

# Successfully rehabilitated

*Greenville's oldest public housing project gets new life after freeing itself of crime, drugs and apathy.*

**M**ountain View Homes, Greenville's oldest public housing project, is no more. In its place is a more livable dwelling called Brookhaven Apartments, a spit-polished incarnation of its former self. Blighted by age, drug trafficking, burglaries, prostitution and a myriad of ghetto pathologies, the former Mountain View Homes had in recent years devolved into an environment unhealthy for children and unsafe for law-abiding citizens.

Residents of the 57-year-old project fought for the soul of their community and won. The newly remodeled and renamed apartment complex is a monument to the change that can be effected with the cooperation of local and federal housing officials, law enforcement and residents simply demanding better living conditions. Hopefully, it will become an example for other communities to follow.

Aware that the weary bones of the former Mountain View Homes was unable to carry the heavy flesh of crime and decay, residents fought for and were awarded a \$3 million federal housing grant in 1996. The grant paid for the renovation of the apartments, the addition of an on-site park and community center and fencing that now deters the once-omnipresent automobile and pedestrian traffic that streamed in the project to buy illegal drugs.

Equal credit also goes to the controversial zero-tolerance drug policies enacted during the Clinton administration that call for the eviction of residents when members are arrested for drug crimes.

The zero-tolerance policies have been criticized as heavy-handed because often minors arrested for petty drug offenses caused entire families to face eviction.

However heavy-handed the evicting of families may appear, the drug laws have had the intended effect of forcing parents to closely monitor their children's activities.

Other crime also is down in the area, similarly attributable to the firmness of zero tolerance.

And residents who've been prisoner to the general lawlessness associated with the vibrant drug trade mostly favor the new zero-tolerance rules.

However, the residents and local officials, not drug laws, deserve the bulk of the credit for the rehabilitation of Mountain View Homes.

Law enforcement and community safety are futile in the absence of personal activism and involvement.

The new Brookhaven Apartments are a reminder of the positives that can be accomplished when people have a personal stake in outcomes.

Clipped By:



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