

# Franklin & Marshall College

## College, Silverang Partnership Offers Students New Housing Options off Campus

Kevin Silverang looked at home as he greeted the neighbors on the front steps of his newly remodeled West James Street property.

A coat of bright yellow paint made the old Victorian at 423 W. James St. look new again. Neighbors gathered for an Aug. 12 open house to marvel at the property that had once been a blighted boarding house.

“That house used to be so gray and ugly. You did a great job. Makes me want to go back to college,” a Mary Street resident told Silverang.

“We aimed to preserve the integrity of the homes and the character of the neighborhood. I think we did well,” said Silverang, a partner in Silverang Hallowell Development Company and a 1977 graduate of Franklin & Marshall.

He may have rebuilt it, but Silverang won't live here. His company remodeled this house for nine Franklin & Marshall students he hadn't met yet.

In fact, 423 W. James St. is one of 23 properties Silverang Hallowell bought and completely refurbished to provide safety features that were not offered before in off-campus housing for Franklin & Marshall upperclassmen. The company is partnering with the College in a program to provide safe and secure off-campus housing. The project represents a \$17 million investment for the company.

This year the company will remodel another 12 homes as part of the program. By next year, the James Street Properties will house a total of 240 students.

So far, 23 properties are completed, enough for 166 students this school year. The remaining 12 homes will be ready for next school year. Keith Orris, F&M Vice President for Administrative Services and External Affairs, says the program ensures students are living in safe, College-approved housing. In years past, students were able to rent from local landlords, which weren't always up to College standards.

The James Street Properties are up to, and in some cases exceed, city and state code. The company added air conditioning, sprinkler systems, new kitchens and bathrooms, and placed new furniture in each property. Students will live in their own rooms and have individual keys.

The company acts as landlord. The College holds the master lease on the properties, but the student is ultimately responsible for his or her own behavior.

Orris said the College is pleased with the work Silverang Hallowell did on the homes and the partnership between the company and the College. “We were very pleased with how many neighbors came and were gratified by their comments on the fine work that Kevin and his company have done in remodeling the homes,” Orris said.



Silverang speaks with a neighbor at an Aug. 12 open house for the James Street Properties.

“In order to stay in the housing, students have to act like adults and live by the rules,” Silverang said. “The control is the same kind of control the College would impose on people who live on campus. We’ve just extended it to the off-campus area for the first time.”

Students are required to sign a rental lease with the company that strictly prohibits behaviors such as excessive noise or loud parties. The College has the right to remove the student from the James Street Properties for repeated or serious violations.

Some city residents had expressed concern that the Silverang housing would become unofficial fraternity or sorority houses. Although members of fraternal organizations and sports teams are permitted to live in the same homes or near each other, Silverang said the lease agreements would keep problems in check.

“I think this will work out,” said Heather Smith of Mary Street, who came to the open house. “If there is a problem, the students will be held responsible. This is better than having them in random houses and doing whatever they want.”

Chi Omega sorority member Patricia Lapear '09 said 18 members of the sorority will live in or near her house on West James Street, but they don't plan on making it a sorority house. “It's not worth the risk of losing our charter and embarrassing the school,” she said.

Jordan Macmain '10 lives with his Ultimate Frisbee teammates in a “real nice house” at 405 W. James St. “They did a good job with it. They could have put it up cheaply, but you can see they didn't do that.” He said he and his friends would respect the lease.

“We're adults. It's more than fair.”