found a wonderful new senior project being built. She entered Turtle Woods in a brand-new apartment and lived there happily for 22 years. At 91, she moved into Harborlight House, and her life ended peacefully at 96! Our family is grateful for the safe and loving home she had at Harborlight. When I got older and needed affordable housing, I didn't hesitate to apply to Turtle Woods and thankfully I have lived here happily for 10 years.

### *Message of Hope:*

Anyone can find themselves in a situation where they have to seek affordable housing. Don't give up! Places like Harborlight Homes are there for you, providing a safe, clean environment to live in happily.

*Cindy (Resident)*

**Harborlight** helped us by building affordable housing in Beverly, so we have an apartment near my son's school. It was very difficult to find an apartment in Beverly as it is a popular city to live in. I also appreciate that they have a property manager onsite and a Resident Service Coordinator to assist with resources. **Anna, Michelle, Tom, Tiffany, Laura, Katie, Marilyn, and Bryan** were all part of my journey.

Some of the resources were helping us find a moving truck and contacting raft to help us with the cost of moving also some of the furniture that we needed. They also helped me find certificate programs at North Shore Community College that I was able to attend for free! Everyone is always so kind and ready to assist in any way they can.

*Message of Hope:*

Don't be afraid to ask for help because Harborlight has amazing resources and support.



## *Neiland Douglas (Board Member Emeritus and More!)*

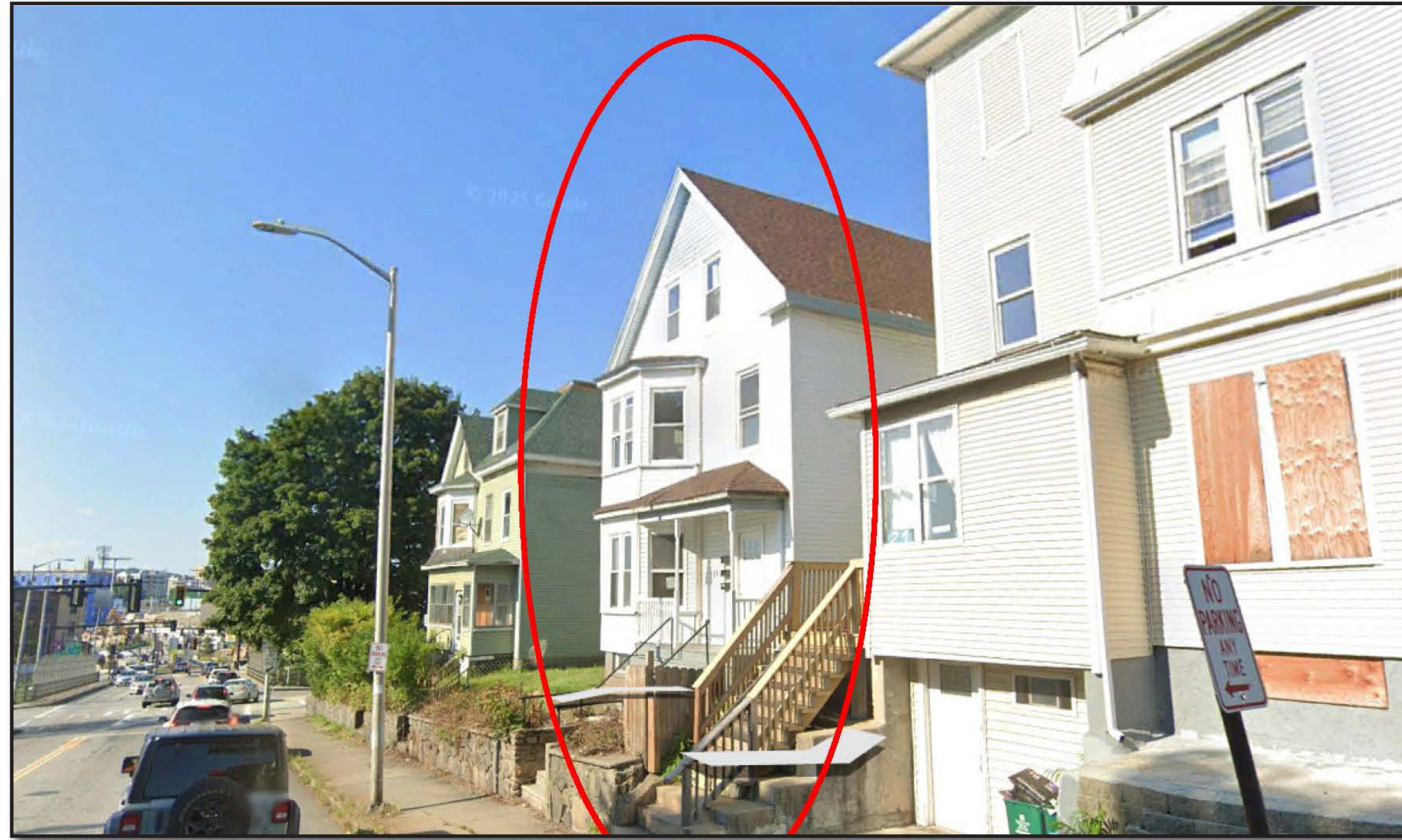


My Journey began when I moved to Beverly. I Joined **First Baptist Church** because of its commitment to outreach. **Rev. John Wilbur's** inspiring leadership to promote the development of affordable housing led to the successful completion of two major projects. I have been privileged to be a part of that movement for 50 years now serving over a thousand households!

## *Message of Hope:*

There is nothing more essential than housing and that's as true today as it was half a century ago. I am confident Harborlight will continue its mission to provide affordable housing and services.

*Thad Siemasko (Supporter & Architect)*



When I was young, **my parents** joined forces with my Aunt Helen and Uncle Larry to buy a classic three-decker (*“decka”*) in Worcester. Over time, they were able to leverage the equity they built and eventually move into single-family homes in more stable neighborhoods. Their journey wasn’t without challenges, but it led to housing security - something that meant the world to a natural worrier like me.

*Message of Hope:*

Supporting HH’s efforts to expand access to affordable housing across communities is my way of giving back.

It’s a direct way I can help others find the same sense of stability and peace my family worked so hard to achieve.