

## 4.6 NEIGHBORHOOD ENHANCEMENT PROJECTS & PROGRAMS

The health and quality of neighborhoods in the Englewood CRA are a critical element in transforming the community. There may sometimes be a perception of conflicting interests between the business community and residents as each is only looking at how the other may negatively affect them and lose sight of their common goals. For instance, the residents may raise concerns about noise, views, and activities that impose on the privacy of their homes from the businesses. On the flip side, the business community may object to the neighborhood youth “hanging out”, unkempt yards and homes, or limitations being placed on night activities by area residents. The realities are that the two factions are reliant on each other to create a community they are both striving to achieve. Each “side” needs to understand the important synergy between them and what their role is to create their ideal environment. The downtown businesses need the residents to patronize their stores and restaurants and speak well of them (word of mouth marketing) and conversely, the residents should want quality businesses to thrive so they can feel safe and be proud of their neighborhood.

Englewood has several associations that represent homeowners. Two that are directly involved in the redevelopment process are the Olde Englewood Village Homeowners Association (OEVHA) and the Southwest County Alliance of Homeowners Associations, which represents a collection of several homeowners associations. The associations are actively involved in most planning and development review activities and their involvement affects the outcomes of projects. In most part, the residents are interested in supporting new developments, as long as the interests of the homeowners are considered and protected or enhanced. While the residents participate in public meetings, public hearings and regularly consult with the County staff and officials, the residents feel there is a gap in active planning for their neighborhoods. The Updated CRA Redevelopment Plan seeks to address the perception that redevelopment programs and projects solely address the commercial sectors by recommending projects and programs for the neighborhoods.

### **Project NA-1: Coordinate Neighborhood Participation, Planning & Development Programs**

**Project Background and Description** – The best way to ensure that redevelopment activities address the neighborhoods’ issues and goals is for stakeholders to actively and consistently communicate with each other. Much of the communication that has occurred so far has been in a reactive mode. The residents discuss issues at their association meetings and then provide their input at public meetings and report their finding back at the next association meeting. These transactions are not allowing for open discussions to occur between the parties to pro-actively help address the issues rather than react to the problems.

A recommendation to address the situation is for the stakeholders to jointly meet on a quarterly basis. This new Neighborhood Partnership Program needs to include representatives from the business community, County Neighborhood Services, homeowners associations and the CRA. Discussions should include proposed redevelopment activities, their impact to the neighborhoods and how the impacts should be addressed. It’s important that these discussions be held early in the project planning stage so the residents’ comments can be addressed properly in the project’s design.

At the same time, it’s critically important for the residents to remain actively involved in attending their own association meetings, attending business association meetings such as OEVA and the Chamber, and other public meetings such as the CRA Advisory Board, Englewood Area Planning Advisory Board (EAPAB) and for neighborhood meetings for proposed rezone petitions.

Sarasota County Neighborhood Services assists and encourages residents to participate actively in their neighborhoods to help preserve and enhance their quality of life. The Neighborhood Services program is a partnership between neighborhoods and Sarasota County Government and helps to connect people to the resources and information they need. Neighborhood Services

has three main elements: Neighborhood Grants, Neighborhood Planning, and Neighborhood University. Of particular interest to many neighborhoods is the Grant Program, where the County has set aside \$400,000 per year to fund neighborhood projects. The County offers a mandatory Grant Orientation Workshops to assist neighborhoods with the application process. The deadline to apply for the grant cycle is typically in August.

Neighborhood University provides several learning opportunities for citizens. Many times citizens don't understand how their government works, how and why certain decisions are made or how they can get involved to affect change. Civics 101 is a class designed to provide a toolbox of resources on Sarasota County operations and services. Civics 101 has two sessions - Spring and Fall - both of which are one night each week for 10 weeks. Twenty-five residents are accepted each term on a first-come, first-served basis. The Englewood neighborhoods should coordinate participation in the program so the graduates can assist with understanding County processes and operations.

### **Project Objectives:**

- Provide pro-active communication between stakeholders to address neighborhood issues;
- Strengthen bonds between residents and businesses; and
- Utilize existing self-help programs provided by the County.

### **Actions Steps Required for Implementation:**

- Create a Neighborhood Partnership Program. Form an alliance of stakeholders to discuss neighborhood issues and redevelopment activities.
- Utilize Neighborhood Grants Program. Apply for grants to help fund neighborhood projects.
- Attend Civics 101. Send Englewood residents to the Civics 101 classes to assist the neighborhoods with their understanding of the services Sarasota County provides and how they operate.
- OEVHA members should introduce idea of creating Neighborhood Partnership Program to other neighborhood associations and business organizations.
- Schedule first Neighborhood Partnership Program meeting and establish future meeting schedule and agendas.
- Review Neighborhood Services information online at [www.scgov.net](http://www.scgov.net), or call 861-5000 to learn about Grant Orientation Workshop schedule, Civics 101 and other services they provide.

**Project Participants and Administration:** CRA, OEVHA, Neighborhood Services, OEVA, AALB, and the Chamber of Commerce.

**Projected Costs:** Not applicable

**Time Frame:** Immediate

## **Project NA-2: Utilize Existing Housing Assistance Programs**

**Project Background and Description:** This project replaces Project 13 in the 2005 CRA Plan – Provide Housing Assistance Programs. The Sarasota County Community Housing Department and the Sarasota Office of Housing and Community Development Department both offer many programs to address community, workforce and affordable housing. The County has the following elements in their community housing tool box that they have or are in the process of implementing:

- Process improvements – concurrent processing;

- 
- Affordable Housing Incentives – impact fee relief, permit fee reduction, and density bonuses;
  - Regulations to Diversify Housing Stock – granny flats, housing variety on block, reduced parking requirement, increased height limitations in designated areas, reduced lot requirements in MF zoning districts, linkage fees, balanced housing ordinance, sustained affordability; and
  - Strategic Partnerships – community land trust, housing fund, tax credit rental development program, professional associations and community organizations.

Additionally, the City/County Housing and Community Development Dept. has the following programs:

- Home Buyer Assistance - Down Payment Assistance Program, State of Florida Bond Program, and Housing Partnership Program;
- Home Improvement Program - Owner Occupied Rehabilitation Program, Barrier Removal Program, and Water/Sewer Connection Program;
- Section 8 Rental Assistance - Special Needs Housing Program and Public Housing; and
- Affordable Community Housing - 2005-2010 Consolidated Plan and Local Housing Assistance Plan.

Many of these programs are applicable in the Englewood area to address the need for more community housing. The CRA should work with the County housing staff to prepare a plan to determine housing development and rehabilitation needs within the Englewood CRA. Additionally, a survey to gather information and determine the level of interest of property owners in using housing assistance programs should be carried out. This information should be used to establish phased strategies to meet the housing needs.

In the interim, provide housing assistance program information at the Englewood CRA local office and at the Sarasota Office of Housing and Community Development. Develop a marketing plan to target property owners, developers, and non-profit organizations that could qualify for the programs. Encourage property owners by providing assistance with program applications.

#### **Project Objectives:**

- Improve the condition of housing;
- Improve the visual appearance of residential neighborhoods; and
- Encourage homeowner participation in revitalizing Englewood.

#### **Actions Steps Required for Implementation:**

- Develop housing needs survey.
- Develop housing needs plan.
- Provide information to Englewood residents.
- Determine eligibility for suitable program.
- Provide application assistance.

#### **Project Participants and Administration:**

- Office of Housing and Community Development
- Englewood CRA Program Coordinator
- Neighborhood associations.
- Private sector

**Projected Costs:** Survey and Marketing Plan - \$2,000

**Time Frame:** Short-term, 1-3 years

## **Project NA-3: Create a Historic Home Relocation/Affordable Housing Program**

**Project Background and Description:** Englewood has several older homes that should be preserved as important historical assets and as a symbol of the community's heritage. However, these homes are often in the path of new development and end up being torn down and replaced with larger, newer structures. These older homes are wood frame and relatively small which would allow them to be moved as an option to demolition. Additionally, many times the homeowner would be willing to give the home away for the relocation cost rather than paying for the demolition and landfill fees. The CRA should identify and purchase a 5-10 acres vacant property where the historic homes could be located. These homes could then be used as part of an affordable housing program where the homes would remain as "affordable" in perpetuity.

### **Project Objectives:**

- Preserve the historic homes and character of the community; and
- Expand affordable housing options in Englewood.

### **Actions Steps Required for Implementation:**

Identify and acquire appropriate sites in Englewood for historic home relocation and new small scale affordable homes - The CRA should be active in guiding the relocation of historic homes and new small scale affordable housing. This includes identifying potential sites (both public and private) within the Town Center neighborhoods which is the most historical in the community and with the best access to services. Discussions and negotiations with developers and historic homeowners should be initiated inform them of the community's interest in preserving older homes and the potential relocation options. Site selection evaluation should include County-owned properties not currently in use and private parcels that may be acquired at reasonable cost for affordable housing. This evaluation should include a list of pros and cons to developing each parcel of land or building and prioritizing properties for affordable housing opportunities. Identifying appropriate properties gives the community an opportunity to be involved in the amount and distribution of historic and affordable housing which best meet the needs of local residents.

Create a local demolition delay ordinance – This ordinance would require owners of historic buildings (50 years and older) to wait before demolishing the building for a period of 60 days. This ordinance can temporarily protect historic homes and building that have become obsolete for their intended use, but which may present potential affordable housing opportunities if they can be saved through a combination effort of the CRA and owner.

Create a recycled housing program – This program could apply to all residential structures that could potentially be re-used for affordable housing. There are many modest homes in Englewood that are not historic but may fit the criteria for conversion to affordable housing. An adequate waiting period for these homes as under the demolition delay ordinance could provide the time necessary for interested parties to acquire and convert them to affordable housing units. These surplus structures could be relocated, rehabilitated, and sold. This type of program is typically used when there are modest existing homes with a low building-to-land ratio in wealthier neighborhoods such as along the Lemon Bay waterfront.

Coordinate and market the program – This new program should be coordinate with the County Housing departments and market to historic home and building owners in the community based on the County's historic resources inventory.

**Project Participants and Administration:** CRA, County Housing Department, neighborhood associations, private property owners, and the Community Housing Trust.

---

**Projected Costs:** Undetermined.

**Time Frame:** Mid-term, 3-5 years

## **Project NA-4: Support and Encourage Neighborhood Pocket Parks**

**Project Background and Description:** The Englewood community has abundant park land (approximately 529 acres) that includes Lemon Bay Park, Englewood Sports Complex, Englewood Recreation Center, Indian Mound Park, Kiwanis Park and Blind Pass Park. These facilities offer active recreation fields, boating, playgrounds, community meeting venues, trails and natural preserves to for flora and fauna observation. Additionally, the County has purchased waterfront properties that will provide public access to Lemon Bay for recreation and public gathering areas and another property for stormwater facilities. While the County has done an exemplary job of providing recreation and open space for south Sarasota County, additional opportunities are available that should be captured before they are lost and the price of land further escalates.

The County purchased approximately 18 acres on North Elm Street and Harvard Street for stormwater facilities as part of the regional stormwater study. This property could also support passive recreation for the neighborhood with the addition of trails and picnic areas. An eagle's nest is located on the property that would need to be considered when designing the facilities.

The community has indicated their desire to have pocket parks created that would allow canoe and kayak access to Gottfried Creek. One location to be considered is an area south of East Cowles Street, which is owned by the Englewood Water District (EWD). Initial conversations with the EWD indicate they are willing to consider the option. However, they have concerns about security and vandalism that will need to be addressed. Another opportunity for a pocket park exists on the east end of Lakeview Lane, a privately owned property located to the east of the stormwater facility owned by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT).

### **Project Objectives:**

- Provide additional public access to Gottfried Creek for passive recreation;
- Utilize existing publicly owned lands for neighborhood pocket parks; and
- Purchase privately owned vacant property for public use before they are developed.

### **Actions Steps Required for Implementation:**

- Organize discussions with EWD, FDOT, County Public Works (Stormwater) Department, and County Natural Resources Department to understand issues and opportunities;
- Organize local neighborhood meetings to discuss issues and opportunities;
- Develop concept plans;
- Identify and secure funding for improvements; and
- Develop use agreement between controlling parties (EWD and County).

**Project Participants and Administration:** CRA, EWD, FDOT, Sarasota County Parks Department, Sarasota County Public Works, Sarasota County Natural Resources Department, Neighborhood Services, and area neighborhood associations.

**Projected Costs:** Undetermined

**Time Frame:** Long-term, 5-10 years

## Project NA-5: Carry Out and Expand Neighborhood Street Tree Program

**Project Background:** Existing trees and natural environment are important assets to the Englewood community and greatly enhance and protect its neighborhoods. Sarasota County adopted the Tree Protection Ordinance (Article XVIII, Sections 54-581) that expands protection of grand trees upon private and as well as public land in order to preserve champion, heritage and specimen trees whose age, quality and other characteristics command unique consideration. Based on a point system, the ordinance provides the parameters for a Grand Tree designation based on a tree's diameter at breast height (DBH), overall height and canopy spread. The County also has regulations that require landscaped buffers for perimeter areas of new residential developments and protection/mitigation for existing trees that do not meet Grand Tree status. While these measures provide protection for existing trees and add new trees to the urban forest, there are many existing neighborhoods and roadways that were constructed prior to existing regulations requiring landscaping or palms to be planted rather than shade trees. These neighborhoods and roadways need additional trees planted to beautify the area, add shade and cooling, and improve the environment.

**Project Description:** The Sarasota County Forestry Division created a Residential Street Tree Planting Program in 1994 that offers design, selection and planting services to qualifying neighborhoods and Homeowners Associations. Interested residential groups must secure a 75% owner participation and submit a written proposal to the Tree Advisory Council for consideration. Proposals must contain at least 20 but no more than 150 trees and the roadways must be county-owned and maintained. The program furnishes the trees at a cost of only \$50 per tree compared to approximately \$200 retail price per tree.

The Englewood CRA needs to be evaluated to determine where the street tree planting program could be utilized. Once the areas are identified and prioritized, the subject neighborhoods need to be contacted and informed about the tree planting program. The implementation of this project should be primarily neighborhood based with guidance from the CRA office and County Neighborhood Services Department. Each neighborhood should appoint a Residents' Coordinator who will act as the liaison with the Forestry Division. The successful implementation of the tree planting program in the neighborhoods needs to be documented and followed up by the CRA so all the neighborhoods and roadways identified as needing tree plantings will eventually be completed.

### Project Objectives:

- Expand the urban forest in the CRA to beautify and enhance the environment
- Involve the neighborhoods in the implementation of the Redevelopment Plan

### Actions Steps Required for Implementation:

- Evaluate the CRA to identify areas that could utilize the Tree Planting Program
- Generally prioritize and establish an implementation schedule
- Identify whether the area has an active neighborhood association to coordinate implementation
- Provide program information to neighborhood associations
- Assist the associations as needed

**Project Participants and Administration:** CRA, County Neighborhood Services Department, County Forestry Division, and local neighborhood associations.

**Projected Costs:** None for the CRA

**Time Frame:** Short-term, 1-3 years

---

## **Project NA-6: Create a Residential Pattern Book for Older Neighborhoods**

**Project Background and Description:** A growing occurrence and concern in Englewood is the development of large homes that are out of scale and character with surrounding homes and neighborhood. This is a particular concern in the older Town Center neighborhoods and along the Lemon Bay shoreline. A residential pattern book would create standards and standards for the appropriate design of public improvements, new and infill homes, layout of residential development, and scale and architectural details for renovations and expansions in the older neighborhoods in the Englewood Town Center Revitalization Area. The pattern book should also apply and guidelines for new homes and residential developments throughout the CRA District. The pattern book would be tied to the facade improvement program and the Architectural Design Guidelines.

### **Project Objectives:**

- To preserve the traditional residential patterns, scale, layout, and architecture of the older neighborhoods in the Town Center Revitalization Area; and
- Encourage new homes and residential neighborhoods throughout the CRA District to follow and expand the traditional neighborhood patterns and styles.

### **Actions Steps Required for Implementation:**

- Hire a consulting firm with experience in urban planning and design, landscape architecture and architecture to prepare a residential pattern book to serve as standards in the Town Center neighborhoods and guidelines for other residential developments in the CRA District.

**Project Participants and Administration:** CRA, neighborhood associations, consultant, and private developers

**Projected Costs:** Approximately \$50,000 from CRA to hire a consultant to complete the residential pattern book.

**Time Frame:** Short-term, 1-3 years

## **Project NA-7: Relocate Community Policing Program to Substation on Dearborn Street**

**Project Background and Description:** This project replaces Project 9 in the 2005 CRA Plan - Expand Partnership Programs between the Community Policing Program and the Englewood Community. The first community policing storefront opened in Englewood in 1992. Today there are six (6) storefront locations; however only three are active - Englewood, Siesta and Laurel/Nokomis, and the other three are used for tactical operations. Community Policing Station One is located at the Englewood Recreation Center on North Orange Avenue. The Englewood location employs five deputies for two shifts and volunteers assist with receptionist duties. The County does not charge rent to the Sheriff's Office for the space at the Recreation Center. The community policing storefront, however, would be better located on Dearborn Street where it would have increased public accessibility and visibility. A location directly on Dearborn Street would better involve the deputies with the businesses and street activities and would provide direct visual surveillance to deter criminal and vagrant behaviors.

A new location needs to provide about 800 square feet for offices and reception area, secured storage space for bicycles and equipment and parking for 6-8 vehicles. Possible areas to relocate the community policing storefront would be an existing vacant storefront on West Dearborn Street, or at the newly acquired waterfront County property at Harbor Lane. Co-locating the uses would benefit both the community policing program and the primary user by increasing safety. The deputies do not bring criminal suspects to the storefront location so these potential conflicts

would not exist. If the community policing storefront were re-located, the County would have more space at the Recreation Center for recreational uses.

**Project Objectives:**

- Increase safety and the perception of safety in the downtown area;
- Better integration of the community policing program with the community; and
- Open more recreation space at the Recreation Center.

**Actions Steps Required for Implementation:**

- Identify location to re-locate Community Policing Storefront;
- Coordinate with Sheriff's Office; and
- Develop use agreement between parties

**Project Participants and Administration:** Sheriff's Office, private property owners and CRA.

**Projected Costs:** Not applicable.

**Time Frame:** Short-term, 1-3 years