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**Join Us In Celebrating the Progress of the BR Choice Neighborhood Initiative
Phase I Housing Component, Cypress at Ardendale:
*Building a Community of Opportunity and Choice***

[Baton Rouge, LA] The East Baton Rouge Parish Housing Authority (EBRPHA), Partners Southeast (PSE), and Integral Development, LLC, are thrilled to invite you to a momentous event celebrating the progress of Cypress at Ardendale, the housing component of the BR Choice Transformation Plan! This celebration highlights the significant progress in transforming the Ardendale community in North Baton Rouge into a resilient and thriving community, thanks to an investment of \$32M in Choice Neighborhood Initiative (CNI) grant funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

The event and tour are celebrating the progress of the housing component and the steadfast commitment and support of the community, its stakeholders, local, state, and federal partners who continue to work tirelessly to make our vision a reality.

Once completed, Cypress at Ardendale, built in four phases, will provide 434 new homes to the community, investing over \$180M in North Baton Rouge.

EBRPHA launched its efforts to transform the 1.6-square-mile area that includes the Smiley Heights and Melrose East neighborhoods in 2013, when it was the recipient of a \$500,000 CNI Planning Grant from HUD. Following its planning efforts, in 2018, EBRPHA and the City-Parish, as its co-applicant, submitted a CNI Implementation Grant application for its “BR Choice Neighborhood” transformation plan that included the collaboration and support of more than forty (40) local public and private partners that committed to improving the lives of families that live in EBRPHA’s Ardenwood Village, creating a sense of place within the larger North Baton Rouge communities and constructing a new mixed-income community, that will include replacement housing for the existing 93 families at Ardenwood Village.

In the fall of 2019, HUD awarded EBRPHA and the City-Parish, \$29.5M in CNI funds, one of four recipients, within the competitive funding round. In July 2024, President Biden, along with Acting HUD Secretary Adrienne Todman, announced EBRPHA and the City-Parish were recipients of an additional \$2.5M supplemental grant. The competitive funding was made available to FY2018 grantees, who were impacted by post-COVID price increases.

The Cypress at Ardendale community is a central part of this transformative initiative. Three hundred and sixty-four (364) apartment homes will be two and three-story walk-up style and town homes for families, offering one-, two-, three- and four-bedroom apartments. Phase I was designed by RHH Architects, while the community is being constructed by Milton J. Womack, Inc. and Legette Construction, a Joint Venture. The greenfield site was designed to carefully incorporate the housing design and not disturb the natural environment. The 40-acre site will maintain approximately 11 acres of wetlands.

“The development team’s goal was to create a walkable community with a diverse inventory of high quality mixed-income apartment homes while maintaining the character and charm of Louisiana architecture. Cypress at Ardendale exemplifies the vision of the BR Choice Transformation Plan with family-friendly townhomes and apartments, as well as dedicated senior housing. This community represents the cutting-edge of inclusive, resilient design. Alongside a network of community amenities, including green spaces and gathering areas, the community supports health, wellness, and connectivity for all families,” stated Janelle Brown, CNI Director and COO of Partners Southeast.

Phase I, one hundred and seventy (170) apartment homes, is currently under construction. The \$70M investment is being financed with \$35M in construction financing from Home Bank through the purchase of affordable housing tax credit bonds issued by the Louisiana Housing Corporation (LHC). Affordable housing tax credits awarded by LHC and subsequently purchased by Alliant/Walker Dunlap for \$24.9M; The Louisiana Office of Community Development (State OCD) invested \$8M in 2016 Flood Disaster Recovery funds and \$4.5M from LHC through HUD’s Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. The City-Parish invested \$8M in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding and EBRPHA through its development arm, Partners Southeast, invested \$11.8M in CNI funding. In addition, an \$11.3M permanent financing loan will be provided by Walker & Dunlap.

The community will also have a 70-unit senior independent living building, that is anticipated to start construction in January 2025 as the second phase. The senior phase has received affordable housing tax credits and \$2M in Developer Assistance Program funds from LHC and \$850k from Federal Home Loan Bank (FHLB) Dallas Affordable Housing Program grant award, sponsored by Home Bank.

Phases III and IV are currently in predevelopment and are expected to close on financing needed to start construction in 2025.

The community will include a half-acre urban park designed by BREC, a clubhouse featuring a fitness center, computer lab, leasing office, and common area, all designed to foster a vibrant, walkable, and interconnected community.

According to EBRPHA and Partners Southeast CEO J. Wesley Daniels, Jr., the Cypress at Ardenale multi-generational community will be the nexus of the BR Choice neighborhood "Educational Spine" to connect the surrounding neighborhoods with key education and employment centers, creating connectivity of educational assets from cradle to career.

The MOVEBR Ardenwood-Lobdell Connector Road project, driven by the City of Baton Rouge, will fund the construction of a half-mile pedestrian and vehicular road on vacant land east of Cypress at Ardenale community, providing access to Baton Rouge Community Colleges, McKay Automotive Technology Center, and Automotive Collision Center, as well as East Baton Rouge Parish Schools, Career and Technology Center, and a planned YWCA early childhood learning center.

Background

The BR Choice Neighborhood Initiative targets an approximately 1.6-square-mile area covering the Smiley Heights and Melrose East neighborhoods. Once industrious communities, these areas have faced systemic challenges in recent decades due to unemployment and poverty. The goal is to create a holistic, integrated community that offers opportunities and choices for its families. This will be achieved through a neighborhood-driven approach that incorporates a community engagement framework, focused in the areas of resiliency, placemaking and innovation.

By leveraging the neighborhood's central location, we aim to attract public and private investments to revitalize abandoned properties, enhance connectivity to essential services and job centers, and introduce a diverse mix of housing and retail/commercial establishments to boost neighborhood vibrancy. The BR Choice plan aims to restore these neighborhoods by fostering resiliency, placemaking, and innovation. With HUD's support and the commitment of EBRPHA and the City of Baton Rouge, this initiative is redefining neighborhoods by their potential—not by the issues they've faced.

Join us in celebrating this new era for North Baton Rouge, meet the partners and leaders behind the transformation, and witness the power of community-driven change.

The BR Choice Celebration will take place at Cypress at Ardendale, 1701 North Ardenwood in Baton Rouge, LA, from 3:00 PM to 5:30 PM on Thursday Nov. 14th, 2024.

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For over 80 years, the East Baton Rouge Parish Housing Authority has served the needs of families by providing affordable housing opportunities. The EBRPHA ACCESS strategy impacts more than 14,000 residents across the Capital Region. Learn more about EBRPHA at ebrpha.org or by calling 225-923-8100.

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For the past 20 years, Partners Southeast has sought to use housing as a vehicle to make measurable impacts in Education, Economic Opportunities, and Health & Wellness in communities throughout the Southeast. Partners Southeast provides and develops quality housing opportunities for individuals and families while promoting self-sufficiency and neighborhood revitalization. Focusing on strategic investments in People, Neighborhoods and Housing, seamlessly mixing market-rate and affordable units, Partners Southeast creates vibrant and diverse communities. For more info on Partners Southeast, call: 225.923.8112 or go to www.partnerssoutheast.com

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For more than 30 years, Integral Development, LLC has earned a solid reputation for bringing innovative community, housing and infrastructure solutions to strengthen and revitalize urban communities. Integral's transformations have successfully produced excellent social, economic and physical environments, while delivering solid returns to investors and partners. Learn more about Integral Development, LLC at <https://integral-online.com>