

Clay Street

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In Annapolis—a town steeped in history—Clay Street has a rich and compelling story that dates back to the mid-eighteenth century. Once a vibrant and thriving community, Clay Street was home to boat builders, business leaders, and professionals in the African-American community. Teachers, lawyers, and doctors made their home on Clay Street. The first African-American Midshipman at the Naval Academy grew up on this street.

At one time, Clay Street was known as the "Harlem" of the mid-Atlantic. A part of the renowned "chitlin' circuit," the Clay Street community was home to jazz and comedy clubs featuring African-American legends such as Pearl Bailey, who performed there on a regular basis.



Hard times came to Clay Street ironically as a result of the urban renewal programs of the 1950s, 60s and 70s. College Creek Terrace, the nation's oldest public housing community, was erected on Clay Street. Other such projects destroyed Clay Street's commercial center and compromised its strong sense of community. Homeowners in the Clay Street community found themselves plagued by crime and drug activity. And families living in public housing along the street faced diminished expectations and a pervasive sense of isolation and neglect.



80 and 82
Clay Street
before, during
and after the
Habitat
restoration.



Habitat for Humanity

In 1999, Habitat for Humanity of the Chesapeake joined members of the area's faith community and residents on Clay Street to begin restoration of the area. Habitat for Humanity purchased deteriorating properties along the Street, renovated them, and sold them to families committed to the revitalization of the neighborhood. Between 1999 and 2007, Habitat built or renovated 12 homes in the community. The Habitat homeowners who moved onto Clay Street have helped bring stability and strength to the community as they support the revival of Clay Street.

Habitat's work prompted the Housing Authority of the City of Annapolis to invite the organization to take part in a multi-partner project to "reinvent public housing" in Annapolis, beginning with the College Creek and Obery Court housing projects that line Clay Street. Habitat was awarded land to build 10 new houses for homeownership. Current residents from any one of Annapolis's 10 public housing communities

were screened and approved to become Habitat homeowners.

A continuation of its decade-long involvement on Clay Street, the new project will increase the number of homeowners living in the community and provide support to existing homeowners as well. The Clay Street project also provides public housing residents with a clear and compelling pathway out of the inter-generational cycle of poverty and diminished horizons that often over whelm public housing residents.

In keeping with the innovative nature of this project, the new homes will be built using "green" materials and techniques; upon completion they will be Energy Star certified.



Habitat's Clay Street Project brings innovation, commitment and new focus to the restoration of one of Annapolis's most important historic communities.