

# An Inside Perspective: The APA CPAT Experience in Hartsville, South Carolina

*Brenda Kelley, Senior Planner, City of Hartsville, SC*

The City of Hartsville’s planning staff’s interest in applying for the Community Planning Assistance Team (CPAT) stemmed from a need to revitalize South Hartsville. A once vibrant neighborhood was in a state of decline with dilapidated houses, overgrown lots, the housing stock in varying degrees of decline, increasing crime rates, etc. We knew we had to do something to help improve the quality of life for the South Hartsville residents.

While searching for a way to help, I stumbled across the CPAT opportunity. With assistance from Planner I, Heather Garrison, we went to work. We spent countless hours preparing the application. We collected maps, Census data, background information and history of the area. We submitted the application and were elated when we received the official notification that we were awarded.

The award was just the beginning. Eric Roach, Program Associate, and Marijoan “MJ” Bull, Team Leader, made an initial visit to Hartsville on June 20-21, 2014. During their visit they talked with community leaders and toured South Hartsville to make an initial assessment. They toured other areas of the city as well. They took all of the information that they gathered during their visit to determine the makeup of the team.

The entire team visited Hartsville on September 7–11, 2014. The all-female team consisted of Marijoan “MJ” Bull, Bridget Wiles, Kimberly Burton, Alina Gross and Karen Campblin, and they hit the ground running. Prior to their visit we reserved a space they could use exclusively during their stay. We coordinated meetings with individuals, community leaders, nonprofit organizations, a Senator, City Council, the city manager, department heads, etc. The team met with these various stakeholders to get input for the plan. Heather and I worked behind the scenes scheduling meetings, collecting data, creating and providing maps, handing out flyers, etc. We cleared our schedules for the week and were available to the team in whatever capacity they needed us.

On Tuesday, September 9, 2014 residents of South Hartsville joined the team in a Walk and Talk tour through the South Hartsville Neighborhood (pictured at right). The participants completed a survey form that was used to evaluate the infrastructure, buildings, safety, public spaces, services, and other quality of life issues. During the tour, residents pointed out areas of concern. The tour ended at the Butler Campus for “A Conversation on South Hartsville.” Residents were invited to meet the team and share their thoughts on the assets and challenges of the neigh-

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*CPAT Team, pictured from left to right: Karen Campblin; Marijoan “MJ” Bull, Team Leader; Brenda Kelley, Senior Planner; Alina Gross; Kim Burton; Bridget Wiles; and Heather Garrison, Planner I.*



*Pictured above and at left: Hartsville Walk and Talk Tour*





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borhood. The conversation centered around five focus areas: Housing, Services, Mobility, Economic Vitality, and Identification and Participation. The conversation became the basis for a Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy for South Hartsville.

On Thursday, September 11, 2014 the team presented a draft Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy based on input from residents, community organizers, institutional leaders, and other representatives.

For months the team worked on the plan while continuously staying in touch with Heather and me. We continued to be a resource for them throughout the entire process.

On January 15, 2015 the program associate and three of the five member team returned to Hartsville to present the final plan (pictured at right). This was the first time that a team made a third visit. South Hartsville is unique and we felt it most beneficial for the team to present the plan and we were right. The residents were pleased with the plan and made a commitment to adopt the plan and begin meeting to get organized to start implementing it.

Our experience with the CPAT was phenomenal. We had an opportunity to meet and work with five amazing women and Eric. The team will forever be a part of our planning family. Our lives were impacted in ways we could not have imagined. We learned a lot about neighborhood planning, community engagement, building relationships, etc. Most of all we learned a lot about ourselves and the part we play in making our community a better place to live, work, and play.



Photo from "A Conversation on South Hartsville"



Photo from the final presentation in January 2015

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