
*HISTORIC DISTRICTS OF
ROSEDALE AND ROSEDALE PARK*

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

AND

REVITALIZATION PLAN

2005

Table of Contents

Summary	1
I. Introduction	3
II. Planning Principles and Strategic Assumptions	3
A. Smart Growth.....	3
B. Sustainable Development.....	4
C. Guiding Principles and Goals of the Community	6
1. Guiding Principles	6
2. Goals	6
III. The Plan	7
A. Historic Preservation.....	7
1. Community and Economic Impact of Historic Preservation	8
2. Recommendations for Implementation	9
3. Community Actions	9
B. Community Development and Capacity Building (RCDC and Rosedale).....	10
C. Economic Development and Land Use.....	11
1. Commercial.....	12
2. Housing.....	12
3. What has Rosedale accomplished?	13
4. What will Rosedale do?	13
5. What can the City do?.....	14
D. Safety and Environment Aspects	14
E. Community Outreach.....	15
F. Funding	16
IV. Other Issues and Concerns	16
A. A New Master Plan and Greater Community Involvement.....	16
B. More Stringent Guidelines for Granting Requests for Re-zoning	17
C. Stronger Criteria for Granting Variances.....	17
D. Make Use of SMART Governance.....	18
V. Conclusion	18
VI. Appendices	19
A. 2001 Housing Viability	19
B. 2005 Housing Viability	20
C. Illustrative Plan of 2005 Rosedale Revitalization Plan.....	21

2005 Rosedale Historic Preservation and Revitalization Plan

Summary:

The work of the Rosedale Revival Committee has progressed significantly over the past few months with the following major areas of work identified as the highest priorities:

1. Research, review and evaluate all previous planning work done about Rosedale.
2. Contact and bring together the current residents of Rosedale to identify the most important needs and future directions of the neighborhood as they see them.
3. Conduct an initial inventory of every piece of property and structure in Rosedale in order to evaluate their viability and/or current status.
4. Survey the ownership of every piece of property.
5. Consult with planning professionals to bring all input up to date.
6. Coordinate the input of the community's residents and as many property owners as possible with the input of planning professionals in order to produce a working draft plan for Rosedale's future development.
7. Evaluate the current capacities and needs of the Rosedale Community Development Corporation (RCDC) and secure both technical assistance and funding in order to strengthen the RCDC's actual on-the-ground neighborhood housing development efforts.
8. Make contact and initiate applications/conversations with a variety of potential funding sources:
 - a. National foundations
 - b. Local foundations
 - c. Individual charitable donors
 - d. Corporations
 - e. Private investors
 - f. National housing technical assistance clearing-houses
 - g. Governmental sources
 - h. Environmental grantmakers
 - i. Religious organizations
 - j. African-American neighborhood development organizations
9. Draft initial considerations for the role of the city in future Rosedale development, particularly around public space, streets, infrastructure, historic district and preservation and the creek areas.

10. Report back to the neighborhood, to the City Council and to property owners on the progress of the work by May 23, 2005.
11. Fine-tune and revise the final design and development plan based on input and recommendations from the community residents, property owners, city council and design professionals.
12. Increasingly focus on the financing and funding aspects and the expanded capacity of the RCDC to produce high-quality, affordable housing for current and future homeowners.
13. Prioritize the rehab housing work schedule and begin rehab work on available properties in June 2005.
14. Initiate new construction projects as soon as funding will allow.

We are pleased to report that we have generally completed all the work slated to be done by the May 23, 2005, deadline, although meetings with property owners and certain potential funding partners are still being scheduled at this time. We project that the initial contacts will be completed in June 2005, with a focus on steps 11 through 14 becoming the primary thrust of the revitalization effort heading into the summer.



I. Introduction

The Rosedale Community Development Corporation and Rosedale Revitalization Steering Committee/Workgroup developed this plan in conjunction with Greater Birmingham Ministries and many other community and professional volunteers. This plan was made possible by the energy, enthusiasm and dedication of residents and volunteers that donated countless service hours. Of course, this plan is only the beginning. All Rosedale residents, business, organizations, and other concerned entities including the city of Homewood share the responsibility of turning words into action, blight and deterioration into renewal and disruption and dissonance into peace, harmony and unity.

II. Planning Principles and Strategic Assumptions

The planning principals and strategic assumptions that guided the 2005 Rosedale Revitalization Plan were thoroughly researched, well documented and have been proven effective. The committee wanted to ensure that all community goals were realistic and attainable and that all planning and development decisions were sound and well informed. Additionally, the committee agreed that in order to be responsible neighbors and citizens, that they must take into consideration how all planning and development decisions affected not only the community, but surrounding communities, the city, the county, the state, region and so on. Therefore, after much research and discussion, it was evident to the committee the plan would be guided by the local, national and global tenets of smart growth and sustainable development as well as best practices (learning from the success and failures of similarly situated communities). Below is a brief overview of smart growth and sustainable development.

Smart Growth

Smart growth is a national phenomenon. Virtually every organization, agency and municipality remotely interested in community planning and development has a smart growth policy. An Internet search yields over 11,000,000 hits for "smart growth." Numerous organizations such as the National Center for Smart Growth Research and Education, Smart Growth America and the Smart Growth Network exist solely to promote smart growth principles. Thousands of other agencies and organizations have their own smart growth programs, including the federal government, many states, countless regional and local governments, and private organizations.

Smart Growth as defined by The Urban Land Institute (ULI) is growth that is economically sound, environmentally friendly, and supportive of community livability. It is typically characterized by a higher concentration of amenities, a mix of commercial and residential uses, and a pedestrian-orientation. Livable communities are a way of life in which economic dynamism, green spaces, and friendly civic streets all coexist.

Smart growth is about being good stewards of our communities and of our rural lands, parks, and forests. It is about ensuring that the best of the past is preserved, while creating new communities that are attractive, vital, and enduring.

Michael Leavitt, EPA Administrator

Smart growth recognizes the many benefits of growth. It invests time, attention, and resources in restoring community and vitality to existing cities and older suburbs. Smart growth in new developments is more town centered, is auto-accessible but also accommodates transit and pedestrian activity, and has a greater mix of housing, commercial and retail uses. It also preserves open space and protects sensitive areas such as wetlands. Smart growth recognizes connections between development and quality of life, public and individual health.

Smart Growth promises new forms of growth and development that redirect investment into existing communities and combines greater fiscal and environmental responsibility, with more livable communities. Directing growth and investment back into existing communities without displacing lower-income residents is the most challenging aspect of smart growth. In order to be truly smart, growth strategies require regional alliances and coordination and must incorporate an equitable, neighborhood-focused approach that links low-income neighborhoods to regional economies and brings the benefits of growth to all communities. To this end, the National Neighborhood Coalition has developed a set of Neighborhood Principles for Smart Growth. These principles promote just and equitable growth across urban, suburban and rural communities and regions, with a strong role for low-income neighborhoods and communities of color. They should be a foundation of any smart growth policy or strategy.

- All neighborhoods and communities should have a fair share of the benefits as well as responsibilities of growth.
- Growth should meet the economic, environmental, and social needs of low-income and other communities.
- Low-income neighborhoods and communities of color should have a strong voice in decisions about growth.
- Growth should not displace low-income residents or people of color in urban or rural areas from their homes, livelihoods, or communities.
- Growth strategies should promote racial, economic and ethnic integration.
- Growth strategies should make use of the human, economic and physical assets within communities.

Sustainable Development

The term sustainable development has been widely used in scientific, business, and public institutions since it was first defined in the Bruntland Commission's "Our Common Future" in 1987. Sustainable development is a global set of principals that guide nations in setting and making environmental policies and decisions. The U.N. Commission for Europe issued a Declaration on Sustainable Development in 1990, the 1992 U.N. Conference on Environment and Development in Rio De Janeiro adopted Agenda 21, and in 1993 the EPA published its report to Congress. Also in 1993, President Clinton created the President's Council on Sustainable Development (PCSD). The PCSD published their final report in 1996 outlining what the United States needs to do to implement strategies that promote

sustainable development. That report and the Council guided President Clinton until he left office. In 2002, President Bush appointed Colin Powell to lead the American delegation to the World Summit on Sustainable Development where the US renewed its commitment and support of sustainable development.

Sustainable development focuses on economic development that goes hand-in-hand with ecological integrity and social equity. Sustainable development is less of a program and more of a multifaceted approach to managing our environmental, economic, and social resources for the long term. In its simplest terms, it means adding some new considerations or dimensions to our everyday decisions as a society. These considerations include: what the long-term impacts of a decision are, is the decision sustainable on a local level, and have the economic, social, and environmental impacts been incorporated into the decision? One of the goals established by the PCSD is to “create full opportunity for citizens, businesses, and communities to participate in and influence the natural resource, environmental, and economic decisions that affect them.” Federal, state, tribal, and local governments working together to achieve environmental protection goals will set the standard for cooperation between communities, businesses, and governments. This new collaborative decision making process will ensure better decisions, create more rapid change, and promote more sensible use of human, natural, and financial resources. Creating a widely held ethic of stewardship will encourage individuals, institutions, and corporations to take responsibility for the economic, environmental, and social consequences of their actions.

An essential aspect of moving toward an equitable decision making process is creating a citizenry that has access to high-quality, lifelong formal and non-formal education. This can be through schools, colleges, and training facilities as well as museums, libraries, parks, and mass media including the information highway, the Internet. A knowledgeable public with access to the free flow of information and opportunities is critical. It will enable people to understand the interdependence of economic prosperity, environmental quality, and social equity so that they can take actions that support all three. Knowledge of how all levels of government, business, and the public have implemented sustainable development in their communities will help others apply sustainability concepts where they live and work.

Sustainable development considers the prospects of future generations by establishing long-term goals. It promotes citizen engagement by supporting civic institutions, networks, pride, and local self-reliance. Through collaboration it sets common values and shared goals by integrating economy, equity, and environment. Helping people make the connection between human and natural systems, using resources more efficiently with technological advancements, and taking a leadership role in the development and implementation of global sustainable development policies are all tenets that will ensure a vital economy, social well-being and a healthy environment for today as well as tomorrow.

Creating a better future depends, in part, on the knowledge and involvement of citizens and on a decision-making process that embraces and encourages differing perspectives of those affected by governmental policy. Steps toward a more sustainable future include

developing community-driven strategic planning and collaborative regional planning; improving community and building design; decreasing sprawl; and creating and supporting strong, diversified communities and local economies while increasing jobs and other economic opportunities.

Sustainable development is sweeping the globe. Most countries have sustainable development policies and a large number of states have sustainable development offices, programs, acts and/or initiatives. There are national and international councils, commissions, and/or departments of sustainable development. An Internet search for "sustainable development" will yield over 40,000,000 hits. There is even an on-line encyclopedia of sustainable development.

Guiding Principles and Goals of the Community

Guiding Principles

Rosedale is an historic and close-knit community. The community, long ago, developed a set of guiding principles by which it continues to operate. These guiding principles are a true testament to the commitment, dedication and love that most residents have for the community. The guiding principles are:

- Community is built on a commitment to **democracy, justice and compassion.**
- Community is not just a **place**, it is **people** working together to overcome difficulties.
- Community builds **bridges** across the fault lines of race and class.

Goals

The goals of the community, guided by the principles, serve to shape the planning process and direct the Plan's strategies. The community developed the goals. The success and/or failure of these goals are dependent upon the realization that they are interlocking goals:

- Maintain, protect and promote Rosedale's historic and residential character.
- Increase the number of owner-occupied homes in Rosedale without unnecessarily displacing current residents; build new homes and rehabilitate existing homes where appropriate.
- Create and maintain quality affordable housing in Rosedale.
- Halt commercial encroachment while encouraging appropriate development in existing commercial areas.
- Link the eastern and western parts of the neighborhood, and improve pedestrian safety and vehicle access for residents.
- Enhance and preserve the environmental qualities of Rosedale and greater Homewood; buffer Rosedale's residential areas from commercial activity.

- Increase the neighborhood's overall attractiveness and visibility.
- Foster open communication and dialogue between city and community leaders and residents.
- Build and maintain relationships and partnerships that benefit the community.
- Maintain the diversity of Rosedale and preserve and enhance its contribution to the larger Homewood community.

These goals were developed through discussions among community members regarding their hopes, desires and concerns for their community. Community members understood that their goals would never become a reality without the hard work and persistence of community members, individually and collectively. The preservation and revitalization process is a long one. The realization of these goals will not happen overnight. The community is ready, willing and able to work to make their shared visions and goals for the community come true.

III. The Plan

It is important for those using this document to fully understand what the 2005 Rosedale Historic Preservation and Revitalization Plan is and what it is not. This plan is a set of strategies developed by neighborhood residents in conjunction with professional volunteers, which set an agenda for the preservation and revitalization of the neighborhood. It is a broad-based plan to improve several aspects of Rosedale and a call for specified steps to be taken by various entities and organizations in and around Rosedale. It is a clear outline of the priorities, interests, concerns, and creative ideas of the citizens of Rosedale. It is not a list of isolated and unrealistic recommendations, but rather a set of interlinked and synergistic strategies for preservation and revitalization. This Plan is intended for use by all - residents, leaders, organizations, businesses, institutions, as well as for future investors and residents as a blueprint for a new course of action in Rosedale. However, this plan is in no way intended to take the place of meaningful dialogue and actual community participation and input in discussions around policies and issues that directly affect Rosedale.

Historic Preservation

Historic properties have a way of disappearing. They quietly fall prey to demolition, neglect, or renovations that alter them beyond recognition. Building by building, site by site, the evidence of a community's heritage can gradually be lost through private and public action and inaction, taking with it much of the community's character, individuality, and vitality. Rosedale is a prime example.

Like any limited resource, historic properties need careful planning and management to ensure their survival for current and future generations. They are subject to the complex pressures and issues of modern society, and often their preservation appears to be at odds with the immediate needs for affordable housing, economic revitalization, employment, education, and so on.

Community and Economic Impact of Historic Preservation

Since the 1970s, mounting evidence has shown that historic preservation can be a powerful community and economic development strategy. Evidence includes statistics compiled from annual surveys conducted by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and statewide Main Street programs, state-level tourism and economic impact studies, and other studies that have analyzed the impact of specific actions such as historic designation, tax credits, and revolving loan funds. Among the findings:

- Creation of local historic districts stabilizes, and often increases residential and commercial property values.
- Increases in property values in historic districts are typically greater than increases in the community at large.
- Historic building rehabilitation, which is more labor intensive and requires greater specialization and higher skills levels, creates more jobs and results in more local business than does new construction.
- Heritage tourism provides substantial economic benefits. Tourists drawn by a community's/city's historic character typically stay longer and spend more money during their visits than other tourists
- Historic rehabilitation encourages additional neighborhood investment and produces a higher return for municipal dollars spent.

Rosedale does not view the preservation of the community's heritage as a mere luxury but as a necessity. Revitalization and preservation are interconnected, one cannot successfully occur without the other in an historic district and/or neighborhood. Historic preservation along with revitalization will stabilize the neighborhood, provide affordable housing, stimulate private investment, bring in people and businesses, attract tourists, and strengthen community pride through out Rosedale and the city of Homewood.

There are numerous ways the community and the city can work together to preserve Rosedale's/Homewood's historic heritage. A few include: a historic preservation ordinance or resolution, zoning/demolition moratoria, downtown revitalization programs, local economic incentives, promoting the federal rehabilitation tax credit (especially in combination with the low-income housing tax credit), and public education programs. The best approach is to use a combination of tools, specially chosen and integrated to suit local needs.

Literally, the Rosedale has one arm and both feet tied behind its back without cooperation from and the support of the city of Homewood and its leaders in this area. The community will continue to do what it can to preserve its historic nature but it is extremely important, not just to Rosedale but to all areas of Homewood, that the City council move forward on several fronts: The adoption of an historic preservation ordinance; creation of the Homewood Historical Commission; development of more stringent zoning and re-zoning guidelines; implementation of a commercial zoning

moratorium in Rosedale; including the boundaries of historic districts on the City of Homewood's zoning and land maps; and updating and adopting a more up-to-date and comprehensive Master Plan that includes guidelines for the preservation of historic districts, etc.,.

Across the nation, cities and towns of all sizes are recognizing the benefits preservation can bring. Historic buildings, commercial districts, and neighborhoods help give communities/cities/towns their distinctive character. Their loss damages the fabric of a community. Their preservation is more than just an issue of aesthetics; it is a matter of sound economic policy.

Recommendations for Implementation

Create a joint council/citizens task force to embark upon a campaign that includes:

- Beginning the groundwork for adopting a local historic preservation ordinance.
- Eliminating uncertainty and confusion about the purpose, meaning, and content of a preservation ordinance.
- Establishing a basis of public policy about historic resources in Homewood.
- Researching, documenting, educating and informing community members and others about each community's heritage and value.
- Ensuring consistency among various local governmental policies that affects community historic resources.
- Facilitating compliance with federal and state historic preservation and environmental quality laws.
- Creating an agenda for future preservation activities; and
- Informing existing and potential property owners, investors, and developers about what historic resources the city wants to protect as it grows.

Community Actions

In an effort to protect and preserve the historic and residential character of Rosedale, the RCDC has been actively seeking and applying for financial and non-financial resource/grant opportunities. In April, the RCDC applied to be included on the 2005 list of Places in Peril (selectees are to be notified in June 2005), sponsored by the Alabama Historical Commission and the Alabama Preservation Alliance (*for more information on Places in Peril please see Status Report or visit the website of the Alabama Preservation Alliance, www.alabamapreservation.org*). The RCDC is currently in communication with the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation regarding a community grant of about \$30,000 to assist with capacity building, tangible community improvements and the development of community leaders. The final grant application will be submitted in July 2005. In addition, the RCDC plans to apply for a Restore America: A Salute to Preservation grant in November 2005. (*Restore America is a partnership between the Home and Garden Television Network*

and the National Trust for Historic Preservation focusing on the rehabilitation and revitalization of historic places and communities for residential use. Approximately 6-12 grants will be awarded ranging up to \$100,000. For more information please visit http://www.hgtv.com/hgtv/shows_ram. The CDC has continued to work with the Black Family Land Trust on issues regarding heir property, clear title and land trusts. The BFLT is a national non-profit organization dedicated to protecting landownership and promoting economic growth in African-American communities. The RCDC is also seeking funds to specifically preserve the birth homes of Afton Lee and Damon Lee for possible use as a small library, archival of Rosedale's history and/or museum.

Community Development and Capacity Building (RCDC and Rosedale)

Plans are underway to build the capacity of the community and the RCDC to respond to and address the needs of the community and its residents. In this context, we are defining capacity as the combined influence of a community's commitment, resources, and skills that can be deployed to build on community strengths and address community problems. In conjunction with Greater Birmingham Ministries (GBM) and the Alabama Organizing Project (AOP), participation in a Grassroots Leadership Development Program (GLD) is now available to Rosedale community members and leaders. This program offers workshops in Media/Communication, Power Analysis, Internalized Oppression, Organizing, Popular Education Techniques, Civics 101 and others. The GLD program is a train the trainer type program. As community members complete the program, they will have the programmatic and technical support of GBM and AOP to facilitate community workshops and training sessions.

The Rosedale Community Development Corporation, a non-profit volunteer organization, was incorporated in 1984 for the purpose of improving living conditions of the Rosedale neighborhood with a special concern for new and improved housing. Currently, the needs of the Rosedale community are outpacing the RCDC's ability (capacity) to address them. The RCDC has partnered with HUD and Seedco (*for more information about Seedco please refer to the previously submitted Status Report*) to build and strengthen its capacity (ability) to address the needs of the community. Seedco provides intensive technical assistance and capacity-building services, focusing on program implementation that leads to measurable outcomes. Seedco representatives completed a "needs assessment" of the RCDC in April 2005. Currently, a plan along with implementation guidelines and strategies are being developed that will assist the RCDC to build its capacity in 5 key areas:

- *Resources* - As a nonprofit organization, the RCDC is dependent on its ability to generate and acquire resources from grants, contracts, loans, and other mechanisms. It must attract, manage, and maintain funding in order to meet its objectives.
- *Organization* -The capability of the internal operations of the RCDC determines its ability to succeed. Several variables affect this kind of capacity, including the management style and skills of its staff, the size and experience of the RCDC, the roles played by its board of directors, and the organization's fiscal capacity (its ability to raise and manage money). To be successful, the RCDC must also

develop and maintain the human resources within its organization through ongoing training and other mechanisms.

- *Programming* - This refers to the types of services offered by the RCDC. It includes the RCDC's ability to build and manage quality affordable housing, provide human services, undertake economic development, offer technical assistance and engage in other roles in leadership development and cultural and educational activities in the community.
- *Networking* - The ability of RCDC to interact and work with other institutions, both within and outside the community, is critical to its success. This facet of capacity represents the importance of the external relationships that RCDC must develop and maintain. The RCDC can build capacity by networking with other community-based organizations, private firms, and philanthropic, educational, and political actors. In doing so, they will be better able to undertake fund-raising for projects and programs, have better access to non-financial resources, and can increase their political power.
- *Political Capacity* - The RCDC's ability to credibly represent its residents and to effectively advocate on their behalf in the larger political arena beyond the neighborhood has important ramifications for its success. Political capacity involves work within the neighborhood, such as advocating on behalf of the community members. The RCDC must be able to effectively mobilize support and demonstrate the community's concern about issues and policies, as well as negotiate for the benefit of the neighborhood. Political capacity is a measure of these strengths and includes the ability of a RCDC to involve residents in determining needs and shaping policy.

Economic Development and Land Use

Community sustainability requires a transition from poorly managed sprawl to land use planning practices that create and maintain efficient infrastructure, ensure close-knit neighborhoods and sense of community, and preserve natural systems. Unmanaged growth in any town, city and/or municipality results in racial and economic segregation; a withdrawal of investment from older communities; exclusionary housing practices that bar low income and/or people of color from the newer/more affluent suburban communities; and in some areas it results in spatial mismatch between workers in older urban neighborhoods, and rural communities and the suburban job centers.

Smart growth is a movement away from sprawl towards growth that uses existing infrastructure more efficiently, is environmentally and fiscally responsible and socially equitable. Smart growth advocates encourage reinvestment in existing communities and more efficient growth in undeveloped areas. Smart growth is development that serves the economy, the community, and the environment. It changes the terms of the development debate away from the traditional growth/no growth question to "how and where should new development be accommodated?" Smart Growth answers these questions by simultaneously achieving:

- **Healthy Communities** that provide families with a clean environment. Smart growth balances development and environmental protection—accommodating growth while preserving open space and critical habitat, reusing land, and protecting water supplies and air quality.
- **Economic Development and Jobs** that create business opportunities and improve local tax base; that provide neighborhood services and amenities; and that create economically competitive communities.
- **Strong Neighborhoods** which provide a range of housing options giving people the opportunity to choose housing that best suits them. It maintains and enhances the value of existing neighborhoods and creates a sense of community.
- **Transportation Choices** that give people the option to walk, ride a bike, take transit, or drive.

In order for commercial areas to be economically viable and bordering communities to thrive, economic development and land use planning must be comprehensive and integrated. In the past twenty years, approximately one-third of the original Rosedale neighborhood has been converted to commercial land uses. The commercial corridor along 18th Street continues creeping to the west, while the eastern portion of the neighborhood is vulnerable to large-scale developments like the Southbridge office complex, which looms above. These commercial intrusions create justifiable anxiety among Rosedale residents whose friends and former neighbors have already been displaced by such encroachment.

Rather than continue the lot-by-lot commercialization of Rosedale’s residential property, careful redevelopment of existing commercial areas bordering Rosedale’s residential districts could extend the pedestrian-friendly and economically vibrant atmosphere of the nearby “curve” in downtown Homewood. Organizing the space more efficiently and attractively need not displace current businesses, and could create possibilities for adding businesses that would make good neighbors.

Commercial

The implementation of “smart growth” and “best practices” policies, strategies and guidelines will be key to sustaining the economic growth and viability of Homewood’s commercial areas as well as the survival and success of bordering and surrounding communities such as Rosedale. Honestly, there is not much the residents of Rosedale can do about the economic development and land use policies, or lack thereof, implemented by the City of Homewood. It is extremely important that the City Council works with and along side all Homewood communities in developing and updating the City’s Master Plan. It is by working together, respecting the human needs of each citizen, that community is built and maintained.

Housing

A healthy neighborhood should be able to provide housing opportunities for persons throughout the changing age and income circumstances of their life. It should include housing suitable for families with children, young adults establishing their first homes,

large households, and retirees who are downsizing. Enhancing this diversity is essential to creating a sustainable and dynamic community that thrives for generations to come.

At the local level, property taxes, zoning policies and ordinances, building and housing codes, and location of public water and sewer have considerable impact on the quality, location, and cost of housing. Other factors influencing housing are population growth and size of family, employment opportunities, economic growth, agricultural needs for land, technological advances in housing construction, the cost of housing construction, the cost of housing maintenance, and utility costs. So it is evident that progress toward meeting the housing needs and goals of any community, can only be made by close cooperation between the public and private sector.

Developing and maintaining a mix of quality affordable and market-rate housing opportunities will spur the personal and financial investment necessary to sustain the community over time. Creating a significant number and wide variety of housing types for current and future Rosedale residents is key to the ultimate success of this effort. Without displacing current residents, this housing variety will be achieved by rehabilitating viable houses (where practical to do so) and through the construction of new houses, duplexes and town-homes on available lots.

What has Rosedale accomplished?

- The RCDC has created a fund that will allow Rosedale homeowners to apply for funding for minor repairs and materials.
- The Rosedale CDC also held a workshop in December 2004 assisting over 15 elderly homeowners with applying for the Jefferson County Housing Rehabilitation Program.
- Created a partnership with the Birmingham Center for Affordable Housing and others to provide a series of educational workshops related to homeownership, mortgage maintenance predatory lending, money management and others.
- RCDC recently completed a house-by-house survey of the homeownership status, and condition of each property/lot located in Rosedale. Of the 79 housing units identified as “non-viable” by a study in 2001, only 13 remain non-viable. The majority of the others have been renovated, demolished, or reevaluated. Please see page 20 for details.

What will Rosedale do?

- Work to preserve the existing housing stock to prevent further deterioration of the history and culture of Rosedale as to ensure the safety and availability of older units for affordable housing purposes.
- Promote the upkeep and maintenance of existing residential properties through the creation of a community association to provide a safe and attractive environment for current and future residents.
- Create and pursue additional affordable housing opportunities for residents through private, public and non-profit avenues.

- Support policies that recognize the need for diverse housing opportunities for all people, but especially for low-income and elderly citizens.
- Partner with YW Homes and Habitat for Humanity and other non-profit groups to repair and/or replace substandard housing units in the community.
- Promote the adaptive reuse of old buildings, into mix-use housing/retail facilities, to provide additional housing options while maintaining the historic character of the community.

What can the City do?

- Develop land use and other governmental controls and polices that promote an orderly pattern of residential growth and development.
- Develop new Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances that promote growth and development centered on town centers and commercial corridors to minimize both land use and the cost of providing services.
- Ensure, where feasible, that the location of new roadways and other major public facilities enhance rather than destroy existing neighborhoods.
- Further develop and update the infrastructure needed to properly service the community.

Safety and Environment Aspects

Linear parks and pedestrian walkovers are commonly developed around a natural resource such as a creek, river or lakeshore. A linear park and a pedestrian walkover connected to Griffin Creek has numerous environmental, health and safety benefits:

- Preserves valuable open space and natural habitat.
- Provides a natural environment for walking, jogging, and bicycling trails.
- Provides a safe and pedestrian friendly corridor linking Homewood neighborhoods, parks, and residents to downtown Homewood.
- Provides a variety of other passive recreational opportunities all free or relatively free from automobile interference.
- Reduces traffic congestion along several of Homewood's busiest streets and intersections.
- Reduces the possibility of traffic accidents.
- Increases air quality.
- Serve as a natural buffer between land uses.
- Offers a chance for residents to get out of their homes and cars to come into contact with each other on a more regular basis.
- Contributes to personal interactions, neighborhood socialization and community unity.

A linear park along the creek could easily connect Homewood Park with Vulcan and with a pedestrian bridge, could connect East and West Rosedale, bringing a pedestrian connection between any current development in East Rosedale to the developing commercial hub of Homewood. Such a linear park could allow for aesthetically appealing retention ponds to help manage the potential flooding in Rosedale and those neighborhoods down stream. This would be a major issue with any future development in East or West Rosedale, whether it is residential or commercial. The City could avoid great cost to the citizens it serves by including in any plan professional studies of water and drainage management, environmental impacts, and transportation studies.

The community has met with several environmental groups and experts regarding the safety and environmental aspects of the community. Homewood has already acknowledged the great potential of viable alternatives to development along creeks and rivers by maintaining a greenway or linear park as a means for pedestrians to enjoy local natural beauty and access human-scale commercial development, access communities and parks, and access historic and culturally significant landmarks. The Homewood Shades Creek Greenway is a prime example. Poised along Griffin Creek, Rosedale could be substantially protected from commercial encroachment by having the City develop the asset it has in Griffin Creek.

The community has great concern regarding pedestrian safety when traveling between east and west Rosedale as well as physically connecting the community that is currently divided by a major highway. A pedestrian walkover, under walk and/or roundabout would benefit the community greatly. As it stands now, pedestrians must cross two major highways without the benefit of sidewalks when traveling from East to West Rosedale. There is neither a crosswalk nor crossing signal for pedestrians exiting and entering West Rosedale. Also, there is no crossing signal for pedestrians exiting and entering East Rosedale, although there is a crosswalk. A pedestrian friendly connection between the east and west sides of Rosedale is greatly needed for children and others to travel safely between Spring Park and the Lee Community Center. A pedestrian friendly connection(s) that is clearly delineated could also serve as a gateway(s) into Homewood from Highway 280/Montgomery Highway and/or from Vulcan. Gateways into districts or neighborhoods are becoming increasingly popular across the nation, especially in conjunction with a renewed emphasis in many cities on neighborhood planning and revitalization.

Community Outreach

Rosedale has its strengths and it has its weaknesses. The majority of the community is dedicated and committed to preserving Rosedale and ensuring that all of its residents enjoy a better quality of life. Admittedly there are a small number of landowners who are not fully committed to preserving the residential character of Rosedale. The steering committee and the RCDC are working towards expanding and strengthening partnerships and relationships within the community itself and within the greater Homewood community. A targeted effort to communicate with other communities and include them in our efforts as well as being willing to assist and support them in their community-driven endeavors has begun. In addition, we are continuing to work on building and renewing partnerships and contacts that will assist and support the community in carrying out its preservation and residential-based revitalization efforts.

Funding

Fundraisers have been held and more are being planned. Fundraising is now the major focus of the community and the RCDC. A newly developed fundraising committee will work on ideas, projects and grants to generate the funds needed for implementation. Through the RCDC and through a growing number of partners, a two-pronged strategy is being pursued. The first prong involves the marketing of Rosedale for private investment dollars for residential redevelopment. The second prong involves obtaining foundation grants to do community-based redevelopment and to add to the RCDC's long-term capacity. We know that Rosedale is ideal for RESIDENTIAL INVESTMENT. Property values will only improve and increase. No one will lose money by investing in Rosedale. And Rosedale is a great plus for a progressive, modern and forward-looking Homewood.

“People of many races from many places, all at home—in Homewood, Alabama.”

IV. Other Issues and Concerns

A New Master Plan and Greater Community Involvement

Homewood is changing and growing rapidly. Homewood's current Master Plan is no longer sufficient to deal with the on-going and significant onslaught of new developments. The creation and development of a new master plan with significant citizen involvement would benefit all of Homewood. Some of comprehensive planning goals should include:

- ***Protecting natural areas***, including wetlands, wildlife habitats, lakes, woodlands, open spaces and groundwater resources.
- Encouraging land uses, densities and regulations that ***promote efficient development patterns*** and low costs.
- ***Preserving cultural, historic and archaeological buildings, districts and sites.***
- ***Building community identity*** by revitalizing older communities & creating and enforcing design standards.
- ***Providing an adequate supply of affordable housing*** for all income levels within the community.
- ***Providing infrastructure, services & developable land*** adequate to meet market demand for residential, commercial and industrial uses throughout the city.
- ***Promoting expansion or stabilization of the economic base*** and job creation.
- ***Balancing individual property rights*** with community interests & goals.
- ***Planning & developing land uses that create or preserve unique historic, urban and/or rural communities.***
- ***Providing an integrated, efficient, and economical transportation system*** that meets the needs of all citizens.

More Stringent Guidelines for Granting Requests for Re-zoning

Property owners should be held accountable to the city and the community in which they own property. Requests for re-zoning property from one use to another should not be granting without requiring the property owner to show that he/she is somehow prevented from using the property as zoned. Property owners should not be allowed to let their property sit vacant and dormant and overgrown just to bolster their request for rezoning. This is unfair to city and to the neighborhood in which the property is located. When considering rezoning requests, the voice, welfare and best interest of the surrounding neighborhood should be given top priority.

Stronger Criteria for Granting Variances

The Planning Commissioner's Journal states that the frequent granting of variances may indicate a failure on the part of the zoning board to adhere to the ordinance's criteria for approval of variance requests. And, numerous requests for variances concerning the same standard or restriction of a zoning regulation may highlight a need for review of that standard and its suitability within the affected zone district. In contrast, relatively infrequent requests for variances and issuance of variances should signal that the process is working well. According to the Journal:

Variances are most appropriate to address unique or special physical characteristics of the property that prevent reasonable use under the requirements of the applicable zoning regulations. These circumstances may include unique topography such as steep slopes, water bodies, wetlands, or other natural features that are atypical within the community or within other properties in the same zone district.

Variances are not appropriate merely because the variance would permit a more profitable use of the property.

The Journal also strongly warns against granting variances in situations of self-created hardship. The self-created hardship standard provides that an owner cannot use his own ignorance or actions (or that of the prior owner) as a justification for the granting of a variance. Requests based upon self-created hardships are quite common. Property owners who make unwise or poorly planned development decisions may later find that a variance is necessary either to properly complete the project or to accommodate some desired change in construction. In some circumstances, owners either unknowingly or intentionally construct buildings or engage in uses that violate the zoning regulations, only to later argue that the variance is necessary to prevent the expense and waste associated with the destruction of the building or cessation of the use. Denying applications that are based on self-created hardships is a sound practice. "To grant such a variance would excuse or reward an owner's lack of reasonable diligence".

Make Use of SMART Governance

- S = Simple
- M = Moral
- A = Accountable
- R = Responsive
- T = Transparent

Members of the committee and volunteers have had a difficult time collecting information regarding city processes, city spending/budgets, copies of city ordinances and regulations, land use maps, etc. The Citizens of Homewood deserve a government that is SMART and committed to the following:

- Supports a variety of opportunities for all citizens to participate effectively in the decisions of local government (e.g., neighborhood groups, and advisory committees).
- Maintains a desirable balance between neighborhood and city-wide interests while always protecting the rights of the citizens most impacted by any proposal.
- Appoints more single-issue or ad hoc citizen groups to advise the City Council.
- Recognizes the importance of citizen participation in government by improving communication with all citizens, opening the appointments to various committees and task forces to all citizens.
- Takes steps to ensure the protection of the human rights, safety and wellbeing of a diverse population in the City of Homewood.

V. Conclusion

The community is dedicated and committed to following this process through to the end. The community would very much like to work in conjunction with the City Council and look forward to the appointment of the Revitalization Committee. However, the community and the RCDC will move forward with the preservation and revitalization of the community even without the appointment of such a committee.