



ST. AUGUSTINE
COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY
CITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE, FLORIDA



City of St. Augustine
Community Redevelopment Agency
Lincolnville Community Redevelopment Area

Florida Redevelopment Association
2021 Award Entry

Outstanding Housing Project

LCRA Fix It Up Program

Application Prepared by
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Cathy Hankins- a lifelong resident of Lincolnton poses at her home after recently having her bathroom vanity and floor repaired. She also had a concrete drive poured to help mitigate the risk of entering or exiting her home during inclement weather.

Project Description

The LCRA has made it a priority to maintain the community's heritage and retain long-term residents. A previously conducted feasibility study showed the need to stabilize the African American presence in Lincolnville which is a historic African American community. Providing health and safety repairs, and façade treatments for qualified homeowners has proven to be vital in sustaining the community. Repairs can range from replacing a roof, HVAC installation, masonry or carpentry work, and plumbing repairs. The program also allows for beautification of the exterior of the home which helps to maintain the integrity of the community and its residents.

Project Innovation

Lincolnville is very unique in its character. To ensure that the Fix-It-Up Program met the very diverse needs of the people that live in the community, the Community Redevelopment Agency retained a consulting firm which developed focus groups comprised of individuals with stake in the community. The focus groups used very selective messaging to design and develop a program that would be beneficial to low income, long-term residents. The focus groups highlighted concerns relative to new construction in the area, affordable housing concerns, and developing programs that would save the homes of residents impacted by increasing property taxes and clear title issues.

The Fix-It-Up Program provides a funding source for residents that have more needs than they have resources. When the program was initially implemented, the maximum grant allotted was \$7,000. After careful consideration and review of the work that was being completed for residents, the Agency discovered that this amount of funding was not merely enough to make an impact on the needs of the residents. This amount was comparable to bandaging a broken bone. The amount of the grant was increased to \$20,000.00. Additionally, it was determined that residents that had already matriculated through the program, receiving \$7,000 could reapply and receive the additional \$13,000 to continue repairs on their homes.

The Community Redevelopment Agency contracted the St. Johns Housing Partnership to administer the qualification process and provide the construction and repair services. St. Johns Housing Partnership has been vital in maintaining the efforts of the program. Because of the relationships that the Partnership has developed throughout the region as it relates to the housing industry, funds and resources were able to be leveraged from other organizations and entities which allowed the CRA to further perpetuate its efforts. Elder Source, St. Vincent de Paul, Council on Aging, local churches, and high school organizations donated their time and resources to achieve the goal.

Community Impact

Success is often determined by the numbers. The Lincolnville residential community continues to be revitalized and many residents have been able to maintain their homes because of the efforts provided by the Fix-It-Up Program. Since 2018, \$668,955 in capital has been injected into the homes of 53 Lincolnville residents. Many of the residents that have matriculated through the program may qualify for additional funding to complete other repairs to their home.

The true identity of Lincolnville is secured in its quaint home exterior design. The architectural housing style, often referred to as a “shotgun house” is a linear design. There has been a reduction in this real estate art form which originated in African American communities. A popular theory is that this housing style originated in response to a real estate tax based on frontage rather than square footage, which motivated narrow structures.

With Lincolnville being a historically African American Community it is imperative to maintain homes that speak to one of the most significant expressions of African American material culture. The Lincolnville community has one of the highest concentrations of shotgun houses in the southeast. The Fix-It-Up Program ensures that these houses are preserved and are not replaced with modern housing styles.

Funding

Each year the Community Redevelopment Agency allocates funding toward the Fix-It-Up Program to ensure its sustainability. The allocation of funds is initially determined by the Redevelopment Plan- and the components outlined therein. Additionally, funding is determined by the need. Currently the CRA administrator and the St. Johns Housing Partnership are working together to complete a needs assessment. This assessment will be used to determine the direction of the program. The assessment will look for new potentially qualified applicants, engage residents who may qualify for additional funding, engage with constituents whose income potentially meets the qualifying threshold based on census information, review data collected from other assistance organization that could be helpful in locating residents that could qualify.

Other funding initiatives are relative to the St. Johns Housing Partnership, who has sustained relationships throughout the region as it relates to the housing industry. Because of these relationships, funds and resources are able to be leveraged from other organizations and entities which allowed the CRA to further perpetuate its efforts. Many residents who need substantial housing repairs that the \$20,000 would not cover may receive additional funds through programs through Elder Source, St. Vincent de Paul, Council on Aging. Additionally, local churches, and high school organizations donated their time and resources. St. Johns Housing Partnership also sponsor “Make a Difference Day” where community organizers and organizations come together to offer in-kind donations of resources, materials, and time to repair homes.

Problem Solving

Poorly maintained homes can be potentially dangerous. Structural damage to residential properties can create a hazardous environment for the individual(s) that live in the home as well as neighboring properties. Many of the historic residential properties in Lincolnville were built over fifty years ago- leaving concerns of lead paint and asbestos in the roofing. This is a common concern for homes built before 1978 and a major concern within the community. The use of these materials can create and perpetuate an environmental hazard for residents.

Other concerns consist of poor air supply and ventilation in the older homes. Poor ventilation can result in too much moisture that wreaks havoc on interior walls and structural elements. It can also exacerbate allergic reactions.

The Fix-It-Up Program reduces these concerns. It solves the problems related to these concerns. Through the program process, special inspections are conducted to determine the major health and safety issues at each residence. Most if not all of the funding is directed to resolving the health and safety concerns and any remaining funds are injected into beautifying and updating the exterior façade of the home as well as interior home renovations.

The Fix-It-Up program focuses heavily on our elderly residents, who are reliant on a fixed income and there is not additional resource for home repair. Many of the shotgun style homes have interior and/or exterior stairs, which makes it extremely difficult for residents to enter or exit the home without assistance or risk of injury. Through this program we offer mobility improvements. Adding ramps, rails, and improving drive and walkways that lead to the home are an effort to mitigate risk related to our aging population.

Applicability to Other Communities

Lincolnville is a very unique community, but the circumstances of blight, gentrification, moderate to low-income residents is not very exclusive when it comes to historically black or African American neighborhoods. Many programs like the Fix-It-Up program are already flourishing throughout the nation. This program could be the prototype and template to aid disadvantaged groups.

In Addition

There are some parts of the Lincolnville community that are prone to flooding due to direct access of lakes and inlets. The Fix-It-Up program has been vital through the years in repairing homes following disastrous storm seasons. Many of the Lincolnville residents suffered devastating losses due to flooding in their homes. Without the Fix-It-Up program they may not have been able to return to their home.

Programs like this one helps to build camaraderie between residents and their governmental agencies. It creates the realization that those in the position to make life changing decisions do have the best interest of the people in mind. The St. Augustine Community Redevelopment Agency has used its platform and funding abilities to positively impact marginalized and disenfranchised residents in an ever-changing community. The Fix-It-Up Program has been impactful in stabilizing the community and creating community partnerships.