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Laurel Neighborhood Plan



Adopted by the
Sarasota County Board of County Commissioners
January 11, 2006



Planning & Development Services
Neighborhood Services

LAUREL PROJECT OPTIONS

Identified Project	Option #1	Option #2	* Option #3	Option #4	Possible Funding Source	Time Frame
Rid the area of drug activity:						
Assist with Court Watch initiatives			\$ 30,000	\$ 30,000		Spring 2006
Surveillance cameras (purchase and installation)		\$ 2,500	\$ 2,500	\$ 2,500		Spring 2006
One dedicated Sheriff's Deputy - 6 hrs. per day or 2,190 hrs. a yr. (Special Detail Deputy)				\$ 87,600		January 2006
Provide second means of ingress/ egress into the neighborhood						
Continue Church Street west and intersect with US 41.	\$450,000	\$450,000	\$450,000	\$ 450,000	Future CIP	2010/2011
Traffic Calming on Lakeview Drive						
Install two/three speed humps on Lakeview	\$23,000	\$ 23,000	\$ 23,000	\$ 23,000	Traffic Ops Funds	Spring 2006
Signage:						
Identification signs for Laurel: three signs - locations TBD		\$ 30,000	\$ 30,000	\$ 30,000		Spring 2006
Park Improvements:						
Re-engineering and reconstruction of the drainage in Laurel Park		\$ 200,000	\$ 200,000	\$ 200,000		2006/2007
New park equipment – two pole shelters/play-ground (tot type), etc.		\$ 40,000	\$ 40,000	\$ 40,000		Spring 2006
Provide staff person to help with programs offered by the Laurel Civic Association			\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000		2006
Swimming pool and/or splash park – \$500,000 each, plus \$200,00 each year for operation. Land acquisition also necessary.				\$1,000,000+		Unknown – possible future CIP
Utilities:						
Water Lines: Collins, Chandler, Browns, Mt. Pleasant, Old Trail, Grove streets	\$ 765,000	\$ 765,000	\$ 765,000	\$ 765,000	\$150,000 CDBG funds – remaining \$615,000 Neighborhood Initiative Funds	FY06-07
TOTAL	\$1,238,000	\$1,510,500	\$1,560,500	\$2,648,100		

* Selected option by the Board of County Commissioners.

LAUREL PRIORITIES

Identified Project	Estimated Cost	Possible Funding Source	Time Frame	Priorities 1 ST Vote	Priorities 2 nd Vote
Rid the area of drug activity:					
Assist with Court Watch initiatives	\$30,000		Spring 2006	#7	#4
Surveillance cameras (purchase and installation)	\$ 2,500		Spring 2006	#3	#7
One dedicated Sheriff's Deputy - 6 hours per day or 2,190 hrs. a year	\$87,600		This would be a Special Detail Deputy – 6 hours a day – paid for one year beginning January 2006	#1	#2
Provide second means of ingress/ egress into the neighborhood:					
Continue Church Street west and intersect with US 41.	\$450,000	Future CIP	2010/2011	#5	#3
Traffic Calming on Lakeview Drive					
Install two/three speed humps on Lakeview	\$23,000	Traffic Ops Funds	Spring 2006	#8	#9
Signage:					
Identification signs for Laurel: three signs - locations TBD	\$30,000		Spring 2006	#6	#6
Park Improvements:					
Re-engineering and re-construction of the drainage in the park	\$200,000		2006/2007	#4	#8
New park equipment – two pole shelters/ play- ground (tot type), etc.	\$40,000		Spring 2006	#9	#10
Provide staff person to help with programs offered by the Laurel Civic Association	\$20,000		2006	#2	#5
Swimming pool and/or splash park – \$500,000 each	\$1,000,000+		Unknown – An additional \$200,000 (each) a year would need to be budgeted for operation – land acquisition would be necessary	#10	#11
Utilities:					
Water Lines: Collins, Chandler, Browns, Mt. Pleasant, Old Trail, Grove streets	\$765,000	\$150,000 CDBG funds – remaining \$615,000 Neighborhood Initiative Funds	FY06-07	Previously anticipated to be funded thru CDBG	#1

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LAUREL PROJECTS FUNDED OR UNDERWAY

Identified Project	Estimated Cost	Possible Funding Source	Time Frame
1. Ability to safely cross Laurel Road in order to utilize Laurel Park: as a part of the Trail project, design a safe pedestrian crossing for Laurel Road – preference is for a signalized crosswalk at the trail and Laurel Road. - provide fencing between the trail and residential properties south of Laurel Rd	N/A \$20,000	Trail Funds Trail Funds	A signalized crossing is planned in Phase II – any overhead pedestrian bridge would have to be funded in Phase III. Will be done in Phase II (2006)
2. Expand Lighting District: - add lights on Browns Road, Mt. Pleasant, Chandler, Anderson Road and Old Trail	N/A	The existing lighting district would be expanded to include this area. New residents would be responsible for the cost of installation of the new lights. Annual assessments on tax bills will be approximately \$40.00	
3. Mail Delivery to Laurel: request the U. S. Postal Service to consider establishing one delivery route of the Laurel Post Office	-0-	N/A	Laurel Civic Newsletter to survey residents – if 51 percent in favor, execute a letter of request to the U. S. Postal Service. No cost to the county/neighborhood is anticipated. However, there would be a cost for the U. S. Postal Service to establish another delivery route. Spring 2006
4. Cleaning of canals and ditches: - establish a regular schedule for maintenance (prior to hurricane season) of the canals and ditches to minimize flooding in the area	N/A	N/A	This is an administrative issue which needs to be discussed – staff and equipment are not available to assure this request. Staff would like to have all county drainage facilities maintained prior to hurricane season.

Laurel Neighborhood Plan



Historic Marker

The Laurel Turpentine Company was located on the north side of Laurel Road, just east of the railroad tracks. It constructed what amounted to a small town for its employees, nearly all black men and their families. This town consisted of approximately 70 small homes for the workers, a still, a nearby church which is still located in Laurel and a cemetery for the workers and their family members. The cemetery is located on Highlands Circle near Mission Valley Boulevard. Burial caskets were built in the cooper's barrel shop and lined with cotton or wool batting, routinely used to strain the resin. This area of Laurel housed a large black community. The south side of Laurel Road was home to the White population. To the south of turpentine quarters was

what the residents called "Albee quarters"; to the north and northwest of the Laurel Turpentine Company's camp were two separate living areas they called the "mill (sawmill) quarters" and "Blackburn quarters" which housed the employees of the J. Ray Arnold Lumber Company and rentals houses owned by Spencer Blackburn. Each community hugged the Seaboard tracks where a train passed through each morning headed for the rail terminus at Venice and came back through, headed north, in the afternoon.

One resident, whose family came to the Laurel area because of the Seaboard Railroad, was Clarence Sims, a resident of the "Albee quarters" in the 1920s. Clarence and Beatrice Sims arrived in 1929 along with their son James Clarence. Clarence's Seaboard job moved him from Georgia to the area. Clarence's job was section crew chief and his responsibilities included keeping up the tracks, keeping the joints tight, gauging it, keeping the crossings in good shape and cutting rights of way. In 1939, James Clarence Sims married Ruby Wallace and after World War II, when the government offered Army barracks from Florida airfields which were closing down, Sims acquired one for \$250 from Buckingham Smith Airfield in Fort Myers (see photo to the right). The barracks was sawed in half, placed on a truck and hauled to Laurel where it was reassembled on a lot which James had purchased for \$50.



By 1925, the J. Ray Arnold Lumber Company began operations after the turpentine had slowly depleted the forests of recoverable resin resources. The company worked approximately 400,000 acres of timberland, part of the estate of the Palmer family, for years to cut all the timber out. In 1942, a great "wild fire" headed for Laurel, burning and blowing for three days from the inland. It destroyed all the buildings in the turpentine camp.

From 1929 to the early 1940s, during the "Great Depression," work was scarce. Although four daily trains went through to Venice, the turpentine business "went down" in Ruby Wallace Sims' words. Former turpentine workers went to work for the Works Progress Administration, then the National Recovery Administration (NRA), helping to build bridges, patch roads and other projects. J. C. Sims, a teenager in the 1930s, worked for Fred Albee at the Florida Medical Center in Venice, and for Lafayette Thompson, loading lengths of pine logs onto railcars. Other residents of today's Laurel found work with Kentucky Military Institute in Venice. Following their marriage, Ruby and James became parents of five children, James Clarence Jr., Beatrice Louverta, Franklin Jerome, Juanita and Sandra Gail.



James & Beatrice (1942)

During the 1940s James Jr., Beatrice and Franklin attended school in the little school house in Laurel and high school at Booker in Sarasota. The original Johnson Chapel and School building was moved to the Booker High School campus. Franklin Sims attended Dunbar School in Fort Myers during the 1950s, then Booker. Juanita attended all twelve grades at Booker. Sandra attended an integrated high school, Venice High School, leaving Booker when she was in the 9th grade, the fall of 1963.

Another long time family still residing in the area is the Chandlers. Leora Hand, daughter of Ernest and Emma Louise Chandler still resides on Chandler road with two of her sons and sister-in-law Caroline Chandler. Ernest was a

carpenter by trade and worked for the Oaks (Palmers), building the Currie cottages formerly located in Nokomis. Emma Louise was the first dietitian at the Venice Hospital. She also served as the dietitian for Doctor Albee's Hospital and was a butcher at Johnson's Grocery in Nokomis. The Chandler family has had P. O. Box 56, since 1936.

In 1944, Kenneth S. Patton, a former ambassador to New Zealand, and his wife Alice Corson Patton purchased eight acres of land along Dona Bay. Eight years later, they purchased another five acres extending eastward to the Seaboard Airline Railroad and built a concrete home to which they retired. They had one son, Kenneth Jr. After their deaths in 1960 and 1963 respectively, the property passed to their grandchildren, Kenneth III and his sister and brother. From 1960 until 1971 the grandchildren hired caretakers for the vacant property, when Walter and Ann Esworthy, the parents of Grace Esworthy Patton, Kenneth's wife, took up residence as their retirement home. Kenneth, who retired from his international banking career in December 1990, and his wife returned to make Laurel their home. They built their retirement house on the site of the concrete block house and moved in Christmas of 1991.



Kenneth and Grace Patton and Walter Esworthy

The Rev. J. C. Sims died in 2005. The remaining members of the Sims family still reside in Laurel along with the Pattons, Chandlers and Hands and continue to be active in the redevelopment efforts of the Laurel community.

Demographics

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, there are 703 persons in the Laurel planning area. Laurel lies within three different census tracts. Three block groups also make up the Laurel area, but these block groups encompass an area much larger than the Laurel planning boundary. Because of this fact, block level data was used. Although the blocks don't "fit" the Laurel planning boundary perfectly, using the blocks that had center points within the planning boundary provides the best representation for this area. The data was collected in 1999 and published in 2000; although the data is five years old, it provides a snapshot of the neighborhood characteristics.

Other items suggested by the youth in the community were as follows:

- Stop the drugs
- Have more activities, at least once a month
- Keep the neighborhood clean and safe
- Have a car wash in the park and use the money to add more things to the neighborhood
- Give away free food and clothes to the people who need it

The above lists show just how much this community has to give and how much the residents are truly concerned for the future of their community.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the committee discussed what direction to follow once the plan was adopted. Discussion regarding the pro's and con's of organizing a neighborhood association separate from the Laurel Civic Association took place. By consensus, the committee agreed that it was appropriate to continue the effort through participation with the Laurel Civic Association and not establish a neighborhood association.

Summary

It has been a long and rewarding few months. Staff has compiled the list of projects and/or programs that will help the community's efforts to achieve their goals and the planning group met again on Sep. 26 to prioritize these items. Originally, staff had arranged to utilize Community Development Block Grant funds to finish the installation of water lines for the Laurel Planning Area. Unfortunately, bids came in which almost doubled the cost and thus required the committee to vote a second time on their priorities list. The chart on page 26 shows the results of both votes.



Residents cast their votes

In general, the neighborhood would like to request Neighborhood Initiative dollars for the water project and if possible, still accomplish some of their other priorities as well. Ridding the Laurel community of the drug dealers and their clientele and providing a secondary means of ingress/egress into the community run close seconds to the water line installation.

There are several other items which are either already funded or underway in the community and they are identified in the chart on pages 24 and 25. The neighborhood will continue to meet as the Laurel Civic Association to monitor the implementation of the

plan and work together to assure that their dreams for this community become a reality.

In closing, staff would like to thank the Laurel planning committee for their committed efforts toward making this a most productive year. The changes which will come about because of their work will leave a lasting impression on those who will follow for years to come.

FDOT acknowledges the existence of the Laurel community by posting an FDOT (green) sign at the point where SR 681 goes south into U.S. 41. Representatives from FDOT also noted that approximately six years ago, they stopped allowing any signs in the medians and suggested that the appropriate location of the Laurel sign might be at the location of their current sign—off the shoulder where SR 681 goes south into US 41. Another sign could be placed at Collins Road, Old Trail and U.S. 41—pointing back to the community. The one on Laurel Road should be placed in the area of the “turpentine mill.” The neighborhood has requested that funds be set aside for the signs and the locations will be determined prior to the completion of the US 41 widening.

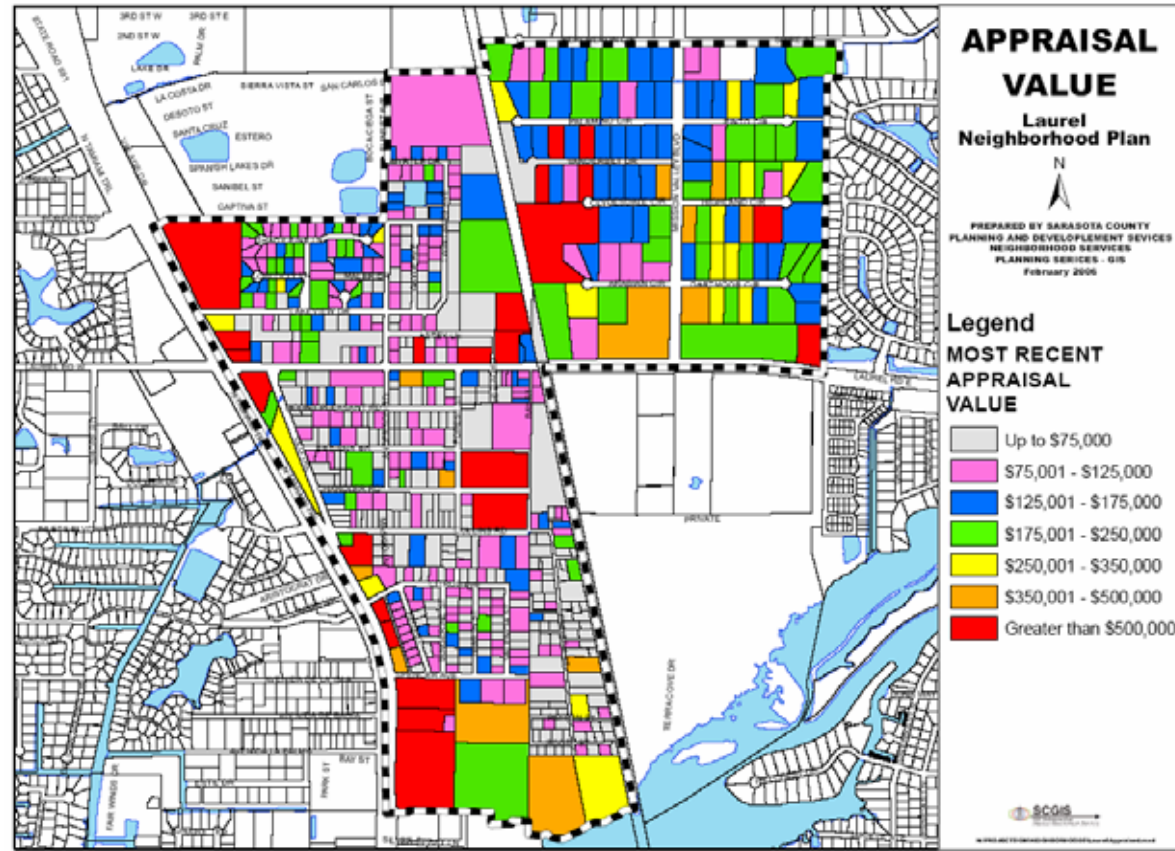
As for the boundary issues, there may never be a resolution which reflects the wishes of the Laurel community, but at least they will have regained the identity of their area.

Community Building

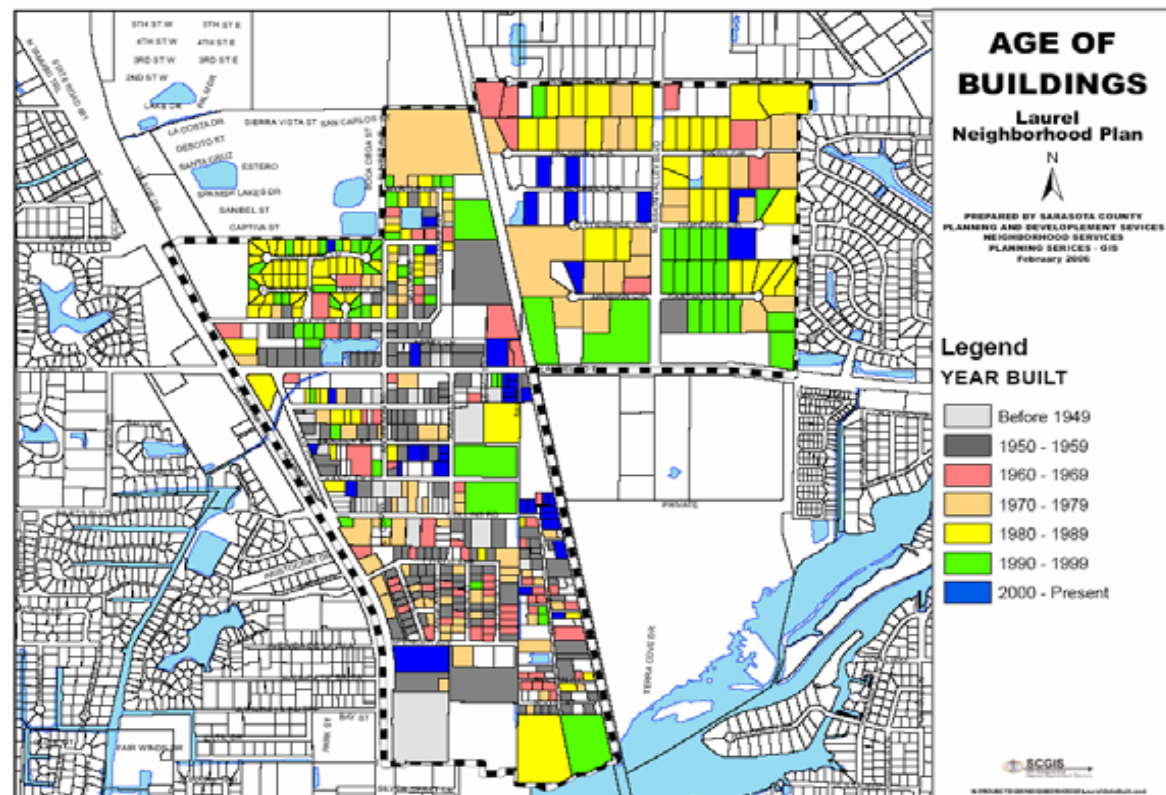
The evening dedicated to community building was enjoyable. Several youth joined the planning committee for a pot-luck gathering at which staff assisted the committee in completing the “Capacity Inventory Example” exercises from the John McKnight, A Community Building Workshop. The committee broke into teams and completed the worksheet which they shared with the others at the end of the get together. Some of the “GIFTS” which were identified are as follows:

Gifts of the head:	Gifts of the hands:	Gifts of the heart:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> History of Laurel which could be shared with the young Comic books Military experience Camping/outdoor skills Dancing Teaching children Singing Baby sitting Tutor Teach reading Set up games Math Acting Computer knowledge Dogs Writing Birds Good places to walk or ride a bike Local environment, birds, animals and plants Botanical world Environmental subjects Theater Public speaking Improvisation Fishing Coastal wildlife, sea turtles and marine life Math with middle school students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baseball Football Working Mechanics Gardening Cooking Dodge ball Sports Carpentry Crafts Flowers Painting Fixing things Tying knots Landscaping Drawing Sewing Singing Helping with homework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environment Civic life Children Neighborhood children Safe environment for children Helping family Doing things for others Be a good listener Senior issues Animals Helping people Friends History Take children to the Library regularly Children 's future Community

Population for Laurel			Population for Sarasota County		
	703	100%		325,957	
Race			Race		
White alone	523	74.4%	White alone		92.65%
Black or African American alone	151	21.5%	Black or African American alone	4.2%	
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	4	0.1%	American Indian & Alaska Native alone		0.25%
Asian alone	8	1.1%	Asian alone		0.81%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0	n/a	Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander		0.01%
Some other race alone	6	0.8%	Some other race alone		1.07%
Two or more races	11	1.5%	Two or more races		1.03%
Ethnicity			Ethnicity		
Hispanic or Latino	19	2.7%	Hispanic or Latino		4.4%
Non-Hispanic or Latino	684	97.3%	Non-Hispanic or Latino		95.6%
Gender			Gender		
Males	353	50.2%	Males		47.4%
Females	350	49.8%	Females		52.6%
Age			Age		
Median Age – Total Population	34		Median Age – total population		50.5
Median Age – Males	27.2		Median Age – Males	48.2	
Median Age – Females	35.2		Median Age – Females		52.5
Age			Age		
Age under 5	38	5.4%	Age under 5		4%
5 – 17	128	18.2%	5 – 17		12.3%
18 – 21	39	5.5%	18 – 21		3%
22 – 29	57	8.1%	22 – 29		7%
30 – 39	90	12.8%	30 – 39		11%
40 – 49	135	19.2%	40 – 49		13.1%
50 – 64	134	19.1%	50 – 64		19.1%
65 and over	82	11.7%	65 and over		31.5%
Households			Households		
Households	300		Households		149,937
Average Household Size	1.74 persons		Average household size		2.13 persons
Families	179		Families		94,528
Average Family Size	1.97 persons		Average family size		2.61 persons
Housing Units			Housing Units		
Vacant units	23	7.1%	Vacant units		17.8%
Occupied units	300	92.9%	Occupied units		82.2%
Owner occupied units	203	67.7%	Owner occupied units		79.1%
Renter occupied units	97	32.3%	Renter occupied units		20.9%
Primary Means of Transportation to Work *			Primary Means of Transportation to Work *		
Drove alone	578	77.7%	Drove alone		80.7%
Carpooled	67	9%	Carpooled		10.1%
Public transportation	10	1.3%	Public transportation		0.8%
Motorcycle	0	n/a	Motorcycle		0.3%
Bicycle	7	0.1%	Bicycle		1%
Walked	27	3.6%	Walked		1.6%
Other means	17	2.3%	Other means		0.8%
Worked at home	38	5.1%	Worked at home		4.6%
Employment Status			Employment Status		
In labor force	800	39.2%	In labor force		50.4%
Employed	756	94.5%	Employed		96.3%
Unemployed	44	5.5%	Unemployed		3.7%
Not in labor force	1,242	60.8%	Not in labor force		49.6%
Income			Income		
Median Household Income in 1999	\$32,103		Median Household Income in 1999		\$41,957
1 in 7 households had income below poverty level in 1999			1 in 13 households had income below poverty level in 1999		
1 in 166 households received public assistance income in 1999			1 in 68 households received public assistance income in 1999		
1 in 2 households received social security income in 1999			1 in 3 households received social security income in 1999		
Educational Attainment – highest level of schooling completed			Educational Attainment		
Did not graduate high school	422	21.4%	Did not graduate high school		12.9%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	658	33.3%	High school graduate (includes equivalency)		30.1%
Some college	615	31.1%	Some college		23.3%
Associates degree	74	3.7%	Associate degree		6.3%
Bachelor's degree	102	5.2%	Bachelor's degree		17.1%
Master's degree	45	2.3%	Master's degree		6.3%
Professional school degree	52	2.6%	Professional school degree		2.9%
Doctorate degree	8	0.4%	Doctorate degree		1.1%
* Block group data used since this information is not available at the block level.			Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000		



The map above reflects the most recent appraisal values in the Laurel Planning Area.



This is a map depicting the year in which the structures were built.

Another item requested by the children in the community was a pool and/or splash park. This would be an expensive project to construct and operate and was not listed high on the list of final priorities of the planning committee. The estimate was approximately \$500,000 to construct a pool and an additional \$500,00 for a splash park, plus \$200,000 each for annual operation/maintenance costs. If approved, this would need to be a capital improvement project programmed out five to 10 years.

The last item addressed, was the removal of the Australian pine trees located along the western boundary of the community center, abutting the residential property. Part of the trees were removed during the April clean-up, but approximately another 100 feet still remain and need to be removed since they interfere with the fence along the property line. Parks and Recreation staff agreed to have those removed by the end of November 2005.



Promoting Laurel

The community is concerned about the lack of identity for the Laurel neighborhood as well as the stigma placed on the area as a place to go to purchase drugs. They are concerned that all the hard work and efforts of the residents to change the perception of their neighbors seems to have gone unnoticed. During the past several months though, the area has received positive media coverage from the Osprey Observer and residents hope that will continue. The residents have diligently worked to make improvements in the community and, as with other communities in Sarasota, property values have risen. In fact, it has become more difficult for the Laurel Civic Association to find affordable lots or homes to buy to construct new homes or for renovation in the neighborhood.

One of the undeveloped lots currently owned by the Laurel Civic Association has some development issues associated with it. County staff met with representatives of the association to work out those issues. Among the major issues was the lack of central sewer to the site, therefore requiring septic systems for any new units constructed on the site. Staff offered recommendations on the development project and the association will move forward to plan construction on the site. Staff will continue to monitor the progress of the development through the county process to assist should problems occur. If the recommendation of the Community Housing Trust is adopted in a few months, then an additional unit will be allowed on the site through the affordable housing incentives.

Signage for the community is a necessity in promoting Laurel. It has been a long-time concern of the residents that the sign leaving Osprey bears the sign of "Nokomis". It has been a problem for the community in maintaining its identity. Staff was requested by the committee to arrange for a meeting with the members of Nokomis Area Civic Association (NACA). On Aug. 22, 2005 a meeting was held with representatives of Laurel planning committee and members of the NACA board. Prior to this meeting, the Nokomis board met and made a motion that they did not support the sharing of a sign at the Osprey/Nokomis existing sign location and further, they would allow the Laurel committee to place a sign any place along Laurel Road and somewhere in the area of SR 681 and U.S. 41. Serious discussions took place, with no resolution and staff was asked by the Laurel planning committee to contact FDOT.

Staff brought information about a program which is utilized in other cities to encourage homeowners to beautify their lawns, a “Yard of the Month” program. This would require the neighborhood to appoint a committee to oversee the program. They would also need to create a brochure to notify the community of program, nominee would need to be submitted to a review committee, and monthly awards given. The awards would be items that the neighborhood received as donations from area businesses. There was not enough interest in the program at this time.

Park and Recreational Needs

The planning committee discussed the programs at the park and suggested offering classes in sewing, ceramics, landscaping and gardening as well as tennis lessons. The committee agreed that the out-door facilities were adequate with the exception of the need for additional pavilion space. It was suggested that several two-pole shelters be constructed around the park to allow additional picnic space. It was also suggested that the existing pavilion be expanded or another one approximately the same size be located close to the existing one. The need for “tot” type play equipment was necessary at the play area adjacent to the pavilion—under the shade trees.

To address the need for additional programs at the park for the children, it was suggested that a part-time person be hired to help administer the programs offered by the Laurel Civic Association. This was further discussed with Parks and Recreation staff and it was determined that the best way to provide this assistance was by hiring a temporary staff person for six months. If this position is approved, then the Laurel Civic Association would use this funding to provide the match for a grant to carry the person through for a year.

The new school bus stop is located on the western boundary of the park adjacent to Forest Road. Residents requested construction of a sidewalk linking the bus stop pad to the community center so the children would be in the park while waiting for and getting off the bus. This is also an area that normally floods during rains, so to alleviate the need for additional retention due to a concrete sidewalk, staff suggested constructing the path from a material called “filter mix.” that led to the suggestion that the existing fitness trail also be re-constructed using “filter mix” instead of mulch.

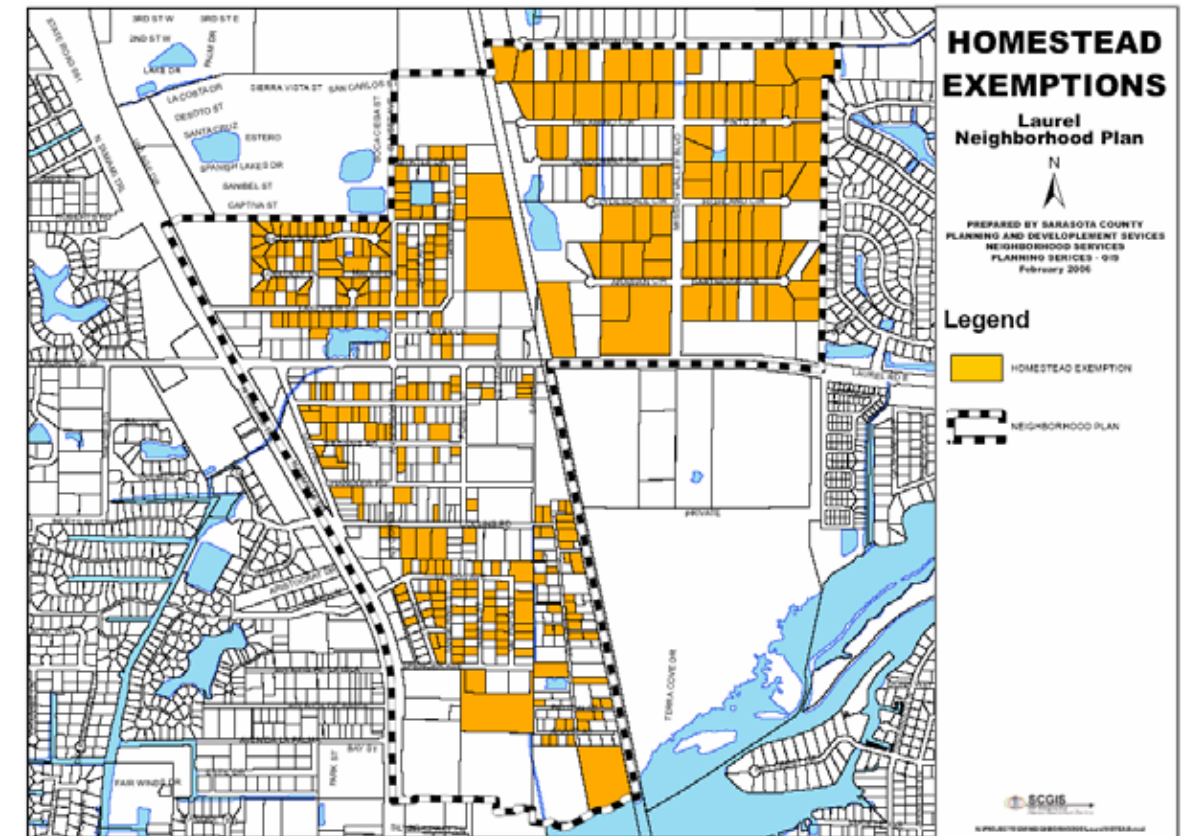
The neighborhood identified the need for bins to provide an area where residents could pick up free mulch and compost for use on their own yards. The bins could be located adjacent to the existing community garden.



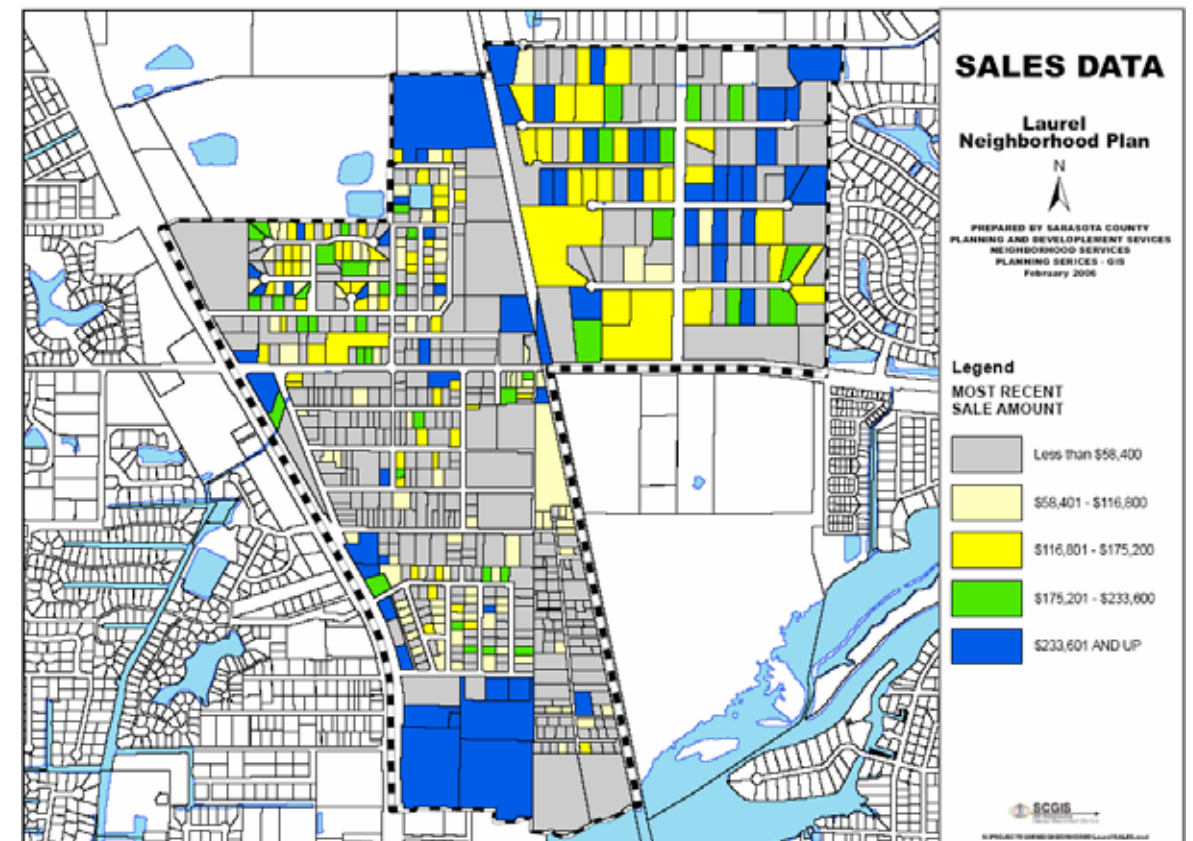
Flooding in the play area

Flooding in the park and off onto adjacent residential properties was a major concern of the planning committee. Staff walked the park with residents and agreed that it is difficult to determine the exact water flow pattern within the park. Staff was shown the areas where the water from the park overflows to adjacent residential property and even onto the streets. After review of the park, it was the consensus of staff from both Drainage and Parks and Recreation that the best course of action would be to completely re-engineer the drainage in the park. Preliminary cost estimates for this work are approximately \$30,000 for the engineering work, than an additional \$100,000 for the re-construction. It was also suggested that the proposed construction projects

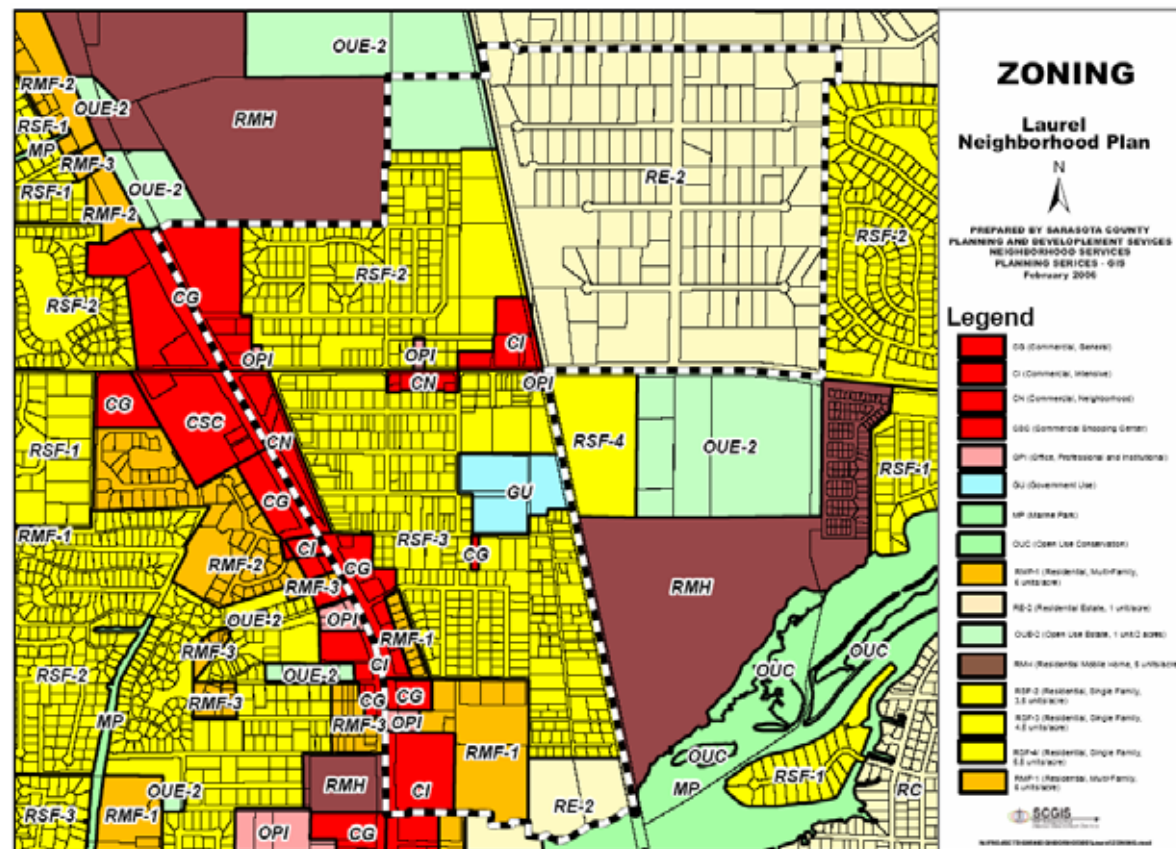
in the park, including the “filter mix” projects, be postponed until the drainage improvements have been completed.



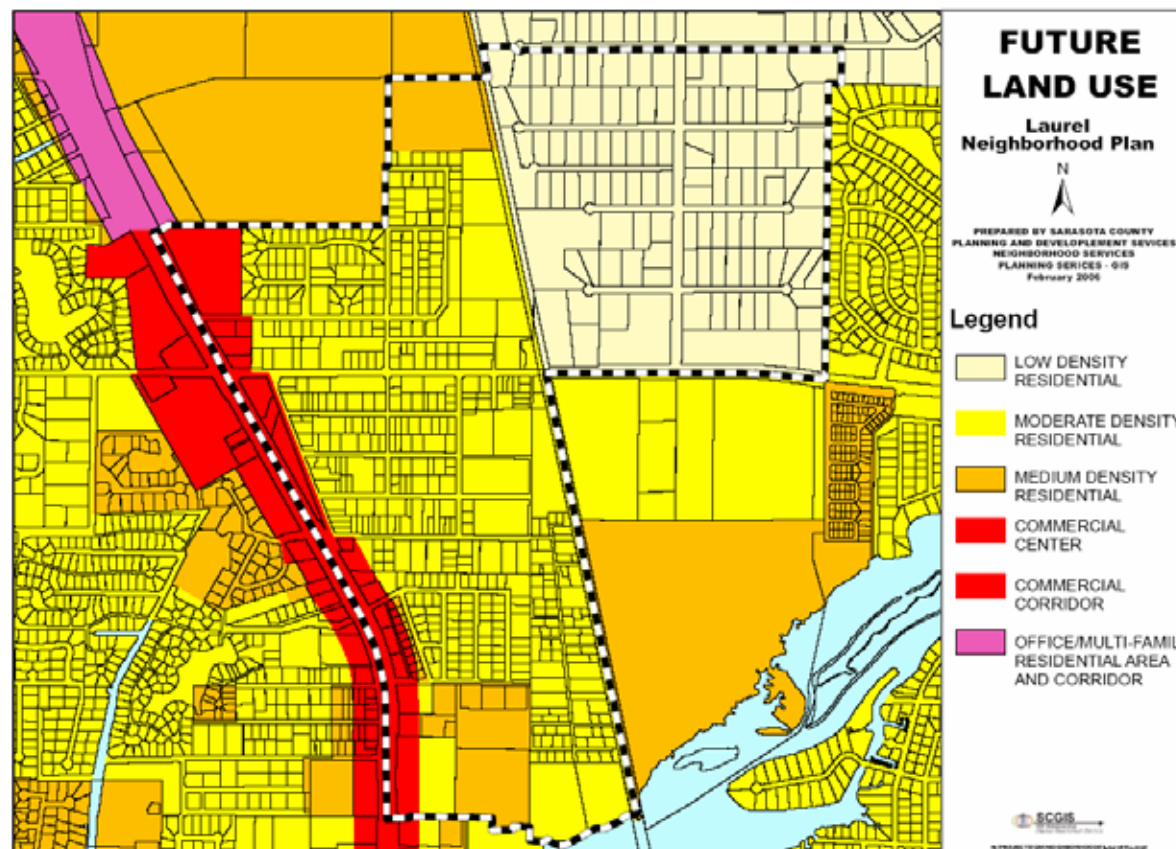
The map above shows the number of owner occupied structures in the planning area.



The map above shows the sales values for the properties in the area.



Most of the parcels within the Laurel planning area are zoned RE-2 or RSF-2



The future land use for this community is low and moderate density residential.

Housing

On June 27, the planning committee discussed affordable housing issues with Wendy Thomas, Manager of Community Housing. She updated the committee on the progress of the county's affordable housing program.

The Laurel Civic Association has also been actively purchasing and renovating properties in the Laurel Community to provide additional affordable housing and Renee Snyder spoke briefly about the program and projects they have completed and underway. The photo to the right shows one of the homes constructed through the efforts of the Laurel Civic Association. Over the years, they have helped first-time buyers through the difficult purchase process, bought and rehabbed several homes in the area and constructed new homes for low-income qualifiers. One of the properties the association owns has development issues which has postponed its development and will be discussed later under the development section of the plan. Ms. Snyder further explained that income-eligible, first-time homebuyers may be eligible for up to \$75,000 in down payment assistance through this program, but applicants must be able to obtain bank financing. The down payment is a zero percent interest mortgage loan. The application for down payment assistance is taken by the Laurel Civic Association along with the mortgage application, and submitted to the county and mortgage lender for approval. Once the buyer purchases the property, if the property is sold, transferred or the property is no longer a primary residence, the loan must be paid in full.



The Laurel Civic Association also assists with finding the right house and provides the following housing services:

Mortgage application; Access to Sarasota County down payment assistance/homebuyer subsidy; Credit repair; Mortgage pre-qualification process; budget counseling; Homebuyer education classes; Loan closing assistance; after the closing, post closing counseling and foreclosure prevention; and many other services which might benefit a new homeowner.

Appearance and Beautification



Sandra Washington, Program Manager of Keep Sarasota Beautiful, met with the committee to discuss the county's adopt-a-spot, street and pond projects. The Laurel Civic Association is already participating in some of the beautification programs. They are also expanding the program to the schools to encourage an "adopt-a-campus" project. The planning committee discussed the programs at length and agreed to adopt-a-spot—the area where the new school bus and shelter will be located as well as the retention pond. Forms adopting the bus stop area have been submitted to Keep Sarasota Beautiful. The pond is still in question as it would require a small row boat be kept within the fenced area in order to maintain the entire pond. Staff will continue to work with Public Works and Stormwater staff to find a resolution.

Postal Addressing System

The planning committee was concerned about the existing postal system and requested that staff contact the U.S. Postal Service and request their attendance at a meeting. On May 23, Kathy Carlsen, Manager, Addressing Management, of the U.S. Postal Service attended the meeting to discuss the situation and possible solutions. The issue concerns boundaries. This has been a question for some time. The Census Bureau recognizes Laurel as one area, the Postal Service another, and long time residents of Laurel yet another area. Originally, as can be seen in old historical documents, Laurel spanned a much larger area than is currently recognized. What the community originally sought was a revision of the boundaries for the Nokomis Post Office which was actually constructed in what used to be known as Laurel. Ms. Carlsen stated that the U. S. Postal Service was not interested in reconsidering a decision made 15 years ago, especially because of the number of people it would affect. What they would consider, if there was support from the neighborhood, was to establish one delivery route out of the existing Laurel Post Office. The Laurel Civic Association recently sent out their first newsletter and included a questionnaire requesting residents' support for changing their mail delivery address from Nokomis to Laurel. Once the input from the neighborhood is received, a letter will be written to Ms. Carlsen requesting that the U. S. Postal Service consider establishing the Laurel mail delivery address. To consider the change, at least 51 percent of the residents must agree to the change. The planning committee hopes to have the support of the community and a letter sent before the end of the year.

Carol Burgess, Addressing Coordinator, Sarasota County and Bill Stevens, Emergency Services, Sarasota County, met with the committee to discuss street and numbering changes under consideration by the county. Ms. Burgess explained that they will be starting at the north end of the county and working their way south, renumbering buildings in an orderly sequence. There are also several duplicate streets names throughout the county and those will also have to be addressed. The community was asked to think about possible names should their street names requiring changes. The committee was concerned since most of their streets were named after long-time community members, usually the first family to live on the street. They understand the need to renumber some of the buildings, but the only street that they wish to see changed is Collins Road and Church Street. They would like those to have only one name since Church Street is merely a continuation of Collins Road.

Code Enforcement

Ron Hall, a Sarasota County Code Enforcement Officer, attended the planning meeting to talk about code enforcement issues. He addressed questions from the committee and noted that he had pending cases on some of the areas of interest. The new Code Enforcement Brochure was also handed out. Code Enforcement also arranged for two neighborhood clean-ups, one on April 16 and one on Sep. 17, 2005. The neighborhood gathered 82 tons of debris at the April 16 clean-up and another 62 tons of debris on Sep. 17. The Laurel Civic Association has been contracting with backhoe drivers for the removal of trees, demolition of homes, and general clearing during these clean-up efforts as shown in the photo to the right.



The Planning Process Begins

Staff met during the first week of January 2005 with Sandra Terry, Executive Director of the Laurel Civic Association, to define the boundaries to be considered for this plan. As previously mentioned, the Laurel community originally encompassed a much larger area of Sarasota County than what is now considered Laurel by the U.S. Postal Service and newer residents of the area. The boundaries were defined as Spanish Lakes Mobile Home Park to the north, Mission Valley Estates to the east (on the north side of Laurel Road) and the railroad right of way to the south of Laurel Road. The southern boundary bi-sects property owned by Matthews-Currie Ford and out to Dona Bay, and US 41 to the west, as shown in the graphic below. The decision was made to include the Mission Valley area since it was the first black community in Laurel.



Boundaries for the Laurel Plan

Staff participated in an open house with the community on Jan. 24, 2005 at which time we built upon a previously-established list of concerns provided by members of the Laurel Civic Association. Flyer invitations to the open house were sent to all property owners in the defined area. During the open house, staff explained the upcoming planning process and solicited participants for the planning committee.



Residents talked with staff



Residents talked with staff



In attendance, from left to right: Deputy Tony Allport, Sandra Sims Terry, Commissioner Jon Thaxton, Deputy Miguel Torres

The actual planning process began on Feb. 7, 2005 by reviewing the identified issues and prioritizing them according to the community's wishes. The order was as follows:

- Law enforcement/crime/safety
- Lighting
- Drainage
- Utilities
- Transportation (streets, traffic calming, sidewalks, trails and SCAT)
- Postal addressing system (Laurel delivery route)
- Code enforcement
- Housing
- Appearance/Beautification
- Parks and recreation
- Promoting Laurel/redevelopment
- Community building

In the past 37 years the community, through the leadership of the Laurel Civic Association has obtained such infrastructure improvements as street lights (1969), the South Laurel Lighting District (1974), and many more as shown on the chart on the following page.

Traffic Calming:

Only one street within the study area has requested assistance with traffic calming. Lakeview Drive experiences heavy cut-through traffic and speeders who use it to avoid the light at US 41 and Laurel. Neighbors along this street have small children and fear for their safety. The Sheriff's Office has placed the speed limit trailer out there, and posted deputies to slow down speeders, but as with the drug activity, when the deputies are not there, the problem resurfaced. Residents on Lakeview are in the process of signing the necessary petitions for the construction of traffic calming devices and are looking forward to approval of the plan to allow the project to proceed.

Sidewalks:



Sidewalks currently exist along Collins Road and Church Street. Recent sidewalk projects connected sidewalks on Forest Road and Old Trail. One remaining sidewalk has been proposed, a small section to connect the northeast corner of Forest Road and Collins Road to the entrance into Laurel Park. This section of sidewalk was included in the "gap" projects and is expected to be constructed in 2006.

Trail:

The new Rails to Trails will run along the eastern boundary of the Laurel Planning Area. The community is excited about the project, but concerned as well. The need for security is a significant concern since there would be no barrier to intruders from the trail. There is a problem with people living in the woods between SR 681 and Dona Bay. Given the age of the residents who live along the corridor and the difficulty of securing the trail, the Planning committee would like to have a wrought iron fence constructed along the trail. Staff has discussed this matter and found that the trail construction funds only budgeted for a chain link fence. The community is concerned that chain link fencing will be cut and not serve as a proper barrier. Funds from Neighborhood Services dollars could be used to supplement those already in the trail construction fund to provide the wrought iron fence requested by the neighborhood. It was also suggested by law enforcement and the neighborhood that a gate be placed at the end of Hiderberg Street to allow entry to the trail if necessary by the deputies patrolling in the area, the Citizen's Patrol and maintenance. There will also be a gate placed at the rear of the Historic Johnson Chapel M. B. Church for future access. The main entrance to the trail in the area would be through Laurel Park and it is requested that parts of the railroad be used to delineate the path to the trail in order to preserve a part of the history and character of the neighborhood.

Another concern from the residents residing on the north side of Laurel Road was that the need for safe way to access the park. A signalized crossing for the trail would allow families safely to cross in order to utilize the park. If that could not be arranged, they requested that a parcel of land be purchased on the north side of Laurel Road to provide them with park amenities.

Staff working on the trail project has assured the community that there will be a signalized crossing provided where the trail crosses Laurel Road.

Laurel Neighborhood Plan

Representatives from FDOT attended the April 25 meeting and explained that US 41 was being improved to three lanes each direction, and that certain medians along the corridor would be closed, but not Collins Road. However, they would be constructing a diverter which would preclude vehicles from continuing to exit U.S. 41 and make an immediate north movement on Old Trail toward Laurel Road. The device would require that vehicles go east for a distance before being able to turn north and travel up Old Trail. This will inconvenience the residents on Chandler and Browns Roads, but overall it is a better solution to the problem of cut through traffic than exists today.



FDOT Presentation

Residents asked what type of landscaping would going to be placed in the medians and FDOT representatives said that they would not be doing the landscaping, but that the county had asked for permission to do plantings. (Staff obtained those plans from Forestry and shared them with the community at a subsequent meeting). There was also concern about the trees which would be removed from the triangular property which separating U.S. 41 from the Old Trail. FDOT explained that part of the trees were being removed to make way for a retention pond. The community felt they should monitor this process and possibly address replanting through the Neighborhood Grant Program once the widening project was completed, which is anticipated to take approximately two years.

The widening process is well underway and the Engineer of record for the project made a presentation to the committee on Sep. 26. He said that construction would begin in fall 2005 and offered to act as the liaison to FDOT should any problems arise during the construction project.

Secondary Means of Ingress/Egress:

The majority of the neighborhood shared the same concern with the dead-end on Church Street. In case of a major event or emergency in this area, they cannot get out of the neighborhood. At the April 25 meeting, Public Works staff presented a map depicting four possible alternatives to consider to continue Church Street to U.S. 41. The alternative which best resolved the neighborhoods concern with access to a signalized intersection took Church Street west, then south—southwest through property owned by Matthews-Currie Ford and to the light at US 41 and Albee Road. When these alternatives were presented, staff acknowledged that the area would need to be further studied. Several months later, staff became aware of the significant archeological site and mesic hammock located in the proximity of the proposed road. Staff has researched the possibilities and at this point in time, the best alternative appears to be across Harris Street and the drainage canal to Spencer Avenue. The estimated cost figure in the chart on page 27 is based upon that route.



Proposed connection of Church Street to U.S. 41 via Harris Street to Spencer

Laurel Neighborhood Plan

PROJECT NAME	FUNDING YEAR & IDIS PROJECT NUMBER	FUNDING SOURCE	FUNDING AMOUNT	PROJECT DESCRIPTION
Laurel Sidewalks	2003 - 0002	CDBG	\$81,942.00	Construct sidewalks in Laurel to link Comm. Ctr & 41
Laurel Water Lines	2003 - 0007	CDBG	\$176,000.00	Installation of water lines
Laurel Community Center Expansion	2002 - 0009	CDBG	\$20,000.00	Design cost for Laurel Community Center expansion
Laurel Sidewalks (Old Trail & Forrest)	2001 - 0003	CDBG	\$168,058.00	Construction of sidewalks, curb, and gutters
Laurel CHDO Set Aside	1998 - 0018	HOME	\$99,546.53	Funds set a side for community housing activities
Laurel Community Acquisition, Demolition, & Relocation	1998 - 0010	CDBG	\$100,000.00	Acquisition, demolition of unsafe and/or vacant buildings
Laurel Community Center	1997 - 0004	CDBG	\$150,000.00	Community Center expansion
Laurel Community Road & Drainage Improvements	1996 - 0002	CDBG	\$471,962.00	Continuation & completion of existing road & drainage improvement.
Laurel Community Road & Drainage Improvements	1995 - 0002	CDBG	\$500,000.00	Continuation & completion of existing road & drainage improvement.
Laurel Target Area	1995-1996 (CHAS Data)	CDBG	\$373,624.00	Engineering design cost to improve infrastructure.
Laurel Target Area - Community Center	1994-1995 (CHAS Data)	CDBG (initial funding date 9/91)	\$96,356.00	Land acquisition for purpose of expanding and developing Laurel Park including the construction of a community center
Laurel Area Roads Storm Drainage	1994-1995 (CHAS Data)	CDBG (initial funding date 6/93)	\$910,562.00	Engineering design cost to improve infrastructure.
Laurel Target Area	1992-1993 (CHAS Data)	CDBG (initial funding date 4/93)	\$77,844.00	Engineering design cost to improve infrastructure.
Laurel Target Area	1991-1992 (CHAS Data)	CDBG	\$228,547.00	Continuation & completion of existing road & drainage improvements & park improvement.
LAUREL CIVIC ASSOC.	1993	CHDO Reserve	\$2,406.00	
LAUREL CIVIC ASSOC.	1994	CHDO Reserve	\$101,100.00	
LAUREL CIVIC ASSOC.	1995	CHDO Reserve	\$108,450.00	
LAUREL CIVIC ASSOC.	1996	CHDO Operating	\$36,100.00	
LAUREL CIVIC ASSOC.	1996	CHDO Reserve	\$108,300.00	
LAUREL CIVIC ASSOC.	1997	CHDO Operating	\$13,900.00	
LAUREL CIVIC ASSOC.	1997	CHDO Reserve	\$105,600.00	
LAUREL CIVIC ASSOC.	1998	CHDO Reserve	\$128,481.37	
LAUREL CIVIC ASSOC.	1999	CHDO Reserve	\$134,720.98	
LAUREL CIVIC ASSOC.	2003	CHDO Reserve	\$76,147.95	
			\$4,269,647.83	

The above listed projects were initiated and followed through on by the Laurel Civic Association. This report does not include cleanup, demolition, and ADA of various locations that included Laurel. Figures are not exact. This information was obtained from the Sarasota Housing and Community Development Office and provided by the Laurel Civic Association.

This was a challenging year for both the residents and staff because their issues of highest priority required unique approaches that cannot be resolved with a construction project. Given the many projects which have or are in the process of being completed, it is not surprising that most of the remaining concerns from the community concerned soft issues and not so many hard or concrete ones. The following pages will explain in more detail what the issues are and offer possible solutions.

Law Enforcement/Crime/Safety

By far, the highest priority of the Laurel community is to rid the area of drug dealers and their customers. This problem has plagued the county and this neighborhood for the past 25 years. The problem appears to be isolated to a couple of locations, but draws unwanted traffic from various other neighborhoods, communities and even other Florida cities. At the Feb. 28 meeting, at which representatives of the Sheriff's office were present, residents requested their own dedicated deputy. Representatives for the Sheriff explained that dedicating an officer would be a precedent they did not want to set. They further explained that they have strike teams working on this area as well as several other neighborhoods experiencing similar



Sheriff's Mounted Patrol

problems. Various approaches have been taken by the Sheriff's office and even though periods of consistent attention have slowed down the activity for a while, once law enforcement leaves, the activity reappears. The offenders don't appear to be intimidated by law enforcement and do not fear being caught. The dealers have lookouts posted at the entryway to the neighborhood to alert them of approaching deputies, providing them with a warning or protection system in which they can operate.

Staff discussed certain Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles with the planning committee such as clearing areas of overgrowth and debris to provide clear areas of

visibility. That eliminates hiding spaces; however these offenders are bold enough to come out any time of into the middle of the street to make their contacts.

Another CPTED principle is to place legitimate activities in the area where the problem is occurring. Residents are encouraged to walk their streets, have gatherings in neighborhoods yards, where their eyes can be on the streets and their surroundings. One way the neighborhood chose to address this issues was to form the Laurel Citizens' Patrol, which they did in

April of this year. Detective Neil Scully of the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office met with a group of approximately 16 volunteers for training and to provide them with signs for their vehicles, a cellular phone connected directly to 911 and other items which could be utilized during their patrols. Volunteers patrol in pairs and were trained in the proper procedures to utilize when patrolling. They were instructed not to make contact with any suspicious person or activity, but rather, gather as much information in their log and call 911 on the phone provided. This information, such as description of an individual, make of vehicle, tag number (if possible) and location of the activity would assist the deputy

when he reaches the area. The group has grown to approximately 25 and they are still actively recruiting volunteers. Although the patrols do help intimidate the offenders and control the drug activity when they are on the streets, once the patrol ends for the evening the activity resumes.



Laurel Citizens' Patrol

Utilities

Part of this neighborhood has already been serviced with water through Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding and another section was paid for by the Laurel Civic Association. The association's project served properties from Laurel Park to Wallace Street. The project in process now, which was funded through CDBG, will install service from Wallace Street to the end of Church Street and will include the side streets. Project #2 is currently in the permitting stages and will complete water service to the end of Church Street. The final area, which includes Browns, Chandler, Mt. Pleasant, Old Trail and Grove streets, was included in the Nokomis/Laurel Area Potable Water Line Extension Project scheduled to begin in late 2005 or early 2006 and be completed during 2007. This project would require an assessment of approximately \$7,500 from property owners towards the construction project. In discussions with representatives from Community Development, they advised that funds in the amount of approximately \$150,000 in 2007 might be available and could be used toward the remaining area in Laurel. Staff advised the committee of the availability of funds and it was the neighborhoods' consensus that this was the top priority for the neighborhood and they requested that these funds, along with the Neighborhood Initiative dollars, be used to complete the water projects in Laurel.

Environmental Services/Utilities staff confirmed that the engineering has been completed on the areas which need to be constructed in Laurel. This project is projected to bid in late 2005 and construction should stay scheduled as previously planned. County staff will contract out the project and oversee the construction, unlike the previous two phases which were bid out and overseen by the Laurel Civic Association. Residents also enquired about central sewer installation. Staff explained that a program to replace septic tanks in the southern portion of the county is being developed and will be implemented sometime in the future.

Transportation

U.S. 41 Widening:

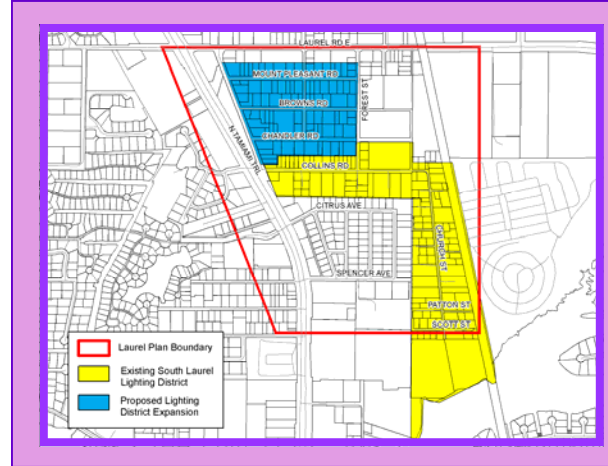
The planning committee asked that staff contact the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and request that they attend a meeting to explain the improvements planned for U.S. 41. In particular, residents wanted to know about the widening, and if the plans included improvements to the Collins Road, Old Trail and U.S. 41 intersection. This is a particularly dangerous intersection as vehicles park along the north side of the right of way on Collins Road, blocking visibility for traffic approaching the intersection from both the Old Trail and Collins Road (see photo to the right).



The community made a request to the Transportation Advisory Committee to authorize the placement of "no parking on right of way" signs in this area. The Board of County Commissioners adopted the Resolution for these signs on October 25, 2005.

Lighting

The Laurel Civic Association was started in 1969 for the purpose of putting in street lights. The first officers were Thomas J. Pittman, president, and Walter Esworthy, secretary. The association contacted Florida Power and Light, then raised and paid them \$400 with the further agreement to pay the lighting bill every monthly. In 1986 the association petitioned the county commission to establish the South Laurel Special Tax Lighting District. That district is still in existence today and the planning committee is proposing that the district be expanded (see map to the right) to include all properties north of Collins Road to Laurel Road, from U.S. 41 to the railroad tracks. Neighborhood residents are obtaining signatures from affected property owners and the expansion is scheduled to be heard by the Board of County Commissioners in January 2006.



A representative from Florida Power and Light accompanied by staff and residents, toured the area and identified locations for the placement of the new lights (photo to the left).

At the open house in January, there was some interest from a resident north of Laurel and in the Citrus Park neighborhood, but representatives did not continue with the planning process and attempts to encourage their participation were unsuccessful.

Drainage

Drainage is another concern to Laurel. The neighborhood has two major drainage ditches which run north and south through the community. Kirk Bagley, Manager of Drainage Operations for the county, met with the planning committee to discuss their concerns and talk about solutions. At the meeting, residents asked if the county could possibly clean out all the ditches prior to hurricane season so that they would not experience flooding as they have in the past. Although they have had yard and street flooding, no structure flooding was reported. Mr. Bagley explained that he had been attempting to develop a system to clean ditches and canals on a regularly scheduled basis, but unfortunately, calls for service dictate where the crews go. He did assure the committee that a crew would be out within 30 days of the meeting to clear the canal running adjacent to the new trail and that was accomplished.



It was also requested that cleaning of the retention pond be done on a regular basis. The ditches and drains which feed into the pond often contain trash and other debris which then ends up in the pond. Adoption of this pond will be discussed under the Beautification section of the plan.

Another approach to controlling the drug problem is the purchase of properties by the Laurel Civic Association, remodeling them and renting them to qualified applicants. They have also bought and demolished houses which were previously problems for the neighborhood. In March 2005, two young entrepreneurs purchased the duplexes at the northeast corner of church and Patton streets, a main area of concern. The two men have been working closely with the community to re-gain control of that corner. At the suggestion of the committee, the owners are now utilizing a new lease which allows them to evict any tenant who is charged in an illegal activity or allows someone to participate in illegal activity in their apartment. The new owners are working to clean up the property and are involved in helping improve the neighborhood.



Duplexes renovated by the Laurel Civic

In mid-spring of 2005, the Sheriff's Department reorganized into a three district department, designated as north, central and south. These districts now operate in a tactical capacity to address issues as they arise in the various neighborhoods. The south district, headed by Captain Kevin Kenney, has actively pursued the drug problem in the Laurel community, utilizing various approaches to deal with it. These include utilizing the mounted patrol and night patrols, both by vehicle, bicycle and even foot patrols traveling north through the properties at the dead-end of Church Street.

On Aug. 4, 2005, residents along with representatives from the Sheriff's Office, took part in "National Night Out," walking through the neighborhood displaying signs that reflected the feeling of the neighborhood—that drug activities are no longer going to be tolerated and they want a safe environment for the families and friends. The evening ended with a get together and refreshments at the Sandra Sims Terry Community Center. Overall, it was an enjoyable evening for the group. Unfortunately, the usual offenders were not in the street, but were most likely watching from inside their homes. Again, a CPTED principle at work put a legitimate activity on the street and the unwanted activity goes inside.



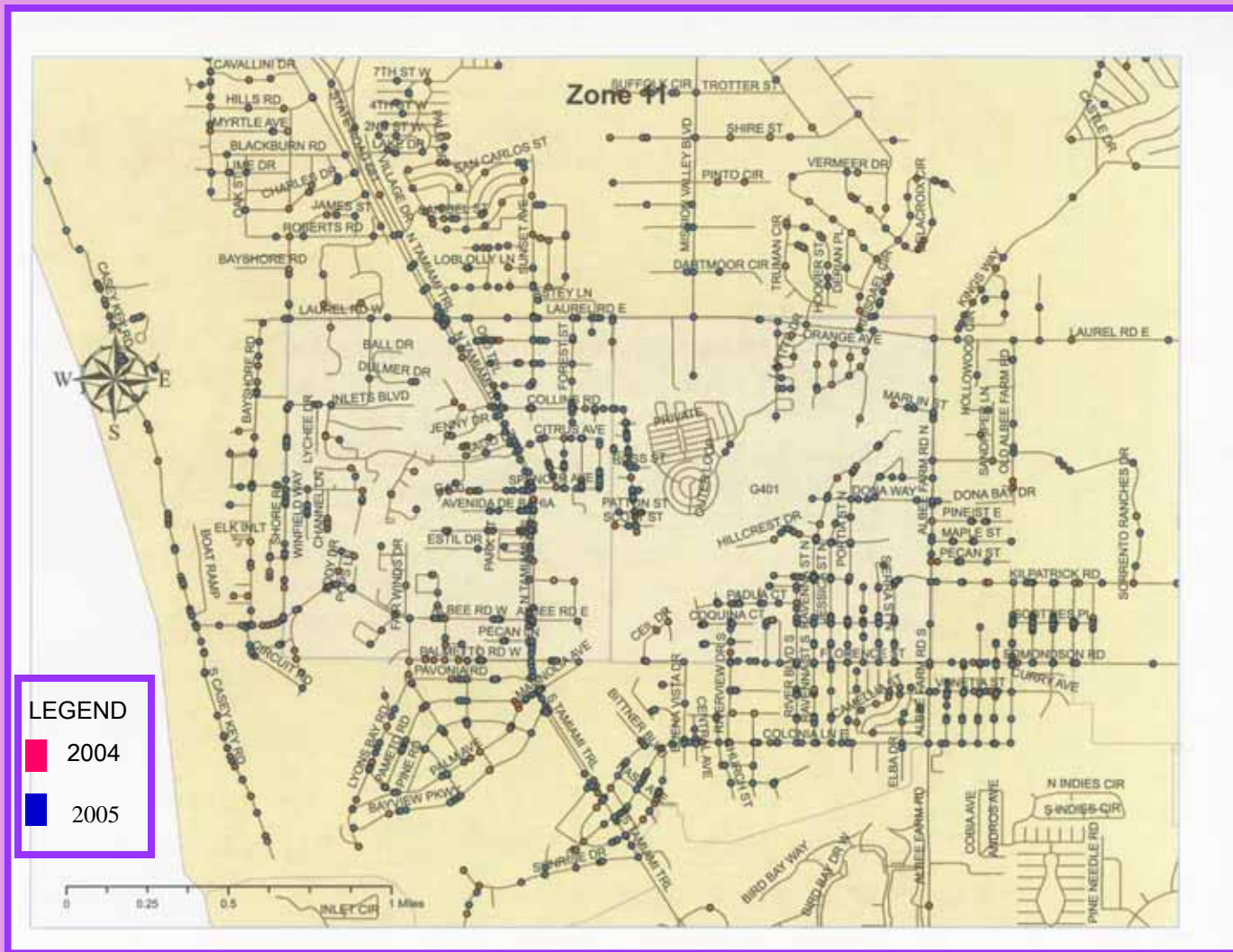
National Night Out

Staff has followed the arrests made in the Laurel/Nokomis area and since March 2005, approximately 200 arrests have been made. Of those, five or six were residents of the Laurel community, with the remaining from other areas, including Charlotte and Pinellas counties and Bradenton, to name a few. Many of those arrests were repeat offenders. Since several arrests have been made and few offenders, if any, received any substantial jail time, it is apparent that other programs or tools need to be implemented in this area. The deputies from District 3 began looking into a program previously used by the city of Sarasota Police Department and other municipalities for prostitution problems—"Geographic Displacement" and modified it's use for drug arrests. This program puts a stipulation in the offender's probation, that they not enter the area of their arrest. If they are found, they are immediately arrested and returned to jail. This procedure was used along north U.S. 41 and in Gillespie Park within the city of Sarasota for prostitution and has proven to be a viable tool to help remove unwanted activity from a particular area. Deputies worked with the Sheriff's Office Legal Advisor on the proposal and on Sep. 7,

Laurel Neighborhood Plan

2005, they appeared before the Criminal Justice Commission accompanied by representatives from the neighborhood to present the idea and request its support. After hearing the frustration of the neighborhood representatives, the Commission voted unanimously to support the concept and requested a letter or resolution in support of the program from the Board of County Commissioners. Staff is working on the boundary map and also researching the possibility of having the condition be a stipulation of bail as well. The program should be in place by the spring 2006.

Below is a map of the calls for service in Zone 11, which includes Laurel. The number of calls for service for April through October 2004 was 1462. For that same time period in 2005, the calls for service totaled 1647. The number of arrests in 2004 for the same area was 286 and in 2005 for the same period of time was 651, more than double.



CALLS FOR SERVICE

Another tool the neighborhood has requested is the placement of surveillance cameras in the areas of know drug activity to monitor and provide the Sheriff's Office more information related to the drug problem.

Laurel Neighborhood Plan

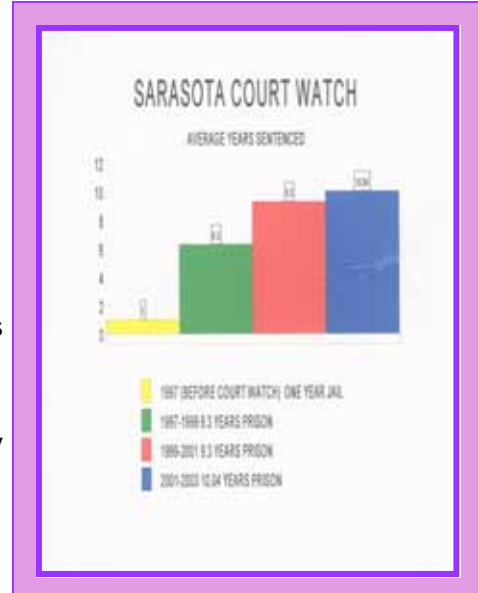


Court Watch Members

The planning committee also heard a presentation from representatives of the Court Watch Program which has also been successful in the city of Sarasota. Court Watch follows the offenders, especially habitual offenders, through the judicial system, insuring that the court system is aware of the neighborhoods' concern for dealing with these offenders. This program had a rocky beginning since it had difficulty finding funds to pay the salary of the program's coordinator. This person is responsible for researching court records, contacting the State Attorney to express the concerns of the community, rounding up volunteers to sit in the court rooms on the day of trial or sentencing and also applying for grants to run

the program. It has been a difficult process in the past and approximately a year ago, the program lost salary funding and the program coordinator left for another position. Volunteers are now trying to get the program back on line, but need assistance with the salary portion of the program.

According to their records, when volunteers are in the court rooms, the sentences appear to be stiffer than when they are not present as shown in the chart to the right. Court Watch has and can continue to apply for grants which will cover supplies and office equipment, but have not found a source to cover the salaries for the coordinator positions. In discussions with staff and the planning committee, it was felt that the program would be beneficial to Laurel as well as other Sarasota County neighborhoods. Court Watch volunteers suggested that there be a north and south county coordinator to do research, recruit volunteers and work with the State Attorney's Office. At the Sep. 26 planning meeting, during discussions with the representatives from Court Watch, neighbors were interested in getting the program started and wanted to know how long it would take.



Staff explained that Board of County Commissioners would not act upon the neighborhood plan until December and there was no guarantee that the item they had requested funding for would be approved. Concerned that this program be implemented, one of the property owners in the area donated \$3,000 to get the South County position establish. He also agreed to find a computer for the position if necessary. It was agreed that staff would look for office space, either in the Sheriff's Office sub-station across U.S. 41 from Laurel, or at the Sandra Sims Terry Community Center in Laurel. A Laurel residents has taken on the position. Staff will also look for other funding sources, such as the forfeiture funds of both the city of Sarasota and Sarasota County Sheriff's Office and other grant funding.

Another request from residents of the community was to post a map and photographs posted in the Park identifying sexual predators so that if parents saw someone just hanging around, watching the children they could check the information and see if the person was on the list. Deputies, along with Neighborhood staff, have prepared a map and a booklet identifying individuals within three miles of the Laurel Planning area and have it ready to be posted once the plan is approved. One resident has volunteered to pay for an enclosed box and is willing to mount it on the pavilion in Laurel Park.

Working together with these various approaches, it is hoped that the drug problem in Laurel will be eliminated, once and for all.