



celebrating 25 years

dna news

duckpond neighborhood association • NE Historic District • Gainesville Florida • April 2014



Keep up on happenings between newsletters! Check out our regularly updated website at HistoricDuckpond.com

general meetings

Tuesday, April 22 & 29, 2014
7:00–8:30 p.m.
First United Methodist Church
419 NE 1st Street
Fellowship Hall

agenda

Tuesday, April 22

GUEST SPEAKER
Presentation on Rezoning
by City of Gainesville Staff

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Tuesday, April 29

GENERAL BUSINESS
Approval of Minutes, Feb. 2014
Treasurer's Report

CRIME REPORT
Gainesville Police Department

GUEST SPEAKER
Proposed Changes to the
Bo Diddley Community Plaza
by Sara Vidal-Finn (see page 4)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Note: Be sure to check HistoricDuckpond.com for changes and updates to the agenda.

DNA PICNIC: Sunday April 27

See details on page 5 and join the fun! >>

Neighborhood Zoning Changes in the Works

The April 22 meeting of the Duckpond Neighborhood Association is an extremely important one for all of us who live in this lovely, historic neighborhood. The program will be a presentation regarding rezoning as proposed by the City Planning & Development Services Department. A representative of that office will explain the proposed changes and how they will affect our Duckpond properties. This will be followed by a question and answer period. The City is also asking for feedback on their rezoning plan. The current schedule calls for a City Commission vote in mid-May, so this may be our only opportunity as a neighborhood to give feedback.

Two City workshops were held on March 5 and 12 for residents of two sections of the City that include southern and northern districts of the Duckpond neighborhood that are being considered for change to "T-3: Single-family zoning district" and "T-4R: Urban Residential low density." Ralph Hilliard gave a presentation on behalf of the Planning & Development Services Department to each group, with explanations and information. Questions and answers followed. The Duckpond neighborhood was well represented. The DNA meeting on April 22 will be devoted to this issue.

Under the plan put forward, the southern part of our neighborhood would be zoned T4-R and would allow up to 15 units (buildings) per acre. The northern portion would be zoned T-3, which would allow up to eight units per acre. A 35-foot height limit will apply to buildings in both

sections, which equates with three stories. Those present had many questions and were concerned about several issues that the zoning changes might mean. A worrisome concern was that of increased density of buildings and the traffic problems that would result. Among other concerns about the new codes are changes in the lawful uses of property, setback distances from the street, and lot width. Also, in other recently rezoned areas some homes thought to be protected by the Historic Preservation Board have been razed or moved to accommodate new higher-density development. It is unclear whether decisions by that Board trump any provisions of these new zoning regulations if they should be approved.

The recommendations of the Planning & Development Services Department is planned to be submitted in mid/late May for action by the City Commission. Detailed information about the planned zoning changes can be found at the following link: <http://www.cityofgainesville.org/PlanningDepartment/CurrentPlanning/LandDevelopmentUpdate>.

continued on bottom of page 4 >



A message from our president

The purpose of the Duckpond Neighborhood Association is to facilitate communication and exchange of information on issues relevant to the neighborhood. We encourage neighbors to submit articles of interest to our neighborhood, or topics for discussion at our general meetings. Please contact Melanie Barr at 377.4217 or e-mail boardDNA@googlegroups.com.

NEIGHBORHOOD COMMITTEES

The Duckpond Neighborhood Association currently has four active committees: the DNA Picnic Committee, the Holiday Carriage Ride Committee, the Roper Park Landscape Committee, and the Duck and Pond Committee. None of these committees requires attending frequent meetings. Volunteering can be rewarding and fun. If you are interested in joining one of these committees, please email boardDNA@googlegroups.com.

APRIL 22 MEETING TOPIC

Our quarterly meeting will be held on April 22nd to discuss the rezoning of our neighborhood. There have been several meetings about the rezoning, and emails have been sent out about this too. Residents from our neighborhood and several other neighborhoods have made it clear that the changes are unwelcome. Planning staff reversed the changes on some of the rezoning, but as of press time portions of our neighborhood are still slated to be changed. Please attend the April 22nd meeting to hear the latest updates.

For topic information on our April 29th meeting, turn to page 4.

Dear Duckpond residents,

Sometimes it pays to be a saver, or hoarder, as others may call us. I was able to find my oldest Duckpond newsletter and tried to determine the date of the first meeting in 1989. I don't believe I was present at the first meeting, but I do have the newsletter reporting on it. Rhonda Riley mentions that it was held in May and the Board members met twice since that meeting. Our next official general meeting would occur on August 9th at 7:30–9:30 p.m. in Gallery A of the Thomas Center. I do remember meeting in the basement for several years. We paid \$50 to meet there. I remember this because I was the treasurer. The newsletter states that \$5 dues were to be sent to P.O. Box 17, which was my post office box for about 25 years until the post office closed in the Federal building.

I remember keeping the dues in a white envelope since we didn't have a bank account and weren't incorporated yet. No one wanted to put the dues in their own bank account which would make it appear that it was income to them and would be reported under their personal Social Security number.

The "newsletter" was several paragraphs of text on legal size paper and was undated. It noted that Pat Pfaff made a presentation about how to call the City's attention to broken lights, bad storm drainage, damaged sidewalks, etc. One of the articles in the 25-year-old newsletter mentions a discussion with Tom Frisbee, Streets Division Manager, about the oil slick on the road that combined with the duck droppings to cause algae growth in the duck pond. It was noted that several people advocated getting rid of the ducks. It is interesting that it took nearly 25 years to accomplish this, but it finally happened despite the outcry of some residents and many non-residents. When the duck removal began comments were made that we were losing the namesakes of our neighborhood, but the evidence shows

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“ I have seen many improvements made to our neighborhood, but it remains in a fragile state due to its location . . . ”
.....

that residents wanted this to occur a quarter century ago.

Board members were President Rhonda Riley; Vice President Beatrice Green; Secretary Jim Aikin; Treasurer Melanie Barr, with additional Board members Thad Crowe and Sharon Oakes. Patsy Parsons was the Chair of the Traffic Committee and John McPherson was Chair of the Roper Park Committee. The Newsletter Committee, Duck Pond Committee and Crime Committee all needed Chairs.

A few of the original members still live in the neighborhood, while others have moved away. However, most of the people who have left still have an interest in the neighborhood. It appears that I am the only one who has been an officer for most of the last 25 years.

I have seen many improvements made to our neighborhood, but it remains in a fragile state due to its location near downtown, and the impact that development, noise, and the inhabitants of the Bo Diddley Community Plaza can make on our neighborhood. Despite this we continue to be a popular neighborhood, as seen by those who desire to join our email list and Facework page, even though they don't live here. We are privileged to live here and I hope we all strive to make it an even better neighborhood as we journey through the next 25 years.

Melanie Barr, President
Duckpond Neighborhood Association

Celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the DNA

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The Duckpond Neighborhood Association will celebrate its 25th anniversary in May. We asked the first DNA president, Rhonda Riley, to write a reflection on how the DNA got started. It is interesting to see how having an active neighborhood association helps improve crime rates and can affect city policy. We would like to thank Rhonda and the other members and officers of the first DNA board for their efforts in starting the DNA, and for helping to make the Duckpond the neighborhood it is today.
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Beginning the DNA

I moved into the Duckpond neighborhood in 1983 as I was starting my family. I loved the neighborhood, but I and many of my neighbors had concerns. Break-ins were frequent then—including my home. If I forgot and left my car unlocked overnight, I was certain to find that it had been searched. Though violence was rare, we didn't feel safe. Everyone I talked to said, "We should do something." Though many of us didn't have, or didn't yet have, school-age children, the school zones were a problem, too. The neighborhood then was zoned for *Williams Elementary School* rather than the much closer *Metcalf Elementary*. The quality of the schools was a concern, too. Again, I heard the refrain, "We should do something." More than once, I heard parents speculating as our toddlers fed the ducks at the duckpond: How clean is that water? What if our children fell in?

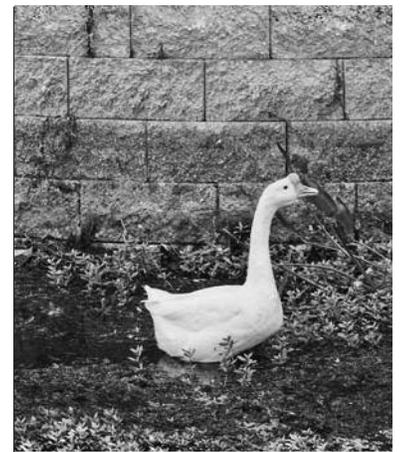
Should we keep them out of the creek?

Some of my neighbors brought up the idea of a neighborhood association but nothing happened. For me the final straw was something that happened to the pond itself. One day I found lots of dead snails and crawfish floating in the water. None of my neighbors knew what had killed the pond dwellers or whether it could harm us. I wrote a letter asking my neighbors to come to my house to discuss the possibility of a neighborhood association and hand delivered it door to door. On the night of what would be the first meeting of DNA, my living room was filled with neighbors. By the end of the evening, we had chosen officers and planned our next meeting. The first thing we did was ask the City for more police patrols. We packed a City Commission meeting. When I asked everyone who supported the DNA's request for better patrols in the neighborhood, it looked like the whole room was on its feet. I was very proud of our turnout. We got what we wanted: the neighborhood was one of the first participating in the new COPS program of community based patrols.

Crime did go down. We had less success changing the zoning of the public schools, and no one ever found out what killed the crawfish off—but I heard they're back now. The DNA continued meeting, becoming a social group as well as an activist group. I left the neighborhood in 1999, due to changes in my personal life. I still miss living there, but I am very happy that the DNA continues as a voice for such a lovely neighborhood and some very nice people. And I love what's been done to the creek. So much more appealing than the concrete ditch it used to be. Thank you! 🐦

—Submitted by Rhonda Riley

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*Becoming a DNA member is easy!
See information on the back
cover of this publication.*



DUCK POND ASSESSMENT

There has been some discussion about whether the neighborhood should purchase additional ducks for the pond. One concern that was raised has to do with how many waterfowl the pond can support. The pond now has three geese and two swans that are full-time residents, plus a few migratory birds. The waterfowl food provided by the neighborhood is intended only to be a supplement to their diet and is not intended to be their main source of food.

The duck committee is looking for someone who is qualified and willing to do a pond assessment. The objective of the assessment would be to determine if the pond can support more waterfowl. If you have the time and inclination to complete a project like this, please contact boardDNA@googlegroups.com.

AT THE APRIL 29th MEETING

Discussion:

Proposed Changes to the Downtown Bo Diddley Community Plaza

First United Methodist Church
419 NE 1st Street

Fellowship Hall

Tuesday, April 29, 7 p.m.

Sara Vidal-Finn will report to us on the proposed changes for the *Bo Diddley Community Plaza*. How many of us can remember when significant buildings in historic downtown Gainesville were torn down to build the Community Plaza? Who can remember when there was a fountain in the middle of the Plaza? Within a few years that was removed. There have been several other changes made to the Plaza since the mid 1970s, and the reworking of the northern portion of the Plaza will be another major change. Please come to make your views known before construction begins. The best time to voice an opinion is prior to the commencement of the work, not after the project is completed.

—Submitted by Melanie Barr



Enjoy Free Fridays Concert Series at the Downtown Plaza
April–November, 8–10 p.m.

Proposed Changes to City Noise Ordinance

The *Gainesville Police Department* (GPD) held a workshop concerning proposed changes to the Gainesville noise ordinance on March 17. A presentation of the proposed changes and the rationale behind them was made by Jared Anderson, a *University of Florida* acoustical engineer.

The changes proposed, on their face, did not seem that significant:

1. Slight adjustments upward in decibel levels to trigger a violation of the ordinance.
2. Changing the noise determination reading from 200 feet to 300 feet. This was proposed because city blocks are typically 300 feet square, thus facilitating the noise.
3. Measurement procedure by GPD (note: the decibel changes referred to in #1 were a result of the change in the distance from the source of the noise to take a measurement).
4. Bands will be allowed to play until 1:30 a.m. rather than the current shutting down time of 1 a.m. This was suggested since the establishments are allowed to stay open until 2 a.m.

However, residential interests from the Porter's neighborhood, Pleasant Street neighborhood, Union Street Station, and The Continuum were quite vocal in expressing disappointment in the current ordinance as well as the proposed changes. One observation made by several of the

residential people attending the meeting was that all of the proposed changes seemed to favor the business establishments and not take into consideration the concerns of residents.

These neighborhoods appear to currently be most affected by what they perceive as excessive noise from clubs and outdoor venues and a lack of enforcement of the existing noise ordinance by GPD.

Both residents and commercial interests expressed a need for cooperation, but little was evident at the workshop. Nothing was suggested by either party to ameliorate the noise issues.

This will be a contentious issue when brought before the City Commission. It is suspected that both sides of the issue will be well represented at that meeting.

The Duckpond neighborhood is currently less affected by downtown noise than the other residential areas present at the meeting. However, since the Duckpond neighborhood borders downtown, this is an issue requiring vigilance on the part of residents of the Duckpond. The dynamics of downtown development will continue to change and evolve, and that evolution which creates an increase in noise levels, requires that Duckpond residents maintain a level of appropriate concern and involvement.

There are no scheduled future workshops regarding this issue at this time. It is possible staff will bring this matter before the City Commission without further input from the community. 🐦

—Submitted by Dennis Tracy

Neighborhood Zoning Changes (continued from cover page)

Please be sure to be present at the Duckpond meeting to learn and be heard regarding the proposed zoning changes. A representative of the Planning & Development Services Department will be there to present information and answer questions.

Note: As we go to press, a change was made by the City. The proposed zone T-3 was changed to “no change” from current zoning on March 20. However, there are still many concerns with the proposed T-4 zoning areas. 🐦

—Submitted by Charlie Covell



DNA Picnic 2013. Photo by Charlie Covell.

Annual Duckpond Picnic on Sunday, April 27

This year's Duckpond neighborhood picnic will take place in *Roper Park* on Sunday, April 27th from 5–7 p.m. As is customary, the picnic is a potluck and covered dish event. The DNA board will provide hot dogs, hamburgers, and buns, along with drinks, ice, plates, dinnerware, and drink cups. Neighbors are encouraged to bring their own chairs as the park has limited seating.

With us for a second year in a row, we have an extra treat with the songs and soulful playing of Monica Leadon Cooper

and the *Y'all Stars*, a local band that is a regular favorite at the downtown *Bo Diddley Community Plaza* Free Fridays concerts that are held from April through early November. Last year, the band performed on acoustic instruments and the picnickers loved them.

This year we will not have a DNA general meeting at the picnic so that we can focus on food, music, and good conversation. We look forward to seeing all of you there. 🐦

—Submitted by George Papadi

New Holy Trinity School moves to Main Street

The new *Holy Trinity School* building is expected to be completed early in April 2014 and move in later that month or in early May. A permanent Head of School is being sought, and the school will be recruiting additional teachers and staff as the school population will almost be able to double in size. The school accommodates children from 6 weeks old to pre-kindergarten. The school may expand to kindergarten in the future.

The school will be a wonderful asset to the families living and/or working in the downtown area. The hours of operation are from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday. *Holy Trinity Church* also offers parents whose children attend the school a scheduled weekend night out. For information call *Holy Trinity Church* at 372.4721. 🐦

—Submitted by Charlie Covell

OF HISTORICAL INTEREST

Now and Then: Bus Tours of Alachua County's History
Matheson Museum
Saturday, June 7, 10 a.m.

Hear history come alive with docent led bus tours of historical sites throughout Alachua County. On this bus tour, discover the rich history of education in Gainesville. For over a century, educational institutions invented and in many cases reinvented the Gainesville community. Hear stories of the determined individuals and institutions that transformed Gainesville from frontier town to the educational heart of Florida. \$30 per person. Please email info@mathesonmuseum.org or 378.2280 for tickets or more information. Space is limited.



Marjorie Harris Carr: Florida's Defender of the Environment
Matheson Museum
Tuesday, June 17, 6 p.m.

Peggy Macdonald, an adjunct professor of history at *Stetson University*, will discuss the life of one of Florida's unsung environmental heroes, Marjorie Harris Carr. Macdonald will examine Carr's campaigns to protect and restore Paynes Prairie, Lake Alice, the Micanopy Historic District, and the Ocklawaha River. The evening will conclude with a presentation by *Matheson Museum* founder, Mark Barrow, who will share historic postcards and take the audience on a photographic tour of the Ocklawaha River. This event is free and open to the public. Please call 378.2280 or email info@mathesonmuseum.org or more information.

A SPRING REFRESHER FOR ROPER PARK

The historic marker in *Roper Park* has been repaired and placed back in its previous location. New picnic tables have been installed with concrete bottoms and new garbage cans are on order and should arrive soon. The City crew has been working hard to clean up the park area starting with the circle perimeter; cutting the entire iris bed back. The mound has had the soil rejuvenated with fresh soil. New plant decisions have been discussed and the new plants have been purchased and planted by volunteers from the *Duckpond Neighborhood Association*. City staff is adding new mulch to the new bed of plants in the circle. Irrigation will occur on a daily basis for 30 days to help get the new plant material established.

—Submitted by John Weber

First United Methodist Preschool

It's a Thursday afternoon when children and parents make their way across Second Street to *Roper Park*. Happy shouts and laughter begin to fill the air as the park playground fills with families enjoying one of the hubs of the neighborhood. And thus begins a daily ritual shared by many of the students from *First United Methodist Preschool*, or "FUMPers" as it is affectionately called.

The preschool was established in 1980 and has been serving families in our neighborhood for 34 years. Though the school is a ministry of the historic *First United Methodist Church*, they welcome all faiths and attract a rich cultural diversity of students and families. F.U.M.P. is one of the few remaining half-day preschools in Gainesville, and it focuses on providing opportunities for children to experience learning for themselves. This unique method emphasizes active learning and exposing children to a variety of concepts through play-centered activities. With a small capacity and extremely low teacher-student ratios, the school accurately conveys its involved, family-focused atmosphere to members and visitors alike.

Small ratios and the half-day schedule allow the school to take a child-centered approach that is different from many

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“With a small capacity and extremely low teacher-student ratios, the school accurately conveys its involved, family-focused atmosphere . . .”
.....

typical child care centers. The teachers meet children where they are socially, emotionally, physically, and academically and encourage curiosity, exploration, and problem solving. This concentration on intrinsic motivation is distinctive when compared to the “skill and drill” rote learning favored by some early childhood programs.

Special community service projects, field trips, and special guests (including local firefighters and other community helpers) round out the considerable educational opportunities of the FUMPers program. FUMPers is currently enrolling for the 2014–2015 school year. Anyone interested in finding out more about the program should contact preschool director Amy Watson at 373.0108 or visit www.fumcgnv.org. 🐦

—Submitted by Jill Dumas

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If you are curious about the responsibilities and time commitment for being a Board member, please contact any of the Board members listed above by calling, or email boardDNA@googlegroups.com. With your help, we can continue to make the Duckpond a great place in which to live.

DNA News is published four times a year, just prior to general meetings. All neighborhood residents are welcome and encouraged to attend meetings. Meeting dates remaining for 2014 are April 22 and 29, September 9, and November 11.

Do you have an announcement, story, article, or advertisement that you would like to share? If so, please submit your information to boardDNA@googlegroups.com. Your submissions are appreciated, and are a great way to share information with your neighbors!

Stay Informed: Join the DNA Update email list!

To join, e-mail your address to boardDNA@googlegroups.com. DNA updates are typically sent out once or twice a month. DNA will never use your email for solicitation or political purposes.

duckpond neighborhood association membership form

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Committee Interests:

Board Member Crime Watch Holiday Events Newsletter Distribution Parks Schools Yard Sale

Skills and/or resources I would like to make available to the Duckpond Neighborhood Association:

I would also like to contribute to the following: *(optional)*

Duck Fund \$ _____ Roper Park Fund \$ _____ Holiday Fund \$ _____ General Fund \$ _____

DNA News occasionally lists the names of paying members. Permission to list your name: yes no