

# City of Tallahassee

## Griffin Heights Housing Rehab Program

### Overview

#### Background

There are tremendous opportunities within Griffin Heights to develop and construct new housing and to renovate existing houses. About 14.3% of the neighborhood's existing housing stock are vacant, and there are 50 acres of potentially developable vacant land, of which 28 acres are unplatted. The largest parcel of unplatted vacant land is 9.75 acres. This parcel is zoned Medium Density Residential (MR-1) with an allowable density of 20 dwelling units per acre. Homeowners tend to have more roots within communities, as their housing situations are less transient in nature. Due to their financial stake in a neighborhood, they may be more involved in community matters and tend to take care of their property to a greater extent than renters. As homeownership decreases within a neighborhood, community ties are less established. Vacancy is a contributing factor to the decrease in homeowners.

Multiple factors contribute to the perception of a neighborhood, but one of the key factors is appearance. While the City can take steps to enhance rights-of-way and public property, most of the land within Griffin Heights is privately owned and thus, it is the responsibility of the property owner to maintain. During the "Walk A Block" neighborhood assessment that was conducted in October 2017, volunteers identified 38 instances of overgrown lawns, 19 instances of buildings with damage or disrepair and eight inoperable vehicles. As of April 2020, there were 15 active care of premise code violation cases and 38 active cases for substandard or dangerous buildings. There are many reasons why property may not be well-maintained in the neighborhood. In some instances, property owners in the neighborhood are absent; about 14.3% of units are vacant. Other owners may not be physically or financially able to maintain their property on their own. In the community survey conducted in 2019, residents identified "revitalizing homes and affordable housing" among the top three neighborhood improvement strategies.

The Griffin Heights Neighborhood, working through the City of Tallahassee's Neighborhood First planning process, has developed a strategic neighborhood plan that outlines goals, strategies and action items to address rehabilitation of the community's housing stock, among top neighborhood priority issues. The Griffin Heights Neighborhood Association has a goal of 15 new or rehabilitated housing units per year.

#### Griffin Heights Neighborhood First Plan

The Griffin Heights Neighborhood First Plan seeks to find ways to mobilize both financial and human resources to help all residents to live in safe and affordable homes. The plan includes strategies and action items which call the establishment of housing rehabilitation programs for the Griffin Heights neighborhood. These strategies and action items include the following:

- **Strategy CB 1.2:** Provide assistance to homeowners to beautify their homes
  - **Action CB 1.2.1:** Promote existing City of Tallahassee housing rehabilitation programs through community events and targeted outreach.
  - **Action Item CB 1.2.2:** Implement a housing façade program that provides grants or low-interest loans for exterior improvements

- **Action Item CB 1.2.4:** Organize a “Do Something Day” twice a year to assist residents in need with volunteers willing to help with minor home repairs and yard maintenance.
- **Strategy NI&LU 6.3:** Promote the repair and reuse of existing structures.
  - **Action Item NI&LU 6.2.3:** Develop and implement a code enforcement amnesty program that waives liens for property owners that address violations.
  - **Action Item NI&LU 6.3.1:** Develop and implement a housing assistance program that offers financial (grants and/or loans) and regulatory incentives for owners to repair and remodel existing structures
  - **Action Item NI&LU 6.1.1:** Maintain an inventory of all vacant lots and dilapidated homes within the neighborhood.
- **Strategy F 1.2:** Work with City and County departments and nonprofit partners to secure funding for neighborhood projects.
  - **Action Item F 1.2.2:** Work with the City of Tallahassee Community Housing & Human Services Department to secure funding for housing development projects.

**Funding:** On September 22, 2021, the City Commission adopted and funded the Griffin Heights Neighborhood First Plan, providing \$550,000 in funding for the implementation of a housing rehab program for Griffin Heights. The Griffin Heights Community Action Team and “Places” Committee, working in collaboration with City staff was tasked to develop the housing rehab program based on the strategies, action items and guidance provided by the Griffin Heights Neighborhood First Plan.

Breakdown of Funding: \$550,000 from community funding grant. \$250,000 from Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding and \$300,000 from City funds. CDBG has federal restrictions that will guide the development of the program. City funding has less restrictions and allows Griffin Heights residents to establish what those restrictions will be.

Given consideration of the source of funding available for the Griffin Heights Rehab Program, two separate sources of funding must be established to address the issues of equity and fair housing implications. The first source of funding would be sponsored through the CDBG and the second source of funding would be sponsored through the City.

## **Funding Source: The Griffin Heights Housing Rehab Program Funded by City of Tallahassee Dollars**

### **What is it the Griffin Heights Housing Rehab Program (City Funded)?**

The **Griffin Heights** Rehab Program provides financial incentives to homeowners and property owners in the Griffin Heights neighborhood to repair their homes, stabilize and improve the housing stock. The program provides a 2-year forgivable lien to eligible Griffin Heights homeowners and landlords to make repairs to homes located within the Griffin Heights neighborhood of Tallahassee. The maximum funding provided by the program is \$25,000 owner-occupied units and up to \$17,500 for renter-occupied units.

### **What does the Griffin Heights Rehab Program seek to achieve for the Griffin Heights neighborhood?**

The Griffin Heights Rehab Program, based on the strategies, action items and guidance provided by the Griffin Heights Neighborhood First Plan, seeks to:

- 1) Preserve and strengthen Griffin Heights existing housing stock
- 2) Provide financial incentives to income eligible homeowners to make repairs to their homes
- 3) Provide financial incentives to landlords whose rental properties are occupied by income eligible tenants to make repairs to their properties; and
- 4) Prioritize improvement to designated historic homes and homes over 50 years.

Revitalizing the Griffin Heights neighborhood through the preservation of the neighborhood's existing housing stock is essential to the livelihood and continued vibrancy of the community. By funding needed housing repairs, the Griffin Heights Housing Rehab Program will aide in keeping residents in their homes, ensure that neighborhood homes are free from health and safety hazards, and preserve the housing unit to allow current residents to age in place and/or provide future residents with decent and safe housing.

### **Who is eligible to receive funding for home repairs from Griffin Heights Housing Rehab Program (City Funding)?**

- Resident homeowners (owner-occupied residences) who meet the following qualifications:
  - Total household income is 120% or less of the area median income. Applicants will have to provide income information for all adults residing in the home.
  - For homes with multiple owners, all owners must sign the grant application.
  - All property taxes and municipal debt are paid and/or be current with the City of Tallahassee and Leon County. This includes City of Tallahassee utilities, property taxes, code liens, etc.
- Property owners (landlords) who meet the following qualifications:
  - Tenants of the rental housing unit is 80% or less of the area median income. The landlord must provide income information for all adults residing in his/her rental home.
  - All property taxes and municipal debt are paid and/or be current with the City of Tallahassee and Leon County. This includes City of Tallahassee utilities, property taxes, code liens, etc.

**What is the maximum funding I can receive from the Griffin Heights Rehab Program?**

The maximum award each funded applicant will receive is based on the ownership status of the housing unit for which the grant is intended: owner-occupied units can receive a maximum award of \$25,000, while renter-occupied units can receive up to \$17,500.00. Landlords can receive up to \$10,000 in funding without providing any matching funds. Any funding request beyond \$10,000 for a rental property must be matched dollar for dollar up to \$17,500 by the landlord.

**Are renters eligible to apply for a grant from the Griffin Heights Housing Rehab program?**

No. While certain rental housing units are eligible to receive a grant from the program, renters cannot apply for the grant on behalf of their leased unit. Grants will be issued only to property owners. Property ownership will be verified using the Leon County Property Appraiser’s database. Landlords applying for a grant from this program must work with their tenants to qualify their tenants based on the income eligibility requirements for the program and to notify the tenant that they intent to apply for grants to improve their rental unit. All tenants must sign the Attachment A: Tenant Notification Form.

**How will applications for the Griffin Heights Housing Rehab grant be evaluated?**

The Griffin Heights Housing Rehab Grant Program is a competitive grant program. The applications received will be reviewed, scored, ranked and then selected for funding based on the scores received. The scoring criteria for the program are:

- 4 points:* Home is owner-occupied
- 3 Points:* Home is 50+ years old or has a historic designation
- 2 Points:* Seniors ages 65 years and older
- 1 Point:* Home is renter-occupied

**Will everyone who applies for a grant from Griffin Heights Housing Rehab Program get funded?**

No, there is limited funding for this program. In the first funding cycle for the Griffin Heights Neighborhood First Plan, the Commission provided \$550,000 in funding for housing rehabilitation programs.

Completed applications received by the closing date for the program, will be reviewed and scored using the scoring criteria established for the program. Scored applications will be grouped by the scores received and starting with the highest scored applications, they will be randomly selected for funding.

**What types of home repairs will the Griffin Heights Housing Rehab program fund?**

The type of repairs funded by the program will differ based on the occupancy status of the housing unit: owner-occupied vs renter occupied.

**Owner-occupied homes** may have both interior and exterior repairs done, while for **renter-occupied homes** only exterior repairs will be funded.

**What are some of the examples of the repairs that will be funded by the Program?**

The specific repairs that will be made to each funded home will be determined jointly by the contractor and the homeowner/property owner. Repairs are prioritized based by code, safety, energy efficiency and aesthetics

Examples of eligible repairs include the following:

- Roof repair or replacement
- Plumbing
- Structural issues
- Tree Removal (limited to safety concern)
- HVAC/Heat/Air replacement or installation
- Energy efficiency (window and door replacement) insulation
- ADA accessibility repairs
- Electrical
- Sewage repair or connection
- Hot water heater
- Smoke detectors

**When and how can I apply?**

The grant application period will begin in June/July, 2022. Interested and qualified applicants must apply through the City’s [Neighborly Software portal](#), submitting an electronic application by the given deadline.

[CLICK HERE TO VIEW THE GRIFFIN HEIGHTS NEIGHBORHOOD FIRST PLAN](#)

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS THE HOUSING REHAB APPLICATION](#)

**How much funding is available for the program (City Funding)?**

There is \$325,000 City funding available for housing rehabilitation programs in Griffin Heights.

**What are the neighborhood boundaries of the Griffin Heights neighborhood?**

The current Griffin Heights neighborhood boundaries include Tharpe Street to the north, Old Bainbridge Road and Woodward Avenue to the east, West Brevard Street and Tennessee Street to the south, and Colorado, California and Arkansas streets to the west.

**How will funds be disbursed?**

Funds will be distributed from the City of Tallahassee to the vendor contracted for the work completed.

**How and who decides what repairs will be completed?**

A home inspection will be conducted by a vendor contractor along with the homeowner to determine what repairs are most needed on the home. Code repairs addressing health and safety issues are the highest prioritization for repairs to be funded, followed by energy efficiency and environmental health concerns. The homeowner and contractor will agree on what repairs will be made.

**What happens after I have been selected for this program?**

Applicant name and contact information will be forwarded to the City Housing Division, who will then follow up with the applicant to complete additional paperwork and evaluation.

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS THE HOUSING REHAB APPLICATION](#)