

Real Estate Solutions: Best Practices for Today's Housing Challenges

Newton County Neighborhood Stabilization Program:
Fairview Community Park

University of Georgia
December 17, 2009

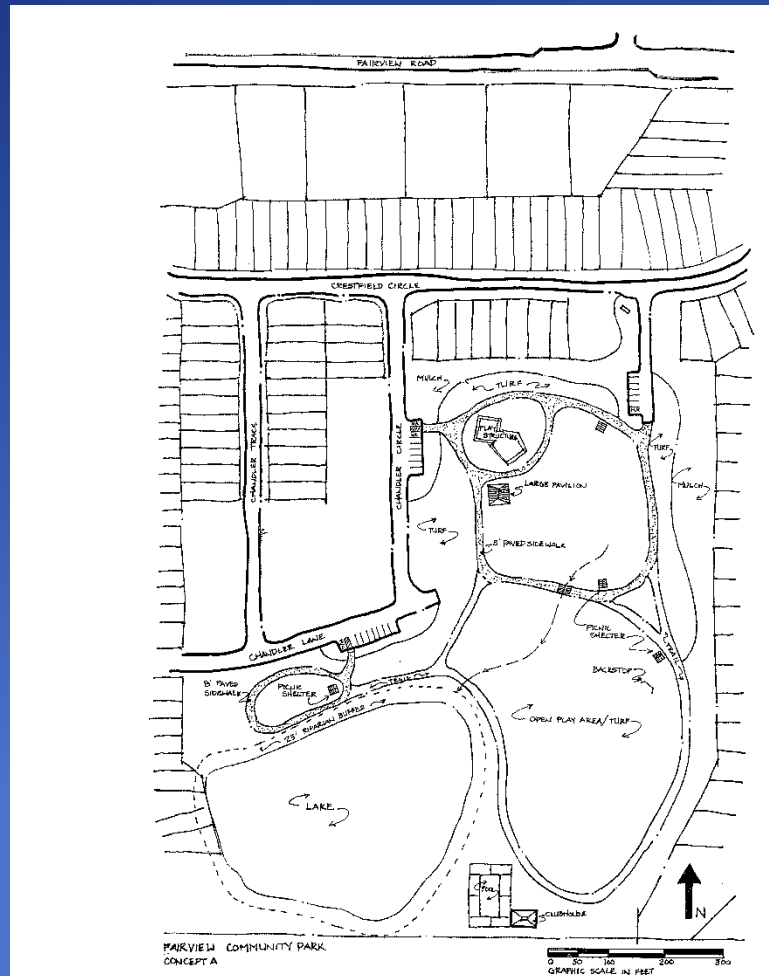
Neighborhood Stabilization Program

- Part of Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008
- Intended to address foreclosure issues
- Newton County received approximately \$1.7 million, primarily for housing program
- Proposal to construct public park to stabilize community most affected by foreclosures

Fairview Estates

- At time of application (December 2008/January 2009), neighborhood had highest percentage of foreclosures in Newton County
- Observed issues with property maintenance, parking of commercial vehicles on vacant land, illegal dumping of trash, other illicit activities
- Unfinished Phase IV of development allowed for combination of housing and public park solutions to foreclosure issues

Initial Proposed Park Layout



Lessons Learned

- *As we satisfied the regulatory requirements an opportunity to engage the community early on was missed.*
 - Although a number of public hearings were held (with legal ads in newspapers), going door-to-door would have been a more effective method of giving notice.
 - This allowed misinformation and rumors to define the project for many residents, creating the need to “re-educate” citizens on purpose and benefits of project.

Lessons Learned

- *Possibility of public park has led to increased real estate activity and higher property values in neighborhood.*
- Has reduced number of available foreclosures for purchase through NSP.
- Community is stabilizing even before park is finalized.

Lessons Learned

- *Development of the park and rehabilitation/resale of foreclosed homes will not stabilize community alone.*
- Also need to address criminal activity through creation and education of Neighborhood Watch Programs, assistance to HOAs, and responsive code enforcement.

Lessons Learned

- *Initially had minimal public reaction, then strongly negative reaction to park proposal (due primarily to misinformation).*
- However, after several meetings between community, County staff and IECDG (NSP partner), there is now strong support within community to move forward.
- Remaining opposition is primarily from outside of the community from those who have a personal agenda or those not willing to become fully informed about the project.

Conclusion

- *NSP is not a panacea, but is an opportunity to stabilize tax base while returning homeowners to the community.*
- *Local government and community must make a commitment to work together to ensure continued success.*