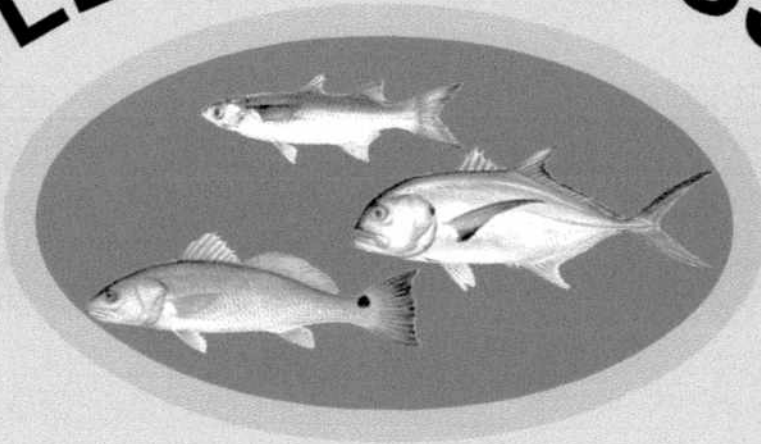


WATERFRONTS FLORIDA FINAL REPORT OLD HOMOSASSA WALK TO THE RIVER

DCA IDENTIFICATION NUMBER: 03-CT-13-02-WF-A1-001

OLD HOMOSASSA



Est. 1835

“A report funded in part by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Florida Coastal Management Program, pursuant to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Award No. NA170Z2330. The views expressed herein are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the State of Florida, NOAA or any of its subagencies.”

November, 2003



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As a recipient of the 2001 Waterfronts Florida Designation, the Old Homosassa community recognized two initiatives that were essential in maintaining the integrity and character of their unique community: **preparing a Community Plan** and **providing neighborhood enhancements**.

Prepare a Community Plan. The goal of establishing a Community Plan for Old Homosassa has been achieved with its adoption as a Comprehensive Plan Amendment by the Citrus County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) on November 18, 2003. The process started in the first year of the Waterfronts Florida program and continued in the second year. This Community Plan was formed by a community visioning process, by the Citrus County Community Development staff as in-kind Waterfronts Florida grant match, and by the public meeting process leading to the BOCC adoption.

Provide neighborhood enhancements. Two projects were envisioned by the community in the first year of the program and completed in the second year:

- The “Landmark” sign at the center of Old Homosassa to provide community identity and a sense of place to this historic town.
- The “Information Kiosk” at the County Boat Ramp Parking Area to provide information (heritage, environmental issues, local recreation), aesthetic upgrade, and waiting space.

METHODOLOGY

Community visioning meetings were held in the first year of the Waterfronts Florida program to establish goals for a Community Plan and to initiate neighborhood enhancement projects. A steering committee was formed to further refine these goals and projects. Citrus County Community Development staff, assisted by Florida Department of Community Affairs (DCA) staff, organized the first year meetings. In the second year of the program Preston Watters, an Old Homosassa resident, volunteered to coordinate activities of the steering committee and to speak at public meetings representing their views.

Prepare a Community Plan. Community Development staff researched the unique characteristics of the community. Old Homosassa residents, some of whose families resided in the community for several generations, assisted in this process. Objectives and policies were derived from goals established by the community in visioning meetings. The local public meeting process began in the second year of the program, with continued refinements to the goals, objectives, and policies suggested by the steering committee and community. Three modifications were made to the Plan in response to community concerns:

- The BOCC had directed staff to prepare two options for consideration. At the recommendation of the steering committee Option 2, which requires Land Development Code standards, was adopted.
- The proposed Overlay District was restricted to areas south of the Homosassa River and extended to the southwest along Mason Creek Road, to more closely coincide with the Old Homosassa plat area.
- Clarification was added that residential density would not increase beyond that allowed by the current Land Development Code Atlas.

Adopting the Plan as an amendment to the Citrus County Comprehensive Plan required a public meeting process. In the second year of the Waterfronts Florida program, this process began with two Plan reviews by the Citrus County Planning and Development Review Board (PDRB) and three reviews by the BOCC in the transmittal phase. Members of the steering committee modified the Plan during the process as outlined above. The Community Plan transmitted by the BOCC to the DCA was approved and commended for provisions to protect the historic nature of this unique community. Since that approval, two PDRB public meetings and two BOCC public meetings were unanimously positive and the Plan was adopted on November 18, 2003.

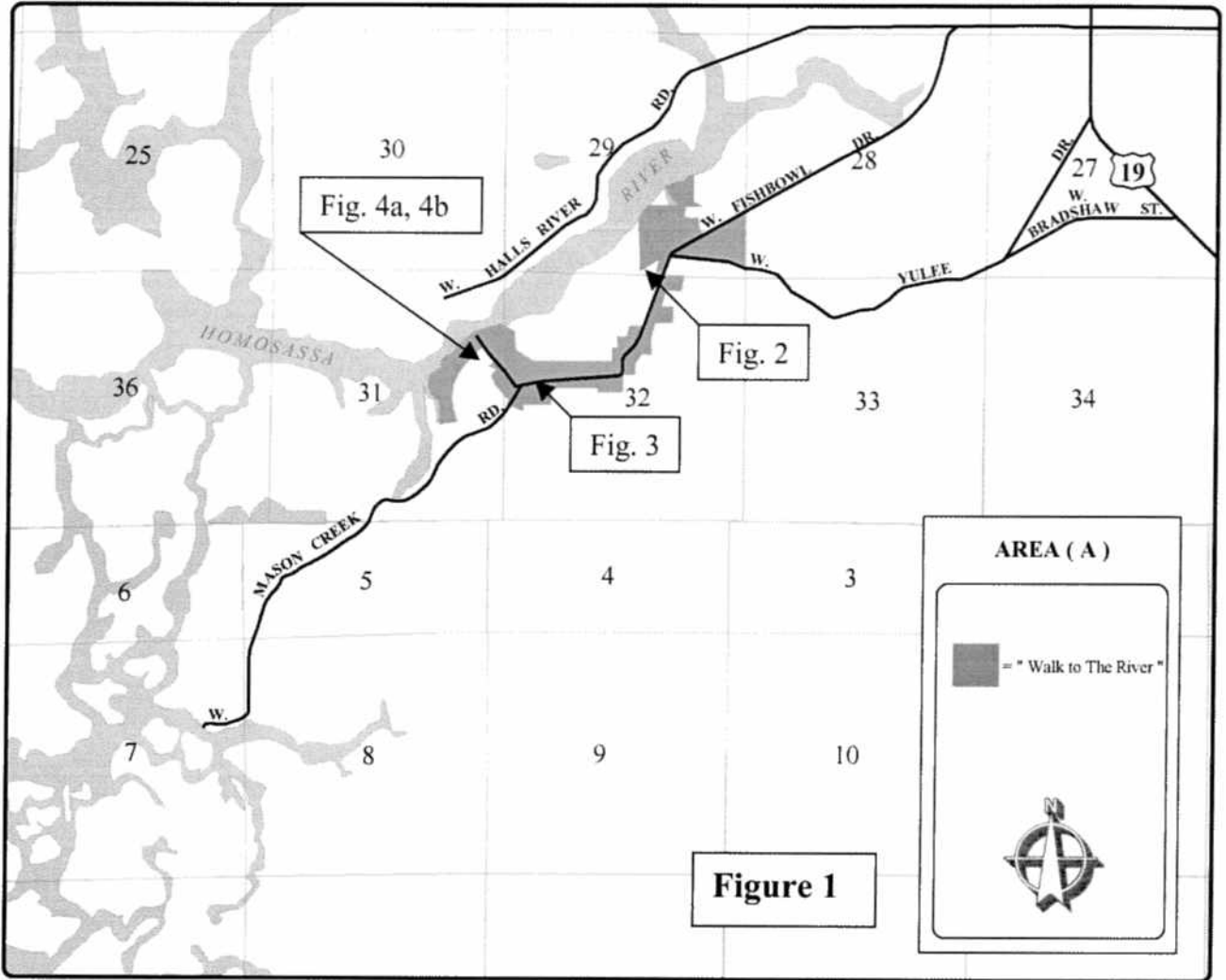
Provide neighborhood enhancements. Implementation of these projects was the result of Waterfronts Florida partnerships.

- The Waterfronts Florida grant funded design and installation of the “Landmark” sign at the center of Old Homosassa. Community Development staff provided graphic design of the sign face. Completion of this sign was made possible by donations from local businesses. A local electrician donated lighting of the sign. Landscaping was provided by a grant to the County for tree replacement. The adjacent property owner constructed a fence as a backdrop.
- The Waterfronts Florida grant funded design and construction of the “Information Kiosk” at the County Boat Ramp Parking Area. Community Development staff provided graphic design of the permanent acknowledgement sign. A local artist has donated a weathervane for this structure. Displays will be provided by: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (manatee protection and other environmental issues), the Homosassa Civic Club (local recreation), and Citrus County (heritage). Landscaping will be provided by a grant to the County for tree replacement.
- The “Walk to the River” entrance was enhanced by the Homosassa Water District Board’s agreement to paint the water tower similar to the “Landmark” sign.

OUTCOME

Community Plan. Adoption of the “Old Homosassa Community Redevelopment Area Plan” by the BOCC was the major goal of the community. Cooperation among the Old Homosassa community, local Citrus County government and Florida DCA made this goal achievable. All involved agree that the Plan will form a basis for future development and redevelopment in Old Homosassa that is consistent with the goals of the community. *See attached “Old Homosassa Community Redevelopment Area Plan” as adopted by the BOCC.*

Neighborhood Enhancements. Two projects which enhance the “Walk to the River” were envisioned by the community: the “Landmark” sign at the center of Old Homosassa and the “Information Kiosk” at the County Boat Ramp Parking Area. Additionally, the Water Tower was painted to announce the entrance to the “Walk to the River”. The successful implementation of these projects during the second year of the Waterfronts Florida Program was the result of several partnerships as outlined above. These projects are intended to provide a sense of pride and identity to this historic community and to serve as an example for future development in the area. *See the following figures illustrating the “Walk to the River”.*



OUTCOME

Neighborhood Enhancements

Figure 1. "Walk to the River"

This area is identified in the Comprehensive Plan Amendment as the primary pedestrian path and includes many of the historical and natural resources that give the town its unique character. Neighborhood enhancement projects were implemented along this path.

Figure 2. Homosassa Water District Tower painted to identify the "Walk to the River" entrance.

Figure 3. Old Homosassa "Landmark" Sign installed at the center of Old Homosassa to provide community identity and a sense of place to this historic town.

Figure 4a, 4b. The "Information Kiosk" constructed at the County Boat Ramp Parking Area to provide information about heritage, environmental issues and local recreation and to provide waiting space.

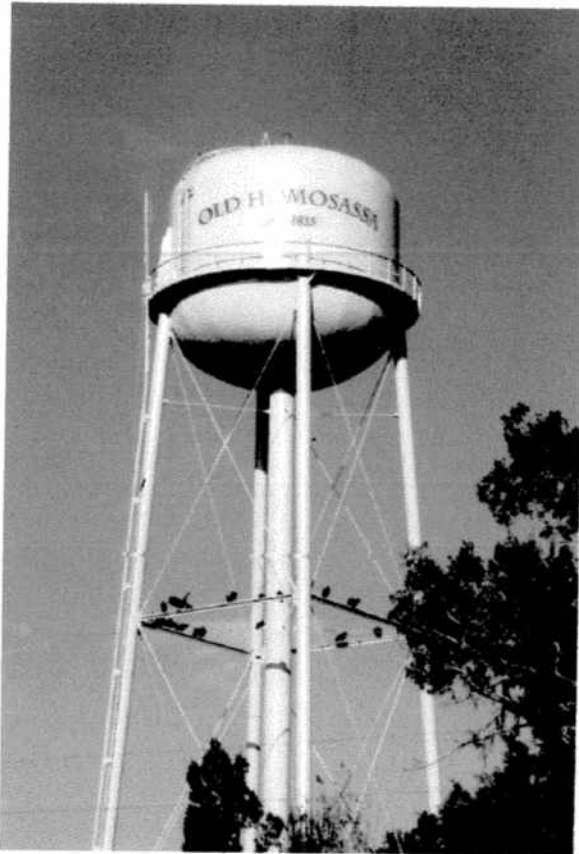


Figure 2. Homosassa Water District Tower



Figure 3. Old Homosassa "Landmark" Sign



Figure 4a. The “Information Kiosk”



Figure 4b. “Information Kiosk” Display

FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Prepare a Community Plan. To implement the Comprehensive Plan Amendment, Land Development Code standards are required. Community Development staff will work actively with the steering committee to create standards that are consistent with the adopted Comprehensive Plan Amendment and that further the goals of the community. The Land Development Code amendment will require a local public meeting process.

Provide neighborhood enhancements. A few small projects remain to be completed by the County, using the remaining Waterfronts Florida grant and other funds, such as lighting/landscaping at the "Information Kiosk" and signage at the County Boat Ramp. More important, it is the goal of all involved in the Waterfronts Florida projects to continue to enhance the "Walk to the River".

The Waterfronts Florida Program has provided an invaluable opportunity for community participation in planning for the present and future of "Old Homosassa". Continued participation on the part of the community and Citrus County is our collective goal.

CHAPTER TEN
FUTURE LAND USE ELEMENT

**Old Homosassa
Community Redevelopment Area Plan
Subelement**

Option 2

(approved for transmittal by the BOCC on July 8, 2003)

(As is with additional clarification of density issue. See Policy 1.2.1.)

NOTE: The following pages 1 – 24 are proposed new text for inclusion in the Future Land Use Element. The underlined material reflects adjustments made during the public hearing process. Upon adoption, the goals, objectives and policies will be numbered to be consistent with the present numbering format in the Future Lane Use Element policies section.

I. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

The southwest corner of Citrus County is home to the unique community Old Homosassa, known for years as an area rich in traditional fishing village history, cracker style architecture, and distinctive natural resources. The unique character of this unincorporated Florida town is under considerable pressure from development, which has led the community to establish community goals and prepare a redevelopment plan.

Recent policy and development issues have impacted Old Homosassa, known for its "Old Florida" lifestyle. The 1993 Net Ban, incoming sewer lines, and the recent completion of the Suncoast Parkway from Tampa to US Hwy 98, are all issues that could potentially threaten the quality of life Homosassa residents and visitors alike have come to enjoy.

Since 1997, the Department of Community Affairs (DCA), through the Waterfronts Florida Partnership, has been helping to chart a new course for Waterfront communities. Every two years new waterfront communities are designated as Waterfronts Florida Communities by the Secretary of the DCA. The program provides support, training, innovative technical assistance, and limited financial assistance to communities striving to revitalize waterfront areas in a manner that incorporates: environmental and cultural resource protection, integration of the viable traditional waterfront economy, hazard mitigation, and public access to the waterfront.

This program requires a commitment from the community, both in terms of finance and time, to identify and pursue solutions to the problems facing individual waterfront areas. In March 2001, the Citrus County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) authorized the Community Development Division to apply for participation in the Waterfronts Florida Program. By so doing, the BOCC recognized that this Program could be instrumental in retaining Old Homosassa's character in face of development challenges.

The Community Development Division and a group of citizens worked together to present an application to the DCA. In July 2001, the group's work was rewarded when Secretary Steven Seibert of the DCA announced that Old Homosassa, along with Panacea and Port Salerno, was designated as a Waterfronts Florida Community.

A Waterfronts Steering Committee and a Program Manager were selected in September 2001. It soon became apparent that the entire community wanted to participate in the goal-defining "visioning" sessions.

In two "visioning" meetings in November 2001 and January 2002, the community listed its strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities. From community issues identified at the visioning six goals were identified:

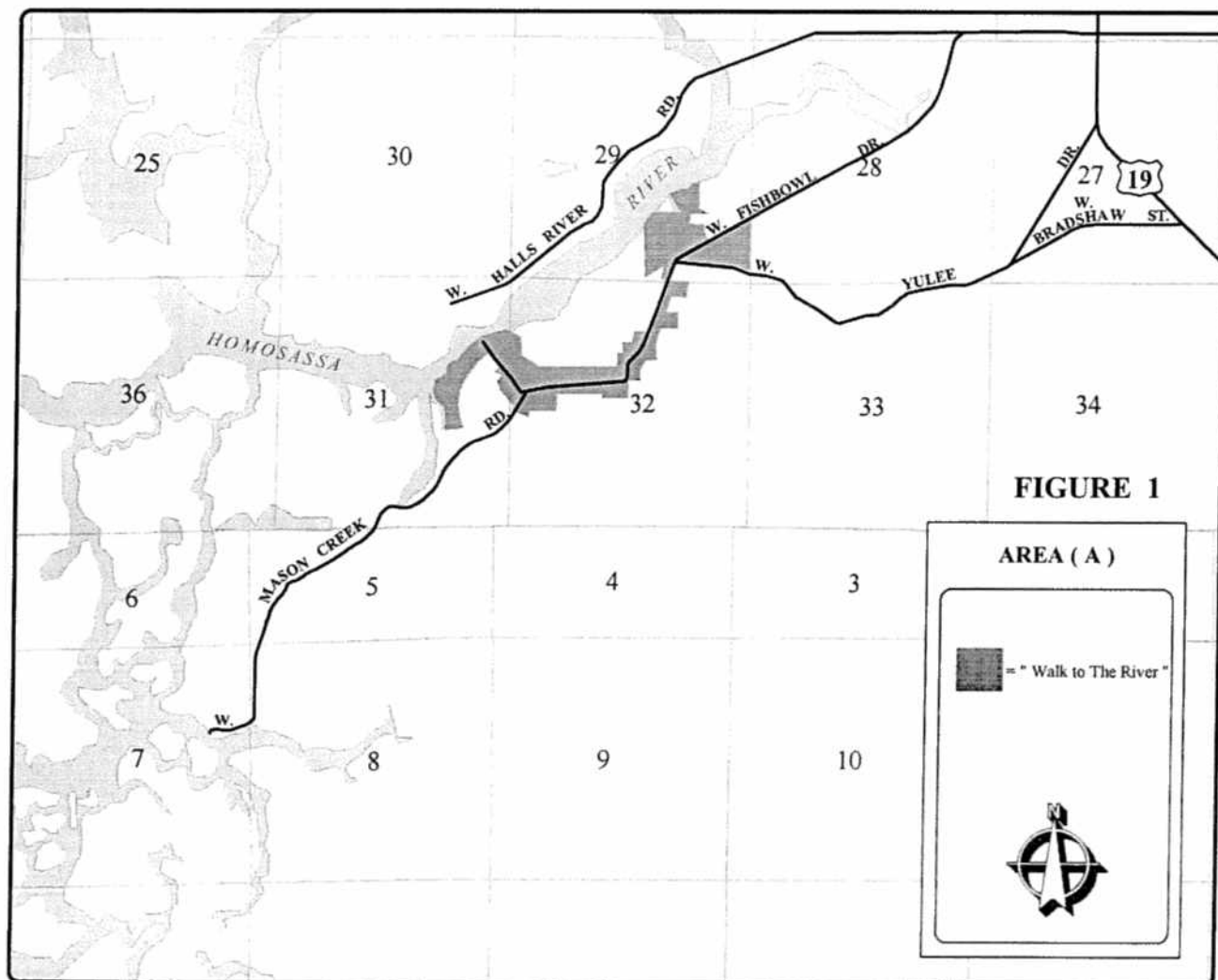
- 1) Preserve the existing character of the community;
- 2) Protect the environmentally sensitive community resources;
- 3) Promote uniform development and redevelopment;
- 4) Promote public recreation and access to the river, as well as general pedestrian connectivity;
- 5) Reestablish the original design elements of the 1886 Town Plat as practical; and
- 6) Support the commercial fishing industry.

To accomplish these goals, three areas are established as follows:

- Area (A) = "Walk to the River"
- Area (B) = Core Study Area
- Area (C) = Proposed Overlay District (to be incorporated into the Citrus County Land Development Code)

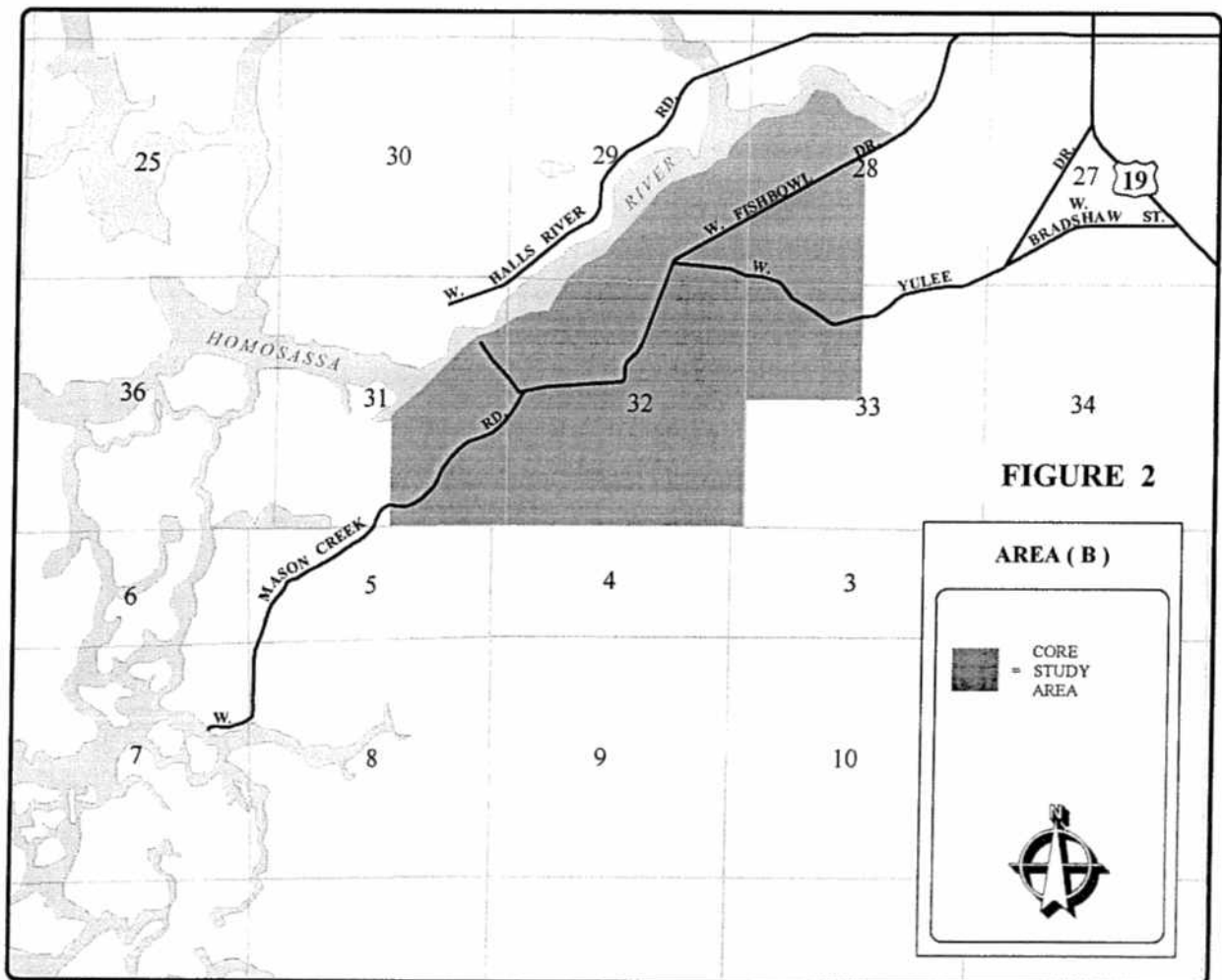
Area (A) = *Walk to The River*. This area highlights four areas: a Fishing Village, a River Portal, an Artist Colony/Business District, and a Heritage Portal. Identified as the central area of Old Homosassa, this region includes many of the historical and natural resources that give the town its unique character. Moreover, much of the community's discussion has focused on preserving the attributes along this corridor.

Area (A) starts at the W. Fishbowl/West Yulee Drive intersection area and ends at the fishing businesses along the Homosassa River. Refer to Figure 1.



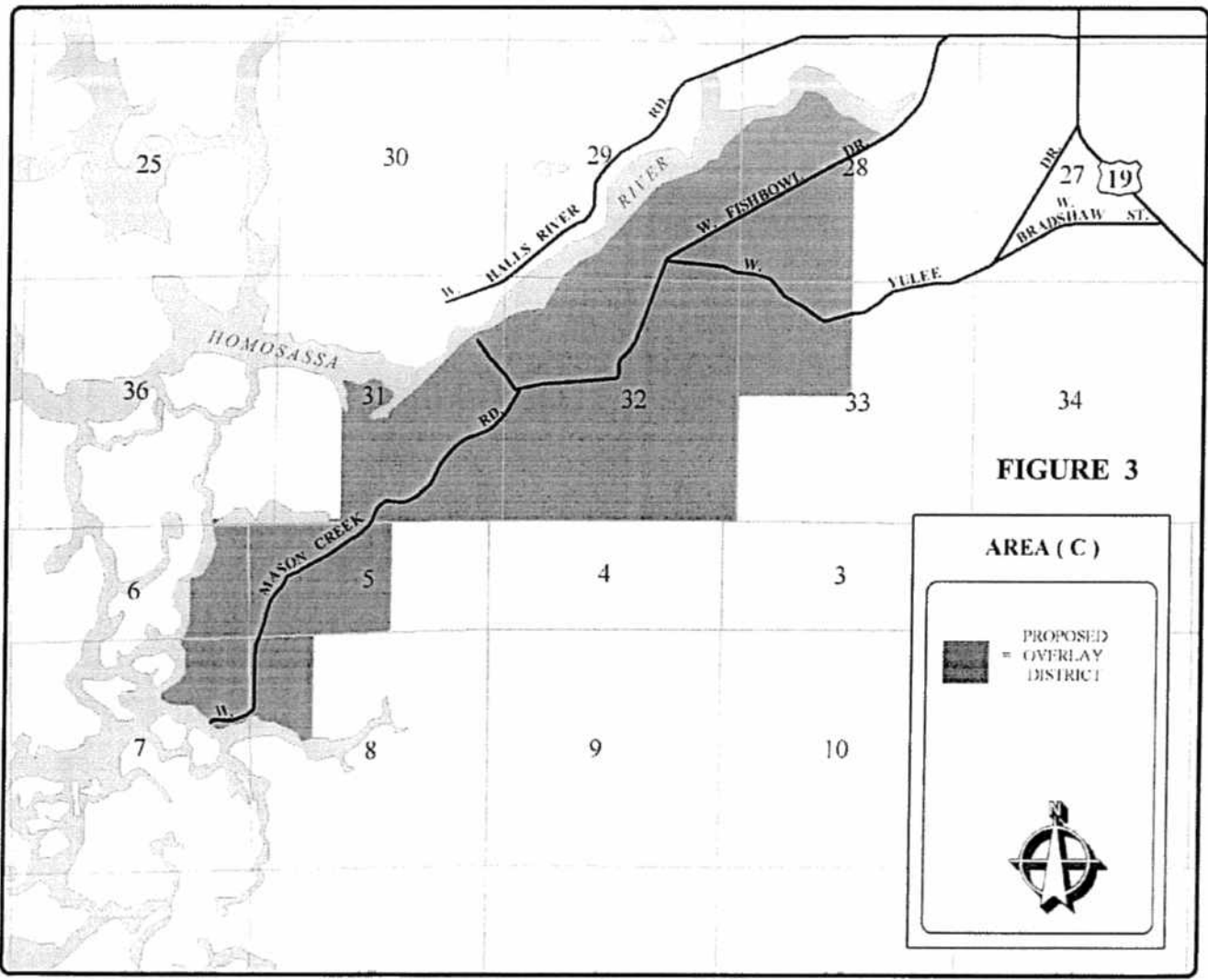
Area (B) = Core Study Area. Encompassing areas including and surrounding the *Walk to The River*, this district is what many citizens call “Old Homosassa” and corresponds to the original 1886 Town Plat. Hence, the *Core Study Area* is the most critical component in achieving the six goals as established by the citizens.

This area is bounded on the North by the Homosassa River, on the West by Otter Creek, on the South by the southern boundary of Township 32, and on the East by the 1886 Homosassa Plat and Moreland Park Subdivision. Refer to Figure 2.



Area (C) = Proposed Overlay District. To protect the integrity of Old Homosassa's character, it is necessary to include areas abutting the *Core Study Area*. The purpose of including this district is to develop enhanced development standards where non-residential and higher density residential densities are likely to occur, where environmental conditions should be carefully considered and where enhanced development regulations may be appropriate, for nonresidential properties on both the north and south side of the Homosassa River. ~~By protecting the view corridor along the river this will help to insure compatibility of appearance and preservation of the sense of place that is unique to the community.~~

The *Proposed Overlay District* includes the *Core Study Area* plus ~~nonresidential sites along Hall's River Road to the southwest of Halls River Bridge and~~ properties to the southwest along Mason Creek Road ending at Mason Creek. Refer to Figure 3.



By concentrating on Areas A, B, and C, a plan can be adopted and enforced to retain Old Homosassa's character and sense of place.

II. HISTORY

Old Homosassa is an area rich in history. Its varied habitat and natural features, combined with a history of different cultures, has made Old Homosassa the unique community it is today.

The first inhabitants were Native Americans. Archeological research indicates that Citrus County was occupied by pre-historic aboriginal people for 12,000 years prior to the arrival of Spanish explorers.

Although Hernando de Soto explored the area in the 16th century, it was the passage of the Armed Occupation Act of 1842 that spurred development. The act stated that a 200,000-acre area south of present-day Gainesville was open for settlement. This law stipulated that one hundred and sixty acres would be given to any head of family or single man over eighteen who was able to bear arms, could live on the land in a house fit for habitation during five consecutive years and cultivate at least five acres. (Knetsch Jan./Feb. 1999)

William Cooley took advantage of this opportunity offered by the Federal government. Cooley and his neighbors found the Act's incentives appealing and submitted numerous applications to settle the land. As a landowner, merchant, pioneer, shipper of red cedar and the area's first Justice of the Peace, Cooley played a prominent role in the settlement of Homosassa. Cooley sold his land to David Levy Yulee and moved to Tampa in 1847. (Knetsch Mar./Apr. 1999)

With the land purchased from William Cooley and the land that had been left to his father through a Spanish land grant, Yulee "established a 5,100-acre plantation and sugar mill in 1846." (Homan & Reilly 19).

"In the early 1840s David Levy Yulee, one of Florida's first senators and developers, purchased thousands of acres on the Homosassa River. His slaves cleared over 1000 acres of land and planted sugar cane. He constructed a sugar mill and built a fine home on Tigertail Island, which became a port of call for the coastal steamers that linked the steamers on the Gulf to the world. A post office was established in 1845 and 1850 Census reveals that settlers from many places and with varying skills were entering the area, taking advantage of land offered by the Armed Occupation Act." (Laurie B-17))

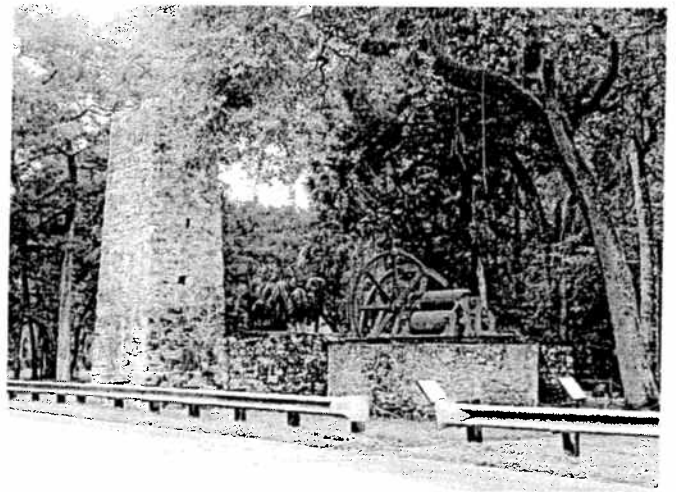


FIGURE 4 *The Yulee Sugarmill*

Homosassa's growth was interrupted by the Civil War. Interrupted is an appropriate word because only a few years after the war, there were many enterprises underway. "During the Civil War, Homosassa operated in support of the Confederate effort and was successful in stopping an attempted raid early in the war. In the end however, Homosassa was defeated and fell victim to the Union gunboats. Union soldiers destroyed the great sugar plantations, ending an era." (Boyd 12)

David Yulee felt first-hand the effects of the war. "In May of 1864, a Union Naval attack destroyed Mr. Yulee's mansion on Tigertail Island in the Homosassa River. The Sugar mill was not destroyed, but never put to use again." (Homosassa Springs Wildlife State Park, website)

Seeing the area as an opportunity for profit, three Northern investors created the Homosassa Company in 1884 to develop Old Homosassa's land. John Dunn, Joshua Chamberlain, and Benjamin Dutton purchased thousands of acres of land once owned by Yulee with the "intent on developing the area as a vacation spot for northern visitors, complete with railroad access and a resort hotel" (Homan & Reilly 21).

The Homosassa Company platted its acquired lands with full intentions of creating a city designed in the neo-classical tradition of combined diagonal streets and grid pattern. The 1886 plat pre-dated the "City Beautiful" planning movement, in which cities included public parks on the waterfront. However, the plat did express two of today's community goals, pedestrian connectivity and public access to the waterfront, to greater extent than exists today. The platted public plaza, a pedestrian amenity, was replaced by a fire station, a danger to pedestrian activity. The platted lake access to the river was never constructed and is now the elementary school.

Although the 1886 plat was never completely constructed and has been compromised by repeated street vacations and lot reconfigurations, its original design intent is a historical legacy that is in part visible today. In 1985 a prescriptive plat was recorded based on a survey of the area and the original town plat.

"In 1887-1888, the Silver Springs, Ocala, and Gulf Railroad Company constructed from Dunnellon to Homosassa an extension of its Ocala to Dunnellon line, which was built in 1885-1887. The train opened up trade and tourism between Homosassa and Ocala," and from Ocala to the northeast and the rest of the country. "The railroad facilities in Homosassa consisted of the depot, a freight dock and storage shed, a siding for cars to be loaded and a turntable for turning the locomotive around. In November 1941, the track and depot in Homosassa were retired and the nostalgic days of railroading came to an end." (Homosassa Springs Wildlife State Park, website)

"A familiar pattern was beginning to evolve, one that is still being used by land developers. Advertising and a well-designed sales campaign drew prospective buyers who came as tourists, staying at hotels built by the land company. Well-connected investors and visitors to the area such as Grover Cleveland, John Stetson, John Jacob Astor, and Henry Plant added prestige." (Laurie B-19)

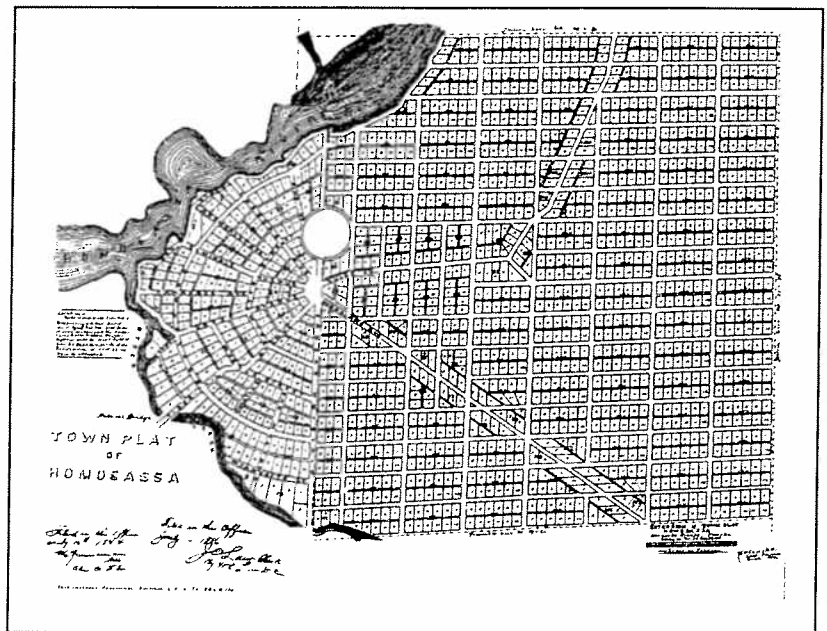


FIGURE 5 *The 1886 Plat created by the Homosassa Company*
Not reflective of the current plat(s) of record.
Current plat reflects allowable lower densities.

“The West Coast Development Company tried again in the 1920s to take advantage of the public’s fascination with Florida land. Like the Homosassa Company, they purchased thousands of acres, advertised heavily, brought in celebrities to attract prospects, and began ambitious building projects” (Laurie B-19).

The Great Depression brought notions of powerful development to a halt in the 1930’s. The only legacy that remained was Dunn’s Homosassa Inn “which was visited by such notables John Jacob Astor, Winslow Homer, and Thomas Edison.” (Homan & Reilly). Now owned by the MacRae family as a private residence, the Homosassa Inn still stands as a beautiful landmark for Homosassa.

Although the construction of U.S. 19 in the 1940s provided an easier access for motoring tourists, it wasn’t until the 1960s that another development company was influential in Old Homosassa. The Norris Development Company, led by Bruce Norris of New York demolished the original Riverside Lodge built by B.F. Dutton and created a resort with such amenities as a boat ramp, pool, and a 74-room hotel. This time, Homosassa was widely recognized as a recreation, resort, and retirement center. Moreover, Homosassa’s transition from water-dependent (fishing) to a water-enhanced (tourism) economy was clear (Watermarks 3).

The latter half of the twentieth century brought with it an increase in infrastructure for Old Homosassa. The roads were paved from US 19 into the heart of Old Homosassa soon after the Norris Development Company had built the Riverside Resort. Along with increased tourism came permanent residents and the necessary infrastructure; water lines were laid and became available in 1957, and a fire station, library, new elementary school, and new post office were all built in the years that followed.

David Yulee’s sugar cultivation was not the only natural resource in Homosassa that provided an economic market. The lumber and citrus industries were both integral to Homosassa’s growth and notoriety. “Cedar mills processed the lumber from the trees which had once covered all of the coastal islands until there were few trees left and the sawdust was used for fill in the swampy shores so that more land could be developed.” (Laurie B-19) Second forest growth has covered the evidence of these industries and there has been no agricultural redevelopment.

The natural resource that has had the most impact on Homosassa’s economy is the fishing industry, both commercial fishing and sports fishing. The numerous species found throughout the Homosassa River and Gulf of Mexico have provided a subsistence and profitable way of life for generations of Homosassa residents, as well as recreation for tourists. From the time of the Indians to the time of the “Mullet Express,” the seafood industry was a staple and integral part of Homosassa’s culture. Unfortunately, “most of the commercial fishing industry has succumbed to the combined pressures of decreasing catches, pollution, net bans, environmental regulations, and the high cost of fuel and fleet maintenance.” (Homan & Reilly 9).

Today, Old Homosassa still has a sense of place as a “fishing community” which coexists with an ever-growing tourism industry. Until now, development of the community has been slow and largely in keeping with the community's image of itself. A community plan is required to insure that Old Homosassa's image and sense of place is retained.

III. INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS OF COMMUNITY RESOURCES

THE COMMUNITY

The Census Designated Place that includes Old Homosassa is largely the same as Area (C), the Overlay District. The following demographic information includes Homosassa to the west of US Hwy 19:

- Riverhaven and other properties to the north of the Homosassa River
- Old Homosassa and other properties south of the Homosassa River

People residing in this area represent a homogeneous community in terms of age.

**TABLE 1
AGE DISTRIBUTION**

Age	Percent of Population
0-19 years	12 percent
20-44 years	18 percent
45-64 years	35 percent
65 years and over	35 percent

Source: U.S. Census, 2000

Seventy percent of Homosassa's citizens are aged 45 or over, contributing to a median age of 58. Considering that the median age for Citrus County is 53 and that the median age for Florida is 39, it is clear that Homosassa is an "older" community. Age is the most important dimension of population in that it relates to service needs. The older composition of Old Homosassa is one reason for the goals of pedestrian connectivity and local community facilities being identified in "visioning" meetings.

Homosassa's recent population growth rate is smaller than that of Citrus County and Florida. This smaller growth rate is largely responsible for the retention of Old Homosassa's character. It is anticipated that the future sewer lines, projected to be installed by 2004, and the nearby availability of the Suncoast Parkway will bring increased population growth to the area.

**TABLE 2
POPULATION GROWTH**

	1990	2000	Percent Change
Homosassa	2,170	2,294	5.7 percent
Citrus County	93,515	118,085	26.3 percent
Florida	12,937,926	15,982,378	23.5 percent

Source: U.S. Census, 2000

Old Homosassa has numerous businesses and organizations, all of which contribute to the character and success of the community. Concentrating on Area (B), the Core Study Area, the following is a description of the major businesses, historic structures, organizations, government entities, and public facilities (Harmon, except as otherwise noted).

RESORTS

The tourism and sports fishing industries have led to the development and redevelopment of two notable resorts. These resorts have been maintained in private ownership, somewhat restricting public access to the Homosassa River while at the same time maintaining high aesthetic standards for tourists and local customers.



FIGURE 6 *Homosassa Riverside Resort*

The Homosassa Riverside Resort

Initially built as a "bed-and-breakfast" inn in the late nineteenth century by B. F. Dutton, this location has been a destination for visitors since its inception.

Today, the Riverside Resort is a 74-bed resort catering to both tourists and the community. Included within the Resort are a restaurant, private boat ramp, marina, dive shop, conference room, and guide services (Boyd 13).

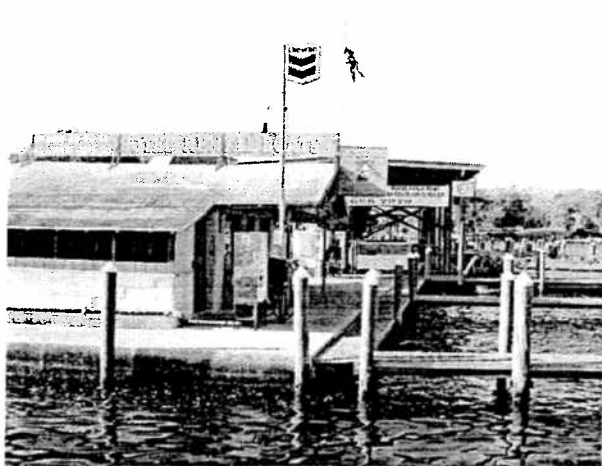


FIGURE 7 *MacRae's Bait House*

MacRae's of Homosassa

Established by Scottish immigrants Mary Isabell and James Alexander MacRae in the early twentieth century, J. A. MacRae's General Store was the first of many MacRae family business endeavors.

Currently, MacRae's maintains a bait-house, a 23-room motel, boat rentals, tiki bar, gift shop and charter services (Boyd 13).

HISTORIC RESIDENCES

The history of Old Homosassa is visible today in these structures. One of the community's goals is to preserve this historic character.



FIGURE 8 *The MacRae House*

MacRae's House

"Built by land agent and developer John Dunn in 1882, the Homosassa Inn was a sportsmen's lodge. James and Mary MacRae purchased the structure in 1919 with the provision that the previous owner, Helen Richardson, be permitted to live there until her death. In 1932, the MacRae family reopened the house as a lodge and later a restaurant. By the mid-1990's family members had once again converted the Homosassa Inn to a private home" (Homan & Reilly 37).



FIGURE 9 *The Whilden House*

Elta Whilden's House

Constructed in 1926, the Whilden house is still occupied by one of its original residents. As Old Homosassa's oldest resident, Ms. Elta Whilden is still able to provide a colorful history. Her husband Wade constructed their house standing adjacent to what was the train turntable. As the train conductor, Wade was able to attend to his duties in a moment's notice.

FISHING BUSINESSES

Commercial fishing is in decline in Old Homosassa, leading to the possibility that these properties could face redevelopment to some other use if not protected and encouraged.

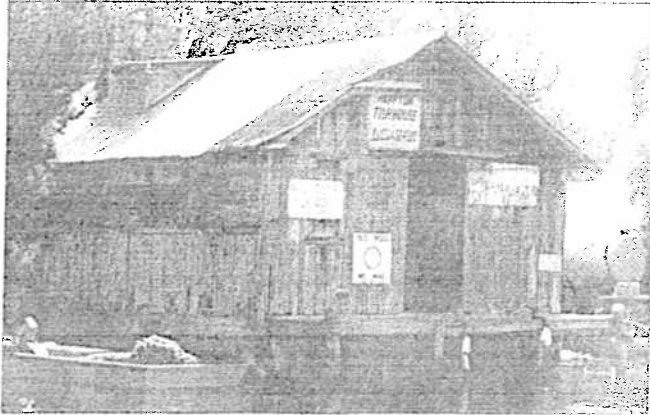


FIGURE 10 *Hampton's Seafood*

Hampton's Seafood

The Hampton's Fish House was built in the 1920's by Luther and Doc McReynolds. It was soon sold to T. L. Rogers who then passed the business to his sons, Buddy and Dick Loclar. The Loclar family still owns the fish house and currently leases it to an independent fishing family.



FIGURE 11 *Homosassa Seafood*

Homosassa Seafood

Since the 1920's, a fish house has occupied the property where Homosassa Seafood stands today. Currently, the company maintains a large shrimping and crab fleet, selling wholesale.



FIGURE 12 *Cedar Key Fish House*

Cedar Key Fish House

Established in 1962 by Buck Sheppard and family, the Cedar Key Fish House has the reputation for introducing mullet and mullet roe to the world. Shrimp, stone crabs, oysters, scallops, and other fish are sold retail and wholesale. The family currently leases the fish house to another seafood company, Shrimps Landing.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Old Homosassa is fortunate to have a number of community facilities. One of the community's goals is to preserve these facilities as part of Old Homosassa's character.

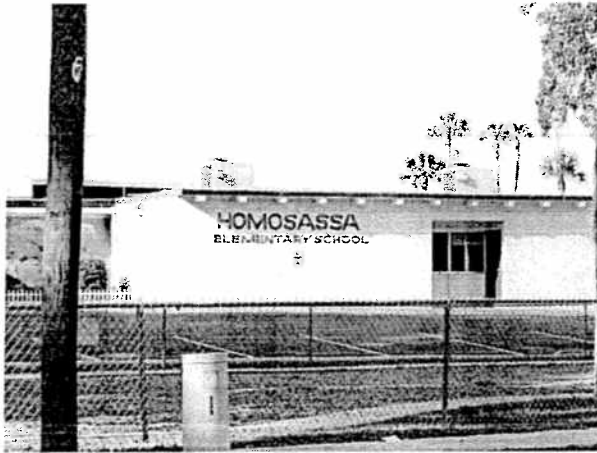


FIGURE 13 *Homosassa Elementary*

Homosassa Elementary School

Homosassa Elementary educates approximately 400 students in grades Kinderparten through 5th grade. Although the existing school was constructed in 1971, it is not the first Homosassa Elementary. Three schools are known to have existed in Old Homosassa prior to this one, the first one dating from 1882 on Gordy Island.



FIGURE 14 *Homosassa Post Office*

Post Office

The first Post Office was constructed on the north side of the river in 1880 and moved to the south side in 1913. Prior to the current location, a post office made of cabbage logs was constructed in 1948. Today's post office was constructed in 1968.

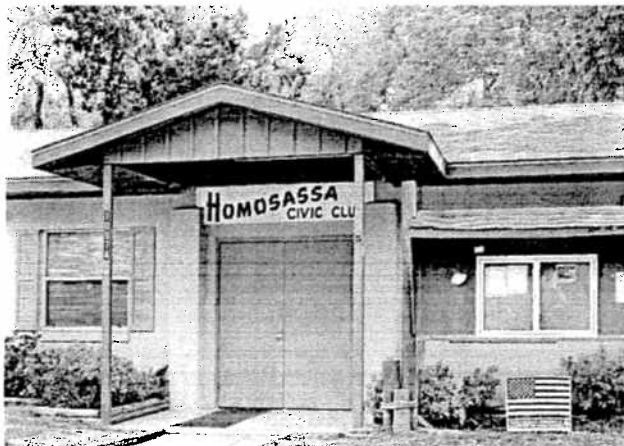


FIGURE 15 *Homosassa Civic Club*

Homosassa Civic Club

Founded in 1950, the Homosassa Civic Club constructed its clubhouse in 1957. Today, the clubhouse serves as headquarters for the club as well as a meeting place for community organizations.



FIGURE 16 *Old Homosassa Public Library*

Old Homosassa Library

Constructed in the late 1960's on property donated by the Homosassa Civic Club, the quaintness of Homosassa's public library is in keeping with the character of the town.



FIGURE 17 *Old Homosassa Firestation*

Old Homosassa Fire Department

The Homosassa Volunteer Fire Department occupies a building constructed in 1964 and continues to provide services for the community.

PUBLIC RECREATION

Two public recreation areas exist in Old Homosassa today, a State of Florida park and a Citrus County Boat Ramp. A future park is planned by the Civic Club in the Waterfront District.



FIGURE 18
Picnic Area at Yulee Sugar Mill Ruins State Park

Yulee Sugar Mill Ruins State Historic Site

The Yulee sugar Mill Ruins were managed by the Citrus county Federation of Women's Club until they donated the land to the Florida Board of Parks and Historic Memorials on June 24, 1953. Today, this 4.49-acre site encompasses the Sugarmill ruins and a picnic area and is maintained by the Florida Division of Recreation and Parks.

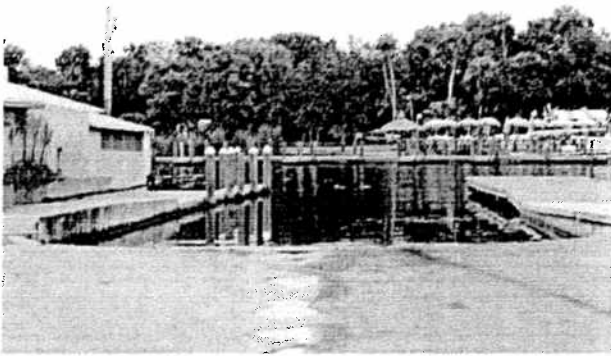


FIGURE 19
Citrus County Public Boat Ramp

County Boat Ramp

Centered between MacRae's and the Riverside Resort is the County boat ramp. The established date of the boat ramp is unknown, but according to local historians "there has always been a public boat ramp." The County has recently constructed a parking facility for users of this boat ramp.



FIGURE 20
Homosassa Civic Club Park

Homosassa Civic Club Park

The Homosassa Civic Club Park is currently used for the annual Fish and Arts and Crafts festival and related parking (Boyd 13).

PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE

Water

Homosassa citizens receive public water service from the Homosassa Special Water District. The District serves a population of 4,567, including the Old Homosassa community. Pollution of private wells from septic systems is not an issue as long as residential properties are connected to this water system.

Sewer

In Area (B), the Proposed Core Study Area, there is no public sewer system. Most properties are served by private septic systems and, in some cases, environmentally unsound systems. A plan has been adopted to provide a central sewer line to Area (B). This plan is funded by Federal, State, and County monies. This endeavor is seen by some citizens as a "double-edged sword", beneficial to the environment and water quality but encouraging more extensive development.

Although a public sewer system is available on the north side of the Homosassa River in Area (C), not all properties along this line are connected.

Stormwater Management

The lack of a stormwater management system in Old Homosassa causes local flooding and untreated water entering the river. In order to implement Policy 3.1.9, of the Citrus County Comprehensive Plan, regarding flooding in adjacent areas and pollution of water bodies, enhanced development standards are recommended. These enhanced development standards should address stricter fill limitations in A zones as is common in other waterfront communities (Manatee County and Hernando County)

Major Roadways

The Suncoast Parkway from Tampa to US Hwy 98 has recently been completed, providing improved access to Tampa from the southern part of Citrus County. By connecting Old Homosassa to businesses in Tampa and the Tampa International Airport, this toll road is a major encouragement to development in the area.

West Yulee Drive (CR-490) provides one of the community's connections to US Hwy 19. The Citrus County Comprehensive Plan recommends upgrading a portion of this collector to a four-lane divided highway (Chapter Six, Traffic Circulation Element, Figure 6-8). This recommendation should be studied before that time because of the potential for inconsistencies with the goals of the Old Homosassa Redevelopment Plan as proposed.

Sidewalks

A sidewalk exists intermittently on the northern side of West Yulee Drive. It extends from the elementary school to near the Sugarmill State Park and is interrupted by several parking lots. Pedestrian connectivity is an important goal of the community and should be addressed by public and private development plans.

IV. ANALYSIS OF ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

All of Area (C), the Proposed Overlay District, lies in an environmentally sensitive coastal area. Moreover, most of Area (C)'s growth has been adjacent to the rivers, creeks, and wetlands. Goals, Objectives, and Policies for protecting this environment are included in the following elements of the Citrus County Comprehensive Plan:

- Chapter Three - Conservation Element
- Chapter Four - Coastal, Lakes and River Management Element
- Chapter Four - Land Use Element
- Chapter Thirteen - Manatee Protection Element

Related standards exist in the Citrus County Land Development Code, but enhanced development standards and levels of public review are needed ~~required~~ to encourage responsible development which sustains Homosassa's economic and environmental integrity.

Water Quality

The quality of Homosassa's water is paramount in retaining the natural habitats and aesthetic value that have long been associated with this community. "Land use affects surface water in two ways: first, by increasing surface runoff, which increases flooding and stream degradation in down-stream areas; and second, by contributing pollutants such as oils, sediments, and heavy metals to stormwater runoff" (Hoch 98). Citizens need education about point pollution, such as septic systems, and non-point pollution, such as nitrates from fertilizers and stormwater runoff.

Wetlands

Protection of Homosassa's wetlands has been a top issue for many of the town's residents who believe that potential developments could disrupt or eliminate wetlands. Enhanced development standards and levels of public review are needed ~~required~~ for these environmentally sensitive areas. The protection of natural wetland systems is necessary ~~required~~ to maintain habitat for flora and fauna as well as to maintain water quality for future generations.

Manatees

The West Indian Manatee is a year-round inhabitant of the Homosassa River and draws tourists from all over the world. The Homosassa Springs State Wildlife Park is located in close proximity to Old Homosassa. It has the second highest traffic of any of the Florida State parks.



FIGURE 21 *Manatees*

Photo by Cindy Brieske

Flood Plain

Most of Homosassa lies in a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) flood Zone A. “Zone A is the flood insurance rate zone that corresponds to the 100-year floodplains that are determined in the Flood Insurance Study (FIS) by approximate methods” (FEMA website).

On August 15, 1984, Homosassa was entered in the National Flood Program, leading to building restrictions. After 1984, with a Base Flood Elevation of nine feet for most of Homosassa (as defined by FEMA) new construction and substantial improvement must be four to five feet above natural grade.

These regulations create a challenge when attempting to achieve architectural styles consistent with the historic character of Old Homosassa. Development standards and public review process for development in the flood plain must balance citizen lifestyles and the historic character against environmental degradation in the following ways:

- The historic character of Old Homosassa is defined by unobtrusive structures constructed on grade prior to the flood regulations, but FEMA regulations do not allow variances for living spaces below the base flood elevation.
- The Florida Accessibility Code (Florida Building Code) requires handicapped access in public places and older citizens require easy access in residences, but elevators limit development to large expensive structures.
- Practicality and aesthetics lead to a preference for non-elevated structures, but fill to achieve required grades is problematic due to the lack of stormwater management and related local flooding and river pollution.

Outstanding Florida Water

The Homosassa River was designated an “Outstanding Florida Water” by the Florida Legislature in 1992. An Outstanding Florida Water, (OFW), is a water designated worthy of special protection because of its natural attributes (FDEP website).

Trees/Native Vegetation

The trees of Homosassa are a special component of what makes the town beautiful. Saving specimen trees as well as specific tree canopies are essential in maintaining the quaint character in Homosassa.

Besides offering a pleasing aesthetic value, trees offer the benefits of shade for cooling effects and can serve as a noise and visual buffer for non-compatible land uses.



FIGURE 22
A Tree Canopy in Old Homosassa

V. SUMMARY OF DEVELOPMENT/REDEVELOPMENT ISSUES

Most of the development in Homosassa during the past decade has been re-development.

Some long-standing structures have been renovated. The Homosassa Riverside Resort, the largest private property within the Waterfront District, has been restored and improved, as has MacRae's of Homosassa, another waterfront property.

The owners of Lawson's Seafood have refurbished the historic Old Hampton Seafood House after it was damaged in the 1993 winter storm. Citrus County has constructed a parking facility for users of the public boat ramp and dock in Old Homosassa. In addition, the Homosassa Civic Club recently purchased land within the Waterfront District and has begun preparation to create a community park.

As increased development becomes possible in Old Homosassa, the community must deal with retaining its character. Sustainable development is an overall goal that could encompass community issues. Sustainable development is "development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." (World Commission on Environment and Development 8) If Old Homosassa is to be a sustainable community, the following three issues are paramount:

- Environmental Protection: Environmental viability, including flood considerations, should not be compromised by economic development. Compact development, encouraged by the original 1886 Town Plat, would help to conserve environmentally sensitive lands.
- Economic Development: New residents and tourists are needed, to some degree, to provide economic health in Old Homosassa, but this presence should be encouraged in a way that promotes environmental protection and a sense of place for the community.
- Social Equity: Participation of affected stake holders should continue as was done in the Waterfronts Florida visioning process. Future residential development should not preclude existing residents from continuing to live and work in Old Homosassa.

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Option 2 (As is with additional clarification of density issue. See Policy 1.2.1.)

VI. GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

Goal #1 - Preserve the Existing Character of the Community

- Objective 1.1 Identify community resources and attributes through the planning process.
- Policy 1.1.1 The County shall inventory community resources including land uses, infrastructure, and specific socio-economic factors.
- Policy 1.1.2 The "Old Homosassa Area Redevelopment Plan", as implemented by enhanced development standards, shall serve as an educational tool for future citizens and businesses seeking to locate in Old Homosassa as well as a regulatory document to implement the community vision and preserve community character.
- Objective 1.2 Protect community resources and attributes through appropriate land development regulations.
- Policy 1.2.1 Within one year of the adoption of the "Old Homosassa Area Redevelopment Plan", Citrus County will adopt enhanced development standards for Area (C), the Proposed Overlay District. No Overlay District standards or other provisions shall increase development density beyond what is allowed by the underlying land use district on the Citrus County Land Development Code Atlas map.
- Policy 1.2.2 Enhanced Development Standards shall include specific restrictions for land uses in Area (C), the Proposed Overlay District, as well as general guidelines for the development review process/level of project review.

Goal #2 - Protect the Environmentally Sensitive Community Resources

- Objective 2.1 Identify environmental resources through the planning process.
- Policy 2.1.1 The "Old Homosassa Area Redevelopment Plan", as implemented by enhanced development standards, shall outline environmental considerations for properties within Area (C), the Proposed Overlay District, and this shall serve as a guide to potential development for the purpose of protecting environmentally sensitive areas and encouraging responsible development.
- Objective 2.2 Protect environmental resources through educational programs and by adopting appropriate development standards to further protect the uniqueness of the Old Homosassa community.

- Policy 2.2.1 Within one year of the adoption of the "Old Homosassa Area Redevelopment Plan", Citrus County will adopt enhanced development standards to guide buildings and accessory uses away from environmentally sensitive resources within Area (C), the Proposed Overlay District. Enhanced standards will be adopted to implement Policy 3.1.9, of the Comprehensive Plan.
- Policy 2.2.2 Enhanced development standards shall guide buildings and other improvements away from environmentally sensitive resources and specifically limit development activity that can occur when the following is present on site or directly adjacent to the development site:
- 1) Wetlands or water
 - 2) Wildlife, including West Indian Manatee, and Habitat
 - 3) Tree Canopy and specimen trees
- Policy 2.2.3 The County shall work with residents through the Waterfronts Florida Program and other community initiatives to educate property owners and developers regarding the environmental conditions of the Old Homosassa community and work together to encourage good stewardship and responsible development.

Goal #3 - Promote Uniform Development and Redevelopment

- Objective 3.1 Establish development standards and assist property owners and developers with design and project review as needed to promote uniform development within Area (C), the Proposed Overlay District.
- Policy 3.1.1 The following issues shall be addressed by enhanced development standards for Area (C), the Proposed Overlay District:
- 1) Zoning (Types of uses allowed)
 - 2) Height/Bulk of Buildings (setbacks/ISR, etc)
 - 3) Landscaping/Tree Protection
 - 4) Off street parking/Interior traffic circulation
 - 5) Pedestrian/Bicycle access connectivity
- Policy 3.1.2 The following additional issues shall be addressed by enhanced development standards for Area (B), the Core Study Area:
- 1) Protection of existing architecture (style/design) as applicable
 - 2) Preserve existing site features that are unique or beneficial to the community through the review process

Goal #4 – Promote Public Recreation and Access to the River as well as General Pedestrian Connectivity

- Objective 4.1 Pursue opportunities for grants and other financial resources that become available to expand public recreation access to the river and pedestrian facilities.
- Policy 4.1.1 The primary pedestrian path shall be recognized as Area (A), Walk to the River, and future public and private development shall be consistent with this design
- Policy 4.1.2 No public waterfront properties within Area (C), the Proposed Overlay District, shall be vacated or otherwise sold to private parties unless they are being assembled for a project that will provide public access to the river and promote general pedestrian connectivity and related facilities or unless such vacation will otherwise be deemed to be in the community's best interest and not detrimental to the goals and objectives of this plan.
- Objective 4.2 Pursue public/private agreements/partnerships and coordinate efforts to effectuate the overall Community Plan.
- Policy 4.2.1 The County shall encourage agreements with private property owners to enhance waterfront access in Area (C), the Proposed Overlay District.
- Policy 4.2.2 The County shall place a high priority on filling in gaps between sidewalk segments and providing future pedestrian access to the waterfront area in Area (A), Walk to the River. This will translate into the prioritization process of public projects as well as into any public/private partnerships or agreements.

Goal #5 – Preserve the Primary Design Features ~~Original Design Elements~~ of the 1886 Town Plat (not the lot density) as Practical

- Objective 5.1 Future development within Area (B), the Core Study Area, shall be consistent with the design of the underlying Town Plat of Old Homosassa as practical.
- Policy 5.1.1 Within Area (B), the Core Study Area, the County shall not approve the vacation of public roads or alleys unless the lands are being assembled for the purpose of a project that will clearly be consistent with the "Old Homosassa Area Redevelopment Plan", including but not limited to the original design of the underlying Town Plat as practical. This assurance shall necessitate a Planned Development Overlay/Master Plan approval by the Board of County Commissioners.

Policy 5.1.2 Any re-plat, minor subdivision or lot reconfiguration shall also be subject to consistency with the "Old Homosassa Area Redevelopment Plan", including but not limited to the underlying town plat as practical. Substantial modifications to lot lines shall necessitate a Planned Development Overlay/Master Plan approval by the Board of County Commissioners.

Goal #6 – Support the Commercial Fishing Industry

Objective 6.1 Encourage and maintain commercial fishing to protect the waterfront from incompatible development and to maintain the historic fishing culture of Old Homosassa.

Policy 6.1.1 Within Area (B), the Core Study Area, adverse impacts on existing commercial fishing operations shall be avoided by the adoption of land use standards applying to all proposed public and private development. The commercial fishing operation shall be given a higher priority by virtue of the stated objective.

Objective 6.2 Preserve the existing commercial fishing operations through public education and land use regulations.

Policy 6.2.1 Commercial fishing operations within Area (B), the Core Study Area, shall be protected from future incompatible land uses through specific buffering requirements that shall be imposed when adjoining properties are developed. Within one year of the adoption of the "Old Homosassa Area Redevelopment Plan", the Land Development Code shall be amended to provide specific setback/buffering/fencing requirements.

Policy 6.2.2 The County shall participate in education about the economic benefits, lifestyles, and environmental effects of commercial fishing through public displays, brochures, and other similar means.