

Tightknit, convenient community

‘Mayberry-like’ town
near train line, city’

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The village of Halethorpe developed as a community where workers could easily commute to jobs in the city by rail. Today, it still offers residents a convenient retreat, but with the welcomed familiarity of a well-established neighborhood.

“The community is largely blessed with many multi-generational families and that has been the hallmark of and a great contribution to the stability of the community,” said Sandra Cullen, president of the Halethorpe Improvement Association.

Her family has been in Halethorpe since 1896.

The Baltimore & Ohio Railroad and the former Baltimore & Potomac Railroad (now Amtrak) act as borders for the triangular-shaped community in southwest Baltimore County. Washington Boulevard bisects the neighborhood.

Residents say Halethorpe is easygoing, comfortable and tightknit, with unbeatable accessibility.

“You can be home and be yourself, yet in under 45 minutes you can be in the nation’s capital, or in 10 minutes be in downtown (Baltimore),” said Cullen. Neighbors “are there to help in a time of need, but they pretty much maintain individual privacy.”

The concept for the community developed in the late 1800’s by local businessman C.R. Varley Myers, who took the train from his home in Odenton to his job in Baltimore. During his commute, he would ride through Halethorpe and admire the beautiful, hilly location with easy rail access.

Barry Lanman, author of *Halethorpe Heritage, A Story of a Maryland Community*, said Myers decided it would make a nice suburban neighborhood, so he joined with a few partners and began development.

“The Halethorpe Land Co., when they were trying to promote the building of the town, hired excursions on the train. So anybody who wanted to come out and see (Halethorpe) could ride out for free, enjoy the scenery and then ride back free,” Lanman said. “I thought that was a genius promotion for that era.”

Ireland Hawkins is vice president of the Halethorpe Civic League, which serves residents on the southeastern side of Washington Boulevard. Historically an African-American section of the community, the area has transformed into a true mix of residents over the years, Hawkins said.

“It’s Mayberry-like,” said Hawkins, referring to the fictional television town. “Everybody waves to everybody. It’s peaceful.”

As older residents move out and houses come on the market, Hawkins said she often refers the area to friends and family, with great success. The 40-year old resident has two sisters, a brother, a brother-in-law, a son and a daughter who live in Halethorpe.

HOUSING “It’s a sleepy little town only minutes from Baltimore City,” said Allie Mitchell, a Realtor with Long & Foster’s Columbia/Fulton office.

“It’s an eclectic mix of housing,” she said, adding that styles include townhouses, bungalows, Cape Cods, ranchers, split-levels, distinctive Victorians and newer Colonials.

The average sales price of a single-family home is in the \$250,000 range, while attached options average about \$215,000, making the area within financial reach for many first-time homebuyers.

Anita Happel, owner of the real estate company, A.W. Happel Inc., in Halethorpe since the early 1970’s, said the variety of housing makes the neighborhood an attractive option.

“There’s a very good community spirit here,” Hapel said. “You have a

small-town appeal. It’s very family-oriented and you will find generations who pass their houses down for the young people buying in.”

Happel and Mitchell said the area is an increasingly popular choice for residents who commute not only to Baltimore City, but also Fort Meade, Columbia and Washington because of its easy access to the MARC train as well as major roadways.

CRIME Halethorpe has seen a drop in crime over recent months because of targeted initiatives in the area, said Cpl. Michael Hill, a Baltimore County police spokesman. Violent crime has decreased 36 percent, while burglaries and arson have decreased 50 percent.

Theft from vehicles is the most prevalent crime.

“It’s a crime of opportunity,” Hill said. “We have been going out and trying to teach the public to keep your cars locked and take expensive and irritant items out of your car.”

SCHOOLS Halethorpe students are served by Halethorpe Elementary, Arbutus Middle, Lansdowne High School Academy of Finance, and Western School of Technology and Environmental Science.

The elementary school has surpassed state proficiency levels, with fourth graders scoring 88.7 percent proficiency in math and 90.2 percent in reading. Middle school seventh graders scored 69.3 percent proficiency in math and 80.4 percent in reading. Both schools met the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirements, a tool used to track academic progress and make accountability decisions.

Lansdowne High did not meet its AYP, but missed the mark in only one category. Its graduation rate was 79.1 percent. Western met its AYP with a graduation rate of 96.8 percent.

The neighborhood is also served by private schools, including the Ascension School of Halethorpe and

Lamb of God School. The Good Shepherd Center provides treatment, residential and educational services for teenage girls.

TRANSPORTATION You can't talk about Halethorpe without noting its easy access to the Baltimore Beltway, Interstate 95 and the Baltimore-Washington Parkway. It also offers its own MARC train station, which many residents can walk to.

SHOPPING Halethorpe has a few local businesses, but for big-box stores and malls, residents can travel to nearby Arundel Mills. The Mall in Columbia and downtown shopping in Baltimore are options as well.

DINING IN There are plenty of restaurant options in and around Halethorpe, including Paul's Restaurant, Leon's Triple L Restaurant and Loung, Sorrento of Arbutus and Gianni's Italian Bistro.

RECREATION The Patapsco Valley State Park is nearby with many recreational opportunities, including hiking, biking, fishing, camping and canoeing.

There are many popular youth leagues in the area and the Baltimore County Department of Recreation and Parks maintains recreational facilities on Halethorpe Avenue. During the summer, many residents join the nearby Wynnewood Recreation Center Pool.