

City Beautiful Jax

NIVP: Neighborhood Inventory of Visual Pollution - Summary

Pollution is not limited to the air we breathe and the water we drink; it can equally offend the eye and the ear. - Warren Burger

Individual citizens are often frustrated by community degradation through visual pollution, which may come about through neglect, an intentional act, or simply the failure to take advantage of an opportunity for the creation of beauty.

A saying has developed, “we get used to ugly.” However, when you resist this “getting used to” syndrome, your eyes may easily be drawn to a parade of visual blight.



The solution to this problem recognizes that there is no single entity responsible for addressing community blight. The disfigurement of the landscape may come in the form of graffiti, dead trees, rotting stumps, snipe signs nailed to poles, bandit signs in highway medians, defacement of traffic signs, broken sidewalks, rusted fire hydrants, vandalized utility boxes, and the list goes on.



Take a look at these photographs. It will not take long to figure out (1) the rusted fire hydrant may be in a part of a city where neglect is the norm, and (2) the freshly painted fire hydrant may be in an historic district.

Communities should be planned with an eye to the effect on the human spirit of being continually surrounded by a maximum of beauty. - Thomas Jefferson

But even in historic districts, neglect can take root. Hollow stumps and dead trees populate many of the public rights-of-way in older neighborhoods. Newer neighborhoods may suffer from a dearth of trees and landscaping - a different form of neglect.



We have to believe that place by place, mile by mile, we can preserve Scenic America and even reclaim ugly America. - Charles Kuralt

Visual blight may be the responsibility of a federal agency like the U.S. Postal Service (in the case of graffiti on U.S. Postal Boxes), or a state agency like the Florida Department of Transportation (in the case of graffiti and snipe signs defacing a traffic signal box along a state road), or a local municipal government or government agency (in the case of a damaged street sign or graffiti on a public park sign).



The City Beautiful Coalition, Inc.'s NIVP Program represents a proven method by which community groups and interested citizens can come together for a purpose: to become better-educated on sources of blight and then canvas a neighborhood and collect at one time a single list of the sources of visual pollution that should be redressed by appropriate authorities or, in some cases, by other volunteer groups.

[T]he way it's really going to have to be done is place by place and one place after another by the people who live there.--Charles Kuralt



The list can be easily delivered to each entity or agency that bears the responsibility.

For example: (1) a list of locations where U.S. Mail Boxes have been defaced can be delivered to the U.S. Postal Service, (2) a list of locations where state traffic signs and utility boxes have been defaced can be delivered to the FDOT Maintenance personnel and/or other FDOT officials; (3) a list of defaced city traffic signs can be delivered to the City of Jacksonville's Traffic Engineering Department; (4) a list of defaced private drop-off boxes such as UPS or Federal Express boxes can be assembled and delivered to their local headquarters; and the examples go on for each issue that a community or neighborhood may face.

The development and preservation of natural resources and clean, salubrious neighborhoods contribute to physiological and emotional stability and well-being as well as stimulate a sense of civic pride.- Judge Clifford in State v. Miller.

How you can help:

1. Volunteers.

- a. First, a local neighborhood association or other civic group can take the lead in identifying those groups and individuals within a specific area with an interest in community enhancement. Examples may include a Boy Scout or Girl Scout Troop, a faith-based organization, a garden club, a state adopt-a-highway group, a city adopt-a-roadway group, the area CPAC, and this is just for starters.

Make a list of people you know who may have an interest in beautification and extend an invitation to join this coordinated effort. Schedule a preliminary meeting to determine how best to approach a broader audience and conduct an NIVP in a selected area.

- b. Choose the scope of the geographic area you intend to cover. Plan on twelve to sixteen square blocks for a team of two to cover in two hours, or break it down into smaller areas but with the potential for a team to cover more than one area depending upon time. Ensure that everyone has a digital camera (see materials, below) to document the sources of visual pollution or other neighborhood problems, such as broken sidewalks.
- c. Pick a meeting place that will accommodate the number of expected volunteers, and plan for a four hour project. One-half hour set up; one hour educational and training exercise; two hour canvas; and one-half hour collation of results and perhaps sharing stories. Work with The City Beautiful Coalition, Inc. and assign one or two neighborhood volunteers to be responsible for the follow-up with the responsible agencies.

In one southern community, a bank paid for a mile of landscaping at the city's entrance. The banker told me that no billboard, no radio or television advertising campaign had ever won him the daily applause he received for this project from his customers. The bank was in the process of trying to get permission from the city to let it do the same thing at the city's three other entrances. So many city fringes present the worst face of the town, a hodgepodge and a scrabble of flashing signs. I remember thinking that the green entrance to that community said, 'Welcome' to me. - Lady Bird Johnson

After identifying volunteers, the next step is

2. Materials.

- a. Forms to record information as to visual blight
(may be provided by The City Beautiful Coalition).
- b. Clipboards and pens
(may be provided by The City Beautiful Coalition).
- c. Digital cameras
(may be provided by The City Beautiful Coalition).
- d. A notepad or legal pad to use with the digital camera to identify locations
(may be provided by The City Beautiful Coalition).

Together, we can work to make a real difference in the visual appearance of our city and prove that “Beauty is Good for Business.” And we must encourage others to retain and enhance that beauty.

It is not enough to simply put up a sign saying ‘Scenic Highway,’ we must protect the character of the land and buildings along the road. If we don’t, one thing is certain: What is scenic today won’t be tomorrow. - Edward T. McMahon

For more information or to schedule a NIVP program, contact:

The City Beautiful Coalition, Inc.
PMB #352
1650 Margaret Street, Suite 302
Jacksonville, FL 32204-3869

info@citybeautifuljax.org
www.citybeautifuljax.org