HOME
A Story of the Porters Community in Gainesville, Florida
In the heart of the City of Gainesville, Florida, in a historic neighborhood called Porters, there lived a girl named Alana.
Alana loved living in Porters because there was always so much to do!

She could ride bikes with friends, go to the neighborhood playground, or help water the plants in the community garden.
Alana liked to play outside, but more than anything, the best part about Porters was living down the street from her grandparents, who she called Nana and Papa.

Whenever Alana visited Nana and Papa, she liked to sit on the front porch stoop and watch all of the people walk by.
In the afternoons, while Papa worked in his tool shed, Nana would sit on the porch with Alana and tell her stories.

Alana’s favorite stories were about Nana and Papa when they were kids. She was always amazed by how much Nana seemed to know about Porters and the people who lived there.
One day, Nana decided to tell Alana a new story. Alana was excited because Nana said this story began over a hundred years ago.

Nana began by explaining how Alana’s great great great great ancestors moved to Porters when it was established in 1884.
At first, they were scared to move to a new place, but they also saw opportunity in Porters that gave them courage to come.

Nana said the first Porters residents worked hard to build their homes, start churches and plant gardens.
Their family loved living in Porters, but it was not always easy. Nana explained that throughout history, people living in Porters were treated differently because of the color of their skin.

This made Alana sad, but Nana said Porters was resilient. She said that meant people in Porters are strong!
Nana told Alana that people in Porters were strong because through hard times, the people of Porters worked together and helped each other.

She said "Porters is a special place, because the people are engaged and inclusive." That meant people cared about their neighbors and wanted to help make Porters a great place.
As Nana finished her story, Papa walked up from his tool shed. He was holding something in his hands.

“What is that?” Alana and Nana asked. Papa smiled and presented them with a piece of wood, shaped like a heart.
He said their neighbor, Mr. Walters, knew Papa liked to make things, so he always gave him leftover wood from his construction business.

Papa said he saw the heart in the pile of scrap wood, and wanted Alana to help him paint it.
Nana laid out some newspaper on the floor of the porch, and Papa found a can of red paint in his tool shed.

Alana put two coats of paint on the heart, then waited for it to dry before showing Papa.
"You did an excellent job," Papa said, "now we have to find a place to hang this masterpiece."

Inspired by Nana’s story, Alana said they should hang it on the front of the house, so everyone could see how proud they were to live in Porters.
Papa set up a ladder and climbed carefully to the top. He used a hammer and nail to attach the bright red heart above the front porch.

Papa climbed down and Nana walked outside to see the final product. “It’s just what we needed,” she said.
This gave Alana another idea. "We should make hearts for everyone in Porters!"

Papa and Nana thought it was a great idea, and Papa said he would ask their neighbor, Mr. Walters, to help make more.
The next day, Papa and Mr. Walters began making hearts while Nana and Alana painted.

Every afternoon they made hearts, and by the end of the week, they had made more than they could carry.
Once they had enough for everyone in the neighborhood, Alana packed the wooden hearts into a wagon.

Nana, Papa and Alana went door-to-door, making sure every house had their own wooden heart to display.
When they had delivered all but one heart, Nana and Papa walked Alana back to her house. Alana ran up to her parents and gave them big hugs.

Alana told them about the amazing day she had with Nana and Papa, delivering hearts and making people smile. Then, she showed them the heart she had made special for them.
The next day, Alana went on a bike ride with her friends and noticed all of her neighbors had put their hearts on their homes.

When she rode by Nana and Papa’s, she saw them sitting on the front porch together. Alana parked her bike and ran up to them, full of excitement.
“Did you see?” she said, trying to catch her breath. “Everyone has their hearts outside already!”

Nana and Papa were filled with joy at the news. They told Alana how proud they were of her.
Nana said “whenever our neighbors see the hearts, they will be reminded that Porters is a special place with strong community ties. They will know that they are HOME.”
A NOTE ON HOME

The story HOME was inspired by a year-long collaborative project in the historic Porters neighborhood, with funding by the University of Florida-Gainesville Research Award.

Residents and stakeholders worked alongside urban planning specialists from the university to document a “neighborhood narrative,” the purpose of which was to detail the values, strengths, and visions of the Porters Community, as well as common interests with citywide partners.

The resulting narrative was organized by four themes, which can be found throughout the story of Alana’s adventures in Porters: home, engaged & inclusive, resilient and opportunity. The overarching neighborhood icons of heart, front porch and tree were also identified to unify each theme.

HOME honors the rich history of Porters and its residents. It is a story of the beauty that can originate from preserving and nurturing a neighborhood’s ‘heart’.
PROJECT TEAM
UF DEPARTMENT OF URBAN AND REGIONAL PLANNING

Savana Wright    Kathryn Frank    Kristin Larsen
Laura Dedenbach    Tyeshia Redden

CITY OF GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA
PORTERS STEERING COMMITTEE

Gigi Simmons  John Davidson  Angela Wright
Beverly King  Andy Coffey  JoeAnn Johnson
Sheena Larry  Michael Leath  Stephanie Seawright

PORTERS NEIGHBORHOOD