

An aerial photograph of a river winding through a dense, lush forest. The river's water is a deep, clear blue-green color, contrasting with the various shades of green in the surrounding trees. The forest appears thick and undisturbed. The text 'CRYSTAL RIVER' is centered over the river in a white, serif font, with a thin white horizontal line extending from the end of the text to the right.

# CRYSTAL RIVER





## CRYSTAL RIVER

### Community Snapshot

**VISION:** “To promote and support efforts to revitalize waterfront areas in a manner which incorporates environmental resource protection and integration of the viable traditional waterfront economy of Kings Bay.”

**DESIGNATION:** 2003

**APPLICANT:** City of Crystal River

**STATUS:** Active; meets monthly

**PARTNERS:** Save the Manatee; Friends of Chassahowitzka Wildlife Refuge; the Rotary Club; Manatee County; FWCC.

**KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS:** Community has risen over \$2 million to purchase Three Sisters Springs; City has been awarded over \$6 million in FCT grants; Kings Bay park improvements; “Bayfest” celebrations; stormwater treatment systems; “Manatee Manners” education for the public.

**CURRENT CHALLENGES:** Raising the remainder of the money needed to acquire Three Sisters Springs; creation of a collector street alleviate traffic; additional stormwater treatment systems.

#### FLORIDA ASSESSMENT OF COASTAL TRENDS DATA:

**Public Dollars Contributed:** \$1.2 million

**Grant Funding Pending:** \$6 million



# CRYSTAL RIVER



Crystal River is located on Florida's Nature Coast. An area dotted with deep, clear, cold springs and rivers that feed the brackish waters along the coast and home to sluggish West Indian manatees.

Crystal River has been "discovered" more so than the neighboring towns of Homosassa, Inglis, and Yankeetown. It has a general aviation airport, a shopping mall, and national chain restaurants. But beyond the car culture of new Crystal River lies the crossroads of the old downtown at the intersection of U.S. 19/U.S. 98 and Citrus Avenue. Citrus Avenue has old storefronts lined with new street lamps and landscaping, and eventually dead-ends at a city park and boat ramp into Kings Bay. If you look closely enough at Kings Bay, you understand the reason for the City's name.

Unfortunately, Kings Bay is choked with the results of too much nitrogen from lawn fertilizers and human and animal waste. Eutrophication has taken hold of the bay. Water quality was certainly one of the issues that the Waterfronts Committee was hoping to tackle when the City was awarded the designation in 2003.

The CRA director wrote the application for waterfronts designation, and the City hired a program manager, developed a Waterfronts Advisory Board, and, through community workshops, developed several goals, including:

- Studying and monitoring the water quality of Kings Bay and the surrounding waters and making legislative recommendations regarding these waters to the City Council;
- Studying and monitoring the Floridian aquifer and making legislative recommendations regarding the aquifer to the City Council;
- Studying and monitoring the flora and fauna in the areas surrounding the waters of Kings Bay and the surrounding waters and making legislative recommendations regarding the same to the City Council;
- Studying and monitoring the care and protection of the Florida manatee and other wildlife native to the waters of Kings Bay and the surrounding waters and making legislative recommendations regarding the same to the City Council;
- Studying and monitoring the impact that stormwater runoff has on the waters of Kings Bay and the surrounding waters and making legislative recommendations regarding the same to the City Council; and
- Studying and monitoring the impact septic tanks have on the waters of Kings Bay and the surrounding waters and making legislative recommendations regarding the same to the City Council.

In the first two years of designation, the City, in conjunction with the advisory board, held annual "Bayfest" celebrations, which had more environmental







and historic preservation information booths than vendors. The City was also awarded \$300,000 in Florida Recreational Development Assistance Program grants to continue improvements to Kings Bay Park.

Unfortunately, the relationship between the program manager and the advisory board eroded and little progress was made toward the Waterfront goals. The advisory board stopped meeting, the program manager was fired, and the program was dormant for a few years.

In 2007, the group resurfaced, thanks to community outcry regarding the development of the Three Sisters Springs — a 60-acre parcel with three natural springs whose owners want to develop it into a single-family residential



community, along with a bottling plant to capture the fresh water flowing out of the springs. The advisory board has partnered with Save the Manatee, the Friends of Chassahowitzka Wildlife Refuge, and the Rotary Club to pressure City leaders to purchase the property. The City was awarded a Florida Communities Trust grant of more than \$6 million to purchase the property or turn it into a passive park where people can swim and view the manatees. The City now

has to raise \$2.7 in matching funds. Members of the Advisory Board and other groups set out to raise the matching funds to carry out this vision and were successful—the Felburn Foundation pledged \$2 million and Citrus County, Crystal River and the Citrus County Tourist Development Council each pledged \$100,000. The push is so popular that at a recent town meeting in Crystal River, residents came forward to write \$1,000 personal checks to the City Council. The developer is expected to ask for \$15 million for the property, but the community is confident in its ongoing fundraising efforts.