

Neighborhoods of Learning.

THE MISSION.

Educating people is a broad-ranging goal of every city, every neighborhood and every household. Formal schooling for children with public or private elementary and secondary schools is expected. Life-long learning is becoming the norm as employment demands evolve and there is a continuous need for workers to stay current with new skills, technologies and languages.

There are three specific aspects of education that relate to neighborhood residents. First, residents need to educate the neighborhoods' children; whether or not there are children in any specific household. Second, residents need education about how to maintain their homes, their finances and their common neighborhood facilities.

Mostly these are self-taught skills but in blighted and other struggling neighborhoods, education programs to teach these skills are useful. Thirdly, residents need access to job-related education and training to maintain or acquire new skills. Community-based programs can facilitate life-long learning for working people and those retired.

EDUCATING CHILDREN.

Public schools in or near neighborhoods are more accessible than those requiring long rides in buses or cars. Private schools also benefit when students are located closer to the school, but private school students tend to travel farther from home to school. In both cases, the city must pay attention to the home-to school-to back home trip.

Elementary schools are more likely to be in or near neighborhoods although middle and high schools can also be located close to neighborhoods, both single and multi-family. Assuring that the student, parent, faculty and staff have safe and convenient access to the school grounds is well within the purview of the city government. A plan for connecting the neighborhood to the school is useful as are joint use agreements that co-locate city parks and community centers with adjacent school buildings and grounds.

A “**Neighborhood Connection Plan**” identifies sidewalks, trails, drop off/pick up zones and parking areas that facilitate the arrival and departure of students from the school. The Plan extends off-site from the campus beyond the school grounds into the neighborhoods. Sidewalks, bikeways and safe street crossings are the main feature of this Plan for the “walk-to” zone associated with each school.

This Plan fulfills the city’s responsibility to provide safe bike/ped access to schools, shops and parks for its residents. This plan enables residents in the neighborhood to have easy and safe access to their city schools, parks and community centers. The Unified Campus Master Plan identifies a secure and safe access system for entering and exiting the combined school, park, community center complex.

Joint-Use Agreements [JUAs] can exist between the city, school boards, neighbor organizations, businesses and nongovernmental organizations [NGOs] such as the YMCA or The Boys and Girls Club.

Recreation and community centers adjacent to public or private schools can be important places for pre-school and after school programs, adult education and community health activities. Agreements between the school, the city, NGOs and businesses to staff the centers can include extended day and summer programs, among others. Power comes from collaboration.

Neighborhoods can also use interpretive posters, monuments and markers to enhance the education of children and adults.

- Exercise courses with posters can provide users with information about the benefits and methods of exercise and diet.
- Brochures and placards can provide information and illustrations about plants, birds and other animals found in nearby water bodies or conservation areas.
- History can be celebrated with posters, statues and monuments, however simple, they present information about the city's founders or other great people or events that occurred in or near the neighborhood.
- The business community in the neighborhood can also provide learning settings with part-time jobs, internships and lectures by business people in neighborhood elementary, middle and high schools.

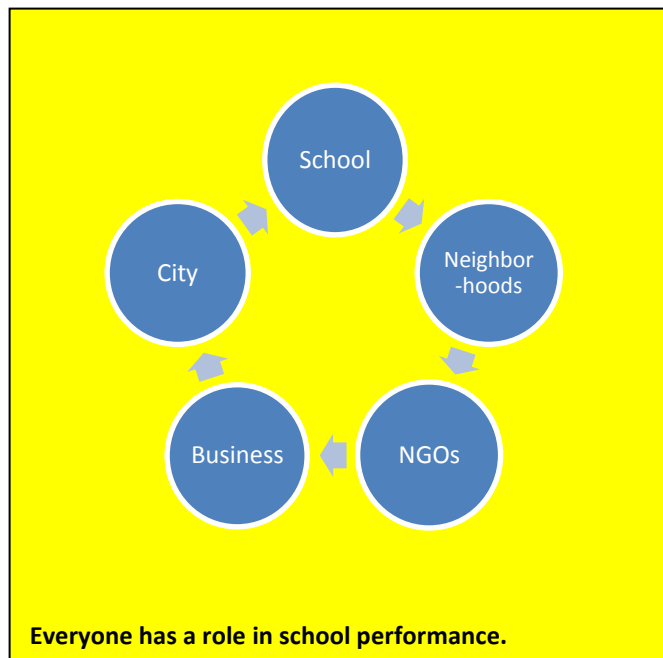
If a neighborhood feels an obligation to be a learning community, it will find a multitude of ways to provide information and insights to residents of all ages. Education involves everyone in the neighborhood area of homes, apartments, parks, schools and shops.



Learning in the Park.



A Monument for an Historic Home.



Everyone has a role in school performance.

RESIDENCY EDUCATION AND TRAINING.

Knowing how to maintain a home or apartment does not necessarily come naturally. Most people learn some or all of the skills necessary while growing up in a home where the parents have honed these skills over decades. However, many households may not possess these skills and experiences. Organizations like HANDS of Central Florida exist to fill this void.

Neighborhoods experiencing neglected properties, maintenance issues or organizational challenges can call upon the city and other organizations for technical assistance and advice. The city can make the availability of these services known through community workshops, published information and on-line resources.

JOB-RELATED EDUCATION AND TRAINING.

Residents of all neighborhoods are faced with continuing casual or forced interest in life-long learning. Whether the need is for on-the-job training, advanced education or certification maintenance, the world of work is changing enough that this need cannot be ignored in neighborhoods of all types.

Programs available from universities, colleges and business organizations can be offered in community centers, schools or libraries in or near neighborhoods. On-line classes and certifications can also be provided on the neighborhood scale with neighborhood resources.

Adult education for enrichment purposes are also neighborhood benefits available to adults of all ages, especially the old, the impoverished and the impaired.



HANDS of Central Florida, Inc. - Mission

HANDS was founded to assist Central Florida communities to increase the supply and availability of affordable housing, both rental and ownership. HANDS achieves this mission by providing the following services:

- A Resource web-directory offering housing information and referral services to Central Florida residents about affordable housing alternatives available to them.
- As a HUD-Certified Housing Counseling Agency, HANDS offers counseling services in group or One-on-One sessions which cover: Pre-purchase, Post-purchase, Budget/Credit analysis, Foreclosure or Default counseling, Home Equity Reverse Mortgage Counseling and Rental/Landlord Tenant Counseling.
- Technical assistance and information to developers, builders and others interested in affordable housing in Central Florida.
- Assistance to Central Florida governments in implementation of the affordable housing element of their Consolidated Plans.
- As a Community Housing Development Agency (Federally Approved Housing Developer) HANDS develops affordable single and multi-family housing units. HANDS owns over 880 affordable rent units in three counties and builds 5-10 single family homes on scattered lots annually.
- In accomplishing this mission, HANDS works to establish partnerships with other non-profit organizations, governments and the business community to build, acquire, and rehabilitate and manage low cost housing units which are sold or rented to individuals and families well below market rate.

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