

*East Gateway
District*

On the Path to Revitalization

ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT, APRIL 2009



Multicultural "Back to School" Celebration, 2008

**ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT, APRIL 2009
EAST GATEWAY DISTRICT**

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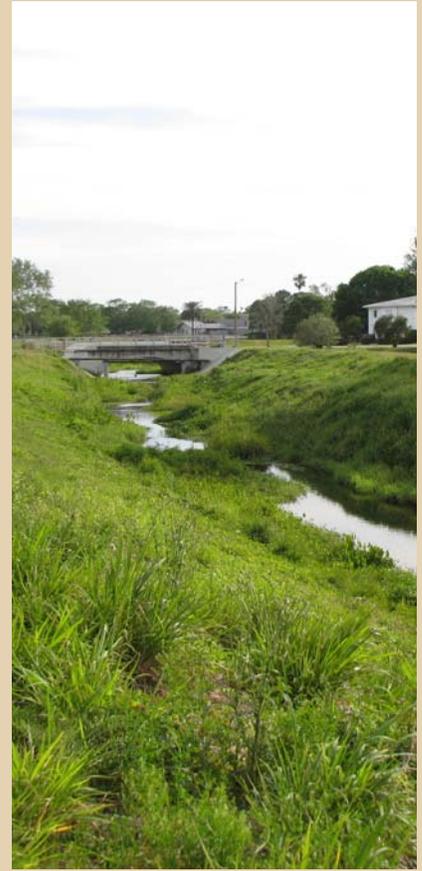
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INTRODUCTION

Strategically Positioned



THIS ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT addresses the first year of the East Gateway District Five-Year Action Program (FY 07/08- FY 11/12). The report illuminates the efforts, accomplishments and progress of the City of Clearwater and the East Gateway community in achieving the neighborhood's revitalization goals.

While the past year presented economic and fiscal challenges to the neighborhood, city and country, the community's interest in a better, more livable East Gateway District was ignited and strengthened in spite of it. New forums for community collaboration were established and citizens and business owners rededicated themselves to results-oriented participation.

GATEWAY TO CLEARWATER'S DOWNTOWN & BEACH

As the economy at-large falters, entrepreneurial spirit is alive in East Gateway. The year saw several new businesses fill vacant storefronts while longstanding businesses remained in hope of better days to come.

A collaborative team approach has made possible the many accomplishments described in this report. The East Gateway Task Force has worked diligently over the year to advance the Action Program to create a better neighborhood for those that live and work in East Gateway.

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Community Voices



THE EAST GATEWAY DISTRICT Five-Year Action Program is the product of a community-based planning process. While the Action Program has transitioned into the implementation phase, community involvement remains vital to decision-making that will shape the neighborhood's future.

Communications & Outreach Plan

To guide the public involvement process during Action Program implementation, the East Gateway District Outreach & Communications Plan was developed. A key element of the plan is establishment of the East Gateway Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) as a measure to gain meaningful participation by the range of stakeholders in this diverse neighborhood.

Task Force Role

The East Gateway Task Force ensures that the public is adequately informed and involved at appropriate intervals in the Action Program implementation. Task Force representatives routinely attend SAG and other community meetings

ACTIVE COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS EAST GATEWAY DISTRICT

EAST GATEWAY DISTRICT STAKEHOLDER
ADVISORY GROUP

EAST GATEWAY BUSINESS & NEIGHBORS
ASSOCIATION

HISPANIC LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

CLEARWATER NEIGHBORHOODS
COALITION

to present concepts, address questions and hear public opinion.

Regular contact with the community has increased staff's awareness of stakeholder needs, concerns, values and preferences, which facilitates technical problem solving and decision making and increases certainty and predictability in East Gateway initiatives.

Outreach

Multiple outreach forums were relied on over the year to increase the public's accessibility to infor-

mation and participation in the Action Program, including:

- Public meetings
- Community events
- Community organization meetings

Public Meetings

A community meeting was held in June 2008 to present the recently approved Action Program and to kick-off the implementation phase. The community in attendance was asked to be more involved in East Gateway neighborhood affairs.

East Gateway Stakeholder Advisory Group

The SAG was established in September 2008 and has been meeting bi-monthly since. Membership consists of seven to 11 individuals representing a cross-section of East Gateway stakeholder groups.

The purpose of the SAG is to make recommendations and provide key information to guide Action Program projects and initiatives. The SAG plays an important role in the Action Program implementation process by:

- Providing first-hand information regarding neighborhood issues
- Flagging potential controversies
- Providing fresh perspectives
- Providing solutions that best meet East Gateway needs, preferences and values
- Identifying the public that needs to be involved and the kinds of input needed
- Suggesting ways to increase community involvement

East Gateway Business & Neighbors Association

The BNA is a grassroots organization that was established by community members in October 2008. The BNA meets monthly as a forum to voice community concerns and solutions. As its name implies, the membership is represented by residents and businesses. Attendance has been excellent, with BNA members quickly moving from issue identification to problem solving mode.



Several BNA members also serve on the SAG. BNA subcommittees include Membership, Infrastructure, Mural Arts District and Soup Kitchen.

Community Events

Community events, such as the August 2008 “Back to School” celebration, provided excellent outreach opportunities by capturing the attention of a larger, more representative group. At the event, people that might not attend community meetings were informed about the neighborhood revitalization effort, including ways to be involved.

Hispanic Community

While a plan to convene Hispanic Focus Groups did not materialize during the year, the Task Force found other ways of getting the word out to and obtaining feedback from this significant East Gateway population group. In September 2008, staff distributed a community survey at a large-scale Mexican Independence Day event. Staff presented the Action Program to the Hispanic Leadership Council. A Hispanic Outreach Center (HOC) staff member participated in Task Force planning meetings for community events and the HOC Executive Director is a SAG member. Business visits are also used to convey East Gateway information.

Projects & Programs

HIGHLIGHTS of the East Gateway District Five-Year Action Program accomplishments over the past year



Community Policing

An agreement between the CRA and City provides for a new community-policing unit in East Gateway and measurable objectives for reducing drug dealing, prostitution and street crimes. The new officers supplement existing patrols to increase police presence.



Crime Watch

The Police Department received six new "No Trespass" affidavits as a result of outreach to area businesses. The East Gateway Business & Neighbors Association canvassed the neighborhood, signing up residents and businesses for East Gateway's second crime watch organization.

Streetlight Program

To resolve an identified lighting deficiency at the 100 block of Missouri Avenue, decorative streetlights were installed. The city is currently coordinating with a cable company to relocate aerial wires in this location to existing underground conduit.



Black Barrel & Recycling Awareness Program

To encourage proper trash disposal, bilingual information was distributed to every East Gateway residence about the range of city solid waste services.



Building Division Liaison

The character of existing development in East Gateway is often at odds with current Code requirements, making simple alterations a challenge for some property owners. James Wagner, Development Review Supervisor, is the Building Division Liaison, helping East Gateway property owners launch their projects.



Solutions to Vagrancy Issues

The city held meetings to discuss public input on the impacts of chronically homeless persons on residents, businesses and property owners in East Gateway. While no specific strategy has been identified, the city continues to seek a balanced solution in partnership with residents and social services organizations.



Business Beautification Award

Indoor Environmental Technologies received the city’s Business Beautification Recognition Award for Winter 2009. IET is helping to establish the standard for building and site design and property maintenance in the East Gateway District.



Community Events

A multicultural “Back to School” celebration was held in August 2008. The estimated 300 people in attendance were largely from the Hispanic community. The 2009 celebration and street festival, *Sunday Ciclovía*, had to be rescheduled due to inclement weather.

CPTED Review Process

New development in Downtown, including city parks, are reviewed by Planning staff for consistency with Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles. CPTED emphasizes the ability to “see and be seen” as a deterrent to crime.



Solutions for Litter “Hot Spots”

Littering is a frequent problem at bus stops without trash receptacles. To help remedy this problem in East Gateway, the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA) installed wire trash receptacles at bus stops on Gulf to Bay Boulevard and Cleveland Street.

Spanish Language Publications

Quarterly issues of *Guía de Diversion* promotes City library programs, homebuyer seminars and recreational facilities and programs to Hispanic residents in East Gateway and citywide. For example, the Parks and Recreation Department Contract Instructor Program serves to expand recreational program offerings of interest to Hispanic residents.

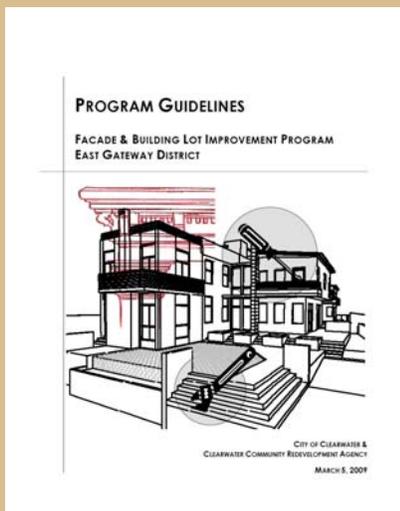
Increasing Homeownership

The city provided funding assistance for a 36-unit townhouse project known as Country Club Homes. The project is located on a 2.1-acre site at Drew Street and Betty Lane (formerly a Verizon parking lot). Units will be owner-occupied and affordable to low to moderate income households.



Traffic Calming

The city worked with Park Street residents to help deter criminal elements using Park Street as a cut-through. An engineering solution included the installation of speed humps.



Façade & Building Lot Improvement Program

This program, approved in March 2009, provides an incentive for commercial property owners to transform the appearance of buildings and building sites on major

Shopping & Dining Guide

The East Gateway District Shopping & Dining Guide reveals the wide variety of businesses in the area. The guide is downloadable on the city's web site.

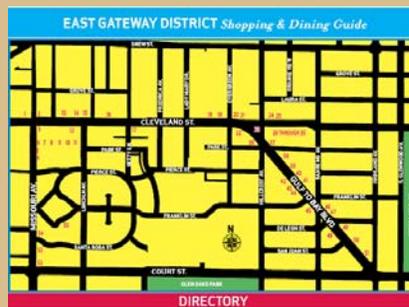
Clean Up Day & Code Sweep

The Neighborhood Services Division organized an East Gateway clean up day in May 2008. The clean up was immediately followed by a Community Response Team code sweep to identify Code violations.



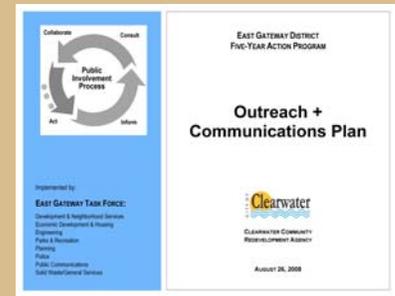
East Gateway Web Page

A web page was created to facilitate information dissemination to the community. The web page tells the East Gateway story, including its history and vision, aspects about the revitalization process and how the community can be involved, and web links to key documents such as the Five-Year Action Program and proposed East Gateway initiatives.



Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy

The East Gateway District Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy (NRS) was approved by the city in March 2009. Designating the East Gateway as a NRS Area under this US Department of Housing & Urban Development program makes reporting and threshold requirements less onerous for federal funding of revitalization projects .



Outreach & Communications

The Public Outreach & Communications Plan articulates the process for community outreach, information dissemination, feedback and use of public commentary in neighborhood decision-making. The purpose of the plan is to facilitate on-going community participation during the Action Program timeframe.



Business Visits

Business visits by staff have proved useful for promoting the East Gateway revitalization effort and learning about business issues, plans and ideas for creating positive change in the neighborhood.

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PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Analysis

PROGRESS in the achievement of East Gateway goals is gauged, in part, through the evaluation of performance measures. The analysis of basic neighborhood indicators in this section reveal that the East Gateway District has yet to turn the corner toward neighborhood stability. While the economic downturn is certainly a contributing factor to declining property values and homeownership rates in East Gateway, the depth and range of longstanding neighborhood issues will indeed take time to correct. Steadfast implementation of the multi-pronged strategies set forth in the Action Program – including strategic investments and nurtured civic engagement – remain critical to a successful revitalization effort.

Property Values

Change in property values is typically a prime indicator of neighborhood health. From 2007 to 2008, the property tax base in the *New Community Redevelopment Area*, which includes the East Gateway District, declined by \$8,856,189 (approximately 6%). *Note:* property value decline was experienced city, state and nationwide in 2008. The map on page 10 depicts changes in the assessed value of East Gateway properties.

**PROPERTY VALUATION
NEW COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AREA ***

2004 Tax Roll (base year)	\$88,234,600
2007 Tax Roll	\$143,451,973
2008 Tax Roll	\$134,595,784

** New Community Redevelopment Area was established in 2004 and is comprised of 201 acres. This area includes the 176-acre East Gateway District. The entire Clearwater Community Redevelopment Area expires in 2019.*

Housing Tenure

Neighborhood stabilization is a primary East Gateway goal. By increasing the ratio of owner to renter-occupied dwellings in this predominantly rental neighborhood, there is a greater likelihood of property maintenance and civic engagement. As shown in the *Homesteaded Properties* map on page 11, owner-occupied dwellings declined from 171 dwellings to 153 dwellings during 2007-2008.

Code Violations

Since 2004, the city has conducted three code sweeps in the East Gateway District. The results of those sweeps are summarized below:

EAST GATEWAY CODE SWEEPS	NOV 2004	NOV 2006	MAY 2008
Parcels with violations	374	248	509
Parcels with no violations	505	633	372
Community Code violations	298	207	735
Public nuisance violations	242	92	202
Most frequent violation	poor paint	unenclosed dumpster	dead/absent landscaping

HOMESTEADED PROPERTIES, 2007-2008 EAST GATEWAY DISTRICT



Source: Pinellas County Property Appraiser, 2008.

LEGEND:

- East Gateway District
- Parcels w/Homestead Exemption 2007 (171)
- Parcels w/Homestead Exemption 2008 (153)
- Waterbody

Code Violations (*continued*)

The significant increase in East Gateway code violations in 2008 over those in 2004 and 2006 is attributable to an intensified city effort to improve neighborhood appearance in East Gateway.

New Business Organizations

A piece of good news is the establishment of the East Gateway Business & Neighbors Association in October 2008. The association meets monthly to discuss and address matters of interest to East Gateway property owners, merchants and residents (Also see Outreach & Public Involvement section for details on this group).

New Business Start Ups

In 2008, the following businesses opened in the East Gateway District:

BUY COINS & STAMPS

1458 Gulf to Bay Blvd

EL RESUEVE (tortillas & tamales)

1417 Cleveland St

GREEKTOWN GRILLE

1220 Cleveland St

HANDS ON BICYCLE (parts & repair)

1453-B Gulf to Bay Blvd

LA FERIA DE LA NIEVA (food & ice cream)

1390 Gulf to Bay Blvd

NOVEDADES ARCOIRIS (sports apparel)

1411 Cleveland St

PAISANO HELP (money wiring & shipping)

1411 Cleveland St

NOVEDADES ARCOIRIS (sports apparel)

1411 Cleveland St

SHU SHU'S MONGOLIAN BARBEQUE

1436 Gulf to Bay Blvd

SILVA WESTERN WEAR

1442 Gulf to Bay Blvd

VIVA MEXICO (Mexican cuisine)

1264 Cleveland St

WANNA SAVE SUB SHOP

1362 Cleveland St

New Approved Site Plans

No applications were made for site plan review in East Gateway in the past year.

Police Reports & Calls for Service

October 2008 marked the first month of enhanced law enforcement in the East Gateway District. Two additional police officers were assigned to law enforcement responsibilities for a minimum of eight hours per day, five days per week, as set forth in a City/CRA Interlocal Agreement.

Current police deployment consists of two bicycle officers working Thursday, Friday and Saturday evening shifts. Other officers assigned to East Gateway work day shifts. Sergeant Joe Falcone supervises enforcement activities pursuant to the Interlocal Agreement. The Downtown Bike Substation serves as the primary duty station for the East Gateway team.

The team is focusing on crime hot spots and networking with residents and businesses in the East Gateway community. A prostitution mapping project was completed and is awaiting final approval. Several "reverse sting" operations are planned for 2009 to address the prostitution problem in East Gateway. Bike Team and Gateway officers monitored the Soup Kitchen/CHIP on a daily basis from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m., educating homeless clients on the "Rules of Conduct" set forth by CHIP and the Police Department. These rules are enforced continually by the officers throughout their shifts.

The tables on page 14 compare Police Department statistics related to criminal offenses in East Gateway. The arrows next to 2008 data indicate the direction of change (positive, negative, neutral).

In light of the decrease in "Reports" and increase in "Calls for Service," the increase in calls may be a result of the Police Department's community policing strategy to ask residents and businesses to call with *any* perceived issue.

**TOP CRIMINAL POLICE REPORTS
EAST GATEWAY DISTRICT**

June 2007 – August 2007

Ordinance violation (e.g., open alcohol).....	60
Drug arrests	56
Burglary.....	27
Theft (petit)	27
Traffic violation.....	24
Criminal mischief.....	15
Trespass arrests	14
Assault aggravated/battery	13
Disorderly conduct.....	10
Battery.....	10
Battery (domestic).....	8
Gang activity.....	7
Fraud/forgery/counterfeiting	6
Theft (grand).....	6
Total reports.....	339

June 2008 – August 2008

Ordinance violation (open alcohol).....	43 ↓
Drug arrests	47 ↓
Burglary.....	24 ↓
Theft (petit)	12 ↓
Traffic violation.....	5 ↓
Criminal mischief.....	15 □
Trespass arrests	13
Assault aggravated/battery	6 ↓
Disorderly conduct.....	1 ↓
Battery.....	11 ↑
Battery (domestic).....	9 ↑
Gang activity.....	0 ↓
Fraud/forgery/counterfeiting	10 ↑
Theft (grand).....	15 ↑
Total reports.....	262 ↓

**TOP CALLS FOR POLICE SERVICE*
EAST GATEWAY DISTRICT**

June 2007 – August 2007

Traffic stop.....	572
Suspicious person.....	421
Special detail.....	108
Assist citizen.....	99
911 hang up	96
Disturbance/disorderly	78
Extra patrol	71
Traffic crash.....	70
Supplemental report.....	62
Assist other agency.....	57
Drug call.....	54
Ordinance violation.....	51
Alarm.....	48
Building check.....	46
Battery	39
Total calls for service.....	2,711*

June 2008 – August 2008

Traffic stop.....	452 ↓
Suspicious person.....	332 ↓
Special detail.....	108 □
Assist citizen.....	98 ↓
911 hang up	78 ↓
Disturbance/disorderly	83 ↑
Extra patrol	0 ↓
Traffic crash.....	44 ↓
Supplemental report.....	55 ↓
Assist other agency.....	41 ↓
Drug call.....	54 □
Ordinance violation.....	46 ↓
Alarm.....	98 ↑
Building check.....	6 ↓
Battery	45 ↑
Total calls for service.....	2,828* ↑

Maintaining Momentum

IN 2008, EAST GATEWAY found its voice through leadership and a specific strategy for positive change. In 2009, the community's greatest challenge will be to maintain momentum in the pursuit of its goals.

EAST GATEWAY DISTRICT TO-DO LIST

Community Engagement

- Convene Hispanic Focus Groups to obtain input from Hispanic residents and businesses and nurture civic leadership in this community.
- Get the word out. Keep the community informed and interested.
- Articulate a community vision for the physical (built) environment and overall community character.

Facilitate Redevelopment

- Consider land use and land development requirements that conform to desired development patterns (see *community vision* above).

Collaborative Partnerships

- Seek action-oriented partnerships in resolving neighborhood issues involving vagrancy.
- Seek strategic partnerships for redevelopment that stimulates private investment in the area.
- Provide technical guidance to community supported initiatives that are in harmony with the East Gateway Five-Year Action Program. For example:
 - *Pierce Street Model Block Project*, Clearwater Neighborhood Housing Services, Inc.
 - *East Gateway Mural Arts District*, East Gateway Business & Neighbors Association



Neighborhood Appearance

- Solicit applicants for the East Gateway Façade & Building Lot Improvement Program.
- Host clean up days.

Infrastructure

- Complete concepts and cost estimates for the Downtown/Beach Gateway & Wayfinding project.
- Identify a site and funding partner for East Gateway Tot Lot.
- Identify solutions to parking issues (see *Facilitate Redevelopment*).
- Retain/attract retail businesses.
- Submit candidate sidewalk projects for funding under the City's Sidewalk Program.

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Historic Images of East Gateway Courtesy of Mike Sanders

