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## **Ocean State Steel's brownfield site to be redeveloped into East Point - by Chris Martin**

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Chris Martin

The East Providence Waterfront Commission approved an ambitious development plan that will reclaim a brownfield, provide new housing including much needed affordable units as well as vital public access to the Seekonk River.

In Rumford along the Seekonk River and Omega Pond lies what will be East Point—a 27-acre site that will breathe new life into three long-dormant parcels. This site was last home to Ocean State Steel, which left the property in environmental ruins in 1994. The parcels have since been remediated, but what remained was a derelict eyesore on what some call one of the most beautiful stretches along the Seekonk River.

The development team behind East Point is Noble Development, led by Richard Baccari from Churchill and Banks and rounded out by Northeast Engineers on civil design, Union Studios on architectural design and Kevin Alverson on Landscape design. East Point will add 392 single and multi-family units in addition to apartments to the housing stock in East Providence.

East Providence, like most of Rhode Island, is experiencing a housing shortage. Nearly 30% of the housing stock in East Providence was built prior to 1939 and only 3.5% of the city's housing has been built since 2000. Adding 392 new units to the housing stock while allocating 10% of that to affordable housing will help East Providence meet residential demand while also meeting its goal to provide adequate housing for all residents. This development will help retain and attract residents to our community which will strengthen our local economy. The plans will also include a new housing choice for older residents who want to consider an age in place living option.

This development will also create an excellent amenity for the city by transforming a former industrial area to a green space along the waterfront. The project will provide public access along Omega Pond and the Seekonk River as part of the Urban Coastal Greenway. There will also be a publicly accessible kayak launch on Omega Pond as part of the development agreement.

In anticipation of this development, the city of East Providence is working with the Rhode Island Transportation Authority to study additional bus service for the expanding population of the area and there will be upgrades to bike and pedestrian infrastructure in the development as well. The developer is also expressed a willingness to installing electric vehicle charging infrastructure and green infrastructure best management practices (BMPs).

The property is being purchased out of the special mastership in two phases over 18 months. The Seekonk River Parcel will be developed as Phase 1 and will be constructed over a multiyear timeframe. The Omega Pond Parcel will be the second phase and will start construction within two years of the initial acquisition and likely take four years start to finish to complete the buildout.

Chris Martin is the executive director of the East Providence Waterfront Commission. Riverside, R.I.

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