

Press Release

City of Hopkinsville Recognized for “Outstanding Project/Program/Tool” by the Kentucky Chapter of the American Planning Association

During their annual awards ceremony on Friday, May 23, 2008, the Kentucky Chapter of the American Planning Association recognized the “Inner-City Residential Enterprise Zone” (ICREZ) Program as the outstanding project/program/tool from a pool of applicants across the Commonwealth. The award was presented by Ed Poppe, Chairman of the KAPA Awards Committee, during the KAPA Spring Conference held at Cumberland Falls State Park Resort.

The Inner-City REZ Program is an initiative of Hopkinsville City Council in an effort to revitalize and rehabilitate four (4) targeted inner-city residential neighborhoods and the downtown business district. The initiative is being funded through a City appropriation of \$500,000 per year over a five (5) year period. Additional funding sources utilized in the targeted areas include the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Kentucky Housing Corporation, Federal Home Loan Bank, and local lending institutions.

The following four (4) elements serve as the basis for the Inner-City REZ initiative: (1) Clean and Safe Neighborhoods, (2) Housing Stock Revitalization, (3) Economic Infrastructure, or Downtown Development, and (4) Economic Opportunity Plan.

To date, the following legislation has been adopted by Hopkinsville City Council as a result of the Inner-City REZ Program: Neighborhood Networks Ordinance, Abandoned Urban Properties Ordinance, Basic Property Maintenance Code, and Downtown 50/50 Matching Grant Program.

The Neighborhood Networks Ordinance provides parameters by which neighborhood groups can seek funding for programs and projects within their neighborhoods. Six (6) Neighborhood Network Associations have formed to date and include the following: Durrett Avenue Neighborhood Association, Hopkinsville Eastside Neighborhood Association, Canton Pike Neighborhood Association, Westside Neighborhood Association, Bryan Street Neighborhood Association, and Crockett/Virginia Street Neighborhood Association.

The Abandoned Urban Properties Ordinance allows the City to tax “abandoned” properties at \$1.50 per \$100 assessed value in an effort to encourage property owners to make improvements to their properties.

The Basic Property Maintenance Code serves as a tool for providing tenants with relief regarding sub-standard housing while also serving as a tool for requiring all properties to be maintained to a minimum standard.

The Downtown 50/50 Matching Grant Program provides a reimbursement of up to \$10,000 for the acquisition and restoration of properties along the main corridors in the downtown area.

Additional incentive programs that have been developed to encourage residential and downtown development and will be forwarded to Hopkinsville City Council in the coming months include a Collateralized Loan Program, an Enterprise Zone Program, and a Preservation in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) Program. Additionally, an Interagency Governmental Task Force is being developed to provide the neighborhoods with proper access to governmental departments and utility providers to assist with undertaking public infrastructure projects.

The Hopkinsville and Christian County Landbank Authority, Inc. has been established to acquire and dispose of tax-delinquent properties within the Inner-City REZ area. It is their goal to return vacant properties within the inner-city to a useful state through providing housing, economic development, or recreational spaces.

Plans are underway for the development of an Economic Opportunity Plan through a partnership with the local Workforce Development Committee, chaired by Hopkinsville Community College President Dr. Jim Selbe. The goal is to provide educational and job training opportunities to the residents who live within the targeted areas in hopes of better preparing them to enter the work force.

Members of the Inner-City Advisory Committee include co-chairs Mike Foster and David Ptaszek as well as James Victor, Elizabeth McCoy, Ruth Lynch, Wynn Radford, Jessie Quarles, Charles Turner, Bernard Standard, Carolyn Self, Austin Moss, and Dave Norris. The program is administered by the Christian County/Hopkinsville Development Corporation (LDC). Members of the LDC include James Victor, Peg Hays, Janet Calhoun, Lee White, and Wendell Lynch. Staff support is provided by the Hopkinsville-Christian County Planning Commission.

The attached excerpt will appear in the chapter newsletter, *Kentucky Planner*, in the coming weeks.

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