

Ground breaks for new military housing

By [Linda Franz](#), *Sentinel Reporter*, October 24, 2006

GMH Military Housing broke ground Monday for 52 duplex homes at The Meadows, across Claremont Road from Carlisle Barracks.

It's part of the Army's Residential Communities Initiative, which will change the face of Army housing over the next 50 years.

The new three- and four-bedroom homes at The Meadows, averaging 2,000 to 2,200 square feet, will boast 2.5 and 3.5 baths, fully equipped modern kitchens, walk-in closets and two-car garages.

Col. Tom Torrance, deputy commandant of the Army War College, called the groundbreaking a "very significant event in the life and history of Carlisle Barracks" that officially starts the work begun more than four years ago to privatize military family housing at the barracks.

The project will provide soldiers and their families with quality, affordable housing, strengthen the partnership with the local community and allow the War College to focus on its mission of training future leaders, Torrance said.

Over an initial five-year development period, the multi-million dollar project will include:

- demolition of 136 existing homes;
- construction of 184 new homes;
- renovation of 79 historic homes;
- construction of a 6,000-square-foot community center;
- development of sports fields.

William Armbruster, deputy assistant secretary of the Army, privatization and partnerships, explained that many challenges delayed the Carlisle Barracks project.

Base Realignment and Closure "was probably the biggest," Armbruster said.

Carlisle Barracks originally was partnered with Fort Monmouth and Picatinny Arsenal, both in New Jersey. Fort Monmouth later was placed on the BRAC closure list.

After that, "We worked to identify some additional funding to make this project a reality," Armbruster said.

The scope of the Residential Communities Initiative has been "a tremendously successful project for the Army," he said. "It has made a dramatic difference in the quality of life for our soldiers and their families."

Armbruster said that 34 Army installations now have been privatized.

"This one to me is the most important one we've done, because of the turbulence and trials to get it out of the ground," he said.

Armbruster credited U.S. Rep. Todd Platts, R-19, with securing and protecting the additional funding needed to move the project forward, and he thanked GMH for stepping in "where we really needed them" after the initial partner backed out when Fort Monmouth was scheduled for closure.

Platts said he had a chance during his first term to tour Carlisle Barracks, including “a very insightful tour of ‘Smurf village,’” the name given to the small houses near the commissary. He called Friday’s groundbreaking “truly a celebration of our nation doing right by our military families.”

Christopher Williams, GMH senior vice president, said the RCI project is the most rewarding program in his 18 years in real estate.

The project will help the local community by bringing more than \$50 million in capital, he said. It is estimated that more than 50 percent of all construction and renovation spending will go to small business contractors in the Carlisle area.

In addition to The Meadows, work will begin soon at Marshall Ridge on post, where 28 new homes will be built initially, Garrison Commander Sergio Dickerson said. The homes are targeted for permanently assigned officers.

The renovation of Young Hall also will begin soon.

Young Hall was built in 1936 as a barracks and was converted in the 1970s into 44 very small apartments, Torrance said.

The upcoming renovation will create 26 fairly large, very modern apartments.