

Section III: Community Participation

Community Meetings

The Affton Community Plan builds upon the community input gathered during the development of the Affton–Gravois Business Corridor Phase I Plan. During the development of that plan, community input was gathered using task forces, a steering committee, open house meetings, and town hall forums.

Community input for the Affton Community Plan involved regular meetings with the Affton Community Betterment Association (ACBA) and a series of small, targeted community meetings with service providers, real estate experts, the faith community, and the Affton School District. Some of the community meetings are highlighted below:

SL St. Louis County Government service providers	February 23, 2001
SL Affton School District	March 1, 2001
SL Affton area faith community	March 6, 2001
SL Affton area realtors	April 3, 2001

Key Community Issues

The topic of discussion for each meeting focused on community housing and development needs, changes occurring throughout the community, and the possible role St. Louis County Government may have to assist with community revitalization efforts. The following are highlights of the issues discussed:

Housing

The four key housing issues that emerged from the community meetings were:

- Attracting and Retaining Young Families
All of the groups discussed the need to attract young, professional families to the area. Participants feel that the Affton area is a good starter home location for many young families. According to the real estate experts interviewed, a lack of modern housing amenities makes it difficult for families to find move-up housing that meets today's consumer preferences. Additionally, a significant portion of the housing stock that is available requires a great amount of updating and modernization. As a result, it is perceived that many families leave the

Affton community for other areas with larger and newer homes.

- **New Housing Development**
Most groups identified the need for new housing development. Currently, single-family attached housing is very popular in the market but not widely available in the Affton area. Furthermore, new single-family homes, priced from the \$150,000–\$170,000+ are needed. An obstacle to new housing development is the availability of land for large-scale development. In Affton, the cost of acquisition, land assemblage, and demolition create challenges to potential developers.
- **Rental Housing**
Several groups mentioned the perceived increase in rental housing as a growing problem. Although the amount of rental property may be a growing concern, overall, the Affton community remains near the County average in terms of the number of rental units. Members from the real estate community suggested that owner-occupied housing units are being converted to renter-occupied housing as elderly homeowners die or move into alternate senior-type housing.
- **Property Conservation District**
In an attempt to preserve and protect the quality of the housing, several groups suggested instituting a Property Conservation District in the Affton area. A Property Conservation District is a tool to preserve the quality of housing stock, and to protect neighborhoods from deterioration that threatens health, safety and welfare. In unincorporated areas of St. Louis County, a Property Conservation District is designated by the St. Louis County Council through enactment of legislation that requires an occupancy permit when there is a change in occupancy of dwelling units.

Services for Senior Citizens

The amount of senior citizens residing in the Affton area was discussed in all of the groups. Alternative housing accommodations such as assisted living facilities, attached housing, and condominiums were recognized as a community need. Furthermore, programs that enable seniors on fixed incomes to maintain and remain in their homes were identified as needs. Programs designed for senior citizens are needed during the daytime because many senior citizens do not like to drive in the evening. The Affton White-Rodgers Community Center provides meals on wheels, which is very popular with many senior citizens.

Commercial Development

The declining quality of the commercial development in the Affton community

continues to be an important issue. The Affton School District expressed a desire to increase the tax base in the Affton area. The tentative closing of the White-Rodgers manufacturing plant` will have a negative impact on the school district revenues due to the loss of hundreds of jobs and a decrease in real and personal property tax assessment. New development is needed to increase the assessed valuation within the district.

Some meeting participants stated that retail and commercial uses that cater to the elderly are needed. Furthermore, locations for redevelopment opportunities were discussed. Several industrial sites were identified as development opportunities, although not for retail. Generally, the commercial realtors felt that big box retail is probably unlikely due to the lack of favorable locations and high concentrations of these developments around the Affton area. The minimum acreage needed for a successful retail redevelopment project is about 15-30 acres, which is not available Affton.

The concept of a town center was also discussed. Since Affton doesn't have a town hall or other symbolic public space, participants expressed interest in creating a central focal point of the community.

Role of St. Louis County Government

Overall, most meeting participants felt that St. Louis County Government should continue to facilitate the community revitalization process. While the establishment of the ACBA has enabled the County to work with members of the community, it was noted that ongoing technical support, economic development assistance, and coordination between service providers are ways in which the County can be of assistance.