

CAMPUS-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP GRANT PROPOSAL

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Introduction

In October 2004, Rhodes College was awarded a Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC) grant through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The objective of the project described in this grant is to forge a partnership between the communities of Rhodes College and Hollywood-Springdale that will “*renew the Hollywood-Springdale community as a healthy, clean, safe, and sustainable community for all*”¹. Many initiatives are already in place such as Housing and Community Renewal, Community Health, and Schooling Opportunities for Youth. In the Fall 2005 a new initiative not funded by the COPC grant, the Greenspaces project, started exploring the availability and feasibility of establishing green areas for the community in existing vacant lots.

Up until the mid-1980s, Velsicol Chemical Corporation dumped substantial amounts of chemical by-products into the nearby Cypress Creek, and the negative effects of the practice continue to affect the lives of Hollywood Springdale residents to this day. Due to soil contamination near the streambed, several sizable tracts of land have remained undeveloped since it is no longer safe to build on them. These vacant lots have been poorly maintained and have become sites of illegal dumping. Our primary mission is to convert these lots into clean, safe, and aesthetically-pleasing greenspaces for the use of residents of all ages to relax, exercise, play, and socialize.

First we met with community leaders, non-profit organizations and city officials that have been working or have an interest in that area to share with them our plans and get their feedback and support. Everybody expressed their support for the creation of greenspaces in that community. There is a consensus that the community will greatly benefit from green spaces economically, environmentally and socially. Worldwide, green areas are promoted as a tool to improve the social and environmental conditions of degraded urban communities. There are many recognized benefits to urban communities associated with the presence of green spaces. They provide places to play, rest, gather, and enjoy the outdoors. They also provide significant ecological benefits to the area, by reducing the urban heat island effect, improving drainage, and reducing noise pollution.

To work toward this goal, a non-profit organization, Hollywood Greenspace Community (HGC), was established which will eventually include a board of neighborhood residents, stakeholders such as companies and nonprofits, and Rhodes faculty, staff and students. The intent of HGC is to produce a plan for the establishment of two or more urban green areas, implementing both short- and long-term environmental improvement programs so

the community members can begin to enjoy the use of greenspaces as soon as possible. Over time the local residents will take charge of these improved spaces and will ensure that these spaces will be maintained and will continue to be enjoyed by the residents.

Project Description

There are currently no areas in the community that can serve as an example of the benefits associated with a healthy natural environment. As mentioned, green areas are often used as trash dumps. A simple way to reach the people in the community and start the process of involving them into the improvement of their natural spaces would a project, such as the one proposed here, that would symbolize the benefits of environmental-based projects. Recently, we met with Ms. Dorothy Cox, the COPC Project Manager, and other representatives of the community. One of their recommendations was to provide funds to clean some of the areas, set up a simple fence to discourage dumping, and replace concrete barriers with a safer and more aesthetically pleasing gate.

The site of interest includes two vacant land parcels bordering Cypress Creek. One of the parcels is adjacent to the concrete-fenced entrance to Cypress Creek, periodically used by the Memphis Public Works Department. This entrance has become a neighborhood eyesore, and the two damaged concrete barriers do nothing to prevent the public, especially children, from entering this dangerous area. With funding and in cooperation with the public works department, these barriers would be replaced with a security gate. The new gate would increase public safety and create a more visually-pleasing entrance.

As mentioned, the two parcels adjacent to the gate are currently used as dumping grounds. In order to deter illegal dumping without restricting public access, a chain will run around the perimeter. Before doing that, however, community cleanups of the parcels will be organized to dispose of litter and clear out the underbrush. This activity would involve both residents and members of the Rhodes community with the expectation that all of them will become more interested in the greenspace project and invested in their maintenance.

In addition to increase safety and the removal of environmental degrading trash, citizens will come to see green spaces as aiding the well-being of the community. It is expected that this project will inspire local residents and will provide a blueprint for the creation of green spaces in other Memphis communities. Throughout the project, incorporating input from residents and soliciting their involvement will be a major priority. It is hoped that eventually the community members will gain a sense of pride and ownership in the greenspaces and will not only utilize them on a regular basis but take responsibility for their management.

Timeline

While these specific projects are expected to be completed before spring 2007, the partnership between Rhodes and the Hollywood-Springdale Community will be ongoing. The community cleanups can be implemented as soon as funds are available.

Requested budget

• <u>Security Gate:</u>	\$ 1,300.00
• <u>Chain around the perimeter:</u>	\$ 200.00
• <u>Supplies for the cleanup:</u>	\$ 200.00
○ <u>TOTAL</u>	<u>\$1,700.00</u>

Evaluation and Dissemination

Of most importance will be feedback from the residents themselves. A survey will be administered to community to gauge their satisfaction with the project, their level of involvement, and their support for future greenspace endeavors in the neighborhood.

To publicize our project within the ACS as well as the greater Memphis community, a brochure and a report will be produced detailing the college's partnership with the Hollywood-Springdale community for this greenspace initiative and highlighting before and after images of the vacant lots. Additional avenues available for the dissemination of information of this project as a possible model for other affiliates will include posting information on the ACS website and presenting the outcome of the project at an ACS meeting.

1. ftp://fileserv1.rhodes.edu/acad_dept_pgm/Urban_Stu/Public/RHSP_2005/PR%20Material/