

# River Hill: A Sustainable Village

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A unique residential development offering a mix of housing options in a scenic, natural setting is now underway near Oakland, Maryland. Rising sharply above the Youghiogheny River on its west side, the aptly named River Hill is bordered to the south by the Little Yough River and by Liberty Street to the east and north. The densely forested site features occasional views of river rapids amidst rock outcroppings, hemlocks and vegetation reminiscent of nearby Swallow Falls State Park. Within its borders lie the ruins of Fort Alice, a small Civil War fort, the Shafer Hill Cemetery from the same era, and an old stone quarry overlooking the Youghiogheny River.

With multiple housing choices for varied income levels and a community center, all set amidst a protected natural setting within incorporated town limits, River Hill is the only development of its kind in Western Maryland. From the southern side, downtown Oakland is less than a mile away.

River Hill's construction has been planned in phases. Now completed, Phase One is Liberty Square, a 30-unit apartment building for senior citizens that features architecture reminiscent of the former Historic Oakland Hotel. Phase Two is Liberty Mews, a complex of 36 rent-to-own townhouses and apartments inspired by old English vernacular architecture featuring an abundance of stone and painted wood siding. The Mews is a joint project involving the Garrett County Community Action Committee and the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development. Future phases of the River Hill project include housing closer to town designed to resemble neighborhoods of old Oakland, and more rustic homes nestled amidst the forest overlooking the Youghiogheny River.

The preservation and enhancement of River Hill's natural environment and scenic beauty are key aspects of the community's design. An estimated 70 percent of River Hill has been designated as Green Space, with areas connected by walking and biking paths. Plans include the creation of Fort Alice Park along the Youghiogheny River, including an open-air amphitheatre for cultural events, and an exhibit and media display of the Fort's battle history. Envisioned as an arboretum, the Park will educate visitors

about native species and their importance within the local ecology. Within the Park, the Yough Glade Trail winds along the Little Yough into downtown Oakland, and will eventually connect to the Garrett County network that is part of the Great Allegheny Passage connecting Pittsburgh to Washington. Eventually, an

intrepid River Hill resident could conceivably walk out of his or her home, hop on a bike or lace up a pair of sturdy hiking shoes, and set out for either city.

River Hill has been designed with sustainability as a priority feature. As a certified Green Community, Liberty Mews will follow a variety of planning and building practices to preserve the natural landscape. Other desirable practices include the installation of sufficient insulation, the use of recycled materials and wood products from sustainable forestry vendors, and the installation of Energy Star appliances.

Conceived as a "village on a hill" by Pittsburgh's Devlin Architecture, River Hill is a long-range work in progress that promises to become an asset to the town of Oakland. To date, community response has been strong. For information about Liberty Mews properties, contact Garrettland Realty and Property Management at (301) 334-9431.

