



PHOTO: NARLO PROBIAN

The room Heather Wells designed as part of Project Place's Adopt-a-Room program

Designers Create Rooms with a View

by Jim Cronin

The new Project Place building at the corner of Washington and East Berkeley Streets will include 14 professionally designed apartments for people who have struggled with homelessness.

Interior designers volunteered to be part of the nonprofit's Adopt-a-Room program, contributing their time and money to make over the residences from dormitory-style rooms into comfortable living spaces.

Each bedroom started out with a bed, desk, night stand and dresser. Heather

Wells, one of the participating designers, lives nearby on Washington Street. Along with 14 others, she purchased and donated such items as bed linens, lamps, kitchenware and bathroom towels to help personalize the 250-square-foot spaces.

"It's nice to give back to a community that really needs it," she said. "We usually work with wealthy clients, so it was an interesting project. We really had to think of what they would want and need, while also making it practical."

Wells said that since there will be ten-

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ant turnover, she tried to use neutral colors, like browns and blues, that would be easy to match to changing belongings.

Suzanne Kenney, executive director of Project Place, said she was pleased to see so many designers, who usually work on high-end homes, volunteer to individualize the quarters, especially since they might be the first real homes for some of the people who will live there. Many of the men and women who will reside in the apartments have battled with drug addiction and mental illness. They will be working full or part-time to pay one-third of the approximate \$1,000 monthly rental fee, and the City of Boston will make up the difference. The tenants will move into their accommodations on the top two floors of the six-story building on Thursday, March 1.

"It will feel more like a home than an

empty apartment when the tenants move in," Kenney said.

Michael Carter, a local interior designer involved with Adopt-a-Room, said his concept for the space was inspired by a swatch of cloth he chose as the closet curtain, which he said gave him a sense of African ethnic design. He decorated the quarters with tribal jars and painted the walls in earth tones.

"We brought the sensibilities of enjoying your own living space to people who we'll never meet and it felt great," Carter said.

The new facility, which will open on Wednesday, February 28, has been named GateHouse to acknowledge its neighborhood location. In colonial times the land was an isthmus that acted as a gateway to the city before the Charles River Basin was filled. Several of the apartments have been painted in blue, green and brown hues to reflect the natural elements of water and earth that existed in abundance prior to metropolitan development.