

Final Notice and Public Explanation of a Proposed Activity Activity in a 100-Year Floodplain

To: All interested Agencies, Groups and Individuals

A. This is to give notice that the Town of Smithfield has conducted an evaluation as required by Executive Order 11988 and 11990 in accordance with HUD regulations at 24 CFR 55.20 Subpart C Procedures for Making Determinations on Floodplain Management and Wetlands Protection. The activity is funded under the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, Contract #16/31/29. The proposed project known as the Georgiaville Village Green is an affordable housing project consisting of the construction of forty-two (42) new affordable rental housing family apartments for five (5) households not exceeding 50% AMI and thirty-seven (37) households earning no more than 60% AMI. The proposed project is on a 10.18 acre lot located at 29 Whipple Avenue in Smithfield, RI, 02917, Providence County. There are nine (9) residential buildings with a total foot print of 26,820 square feet. The project also involves the installation of new utilities (sewer and water), drainage and new roadways. The project will be developed in the former location of the Narragansett Gray Iron Foundry.

Floodplain: A portion of the subject property is located within the 100-year floodplain (Zone AE) associated with the Woonasquatucket River. Approximately 43,000 square feet of floodplain is located within the boundaries of the lot. The development portion of site is not located in a flood zone and no disturbance of the floodplain area is proposed. Accordingly, there will be no loss of floodwater storage, floodwater conveyance or loss of any of the other natural and beneficial functions of the floodplain and, therefore no mitigation is necessary.

Wetlands: Three freshwater wetland types are present in the area. These wetlands include a riverbank wetland, special aquatic sites and a forested wetland. The riverbank wetland extends 200 feet west of the Woonasquatucket River's west bank. The riverbank wetland occupies approximately 2.27 acres on this lot. Within the riverbank wetland, the special aquatic sites occupy approximately 0.10 acres, deciduous forest occupies approximately 0.38 acres, forested wetland occupies approximately 0.01 acres and the grass/shrubland occupies approximately 1.78 acres. is located adjacent to the 100-year floodplain, and freshwater wetlands.

B. The Town of Smithfield has considered the following alternatives and mitigation measures will be taken to minimize adverse impacts and to restore and preserve natural and beneficial values of the riverbank wetland:

1. There are a very limited number of sites that are appropriately zoned for multi-family housing development within the Town of Smithfield and that meet the above stated criteria. Most of the appropriately zoned sites have been developed or are in the process of being developed and were not available for acquisition. The 29 Whipple Avenue site was approved for 42 units of multi-family housing in 2008 and also meets the selection criteria. The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) found that the project would result in minimal disturbance to onsite wetlands and that there will be no development within the floodplain. Based on these factors RIDEM issued an Insignificant Alteration Permit for the project and led to the Town's determination that there were no practicable alternatives to the development at the 29 Whipple Avenue site.

2. No Action or Alternative Actions that Serve the Same Purpose A no action alternative was considered and rejected because the Town's Comprehensive Community Plan clearly identifies a significant need for affordable housing in the Town of Smithfield. The current housing stock in Smithfield does not include a sufficient number of units to accommodate the number of low income families seeking affordable rental housing. The proposed project represents a substantial increase in the number of affordable housing units needed as the Town strives to achieve 10% affordability threshold by 2050, as required under the Low and Moderate Income Housing Act (Act). The Town currently has a 5.2% LMI component which is primarily made up of elderly housing. In fact, only 6 percent of the Town's LMI units are family units and none of those are rental units. The Georgiaville Village Green project represents the first family rental LMI project in the community and will provide affordable rental housing apartments for five (5) households not exceeding 50% AMI and thirty-seven (37) households earning no more than 60% AMI. The need for family LMI housing as expressed in the Housing element of the Comprehensive Community Plan outweighs the minimal impacts to wetlands with the proposed mitigation and the fact that no development is proposed within the floodplain.

Floodplains:

As stated, the project does not alter or damage the floodplain or its natural functions as no disturbance, paving or other obstructions are proposed within the 100 year floodplain associated with the Woonasquatucket River.

Wetland Mitigation:

The proposed project will result in a reduction of grass/shrubland habitat within the 200' riverbank wetland. The areas to be altered are already degraded from man-made debris and other features left behind from the demolition of the former foundry. The mitigation includes the cleanup of old rubbish on the property will also occur within the resource areas that are not to be altered, and therefore the overall quality of these habitats will be enhanced as they retain a naturally vegetated composition. The areas to be altered are also dominated by invasive species such as Russian Olive, Multiflora Rose and Oriental Bittersweet. The proposed mitigation in these areas will be to remove the invasive species and replant with native species. The reintroduction of the native species will eventually lead to the restoration the natural functions and values of the riverbank wetland. The project employs pervious pavement drainage system for all driveways and parking areas that are designed to attenuate the peak flow for the 10 year and 100 year, 24 hour Type III design storm events and provide exceptional groundwater recharge rates that help to restore the natural functions of the wetlands and associated buffers. Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control Practices have been employed to avoid and minimize impacts to adjacent wetland resources. Silt fence and straw wattles are proposed along the limits of disturbance. Once established, these measures will be monitored daily until construction activities are complete. The silt fence line will serve as the strict limits of disturbance for the project within or adjacent to regulated freshwater wetland areas. No alterations, including vegetative clearing or surface disturbance, will occur beyond this silt fence line. The limits of clearing, grading, and disturbance will be kept to a minimum within the proposed area of construction. All areas outside of these limits, as depicted on the project site plans, will be totally undisturbed, to remain in a completely natural condition. RIDEM issued an Insignificant Alteration - Permit No. 16-0235 on December 9, 2016 based on the impact avoidance and minimization efforts of the project designers.

C. The Town of Smithfield has reevaluated the alternatives to building in the wetland and has determined that there is no practicable alternative. Environmental files that document compliance with steps 3 through 6 of Executive Order 11988 and 11990 are available for public inspection, review and copying upon request at the times and location delineated in the last paragraph of this notice for receipt of comments.

D. There are three primary purposes for this notice. First, people who may be affected by activities in floodplains and those who have an interest in the protection of the natural environment should be given an opportunity to express their concerns and provide information about these areas. Second, an adequate public notice program can be an important public educational tool. The dissemination of information about floodplains and wetlands can facilitate and enhance Federal efforts to reduce the risks associated with the occupancy and modification of these special areas. Third, as a matter of fairness, when the Federal government determines it will participate in actions taking place in floodplains, it must inform those who may be put at greater or continued risk.

E. Written comments must be received by the Town of Smithfield at the following address on or before **March 29, 2019**: 64 Farnum Pike, Smithfield, RI 02917, (401) 233-1017, Attention: Michael Phillips, Town Planner. A full description of the project may also be reviewed during normal business hours, 8:30-4:30 at the same address as above. Comments may also be submitted via email at mphillips@smithfieldri.com.

Date: March 21, 2019