

## **Purpose and Plans of Lincoln Village Restoration Corporation**

The fundamental purpose of the Lincoln Village Restoration Corporation is work to improve the living conditions of families in the Lincoln Mill Village area of Huntsville, AL. Working along side other organizations such as the HEALS Medical and Dental Clinic, Second Mile Development Corporation, Southwood Presbyterian Church, as well as other community organizations, Lincoln Village Restoration is focused on providing affordable and safe low-income housing. The primary means of providing this housing will be the acquisition, renovation, leasing of current properties in disrepair as well as the development of housing on unimproved property in the Lincoln Village Area. We are working a multi-faceted approach with the other organizations. To fully impact the life of the community and its residents, we must educate the resident, support improvement of education at the neighborhood school, provide near term relief to the poor and longer term training, provide a moral and religious foundation for the improvement of life, and provide affordable, safe, and decent housing. The latter is the primary purpose of Lincoln Village Restoration Corporation.

The Lincoln Village area of Huntsville lies on the Northern Edge of the downtown district. It was developed between the early 1900's and the mid 1950's when the Lincoln and Dallas mills were large employers and stabilizing influences in the area. The closing of the mills has led to the abandonment of the area by developers and the resulting decline in the property and living conditions of the residents. Currently the elementary school servicing the area, Lincoln Village Elementary, has an enrollment that lives at approximately ½ the poverty income level. Several groups cited above have in recent years taken an active role in improving the conditions at the school and providing tutoring for the students. A large void in improving the total living conditions still exists in the housing that many of the children and families find themselves. Housing that today has units without electricity or running water, unsafe structures, and a significant population of 'crack' and 'shot' houses.

The City of Huntsville in developing a Downtown Master Plan has identified the Lincoln and Dallas Mill Villages as key areas for improvement and a future source of low- to moderate-income housing. As such, in several meetings we have forged a good working relationship where the city will assist in many functions such as: infrastructure development, more frequent police patrolling, rezoning as property is acquired, the removal of unsafe properties, and support with money for urban redevelopment (refurbishment dollars to improve existing housing.)

This community is on the brink of total collapse if action is not taken immediately. The absence of owner residents, the acquisition of parcels of property by commercial interests, and the deplorable living conditions ensure new resident are discouraged from moving in, and has resulted in unsafe living conditions for the children of the neighborhood and school. The 'landlords' have hampered the City in its efforts to improve the area: from rezoning, effective enforcement of building standards, and improvement of the overall neighborhood living conditions. Children in the area have

been living without hope: rampant drug use, a failing school, deterioration of housing, and crime make their future bleak.

In May 2003, the Lincoln Village Restoration Corporation was formed to support the overall program to improve the lives of the residents of the area. In the first months we have developed a master list of all properties and owners in the area and a strategy to acquire the properties and begin refurbishment. To date we have an offer accepted on a 13-plex unit and are negotiating on a 6-plex. In addition, we have developed an option contract and are beginning to establish prices for acquisition of approximately 30 more units in the area. This will leave approximately 30 units for our next phase. We will encourage resident owners to remain in the area and will offer support to refurbish their homes to bring them up to acceptable standards and all building codes of the City of Huntsville. Once ongoing acquisitions and option agreements on the first phase are complete, we will begin refurbishment.

Lincoln Village Restoration Corporation will depend on several sources of income. Initially we have raised money from several key donors who support the objectives of the corporation. We have discussed and have basic agreement with the City of Huntsville for two sources of support: 1) infrastructure development within the city's five year plan, and 2) Urban development money for refurbishment of properties. In addition, rezoning and police support will be key to long-term viability of the plan. We have worked with several corporations to define our plans and garner support. Many individuals have come forward to support the program. To date we have not solicited additional contributions since we cannot represent charitable status at this time. We are actively considering indebtedness for the sole purpose of speeding the actions to improve the community. In this case, rents could be used in conjunction with donations to retire the debt. In the future when we collect rents, all income derived from housing will be used to maintain, improve, and develop the community.