

Vision Plan For Eau Gallie Riverfront

A Waterfronts Florida Community



Melbourne, Florida
July 2004

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For
Eau Gallie Riverfront
A Waterfronts Florida Community**

Prepared for:
**Eau Gallie Riverfront Community Redevelopment Agency
Advisory Committee/Waterfronts Florida Partnership
Committee**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The community, in response to the area's Waterfronts Florida Partnership designation created this Vision Plan for the Olde Eau Gallie Riverfront of the City of Melbourne. The Vision Plan is intended to supplement the Olde Eau Gallie Riverfront Urban Infill and Community Redevelopment Plan, not to replace the plan. Items from the Redevelopment Plan were blended with new ideas for the area to create the Vision Plan.

The Vision Plan highlights the following:

1. History of the area.
2. Description of the area.
3. How the vision was developed.
4. Visions and goals the community has for the area.
5. Potential funding sources of projects.

The focus of the plan is on the development of the waterfront and the surrounding area. The water is the primary asset in Eau Gallie, thereby, maintaining public access to the water and creating additional areas for the public to enjoy the water is a large part of the vision. The community recognizes the economic development of the surrounding area may be maximized by the connectivity of the water to the urban core.

This plan is intended to present a long-range strategy for positive change in the Olde Eau Gallie riverfront area, not as a commandment of items to accomplish. The strategies represent a partnership between the City, the community and private business. Conditions of the area have the potential to change and the plan is intended to respond and work within the parameters of change in a fluid and dynamic manner. Presently, there is no programmed funding or a specific timeline for the projects, and each project will need approval by City Council/CRA as they are prioritized and funding is identified.

History

The Eau Gallie Waterfronts Florida Community has a long, intimate association with the Indian River Lagoon/Eau Gallie River Basin. The first settlement was established in 1859 when John C. Houston received an 80-acre homestead on the north shore of the Eau Gallie River.¹ The late 19th Century saw early development in Eau Gallie. In the 1870s, A.G. Hill and H.R. Olmstead opened stores. Steamers frequented Eau Gallie. Aaron Bennett opened a boatyard in 1896.² “Before the railroad came in 1893, the main means of passenger and cargo transport to Indian River towns was by steamer.”³

From those earliest days, the Indian River Lagoon has provided economic and recreational benefits to the inhabitants of Eau Gallie. Early pictures show fishermen with large numbers of fish reaching four foot in length. Today one sees fishermen and “shrimpers” camped out on the Eau Gallie Causeway.

Commercial river traffic has declined, but recreational vehicles, both powered and sailboats, fill the river today. Weekend crowds cover the lagoon with people and boats. Sailboat races are seen up and down the river.

As Eau Gallie grew, it became a community center. In the 1920’s and 1930’s, visitors flocked to the Oleander Hotel, which graced the banks of the Indian River just north of the wooden Eau Gallie Bridge. A local poster in 1935 lists an array of community activities celebrating George Washington’s birthday. Crowds of residents and visitors marked Washington’s birthday at the corner of Pineapple and Eau Gallie Boulevard with fish fries, horseshoe and shuffle board contests, girls’ and men’s athletic events. There were Baby Parades and political speeches. A dance at the Eau Gallie Yacht Club capped the activities.⁴

Eau Gallie joined with the City of Melbourne in 1969, retaining its neighborhood title of Eau Gallie. Reacting to low economic conditions, high crime, and undesirable conditions in the late 1990s, the citizens of the Eau Gallie Community banded together to work with the City of Melbourne to restore a sense of community and revitalize its waterfront community ambiance of earlier times.⁵

The force of the community effort helped to create a Community Redevelopment Area in 2000 and a designation as a member of the Waterfronts Florida Partnership Plan in 2003. This plan is directed toward identifying and implementing the vision for the community that was developed during town meetings and inputs made to the Redevelopment Advisory Committee and the Waterfronts Florida Committee and subsequent deliberations of the Waterfronts Committee⁶.

¹ *The Melbourne Bicentennial Book*, Noreda B. McKemy & Elaine Murray Stone, eds., (Melbourne, 1976) 3.

² *Melbourne and Eau Gallie*, Karen Raley & Anne Raley Flotte, Arcadia Publishing, 2002, PG 15.

³ *Ibid.* Pg 19.

⁴ *Ibid.*, PG 75.

⁵ See the Olde Eau Gallie Riverfront Urban Infill & Community Redevelopment Plan, Brad Smith Associates, Inc. & Hunter Interests, Inc. (hereafter referred to as the Smith/Hunter Plan), pp 10-15.

⁶ The CRA Advisory Committee has assumed the role of the Waterfronts Committee as many of the goals and objectives derive from a common vision for the area for both CRA and Waterfront Community.

The Area

The heart of the community is the Eau Gallie Riverfront Cultural Center that features the Brevard Museum of Art and Science, the Brevard Symphony Orchestra House, the Eau Gallie Civic Center, the Eau Gallie Public Library, Pineapple Park and the Eau Gallie Pier, the Rossetter House Museum and the Square. The Square (unofficially known as the Eau Gallie Square) was a gathering place in the 1920's and 1930's for community festivals.

The surrounding commercial establishments, which are to the south and west of the core area, are an important neighborhood element. Our vision includes restoring the Eau Gallie pier to its former place of importance in community activities. The vision also includes establishing a riverwalk to give the public better access to the wonders of the Indian River Lagoon. The riverwalk, along with a series of crosswalks, traffic calming devices, and street scaping are planned to connect the ecological, cultural, residential, and service sections of the district together.

The southern region of the Eau Gallie Waterfront Community has elements that reflect the area's early beginnings. The Saint John's Episcopal Church was organized in 1890. The Eau Gallie Yacht Club (now a private residence) was completed in 1911. The John Houston house was built in 1859 and purchased in 1903 by a Standard Oil regional manager named James Rossetter. The house, now known as the Rossetter House, was donated to the Florida Historical Society, and is planned to operate as a museum.

The Eau Gallie Yacht Basin was established in 1896 and further developed in 1920. An operating marina is now on the site of the Yacht Basin. The marina and Ballard Park (across the river) provide recreational opportunities associated with the Eau Gallie River.

The vision is to preserve the historical elements of the southern section so that it supports the cultural heritage of Eau Gallie and to enhance the water elements so that they may be integrated into overall activities that focus on the outstanding water resources present.

Developing the Vision

The current Eau Gallie Waterfronts Community vision originated with the Smith/Hunter⁷ study commissioned by the City of Melbourne. The study resulted from public concern over conditions in the Eau Gallie neighborhood. The effort was described as “ a partnership between the City [Melbourne], the consultant team, and the public. Per the City’s direction, the study was “publicly driven and defined” and a “grass-roots, bottom-up approach.”⁸

There were a series of public workshops and meetings of a steering committee composed of interested citizens, homeowners, and local business owners. The committee identified issues, derived a vision reflecting the desired direction of efforts, and, finally, articulated goals and objectives to guide redevelopment.⁹

The public/City interactive activities produced City actions in law and code enforcement. A City Council Resolution¹⁰ established a formal Community Redevelopment Area. The Council appointed a citizen/business Community Redevelopment Area Advisory Committee (hereafter referred to as The Committee) to ensure efforts remained grass roots, citizen centered.

The Committee began regular monthly meetings using Smith/Hunter as a playbook. The Committee quickly realized that the waterfront is essential in revitalizing the Eau Gallie Community. Historically, the river provided communication/transportation activities that welded the community together.

The Committee, through the City, commissioned development of a Riverfront Development Area Master Plan. Envisioned was retaining/enhancing the Eau Gallie Square area provide a catalyst for Eau Gallie neighborhood development.

The concept of enhancing public access and interest in the river is promoted with a Riverwalk. The Riverwalk skirts the shoreline by the Library/Pineapple Park, extends into the Indian River Lagoon, passes under the Eau Gallie Causeway and ends near a Department of Transportation retention pond that, hopefully, will be transformed into ecological interest point.

A second concept is renovation of the existing pier to allow public celebrations at the location, as well as providing a daily recreation spot for fishing and boating.

The purpose of these improvements is to provide a pleasant, small town gathering area to draw people to the area, support recreational/community activities, and spark commercial development commensurate with the community environment created.

The desire to retain the area’s small community atmosphere led the Committee to also consider promoting an artist neighborhood to enhance and compliment the role of the Brevard Museum of Art & Science, a key asset in the community.

⁷ *Eau Gallie Riverfront Urban Infill and Community Redevelopment Plan*, Brad Smith Associates, Inc., and Hunter Interests, Inc., 2001. Subsequently, “Smith/Hunter.”

⁸ Smith/Hunter, p 8.

⁹ Ibid, pp 16, 39.

¹⁰ Melbourne City Council Resolution No. 1657, September 2000.

Vision and Goals

The vision developed by the public through the auspices of the Smith/Hunter study states:

Old Eau Gallie is a charming, thriving place, with its centerpieces being:

- *A unique riverfront environment*
- *An economically viable marketplace, and*
- *Cultural and historic areas*

It is a place where people want to live, work, and play for many generations to come.¹¹

Building on the original vision, based on Waterfront Committee deliberations with direct public input, a Waterfront's vision may be articulated as follows:

- Further develop the unique riverfront environment of Old Eau Gallie to support public, cultural, historic, and economic purposes

In support of this vision, the following goals, objectives, and strategies were developed:

GOAL A: IMPROVE AND INCREASE PUBLIC USE OF THE AREA AND ACCESS TO THE WATER

Objective 1: Improve Pineapple Park and the Eau Gallie Pier.

Strategy 1: Redesign and rebuild the Eau Gallie Pier (subject to obtaining permitting, easements and funding) to enable dockage for:

- Fishing
- Boat tie-ups
- Public activities using the pier.
- Encourage environmental tours of the lagoon employing the pier facility.

Strategy 2: Redesign and renovate Pineapple Park.

Strategy 3: Renovate and add sidewalks to:

- Link the park and the pier.
- Border the lagoon and link with the River Walk. (See objective 2)
- Facilitate creating a linear park.

Strategy 4: Replace existing light poles/add more poles for appearance and safety.

Strategy 5: Add new benches, picnic tables, trash receptacles, pavilions, and playground equipment to the park. Add benches and trash receptacles between the park and the pier.

Strategy 6: Add new/additional landscaping in the park and along the sidewalk.

Strategy 7: Add an entry node to the pier, which at a minimum would contain benches landscaping, and trash receptacles.

¹¹ *Eau Gallie Riverfront Urban Infill and Community Redevelopment Plan*, Brad Smith Associates, Inc., and Hunter Interests, Inc., 2001.

Strategy 8: Construct an observation deck at the east end of Pineapple Park.

Objective 2: Construct a Riverwalk.

Strategy 1: Design/build a riverwalk to encompass the area from Pineapple Park to the south side of the Causeway beyond the Department of Transportation retention pond, subject to obtaining the proper easements, permitting and funding.

Strategy 2: Plan for an extension of the riverwalk along the south perimeter of the community to link north and south and support a linear park.

Strategy 3: Continue historical signage in the area along the riverwalk at strategic points.

Strategy 4: Add interpretive signs to describe native flora and fauna.

Objective 3: Improve the Eau Gallie Causeway Recreation Area.

Strategy 1: Take measures to upgrade the recreation area.

- Clean up current landscaping.
- Add new, native landscaping to enhance the recreation area.
- Work with Brevard County to upgrade the boat launching facility of the recreation area.

Strategy 2: Improve/expand the passageway under the Causeway to make it more accessible, usable, and safe and tie it to the recreation area.

- Refurbish the passageway.
- Add lighting.
- Provide fishing stations.
- Add landscaping to upgrade the area.

Objective 4: Improve the Park at the end of Houston Street.

Strategy 1: Construct a new sea wall to improve and preserve the shoreline.

Strategy 2: Add new benches & trash receptacle.

Strategy 3: Add a pathway and bike trail to link to the proposed linear park.

Objective 5: Improve the public area at the east end of Young Street.

Objective 6: Improve Ballard Park.

Strategy 1: Support the proposed construction of an interactive water park (20' x 20') behind current playground equipment.

Strategy 2: Provide lighting on poles with receptacles at the base of the poles.

Strategy 3: Replace picnic tables, benches and trash receptacles.

Strategy 4: Provide signs indicating linkage with the linear park.

Objective 7: Improve the Causeway Entryway into the City.

Strategy 1: Build signage and/or a “gateway” that will help identify the Eau Gallie historical neighborhood.

Strategy 2: Landscape the Causeway similar to the Melbourne Causeway.

GOAL B: MAINTAIN/ENRICH COMMUNITY CULTURAL RESOURCES

Objective 1: Expand cultural activities incorporating the sciences, performing arts, environmental education/activities and other activities of cultural development

Strategy 1: Improve Eau Gallie Square to make it a location/destination for cultural events in accordance with the FCT Management Plan.

- Build a pavilion for presentations/performances, as a gathering place.
- Enhance the landscaping with natural Florida vegetation.
- Provide pathways in the square.
- Provide benches, trash receptacles and a bike rack.
- Place appropriate lighting for evening use, security.

Strategy 2: Construct an interactive fountain and amphitheater in the Riverfront Cultural Center, subject to obtaining proper permitting, easements, and funding.

Strategy 3: Support the Brevard Museum of Art and Science in maintaining/enhancing its stature as a major cultural attractor.

Strategy 4: Promote cultural activities and integrate the facilities/resources in support of those activities (Museums, Library, Civic Center, Eau Gallie Square, Brevard Symphony).

GOAL C: ENCOURAGE COMMERCIAL/RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Objective 1: Use public/private partnerships to promote economic opportunities.

Strategy 1: Use agencies such as the Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Council, and the City of Melbourne planning staff to bring selected commercial enterprises into the area.

- Promote the infill of businesses that support the vision for the area.
- Especially encourage development of ecological oriented/friendly businesses.

Strategy 2: Consider tax incentives through CRA funds to businesses that enhance the vision of the Riverfront Cultural Center.

Strategy 3: Expand the CRA.

Objective 2: Encourage development of adequate lodging for visitors and tourists.

Strategy 1: Develop policies to encourage Bed & Breakfast and other lodging facilities that retain the appropriate scale for the area.

Strategy 2: Conduct an inventory/publicize existing tourist locations and lodging.

Objective 3: Encourage mixed use projects that incorporate retail, office and residential uses within the same structure or site.

Strategy 1: Support facilities that incorporate retail/office/ residential in a scale appropriate to the area.

Strategy 2: Consider artistic “working” residences.

Objective 4: Establish/Maintain architectural standards consistent with the historical, cultural nature of the region.

Strategy 1: Develop/define/refine architectural standards for the area.

Strategy 2: Monitor the conversion of housing stock to office or professional uses in order to maintain the architectural standards and quality residential component near the urban core.

Objective 5: Develop a pedestrian friendly community.

Strategy 1: Create a high quality pedestrian (including bike paths) linkage between living, working, and recreational areas of the district.

- Create paths/sidewalks with paving, lights, and landscaping for easy, comfortable travel where needed.

Strategy 2: Specifically improve/repair existing sidewalks; add sidewalks in Pineapple Park and the Eau Gallie Square, and the residential area south of Montreal (where desired).

Strategy 3: Construct distinct crosswalks at the following intersections:

- Highland Avenue and Eau Gallie Blvd.
- Highland Avenue and Montreal Avenue
- Pineapple Avenue and Eau Gallie Blvd.
- Pineapple Avenue and Montreal Avenue

Strategy 4: Construct traffic calming devices on Pineapple Avenue to include a raised walkway between the Brevard Museum of Art & Science parking area and the Pineapple Park/Eau Gallie Library.

Strategy 5: Obtain easements as necessary for extending sidewalks, streetscape and pedestrian areas.

GOAL D: IMPROVE AND INCREASE PARKING

Objective 1: Purchase lands for creation of public parking lots or structures, integrating private and public cooperative financing mechanisms and partnerships.

Objective 2: Extend on street parking for use in commercial and residential areas for additional and/or traffic calming.

Strategy 1: Analyze downtown parking allowing narrower parking spaces in public lots and on-street parking.

Strategy 2: Change parallel parking spaces to angled parking on the east side of Highland between Eau Gallie Blvd. and Bud Yeager, on the north side of Bud Yeager adjacent to Eau Gallie Square, and Highland Avenue across from the Eau Gallie Civic Center.

Strategy 3: Ease Parking Requirements as Incentive.

- Research parking requirements for new business in the redevelopment area to encourage new business.
- Review retention pond requirement in the redevelopment area.

GOAL E: ENSURE ADEQUATE TRANSPORTATION IN THE AREA

Objective 1: Provide traffic control/calming

Strategy: Commission a traffic study with the purpose of:

- Streamlining traffic flow
- Creating pedestrian friendly traffic calming
- Considers parking needs

Objective 2: Enhance public transportation

Strategy: Work with Brevard County to ensure the Space Coast Area Transit system services the area.

GOAL F: IMPROVE THE INFRASTRUCTURE

Objective 1: Employ environmentally sensitive practices to improve the infrastructure

Strategy 1: Create stormwater parks when installing master stormwater retrofitting improvements.

Strategy 2: Connect public and private open space through linear parks and greenways where possible.

Strategy 3: Provide shoreline stabilization and stormwater improvements to enhance the Indian River Lagoon.

Strategy 4: Regrade the roads in the south area to alleviate stormwater runoff problems.

Objective 2: Manage Utility Line Installation.

Strategy 1: Ensure the location/installation of utility lines (water, sewer, and stormwater) serves public/private needs with minimum adverse environment and appearance impacts.

Strategy 2: Upgrade existing utility lines (sewer, water, and stormwater) as necessary to meet current and projected needs.

GOAL G: RETAIN/PROMOTE EAU GALLIE'S HERITAGE

Objective 1: Encourage preservation/rehabilitation of structures with architectural, historic or aesthetic significance.

Strategy 1: Promote incentives and programs which cause the rehabilitation of historic and architecturally significant buildings within the area.

Strategy 2: Review the historic survey and encourage owners to place sites/structures on the National register.

Strategy 3: Obtain Historic District designation for at least a part of the area.

Objective 2: Ensure significant places/events are identified with historical markers

Strategy 1: Ensure preservation of the current historical markers.

Strategy 2: Promote creation of additional historical markers in the community.

Strategy 3: Expand upon the current Boy Scout project of restoring/repairing the historical markers.

Objective 3: Develop the Eau Gallie Gateway

Strategy 1: Use landscaped, monolithic ceramic and mosaic sculptures and signage to depict historically researched stories.

Strategy 2: Develop self guided walking tours and guided group tours to educate on and showcase the area's heritage (for instance, partner with the Brevard Heritage Council and/or Florida Historical Society to create walking tours)

Objective 4: Develop/implement a marketing/promotion plan that integrates the area into the Florida Greenway and Trails system and the Indian River Lagoon Scenic Highway program

FUNDING THE VISION

The following are suggestions identified by the Vision Work Group:

- Apply for other grants or loans to implement the Plan.
- Use the Olde Eau Gallie Community Redevelopment Agency funds to pay for improvements/create financially based incentive programs for property and business enhancements.
- Create an historic property inventory through survey and planning grants, leading to the creation of an Historic District
- Department of Transportation funds