

MINQUADALE VILLAGE HOMEOWNERS MAKE STATE HISTORY
Association buys community property, making it resident-owned

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NEW CASTLE, Del. (July 2, 2009) – With the stroke of a pen Thursday, Minquadale Village became not only a great place to live, but a piece of history as well.

Ken Shaw, president of Minquadale Village Homeowners Association, on Thursday afternoon signed off on a \$2.1 million deal that made the association the legal owner of the community where its members live. It is the first manufactured home community homeowners association in Delaware to take this groundbreaking step, under a law enacted one year ago that gives homeowner groups an opportunity to purchase their community when it is for sale.

"Closing on this property sale was a dream come true not just for me but for all my neighbors at Minquadale," said Shaw. "We owe a debt of thanks to everyone who has made this possible. From the Delaware Manufactured Home Owners Association and Community Legal Aid Society Inc., who helped to pass the law that gave us the opportunity to buy our community, to READS, whose guidance and help got us to this point. We had a great deal of support, and we're grateful."

The homeowners association will celebrate the successful conversion of the community to resident ownership, on July 18. The event will include representatives from READS and some of the other organizations that assisted in the conversion effort, including ROC USA, New Jersey Community Capital, Community Legal Aid Society Inc. and Delaware Manufactured Home Owners Association.

"We have a lot to celebrate," said Shaw, "but we have a lot to showcase also. Everyone who already lives at Minquadale already knows how wonderful it is, but we have room to grow. There are homes for sale, and there are vacant lots for other people who want to buy into what we have here."

With manufactured homes making up about 15 percent of the housing stock in Delaware, the purchase of Minquadale Village by its residents is significant to more than just the proud new community owners.

"Manufactured housing is the largest block of affordable housing in the state that does not require a government subsidy," said Ed Speraw, President of the Delaware Manufactured Home Owners Association. "Unlimited yearly rent increases creates financial evictions and increases the burden of the Delaware State Housing Authority. Minquadale homes will now remain affordable."

The Minquadale association's right to purchase the property comes as a result of legislation approved only last year. Under the law, a manufactured homeowners association has the right of first offer when the community's owner decides to sell the property. The law also bars the owner from selling the property to a third party unless they outbid the homeowners association.

Passage of the law came after a concerted effort. The Delaware Manufactured Homeowners Association long advocated for the bill; state Representative Valerie Longhurst gave it the 11th-hour support it needed to pass through the Legislature; and the Community Legal Aid Society gave legal assistance that Speraw called invaluable.

“It's not an exaggeration to say that without the support of Chris White, the Executive Director of Community Legal Aid Service, this law would not have passed and the Minquadale purchase would never have happened,” said Speraw of the Delaware association. “White prevailed on Wilmington Attorney Steve Goldberg for assistance in preparing the documents needed for the sale, and when the sale faced a serious court challenge, White was able to obtain pro bono legal help to uphold the law and guarantee the right of the homeowners to buy their community.”

READS, a not-for-profit real estate firm in New Jersey, became involved with the Minquadale purchase last summer. Since those initial meetings, representatives of READS have provided a host of services to the residents. In addition to helping the homeowners incorporate so they could buy the community, READS also arranged for pro bono legal representation; found financing for the mortgage, through ROC USA Capital; and managed the entire purchase process.

Keith Timko, Vice President of Real Estate and Innovative Programs at READS, predicted that the successful conversion of Minquadale to resident ownership would serve as a role model to homeowners in other manufactured home communities when their communities go up for sale.

"By taking ownership of the property themselves, the Minquadale homeowners not only have guaranteed the future of their community, they've begun to build equity in their property, and they've gained control over what happens there in the future," said Timko.

READS will continue to assist the homeowners association by providing board governance and technical assistance, including matching the association with engineering firms that can provide professional assistance.

Based in Metuchen, NJ, READS was founded in 2003 as an innovative nonprofit real estate development company committed to building strong organizations and communities through innovative real estate development. It is one of ten Certified Technical Assistance Providers affiliated with ROC USA Network, a network of nonprofit affordable-housing organizations serving homeowners in 30 states. Local and regional non-profit affiliates of ROC USA Network have helped 12 resident corporations purchase their communities in eight states in the last year.

“Resident ownership has a 25 year history in some other markets and it will now begin to develop a presence in Delaware thanks to the leadership provided by key local actors and the self-help efforts of homeowners and community leaders,” said Paul Bradley, President, ROC USA. “We are inspired each and every time homeowners take ownership because it represents their dedication to homeownership and community and taking responsibility for themselves.” ROC USA operates both a national network of certified technical assistance providers, which includes READS, and a national loan program for resident corporation purchases of communities. ROC USA Capital is a lender to Minquadale Village Homeowners Association.

Community Legal Aid Service is a private, nonprofit law firm that provides free civil legal services to assist low-income and other qualified clients in becoming self-sufficient. Based in Wilmington, DE the firm serves clients age 60 or older and clients with low incomes or with disabilities.

The Delaware Manufactured Home Owners Association is the only statewide organization representing manufactured home owners on leased land. Starting out in Sussex County, the association has been successfully advocating in changing laws to protect manufactured homeowners. This year another milestone was reached when the governor signed a bill banning mandatory once-a-year rent payments.

For more information, call:

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