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## **Op ed: Where healthy environment meets safe homes and good jobs** **Tue, Sep 04 07**

By RICHARD GODFREY

Last week I had the distinct pleasure of introducing a groundbreaking initiative that benefits our state and our residents, KeepSpace: where neighbors meet, people work, children play. KeepSpace is a revolutionary approach to building neighborhoods that include safe, affordable homes; match the local character of each community; and incorporate jobs, culture and a cleaner environment. And, by reusing existing land that has been underutilized or abandoned, KeepSpace Communities will help preserve a precious Rhode Island commodity: open space.

From Warwick to Westerly and Barrington to Burrillville, KeepSpace is working to revitalize neighborhoods in a way that is beneficial to each and every city and town and their residents while helping to ensure the viability of Rhode Island for years to come.

As the founding partner in this landmark initiative, Rhode Island Housing is bringing together advocates for jobs, the environment, safe homes and the many other essentials of a thriving community, to create KeepSpace Communities. Through these broad-based partnerships with non-profit organizations, state agencies, local government officials, business leaders and residents, KeepSpace will become Rhode Island's first fully comprehensive and cooperative effort to revitalize our state. Instead of working independently of each other to create small pockets of success in each area, KeepSpace partners will work together to create neighborhoods where a healthy environment meets safe homes and good jobs. Whether urban, suburban or rural, each community will be a unique design, fitting with the local character and needs of the residents.

Ultimately, these unprecedented partnerships will result in neighborhoods with good-paying jobs, and homes that are beautiful, convenient and affordable. Schools, services, church and cultural centers will all be nearby. Close proximity, coupled with conveniences like bike paths and public transit will help minimize traffic and air pollution. And "green" building practices will protect and reuse natural resources.

Rhode Island Housing has issued a request for proposals to developers and cities and towns for the first 3-5 communities, and is poised to invest millions of dollars to ensure affordable homes are incorporated into KeepSpace Communities. In doing so, we will leverage our expertise, programs, and funding capability with those of other public, private and non-profit agencies to stimulate unique models of community development, site design and sustainable growth for the future.

KeepSpace Communities are a bold step to ensure a safe, healthy future for our children and our children's children. We are delighted to already be joined by a remarkable list of partners including Grow Smart, the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation, Rhode

Island Local Initiative Support Corporation, the State Department of Planning, among many others. I encourage you to visit [www.keepspace.org](http://www.keepspace.org) to share your input and learn how you can become a partner in this vital, historic opportunity to build a better Rhode Island.

**Richard Godfrey is executive director of Rhode Island Housing and chairman of the KeepSpace Advisory Committee.**