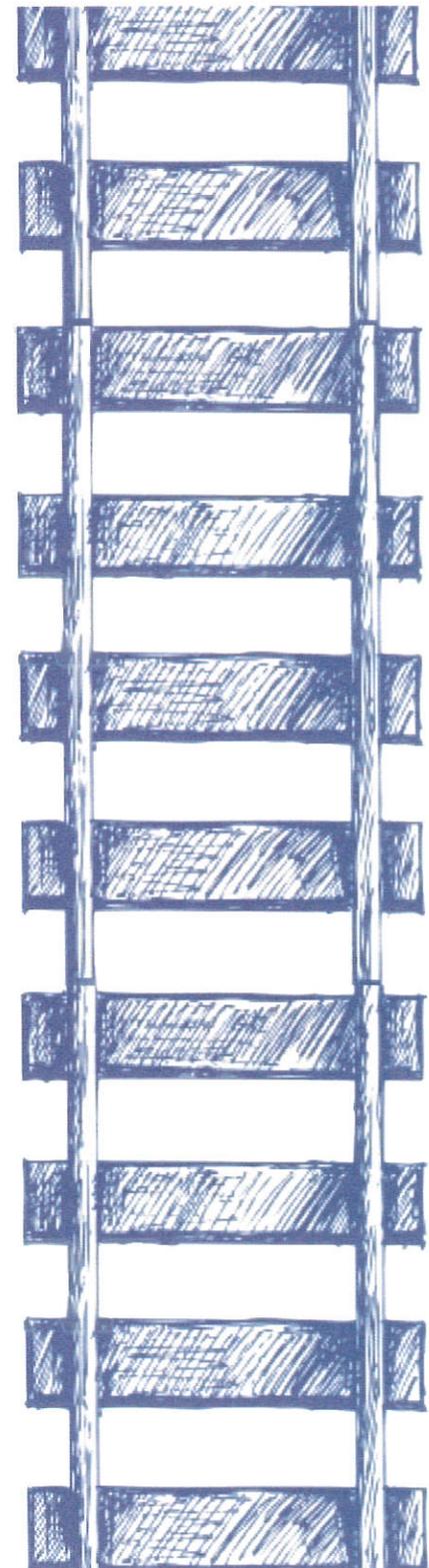


# Carver-Jeter Plan

a master plan for the Carver and Jeter areas of Opelika

October 2014





# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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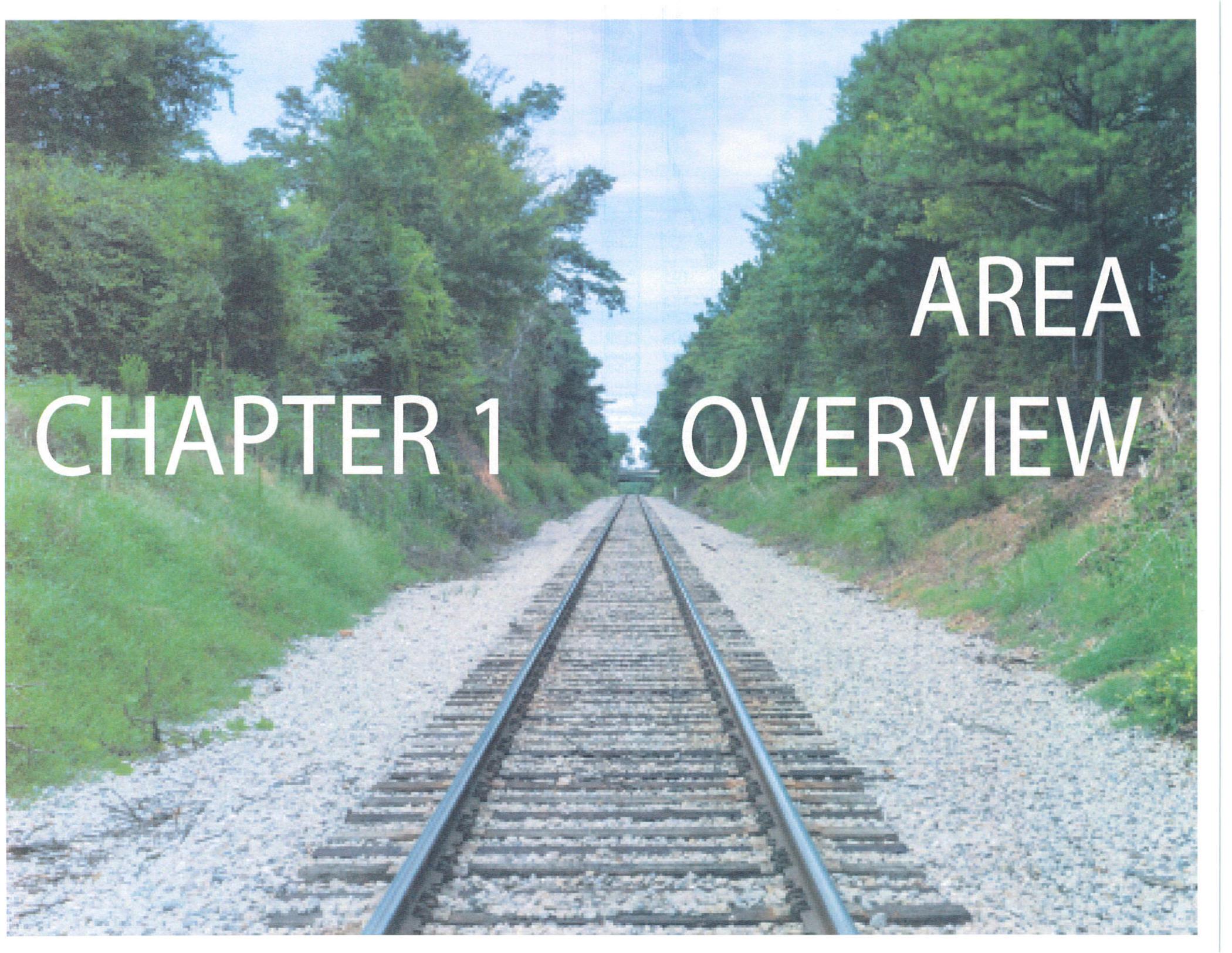
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# CHAPTER 1

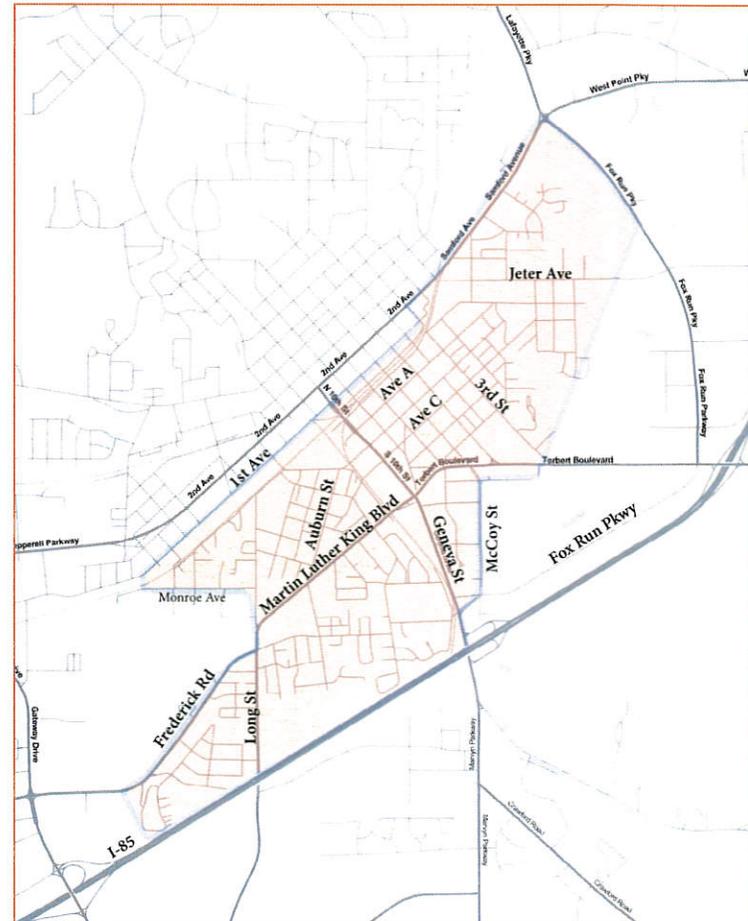
# AREA OVERVIEW

# THE AREA

For over 150 years, Opelika has served as a key connection point in the southeastern United States. Initially, the city was a key railroad connection between New Orleans and Atlanta, thus giving all states on the eastern seaboard access to goods and cotton from the south. Enduring turmoil during and after the civil war, Opelika eventually established itself as a key textile manufacturer in the region. It's railroad infrastructure delivered a distinct advantage to industry and manufacturing during the turn of the century. Though no textile mills remain in operation today, Opelika has proven to retain its competitive advantage by always thinking ahead and playing to its strengths. Manufacturing techniques and needs have evolved, but Opelika and its residents are essential to providing the labor and expertise in manufacturing for large car manufacturers in the area in addition to food processing and medical products. Currently, Opelika finds itself as a key crossroads community again—this time digitally. A new type of infrastructure has been laid as lines of high speed fiber optic cable have been laid and now position the city and its residents at a competitive advantage once again.

Opelika's Carver and Jeter neighborhoods have played an instrumental role in the history and heritage of the city. These neighborhoods have been historically inhabited by African American families. This rich history includes Dr. J.W. Darden, the Opelika region's only African American doctor in the early 1900's and Dr. W.E. Morton, an integral figure in the education system in the area. These prominent figures, their families, and their neighbors have created a rich African American heritage for Opelika and specifically the Carver and Jeter neighborhoods that needs to be continually retold and treasured for generations to come.

Carver-Jeter Plan Study Area



# HISTORY

The neighborhoods surrounding Opelika's downtown are rich with history and a strong heritage as historical African-American neighborhoods.

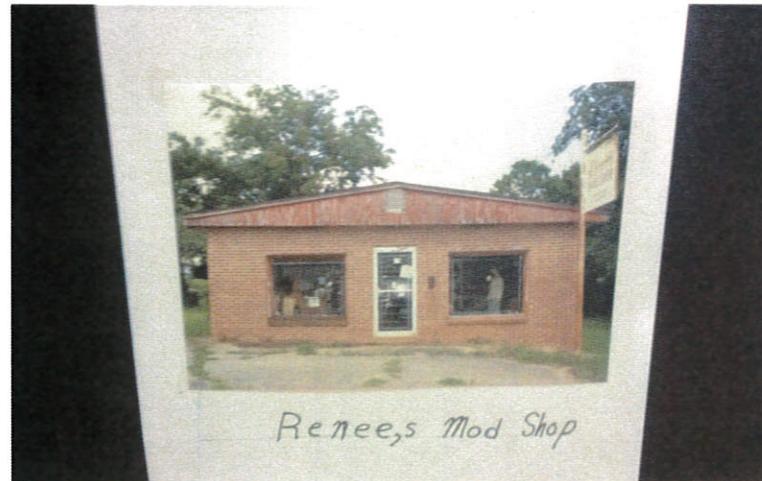
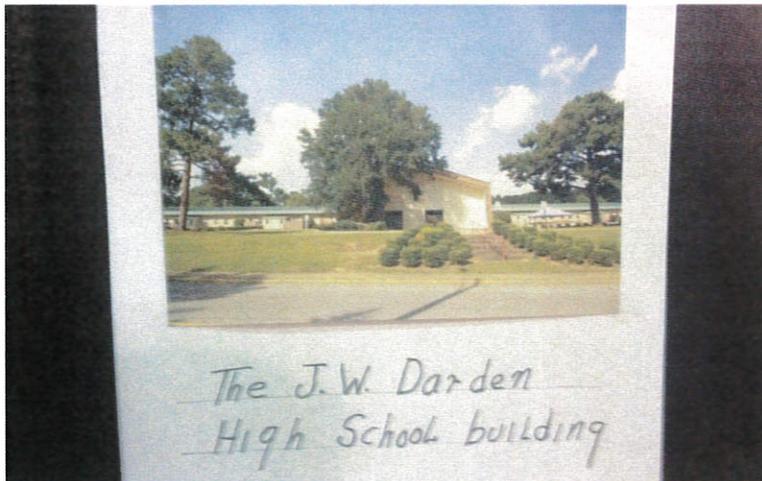
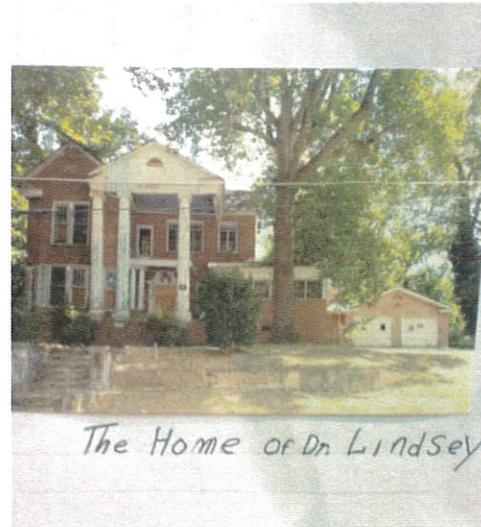
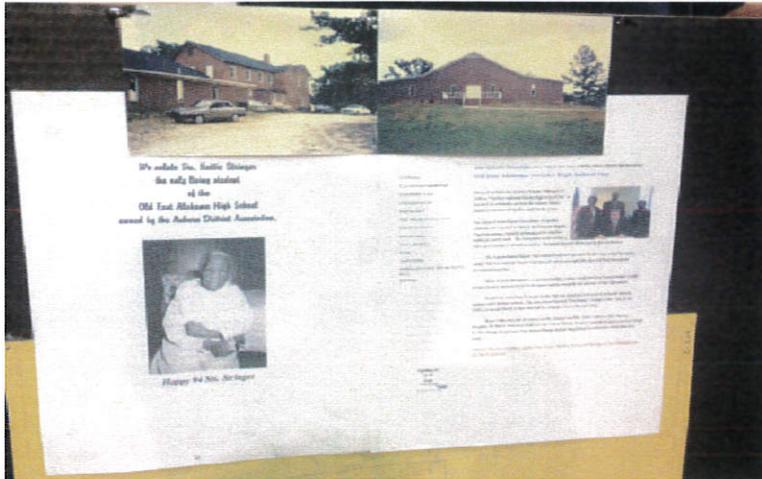
As part of the greater core of Opelika, the Jeter community has enjoyed a strong sense of unity, which has a long and proud place in East Alabama history. In fact, Opelika's first African-American church was founded in the Jeter Community in 1868, just five years after the Emancipation Proclamation was signed.

In the Carver community, during the late 1800's, Mr. and Mrs. William Lyman built one of the first meeting/recreation centers for the African American community. Across from Rosemere Cemetery at Martin Luther King Boulevard and Auburn Street, the community center anchored the neighborhood and led to Mrs. Lyman establishing one of the first private schools for African-Americans in the basement of their home. Later, Mrs. Lyman went on to teach at Tuskegee University.

Around 1912 the Opelika Colored School opened on East Street. Eventually known as East Street High, it served as the only African American public high school until 1951 when it subsequently transitioned into Carver Elementary.

One of the most prominent early residents was Dr. John Wesley Darden. Originally from North Carolina, he went to medical school in New York and desired to find a community where there was little to no medical help, specifically for African Americans. Dr. Darden found Opelika, and the residents found him, 'treating him to 18 hour work days' it is said. Along with the practice, he also opened a drugstore on Avenue A where he and his brother, J.B would fill prescriptions and sell cosmetics and ice cream. Naturally, this became a key meeting place for the community and became a Sunday tradition for area residents to meet and enjoy homemade ice cream.

In the mid 1980's, the City of Opelika and the Lee County NAACP came together to adopt the current city government format of five city council members and mayor. In 1986, Opelika elected it's first two African-Americans into city council allowing for the first African-Americans to hold office in the city's history.



Area residents maintain documentation of the rich local history in both the Carver and Jeter areas of Opelika.

# STRATEGY

The Carver and Jeter Community Planning Initiative is a comprehensive planning and visioning process initiated by the City of Opelika, Alabama for the purposes of better connecting the Carver and Jeter neighborhoods to the greater city of Opelika and for establishing a compelling vision for the future of these neighborhoods. This 20 week process leveraged community input to generate a strategic plan for land use and zoning, transportation, open space and environment, urban design, historic resources, public services, economic development for the community.

This planning initiative serves as a strategic tool for ensuring that the proper structure is put into place to enable Opelika's Carver and Jeter neighborhoods to become the kind of a place that represents a rich heritage and a promising future. Opelika is a city that cares - the perfect setting for families of all ages and backgrounds. It is a city that embraces business and innovation. And it is a community that is committed to providing a dynamic quality of life for all of its citizens regardless of age, income or race.

This master plan establishes the framework for ensuring that Opelika and its historic surrounding neighborhoods will preserve all that is already so valuable within the community today while also attaining an exciting new vision for their future.

# GOALS

As a result of this master planning process, the following goals have been identified for the Jeter and Carver communities.

**QUALITY OF LIFE** Improve the overall quality of life for local residents by focusing on increased recreational opportunities and improved community aesthetics.

**EMPLOYMENT** Intentionally pursue initiatives that create jobs, and equip community members to obtain higher-paying employment opportunities.

**HERITAGE** Understanding the unique heritage of the neighborhood, use opportunities to highlight the past and re-envision the future in light of the unique history and community assets within these neighborhoods.

**CONNECTIVITY** Knit the Carver and Jeter neighborhoods together with downtown Opelika to ensure a cohesive and accessible urban area.

**TRANSPORTATION** Continue to develop multiple modes of transportation and appropriate infrastructure in order to better service the residents of these neighborhoods with access to local jobs, services and resources.

**LAND USE** Work with the City, the Housing Authority, and area property owners to provide a variety of housing options and increased business opportunities for the neighborhoods