

We Own It: How READS Is Helping Homeowners Buy Their Community

For the people who live there, Minquadale Mobile Home Village is a special place.

Covering a modest 10 acres in New Castle, Del., the Minquadale Village landscape is dotted with majestic trees that provide shade and beauty in the summer. It is a place with benches lining its streets, and a strong sense of community. It is a place where friends and neighbors who have been through many of life's milestones together go to sleep each night and wake up each morning to start a new day together. For the people who live there, Minquadale Village is, in short, their home.

And now, thanks to READS, the village is a home that they are going to own, from the front entrance to the rear of the property, and from the roads to the houses that line them.

There is still a monthly fee for living there, but that fee isn't rent that generates a return for an investor owner. It's a mortgage, and with each payment they make, homeowners build a little more equity in their property.

It almost didn't work out that way. Last September, the person who had owned Minquadale for 50 years decided it was time to sell the park. With a new owner, it was likely that rents would increase.

The best bet for homeowners was to organize and buy the property together – an imposing process that would require considerable financial legerdemain, time and specialized knowledge to handle the legal processes. It would require formally incorporating a homeowners association, electing a board of directors, and complying with the provisions of a new Delaware state law that gives residents a right of first offer to purchase their community.

Enter READS.

Acting on the recommendation of the Delaware Relocation Trust Authority, homeowners at Minquadale contacted READS for help. Before long, representatives of READS were meeting with homeowners to guide them through the process of incorporating as a homeowners association.

"We worked with the Minquadale homeowners to develop



Because of the work of READS, residents of Minquadale Village own more than just their homes. They own their community, giving them the same measure of control as enjoyed by owners of homes built through on-site construction.

and approve a set of bylaws, register with the state, and elect a board of directors," said Keith Timko, vice president of real estate and innovative programs at READS. "And because Delaware law considers every resident to be a member for purchasing the community, we worked to get all the residents signed onto the idea."

READS and its partners helped to arrange pro bono legal representation for the Minquadale homeowners to pursue their rights under Delaware law. And on March 27, the Delaware courts determined that they had met the requirements of the law, and the property should be sold to them.

READS also helped arrange financing for the mortgage, a \$2.1 million loan through ROC USA Capital and the National Council on Agricultural Life and Labor Research Fund Inc.

"This is a win for everybody," said Brian Keenan, president of READS. "The seller gets a competitive price for their community and the homeowners get to control their future. We hope it shows other community owners that resident ownership is a real and viable option, and that residents should be considered as viable buyers when an owner decides to sell a community."

Once the residents buy the community, READS will continue to assist the homeowners association by providing board governance and technical assistance, including matching the association with engineering firms that can provide professional assistance.

The process has only been started, and there are more things that will need to be done before the Minquadale sale can fully conclude this summer. But for now its residents are sure of one thing: It's a special place they'll call home for years to come.

After all, they own it.



Homes at Minquadale Village often enjoy personal touches from landscaping to decks and other add-ons.