

# *Greek Row Neighborhood Revitalization Plan*



**PREPARED BY:**  
The City of DeKalb  
Community Development Department

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# **GREEK ROW NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION PLAN**

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**BY**

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# ***“THE JEWEL OF DEKALB”***

Every neighborhood has a unique combination of assets on which to build its future. The distinctiveness of the Greek Row neighborhood is a result of a youthful vitality, proximity to Northern Illinois University, and uniformity of the neighborhood through its shared educational experience. Embedded in rich tradition, the Pan-Hellenic organizations located in the Greek Row area provide its name and the institutional framework. In addition to these organizations, scholarship-oriented societies, long-term residents, and representatives from various nationalities add to the dynamics of the Neighborhood.

In order to build upon the positive attributes of the Greek Row Neighborhood and reverse a cycle of disinvestments, the City Council has selected the area for revitalization. This emphasis on renewal of a high quality of life for the residents in older, mature neighborhoods is a top priority for the City of DeKalb. A formal neighborhood revitalization planning process by the City has resulted in adoption of the Pleasant Street Neighborhood Plan and the development of similar plans for Greek Row and the Fifth Ward. While the procedure for development of this Plan is similar, the results will be specific to the opportunities that exist in the area.

The most important component in the neighborhood planning process is the citizens and their participation. Numerous meetings to obtain input on the Greek Row Neighborhood Revitalization Plan were attended by property owners and residents, Northern Illinois University staff, and City of DeKalb elected officials and staff. From these meetings, the issues and challenges of the neighborhood and, most importantly, opportunities for improvement were identified. This citizen involvement cannot end with the adoption of the Plan, but must continue throughout its implementation. This continued contribution will ensure overall success of the revitalization efforts. As one person attending an initial meeting poetically stated, “The Greek Row area was once the jewel of DeKalb, now it is tarnished, but with a little hard work it should sparkle again.” It is the purpose of this Revitalization Plan to restore that sparkle.

City of DeKalb  
Community Development Department

## **Executive Summary**

The Greek Row Neighborhood Revitalization Plan is the third neighborhood plan the City of DeKalb is preparing for implementation. The City recognized that the ever-changing needs of this neighborhood had to be addressed due to the residents' perception that the Neighborhood is unsafe. Citizen participation was a very important element in the development of this Plan. A nine member Greek Row Neighborhood Revitalization Task Force was established to work with City staff to help identify the challenges facing the Neighborhood and give recommendations/solutions to counter-attack those challenges.

In addition to the Task Force, Neighborhood residents and property owners were given the opportunity to participate in the planning process by attending a public meeting at Westminster Presbyterian and filling out the Greek Row Neighborhood Revitalization Plan Survey. Task Force members, Neighborhood residents, and property owners identified that Lighting, Public Safety, Neighborhood Pride & Appearance, Code Enforcement & Zoning, Economic Development, and Parking were areas of concern believed to contribute to the decline in the quality of life for residents.

The City of DeKalb, Greek Row residents, and property owners will be responsible for seeing that all recommendations are implemented to ensure the vitality of the Neighborhood and dissolve the areas of concern.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this revitalization plan is to outline approaches for dealing with the challenges facing the Greek Row Neighborhood. Neighborhood residents and property owners have identified the following key issues/challenges in the neighborhood:

- Lighting
- Public Safety
- Neighborhood Pride & Appearance
- Code Enforcement & Zoning
- Economic Development
- Parking

Strategies for dealing with the challenges identified by neighborhood residents and property owners are the basis of this revitalization plan with the assistance from the City of DeKalb in partnership with Northern Illinois University. It is the creative vision of all participants that will promote the continued vitality and revitalization of the Greek Row Neighborhood. The objectives listed below are followed by a list of recommended approaches toward meeting the goals set forth in this Plan. Detailed explanations of the recommendations are provided on pages 23 through 36 of this Plan.

**Lighting Objective:**

To develop a program for improved lighting in the Neighborhood.

**Recommendations**

- Conduct a light study
- Increase lighting for public/private properties
- Continue tree-trimming program
- Explore creating a private property lighting compliance program

**Public Safety Objective:**

To develop a realistic perception of neighborhood safety through working jointly with City of DeKalb and NIU law enforcement officials and all residents and property owners to develop local crime prevention efforts.

**Recommendations**

- Increase communication and education between residents and law enforcement officials
- Continue bike and foot patrol
- Develop a Neighborhood Watch Program
- Install lighted bus shelters
- Investigate environmental design

- Develop a Porch Light Program

### **Neighborhood Pride & Appearance Objective:**

To establish programs that improves the aesthetics of the Neighborhood, thus creating more neighborhood pride and enhancing the quality of life for residents.

#### *Recommendations*

- Create a Neighborhood Association
  - Establish a Neighborhood Clean-Up Program
  - Develop an Aesthetics Improvement Program
  - Conduct a diversity study
- Review trash removal policies
- Examine the creation of information centers—Kiosks
- Sidewalk Replacement Program
- Review Private Property Rehabilitation Programs
- Review the creation of a special service area

### **Code Enforcement & Zoning Objective:**

To develop programs to reduce the number of property maintenance violations and improve compliance with zoning regulations.

#### *Recommendations*

- Consistent and aggressive inspections and enforcement of property maintenance codes
- Create a Property Maintenance Association
- Review Rental Rehabilitation Program
- Increase education and information relating to property maintenance
- Conduct a land use study
- Update zoning regulations

### **Economic Development Objective:**

To support programs that boost the current economic vitality of commercial activity in the Neighborhood and research the shopping desires of residents and need for new businesses.

#### *Recommendations*

- Discuss strategies to market the City and the Neighborhood to commercial developers
- Investigate financial incentives for economic development

### **Parking Objective:**

To develop methods to maximize the availability of parking spaces on private property and public streets.

#### *Recommendations*

- Conduct a parking inventory
- Investigate the creation of shared parking
- Update code regulations on parking

## **Introduction**

A revitalization plan is an advisory document for initiating, directing, and managing change. It demonstrates thoughtful work between the neighborhood and City to recognize the strengths and weaknesses, identify the goals, and to develop policies and strategies to improve the quality of life for all residing or doing business in the area. The plan guides residents to initiate rather than react to change. In addition, the plan serves as an element of the City's Comprehensive Plan in shaping the direction of the entire City.

The Greek Row Neighborhood Revitalization Plan is the third neighborhood plan the City has developed. The first plan, the Pleasant Street Neighborhood Revitalization Plan, was adopted by City Council in March 2001. Like the earlier plan, the Greek Row Neighborhood Revitalization Plan establishes objectives for the rejuvenation and stabilization of the Neighborhood. It provides a conceptual framework and creates implementation strategies, which will direct the Neighborhood toward its vision of success. The Plan is intended to promote patterns of land use, urban design, and services that contribute to the economic, social, and physical well being of the people who live and work in the Neighborhood. This plan is the result of collaboration between Greek Row residents and property owners, City leaders, and Northern Illinois University (NIU).

### **Why Greek Row?**

The City of DeKalb identified several neighborhoods for potential revitalization through a wide array of aesthetic improvements and economic development. One such area is the Greek Row neighborhood. Once known as the "Jewel of DeKalb," the area is located in Ward 1 north of NIU. One of the most densely populated and diverse neighborhoods in the City, the population consists of students, long-term residents, and representatives of many nationalities.

Commercial businesses provide services to the residents of the neighborhood and City. These elements make this Neighborhood unique in character.

Located just north of Northern Illinois University, it has a population with regular turnover. One hundred percent (100%) of the properties in the target area are rental. Embedded in tradition, Greek Row is also home to twenty-two Pan-Hellenic organizations. Sixty five percent of neighborhood residents are students or have some affiliation with the University. However, in recent years, the dynamics of the neighborhood have changed. The change is due in part to development of rental properties west of Greek Row. These projects provide newer housing with more amenities. The migration leaves historically student occupied units available for non-students who can take advantage of the older, more affordable housing.

Businesses are an important aspect of the Neighborhood. Businesses in the area cater to the college students, yet are diverse enough to accommodate the needs of non-students. Businesses located in the Neighborhood include several restaurants, a movie theater, a convenience store, and other miscellaneous businesses.

Zoning in the neighborhood includes Light and General Commercial zoning near the intersection of Hillcrest and Annie Glidden, with the remaining area zoned Multiple-Family Residential. The majority of structures in the neighborhood include multiple family apartments, rooming houses, and similar uses. Even many of the commercial buildings include apartments on the upper floors. The nonconformity of many of these properties with current zoning regulations is a major issue. The presence of a nonconforming use or building restricts the ability of the property owner to reinvest in the property. By typical zoning standards, the uses cannot be changed unless brought into compliance with current codes. This creates a

disincentive to improve their properties, which in some cases has lead to owners literally abandoning their properties.

Most nonconformities are due to changes in the underlying zoning regulations since the properties were developed and are not the fault of the property owner. New regulations are far more restrictive in terms of density, parking requirements, building setbacks, and landscaping. The changes were made to the regulations in a reaction to new development and a desire by City Council to assure adequate requirements that would meet ever-changing demands of multifamily residents. However, the affect of these new codes on the multifamily properties in this neighborhood needs to be examined.

The perception of a decline in the quality of life in the Neighborhood as a result of increased crime and a reduced level of comfort has diminished the desirability of living in the community. Some of the negativity attributed to the perception that Greek Row is unsafe comes from media coverage and hearsay. Although the crime index appears to have changed slightly in recent years, the Neighborhood is considered to be as safe as other communities in the City.

The Plan identifies public safety improvements, infrastructure improvements such as street lighting, increased code and property inspections, and neighborhood pride as objectives to meet the goal of restoring the shine to the Neighborhood.



## **Planning Process**

The neighborhood planning process relies on residents and property owners to identify critical issues in the neighborhood. After reviewing data and other information related to those issues, residents and property owners establish goals and draft action steps to improve the neighborhood. The resulting plan, which will be adopted by City Council, identifies the pressing issues and solutions facing the Greek Row neighborhood. The following is the planning process that was used to develop the Greek Row Neighborhood Revitalization Plan:

### ***Greek Row Neighborhood Planning Process***

- **Define Boundary**
- **Research:** *Data collection to identify issues and trends and compare residents' perceptions*
  - Survey
  - Data/Statistics
  - One-to-one meetings
    - Staff/Council
    - NIU Administration/Greek Council
    - Landlord/Property Owners
    - City of DeKalb
- **Define Issues/Problems:** *“Discover” the neighborhood based on residents' perceptions through citizen participation*
  - Neighborhood Public Input
  - Formal Input Process (Survey)
- **Task Force Visioning:** *Identify issues and establish goals and objectives*
  - Clarify Issues/Refine
  - Identify/Prioritize Solutions
  - Draft Plan
- **Build Consensus/Share Plan:** *Re-examine goals and objectives and agree on planning recommendations*
  - Planning Commission Workshop
  - City Council Workshop
  - Neighborhood meeting
  - Pan-Hellenic meeting
- **Final Plan:** *Recommendations and Adoption*
  - Plan Commission Public Hearing

- City Council Approval
- **Implementation:** *Perform recommendations*

Boundary

Identifying the boundary of a neighborhood is crucial to the success of any revitalization plan. The target area cannot be so large that the project is unmanageable, yet it should be of sufficient size to make an impact on the residents of the area. The boundary that will be revitalized in the Greek Row neighborhood plan will focus on the streets between Normal Road and Annie Glidden Road, north of University Village and includes:

- |                   |                   |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| ➤ Ridge Drive     | ➤ Hillcrest Drive |
| ➤ Kimberly Drive  | ➤ Greenbrier Road |
| ➤ Blackhawk Road  | ➤ Rushmoore Drive |
| ➤ Edgebrook Drive | ➤ Arcadia Drive   |

The area that will receive revitalization was set by natural boundaries on all four sides. The east and west borders are created by Normal Road and North Annie Glidden Road because of the traffic volume and the land use changes on the far sides of the streets. The southern border includes the south side of Greenbrier. This designation allows for inclusion of all Pan-Hellenic housing in the target area. The northern border includes apartment complexes located north of Ridge. The inclusion of these units will provide a uniform approach to improvements in the targeted area.

Although the focus of this plan is specifically for this concentrated area, the City recognizes that all events and activities adopted in this plan will affect adjacent areas, regardless of formal boundaries.



## Survey Results

The Community Development Department prepared a survey that was distributed to all residents and property owners in the focus area. This survey was used to seek out comments and opinions from the widest range of area residents and to encourage involvement in the process. The results were instrumental in the design of the plan. A key component of the survey was the ranking of various facilities and services. The survey identified a number of things that people liked about the neighborhood, as well as those things they disliked.

It was apparent early in the planning process that there were many attributes to this neighborhood that residents liked. Such attributes included convenience to services and Northern Illinois University, and the dynamics and vitality of the diverse neighborhood. These attributes can be enhanced or exploited to improve the quality of life throughout the neighborhood. Furthermore, there were many attributes that raised concerns that need to be addressed in order to improve the quality of life. Such concerns include inadequate shopping opportunities and a perception of low personal safety. These attributes, both positive and negative, form the basis for the recommendations set forth in this Plan.

Three thousand surveys were distributed in the Neighborhood during October 2001 (1500 fraternal organizations/1500 property owners and residents). Survey questions ranged from issues dealing with safety to economic development. Of the three thousand surveys distributed, 30% were returned. One hundred and fifty surveys were randomly selected from the returned responses to serve as a representative sample.

Key objectives identified in the survey are:

- Lighting
- Public Safety
- Neighborhood Pride & Appearance
- Code Enforcement & Zoning
- Economic Development
- Parking

The following presents a summary of the survey findings:

### **About The Residents**

- 65% of residents are students or have some affiliation with the university.
- 38% of residents in the Neighborhood have lived in the neighborhood only 1 to 3 years. 21% have lived in the area ten years or more.
- 27% have lived in the Neighborhood for less than one year.
- 31% reside in the Neighborhood because it is in close proximity to the University. An additional 24% like the affordable housing.
- 16% live in Greek Row area because their fraternity/sorority house is located in the area.
- Only 16% of residents say they will be leaving the neighborhood because it is perceived to be unsafe or the area has a poor reputation.

### **What the Residents Feel about Greek Row**

- 66% of residents agree that lighting in the Neighborhood is inadequate.
- 33% of residents disagree that there is enough visibility by the City police department in the Neighborhood.
- 54% disagree that there are adequate businesses.
- 43% disagree that there are adequate services.
- 10% recommend lighted bus shelters.
- 24% recommend an increased police presence to enhance the perception of safety in the neighborhood.
- 29% suggest building a grocery store/pharmacy to enhance the neighborhood.
- 22% suggest building a family-style restaurant.

### **Overall Assessment**

- Although Greek Row has a regular turnover rate among residents, the Neighborhood is prized for its affordable housing, closeness to University, and unique character derived from its youthful vitality.
- The area's perceived reputation is questionable because of concerns about crime, inadequate street lighting, property maintenance and the need for more of a variety in commercial business development.
- All of the residential structures in the Greek Row Neighborhood are rental properties.
- Residents believe the Neighborhood is under-served in convenience retailing and personal services. Among the missing retail functions are a grocery store and drug store.
- Many streets lack adequate lighting, especially for pedestrians, which promotes the perception that the Neighborhood is unsafe.
- Parts of the Neighborhood are perceived to have a higher index of crime than other neighborhoods in the City. Even though community policing has improved this situation, the perception that the Neighborhood is unsafe remains.
- Residents complained about excessive amounts of litter and trash throughout the Neighborhood. Private property owners worsen this situation by not providing proper or enough receptacles to store trash, which make it more visible.

Census Characteristics

In Census year 2000, there were 2,889 people living in the Greek Row Neighborhood, which is 13.5% of the total city-wide population of 39,018. Although the area is predominately Caucasian, minorities make up 36.3% of the population as compared to the minority population for the rest of the City, which is 20.5%. Persons between the ages of 20-24 make up approximately 61.4% of the Neighborhood population in 2000. The comparable city-wide figure for persons in this age group is 27.5%.

<b>Greek Row Neighborhood Census Comparison 1990 - 2000</b>						
	1990		2000		Change from 1990-2000	% Change
Population	3462		2889		-573	16%
Per Capita Income	\$5,476		\$8,126		\$2,650	48%
Household Income	\$12,950		\$16,189		\$3,239	25%
Family Income	\$31,765		\$26,364		(\$5,401)	17%
<b>Racial Breakdown</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>Change from 1990-2000</b>	<b>% Change</b>
White	3108	90%	1839	63.7%	-1269	-26.1%
Black	134	4%	442	15.3%	308	11.4%
Am. Indian	1	< 1%	11	< 1%	10	< 1%
Asian	179	5.2%	298	10.3%	119	5.1%
Pac. Island	1	< 1%	9	< 1%	8	< 1%
Other	40	1.2%	179	6.2%	139	5.0%
*Multi. Racial	0	< 1%	111	3.8%	111	< 1%
Hispanic	75	2.2%	415	14.4%	340	12.2%
<b>*Multi Racial: Newly added category for 2000 Census</b>						
<b>Age Breakdown</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>Change from 1990-2000</b>	<b>% Change</b>
Under 17	103	3.0%	279	9.7%	176	6.7%
17-19	276	8.0%	226	7.8%	-50	-0.1%
20-24	2672	77.2%	1773	61.4%	-899	-15.8%
25-29	212	6.1%	322	11.1%	110	5.0%
30-34	93	2.7%	124	4.3%	31	1.6%
35-39	46	1.3%	68	2.4%	22	1.0%
40 & Over	59	1.7%	97	3.4%	28	1.7%

\*See the following Census Tract Map for Census Block included in this comparison



### Citizen Participation

Citizen participation is a critical element in successful neighborhood planning. Participation from both residents and property owners were a key component in preparing this Plan. Efforts were made to incorporate a number of opportunities for participation requiring varying levels of commitment, including neighborhood meetings for input, surveys distributed throughout the area, and the formation of a Greek Row Neighborhood Revitalization Task Force. Establishing the Task Force was done to accommodate people who wanted to be integrally involved in the process and opened up the lines of communication between area residents and the City.

In the summer of 2001, a City resident was killed near a fraternity house. In response to the killing, the NIU Student Association formed open panel discussions/focus groups to identify solutions to reduce crime in the Greek Row area. A series of focus group discussions were held between the City, NIU administrators, NIU Student Association, and Pan-Hellenic organizations. These meetings helped identify issues in the Greek Row Neighborhood, design the survey, and discuss goals and objectives. In addition to the meetings with NIU, the City held a forum in the Neighborhood to discuss neighborhood planning and inform residents of our efforts to revitalize the area. Forty residents and property owners attended the November 14, 2001 meeting. Residents were given an opportunity to voice their concerns, learn more about the revitalization planning process, and take a proactive role in the development of the Greek Row Neighborhood Revitalization Plan.

The long-term success of this Plan is in the hands of the residents and property owners in the Neighborhood working collaboratively toward the implementation of all of the

recommendations. It is important that this Plan remain citizen driven and residents and property owners in the Neighborhood work with the City to ensure the solutions become reality.

#### *Greek Row Neighborhood Revitalization Task Force*

The Greek Row Neighborhood Revitalization Task Force was created to be a communication link between citizens, Northern Illinois University, and the City of DeKalb. Citizens were given an opportunity to volunteer to be on the task force at the November 14, 2001 neighborhood meeting. In addition to this, members were selected based upon recommendation from City leaders. The nine-member Task Force provided a balanced representation of the general composition of the neighborhood and included two NIU representatives, one property owner, one City representative, two representatives from Pan Hellenic organizations, and three residents.

Five meetings were held over the course of three months. During the meetings, members discussed the results of the survey in detail and objectives and goals of the plan were identified. These identified key issues and recommendations were used in the development of this Neighborhood Revitalization Plan. The members of the Task Force will continue to serve as liaisons between the residents of Greek Row, City, and NIU. In addition to this, they will provide the leadership necessary to sustain the viability of this Plan by ensuring that all recommendations are implemented.

#### *Adoption of the Plan*

Prior to approval of the Greek Row Neighborhood Revitalization Plan, effort was made to ensure adequate input of the goals and recommendations. The success of the Plan will be contingent upon the cooperation of all involved in the revitalization process. The adoption process includes the following tentative schedule of public meetings:

September 16, 2002	City Council Workshop
September 25, 2002	Plan Commission – Public Hearing
October 8, 2002	Neighborhood Meeting
October 14, 2002	City Council (Anticipated adoption of Plan)

The feedback from these public meetings will be incorporated into this Plan prior to adoption as a component of the City of DeKalb's Comprehensive Plan.

## **Greek Row Neighborhood Mission**

The recommendations set forth for the revitalization of the Greek Row Neighborhood are designed to improve the quality of life for residents in this area. The Plan was created to address the needs and opportunities identified in the Neighborhood and fulfill the Mission of the Greek Row Neighborhood Revitalization Plan.

### **Greek Row Neighborhood Revitalization Plan** **Mission**

The mission of the Greek Row Neighborhood Revitalization Plan is to create a neighborhood where people of various social and economic backgrounds choose to live, to develop a sense of pride and unity, to instill a feeling of safety and welcome for residents and visitors, and to maintain the unique University character of the area.

In order to fulfill the mission of the Greek Row Neighborhood Plan, residents, property owners, and City of DeKalb staff have identified six key objectives to be addressed as the platform for revitalization of the Neighborhood:

- Lighting
- Public Safety
- Neighborhood Pride & Appearance
- Code Enforcement & Zoning
- Economic Development
- Parking

The success of the Plan will be contingent upon the cooperation of all involved in the revitalization process in an effort to make this Neighborhood once again the “Jewel of DeKalb.”

## **Greek Row Neighborhood Revitalization Objectives**

### **Lighting Objective**

To develop a program for improved lighting in the Greek Row neighborhood.

Inadequate lighting in the Greek Row neighborhood is a major concern among residents. In the survey, residents and property owners stated that insufficient lighting added to the perception that their neighborhood was unsafe. In addition to this, residents cited that the existing poor lighting is ineffective in discouraging crime and does not ensure the safety of pedestrians and vehicles. Moreover, inadequate lighting between properties causes a visibility problem for law enforcement and makes policing those areas difficult. The most significant lighting problem is in the parking lots of privately owned rental properties. The Greek Row Neighborhood Revitalization Task Force conducted an evening walk-thru of several streets in the Neighborhood in Spring 2002. This visual survey of the Neighborhood showed that many rental properties have insufficient lighting in the parking lots. Either the parking lots were completely dark, or they were insufficiently lit due to the type of fixtures or placement on buildings or doors.

Because the buildings were constructed prior to adoption of existing regulations, a large number of these facilities do not conform to the lighting standards specified in the City's Unified Development Ordinance. Article 10.05.01 states that all common areas or facilities should be sufficiently illuminated to ensure the security of property and the safety of persons using such streets, sidewalks, or other common areas or facilities. As a part of the planning process, the City hired an engineering consultant to conduct a light study to determine the needs of the area. Results of this study will be used to implement this objective. All improvements will be

designed to provide maximum coverage of sidewalks and streets to ensure pedestrian safety-oriented while reducing glare that negatively affects the quality of life for residents. In addition to this, a tree maintenance program will be created for the trimming of trees that block existing street lights. For property owners that have inadequate lighting, the City will investigate programs to provide funding for increased lighting on private property. Additional lighting will not only enhance the property but will make it a more desirable place to live.

The following are recommendations to improve lighting in the Greek Row

Neighborhood:

- **Conduct a lighting study:** The City will conduct a lighting survey of the Neighborhood. The survey will review existing lighting and determine where additional lighting is needed on public and private properties. The following exhibit from the survey provides proposed lighting upgrade on private property in the Neighborhood.
- **Increase lighting for public/private properties:** The City will integrate higher intensity lighting in public areas that have insufficient lighting. The additional lighting will allow for better pedestrian-oriented travel and help dispel the negative perception that the Neighborhood is unsafe.
- **Continue tree-trimming program:** The City will collaborate with Commonwealth Edison to trim specific trees in public right of ways that affect visibility of street lights. This will increase lighting in the neighborhood and make it safer for pedestrian and vehicular travel.
- **Explore creating a private property lighting compliance program:** The City will explore the possibility of creating a private property lighting compliance program. Property owners will be expected to comply with community-wide lighting program, by allowing easements on their property, trimming trees and shrubbery, and increasing parking lot and site lighting for residents.



**Public Safety Objective**

To develop a realistic perception of neighborhood safety through working jointly with City of DeKalb and NIU law enforcement officials and all residents and property owners to develop local crime prevention efforts.

Residents expressed, as a major concern, the negative perception that their neighborhood is unsafe. In the past several years, the Neighborhood's image has been tarnished due to high levels of negative press coverage of crimes in Greek Row, cultural differences among residents, and recent unrelated deaths. In addition to this, the lack of pedestrian oriented lighting and insufficient lighting in the parking lots of rental property reinforces this negative perception.

Statistics show that the Neighborhood is as safe as other neighborhoods in the City. The City of DeKalb Police Department reports that the majority of crimes committed in the Neighborhood are petty crimes and/or alcohol related incidents. Because DeKalb is a small city, it is safe to assume that most of the crimes committed in any neighborhood are by non-residents of that neighborhood. Underage drinking and disorderly parties are to be expected in a community with a high concentration of traditional college students. In fall semester 2001, the City of DeKalb Police Department reported that they gave out an estimated 275 alcohol violation citations in the Greek Row neighborhood. This number is higher than for other neighborhoods with non-student populations.

Neighborhood residents and property owners identified a number of ways to improve safety in the Neighborhood through physical improvements and community policing. The following are recommendations to help reduce crime and eliminate the perception that this is an unsafe neighborhood:

- **Increase communication and education:** If the fight against crime and negative perceptions about the Neighborhood are to be eliminated, there must be a collaborative effort among police and the residents they are serving. Such collaboration creates a forum of mutual trust that is vital in alleviating safety concerns. It is recommended that residents and property owners conduct regularly scheduled meetings with police officers serving the neighborhood. The residents and property owners can use these meetings as an opportunity to get to know the officers and notify them of specific areas they deem as hot spots for criminal activity.
  
- **Continue Bike and Foot Patrol Program:** The continuation of police bicycle and foot patrols can help deter occurrences of crime. Bicycle and foot patrols make for informal interactions of the police officers with the widest range of people in the neighborhood. The police officers have an opportunity to get to know the residents and property owners, while viewing first-hand the problems they face. Neighborhoods that have police bicycle and/or foot patrols have witnessed dramatic improvements in safety.
  
- **Develop a Neighborhood Watch Program:** The development of a neighborhood watch program is a method used in many neighborhoods to get residents and property owners to participate in the fight against crime. Neighborhoods with active programs have proven that this is a positive technique for reducing crime. In addition to this, it is a perfect way for neighborhood residents to get to know one another. A Neighborhood Watch Committee can be established with the guidance of City law enforcement officers. In addition to community policing, the Neighborhood Watch program can report where lighting is inadequate and/or where lights have gone out.
  
- **Install lighted bus shelters:** Developing a partnership with NIU Student Association for funding of lighted bus shelters in the Greek Row neighborhood. These shelters will not be used exclusively by students, but by all residents that use the Huskie bus line. The bus shelters can also be used for purposes such as refuge from outside elements and serve as an information center (kiosks) in an artful and attractive manner.
  
- **Investigate environmental design:** The use of environmental design is an easy and inexpensive way to create a safe surrounding. Trimming bushes to create better visibility around entrances to buildings and in parking lots is an example of this process. The City and property owners should coordinate efforts through the community-policing program to conduct environmental assessments of all properties in the area. These assessments would provide recommendations to the owners of steps they could take to make their property safe for tenants of the building and other residents or visitors in the Neighborhood.
  
- **Develop a Porch Light Program:** Where the opportunity exists, it is essential to develop a porch light program among residents and property owners to better light neighborhood sidewalks and building entrances in the evenings for visitors and residents. This effort deters criminal activity and makes the neighborhood feel safe and welcoming.

**Neighborhood Pride & Appearance Objective**

To develop programs that improve the aesthetics of the Greek Row neighborhood thus creating more neighborhood pride while enhancing the quality of life for residents.

Residents indicated in the survey and subsequent neighborhood meetings that appearance plays a significant role in projecting a positive image of the neighborhood. Participants identified poorly maintained properties, both residential and commercial, and lack of attractive aesthetics as major contributors to the negative perception of the Neighborhood. An excessive amount of trash was identified as the primary reason for the poor appearance. The lack of adequate dumpsters on rental properties makes the neighborhood appear unsightly and very unappealing. This negative image reduces the likelihood of worthwhile investments or redevelopment efforts by owners. Poorly maintained properties, on the other hand, increase health and safety of residents.



***Examples of attractive aesthetics in the Neighborhood***

In addition to the negative appearance of the neighborhood, residents expressed that the low sense of pride and camaraderie makes living in the Neighborhood undesirable. Residents

feel that two recent homicides and other criminal activity add to this perception. Moreover, the new image that the Neighborhood is a haven of non-student, low-income housing has caused a lot of conflict in the neighborhood. Many residents feel a loss of the tradition of the neighborhood for Pan-Hellenic organizations and students. This loss has caused dissent among residents. However, the residents acknowledge that there is a need to celebrate the diversity of the neighborhood while creating a unified feeling and instilling more pride among residents.

Keeping this in mind, it is recommended that the City and residents undertake the following programs to increase neighborhood pride and aesthetic attractiveness of the Greek Row Neighborhood:

- **Create a Neighborhood Association:** Establish a Greek Row Neighborhood Association that is open to all residents and property owners and fosters communication between property owners, residents, and the City in order to assure that programs identified throughout the Plan are continued. Moreover, residents in the Association will have the responsibility of reporting neglected properties. Additional subcommittees could include the following
  - **Establish a Neighborhood Clean-up Program:** The development of a neighborhood clean-up program is one way to get residents and property owners involved with helping each other create a more desirable neighborhood.
  - **Develop an Aesthetics Improvement Program:** Collaborate with property owners, residents, and City staff to create a landscaping committee that supports yard maintenance, tree planting, and attractive signage in the Neighborhood.
  - **Conduct a diversity study:** It is recommended that the Human Relations Commission, with help from residents and property owners, conduct a diversity study to discuss the changing dynamics of the neighborhood in order to educate and celebrate the different cultures represented.
- **Review trash removal policies:** The City will work with Waste Management and property managers to review trash removal policies in an attempt to establish extra trash pickup days and explore other ways to reduce the amount of litter/trash.
- **Examine the creation of information centers—Kiosks:** Kiosks or bulletin boards can be placed in an artful and attractive manner in bus shelters as a way to inform citizens about what is happening in the Neighborhood, on campus, and in the City.
- **Sidewalk Replacement Program:** The City and Task Force should prepare a thorough inventory of sidewalks requiring replacement or improvement. Sidewalk upgrading is one means to improve the image of the neighborhood and the residents' sense that the neighborhood is worth caring about.

- **Review Private Property Rehabilitation Programs:** Encourage reinvestment by owners in rental properties through private and /or public funding. Also, the City will review the option of providing assistance property owners who want to rehabilitate their rental properties for lighting improvement, aesthetic improvement, or resurfacing parking lots so that they are adequately maintained.
  
- **Review the creation of a special service area:** The City and owners will review the possibility of creating a special service area for the Greek Row neighborhood. Under this program, properties in Greek Row would generate a special tax and monies received could be specifically used for aesthetic and other improvements in the Neighborhood.

**Code Enforcement & Zoning Objective**

To develop programs to reduce the number of property maintenance violations and to enforce zoning regulations.

The residents of Greek Row specified that some properties in the area need some type of rehabilitation. Some of the properties, occupied and non-occupied, are in a serious state of decline while many others are marginal and will quickly deteriorate if repairs are not made. These buildings are unsightly in appearance and give the impression that residents and property owners do not care about their neighborhood. In addition, trash in the Neighborhood that clutters the area during the school session is a major concern. In an effort to curb property maintenance concerns, the City and residents support the following programs that keep public and private infrastructure in a state of good repair, make the Neighborhood more attractive, and generally make Greek Row a more desirable place to live:

- **Consistent and aggressive inspections and enforcement of property maintenance code:** The City should maintain and step-up its present program that enforces code regulations for property owners and residents in the Neighborhood.
- **Create a Property Maintenance Association:** It is recommended that a property maintenance association be established by property owners. This Association should include both student and non-student property owners. The Association might consider hiring a company that would be responsible for landscaping and exterior maintenance of all buildings and grounds.
- **Review Rental Rehabilitation Program:** A focused program of rehabilitating rental structures should be undertaken. This program will explore the option of providing financial assistance to owners of aging and deteriorating structures to rehabilitate property. This action will upgrade the quality of housing in the community and create a more desirable place to live.
- **Increase education and information relating to property maintenance:** Annual neighborhood meetings with residents and property owners that focus on the importance of complying with property maintenance regulations as well as what steps should be taken in reporting properties that do not meet the code. In addition to meetings, brochures can be distributed to educate community residents and property owners about the importance of complying with property maintenance regulations and subsequent penalties for noncompliance.

In addition to property maintenance concerns, zoning is also a big issue. Although the area is zoned primarily for multi-family usage, nearly all of the multi-family residential structures are nonconforming to new zoning regulations. Problems that have arisen from the nonconformity with existing codes include higher density for residences in rental properties and insufficient parking spaces. These problems in conjunction with others result from zoning amendments that did not take into consideration their affect on this neighborhood. The following recommendations could address some of the specific zoning issues of this neighborhood:

- **Conduct a land use study:** Conduct a land use study that accesses current development in the Neighborhood and looks at the feasibility of re-using existing buildings or necessity of modifying zoning regulations to bring more commercial businesses to the area.
- **Update zoning regulations:** The City needs to update and review zoning regulations for the Neighborhood and make recommendations to the Planning Commission in an effort to reduce restrictions on reasonable reinvestments in existing properties.

**Economic Development Objective**

To support programs that boost the current economic vitality of commercial activity in Greek Row as well as researching the shopping desires of residents and need for new businesses.

The residents of Greek Row have indicated that there is a lack of adequate businesses to serve their needs within walking distance. Residents cited the need for more development because of the high volume of students in the area and the feeling of isolation from the rest of the City. Primary businesses such as Wal-Mart and a variety of grocery stores are located along Sycamore Road, a distance of over a mile away. Furthermore, the access to Sycamore Road from this area is indirect, with the primary route being along Hillcrest Drive, forcing traffic through single-family residential areas with many traffic-calming features, including speed tables. The distance to retail and service uses that serve regular needs forces residents to either drive or take a bus. Many of these needs could be met by locating a pharmacy or grocery store in the Greek Row Neighborhood.

Presently, there are parcels zoned for light commercial and general commercial uses, including an older, underutilized strip shopping center. Current businesses in the area are restaurants, a convenience store, and a movie theater. In the Greek Row survey, residents specified that they would like to see a grocery store or hardware store in the area. Additionally, businesses currently in the Greek Row area may benefit from having these types of retailers in the vicinity. The increase variety might decrease the daily migration to Sycamore Road and create an incentive for residents to spend money in the Neighborhood.



\*Around The Clock



\*The Jungle Shopping Center

### *Greek Row Businesses*

The following is a list of recommendations to initiate more diverse commercial activity in

Greek Row:

- **Discuss strategies to market the City and Neighborhood to developers:** New commercial development can be neighborhood focused and take advantage of the college-oriented market. Marketing forces will determine what stores are needed in the community but opportunities may include a grocery store, video store, or drug store. Economic development of the Neighborhood should take into consideration the convenience of location and uniqueness of neighborhood
- **Investigate financial incentives for economic development:** The City will look at the possibility of providing financial incentives to developers who want to build or improve businesses in the Greek Row Neighborhood.

**Parking Objective**

To develop programs to maximize the availability of parking spaces on private property and public streets.

Parking is another concern among Neighborhood residents due to a lack of adequate private property parking and difficulty finding on-site parking near private residences. Residents expressed that they feel uncomfortable parking in isolated areas and areas that have insufficient lighting. This situation in turn creates additional problems if vehicles are illegally parked on the public streets or encroach on private properties.

Most multi-family buildings do not conform to existing parking requirements because they were built before current zoning regulations were enacted. When constructed, the available parking spaces accommodated the needs of students at the time. However, the demographics of the community have changed, more families have moved into the Neighborhood and more students have vehicles. The additional cars and limited parking spaces make the Neighborhood appear cluttered and congested. Furthermore, numerous rental properties have parking lots that are in dire need of repair or may have never been paved.

Because of inadequate close in parking for students on campus, many leave their cars in the Greek Row Neighborhood and walk or ride the NIU bus to classes. This high pedestrian traffic, large number of parked vehicles, and bus traffic creates a potentially dangerous mixture. This has been evidenced by at least one traffic fatality resulting from an automobile hitting a pedestrian.

A number of actions are recommended to reduce congestion on streets (and thus make the area more attractive and less congested) to provide safer, more attractive parking. The following is a list of recommendations to alleviate the parking situation:

- **Conduct a parking inventory:** Estimate how many parking spaces are available in the neighborhood in addition to identifying areas where shared parking or other improvements can enhance and maximize the availability of on and off-street parking.
- **Investigate creation of shared parking:** Property owners will be encouraged to identify shared parking areas or easements, especially in areas with small lots where sharing can increase the number of available spaces. Shared parking lots could be owned by participating property owners and would be their responsibility to maintain. Additionally, it could provide cross access in between lots for better accessibility for residents, patrol cars and similar emergency services.
- **Update code regulations on parking:** Review existing regulations and update zoning regulations for parking for rental property where needed.

## Implementation Strategies

The following implementation strategies are a result of brainstorming and discussion sessions held by the City of DeKalb staff and Greek Row Neighborhood Revitalization Task Force. Upon neighborhood-wide approval, the plan has to be approved by City Council. This Plan will be used to guide revitalization activities in the Greek Row Neighborhood and will be carried out by identified lead participants.

### Lighting:

**Objective: To develop a program for improved lighting in the Greek Row neighborhood.**

<i>Implementation Strategy</i>	<i>Lead Participants</i>	<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Outcome Measures</i>
Conduct a lighting study	City of DeKalb Public Works Department Hired engineers	Fall 2002	Develop implementation strategies
Increase lighting for public/private properties	Public Works Department Community Development Department Neighborhood Property Owners	Fall 2004	Implementation of lighting study strategies Updated survey by Task Force walk-thru
Continue tree-trimming program	Public Works Department Commonwealth Edison Neighborhood Property Owners	On-going	Review tree-trimming during updated lighting survey walk-thru by Task Force in Fall 2004
Creating a Private Property Lighting Compliance Programs	Public Works Department Community Development Department Neighborhood Residents and Property Owners	On-going	Documented increase in compliance with property maintenance standards

**Public Safety**

**Objective: To develop a realistic perception of neighborhood safety through working jointly with City of DeKalb and NIU law enforcement officials and all residents and property owners in local crime prevention efforts.**

<i>Implementation Strategy</i>	<i>Lead Participants</i>	<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Outcome Measures</i>
Increase communication and education	City of DeKalb Police Department NIU Police Department Neighborhood Residents and Property Owners	On-going	Documented reduction in both minor and serious criminal activity
Continue Bike and Foot Patrol Program	City of DeKalb Police Department	On-going	Documented reduction in both minor and serious criminal activity
Develop a Neighborhood Watch Program	City of DeKalb Police Department Neighborhood Residents and Property Owners	Fall 2003 / On-going	Formation of at least one Neighborhood Watch Program
Install lighted bus shelters	Public Works Department Community Development Department NIU Student Association	Spring 2004	Installation of at least four bus shelters
Investigate environmental design	Public Works Department Community Development Department Commonwealth Edison Neighborhood Property Owners	Spring 2003 – 2006	Consultation with at least four private property owners per year
Develop a Porch Light Program	Neighborhood Residents and Property Owners	Fall 2002 / On-going	Increase in number and length of time private owners utilize porch lights

## Neighborhood Pride & Appearance

**Objective: To develop programs that improves the aesthetics of the Greek Row neighborhood thus creating more neighborhood pride while enhancing the quality of life for residents.**

<i>Implementation Strategy</i>	<i>Lead Participants</i>	<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Outcome Measures</i>
Create a Neighborhood Pride Association	Neighborhood Residents and Property Owners	Fall 2003 / On-going	Creation of at least one Neighborhood Pride Association
Review trash removal policies	Public Works Department Waste Management Neighborhood Property Owners Pan-Hellenic Organizations	Spring 2003 / On-going	Documented increase in compliance with property maintenance standards
Examine the creation of an information center-Kiosks	Community Development Department Neighborhood Residents and Property Owners	Spring 2004	Installation of information centers/kiosks in at least four bus shelters
Sidewalk Replacement Program	Public Works Department Community Development Department	On-going	Documented increase in maintenance of sidewalks
Review Private Property Rehabilitation Programs	Community Development Department Neighborhood Property Owners	Fall 2003	Workshop by City Council to consider rehab program, and major rehabilitation of at least two properties in the Neighborhood
Review the creation of a special service area	Property Owners	Spring 2004	Recommendation for special service area available for discussion with property owners

## **Code Enforcement & Zoning**

**Objective: To develop programs to reduce the number of property maintenance violations and to enforce zoning regulations.**

<i>Implementation Strategy</i>	<i>Lead Participants</i>	<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Outcome Measures</i>
Consistent and aggressive inspections and enforcement of property maintenance codes	Community Development Department	On-going	Documented reduction in compliance with property maintenance standards
Create a Property Maintenance Association	Neighborhood Property Owners Pan-Hellenic Organizations	Fall 2003 / On-going	Create at least one Property Maintenance Association
Review Rental Rehabilitation Program	Community Development Department Neighborhood Property Owners	Fall 2003	Workshop with City Council to consider creation of a Rental Rehabilitation Program
Increase education and information relating to property maintenance	Community Development Department Neighborhood Residents and Property Owners	On-going	Documented increase in compliance with property maintenance standards
Conduct a land use study	Planning Commission Community Development Department	Fall 2003	Complete land use study
Update zoning regulations	City of DeKalb Planning Commission Community Development Department	Spring 2004	Implementation of results from land use study

## **Economic Development**

**Objective: To support programs that boosts the current economic vitality of commercial activity in Greek Row as well as researching the shopping desires of residents and need for new businesses.**

<i>Implementation Strategy</i>	<i>Lead Participants</i>	<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Outcome Measures</i>
Discuss strategies to market the City and Neighborhood to developers	City of DeKalb Economic Development Commission Community Development Department Finance Department	Spring 2003	Creation of Economic Development Strategies for the Neighborhood
Investigate financial incentives for economic development	City of DeKalb Economic Development Commission Community Development Department Finance Department	Fall 2004	Workshop with City Council to consider creation of Incentive Program for the Neighborhood

## **Parking**

**Objective: To develop programs to maximize the availability of parking spaces on private property and public streets.**

<i>Implementation Strategy</i>	<i>Lead Participants</i>	<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Outcome Measures</i>
Conduct a parking inventory	Public Works Department Community Development Department	Spring 2003	Complete Inventory
Investigate creation of shared parking	Public Works Department Community Development Department Neighborhood Property Owners	Fall 2003	Completion of review of parking inventory
Update code regulations on parking	Public Works Department Community Development Department	Fall 2003	Implementation of regulations identified in the parking inventory review