

## YMCA to Rise Where Crime Once Ruled *Facility Is Part of Mixed-Use Project*

By TIMOTHY WILSON  
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When the Anthony Bowen YMCA opened 20 years ago at 1325 W St. NW, it was surrounded by drug dealers and crime scenes.

Now, a modern Y will be built for the revitalized U Street corridor, which has been transformed from its blighted past into a hub of commercial and residential activity.

Perseus Realty and YMCA of Metropolitan Washington broke ground Friday at 14th and W streets NW for a \$97 million mixed-use project that will include 231 one- and two-bedroom apartment units, 12,200 square feet of street-level retail space and a 46,000-square-foot YMCA facility.

The development will rise on the site of the old YMCA. Perseus Realty and the youth organization agreed to a deal in which the developer would tear down the old building and incorporate a YMCA as part of the new one. Perseus Realty will own the apartment and retail portions of the project; the YMCA will retain ownership of its facility.

Officials said the building heralds a new day for the neighbor-

hood.

"We've come a mighty long way," said Angie L. Reese-Hawkins, president and chief executive of YMCA of Metropolitan Washington. "We've replaced the fear and distress with families and people who are committed and care about their community."

The YMCA facility will have child-care rooms, offices, a wellness center, an Internet cafe, an interactive museum, a rooftop terrace and a 25-meter indoor swimming pool with locker rooms.

"Having a new, state-of-the-art community center for young people to go to in this neighborhood is going to be a great thing for generations to come," Mayor Adrian M. Fenty (D) said at the groundbreaking. "You can never have too many positive programs for young people, and this is an exceptionally positive one."

D.C. Council member Jim Graham said the project got off to a good start when the developers incorporated the community's ideas on the project.

"I think on this project, all of the stars were aligned," Graham (D-Ward 1) said. "Everybody who is a stakeholder in this project did

the right thing from the beginning."

Anthony Bowen, a former slave who had purchased his freedom, moved to the District in 1853 and founded the first YMCA for blacks in the United States. In 1912, the Twelfth Street YMCA, known as the Colored YMCA, opened its doors. It closed 70 years later when the building had become structurally unsound.

The branch reopened in 1988 at its W Street location; the former site was redeveloped and became the Thurgood Marshall Center for Service and Heritage in 1999.

During construction, child-care services at the Bowen branch will be moved to Mount Airy Baptist Church, 1100 North Capitol St. NW. Senior programs will be moved to the Thurgood Marshall Center. The project is expected to be completed by December 2010.

"Buildings house us, but they don't define us," Reese-Hawkins said. "It's what we do with those buildings that really fundamentally make a difference in our communities."





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**From left, John Bolton Jr., executive vice president of Perseus Realty; D.C. Council member Jim Graham; Mayor Adrian M. Fenty; Angie L. Reese-Hawkins, chief executive of YMCA of Metropolitan Washington; Robert L. Cohen, president of Perseus Realty; and Robert Bolle, YMCA of Metropolitan Washington board chairman, at the groundbreaking for a mixed-use project, illustrated at right.**



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