

THREE: COMMUNITY APPEARANCE



Urban Design Elements (Paver Brick, Decorative Lighting, Wrought-Iron Fencing, and Landscaping) at a Nokomis Center Business

Urban Design and Beautification

Nokomis residents want to improve the appearance of the Nokomis Center. To achieve this goal, the Nokomis Center Revitalization Plan requires new development to meet urban design conditions related to building form and scale, density, spatial relationships, and physical and visual linkages as well as signage, lighting and screening of utilities. The revitalization plan includes beautification measures such as street tree plantings, decorative street lighting, decorative street signs and other gateway and streetscape features intended to improve the appearance of public areas such as street rights of way. Residents support the plan's urban design requirements for new development, as long as the requirements are flexible and allow for developer choices. Although not required, existing businesses are encouraged to incorporate similar improvements. Table 3-1 lists urban design and beautification elements for the Nokomis Center.

Sign Requirements

The assortment of wall, monument and ground signs currently in the Nokomis Center is, in some places, confusing and unattractive. Most of the freestanding business identification signs are pole signs, which range in height from two and a half feet to thirty feet, the maximum height allowed by the Sarasota County Zoning Code. Many are less than fifteen feet high. The maximum allowable height for new pole signs in the Nokomis Center should be reduced to fifteen feet, to provide continuity between new and existing signs. Signs and their supporting structures should be compatible with the businesses they identify. The location, height and size of the signs should be in keeping with the size of the building. Smaller wooden pole signs are used by very few of the Nokomis Center businesses, but provide a sense of charm typical of specialty shops. Small wood signs are encouraged in the Colonia Lane industrial and commercial areas near the railroad tracks where traffic speeds are slow enough so back-lit signs are not needed.



Wood Sign on Colonia Lane

TABLE 3-1

(see table of contents for link to document)

Table 3-2 lists sign requirements for the Nokomis Center, establishing a unifying element for the community including community, service and street signs.

(see table of contents for link to document)

Related Programs

The appearance of existing development in the Nokomis Center can be improved through a coordinated effort, including assistance from residents, business owners and community agencies and organizations. Code enforcement, community Clean-Up Days, and other community outreach and assistance programs will support urban design improvements in the Nokomis Center.

Urban Design Manual

An Urban Design Manual will establish design guidelines for the Nokomis Center to address streetscape features such as decorative streetlights, transit shelters, entry signs, benches and crosswalks. The manual will address architectural characteristics and include ways business owners can improve existing buildings and sites with simple design techniques. See Project Sheet UD-1.



Industrial Building and Equipment are Screened

Code Enforcement and Neighborhood Response Team

The County's Neighborhood Response Team responds to problems within the County rights of way related to drainage, broken sidewalks, potholes, etc. This successful County program is available to all County residents. County Inspection and Code Enforcement Services staff enforces regulations related to buildings in disrepair, derelict vehicles, derelict property, and mowing on private property. Staff enforces rules concerning abandoned buildings and condemned structures. Code enforcement is coordinated with the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office, but the County needs to develop a proactive code enforcement program to address code violations in the Nokomis Center. See Project Sheet UD-2.

Community Clean-up and Other Community Outreach and Assistance Programs

Nokomis residents have participated in several annual Clean-up Days with assistance from the Nokomis Area Civic Association and the Nokomis East Subdivision. Residents can clean out storage areas and yards, perform landscape maintenance, and dispose of waste free of charge during County sponsored Community Clean-up Days. In the future, these efforts should be coordinated with area businesses, and the County should allocate two cleanups each year for the Nokomis Center.

Residents and business owners together can work together to improve the appearance of the Nokomis Center. For example, the Nokomis Area Civic Association Beautification Committee can work with the County's Street Tree Program to encourage residents to plant trees along the residential streets or sponsor a "Paint Week" in cooperation with Keep Sarasota Beautiful and Waste Management, Inc. Business owners can help by providing painting supplies and purchasing low-cost paint through the County's Recycled Paint Program. Business owners and local banks can work with the County to initiate a Storefront Improvement Program to encourage business owners to rehabilitate existing building storefronts. Possible funding for this program can be coordinated through community development agencies and organizations, such as the Venice Foundation. See Project Sheet UD-3.

Streetscape Features and Gateway

Streetscapes features, such as decorative streetlights, bus stop benches and shelters, decorative street signs, and paver brick crosswalks, emphasize public areas and create a more attractive and vibrant community. Landscaping, entry signs and decorative lighting will emphasize important intersections as gateways to the Nokomis Center. Gateways will be located on U.S. 41, as well as smaller intersections on Albee Farm Road, and will introduce and identify the Nokomis Center as a unique place. Gateways and other public areas will benefit from planting small canopy trees, palms and shrubs. Streetscape features and gateway projects will be coordinated with state and county transportation projects and will add beauty and a sense of identity to the Nokomis Center.