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Carpionato Properties redeveloping former 30-acre boys reform school into Chapel View, Cranston

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With Rhode Island's unemployment hovering around 10% and concern about a rebound of the job market, it may come as a surprise to some that one multi-million dollar project is continuing to create jobs for hundreds of skilled construction workers. But a visit to Carpionato Properties' Chapel View project reveals a flurry of activity as workers move to ready the latest installment in the 470,000 s/f development for occupancy.

Chapel View, named for the 1891 stone chapel on the property, is at the 30-acre former site of Rhode Island's reform school for boys. The stone chapel has been restored and renovated and now houses the Chapel Grille.

The rest of the 10 building mixed -use project includes additional restaurants, retail stores including REI, a supermarket and a mix of specialty shops and services. There are 14 residential condominiums, some carved out of old stone buildings that once housed reform school dormitories.

Nearing completion now, "Building 2000" - a six-story office and retail building with 125,000 s/f of space. The building has floor to ceiling windows that provide views of Providence, the Newport Bridge and Fall River. Wall to wall sliders fold back to wrap around decks.

Construction is about to get underway on the final building, and Carpionato Props. is projecting full completion and occupancy by the end of the year.

Since the \$90 million project took special care to preserve much of the original architecture, it provided a much-needed economic boost to the local economy. Over the seven year period of construction, Chapel View has provided over 700 jobs in a variety of construction trades including, masons, carpenters, electricians, laborers, operating engineers, architects and designers.

The stonewalls made of granite surrounding Chapel View and onsite took two years to complete.

Building in a difficult economic time required confidence in the viability of the project. "We had great faith in the regional nature of the site, and the fact that the architecture, the location and the views make it a unique development parcel," said MacArthur Coates, senior vice president of Carpionato Props. " We knew that this is one of those cases that if you build it they will come."

"We incorporated stone into the project echoing the Gothic-style of the reform school cottages through the development," said Coates. "Not only did the project create job stability, we have taken property that was off the tax rolls and created a project that will contribute significantly to the tax base in the City of Cranston."

For Carpionato Props. founder, Alfred Carpionato, the project is personal. A long time Cranston resident, he worked with Cranston's Historic District Commission, and state preservation officials to respect the site's history.