ACTION-Housing, Inc. Board of Directors Treasurer, Ricardo G. Savido, who is also the President of BNY-Mellon’s Community Development Corporation, spoke briefly at the ceremonial wall-busting to kick off construction activity on the Shanahan Apartments.

But it was his silence that made the biggest impact.

Turning to the sign language interpreter, Savido said at the end of his speech, “I’m not sure who you’re signing for, but I have a message for them,” before stepping away from the podium to sign the rest of his speech.

He used the opportunity to communicate to the deaf and hard-of-hearing community that he was proud to help provide safe and affordable housing.
For a building that will designate 18 units for persons with disabilities, including 10 designed for persons who are deaf, deaf/blind and/or hard of hearing, Savido’s message was a touching and fitting way to officially kick off work on the property.

Savido was one of fifteen people — including the Mayor of Pittsburgh, Luke Ravenstahl and, State Senator Wayne Fontana — who wielding sledgehammers, officially opened work on the Shanahan Apartments in Uptown, Pittsburgh on Friday, June 1.

Other guest speakers included Karen Fitch from Councilman Daniel Lavelle’s office, Christopher Rosselot from Senator Robert Casey’s office, Mary Ann Sipos from the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency, Tom Cummings, from the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh, Macy Kisilinsky of the National Equity Fund, and David R. Weber, the Government Relations and Special Services Officer of the Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh.

Also on hand were Amy Hart, President and CEO of The Center for Hearing and Deaf Services, Terry Carik, from Mercy Behavioral Health, and Chuck Keenan, from the Allegheny County Department of Human Services, as well as ACTION-Housing Inc. Board Members Michael Dear and Becky Yago and members of ACTION-Housing’s Inc.’s development team.

Then, the assembled group each swung away at a ceremonial cinderblock wall that was about waist-high.

The Shanahan Building is a century-old bakery that was formerly owned by the Famous Biscuit Company, and later the National Biscuit Company, better known by the abbreviated name they adopted, NABISCO. Prior to ACTION-Housing’s acquisition of the building, which is located at 1801 Forbes Avenue, it was used as a storage facility for the Shanahan Moving Company.

The next incarnation of the historic building will be 43 units of affordable, accessible, and sustainable, workforce housing for the emerging Uptown Neighborhood. The Apartments will provide walk to work, and car-free living opportunities given the building’s prime location next to Duquesne University, Mercy Hospital, and the Consol Energy Center. The building is also less than a mile away from Downtown and Oakland, the second and third largest economic engines in Pennsylvania respectively.

The project is being financed through equity from the sale of tax credits allocated by the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency, which have been purchased by The National Equity Fund and Bank of New York Mellon and a loan from the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh.

The Shanahan Apartments will also be completed with sustainability in mind. The Shanahan Apartments will be a high performing property that will minimize utility usage and provide its residents with healthy indoor air quality. The Shanahan Apartments will maximize energy and water efficiency through the use of geothermal heating and cooling, Energy Star appliances, a well-insulated building envelope and water saving fixtures. The property will be completed without the use of toxic off-gassing materials in the construction, and institute a green cleaning and maintenance plan.

The project is expected to be completed in mid-2013.