



City of Valdosta
Neighborhood Revitalization Plans
HUD Designated Revitalization Areas

A supporting document to the City of Valdosta Consolidated Housing Plan 2004-2009



Prepared by the
South Georgia Regional Development Center
Community and Economic Development Department

I. Introduction

In recent years, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Office of Community Planning and Development (CPD) has stressed a coordinated marshalling of resources to facilitate entitlement communities' ability to engage in comprehensive community revitalization strategies. Comprehensive community revitalization strategies seek to create partnerships among federal and local governments, the private sector, community organizations and neighborhood residents. HUD seeks to create communities of opportunity in neighborhoods by stimulating the reinvestment of human and economic capital and economically empowering low-income residents.

II. Metropolitan Status and CDBG Entitlement

The Valdosta/Lowndes County area, combined with Brooks County, Echols County, and Lanier County, qualified as a Metropolitan Statistical Area following the 2000 Census. With Metropolitan designation, the City of Valdosta was also designated as an Entitlement Community by HUD. Pursuant to CDBG requirements, at least seventy-percent of low to moderate income residents must benefit from the annual CDBG funds. By allocating CDBG funds to projects in the Designated Revitalization Area the City ensures compliance with this requirement. Entitlement communities may define a Designated Revitalization Area (DRA) that meets the threshold for low/moderate income (LMI) residents (5,152 residents in Valdosta), and that is also primarily residential. Within this area the City is afforded much greater flexibility in the use of CDBG funds.

III. Consolidated and Annual Action Plans

The City must submit a Consolidated Plan to HUD every three to five years. The intent of the Consolidated Plan is to:

- Promote citizen participation and the development and prioritization of local needs and objectives by providing comprehensive information on the jurisdiction that is easy to understand;
- Coordinate the statutory requirements of the different programs in such a manner as to achieve their purposes in a comprehensive way, while reducing paper work and to simplify the process of requesting and obtaining federal funds available to the jurisdictions on a formula basis;
- Promote the development of an action plan that provides the basis for assessing performance and to encourage consultation with the public and private agencies, including those outside a single jurisdiction, to identify shared needs and solutions.

SOURCE: <http://www.hud.gov>

The Annual Action (AA) Plan is prepared every year to provide information on the intended use of HUD program funds to address needs identified in the Consolidated Plan. The AA describes various projects and activities the City will undertake during the next fiscal year to achieve the goals set forth in the Consolidated Plan. The AA also contains information about other available financial resources to accomplish goals beyond the annual entitlement funds the City expects to receive.

A summary of the Consolidated Plan Goals and Objectives is included as Appendix A.

IV. Benefits of Neighborhood Revitalization Strategies

The benefits are described in amendments to the CDBG regulations at 24 CFR 570 which were published in the Federal Register on January 5, 1995, and updates in the final rule changes published in the November 9, 1995, Federal Register. They are as follows:

1. Job Creation/Retention as Low/Moderate Income Area Benefit: Job creation/retention activities pursuant to the strategy may be qualified as meeting area benefit requirements, thus eliminating the need for a business to track the incomes of persons that take, or are considered for such jobs (24 CFR 570.208(a)(1)(vii) and (d)(5)(i));
2. Aggregation of Housing Units: Housing units assisted pursuant to the strategy may be considered to be part of a single structure for purposes of applying the low/moderate -income national objective criteria, thus providing greater flexibility to carry out housing programs that revitalize a neighborhood (24 CFR 570.208(a)(3) and (d)(5)(ii));
3. Aggregate Public Benefit Standard Exemption: Economic Development activities carried out under the strategy may, at the grantee's option, be exempt from the aggregate public benefit standards, thus increasing a grantee's flexibility for program design as well as reducing its record-keeping requirements (24 CFR 570.209 (b)(2)(v)(L) and (M); and
4. Public Service Cap Exemption: Public Services carried out pursuant to the strategy by a Community-Based Development Organization will be exempt from the public services cap (24 CFR 570.204(b)(2)(ii).

V. Community Consultation

Prior Citizen Involvement

CDBG regulations require all grantees to certify that they are following a Citizen Participation Plan. The participation plan involves participation of residents of predominantly low-to moderate-income neighborhoods, slum or blighted areas, and areas in which the grantee proposes to use CDBG funds. As part of the Consolidated Planning process in 2003, the Government Excellence Team (GET) at Valdosta State University conducted focus groups and administered a survey at neighborhood meetings within the DRA. The GET study found that a majority of survey respondents were "very dissatisfied" or "somewhat dissatisfied" with the following aspects of their community:

- The physical appearance of their neighborhood
- Availability of affordable housing
- Information provided by the city
- Economic development
- Enforcement of property maintenance laws
- Activities for teens
- Water quality and sewer services
- Storm water drainage

These results confirmed the need for additional programs, projects, and funding to be dedicated to the DRA and provided specific areas in which these improvements should be focused. In developing the Neighborhood Revitalization Plans, the above mentioned concerns were kept in mind during the formulation of specific revitalization strategies.

Citizens' Advisory Committee

As part of the Citizen Participation Plan, the City of Valdosta established a Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) to assist in the CDBG fund allocation process. The Committee consists of seven members, five of which are appointed by the Valdosta City Council. The Committee provides input in the development of the Consolidated Plan, any amendments to the plan, and the annual performance report. The CAC

had involvement in the development of these Neighborhood Revitalization Plans and provided guidance throughout their development.

VI. Designated Revitalization Area

In 2002, HUD approved Census Tracts 108, 109, 110 and 113 (excluding Block Group 1 of Tract 113) as a Designated Revitalization Area (DRA). This area incorporates the greatest portion of the city's low and moderate-income neighborhoods. This area was defined based on 2000 Census data.

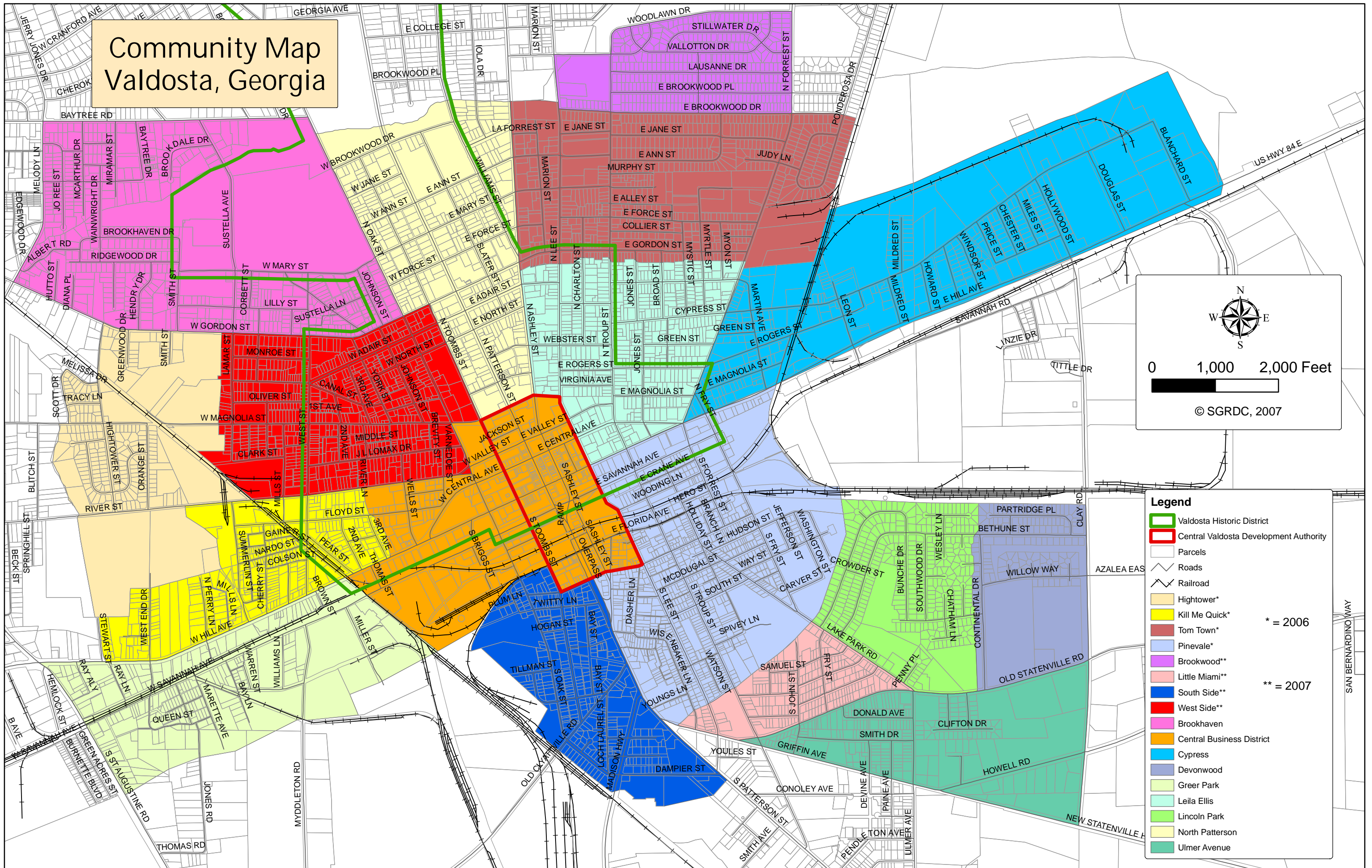
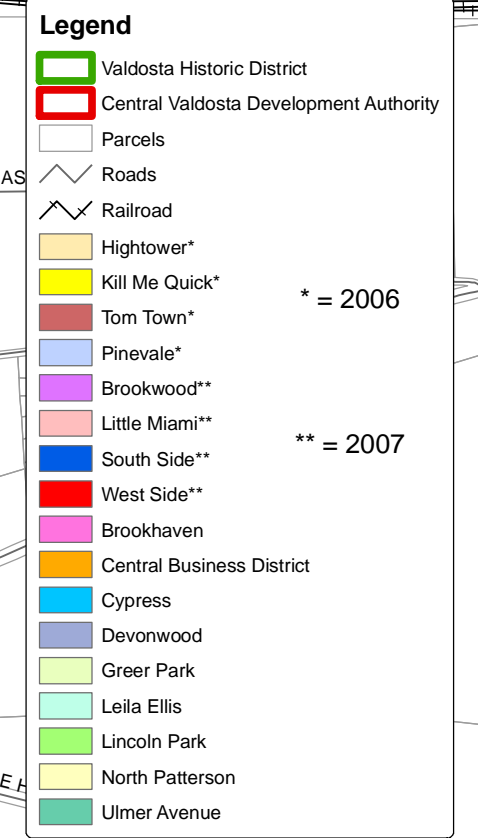
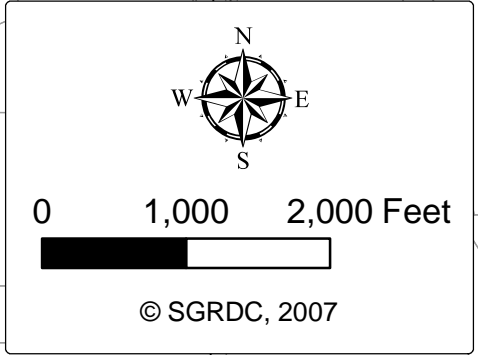
Based on citizen input, seventeen neighborhoods were delineated within these tracts. The citizens involved in the delineation of these neighborhoods also recommended names based on historical references to the individual communities.

All seventeen neighborhoods have been identified for revitalization planning over a four-year period, according to the following schedule:

<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>
Hightower	Brookwood	Brookhaven	Devonwood
Kill Me Quick	Little Miami	Cypress	Leila Ellis
Pinevale	Southside	Greer Park	North Patterson
Tom Town	West Side	Lincoln Park	Ulmer Avenue

All seventeen neighborhoods are depicted on the following map.

Community Map Valdosta, Georgia



VII. Neighborhood Revitalization Plans

As identified in the City of Valdosta Consolidated Housing Plan, “assessments of each neighborhood will be conducted in order to establish a priority system of improvements based on concentration of low to moderate income residents, low rates of home ownership, and the number of sub-standard structures contained in the neighborhood.” Utilizing these criteria, the neighborhoods with the greatest documented need will be given the highest priority for CDBG funded activities.

The City of Valdosta Consolidated Plan addresses seven strategy areas to be taken into consideration as part of neighborhood revitalization planning:

1. Homeless

Homelessness is being addressed by the City and the South Georgia Coalition to End Homelessness (SGCEH). The SGCEH provides outreach, intake, assessment, information and referrals, case management and follow-up and tracking of homeless individuals and families. In addition, the SGCEH seeks to identify the causes and conditions of homelessness and obstacles faced by those living in poverty. In the City’s 2006-2007 Annual Action Plan, the City earmarked CDBG and other funds for the SGCEH to conduct a Valdosta homeless county and outreach project with special emphasis in the Designated Revitalization Areas.

2. Special Needs

The Special Needs strategy is being addressed by several entities. SGCEH and the South Health District 8-1 (SHD 8-1) provide services for individuals and families living with HIV/AIDS. The SGCEH is responsible for administering funds from the federal government and the SHD 8-1 is responsible for providing services and case management. The Department of Family and Children Services (DFACS) assists disabled persons by providing transportation for vital services and assists with managing finances.

3. Non-Housing Community Development – Economic Development, Public Facilities, Public Services, and Planning

The City’s Community Development Department spearheads the Non-Housing Community Development strategy area, specifically the Economic Development sub-strategy area. The department supports programs that improve training and educational opportunities for people of low to moderate incomes. The department offers free training in many different areas. The City and the Valdosta State University Small Business Development Center collaborate to provide annual business training for low to moderate-income business owners. Further, the Valdosta Main Street Program coordinates economic development efforts in the Central Valdosta Development Authority area.

According to the City’s 2006-2007 Annual Action Plan, the City is utilizing several entities to address the Public Facilities and Public Services sub-strategy areas. The City is assisting in the funding of: a physical fitness program through the Boys and Girls Club, an art and literacy program at Snake Nation Press, Disabled Veterans for day services, land acquisition to build homes for Habitat for Humanity, and preparedness information and disaster assistance by the American Red Cross. The Valdosta-Lowndes County Recreation, Parks, and Community Affairs Department is responsible for providing adequate recreational opportunities and maintaining the facilities for the City.

The City, the City’s Community Development Department, the SGRDC, and the Greater Lowndes Planning Commission are the primary entities responsible for the Planning sub-strategy area. The City seeks to have a planning system that determines the needs of neighborhoods and

steps of action to take. These groups will continue to review and recommend revisions to the local subdivisions and zoning ordinances, in order to alleviate land use barriers in the DRA. These groups will also identify and define neighborhoods adjacent to the existing DRA that may contain concentrations of low to moderate-income residents and low rates of homeownership in order to apply for the DRA designation for these areas.

4. Anti-Poverty

The City is addressing the Anti-Poverty strategy by addressing the other strategy areas. As mentioned earlier, the City works with various public service providers and other units of local government to provide low-income families with supportive services. The City will continue to provide and seek additional housing resources for lo-income persons residing in the community. The City partners with a network of agencies that provide human service programs.

5. Housing

The City's Community Development Department is taking the lead in the Housing strategy area. This department administers the CDBG. The department provides funding:

- To HUD certified organizations that carry out homebuyer education programs,
- First-time homebuyer down payment assistance for homes purchased in the DRA, and
- Owner-occupied housing rehabilitation in the form of direct loans.

The City and the Community Development Department are also currently working in partnership with the Valdosta Housing Authority to promote greater homeowner opportunities for authority residents.

6. Lead-Based Paint

The City's Community Department is spearheading the Lead-Based Paint strategy. The department plans to contract with certified lead paint contractors to test and abate lead in any units constructed prior to 1978 that receive funds from CDBG or other HUD programs for rehabilitation.

7. Barriers to Affordable Housing

The City plans to analyze the impediments and barriers to affordable housing in the DRA, at the federal, state, and local levels and throughout the private sector. Strategies will be developed and implemented to alleviate those impediments and barriers.

VII. Plan Development

A windshield survey of each neighborhood was conducted by SGRDC staff to ascertain the general condition of features such as roads, sidewalks, and storm water drainage facilities. Dr. Michael Brooks, a professor at Valdosta State University, and a team of VSU students conducted a detailed housing inventory in each neighborhood based on conditions readily apparent from the public right-of-way. Surveyors used Global Positioning System (GPS) technology to gather data specific to individual parcels which was then spatially depicted using Geographic Information System (GIS). The surveyors focused on the condition of single-family structures, but also collected data on multi-family structures, manufactured housing, and commercial properties. Vacant lots and undeveloped land were also catalogued as potential infill opportunities. Survey results are summarized in each neighborhood plan. This summary assessment was made after analyzing the detailed survey report which includes details about the condition of specific parts of the structure such as the roof, foundation, windows,

doors, cladding material, porches, etc. The inventory report also includes information on the condition of the storm water drainage of the lot and any accessory structures. An important and often overlooked element that is crucial to safety is the existence and visibility of address numbers. The condition of address numbers is included as an entry in the inventory report. The Neighborhood Survey Inventory Form is included as Appendix B. The complete Housing Inventory is included as Appendix C.

As a means of quantifying the data collected as part of the housing inventory housing conditions were defined as “OK”, minor repair, major repair, or dilapidated.

Houses were classified as needing minor repair when necessary improvements could be made without a building permit. These repairs are ideal candidates for youth work camps or other volunteer groups in the community.

Houses were classified as needing major repair when a building permit would be required for the necessary improvements. These structures should become a high priority for rehabilitation, when possible, to prevent further deterioration and the possible creation of uninhabitable conditions.

Dilapidated structures are those homes that have deteriorated to such a state that they are beyond repair. These homes are contributing to the presence of slum and blight in the neighborhoods and should be demolished to make way for redevelopment. Demolition of these structures should be a high priority for the City.

Vacant structures were also catalogued as part of the inventory. These structures present residential and commercial redevelopment opportunities and should be monitored by the City to ensure that they do not fall into a state of disrepair.

The housing survey includes an inventory of multi-family and manufactured housing. The location of each housing type was catalogued, but condition was not assessed. It is recommended that the City carefully monitor the condition of manufactured homes as the building materials often deteriorate more rapidly than a conventional site built home. Multi-family housing can provide an affordable alternative to housing. Because multi-family housing units have a greater density than conventional single family neighborhoods, they offer opportunities for residents to live in a safe environment without a large yard to care for, which may be of interest to older residents. Furthermore, multi-family housing can often offer a solution to a lack of available park land by allowing for increased density that can be off-set by open space.

The survey team also inventoried vacant lots and undeveloped land. These parcels provide excellent opportunities for infill and redevelopment. It is important to keep in mind that infill and redevelopment are not only terms used in reference to housing. Vacant lots can provide an opportunity for a park in a community without adequate open space or they can offer an opportunity, in the right location, for a neighborhood service such as a small grocery store or market that would be easily accessible to residents. The vacant lots that were inventoried were then compared to the existing zoning ordinance to check conformity. Any non-conforming lots, that is, any lots that are smaller than permitted by the current zoning ordinance have been noted.

Each Neighborhood Revitalization Plan includes a Map Appendix. This appendix includes neighborhood maps showing general information about each community including community facilities, crime statistics, zoning, character areas, historic resources, as well as the detailed results of the housing inventory.

IX. Plan Updates

In an effort to ensure that the Neighborhood Revitalization Plans remain effective guides for the allocation of annual CDBG funds, each plan will be reviewed annually. As part of this review, updates to the list of Consolidated Plan Goals & Objectives will be recommended to include new projects and a status report on project underway.