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MASSDEVELOPMENT ANNOUNCES FIRST COMMERCIAL TENANT FOR VILLAGE HILL AT NORTHAMPTON

**CUSTOM FURNITURE-MAKER VCA, INC. TO CONSTRUCT 20,000 SF
FACILITY, ADD FOUR TO EIGHT NEW EMPLOYEES**

MassDevelopment today announced the first commercial land sale at Village Hill at Northampton, a 126-acre mixed-use redevelopment project. Upon approval of the site plan by the Planning Board, Easthampton-based furniture manufacturer, Volz Clarke & Associates, Inc. (VCA), will purchase a three-acre parcel (Lot 12-A) located on Earle Street, and construct a new 20,000-square-foot manufacturing facility to produce custom, high-end furniture and architectural millwork.

“With demolition complete and new infrastructure in place, 2007 is shaping up to be a year of important development milestones at Village Hill, including news of our first commercial property sale and corporate tenant,” said Robert L. Culver, MassDevelopment president/CEO. “I’d like to thank the VCA team for demonstrating their commitment to western Massachusetts, congratulate them on their expansion in Northampton and commend their pioneering spirit.”

VCA plans to start construction in September, and relocate from Easthampton by March 2008. The 16-employee firm also has pledged to add four to eight new jobs over the next three years.

Mayor Mary Clare Higgins said “Northampton welcomes VCA to Village Hill. We are very pleased that VCA will be the first commercial tenant. VCA expressed interest in the Earl Street property when the state first went out to bid seeking developers for the campus. VCA has been invested in this site for a long time, and I’m pleased the project will provide a home for this growing local business,” said the Mayor. “It’s a good fit for the project and a good fit for Northampton.”

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Founded in 1992 by Bruce Volz and Tony Clarke, VCA specializes in the development and construction of fine, hand-crafted furnishings. From humidors and night-stands to bookcases and dining tables, VCA, Inc. products are characterized by technical proficiency and sensitivity to design. VCA technicians collaborate with skilled designers and architects like Marc Newson, Thomas Pheasant, Robert A.M. Stern and Thierry Despont, to produce quality commissioned pieces. For more information about VCA visit www.vca-inc.com.

“We chose Village Hill at Northampton based on the site’s scenic beauty and comprehensive redevelopment plan for a livable, walkable community with retail, commercial and residential opportunities,” said Bruce Volz, VCA, Inc. co-founder. “We’re looking forward to growing our team and expanding our business in Northampton for years to come.”

At its operational peak, Northampton State Hospital (NSH) employed nearly 500 workers and housed 2,500 patients on its rural campus. The state closed the facility in 1993 and the site’s 70 buildings sat vacant for nearly a decade. In 1999, the City of Northampton approved a redevelopment master plan submitted by MassDevelopment, the state’s finance and development authority, and The Community Builders (TCB), the largest nonprofit urban housing developer in the country.

Today, the site is evolving into **Village Hill at Northampton**, a master-planned community based on New Urbanist principles, and combining commercial, industrial and residential uses to support regional job creation and business development. When finished, Village Hill will feature commercial, mixed use space and open. MassDevelopment officials estimate that at full build-out, Village Hill will support the creation or retention of 400 to 800 regional jobs.

MassDevelopment, the state’s finance and development authority, works with businesses, nonprofit organizations, financial institutions and local officials to stimulate economic growth across the Commonwealth. Between FY2004 and FY2006, MassDevelopment financed or managed 589 projects statewide representing an investment of more than \$4 billion in the Massachusetts economy. These projects are supporting the creation of 5,505 housing units and more than 23,000 jobs: 12,381 permanent and 10,679 construction-related.