

Mady Development In The News

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Mady Development Corporation built Fort Worth's first storefront police station in an apartment community as part of its Garden Gate community clubhouse, at the request of a local homeowners association.

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Making Protesters Partners

In November 1993, residents of the Summerfields community in Fort Worth, Texas, vehemently protested the proposed building of a moderate-income housing complex in their neighborhood. Yet in December 1994, it was the Summerfields Neighborhood Association that sponsored a ribbon cutting ceremony for the property.

This turnaround of public opinion is a textbook case of how a private developer can work successfully with a homeowners association to create a win-win outcome. It also shows how innovative partnerships can work to everyone's benefit. "The partnership that developed among federal, state, and local officials, the neighborhood association, and our firm is a perfect example of how government can create a program that allows the private sector to help the community," says Charles P. Mady, Jr., Vice President of Mady Development Corporation, the Dallas-based firm that developed the property. Mady owns a total of 70 acres in the heart of Summerfields, a 5,200 home neighborhood.

In 1993, the firm was approved for a federal tax credit allocation to build moderate-income multi-family housing. It proposed Garden Gate, a 240-unit apartment community with one, two, and three bedroom units restricted to working families earning up to 60 percent of median income levels.

The site had been zoned multi-family for more than ten years, but homeowners nearby feared that the complex would provide subsidized housing to low-income people, and thus bring an increase in crime and other inner-city kinds of problems.

Choosing to address the homeowners' fears and hostilities proactively, the developer's staff attended meetings of the homeowners association. They conferred with association president Susan Prescott on what the company could do to ease the tension and resolve the controversy. The developer let the homeowners lay their demands on the table before revealing its detailed plans for Garden Gate. This proved to be a wise move, as many of the association's demands like the construction of a solid fence between the property and adjacent school grounds and a sidewalk for school children along a secondary street were already a part of Mady's plans. The homeowners thus came to see the developer as responsive and conciliatory.

The association requested criminal checks on residents over 18 years of age. Mady saw the value of this idea and has directed the property management company at Garden Gate to conduct exhaustive background checks. (This process has been so successful that the company now routinely conducts criminal checks at all its apartment properties.)

The association's boldest request was for a storefront police station to serve the community. Mady

complied by allocating an approximately 400-square-foot area of an enlarged clubhouse for this use. The station includes two offices and a waiting area, furnished by the Summerfields community. A private vendor provides telephones, a security system, and cable -TV at no cost. The \$10,000 required to reconfigure the clubhouse was a small investment in a \$9 million project.

This is Fort Worth's first storefront station in a low-crime area and it's first in an apartment community. The station is well used by local residents. As one example, Citizens on Patrol (COP), a volunteer citizens' group, holds its meetings in a classroom in the clubhouse.

Mady also has been willing to entertain ideas from the homeowners association concerning the development of its other proper ties in the area. Although the company did not agree to a request not to build apartments on other sites, it has agreed to consider building a traditional neighborhood development (TND) of higher density, single family, for-sale units in Summerfields.

A TND would bring a much-needed cohesiveness to the essentially fragmented neighborhood. Mady believes that it has an opportunity, even an obligation, given its extensive landholdings in the area, to design a town center that will create a true sense of community.

The cooperative effort between Mady and the homeowners association offers a model for other partnerships. It has provided moderate-income housing while enhancing neighborhood safety and security. Susan Prescott of the Summerfields Neighborhood Association summarized the success of the partnership: "Originally, we were less than thrilled with the development. Now we're very protective of it. There's a sense of ownership because Mady has worked with us to improve the entire community. They're not just apartments, they're a part of our community."