

Garden City Reconsidered is a speculative project that aims to reestablish a neighborhood that once stood as a cornerstone for the Hayti District in Durham, North Carolina. For decades, suburbia has existed as a thriving environment for the Euro-American family. For Black communities, suburbia has been a battle for many, as self-built established neighborhoods have been systematically lost, ranging from zoning laws, urban redevelopments, and gentrification. Hayti was one of the Black Wall Streets established in the American South, which for decades, stood as one of the most self-sufficient Black communities in America. Hayti is home to one of the largest Historically Black Colleges and Universities, North Carolina Central University. Artifacts of Hayti remain standing despite their dilapidated states, and this remains true in the case of the Fayette Place Neighborhood.

In the 1960s, the city of Durham proposed a new urban plan that would create a brand new highway, Highway 147/Durham Freeway, to connect to the up-and-coming Research Triangle Park adjacent to the city. The proposal, which was voted on by the Hayti community, was intended to reduce the overall economic disparity between Hayti and the rest of Durham by creating more housing and opening more businesses in the area. However, the promises made never came into fruition, destroyed Hayti in its entirety, and, more importantly, destroyed the Fayette Place Neighborhood. The erection of the Durham Freeway displaced over 5,000 families and over 1,000 businesses across Hayti, creating further hardship in the area. Neighborhoods like Fayette Place were replaced with government-subsidized housing projects. Lack of funding for the housing project led to its long-term neglect and persistent rent hikes for decades after its completion. The housing project was condemned in 2004 and demolished in 2009, with the remnants of foundations and hardscape existing as artifacts of what once stood.

Efforts to restore the neighborhood and to gentrify the area have come and gone; most recently, as of November 2025, they have faced community backlash, leading to the scrapping of projects. What this proposal harmonizes with is the Garden City Movement by Ebenezer Howard; rather than at the large urban scale, it is reimaged to a smaller scale, with its central core being, rather than gardens, the center becomes programmatic needs for the overall community to help improve their wellbeing. Fayette Place is a food desert, with the nearest grocery store being a 30-minute walk or bus ride on the busiest roads in Durham. The core of the neighborhood in this proposal is now a market and plaza, with a mural that takes a nod to artist Ernie Barnes. Surrounding the market and plaza is a series of multi-scalar housing ranging from one and two-story duplexes, rowhomes, and an apartment block that fronts the highway. The ambition of Garden City Reconsidered is to rectify the problems created by urban redevelopments that have tarnished Black communities, applying the Garden City Movement at the scale of the neighborhood rather than urban, to be responsive to the needs of the community.