

Draft

**REVITALIZING WEST REHOBOTH**  
**An Economic Development and Community Revitalization**  
**Plan For An Historically Black Neighborhood in the Center of**  
**Coastal Sussex County**



**WEST SIDE NEW BEGINNINGS, INC.**  
**WEST SIDE NEW BEGINNINGS COALITION**  
**And the**  
**WEST REHOBOTH COMMUNITY LAND TRUST**  
**Rehoboth Beach, Delaware**  
**January 14, 2009**

# **REVITALIZING WEST REHOBOTH**

## **An Economic Development & Community Revitalization Plan For An Historically Black Neighborhood In The Center Of Coastal Delaware**

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### **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The *Revitalizing West Rehoboth* plan has been prepared for the West Rehoboth Community Land Trust and the West Side New Beginnings Coalition by David G. Nutter, AICP, and Ellen Nutter, Principals of Nutter Associates, Community Planners and Development Professionals, of Salisbury, Maryland. Charles Adler of Geographic Intelligence Services of Easton, Maryland served as a sub-consultant to Nutter Associates for computerized mapping. Funding for the work of Nutter Associates was provided to the West Rehoboth Community Land Trust by the Catholic Campaign for Human Development of Washington D.C. and Wilmington, DE. The Community Foundation of the Eastern Shore, of Salisbury, MD, kindly offered its Nonprofit Support Center for access to the national Foundation Center database.

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The analysis, views, principles and recommendations of the plan are the responsibility of Nutter Associates, Community Planners and Development Professionals.

Respectfully submitted,

*David G. Nutter, AICP*

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## CHAPTER 1 - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### PURPOSE AND VISION OF THE REVITALIZATION PLAN

*Revitalizing West Rehoboth* is a guideline for action to preserve the excellent character of West Rehoboth and restore it to its best conditions, beginning now. The plan is centered on a community vision:

“West Rehoboth is an historic and urban African American neighborhood in the heart of coastal Sussex County. With pride and determination, it desires to treasure its past, preserve its best character, provide new affordable housing, create a clean and healthy environment, foster economic development for jobs and growth and provide a bright future for its residents.”

It is intended as a blueprint for West Rehoboth actions to be taken by its leaders, West Side New Beginnings, Inc., (WSNB), the West Rehoboth Community Land Trust, Inc. (WR CLT) and the West Side New Beginnings Coalition (WSNBC), which includes the Coalition for Tolerance and Justice of Sussex County, Inc., the Lewes-Rehoboth Association of Churches (LRAC) and the Citizens Committee for West Rehoboth. It is based on the participation of residents, owners and volunteers. It builds on neighborhood values, prior accomplishments and history.

As pictured in the Vision Sketch, the plan focuses on:

- ❑ Improving the predominantly residential, single-family, low-density personality of the neighborhood,
- ❑ Identifying the worst housing conditions, those along Central Avenue and in “The Bottom” on Norwood Street, both of which badly need redevelopment,
- ❑ Allowing limited higher density and commercial uses in the form of convenience retail, including a laundromat and store, service uses and two-family homes,
- ❑ Connecting the Junction & Breakwater Trail through the neighborhood along Historic Hebron Road,
- ❑ Revitalizing Historic Hebron Road as the “Main Street” of West Rehoboth,
- ❑ Having “Gateway” projects with small units of retail and service development at both ends of Historic Hebron Road,
- ❑ Making new gardens, tree plantings, greenspaces and an interconnected neighborhood trail,
- ❑ Expanding the vital West Side New Beginnings Community Center, with an expanded building and a new Community Square and playground on Hebron Road,
- ❑ Replacing deteriorated homes with new and improved affordable homes, and
- ❑ Connecting West Rehoboth and the City of Rehoboth Beach through a new “Brick Road” to the Canal and beyond.

### THE CHARACTER OF WEST REHOBOTH

West Rehoboth is a predominantly residential, single-family, low-density neighborhood

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consistent with its roots. It is a story of courageous people since the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As free blacks searched for new homes, parcels of land were purchased along the country highway that is now Route 1. Mt. Pleasant UM Church is now over one hundred years old. The Old Clement DuPont West Rehoboth School still stands on Oyster House Lane. A Quaker, Charles Mills, turned part of his farm into the West Rehoboth subdivision in 1941. So they could have “lots of their own”, he sold lots to black neighbors for \$70.00 apiece. By 1968 the neighborhood was green and developed, with a dozen local businesses. The “Brick Road” is an important, almost legendary, piece of West Rehoboth’s history. It connected this special neighborhood to Rehoboth Avenue, the Lewes-Rehoboth Canal and downtown Rehoboth Beach.

## EXISTING NEIGHBORHOOD CONDITIONS

Within the 37-acre study area, population, streets and parcels, existing land use, current Sussex County zoning, property ownership patterns and property conditions have been surveyed on a parcel-by-parcel basis. Land prices, utilities and socio-economic conditions have been studied. The need for redevelopment with a community purpose is strong. West Rehoboth has difficult social and economic problems, with needs for economic development and social services. It has been threatened by the run-up in speculative land value during the boom years.

## THE PLAN: ACTION PROJECTS AND POLICIES

Built on the priorities of the 3 organizations, the action projects and policies of the Revitalization Plan include: (1) a new annual CDBG initiative with Sussex County, (2) 7 action projects: (a) to expand the West Side New Beginnings Center and build a new Community Square and playground, (b) new homes on Burton Avenue, (c) a Habitat for Humanity new homes project in the Central Avenue area, (d) a North Hebron Neighborhood Retail Center, (e) a Neighborhood Open Space and Connected Trail greening project, (f) a Hebron Road Junction and Breakwater Trail and Streetscape plan and (g) a West Side Mixed-use Village project in the area of “The Bottom”, and (3) policies for zoning change, the best types of housing, keeping density low, serving the elderly and making land acquisition affordable. Future annexation into Rehoboth Beach should be considered.

## IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

A timeline of implementation steps is specified, beginning now. Immediate (2009), short (2010-14) and mid-to-long term (2015-2019) timeframes, organizational responsibilities and rough cost estimates are provided. Two key steps are to employ a community organizer and to conduct a one-year campaign for continuing operating funds and seed capital for a revolving fund for land acquisition & related expenses.

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## CHAPTER 2 - THE CHARACTER OF WEST REHOBOTH

### “Room Enough”

“ ‘Rehoboth’ is a word with biblical connections. As Job searched for his new turf, he led his flock of followers to a place where they would be safe, where everyone could live, where there would be room enough. That is what ‘Rehoboth’ means: ‘room enough’.”

- From *West of Rehoboth – A Novel*, by Alexis D. Pate, page 30

The purpose of the plan is to preserve the character of West Rehoboth and not let the community be lost, either in reality or memory, making a bright future for its residents. “Character” is defined as a special mix of the human memories and social and physical characteristics within a neighborhood that set it apart from other neighborhoods and contributes to its individuality. West Rehoboth has always had a special character. It cannot be replaced at any other location.

Community includes both the physical neighborhood and the people. Character the unique essence meant to be preserved and brightened. Partly it is history and partly it is spirit. It is why the motto of the west Rehoboth Community Land Trust is “We shall not be moved”.

### Treasuring the Brick Road

There was once a special, perhaps even magical, road in West Rehoboth. It was called the Brick Road. It connected this people, separated by segregation, within this place, to the larger surrounding world, that of Rehoboth Avenue and the City of Rehoboth Beach. It never did have any bricks, but that is not important. It followed the even older right-of-way of the Junction and Breakwater Railroad to Henlopen Station. It symbolized the relationship to the outside world, and hope. It is physically gone now, except for a few traces among the trees, but it is a treasured memory for many.

In a way, the Brick Road signifies the character of West Rehoboth, the story of its people and place. So, in some ways, treasuring the Brick Road means preserving West Rehoboth, building on its tradition and revitalizing its human best.

Here is what life-long resident and neighborhood leader Brenda Milbourne said about the Brick Road in her Oral History of the neighborhood:

“We can still think of the brick road, the brick road of where people lived at, black folks lived at. The brick road was beside a store where white people lived at and the brick road is right out on the highway right now where the Icehouse is located, the package store. That used to be called the brick road where black folks lived.

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Yes, it's now where the liquor store is, at that liquor store. Mr. Malloy was a black owner, he had hotels, where people came up from Florida lived in and then he had places for people to live. They worked at the clam house. Right out where the car wash is and the new condos are, that used to be called the freezing plant. Mr. Walt Lehman used to have a factory there and black folks used to work there. Then a big storm came in West Rehoboth and Downtown. It was in the late 60's. It blew the people off of the oyster house because they lost their homes, the boardwalk was all tore up. Those people moved here in West Rehoboth causing our population to grow bigger. So we then grew bigger and we had good people, bad people, and different people."

- From the *Oral History of Mrs. Brenda Milbourne*, September 17, 2007, Rehoboth Beach Historical Society, Mrs. Violet J. Chilcoat, Interviewer, Page 5

This is how the noted author and novelist Alex D. Pates, himself a member of the extended family of West Rehoboth, put it in his novel *West of Rehoboth*:

"Rufus now walked through the wooded area between downtown Rehoboth Beach and West Rehoboth. As he broke through the wooded area and left the tracks behind him, he turned up the road to his left. He passed houses constructed of shattered, rotting trees and tar paper, as children played in the yards, kicking up sand as they ran. . . In the yards of these poor black folk were chickens and chicks pecking in wonder at the ground, searching for their meager portions."

- From *West of Rehoboth – A Novel*, by Alex D. Pate, page 225

West Rehoboth is an historic black settlement that took shape on the western outskirts of Rehoboth Beach. In order to understand its character, one thing we need to do is to appreciate its history. To do that, conversations were held with two residents who have lived and breathed West Rehoboth in their lives, Savannah Hall Blackwell and Brenda Milbourne. Ms. Blackwell is compiling historic documents for a history of the neighborhood. Ms. Milbourne has served the community steadfastly as Director of Adult and Youth Programs at the West Side New Beginnings Center.

Both were born in the community and have experienced it in their lives. A third outstanding resource has been the novel by Alex D. Pate, who also wrote *Amistad – A Novel*. As a boy from Philadelphia, he visited his aunt in West Rehoboth in the summers of the 1960's. *West of Rehoboth* is filled with the taste and spirit of the neighborhood at that time.

The Delaware Public Archives also provided invaluable historic photographs of Mt. Pleasant United Methodist Church and cemetery, early schools, roads, railroads and aerial photos from 1938 and 1968 and of the neighboring Lewes and Rehoboth Canal.

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## **Emancipation**

The history of West Rehoboth began in the post Civil War 19<sup>th</sup> century as freed blacks, emancipated in Delaware by the Fourteenth Amendment, began to resettle into new areas of their own. In the case of Rehoboth, the new area was the earlier country road that became Route 1 as it approached the little village of Rehoboth Beach, then a summer camp for Methodist Sunday School teachers.

The earliest land records found by Mrs. Savannah Hall Blackwell in her history project date back to a land sale to an African American in 1837. Gradually, purchases were made of farmland and commercial property, all accessed from the country highway. Ms. Blackwell has discovered property records throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many involving her own family. Ms. Blackwell owns an annotated family bible dating back to the 1830's. She is finding official records of African American beginnings in West Rehoboth throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

## **Mt. Pleasant United Methodist Church**

The oldest church in West Rehoboth is Mt. Pleasant United Methodist on Church Street, which recently celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Its history, included in *African American Churches In Sussex County*, says that “. . . the idea of a church building for the black community of Rehoboth Beach was conceived well over one hundred years ago. But Elijah Burton with trustees Henry Little and Thomas Harmon of the Burton's Chapel Methodist Episcopal Church sought to improve and enlarge the church. Elijah Burton deeded (a one acre) plot of land ‘ . . . in trust for the said church and their successors in office forever . . . ’ The original deed, dated August 22, 1884, states in detail the land that Elijah Burton gave the church.’ It appears from the Delaware Public Archives photograph of the Mt. Pleasant Cemetery that it was located west of the church, within the present right-of-way of Canal Crossing Road.

## **Farmland and Railroad**

The 1938 Aerial Photograph shows the West Rehoboth site one hundred years after the 1837 purchase. The country highway is evolving toward today's busy Route 1. The open farmland that was soon to become the West Rehoboth subdivision is being readied for plowing. Hebron Road has been built but not paved. It dead-ends at the old railroad tracks. Numerous farmhouses and outbuildings are located along the east side of Hebron Road.

Southern Delaware's earliest railroad, the Junction & Breakwater, had been extended from Lewes to Rehoboth in 1878. In the photograph, it passes just north of the farmland that became West Rehoboth. Where Central Avenue is now located, there is a junction. One arm continues across the canal into Rehoboth Beach. The other turns south to Henlopen Station. One siding serves the Cannery just to the southwest.

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In that era, black families lived in both substantial and humble one-room homes throughout this area, inhabited by both blacks and whites. There were African American owned homes, stores, restaurants and churches. As Jim Crow laws tightened, blacks settled into clusters like “Rabbit Nip” on old Savannah Lake, now bisected by the extension of the Lewes-Rehoboth Canal, “Washington Heights” where Burton Village and the Sussex County YMCA are located, and “Possum’s Hollow” and “Tar Paper City” by the Cannery on the canal.

## **Charles Mills, A Quaker**

West Rehoboth in its founding was a deliberate act of caring by an enlightened man who created the Shockley Subdivision, east of Hebron Road, and the West Rehoboth subdivision, west of Hebron, in order provide “lots of their own” to African American residents. Mr. Mills named the streets for leading residents.

“Charles Mills, a Quaker, came to Rehoboth after World War II to manage a cannery. He bought land in the area and eventually became a successful farmer. Bothered by the inequities created by Jim Crow laws, Mr. Mills subdivided one of his farms and created West Rehoboth. The first residents of Mr. Mills’ 50’ x 175’ parcels were the families of the cannery workers and the men and women who worked in the restaurants and hotels in the growing resort town of Rehoboth - the same men and women, who were forbidden to live, eat or shop there.

Charles Mills gave African American residents of Sussex County a chance to own their own land and build homes for their children and grandchildren. Today, the West Rehoboth Community Land Trust is working to help the residents of West Rehoboth save and revitalize their community with the help of affordable housing and economic development.”

- West Rehoboth Community Land Trust

## **Early Growth of the Neighborhood**

Many of the men to whom “Charlie” Mills sold his lots worked on his farm or in the cannery he managed. Johnnie Cannon, speaking to *The Coastal Press* in 2004, said:

“In 1945, I got out of the Army, and Mr. Charlie Mills was selling land. Before this, this land was all string beans. It was farmland. I bought two plots of land from Mr. Mills in 1945. For a lot of 50-by-175 (feet”, I paid \$100. The next one was \$10 cheaper. . . He told me that if I wanted the rest of them all the way down, that I could have them for \$70 a lot.”

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## Churches

As West Rehoboth grew, other churches joined Mt. Pleasant. Today, Holy Ghost and Fire Healing and Deliverance Ministries is located on the west side of Hebron Road. Behind it on Norwood Street is the Soul Saving Station Deliverance Church of the Apostolic Faith. Both were built within the West Rehoboth Subdivision after the 1940's. Holy Ghost is the newest of the three churches.

## 1968 Aerial

The 1968 Aerial Photograph shows the neighborhood as it had developed by the time that Ales D. Pate wrote his novel *West of Rehoboth*. The railroad is now weakened in the age of trucking, starting to close down, but parts of it are still there, and its old right-of-ways are still major features in the landscape.

## The Greening of West Rehoboth

Study of the 1968 Aerial shows how green West Rehoboth became 20 years after its creation. The impression is one of green streets, green yards, many trees and informal open spaces and trails.

## “What Did We Do As Little Children?”

Mrs. Milbourne tells us about West Rehoboth at this time:

“Let me tell you a story about this lady named Miss Bernice Polite. She would have a little club for us and she named it the Flower Garden Club. What did we do as little children? We went around to the elder homes like Miss Ethel Fields, Miss Mamie, different homes and we planted flowers in their gardens around their houses and we kept their yards clean. My mother and Miss Bernice Polite and Miss Mamie and Miss Ethel, the building that's right in front of me, that's closed now, used to be called the 400 Social Club. These ladies would have big dances, big bands come from Virginia, they would dress up in their black and white dresses and have social dances. That was the thing here, the jazz and the blues, bands would come.”

- From the *Oral History of Mrs. Brenda Milbourne*, op. cit., Page 2

## “Everything Was Blooming”

“Everything was blooming, everything, everything was just beautiful back here everybody was a family. It was just like people came from Florida, instead of going back, some would stay. We had our own beautician, a lady to do hair, Miss Bell Lane. We had Miss Vergie Friend who was a taxicab lady. We had Miss Edna Null, who had a store where we could go and buy bread and

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bleach and candy and cookies. She cooked dinners for people to buy. I mean, we really didn't have to leave out of our community for anything cause back there in those times people sewed their children's clothes. What they wore or they were just hand-me-downs, where they worked for the white folks and the white folks children you know those are the kinds of clothes that we wore. We did not know we were poor until we integrated. It was something different, integration really changed the world, not only in West Rehoboth, it broke down barriers for some and for some it was harmful."

- From the *Oral History of Mrs. Brenda Milbourne*, op. cit., Page 5

## The Brick Road

After the demise of the railroad and its Henlopen Station branch, neighborhood residents used part of its vacant right-of-way east of Central Avenue as "the Brick Road", a walking path connecting West Rehoboth with the Lewes-Rehoboth Canal, Rehoboth Avenue and the City of Rehoboth Beach beyond. West Rehoboth was separated from Rehoboth Beach by both the old railroad alignment and the Lewes-Rehoboth Canal. The Brick Road, which was paved in brick only in imagination, became a daily part of neighborhood experience, and a legend.

## Informal Open Spaces

In that time, informal open space served West Rehoboth as it did most American neighborhoods. Families gathered at the cul-de-sac ends of streets so they could sit and talk, eat good food and watch children safely play. The liveliest example of this today is the end of Duffy Street.

## Desegregation Comes

The two West Rehoboth subdivisions grew to a population estimated as high as 250 persons by 1994. Residents satisfied many of their needs in the neighborhood, leading to the growth of local businesses. The neighborhood overall, with a single entrance via Hebron Road, was a set of cul-de-sac streets, each of which ended in farmland and forest on the north and west. Children played in the forest and fished from a dock on the canal.

There were a dozen or more local businesses. One of the most remembered is **Miss Edna's Restaurant**, dance floor and rental cabins on the south side of Burton Avenue, across from today's West Side New Beginnings Center.

Alexs D. Pate, the author of *Amistad – A Novel* and *West Rehoboth – A Novel*, wrote about Miss Edna's place and the riskier Do Drop Inn just a short walk away at the corner of Hebron and Burton Avenue:

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“Inside, there was a large dining area with ten small tables which doubled as a restaurant and later, at night, as a dance floor. Edna had extended the back room to accommodate three full-size pool tables. Nearly everybody in West Rehoboth came to Edna’s for something. A Log Cabin candy bar, a barbeque sandwich, a game of pool, a night out dancing. If they wanted to have fun in a safe place, Edna had a corner on the market. The only other option for black folks was the Do Drop Inn – and there was considerable risk in simply walking through the Do Drop’s doors.”

- From *West of Rehoboth – A Novel*, by Alexs D. Pate, Page 34

Other locally owned businesses in or around the neighborhood included:

- ❑ The **Do Drop Inn** opened in the early 1950’s and thrived until the late 1980’s.
- ❑ **The 400 Social Club** (est. 1965) owned by the Masons, at Burton Avenue and Duffy Street, where bands from Virginia played. It’s building still stands but is vacant. There is talk of opening a Soul Food Restaurant in the 400 Building,
- ❑ **Juanita James’ Store** on Central Avenue (est. 1960’s), which catered to young people.
- ❑ **Rose Brittingham’s Store** on Norwood Street (est. 1970’s),
- ❑ **Malloy’s Motel** and bungalows on Malloy Street,
- ❑ **The Wayside Inn and Elephant Hotel** in nearby Washington Heights, run by the Allen family,
- ❑ **The Chicken Shack** on Oyster House Road and Route 1,
- ❑ **Jim Waples’ Store** on Route 1,
- ❑ **Ms. Mary Jackson, Midwife**, on Rehoboth Avenue,
- ❑ **Bell Lane’s Beauty Parlor** on Oyster House Lane,
- ❑ **Jimmy’s Store and Bob Ayers’ Barber Shop** on Oyster House Lane,
- ❑ **The T & I Motel** on the vacant Norwood Street lot north of the Center;
- ❑ **Showell’s Motel** with 14 rooms on Norwood Street, and
- ❑ **Charlie Burton’s House Moving** business on the east side of Hebron Road.

The American Legion was located next to today’s intersection of the Junction and Breakwater Trail with Hebron Road. The historic Clement DuPont School was built on Church Street and later moved to Oyster House Road and Route 1 where it still stands.

## Work

Jobs came from local business and the needs of the larger Rehoboth Beach area.

“Every black person who resided in Rehoboth, was visiting, or just passing through could get a job in the summer months. Indeed, the Rehoboth seashore drew folks from all around: Baltimore, New York, Wilmington, New Jersey, Atlanta, Washington. Black people searching for money, for the feeling of gainfulness. The juke-box sway that permeated West Rehoboth. The brush-scrubbed ruby faces of white people who wanted luxury, holiday, and would pay a colored person to watch their children, cook their food, wait tables, mow lawns, anything. There

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was so much work there. And it wasn't restricted only to adults. Many children began work at eleven. By fourteen, a kid could have developed a long-term relationship with a particular summer employer that would last until they died or decided not to return to Rehoboth for the vacation season."

- From *West of Rehoboth – A Novel*, by Alexs D. Pate, Page 49

## **"Remanded to the Western Province"**

"The folks of West Rehoboth were crab catchers, clam shuckers, dishwashers, waitresses, maids and lawn mowers. They provided the human arms which kept the Rockwellian town bristling clean . . . And when they were done with their chores in Rehoboth Beach, they were remanded to the western province."

- From *West of Rehoboth – A Novel*, by Alexs D. Pate, Page 49

Swimming was available only at the segregated Crow's Nest Beach, 100 feet of beachfront next to the Henlopen Hotel.

In the 1970's Sussex County instituted a zoning ordinance and map. The area west of Hebron was made R1 Residential. The area east of Hebron was designated as C1 Commercial. C1 allowed for mobile homes.

During the 1980's and 1990's, the neighborhood experienced growing problems due to the increase in drug traffic. Drug trade and use in the neighborhood, crime, deterioration, vacancy, purchases of lots by outside parties, and defective titles grew as they did in many other places.

## **Flower Power – "Life Changed Back Here"**

"Yes. We had flower power, then after our little bellbottoms. I don't know, I think in the early '80s life changed back here. Drugs and kids changed, it was just different, like a cloud had come down and when it lifted back up West Rehoboth had changed. Shootings, drugs, it was just something different. The old timers that had kept our community together, some of them had died on, some of them are still living but some of them have reached of age. Some people, like Miss Minnie Smith, you know who tried very hard to keep our community together, Miss Minnie Smith taught school in the Lewes area, who still now continues to work with us at the West Side New Beginnings Building."

- From the *Oral History of Mrs. Brenda Milbourne*, op. cit., Page 7

The West Side New Beginnings Center was built in 1990 with help from the First State Community Action Agency. West Side New Beginnings, Inc., was organized as a 501©(3)

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charitable organization to own and operate the center as a place for After School Children and Adult Education programs as well as neighborhood meetings.

## **The 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

The first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century brought several changes.

The connection of Hebron Road to the new DelDOT Service Road along Routes 1 and 1A, and its extension in the north to connect with Canal Crossing Road and Holland Glade has completely changed the accessibility of West Rehoboth. The new suburbs of Canal Corkran and The Glades are growing rapidly to the north with expensive single-family homes, townhouses and condominiums. Commercial development has intensified along Route 1 with new discount outlets, restaurants and hotels. Unfortunately, new developments have further isolated West Rehoboth behind buildings, walls, fences and berms.

The new transportation developments, in concert with the real estate boom of the 2000-2005 period, and the commercial zoning west of Hebron Road have intensified a speculative interest in acquiring and holding West Rehoboth lots for future gain.

Four new 2-story commercial buildings, three warehouses and an operations center, have been built on the east side of Hebron Road.

Epworth Methodist Church has built a new church on Holland Glade Road.

The Junction and Breakwater Trail was established as a very attractive hiking and biking route but there has been difficulty in deciding on the treatment of historic Hebron Road as part of its route.

In 2005, the West Rehoboth Community Land Trust was founded to engage in socially motivated land purchases designed to dampen speculation and make lower density development possible.

The West Side New Beginnings Coalition was founded in 2008 to serve as an umbrella organization for all the groups helping West Rehoboth.

There has been additional demolition of deteriorated and vacant housing units, leading to an increase in vacant lots.

In 2008, a major effort is now underway to bring CDBG funding to West Rehoboth for the first time.

# REVITALIZING WEST REHOBOTH

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The Revitalization Plan was decided upon in order to take the opportunity of the best developments, and the best traditions of the neighborhood, and the challenges of many difficult problems, and forge them into a guideline for a bright future for West Rehoboth.

## **“We Will Not Be Moved”**

“That’s what we do here, we who believe in West Rehoboth and believe in our community, we continue to keep the faith. We will not be moved and we will beautify our community and we are going to clean our community up. We can’t help the name, but we can help to continue to keep it as West Rehoboth, we are not worried about who comes here and lives, what we worried about, will you help make it affordable, that’s what are worried about. Not everybody has a college degree. Some people are still factory people, some people are still hotel people, yes, they still need a place to live in West Rehoboth.”

- From the *Oral History of Mrs. Brenda Milbourne*, op. cit., Page 9

## **Conclusion**

The character of West Rehoboth is an enduring story of people and place. It leads us toward a vision and plan for preserving and revitalizing this neighborhood for the future. In the next chapter, we will add an evaluation of existing neighborhood conditions. Both of these elements are important in formulating the action projects and policies of the revitalization plan.

# REVITALIZING WEST REHOBOTH

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## CHAPTER 3 - EXISTING NEIGHBORHOOD CONDITIONS

The Revitalization Plan is based on an intensive survey of social and economic factors, parcels, streets, uses, property conditions, existing land use, current zoning, land ownership and property values. The question of the capacity of the West Rehoboth Community Land Trust has been treated as a special topic. Several field surveys and walking tours were made of the neighborhood.

Participation in the November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2008 Neighborhood Clean-up and the December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2008 Christmas Joy event, discussions at regular meetings of the West Side New Beginnings Coalition, West Side New Beginnings, Inc. and the West Rehoboth Community Land Trust provided an opportunity to become familiar with the neighborhood and exchange ideas with its people. Ground and aerial photographs were prepared and studied. Interviews were held with residents and businesses. Data was gathered from county, state, City of Rehoboth Beach, West Rehoboth Community Land Trust and private sources.

Population, income and social information were gathered through interviews. Data collected by the Land Trust was reviewed. All of these elements have been brought together to form this inventory of existing conditions. The inventory is then used for perspective and realism in preparing the Revitalization Plan.

### **Map A: Study Area with Streets and Parcels**

Map A describes a study area that has been defined on the basis of historical development patterns and present uses within the neighborhood. It shows parcels, streets and the historic Shockley and West Rehoboth subdivisions.

The Study Area includes 140 contiguous parcels of land, including 94 parcels in the West Rehoboth subdivision west of Hebron Road, 36 parcels in the Shockley subdivision east of Hebron Road, 9 parcels in the adjacent Church Street area clustered around Mt. Pleasant UME Church and 1 parcel south on Hebron Road to the south of the Shockley Subdivision. Map A is taken from Sussex County tax plat records and shows parcel location, identification and dimensions. Parcel numbers are shown in red. Older lot numbers are shown in black.

The Study Area contains 37 acres of land including streets and 32.4 acres not including streets. With an estimated population of 150 persons, the overall residential density of West Rehoboth is 4 persons per acre.

The number of parcels today is less than the number of lots laid out in the initial Shockley and West Rehoboth subdivisions of the 1940's. This is because outside investors have combined parcels to develop higher-income commercial uses.

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Originally all the streets of the neighborhood dead-ended in cul-de-sacs at their north and western ends. The major street changes in West Rehoboth during the past five years are two. First DelDOT extended Hebron Road to connect it with a new extension to the northwest to connect with Holland Glade and also to connect it with the new Canal Crossing Road leading to Church Street. These road extensions were made to service large new suburban developments like Canal Corkran and The Glades.

DelDOT takes responsibility for Hebron Road now that it connects the Route 1A Service Road to Hebron Road Extended and Canal Crossing Road. Central Avenue, Dunbar Street, Johnston Street, and Malloy Street are privately owned rights-of-way. Easements need to be obtained from abutting owners in order to improve or repair these streets. The other West Rehoboth Streets have been resurfaced using DelDOT and county funds.

Although county tax records show one block segments of Johnston and Malloy Streets east of Central Avenue, and these rights of way provide access to 3 occupied units, these are forgotten and badly neglected streets. Johnston Street is barely recognizable as a street. On the western edge of the neighborhood, Dunbar Street is in very bad condition.

## **Map B: Existing Land Use**

Map B shows present land uses in the West Rehoboth neighborhood. Six types of land uses are shown: (1) residential, (2) commercial, (3) institutional, (4) mixed residential-commercial and (5) vacant lands.

Of the 140 parcels within the study area, 66 are in residential use, 10 in commercial use, 4 in institutional use (the three neighborhood churches plus the West Side New Beginnings Community Center), 3 in mixed use where there are residential and business uses on the same parcel and 57 vacant. 41% of the parcels are vacant. 47% are in residential use. Several residential use parcels have more than 1 residential use.

Only 7% of the parcels are in commercial use, although 4 of these parcels have been redeveloped with 2-story buildings. When the state extended Hebron Road to the Holland Glade and Canal Corkran development areas, investors began taking advantage of the current commercial zoning on the east side of Hebron Road. Four new two-story metal buildings were built as a result.

## **Map C: Current Zoning**

Map C shows current Sussex County zoning within the study area. Sussex County first began to use zoning to control land use in the 1970's. The portions of the study area east of Hebron Road, including the Shockley Subdivision and the Mt. Pleasant Church cluster, are zoned C1 - Commercial by the county. The West Rehoboth Subdivision area west of Hebron Road is zoned GR - General Residential by the county. Both types of zoning permit mobile homes.

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Approximately one-third of the study area is now zoned commercial, which is a dangerous condition for a residential neighborhood.

Over the years Sussex County has amended its zoning for West Rehoboth several times based on requests from individual property owners. There are several conditional uses in the neighborhood that are shown on Map C.

## **Map D: Property Conditions**

Map D shows noteworthy positive and negative property conditions in the study area. The map shows the limited number of new buildings built in recent years. It also shows blighting conditions such as vacant lands, vacant buildings and deteriorated buildings.

The worst property conditions in West Rehoboth occur in the collection of mobile homes on the east side of Norwood Street in the area known as “The Bottom”, or “Possum’s Hollow”, and in the Central Avenue area. These are obsolete mobile homes with unvented kerosene heaters, uncovered pressboard floors, missing windows and run down bathrooms. There are also concentrations of vacant lots and abandoned structures in the Central Avenue and upper Norwood Street areas. Generally, the best property conditions occur along Duffy Street and Burton Avenue, where there is less vacancy and more homeownership.

Given that both vacant lands and buildings and commercial zoning of historically residential lands is concentrated along Central Avenue, it appears that one of two futures will occur there. Either it will (1) be redeveloped in a parcel-by-parcel uncoordinated way for commercial uses or (2) the neighborhood, the West Side New Beginnings Coalition and the West Rehoboth Community Land Trust will take strong action to change these conditions and promote a revitalized future as a planned residential area.

The existence of 57 vacant lots in West Rehoboth is a problem but it is also a strong asset. These are fully subdivided 5,000 (in the Shockley Subdivision) and 8,750 (in the West Rehoboth Subdivision) square foot lots that are served by paved streets and by City of Rehoboth Beach municipal water and Sussex County sewer systems.

One other condition should be noted. When market-rate developers built new projects around the historic neighborhood, they also built walls, building walls, berms and fences along the boundaries of historic West Rehoboth. This has had the effect of increasing the isolation of the neighborhood even at the same time that the newly extended Hebron Road has increased traffic through it.

The conditions map underscores the need to take immediate, short-term steps to repair or replace deteriorated older mobile homes, make site improvements, weatherize homes, demolish vacant

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buildings and build new individual homes on existing lots. This has begun with steps now being taken by the West Side New Beginnings Coalition and the West Rehoboth Community Land Trust. It is for this reason that the Sussex County Division of Community Development and Housing has targeted West Rehoboth in its 2009 CDBG application.

## **Map E: Property Ownership**

Map E describes property ownership patterns, distinguishing between local ownership by people located within the neighborhood and non-local ownership by people outside the neighborhood. This is one measure normally used to sense the direction a neighborhood is taking. The degree of non-local, or absentee ownership, is seen as an indication that an area is being seen as a target of opportunity by profit-oriented investors who wish to convert land to other uses. 29% of the land parcels in West Rehoboth are locally owned; 71% are in non-local ownership.

It is a reasonable conclusion that the sharp growth in non-local, investor ownership has been fuelled by DelDOT's extension of Hebron Road coupled with the real estate "bubble" that has been experienced during the past ten years. Map E is based on a parcel-by-parcel study of tax records for individual parcels. If the mailing address of the property owner of record was not within the neighborhood, the ownership was noted as non-local.

Map E is the updating of a similar map prepared by the Delaware Housing Coalition in 2004. It dramatizes the need to activate a property acquisition program on the part of the West Rehoboth Community Land Trust, so that neighborhood land can be used for community-approved, planned uses.

## **Utilities**

The City of Rehoboth Beach has extended its municipal water system to serve all of West Rehoboth except for one segment of Central Avenue. Sussex County supplies sewer service to the neighborhood as part of its West Rehoboth sewer district. Electricity and street lighting is provided Delmarva Power, which added new streetlights in December. Verizon provides telephone service. Comcast provides cable TV and high-speed Internet service. Sussex County has assisted WSNBC in providing trash removal services and also assisted in the recent neighborhood clean up. Utility services are adequate except that many residents cannot afford the connection fees for water and sewer. The Lewes and Rehoboth Fire Company provides fire protection and emergency medical service.

Pressing utility issues are to enable lower-income residents to connect with the water and sewer services. Such connections are an eligible item for CDBG funding, which should be used to solve this problem. Unvented kerosene heaters must be addressed by switching to a safer form of heating. Weatherization is expected to be a major initiative in the President Barack Obama

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administration. Heating, ventilation and weatherization improvements should be funded for lower-income residents through these public sources.

## **Social and Economic Conditions**

West Rehoboth is an impoverished neighborhood with great needs. Most families live below the poverty line. There are many single-parent households. Many residents have not completed high school. Residents often are not aware of where to go for help. There is drug use and drug trade. Although no specific social or economic data is published for areas as small as West Rehoboth, a socio-economic profile has been compiled from interviews with residents.

With the help of knowledgeable residents, the West Rehoboth Community Land Trust has estimated that there are 150 residents in West Rehoboth, including an estimated 50 children, living in 81 households with an average annual household income of \$18,000 or less. Many heads of households earn only \$10-12,000 per year. Conditions in the Central Avenue and Dunbar Street areas suggest that population is decreasing.

Approximately 85% of the residents are of African American heritage. Most adult residents are retired or employed in service related to seasonal resort activity.

Deteriorated mobile homes in the neighborhood rent for \$400-450 per month, with utilities paid for by the tenant, a level of rent is well beyond accepted standards for monthly rent.

Most employment growth in the Rehoboth Beach area is in the retail and service sector, which pays an average wage of \$8.29 per hour. Full-time employment at this hourly rate would generate annual earnings of \$17,243. Rehoboth Beach is a summer resort town and most retail and service jobs are cut back during the out-of-season winter months.

For home ownership, the picture is more severe: the median price for a Sussex County house in 2004 was \$239,000. The annual income needed to be able to afford such a home is \$60,000 or more. A household with two incomes, each at \$10 per hour, would earn \$41,200 annually, or only 68% of the income normally required to afford a Sussex County median-price home.

As the *2008 Zip Code Area 19771 Demographic Summary* included in the Appendix indicates, the larger area around West Rehoboth does have abundant employment, daytime business activity, new investment and strong demographic and income trends. It also has good infrastructure and basic public transportation. Unfortunately, West Rehoboth does not share in these conditions.

The challenge for West Rehoboth residents is to gain access to employment opportunities that exceed the low wages of service employment and to retain, rehabilitate and develop affordable housing.

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There is a need and demand for the services that small businesses could provide to residents and others in nearby new subdivisions. Identified needs include a laundromat, a convenience store, a hairdresser, a small business incubator and home repair and improvement enterprises.

Entrepreneurship is constrained by both the lack of skills and the inflated prices of property in the neighborhood. Opportunities for new business development may be stimulated through training programs in job skills and by creating sites for new enterprises.

This condition was the beginning of the idea, central to the plan, that the West Side New Beginnings Community Center should be expanded to provide an estimated 2,500 square feet of new space for job training, a computer center, day care, youth and adult education and neighborhood organization space.

West Rehoboth is entirely located within unincorporated Sussex County and consequently does not receive municipal services, with the exception of utilities. The City of Rehoboth Beach provides central water service and Sussex County provides sewer service. While the Sussex County Council has often responded to community needs in West Rehoboth, it is the City of Rehoboth Beach that provides the kinds of municipal services that West Rehoboth needs.

West Rehoboth residents live in small and often deteriorating single-family dwellings, with a mix of rented mobile homes. Infrastructure is poor, with several narrow and unimproved streets, no sidewalks and poor drainage.

The Rehoboth Beach community has a total population of 1,544 year-round residents and an estimated additional summertime population of 7,100. 98% of its residents are white, non-Hispanic. The local unemployment rate is virtually zero, with an estimated 3,000 workers commuting to Rehoboth Beach for daily employment. The abundance of summer-season employment results in annual importation of foreign guest workers. There are 3,152 housing units in the city of Rehoboth Beach, not including West Rehoboth.

The median value of homes in the larger area is \$320,500, although that figure is now declining. Median rent is \$818 per month. The median income of permanent residents is \$51,429.

## **Land Values**

For many reasons, land values have risen steeply in the neighborhood. The causes include the housing bubble experience nationally since the late 1990's, the adjacency of large commercial and market-rate housing developments, the extension of Hebron Road by DelDOT, the role of land speculation, the relative ease of Sussex County zoning and the fact that the area east of Hebron Road is zoned C1 Commercial. It should be noted that Sussex County's tax records

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could not be used to help understand property value because the county has not reassessed for 26 years.

Prices for Shockley Subdivision 5,000 square foot parcels and West Rehoboth Subdivision 8,750 square foot parcels peaked at approximately \$350,000 in 2006-7. First State Appraisals reports that prices and sales between \$155,000 and \$300,000 were common in 2005, the last boom year before the downturn. There were only two sales in 2006. With the current global recession, land values have decreased by 18% or more nationally in the past year, but only 10% in the Rehoboth Beach area, with more decreases expected both nationally and regionally in the years ahead. Currently \$100,000 is being asked for some parcels for sale but sales have virtually stopped at any price.

In the Rehoboth Beach area, land value is now treated as 90% of total value, compared to 70% nationally, which is a sure sign of speculation. It is clear that sensitive community development cannot take place at current or recent land prices. In order to implement desired projects in West Rehoboth, subsidies will have to be found to reduce the cost of land. Typically, non-profit housing projects pay only about \$35,000 per lot. The only entity that can address the land price problem in West Rehoboth is its Community Land Trust.

## **Map H: State Strategies**

Map H is the West Rehoboth section of the *State Strategies for Policies and Spending* map. It is part of a statewide map prepared by the Delaware Office of State Planning and Coordination. It summarizes factors that the Office deems critical for state of Delaware future land use planning. It interprets this thinking in terms of “level of investment areas”. Level of investment areas are areas where the state believes it should support greater or lesser levels of development and investment by the state in services.

Unfortunately, the State Strategies Map for West Rehoboth is improperly drawn. It does not recognize West Rehoboth’s neighborhood character, history or existing land use. It shows a random diagonal line running through the middle of the neighborhood, designating the highest level of investment for the southeastern portion and next highest level for the northwest portion. Both level of investment areas represent high levels of development, including unlimited commercial development for most of West Rehoboth. The state revises the strategies map periodically and the neighborhood should ask for a more sensitive revision for West Rehoboth.

## **Need for Public Interest Redevelopment**

The evaluation of existing conditions, including physical conditions, ownership and land prices, shows a clear need for public-interest redevelopment. Redevelopment means that

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deteriorated properties are acquired by a public interest entity in accordance with a community plan and developed with new uses benefiting the neighborhood.

Such an approach will give the neighborhood's private property owners the incentive to respond with their own improvements.

## **Capacity of the West Rehoboth Community Land Trust**

There is expressed concern about the capacity of the West Rehoboth Community Land Trust. On August 6, 2008 the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD), as the funding agency for the plan, met with numerous Community Land Trust and West Side New Beginnings representatives to discuss this matter.

CCHD expressed some concern about the ability of the Land Trust to accomplish a land acquisition and stewardship mission in West Rehoboth. It asked whether it might be better to let the statewide Diamond State Community Land Trust perform this role in West Rehoboth. Representatives expressed their determination to ensure the survival of the West Rehoboth neighborhood. They stated that the Land Trust role should be done on a neighborhood basis because it must be coordinated with many other existing neighborhood issues and it must know the people. CCHD was told that this issue would be addressed in the Revitalization Plan.

On October 16, 2008, Nutter Associates attended the Diamond State Community Land Trust Annual Meeting in Dover. It was requested by Nutter Associates that West Rehoboth at least be mentioned in the Sussex County application for funding under the new HUD Neighborhood Stabilization Fund.

On December 18, 2008, Nutter Associates met in West Rehoboth with Van Temple, Executive Director of the Diamond State Community Land Trust. Mr. Temple emphasized that Diamond State wished to help the West Rehoboth Community Land Trust undertake neighborhood projects.

It was discussed and agreed that the development model that Diamond State was using was one of partnering with private or non-profit developers who would donate the land beneath a selected number of units To Diamond State.

After evaluation of this issue, it appears that the best solution for West Rehoboth is one that uses an "existing neighborhood model" emphasis. The West Rehoboth Community Land Trust, with management and staff assistance by Diamond State, should play the role of landowner and steward. A project-by-project working partnership will need to be worked out with Diamond State Community Land Trust.

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## **Environmental Resources Overlay**

Envirotech Environmental Consulting has prepared an environmental overlay as part of the Revitalization Plan. *Map H: Environmental Overlay* describes existing vegetation and identifies plants that are native and healthy, exotic, invasive, native nuisance, dead or aging, degrading to mature trees or diseased, present code issues, or pose hazards to structures. It presents corrective actions for restoration. It identifies areas prone to drainage problems and recommended solutions.

## **Conclusion**

The existing conditions are pointers to the future actions of the plan. A response to each condition has been considered in preparing the Revitalization Plan. The plan is based on the need to come as close as possible to a redevelopment plan through non-profit and public interest investment to serve the best interests of West Rehoboth.

Without a public-interest plan, existing conditions that are negative may overwhelm the neighborhood. This could cause neighborhood land to be bought up in a piecemeal manner, developed in a haphazard way and sold for the highest-possible short-term profit.

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## CHAPTER 4 - THE PLAN: ACTION PROJECTS AND POLICIES

In concert with the study of the character and history of West Rehoboth and the evaluation of existing neighborhood conditions, steps were carried out to prepare the principles of the plan, a creative physical and social vision and goals and recommended action projects and policies.

Each of the community's three institutions, West Side New Beginnings, Inc., the West Side New Beginnings Coalition and the West Rehoboth Community Land Trust are needed to play strong, decisive, cooperating roles.

Together they must seek help from any and all outside supporting organizations. Funds will have to be raised in a strong and coordinated fashion.

### **The Priorities of the West Side New Beginnings Coalition**

On September 17, 2008, the West Side New Beginnings Coalition met and prepared the following list of priorities:

1. **New capital improvements** should be implemented, including affordable housing and a new playground,
2. **Sidewalks** should be installed in West Rehoboth,
3. **Road Improvements** should be made, including new street paving for Central Avenue and Dunbar Street,
4. **Street light improvements** should be made by Delmarva Power,
5. **Speed bumps** should be installed by DelDOT,
6. **Traffic lights**, such as one proposed at Canal Crossing Road and Church Street, should be installed,
7. **Speed signs** or other traffic control measures should be installed by DelDOT, especially along Hebron Road, where there are serious safety issues,
8. **Abandoned structures** should be demolished, redeveloped or rehabilitated
9. **A laundromat** should be added to the neighborhood,
10. **Environment** - Envirotech should be enlisted to help with environmental standards and landscaping recommendations, and
11. **Housing rehabilitation** should be pursued through Sussex County Community Development and Housing.

### **A Framework of Ideas for West Rehoboth**

Nutter Associates prepared a sketch plan of ideas for revitalizing West Rehoboth on October 15, 2008. It was based on all previous discussions. It was discussed with residents and volunteers that evening and was received with enthusiasm.

# REVITALIZING WEST REHOBOTH

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The sketch plan focuses on:

- ❑ Improving the predominantly residential, single-family, low density of the neighborhood,
- ❑ Identifying the worst housing conditions, along Central Avenue and in “The Bottom” which badly need redevelopment,
- ❑ Allowing limited higher density and commercial uses in the form of convenience retail, with a laundromat and store, and duplex housing,
- ❑ Connecting the Junction & Breakwater Trail through the neighborhood on historic Hebron Road,
- ❑ Revitalizing Historic Hebron Road as the “Main Street” of West Rehoboth,
- ❑ Having “Gateway” projects with some retail and business developments at both ends of Historic Hebron Road,
- ❑ Making new gardens and greenspaces and a neighborhood trail,
- ❑ Expanding the vital West Side New Beginnings Community Center, with a Community Square and playground on Hebron Road,
- ❑ Replacing deteriorated homes with new and improved homes, and
- ❑ Connecting West Rehoboth and the City of Rehoboth Beach through a new “Brick Road” to the Canal and beyond.

The sketch also identifies ideas based on the enduring character of the neighborhood. It presents West Rehoboth as a predominantly residential, single-family, low-density neighborhood consistent with its roots. Features such as historic streets, cul-de-sacs, special places like Central Avenue, Dunbar Street and “the Bottom” on Norwood Street are highlighted.

The hemming in of the neighborhood by adjacent walls, berms and fences is identified as a problem. The intersections of Hebron and Canal Crossing and Hebron Road, Burton Avenue and Harmon Street are singled out as “Gateway” locations, where the neighborhood can “open itself up” and build new activity centers. At the same time these new activity centers can act as ambassadors between West Rehoboth and the larger community surrounding it. Both of the Gateways have good potential for new community service and convenience retail uses.

The three churches and the community center are identified as landmarks. Existing commercial uses, including the four new two-story commercial buildings along the east side of Hebron Road, are shown as intensive uses. Hebron Road is shown as a vital link in the Junction and Breakwater hiking trail. The worst housing areas are shown. New development potentials are shown. Unique features such as the historic “brick road” walking path leading to the city are shown. These are principles developed in greater detail in the Revitalization Plan.

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## **Neighborhood Clean-up on November 8, 2008**

The WSNB Coalition organized a highly successful neighborhood clean up on Saturday November 8, 2008. The clean up offered an opportunity to see the neighborhood in a close and vivid way. It made clear how difficult many property and household conditions area and how continued clean up and maintenance would be needed in the future.

## **Sussex County Community Development Hearing on November 12, 2008**

Discussions were initiated with the Sussex County Division of Community Development and Housing as soon as work on the plan began. The Division conducted a public hearing on its 2009 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application at the WSNB Center on November 12, 2008. William Lecates and Brad Whaley of the Division stated that the county was making West Rehoboth a priority community for 2009, and that the county had been encouraged by the Revitalization Plan project. CDBG funds would be available for eligible properties in July 2009 and would be spent during the following 18 months. Property owners and occupants were encouraged to submit their names and properties. It was stressed that this would be a highly competitive process and that West Rehoboth should respond with enthusiasm.

## **Citizen Participation Meeting of November 19, 2008**

On November 19, 2008 the WSNBC sponsored a neighborhood participation meeting in the Community Center to discuss the development of the plan. Approximately 30 residents, owners and volunteers attended. The results of the meeting are summarized in Appendix A.

## **Principles of the Revitalization Plan**

- ❑ This **difficult time of economic recession** should be used as a time for careful planning by West Rehoboth,
- ❑ **Community Trust** can be built by accomplishing common projects with lasting benefits for residents,
- ❑ **Land** needs to be acquired and its price, while driven up by speculation, can be reduced by determined fund-raising,
- ❑ **Partnership** is vital because no one person or organization can do it alone,
- ❑ **Doors** need to be opened with any and all groups that can help,
- ❑ **Community Help** can be improved by having a professional community organizer,
- ❑ **Better working relationships must be developed with landowners** that go beyond speculative profit making into community-oriented actions,

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- ❑ The neighborhood can **build its future in a stair-step fashion**, beginning with the successful work of West Side New Beginnings, Inc. the West Side New Beginnings Community Center, the creation of the West Side New Beginnings Coalition, the successful neighborhood clean-up of November 8, 2008, the designation of West Rehoboth as a target area in Sussex County's 2009 CDBG application, and the beginning of public improvements with the planned repaving of Central Avenue and following with the actions and projects proposed by this Revitalization Plan,
- ❑ **The West Rehoboth plan should respond to the new national policies** expected from the Obama Administration for community greening and environmental responsibility, neighborhood participation, affordable housing, early childhood education, job training and economic development, and infrastructure stimulus spending, and
- ❑ In the future, the neighborhood should **explore annexation into the City of Rehoboth Beach**, where there would be greater promise of political representation and needed municipal services.

## **Presentation of Vision and Goals on December 3, 2008**

After discussion of the sketch plan, a written community vision and goals were prepared:

### **WEST REHOBOTH REVITALIZATION PLAN COMMUNITY VISION & GOALS**

West Rehoboth is an historic and urban African American neighborhood in the heart of coastal Sussex County. With pride and determination, it desires to treasure its past, preserve its best character, provide new affordable housing, create a clean and healthy environment, foster economic development for jobs and growth and provide a bright future for its residents.

#### ❑ **West Rehoboth Community Vision**

#### **Goals:**

The central goal is to preserve the most positive and enduring character of the West Rehoboth community. Character is defined as the special mix of human memories, social relations and physical characteristics within a neighborhood that set it apart from other neighborhoods and contributes to its individuality. Community includes both the physical neighborhood and the people.

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## **The Physical Neighborhood**

- ❑ West Rehoboth desires to preserve its character by maintaining a predominantly low-density, single-family home and residential land use way of life.
- ❑ Home ownership of clean, modern, single-family houses on lots of their own is the desired future.
- ❑ A limited number of rental, commercial, multi-family and mixed uses are a welcome part of the neighborhood at specified locations on Hebron Road and Burton Avenue.
- ❑ Tree-lined and well-maintained streets with sidewalks are as essential to the future.
- ❑ Sitting, playground and park areas for residents, children as well as elderly, to meet and play are vital.
- ❑ Walking trails within, and in the case of the Junction and Breakwater hiking and biking trail, through the neighborhood, are essential.
- ❑ Managing traffic to protect the neighborhood is indispensable, especially along Hebron Road now that it has been made into an important DeIDOT through road.

Building up the neighborhood with safe, clean and attractive rehabilitation and new development is the core value of the plan. The plan is designed to improve the quality of life for all residents, businesses and visitors, and to achieve a positive reputation and new respect for West Rehoboth.

Things to be discouraged include unplanned, out-of-scale multi-family housing, multiple uses on the same lot, overly large or tall buildings, overcrowding in any way, windowless commercial structures and allowing unclean, unsafe and deteriorated conditions.

In public areas, new street lights should be added, sidewalks installed, signage added, dead and dying trees replaced with healthy specimens, a park and playground added and utility conditions improved (undergrounding overhead lines where feasible, and maintaining unbroken house connections).

The West Side New Beginnings Community Center is the center of the neighborhood. It should be enlarged and remodeled to enhance and expand its community value, with new social and educational programs and an adjacent playground and park.

A work of art has been identified as an action project for a specific site in the plan. The work of art should have symbolic significance relative to the revitalization of the community. It should be located at the main corner at Hebron Road and Burton Avenue. At that location it can be made an integral centerpiece within a project combining playground and park space, gateway signage identifying “Historic West Rehoboth” at the neighborhood’s most prominent entrance, the expansion of the West Side New Beginnings Center and new street work.

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The Revitalization Plan must contribute to a reopening of gateways between the neighborhood and surrounding city and county areas. This will offer a welcome change and “fresh air” to a pattern that has become increasingly “walled off” by walls, fences and berms built at the rear edges of adjacent projects.

In transportation planning, the plan seeks to ensure improved access, security conditions, visibility, lighting and neighborhood surveillance to all areas in West Rehoboth.

Hebron Road should be seen as the “Main Street” of West Rehoboth, in tandem with selected sites on Burton Avenue. The Junction and Breakwater Trail should officially continue north along Hebron to the new by-pass roads. Improvements to Hebron should include new paving, sidewalks, designation of bike lanes, tree and floral landscaping, a permanent and well-designed park, playground and gathering space, connection to the expanded West Side New Beginnings Center, and understandings with private property owners as to harmonious improvements and development on adjacent lots.

The current Sussex County commercial zoning of land east of Hebron Road (in the Shockley Subdivision) needs to be seriously re-examined and modified to ensure a predominantly low-density residential future for West Rehoboth.

As a tool for a new “greening” of West Rehoboth, an environmental resources overlay should emphasize the need for a healthy environment. Its purpose will be to create an attractive, sustainable, environmentally sound, aesthetically attractive, safe and healthy neighborhood based on good activities and increasing property values. The overlay should identify drainage, vegetation and landscaping, and code compliance improvements. It would identify corrective actions and improvements including potentials for rain gardens, growing centers, composting areas, play stations and an integrated trail and walking system with fitness facilities.

## **The People**

The plan contains a history section that describes the growth of West Rehoboth against the backdrop of the history of Route 1 and Rehoboth Beach. It is designed to remember the inherited past and the contributions of earlier generations in creating businesses, institutions and values, and to remember places of special and sacred significance.

While envisioning the future, the plan also focuses on the here and now of the present and the next five years. This means building on the programs of West Side New Beginnings, Inc., the formation of the West Side New Beginnings Coalition, the success of the November Clean up, and the new priority of the 2009 Community Development Block Grant application. The latter moves the community into the new community

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development phase. Out of these stages of real progress the morale, coordination, cooperativeness and organization of the community can grow for more ambitious steps.

The plan serves as a tool for identifying implementation roles and contributions that can build the capacity of the West Rehoboth Community Land Trust. The essential contribution that the Land Trust can make to the revitalization of West Rehoboth will be in the critical areas of land and property acquisition and capital fund raising for agreed-upon community projects.

It is essential that the revitalization plan include a resident leadership development mechanism, whereby young men and women from the neighborhood will be trained for leadership roles. African American leadership development is essential.

Economic development is an integral part of the plan. Action projects and sites are specified that will bring new jobs for neighborhood residents. Economic development will add daytime business activity to West Rehoboth, increase business investment in private property, encourage public-private cooperation and develop job training opportunities. The economic development projects include a job, entrepreneurial and leadership-training program in an expanded West Side New Beginnings Center. The plan also includes the development of a small laundromat, retail store, luncheonette or restaurant and related services on sites at the intersection of Hebron Road and Burton Avenue and the junction of Historic Hebron Road with Canal Crossing Road. It also proposes up to forty (40) new homes for construction.

Between the full- and part-time retail and service jobs that will be generated by the economic development projects and the construction jobs needed to build the retail and the housing, there should be a potential for 15 neighborhood jobs.

Volunteer, donated and low-cost methods of implementation are emphasized, including bringing money, energy and resources to the neighborhood from outside organizations and sources.

The plan is designed to stay within “economic levels” which are right for the West Rehoboth neighborhood and address resident needs. This means that action projects must be based on moderate and low levels of household income, concern for the elderly and affordable housing levels, rents and prices. It also addresses residents’ needs for help in securing emergency social and financial help.

The plan seeks to call official attention at the highest levels to the value of West Rehoboth as one of the last pieces of historic ground in Coastal Sussex for real affordable housing for low-income families.

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## **Christmas Joy on December 20, 2008**

The Lewes Rehoboth Association of Churches Area churches sponsored its annual Christmas Joy gift of Christmas presents on December 20, 2008. The West Rehoboth group visited several homes in the area of “The Bottom” on Norwood Street, on Burton Avenue, in the Central Avenue area and on Church Street. This was an important opportunity to meet families, understand their economic and social problems and experience both interior and exterior conditions. It also made vivid the need for a community organizer in the neighborhood.

## **Future Land Use**

Map F: Future Land Use weighs the ideas of the sketch plan and the written vision and goals to develop Future Land Use showing desirable changes in land use to revitalize the neighborhood.

Where parcels are now vacant, the FLU map shows future land use based on active uses, primarily residential, as is the case for the many vacant parcels along Central Avenue new commercial use is shown for parcels at the north end of Hebron Road Open space for a new park is shown at Hebron and Duffy. The vacant American Legion building is shown restored to active institutional use.

## **Future Zoning**

Map G: Future Zoning shows desirable zoning changes to implement the Future Land Use General residential zoning is applied to the area east of Hebron Road, except for developed commercial properties along the east side of Hebron.

## **Design and Development Concept Plan**

Prepared by Element Design Group, LLC and Envirotech, LLC, Environmental Consultants, working with Nutter Associates, then prepared the Design and Development Concept Plan and the Environmental Overlay to illustrate the projects of the Revitalization Plan.

## **Action Projects**

The revitalization plan includes the following action projects:

- 1. WSNB Community Center and Square**

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Hebron Road is the historic “Main Street” of West Rehoboth. Burton Avenue is its second most intensively used street. The plan is centered on this intersection, once the site of the Do Drop Inn. A new community park, playground and sitting area would be developed on the site to the east of the West Side New Beginnings Community Center.

The Center itself would be remodeled, including a more neighborhood-friendly and open façade treatment, and expanded with approximately 2,500 square feet of additional space. The new space and remodeling would allow the inclusion of new computer center, a library, day care, early childhood, adult job training and neighborhood meeting space. The existing parking lot would be redesigned and possibly slightly expanded. Landscaping would be added around the expanded center.

## **2. Burton Avenue New Housing Development**

The plan includes the development of the four attractive duplex housing units planned by the West Rehoboth Community Land Trust. These four affordable units would be developed on the Sumlin Property on Burton Avenue. Planned parking will be provided on-site.

Funding will be provided via a mixture of private contributions, Delaware State Housing Authority tax credit bond funds, a partnership with the Diamond State Community Land Trust and loan funds provided by the First State Community Loan Fund.

## **3. Habitat for Humanity New Housing along Central Avenue**

In concert with the current and immediate project to repave Central Avenue, the plan invites Sussex County Habitat for Humanity to join the Coalition and the West Rehoboth Community Land Trust to develop new affordable single-family homes on the eastern edge of the neighborhood. This is both a response to vacancy and deterioration conditions in this area and the opportunity to use the platted lots for new development by Habitat for Humanity.

Eight units are envisioned in a first five-year phase, followed by an additional 16 units in subsequent stages. In this relationship, the West Rehoboth Community Land Trust would be responsible for property acquisition and would own the land beneath the homes when they were complete. It would fulfill its public purpose of ensuring long-term community land use and making sites affordable. Fund raising to help offset site costs would be a joint endeavor between the two organizations.

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## **4. North Hebron Neighborhood Retail Center**

The neighborhood has expressed desires for a laundromat, a small convenience store and perhaps office or service business space serving neighborhood and area needs. A size range of 3,000-3,500 square feet of space is the recommended program. This project is best realized by using a location on Hebron Road.

The plan shows the convenience center located at the junction of the historic and new Hebron Roads, where it can both serve neighborhood needs and attract additional trade from the growing developments to the north. The visibility of this location and its traffic flows are assets for successful retailing. The West Rehoboth Community Land Trust will own the land for the center. A private or non-profit developer will be selected to develop, own and manage the building and other site improvements.

## **5. Neighborhood Trail and Connected Open Space**

West Rehoboth does not presently have any dedicated or protected open space. In addition to the community square at the corner of Hebron Road and Burton Avenue, the plan envisions a neighborhood trail to provide pedestrian access and connect streets and homes throughout West Rehoboth.

The street tree planting recommended by the plan offers an opportunity for help from a local civic organization.

There is now a well-worn neighborhood trail that connects Norwood Street with Duffy Street and that may once have connected with the right of way of Johnston Street to the east. The plan recommends that this long-used trail be preserved and protected by incorporating it into the West Rehoboth Village project described below. Sidewalks are shown connecting the community square, neighborhood trail and homes to the expanded Community Center and the Neighborhood Retail Center.

## **6. West Side Mixed-Use Village**

The plan envisions a longer-term “West Side Village” project for revitalizing the northern edge of the neighborhood from Hebron Road to Norwood and Dunbar Streets. It would include the redevelopment of the mobile home park known as “The Bottom”, on the east side of Norwood Street. The project involves the WSNBC and WR CLT entering into agreement with a socially motivated for-profit developer. It would encompass an area of approximately 4 acres.

Moderately priced market-rate housing units, including units for the elderly, would be mixed with subsidized, affordable for-sale and rental units as well as additional service

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and convenience retail space to serve neighborhood needs. New access would be opened from Norwood and Dunbar Streets to connect with the extension of Hebron Road to Holland Glade. Street trees and landscaping would be added to the south edge of the new Hebron Road.

The project would be integrated with the neighborhood trail and connected open space project and also with the retail convenience center at the north end of historic Hebron Road. The concept presented for this future development includes an envisioned 30-35 housing units, pedestrian and parking areas, a small retail addition to the North Hebron convenience center and open space.

The Design and Development Concept shows Norwood Street opened to the extension of Hebron Road, in order to provide greater access to the neighborhood, and communication between it and the developing Holland Glade area.

## **7. Hebron Road Junction and Breakwater Trail and Streetscape**

Historic Hebron Road through the West Rehoboth neighborhood has always been a community Main Street. DelDOT has now connected the historic West Rehoboth section of Hebron Road with a new service road connected to Route 1A in the south and Canal Crossing Road and the new Hebron Road extension to Holland Glade to the north. In addition, the Junction and Breakwater Trail is now carried along Canal Crossing Road between Hebron Road and Church Street. Although it seems that the Junction and Breakwater Trail continues from its end point at the American Legion building north along historic Hebron Road to Canal Crossing, there is no sign or any physical improvement to demonstrate that.

The plan proposes that the J & T Trail be officially extended over historic Hebron Road. The trail should be improved with dedicated bicycle lanes on Hebron Road. Sidewalks need to be added to the road, as well as street trees and “Historic West Rehoboth” and pedestrian crossing signage. New pavement should be added to help slow traffic down on this urban street which many children use. Overall, Hebron Road should become a full-fledged streetscape project including street trees and appropriate other landscaping with flowers and plants highlighting the new community square.

## **Policies**

### **Stick-built, Manufactured, Modular or Mobile Home Housing?**

There needs to be a policy with regard to the type, or types, of housing to be sought for West Rehoboth. In purely aesthetic terms, for the sake of the beauty of the neighborhood, stick-built houses would be ideal. The original houses of the 1940's and 1950's were

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stick-built. However, stick-built houses are too expensive for many of the residents. Modular housing is attractive, but it costs more than stick-built housing. Manufactured housing is less expensive and can be attractive, especially if features like front porches are added. Repairing existing mobile homes, or replacing them with better used units on a temporary basis, is a needed solution for some of the poorest residents. The best policy for West Rehoboth is to tolerate a mixture of types as long as conditions are improved, but aiming toward a longer-term future in which all mobile homes are replaced with homes of one of the other three types.

## **Low-density Housing**

Homes in West Rehoboth should be primarily low-density single-family houses on individual lots. In their design, including such features as front porches, they should be in character with the tradition of the neighborhood. This policy can be substantially help by convincing the Sussex County Council to modify the commercial zoning east of Hebron Road.

## **Housing for the Elderly**

Housing units for the elderly should be an integral part of each housing project and should be appropriately equipped for elderly use and needs.

## **WSNBC as the Umbrella Group for Decision-making**

The West Side New Beginnings Coalition should be recognized as the umbrella group for participating organizations. It should designate projects for assistance by the West Rehoboth Community Land Trust.

## **Changing the Sussex County Zoning Map**

Based on the Future Land Use and Future Zoning Maps prepared as part of the Revitalization Plan, the West Side New Beginnings Coalition should request that Sussex County amend its Zoning Map according to the Revitalization Plan.

## **Environmental Resources Overlay**

The Environmental Overlay analysis recommends new environmental improvements including rain gardens, native plant gardens, ornamental low-cost gardens, growing centers, composting bins for recycling and play stations. It recommends an interconnected community trail system with fitness facilities.

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## **Transportation Elements**

The Revitalization Plan includes the following transportation elements: (1) the improvement of Historic Hebron Road as the “Main Street” of West Rehoboth, including official designation and design of the Junction and Breakwater Trail along this alignment, where it can also offer amenities to West Rehoboth, a new comprehensive Streetscape Design, with directional, historic and information signage, speed controls and sidewalks with crosswalks and possibly transit service at a designated stop, (2) the repaving of Central Avenue, and later, of Dunbar, Johnston and Malloy Streets to make them functional and accessible once again, (3) a new traffic signal at Canal Crossing Road and Church Street, (4) new sidewalks in the neighborhood, (5) a connected neighborhood trail which also connects with the improved Junction and Breakwater Trail, and (6) the connection of Norwood Street with the extended Hebron Road.

## **Potential Annexation and a “Second Waterfront” on the Canal**

The Comprehensive Plan of the City of Rehoboth Beach recognizes West Rehoboth as an area for potential future annexation into the city limits. It would be desirable for most of the residents of the neighborhood to have access to the greater number of services the city provides. The Church Street edge of the study area is only 700 feet west of the Lewes and Rehoboth Canal, the city’s western boundary. The land in this 700-foot wide area is now predominantly vacant and centers on the 2.38-acre parcel previously used by the Suburban Propane Company.

In the current updating of the City of Rehoboth Beach Comprehensive Plan, there has been discussion of creating a “second waterfront” for the city where Rehoboth Avenue crosses the Lewes and Rehoboth Canal. The Suburban Propane site is directly opposite the new Rehoboth Beach Museum, Visitor’s Center and Canal Park. There is even a pathway across the site that is a trace of the former Junction and Breakwater Railroad. This could be used as a portion of the modern Junction and Breakwater Trail. It appears that these promising conditions offer a realistic opportunity to annex West Rehoboth into the city. The primary reason for exploring annexation is that the City of Rehoboth Beach offers greater services to its residents.

## **Future Year CDBG Applications**

CDBG is a real lifeline for neighborhood improvement. This federal program was created to help neighborhoods like West Rehoboth. It should become prominent in neighborhood thinking. The Sussex County Division of Community Development and Housing should be invited to come to West Rehoboth as often as possible. Annual efforts need to be made to identify the most pressing West Rehoboth CDBG items.

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## Land Acquisition Policy and Direction

The plan proposes that a Revolving Fund, with a seed grant provided by one or more National Foundations, be established to enable WR CLT to purchase the parcels of land necessary to accomplish the objectives of the plan.

### Potential Sources of Funds for Land Acquisition by the Land Trust

- ❑ Tax-exempt **donations** of neighborhood land to the West Rehoboth Community Land Trust,
- ❑ Land acquisition funds as part of projects undertaken with Delaware State Housing Authority low- and moderate-income housing **tax credits**,
- ❑ **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)** funds provided by the U.S. Department of Housing and Community Development, through the Delaware State Housing Authority, to Sussex County,
- ❑ **Diamond State Community Land Trust** public-private partnership funds based on private development projects which can donate land and housing units to the West Rehoboth Community Land Trust,
- ❑ The United States Department of Agriculture/Rural Development **502 Home Ownership Program**,
- ❑ **Private developer equity funds** as part of mixed-income partnership projects,
- ❑ Property acquisition moneys included in **non-profit project partnerships**, such as projects undertaken by Sussex County Habitat for Humanity or the Milford Housing Development Corporation,
- ❑ **Private owner lands owned for specific projects owned** by the West Rehoboth Community Land Trust and managed by Diamond State Community Land Trust,
- ❑ **Bargain sale** purchases of land at less than market value by the West Rehoboth Community Land Trust,
- ❑ **West Rehoboth Community Land Trust revenues** generated by the implementation of a first-phase commercial or mixed-use pilot projects,
- ❑ Funds that may be obtained via anti-recessionary **stimulus package spending** by the Obama administration,
- ❑ Property acquisition as part of redevelopment funded through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development **Neighborhood Stabilization Program**,
- ❑ **Private foundation grant funds** based on a major project structuring and fund-raising effort by the West Rehoboth and Diamond State Community Land Trusts working closely with the West Side New Beginnings Coalition,
- ❑ Grant funding from the Delaware State Housing Authority's **Housing Development Fund (HDF)**,
- ❑ Grant funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's **HOME program**,

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- ❑ **Bond Bill funding** from the Delaware General Assembly with support from the Markell administration, and
- ❑ **Mixed funding from two or more of the above potential sources.**

## **Conclusion**

The identified elements of the Revitalization Plan must now be analyzed in terms of leadership responsibility, timing, attractive design, economic potential, potential sources of funding and likely ranges of cost.

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## CHAPTER 5 - IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

Implementing the Revitalization Plan for West Rehoboth requires a stair-step approach from the present into future years and from present to future accomplishments. It needs a phased timetable, estimates of likely costs and directions for potential funding. This chapter divides actions recommended by the plan into an Immediate One-Year Phase during 2009, a Short-Term Phase during the 2010-2014-time period and a Mid-To-Long Term Phase from 2015 to 2019.

Potential sources of funding are identified for each project. Organizational and planning initiatives are identified with agencies or groups best suited to carry them out. Where appropriate, voluntary associations, business groups, private investors or regional agencies most suitable for each step are identified.

Where projects require special expertise, the expertise is identified. Rough estimates of probable costs, expressed as cost ranges, are given. Potential Sources of Funds are categorized as CG – Capital Grant, OG – Operating Grant, LC – Local Contribution, AP – Administration and Planning, VL – Volunteer Labor and Donated Materials, PF – Project Financing and G - Government. Each factor mentioned is intended for general planning purposes.

### **Building Blocks for Implementation**

Implementation should build on past and present accomplishments. As discussed earlier, these include the building, programs and operation of West Side New Beginnings, Inc., the formation of the West Side New Beginnings Coalition, the Neighborhood Clean-up of November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2008, and current work on the 2009 Community Development Block Grant Application.

### **Operating Costs**

For future years, WR CLT and WSNBC will need an estimated \$40,000 per year for operating costs, raised through multiple foundation grants, revenues from leases, donations from local businesses, and membership dues. The AP cost category involves use of these funds. The primary use of the funds would be to employ a community organizer on a stable basis.

### **Immediate (2009)**

- ❑ WRCLT and WSNBC should organize an intensive **one-year campaign to establish base funding** for both continuing operations and seed capital for a revolving fund for acquisition and related expenses. A comprehensive and innovative grant application

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- for initial funds should be prepared and submitted to a selected set of national and regional foundations, possibly including The Delaware Community Foundation, The Ford Foundation, the Arthur T. and Katherine D. MacArthur Foundation, The Lewes Foundation, The Abell Foundation, The Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Surda Foundation. (Est. Cost Range: \$4,000- 5,000) (Potential Funding Source: OG, CG)
- WSNBC and WRCLT should continue working closely with the Sussex County Division of Community Development and Housing on the West Rehoboth requests for the county's 2009 **CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) Application**. Residents need to be encouraged to submit requests and identify actions for rehabilitation. (Est. Cost Range: \$500– 1,000) (Potential Funding Source: VL)
  - In November and December 2009, this work should be repeated for the **2010 CDBG Application**. By doing this, the neighborhood will learn more each year about how to successfully apply for the most needy projects. It should be the goal to bring \$75-85,000 per year to West Rehoboth from the CDBG funding source. (Est. Cost Range: \$500-1,000) (Potential Funding Source: VL)
  - **Organizational coordination between leaderships of WSNBI, WSNBC and WRCLT** to form a better-funded and coordinated approach. Expand the Board of Directors of WRCLT as a result. Coordinate the fund-raising of the two organizations. Jointly raise the necessary funds to employ a community organizer for West Rehoboth, one who would also serve as a Staff Director for the local organizations. Recruit one or more persons with strong fund raising experience to join the effort. (Est. Cost Range: \$500-1,000) (Potential Funding Source: VL)
  - West Side New Beginning, Inc. (WSNBI) and the West Side New Beginnings Coalition should ask the West Rehoboth Community Land Trust to undertake the following **four (4) land trust community development projects**: (1) implementation of the Community Land Trust project to build 4 units of duplex moderate-income housing on the Sumlin property on Burton Avenue, (2) participation as a land acquisition agent for site acquisition for the neighborhood park and playground on the Hebron Road/Burton Avenue site, (3) invite Habitat for Humanity of Sussex County to undertake the design and development of approximately 6 Habitat single-family homes in the Central Avenue section of West Rehoboth, and (4) plan and implement a commercial and mixed-use retail convenience center at the site designated at the intersection of Hebron Road, the new extension of Hebron Road to Holland Glade and Canal Crossing Road. (Est. Cost Range: \$500-1,000) (Potential Funding Source: VL)
  - Place “**Historic West Rehoboth**” signs at two locations along historic Hebron Road, one at the south end at the former American Legion building, at the Junction and Breakwater Trail, and the other, at the north end, where historic Hebron Road, the new extended Hebron Road and Canal Crossing Road meet. (est. Cost Range: \$1,000-2,000) (Potential Funding Source: VL, LC)
  - Implement the project to **replace worn-out, badly deteriorated mobile homes** with better-used mobile homes donated to WRCLT. (Est. Cost Range: \$1,000-4,000)

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- (Potential Funding Source: VL, LC)
- ❑ **Repave Central Avenue**, seeking funding from Sussex County for this purpose. (est. Cost Range: \$50,000-160,000) (Potential Funding Source: G, LC)
  - ❑ **Conduct a 2009 Neighborhood Clean Up** in November of 2009. (Est. Cost Range: \$5,000-10,000) (Potential Funding Source: VL, G, LC )
  - ❑ Meet with **Sussex County Habitat for Humanity** to plan for a Habitat project of at least 6 single-family homes in the Central Avenue area, using the WRCLT as the agency for land acquisition and continuing land ownership. (Est. Cost Range: \$500-1,000) (Potential Funding Source: VL)
  - ❑ West Side New Beginnings, Inc. should proceed to plan and apply for funds to construct a **new addition to the West Side New Beginnings Community Center**, with additional space (approximately 2,500 square feet) for job skills, entrepreneurial and leadership training, a computer center, child and adult education, a small library and space for day care as well as elderly programs, with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Development program as the most likely source of grant funds. This project should be coordinated with the community square neighborhood park and playground on Hebron Road site adjacent to the Center. (Est. Cost Range: \$5,000-10,000) (Potential Funding Source: G, CG)
  - ❑ Finalize **CLT legal documents** for ground leases, use restrictions, equity limitations and resale conditions for CLT ownership, using the *ICE Community Land Trust Legal Manual* and previous WRCLT work as a guide. (Est. Cost Range: \$500-1,000) (Potential Funding Source: OG)
  - ❑ Seek inclusion in Sussex County's implementation of the new **HUD Neighborhood Stabilization Program**. (Est. Cost Range: \$100-400) (Potential Funding Source: VL)

## Short-term Actions (2010-2014)

- ❑ Continue **annual CDBG applications** each and every year with Sussex County. (Est. Cost Range: \$500-1,000) (Potential Funding Source: VL)
- ❑ Work with Sussex County Habitat for Humanity to make agreements and prepare sites for phase 1 of the **Central Avenue New Homes** project, and especially to accomplish land acquisition funding and site acquisition. (Est. Cost Range: \$500-1,000) (Potential Funding Source: PF, CG, VL, OG)
- ❑ Secure funding for the **Burton Avenue New Housing** Development, acquire the site and proceed with construction. (Est. Cost Range: \$1,100,000-\$1,500,000 ) (Potential Funding Source: CG, PF, OG, LC)
- ❑ Seek support and proceed to plan, design and identify funding sources for the **Hebron Road Streetscape Project**, viewing it as a DelDOT and U.S. DOT Transportation Enhancements project with Sussex county support. (Est. Cost Range: \$500-1,000) (Potential Funding Source: VL, OG)
- ❑ Do initial planning for the **North Hebron Neighborhood Retail Center**. (Est. Cost

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- Range: \$5,000-6,000) (Potential Funding Source: VL, OG)
- ❑ Complete funding and construct the **WSNB Community Center Expansion** and seek funding for the adjacent Community Square Project. (Est. Cost Range: \$250,000-400,000) (Potential Funding Source: G, CG, LC)
  - ❑ As a first step toward implementing the **West Side Mixed-use Village Project**, obtain design and funding assistance for land subsidy and acquisition by the Community Land Trust, and seek appropriate development partners for the project. Do conceptual planning for the West Side Village housing development. (Est. Cost Range: \$ 5,000-10,000) (Potential Funding Source: CG, VL, PF)
  - ❑ Formulate one or more possible projects that may be attractive to the **Milford Housing Development Corporation** and invite MHDC to come, talk and look. (Est. Cost Range: \$500-1,000) (Potential Funding Source: VL, OG)
  - ❑ Seek advice and help from **NCALL and First State Community Action Agency** to recruit and counsel an initial group of new homeowners. (Est. Cost Range: \$500-1,000) (Potential Funding Source: VL, OG)
  - ❑ Identify a reuse and initiate fundraising and rehabilitation for the former **American Legion Hall** as an office, meeting hall and neighborhood museum. (Est. Cost Range: \$1,000-2,000) (Potential Funding Source: VL, OG)
  - ❑ Conduct training in **ancillary services** (home operation and maintenance, entrepreneurship, and beautification) with partner organizations. (Est. Cost Range: ) (Potential Funding Source: )
  - ❑ **Pave Dunbar Street, Johnston Street and Malloy Street.** (Est. Cost Range: \$60,000-120,000) (Potential Funding Source: G, CG)

## Mid-to-Long-term Actions (2015-2019)

- ❑ Continue **annual CDBG applications** each and every year with Sussex County. (Est. Cost Range: \$500-1,000) (Potential Funding Source: VL, SC)
- ❑ Assemble and implement the **West Side Mixed-Use Village** project for new homes in the upper Norwood and Dunbar Street area, working with a carefully selected non- or for-profit developer. (Est. Cost Range: \$2,000,000-\$2,500,000) (Potential Funding Source: CG, PF)
- ❑ Complete the **Hebron Streetscape Project**, including designation of the **Junction and Breakwater Trail** along historic Hebron Road, and the Neighborhood Trail and Connected Open Space Project to tie in with the **Community Square** and Hebron Streetscape. (Est. Cost Range: \$1,000,000-1,500,000) (Potential Funding Source: G)
- ❑ Continue the Sussex County **Habitat for Humanity Partnership** for rebuilding the Central Avenue area. (Est. Cost Range: \$500,000-750,000) (Potential Funding Source: VL, CG, G)
- ❑ Develop a **“Green Streets” partnership** program for street tree and floral planting with Rehoboth Beach civic groups, drawing neighborhood children in to this as an educational program. (Est. Cost Range: \$15,000-25,000) (Potential Funding Source:

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VL, LC, G)

- Develop a program to add **small units of service, office, and retail space** as economic development projects to bring new jobs, private investment and daytime business activity to sites in and adjacent to the neighborhood. (Est. Cost Range: \$10,000-15,000) (Potential Funding Source: CG, LC)

## **Conclusion**

The revitalization plan and implementation steps as recommended can preserve the character of West Rehoboth and build upon it for affordable and decent housing, improved neighborhood conditions and a better way of life with diligent cooperation and hard work on the part of the partnership organizations.

## **“We Who Believe in West Rehoboth”**

We quote from Brenda Milbourne’s *Oral History* on the future:

“That’s what we do here, we who believe in West Rehoboth and believe in our community, we continue to keep the faith. We will not be moved and we will beautify our community and we are going to clean our community up. We can’t help the name, but we can help to continue to keep it as West Rehoboth, we are not worried about who comes here and lives, what we worried about, will you help make it affordable, that’s what are worried about. Not everybody has a college degree. Some people are still factory people, some people are still hotel people, yes, they still need a place to live in West Rehoboth.”

Page 9, from the *Oral History of Mrs. Brenda Milbourne, op. cit.*

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