



North Port

FLORIDA



Unimproved Lot Registration Program

City Commission Regular Meeting
January 14, 2025

Unimproved Lot Registration Program

- What is it?
- What issues does it address?
- How is it funded?
- How are funds used?
- Who does it benefit?



Unimproved Lot Registration Program: What is it?

- Annual online registration for unimproved parcels
 - Collects current property owner information
 - Requires 24-hour emergency contact
- Annual fee
- Exemption for certain lots
- Similar programs in several other Florida cities



Unimproved Lot Registration Program: What Issues Does it Address?

- Reduces / eliminates certain public hazards and nuisances.
 - Impinging growth
 - Hazardous trees
- Shortens abatement process and eliminates need for liens.
- Provides sufficient funding for enforcement / abatement.
- Potential funding to improve infrastructure to unserved / underserved pre-platted areas.
- Reduces burden on General Fund.



Public Hazard / Nuisance – Impinging Growth

- Vegetative growth that encroaches on a neighboring property, utilities, and/or public rights-of-way.
- Often invasive plant species such as Brazilian pepper and fast-growing vines.
- Can cause damage to fences, homes, overhead utility lines, and other structures.

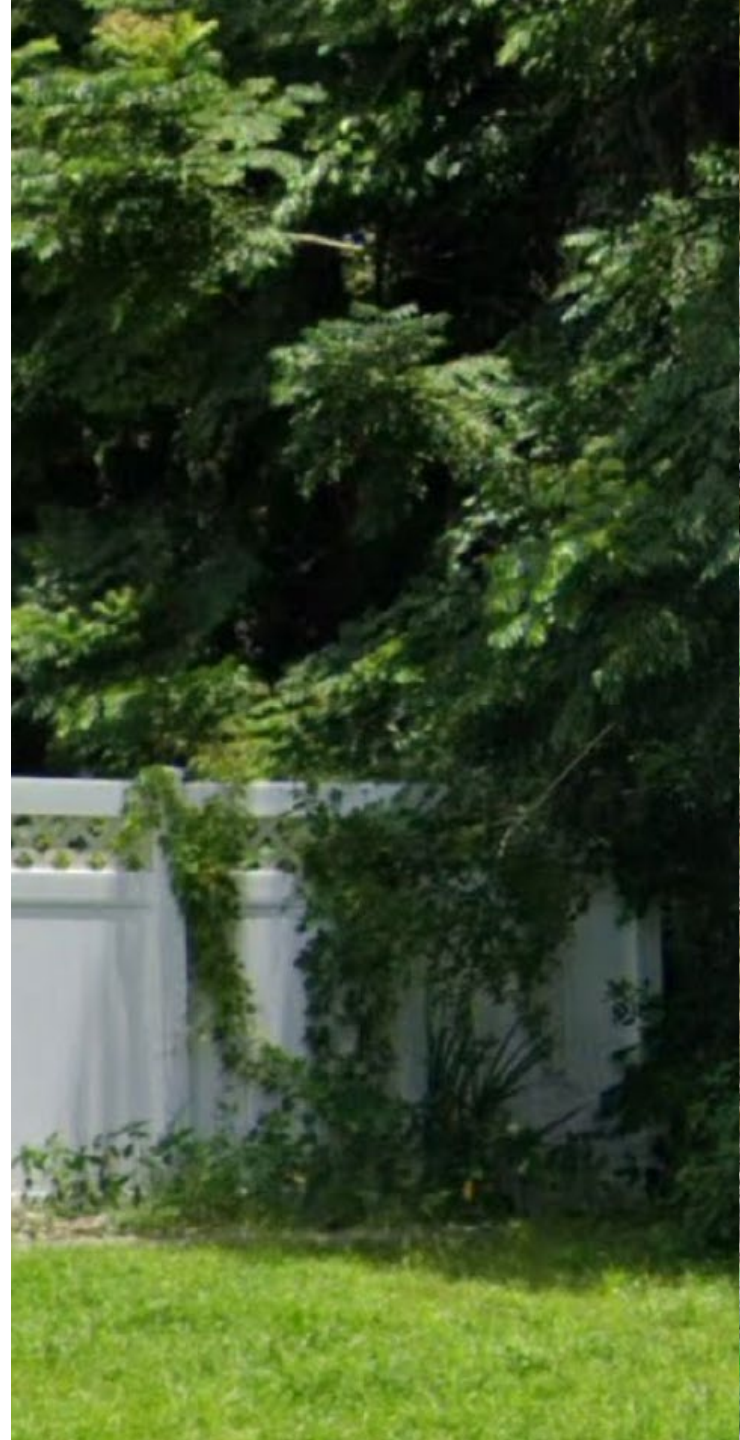


Impinging Growth



Impinging Growth : Background

- City previously had an Impinging Growth Ordinance.
 - In effect 2017 to 2020.
 - Required unimproved property owners to keep vegetation cut back 10 feet from property line.
 - City processed about 2,700 complaints.
 - Spent approx. \$570,000 in abatement costs.
 - Filed over 300 liens on properties.
 - As of 2024, 270 liens were still outstanding with a total amount owed of approx. \$243,000.



Impinging Growth: Lessons Learned

- In many cases, unimproved property owners will not have the work performed themselves.
- Administratively burdensome due to constant cycle of violation notifications, magistrate hearings, abatement, and lien placement, often for the same properties.
- Liens against unimproved property may not be recovered for many years, if ever.
- Need multiple contractors to keep up with work (City only had one contractor).
- Program and enforcement mechanism was too costly for City to continue without alternative funding source.



Impinging Growth: Current Situation

- Code Enforcement receives about 35 complaints **per week**.
- Homeowners have no assistance from City in managing impinging growth.
- Homeowners rarely receive assistance from undeveloped property owners.
- Overgrown vegetation causes frequent damage to fences, roofs, and other structures.
- Many residents cut back the growth on neighboring property themselves.
 - No permission from undeveloped property owner.
 - Not legally allowed to perform work without the owner's permission.
 - Costly to residents.
 - Higher potential for environmental impacts.



Public Hazard – Hazardous Trees

- Any tree that poses “actual hazard or damage to the public, rights-of-way or utilities as determined by the city or to an adjacent lot upon a complaint by the adjacent lot owner, tenants, lessees, or occupants.”
- City authorized to remove per Code of the City Sec. 42-22.
- Code Enforcement receives about 15 complaints **per week.**



Hazardous Trees



Hazardous Trees: Current Situation

- Code Enforcement budget includes \$60,000 per year to remove hazardous trees.
- Will remove trees that are dead, dying, diseased, or significantly leaning toward neighboring house.
- Currently limit removal to trees that could fall directly on house due to limited funds.
 - Complaints often involve trees that could fall on pool cages, sheds, fences, or yards.
- Costs approx. \$1,000 per tree to cut and leave onsite.
 - Removal from property is additional \$300 – 500 per tree.
- Some vacant lots have multiple trees that pose hazard to neighbors.



Current Enforcement Issues

- Limited abatement funds for hazardous trees depleted within first half of each budget year.
- Funding currently comes from General Fund.
- Increasing funding under existing provisions would further burden General Fund.
- Very low cost recovery rate through liens.
- No City enforcement for impinging growth.



Potential Solution: Unimproved Lot Registration Program

- Over 40,000 unimproved pre-platted lots.
- Annual online registration
 - Current property owner information
 - 24-hour emergency contact
- Annual fee collection options
 - Online payment portal
 - Non-Ad valorem assessment
- If not collected through non-ad valorem assessment, then non-payment of fee would become a code enforcement action.



Unimproved Lot Registration Program

- Potential Annual Fee Options

Annual Fee Per Parcel	Total Annual Collection*
\$100	\$4 million
\$200	\$8 million
\$300	\$12 million

* Based on 40,000 parcels

- Fee assessed based on status as of January 1st each year.



Unimproved Lot Registration Program

- Potential exemption for certain lots.
 - Property designated as conservation and/or owned by non-profit conservation entity.
 - Government owned property.
 - Lots owned and maintained by adjacent developed property owner.
 - Pre-platted lots that have been cleared and have an active building permit.
 - Lots within an HOA and/or master-planned subdivision.
- Provide exemption form for property owners to complete and submit for review.



Unimproved Lot Registration Program: Use of Funds

- Abatement
 - City-contracted removal of hazardous trees.
 - City-contracted removal of impinging growth.
 - Could be limited to invasive plants (Brazilian pepper, vines, etc.).
 - Could be limited to once or twice per year, per property.
 - Would eliminate violation notices, magistrate hearings, and liens for these issues.
- Natural Resources review for listed species.
- Code Enforcement resources to oversee program.



Unimproved Lot Registration Program: Use of Funds

- Potential Infrastructure Improvements in pre-platted areas.
 - Extension of water/sewer to areas without existing service
 - Stormwater
 - Canal crossings
 - Sidewalks



Unimproved Lot Registration Program: Benefits

- To unimproved property owners
 - Eliminates violation notices, magistrate hearings, and liens for covered issues.
 - Eliminates need for out-of-area property owners to secure local contractors and manage work long-distance.
 - Improved infrastructure increases value and usability of property.
- To general public
 - Removes danger of hazardous trees.
 - Removes burden from homeowners dealing with nuisance impinging growth.
 - Improves infrastructure and accessibility to water/sewer.
 - Eliminates reliance on General Fund.
- To environment
 - Provides review by Natural Resources before growth is removed.
 - Extension of water/sewer reduces proliferation of well and septic.
 - Reduces spread of invasive plant species.



Strategic Pillars: Safe Community & Good Governance



Direction / Next Steps

- Proceed with development of Unimproved Lot Registration Program?
 - Include provisions for impinging growth removal?
 - Determine fee amount and method of collection (online vs. ad-valorem).
- If proceeding with program, need direction regarding use of funds.
 - Registration and abatement program?
 - Infrastructure improvements?
 - Other potential needs that would provide a benefit to the unimproved lot owners?





Questions?