

# Homes restored with future in mind

Rehabbed residences are heaven to new owners

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TRENTON — The four-bedroom, two-bath brick house with its front porch, bay windows, garage, driveway and spacious backyard is everything Denise Burton ever wanted in her first home.

Burton, 34, was driving on Spring Street one day when she spotted the house.

"I wanted it. Now it's mine," she said.

Burton, who expects to move in by the end of the month, said she is not crazy about the neighborhood, but said "I love this house." Burton recognizes the problem with gangs in the area, but said she is not too apprehensive about moving her three kids there because they are good kids.

"Anywhere you go you run into that problem (anyway)," said Burton, who be-

lieves the neighborhood "will clean up well" once vacant homes are fixed up and homeowners move in.

Burton's home is one of three houses that have been rehabbed on Spring Street as part of the first phase of the SouthWest Village project by Tara Developers, LLC, which consists of 13 rehabbed and six new homes on Spring Street. A ceremony was held yesterday to showcase the houses, the first phase of a continuing project.

The second phase of calls for 51 homes on Spring and Passaic streets. The company is also building 15 new homes on Titus Avenue.

Robert Kahan, company principal, said the rehabbed homes on Spring Street are being sold for \$120,000.

Kahan said monthly mortgage payments for the homes, including property taxes and homeowner's insurance, will

total about \$825.

Mayor Douglas H. Palmer said once Spring Street was one of the most affluent African-American neighborhoods in the city, but it fell on hard times during the 1970s and 1980s when the housing market collapsed. People were unable to sell their homes and many were abandoned, said Palmer.

"This was our Gold Coast," he said of Spring Street, which was home to Palmer and former New York City Mayor David Dinkins. "To bring this back, it's one of the things I'm most proud of."

The project is in keeping with the city's strategy to remove blight through homeownership, he said.

Palmer, in an apparent attempt to quiet his critics, said "this is the American dream" built in part with regional contribution agreement funds.

He then asked Kahan how many local  
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## HOMES

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people were employed by the project. The response was that out of 15 subcontractors, 12 were local and nine were minority-owned. Five people from the neighborhood were also employed as casual laborers, said Kahan.

Alan J. Greenwald, city director of housing and economic development, City Council President Paul Pintella, East Ward Councilman

Gino Melone and Susan Bass Levin, commissioner of the state Department of Community Affairs (DCA) also were present. The New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency, a DCA affiliate, provided more than \$1.6 million for the project.

Jenise Pickett, 33, rented an apartment on Stuyvesant Avenue for six years before finally becoming a homeowner. "I love it to death," gushed Pickett about her new home across the street. "It's so nice, cozy and so beautiful."

Pickett said "it's not where you live, but how you live," and, like Burton, is confident that as the number of homeowners increases, the neighborhood will improve.

"Once we come together, Spring Street is gonna be back on the map," said Pickett.

## HAPPY HOMEOWNERS



Jenise Pickett and Denise Burton hold symbolic keys to their new homes on Spring Street with Trenton Mayor Doug Palmer yesterday. The new homes are among 71 coming to Spring and Passaic Streets as part of the Southwest Village I and II projects.

Trentonian Photo/DAVID P. CARDACIOTTO



Jenise Pickett, left, and Denise Burton hold the keys to their newly rehabilitated Spring Street homes in Trenton yesterday. Mayor Douglas H. Palmer, right, said once Spring Street was one of the most affluent African-American neighborhoods in the city.

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