

Visger Road - Milton Hospital Site in River Rouge

Statement of the Problem

Visger Road is a distressed former commercial street that can no longer service its market. It also serves as the boundary between the cities of Ecorse and River Rouge. A couple of party stores, small marginal businesses, an auto wash that appears to attract other illicit activity, abandoned buildings including a former African-American owned hospital, and vacant lots dot the strip.

Process

Wayne County, with the help of some funding from EDA, hired McKenna Associates to prepare a plan for Visger Road. Al Bogdan was named Project Manager. Bogdan's market study indicated that the neighborhood could only support approximately a block to a block and one-half of retail. A study for the reuse of Milton Hospital indicated that it could not be effectively reused - it needed to be removed. The study proposed the replacement of most of the strip with townhouses. When Bogdan joined Wayne County he initiated a proposal to build over 40 lease to own low income housing tax credit units using HOME funding for acquisition of existing buildings and a HUD 202 senior housing project for the Milton Hospital Site. The city of ecorse rejected the proposal for the Ecorse side of the border. Many of the old timers still wished for a return of the former retail strip. They would not be convinced that times had changed and that the area could no longer support that much retail activity.

On the Milton Hospital site we used the EPA Pilot Site Assessment to perform the site assessments, we obtained a \$300,000 Clean Michigan Initiative commitment from the state to demolish this historic former African-American hospital, the city recruited Volunteer of America as a developer, and we then helped the city obtain a \$4.6 million HUD 202 commitment for senior housing on the site and a small HOME grant to help finance it.

Result

A HUD 202 development will start construction in 2004.

