

City of Gainesville

Inter-Office Communication

To: John Wachtel, Neighborhood Planning Coordinator
From: Andrew Persons, Neighborhood Planning Intern
Date: October 1, 2008
Subject: Neighborhood Planning Program Update

Introduction

The mission of the Neighborhood Planning Program is to enhance the quality of life for neighborhood residents by encouraging active citizen participation in identifying, prioritizing, and addressing opportunities for positive change within neighborhoods and to familiarize citizens with the relevant processes and personnel of City Government.

The Neighborhood Planning Program (NPP) is a collaborative process between the City and the people who live and work in its neighborhoods. The program is coordinated by the Neighborhood Planning Coordinator and includes the participation of city staff from various departments to assist designated neighborhoods to meet goals, address needs, and implement projects. To be eligible for the program, neighborhood organizations (usually formal associations or crime watch groups) must apply for designation and be registered with the City. The City Commission ultimately decides which neighborhoods participate in the program.

The NPP is intended to build stronger community relationships, improve communication between the neighborhood and the City, define neighborhood goals and issues, and explore alternatives for achieving desired neighborhood and City priorities. The NPP provides a forum for residents to initiate, rather than react to change, and in which neighborhood residents can develop mutually acceptable alternatives and solutions to area problems and define future goals. Further, the neighborhood planning process addresses issues and opportunities at a scale that is more refined and responsive to neighborhood needs.

Since 1998, the City Commission has designated seventeen neighborhoods for participation in the Program. The City Commission allocated \$15,000 for each neighborhood to implement the program and for physical improvement projects located in the city right-of-way, on city owned property, or on common property maintained by the neighborhood. The funding for small projects has been made a part of the program based on the belief that people working together to provide tangible improvements in a neighborhood helps to instill a sense of neighborhood pride, thereby building stronger communities. The projects chosen by the neighborhood should help to create a common identity or sense of community in the neighborhood.

The end product of the NPP, in addition to the physical improvement of the neighborhood, is a Neighborhood Action Plan, which identifies neighborhood issues and projects, guides future enhancements of the neighborhood, and directs and manages change.

Resident participation is the cornerstone of the Neighborhood Planning Program, and the Neighborhood Action Plan is completely neighborhood driven. The plan is divided into issue areas and contains the goals and strategies as recommended by the neighborhood through a series of neighborhood meetings.

The main purpose of this plan is to provide the neighborhood with a working document to continue to work on long- and short-term goals beyond the city sponsored neighborhood planning process, thereby further enhancing the quality of Gainesville's neighborhoods and neighborhood organization network.

General Projects

Neighborhood Planning Staff is continuing to update, formalize and document NPP Procedures based on input from two rounds of neighborhood selection for inclusion in the program. Updates were made to explanation packets, application forms, selection recommendation procedures, and the general yearly schedule.

Neighborhood Updates

Duval - Although there are no NPP funds left for this neighborhood, and the NPP is no longer active in this neighborhood, the neighborhood association continues to meet, to coordinate with city departments, and to advocate for the neighborhood.

Projects completed include the following:

- Installed entranceway sign and landscaping;
- Installed landscaping along streets; and
- Installed two bus shelters.

Grove Street – Like Duval, Grove Street has no NPP funds left, but continues to meet, to coordinate with city departments, and to advocate for the neighborhood.

Projects completed include the following:

- Installed historic style street signs throughout the neighborhood;
- Installed improvements in the Neighborhood's Dreamers' Garden; and
- Installed landscaping in several medians.

Sugar Hill - Like Duval and Grove Street, Sugar Hill, has no NPP funds left, but continues to meet, to coordinate with city departments, and to advocate for the neighborhood

Projects completed include the following:

- Installed a picnic shelter in Barbara Higgins Park;
- Installed new picnic tables, grills and benches in Barbara Higgins Park;
- Installed a fence along the back of Barbara Higgins Park; and
- Installed a new bus shelter.

Lincoln Estates - Like Duval, Grove Street, and Sugar Hill, Lincoln Estates has no NPP funds left, but continues to meet, to coordinate with city departments, and to advocate for the neighborhood.

Projects completed include the following:

- Installed crosswalks and sidewalks with curbs leading toward the Boys Club;
- Installed landscaping in a prominent median; and
- Installed a sign and landscaping at a major entranceway.

Hibiscus Park - Like Duval, Grove Street, Sugar Hill and Lincoln Estates, Hibiscus Park has no NPP funds left, but continues to meet, to coordinate with city departments, and to advocate for the neighborhood

Projects completed include the following:

- Installed historic style street signs;
- Installed three entranceway signs;
- Installed landscaping for one entrance;
- Used creative design and landscaping to convert a sink hole into a passive park with benches, picnic tables and trash receptacles; and
- Coordinated with the Public Works Department to pave neighborhood streets.

Highland Court Manor - This neighborhood has approximately \$500 left. Future projects may include additional landscaping

Projects completed include the following:

- Installed entranceway signs and landscaping installed at six prominent entrances;

- Installed 16 Sweet Bay Magnolia trees, 8 Holly trees, and 4 Drake Elm trees along Northeast 9th Street;
- Installed two additional entranceway signs; and
- Installed a gardener's shed for the Northeast 31st Avenue Community Garden

Porters Community – The Neighborhood currently has \$8,747 remaining. Potential future projects include a neighborhood community garden, trimming hazardous trees, and landscaping.

Projects completed include the following:

- Installed a drinking fountain, new fence, and new trash receptacle in a neighborhood tot lot;
- Installed two neighborhood entranceway signs;
- Re-established the Porters Oaks Homeowners Association; and
- Installed “No Trespass” signs for Porters Oaks Homeowners Association.

North Lincoln Heights – This neighborhood has \$7,200 left. Future projects identified by the neighborhood include entrance signs and additional landscaping.

Projects completed include the following:

- Installed 41 East Palatka Holly and Crape Myrtle trees in front of Williams Elementary School, along Southeast 7th Avenue;
- Installed 18 flowering trees along Southeast 3rd Avenue, and
- Constructed a monument celebrating residents' efforts to improve and beautify their neighborhood

Oakview – Like Duval, Grove Street, Sugar Hill, Lincoln Estates, and Hibiscus Park, Oakview has no NPP funds left, but continues to meet, to coordinate with city departments, and to advocate for the neighborhood

Projects completed include the following:

- Installed neighborhood signs and landscaping at prominent entranceways; and
- Installed curbing and extensive landscaping in a median; and
- Reinstallation of a recovered entranceway sign.

Ridgeview – Ridgeview currently has \$4,732 70 left. Future projects may include additional landscaping and fencing around a portion of the Hogtown Creek

Projects completed include the following:

- Installed 90 bollards to control parking around a neighborhood park;
- Installed a bus shelter at a heavily used bus stop; and
- Installed neighborhood signs at prominent entrances.

Springhill – An initial draft of The Springhill Neighborhood Action Plan has been completed, but not finalized or approved. The draft envisions major improvements to Springhill Park, including coordinating with the Eastside Community Redevelopment Agency and the General Services Department to purchase and install a picnic pavilion, picnic tables and benches, a drinking fountain, and barbeque grills.

Projects completed include the following:

- Site plan approval for the Springhill picnic pavilion

Stephen Foster – An initial draft of The Stephen Foster Neighborhood Action Plan has been completed and approved. Potential projects include entrance signs, planting fruit trees around the neighborhood, and bus stop improvements.

Ironwood – Like Duval, Grove Street, Sugar Hill, Lincoln Estates, Hibiscus Park, and Oakview, Ironwood has no NPP funds left, but continues to meet, to coordinate with city departments, and to advocate for the neighborhood.

Projects completed include the following:

- Installed 20 Crape Myrtle and 10 Drake Elm Trees along the west side of Northeast 15th Street, between the bus stop shelter and Northeast 39th Avenue; and
- Installed decorative fencing along the east side of Northeast 15th Street, near Ironwood Village

Pine Park – The Pine Park Neighborhood Action Plan is complete. Potential projects include landscaping the three medians in 21st Avenue and entrance signs.

Northeast Neighbors – Portions of The Northeast Neighbors Neighborhood Action Plan have been drafted. Additional input from residents is needed.

Apple Tree – The Apple Tree Neighborhood Action Plan is complete. Although the Apple Tree Neighborhood has no NPP funds left, they continue to meet, to coordinate with city departments, and to advocate for the neighborhood.

Projects completed include the following:

- Designed and installed two new entrance signs;
- Installed new irrigation and landscaping at the entrance to the neighborhood. The landscaping included six Magnolia Trees, Variegated Liriope, Azaleas, Parson's Juniper, Needle Palms, Agapanthus, and Viburnum.

Greater Northeast Community – Portions of the Greater Northeast Community Neighborhood Action Plan have been drafted. Several visioning and informational meetings have taken place. A neighborhood survey has been distributed to gather additional input.

Summary – The Duval, Grove Street, Sugarhill, Lincoln Estates, Hibiscus Park, Oakview, Ironwood, and Apple Tree neighborhoods have graduated from the Neighborhood Planning Program. With the exception of Stephen Foster, Northeast Neighbors, and the Greater Northeast Community, the remaining neighborhoods are in the process of implementing their Neighborhood Action Plans. Stephen Foster and the Greater Northeast Community hope to begin implementation soon, while Northeast Neighbors needs to finalize the plan.

Future Directions for the Neighborhood Planning Program

The NPP is uniquely positioned to address needs, meet goals, and initiate projects on a neighborhood level. The NPP will continue to implement capital projects and collaborate with other City departments to achieve desired neighborhood and City priorities. In response to residents' requests, the City should consider expanding the focus of the NPP to explore more service and training opportunities for neighborhood residents, including partnering with other City and County departments, non-profit agencies, and the University to promote career building, small business training, community organizing, health and nutritional programs, and neighborhood safety.