

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Mayor and Town Council

**FROM:** Sykes Street Planning Students

**SUBJECT:** Report on Fall 2002 Involvement in the Sykes Street Project

**DATE:** February 10, 2003

The purpose of this report is to update the Council on the status of the Sykes Street Project in the Northside neighborhood and to provide recommendations for future town involvement in the Northside neighborhood.

**BACKGROUND**

Students in the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Department of City and Regional Planning have developed a strong relationship with the Sykes Street Steering Committee (see Attachment A, History of the Sykes Street Steering Committee). On October 7, 2002, we provided a report to the Council detailing the history of the Sykes Street Steering Committee and outlining the intentions of the Sykes Street Steering Committee for the Fall of 2002. It was also requested that the original Sykes Street focus area be expanded to include a larger portion of the Northside neighborhood. Throughout the Fall of 2002, eight students in the Techniques in Neighborhood Revitalization workshop have worked with the Sykes Street Steering Committee on three goals:

- 1) creating plans for crime prevention through environmental design;
- 2) community organizing by establishing block captains and holding neighborhood events; and
- 3) securing grants to fund a Community Organizer position.

**DISCUSSION**

Crime and safety have been concerns for the Sykes Street Steering Committee since its inception. This semester, the Environmental Design Team chose to tackle the issue of crime and safety by developing neighborhood site plans that utilize environmental design techniques to reduce the opportunity to commit a crime. After analyzing data from the Chapel Hill Police Department, crime statistics from the neighborhood and previous neighborhood safety surveys, the Environmental Design Team organized a community Action Planning Day to gather input from residents and community stakeholders on implementing environmental design strategies in the neighborhood.

At Action Planning Day, the Sykes Street Steering Committee discussed three problem sites identified as targets for redevelopment through environmental design—the intersection of Craig

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Street and Bynum Street; the area surrounding the intersection of Sykes Street and Gomains Avenue; and the Peninsula area at the intersection of Graham Street, Nunn Street, Whitaker Street, and Sykes Street. Residents and community stakeholders provided many useful environmental design suggestions; the Environmental Design Team has prepared recommendations for the Chapel Hill Town Council based on the successes from Action Planning Day. Summaries of the recommendations are as follows:

**Craig and Bynum**

1. Work with Carrboro on engaging the adjacent neighborhood in the issue of the Craig-Bynum vacant lot.
2. Connect the path from Sunset Drive into the vacant property with the existing path in the right-of-way.
3. The Town should consider purchasing the vacant property on Craig Street, just east of the Craig-Bynum corner.
4. Work with St. Joseph's A.M.E. Church to leverage possible easement acquisition for public path.
5. Formalize the path from Craig Street to Baldwin Park that lies within the Town of Chapel Hill right-of-way.

**Sykes and Gomains**

1. The Town should attempt to lease the vacant lot on the corner of Sykes Street and Gomains Avenue for use as a community garden.
2. A lighting survey should be conducted by the Town to identify obstructions to streetlights.
3. Adopt a model house in the neighborhood as the beginnings of a pilot program that will showcase the accomplishments that can be made in the neighborhood.
4. Place sidewalks along Sykes Street.
5. Place sidewalks along Craig Street.
6. Develop an educational program concerning landlords' rights related to the activity of their renters.

Peninsula

1. EmPOWERment, Inc. should build two new affordable homes on the Peninsula.
2. The Town of Chapel Hill should install stop signs at the corners of Sykes and Whitaker Streets, Sykes and Nunn Streets, Nunn and Whitaker Streets, and Graham and Whitaker Streets.
3. Create a partnership between EmPOWERment, Inc. and the Town of Chapel Hill to develop a comprehensive landscaping program for the Peninsula and homes around the Peninsula.
4. The Town of Chapel Hill should implement a Property Maintenance Grant for residents who want to improve their property but do not have the financial means to do so. The Town can work with EmPOWERment, Inc. to advertise the program and to identify interested residents.

A detailed discussion of Action Planning Day activities and the resulting recommendations can be found in Attachment B.

The overarching goal of the community organizing work was to support the outreach efforts of the recently hired Northside neighborhood Community Organizer, Delores Bailey. More specifically, this included helping Mrs. Bailey with three projects: 1) expanding the focus area of the Sykes Street Steering Committee (see Attachment C); 2) establishing block captains; and 3) sponsoring and planning a neighborhood event. The Town Council gave approval to expand the study area in September. Together with the Community Organizer, Delores Bailey, the Community Organizing Team delineated blocks to which block captains were to be assigned and prepared informational packets on the block captain position. Delores Bailey has already identified three block captains and is working on identifying candidates to fill in the remaining positions. Finally, the group was successful in organizing the First Annual Frances Hargraves Memorial Walk and Celebration on Saturday, November 16<sup>th</sup>. In spite of the inclement weather, more than 50 people joined the Walk. Donations were raised and with additional funds provided by the Town will be used to place a bench dedicated to Ms. Hargraves at the Hargraves Center. The Sykes Street Steering Committee is planning on making this celebration an annual event. Future work in the neighborhood should continue to focus on increasing informal neighborhood outreach to residents to attract residents to the block captain positions and on increasing resident participation in the Sykes Street Steering Committee. The Committee should also continue to sponsor frequent community events.

The Northside neighborhood is in need of a dedicated Community Organizer to increase resident involvement in and commitment to the neighborhood. Although EmPOWERment Inc. has hired a part-time, temporary Community Organizer, additional funds are needed to secure this position on full-time, permanent basis. The Grant Writing Team has worked diligently to identify and secure funding for this important position. A significant success of the Team is the creation of a grant template to be used as a model document on which to base future grant

applications. During the course of the semester, two grant proposals were completed and submitted to potential funding sources and two additional opportunities for financial support continue to be pursued. Searching for secure funding for the ongoing community organizing work should continue to be a high priority.

The Sykes Street Steering Committee utilized a \$500 grant from Community Development funds and a \$300 grant from the Chapel Hill Police Department to cover costs related to the projects. In addition, the Committee accepted many donations from local businesses and residents. A detailed summary of financial support for the project is included as Attachment D.

### CONCLUSION

The three student teams have achieved a number of successes for the Sykes Street Steering Committee over the course of the semester. In addition to these accomplishments, a number of recommendations have been formulated to continue the Northside neighborhood's development through community building. Recommendations that have been given high priority for improvements in the neighborhood are:

- 1) conduct a lighting survey to identify obstructions to neighborhood streetlights,
- 2) adopt a model house in the neighborhood as an example of the accomplishments that can be made in the community,
- 3) build two new affordable homes on the vacant lot known as the "Peninsula",
- 4) install stop signs at the corners of four intersections,
- 5) implement a property maintenance grant for residents who want to improve their property but do not have the financial means to do so,
- 6) increase informal neighborhood outreach to residents to attract block captains and increase resident participation in the Sykes Street Steering Committee,
- 7) continue to hold frequent community events, and
- 8) continue to search for and submit grants to secure funding for the ongoing community organizing work.

Implementation of these recommendations will encourage positive developments and foster a strong sense of commitment to the Northside neighborhood in community residents. The successful accomplishments of the workshop have brought about positive changes in the Northside neighborhood. Residents are excited about the neighborhood opportunities offered through the workshop activities and have been encouraged by the commitment of the students in the workshop. In addition, community stakeholders, such as Town Department representatives, have noted the changes in the Northside neighborhood and are eager to continue work in this community.

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## ATTACHMENTS

- A. History of the Sykes Street Project
- B. Detailed Recommendations from Action Planning Day
- C. Expanded Focus Area
- D. Financial Support for Fall 200



## **Attachment A. History of Sykes Street Project**

On January 8, 2001, the Council adopted a resolution authorizing the Town to participate and provide technical assistance and staff support in an advisory capacity to develop an Action Strategy for the Sykes Street area. Representatives from EmPOWERment, Inc., Orange Community Housing and Land Trust, the Sykes Street area, students from the University of North Carolina Department of City and Regional Planning, and the Town (including representatives from the Planning, Parks and Recreation, and Police Departments) have continued to meet to discuss a variety of issues facing the Sykes Street neighborhood. The Council agreed to provide \$500 of Community Development funds for class expenses related to the project. Students working with the Committee on this project presented a final report to the Council on May 21, 2001.

On September 24, 2001, the Council endorsed the Sykes Street Action plan presented to the Council on May 21, 2001, and authorized the Town's continued participation in implementing a plan for making improvements in the Sykes Street neighborhood.

During the fall semester of 2001, the Steering Committee and students focused on identifying and developing neighborhood leadership and planned two key events: a community charette focusing on reducing crime in the community and environmental design changes to improve the community and a community clean up and block party. The students presented their report to the Council on January 14, 2002.

On February 11, 2002 the Council authorized the Town's continued participation in implementing a plan for making improvements in the Sykes Street neighborhood and budgeted \$500 of Community Development funds for class expenses. This including working with a third group of students during the spring of 2002.

On March 4, 2002, we provided a report to the Council to respond to a report on recommended improvements in the Sykes Street area presented to the Council on January 14, 2002 by the Planning students. At that time, we reported that we would continue to work with the Sykes Street Steering Committee and residents to identify problems and concerns in the community and to develop ideas for improvements. We also reported that based on recommendations presented to the Council by the Planning students on behalf of the residents, we would focus our immediate efforts in three key areas:

1. Providing increased Police coverage;
2. Improving property maintenance and housing conditions; and
3. Determining how best to address identified public improvements in the area.

During the spring semester of 2002, the students work focused on increasing resident participation. Two highlights of the semester's activities were: (1) a community charette held on March 2, 2002 where residents had the opportunity to voice their

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concerns and develop solutions to neighborhood problems; and (2) a community event for residents of the Sykes Street area held on Saturday, April 27. Approximately 125 people attended the event that included music, dancing and lunch that was provided with the assistance of local merchants.

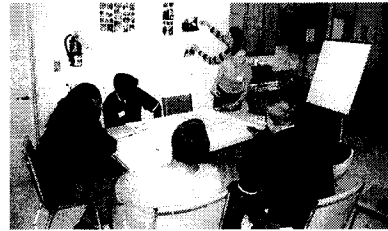
A student from the class continued to work with the Planning Department throughout the summer to continue to implement activities in the neighborhood. On August 6, the Sykes Street Steering Committee planned a successful event, Neighborhood Night Out. The event included a group walk through the Northside neighborhood, music, and food provided largely by donations from local businesses and organizations.

On October 7, 2002, the Town Council unanimously approved an expansion of the original boundaries of the Sykes Street Steering Committee focus area. As the project progressed, it became clear that the issues associated with the Sykes Street area extended beyond the boundaries of Sykes Street and the neighboring properties to a larger portion of the Northside Neighborhood as a whole. Previous semesters had focused on an area bordered by the termination of Sykes Street to the north, Nunn Street and Whitaker Street to the south, Mitchell Lane and Edwards Alley on the east, and the Carrboro Town line to the west. The new study area widened the boundaries to include the area to the west of Roberson Street, north of Rosemary Street, east of the Town of Carrboro line, and south of McMasters Street. The expansion of the study area was necessary in order to more effectively address the issues faced in the Northside neighborhood. Furthermore, by expanding the focus area, more people within the community are affected and targeted for involvement with the SSSC activities.



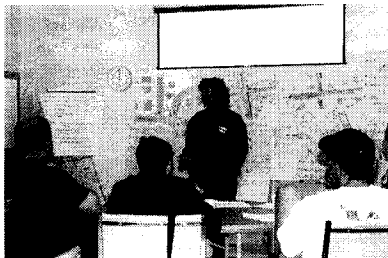
**Attachment B. Detailed Recommendations from Action Planning Day**

At Action Planning Day, the Sykes Street Steering Committee discussed three problem sites identified as targets for redevelopment through environmental design—the intersection of Craig Street and Bynum Street; the area surrounding the intersection of Sykes Street and Gomains Avenue; and the Peninsula area at the intersection of Graham Street, Nunn Street, Whitaker Street, and Sykes Street. These areas had been identified through extensive analysis of crime data from the Chapel Hill Police Department as “hot spots” of crime in the Northside Neighborhood. Action Planning Day participants split into three panels to address issues specific to each site. Each small panel was composed of representatives of various stakeholder positions; all panels included community residents, members of the Chapel Hill Police Department and Chapel Hill Planning Department.



*Small Group Exercise*

The small panel activity began with a discussion of the major issues faced at the site. Residents were shown a large-scale map of the area and photos of the area for orientation purposes and to ensure that the group memory of the site was accurate.



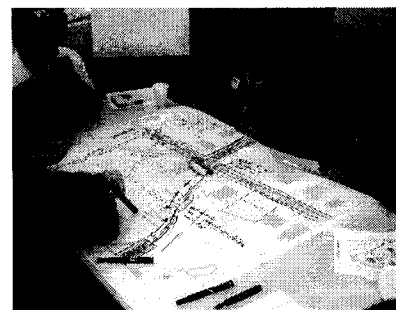
*Community Mapping Exercise*

Next, panel members’ suggestions were drawn in on the map, to provide a visual representation of the spatial improvements. At the end of this hands-on process, the each panel compiled a final comprehensive map and sheet of best recommendations. The three focus areas, Craig and Bynum, Sykes and Gomains, and the Peninsula, and corresponding recommendations are discussed below.

**Action Planning Day: Craig and Bynum**

***Background of Area***

The first focus area is located where Craig Street turns perpendicularly to the north and becomes Bynum Street. The property to the west of this turn is a vacant lot that is informally used for pathways to Baldwin Park in Carrboro, which adjoins the vacant lot. Part of the vacant land is designated as a public right-of-way, terminating at the Carrboro-Chapel Hill line, and would presumably be an extension of Craig Street. This right-of-way area is where the most pronounced pathway has been established. Additional pathways connect the vacant lot to the northern terminus of Sunset Drive and to other portions of the adjacent Baldwin Park.



*Action Planning Day – Craig and Bynum small group*

**Issues**

Members of the small panel identified the following items as issues of immediate concern in the neighborhood:

*General Safety*

The Craig-Bynum intersection is considered to be a generally unsafe location in the neighborhood. The presence of shortcut paths on an empty lot, combined with poor lighting in a heavily wooded area away from the streets, present opportunity for crime to occur. Also, the jurisdictional boundary between the Towns of Chapel Hill and Carrboro that separate the area is believed to lead to complications in trying to deter crime in the area.

*Property Ownership*

Property is a significant issue for this focus area because the section is composed of two parcels, one owned by St. Joseph's African Methodist Episcopal Church and the other owned by a private family. Although the parcels currently accommodate a quasi-public use, they are privately owned and therefore any legitimate public use would require a legal arrangement of some manner. St. Joseph's A.M.E. Church has planned the development of a youth/community center on the site, so development of the site for other uses—including recreational ones—may not be a feasible option.

*Continuing Current Usage of the Site*

As mentioned previously, the site is presently being used, although not officially, for paths connecting the Baldwin Park playground in the Town of Carrboro to the Craig-Bynum corner and the northern end of Sunset Drive. Participants in the APD issue group on this site claimed to use the paths regularly and expressed concern that closing or restricting them in the name of crime prevention would prohibit a legitimate and convenient function. These paths also cross over the boundary separating the two parcels comprising the site, which present a difficult arrangement if the paths were to be formally improved.

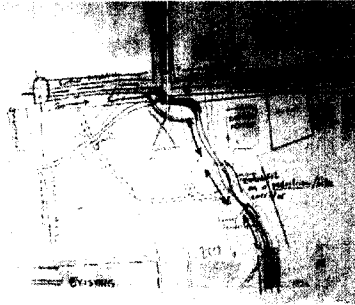
**Recommendations**

The small Action Planning Day panel identified the following recommendations as next steps for the Craig-Bynum site. The timeline for the recommendation (immediate, long-term, or ongoing) is also noted. All APD participants reviewed and approved the recommendations.

**1. Work with Carrboro on engaging the adjacent neighborhood in the issue of the Craig-Bynum vacant lot.**

Most of the paths existing on the vacant lot at the Craig-Bynum corner connect to the adjacent Baldwin Park, which lies just across the Chapel Hill town boundary, in the municipal jurisdiction of Carrboro. Baldwin Park is surrounded by a neighborhood centered on Lloyd and Broad Streets. The Town of Chapel Hill should involve the adjacent Carrboro neighborhood and the Town of Carrboro in any plans for improvement of the Craig-Bynum site. *Ongoing.*

- 2. Connect the path from Sunset Drive into the vacant property with the existing path in the right-of-way.**



*Action Planning Day – Craig and Bynum recommendations*

The issue group noted that these two paths are used as a practical means of reaching Baldwin Park and nearby commercial uses located in Carrboro. They supported the idea that the paths should be connected, so that residents using the path from Sunset Drive could easily and safely cross the town line by use of the path connecting the Craig-Bynum corner to the Carrboro line. It is recommended that the two lines meet at the right-of-way at the corner of the two streets to provide maximum connectivity to existing paths, whether they are foot and bicycle corridors or complete streets. *Long-term.*

- 3. The Town should consider purchasing the vacant property on Craig Street, just east of the Craig-Bynum corner.**

Any easement acquisitions for a public path would be difficult to negotiate and may further compromise safety concerns by forcing the alignment of the path in a way that would create more blind corners and make good visibility difficult. The church's plans to develop a community center on the property may also keep the improvement of existing paths from being easily accomplished. The ideas of the APD group included possible future development of the site into a park that could complement the Carrboro facility, and purchase would most likely be the only option that would permit such a public use on the site. *Long-term.*

- 4. Work with St. Joseph's A.M.E. Church to leverage possible easement acquisition for public path.**

Even if the option to purchase the property mentioned in Recommendation 2 is valid and feasible, the Town should consider the acquisition of property within the church-owned parcel so that the design of a path connecting Sunset Drive and the Craig-Bynum corner does not have to be impaired by existing property lines. Since this portion of the church property is not immediately accessible from the Craig and Bynum rights-of-way, it may not interfere with the possibilities for development of the site. *Long-term.*

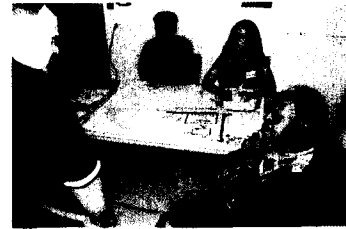
- 5. Formalize the path from Craig Street to Baldwin Park that lies within the Town of Chapel Hill right-of-way.**

The Town should create a formally landscaped path through the town right-of-way. Residents have identified this path as a beneficial part of their neighborhood. In its current state, the path is a dirt trail with poor lighting. A formal path should be landscaped, possibly with pavement for the benefit of bicyclists, and should have adequate lighting so as to be less dangerous for community residents utilizing the path. Formalization of this path would reduce the use of the other informal paths in the area, which currently cut across private property. *Immediate.*

**Action Planning Day: Sykes and Gomains**

***Background of Area***

The second focus area is the intersection of Sykes Street and Gomains avenue and the immediately surrounding area along these two streets. This region has frequently been sited as one of the most crime-ridden sections of the neighborhood. Crime reports indicate that more crime occurs in these areas than any other section of the neighborhood. More than any other portion of the Northside study area, past surveys have indicated that residents feel most unsafe in the area around the Sykes and Gomains intersection.



*Action Planning Day – Sykes and Gomains small group*

***Issues***

Members of the small panel identified the following items as issues of immediate concern in the neighborhood:

***Vacant Lot on Northeast Corner of Intersection***

The property forming the Northwest corner of the Sykes and Gomains intersection is currently a vacant lot. The lot is often overgrown with bushes, trees and weeds, creating not only an unsightly area in which to live, but the clutter on the lot makes it difficult to see through the property, providing a good hiding place for criminal activity. The lot is sometimes used as a cut through to a house that is known for drug activity in the neighborhood. The Town Inspections Department is aware of the problem with the vacant lot and has made attempts to have the lot cleaned on several occasions. However, the problem has not been resolved through these means. The overgrown appearance of the lot, as well as the opportunity for crime, make most residents very apprehensive of the intersection.

***Trespassing***

Trespassing across private property is a concern of many Northside residents. It is common for individuals to take short-cuts through the neighborhood, even if that means cutting across private property. Coupled with the high incidence of breaking and entering in the neighborhood, many older residents are concerned for their safety when seeing unfamiliar people crossing their property.

***Lighting***

Though many new streetlights have been installed in the Northside neighborhood in the past year, many residents feel that the degree of lighting in the area is still inadequate. Neighbors complain that the lights in the neighborhood are frequently out and that there are lengthy maintenance periods. Also, despite the addition of new lights, there are many areas of the neighborhood that are sparsely lit and remain in the shadows at night; in some of these areas trees and other structures block the light from the streetlights. The lack of lighting increases the safety concerns of the residents.

*Overgrown Bushes at Public Housing*

A small parking lot on the southeast corner of Sykes and Gomains is shielded from view by a row of bushes. While these bushes provide more pleasing scenery than the parking lot, the bushes have not been adequately maintained. They are currently overgrown and unsightly. In addition to their current neglected state, the bushes obstruct the view of both nearby residents and passing motorists.

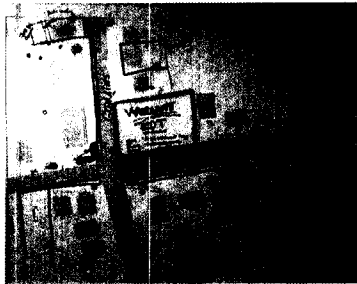
*Renters*

Rental properties are a significant concern in the neighborhood; over the last several years, the Northside neighborhood has transitioned from a predominantly owner-occupied neighborhood to a predominantly rental community. Many residents were concerned that property owners who lived elsewhere were unknowingly renting their homes to individuals involved in the crime in the neighborhood. These rental units are becoming a locus of crime in the neighborhood.

*Recommendations*

The small Action Planning Day panel identified the following recommendations as next steps for the area near the Sykes and Gomains intersection. The timeline for the recommendation (immediate, long-term, or ongoing) is also noted. All APD participants reviewed and approved the recommendations.

- 1. The Town should attempt to lease the vacant lot on the corner of Sykes Street and Gomains Avenue for use as a community garden.**



*Action Planning Day – Sykes and Gomains Recommendations*

The Town should attempt to work out a five-year leasing arrangement with the property owner. This option has high potential, as the owner is not currently utilizing the property and would be free to utilize the property in some other manner in the future. In the intervening time, instead of contributing to negative activity in the neighborhood, the Town and neighborhood would benefit from the addition of the community garden. The community garden would provide an opportunity for the residents of the neighborhood

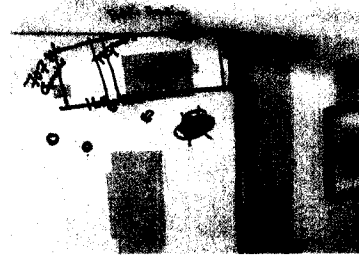
to congregate for a productive activity that would increase investment in the neighborhood. This program should consider involving the youth of the community and perhaps a local school group in the development and care of the garden. *Long-term.*

- 2. A lighting survey should be conducted by the Town to identify obstructions to streetlights.**

Residents have identified several areas where trees or other structures block the light from streetlights. The survey would identify these areas as a first step to removing the obstructions or relocating the streetlights. Residents will be encouraged to continue to call Chapel Hill Police Department and Duke Power to report outages of streetlights. *Immediate and Ongoing.*

3. **Adopt a model house in the neighborhood as the beginnings of a pilot program that will showcase the accomplishments that can be made in the neighborhood.**

A home at 707 West Gomains Avenue has been identified for this program. The home is facing many of the problems mentioned as problems in this area of the neighborhood and the homeowner is concerned citizen who does not have the funds available to implement these suggestions. As part of a pilot program of crime prevention and home improvements, the Town would assist the committed homeowner in making these beneficial changes to the property. The Town, partnering with Orange County, currently provides assistance for the rehabilitation of houses; this program should be modeled after the rehabilitation program. The model home property should receive help from the Town to implement environmental design strategies that will decrease the opportunity for criminal activity to occur on the property. A potential description of this program is contained in Recommendation #4 of the Peninsula focus group, discussed below. Specific recommendations for the home at 707 West Gomains Avenue are as follows: Prickly bushes should be planted around the property at knee or waist height, to deter individuals from trespassing across the property. A survey should be conducted to ensure that lighting around the home is adequate and properly maintained. A tree on Town property that blocks views of the surrounding neighborhood will be significantly trimmed or removed. Motion-detector lighting should be installed to deter potential intruders. As the pilot program is developed more fully and strongly established, the program should be expanded to include other properties in the neighborhood and throughout Chapel Hill. *Immediate.*



*Action Planning Day – Sykes and Gomains model house recommendations*

4. **Place sidewalks along Sykes Street.**

Sidewalks will formalize pathways along the street and make it safer and more convenient for residents to walk within the neighborhood. Sykes Street has been listed on the Town's regular Sidewalk Installation Schedule since the fall of 2001; however, funding for this schedule does not consider community development monies that could be used to finance this project. Utilizing other community funds, rather than traditional public works funding could increase the speed at which this project was realized. The eastern side of Sykes Street seems most feasible for sidewalks. A public housing complex on the eastern side of Sykes Street has existing sidewalks in some areas; the proposed sidewalk would connect to the existing sidewalks. Also, there is a public housing playground on the eastern side of Sykes Street; the sidewalks would permit safer travel of children to and from the playground. *Immediate.*

**5. Place sidewalks along Craig Street.**

Sidewalks will formalize pathways along the streets and make it safer and more convenient for residents to walk within the neighborhood. Sidewalks along Craig Street would encourage pedestrian traffic along Craig Street rather than along Gomains Avenue. In addition, sidewalks along Craig Street will potentially connect to other pathways at the end of Craig Street. *Immediate.*

**6. Develop an educational program concerning landlords' rights related to the activity of their renters.**

The residents of the neighborhood are concerned about absentee landlords renting property to individuals involved in criminal activity in the neighborhood, or who allow criminal activity to occur on their property. An educational program concerning the merits of such issues as drug-free leases and criminal background checks should be developed. The program could be composed of such pieces as a compilation of educational materials, conversations with the Community Organizer and Block Captains and community meetings with landlords. Making property owners knowledgeable of ways of preventing and deterring criminal activity on their property is a first step in eliminating this activity at rental properties. *Ongoing.*

**Action Planning Day: Peninsula**

***Background of Area***

The third focus area is located at the intersection of Graham Street, Nunn Street, Whitaker Street, and Sykes Street. These four roads come together to form an oddly shaped intersection commonly known as the Peninsula. The Peninsula is a vacant plot of land in the middle of the neighborhood that has become a magnet for loitering and drug dealing, especially by people from outside the community. This area has been a concern for the Town of Chapel Hill, the police department, and the residents of the neighborhood for over two years. The local Community Development Corporation, EmPOWERment, Inc., recently purchased the lot, which includes an old, substandard house to the south of the vacant land. In addition, EmPOWERment and the Orange Community Housing and Land Trust (OCHLT) are renovating a home on the corner of Sykes and Whitaker Streets.



*Action Planning Day – Peninsula  
small group*

***Issues***

Members of the small panel identified the following items as issues of immediate concern in the neighborhood:

***Loitering***

Loitering is an issue at the Peninsula at all times of the day and night. People tend to hang out on the vacant lot, in the street, and on the large rocks in front of the house on the corner of Nunn Street and Whitaker Street. With the different shape of the intersection

and the lack of traffic calming measures, automobiles approach the intersection at unsafe speeds, especially considering the number of people standing and walking in the street. Finally, residents are afraid to walk through this intersection because of the loitering and other activities taking place there.

*Vacant Homes*

There are six homes immediately surrounding the Peninsula intersection, and at the time of the Action Planning Day, four of these homes were vacant. As mentioned above, EmPOWERment and OCHLT recently renovated the home on the corner of Sykes Street and Nunn Street and are working to find a homebuyer. They are also rehabilitating the vacant house directly to the north of that home. EmPOWERment recently worked with a new homebuyer to close on the house at the corner of Sykes and Whitaker Streets. The vacant homes in this area are of concern for a number of reasons. First, without residents in the area, there are fewer “eyes on the street” to patrol the area and call the police when crime takes place. Second, the vacant homes lead to the idea that the area is neglected and, therefore, the feeling that no one is harmed by the negative activity that is taking place there.

*Crime*

Despite the fact that there is a wide variety of crime taking place on the Peninsula, specific concerns addressed by the Action Planning Day group include drug dealing, a recent mugging, and a drive-by shooting. Although the shooting and mugging were isolated incidents, they stunned and frightened the neighborhood and added to the negative perception of the area. Drug dealing, however, has been an ongoing concern for years. It is rumored that people come from all around the Triangle Region to deal and/or buy drugs in the Northside neighborhood. In other portions of the neighborhood, residents have been successful in deterring drug activity; however, the result has usually been that when one street has been cleared of drug activity, the activity has simply moved to another street in the neighborhood. Despite these successful efforts in other portions of the neighborhood, the drug activity has remained consistent around the Peninsula.

*Recommendations*

The small Action Planning Day panel identified the following recommendations as next steps for the Peninsula. The timeline for the recommendation (immediate, long-term, or ongoing) is also noted. All APD participants reviewed and approved the recommendations.

- 1. EmPOWERment, Inc. should build two new affordable homes on the Peninsula.**

The suggestion to build two new homes on the Peninsula lot will allow for more “eyes on the street”, especially during late night hours when crime is most prevalent. EmPOWERment should develop a specialized homebuyer selection in order to place and train residents who will understand what they can do to fight crime and who will take care of the area and reduce the neglected perception of the area. The new homebuyers should be encouraged to get involved in and develop the Community Watch program to deter crime throughout the Sykes



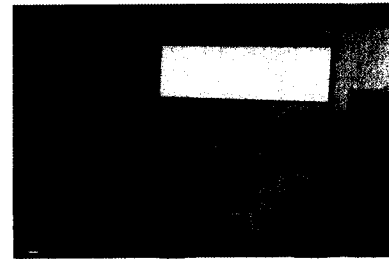
Street area and the entire Northside neighborhood. It is also hoped that the homes will act as a traffic calming measure by restricting visibility and forcing drivers to slow down at the intersection. It has been noted that the suitability of this lot for two houses has been questioned. Main concerns center on the overall size of the lot and the potential noise generated by being surrounding by streets on three sides. Also, in order to build two homes on this parcel, the area will have to be rezoned. These limitations are recognized by EmPOWERment, yet the organization is firm in the belief that this recommendation can be suitably accomplished. *Immediate.*

**2. The Town of Chapel Hill should install stop signs at the corners of Sykes and Whitaker Streets, Sykes and Nunn Streets, Nunn and Whitaker Streets, and Graham and Whitaker Streets.**

The intersection at the Peninsula is dangerous for pedestrians and drivers. Especially if new homes are to be built on the Peninsula, it is essential for the Town of Chapel Hill to add new stop signs at the intersection in order to reinforce the need to slow down and drive with caution. Currently, there are two stop signs at the Peninsula, on the corners of Graham and Whitaker Streets and Sykes and Whitaker Streets. Two additional signs should be added at the corner of Sykes Street and Nunn Street and the corner of Whitaker Street and Nunn Street. This project should be completed in conjunction with the construction of the new homes. *Immediate.*

**3. Create a partnership between EmPOWERment, Inc. and the Town of Chapel Hill to develop a comprehensive landscaping program for the Peninsula and homes around the Peninsula.**

In order to improve the appearance of the area around the Peninsula and to use environmental design to deter crime from occurring, the Town of Chapel Hill should assist EmPOWERment in preparing, funding, and implementing a comprehensive landscaping program. Suggestions include adding small bushes, flowers and/or flowering bushes, and working with the resident on the corner of Nunn Street and Whitaker Street to remove the troublesome rocks and replacing them with aesthetically pleasing landscaping. Additionally, because the Peninsula is considered a gateway to the neighborhood, improving the appearance around the gateway could have a ripple effect throughout the neighborhood by giving other residents the incentive to improve the appearance of their own lots. This comprehensive landscaping program can be started in conjunction with the site plans for the new homes, although it would not be implemented until the new homes are completed. As a long-term extension of this project, a comprehensive landscaping program for the entire Northside neighborhood should be considered. *Long-term.*



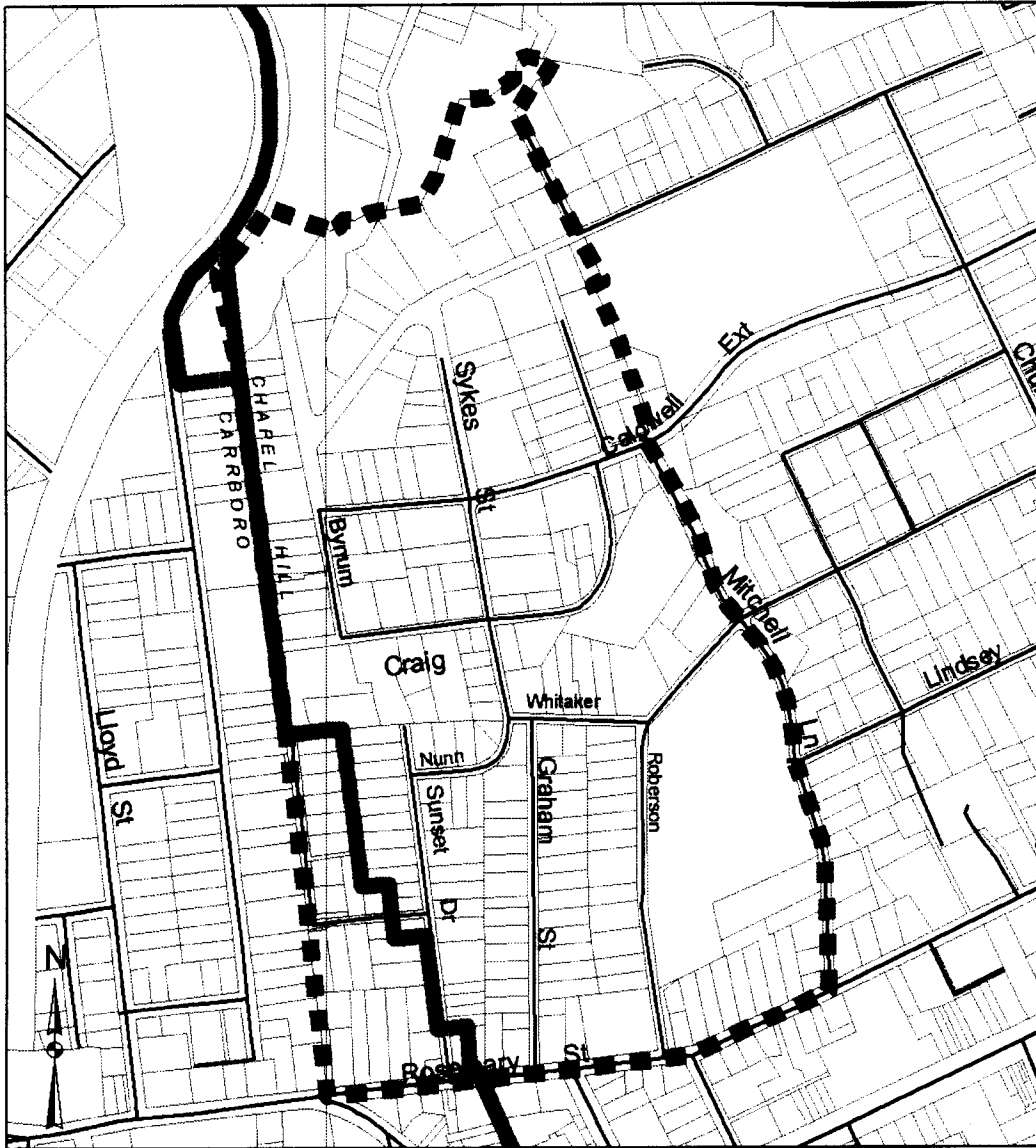
*Action Planning Day – Peninsula  
Recommendations*

- 4. The Town of Chapel Hill should implement a Property Maintenance Grant for residents who want to improve their property but do not have the financial means to do so. The Town can work with EmPOWERment, Inc. to advertise the program and to identify interested residents.**

The final recommendation should be implemented not only for the area around the Peninsula, but also for the entire Sykes Street area, the Northside neighborhood, and all of Chapel Hill. The Town of Chapel Hill should create a small grant/loan program for property maintenance for owners who are financially unable to afford materials and/or labor for such activities. This step will enhance the area visually as well as improve ownership and pride in the community. As this program becomes more strongly established, the program should be expanded to include properties throughout the Town of Chapel Hill. *Immediate.*

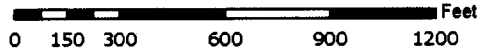
Attachment C. Expanded Focus Area

Expanded Sykes Street Area Map



Legend

- Study Area Boundaries
- ▭ Town Boundaries
- ▭ Parcel Boundaries
- Streets



Prepared by the Neighborhood Revitalization Seminar,  
 Department of City and Regional Planning,  
 University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

September 25, 2002



### Attachment D. Financial Support for Fall 2002

Funding for the various class projects was secured through a variety of different sources, including a Community Development Block Grant of \$500, a donation from the Chapel Hill Police Department of \$300, a contribution from EmPOWERment, Inc. of \$150, and a total of \$85 in donations from four local grocery stores. The Environmental Design Team utilized approximately \$200 for the community Action Planning Day. Major costs involved included a full lunch for all participants, various supplies and copying and printing costs. The Community Organizing Team used approximately \$350 on the First Annual Frances Hargraves Memorial Walk and Celebration. These funds paid for food, entertainment and various coping and printing costs. The Grant Writing Team needed no funding for the Team's projects. The class as a whole utilized \$150 for costs related to the printing and binding of final reports necessary to the class requirements. In sum, the class had an income of over \$1000 but only used a little over half of these funds over the course of the semester. The remaining funds have been donated to the purchase of the Frances Hargraves Memorial Bench. The table below provides a detailed class budget.

**Income**

Class CDBG Budget	500.00
Police Department Donation	300.00
EmPOWERment, Inc.	150.00
Wellspring - Whole Foods	25.00
Harris Teeter - Carrboro	20.00
Harris Teeter - Estes	20.00
Harris Teeter - Weaver Dairy	20.00
<hr/>	
<i>Subtotal</i>	<b>1035.00</b>

**Expenditures**

<i>Environmental Design Team</i>	
Kentucky Fried Chicken	(127.12)
Harris Teeter - Supplies	(42.17)
<u>Copying and Printing</u>	<u>(107.96)</u>
<i>Subtotal</i>	<b>(277.25)</b>

<i>Community Organizing Team</i>	
Rainbow Wagon Entertainment	(150.00)
Subway - Franklin Street	(172.53)
Wellspring - Whole Foods	(1.15)
Harris Teeter - Carrboro	(1.32)
Harris Teeter - Estes	(1.47)
Harris Teeter - Weaver Dairy	(3.48)
Wal-Mart	(10.12)
<u>Copying and Printing</u>	<u>(105.00)</u>
<i>Subtotal</i>	<b>(445.07)</b>

**Cash Flows**

Income	1035.00
<u>Expenditures</u>	<u>(722.32)</u>
<b>Balance</b>	<b>312.68</b>