



*The
Neighborhood
Chapter
Sarasota City Plan*

and

Support Document

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The Neighborhood Plan

INTENT AND PURPOSE

The purpose of the Neighborhood Chapter is contained in the City Commission's adoption of the Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR) in June of 1996. It directed that the City develop a neighborhood chapter for inclusion in the Sarasota City Plan update which:

- acknowledges neighborhoods' contribution to the community that is Sarasota;
- provides support to their continued existence;
- seeks to preserve the best qualities of Sarasota's distinct neighborhoods; while
- responding creatively to the pressures of change and growth.

This Chapter is founded on this expressed intent of the City Commission and upon **Sarasota's Strategic Plan**.

Sarasota's Strategic Plan Goals

In 2004, the City Commission adopted "Sarasota's Approach to Strategic Planning", which provides the foundation for the Strategic Plan and six Strategic Goals that have particular relevance to the Neighborhood Plan:

"A City where urban amenities meet small town living."

Neighborhoods play a critical role in realizing this vision statement for the City. The way people feel about their neighborhoods has a lot to do with achieving "small town living". Small towns, and successful neighborhoods offer a sense of community, mutual responsibility, friendliness, visual pleasantness, ease of movement and safety from crime. The intent of this Plan is to achieve this vision.

"Viable, safe and diverse neighborhoods and businesses that work together."

The City's ability to achieve safety in its neighborhoods, both real and perceived, is critical to maintaining healthy neighborhoods. Before people can enjoy the qualities of living in City neighborhoods they must feel secure in their homes and neighborhoods. Objectives and action strategies in the Neighborhood Plan address this defining principle.

Perhaps, the most important qualities of successful neighborhoods are their sense of community, and willingness to work together toward common objectives. The Neighborhood Plan intends to establish a framework that will facilitate and encourage neighborhoods working together as a community.

“An attractive, environmentally-friendly community that is safe and livable and provides an array of cultural and aesthetic enjoyments.”

Attractive, clean and aesthetically pleasing neighborhoods are essential to healthy neighborhoods - to maintaining the City as a desirable place to live - and to achieving this defining principle.

It is the intent of the Neighborhood Plan to pursue actions that further **Sarasota’s Strategic Plan**. The City’s neighborhood initiative is just beginning. Moving forward will require an on-going dialogue between the City Commission, the Planning Board, and neighborhood representatives. It will require a continued refinement of City government and neighborhood relationships in the best traditions of self government.

Florida Statutory Requirements

The Neighborhood Chapter is optional. Therefore there are no State requirements.

Organization of the Neighborhood Chapter

The Neighborhood Plan consists of a goal followed by objectives and action strategies pursuant to the goal.

The Neighborhood Plan is organized around objectives addressing the following topics:

- Objective 1. Neighborhood Identification;
- Objective 2. Neighborhood Information System;
- Objective 3. Neighborhood Planning Process;
- Objective 4. Neighborhood Compatibility;
- Objective 5. Neighborhood Safety;
- Objective 6. Neighborhood Transportation;
- Objective 7. Neighborhood Aesthetics and Identity;
- Objective 8. School Board Cooperation;
- Objective 9. Neighborhood Infrastructure, and;
- Objective 10. Other New Initiatives.

The Neighborhood Plan is one of the eleven plans which collectively represent the Sarasota City Plan. This Plan can neither stand alone nor be interpreted independent of the others.

Implementation of the Sarasota City Plan

Implementation of the Sarasota City Plan will require actions by both the public and private sectors. In this regard many of the plan components speak to “the City” pursuing certain actions to:

promote, provide, consider, identify, enhance, create, maintain, conserve, support, reduce discourage, coordinate, and employ.

While these actions may be initiated by City government itself, City government will also be expecting applicants seeking development approvals to pursue these same type of actions as part of their applications.

GOAL, OBJECTIVES AND ACTION STRATEGIES

Goal

It shall be the goal of the City to achieve healthy and livable neighborhoods by:

- Maximizing opportunities for all citizens to have meaningful involvement in the decisions that affect their neighborhood;
- Maximizing compatibility between residential and non-residential uses;
- Ensuring neighborhood safety and quality of life;
- Developing safe, aesthetically pleasing and efficient transportation networks; and,
- Preserving, protecting and enhancing neighborhood aesthetics, identity, and natural and historic resources; and
- Embracing an Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) philosophy by focusing on the capacities and assets of associations and citizens.

Objective 1 - Neighborhood Identification

The City shall encourage the formation of neighborhood organizations and identify, delineate and name all neighborhoods within the City.

Action Strategies

- 1.1 **Composition of Neighborhoods:** The City will recognize and encourage that the formation and composition of “neighborhoods” may be residential, non-residential or both. The City will encourage planning that focuses on the relationship between residential and non-residential uses and on actions that create compatibility between these uses.

- 1.2 **Neighborhood Organizations:** The City will continue to encourage the formation of neighborhood organizations. These organizations involve residents, owners and businesses that focus on creating healthy and livable neighborhoods. Components of such organizations are listed below:
1. Meet regularly.
 2. Have recognized leadership.
 3. Communicate with residents.
 4. Communicate with government.
 5. Take formal action to officially represent.
 6. Have articles of association/incorporation
 7. On record with the Neighborhood and Development Services Department.
- 1.3 **Neighborhood Delineation:** The City will facilitate existing neighborhood organizations and neighborhood residents not represented by these organizations to delineate neighborhood boundaries that consider:
- Generally agreed upon and locally recognized boundaries;
 - Areas defined by strong historical, cultural, geographic, or business relationships;
 - Appropriateness of the area for the planning purpose (e.g. watershed areas for addressing drainage issues);
 - Natural or man-made barriers (e.g. roads, major topographic changes, rivers);
 - Size of area; and,
 - The opportunity for all residents of the City to participate in neighborhood organizations.

Objective 2 - Neighborhood Information System

The City will encourage personal communication between neighborhood associations, staff, and City Commission. The Neighborhood and Development Services Department will act as a liaison between the City of Sarasota and its citizens.

Action Strategies

- 2.1 **Surveys:** The City will conduct periodic surveys through a multi-pronged approach to determine priorities of neighborhood residents and their perception of what City programs are working and which need improvement. The City will assist neighborhoods in conducting surveys beyond NAS process; distribute surveys at neighborhood meetings over a defined period of time; and communicate results of such surveys expeditiously.

Provided funding is available, the City will conduct a “Community Forum” type event in conjunction with another City event to increase attendance.

- 2.2 **Newsletters:** The City will prepare periodic newsletters informing neighborhood residents, business people and neighborhoods of City neighborhood related actions and programs and will increase accessibility through improved distribution (e.g. Sunday paper insert).
- 2.3 **Mailing List:** The City will create and maintain a frequently updated mailing list of neighborhood organizations that all City departments will use to notify neighborhood leaders of notifications.
- 2.4 **Computerized Data Base:** The City will create a computerized land use and building data base, updated on a regular basis, which would allow easy access by the public.
- 2.5 **DRC Database:** The City will create an active DRC database (eDRC) to include all current applications, DRC comments, Planning Board minutes, Planning Staff recommendations, etc.
- 2.6 **Development Information:** The City will establish a system where NPO staff acts as information liaison to applicable neighborhoods, similar to how a planner is assigned to a developer, and create a document that outlines development processes.
- 2.7 **Neighborhood Meetings:** City staff will continue to attend neighborhood meetings to promote communication between neighborhood associations and the City and listen to citizen issues and concerns.

Objective 3 - Neighborhood Planning Process

The City will build a strong, effective “neighborhood planning process” that establishes the type and level of assistance residents and businesses desire for their neighborhood. This process will be open to all neighborhoods and will be community asset-based, recognizing that long-term neighborhood development and sustained participation require community capacities as a foundation.

Action Strategies

- 3.1 **Establishing Priorities:** The City will consider the following criteria in establishing priorities for allocating available neighborhood asset strategy planning resources:
 - Established set of standards of interest among the residents and businesses in an area to participate in a neighborhood asset strategy plan;
 - On a first-come, first-serve basis, associations that have successfully completed the asset-survey/mapping component; and
 - Opportunity to influence positive change through connecting community assets to needs.
- 3.2 **Scope of Planning:** The City will conduct preliminary assessments of neighborhoods to determine the scope of planning to be undertaken. The degree of neighborhood association activity/organization shall be included as a measurement in such assessments.
- 3.3 **Initiation of Neighborhood Plans:** The City will permit either neighborhood organizations or itself to initiate neighborhood asset strategy plans with City support, to the extent provided in the City’s annual budget.
- 3.4 **Standards for Plans:** The City will provide standards and guidelines for neighborhood asset strategy plans that establish the content and technical analysis and which result in plans with a consistent level of quality and with sufficient information for decision-making by the City Commission. The review or locating of funding sources for these plans shall be performed as part of these standards. The City will continue to include standardized planning elements in NAS plans and continue to encourage neighborhoods to drive content based on individual issues.
- 3.5 **Adoption of Plans:** Upon completion of the planning process for a particular neighborhood, the City will adopt a plan by resolution or ordinance that provides the foundation for improving the neighborhood in a positive manner. The neighborhood plan shall be consistent with the *Sarasota City Plan*.

- 3.6 **Implementation of Plans:** The City will implement adopted neighborhood asset strategy plans through consideration of the recommendations during the annual budget process recognizing the City’s legal, administrative and fiscal constraints. The City will continue to give priority to adopted NAS plan action items.
- 3.7 **Monitoring of Plans:** The City will monitor implementation of adopted neighborhood plans and communicate the results to the City Commission, and the general public.
- 3.8 **Neighborhood Preservation and Enhancement Program:** The City will explore the feasibility and interest in developing and implementing a Neighborhood Preservation and Enhancement Program to address neighborhood issues and assist neighborhoods in improving and maintaining their intrinsic characteristics and values.

Objective 4 - Neighborhood Compatibility

The City will promote compatibility of new and re-development projects within neighborhoods.

Action Strategies

- 4.1 **Involve Neighborhood Organizations:** The City will continue to involve impacted neighborhood organizations in the review of private and public development projects which require review by the Planning Board.
- 4.2 **Design and Compatibility Guidelines:** The City will explore the feasibility and interest of creating “Design and Compatibility Guidelines” to:
- Build awareness of design principles with developers and the general public;
 - Evaluate new development and re-development projects; and,
 - Guide future modifications to the City’s Land Development Regulations.
 - Ensure that new development is compatible with the existing scale of the neighborhood where it is located and encourage “like facing like” development when reviewing development proposals located on the periphery of residential neighborhoods.
 - Establish design and compatibility guidelines on a neighborhood, community, and/or regional basis.
- 4.3 **Land Development Regulations:** The City will include measures that enhance neighborhood compatibility in the Land Development Regulations.

Objective 5 - Neighborhood Safety

The City will promote neighborhood safety and cohesiveness by encouraging resident and neighborhood involvement in crime prevention and elimination.

Action Strategies

- 5.1 **Neighborhood and Business Watch:** The City, in conjunction with the Sarasota City Police Department, will continue to encourage the formation of “Neighborhood and Business Watch” groups and encourage existing groups to remain active.
- 5.2 **Neighborhood Crime Fighting Programs:** The City, in conjunction with the Sarasota City Police Department, will continue to support neighborhood-based crime fighting programs, which have proven to be a successful at reducing crime.
- 5.3 **Volunteer Programs:** The City will continue to promote and encourage participation in the Sarasota Citizen Volunteer Program other volunteer programs and annually recognize all volunteers.
- 5.4 **Crime Statistics:** The City will increase public access to City crime statistics.

Objective 6 - Neighborhood Transportation

The City will provide safe, efficient and aesthetically pleasing neighborhood transportation networks for pedestrians, cyclists, motorists and mass transit.

Action Strategies

- 6.1 **Truck Traffic:** The City will continue to develop and implement strategies to discourage through truck traffic on residential streets. The City will consider the use of truck by-passes where feasible.
- 6.2 **Through Automobile Traffic:** The City will continue to develop and implement strategies to discourage through automobile traffic on residential streets within neighborhoods.

- 6.3 **Automobile Speed and Pedestrian Safety:** The City will continue to develop and implement strategies to manage the speed of automobile traffic within residential neighborhoods and City thoroughfares so the street environment is inviting to pedestrians and bicyclists. The City will increase traffic enforcement where feasible. The City will utilize controlled turn lanes and medians where necessary. The City will also encourage the use of center medians or “rescue spots” with pedestrian signal buttons where appropriate and will continue to extend pedestrian light timing where warranted.
- 6.4 **Sidewalks:** The City will continue to identify, construct and maintain sidewalks where they are needed to improve pedestrian safety and encourage walking. Private funding will be used whenever possible.
- 6.5 **Bicycle Paths:** The City will continue to design and construct paths for with links to Citywide bicycle systems. Private funding will be used whenever possible.
- 6.6 **Sarasota County Area Transit (SCAT):** The City will request SCAT to design comfortable and aesthetically pleasing improvements in the transit system to interface with neighborhood walkway systems. Bus stop shelters and their subsequent maintenance should be a priority.
- 6.7 **Aesthetic Improvements:** The City will continue to incorporate landscaping and other appropriate aesthetic improvements into all neighborhood transportation projects in order to enhance neighborhood aesthetic quality and identity.
- 6.8 **Traffic Safety:** The City will continue to encourage residents to promptly report traffic safety problems, including such items as potholes, blocked or damaged signage, malfunctioning traffic controls, and visual obstructions. The City will respond appropriately and in a timely manner.
- 6.9 **Studies:** The City in conjunction with other public and private agencies will conduct studies of intersections and roads with noted problems to identify when additional traffic controls and improvements are warranted to ensure traffic safety. The City will consider expediting the process relating to the installation of traffic calming measures.
- 6.10 **Traffic Calming Signs:** The City will continue to promote the use of traffic calming signs, such as Keep Kids Alive-Drive 25, and decrease the costs to the public of purchasing such signs. The City will also study the use of traffic calming decals on garbage bins.
- 6.11 **Crosswalks:** The City will support the use of crosswalks City-wide for increased pedestrian safety and as a traffic calming measure.
- 6.12 **Notification of Transportation Projects:** The City, where appropriate, will notify affected neighborhood associations of local and state transportation projects.

Objective 7 - Neighborhood Aesthetics and Identity

The City will enhance the unique aesthetic identity of individual neighborhoods.

Action Strategies

- 7.1 **Historic Resources:** The City will continue to identify, designate and encourage the preservation of historic structures and districts within neighborhoods and will create a “historic structure” data layer within GIS and also allow for the public to access/view this data layer.
- 7.2 **Unique Architecture:** The City will continue to identify and encourage the preservation of architecture that contributes to the unique quality of neighborhoods, and will create a “unique architecture” data layer within GIS and also allow for the public to access/view this layer.
- 7.3 **Landscape:** The City, where appropriate and feasible, will make landscape improvements incorporating *Florida Friendly* principles that contribute to neighborhood identity and to a pedestrian friendly environment.
- 7.4 **Open Space:** The City will, where appropriate and feasible, create open spaces that facilitate neighborhood gatherings and contribute to neighborhood identity. The City will also study the issue of creating an open space fund (similar to affordable housing and public art funds) for developers to contribute to for the purpose of acquiring additional open space areas.)
- 7.5 **Public Art:** The City will continue to consider the use of public art to enhance other public improvements and to create neighborhood identity. The City will create a public art database for the public to access. The database will include, at a minimum, descriptions of public art and locations, as well as potential sites for consideration. The City will also increase programs and incentives for neighborhoods to install public art and market such programs accordingly.
- 7.6 **Signage:** The City, where appropriate and feasible, will design and implement signage that contributes to neighborhood aesthetics and identity, and will increase opportunities for signage at neighborhood entrances, parks and trails.

The City will consider attaching neighborhood signs to MURT signs, e.g. “You are in the _____ neighborhood.”

- 7.7 **Unique Features:** The City will continue to identify, preserve, and enhance unique features, such as natural features or institutions, that contribute to neighborhood identity, and consider creating a database of such features. The City will consider installing signage at unique features as part of an identification process.

- 7.8 **Urban Design:** The City will, where appropriate and feasible, use urban design in programs such as the NAS process to create a cohesive whole while preserving the integrity of the neighborhood relating to improvements in transportation, architecture, landscape, open space, and public art.
- 7.9 **Keep Sarasota County Beautiful:** The City, will continue to encourage programs to maintain and beautify neighborhoods. Such programs may be in conjunction with the Keep Sarasota County Beautiful program and include “Adopt-a-Street” or “Adopt-a-Park.” The City will continue to market programs, promote them on its website, and encourage decreasing the two-mile minimum for street adoption.

Objective 8 - School Board Cooperation

The City will cooperate with the School Board of Sarasota County in order to provide a high quality education for children of City residents.

Action Strategies

- 8.1 **Use of School Facilities:** The City will encourage the School Board to maximize the use of school facilities by allowing civic and recreational groups to utilize school properties when not in use for school activities.
- 8.2 **Neighborhood Involvement:** The City will encourage the School Board to hold Community Workshops for all applicable school board development proposals within the City, based on the requirements for applicants where the City is the regulating authority, located in Administrative Regulation No. 029-A--Procedures for Community Workshops.

Objective 9 - Neighborhood Infrastructure

The City will develop infrastructure through its Capital Improvements Program that enhances Neighborhood Quality, including downtown.

Action Strategies

- 9.1 **Special Districts:** The City will consider creating a clear application and review process for organizations seeking to create special taxing districts.

- 9.2 **Long-Term Stormwater Management:** The City will continue coordination with Sarasota County to design long-term regional stormwater management improvements.

Objective 10 - Other New Initiatives

The City will investigate innovative plans, programs and initiatives associated with neighborhoods.

Action Strategies

- 10.1 **Landlord Training Program:** The City will implement the Police Department's "Landlord Training Program" to educate existing and prospective landlords about their rights and responsibilities; the City will also increase community awareness and availability of the program.
- 10.2 **Front Yard Parking:** The City will draft an ordinance regulating front yard parking.
- 10.3 **Neighborhood Self-Help Fund:** The City will continue the "Neighborhood Grant Program" to fund neighborhood projects on a bi-annual basis. Neighborhood grants may be used for planning, technical assistance, and small-scale projects. The grant would be set at a level that would allow a reasonable number of "ranked" projects to be funded each year.
- 10.4 **Neighborhood Coordinating Committee:** The City will explore the feasibility and interest in creating an interdepartmental "Neighborhood Coordinating Committee, made up of both planning and operating agencies/departments that deliver services to neighborhoods. Neighborhood representatives shall be part of this committee. The Committee's functions could include:
- Coordinating departmental responses to neighborhoods;
 - Keeping the City informed about neighborhood issues;
 - Monitoring commitments made by the City to neighborhoods; and
 - Evaluating and identifying ways the City could be more responsive to neighborhoods.

- 10.5 **Neighborhood Maintenance Program:** The city will explore the feasibility and interest in initiating a “Neighborhood Maintenance Program,” for use in targeted neighborhoods. The program would be designed to coordinate the resources of various City departments toward addressing deteriorating conditions within neighborhoods. Items for study should include but not be limited to:
- Neighborhood Maintenance Education Program Alternatives;
 - Code Compliance Alternatives;
 - Rental Inspection Programs, as an alternative, for neighborhoods that desire it;
 - Relationship and coordination of City departments
 - Cost, benefits and relationship to the City budget;
 - Landlord contact/registration program; and
 - Strengthen code compliance ordinance and increase fines for repeat/long-term violators.

The Neighborhood Support Document

The inventory and analysis in the Support Document provide the foundation for the Plan portion of this Chapter.

The Support Document is not adopted.

INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

CONTEXT

Basic Issues

City neighborhoods have many strengths. They include:

- the allure of small town feeling and living;
- a sense of history from older buildings;
- diversity of people;
- architectural diversity;
- easy access to urban amenities; and,
- a sense of community and belonging.

The attraction of these qualities is evident from both those who chose to live in urban neighborhoods and from the many attempts to imitate these qualities in other settings. These positive qualities, however, have not been sufficient to keep many from choosing other places to live. There is benefit in discussing the possible reasons for their choice to live elsewhere. The list of these reasons may include:

- fear of crime (based on real or perceived dangers);
- uncertainty about the quality of city schools (for families with school age children);
- unease in living near people of different racial or cultural backgrounds; or,
- the attraction of nature and wide open spaces.

The City's programs to address issues of safety, both real and perceived, are basic and critical to maintaining healthy neighborhoods. Before people can enjoy the qualities of living in City neighborhoods they must feel secure in their homes and neighborhoods.

Likewise, maintaining the high quality of the City schools is essential for attracting and keeping families with school age children. In addition to the high academic standards, the City's schools offer unparalleled opportunities for cross cultural experiences that will be invaluable for living and working in an increasingly global and culturally diverse world. These high educational standards and opportunities must be maintained and improved for City neighborhoods to flourish.

Achieving racial and cultural harmony is a national as well as local - and governmental as well as private issue. It is paramount to our ability to survive and thrive as a culture. The alternative of not achieving this objective is simply not acceptable. Our ability as a society to achieve this goal will affect neighborhoods as it will impact all aspects of our lives.

Alongside the feeling for small towns is the American attraction for nature and wide open spaces. The result has been urban sprawl and an ironic degradation of the natural setting in which people wished to live. Increased environmental awareness and less space have limited, to a degree, the ability to expand into rural land. However, options for living in suburban or semi-rural settings will continue to be available.

As the City and residents work together on the details of achieving healthy and livable neighborhoods, these basic issues should not be forgotten.

Scale and Housing Density

Though strong neighborhoods can be found in small towns or large cities, scale and density have an impact on achieving “small town feeling” and on neighborhood services. In Sarasota, the absence of large scaled infrastructure (such as freeway overpasses) or very tall buildings are important in maintaining a more human scale or “small town feeling”.

Residential densities in Sarasota range between 2 and 50 dwelling units per acre. The highest densities occur in the downtown area. Outside the downtown, housing densities range between 2 and 25 units per acre. Projected housing growth through 2010 will not significantly change these densities. For comparison, many larger cities have areas with residential densities well over 100 units per acre. Sarasota has chosen to have housing densities and building heights, that are, for the most part, closer to the small town than the large city.

The trade-off for these lower densities and “small town feeling” is a broader geographic dispersion of neighborhood services. Supermarkets, for example, must be far enough apart to attract spending from a sufficient number of households to profit and survive. The resultant spacing precludes easy access by walking for most people. Except for neighborhoods near the downtown, automobiles, bicycles or buses become the primary means of access to services.

It is generally accepted that good neighborhoods are pedestrian and bicycle friendly. People on foot or on bikes have opportunities to meet their neighbors and build community. Though automobiles within neighborhoods are necessary, the careful planning and management of traffic (pedestrian, bicycles, autos and mass transit) is critical to the achievement of healthy and livable neighborhoods.

Housing Age and Condition

Housing construction within Sarasota accelerated steadily from 1940 through 1980. It peaked in the decade of the 1970s. Thereafter, housing construction declined, due to the dwindling availability of large tracts of vacant land.

By 2010 the majority of the housing stock is projected to be over forty years old - the age when housing units generally begin to experience major structural problems.

Housing age does not correlate directly to housing condition. The City has many homes that have received continued maintenance over the years and have remained in excellent condition. When well maintained, these older structures create architecturally distinct, quality neighborhoods that are significant assets to the City. However, when adequate maintenance is lacking, age takes its toll and negatively affects housing condition.

Maintenance of the housing stock to standards accepted by the community requires both motivation and the ability of owners. Motivation is usually provided through pride, peer pressure, return on investment, and good citizenship. Owners must also have the knowledge and ability to do their own maintenance or the ability to pay others. In some cases, however, motivation and/or ability is lacking and properties deteriorate in condition. Deteriorated housing can affect the motivation of others, starting a downward spiral in neighborhood perception and quality.

The City's Code Compliance Program and the Nuisance Abatement Board currently address this issue. The Code Compliance Program includes an inspection, from the public right-of-way, of all residential properties at least once a year with enforcement of identified code violations. The program also addresses properties on a complaint basis. The Nuisance Abatement Board addresses problems of drugs, prostitution and gangs. Though both of these programs are effective, they are limited by their means of identifying problems.

Reliable data on housing condition, that is useful in analyzing the issue of housing condition in the City, is limited. Analysis of the 2000 U.S. Census data indicates that less than 2,000 housing units have basic deficiencies with respect to condition [lacking; complete plumbing (96), complete kitchen (242) or central heat (326)] or overcrowding (1,286). Better information would be useful in considering and designing programs to assure that the City's aging housing stock is well maintained.

Criteria for City government programs to assure reinvestment in and maintenance of the City's housing stock need to include:

- availability of the type of information that is useful in decision making;
- cost effectiveness;
- the City's budget constraints;
- examination of the root cause of problems;
- respect for the rights of property owners; and,
- care that an undue burden will not be placed on the majority of property owners that maintain their properties in good condition.

The City should explore new methods for monitoring housing condition and maintaining the housing stock using these criteria as a general guide.

Housing Tenure

It is generally accepted that home owners, in comparison to renters, have a greater stake in their homes and neighborhoods and thereby assume a greater responsibility for their maintenance.

In 2000, U.S. Census data indicated that 58% of occupied housing in the City were owner occupied. This compares to 57% in 1990, 60% in 1980, and 66% in 1970. In 2000, 79% of the dwelling units in the unincorporated area of Sarasota County were owner occupied.

Programs or actions that increase home ownership will have a positive impact on neighborhood livability.

See the *Sarasota City Plan*, Housing Chapter for a more detailed discussion of housing type, age, condition, and tenure.

Small Town Living and Neighborhood Design Principles

There has been a significant amount of study nationwide on the common qualities of successful urban neighborhoods. The bibliography of this Chapter contains a sample of these sources. The literature includes a variety of perspectives - some have focused on the similarity between small towns and neighborhoods - most include some form of proposed design principles.

Small Town Living and Feeling

While few Americans today live in small towns with healthy central business districts, many Americans still cherish that image and way of life either openly or somewhere in the back of their minds. People feel the small town offers a sense of community, mutual responsibility, friendliness, visual pleasantness, ease and convenience of movement, and safety from crime. The small town is not generally regarded as offering much in the way of diversity, either of people or of opportunities, but even on this score the small town has its advantages. While the town of thirty-five hundred to five thousand people can't approach the variety of a big city, the classic form of the small town typically embraces greater economic, racial, and functional diversity within its perceptually unified, continuously walkable or bikable space than does the typical suburban area with a comparable population.

The small town's strength is its ability to assimilate whatever diversity it has into a socially cohesive and functionally integrated whole¹. This ability derives, at least in part, from the type and degree of specialization of the town's spatial organization. The land use map of such a town is specialized in the sense that it has a clear center, the primary focus of commercial, governmental, and social activity, with primarily residential and institutional uses radiating out from the center. However, the street grid pattern on which these land uses are located is continuous and non-specialized, establishing no rigid geographic boundaries between land uses or economic classes. The specialization is in use, not in form².

In the way they function and in their spatial organization, successful urban neighborhoods are very similar to successful small towns. Good neighborhoods can be economically privileged or modest, ethnically mixed or homogeneous. What they all have in common is an active, magnetic, mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented center intimately linked by the street-and-sidewalk grid to the surrounding residential areas.³

Throughout this century, the neighborhood has been a major focus of attention among those concerned with urban affairs.⁴ This focus on neighborhoods stems from the belief that they represent the building blocks of a city. The health of a city is largely dependent on the vitality of its individual neighborhoods. And, the physical and social conditions in neighborhoods to a large degree define the quality of life for urban residents. They affect individual decisions to stay or to seek more desirable living conditions in suburban or rural locations. Those decisions, in turn, can affect the local tax base and the overall viability of the City.

Neighborhood Design Principles

The following list is an attempt to identify a consensus of principles for good neighborhoods. It is intended to be used as a general check-list to stimulate discussion. Each neighborhood is unique and is encouraged to develop their own specific list as part of their planning process. Appendix 1 of this report provides a more detailed description of these principles.

- The neighborhood is designed with human scale foremost.
- Neighborhood design fosters communication.
- There is a sense of ownership and responsibility.
- The identity of the neighborhood is important.
- Variety and diversity are encouraged in the neighborhood.
- Land planning supports neighborhood character.
- The neighborhood has a central place.
- The components of the neighborhood are interconnected.
- The neighborhood is linked with its larger context.
- The layout of blocks and streets encourages walking and bicycling.
- Transit is an integral part of the neighborhood.
- Cars have their appropriate place in the neighborhood.
- Housing arrangement fosters neighborliness.
- There are different scales of space.
- Streets belong to people.
- Neighborhood design which responds to natural, cultural, and historic context.

PROCESS

Organization

Neighborhoods and their Associations

The City manages a database of over 70 neighborhood and business associations within the City. They range between condominium associations, of which there are several, to organizations representing sizable portions of the City. Some are very active - others are not. Some neighborhoods have formed joint task forces to address common concerns. Illustration N-1, Existing Neighborhood Association Areas, shows the organized associations within the City.

For purposes of public information, the City serves all of these organizations as it does all City residents. However, when the City begins to expend scarce resources to provide additional services to neighborhood organizations, issues of priority, equity, need and efficiency arise:

- How should neighborhoods be prioritized for receiving City services that are unavailable on a City-wide basis?
- What is the most efficient way to deliver various City services and how does this relate to the pattern of neighborhoods and their organizations?
- What role(s) should neighborhoods have in asset-based community development processes?
- Should there be guidelines or standards for the delineation of neighborhoods?
- How should the City relate to areas that are not within a self delineated neighborhood?
- How will the City monitor progress in achieving neighborhood livability?

Since neighborhood associations benefit neighborhoods it makes sense for the City to encourage their formation. If, after this encouragement, there are areas of the City with no neighborhood organizations, the City should explore measures to keep unrepresented areas informed about the City's neighborhood programs.

It also seems logical to attempt, through a dialogue between the City and existing associations, to delineate neighborhoods that together comprise the entire City. General criteria for discussing boundaries might include:

- the City's recognition of the vital function of neighborhood and business associations in the community.
- generally agreed upon and locally recognized neighborhood boundaries;
- areas defined by strong historical, cultural, geographic or business relationships;
- appropriateness for the planning purpose (e.g. watershed areas for addressing drainage issues);

- natural, or man-made barriers (e.g. roads, major topographic changes and waterways); and,
- Size of area.
- the opportunity for all residents of the City to participate in neighborhood organizations.

City Government

In 1997, the City Manager and the City Commission endorsed the creation of a Department of Neighborhoods and Redevelopment with the inherent understanding that meaningful citizen participation yields better long-term solutions for neighborhood issues. In 2002 the department name was changed to Neighborhood Partnership Office – to further illustrate the close relationship between the City and its associations. As part of the 2008 City reorganization, the services of the former Neighborhood Partnership Office were consolidated into the current Neighborhood and Development Services Department.

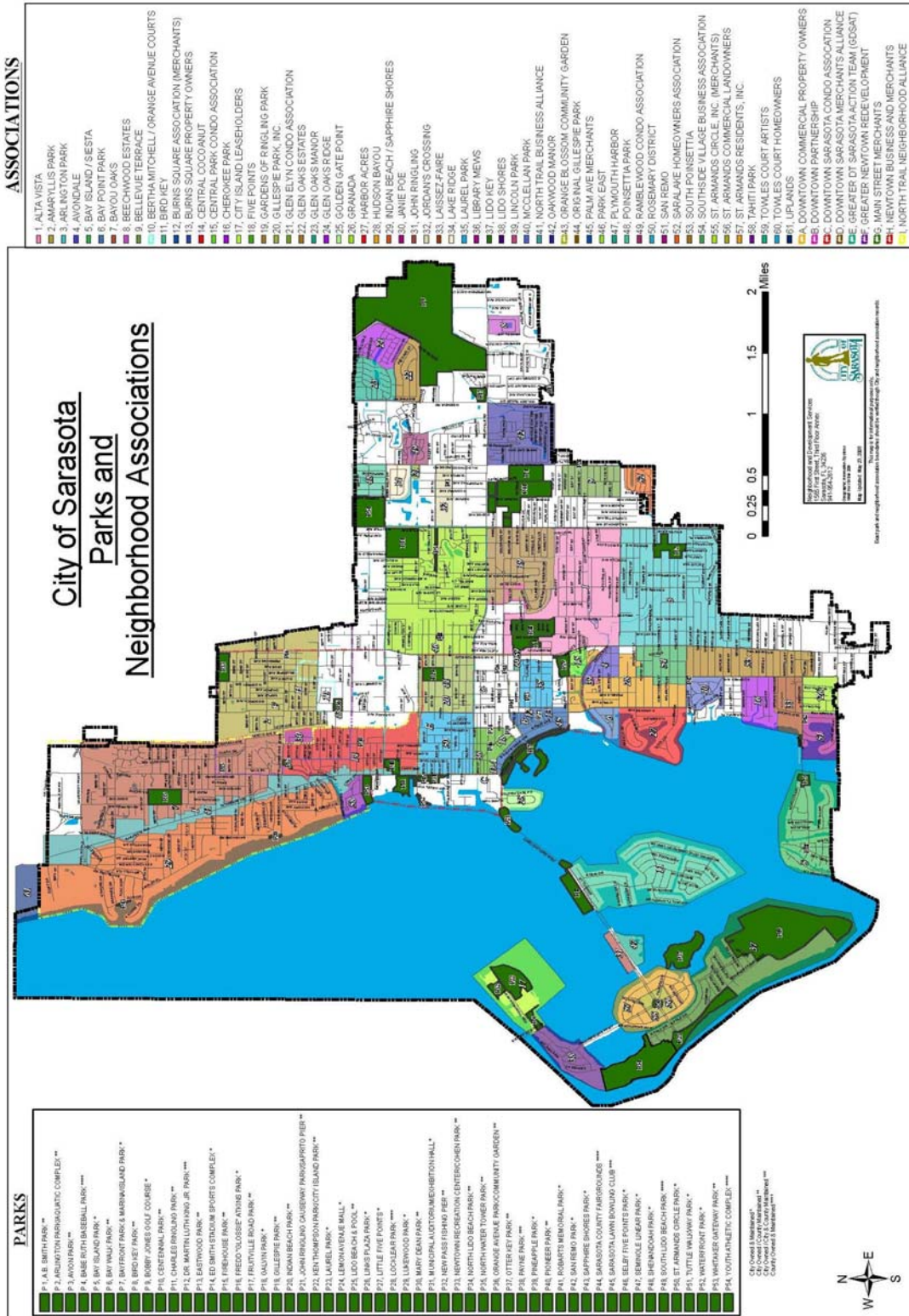
A new Neighborhood Services Work Team has been formed modeled after the City’s existing Development Review Committee. The Neighborhood Services Work Team function includes:

- Coordinating departmental responses to neighborhoods;
- Keeping the City informed about neighborhood issues;
- Monitoring commitments made by the City to neighborhoods; and
- Evaluating and identifying ways the City could be more responsive to neighborhoods.

One of the key functions of the Neighborhood and Development Services Department is to provide effective communications between the City and neighborhoods. Among the tools proven helpful in this task are:

- Surveys - conducted periodically to determine the priorities of City residents and their perception of what City programs are working and which need improvement;
- Newsletters - to inform neighborhoods on City actions and programs available to residents, business people and neighborhoods;
- Mailing lists - of neighborhood and business groups, updated frequently, available to all City departments via the City’s computer network; and
- Geographical Information System - including neighborhood mapping, land use and building data, updated on a regular basis, that would allow easy access to neighborhoods for planning and monitoring their improvements.
- Neighborhood meetings – attendance by staff to promote communication between neighborhood associations and the City and listening to citizen issues and concerns.

Illustration N-1, Existing Neighborhood Association Areas



Neighborhood Asset Strategy Program

Since 1998, quality neighborhood planning has increased the chances of achieving livable neighborhoods. Appendix 2 of this report outlines a neighborhood based planning process. The program includes the planning steps of:

- Education/Orientation;
- Inventory-Asset Survey;
- Analysis of mapping results;
- Community Visioning;
- Plan Development; and,
- Asset Leveraging-Implementation.

The outlined process is comprehensive and requires considerable staff support. The magnitude of supporting this scale of planning for every neighborhood in the City and the widely differing needs of neighborhoods has raised several issues:

- Is planning needed in each neighborhood?
- How should priorities for planning continue to be established?
- What is the link between planning and implementation?
- What are the available resources?

Appropriate planning should take place prior to any implementation. However, it is wasteful to do planning for planning's sake. Some neighborhoods could clearly benefit from a comprehensive planning process while others may have relatively small, narrowly defined issues. There may be benefit in conducting an abbreviated "scoping" process prior to initiating comprehensive neighborhood planning. The scoping process would be done by the neighborhood, with assistance from the City. It would include a preliminary general assessment of the neighborhood in order to determine an appropriate scope of issues or projects to pursue with more detailed planning. Following the scoping process, criteria for determining planning priorities might include:

- Established set of standards of interest among the residents and businesses in an area to participate in a neighborhood asset strategy plan
- On a first-come, first-serve basis, associations that have successfully completed the asset-survey/mapping component; and,
- Opportunity to influence positive change through connecting community assets to needs.

Delivery of Services

The City provides many services that impact on neighborhoods. A partial list follows:

- Code Compliance;
- Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design reviews;
- Green Canopy Partnership Tree Program;
- Environmental Management
- Historic Preservation;
- Housing and Community Development;
- City Sidewalk and Curb and Gutter Programs;
- Nuisance Abatement Board;
- Parks, Recreation and Environmental Protection;
- Planning and Redevelopment;
- Police;
- Public Art;
- Sarasota County Keep Sarasota Beautiful;
- Traffic Calming Program.

The objective of each of these programs is the efficient delivery of their particular service. The desire to tailor the delivery of services to each neighborhood may create some tension with objectives for City-wide efficiency. It may also raise issues of equity between neighborhoods. It will be important for the City and the neighborhoods to carefully assess both the benefits and costs of proposed service customizing.

In addition to sorting out which services may make sense to customize, the process should also involve a search for creative and symbiotic ways of delivering City services in order to meet neighborhood objectives.

Capital Budgeting

The City's capital budgeting process includes an evaluation each year by the Capital Improvement Committee. The Committee is made up of representatives from major departments within the City. Following the Committee's evaluation the City Manager prepares and submits a recommendation to the City Commission (including neighborhood projects resulting from approved plans). The City Commission reviews the City Manager's recommendations and approves the annual capital budget based on the City's available resources.

APPENDIX 1

Neighborhood Design Principles

Quality of life issues have become an increasing concern in the City and across the country. Citizens and policy makers have begun to reconsider the way cities, neighborhoods and transportation systems are, and have been, built. The questions are posed: how are existing models deficient in creating a sense of community; and how can they be improved?

Throughout the country many neighborhoods have been constructed over the past sixty years where the perceived demands of the automobile dominated their design. Current regulations tend to reinforce this pattern of development. There has been a vast amount of study done of the issues and elements of alternative neighborhood patterns.

This Appendix is an attempt to identify a consensus of principles for good neighborhoods and to create alternatives in urban neighborhood development.

Fundamental Principles

1. **The neighborhood is designed with human scale foremost.**

In good neighborhoods, the neighborhood pattern, layout and design emphasizes human scale. A major element is the design of streets which are livable, which are intimate in scale in residential areas, which encourage slow traffic, and which encourage walking and bicycling.

There are many effects of an emphasis on the auto in neighborhood planning. For example, streets are designed to inappropriately wide standards. This excessive width enables motorists to speed through residential areas and disallows planting for a shaded canopy over the street. Other design standards have impacted the scale of roadways. The turning requirements for large emergency vehicles results in street corners which double the pedestrian's walking distance across an intersection. Utility easements in the area between the street and the sidewalk prevent tree plantings. These are among numerous factors contributing to the inhuman scale of many neighborhoods.

2. **Neighborhood design fosters communication.**

In good neighborhoods, neighborliness and communication are facilitated. Among ways that can bring this about is to ensure a balance between public space and private space by creating places to meet, by designing the street as a public living room, and by establishing a hierarchy of focal points in the public realm.

Where people live behind walls, possibilities for communication on which “community” is built are limited. Where the house fronts are blank facades with only car storage in view, informal activity on the street becomes less desirable. Where there is no place to visit with neighbors, there is limited opportunity for neighborliness. Where there is no central place to come together, or informal places to meet, there is limited coming together as a community.

3. **There is a sense of ownership and responsibility.**

In good neighborhoods, the emphasis is on creating a sense of ownership and responsibility for the neighborhood by the residents. This is facilitated by ensuring that each neighborhood has its own identity and character. It is enhanced by having the parts of the neighborhood interconnect internally and to the surroundings. It occurs where areas are not walled off into separate enclaves. It happens when there are other uses in a neighborhood which support the residential character and which can be identified as “mine” - my school, my church, my grocery, my day care center. It happens when an individual can meet lifetime housing needs - single, newly married, family, empty nest, and retirement - in the same neighborhood.

4. **The identity of the neighborhood is important.**

Each neighborhood is identifiable and distinctive. There is creativity in the layout and detail, and there is less of the cookie-cutter approach. The boundaries of the neighborhood are discernible. There are edges to the neighborhood which help create a sense of identity. This can be accomplished by: encouraging design compatibility of components within the neighborhood, using special layout and design treatments of streets and public spaces, encouraging gateways at major entrances, and the use of natural features to enhance identity.

5. **Variety and diversity are encouraged in the neighborhood.**

There is variety in housing types, age groups, and in income. This diversity adds interest and richness, and provides connections to people of all types. All of the life cycle needs can be met in the same locale, offering continuity and a sense of ownership and belonging. Different family configurations and needs are accommodated - there is day care, elderly care, and home-based work. Where there is a mix of age groups, the neighborhood is inhabited on a twenty-four hour basis. This enhances neighborhood safety.

6. **Land planning supports neighborhood character.**

The design of the neighborhood and its components responds to the surroundings to create a unified place. Neighborhood components are arranged to complement each other. Conflicts between the intended uses are minimized. This can be accomplished in many ways, such as: encouraging compatible land use relationships, incorporating open space planning into neighborhood design, encouraging active uses facing parks and public spaces, allow school sites to be used as neighborhood parks, and coordinating neighborhood-wide utilities planning.

7. **The neighborhood has a central place.**

This central space might be a well landscaped central street, a park, a playground, or some civic use. It might be an appropriately scaled commercial and service center. It is the symbolic focus of the neighborhood. It is easy to get to, safe, and pleasant. Neighbors can use it both formally - for civic meetings and other functions - and informally.

8. **The components of the neighborhood are interconnected.**

Things are not separated from one another. There is easy access between housing types, and between housing and other uses. Uses are not walled off into separate enclaves. Good neighborhoods thrive on accessibility and communication between neighbors. Walled off enclaves may appear to create safety within, but they also make the public space more dangerous. Where there are walls, the streets outside the walls are owned by no one, and they can become no man's land. Good neighborhoods can be created by limiting the use of walls, and by providing more attractive forms of buffering, such as street trees and landscaping. In instances where walls and other buffering are used to separate incompatible uses, they may block logical pedestrian or vehicular access. Walls and buffers which are designed to allow for cross access can provide the needed buffering while not impeding movement in the neighborhood.

9. **The neighborhood is linked with its larger context.**

There are links to surrounding neighborhoods and to the larger community. These are provided by interconnecting streets and a network of open space.

10. **The layout of blocks and streets encourages walking and bicycling.**

Walkable blocks have sidewalks, and where appropriate, the sidewalks are shaded. They are laid out in a regular pattern that is understandable. People using the streets pass by things which are interesting - especially things that have activities. Streets are safe, both in fact and perception. The passerby is not threatened by speeding cars. Street intersections are safe for pedestrian use. Pedestrians and bicyclists have ample room to maneuver safely.

People are encouraged to walk in their neighborhood when they can walk around reasonably sized blocks. Long blocks and cul-de-sacs discourage walking. Pedestrian activity is more likely where the pattern leads to some destination, such as the neighborhood center or natural feature.

Intersections should also be designed with the pedestrian in mind. A large turning radius at an intersection, such as thirty feet, requires the pedestrian to cross more of the street. Turning radii and other design details of the transportation system need to be coordinated with the City's Public Works Department. Smaller radii, such as fifteen feet, give less street to cross, and still allow vehicles to maneuver, albeit slower. In addition, marked crosswalks alert motorists that pedestrian activity can be expected and create a more pedestrian friendly atmosphere.

Walking and bicycling is encouraged where sidewalks and bike lanes are continuous. Ensuring there are no gaps in the sidewalks and providing adequate dimensions for bike lanes help attract users.

In semi-tropical climates like ours, alternative modes of transportation (walking and bicycling) are more attractive when they are comfortable. Regularly spaced shade trees provide a continuous canopy, which can make walking, bicycling, and waiting for transit more attractive options. Extensive shade trees also lower the ambient temperature of the entire neighborhood and help define the street as a sheltered public place.

In addition, the areas of the planted shade trees form a buffer and safety zone between the sidewalk and the street. Pedestrian activity and other social use of the street is enhanced where the front yards and sidewalks feel protected from fast moving cars.

11. Transit is an integral part of the neighborhood.

The arrangement of uses supports transit, with density and destinations related to transit stops. Stops are within walking distance of most homes and the neighborhood center. Transit stops are designed to be comfortable, inviting, and safe places to wait. There is seating, shade, and weather protection.

12. Cars have their appropriate place in the neighborhood.

Motorists are encouraged to travel at safe speeds because the streets are relatively narrow and because parking is allowed on the street. Cars may be stored toward the back of the lots, with garages often accessible by alleys or shaded driveways. The street facade of the houses, previously dominated by the garage, is thus freed for social use.

13. **Housing arrangement fosters neighborliness.**

The size and features of the space between the house and street affect social interaction. Neighborliness is encouraged where houses face the street, with active uses at the front. There is a visual connection between the front yard and the street. Houses should be designed so they are friendly to the street. People tend to know their neighbors when they see them and can interact with them on a regular basis. Windows, doors and porches make it easy to see and get to know your neighbors. Allowing the house to be close to the street makes the street scene more intimate and promotes neighborliness. The garage portion of the house may then be located to the rear, so the front of the house will not be dominated by the car.

14. **There are different scales of space.**

There are large spaces for gathering and small spaces for solitude. There are public, semi-public, semi-private, and private spaces. This variety allows public communication at different levels and personal privacy.

People in neighborhoods need spaces in the public realm where they can meet and get to know one another. This happens in parks, playgrounds, at the neighborhood center, along the street, and on street corners. The front yard and porches of houses are important as transition areas between the public and private domains. Neighborhoods which meet the range of residents' needs provide spaces for both highly active outdoor uses, such as basketball courts and playgrounds, and for more passive uses, such as sitting and talking, watching the sunset, and such things as public gardening.

Some of the most successful neighborhood spaces are very small. These type spaces seem to foster spontaneous interaction between people. Allowing small spaces in the public realm can greatly benefit the neighborhood.

15. **Streets belong to people.**

Streets belong to people driving cars, riding bicycles, walking, talking, socializing, or playing. The dominant users of the street may appear to be cars, but it is always people who drive cars.

Where the street is considered primarily a conduit for cars, there is little opportunity for spontaneous and sociable meeting between neighbors. Attractive comfortable places for people to walk, skate or bicycle helps bring activity to the street. Neighbors are most likely to use the street for social purposes when there is safety for both cars and pedestrians. The principal means for achieving this desired condition is to ensure cars move at a speed which is appropriate to the residential character of the neighborhood. Reduced street widths, small turning radii, on-street parking, and planted parkways with trees are some of the ways to slow the traffic down.

16. **Neighborhood design which responds to natural, cultural, and historic context.**

When neighborhood design responds to its context, neighborhood identity and connections with the entire community are reinforced. Climate and natural features may influence the layout of streets, open space, types of vegetation, and building design. Prevalent local culture or history may inspire distinctive streetscape elements, architectural style or details, or landmarks in neighborhoods. Various things can be done to address this need, such as: the use of climate-appropriate design and materials, limiting the requirements for fill above grade, encourage development which preserves trees and natural features, encourage the use of water-wise landscaping, reduce the impact and extent of paved areas, and encouraging the design and ornamentation of buildings and open space to express local culture and history.

APPENDIX 2

Neighborhood Planning Process

The material in this appendix is offered as a general guide, or check list, to assist neighborhoods in organizing their planning processes. The process outlined below is based on general neighborhood planning principles that have been successful in other communities. The general principles are the most important. Specific details should be viewed as illustrative; they should be examined and modified to fit the needs of each neighborhood.

This neighborhood planning process is a thorough, disciplined effort that the City helps the neighborhood undertake. A Planning Committee should be formulated within an established neighborhood association from a group of individuals who have an interest in participating in the process. The entire process may require up to eight to ten months of intense work and dedication on the behalf of the Planning Committee with significant input from the neighborhood as a whole at various stages.

As a neighborhood driven and broad-based process, each neighborhood must have the flexibility to define its stakeholders and its decision-making process. In addition, the City is responsible for ensuring an inclusive process and setting guidelines and evaluation criteria for how City dollars are spent.

Typically, a neighborhood planning process should follow below steps:

1. **Request for Neighborhood Asset Strategy Planning**

The Neighborhood and Development Services Department. will continually receive requests for neighborhood asset planning from eligible neighborhood associations. The request will be evaluated based on successful completion of an inventory of neighborhood assets and subsequent asset mapping, a demonstration of the neighborhood's organized support, and a demonstration of individuals willing to participate in the planning process. The Association must identify significant assets they want to enhance, and possible issues needing to be addressed. Upon review and evaluation, the Neighborhood and Development Services Department. will facilitate the planning process in tandem with association leadership.

The asset-based inventory is vital to a shared implementation of the plan and must be in place beforehand and updated regularly by the association.

2. **Education/Orientation**

In an ongoing effort to collaborate with neighborhoods wanting to participate in the neighborhood asset strategy planning process, the Neighborhood Planner will coordinate a neighborhood meeting to introduce the process and invite citizen participation. The active involvement of neighborhood residents and business owners (stakeholders) is critical to the success of the strategies which are developed. This level of involvement ensures that the future of the plan is responsive to the needs and desires of the neighborhood, and provides appropriate solutions to any identified issues. Asset survey and interviewing techniques are discussed at this stage, as well as the formulation of an asset inventory instrument tailored to the neighborhood's goals and expectations.

The Neighborhood Planner will support the Neighborhood Association in identifying stakeholders. A number of stakeholders will be identified from a review of the asset survey results. Stakeholders will be different for all neighborhoods and should also reflect the diversity and unique character of each area. It is especially important to remember that people of all ages, ethnicities, races, income levels and interests be included. The list should be broad and inclusive and may be narrowed later as issues become more defined. A stakeholder analysis will likely include the following:

- residents, property owners and tenants
- business owners
- other property owners
- community organizations such as community councils
- social service providers and their clients
- workers
- business organizations such as chambers of commerce
- fraternal and trade associations
- schools and their students
- major institutions such as universities and hospitals
- youth and seniors
- religious institutions
- developers

A Planning Committee consisting of stakeholders will begin meeting regularly to oversee the process. The size of the Planning Committee is dependent on the number of individuals who want to participate in the process. Ideally, the Planning Committee will consist of members who are demographically and geographically representative of the neighborhood.

The effectiveness of the Planning Committee is dependent on the identification and selection of its members. Strength and credibility comes from the process of inclusion and striving for a balanced group. The purpose is not only to avoid homogeneity, but also to take full advantage of the benefits of collaboration and participation. Organization is critical to the success of the neighborhood planning process. The

Planning Committee must be a determined and dedicated group of neighbors who drive the planning effort. Special skills or knowledge, while beneficial to the process, is not necessary. Planning Committee members need to believe that their involvement in this process will make a long-term difference in their neighborhood. Their specific responsibilities include: attending meetings of the Planning Committee and the Neighborhood Association, taking a lead role in the coordination of the asset survey, accurately communicating the actions of the Planning Committee and Neighborhood Association to both groups, and accurately representing the view of the Association at Planning Committee meetings.

The role of the Neighborhood Planner is primarily to coordinate the meetings of the Planning Committee, and act as a technical advisor and resource person to the group. The very nature of a neighborhood plan demands interdepartmental cooperation. Staff from other City departments will be asked to actively participate in the process if an issue of concern arises that affects their department, or requires their expertise and informational resources.

3. **Inventory – Asset Survey and Mapping Analysis**

Background information regarding the historical development and existing conditions is gathered through survey, research and observation. Current land use maps will be developed to illustrate conditions that exist in the neighborhood.

Face-to-face interaction of neighbors with both residents and businesses will begin to yield insights regarding their attitudes toward the neighborhood and what assets they may have to offer in order to make the area a better place to live and work. This deliberate pursuit of individual talents, experience, gifts, skills, and interest avails the necessary information to consider the full range of possible connections for action, problem solving, community building and organizing. The goal of the asset survey is to seek talents of the head, heart, and hands of neighbors to achieve sustained resident participation for asset-based community development.

Members of the neighborhood association are responsible for the asset survey data collection and information dissemination. The reason for this is to mobilize neighbors and build relationships by “connecting” resident assets to those with needs. To ensure the asset survey process is not too cumbersome for association members, the entire neighborhood need not be surveyed at once, but rather through a more manageable exercise via a block-by-block or street-by-street basis.

The Neighborhood and Development Services Department and other City departments will be called on to provide information and to perform support tasks such as mapping, graphics, data entry, and/or analysis. The role of the Planning Committee at this stage is to collect and evaluate the data and begin to connect the newfound assets with neighborhood needs. The Planning Committee would determine the frequency of updating the database. Upon determining assets within the neighborhood, the Planning

Committee would start to identify projects that can be completed expeditiously in an effort to show progress and build momentum.

4. **Community Visioning**

Once the benchmarks of the previous steps have been met, the neighborhood association is eligible to move forward with the next part of the planning process, Community Visioning. The results of the asset survey and mapping analysis allow the Neighborhood Association to understand the capacities found within the area. Through this realization, the Neighborhood Association can now begin to determine its needs. One of the Association's first tasks will be to determine how to translate resident skills and capacities into community-building goals. A neighborhood meeting should be held at this stage to with the residents and business interests to seek consensus on a neighborhood vision. This step in the process provides a clear understanding of the neighborhood's current position and the value and importance residents and business interests attach to issues that impact their neighborhood. In essence, at this stage they are taking the pulse of the neighborhood by asking the question, "Where are we now and where do we want to go?" Additional information gathered from surveys helps to identify the issues that might be addressed in the plan. The Neighborhood Association will also discuss the strengths, opportunities, and solutions within the neighborhood. With assistance from the Neighborhood Planner, the Neighborhood Association is responsible for reviewing the information collected in the previous stage of the process in order to identify the issues that might be addressed in the plan. The Neighborhood Association will have to use some judgment in pinpointing what the main issues are on which the plan should focus.

5. **Plan Development**

Using facilitation techniques coordinated by the Neighborhood Planner such as brainstorming, prioritization exercises, and breakout groups, the Neighborhood Association will envision a preferred future based on ideas and solutions that are raised by residents. The intent of this portion of the planning process is to develop a realistic, commonly accepted vision of the neighborhood with actionable items, which takes into account the strengths and opportunities and identifies what the neighborhood can and should become in the future. Maps and graphics are also included in the plan to illustrate the vision the plan is designed to achieve. Staff from relevant City departments participate in the interactive neighborhood planning meetings held at this stage to lend expertise regarding specific neighborhood issues.

Developing goals derived from the neighborhood's vision serves as the foundation for the neighborhood plan. Goals state what the neighborhood means to do about the issues. Objectives address how the goal will be achieved. Action items, considered the "teeth" of the plan, are the specific processes for carrying out the goals and objectives and are able to be measured. The goals, objectives, and subsequent action items are based on issues previously identified by the neighborhood. Any recommendations and action items

proposed in the neighborhood plan that are inconsistent with the current *Sarasota City Plan* must be noted, so that these inconsistencies can be addressed and resolved by the City. Resolution may take the form of an amendment to the *Sarasota City Plan*. The Neighborhood Association or designated Planning Committee, with support from the Neighborhood Planner, will outline specific implementation strategies with cost projections and the agencies responsible for carrying out each implementation strategy. To the greatest extent possible, the neighborhood plan should attempt to identify funding options and resources.

The neighborhood plan will include written recommendations of actions that should be taken to protect and improve the neighborhood. The plan becomes the basis for developing and implementing actions, services, ordinances, programs, etc., which may be carried out by the neighborhood association, the City, or other agencies and organizations. Drafting of the document is the responsibility of the Neighborhood Planner with input from other City departments and the neighborhood association.

6. **Approving and Adopting the Plan as Public Policy**

The Neighborhood Plan will be presented for approval to the neighborhood prior to being officially adopted by City Commission. A final draft will be presented to the neighborhood for resolution of outstanding issues and endorsement. Next, the plan for the neighborhood will be presented to the City Commission for review and adoption. The approved neighborhood plan will act as a supplement to the *Sarasota City Plan*.

7. **Asset-Leveraging - Implementation**

In order for the neighborhood plan to be realized, it is crucial that all previously identified stakeholders also actively participate in the implementation of the plan. It is also critical that neighborhood association members continue to connect identified resident assets with a determined need. The neighborhood association, the City, property owners, residents, private developers, nonprofit groups and many other entities will likely be involved in implementing the strategies and leveraging assets.

Each recommended action item will have a time frame for carrying out that specific portion of the plan. The primary parties responsible for implementing the recommendation will be identified, as well as the costs associated with the action will be projected, when feasible. There are instances where factors such as market value or redevelopment timing maybe difficult to predict. Nevertheless, most of the plan recommendations should be scheduled for implementation within five of the effective date of the Plan.

The “gaps” found between identified assets and neighborhood need are likely to require capital improvements which influence the City's budgeting process and the work plans of various City departments. The appropriate City departments and their resources should be accessed as needed. However, this is the main reason it is critical to have all

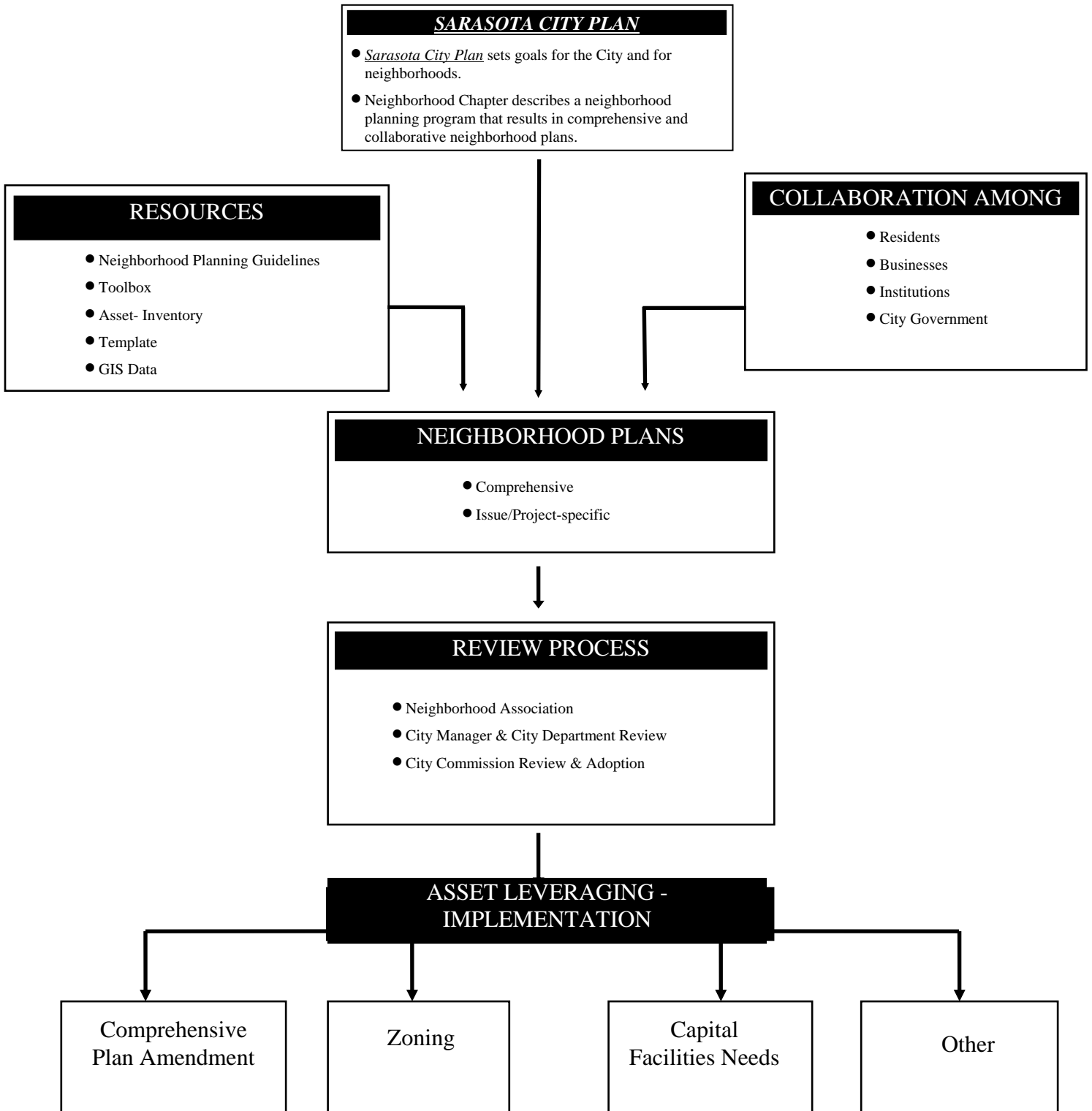
appropriate City agencies be involved, as necessary, during formulation of the neighborhood plan.

Neighborhood plans get implemented only if residents, with assistance from their Neighborhood Planner, systematically work to get the plan's recommendations acted on by the appropriate parties. Cooperation and collaboration throughout the process are the keys to the successful adoption and implementation of the neighborhood plan.

8. Monitoring, Evaluating and Updating the Plan

Neighborhood plans should not be viewed as static documents, but as parts of an ongoing process in which citizens should remain vigilant about conditions in their neighborhood and continually work to improve them. The neighborhood, in conjunction with the Neighborhood Planner, will periodically assess the progress in implementing the plan. Since conditions within the neighborhood could alter the premise for the various recommendations, it is important to revise the plan periodically to best accomplish originally identified goals and objectives. The Neighborhood and Development Services Department will produce an annual report to track accomplishments and outstanding issues.

Illustration N-2: Neighborhood Planning Process



APPENDIX 3

9J-5 Requirements Index

This is an optional Chapter. There are no requirements.

APPENDIX 4

Sarasota's Strategic Goals

In 2004, the City Commission adopted “Sarasota’s Approach to Strategic Planning”, which provides the foundation for the Strategic Plan and six Strategic Goals that are the foundation upon which the *Sarasota City Plan* is based. This appendix references objectives and action strategies in the *Sarasota City Plan* that implement these goals.

Our Vision

A City where urban amenities meet small town living.

The Goals of the City of Sarasota

1. **A responsible and accessible government that has sound financial and administrative practices.**

Applicable Action Strategies: 2.1, 2.7, 3.1, 3.6, and 10.4.

2. **Viable, safe and diverse neighborhoods and businesses that work together.**

Applicable Action Strategies: 1.1-1.3, 2.1-2.7, 3.1-3.8, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 5.1-5.4, 6.1-6.12, 7.1-7.9, 8.1-8.2, 9.1-9.2, and 10.1-10.5.

3. **An economically sustainable community.**

No Applicable Action Strategies.

4. **A workplace that attracts and retains an outstanding workforce.**

No Applicable Action Strategies.

5. **An attractive, environmentally-friendly community that is safe and livable and provides an array of cultural and aesthetic enjoyments.**

Applicable Action Strategies: 3.8, 4.2, 5.1, 5.2, 6.1-6.12, 7.1-7.9, and 10.2-10.5.

6. **Well maintained and future-oriented infrastructure.**

Applicable Action Strategies: 9.1 and 9.2.

APPENDIX 5

End Notes and Bibliography

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