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## **Strong attributes serve as building blocks for East Providence - by William Fazioli**

January 10, 2020 - Rhode Island

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With a new year upon us the city of East Providence is resolute to continue a patch of sustained economic growth. Already, 2020 promises to be a very busy year for residential development in East Providence as several key projects are set to move forward. Construction of new townhomes and apartment units at Kettle Point will result in a grand total of 290 residential units being added to the city's housing inventory. Additionally, in November 2019 the East Providence Planning Board granted final approval to the Hundred Acre Cove development, which will feature 21 new single-family homes located off Wampanoag Trail in Riverside.

Also, the Waterfront Commission approved the redevelopment of a highly prominent site at the end of Veterans Memorial Parkway into a contemporary 22-unit apartment complex. This project will feature 18 single-bedroom and four two-bedroom increasingly popular "micro lofts." In connection with this project, the developer has purchased a two-family unit in the nearby area to serve as an affordable housing dwelling. Additionally, the Lofts on Taunton Ave. have recently been placed on the market which feature both one- and two-bedroom units along with commercial space on the street level.

Progress on the Ivy Place project is continuing with a recent award of essential federal funds to support this important project. Ivy Place is a 14-unit owner occupied affordable housing proposal located directly across from city hall that is conveniently located near a very active public transit line, local schools and other municipal amenities.

The pipeline of additional projects in 2020 remains promising as an array of other developments throughout East Providence are currently undergoing preliminary review. These new housing units will assist the city to reverse decades of stagnant population growth. East Providence will have a greater capacity to attract new residents, which can support local businesses and civic groups. A growing population will also augment the city's labor force which will make it more attractive to employers.

More importantly, these additions to the city's housing stock will help address the statewide shortage of adequate workforce and affordable housing. East Providence will be developing policies to address workforce housing needs through a combination of updated zoning regulations and other innovative approaches. In addition, the city will be partnering with community development housing groups to preserve existing workforce housing units and identify prospects to grow the supply of affordable housing.

These developments underscore the perception of East Providence as a genuine "opportunity bargain." This term was adopted by a team of economists from Harvard University and Brown University in a recent observational study, "The Opportunity Atlas", <https://www.opportunityatlas.org/>. This report identifies communities that foster an environment which afford optimal upward social and economic mobility for its residents. East Providence shares many of the attributes of these communities which are characterized as being affordable, safe, culturally diverse and are anchored by stable neighborhoods with high rates of owner occupancy. These strong attributes will serve as the building blocks for East Providence's economic momentum in the new decade.

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New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540