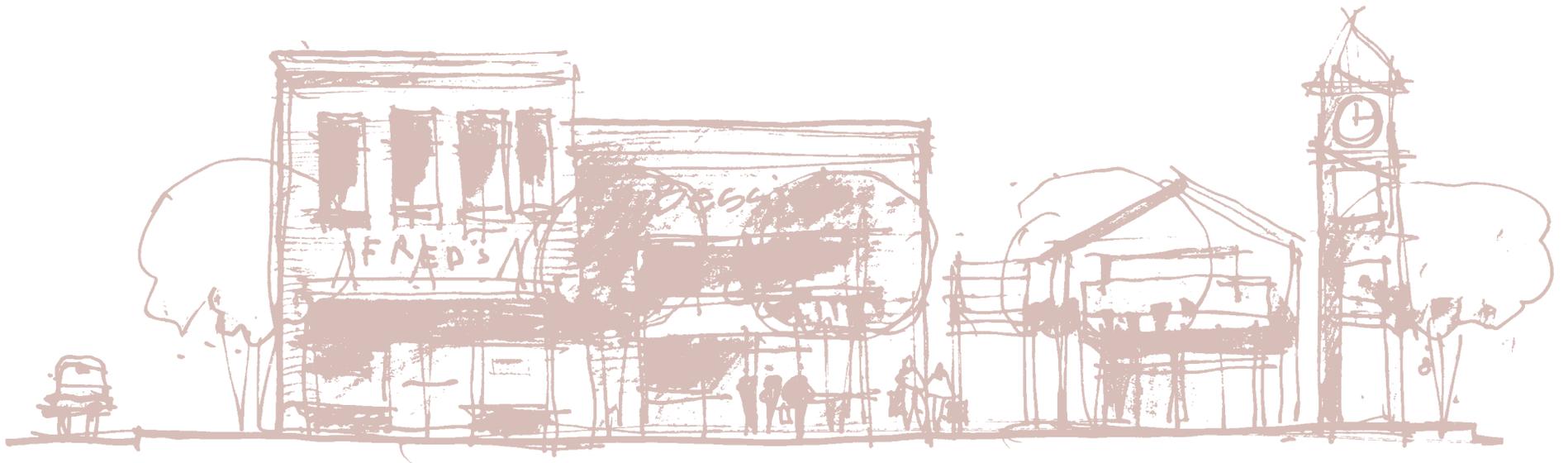




HOLT, ALABAMA

Long-Term Community Recovery Plan
November 2011



HOLT, ALABAMA

Long-Term Community Recovery Plan
November 2011



LETTERS OF SUPPORT

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

ROBERT BENTLEY
GOVERNOR



STATE CAPITOL
MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA 36130

(334) 242-7100
FAX: (334) 242-3282

STATE OF ALABAMA

November 4, 2011

The Honorable W. Hardy McCollum
Chairman of Tuscaloosa County Commission
Tuscaloosa County Courthouse
714 Greensboro Avenue
Tuscaloosa, AL 35401

Dear Judge McCollum:

RE: Long Term Community Recovery Plan - Holt, Alabama

The tornado of April 27, 2011, may have changed the landscape of your community, but it has also given the world an opportunity to see your spirit in working together to develop a strategy for your future.

With great destruction comes opportunity; you are seizing this opportunity to create a Holt, Alabama, that will shine in the future. This Recovery Plan will serve as a guide as the citizens carry their vision forward. The community will make this plan its own, selecting and further developing the projects that most closely fit your vision for Holt. The partnerships fostered over the last six months, through the Long Term Community Recovery process, with state and federal agencies, local stakeholders and the private sector form the firm foundation for this new vision and a stronger, more resilient community in the future.

Extraordinary circumstances have demanded extraordinary resolve. Faced with the daunting tasks of rebuilding home and hearth, many of you have also devoted energy, thought and creativity to envisioning the new Holt. I am pleased that FEMA has been able to assist you by providing technical expertise and a staff devoted solely to the development of this plan over the last six months.

I commend you on the progress you have made thus far toward your recovery and your vision for the future of your community. It is with great pleasure that I pledge my support for this plan and look forward to a full recovery of Holt and Tuscaloosa County.

Sincerely,

Robert Bentley

RB:RM:cf

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 W. Hardy McCollum
Chairman of Tuscaloosa County Commission
Tuscaloosa County Courthouse
714 Greensboro Avenue
Tuscaloosa, AL 35401

Dear Judge McCollum:

RE: Long Term Community Recovery Plan - Holt, Alabama

It has been six months since a devastating tornado struck the community of Holt and Tuscaloosa 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 Holt and Tuscaloosa 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 Holt and Tuscaloosa 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 Holt and Tuscaloosa 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 Holt and Tuscaloosa 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

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
INTRODUCTION	5
PARTNERSHIP, LEADERSHIP + FORGING AN IDENTITY	11
VISION + GUIDING PRINCIPLES	17
RECOVERY PROJECTS	21
Housing	21
Economic Development – Jobs + Business	27
Natural Resources	39
Infrastructure + Public Facilities	45
NEXT STEPS + IMPLEMENTATION	55
FUNDING + CAPACITY BUILDING	59





"We want to be able to have a community that comes together as Holt . . . and this tornado has created something so that we can be somebody, and we can rebuild"



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the months following the April 2011 disaster, the community of Holt has been discovering novel ways to define the things that make up a community and a way to recover. With this quest at the forefront, Holt is defining its role as a regional leader in recovery.

HOLT in Action, the recovery committee formed through the Long-Term Community Recovery (LTCR) process, is engaged in a proactive discourse committed to growing a renewed sense of place. The committee is leading the way, helping heal its community, bringing partnerships together, promoting collaboration and representing a place and people “forging ahead.”

Throughout the process of recovery planning, the community’s objectives follow three themes:

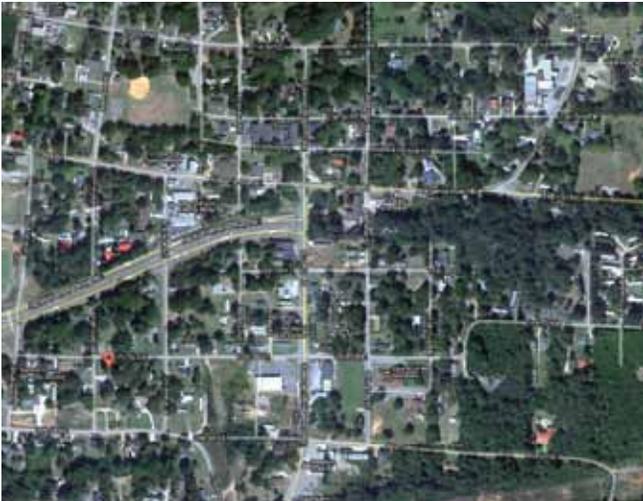
- **CONNECTING:** neighborhoods, neighbors, resources and services.
- **CREATING:** a vision, a renewed sense of place and neighborhood bright spots.
- **CELEBRATING:** heritage, history, culture and diversity.

Holt’s residents and Project Champions are now unified by a common vision. This vision will continue to be a catalyst for progress. The community will continue to gather to discuss issues and develop ideas for new homes, streetscapes, parks and schools. Holt will rebuild, reshape and revitalize through its determination and resourcefulness.

INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION



This recovery plan is a holistic compilation of community thought, discussion, research and interaction. It is designed to be a roadmap for the community of Holt as it forges ahead from a place of devastation to a bright, hopeful place to live for all residents. While the April 27 tornado dealt Holt a major blow, the community has begun the process of recovery, making great strides in working together toward common goals. The community is committed to rebuilding and maximizing its key strengths and opportunities.

TORNADO IMPACTS

On Wednesday, April 27, 2011 an EF-4 tornado came through Tuscaloosa County on its 80-mile journey across Alabama. The tornado severely impacted the community, resulting in a level of devastation never before witnessed by residents. In Tuscaloosa County, 52 people lost their lives. Within the community of Holt, 247 houses, 114 mobile homes, four churches and seven businesses were totally destroyed, while many more structures were damaged. A community landmark, Holt Elementary School, was among the structures rendered unusable for the remainder of the spring semester and throughout the following school year.

HOLT'S INDUSTRIAL BEGINNINGS

Holt, Alabama's largest unincorporated community lies east of the City of Tuscaloosa and is considered the western most point of the Appalachian foothills. It is a close-knit community with a distinctive identity as a factory town, once the industrial backbone of Tuscaloosa County.



Holt began to develop as a community in 1901 when Frank Holt of Tennessee, an agent for the Central Iron and Coal Company of New York City, bought a substantial piece of land on the Black Warrior River. By 1903, coke ovens were in operation and pig iron was being produced. Over the following decade, a foundry was in place producing cast pipe. The industry expanded quickly and required numerous employees. During the 1910s and 1920s, a large number of homes were built by the company to house workers and their families, and the community of Holt blossomed with a hotel, company store and weekend entertainment. A paper mill was another important employer that started in 1929 and closed in 1978. Today, Nucor Steel Tuscaloosa employs 400 people. There are several other employers on the riverfront and several small businesses operating throughout the community.

The solid work ethic and small-town way of life that built Holt remains in the memories of many community members. Hard work and dedication was reborn after the devastation of April's tornado. This is evident as Holt begins to recover: *Holt still forges ahead.*

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

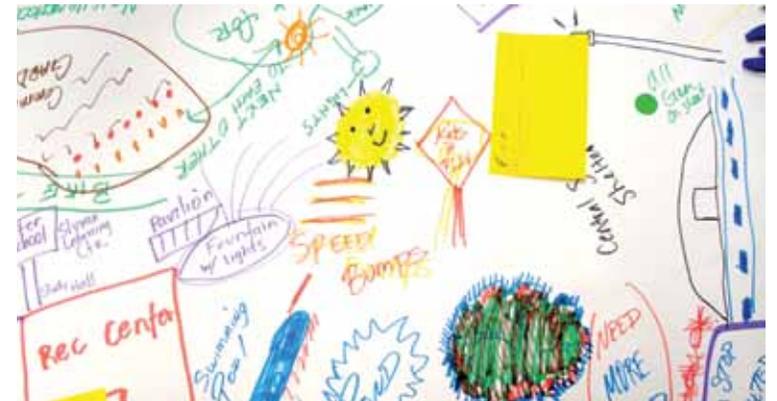
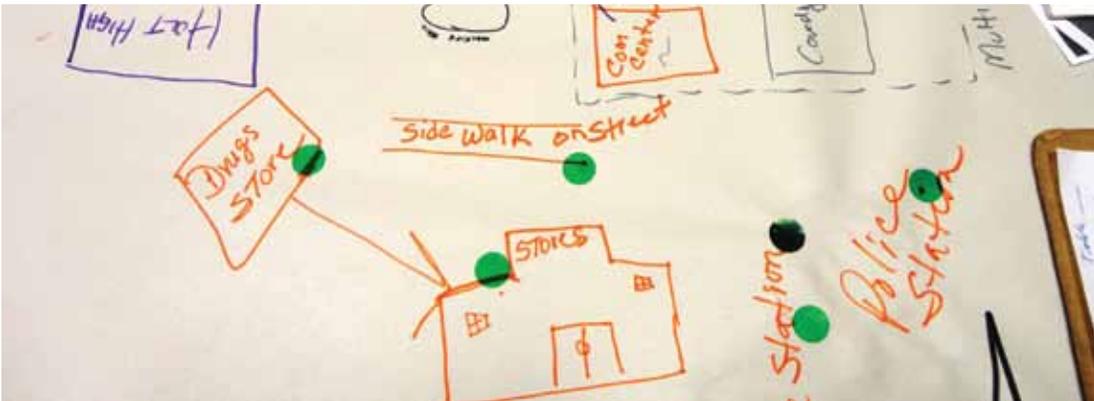
Tuscaloosa County Probate Judge W. Hardy McCollum signed a resolution inviting FEMA's Long-Term Community Recovery (LTCR) to partner with the community. The LTCR Team reached out to community leaders already engaged in the arduous demands of disaster response and recovery.

The first community-wide recovery meeting was planned and announced by community leaders and the word spread. Soma Church graciously hosted this first gathering on July 12, 2011. Despite the dangerous thunderstorms that occurred that evening, more than 150 community members attended and resolved to move forward together from response into recovery.

Participants were led through a community mapping exercise that allowed them to describe their community by drawing it. The objective of the exercise was to help the participants and the LTCR Team better understand the local perceptions and opinions. The following recovery topics emerged:

- Establish a community center in Holt
- Expand parks and recreation
- Build community involvement/sense of place
- Strengthen neighborhood design/housing/community infrastructure
- Connect to the environment
- Improve community safety
- Enhance schools
- Encourage economic development
- Improve public transportation
- Examine the Tuscaloosa Eastern Bypass
- Explore resources/funding opportunities

A commitment to bring Holt back better than it was before was evident at



Community members share their concerns, needs and hopes during a community mapping exercise. Through a facilitated discussion participants expressed perceptions, experiences and opinions of their community.

PARTNERSHIP, LEADERSHIP + FORGING AN IDENTITY



“The tornado of April 27, 2011 changed our lives and our community drastically. Personal loss of family, friends and property continues to be difficult. During our darkest hours, God provides the light of His hope.

As the winds settled, within seconds, our community responded. We were instantaneously engrossed in acts of heroism and compassion that can only be described as miraculous. In the days and weeks that followed, an army of citizens and volunteers unified at churches, relief centers, and our schools to provide for those directly impacted. A strong tornado moved through the heart of our community but we will recover stronger and better than before.

Everyone has been affected. Togetherness is our theme. We have been unified by our pain. Differences do not matter. Finding common ground is now our goal and healing is our focus. Love is our common denominator and recovery is the end result.”

– **Shaun Faulkner**, Holt resident, Pastor Soma Church, *HOLT in Action* Convener

PARTNERSHIP, LEADERSHIP + FORGING AN IDENTITY



Residents and others who attended the community meetings formed a steering committee and met weekly. The group adopted the name Holt Opportunities Leadership Team in Action (*HOLT in Action*) and developed recovery strategies with the Long-Term Community Recovery (LTCR) Team. *HOLT in Action's* mission is to provide a unified voice for Holt and focus on implementing the Long-Term Community Recovery plan. This steering committee has evolved into a coalition of residents joined by support from around the region including pastors, political leaders, public agencies, service organizations, businesses and people who have adopted Holt as their home.

Two key organizations form the core of *HOLT in Action*: the Holt Community Partnership and Concerned Citizens for Holt. The group recognizes that in order to attain this goal, it must coordinate with other groups and organizations that must pursue their own missions and goals. One method to achieve this was to establish five subcommittees to focus on key areas of community recovery including:

- Holt's Voice (Communications and Governance)
- Housing
- Infrastructure
- Jobs and Economic Development
- The Leadership Roundtable

Each committee has a chair, joined by a co-convenor and other Holt-focused leadership.

SUBCOMMITTEE INITIATIVES

Holt's Voice – Communications and Governance

As an unincorporated community located on the edge of the City of Tuscaloosa, Holt faces major challenges ahead. Discussions about disaster recovery and rebuilding the community brought to light issues such as the need for a sewer system, the impact of the Tuscaloosa Eastern Bypass, and concerns over annexation. All of these issues relate to how the community is, or is not, governed. *HOLT in Action* has been engaged with Tuscaloosa County elected officials and staff who have provided critical guidance on the recovery planning process. Although unincorporated, Holt has demonstrated a growing capacity for organization. The disaster recovery planning process, in the words of a committee member “woke a sleeping giant” and helped the community recognize this effort must include a wide range of partners, as well as seek to improve the entire community. They have adopted the theme “Holt – Forging Ahead!”

REBUILD
RESHAPE
REVITALIZE

HOLT in Action is framing a community-wide discussion related to the community's future. Early discussions include three options:

1. Become an incorporated city.
2. Organize and negotiate with Tuscaloosa to become a wholly annexed neighborhood of the city.
3. Continue to function as a limited home-rule community in Tuscaloosa County within the Police Jurisdiction of Tuscaloosa.

The first two options will require *HOLT in Action* and other local organizations to help residents understand issues and opportunities. Currently, *HOLT in Action* is working with the County Probate Judge, District Two County Commissioner, Sheriff, State leaders and local agencies as well as engaging with the David Mathews Center for Civic Life. The objective of creating these partnerships is to gain support and assistance to:

- Research actions required to better understand governance options.
- Define the benefits and costs associated with these options.
- Provide a clear road map of the steps to be taken and consequences associated with each option.

It will be critical for the community to be well-informed of the pros and cons of each option. Some tools for communication have already been established through the community recovery planning process. A Facebook page and a Web-based group management tool (www.HoltCommunity.org) are two online forums used for organizing, archiving, and relaying information about community initiatives. *HOLT in Action* actively seeks participation from the community at-large. As was often said, “If you can say, ‘I love Holt,’ you belong here.”

Housing

The Housing Subcommittee recognizes that home construction is urgently needed. During the community open house a range of housing issues were presented. Participants gravitated toward rebuilding in a manner that would provide housing opportunities across all income levels and life stages, with particular attention on the needs of seniors. Other ideas from the community included rebuilding in a socially and ecologically sustainable way and making neighborhoods stable. The Housing Subcommittee worked through these complex ideas and developed programs that seek out partnerships with public and human service organizations and housing developers.

Infrastructure

During the community open house there was support for creating safe, walkable neighborhoods and providing a variety of transportation choices. The community marked maps to identify ways to connect neighborhoods, schools and future community facilities. Public safety was another topic covered by the Infrastructure Subcommittee. Community input ranged from requests for more traffic lights, street lighting and traffic speed monitoring and included a desire to improve crime prevention and code enforcement.



Jobs and Economic Development

The *HOLT in Action* Jobs and Economic Development subcommittee managed two discussion stations during the community open house. One related to economic development and the other related to community design. Key issues that will affect economic development include: the proposed bypass, fear of losing new commercial development to the City of Tuscaloosa through annexation, lack of zoning and building codes, lack of density in housing and an inadequate sewer system.

Community members expressed hopes to reverse the recent trend of declining population by attracting jobs and families to the neighborhood. In order to achieve this, the community recognizes that job readiness is a major concern. When asked what was needed to help improve Holt's job prospects, the top issues mentioned by the community were access to daycare, transportation, job training and job listings/openings.



During the meeting, participants were introduced to several community design concepts that can promote the redevelopment and revitalization of Holt. The idea of creating a town center received strong support. The area around the intersection of Jack Warner Parkway and Crescent Ridge Road was the preferred location for a town center.

When asked what should be within walking distance of their home, school and church, people indicated the strongest support for:

- Community Center
- Nature trails
- Café/coffee shop
- Picnic area
- Playground
- Grocery store
- Shops
- Bus stop
- Laundry
- Swimming
- Gazebo
- Bike path
- Medical services

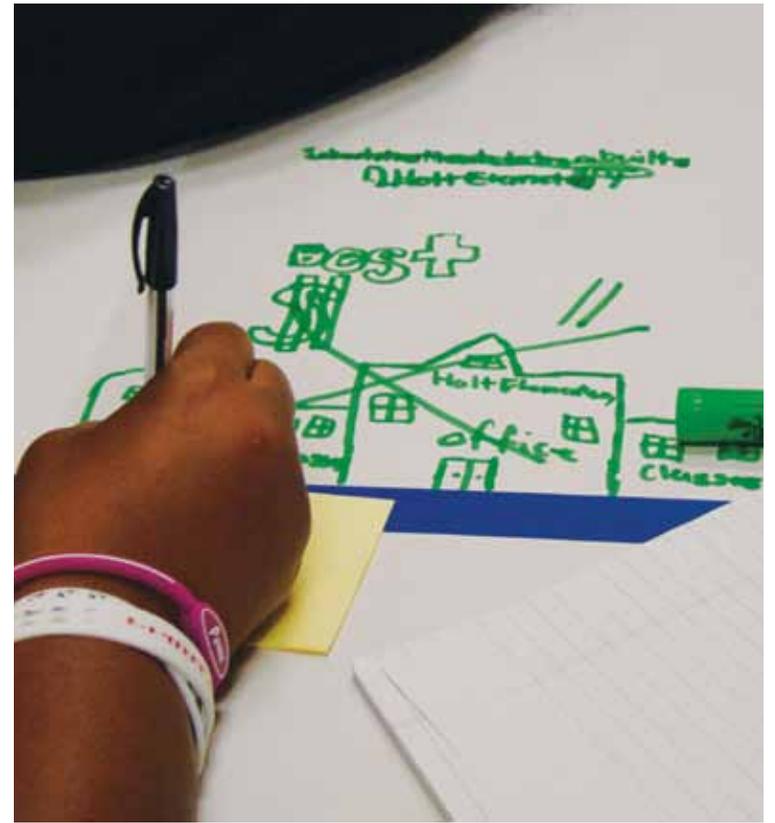
According to community members, key features desired for a community center and parks include: gathering places such as pavilions and picnic tables, nature and hiking trails, playgrounds, sports, recreation and fitness facilities. Participants identified an ideal central location for a community center in Holt, near the Holt Elementary School off of Crescent Ridge Road.



A town center provides a central location for community activity and can serve as a gateway signaling a special place. It can include shops, restaurants, services, housing, green space, shared space and other amenities. A town center can encourage community interaction and unity, and enhance quality of life.



VISION + GUIDING PRINCIPLES



VISION + GUIDING PRINCIPLES

HOLT'S VISION FOR RECOVERY

Holt's vision is an expression of the community's hopes and dreams for the future. The vision statement was developed through community involvement and represents a shared sentiment. Shortly after the community's first open house community leaders adopted the following vision.

Holt's future is of a place...

... where each individual community member has a meaningful voice on local issues and the community's development, yet the community as a whole can speak with a single and powerful voice when representing its concerns and interests to outsiders, at the county, regional, and state levels.

... that pays respect to its history as a once powerful industrial center without letting this past limit its economic way forward.

... that embraces the diversity that exists in the age, ethnicity, and social-economic status of its members and facilitates communication and interaction across these diverse groups.

... whose residential and commercial growth is well-planned (rather than haphazard), varied and environmentally appropriate, and occurs in such a way as to connect to neighboring communities effectively so that the Holt community can contribute to and benefit from the educational, employment, and cultural opportunities these neighbors afford.

... where individuals feel safe and are permitted to flourish personally, physically, economically and spiritually.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Holt's leaders have laid a solid foundation of cooperation and collaboration to achieve sustainable success in rebuilding. *HOLT in Action* established Guiding Principles to help focus their efforts toward the ultimate goal of their community's recovery.

HOLT in Action Guiding Principles

1. We will never be the same as before.
2. We have suffered unprecedented loss and devastation.
3. We can go forward intentionally.
4. We have been a fragmented community in the past to our detriment.
5. We are doing more by working together and have a promising future.
6. We recognize the value of our diverse community organizations and their missions.
7. We will not agree on all things but will work to understand one another and explore alternatives.
8. We know that regardless of what the future holds we will be better prepared by organizing, communicating and building strong relationships.
9. We realize there will be many obstacles to overcome; doing so will require sacrifice, dedication, commitment and a willingness to engage outside resources.
10. We are building our children's future today.

RECOVERY PROJECTS



“An idea is salvation by imagination”

– Frank Lloyd Wright



HOUSING

The disaster revealed a need to address housing issues in Holt. A significant percentage of the community's housing is vacant, abandoned, or in various states of disrepair. The planning team was not able to identify any previously coordinated programs for housing rehabilitation or construction in the community. Many displaced residents were not able to relocate to other homes in Holt because so many residential structures are in poor condition.

Neighborhood stabilization is about creating a series of tools and effectively coordinating their use. *HOLT in Action* and residents know that the community's best days are ahead. Since the disaster, Holt has embraced innovation and best practices in community development.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- Create an organization that will enable a wide range of agencies to undertake coordinated program activities that will revitalize the North Holt neighborhood.
- Establish local control over abandoned property and create opportunities to redevelop land for community purposes.
- Instill community pride, improve health and increase economic activity in the North Holt neighborhood by:
 - ◇ Redeveloping and rebuilding blighted areas so that they become desirable neighborhoods.
 - ◇ Creating diverse and affordable housing opportunities for renters as well as home owners.
 - ◇ Promoting activities that bolster neighborhood stabilization.

HOUSING PROJECTS

This section outlines a set of tools and projects that the community can develop for housing recovery implementation.

- Housing Market Study and Property Conditions Survey
- Capacity Building for Housing Development and Human Services
- Housing Resource Fairs

HOUSING MARKET STUDY AND PROPERTY CONDITIONS SURVEY

A housing needs assessment would be required in order to prioritize housing recovery efforts. This project outlines steps related to assessing the housing market and developing a database on housing conditions.

PROJECT CHAMPIONS

Tuscaloosa County Commission

West Alabama Regional Commission

Tuscaloosa Housing Authority

PROJECT BACKGROUND

That there is a housing need as a result of the tornado is apparent. Less clear are the housing needs that existed prior to the disaster or future demands in relation to the broader regional housing market. A Housing Market Study is particularly appropriate given the persistent weakness of the housing market and the risk that will be assumed by private housing developers attempting to meet the housing demand. An element of the market analysis is to develop a database related to the conditions of homes and property in the community.

Holt's population has dropped over the past ten years from 4,103 in 2000 to 3,638 in 2010 according to the U.S. Census for the Holt Census-Designated Place (CDP). The tornado has affected a temporary, but potentially permanent, drop in population due to the loss of housing. This loss in population is reflected in the storm damage numbers (provided by Tuscaloosa County Sheriff's Office, Tuscaloosa County Public Works and Tuscaloosa County E-911). Significant damage was done to residential property affecting a mix of low, middle and upper-income areas.

- Apartments: 50-light damage
- Mobile homes: 114-destroyed, 24-moderate damage, 19-light damage
- Houses: 247-destroyed, 111-moderate damage, 205-light damage

Housing stock in Holt is diverse, but dominated by single family dwellings, a significant number of which are mobile homes. The 2010 U.S. Census for the Holt CDP indicated 1,603 housing units in the community, 218 of which were vacant. 61.5 percent were owner-occupied and 38.4 percent rented.

GOALS

- Identify current housing uses and trends.
- Document housing and property conditions

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This housing market study and post-disaster demand estimate will collect data on current housing uses and trends, including projections of future demographics, and an analysis of existing and projected needs. The project will include long-term strategies for meeting the post-disaster housing need, and address the conditions, challenges and opportunities within the local housing market. The study will recommend projects and the appropriate public, private, nonprofit and partnership strategies to meet the current and future housing needs of the community.



HOUSING CONDITIONS SURVEY

A Housing Condition Survey is a tool that establishes a baseline of the neighborhood's current state. A survey can be conducted by residents in the neighborhood and can include information about housing occupancy and the condition of the structure lot and surrounding infrastructure. Results of the survey can help to guide the identification of priority blocks for housing programs, as well as other services that may assist residents and property owners.

ACTION STEPS

- Determine scope of work.
- Use a Request for Proposals (RFP) process to engage an agency, university or consultant to conduct the study.
- Complete the study
- Disseminate the study to the public and all stakeholders.
- For the Housing and Property Conditions survey, use the survey document located in the support CDROM for this document.



FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

PRELIMINARY COST ESTIMATE

\$15,000 – \$30,000

FUNDING GAPS

To be determined

POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

Underwritten through public (e.g., housing authority) and private (e.g., mortgage lenders and real estate brokers)

Conducted through a university as part of its curriculum and may provide opportunities for partnership in the development of a housing study and in its implementation.

RESOURCES

- University of Alabama
- Tuscaloosa County
- Tuscaloosa Chamber of Commerce
- *HOLT in Action*

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AND HUMAN SERVICES

The *HOLT in Action* Committee seeks to create a collaborative organization that brings together agencies to address housing needs and issues. A program of capacity building through technical assistance would expand affordable housing and infrastructure development projects and create public-private partnerships.

PROJECT CHAMPIONS

HOLT in Action Housing Committee Members

Carolyn Roshell

Bessie McCaw

Linda Kirkwood

Jackie Maye

Riz Shakir

Joe Boteler

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Holt lacks the capacity to help residents navigate the rebuilding process and make informed decisions. There is also little capacity to pursue funding to help the community rebuild. At public meetings residents expressed strong interest in implementing a housing-focused strategy for the entire community.

GOALS

- Build capacity for housing development and human service organizations.
- Effectively deliver housing information to displaced residents and potential new Holt residents.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This program is intended to efficiently connect those seeking housing-related services to those who can provide services.

The *HOLT in Action* Committee seeks to create a collaborative organization that brings together agencies such as Tuscaloosa Housing Authority, Project Team Up, Samaritan's Purse, and Habitat for Humanity, United Way of Western Alabama, Tuscaloosa One Place and other housing and human services organizations. The collaborative can address housing needs and issues such as development, homelessness, counseling and land banking.



Nonprofit community development organizations are uniquely positioned to address long-term recovery issues and to support the governmental response to disasters. Given the geographic extent of the disaster and the diversity of people needing help, coordinating agencies can be an effective partners in providing services that deal with non-structural needs as well as rebuilding and strengthening homes.

Capacity Building for Housing Development and Human Service Organizations is intended to 1) build capacity of both the nonprofit and public sectors to better access funding and operate programs that meet the needs of under-served populations and 2) provide information about community-wide needs and assets.

The project includes hosting a Housing Resource Fair to connect those with housing resources to the residents who need those resources.

A Housing Resource Fair will bring together the private and public partners that can assist those seeking housing and other housing-related needs. Mortgage lenders, real estate companies, public/private nonprofit organizations, and builders are among the partners who can participate. The resource fair can offer seminars and educational exhibits.

An example of a project that could be undertaken by this organization is a One Block at a Time program. One Block at a Time is a tool for neighborhood stabilization that brings together agencies and resources in a manner that focuses those resources on a block-by-block basis. For example, an abandoned house that has become a haven for illegal activity is clearly a public safety issue. However, dealing with only that one aspect of the problem may not address the larger issue. Addressing issues holistically through social services, nuisance abatement, housing rehabilitation or condemnation will help encourage reinvestment by adjacent owners.

Programs that focus on an entire block promote efficient coordination of community services, infrastructure improvements and construction services. The *HOLT in Action* Housing Committee has identified North Holt as an appropriate neighborhood to begin that process. Stabilizing North Holt can be a catalyst for the rebuilding of the tornado-impacted South Holt area.

ACTION STEPS

- Assemble the housing development and human services community for a disaster recovery housing summit.
 - ◊ Define the current capacity of housing development and housing-related human service organizations.
 - ◊ Initiate the housing market study.
 - ◊ Set goals to assess and meet the housing needs of the community.
 - ◊ Appoint leaders of their organizations as representatives to the housing consortium.
- Form a Housing Consortium made up of public, private and nonprofit organizations.
- Develop a schedule of information sharing and capacity building programs.
- The Consortium can assist Tuscaloosa County in developing funding applications to state, regional (e.g., Appalachian Regional Commission) and federal sources.
- Set a meeting with local agencies to discuss housing issues and ideas.
- Develop strategies and program concepts
- Establish a program for on-going coordination.

SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES

Invite agencies and businesses that can provide information on the benefits and costs associated with green building practices.





ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT – JOBS + BUSINESS

Prior to the disaster, there were 44 businesses operating in Holt. Seven of these businesses were destroyed and two were damaged by the tornado. The construction of the Tuscaloosa Eastern Bypass will impact local business in many ways. It was noted by residents that several businesses are located in the proposed right-of-way and will likely be purchased by Alabama Department of Transportation. This new roadway is expected to dramatically shift development patterns in Holt.

Larger employers, such as industrial factories located along the Black Warrior River, employ 70 percent of the community workforce. Other Holt residents work in surrounding areas such as Tuscaloosa and Northport.

Residents are concerned that existing trade and college educational opportunities are not being fully utilized, confining area youth to lower wage employment. The lack of affordable daycare options in the Holt area also prevents some people from seeking full-time employment.

GOALS

- Identify economic development opportunities that will expand the local economy.
- Support and promote workforce development.
- Identify methods to involve local businesses and industries in the recovery process.

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

The two greatest catalysts for economic development in Holt are the future eastern bypass and the redevelopment opportunities that arise after a major natural disaster. Holt has several other assets that should encourage business development:

- Barge transportation to the Port of Mobile and, via the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway, to the Tennessee, Ohio and Mississippi Rivers.
- The Alabama Southern rail line.
- Industrial land along the Black Warrior River.
- Opportunities for tourism development related to Hurricane Creek and its location in the Appalachian foothills.
- Retail development associated with the proposed Tuscaloosa Eastern Bypass interchanges at Crescent Ridge Road and Jack Warner Parkway Corridor.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

This section outlines a set of tools and projects that the community can develop for housing recovery.

- Holt Community Design Master Plan
- New Foundry Creative Center – Create, Work and Grow in Holt, Alabama
- Industrial Park

HOLT COMMUNITY DESIGN/MASTER PLAN

The Community Design/Master Plan is a priority project for the community. Reshaping the community’s physical design and appearance can contribute to economic development and enhance the quality of life for residents.

PROJECT CHAMPIONS

Shaun Faulkner
Bill Holley
Melanie Lankford
Donald Lankford
Randy Mecredy

BACKGROUND

The disaster highlighted residents’ desire for a better Holt. A lack of planning for the community in the past has resulted in problems such as aging and inadequate infrastructure and poorly planned development. Proposed infrastructure projects at the county and state level, such as sewer system expansion and the Eastern Bypass, can have significant impacts on the community. A Master Plan will help the community address these and future land use challenges.

GOALS

- Continue the planning process that builds on the consensus achieved during the Long-Term Community Recovery (LTCR) planning effort.
- Create a master plan that incorporates current efforts to rebuild disaster affected areas as well as the community’s vision for the future.
- Prepare an implementation plan that articulates projects, programs and funding requirements that will achieve the community’s objectives.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

If three people were asked, “What makes a well-laid out town?” they can give three different answers. The idea of good community design principles is, in part, subjective. But experience and research have also taught us that making thoughtful changes in the physical shape of a community can contribute greatly to quality of life.

During the recovery planning process, the community expressed strong sentiments about the more robust neighborhoods and social connections that existed when neighborhoods were walkable. Residents want to reconnect the places that they frequent with sidewalks, trails and public transit. Creating these connections has the added benefits of improving the health of the community and helping to build a stronger local economy.

Fostering a sense of place can mean building upon the history of a community, establishing a new identity or celebrating the unique character of a place. Holt’s history is exceptional and has shaped the landscape and the people who live there. “Holt’s Town Center” should develop out of the same criteria. Town centers with unique characteristics — historic buildings, mom-and-pop businesses — are valued by residents and visitors. A town center can reflect the community’s individuality. *(continued on page 31)*







Some characteristic elements for a town center include street parking (with additional parking in the rear of buildings), sidewalks and buildings constructed along the edge of the sidewalk. The goal is to create a unique and inviting experience.

Market opportunities for Holt's Town Center include The Retreat at Tahoma Lake, a new, housing complex for University of Alabama students, which lies just west of Holt. This large student population creates the opportunity for small business development in Holt. Businesses located in the town center can provide students with laundry, food and other goods and services. To be successful, these businesses should be easily accessible to students and residents. A pedestrian connection, for example, can be provided along Riverfront Park, connecting Holt to Tuscaloosa.

The current and projected roadway network presents a design challenge for Holt. The major roads that link Holt to the region also physically divide the community. Jack Warner Parkway, Tuscaloosa Eastern Bypass (proposed) and Crescent Ridge Road, as they currently exist or as envisioned in the future, serve primarily to move traffic through and past the Holt Community. After the disaster, the residents of Holt

recognized that these roads can impair internal traffic circulation within Holt and should be re-examined to address the need for pedestrian connections and good internal traffic flow.

The master planning process is estimated to take six months to complete and will include an assessment of the physical infrastructure, the transportation network and economic needs and opportunities in the community.

ACTION STEPS

- Seek or allocate funding for Master Plan development.
- Prepare a Request for Proposal (RFP) to develop the Holt Area Master Plan.
- Prepare an RFP for a Buildable Land Survey that would analyze infrastructure capacity, land availability and development potential.
- Incorporate LTRC planning efforts as a part of Master Planning process.

SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES

Smart Growth principles, which incorporate sustainability considerations, will guide this planning process.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

PRELIMINARY COST ESTIMATE

Cost estimate for a six month planning process: \$120,000

FUNDING GAPS

The community is seeking volunteer support for completing this project. Funding gaps are to be determined

POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

- Tuscaloosa County
- Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA)

RESOURCES

- University of Alabama
- Auburn University Urban Design Studio

NEW FOUNDRY CREATIVE CENTER – CREATE, WORK AND GROW IN HOLT, ALABAMA

This project fosters entrepreneurial endeavors by providing education, workforce development, arts and cultural enrichment.

PROJECT CHAMPIONS

Riz Shakir
Randy Mecredy
Nancy Callahan
Jackie Maye
Cetera Church
Melanie Lankford

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Over the last few decades, much of Holt’s industry has left the area. This economic shift has mandated a cultural shift, requiring more emphasis be placed on education and new types of employment. The April 27 tornado displaced residents and destroyed several businesses, further exacerbating a shortage of jobs in Holt.

The potential home of the core programs of the New Foundry Creative Center is an underutilized facility owned by the Tuscaloosa County School Board (TCSB) known as the Alternative School located on Alabama Avenue one-half mile from Holt High School.

GOALS

- Foster a growing business community.
- Attract new private and public investment.
- Support local entrepreneurs as they start new businesses or nonprofit organizations.
- Offer residents new educational opportunities.
- Establish community gathering places that celebrate Holt’s heritage.
- Revitalize North Holt.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The New Foundry Creative Center will provide a range of community activities including:

- Economic opportunities - business development support.
- Arts and heritage-focused community gathering spaces.
- Workforce education initiatives.
- Youth activities.

HOLT in Action is actively exploring new means of sustainable employment opportunities which blend creativity and healthy community living. This project addresses those needs and supports the revitalization and recovery of the Holt community by optimizing resources and creating new partnerships.

PROJECT ELEMENTS

Currently, discussions between *HOLT in Action* and TCSB are addressing shared-use arrangements for the property, but there are other land owners and entities that will need to be engaged in order to make this project a success. Early planning discussion has divided this project into three phases.



Phase I

Instructional Center – Establish classrooms, offices, and restrooms in existing buildings. Programs may include:

- GED instruction
- Ready-to-work programs
- Culinary training courses
- Art-related instruction
- Small business support classes.
- Students and faculty from area universities and colleges can support educational programs and projects at the New Foundry.

Flexible Workspaces – An existing classroom wing can be converted into flexible office workspaces for emerging enterprises, nonprofits or studio space. Rent and fees can be set below market for shared business office services and the revenue would support facility operations. The typical period of tenancy would be one to three years.

Community Kitchen and Garden Classroom
The commercial kitchen and cafeteria can become a rental location for catering firms as well as a professional and recreational culinary arts training center. Participation from area schools would be encouraged in the development and

use of an organic garden or “edible schoolyard,” educational programs focused on “slow food” and sustainable agriculture.

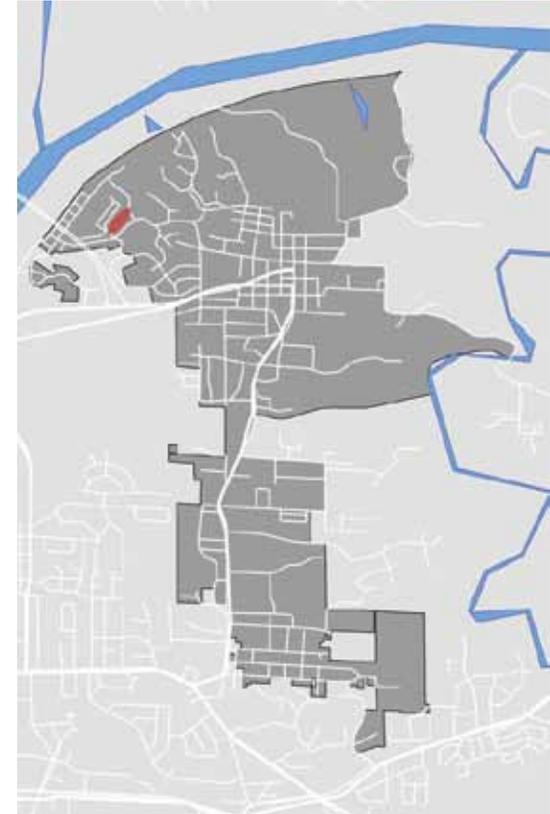
Action Steps Phase I

While most of the physical plant exists, the grounds and building are in need of rehabilitation and repurposing for the project. The scope of work for Phase I would be:

- Develop project master plan.
- Determine ownership/operating possibilities among school board, county; potentially forming a nonprofit organization to manage the New Foundry.
- Secure and refurbish the facility starting with the instructional element and shared work spaces.
- Develop programs and recruit educational partners.
- Renovate kitchen and construct vegetable gardens.

Phase II

Art Park/Sculpture Garden – The former baseball field would be converted to an art/sculpture park including benches, a pavilion, an event stage and a walking path. Along the walking path, industrial relics and sculptures with plaques would explain



the relevance and history of each. Programs, including an annual art festival, can be hosted by the community. Local artists can be involved in creating sculpture for the park including a memorial to the tornado victims.

NEW FOUNDRY CREATIVE CENTER (CONTINUED)

Action Steps Phase II

- Plan and coordinate art park development and construction.
- Recruit artists, historians and sponsors for arts and heritage project development.
- Rehabilitate the property for the New Foundry Welcome and Heritage Center.

Phase III

In the longer-term, the goal is to establish an arts and heritage district around the New Foundry project. This district can provide opportunities for cross-cultivation with other programs and elements at the center. This program has two main elements: a Welcome and Heritage Center and an “artist in residence” program where artists live and run studios or galleries in renovated homes.

Action Steps Phase III

Steps for creating the district include:

- Forming an arts and heritage trust for preservation nonprofit organization.
- Acquiring land/property through use of a community land trust.
- Rehabilitating bungalows (partnered with the Neighborhood Stabilization Program detailed in this plan)
- Continued recruitment and management of artist/craftsmen tenants.

SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES

- Promote a healthy, sustainable community through education and cooperative efforts.
- Support nonprofits and small businesses focused on wholesome foods.
- Re-purpose under-utilized buildings.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

PRELIMINARY COST ESTIMATE

HOLT in Action and TCSB are currently in discussions regarding the property in Phase I and the costs will be determined as the project progresses.

FUNDING GAPS

Major foreseeable funding gaps include:

- Park and garden development funds
- Full kitchen revitalization funding
- Three year operating budget

POTENTIAL RESOURCES

- Tuscaloosa County School Board
- Shelton State Community College
- University of Alabama
- Tuscaloosa Farmers Federation
- U.S. Small Business Administration’s Small Business Development Center
- Tuscaloosa County Preservation Society
- Culinary Arts programs



INDUSTRIAL PARK

Job creation opportunities exist for the community through redeveloping large industrial parcels of land along a major inland waterway.

PROJECT CHAMPIONS

Dara Longgrear

Executive Director, Tuscaloosa County Industrial Development Authority

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Numerous comments recorded at community meetings indicated a desire to bring new industry to the riverfront. “The community is missing out on using this large piece of land,” states Tim Parker, chairman of Parker Towing, a major inland waterway transportation company in Tuscaloosa County. The Empire Coke property, owned by McWane Inc., was closed in 2004 and the property has been cleared of structures. The 60-acre site offers the advantage of access to water, rail and road transportation. The property has city sewer, water and fire protection services.

GOALS

- Bring new industries to the riverfront
- Generate job opportunities for the Holt community and surrounding areas.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Two major components of this project include developing the Alabama State Port Authority commercial docks and establishing an industrial park at the site. The Alabama State Port Authority is considering relocating from their present 20-acre location which is situated several miles downriver in Northport. Both facilities have the potential to attract tenants who can employ hundreds of workers, making the industrial park the leading employer in the Holt area.

The project will assist the community’s recovery by directly creating jobs and indirectly supporting neighboring service industries and retail establishments. The projects would help resurrect Holt’s reputation as a regional industrial force. A key component of this project is to focus the taxes collected from the industrial park tenants to the community of Holt – as a resource to fund community recovery project implementation.

ACTION STEPS

This project involves an incremental process beginning with the acquisition of the land located on the Black Warrior River at Holt.

- Acquire land (Tuscaloosa County Industrial Development Authority).
- Conduct Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Phase I assessment (ADEM).
- Conduct EPA Phase II assessment (ADEM).
- Mitigate site (to be determined).
- Install infrastructure (Tuscaloosa County Industrial Development Authority).

State Docks:

- Acquire land (Alabama State Port Authority).
- Build infrastructure/relocate docks (Alabama State Port Authority).

SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES

- Proposed pedestrian/bicycle trails enable residents to walk/bike to work.
- Infill development takes advantage of existing infrastructure and services.
- Promote use of natural stormwater treatment systems.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

PRELIMINARY COST ESTIMATE

15 – 20 acres of waterfront property: cost to be determined
Dock facilities: cost to be determined
Warehouse 10,000 square feet: \$500,000
Truck scales: \$85,000 estimate
Facility infrastructure (road access, utilities, etc.): cost to be determined

FUNDING GAPS

To be determined

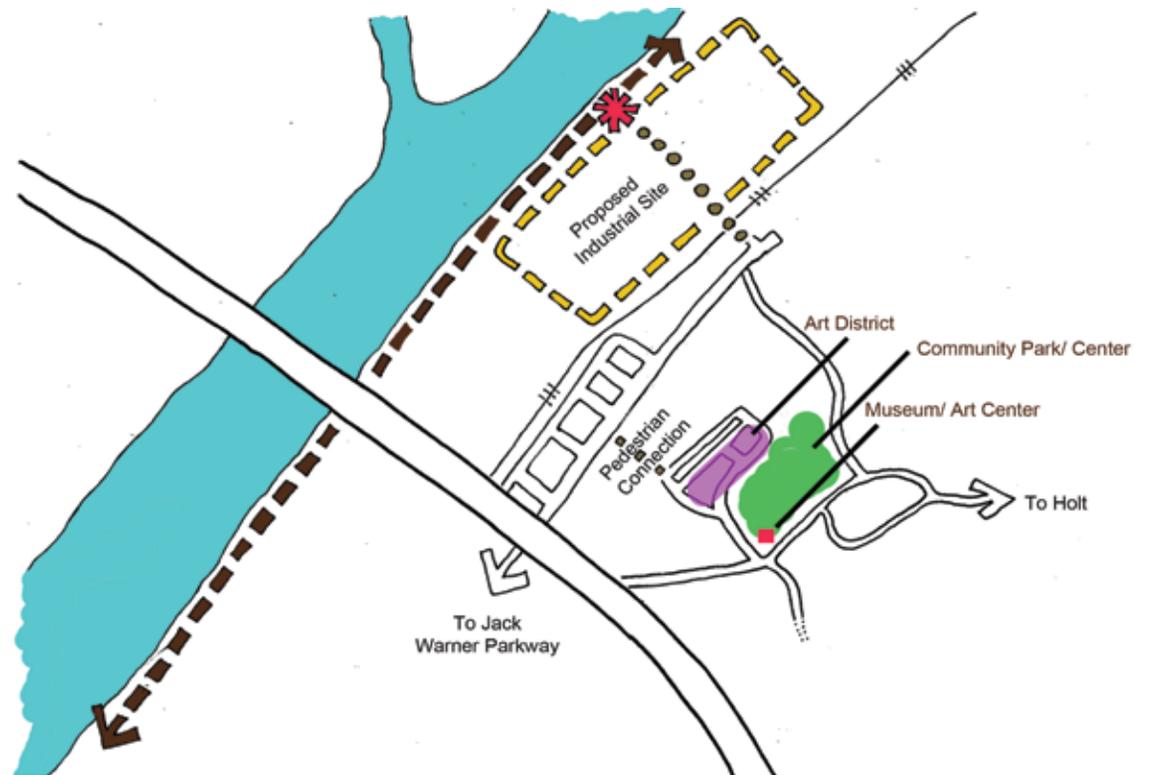
POTENTIAL RESOURCES

Funding

- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) or Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) for conducting the environmental assessment and site mitigation, if needed
- McWane to donate the land
- Economic Development Administration (EDA) for funding the industrial park and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) for providing dock relocation assistance

Technical Assistance

- Tuscaloosa County Industrial Development Authority
- Tuscaloosa Chamber of Commerce
- ADEM
- Alabama State Port Authority
- USACE
- The property owner, Nucor Steel, and Parker Towing





NATURAL RESOURCES

The tornado caused the loss of Holt's trees which were an important part of Holt's character. The tornado that travelled through Holt had wind speeds up to 140 mph and was on the ground in Tuscaloosa County for 41 miles, causing a path of destruction over 2,000 feet wide. Six months after the disaster, a visible scar remains on the landscape.

The Long-Term Community Recovery (LTCR) planning process generated a great deal of community input about Holt's natural resources, the need for improved parks, protected open space and pathways to link residents to these assets. This section of the plan defines two projects that promote community goals. Both projects were developed to help heal the marks of the storm.

GOALS

- Re-establish wooded areas and other vegetation in the community.
- Create new recreational opportunities for the community and region.
- Develop a community trail system for recreation and access to water resources.

PROJECTS IN THIS SECTION

- Greening Holt
- Hurricane Creek Nature Trails

GREENING HOLT

This project addresses the loss of trees which were a major element of the landscape and aesthetics of the pre-disaster Holt community.

PROJECT CHAMPIONS

Joe Boteler
Cindy Dixon
Lois Church
Debra Church
Bessie Harper
Linda Kirkwood
Joe Lopez

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The tornado that went through Holt has left a large path of barren land where there used to be wooded ravines and forests. The objective of the “Greening Holt” project is to transform the area in a manner that will revitalize the community and enhance the environment.



GOALS

This project will achieve the community’s vision to “facilitate communication and interaction across diverse groups” and “to flourish personally, physically, economically and spiritually.”

- Re-establish tornado-damaged trees.
- Utilize vacant lots within Holt for community gardens.
- Re-establish and build new gardens throughout the community.

ACTION STEPS

- Work with property owners to assess the impact that disaster has had on large woodland habitat areas and identify methods for restoration.
- Identify publicly-owned land and other open space opportunities that can be used as a tree plantation.
- Work with residential property owners to identify methods for utilizing vacant lots for community gardens.

This will be a community-wide effort that brings together diverse groups of people representing not only residents but anyone who has an interest in revitalizing Holt. A well-planned approach to landscaping public areas will ensure viability and make maintenance more manageable.

Through coordinating efforts and activities of all residents of the community this project has the ability to revitalize and beautify, preserve open space, provide a catalyst for neighborhood recovery and increase property values.

SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES

- Trees and landscaping reduce erosion.
- Community gardens promote health and provide fresh food goods for residents.





FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

PRELIMINARY COST ESTIMATE

The scope of work to be developed by the Greening of Holt project committee will detail the cost dependent upon the area chosen for the first phases of the project.

FUNDING GAPS

To be determined

POTENTIAL RESOURCES

Funding

HOLT in Action was awarded a grant of \$8,000 from the Tombigbee Resource Conservation & Development General Fund.

Technical Assistance

Initially, this project will focus on the areas impacted by the tornado as a primary focus. Future areas may include public land, rights-of-way, and vacant lots. The following have been identified as potential resource partners for this project:

- Alabama Farmers Federation
- Druid City Community Garden Project
- The University of Alabama Arboretum
- Alabama Green Industry Training Center
- Alabama Urban Forestry Association
- Alabama Forestry Commission
- The Druid City Canopy Coalition
- Alabama Cooperative Extension System
- Alabama Master Gardeners
- Local nurseries
- Tuscaloosa County Commission

HURRICANE CREEK NATURE TRAILS

Holt's distinctive location provides the community an opportunity to market the area as a place for visitors interested in mountain biking, hiking, geology and other activities.

PROJECT CHAMPIONS

John Wathen

Linda Kirkwood

Nancy Callahan

Erin Wiggins

Development Planner, Tuscaloosa County Park and Recreation Authority

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Hurricane Creek forms the eastern boundary of the Holt community and is an important part of Holt's culture and history. Referred to as the "crown jewel of Tuscaloosa County," Hurricane Creek is the southernmost free-flowing stream in Appalachia and a place of exceptional biodiversity.

Discussions between *HOLT in Action*, Friends of Hurricane Creek and Tuscaloosa Parks and Recreation Authority (PARA) produced a consensus that it would be beneficial to the community and Hurricane Creek to develop a nature trails system in Holt.

GOALS

- To develop a continuous trail along Hurricane Creek.
- Highlight unique geologic, riparian and historical features of the creek.
- Provide the community with educational and recreational opportunities.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Hurricane Creek trail will include trail development and education programs. This project is expected to occur in phases. The initial phase will link residential areas in Holt with a creek trailhead, providing access to the backwoods and the waterway. In future development phases, partners can consider constructing a pedestrian bridge over the Alabama Southern rail line, storm shelters, camping facilities, a ropes course, boat

launches, a tree house and other amenities. There is also the potential for Hurricane Creek nature trails to connect to the other trails in the area to form a larger trail system.



ACTION STEPS

- Inform key partners of project goals.
- Seek authorization from the PARA board and support of the county.
- Coordinate with other jurisdictions such as the City of Tuscaloosa.
- Form a trail development partnership to include Tuscaloosa Park and Recreation Authority, Tuscaloosa County Commission, Friends of Hurricane Creek and property owners along the creek.
- Develop a GIS-based trail map with parcel information to track existing and required easements.
- Determine the path of the proposed bypass to ascertain potential impact on trails along Hurricane Creek.
- Identify potential tax-related incentives and seek funding for other inducements for private property owners to allow and support public trails.
- Develop concept plan that connects the Holt community, area residents and visitors to Hurricane Creek. Establish trail protection policy.
- Develop programs to increase public awareness of trails.

SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES

- Communities with trails are found to be more desirable to live in. Nature trails can encourage the community to become physically active and promote healthier choices.
- Enabling people to experience the creek along the trail and educating them about the unique characteristics of this watershed will help to protect the creek.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

PRELIMINARY COST ESTIMATE

PARA's current estimate for full development of trail and amenities: \$660,000.

FUNDING GAPS

\$660,000

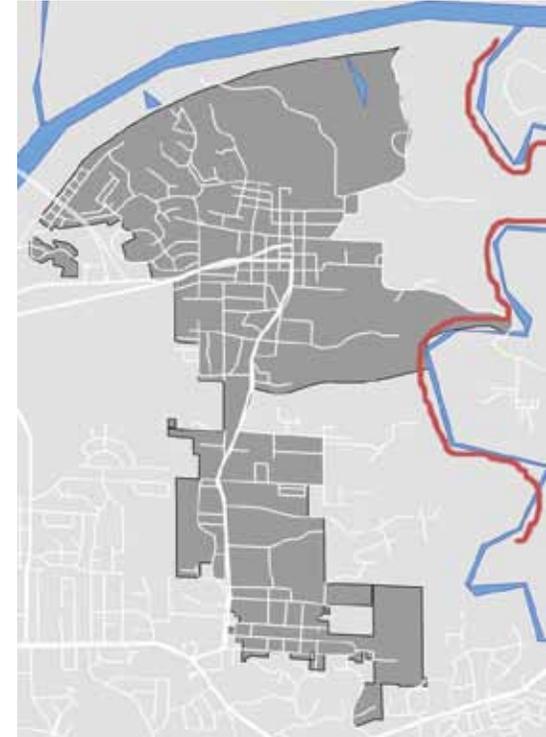
POTENTIAL RESOURCES

Funding

- Donations
- Business and Local Governments
- Others to be determined

Technical Assistance

- Alabama Department of Environmental Management
- Tuscaloosa Parks and Recreation Authority (PARA)
- Tuscaloosa County Commission
- Friends of Hurricane Creek
- Property owners along the creek



"I will never forget the afternoon of April 27, 2011 and what I would experience following the massive tornado destroying the communities so special to me. My life was changed that night. I experienced situations that seemed so unreal. Upon arriving at Holt Elementary School, I was met by those who care and those who had lost so much. Without even thinking, an emergency plan was put into place. Our gym was opened as a triage area to care for those who were hurting physically and emotionally.

A group of Holt Elementary employees gathered together and worked tirelessly for days in meeting physical needs, providing a hug when needed, and searching for our students and families as we also bonded with each other. We became close partners with the Tuscaloosa Sheriff's Department as we worked side by side for days. I truly have a different perspective of our great First Responders as I personally saw the dedication they displayed. It is so hard to imagine how to move a school in a short time. On Saturday, April 30, the many volunteers who gave of their time to move our school in six hours were amazing. This was just the beginning. The outpouring of love and concern shown to Holt Elementary has been phenomenal. We have truly been blessed and deeply appreciate the generosity of everyone who has given of their time and money.

Our heart is still in Holt even though our school is in Northport. We look forward to the day we can return to our school in Holt."

– **Debbie Crawford**, Principal, Holt Elementary School

INFRASTRUCTURE + PUBLIC FACILITIES

Supporting community recovery and redevelopment requires a foundation. Infrastructure is the foundation that supports proposed improvements to the community and includes transportation, sewer collection and treatment, communications, schools and community facilities. This section provides an overview of key actions that are underway with respect to sewage collection and treatment as well as transportation and identifies key projects that will increase public facilities and services for the community.

SEWAGE COLLECTION AND TREATMENT

Sewage collection and treatment is a challenge for the Holt community. The City of Tuscaloosa adopted an ordinance in 2007 that prohibits hook-ups to their system in the unincorporated area. In order for a connection to be approved, the property must be annexed to the City. Since Alabama law prohibits discontinuous annexations, much of Holt cannot connect to the system even if the property owner wants to annex. At the time of publication Tuscaloosa County announced to *HOLT in Action* that county leaders had begun to

explore a new county sewer expansion project. *HOLT in Action* will continue to work with the county on this project.

TRANSPORTATION

City buses currently pass through Holt along Crescent Ridge Road providing limited service in Holt. The Tuscaloosa County Commission has indicated support for expanded service and is exploring financial options. *HOLT in Action* will encourage continued negotiations between the county and the city in order to come to an agreement about what level of support is feasible.

Crescent Ridge Road is a major roadway that serves the residents of Holt and is a regional corridor. The design of this roadway lacks sidewalks and adequate lighting that would enable it to serve vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle traffic in a manner that would connect the Holt community.

PUBLIC FACILITIES

Public facilities are limited in Holt and consist of Holt High School, Holt Elementary School and

the Holt Community Center (privately owned by a nonprofit for community use). There is one community park, Roshelle Park. For Holt to once again thrive projects should be undertaken to improve public facilities that serve residents.

GOALS

- Continue to work with Tuscaloosa County to establish community wide sewage collection
- Improve Crescent Ridge Road for pedestrians and bicycles
- Increase access to public facilities

SECTOR IMPACTS

The disaster brought the community together and helped residents see opportunities to strengthen the entire area; it also made residents realize that infrastructure will be required to implement recovery projects.

PROJECTS IN THIS SECTION

- Crescent Ridge Road Corridor Study
- Holt Town Center
- Multi-Use Regional Park and Community Center

CRESCENT RIDGE ROAD CORRIDOR STUDY

Community members seek sound planning for road and sidewalk improvements that will support safe transportation and local economic development along the community’s major corridor.

PROJECT CHAMPIONS

- Neal Guy
Debbie Crawford
Fred Glaze
Ruth Brown
Lizzie Hannah
Donald Lankford

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Crescent Ridge Road is a four lane major arterial roadway constructed within a narrow right-of-way. It lacks sidewalks, bike lanes and lighting. Foot traffic along Crescent Ridge Road became commonplace after the tornade destroyed many of the residents’ vehicles. This caused concern over the lack of sidewalks along that road. In addition, the proposed next phase of the Tuscaloosa Eastern Bypass, which crosses over Holt, will physically divide the community. The right-of-way for this project is routed through a large portion of the area impacted by the April

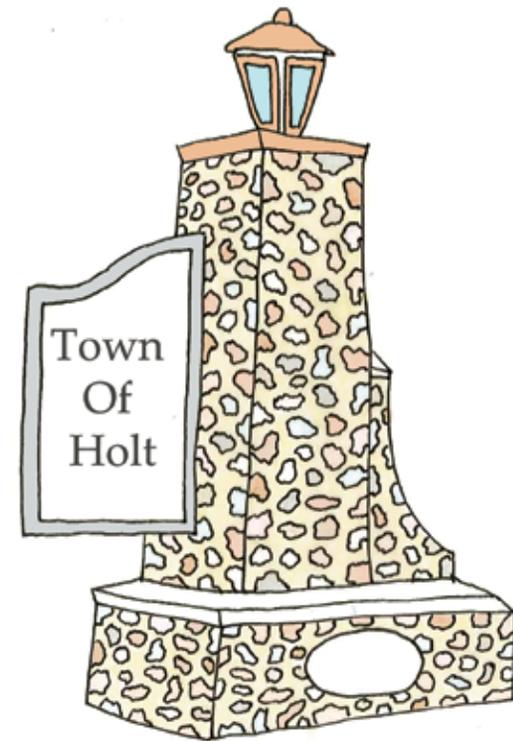
2011 tornado. Residents hope that the bypass will spur development in a way that benefits the community and request that a corridor design study be undertaken to ensure that these two roadways will function within the context of the community to promote economic development and create a well connected walkable community.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- Complete a corridor study that addresses land use, transportation and community design ideals as defined in Holt’s vision statement and guiding principles.
Increase safety along Crescent Ridge Road.
Study the feasibility of new neighborhood businesses locating along the Crescent Ridge Road.
Plan appropriately for the development along major corridors and entrances to the community.
Construct sidewalks along Crescent Ridge as indicated in the Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization’s Long-Term Transportation Plan.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Corridor Study takes a comprehensive look at the transportation needs for the Crescent Ridge Road corridor as it travels through Holt from University Boulevard to Jack Warner Parkway. Crescent Ridge Road is a vital link in the local transportation network and ensuring its long-term viability is essential to the future development of Holt’s economic potential.



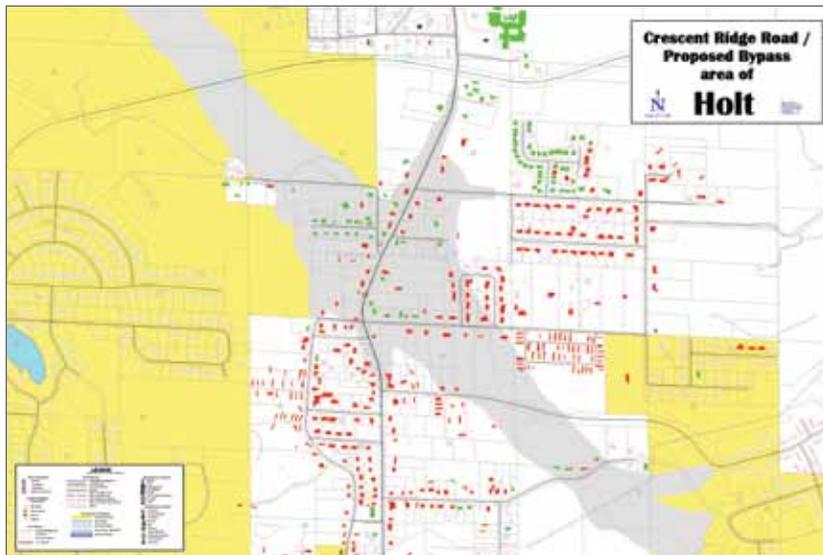
The corridor study will consider a range of mobility options along the corridor, including personal and commercial vehicles, public transit as well as other modes of transportation. The results of the study will form the basis for future projects along the Crescent Ridge Road corridor. The product from this study will establish a blueprint that includes short-term actions, intermediate recommendations and a vision plan that identifies long-range goals, policies and recommendations.

The project will focus on one future and two current gateways into Holt:

- The southern end of Crescent Ridge Road, where University Street intersects, is an opportunity to create a gateway to the Holt community.
- The proposed interchange of Crescent Ridge Road and the proposed Tuscaloosa Eastern Bypass offers an opportunity for larger scale commercial/mixed use development.
- The intersection at Jack Warner Parkway and Crescent Ridge Road offers an opportunity to create a commercial town center.

ACTION STEPS

- Coordinate with Tuscaloosa County and the Alabama Department of Transportation (ADOT) to determine funding options for this study.
- Work with the Auburn University Urban Studio (AUUS) for study guidance.
- Finalize a scope of work for the project.



FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

PRELIMINARY COST ESTIMATE

Corridor study: \$200,000

FUNDING GAPS

\$200,000

RESOURCES

- ADOT
- University of Alabama
- AUUS
- U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Safe Routes to School Program
- FHWA Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act

HOLT TOWN CENTER

The proposed town center project creates a community focal point where small business and services can be centrally located.

PROJECT CHAMPIONS

Ples White

Jackie Maye

Ruby Jean White

Bessie Harper

Alonzo Harper

Fred Glaze

Clarence Richardson

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Holt community, through the recovery planning process, has discussed the need for creating a town center. This project undertakes a study to develop a design for a new town center. Proposed as a public/private development the town center can become a neighborhood destination for local shopping and entertainment, and it can serve the University of Alabama population living and working nearby.

The potential location of a town center was refined during a community meeting, when 70 percent of respondents chose the area near

the intersection of Jack Warner Parkway and Crescent Ridge as the best location.

GOALS

- Develop a town center that takes advantage of all of the current best practices.
- Alleviate traffic and safety issues and improve connections.
- Enhance the identity of Holt and attract economic development.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed project would complete a master plan study of the area along Crescent Ridge Road between two intersections: Jack Warner Parkway and Alabama Street NE. The town center concept would evaluate potential building design guidance, building lines, land use, parking and roadway improvements that would lead to creating a neighborhood node and gateway at the north end of Crescent Ridge Road.



ACTION STEPS

- Include a Steering Committee and the community in the study process
- Meet with County engineering staff to be aware of any potential pertinent staff study of the corridor
- Establish a schedule of meetings with Committee and community to provide adequate discussion of opportunities and recommendations.

SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES

This project promotes alternative transportation along Crescent Ridge Road, supports the development of neighborhood-focused businesses and facilitates the development of walkable communities.



17th

Crescent Ridge Road looking west at 17th
Holt, Alabama
Auburn Urban Studio

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

PRELIMINARY COST ESTIMATE

Master Plan Design Study: \$75,000
The town center project requires multiple partners and funding sources. A cost estimate will be a product of the master plan study.

FUNDING GAPS

To be determined

PROPOSED FUNDING

Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) Enhancement Program – local governments (e.g., mayors, county judges, et al) must submit a letter of request to the ALDOT Director requesting funding for project(s). The ALDOT director will review individual requests and approve projects on a case by case basis.

RESOURCES

- Auburn University Urban Design Studio
- Alabama Department of Transportation
- FHWA Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act

NOTES: *As far as local match assistance, both the railroad and school (and other private route entities) can enter into public partnerships with the county and/or city to leverage/enhance funds.*

Communities considering business/downtown and/or corridor development may pursue a transportation improvement zone and/or business district.

MULTI-USE REGIONAL PARK AND COMMUNITY CENTER

Creating a community center that is incorporated into a regional park will accomplish a key community goal: providing a central location for the community to gather.

PROJECT CHAMPIONS

Ben Horton

Clarence Richardson

Jeff Parker

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Holt has a small building to accommodate community gatherings. This facility, located on the edge of the tornado path, could not serve as a community safe room. Discussion during community meetings focused on the benefits of a larger facility offering expanded programs and a community safe room.

Park land in Holt is limited to Rochelle Park, a small neighborhood park with basketball and non-regulation baseball facilities. Presently no public spaces exist in Holt for passive uses such as benches, paths, scenic views, plantings, fountains or similar features. Holt is in need of safe, secure, family-friendly recreational venues.

GOALS

- Provide the community with a central location for social activities, education, social development and recreation.
- Develop a regional park that establishes a connection to Hurricane Creek.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Combining a new community center with a substantial, regional park development near Holt Elementary can attract development. This new development will transform the recreational options of the area and become a true destination offering access to Hurricane Creek. Planned as an active park, the project includes a full-feature sports and recreational area coupled with a community center that would include meeting space and exercise facilities.

This project can utilize an unused property located behind the soon-to-be renovated Holt Elementary. The parcel is currently owned by the Tuscaloosa County School Board (TCSB) and early conversations indicate it could be made available for this project. Members of the Long-Term Community Recovery (LTCR) team met with the staff and board of Tuscaloosa Parks and Recreation Authority (PARA), who play a central role in providing recreational facilities



in the County. With input from Holt residents and community partners, PARA can lead design and help construct a new multi-use park and community center facility on the property. PARA recognizes the need for parks and recreational facilities in Holt.

The park portion would include:

- Walking paths
- Play equipment
- Picnic shelters
- Splash pad
- Community Safe Room

Eventual access to the waterway would allow for canoeing and entry onto the anticipated Hurricane Creek Nature Trail network.

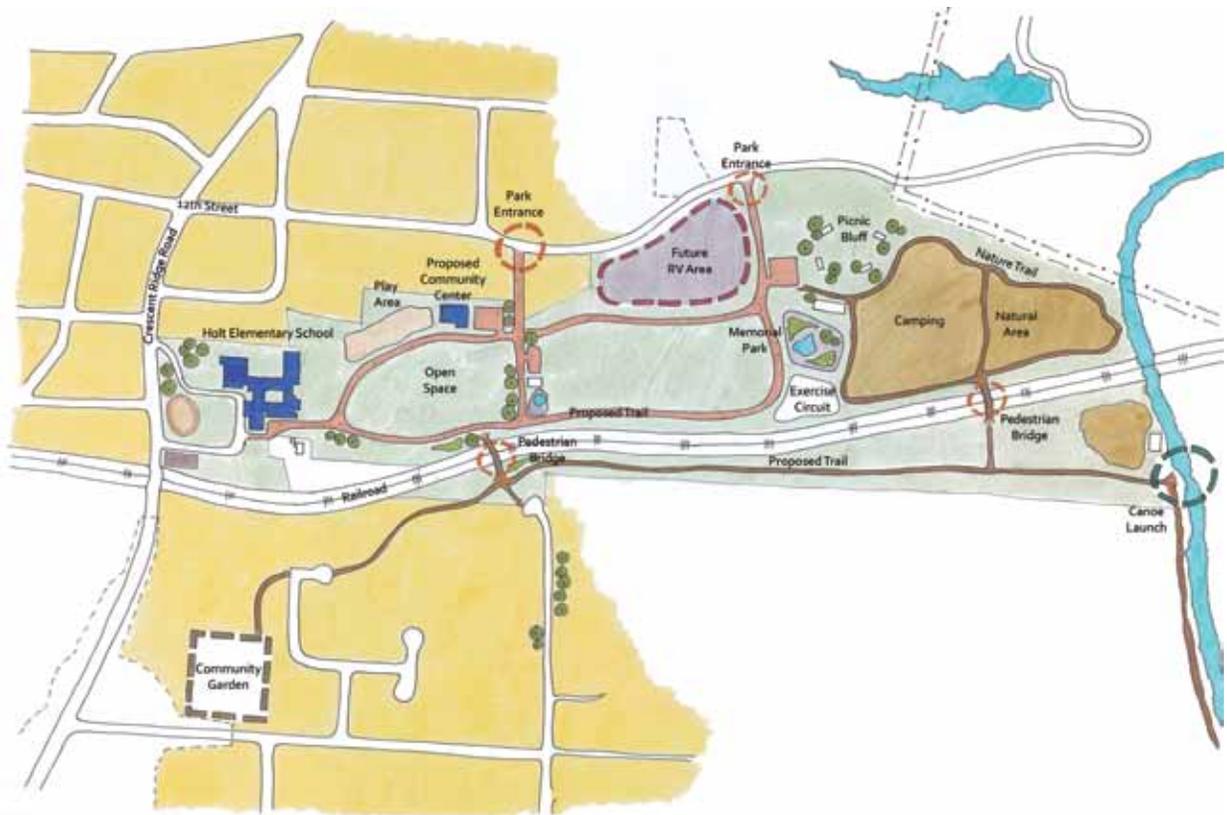
The community center would be new construction and offer activities related to sports and exercise, the elderly and after-school programs. It would have a media center and outdoor pavilion areas.

ACTION STEPS

- Continue planning meetings between *HOLT in Action*, PARA, Tuscaloosa County School Board (TCSB) and the County Commission.
- Develop agreements and procedures for how the land can be developed.
- Develop financial plan encompassing construction and operation funding sources.
- Begin a local campaign to raise funds
- Identify and develop grant applications for park support

SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES

- The community center and park incorporate sustainable low-impact design principles.
- The community center facility can be equipped with efficient lighting and control systems, eco-friendly water heating and delivery systems and energy-star compliant appliances and climate control systems.



FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

PRELIMINARY COST ESTIMATE

Holt Community Center (5,200 square feet multiply purpose facility):	\$700,000
Multi-use park:	\$500,000 – \$1,000,000

FUNDING GAPS

\$700,000 – Community Center
\$500,000 – Multi-use park

RESOURCES

Apply to PARA for up to \$50,000 to fund the renovation of school properties. The grant money would have to be matched 50-50, although volunteer labor can count towards the match

The community group would also have to take responsibility for maintaining the properties. The Board of Education can transfer the ball fields to PARA. As owners of the property, PARA would then take responsibility for renovating the facility and maintaining it.



NEXT STEPS + IMPLEMENTATION



NEXT STEPS + IMPLEMENTATION

The responsibility for adopting and implementing recovery strategies, initiatives and projects rests with the Holt community, supported by its civic and elected leadership. Assessing project impacts on recovery should guide implementation priorities. In this assessment, consider:

- Does one step make four others possible?
- Is the step being considered dependent upon the completion of some other action or activity?
- Does completing a recovery project build excitement and maintain community momentum for the hard work ahead?

The answers to these questions, in part, help a community determine both immediate and long-term value of any recovery project.

Generally, the following principles guide implementation priorities:

- Define roles and responsibilities.
- Develop realistic project management timelines.
- Maintain focus on projects that will have the most impact on recovery when implemented.
- Move forward on projects that can be readily implemented, offer partnership opportunities, have significant public support, or have available funding.

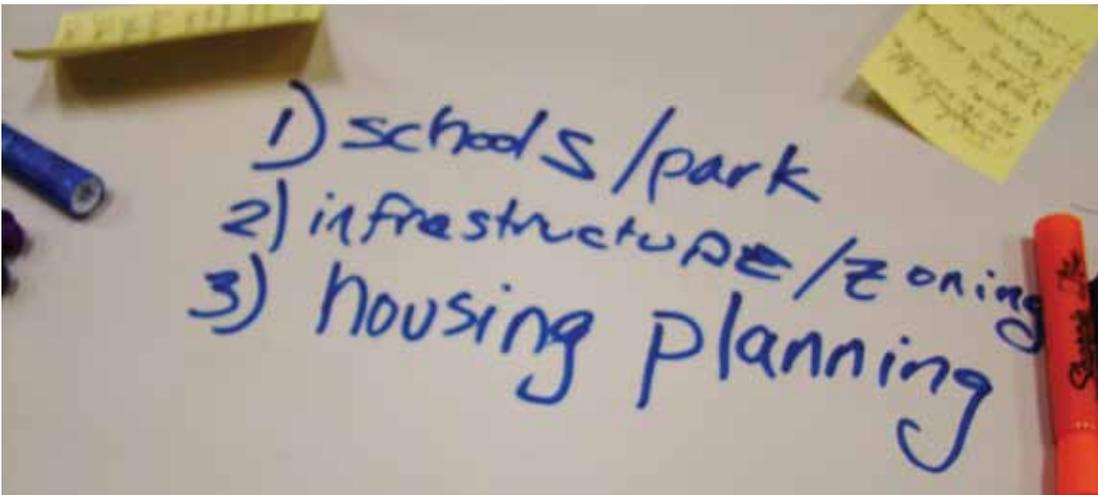
In addition to rebuilding homes, businesses and community facilities, ongoing planning will require a continued commitment of time, energy and focus by a great number of community members.

Key elements are currently in place to continue planning and, in some cases, begin implementation of initiatives and projects mentioned in this document:

- State and FEMA resources are being developed to provide a recovery manager for Holt.
- The Greening of Holt project committee was awarded an \$8,000 grant that they will use to leverage more funds. This award has spurred the committee into planning a first phase scope of work for the project.
- *HOLT in Action* leadership has begun to meet regularly with the Tuscaloosa County Probate Judge to keep track of County initiatives that will impact Holt's recovery such as the sewer study and repaving/ restriping of Crescent Ridge Road.
- *HOLT in Action* members are participating in several training and technical assistance programs which will continue to build capacity.
- HoltCommunity.org serves as the group management tool as recovery moves forward.

HOLT in Action has begun to develop a strong leadership structure and each proposed recovery project has one or more champions with responsibility for providing overall accountability and management. Nonetheless, the ranks of *HOLT in Action* must be augmented by many energetic residents and stakeholders to actively communicate with one another and share the burden and successes of day-to-day recovery activities. As mentioned throughout this plan, Holt has experienced a rebirth out of the disaster and will rebuild, reshape and revitalize through its determination and resourcefulness.

FUNDING + CAPACITY BUILDING



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.

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.

HOLT COMMUNITY RESOURCE GUIDE

Students from the University of Alabama are developing a resource guide for the community. Students will identify community resources, map their physical locations, provide detailed contact information, and web links. Through research and interviews, the students will decide how to organize and distribute the information. Once the information has been collected and organized, it will be made available to the community. The guide will be updated as needed either by other students or members of the community.

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.

These commissions/councils frequently deal with issues and needs that cross city, town, and county boundaries. Also, 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.

The West Alabama Regional Commission (WARC) serves Tuscaloosa County. Through communication, planning, policymaking, coordination, advocacy, grant writing and technical assistance the commission/council serves the local governments and citizens in the region. Community members may visit www.warc.info for a full list of the programs and services offered by the regional council.

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 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.

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

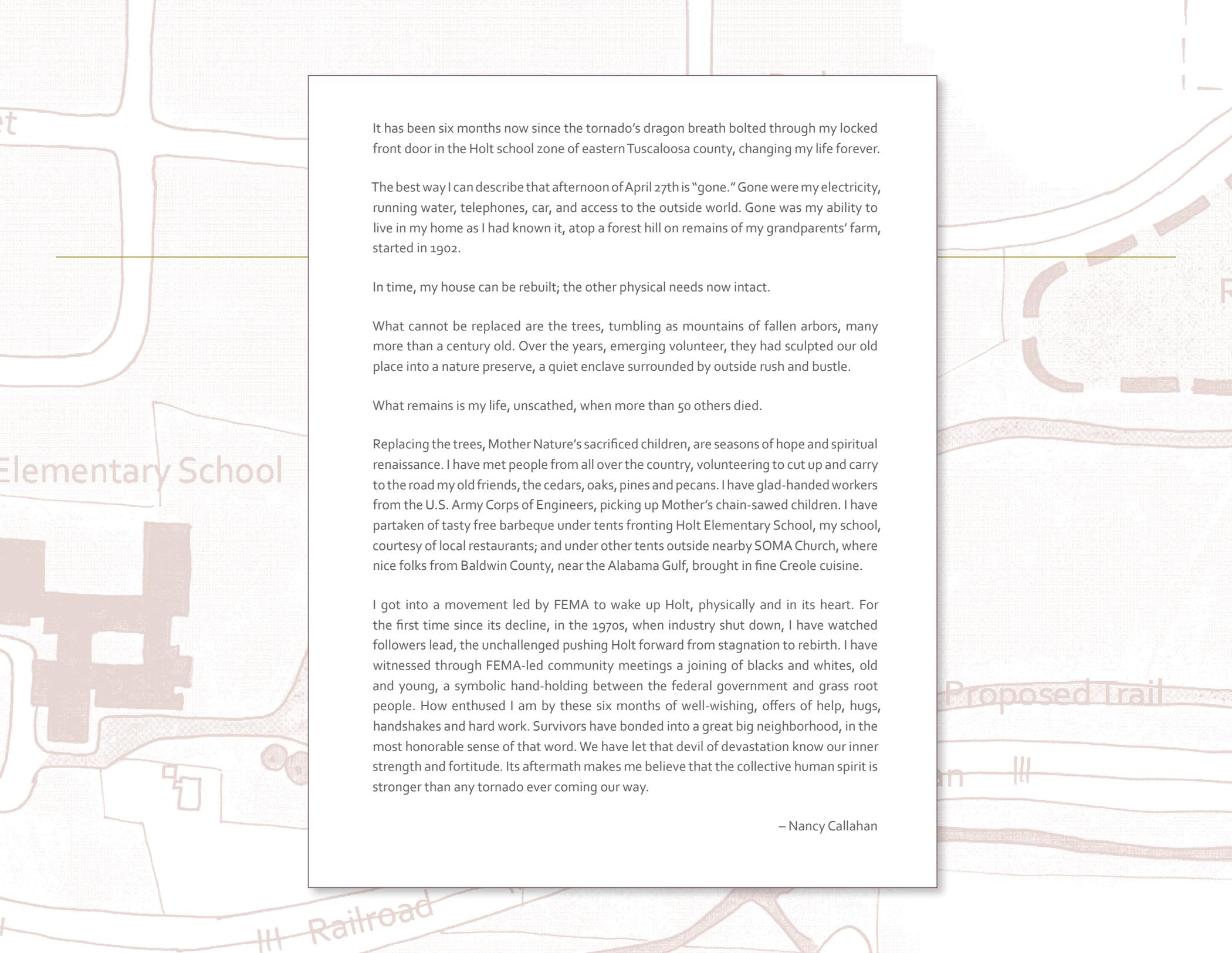
State agencies, universities, and associations provide a broad range of financial and other support to communities and organizations of interest to them. They are an excellent resource for capacity building support, technical assistance, studies and projections, and sometimes even funding. The Alabama 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
- Your Town Alabama
www.yourtownalabama.org
- Alabama Home Builders Association
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.



It has been six months now since the tornado's dragon breath bolted through my locked front door in the Holt school zone of eastern Tuscaloosa county, changing my life forever.

The best way I can describe that afternoon of April 27th is "gone." Gone were my electricity, running water, telephones, car, and access to the outside world. Gone was my ability to live in my home as I had known it, atop a forest hill on remains of my grandparents' farm, started in 1902.

In time, my house can be rebuilt; the other physical needs now intact.

What cannot be replaced are the trees, tumbling as mountains of fallen arbors, many more than a century old. Over the years, emerging volunteer, they had sculpted our old place into a nature preserve, a quiet enclave surrounded by outside rush and bustle.

What remains is my life, unscathed, when more than 50 others died.

Replacing the trees, Mother Nature's sacrificed children, are seasons of hope and spiritual renaissance. I have met people from all over the country, volunteering to cut up and carry to the road my old friends, the cedars, oaks, pines and pecans. I have glad-handed workers from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, picking up Mother's chain-sawed children. I have partaken of tasty free barbeque under tents fronting Holt Elementary School, my school, courtesy of local restaurants; and under other tents outside nearby SOMA Church, where nice folks from Baldwin County, near the Alabama Gulf, brought in fine Creole cuisine.

I got into a movement led by FEMA to wake up Holt, physically and in its heart. For the first time since its decline, in the 1970s, when industry shut down, I have watched followers lead, the unchallenged pushing Holt forward from stagnation to rebirth. I have witnessed through FEMA-led community meetings a joining of blacks and whites, old and young, a symbolic hand-holding between the federal government and grass root people. How enthused I am by these six months of well-wishing, offers of help, hugs, handshakes and hard work. Survivors have bonded into a great big neighborhood, in the most honorable sense of that word. We have let that devil of devastation know our inner strength and fortitude. Its aftermath makes me believe that the collective human spirit is stronger than any tornado ever coming our way.

– Nancy Callahan



Entrance

Future
RV Area

Picnic
Bluff

Nature Trail

Memorial
Park

Camping

Natural
Area

Exercise
Circuit

Pedestrian
Bridge

Proposed Trail

