
Chapter VII: Housing and Neighborhood Development

- Help revitalize older neighborhoods through a variety of approaches within targeted areas in partnership with neighborhood and non-profit organizations.
- Support quality housing at all levels, including workforce housing and executive housing, to contribute to the diversity, character, and economic vitality of the City.
- Actively promote homeownership as a means to achieve stable neighborhoods.
- Design new neighborhoods to encourage resident interaction, promote “walkability,” and create a distinct sense of place.
- Prepare or require detailed neighborhood development plans for large areas in advance of subdivision plat approvals for smaller pieces of those areas.
- Require quality housing design, including multi-family residential developments.

The Housing and Neighborhood Development chapter establishes goals, policies, and programs to assure that there is an adequate supply of decent housing to meet present and future demand. The policies and recommendations also support the interest in achieving high-quality neighborhoods.

The fabric of a healthy, sustainable neighborhood is created through the interaction of neighborhood conditions, existing assets, residents' priorities and capacities, and the level of neighborhood support and leadership. All neighborhoods, new and old, require attention and tending to ensure that pieces of the fabric do not fray. When it does, mending the fraying pieces becomes a priority.

A. Housing and Neighborhood Development Framework

This section describes the characteristics of the City's housing stock including type, value, occupancy status, age and structural condition. This section also provides projected housing demand in the City and describes housing development and rehabilitation programs available to City residents.

1. Housing Condition and Age

The age of a community's housing stock is one measure of the general condition of the community's housing supply. A casual survey of the housing stock in the City reveals that the housing is in generally good condition, regardless of age. Given the long history and slow growth of the City, it is not surprising that the majority of the housing stock was constructed before 1959. Approximately 60% of housing units in the City of Beloit were constructed before 1960, which is significantly higher than similarly sized communities.

2. Housing Characteristics

Figure 29 compares the City's housing types between 2000 and 2015. Overall, there was little change in the composition of the City's housing types. Approximately three-quarters of all housing units in the Beloit are single family homes, with a slight decrease in single-family detached and increase in single-family attached dwellings. The number of two-family or duplex units decreased significantly between 2000 and 2015, likely due to many nonconforming duplexes in single-family districts losing their legal nonconforming status. Two-family dwellings now account for only for six percent of the City's housing stock. The percentage of multi-family units in Beloit increased slightly from 2000 to 2015 with the completion and occupancy of several large-scale apartment complexes.

Figure 29: City of Beloit Housing Types, 2000 & 2015

Units per Structure	Number		Percent	
	2000	2015	2000	2015
Single Family Detached	10,290	10,844	72.2	70.6%
Single Family Attached	219	605	1.5	3.9%
Two Family (duplex)	1,468	934	10.3	6.1%
Multi-Family: 3 or more units	2,083	2,821	14.6	18.3%
Mobile Home	193	151	1.4	1%
Total	14,253	15,355	100	100

Source: U.S. Census (2000) and American Community Survey (2011-2015)

Figure 30 compares other 2012-2016 housing value characteristics in Beloit with surrounding communities. It is worthwhile and important to note that the housing market has improved drastically in Beloit during the past two years, so any and all 2012-2016 housing data should be viewed in light of the possible irrelevancy of said data. The percentage of owner-occupied housing units in the City was relatively low in comparison to the surrounding communities—suggesting that a fairly significant percentage of the City's single family housing is currently being rented. The median value of owner-occupied units was lower than median values in nearby municipalities, although we know that strong demand and low supply is causing upward pressure on housing values not seen since before the Great Recession. Interestingly, the median gross rent in Beloit is on par with the median gross rent in nearby municipalities, suggesting that Beloit is a profitable place to be a landlord.

Indeed, this presents another barrier to the reversion and rehab of multi-unit nonconforming rental properties into owner-occupied units, and is a topic worthy of further analysis.

Figure 30: Housing Value Characteristics

	City of Beloit	Town of Beloit	City of South Beloit	City of Janesville
Percent Owner Occupied	58.6%	78.7%	72.4%	65.8%
Median Value of Owner-Occupied Units	\$85,000	\$118,900	\$122,400	\$129,300
Median Gross Rent	\$727	\$832	\$670	\$765

Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey (2012-2016)

3. Existing Neighborhood Development Pattern

Beloit's current pattern of neighborhood development greatly influences the character of the City. With a unique combination of historic established neighborhoods and new residential areas, Beloit offers a wide range of neighborhood settings.

Beloit's historic neighborhoods are located near the Downtown on both sides of the Rock River near the heart of the City. The Merrill neighborhood is located north of White Avenue east of the Rock River. The near westside neighborhood is located south of Liberty Avenue west of the Rock River. There is also an established near eastside neighborhood surrounding Beloit College. These residential areas are characterized by traditional homes on smaller lots with a "grid" street pattern. They represent the fabric of the City.

Beloit also has new residential areas on the periphery of the City. These developments include The Oaks, Deerfield, Walnut Grove, Parkmeadow, and Eagles Ridge subdivisions. These areas are characterized by larger lots and homes laid out in a curvilinear design, where streets follow the natural contours of the land rather than the traditional "grid" pattern.

4. Housing Agencies and Programs

There are several agencies and programs operating in Beloit with the goal of improving housing opportunities, including the following:

Beloit Housing Authority

The Beloit Housing Authority (BHA) assists in providing adequate and affordable housing, economic opportunity, and a suitable living environment free from discrimination for low-income, elderly and disabled residents in the Beloit community. The Authority manages 131 units for families and individuals. These properties are federally funded through the Department of Housing and Urban



Development (HUD), and administered by the Beloit Housing Authority. The BHA also administers 598 Housing Choice Vouchers as part of the Section 8 Program. The program is designed to assist very low-income families in renting, or continuing to rent decent, safe, and sanitary housing at costs they can afford. Additional program information is available through the City.

Community Action Inc.

Community Action Inc. of Rock and Walworth Counties is a private, non-profit community service and developmental agency. Services focus on enabling residents to become or remain socially and financially self-sufficient and include emergency shelter for the homeless, free health care services for women, and assistance with child care. In addition to programs administered by Community Action, the agency also works with other institutions and organizations in the communities it serves to coordinate efforts to assist low-income individuals and families. Community Action is currently purchasing houses in the Merrill neighborhood, rehabilitating them, and reselling to low income home owners.

NeighborWorks Blackhawk Region

Established in 1979, NeighborWorks Blackhawk Region (formerly known as Neighborhood Housing Services) is a private, not-for-profit organization working to build the Beloit community through programs that support homeownership, residents, and community development. NeighborWorks strives to provide quality services to first-time home buyers, current home owners, and quality rental property owners, including education and counseling, down payment assistance, and emergency loans.

Community Development Block Grant and HOME Programs

In 1974, the federal government established the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program to provide cities with funds to help meet the needs of low- and moderate-income residents and eliminate substandard housing and blight. Later, the federal government established the HOME Investment Partnerships Program, to focus in particular activities that build, buy, and/or rehabilitate affordable housing for rent or homeownership or provide direct rental assistance to low-income people.

The City of Beloit receives annual CDBG and HOME allocations from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for local use. There are certain guidelines as to the types of programs eligible for CDBG and HOME funds. In addition, the City of Beloit establishes local priorities for funding to meet specific local needs. The funds are managed locally by the City of Beloit's Division of Community & Housing Services, which is responsible for ensuring that all funded agencies manage those funds in accordance with HUD guidelines.

To continue to receive CDBG and HOME funding, the City is required to prepare a three to five year strategic plan. The 2015-2019 consolidated plan identifies renters and elderly homeowners as populations with priority housing needs including rehabilitation and other housing assistance. Strategies for addressing these needs are focused on upgrading the City's older housing stock, promoting homeownership, and helping homeowners stay in their homes. Specific objectives include:

- Develop a variety of housing alternatives in order to satisfy a wider range of housing needs.
- Use the existing programs and resources to improve Beloit's older housing stock.
- Promote the conversion of rental to owner-occupied housing in neighborhoods with unusually high percentages of rental properties.
- Promote homeownership as an alternative to renting for qualified households.
- Support programs that enable homeowners to retain their homes.
- Support neighborhood revitalization efforts.

Other Housing Programs

Other housing programs available to City of Beloit residents include home mortgage and improvement loans from the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA) and home repair grants for the elderly from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The Housing Cost Reduction Initiative (HCRI) also funds activities such as emergency rental aid, homeless prevention efforts, and related housing initiatives. Further information on these programs can be obtained by contacting WHEDA.

Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Areas (NRSA)

The Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Areas (NRSA) was developed to outline practical actions steps for a coordinated response to addressing various concerns in the community of Beloit, specifically related to deteriorating properties, vacant and abandoned housing, an increasing number of rental properties, high rates of poverty and unemployment, and an increase in violent crimes. The development of the NRSA allows the City to use Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding more flexibly. This plan provides specific action steps towards overall economic empowerment and improved housing opportunities and was submitted as an amendment to the City's 2015-2019 Consolidated Plan.

The scope of the NRSA examines trends throughout the City of Beloit, but focuses on the Hackett and Merrill neighborhoods, which are census tract 16, block groups 1-4 and census tract 18, block groups 1-4 respectively. The economic indicators described in this NRSA illustrate a wide gap in economic prosperity in the two NRSA neighborhoods compared to the City as a whole. Numerous factors related to deteriorating housing stock, high crime, and lack of availability to job training and economic resources has negatively affected economic prospects of residents in both NRSA areas.

The City embarked on a fact finding and solution driven mission in early 2015 as a result of business owners and residents voicing concerns regarding crime, property deterioration, and lack of resources for residents in need.

Mapping: The City began mapping incidents of crimes against people, crimes against property, vacant and abandoned housing, code violations, income levels, residential property values, and other demographic data in order to identify patterns and concentrations. Although many of the negative data patterns were spread city-wide, some clustering was evident in Census Tracts 16 and 18, the Hackett and Merrill Neighborhoods respectively.

Community Input: The City used a number of efforts to obtain community input in order to identify the needs of Beloit residents, Hackett and Merrill neighborhoods, businesses, and other community stakeholders. These efforts included individual interviews, stakeholder meetings, community listening sessions, neighborhood tours, and an online survey. The City also consulted with a variety of public services agencies, community organizations, business leaders, and other City Departments.

Identification of Needs: The needs of the community fell into three general categories: Neighborhood deterioration and instability, lack of resources for residents to succeed, especially youth, and a general feeling of insecurity. Accordingly, the Plan is grouped by strategies for neighborhood revitalization, resident empowerment, and public safety.

Research and Analysis: The City conducted new research and reviewed previous research materials regarding community needs, gaps in services, and possible solutions. The City also consulted with agencies located throughout Rock County and Beloit to assess current resource capacity and to develop coordinated efforts to fill gaps that meet the needs of the people.

Vision and Goals: The City identified six common goals for the Plan and developed an overall vision. Strategies and objectives included in the NRSA Plan meet at least one of the six common goals that were identified.

- **Vision:** Establish safe, healthy, and stable neighborhoods, and ensure all Beloit residents have meaningful opportunities for economic stability and growth.
- **Goals:** (1) reduce crime, fear, and disorder; (2) provide opportunities for job growth and education that create meaningful jobs for unemployed and low-moderate income residents; (3) encourage

collaboration and coordination between community organizations; (4) improve the physical environment of the City's neighborhoods; (5) provide positive outlets for youth in the community; (5) restore a strong sense of community pride.

Neighborhood Revitalization: The City developed three objectives with action steps that will improve the quality of the housing stock, reduce the number of vacant and abandoned properties, and increase the number of long term residents in the NRSA neighborhoods. The City identified partner agencies and will work closely with them to strategically align activities and target various financial resources in both NRSA neighborhoods.

Resident Empowerment: The City worked closely with Community Action, Inc. to develop strategies to address the needs of residents in the NRSA neighborhoods and to increase economic empowerment. Five objectives were developed that include action steps to increase programming for job training and life skills education, create additional programming for youth, increase the involvement of residents in their neighborhoods, improve race relations in the community, and connect residents to financial and supportive resources they need to be successful.

Public Safety: The City worked closely with the Beloit Police Department to develop three main objectives to improve overall public safety in the Beloit Community. Actions steps outline how the Police Department will implement community policing strategies, enhance statistical data, and improve transparency regarding crime and prevalence of crime.

Wisconsin Historical Society's Historic Homeowners Tax Credit Program

There are three existing historic districts and one proposed district in the City of Beloit. As an incentive to preserve and enhance historic homes, homeowners in these districts are eligible to apply for a tax credit against their state income taxes of up to 25% of project costs. Eligible projects include exterior work as well as interior projects such as electrical, plumbing, and HVAC.

Beloit Memorial High School Student House Build

For the past several years, Beloit Memorial High School has partnered with local contractors to have students participate in the construction of a new single-family home. Once completed, each home is sold with the proceeds sustaining the next project. The School District of Beloit recently acquired several buildable lots on Trevino Court that will be used for this program during the next several years.

Neighborhood Associations

Neighborhood Associations and informal groups can be a key factor in neighborhood health, and an important conduit between City Hall and the people who live in a neighborhood. The results of the public opinion survey revealed that few of Beloit's neighborhoods have known names and/or neighborhood groups. This presents a significant opportunity to engage residents in the naming or re-naming of neighborhoods in an effort to promote neighborhood identify and pride, and to encourage connections between residents. The rise of social media has presented a new platform for neighborhood organization and communication that should be an integral part of this effort.

B. Housing and Neighborhood Development Goals, Objectives and Policies

1. Goal

- a. Support a variety of housing types and costs and quality neighborhoods to promote a desirable living environment for all residents.

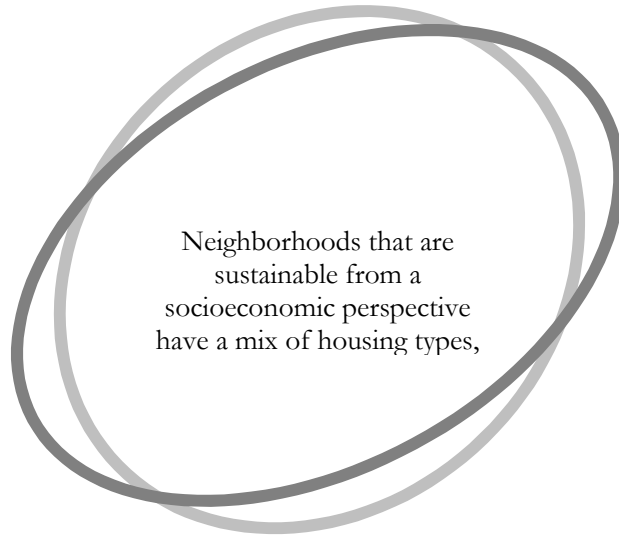
2. Objectives

- a. Provide a range of affordable housing types to address the demands of various age groups, household types, income levels, and those with special needs.
- b. Promote neighborhood stability through long-term residency, whether owner occupied or rental.

- c. Promote high quality, safe housing and living environments that enhance existing neighborhoods, maintaining reasonable densities and promoting a sustainable owner-renter ratio.
- d. Require City neighborhoods to be served by a full range of urban services and close to key destinations for residents.
- e. Encourage housing designed and constructed for working professionals offering modern amenities and connectivity to existing employers and goods & services.
- f. Encourage well-designed neighborhoods, with a mix of housing types oriented towards pedestrians and well served by sidewalks and bicycle routes.

3. Policies

- a. Encourage a housing mix in all neighborhoods that focuses on owner-occupied housing, yet provides opportunities for rental housing. In general, neighborhood stability and health are strongest when the ratio of owners to renters is at least 50/50, with greater percentages of owners leading to healthier neighborhoods. The City will strive to achieve these ratios in new and existing neighborhoods.
- b. Encourage that the development of new neighborhoods comply with the City's historic housing mix, in order to maintain the character of the community while allowing for housing choice. Within each continuous area designated as a "Planned Neighborhood" on the Future Land Use map (Map 10), seek a housing mix where the majority of all housing units are in single family residences, with two-family dwellings and multiple family dwellings (3+ units per building, regardless of occupancy) to diversify the land use mix. For two-family and multiple-family units, seek to maximize the percentage of such units that will be available for owner-occupancy. For single family units, seek a mix of lot sizes.
- c. Guide new housing and neighborhoods to areas with convenient access to commercial and recreational facilities, transportation systems, schools, shopping, services, and jobs.
- d. Accommodate and promote the development of executive-style single-family dwellings on various lot sizes to help with business recruitment and boost the City's residential tax base.
- e. Promote the development of quality workforce housing to help with business recruitment.
- f. Promote upper story housing in Downtown Beloit as described more thoroughly in the Beloit Downtown Redevelopment Plan.
- g. Plan for multiple-family developments in parts of the City where streets and sidewalks can handle increased volumes of traffic; there are adequate parks, open space, and shopping facilities existing or planned; and utility systems and schools in the area have sufficient capacity. Disperse such developments rather than planning for large multiple family housing developments in isolated areas.
- h. Design neighborhoods to protect environmental resources, encourage resident interaction, promote "walkability", and create a sense of place, following the "Planned Neighborhood" design guidelines presented in Chapter Four: Land Use.




- i. Require residential developers and builders to complete development and provide infrastructure improvements, including parks and streets, in partially developed existing subdivisions prior to platting new development areas or additions.
- j. Require developers to help fund safe and efficient pedestrian and bicycle access between residential neighborhoods and nearby community facilities (e.g. bus routes, parks, and schools).
- k. Encourage infill development of various types and styles that can utilize existing infrastructure, especially on vacant lots. Promote creative solutions and ongoing dialogue between City staff and developers to best integrate developments into existing neighborhoods.
- l. Explore a pilot program to waive permit fees for new single-family construction in the NRSA areas on vacant or underutilized lots.
- m. Continue the City's proactive code enforcement policy with strict consequences for continued violations.
- n. Work to increase property values in existing City neighborhoods through concerted efforts towards revitalization. Explore a pilot program to name or re-name existing neighborhoods to enhance neighborhood identity, pride, and connections.
- o. Consider the use of the Health Impact Assessment (HIA) process to support health considerations in decisions that impact the built environment, such as large-scale new subdivisions, large redevelopments, infrastructure expansions, etc. Partner with the Rock County Public Health Department and allied organizations to complete HIA's for public and private projects.
- p. Implement a multi-layered approach to promoting housing affordability of various types, through the update of the 3-5 Year Strategic Plan required for the City's CDBG/HOME program.
- q. Implement new state-imposed housing report mandates relating to development fees and housing affordability by effective date of January 1, 2020.

C. Recommendations and Programs for Existing Neighborhoods

The continued revitalization of neighborhoods like Merrill and Hackett are essential to provide a decent living environment for their residents. Further, their revitalization will enhance the City as a whole. For example, neighborhood revitalization will complement and enhance the community's investment in its Downtown, perhaps by providing the type of urban neighborhoods that are attractive to young professionals, empty nesters, and young families.

The key to revitalization is targeting public services, initiatives, and investment in specific areas within the neighborhoods with the goal of encouraging and leveraging private investment by both for profit and non-profit builders and property owners. Concentrating resources in a particular area or section of a neighborhood increases the likelihood for the successful revitalization of the entire neighborhood. As the targeted part of the neighborhood improves, the benefits reverberate through the surrounding neighborhood. Through the strategic implementation of this investment approach over time, entire neighborhoods can be transformed.

The crucial components to the long term successful implementation of this targeted strategy include public/private (non-profit and for-profit) partnerships, proactive code



Beloit's urban neighborhoods are a model of sustainability—compact development; mixed uses; proximity to jobs, shopping and services; and on

enforcement, comprehensive public safety initiatives, incentives for housing rehabilitation and new development, on-going resident participation and buy-in, and, most importantly, political will and leadership.

The following are specific programs and recommendations to promote the revitalization and continued attention to Beloit's existing neighborhoods:

1. Implementation of the Actions Steps in the Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Areas

The City will lead, support, and promote action steps that will achieve all six of the goals identified in the NRSA.

2. Improve Connections to Neighborhood Groups and Residents

To improve City-neighborhood relations and to promote neighborhood pride, identity, and connections, the City may start a pilot program to name or re-name existing neighborhoods. This may include supporting the creation of neighborhood associations and/or parent support groups.

The City will also work with neighborhood groups to explore options for supporting local public improvement projects by neighborhood groups and associations, such as neighborhood signs, public art, banners, and other streetscape improvements.



3. Maintain Other Partnerships for Lasting Success

In an era of scarce public resources, the importance of coordinating efforts across all City departments and partnering with other civic organizations to improve housing and neighborhoods cannot be underestimated.

To this end, the City will coordinate among the Departments of Community Development, Police, Public Works, and Public Health to include neighborhood safety, public improvements, and code enforcement in its neighborhood improvement initiatives. Targeted investment in specific areas should be in conjunction with other major capital or private sector investments.

In addition to the City, many organizations in the Beloit area are working to meet the housing needs of local residents. These organizations include NeighborWorks, the Beloit Housing Authority, and Community Action, Inc. Housing issues in the City should be addressed through the concerted effort of all these groups and the City in targeted neighborhoods.

4. Continue Housing Improvement Initiatives

The City will continue to focus on improving the conditions of existing housing within its central city neighborhoods, including but not limited to the following ongoing efforts:

- Providing incentives for housing upgrades and homeownership increases through use of CDBG/HOME funding and partnerships with other organizations.
- Within targeted neighborhoods, continuing to pursue the purchase of vacant, dilapidated, and tax delinquent housing for rehabilitation and resale for owner-occupancy.
- Continuing proactive code enforcement policy with strict consequences for continued violations.
- Maintaining the current policy of downzoned central city neighborhoods, focused on reverting former single family houses back to single family use and reducing the incidence of multiple units on a single lot. Consider the impact of this policy on buildings originally built for more than single family use, perhaps through minor zoning text changes.

D. Recommendations and Programs for New Neighborhoods

Building off of some of the policies listed in Section B, the following are programs and recommendations to promote high-quality and affordable housing and neighborhoods in the Beloit area, focused in particular on newer neighborhoods near the City's fringe.

1. Support Provision of Quality New Housing at all Levels

Housing is not simply part of the framework of the City; it also contributes to its economic vitality. In order for the Beloit area to grow economically, housing is needed to meet diverse job opportunities. Businesses need access to workers, and workers need quality housing they can afford. A range of housing types, from workforce housing to executive housing, is an asset to the City. It promotes attachment to the community by providing housing for all stages of life, and lends richness to community life through variety and balance. To this end, the City will continue to promote a range of housing choices in new neighborhoods, consistent with the policies laid out earlier in this chapter.

2. Require Neighborhood Development Plans in Advance of Subdivision of New Neighborhoods

The Land Use chapter includes a description of the "Planned Neighborhood" future land use category, which is intended to provide for a variety of housing choices and a mix of non-residential uses such as parks, schools, religious institutions, and small-scale shopping and service areas. These areas are mapped on Map 10 for future development in different parts of the City. The complexity of "Planned Neighborhood" areas suggests the preparation of detailed neighborhood development plans to further guide development of these areas. A neighborhood development plan would be prepared by a developer, a group of property owners, or the City, in advance of the approval of individual subdivision plats within the area it covers.

Neighborhood development plans specify in greater detail land use mix, density, street layouts, open space, and stormwater management than are possible within this *Comprehensive Plan*. They also suggest important connections between individual property ownerships and future subdivision plats. These neighborhood development plans would ideally be adopted as a detailed component of the City's *Comprehensive Plan* once completed.

Preparing Neighborhood Development Plans – A Recommended Process

The following planning process has a proven track record of success:

- I. Analysis: A wide variety of site specific information must be collected about both existing and emerging conditions:
 - A. Establish and confirm the full neighborhood design process, including the creation of an ad-hoc or blended oversight committee including and/or reporting to the Plan Commission and City Council;
 - B. Collect existing map and plan data for the area and its surroundings related to parcels, topography, soils, land cover and uses, utilities, transportation, recreation, public services, plan recommendations, zoning and property ownership;
 - C. Evaluate the existing and emerging real estate market;
 - D. Employ meaningful public participation to help identify opportunities & constraints, and to help create a vision for the area; and,
 - E. Conduct property owner, agency and stakeholder interviews.
- II. Plan: Based on the results of the Analysis phase, prepare a detailed Neighborhood Development Plan as derived from the consideration of a Preliminary Concept Plan, Alternative Concept Plans where options are many, and a Refined Draft Neighborhood Plan:
 - A. Refine and confirm the neighborhood vision;
 - B. Draft and confirm a Preliminary Concept Plan depicting the general arrangement of land uses, development character, main roads and stormwater management facilities, pedestrian & bicycle networks, and the open space system. For more complex neighborhoods with a variety of options, produce and confirm one or more Alternative Concept Plans;
 - C. Present Preliminary Concept Plan or Alternative Concept Plans for review by the public, stakeholders, agencies and the committee. An alternatives Open House with rating sheets is an excellent method to receive general public input;
 - D. Produce and confirm a Draft Neighborhood Development Plan based on the responses to the Preliminary or Alternative Concept Plans.
 - E. Refine and adopt the Neighborhood Development Plan, and ultimately integrate it into the *Comprehensive Plan* as an amendment.
- III. Implementation: Following neighborhood development plan adoption, establish and apply the appropriate regulatory and procedural foundation to ensure full implementation:
 - A. Facilitate developments consistent with that plan;
 - B. Establish zoning districts and boundaries in compliance with the plan;
 - C. Review proposed land divisions, conditional use permits and planned developments based on conformance with the plan, including consideration of land use pattern, density/intensity, community character, and infrastructure recommendations.