

**INDIAN RIVER COUNTY, FLORIDA  
M E M O R A N D U M**

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**TO:** Board of County Commissioners

**THROUGH:** John A. Titkanich, Jr., County Administrator

**PREPARED BY:** Chris Balter, Planning & Development Services Director

**DATE:** November 6, 2024

**SUBJECT:** Gifford Neighborhood Plan (GNP) Status Update

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It is requested that the data herein presented be given formal consideration by the Board of County Commissioners at its regular meeting of November 19, 2024.

**BACKGROUND:**

In 1999, the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) created a task force to identify issues that existed in Gifford and to make recommendations regarding those issues to the BCC. That direction was primarily driven by coordination with the Progressive Civic League of Gifford (PCLG) and Gifford residents, and the effort culminated in the preparation of the original Gifford Neighborhood Plan (GNP). The original GNP was presented to the BCC on September 17, 2002. About a decade later, County staff worked with Gifford residents in preparing an update to the GNP, which was then adopted by the BCC on July 15, 2014. Both endeavors involved numerous workshops and public meetings, and gathered significant public input from the PCLG, Gifford residents, and other key stakeholders and special interest groups.

While most of the action items identified in the 2002 and 2014 GNPs have been completed, there are still a few large-scale projects that have not been completed. Also, there are recurring/ongoing action items that should be held/completed on a more consistent basis.

**ANALYSIS:**

Generally, actions in the 2014 GNP are currently in three separate statuses/positions. The first status is for recurring/ongoing action items, the second status is for large-scale action items from the 2014 GNP that have not yet been completed, and the third status is consideration of an entirely new plan update.

- *Recurring/Ongoing Action Items:* Many of the action items identified in the 2014 GNP are recurring/ongoing action items, such as educational workshops, meetings with specific groups, a housing fair, or periodic maintenance of roadway and drainage facilities. Most of these action items were intended to occur either monthly, quarterly, or annually. While some of the recurring action items have been held/completed on a consistent basis, others have been discontinued or otherwise cancelled due to changes in staff, limited resources, or other reasons.

Staff recommends that all recurring action items be revisited by each respective department or responsible party, evaluated for need and occurrence timeframe (monthly, quarterly, or annually), and resumed immediately as needed.

- *Large-Scale Action Items:* Most of the large-scale action items identified in the 2014 GNP were multi-faceted physical improvement projects such as sidewalk projects or drainage improvements. Foremost among the infrastructure projects was the 45<sup>th</sup> Street “Main Street” beautification project from US 1 to 43<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, which was completed in 2019. The beautification project included culverting the canal along the south side of 45<sup>th</sup> Street, widening shoulders/bike lanes, constructing a sidewalk along the south side of 45<sup>th</sup> Street (the north side sidewalk was already existing), and adding hardscape/landscape enhancements. Other large-scale action items that have been completed to date include sidewalks, drainage improvements, park/playground improvements, street lighting, and modifications to Land Development Regulations (LDRs).

At this time, three large-scale action items have not been completed. Those three items are listed below, along with a status update for each item:

1. *Action 7.3 – By 2018, the County Public Works Department will repair, connect, and construct the sidewalk along 45th Street, from 43rd Avenue to U.S. #1, and by 2021, along 45th Street from 43rd Avenue to 58th Avenue, where necessary right-of-way is available (has been acquired). The County will seek to install segments of a 45th Street sidewalk between 43rd Avenue and 58th Avenue prior to 2021.*

**Status Update:** The 45th Street sidewalk from US 1 to 43rd Avenue has been completed, but the sidewalk from 43rd Avenue to 58th Avenue has not been constructed. Only a small portion of this one-mile segment of 45th Street has sufficient right-of-way available for a sidewalk. Because of these constraints, the County explored culverting the drainage canal along the south side of 45th Street to provide sufficient right-of-way.

Due to the considerable cost and complexity associated with enclosing one mile of an open canal, assistance was sought from the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) through the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). At its June 14, 2023 meeting, the MPO Board ranked 45th Street as its highest priority project. In the fall of 2023, FDOT added 45th Street to its Five-Year Work Program with a feasibility study/design beginning in FY 2025/26. Because the cost of enclosing the canal is significantly greater than a sidewalk, the project scope was modified to reconstruct this segment of 45th Street as a Complete Street with sidewalks, bike lanes, and bus stop improvements along both sides of the street (similar to the 45th Street beautification project east of 43rd Avenue). Turn lane improvements at the 45th Street/58th Avenue intersection are also included in the \$20 million project.

2. *Action 7.4 – By 2024, the County Public Works Department will repair, connect, and construct a sidewalk along 41st Street from 58th Avenue to U.S. #1, and a sidewalk along 49th Street from Fire Station 12 to U.S. #1, where necessary right-of-way is available (has been acquired) and adequate funding has been obtained.*

**Status Update:** At this time, approximately one mile of sidewalk remains to be constructed along the north side of 41st Street from east of 38th Avenue to US 1. Along

49th Street, approximately 0.7 miles of sidewalk remain to be constructed from Fire Station 12 to US 1.

The MPO recently updated its Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan, and both the 41st Street and 49th Street sidewalks were identified as being among the top sidewalk priorities in the county. As a result, both sidewalk projects are eligible to be funded through the MPO's Transportation Alternatives Program, which has an annual project application deadline of March 1st each year. MPO staff will coordinate with Public Works to prepare project applications for both sidewalk projects in the next application cycle.

3. *Action 8.5 – By 2022, the Progressive Civic League of Gifford will coordinate with property owners along 32nd Avenue north of 43rd Street, and 35th Avenue north of 45th Street, to obtain commitments for right-of-way donations so that those roads can be considered for dedication to and acceptance by the County for improvement and maintenance.*

*Action 8.6 – By 2020, the County Public Works Department will pave 32nd Avenue north of 43rd Street, and 35th Avenue north of 45th Street if needed rights-of-way are donated to and accepted by the County and adequate funding for paving has been obtained.*

**Status Update:** Both 32nd Avenue and 35th Avenue are unpaved roads that are not located within a public or private right-of-way. Both roads were created prior to 1973, when the County's land development regulations were modified to require streets to be located within a right-of-way (ROW) while also prohibiting the creation of new landlocked parcels. Currently, each road cuts across numerous private properties, and there does not appear to be sufficient width to accommodate a formal ROW scenario. Therefore, staff should coordinate with various private property owners to consider an acceptable alternative scenario that still provides a better and more consistent stabilized travel way.

- *Entirely New Plan Update:* It has now been a little of 10 years since the 2014 GNP update. Therefore, staff recognizes that an entirely new plan update would be appropriate, and the updated plan should include all relevant recurring/ongoing action items, the above-referenced large-scale action items that have not yet been completed, and any new action items that result from the new plan update.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends that the Board of County Commissioners consider the provided Gifford Neighborhood Plan status update and direct staff to proceed with the following initiatives:

1. Each department and responsible party shall review all recurring and ongoing action items, evaluate the necessity of each item, determine the appropriate frequency for their occurrence (monthly, quarterly, or annually), and promptly resume them as appropriate.
2. Staff shall continue to work on completing the large-scale action items that have not yet been completed.

3. Staff shall initiate the process for an updated GNP to ensure alignment with current community needs and priorities. The update will include:
  - A. All remaining large-scale projects and recurring/ongoing action items that require attention.
  - B. New issues and goals identified through community engagement, ensuring that the updated plan is comprehensive and future-oriented.
  - C. Collaborating closely with the Progressive Civic League of Gifford (PCLG), residents, and other stakeholders to identify emerging needs and opportunities in the Gifford area.