



CITY OF NEW ORLEANS



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Families at the Center of Results

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## **BIENVILLE BASIN TRANSFORMATION CELEBRATES COMPLETION OF MULTI-PHASED FORMER IBERVILLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT SITE**

*Major Public Housing Development Transformed  
Through HUD's \$30.5 Million Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grant*

**NEW ORLEANS** (November 13, 2019) – Today, Executive Director of the Housing Authority of New Orleans Evette Hester was joined by Director of Community and Economic Development for the City of New Orleans Ellen Lee, Louisiana Office of Community Development Executive Director Pat Forbes, Executive Director of the Louisiana Housing Corporation Keith Cunningham, Assistant Secretary for the Office of Public and Indian Housing R. Hunter Kurtz, General Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Office of Public and Indian Housing Dominique Blom, Director of Choice Neighborhoods at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Mindy Turbov, President of Urban Strategies Esther Shin, the Honorable Kristin Gisleson Palmer, New Orleans Councilmember - District C, and HRI Properties President and CEO Tom Leonhard to celebrate the completion of the multi-phased Iberville Onsite redevelopment site, now known as the Bienville Basin neighborhood. Josh Collen, President of HRI Properties' new Communities division, served as emcee for the event having overseen the development of the project from conception. A ribbon cutting and site tours for housing and economic development officials, project participants and stakeholders commemorated the post-Hurricane Katrina milestone.

### **Bienville Basin Transformation**

Developed in public-private partnership by HRI Properties under a Choice Neighborhoods Implementation (CNI) \$30.5 million grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to the Housing Authority of New Orleans and the City of New Orleans, the ribbon cutting marks the transformation of the 23-acre former Iberville Public Housing Development, built in 1942 and located adjacent to New Orleans' famous French Quarter, into a vibrant, mixed-use, mixed-income community. New Orleans was one of five cities to receive a CNI implementation grant in its inaugural round in 2011.

“The completion of the transformation of the Iberville Housing Development into the Bienville Basin Neighborhood is a major win for the City of New Orleans and our residents. We are facing an affordability crisis in a city that is majority renters. With this development, we are creating affordable, mixed-income housing and meeting the needs of our people. This project is a great example of what can happen when we come together at

the local, state, and federal levels and leverage our public-private partnerships, but there is still work to be done. On Saturday, November 16 there is a proposition on the ballot that would allow the City to sell \$500 million in bonds, which would secure more funding to go towards more affordable housing initiatives,” said **Mayor LaToya Cantrell**.

**Assistant Secretary for the Office of Public and Indian Housing R. Hunter Kurtz** said... “Choice Neighborhoods grants focus not only on redeveloping distressed housing, like Iberville, into mixed-income developments, but also on the needs of the residents so their lives can be transformed. Through the work of the Iberville team, 682 housing units have been modernized and former residents now have the opportunity to return home to a revitalized neighborhood. HUD is proud to have been part of the Iberville team.”

**Executive Director of the Housing Authority of New Orleans Evette Hester** said... “The completion of Bienville Basin is an example of HANO’s commitment to creating healthy and sustainable communities coupled with wrap-around supportive services for our residents. We have an essential mission to provide affordable housing in New Orleans, and the completion of this journey that began in 2011 with the award of \$30.5 million through HUD’s Choice Neighborhood Initiative, solidifies our commitment and provides us with an opportunity to expand upon this success through our off-site housing component.”

**HRI Properties President and CEO Tom Leonhard** said... “At HRI Properties, our mantra is to elevate the urban experience for our residents and guests. HRI creates vibrant places where people want to live, work, play, and stay. With Bienville Basin, we’ve been able to do just that. We offer residents beautiful homes just steps from the center of the city with on-site amenities that include training opportunities and services designed to build a true community that reinvigorated the entire historic Iberville neighborhood. We are so passionate about this type of work that we’ve created a brand-new division of our company, HRI Communities, dedicated solely to transforming underserved areas that in turn create high quality jobs and build sustainable, thriving communities.”

### **Achieving HUD Housing Goals**

Sustaining partnerships spanning across the years, the coordinated efforts of the State of Louisiana, HANO, the City of New Orleans, and HRI Properties have produced lauded developments advancing the CNI mission and accomplishing HUD’s envisioned community transformation. The Iberville/Tremé CNI has demonstrated more progress and achieved more successes in creating Replacement Units (R.U.) than any other CNI development in the nation.

To date, CNI housing developments completed by HRI Properties or completed and/or underway by other developers are providing for 1,305 mixed income housing units, of which 715 are CNI Replacement Units counted towards the HUD mandated 821 Iberville Public Housing Replacement Units. Amongst these completed Replacement Units are the 304 Iberville Onsite Replacement Units required, thus meeting a major milestone and achieving a fundamental imperative of the Iberville/Tremé CNI.

In addition to new high-quality housing, the project leveraged \$20 million in philanthropic funding and in kind donations allowing for a significant investment in services for the residents of the Iberville development at the time of the CNI grant application, including a \$500,000 CNI endowment that ensures sustained programming for the next decade after the formal grant period is over. Nearly 85 percent of all households from the former public housing project site enrolled in case management with 80% resulting in positive outcomes, and a Workforce

Development Series was launched along with the implementation of a Public Safety Enhancement Grant that resulted in a 29% decrease in crime.

**President of Urban Strategies Esther Shin** said... “Urban Strategies is thrilled to have been part of a Development Team that prioritized resident engagement at every level of the planning and implementation process. Resident leaders formally organized the Iberville Resident Working Team (IRWT) and were accountable to their neighbors for their role and the outcomes of the project. The IRWT brought their invaluable experience, expertise and perspective to every meeting and event. The IRWT demonstrates what inclusion can look like when you see the power of resident voice.”

### **Bienville Basin Amenities**

The Bienville Basin community features 227 market rate apartments, 151 workforce housing units and 304 public housing replacement units, including a 51-unit senior housing component. Bienville Basin is just steps from the French Quarter with the Canal Street, Rampart Street and St. Charles Avenue streetcars running nearby, providing access and connectivity to all of New Orleans.

Residents at Bienville Basin enjoy amenities including: three fitness centers; a computer learning center and outdoor technology patio powered by Dell; retail shops featuring a café and yoga studio; community rooms; an early childhood reading room to promote youth literacy; an outdoor dining area including picnic benches, BBQ grills, food truck parking; gardens tied to nutritional education programs; two playgrounds; and off-street, gated parking. The entire neighborhood was wired for fiber optics, offering the fastest Internet and cable services in the city.

Apartments are constructed to the latest in sustainable green building standards with amenities that include Energy Star rated equipment, energy-efficient central air and heat with programmable thermostats, stainless steel kitchen appliances, walk-in closets, and full-size washers and dryers. Wrap around balconies and private porches are also available in select floor plans.

### **Contracting, Hiring, & Training Successes**

Demonstrating its commitment to fostering inclusive contracting and hiring structures, HRI’s CNI development efforts have resulted in the hiring of 325 Section 3 low-income workers, certified career training provided for 181 Section 3 individuals, and approximately \$52 million in contract value awarded to DBE/WBE/Section 3 businesses and partnerships.

### **Bienville Basin Financing**

In addition to the CNI grant, the Bienville Basin community required a complex partnership and financing structure including public and private investments with significant programmatic support by the Louisiana Housing Corporation.

**Executive Director of the Louisiana Housing Corporation Keith Cunningham** said... “As proud as we are of our roll in the development of this community, we recognize that our strength is in our ability to be a resource to developments like this throughout the State.”

**HRI Communities President Josh Collen** said... “This achievement was made possible by the State’s active role in partnering with HUD and the Iberville/Tremé CNI team, establishing these efforts to be the model for what a

successful public-private partnership looks like. The tax credits and CDBG funding provided by the Louisiana Housing Corporation and Office of Community Development were instrumental to the success of the development. Bienville Basin is the definition of what can happen when a wide range of community enhancement efforts combine to mutually and equally promote and augment each other. It is our hope that Bienville Basin will serve as a catalyst and case study for future local, state, and federal partnership efforts to implement large-scale revitalization projects.”

“By redeveloping the former Iberville housing project into the Bienville Basin neighborhood as part of the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative, the city of New Orleans has completed the transformation of several large public housing projects that flooded after Hurricane Katrina,” **Office of Community Development Executive Director Pat Forbes** said. “With the help of Community Development Block Grant funding, HANO has turned these distressed projects into beautiful, functional and desirable communities like River Garden, Harmony Oaks, Columbia Parc, Marrero Commons, Lafitte and now Bienville Basin.”

Private financial institutions participating in the multi-phase redevelopment of Bienville Basin include: U.S. Bancorp Community Development Corporation, Stonehenge Capital, Boston Capital Finance, Barings Multifamily Capital and the Community Development Trust.

“U.S. Bank was honored to participate in all seven phases of the Iberville/Bienville Basin CNI re-development and has made a long-term commitment to this project, the community and most importantly its residents,” said **Beth Stohr, director of Affordable Housing for U.S. Bancorp Community Development Corporation**, the tax credit and community development subsidiary of U.S. Bank, which has been the federal tax credit investor and lender on all seven phases. “Being part of such a large scale and collaborative public-private partnership to provide so many units of mixed-income housing to a single community is not an opportunity that presents itself every day. This development has not only transformed a neighborhood, but more importantly, changed the lives of those who call Bienville Basin home – because a stable home is the foundation for opportunity. By partnering together on projects like this, we can help close the gap between people and possibilities and make a meaningful and lasting impact in our communities.”

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