



# 2 Community Involvement





## 2 Community Involvement

### 2:1 The Role of Consensus in Neighborhood Planning:

Consensus plays a valuable role in neighborhood planning by ensuring that residents, business owners and non-resident property owners have contributed to forming the plan's goals, objectives and action items. By utilizing the consensus model in decision-making, the Long Range Planning staff can make decisions to be of higher quality due to the input of all the interested parties, greater commitment to implementation of the plan's goals, and the assurance that the plan was developed with the values of:

- Inclusion
- Democracy and the ability to compromise
- Participation
- Understanding
- Flexibility

### 2:2 First Round of Meetings – Gathering Ideas of Needs:

The first round of Community Involvement Meetings was held at the Girard Middle School on the evening of July 24, and at the Hawk-Houston Boys & Girls Club on July 26, 2012 before a group of concerned citizens, public officials and planning staff. The outcome of the meetings was a productive session of problem identification and consensus brainstorming over issues regarding quality of life in the area. Questionnaires were filled out, round tables were formed, and presentations of perceived needs and ideas were made by the attending public. In the end, the Long Range Planning staff received a bank of information to assess and assemble. Those findings as well as photos of the public interaction follow.

#### Girard Middle School – July 24:



**Figure 2-1: Discussing exhibits prior to the meeting @ Girard Middle School.**



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**Figure 2-2: Attendees of the meetings in their “brainstorming” breakout sessions**

**Hawk-Houston Boys & Girls Club – July 26:**



**Figures 2-3 & 2-4 Group at Hawk-Houston**



## **2:2:1 Highlights of the July 24 and July 26 Community Involvement Meetings:**

During our first round of meetings, the long range planning staff displayed several maps and charts exhibiting the existing conditions of the N.W. Urban Sector Neighborhoods (NWUSN).

Maps or Graphics delineating:

- Existing Land Use (2012)
- Existing Sidewalks
- NWUSN Sections
- NWUSN Boundary & Major Gateways
- Commercial Influences
- Conceptual Example of a possible Live-Work Streetscape in the NWUSN
- Traffic Turning Movement Counts on Denton Rd. @ the Ross Clark Circle



**Figures 2-5 & 2-6 Girard Assembly**

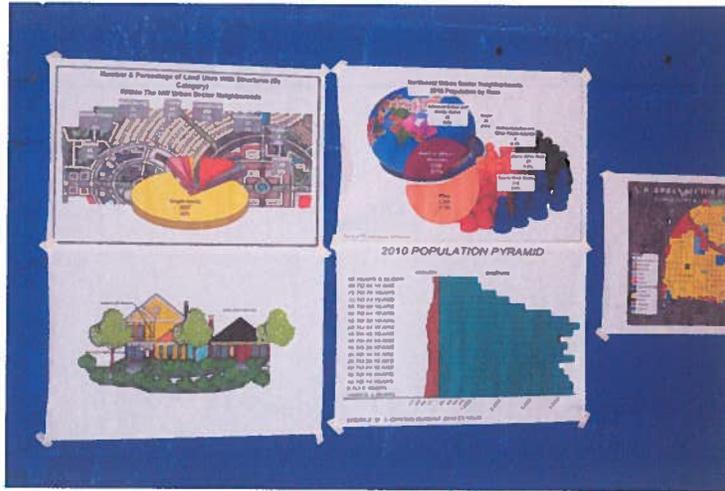


**Figures 2-7 & 2-8 Hawk-Houston Assembly**



Charts were also displayed showing background data regarding:

- 2010 Population by Race of the NWUSN
- 2010 Population Pyramid by Age Comparison (NWUSN & Dothan-wide)
- Land Use Types in the NWUSN



**Figure 2-9 Presentation Graphics**

The Planning Staff also handed out a three-page, 14-question questionnaire and asked those present to complete and turn in prior to breaking into brain-storming groups.

The results of the questionnaire response as well as statistical data relevant to the community participation during this planning process follows.

### **2:2:2 Questionnaire Results:**

Nearly 100% of the residents assembled at the meetings took the opportunity to tell the city staff what they felt were neighborhood needs; and although they were in attendance, none of the public officials or employees participated in the questionnaire response. Consequently, the determination of the planning area's needs was left up to a handful of citizens that attended the meetings and the city long range planning staff's interpretation of existing conditions, citizen input, and personal planning knowledge and expertise.

The questionnaire was divided into three categories that the staff felt, due to many years of interaction, was most important to the residents in the area. Those categories were **HOUSING, TRANSPORTATION, and QUALITY OF LIFE.**

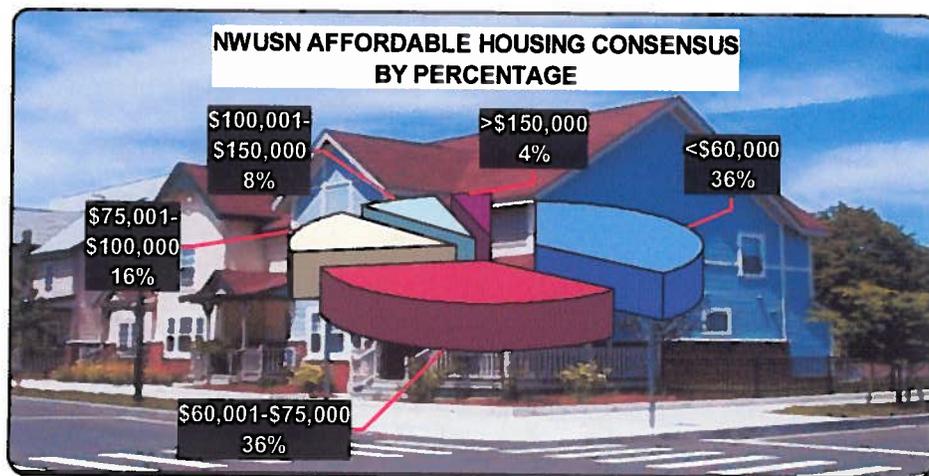


**Figures 2-10 & 2-11 Staff**

**2:2:2:1 Housing:**

The Housing Category posed three questions.

1. **How much do you think affordable housing should cost?** The response shows a tie between what respondents felt was affordable housing price points. 36% of the respondents feel a range between \$60,001 and \$75,000 was appropriate, while another 36% felt somewhere below \$60,000 was more appropriate price point for affordable housing in this Sector. Only 16% thought \$75,001-\$100,000, another 8% thought \$100,001-\$150,000, and the remaining 4% believed over \$150,000 was more in line with the cost of affordable housing in the NWUSN. It can be concluded that the majority of respondents, a combined 72% felt that affordable housing ought to be priced between \$0 dollars and \$75,000.



**Figure 2-12**



2. **What amount per month would an affordable 2-bedroom apartment cost?** The response shows the majority of respondents (38%) favoring a range of somewhere between \$301 and \$450 was an acceptable range for affordable two-bedroom apartments. Another 37% felt a monthly payment below \$300/month was a fair rental rate. The next group (21%) felt \$451-\$600/month was appropriate; and the remaining 4% felt \$601-\$750/month was a fair cost for a two-bedroom apartment in the NWUSN. Nobody felt a two-bedroom apartment ought to cost more than \$750/month in this area. The conclusion seems that a full 75%, a clear majority, felt that a range somewhere between \$0 dollars and \$450 per month was the proper rental rate of an affordable two-bedroom apartment in the NWUSN.



**Figure 2-13**

3. **What type new housing development would you like to see in your neighborhood?** This was a two-part question that asked for the first choice and the second choice. Choices given were Single-family; Patio Homes; Townhomes; Apartments; Duplex/Triplex; or Assisted Care/Nursing Home Facilities. Response showed the majority of respondents (55%) preferred single family housing, 26% preferred patio homes, 10% preferred duplex/triplex or other attached single family types, 6% favored more apartments (one survey indicated that the Garden District did not want apartments); and 3% preferred assisted care nursing homes. Nobody suggested that the NWUSN needed townhouses as a future housing choice.

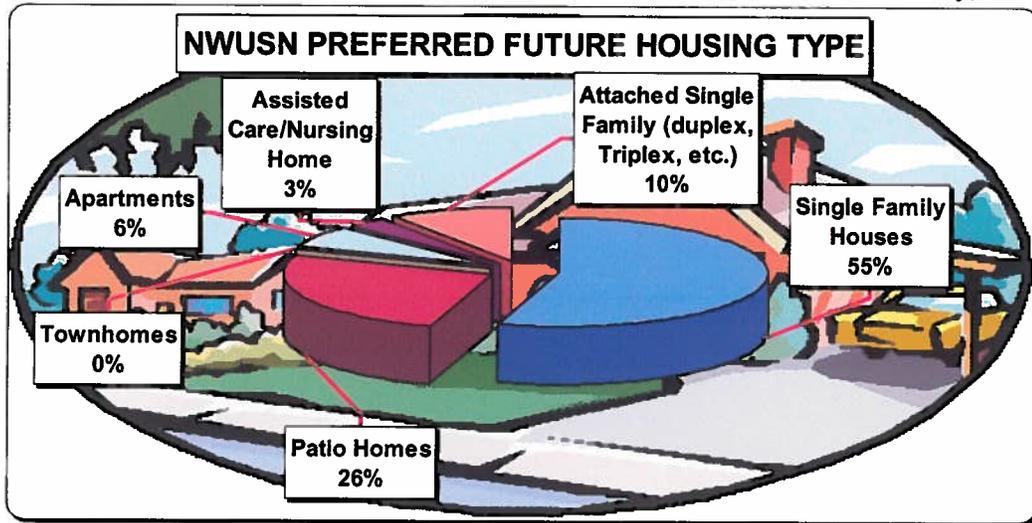


Figure 2-14

**2:2:2:2 Transportation:**

The **Transportation Category** posed four questions. The respondents were offered some specific choices as well as having the option to include any intersection of their choice. The results are found on the following tables.

**1. Which intersections do you think is most dangerous?**

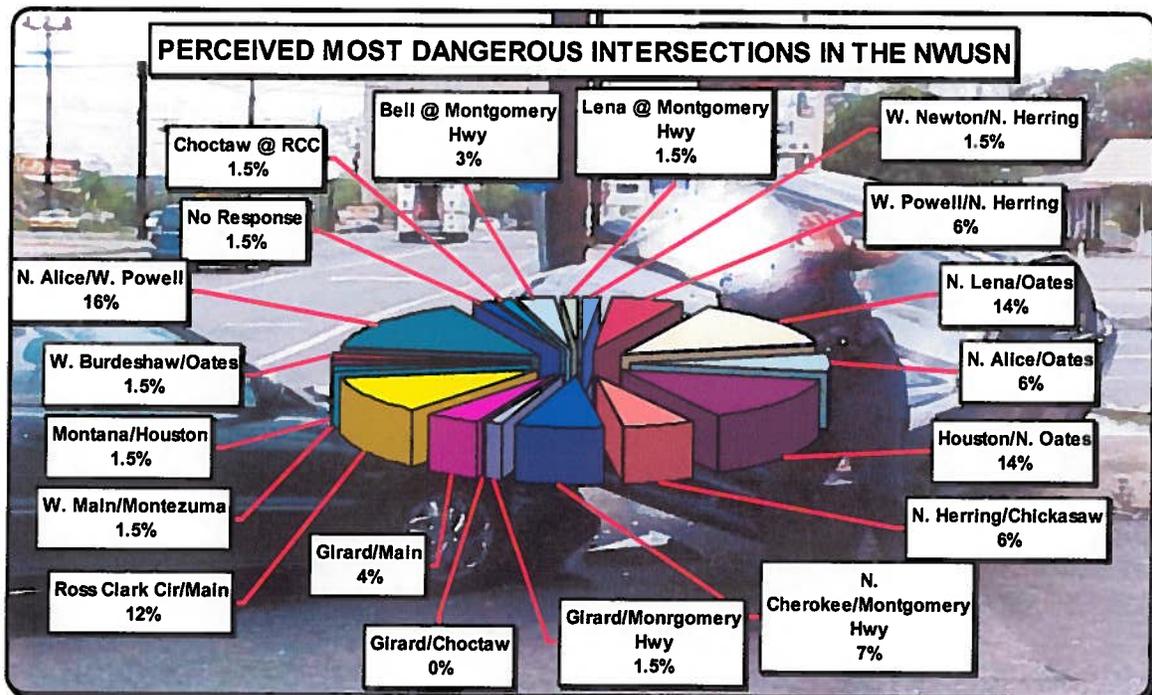


Figure 2-15



N. Alice/W. Powell was nominated by the respondents as the most dangerous intersection while N. Lena/N. Oates and Houston/N. Oates were clearly indicated as the next two most dangerous intersections in the NWUSN. They were followed closely by Ross Clark Circle/W. Main.

There are many road intersections in the proximity of or within the area known as the Baptist Bottoms area where buildings are so close to the paving that it appears there is very little to no public right-of-way between the curb and the foundation of some of the structures in this area. It makes negotiating a turn at or simply crossing these intersections a challenge due to the lack of line of sight.

Even with stop signs present, one must nose the car into the intersection to simply ascertain whether or not there is oncoming opposing traffic.

**2. What roads in your neighborhood need improvement?**

<b>Road</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Montana	4%
N. Oates	4%
W. Newton	9%
N. Alice	17%
N. Lena	4%
W. Powell	12%
Houston	9%
Blackshear	4%
Atlanta	6%
N. Bell	13%
Linden	9%
Choctaw	1%
Chickasaw	1%
All East/West Sts that bottom out at intersections	1%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 2-1**

N. Alice was nominated by the respondents as the road most in need of improvements while N. Bell and W. Powell were clearly indicated as needing improvements as well. Three other roads, (W. Newton, Houston, and Linden), were each selected by 9% of the respondents as roads needing improvements.



All these roads are in the proximity of or within the area known as the Baptist Bottoms area (Section One) of the NWUSN. None of the roads within the other two sections of the NWUSN received any mention.

### 3. To where do you walk or bike most often?

Number one location that those who attended these community involvement meetings and responded to this question generally walk to is the Post Office. The library, parks, places of worship were also popular walk-able destinations. Locations of less frequency walking to and from include grocery and convenience stores, although they also received a large proportion of votes, and to the lesser extent, schools and city offices were walked to.

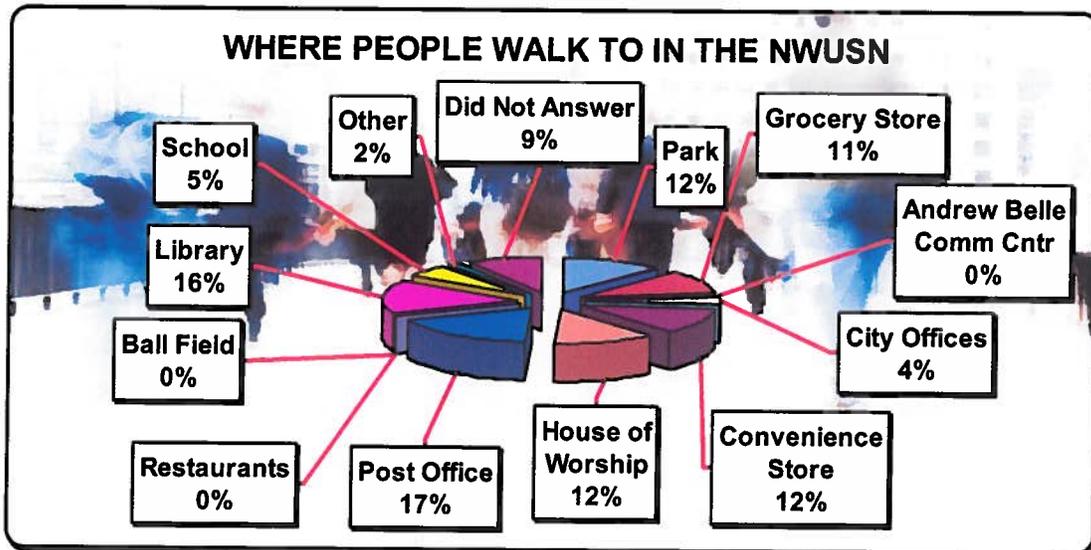


Figure 2-16

Not one respondent said they bothered to walk to Andrew Belle Community Center, restaurants, or ball fields. The NWUSN has no designated baseball or softball fields, however there are backstops at both Solomon and Kinsey Parks. The Andrew Belle Community Center at Lake St. and Bayshore Ave. is located just a little over 1/10 of a mile from the non-profit Hawk-Houston Boys & Girls Club. It is equipped with a gymnasium, club room, a computer/homework room, a game room, and a small kitchen. The park consists of 3 baseball fields, playground, water splash pad, and an outdoor basketball court.



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**Figure 2-17 - Andrew Belle Community Center**

The Hawk-Houston Boys & Girls Club has an indoor basketball court, classrooms and activities for area children. It's plain to see how important this facility is to the NWUSN. Even though Andrew Belle is within walking distance, none of the respondents said they walked to it. The Boys & Girls Club most likely provides the community center need for this section of the NWUSN.



**Figures 2-18 & 2-19 - Children at the Hawk-Houston Boys & Girls Club & the Building Exterior**

Respondents also said they did not walk to restaurants. With the exception of one restaurant on N. Alice St., all restaurants are located along one of the NWUSN boundary roads or along Montgomery Hwy.; and are certainly within walking distance of most of the NWUSN homes. The absence of sidewalks perhaps is the cause for the lack of pedestrian interest among the citizens.



4. *Where would you like to see sidewalks in your neighborhood?*

<b>Roads</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
N. Herring	5%
Montana	19%
Girard	2%
N. Cherokee	7%
Chickasaw	12%
Choctaw	5%
Osceola	2%
W. Main	9%
Montgomery Hwy.	9%
Houston	12%
Old Headland Ave.	2%
Oates @ Montgomery Hwy	1%
Oates @ Main	1%
N. Alice	2%
N. Bell	2%
Everywhere	5%
Don't Use or Want Them	4%
Did not Answer	1%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 2-2**

Montana St. was the number one street selected by all respondents for new sidewalk construction. Currently, sidewalks only exist along Montana in right-of-way directly adjacent to and abutting the Montana Magnet School. Chickasaw and Houston Sts. were basically tied for the second spot, followed by W. Main and Montgomery Hwy. Sidewalks currently exist along the north side of W. Main St. from its intersection with Oates St. to Porter Square with another segment of sidewalk in front of the First Methodist Church at W. Main St. and N. Park Ave. No sidewalks exist along the north side of W. Main St. from the western parking lot of First Methodist Church to the Ross Clark Circle.

The next popular selection was “everywhere”, which yielded 5% of the total number of responses. Curiously, 1% of the respondents felt that sidewalks were needed at the intersection of W. Main and Oates Sts. where sidewalks currently exist. Both “everywhere” and “W. Main @ Oates” were under the “Other” category where respondents were free to write in a location of their own choice. Finally, 4% of the respondents reported that they did not want any and didn’t use the ones that were already in the area.

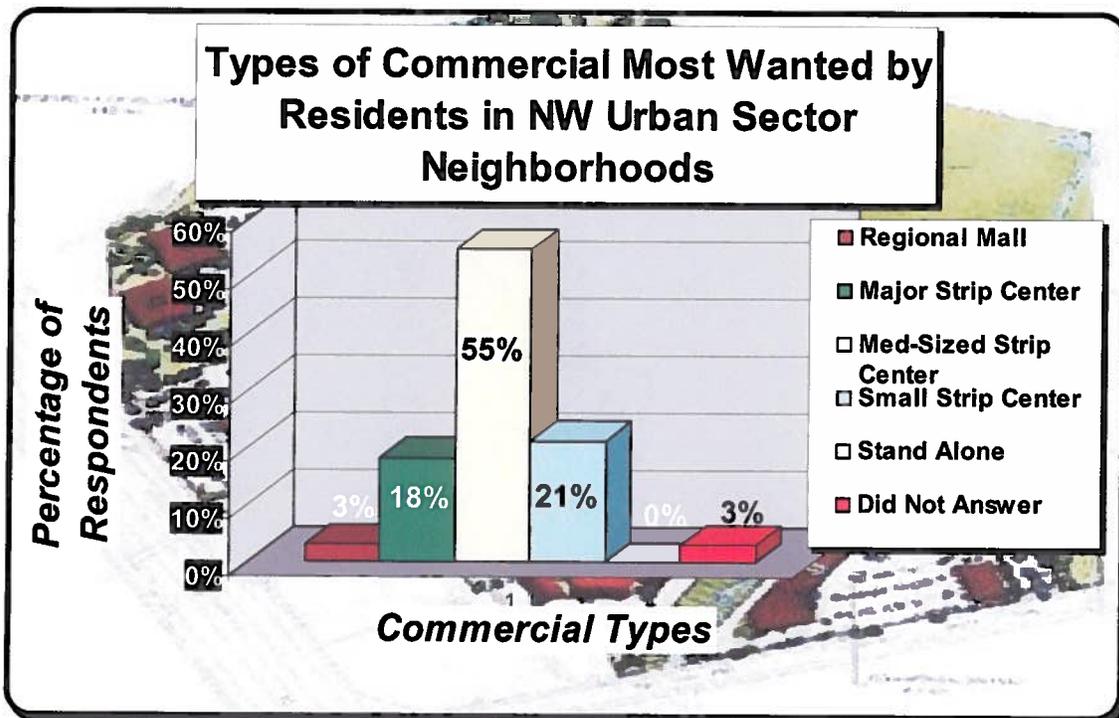


**2:2:2:3 Quality of Life:**

The seven **Quality of Life** questions revolved around sense of place and their community and how they saw it improving through various city-sponsored activities, citizen backed and operated efforts, or future private land development projects.

1. **What type of commercial development would you most like to see in your neighborhood?** Most people (55%) felt a small strip center with doctor, dentist and other community services would benefit them the most, while 21% preferred stand alone restaurants and commercial stores, another 18% thought a medium sized strip center would be good, and just 3% thought a major shopping center would be of benefit. Only 3% of respondents chose not to answer this question.

Conversations during the meetings pointed out the need for a city-established and operated community service facility, perhaps located at the Porter Square Mall or Highlands Elementary that would house offices of the Social Security Administration, the Veteran’s Affairs Department, Alabama Employment Office, a police substation and doctor, dentist and other medical services.



**Figure 2-20**



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**2. What locations would you like to see this commercial development?**

The majority of people (66%) had the Porter Square Mall in mind, whereas Main St.; Lena @ Chickasaw; Montgomery Hwy. @ Beeline; and Evergreen Plaza each received 8.5%. Clearly the Porter Square Mall is the location of choice for any doctor, dentist and other community services to be situated.

**3. Would you like to see a community garden in your neighborhood?**

74% voted Yes and 26% No.

**4. Would you be interested in a neighborhood watch program?**

64% said Yes, 36% said they weren't sure. Nobody selected "No".

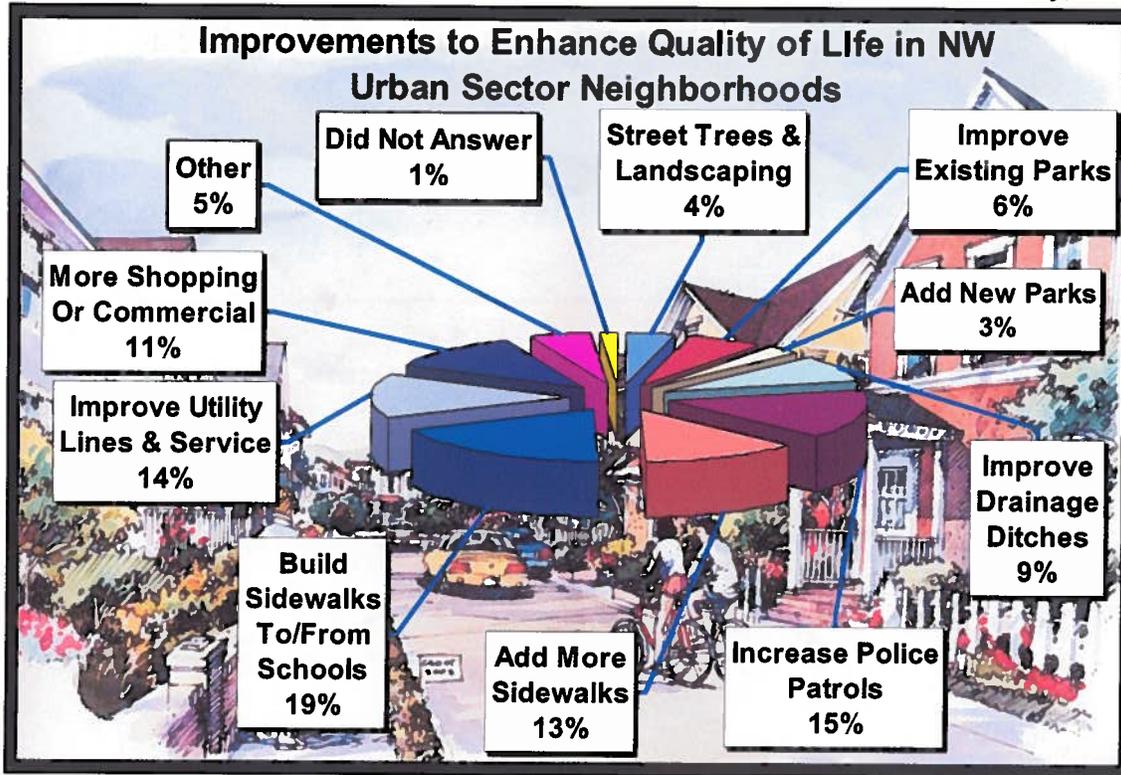
**5. Any buildings in your neighborhood worthy of historic preservation?**

58% said they weren't sure, another 25% said "Yes" and the remaining 17% said "No". Three sites were named as potential historic sites. 56% felt that the Hawk-Houston Boys & Girls Club should receive that distinction, 33% thought the Houston-Love Memorial Library would qualify, and the remaining 11% mentioned the First Missionary Baptist Church.

**6. What improvements do you think would enhance the quality of life in your neighborhood?**

Most respondents (19%) felt that new sidewalks to and from schools in the area was the most important item to advance the quality of life in the NWUSN. Another 13% felt building sidewalks in general at various locations or throughout the entire area would be an improvement; whereas 15% felt more police patrols, and 14% felt an improvement in utility lines & service was needed. More shopping or commercial uses brought in 11% of the vote. Only 1% chose not to answer this question. In the "other" category where 5% of respondents voted the following suggestions were cited:

- a. Reduce the number of police patrols in the area.
- b. Maintain city-owned lots.
- c. Add recreational improvements to the Hawk-Houston Boy's & Girl's Club.
- d. Develop small businesses in the area.
- e. Develop a public garden.



**Figure 2-21**

**7. If more street lighting could be provided on what streets is it most needed?** Visibility at night along neighborhood and through streets is a matter of safety. Some areas of the NWUSN are not at all well lit after dark. IN the Baptist Bottoms area some streets just do not have adequate vacant space in the street right-of-way between the curb and the private property lines to install light poles. This can be a challenging issue for the city.

We provided six streets from which the respondents could choose and allowed space for additional streets to be written in. Two of the six streets provided on the questionnaire, W. Powell and W. Newton received a large amount of votes. In fact 15% of the total selection was cast for each of these two streets, representing 30% of the entire amount of selections made by the respondents.

The remainder of the preselected streets (N. Cherokee, Denton, Montgomery Hwy., and N. Park) received between 5% and 8% of the total, leaving 36% of the total selections distributed among the write in selections of Wheat (8%); Alice (7%); Houston (7%); Linden (3%); Walnut (3%); and Whiddon, N. Bell, Chickasaw, and N. Lena (2% each). Those choosing not to answer totaled 7%.





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Most common among all focus groups was the condition of existing housing and the cost of housing as well as a desire to see a community services facility that housed Veteran's Affairs, Social Security and other civil and medical offices. It was suggested that the Porter Square Mall was the ideal site for a facility such as this. A police sub station was also among the popular topics discussed.

Comments, concerns and issues relevant to housing were:

1. Dilapidated properties are plentiful in the area, they need to be removed.
2. Homes should be brought to habitable condition or removed.
3. Eliminate boarded up homes and businesses or bring them up to code within one year.
4. Absentee landlords and other landlords need to bring their rental properties up to current building code prior to renting them.
5. Enforce existing codes against property maintenance violations
6. The City needs to partner with private developers to build homes and commercial establishments.
7. Affordable housing needed in neighborhood in the  $\leq \$60,000$ - $\$75,000$  price point.
8. Provide additional police patrols OR open a police sub-station, possibly at Highlands Elementary, location of Operation Head Start.



**Figure 2-25 Presentation of Ideas**

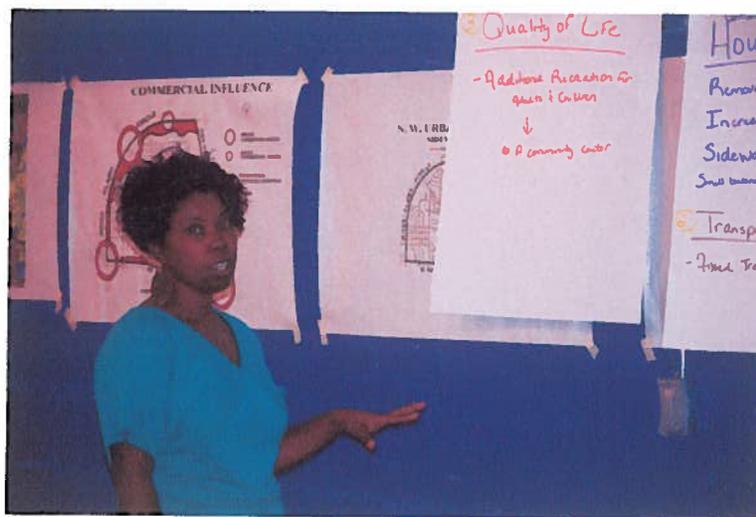
The other items on the lists the focus groups developed were:

1. Lack of public landscaping.
2. Street lighting is needed throughout.



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3. All east/west streets that “bottom out” at intersecting north/south streets need to be improved so they don’t bottom out.
4. The residents asked for cost-free G.E.D. classes in the area OR for the city or Wallace College to provide free transportation to and from Wallace College to attend the free G.E.D. classes.
5. Transportation/transit services are requested along fixed routes to take residents to various locations throughout the city.
6. Dothan Utilities needs to improve their service and fix the problem that causes unscheduled interruptions of service and surges.
7. Improve existing parklands and add recreational facilities at Hawk-Houston Boy’s and Girl’s Club.
8. There was an interest in forming Home Owner’s Associations (HOAs) and questions regarding the procedures to do so.
9. Need small strip centers within walking distance at which to purchase groceries and dine at restaurants.
10. Request that the city develop and operate a community service facility preferably at Porter Square Mall or Highlands Elementary consolidating offices of the Social Security Administration, Veteran’s Affairs, Alabama Employment Services, a police sub-station, along with medical, dental, and vision clinics.
11. In the event the city cannot accomplish Item 10, could the city provide transportation services to the residents of the neighborhood to those offices mentioned in Item 10. Many citizens in this area do not have transportation and find it difficult obtaining health care or handling matters with these federal or state offices since they are located miles away from the NWUSN.



**Figure 2-26 More Ideas**



## **2:3 Highlights of the November 8, 2012 Community Involvement Meeting:**

A Power Point presentation was prepared for showing during this meeting that explained the information we had received during our initial two meetings held in late July. A handout was also made available to those in attendance which explained in more detail the suggestions and concerns we received from the citizens during the initial meetings along with a list of recommendations the planning department was proposing as part of the Plan. Charts, maps and graphs were displayed on the walls on the Boys and Girls Club of Hawk-Houston for attendees to review.

Unfortunately, the interest from the public seemed to have waned somewhat from the July meetings, because only two citizens were in attendance. Since the attendance was quite small, we decided to forego the Power Point presentation and “talk” from the handout. A question and answer session followed and additional information deemed appropriate to the Plan was recorded for further study and possible inclusion into the Plan.

The meeting which was scheduled from 6pm to 8:30pm was adjourned at 7:15pm once it was clear that no other members of the public would be attending, all the questions from the two citizens in attendance were answered and an interview with a representative of the television media was concluded.

## **2:4 Meetings’ Turnout:**

The people who participated were actively involved and provided some excellent comments, concerns and direction although the turn out was a comparatively low one when factoring in the population of the NW Urban Sector Neighborhoods.

## **2:5 Solomon Park Charrette:**

Commissioner Baxley met with representatives of the Garden District early in 2012 to discuss developing plans to make Solomon Park a more “senior-friendly” one. At the request of the commissioner, the Long Range Planning Division prepared three alternative conceptual redevelopment plans showing the park used as a passive, a semi-active as well as an active retreat.

In October, the commissioner once again asked the Long Range Planning Division to amend the original alternative plans and create two additional ones adding features to the park site based upon a rough sketch that had been prepared by the Solomon Park Steering Committee of the Garden District Neighborhood Watch Group.



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The Commissioner plans a Charrette with the Garden District to decide on what alternative or combination of alternatives with which the citizens wished to proceed and request redevelopment from the city.

## **2:6 Advertisement:**

The city announced its intention of holding this meeting through a combination of media and strategic initiatives to include flyers, public notification in the July 23, 2012 edition of the *Dothan Eagle* newspaper, face to face meetings with the two city commissioners in who's districts the planning area involves, as well as an interview with two reporters from WTVY & WDHN TV Stations, notification by the morning anchor on WTVY July 24 of the two meetings. Personal contact to names of individuals in the CDBG Administrator's files, and personal delivery of flyers to area churches that were not locked and the Hawk-Houston Boy's & Girl's Club.

The second meeting held November 8, 2012 was advertised during the second week of October through flyers distributed to the Hawk-Houston Boys and Girls Club, area churches, the Montana Magnet, Girard Elementary, and Girard Middle Schools, the Dothan Chamber of Commerce, and the various city departments in the civic center for their posting.

WTVY and the Dothan Eagle were also provided with a public notice early in November. The Chamber advised the Long Range Planning Division representative that they would include the announcement in a membership-wide email; and the Hawk-Houston Boys and Girls Club said they would post the announcement on their website.