



HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN / AUSTIN HOUSING FINANCE CORPORATION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Rosewood Choice Neighborhoods Plan has been developed with the active involvement of Rosewood Courts residents, community leaders, residents of the City's designated Rosewood and Central East Austin planning areas, City staff and a variety of affordable housing, education and social service providers who have long-standing relationships with the Housing Authority of the City of Austin (HACA) and the Rosewood community. The plan that we have developed is consistent with and builds upon the City's recently adopted *Imagine Austin* comprehensive plan and other citywide planning initiatives.

The Rosewood Choice Neighborhoods Plan provides a roadmap for revitalization of HACA's Rosewood Courts property and enhancement of the surrounding neighborhood to re-establish Rosewood as one of Austin's complete communities. A complete community is one that is livable, mobile and connected, prosperous, educated, creative, natural and sustainable, and one that values and respects people.

GOALS OF THE PLAN

- Replace Rosewood Courts with a mixed-income residential development that includes 1:1 replacement of 124 public housing units.
- Work with community residents and organizations to improve lives and living conditions for Rosewood Courts families and residents of the surrounding neighborhood, with a particular focus on the highest need families.
- Build on existing efforts to celebrate and market Rosewood as a special place – with a rich and significant history and a vibrant, positive and inclusive future.



To achieve these core goals, the Rosewood Choice Neighborhoods Plan lays out an approach to the redevelopment of Rosewood Courts as well as suggested neighborhood improvements that support positive outcomes for families from all walks of life. The planning process was structured to give a strong voice to Rosewood Courts residents in planning for the revitalization of this property. While neighborhood associations have long been active participants in development and neighborhood improvement decisions, the same cannot be said for residents of public housing. Our approach was designed to expand and strengthen neighborhood connections and set the stage for future accomplishments.

The overarching goal of the Choice Neighborhoods planning initiative is for coordinated efforts to stimulate strategic investment in assets that will improve the quality of life for all individuals in the target neighborhood, with a specific focus on those residents with the lowest-incomes and greatest needs. The Choice Neighborhoods Initiative is well aligned with *Imagine Austin*'s emphasis on the development of complete and inclusive communities.



Figure 1: Rosewood Choice Neighborhoods Planning Area Boundaries

- North: East 12th Street
- South: East 7th Street
- East: Approximately Airport Blvd. Webberville Road & Pleasant Valley Road
- West: Frontage of IH 35 North



THE ROSEWOOD CHOICE NEIGHBORHOODS PLANNING AREA

The Rosewood Choice Neighborhoods planning area has Rosewood Courts at its center. The boundaries were drawn to encompass the historic Rosewood neighborhood and its many shared community assets. These assets include churches, parks, schools, two institutions of higher learning, a variety of social service providers and a rich cultural heritage.

Rosewood is home to three HACA properties (Rosewood Courts, Booker T. Washington, and Salina Apartments) as well as other subsidized housing developments. Rosewood has been "discovered" and much of its historic affordable housing supply is being lost to market rate development. Rosewood is at the center of discussions as to how best to preserve affordable housing, while accommodating new growth.

Since the 1990s, the City has recognized Central East Austin and Rosewood as separate neighborhood planning areas. Rosewood Courts forms the hinge between these two districts. However, both planning areas have historically been referred to as Rosewood, an African American enclave that evolved as a result of local regulations that led to a segregated environment. As early as 1928, City of Austin planning policies dictated that "facilities and conveniences for African Americans be limited to the east side of the city close to 'the negro high school,'" which would act as

an incentive to "draw them to the area." Industrial land uses subsequently began to locate in East Austin. In 1957, the City zoned the area as an industrial district, negatively impacting residential property values. A concentration of subsidized housing was also created over the years, which reinforced Rosewood's identity as a low-income community. A six-lane interstate built in the 1950's further isolated Rosewood residents from downtown and the more affluent neighborhoods to the west.

Since Austin's first Fair Housing Ordinance was adopted in 1967, Rosewood has gradually become a more racially, ethnically, and economically diverse place. Today, Rosewood is on the rise; many entities are interested in purchasing property and developing the area. Rosewood is close to downtown and has good transit access and provides a variety of amenities that appeal to many middle and upper-income households. While Rosewood still contains a high concentration of subsidized housing and low-income families, with more than one-third of the neighborhood's population living below the poverty line, demand for affordable housing clearly outweighs the supply and there is increasing competition from higher-income households for available space.

ROSEWOOD COURTS

Rosewood Courts, the target housing for the Rosewood Choice Neighborhoods Plan, has an important place in the history of public housing in America because of its association with Lyndon B. Johnson and his efforts to secure passage of the United States Housing Act of 1937, which ultimately led to the creation of HACA. One of the oldest properties in HACA's portfolio, Rosewood Courts was built in 1939. It was among the first public housing projects built in Texas and the United States under the 1937 Act – at a time when public housing was required to be segregated. Between 1939 and 1940, HACA developed Santa Rita Courts for Hispanic, Rosewood Courts for African American and Chalmers Court for white low-income families. In addition to its distinction as one of the first public housing properties constructed for African Americans, the Rosewood Courts property is important because before the housing was developed, it was the location of Emancipation Park and local African American Juneteenth celebrations.

However, the historic Rosewood Courts buildings are not well suited to meet the needs of today's families – much less current building, life safety codes and accessibility requirements. The barrack-style, cinder block units have no central air conditioning,



steep and narrow stairwells, very small bedrooms and living spaces that require modern upgrades. The site's topography differs by as much as thirty feet from one end of the property to the other, making it difficult for residents to maneuver, particularly individuals with physical disabilities or the elderly. There are no ADA compliant means to traverse the site and its steep inclines. Thus, the primary challenge in developing the housing component of the Rosewood Choice Neighborhoods Plan is to simultaneously honor the historical and cultural significance of the Rosewood Courts property and provide a suitable living environment for today's families, and current and future residents.

ROSEWOOD CHOICE NEIGHBORHOODS PLAN OVERVIEW

The strategies and projects of our plan are designed to achieve the following vision:

THE VISION

The Rosewood Choice Neighborhood becomes a stable, true mixed-income community that respects the different cultures and values of area residents today and tomorrow. Rosewood Courts enhancements reflect the historic and cultural significance of the site while accommodating the needs of both current and future residents. Rosewood Courts families and other low-income neighborhood residents have the support and services needed to help them move their families from poverty to prosperity.

The Rosewood Choice Neighborhoods Plan addresses identified challenges in a holistic manner as well as the core principles of the City's *Imagine Austin* comprehensive plan and the core goals of HUD's Choice Neighborhoods Initiative. Our revitalization program is designed to improve the quality of life and economic development potential of the neighborhood.

HOUSING

The housing element of our plan focuses on the future of Rosewood Courts, the target housing of the Rosewood Choice Neighborhoods planning initiative. This element of our plan furthers the core principles of *Imagine Austin* and the development of complete communities that are livable, mobile and interconnected, natural and sustainable, affordable, and prosperous. Quality design, distinctive character, historic heritage and compact and walkable development are all touchstones for the new Rosewood Courts.

Rosewood Courts will be replaced with a well-managed, financially viable, high-quality, energy-efficient, mixed-income development that includes 1:1 replacement of 124 public housing units, with unit sizes that are appropriate to the space requirements of current and future Rosewood Courts families. Per the requirements of HACA's Choice Neighborhoods grant agreement and agency policy, all lease-compliant residents will be guaranteed the right to return to Rosewood Courts, following project completion. Residents will also be provided relocation assistance for temporary or permanent relocation, depending on resident relocation preferences. The complex will be designed to



maximize transportation and mobility options for residents, and provide adequate automobile and bicycle parking.

The historic legacy of the site will be celebrated through building and site design, including a re-envisioned Emancipation Park and preservation of selected buildings. Rosewood Courts will be better connected to the adjacent neighborhood through the addition of mixed-use community spaces and a Self-Sufficiency One-Stop Shop that serves low-income residents living at Rosewood Courts or elsewhere in the Rosewood neighborhood.

The Rosewood Choice Neighborhoods Housing Plan is built around commitments made to Rosewood Courts residents at the start of the planning process. These commitments have a prominent place on the home page of the Rosewood Choice project website (www.rosewoodchoice.com).

HACA'S COMMITMENTS TO ROSEWOOD COURTS RESIDENTS

- HACA will fully replace all public housing units at the Rosewood Court site. 124 units of public housing currently exist at Rosewood Courts, and HACA will ensure that 124 units remain at the site following any preservation, rehabilitation or redevelopment.
- HACA will preserve Rosewood Courts' unique history. Rosewood Courts is of unique historical significance in East Austin. HACA commits to preserving this history, interpreting the Rosewood Courts site, and developing a plan to make the site's history more accessible to the community.
- HACA will guarantee the right to return and work to minimize displacement. A comprehensive relocation plan will address relocation services, Section 8 Tenant Protection Vouchers, public housing transfer priority, relocation assistance, phased redevelopment and tenant's right to return.

PEOPLE

The People element of our plan furthers a number of *Imagine Austin* principles including improving access to community amenities and services, creating a safe and healthy community, providing paths to prosperity for all residents through learning opportunities for all ages, skills development and training, and access to jobs. A number of organizations and service providers helped identify desired outcomes for individuals and families in the planning area and developed an initial list of implementation project and program ideas.

The People component of our Plan is organized under the general headings of Self-Sufficiency, Education, and Health, Wellness and Safety. Our strategies are directed toward ensuring that Rosewood Courts families and neighborhood residents have the resources needed to improve their lives. There are many service providers who have worked diligently, using evidence-based models, to serve our target population. Our implementation program will expand partnerships with these organizations and forge new alliances to support our housing, people and neighborhood improvement efforts and strategies.

NEIGHBORHOOD

The Neighborhood element of our plan considers housing, transportation, economic development and other community improvement initiatives that will occur in the neighborhood that surrounds Rosewood Courts. These strategies and projects can be further developed and refined through the City's neighborhood planning process.

One of the key goals of *Imagine Austin* is establishing complete communities that are vibrant places that meet daily needs within a short trip from home or work. *Imagine Austin* defines complete communities as places that are "pedestrian-scaled and provide facilities and services to meet people's everyday needs and wants, including schools, community facilities, parks, a variety of housing options, and places to work and shop." Preserving identity, culture and sense of place is also critical to the creation and maintenance of a vibrant and complete community, such as that envisioned for the Rosewood Choice Neighborhood. We

anticipate that the City of Austin will partner on implementing many of the projects included in this element of our plan, and help to facilitate additional partnerships as necessary and appropriate. A number of City departments (Public Works, Planning and Development, Neighborhood Housing and Community Development, Economic Development, Health and Human Services, Parks & Recreation) have been active participants and partners throughout the planning process.



Kids help to design play spaces at Rosewood Courts



Design and preservation discussion with UT architecture students

IMPLEMENTATION: MAKING IT ALL HAPPEN

A high quality, mixed-income Rosewood Courts housing program with a comprehensive approach to self-sufficiency will allow Rosewood to evolve into a successful Choice Neighborhood and one of Austin's complete communities, guided by a sustainable implementation and governance structure.

With a presence of a number of anchor institutions in the neighborhood and clear housing and economic development market interest in the area, HACA is confident that it will be able to attract investment to implement the housing vision for Rosewood Courts and provide support for related neighborhood improvement projects and supportive service programs. In November 2013, a \$65 million affordable housing bond was passed in the City of Austin. HACA will apply for a portion of these General Obligation (G.O.) bonds through the City of Austin Neighborhood Housing and Community Development Department (NHCD) to support the housing component of its Rosewood Choice Neighborhoods project as well as utilizing other federal, state and local funding options including HOME, CDBG and Low-Income Housing Tax Credits and Bonds.

The planning process has built implementation capacity by allowing HACA to develop partnerships and reach out to potential stakeholders to grow informed consent and support. HACA and its planning partners are engaged in thoroughly researching and exploring resources and funds to support the implementation of the Rosewood Choice Neighborhoods Plan, and taking full advantage of opportunities as they arise. The performance metrics established for each strategy will allow progress toward the achievement of desired outcomes to be tracked over time.

HACA will continue to work with public and private agencies, philanthropic organizations, businesses, cultural entities and other community partners to gather and leverage the resources needed to support the financial sustainability of the plan. By focusing resources in targeted places, and by drawing on the compounding effect of well-coordinated actions, HACA believes that the Rosewood Choice Neighborhoods Plan will support local partners in making Rosewood one of Austin's most complete and inclusive communities.

ROSEWOOD CHOICE NEIGHBORHOODS PLAN SUMMARY

OUR VISION

The Rosewood Choice Neighborhood becomes a stable, true mixed income community that respects the different cultures and values of area residents today and tomorrow. Rosewood Courts enhancements reflect the historic and cultural significance of the

site while accommodating the needs of both current and future residents. Rosewood Courts families and other low-income neighborhood residents have the support and services needed to help them move their families from poverty to prosperity.

HOUSING PLAN

ROSEWOOD COURTS MIXED INCOME HOUSING PLAN

- 124 replacement public housing units
- 76 affordable/market rate rental units
- 25 homeownership units

Variety of housing products

- multi-family
- townhomes
- single-family
- preservation units

ROSEWOOD COURTS DEVELOPMENT CONSIDERATIONS

- Energy efficient and sustainable
- Accessible, safe and secure
- Connected – to the neighborhood and the Internet
- Free from discrimination and affirmatively furthers fair housing
- Financially viable and well-managed
- Respects historic heritage of the site
- Right to Return Agreement
- Resident relocation support services
- All lease compliant Rosewood Court residents have the right to return to Rosewood Courts following redevelopment
- Importance of homeownership opportunities / owner-occupied single family housing for low to middle income families

PEOPLE PLAN

ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY STRATEGIES

- Create a centralized service delivery center at Rosewood Courts to help households build and manage resources.
- Connect Rosewood Courts residents and other low-income neighborhood residents with effective programs and resources to support economic self-sufficiency goals.

EDUCATION STRATEGIES

- Build early learning capacity and high quality learning environments that support school readiness and prepare parents to help children succeed from an early age.
- Link students and families to learning and enrichment activities that support student academic achievement and empower parents to help their children break the cycle of poverty.

- Work collaboratively with AISD, neighborhood associations, parents and other community stakeholders to increase the long-term viability and diversity of excellent neighborhood schools.

HEALTH, WELLNESS AND SAFETY STRATEGIES

- Improve interagency communication and coordination to improve health outcomes for neighborhood residents.
- Improve nutrition and access to affordable, healthy foods in order to increase self-sufficiency and healthy lifestyles.
- Work collaboratively to improve neighborhood and resident safety to promote active lifestyles in a safe environment.

NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

CULTURAL RESOURCES AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION STRATEGY

- Celebrate the cultural and ethnic heritage of Rosewood Courts and the Rosewood neighborhood to strengthen and enhance the neighborhood's identity and attract new businesses and cultural institutions.

NEIGHBORHOOD INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGIES

- Maintain Rosewood economic diversity and continue to strengthen partnerships with affordable housing providers to ensure that a stable and accessible supply of affordable housing is available in Rosewood for low- and moderate-income households so that current residents can stay in their homes, and to maintain Rosewood's economic diversity.
- Support small business development that fills service gaps, reinforces the neighborhood's historic and cultural identity, and expands the neighborhood employment base.
- Identify improvements to the transportation system in order to improve connectivity.
- Connect residents through vibrant community spaces.

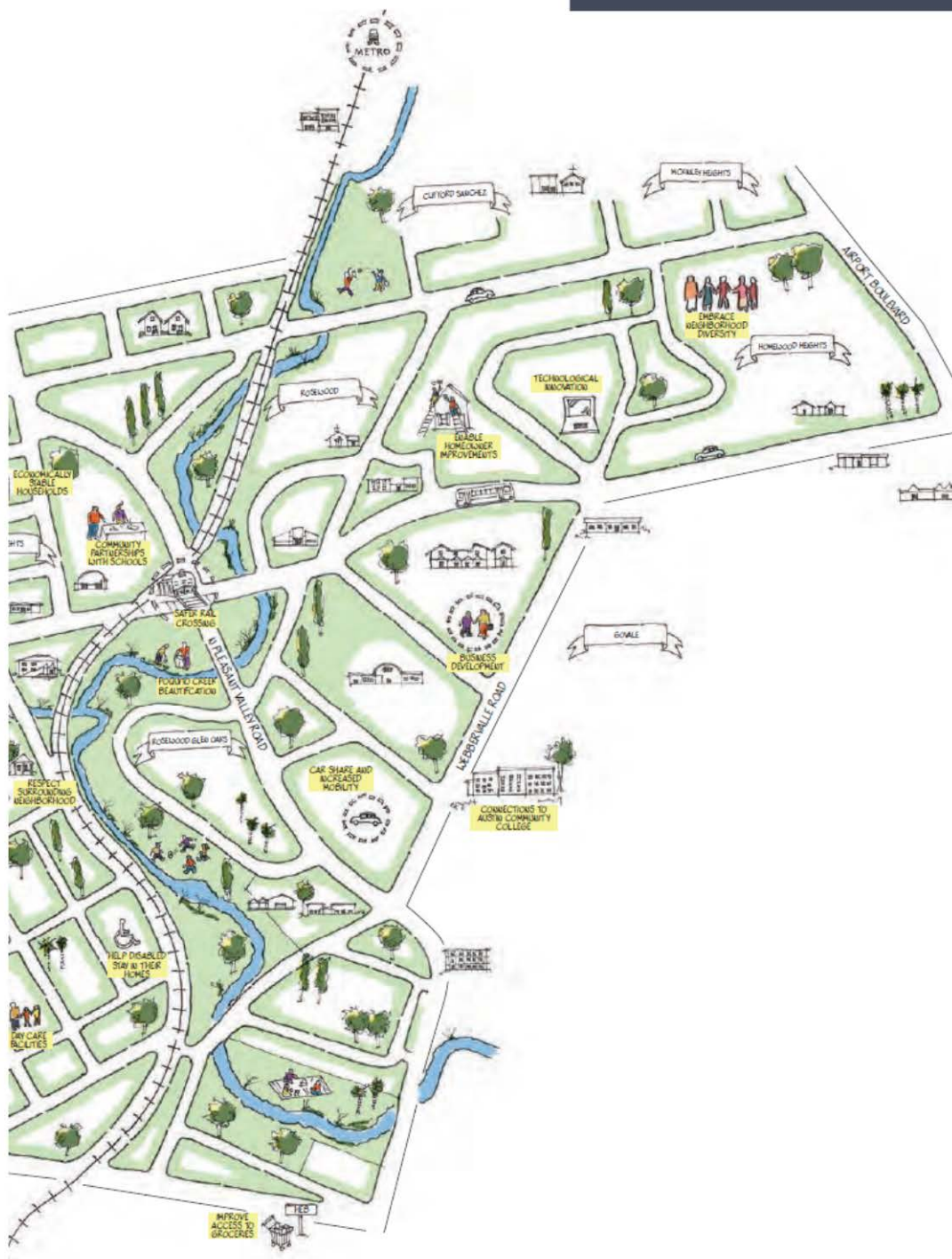


HACA staff welcomes attendees at meeting



Community conversations with Rosewood Courts residents

FIGURE 15: NEIGHBORHOOD VISION PLAN



ROSEWOOD COURTS HISTORY AND CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Much of the significance of Rosewood Courts can be traced to the role that Lyndon B. Johnson played in the passage of the United States Housing Act of 1937. This federal legislation was the result of years of public housing advocacy and established a commitment to the production of public housing for the poor. It decentralized the construction, ownership and management of public housing by allowing local housing authorities (established under state enabling legislation) to build and manage low income housing. The law established the United States Housing Authority (USHA), which provided 60-year loans for up to 90 percent of slum clearance or low-rent housing projects.

The first public housing in the nation created under the 1937 Housing Act was built in Austin due to the efforts of congressman Lyndon Johnson. As soon as the 1937 housing legislation passed, Johnson persuaded USHA administrator Nathan Strauss and President Franklin Roosevelt that Austin should be the site of the first public housing development. The Texas legislature authorized the creation of local public housing authorities shortly after the Housing Act of 1937 was approved, and on December 27, 1937, the Austin City Council established the Housing Authority of the City of Austin (HACA). HACA made an initial application to the USHA for funds to build 186 units of public housing on three sites: Santa Rita Courts (for Hispanic families), Chalmers Courts (for white families) and Rosewood Courts (for African American families). The first three federal loans awarded following passage of the Housing Act of 1937 went to the Austin, New Orleans and New York housing authorities. It has been said that the cities were announced in alphabetical order, making Austin the first on the list.

Rosewood Courts was constructed in two phases. The initial units were built in the southern portion of the property and along Chicon Street. During construction of the first sixty units of single story housing, HACA received an additional funding allocation to construct another seventy units. These two-story structures are located at the northern end of the site along Rosewood Avenue and Poquito Street. Construction began on February 1, 1940, and was completed on New Year's Day, 1941.



Rosewood Choice Neighborhoods Plan



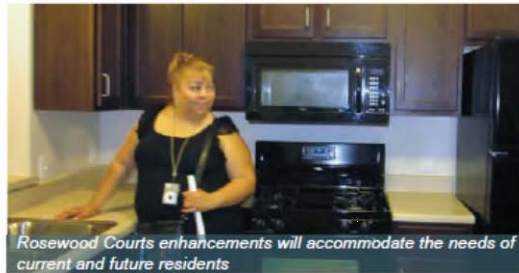
A portion of the second construction phase was built atop Emancipation Park, which was Austin's most historically significant Juneteenth parade ground at the time. The Juneteenth holiday commemorates June 19, 1865, which is considered the date when the last slaves in America were freed. Although the rumors of freedom were widespread prior to this date, actual emancipation of slaves in Texas did not come until General Gordon Granger rode into Galveston, Texas, and issued General Order No. 3, on June 19, 1865 almost two and a half years after President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation. Emancipation Park was one of the first parks purchased by African Americans specifically for the purpose of celebrating the Juneteenth holiday; land acquisition began in 1905 and was completed in 1907. The Emancipation Park property was acquired by the City of Austin using its eminent domain powers for the Rosewood Courts development. Rosewood Avenue is still Austin's Juneteenth parade route and Rosewood Courts is a prominent site along the way.

In November 2013, Rosewood Courts was nominated to the National Register of Historic Places by Dr. Fred McGhee, with no input solicited from or provided by HACA (the property owner). After review and presentation of the nomination at two Texas Historical Commission State Board of Review meetings, in January and May 2014, the Commission forwarded the nomination with comments to the National Park Service for federal review in late May 2014. HACA fully supports the historic nomination based on the property's association with events and individuals that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history and its association with the lives of persons significant in our country's past. However, based on research done by subject matter experts, Rosewood Courts residents and others, HACA did not support the submission of the nomination based on the architectural criterion that was also included.

On September 25, 2014, the nomination's author received return comments from the Historian for the National Register of Historic Places. Comments indicated that Rosewood Courts is clearly deserving of federal recognition in the National Register.

Specifically, the National Register challenged the quality of the nominator's scholarship, indicating that certain aspects of the property's historical and architectural character, as well as general condition, were overstated and misleading. The National Register further noted that the nominator's effort to tie the property to certain historical figures was considered "fleeting at best," and that the narrative "simply reaches too far" or is "misplaced" when discussing the property as model of certain architectural types. These and other issues must be addressed before the nomination can be reconsidered by the National Register for listing. HACA agrees with this assessment.

HACA has always recognized that Rosewood Courts is one of the earliest public housing properties in the United States, and more importantly is one of the first properties designated for African-American families. HACA fully expects, and looks forward to working with the preservation community, to ensure that preservation values are considered. Further, HACA will work with responsible and knowledgeable scholars to correct the returned



nomination and provide detailed and accurate information as directed by the Texas Historical Commission's Board of Review.

Moreover, as an indication of its commitment, HACA has proposed a design that preserves six buildings on the site – fully one-quarter of the 24 buildings with residential dwelling units. HACA is prepared to continue its work with the Texas Historical Commission regarding preservation options and considerations through the required Section 106 process.

CELEBRATION OF THE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF ROSEWOOD COURTS

HACA's plan is to create a new Emancipation Park at Rosewood Avenue and Poquito Street, near its original location, as a prominent open space feature of the redevelopment plan. Rosewood Avenue is part of Austin's Juneteenth and Martin Luther King Jr. celebration parade routes, and Emancipation Park would help to integrate the new Rosewood Courts development into the cultural fabric of the Rosewood community. HACA also plans to retain and rehabilitate six of the earliest original structures. These buildings currently contain 24 residential units with each of the six buildings having four units, but will be reconfigured to increase living area within each unit and make the necessary improvements so that the rehabilitated units will be comparable to the newly constructed units. However, due to the design deficiencies and physical conditions present at Rosewood Courts, retention of all of the buildings is not practical in terms of financial viability and meeting contemporary living standards.

The historic legacy of Rosewood Courts will be celebrated through site and building design. Natural elements will be included throughout the site and large heritage trees preserved where

possible. As discussed earlier, an Emancipation Park open space is planned that honors the historic importance of the site within the Rosewood neighborhood. Other design features will be used to honor the legacy of Rosewood Courts as among the first public housing built for African-American families. HACA intends to work with neighborhoods organizations, and local designers and artists, to interpret the history and develop a design for the park that honors the significance of the property and its importance to the African-American community. This includes working with the African-American Cultural Heritage District that encompasses Rosewood Courts, as well as entities such as Preservation Austin and the local chapter of the American Institute of Architects who have expressed interest in the project since its inception. HACA envisions holding a park design competition that invites self-identified local teams to present their ideas through a charrette process with the local community. Murals and public art will be prominent at the site to underscore Rosewood's cultural heritage. Community buildings and other common areas will display art and exhibits that further share and interpret Rosewood's importance.



FIGURE 29: ROSEWOOD COURTS REPLACEMENT HOUSING PLAN



SECTION 106 REVIEW

The recognized historical significance of Rosewood Courts means that redevelopment of the property cannot occur prior to a review of potential adverse impacts to ensure that preservation values are considered. Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 requires federal agencies to consider the effects of projects they carry out, approve, or fund on historic properties. Section 106 review encourages, but does not mandate, preservation. As a Certified Local Government, the City of Austin will be responsible for the Section 106 review, and will coordinate with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) for Texas. The preparation of the Rosewood Choice Neighborhoods Plan does not trigger Section 106 review because it has no physical impact on Rosewood Courts; however, redevelopment of the Rosewood Courts property will. Even if Rosewood Courts is not listed in the National Register of Historic Places, Section 106 review is required because the property has been deemed "eligible for listing" due to its historical significance.

SECTION 106 REVIEW PROCESS

- Gather information needed to decide which properties that may be affected by the project are listed, or are eligible for listing, in the National Register of Historic Places;
- Determine how these historic properties might be affected;
- Explore measures to avoid or reduce harm to the historic properties; and
- Reach agreement with the SHPO on measures to avoid, minimize or mitigate the adverse impacts.