



APNASRQOutreach@Outlook.com  
<https://ArlingtonParkNeighborhoodAssociation.org>

July 15, 2020

Transmitted via email

Mayor Jen Ahearn-Koch  
Mr. Marlon Brown  
City of Sarasota  
Sarasota, FL. 34236

Dear Mayor Ahearn-Koch:

Thank you for requesting that I formalize Arlington Park Neighborhood Association's (APNA) request for assistance by City staff to you with this letter. Arlington Park Neighborhood is a unique collection of existing, older affordable homes and brand new homes. The older homes house many on fixed incomes and the issues below can have a major negative or positive impact on our existing and future residents' socio-economic security and support. We want to support all our residents, current and future, and allow them to remain in their homes. Planning our community correctly and moving accessory dwelling units forward allows more affordable homes and helps to level the socio-economic field. We look forward to building a diverse, multi-ethnic, multi-generational community.

**Background:** *Beginning in early 2019, our neighborhood was presented with four major land use challenges seemingly all at once: 1) complaints about overflow office/commercial parking on neighborhood streets near US 41; 2) developer presented a combination comp plan change/rezoning and site plan high density request at corner of Tuttle and Bahia Vista; 3) proposal at Midtown Plaza to add more height and a hotel; and 4) visit from City Staff suggesting that Accessory Dwelling Units (no larger than 600 square feet) be included in Arlington Park Neighborhood as part of a City-wide effort. ADUs appear to be acceptable to all Board members (we have not seen/nor conducted a full neighborhood survey); but we asked that the 800 square foot size recommended by the Florida Housing Coalition be considered.*

*These new City development proposals came right on the heels of the City permanently giving away the right of way to School Avenue to the School Board with no hope of ever regaining the right of way, no matter what ultimately happens to the School Board property. By October 2019, we were feeling shell shocked and we just wanted to have a plan to hold onto so we could know what was next.*

*Throughout 2019, we immediately engaged as a neighborhood, as best as we could through normal channels – neighborhood meetings, appearing at City Commission meetings, individual meetings with developers and with staff when we could get appointments. The APNA Board realized that our 2006 Plan, updated in 2014, wasn't a suitable adopted plan to handle these multiple challenges and we proposed that a 2020 plan update, assisted by City staff, as is Sarasota Comprehensive Plan Policy, would be the best way forward. Unfortunately, there is no process, no procedure, no clear way that we would/should/could begin a Neighborhood Planning process with City support. We asked CCNA for guidance so that all neighborhoods could ultimately get a neighborhood plan. At our request, in January 2020, CCNA unanimously approved a resolution attempting to define this ephemeral Comprehensive Plan policy, regarding City supported Neighborhood Planning Process, using Arlington Park Neighborhood as the "pilot" neighborhood.*



*Fast forward to today, July 2020. In response to the APNA and CCNA resolutions, in January 2020, we received an email from Steve Cover saying that the APNA neighborhood should do whatever it is that we want to do, get full neighborhood agreement, then bring our results to the City for Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Changes and to remember that there would be fees involved for any implementation of an overlay district. There was no offer of City staff support and no direction on how to ask for such support, and certainly no mention of the Comprehensive Policy that addresses how the City intends to support neighborhood planning and community input.*

*Then along came the pandemic and we in Arlington Park started weekly Zoom meetings to begin to update our Neighborhood Strategic Plan, all by ourselves. We realized that City staff input is needed for a variety of technical questions. We also realized that a full survey of our population (over 1500 dwelling units) is necessary in order to have full neighborhood agreement. We invited City Staff to our meetings and hoped that would get a more fulsome process started. But, alas, that was not to be. Instead zoning text amendments that will control the two corners of our neighborhood (and other City parcels) went forward without our input. And, we understand now, the ADU ordinance is underway, but there is no City Planning process planned for meaningful and timely community input.*

*So, beginning in early June, prior to writing this letter, we, the members of the APNA Board, wanted to see if any staff support was available, to bolster our all-citizen Plan writing progress. The Board directed Bowie to start sending emails and phone calls and finally, weeks later, she received a group call back from Steve Cover, Ryan Chapdelain and Nancy Kelly. I requested assistance from City staff (4 hours per week) in completing the neighborhood plan and survey. Steve Cover again stated he could not give us any staff assistance, except that we are welcome to direct our questions to Nancy Kelly for general assistance. At this point in time, we feel like our planning process is purposeless – because the City is moving forward with three zoning text amendments that really resolve most of the issues that are important to APNA. Essentially APNA and City of Sarasota are operating in parallel universes. We want to work with the City, not in a vacuum.*

**APNA Requests:** Many cities and counties include neighborhood planning as the most important, basic building block of the planning process. The neighborhood planning process is always, most importantly, built upon strong community participation. APNA hungers for the City to have more neighborhood planning and more meaningful community input. Here are the requests of the Arlington Park Neighborhood Association:

1. We request that the City of Sarasota identifies and adopts a clear process where neighborhood planning could happen and where we could request that process be initiated for Arlington Park Neighborhood.
2. We request that the City of Sarasota identifies and adopts a clear process that encourages formal citizen public input into any zoning text amendments, one that is open, meaningful and timely. When the public has only 5 minutes at the Planning Board or 3 minutes at the City Commission meetings, it is too little and too late.



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3. We request that the City of Sarasota revises the community input process for proposed developments to make it more responsive. We believe that the current public/community input process is broken and is not functioning to the best interest of anybody, not the citizens, not the applicant, not the staff, not the Planning Board and not the City Commission. The neighborhood meetings are not working because the only output from the City Staff into the DRC meetings is simply that a neighborhood meeting was conducted. Citizen ideas and concerns are not transmitted into the process.
4. Finally, we are very interested in partnering with the City in the creation of an Arlington Park Neighborhood Association Community Building at Arlington Park utilizing the historical Lustron house. Information and updates from City staff on this project have not been provided as hoped. We would like to understand the timing and the process underway and be advised of proposed schedule, to keep the Lustron property owner interested in donating this structure to the City.

We look forward to discussing these issues at length in our upcoming meeting, scheduled for July 23. Several members of the Board of Directors and active Arlington Park residents will be attending the WebEx meeting with me.

Thank you very much for considering our requests.

In community,  
/signed/ Mary Anne Bowie

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President, Arlington Park Neighborhood Association, Inc.  
on behalf of APNA Board Members:  
Terry Langlois, Kim Pitts, Elaine Silver, DeeAnna Dowdle, Julia Clark, Lorrie Muldowney

cc: Commissioners: Liz Albert, Shelly Freeland-Eddie, Hagen Brody, Willie Shaw  
Tom Barwin  
Steven Cover  
Jerry Fogle  
Executive Board Members of Coalition of City Neighborhood Associations CCNA:  
Lou Costa, Ron Collins, Tony Smith – (with request to distribute to CCNA Member Neighborhoods)