

Editorial: Kupfrian Park improvements welcome

In recent years economic development officials have recognized that most job growth is likely to come from the expansion of established businesses, not the recruitment of new ones.

So helping existing businesses prosper and expand has become as important as reaching out for new ones.

The same dynamic can work for neighborhoods.

So plans announced last month by Escambia County to invest \$1 million in local option sales tax revenue to upgrade the Kupfrian Park community reflects the kind of investment needed to keep older neighborhoods up.

New subdivisions and commercial development usually get the publicity and compliments, as they represent economic advancement.

But those advances can be negated by the decay of older communities.

Yet those older neighborhoods represent a resource that should not be ignored. In many towns, it is the renewal of older neighborhoods that can spark needed economic improvements.

For example, the resurgence of the Seville Square district in the 1960s and '70s has paid big dividends for both downtown and the city as a whole. What had deteriorated into slum-like conditions is now a strong source of jobs and tax revenues, not to mention its contribution to the ambience of downtown.

The same can be said of the home restorations in North Hill that have restored and expanded its cache as a desirable residential neighborhood.

The 40-block Kupfrian Park is one of Pensacola's older neighborhoods. After the Civil War it was a lively entertainment district. But it has been hampered by poor drainage and needs new sidewalks and better lighting.

As new areas emerge, it's important to make sure older areas keep up. That's as much a part of community-building as supporting new development.