



Making
**RESIDENTIAL
REHABILITATION**
a Community Priority

First-tier suburbs — suburban communities that are fully developed and whose housing stock was primarily built between 1940 and 1970 — face a number of significant and common issues. First suburbs have many positive attributes, including a sense of place, proximity to both urban and suburban amenities, and quality schools. However, rehabilitating the aging housing stock in first suburbs presents a challenge. These homes often have maintenance problems because of their age, and many of them do not include features that modern homebuyers are looking for, such as two-car garages, large bedrooms and plenty of closet space.

Rehabilitating this aging housing stock is a top priority for the First Suburbs Coalition. First-tier cities must make a concerted effort to modernize homes in order to attract new residents, encourage current citizens to stay, and revitalize a sense of pride in their communities. There are a number of actions first suburbs can take to encourage residential rehabilitation. This brochure and the accompanying Web site, www.marc.org/firstsuburbs/rehab.htm, provide guidelines and resources for local governments.

What can your local government do?



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Begin with this step-by-step checklist to assess your residential rehabilitation project. If you are doing everything possible to encourage residential remodeling and you are unable to act on every checklist item, a thorough review of this list will help you identify resources, visit the related Web site at www.marc.org/firstsuburbs

Building Codes

For homeowners and developers planning remodeling projects, one of the most frustrating and confusing parts of the process is understanding how building codes relate to rehabilitation.

In many communities, local governments rely on building codes that focus on new construction. The high standards set forth in these codes can make rehabilitation projects financially infeasible for homeowners, discouraging improvement projects that would benefit the entire neighborhood. While codes can be easily met in new construction, it is often difficult to determine how rehab projects fit into building code categories.

The following checklist is a guide for local governments to consider:

- What building code does the city currently use and how does it address rehab projects? Does the code have a specific section that addresses residential rehabilitation?
- Does the current building code present any problems for homeowners or remodelers?
- Is the city willing to consider adopting a new code or modifying the current code to encourage remodeling?
- How are building officials trained to inspect rehab projects? Would improved consistency in what inspectors look for help reduce confusion about what is expected? Are inspectors familiar with the rehabilitation provisions in the city's building code and how to apply them?
- Does the city have a program to educate the remodeling community and homeowners about the rehabilitation section of the building code, its impact and how to use it?

Zoning Regulations

The combination of small lot size and zoning ordinances that are more suited to large-lot suburban development often presents a major barrier to remodeling and redevelopment. However, there are a number of techniques that communities can use to make zoning regulations more accommodating for residential rehabilitation. Consider the following:

- Does the city's zoning ordinance restrict rehabilitation or redevelopment? If so, how? Make a list.

For more information, visit www.marc.org/firstsuburbs/rehab.htm

rehabilitation priorities and evaluate whether your community is ready for remodeling and redevelopment. While your community may not choose to do everything, help you make sure no stone is left unturned. For more information, visit [rehab.htm](#).

- Does the city's zoning ordinance allow for variances or provide flexibility in other ways that will allow zoning restrictions to be avoided when warranted?
- Which zoning restrictions create the most problems and how might they be modified?
- What approaches are available to the community to address these issues?
- Based on this information, does the city need to adopt a revised zoning ordinance that is more accommodating to remodeling and redevelopment?

Rehabilitation Finance

Rehabilitation projects have a beneficial effect on neighborhoods and can improve a community's image. Because these projects are often expensive endeavors for families, cities that want to encourage residential remodeling and redevelopment should look for ways to help residents find the necessary funding. Consider the following:

- Is the city's local financial community prepared to make loans for residential rehabilitation projects?
- Is the city making funds available to residents through low-interest loans and grants?
- Does the city provide any other kind of incentives to encourage homeowners and developers to rehabilitate older housing, such as tax incentives?
- Is the city helping residents, non-profit organizations and developers learn about local state and federal programs that can assist in home rehabilitation?

Other Strategies

While financing and regulation are key elements in any residential remodeling strategy, other policies can reinforce these elements and ensure a comprehensive approach to rehabilitation and redevelopment.

- Does the city have a comprehensive code enforcement program?
- Does the city currently have a problem with maintenance of rental property?
- Does the city have a program to actively promote residential rehabilitation?
- Does the city have a comprehensive program to maintain, replace and enhance neighborhood infrastructure?
- Could targeted public infrastructure improvements encourage private investment?



shared
interests

shared
challenges

shared
opportunities





RESIDENTIAL REHABILITATION

Is your community supporting residential rehab?

Is your city making residential rehab a priority? The Mid-America Regional Council is working with the First Suburbs Coalition and the Housing Choices Coalition (HCC) to create a comprehensive analysis of what it takes for older suburban communities to improve their housing stock, one of their most important assets.



The topics touched on in this brochure are explored in greater detail on the MARC Web site at www.marc.org/firstsuburbs/rehab.htm. MARC is also working with the Greater Kansas City Home Builders Association and the National Association of the Remodeling Industry to develop a housing remodel plan book that will help homeowners envision ways they can update and improve their homes, and a remodeled housing tour that will show current and prospective homebuyers the residential possibilities that exist in first-tier suburbs.

FIRST SUBURBS COALITION

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www.marc.org/firstsuburbs/rehab.htm

