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Goodwin College wins Blue Ribbon Award at The Real Estate Exchange Developer's Showcase

April 15, 2009 - Connecticut

The Real Estate Exchange held its Developer's Showcase March 25th at the Convention Center. The winner of the Blue Ribbon Award is Goodwin College.

Goodwin College, located in East Hartford, is a non-profit educational institution accredited through the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. Since its inception in 1999, the college has dramatically grown, with student enrollment increasing 69% from 2004 to 2008. Realizing that the continued surge in student enrollment would soon necessitate a larger campus, Goodwin College's board of trustees, along with the leadership of president Mark Scheinberg, began securing funding from operations several years before the college expansion plans were announced in 2005. While the college prepared for future expansion, its leaders quickly ascertained that the existing campus on Burnside Ave. could not accommodate further expansion.

A neglected section of East Hartford along the Connecticut River offered unique opportunities to Goodwin's students and the surrounding community, but the college had initial concerns about the environmental state of the property, which at one time was littered with oil tanks. Goodwin College's leaders embraced these challenges to seek innovative ways to create a new learning center at that location that would take advantage of the proximity to the Connecticut River while also maintaining a sense of fiscal responsibility to ensure that students did not take on the financial burden of this expansion.

Goodwin College faced several challenges in achieving its goal to construct a new riverfront campus. As a young college without an endowment or a large alumni base, the college could not depend on traditional ways to raise money for a new academic and administration building. While the college had managed to save a substantial amount of funds, more support was necessary to ensure the completion of the new academic center on properly cleaned property. The college needed to ensure that it had the resources to remediate the neglected riverfront properties acquired for the new campus. Goodwin College met the challenge of creating the new campus through securing local, state and federal support to help cover the costs of remediation of the contaminated land and the costs of constructing the college's new educational hub, a six-story academic and administration building.

A true "smart growth" project, the new campus project redeveloped formerly unusable, industrial zoned, tax delinquent, foreclosed, blighted and environmentally challenged land, while retaining the natural appeal and opening public access to very large tracts of riverfront. These properties are highly visible to the surrounding residential and commercial neighborhood as well as Rte. 2. The above-ground rusted tank farms that dominated these properties limited the view of the region's primary natural resource - the Connecticut River. Immediately upon acquisition of all properties, Goodwin College undertook an aggressive remedial work program intended to ultimately bring the

soil and groundwater condition into environmental compliance and, therefore, allowed for the construction of the new academic center to proceed as planned.

In December 2008, the college opened the 109,000 s/f flagship academic and administration building on its new 30-acre riverfront campus, serving over 2,000 students. The building includes 39 classrooms, 6 technologically advanced science laboratories, 3 computer labs, a two-story library and media center, a cafeteria, two community rooms, and a 700-seat auditorium.

At the same time that plans were made for the new academic building, the college also began assembling over 500 acres of open space parcels with the intention of assembling enough Connecticut River floodplain to serve as a living laboratory for a future Environmental Studies associate degree program which was recently approved by the State of Connecticut Board of Governors for Higher Education. This floodplain lies to the south of the college's academic center on Riverside Dr. and extends to the area of the Rte. 3 Putnam Bridge. The college now owns 2.5 miles of riverfront property.

The design team was lead by Capital Studio Architects. Engineering services and environmental oversight were provided by Zuvic Associates. The construction manager and general contractor was FIP Construction. Construction was completed on time and within budget.

Construction financing was provided by New Alliance Bank, along with federal and state support from the Environmental Protection Agency, National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, State Department of Economic & Community Development, Connecticut Development Authority, Capitol Region Council of Governments, and the Town of East Hartford.

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