

Affordable Housing for LGBTQ/SGL Individuals to Be Built in D.C.

Partnership Between Mary's House for Older Adults and Northern Real Estate Urban Ventures

July 5, 2023 (Washington, D.C.) – Mary's House for Older Adults (Mary's House) has partnered with Northern Real Estate Urban Ventures (NREUV) to build its first communal housing for adults over 60 years of age, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and same gender-loving (LGBTQ/SGL) individuals in an effort to provide a safe and affordable housing environments as they age.

"Sometimes being older and LGBTQ/SGL is simply too challenging. Empirical evidence shows that this population is bullied, harassed, and treated poorly. This forces many older adults and elders to return to the 'closet'. In addition, recent studies show that LGBTQ/SGL elders are still discriminated against in the housing arenas based on their gender identity and sexual orientation," states Mary's House President & CEO, Dr. Imani Woody.

The mission of Mary's House is to develop housing and inclusive environments that comprehensively address affordability and access and diminishes the constant worry of discrimination or even violence based upon the LGBTQ/SGL status of the individual. Mary's House intends to meet the emotional, recreational, social and other similar needs of older adults through health and wellness programming, referral of community and social based services, and education and advocacy.

"This is an incredible opportunity to make a significant impact on, and investment in, a vulnerable population that is often overlooked and underserved. We are excited to build D.C.'s first affordable, communal living space for older LGBTQ/SGL individuals. This project would not be possible without the financial and advisory support of Mayor Bowser and the D.C. Department of Housing and Community Development, the D.C. Housing Finance Agency, Wells Fargo and its Growing Diverse Housing Developers program, Capital Impact and its Equitable Development program, National Affordable Housing Trust and its Black Developer Capital Initiative and Goldman Sachs' One Million Black Women program," shares Dr. Gina Merritt, MBA, Principal and Founder of NREUV. All of these financing programs were created to level the playing field for developers of color.

The building will be located in the Fort Dupont Neighborhood in southeast Washington D.C. on an 8,885 square foot site, the location of Dr. Woody's childhood home, which is slated for demolition.

The design concept involves a three-story structure with basement to house 15 single-occupancy residential units and over 5,000 square feet of communal shared living space for active older adults and elders. The ground level will include common spaces such as a reception area, great room, porch, kitchen, dining, living room, and administrative offices. The upper two levels include seven living units each, a game room, an arts and crafts room as well as common areas for storage, seating, and laundry facilities. Several amenities at the basement level will include an exercise room, a quiet room, and a community meeting space. Other amenities include an outdoor terrace with a vegetated roof with seating area.

“It is our duty to ensure that all people regardless of sexual identity live with dignity and have access to the support and services they need to age in place,” states Dr. Woody.

The concept for this project was inspired by Dr. Woody’s father. An active citizen of D.C., he suffered a stroke and had to be placed in a nursing home but did not receive the quality care Dr. Woody expected, leaving her to wonder what would have happened to him if he didn’t have her support or if he had been a gay man. Shortly after this experience, Dr. Woody learned that an LGBTQ/SGL friend had died – in an upscale retirement community. He died alone and was found five days later. Many older adults and elders live alone and do not have children that traditionally care for them, and also those in the LGBTQ/SGL community have also suffered the loss of many of their peers due to the AIDS/HIV epidemic.

Other partners in the project include Waldon Studios, Clark Azar, CID Engineering, ZHG, Engineering Design Group, CDKM Consulting, Emotive Architects, and Mclean and Tircuit.

The project’s construction financing is funded by Capital Impact Partners, D.C. Housing and Community Development, Dr. Imani Woody, National Affordable Housing Trust, and Goldman Sachs. Predevelopment funding was provided by Enterprise Community Partners, D.C. Housing and Community Development, D.C. Housing Finance Agency, and National Housing Trust.

###

About Mary’s House for Older Adults

The mission of Mary’s House for Older Adults (MHFOA) is to provide safe and affordable housing environments for adults over 60 years of age, specifically including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and same gender-loving (LGBTQ/SGL) individuals. Mary’s House provides brick and mortar structures as well as education and advocacy to make the golden years of our elders rewarding, regardless of who they are and where they live. Learn more at <https://www.maryshousedc.org/>.

About NREUV

Northern Real Estate Urban Ventures, LLC (NREUV) is a community development organization that is engaged in a holistic approach to real estate development in low-income communities. Using a human-centered approach, NREUV works with local businesses to help grow them and with local residents to create economic empowerment opportunities, all while performing real estate development activities with a high level of execution expertise. NREUV provides consultative services in Real Estate Advisory, Financing, and Construction Management and is also managing \$550M of real estate projects for its own account. Learn more at <https://www.nreuv.com/>.