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MHP Completes \$5.34 Million Green Renovation of Affordable Rental Development in Takoma Park with Help from Federal Stimulus Grand Re-opening of Gilbert Highlands Welcomed by Federal, State, and County Officials

(Takoma Park, MD – September 8, 2010) – Montgomery Housing Partnership (MHP), a private nonprofit housing developer, was joined by County Executive Isiah Leggett September 8, to cut the ribbon on the grand re-opening of its newly renovated Gilbert Highlands development. The project is the first housing development in Maryland to open after utilizing funding from the American Recovery & Reinvestment Act of 2009. The \$5.34 million renovation, which began in November, created 28 jobs. Federal, state and local officials were on hand to tour the renovation, which was hailed as a model for the other 28 stimulus funded projects currently underway in the state.

The completion of Gilbert Highlands raises MHP's total investments in Takoma Park and the Long Branch neighborhoods through public and private financing, to \$40 million over the last 10 years. Gilbert Highlands is a 21-unit affordable rental community located at 8508-8510 Flower Avenue. It was built in 1953, and is within walking distance to stores, schools, county services, and the future Purple Line Metro. The renovation features an onsite rental office, and a new community room that will house a bilingual preschool and computer lab.

MHP purchased the formerly distressed building from private investors in 2007 with the help of Montgomery County and other partners. As a result of a major renovation, the property now features an array of amenities and sustainable green features. The remodel includes new kitchens and bathrooms, window and door replacements, new floor finishes and refinished hardwood floors, mostly new plumbing and electrical systems, and individual HVAC systems.

"The completion of Gilbert Highlands is the culmination of a successful public-private partnership that included federal, state and county financing focused on a community that desperately needs to remain affordable," said Robert Goldman, President of MHP. "We could not have acquired this development without the support of Montgomery County, and I'm very proud of the end result."

Gilbert Highlands was the first development in the state to receive funding from the Maryland Multifamily Energy Efficiency and Housing Affordability (MEEHA) Program, and received \$1.17 million from the federal stimulus through the tax credit exchange program. Today it became the first beneficiary in Maryland to officially open. Montgomery County Executive Isiah Leggett served as the keynote speaker, and welcomed residents to their new homes.

"I am thrilled today to be here to celebrate Gilbert Highlands," said Leggett. "Despite the economic downturn, Montgomery County is continuing to invest in my priority of expanding and preserving affordable housing -- working with communities and our non-profit partners."

The grand re-opening was also welcomed by residents who were excited about the improvements to their home, including Frances Ballard, 71, who had lived at 8508 Flower Avenue for more than 30 years before the renovations started. She moved into one of MHP's other properties down the street until Gilbert Highlands was completed.

"It's a completely new makeover. They did a grand job, and I can hardly recognize the old building," remarked Ballard when she toured the renovation for the first time. She moved into Gilbert Highlands with her late husband on Christmas Day in 1977.

(More)

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“I actually got lost, which is a wonderful feeling. The only thing that hasn’t changed is the mosaic tile flooring in the hallway, and I think it’s terrific that MHP would save a piece of the former building. I love it here. Everything I need is within walking distance. I would be lost living somewhere other than this neighborhood,” Ballard said.

MHP has integrated many of Enterprise’s Green Communities Criteria into the renovation, including: energy efficient appliances and lighting to reduce electricity consumption, energy efficient windows and doors to reduce energy loss, low-flow toilets and plumbing fixtures to reduce water consumption, environmentally friendly paints and floor coverings, and landscaping with native plants.

MHP’s financing, construction and technical assistance partners on the Gilbert Highlands project include: Montgomery County Department of Housing and Community Affairs; State of Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development; Citi Community Capital; City of Takoma Park; Community Housing Capital; NeighborWorks America; EDG Architects; RKR Construction; Building Consultants, Inc.; and Charles Tini & Associates.

The Gilbert Highlands project is part of MHP’s community revitalization efforts in Takoma Park and the Long Branch neighborhoods. Most recently, MHP’s Takoma Park Preservation (TPP) project, which was completed in late 2008, included the preservation and renovation of three apartment communities that were at risk of being converted to condos. The properties are all within close proximity to the new Gilbert Highlands, and include: The Crossroads at Flower on Flower Avenue, Sligo View Apartments on Houston Avenue, and Merrimac Gardens on University Boulevard. A few miles away and in the heart of Takoma Park at the intersection of Maple & Ritchie Avenues, MHP is in the midst of construction on a \$5.25 million renovation of the vacant 8-story Maple Towers. It is expected to be completed in the spring of 2011, and will preserve affordable rental housing for an additional 36 families.

MHP’s holistic approach to housing includes providing affordable rents, developing educational programs for residents to expand their opportunities and balance their lives, and implementing neighborhood revitalization efforts. For more information about the nonprofit, visit us at www.MHPartners.org.

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About MHP

Montgomery Housing Partnership is a private, nonprofit housing development organization based in Silver Spring, MD. It is the largest nonprofit housing developer in Montgomery County, and has developed more than 1,100 units of affordable apartments, condos and townhomes. MHP also works with residents to enhance the vitality of the neighborhoods in which affordable housing is located, and implements Community Life Programs for its residents. MHP is a chartered member of NeighborWorks® America. For more information, visit www.MHPartners.org.