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**WHY NOT: Mill Village Rehabilitation?
A Visit With Jerry Galloway,
Director of Community Development**
by
Elise Stephens

A welcoming office staff, a good fresh cup of coffee, a warm open smile greeted me at Jerry Galloway's Community Development office on the 2nd floor of the renovated Yarbrough Hotel building. The youthful-looking director, a native of Birmingham, has made Huntsville home since 1964. He came just as the Courthouse was being torn down to put up the "modern" one. A large photograph of that 1913 structure hangs on his office wall accompanied by other photographs and paintings of historic structures. Here is a man who values the past and its architectural legacy.

Here, too, is a man dedicated to his job of community development. Proud of his office's role in turning the Weeden House from a "dilapidated structure" to the showplace it is now, Galloway explained that in the 1960s and 1970s, Community Development was instrumental in creating Constitution Village and the Roundhouse as well as restoring the Weeden House and the Depot. All of the preservation projects brought economic development to downtown and helped give Huntsville a tourist base. The Weeden House is still our only downtown house museum open to the public.

In the 1990s, the role of community development has narrowed primarily to that of caretaker of low- to moderate-income families. The emphasis is on people, people in need of decent but inexpensive housing. This includes a large number of elderly as well as children. The gospel according to Jerry Galloway is to keep housing affordable and maintenance costs as low as possible. If vinyl siding is low cost housing's coat of armor, Jerry Galloway must be its knight in shining armor taking on the advocates of historic preservation if "gentrification" is threatened.

Galloway pointed out that the agency was active in assisting moderate-to lower-income housing in the Old Town area in the early 1970s, only to

watch Old Town take off and the value of properties catapult out of “affordable” range for the people the agency was set up to serve. This is what Jerry fears most—that preservation leads to gentrification and subsequent loss of available housing. It is counterproductive to support a preservation plan if it works against agency goals.

Take heart, however, Community Development and the HHF can achieve common goals. The Foundation is the logical citizen group to spearhead restoration of “period Piece” houses that tell the city’s history. Mill Village housing is low income—now and in the past. That is its history and can be its destiny. If restoration costs make sales or rents prohibitive, then the Foundation may want to purposely assume some of the difference. The Foundation and Community Development together can evolve plans and approaches to preservation of low cost housing of historically significant structures.

One of the most notable things about Huntsville is the pride **all** of its citizens take in its history. That is as evident among Mill Village residents as in Twickenham’s. That is the strength of our public and private efforts toward historical preservation. Jerry Galloway is a good man to work with.

Community Development Block Grant Program

Purpose

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) Community Development Block Grant program provides a formula allocation to certain cities which have a population of 50,000 or more. Huntsville receives a grant award from HUD every year based on the amount congress has allocated to the CDBG program. A majority of Community Development funds must be used for activities which benefit low and moderate income people. All CDBG projects must address one of the national objectives of the program: benefit low and moderate income people and eliminate or prevent slums and blight.

Eligibility

Any state incorporated non-profit which serves low and moderate income individuals or families can apply to the city to receive a portion of these funds.

Eligible Activities

- **Housing Rehabilitation**—Funds may be used to finance the rehabilitation of privately owned buildings and improvements for residential purposes when such activities meet a national objective.
- **Public Facilities**—Funds may be used for the construction or renovation of a public facility (such as a recreation center), when it is located in a lower income area or serves a specific group which is assumed to be eligible—handicapped, elderly, or homeless.
- **Removal of Architectural Barriers**—Funds may be used to remove architectural barriers for the elderly or handicapped when such activities meet a national objective.
- **Code Enforcement**—Funds may be used to enforce local codes when code enforcement, combined with other public improvements, rehabilitation, and services, may be expected to arrest the decline of the area provided activities meet a national objective.
- **Acquisition of Real Property**—Funds may be used to acquire real property in whole or in part by purchase, long-term lease, donation, or otherwise, for any purpose which meets a national objective.
- **Clearance**—Funds may be used for clearance, demolition, and removal of buildings and improvements, when such activities meet a national objective.
- **Public Services**—Funds may be used to establish or expand (but not simply maintain) public services, including but not limited to, services concerned with employment, crime prevention, child care, education, health, etc., when such activities meet a national objective. (HUD places a 15% limit on the amount of the city's CDBG funds which may be spent for public services.)

Budget

Approximately 3 million dollars.

For further information contact: Community Development, 532-1700.