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**MOUNT HOLLY TOWNSHIP AND MOUNT HOLLY GARDENS RESIDENTS
AGREE TO LANDMARK SETTLEMENT OF DECADE-LONG LAWSUIT**

Mount Holly, N.J. – A landmark settlement resolving a decade of litigation over the redevelopment of the Mount Holly Gardens neighborhood was approved at a special meeting this evening of the Mount Holly Township Council. The settlement agreement allows Mount Holly Township to move forward with economic revitalization in the Gardens neighborhood while providing current residents of the neighborhood with an opportunity to stay and benefit from the redevelopment. The agreement resolves all legal claims brought by 50 neighborhood residents and the community group Mount Holly Gardens Citizens in Action, Inc. regarding the Township’s redevelopment plan for the Gardens neighborhood.

The key aspects of the settlement agreement include:

- Construction on an expedited schedule within the Mount Holly Gardens neighborhood of 44 new emerging market homes.
- Twenty of the 44 houses will be provided to current residents of the Gardens in exchange for allowing the redevelopment of their existing homes. Those 20 homeowners would experience no adverse economic consequences as a result of their relocation into new housing.
- The first of the replacement houses will be ready for occupancy before the end of 2014. All of the phased new construction will be completed by no later than 2018.
- Existing residents will have the right to remain in the Gardens community pending the development of the new homes.
- Seven households who have elected to relocate out of the neighborhood will be compensated by way of a relocation allowance based in part on the appraised value of their homes.
- The remainder of the Gardens development will go forward, creating additional new homes and commercial/retail development that will provide significant economic benefits to Mount Holly Township.

“This is a historic settlement because it demonstrates that all the parties were willing and eager to work toward a global resolution that serves the interests of the Gardens’ residents and Mount Holly Township as a whole,” said Township Attorney George Saponaro after the proposed settlement agreement won unanimous approval by the Township Council. “Our goal was to ensure that Mount Holly Gardens would remain a viable community, not just a redevelopment parcel. This agreement symbolizes what can happen when respect and fairness for one another are the common denominator in settlement negotiations. Mount Holly has taken a stand for what is right and just in the way its people respect and treat one another. It may be a small town of less than 10,000, but it has a big heart and is determined to become the new model in community revitalization with this redevelopment effort.”

Olga Pomar, of South Jersey Legal Services, Inc., lead counsel for the plaintiffs, said after the Township meeting, “This settlement offers our clients the opportunity they have always wanted – to be able to remain in Mount Holly and participate in the revitalization of their community if they so choose, rather than being uprooted from the homes they have lived in for many years, separated from their neighbors, friends and families. Many of them are excited about moving into the new homes, and they are all very relieved to end the uncertainty under which they have lived for over a decade. We have been able to work out a resolution that truly meets the needs of both our clients and the Township. We are all hopeful that this resolution of the litigation and the planned revitalization of the Gardens will make Mount Holly an even better and stronger community in which to work, worship, and raise a family.”

Kenneth Goldman of South Jersey Legal Services added, “Our clients appreciate that the current Township Council members were willing to take a fresh look at the Gardens and ensure that our clients will have the right to remain homeowners and citizens of Mount Holly.”

AARP Foundation Litigation Attorneys Susan Ann Silverstein and Mariam Morshedi served as co-counsels with South Jersey Legal Services. Silverstein said, “We are delighted with the outcome because it ensures that the older residents will be able to remain in their community as they age in safe and well-designed homes. Residents of all ages have worked together for the long haul to obtain this tremendous settlement and to uphold fair housing and equal opportunity for everybody in Mount Holly.”

The 44 homes will be developed by TRF Development Partners, Inc., a Philadelphia-based national leader in financing neighborhood revitalization. TRF, which has worked to support community development in New Jersey for decades, assembled the financing for the final deal.

“The settlement will create a development that benefits all of Mount Holly,” said Sean Closkey, president of TRF Development Partners. “We’re pleased we could play a role in resolving this case in a way that unifies the community so that everyone wins.”

The Mount Holly case is currently pending before the U.S. Supreme Court, with argument scheduled for December 4, 2013. As a result of the settlement agreement, it is no longer necessary to have the case heard by the Supreme Court or to continue with litigation at the trial level. Following tonight’s vote, the parties will file a Joint Agreement to Dismiss the petition filed with the U.S. Supreme Court and a Joint Stipulation of Dismissal with the U.S. District Court, which will conclude all of the pending litigation.

Mount Holly Gardens, which once included more than 300 rowhouses, is located on a roughly 30-acre tract off Levis Drive and the Route 541 Bypass. Construction on more than 200 new apartments under the Township’s redevelopment plan has been underway, unaffected by the litigation.

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