



# Community Page



## A new era emerges on Old Wilmington Road

by Jae McKrae

*There were tears 'of joy' during the opening of first available Hope VI apartments along Old Wilmington Road; all families were ecstatic.*

From the start, there were mixed feelings of the Hope VI grant program's objectives, and who would be allowed to return to the area following the demolition of the Campbell Terrace and Delona Gardens "housing projects." It was nearly two years ago that 204 families were moved from public housing on Old Wilmington Road. Of the 204 families, 182 have remained in the program.

No official knows who among the relocated families will return to that neighborhood. About half were moved into privately owned apartments or rental houses and continue to get Section 8 living subsidies. Many of those families have chosen not to return to public housing because of the freedom to choose where they live under the Section 8 program.

Structurally, the new Dogwood Manor, a senior citizens apartment, adds to the aesthetic value of the neighborhood. All new residents are proud to call them home. The 36-room facility is equipped with an exercise room, a hair stylist, leather chairs—that are situated around a table, a commons area with soft sofas and a mounted flat-screen TV in the game room on the second floor. Laundry rooms are also on each floor. Other amenities, unmatched in any public housing complex in Fayetteville, include a gazebo.

Margaret Thompson was one of the eight residents who recently moved into Dogwood Manor. Ms. Thompson said this was luxury compared to her old home. Manor resident Sharon Baker, who once called Delona Gardens home, now lives in a spacious two-bedroom apartment. Baker gleams about the modern kitchen appliances that include a garbage disposal, and the addition of the security system. I know she's gonna miss her old friends, but she won't miss the persistent rise in



crime. Cars vandalized or break-ins are only two examples. A former resident of Campbell Terrace Earline Washington said. "I hated to see it go."

I don't want to berate the existence of the old Campbell Terrace, Delona Gardens or any other housing project in the area because thousands of Fayetteville citizens grew up there. Many who were reared under those circumstances have gone on to achieve great successes. Growing up in this community shaped and molded their personalities to win and rise to the occasion against the odds. A few insensitive comments were made about how poorly the old dwellings were built and on the choice of building materials. How could anyone have lived like that? ...as if years ago, the residents were allowed at the meeting to voice their concerns about the design or the quality of materials used. Just think, somebody in a decision making position signed off on it at the time. In contrast, today, we are living in a 'prouder Fayetteville'. The head of the Fayetteville Metropolitan Housing Authority, Dawn Driggers said that people are usually better off when you treat them like people. She is right, and that's apparent when you're outside admiring Dogwood Manor, the latest addition to the community. I say, 'When you live better, you feel better!'

This complex is one of seven facilities of the Hope VI project to improve some of Fayetteville's public housing. The apartments and single-family homes are eventually sold to eligible families. In 2010, that was \$52,500 for a family of four.

Officials also hope the improvements encourage property investments, residential and commercial. There is a \$1 million city budget in place to develop a 9-acre office park

near the area. Within the next two years, the housing authority plans to build a \$2 million recreation center and day care center.

Tiffany Schaff, who works with the Hope VI program, references the program's successes in other major cities. The Ida B. Wells homes in Chicago and the Lincoln Court and Laurel Homes in Cincinnati - all notorious before rebuilding took place and changed them into more useful and livable Hope VI communities. Schaff is the Hope VI project director for United Management II, the property management company that manages the Fayetteville Hope VI project. The local housing authority doesn't determine who moves into the area. That's the responsibility of United Management II. This month two other Hope VI facilities are on schedule to open. 642 apartments are projected.

### Curb appeal

The warm colors in Dogwood Manor are inviting. The residents also say their new homes feel safe. To enter the building, you need a swipe card. One perk is you can buzz in your visitors from your apartment. Should anyone need help during an emergency, they can use their emergency cards. All apartments have alarm systems that beep every time the door is opened.

Hope VI apartments are also in development on Curtis Lane, off Old Wilmington Road next to Christina Smith Park. Some owners of homes near the area are hoping the completed apartments create more diversity as well.

Darcel Burns is the director of Conventional Housing—Fayetteville with the Housing Authority. "My purpose in life has always been to help disabled and elderly individuals. That is truly my calling," she said. "It was just so exciting just to see the joy on their faces to walk into this beautiful establishment."

Judging from the meticulously landscaped grounds that surround Dogwood Manor, it is clear, a new era has emerged in the neighborhood.

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