

Georgia Avenue Business Resource Center

The Georgia Avenue Business Resource Center is located at 7408 Georgia Avenue, NW in Washington, D.C. near Howard University. Its broad purpose is to facilitate access to capital and to provide technical assistance – and other business support services – to businesses located around the Georgia Avenue Corridor. The Center hopes to support existing business growth and expand and help budding entrepreneurs.

The concept for the Center came from several meetings held in D.C., hosted by Al Broaddus, President of the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond, and Alice Rivlin, then Vice Chair of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System. The implementation of the Center became a collaborative effort coordinated by the D.C. Chamber of Commerce, the D.C. Department of Housing and Community Development, Riggs Bank, City First Bank, the Small Business Administration, and several D.C. universities.

The Federal Reserve's role in this project has been one of facilitation. The Fed hosted meetings and actively engaged the group in trying to understand what the community needed to increase small business development in the District. Active dialogue by all parties then determined that a "store front" resource center on a major business corridor in D.C. would help small businesses access appropriate capital resources and obtain needed technical assistance.

Today the Georgia Avenue Business Resource Center is a reality. It has helped hundreds of small businesses needing technical assistance. Several seminars on bookkeeping, the loan application process, and other topics have been conducted. Recently, the Center started a storefront improvement program, and the SBA has announced that the Center will become an SBA One Stop Capital Shop Satellite Office.

Currently, the partners are working on plans for the next two phases.

esting and located in a historic area. There is transit accessibility with an entrance to the metro-rail and three major arterial commuter routes. The area is part of the Washington, D.C. Enterprise Zone that has a significant number of developable parcels, and the area is convenient to both Howard University and Howard University Hospital.

In order for the Initiative to be feasible, the plan was divided into three phases. Phase I consisted of converting 45 unoccupied, vacant Howard-owned properties into homeownership opportunities. This phase also includes the redevelopment of 130 other non-Howard owned vacant and boarded properties in the LeDroit Park Historic District and adjacent communities. Progress on this effort in this critical element of Phase I can already be seen. Phase II consists of \$25 million in public infrastructure improvements in the area. Improvements will include roadway and alley repaving, and upgrades in lighting, plantings, and signage.

Over \$10 million of this funding has already been raised and construction of these improvements began this winter. Another level of public facilities improvement will be the return of McMillan Park Reservoir to public accessibility. McMillan Park Reservoir was originally designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. (the designer of Central Park), but was fenced off since World War II. Phase III consists of the development of a cultural district that anchors the east end of the U Street Festival area, once known as the old Black Broadway, and a Town Center that will provide significant retail and entertainment opportunities. Currently, the partners are working on plans for the next two phases. Timelines for the remaining development phases have not been determined.

Fannie Mae and Howard University refer to their relationship as a strategic partnership, and to that end Fannie Mae's role in the Initiative has been substantial. At the outset of the Initiative, the



Venturing with Verizon

Howard University and Fannie Mae partnered with Verizon of Washington, D.C., to create an electronic village in LeDroit Park. This community is the first in the city – and perhaps the first urban community in the nation – to become smart-technology ready. Through this unique partnership, every home developed by Howard University is completely wired for the 21st century and has the capability for in-home networks, high speed direct-connect to the Internet, the latest in home security, and virtually any other type of technology available for in-home use. In December at the LeDroit Park U Street celebration, Verizon announced the launching of *ledroitpark.org*, the community's own web site.

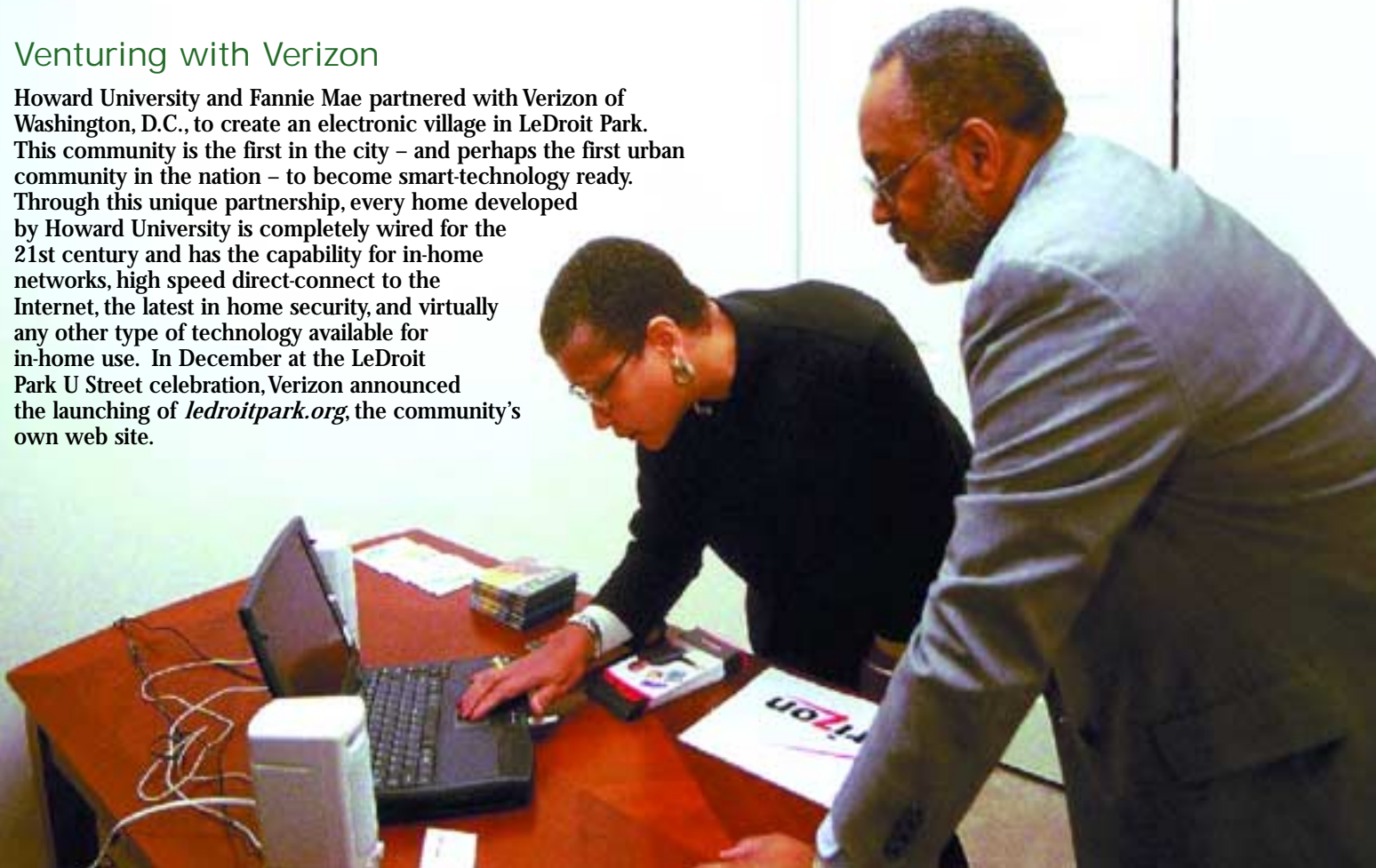


Photo Courtesy of Fannie Mae

Verizon–Washington, D.C. President Marie Johns and Ken Clark, Director of External Affairs, review a workstation model in a home.

corporation supported the University through a loaned executive, Alvin Nichols, to assure Howard University and Fannie Mae that the project would have at its disposal the corporation's technical expertise and focus to manage the Initiative. Additionally, through partnerships with its vast network of lenders, Fannie Mae has leveraged nearly \$25 million in financing in support of housing development in the Initiative focus area. Key lending partners in the Howard University Initiative include Riggs Bank, SunTrust Mortgage, Industrial Bank, Bank of America, and the D.C. Housing Finance Agency.

Fannie Mae's range of involvement and investment has included the provision of technical assistance in the conceptualization of the redevelopment plan; the provision of \$800,000 in predevelopment loan funding; the assemblage of a syndicate of financial institutions that provided the construction and mortgage financing; and the purchase of \$18 million in mortgage revenue

bonds. These bonds support homeownership in the focus area, including \$5 million in targeted area builder bonds from the D.C. Housing Finance Agency to make home prices more affordable through lower interest rates for the homes being developed by Howard University. Additionally, Fannie Mae provided technical assistance in structuring an employer-assisted housing program that was capitalized by a \$500,000 Fannie Mae loan; the provision of homeownership education; assistance in developing a communications strategy; support for and coordination of celebrations and related special events;



Alvin Nichols
*Director of Neighborhood Initiatives
Fannie Mae*

