

Insider

WINTER HAVEN
The Chain of Lakes City

CITIZEN NEWSLETTER

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CITY PROGRESS—EIGHT YEARS

Think back to early 2001 when Winter Haven's downtown was decaying and many storefronts were shuttered; few residents frequented the downtown area or patronized downtown businesses. Today that's not the case. The downtown area thrives with activity and many special events are held there.

If you've ever wondered what the City of Winter Haven does with public funds it's responsible for, take a look around the City and consider all the projects that have been completed since 2001. More than \$130 million has been invested to improve the quality of life for residents of the City of Winter Haven. These improvements have been backed without exception by City Commissioners past and present.



The Winter Haven Public Library is celebrating its fifth anniversary this year.

The first project to help revitalize downtown Winter Haven was the new Public Library, completed in 2004. The 31,500-square-foot, \$5.4 million Winter Haven Public Library is a magnet for visitors to the City's core area. This project was soon followed in 2005 by the \$3.5

million project to renovate Central Avenue and Central Park. Improvements have been made to roadways, as well as new sidewalks and beautiful streetscaping. Downtown Parks are now the site for the annual Florida Outdoor Sculpture Competition for which the City spends about \$25,000 each year to bring fine art up close and personal for City residents.

Additional projects have helped bring new life to other areas of the City. In the Florence Villa area, the new Police Station was completed in 2003 at a cost of \$5.8 million. Streetscaping and road improvement projects totaling more than \$3.1 million have also brought new beauty to this historic community.

Several projects have been undertaken in the ongoing effort to make Winter Haven a more sustainable community. The Chain of Lakes Trail (right) brings a multi-modal element to the City by providing a safe avenue of travel for pedestrians and bicyclists around town, as well as to other nearby communities. Through the curbside recycling program, started in 2007, more than 1,800 tons of discarded recyclable items have been removed from local landfills.

Did you know the City of Winter Haven has invested about



The new \$5.7 million Fire Safety Complex is under construction at U.S. Highway 17 and Avenue G SW.

\$52 million to upgrade its water and wastewater systems? That includes the 2008 \$16.5 million project to convert a wastewater treatment plant to Advanced Treatment, making it a more sustainable facility, treating wastewater to a higher quality. Another almost \$1 million has been invested in back-up generators for many key wastewater lift stations so they can continue to operate in the event of power outages, including during a hurricane.

In 2001, other areas of the City were in need of revitalization, too. As the City's population began to grow, recreation was an area that needed new energy. In addition to recreation projects mentioned above, the City Commission approved spending in this area to the tune of almost \$10 million, including design, planning and construction of projects at the Winter Haven Recreational and Cultural Center and the Chain O' Lakes Complex; community playgrounds including R.H. Malcolm Park, Girl Scout Park, Lions, Kiwanis and Rotary Parks; nature parks at Lakes Maude, Hartridge and Howard; and Sertoma Park ball fields.

In the past eight years, many more projects have been completed, like resurfacing almost 25 miles of City streets at a cost of \$4 million; improvements at the Winter Haven Municipal Airport totaling \$13 million, most of which was funded by Federal and State



City Commissioners "blaze a trail" at the Chain of Lakes Trail opening.

grants; and the Advanced Traffic Maintenance System being installed at a cost of \$8.1 million to improve traffic flow and emergency response times.

With improvement projects spread equally throughout all neighborhoods,

City Commissioners and staff are working diligently to make Winter Haven the premier place to live, work, play and raise a family.



School Starts Aug. 24

Drive safely and be mindful of school buses and children walking as Polk County students return to classes Aug. 24. With many school children on the streets in the morning and afternoon, extra caution should be taken while driving our roadways.

Slow down, especially in school zones. Be aware of young children who may dart into traffic. If you come to a school bus with its stop sign extended, be sure to stop when appropriate, no matter how hurried you may be.

Walkers, bicyclists and drivers should all take care to follow laws established to keep everyone safe. Do your part to help keep our students safe.

Florida-Friendly Planting

In the City of Winter Haven we encourage all residents to use Florida-friendly plants when replacing landscaping or planting anew. The City of Winter Haven has already adopted a policy of using Florida-friendly plantings in City landscape projects.

Rain gardens are a new water conservation concept the City has started using to help protect our water resources. The first rain garden is located at the East City Hall Annex, at 490 Third St. NW. Rain gardens are small sunken areas in a lawn that are landscaped to absorb diverted stormwater runoff from lawns, roofs, parking lots, streets, etc. Typically, when it rains, water flows from impervious surfaces and even some landscaped areas where it picks up pollutants such as motor oil, fertilizers, insecticides, fine particulates and even heavy metals. Then it quickly enters storm drains and flows into our lakes.

By redirecting some of the water and holding it for a short time in the rain garden, it slowly seeps into the ground; thereby allowing plant material and layers of mulch and soil to filter out many pollutants before it reaches groundwater. Featuring Florida-friendly plants, the rain garden needs little or no irrigation, fertilizers or pesticides, and will attract wildlife, too. Gutters on the building direct the stormwater to the rain garden.

Did you know that in contrast to a traditional lawn, a rain garden allows about 30 percent more water to soak into the ground? Plants selected for the City's new rain garden are muhly grass, sand cord grass, African iris, lantana (purple and yellow), coon-

tie (a Florida native cycad) and beauty berry. Grass around the garden was also replaced with perennial peanut, a Florida-friendly ground cover.

City officials have also started including Florida-friendly plantings in development agreements, where possible. Anyone can install a rain garden. It's a small thing we all can do to protect our water resources, attract wildlife and even improve our individual properties. City staff is planning a workshop on how to design and install a rain garden. Watch the Winter Haven Insider Citizen Newsletter and visit www.mywinterhaven.com for information that will be posted in the future.

Florida-friendly plants require less water and reduce pollution of our water resources. Be sure to include Florida-friendly plants in your next landscaping project. Visit www.watmatters.org, for more information.



A rain garden under construction at the East City Hall Annex.

LOOKING FOR SOMETHING TO DO? CHECK OUT THE UPCOMING SPECIAL EVENTS!

Cruisin' Winter Haven	Downtown	First Saturday of every month, except. Dec.; 4-9 p.m.
Downtown Alive	Downtown	Third Friday of every month, Sept.-May; 5-9 p.m.
Health, Education & Safety Fair	Recreational & Cultural Center	Aug. 15, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.
Labor Day Holiday	City offices closed	Sept. 7.
City Commission Election	Polling places	Sept. 8; 7 a.m.-7 p.m.
Race for the Kids	Lake Shipp Park	Sept. 18-20; 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Friday and Saturday, noon-5 p.m. Sunday; hydroplane boat races.
Friends of the Poor Walk	MLK, Jr., Park, Lake Silver	Oct. 3; 9-11:30 a.m.; Community walk around the lake to benefit Society of St. Vincent de Paul.
Pops in the Park	MLK, Jr., Park, Lake Silver	Oct. 30; 7:30 p.m.
Ghouls' Night Out	Downtown	Oct. 30; 6-9 p.m.

The Winter Haven Public Library offers free movies the First Thursday of each month at 5:30 p.m. The movies are intended for adult audiences. All children must be accompanied by an adult. Here's the schedule for the rest of the year.

THE ENRICHMENT SERIES

FILMS SHOWN ON THE FIRST THURSDAY OF THE MONTH AT 5:30 P.M. FREE ADMISSION

JULY 2

Marley and Me
PG (115 min.)

A memoir of Philadelphia Inquirer columnist John Grogan's life with his yellow Labrador retriever. The heartwarming and unforgettable story of a family in the making and the wondrously neurotic dog who taught them what really matters in life.

AUGUST 6

Revolutionary Road
R (118 min.)

Frank and April Wheeler are a young couple living in suburban Connecticut in 1955. On the outside their lives appear to be perfect, but they really aren't happy. They decide to break away from the ordinary and move to Paris, but can they do it without breaking their marriage apart?

SEPTEMBER 3

King Korn
NR (90 min.)

Fueled by curiosity, college buddies Ian Cheney and Curt Ellis return to their ancestral home of Greene, Iowa to find out how the modest corn kernel conquered America. Along the way, they unlock the hidden truths about America's modern food system.

OCTOBER 1

To Kill A Mockingbird
NR (130 min.)

Based on the award-winning novel by Harper Lee. Two children in a small Southern town are thrust into an adult world of racial bigotry and hatred when their lawyer father chooses to defend a black man unjustly accused of raping a white girl.

NOVEMBER 5

Flash of Genius
PG-13 (120 min.)

Based on the true story of college professor and part-time inventor Robert Kearns' long battle with the U.S. automobile industry. The tale of one man who fought to receive recognition for his ingenuity at any price.

(FAMILY NIGHT!) DECEMBER 3

It's A Wonderful Life
G (130 mins.)

A Christmas classic. A man is saved from a suicide attempt by an angel and is then shown how important he is to the people who love him.

***All films are intended for an adult audience unless otherwise noted. Minors must be accompanied by an adult.**

Winter Haven Public Library
325 Ave. A NW
863.291.5880
whpl.mywinterhaven.com



Connecting the Dots for a Sustainable Winter Haven

Since 1999, Winter Haven's population has increased 36 percent to 34,000 people and it's grown from 24 to 40 square miles. Setting new priorities as we grow was the purpose of the City Commission/Staff retreat, held July 29 at the Historic Woman's Club. Sustaining our City for current and future generations was the topic of the day.

A sustainable City is one that meets the diverse economic, environmental and social equity needs of today without compromising the needs of tomorrow. Considering people and the environment before you take action is a key component of being sustainable. Sustainability is the area where people, planet and prosperity intersect. Decisions made in Winter Haven today will impact the City and the quality of life for future residents. Whether we're talking about sustaining our natural resources, providing customer services, including recreation, or planning future development, it's all connected.



Mayor Yvonne Brooks participates in a small group exercise at the recent City Commission/Staff retreat.

The 2009-10 planning retreat highlighted all City efforts being made toward sustainability. Meeting today's residents' needs, without compromising those of the future, guarantees Winter Haven's unique lifestyle, said Mayor Yvonne Brooks. "Being a sustainable City benefits us and all future generations who choose to call Winter Haven home."

Having an adequate water supply is probably the

highest priority for any community, especially one like Winter Haven where the very identity of the City is based. Water supports all life, and all land uses impact water. Protecting water resources is critical to our current and future well being. Putting into practice the City's new Water Resources Sustainability Plan will bring about improved water quality, increased water supply, restoration of natural systems and improved flood protection, as well as expanded economic, social, cultural and recreational opportunities. Increased water storage in natural landscaping, such as rain gardens, throughout the City, integration of water resource restoration projects within the community through nature parks that also provide recreation and wildlife habitat opportunities, and partnering with developers to protect and improve our water resources, are all part of the plan.

While experiencing difficult economic times, families tend to become more thrifty and look to their community for more reasonably priced resources, services and entertainment. Winter Haven has much to offer as families demand more services and programs.

Retreat participants explored ways the City can remain sustainable using the five- and 10-year goals established at the 2008 retreat. Primary topics discussed reflect key performance areas developed during the 1999-2000 community visioning process, including: economic development, lake preservation/enjoyment, community neighborhoods, community leisure, growth/development and City services.

Sustainable progress is already being made as efforts continue to make Winter Haven a distinctively different community. It's a community where the needs of all residents can be met for housing, employment, healthcare, education, shopping, recreation and dining. Are you doing all you can to help make Winter Haven a sustainable City?