

THE BACK BAY SUN

SHEDDING NEW LIGHT ON AN OLD NEIGHBORHOOD

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Back Bay developer helps neighborhood stay clean

by Christopher Sardelli

BACK BAY RESIDENTS HAVE NOTICED the surge in graffiti and other forms of defacement on neighborhood buildings, and one local developer is hoping to turn the tide on his block.

"I'm just discouraged that people are attacking my neighborhood," said Curtis Kemeny, CEO and president of Boston Residential Group, a real estate firm that owns and manages several apartments in the Boston area. "I'm determined to stop them."

Kemeny, who grew up in Brookline and now lives in the Back Bay, is starting his clean-up at 360 Newbury Street. The building, which his firm owns, currently houses the Virgin Megastore, located on the corner of Newbury Street and Massachusetts Avenue. Kemeny's

group is constructing 54 high-end condominiums on the top floors of that building, all set to be completed by October. He plans to clean the area in time for new residents to move in.

One of his major initiatives revolves around the MBTA station which is housed in the building. His firm has approached the MBTA and offered to make improvements to the station, including the entrance and foyer of the station on Massachusetts Avenue, the exit on Newbury Street and the sidewalks that run alongside. They are also discussing preliminary ideas to clean up the area in front of the MBTA transformer station next door to 360 Newbury.

Kemeny is also focused on the graffiti that has marred his building. The areas hardest hit are portions of the rooftop as well as the alleyway behind the building

that runs parallel to Newbury Street. He said most of the damage occurred in the last year and it has been harmful to the area.

"There's the cost to clean it up and the negative impact on the character of the neighborhood, and it also lowers property values," Kemeny said.

He said he is committed to working with neighbors, business owners, property owners and neighborhood associations to strategize ways to stop the defacement of Back Bay buildings. He said it is important that the neighborhood keeps in constant contact with police, as well as with people who are skilled in graffiti removal.

"We're concerned property owners and concerned citizens who want to make a positive contribution to the area," Kemeny said. "We're doing everything we can to be a good neighbor." ▸