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Ask the Mayor

Muriel Bowser
Mayor

Mayor Bowser Opens The Brooks, Ward 3's Short-Term Family Housing Program

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(Washington, DC) – Today, Mayor Muriel Bowser opened The Brooks, the Short-Term Family Housing site in Ward 3 and the latest of the eight sites opening in the District. This opening is part of Mayor Bower's strategic plan to end homelessness – Homeward DC – and continues the momentum toward reforming the District's crisis response system for families experiencing homelessness.

"At a time when we face unprecedented challenges, The Brooks reminds us that our most vulnerable residents of the District deserve the safety and security of a home when they fall on hard times," said Mayor Bowser. "Particularly during this public health emergency, we will continue to support our families and provide them with wrap-around services they need to transition into permanent housing. We're all in this together."

Based on DC Health guidance, staff at The Brooks have implemented a series of protocols to protect residents and staff during the coronavirus (COVID-19) public health emergency. There will be an opportunity for the community to mark the opening of the site once restrictions on large gatherings are lifted.

The Brooks follows the ribbon-cutting of The Aya (Ward 6), and the openings of short-term family housing sites The Kennedy (Ward 4), The Sterling (Ward 5), The Horizon (Ward 7) and The Triumph (Ward 8). The W.J. Rolark (Ward 8) opened in the summer of 2019 and is temporarily operating as a Short-Term Family Housing site and will transition to Permanent Supportive Housing. The Ward 1 Short-Term Family Housing site will open in Fiscal Year 2021. The Bowser Administration also opened the Patricia Handy Place for Women (Ward 2) a low-barrier shelter in 2016.

The Brooks is named in honor of Donald Brooks, who tirelessly advocated for people experiencing homelessness and poverty. He was an Army Veteran who overcame numerous challenges, including homelessness. His advocacy was grounded in hard-fought lessons of personal experience, but always came with a smile and a comforting hug. In recent years, he also served as a case manager at the DC Department of Human Services (DHS).

"I'm very pleased to welcome new families to The Brooks in Ward 3 – even while temporary, it will provide a safe and secure home for parents and children who need it most," said Ward 3 Councilmember Mary Cheh. "There is no doubt that the building is both attractive and welcoming and, coupled with management by Friendship Place, I am confident that the families who locate there will have the services and support

they need to get back on their feet."

At The Brooks, families will have access to service-enriched programming that will assist them to quickly stabilize and move to permanent housing. The site includes 50 family units, on-site parking for staff, indoor community and meeting space, a playground, administrative space for staff and providers, and other amenities. The site is designed with several energy-efficient and sustainable features including a green roof, high efficiency windows, HVAC system, and plumbing fixtures.

"During this time of uncertainty, we continue to grow and improve our services for District families experiencing homelessness and provide services that we know help to end homelessness," said DHS Director Laura Zeilinger. "I am proud of the work we have done over the past several years with the Ward 3 Advisory Team and the Department of General Services to make this site a reality for the families that we serve."

Through a competitive procurement process, DHS selected Friendship Place to operate the Brooks. Friendship Place began their work in the District in 1991 providing shelter services in upper Northwest DC. Friendship Place operates a number of programs in DC's Continuum of Care and throughout the region including street outreach, a drop-in center, free medical and psychiatric clinic, shelters and transitional housing facilities, permanent supportive housing and rapid rehousing, and specialized programs for veterans and youth.

Since the launch of Homeward DC in 2016, the District has reduced overall homelessness by more than 11% and has reduced family homelessness by 45%. A centerpiece of this work is the Homelessness Prevention Program, which has successfully prevented a shelter stay for more than 7,500 District families since its launch in 2015. In addition to making unprecedented investments in affordable housing opportunities, Mayor Bowser's Fiscal Year 2020 budget included $47 million to support homeless services, including permanent housing resources and enhanced street outreach.