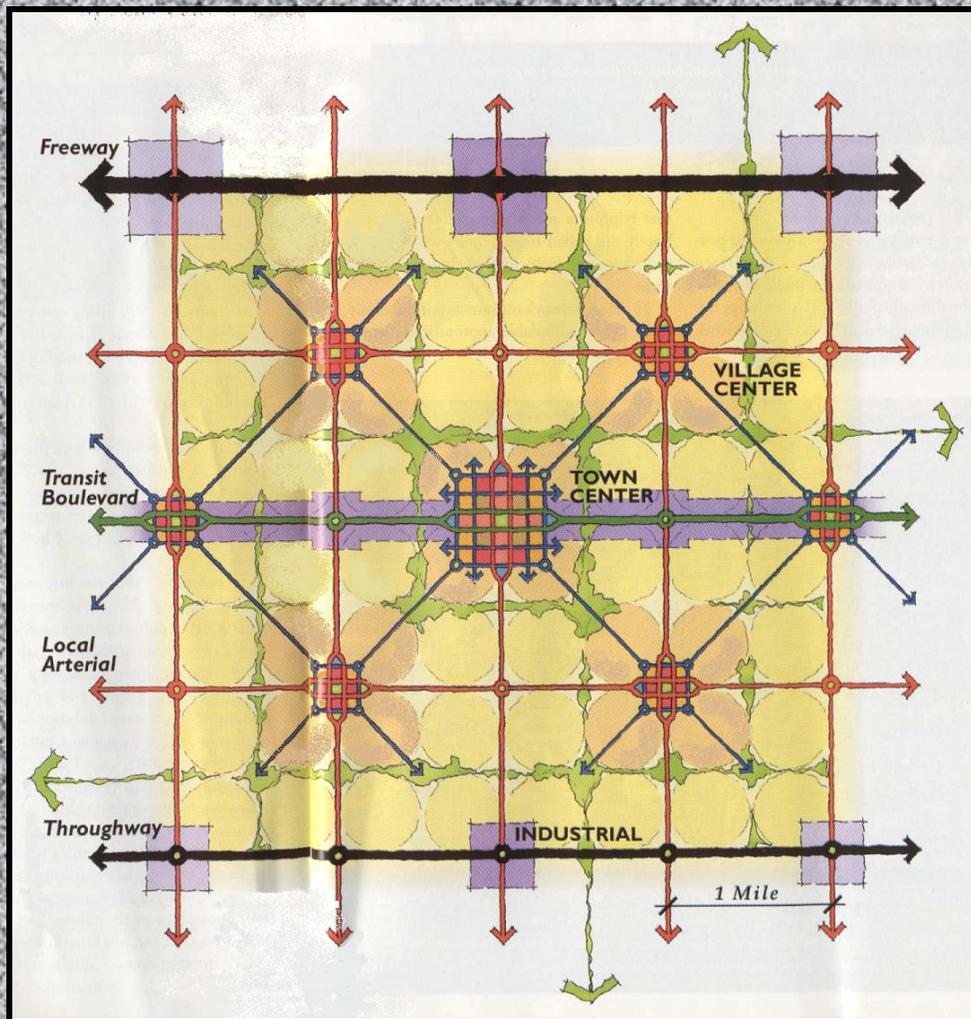# Neighborhoods

Peter Calthorpe's abstract diagram shows how the Urban Network binds to-gether a hierarchy of walkable centers with a range of new road types and inter-section configurations. Transit routes and one-way couplets provide direct local and regional access to the centers.
Planning Magazine–May 2002

Freeway

Transit Boulevard

Local Arterial

Throughway

VILLAGE CENTER

TOWN CENTER

INDUSTRIAL

1 Mile

I. Existing Conditions

A. What Is A Neighborhood?

Including neighborhoods in the planning process necessitates determining what constitutes a neighborhood. Robert J. Chaskin, in a Growing Smart Working Paper SM, suggests an approach to defining neighborhoods be viewed as a set of actors, facilities, organizations, and the networks of associations among them within a specified activity space (Defining Neighborhoods, p.2). Chaskin admits that even with this definition, the task of fixing geographical boundaries for neighborhoods remains a formidable one. However, he adds that neighborhood boundaries should be based on program goals and objectives, neighborhood characteristics and the local context. This approach yields the following three general types of neighborhoods:

- **Face-block:** This is a neighborhood as two sides of one street between intersecting streets, and the small scale and size of this type of neighborhood are best suited for program individuals, rather than the broader community.
- **Residential:** This type of neighborhood has a population of up to approximately 5,000 and focuses on program goals oriented toward physical revitalization, economic development, safety and social organization.
- **Institutional:** This type of neighborhood is larger than the residential and usually designated as an official sub-area of a city. Institutional neighborhoods are best suited for program goals that focus on organizational and institutional collaboration that is often joined with or built on the programs at the face-block or residential neighborhood level.

Neighborhood Building Blocks

The following diagrams represent a prototypical neighborhood center, including conceptual development plan and a neighborhood unit concept. Both are comprised of several land uses, but the fundamental concept is the co-location of elementary schools and neighborhood parks as the central focus of a neighborhood. The service area of the a elementary school should determine the size of the conceptual neighborhood unit.

- **Neighborhood Unit Concept:**

Neighborhood Unit Concept
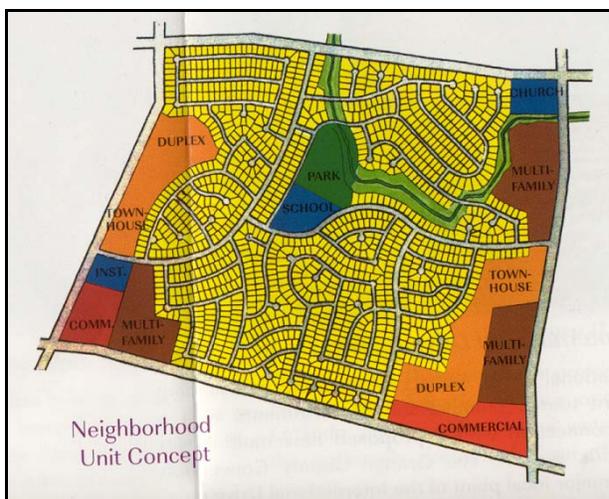
Rocky Mount Mills Historic District

Over the years planners have used the neighborhood unit concept as the building block from the development of future land uses plans. Ideally, an elementary school, in conjunction with a neighborhood park, will be located at the approximate center of each district neighborhood-planning unit. Each neighborhood should also be approximately one square mile in area with its boundaries defined by principal arterial streets at a one-mile spacing. Lower density residential access should be adjacent to and near the combined school and park, with higher densities located at the periphery of the neighborhood.

- **The Village Concept:**

This concept is similar to the neighborhood unit. Its cornerstone is a neighborhood school within one-half mile walking distance from the residential homes in the vicinity. The major difference is that specialized commercial and public institutional uses are planned to be developed in close proximity to the neighborhood park and elementary school in order to create an active neighborhood center. In addition, several neighborhoods are grouped to create a village with a town center, having regional and community retail facilities. Each village is a district, unconnected and geographically autonomous from other villages. Greenbelts and natural undeveloped open space corridors separate the individual villages from each other.

This chapter includes a review of existing conditions in two types of residential neighborhoods—Historic Districts and Community Development Project Areas. Although these types of neighborhoods are the only ones discussed in detail in this chapter, they do not reflect the diversity of neighborhoods in Rocky Mount. Rocky Mount neighborhoods range from low-density neighborhoods, such as Greystone, with homes costing up to $1 million or more, to high density neighborhoods, such as Little Easonburg, with

a large number of rental units that are mobile homes. Since Historic Districts and Community Development Project Area are the focus of current planning and development efforts, they are reviewed, in some detail, in this chapter. However, planning for other neighborhoods is included in the discussion of institutional neighborhoods or planning sub-areas in the Land Use Chapter.

B. History Of Rocky Mount Neighborhoods

The history of Rocky Mount as a community, rather than individual families, began in 1744 when residents of a neighborhood formed the congregation of the Primitive Baptist Church at the Falls of the Tar. From this neighborhood congregation, there emerged the Primitive Baptist Church sanctuary in the 1750s and the Mill Village in the late 1770s; and from the Mill Village, the town of Rocky Mount in 1867.

Neighborhoods, like that first neighborhood that emerged and constructed a church building and developed into a village and then a town, continue to play a vital role in the Rocky Mount community. National and local historic designation of neighborhoods in Rocky Mount is an attempt to preserve and promote the vital role that neighborhoods, like the Mill Village, have played in the development of this community.

The Role Of Historic Neighborhoods In Rocky Mount
One of the most distinctive features of Rocky Mount is the strong presence of neighborhoods defined by historic significance. During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Rocky Mount experienced a strong surge in building that included a number of architectural styles. Sadly, too many of these buildings have been lost to neglect and changing times. However, a grass roots effort by the citizens of Rocky Mount to actively support preservation efforts has helped save many of these buildings. While there are a number of neighborhoods and areas which are heavily influenced by the presence of these older buildings, some neighborhoods have attained a recognized status for their contribution to national and local history. This recognition comes in the form of National and or Local Historic Designation of the Neighborhoods.

National Historic Designation
To date, the following six neighborhoods have been designated National Historic Districts:
- Central City National Historic District
- Falls Road National Historic District
- Rocky Mount Mills National Historic District
- Edgemont National Historic District
- Villa Place National Historic District
- West Haven National Historic District

The National Historic Designation of a neighborhood starts with the request by a neighborhood association to the Rocky Mount Historic Preservation Commission. A thorough study is conducted to research the historical, archeological and architectural significance of a prospective neighborhood. Each building is examined and cataloged in this architectural study, which is then submitted to the National Register Advisory committee of the State Historical Preservation Office.

National Historic Designation is first and foremost an honor to the neighborhood. It carries little real substantial change for the homeowner unless they choose to participate in the federal tax credits available for preservation. These funds come with the responsibility of ensuring that any changes to the exterior of the buildings are historically appropriate.

Local Historic Designation
There are two Local Historic District Designations:
- Rocky Mount Mills Local Historic District
- Edgemont Local Historic District

While these local districts closely mimic the areas of the National Districts, which share their names, the actual boundaries do vary.

The process for Local Designation is similar to that for the National Designation. The neighborhood association petitions the Historic Preservation Commission. The existing National Designation study will be updated to reflect any changes that might have occurred since origin and is sent to the State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO). The SHPO will review and comment to the Rocky Mount Historic Commission. The Commission will, upon favorable report, choose to recommend local designation to the Planning Board, which in turn may choose to recommend to the City Council for official status as a local district.

The outcome for local designation has different connotations than the National District designation. It is a zoning overlay district, which does not interfere with the existing zoning requirements in place. However, it does add some additional criteria for exterior changes. The City zoning code protects a local historic district's assets by establishing a special design review process. This process ensures that proposed work is compatible with the nature of the historic property and contributes to the character of the historic district as a whole. Owners making exterior modifications to their structures and lots will be required to seek a Certificate of Appropriateness before commencing work. This includes plans for additions to existing buildings, removal or enclosure of porches, erection of signs and the addition of retaining walls, decks and fences. Standard maintenance procedures (painting etc.) require no such review. Since the review process requires public comment, neighboring property owners have the opportunity to be more involved in the development and alteration of homes in their area than if no district were in place. Many local historic districts have experienced improvement in the appearance of the area and an increase in homeownership and ultimately a stabilization of the overall neighborhood.

The Economic Considerations of Historic Preservation
There is some concern about the effect of Historic Preservation building requirements on the cost of renovation within Historic Districts. This is of particular importance in neighborhoods with historic houses that have residents with moderate to low incomes. In 1997 the North Carolina General Assembly approved the most comprehensive state historic preservation tax credit program in the nation. Two state tax credit packages were approved;
- A 30% state income tax credit for Certified rehabilitations of non-income producing certified historic structures, including personal residences. Qualified rehabilitation expenses must exceed $25, 0000 within a two year period.
- A 20% state income tax credit for certified rehabilitations of income-producing certified historic structures, such and commercial and retail buildings. This credit is available for rehabilitations which qualify for the 20% federal tax credit. The combination of the two credits can reduce the cost of certified rehabilitations by 40%.

There are two federal tax credits available for rehabilitation of buildings:
- A 20% federal income tax credit for certified rehabilitation of income-producing structures. Rehabilitation projects which receive this credit are eligible for the 20% state credit as well.
- A 10 % federal income tax credit for he rehabilitations of income-producing non-historic structures built before 1936 and used for non-residential purposes.

There is no federal tax credit for rehabilitation of non-income producing properties, such as private homes.

Rocky Mount currently has two local programs for restoring the facades of downtown business in the Central City Historic District.
- The Building Improvement Grant program provides $5000 in matching funds for façade improvement anywhere within the Central City Revitalization Zone.
- The newly created Major Impact Grant program provides $10,000 for façade improvement on Main

Street with a twenty percent investment requirement by the property owner.

Our community has yet to fully tap these sources. Without doubt the Historic Preservation Commission should spearhead the effort to research and maintain current information on the full gamut of tax credits, grants and financial incentives that support preservation in our community. Furthermore, the continued development of local funding sources that will assist projects which do not fit the current programs available should be developed. Those residential projects costing less than $25,000 and those projects where economic hardship is a fact of life, as example.

A second, potentially adverse effect of historic preservation is that any significant elevation of real estate values could displace moderate to low-income residents. SHPO reports the consistent use of good design guidelines throughout a community, in both historical and non-historical neighborhoods, reduces the displacement factor, providing better conditions for all.

Historic Districts

Peoples' Bank—SE Main Street

Central City National Historic District-
Although the initial settlement of Rocky Mount was centered around the Falls of the Tar River, the completion of the Wil-

mington and Weldon Railroad in 1840 opened up the area around the railroad tracks for development. The establishment of a depot was closely followed by the growth of a commercial and retail area facing the tracks. This configuration with its historical ties to the railroad is still the heart of the Central City District today. This is the only district in Rocky Mount that is dominated by commercial businesses. The economic lag of the area and high vacancy rate has been a challenge to downtown development for a number of years. Many communities have successfully overcome similar challenges of revitalizing the downtown, transforming it into a new vibrant form. Recent work with the "Main Street" Program has been fruitful in providing citizens with opportunities to network and create "vision" for a renewed Central City. In this process, there are recurring themes that prevail. One such theme is the need to encourage residential use in the downtown area, particularly in the upper-story floors of the Main Street buildings. Mixed residential and commercial use would significantly increase the vitality of downtown. The Main Street program is highlighted in Chapter 14, Implementation.

Falls Road National Historic District
The Falls Road Historic District stands northwest of the business district of the City of Rocky Mount. The Falls Road District encompasses substantial residences sited on spacious lots with mature shade trees. These residences were erected by some of the city's wealthy businessmen and professionals from the early 1900s to 1949. This district has a variety of architectural styles of the day including Queen Anne, Colonial Revival and Georgian Revival. Many of these homes are obviously well maintained and appreciated yet many others throughout the area have been lost to neglect. The change in the Falls Road and Peach Tree to one-way thoroughfares has increased traffic flow and speed to the detriment of the neighborhood. The continued encroachment of commercial land use in this neighborhood has not always been welcome to the residents. New sensitivity and creative tools are needed to balance the needs of the area.

Rocky Mount Mills National and Local Historic District
The Rocky Mount Mills Village Historic District is a remarkably intact Mill Village straddling Falls Road, south of the Tar River. Built between 1835 and 1948, the historic structures that make up the district comprise the historic mill and mill village associated with the second oldest cotton mill in North Carolina. Encompassing six blocks, the district consists of industrial and residential buildings. Many people in the community consider the Mills to be the most significant symbol of the community. Certainly, the unique aspect of this neighborhood is that it was developed and owned by a single entity and shows a singular consistency in its design concept and construction. A number of the mill homes have been beautifully renovated and numerous others are

in various stages of work.

The Neighborhood Association enforces covenants above and beyond the local Historic Preservation guidelines to retain the historical integrity of the buildings of the neighborhood. Many of the homes are very modest, wood frame, single room deep construction with German siding, a metal roof and a simple front porch. Homes originally intended for the management still show the additional size and detailing commensurate with their station at the mill. Details of Gingerbread or Greek Revival are not unknown in these dwellings. The overall neighborhood design is a pleasant walkable step back into time. The Mill commercial buildings are currently under consideration for creative re-use as a condominium development. The key location right on the river has both the luxury of magnificent views and the deficit of responsibilities to deal with flood plain requirements.

Edgemont National and Local Historic District
The Edgemont District is the only National District wholly on the Edgecombe side of Rocky Mount. It has large early twentieth century dwellings erected for lawyers, doctors, tobacconists and other professionals. The houses in the district epitomize nationally popular styles from the time including Craftsman, Foursquare, Tudor Revival, Neo-Classical Revival and Colonial Craftsman. The district today remains wholly residential in nature. Its homes are, by and large, well-maintained and beautifully preserved. Pride in ownership is evident. It should be said that this local district has been so well received by its residents that they are now in the process of looking to expand the local boundaries. The concept of Local Designation has proven its worth in this neighborhood.

Villa Place National Historic District
The Villa Place Historic District stands on the west side of the Central City business area of Rocky Mount. The district encompasses early twentieth century residences, including a number of large dwellings created for professional and executives of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad and leading industrialists in Rocky Mount. The neighborhood is densely packed with well-preserved Queen Anne, Foursquare, Craftsman, Colonial Revival and Neoclassical Revival style houses built between 1900 and the 1940's. There are two particularly fine residences in this district. Machaven has been called the Jewel of the City of Rocky Mount. It is a spectacular Neoclassical Revival style brick mansion that is now the home for the City Club of Rocky Mount. The Keel House is also Neoclassical Revival style and located in Villa Place. Its fine detailing is attributed to John C. Stout, Rocky Mount's foremost architect of the day. It recently was purchased and currently is used as an elegant reception hall and meetinghouse. Also located in the district is the James

Craig Braswell Elementary School (1940), which was constructed at the site of the ld West School. The West School (1901) was the first graded public school erected in Rocky Mount. Villa Place district has perhaps the highest rental property percentages of any of the historic districts. This presents unique challenges in preservation. Such properties may come under guidelines for specific federal tax credits that personal homes will not.

West Haven National Historic District
The West Haven district is Rocky Mount's most recent designation, receiving official qualification in the fall of 2002. It is situated about one mile west of the business district . At 211 acres, it is the largest of all the national districts. West Haven neighborhood is on of the first platted neighborhoods of Rocky Mount, and the district boundaries follow the original plat as closely as possible. Early landowners and builders in West Haven were leading professional, executives, and industrialists seeking a "sylvan environment" in which to raise their families. The houses were designed and built to impressive popular styles of the early twentieth century. West Haven remains a prestigious tract of large Colonial Revival, Neoclassical Revival, Tudor Revival and Renaissance Revival style homes.

C. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT AREAS
Although they may not yet be designated as National or Local Historic Districts, many other residential neighborhoods in Rocky Mount have rich histories, and the current condition of some of these neighborhoods are rooted in their past. The following sections describe some of the neighborhoods that are actively working with the City's Community Development Department to improve their conditions. Map 12-2 shows the location of each of these neighborhoods and the other Community Development Project Areas:

- Happy Hill
- Little Raleigh
- Holly Street
- South Rocky Mount
- Clark-Branch Street
- Hillsdale

Happy Hill
Happy Hill is located near two of Rocky Mount's prominent historic districts, Rocky Mount Mills and Falls Road. According to the 1971 Land Use Analysis for the City of Rocky Mount, Happy Hill emerged as a neighborhood that filled in the voids in the Rocky Mount Mills subdivision "with poorly planned lots of insufficient size." The lack of planning in the original development of Happy Hill has resulted in a number of housing problems that, according to recent analysis of the neighborhood include the following:

Happy Hill At A Glance	
Total Population	1,157
Race	
White	8%
African American	81%
Other	11%
Gender	
Male	37%
Female	63%
Average Household Size	2.51
Households with one or more people 65 years and over:	10%
Total Housing Units	449
Owner occupied:	32%
Renter occupied:	68%

- Lack of housing choice
- Substandard housing
- Inadequate supply of housing available to low and moderate-income persons
- Lack of housing opportunities for the elderly
- Need to assist low-income homeowners with energy- related housing rehabilitation

South Rocky Mount

The South Rocky Mount neighborhood is bordered by Kingston Avenue on the south, Raleigh Street to the west and north and Main Street to the east. The 1971 Land Use Analysis for the City of Rocky Mount pointed out that many of the planning and development problems in this neighborhood were rooted in its history. The report explains, "These areas were developed by land speculators who gave little thought to the future and left many problems behind." One of those problems at the time was inadequate water and sewer service. Although that problem has been addressed, another problem related to having land speculators develop the area was the high number of rental housing units. Figure 12-1 shows that the problem of having a disproportionate number of renters rather than homeowners continues to plague South Rocky Mount. The proportion of South Rocky Mount residents that are renters is nearly 40% greater than the proportion of the City of Rocky Mount residents that are renters.

South Rocky Mount continues to be plagued by a number of problems, including the following concerns expressed by residents of the neighborhood:

- Substandard and dilapidated housing
- Crime
- Improved lighting and street maintenance

South Rocky Mount At A Glance	
Total Population	3,022
Race	
White	10%
African American	88%
Other	2%
Gender	
Male	45%
Female	55%
Average Household Size	2.72
Households with one or more people 65 years and over:	6%
Total Housing Units	1,113
Owner occupied:	24%
Renter occupied:	76%

In its 1999 Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy, the City began to address these and other concerns raised by residents of South Rocky Mount. However, with more than three out of every four residents being renters rather than homeowners, South Rocky Mount needs sustained efforts by the City and others to revitalize the neighborhood. A group that has emerged to help the City revitalize the neighborhood is the South Rocky Mount Neighborhood Association. The Association recently had the former Tip Top Bakery site donated to it and is moving forward to renovate it and use it as a hub for community supportive services.
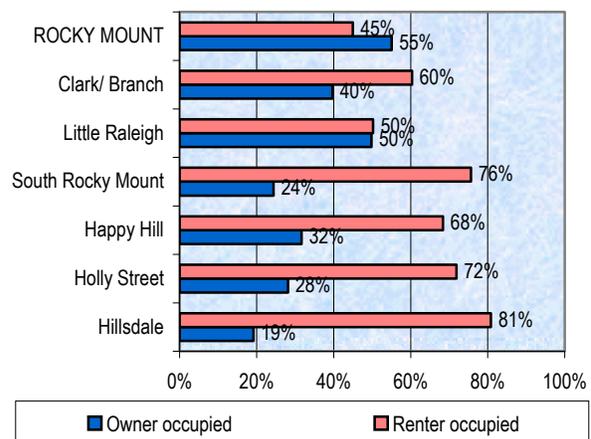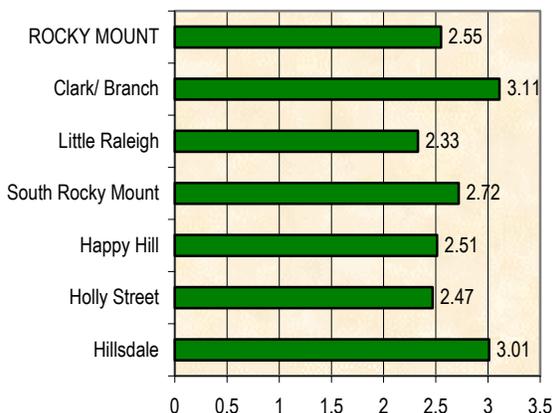
Clark/Branch Street

The Clark/Branch Street neighborhood is bordered by Edgecombe Street to the north, Cokey Road to the east, Blandwood Drive to the south, and Main Street to the west. The Clark/Branch Street neighborhood, like South Rocky Mount is a neighborhood in which residents are actively involved in the revitalization effort. Members of the neighborhood association were involved in the planning

Clark/Branch Street At A Glance	
Total Population	2,644
Race	
White	6%
African American	93%
Other	1%
Gender	
Male	47%
Female	53%
Average Household Size	3.11
Households with one or more people 65 years and over:	7%
Total Housing Units	2,636
Owner occupied:	40%
Renter occupied:	60%

and development of the Bassett Center that opened last year and continue to play a role in its operation. In addition to providing transitional housing for twelve homeless families, the Bassett Center offers a wide range of

Figure 12-1: Housing Tenure By Neighborhood

Neighborhood	Owner occupied	Renter occupied
ROCKY MOUNT	55%	45%
Clark/ Branch	40%	60%
Little Raleigh	50%	50%
South Rocky Mount	24%	76%
Happy Hill	32%	68%
Holly Street	28%	72%
Hillsdale	19%	81%

supportive services for the community.

Figure 12-2: Neighborhod Average Household Size Composition

Figure 12-3: Households With Persons Age 65 and Over By Neighborhood

Although the Bassett Center and the services that it provides are an asset to the community, the Center cannot meet all the community revitalization needs of this neighborhood. Many of those needs, like those in South Rocky Mount, can be traced to the history of the development of the neighborhood.   The Clark/Branch Street neighborhood was developed in 1923 as Gibson Hill and was home to many railroad families. However, other parts of the neighborhood never were developed as planned and this resulted in the area being used for substandard housing and industrial operations. The legacy of that lack of planning is a neighborhood in which three out of five housing units are rental units and many of the homes are substandard. Moreover, Figure 12-2 shows that this neighborhood has an average household size that is the highest among the neighborhoods included in the Community Development Project Areas and is more than 25% higher than the average for the City.   This high average household size suggests that there may be overcrowding in many homes in the neighborhood.

In addition to the housing problems in the Clark/Branch Street neighborhood, the City is working with residents and local nonprofits to address the following issues:
- Rehabilitation of substandard housing
- Lead abatement
- Neighborhood beautification
- Stricter code enforcement
- Street maintenance
- Increased police visibility to reduce crime

Little Raleigh
Little Raleigh shares Main Street as a border with the Clark/Branch Street Neighborhood. Little Raleigh is bordered by Main Street to the east, Nashville Road to the south, Raleigh Road and West Haven Boulevard to the west and
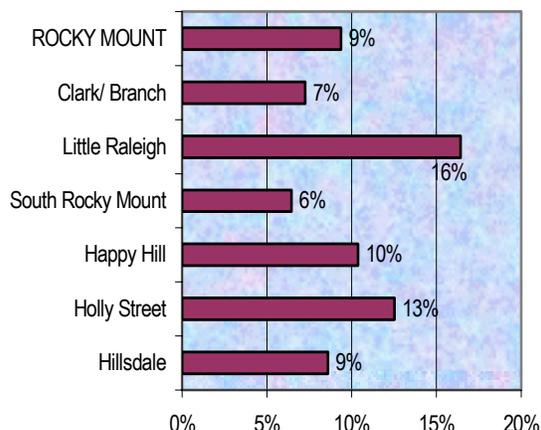
Hammond Street around to Talbott Street to the north. In addition to sharing a border with the Clark/Branch Street neighborhood, Little Raleigh also shares similar neighborhood revitalization issues. The following are some of those issues that have been identified by residents and are being addressed by the City:

- Rehabilitation of substandard housing
- Lead abatement
- Stricter code enforcement
- Street maintenance
- Increased police visibility to reduce crime
- Energy audits/home weatherization
- Home Ownership Counseling
- Entrepreneurship Training

Although, as the 1971 Land Use Analysis explains, little or no land use planning went into the development of Little Raleigh, the fact that Raleigh Road had one of the best early roads in the City helped direct the development of the area. As the City plans for the future of the Little Raleigh neighborhood, those plans might need to include programs and services to meet the needs of a population that has the highest proportion of residents age 65 and over among the neighborhoods

Little Raleigh At A Glance	
Total Population	2,357
Race	
White	27%
African American	72%
Other	1%
Gender	
Male	44%
Female	56%
Average Household Size	2.33
Households with one or more people 65 years and over:	16%
Total Housing Units	1,006
Owner occupied:	50%
Renter occupied:	50%

targeted for revitalization. Figure 12-3 shows that approximately one of every six Little Raleigh households have persons age 65 and over. This is nearly twice the proportion (9%) for the City.

Holly Street

The Holly Street neighborhood has the second highest proportion of households that have persons age 65 and over among the six neighborhoods targeted for revitalization. Another trait that Holly Street shares with Little Raleigh is the high proportion of homes that have undergone lead abatement. The Holly Street neighborhood is located in the northeastern part of the City and is bordered by East Virginia Street to the north, East Grand Avenue to the east, Raleigh Street to East Thomas Street on the south, and Main Street on the west.

Holly Street At A Glance	
Total Population	1,405
Race	
White	1%
African American	98%
Other	1%
Gender	
Male	45%
Female	55%
Average Household Size	2.47
Households with one or more people 65 years and over:	13%
Total Housing Units	569
Owner occupied:	160
Renter occupied:	409

In addition to being similar to Little Raleigh by having a large number of elderly residents and houses that have had lead abatement, Holly Street has a similar history of development. Holly Street, like Little Raleigh, had little or no planning go into its development. The 1971 Land Use Analysis states that as Rocky Mount's tobacco market, railroad shops and other businesses expanded, a need for housing African Americans that worked in those enterprises emerged. To meet that need, some African Americans bought homes, but investors that bought entire blocks of property and built rental-housing units purchased most of what is currently the Holly Street neighborhood. Today, with 74% of its housing units being rental units, the Holly Street neighborhood has the third highest percentage of rental-housing units among the six neighborhoods targeted for redevelopment in the City.

Although the proportion of homes in Holly Street that are rental-units might be high, the quality of the residences has dramatically improved as a result of an intensive revitalization initiative spearheaded by Rocky Mount Edgecombe Community Development Corporation and the City of Rocky Mount.

Hillsdale

The Hillsdale neighborhood, like the Holly Street neighborhood, has a high proportion of rental housing. In fact, Hillsdale, with 84% of its housing units being rental

units, has the highest proportion of rental housing units among the six neighborhoods targeted for revitalization. Hillsdale is located in the northeastern part of the City and is bordered by the Tar River to the north, Harper Street to the east, Springbrook Drive to the south and Cowlick Creek to the west.

Hillsdale is similar to Holly Street in that the high proportion of rental housing units in the neighborhood can be traced to the history of land use and development in the area. Hillsdale is located on what was formerly "The Oaks", a 19th century plantation owned by Joel Battle. In the years after slavery, houses that formerly served as slave quarters became houses rented to former slaves. However, recent development in the area has increased the number of homeowners in the neighborhood. As part of the 1999 flood recovery effort, Rocky Mount Habitat for Humanity, has built more than a dozen homes in Hillsdale, and these homes are being sold rather than rented to the occupants. Through sustained homeownership efforts like this, the high proportion of rental housing in the neighborhood can be reduced to the proportion for the City as a whole.

Hillsdale At A Glance	
Total Population	1,081
Race	
White	1%
African American	98%
Other	1%
Gender	
Male	37%
Female	63%
Average Household Size	3.01
Households with one or more people 65 years and over:	9%
Total Housing Units	365
Owner occupied:	81%
Renter occupied:	19%

Target Neighborhoods Market Analysis

As part of the consolidated planning process, the City of Rocky Mount conducted a detailed problem/needs assessment for the Happy Hill, Little Raleigh, and South Rocky Mount neighborhoods. While the entire study is not included here, this section contains a summary of the analysis, implications and recommendations.

While the data collected for each of these three neighborhoods vary slightly, the information obtained shows that their dynamics are very similar. All three neighborhoods share the following deficiencies:

- The poverty level is higher in all three neighborhoods than in the city as a whole.
- The median income in all three areas is at least one third less than the median income for Rocky Mount.
- Unemployment is twice as high in Happy Hill and Little Raleigh than for the city, and unemployment is almost three times higher in South Rocky Mount.
- There are fewer residents with college educations in these areas than in the city.

- Fifty percent (50%) of the homicides that occurred in the city in 2000 occurred in these three neighborhoods.

The following are objectives that will help remedy the deficiencies in these areas and in areas like them in other neighborhoods:

Housing Objectives:

- To encourage a variety of housing choice through preservation, rehabilitation, code enforcement and new development.
- To encourage quality in the design and construction of new dwellings
- To discourage insensitive new construction and demolition of useable units.
- To encourage the restoration and preservation of historic residential properties
- To improve existing neighborhoods
- To increase the supply of housing available to low and moderate-income persons
- To improve, preserve, and develop residential areas for persons of low and moderate income
- To increase housing opportunities for the elderly
- To seek innovative ways of assisting families to avoid home foreclosure
- To provide transitional housing
- To increase the quality and quantity of shelters for homeless people
- To assist low-income homeowners with energy-related housing rehabilitation

The following list of recommendations provide specific strategies for meeting the objectives above and improving the overall condition of these three neighborhoods and neighborhoods like them in other parts of the City:

Recommendations:

- Utilize Community Development Entitlement funding to demolish and clear vacant dilapidated housing units of no redeeming economic or historic value
- Utilize Community Development Entitlement funding to rehabilitate severely deteriorated housing units
- Apply HOME funding towards the rehabilitation of moderately deteriorated housing units
- Set up job training classes for residents in these neighborhoods. In addition, provide for childcare services during the classes
- Take an inventory of street lighting in these neighborhoods. Determine whether or not the existing street lighting is sufficient
- Establish an adopt-a-neighborhood program for beautification of the area

- Provide educational classes on homeownership. Notify area residents of special programs for first-time homebuyers, minorities, and people with low incomes.
- Be more aggressive with Code Enforcement procedures
- Assign extra police units to these areas and establish neighborhood-policing programs
- Prepare urban renewal plans for those areas with the greatest concentrations of substandard housing and have areas designated as urban renewal areas
- Establish HUD IDEA home purchase funding program.
- Focus on reducing the inventory of rental housing
- Utilize North Carolina Housing Finance Agency first time homebuyer assistance funds

In summary, the needs of these three large neighborhoods are in many ways reflective of the needs of other neighborhoods in the City of Rocky Mount. By applying these recommendations to these neighborhoods and others like them, the City can help reverse the legacy of the lack of adequate land use planning and development in the history of many of these areas.

II. Goals

Safe, attractive, pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods – and active neighborhood associations – that promote community pride, preserve historic character, encourage activities for people of all ages and prevent inappropriate commercial and business uses

III. Objective and Strategies

A. Stabilize Declining Neighborhoods And Encourage Reinvestment In Neighborhoods

Several key neighborhoods should be strengthened to ensure all residents live in acceptable – even outstanding – residential environments. Although there are many neighborhoods within the City, those needing special attention at his time include: the Cross-Town/East Grand Avenue area, Happy Hill, Joyner's Hill, Little Raleigh, Holly Street, Clark-Branch, and South Rocky Mount. These neighborhoods should be targeted for special and immediate improvements. Public investment in open space, pedestrian improvements, landscaping and safety will create an atmosphere that encourages concurrent private investment. These strategies recommend ways for the City to improve its existing neighborhoods.

1. Assess Neighborhood Conditions; Prepare And Implement Revitalization Plans

The City should inventory and assess the characteristics that define neighborhoods and the needs faced by those neighborhoods. The City should consider re-initiating the Comprehensive Area Response Teams (CART) program as a means to implement this strategy. The teams should survey each neighborhood in terms of housing, infrastructure, parks and other public places, property maintenance, and other characteristics. The teams should then use this profile to prepare neighborhood revitalization plans that will help to stabilize declining neighborhoods. These plans should be implemented and updated regularly, using a set of consistent benchmarks for measuring success.

2. Update The Consolidated Plan To Be Consistent With Neighborhood Plans

Existing programs, such as the Consolidated Plan and the Enterprise Alliance, have been important components of the City's housing strategy to date. These programs support the strategy and should continue to be supported and implemented. The Consolidated Plan must be updated annually and revised every five years. The next revision is scheduled for 2007. The update should ensure that the plan is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. As an example, these programs should be consistent with the Plan's land use and density recommendations. At the same time, the City must identify new funding sources for its housing programs, given the ongoing decline in Federal support. In reviewing the new funding sources, serious consideration should be given to use of housing bonds to provide a more flexible source of revenue to address the community's housing needs.

3. Maintain And Upgrade Public Infrastructure Streets, Curb And Gutter, Sidewalks, Street Lighting, Street Trees And Parks On A Regular, Comprehensive Basis

The City should target available resources for physical improvements to declining neighborhoods. This should occur as part of the annual capital improvement budget process. These improvements will create an atmosphere in which private investment is more likely to occur. Specific resources include state and federal grants, local matching funds, staff assistance and capital improvements. Alternatives include tax incentives and partnering with lending institutions.

4. Increase Homeownership Rates

Homeownership rates should be expanded throughout Rocky Mount but especially in distressed neighborhoods. This will increase personal investment in neighborhoods, providing stability and improving the housing stock. It will also build long-term wealth for residents who benefit from increasing property values. *See strategies under Housing Objective 2.*

5. Facilitate Infill Residential Development

Rocky Mount's existing neighborhoods that are threatened by or experiencing disinvestments and decline should be strengthened to ensure all residents live in acceptable – even outstanding – residential environments. The City should target reinvestment, redevelopment, and infill residential development for the community's older neighborhoods, ensuring compatibility with these areas. Investments in open space, pedestrian improvements, landscaping and safety will also create an atmosphere that encourages concurrent private investment.

6. Mitigate Land Use Impacts Resulting From Commercial And Industrial Intrusions Through Stronger Standards For Setbacks, Screening and Buffering

Conflicting or incompatible land uses can reduce neighborhood quality of life by creating noise and traffic, destroying views and diminishing neighborhood character. The City should identify and mitigate these impacts, especially in neighborhoods that are already in decline. Mitigation includes the use of landscape screening, signage, walls or fences in keeping with neighborhood character, open or green space buffers or the re-configuration of lots. Development regulations should establish clear guidelines for preventing land use conflicts in the future. Sensitive implementation of integrated land use should be considered particularly where pedestrian context is most desirable. This must be used where such mixed use will be an asset to the immediate neighborhood.

7. Demolish Abandoned And Dilapidated Structures And Reclaim These Sites For New Residential Development

Where vacant sites or structures are no longer viable in their present use, the City should encourage new uses. The City should encourage redevelopment of vacant buildings, and economic and zoning incentives should be targeted for empty or underused properties.

8. Promote Pride Through Physical Improvements, Outreach And Working With Neighborhood And Faith-based Organizations

Community pride should be increased through deliberate actions that improve communication and provide greater opportunities for improving neighborhood quality of life. The City should foster partnerships with organizations that can

support these objectives and engage them in identifying needed improvements, seeking funding to implement these improvements, and conducting outreach to involve neighborhood residents in these efforts.

9. Focus Enforcement Efforts On Targeted Areas

The City should re-institute a targeted enforcement program that can have a fast, positive impact on troubled areas and neighborhoods, such as the Comprehensive Area Response Team. These programs are highly effective and can support neighborhood pride. Such efforts also reinforce the requirement that all properties be posted with clearly readable street address numbers.

10. Adopt Conservation Guidelines For Existing Neighborhoods

To provide guidance where infill development is promoted in existing neighborhoods, the City should adopt conservation guidelines that promote compatibility with existing neighborhood character. These guidelines can help to ensure that new homes and multi-family structures are generally compatible in character with existing buildings.

B. PRESERVE HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOODS

The City should continue and expand present efforts to preserve historic neighborhoods. These neighborhoods and their individual historic resources are vital components of the City's history and also serve as a foundation for providing housing options and attracting businesses to the City.

1. Expand The Number Of Neighborhoods On National And Local Historic Registers

The City should continue to work with the Historic Preservation Commission and residents to designate historic neighborhoods on the national and local registers. National designation provides significant tax benefits to support rehabilitation of both owner-occupied and investment properties. Local designation expands the Historic Preservation Commission's authority to ensure investments and rehabilitation supports for integrity of individual districts.

2. Promote Historic Neighborhoods

The City's historic neighborhoods are vitally important to stabilizing properties, increasing property values, building community pride and strengthening the local economy. These neighborhoods should be promoted to new residents, businesses, and visitors, to encourage reinvestment in the heart of Rocky Mount and to boost tourism.

3. Create "Neighborhoods Of Choice" Through A Sense Of Identity And Pride For

Individual Neighborhoods Through Physical Improvements

"Neighborhoods of choice" provide residents with a wide range of quality options in shops and services, housing, parks and open space, and transportation. The City should develop standards for these neighborhoods, market the concept to potential investors and developers, and provide incentives to support enhancement or creation of these places. The City should also target neighborhood improvements to these areas, including shared green/open space, walking and bicycle paths, improved lighting, and property maintenance assistance.

C. SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS WHERE APPROPRIATE

New neighborhoods can contribute to the vitality of the whole community when these places are sited, developed and serviced in an appropriate and consistent manner. It is critical that new neighborhoods be designed to meet the goals of the Comprehensive Plan. In particular, the City should encourage the use of neighborhood development as a way to improve the balance between investment in the Edgecombe and Nash sides of the City. These strategies recommend ways for the City to undertake the development of new neighborhoods in an equitable and rational manner.

1. Identify And Prioritize Areas Suitable For New Residential Development Based On Criteria Consistent With The Comprehensive Plan

Residential neighborhoods should be located in a rational manner. It is important that the City promote a land use development pattern that considers the role of new neighborhoods in development decisions. The City should emphasize land use, development and zoning decisions that are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. The City should establish criteria for locating new neighborhoods, identify areas that meet these criteria and prioritize the areas for neighborhood development. Some criteria to consider include: existing infrastructure, proximity to shops and services, public transportation routes and natural hazards such as flooding. New neighborhoods should connect to existing neighborhoods via internal streets. In order to insure adequate land and resources are available to provide recreation opportunities for residents in new subdivisions, the City should investigate the use of a fee-in-lieu or parkland dedication requirement.

2. Support New Subdivision Development With New Infrastructure Development In The Edgecombe County Portion Of The

City

Edgecombe County provides key sites for the development of new subdivisions. The City should encourage development of these sites to be concurrent with the installation of new supporting infrastructure to maximize the City's capital investments. The City should also work with developers to ensure that infrastructure is located appropriately within new subdivisions and protected from flooding.

3. Expand Financing Sources To Facilitate Affordable Housing Development, Such As Bonds, City Revenues, Etc.

New neighborhoods should support the City's goal of providing affordable housing. The City should set specific objectives for the supply of affordable housing units in new developments and assist developers in meeting these objectives. Some specific tools include bonds, city funds, public-private partnerships, tax or zoning incentives.

4. Oppose Rezonings And Infrastructure Improvements That Create A "Leap Frog" Residential Development Pattern

"Leap frog" residential development is costly, degrades the environment and results in congestion. The City should discourage rezonings and infrastructure improvements that would support this development pattern. This should include raising awareness among the public of the problems associated with this type of development. The City should also ensure that development regulations strongly discourage unnecessary "leap frog" residential development.

5. Support Neighborhood Retail At Logical Locations That Provide For Neighborhood-oriented Goods And Services

Supporting neighborhood retail in appropriate locations strengthens neighborhoods. Neighborhood retail improves economic viability of neighborhoods. It makes housing in these areas more marketable. It also reduces the need for residents to travel elsewhere for basic goods and services, promotes active streetscapes and public places and builds a sense of community. The City should support neighborhood retail through zoning decisions, economic incentives, partnerships and community participation in development decisions. It should focus efforts on the Edgecombe side of the City and recognize the need for pedestrian-scale access to goods and services is more critical in neighborhoods where income is lower and access to cars less available.

D. Enhance Neighborhood Safety And Security

Public safety affects the quality of life in homes and neighborhoods and has a spillover effect on the entire community. Actual and perceived safety also has a significant impact on neighborhood investment. The City should enhance public safety as it relates to crime as well as to the physical environment. Community design which takes public safety as a primary goal should be implemented. These strategies recommend ways for the City to undertake this objective.

1. Support Block Watch And Other Community-based Safety Programs

Block watch, park watch and other community-based safety programs are critical to neighborhood safety. Programs such as neighborhood block watch not only prevent crime but also build a sense of community. The City should continue to support these programs by raising awareness of them, recruiting volunteers to participate in them and acknowledging the powerful impact of these programs as measured by selected indicators.

In addition, police efforts, such as community policing and DARE, are extremely effective in reducing crime and improving a sense of community. The City should support these programs by addressing staffing and other personnel issues in order to make these positions competitive with neighboring communities.

The City should also support efforts to improve posting of house numbers, street and porch lighting; design improvements to create visible and safer and more pedestrian-friendly public spaces and revitalization efforts that create vital neighborhood spaces in which people come together to shop, eat, attend festivals, recreate and socialize.

2. Strengthen Police-Community Relationships, Including Increasing Police Visibility, Especially Foot And Bicycle Patrols And Youth Outreach Programs

Positive police-community relationships are an important component of neighborhood safety. A police presence can be a powerful deterrent to crime. Moreover, when police and community work as a team, information exchange and perceptions of safety are greatly improved. Police become advocates for neighborhood safety, involving themselves in more issues than just criminal activity. The City should consider making police activity more visible to and interactive with the community. Increasing foot and bicycle patrols, participating in youth outreach programs and supporting neighborhood block watch are some of the specific ways in which this can happen.

In addition, police efforts, such as community policing and DARE, are extremely effective in reducing crime and im-

proving a sense of community. The City should support these programs by addressing staffing and other personnel issues in order to make these positions competitive with neighboring communities.

3. Promote Crime Prevention Through Urban And Environmental Design

The design of the physical environment contributes greatly to crime prevention and perceptions of public safety. The City should explore ways to improve the design of public spaces to address crime prevention and safety. Some specific actions can include: configuring spaces to improve visibility and multiple means of access, maintaining landscapes to provide clear sight lines, placing street lights, installing call boxes in appropriate locations and ensuring that all properties are posted with clearly readable street address numbers. In addition, appropriate opportunities should be identified for the police to become involved in the plan review process to address safety issues.

4. Improve Lighting On Sidewalks And Road ways And Target Community Facilities Such As Parks And Community Centers

Safety from criminal activity as well as health hazards is an important aspect of neighborhood quality of life. The City should ensure that public safety programs address pedestrian safety and the safety of community facilities and public spaces. Lighting should be used where appropriate to improve visibility and perceptions of safety on sidewalks, roadways, parks, community centers and neighborhood places.

The City should use the Operation Feedback program as a way to identify areas and properties that require maintenance. City staff should be encouraged to use Operation Feedback forms to make note of items such as nonfunctioning traffic or streetlights, deteriorating sidewalks or overgrown properties. In addition, the City should publicize the availability of this program on the City's web page in order to facilitate citizen participation.

5. Link Public Safety To Neighborhood Investment Strategies

Public safety and neighborhood investment go hand-in-hand. But frequently, institutions in areas where actual and perceived crime is high discourage investment. The City should support and encourage neighborhood investment strategies that increase public safety in line with other neighborhood objectives. In addition, the City should revitalize programs like Comprehensive Area Response Teams and Neighborhood Action Plans and make safety a high priority among the goals of these programs.