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Virtual Groundbreaking **Robinson Overlook** will answer need for mixed-income housing options in Columbia

September 2, 2020, Columbia, MD...Construction for the \$18.7 million mixed-income housing development called **Robinson Overlook** is now underway at 7410 Grace Drive here.



In lieu of a large public groundbreaking celebration, developer Woda Cooper Companies

and general contractor Harkins Builders hosted a small ceremonial event without an audience at the site on August 20, 2020, to commemorate the start of construction. A [video](#) was released today to mark the occasion.

Robinson Overlook, nestled on a 3.8-acre site near Robinson Nature Park, has been embraced by state and local housing experts and Howard County leaders because it will expand high quality housing options for area residents at various income levels in need of affordable homes.

"Howard County is committed to creating a full spectrum of housing opportunity for all our residents," said County Executive Calvin Ball. "Robinson Overlook is an important investment of the Payment in Lieu of Taxes program and a step forward as we build a community with inclusive and accessible housing for people of all incomes."

Robinson Overlook will consist of five residential buildings that offer single level apartments and townhomes. Creating a mixed-income community was an emphasized goal. Of the 48 total units, 43 will be reserved for lease to residents earning a range up to 60% of the area median income, with five more units leased without income restrictions. It will include 8 one-bedroom, 19 two-bedroom, and 21 three-bedroom units. Eight of the units will be set aside for persons with disabilities.

LIHTC support

Primary funding for Robinson Overlook was supported through federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credits allocated by the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (MD-DHCD). The agency also contributed a permanent mortgage and low interest loan to expand housing opportunities for persons with disabilities, in conjunction with the Harry and Jeannette Weinberg Foundation.

"Under Governor Hogan's leadership, the State of Maryland's production of affordable rental housing has risen to unprecedented levels, and Robinson Overlook will be another great example of the safe, high-quality, energy-efficient housing we support," said Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development Secretary Kenneth C. Holt. "It's also a testament to the strong partnerships between the public, private, and nonprofit sectors that are needed to create modern affordable housing opportunities for all Marylanders."

All units at Robinson Overlook will offer spacious open-concept, light-filled living spaces, fully-equipped kitchens with ENERGY STAR appliances, including dishwashers. All units will have walk-in closets; individually-controlled HVAC and hot water heaters; washer/dryer hookups; window blinds; large windows; and high-quality, durable contemporary flooring and finishes throughout.

In addition, there will be a stylish community room with kitchenette, two playgrounds, and a community picnic area. There is an onsite leasing and management office and off-street parking. A regional bus stop is located a quarter mile from the site allowing easy access to the many work centers, including a medical center, retail mall, Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Laboratory, and Howard County Community College, all within a few miles of the community.

"Robinson Overlook will fill a gap in the county by offering families and singles who work in the many retail, service, and health care jobs nearby, along with giving retired seniors who are on fixed incomes, safe, secure and affordable places to live with gorgeous, modern amenities that meet today's living standards," said Andrew B. Cohen, Woda Cooper's Senior Vice President.

Supportive services will be provided through Howard County Housing Commission (Howard Housing), the housing authority for Howard County and minority owner. Services will target both parents and children with enhanced wellness and daily living skills, including areas such as accessing resources, household budgeting, parenting, nutrition and meal planning, and after-school programs.

Peter Engel, the Housing Commission's Executive Director, noted that, "We are proud help bring new equitable housing to the County. Now more than ever Howard County needs a stable, safe platform from which residents can climb the economic ladder. Robinson Overlook will provide that platform for the families that live here, with dual-generation programming that can dramatically improve the future for both parents and children."

Green building

Built to National Association of Homebuilders ICC-700 National Green Building Standard (NGBS) 2015, Robinson Overlook includes highly-sealed and insulated buildings, specialized fresh air transfer systems, energy-efficient kitchens, heating/cooling systems, windows, and water-saving bathroom fixtures.

"Residents will pay low monthly utility bills due to green building materials and energy-efficient systems used throughout the facilities," said Mr. Cohen. Solar panels will be used to generate sufficient levels of electricity for common spaces.



The video features Mr. Cohen; Secretary Holt; County Executive Ball, Mr. Engel; Steve Smith, Senior Vice President for Truist Financial Corporation; Wayne Sagal, Harkins Builders; and Deb Young, Howard County Council District 4.

Truist Community Capital provided equity capital, construction financing, and an additional loan from Freddie Mac to finance the development. “We’re proud to partner on delivering funding for Robinson Overlook, which will fulfill a critical need for more affordable housing in our Howard County,” said Mr. Smith. “This investment underscores our focus on providing developers with the tailored solutions they need to take projects from concept to reality.”

Collaboration was vital for the community’s planning and development. “The tremendous support from Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development, Howard County, Howard County Housing Commission and investor/lender Truist Community Capital was essential in bringing Robinson Overlook to life,” Cohen said.

Projected rents will be no greater than \$1,150/month for affordable units based on unit size and income restriction. Eight project-based housing vouchers through the Baltimore Metropolitan Council have been awarded to provide rental assistance in 3 two-bedroom units and 5 three-bedroom units.

Robinson Overlook is expected to be ready for leasing in June of 2021. Architecture by Design is project architect, with general contracting by Harkins Builders, Inc. Civil engineer is Vogel Engineering + Timmons Group. Woda Cooper’s management division will oversee day-to-day operations including leasing, property maintenance, and ongoing management to assist residents. For more information about leasing, visit wodagroup.com or call 240-841-5039.



Robinson Overlook Groundbreaking participants (from left): Andrew B Cohen, Woda Cooper Companies; County Executive Calvin Ball, Howard County; Secretary Kenneth C. Holt, Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development; Steve Smith, Truist Financial Corporation; Peter Engel, Howard County Housing Commission; Wayne Sagal, Harkins Builders; and Deb Jung, Howard County Council District 4.

About Woda Cooper Companies, Inc.

Woda Cooper Companies, Inc. and its affiliates specialize in the development, design, construction, and management of high-quality affordable multi-family apartments, senior communities, and single-family homes. The company marked 30 years in business May 2, 2020, with operations in 15 states and a portfolio of approximately 350 communities and more than 14,000 units. Green building is standard with certifications including Passive House, Zero Energy Ready Homes, LEED, Enterprise Green, EarthCraft, and ENERGY STAR. In addition to its Columbus headquarters, Woda Cooper has offices in Savannah, GA; Indianapolis, IN; Shelbyville, KY; Annapolis, MD; Mackinaw City, MI; Charlotte, NC; and Norfolk, VA. Affordable Housing Finance magazine ranked Woda Cooper Companies 10th in nation among Developers and 14th among Owners on May 1, 2020.

