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REDEVELOPMENT

A STORY OF HOPE

Fayetteville has won a \$20 million federal grant to transform two high-crime, high-poverty public housing complexes. A Raleigh neighborhood shows what can happen when residents and governments work together for positive change.



Staff photos by David Smith

Javaris Newsome, 7, and his mother, Angie Hall, enjoy a warm spring day in the Capitol Park neighborhood in Raleigh.

By Michael N. Graff
Staff writer

RALEIGH — When darkness settled in each Friday night, and the ghosts with guns began to gather outside, LaWanda Harris hid.

She put chairs inside a small closet. She moved the television just outside the closet door. And she sat with her children, watching whatever pleasant shows she could find.

Outside in the dark, there was only horror. Halifax Court wasn't a place for real people. It was a place for the heartless, the soulless, and, as Harris remembers, "the hopeless."

A decade later, on the same piece of land just north of downtown Raleigh, Harris leaves her blinds open all hours. Her children, now teenagers, run free in the evenings. Her sister now comes to her neighborhood to take nighttime walks.

Hope VI, the same federal grant for urban redevelopment awarded to Fayetteville earlier this month, changed everything here.

Flattened are the projects where the poor were clustered and the drug dealers were kings. Standing are the mixed-income neighborhoods where the grass is trimmed and

See **HOPE VI**, Page 4A

NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENTS

The economic impact since the completion of the Halifax Court project totals about \$66.4 million. These are among the neighborhood improvements:

\$11.4 million
Raleigh Charter School

\$7.5 million
Pilot Mill revitalization

\$27.3 million
Village at Pilot Mill

\$5.2 million
Peace College expansion

\$15 million
Seaboard Warehouse renovation

■ The value of the surrounding property went from an average of \$73,500 per tract in 1990 to \$162,500 in 2000, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Source: Raleigh Housing Authority



'I want to live somewhere nice, too. Just because I can't afford it, are you just going to put me back in the projects and make me raise my kids there? Some people just want a chance.'

LaWanda Harris, who has moved into the Capitol Park Hope VI neighborhood in Raleigh



AP photo

UNC coach Roy Williams celebrates with the team after their win against Louisville at Charlotte.

Final Four: Tar Heels are in

North Carolina knocks off Louisville, 83-73, and heads to San Antonio

■ **What happened:** The Tar Heels were tested for the first time in this NCAA tournament after three straight blowout wins, but it didn't matter as veteran Tyler Hansbrough pulled them through. Hansbrough scored 20 of his 28 points in the second half to lead the victory.

■ **Worth noting:** After starting the tournament with an offensive bang by scoring 100 or more points in its first two games, UNC punched its ticket to the Final Four with defense and rebounding. The Tar Heels outrebounded Louisville 33-26 and held the Cardinals to just two points during a decisive 5½-minute stretch late in the game.

■ **Fast fact:** UNC is now 25-1 all-time in NCAA tournament games played in the state of North Carolina, including 9-0 in Charlotte. The Tar Heels will be making their 17th trip to the Final Four, which is one shy of UCLA's record of 18.

■ **What's next:** The Tar Heels will face the winner of today's Kansas-Davidson game Saturday in the Final Four in San Antonio.

MORE COVERAGE

- Complete coverage from the UNC, Louisville game, **Page 1C**
- Courtside with Dan Wiederer, **Page 5C**
- Fast Break with Earl Vaughn Jr., **Page 6C**

IRAQ

Militia leader tells followers to fight on

By Robert H. Reid
The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Anti-American Shiite militia leader Muqtada al-Sadr ordered his followers Saturday to defy government orders to surrender their weapons, as U.S. jets struck Shiite extremists near Basra to bolster a faltering Iraqi offensive against gunmen in the city.

Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki acknowledged he may have miscalculated by failing to foresee the strong backlash that his offensive, which began Tuesday, provoked in areas of Baghdad and other cities where Shiite militias wield power.

Government television said the round-the-clock curfew imposed two days ago on the capital and due to expire today would be extended indefinitely. Gunfire and explosions

See **IRAQ**, Page 6A

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INDEX

- | | | | | | |
|---------------------|--------|----------------------|----|-------------------|-----|
| Books | 3E | Horoscope | 5E | Obituaries | 5B |
| Classifieds | 2D, 6F | Jobs & Money | 1D | Perspective | 15A |
| Crossword | 7E | Life & Arts | 1E | Sports | 1C |
| Don Worthington ... | 1D | Live Wire | 2A | Television | 10E |
| Editorials | 16A | Local & State | 1B | Travel | 8F |
| Home & Garden | 1F | Myron B. Pitts | 1B | Weather | 8B |

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TOMORROW

- **Bladen County:** A monitoring well near the Bladen County DuPont plant shows that levels of a toxin called C8 have doubled.
- **Life:** Life coaches can help balance your life.

WEATHER



■ Cloudy with rain; high around 48, **8B**

Hope VI: Residents initially resisted the plans

From Page 1A

the working-class feel safe. About half of the residents remain in public housing. But a casual observer can't tell which half. The houses look the same. For every person in the neighborhood like Harris — a single mother of three who qualifies for public assistance — there's a person like Charles Bolton — a retired college administrator who pays full rent.

The new crossbred neighborhood is named Capitol Park. Underneath it is a graveyard, a place once called Halifax Court, where the ghosts ran wild.

They're only stories now. "It was almost like watching a movie," Harris said. "You wouldn't believe the things I saw."

She went on to name a few. Prostitution. Drug deals. Bullet holes in the side of her house. A friend beaten senseless by gang members because he'd spent too much time on a pay phone. A woman strung out on drugs giving birth to a child in a bush.

Somewhere in Raleigh, you might find somebody who misses the old Halifax Court. But you won't find them in the new Capitol Park.

"This is the best thing to ever happen to Raleigh," said Harvey Smith, who has lived across the street from the land for 30 years. "I prayed they would tear it down. They didn't bother me. But when they started shooting ... you didn't know who was going to get it."

Trees. That's what Steve Beam remembers outsiders worrying about when he first proposed tearing down Halifax Court more than a decade ago.

The oak trees surrounding the housing project had hidden it well for nearly 50 years. What's more, Raleigh was the city of oaks, the outsiders screamed.

Beam, the executive director of the Raleigh Housing Authority, faced plenty of resistance when he and his staff were building their application to receive the federal grant in 1999.

The Hope VI program, started in 1992, was still relatively new. And so was Beam. He was only in his third year as executive director.

Residents of Halifax Court had trouble trusting Beam or his staff. They cried history, saying Halifax Court was a historic neighborhood.

But over time, Beam and the housing authority won the critics over.

They took residents on tours of the other public housing options in the city. The people were shocked by the nice places where they could live, even if they were poor.

Then he showed them designs for the new neighborhood. And he told them they could return here and pay the same rent — if they followed the rules.

Finally, Halifax Court residents understood there was life outside the oak trees.

"Functionalism is the absence of design. You talk about warehousing the poor — (Halifax Court) was warehousing the poor," Beam said. "Hope VI came along and said, 'The quality of housing is important.' I think housing motivates people."



Ty Bordeaux, left, and his mother, Ginger Goode, greet neighbors Charles and Randie Bolton on Haynes Street in Capitol Park.

Staff photos by David Smith



BEFORE AND AFTER

In 1998, Halifax Court, above, was one of Raleigh's most-troubled neighborhoods. In 2007, four years after the rebuilding project was completed, the new Capitol Park stands on the same land.

But it's not the same neighborhood. Here are the changes:

	Halifax Court	Capitol Park
Public housing units	318	60
Market rate units	0	59
Low-income senior citizen units	0	90
Off-site public housing, single-family homes	0	117
Total	318	326

Staff graphic

Before the bulldozers started plowing over Halifax Court in 2000, 271 families lived in the old public housing project.

After being relocated, just 29 families returned in 2003 when the new neighborhood opened.

The rules are different now. Residents must work at least 35 hours a week. They must keep their place tidy. And they must move out within 10 years.

Housing authorities normally can't set a work requirement for public housing residents. But Hope VI projects allow for such standards.

"I don't believe you give it away," Beam said. "There needs to be a process where it's earned."

Those who didn't meet the requirements didn't come back. About 100 former Halifax Court residents took Section 8 vouchers and moved elsewhere.

Some are still scattered in single-family homes throughout Raleigh. And others are still at other public housing projects.

One of those is Walnut Terrace, a barracks-style complex south of downtown.

Last week, Allison Hapgood had to walk door to door in Walnut Terrace and deliver the news to residents there: they had not received the Hope VI grant.

That money had gone to Fayetteville, or one of the four other cities to receive the \$20 million grant this year.

"They are so disappointed," said Hapgood, a housing authority staff member who writes Hope VI applications. "I'm not looking forward to giving them that letter."

Walnut Terrace would have been the third Hope VI grant awarded to Raleigh. Chavis Heights, a 296-unit complex, was recently demolished and rebuilt. It opened to residents in September.

One day, Walnut Terrace will go. As temperatures approached the mid-70s last week, residents couldn't turn their heaters down because of a bad boiler system. The clotheslines throughout the complex were full of pinned-up jeans and T-shirts. And kids pedaled their bicycles over broken glass on the sidewalks.

"I want them to tear this place down," said Mary

Hinton, who has lived in Walnut Terrace for 37 years.

Not everybody feels the same.

Colon Prestan Rogers, who did maintenance work with the housing authority for 30 years, said he never took a day off for the first 19 years and 7 months he was employed.

But some of his neighbors at Walnut Terrace don't share the same work ethic, he said. They couldn't live in the new neighborhoods because of the work requirement.

"A lot of them over here are glad they didn't get the grant money, because they get another year here for free," Rogers said.

While other former Halifax Court residents are still toiling in projects, Tarsha Turner expects to close on a house this week.

After the relocation period, she returned to Capitol Park with her two children. The graduate of N.C. Central University works as an associate underwriter at the N.C. Joint Underwriting Association.

One of the goals of the Hope VI program is to house people and then move them toward home ownership. The 10-year limit helps push them along.

"It's incentive for you to try to own your own home," Turner said.

Motivation is everywhere in the new Capitol Park, a comely neighborhood made mostly of brick, two-story units with V-shaped roofs.

Bolton, the retired college administrator, and his wife moved back to Raleigh in 2006 after living at the beach in Beaufort for eight years.

On weekday afternoons now, Bolton sits on the front porch of his detached home and helps some of the children in his neighborhood with their homework.

"This was going to be temporary," Bolton said. "But we'll probably just stay. This is terrific. I love the socioeconomic diversity and the racial diversity."

That's not to say there's no tension in the neighborhood.

April Banks, a mother of three who works full time and takes classes at Shaw University, pays the market-rate rent of about \$800 for her two-bedroom apartment.

Banks said she didn't know she was moving into a mixed-income development when she signed her lease two years ago.

"If I'm paying a certain amount of rent, my neighbor should be paying close to it," she said.

The residents on public housing assistance disagree.

"I think it's fair, because I want to live somewhere nice, too," said Harris, the mother who once hid in her closet. "Just because I can't afford it, are you just going to put me back in the projects and make me raise my kids there? Some people just want a chance."

About 3 p.m. Wednesday, students began filing out of Raleigh Charter School, one of the top-performing schools in the state.

They walked to their cars, which were parked in the streets near Capitol Park, without worries. They stopped on the corners and talked on their cell phones.

Around the same time each day, Jennifer Dunn, a nanny, walks 13-month-old Mary Francis Ramsey down Blount Street. The street borders Capitol Park. The houses at the end of the street, where Mary Francis' family lives, are priced "from the \$400,000s." One house on an offshoot street was featured on the ABC television show "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition."

It's a long way from the days of "New Jack City," as some residents from the old neighborhood remember Halifax Court.

"You couldn't even stand here 10 years ago," said Steve Robertson, a longtime Raleigh resident.

In 1999, Halifax Court recorded 51 criminal offenses. Of those, nearly half were assaults. In one of the worst, two police officers were shot during a drug raid.

It wasn't always that way. Joann Poole Lee, Mary Jenkins Gibbs and Cedric Bost

WHERE'D THEY GO?

Perhaps the biggest criticism of Hope VI projects around the country is that residents are lost in the process of relocation. Here's where many Halifax Court residents went when their old projects-style neighborhood was demolished.

Moved to public housing inside beltline	90
Moved to public housing outside beltline	36
Took Section 8 vouchers	101
Evicted for not paying rent	8
Evicted for criminal activity	7
Evicted for repeated disturbances	4
Evicted for failing to recertify eligibility	2
Deceased	7
Moved and unable to locate	10
Moved from city with assistance	6
Total	271
Number of original residents who returned	29

remember the neighborhood before it became Halifax Court.

Sitting in the hall of the senior citizen center at Capitol Park, the three locals remembered when the nearby mill was in operation 50 years ago. Hundreds of tiny houses were built nearby for the mill workers.

They remembered when the Halifax Court projects opened in the 1950s. The first residents were mostly white.

During desegregation, the blacks moved in and the whites left.

Then, in the 1980s and '90s, drugs ruled over everything.

And now, the neighborhood historians gaze out the window of a \$9 million senior center with pride, knowing this land is better than ever.

"Before they put this here, you could say it was Hell here," the 73-year-old Bost said. "Now, you can say it's home."

Staff writer Michael N. Graff can be reached at graffm@fayobserver.com or 486-3591.



Longtime Walnut Terrace resident Mary Hinton takes clothes off the line. Her development missed out on a Hope VI grant. At right, Kristen Rahl, left, Micah Khater and Donna Omile warm up before soccer practice at Halifax Park in the Capitol Park neighborhood. The girls are on the Raleigh Charter School soccer team.

