



## **Project of the Month: Omni Housing Development and Rome Housing Authority celebrate completion of \$14.3 million Phase 1 Liberty Gardens revitalization**

September 10, 2012 - Upstate New York

Omni Housing Development COO Duncan Barrett and Rome Housing Authority chairman James Masucci joined local residents, tenants and state and local dignitaries to celebrate several new milestones of the Liberty Gardens revitalization project. A highlight of the event, held August 20, was the naming ceremony and dedication of a new community building to Edward W. Corr, the 93 year-old member and Treasurer of the Rome House Authority Board of Commissioners. The event also celebrated the substantially complete \$13.4 million Phase 1 of the project and the groundbreaking of the community center. Finally, the event recognized the project's efforts to achieve an Energy Star Homes Certification as well as a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) for Homes Certification at the Silver level.

Construction of the new 6,000 s/f community building will include 1,600 s/f of open community space available for meetings, events or recreation. The building will also have a computer lab with wireless Internet capability, a kitchen, and a central laundry room. The community center is being dedicated to and named for Edward Corr, the 93 year-old member and treasurer of the Rome House Authority Board of Commissioners.

Born in 1919, Corr is a lifelong citizen of the city. He is currently retired from the Rome City Procurement Department. With more than 50 consecutive years of service to the Rome Housing Authority Board of Commissioners, he was first appointed to the board in 1961 and has served as treasurer during nearly all of his term. He has been appointed and re-appointed to the board by five different mayors: mayor Charles Lanigan, mayor William Valentine, mayor Carl Eilenberg, mayor Joseph Griffo, mayor James Brown.

Corr has been involved in the Liberty Gardens development since its original construction in 1952 and is currently active in the revitalization project. As part of the dedication ceremony, Corr will be presented with a framed rendering of the community center, which will stand in his name.

The nearly complete Phase 1 of the project includes three masonry two-story buildings and the construction of six new buildings, consisting of 78 family units. The first building of the redevelopment, which underwent a complete gut renovation including demolition from interior to studs, was completed and occupied in March.

Four new buildings were also completed and occupied in May. The completion of Phase 1 consists of a gut renovation to Building 300 and new construction of two additional buildings, comprised of 28 more units to be completed and occupied in December.

Construction of Phase 2 is set to begin in September and will substantially renovate three more of the existing buildings, consisting of 50 more units. The Phase 2 buildings will include 6 one-bedroom, 22 two-bedroom, and 22 three-bedroom units. Six of these units will be handicapped

accessible or for persons with hearing or vision impairments.

This is the first extensive renovation to the Liberty Gardens affordable housing development in since it was originally constructed in 1952 under a New York State Public Housing Program. So far, current and prospective tenants are delighted with the results of the project and are excited for its completion.

Krissy Metott who currently resides in unit #709 said, "I adore my new apartment and compared to my old apartment I feel like a brand new person. Thank you to everyone who helped to make these new homes for us." Joey Hildenbrandt in unit #711 said, "I love the new apartment, they are bigger and more efficient than my old apartment." Jessica and Tanya Look, unit #715, said, "There is a lot more room, more cabinet space that will make it easier with the cleaning."

The ultimate goal of the project is to produce a model of excellence in greening of existing affordable and public housing. LEED for Homes provides a template for the design and construction of housing that is energy efficient, healthy, and uses locally produced building materials. Architect Dominic Rigosu and consultants from New Ecology Inc. are looking at every aspect of the building process in order to use materials, water and energy more efficiently. Efforts to achieve this goal, which have been implemented so far, include replacement of all doors and windows, installation of all new Energy Star-rated appliances and special attention given to air sealing the units, reducing air infiltration.

Upon completion, all appliances, furnaces and lighting will be Energy Star-rated. Plumbing fixtures will use less than half of the current water usage. Reuse of the existing buildings substantially reduces the amount of materials required for the project. Both new and renovated structures will be very well insulated. Paints, caulks and adhesives used will emit no or very low levels of Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs). Air quality will be enhanced by ventilation that meets the latest standards for healthy homes. High albedo shingles will reflect the sun leading to cooler attic spaces. The landscape will include rain gardens to reduce runoff from the site and native plants that will not require watering. Cabinets for all the units are being produced locally by Serway Cabinet Trends.

Overall, the project's LEED certification efforts benefit the community by offering increased energy-efficiency and ultimately reduced energy costs, as well as investment in the local economy. The Liberty Gardens redevelopment project will also protect existing tenants, provide quality affordable family housing, assist low income families, improve financial stability and deliver structural and accessibility improvements.

Dignitaries participating in the ribbon cutting ceremony include special guest, Rome Housing Authority treasurer, Corr; city mayor, Joseph R. Fusco, Jr.; Rome Housing Authority chairman, James Masucci; Rome Housing Authority executive director, James Baldwin; representing governor Andrew Cuomo, New York State Office of General Services commissioner, RoAnn Destito; city 4th Ward councilwoman, Ramona Smith; Oneida County executive, Anthony Picente, Jr.; 49th District New York State senator, David Valesky; 47th District New York State senator, Joseph Griffo; 116th District New York State assemblyman, Anthony Brindisi; NYS Homes & Community Renewal Affairs assistant commissioner, Daniel Buyer; Omni Housing Development LLC CEO, David Swawite; and Omni Housing Development LLC COO, Duncan Barrett.

RIDA Architects, 3t Architects, Bergmann Associates and Friedman Fisher Associates are providing architecture and engineering services. Omni Housing Development and the Rome Housing Authority are leading the development and management efforts, with local company Charles A. Gaetano Construction Corp. in charge of construction.

Financing for the revitalization project provided by the Rome Housing Authority, M&T Bank, Community Preservation Corp. and New York State Homes and Community Renewal. The project also received a NYS Public Housing Modernization Grant, Housing Trust Funds and Weatherization Funds. Hudson Housing Capital LLC and JP Morgan Capital Corp. invested the low income housing tax credit equity.

Omni Housing Development LLC, with affiliated companies Omni Development Company, Inc., and Omni Management Group, Ltd., provide a wide array of services, including project feasibility and market analysis, project finance including loan, tax credit and grant application and processing, financial and land use planning & analysis, design/build and facility management. Omni Housing Development LLC is headquartered in downtown Albany at 40 Beaver Street.

**Project Team:**

Architect: 3t Architects

Developer: Omni Housing Development

Drywall: Fleetwood Drywall

Engineer: Bergmann Associates

General Contractor: Charles A. Gaetano Construction Corp.

Masonry Restoration: Lupini Construction Inc.

Millwork: Serway Bros., Inc.

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