

Community

Habitat helping Newburgh rebound Ruined houses to be restored in historic part of city

By Doyle Murphy
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CITY OF NEWBURGH — Rain fell into the burned-out and abandoned buildings yesterday at the west end of East Parmenter Street.

Just outside, in the street, 80-90 people huddled under tents and golf umbrellas to celebrate plans for a new neighborhood. Leyland Alliance, the developer that intends to redevelop Newburgh's waterfront, is joining Habitat for Humanity to build a mix of 24 homes during the next two years. The city and Central Hudson will repair the roads and utility lines during the same time. They hope to restore one of Newburgh's oldest neighborhoods and, with it, spark development through the area. "It is block by block, building by building," City Manager Jean-Ann McGrane told an audience that included Rep. Maurice Hinchey and representatives of Gov. David Paterson and state Sen. Bill Larkin.

Washington's Headquarters sits directly across Liberty, to the east of the block-long street. Liberty has seen a slow revival with its mixture of antique shops, restaurants and boutiques. A new art-supply store will open next month just around the corner from East Parmenter. But the west end of the street has only decayed. Rival gangs, La Eme and the Benkard Barrio Kings, have crossed out and written over each other's graffiti so many times it's hard to tell who's winning the turf battle. Families will ultimately take over, say Leyland and Habitat. They'll market the 16 Leyland houses to working people — teachers, firefighters, city workers. The eight Habitat houses will go to low-income families. One of them will be Mike's House, a tribute to the late executive editor of the Times Herald-Record, Mike Levine. The idea began with the members of Monroe's Temple Beth-El and spread to the greater Jewish community in Orange County.

"We're taking a little corner of our world, and we're pasting it back together," Levine's widow, Ellen, said.

Architects have tried to match the character of the neighborhood in their plans. In some cases, construction crews will reuse pieces of the old houses in the new buildings. Town homes and single-family houses will replace the boarded-up wood and brick structures. A small park will sit on land where Habitat workers recently found the remains of a car chopped up for parts. Leyland and Habitat expect the first new residents to move in during the winter of 2009.
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