

PRATT CITY DISPOSITION STRATEGY

City of Birmingham, AL

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On April 27, 2011, an EF-4 tornado swept through Birmingham, leaving devastation and destruction in its path. One of the most affected was the Pratt community, a small suburban community west of Birmingham, initially built to support the steel and coal industries. Once the largest mining city in the state, Pratt City had already suffered significant population loss due to the death of a nearly obsolete industry and out-migration. Mining, coke, and shipping operations made Pratt City a regional center for these industries in the 1880s through the 1950s. Decades of disinvestment and neglect have contributed to the deterioration of Pratt City. The 2011 tornadoes leveled a significant portion of Pratt City, damaged or destroyed over 500 homes, and left at least 1,000 residents displaced¹. Pratt City was and still is predominately a low to moderate income, African American community, with older residents who were significantly under insured, than its neighboring communities, thus rebuilding Pratt City has been a slow effort. In August 2011, the City invited the American Institutes of Architects (AIA) to come to Birmingham to identify opportunities and strategies for rebuilding Pratt City. The final report, *Rebuilding the Pratt Community, (R/UDAT)* provided a recovery and revitalization strategy built on the vision of “Creating a New Narrative for the Pratt Community. The final strategy included recommendations in the areas of health, safety and quality of life; economic development; urban design and architecture; landscape and ecology; infrastructure, energy and water; mobility; and housing, mixed use development. The executive summary is provided as Appendix A.

Over a four month period, APD Urban Planning and Management, LLC (APD-U) and its subconsultant, RKG Associates, Inc, worked with the City of Birmingham’s Community Development Department to develop disposition strategies for Pratt City’s inventory of vacant and abandoned properties. At the heart of the proposed disposition strategies is the City’s RISE Program (Remove Blight, Increase Values, Strengthen Neighborhoods, Empower Residents), a neighborhood stabilization program that intends to stabilize the housing market of Pratt City by empowering residents with opportunities to accumulate wealth through property ownership and increase their quality of life overall. The plan of action outlined in the following report builds on stabilizing existing conditions in a manner that reinforces and rebuilds a sustainable quality of life, establishes and maintains affordability, and establishes a foundation for reinvestment in Pratt City.

Pratt City, Alabama

Pratt City is a small suburban area outside of Birmingham AL. The historic city was initially built to support the steel and coal industries. Already suffering population loss, tornadoes devastated much of the city in April 2011, leaving the City of Birmingham with a huge hole in its history. Rebuilding efforts are still continuing today.

¹ City of Birmingham AL CDBG Disaster Recovery Action Plan Substantial Amendment, August 2014.

The Pratt City Disposition Strategy encompasses three sections – Introduction, Analysis and Disposition Strategy. The Introduction provides the background and project approach, and outlines the overall vision and goals for the assignment. The Analysis section identifies and utilizes three (3) Best Practice tools critical to making strategic and objective decisions when establishing a disposition strategy, and the Recommendations section outlines redevelopment approaches to consider when disposing of vacant and abandoned properties. The Strategy provides a roadmap for the stabilization and revitalization of Pratt City, capitalizing on short range redevelopment opportunities to stabilize Pratt City and leverage these opportunities as catalysts for more long term reinvestment in North, Central and South Pratt.



Figure 1: Pratt City Images

INTRODUCTION

In December 2014, the City of Birmingham requested technical assistance through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to develop a disposition strategy for vacant and abandoned properties in and around Neighborhood Stabilization Program investment areas, located in Pratt City, to assist with implementation of recommendations set forth in the R/UDAT report. APD Urban Planning and Management, LLC was selected to provide the requested technical assistance because of its expertise and extensive experience in the disposition of vacant and abandoned properties.

Project Approach

In approaching the redevelopment of Pratt City holistically, yet still cognizant of the fact that three (3) unique communities create this area, best practices tools were utilized with the intent to create a working document(s) that would guide disposition, stabilization and redevelopment development in priority focus areas within all three (3) neighborhoods of Pratt City. The APD-U Team utilized three (3) Best Practice tools to determine the appropriate disposition and implementation strategies for Pratt City – a Parcel Analysis to initially identify locations for opportunities based on conditions on the ground; a Market Scan and Housing Affordability Analysis to look generally at the potential marketability, housing pricing and affordability of Pratt City and the effect this has on the redevelopment of Pratt City; and a Decision Making Matrix, an objective process to assist in making strategic, objective decisions on use of development approaches in specific targeted areas.

The process began with an initial site visit by the APD-U Team in April 2014 to conduct a kickoff meeting with a Project Management Team (PMT) to determine and prioritize the specific needs of the Community Development Department. The Project Management Team consisted of staff from the Community Development Department and the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (RPCGB). The study area initially included Central Pratt, North Pratt, Sandusky, Smithfield Estates, South Pratt, Thomas and Ensley to follow the AIA Communities by Design study; however upon further discussions, the Project Management Team and the APD-U Team elected to concentrate on Pratt City (North Pratt, Central Pratt and South Pratt) as the study area. The redevelopment disposition and implementation recommendations identified in this report further support the recommendations outlined by the R/UDAT study. Following the initial site visit, the APD-U Team reviewed information provided by the Community Development Department and RPCGB for the three (3) targeted neighborhoods in Pratt City. Information included existing studies and reports as well as several planning documents. The information from the studies, reports and plans were then field verified through several planning techniques including windshield surveys and staff interviews.

Best Practice Tool

Throughout this report, this panel will be used to summarize the three Best Practice tools used for this assignment – Parcel Analysis, Decision Making Matrix, Market Scan.

Once the data was collected and analyzed, the Team initiated a three-step process that resulted in a series of recommendations for implementable disposition strategies for Pratt City's vacant and abandoned properties.

Using this approach, the APD-U Team along with the Project Management Team, identified eight (8) potential catalyst project areas in Pratt City that could leverage existing, proposed and recently completed projects. The resulting disposition and implementation recommendations outline a comprehensive approach to achieving the goals identified during the Kickoff Meeting.

Project Goals and Outcomes

During the Project Kick-Off Meeting, the Project Management Team identified several goals and key issues/concerns for consideration in developing the disposition and implementation strategy:

Key Issues:

- Stabilization of the market through the RISE Program
- Vacant and abandoned properties
- Loss of population
- Perception of neighborhoods as good places to live
- Lack of walkability or resident connectivity
- Ongoing property maintenance
- Code enforcement improvements
- Productive green space
- Education
- Community partnerships

Goals:

- Develop a conveyance strategy for the RISE Program;
- Increase number of homes and buildings in compliance with code enforcement and other quality of life regulations;
- Select priority project areas for stabilization or revitalization using a process that could be replicated in other parts of the City; and
- Reduce the number of vacant and abandoned properties through a strategic demolition strategy.

Outcomes:

- Increase use of best practice tools for property disposition;
- Increase understanding and capacity to address gaps in disposition and implementation strategies.

Review of Previous Plans

Several plans and studies were reviewed to gain an understanding of Pratt City and the City of Birmingham as a whole. The plans reviewed included the following:

- Disaster Recovery Grant Action Plans (2012 – 2013)

- CDBG Tornado Disaster Recovery Action Plan 2011
- City of Birmingham Comprehensive Master Plan, 2012
- Red Rock Trail System Plan
- AIA Communities By Design Report (R/UDAT) – Rebuilding the Pratt Community, October 2011

Review of the plans was important to crafting the framework through which the three (3) Best Practice tools can be utilized to develop implementable disposition strategies for vacant and abandoned properties in Pratt City.

Figure 2: City of Birmingham Comprehensive Master Plan Executive Summary



CITY OF BIRMINGHAM COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: People, Prosperity, Place, Partnership, Performance

WHAT'S IN THE 2012 CITY OF BIRMINGHAM COMPREHENSIVE PLAN? IMAGINE PLAN > ACT

The Comprehensive Plan covers a broad range of topics in 15 chapters about current trends, the planning process and all aspects of community life that affect the way our city can develop in the future.

IMAGINE

What kind of place do we want to be in the 21st century?

- **Part I: Setting the Stage.** Our vision for the future, guiding principles for planning, the public process, and where we are starting from today.

PLAN

How do we achieve it?

Strategies to outline the vision.

- **Part II: Green Systems.** Nature and environment, parks and recreation, and sustainability and green practices.
- **Part III: Neighborhoods, Housing and Community Renewal.** Sustaining, enhancing and renewing neighborhoods to provide a good quality of life.
- **Part IV: Prosperity and Opportunity.** Supporting and growing the industries that drive the city's economy, while reinforcing the economy's building blocks—education, workforce development, entrepreneurship, and quality of life to retain and attract talent—and continuing the downtown renaissance.
- **Part V: Strengthening City Systems and Networks.** Expanding transportation choices based on land use strategies and providing excellent city services.

ACT

How do we get started?

- **Part VI: From Plan to Action.** A new development framework of land use, regulation and urban design, with step-by-step actions to achieve the vision and monitor progress.

BIRMINGHAM'S POWER OF PLACE

High quality of life—resident satisfaction in daily living—is the foundation of successful 21st-century communities. Businesses locate where people want to be, and good neighborhoods, along with a great open space system and a vibrant cultural life are among the key attractions that any city and metropolitan area can offer.

With its ridges and valley topography, lush greenery, historic downtown, and neighborhoods that emerged from small towns, Birmingham has the pedestrian-friendly street grid, neighborhood centers, and local parks that people increasingly seek in a place to live. At the same time, the city's large natural parks and emerging greenway system will make it possible for Birmingham residents to experience nature without leaving the city limits. This combination of urban lifestyles with access to nature creates a powerful mix for quality of life.

the big picture

Birmingham has many assets—economy, culture, history—but it also has to grapple with many challenges. The city needs better tools, better systems, more informed local and regional officials, and enhanced partnerships to achieve Birmingham citizens' vision for the future.

Make the city's information available for data and evidence-based decisions making

- A comprehensive property information database, a real estate market analysis on a block-to-block basis, detailed data on city jobs and enterprises, and an asset management system—result in more informed decision making and effective use of taxpayer dollars.

Use the right tools for each job

A professional City of Birmingham Redevelopment Authority and Land Bank along with a high profile system of coordinated code enforcement will deploy a variety of tools to eliminate blight and redevelop neighborhoods.

Be strategic, focused, and systematic in creating viable success

Target neighborhood investments in housing, infrastructure, transportation, parks, facilities, and workforce and social services to areas with assets, so that viable

successes can create confidence and momentum, leverage private investment

- Target incentives to support emerging industries, entrepreneurship and microbusiness, and revitalization in designated Urban, Village, and Strategic Opportunity Areas.
- **No money: No coordination, cooperation, collaboration**
- Create a Housing Policy Advisory Council that includes government, the housing authority, neighborhoods, housing developers, realtors, and economic development specialists.

Established and emerging industries

- Culture enterprises will make Birmingham a place to enjoy in the City
- Target a portion of revenue increases to emerging industries

Develop a smart capital

- Funding will be allocated to support innovative programs across the system
- Coordinate the multiple funding sources

Start strong Downtown

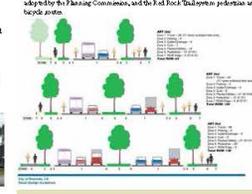
- Develop and implement a plan for the Entry-level District and strengthen the interconnectivity
- Develop and implement a Downtown Core Area Plan to link downtown activity centers and establish a new urban edge program with green space, ground floor activation, pop-up events, public art and more
- Create a Center for the City: Finance District from Railroad Park to Ross Park to downtown Alabama State College
- Develop and implement a plan for the southern quadrant of downtown

STRENGTHENING CITY SYSTEMS: TRANSPORTATION, INFRASTRUCTURE AND PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Creating more transportation choices through long-term transit, facilities and networks—will start with the City of Birmingham's decision by the city at every public meeting. While the city works to get local and long-term systems, it will also work to get the city's transportation system to be a better place to live.

Transportation

- Support transportation and land use planning to help us to be a more successful transportation system
- Support transportation and land use planning to help us to be a more successful transportation system



THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AS A LIVING DOCUMENT

- Designate a position in the City's Planning Division as the long-range Planner to be the in-house expert on the Comprehensive Plan and implementation coordinator.
- Create a Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee to monitor progress.
- Review implementation progress in annual public hearings at the Planning Commission and City Council.
- Use the Comprehensive Plan in creating departmental work plans, the budget and the capital improvement program.
- Update the Comprehensive Plan required planning documents for federal funding programs, and grant proposals.
- Schedule a public process every two years to review implementation progress on the Comprehensive Plan and to confirm or revise the Vision, Principles, and Goals.
- Update the Comprehensive Plan thoroughly at least every 20 years.

Mayor William B. Bell, Sr.
 Deputy Mayor
 City Council
 Planning Division
 Department of Public Works
 Department of Transportation
 Department of Public Safety
 Department of Parks and Recreation
 Department of Cultural Affairs
 Department of Economic Development
 Department of Housing and Community Development
 Department of Information Technology
 Department of Public Works
 Department of Transportation
 Department of Public Safety
 Department of Parks and Recreation
 Department of Cultural Affairs
 Department of Economic Development
 Department of Housing and Community Development
 Department of Information Technology



- **Support transit** through a variety of transportation Plan Transit and other locations to the transit system and establish a new program
- Develop policies to encourage transit, transit and other modes of transit
- Set long-term priorities for transit and other modes of transit
- Set long-term priorities for transit and other modes of transit

IMPLEMENTATION

The plan includes an implementation plan that sets out potential actions, responsible parties, timeframes, milestones, and long-term, well-communicated and measurable objectives

Implementation will require strong partnerships including business, neighborhood, universities, and public and private

When is the money?

Finance plan with financing and investment funding plan developed through a participatory process demonstrates that the city has the resources to get the job done. A multi-faceted financing plan will be developed and implemented. Over the long term, the plan will be a living document that will be updated as needed.

- Create a comprehensive living document
- Develop a budget and other financial plans
- Develop a budget and other financial plans
- Develop a budget and other financial plans

Long-term goals and objectives

- Develop a budget and other financial plans
- Develop a budget and other financial plans



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PARCEL ANALYSIS

The Parcel Analysis focused on verifying neighborhood conditions of Pratt City's three neighborhoods - North Pratt, Central Pratt, and South Pratt. The study area initially included Central Pratt, North Pratt, Sandusky, Smithfield Estates, South Pratt, Thomas and Ensley to follow the AIA Communities by Design Study (R/UDAT); however, upon further discussion, the Project Management Team and the APD-U Team elected to concentrate on North Pratt, Central Pratt, and South Pratt. This area was most affected by the recent tornados and the focus areas for Neighborhood Stabilization Program funds. Data for the Parcel Analysis was collected through a detailed windshield survey that captured parcel-by-parcel conditions. The Parcel Analysis, along with the Decision Making Matrix and the Market Scan, will be used to strategically identify locations and approaches to be used to implement the City's RISE Framework Plan and possible revitalization projects. A summary of the Parcel Analysis is provided below; the complete Parcel Analysis Report is provided in Appendix B.

Methodology and Process

A rating system was used to identify parcel land use and existing condition for each parcel in the three neighborhoods by a field team that included APD-U staff, City of Birmingham Community Development planners and RPCGB staff. The field research team used the parcel rating system established by the Regional Planning Council of Greater Birmingham (RPCGB). Data sources employed include both primary and secondary data. Field observations of existing conditions of the project areas are primary data. The secondary data used include GIS data and existing conditions rating system provided by the City of Birmingham and the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (RPCGB), 2010 US Census data, reports and documents relating to Pratt City as provided by public authorities and agency websites.

Using the ArcGIS Collector mobile application, field research was conducted over several days to determine land use and existing conditions of the 2,900 plus parcels in Pratt City. In completing the detailed windshield survey, two assumptions were made: the first, occupied units can either be renter or owner occupied, and the second a stabilized area is characterized by external appearance rather than housing value, age, or the unknown internal factors of the units. Each parcel was observed and based on their overall condition were classified and rated with RPCGB's parcel rating system. Photographic documentation was also collected by the field team.

Best Practice Tool

The Parcel Analysis Tool helped to identify and prioritize locations for opportunities at a block level, based on neighborhood conditions on the ground. It is highly recommended that this Tool be used in conjunction with the Decision Making Matrix.

Table 1: Birmingham Property Conditions Parcel Rating System

Parcel Rating System – Property Condition Ratings	
SO	Sound Occupied (habitable structure that is occupied)
SU	Sound Unoccupied (habitable structure that is not occupied)
dO	Deteriorated Occupied (habitable structure with aesthetic damages, such as significant paint chipping, loose fascia board or siding, etc., that is occupied)
dU	Deteriorated Unoccupied (habitable structure with aesthetic damages, such as significant paint chipping, loose fascia board or siding, etc., that is unoccupied)
DO	Dilapidated Occupied (inhabitable structure with structural damages; sagging or missing roof or walls and/or missing windows and doors that is occupied)
DU	Dilapidated Unoccupied (inhabitable structure with structural damages; sagging or missing roof or walls and/or missing windows and doors that is not occupied)
VO	Vacant Overgrown
VM	Vacant Maintained
VN	Vacant Natural

Key Findings

Once the field research was completed, the data was mapped and analyzed using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology. Analysis included total parcel counts associated with each property condition rating to identify level of stability in each neighborhood. North Pratt and Central Pratt contain more than twice the number of parcels than South Pratt, thus the parcel counts are provided as percentages to quickly compare the property conditions in the three neighborhoods. A density analysis for occupied properties, unoccupied properties and vacant lots was also completed using GIS. The density analysis was then combined with the property condition ratings to determine areas where the various property conditions coincided with areas of high density or concentration of particular property types.

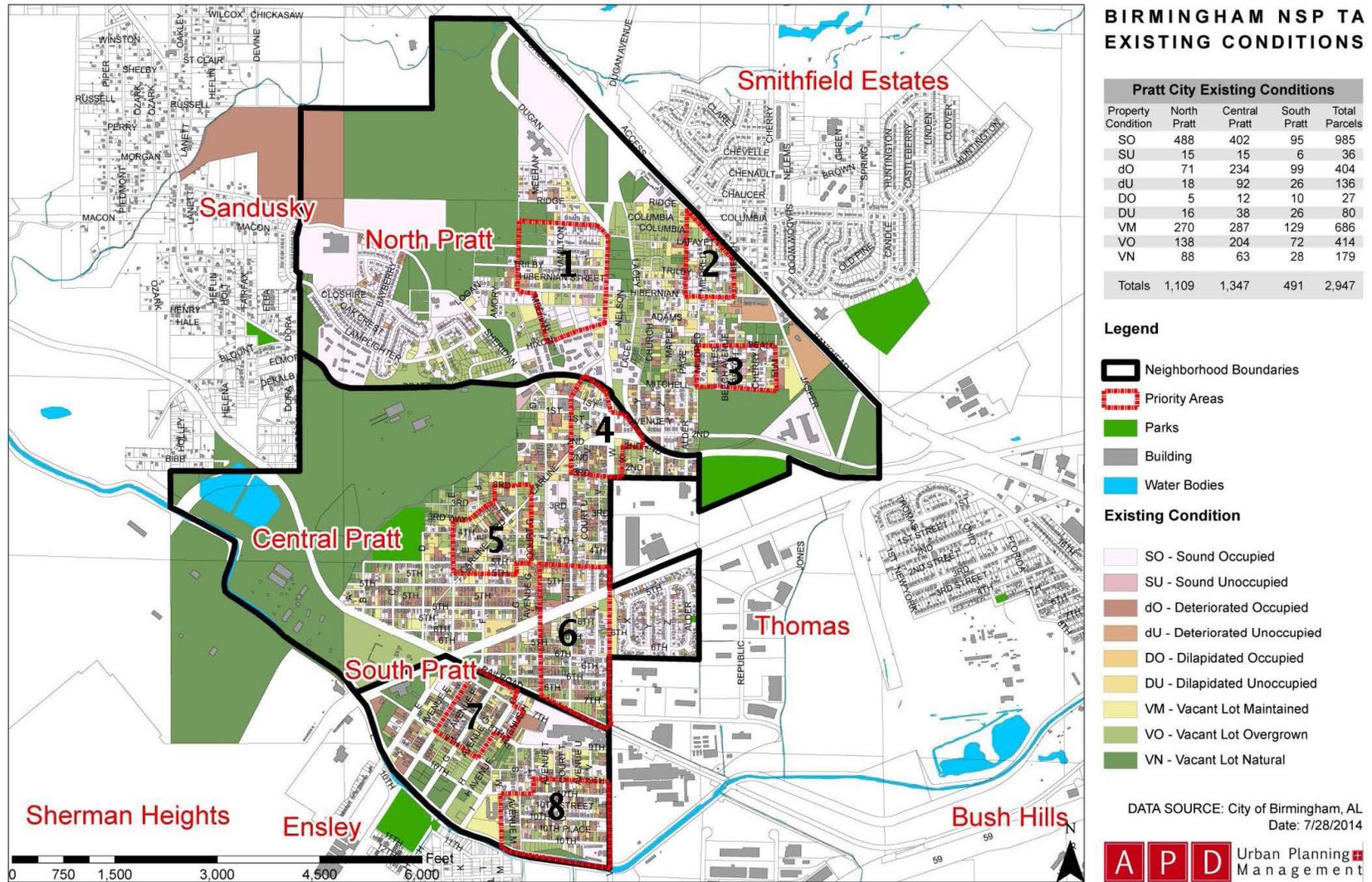
Table 2: Birmingham Property Condition Survey Data

Pratt City Parcel Analysis										
Neighborhood	Property Condition									Number of Parcels Rated
	SO	SU	dO	dU	DO	DU	VO	VM	VN	
North Pratt	488	15	71	18	5	16	270	138	88	1109
Central Pratt	402	15	234	92	12	38	287	204	63	1347
South Pratt	95	6	99	26	10	26	129	72	28	491
Totals	985	36	404	136	27	80	686	414	179	2947
Percentages										
Neighborhood	Property Condition									Number of Parcels Rated
	SO	SU	dO	dU	DO	DU	VO	VM	VN	
North Pratt	44%	1%	6%	2%	0%	1%	24%	12%	8%	38%
Central Pratt	30%	1%	17%	7%	1%	3%	21%	15%	5%	46%
South Pratt	19%	1%	20%	5%	2%	5%	26%	15%	6%	17%
Totals	33%	1%	14%	5%	1%	3%	23%	14%	6%	100%

Key findings from the Parcel Analysis include the following:

- Central Pratt has the highest number of parcels in Pratt City (46%)
- Approximately 40% of Pratt City is considered vacant – highest in South Pratt (57%)
- North Pratt has the highest concentration of vacant LOTS
- Generally, North Pratt is the best candidate for a stabilization program (80% of parcels)
- South Pratt has the highest percentage of deteriorated or dilapidated parcels (30%)
- South Pratt is most likely candidate for a revitalization approach (79% of parcels)
- 6% of Pratt City is vacant natural land

Figure 3: Vacant Lot Density Map with Potential Project Areas – Pratt City



MARKET SCAN AND AFFORDABILITY

In order to make informed decisions about the best opportunities for renewing urban neighborhoods, an understanding of the market forces shaping these neighborhoods is highly recommended. This will provide the context for making informed decisions on where and how to invest public money and staff resources in the most effective way. The Residential Market Scan provided an understanding of the potential marketability of the three (3) Pratt City neighborhoods to determine which areas of Pratt City are most likely to attract private investment. The Housing Affordability Analysis provides a basis for examination of housing pricing and affordability as it relates to the options needed to understand the demand and supply of affordability housing for Pratt City. A Market Scan should not be interpreted as a detailed Residential Market Analysis, but rather as a broad representation of the marketability of Pratt City. A detailed market analysis is recommended as a part of the pre-development phase to determine the appropriate mix of housing types to accommodate changes in housing composition, housing and lifestyle preferences. A summary of the Residential Market Scan and Housing Affordability is provided here; the complete report is provided as Appendix B.

Methodology and Process – Residential Market Scan

Each market indicator was selected to represent what an investor or homebuyer most often looks for when purchasing a home. Both vacant and residential parcels were scored based on proximity to parks, interstate highway interchanges, active school facilities, full service groceries or being either recently sold or near a property recently sold. Final weighted scores for each parcel were mapped using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software to identify marketable areas likely to attract private investment. Each parcel received a score from 1 to 10. Parcels that received scores of less than 5 had relatively low marketability and are represented in shades of gold. A low marketability rating is linked to receiving low scores on the heavily weighted indicators such as residential housing value and condition rating for residential parcels and proximity to an occupied residential structure for vacant parcels. Conversely, parcels with relatively high marketability (blue parcels) scored between 5 and 10 points indicating overall higher scoring, especially on the more heavily weighted indicators.

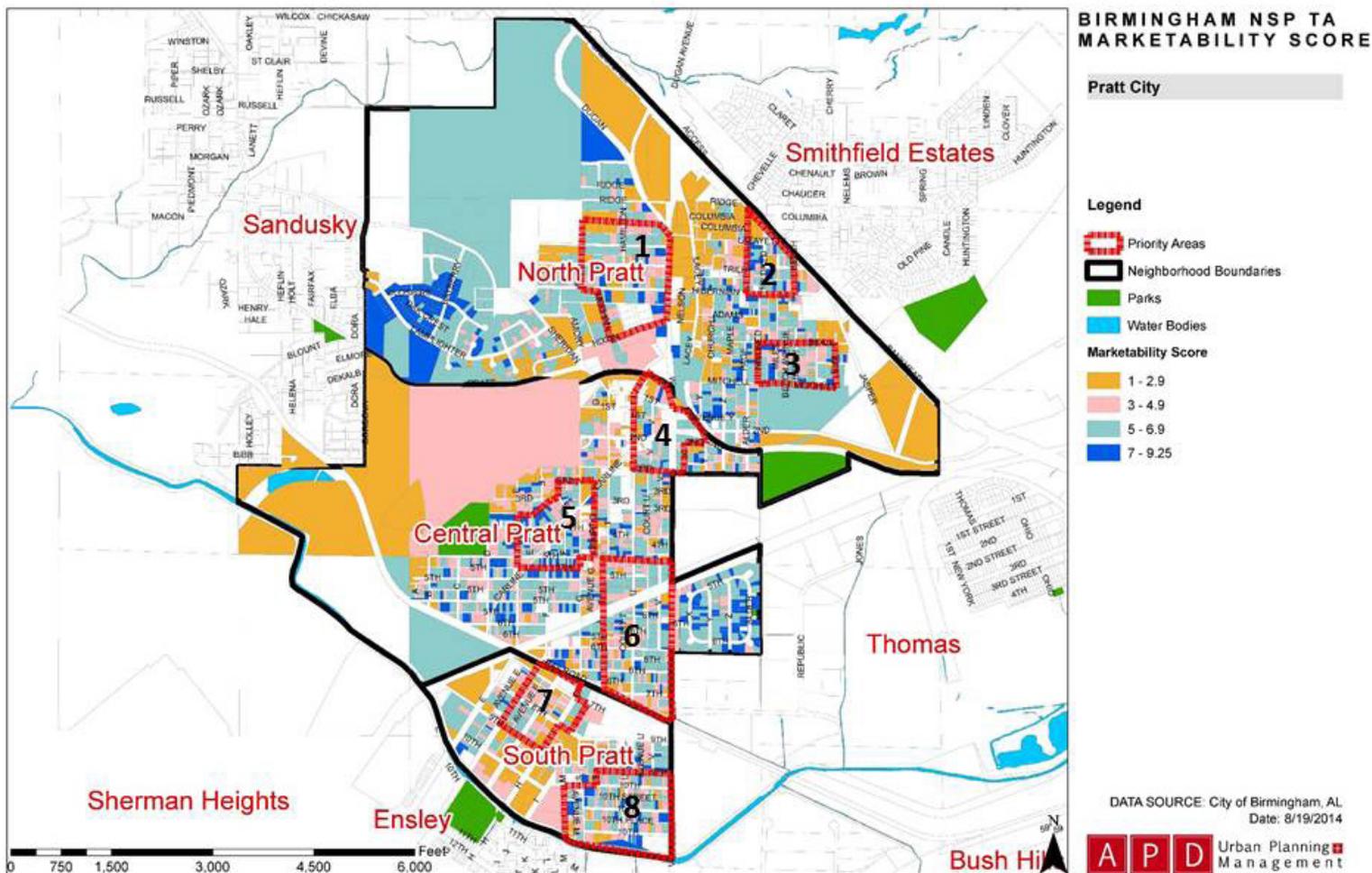
Best Practice Tool

The Residential Market Scan examines market indicators that affect marketability of a plan, property disposition and/or implementation strategy of a community or neighborhood. The Market Scan and Affordability Analysis is used as a primary component to any neighborhood planning or development effort.

Findings and Implications

The overall marketability of the Pratt Community is mixed. There are a large number of parcels shaded to varying degrees of both blue (moderate/high) and red (moderate/low). However, within each neighborhood there are concentrations of parcels with moderately high to high marketability scores. These areas constitute the major findings for this analysis. The Area Marketability Map (Figure 3) below illustrates these findings. Overall, the parcels analyzed for the market scan reveal that residential parcels in Pratt Community are generally of moderately low or moderately high marketability and are constrained from becoming more marketable by issues related to condition and building value. The analysis also indicates that vacant parcels are either a challenge or an opportunity for redevelopment based largely on their relationship with surrounding occupied residential parcels. Ultimately, the findings of this analysis indicate that redevelopment and rehabilitation efforts within the areas of concentrated marketability initially outlined in this section have the greatest chance of success because they are within areas that are most likely to attract private investment.

Figure 4: Area Marketability – Pratt City



Methodology and Process – Housing Affordability

For this analysis, housing affordability was defined as spending no more than 30% of household annual gross income on housing costs which is consistent with the definition of housing affordability used by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). While affordability is important for households at all income levels, it is most critical for those with incomes below 100% of Area Median Income. In these cases, balancing housing costs with other costs of living become more critical. Therefore, for this analysis, housing affordability was evaluated as it relates to HUD income limits. These income limits are calculated by HUD in relation to the Area Median Income (AMI) of a county or metropolitan area for household sizes ranging from one person to eight persons. Birmingham is part of the Birmingham-Hoover, AL HUD Metro FMR Area, so it shares the same income limits as all other cities and counties falling within this area. The income limits used to create affordability thresholds are detailed below:

- 30% of AMI or less – Extremely Low Income
- 31% to 50% of AMI – Very Low Income
- 51% to 80% of AMI – Low Income
- 81% to 100% of AMI
- 101% to 120% of AMI
- 121% of AMI or more

In April 2011, the Pratt Community experienced significant tornado damage. An estimated 500 homes were destroyed and more than 1,000 individuals were displaced as discussed earlier in this document. Available household and housing unit estimates for this year and subsequent years are based on American Community Survey data which does not take into account the loss of housing units and household displacement due to methodology. Thus, the number of households and housing units impacted by the storm was estimated based on the location of the greatest amount of destruction produced by the path of the tornado and removed from the analysis. Therefore, the housing affordability analysis is not an exact accounting of housing units and households within the Pratt Community, but reflects estimates of existing housing supply and demand.

In addition to those mentioned above, the data used for this analysis is as follows. The 2013 estimates for owner-occupied and renter-occupied housing units by value and household incomes were provided by Esri.² Housing tenure information was obtained from the 2012 American Community Survey 5-year estimates produced and collected by the U.S. Census Bureau. Data related to the housing costs associated with homeownership were gathered using a variety of sources, including property tax rate information from the Jefferson County Tax Assessor’s Office, mortgage rates from www.bankrate.com and homeowners insurance rates from the Alabama Department of Insurance. FHA mortgage information was provided by HUD and conventional loan information was provided by Wells Fargo Bank. Data used to estimate utilities for rental units also came from HUD approved allowance tables.

Homeownership

In general, the existing supply of housing units provides enough housing for households earning 50% of AMI or less. However, shortages exist for housing of higher value that meet the maximum affordability for households earning more than 50% of AMI. There is a sufficient existing surplus of housing stock in the lowest income thresholds to accommodate housing demand from households earning 51% to 100% of AMI or earning from \$27,451 to \$54,900 annually. Although housing need of households earning from 51% to 100% of AMI are accommodated by existing housing stock, approximately 27% of households in the Pratt Community earn more than \$54,900 annually and are lacking sufficient housing options at their maximum level of affordability. While existing housing trends do not indicate that substantial need exists for these housing units in the Pratt Community, these trends do indicate that additional moderately priced homes would expand housing options for all households earning greater than 51% of AMI.

² Esri is a nationally recognized fee-based geographic information systems (GIS) provider that produces calculated estimates and projections for a variety of U.S. Census based data points for geographic areas.

Table 3: Affordability Thresholds for Pratt City Neighborhoods

**Affordability Thresholds Based on 3-Person HUD Income Limits
North, Central and South Pratt Neighborhoods, Birmingham, Alabama**

Threshold	Units - Housing Supply				Income - Housing Demand				Gap Analysis	
	Minimum Value	Maximum Value	Units	% of Units	Threshold Minimum	Threshold Maximum	Households Within Threshold	Households Within Threshold	Surplus/ (Shortage)	Supply as a % of Demand
CONVENTIONAL FEE SIMPLE										
30% and Below	\$0	\$91,570	527	73.3%	\$0	\$19,790	249	30.9%	278	211.6%
31% to 50%	\$91,571	\$126,699	128	17.8%	\$19,791	\$27,450	83	10.3%	45	154.2%
51% to 80%	\$126,700	\$202,370	58	8.1%	\$27,451	\$43,950	186	23.1%	(128)	31.2%
81% to 100%	\$202,371	\$252,588	0	0.0%	\$43,951	\$54,900	74	9.2%	(74)	0.0%
101% to 120%	\$252,589	\$302,944	6	0.8%	\$54,901	\$65,880	53	6.6%	(47)	11.3%
121% and Above	\$302,945		0	0.0%	\$65,881		160	19.9%	(160)	0.0%
Total			719	100.0%			805	100.0%	(86)	89.3%
FHA FEE SIMPLE										
30% and Below	\$0	\$74,204	381	53.0%	\$0	\$19,790	249	30.9%	132	153.0%
31% to 50%	\$74,205	\$102,680	197	27.4%	\$19,791	\$27,450	83	10.3%	114	237.3%
51% to 80%	\$102,681	\$164,018	120	16.7%	\$27,451	\$43,950	186	23.1%	(66)	64.5%
81% to 100%	\$164,019	\$204,725	15	2.1%	\$43,951	\$54,900	74	9.2%	(59)	20.3%
101% to 120%	\$204,726	\$245,542	0	0.0%	\$54,901	\$65,880	53	6.6%	(53)	0.0%
121% and Above	\$245,543		6	0.8%	\$65,881		160	19.9%	(154)	3.8%
Total			719	100.0%			805	100.0%	(86)	89.3%

Source: RKG Associates, Inc., 2014

Rental

Similar to ownership housing units, most (approximately 87%) of the 407 rental housing units in the Pratt Community are affordable to households earning \$39,050 in gross income annually or 80% of AMI. These units have a gross rent of \$976 or less. The largest portion of these units, approximately 44% of all units, falls within the 51% to 80% of AMI threshold. Overall, demand for rental housing in the three Pratt neighborhoods is concentrated among households earning 80% of AMI or below or making \$39,050 or less annually. Unlike the rental housing stock which is concentrated within the 51% to 80% of AMI threshold, most of the renter households earn 30% of AMI or less. This portion accounts for approximately 54% of the 366 households that rent. Housing can be a substantial challenge for extremely low income households, and the concentration of households in this threshold is consistent with other communities with households of reduced means. Based on an analysis of existing demand for rental units and the current rental housing unit supply, demand for rental housing is met at all thresholds of affordability except the 30% of AMI or below threshold. This is consistent with the large number of households within this category and that the supportable market for rental units is two affordability thresholds higher (51% to 80% of AMI). The existing shortage of approximately 103 units within the 30% of AMI or below threshold and the surplus of units at the 31% to 50% and 51% to 80% of AMI thresholds indicate that many of the extremely low income households are renting housing units that are beyond their level of affordability. This indicates that many of these households are cost burdened and spending more than 30% of their annual gross income on housing.

Table 4: Rental Affordability Thresholds – Pratt City Neighborhoods

**Rental Affordability Thresholds Based on 2-Person HUD Income Limits
North, Central and South Pratt Neighborhoods, Birmingham, Alabama**

Threshold	Rental Units - Housing Supply				Income - Housing Demand				Gap Analysis	
	Minimum Rent	Maximum Rent	Units	% of Units	Threshold Minimum	Threshold Maximum	Households Within Threshold	% of Households Within Threshold	Surplus/ (Shortage)	Supply as a % of Demand
RENTAL UNITS										
30% and Below	\$0	\$393	94	23.1%	\$0	\$15,730	197	53.8%	(103)	47.7%
31% to 50%	\$394	\$610	80	19.7%	\$15,731	\$24,400	60	16.4%	20	133.3%
51% to 80%	\$611	\$976	179	44.0%	\$24,401	\$39,050	60	16.4%	119	298.3%
81% to 100%	\$977	\$1,220	39	9.6%	\$39,051	\$48,800	34	9.3%	5	114.7%
101% to 120%	\$1,221	\$1,464	8	2.0%	\$48,801	\$58,560	8	2.2%	0	100.0%
121% and Above	\$1,465		7	1.7%	\$58,561		7	1.9%	0	100.0%
Total			407	100.0%			366	100.0%	41	111.2%

Source: RKG Associates, Inc., 2014

Implications

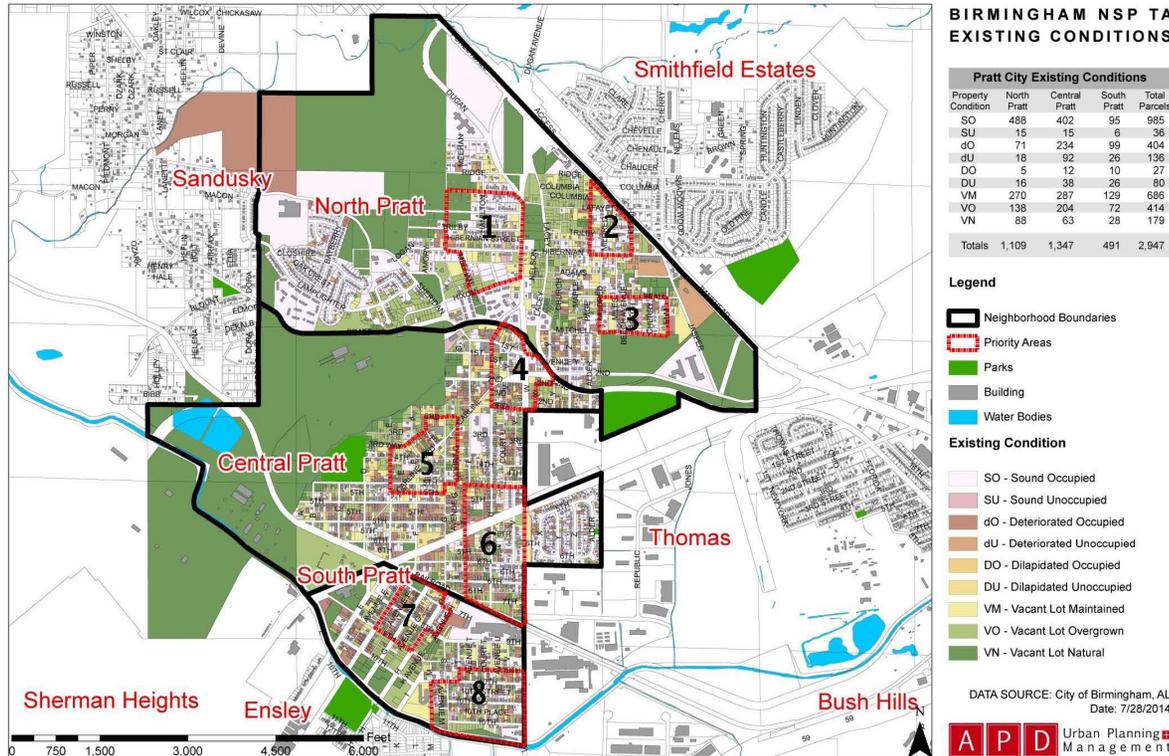
Based on the existing demand for ownership units above 50% of AMI and the predominance of low value units leading to a shortage of housing units to meet this demand, the affordability analysis indicates the greatest need is for housing of modest value. Using conventional loans, this is housing priced from \$126,700 and \$252,588. Using an FHA loan, additional housing units of modest value could be added if priced from \$102,681 to \$204,725. Overall, this provides a range of housing prices from \$102,681 to \$252,588 although it is likely that most homebuyers in this area will focus on ownership units in the lower half of this range because they are affordable with an FHA loan.

Rental housing in the Pratt community is most needed for households of extremely low income (30% of AMI or below) which are currently experiencing a shortage of affordable units. The moderate rate of traditional ownership unit conversions within the Pratt Community is contributing to the surplus of rental units for households from 51% to 80% of AMI, but these units are far beyond what is affordable for lower income households. Therefore, additional rental units at a gross rent of \$610 per month or less would meet the existing unmet demand for renters of extremely low income or at least reduce the amount to which they are cost burdened by housing.

DECISION MAKING MATRIX

The Decision Making Matrix (DMM) is an organized process designed to analyze criteria that are important in moving potential development projects forward. It is intended to aid the community and development leaders to make objective decisions in prioritizing development initiatives. The DMM uses maps prepared with Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology and market conditions data that aid in demonstrating how different criteria factor into prioritizing initiatives.

Figure 5: Pratt City Potential Project Areas



Best Practice Tool

The Decision Making Matrix Tool allows for an assessment of key criteria to make strategic and objective decisions concerning development initiatives. It can also be used to indicate which development approaches are most appropriate for use in specific project areas. The Decision Making Matrix Tool is most often used in conjunction with a Parcel or Block Analysis Tool.

Methodology and Process

Using the Parcel Analysis data, eight sets of blocks were identified as potential project areas for the City's RISE initiative, considering vacant and abandoned properties as assets. Figure 5 above identifies these eight (8) potential project areas. In addition to the Parcel Analysis data, other information and data was obtained and analyzed to develop key criteria appropriate for analyzing the overall level of readiness for two development approaches – stabilization approach, or the RISE Program, and a revitalization approach. Since there were a number of areas with concentrations of varying levels of blight as identified through the Parcel Analysis, it is highly recommended that a revitalization approach be considered as a part of the long term redevelopment of Pratt City. Table 5 (Stabilization Criteria and Definitions) and Table 6 (Revitalization Criteria and Definitions) outline the key criteria and definitions by development approach.

A Decision Making Matrix (DMM) work session was facilitated by the APD-U Team to assist key staff and stakeholders with prioritizing the eight (8) project areas. During the decision making process each criterion and its associated map (if available) were reviewed. Each criterion received a rating of 1 through 8, with 1 being the most desired characteristic and 8 being the least desired characteristic for development. Once each project area was rated, the eight (8) priority project areas were ranked in priority from greatest development potential to least development potential for each development approach.

The results of the DMM prioritization are identified in Table 7. In priority project areas with the same rating in both approaches, it is recommended to begin with the Stabilization approach at the block level in a strategic manner, while conducting pre-development work for the Revitalization approach (Priority Project Areas 1, 7, and 8).

Figure 6: Example of Vacant Lot



Figure 7: Example of Deteriorated Structure



Stabilization Approach

Stabilization areas are those areas that have high occupancy, with opportunities for side lot programs and homeowner rehab and renovation. These areas are not characterized as neighborhoods with large concentration of vacant and abandoned property.

Table 5: DMM Stabilization Criteria and Definitions

STABILIZATION CRITERIA	DEFINITION / EXPLANATION
Percentage of Sound Occupied (SO) Structures	Areas with concentration of SO structures indicate more stable locations
Percentage of Sound Occupied adjacent to Vacant Maintained or Vacant Overgrown	Concentrations of SO adjacent to vacant parcels represent opportunities for side lot transfers or acquisitions through RISE Program
Percentage of Sound Unoccupied adjacent to Vacant Maintain/Vacant Overgrown	Concentrations of SU adjacent to vacant parcels represent opportunities to expand buildable lots or acquisition packages through RISE Program
Incompatible/Inappropriate Uses (Existing Land Use)	Zoning changes require additional time and additional actions, making project less attractive to a developer or individual buyer
Percentage of Tax Delinquent Lots (TDL) with structures	Concentrations of TDL (5 or more years) represent opportunities for site control through possible land bank acquisitions for RISE Program (rehab programs)
Percentage of Tax Delinquent Lots without structures	Concentrations of TDL (5 or more years) represent opportunities for site control through possible land bank acquisitions for RISE Program (side lot programs)
Property Ownership	Ability to acquire blighted properties quickly that are adjacent to each other is first step in stabilization process
Homeownership rate	Proximity to existing homeowners demonstrates potential stabilization factor within communities
Environmental Constraints	Consideration of environmental constraints is important as these are typically considered development constraints
Proximity Analysis Map Series:	Concentrations Analysis of TDL (5 or more years) represent opportunities for site control through possible land bank acquisitions for RISE Program (rehab programs)
Transit/Walkability	Proximity to transit, food, open spaces, schools, transit corridors are all elements of a sustainable, walkable environment with more than one mode of transportation and access to healthy foods and outdoor spaces. Locating close to these amenities is not only good for existing and future residents, but makes any projects or developments more marketable and attractive.
Grocery Stores/Access to Food	
Parks	
Schools	
Major Corridors	

The results for the stabilization criteria are identified in Table 7. The top three Stabilization Project Areas are Priority Project Areas 3, 6 and 8.

Revitalization Approach

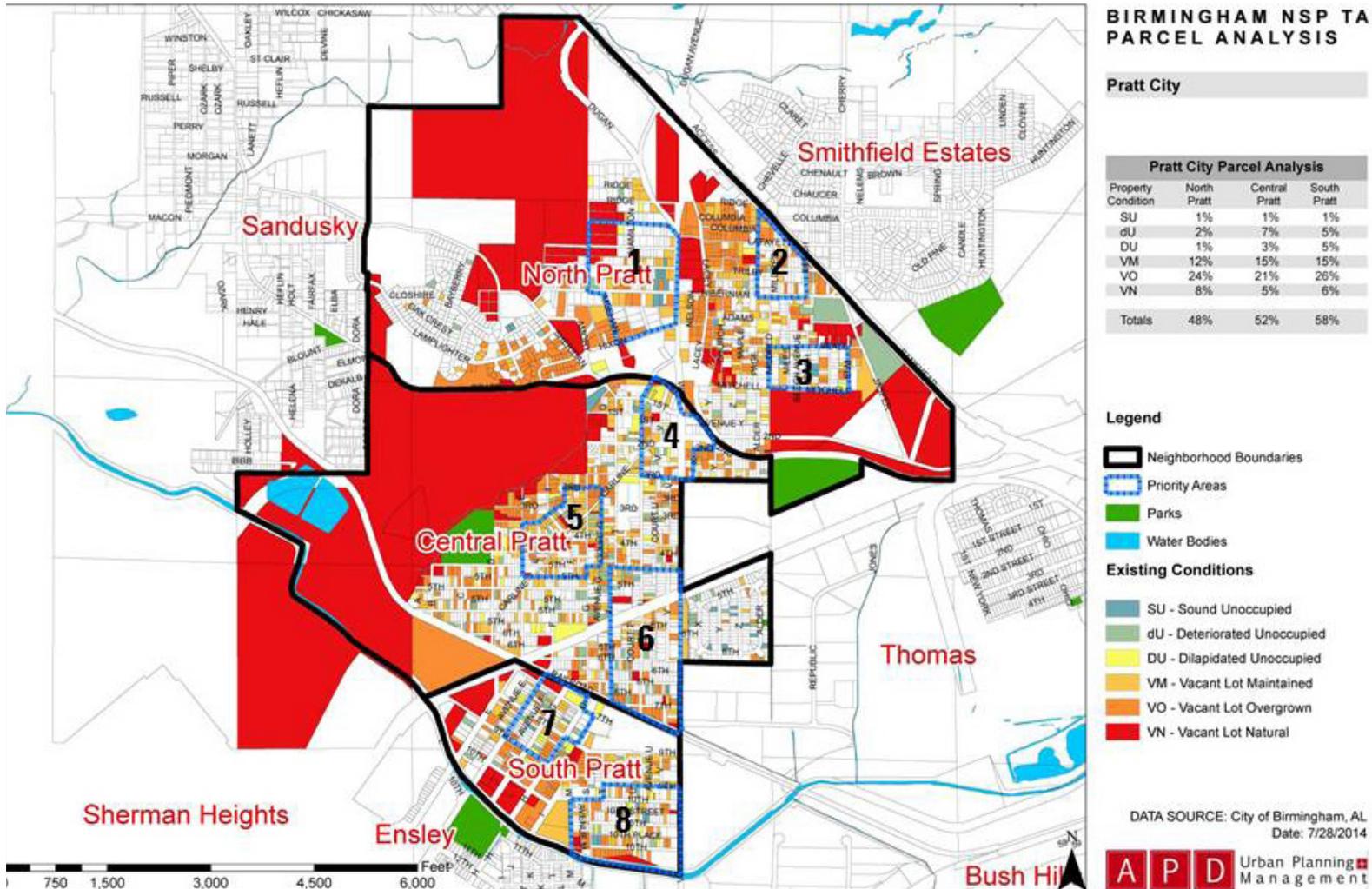
Revitalization neighborhood areas have large concentrations of contiguous vacant properties. These areas also have opportunities that can serve as catalysts to spur additional investment.

Table 6: DMM Revitalization Criteria and Definitions

REVITALIZATION CRITERIA	DEFINITION / EXPLANATION
Percentage of Unoccupied Structures	Unoccupied structures next to VM, VO represent opportunities for long term strategies such as revitalization or even redevelopment.
Percentage of Deteriorated, Dilapidated, and/or Vacant Parcels	Concentrations of parcels in deteriorated or dilapidated condition represent opportunities for long term strategies such as revitalization or even redevelopment (i.e., new infill projects)
Incompatible/inappropriate uses (Future Land Use)	If project requires use that is different from current zoning classification, a variance or rezoning would be required, adding additional time and actions before any construction activity can occur
Property Ownership	Ability to assemble multiple properties that are adjacent to each other is first step in revitalization or redevelopment process
Area Marketability	Series of weighted market factors indicating desirability of area to potential developers, investors, homeowners, renters. Higher concentration of these parcels indicate high marketability and potential for attracting private investment
Environmental Constraints	Consideration of environmental constraints is important as these are typically considered development constraints
Proximity Analysis Map Series:	Proximity to transit, food, open spaces, schools, transit corridors are all elements of a sustainable, walkable environment with more than one mode of transportation and access to healthy foods and outdoor spaces. Locating close to these amenities is not only good for existing and future residents, but makes the project or development more marketable and attractive
Transit/Walkability	
Grocery Stores/Access to Food	
Parks	
Schools	
Major Corridors	

The results for the stabilization criteria are identified in Table 7. The top three Revitalization Project Areas are Priority Project Areas 8, 5 and 6/7 (tie).

Figure 8: DMM Map – Deteriorated, Dilapidated, Vacant Parcels



Other Criteria for Consideration

There are other criteria that should also be considered in making strategic and objective decision concerning development approaches. Data for the following criteria was either unobtainable or unavailable for analysis.

- Tax Delinquent Properties with no clear ownership. Concentrations of TDLs without clear title will take time to clear the tile for site control/acquisitions, adding additional time to development projects, required a more focused strategy for site control.
- Current or Planned Projects. Knowing conditions of existing or planned infrastructure improvements is important as it would require less of an investment from the developer of a project.
- Financing/Redevelopment Designations. Areas that have been designated as financing or redevelopment areas (TIFs, CID, TADs, etc) are desirable places to develop since it represents potential additional sources of revenue and or reduced taxes for development projects.
- Involvement of Local Partners. Investment of local partners (nonprofits, for profit developers) or planned investment of local partners indicate readiness of project area for redevelopment or revitalization.
- Proximity Analysis. Defined above. May not be as important a factor in this case as this is the initial stages of rebuilding efforts and there are very few if any amenities within a mile radius of the Pratt community.
- Crime. Understanding types/concentrations of crimes in and within close proximity of proposed project areas is detrimental to success of projects. Project can either work to eradicate crime OR can be negatively affected by it.

It should be noted that the Crime data was provided after the work session was completed. Data was analyzed, mapped and provided to the City. The complete presentation for the Decision Making Matrix and Map Series, including the Crime map, is provided as Appendix B.

Decision Making Matrix Findings and Results

The analyses obtained from the Decision Making Matrix was used to inform work session participants on how to provide proper intervention strategies, and focus on the criterion important to advance a neighborhood or agency’s housing or development initiatives. The Decision Making Matrix is used as a tool to assist in determining the type of housing disposition strategies that can be recommended for priority project areas in Pratt City. The Decision Making Process can be replicated to identify potential project areas in subsequent phases of Pratt City’s redevelopment initiatives. Each project area summary is provided in Appendix C; however, it is strongly recommended that a parcel-by-parcel analysis of each of these priority Project Areas is conducted to determine the specific development approach that is most appropriate for these areas at the block level.

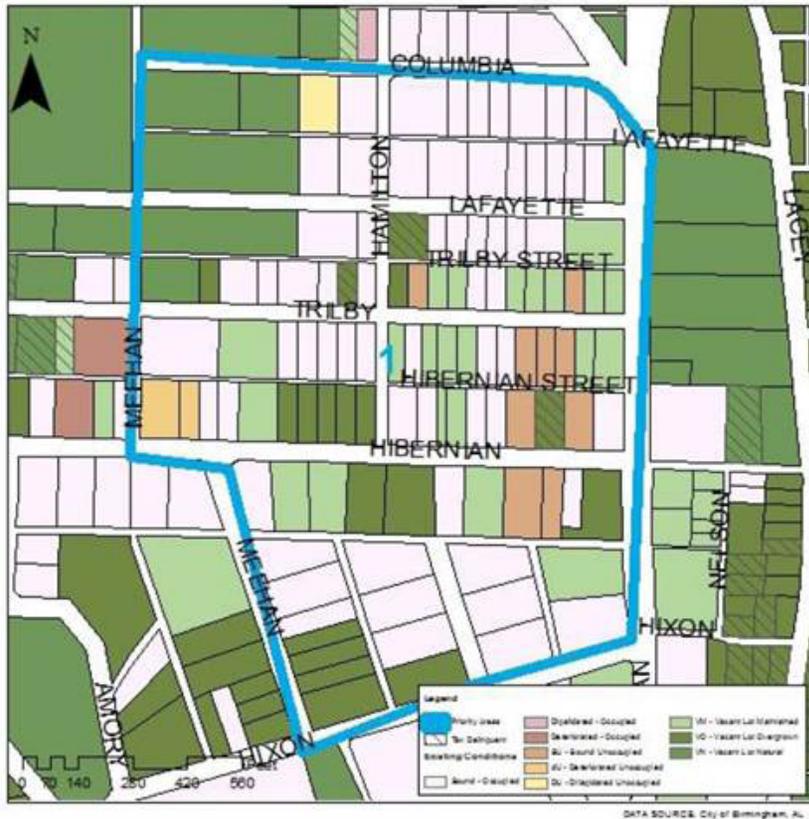
As noted above, in Priority Project Areas with the same rating in both approaches, it is recommended to begin with the Stabilization approach at the block level in a strategic manner, while conducting pre-development work for the Revitalization approach (Project Areas 1, 7, and 8).

Table 7: DMM Project Area Priorities (areas highlighted are the top priority project areas)

	Stabilization	Revitalization
Project Area 1	55	42
Project Area 2	60	40
Project Area 3	64	42
Project Area 4	54	49
Project Area 5	57	57
Project Area 6	66	50
Project Area 7	63	50
Project Area 8	85	66

Figure 9: Example of DMM Priority Project Area Summary

BIRMINGHAM – PRATT CITY DISPOSITION PROGRAM
Decision Making Matrix - Catalytic Project Areas



CATALYTIC PROJECT AREA 1: Hibernian

Overview

The Hibernian Project Area ranked 7th in both the Stabilization and Revitalization development approaches. This is an indication that a Stabilization approach should lead a Revitalization approach. This is the location of the new NSP homes and to the west of the Project Area sits the new Pratt Library, a major asset to the community.

Opportunities

Due to the large number of Sound Occupied units adjacent to Vacant Maintained or Vacant Overgrown throughout the Project Area, there are significant opportunities for side lot transfers for existing residents. Moderate marketability due in part to recent new home sales and new library.

Challenges

New infill be planned such that it has enough scale and recognized continuity to provide impact. Very few tax delinquent parcels, thus strategic property acquisition guidelines will be needed to institute a successful side lot transfer program.

Other Comments

A well-thought-out and executed acquisition effort could make this node a prime candidate for a short-term infill revitalization initiative. Continue to stabilize Hibernian, and implement a proactive code enforcement strategy to keep vacant lots maintained.

Project Area	Sound Occupied Structures	Deteriorated/Dilapidated Occupied Structures	Deteriorated/Dilapidated Unoccupied Structures	Vacant Lots/Parcels	Tax Delinquent Parcels	Home-ownership	Total Parcels
1	60/51%	0/0%	3/3%	46/39%	3/3%	48/41%	118



Figure 10: Homes in Pratt City in various ratings

DISPOSITION STRATEGY

Overview of Disposition Strategies

The recommendations below introduce a model block approach to revitalizing communities along with related stabilization and revitalization approaches with associated recommendations for addressing housing concerns in the community. There are a number of options for reuse of vacant and abandoned property, depending on the development approach. Whether the recommendation is a stabilization or a revitalization approach, there must be a strategic approach and process for bringing vacant and abandoned properties back into productive use. Both approaches are outlined below, and include recommendations for successfully bringing problem properties back on the City's tax rolls and as a result, increasing property values, increasing public safety and improving the health and overall quality of life for Pratt City.

As noted above, loss of population and the devastating tornadoes that have torn through Pratt City have contributed to the substandard conditions of many properties. The Parcel Analysis for Pratt City indicated approximately 16% of existing structures are in deteriorated or dilapidated condition, and more than 31% of these parcels are vacant. The highest concentration of these parcels are located in the Central and South Pratt neighborhoods. Many of these deteriorated and dilapidated properties are located next door to owner occupied properties in sound condition, and as a result, have caused property values to decrease over the years, property taxes left unpaid, and an overall negative appearance of the neighborhoods. Major overgrowth in vacant lots, and yards having trash or debris have contributed to blight and disinvestment in each of the three neighborhoods.

The City of Birmingham has developed the RISE Program as its primary mechanism to address vacant and abandoned properties in Pratt City. The RISE Program (Remove Blight, Increase Values, Strengthen Neighborhoods, Empower Residents) is a neighborhood stabilization program that intends to stabilize the housing market of Pratt City by empowering residents with opportunities to accumulate wealth through property ownership and increase their quality of life overall. The recommendations provided below under the Stabilization and Revitalization approaches provide a foundation for implementation of the RISE Program in Pratt City.

In 2013, the City of Birmingham established the Birmingham Land Bank Authority, whose primary function is to serve as a mechanism to "acquire the tax-delinquent properties, surplus properties of the local governments, and other properties located within the City of Birmingham in order to foster

Best Practice Tool

Successful disposition strategies contain multi pronged approaches that seek to address the needs of existing residents and stimulate future investment into a revitalization effort. At a minimum, these best practices approaches include both a Stabilization and Revitalization approach.

the public purpose of returning land which is in a nonrevenue-generating, nontax-producing status to an effective utilization status in order to remove blight, provide housing, and stabilize neighborhoods”³ The Birmingham Land Bank Authority (BLBA) will be the process through which the RISE Program will be implemented, allowing existing residents, investors, nonprofit organizations, developers and other entities to acquire vacant and abandoned property and return it to productive use.

Land Bank Disposition Strategies

The BLBA adopted its Administrative Policies and Procedures and By-Laws in October 2014. It is important that parcels owned by the Birmingham Land Bank Authority be conveyed to builders, developers, and individuals who are committed to stabilizing these parcels and the neighborhoods in which they are located. It is anticipated the goals of the BLBA can be accomplished through revitalizing these parcels and returning them to active commerce in a manner that is consistent with the AIA Communities by Design Study (R/UDAT) “*Rebuilding the Pratt Community*”, commissioned in October 2011⁴.

Guiding Principles of Land Bank Disposition

In addition to the Administrative Policies and Procedures, guiding principles for land bank disposition strategies should be established prior to conveyance of land bank properties. The guiding principles fall under BLBA Administrative Policies Section 6.2 Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions

Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions. All conveyances by the BLBA to third parties shall include such covenants, conditions and restrictions as the BLBA deems necessary and appropriate in its sole discretion to ensure the use, rehabilitation and redevelopment of the property in a manner consistent with the public purposes of the BLBA. Such requirements may take the form of a deed creating a defeasible fee, recorded restrictive covenants, subordinate financing being held by the BLBA, development agreements, or any combination thereof. In all cases, development agreements will delineate the standards and expectations that must be met to retain possession of the property. Failure to satisfy established conditions will result in Land Bank Authority control over the property.⁵

The guiding principles are identified by redevelopment approach on the next page; however, there are some guiding principles that apply regardless of development approach used.

³ Administrative Policies and Procedures, Birmingham Land Bank Authority, October 2014

⁴ “Rebuilding the Pratt Community”, Birmingham AL R/UDAT, October 2011

⁵ Birmingham Land Bank Authority Administrative Polices, Adopted September 2014

Table 8: Land Bank Disposition Guiding Principles by Redevelopment Approach

STABILIZATION APPROACH	REVITALIZATION APPROACH
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review intended use of the property to insure the proposed use conforms to existing land use and zoning; • Monitor maintenance of the property to insure it is maintained in accordance with local codes; • Monitor maintenance of the property until such time rehabilitation of the property takes place to insure it is properly secured and maintained in accordance with local codes; • Within 24 months from the time of conveyance, the plans for rehabilitation, inclusive of a detailed, room by room work write-up, is submitted for review and approval; • Within 24 months builder/developer will provide evidence of a commitment for rehab loan financing sufficient to build or rehab the home as a condition for extinguishing back taxes and liens; • For rehab projects, homeowner will provide a master project development schedule that clearly illustrate the time frame in which the lots will be developed • A certificate of occupancy must be issued for the subject property within 36 month from the date the property is conveyed • After five consecutive years of maintaining the property, the BLBA will extinguish back taxes and convey property at no cost. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site plan review to insure the proposed facility or home conforms with land use and zoning designation proposed for the facility or home is to be located; • If the parcel(s) include an existing structure, an assessment is required to review the existing structure to determine if the house can be renovated or if it should be demolished; • Review existing architectural features of houses in the neighborhood where the facility or home will be built and require that the new facility (home)'s intended height, massing, and building features are designed with compatible architectural design features; • Developer will provide evidence of a commitment for construction loan financing sufficient to develop the proposed project; • Developer will provide a project development schedule that clearly illustrate the time frame in which the facility (home) will be built <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master development schedule for the build out of all lots not to exceed 36 months • Per lot development schedule that does not exceed 120 days per home • Developer will provide a development schedule to include key milestone indicators prior to the construction start of each home; • Developer (Homeowner) will provide a development schedule to include key milestone indicators; and • Developer will present a marketing plan to solicit building that is designed to create awareness regarding where the facility is being built, expected completion dates, rental rates, and special features the facility will offer.

Tables 8 - 11 provide sample scenarios that illustrates situations in which the various land bank disposition guiding principles are demonstrated. In each and every scenario presented, the Land Bank reserves the right to recapture the lot if the terms and conditions of conveyance are not met.

Table 9: Disposition Guiding Principles by Scenario

RECOMMENDED GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR LAND BANK DISPOSITION BY SCENARIO	
<p>Scenario 1 Mr. Smith owns a parcel in Ensley that is zoned R-1. It is 50' by 100' and has a/n owner-occupied dwelling. Directly to the west of Mr. Smith is a TDL which Mr. Smith has been maintaining for 7 years. It has no history of violations with the City. Mr. Smith wishes to acquire the property but it has \$10,000 in back taxes and liens. Mr. Smith has no money to purchase the property and has asked the BLBA to clear title and convey the property to him at no cost to him.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review intended use of the property; • Monitor maintenance of the property; and • After five consecutive years of maintaining the property, the BLBA will extinguish back taxes and convey property at no cost.
<p>Scenario 2 Mr. and Mrs. Blackstone own a property in good standing. Across the street is a vacant TDL which the City cuts about twice per year. Mr. Blackstone would like to acquire the property at no cost and has agreed to maintain the lot. Back taxes and liens on the property is \$15,000.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review intended use of the property; • Monitor maintenance of the property and • After five consecutive years of maintaining the property, the BLBA will extinguish back taxes and convey property at no cost.

Examples of Scenarios 1 and 2 can be seen in Priority Project Areas 1, 2, 4 and 6:

- Trilby between Hamilton and Meechan (Project Area 1)
- Lafayette between Hamilton and W (Project Area 1)
- Trilby between Mildred and Beech (Project Area 2)
- 2nd Street (Project Area 4)
- W between 6th and 6th (Project Area 6)

Table 10: Disposition Guiding Principles by Scenario

RECOMMENDED GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR LAND BANK DISPOSITION	
<p>Scenario 3 The Bindy Group would like to build an assisted living facility and will require the assemblage of 14 R-1 lots into a single parcel. 3 of the 14 parcels are vacant TDL more than 5 year delinquent. They would like the BLBA to acquire and clear the title of the 3 properties and then convey the title to the Bindy Group for assemblage.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site plan review; • Review existing architectural features and require that the new facility’s building features are designed with compatible architectural design features; • Evidence of a commitment for construction loan financing sufficient to develop the proposed project; • Project development schedule that includes key milestone indicators that clearly illustrate the time frame in which the facility will be built; and • Developer will present a marketing plan to solicit building that is designed to create awareness regarding where the facility is being built, expected completion dates, rental rates, and special features the facility will offer.
<p>Scenario 4 The Williams family loves Eastlake and would like to build a home that matches their traditional French style and anything available is proletariat bungalows. They have identified a parcel that suits their needs. The property has a market value of \$25,000 but has \$10,000 in owed taxes and \$5,000 in weed liens on the title. They would like to use the BLBA to generate a clean title so they can build an Eastlake Versailles. They have unlimited funds but are short on time.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site plan review; • Review existing architectural features and require that the new home’s building features are designed with compatible architectural design features; • Evidence of a commitment for construction loan financing sufficient to develop the proposed project as a condition for extinguishing back taxes and liens; • Project development schedule that includes key milestone indicators that clearly illustrate the time frame in which the home will be built

Examples of Scenarios 3 and 4 can be seen in Priority Project Areas 1, 3, 5, 7 and 8:

- Lafayette between Hamilton and W (Project Area 1)
- Cherry between Mitchell and Beall (Project Area 3)
- Avenue G between 4th and 5th (Project Area 5)
- H between 8th and 9th; Avenue G between 8th and 9th (Project Area 7)
- 10th between Avenue U and Avenue S (Project Area 8)

Table 11: Disposition Guiding Principles by Scenario

RECOMMENDED GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR LAND BANK DISPOSITION BY SCENARIO	
<p>Scenario 5 The Proper Foundation has identified 17 noncontiguous properties in Birmingham that are within their focus area. They are in the business of developing affordable single family owner occupied housing. They would like to use the BLBA as a conduit transfer and pay the BLBA for the project cost only.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site plan review; • Review existing architectural features and require that the new facility’s building features are designed with compatible architectural design features; • If the parcel(s) include an existing structure, an assessment is required to review the existing structure to determine if the house can be renovated or if it should be demolished; • Evidence of a commitment for construction loan financing sufficient to develop the proposed project prior to conveyance; • Project development schedule that includes key milestone indicators that clearly illustrate the time frame in which the facility will be built; and • Developer will present a marketing plan to solicit building that is designed to create awareness regarding where the facility is being built, expected completion dates, rental rates, and special features the facility will offer.
<p>Scenario 6 Mr. Jackson has solicited the BLBA to clear the title on 15 TDL scattered throughout the City. He has made a passionate case that these properties can turn the tide of decline in the neighborhood, yet he has no immediate plans for the use. He would like the BLBA to clear the title and pay fair market price for the property. He will assume maintenance and hopes to be able to build home to rent as soon as the market is ready.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site plan review to insure the proposed house(s) conform with land use and zoning designation proposed for the neighborhoods in which they are located; • Review existing architectural features of the proposed house to insure that the new infill home will be compatible with existing architecture; • Developer will provide evidence of a commitment for construction loan financing sufficient to develop each home prior to conveyance; • Developer will provide a master project development schedule that clearly illustrate the time frame in which the lots will be developed inclusive of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master development schedule for the build out of all 15 lots not to exceed 36 months • Per lot development schedule that does not exceed 120 days per home • Developer will provide a development schedule to include key milestone indicators prior to the construction start of each home; • Developer will present a marketing plan to solicit homebuyers that is designed to create awareness regarding new home(s) expected completion dates, and special features the new homes will offer

Examples of Scenarios 5 and 6 can be seen in Priority Project Areas 2, 3, and 4:

- Forestdale between Trilby and Lafayette (Project Area 2)
- Miles between Mitchell and Beall (Project Area 3)
- Mildred between Forestdale and Lafayette; Carlisle between Avenue U and 2nd (Project Area 4)

Table 12: Disposition Guiding Principles by Scenario

RECOMMENDED GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR LAND BANK DISPOSITION BY SCENARIO	
<p>Scenario 7 Mr. and Mrs. Jones own a property in good standing but have identified a vacant tax delinquent parcel (and structure) in Pratt City where they would like to build a new home to occupy. Mr. Jones would like to acquire the property at no cost. Back taxes and liens on the property are \$15,000 and has a vacant structure on it.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review intended use of the property; • Monitor maintenance of the property until such time and rehabilitation of the property takes place to insure it is properly secured and maintained in accordance with local codes; • Within 24 months from the time of conveyance the plans for rehabilitation, inclusive of a detailed, room by room work write-up, is submitted for review and approval; • The Land Bank reserves the right to recapture the lot if the terms and conditions or conveyance are not met; • Within 24 months builder/developer will provide evidence of a commitment for rehab loan financing sufficient to rehab the home; • Developer will provide a master project development schedule that clearly illustrate the time frame in which the lots will be developed; and • A certificate of occupancy must be issued for the subject property within 36 month from the date the property is conveyed

Examples of Scenario 7 can be seen in all Project Areas:

- Hibernian Street between Hamilton and W (Project Area 1)
- Beech between Mitchell and Beall (Project Area 3)
- 1st Street between Dugan and 2nd (Project Area 4)
- Carlisle between 5th and 5th (Project Area 5)
- 6th between Avenue U and Avenue W (Project Area 6)
- 10th between Avenue S and Avenue U (Project Area 8)

Heir Property Program

Land banks can also handle heir properties. Heir properties are problematic as they are owned by heirs of a deceased person whose estate was not handled in probate court. These types of properties are common obstacles in older, historically African-American neighborhoods, such as Pratt City. A title search, performed by an experienced real estate attorney or title company will reveal potential issues that may hinder or delay the City's ability to obtain clear title and acquire property for development. Resolving title issues related to heirs' property can take anywhere from a couple of months to several years. It is recommended that the City begin to establish a working relationship with professionals experienced in resolving heirs' property constraints to help address this issue. Clearing title to these properties will allow for quicker return of these non-productive properties to the City's tax rolls, reducing the issues with non-responsive absentee landlords.

Redevelopment Approaches

It is recommended that a model block concept is adopted to strategically address small areas or individual blocks in Pratt City for phased development (Stabilization) or redevelopment (Revitalization). The Parcel Analysis and the Decision Making Matrix Tool provides the foundation for strategic decision making relative to redevelopment in Pratt City. A model block concept includes:

- Identifying opportunity sites in a neighborhood which holds the greatest promise for short term development;
- Makes a statement and becomes a model for housing in the neighborhood;
- Productive reuse of vacant lots; and
- Assists in stabilizing Pratt City by encouraging reinvestment in areas beyond the identified "Model Block" boundaries.

Selection of a model block project considers several key criteria for identification of priority areas or blocks to start a redevelopment effort; however, all criteria are not applicable to every type of neighborhood. In neighborhoods with similar characteristics as North Pratt, Central Pratt and South Pratt, the typical criteria of identifying priority areas include:

- Context – are there other similar blocks or areas in close proximity?
- Building conditions – are there just a few blighting influences or are there many vacant lots or units in disrepair or deteriorating condition? Are there units that need to be demolished?
- Community resources – how close or accessible are community amenities and resources? Is this a walkable environment or near a major transit corridor, or is transportation an issue for accessibility to community amenities?
- Owner occupancy – are there a significant number of owner occupied homes or is this a block or area with a high concentration of rental properties?
- Community and resident engagement – are the existing residents active in the community or on their blocks? Do the existing residents maintain their homes?
- Marketability – are there economic development or job opportunities nearby? Is the block or area visible and accessible to the surrounding area

Using the Parcel Analysis data and the results from the Decision Making Matrix Tool, eight (8) priority project areas have been preliminarily identified for implementation of a Stabilization and/or Redevelopment approach in North, Central and South Pratt. Overall, housing development project approaches for Pratt City should include several key elements:

- Encourage architectural sensitivity and rehab standards as part of the overall approach to both minor and major rehabilitation;
- Offer housing counseling that prepares families and individuals to transition from rental to owner-occupancy;
- Provide financial incentives that encourage investor-owners to reinvest in their property without passing the cost of reinvestment to lower income tenants;
- Link identification of code violations with financial incentives and technical assistance to encourage reinvestment;
- Develop an outreach and marketing component to be incorporated into the overall approach to encourage rehabilitation, since the rehabilitation of occupied homes are generally met with concerns of displacement and gentrification;
- Target marketing of vacant/abandoned homes to moderate/middle income homebuyers to facilitate mixed income households moving into Pratt City; and
- Implement a re-branding and marketing effort to create a more positive perception of Pratt City.

Stabilization Approach Best Practices

A Stabilization Approach is designed to provide a series of initiatives that intentionally address issues related to blight, safety and needs of existing residents with a community. Stabilization of North, Central and South Pratt will be fundamental to ensuring any redevelopment efforts are successful and minimizing any barriers that would impede future developments. Prior to implementing any plans, a strategy for stabilization must be developed. This will ensure that any future development or redevelopment is successful, and will minimize those barriers that could impede future investment in Pratt City. There were specific areas or blocks in Pratt City that have a small amount of blighting influences on otherwise stable blocks, particularly in Priority Project Areas 1, 2 and 3. In these instances, it is important to stabilize these neighborhood blocks to stop the progression of neighborhood decline. Although these were scattered sites throughout Pratt City, addressing these blighting influences represented opportunities for immediate impact.

If parcels are conveyed in an area that is targeted for a stabilization redevelopment approach, the following best practices should be applied:

- Address safety issues through strategic code enforcement;
- Targeted renovation for existing residents;
- Vacant lot temporary reuse; and
- Rental property registration

Strategic Code Enforcement

To protect the health and safety of the community, Code Enforcement should be used to enforce housing code violations where it is evident that levels of disinvestment is occurring. Areas of the neighborhood where it is trending from owner-occupied to investor-owned single family detached property should be a high priority. Conducting a Neighborhood Profile that would provide a map of occupied properties in the community that appear to be in poor, deteriorated or dilapidated condition would help in directing code enforcement resources. This information could be used to help determine the exact locations of occupied homes that may have code violations. As a means of creating an incentive for correcting code violations, it is important to initiate a Strategic Code Enforcement Program in conjunction with funding through the Community Development Department as a means of making resources available to lower income residents and investor-owners who rent to lower income residents.

Targeted Renovation for Existing Residents

Addressing existing homeowners housing needs should be a priority regardless of the development approach, particularly those of elderly residents. Providing financial incentives to existing homeowners, whether in the form of low or interest free, forgivable loans or grants, can encourage homeowners to reinvest in their properties. A successful Targeted Renovation strategy in Pratt City would use code enforcement to identify existing code violations, prepare construction/repair specifications that correct existing code violations, repair anticipated code violations, and improve the exterior conditions of impacted property to pre-approved design standards. The Community Development Department staff should work closely with code enforcement officials to provide financial assistance, most likely through the Community Development Block Grant funds. Repairs should address code violations, repair major systems in jeopardy of becoming code violations, and help stabilize targeted blocks. Since a significant portion of the homes located in Pratt City requiring minor rehabilitation are occupied by renters, a rental rehab program should also provide incentives for conversion of renters to owner-occupants, and incentives for investor-owners to reinvest in their property. However, this can be addressed in subsequent phases of a Stabilization Approach.

Temporary Uses of Vacant Lots

Vacant and abandoned properties has been characterized as a development resource rather than an obstacle to development in neighborhoods with similar characteristics as Pratt City. Once a detailed parcel assessment has been completed, the existing conditions and location of the vacant lots can be used as a means to determine which lots may be feasible for infill construction, re-purposing as side lots, or green space development. While the RISE Program is the primary mechanism for addressing vacant and abandoned properties, short term or other temporary uses should be given consideration as well. In a Stabilization Approach, returning vacant lots to productive use can also include temporary uses, such as urban farms or community gardens⁶. This is most effective when there is a Vacant Maintained or Vacant Overgrown lot next to a Sound Occupied single family home, and the lot has had a history of maintenance by a neighbor or resident on the block. In exchange for maintenance of the vacant lot, the neighbor is deeded the title to the lot.

Figure 11: Example of Vacant Lot



⁶“Temporary Urbanism: Alternative Approaches to Vacant Land, Evidence Matters, Winter 2014, <http://www.huduser.org/portal/periodicals/em/winter14>

Tactical urbanism is another mechanism for temporary use of vacant lots in a Stabilization Approach. Tactical urbanism is a deliberate approach from community members and stakeholders to solve specific problems within their communities in a short time frame and with minimal resources. It is a response to solving issues, or in response to needs, that the city has not become aware of. Tools include:

- Use of Vacant Lots - temporary community gardens, pocket parks, urban forestry, and community cleanings.
- Living Walls/Murals - can be permanent and showcase the essence of a community along a wall of a building. These can also be temporary as buildings are boarded up temporarily.
- Informal Bike Parking - increases the supply of bicycle parking where needed. It provides the community members with areas to park their bikes for a temporary period of time. These installations also indicate demand, which can be shown to transportation organizations within the city as a method to persuade them to install safer/permanent bicycle facilities.
- Weed Bombing - weed bombing is the act of converting overgrown weeds into works of street art. Unlike traditional graffiti, weed bombing doesn't damage private or public property and has immediate benefits to quality of life. Weed bombing can make overgrowth in vacant property look more like flowers. They are meant to highlight disparities in where public and private maintenance dollars are spent.
- Outdoor Living Rooms - vignettes of furniture installed in public spaces - simple wood fixtures that give physical form to the social life of the street: waiting for a bus, meeting outside a shop, waiting for the schools bus, etc. The project is an effort to modify street space for human use.

Figure 12: Examples of Tactical Urbanism



Rental Property Registration

The City must address rental property ownership in Pratt City to assist identifying problem properties, encourage landlords to address deferred maintenance, and implement good property maintenance practices. Pratt City has a number of renter occupied properties within its boundaries, many of which are in deteriorated condition. A Rental Property Registration program would require property owners to hold a business license and register all rental units within in the City of Birmingham, and does allow for random or routine inspections regardless of whether or not a property has code violations. The proposed Rental Property Registration Program should also include a mechanism for identifying single family rental properties (i.e. through utility usage) to help track down out-of-locale landlords.

As a support to those property owners who do register their properties, landlord and property management training should be provided with access to funds for property renovations upon completion of training. Other landlord incentives could include tenant screening and placement assistance, responsible renter training, funding pool that covers physical damages or other losses, and expedited eviction process to assist in removing those tenants with continued violations⁷. The City could also offer tax abatement for rental property owners to reinvest in existing properties, for investors who rent to families with incomes of 50% AMI or less. Renter incentives could also include pre-homeownership counseling similar to Habitat for Humanity programs to encourage conversion from renter to homeowner.

Revitalization Approach Best Practices

The APD-U Team understands that the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (RPCGB) has completed a long term disaster recovery and revitalization strategy for Pratt City. However, as a part of a comprehensive redevelopment initiative, the Decision Making Matrix Best Practice tools took into account both a Stabilization and Revitalization approach to redevelopment.

A Revitalization Approach looks at catalytic residential development projects that could be completed in the short term, one to three years. These sites can introduce a high impact development and are meant as models for new or renovated housing in the blocks or areas in which they are located. In the long term, model development block sites can assist in stabilizing the housing stock by encouraging reinvestment in areas beyond the boundaries of Pratt City. Best practice elements for a Revitalization Approach should include the following:

- Existing homeowner rehab program that address major systems repairs as well as minor home repairs;
- Site planning and streetscape design;
- Strategic demolition and targeted end-use;
- Crime prevention through environmental design;
- Construction and design guidelines; and
- Economic development and job creation.

In some instances, revitalization may require a more intensives and long term investment, thus a comprehensive review and application of regulatory tools will be necessary to maximize incentives to attract both private and nonprofit developers. Overlays such as a Neighborhood Improvement District or Conservation District will facilitate a framework for streetscape development, building and design guidelines, green development and even development density within the designated blocks. Although Pratt City has a number of historic structures, a Historic District is not recommended due to the stringent guidelines for design and redevelopment, and may be cost prohibitive for existing residents wanting to improve their properties, and a hindrance to maintaining affordability for the neighborhood. An alternative would be to create design guidelines that offer affordable options.

⁷ "When Vacancies Are Assets", American Planning Association, October 2014, <https://www.planning.org>

Existing Homeowner Rehab Program

Housing rehab standards and specifications are necessary to guide any rehab and renovation work in Pratt City to protect the architectural integrity of the neighborhood. This should include the preparation of detailed work-write-ups and construction specifications to provide guidance to all rehab work. The following guidelines should be followed to when providing work write ups and cost estimates for home renovations:

- When doing work write ups, put on eyes as ‘homeowner’ and not ‘developer’. It helps to see items that may be deal-breakers when trying to sell a home (i.e. light switch at each end of hall vs. only one switch in middle of hall; placement of hot water heater in utility room vs. master bedroom closet or half-bath).
- Exterior conditions should be listed first, then remaining items outlined room-by-room.
- Measured in square footage, linear footage or allowances based on line item.
- Roof and kitchen are most important. Roof write ups and cost estimates are done in allowance to account for possibility of rotten wood underneath, should also include number of shingles.
- Room-by-room is best; lump sum write ups almost always lead to cost overruns and confusion.

The use of rehab standards and specifications, incorporated into an overlay designation, for all renovations should also be addressed as part of any work on a home.

Strategic Demolition and Reuse Plan

While temporary and short term uses of vacant lots will provide immediate improvement to the aesthetics of a block or area, these uses must be evaluated in the context of a Revitalization approach. There is currently no demolition strategy for the City of Birmingham, and no standardized guidelines on how properties are selected for demolition. Defined demolition guidelines and standards need to be established, (i.e. a demolition scope of work for each property targeted for demolition and potential lot reuse), that would bring the demolished lot to the highest standard possible. Considerations of end use should include:

- Maintained as side lot or garden by neighbor?
- Community garden or urban farm?
- How much will it cost the City to maintain and are there resources available for this?
- Is the property located in a place that would be conducive to future redevelopment?
- Is green space or other community use an option?

Public Works and the Community Development Department should develop a strategic demolition process designed to complement each specific development approach. Demolition of blighted structures can not only positively change the appearance of a neighborhood; it has the potential to eradicate centers of crime and possibilities for arson. Properties that are recently demolished should be graded and seeded, and sidewalks replaced if they were there previously. Properties can be deemed eligible for demolition if they meet certain criteria. For example, criteria could include physical conditions of the properties, market conditions and local input. Engaging the residents of the three Pratt City neighborhoods prior to any demolition is key to gaining community buy-in for any future redevelopment project. If the residents are not involved in the decision making process, the opportunity for negative criticism is very high, resulting in a lack of community support for redevelopment projects. If market conditions are weak, lots that are vacant as a result of demolition could be use as green spaces, side lots, or temporary uses such as outdoor living rooms, urban farms or community gardens (see Tactical Urbanism above). Temporary uses of vacant lots also promote community engagement.⁸

In other instances, more long term use of key vacant parcels is evident, and this must be considered when determining temporary or short term reuse of vacant lots. If viewed from this perspective, it helps guide the selection of the location of the community gardens so that it is not in the path of a development project that may be occurring in the short term. Stormwater management uses have also become more popular in urban redevelopment. Drainage improvements to accommodate runoff may be necessary to reduce any impediments to development and make areas within Pratt City, particularly in South Pratt, more attractive. Stormwater management can reduce or eliminate flooding from runoff or sedimentation, reduce or eliminate standing water and recycle rainwater. Permeable pavement, rain barrels, curbs and gutter elimination, inlet protection devices, and xeriscaping are examples of low impact development techniques used in urban settings.

Green infrastructure can also be viewed as neighborhood amenities. Residential rain gardens, tree box filters, stormwater planters and vegetated filter strips are all examples of use of green infrastructure and stormwater management practices in neighborhood revitalization. Gateway markers can also be created on key vacant lots that are entryways into neighborhoods. Identifiable gateway markers should incorporate signage, landscape elements, pedestrian amenities and green infrastructure elements. In selecting parcels for development of green space, a predetermined set of criteria must be examined including but not limited to location/proximity to potential users, context and length of proposed use, regulatory requirements, and cost for development and maintenance.

Regardless of the end use of a recently demolished property, a well planned demolition and reuse program can reduce the problematic vacant properties and improve aesthetics of the Pratt City neighborhoods.

Figure 13: Example of Curbside Rain Garden

curbside rain garden



⁸ "Evidence Matters: Vacant and Abandoned Properties: Turning Liabilities into Assets", Winter 2014, <http://www.huduser.org/portal/periodicals/em/winter14/index.html>

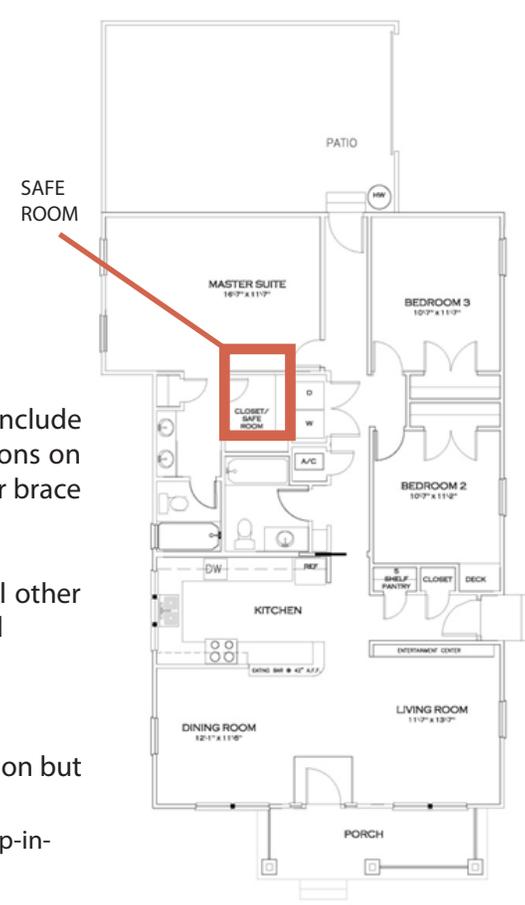
Construction and Design Guidelines

The current City Building Code requires protection from wind loads of 90 miles per hour, yet the EF4 tornado that hit Pratt City in 2011 had wind speeds between 166 to 200 miles per hour. The 90MPH wind load is the standard building code for most of the country as stated in the International Residential Code. While the new infill NSP homes built on Hibernian have storm shelters and some tornado resistance features, it is not a requirement for new infill or renovated homes. With the frequency of high intensity tornadoes/storms that have hit Birmingham over the years, the following revisions to the existing building code are recommended, at least to the Pratt City rebuilding efforts. The revisions would increase the wind load resistance from the existing 90 miles per hour to 135 miles per hour. After a series of devastating tornadoes, the City of Moore OK became the first city to revise its building codes to require tornado/hurricane resistance building techniques and features⁹.

Construction Methodology

- An alternative construction technique that offers protection from 200 mile per hour wind loads is ICF (Insulating Concrete Forms) modular construction. This approach consists of stacking Styrofoam modular units to form a wall. The wall is then filled with concrete with all roof tie downs embedded in the concrete wall. The entire house can be built with this technique or just the interior Safe Room. Cost of construction is between 2% to 8% higher than standard frame construction depending on local market.
- Recommendations to introduce tornado/hurricane resistant construction techniques in frame construction:
 - In foundation 5/8" bolt for Simpson HD3B anchor at corners and two story framing
 - Strap floor-to-floor with Simpson LST149 to resist 2200#
 - 2x6 studs at 16" o.c. balloon frame at stair wall
 - Install H10-2 Simpson hurricane clips at each end of each rafter
 - Strap each side of each opening with Simpson LSTA9 to resist 450#
 - Strap floor to floor at corners with LSTA21
 - Wind resistant windows and/or storm shutters
 - Roof sheathing (OSB or plywood) shall be nailed at 4" o.c. at edges and 6" o.c. in the field. Dimensional decking is not allowed
 - Maximum spacing for roof framing shall be 16" o.c.
 - Connections for roof framing shall be designed for both compression and tension and may include nail plates or steel connection plates. Connections for roof framing shall include connections on rafters, web members, purlins, kickers, bracing connections, and the connections to interior brace wall top plates or ceiling joists
 - Gable end walls shall be tied to the structure with steel straps or plates at top and bottom
 - Structural sheathing panels (OSB or plywood) shall be required for gable end walls and all other walls. Nailing pattern shall be 8d or 10d nails on 4" o.c. along the edges and 6" o.c. in the field
 - The upper and lower story wall sheathing shall be nailed to the common rim board
 - Garage doors shall be rated to withstand 135 mph wind or above
 - No form of intermittent bracing shall be allowed on an outer wall
 - Structural Insulated Panels (SIPs) could be considered an alternative to stick-built construction but additional research is needed

Figure 14: Example of Floorplan with safe room



⁹“Moore Ok Takes Historic Step in Bolstering Homes”, <http://newsok.com/moore-city-council-takes-historic-step-in-bolstering-homes/article/3944338>

Proposed Initial Design Standards

The following building design elements are recommended based on the interest in establishing a framework for what new buildings would look like in Pratt City, and the overall goal of retaining existing residents and attracting new families to the neighborhoods:

- All structures to have a Safe Room (frame: reinforced room with 4x4s at 16" o.c., cont. 20 gauge steel sheathing with ¾ plywood wall or ICF construction) on the interior
- Recommend construction of detached garages
- Energy Star version 3.5 construction techniques
- New homes designed for a 40' x 100' lot
- Elevated slab construction
- Craftsman Bungalow as an architectural style which was prominent in Alabama during 1900 to 1925

Figure 15: Sample Front Elevation, 10th St



Potential names for new home models should reinforce the history and culture of the neighborhoods. Examples include The Rayfield, The Poe, The Brown, The Scott, The Fayette.

Overlays and Special Districts

Overlays can serve neighborhoods similar to Pratt City in a number of ways. While design guidelines have the ability to protect historically significant architectural features, overlays or special districts also have the capacity to restore and reinforce the character of a community by defining code enforcement guidelines as well. For instance, the guidelines could require that rental properties be inspected each time a new lease is created or new tenant moves into the property, further reinforcing the Rental Property Registration. By combining design and code enforcement guidelines into an overlay or special district, Pratt City will not only deter additional housing deterioration and influence quality improvements to the existing housing stock, but this will ensure that any new development enhances the existing fabric of the neighborhood. As Pratt City continues to rebuild, bringing new families and economic development into the community, an overlay will be crucial to protecting the unique cultural and historic character of each neighborhood¹⁰. A recommended overlay is one that combines elements of conservation, as well as code enforcement and design guidelines for each one of the neighborhoods. The combination of these features will protect Pratt City neighborhoods from further deterioration as well as protect the unique character of each of the three neighborhoods.

Development Guidelines

Development guidelines can be a regulatory tool for providing development oversight and guidance in rebuilding efforts in Pratt City. Development guidelines would be most efficient as a part of an overlay or special district, but can also be implemented as a part of land bank disposition policies. They can also be stand-alone established guidelines to be enforced through an approved development process applicable to disinvested communities such as Pratt City. New single family infill should follow the existing development pattern of the neighborhood (front yard setbacks, side yard setbacks, minimum/maximum lot size), multifamily uses should meet the need for affordable housing, and allow for new construction of duplexes. Duplexes can be an option to create homeownership opportunities on one side, while providing for affordable rental options for low to moderate income tenants on the other side. Development guidelines should be explored as a regulatory tool to preserve the historical and cultural assets of Pratt City. A Pattern Book/Design Guidelines Manual would serve as a guide for existing and new development and will create a vibrant, safe and walkable neighborhood while developing a sense of place and continuity with the history and culture of Pratt City. A Pattern Book/Design Guidelines can be utilized in both a stabilization and revitalization approach. A Pattern Book for Pratt City redevelopment should address:

¹⁰ "Rebuilding the Pratt Community", AIA Communities by Design, October 2011

- Infill development – sensitive to contextual scale and massing
- Redevelopment - as appropriate for neighborhood stabilization and economic growth.
- Scale/Massing - appropriate to context and location
- Building Placement/Setbacks – should respect the existing setbacks yet provide some consistency on any given street or block
- Green Space/Landscaping – indicate areas that can be used for recreational activity and areas where development should not occur because of site constraints
- Architectural Detail - detail at the pedestrian level is necessary to provide a visually appealing experience. There are types of architectural differences throughout the neighborhood that should be preserved
- Sustainability - use best practices to reduce environmental impacts and operating costs

Economic Development and Job Creation

Without needed resources and support, the community cannot achieve the desired levels of education and employment necessary to boost the potential for growth in the neighborhoods. The Pratt City neighborhoods have experienced depopulation, private disinvestment, escalating crime and other social ills for over a decade, more severely in the last three years due to the EF4 tornado. In order to reverse this decline, there is a need for supportive services that provide opportunities to increase education and skill sets for residents to overcome the economic challenges that are deterrents to personal and professional growth.

The revitalization that is occurring in downtown Birmingham could have significant impact on the neighborhoods that surround downtown, including Pratt City. City officials recognize this connection and have begun a process of assessing neighborhood conditions (Framework Plans) and designing strategies that will improve existing infrastructure, housing conditions, and the overall quality of life¹¹. While each of the neighborhood revitalization components are important, achieving economic development gains within Pratt City is equally as important.

A neighborhood economic development strategy for Pratt City should work to fill gaps in the delivery of products and services. Those specific products and services can be identified through completion of a detailed market analysis for the neighborhoods. Regardless of the initiative, each initiative should feature the following characteristics:

- Market driven plan of action;
- Strategy designed to foster a proactive business community;
- Efficient use of tools, resources, and incentives; and
- Method of communicating market opportunities to existing business and new businesses.

For these reasons, a Pratt City Neighborhood Economic Development Program should include four primary components: Land Use, Planning and Design, Business Community Engagement and Support, and Neighborhood.

¹¹ City of Birmingham Comprehensive Master Plan, 2012

Table 13: Economic Development Strategies

Component	Application	Recommendation
Land Use Planning and Design	Creation of business district vision/plan to guide development opportunity areas	Establish business district zoning, development criteria and building design criteria to use in priority project area business districts and commercial nodes. Community feedback needed.
Business Community Engagement and Support	Provide consistent vision and marketing theme for neighborhood businesses	City of Birmingham to provide Pratt City with assistance to organize businesses along key retail and commercial corridors and to organize Business Improvement Districts or Neighborhood Business Districts.
Business District Development	Assist small business owners with accessing plans and funding for development of business district	Retain a neighborhood business development consultant to organize business owners, determine their business improvement interest, and identify funding opportunities to fund development plans, market studies, and business improvements.
Business Retention and Attraction	Residents will have different expectations regarding types of goods and services they prefer	Retain professional services with expertise in working with property owners and business owners to promote commercial space and market opportunities consistent with the growth and development of the target neighborhoods.

CONCLUSION

The City of Birmingham has taken on the difficult task of rebuilding an entire city after multiple natural disasters and years of disinvestment and population loss. Pratt City has had some reinvestment within the last several years through CDBG Disaster Recovery funds and other entitlement funded programs, but an aggressive strategy is needed to address the long term vacant and abandoned properties issue.

The goal of this report was to:

- Document existing conditions in Pratt City;
- Assess the residential market and affordability;
- Review best practices and strategies to reclaim vacant and abandoned properties; and
- Recommend strategies for the conveyance and disposition of vacant properties that takes into consideration market potential and how this information can be used to guide reinvestment initiatives designed to stabilize neighborhoods and act as catalyst to stimulate neighborhood revitalization project areas.

Many cities, including Birmingham, Alabama are now adopting Land Banking state enabled land banking legislation. One of the most important features of land banks is their ability to accelerate foreclosing on back taxes and liens on property that can result in an ownership change. This is a key component of land bank legislation because it provides a mechanism to bring property into the Land Bank and use the inherent powers of the land bank legislation to clear title encumbrances and convey property with good and marketable title. Unfortunately, many cities with expanding inventories of vacant lots and abandoned housing, similar to Birmingham, do not have conveyance policies and procedures designed to encourage the re-use of these properties in a manner that will stabilize neighborhoods or stimulate neighborhood reinvestment.

The report achieved this goal which sets the stage for the City of Birmingham and the Pratt City community to strategically address the disposition of vacant and abandoned properties in Pratt City. The Best Practice tools that were presented assisted in crafting redevelopment approaches that will ensure existing residents have an opportunity to receive vacant lots through the City's RISE Program. The process of conveying vacant lots to existing residents will improve and help stabilize neighborhoods by conveying property to responsible residents who are committed to maintaining the property. In other portions of the neighborhood where vacant and abandoned properties are more pervasive, this report details a process to determine locations within a neighborhood where the assemblage of vacant and abandoned property can be use as part of a catalytic model block redevelopment initiative. The recommendations included in this report provide a framework for how strategic disposition, stabilization and revitalization can occur, and sets out a roadmap for improving quality of life and developing short range catalytic projects that will serve as the foundation for long term reinvestment. The recommendations should be utilized in such a manner that benefits the community and improves the environment by building on Pratt City's historic and cultural assets and strengths.