



who joined Dr. Minor's staff in 1991 as assistant for community relations, became its director.

In 1995, H. Patrick Swygert, a Howard alumnus and the university's newly hired president, toured the areas where the central campus interfaced with the community. As he rode through the neighborhood streets lined with boarded properties, he was surprised and shocked to learn that the university owned so many of these structures and resolved to address the issue. He was made aware of the citizens' frustrations with the university and their hope that Howard would become a better neighbor and a more active leader in rebuilding the surrounding community.

Later in the school year, President Swygert asked Dr. Minor and his staff what it would take to redevelop all of the Howard-owned properties at one time. He indicated that this was the direction in which he wanted to move, and asked Dr. Minor to follow-up on a previous contact that had been made with Fannie Mae in the months prior to becoming president.

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The contact that had been made before President Swygert's tenure was renewed for the purpose of exploring how Howard University and Fannie Mae might work together in the development of affordable housing. In 1994, Fannie Mae began opening Partnership Offices throughout the nation, to work with partners (including universities and other major employers) to expand the availability of affordable housing. The first of these offices, the Washington, D.C. Partnership Office, had seen the potential for Howard University to affect the revitalization of the entire LeDroit Park neighborhood.

A planning team was assembled. Alvin Nichols, Brenda Harrison, Patricia Siegrist, and Beryl Sparrow of Fannie Mae and Dr. Minor, Diane Kenney, and Maybelle Bennett of Howard University met for nine months to define the initiative's objectives and map out its strategy for implementation.

In September 1997, after hearing a presentation on the Initiative, the Executive Committee of

LeDroit Park's close proximity to Howard University Hospital is one of the many conveniences of its location.



Howard's Board of Trustees and the chairman of Fannie Mae, James Johnson, gave their approval of the Initiative. In fact, Johnson was so enthusiastic about the Initiative that he tabbed the corporation's vice chair, Jamie Gorelick, to be Fannie Mae's corporate sponsor of the project, and named Alvin Nichols as a full-time loaned-executive to Howard University, in support of the execution of the project.

With this commitment and support in hand, work began on the expansion of the team, the arrangement of financing, and the garnering of political support needed to successfully redevelop the 45 properties into homeownership opportunities.

In addition, the Fannie Mae Foundation partnered with Howard University by supporting the development of three studies that produced a streetscape design for the upgrade of the open spaces and infrastructure, a cultural district study (to highlight the feasibility and potential of revitalization of this once vibrant commercial and entertainment core of the community), and a land use plan for a 150-block area around the central campus.

These studies were to be used to propose improvements and amenities that would enhance the existing and proposed housing development in LeDroit Park, add value to the community as a whole, and augment the cultural and economic opportunities that would ensure the long-term success of the overall redevelopment plan.

The onset of the Initiative, in particular the development of the 45 homes built by Howard University, was the first step in rebuilding the community's trust and was an indication that the university was committed to the community's redevelopment over the long haul. The community celebrated the first of the university's new charter homeowners just fifteen months after taking the plan from paper (in September 1997) to pavement in December 1998.

Doing the Homework

The 150-block impact area of the Initiative is bounded on the east by North Capitol Street; on the north by Michigan Avenue and Hobart Place; on the west by Sherman and Vermont Avenues; and on the south by S Street and Florida Avenue. The area includes six project zones: the long-established neighborhoods of LeDroit Park, Bloomingdale, and Pleasant Plains; Howard University's central campus; the Georgia Avenue corridor; McMillan Park Reservoir; the cultural dis-

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trict; and a town center, all of which will require additional consensus building and planning.

The Howard University LeDroit Park Initiative has three themes: 1) celebrate the history of the area; 2) redefine the community; and 3) enhance the quality of life and safety. The goal is to restore LeDroit Park and surrounding communities both culturally and economically through the creation of homeownership for moderate-income families and to spur renovation of abandoned housing area-wide. Participants in the effort have always envisioned the Howard-sponsored redevelopment as a catalyst for other private and publicly sponsored revitalization activities in the neighborhoods and along the Georgia Avenue corridor.

Fortunately, the area has a range of assets that will retain existing residents and attract newcomers. The housing stock is architecturally inter-

How Howard and Partners Made It Happen

Howard University engaged a number of other partners in the creation of a critical mass of redevelopment in the LeDroit Park area. From 1995 through 2000, the university received approximately \$2.4 million in grants from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Community Development Program. HBCUs compete for funding to carry out community development activities in the neighborhoods that surround them. Verizon, another major partner, is pulling fiber optic cables into the area to "wire" the community (see page 7). Howard has also worked with Manna and the Peoples Involvement Corporation, two nonprofit community development corporations, to construct a new townhome development for low- and moderate-income homeowners; adaptively reuse an old school building to create apartments for seniors; develop a former multifamily residential structure into a social service center for public housing families; and provide the provision of case management services to families in the area's public housing development.

