



Real Estate

Bladensburg: Historic gateway to Washington

By: J.J. Smith
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For more than 400 years, Bladensburg, Md., has been an important gateway to the Washington area for military forces, businesses owners and families looking for a new place to call home.

Settled in the 1630s as Garrison's Landing, Bladensburg was originally a busy Anacostia River port town. It was renamed in honor of Thomas Bladen, who was governor of Maryland from 1742 to 1747 and played an important role during the War of 1812. American troops defending Bladensburg lost to the British on Aug. 24, 1814, leaving the way to Washington open. As a result, many government buildings in D.C. were burned.

"We're working in collaboration with the War of 1812 Bicentennial Commission, and we're looking to erect signage that lets tourists know about the events of the War of 1812 that took place in Bladensburg," said Mayor Walter James.

The town's history also includes the first exhibition of a hot air balloon. On June 19, 1784, Peter Carnes demonstrated his Aerostatic Balloon, made of silk with an iron stove suspended at the bottom. Bladensburg also is famous for Spa Springs, which began operations in the early 1800s and was said to offer powerful curative waters.

Though big ships no longer stop there, the town is still a major trans-shipping point because of its unique location. Goods destined for Virginia, Baltimore and all over Maryland can arrive within 30 minutes, said Brendan O'Keefe Quinn, owner of Ernest Maier Inc., which has been operating in Bladensburg since 1926. "We manufacture concrete blocks. Concrete blocks are portable, manufacturing is not. So one of our competitive advantages has to be geography," he said.

At a glance May 2010 -- Average sold price in the 20710 ZIP code: \$133,675 -- Average list price in the 20710 ZIP code: \$170,918 -- Average days on market for homes sold: 99 May 2009 -- Average sold price in the 20710 ZIP code: \$129,580 -- Average list price in the 20710 ZIP code: \$147,560 -- Average days on market for homes sold: 210

Bladensburg is now a working-class community of just over 3,100 houses, most of which are affordable ramblers priced from \$120,000 to \$240,000, according to Jo-Ann Henry, a Re/Max agent in the area. A recent surge of foreclosures and short sales has affected home prices, she said.

Neighbors in the close-knit community look out for one another. Vickey Lewis, for example, participates in the community's Share Program, which provides food for families in need.

"The Share Program has gone from 12 families per month to 22 families per month," she said.

Benea Younger has lived in Bladensburg for 16 years, moving there to help out her grandparents. She says there "are generations [of my family] who live in this neighborhood" and that just sitting and gossiping or taking the children to the park are part of the pace of life.

The town has its own police force and other municipal agencies. Bladensburg Waterfront Park and Bladensburg Community Center offer many outdoor recreational opportunities for families. Commuters rely on multiple Metrobus routes running through town.

Top reasons to live in Bladensburg Services Bladensburg's Career One-Stop Job Center in the Autumn Woods Apartment Complex provides job seekers with job leads, an assessment of skills and resume assistance. Community The town has a Seniors Club that meets every second and fourth Thursday of the month. The Share Program provides food for needy families. Recreation Bladensburg Waterfront Park on the Anacostia River is a historic waterway and has fishing, boating and a B&O Railroad caboose. It also offers boat tours and rentals.