

■ FOR SUBSCRIBERS BUSINESS

# City celebrates opening of 47 apartments at former Torrey Factory building

**Marco Cartolano** Telegram & Gazette

Published 5:00 a.m. ET Nov. 18, 2021 | Updated 5:46 a.m. ET Nov. 18, 2021

WORCESTER — Once a grim symbol of Worcester's faded industrial past, the former Torrey Factory building has been converted to 47 market-rate apartments.

The building at 128 Chandler St. now known as the Torrey Factory Lofts, had its official opening and ribbon-cutting ceremony Wednesday afternoon. The building is fully leased and has 31 studios, 12 one-bedroom and four two-bedroom apartments.

The property is managed by Worcester-based Bluestone Residential Inc. and company principal Tim Adler said the unit rents go for prices that fit into the price range of a young professional making an average salary of around \$30,000 to \$40,000.

A studio apartment at the building goes for \$1,150 to \$1,200 a month, a one-bedroom goes for around \$1,400 a month and a two-bedroom goes for \$1,600 a month, Adler said.

Daniel Stroe, another principal for Bluestone Residential Inc., linked the building's construction at a time of economic growth for Worcester to the city's current moment.

"To me this is a symbol because we are also in the middle of unprecedented growth in the city," Stroe said. "J.R. Torrey, the man who built this, has a very inspiring story. (He) started from nothing and became one of the most respectable companies in his field."

## 'Symbol of better times ahead'

Built in 1883 by J.R. Torrey Razor Co., the factory was used in the production of the company's razors. Before the building was acquired in 2019, it was vacant for 10 years. City Manager Edward M. Augustus Jr. said the building has long been a sore sight in the Main Middle neighborhood and he is glad to preserve a historic building.

"For 10 years it was kind of a negative on the neighborhood, a symbol of maybe better times that were in the past," Augustus said. "And now it's a symbol of better times ahead."

Augustus added that Torrey Factory Lofts coming onboard along with Worcester Common Ground's opening of affordable housing units on Chandler Street in October will create density in the neighborhood and aid economic activity.

## **Rivera: City experiencing population wave**

District 4 City Councilor Sarai Rivera said she welcomed the new residents to her district and said the city is experiencing a population wave.

"We have a wave and we know one of the things people keep talking about is having more livable spaces. And being able to have both market-rate and affordable-rate living spaces is something we definitely need. This is a great project because it exactly fits with the need of the city right now and the community as well," Rivera said.

Timothy P. Murray, president and CEO of the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce, said the city exceeding expectations for population growth in the U.S. Census underscores the need for housing.

"To have this building here with 47 units, and then next door Worcester Common Ground as well, we're meeting that need and there's a lot more to do," Murray said. "On a personal note, I think some of us who are lifelong Worcester residents ... growing up in Worcester, sometimes Piedmont-Chandler was a neighborhood that was overlooked by some and dismissed by some and not encouraged by leaders to look at and invest."

## **Chandler Street redesign**

The project brings in more units to Chandler Street, a street that Rivera plans to focus on in her next term on the City Council. Rivera also brought up plans that are in the works to redesign Chandler Street to slow the street down for safety and economic reasons.

Augustus compared the city's goals for the Chandler Street redesign to Shrewsbury Street, a hub for businesses and restaurants.

"If you think about Shrewsbury Street, it has a nice island in the middle, beautiful plantings and signs that kind of create a sense of place. That's what we kind of see for Chandler Street," Augustus said.

Adler said the development team had to mix both modernizing features such as the building's elevator while preserving aspects of the old building such as the exposed ceilings. For the ceilings, Adler said the team had to fireproof floors above ceilings at an extra expense in order to meet safety standards.

Bluestone Residential Inc. is also applying to get the building recognized on the National Historical Registry.