

## Residents of new Lincoln Heights subdivision thrilled with their Villas of the Valley homes

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By Dion Webb The Cincinnati Herald



The residents of the new single-family homes in Villas of the Valley, which are replacing the deteriorating houses in the former World War II era Valley Homes subdivision in Lincoln Heights, will be the first to tell you that hard work does indeed pay off.

The first phase of the Villas of the Valley redevelopment is now completed and includes 42 two-bedroom senior villas and resulted in a \$9 million investment. The first phase achieved a 33 percent economic inclusion level for minority contractors. Phase Two, a \$7 million project of 35 units of affordable family housing, is underway. Ownership of the homes will go to a resident cooperative after 15 years.

The WW II housing project was built to provide temporary shelter for African Americans working at Wright Aeronautical and their families in the historic African American village of Lincoln Heights. The housing was plagued by maintenance problems in recent years, which put the subdivision into receivership. The original development was made up of 50 buildings in townhouses with four to eight units each, for a total of 300 homes. A homeowners association purchased Valley Homes from the federal government in 1953.



Faced with problems in maintaining the properties, well-respected local affordable housing director Maureen Wood was named receiver in 2006. Efforts developing from a receivership to replace the homes using tax increment financing to maintain their affordability were opposed by a majority of the village's planning committee and council due to distrust. However, a plan was proposed by developer The Model Group and supported by Lincoln Heights Mayor LaVerne Mitchell to circumvent that opposition by building a subdivision with fewer homes. Ground was broken last spring, and senior residents already living in the subdivision first moved into their new homes last October. All of the 42 new senior homes in the first phase of the development, which is north of Medoch Avenue, are now occupied, and construction will begin soon on single-family homes and rental units in the southern section of the subdivision.



The original Valley Homes subdivision was developed within a few months, and the less than quality construction done more than 60 years later was becoming impossible to maintain. This is when the residents took it upon themselves to take a stand to better their quality of living, despite opposition from some residents to any new development. Originally, The residents of the new houses had plenty to say regarding their newly upgraded living conditions.

Addy Shackelford, who moved into her unit this past January, thought that the whole new area was beyond belief. She said, “I absolutely love my new home. It’s so beautiful and I’m so happy. This home is way more than I expected. When I first walked in and saw it I thought it was simply amazing. At night when everyone’s lights are on, it looks so pretty, just like a Christmas card. I can’t wait to get out in the yard and do some gardening. I want the outside to be as beautiful as the inside.”



Patricia Baker, who lives across the street, had similar feelings about her home and the community. “I was born and raised here and have seen a lot of changes,” said Baker, who moved into her home Oct. 1. “This has always been a close-knit place where everyone knows everyone. I have raised my son here and he knows that he wouldn’t be able to do anything without everyone finding out. It’s just a quiet type of environment that feels like family.

“I think this is a really good thing, and I like it. Actually, I love it,” Baker said.

Joyce Thacker and Joyce Hawkins fought for the redevelopment from the beginning and have led the effort from the homeowners’ viewpoint since 2002. They spent their days in the subdivision administrative office providing information about the need for replacing the homes and updating residents on the progress being made to do that.

Thacker said, “It was enjoyable and we all worked well together. Hawkins added, “For us to have this is remarkable. We wouldn’t have made it another year.” Both ladies mentioned how prayer helped get them through the whole process.