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EDGEWOOD TERRACE UNDERGOES A REBIRTH

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First there's the bold and cheerful color, beckoning all who pass by. Then there's the sign, "The Vantage and the Parke." Combined, they signal the reincarnation of Edgewood Terrace, a moderate-income rental community in Northeast Washington that fell victim to such colossal decline that its value was reduced to \$1 in a 1995 foreclosure sale.

Today the Vantage (a seven-story mid-rise) and the Parke (six garden-apartment buildings) flaunt their make-over with a comfortably appointed model apartment. But during the 1980s and the early 1990s, they fell victim to the financial mishaps (their Seattle owners, who used them as a tax write-off, defaulted on the mortgage) and social woes of the period (they lost tenants and turned into an open drug market).

The buyer at the 1995 foreclosure sale was Community Preservation and Development Corp., a Bethesda nonprofit that buys distressed properties and works with tenants to revitalize them.

Leslie A. Steen, president of CPDC, recalled that tenants were clearly against condominium conversion. "We came to the residents with a proposal for homeownership," Steen said. "We actually got a planning grant from HUD," which had subsidized the building of the complex.

The tenants said no. Rogerline Nicholson, who moved to Edgewood Terrace shortly after it opened in 1971 and today is president of the residents association, said that many of them were seniors and didn't want the burden of ownership. "Only two people wanted to [buy]," Nicholson recalled. "I had retired in 1989 and I thought that was a bit too much." The poorest tenants, she added, would have been forced out.

HUD then ordered a survey to assess tenants' needs. Steen recalled, "They said, 'We want our housing fixed, and we want jobs.'"

Many of the people who had choices left the buildings. But a core group chose to stay and work to revive their homes if CPDC bought the property and lived up to its promise.

Nicholson declared the collaboration a success. "I think they did a fantastic job," she said of CPDC. "They worked very well with the association and the residents, and we have tried to support one another."

The fancy paint job and different name herald an amazing rebirth made possible by tenant-owner efforts and \$17 million in public and private funding.

The first challenge was to clean and rehabilitate much of the 16-acre, 884-unit site between the

Brookland and Rhode Island Avenue Metro stations after its decade as a crime zone. There are two other components of the Edgewood Terrace complex, a public-housing cluster, now owned by CPDC and scheduled for senior housing conversion, and an 11-story building that remained stable and today is owned by a limited partnership.

Erasing that image required astute marketing. The leasing center was made into bright modern offices and a computer training center -- the core of CPDC's economic empowerment program for tenants. The complex offers both day care and after-school programs run by nonprofit organizations.

The leasing staff shows an attractive model unit, a standard marketing tool for upscale complexes but "unusual for this kind of community," Steen said. The rooms are large, carpeted and wheelchair-accessible. They are outfitted for the disabled, and there is a strobe-light system for the hearing-impaired.

Seeing the model did the trick for Frances Crawford, who recently braved a freezing morning to fill out an application. "I was just very impressed," Crawford said. "I've never seen carpet in places for people of lesser means, and it's there."

Dorothy Tucker, director of resident services for CPDC, said that with 60 percent market-rate apartments and 40 percent subsidized units, the population is stabilizing with "two-parent families" and "individual singles, many of whom are middle-income folks."

Although serving all types of tenants is the common goal, Nicholson believes that senior citizens deserve priority. "We really would like to have a nice place for the senior citizens . . . We need things for the teenagers, but without the senior citizens, this [renovation] would not have happened," she said.

And as for the new name, many are still proud of the old one. "We want the name Edgewood," Nicholson said. "We know it was a terrible place to live for a while, but we've done something about that. We didn't mind adding 'the Vantage and the Parke,' but please don't leave Edgewood off."

THE VANTAGE AND THE PARKE AT EDGEWOOD TERRACE

601 Edgewood St. NE
Washington, D.C. 20017

202-832-0400

* Application fee:\$25; a \$100 holding fee is applied to the first month's rent

* Security deposit: \$300

* Lease term: One year

* Utilities: Not included

* Amenities: On-site computer training classes; Internet access; laundry centers; day-care facilities; after-school programs

* Parking: Rear lot with free, uncovered spaces or covered spaces, \$25 a month

* Pet policy: No pets

APARTMENT SIZE QUANTITY SQUARE FEET MONTHLY RENTAL

Efficiency or 1BR 101 430 to 620 \$480 to \$535

2BR or 2BR/Den 119 808 to 972 610 to 700

3BR or 3BR/Den 72 972 to 1,133 700 to 825

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