

**Omaha Master Plan**  
**Mike Fahey, Mayor Report #275**

# *Housing* **Element**



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## **Introduction**

Fundamental to most people's appreciation of the quality of life within a community is their experience of it close to where they live. Their homes and neighborhoods must be places to enjoy the benefits of their work and raise their children, as well as places to earn a living. The strength of a rich community life is enhanced when people bring their cultures, skills, knowledge and life experiences to each other in an atmosphere of mutual appreciation and respect.

It is natural then, that the primary concern of most people is their home environment, the place in which individuals possess the greatest control of any place in their lives. As attention broadens to the neighborhood, the individual's level of control is shared with neighbors and various governmental entities, in particular, the City. The Omaha Master Plan and its elements represent the unique role City government can play in the life of a community. The Concept Element of the Master Plan, which was adopted in late 1993, was designed to address broad issues facing the city. One of these, the Housing and Community Development Element of the Master Plan, is the culmination of a process which attempts to identify in general terms what the residents of Omaha want. It describes what approaches would be suitable to meet neighborhood needs, and delineates appropriate initiatives given the extent of the problem and the level of City support.

The Housing and Community Development Plan is divided into six sections: Vision and Goals from the Concept Element, Current Conditions and Trends, Creation and Preservation of Healthy Neighborhoods, Expansion of Affordable Housing Opportunities, Development of Neighborhood Businesses and the Creation of Jobs, and Development of Public Services and Facilities.

The first section identifies the linkage between the Concept Element and Housing and Community Development Elements. Omaha's present housing conditions and development trends are described in the next section. The final sections cover the four primary areas of concern around which the housing and community development initiatives are designed.

## ***Vision and Goals from the Concept Element***

On November 24, 1993, the Omaha City Council adopted the Concept Element of the Omaha Master Plan. The housing and community development related vision statements from the Concept Element are as follows:

### ***Vision***

***Omaha must be a community committed to promoting and maintaining a high quality of life for all its people.***

- Omaha should take advantage of the cultural diversity of its people and help foster an appreciation of their differences and a spirit of cooperation in order to promote overall community betterment and equal opportunity. Omahans should continue to aspire to make their city a safe place to live, work, and visit. Omaha's educational systems must promote educational excellence at all levels. Human services need to be accessible and effective and should reflect the cultural diversity of the city's population.
- Omahans need to take pride in the physical attractiveness of their city and work to eliminate visual blight and to promote high quality design. Omaha's urban form must be carefully designed to eliminate land use conflicts, reduce traffic congestion, encourage pedestrian movement, and incorporate open space. The preservation of historic buildings and sites is important to Omahans as they work to preserve their cultural and ethnic heritage.



*Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial*

- Omaha's neighborhoods must be designed to supply a variety of affordable, quality homes along with a full range of the services and amenities which make each neighborhood unique. Private investment, public programs and the involvement of community organizations should all be used in an effort to reverse and eventually eliminate deterioration within the city.
- Public and private cooperation should be utilized to ensure that Omaha's economy is viable and self-sustaining and that it provides diverse and rewarding employment opportunities, upward mobility, job security, and a good standard of living. Omaha's education system must provide quality employees at all levels and should help to rapidly retrain the structurally unemployed.
- Public improvements and services must be provided in a way which promotes balanced growth and redevelopment and distributes costs according to benefits received. Quality, efficiency, and equitable distribution need to be stressed in the provision of public facilities and services. In an effort to improve Omaha's overall quality of life, fiscal, social and environmental costs and benefits must be considered in decisions regarding public services.
- Omaha's plans and regulations must accurately reflect the community's desires, resulting in a clear direction for Omaha's future and rapid approval of proposals which follow those plans. Omaha must make every effort to be the best community in the metropolitan area, but should also work with other nearby communities to promote the growth of the entire region.



*South Omaha Business District*

## Goals

Manage the growth of the city.

- Be pro-active rather than reactive regarding development.
- Establish a contiguous and compact pattern of growth.
- Prevent new strip office/commercial development.
- Create a series of high-density, mixed-use areas throughout the city.

Develop and maintain a positive city image.

- Strengthen the Central Business District as the city's "image center".
- Preserve and protect unique natural and historic features which serve as a foundation for Omaha's overall image.

Promote and maintain a high quality of urban design.

Preserve and promote the city's physical, ethnic, and cultural heritage.

- Preserve historic structures.
- Draw on the rich, diverse ethnic heritage of the city.
- Expand and improve the city's cultural amenities.

Create healthy and diverse neighborhoods throughout the city.

- Reverse deterioration in older areas of the central city.
- Promote the creation of a full range of jobs.
- Conserve existing stable neighborhoods.
- Encourage private investment.
- Ensure good quality housing.
- Encourage home ownership.
- Promote the construction of affordable housing.
- Ensure a mix of housing patterns, types and styles.
- Prevent negative changes to neighborhood character (slip-ins/conversions/spot zoning).
- Ensure a mix of necessary retail and personal services in all areas.

Protect our natural systems and environmental quality.

Provide public services efficiently and equitably.

- Ensure that those who benefit help pay for the city services they receive.
- Create an interconnected park and open-space system.
- Provide an equitable distribution of recreation amenities and services.
- Reduce traffic congestion and costs by shifting from a "sparse hierarchy" to a "dense network" street system.

# Current Conditions and Trends

## Population and Households

The 1990 census reports that the population of Omaha, Nebraska is 335,795, an increase of 6.9% from 1980. The population has fluctuated during the past 30 years, resulting in an overall increase of 11.3% since 1960 (See Figure 1). The geographical incidence of population loss and gain within the city has produced a shift in the population from east to west resulting in a decrease in overall population density of 5.1 persons per acre in 1990, down from 9.2 in 1960.

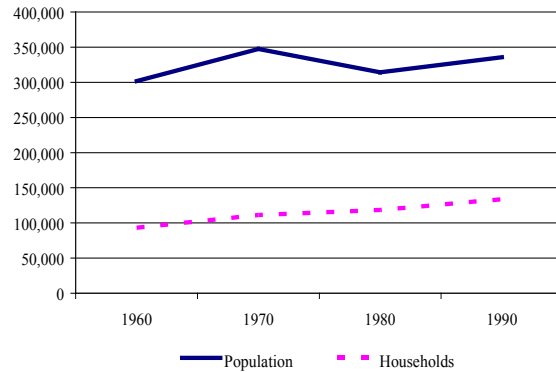


Figure 1  
Population and Housing

## Household Size

Table 1 below shows the general decline in size by household types from 1980 to 1990. Owner households had the largest decline in persons per household (from 2.96 in 1980 to 2.72 in 1990). The exception, renter households, showed an increase from 1980 to 1990. The size of family households followed the general trend, decreasing between 1980 and 1990 from 3.25 to 3.11.

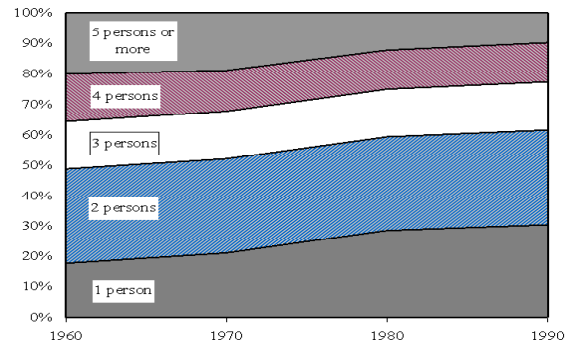


Figure 2  
Distribution of Household by Size

Figure 2 shows the proportion of one person households expanding between 1960 and 1990, with a particularly sharp increase occurring during the 1970s. The proportion of households with five people or more shows an equally dramatic decline during the same period. Other household sizes show small or no changes in their proportion during the 30-year period. This shift from larger to smaller household sizes accounts for the higher rate of increase for the number of households compared to the rate of increase for the population overall (See Figure 1).

Table 1

### PERSONS PER HOUSEHOLD AND FAMILY

	1980	1990	%CHANGE
Persons per household	2.59	2.45	-0.14
Renter households	1.99	2.05	0.06
Owner households	2.96	2.72	-0.24
Persons per family	3.25	3.11	-0.14

## Race and Ethnicity

Racial/ethnic diversity increased within the city between 1980 and 1990 with the number of minority people increasing by more than 20%. Some racial/ethnic groups experienced increases of 40% and greater, as shown below.

Table 2

### POPULATION, RACE AND HISPANIC ORIGIN

RACE/ETHNIC GROUP	1980		1990		% CHANGE 1980-1990
	POPULATION	% OF TOTAL	POPULATION	% OF TOTAL	
Total	314,255	100.0	335,795	100.00	6.9
White	268,591	85.5	281,603	83.9	4.8
Black	37,864	12.0	43,989	13.1	15.9
American Indian	1,796	0.6	2,274	0.7	26.6
Asian	1,769	0.6	3,412	1.0	92.9
Other	4,235	1.3	4,517	1.3	6.7
Hispanic Origin (incl. White & Black)	7,319	2.3	10,288	3.1	40.6

## Income, Race/Ethnicity

The overall economic well-being of Omahans stayed about the same between 1980 and 1990, but that did not hold true for everyone. Based on comparisons of median household incomes adjusted for increases in the cost of living, households headed by persons of Hispanic origin and those headed by White persons showed significant increases. The incomes of Asian-headed households experienced slight declines during the 1980s, while Black-headed households experienced significant declines. Native American household incomes dropped the most by nearly 24% during the 1980s.

Table 3

### CHANGE IN HOUSEHOLD INCOME BY RACE/ETHNICITY

RACE/ETHNIC GROUP	MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME 1980	MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME 1990	% CHANGE
White Households	\$28,292	\$31,721	12.1
Black Households	\$16,909	\$15,431	-8.5
American Indian HHs	\$16,753	\$12,859	-23.3
Asian Households	\$22,002	\$21,639	-1.7
Hispanic Origin HHs	\$22,157	\$25,443	14.8
All Households	\$26,968	\$26,927	-0.2

\*adjusted to 1990 dollars

Sources: 1980 and 1990 Censuses

## Unemployment

The unemployment rate for Omaha was 4.7% according to the 1990 census. Contributing to the economic distress in the eastern portion of the city is the concentration of unemployed citizens. In some census tracts in North Omaha unemployment rates exceed 20%.

## Minority Concentration

While minority households can be found throughout the city, the majority are located in the eastern quarter of the city, mostly north of Dodge Street in what is considered the geographic heart of Omaha's African American community. On a smaller scale, South Omaha's importance to the Hispanic community has increased steadily over the years as more Hispanic households reside there than ever before. The location of other minority households throughout the city are neither as large nor concentrated as the African American or Hispanic households.

## Concentration of Poverty

The geographical location of Omaha's poorest people follows a familiar pattern. People living in poverty can be found in virtually every census tract in the city, but again the eastern quarter of the city has the majority of Omaha's poor, with the area north of Dodge Street having the highest concentration.

## Age Composition

In general, Omaha's population has aged since 1980. The oldest and least numerous range (85+) increased by the largest percentage, a trend which is projected to continue in Omaha as it is throughout the country. All other age ranges increased, with the exception of the school-aged population (5-19) which decreased by nearly 10 percent.

Table 4

### AGE COMPOSITION

AGE GROUP	1980		1990		% CHANGE
	NUMBER	% OF TOTAL	NUMBER	% OF TOTAL	
0-4	22,491	7.2	25,711	7.7	14.3
5-19	76,914	24.5	69,545	20.7	-9.6
20-34	83,073	26.4	89,004	25.0	7.1
34-65	93,351	29.7	108,238	32.2	15.9
65-85	34,512	11.0	38,317	11.4	11.0
85 +	3,914	1.2	4,980	1.4	27.2

## Homeless

Estimates of the number of homeless people range between 800 and 1,000 people in Omaha. According to the Alliance of Family Shelters, demand for emergency shelters has increased by 200% during the past four years. The Alliance states that the average adult sheltered in Omaha is 29 years old, has a tenth grade education, and probably has a history of some institutional involvement (such as foster care). Families and their members make up 40% of the clients served by emergency shelters.

People with special needs also make up a significant proportion of the sheltered population. People with severe mental illness make up 18% of the sheltered homeless population, another 19% of the sheltered homeless have alcohol or drug abuse problems (these percentages represent mutually exclusive populations). People homeless as the result of domestic violence make up 5% of the sheltered homeless population.

A survey of emergency shelters by the Planning Department indicates that shelter users are commonly homeless for less than a month (ranging from 45-93%, depending on the shelter). Results of this survey further indicate that only 5% of shelter users are homeless for more than six months. These results are in contrast to those of a survey of homeless service providers, which indicate that between 40-80% of their clients were homeless for more than six months. This difference may represent the difference in the client base between homeless shelter providers and service providers, suggesting a significant proportion of homeless people are unsheltered.

## Housing

According to the 1990 census, Omaha has 143,612 housing units, an increase of 14.5% from 1980. Since 1960, the number of housing units has increased steadily, resulting in a 30 year increase of 67.7%, compared to a 43.8% increase in the number of households, and a 11.3% increase in population. The numerical difference between households and housing units is the number of vacant units. Figure 3 indicates that since the 1960s, housing vacancies have been increasing steadily.

The number of occupied units increased by more than 15,000, or 13%, from 1980 to 1990, while the number of vacant units increased by 41.3%. The vacancy rate for rental units rose from 7.1% in 1980 to 8.3% in 1990, an increase of nearly 1,500 units.

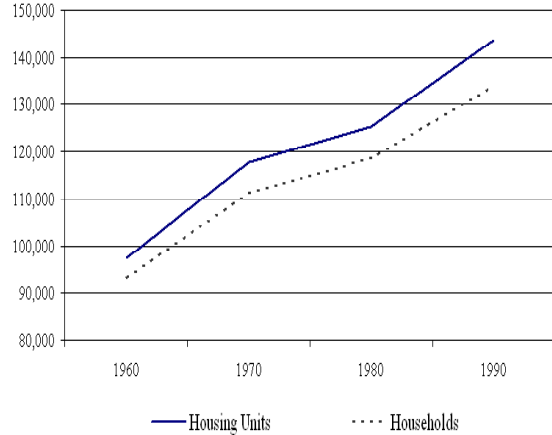


Figure 3  
Households and Housing Units

Table 5

### HOUSING UNITS AND TENURE

TENURE	1980		1990		% CHANGE
	NUMBER OF UNITS	% OF TOTAL	NUMBER OF UNITS	% OF TOTAL	
Total	125,381	100.0	143,612	100.0	14.5
Occupied	118,465	94.5	133,842	93.2	13.0
Vacant	6,916	5.5	9,770	6.8	41.3
For rent*	3,489	7.1	4,927	8.3	41.2
For sale**	961	1.3	1,062	1.3	10.5

\*as a percent of rented and for rent

\*\*as a percent of owned and for sale

Source: U.S. Census, 1980 and 1990

## Location of Vacant Housing

Vacant housing units can be found in all parts of the city, but are most prevalent in the eastern quarter of the city, with larger numbers in North Omaha than South Omaha. This is the same general area where the number of vacant housing units increased the most during the 1980s. Several North Omaha census tracts had fewer vacant units, which can be attributed to the demolitions associated with the construction of the North Freeway.

## Housing Costs/Values

Between 1980 and 1990, the cost of housing increased or decreased depending on the segment of the housing market considered. In general, lower cost housing increased in value while more expensive housing decreased, or increased at a lesser rate. While the adjusted median housing value decreased by more than \$2,000, or -3.6%, over the decade, the first quartile housing value increased by nearly \$2,000, or 5.2%. This trend, along with the significant drop in the value of housing in the third quartile (over \$9,000 or -9%) indicates a greater demand for lower priced housing than for higher priced housing.

Not as much variability is found in Omaha's rental housing market though a similar pattern does prevail. From 1980 to 1990, the median monthly contract rent increased by 13.2%. The largest increase is found in less expensive rental units where rents increased by more than fifteen percent. The third quartile rental property figures reveal the smallest increase (7.3%).

Table 6  
MEDIAN HOUSING VALUE AND RENT

	*1980	1990	CHANGE 1980 TO 1990	
			\$	%
Median Housing Value	\$56,657	\$54,600	-\$2,057	-3.6
Housing Value First Quartile	\$36,878	\$38,806	\$1,928	5.2
Housing Value Third Quartile	\$80,367	\$73,183	\$7,184	-8.9
Median Rent	\$288	\$326	\$38	13.2
Rent First Quartile	\$214	\$247	\$33	15.4
Rent Third Quartile	\$385	\$413	\$28	7.3

\*adjusted to 1990 dollars

Source: 1980 and 1990 Censuses

## Availability of Affordable Housing

A measure of available, affordable housing can be obtained by dividing the number of units that are affordable to households in an income range by the number of households that can afford them. This calculation yields a ratio, which, if less than 1.0, indicates a lack of affordable units for households in that income range. A ratio greater than 1.0 indicates a surplus. (This measure estimates the match between affordable units and households that can afford them. It assumes that households are matched to their affordability category. In reality, however, higher income households very often reside in units affordable to households in lower income categories. With this in mind, the affordability index should be considered a method which understates the availability of housing at a lower income range.)

Using this method of measuring affordability for three income ranges (0-30%, 0-50%, 0-80% of the Median Family Income or MFI), housing generally appears to be affordable in all income categories. Not surprisingly, the availability of affordable housing increases as household income increases. The ratio of owner households to units affordable to them is clearly higher than for renter households. Renter households at or below 30% of the MFI have the lowest ratio (0.73), revealing a shortage of 3,277 units for extremely low-income renters. It should be noted that the actual availability of affordable units is even less because of the likelihood of some higher income households occupying units affordable to lower income households.

Table 7  
HOUSING AFFORDABILITY INDEX

	INCOME RANGES		
	0-30%	0-50%	0-80%
Units to households that can afford them	1.07	1.71	1.98
Owner units to owner households that can afford them	1.84	2.22	2.45
Renter units to renter households that can afford them	0.73	1.42	1.65

Source: 1993 CHAS Data Book Table 5

## Home Ownership

The rate of home ownership for Omaha is 59%, a drop of more than two percent from 1980 to 1990 (See Figure 4). Elderly households are the most likely to own their own home, closely followed by non-Hispanic White households. Half of all Hispanic households own homes, while the home ownership rate for Black non-Hispanic households is just over 40%. The fact that home ownership rates increase as household incomes rise indicates a general preference for home ownership as the desired form of shelter in Omaha.

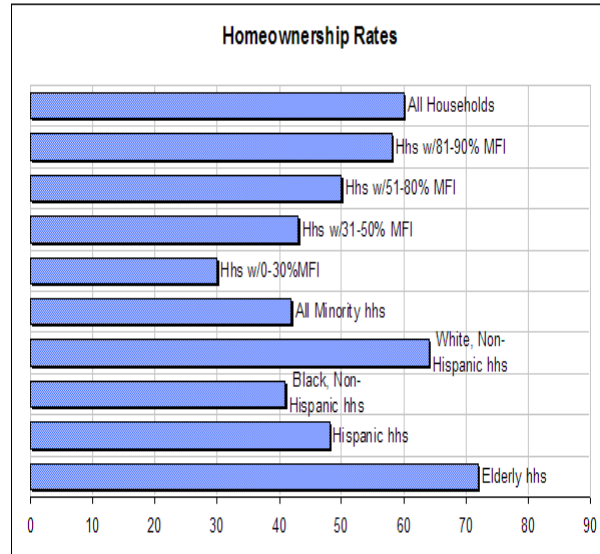


Figure 4  
Homeownership Rates



Charles Place

## Vacancy Rates and Affordability

The pattern of vacancy in housing units affordable to lower-income households is similar to the vacancy pattern for all units, i.e., higher with smaller units and lower with larger units. As Table 8 indicates, the pattern of vacancy may be similar, but the rate for the most affordable housing units is consistently higher when considering all units of the same size and tenure. Owner units have lower vacancy rates than do renter units, particularly for two bedroom units or larger.

For households with incomes above 50% MFI, vacancy rates decline to about the same level as overall vacancy rates for all unit sizes and all tenures.

Table 8

### VACANCY RATES BY UNIT SIZE AND AFFORDABILITY

INCOME CATEGORY	0-1 BEDROOMS	2 BEDROOMS	3+ BEDROOMS
All units:	9.4	5.0	1.8
0-30% MFI	10.8	6.0	4.7
0-50%	11.7	6.4	4.3
0-80%	9.3	5.2	2.1
All Rental units:	9.5	7.9	6.2
0-30% MFI	12.2	13.4	10.4
0-50%	12.3	11.7	11.7
0-80%	9.4	8.0	6.5
All Owner units:	7.8	1.7	1.0
0-30% MFI	2.7	2.1	2.3
0-50%	5.0	1.8	1.7
0-80%	7.6	1.7	1.1

Source: CHAS Data Book, Table 4

## Cost Burden and Severe Cost Burden

The cost of housing is considered to be a burden when a household spends more than 30% of its monthly income on rent or mortgage payments, and is severe if 50% or more is spent on housing. Omaha households experience housing cost burden 24% of the time, while 8% experience severe cost burden. Not surprisingly, the experience of cost burden and severe cost burden is directly related to income. The lower the income the greater likelihood of a housing cost burden. The poorest Omaha households experience a housing cost burden 71% of the time, and severe cost burden 52% of the time. Another important factor is tenure. Renter households experience a housing cost burden 36% of the time compared to 16% for owner households.

## ***Physical Condition of the Housing Stock***

Several measures of the physical condition of Omaha's housing stock reveal a similar pattern of housing and neighborhood deterioration. The annual Building and Development Summary provides data regarding the general location of demolition activity. Over 90% of all demolition activity, based on wrecking permit applications, occurs east of 42nd Street. Two other studies conducted during the late 1980s confirm the deterioration of housing conditions in the city's east, and further specify the northeast portion of the city as having the most severe housing condition problems.

### ***Omaha must be a community committed to promoting and maintaining a high quality of life for all of its people.***

To contribute to the realization of this vision through housing and community development activities, the Concept Element places great importance in the creation, improvement and preservation of healthy, diverse neighborhoods and in the availability of affordable housing to all residents in all parts of the city. While these goals are interrelated, the achievement of either of these ideals would appear difficult, if not impossible, in light of the physical and economic decline in some Omaha neighborhoods and the barriers some residents must overcome to change their housing circumstances. Still, the previous descriptions of Omaha's people and housing characteristics identified problems that need to be addressed and opportunities which should be taken.

The focus of the city's housing and community development effort should be the preservation and improvement of inner-city neighborhoods. Building on existing economic strengths and creating new economic opportunities enhance the economic viability of inner-city neighborhoods. Housing activities within these neighborhoods have the additional benefits of improving and expanding the city's affordable housing stock, as well as creating employment opportunities to area residents. However, revitalizing inner-city neighborhoods must be balanced with the goal of increasing the availability of affordable housing units throughout the city.

Striking and maintaining this balance in the context of dynamic issues and opportunities will be a difficult, ongoing process. This process must routinely involve the people who have first-hand knowledge of the problems and who are directly affected by the actions of community development, as well as anyone who has a stake in what happens in Omaha's most economically and physically distressed neighborhoods.

The city's housing and community development efforts are organized by the following action-oriented goals: the creation and preservation of healthy neighborhoods, the expansion of affordable housing opportunities, the development of neighborhood businesses and the creation of jobs, and the development of facilities and the improvement of services.

# ***Creation and Preservation of Healthy Neighborhoods***

The Concept Element states:

- Mechanisms to monitor and programs to maintain housing stability and neighborhood viability will be utilized by the city to ensure the preservation of the existing housing stock and to ensure the prevention of changes detrimental to the neighborhood.
- The City will identify existing neighborhoods in need of housing conservation and rehabilitation and will not pursue large-scale displacement of residents within said areas unless it is part of a redevelopment effort that will improve/upgrade the housing stock.
- Rezoning, conversions, and “slip-in” apartments will be discouraged in conservation areas and special regulations and an adequate level code enforcement will be implemented to encourage conservation and rehabilitation.
- The City will encourage the preservation and renovation of existing housing stock and historic sites and structures through a variety of methods, including the use of incentives as well as the construction of new housing.
- New development should be consistent with the character of older neighborhoods, except in areas designated for extensive redevelopment.

Increases in the number of housing units in Omaha during the 1980s kept prices lower and adversely affected the neighborhoods in which the most-affordable housing is located. The number of new households that formed in the 1980s was surpassed by the number of new housing units constructed, resulting in an increase in vacant units. The number of vacant units increased by 2,900 to a total of nearly 10,000 units in Omaha by 1990. In spite of higher vacancy rates and drops in housing values in upper market segments, housing prices of Omaha’s least expensive housing increased in value.

In contrast to the typical market pattern in which costs rise and supply decreases as a result of increased demand, vacancy rates for lower cost housing units were 50% to 100% higher than overall rates. The reason for this higher vacancy rate may be that a portion of the city’s most-affordable housing stock is, in strictly market terms, in unacceptably poor physical condition. The lack of affordable housing is aggravated by this reduction in acceptable affordable units. Neighborhoods further suffer in economic and social terms when households move to other parts of the city.

Deteriorated housing affects surrounding units, as well as whole neighborhoods. Efforts to improve the physical conditions of inner-city neighborhoods should utilize existing housing resources and infrastructure through the conservation and improvement of established neighborhoods.

Sometimes a vacant, vandalized or deteriorated house will detract from the viability of a neighborhood, no longer serving any safe or useful purpose. In such cases, removal of the structure is the best outcome. Demolition of the house, when combined with infill housing or other redevelopment activity, can have a positive effect on a neighborhood.

Neighborhood development efforts should have three main components: single-family rehabilitation, rental rehabilitation, and housing development. Single-family rehabilitation addresses the need to increase stability in neighborhoods by preserving existing single-family, predominantly owner-occupied housing. Rental rehabilitation encourages the improvement of vacant and occupied rental properties. Housing development activities find ways to make home ownership and rental opportunities possible by putting vacant property to productive use again through infill and subdivision development.

Each of these approaches should attempt to use existing housing resources in areas of the city which are economically and physically distressed. Together they make up a coordinated strategy for neighborhood preservation, improvement, and reinvestment.

### ***Owner-Occupied Housing***

*Improve the quality of the owner-occupied housing stock in deteriorated parts of the city through rehabilitation.*

A significant amount of Omaha's affordable housing located in the eastern, older portion of the city is in poor physical condition. The quality of the owner-occupied stock is of particular concern because of the important role it plays in maintaining the stability of neighborhoods. Home owners are more strongly anchored to a neighborhood through ownership, and therefore tend to feel a greater sense of responsibility for where they live. Improving and maintaining the owner-occupied housing stock not only serves the occupant but the neighborhood as well. Once a single-family dwelling is lost to the investment housing market, it is unlikely to become an owner-occupied dwelling again.



*Kountze Park*

The City should provide a range of rehabilitation activities designed to meet the needs of the diverse population that make up owner households. Most should focus on the rehabilitation of housing within specified geographical areas. One approach in the city's most distressed neighborhoods is to provide full, moderate and partial rehabilitations to low- and moderate-income owner households (See Map 1-Target Area Neighborhood). Within a larger, though still focused geographical area, the City will work with area lending institutions to leverage private dollars for the rehabilitation of owner-occupied housing (See Map 2- Low and Moderate Income Area).



*Country Club Neighborhood*

Very low-income home owners from all parts of the city should be provided emergency repair services. Minor repairs for low- and moderate-income elderly households should also be available throughout the city. Working through non-profit organizations, the City should work with households that have physically disabled members to make their homes accessible.

Objectives of single-family rehabilitation efforts are:

- To provide dramatically visible, concentrated improvement in strategic parts of neighborhoods with greatest economic and housing needs.
- To make affordable rehabilitation financing more available in low- and moderate-income neighborhoods.
- To expand rehabilitation activity into low- and moderate-income neighborhoods which have seen little or no previous activity.
- To use resources to leverage private sources, including lenders and the Nebraska Investment Finance Authority.
- To provide special services to people with critical needs.
- To support agencies and programs which are associated with and vital to the success of the Community Development Program.
- To provide an acceptable level of emergency and transitional housing services for homeless people.

## Renter-Occupied Housing

*Improve the quality of the renter-occupied housing stock in deteriorated parts of the city through rehabilitation.*

The physical condition of rental property is generally not equal to that of owner-occupied housing. The negative effect deteriorated single-family and, in particular, multi-family houses have on a neighborhood is great. In order to rehabilitate as many rental units as possible in distressed neighborhoods, City efforts should attempt to leverage as much private financing from multiple sources as possible.

To improve the physical condition of households in distressed neighborhoods, the City should develop programs which involve investor-owners with properties in low- and moderate-income neighborhoods (See Map 2-Low and Moderate Income Area). Another approach should provide rehabilitation financing for highly visible multi-family properties in North, Central, and South Omaha neighborhoods. The program should concentrate on the reuse of repairable vacant buildings and should be designed to work in concert with various types of available public and private funding.

The City should also provide opportunities to modify rental property located throughout the city to increase accessibility of the units for people with disabilities. Working with low- and moderate-income households, this approach would encourage people to remain in their existing living environment and create additional accessible housing in the community.

Objectives of rental rehabilitation efforts are:

- To provide sound rental housing for low- and moderate-income residents.
- To encourage the reuse of vacant but repairable multi-family structures.
- To leverage private investment and to make rehabilitation projects economically feasible with the use of federal funds.
- To increase the supply of handicapped-accessible units.
- To encourage additional residential uses in or near Downtown Omaha.



*Kountze Park*

## New Construction of Housing

*Create additional renter and owner-occupied housing.*

The housing and community development activity which would probably have the greatest impact on distressed neighborhoods is new housing development. New development often removes the most blighting elements of a neighborhood and replaces them with housing that is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood, not to mention the energy that new families bring to neighborhoods.

City efforts to develop new housing should be accomplished in cooperation with for-profit and non-profit developers. Often these developers work in particular parts of the city which the



*Kountze Park*

City has identified as distressed to construct new housing and rehabilitate vacant, sometimes condemned housing for home ownership. The City should establish loan funds to be used for defraying the immediate costs of home ownership to low- and moderate-income households.

Construction of owner-occupied housing should be encouraged through infill development and the creation of new subdivisions. Site acquisition and preparation should be among the incentives used to encourage developers to participate in single-family home construction. Low interest rates and deferred payment loans would lower the costs for potential home owners. Much of the marketing and loan underwriting for these projects would be handled by non-profit community development intermediaries. These organizations would provide technical assistance to neighborhood groups and community development corporations to increase their capacity to undertake community development activities. Working with the City and area lending institutions, they would also act as the link for a public-private partnership to access capital to support development organizations and specific projects.

The construction of multi-family units should occur in distressed areas of the city. As incentives, the City should offer developers site assemblage and preparation, utility installation, public improvements and leveraged low-interest construction and permanent financing. These incentives would lower the costs of the development and also keep rents affordable.

The objectives of the housing development program are:

- To expand home ownership opportunities for low- and moderate-income residents.
- To conserve and reuse structures that face demolition or continued deterioration.
- To convert unproductive land to productive residential use.
- To promote new, moderate cost residential construction for home owners in community development areas.



*Fontenelle View*

- To encourage more efficient use of existing infrastructure through infill development.
- To encourage the development of low-cost housing for elderly and low- and moderate- income residents.
- To support agencies and programs which are associated with and vital to the success of the Community Development Program.
- To encourage for-profit builders and developers to reinvest in low- and moderate-income neighborhoods.

### ***Illegal Land Uses***

*Continue to prohibit illegal land uses.*

Physically and economically distressed neighborhoods are vulnerable to the effects of illegal and incompatible land uses, which can dramatically hasten neighborhood decline. Large numbers of vacant houses and lots mean fewer affected parties to detect and affirmatively respond to illegal land uses. Quick response by area residents and zoning enforcement officials, when stakes are relatively low, is critical to controlling land use activities.

Constant monitoring of land use and zoning practices requires an ongoing and systematic commitment by those affected. Area neighborhood associations have this level of commitment, but may lack the knowledge of zoning and appropriate land use practices. The City should provide neighborhood organizations with the information and technical assistance they need to effectively manage land use activities in their neighborhoods.

Land use control ultimately depends on the quality of enforcement by the City. The City's commitment should extend beyond education to aggressively enforcing the zoning ordinance throughout the city.

## Incentives for Development

*Provide incentives for redevelopment within inner-city neighborhoods to non-profit and for-profit organizations.*

The establishment of private/public partnerships are necessary to encourage the redevelopment of many inner-city neighborhoods. The total costs associated with the redevelopment of deteriorated neighborhoods are often greater than what individual organizations can absorb. The Land Reutilization Commission (LRC) will play a role in reducing the costs of redevelopment within inner-city neighborhoods. The LRC is a governmental entity which exists for the purpose of returning tax delinquent real property to revenue producing status by selling such property to the public. The LRC, working with the City and sometimes a private developer, will assist in the assembly of land for redevelopment by providing property which is part of the LRC inventory. The cost of the LRC property to the City or co-developer will be nominal, providing the purpose of the project is congruent with City community development goals.

## Site Development Regulations

*Require that projects meet zoning ordinance provisions for minimum lot area and setback regulations, landscaping, buffers, screening, parking, and home occupations and grant waivers where they are not appropriate to redevelopment of older areas.*

New development within neighborhoods that are in decline or are already deteriorated provides one of the best opportunities for dramatic improvement. The zoning ordinance sets site development standards that can help the new development achieve the most positive and the least negative impact on a neighborhood. However, because the zoning ordinance was developed for the purposes of regulating new development, it sometimes has requirements that are inappropriate to the redevelopment of inner-city neighborhoods. For example, the required new housing setbacks within an older neighborhood may differ from the setback of the houses in the rest of the neighborhood. The resulting effect is contrary to the intention of the redevelopment activity to strengthen the existing character of the neighborhood.



*Park Avenue*

## **Compatibility with the Surrounding Neighborhood**

*Require that projects are compatible with the surrounding neighborhood in terms of scale, setback, building materials, landscaping and parking.*

Zoning can help encourage compatibility with the surrounding neighborhood by assuring land uses are compatible and housing density is similar. Other considerations can also greatly enhance compatibility, particularly with regard to older and historic neighborhoods which derive much of their character from the past. The benefit of incorporating design styles and features common to the surrounding neighborhood such as porches, bays, and gables, along with the use of similar construction materials clearly promote neighborhood compatibility. Retaining trees and other existing landscape features on construction sites can strengthen the relationship between the new development and the neighborhood. Maintaining the form and scale of the structures in the surrounding neighborhoods in the new design contributes to the sense of “fit” within the neighborhood, not only from the point of view of the casual observer, but by the neighbors as well.

The City should work closely with the designers of construction projects to assure neighborhood compatibility issues are addressed and that the best overall fit is achieved between the new project and the neighborhood. On occasions where the zoning ordinance detracts from the compatibility of the project to the neighborhood, the City should consider granting a waiver to the developer.

## **Neighborhood Down-Zoning**

*Initiate neighborhood down-zoning where zoning does not match existing use.*

Sometimes zoning does not match existing uses within neighborhoods, leaving them vulnerable to land uses which pose a risk to the integrity of the neighborhood. Often, the nature of the incompatibility is that present zoning permits single-family residences to be converted to multi-family dwellings. The additional rental units can strain the capacity of the neighborhood in terms of parking, parks, and traffic congestion. This can discourage existing home owners, reducing their commitment to the neighborhood resulting in further neighborhood disinvestment.

To reduce this possibility, the City should encourage neighborhood down-zonings. Working with neighborhoods, preferably organized entities, the City would facilitate a process to determine the most suitable zoning designation. The Planning Department would act as advocate in the required Planning Board and the City Council processes. An additional positive result would be the educational benefit regarding zoning and land use issues this process yields for the neighborhood residents.

## Housing Code Enforcement

*The City should continue to enforce the housing code.*

The most positive outcome to housing code enforcement activities requires the same level of commitment by the residents of a neighborhood and the City needed for enforcing the zoning ordinance. Housing code violations are a particular problem in the affordable rental housing market in older parts of the city. Absentee landlords and a lack of respect of properties by some tenants are conditions which contribute to poor housing conditions. Further, tenants may feel they have limited housing options which may result in unhealthy housing circumstances.

Organized groups within a neighborhood can best provide the continuous, systematic monitoring needed to assure effective neighborhood wide housing code enforcement. Again, as with land use control, housing code enforcement ultimately depends on the quality of enforcement by the City.

## Historic Structures

*Encourage the retention and rehabilitation of historic structures.*

In 1977, the Omaha City Council adopted the Landmarks Heritage Preservation Ordinance, Chapter 24 of the Omaha City Code. The ordinance contains provisions for the creation of a commission that has the ability to designate structures and districts of local significance, regulate work done on designated buildings, and identify and implement overall goals and objectives for preservation in the city.

In addition to the protections offered by the Heritage Preservation Ordinance and the commission, the State Historical Society requires the submission of a “Request for Historical Review” for all structures the Planning Department’s Housing and Community Development Division proposes to rehabilitate using federal funds. If a structure is considered significant, by agreement with the State, the City must proceed in conjunction with the owner to preserve the structure’s historical integrity.



*24th and Lake Streets*

## Neighborhood Monitoring

*The City will develop a mechanism for monitoring the general well-being of Omaha neighborhoods.*

Evaluating the conditions that exist within neighborhoods can help monitor the success of community development activities and direct programming within areas that are changing. The City should develop a quantitative tool using census data to provide a general overview of conditions within census tracts. The results would then be mapped and compared to previous census data to identify changes due to effective community development activities or other factors. Since simplicity and clarity will be strong considerations in the development of this tool and in the presentation of the results, concerns about oversimplification should not be minimized. The value of clarity to a large audience is important if the tool is used in conjunction with other information which helps provide a more complete representation of the conditions in Omaha neighborhoods.

The factors that will be used are:

- > Home ownership rate
- > Housing vacancy rate
- > Percentage change in population
- > Median household income
- > Unemployment rate



*The Townhouses at Little Italy*

# **Expansion of Affordable Housing Opportunities**

The Concept Element states:

- The City will ensure that policies and programs are in place to create healthy and diverse neighborhoods and ensure that Omahans can find affordable housing throughout the city.
- The City will develop programs designed to reverse the causes that have traditionally led to patterns of deterioration. The City will establish incentives for development and redevelopment based on existing needs. (More in areas with greater needs, less in areas with fewer needs).
- Incentives for inner-city development must be provided.
- The City will establish practices and guidelines which ensure that Omahans have access to all styles and types of housing in a multiple of market ranges throughout the city.
- It is important that “affordable” housing be available to all of the city’s residents in all areas of the city.
- The City will encourage the development of infill housing which makes use of vacant land and existing under-utilized central city infrastructure.
- The City will establish financial incentives to encourage new housing development in the central city.
- The use of innovative site planning and design techniques will be encouraged as a way to reduce overall development costs.
- The City will streamline approval process procedures for platting, replatting, zoning changes, and site plan review in order to shorten review time frames and reduce development costs.
- The City will encourage development of special needs housing in all parts of the city.

A conservative estimate of the need for some 3,300 rental units for extremely low-income households (0 to 30% MFI) quantifies the extent of the affordable housing problem for Omaha’s poorest households. How well these several thousand households manage depends on factors such as their resourcefulness or the strength of their familial or community support network. As indicated by the percent experiencing cost and severe cost burden, most simply choose to pay more for housing than they can afford. Of the 18,000 extremely low-income households, the percent that experience a cost burden is 70%, while 50% experience a severe cost burden. Data is not available on the number of low-income households living in affordable but substandard housing units, or the number paying more than they can afford for substandard units.

The preservation and improvement of the existing affordable stock is as important as expanding affordable housing opportunities. The City should, often as part of its neighborhood development effort, encourage the rehabilitation of the affordable housing stock.

## Rehabilitate Owner-Occupied Housing

*Provide affordable rehabilitation of owner-occupied housing to low- and moderate-households.*

The poor physical condition of a significant portion of Omaha's affordable housing threatens to further reduce the size of the city's affordable housing stock. Maintaining and improving the quality of the owner-occupied housing stock serves the immediate owner but also helps preserve the long term viability of an important affordable housing resource for future occupants.

The City should provide a range of rehabilitation activities designed to meet the needs of the diverse population that make up owner households. Most activities will focus on the rehabilitation of housing within specified geographical areas; others should serve populations such as the elderly or disabled households throughout the city.

The City should work with neighborhood associations in the most distressed neighborhoods to provide full, moderate and partial rehabilitation assistance to low- and moderate-income owner households. Within a larger, though still limited, geographical area, the City, in partnership with area lending institutions, should expand programs designed to leverage private dollars for housing rehabilitation. Very low-income home owners should be provided emergency repairs on their homes regardless of where they live in the city. Minor repairs for low- and moderate-income people should be available throughout the city to elderly home owners.

## Rehabilitation of Rental Housing

*Encourage major rehabilitation of rental housing by non-profit and/or for-profit organizations.*

The rehabilitation of rental units should take place throughout the city with emphasis placed on the redevelopment of areas in decline and in mixed income projects. This initiative will increase the housing choices available to low- and moderate-income households.

In addition, the City, through non-profit agencies, should provide funding for the removal of architectural barriers to improve accessibility for low- and moderate-income households where one or more members have a disability. This program should be implemented on a city-wide basis.



*Dundee Neighborhood*

## **Construction of Affordable Rental Housing**

*Promote new affordable rental housing in all parts of the city.*

The development of rental housing through new construction will occur throughout the city. The construction of rental housing should be part of larger redevelopment efforts in inner-city neighborhoods with various income requirements for potential renter households. Construction of new rental units located outside of inner-city areas should also be developed to attract residents with a mix of incomes, with an emphasis on providing additional units for lower-income families

## **Construction of Affordable Single-Family Homes**

*Promote new affordable home ownership opportunities through the construction of single-family homes on vacant sites, primarily in inner-city neighborhoods.*

The aspiration of home ownership by many households is indicated by the increase in home ownership rates as household incomes increase. For some, the initial financial barriers to home ownership make it unattainable, while the actual monthly costs may even be more affordable than renting. Other households lack knowledge of home repair and maintenance and financial management.

Working with for-profit and non-profit organizations, the City should provide a variety of possible financial incentives to develop home ownership opportunities for predominately moderate-income households. The City would assemble land and prepare sites for construction by the developer. The construction of necessary public improvements would be made by the city. Along with these potential incentives for development, the City would provide construction financing for the developer.

## **Development Incentives**

*Promote the development of affordable housing through the use of incentives in the form of reduced development fees for such housing.*

The eventual price/cost of new housing is largely a function of the cost to build the unit. To reduce the cost of construction and provide incentives for the development of affordable housing, the City should reduce development fees for construction of new affordable single-family and multi-family housing. The more affordable the unit, the lower the fee.

The sanitary interceptor sewer fee that is currently collected on a per unit basis for the development of suburban housing should be partially or entirely waived. Fees associated with inner-city development, such as front footage sewer fees or building permit fees, should they become a reality, could also potentially be waived to encourage the construction of affordable housing.

## **Rental Assistance**

*Provide rental assistance payments to very low-income families throughout Omaha.*

Over 21,000 low-income households in Omaha experience a housing cost burden. Of those, more than half experience a severe cost burden. The City, in cooperation with the Omaha Housing Authority, should provide rental assistance. The rental assistance should be in the form of Section 8 Housing Vouchers provided to eligible families for renting decent, safe and sanitary units anywhere in the city.

## **Homelessness**

*Provide an acceptable level of emergency and transitional housing services for homeless persons.*

In order to serve the needs of the estimated 800 to 1,000 (1996 estimate) homeless people, local governments should provide financial support to shelter programs stressing self-sufficiency. In addition to providing shelter and services to the already homeless, efforts should be made to prevent households from becoming homeless.

The City, through a competitive process, would provide funds to non-profit emergency homeless shelters for maintenance, repair, security, equipment, insurance, utilities, furnishings, and administrative costs of emergency shelter facility operations. In addition, emergency shelters and service providers would compete for funding of homeless services and preventive measures. Funded services would include assistance in obtaining permanent housing, medical and psychological counseling, employment counseling and training, nutritional counseling, substance abuse treatment and counseling, medical assistance, and other assistance appropriate to addressing the needs of the homeless. Preventive measures would assist households who, due to their inability to meet rent, utility or mortgage obligations, are at risk of becoming homeless. Preventive measures would include the provision of short-term subsidies to defray rent and utility arrearages for persons that have received eviction or utility termination notices. In addition, payments to prevent foreclosure on a home and security deposits or first month's rent to permit homeless families to move into standard housing would be provided.

Transitional housing opportunities are designed for families currently living in emergency shelters. In partnership with non-profit organizations, housing will be provided along with hands-on supportive services to selected families over a period of two or three years. The ultimate goal of the effort would be self-sufficiency which will hopefully be achieved by the family in a neighborhood setting.

In partnership with non-profit agencies, the City would create assisted housing opportunities for persons experiencing chronic mental illness. The housing would be located throughout the city and will remain in the program for up to fifteen years. The agencies would provide the specialized services and supervised living.

## ***Development of Neighborhood Businesses and the Creation of Jobs***

The Concept Element states:

- Policies and programs will be established and maintained to create employment opportunities and to provide equitable levels of service to areas within the central city which have experienced declines in employment and infrastructure deterioration.
- The City will promote redevelopment to provide a broader range of employment, retail, service and housing opportunities within central city areas identified as having the greatest needs.
- The City will assist in upgrading existing central city infrastructure in order to accommodate economic and community development.

Directly associated with the physical decline of neighborhoods is economic decline. When vacant houses and land are pervasive within a neighborhood, its overall economic viability is limited by the under-utilization of resources. Many lower-income households located in deteriorated neighborhoods not only have difficulty maintaining their homes, but are also unable to afford many basic goods and services. To get the goods and services they want and need, residents of lower-income neighborhoods must go outside of their neighborhood. The outflow of the already limited wealth results in further economic decline in the form of jobs lost to other parts of the city. This cycle of decline is devastating to neighborhoods and difficult to reverse.

In addition to the City-sponsored housing activities which strengthen neighborhood economic viability, the City should support a variety of activities that reinforce neighborhood business development, encourage small business starts, and create jobs for low- and moderate-income people. The economic development programs would build financial strength in neighborhoods and create jobs which would help people achieve economic self-sufficiency--the highest goal of any community development program.



*Historic Strehlow Terrace Apartments*

## **Local Economies/Small Businesses**

*The City will promote economic development through the revitalization of neighborhood business districts, and the development of small business opportunities.*

Housing and community development activities should have the effect of building the economies of the neighborhoods in which they occur. Quality housing increases the stability of neighborhoods and supports the housing industry. In addition to housing activities, the City would promote economic activity in a range of business sectors from home occupations to the development of land for industrial purposes. Types of assistance would include: technical assistance and training, improvement of the commercial building stock, tax incentives, seed capital and other types of business development lending, and assistance to local contractors. The aim of this assistance would be to increase individual self-sufficiency and neighborhood/community sustainability.

The availability of a variety of goods and services within economically distressed neighborhoods is not only a convenience to local residents, but it keeps dollars in the local economy. Economic development activities which focus on small businesses would allow many more people the opportunity to start or expand their own small business and provide a greater variety of local goods and services from which area residents may choose.

A non-profit organization located in the heart of one of the most economically distressed portions of the city would provide a variety of mostly on-site business development activities from which neighborhood residents can benefit. A 51,000 square foot incubator would provide office and light industrial space to tenants who share receptionist, switchboard, photocopying, and facsimile services. In addition to these services, the facility would offer a common lobby, conference rooms, a lunchroom, and a loading dock. Financial assistance for start-up businesses including the City-backed Seed Capital Fund and the Contractors Assistance would encourage potential and small business people to develop ideas. For entrepreneurs that need guidance as much as they need financial resources, technical assistance in the form of self-employment training and seminars on financing, marketing, and business planning would be available.

The ability to take advantage of opportunities as they arise is crucial to encouraging any type of business activity. Funding which has flexibility should be available for optimizing these opportunities for enterprises in neighborhood business districts.

Suitable, adequate space in a good location is important for the success of small retail stores and service-oriented businesses. The City should provide funding to improve commercial space through the renovation of commercial buildings within distressed neighborhoods. Good quality commercial space not only encourages people to use that business but it improves the physical condition of the business district and the neighborhood as well.

## Minority-Owned Business Development

*Encourage the development and expansion of minority-owned businesses.*

Most of Omaha's most economically and physically distressed neighborhoods are in areas with significant numbers of minority people. It is natural to expect that these areas would be served predominately by people of similar racial/ethnic background as the residents, and to a large extent they are. Because of the poor economic conditions in these neighborhoods, many businesses do not thrive. Therefore, the neighborhoods that minority business owners serve often limit the kind of entrepreneurial experience that many small business owners have--the kind of experience that encourages business growth and expansion.

It is vital to the city's economic and social well-being that minority-owned businesses thrive, expand, create economic stability, and increase job opportunities. The City's effort to develop minority-owned businesses is embedded in its policy of non-discrimination in the conduct of city business including the procurement of goods, materials and services, construction activities, and community and economic development activities. This policy takes the form of the City's Contract Compliance Ordinance which commits the City to:

- Require contractors and/or vendors to provide employment opportunities without regard to race, creed, color, sex, disability, marital and familial status, religion, or national origin;
- Monitor contractor and vendor equal opportunity performance; and
- Increase the total number and total dollar volume of City contracts awarded to minority-owned and women-owned firms.

The City should encourage the development of minority-owned businesses and economic development directed at predominately minority neighborhoods and minority business people.



*Hope Skate*

## Jobs Creation

*To create jobs for low- and moderate-income people through business location and expansion in economically distressed parts of the city.*

An important feature of an economically viable neighborhood is a strong base of employment. As neighborhoods deteriorate, they become less attractive to potential businesses, and existing businesses are more likely to move out than to expand. Financial incentives, in concert with other revitalization efforts, can induce businesses to locate and expand in areas in need of strengthening their employment base.

The Tax Increment Financing (T.I.F.) program is a mechanism to dedicate future taxes on an improved property for a period of time to pay some of the costs of development. T.I.F. may be used for such costs as public improvements associated with a redevelopment project, acquisition of redevelopment sites, and rehabilitation of structures in redevelopment sites. The primary focus of T.I.F. is business location and expansion, but it can also be used for multi-family housing (See Map 3-Blighted Area in the Appendix for the boundaries of where the T.I.F. program operates).

In addition to the T.I.F. mechanism, the City will work in partnership with industry to expand additional employment opportunities east of 42nd Street. Industry in economically distressed areas can provide employment for area residents and spawn other types of economic activity that area residents may own or benefit from. The City will assemble and prepare land for industrial purposes east of 42nd Street to attract industry and enhance the overall economic viability of the area. Neighborhood and community organizations affected by industrial development will have a significant role in maintaining the integrity of neighborhoods in which industrial development might occur. Suitable potential industrial tracts will be identified and some will be bought and cleared out to make way for industry. The tracts that do not meet requirements set by the Environmental Protection Agency could be improved to meet those standards.

The City has received the State designation as an Enterprise Zone, and the Federal designation as an Enterprise Community. The State Enterprise Zone Act, LB725, provides tax credits for qualifying businesses that, during any tax year, increase investment by at least \$75,000 and increase net employment by an average of two full-time positions during a taxable year (See Map 4-State Enterprise Zone and Federal Enterprise Community Boundaries).



*Dundee*

Objectives of the City's Neighborhood Business Development and Jobs Creation efforts are:

- Building the local economies of community development neighborhoods.
- Encouraging small enterprises, particularly those offering goods and services to neighborhood residents, to locate or remain in crucial neighborhood business districts.
- Increasing the amount of retail activity in business districts.
- Improving the commercial building stock of neighborhood business districts.
- Encouraging new small business starts and expansion in revitalization areas.
- Promoting the development of minority-owned businesses.
- Creating jobs for low- and moderate-income people.



*Historic Livestock Exchange Building*

## ***Development of Public Services and Facilities***

The Concept Element states:

- All public services must be located in a way which supports the city's desired pattern of growth and redevelopment.
- The City will plan the future locations of schools, libraries, community recreational centers, and other civic uses desired by city residents.

### ***Redevelopment Activities and Low- and Moderate-Income Residents***

*To optimize the effect of redevelopment activities and encourage non-profit community organizations to develop and execute projects and services that benefit low- and moderate-income residents.*

In many ways the public service and facility needs of distressed neighborhoods are similar to the needs of any neighborhood. All neighborhood residents need good access to quality parks and recreational facilities, libraries, as well as facilities which provide police and fire protection. Improvement of any of these facilities is the responsibility of the City's capital improvement effort. When the capital improvement effort within a distressed neighborhood does not correspond to the timing of redevelopment efforts, it may sometimes be sensible to make improvements to parks and recreational facilities to coincide with redevelopment activities. The City should make improvements to recreational facilities as needed to complement redevelopment efforts.

Distressed neighborhoods also have public service and facility needs that are less important to other neighborhoods in the City. Locating social services and facilities in distressed neighborhoods make the delivery of those services more efficient for both resident and service providers. The City should encourage non-profit service organizations to make physical improvements which will allow them to improve the delivery of their services.

Objectives of the effort to improve Public Services and Facilities are:

- To provide a means by which non-profit organizations can construct physical development projects which will benefit low- and moderate-income people.
- To increase private participation in development projects through matching and "sweat equity" requirements.
- To improve the quality of improvement projects through competitive applications.
- To expand emergency services such as food supply and distribution to low-income people.
- To establish strategic plans for community development areas to guide future activities.

# **Appendix**

## ***Master Plan as a Guide***

The Omaha City Charter establishes the master plan as a general guide for the physical development of the city. Deviations from the Plan may be allowed by the Planning Board or City Council as deemed necessary to further another important master plan objective.

## ***Amendments to the Housing Element***

Approved by Ordinance (No. 34338) October 1997

