

2003 Annual Report Executive Summary

The Town of Austin Enterprise Community

The Year 2003 was filled with exciting ideas, dreams and realities as the AREC continued to implement projects identified within our Strategic Plan and Annual Public Hearing Process. The activities continue to focus on empowering residents, improving overall quality of life, and obtaining financial sustainability for AREC Residents.

Construction activities involving AREC were abundant as we watched the Apple Blossom Court develop for LMI families with transitional housing needs, the rehabilitation of four LMI homeowner occupied residences, new housing construction for 3 LMI families through our Down Payment Assistance (DPA) Program, the construction of ADA ramps for families in crisis situations through the United Way Caring Construction Company, the renovation of our former Austin Middle School, the new Austin Senior Citizens Center, and we cannot forget the continued construction activity on the Town's Storm Drainage System. The AREC also provided DPA assistance to four additional families for purchase of existing homes in conjunction with USDA, New Hope Services and Ohio Valley Opportunities.

Beautification efforts continue and we are all proud of the Austin PRIDE Award Program having recognized 31 residences and 7 businesses to date which have either consistently or recently partaken of efforts to improve or maintain their property in good overall condition and set an example to others throughout Austin. A lack of community pride was identified within our Strategic Plan as an area of major concern, programs such as the Austin PRIDE Award has made remarkable strides in changing this opinion of our town. To further promote the PRIDE efforts, AREC has provided assistance to establish 2 additional Neighborhood Associations this year, the South 1st Street Neighborhood and the Austin Main Street Neighborhood. Both groups will complete their organizational process during 2004 and hopefully be as productive as the Audrey/Linden Neighborhood Association has been during 2003.

The lack of basic health care for all residents has been an issue within Austin for several years. AREC has been very fortunate to have partnered with Scott Memorial Hospital, the Scott County Health Department and such fine physicians as Dr. Kevin Rogers, Dr. Priscilla Villaroman and Dr. M.A. Qurashi to enable LMI families who cannot afford health insurance, access to the most basic of all health services. This program has provided in excess of 500 clinical visits during 2003 alone, and since its beginning in 2001, more than 2500 total visits have been provided at little or no cost to the AREC resident. During 2003, we were able to expand our services to include Prescription Drug coverage for qualified residents, and to date, financial assistance, at a dramatically discounted rate, has been provided for the purchase of over 1008 prescriptions from area pharmacies.

The AREC continues our partnership with Scott Memorial Hospital and the Scott County Health Department to provide our annual Health Fair Celebration (89 booths in 2003) in an ongoing attempt to promote preventative services within our community and hopefully reduce the need for major hospitalization or chronic care services in the areas of lifestyle behaviors and preventable diseases. Programs such as the health fair also promote “healthy families” and strive to provide resources to assist families with all areas of need, including the Scott County Clearinghouse, Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Scott County, Center for Women and Families, the United Way and CAPE programs.

It is a well know fact that the future of Austin lies with our youth. To improve our community, we must instill the ideas of a better life and teach opportunities to our students at an early age. Programs including the Future Leaders of Austin, the Austin Youth Volunteer Corps and the Junior Leaders of Austin reach well into the High School and Middle School ranks to accomplish this goal. In 2003 we saw the class sizes increase from 62 in the Spring Semester to 87 students in the Fall Semester. These FLA and JLA students meet monthly in a cooperative effort with the Scott County School District 1 and undergoes a vigorous leadership program covering topics from “Living in Poverty is not for ME!”, “Health Care for All”, “WE CAN CHANGE FOR THE BETTER”, “Serving our Residents”, and of course the sessions include components of local, state and federal government to teach the students that the path to a better future begins now. The Austin Youth Volunteer Corps are a group of students willing to meet after school and on weekends to learn about true volunteerism and make a difference within Austin. Projects such as Saturday morning reading sessions for K & 1st graders, cleaning our town streets, sidewalks and history center for the Sesquicentennial Celebration and raking leaves for those in need of assistance are only part of the work these students undertake.

In order to provide more space and allow the programs to continue to grow, the AREC took on the 3rd floor of the old Austin Middle School and created the AREC Youth Development Center. In this center, not only do the programs thrive, but we have opened the facility to include Movie Nights for K-3 and AMS Students and will continue to provide additional programs throughout 2004.

Other educational activities include the awarding of 13 scholarships to AHS graduating Seniors, 12 graduating FLA Students, and 8 Non-traditional Students to provide a small financial incentive for continuing their education with the idea of “bringing back” something to Austin – in essence the “planting of a seed” does not always mean bricks and mortar, but can just as effectively include the most valuable resource we have – our children! To help families prepare for college or vocational opportunities, AREC conducted 2 Senior Night Programs last year, providing FAFSA counseling on-site, scholarship information and college recruiters for students and parents to have an additional chance for help with paperwork or to search out additional funding programs.

Economic Development has been slow in Austin; however, we are pleased to announce the approval of 3 RLF loans, and the opening of 5 new businesses within the AREC zone or Austin Main Street District, a total leverage amount in excess of \$750,000 this year. Activity in the Austin Main Street Program continues as we provide services to local businesses through the Business Association and will work with the homeowners in the district through the Main Street Neighborhood Association. To enable AREC zone families access to affordable childcare, AREC provided over 240 weeks of childcare assistance ranging from 25% - full coverage through local licensed day care centers or certified family child care homes. This program was instrumental in keeping single mothers in the local workforce while reducing the demand for services through other agencies. It is important to note however; no family received assistance from AREC during a time in which funding from other sources were available.

The AREC plays a vital role in many community functions and festivals. During 2003 we participated in the Austin Fireman's Festival, Back-to-School Bash, Austin Elementary School PTO Carnival, Psi Iota Xi Christmas Craft Show, and lest we not forget, the Austin Sesquicentennial Celebration. As an organization we are proud to assist in any way possible and encourage all residents to participate in all activities offered within our community. To show our continued appreciation for the many volunteers within our community, AREC was proud to sponsor the 2nd annual SOAR Awards Program, recognizing 41 volunteers who truly "DARE to SOAR" and make a difference for residents throughout Austin.

As we look forward to 2004, the Board of Directors will continue to monitor the ever changing needs of our community and pledges that any service provided within our limited scope of funding, will meet a current priority need within our Strategic Plan and improve the overall quality of life for our residents. Volunteers are always welcome and greatly needed with our Committees and local projects. Through our efforts as a Community, Austin will continue to grow and thrive and provide additional sustainable opportunities for our Residents.