

NORTH SARASOTA NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

A Neighborhood In Transition With A Plan For Their Future

This document is the result of many months of dedicated work by the residents of this community. The Plan sets forth the vision for this neighborhood and identifies the existing assets and areas which the neighborhood and Sarasota County will focus on to bring about the changes required to make that vision a reality.



Above: Architects from The ADP Group volunteered their time to assist the community at the design workshop on August 21, 2004 at Emma E. Booker Elementary School.

INTRODUCTION

For approximately the past four years, various staff members have been attending meetings with the North Sarasota community to address specific issues such as lighting and traffic calming. A number of projects are currently underway in this community. Some of the most significant investments in this area are as follows:

- The construction of water and sewer lines throughout the neighborhood with the exception of those properties along Leonard Reid Avenue. This was accomplished by the use of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds in the amount of **\$3,900,000.00** to date, with an additional **\$1,200,000.00** scheduled for the remainder of 2004 and 2005.
- The construction of the new North Sarasota Library, at a cost of **\$6,236,121.00**, which opened in November 2004.
- The plans for a new North Sarasota County Health Out-patient facility at the southeast corner of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way and Colson Avenue to be constructed within the next 24 months, at an estimated cost of **\$8 to \$9,000,000.00**.
- The connection of Myrtle Street to US 301 – including a secondary means of ingress and egress into the Newtown Estates subdivision. Construction is to begin in the winter of 2004 and be completed in the fall of 2005. The total cost of the project is **\$5,958,971.00**.
- On October 26, 1999 the Board of County Commissioners approved the expansion of the Newtown Estates Lighting District in order to provide for additional lighting throughout the community. Additional roadway lighting is being added to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way beginning in November 2004 at a cost of **\$160,000.00**, which is being paid through surtax dollars, not by the Lighting District.

- Improvements to Mango Avenue and 19th Street which includes increasing the lane widths to 10 feet each and the construction of a sidewalk on the west side of the road. Construction will begin April 2005 at a cost of **\$750,000.00**.
- Renovations to the Newtown Estates Recreation Center, including landscaping, are currently underway at a cost of approximately **\$500,000.00**.

At the completion of these projects, approximately **\$27,618,211.00** will have been invested in this community.

In December 2003, the Sarasota Board of County Commissioners authorized Neighborhood Planning staff to work with the residents to formulate a neighborhood plan and to look at a broader approach to resolving issues instead of addressing them one at a time.

Staff met on February 5, 2004 with representatives of the community and the Community Oriented Policing Officers assigned to the North Sarasota area. Attendees toured the community to discuss areas of concern. Staff then arranged for a kick-off event, which was held on March 13, 2004.

The day started out with a neighborhood clean up. Approximately 70 volunteers from



the Harvest House, a program of the Harvest Tabernacle Church, came out to help with the clean up and serve lunch.



Code Enforcement staff helped with the clean up efforts, from clearing debris to checking and sorting the items being brought for disposal.

Sheriff Deputies, also known as Community Oriented Police Officers for this area, were on hand to answer questions for residents.



Several agencies were on hand to share their programs and answer questions including the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office, Sarasota County Fire Department, Sarasota Memorial Hospital/Manatee Rural Health, HIV Testing, Habitat for Humanity, First Tee of Sarasota, City of Sarasota – Redevelopment Department, 4-H, Kid Care/Healthy Start, Keep Sarasota Beautiful, Parks & Recreation and the North Sarasota Public Library, just to mention a few.



The First Tee of Sarasota/Manatee brought their "Snag Golf" equipment and instructed the children in proper golfing techniques.



Lunch was provided by the Harvest Tabernacle Church.

Other displays were set up inside the Newtown Estates Recreation Center Gym. Staff from the Neighborhood Initiative Program along with representatives of the North Sarasota committee solicited input from the residents as to what issues they would like addressed in the plan.

The Sheriff's mounted patrol entertained the youth.



Residents were provided with a variety of information about services available to the community and staff explained projects which were in the planning stages.



The fire fighters gave the children a close up view of the fire truck and equipment.

Following the kick-off event, staff sent notices to the residents within the study area informing them of the first planning meeting which was held on April 13, 2004. At this meeting the committee discussed previously identified issues as well as those identified at the March 13th kick-off event. These issues were listed and the committee began voting to prioritize them. At the end of the meeting, the consensus of the committee was as follows. The topics are listed

in the order of their importance and order for discussion:

1. Code Enforcement (illegal dumping, etc.)
2. Lighting (district and new fixtures, etc.)
3. Flooding & Drainage (effects, septic/drain fields, etc.)
4. Beautification & Clean up (adoption, King Boulevard, etc.)
5. Streets & Sidewalks (traffic calming, crossing at US 301 & Myrtle, 2nd entrance into Newtown Estates, etc.)
6. Safety
7. Law Enforcement (illegal activities, speeding, dogs & cats, etc.)
8. Landlords
9. Water & Sewer Connection (business access, residential connection - fee info)
10. Education (how to maintain a home, parenting, after school assistance, Lime Lake Environmental Project, etc.)
11. Parks & Recreation (trails, Recreation Center, Lime Lake)
12. Development/Redevelopment (Aqua Source site, etc.)

Included in this study area is the 17th Street Business Association. Staff met with them separately on two occasions to discuss their concerns. The one and only issue they wanted addressed was the 17th Street flooding. Last year several businesses suffered water damage during a heavy rain. This will be further discussed under the Drainage/Flooding portion of the Plan.

The neighborhood committee met bi-monthly, the second and fourth Tuesday of each month from April 13th through October 2004. At each meeting one of the issues listed above was addressed. In the pages that follow we will discuss each item in depth and propose possible solutions.

At the end of this document is a map identifying the proposed projects as well as a chart listing those projects as prioritized by the committee with estimated costs and possible funding sources.

HISTORY



(North Sarasota Planning Area)

The North Sarasota Neighborhood, particularly the western section historically housed the black population, numerous business enterprises, and now a school, library and several social service agencies. After World War II this section became the extension of the traditional Newtown community as it expanded across Highway 301.

Many of the streets herein are named to honor locally and nationally prominent African American leaders. Leonard Reid Avenue, the sections western boundary honors Sarasota pioneer Leonard Reid who arrived in Sarasota in 1900 and became associated with John Hamilton Gillespie, early developer and first mayor of Sarasota. Reid helped to lay out Sarasota's first golf course. Colson Avenue is named for Lewis Colson who was part of the surveying crew that platted Sarasota in 1885. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way, named for the great civil rights leader, runs through the middle of the study area. The area is framed by 17th Street to the south; Myrtle Street to the north; Tuttle Avenue to the east and the City Limit line to the west.

Emma E. Booker Elementary School and the social service agencies which are adjacent to it are one of the neighborhood's focal points. Named after long time Sarasota educator and first black principal, the school opened in 1990 and was the first in the county to go on a trimester, year-round schedule. The school also offers the services of numerous social service agencies in an effort to have a positive impact on the needs of the student's entire family.

East of the school, across Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way, is Newtown Estates. Platted in 1969, this development of mostly single story, concrete block homes offers many recreational and educational amenities including the Recreation Center and the newly built North Library. Streets throughout the neighborhood are named for famous African-Americans.

Along with the defined and platted subdivisions within the North Sarasota area are an eclectic variety of homes ranging from the rural character of small 20s era clapboard bungalows, to large, modern homes with caged pools and double car garages. Businesses too reflect the multi dimensional character with traditional mom and pop operations mixed among nationally known enterprises.

CODE ENFORCEMENT

As noted in the introduction, the number one priority of this neighborhood was Code Enforcement. A number of homes in this community are in need of repair and general up keep. The Code Enforcement Officer in this area has worked diligently to educate the residents as to what is a code violation and what is not. Understanding the uniqueness of this community the Code Enforcement Officer works with the residents to assure that the violation can be eliminated without being an overwhelming burden.

Our first meeting was dedicated to discussing Code Enforcement issues and residents were asked to note any items which they considered to be violations and bring them to the meeting. Most of the discussion at the meeting centered around illegal dumping, overgrown lots and

littering. As you can see in the photograph below, illegal dumping, especially in drainage canals, is a major problem in this neighborhood.



This canal was cleared by the Sheriff's "road gang" the first week of March 2004 and the above photograph was taken the last week of March 2004. This particular canal is accessible from both Euclid Avenue and 24th Street and Booker Avenue.



Early in April 2004, Sarasota County, Public Works, Drainage Operations staff placed post and cable at the entryway to the canal off Booker and 24th Street and posted "No Trespassing" signs in the right-of-way. Since that time, less dumping has occurred.

Another way to deal with areas like this would be to utilize Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) techniques. One of those techniques is to provide an opportunity for the space to be utilized for legitimate purposes and that in turn will discourage illegal activities. A multi-purpose trail along this canal would provide not only a direct means to get to Emma E. Booker Elementary School, but also to the Newtown Estates Recreation Center, the new North Library and the hospital facilities located within the core area of this neighborhood.



This area could be developed similar to the Phillippi Creek project in the Pinecraft community (photo above) and serve a variety of purposes. The same problem exists in the canal running adjacent to Myrtle Street, behind the Newtown Estates subdivision. Bicycles, chairs and other debris have been dumped into this canal. The fence is in disrepair and during some heavy rains the canal runs over into adjacent yards.



As part of the Myrtle Street connection to US 301, this drainage canal will be piped and filled, leaving a small swale in its place. This will be a definite improvement to this area.

Another issue of concern was the maintenance of fences on private property. Several fences in the neighborhood are in need of repair and under the current County regulations, they cannot be cited unless they are lying on the ground. In the future the neighborhood organization could work with neighbors to encourage repair or removal of the fences.

Overgrown vacant lots in this area are also a problem and existing codes do not require the clearing of lots which have never been developed. Parcels are allowed to be in what is referred to as a “natural state” until such time that they are developed. These areas often provide hiding places for illegal activities as well homeless camps. Several of these camps were found along the CSX Railroad right-of-way during the March neighborhood cleanup.



Representatives from the railroad cleared fifty feet of right-of-way on both the east and west sides of the tracks in the summer of 2004.

Littering is also a major problem in this neighborhood. Sarasota County does not have a litter Ordinance; therefore Florida State Statutes prevail, which allows for a fine of up to \$500.00. It is suggested that “No Littering” signs be posted on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Way and on Tuttle Avenue and that the law be strictly enforced.

The residents felt that the neighborhood clean ups were very helpful. Currently the Code Enforcement Department organizes one clean up a year for the neighborhood. One was held in August 2003, an additional one was held on March 13th as part of the kick-off event for the Neighborhood Plan and another was held on August 28, 2004. These clean ups have been very successful. Collected waste materials totaled 36.23 tons at the last clean up. Residents feel that it is necessary to have at least two clean ups each year, possibly three. In order to assure that there will be funding for these clean ups, it is suggested that in the

future, the neighborhood apply for matching funds from the Neighborhood Grant Program to offset the charge for the pick up and disposal of debris as well as staff time for the additional clean ups.

Suggested Solutions:

- Distribute a brochure detailing Code Enforcement problems, who to call, etc., to all the residents in the area. Set up a neighborhood hot line for Code Enforcement calls.
- Post “No Littering” signs and work closely with the Community Oriented Police in this neighborhood to strictly enforce the law. The neighborhood could participate in the “Adopt-a-Road” program in the future.
- Encourage legitimate use of parcels of land where dumping and illegal activities are taking place. Construct a multi-purpose trail along the drainage canals from Euclid Avenue, north across Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way, and continue north to Myrtle Avenue.
- Recommend staff research the possibilities of a nuisance abatement program for Sarasota County.
- Continue to have at least two neighborhood clean ups per year provided for by the Code Enforcement Department. The neighborhood will apply for funds from the Neighborhood Initiatives Program to cover the cost for any additional clean ups.

LIGHTING

The Board of County Commissioners approved the expansion of the Newtown Estates Lighting District on October 26, 1999 to include the south side of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way. The

district is now called the New Newtown Estates Lighting District. Lighting reviews have been on going during the past several years. As noted above under the projects currently underway, roadway lighting is being installed along Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way. The community discussed this lighting in detail. The consensus was that the normal street lighting was adequate and there was no need to spend additional funds on decorative lights.

The community identified the need for additional lighting in the Newtown Estates subdivision. The lights within the subdivision have been installed utilizing underground conduit which is far more expensive than the overhead lines which exist throughout the rest of the community. Staff is in the process of completing night reviews of the Newtown Estates subdivision and provisions will be made to improve the lighting either by adding additional poles or increasing/changing out the existing fixtures. The cost of this improvement will be covered by the Lighting District.

In an attempt to obtain as much input from the community as possible, staff prepared a survey card and newsletter for the community and mailed it to 1200 homes in the area. One of the questions on the survey card was “Is there sufficient lighting on your street?” The majority responded no. Staff has mapped out those addresses and a night review is planned to identify additional areas where lighting may be necessary. If additional fixtures are needed, staff will send the appropriate work order to Florida Power and Light to have the lights installed and the cost will be the responsibility of the Lighting District.

Lighting around the Newtown Estates Recreation Center was also addressed. The community has requested that the lights in the parking lot of the Recreation Center be turned on at night. With the new lighting at the North Sarasota Library, the community feels that this will be adequate for the entrance to the Newtown Estates subdivision.

Suggested Solutions:

- Complete lighting reviews of the entire planning area and direct Florida Power and Light to install additional lights or change out fixtures as required. The cost will be the responsibility of the New Newtown Estates Lighting District.
- Complete the installation of the street lighting along Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way by the end of April 2005 as previously planned.

FLOODING AND DRAINAGE

This neighborhood lies within the Whitaker Bayou Drainage Basin. Staff is currently undertaking a study of the entire basin based upon flooding problems in the 17th Street business area and also in the Tri-Par Mobile Home Park, west of US 301. Overall, the areas identified by the committee pertain to street flooding and can possibly be alleviated by regularly scheduled maintenance of the canals and drains in the area. It was noted that there is street flooding in the following areas:

- 20th Street between Chester and Euclid;
- the sidewalk and street floods at Euclid and 22nd Street;
- Bunche Street has yard and street flooding;
- road flooding at the entrance into Newtown Estates;
- the sidewalk between Tuttle and Lockwood Ridge floods;
- the sidewalk leading to the pedestrian bridge to Emma E. Booker Elementary School floods;
- the canal behind Joe Lewis Drive rises into the backyards.

County staff has reviewed these areas. In the case of most of the sidewalks, they were installed at a time when engineering of the sidewalk was not required and therefore they were not elevated to prevent flooding. The County now requires that all new sidewalks be engineered to minimize standing water.

Sarasota County has adopted a level of service for flooding that allows for street and yard flooding. During our discussions with the residents of this community, no residential structures were identified as having flooding issues.

In meetings with the 17th Street Business Association, it was noted that some of the businesses had flood damage in 2003 during a heavy rainstorm. One of the main pipes under the railroad tracks on 17th Street had collapsed and the other was partially blocked with debris, a sofa, shopping carts, etc., during this time. The collapsed pipe has been replaced and the canal has been cleared of debris. No further flooding has been reported.

Storm Water Utilities staff has been working with Boyle Engineering, a consultant, on an overall master plan for the basin. The plan will be presented to the Board of County Commissioners this fall. Although the plan could eliminate the flooding problem, it would be at an extremely high cost to the property owners in the basin.

Suggested Solutions:

- Continue regularly scheduled cleaning/clearing of the ditches and canals.
- Continue to research alternatives for eliminating the flooding problems on 17th Street should they reoccur.

BEAUTIFICATION AND CLEAN UPS

Beautification

During the original prioritization exercise with the community beautification and clean ups ranked number 4. The community identified three areas they would like to see improved.

- Newtown Estates Boulevard between the new Library and the Recreation Center (photograph on page 8).



- The back walkway (to be the new back entrance) into Newtown Estates across the street from Booker Elementary (photograph below).



- Neighborhood identification signs on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way at the City Limit line and at Tuttle Avenue.

It was also suggested that classes be offered at the Recreation Center in plants and proper care. As a part of the class they suggested a plant sharing or give away might help to encourage residents to beautify their lawns.

Another program utilized in other cities was recommended by staff – a “Yard of the Month” program. A program of this nature would require the dedication of a committee to accept nominations, award a winner each month, and solicit donations from area businesses for prizes. The Neighborhood Grant Program could be utilized to assist in the purchase of a sign to place on the winning property and to create a

brochure to promote the program. The committee felt that at this time there were other more pressing issues to deal with. At some point in the future this might be a good tool to encourage pride in ownership.

Staff has encouraged the neighborhood association to participate in the Neighborhood Grant process in order to obtain assistance with the beautification and signage projects.

During our final project prioritization exercise, the beautification project along Newtown Estates Boulevard ranked number 8 in their list of priorities (please refer to the Chart on page 17).

Clean ups

The committee agreed that the clean ups were necessary because of the littering, illegal dumping, and that the canals with no water in them were prime spots for dumping. The Code Enforcement portion of this document addresses the issue of clean ups.

Suggested solutions:

- Assist the community with the Neighborhood Grant process in order to complete the beautification and signage projects.
- Complete the Myrtle Street extension to US 301 project including the piping and filling of the drainage canal adjacent to the right-of-way by April 2006.

STREETS/ SIDEWALKS/TRAFFIC CALMING

Streets

At the committee meeting of June 22, 2004, staff from Public Works Mobility, Transportation Planning presented the plans for the extension of Myrtle Street to US 301. The plans included the connection of King Boulevard to Myrtle Street which has been requested by the Newtown Estates community. The connection of King Boulevard will provide the community with an alternate means of ingress and egress in the event of an accident on Dr. Martin Luther

King Jr. Way or if necessary, for evacuation of the area. The community realizes that the connection may cause additional traffic through their residential community and have establish a traffic calming committee to work with County staff on abatement procedures. The pedestrian bridge which currently exists over the drainage canal for students to cross to get to Booker Middle School will be removed and replaced with sidewalks as a part of this project. Grass medians will be provided along Myrtle Street from Carmichael, east to Tuttle Avenue and as previously noted, the drainage canal which is adjacent to the right-of-way will be piped and filled, leaving a small swale in its place. Roadway lighting is being installed along Myrtle Street and solar powered school "flashers" will be installed at the school crossings. This project is scheduled to begin in the spring of 2005 and be completed by the spring of 2006.

Staff further explained that the signals at US 301 and Myrtle Avenue would remain the same until the State completes the widening project for US 301, which is anticipated to begin in a couple of years. Residents were also concerned with the pedestrian crossing at US 301 and Myrtle. A pedestrian overpass was discussed and staff agreed to contact Florida Department of Transportation requesting that a safe pedestrian crossing being included in their project.

Two issues were identified during the August 21, 2004 design workshop which had not been brought up at any previous meeting, but quickly became a priority with the community. The first one is the widening of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way between the railroad tracks and Tuttle Avenue. The residents noted that traffic is very congested especially during the morning and afternoon hours. Traffic backs up because of vehicles turning into the Newtown Estates entrance and Emma E. Booker Elementary School. The other was the widening of Euclid Avenue between 17th Street and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way. Euclid Avenue is very narrow and in order to pass, one car must almost pull off the road.

Sidewalks

The next project which was presented by staff was the improvements to Mango Avenue. This project calls for widening of the lanes to a minimum of 10 feet, enclosing the ditches on the west side to accommodate the road widening and the construction of a sidewalk on the west side of Mango Avenue. The proposed sidewalk will continue east on 19th Street to Euclid Avenue and a section will run south on Snug Harbor to 17th Street. As a part of this plan, improvements to the curve at the south end of Mango Avenue will be incorporated into the design. Two other streets, 23rd and 24th Streets are planned for sidewalks in order to complete the connection to Emma E. Booker Elementary School, the new Library and the Recreation Center.

An additional sidewalk project is planned for this community. Sidewalks will be constructed on the following streets in order to assure that students can travel to and from school safely. The streets are as follows:

- 22nd Street from Tuttle Avenue, west to Chilk Avenue;
- 23rd Street from the drainage canal, west to Emma E. Booker Elementary School;
- 24th Street from Euclid Avenue, west to Booker Avenue;
- Chilk Avenue from 19th Street, north to 23rd Street;
- Booker Avenue from 24th Street, north to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way.

A map identifying the sidewalks to be constructed in 2005 and the additional sidewalks proposed above follows on page 10.



Located within the sidewalk along Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way, between Colson Avenue and Emma E. Booker Elementary is a pedestrian bridge which the community feels is an eyesore. The bridge was constructed over the drainage canal to provide a more direct access to Emma E. Booker Elementary. The bridge is constructed of a material which as it weathers, appears to be rusted (photo below). The community would like to have the bridge painted or replaced with another type of structure.



Traffic Calming

County staff has been working with the residents along Euclid Avenue for approximately eight months in order to develop a plan for traffic calming on their street. This is a direct route from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way to 17th Street which is heavily utilized by both cars and trucks. The committee is suggesting widening the lanes on Euclid Avenue to 10 feet each and constructing traffic calming devices.

At the March 13, 2004 kick-off event, another group identified the need for traffic calming in Loraine Park. Residents of that area did not continue to participate in the process, but will have the option to form a committee to work on traffic calming measures with the County if they choose in the future.

Newtown Estates subdivision formed a traffic calming committee in September 2004. With the connection of King Boulevard to Myrtle it is anticipated that some additional traffic will utilize the streets within this subdivision to travel between Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way and Myrtle Street. The committee will continue to meet once the construction is complete in order to monitor the traffic and eliminate problems should they occur.

Suggested solutions:

- Construct a landscaped median with controlled access points on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way from the railroad tracks east to Tuttle Avenue.
- Widen Euclid Avenue to a minimum of 20 feet (10 feet wide lanes) and the construction of traffic calming devices.
- Complete the proposed sidewalk projects as identified above.
- Paint or replace the pedestrian bridge located between Colson Avenue and Emma E. Booker Elementary School.

- Continue to work with the traffic calming steering committees on Euclid Avenue and in Lorraine Park if necessary, coordinate the installation of traffic calming devices into the design and reconstruction of Euclid Avenue during the widening project.
- Work with the Newtown Estates traffic calming steering committee to monitor traffic once King Boulevard is connected to Myrtle Street in order to determine whether or not traffic abatement devices are necessary.

SAFETY & LAW ENFORCEMENT

Safety

The community and the Sarasota County Sheriff’s Office Community Oriented Policing Officers identified the need to improve the school crossing at Emma E. Booker Elementary. The flashing lights are currently placed on the west side of Mango Avenue. If you enter Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way from Mango Avenue, Colson Avenue or Newtown Boulevard, you do not see the school-crossing zone and therefore do not know that you have to slow down. This is a dangerous situation for the children walking to school. It was suggested that an enhanced crossing be installed in this area and as part of the County’s testing of various pavement treatments, Deco Mark material was installed at the crossing at Emma Booker Elementary School.

Below is a photograph of the crosswalk.



Law Enforcement

This community benefits greatly by the fact that the Sarasota County Sheriff’s Office has a Community Oriented Policing Office located on Colson Avenue and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way. The Deputies assigned to this office are dedicated to making this a safe community for the residents. This team works diligently on ridding the area of crime and illegal drug activities. They also work closely with the Code Enforcement Officer in this area on abandoned vehicles, vacant or abandoned structures and those in need of major repairs.

The residents of this community commended the Deputies for their dedication and hard work in this neighborhood. They feel that they have a safe environment in which to live and that is primarily due to the efforts of these Deputies.

One problem that has been noted since the beginning of this planning process is that the Deputies actively pursue arresting drug dealers in the area. They make arrests and in most cases the violators are back on the streets within 72 hours and back to the illegal activities.

The City of Sarasota has adopted an ordinance which provides for, in cases where these activities are recurring, the owner be taken before the Nuisance Abatement Board. If the activity continues, the City takes over the property. If the owner has renters in the property, you will normally see a change in occupancy. Clearing of vacant properties when they are connected to illegal activities is also covered by this ordinance. This type of a program would be a definite benefit to this community and could be utilized Countywide.

Suggested solutions:

- Relocate or add additional flashing lights within the school-crossing zone.
- Research, with the assistance of the Sarasota County Sheriff’s Office, the possibility of creating a Nuisance Abatement Board for Sarasota County.

LANDLORDS

This neighborhood has approximately 60% owner occupied dwellings, leaving approximately 40% of the homes as rental properties. Some rental properties, as in other areas of the County are troublesome to the neighborhood, either because of their tenants or because of the appearance of the property. We were fortunate to have some of the landlords participate in this planning effort. They identified needs such as assistance with loans to hook up to the water and sewer. The loans through Community Housing are only available to owner occupied properties. The absentee landlords need to be encouraged to be involved in the future of this community as if they lived there. This may require them to better educate their tenants in such things as when trash day is and the times that trash cans can be placed at the curb and when they must be removed. Encourage them to participate in the County's Street Tree Program and not to park on grass areas when possible. These are things that the committee may wish to work on in the future and if a "Yard of Month" program is put in place it may encourage the tenants to take more pride in their surroundings.

Suggested solutions:

- Continue to involve landlords in community activities.
- Distribute the Code Enforcement brochure to both the landlord and the tenant.
- Distribute a flyer with "nice to know" information, such as the guidelines for trash pick up and recycling.
- Encourage the tenants to join the association so they become a part of the solution, not the problem.

WATER AND SEWER CONNECTIONS

Over the past five years, the Community Housing Office, through Community

Development Block Grant funds has been installing water and sewer lines throughout this entire neighborhood. Two final phases remain to be completed. Phase five runs along 19th Street to Mango Avenue and will be completed by the summer/fall of 2005. Phase six will follow immediately and will continue north on Mango Avenue and include 22nd, 23rd, 24th and 25th Streets and Colson Avenue.

The area along Leonard Reid Avenue is the only area where water and sewer lines will not be installed. This area may be considered for a land use change from residential multiple family to light industrial or office use. These parcels may be redeveloped in larger tracks and therefore, it may be premature to install lines and pave unimproved streets which might have to be removed in the future.

Aqua Source is the provider of services to this community and at several meetings it was noted that the fees were very high. Also there were several reports of sewage spills in and around their site at Tuttle Avenue and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way. A representative from the Health Department was in attendance at several of those meetings and assured residents that they were monitoring the situation.

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Staff from Community Services attended the meeting on education opportunities in order to share the various programs that the County offers to residents. The following is a list of classes/programs the community would like offered either at the new Library or the Recreation Center.

- How Government works – "a mini-civics"
- How to rezone your property
- How to keep up your property
- Traffic calming – how to and what's available
- How to start/incorporate a neighborhood association
- Organized activities for youth/teens
- Community Youth Development
- Computer classes – adults and children

- Sewing classes – local talent available
- Cooking classes
- Information on Solar Energy
- Pest (Insect) Management - ants and snakes
- Yoga
- Assistance for home improvement – how to fix-up – home improvement tips
- Tax advise for filing
- Family budgeting
- Homeownership
- Parenting classes
- How to set up a friends of the park/library group and fundraiser for projects

The County currently has resources to provide most of these programs. The new North Library will have a computer lab which will be available for the community's use and will be offering classes. Forty Carrots will be providing parenting classes at the Library and residents will be able to get tax assistance there as well.

The Cooperative Extension Service has the resources to bring programs such as sewing, cooking, pest control, home improvement as well as many other classes to the Recreation Center.

The existing Civics 101 series offers such programs as “how to rezone your property” and could easily adapt itself to a “mini” program offered at the Recreation Center.

Suggested solutions:

- Advertise and promote the programs which will be available at the new North Library.
- Schedule and conduct at least four of the requested classes during 2005, to include a “mini” Civics 101 series. Enlist the assistance of local residents when possible.

PARKS AND RECREATIONAL NEEDS

The number 3 priority to the community was the need for a community pool/splash park. It was noted that a pool exists at the Recreation Center located at Myrtle Avenue and US 301, but it is not convenient for use by this community. One of the survey questions was “would you like a pool in the neighborhood” and of the 129 responses, 82 said they would. They were also asked if they were willing to pay to use the pool, and 73 said they would.

A major sports complex was also discussed. As part of the Sarasota County Parks and Recreation Master Plan, there is an identified need for an additional major sports complex like the Englewood Sports Complex. An aquatic center (splash park) could be incorporated into the Major Sports Complex. The guidelines for a “District Park” as outlined in the Master Plan identify the need for such a facility between 2005 and 2010, located in proximity to the incorporated City of Sarasota. A District Park should be approximately 80 acres. The community was excited about this possibility and it ranked number 7 on their list of priorities.

The committee also discussed the need for other programs at the Recreation Center. They are as follows:

- Gymnastics
- Reading program
- Exercise program
- Dance classes
- Music classes
- Boxing
- Basketball program
- Teen room (or center)
- Game room
- Computer classes

The committee also felt that there should be opportunities for youth employment after school. The hours of operation for the Recreation Center were also discussed and the community felt that the hours should be 2:00 p.m. to 6-7:00 p.m. during the week and that either on Friday or Saturday the Center should remain open until

10:00 p.m. to provide a safe place for the youth to go.

Additional parkland was discussed. It was suggested that the County purchase the property immediately behind the Library and turn it into a park, with small shelters, tables, benches, etc. Or, upgrade the existing shelter with additional lighting, new tables, benches, and grills.

Another park project which was identified was Lime Lake. This area could be beautified, the fence removed and a small park created along the property surrounding the Lake. This project could be done through the cooperation of an adjacent developer, Sarasota County and the Sarasota County School Board.

One additional area for parks was identified and that was along the multi-purpose trail proposed adjacent to the drainage canal. One park was suggested at the connection of Booker Avenue to 24th Street and another on the northern portion of the trail at about 32nd Street. Consideration of these areas should be given during the design stage of the multi-purpose trail.

Suggested Solutions:

- Incorporate classes/programs as identified by the neighborhood into the curriculum currently offered at the Recreation Center.
- Staff assigned to the Recreation Center will work with the neighborhood to schedule classes/programs and extended hours of operation to be implemented in the spring of 2005 .
- Continue to research and identify proposed locations for the Major Sports Complex in order to meet the proposed time schedule of 2005 to 2010 as outlined in the Sarasota County Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

DEVELOPMENT/REDEVELOPMENT

Unlike their neighbors immediately west of this area, they are less concerned with development and redevelopment issues. They have more pressing needs that they wish to address through this process and therefore, this topic was last on the list of priorities. Staff was however concerned with future development and encouraged the neighborhood to have input into what they would like the community to look like in five to ten years. There is a significant amount of infill housing going on in this area. Ten new townhouses are currently being built on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Way and another affordable housing project is underway at 20th Street and Lime Avenue. Several single family homes are going up on streets located south of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Way.



Above, staff, with the assistance of Architects from The ADP Group, engaged the community in discussions about what they foresee as the vision for this area at a design workshop on August 21, 2004 at Emma E. Booker Elementary School. The group was broken down into smaller working groups and discussed such topics as safety, services, land use, sense of community, economic issues as well as traffic patterns. Under the land use discussions, several areas were identified as suitable for a change in land use.

One of those areas, a large parcel (114 acres +/-) located at the northwest corner of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way and Tuttle Avenue is a concern for this community. Several possibilities for redevelopment have been discussed.

Everything from affordable housing and retail/commercial, to the location for the major sports complex. The parcel is currently owned by Aqua Source and the acquisition or partnership is the next big step in redevelopment. The final consensus was that either housing, with commercial/retail on the fringes along Tuttle Avenue and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Way was appropriate or the site could be combined with the existing Recreation Center parcel to form a major sports complex.

The southwest corner of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way and Tuttle Avenue was considered suitable for retail/commercial uses as well. Appropriate use of the land which abuts Leonard Reid Avenue was considered to be light industrial or office. If this area is considered for a change in land use to the Major Employment Center (MEC), it would allow for light industrial, manufacturing, warehousing and office uses or a combination of those. Limited amounts of residential development are also permitted to facilitate access between home and place of work. There is some existing residential in the area now which would be allowed to remain, but most of the land is either vacant, in church use, or in need of redevelopment. The area on the west side of Mango Avenue was considered best suited for light industrial or office as well, with the properties on the east side of Mango Avenue being considered for live work. It was recommended that the properties east of Chilk Avenue to Tuttle Avenue, between 19th and 17th Streets be considered for commercial/industrial to be consistent with the properties west of Chilk Avenue.

Suggested Solutions:

- This area should be further discussed during the up-coming Evaluation and Appraisal Report process. Staff will hold meetings with the affected property owners to explain the process and the benefits of the proposed changes prior to any Comprehensive Plan Amendments being processed.
- If appropriate, Planning staff will initiate the applicable Comprehensive Plan

Amendments and the subsequent Rezoning Petitions.

CONCLUSION

Staff began this planning process with a small group of residents meeting on February 5, 2004 and continuing to meet from April through October 2004. This group grew from approximately 10 residents in the beginning, to approximately 40 residents at the last meeting. We also solicited input from the community by means of a newsletter and a survey card which, out of approximately 1200 mailed, 129 responded. These responses were considered when the committee voted on their top 8 priorities at the September 28th meeting. The items are listed in order of their priority as follows:

- #1 Landscaped medians on Dr. MLK Jr. Way with controlled access points from the railroad tracks east to Tuttle Avenue including an enhanced school crossing.
- #2 Widening of the lanes on Euclid Avenue to a minimum of 10 feet between Dr. MLK Jr. Way and 17th Street and construction of traffic calming devices.
- #3 Neighborhood Pool/Splash Park
- #4 Additional lighting in Newtown Estates
- #5 Paint or change out the pedestrian bridge to Emma E. Booker Elementary School on Dr. MLK Jr. Way.
- #6 Multi-purpose trail along the drainage canal from Euclid to Myrtle Street.
- #7 Major North County Sports Complex.
- #8 Enhanced landscaping on Newtown Boulevard between the Library and the Recreation Center.

A map identifying the projects is on page 16. A chart showing the priorities, cost estimates and possible funding sources is on page 17.





We would like to thank the North Sarasota Community for their dedication and hard work to this neighborhood planning effort.

Board of County Commissioners

Jon Thaxton, Chair
Paul Mercier, Vice Chair
David Mills
Nora Patterson
Shannon Staub

Neighborhood Planning Team

Jane Grogg Debbie Marks

Contributing Staff

Kirk Bagley	Brian Beatty
Alex Boudreau	James Dierolf
Frank Domingo	Deputy Gregg Duncan
Jim Harriott	Don Galloway
George Giovino	Sage Kamiya
Jeff LaHurd	Irene Maiolo
John McCarthy	Anne McClung
Tom Palumbo	Michael Perry
Warren Reuschel	Olga Ronay
Chris Rosenboom	Sgt. Jeffrey Slapp
Jim Somers	Deputy Dan Tutko
Chuck Walter	Paula Wiggins
Mollie Williams	William Wisniewski

**PRIORITIES AS ESTABLISHED BY THE N. SARASOTA COMMUNITY ON 9/28/04
WITH POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCES**

					POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCE
1	Center landscaped medians with access breaks on Dr. MLK Jr. Way from the railroad tracks east to Tuttle Ave (including enhanced school crossing).		\$5,300,000	\$ 5,300,000	Future CIP to be determined during up-coming cycle summer 2005. Proposed design funds 2006, begin construction between 2007 - 2010
2	Widening of Euclid Avenue to 10 ft. lanes between Dr. MLK Jr., Way and 17 th St. & construction of traffic calming devices.	\$ 425,000	\$ 425,000	\$ 425,000	Neighborhood Initiative Fund
3	Neighborhood Pool/Splash Park*			\$ 1,000,000	Land cost not included, plus \$500,000 operating cost per year. Future CIP with partnership opportunities.
4	Additional lighting in Newtown Estates	N/A	N/A	N/A	New Newtown Estates Lighting District
5	Paint or change out the pedestrian bridge to Emma E. Booker Elementary School on Dr. MLK Jr., Way	\$ 140,000	\$ 140,000	\$ 140,000	Trail Fund – Spring 2005
6	Multi-purpose trail along the drainage canal from Euclid Avenue to Myrtle St.		\$ 500,000	\$ 500,000	Trail Fund - FY 2007
7	Major North County Sports Complex			\$15,000,000	Future CIP with partnership opportunities.
8	Enhanced landscaping on Newtown Boulevard between the Library and the Recreation Center.	\$ 24,000	\$ 24,000	\$ 24,000	Cooperative effort between Parks & Recreation, Forestry and the Neighborhood Grant Program
	Sidewalk network in the southeast quadrant of the N. Sarasota Community.	\$ 1,500,000	\$1,500,000	\$ 1,500,000	Sidewalk Program (bonded) FY 2005 design, FY 2007 begin construction
	Recreational Programming at Newtown Estates Park	Work in progress	Work in progress	Work in progress	Parks and Recreation to incorporate suggested programs in coordination with the new Library.
	Resurface streets in Newtown Estates	\$ 180,000	\$ 180,000	\$ 180,000	Resurfacing Program
	Lime Lake Park Project	Work in progress	Work in progress	Work in progress	Cooperative effort between Parks & Recreation, private developer, School Board and Neighborhood Grant Program
	Neighborhood signs at the City limits and at Tuttle and Dr. MLK Jr. Way and Newtown Boulevard	\$ 24,000	\$ 24,000	\$ 24,000	Neighborhood through the Neighborhood Grant Program
	Land use changes along Leonard Reid Avenue, on the west side of Mango Avenues and the southwest corner of Dr. MLK Jr. Way and Tuttle Avenue	Work in progress	Work in progress	Work in progress	Planning staff to include in the EAR process and if appropriate, the rezoning process.

*Include in the Major North County Sports Complex.

**Option #2 approved by the Board of County Commissioners on December 14, 2004.