

Community Focus: Residents make Sungate shine

Cory Young World Staff Writer | Posted: Wednesday, November 24, 2004 12:00 am

Strong neighborhood association helps keep the area clean

Gene Ray does not think his 10 years of residency in the Sungate neighborhood are a big deal.

But he has been there long enough to make a difference.

"I'm one of the youngsters in the neighborhood," said Ray, president of Sungate Neighbors Inc., the area's neighborhood association. "Most people have been here longer than that."

The neighborhood's location brought him and his family there in 1994.

"It's a very nice neighborhood, very pleasant, nice sidewalks, a good place to move into," Ray said.

It also is convenient.

"You have access to everything here," Ray said. "We're within two miles of the two major malls -- Woodland Hills and (Tulsa) Promenade. You can get to anywhere you want to in about 15 minutes or less."

There are 600 homes inside the neighborhood. Approximately half of the homeowners are involved in the neighborhood association, he said.

"It's not where we'd like it to be, but it's good. It shows a concerned neighborhood," Ray said.

The first homes were built in 1963 when developer Jim Nuckolls planned the Sungate subdivision, which was one of the largest developments in Tulsa homebuilding history.

Sungate was the first major residential project that had underground telephone and electric lines, along with a neighborhood association. Jim Coover, 74, moved with his family to Sungate in 1967.

It was only about 40 percent developed when he moved in, he said.

"I moved into the neighborhood back when it started. There were a lot of vacant lots at that time," he said.



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When Jim Coover and his family moved into the Sungate neighborhood, only about 40 percent of the neighborhood was developed. Today, the neighborhood is fully developed, and approximately half the residents participate in the neighborhood association.

Changes, including development and the age of residents, have occurred.

"Of course, it's all built up now," he said.

"We've gone through different generations," Coover said. "My kids are all grown up, and a lot of the original owners have either died or are living in assisted living facilities."

Sungate Park, which includes the neighborhood pool, is at the center of the neighborhood. Eighty percent of the neighborhood's financial support comes from the pool fund, and the other 20 percent comes from association fees, he said.

"We're one of the few areas in town that still has a neighborhood pool," Coover said, "One that's rehabilitated and operated by the neighbors."

In the past 10 years, approximately \$250,000 has been put toward the upkeep of the neighborhood, Coover said.

One neighbor is paid to pick up trash, and others help to keep Sungate Park clean.

The city bought out three houses in the neighborhood for flood maintenance, and neighbors are responsible for the upkeep of that area.

Hayden Downie, 63, a past neighborhood president who now heads the neighborhood pool committee, moved in 22 years ago.

"We found a very lovely house, loved the location and the amenities. There were other families our age, and it was good for our children," he said.

The residents are why Downie likes it even more today.

"It's gotten better," he said. "We have a very active neighborhood association. We maintain the fences around the whole addition."

Block parties and barbecues are normal happenings at Sungate.

"The neighbors make sure that it's still a neighborhood that remains friendly," Downie said. "I plan on staying here as long as I'm alive."

SUNGATE

Established: First homes built in 1963

Number of homes: 600

School district: Tulsa Public Schools (Memorial High School, Byrd Middle School, Salk Elementary School)

Landmarks: Farm Shopping Center

Neighborhood association board: Includes 12 members. The president is Gene Ray.

Activities: Annual block party, quarterly alert neighbor meetings, beautifying neighborhood entrances project, open pool each summer, park mowing, mowing along 51st Street and Sheridan Road, supporting area schools

Current projects: 10-year plan, which includes residents' proposals, but work cannot begin until each item is voted on and approved. Items include a new watering system for the Sungate Park area, the addition of shrubs and flowerbeds, repairs to the pool facility and new furniture for the pool area.

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