

St. Charles group aims to maintain subdivision median

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St. Charles residents (from left) Bob Walters, Lynne Hepler, Connie Thullen, Todd Henning and Christopher Naese have formed the Fox Chase Boulevard Median Foundation to maintain the medians along Fox Chase Boulevard. (Sandy Bressner – sbressner@kcchronicle.com)

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ST. CHARLES – To residents living on and around Fox Chase Boulevard, the half-mile median within the roadway is as important as a park.

And so a handful of these east St. Charles citizens began a grass-roots effort to maintain the median. In some areas it had become overgrown, unsightly and in need of renovation and restoration, said Connie Thullen, president of the Fox Chase Boulevard Median Foundation.

The foundation was created in October and formalized the residents’ efforts to care for the median. This year it entered into a license agreement with the city allowing the organization to continue its work on the city-owned right-of-way.

“We just feel that it’s as important as a park to maintain the feel of homeyness and environmental consciousness of St. Charles,” Thullen said. “A lot of people go by it on the way to [St. Charles East] High School and [Wredling] Middle School.”

The group this year wants to focus on the areas that have had problems with buckthorn, hawthorn and overgrown bushes obstructing motorists’ vision, Thullen said.

Overall, she said, the foundation wants to plant sustainable, native plants requiring low maintenance.

“We want to eliminate grass eventually so there’s not even the environmental impact of mowing any more,” she said.

Ben Deutsch, the city’s arborist and public services division manager, said it’s clear these residents take a lot of pride in their subdivision.

“We have residents that do some parkway plantings, but nothing on this scale,” he said.

The city does what it can to help property owners invest in landscaping. In addition to providing free mulch – a program the Fox Chase group took advantage of last year – it also has a 50/50 Parkway Tree Program and has provided grants for landscaping improvements.

According to the city, its corridor improvement grants pay up to half of the cost of new materials, labor and installation for improvements to properties in the downtown special services area or those with frontage on Main Street, Randall Road or Kirk Road.

Recipients for the last fiscal year included Colonial Cafe, 554 S. Randall Road, and the Charlemagne and Majestic Oaks homeowners associations for work along the subdivisions’ entrances on Kirk Road.

City planner Matthew O’Rourke said that by helping property owners beautify their landscapes, the corridors would attract more attention.

Unfortunately, he said, budgetary constraints have prompted the city to suspend funding for the program, which was unique to the Tri-Cities. The Geneva City Council has, however, identified the creation of an annual landscape enhancement award program as an objective in its 2017 strategic plan, Geneva Community Development Director Dick Untch said.

The Fox Chase Boulevard Median Foundation, meanwhile, is relying on its neighbors to donate the \$4,000-\$8,000 in annual maintenance costs, Thullen said. She said the foundation will work toward its master landscape plan little by little.

According to the foundation, residents donated more than \$10,000 in 2010, and the Aintree Homeowner’s Association contributed another \$4,000 in matching funds.

“We had a fantastic first year,” Thullen said. “We’re just hoping it’s got the momentum to stay as high this year and make a significant cut in new plantings.”

Find out more

Go to www.foxchaseblvd.org for more information about the Fox Chase Boulevard Foundation.