



# Next Steps

African American families in West Davidson go back hundreds of years, worshiping at historic local churches, and some living in homes built by their ancestors. But over time family feuds developed, and these roots of bitterness divide the community. These divisions are complicated and directed at neighbors, government, wealth and politics; and are the key reasons for failed communications and lack of community organization.

Not until the tremendous magnitude of land development in the area brought water runoff, increased traffic, rising land values, detour signs, and other nuisances did skeptics start asking questions and attending meetings. The West Davidson Stakeholder Committee explained how more universally accessible media and familiar vocabulary could improve community involvement in significant land use decisions. Because West Davidson is the most racially and economically diverse, it warrants a creative and unique approaches to communications.

The Town has taken the initiative to work with the community, inviting individuals to sit together and discuss common concerns and needs. However, a community anchoring so much of its heritage and belief in the Christian faith should not depend on the Town to ask for community healing. Residents should have begun forgiving one another, the Town and other blamed organizations a long time ago; and if it had, neighbors would have been more willing to hear what the Town had to say about community development and discuss a unified vision for growth.

Crime incidents as recent as Summer 2007 provided an opportunity Town to hire Ken Griffin to facilitate discussions amongst

## Anticipated West Davidson Initiatives

- 2007/08— *Dream Builders Communication* Community Development Facilitation
- 2007/08— Davidson Police Department Diversity Training
- Implementation of West Davidson Stakeholder Committee Report recommendations
- 2008 —Transit Planning?
- Potts Sloan Connector Construction
- Delburg-Watson Small Area Plan

# Next Steps



**For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. 2 Timothy 1:7, NKJV**

neighbors and improve law enforcement sensitivity to issues facing the African American community. These efforts will hopefully encourage a sincere and meaningful dialogue and demonstrate that the Town is serious about equality.

However, there is still much to be done to plan for growth in West Davidson. If the CATS North Commuter Rail line is approved for construction, then a transit plan will have to be adopted very quickly. The West Davidson Stakeholder Committee Report contains several thoughtful suggestions and comments regarding transit planning.

Vacant or underdeveloped properties in West Davidson abound and provide much promise for improving traffic, job opportunities, open space amenities and affordable housing. Town planners and residents should move quickly to develop a small area plan for properties along Delburg, Watson, Griffith and Armour Streets. Construction documents, cost estimates and funding should also be accelerated to build the Potts-Sloan connection. Town staff should formalize policies for

connectivity and land development for parcels along Catawba Street and bordering Lake Cornelius.

The biggest challenge to face the community's diversity could be the loss of African American families and working-age residents. The County's best preserved African American community could be lost within a few years if younger blacks are not attracted to the Town. The community's cultural landmarks would also be threatened without a local memory of what made these places special.

West Davidson is a resilient and capable community of professors and executives, slave descendents and mill workers, caregivers, youth, and leaders. The community is unique, but not any more important than other neighborhoods in Davidson. Therefore, residents must heed the call to stay engaged and connected to local affairs, attending public meetings and focusing on the future.

## *On the Pulse of Morning*

by Maya Angelou

...Here, root yourselves beside me.  
I am that Tree planted by the River,  
Which will not be moved.  
I, the Rock, I, the River, I, the Tree,  
I am yours— your passages have been paid.  
Lift up your faces, you have a piercing need  
For this bright morning dawning for you.  
History, despite its wrenching pain,  
Cannot be unlived, but if faced  
With courage, need not be lived again...