

# 2007 Florida Cities of Excellence Awards Program ▶

Category (Please check one) See Award Criteria for more information. Please print or type. One nomination per page.

Name of Municipality Nominated \_\_\_\_\_  
Nominated by \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of City/Town/Village)

Name of Municipality Nominated City of Palm Bay  
Nominated Project Liberia Avenue Neighborhood Revitalization  
Nominated by City of Palm Bay City Council  
(Name of City/Town/Village)

Name of Individual Nominated \_\_\_\_\_  
Nominated by \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of City/Town/Village)

Name of Individual Nominated \_\_\_\_\_  
Nominated by \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of City/Town/Village)

Name of Individual Nominated \_\_\_\_\_  
Title \_\_\_\_\_ Department \_\_\_\_\_  
Nominated by \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of City/Town/Village)

Name of Individual Nominated \_\_\_\_\_  
Nominated by \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of City/Town/Village)

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Nominated by \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of City/Town/Village)

Name of Individual Nominated \_\_\_\_\_  
Nominated by \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of City/Town/Village)

**Finalist Information**

The following person will be the main contact if your city's nominee is selected as a finalist.

Please print or type.

Name Suzanne Sherman

Title Management Analyst

Government City of Palm Bay

Address 120 Malabar Road, SE Palm Bay, FL 32907

Telephone Number 321-952-3411 Fax 321-952-3412

E-mail Address sherms@palmabayflorida.org

**City Approval**

This nomination has been voted on and approved by a majority of the city council/commission.

Signed   
City Clerk

The judges will use the narrative and supportive information to select the award winners. Nominators/nominees are asked not to contact the judges directly.

**Narrative**

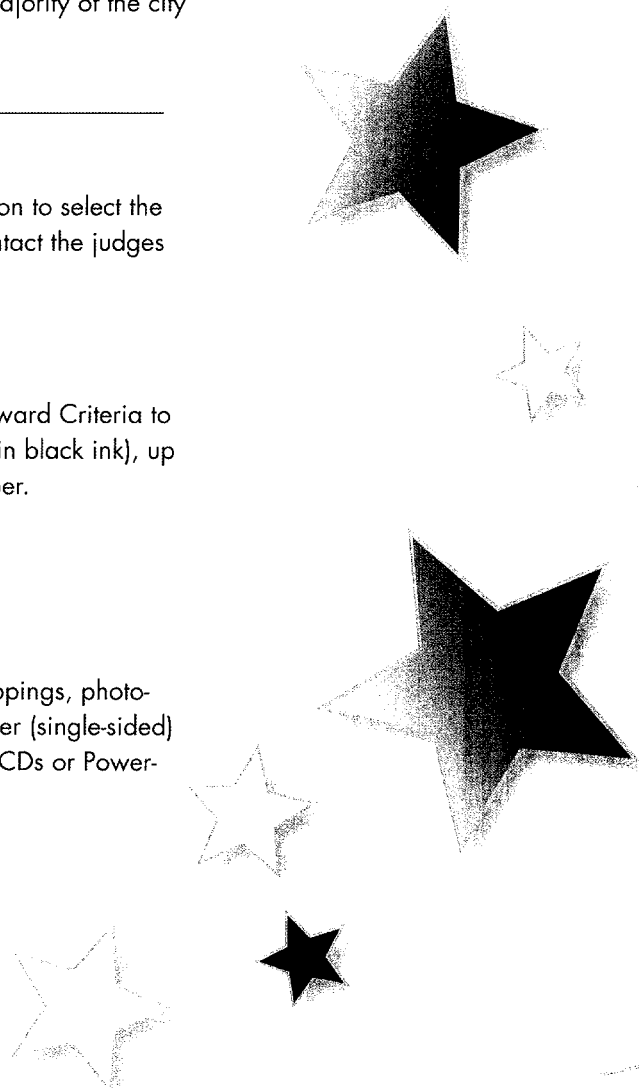
In the narrative, please be clear and concise, using the Award Criteria to support the selection of your nominee. Please type (or print in black ink), up to 1,200 words, double-spaced on white 8-1/2" x 11" paper.

Please include a word count: 1,198  
Number of words

**Supportive Information**

Up to 10 pages of supportive information (newspaper clippings, photographs, letters from constituents, etc.), on 8-1/2" x 11" paper (single-sided) may be provided. Please do not include videotapes, DVDs, CDs or Power-Point presentations.

Submit nominations by **August 10, 2007**:  
Florida League of Cities, Inc.  
Attn: Florida Cities of Excellence  
301 S. Bronough Street, Suite 300 (32301)  
P.O. Box 1757  
Tallahassee, FL 32302-1757



## Project Description

The Liberia Avenue Neighborhood Revitalization Project began in 2003 as a conventional capital improvement project, with the original premise being to fix severe paving and drainage problems throughout a neighborhood known as Powell's Subdivision. This neighborhood, located in the extreme northeast corner of the City of Palm Bay, had historically been plagued with poor drainage and frequent flooding, aged and failing infrastructure, run-down housing and a plethora of code violations, along with severe crime and drug trafficking problems. The main thoroughfare through the area, Liberia Avenue, was a primary focal point as it provided an easy entry/exit point for drug dealers and other criminal elements. What started out as a straightforward public works project to be supported by Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding, ultimately evolved into a multi-phase revitalization project, employing the services of staff in multiple city departments and drawing on strong community partnerships and citizen collaborations to change the direction of an entire neighborhood.

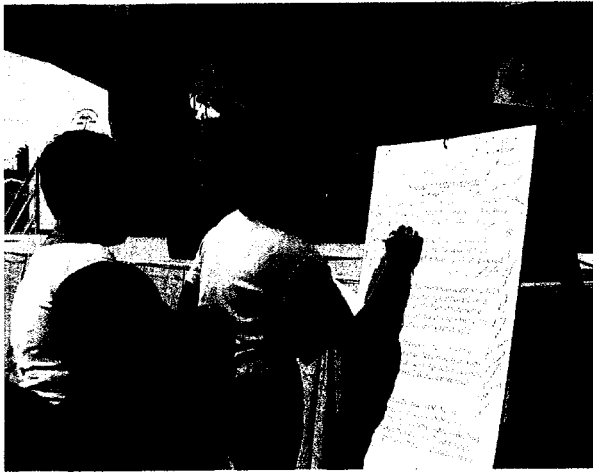
As a result of the poor condition of the neighborhood, the residents of the area had very little trust in local authorities. In fact, when an initial community meeting was held to inform residents about the city's planned paving and drainage improvements, the response was actually negative. In the midst of this situation, a Palm Bay police officer who had been actively involved in working in the area suggested that Liberia Avenue be either closed off or developed into some sort of linear park, all principles of a concept known as Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED). This suggestion and the discussion it generated proved to be the impetus needed to turn the project into a community revitalization effort.

In recognition of the sensitivity of the issues involved, partnership and communication with the community became priority focuses. Meetings were planned and scheduled on a monthly basis, and a representative committee of 12-15 community residents was formed to oversee the project. However, group meetings alone were not enough, and city staff began a concerted effort to reach out to various groups and individual leaders in the area in an attempt to truly distinguish between perceived and actual needs and to identify methods to address those needs. This included not only one-on-one meetings with community members, but also entailed staff walking the neighborhood with residents in outdoor evening meetings designed to provide city personnel with a first-hand understanding of the existing issues.



Disillusioned citizens were understandably still less than enthused and highly suspicious of the city's plans, so an initial phase "pilot" project was proposed to begin rebuilding trust. This included installation of some sidewalks, picnic areas with

benches, landscaping and the development of a zero-depth water feature, all part of the proposed linear park design on Liberia Avenue. After the completion of this phase as an initial sign of good faith, some community members were showing preliminary



support for continued activity, but vocal and conflicting groups within the area were still leery and uncertain that the city's planned improvements were best for their neighborhood. To overcome this obstacle, constant communication and outreach initiated by city staff became the norm, including meetings in the streets, recruiting supportive residents to survey others for ideas and input, and even city-funded barbeque events designed to bring people together and get them engaged in problem-solving as a community. Residents and city staff also agreed to and signed a "Covenant

for Our Community" document, which served as a visible reminder of the commitments that were being made. These steps proved to be fundamental in breaking through the tension and distrust, and resident support for further phases of the project was ultimately achieved.

A consultant was hired to work with residents to plan for visual aspects of the project such as landscaping, lighting, street furniture, entryways to the community, and signage. Monthly meetings and periodic inspections were scheduled throughout all phases of the project in an effort to keep everyone involved, answer questions, and garner feedback. Community partners included local congregations, a neighborhood charter school, and a civic organization, the Congregation for Community Action. Leaders from the City Council, County Commission, the Bayfront Community Redevelopment District, and the State Attorney's office were active participants in the endeavor. City staff from multiple departments became involved, including: police, fire, planning, parks, public works/engineering, code enforcement, and economic and neighborhood development. Media also played an important role, with the local newspapers providing positive coverage of the project.

The construction aspects of the project concluded in late summer 2006, and the project ultimately included the following improvements:

- construction of a large drainage system with an attractive retention pond;
- rebuilding the road network;
- removing several segments of the central interior road to interrupt traffic patterns;
- installation of traffic calming devices;
- installation of picnic areas, lighting, and landscaping throughout the neighborhood;
- conversion of a road right-of-way into a linear park;
- installation of sidewalks;
- additional parking for the existing adjacent park facility; and,

- installation of the city's first zero-depth water feature.

In addition to all of these upgrades and improvements, the area was renamed from Powell's Subdivision to Driskell Heights, further emphasizing that this neighborhood had experienced an extreme makeover. In addition to traditional municipal funding sources, a variety of grant funding was utilized to acquire property, support drainage and road improvements, and even increase police staffing. Transportation impact fees were utilized to support traffic and pedestrian capacity improvements, and the Bayfront Community Redevelopment Agency approved funding for landscaping and lighting components, along with more traditional municipal funding sources. The total cost of this approximately three year project was around \$2 million.

Aside from the more obvious external changes, many other positive aspects have materialized, including:

- Reduction in crime (26% drop in the first year of the project alone)
- Neighborhood watch units were set up in the neighborhood and are still active
- Community meetings continue to monitor all neighborhood activities
- Most of the initial code enforcement violations have been addressed; recently a group of City staff from the City Manager's Office, Code Compliance, and the Police Department began the first in a series of periodic visits to the area. This entails walking the neighborhood and identifying and following up on outstanding issues.
- Litter problems have been virtually eliminated and vandalism has not been an issue.
- The community is self policing through our Adopt-a-Road litter program; augmented by our Clean up Blitz Program (CLUB); and patrolled by our Beautification Enhancement Strike Team (BEST);
- Flooding problems have been resolved, as tested by Hurricane Wilma in 2005.

The Liberia Avenue Neighborhood Revitalization Project exemplifies the success and achievement that can occur when local government engages in partnership with its citizens. Although this could have remained a simple drainage improvement project, the willingness of those involved to take chances and think outside of the box led to substantial changes that have completely turned a neighborhood from a place of blight and crime to a place that residents can be proud to call home. Any agency that makes a serious commitment to a revitalization project will find that incredible results can be achieved when collaboration and communication with citizens are given top priority.







To all,

The Liberia Avenue Improvements Project involved the development of a multi-faceted project located in the extreme northeast part of Palm Bay. The development of this project began with the original premise being to fix the paving and drainage problems throughout the area. This had evolved to a more complex project with several phases employing the services of many disciplines and strong community involvement and commitment.

This neighborhood has been plagued with poor drainage and flooding, aged and failing infrastructure, and crime and drug trafficking for many years. As a result of such conditions the residents of this area have illustrated that they previously had little trust in city officials.

Funded through Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Transportation Impact Fees, Redevelopment Agency Funding, Grants and General Fund support, turning the street into a linear park by employing Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles was just the beginning of what developed into not only a project for the community but one by the community.

The community support and interest for this project has gone from one of suspicion and opposition to that of support and trust. As a result, new partnerships and friendships have been developed and trust was restored in local government and city staff by of the community:

- Mayor and City Council
- Bayfront Community Redevelopment Agency Representatives
- Neighborhood State Attorney's Office
- Mt. Moriah – Rev. Harvey Riley
- Diamond Community School – Dr. Fields
- Congregation for Community Action – Janice Everson, Norm Gleason
- Apostolic Church – Rev. Hadley
- Citizens, Lead by James Culver
- Community Development Neighborhood Committee (Glenn Morris' Group)
- All city departments, management, and staff

As the Public Works Director I have supported all of the efforts and the efforts of the partners in this endeavor to ensure that the covenant to our community was to be not only a vision to strive towards but a reality that we can all realize together as a team.

We have done this.

Sincerely

Jim Proce  
Your Friendly Neighborhood Public Works Director