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## INTER-OFFICE COMMUNICATION

SEP 11 2008

**DATE:** September 10, 2008

**TO:** Russ Blackburn, City Manager

**VIA:** Fred Murry, Assistant City Manager *FM*

**FROM:** *W* John Wachtel, Neighborhood Planning Coordinator

**SUBJECT:** Use of Neighborhood Planning Program Funds

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The Stephen Foster Neighborhood has requested that a noise study be conducted for the Koppers property. They have also suggested that Neighborhood Planning Program (NPP) funds be used to for this purpose.

The Neighborhood currently has \$15,000 available in its NPP account.

It is important to note that the intended use of these funds is for physical projects. That fact is reflected in Section III, Project Funding, of the attached Neighborhood Planning Program Guidelines and Procedures. That section states that the funds are to be used for, "physical improvement and/or beautification projects located in the city right-of-way, on city-owned property, or on common property maintained by the neighborhood." Using the funds for studies is a change from past procedures and is not consistent with the City Commission's original intent of the Program.

Please contact me if you have any questions about the NPP.

Attachment: Neighborhood Planning Program Guidelines and Procedures

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# City of Gainesville Neighborhood Planning Program

## Guidelines and Procedures

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.

### I. Overview

The City of Gainesville Neighborhood Planning Program (NPP) is a collaborative process between the City and the people who live and work in neighborhoods. The program is administered by the City's 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 is designed to address issues and opportunities at a neighborhood scale.

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 useful document to continue to work on long- and short-term goals, beyond the city sponsored neighborhood planning process.

## II. History

Since 1998, the City Commission has designated seventeen neighborhoods for participation in the Program. The following neighborhoods have participated in the Neighborhood Planning Program:

- Duval
- Grove Street
- Sugar Hill
- Lincoln Estates
- Highland Court Manor
- Porters
- Hibiscus Park
- North Lincoln Heights
- Oakview
- Ridgeview
- Springhill
- Ironwood
- Northeast Neighbors
- Stephen Foster
- Pine Park
- Appletree
- Greater Northeast Community

## III. Project Funding

The City Commission has allocated \$15,000 for each neighborhood to implement the program and for physical improvement and/or beautification projects located in the city right-of-way, on city-owned property, or on common property maintained by the neighborhood. In other words, the projects must be permanent improvements located on public property or on neighborhood-maintained common property. These funds cannot be used for operating and/or maintenance expenses.

The rationale for funding small projects is the belief that people working together to provide tangible neighborhood improvements develops neighborhood pride and stronger communities. The projects chosen by the neighborhood should help to create a common identity or sense of community in the neighborhood. Some examples of successfully completed projects include, installing neighborhood entrance features, landscaping along streets and medians, constructing bus shelters, and neighborhood park improvements. **Selected neighborhoods must create and formally approve a Neighborhood Action Plan prior to any expenditure of NPP monies.**

## IV. Eligibility

Any neighborhood-based organization whose purpose is to improve the quality of life for neighborhood residents is eligible to participate in the NPP. Organizations do not need to be incorporated. Individuals, single businesses, institutions, religious organizations, government agencies or political groups are not eligible. Also excluded are citywide groups, universities, hospitals, newspapers, state and national foundations, and fraternal organizations. Neighborhood organizations must be registered with the City of Gainesville in order to be considered. A neighborhood or a neighborhood organization may be selected for participation only one time.

## V. Program Guidelines

The NPP involves a series of meetings with city staff to determine neighborhood priorities and goals, develop a neighborhood action plan, and identify and implement neighborhood projects. The City Commission has allocated \$15,000 per neighborhood for improvement projects. **Selected neighborhoods must create and formally approve a Neighborhood Action Plan prior to any expenditure of NPP monies.**

Depending on various factors, including funding and staffing levels, up to two neighborhoods per year may be selected to participate. Neighborhoods which are well organized, are older than 25 years, have a high level of citizen interest and initiative, and have issues which can be addressed by the neighborhood planning program are more likely to be selected.

## VI. Selection Process

Although **neighborhoods are ultimately selected by the City Commission** at a regular meeting in October, the selection process begins in the summer. Between May 15<sup>th</sup> and June 1<sup>st</sup>, City staff will mail application packets to all registered neighborhoods that have not been previously selected. Returned applications will be evaluated based on a number of factors and will receive points based on the neighborhood's adherence to the program criteria. More specifically, the evaluation process consists of separate quantitative and qualitative components, both of which are weighted equally. The quantitative component consists of a staff survey of existing neighborhood resources.

Neighborhoods will be assessed based on the:

- Age of the neighborhood
- Historical character of the neighborhood
- Level of need
- Neighborhood organization
- Potential for program implementation
- Major issues and types of projects
- Previous initiatives

The qualitative component gives the neighborhood a chance to highlight its strengths and identify areas for improvements. For the qualitative component, the neighborhood is asked to identify:

- The neighborhood's vision for its future
- The strengths of the neighborhood
- Areas for neighborhood improvement
- Why the neighborhood is an appropriate choice for inclusion in the NPP

Additionally, the neighborhood should describe itself in its own words. The description should include a brief account of the physical, social, and public safety conditions of the neighborhood. The application should also highlight any special resources, knowledge, or experience the group brings to the planning process.

The qualitative component will be reviewed by a Selection Committee. Using their collective experience, the Selection Committee will score the qualitative component based on the applicant's ability to use the program to accomplish positive changes. To a certain degree, this depends on some of the same subjects covered in the quantitative component (e.g., Level of Need, Level of Organization, Previous Initiatives, and Potential for Implementation).

The Selection Committee is usually comprised of representatives from the Police, Public Works, Neighborhood Planning, and Codes Enforcement Departments. If a representative from one of those departments is not available, a representative from the Housing Division will join the Selection Committee.

Finally, staff adds the quantitative and qualitative scores to determine a total score. The applications are then ranked by total score. That ranking is the basis for staff's recommendation to the City Commission.

## **VII. Application Deadline**

Neighborhoods must submit their applications via the U.S. Post Office, to the Neighborhood Planning Program, c/o John Wachtel, P.O. Box 490, Sta. 11, Gainesville, Florida 32601. Applications must be received by 4:30 p.m. on August 1<sup>st</sup>.

## **VIII. Selection Schedule**

The selection schedule is as follows:

1. Staff sends out applications between May 15<sup>th</sup> and June 1<sup>st</sup>.
2. Staff receives completed applications by August 1<sup>st</sup>.
3. Staff sends receipt letters to applicants by August 15<sup>th</sup>.
4. Staff sends applications to the Selection Committee members for review and evaluation by August 15<sup>th</sup>.
5. Staff scores the Quantitative Component by September 15<sup>th</sup>.
6. The Selection Committee meets and scores the Qualitative Component by September 15<sup>th</sup>.
7. Based on the total score, staff recommends up to two neighborhoods for inclusion into the NPP. The City Commission makes a final decision by October 31<sup>st</sup>.