

MID TOWN NORTH A PLAN FOR 2003-2007

FIRST ANNUAL REPORT 2004



HISTORY

In January 2001, the City of Rockford and SwedishAmerican Hospital signed an agreement under which the City promised to relocate Charles Street south to what was 3rd Avenue between 9th and 11th Streets, and the Hospital agreed to make a major expansion to its acute care hospital facility at its current location and remain there at least until the end of 2015.



This project had a strong impact on the neighborhood around SwedishAmerican Hospital. In order to determine the true condition of the neighborhood and what steps could be taken to strengthen it, the City, SwedishAmerican Hospital and the SwedishAmerican Medical Foundation agreed to a joint planning process in June, 2002. A Task Force was created with three representatives from the City, two from the Hospital, one from the Foundation and one each from Mid Town District, Zion Development Corporation and Rockford Area Habitat for

Humanity. No neighborhood organization existed at the time the planning process began. Virtually every department of the City provided staff assistance.

The planning process began with monthly meetings of the Task Force. Various information about the neighborhood was presented. The Task Force then sought input from residents and investor owners in the neighborhood through a series of public meetings. What resulted was a plan with action steps identifying what needed to be done to make this a healthier neighborhood. This plan was adopted by all organizations represented on the Task Force. While the final adoption by Rockford City Council did not occur until February 9, 2004, all organizations had by then been actively working within the neighborhood for several months.

The following is a summary of the accomplishments through December of 2004.

NEIGHBORHOOD INVOLVEMENT AND RESIDENT SUPPORT

12-Month Successes

- ▶ A neighborhood organization was formed consisting of a strong core group of leaders. Officers have been elected and run the organization's meetings. These are held on the third Wednesday of every month at SwedishAmerican Hospital and that following Saturday at Rockford Bread and Bagel for those unable to attend the Wednesday evening meeting. Guest speakers have presented a variety of topics to the group.



- ▶ A newsletter was also developed and two newsletters have been distributed.
- ▶ Two neighborhood cleanups have been conducted – spring and fall. Neighborhood Standards provided the dumpsters while food for the volunteers was donated by various businesses for the functions.

- ▶ The neighborhood's first Christmas party was held to not only celebrate the holiday but to celebrate their accomplishments. They also collected donations (money, food, clothing, and toys) for several families in need.
- ▶ The neighborhood group established a system for submitting complaint and following up on them. Since the process began, 13 complaints have been documented as complete. The process includes an anonymous complaint reporting mechanism, a designated person following up on the complaint, another person driving by the address to verify if the complaint was addressed, and then a report out to the neighborhood group at the next meeting.
- ▶ The City's Human Services Department began the process of identifying a temporary site in Mid Town North to provide an access point for needed services to low-income residents. Several contacts were made but no site chosen.
- ▶ Human Services also began the research on creation of a Neighborhood Academy. The neighborhood group has been informed of this plan and has been asked to begin thinking about topics for presentation.

IMPROVE JOB SKILLS OF NEIGHBORHOOD RESIDENTS

12-Month Successes

- ▶ SwedishAmerican Hospital determined that CNA (Certified Nursing Aid) job skills, education and training were needed.
 - ▶ SwedishAmerican Medical Foundation held a recruitment fair with excellent results.
 - ▶ 13 neighborhood residents received training as CNAs and found jobs in 2004.
- ▶ The City of Rockford's Community Assistance Program (CAP) awarded grants to three organizations in Mid Town North. These included
 - ▶ \$24,000 to Promised Land Employment Services to support the development of a job search training and resource program.
 - ▶ \$14,695 to SwedishAmerican Medical Foundation to support the development of a Healthcare Career Management Training program.
 - ▶ \$7,300 was awarded to Valkommen Plaza to support the development of a computer lab.
- ▶ A representative from the City's Human Services Department met with the SwedishAmerican Human Resources Department to determine the criteria needed to be an employee of the hospital, with Promised Land Employment Agency to determine the training needed and for Promised Land to begin constructing a curriculum that will fit the needs of the residents.

IDENTIFY SUBSTANDARD HOUSING; DETERMINE BEST USE OF PROPERTIES

12-Month Successes

- ▶ SwedishAmerican Medical Foundation identified and pursued numerous sites for construction of new homes by Rockford Habitat for Humanity.

- ▶ Habitat for Humanity received lots purchased by SwedishAmerican and three lots by the City of Rockford in order to begin the construction single-family homes.
- ▶ Five sites were donated by SwedishAmerican to the City of Rockford's Homestead Board for its West Side Alive! program.
- ▶ The property at 1636 4th Avenue was identified as substandard and was acquired by the City through its foreclosure process. It is scheduled for demolition in 2005.
- ▶ The property at 612 8th Street was acquired and demolished in 2004.
- ▶ Fast track demolition was conducted at 805 6th Avenue (not in Mid Town but in the near vicinity).
- ▶ The property at 418 10th Street was purchased and cleared by SwedishAmerican Medical Foundation.



INCREASE HOME OWNERSHIP TO 49%

12-Month Successes

- ▶ Habitat for Humanity constructed and sold 17 new single-family homes in the district in 2003 and 2004.
- ▶ Three new West Side Alive! homes were completed and sold by the City of Rockford's Homestead Board: 1335 4th Avenue, 1239 5th Avenue, and 1411 4th Avenue.
- ▶ SwedishAmerican Medical Foundation created an Employee Assistance Program to aid employees of SwedishAmerican in purchasing and improving homes in Mid Town North.
- ▶ The Human Services Department opened nine Individual Development Accounts for residents in this area. These funds provide financial literacy training and matched savings account towards the purchase of a new home.
- ▶ Two homebuyers were assisted through the Assist Bond program in 2003 and eight in 2004.
- ▶ The HELP program was announced in November of 2003. This program is a homebuyer assistance program offered through the Illinois Housing Development Authority.



ENCOURAGE INVESTOR AND OWNER-OCCUPIED INVESTMENT IN MID TOWN NORTH

12-Month Successes

- ▶ Five "Paint-up/Fix-up" grants from the SwedishAmerican Medical Foundation have assisted homeowners with improvements to their properties. Projects vary from new siding, insulation, windows, tree trimming, basic repairs from repairing stoops to painting the exterior of homes with a 50/50 grant.
- ▶ A grant application was submitted to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) under their Neighborhood Initiative program by the City of Rockford and SwedishAmerican. Upon receipt of the HUD funds, which will be in the amount of \$298,230, concrete driveways and new garages will be built in the district to remove cars from the streets. The program is expected to begin in the summer of 2005.
- ▶ The City's Human Services Department marketed the weatherization program by distributing 300 brochures in the area. As a result, calls to Human Services increased by at least 25%.
- ▶ The Human Services Department assisted 19 properties in 2003-2004 and 21 in 2004-2005 through this weatherization program. This program offers improvements such as the replacement of furnaces, insulation and windows.
- ▶ The Human Services Department provided rehabilitation assistance to 20 property owners to carry out light rehab work through their Energy Conservation and Housing Rehabilitation (ECHR) program.
- ▶ A CAP grant was awarded in the amount of \$17,500 to Habitat for Humanity to develop a Habitat ReStore in the Mid Town North area.
- ▶ Alpine Bank committed \$500,000 in the form of 4.99% loan with 5-year terms to use as match to the City of Rockford's programs.
- ▶ The Human Services Department provided assistance through their Low Income Housing Energy Assistance Program to 233 households in this area during 2003 and 2004, thereby stabilizing their occupancy within the neighborhood.

IMPROVE THE EXTERIOR APPEARANCE OF PROPERTIES IN MID TOWN NORTH

12 Month Successes

- ▶ Through flyers and reverse 911 calls, the neighborhood has been notified of the City of Rockford's rehabilitation programs through the Community Development Department. As a result:
- ▶ 16 homeowners have been assisted in the rehabilitation of their property.
- ▶ 7 investor owners have been assisted in rehabilitating their 14 rental units.



- ▶ As a result of a short and long term planning process, it was identified by the neighborhood organization that a goal for the group would be to complete a neighborhood cleanup. At a neighborhood meeting, representatives from two other neighborhood groups and Public Works came and provided guidance on “how to” conduct a neighborhood cleanup. Two neighborhood cleanups were conducted – May and September of 2004.
- ▶ The neighborhood has been advised through the newsletters and leaflets on what services are offered and who to contact at the City of Rockford for Neighborhood Standards issues and Public Works assistance.



Improve Safety and Security

12-Month Successes

- ▶ A CAP grant was awarded to Carpenter's Place to support operational funds for the development of a prostitution outreach program. Unfortunately, client participation was unsuccessful and the project was discontinued.
- ▶ In 2003, the City of Rockford's Fire Department conducted a voluntary home safety survey.
- ▶ A police substation was opened on 7th Street to serve the neighborhood.
- ▶ Total offenses for the Sub Beats represented in this neighborhood have been on the decrease: 2002 totaled 7,424; 2003 offenses went down to 6,610; and 2004 offenses went down again to 6,586.

UPGRADE PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS

12-Month Successes

- ▶ 13th Street Bridge removal has been completed.
- ▶ 8th Street resurfacing, at 5th and 6th Avenue, has been completed ('03).
- ▶ 8th Street resurfacing, at 6th and 7th Avenue, has been completed. ('03)
- ▶ 8th Street resurfacing, at 4th and 3rd Avenue, has been completed. ('04)
- ▶ 8th Street resurfacing, at 5th and 4th Avenue, has been completed. ('04)

INCREASE RECREATIONAL FACILITIES AND PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

12-Month Successes

- ▶ The lot at the corner of 10th Street and 4th Avenue was purchased and cleared by SwedishAmerican Medical Foundation. The Donor Park will be created once HUD's Neighborhood Initiative funds are received – probable start date is the spring of 2005.
- ▶ SwedishAmerican Park is now located on land that once housed a closed business and two homes. The property was purchased by the Foundation and the buildings were torn down. Kids Around the World was contracted to build the playground. Support was provided by the Medical Foundation and William Howard Trust. A grant is being pursued to help fund additional seating and lighting to encourage parents to accompany their children to the playground and, to ensure a safe environment.



PRESERVE THE ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER OF MID TOWN NORTH

12-Month Successes

- ▶ Habitat for Humanity redesigned the exterior design of their homes specifically for the Mid Town North area.
- ▶ The West Side Alive! homes were designed by a local architect to blend into the existing neighborhood
- ▶ Homes were rehabilitated through the City of Rockford in keeping with the character of the neighborhood.
- ▶ A complete historic resources survey was completed of the Mid Town North area.

