

Ben Gray entered City employment soon after writing a letter to Mayor Frederick in 1986 expressing support for the Great Neighborhoods Program, and asking to be involved. His initiative led to a career in public service that included four job positions spanning almost 30 years and three administrations.

Ben's interest in public service drew him to the City where he focused his creativity, curiosity, and knowledge on helping make Orlando a better place to live and work. He enjoyed the process of working with others to achieve common goals. His curiosity about the how and why of activities, systems and processes led him to learn, do, and teach. He helped others to succeed.

From 1986 to 1990, Ben served as Senior Neighborhood Liaison and then as Supervisor in the Great Neighborhoods Program. During that time he led the effort to identify and map the neighborhoods in the City. The Neighborhood Liaisons initially focused on neighborhood cleanup issues, but they became conduits of information between neighborhood residents and City staff.

In 1990, Ben was selected for the position of Assistant to Director in the Public Works Department. He served in that position under Dave Metzker until 2004. At that time, the Public Works Department encompassed seven Bureaus - Engineering/Survey, Fleet Management, Facilities Management, Project/Construction Management, Streets and Drainage, Stormwater Utility, and Transportation Engineering/Parking.

Ben handled a wide variety of duties and responsibilities, such as coordinating and monitoring budgets, assisting with personnel actions, researching and writing reports, and supervising office staff. Special projects became part of that mix early on.

- Completed construction of the Cady Way Trail and coordinated maintenance with Orange County and the City of Winter Park.
- Managed the operation and maintenance of the City Hall including adjustments to security after the 9-11 attacks.
- Coordinated arrangements for special events in City Hall.
- Coordinated with the CNL construction group during the construction of CNL tower 1, City Commons garage, a new 2nd floor entry, and the pedestrian bridge.
- Worked with OUC and City staff on agreements, contracts, and physical arrangements for participating in the OUCooling initiative. City Hall was the first facility to connect to the new chilled water service.
- Managed the design and construction of two neighborhood walls - Dover Estates and Haralson Estates - to shield residents from busy roadways.
- Managed the design and construction of two segments of the Lake Fran bike trail.

- Managed the design and construction of Eagle Nest Park and the extension of Metrowest Blvd across Shingle Creek. Coordinated with Orange County Public Schools on the construction of Eagle Nest Elementary School.
- Served as the Public Works Coordinator in the Emergency Operations Center before and after the three hurricanes in 2004.

In 2004, Ben was selected for the position of Transportation Engineering Project Manager under Charles Ramdatt and served until 2013. His duties continued to vary with the need.

Project and Construction Management

- The Malibu Groves neighborhood wall
- A segment of the Single Creek Bike Trail
- Crystal Lake Drive Improvements
- Narcoossee Road Improvements
- Assisting other project managers on transportation projects

Grant Application, Management, and Administration

- FDOT Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP)
- FDOT Local Agency Program (LAP)
- American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) - after the 2008 Recession
- City Grant Operations Committee

Budget and Administrative Coordination

Consultant Contracts

- Specifications
- Selection
- Documenting and monitoring

In 2013, Ben was selected for the position of Stormwater Assistant Division Manager under Lisa Henry, and served until his retirement in 2016. In this position, he was responsible for stormwater operations including five program activities of surface water maintenance, compliance and monitoring, public awareness, stormwater billing, and GIS services.

Other activities and initiatives

- Implemented tests of different makes of street sweepers
- Encouraged coworkers to question and think creatively
- Initiated studies on Lake Silver to determine amounts and sources of nutrients entering the lake, and how they influence water quality in the lake environment.

- Sponsored:
 - creative advertising in public awareness
 - billboards and “Listen to your lawn”
 - Investigating and documenting cyanobacteria blooms
 - Bathymetric mapping of lakes using GPS technology
 - Telemetry and water quality database

Personal

Ben and Sandra, his wife of 43 years, have two grown sons.

Education

BS in Freshwater Ecology from UCF
MS in Entomology from Mississippi State University

Other work experience

Managed a local jewelry store between 1976 and 1986

Dedication and Appreciation

I could not have achieved what I have without the constant love and support of my wife Sandra. My success is yours too, and I am grateful for your patience and help. I look forward to sharing the rest of our lives together.

I also thank all of my coworkers, who, whether they know it or not, encouraged, taught, and guided me through my career.

I am grateful for the opportunities I had while working for the City of Orlando.

Memorable comments and questions from City Staff

- You haven't done this before, have you? (several people)
- You're doing much more than I did in this position.
- Where or how did you learn to . . .
- You don't know what you are getting into.
- What are you doing here? I thought you worked in . . .
- You appear to be the "Clerk of the Works" for the Department.
- You're going from the frying pan to the fire.
- Can you help me with this?
- Thank you