



City of
Moultrie
Urban Redevelopment Plan

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Introduction

“We will be a vital, dynamic and growing community that honors and maintains its heritage through increased collaboration and economic opportunities in order to provide a superior quality of life that makes us the envy of Southwest Georgia.” This is the vision the City of Moultrie has adopted.

Moultrie is the county seat and the largest city in Colquitt County. It is a City well known for its many antique shops. It claims to be the City of Southern Living and the Antiques capital of Southwest Georgia. The City of Moultrie was formed in 1859 and really didn't begin to thrive until the early 1900's. In 1918 the population was 10,000 people and today the city's population is well over 14,000 people. The City's growing diverse population has changed the way services are provided and also the way development has taken place.

According to the Comprehensive Plan in 1990, the majority of the city and county residents lived on less than \$9,999 a year. This meant that anyone who lived in a two person household comprised of two adults or one adult and one child was living below the poverty line.

During the past several years, the city of Moultrie has been fortunate to have a number of planning and housing studies done. In 2006 the Quality Growth Resource Team for Moultrie and Colquitt County and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs worked together to address “smart growth” issues in the county. Smart Growth is a better way to build and maintain our towns and cities. It creates communities with housing and transportation choices near jobs, shops and schools. This approach supports the local economy and protects the environment. The Resource Team spent one week in Colquitt County and reviewed a cross section of the community, spoke with local officials, reviewed local ordinances and conducted field surveys. The team then formulated policy recommendations. Many of which were used to guide the development of the Urban Redevelopment Plan.

The City of Moultrie also participated in a 3 year housing training program entitled the “Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH). Through this program the City conducted numerous project specific housing reports and assessments. They worked with state and local partners to study the housing situation in Moultrie. Again in 2009, the City reviewed and analyzed these housing reports and developed a plan that would utilize all the information and data gathered to produce a plan of implementation specifically to address housing. One recommendation in this report was to develop an Urban Redevelopment Plan to enable the City to redevelop the blighted or threatened areas of the community.

Redevelopment Goals and Objectives

Purpose

The Moultrie Urban Redevelopment Plan (URP) provides a general blueprint for redevelopment of the blighted and threatened areas in the city. The plan was created in accordance with the guidelines set forth by Georgia's Urban Redevelopment Act (URA).

Urban Redevelopment Act

Georgia's Urban Redevelopment Act helps local government rehabilitate, conserve or redevelop any define geographical area (urban or rural) that is locally designated as a "slum area." Such an area may be characterized by deteriorated structures, defective or inadequate street layout, faulty lot layout, unsanitary and unsafe conditions, etc. The Act gives cities and counties the ability to undertake redevelopment efforts financed by tax exempt bonds that do not count towards the local government's general indebtedness.

The broad redevelopment goals are to:

- Arrest physical and social blight
- Improve economic and social conditions
- Improve physical development infrastructure
- Create impetus for public/private investments

The City of Moultrie expects that the activities related to and emanating from the proposed development projects will work in conjunction with other initiatives to stimulate renewed interest and increased economic vibrancy in the downtown area.

This new economic vibrancy will:

- Lead to increases in income and employment
- Raise the standard of living of the affected persons
- Create demand and expanded spending and consumption which will provide a basis for urban regeneration, economic growth and human development

The URP is written broadly to allow the implementing agency (City of Moultrie staff with City Council oversight) to plan as necessary once a more specific plan of action is known; all actions in the plan will be done in accordance with the Urban Redevelopment Act.

Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan

The Urban Redevelopment Plan for the City of Moultrie is consistent with the City's current Comprehensive Plan (2008-2028). The Community Vision will guide the City's actions as it pertains to growth and development for the next twenty years.

Vision Statement

"We will be a vital, dynamic and growing community that honors and maintains its heritage through increased collaboration and economic opportunities in order to provide a superior quality of life that makes us the envy of Southwest Georgia.

Colquitt County Comprehensive Plan (2008-2028)

The Community Vision Statement provides a general framework for the Comprehensive Plan; therefore, specific concepts from the Vision Statement were used to steer the Urban Redevelopment Plan.

The Comprehensive Plan also supports the City's development of an Urban Redevelopment Plan (Colquitt County Consolidated Community Agenda pages 73, 87).

According to the Comprehensive Plan, the City works closely with the Chamber of Commerce and the Moultrie/Colquitt County Development Authority to ensure there are jobs for all income levels. The Chamber has developed an Economic Development Plan that guides many of the City's planning and decision making.

The City of Moultrie maintains an inventory of vacant sites and building in the event that an opportunity for infill development occurs. The Chamber of Commerce also maintains a list of vacant commercial and industrial buildings for future development purposes. They also have a 148 acre Business Park along with a few other tracts of land for development.

According to the Comprehensive Plan, future development within Moultrie is projected to occur within the Urban Redevelopment Area. The downtown is surrounded by commercial and residential/mixed use areas. Residential that is surrounding the downtown area should reinforce the town center through a combination of rehabilitation of building in the downtown area and compatible new infill development targeted to a broad range of income levels, including multi-family, apartments, lofts and duplexes. The neighborhoods in the URA already possess a distinct identity and character. There are several opportunities for infill development with vacant properties throughout the area. The URP will ensure that the community's anticipated growth will occur in a well integrated and organized fashion that promotes efficient use of infrastructure.

Community's Land use Objectives

The Comprehensive Plan takes an assessment of the current and future utilizations of the land. The assessment examines where land is, what the land is currently utilized for and what will it be used for and also how best to utilize. Some categories utilized to classify land are: residential, commercial, industrial, public/institutional, Transportation Communication and Utilities, Parks/Recreation/Conservation, Agricultural/Forestry, Open Water and Underdeveloped.

Because the Urban Redevelopment Area comprises a large portion of the City of Moultrie, existing land use in the Urban Redevelopment Areas is varied. The categories of land uses noted during site visits while developing this plan were: residential, commercial and industrial.

The predominant housing within the plan area is single family residential dwellings with a small percentage of multifamily development units scattered throughout. There a few non-residential land uses contained within the area such as churches and manufacturing businesses.

The area is a mix of land uses, including residential, commercial and industrial. There are several areas that have significant disinvestment and contain pockets and sometimes entire streets where the housing is dilapidated and abandoned. The greatest residential densities occur in Northwest and South Moultrie. The housing types range from shotgun styles homes on small lots to larger homes on large manicured lots. The City of Moultrie allows development on smaller lots sizes of 5,000 square feet or less. This ordinance in addition to setbacks creates a barrier to development that does not meet the character of the neighborhood. This has presented challenges for the City in the past.

In addition to dilapidate housing, the City has several industrial areas in need of revitalization in Northeast Moultrie. Many structures have been vacant for some time.

Zoning is an integral part of redevelopment. The City adopted zoning and will need to allow flexibility with some ordinances as the URP is implemented.

The City has completed or is currently working on the projects listed below. It is the City's belief that these projects will jump start redevelopment efforts and will positively impact the Urban Redevelopment Area.

1. CDBG ditch piping project on 2nd and 3rd Ave NW (proposed) and Northside Dr. and Oak Circle (ongoing)
2. Side walk rehabilitation and curb and gutter replacement
3. Swift Plant demolition
4. Round-about (proposed) at N. Main and 1st St. NE intersection
5. 9th St SW 600 block culvert replaced
6. Bike Trail Maintenance
7. Intermodal Facility (under construction)
8. 3 bay Strip Mall at 601 W. Central (under construction)
9. New DOT traffic signals and handicap ramps leaving sidewalks at the following intersections (5th St and 1st Ave SE; W. Central at MLK; 5th St and W. Central SW; 11th St and W. Central SW; W. By-pass and W. Central; 1st St and 5th Ave NE)
10. Streetscape Downtown



Boundaries of the Redevelopment Area

The boundaries of the Urban Redevelopment Plan cover such a large area that it is best defined by a map. (See Figure 1) There are numerous residential structures and commercial properties within the area that have been identified as uninhabitable, unsafe and unworthy of rehabilitation.

In addition, there are many unkempt vacant lots adversely affecting the tax base and slowing the development of neighborhoods. The City's Code Enforcement and Fire Department conducted on-site inspections of all properties in the URA cited for demolition. (See Figure 3)

The URP will re-establish housing and commercial activity in the area by using existing zoning ordinance wherever practical in concert with private investments. Current demolition costs are borne by the City; funding for anticipated demolition costs will be sought through programs such as CDBG and CHIP. The City will also work with the Georgia Department of Community Affairs on options to finance housing and economic development opportunities making development more enticing to the private sector. All target properties at this time are vacant, future inhabited properties, if applicable will be handled in accordance with the Georgia Relocation Act and Federal Uniform Relocation Act.

Designation of Implementing Agency

It is the desire of the City Council that the City of Moultrie's staff oversee the implementation of the URP. Based on the Urban Redevelopment Act, the City can appoint itself as the implementing agency. The City Council is composed of seven members that serve two year staggered terms; the next election is scheduled for 2011. The City has dedicated staff and a four member Planning Department. City staff would be responsible for plan implementation and the City Council would have oversight.

Historic Preservation Considerations

Any property located within the redevelopment area which is designated as historic property or is listed on or has been identified by any federal agency to be eligible for listing on the National Register will not be substantially altered in any way inconsistent with technical standards for rehabilitation or demolition unless feasibility for reuse has been evaluated based on technical standards for the review of historic preservation projects, used by Georgia Historic Preservation.

Explanations of Negative Conditions

The housing in the URP area is predominately single family residential. The typical residential structures were built in the early 1900's and mid 1950's with some homes being constructed or reconstructed as infill homes roughly 20 years ago. Many residential structures are constructed in the bungalow, craftsman and shotgun styles of the early 1900's.

Most of the structures within the area deemed inadequate and are considered dilapidated, vacant dilapidated or substandard. Many of the structures have been identified and targeted for demolition by the City's Code Enforcement Department. These structures are and have been a financial burden to the city and are a haven for illegal activity, such as drug dealings, drug use, vagrancy and prostitution.

Though the redevelopment area is widespread the following negative conditions are characteristic of several or all of the neighborhoods found within the URA. These conditions caused the redevelopment areas to meet the statutory definition of "slum" as defined in the Urban Redevelopment Act.

The negative conditions are as follows:

- Broken uneven sidewalks
- Building interior and exterior in need of repair
- Unkempt yards
- Abundance of trash or junk items stored on properties
- Low rates of home ownership
- High occurrence of vacant structures, which are often left unsecured
- An existence of criminal activity
- Higher rates of condemnation
- Disinterest of private residential and commercial investment
- General Property distress
- Contiguous poverty blocks groups (See Poverty Map)

Description of Parcels to be acquired

The City of Moultrie has no plans to acquire any parcels of property as part of its redevelopment efforts at this time. However, the City does have the right to acquire property for the purposes of redevelopment. Currently, no properties requiring this action have been identified. Should the City decide acquisition is necessary, this plan will be amended to reflect these changes.

Structures to be Demolished or Rehabilitated

The City Moultrie has taken an aggressive approach towards demolition in the Urban Redevelopment Area; several of the housing units in the area have either been condemned or are scheduled for demolition.

Currently there are a total of 169 housing units in the area and approximately 160 are tagged as uninhabitable and are scheduled to be demolished. To date a total of (9) structures have been demolished. (See Figure 3)

However, the City reserves the right to add more structures to the condemned list; the decision will be based on the condition of the structures and current property maintenance codes.

Plan to Leverage Private Resources

The City plans to engage a variety of private resources to implement this plan. This includes local developers, community and nonprofit organizations. They have worked with some developers in the past to revitalize the Northwest area but were unsuccessful due to the lack of developer incentives offered. The City is also working to establish a land bank authority which will serve as a vital component in the implementation of this plan.

Strategy for Relocating Displaced Residents

Under the current plan, the City does not plan to displace any residents. All target properties at this time are vacant, future inhabited properties, if applicable will be handled in accordance with the Georgia Relocation Act and Federal Uniform Relocation Act.

Planning, Zoning and Building Regulations

A benefit of using an URP for redevelopment is the ability to alter some existing zoning and development requirements, in accordance with the Urban Redevelopment Act, for the purpose of achieving the optimum economic and aesthetic results in the redevelopment area.

At this time, any alteration or alleviation of existing requirements that may be necessary to effectively implement the URP is unknown. However, it is likely that some change or mitigation will be essential and or beneficial. As such, the City Council will reserve the option to pursue changes to existing zoning and development regulations as they are reasonable and necessary.

Covenants and Restrictions to be Place on Properties

There will be no covenants or restrictions placed on the properties in the Urban Redevelopment Area.

Needed Public Infrastructure

Downtown Moultrie has a locally and nationally designated historic downtown district with a traditional town square and a grid pattern street network. On street parking is the main source of parking in this area. There are vacant lots on the outskirts of downtown that people use for parking. The center of the City's Historic Downtown area is the Historic County Courthouse, located in the center of the square, with local businesses surrounding. On street parking is available but more parking is needed as patrons do not have adequate parking and often times utilize vacant parking lots. They also use the adjacent parking and parking areas behind the businesses.

The downtown is pedestrian friendly with tree lined streets, sidewalks and decorative benches. The design does not lend itself to bicycling and in its current design, is not practical. The traffic flow in downtown is controlled through a system of one way streets. There are quite a few vacant building within the Urban Redevelopment Boundaries which have contributed to the decline of the downtown.

The City struggles with the cost on infrastructure and currently does not have the financial ability to purchase large tracts of land for industrial prospects; however, Spence Field is available to potential prospects. The City has identified potential challenges to attracting new industrial and commercial development: availability of land to accommodate growth and infrastructure and appropriate infrastructure to support development. Since current development codes do not allow high-density single family development, this presents a barrier to residential development. In addition, industrial and commercial growth must be encouraged and recruited heavily to keep pace with the residential population.

The City realizes that one issue it will need to coordinate is utility and infrastructure expansion plans with comprehensive economic development plans. However the City has several opportunities that are present:

- Market and promote downtown
- Offer incentives to new and existing businesses and encourage businesses to move downtown
- Promote Industrial Parks and capacity
- Encourage continues support and collaboration with the Sunbelt Agricultural Expo
- Work toward the development of a land bank in order to stabilize tax delinquent and vacant properties for redevelopment.

The Urban Redevelopment Plan will work as a conduit to help maximize the opportunities to their greatest economic potential.

Strategy for Implementing the Plan

The Moultrie Planning Department and City Council will work together to implement the plan. This will be officially adopted when the plan is finalized. The Council has worked closely with the Planning Department staff to institute the Urban Redevelopment Plan since early 2010 and will continue to have oversight once the final plan is approved. The Planning staff will implement the plan with the oversight of the Moultrie City Council.

Appendix

**A RESOLUTION
APPROVING AND ADOPTING THE CITY OF MOULTRIE
URBAN REDEVELOPMENT PLAN
AS REQUIRED BY STATE LAW**

WHEREAS, the Urban Redevelopment Act O.C.G.A 36-61, et.seq., gives cities broad powers to redevelop blighted or threatened areas of the community and encourages involvement of private enterprise and public/private partnerships to redevelop neglected areas of the community; and

WHEREAS, the City of Moultrie's Urban Redevelopment Plan is intended to address aging housing surrounding the downtown area, other neighborhoods in need of redevelopment and commercial and industrial properties; and

WHEREAS, it is in the best interest of the citizens of the City of Moultrie to adopt the Urban Redevelopment Plan

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Mayor and Council of Moultrie, Georgia and it is hereby resolved by authority of the same:


SECTION 1. The City of Moultrie Urban Redevelopment Plan is hereby approved and adopted.

SECTION 2: A copy of said Plan and Map designating the Urban Redevelopment Area is attached hereto and incorporated herein by reference as if fully as if set forth verbatim.



Mayor

ATTEST:



CITY CLERK

Adopted: May 17, 2011
Date

Figure 1 – Urban Redevelopment Plan Area

MOULTRIE

Urban Redevelopment Plan
March 2011

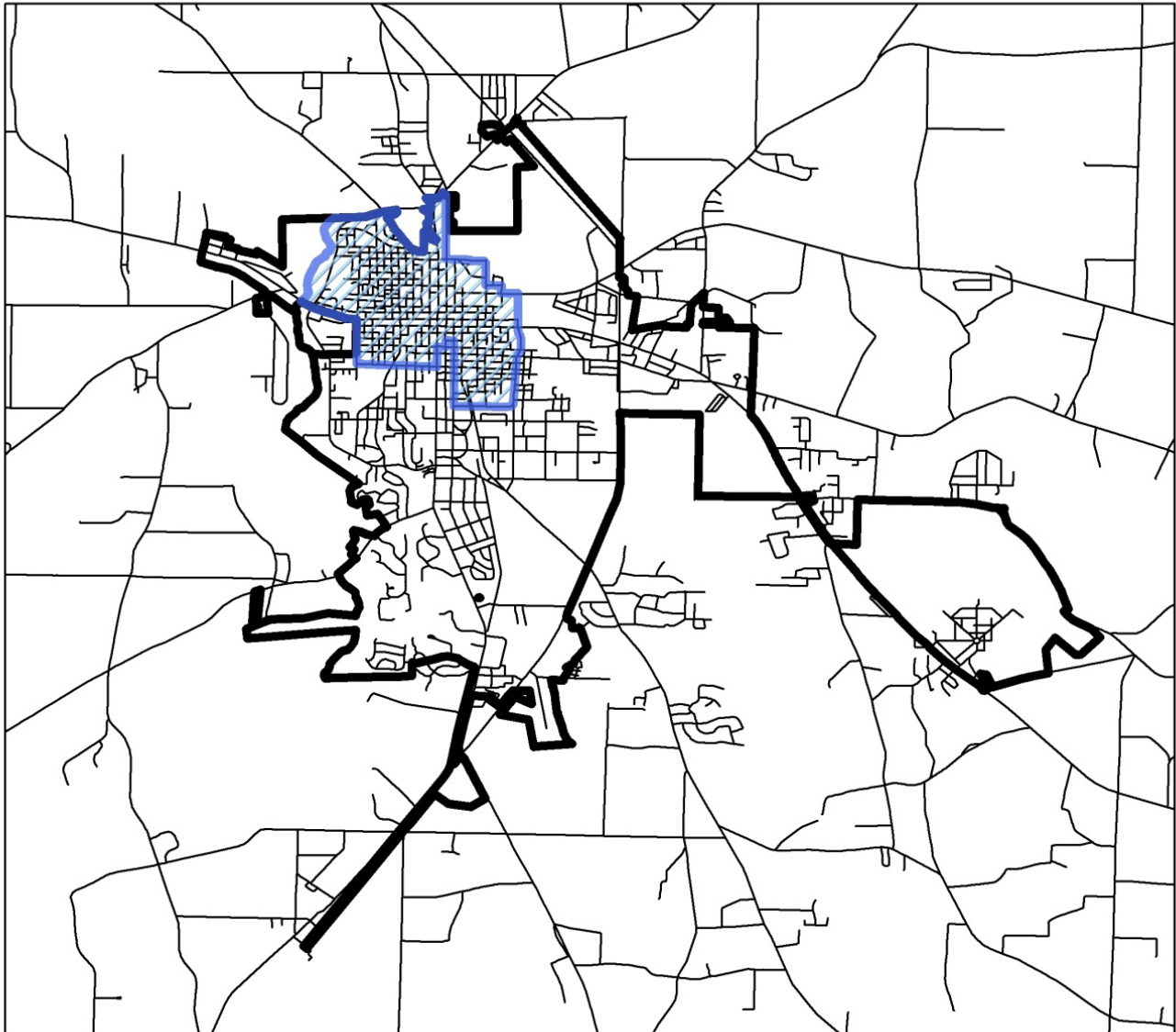
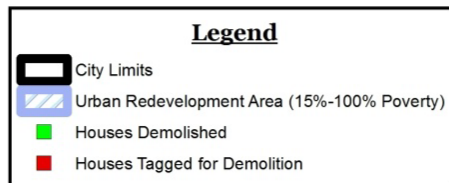
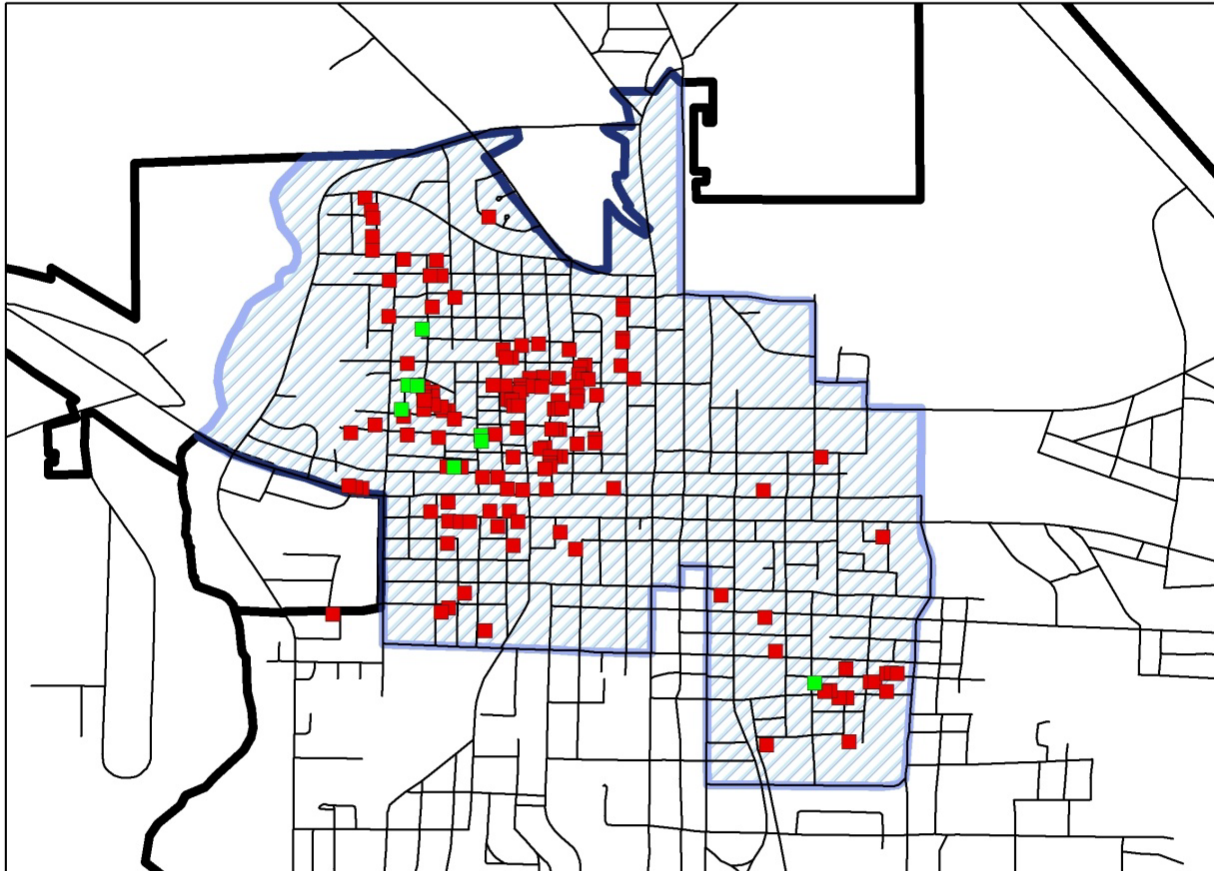


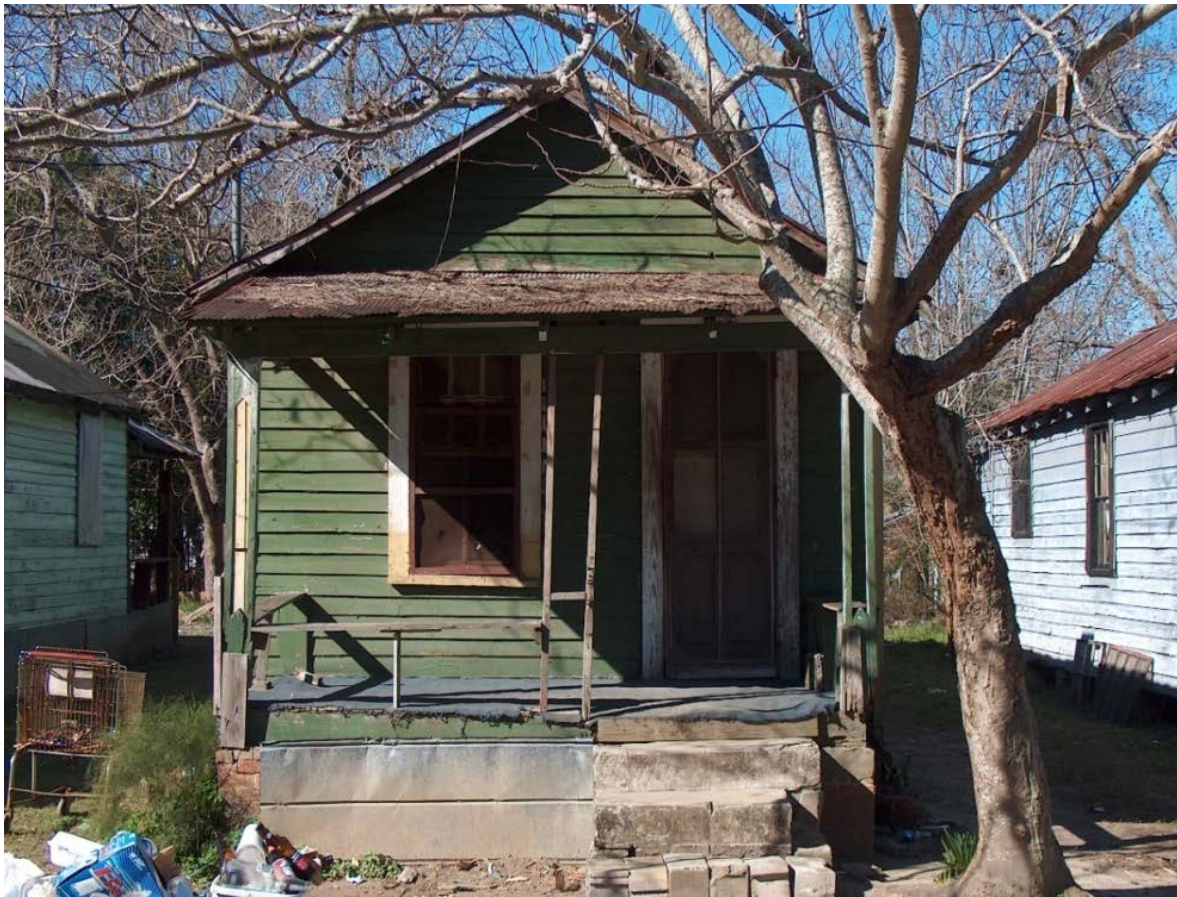
Figure 3 – Houses Tagged for Demolition

MOULTRIE

Urban Redevelopment Plan
March 2011



Substandard Housing





Substandard Housing (Cont'd)











City of Moultrie Vacant Commercial/Industrial







Vacant Commercial / Industrial (Cont'd)







Vacant Commercial / Industrial (Cont'd)

