

Dreams of homeownership are fulfilled

By Denise Hollinshed

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

EAST ST. LOUIS • Crystal Stepney's mother always told her that someday they would have a home of their own. That became a reality Friday at the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the River City Place subdivision in East St. Louis.

The \$2 million development of 12 single-family houses is in the Emerson Park neighborhood. The Emerson Park Development Corp. was the developer. The structures are the first new houses in the neighborhood in 40 years.

Crystal, 15, stood in her mother's shadow outside of their new three-bedroom house. "When she first told me, I didn't believe her because a lot of times she told us we were moving but we didn't," Crystal said. "When I really came and saw the house, I said she was for real about it this time."

Crystal's mother, Sheron Stepney, 40, and Mayor Carl Officer wrestled with an oversized pair of scissors as they clipped a red ribbon in an opening ceremony.

"Welcome to paying taxes to the city of East St. Louis," Offi-

cer said. The subdivision's houses cost \$155,000 to \$185,000, but with special financing the new owners will pay off mortgages ranging from \$75,000 to \$100,000.

Stepney, in a pink suit, was all smiles. For years, she and her children — 19, 17 and 15 — lived in the John DeShields public housing complex in East St. Louis.

"I'm just going to sit down on my carpet, rub it and reminisce on where I was and where I am now," she said.

Stepney works for INDOX Services as a copy center operator for the housing authority.