



# PLEASANT GROVE, ALABAMA

Long-Term Community Recovery Action Strategy  
November 2011



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# LETTERS OF SUPPORT

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

ROBERT BENTLEY  
GOVERNOR



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STATE OF ALABAMA

November 4, 2011

The Honorable Jerry Brasseale  
Mayor of Pleasant Grove  
501 Park Road  
Pleasant Grove, AL 35127

Dear Mayor Brasseale:

RE: Long Term Community Recovery Strategic Action Report

Let me begin by saying how very proud I am of the people of Pleasant Grove for their incredible resilience in the face of the devastation left in the wake of the April 27<sup>th</sup> tornado. It is a great honor to be associated with the State of Alabama. Virtually every time I have been in the Jefferson County area since the storm, I have witnessed unbelievable acts of selflessness, kindness, determination and adaptability among those who have lost so much, and those who have come to provide aid and assistance.

It has been extremely gratifying to see city, county, state and federal officials working closely together and with the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) representatives. I appreciate everyone's efforts – action committee meetings, stakeholder meetings and individual interviews – to craft a recovery plan that supports the long term viability of the community of Pleasant Grove and those who live in and around it.

In the weeks and months to come, I look forward to staying involved with the citizens of Jefferson County, the various agencies, both private and public aid organizations including FEMA, to ensure that this plan moves forward effectively and efficiently. We will need all our patience, cooperation, creativity and vision to rebuild the future together.

Sincerely,

Robert Bentley

RB:RM:cf

Enclosure

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

ROBERT BENTLEY  
GOVERNOR



STATE OF ALABAMA

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC  
AND COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

JIM BYARD, JR.  
DIRECTOR

November 4, 2011

The Honorable Jerry Brasseale  
Mayor of Pleasant Grove  
501 Park Road  
Pleasant Grove, AL 35127

Dear Mayor Brasseale:

RE: Long Term Community Recovery Strategic Action Report

It has been six months since a devastating tornado struck the community of Pleasant Grove and Jefferson County, severely disrupting the lives of the people who live and work there. At that time the State of Alabama's emergency response agencies moved swiftly to assist in rescue, debris removal, security, and restoration of essential services. Now the emergency clean-up effort is complete, but there still remains the long process of rebuilding and repairing businesses, homes and public property. I want to assure you that the State's Long Term Community Recovery staff will continue to offer assistance as you work to recover and rebuild.

This rebuilding effort, while painful and difficult, does present some opportunities for the community of Pleasant Grove and Jefferson County. Local officials are already considering the best way to approach a long term recovery plan. To succeed, that plan must involve all levels of government, as well as local businesses, private organizations and, most importantly, the citizens of Pleasant Grove and Jefferson County. Together, you have a great opportunity to develop a vision of your community's future, and to create a comprehensive plan to make that vision a reality.

To help Pleasant Grove and Jefferson County develop their Long Term Recovery Plan, an Alabama Long Term Community Recovery Team representing several agencies throughout the State of Alabama and elsewhere are working closely with the Federal Emergency Management Agency. I strongly endorse this effort. I have directed the participating agencies to identify potential sources of funding to implement and complete projects proposed in the plan. I commend you and the citizens of Pleasant Grove and Jefferson County for the dedication and willingness you have demonstrated by working together through this difficult time, and I look forward to working with you as the long term recovery effort continues.

Sincerely,

Jim Byard, Jr.  
Director

JB:RM:cf

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The Pleasant Grove Long-Term Community Recovery Action Strategy is the end-product of an effort initiated by local officials and directed by the Pleasant Grove Recovery Steering Committee. The contents of the Action Strategy are based on input gathered during committee meetings. This recovery planning effort constitutes the beginning of their holistic endeavor to rebuild the City of Pleasant Grove, Alabama, following the destruction of the April 27, 2011 tornado. The planning process began when Pleasant Grove officials adopted a resolution to deploy Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Long-Term Community Recovery (LTCR) to provide technical assistance during the city's recovery process. The objective of LTCR is to build local capacity while facilitating the initial planning process as a step in the community's long-term recovery efforts.

In the City of Pleasant Grove, disaster impacts to housing were severe. The LTCR Team began working with the mayor and members of the city council in June 2011. The city council appointed the Pleasant Grove Recovery Steering Committee on September 6, 2011. Since September, the committee and city officials worked with the local and regional agencies to analyze the disaster impacts, identify issues, and develop strategies. Based on this information, the committee developed the following strategies that will contribute to Pleasant Grove's recovery.



## INTRODUCTION



### COMMUNITY BACKGROUND

Pleasant Grove, a mining community established in 1884, was incorporated in 1934 as a cooperative venture to create a public water system. Pleasant Grove earned its nickname “The Good Neighbor City” from its history as a community of hard-working individuals known for helping each other. Located in the Birmingham metropolitan area, Pleasant Grove is considered a clean and friendly community that provides excellent schools and active churches.

Demographic data further describe Pleasant Grove’s assets, as it boasts a relatively high average household income, a low unemployment rate, and a high residential owner-occupancy rate. According to 2010 U.S. Census data, Pleasant Grove’s population is 9,930. The median household income is \$63,658. The city’s unemployment rate is 5.9 percent. Most of the developed portion of the city is residential. Ninety percent of the 3,946 residences are owner-occupied, which indicates that most people living in Pleasant Grove have a vested interest in the community. The median value of homes in the city is \$148,800.

The community’s resilience was recently tested by a tornado that left significant destruction in its wake. In the aftermath, Pleasant Grove proved its strength, as residents and local officials banded together to help each other. People working together is the foundation of long-term community recovery.



*“We pray that no disaster in our time or any time in the future will mirror the storms that tore across our state in April.”*

*—Governor Robert Bentley*



## THE TORNADO AND PLEASANT GROVE'S IMMEDIATE RESPONSE

On April 27, 2011, an EF-4 tornado cut a path three and one-half miles long and one-half-mile wide through Pleasant Grove. It caused ten fatalities in the city. Residential properties suffered the most structural damage, with 358 homes destroyed, 226 made uninhabitable, and 425 damaged to a lesser extent. The tornado destroyed one church and significantly damaged another. Minor damage occurred at a shopping center at Park Road and 9th Avenue. The storm's path narrowly missed the recreation complex and new high school to the north, and the elementary school, middle school, and city hall to the south.

Paramedics at the fire station and two local nurses provided emergency medical assistance until additional help arrived from nearby cities to assist with triage as well as search and rescue efforts.

Three days after the storm, the mayor and chief of police instituted a new system of color-coded passes. The pass system provided residents with a sense of security and belonging, allowing them access to their homes and easing the difficulties of travel into and around the city.

The city expedited debris removal by utilizing a landfill within a few miles of Pleasant Grove. Another property located on the edge of the city was approved for the disposal of vegetative debris. This fortunate situation greatly reduced travel time for dump trucks and accelerated debris removal efforts.

Social media played a role in Pleasant Grove's recovery. The police department and several residents created Facebook pages to facilitate community discussion about the tornado and its aftermath. One Facebook page administrator decided to compile pictures and stories into a book. The book was a grassroots project documenting the people of Pleasant Grove and what they had been through and how they were moving forward after the disaster. Personal stories provided something essential to those affected by the tornado: an emotional outlet, which is a critical step for emotional healing.

Proceeds from the book will be donated to local charities that assisted with relief efforts.

The Alabama State Senate recognized, by Proclamation, the mayor, council, fire department, and police department for their rapid level of response to the disaster. Several area churches also received honors for their role in supporting local response. An excerpt from the proclamation reads:

*"...celebrate the sense of community and proudly commend the first responders, community leaders, government officials, and volunteers who have stepped forth to begin the rebuilding process."*





## THE RECOVERY OF PLEASANT GROVE



### **FROM IMMEDIATE RECOVERY TO LONG-TERM COMMUNITY RECOVERY**

The city's successful emergency response inspired the Pleasant Grove City Council to continue helping residents rebuild and recover in a safer and sustainable manner. On September 6, 2011 the Pleasant Grove City Council appointed an eight-member steering committee to focus on long-term community recovery planning. The FEMA Long-Term Community Recovery (LTCR) Team and the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (RPCGB) facilitated weekly meetings with the steering committee. Other attendees included representatives of the Jefferson County Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD) and the Birmingham Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA).

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## STRATEGIES FOR PLEASANT GROVE RECOVERY

In partnership with the LTCR Team, the State of Alabama, and RPCGB, the Pleasant Grove Recovery Steering Committee developed the following strategies through numerous discussions and meetings. This Long-Term Community Recovery Action Strategy presents Pleasant Grove's community recovery strategies. They include:

- Capacity Building for the Pleasant Grove Recovery Steering Committee
- Homecoming: Assisting the Return of Residents
- Addressing Dilapidated, Vacant and Abandoned Property
- Mitigation and Risk Reduction
- Disaster Response Enhancements
- Town Center Development

### Capacity Building for the Pleasant Grove Recovery Steering Committee

The Pleasant Grove Recovery Steering Committee indicated their need for guidance and skills-based training to become equipped for disaster response and the roles and responsibilities required for recovery. They identified potential partners to provide technical expertise and training to strengthen the committee and the community by adding to their knowledge and understanding of strategic planning and resources. The partners identified include existing boards, agencies, and other community organizations. Capacity building can pave the way to addressing other recovery projects listed in this plan or other projects that are identified later, as the committee continues to convene.

### Action Steps

- Seek Pleasant Grove City Council endorsement of the Action Strategies.
- Expand committee membership to include additional resources, interests, and skills.

- Seek out capacity building opportunities and partners.
- Coordinate community education in disaster preparation, response, recovery, grant writing, project development and management.

### Potential Resources and Partners

- Alabama Community Leaders Network at Auburn University
- Your Town Alabama Program
- Jefferson County Volunteers Active in Disasters (VOAD)
- Pleasant Grove Planning Commission
- Pleasant Grove Beautification Board
- Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (RPCGB)

### Homecoming: Assisting the Return of Residents

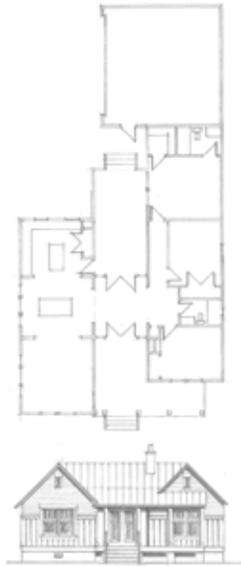
The neighborhood fabric of Pleasant Grove is threatened if displaced residents do not return to the city. The Jefferson County Emergency Management Agency (JCEMA) counted 584 dwellings made uninhabitable by the tornado. The majority of the households applying for FEMA housing assistance had property insurance. The number of new building permits suggests that some people will return. However, a significant number of displaced residents may not be returning. Local pastors estimate that thirty to forty percent of their members whose homes were destroyed may be moving away. Homeowners who wish to rebuild also may face investment costs higher than the value of their original home.

Members of the Birmingham Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) partnered with the Greater Birmingham Association of Home Builders (GBAHB) to create AIA/GBAHB Housing Recovery. This partnership has developed a program to deliver housing designs that maximize housing value and reduce operating and maintenance costs over the life of the structure. The goal of the program is to create high-quality, cost-effective, aesthetically pleasing, contextually appropriate, and environmentally sustainable home

plans. The AIA/GBAHB designed a series of residential components. There are three primary components:

- Kitchen/living room
- Bedroom/bathroom
- Porch

These components can be combined in several arrangements to create a variety of custom houses, ranging in size from 1,100 to 1,400 square-feet. The components can be built on-site or can be manufactured, trucked to the site and customized. The plans call for ENERGY STAR compliant heating and ventilation systems and appliances, and they have interior safe rooms.



Ensuring that the components are affordable, the AIA/GBAHB Housing Recovery will negotiate with building supply stores and local home builders to construct houses according to the plans within a predetermined price range. Prospective homeowners may choose to use the plans with or without the participating suppliers and contractors. In addition, volunteer agencies that rebuild houses in Pleasant Grove can use the building plans at no cost.

AIA/GBAHB Housing Recovery is hoping to build at least three homes in Pleasant Grove following these plans so that the Parade of Homes will include them in the upcoming April 2012 tour. Such exposure could generate broad awareness of this innovative program available in Pleasant Grove.

#### **Action Steps**

The Steering Committee will work with AIA/GBAHB Housing Recovery to:

- Work with the local building code official for pre-approval of the plans.

- Conduct marketing and outreach to residents using public meetings, Web, print, radio and television media.
- Help identify families who will consider using AIA/GBAHB plans.

#### **Potential Resources and Partners**

- Birmingham Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA)
- Greater Birmingham Association of Home Builders (GBAHB)
- AIA/GBAHB Housing Recovery
- Local building materials suppliers
- Local builders/contractors
- Jefferson County VOAD

#### **Vacant and Abandoned Property**

##### **Removal of Dilapidated Buildings**

Dilapidated buildings pose a variety of health and safety problems, weaken disaster impacted neighborhoods, and reduce neighboring property values. These are all threats to the full recovery of Pleasant Grove. A number of property owners have not repaired, and may not repair, uninhabitable buildings. Enforcement of local regulations addressing unsafe or nuisance properties is the major tool for removing dilapidated buildings. Currently, Pleasant Grove lacks an appropriate ordinance to remove uninhabitable structures. To remedy the situation, the city should engage in a public process to amend the current ordinance for this purpose.

##### **Action Steps**

- The Pleasant Grove Recovery Steering Committee and community residents can provide input to the building official and city attorney to draft a proposed ordinance.
- The Pleasant Grove Recovery Steering Committee can help facilitate a public review process for the ordinance.

### **Purchase of Abandoned Property**

Another option to address vacant lots is for the city to purchase abandoned property. Alabama statutes provide guidance for the acquisition of properties with tax liens. Through this process the city can manage and plan for the redevelopment of abandoned property that will be beneficial to the community. Other options for public acquisition include direct purchase of lots or property tax-deductible donations.

### **Action Steps**

- The committee can recommend criteria for selecting properties for purchase to the city council.
- The committee can seek grants for property acquisition.
- The committee can research properties that meet the criteria from the 2012 list of tax-delinquent properties.
- The committee can help develop plans for property redevelopment.

### **Potential Partners and Resources**

- Jefferson County's Community Development Block Grant program
- Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham
- Regional Planning Council of Greater Birmingham (RPCGB)
- Governor's Fund
- Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology at Auburn University
- Alabama League of Municipalities

### **Mitigation and Risk Reduction**

Damage and fatalities can be reduced by hardening existing structures and constructing new residential and community safe rooms. These are objectives in the Pleasant Grove Mitigation Action Program found in the 2009 Jefferson County Interim Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan. Tornado safe rooms designed

and built to FEMA guidelines provide near-absolute life-safety protection during extreme wind events. Other mitigation measures can strengthen a structure to resist wind impacts of EF-0, EF-1, and EF-2 tornadoes, which occur more commonly. Increased use of weather radios bolsters the existing warning system, allowing the system to reach more people.

### **Action Steps**

- The city will encourage residents to incorporate mitigation, including safe rooms, during reconstruction and new construction.
- The Jefferson County Emergency Management Agency (JCEMA), city, and the committee will provide mitigation workshops and information to community members.
- The building official will continue mitigation-related training.

### **Potential Resources**

- FEMA Library ([www.fema.gov/library/index.jsp](http://www.fema.gov/library/index.jsp)) for mitigation publications
- Emergency Management Institute (EMI) Independent Study Program (<http://training.fema.gov/IS/crslst.asp>) for online mitigation trainings
- International Code Council ([www.iccsafe.org/Edu-Cert/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.iccsafe.org/Edu-Cert/Pages/default.aspx)) for education and certification for construction-related professionals
- Jefferson County Emergency Management Agency (JCEMA)
- Alabama Emergency Management Agency (AEMA)

### **Disaster Response Enhancements**

#### **Debris Management**

The city accomplished its outstanding response by dividing responsibilities. The mayor managed debris removal and the building official managed demolition, repair, and reconstruction. Both officials worked in the field daily, communicating with residents and holding extensive meetings with county, state, and FEMA representatives. Although successful, the city can improve its

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debris removal and disposal efforts by developing a debris management plan.

FEMA encourages communities to prepare a debris management plan as part of their overall emergency management plan. By doing so, communities are better prepared to coordinate and manage debris removal operations, restore public services, and ensure the public health and safety after a disaster. Also, they are better positioned to receive the full level of assistance available from FEMA and other entities. A comprehensive debris management plan incorporates best practices in debris removal, includes FEMA eligibility criteria, and is tailored to the specific needs and unique circumstances of the community.

#### **Action Steps**

- Determine local capacity to develop a debris management plan and seek technical assistance if needed.
- Research debris management best practices.
- Review local vulnerability to natural disasters.
- Develop a draft debris management plan.

#### **Potential Resources and Partners**

- Jefferson County Emergency Management Agency (JCEMA)
- Alabama Emergency Management Agency (AEMA)
- FEMA Debris Management Guide ([www.fema.gov/government/grant/pa/demagde.shtm](http://www.fema.gov/government/grant/pa/demagde.shtm))
- Alabama Historical Commission
- Alabama Department of Environmental Management

#### **Nonprofit Coordination**

Church officials and congregations responded immediately to the disaster and led extensive relief efforts. Many faith-based organizations from within and outside of Pleasant Grove provided food, water, new and used clothing, toys, cell phone charging stations, showers, and shelter. Donations poured in from

across the country. Each church initially provided a wide range of help and efficiently organized their many volunteers to collect and distribute donations and provide other assistance.

The churches can operate more effectively in the future if they develop a disaster response plan in cooperation with city and county emergency management agencies. Coordination of each organization's services and geographic area responsibilities will allow quicker response to a greater number of people.

#### **Action Steps**

- The committee should collect information and data from emergency management agencies, local nonprofits, and churches involved in disaster response.
- Plan a coordinated response framework among local agencies.
- Develop a draft memorandum of agreement based on the framework plan.

#### **Potential Partners and Resources**

- Jefferson County VOAD
- Area churches and nonprofits
- Jefferson County EMA
- Alabama EMA

#### **Town Center Development**

During meetings with the Pleasant Grove Recovery Committee a concept for a Town Center development was raised. The idea was to create a commercial area for the disaster impacted community that would distinguish it and attract new residents to the recovering area. The concept was to include a development that would have a mix of uses including homes, shops, offices and recreation areas.

A mixed-use town center can offer the convenient shopping and employment opportunities that Pleasant Grove residents and visitors seek. Mixed-use developments, with retail, office, and affordable residential units, allow residents to live, work, and shop in a single location. Creating a mixed-use town center in Pleasant Grove could attract young professionals, recent graduates, families, and active retirees.

This strategy is consistent with objectives in the city's comprehensive plan. Those strategies include:

- Maintain nodal commercial activity centers and discourage strip commercial development.
- Promote traditional neighborhood designs.
- Utilize innovative residential development approaches to meet social demands, such as smaller yards and building sizes, safety and security, day-care needs, etc.

The area around the intersection of Park Avenue and Ninth Street may be an appropriate location for such redevelopment. A portion of this centrally-located site is designated for commercial use and currently supports commercial and public uses.

#### Action Steps

- The committee and city will determine community support for town center development.
- The committee and city will sponsor a public planning process for town center design.
- The committee and city will oversee town center construction and development.

#### Potential Partners and Resources

- Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (RPCGB)
- Auburn University Urban Studio (AUUS)
- Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA)



*“Pleasant Grove is a great place to live,  
but it is also a great place to be from.”*

## NEXT STEPS + IMPLEMENTATION



As noted throughout this document, development of the strategies will require the Pleasant Grove Recovery Steering Committee to think strategically. As the development of recovery projects are considered, it is important that the committee and stakeholders consider questions that will help guide the strategic development of “big picture” projects.

### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

#### 1. Is there a strategy or project that will make other projects easier to accomplish?

For example, the development of this report makes the recovery process easier because it provides a framework for recovery. Strategies included in this plan will help enable the committee to see that all the strategies move forward. There is no recommended order of strategy development and project implementation, but stakeholders should consider the capacity of the community to develop strategies further, undertake projects, and consider how those projects will positively impact their ability to take on other projects.

#### 2. Are there any high visibility strategies or projects that should happen sooner rather than later?

Strategies and projects that have high visibility will maintain momentum and enthusiasm towards community recovery. Housing projects will raise community morale because they have a direct and

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visible impact on residents. As mentioned previously, there is no prescribed order in which to develop strategies or implement recovery projects, but their visibility should be considered, especially in the early stages of the long-term community recovery process.

### 3. Does the strategy or project address a priority issue in the community?

Strategies and projects that address priority issues for the community are likely to have the most support. For example, if economic development in a town center is a priority issue, projects that contribute to that development may be considered first.

### 4. Do stakeholders currently have the capacity to develop the strategy further or undertake the project?

Consider the resources the community has at its disposal in terms of technical expertise, funding, and the availability of stakeholders to invest time in a strategy or project. Also, consider whether the community has the right group of stakeholders to address the strategy or project. If all of the necessary resources are in place, taking on full development of a strategy or its project might be a good decision. If the resources are not in place, seeking those resources or the appropriate stakeholders should be considered before attempting to develop the strategy fully or implement the project.

## **MAINTAIN MOMENTUM AND OPEN COMMUNICATION, BUILD ON YOUR SUCCESSES**

In order for recovery strategies to be successful, momentum must be sustained. The Pleasant Grove Recovery Steering Committee and other stakeholders should meet regularly to keep projects moving forward. Regular meetings will also ensure continued collaboration among stakeholders because communication is critical to keep projects on track and to maintain accountability among stakeholders and partners. In addition to regular

committee and stakeholder meetings, the stakeholders should conduct periodic open house meetings to maintain community buy-in to the process. Communicate progress to the public regularly so that they understand that community recovery is continuing. Emphasize the successful development of strategies and implementation of projects and how they contribute to the recovery of Pleasant Grove, regardless of their profile or scope.

### **Be Adaptable**

Community needs and priorities will evolve over time. This evolution may affect the strategies and projects in this report. If a strategy needs to be updated to meet changing community needs, revise the strategy and its projects. This Pleasant Grove-owned document represents the final product of what was discussed in committee meetings that took place in August, September, and October of 2011. But, even as a final product of the community's long-term recovery efforts, this document will never truly be finished because community recovery needs and priorities can and will change. The committee and stakeholders must work together to revise this document as necessary to ensure that changing community needs and priorities continue to be addressed.

### **Be Optimistic**

Recovery is a long process and there will be challenges along the way. It is important that the committee and stakeholders remain optimistic through challenging circumstances. This optimism will help maintain momentum and assure the public that the community is recovering, despite potential setbacks. In time, a full recovery can happen as long as rebuilding efforts remain on the forefront of the community's mind and community members remain vested in the long-term community recovery process.

## FUNDING + CAPACITY BUILDING



### GUIDE AND TOOLS

#### **Alabama Resource Guide and Resource Matrices — Federal, State and Regional Resources**

The matrix of resources, entitled *Alabama Project Categories — Potential Resources* that supports this document, identifies specific agencies and organizations that the community can approach about potential funding or technical assistance resources to implement community recovery and revitalization projects. The matrix references the *Alabama Resource Guide* (included as a companion disc) that provides an overview of hundreds of federal, state, and regional funding sources, both public and private. In addition, each Project Development Guide (included on a separate companion disc) is paired with a project-specific matrix of resources that are suggested starting points in researching potential funding sources. Unless otherwise noted, these project-specific matrices also refer to funding sources listed in the *Alabama Resource Guide*.

All grant programs have specific eligibility requirements for applicants. Some grant programs fund only 501(c)(3) charitable nonprofit organizations, while others fund only governmental units, such as towns or cities. Some grants are available to both types of applicants. Therefore, public-private partnerships are important to maximize funding, capacity building, and other opportunities.

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Some grant programs restrict their funding to communities that meet certain eligibility criteria, such as falling within a certain geographic area or possessing certain demographic characteristics like high poverty or unemployment rates. Meeting the specified program criteria could result in a special designation that allows the community to participate in programs and apply for grant funding unavailable to communities that do not meet the program criteria. Some designations specifically target more urban areas for assistance, while others specifically target rural areas. Examples of designations, often referred to as designated areas or zones, that provide funding opportunities include:

- Food deserts in metropolitan areas
- Distressed communities
- Housing or economic development hot zones
- Health professional shortage areas and/or medically underserved areas
- Brownfields

Many specific programs exist to support different types of designated zones or areas. Designations can be part of a successful strategy to secure funding to develop recovery strategies and implement projects that affect a community's economy and vitality.

The census tract matrix, *Census Tract Information for LTCR Communities* that supports this document, shows how the use of designations can help secure funding. This matrix identifies federal grant and financing opportunities, many of which are based on designations that can serve as a core part of the community's grant application, make the project competitive, and facilitate funding. It should be noted that even if a census tract is not designated as eligible for funding or presents a financial resource opportunity, the governing federal agencies do have waiver procedures, especially when it comes to such factors as loss and devastation from disasters.

For more specific information about designations and related funding, contact your regional council of governments or planning commission.

### **IMPORTANT PARTNERS**

Forming alliances and partnerships can increase grant-writing and project implementation success. Partnerships, especially public-private partnerships, can maximize funding, capacity building, and other opportunities. Alliances and partnerships can exist between two communities and/or communities and other organizations. For example, if two or more adjacent communities each submit an application to fund a medical center, they will compete against each other. Conversely, if they submit an application together for one shared facility, they will have a stronger application, less competition, and may even receive more funds. Programs that fund economic development activities often favor a regional approach to overcome challenges. A community and its recovery committee or nonprofit organization may partner with other local, regional, and statewide organizations to build capacity or develop, fund, and implement recovery strategies and projects.

### **Regional Councils or Planning Commissions**

Regional councils are quasi-governmental organizations and another important resource for communities. A regional council or planning commission is a public organization that encompasses a multi-jurisdictional regional community. The governing bodies of councils are primarily composed of local government elected officials and appointed representatives of local communities and state government. The Alabama Association of Regional Planning Councils includes 12 regional planning councils/commissions to support Alabama communities. Five of these councils/commissions serve Alabama's communities that are engaged in the long-term community recovery planning process. Pleasant Grove is served by the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (RPCGB) – Cordova, Jefferson County, Pleasant Grove, and Pratt City.

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Through communication, planning, policymaking, coordination, advocacy, grant writing, and technical assistance, the commission/council serves the local governments and citizens in the region. These commissions/councils frequently deal with issues and needs that cross city, town, and county boundaries. Each region can provide special services as determined by its board of directors. The services and programs offered depend upon local needs and priorities within the region. These needs may exist currently or be based on projected growth, changing lifestyles and demographics, and technological innovations.

Regional councils and planning commissions are an important asset for long-term community recovery work and are well-versed on recovery challenges and needs. They have resources and information that help a community to make decisions about implementation strategies, especially as they pertain to designations, alliances, and grant applications. Additionally, each regional council or planning commission has a comprehensive economic development strategy (CEDS), which offers a detailed view of the opportunities, needs, and challenges within the region to promote and sustain economic growth.

Communities may visit the RPCBG website ([www.rpcgb.org](http://www.rpcgb.org)) for a full list of programs and services offered by the regional commission.

### **501(c)(3) Charitable Nonprofit Organizations**

A 501(c)(3) refers to a charitable nonprofit organization that is incorporated in a state and designated by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) as a charitable entity. Nonprofits do not pay federal taxes on programs and services related to their charitable mission. Nonprofit missions can include aid to vulnerable populations; construction, erection and/or maintenance of historic buildings, monuments, or works; reducing the burdens of government; community development; youth programs; and other charitable purposes.

Many grant programs offer funding only to 501(c)(3) charitable nonprofits. A community's recovery committee may decide to incorporate as a

charitable nonprofit and partner with the local government to strengthen the recovery effort and opportunities. Depending on the recovery goals and future development plans, the community may choose to structure its charitable nonprofit as a certain type of community service or development organization. These types of organizations are described below.

### **Community Development Corporations**

Community Development Corporations (CDCs) are community-established organizations that anchor local capital through residential and commercial development, ranging from affordable housing to shopping centers and businesses.

### **Community Housing Development Organizations**

Community Housing Development Organizations (CHDOs) earn designation through the federal HOME program and serve as a means to finance housing projects. A CHDO generally is defined as a nonprofit, community-based community service organization that develops affordable housing in the low-income community it serves.

### **Community Development Financial Institutions**

Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) earn designation from the U.S. Treasury Department. A CDFI is a private-sector financial institution that focuses on personal lending and business development efforts in local communities. They are primarily funding sources to support small business growth and development. CDFIs can be an important source for the use of New Market Tax Credits to finance economic development efforts.

### **Economic Development Organizations**

Economic Development Organizations serve as the primary sources of grant funds from federal agencies involved in economic development.

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### Certified Development Corporations

Certified Development Corporations earn their designation from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) and offer any form of SBA loan assistance. Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs) are partnerships primarily between the government and colleges to provide educational services for small business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs.

### Housing Resource Centers

Housing Resource Centers (HRCs) are central points for technical assistance and a resource for stimulating new housing construction as well as rehabilitation. HRCs help existing and potential homeowners to locate resources to repair, build, or purchase a home.

A community or committee should explore all options to determine the best vehicle to develop its recovery strategies and projects. It may choose to structure as, or partner with, one of the community development organization types. Alternatively, the community or committee may elect to incorporate as a charitable nonprofit corporation but not structure it specifically as one of these organizations, based on what best meets the needs and goals of the community for the both its recovery and future development.

### Agencies, Universities and Associations

State agencies, universities, and associations provide a broad range of financial and other support to communities and organizations of interest to them. They are an excellent resource for capacity building support, technical assistance, studies and projections, and sometimes even funding. The Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA) is the coordinating agency under the Governor's Office for long-term community recovery efforts. There are numerous supporting state agencies that assist in long-term community recovery. A list of links to State agency websites is included in Section V of the *Alabama Resource Guide*.

### Examples of Other Potential Partners

- Alabama Association of Nonprofits  
<http://alabamanonprofits.org>
- Alabama Communities of Excellence  
[www.alabamacommunitiesofexcellence.org](http://www.alabamacommunitiesofexcellence.org)
- Your Town Alabama  
[www.yourtownalabama.org](http://www.yourtownalabama.org)
- Alabama Home Builders Association  
[www.hbaa.org](http://www.hbaa.org)
- Local university centers and programs
- Local chambers of commerce
- Local development authorities

This is by no means a comprehensive list, but it does illustrate that numerous agencies and organizations can partner with communities to gain needed support during the recovery process. The regional council or planning commission that serves the region is an excellent resource for cultivating and strengthening relationships with these key partners, both public and private. Typically, the regional council or planning commission has existing relationships with the organizations and agencies that are active in the region and can provide insight and resources to help identify and secure critical support for projects. Assembling a strong team of partners to provide support is essential to holistic recovery.







Ms. Susan McGee, Chairperson  
Pleasant Grove Long Term Community Recovery Steering Committee  
% Pleasant Grove City Hall  
501 Park Road  
Pleasant Grove, AL 35127

Subject: Long Term Community Recovery Support

Dear Ms. McGee:

As the Long Term Community Recovery Committee moves forward in the next weeks and months I wanted to assure you that the resources of the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham will be at your service.

I have reviewed the Pleasant Grove Long Term Community Recovery Steering Committee prepared with the assistance of the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The Steering Committee has accomplished a great deal of work in a very short period of time. The work accomplished with the assistance of David Fuller, John Akin, Deversray Garner and Lisa Harris charts an achievable path for Pleasant Grove's recovery.

I look forward to continuing the RPCGB support to Pleasant Grove and to the full recovery of the community.

Respectfully,

Steve Ostaseski  
Principal Planner

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Phone (205) 251-8139 \* Fax (205) 328-3304 \* Website [www.rpcgb.org](http://www.rpcgb.org)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Pleasant Grove Community Recovery Committee  
City Council, City of Pleasant Grove  
First Baptist Church of Pleasant Grove  
Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham  
Central Alabama Volunteer Organizations Assisting in Disasters  
American Institute of Architects, Birmingham Chapter  
Greater Birmingham Association of Home Builders

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**PLEASANT GROVE, ALABAMA**

**Resolution Number 62011**

Whereas, the City of Pleasant Grove, Alabama received major devastation as a result of the EF-5 tornado that struck the city on April 27, 2011;

Whereas, the impact of the tornado resulted in major loss of housing, lives, city funds, and has severely disrupted the community;

Now therefore, be it resolved that the City of Pleasant Grove, Alabama requests that FEMA's Long-Term Community Recovery group and its partner agencies, otherwise known as Emergency Support Function Fourteen (ESF-14), be deployed to fully support the City of Pleasant Grove in our recovery efforts as quickly as possible;

Further be it resolved that, the City Council of Pleasant Grove encourages our citizens and staff to participate in the recovery activities coordinated through our process in partnership with the County Officials of Jefferson County, the State of Alabama, FEMA's Long-Term Community Recovery group, and other recovery partners.

**Jerry W. Brasseale, Mayor**

Attest: Karen Duncan, City Clerk

