

# Venice Gardens Neighborhood Plan



Approved September 28, 2005 by the  
Board of County Commissioners

Plan Prepared By:  
Sarasota County Neighborhood Services

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Venice Gardens residents participated in many meetings during this neighborhood planning process



Venice Gardens Aerial Map showing Neighborhood Planning boundaries

## Executive Summary

Sarasota County Neighborhood Services, at the request of the Board of County Commissioners, worked with the Venice Gardens Neighborhood to develop this Neighborhood Plan. This plan is the neighborhood residents' statement of issues and priorities that they believe will enhance the future of the Venice Gardens community. The plan is comprised of eight elements defined by the residents, property owners, and other stakeholders in the Venice Gardens Neighborhood. The eight (8) identified elements comprising the Venice Gardens neighborhood are: Code Enforcement,

Transportation, Appearance & Beautification, Parks & Recreation, Integrated Water Resources (Drainage & Stormwater, Utilities & Potable Water), Deed Restriction Information, Crime & Safety, and Community Building & Association Building.

Sarasota County, through its Neighborhood Planning efforts, allots money for capital improvements and other projects identified through the neighborhood planning process. After six (6) months of meetings and working together, the Venice Gardens community voted to request funding for the following projects:

- Sidewalk construction along Banyan Drive from Center Road to Shamrock Blvd. - approximate cost \$265,000
- Sidewalk construction along Pomelo Drive from Shamrock Blvd. to Briarwood Road - approximate cost \$197,000
- Six (6) speed tables throughout the community, with locations to be determined by residents with the support of Sarasota County Transportation Planning staff - approximate cost \$45,000

Neighborhood Services staff recommends that the Board of County Commissioners approve \$520,000 in funding for implementation of the aforementioned projects identified through the neighborhood planning process.

Multiple business units throughout the County are contributing funds from their operating budgets to address other neighborhood-identified projects. Parks & Recreation is installing a fitness trail, playground path, and two signs at the Venice Gardens neighborhood park. SCAT is considering bus stop improvements on Center Road; and Traffic Operations will install signs that are requested through the Traffic Advisory Council. The neighborhood has identified several projects that they will coordinate through their association and the Neighborhood Grant Program.



Residents consider their options before casting their vote for Neighborhood projects

## Introduction

### *The Planning Process*

In June 2004, the Sarasota County Board of Commissioners authorized Neighborhood Services staff to engage residents of the Venice Gardens community in the neighborhood planning process. The Venice Gardens neighborhood was chosen for a plan based upon a number of factors, among them the intensity and consistency of area residents' interest in participating in a plan and the County's desire to be comprehensive in its neighborhood planning efforts. (Neighborhood Services worked with the Woodmere neighborhood, located immediately to the east, to complete a plan in 1998 and with the South Venice neighborhood, located immediately to the south and west, to complete a plan in 2003.)

The planning process for the Venice Gardens neighborhood officially began on April 2, 2005 with a drop-in open house, at which residents talked with County staff from business centers across the

organization about specific problems and concerns impacting the Venice Gardens neighborhood. Prior to the Board of County Commissioners authorizing the Venice Gardens plan, Neighborhood Services staff met with board members of the Venice Gardens Homeowners' Association (VG HOA) to gather information about the community's strengths and opportunities for improvement. The information obtained at this earlier meeting served as a starting point for conversations at the open house, which was held at the VG HOA clubhouse located on Shamrock Blvd., a centrally-located community asset within the neighborhood. About 60 residents came out to share their perspectives, making the open house a success.



Venice Gardens Homeowners Association Community Building

Following the open house, staff compiled the citizen input into a document and mailed it, along with a meeting notice, to every household within the planning area. On April 19, 2005, residents gathered once again to prioritize, by order of perceived importance, the issues identified at the Open house. The resulting issue prioritization (detailed below) largely dictated the order in which these issues were discussed.



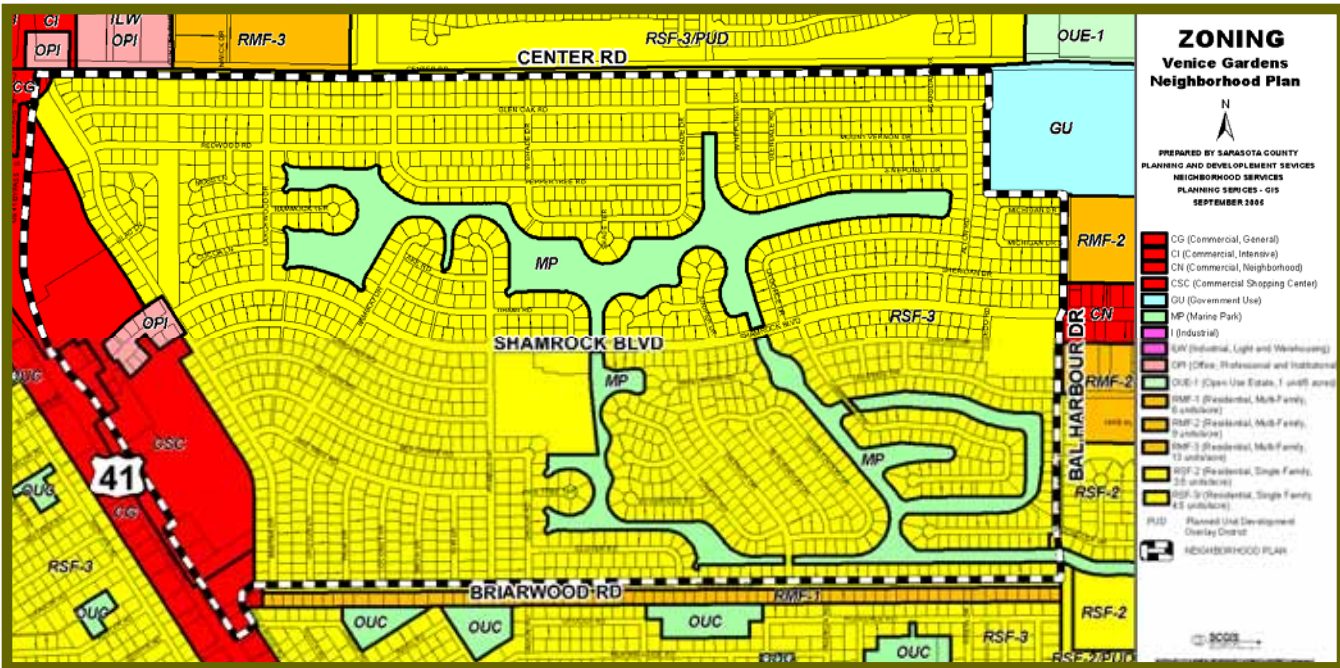
Sarasota County Stormwater Management staff present to residents at a neighborhood meeting

1. Code Enforcement
2. Transportation
3. Appearance & Beautification
4. Parks & Recreation
5. Drainage & Stormwater, Utilities & Potable Water
6. Deed Restriction Information
7. Crime & Safety
8. Community Building & Association Building

The Venice Gardens Neighborhood Committee, comprised of those residents exercising their right to participate in the neighborhood planning process, met bi-monthly from April 19<sup>th</sup> to September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2005. Participants and County staff discussed in detail one or more of the issue areas outlined above at each of the Tuesday night meetings. The results of these efforts have been synthesized into the Venice Gardens Neighborhood Plan. About 100 households contributed time and energy to the creation of this plan.

### ***Land Use & Development***

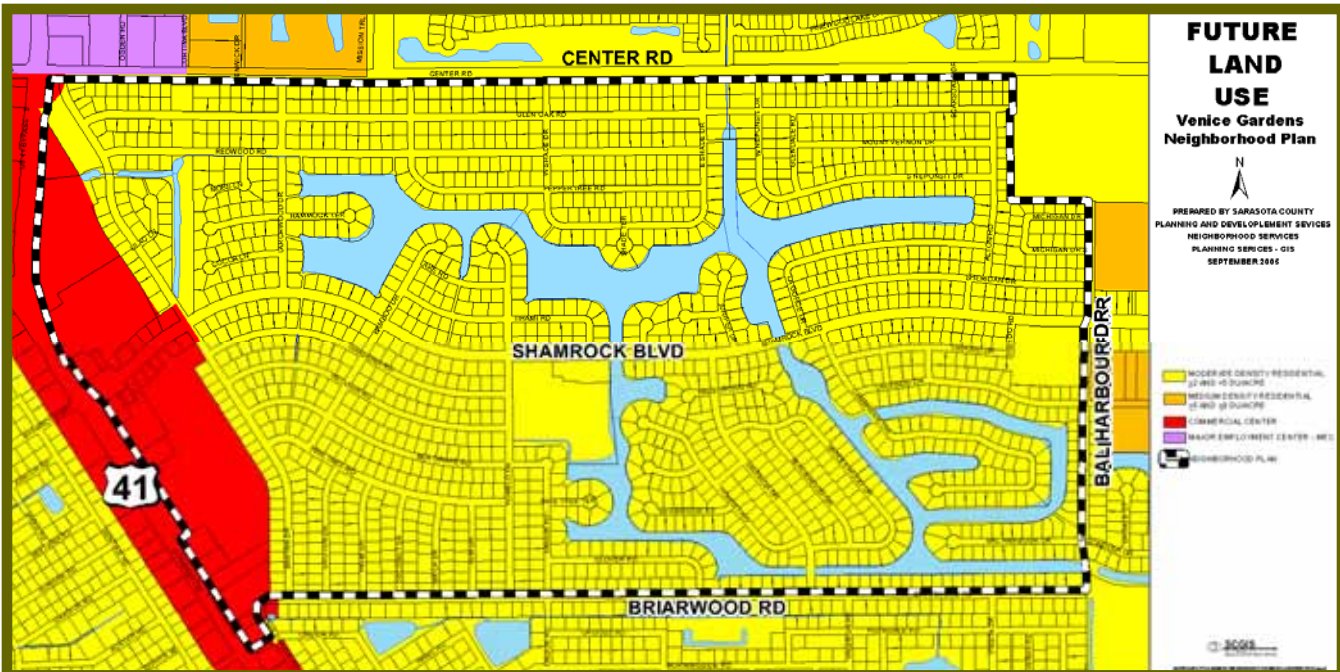
The Venice Gardens Neighborhood is located in the southern portion of Sarasota County. The neighborhood is bounded by Center Road to the north, U.S. 41 to the west, Briarwood Road to the south, and Bal Harbour Drive to the east. The Venice Gardens Neighborhood is approximately 627± acres and is predominately single family residences with commercial, office, and professional uses along U.S. 41. Garden Elementary School is located on the northeast corner of the planning area. The Venice Gardens Homeowners Association building (a voluntary association) is located centrally within the neighborhood along Shamrock Boulevard. This community building has a swimming pool



Zoning Districts within the Venice Gardens Neighborhood

that is accessible to its members. Abutting this property is a playground that is located on Sarasota County owned land and is maintained by Parks and Recreation.

The majority of the area is zoned RSF-3 (Residential, Single Family, 4.5 dwelling units/acre), while portions of the planning area are zoned OPI (Office, Professional and Institutional), CSC (Commercial Shopping Center), and MP (Marine Park). Future Land Use designations for the Venice Gardens Neighborhood are Moderate Density Residential (between 2 and 5 dwelling units per acre) and Commercial Center. These designations are consistent with the existing uses within the



Future Land Use designations within the Venice Gardens Neighborhood

## Venice Gardens Neighborhood Plan

neighborhood boundaries. New commercial development is occurring along U.S. 41; Lowe's, a home improvement store, was recently constructed south of Shamrock Boulevard.

Venice Gardens development began in the late 1950s and continued throughout the 1960s and 1970s. The first plat was recorded with the Sarasota County Clerk's Office in 1956 and the final plat was recorded in 1972. While there are a total of 34 plats recorded as Venice Gardens, thirty (30) of these are within the Venice Gardens Neighborhood planning area. The remaining four plats, which are now known as Jacaranda West, are included in the Woodmere Plan. The predominant developer for the majority of Venice Gardens was Venice Gardens, Inc. According to the 2000 Census, the average year of home construction within Venice Gardens Neighborhood is 1969. Most homes are of concrete block construction.



Venice Gardens Neighborhood sign located on Shamrock Boulevard and U.S. 41. Venice Gardens began construction in the 1950's

### Demographics

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, there are 2,917 people living within the Venice Gardens Neighborhood. Venice Gardens is located within Census tract 25.04, Block Groups 1 and 2.

While the Census boundaries don't "fit" the Venice Gardens Neighborhood boundary perfectly, these two block groups are the best representation of the Venice Gardens Neighborhood.

*Educational Attainment* - For the population aged 25 years and over, 83.8% of Venice Gardens residents have a high school diploma (includes equivalency). Of those residents that have completed high school, 25.4% have some college experience but no degree. Almost 12% of residents have bachelor's degrees, 2.7% have master's degrees and 1.8% have doctorate degrees.

#### Quick Facts

Females - 54.2%

Males - 45.8%

Median Age - 52.5 Years Young

87.6% Owner Occupied Housing Units

12.4% Renter Occupied Housing Units

Source: U.S. Census , 2000	Population	Percentage
Total Population of Venice Gardens	2,917	100%
Ethnicity		
Hispanic	47	1.6%
Non-Hispanic	2,870	98.4%
Race		
White Alone	2,795	95.8%
Black or African American Alone	39	1.3%
American Indian and Alaska Native Alone	10	0.4%
Asian Alone	27	0.9%
Some Other Race Alone	15	0.5%
Two or More Races	31	1.1%
Males	1,336	45.8%
Females	1,581	54.2%
Median Age - Total Population	52.5	N/A
Median Age - Males	50.5	N/A
Median Age - Females	54.5	N/A

<i>Source: U.S. Census, 2000</i>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Population in Family Households	2,347	80.5%
Population in Non-Family Households	570	19.5%
Average Household Size (Number of Persons per Dwelling Unit)	2.2	N/A
Occupancy Status of Homes	1,508	100%
Occupied Housing Units	1,383	91.7%
Vacant Housing Units	125	8.3%
Occupied Housing Units - Tenure	1,383	100%
Owner Occupied	1,211	87.6%
Renter Occupied	172	12.4%
Houses that are for Seasonal/Occasional Use Only	48	3%
Median Value of Home	\$89,350	N/A
Median Household Income in 1999	\$36,546	N/A
Percentage of Households that Receive Social Security Income	N/A	54.3%
Percentage of Households that Receive Public Assistance Income	N/A	0.7%
Employment Status for the Population 16 Years and Over	2,470	100%
In Labor Force:	1,246	50.4%
Employed	1,246	50.4%
Unemployed	0	0%
Not in Labor Force:	1,224	49.6%
Primary Means of Transportation to Work for Those that Work:	1,206	100%
Drove Alone in Own Vehicle	1,012	83.9%
Carpooled	70	5.8%
Public Transportation (Bus)	7	0.6%
Walked	42	3.5%
Other Means	33	2.7%
Worked at Home	42	3.5%



Most Recent Appraised Value of Homes in the Venice Gardens Neighborhood (Source: Property Appraiser Data)

## Code Enforcement

Issues relating to code enforcement emerged as the top priority for residents of the Venice Gardens planning area. At the meeting dedicated to discussing this issue, initial confusion existed about the difference between regulations contained in Sarasota County's Code of Ordinances and regulations contained in deeded covenants or restrictions enacted by homeowners' associations. As a result of this initial confusion, Neighborhood Services staff reserved a future meeting date at which to provide information on the process for reviving expired deed restrictions as well as to discuss the specific details of deed restrictions that at one time applied to plats within the Venice Gardens planning area.

Sarasota County Code Enforcement officers from Planning & Development Services (PDSBC) and Environmental Services (ESBC) business centers attended the meeting to address residents' general and specific code enforcement concerns. The officers explained the two broad categories of enforcement – solid waste regulations and building and zoning code regulations – and shared information about what types of enforcement fall under the purview of the Sheriff's Department as opposed to either PDSBC or ESBC. Through the Neighborhood Planning process, at least 10 code violations in the Venice Gardens area were voluntarily remedied. Many of the concerns voiced by Venice Gardens residents relate to the presence of unsightly trash and debris on properties throughout the neighborhood and commercial vehicles parked in a residential zone.

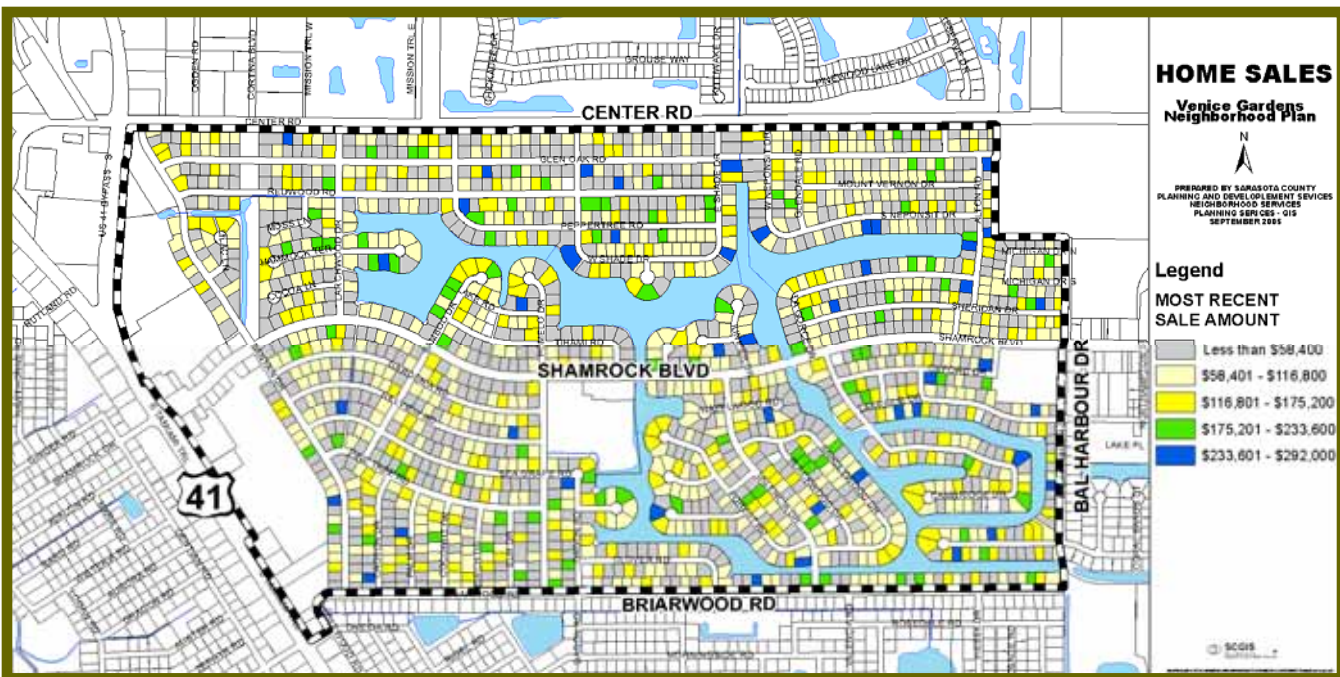
Over the course of the meeting, several trends emerged in conversations among neighbors in Venice Gardens. The neighbors agreed that some conditions that habitually exist in the neighborhood, while not necessarily violating any County regulations, have undesirable effects on the community atmosphere. Meeting participants generally agreed that they would favor the adoption of County ordinances regulating the following:

- Limiting and/or restricting overnight street parking in residential areas

- Limiting the maximum number of automobiles allowed to park on the yard or in front of a house.
- Limiting the maximum number of recreation vehicles, boats, and trailers allowed to park on each property based on lot size.
- Establishing minimum maintenance and aesthetic standards applied to conditions like landscaping, fences, and roofs.



Age of Housing in Venice Gardens by Year Built (Source: Property Appraiser Data)



Home Sales Information for Venice Gardens Neighborhood - Sale Amount Reflects the Most Recent Sales Data According to the Property Appraiser

Because any changes to the County Code would apply to the entire County (as opposed to just the Venice Gardens neighborhood), the Venice Gardens residents' commitment in assisting to get these suggested changes considered by the Board of County Commissioners consists of organizing County-wide support among other homeowner associations, civic associations, neighborhood groups, and residents. County staff has offered to assist neighborhood leaders in identifying appropriate points of contact for targeting these conversations.

In addition to mobilizing support for ordinances regulating these conditions, residents have discussed possible information campaigns aimed at educating property owners as to their responsibilities in maintaining their properties and, in so doing, their neighbors' property values and the neighborhood identity.

## Crime & Safety

Generally, neighborhood residents feel safe in Venice Gardens. Crime rates in the area are relatively low, thanks in part to the Venice Gardens Citizens Patrol, which has been active since 1978. The



Homes within Venice Gardens that have Homestead Exemptions - this indicates the ownership versus rental rates within the Neighborhood (Source: 2005 Property Appraiser Data)

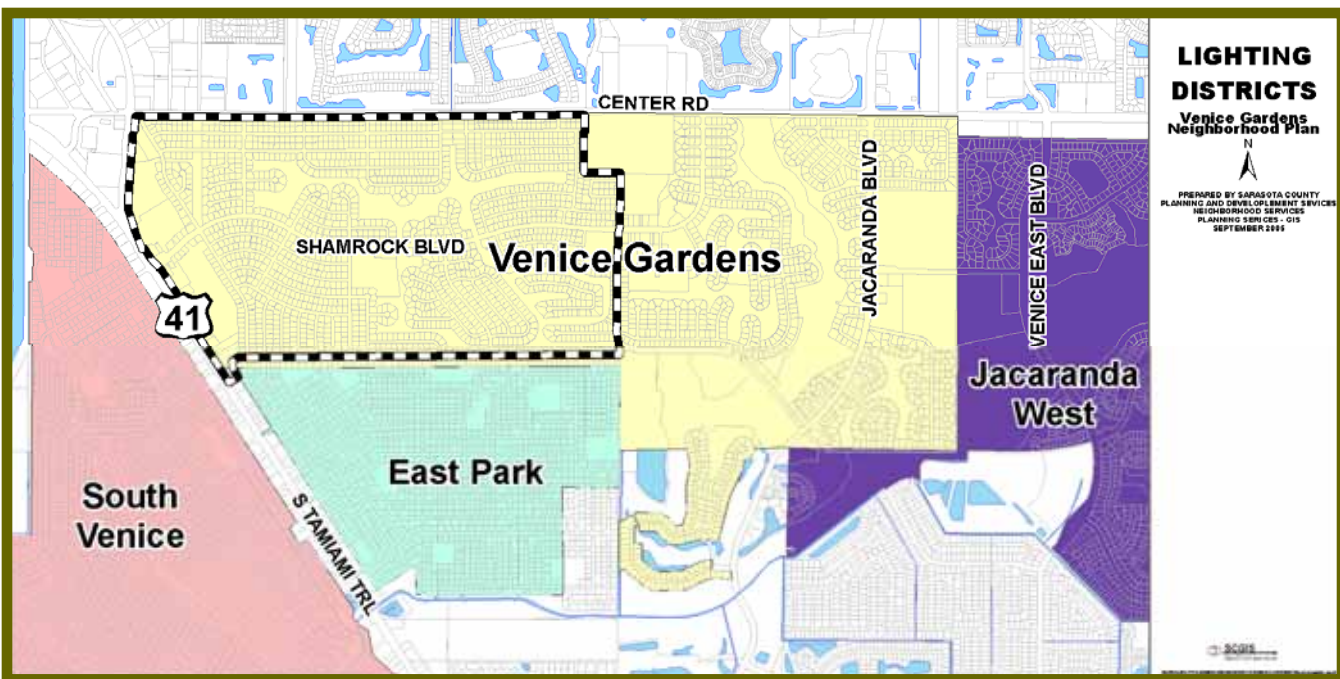
Venice Gardens Citizens Patrol sent a representative to spend the evening with residents to spread the word about ways for neighbors to get involved in keeping their community safe. Sarasota County Sheriff Department Neighborhood Community Policing officers also attended to hear residents' concerns relating to crime and safety.

Several participants emphasized problems with traffic speeding through the community, posing a threat to neighborhood safety, especially given the proximity to Garden Elementary School. While there are currently four traffic units (both marked and unmarked) patrolling the Venice Gardens neighborhood, drivers continue to use excessive speed when traveling through the primarily residential area.

In response to this issue, residents generated several potential solutions to control the flow of traffic through the neighborhood. Many of the proposed solutions involve the installation of additional signage, such as:

- Installing **personalized neighborhood signs** reading, “This is our neighborhood. Please drive carefully.” (Total cost: \$200 per sign)
- Installing **speed limit signs** on certain high-speed neighborhood streets, including Glen Oak (Total cost: \$200 per sign)
- Installing **stop signs** (total cost: \$200 per sign) on targeted neighborhood streets and at intersections such as:
  - a.) Redwood Road and Banyan Drive,
  - b.) Gondola Drive and Bal Harbour Drive,
  - c.) Glen Oak Road and East Shade Drive, and
  - d.) Glen Oak Road and Neponsit Drive

In an effort to emphasize the importance of shared responsibility between Sarasota County and Venice Gardens residents for improving the neighborhood’s sense of place, Neighborhood Services



The Venice Gardens Neighborhood is part of the Venice Gardens Lighting District (shown in yellow).

staff provided residents with all of the information necessary for them to initiate requests for additional signage. Any signage that residents elect to pursue must be approved by the Traffic Advisory Council and the Board of County Commissioners via established processes. Standard speed limit and stop signs are funded by Traffic Operations

Beyond adding additional signage, residents identified a few areas, listed below, where the **installation of traffic calming devices, such as speed tables**, could impact traffic flow and speed. County Transportation Planning staff informed residents that, to be effective, a minimum of two speed tables - at a cost of \$7,500 each - should be constructed on a given stretch of road. Based on that

information, residents opted to request \$45,000 in Neighborhood Initiative dollars for the construction of six speed tables throughout the neighborhood planning area. Some of the potential speed table locations identified by residents include:

- a) Glen Oak Road,
- b) Neponsit Drive,
- c) Larchwood Drive,
- d) East Shade Drive,
- e) Banyan Drive

Upon adoption of this plan by the Board of County Commissioners, residents will meet with Sarasota County Transportation Planning staff to determine the exact locations for the speed tables. Once the locations have been identified, residents will gather the necessary neighborhood support from residents living in both the benefit area and the impact area prior to installation of the speed tables, adhering to the process guidelines used by any citizen in initiating a traffic calming request outside of a neighborhood plan, in the interest of fairness and equity.

## Infrastructure, Transportation, & Circulation

Venice Gardens residents expressed concern about the traffic impacts related to new commercial development at Shamrock Boulevard and U.S. 41. Sarasota County Transportation Planning staff attended a meeting to discuss the subject. Staff relayed that some of the specific traffic concerns voiced by residents will be alleviated when the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) implements its plans to construct dual turn lanes and a left-turn pocket southbound on U.S. 41 and to extend the median in front of the new commercial development.

Some residents expressed the desire to see additional street lights installed along Pomelo Drive. Because the neighborhood planning area does fall within the Venice Gardens Lighting District (see Lighting District map on previous page), county staff directed citizens to route any requests for additional lighting through the existing lighting improvement district. Handling lighting requests through the lighting district rather than through the neighborhood planning process ensures that the homeowners who will ultimately bear responsibility for funding the energy costs and maintenance of any additional lighting installed will have a voice in determining whether or not the additional lighting is warranted.

Pedestrian safety is being addressed in several projects that are already under design and funded. One project is the Center Road and Pinebrook Road improvement project, which includes intersection signalization and crosswalks. The other planned sidewalk projects include:

Sidewalk Location	Cost of Construction
Briarwood Road	\$572,000
Sklar Drive	\$209,000
Venice East Boulevard	\$512,000
South & East Gondola Drive	\$769,000

Figure 1: Sidewalks Planned for Venice Gardens Neighborhood (unassociated with Neighborhood Planning Process)

Based on concerns similar to those expressed in relation to traffic speeding through the neighborhood, many residents expressed a need for sidewalks because they feel unsafe when walking on the streets. The number of school children who walk to school through the Venice Gardens neighborhood has been increasing in recent years, heightening the need for safe sidewalks.

Through the Neighborhood Planning process, meeting participants have elected to apply County resources towards **constructing sidewalks** on the following streets:

Road	Section	Estimated Cost
Pomelo Drive	Briarwood Road to Shamrock Boulevard	\$197,000
Banyan Drive	Shamrock Blvd. to Center Road	\$265,000

Several residents drew attention to design problems relating to the 0.9 mile stretch of sidewalk that runs along the north side of Center Road in front of the Pelican Pointe subdivision. To access the sidewalk from a bus stop, pedestrians must cross through a deep drainage ditch or walk along the narrow shoulder of the street until they reach a cross-street, at which point they can enter the sidewalk safely. SCAT staff has committed to investigate possible solutions to this problem.

## Appearance & Beautification

In addressing neighborhood concerns about the general appearance and potential beautification projects for Venice Gardens, County staff and meeting participants revisited some issues relating to code enforcement and to conditions that do not violate code but that have undesirable effects on the community. Expanding conversation on these issues, the neighborhood and County staff discussed ways for the residents of Venice Gardens to take an active role in shaping the neighborhood atmosphere according to their desires.

Neighborhood Services staff provided a brief description of the Neighborhood Grant Program (NGP). Several of the issues of concern that have been identified by residents of the Venice Gardens neighborhood are projects eligible for funding through the NGP. Therefore staff suggested that residents utilize this avenue to tackle one or some of the projects identified rather than using the Neighborhood Initiative dollars allocated through the plan. This would allow Venice Gardens residents to maximize the impact of funds appropriated through the Neighborhood Plan. Figure 2, located on Page 15, summarizes specific projects suited for the NGP.

Additionally, the committee discussed applying for Neighborhood Grant funds to **distribute a brochure containing tips on being a good neighbor**, which would reinforce the central message of the education campaign surrounding reducing the neighborhood’s code violations. County staff provided residents with a sample brochure from a recent grant project. Residents also discussed utilization of Neighborhood Grant funds to pay for the removal of invasive species on neighborhood



Bus stop adjacent to open ditch on north side of Center Road

publicly-owned lands and in the lake system.

To continue the emphasis on neighbors within Venice Gardens taking a proactive role in creating the community in which they wish to live, County staff presented information about the **establishment of a “Yard of the Month” program** to the group. Many homeowners’ associations and civic groups organize Yard of the Month programs as a way of encouraging residents to take pride in the appearance of their properties. Neighbors nominate yards, and a selection committee makes the decision as to which yard wins. Winners receive small prizes like gift certificates donated by area businesses, etc., and a sign denoting the property as “yard of the month” is displayed for the entire month. The Venice Gardens Homeowners Association is exploring establishing such a program in their neighborhood.

Another opportunity for the residents of Venice Gardens to strengthen their civic and community commitment while at the same time improving the overall appearance of their neighborhood resides in participation in Sarasota County’s Adopt-a-Road, -Spot, -Pond, or –Park Programs. If the neighborhood opts either to form an ad-hoc group to adopt the responsibility for maintaining an area or to adopt an area through the Venice Gardens Homeowners’ Association, then issues related to litter and trash in the neighborhood could be resolved.

## Parks & Recreation

Sarasota County Parks and Recreation staff attended a meeting with Venice Gardens residents to discuss possibilities for recreation-related improvements to the neighborhood. One of the greatest shared assets within the community, a beautiful County owned park with a partially ADA-accessible playground, picnic shelters, and horse shoe courts, lies just behind the Venice Gardens HOA clubhouse. This park is located on the same parcel as a County-owned de-commissioned utility well field, predominantly consisting of undeveloped open space, a fact that contributes to the significant potential for the park to become a focal point of the community, bringing together residents of all ages and various athletic abilities. Because there is limited availability of public parking near the park, the establishment of a partnership between residents of the neighborhood and Sarasota County is being

forged. The terms of the partnership will specify each party’s responsibility with regards to park maintenance and shared parking.

As a result of conversations with residents that occurred at this neighborhood meeting, **Parks and Recreation has agreed to fund:**

- **Construction of an ADA-accessible path** from the clubhouse parking lot to the playground, which would improve handicapped accessibility from partial to full. (Total Cost: \$350)
- **Construction of a crushed shell filter-mix fitness/jogging trail** around the perimeter of the playground (Total cost: \$3,500)



Venice Gardens Neighborhood Park - ADA-accessible playground

Potential Neighborhood Grant Projects	Estimated Cost
Construction of small 2-pole picnic shelter in Venice Gardens Neighborhood Park	\$3,065
Replacement of Venice Gardens Neighborhood Sign on Shamrock Blvd. & U.S. 41	\$7,000
Installation of xeriscape landscaping around Venice Gardens Neighborhood sign on Shamrock Blvd. & U.S. 41	\$5,000
Landscape of medians within Neighborhood	\$5,000 per median
Installation of staggered fitness stations along shell trail around park perimeter	\$7,000
Construction of bocce court in Venice Gardens Neighborhood Park	\$1,000
Ping Pong and/or Badminton Equipment	\$1,200
Baseball backstop with clay areas cut out for placement of bases	\$2,500

Figure 2: Projects Appropriate for Implementation through Neighborhood Grant Program - These projects fall under the Appearance & Beautification and Parks & Recreation priority categories.



Residents were quick to highlight the advantages and probable outcomes of building the trail around the playground: increased interaction between residents of various ages, increased supervision of children using the playground, reduced incidence of vandalism, strengthened community social fabric due to increased neighborhood interaction, and enhanced overall neighborhood health.

Parks and Recreation also offered to fund two smaller improvement projects in the area: the **installation of a park bench** near the pedestrian bridge on Shamrock Boulevard that overlooks the water (total cost: \$65), and the **installation of two signs on Shamrock Boulevard**

**advertising the existence of the public Venice Gardens Neighborhood Park** behind the clubhouse (total cost: \$3,000).

When one resident raised the possibility of constructing a basketball court somewhere on the park site, another questioned why neighborhood residents could not instead utilize the existing basketball courts located at Garden Elementary School. Because of concerns related to vandalism and adequate supervision, school officials have limited the public’s access to these facilities after school hours. Upon further research, County staff learned that an inter-local agreement exists between the

Sarasota County School Board and Sarasota County Government regarding the sharing of facilities. In this inter-local agreement (Contract #96-281, dated 6/25/96), Garden Elementary School is listed as a school “to be implemented in the future.” The content of this inter-local agreement has been shared with Venice Gardens residents, who intend to use this inter-local agreement as a place from which to begin a conversation with officials at Garden Elementary School about allowing the public to access this school facility after school hours.

Another recreation-related item warranting further explanation emerged at the meeting regarding the existence of a County-owned kayak/canoe launch located on the lake behind the park. This launch is currently inaccessible because there is a padlocked gate obstructing access. This issue assumes significance because some residents expressed interest in creating an access point to the water for non-motorized vessels such as paddleboats, kayaks, canoes, etc. In its current state, only residents who own lake-front property can access the water, which effectively creates a feeling of exclusion among residents without lake-front property.

Neighborhood Services staff explored the issue with other county staff from Stormwater, Utilities, and Road and Bridge to assess whether or not it would be possible to grant the public access to this ramp. All affected County business units have agreed that, contingent upon the absence of any issues relating to risk and safety, which are currently under examination by County staff, it would not be problematic to allow the residents of Venice Gardens to utilize this ramp as a point of public access to the lake.



Venice Gardens residents would like access to the lakes for kayaking and/or canoeing

In addition to the aforementioned, some of the ideas that residents were interested in implementing would be projects eligible for funding through the Neighborhood Grant Program, and are detailed in Figure 2, on Page 15.

## Stormwater, Drainage, & Potable Water

At the meeting dedicated to discussing issues relating to water, Integrated Water Resources staff were present to share information and to address any questions or concerns raised by Venice Gardens residents. Staff informed citizens that Sarasota County has enough potable water to meet current and projected needs through about 2020.

Venice Gardens residents have reported a high incidence of pipe replacement among residential homeowners due to pinhole corrosion. When asked about this problem, staff distributed an informational hand-out. Based on the results of ongoing scientific analyses on pinhole corrosion, the preferred piping material is fast becoming poly-phosphate pipe. This shift should help to lessen the occurrence of pinhole leaks in residential household piping in Sarasota County, although the problem of pinhole corrosion is not unique to the county.

County Stormwater and Drainage Operations staff addressed issues relating to watershed management, providing residents with information about scheduled ditch maintenance, which entails grading and sodding the ditches. By contacting the County Call Center (861-5000), residents can report areas where ditches need care in between scheduled maintenance periods.

Many of the concerns that Venice Gardens residents identified at the beginning of this neighborhood plan, like level of service (LOS) deficiencies related to stormwater, are in the process of being addressed by Sarasota County. Staff explained the details of the Alligator Creek Capital Improvement Project (CIP), for which public meetings were held in the area in May 2005. Alligator Creek CIP is made up of five individual projects with the goal of correcting street flooding, and three of these projects will improve drainage conditions in the Venice Gardens planning area. The targeted improvements will mainly affect Banyan Drive, Bal Harbour, and Venice East Avenue. Construction is slated to begin in mid-2006

- Banyan Drive: Culvert replacement and storage increase to remedy street level of service (LOS) deficiency for every design storm event from 2-year to 100-year.
- Briarwood Area Conveyance Improvements: Improve conveyance by re-grading ditches and replacing culverts. This will, among other things, solve the street LOS deficiencies at Tanager Road.
- Bal Harbour/Shamrock Boulevard Drainage Improvements: Conveyance improvements from Garden Elementary School to McNeary Waterway. This will remedy street LOS deficiencies for a 100-year storm.

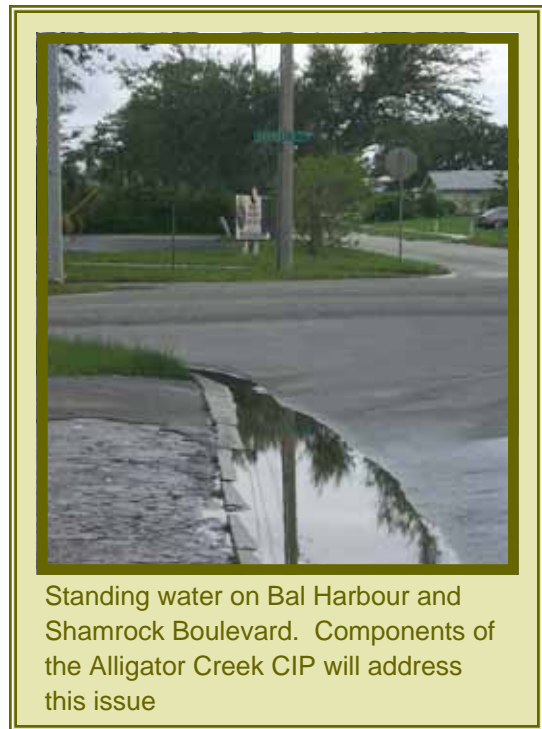
Staff laid out the details of the pipe replacement projects slated to occur in the area: new concrete pipes and boxes are scheduled to be installed on Pine Tree Road, Coconut Drive, Birch Drive, and Elm Drive. New pipe liners are scheduled to be installed along West and South Neponsit Avenue.

## Deed Restriction Information

At the meeting dedicated to discussing deed restrictions, Neighborhood Services staff presented deed restriction information, which had been listed as an issue of concern. Restrictions and covenants were recorded with each plat. Residents now are unsure as to whether indeed the covenants and restrictions have expired, and if so, they want information as to how they could go about reviving them.

Venice Gardens was platted in the 1950s by Venice Gardens, Inc., the developer. Venice Gardens was constructed over time and there are a total of 34 plats that make up the area known today as Venice Gardens. The development occurred from the 1950s to the late 1970s.

Research of the County Clerk's Official Records showed that each plat had covenants and restrictions recorded with it, totaling 34 different sets of deed restrictions. These various restrictions covered such items as minimum standards for size of home constructed and the use of lot (residential only). Additional restrictions stipulated things like oil drilling was not allowed on lots nor would outside bathrooms be allowed. Only one sign would be allowed per lot (referring to real estate signs), and the height of fences was restricted to five feet,



Standing water on Bal Harbour and Shamrock Boulevard. Components of the Alligator Creek CIP will address this issue



discussed as a community at a future time. County Staff explained that this was a private issue and although they could provide information as they have done, Staff cannot give counsel and advice with regards to a private issue such as this.

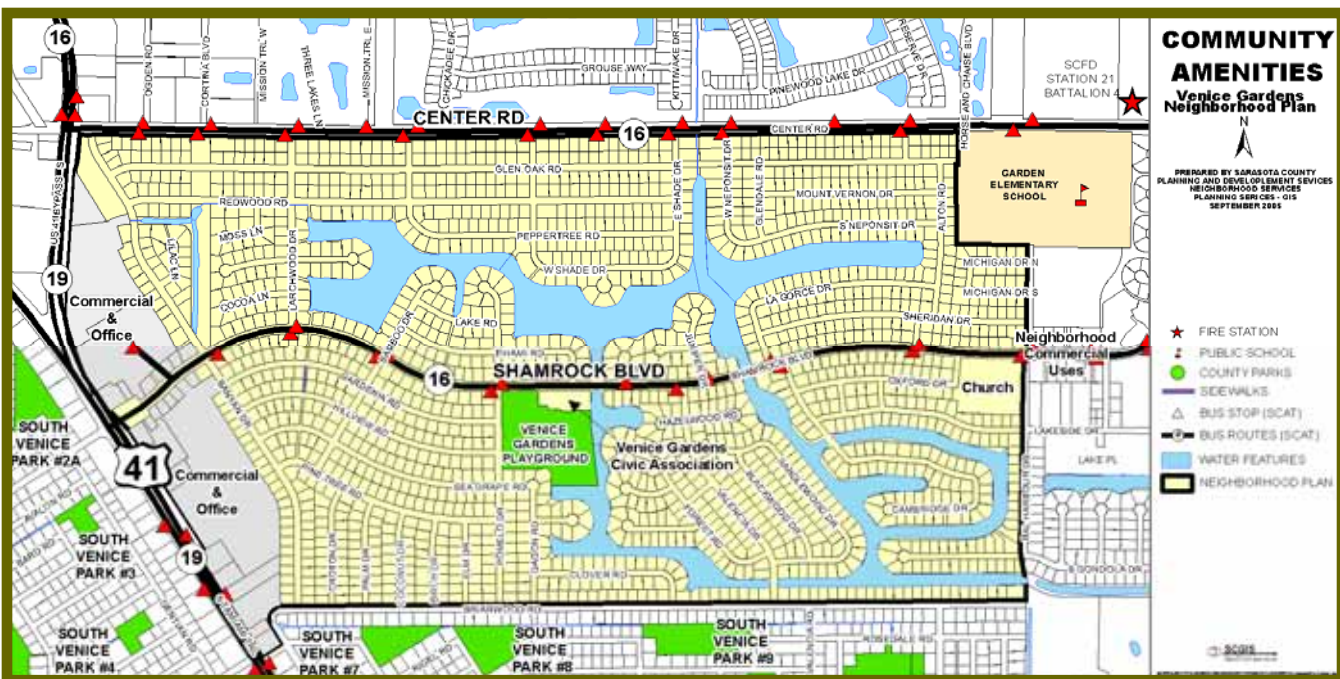
## Community Building

At the beginning of the Neighborhood Planning process, residents indicated that they wished to strengthen the sense of community - and the neighborhood association - within the Venice Gardens neighborhood. Throughout the planning process, staff emphasized areas and projects that lend themselves to building and strengthening community at the same time as accomplishing other, more tangible goals like litter removal, neighborhood beautification, etc. Over the course of the bi-monthly meetings, signals of an enhanced feeling of neighborliness among plan participants began to manifest themselves. Cookies and coffee became a regular fixture at meetings. Residents lingered for a little while longer after meetings concluded, socializing and talking for a few extra minutes before leaving for home.



Venice Gardens residents meet their neighbors at the community building session

Fittingly, the final meeting of the neighborhood planning process was dedicated to exploring the possibilities for strengthening the neighborhood and building association membership. Members of the Venice Gardens Homeowners Association extended an invitation to the neighborhood to stay after the meeting concluded to share hotdogs and snacks, swim in the pool located on-site, and spend some time together. Through an exercise facilitated by Neighborhood Services staff, residents learned that many of them shared hobbies, interests, and community concerns such as protecting the



Venice Gardens is well located - parks, commercial and office uses, transit, and schools are easily accessible

environment, safeguarding children, gardening, cooking, and cross-stitching, to name a few. Additionally, some residents of Venice Gardens have expertise in things like real estate, electronics, antique car repair, tile installation, light landscaping and carpentry, and computer skills such as web design. While the work of community building cannot be accomplished overnight, the Venice Gardens residents have built for themselves, through this Neighborhood Planning process, a foundation on which to build in moving forward.



Venice Gardens Homeowners Association hosted the barbecue at its community center for the community building session



Residents schmooze with one another at the barbecue

## Plan-at-a-Glance & Next Steps

During the course of the Neighborhood Planning process, Venice Gardens residents identified capital projects and improvements they wanted for their neighborhood. At the final meeting, Venice Gardens residents voted on their list of projects they identified during this process.

Safety concerns emerged as the top priority with three sections of sidewalk voted on for safety of walking through the neighborhood. In addition, residents voted to request \$45,000 of their available Neighborhoods Initiative plan money for six (6) speed tables throughout the community. At a future meeting,

residents will identify specific road sections where they would like these traffic calming devices. As a community, they will vote again to prioritize these locations and use the County's traffic abatement program to engage the affected property owners.

Park improvements were the community's second priority. Residents would like to see another covered pavilion in the park and would also like to have fitness stations installed around the shell half mile trail.



At the community building barbecue, Venice Gardens residents find that they can have their cake and eat it, too

**Plan-at-a-Glance - Venice Gardens List of Priorities and Options**

Priority	Issue Area	Estimated Cost	Option #1	Option #2	Option #3
1	Sidewalk Construction on Banyan Drive (Shamrock to Center Road)	\$265,000		X	X
2	Install 6 traffic calming devices (speed tables) – Locations TBD *	\$45,000		X	X
3	Sidewalk Construction on Pomelo (Briarwood Road to Shamrock Boulevard)	\$197,000		X	X
4	Construct additional picnic pavilion in park (large 30 ft. x 30 ft.)	\$49,500		X	X
5	Create fitness stations along shell trail	\$7,000	X		X
6 (tie)	Construct bus shelters along Center Road ( <i>For potential locations on north side of Center Road, see attached map</i> )	\$20,000 each	X		X
6 (tie)	Construct additional picnic pavilions in park (small 2-pole shelter)	\$3065	X		X
7	Construct ditch cross-over between north edge of Center Road and sidewalk on north side.	\$150,000	X		X
8	Install speed limit signs that read, "This is our neighborhood. Please slow down."	5 @ \$200 each = \$1,000	X		X
	Sidewalk Construction on Bamboo (Shamrock to Pine Tree Road – 0.20 miles)	\$133,000			X
	<b>TOTAL:</b>		<b>\$181,065</b>	<b>\$556,500</b>	<b>\$870,565</b>

\* Processed and funded through the Traffic Abatement Program

# Venice Gardens Neighborhood Plan



**Estimated Cost  
\$265,000**

**Community Building**

**Recently Installed  
Park Bench**

**VENICE GARDENS  
PLAYGROUND**

**Fitness  
Trail**

**Estimated Cost  
\$197,000**

**BRIARWOOD RD**

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**Acknowledgments**

The preparation of the Venice Gardens Neighborhood Plan was not possible without the time and effort expended by many Venice Gardens residents. Neighborhood Services staff and the Board of County Commissioners thank the organizations, especially the Venice Gardens Homeowners Association, citizens, and property owners who furnished information and their time to attend numerous neighborhood meetings in the preparation of this document.

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