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Elected officials and partners celebrate new affordable apartments in Smithfield

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Smithfield, RI U.S. senator Jack Reed, U.S. congressman David Cicilline, governor Daniel McKee, and town manager Randy Rossi joined leaders from Smithfield Housing Authority, Coventry Housing Associates, RIHousing and funding and community partners to celebrate the completion of new rental homes.

“I’m proud to have been part of the public-private partnership that revitalized this former iron foundry site into beautiful, affordable homes. From planning to development to remediation work to infrastructure upgrades and construction, this project was a true team effort that was many years in the making and will be a tremendous community asset for many years to come. I salute the town of Smithfield, the Smithfield Housing Authority, Coventry Housing Associates, Gemini Housing Corp., RIHousing, and many others who made this project a reality. There is a real need for quality, affordable housing and this development offers so much for residents who call it home as well as a blueprint for successful revitalization and building stronger, healthier communities,” said Reed, a senior member of the Appropriations Committee. “I also want to salute the development architect for this project, the late John Robinson, whose vision was realized here and whose legacy of service includes many contributions, including as a member of the United States Air Force.”

“These beautiful new homes are providing more Rhode Islanders with safe and affordable housing and a great place to raise a family. Affordable housing is key for expanding opportunity and economic growth,” said Cicilline. “These new units are helping more Rhode Island families achieve that important goal.”

Located in the village of Georgiaville, a mill village along the Woonasquatucket River, Georgiaville Village Green has remediated a brownfield site while introducing much-needed affordable, family housing into the northern part of the state. A joint venture between Gemini Housing Corp. and Coventry Housing Associates Corp., the development includes 42 new rental homes and has been recognized by Grow Smart RI and the RI Chapter of the American Planning Association.

“Providing safe, affordable housing to families in Rhode Island is a top priority, and it takes a team effort to make it happen,” said McKee. “The Georgiaville Village Green not only gives 42 families a

place to call home, but it also plays an important role in the revitalization of historic Georgiaville. I am thankful to our congressional delegation as well as our housing and funding partners for coming together to complete this project.”

The 42 apartments are available to individuals and families earning less than 60% of the area median income (AMI), approximately \$51,900 for a family of four. Five of the units are reserved for individuals and families earning less than 30% of the area median income.

“The town of Smithfield is proud to be a part of the Georgiaville Village Green Project, having been awarded ‘Outstanding Smart Growth Project’ by Grow Smart RI,” said Rossi. “With the help of project partners Coventry Housing Associates Corp. and Gemini Housing Corp., this neighborhood revitalization project has strengthened the community by providing affordable housing in the heart of the historic village of Georgiaville.”

The property was formerly the Narragansett Gray Iron Foundry mill site, which was demolished by the previous owner and was designated a brownfield site by the state. Site remediation was completed as part of the development.

“Affordable housing is our mission, but moving families into a place they can call home, is our passion,” said Clare Fortin, executive director of the Smithfield Housing Authority.

Funding for Georgiaville Village Green came from a variety of funding sources, including \$7.95 million in Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) equity, \$750,000 in Thresholds funding, a \$650,000 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), a \$200,000 grant from RIDEM, a construction loan from Citizens Bank, a first mortgage from RIHousing, and \$906,000 from the state-funded Acquisition and Revitalization Program (ARP). Georgiaville Village Green was one of the first projects to make use of funds from Rhode Island’s ARP, funded via state bond funding approved by Rhode Island voters in November 2016.

The event also included a flag raising ceremony and dedication in honor of the late John Robinson of Robinson Design, who served as the development architect for the project. Robinson passed away in February 2021 at the age of 73. He honorably served in the U.S. Air Force and was a member of the American Institute of Architects and the National Society of Professional Engineers. Members of the Robinson family were in attendance at the dedication ceremony.

“Projects such as Georgiaville Village Green provide important affordable housing options for Rhode Island residents,” said Keith Kelly, Rhode Island president, Citizens. “As a funding partner, Citizens sees this project as a great way to support the community and put the bank’s capital to good use. We would like to welcome the residents to their new homes.”

“Today we are celebrating more than the completion of 42 new rental homes,” said Carol Ventura, executive director of RIHousing. “We are celebrating a community and the families who live here. Georgiaville is the kind of development we need more of in the state. Fortunately, we have the support from our federal, state and local leaders to make these kinds of developments a reality for

more Rhode Islanders. Our families and our state will be made stronger with each new development.”

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