

2007 Florida Cities of Excellence Awards Program ▶ Nomination Form

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

FLORIDA CITY OF EXCELLENCE AWARD
Name of Municipality Nominated _____
Nominated by _____
(Name of City/Town/Village)

CITY SPIRIT AWARD
Name of Municipality Nominated City of Tarpon Springs
Nominated Project Affordable Housing Partnership
Nominated by Tarpon Springs City Commission
(Name of City/Town/Village)

MAYOR OF THE YEAR
Name of Individual Nominated _____
Nominated by _____
(Name of City/Town/Village)

COUNCIL MEMBER OF THE YEAR
Name of Individual Nominated _____
Nominated by _____
(Name of City/Town/Village)

CITY EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR
Name of Individual Nominated _____
Title _____ Department _____
Nominated by _____
(Name of City/Town/Village)

CITY MANAGER OF THE YEAR
Name of Individual Nominated _____
Nominated by _____
(Name of City/Town/Village)

CITY CLERK OF THE YEAR
Name of Individual Nominated _____
Nominated by _____
(Name of City/Town/Village)

CITY ATTORNEY OF THE YEAR
Name of Individual Nominated _____
Nominated by _____
(Name of City/Town/Village)

CITY FINANCE OFFICIAL (DIRECTOR OR OFFICER) OF THE YEAR
Name of Individual Nominated _____
Nominated by _____
(Name of City/Town/Village)

CITY CITIZEN OF THE YEAR
Name of Individual Nominated _____
Nominated by _____
(Name of City/Town/Village)

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Contact Person

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

Please print or type.

Name Judy Staley
Title Research & Information Officer
Government City of Tarpon Springs
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Telephone Number 727-938-3711 Fax 727-937-8199
E-mail Address jstaley@ci.tarpon-springs.fl.us

Nomination Certification

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

Signed *Jane S. Jacobs*
City Clerk Resolution 2007-32
8-7-2007

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.

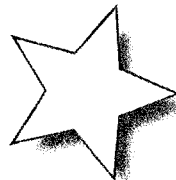
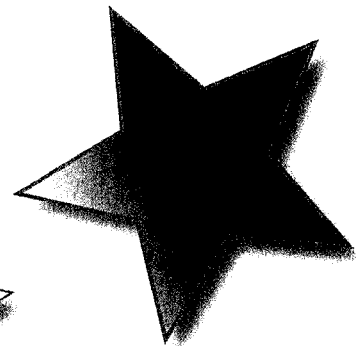
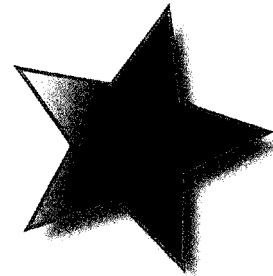
Please include a word count: 1192
Number of words

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



Tarpon Springs Affordable Housing Partnership Brings Spirit to the Union Academy Neighborhood

A unique redevelopment partnership is attacking crime in a once blighted neighborhood within walking distance of Tarpon Springs' historic downtown. This innovative public – private partnership is also creating affordable housing for residents by offering financing options designed to make home ownership a reality for those who might otherwise never be able to achieve this dream.

The project began in the mid-1990's in the union academy neighborhood, plagued by persistent crime and declining housing conditions. Traditional methods of fighting crime were not working. From this problem, a public-private partnership was born between the City's Police Department, Code Enforcement Division, Tarpon Springs Housing Authority, Pinellas County Economic Development, a private-for-profit builder/developer Neighborhood Homes of West Florida and the residents of the neighborhood

Today, the results are startling. Declining properties have been repaired or demolished, new affordable homes have been built and violent crime has become virtually non-existent in the Union Academy neighborhood. Crime statistics continue to improve. There has been an overall decrease of 37% in the number of total incidents reported and a 63% decrease in calls reporting violence.

A total of 28 single-family homes in the popular neo-traditional style have been sold to income qualified buyers. Two of the major roads in the area have been reconstructed and street-scaped through Community Development Block Grants and plans are in the works for a third major project. A thriving youth center is owned and operated in the neighborhood by the Tarpon Springs Police Department with the assistance of grants from the Pinellas County Juvenile Welfare Board.

In the mid-1990's, properties in this area were declining in value and condition and over 70% of the dwelling units were renter occupied. It was difficult to establish a true sense of community pride within due to the low percentage of owner occupied homes. Land acquisition, demolition of substandard structures and aggressive code enforcement has improved the overall condition of the neighborhood, however home ownership was established as an overall goal for a long lasting impact.

The opportunity for new home construction was enhanced by the large number of vacant parcels within the area that remained undeveloped due to the high crime and blighted conditions. The neighborhood had many strong points: proximity to the "Pinellas Trail" linear park; Tarpon Springs Fundamental Elementary School, Dorsett Park; the Tarpon Springs Police Department's Cops & Kids Youth Center; two major shopping centers and the Citizen's Alliance for Progress, a community based organization that has been successful in the delivery of social services. The image of the neighborhood has changed over the last ten years and with each success, the climate for new development is enhanced.

The Police Department works closely with the Tarpon Springs Housing Authority to improve the public housing environment and remove residents found to be involved in illegal narcotics activities. Strict rules for eligibility and a "One-Strike" policy improved conditions within public housing to the point that the program now has a one-year waiting list. Nineteen new public housing units have been developed and old units demolished utilizing Public Housing Capital Funds, Pinellas County Community Development SHIP Funds and City Redevelopment Funds. Over the next year, phase 2 and 3 of this project will add 52 new units.

Improvement is not just the result of an increase in police presence. The entire condition of the neighborhood was addressed through improved street

lighting; construction and repair of sidewalks; organized semi-annual community clean-ups; demolition of sub-standard structures; an intensive "paint-up green-up" program; increased code enforcement and injunctions against nuisance businesses.

From 2002 – 2005, two Community Development Block Grant projects were made possible by Pinellas County Community Development. The projects reconstructed two major roads that bisect the neighborhood; added street lighting; sidewalks; drainage improvements and decorative brick crosswalks to both roads. The improvement of infrastructure and pedestrian amenities on these roadways has also positively influenced the re-development effort.

Re-zoning has encouraged the development of single family homes. The Housing Authority is also constructing town-home style buildings on some of its vacant properties similar in design to market priced complexes and targeted toward a population earning 60 to 80% of the median area income (a maximum of \$43,500 for a family of four).

Public sector commitments made it possible to secure investment from the private sector by Neighborhood Homes of West Florida. Neighborhood Homes recognized the importance of building neo-traditional homes that would fit the neighborhood and create a sense of community. A reduction in the disproportionate number of renter-occupied dwelling units is being achieved by providing a combination of new housing and rehabilitated homes.

Over 57 parcels of land have been purchased and 28 homes have been completed and sold. All purchasers' income statistics fall under 120% of the median income (\$65,280 for a family of 4. These units are funded by Florida DCA Urban Infill Grants; City of Tarpon Springs Redevelopment Funds; Pinellas County Community Development (PCCD) Model Home Program Funds; PCCD

Land Acquisition Program; PCCD Home Buyer's Assistance Program and the Florida Housing Finance Homeowners Assistance Program.

The Housing Authority created a private-non-profit affiliate in 2005, the Local Community Housing Corporation. The LCHC develops and manages affordable housing and facilitates services that support residents including a home share program; senior grant program and the Cops & Kids middle school youth program.

The Home Share Program helps solve housing needs for those who cannot afford typical rentals in the area by providing rental properties at affordable prices and helps to resolve home owner cost crisis created by skyrocketing insurance and property tax costs by matching home providers with home seekers. It is the first program of its kind in Florida. It matches compatible people, provides background checks and thoroughly checks references.

The Senior Home Repair Program is funded by Pinellas County Community Development and provides grants up to \$20,000 for home repairs. Currently 21 seniors are in the program, all under 80% of the median income. The LCHC acts as an advocate for seniors through problem solving, income qualification, processing of grant and loan applications, obtaining contractor bids and inspection / approval of the work performed.

The Cops & Kids after School / Summer Camp fosters healthy social and personal behavior for middle school age, very low income children. Fifty children attend after school and 90 children attend summer camp. The Housing Authority, Police Department and YMCA partner in this project with funding provided by a Juvenile Welfare Board grant. All public housing middle school children attend free of charge. The curriculum includes character building, life skills, educational programs, social skills, community service and field trips.

Purchase and rehabilitation of existing homes is also a component of the re-development effort. Structurally sound homes that lack the amenities commonly associated with today's standards are candidates. Through the purchase and re-habilitation of existing structures, the program is able to further decrease the number of minimally maintained or blighted structures, and offers another alternative to the housing market. While new home construction is the primary focus, many of those that do not qualify for a new home can qualify for a rehabilitated home. Lease options to purchase are being explored as an incentive to qualified applicants who are working to improve their credit.