

City partners roll up sleeves, spruce up Haynie-Sirrine

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Neighbors, friends and city partners rolled up their sleeves, defied anthills and got down and dirty Saturday to help residents of the Haynie-Sirrine community clean up their neighborhood.

Pockets of people mowed lawns, raked trash and spruced up street corners with plantings — all part of

an effort to jump-start a resident-driven neighborhood improvement process.

Members of First Baptist Church were out in full force.

"We will accomplish some things today, but the real purpose of this is to empower this neighborhood



Neal

to do things on their own," said architect Jim Neal of Neal Prince Architects, who co-chairs the First Baptist Haynie-Sirrine cleanup committee. "Some of the neighbors have started doing some cleanup, so we think it's contagious."

He said other groups participating in the Saturday project included the United Way, Upstate Forever and the city of Greenville.

Johnnie Mae Babb, a resi-

dent of the neighborhood for 56 years, worked with a team that included youth members of First Baptist church such as Baker Watts, a Beta Club member at his high school.

"It's a great way to make the neighborhood look better and meet some neighbors," he said.

This is the second year that the Haynie-Sirrine

See **SIRRINE** on page 4B

SIRRINE

FROM PAGE 1B

neighborhood teamed up with its city partners for a cleanup event. The neighborhood is one several targeted by the city for further redevelopment. While Saturday's effort just scratched the surface, it went deeper in planting the idea of self-help, too.

Just before 10 a.m. Saturday, a team of volunteers and Haynie neighbors descended on the corner near Haynie and Church Street to begin constructing a sign that will identify the Haynie-Sirrine neighborhood.

Resident Billy Blessingame, 65, joined three volunteers, and they sawed, nailed and debated the conversion of letter sizes to fit the signs being made.

Blessingame approved of the cleanup day.

"I think this is a good idea for the neighborhood if we follow up on it," he said.

He joined Larry Ayres and Hayden Hays, who both praised resident Felsie Harris, head of the Haynie Neighborhood Association, in organizing the project.

"It's great to see this sort of neighborhood revitalization happening here in Greenville, espe-



OWEN RILEY JR. / Staff

Clean-up effort: Volunteers, from left, Johnnie Mae Babb, 56, Baker Watts, 17, and Ivery Jones, 42, help clean up the Haynie-Sirrine neighborhood early Saturday morning.

cially because the people who live right in the neighborhood putting time and effort into it," said architect Erin Knight, 24, of Upstate Forever, as she shook ants from her pants leg.

David Mahaffey, a city Sanitation Department employee, sat

patiently in the cab of his front-end loader waiting to haul away the debris.

"We did this last year," he said.

"It helps the city and it helps the neighborhood."