

# Southside continues to make a comeback

By **Caroline Hudson**  
UNC Staff Writer

Marie Hunter has lived in the Southside neighborhood for more than 60 years.

She remembers when it was called St. Teresa and was full of family homes with children playing in the yard.

But that's no longer the case.

"I just get tired of people saying bad things," Hunter said. "They put a bad mark on the community."

The area is now mostly known for its descent into disinvestment, its abandoned houses and its crime rate.

Hunter's own son was killed in a drive-by shooting in 1997 while standing on the front lawn of Happy Rock Unity Holy Church.

Southside is an area of about 100 acres south of the Durham Freeway and northwest of North Carolina Central University. Next to Southside, across Roxboro Street, is a 20-acre site formerly known as Rolling Hills.

Both are part of the Hayti district, a historically black neighborhood that experienced crippling demolition in the 1960s due to the construction of the Durham Freeway.

Hunter, who serves as president of the Southside Neighborhood Association, said the name "Southside" began to catch on in the late 1980s. When the old residents moved out and new ones

moved in, trouble started to brew.

"People come and go," she said. "The history of our neighborhood has died out."

After failed attempts at redevelopment in the 1980s and 1990s, the city of Durham decided to step in and look for a developer to improve the neighborhood in the early 2000s.

Reginald Johnson, director of the city of Durham's Community Development Department, said before development began the city spent years buying out about 40 individual owners in the area.

He said the developer, McCormack Baron Salazar, came up with the idea to use low-income housing tax credits to fund part of the multi-phase project.

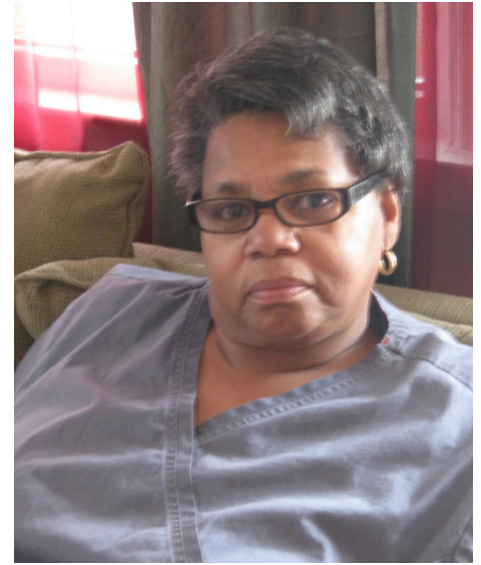
The Rolling Hills site is now home to 132 units of mixed income apartments, known as the Lofts at Southside. Thirty-nine of the units will be available at market rates, but 20 units will be reserved as affordable housing for families earning 30 percent or less of the area's median income.

"We asked for this," Hunter said. "We could see that it's an impact on the neighborhood."

Johnson said that the idea is to offer affordable housing while also providing incentive for private investors to buy units or build homes.

"People will come to the neighborhood because they picked it," he said.

The city is also looking to encour



**Marie Hunter sits in her newly renovated home on Scout Drive. She has been a member of the community for decades. (Staff photo by Caroline Hudson)**

age home ownership by building new houses as part of The Bungalows at Southside and by renovating old homes in the area—including Hunter's.

"Part of this, from our standpoint, is this is more than just building houses," Johnson said. "Strong neighborhoods make strong cities."

Jared Pone, Southside's outreach community coordinator, said the Lofts and the new homes are part of the project's first phase of three, and they are nearing completion.

He said his goal is to create one Southside—one cohesive neighborhood—in the area.

Although the project comes with a hefty price tag, Johnson said it's all worth it if the city can create a stable neighborhood that will eventually be able to stand on its own.

"Overall, people think it is a movement in the right direction," Johnson said. "One of the things that we're hoping to see changed is that people will be even more proud of their neighborhood."

Hunter is staying positive about the changes and said that she hopes to see her beloved community continue on the right path.

"It's not as bad as it used to be, but it's not as good as we want it to be," she said. "I'm not looking to go nowhere. I'm happy."



**Several of the brand new homes are located off of South Street. The city of Durham is hoping to create a stable community for its residents. (Staff photo by Caroline Hudson)**