Every Building Has A Story

BLAIR PARK’S STORY HAS CHANGED FOR THE BETTER

“Five tenants from the Blair Park Apartments have won a judgment for back rent and attorney’s fees in an unprecedented ruling made about the property’s owners by the Montgomery County Commission on landlord and tenant affairs…The three buildings that make up Blair Park violate more than 700 health and safety codes.”

– June 19, 1996 Silver Spring Gazette

What a difference a decade makes. The 52-unit Blair Park Apartments of today has newly installed roofs, windows in the basement, doors, floors, lights, locks and a new fire alarm system.

The renovations took place in three phases to minimize tenant displacement. Extensive work was done on the exterior, interior and common areas. “New” is the description that applies to virtually every important

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One Family’s Experience…

MHP PROGRAMS OFFER HOPE AND SKILLS

An illness in the family and associated medical bills forced Ernest and Nana Marfo to give up their home in the mid-80’s. They found affordable housing at Great Hope Homes in Silver Spring, MD, but struggled to make ends meet while at the same time enduring terrible housing conditions.

After 10 years, the Marfo’s faced eviction as the owner of the existing apartments planned to convert them into luxury condominiums. However, Montgomery Housing Partnership stepped in and purchased and significantly renovated the property.

Upon purchasing Great Hope Homes, MHP also offered residents its home ownership program. The program helps potential first time home buyers become financially “literate”, develop consistent savings habits, develop relationships with mainstream financial institutions, and gain skills in money management. The Marfo’s participated in the program and now are happy owners of a new home. The Marfo’s serve as one example of the extent to which MHP’s programs work and affect people’s lives.
We know that the work we do helps people fulfill their dreams: living in affordable homes in vibrant neighborhoods with programs that enrich community life. However, turning the dream into a reality in Montgomery County presents challenges that other communities do not confront. Housing values in the county have increased as much as 60 to 70% recently. While this signals a housing market boom, the creation of affordable housing becomes much more difficult.

Our work involves reaching out to people who live in the areas of Montgomery Housing Partnership (MHP) affordable housing and working with them in revitalizing their neighborhoods. The relationships that develop as a result broaden the support network for all families associated with the effort.

We have seen many milestones already this year and there will be more to come. We have purchased land in Rockville adjacent to our existing property at Beall’s Grant that could result in 100 new units of affordable housing close to the Metro. We also have contracts to purchase and renovate an additional 63 units in Takoma Park.

part of these homes, including individually controlled heating and air conditioning, electric panels, kitchens, bathrooms and windows.

Steps and walkways were repaired. The common laundry room was renovated. A new community room has been built. In fact, the total cost of the renovation was approximately $2.3 million. Now, the 52-unit garden style apartment complex is in demand.

These apartments are a stark illustration of the need for MHP’s work. Blair Park Apartments now has a new beginning, with newly renovated apartments in a newly renovated area of Montgomery County.
How can old computers be put to good use? MHP formed a partnership with three organizations to develop one answer to this question. NPWnder Greater DC Region, an organization that helps nonprofits use technology to run more effectively, donated used computers to MHP. Skilled employee volunteers from America Online, called the AOL Technology Corps, installed donated software and networked the computers. Greater DC Cares recruited volunteers, coordinated logistics, and provided technical training. The result: 13 computers were rebuilt, installed and networked, seven at Great Hope Homes and six at Glenville Road. The donated computers offer residents a myriad of opportunities in terms of success in school, information for job opportunities, and access to greater economic success. MHP would like to extend many thanks to all of the volunteers who donated time and computers.
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Montgomery Housing Partnership’s work is made possible by the generous donations of corporations, individuals, and the state and county government. We would like to recognize and thank the following donors who have contributed to MHP from September 2005 to March 15, 2006. (This list does not include participants in our special events who will be recognized in our upcoming annual report.)

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