

FINAL PROJECT REPORT

Bagdad Waterfronts Florida Partnership
(Blackwater River Foundation, Inc.)

August 2007

Prepared by: Joshua Wilks, Program Director
Bagdad Waterfronts Florida Partnership
(850) 485-0465; wilksjoshua@mchsi.com



This report funded in part, through a grant agreement from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Florida Coastal Management Program, by a grant provided by the Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management under the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Award No. NA06NOS4190129. The views, statements, findings, conclusions and recommendations 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. August 2007.



Executive Summary

In September 2005, the Department of Community Affairs designated the Village of Bagdad as a Waterfronts Florida Partnership community to focus on the areas of public access to the waterfront, hazard mitigation, economic revitalization, and environmental and cultural resource protection.

The primary goals of the Partnership were the following areas: 1.) public access to the waterfront; 2.) hazard mitigation; 3.) economic revitalization; and 4.) environmental and cultural resource protection.

With Santa Rosa County and DCA's assistance, participating Bagdad residents and stakeholders created a public involvement process for community planning through the Bagdad Waterfronts Florida Partnership program. The participants helped facilitate a vision plan process in July 2006 that is guiding community revitalization efforts within the Partnership and Santa Rosa County.

Principal Participants: The initial partners in the Partnership were DCA, Santa Rosa County, and the Blackwater River Foundation (the grant manager and program applicant).

Two years later, the participants include the following:

- Bagdad residents and property owners
- Santa Rosa County Planning and Zoning
- Santa Rosa County Special Projects and Grants
- Santa Rosa County Public Works
- Santa Rosa County Board of County Commissioners
- Bagdad Village Preservation Association
- Bagdad Architectural Advisory Board
- Florida Department of Environmental Protection
- Northwest Florida Water Management District
- Santa Rosa County Volunteer Center
- Main Street Milton, Inc.
- Bagdad United Methodist Church
- Santa Rosa Historical Society, Inc.
- Bagdad Cemetery Association, Inc.
- University of Florida-IFAS Extension
- University of West Florida
- University of South Alabama
- The Nature Conservancy
- Northwest Florida Aquatic Preserves
- Office of Greenways and Trails
- Blackwater Heritage Trail
- West Florida Regional Planning Council

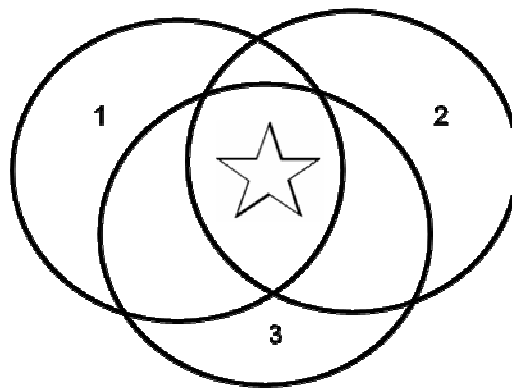
Methodology:

Consensus Decision-Making approach was adopted by the Steering Committee as the management procedure for decisions and Partnership efforts.

“Consensus process creates a cooperative dynamic. Only one the proposal is consider at a time. Everyone works together to make it the best possible decision for the group. Any concerns are raised and resolved, sometimes one by one, until all voices are heard. Since proposals are no longer the property of the presenter, a solution can be created more cooperatively.” (*On Conflict and Consensus: A Handbook on Formal Consensus Decisionmaking*. C.T. Lawrence Butler and Amy Rothstein. 1987-2004.)

Additionally, the “Three Rings to Success” approach was taken to organize the decision-making group. Anyone was welcome to participate and no one was turned away. The Steering Committee held 20 seats.

3 Rings to Success



- 1- Stakeholders – well known**
- 2- Stakeholders – not so well known**
- 3- Non-stakeholders, but have experience to assist**

Outreach methods have included postcards to all Bagdad property owners, public notices in newspaper, email notices, roadway signs, and flyers/posters throughout community.

Primary Goals and Objectives

As identified in the Bagdad Community Visioning Process – July 2006

During the month of July 2006, three community visioning meetings were held at the Bagdad Elementary School. The following are the goals and objectives later adopted for implementation by the Partnership and the Santa Rosa County Board of County Commissioners:

1. Environmental Resource Protection
 - a. Protect the quality of waterways surrounding the Village of Bagdad (Blackwater River, Pond Creek, and Oakland Basin)
 - b. Enhance and protect upland natural resources of the Village
 - c. Provide environmental education to Village residents and property owners
2. Cultural Resource Protection
 - a. Revise County Codes to clarify Historic Zoning District regulations for the purpose of protecting historic character and property values
 - b. Provide information to the community on the cultural resources unique to the Village of Bagdad
 - c. Identify archaeological resources in the area
3. Hazard Mitigation and Public Safety
 - a. Reduce crime in Bagdad
 - b. Relocate the Bagdad Firehouse out of the storm surge area.
 - c. Relocate overhead utility lines underground.
 - d. Improve traffic safety.
 - e. Improve the ability of the community to respond to and recover from hurricanes.
4. Public Access to the Waterfront
 - a. Develop the Mill Site Park as a passive park that capitalizes the area's unique resources and serves as a location for special events.
 - b. Improve Dorr's Fence Landing for use as a canoe and kayak launch area
 - c. Oyster Shell Pile Boat Landing
 - d. Continue to improve the Bagdad Ball Park as an active recreation area
5. Economic Revitalization
 - a. Create a tradition for the economy of Bagdad focused on small businesses that are compatible with the historic character of the village and capitalize on the recreation and natural resource of the area.
 - b. Enhance the historic character of the community with the use of streetscape improvements

Summary of Outcome and Impacts:

The outcome from an all-inclusive approach to community visioning and goal implementation resulted in continued growth of public involvement, public awareness and local government support.

The Partnership has created a good relationship with various Santa Rosa County government departments, various state agencies, and local civic organizations. Additionally, the Partnership has created a relationship with the West Florida Regional Planning Council, and currently holds a voting position on the regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee.

After two years of meetings, discussions, public comments, review of issues regarding Bagdad's revitalization as related with the focus areas of the program, the Steering Committee determined that the program should be continued past the grant cycle. The Steering Committee approved moving forward to incorporate as an individual not-for-profit organization that will focus on inclusive community participation – all meetings and activities open to anyone who wants to participate.

The results and accomplishments of the Bagdad Waterfronts Florida Partnership will be reported on an annual basis to the Department of Community Affairs and Santa Rosa County. Accomplishments will reviewed annually by the Partnership.

Program Accomplishments: *January 1, 2006 to August 2, 2007*

2006

January:

- Community meeting at the Bagdad Museum.

February

- Elected Steering Committee officers
- Established subcommittees and chairpersons
- Began discussion about Visioning Process

March

- Adopted operating procedures
- Established a calendar of meetings
- Developed a Community Outreach Procedure
- Met as subcommittees to develop area priority lists

April

- Began discussion of Neighborhood Watch program.
- Began discussing with Santa Rosa County possibility of Bagdad Heritage Trail.

May

- Began planning for the Bagdad Front Porch Art Stroll
- Began preparing for Visioning Workshops
- Established welcome sign committee

June

- Approved moving forward advertising the visioning workshops
- Distributed door tags throughout Bagdad about program and workshops
- Mailed out postcards to all property owners about workshops
- Requested to Public Works that Bagdad Heritage Landmark sign be replaced to north of Pond Creek bridge. Sign was moved for more visibility.

July

- Established a Community Award Program committee
- Conducted Vision Process

August

- Mill Site Park visioning workshop
- Vision Plan was approved by the Board of County Commissioners.

September

- Began development of a Vision Action Plan
- Program Success Evaluation Procedure
- Established a Neighborhood Watch planning group

October

- Requested a representative to serve on Florida-Alabama Transportation Planning Organization's Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee. Voting position was approved.
- Economic Revitalization/Public Safety subcommittees recommended temporary traffic calming remedies such as a school zone caution light placed on Garcon Point Road, and a stop sign placed at the three-way intersection in front of the Bagdad Elementary School. The committee began gathering signatures for a petition to the Board of County Commissioners.
- Met with Santa Rosa County crime prevention officers about forming a Neighborhood Watch Program and were furnished a packet of "start-up" materials.

- Established a Neighborhood Watch, in collaboration with National Make a Difference Day.
- Initiated Town Hall meeting; passed out flyers and door tags.
- Initiated the Bagdad Community Urban Forestry Program
- Established incorporation committee to develop future plans for *Partnership*

November

- Sewer expansion began construction
- Began discussion of establishing a non-profit corporation to continue the Partnership's efforts once grant cycle ends.
- Santa Rosa County applied for a grant to create the Bagdad Heritage Trail to connect Bagdad with Milton's Blackwater Heritage Trail.
- Fishing line recycling bins were installed at boat landings in Bagdad.
- Community Award Program Beautification award was given to Carey Allen.
- Santa Rosa County repaired sidewalks in Bagdad in response to a request by the Partnership.

2007

January

- Established and celebrated an Arbor Day celebration in Bagdad.
- A group of Partnership members visited St. Andrews, Fla.
- Uploaded a Waterfronts Partnership website.

February

- Held Neighborhood Watch meeting and safety workshop
- Presented Lighting Program idea to 37 attendees.

March

- Hosted a Volunteer Reception Center training workshop at the Bagdad Community Center.
- Met with the West Florida Historic Preservation, Inc. to discuss ideas for economic revitalization focusing on historic preservation and ecotourism.
- Defined "Bagdad Limits" for Santa Rosa County and requested Bagdad community signs. Within two weeks, Santa Rosa County installed Bagdad community signs at those boundary lines.
- Approved the Bagdad Vision Plan Action Plan that the *Partnership* developed to guide implementation of the Bagdad Vision Plan.

April

- Moved forward with non-profit designation.
- Adopted “Ollinger & Bruce Shipyard Trail” site from Northwest Florida Water Management District.
- Hosted Earth Day Great American Cleanup, clearing Trail park site, clearing trail, and assisting with derelict boat removal from Bagdad waterfront.

May

- Hosted Statewide Waterfronts Florida Partnership quarterly meeting.
- Hosted a Bagdad Native Tree Workshop.

June

- Established informal group to plan future of Partnership.
- On recommendation by Partnership, Public Works Department painted no-passing stripes along Forsyth and Church streets in Bagdad to calm traffic.
- On recommendation by Partnership, Public Works Department created a three-way stop at the intersection of Forsyth Street and Garcon Point Road.

July

- A consultant was hired to update Bagdad Historic District’s Land Development Code. This process was initiated by Santa Rosa County because of the results of the Partnership’s visioning process July 2007.
- State of Florida funded a consultant to perform an engineering assessment of the Bagdad Mill Site retaining wall. (still in process)
- Installed welcome sign posts and purchased welcome signs.
- University of West Florida’s biology department began conducting a vegetation survey of Bagdad’s waterfront.

August

- Developed Property Owner survey.
- Completed architectural survey of the historic district.

Initial Goals and Objectives not accomplished:

The initial goals and objectives in the Partnership’s 2007 workplan that were not achieved:

| <u>Goal/Objective</u> | <u>Reason not achieved</u> |
|--|---|
| <p>Cultural Resource Protection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Prepare an “oral history” of the Village by interviewing longtime area residents. | <p><i>The projected date to begin an oral history project was October 2006. The reasoning for the project not pursuing was due to a lack of involvement of the Cultural Resource Protection subcommittee. The subcommittee could not move beyond zoning discussions that dominated meetings. Participation dwindled and the Steering Committee approved this subcommittee meeting for special issues on a biannual or as-needed basis only.</i></p> |
| <p>Public Access to the Waterfront:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Identify Dorr’s Fence Landing as canoe and kayak launch area | <p><i>The Steering Committee recommended to Santa Rosa County for its designation, but a neighbor to the boat landing objected to its designation and the Marine Advisory Board did not approve the recommendation to date.</i></p> |
| <p>Hazard Mitigation and Public Safety:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Create and implement a community lighting plan. | <p><i>The community lighting program was initiated by the Partnership through the Bagdad Neighborhood Watch group. The lighting program was not pursued due to lack of participation in meetings related to the lighting program. The Partnership intends to pursue the lighting program in the near future.</i></p> |

Further Recommendations:

There is a need for continued technical assistance from DCA and Santa Rosa County. The need for more public involvement is crucial if the Bagdad Waterfronts Florida Partnership intends to continue using subcommittees for each program focus area. Recommendations include inviting more participants/stakeholders to serve on the Steering Committee. Two representatives for each focus area (equaling 10 positions) and the rest Bagdad residents (equaling 10 positions). This would equal 20 voting positions in all.

Since the Blackwater River Foundation is a private foundation not open to general membership, the Steering Committee decided to work toward establishing a separate entity focused on the areas of Waterfronts Florida concerns that would be inclusive -- open to general membership so anyone interested in participating could join its efforts. A public foundation would be eligible for charitable grants and donations that could help the Partnership pursue projects identified by the community targeting the focus areas. This opportunity was explained by Dr. Michael Conrad at the Nov. 2, 2006, steering committee meeting. Dr. Conrad explained that this model has been used by other Waterfronts Florida Partnership communities. In May 2007, the steering committee approved a special committee move forward with incorporation of a 501(c)(3) organization. The current steering committee can join as a board member of the organization.

The new organization, Bagdad Waterfronts Florida Partnership, Inc. will move forward with the implementation phase of the Waterfronts Florida Partnership program.