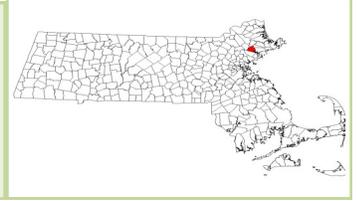


**Site Details:** 500 Acre site- 77 acre former state hospital reuse, 497 apartment units  
**Zoning:** Hathorne West District, commercial and business, special permits

**Funding:** Private developer  
**Date(s):** 2006-2008  
**Goals:** reuse state hospital, site revitalization, expand and diversify tax base



## Background

The former site of the Danvers State Hospital, notorious for its grim past as a state asylum, has now completely transformed into luxury style apartments and condominiums overlooking the town of Danvers at the top of Hathorne Hill. The former hospital opened its door in the late 1800s and during its heyday in 1950 it served as a state of the art facility that helped to cure over 3,000 mentally ill patients. However it slowly deteriorated because of lack of funding and attention, and finally closed its door in 1992. For many years this facility has gained fame not only for its historical significance, but for the daunting price and size associated with the task of trying to redevelop the site, which was about 77 acres of an almost 500 acre site. Since the 1990s the City of Danvers had been envisioning the potential benefits of revitalizing the site. However real progress could not begin until the state legislation passed in 1997, allowing the state owned facilities to be put up for sale for development.

## Site Development

The property was initially sold in 2001 to Archstone Developers who proposed a mix of homes and office space for the hospital site. They had planned to preserve the central building of the state hospital, the former administration building, and two adjoining wings; however with the costs associated with the preservation and



The restored Kirkbridge building of the original Danvers State Hospital, 2011.

the market downturn, the developers pulled out of the project. Three years later the site was sold to AvalonBay Communities for 18.1 million dollars and in 2006 they embarked on one of the largest state hospital reuses. They spent over \$80 million dollars on the largest product ever undertaken, and the end product was 497 units, including market rate and affordable apartment units as well as an adjacent condominium community by a different developer, Aria.

When the enabling state legislation was passed in 1997, the bill required the property to allocate a portion of the development for employment, housing and job training for the mentally ill as well as provide affordable housing. This was to ensure that the legacy of the facility and who it served would still live on after its redevelopment. Many felt like this compromise would allow the original purpose of the facility not be forgotten. In conjunction with the state legislation, 20% of the housing were set aside for people ages 55 and older, and 15% of the apartments were set aside as affordable housing units. In addition to the development, AvalonBay was extremely generous and donated \$1 million for Danvers' education system and \$500,000 to both affordable housing and historic preservation in the town. The development is now 95 percent leased and 90 percent occupied.

## Development Process

Before the state legislation was passed, the Danvers State Hospital Re-Use Committee worked closely with the planning board and the community to come up with alternative



Danvers State Hospital Site before and after, 2011.



Separate on site condo developments from developer Aria, 2011.

should not exceed 33 percent; however the revised plan proposed to reduce that level to 20 percent on site. In addition to the Avalon Danvers residential component, the Beverly Hills Hospital was also built on site. The Town of Danvers, along with the State and developers have worked very closely to ensure the success of this district to both reap the benefits of boosting the tax revenue and creating jobs for the town of Danvers, but also improving the quality of life for its citizens, who have tremendously benefited from the infusion of mixed use development in this area.

## Avalon Danvers and MetroFuture Goals

### Community Vitality

In addition to redeveloping and reusing the derelict site of an old state hospital, AvalonBay Communities generously donated over 2 million dollars to the Town of Danvers for historic preservation, educational, and affordable housing needs. They also helped with traffic improvements in and around the development which has aided congestion and flow into adjacent highways.

### Housing Choices

AvalonBay has helped to provide 15% affordable units to the development, both in part to increase the availability for residents with diverse incomes, but also as a mandate as part of the state legislation. In addition to having both market rate apartment units and affordable ones, there are also single family condominiums available to purchase that are leased from a different developer.

### Contact Information

For more information about the Danvers Town Planning Director, Karen Nelson at [Knelson@mail.danvers-ma.org](mailto:Knelson@mail.danvers-ma.org).



Housing unit architecture mimics and blends with original Kirkbride building, 2011.

*“This project represents a close collaboration between the State, the Town and an imaginative and far-sighted developer. The preservation of key elements of the former State Hospital provides a dignified tribute to the property's past, and the mix of uses resulting from the flexible zoning have proven very successful even during a difficult economic period. We feel this is an outstanding example of adaptive re-use and successful investment in a prominent Danvers location.”* – Kate Day, Senior Town Planner, Danvers