

FINAL REPORT FOR THE CITY OF FORT WALTON BEACH

August 2007

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Executive Summary

The City of Fort Walton Beach was designated a Waterfronts Florida community for the period of 2005 – 2007. During this period, the Fort Walton Beach Waterfronts Committee (WFPC) created *Charting the Course – The Fort Walton Beach Waterfronts Vision Plan*. In addition to the plan, the Waterfronts Florida Partnership Committee has completed projects listed in the plan such as:

First year of grant - “Drains to Bay” stencils, participating in Earth Day,

Second year of grant – Creating Welcome to Fort Walton Beach signage, a master plan for Liza Jackson Park, and funding through DCA Waterfronts for the studies at the Landing Park for the Fort Walton Beach Visitors Dock.

Methodology

The Fort Walton Beach Waterfronts Florida Partnership Committee took great strides to make sure that the public was involved in each step of creating the Waterfront Vision Plan. During both years of the grant period, the WFPC held public meetings, as well as the program manager speaking at various neighborhood and civic meetings (Chamber of Commerce First Friday breakfast, engineering club, etc). For projects in public space, such as Liza Jackson Park, the program manager went back to neighborhood meetings to get input on what adjacent neighborhoods would like to see at the park – to include in the Master Plan. The WFPC invited speakers to their monthly meetings on topics such as mooring fields, temporary docking facilities, and master planning.

Once *Charting the Course – Fort Walton Beach Waterfront Vision Plan* was complete, the committee prioritized projects. From this prioritization list, the committee researched topics like permitting and funding for projects. The program manager and committee referred to the Vision Plan quite frequently to make sure that the short term projects were being addressed.

The program manager has outlined what projects, to date, have been completed and if not completed, where the project stands. This will help each department in the City focus on the projects from this time into the future. The committee and staff will continue to rely on the Vision Plan for guidance and will update that plan accordingly.

Outcome

The WFPC has been able to fully complete some projects. Examples would be installing the “Drains to Bay” stencils (first year), having waterway signage made (with City installation – second year), a master plan of Liza Jackson Park completed (second year), a letter to Fish and Wildlife from the mayor (second year), and researching funding options for the Fort Walton Beach Visitors Dock (second year). During the second year, the program manager assisted in building an oyster reef to improve water quality in local

waters. The program participated in the Earth Day program, during the first year of the program, making natural bird feeders.

To say this program and the committee has been a success would be an understatement. The committee has offered two plans to the City – *Charting the Course – Fort Walton Beach Waterfront Vision Plan* and the Master Plan for Liza Jackson Park (short and long term). These master plans can be utilized to apply for grant monies to complete the actual projects of either plan. In addition, the plans can be used by City departments for future budgeting purposes.

Further Recommendations

There were many lessons learned along this two year voyage. The first recommendation that the program manager would suggest is to make the committee separate from the City. Having a committee appointed by City Council can cause problems such as the necessity of a quorum and strict adherence to the Sunshine Law as well as Robert's Rules of Order. In addition, each step of the project has to be approved which takes a great deal of time. For example, the committee sends a recommendation to council. If there are grants to be applied for, that has to be approved by council – if the grant is received, the receipt of the grant has to be approved by council, if applications are required (for permitting, etc) – it has to be approved by council, etc.

The second lesson that the program manager learned was to have City officials (ex: City Council) active from the beginning of the grant period. Since the projects must go through City Council, it would be advantageous to have them integrated into the decision making at the committee level.