

Kupfrian Park eyes improvements

Residents seeking improved drainage, new sidewalks

Alvin Peabody

Several longtime residents of one of Pensacola's oldest neighborhoods are hoping to reap some much-needed benefits -- thanks to a national program that is being tapped into for the first time in Escambia County.

Among the benefits sought by the Kupfrian Park residents are new sidewalks, lighting and improved drainage.

"The goal is to make this a lot more community-friendly area, just as a lot of other parts of Pensacola already are," said Rosa Stallworth, a 25-year resident of the 1500 block of Avery Street.

To make that happen, Stallworth and other Kupfrian Park residents have teamed with the Escambia County Health Department to take advantage of the Protocol for Assessing Community Excellence in Environmental Health program. Developed by the National Association of City and County Health Officials and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the program allows health departments to help residents organize and identify problems with their environment, and then connect them with local governments for solutions.

The state Department of Health has allocated \$40,000 over two years for program administrative costs while local officials plan to draw from the community redevelopment budget, said Mary Beverly, Escambia County Health Department's coordinator for environmental health:

Among residents' concerns:

- Lighting: Kupfrian Park lies within the county's Brownsville and Englewood community redevelopment districts. Using CRA money, 21 new street lights recently were installed along Avery, Lloyd and G streets and parts of Pace Boulevard, said Keith Wilkins, director of the county's neighborhood environmental services.

- New sidewalks: The neighborhood, which spans more than 40 blocks near Baptist Hospital, is home to scores of elderly residents. Many of them walk or wheel themselves to nearby health care appointments on broken or incomplete sidewalks.

"I know a lot of seniors who ride their scooters in the middle of the street because of unsafe sidewalks," said Andrew English, a former longtime Avery Street resident who still owns rental property in the area.

Residents also are pushing for more speed bumps to ease traffic safety concerns.

County engineers are assessing the need for street modifications, including curbing and streetscaping, Wilkins said.

- Street flooding: Residents complain about standing water when it rains.

"Sometimes, the water is so high you can't get out of your house," Stallworth said.

Engineers also are studying the area's water quality in connection with leaky septic tanks and ways to improve storm water retention, a type of wetland that is used to contain rain runoff, Wilkins said.