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Zero-energy housing project breaks ground at Devens

by Joe Hutchinson

Harvard also in line for zero-energy project

Adams Circle at Devens will be the site of a new community featuring eight single-family zero-energy homes, homes that produce more energy than they consume over the course of a year by combining solar (PV) energy, efficient mini-split heat pumps, along with other environmentally sustainable devices. Local developer R. Carter Scott and energy and design consultant Richard Gilles of Ayer began working on the zero-net-energy concept for Devens 10 years ago. Scott, CEO of Transformations, Inc., has built similar homes in Townsend, Princeton, and Easthampton.

Mass Development President and CEO Marty Jones said at Monday's groundbreaking ceremony for the project, "These well-priced and well-sized houses can be built anywhere in the commonwealth. By creating both green jobs and green housing at reasonable prices, this project will help increase economic activity and expand sustainable housing options."

Jones introduced Sen. Jamie Eldridge, who stated that the effort over the past 10 years was an example of cooperation on a policy level and in action among federal, state, and local officials. Eldridge, who serves as the Senate Chairman of the Joint Committee on Housing, said that the Devens housing at Adams Circle would be an example of how to build more workforce housing—housing for people who work locally, whether for government or for local businesses. He said that the range for market rate units will be less than \$350,000.

Scott, also at the ground-breaking, has plans for 24 zero-energy homes in Harvard and said that the required permitting processes with Harvard's boards—for example, ZBA, Water Commission, and the Board of Health—are under way. Scott told the Harvard Press that market-rate units in the Harvard Chapter 40B development on Stow Road will be between \$350,000 and \$500,000 and that affordable units will be less than \$200,000. In his remarks at the event, Scott said, "There is a perfect storm of federal, state, and local incentives for building these homes, so the cost is now competitive with conventional construction, and the word is starting to get out that this makes a lot of sense for the homeowner, the environment, and the builder." Approximately 50 people attended the ceremony, including MassDevelopment officials, state political leaders, developers, and the public.

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Celebrating the groundbreaking of an 8-home zero-net-energy community at Devens, from left: Richard Gilles, CEO BarnRaisers Inc; State Representative Sheila Harrington; R. Carter Scott, Transformations Inc; Marty Jones, MassDevelopment President and CEO; State Senator Jamie Eldridge; George Ramirez, Executive VP of Devens Operations; Rhonda Spector, MassDevelopment Project Manager; and William Marshall, Devens Enterprise Commission. (Courtesy photo)

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