

Habitat Joins City of Memphis in Revitalization Efforts Land Donation Sparks “An Evolving Partnership”

Julie Clary

Four Habitat families have a new place to call home on Hawkins Mill Road in Frayser, and in June, three more will settle into the neighborhood. Come next spring, volunteers will gather once again to construct six additional homes along the same street, and a vision for the area will have been fully realized.

It's the vision of Robert Lipscomb, director of the Office of Housing and Community Development, and the City of Memphis to rebuild public housing sites and ensure the long-term success of communities throughout Memphis. “The Office of Housing and Community Development enforces the City's housing code, provides low interest loans for housing rehabilitation and works with private developers to ensure construction of affordable housing.” In short, the City of Memphis provides grants to local agencies to assist in eliminating substandard housing throughout the community.

After reviewing a model between the city of Jacksonville, Florida and the Habitat affiliate there, Lipscomb recognized the value such a partnership could have in Memphis. The City's goals, placed alongside the efforts of Habitat for Humanity of Greater Memphis, made the organizations seem like a match made in heaven.

With similar missions, the two organizations have joined forces in tackling the problem of poverty that plagues the city, and after much discussion of Habitat's critical need for land, the City proposed that Habitat build 13 traditional single-family homes on Hawkins Mill Road as part of the revitalization efforts for the area. “A Habitat affiliate in an urban area has to be concerned with the city's revitalization,” says Habitat's executive director Dwayne Spencer. “Habitat is just as much about building single-family homes as it is about building neighborhoods in which families can prosper and communities can grow.”

In addition to these single family homes, the City recently completed the construction of a multi-family complex called Agnes Place on the formerly dilapidated public housing site on Range Line Road near Hawkins Mill.



HCD Director Robert Lipscomb, along with Dwayne Spencer, Habitat's executive director, and a longtime Range Line resident, delivers the keynote speech at the dedication held on May 6.

Amy Pruitt's new home was one of four homes completed on Hawkins Mill Road during the Spring 2006 Build.



Over the next year, Habitat will fulfill its commitment in the area and hopes to continue the partnership with the City in the future.

Through the development of these mixed-income communities, Habitat and the City of Memphis have created an environment where people can learn to live with one another despite the financial differences that may exist between them. Highlighting the goals of this initiative, Robert Lipscomb references an important lesson, saying, “The ground belongs to all of us to work and play together. By forming a community with different groups of people, we learn that we all have a value.”

It is clear that substandard living conditions are just one element that encompasses the problem of poverty in the city, but the benefit of safe, decent, and affordable housing is a point that has been proven over and over again. By providing families with a

(continued on page 10)