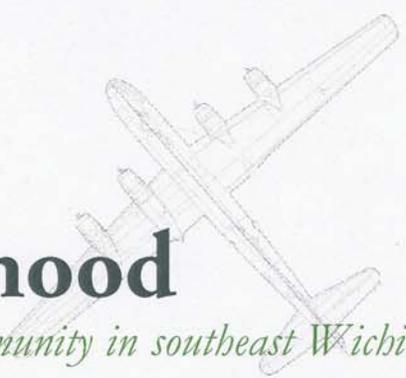




Hilltop Neighborhood

a revitalization plan for the

60 years of community in southeast Wichita



prepared by Development Concepts, Inc. for the City of Wichita

May 2000



DEVELOPMENT CONCEPTS, INC.



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City of Wichita

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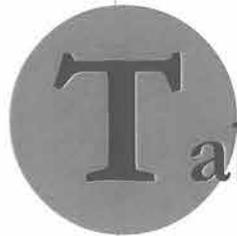


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H

chapter one Historic Overview

Housing in what would become known as the Hilltop Neighborhood would not take physical shape for nearly two decades, but the future need for it was cast in 1927. It was that year that two new aircraft companies, Stearman (which would be purchased by Boeing in 1929) and Beechcraft, were formed in Wichita. Although Walter Beech of Beechcraft, decided not to manufacture the plane that would carry Charles Lindbergh on his trans-Atlantic flight that year, the City of Wichita began promoting itself as 'The Air Capital of the U. S.' and the nationwide interest in aviation following Lindbergh's flight benefited the City. By 1929, Wichita had sixteen aircraft plants that employed 2,000 people, had its own airline (Central Air Lines), thirteen flying schools, 1,640 acres of flying fields, and six aircraft engine factories. During that year, 26% of the total U. S. production of commercial aircrafts (1,000 planes) were manufactured in Wichita.

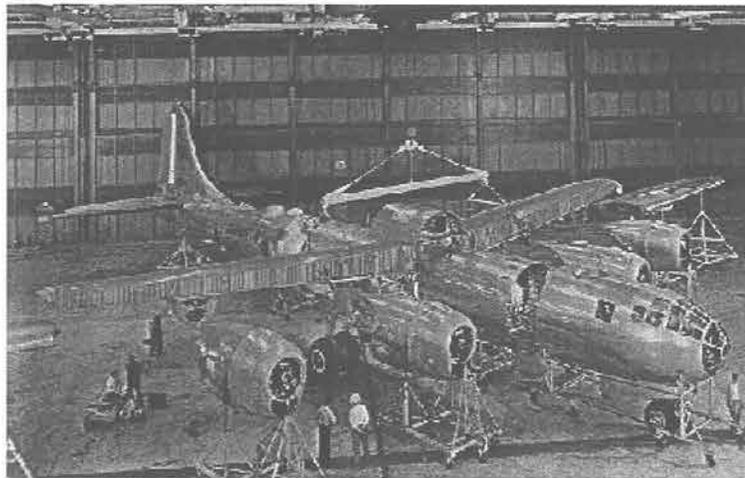
By the late 1930's when Hitler began his assault in Europe, the locally-manufactured Stearman biplane was in high demand as a primary training craft for the United States Air Force. The plant received military contracts in 1934 and delivered the trainers, PT-13's, two years later. By the end of World War II, more than 10,000 PT-13's would be built in Wichita. In 1937, the Wichita Eagle printed a supplement on local aircraft production proclaiming that 'War Clouds Rain Dollars into Wichita.' Besides Wichita's existing aircraft production capacity, its middle-of-the-country location made it a suitable site for a major defense production center. It was also less likely to be attacked by the Germans or Japanese than coastal cities.



A queue of B-17's on an Air Force landing strip.

By fall of 1940, Stearman had 1,200 employees and was operating three production shifts. Beechcraft had 1,260 employees and was building 70,000 square feet of additional space, with an estimated employment of 4,000 to 5,000 by spring of 1941. Payrolls at the three major plants totaled \$400,000 a month. In October 1940, the federal government authorized the construction of a new plant devoted to the production of bombers at the Stearman division of Boeing in Wichita. This plant, to be known as Plant II, would be owned by the federal government and would roll out its first B-29 bomber in April of 1943. This new construction would expand the existing 350,000 square foot facility

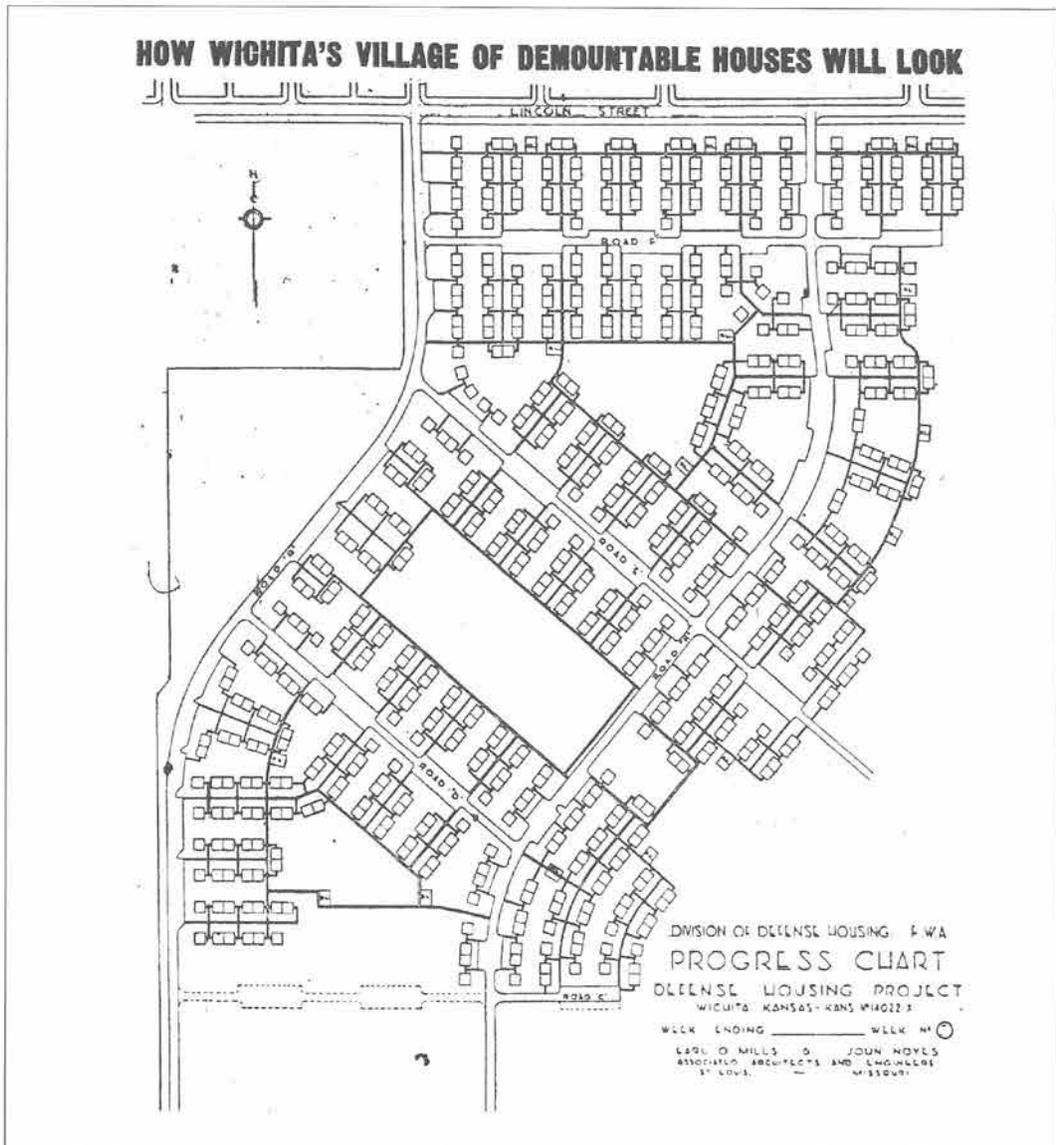
to approximately 1.5 million square feet and would increase employment to more than 20,000 within two or three years. By the end of the war, Stearman was officially re-named Boeing-Wichita; it had grown to more than 3,000,000 square feet of production space and had produced more than 1,000 B-29's.



The aircraft industry, particularly the production of B-29's for WW II, was a driving force behind the Wichita economy during the middle of the 20th century.

It was within this context, that the city's population which was 114,966 in 1940 grew to 135,000 in 1941. A census in March 1943 put the population at 189,910. More than 225,000 people lived in the metropolitan area at that time. Not surprisingly, the problem that confronted Wichita business and political leaders in the early 1940's was housing. In October of 1940, estimates showed that aircraft factories would add at least 12,000 workers during the year. Assuming 10,000 would come from outside the city, with an average family size of three, the town would need new housing for 30,000 people. President Roosevelt designated Wichita as one of 146 'defense areas' where homes would be financed through the Federal Housing Administration with no down payment. In addition, the federal government announced early in 1941 that it would build 400 homes in Wichita, at an average cost of \$3,500, to house defense workers. This project became known as Hilltop Manor.

Hilltop Manor was the only village of the three defense villages located in the Wichita area (Oaklawn and Planeview were the others) that had permanent housing defined by the Federal Public Housing Authority as “demountable houses...and for the most part, suitable for permanent residential use...(they are) units of standard construction” (source: *Public Housing: The Work of the Federal Public Housing Authority*, National Housing Agency. Federal Public Housing Authority, Washington, D.C., March 1946). The design of Wichita’s defense housing was a “minimal house” so identified by the government and was, in its basic form, a square, four-room plus bath, with no basement dwelling unit.



Site plan of the proposed Hilltop Manor development that was featured in the *Wichita Eagle* on October 14, 1941.

As construction of Hilltop Manor neared completion, the housing crisis had escalated, and 600 more units were authorized for the area. This second phase, to the east of Hilltop Manor, would consist of one-story demountable units. Further south near the aircraft plants, the federal government was persuaded to build more housing. This housing became known as 'Planeview' and would eventually house 20,000 people.

After World War II, activity in the aircraft industry did not halt. Aircraft manufacturing, which was only one of Wichita's industries, continued to thrive and people continued to migrate to Wichita. Because of the population growth, city leaders found it was not as easy to eliminate wartime housing as expected. In 1943, Harland Bartholomew was hired to revise the 1923 city plan. His firm's study found that between 1940 and 1943, the city limits were expanded by only 13% while the population grew by 50%. This led the firm to express hope that there could be post-war growth "without an unwarranted outward spreading of population." Planners felt that Wichita had been "spaciously developed" during the 1920's with many subdivisions and, as such, that the city could continue to grow through infill construction to avoid urban sprawl. The firm and the Planning Commission, therefore, recommended that the housing developments built during the war should be torn down. However, this was based on estimates that Wichita's population would be 185,300 by 1970; yet by 1960, the census showed that 254,698 people already lived in the city.

In addition, the 'temporary' housing in Planeview, Beechwood, and Hilltop Manor were still full of workers from Wichita's aircraft plants who appreciated the affordable rents. The 1950 census indicated that the largest average family size and the highest population density in the city existed in Hilltop Manor. Perhaps the defining moment for the future of the housing development came with the reluctance of the federal government to demolish the project without compensation rather than to sell it to residents or landlords so that it could remain rental property. In 1946, residents of Hilltop Manor formed a residents association and hired prominent attorney Payne Ratner to request that the City waive new provisions of the building code that would require expensive modifications in the houses. This would allow all 1,118 units to be sold to the cooperative, the Hilltop Manor Residents' Association. The federal government liked this idea and agreed to sell to the Association for just over \$3 million. The city blocked this by refusing to compromise on its code; however, in 1948, with Boeing reactivated for jets, a city housing vacancy rate of only 1%, and a waiting list of 315 families for all three war housing complexes, any real chance of demolition was slim. A compromise resulted. The 400 so-called 'permanent' units, the first ones

built, were sold to the Residents' Association in 1949. The city accepted Federal Housing Administration (F.H.A.) requirements for 90% financing on the homes in lieu of its own building code with the understanding that the remainder of the Hilltop units would be removed. This condition was never realized, and in 1956 the Park Board purchased the Hilltop administration building for a neighborhood recreation center.



The distinction between the two phases of the Hilltop development has affected the neighborhood throughout its history. The disposition of the original Hilltop Manor to a cooperative residents' association helped to secure it with a stable, well-maintained future. However, the individual sales of the units on the west side of the neighborhood have resulted in multiple landowners, many of whom are absentee landlords with varying degrees of property maintenance and repair. As described by a resident in a 1994 *Wichita Eagle* article, "Hilltop is clearly a divided neighborhood. An 8-foot chain link fence erected nearly 30 years ago to prevent trespassing divides the east side – 400 units of one- and two-story duplexes, fourplexes and sixplexes – from the rest of Hilltop." Both sides of the neighborhood provide affordable housing, but homeowners on the east side are charged a monthly service fee according to the size of the unit. This revenue provides maintenance for the 400 units.

A Preliminary Site Information Questionnaire (PSIQ) was submitted to the Kansas State Historic Preservation Office in September of 1996, as the initial step in determining eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The PSIQ was in specific reference to the first 400 units built on the east side of the neighborhood. Preliminary review by state Historic Preservation Office staff indicates the properties to be significant cultural resources and that a National Register Historic District nomination be submitted for Hilltop Manor.

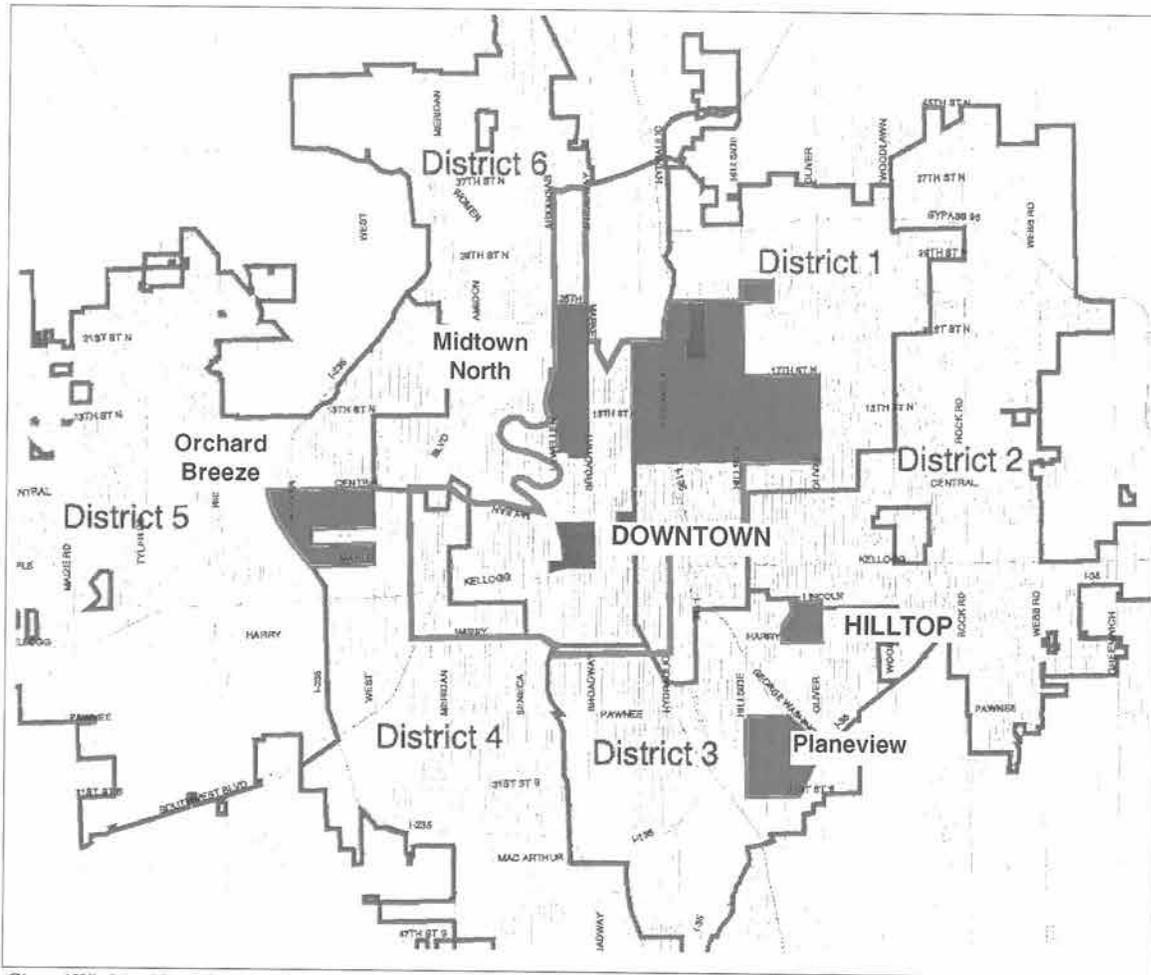
Sources:

Miner, Craig; *Wichita, The Magic City, An Illustrated History*; copyright 1988 Wichita-Sedgwick County Historical Museum Association.

Main Street of Hilltop Manor, Wichita's Defense Village; *The Wichita Eagle*; p. 2; September 14, 1941.

Wichita Furnishes Unusual Service to Defense Employees; *The Wichita Eagle*; p. 22; July 27, 1941.

Give Neighborhood A Closer Look, Hilltop Residents Urge; *The Wichita Eagle*; p. 1D; June 3, 1994.



City of Wichita Neighborhood Revitalization Plan - Local Investment and Neighborhood Revitalization Areas.

E *chapter two* **Existing Conditions**

Located on the southeast side of the City of Wichita, Hilltop is a densely concentrated neighborhood with a unique and interesting history. The area's boundaries are Oliver to the East, Broadview to the West, Harry to the South, and Lincoln to the North. Based on 1990 Census information, the Hilltop area has a 10.51% unemployment rate compared to the city average of 5.86%. The median income of \$15,518 is well below the city-wide median income of \$28,024. The percentage of people living below the poverty level is 57% compared to 8% city-wide; and the percentage of low and moderate income households is 77% compared to 32% for the city as a whole. Census data indicated that 51% of the total dwelling units are renter occupied; 37% of units city-wide are renter-occupied.

The seemingly balanced proportion of rentals vs. owner-occupied units is skewed by the physical conditions and general ownership of the neighborhood. The neighborhood is divided into two broad areas: the west end of the neighborhood consists of parcels individually owned by private individuals; the east end of the neighborhood is a cooperative where homeowners do not actually own their units, but own 1/400 of the cooperative. As expected, over the years the distinction has been exaggerated by discrepancies in property maintenance and in the predominance of rental units. Ownership opportunities are highly affordable in both areas of the neighborhood; however, the concentration of owner occupancy is significantly higher to the east in Hilltop Manor. A fence now divides the two sides of the neighborhood to prevent trespassing. This is a clear symbol that cooperation and participation between the two areas are lacking.



Characteristic attached housing in Hilltop Manor, the 400-unit development constructed in 1941.

While Hilltop Manor is characterized by a predominantly senior population, the west side of the neighborhood is experiencing a growing trend toward transience. Several of the participants in the planning process indicated that they had moved to Hilltop to 'get back on their feet again' and do not intend to stay there very long. Others, though, have either resided in the neighborhood for decades or have committed themselves to living in and improving the neighborhood.



Characteristic detached single family unit on the west side of the Hilltop Neighborhood.

The housing configuration in the neighborhood creates a campus-like feel; however, the general appearance is reminiscent of a poorly kept housing development. Because the homes were intended to be temporary, the style of housing is quite unique in comparison to any other area of the city. The construction and materials of the homes, while intended for temporary use, have allowed the structures to age

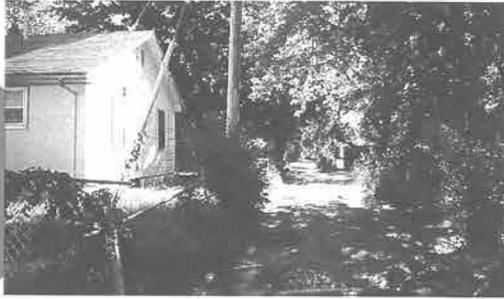
well. Although the homes do not have permanent foundations, they were constructed of solid pine that is much larger than conventional dimensional lumber used in home construction. Units are small but can be easily combined to provide more marketable and flexible living accommodations. Interestingly, troubles that have plagued the housing since its original resale from the federal government—mainly those of code compliance—are only compounded today. In fact, several of the homes are not accessible to emergency vehicles and as a result have been lost to fire. These structures present a particular problem to the neighborhood because they sit on virtually 'unbuildable' land (based on building regulations) and they become magnets for trouble that can plague the neighborhood from within.

The major green space in the neighborhood is Friendship Park which physically is the primary organizing element of the neighborhood (see Hilltop Neighborhood Land Use Map after page 15); however, lack of facilities, poor lighting,



Friendship Park.

and safety concerns minimize its use. In fact, houses that abut the park are separated by unkempt landscaping and a chain link fence that inhibits easy access to the park. Residents of the neighborhood have initiated a community garden that is on the edge of the neighborhood across Broadview from Friendship Park.



Property maintenance is a significant issue for the western half of the neighborhood. Many of the properties are in a serious state of deterioration, while others are marginal and on a fast course of decline if repairs are not made. Debris of all sorts, along with many items eligible for heavy trash removal, clutter some lots. In many instances, this not only creates a blighted appearance but unsafe conditions for residents, especially children. Roadways are also poorly maintained and, in some cases, unpaved.

Active commercial corridors surround Hilltop to the south and east. In fact, one of the older, enclosed malls, Wichita Mall, is adjacent to the neighborhood across Harry. Many of the commercial establishments are not necessarily neighborhood-oriented, instead many of these businesses seem to attract their customer base from other parts of the city. Fast food restaurants line Harry to the west of the neighborhood. A significant neighbor exists to the west on Harry Street in Via Christi Hospital. This stakeholder provides job opportunities and a committed partner for neighborhood redevelopment efforts.

An additional stakeholder exists in the Hilltop Evangelical Free Church located at Lincoln and Broadview. The Church has been instrumental in supporting the development of neighborhood leaders, the non-profit Hilltop Improvement Alliance, the construction of a new community center, and other programs to support the neighborhood. The church is a community resource that serves as a setting for many resident meetings and events, but more importantly, its leadership is heavily involved with grass-roots community organizing. Church leaders saw that, although resident involvement and responsibility had shown signs of improvement, the grass roots group needed help and advice from members of the community who had experiences that could help the neighborhood reposition itself. This resource group is the Hilltop Improvement Alliance, a non-profit 501 (c) (3) corporation, which could ultimately become a community development corporation (CDC). The new community center in Friendship Park houses the federally-funded Head Start program.

The local police have also been actively involved in the neighborhood. The Community Oriented Policing (COPS) Program has resulted in a situation where residents know and trust their neighborhood police officers. The officers' participation throughout the planning process was consistent and informative.

Because Hilltop is situated within major commercial corridors and facilities such as Via Christi Hospital are located nearby, mass transit is within walking distance for most residents. However, residents have mixed ratings of the efficiency of the local bus system, especially to access employment outside the neighborhood. A substantial number of residents do not own a private vehicle and are, therefore, dependent on public transit.

From a physical infrastructure standpoint, Hilltop has functioning, albeit aging, water and sewer systems. The water and sewer lines are old and should be replaced as redevelopment occurs. Major clearance of buildings and total redevelopment is not envisioned; however, selected acquisition and clearance of the most substandard and troublesome housing units will be needed. In these cases, the water and sewer lines should be replaced. Furthermore, the sewer and water line maps for Hilltop show the locations of some utility lines not in proper alignment with the lot lines and public right-of-ways. Replatting should also be a principal requirement of any redevelopment that occurs.

Drainage complaints have not been significant in the neighborhood. The area is not one of the drainage "hotspots" in the city. Stormwater runoff flows in a system under Terrace Avenue and then under Boston Street to the southeast toward Dry Creek.

The condition of local streets has been a concern to residents. The unpaved status and the lack of defined curbs give rise to irregular and unsightly parking patterns in the neighborhood. The lack of suitable areas for parking is also a major concern and needs to be a part of the street improvements. There are plans to pave and improve a number of the local streets in Hilltop in the near future. For example, Bayley Street was recently improved.

Finally, streetlights are needed according to residents. The area around Friendship Park in particular lacks enough lighting to deter vandalism and petty crimes.

HILLTOP NEIGHBORHOOD LAND USE

Wichita/Sedgwick County

Metropolitan Area Planning Department



- Hilltop Neighborhood
- Rail Road Tracks
- Streets
- Parcels
- LAND USE**
- Agriculture
- Residential Suburban
- Residential Urban
- Residential Medium Density
- Residential High Density
- Commercial Services (Offices)
- Commercial Retail
- Commercial Service (Warehouse)
- Commercial Mixed
- Industrial
- Public-Semi-Public-Institutional
- Public Parks-Open Space-Golf Courses
- Transportation-Communications-Utilities
- Vacant



Software: ArcView GIS Ver. 3.1
Hardware: DEC ALPHA 2100
Printer: HP 450C
Map Data Source:
Parcels: Provided by Sedgwick County GIS
Street Centerline and Railroad Tracks: Provided by The Data Center

Land Use: Provided by Sedgwick County Appearance Office
Classification System: Used From: June 1991
NAD 83: Federal: GRS 1980
Contour: 100: Feet

Printed 02/1999

It is understood that while the City of Wichita Data Center Geographical Information Systems Department has no liability and makes no warranty as to the accuracy of information incorporated in the base map, the Data Center GIS personnel make no warranty or representation, either expressed or implied, with respect to the information, or data displayed. Any public property represented on this map is not intended to be definitive.

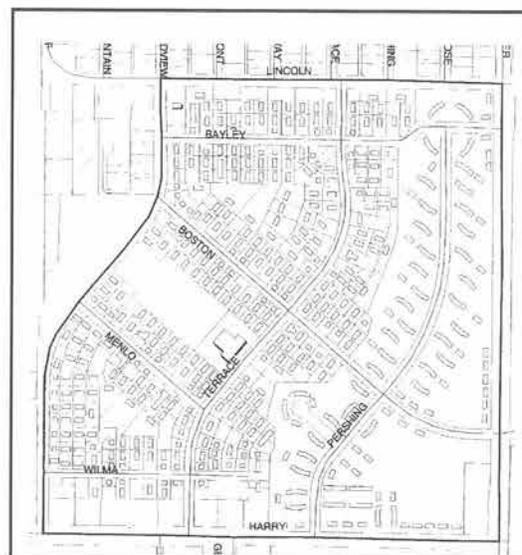
In summary, there are eight primary elements of the Existing Neighborhood Framework illustrated below and on the following page: 1) *district streets* that serve an area beyond the Hilltop Neighborhood and are major corridors within the larger district, 2) *major neighborhood streets* that are primary thoroughfares within the Hilltop Neighborhood, 3) *local streets* that predominantly serve a limited area within the neighborhood, 4) *neighborhood assets* which are the strengths and anchors of the neighborhood, 5) *gateways* which signal significant transition points and entrances into Hilltop, 6) *major defining features* (i.e. fence dividing neighborhood) which, are other major physical conditions in the neighborhood, 7) *transition areas* that through their location and uses provide a buffer between different uses, districts, or neighborhoods, and 8) *neighborhood units* which are areas within the neighborhood that are defined by street patterns, similar uses, or other conditions that create a sub-community within the neighborhood.

The Hilltop Neighborhood is uniquely poised to capitalize on a number of characteristics that should not be overlooked when determining the neighborhood's future:

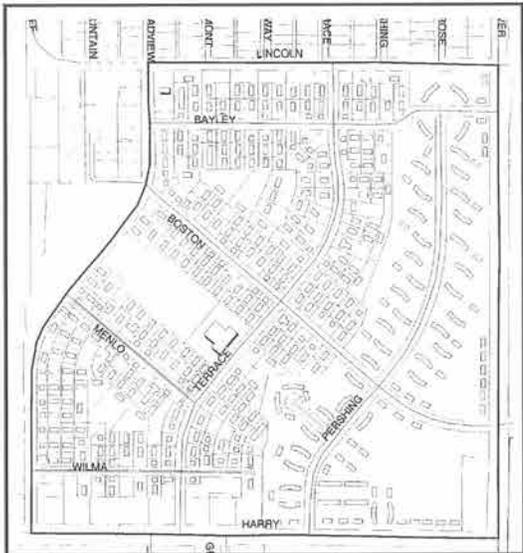
- A history that makes the neighborhood unlike most others in the country.
- The potential to provide affordable housing in a neighbor-friendly and supportive community.
- A highly committed and dedicated neighborhood leadership group.
- A model for successful property maintenance and upkeep in the Hilltop Manor cooperative.



District Streets



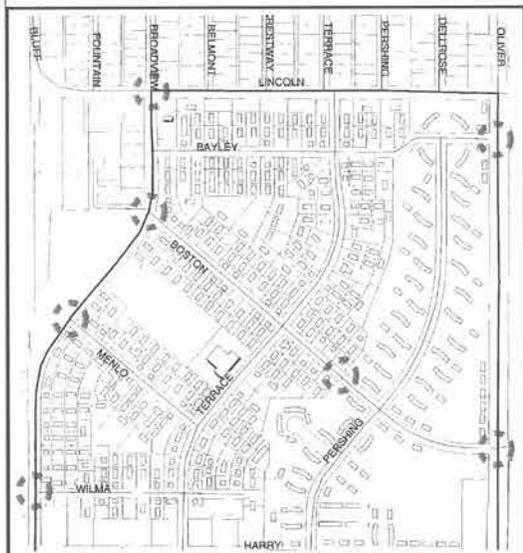
Major Neighborhood Streets



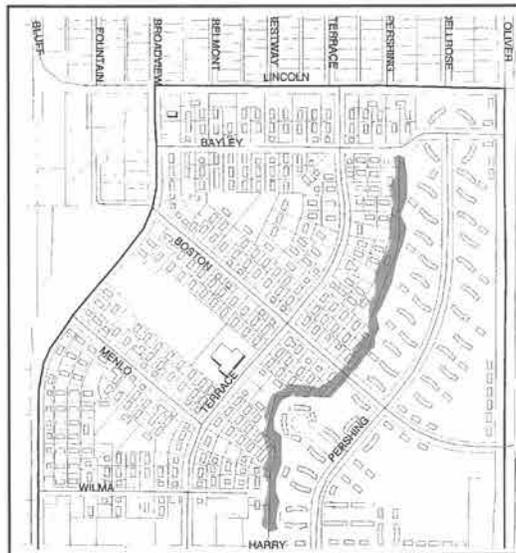
Local Streets



Neighborhood Assets



Gateways



Major Defining Features



Transition Areas



Neighborhood Units

P

chapter three Planning Process



Hilltop Church hosted neighborhood meetings during the construction of the new community center in Friendship Park.

This planning process was initiated by the City of Wichita in its application and receipt of a Metro Community Capacity Building Grant from the Kansas Department of Commerce and Housing. As one of the City's Local Investment Areas, the Hilltop neighborhood is eligible to benefit from programs that are designed to encourage homeownership, homeowner repair, and new construction.

The planning team initially met with a core group of neighborhood representatives to discuss neighborhood issues. Subsequently, three neighborhood meetings were hosted by the City and the planning team to generate resident input to the plan. The result of this process is this neighborhood plan which has two components: (1) a Community Development Plan that identifies Neighborhood Goals, Recommended Actions, and Partnerships and (2) a Physical Development Plan that includes Physical Plan Strategies, Principles for a Physical Development Framework, Desired Framework, and Physical Plan.

At the onset of the planning process, participants were asked to use one word to describe the neighborhood as it currently exists. Responses are listed below:

| | | | |
|---------------|------------|-----------|--------------|
| Affordable | Peaceful | Friendly | Transitional |
| Compact | Nice | Forever | Home |
| Diverse | Caring | Wonderful | Hot |
| Poor but Good | Challenged | Changing | Handy |
| Challenging | | | |

Participants and interviewees were also asked to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) of the Hilltop Neighborhood.

| | |
|---|--|
| <p><u>Strengths</u> Good Place to Get Back on Feet Again Affordable Close to Bus Lines Close to Shopping Close to Employment (Boeing, McConnell, Cessna) Close to Hospital and Doctors New Community Center Interest/Support of Via Christi Hilltop Church Hilltop Improvement Alliance Good Response and Involvement from Police Community Garden Neighborhood Organization People Elementary School Friendship Park Well-Built Homes Hopeful</p> | <p><u>Weaknesses</u> Nearly all Rental Property Number of Absentee Landlords Some Units Inaccessible by Emergency Vehicles Difficult to Recapture Investment if You Improve Your Home Overgrown Trees Make Intersections Dangerous Some Landlocked Homes Utility Costs Can Be High – Poorly Insulated Homes Abandoned, Vacant Homes Public Relations Problem – Perceived Negativity Dark Park and Streets Difficult Alleys Code Violations that Make Homes Unsafe Shallow Sewage System Trash Poor Code Enforcement High Mobility</p> |
| <p><u>Opportunities</u> Improve Social Support Infrastructure Building Design and Layout is Good for the Elderly Design Has Potential to Encourage Community Interaction Need/Desire for More Homeownership Rental Agreements Head Start in New Community Center Encourage Police to Live in Neighborhood Speed Up Condemnation and Demolition Process Job Training at Community Center Create More Frequent Neighborhood Clean-Up</p> | <p><u>Threats</u> Built as Temporary Housing Utility Systems and Sewers Built for Temporary Use Hard to Get Residents Involved – May Be Little Chance of Broad-Based Participation Code Restrictions Inhibit New Construction City Financial Incentives Can Be Difficult To Use Perception of City Not Meeting Responsibilities Barriers to Homeownership or New Construction: Lot size and Required 20' Setback, Easements, Uncertainty Where Utilities Are, Boarded-Up Homes with Unreachable Owners High Unemployment High Poverty Difficulty Financing – Perception of Temporary Foundations are Not Permanent Kids Damaging Property – Vandalism Condemnation Process</p> |

A survey was distributed throughout the neighborhood by residents and at neighborhood meetings. Following are the key findings from the 67 respondents:

- 
- 78% of respondents rent their home
 - 72% spend less than \$350/month on housing
 - 34% have lived in the neighborhood 1 year or less
 - 36% have lived in the neighborhood between 2 and 6 years
 - 18% have lived in the neighborhood between 7 and 20 years
 - 10% have lived in the neighborhood more than 20 years
 - 63% cited affordability as attracting them to Hilltop
 - 36% plan to leave the neighborhood within the next year
 - 54% plan to leave within 2 to 3 years
 - 39% plan to live in the neighborhood indefinitely
 - 46% of respondents indicated that they had pest problems
 - 55% of respondents have children at home

If a respondent lived in the neighborhood for more than 3 years, they were more likely to say they would stay indefinitely.

Police presence, strict code enforcement, paved roads and alleys, less noise, better property maintenance, cleaner – trash removed, and removal of drugs and crime were identified as reasons one might reconsider a decision to leave the neighborhood.

At a September 1999, public neighborhood meeting, residents and business owners in attendance participated in an exercise called 'PARK- it! They were asked to identify elements that they would like to preserve, add, remove or keep out of the neighborhood. Participants were divided into four groups to complete this exercise. Once complete, all the lists were placed on a wall and participants used dot stickers to 'vote' on the items that they felt were most important within each category. The items identified are listed on the next page. Following each item is the number of 'votes' each item received when the group voted on items listed by all groups. The high-ranking items were used as a basis for goal-setting (see chapter 4, Community Development Plan).

Preserve

Community Policing 9
Garden 7
Park 4
Church 4
Community Center 3
School 3
Affordability 3
Sense of Community 3
Sense of Home 2
Clean-Ups 2
Good Landlords 2
Hilltop Improvement Alliance 1
Bus Access 1
Head Start
City Programs
Neighborhood Association
Relationship with City
Neighborhood Integrity
Good Neighbors

Add

Youth Programs 8
Better Screening of Tenants 5
Lights at Park 5
Speed Bumps 5
New Homes 4
Homeowners 4
Sidewalks 3
Daycare 3
'Safe House' Program/Stronger
Parenthood 2
Street Lights 1
More Code Enforcement 1
Curbs 1
More People 1
Paved Access 1
More People Involved 1
Better Rental Housing 1
Children's Crosswalks
Programs for Renters
Cleaner Streets
Library
Easy to Buy Home
Streamlined Condemnation

Remove

Abandoned Houses 19
Homebuying Barriers 8
Crime 6
Slum Lords 4
Vandalism 3
Apathy 2
'Temporary' Mindset 1
Trash

Keep Out

Drugs 14
Slum Lords 9
Trash 4
Gangs 3
Irresponsible Tenants 3
Disrespect 1
Inappropriate Activities in Park 1
Illegal Dumping
Graffiti
Intolerance
Vagrants
Stray Animals

C *chapter four* **Community Development**

By utilizing results from the SWOT exercise, PARK-it! exercise, surveys, and discussions with stakeholders, the planning team prepared descriptions of the following nine Neighborhood Goals which were presented to and discussed at the November 1999 public neighborhood meeting. These Neighborhood Goals are central to the Community Development Plan which outlines actions that residents and stakeholders, in conjunction with the City and the Hilltop Neighborhood Association, can take to improve the neighborhood.

1. Preserve community policing.
2. Preserve community garden, park, historic resources, and church.
3. Add programs for youths.
4. Add tenant screening.
5. Add more park and street lights.
6. Remove barriers to home buying.
7. Remove abandoned houses.
8. Keep out drugs.
9. Keep out slum landlords.

The goals and the recommended actions for achieving each goal are described in greater detail on the next page. Many of the recommended actions listed were identified at the September 1999 neighborhood meeting. At that meeting, after the group had voted on each of the items to preserve, remove, add and keep out, the discussion focused on how the top-scoring 'preserve' items could be maintained, the top-scoring 'remove' items eliminated, and so on.

Hilltop Neighborhood Goal One: Preserve Community Policing.

Community policing in Hilltop has been one of the neighborhood's strengths in recent years. Neighborhood and church leaders have worked with the police to track recurring problems, implement preventative solutions, and assist residents who are in substandard housing. Over the years, the cooperative on the east side of the neighborhood has utilized private services to assist with neighborhood security; however, the west side of the neighborhood does not collectively have the resources to hire additional help to supplement city services. Fortunately, the police have been active and involved in the neighborhood and the continuance of that productive relationship is critical to improving conditions in Hilltop.

Recommended Action:

1. Establish office hours with police to provide a forum in which anonymous complaints can be made.
2. Continue resident and neighborhood organization cooperation with police.
3. Provide space to the police in the new community center so that it could function as a type of police sub-station or satellite office.
4. Report crime and 'things that don't fit.'
5. Build better/stronger relationships with officers.
6. Establish and support a neighborhood watch program.
7. Get involved and encourage involvement from neighbors.
8. Organize system of block clubs to monitor conditions and activities.

Partners:

City of Wichita, Wichita Police, Neighborhood Block Captains, Hilltop Neighborhood Association

Hilltop Neighborhood Goal Two: Preserve community garden, park, historic resources, and church. The community garden, Friendship Park, and Hilltop Free Evangelical Church were all identified by participants in the planning process as the greatest physical assets of the neighborhood. Identifying resources to support, maintain, and sustain these assets will be an ongoing challenge for neighborhood leaders. Fortunately, recent investment in Friendship Park has resulted in the completion of a new community center and funds have been raised for an addition to the church.

Recommended Action:

1. Identify and prioritize opportunities to physically enhance neighborhood assets (improvements for Friendship Park are suggested in chapter 5, Physical Plan).
2. Work with the City to identify and capitalize on grant opportunities for improving facilities.
3. Host events to highlight the church, park and community garden.
4. Consider a small neighborhood 'farmers' market that could offer produce and plants grown in the community garden for sale .
5. Investigate the eligibility of a portion of the Manor area for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.
6. Preserve buildings of historic value/character when feasible and safe to do so.

Partners:

City of Wichita, Parks Department, Hilltop Free Evangelical Church, Via Christi, Hilltop Neighborhood Association

Hilltop Neighborhood Goal Three: Add Programs for Youths.

The absence of facilities and activities for neighborhood youth has led to some of the trash, vandalism, and crime problems in Hilltop. While not all of the problems are created by youth with nothing more constructive to do, the provision of additional youth-oriented facilities could help the younger members of the neighborhood show more pride and ownership in the community. Throughout the planning process, adults with children expressed concern about their willingness to let their children play in the neighborhood unsupervised and about the need for more facilities where their children can play safely. The recent addition of the half-basketball court in the new community center and the programs planned there will help fill this void. In addition, plans for recreational space in the church expansion will benefit the neighborhood.

Recommended Action:

1. Continue to support and utilize youth in maintaining and improving the Community Garden.
2. Host special neighborhood meetings to involve youth in the neighborhood.
3. Continue adding recreational facilities.
4. Add a neighborhood computer center in the community center and provide volunteers to provide training and assistance.
5. Develop a tutoring program offered at the community center.
6. Utilize youth programs (through schools, youth clubs, service organizations, etc.) to assist with property maintenance, particularly for the elderly who may need assistance.
7. Partner with other neighborhoods to develop programs to encourage greater participation from young people in neighborhood decision-making.
8. Consider a merit program with rewards for youth service in the neighborhood.
9. Develop Hilltop Neighborhood 'Big Brother/Big Sister' program to provide mentoring and involvement in the neighborhood.
10. Partner with area schools to design school projects that can use the neighborhood as a learning laboratory.
11. Consider the creation of 'school age' positions on the Hilltop Neighborhood Association and Hilltop Improvement Alliance boards.

Partners:

City of Wichita, Parks Department, Wichita Public Schools, Schools, Wichita Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Youthbuild, Parents and Children, Hilltop Free Evangelical Church, Via Christi Hospital, Hilltop Neighborhood Association, Hilltop Improvement Alliance, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Junior Achievement

Hilltop Neighborhood Goal Four: Add Tenant Screening.

Responsibility for the condition of rental properties in Hilltop oscillates between absentee landlords who try to maximize revenue from the property while investing very little and the tenants themselves some of whom are a nuisance to neighbors and leave properties in seriously damaged condition upon their departure. Most landlords interviewed during this process indicated that they use a tenant screening process but that no procedure is foolproof. Some cities have initiated programs that require a rental unit to be inspected by the city before it can be released. In theory, this should protect both the lessee and the lessor; but landlords seldom support this type of effort. These problems are not unique to Hilltop and, as such, the opportunity for partnerships with other neighborhoods in the city could lead to a more dynamic and powerful response to this issue.

Recommended Action:

1. Work with other neighborhoods to strengthen city-wide standards for tenant screening.
2. Consider stronger legislation to penalize problem landlords.
3. Partner with local media to publicize/expose landlords that pose a threat to Wichita's neighborhoods.
4. Partner with other neighborhoods to prepare database of problems (tenants, landlords, properties, etc.)
5. Partner with other neighborhoods to develop a campaign to promote the characteristics of different neighborhoods; program could also be used as a first source for locating in a neighborhood providing a service matching tenants to available units, in effect, a 'city living information clearinghouse.'
6. Partner with landlords to share information and concerns; request notification of new tenant move-ins and share information regarding rental inquiries.
7. Establish 'welcome wagon' committee to meet new tenants, encourage involvement, and share neighborhood goals.

Partners:

City of Wichita, Wichita Independent Neighborhoods, Code Enforcement Officers, Block Captains, Other Neighborhoods, Hilltop Neighborhood Association, Hilltop Improvement Alliance

Hilltop Neighborhood Goal Five: Add More Park and Street Lights.

A poor perception of safety in the Hilltop Neighborhood is compounded by less-than-adequate street lighting. In addition, the absence of any lights in Friendship Park limit its use particularly in the Fall and Winter. This infrastructure must be provided in order for residents to feel more comfortable and secure in their neighborhood.

Recommended Action:

1. Prepare an inventory of existing street lights and highlight deficiencies.
2. Work with the city to prioritize spending for new lights.
3. Work with the city to identify grant opportunities for assistance in purchasing and installing new lights.
4. Develop program to provide special house or yard lights.

5. Consider partnership between City and property owners to fund new lights.
6. Determine redevelopment potential of commercial properties along the edges of the neighborhood and consider tax increment financing boundaries that could raise revenue for infrastructure needs in the neighborhood.

Partners:

City of Wichita, Public Works, Electric Company, Hilltop Neighborhood Association, Hilltop Improvement Alliance

Hilltop Neighborhood Goal Six: Remove Barriers to Homebuying.

A number of inhibitors prevent homeownership in the Hilltop Neighborhood. Not the least of which is the difficulty that some potential buyers have encountered in trying to obtain financing. Some homeowners have invested tremendously in their homes (even to the extent of raising a house in order to retrofit it with a permanent foundation) yet acknowledge that they will never see a return on their investment. To some extent, these conditions only encourage a predominance of rental units because a property may be more economically successful if it generates rent that covers debt service rather than generating a mortgage on a property with steadily declining worth.

In addition, the City can improve the potential for homeownership by showing more support to the neighborhood in terms of code enforcement, appropriate revisions to the Zoning Code, and infrastructure improvements. These items must be addressed immediately in order to prevent further undermining of the Hilltop Neighborhood. Also, although alleyways are private property in Hilltop, a system for their maintenance, paving, and widening should involve City participation. In fact, it may be beneficial for a replatting to occur so that the alleyways are returned to public ownership.

Recommended Action:

1. Request inspection from city engineers to reinforce the structural integrity of the homes.
2. Work with city to identify criteria for a special overlay Zoning or Building Code district that would factor in the unique conditions that exist in Hilltop (i.e. setbacks, access, etc.)
3. Solicit appraisals to determine the replacement value of homes in order to generate a loan pool for improvements to deteriorating homes.
4. Continue providing credit counseling to potential buyers.
5. Encourage landlords and tenants to participate in a lease-to-own program.
6. Foster entrepreneurship by encouraging homeowners within the neighborhood to acquire additional properties to rent; ideally a greater concentration of homeownership should be achieved, but a larger pool of landlords committed to improving the neighborhood would be a positive interim step.
7. Consider creating a non-profit community development corporation (CDC) that could acquire properties and provide friendly financing for homebuyers who will live in the neighborhood.
8. Prepare campaign about the Hilltop Neighborhood for promotion it to financial institutions and potential buyers.

Partners:

City of Wichita, City Engineering Office, Zoning Administrator, Appraisers, Hilltop Improvement Alliance, Banks, Hilltop Neighborhood Association

Hilltop Neighborhood Goal Seven: Remove Abandoned Houses.

As with any neighborhood in transition, the Hilltop Neighborhood has a number of houses in disrepair, some of which appear to have been neglected or abandoned altogether. These homes are a visual blight and safety hazard. Residents participating in the planning process placed a high priority on the removal of these vacant homes.

Recommended Action:

1. Solicit volunteer services from architects/engineers or city officials to determine the ability to reuse structures.
2. Identify most problematic homes.
3. Prepare list of priority demolitions and of homes to be stabilized (refer to Physical Plan in chapter 5 as a starting point).
4. Utilize neighborhood youth to stabilize homes which are to remain.
5. Work with city to accelerate condemnation process.
6. Consider potential of 'receivership' that could get abandoned properties into hands of responsible party.
7. Create a neighborhood community development corporation (CDC) that can raise money to acquire, demolish, and renovate vacant (or poorly maintained) housing.
8. Look at models from other neighborhoods – e.g., the Dudley Street Neighborhood Association in Boston successfully fought to gain eminent domain powers within its neighborhood so that it could get control of property and steer neighborhood redevelopment.
9. Develop side (or rear) lot adoption program to give property owners additional outdoor space.

Partners:

City of Wichita, Code Enforcement, City Attorney, Hilltop Improvement Alliance, Hilltop Neighborhood Association

Hilltop Neighborhood Goal Eight: Keep Out Drugs.

Drug activity and the resultant traffic and noise that it generates are a threat to future stability in the Hilltop Neighborhood. Failure to address and solve many of the issues that have been discussed throughout this document will only lead to an environment that is conducive to drug and other illegal activities. Because Hilltop is not an island, the elimination of certain activities in the neighborhood would most likely mean that the activity has moved to another area of the city. As such, partnerships with other neighborhoods and the city are necessary to continually combat drugs in Wichita's neighborhoods.

Recommended Action:

1. Support Community Policing (see Neighborhood Goal One).
2. Cooperate with police.
3. Organize system of block clubs and neighborhood watches.
4. Report suspicious activity.
5. Provide opportunities to occupy youths' time.
6. Improve street lighting.
7. Maximize visibility and accessibility so that there are no hidden, 'unsupervised' spaces.
8. Remove abandoned homes.

Partners:

City of Wichita, Wichita Police, Block Clubs and Captains, Hilltop Free Evangelical Church, Public Works, Other Neighborhoods, Wichita Independent Neighborhoods, Hilltop Neighborhood Association

Hilltop Neighborhood Goal Nine: Keep Out 'Slum' Landlords.

Conditions are ripe in Hilltop (because of affordable purchase prices and less-than-adequate code enforcement) for inexperienced or irresponsible landlords to take advantage of tenants' housing needs. Raising the standard for rental units in the neighborhood will help discourage uncommitted property owners from investing in the neighborhood, but it may also frustrate landlords who are responsible. The existence of a neighborhood-friendly entity that has the resources to buy property may be the best defense against the threat of 'slum' landlords.

Recommended Action:

1. Consider developing a community development corporation to acquire properties for resale or rental.
2. Strengthen city-wide standards for tenant screening.
3. Partner with city leaders to implement stronger legislation that penalizes problem landlords.
4. Partner with local media to publicize/expose landlords that pose a threat to Wichita's neighborhoods.
5. Consider partnership with other neighborhoods to prepare database of problems (tenants, landlords, properties, etc.)

Partners:

City of Wichita, Hilltop Improvement Alliance, Hilltop Neighborhood Association, Other Neighborhoods, Local Media

P *chapter five* **Physical Development**

As a companion piece to the Community Development goals, five strategies for a Physical Plan for the Hilltop Neighborhood were identified in response to issues raised during the planning process:

1. Focus revitalization by capitalizing on the strengths of Friendship Park, the community garden, and the Hilltop Evangelical Free Church.
2. Remove abandoned houses.
3. Increase potential for crime reduction through design changes and better lighting.
4. Maximize access to homes and circulation throughout the neighborhood.
5. Provide facilities for community interaction and programming.

These strategies were the foundation for decision-making regarding physical projects and improvements. In addition, four Development Principles were discussed with participants in the planning process to make sure that there was a common value system steering improvements. The Development Principles were finalized at the November 1999 neighborhood meeting:

1. Friendship Park, the community garden, Hilltop Evangelical Free Church, and the community center are strengths from which to build.
2. Improved infrastructure within the neighborhood will improve marketability, safety, and liveability.
3. Physical site and building design can encourage community interaction and self-policing.
4. Quality open space is an asset to the neighborhood and an amenity for homeowners.

As a general statement of the neighborhood's philosophy toward physical redevelopment, the Development Principles were a starting point for the creation of a Desired Neighborhood Framework shown on page 35. The Desired Framework provides an illustration of the eventual or long-term objectives of physical neighborhood projects and improvements. There are three significant new elements of the Desired Framework that could help reposition the Hilltop Neighborhood. The implementation of these framework concepts is explained in greater detail later in this chapter.

The first element of the Desired Framework is the recommendation that the detached units on the west side of the neighborhood are improved to strengthen their relationship to neighboring units and to Friendship Park.

The second recommendation is that the separation between the two sides of the neighborhood is removed and replaced with improvements that could be an asset to both sides of the neighborhood and could provide a gateway element between the two areas. In effect, the framework proposes that the existing barrier become an opportunity place for interaction.

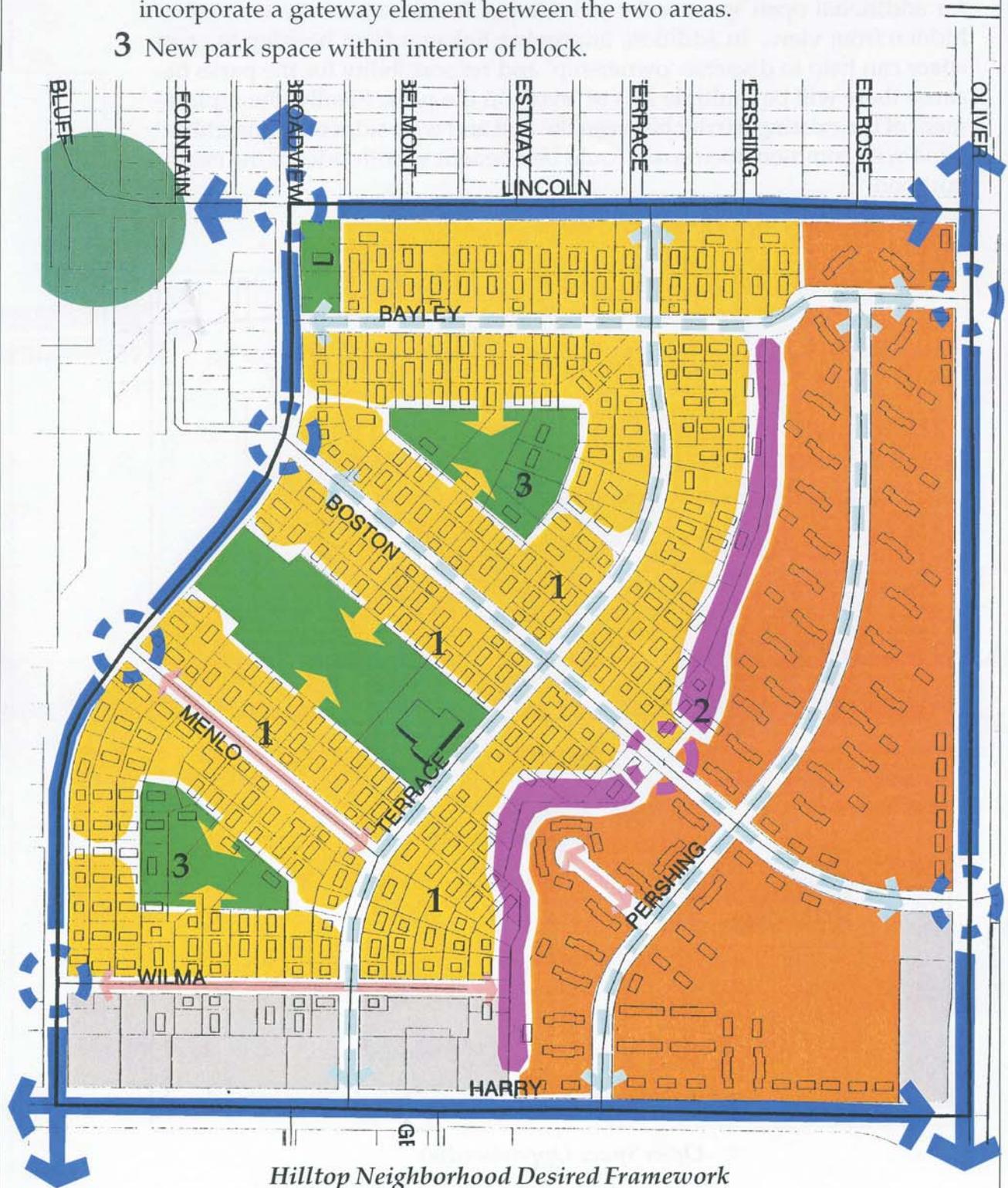
The third major element of the Desired Framework is new park space within the interior of each of the three major blocks of detached housing on the west side of the neighborhood.

These framework elements lay the ground work for the detailed physical plan recommendations. The following discussion on pages 36-41 looks at each element in isolation. The recommended combination of these framework elements is the Proposed Physical Plan shown on page 43.

Achieving the Desired Neighborhood Framework could be done through a number of mechanisms described below:

- 1. Open Space**
- 2. Improvements to Existing Housing**
- 3. New Streets**
- 4. Strategic Phasing of Improvements**

- 1 Improved housing in courtyard style 'fronting' onto park space.
- 2 Separation/fence between Manor & Corporation removed & replaced to provide an asset for both sides of the neighborhood & to incorporate a gateway element between the two areas.
- 3 New park space within interior of block.



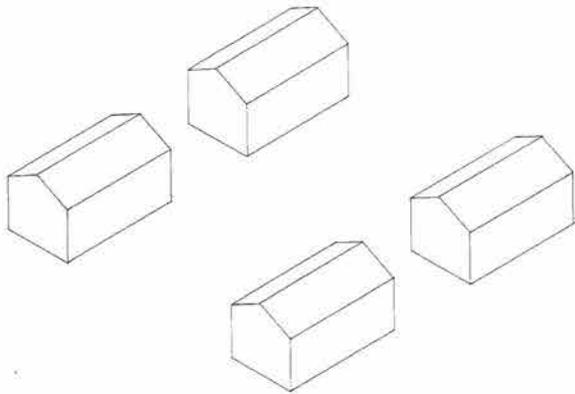
Hilltop Neighborhood Desired Framework

1. Open Space - Open space could provide additional park facilities in carefully identified locations to add recreational opportunities for youths. New open space could also facilitate the use of properties that are landlocked and, therefore, difficult to redevelop. What must not happen, however, is for additional open space to be provided in locations that are isolated or hidden from view. In addition, improving linkages from housing to open space can help to disperse 'ownership' and responsibility for the parks because there will be multiple sets of 'eyes' on the park. Finally, the replacement of the existing barrier between the east and west sides of the neighborhood with common open space could be a benefit to both sides of the neighborhood.

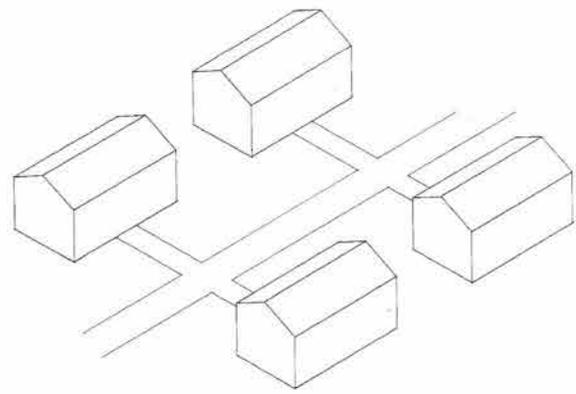


Open Space Opportunities

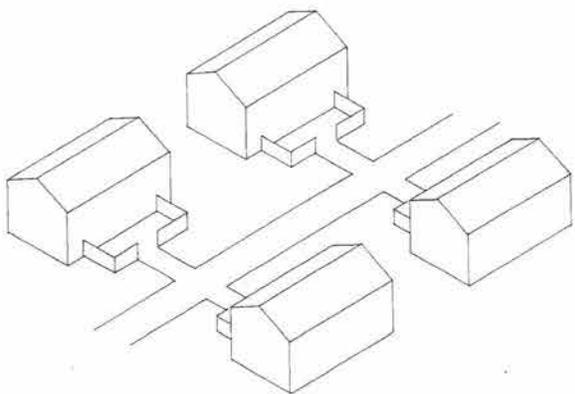
2. Improvements to Existing Housing - Improvements to the existing housing stock can be made to facilitate community interaction and to enhance the sense of security in the neighborhood. The existing plan configuration of buildings could be strengthened through the establishment of courtyards between groups of buildings. Improvements to the exteriors of homes, such as sidewalks, low fences, and porches could reinforce the courtyard concept. By grouping rows of homes in sets of twos, each group could incorporate an internal courtyard between the two rows. Additional parking could be provided on the back, or 'between-group' side of the homes. Similar types of improvements have been made to housing developments across the country allowing for greater neighborhood pride and increased property values. For example, Diggs Town, a Norfolk, Virginia, housing development built in the 1950's on big blocks with poorly defined open space between buildings, was redesigned 45 years later. The revitalization cost \$45,000/unit (\$28,000 for interior changes and \$17,000 for exterior changes) and opened up access to interior spaces that had previously been isolated. In addition, community policing was also introduced and police calls in the neighborhood dropped to 2 or 3 a week from 25 to 30 per day.



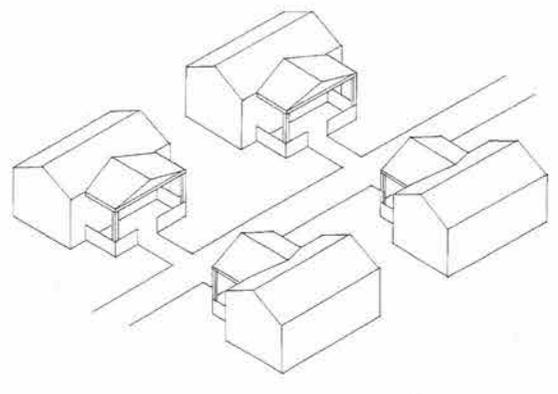
Existing Layout



Sidewalk Improvements



Low Front Fences



Sheltered Porches

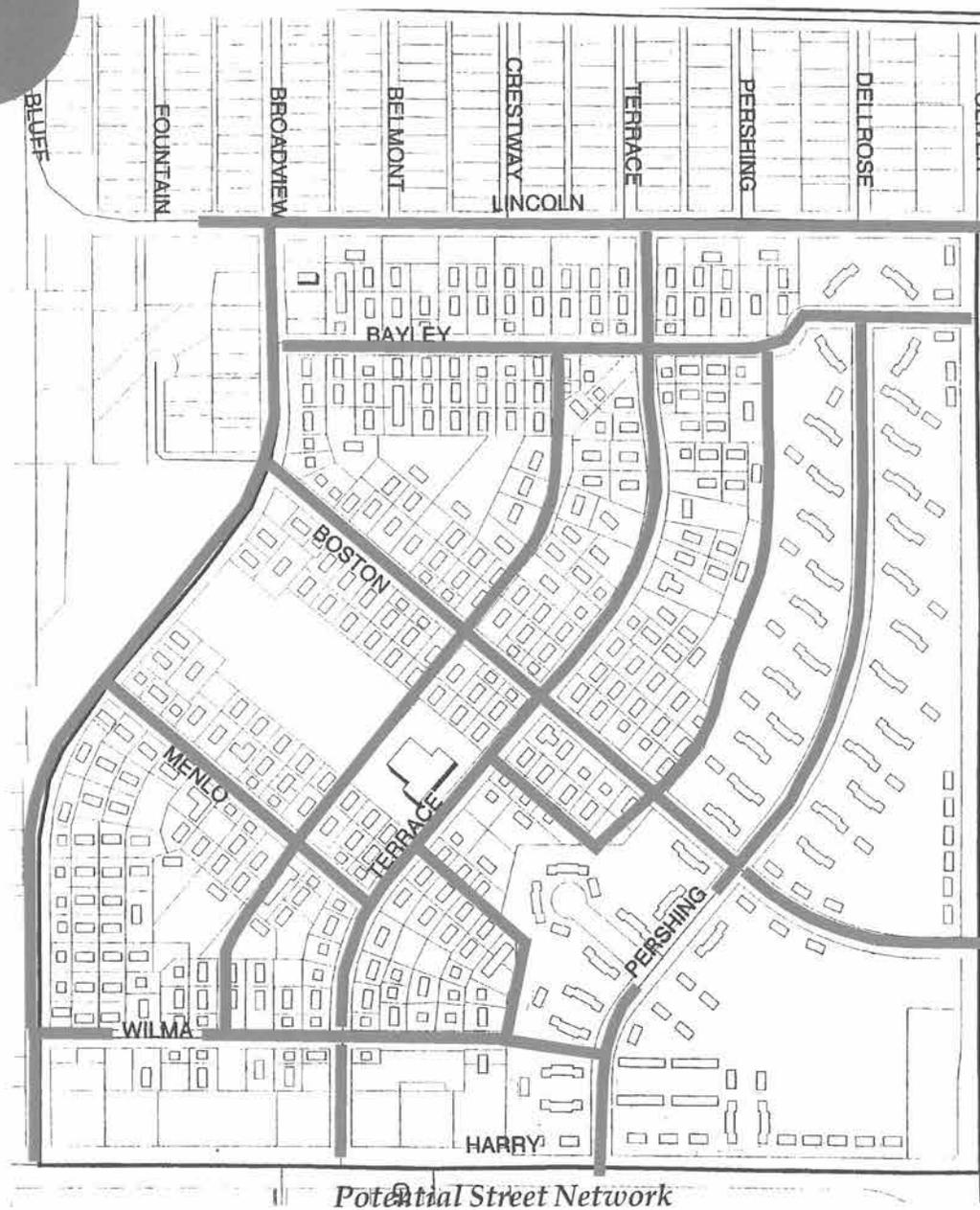


Diggs Town, a Norfolk, Virginia, housing development was built in the 1950's on big blocks with poorly defined open spaces between buildings.

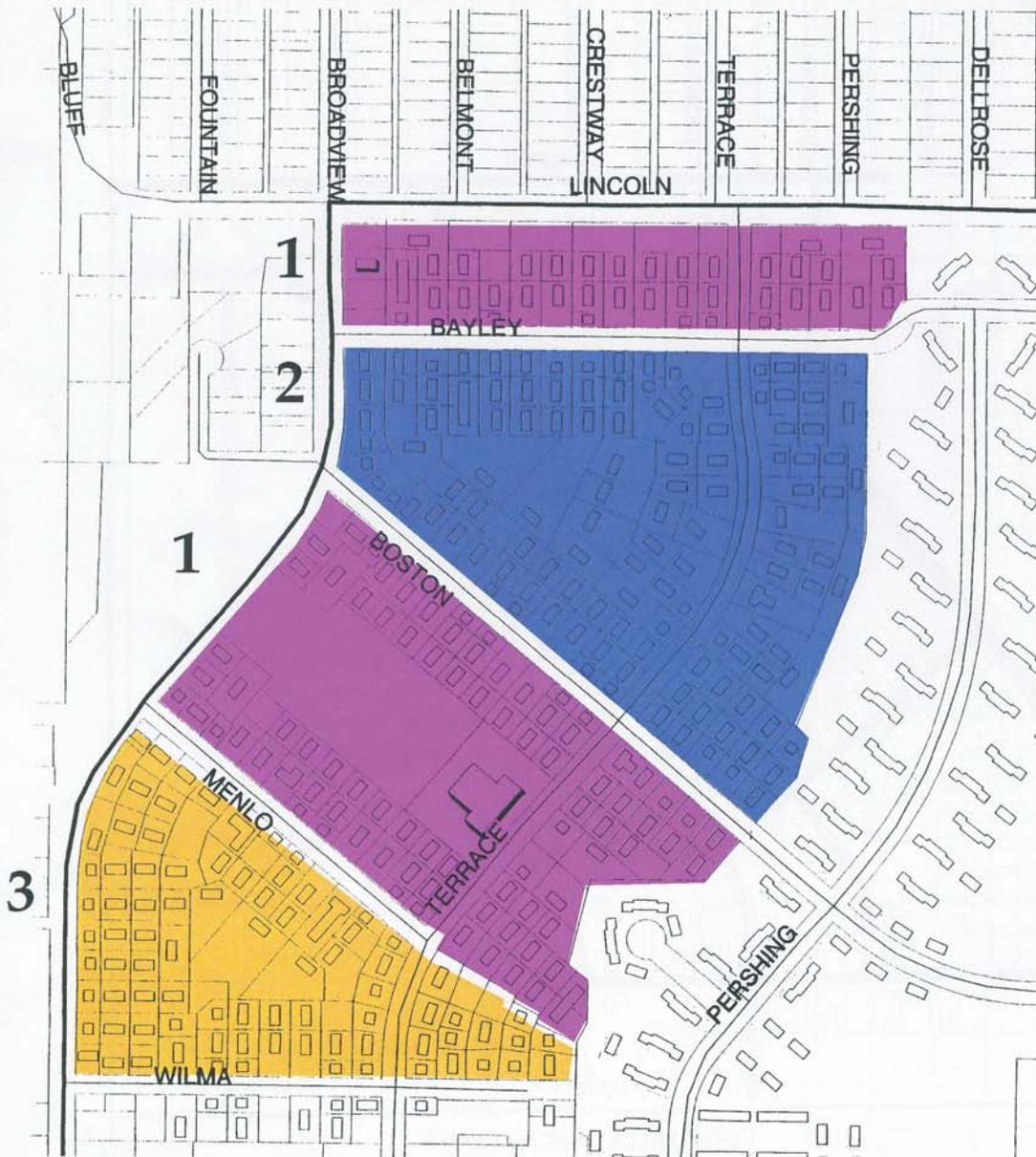


A redesign of the neighborhood kept the same building layout but added front yards and porches to the buildings.

3. New Streets - The introduction of new streets into the Hilltop Neighborhood could have multiple benefits for the area. New streets could improve access to landlocked properties and limit the number of areas that are hidden from view and, as a result, public safety hazards. The street layout within the neighborhood is one of Hilltop's defining characteristics; however, the limited number of streets causes a number of life-safety and access problems.



4. Strategic Phasing of Improvements - The renovation of deteriorating and abandoned homes is a critical task that should be accomplished in a targeted manner that maximizes positive results and spin-off benefits. To support existing homeowners and recent investment activity in the neighborhood, this plan proposes a three-phase approach to prioritizing rehabilitation and renovation projects – particularly those that receive assistance from the City of Wichita. Early phases would focus on areas around Friendship Park, the community center, and Hilltop Church. Next phases would focus on the areas between the two initial phases (from Bayley to Boston) and then on the area southwest of Menlo.



Phasing of Improvements



Opportunities for safety-enhancing elements should be sought in conjunction with any improvements in the neighborhood. Because issues of neighborhood safety were significant to Hilltop residents, physical improvements, their location and design, were carefully considered to determine their potential to improve or threaten neighborhood security. For example, open space amenities, like Friendship Park, have become sources of trouble in the neighborhood that inhibit residents from using them. Even the homes lining the park are separated from it by unkempt landscaping and fencing. Introducing new open space, as has been suggested, could further exacerbate safety issues if it is not done properly and if residents do not accept some responsibility for monitoring activities and reporting suspicious behavior. The City should also be involved to provide and maintain adequate lighting within the park. In addition, other tools can be applied to neighborhood redevelopment to improve safety. The following nine 'SafeScape' Principles were utilized to evaluate neighborhood improvements and should be used as a resource for decision-making regarding future projects in Hilltop.

'SafeScape' Principles

Enclosure & escape – providing directional choices, clearly defined spaces, & eliminating opportunities for concealment within any given location.

Access & movement – facilitating or restricting accessibility to spaces based on the intended uses & users of that space.

Wayfinding & information – using signs & other design features to guide people to their destinations.

See & being seen – optimizing visibility to & from spaces in a manner that supports informal surveillance of people & activities.

Socialization & interaction – encouraging informal gathering of people to sustain a sense of community.

Activity & programming – facilitating the formal organization of events & land uses to generate activity & vitality.

Stewardship & ownership – encouraging citizens to assume responsibility & care for private property & the public realm.

Land uses & compatibilities – arranging & mixing land uses to generate & sustain productive activities.

Management & maintenance of places for their intended use & in their optimal physical condition.

SafeScape Principles for crime prevention as defined by Dean Brennan and Al Zelinka, courtesy of New Urban News, January-February 1999.

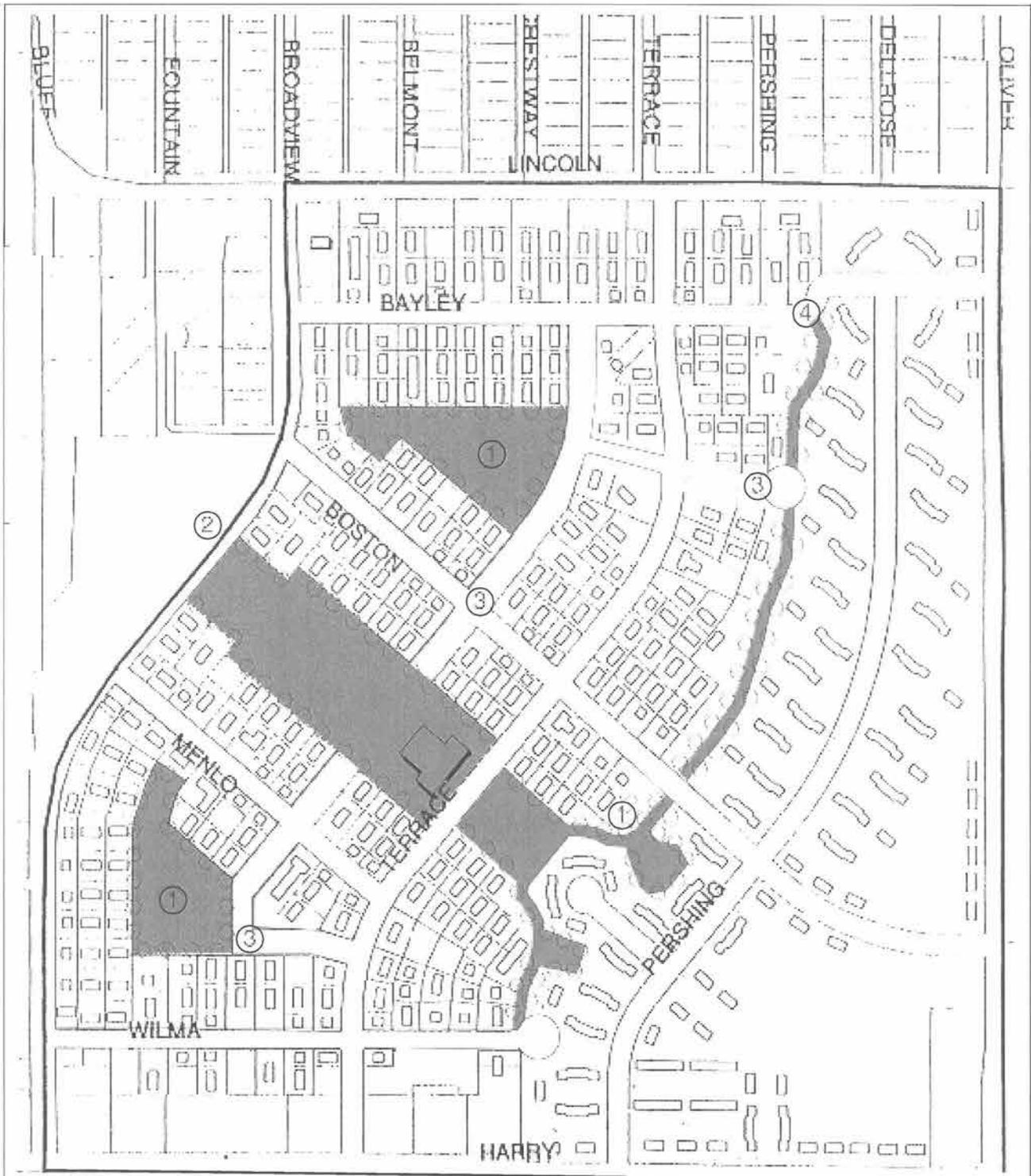
The assemblage of the separate plan components into a comprehensive master plan could take a number of shapes depending on ultimate neighborhood acceptance of the individual ideas. This plan recommends the use of the four plan components to achieve the following:

- Creation of two new parks within the interior of blocks bound by Bayley and Boston, and Menlo and Wilma.
- Creation of a pedestrian path or linear park along the site of the existing fence that separates the two sides of the neighborhood.
- Improvement of existing houses to reinforce a courtyard arrangement, parking, and connections to park space.

Addition of a new north-south street (Street 'A') approximately mid-way between and parallel to Broadview and Terrace. New streets would also be added to connect Street 'A' to Terrace between Menlo and Wilma and to provide north access to the new linear park.

These improvements will not happen without a change in attitude regarding the neighborhood. As suggested in Chapter 4, Community Development, a zoning overlay district should be considered so that the recommended improvements can be made easily. Revisions to the Zoning Code should address access to/maintenance of private alleyways, building setbacks, access to properties, etc. Because of the unique conditions in Hilltop, not only Building Code officials, but representatives of the Fire Department, Police Department, Street Department and others should be involved in these discussions and agree that the retention of the character of the Hilltop Neighborhood is desirable. Familiarization with the elements of this plan will be critical for all participants. To facilitate this process, the City should consider providing a position that acts as a liaison between the neighborhood and City officials to coordinate all efforts and concerns. Once new regulations are in place, and improvement projects are underway, that staff person could focus his or her efforts on another neighborhood that is in similar need of attention.

Also, the model that exists with the Hilltop Corporation should not be quickly dismissed. Because many of the landlords in Hilltop are not closely connected to the revitalization effort, there may be merits to investigating the corporation, or co-op, structure elsewhere in the neighborhood. With willing owners, one or two areas could be targeted for the transfer of individual ownership into proportionate ownership in a for-profit corporation that manages the property. A case study could track profits before and after incorporation so that the strategy could be used elsewhere. If properly presented (and financially competitive), this concept may be attractive to absentee landlords because they would be transferring their management responsibilities to another group who could perform it more efficiently because of the scale and number of units.



Proposed Physical Plan

- | | | | |
|---|------------|---|--|
| ① | New park | ② | Improved houses in courtyard arrangement |
| ③ | New street | ④ | New pedestrian path/linear park |