Evergreen East rises from Perinton fire

Affordable housing units secured for next 40 years

Steve Howe Rochester Democrat and Chronicle | USA TODAY NETWORK

Four years after a fire displaced dozens of residents and raised questions about the future of one of Monroe County's largest affordable housing communities, Evergreen East has completed an $86 million transformation that secures its affordability for decades. ●

More than 65 Pines of Perinton residents were displaced by the 2022 fire at the 43-acre, 508-unit affordable housing complex at the corner of state Route 250 and Whitney Road. On Aug. 20, a ceremony marked the end of the rehabilitation project.

The renovation was not just to preserve the complex now known as Evergreen East, but to upgrade and modernize all of its units.

Those improvements include new plumbing, electrical and HVAC systems, expanded services, a modern community building and improved accessibility. Winn-Companies, the owner and operator of the complex, completed the improvements over the past three years, working in phases to not displace residents.

While local dignitaries celebrated under a tent at the ribbon cutting, children played on a new playground in the background while ground crews tidied up landscaping. A vibrant mural frames the doors to the new community center and some residents wandered down to get a glimpse of the proceedings.

"We need more housing so there's more opportunity," said RuthAnne Visnauskas, commissioner of New York State Homes and Community Renewal. "But it also means we have to preserve what we have. And protecting affordable housing like this that can remain safe



The updated community center at Evergreen East, formerly the Pines of Perinton, during a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Aug. 20. STEVE HOWE/ROCHESTER DEMOCRAT AND CHRONICLE



A three-alarm fire destroyed several apartments on Honeysuckle Terrace at the Pines of Perinton in Fairport on Jan. 25, 2022. The firefighters were trying to stop the fire from spreading to other apartments and had been battling it at this point for at least four hours. TINA MACINTYRE-YEE/ROCHESTER DEMOCRAT AND CHRONICLE

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and modern and affordable for the next generation is as much a part of that puzzle and that strategy around housing for the governor as the new construction, especially here in Monroe County."

The community formerly known as Pines of Perinton was constructed between1972 and1976 by the New York State Urban Development Corporation. The property was acquired by Winn-Companies in 2023, securing financing to ensure the property is 100% affordable for the next 40 years. The complex includes studios, one-bedroom apartments, twobedroom townhomes, three-bedroom apartments and townhomes and four-bedroom townhomes.

There's no community like this on the east side suburbs, said Assemblywoman Jen Lunsford. If children were displaced, by the fire or by market conditions favoring market- rate housing, they wouldn't be able to stay in the Fairport School District as there is nowhere to rent at the price point, especially for

families.

“This is a very unique structure and to be able to afford opportunities for families to grow, for people to live in a place that is welcoming and safe and now beautiful is such a boon,” Lunsford said. “Because everybody deserves to be a part of our community and we are made better and stronger by all of the residents who live here.”

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