

Garden District Strategic Plan

*A partnership of the Garden District Community Advisory Board
and the City of Casselberry Community Development Department*



January 2018



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INTRODUCTION

Background

On February 22, 2016, Community Development Staff presented ten different strategies to the City of Casselberry City Commission on economic development and community building strategies that could be achieved within the next few years. One strategy was to create a network of neighborhood districts encompassing the City's older neighborhoods and to establish a volunteer organization to oversee events and neighborhood beautification projects that take place within each distinct district. In September of 2017, the Garden District Community Advisory Board was created, and with the help of Community Development Staff, the district's first community meetings were held the following month to solicit ideas and information from the community to be included in their first Strategic Plan.

Purpose

The creation of the Garden District, in conjunction with the Garden District Community Advisory Board (GDCAB) and subsequent Strategic Plan, is part of a concerted effort by the City of Casselberry to beautify, connect, and brand many of the older and more established residential neighborhoods throughout the City. The Garden District is led by a volunteer coalition of district residents, dubbed the Garden District Community Advisory Board (GDCAB). Through the Garden District Strategic Plan, district residents and the GDCAB will help guide staff and the City Commission to increase awareness of planning efforts; increase citizen engagement and involvement in support for neighborhood planning; and reach consensus on actions and priorities for improvements in the Garden District.

What is a strategic plan?

A neighborhood strategic plan is a set of goals and policies that help a neighborhood plan for the future. The intent is to involve Garden District residents and property owners in the process. The residents and property owners provided input on neighborhood conditions and issues, and identified positive outcomes they wish to see in their community. Their input is the backbone of the Garden District Strategic Plan. In order to ensure positive outcomes from the planning

process, it was imperative to include input from the residents of the district on matters of their community.

Planning Process

With direction from the City Commission, Community Development Staff held two community meetings in July of 2017 in order to introduce the idea of a “neighborhood district” and to solicit volunteers to be involved. Approximately 30 residents in total attended the two meetings to kick off the “Garden District” concept. A majority viewed this as a positive development for their community.

At the July meetings, a sign-up sheet was available to solicit volunteers who would be interested in serving on the Garden District Community Advisory Board (GDCAB). In August of 2017, a meeting was held with just the group of volunteers who signed up to be a part of the creation of the district. At this meeting, staff discussed the roles of the organization's advisory board and studied examples of bylaws of other organizations to shed light about how the GDCAB might function and how volunteers could participate within the group. Many of the residents in attendance at this meeting would ultimately agree to serve as members of the GDCAB.

In September, a meeting was held with the voluntary members of GDCAB. This meeting was meant to formalize the positions of the volunteers into functional roles within the GDCAB. Prior to the meeting, staff asked those interested in serving on an advisory board to send in their letter of intent. It was at this meeting that volunteers were voted into their respective roles as GDCAB members. Additionally, at this meeting, staff and GDCAB members discussed the need for and formulation of a strategic plan. By the end of the meeting, staff and members of the GDCAB were in agreement that the best way to start the strategic planning process was to engage as many residents of the district as possible to ensure consensus.

In October, the GDCAB, along with Community Development Staff, held two meetings solely focused on engaging the community to gain their input. The results of these two community meetings provided the basis and foundation for the strategic plan.

The GDCAB met with Community Development Staff again at the end of October and in November to discuss the outcome of the community meetings and to

discuss the future of the organization. Community Development Staff took direction from the Advisory Board and gathered information from both the group and the community meetings to draft the first strategic plan.

From November 2017 through January 2018, the GDCAB and Community Development Staff have been working to complete the Strategic Plan.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

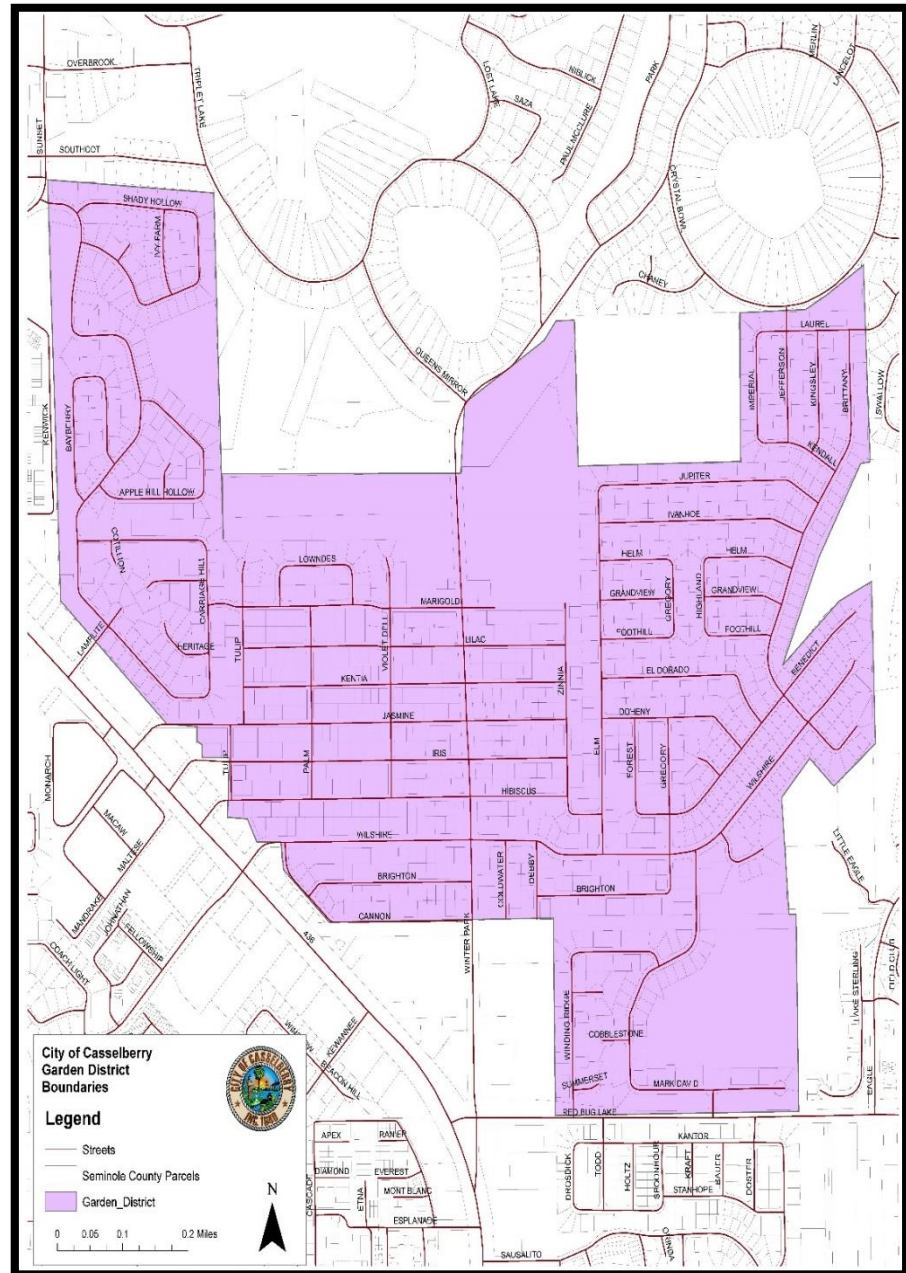
Historical Context

Historically, Casselberry was nationally known for growing ferns. Ferneries flourished across Casselberry's land. At one point, Casselberry was one of the largest ferneries in the world. As World War II began, the ferneries were determined to be obsolete, and were replaced by government contracts for manufactured goods to support the war effort. By the time the war was over, many workers had established homesteads within the city. In 1965, Casselberry was incorporated: it was the 2nd largest city in Seminole County at the time.

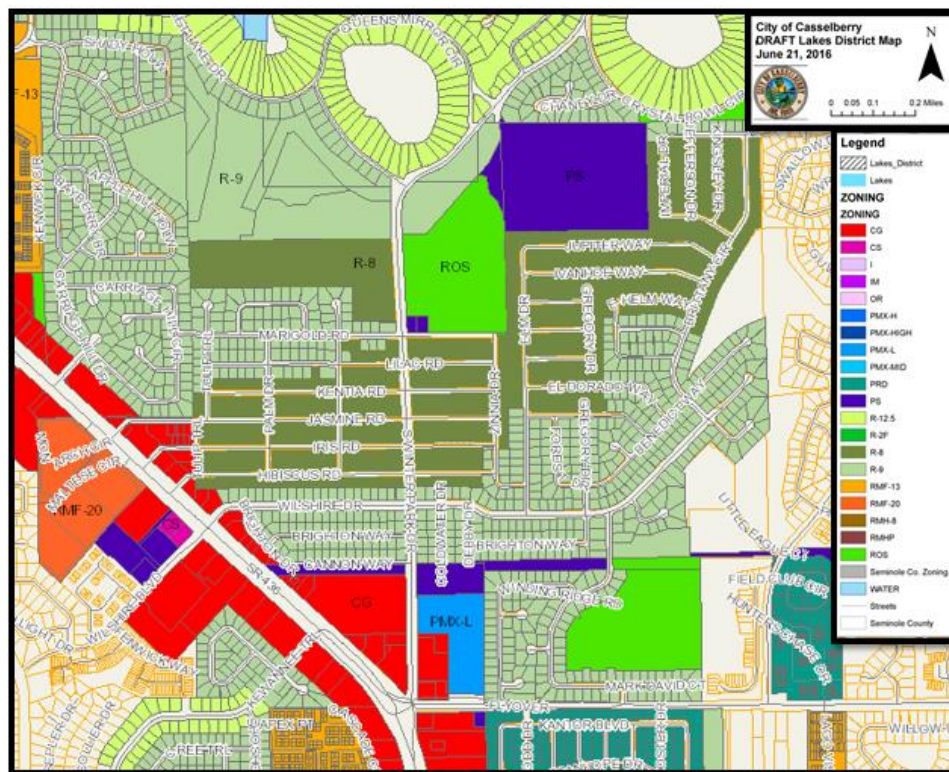
Now, the City of Casselberry has grown to a population of more than 27,000. The city is fully developed, and some of the older homes and businesses within the city are ripe for redevelopment. Some of Casselberry's older homes are in need of repair; however, many longtime residents have taken very good care of their homes and properties.

Rapid growth, expanded highways, new flyovers, and other projects have kept Casselberry in the redevelopment spotlight. Now the City Commission has turned to its aging residential communities to look for new potential for growth.

The Garden District is centered around long-established neighborhoods within the heart of the City of Casselberry. The district encompasses many of the neighborhoods connected by South Winter Park Drive, including Carriage Hill, Summerset North, and Queens Mirror South. The district's northern boundary includes Laurel Way, South Winter Park Drive, Sections of the Casselberry Greenway Trail and Shady Hollow. The eastern boundary includes Mark David Boulevard, Wilshire Drive and Brittany Circle. The western boundary includes Carriage Hill Drive, Tulip Trail, and Brighton Way. The southern boundary of the district is Red Bug Lake Road.



District Features



The majority of the district is zoned residential, with about 1,500 different households, large recreation areas, and open spaces.

The Garden District is unique in that many of its streets are named after flora. If South Winter Park Drive forms the spine of the district, the flowers streets are the ribs.

It contains the largest portion of the City's Greenway Bike Trail (formerly known as Wirz Trail). Casselberry's Wirz Park is located within the Garden District and is currently the only park within the City with a community swimming pool. The District also contains the Crystal Bowl Park butterfly garden.

The Casselberry Elementary and South Seminole Middle Schools are in walking distance to many of the homes within the District. Residents also have access to retail and restaurants along State Road 436, to the west.

ISSUES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Issues and Areas of Focus

The following table of issues was constructed by analyzing the responses of the district residents from the two community meetings held in October. The primary objective of these community meetings was twofold: bringing residents into the planning process, and using the results from these meetings to inform the GDCAB and City Staff with direction regarding the prioritization of projects and goals.

In order to bring residents into the planning process, City Staff created a workshop free of lectures and one-sided discussions. Instead, City Staff created an atmosphere and environment that allowed residents to share their feelings and opinions freely without fear of embarrassment or harassment. Among the exercises available to residents to share their thoughts were: a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis of the entire district; a preferences exercise that allowed residents to identify different types of amenities and projects they would like to see; a brief demographic survey; and a “what did we miss” exercise that gave residents the opportunity to use their imagination and creativity to suggest other ideas, projects, and amenities that may have been left out.

As a result of the great turnout and warm reception, residents of the district provided City Staff and the GDCAB with invaluable comments and information. Staff, in tandem with members of the GDCAB, were able to synthesize all of the comments and generate a list of the focus areas from residents of the district.

The following table illustrates the areas of greatest focus for the residents, as well as the weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to each focus area. The results of these meetings and the following table also provide Staff and the GDCAB with the information necessary to begin prioritizing projects and goals to improve the overall quality of life for residents in the District.

This strategic plan was crafted with the principles of community engagement and consensus building. Great efforts were made by both GDCAB volunteers and City Staff to maintain and ensure adherence to these principles. A primary goal of City Staff at the very beginning of this process was to ensure residents were engaged in the process and left with the feeling this strategic plan was created with them and not for them.

Issues / Area of Focus	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Community Engagement & Citizen Participation	Lack of community Involvement	Improving community attitude and	Lack of effective communication generating

		sense of community overall	engagement or interest of residents
District Beautification	Residents not maintaining yards	Community gardens in public areas	Lack of participation in maintaining and financing projects
Health and Safety	No speed bumps or traffic lights to curb speeding through the street	More speed-calming devices to promote district travel by bike and foot	Cut-through traffic in neighborhoods; new apartments create more traffic
Education	Overcoming the negative stigma of Casselberry	Become the central forum for community interaction, info sharing, and discussion	Diverse population may lose message in some translations
Advocacy	Need to become a focused voice, and not one of many voices	Become a focused voice to bring residents' concerns to the City	Overstepping scope or purpose of Garden District

Recommendations from Community and Staff

Community Engagement and Citizen Participation

The City of Casselberry is fortunate to have a diverse population, and the Garden District demographics are an accurate reflection of that diversity. Throughout the meetings, "Community Engagement & Citizen Participation" was continuously identified as an area of significant focus. Concern was expressed about the lack

of community engagement and citizen involvement opportunities. However, numerous opportunities currently exist for citizens to participate, and an increasing number of opportunities will exist within the Garden District. The best way to curtail this concern is to increase the education and awareness of current and ongoing opportunities. To achieve this, the Garden District hopes to increase awareness of City and Garden District activities across social media platforms and the Casselberry Garden District website (<http://casselberrygardendistrict.org/>), in addition to traditional approaches, such as mailers and door hangers.

A need also exists to ensure that renters in the Garden District feel welcome, and are invited to City and Garden District events. Residents, homeowners and renters alike, expressed belief that an increase in interaction with their neighbors would encourage a greater sense of community in the district.

Recommendations

- ✓ Using traditional methods and social media to keep residents informed about ongoing activities and projects
- ✓ Improve community attitude and sense of community through consistent calendar of seasonal events
- ✓ Act as a central forum for community interaction, information sharing, and discussion using in-person General Meetings and social media
- ✓ Actively work to increase sense of community by getting residents out of their homes and talking to their neighbors – such as promoting block parties
- ✓ Have events which include all age groups such as community cleanups and grounds maintenance

District Beautification

Another item of opportunity residents brought up during our discussions was the chance to improve curb appeal within the district's borders. As some of the oldest neighborhoods in the City fall within the district's borders, some homes may need extra cleanup or repair. With the Greenway Bike Trail weaving through the district's spine, there is additional pride and motivation in maintaining an appealing environment.

Recommendations

- ✓ Events consisting of home cleanups, trash pickups, and helping elderly residents with yard work
- ✓ Painting the fence along the Greenway Bike Trail in a similar fashion as Seminole County's "Paint the Trail"
- ✓ Natural beautification through community gardens and strategic tree planting

Health and Safety

It should be no surprise "Health and Safety" was identified as another area of focus for the Garden District residents. Safety in this context was dominated by concerns of automobile safety, specifically speeding and traffic congestion. In response to these concerns residents identified opportunities for speed control and traffic calming enhancements throughout the district. Health was in the context of minimizing pesticide and herbicide usage, which benefits residents and the environment by minimizing exposure. Residents also expressed interest in increasing the exercise elements along the bike trails found in the district.

Recommendations

- ✓ Minimize pesticide and herbicide use
- ✓ Increase recreation elements such as exercise and stretching stations along the bike trail
- ✓ Use speed-calming devices to reduce speeders
- ✓ Partner with the City to advocate for speed impeters such as speed bumps and traffic lights

Education

Another area of focus for district residents pertains to the education of residents and non-residents of Casselberry regarding the state of the city. This concept represents 2 ideas: optimism and concern. District residents expressed optimism for the current state of the City, including, but not limited to amenities such as our many lakes, parks, and trails. However, concern was expressed about overcoming the negative stigma associated with Casselberry. Citizens identified opportunities to educate the general public regarding Casselberry's unique attributes.

Recommendations

- ✓ Partner with the UF/IFAS Extension to help educate residents about pesticide/herbicide use and tips for home gardens
- ✓ Partner with the City and a non-profit organization to establish a Bike Share program
- ✓ Install wayfinding signs to help people locate neighborhood parks, trails and other community assets
- ✓ Create and promote events to help the districts create a warm community feeling

Advocacy

While there are many individuals and groups that have an opinion about the future of Casselberry, their proposals could be more impactful when they are presented as a consensus. Throughout the October meetings, many ideas were passed on to the staff and GDCAB. While staff and the GDCAB would love to tackle all of the issues, it was determined that a focused group effort would achieve better results. However, the GDCAB should self-check itself to assure it is not overstepping the scope of why it was created.

Recommendations

- ✓ Promote polls that let community members give ideas and vote on popular ideas
- ✓ Invite professionals to meetings that can help navigate our goals/focus
- ✓ Be open about plans and goals on social media, in traditional mailings, and at events

ACTION PLAN

Projects

The Garden District Community Advisory Board discussed the order in which they wish to take on certain projects. They have determined that some of these are long term goals whereas others are short-term and easily achievable, with little preparation and funding.

Year to be accomplished	Project	Area of Focus	Funding Requirement
2018	Install Casselberry Garden District signs	Community Engagement & Citizen Participation	\$7500 – Neighborhood Improvement Grant funds
Quarterly	Seasonal events	Community Engagement & Citizen Participation, Education	TBD – fundraising, donations, etc.
Yearly	Community Meeting	Community Engagement & Citizen Participation, Education	Minimal to none – work with City Staff to use a City building for meeting
Ongoing	Advocate City Commission on behalf of residents & provide input on decisions	Advocacy, Health & Safety	None – GDCAB members attend City Commission meetings
Ongoing	GDCAB presence at City events (such as Art & Music at the Park)	Community Engagement & Citizen Participation, Education	TBD, but minimal – work with resident gardeners or businesses for garden-related donations for swag or raffle; work with City Staff for table/tent
Ongoing	Community clean-up projects	District Beautification	TBD – will need gloves, grabbers, garbage bags, etc.; after initial investment, some items reusable

Appendix

Notices

- Notice mailed to residents to inform creation of district.



CITY OF CASSELBERRY

Phone: (407) 262-7700 ext. 1102
Fax: (407) 262-7763
95 Triplet Lake Drive, Casselberry, FL 32707

The Garden District (Suggested Boundary)



Community Meetings:

Tuesday, July 18th at 6:30 PM

and

Saturday, July 22nd at 9:30 AM

- Both meetings are being held at Wirz Park
806 Mark David Blvd
Casselberry, FL 32707
- Beverages and light snacks provided

COME BE A PART OF THE CREATION OF CASSELBERRY'S GARDEN DISTRICT

The City of Casselberry requests your involvement in the creation of the Garden District. In an effort to promote a sense of place, the Garden District will help enhance and beautify the area as well as improve connectivity between neighborhoods. In order to achieve these goals, the City seeks your help in creating the Garden District Advisory Council – This voluntary organization will help guide district wide enhancements, beautification, and branding projects in and around your neighborhood.




- Notice mailed to residents for Strategic Plan meetings.



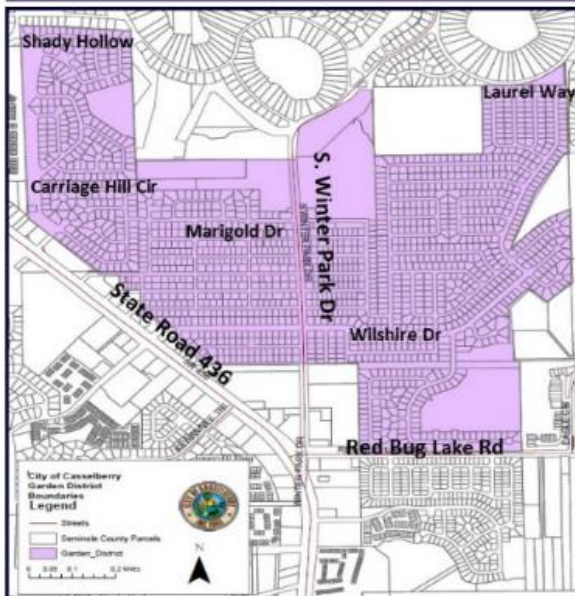
CITY OF CASSELBERRY

Phone: (407) 262-7700 ext. 1102

Fax: (407) 262-7763

95 Triplet Lake Drive, Casselberry, FL 32707

The Garden District



COME OUT AND HAVE A VOICE IN THE NEWLY CREATED CASSELBERRY GARDEN DISTRICT

The City of Casselberry and the Garden District Community Advisory Board request your involvement in an engaging community meeting. We hope to solicit information from residents on how to make the Garden District a great place to live work and play! Come join us and provide your input and feedback into our newly formed organization!

Community Meetings:

Tuesday, October 24th at

6:30 PM

and

Saturday, October 28th at

10:00 AM

- Both meetings are being held in the Casselberry Police Multi-purpose room
- 4195 S US Highway 17-92, Casselberry, FL 32707



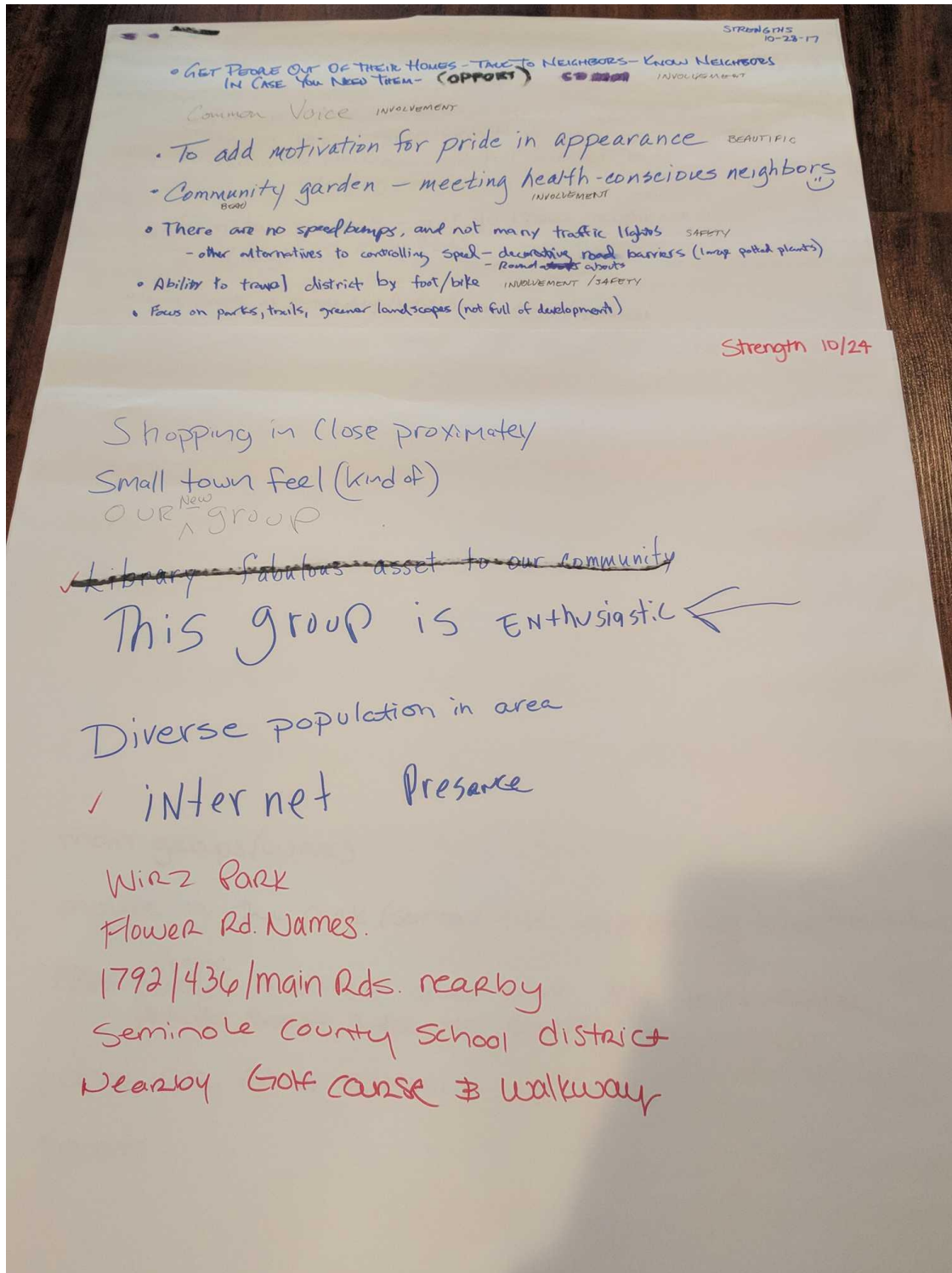
**Casselberry
Garden
District
Advisory
Council**



Results of Community Workshop

- **SWOT Analysis**

STRENGTHS



WEAKNESSES

Some residents (flower streets) not maintaining front yards

We need some Recreation Elements
Along our trails, For stretching or
maybe a skate spot.

Weaknesses 10/29

~~Lack of tree trimming and removal on Oxford Rd
between Library and Carriage Hill entrance.~~

✓ Extremely rough entrance to Carriage Hill off of Oxford Rd.

B
Lamplite
Way
Edwin
Woods
Golf

Traffic

When citizens Ask for something,
with a volume of support. The city ~~ignores~~ Ignored All Requests.

^{yet.}
Not enough care in People

Lack of completion of potable/recycled water

Lack of community involvement

Some renters

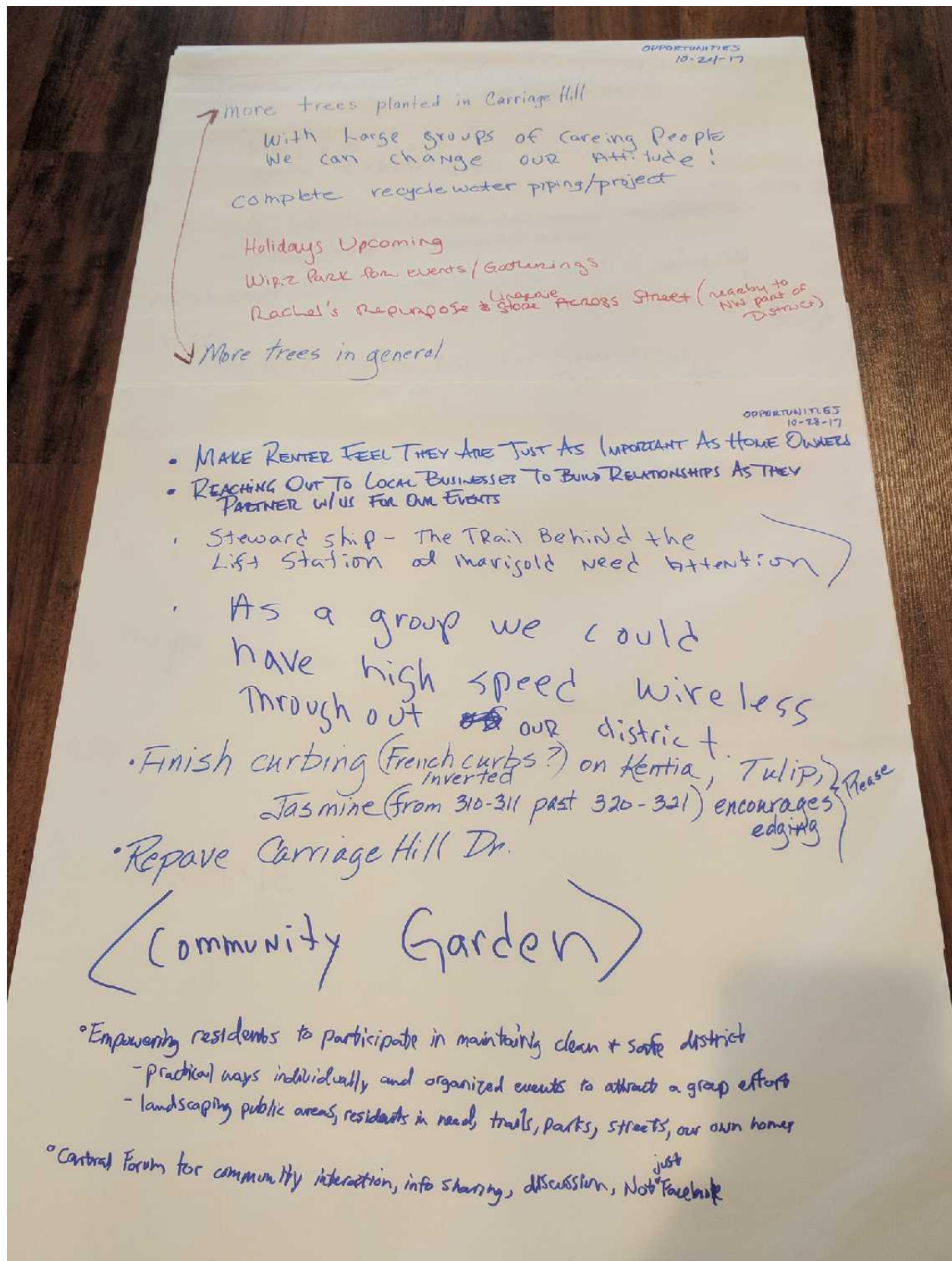
Low home values relative to age/size.

Small recycle Bins (city of Orlando does large bins)

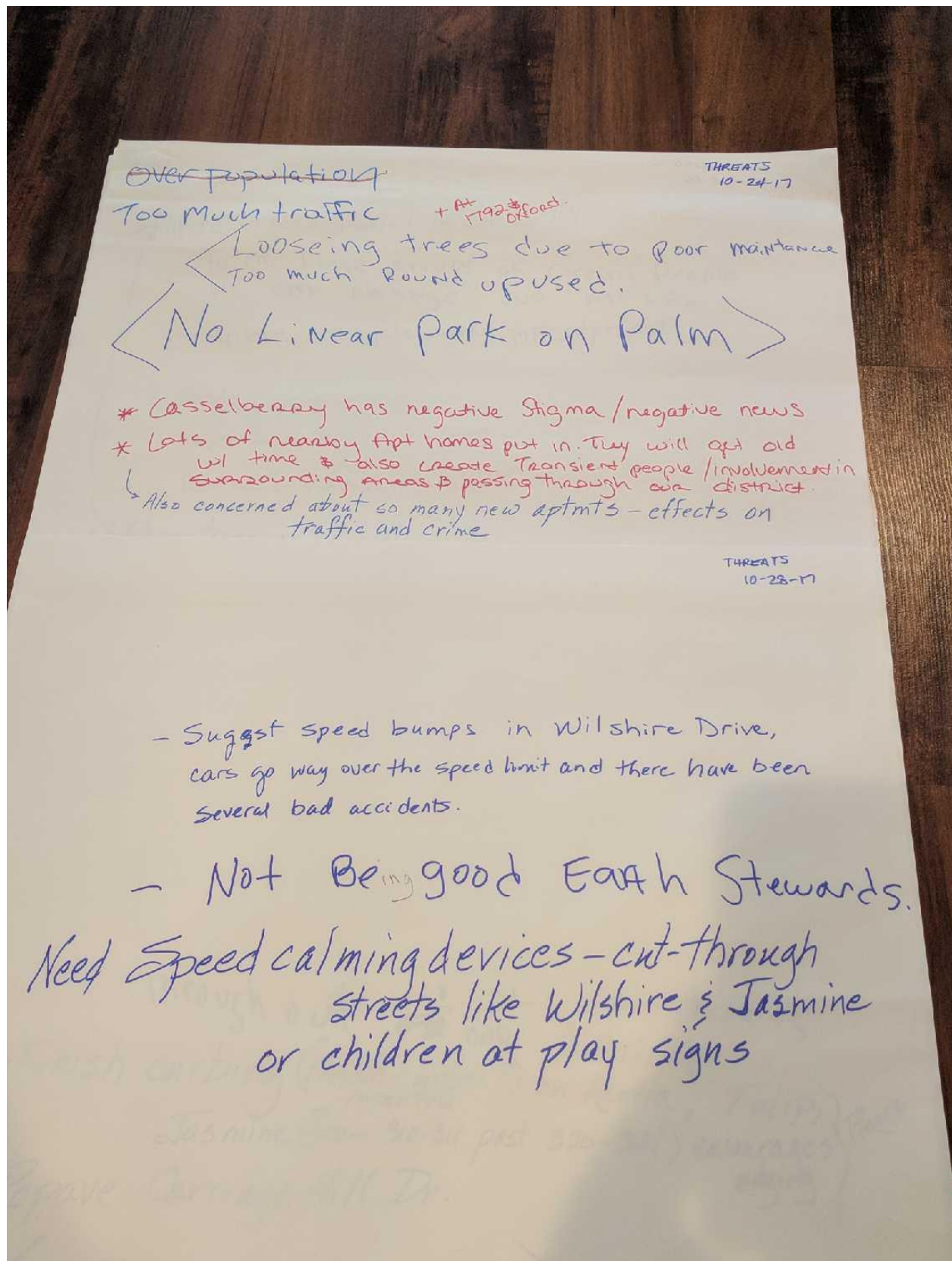
Lack of curbing on flower streets to give cleaner appearance
and help with drainage/rain

traffic

OPPORTUNITIES



THREATS



- Preferences And Map Exercise

SIGNS

Monument Signs



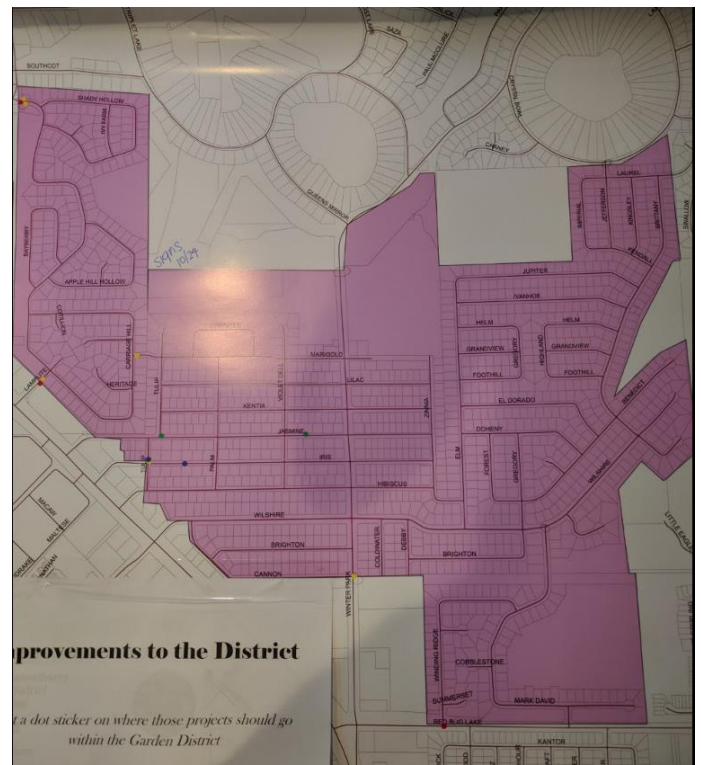
Wayfinding Signs



Decorative Street Signs



Banner Signs



LANDSCAPING

Street Corner Landscaping



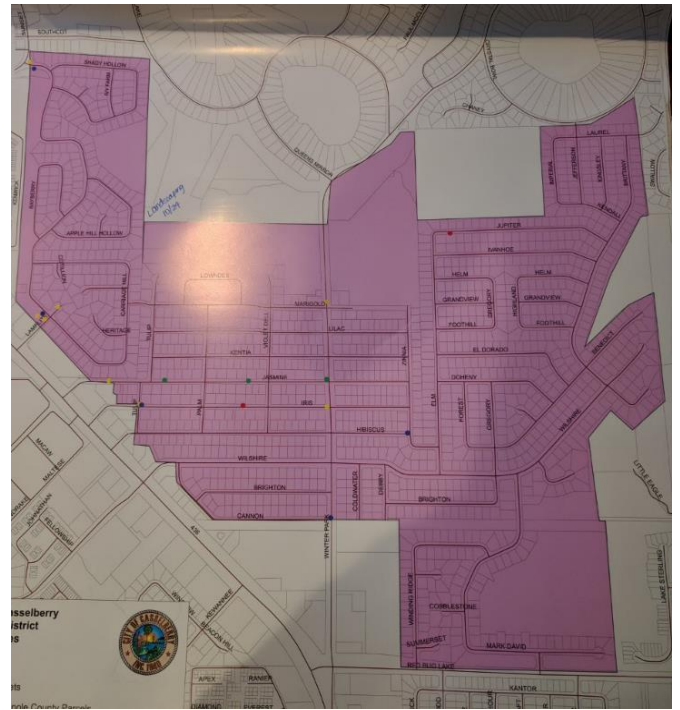
Potted plants along roadways



Street Trees



Monument Sign Landscaping

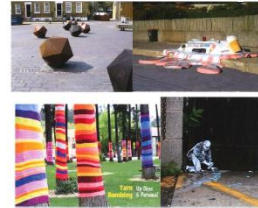


CREATIVE ADDITIONS

Fountains



Art Installations



Community Gardens



Utility Box Wraps



STREET FURNITURE

Benches



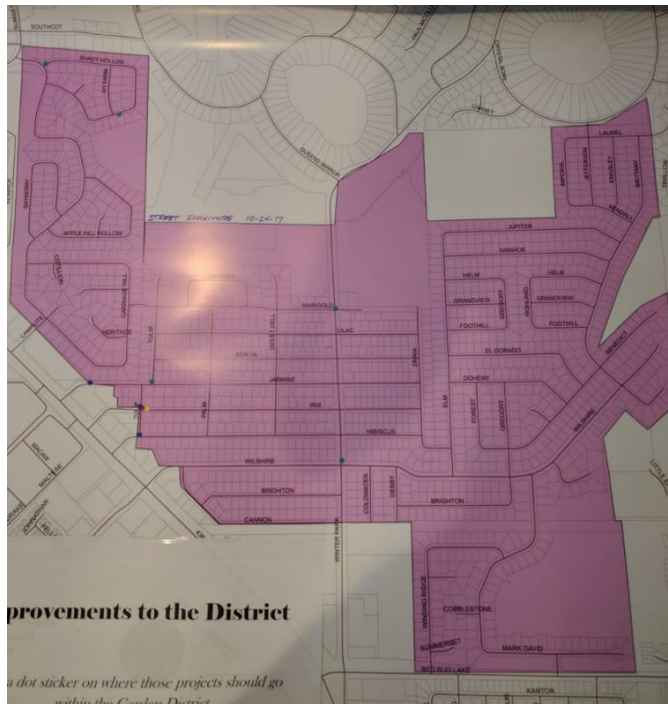
Decorative Clocks



Decorative Street Lights

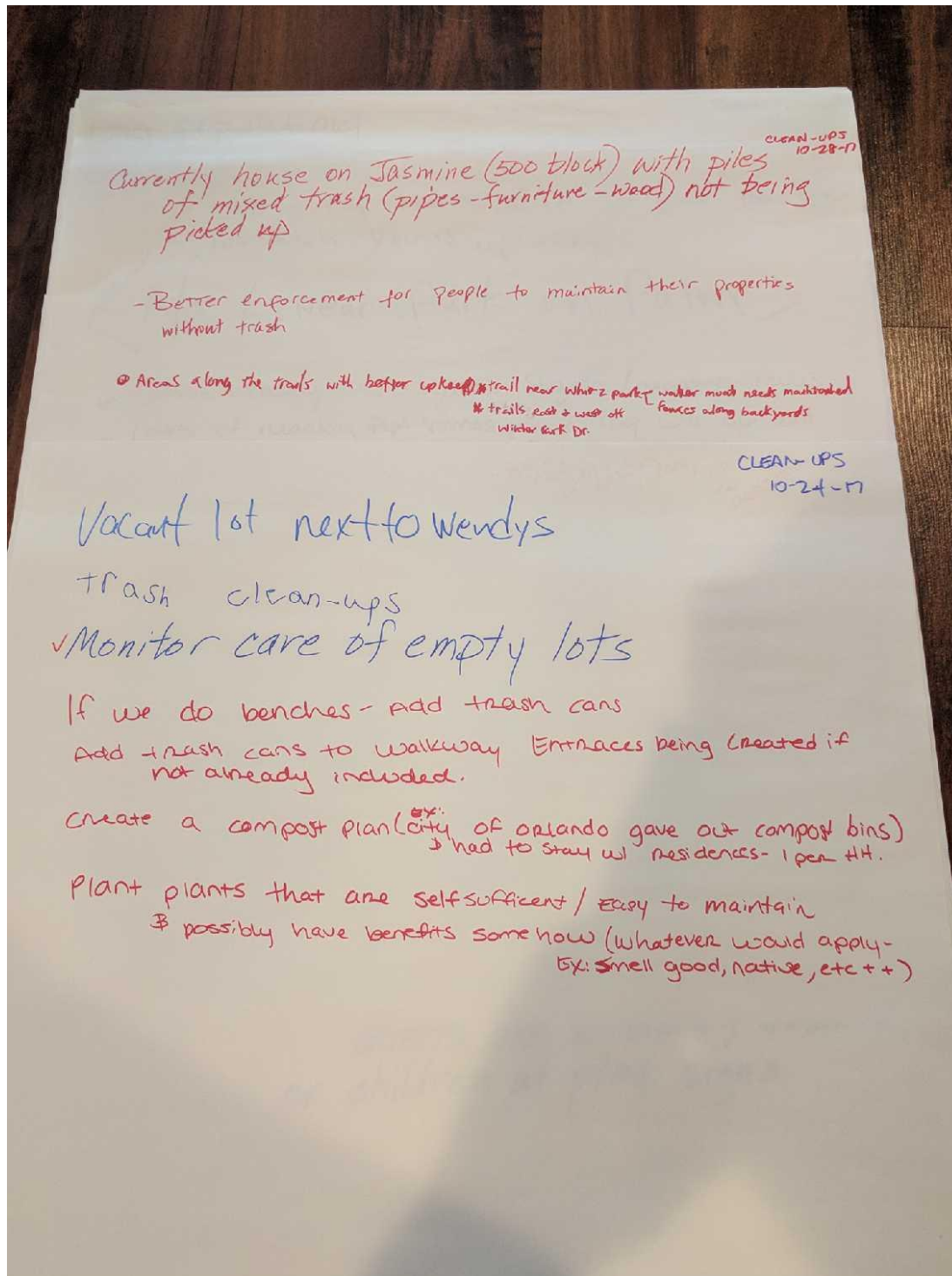


Waste Receptacles



- "What Did We Miss" Exercise

CLEAN-UPS



PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS

Recycled water throughout city

PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS
10-24-17

Traffic/Roads

Keeping sidewalks clean

Curbs

Cannage Hill ~~to~~ Roads, All roads

Lampite Entrance help - beautify. & surrounding houses there.

<Fix the Oxford Entrance>

Wall behind businesses on 436 to help divide commercial from residence - aid in feeling of entering a neighborhood rather than a 7-Eleven and increase safety of adjacent residences

PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS
10-28-17

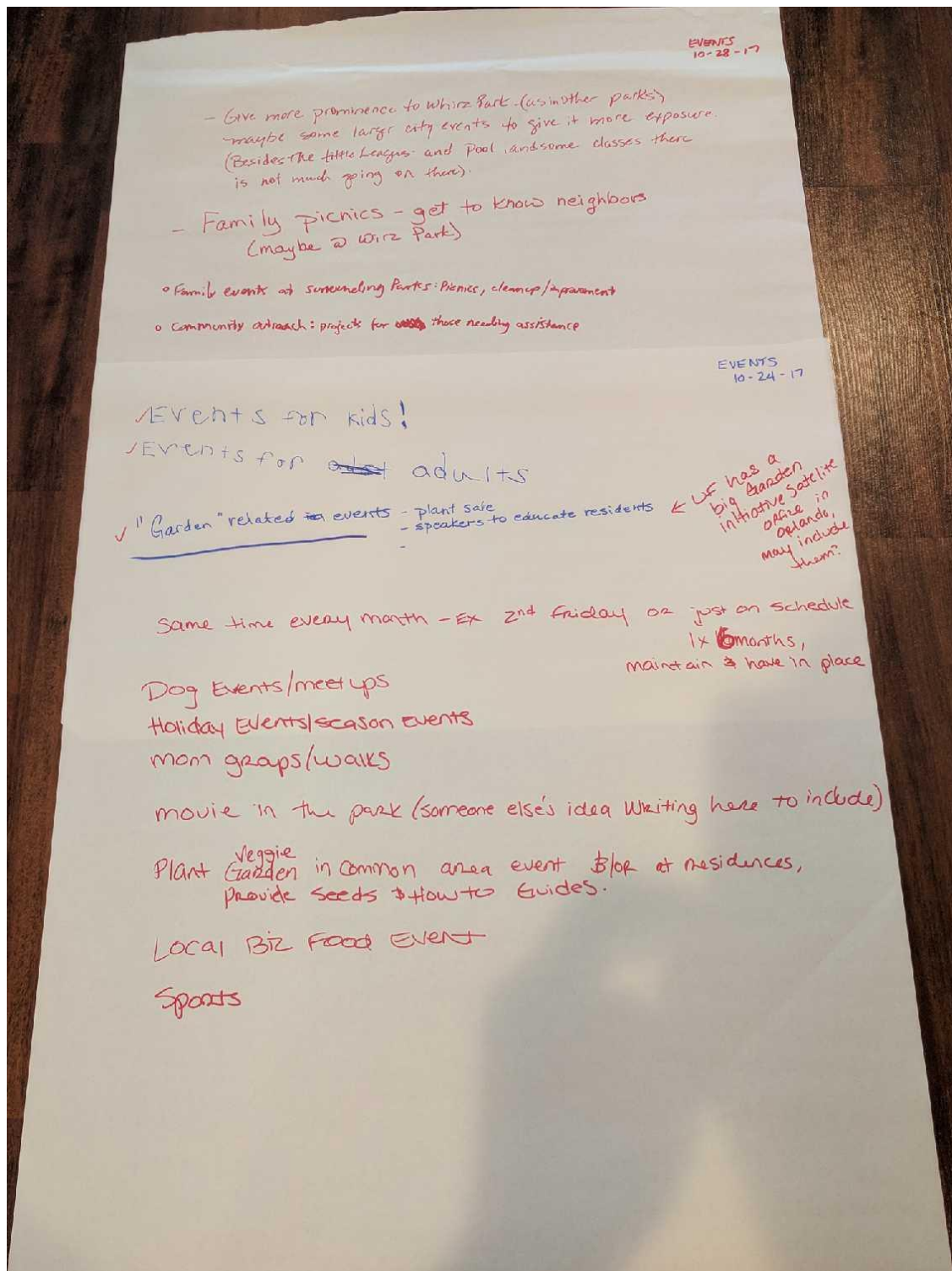
More trees

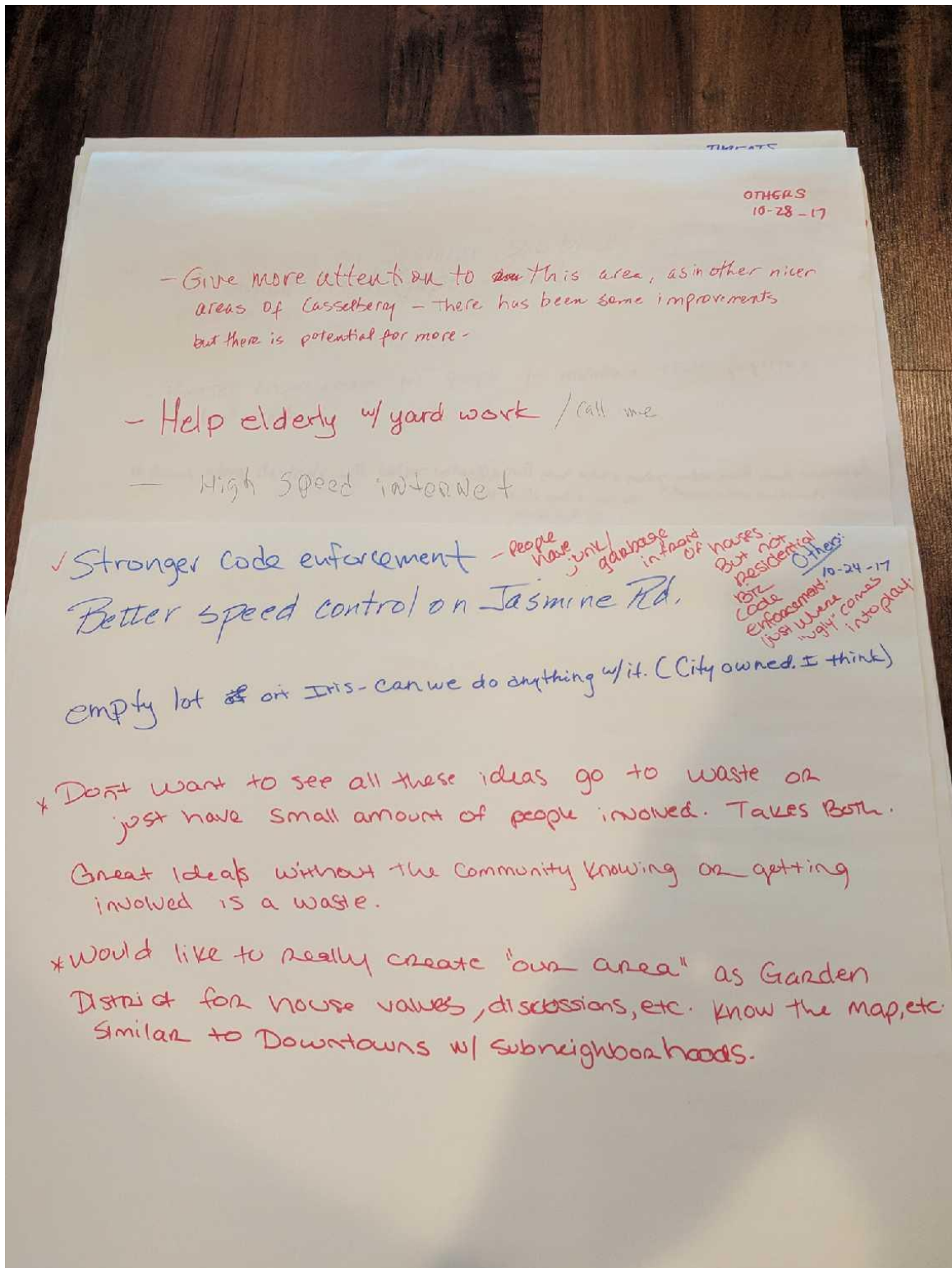
Entrance markers (see dots on map)

• Running/Biking trail by Whitz park improved to be pleasant to travel around
proposed

• Design/Build • Garden District voice & feel into signage, street art, parks
- i.e. street art - Lilac & Palm
- putting that voice & feel around would help community adopt & invest into the District

EVENTS





• Survey

GARDEN DISTRICT

GET TO KNOW YOUR NEIGHBORS!

1. Why did you move to Casselberry?
2. How long have you lived in Casselberry?
3. What do you like best about Casselberry?
4. How many neighbors do you know?
5. What are your favorite events in Casselberry?
6. Have you ever visited the Casselberry website?
 - a. If so, why?
7. What social media sites do you use most often?
8. Do you have any children living at home?
 - a. If so, what are their ages?
9. Do you have any pets?
 - a. If so, how many and what kind?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ANSWERS!