

Because of location, two Beach communities excluded from target program's progress

Atlantic Park, Burton Station
are in airport crash zones.

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VIRGINIA BEACH — Overall, the city's Target Neighborhood Program has been a tremendous success: In the past two decades, 10 communities with unlivable houses, backyard privies and dirt streets have been turned into thriving, pleasant places to live.

But two other neighborhoods targeted for the redevelopment effort were left behind by the progress because of their locations.

Work was stymied in both Atlantic Park, which backs onto Oceana Naval Air Station, and in Burton Station, which abuts Norfolk International Airport, because of their locations in airport crash zones. Federal regulations discourage residential development near airports, but allow commercial growth.

In Atlantic Park, a neighborhood with 149 livable homes and 33 unlivable ones when it was tapped for redevelopment in 1979, received city water and sewer, but few other improvements. Last year, civic leader E. George Minns persuaded the city to provide housing rehabilitation money for the neighborhood, but the impact of that financial commitment is not yet readily visible.

In Burton Station, more than half the 102 houses were uninhabitable according to a 1986 city study. No work has been done in this neighborhood, off Northampton Boulevard. The city instead has spent \$700,000 in Target Neighborhood money to help relocate residents voluntarily out of the community. Once all of the residents have moved, the city plans to turn the neighborhood into an industrial park, capitalizing on its proximity to the airport.

Burton Station has few residents left. Most who remain have turned down city offers to buy them out. They've lived in Burton all their lives and, approaching old age, are unwilling to relocate and take on mortgages.

Many landowners in both neighborhoods are frustrated by the decisions that have left their streets a mess and their houses decrepit. Burton Station landowners have reacted angrily; Atlantic Park residents seem demoralized by their unsuccessful efforts to get more out of City Hall.

"Over the years, I just really lost my hope, I really did," said 20-year Atlantic Park resident William Giliam, 64, a popular local jazz musician.

"There are no sidewalks, no lights. . . We don't have any kind of parks for the children to play in. There are so many things," he said, but the city and most of his neighbors do nothing. "I just feel so let down."

Virginia Beach's "target" neighborhoods are improving slowly — but the changes are pleasing residents/B1