

# Carlisle Barracks ends housing era

By Tom Conning

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A crisp wind on a snowy January morning bites at any exposed skin as demolition equipment rips, crunches and flattens a simple, white, split-level, Mayberry-like house that was home to generations of Army War College families since the 1950s. This is the beginning of the end for the homes, better known as "Smurf" houses than by their official Carlisle Barracks name.



*Contractors for Balfour Beatty tear down Smurf houses on Carlisle Barracks Jan. 16. Demolition of the 60-year-old houses should be finished by March and construction will start on more effective and efficient homes. Photo by Tom Conning.*

Balfour Beatty is demolishing 69 houses, built more than 60 years ago and replacing them with 56 modern homes. New homes will be more energy efficient, more practical for modern needs, and cheaper than remodeling, said **Ty McPhillips**,

project director for Balfour Beatty Communities.

"It's not cost effective by any means to remodel," said McPhillips. "You would end up with a lesser product that's not desirable and you'd spend a whole lot of money to do it."

Once Balfour Beatty completes demolition in early March, it will build houses that are more efficient and larger, with conveniences that Smurf housing lacked, like a two-car garage and updated kitchen, elaborated McPhillips.

Carlisle area real-estate broker **William Hooke** and his associates built the Smurf houses in 1950. His son, **William Hooke, Jr.** remembered that the houses were progressive then. "They were considered very state-of-the-art at the time in the '50s," said Hooke. "The insulation is sub-standard compared to today."

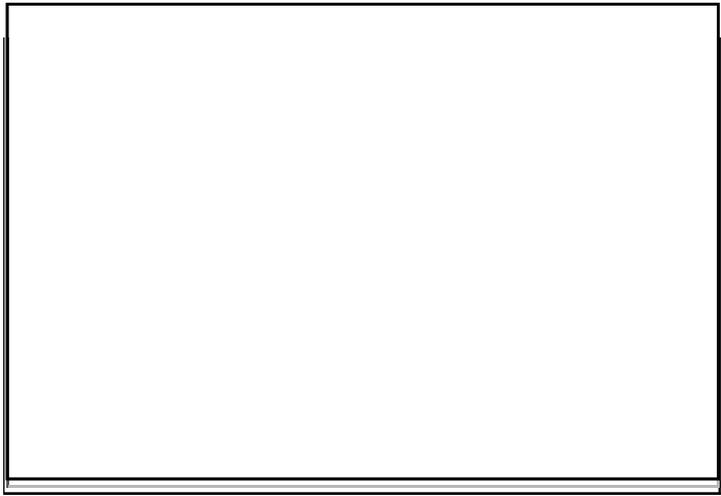
Smurf demolition started in the College Arms area of Carlisle Barracks in 2008 as part of the Residential Communities Initiative. Now, Balfour Beatty is working on the rest of the Smurf homes on post.



New construction will start in March and homes are scheduled to be available in July 2014 for The War College students of academic year 2015, said McPhillips.

***Newer homes contrast starkly with their 60-year-old counterparts. At the end of the final phase of the BBC construction project in mid-2014, a total of 184 new homes will be available for military families at Carlisle Barracks.***

***Photo by Tom Conning***



Former War College students who lived in the Smurf housing with their families remember their experiences fondly.

**Charles Allen**, USAWC Professor of Leadership and Cultural Studies, lived in Smurf housing from 2000-2001. "It's had its time, so renovations are a good idea. The new set of quarters are great," said Allen.

I think a lot of folks have some nostalgia about the time they were in Smurf Village," Allen said. "All the backyards in Smurf Village opened up to one another. If you had neighbors that you knew either from classroom assignments here or previous tours, you had a chance to share some of those old war stories."

This sense of community is a common theme among former residents.

**Dr. Christopher Fowler**, USAWC Registrar, has a picture in his office of the house in which he and his family lived while he attended the War College in 2002. "They weren't really wired for modern day electronics," said Fowler, who added, "The plumbing was old.

"It's more the people around you and the community feeling and the interactions with other people than the actual house because you just take it for granted that Army housing is what it is at any given post," said Fowler.

Past residents suggest that it's what they do outside of the homes that define the "Carlisle experience."