

## **Housing Improvement**

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During East St. Louis' industrial heyday, Olivette Park established a reputation as one of the city's premiere residential neighborhoods. Stately brick mansions lined many of the neighborhood's streets, earning it the name "Quality Hill" (figure 4.1). Today, several of those mansions are still intact, and a few have been expertly rehabilitated and restored. However, the neighborhood also contains a large number of dilapidated homes that pose a health and safety threat to the neighborhood and should be demolished, as well as a significant number of deteriorated homes in need of maintenance and improvement. In addition, the neighborhood also contains a large amount of vacant land, the former sites of homes and businesses, that is suitable for new residential development.

In light of these neighborhood strengths and weaknesses, this section focuses on strategies to stabilize and improve the quality of the housing and to eliminate derelict structures from the neighborhood. Immediate and short-term projects focus on stabilizing and rehabilitating existing homes through home improvement projects and owner education programs. These projects are modest in scope and in funding requirements, and should be easily implemented by the Olivette Park Neighborhood Association Housing Committee. The long-term project would be a development plan for new housing construction in the neighborhood.



Figure 4.1. An example of housing that earned the neighborhood the nickname "Quality Hill".

## **Project One**

### **Create a Demolition Plan to Rid the Neighborhood of Derelict Structures**

*Description* The results of a Fall, 1995 physical condition survey indicated that 83 parcels of land in Olivette Park contain derelict structures in need of demolition. Of those parcels, address and ownership information could be determined for 68 derelict structures. A list of these 68 structures is provided in this chapter. This project seeks to decrease this number by prioritizing the derelict structures and then working with the city and non-profit organizations to eliminate the most dangerous structures.

Currently, the city has \$1.2 million slated for demolition of derelict structures throughout the East St. Louis. Each demolition costs around \$4,000<sup>1</sup>. Because Olivette Park accounts for about 8 percent of the city's population, its "fair share" of the demolition money should be about \$75,000. This would allow for the demolition of about 18 to 20 dangerous buildings in the neighborhood. That amount of money obviously will not eliminate all of the dangerous structures in the neighborhood. Therefore, it is recommended that public dollars be used to demolish publicly-held buildings and buildings owned by very low-income people lacking the means to demolish them. To rid the neighborhood of other privately-owned structures, whose owners do have the means to demolish or seal, it is recommended that the neighborhood association use two approaches. First, the neighborhood association should initiate a letter-writing campaign to strongly encourage private owners to seal or demolish their dangerous buildings. If that tactic does not prove successful, the neighborhood association should work with Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance to take these property owners to court to legally force them to seal or demolish their derelict structures. Finally, the neighborhood association should fully participate in the East St. Louis Community Action Network's code enforcement campaign, to work toward improving the overall level of property maintenance in the city.

*Rationale* Derelict structures pose a health and safety risk to the neighborhood. The Olivette Park Neighborhood Association must work

to ensure that its demolition needs are considered in the city's demolition program, as well as explore other avenues for ridding the neighborhood of dangerous structures. Creating a list of derelict structures in the neighborhood, prioritizing them based on location and severity, and implementing a strategic demolition plan will demonstrate the neighborhood's organizational capacity and commitment to neighborhood improvement.

It is recommended that public dollars not be used to demolish buildings owned by individuals or real estate companies with the financial means to fix the problem. Public dollars should only be used to demolish tax-delinquent buildings held in trusteeship by the county, or structures owned by people who truly cannot afford to seal or demolish their buildings. Therefore, the Olivette Park Neighborhood Association should use several approaches, described in detail in this section, to force owners with sufficient means to use their own resources to demolish or seal their dangerous structures. For owners of dilapidated structures in Olivette Park who truly cannot afford to demolish or seal their properties, it is recommended that funds from the city's demolition program be used.

#### *Activities*

##### *1. Confirm and modify list of derelict structures in Olivette Park*

The list of structures recommended for demolition generated through the physical conditions inventory of the neighborhood is provided in table 4.1. The first step in this project is to organize members of the housing committee to divide up the list and check each property. As this data was collected in Fall, 1995, there is a possibility that some conditions have changed, or that some of these buildings have already been demolished. Also, these persons should note any additional structures that have deteriorated since the Fall, 1995 survey due to fire or other causes.

##### *2. Present a list of county-held properties to the city for demolition.*

It is recommended that county-held buildings be referred to the city for demolition first, as the city has control over these properties and can demolish them without a court order. Under Illinois State law, the county is required to take over as trustee of abandoned properties. The city pays holding costs to the county, and the city has the authority to determine what to do with the properties.<sup>2</sup> If St. Clair County is the "holder in trust" of the title for a property with a derelict structure, the city can seek the county's

Parcel I.D. Number	Property Address	Parcel I.D. Number	Property Address
02-18.0-105-015	734 N 8TH ST	02-18.0-126-023	518 VERONICA AV
02-18.0-105-045	809 PENNSYLVANIA	02-18.0-126-025	1325 STATE ST
02-18.0-105-051	717 N 9TH ST	02-18.0-126-034	535 N 14TH ST
02-18.0-106-030	905 PENNSYLVANIA	02-18.0-127-011	538 N 14TH ST
02-18.0-106-033	913 PENNSYLVANIA	02-18.0-127-012	536 N 14TH ST
02-18.0-108-001	1112 ST CLAIR AV	01-13.0-201-003	COLLINSVILLE AV
02-18.0-108-003	1112 ST CLAIR AV	01-13.0-202-028	511 N 6TH ST
02-18.0-108-004	1112 ST CLAIR AV	01-13.0-202-034	501 N 6TH ST
02-18.0-108-005	1112 ST CLAIR AV	01-13.0-203-001	600 PENNSYLVANIA AV
02-18.0-108-006	1112 ST CLAIR AV	01-13.0-203-004	644 N 6TH ST
02-18.0-108-025	729 N 13TH ST	01-13.0-204-001	700 PENNSYLVANIA AV
02-18.0-108-034	717 N 13TH ST	01-13.0-204-038	611 N 8TH ST
02-18.0-108-040	1111 PENNSYLVANIA	01-13.0-205-038	823 SUMMIT AV
02-18.0-108-046	710 N 11TH ST	01-13.0-207-001	700 SUMMIT AV
02-18.0-109-011	722 N 13TH ST	01-13.0-208-016	510 N 8TH ST
02-18.0-109-014	716 N 13TH ST	01-13.0-213-018	436 N 7TH ST
02-18.0-109-028	1307 PENNSYLVANIA	01-13.0-213-019	434 N 7TH ST
02-18.0-110-003	1352 ST CLAIR AV	02-18.0-212-029	1507 SUMMIT AV
02-18.0-110-004	1352 ST CLAIR AV	02-18.0-212-031	1513 SUMMIT AV
02-18.0-112-033	735 WABASHA AV	02-18.0-300-029	1473 BELMONT AV
02-18.0-113-008	638 N 9TH ST	02-18.0-302-024	1515 OHIO AV
02-18.0-113-022	629 N 10TH ST	02-18.0-304-004	1504 BELMONT AV
02-18.0-113-025	623 N 10TH ST	02-18.0-304-011	1514 BELMONT AV
02-18.0-114-035	601 N 11TH ST	02-18.0-304-013	1516 BELMONT AV
02-18.0-114-036	607 N 11TH ST	02-18.0-305-030	1629 OHIO AV
02-18.0-115-014	667 N 13TH ST	02-18.0-306-009	1612 OHIO AV
02-18.0-118-010	1020 SUMMIT AV	02-18.0-306-027	1625 BELMONT AV
02-18.0-119-009	1310 SUMMIT AV	02-18.0-400-004	1705 COLLEGE
02-18.0-124-019	546 N 12TH ST	02-18.0-401-030	667 N 18TH ST
02-18.0-124-022	0 N 12TH ST	02-18.0-401-061	1743 OHIO
02-18.0-124-025	528 N 12TH ST	02-18.0-402-045	1717 BELMONT
02-18.0-124-039	543 N 13TH ST	02-18.0-402-048	1725 BELMONT
02-18.0-125-001	1300 COLLEGE AV	02-18.0-402-069	1718 OHIO
02-18.0-125-024	530 N 13TH ST	02-18.0-403-012	1720 BELMONT
02-18.0-125-053	519 VERONICA AV	02-18.0-405-042	1801 OHIO
02-18.0-125-066	531 VERONICA AV	02-18.0-415-002	2000 ST CLAIR AV
02-18.0-126-016	532 VERONICA AV	01-13.0-416-011	1102 GATY

Table 4.1. Properties requiring demolition in Olivette Park

permission to demolish.<sup>3</sup> According to the physical conditions survey and ownership data provided by the St. Clair County Assessor's Office, 10 derelict structures in Olivette Park are currently held in trusteeship by the county.

As these structures could be demolished with a minimum of legal delays, and would require public funding, it is recommended that these structures be placed at the top of the neighborhood association's list of structures to be demolished. These county-held properties should be presented to the city to include in its demolition program. St. Clair County also will soon have funds available for demolition, as local taxing bodies recently agreed to forgo revenues from the sale of county-held structures.

If no other county-held, derelict structures are found during the group's inspection of the neighborhood, the list in table 4.2 would be presented to the city for demolition.

Parcel ID	Site Address
02-18.0-105-045	809 PENNSYLVANIA
02-18.0-108-025	729 N 13TH ST
02-18.0-112-033	735 WABASHA AV
02-18.0-124-025	528 N 12TH ST
02-18.0-126-034	535 N 14TH ST
01-13.0-204-001	700 PENNSYLVANIA AV
01-13.0-208-016	510 N 8TH ST
02-18.0-304-011	1514 BELMONT AV
02-18.0-305-030	1629 OHIO AV
02-18.0-405-042	1801 OHIO

Table 4.2. County-owned derelict structures in Olivette Park

### 3. Prioritize the remaining, privately-held derelict structures.

According to the physical conditions survey, there are 58 privately-owned, derelict structures in Olivette Park. Some of these structures are obviously more dangerous than others, in terms of location, adjacency to schools, churches, or inhabited homes, crime incidence, and rodents, insects, and other vermin. Therefore, it is recommended that the neighborhood association determine which structures present the most urgent need for demolition. Mem-

bers of the Olivette Park Neighborhood Association Housing Committee should decide which buildings are the biggest problem in the neighborhood so the demolitions can be completed in order from most to least dangerous.

A prioritization form used by the East St. Louis demolition program, shown in figure 4.2, should help the neighborhood association develop a list of criteria for demolition prioritization.

<b>DEMOLITION PRIORITIZATION</b>		
Condemnation Case #: _____	Court Order #: _____	Date & Initials: _____
<b>I. STRUCTURE</b>		
1. Condition: ____ Boarded-up ____ Burnt-out ____ Collapsed ____ Other : _____	2. Livability: ____ Rehabitable ____ Uninhabitable	3. Health & Safety Concerns: ____ Close to Neighbor Structure ____ Leaning Refuse ____ Collecting Yard ____ Overgrown
		<b>Total: I. _____</b>
<b>II. NEIGHBORHOOD/BLOCK</b>		
1. Number of Structures: ____ Total ____ Inhabitable ____ Uninhabitable	2. Pedestrian Traffic: ____ School Route ____ Recreation Route ____ Business Route ____ Religious Route ____ Residential	3. Vehicular Traffic ____ Primary ____ Secondary ____ Residential
4. # of Features ____ Business ____ School ____ Religious Site ____ Recreation/Park	5. # of Organizations: ____ Neighborhood Associations ____ Crime Watch	
		<b>Total: II. _____</b>
<b>III. PUBLIC SAFETY (PAST 12 MONTHS)</b>		
1. Police Incidence: ____ Property Crime ____ Person Crime ____ Drug Crime ____ Other: _____	2. Fire Incidence: ____ Structure ____ Yard/Weed ____ False Alarm ____ Other: _____	3. Health Incidence: ____ Refuse/Garbage ____ Vermin ____ Odor ____ Other: _____
		<b>Total: III. _____</b>
<b>IV. EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES</b>		
1. Low to moderate income property owner ..... _____		
2. Property owner resides adjacent to structure ..... _____		
3. Cancellation of adjacent property's insurance ..... _____		
4. Public/Private reinvestment project (s) ..... _____		
<b>DEMOLITION PRIORITIZATION TOTAL _____</b>		

Figure 4.2. City of East St. Louis Demolition Prioritization Form

4. *Go after the 20 worst, privately-owned structures in the neighborhood.*

Based on the results of the prioritization, target the 20 worst structures in the neighborhood for demolition. The neighborhood association will need to encourage individual property owners with the means to maintain their property to do so through a series of letters. If that does not prove successful, the neighborhood association can work with Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance to try and obtain court orders to force property owners to seal or demolish their derelict buildings.

- The Olivette Park Neighborhood Association Letter Campaign Ownership information for each derelict structure in the neighborhood has been provided to the neighborhood association. The first step in ridding the neighborhood of derelict structures is simply to request that the owners tear them down. This would be most effectively done in a formal letter from the Olivette Park Neighborhood Association, signed by the officers. The neighborhood association should request a prompt response from the property owner, either stating that the structure will be demolished or the reasons why it can not be demolished. If there is no response within one month, a follow-up letter should be issued stating that legal action will be taken against this owner.

- **Land of Lincoln Legal Aid**

If the letter campaign proves unsuccessful, the neighborhood association should work with Diane Thompson at Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance to take these individual property owners to court to force them to maintain their properties. Ms. Thompson has successfully helped the Olivette Park Neighborhood Association President Mamie Bolden obtain a court order for demolition of a derelict structure at 610 Veronica, which was demolished in May.

5. *Consider the needs of low-income property owners.*

The neighborhood association must be sensitive to the plight of low-income property owners who cannot afford to maintain their properties. It is recommended that people dependent on public assistance or social security as their primary source of income not be forced to use all of their own resources to demolish or seal their buildings. It is recommended that the derelict properties of very low-income residents be referred to the city's demolition program. As stated in the introduction to this section, Olivette Park's "fair

share” of the city’s demolition program money would allow for the demolition of approximately 18 to 20 structures. It is recommended that the 10 county-held, derelict structures be demolished using city demolition funds. Therefore, there would be funding left for an additional eight to 10 structures. It is recommended that this remaining funding be used for the demolition of structures owned by very-low income people who cannot afford to seal or maintain their own buildings.

*6. Participate in the East St. Louis Community Action Network Campaign*

ESL CAN is a year-old coalition of grass-roots neighborhood and community-based organizations dedicated to improving the quality of life in East St. Louis. The group’s first issue to accomplish this goal is to encourage more strict enforcement of the city’s sanitation code, which includes derelict structures and unmaintained lots. It is recommended that the Olivette Park Neighborhood Association participate fully in this effort. With broad-based, community participation, ESL CAN will be successful in improving the environmental quality of East St. Louis through more stringent adherence to the city’s sanitation code.

*Timeline* This process should begin immediately. As soon as the list of derelict structures is checked and updated by the members of the housing committee, this project can begin. Ms. Diane Bonner, executive director of the East St. Louis CDBG, has indicated her willingness to fund proposals that result from the Olivette Park Action Revitalization Plan. This would be an important such proposal for the neighborhood to submit. Ms. Diane Thompson, of the Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance, has indicated her willingness to help the neighborhood association take private property owners to court. Therefore, the neighborhood association should work with these agencies and begin implementing this program as quickly as possible.

*Costs* The costs to the Olivette Park Neighborhood Association are mostly time-related. Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance provides free legal advice to neighborhood organizations. The cost to the city of East St. Louis demolition program would be about \$75,000.

*Resources*     **Diane Bonner**  
**Community Development Block Grant**  
**City of East St. Louis**  
**301 River Park Drive**  
**East St. Louis, Illinois 62201**  
**(618) 482-6600**

**Diane Thompson**  
**Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance**  
**327 Missouri Avenue**  
**Suite 300**  
**East St. Louis, Illinois 62201**  
**(618) 271-9140**

**Bruce Stennis**  
**Code Enforcement Officer**  
**City of East St. Louis**  
**301 River Park Drive**  
**East St. Louis, Illinois 62201**  
**(618) 398-2040**

**Carolyn Fuller**  
**Executive Director, ESL CAN**  
**8787 State Street**  
**East St. Louis, Illinois 62207**

## **Project Two**

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### **Scrape-up and Paint-up Program**

*Description* Many homes in Olivette Park are in need of maintenance and improvements, but owners cannot afford to make them. Some of these improvement activities, such as scraping and painting, do not require highly skilled labor and can be accomplished with a number of volunteers. The purpose of this project is to identify homes that are in need of exterior scraping and painting and to establish a system of recruiting volunteers and securing resources to complete the painting projects.

*Rationale* When homeowners are unable to make necessary repairs and improvements to their houses, the lack of maintenance reflects on the entire neighborhood. Adding a new coat of paint to a home is a very visible project that not only improves the individual dwelling unit, but the entire neighborhood environment. Through a community-based, volunteer scrape-up and paint-up project, neighbors would be recruited to help other neighbors, increasing the sense of community spirit in Olivette Park. Successful completion of several small-scale painting projects would increase the visibility of the neighborhood association, add credibility to the organization, and increase the confidence of its membership.

*Activities* 1. *Establish guidelines for the project.*  
This can be done by the Olivette Park Neighborhood Association Housing Committee or a sub-committee of the neighborhood association. These guidelines should include the scope of the projects, a method for prioritizing projects, and requirements for participants in the program. For example, the committee could decide that senior citizens would receive priority, or houses in a certain target area of the neighborhood would receive priority. It is important to establish criteria for deciding which homes will be selected for the paint-up and scrape-up project to ensure that the project is fair and equitable. An application form for prospective participants should also be developed.

The Housing Committee will want to establish guidelines for how much individual homeowners will be expected to contribute to-

ward the program. In all likelihood, each homeowner will have to contribute a percentage of the paint and supply costs. The Housing Committee will need to develop a sliding scale based on income. For example, very low-income homeowners, people on public assistance or seniors on a fixed income might be expected to pay five to 10 percent of the paint costs, while people with higher incomes might be expected to pay half or all of the supply costs.

*2. Recruit participants.*

Announce the program through fliers, press releases, and pulpit announcements. Solicit homeowner participants as well as volunteers to help with the painting projects. Students from the University of Illinois East St. Louis Action Research Project have participated in many scrape-up and paint-up projects throughout the city and could be recruited to work in teams with Olivette Park residents. Local youth, church organizations and service fraternities and sororities should also be recruited to participate. In addition, students from local universities, including Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, Southern Illinois University Carbondale, State Community College, Belleville Area Community College, Washington University, and the University of Missouri St. Louis should be recruited to participate. About six to eight people will be needed per house, depending upon the size of the house and the number of stories.

*3. Create a list of potential participants.*

The committee should then use pre-established criteria to prioritize projects in terms of when each project can be scheduled and completed. It is recommended that one house be selected for a pilot project. The owner of the pilot project house should then be notified in writing.

*4. Schedule the projects.*

Schedule a weekend or series of weekends for completing the pilot project. Secure the equipment needed (paint, brushes, rollers, etc.) and confirm the participation of volunteers. It will likely take at least one day to prepare the house for painting (scraping, taping up windows, etc.) and at least one day to paint the house.

*5. Scrape and paint the house(s).*

Arrange for all volunteers to arrive by 8 A.M. to ensure enough daylight hours for work. Make sure that all equipment is at the

site the night before to avoid a start-up delay. Ask the homeowner to provide water and drinks for the volunteers.

Generate awareness of the pilot project house to encourage others to get involved in the paint-up and scrape-up program. A lunch-time cookout, a neighborhood association sign, and media coverage can increase awareness of the paint-up and scrape-up program as well as the neighborhood association. After the projects are completed, an attractive yard sign should be placed at the site announcing that these painting projects were completed by the Olivette Park Neighborhood Association.

6. *End on a high note.*

Celebrate the successful completion of the project with a picnic or barbecue. This could be a fundraising event to finance the next year's scrape-up/paint-up equipment costs. Also, thank-you notes and a before and after picture of the house should be sent to any store or wholesaler that provided paint and equipment. Thank-you notes should be sent to the volunteers by the neighborhood association.

*Timeline* This project can be planned during the winter months, and implemented during the Spring, Summer, and early Fall. After one successful year, the project may be expanded, dependent on available resources and volunteers. The housing committee might set a goal to complete one house the first year, four houses the second year, six houses the third year, and 8 houses the fourth and fifth years. The rationale is to successfully complete a small number of houses the first two years and then expand the program by recruiting more volunteers and soliciting more equipment and monetary donations.

*Costs* A 1,500 square foot home with wood siding would require about eight gallons of paint. A gallon of latex paint costs around \$28, which means that it would cost about \$225 to complete such a house. Paint brushes, rollers, drop cloths, and pans will cost about another \$100 to \$200, but these items can be re-used. Volunteers may be able to loan some of their own equipment and supplies, which will cut down on costs.

*Funding* There are several possible ways to fund this project. The first is to solicit donations of paint and brushes from local hardware stores,

chain stores, or national paint companies. A second method is to solicit CDBG funds to purchase paint and supplies for the project. A third method is to have participants provide the paint and supplies for volunteers to use. The Olivette Park Neighborhood Association might consider holding a fund raiser to purchase some painting equipment, such as brushes and rollers, to be available for all painting projects in the neighborhood.

*Resources* The main resource needed for this project are volunteers. Many of the volunteers likely can be recruited from the neighborhood, through the neighborhood association, local schools, and local churches. Other possibilities include service fraternities and sororities, area colleges and universities, alternative spring break projects, and national church organizations.

### **Project Three**

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#### **Home Improvement and Maintenance Fair**

*Description* This one-day, city-wide fair will host how-to booths for residents interested in improving their homes. Booths could include home security, home maintenance, landscaping improvements, home weatherization, and home improvement loans. Knowledgeable residents, contractors, loan officers, landscape architects, and government officials would be asked to staff the booths, distribute pamphlets and brochures, hold demonstrations, and answer questions.

*Rationale* Many homes in Olivette Park are in need of maintenance and repair. Some residents might need technical assistance or information in order to make the repairs, or practical information about how to hire a qualified contractor to make repairs. This fair would provide such assistance free of charge to residents, increasing the likelihood that these needed repairs will be made. An increase in home repair and maintenance will increase the attractiveness and quality of the overall housing stock in Olivette Park. A successful fair, attended by residents citywide, will increase the visibility and credibility of the Olivette Park Neighborhood Association.

*Activities* 1. *Establish a committee to plan the fair.*  
This might be the Olivette Park Neighborhood Association Housing Committee or some sub-committee. As the fair will take a substantial amount of planning and organizing, it is recommended that eight to 10 volunteers be recruited to serve on the planning committee for the fair. The neighborhood association may want to invite other East St. Louis neighborhood organizations to serve as co-sponsors of the event and serve on the planning committee. The committee will need to begin meeting once a week at least three to four months prior to the actual event to ensure enough time for planning, recruiting participants, and advertising.

2. *Secure a location and date to hold the fair.*  
The fair should ideally be held in Olivette Park in order to promote the neighborhood to the rest of the city. The location must have access to phones, restrooms, and parking. It is recommended

that the fair be planned as both an indoor and outdoor event. Holding some booths and demonstrations outdoors will increase the visibility of the fair and attract more people. However, because of the possibility of rain, the facility also should have enough indoor space to accommodate all booths.

Some possible Olivette Park locations for the fair include the Salvation Army, 616 N. 16th St., and the Christian Activity Center, 540 N. 6th St., or one of the neighborhood schools, such as Miles Davis Elementary School or A.M. Jackson. The committee should investigate each possibility and check for availability before making a decision on where to hold the event.

Spring or early Summer would be the most ideal time to hold the fair, since many home improvements are conducted during the warm weather months. The fair should probably be held on a Saturday, to avoid conflicts with work schedules and church services. Finally, the fair should probably be held for several hours, such as from noon to 5 P.M., to accommodate the maximum number of attendees.

### *3. Recruit participants.*

Recruit people and organizations to host “how-to” booths at the fair. Ideally, at least 15 to 20 booths should be recruited. Some suggestions for booths include electrical repair, home weatherization, landscaping, plumbing tips, exterior painting, interior improvements (painting, wallpapering, and floor-stripping), home security, and energy efficiency tips.

First, send a letter to local contractors, hardware store managers, plumbers, trade unions, the East St. Louis Police Department, and building maintenance workers inviting them to participate in the fair. Follow these letters up with phone calls about one week later, to secure their participation. Ask each invited participant for suggestions of additional individuals, business owners, or agencies to invite, and follow up with letters. Also, use the media and local churches to recruit resident experts to staff booths.

Secure commitments from participants a month prior to the fair. Find out what materials (pamphlets, brochures, etc.) participants will distribute, and whether or not they will be able to provide a

booth sign. If not, a committee member should be in charge of making signs for booths. This will help fair attendees quickly find their way to the booths in which they are interested.

*4. Secure equipment for fair.*

Check with the host facility to see if chairs and tables are available for use. If not, the committee can solicit local churches and schools to lend equipment for the fair. Also, determine if a sound system with a microphone will be needed for the home improvement demonstrations. Check with State Community College, the GEMM Centre, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (East St. Louis campus), or local churches to see if a system can be borrowed.

*5. Plan a fund raiser for the neighborhood association.*

The fair provides an ideal opportunity for the neighborhood association to raise money. The fundraising committee can determine what specific fundraising activity should be undertaken. Some possibilities include selling food and beverages, selling raffle tickets, or selling Olivette Park Neighborhood Association t-shirts.

*6. Publicize the event.*

About one month before the fair, plan a press conference to announce the event and invite the local media (see Appendix A for information on press contacts). Feature two or three of the home improvement fair participants and provide information about what other booths will be at the fair. Besides the press conference, also use local churches, social service agencies, and businesses to spread the word about the event. Finally, recruit some volunteers from other neighborhood organizations to distribute fliers throughout their neighborhoods.

*7. Hold the fair.*

Make sure a core of volunteers arrives early to set up and another group remains late to clean up.

*8. Follow-up after the fair.*

Make sure that all equipment borrowed is returned. All participants should be sent a thank-you note on behalf of the neighborhood association.

*Timeline* As noted above, this project would be an ideal Spring or early Summer project. Project planning can begin in February for a May event. Requests for volunteers can go out in mid-February and

confirmed by the beginning of April. Potential locations for the fair can be investigated during early March and secured by the end of March. Publicity for the event should begin the first or second week in April.

*Costs* The costs associated with this program are: creating publicity fliers, making signs, and renting any equipment that cannot be borrowed. Printing and sign costs will likely be \$100 to \$200..

*Funding* Local businesses can be solicited for small donations to cover the printing costs, or local printing companies can be asked to donate services. Paints or markers for signs can likely be donated or borrowed, and large poster boards can be purchased using Olivette Park Neighborhood Association dues money.

*Resources* *Home Security:*  
 Lt. Alonzo Perrin  
 Community Oriented Policing Commander  
 East St. Louis Police Department  
 301 River Park Drive  
 East St. Louis, Illinois 62201  
 (618) 482-6793

*Home Repair:*  
 Carpenters Local 169  
 9439 Lebanon Road  
 East St. Louis, Illinois  
 (618) 397-3833  
 (618) 398-0169

University of Illinois  
 School of Architecture  
 Building Research Council  
 1 E. St. Mary's Road  
 Champaign, Illinois 61820  
 (217) 333-1801

*Landscaping:*  
 University of Illinois  
 Department of Landscape Architecture  
 101 Temple Buell Hall  
 611 E. Lorado Taft Dr.  
 Champaign, Illinois 61820

*Weatherization and Home Energy Assistance:*  
**St. Clair County Intergovernmental Grants Office**  
**19 Public Square**  
**Belleville, Illinois 62220**  
**(618) 277-6790**

**Project Four****Rehabilitate Seven Homes for Low-income and Very Low-income Families in Olivette Park**

*Description* Olivette Park contains 201 buildings in need of rehabilitation. The majority of these structures are single-family homes. Given the high level of poverty in Olivette Park, it is likely that many of the owners of these homes cannot afford to rehabilitate them. This project seeks to take advantage of an existing home rehabilitation program - the HOME program - run by the city of East St. Louis Community Development Block Grant Office. This project recommends that the neighborhood association apply in the Spring of 1997 for funding to rehabilitate seven homes in the neighborhood for low and very low-income families. Construction could be completed in the Summer and Fall of 1997 and the Spring of 1998. The neighborhood association might want to consider focusing this rehabilitation effort around the block between 7th and 8th Streets and Summit and Pennsylvania Avenues. This area is recommended to be targeted as a demonstration model of new, affordable housing in East St. Louis by a new non-profit group, East Side Home and Heart. Therefore, it might be logical to target the blocks around this area for home rehabilitation assistance to make a dramatic, visible impact in a concentrated area.

*Rationale* Lack of quality housing is one of the biggest concerns of residents in Olivette Park. The neighborhood contains many structurally sound homes that are good candidates for rehabilitation. Rehabilitating even a small number of homes in Olivette Park will enhance the physical appearance of the neighborhood and increase the quality of life.

A successful home rehabilitation project under the HOME program will demonstrate the neighborhood association's capacity to provide community development assistance to residents. As the neighborhood association gains more experience in housing rehabilitation and management, the neighborhood association will be able to better assist Olivette Park residents currently not being served by the private market.

Activities 1. *Establish criteria for participation in Olivette Park home rehabilitation program.*

All units within the Olivette Park neighborhood boundaries should be eligible to apply for the program. Homes should be selected based on pre-established criteria. One way to determine participation in the program would be to prioritize homes based on the criteria used in the Emerson Park Development Corporation's HOME proposal, submitted in May of 1996. Emerson Park based selection on whether:

- The owner is low- or very-low-income resident of the neighborhood
- The owner is an elderly person or a female head of household
- The unit is a single-family unit that is structurally sound but in need of systems upgrading and rehabilitation
- The unit is on a block with other occupied single-family units
- The home is adjacent to one or more occupied single-family units.<sup>4</sup>

2. *Apply for funding based on the established program criteria.*

Apply for HOME funds in Spring of 1997. By that time, it is likely that the neighborhood association will have received non-profit, tax-exempt status and will be eligible to receive funding from the HOME program. HOME fund applications may be obtained from Natalene Harper of the East St. Louis Community Development Department. Technical assistance in writing the application for the program can be provided by the University of Illinois East St. Louis Action Research Project or the East St. Louis Neighborhood Technical Assistance Center, scheduled to be opened in the Fall of 1996. Either of these two entities can help the neighborhood association develop a budget for the proposal.

3. *Assuming the proposal is funded, advertise for participants.*

The neighborhood association should sponsor several public meetings throughout the neighborhood to announce the home rehabilitation program. The guidelines for the program should be outlined at the meeting and attendees should be given applications. In addition to the meeting, fliers and application forms should be distributed to local social service agencies, churches, and schools. The application deadline should be clearly stated on the flier and application form.

4. *Select participants for the housing rehabilitation program.*

The neighborhood association officers and housing committee members should work with University of Illinois architecture faculty and Neighborhood Technical Assistance Center Staff to evaluate the applications according to the criteria. Site visits to determine the structural soundness of the homes proposed will be required to prioritize the projects and select which applicants would best be served through the home rehabilitation project.

5. *Implement the housing rehabilitation program.*

Assuming the HOME grant is approved and the application process is completed, the home rehabilitation program can begin in Summer of 1997. The neighborhood association and University of Illinois faculty and Neighborhood Technical Assistance Center staff can perform the preliminary, pre-development inspection of each property selected. A bid package must be developed and a low bidder selected to perform the general contract work on the properties. The East St. Louis Community Development Block Grant Department and St. Clair County Office of Intergovernmental Grants can help provide lists of qualified contractors.

- Timeline* This project recommends that the neighborhood association apply for funding in the Spring of 1997 to rehabilitate seven homes in the neighborhood for low and very low-income families. Construction could be completed in the Summer, and Fall of 1997 and the Spring of 1998.
- Costs* Specific costs for the Olivette Park home rehab project will have to be developed with technical assistance from the Neighborhood Technical Assistance Center. To give an idea of what the Olivette Park project might cost, the Emerson Park Development Corporation HOME proposal indicated that the rehabbing seven homes in that neighborhood would cost approximately \$225,000.<sup>5</sup>
- Funding* The City of East St. Louis Home Program would be the primary funder of this project.

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**Professor Ken Reardon**  
**University of Illinois**  
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**East St. Louis Neighborhood Technical Assistance Center**  
**(location to be announced in Fall, 1996)**

**Project Five****Develop a Demonstration Model of New, Affordable Housing in Olivette Park**

*Description* It is recommended that the block between 7th and 8th Streets and Summit and Pennsylvania Avenues be targeted as a demonstration model of new, affordable housing in East St. Louis. The Olivette Park Neighborhood Association would work with a new non-profit, a local developer, and students from the University of Illinois School of Architecture to create a housing proposal that provides new housing options to low-income East St. Louis families.

A substantial portion of the proposed block is owned and maintained by the Family Center, which is located on the block. The Family Center, in its involvement with a non-profit entity called East Side Heart and Home, has been working to acquire and clear the remaining parcels on the block, with a future goal of building affordable housing for low-income families.

It is recommended that the neighborhood association and East Side Heart and Home work with students and faculty of the East St. Louis Action Research Project to 1) write a development proposal for the project and 2) to develop a housing design that is affordable, energy-efficient, and easy to maintain. University of Illinois Architecture students have already developed such a model of housing for residents in Emerson Park that could easily be adapted to Olivette Park. The design consists of single-family, craftsman style bungalow homes built around a small, shared courtyard. The bungalow style is indigenous to East St. Louis and would fit in well with the existing housing stock. The courtyard design would provide a secure, manageable space for children to play and for neighbors to share child-care responsibilities. Architecture students have also developed designs for duplex housing that would inter-mix with single-family housing.

*Rationale* A significant number of East St. Louis families with incomes between \$15,000 and \$30,000 have few housing options.<sup>6</sup> Research by Stern indicated that within this income group there was a market for affordable, new housing in East St. Louis. Olivette Park,

with its significant physical, social, educational, and cultural assets, would be an ideal location to develop a demonstration model of new, affordable housing. As discussed in the analysis section of this report, Olivette Park is one of the most visible and accessible neighborhoods in the city of East St. Louis. It contains many of the most important institutions in the city, and is home to three schools and 19 churches. Moreover, it contains an ample supply of vacant land suitable for the development of affordable houses.

It is recommended that the Olivette Park Neighborhood Association form a partnership with East Side Heart and Home, and that the two groups work together, with design assistance from the University of Illinois and the Neighborhood Technical Assistance Center, to develop a demonstration block of affordable housing. The members of East Side Heart and Home, specifically the Family Center, and Catholic Urban Programs have provided valuable social service programs for residents of the Olivette Park and the greater East St. Louis community. Volunteers from St. Vincent's Parish in St. Louis have helped clear several lots in the neighborhood. In addition to the social service members, East Side Heart and Home has enlisted the services of the East St. Louis Development Corporation.

The target location for the affordable housing demonstration model makes sense in terms of logistics, visibility, and access to services. Since the Family Center and the Belleville Diocese already own a significant portion of the block, land acquisition costs are lowered. The Family Center, the Christian Activity Center, Summit Avenue Baptist Church, the Gompers Homes, and the Catholic Daycare are all located within a few blocks of the demonstration block. As noted in the economic development chapter, this demonstration block also would be recommended as a target for infrastructure improvements, including streets, sidewalks, sewers, and lighting.

*Projected Costs and Possible Funding: A hypothetical affordability model*

University of Illinois architecture students and faculty have estimated that these single-family homes would cost around \$60,000 each to construct. With subsidy from the East St. Louis HOME program, such a house could be affordable to a family with a \$20,000 income.<sup>7</sup>

The family with a \$20,000 income could afford to pay a total of \$466 per month on housing costs, according to most bank lending

guidelines. Assuming that \$100 of that would go toward taxes and insurance, the family could afford a \$366 monthly mortgage payment. Based on a 30 year mortgage and a 7.5 percent interest rate, this family would actually only be eligible for a mortgage of \$52,345.

Most banks require a minimum down payment of 5 percent. However, the HOME program allows for potential homebuyers to apply for a “3-2” program for funds to use as down payment assistance. So this family would have to produce \$1,800 down payment, (3 percent) and the remaining 2 percent could be covered by the HOME funds. So, adding the \$1,800 down payment to the \$52,345 mortgage, the family would be able to purchase a \$54,145 house. The affordability gap, therefore, is equal to \$5,855.

This gap can be overcome through funding from the HOME program. Non-profit organizations can apply for \$100,000 in HOME funding for a homebuyer down payment fund. Such funding could help approximately 17 families overcome the affordability gap described above.

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**East St. Louis Neighborhood Technical Assistance Center  
(location to be announced in Fall, 1996)**

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<sup>1</sup> Olivette Park Neighborhood Association meeting 3/7/96. Presentation by Diane Thompson, Land of Lincoln Legal Services.

<sup>2</sup> Howard, Craig, and Molina, Frieda. *The East St. Louis Housing Market in 1990*. Presented to the East St. Louis Community Fund. October 18, 1991.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas, Daniel. Thesis. *Code Enforcement in East St. Louis*. University of Illinois. May, 1996.

<sup>4</sup> Forby, Vicky. Emerson Park Development Corp. Home Program Proposal. May, 1996.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid*

<sup>6</sup> Stern, Emily. Thesis. *An Analysis of the Housing Market in East St. Louis, Illinois: Exploring the potential for creating affordable homeownership opportunities through a new housing development initiative*. August, 1995

<sup>7</sup> Conversation with Richard Koenig, Illinois Housing Development Authority. May 4, 1996.