

Blacks Pool Their Lands to Replace Substandard Homes

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By Matthew Lewis—The Washington Post

Gum Springs residents hold groundbreaking ceremonies for the first 28 moderate-income, single-family homes.

Blacks Pool Their Lands to Replace Substandard Homes

By William N. Curry
Washington Post Staff Writer

Residents of Gum Springs, a predominantly black community in Fairfax County, broke ground yesterday for a cooperative housing subdivision designed to replace some of the ramshackle homes.

The subdivision eventually will provide 28 four-to-five-bedroom homes for people who presently live in crowded houses, some of which have neither water nor sewage facilities.

"No one knows how badly housing is needed more than those who need it," said the Rev. Channing E. Phillips, whose Housing Development Corporation provided early planning money for the subdivision.

A county study two years ago found that of 460 dwelling units in Gum Springs, 81 were substandard. Officials say that 17 families

now live in houses that should be torn down.

These families have not been evicted because they have no place to go.

So about a year and a half ago, with the help of the Saunders B. Moon Community Center, five landowners pooled their holdings, 5.8 acres on Fordson Road, for the subdivision.

As new homes are built, the landowners will move into them, and their old homes will be torn down to make way for more new houses. Using federally backed, low-interest financing, people in Gum Springs will buy these new houses, priced at about \$20,000, from the original five.

Kay Holland, the housing specialist at the Moon Center, said the first homes should be finished before the end of the year.

The subdivision will be called Gabriel Plaza in honor of Gabriel Washington, 85, who once owned much

of the land in the area. Its history dates back to George Washington, who ran it as the Muddy Hole farm.

Today Gum Springs is frequently muddy, due to drainage problems, and Fairfax County has moved up several drainage improvement projects to coincide with the building of the subdivision.

William S. Hoofnagle, a chairman of the County Board of Supervisors said yesterday the subdivision is an example of government responsiveness to "concerned citizens."

The subdivision required a special high-density zoning category to be economically feasible, and Supervisor Herbert E. Harris helped obtain the zoning.

Hoofnagle said yesterday he hoped the Gum Springs project would be "an example we can follow in providing decent and adequate housing for all citizens" in the county. Last week, county planners urged the spending of \$275,000 to upgrade public works facilities in the area.

Despite the long history of the Gum Springs area, Calvin Ferguson, director of the Moon Center, observed

yesterday, "This is only the beginning of Gum Springs."

And to underscore that, Phillips announced the Housing Development

would also supply "seed" money for another co-op project in Gum Springs, this one involving 15 families at Brosar Park.