



HIDDEN TREASURE: Fourmile Creek Waterfront Vision Plan



VISION PLAN SUBMITTAL JUNE 2012



A COOPERATIVE EFFORT BY CITY OF FREEPORT AND WALTON COUNTY

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SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION

The Waterfronts Florida Program was established by the Florida Coastal Management Program in 1997 to assist communities in revitalization and promotion of their waterfronts. Historically, Florida waterfronts have been tremendous assets to their communities, with a host of historical commercial activities such as shipping and commercial fishing. However, because of societal changes, advancements in technology, and conversion from commercial to residential uses, some commercial waterfronts have experienced economic decline, deterioration, and neglect. In order to address these issues, the Waterfronts Florida Program encourages the preservation of water-dependent and water-related land uses and requires each community accepted into the program to work toward four major goals: environmental and cultural resource protection, public access to the waterfront, retention of traditional waterfront economies, and hazard mitigation.

In 2010 the City of Freeport and Walton County were selected to pilot a new process for the Waterfronts Florida Program, requiring three basic steps prior to receiving designation. The three steps that are required include 1) Obtaining buy-in and support from the community including elected officials, 2) Building a Waterfronts Florida Partnership local organization that includes stakeholders from the community, and 3) Completion of a vision and implementation plan that details future improvements and timelines within the Vision Plan Boundaries. This vision plan serves to complete the final step in the Freeport Waterfronts Florida designation process. After receiving the designation the City of Freeport will continue to receive technical assistance and support as a graduate program through the Waterfronts Florida Partnership network.

The physical boundaries of the proposed waterfront program area are outlined on the aerial map identified as **Figure 1** (p.8). The primary water boundaries are on Fourmile Creek from the turn basin near the bridge Bay Loop Road to a downstream distance of 1.8 miles where it terminates just south of Marina Village Subdivision. The water boundaries on Lafayette Creek extend from SR-20 to a downstream distance of approximately one (1) mile where it intersects with Fourmile Creek at the newly constructed Fourmile Creek Park. The City of Freeport has designated Latilda Henninger as program manager and will utilize the City of Freeport Planning Commission along with a stakeholder board for support and public input from the community. The development of the program evolved through community input and vision goals that were realized through a series of interactive public meetings. The final vision plan will be utilized as a roadmap to reach implementation of projects defined in the goals, objectives, and strategies developed through the interactive vision plan development process.

ORGANIZATION OF THE FOURMILE CREEK WATERFRONT VISION PLAN

This plan is divided into seven sections and an appendix that describes the background conditions of the Fourmile Creek Waterfront Program Area. The plan provides a Vision and Mission Statement, sets forth goals, objectives, and strategies; outlines recommended programs and projects; and establishes a prioritized implementation plan.

Section 1, Introduction

Section one describes the Waterfronts Florida Program and sets the stage for the subsequent sections. This section provides a brief history of the Freeport community then describes the timeline for development of the community involvement.

Section 2, Vision and Mission Statement

Section two sets forth the vision and mission statement for the plan that was formulated based on public input and the results of interactive stakeholder surveys.

Section 3, Planning for the Fourmile Creek Community

Section three is a compilation of the planning documents that have been approved and adopted by the City of Freeport and Walton County that are relevant to the Fourmile Creek Waterfront Program Area and the Waterfronts Florida Program goals. A brief summary of the purpose of each planning document is provided, along with the status of the recommendations from the documents. This section also includes a summary of the public participation activities that have taken place to gain input into the Fourmile Creek Waterfront Vision Plan since the first public meetings were held.

Section 4, Goals, Objectives and Strategies

Section four sets forth the goals, objectives, and strategies of the plan. These strategies were developed based on comments from the public workshops and input from stakeholders that attended meetings and responded to questionnaires. These goals, objectives, and strategies are presented within the framework of the four Waterfronts Florida Program priority goals - environmental and cultural resource protection, public access to the waterfront, retention of traditional waterfront economies or economic restructuring, and hazard mitigation. The objectives and strategies form the basis for the programs and projects recommended in Section 5, as well as the implementation plan established in Section 6 of this plan.

Section 5, Recommended Programs and Projects

Section five identifies programs and projects, as well as potential partners and funding sources that will implement the goals, objectives and strategies set forth in Section four. These programs and projects are described in as much detail as possible to ensure that readers of the plan can understand the reasoning for their inclusion in the plan and the steps that are required throughout the process to fully implement the program or project.

Section 6, Implementation Plan

Section six prioritizes the action steps that are needed to implement the programs and projects recommended in Section five in an orderly and fiscally responsible manner. The implementation plan identifies starting and ending years for the programs and projects for ten years, beginning with fiscal year 2012/2013 and continuing out to fiscal year 2022/2023.

Section 7, Acknowledgements

Section seven provides acknowledgement to the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity for the funding provided for the pilot program as well as recognition of the stakeholders and elected officials that provided input and support through the visioning process and follow up discussions.

Appendix

The Appendix includes more detailed information that is referenced in Sections 1 to 6 of the Vision Plan including: a listing of specific objectives and policies in the Walton County Comprehensive Plan that relate to the Fourmile Creek Waterfronts Florida Program Area; relevant maps of the Fourmile Creek community vulnerabilities to hazards as identified in the Walton County Post-Disaster Redevelopment Plan; material from the previous three (3) Community Visioning Workshops held in 2012 to establish priorities for the vision plan; and a funding sources matrix that lists details about current sources of funding for the programs and projects recommended in the plan.



THE VIBRANT HISTORY OF FOURMILE CREEK & FREEPORT WATERFRONT COMMUNITY

Settlement in the Freeport area started about 1830 when settlers were attracted to the natural harbor of LaGrange Bayou located near the eastern end of Choctawhatchee Bay and the mouth of the Choctawhatchee River. The protected waters of the bay provided safe harbor during storms and the waterfront areas had an abundance of wild game and fish. Freeport was first known as “Genoa” and later “Four Mile Landing”. During the Civil War, Four Mile Landing began to be referred to as “Freeport”, literally because there was no charge to dock at the port area at the junction of Four Mile Creek and LaFayette Creek. Another locally circulated story is that at some point in that time period, an unclaimed shipment of wine was discovered in the port area and everyone in the area was encouraged to come have a little “free port”. The primary attractions for the expansive community included access to local doctors, jobs related to the timber sawmills, an abundance of water from artesian wells, and export related jobs for raw materials headed west to Pensacola.

Freeport remains home for many the founding families who first settled in this area. In the 1850 census, most of the heads of household were listed as farmer or boatmen. Many of the residents farmed their land and fished in the down-time or worked the commercial fishing boats and cargo vessels. The farmers traded their farm produce and livestock for other items they could not grow or make for themselves. The Fourmile Creek and Lafayette Creek basins were popular areas for trade between farmers to the north and waterfront settlers to the south. Large numbers of settlers migrated to the area with the establishment of the lumber mills which were a primary source of income for many of the first settlers to the area. The current Fourmile Creek Park site is where the largest lumber mill was constructed and also home to the famous artesian well that still flows today. The various “landings” were named for the families that settled along LaGrange Bayou, Four Mile Creek, Black Creek and the Choctawhatchee River.

For many years, Freeport, with its steamboat and schooner connections to Pensacola, and up the Choctawhatchee River to Geneva, Alabama was the commercial and “political hub” of Walton County. The first mail delivered in the county came by water from Pensacola to Freeport, and an overland stagecoach route from Tallahassee connected with steamboat service near Freeport. Most of the goods ordered from Pensacola were freighted from Freeport by commercially operated wagon trains which followed the route leading northeast from Freeport through the Euchee Valley to the town of Cerro Gordo on the Choctawhatchee River above Westville. Following Reconstruction (post-Civil War), the lumbering and naval stores industries became important. Mills were built along waterways as they had to depend on water transportation. In 1918, the Valparaiso Development Company purchased land at Freeport for the North and South Farms where sugarcane and other timber products were shipped to Pensacola by water and then headed north by rail to Chicago and other northern Cities.

Today the Freeport Shipyard, Cemex Operations, and Murphy Oil Depot are the dominant features in the original port area at the juncture of Four Mile Creek and LaFayette Creek at the head of LaGrange Bayou. In addition, the recent development of the Fisherman’s Boatyard that boasts an eighty (80) ton travel lift and capacity for haul-out of vessels up to seventy-five (75) feet have enhanced economic opportunities in the area. The completion of the Fourmile Creek Park improvements with new boatramps, mooring docks, and other amenities has drawn attention to the area from crowds that were unaware of this hidden treasure. Many of the current residents work on Eglin Air Force Base as military contractors or civil service, but most work “south of the Bay” in South Walton County either in county employment, construction, or in one of the service industries associated with the tourist trade of that area. One of the primary goals of improving the economic opportunities in the boundaries of the Fourmile Creek area is to create opportunities for existing and new businesses that will provide jobs and create responsible growth in the local market. The availability of waterfront parcels that are currently zoned “Industrial” provides the key to growth in the proposed waterfront area.

Freeport is literally the “crossroads” between North and South Walton County. It is centrally situated and within driving proximity to Tallahassee, Pensacola, Montgomery, Ft. Walton Beach, and Panama City. It is within an hour of the Okaloosa County Regional Airport, the Beaches International Airport, the Destin Municipal Airport, and the DeFuniak Springs Municipal Airport. The waterfront features of Freeport are truly hidden treasures that will likely hold the key to expanding economic opportunities for the region.

THE OPPORTUNITIES OF THE FOURMILE CREEK ECONOMIC REDEVELOPMENT

The Waterfront Vision Plan is a tool that will be used by the community to revive and reinvigorate the area that was once the center piece of Walton County. The final plan will provide a framework for growth and development within the boundaries of the Waterfront District. In addition, the final plan will provide guidance for identifying programs, projects, and priorities that will utilize the vast area of industrial zoned land adjacent to Fourmile Creek while preserving the area's rich heritage and waterfront assets. The waterfront areas of Freeport were historically dominated by industries and businesses that were water dependent. The turpentine mills, lumber mills, and community development surrounded the waterfront areas in Freeport from 1830 until 1910. The artesian wells in the area did not require power to provide potable water and the creek banks were lined with trading posts and craftsman that had minimal currency and vast natural resources. The photograph below was taken from the boat basin at the end of Fourmile Creek near the Bayloop Road.



As farming methods advanced and road networks were developed to provide better overland access and transport for goods and services, the bustling Fourmile Creek community dwindled. By 1920 the community was still a major water transportation hub for Walton County but the associated trading and craftsman businesses had spread north and east to Eucheanna. The major timber industry had run its course with many of the old growth Juniper and Cypress trees that lined the banks of Lagrange Bayou, Mallet Bayou, Black Creek, and the Choctawhatchee River old growth timber cut down to stumps.

The waterfront area is now mostly vacant land with prominent development near the turn basin at Bay Loop Road and the intersection of Lafayette and Fourmile Creeks. There are several commercial shrimp boats lining the west side of Fourmile Creek that back up to residential neighborhoods and one Marina near the south boundaries of the Waterfront Overlay border. The northern boundaries of the Waterfront Vision plan extend from SR-20 to Marina Village to the south for a distance of approximately 2.3 miles. The western boundary is Bayloop Road and the eastern boundary is Lafayette Creek and Fourmile Creek as it runs south. There are three primary boater access areas that are available in the area. The first is located in Marina Village where fuel and mooring are available near the south end of the plan boundaries on the west side of Lagrange Bayou. The second boating access location is at the end of Shipyard Road where the new Fourmile Creek Park was constructed with boattramps, loading docks, restrooms, boardwalks, and boat-trailer parking. The new park also has provisions for barge unloading near the north end of the park where a large bulkhead and mooring piles were constructed. The third boating access location is the Steel Bridge Boatramp near Bayloop Road at the end of the Fourmile Creek turn basin. The proposed boundaries and existing waterfront uses within the vision plan area are outlined below:

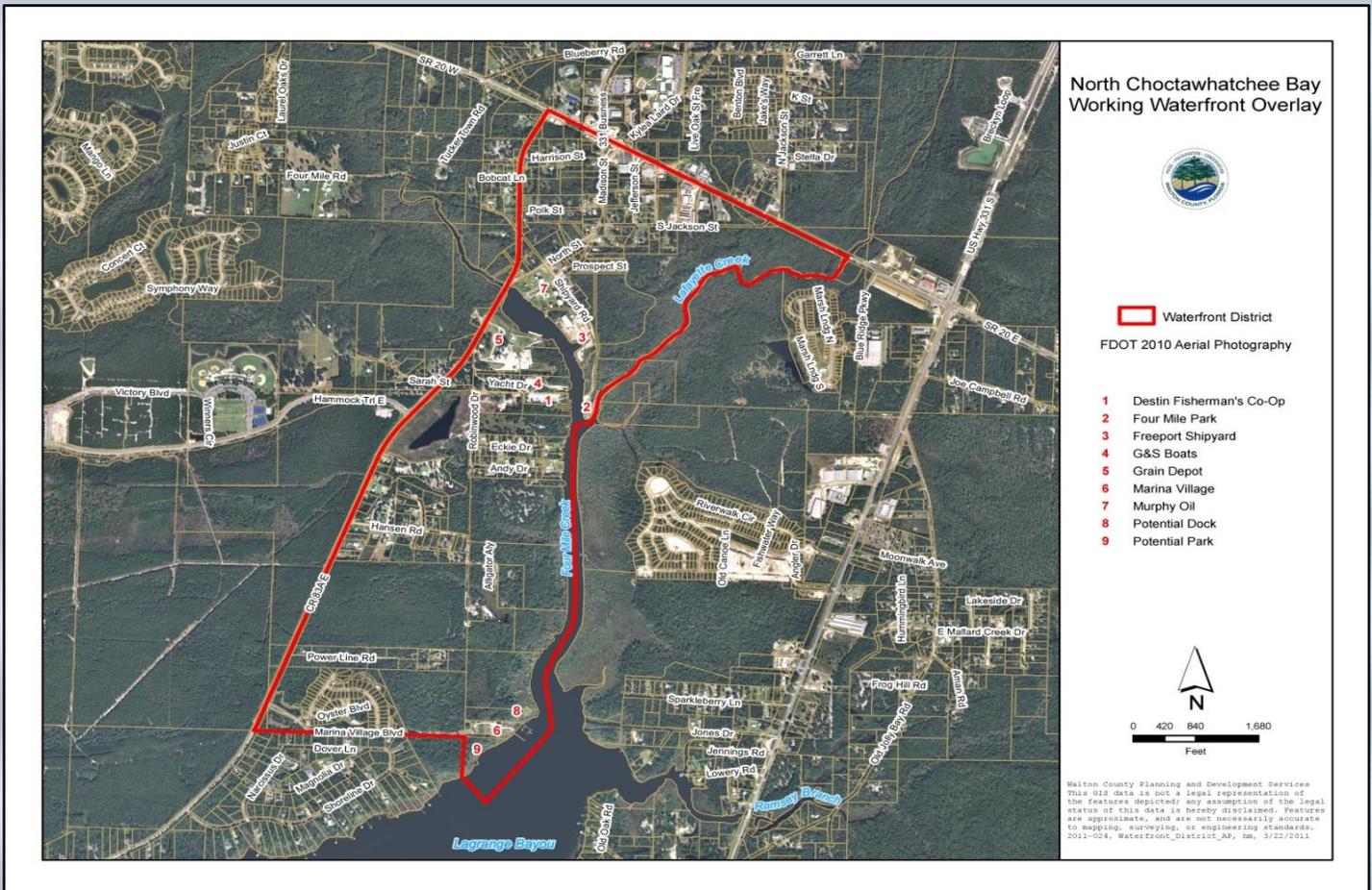


FIGURE 1 - Waterfront Plan Boundaries

The community's ideas for redevelopment have been incorporated into this waterfront vision plan and, together, form the basis for the implementation program. The vision statements that have been developed to date include an overwhelming need for countywide public access to the creek areas and education about the abundance of natural resources in the area. Unfortunately the area cannot be seen from SR-20 and most residents and visitors pass through the area with no idea what hidden treasures the Fourmile Creek area has to offer. Other vision elements that have been expressed in detail include the need for mooring piles along the banks of Fourmile Creek for the tanker barges that would end the long history of killing old growth trees along the creek banks. Additional direction for short term improvements include the permitting and construction of community docks along Bayloop Road for commercial vending of fresh seafood and possible open air markets that would encourage the preservation of the fishing and trading industry in the area. The acquisition of City and County land along the waterfront would open doors for festivals and events that could educate the public on the rich history of the area and bring attention to the hub that was once a bustling commercial district. Additional needs outlined in the vision plan include the development of a Port Authority for the Lagrange Bayou region that could govern activities through a board that would be responsible for management of the balance between growth and business opportunities and preservation for recreational access. When the vision is implemented the The Fourmile Creek waterfront can serve as a model for other Florida communities attempting to balance the rights of individual residential and business property owners with the needs of the general public for access to water resources. The Fourmile Creek Waterfront Vision is the stepping stone for revitalization of the area and will likely start the economic engine that will promote responsible growth for Freeport and Walton County.

The following is a summary of existing facilities that could be expanded and improved through the implementation phase of the project and are summarized as follows:

Four Mile Creek Park

Four Mile Creek Park was completed early 2009. This project was a City vision for nearly 16 years before construction was initiated and included a cooperative effort through Walton County and the City of Freeport. The bulkhead improvements were completed with economic development funds from Walton County and additional construction costs were shared by the City and County. the design and construction of an asphalt parking area with boat ramp and loading dock; a 365 linear foot steel sheet pile retaining wall along the shoreline of Four Mile Creek with a 6 foot wide timber boardwalk; a timber boardwalk and boat docking area along the shoreline of Lafayette Creek; public restroom facilities; stormwater facilities; a timber gazebo; and a 640 linear foot timber boardwalk.



Fourmile Creek Phase I Bulkhead is used for mooring and bank fishing opportunities



Lafayette Creek Public Docking Facilities Phase I was completed in 2009 at Fourmile Creek Park



Shipyard Road Pedestrian And Vehicular Route Improvements

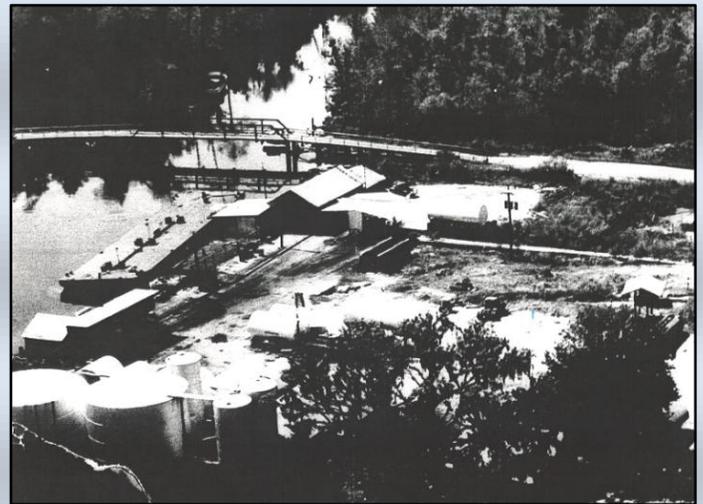
Shipyard Road resurfacing and reconstruction was completed late 2010 with the assistance of Walton County and the Department of Environmental Protection for funding. This project included the design and construction of an asphalt roadway along with a concrete sidewalk and timber boardwalk that connects various recreational facilities and a two lane boat ramp. A timber vehicular bridge was constructed to connect a large tidal wetland area with pedestrian facilities that were connected from Bayloop Road to the new park for public access. The bridge location is near the historical bridge that was constructed in the early 1900's and connected two large wetlands that were segregated by the road construction in 1972. The historical flows were restored by the bridge along the branch and provided significant environmental restoration to the wetlands on the west side of the crossing.



Shipyard Road pedestrian and vehicular bridges provide access to the Fourmile Creek Park

Bayloop Road Pedestrian And Vehicular Route Improvements

The improvements to the Bayloop Road bridge were completed in 2010 and provided connection to pedestrian facilities that extend approximately 8 miles around Bayloop and Shipyard Roads. The original steel bridge configuration that was built in the early 1950's was matched with steel rails that keep the historical look to the area. The covered pedestrian bridge includes an overlook and fishing platform to provide access to the west side of Fourmile Creek.



Bayloop Road Bridge replacement was designed to mirror the historic original steel span bridge from the 1940's

Murphy Oil Depot

The Murphy Oil Depot facility consists of a fuel barge off-loading dock, ground storage tanks, and distribution center for truck transport. Barges bring in fuel from Monroe, LA through the intercoastal waterway, twice a week. The facility receives approximately 2 million gallons of fuel from the barge shipments and is distributed to destinations throughout Southern Alabama and North Florida. The tug boats and barges draw about 12 feet of draft and would benefit tremendously from dredging the channel to Lagrange Bayou.



Murphy Oil Depot on Fourmile Creek basin imports up to 2 million gallons of fuel per week for distribution

Cemex Concrete Plant

Cemex also has a cement distribution center on the Southern shores of Four Mile Creek. The facility receives shipments of cement by barge three to four times monthly. In 2006 the facility was offloading barges two to three times per week to keep up with the pace of development. 4,500 to 5,000 tons of cement is transported to the Freeport operation each month. Expansion of commercial and industrial enterprise at the port has been handicapped by the inability to dredge Four Mile Creek allowing for the passage of larger shipping vessels.



Cemex storage tower and barge unloading port facilities located at the turn basin on Fourmile Creek

Freeport Shipbuilders

Since 1981 the Freeport Shipbuilding Facility has been one of the largest employers in the City of Freeport and built various types of barges and ships up to 1754 Tons. The industry demand for work on larger vessels and the lack of adequate travel lift capacity has caused the business to remain dormant for the past year. Improvements to the infrastructure at the facility would allow for expansion to handle the demand for large ship building and maintenance. The long history of Shipbuilding in Freeport is outlined on the ship registry logs in Appendix F that provides an outline of the year constructed and length of each vessel constructed at the facility.



Freeport Shipbuilders has a long history of shipbuilding in the Freeport Community and needs infrastructure improvements to expand the services to be competitive and handle larger vessels

G&S Marine Custom Yacht Builders

G&S Marine is a custom fishing yacht builder owned by Freeport resident Buddy Gentry that has customers world-wide. Located on Fourmile Creek G&S Boats is a 37 year old company still owned and operated by its founders, Buddy Gentry and Steve Sauer. Using a one-off construction method G&S constructs world famous technical fishing yachts and is a major employer in Freeport. The plans for expansion have been sidetracked due to permitting issues and lack of grant opportunities for the industry.



The Mollie II and Hook & Bull are both world famous fishing yachts constructed at G&S Boats Inc. on Fourmile Creek

Fisherman's Boatyard – Destin Fisherman's Cooperative Facility

The Freeport Boatyard Dry-Dock facility is owned and operated by the Destin Fisherman's Cooperative and is open to the public. It can accommodate up to 50 large fishing boats for repair and maintenance and has an 80 Ton marine travel lift. The facility has spurred significant economic opportunities for the area and is operating at full capacity. The facility was constructed in 2009 and is seeking economic development opportunities for expansion.



The Fisherman's Boatyard is full to capacity and plans to expand services with larger lift capacity and storage

SECTION 2 – VISION AND MISSION STATEMENT

The vision plan that was adopted by the Walton County Board of County Commissioners on October 26, 2010 includes elements that reflect the goals and objectives of the Fourmile Creek Waterfront Vision Plan. Many of the same goals and objectives that are outlined in Section Four (4) of this report reflect the same vision as outlined in **Figure 2** below. The vision statement established by the one year public input process by Walton County citizens is outlined below:

“Sustain and Enhance Walton County’s Vitality, Environment, and Community Character through delivery of Public Services that advance the County’s high value priorities and improves the quality of life.”

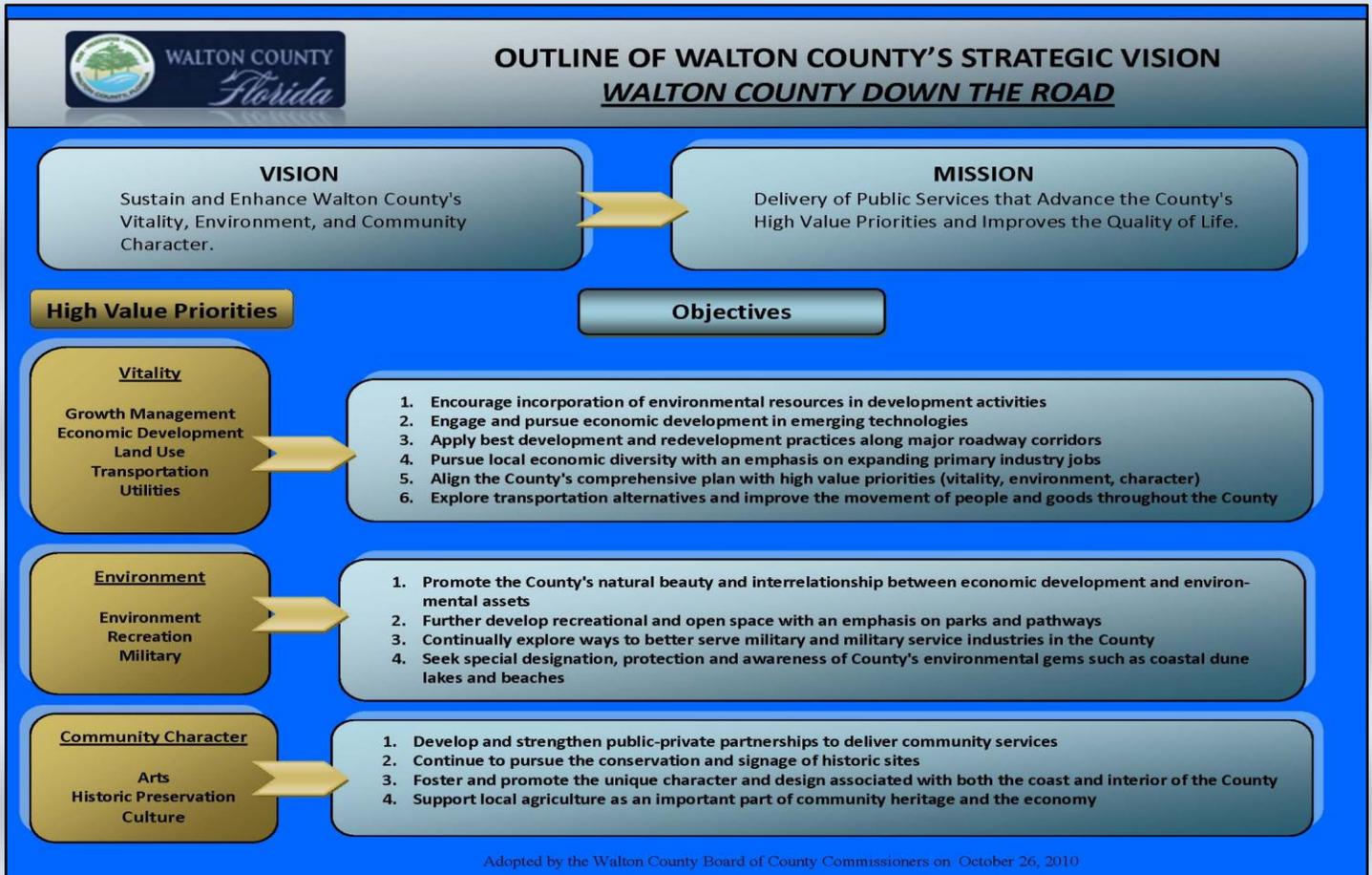


FIGURE 2 – Walton County Vision Plan Summary



VISION MEETINGS TO GATHER INPUT FROM THE COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDERS



Fourmile Creek Waterfronts Florida Partnership Community Vision

Freeport is a close-knit, laid-back, hidden hometown treasure that serves as the “crossroads to everywhere”. This waterfront community has a rich history where families take root and economic opportunities through water-based recreational, industrial, and commercial business are abundant.

Mission Statement

The Freeport and Walton County communities are committed to guiding the implementation of the Fourmile Creek Vision Plan to reach economic prosperity through responsible growth while protecting the intrinsic resources that make the Fourmile Creek area our hidden treasure.

Freeport Waterfront Community Partnership Vision Process

The vision meetings that were held for community input were an essential component to the development of the plan. The stakeholders were primarily residents and business owners from the vision boundary areas and were quite knowledgeable of the issues facing the area. The Community Vision and Mission Statement that resulted from these meetings are outlined below:

The objectives outlined in the Walton County Vision Plan reflect many of the same goals and objectives that were discussed during the public input portion of the Waterfronts Florida Vision process including the following:

1. Encourage incorporation of environmental resources in development activities
2. Engage and pursue economic development in emerging technologies
3. Pursue local economic diversity with an emphasis on expanding primary industrial jobs
4. Align the County's comprehensive plan with high value priorities
5. Further develop recreational and open space with an emphasis on parks and pathways
6. Seek special designation, protection and awareness of the County's environmental gems
7. Develop and strengthen public-private partnerships to deliver community services
8. Continue to pursue the conservation and signage of historic sites

The key elements outlined above for the Walton County Vision Plan are very similar to the vision that was developed through the Fourmile Creek Waterfronts Vision plan including similar goals and objectives.



PHOTOS OF VARIOUS LANDSCAPE AND DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE VISION PLAN



Freeport Visioning Meetings

Board of County Commissioners Meeting: February 16, 2011

Waterfronts Florida Program was recommended to the BCC by DCA Secretary Billy Buzzett as a possible program opportunity for Freeport, with Freeport piloting the new admissions process into the program. The new application process and parameters were discussed with the board, Latilda Henninger was chosen as the Program Manager and other assignments were discussed.

Freeport Community Visioning Meeting with the Mayor: October 21, 2011

Waterfronts Florida representative, Julie Dennis, Department of Economic Opportunity Division Director, Tom Beck, and Freeport's Program Manager, Latilda Henninger, met with Mayor Mickey Marse to provide an overview of the designation process. The mayor was familiarized with the general outline of the program and the benefit of the Waterfronts Florida Program Partnership.

Freeport Waterfronts Program Technical Assistance Meetings: December, 2011 – February, 2012

The Freeport Community held a series of meetings to review and present the various phases of the application process for designation, as well as obtaining approval for a joint resolution to support the Freeport Waterfronts Florida Program. These meetings were attended by the Walton County BCC, staff, and community members.

Freeport Community Visioning Workshop: April 4, 2012

The Freeport Community was invited to a workshop where they were asked to contemplate what they envisioned when they thought about Freeport and how those concepts could become part of the Vision for Freeport. The participants also brainstormed on four priority areas (natural and cultural resource protection, hazard mitigation, economic development, and public access) and the prioritization of projects within each area. The meeting concluded with the creation of potential Freeport Vision Statements.

Freeport Community Visioning Workshop: April 18, 2012

The second workshop determined what terms most participants would like included in a Vision Statement for Freeport. Participants then voted on each of the drafted Vision Statements and ultimately combined favorite terms into the final Vision. This was followed by a brainstorming session regarding ideas and issues in each of the determined priority areas from the previous visioning workshop and ranking them in terms of importance.



SECTION 3 – PLANNING FOR THE FOURMILE CREEK COMMUNITY

In addition to the comprehensive planning efforts for the City of Freeport and Walton County, the successful future development and redevelopment of the City's historic downtown waterfront areas will require coordination with the Walton County Planning department to ensure that goals and objectives established through the vision plan are adopted as part of the long range county planning efforts. The Vision Plan document should be carefully reviewed with the Planning Director and incorporated into the Capital Improvements Element of the Comprehensive plan that is adopted by Walton County and the City of Freeport.

Figure 3 below outlines the Future Land Uses that have been adopted within the planning boundaries of the vision area. The items of interest on the map are the significant area zoned as Industrial (purple) as well as significant property that is zoned Rural Village (orange) which allows for residential units and commercial development. **Figure 4** provides an aerial view from 2010 that shows the level of development (or lack thereof) within the boundaries of the vision plan. Several of the businesses and points of interest are labeled on the map as items one (1) through nine (9) that are discussed further in section one of the vision plan.

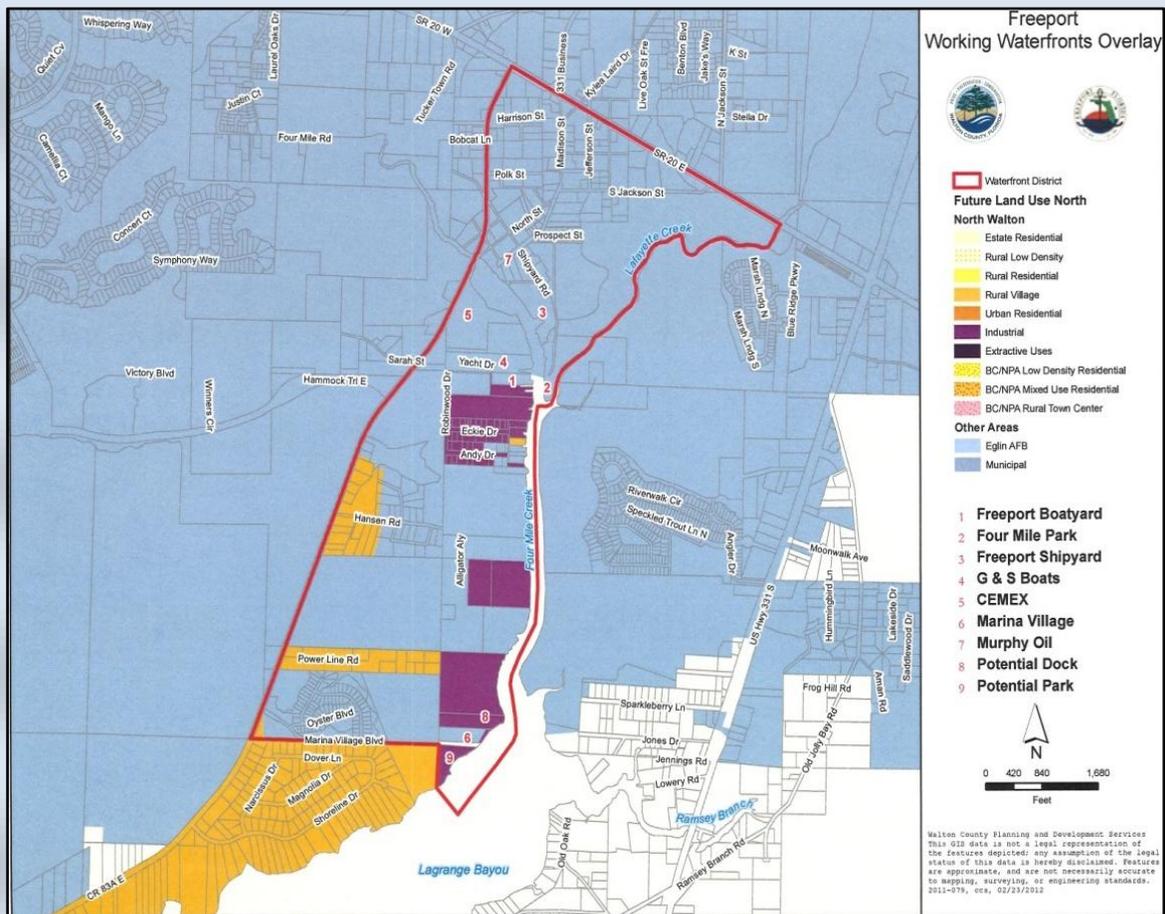


FIGURE 3 – Future Land Use Map for Vision Boundary Areas

On the attached section of the Walton County Future Land Use Map (**Figure 5**) with the Working Waterfronts overlay superimposed, the county properties adjacent to Four Mile Creek, with the exception of one (1) quarter(1/4)-acre parcel are designated “Industrial” on the County’s Future Land Use Map. The ¼ -acre parcel is designated Rural Village, which

is low-density residential (2 residential units per acre.) The county properties in the outlying non-water frontage parcels are designated Rural Village (2:1). The designation was assigned due to the presence of low-density residential development. The following summary provides additional information on the zoning uses allowed in those areas:

Industrial Zoning: allows all industrial use, and heavy commercial uses.

Rural Village Zoning: Low density residential category allowing single family residential development at 2 units / acre

Freeport Zoning Map Land Use Narrative

On the City of Freeport Zoning Map the following land use categories are present within the working waterfront area and are outlined as follows:

1. C-1 /General Commercial: located along Highway 20 at north end of the working waterfronts area; all general commercial uses
2. C-2 /Heavy Commercial: located along Highway 20 at north end of working waterfronts area; general and heavy commercial uses.
3. Con /Conservation: floodplain area located along Lafayette Creek and some areas of Four Mile Creek. Limited development potential.
4. I-2 /Heavy Industrial: located on south side of Shipyard Road and the bulk of properties west of Four Mile Creek in the central part of the working waterfronts area.
5. PS /Public Service: city property located at the south end of Shipyard road. The location of Four Mile Park.
6. R-2 /Medium Density Residential: located in the area north and adjacent to Lafayette Creek. Single family and multi-family residential at 8:1 density.
7. R-3 /High Density Residential: located south and adjacent of the commercial uses on Highway 20 in the northern region of the working waterfronts area. High-density residential allowing dingle family (8:1) and multi-family (14:1).
8. RC / Residential Commercial: mixed use designation located between the High Density Residential and Industrial in the northern region of the working waterfronts area. Allows general commercial uses, single family (8:1) and multi-family (14:1).Encourages mixed-use development.
9. RV /Rural Village: located in south end of waterfronts area fronting Highway 280A/non-waterfront. Low-density residential 2:1

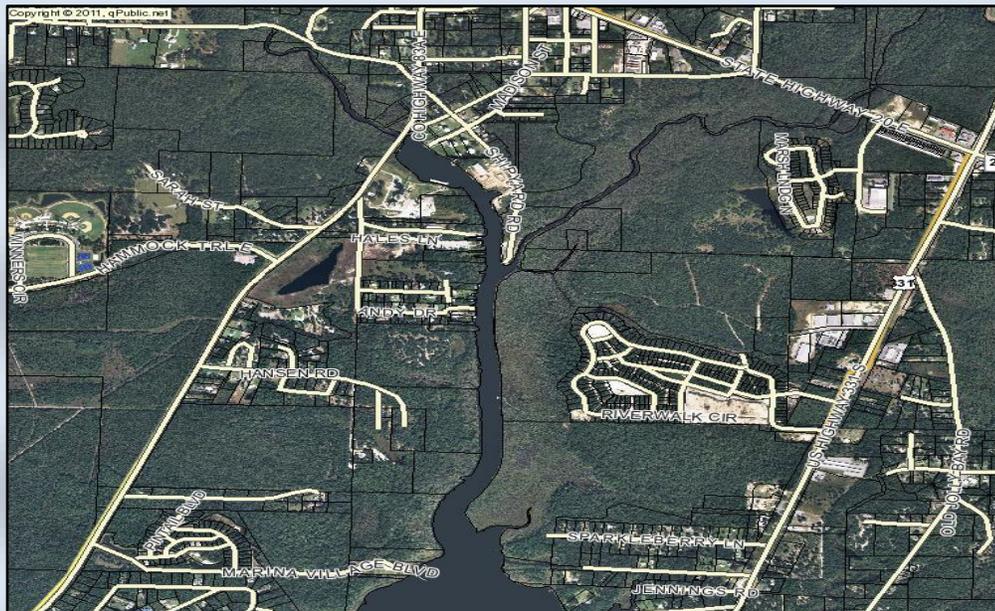


FIGURE 4 – 2010 Aerial of the planning area that shows limited development in the Vision Boundary Area

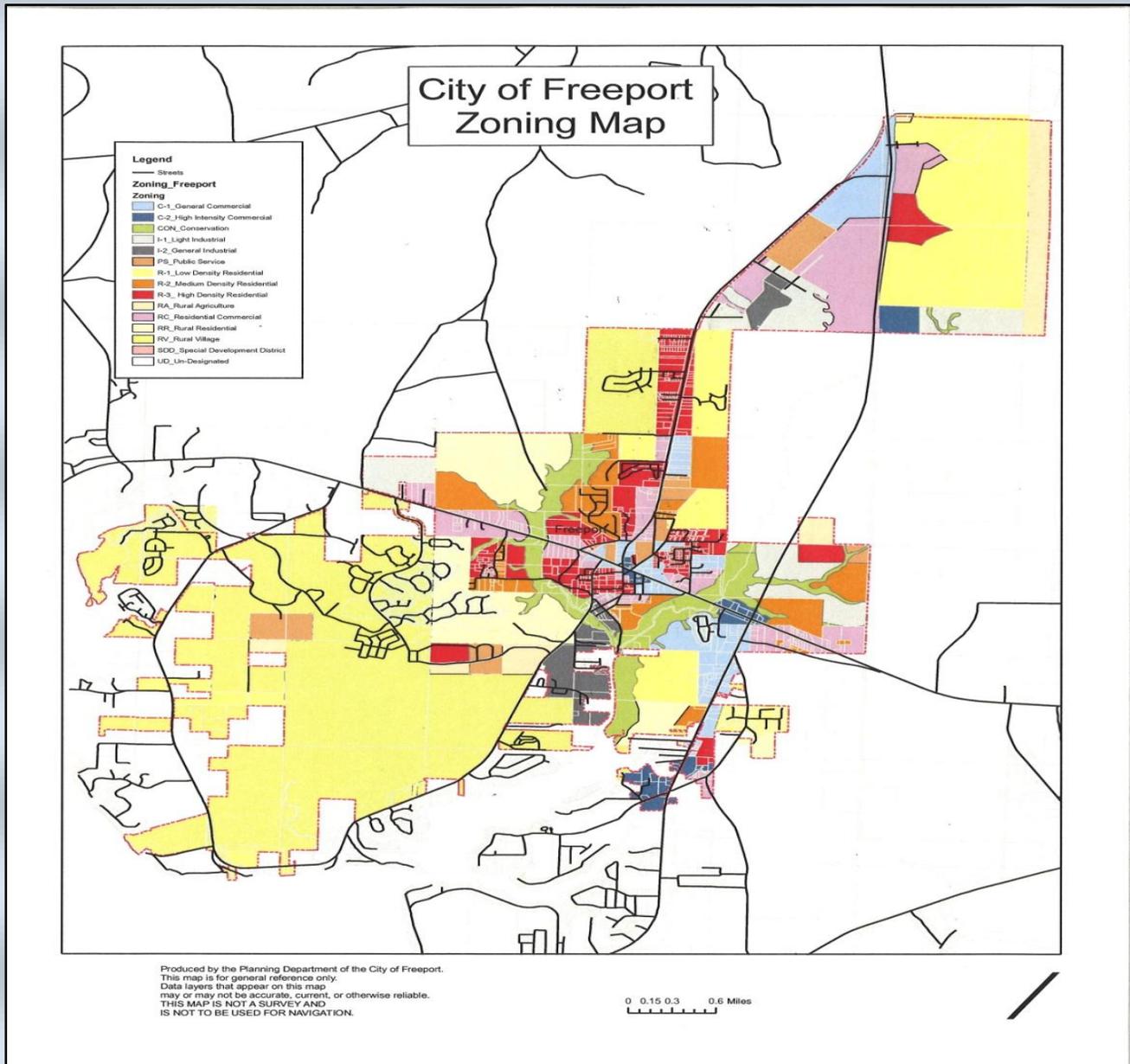


FIGURE 5 – City of Freeport Zoning Map for Vision Boundary Areas

Walton County Comprehensive Plan & 2010 EAR Amendments

Several elements of the Walton County Comprehensive Plan include goals, objectives and policies that address general planning issues related to the Waterfronts Florida Program applicable to the Fourmile Creek Waterfront Community: Future Land Use, Coastal Management, Recreation and Open Space and Intergovernmental Coordination. In addition, the City's adopted Future Land Use Map (FLUM) is a critical component of the comprehensive plan that guides how land is developed within the proposed boundary area. The FLUM does not accurately reflect the development pattern reflected in the Waterfront Vision Plan so amendments need to be initiated to ensure consistency between the comprehensive plan and this vision plan. Inconsistencies may also arise between the comprehensive plan goals, objectives and policies and the strategies recommended for the Fourmile Creek Waterfront Vision Plan, therefore text amendments may also be required. **Figure 5** depicts the adopted future land use categories within the Fourmile Creek community. The comprehensive plan goals, objectives and policies applicable to the Florida Waterfronts Program in Fourmile Creek are listed in Appendix A. Section five (5) recommends amendments that may be pursued in order to ensure consistency between the City's comprehensive plan and the Waterfront Vision Plan.

Rural Enterprise Zone

The preservation of environmental resources through public awareness was discussed at length by stakeholders during the visioning process and appears to be a common goal between both vision plans. The pursuit of economic development is also a common theme and the City of Freeport is in a good position to promote growth due to its designation by the Governor of Florida as a **Rural City of Economic Critical Concern**. The designation provides for expedited permitting, reduced permit fees, and additional points for grant applications through State Agencies. In addition, the City of Freeport has been designated as a **Rural Enterprise Zone** as shown on **Figure 6**.

The Rural Enterprise Zone designation provides for tax incentives for businesses that create jobs in the zone through the State and is recognized in the Walton County Comprehensive plan that was recently adopted. The Vision Plan boundaries include the zone and will encourage the industrial development that is also important to the stakeholders that attended the visioning meetings.



FIGURE 6 – City of Freeport Rural Enterprise Zone

Walton County Local Mitigation Strategy (LMS), 2010

The Walton County LMS includes a detailed assessment of the post-disaster redevelopment process of the City - County and its risks. Walton County is in the process of updating the LMS, which is expected to be adopted by December 2012. The following is a summary of the relevant information found in the strategy plan.

1. The LMS plan outlines the hazard to which the City and County are vulnerable and what impacts may occur. **Impact:** The Fourmile Creek area is very vulnerable to flooding due to storm surge in the Lafayette Branch and Fourmile Creek. The Storm Surge Zone maps attached outline the limits of surge that are anticipated for a Category 1 through Category 5 storm event. **Figure 7** identifies the storm surge within the vision boundaries that are likely to occur during Category 1 through Category 5 storm events. In addition, the area is also within the Coastal High Hazard area as outlined on **Figure 8**. The areas within the planning boundary that are most impacted by any (1-5) category storm event is located just south of Cemex Materials along the west banks of Fourmile Creek and all areas east of the Lafayette Creek Branch. Please refer to the 2010 Storm Surge Zone maps and Coastal High Hazard maps for additional details on the impact areas.
2. Incorporates current and future land uses and growth trends.

3. Includes a risk assessment for the City and County. Impact: The Post Disaster Recovery Plan does not specifically address the Vision Planning area and should be updated or amended to include specific recommendations for the waterfront areas that would likely be impacted by a storm event as predicted by the Storm Surge and Coastal High Hazard studies that have been completed.
4. Contains a list of critical facilities located in the City and their level of vulnerability. Impact: The critical facilities located within the City outside the anticipated impact area except for well number 5 that is within the storm surge and flood zone area. **Figure 9** identifies the Flood Zones
5. Identifies the City of Freeport and Walton County Point of Contact for the LMS.

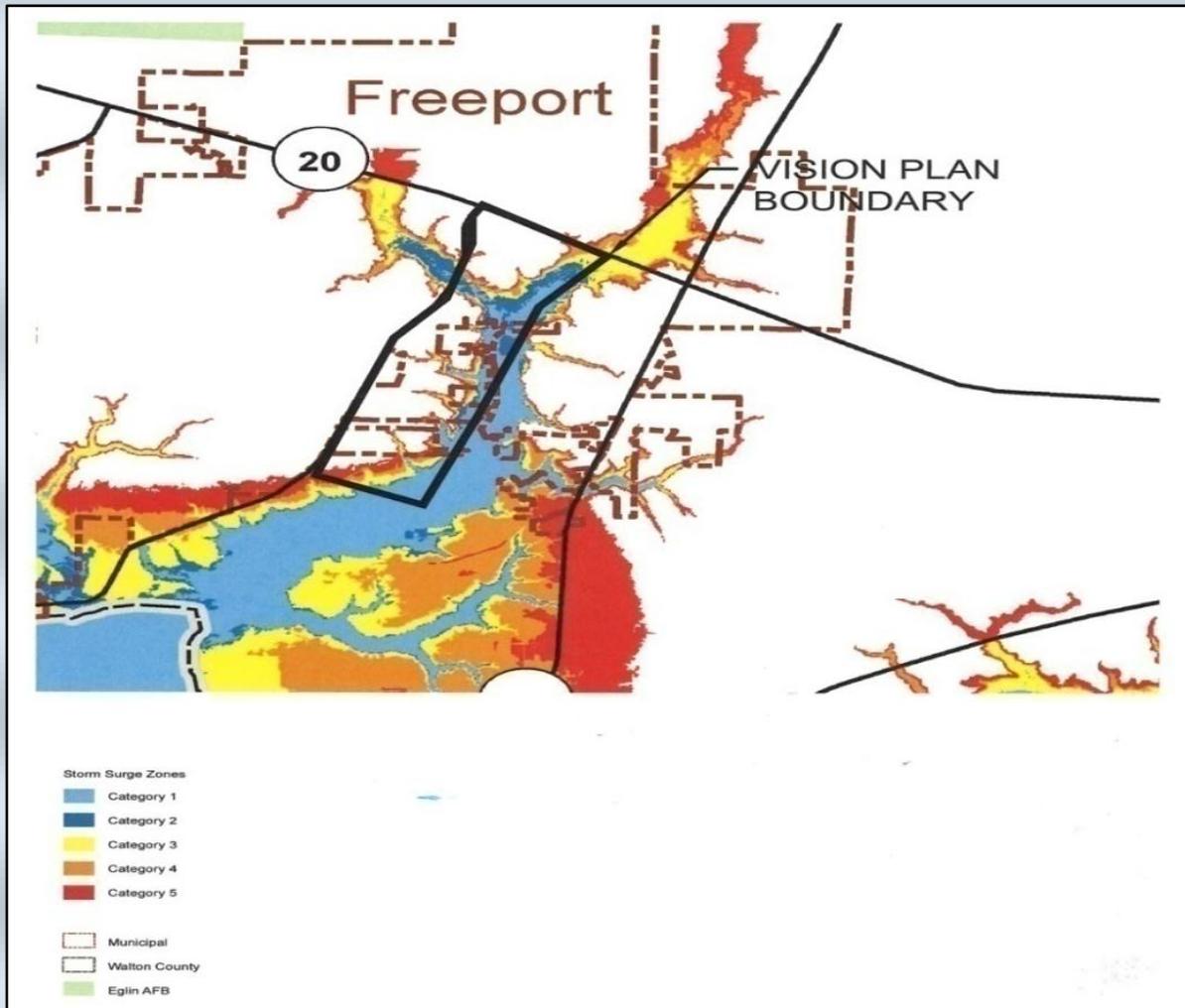


FIGURE 7 – Storm Surge Zones within the Vision Planning Boundaries

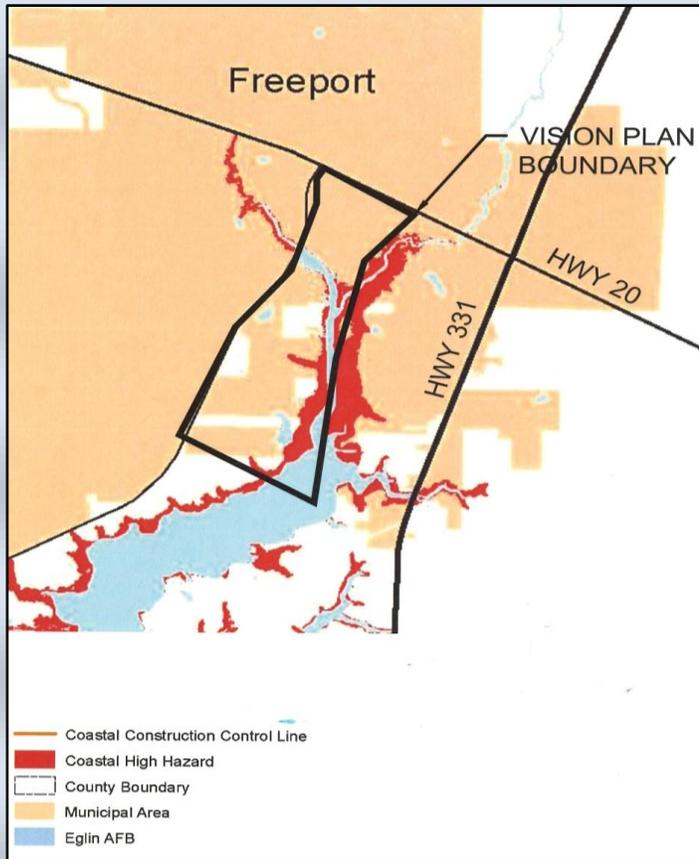


FIGURE 8 – Coastal High Hazard Impact areas within the Vision Planning Boundaries

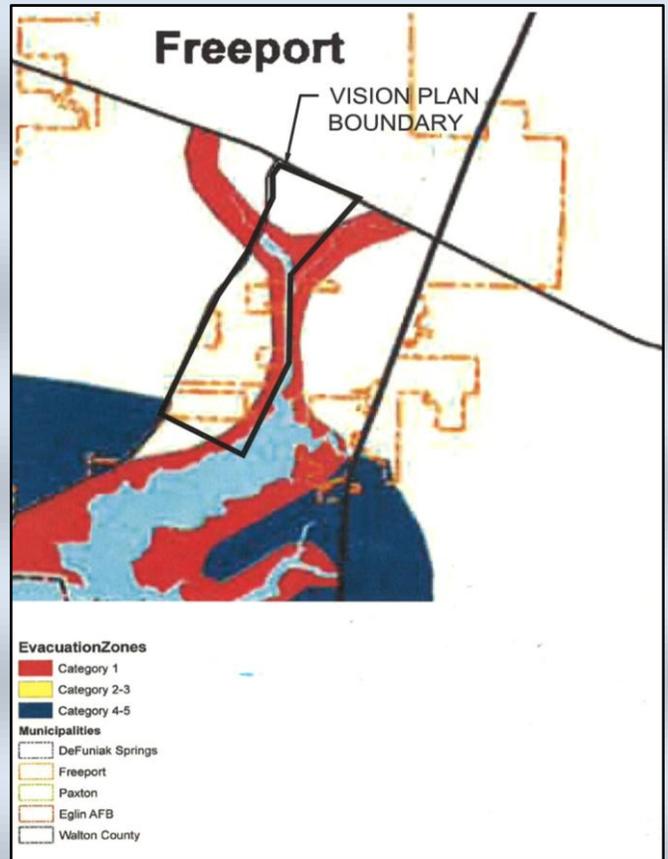


FIGURE 9 – Hurricane Evacuation Zones within the Vision Planning Boundaries

The vulnerability of critical facilities is limited to the Well No. 5 and Bay Loop Road that are both located within the flood and surge boundaries. This should not be a critical issue since the well is tied to several other wells and can be shut down and valved off to prevent infiltration from floodwaters. The control building for the well appears to be within the flood zone and would likely be inundated by a 100 year storm event. The Bayloop Road has access through Hammock Bay and could be used as an alternate route should flooding around the bridge cause issues with evacuation. All other facilities that would be impacted are not critical in nature such as parks, boat ramps, and roadways that would not cause risk to life during a critical storm event that may occur.



The Walton County Economic Development Alliance Program of Work, 2012

The City of Freeport and the Walton County Economic Development Alliance and the Walton Chamber of Commerce are in a good position to compliment the Freeport Visioning process. The organizations represent all of the municipalities within the county. The Walton County Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development Alliance work diligently to develop and maintain a relationship with business owners within the county. The Program of Work for 2012 contains the strategic goals and objectives for the organizations with regards to economic development. None of the strategic goals and objectives specifically addresses the Fourmile Creek Waterfronts Florida Program Area; however, all are applicable to the economic development needs of the area.

The following is a summary of the relevant information found in the Economic Development plan:

1. States the need to facilitate new investment and job creation.
2. Expresses the need to foster strong community relations with companies that show signs of growth potential or negative growth.
3. Maintains and project strong presence at specific target industry.
4. Maintains a current inventory of available buildings and sites in City of Freeport/Walton County suitable for commercial/industrial use and conducts the necessary research to provide a professional response to inquiries.
5. Develops and maintains good relationships with key management personnel from key area employers.
 - Organizes monthly industrial industry visits with volunteers from Existing Industry Committee
 - Organizes quarterly meetings of the Manufacturers Roundtable and Defense Contractors Roundtable
 - Continues company interviews with the Insights program
6. Identifies and conducts proper follow-up on companies who have indicated signs of growth potential or early signs of distress.
7. Maintains current incentive information and serves as a facilitator and advocate in their applications for state and local incentives/grants.

The Walton County Economic Development Alliance Program can provide strategic opportunities for the City of Freeport Vision Plan as they have recently recruited Southern Wine and Spirits to the Freeport Industrial Park as a new tenant that will provide significant job opportunities for the area. The difficult issue facing the vision study area is the availability of utilities that would provide opportunities for the recruitment of similar companies. The installation of water and sewer to many of the industrial zoned vacant properties should be a target goal for the grant opportunities that are described in further detail in this report. This component is critical to attracting businesses to the area especially when you consider that businesses that are water dependent will have to locate within the vision boundary. While the benefits of the Economic City of Critical Concern and the Rural Enterprise Zone are a great benefit the need for utilities to service those industries must be in place to attract them to the vision boundary areas.



Existing Organizations

The organizations that could assist with the goals and objectives of the vision are outlined below with some concepts that would assist with the effort:

- ❖ Walton County Economic Development Alliance: can be provided a brochure regarding the Four Mile Creek Working Waterfront Planning Area with the Planning Area list of current businesses and services and the wish-list of desired businesses/services
- ❖ Freeport Town Planters: maintain the working historical archives of the City; assign themselves landscaping and beautification projects on city properties.
- ❖ Walton Area Chamber of Commerce: can be provided with a brochure regarding the Four Mile Creek Working Waterfront Planning Area with the Planning Area list of current businesses and services and the wish-list of desired businesses/services
- ❖ South Walton TDC: can be provided with a brochure regarding the Four Mile Creek Working Waterfront Planning Area with the Planning Area list of current businesses and services and the wish-list of desired businesses/services
- ❖ The City and County Planning Departments can provide the public with a Four Mile Creek Working Waterfront brochure with current/wish-list items.

Post-Disaster Redevelopment Plan (PDRP), 2012

The post disaster redevelopment plan addresses the debris removal and access issues related to the large storm surge that typically occurs in the Lafayette Creek and Fourmile Creek basins. The trees and debris would be removed through the continuing services contract with Crowder-Gulf that is handled through Walton County. The storm surge typically deposits storm debris along the roadways and properties that are above elevation 7.0 NGVD which will include all of Shipyard Road and the Fourmile Creek Park areas. After debris removal is completed an assessment of damages to roadways, waterlines, and sewer lines will be conducted to repair all underground infrastructure to normal operating conditions and prevent discharge into waters of the State.

Additional evaluations will be conducted on all adjacent structures to verify their condition and condemn those that are no longer deemed safe by the Walton County Building Official. Fortunately, the Freeport City Hall is on a ridge north of the waterfronts area and would be a staging area for all emergency services that may be required. The primary impact areas in the study area are Freeport Church of God, Freeport United Methodist Church, and Alaqua Animal Refuge. The animal refuge is a challenge since the facility is critical during storms as they rescue displaced animals for the community. Many storm events require citizens to evacuate without their animals and it would be difficult for the Alaqua Animal Refuge to assist since they would already be evacuating their own animals to safety further to the north in the county. Additional Facilities that would be severely impacted by a Category 1 or larger event that are not identified on the PDRP provided by ATKINS are the Murphy Oil Port and the Cemex Materials facility that would both be critical following a storm event (**Figure 10**).

The Post Disaster Plan does not identify the opportunities that may exist following a disaster where redevelopment opportunities may exist with the assistance of Federal Funding such as FEMA. The reconstruction and redevelopment efforts that would be good opportunities after a storm event should be identified in the report to assist with planning efforts. The reconstruction of businesses such as G&S Boats and the Fishermans' Boatyard would be essential to the local economy due to the number of jobs provided by each of these businesses. The reconstruction of roadways that would likely be damaged during a storm event in the surge areas would also be essential to consider during the planning for disaster recovery. The critical facilities located in known hazard zones within the City of Freeport are outlined on **Figure 11** and **Figure 12**.



FIGURE 10 - Industrial Facilities that would be impacted during storm surge from Category 1 Events include Murphy Oil Distribution Center and Cemex Materials which is the major concrete supplier in the Freeport area. Both facilities would be essential after a storm event to the local economy and rebuilding efforts.

WALTON COUNTY POST-DISASTER REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

Table 3.6: Critical Facilities Located in Known Hazard Zones

Facility	Flood Hazard Zones			Storm Surge Hazard Zones					Wildfire Hazard Zones High Potential
	100-year	500-year	VE	Cat 1	Cat 2	Cat 3	Cat 4	Cat 5	
COLLEGE AVE CHURCH OF CHRIST									
COMMUNITY HOLINESS CHURCH									
CONTINENTAL WORSHIP CENTER									
CORNERSTONE CHURCH									
CORNERSTONE LIFE CHURCH									
COUNTRYSIDE BAPTIST CHURCH									
CROSS ROADS ASSEMBLY OF GOD CHURCH									
CROSSPOINT CHURCH									
CROWDER CHAPEL CHURCH									
DAMASCUS PENTECOSTAL MINISTRIES									
DARLINGTON BAPTIST CHURCH									
DARLINGTON METHODIST CHURCH									
DEFUNIAK SPRINGS FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH									
DEFUNIAK SPRINGS SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH									
DESTINY WORSHIP CENTER									
EAST BAPTIST CHURCH									
EMERALD COAST CHRISTIAN CENTER									
EMERALD COAST LUTHERAN CHURCH									
ELUCHEE VALLEY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH									
ELUCHEE ANNA APOSTOLIC CHURCH									
FAITH ASSEMBLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH									
FELLOWSHIP OF LOVE CHURCH									
FIRST APOSTOLIC CHURCH									
FIRST ASSEMBLY OF GOD									
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF CHOCTAW									
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF DEFUNIAK SPRINGS									
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF FREEPORT									
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF LIBERTY									
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF MOSSY HEAD									
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF WOODLAWN									
FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH									
FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH									
FREEPORT ASSEMBLY OF GOD CHURCH									
FREEPORT CHURCH OF CHRIST									
FREEPORT CHURCH OF GOD									
FREEPORT FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH									
FREEPORT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH									
FREEPORT UNITED PENTECOSTAL CHURCH									
FRIENDSHIP BAPTIST CHURCH									
GASKIN CHURCH OF CHRIST									
GASKIN FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH									
GASKIN PENTECOSTAL CHURCH									
GLENDALE BAPTIST CHURCH									
GLENDALE CHURCH OF GOD									

SECTION 3: VULNERABILITY IDENTIFICATION 3-15 MAY 2012

FIGURE 11 – Critical facilities within the known impact areas

WALTON COUNTY POST-DISASTER REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

As noted above, Table 3.6 provides a detailed list of the critical facilities located in hazard areas by name and specific hazard risk.

Table 3.6: Critical Facilities Located in Known Hazard Zones

Facility	Flood Hazard Zones			Storm Surge Hazard Zones					Wildfire Hazard Zones High Potential
	100-year	500-year	VE	Cat 1	Cat 2	Cat 3	Cat 4	Cat 5	
ANIMAL-RELATED FACILITIES (10)									
Aidmore Animal Clinic									
Alaqua Animal Refuge									
Allen Rescue Foundation									
Barry Veterinary Hospital									
Best Friends Pet Doctor									
Freeport Pet Clinic									
Kindness Pet Hospital									
Santa Rosa Animal Hospital									
Walton County Animal Clinic									
Walton County Animal Control									
CHURCHES (142)									
ALAQUA UNITED METHODIST CHURCH									
ARGYLE BAPTIST CHURCH									
ARK OF THE CONVENANT RETREAT & CONFERENCE CENTER									
BALDWIN AVE BAPTIST CHURCH									
BEECH GROVE CHURCH OF GOD									
BETHEL BAPTIST CHURCH									
BETHEL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH									
BIBLE BAPTIST CHURCH									
BIBLE METHODIST CHURCH									
BLACK CREEK UNITED METHODIST CHURCH									
BREAD OF LIFE FELLOWSHIP CHURCH									
BROWN MEMORIAL HOLINESS CHURCH									
BRUCE COMMUNITY CHURCH									
BRUCE METHODIST CHURCH									
CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH									
CANEY CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH									
CENTER RIDGE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH									
CHILDRENS HOME ASSEMBLY OF GOD CHURCH									
CHOCTAW BEACH METHODIST CHURCH									
CHRIST THE KING CATHOLIC CHURCH									
CHRIST THE KING EPISCOPAL CHURCH									
CHRISTIAN INTERNATIONAL CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER DAY SAINTS									
CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER DAY SAINTS									
CLEAR SPRINGS BAPTIST CHURCH									
CLUSTER SPRINGS BAPTIST CHURCH									

SECTION 3: VULNERABILITY IDENTIFICATION 3-14 MAY 2012

FIGURE 12 – Critical facilities within the know impact areas

SECTION 4 – GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES

Based on the public input gathered from the Fourmile Creek Waterfronts Florida Partnership Committee's previously cited planning and visioning activities, the Partnership has developed the goals, objectives and strategies included in this section to act as the guiding principles of the Fourmile Creek Waterfront Vision Plan. Recommendations for programs and projects along with a prioritized implementation plan are described in Sections 5 and 6 of this plan.

PUBLIC ACCESS

Public access was identified as a key element that needs improvement through the interactive meetings. It is the foundation and the main feature of waterfront revitalization. Public access to the waterfront, both direct physical access and visual access, was identified as the top priority at the Fourmile Creek Waterfronts Florida Partnership Committee Public Visioning Workshop held in March 2012. The primary challenge is to balance the need to provide residents and visitors with access to the waterfront, the rights of adjacent property owners and protection of the natural environment. Fourmile Creek's industrial waterfront contains certain parcels that are physically inaccessible to the public because of potential hazards to visitors from proximity to the industrial processes. With the closing of many of the older industries there are now many vacant waterfront parcels along that could provide the means to full or partial public access opportunities to the Fourmile Creek waterfront. One area that has been discussed briefly is the Freeport Shipbuilding yard that includes approximately 7.5 acres of waterfront land that could potentially be funded through programs affiliated with the DEO. The site would provide adequate parking for festivals and events and could also serve as a port for commercial vessels selling seafood on the creek.

Vision Plan Boundary Pedestrian and Multiuse Facilities

The pedestrian network within the planning area has been enhanced significantly with the completion of the Shipyard Road sidewalk and paving projects. The connection to the Bayloop Road path now provides 13 miles of paths that connect directly to the Fourmile Creek Park and Steel Bridge Boatramp that are both located on the Fourmile Creek Canal and turn basin. In addition, the connection to the Madison Street intersection provides enhanced connections that provide a safe route from Fourmile Creek to Highway 20 at City Hall. Additional connections are needed and are outlined below in the Goals, Objectives, and Strategies detailed below.

GOAL 1: Maintain, Preserve, and Enhance Public Access and View Sheds to the Waterfront

Objective 1.1: Provide maximum opportunities for public views of Fourmile Creek and Lafayette Creek.

- ❖ *Strategy 1.1.1: Implement a City/County program to clean out trash and debris and selectively clear vegetation within all publicly owned rights-of-way that extend to the water's edge on a routine basis so bayou views are opened up.*
- ❖ *Strategy 1.1.2: Establish a program to assist owners of vacant property along the bayou to clean out trash and debris and selectively clear vegetation so more opportunities for water views are opened up. Coordinate volunteers willing to participate in the program and pursue funding sources for rental of equipment and removal/disposal of the debris.*
- ❖ *Strategy 1.1.3: Establish regulations in the City's/County's Land Development Code to regulate building setbacks, height and density to promote public view sheds and encourage development of view corridors along Watson Bayou.*

- ❖ *Strategy 1.2.2: Evaluate the possibility of installing Mooring Piles for barges to anchor up in downstream reaches of the Fourmile Creek. This would eliminate the need to tie up to trees that have been killed by this activity.*
- ❖ *Strategy 1.2.3: Evaluate all publicly-owned rights-of-way that extend to the water's edge to determine the type of facilities that may be constructed at each one that will provide pedestrian or very limited vehicular access to the waterfront. These facilities could include limited parking, viewing platforms, kayak/canoe launch access, benches, picnic area and small docks and/or fishing piers, depending on the size constraints, and the physical and environmental characteristics of the right-of-way.*
- ❖ *Strategy 1.2.4: Establish regulations in the City's Land Development Code to require and/or encourage, through the use of development incentives, multi-family residential, mixed-use and commercial development along Fourmile Creek and Lafayette Creek to donate a shoreline easement to allow for the construction of a waterfront boardwalk that links as much of the shoreline as possible and provides waterfront access for residents and visitors.*
- ❖ *Strategy 1.2.5: Pursue federal, state, local and non-profit funding to purchase waterfront property, or property close to the water that provides access to water views or the shoreline, for use as public parks and open space, civic uses, parking for boat ramps or other waterfront amenities, and similar public uses.*
- ❖ *Strategy 1.2.6: Develop programs to encourage children in Freeport and Walton County to connect to the waterfront, including activities and events such as fishing clinics or contest and, educational opportunities such as water quality monitoring projects and fieldtrips. Kids Fishing day could be an event at Fourmile Creek Park that would generate some better participation in the Vision Goals.*

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION

Waterfront communities are attractive growth areas primarily because of the associated environmental resources, which serve as the economic and recreational base. The development of numerous facilities to increase opportunities for waterfront social activities and events was identified as the second overall priority at the Fourmile Creek Waterfronts Florida Partnership Committee Public Visioning Workshop held in March 2011. When a community such as Fourmile Creek also has a rich historic and cultural background the human influences makes for an even more unique atmosphere. That very relationship between the natural resources, enhanced activities and the cultural aspects of a waterfront community is a fragile balance that must be preserved, with respect for delicate shoreline ecosystems and the historic character of the waterfront and its adjoining neighborhoods.

GOAL2: Preserve, Maintain, and Enhance Historic and Cultural Resources in the Fourmile Creek Community

Objective 2.1: Emphasize historical character of Fourmile Creek.

- ❖ *Strategy 2.1.1: Implement strategies from the Fourmile Creek Area Community Redevelopment Plan to expand and enhance the historic commercial district located along the Madison Street and Shipyard Road in a way that represents the traditional mixture of uses found in a waterfront community.*
- ❖ *Strategy 2.1.2: Design and construct a gateway with landscaping and traditional brick columns at the intersection of Madison Street and Hwy 20 or Shipyard Road and Bayloop Road that incorporates Fourmile Creek's character and provides easy visibility to motorists that are not aware of the Waterfront areas such as Fourmile Creek.*
- ❖ *Strategy 2.1.3: Identify Historic Structures and/or iconic structures in the Fourmile Creek community.*
- ❖ *Strategy 2.1.4: Coordinate with the City of Freeport/Walton County Economic Development Alliance to pursue existing funding sources identified in Appendix D of this plan and to continuously update the list of sources to identify future grant programs designed to assist rehabilitation of historic structure.*

Objective 2.3: Coordinate with the City and local civic and social organizations to promote festivals along the Fourmile Creek waterfront.

- ❖ *Strategy 2.3.1: Encourage organizations to participate in having a boater's Christmas parade at Fourmile Creek where the Public could view from Fourmile Creek Park or other areas.*
- ❖ *Strategy 2.3.2: Encourage the organizers to expand the July 4 community gathering at Fourmile Creek Park to include firework displays.*

GOAL 3: Protect, Maintain, and Enhance Environmental Resources in the Fourmile Creek Community

Objective 3.1: Develop a program to address stormwater runoff and dumping of trash and debris into Fourmile Creek and its tributaries.

- ❖ *Strategy 3.1.1: Coordinate in future updates of the City of Freeport/Walton County Storm water Master Plan to ensure that stormwater mitigation projects are included in the plan and incorporated into the City's Capital Improvements Schedule.*
- ❖ *Strategy 3.1.2: Establish ongoing program to monitor and clean up dumping activities and debris in and adjacent to the bayou, creeks and wetlands.*
- ❖ *Strategy 3.1.3: Coordinate with other agencies to educate residents, business owners and visitors in Fourmile Creek and boaters on LaGrange Bayou about impacts of dumping litter and trash into the bayou, creeks and wetlands.*
- ❖ *Strategy 3.1.4: Coordinate with City of Freeport and Walton County to purchase, install and maintain baysavers/screens for outfalls to treat storm water before it enters the headwaters of Fourmile Creek.*
- ❖ *Strategy 3.1.5: Request assistance with DEP to evaluate the contamination of waters in the headwaters of Fourmile Creek that is occurring from the C&D facilities located on Hwy 20 including the Coyote Landfill and Waste Pro facilities that have had numerous violations of water quality over the past 20 years. The DEP is currently in enforcement with the Coyote East facility and issues related to iron and nitrogen are discharging directly into the Fourmile Creek headwaters. The City should arrange a meeting with DEP to discuss what influence the City may be able to have in correcting the discharge situation.*

Objective 3.2: Obtain water quality data from available sources and coordinate with the agencies that monitor water quality in Fourmile Creek to identify problem pollution areas and sources of funding to mitigate the problems.

- ❖ *Strategy 3.2.1: Pursue existing funding sources identified in Appendix O of this plan and continuously update the list of sources to include future federal, state and local programs for the funding of improvements to water quality in the Fourmile Creek community.*
- ❖ *Strategy 3.2.2: Identify potential funding sources for the development of educational and training programs relating to storm water control and water quality and for purchase and installation of storm water control and treatment devices*
- ❖ *Strategy 3.2.3: Pursue existing funding sources identified in Appendix D of this plan and continuously update the list of sources to include future federal, state and local programs for the funding of improvements to water quality in the Fourmile Creek Basin.*



HAZARD MITIGATION

Waterfronts are extremely vulnerable to natural and man-made hazards; therefore, the planning process for a waterfront community must incorporate hazard mitigation. Hazard mitigation is action taken to reduce risk to people, property, and the environment and is one of the Fourmile Creek Waterfronts Partnership Committee's highest priorities. Natural hazards include floods, hurricanes, storm surges, and erosion. Among man-made hazards are toxic waste, oil spills, and chemical run-off. Fourmile Creek is subject to both natural and man-made hazards and must be protected from the risks those carry.

GOAL 4: Reduce Risks to People, Property, and the Environment from Natural and Manmade Hazards.

Objective 4.1: Participate in the development of pre-hazard plans and programs to prevent losses to the Fourmile Creek community.

- ❖ *Strategy 4.1.1: Suggest projects to promote Fourmile Creek community resiliency for inclusion in the Walton County's Local Mitigation Strategy, such as storm water or sediment removal and prevention projects. The primary area of contamination is at the headwaters of Hwy 20 from the two landfill operations that need to be carefully monitored.*
- ❖ *Strategy 4.1.2: Coordinate with the City and Walton County to develop plans for securing boats during hurricanes that boat owners and owners of marinas would be advised to utilize prior to a hurricane. The mooring field project would enhance the safety in Fourmile Creek since there are as many as 75 large vessels that anchor up in the basin during major storm events. Damage to other boats and the Fourmile Creek bridge have been a major issue during the storm events from boats that were not adequately anchored during the storms.*
- ❖ *Strategy 4.1.3: Educate the Fourmile Creek community so residents are aware of the closest evacuation routes and shelters.*
- ❖ *Strategy 4.1.4: Add new signage in Fourmile Creek to direct residents to evacuation routes.*
- ❖ *Strategy 4.1.5: Educate property owners about the use of traditional wooden shutters and other effective means for protection from wind, and pursue grants to aid in the installation of the shutters*

Objective 4.2: Participate in the development of plans and programs for post-hazard redevelopment of the Fourmile Creek community, taking into account the preservation of historic structures.

- ❖ *Strategy 4.2.1: Establish a program to identify and acknowledge historic structures and/or iconic structures in the Fourmile Creek community.*
- ❖ *Strategy 4.2.2: Coordinate with County emergency management staff to prepare a handout that summarizes technical assistance resources available for repair and recovery after a hazard.*
- ❖ *Strategy 4.2.3: Prevent the mooring of derelict vessels in Fourmile Creek by partnering with local law enforcement agencies to identify at-risk vessels, register them in the statewide database and provide notice to vessel owners of the need for them to take action.*

Objective 4.3: Coordinate with the City and Walton County to pursue federal, state and local grants to provide funding for hazard mitigation projects and programs in Fourmile Creek after all disaster declarations by FEMA.

- ❖ *Strategy 4.3.1: Review available grant and loan programs from the FEMA Hazard Mitigation Assistance Program for applicability to potential Fourmile Creek Waterfront projects.*
- ❖ *Strategy 4.3.2: Review available grant and loan programs from the FEMA Preparedness Grant programs including but not limited to the Regional Catastrophic Preparedness Grant Program (RCPGP) which includes the Flood Mitigation Assistance and Pre-Disaster Mitigation Assistance Grants, repetitive Flood Claims and Severe Repetitive Loss programs for applicability to potential Fourmile Creek Waterfront projects.*
- ❖ *Strategy 4.3.3: Review available grant and land acquisition programs available through State agencies, Walton County Economic Development Alliance and similar funding sources for acquisition of property as potential storm water retention and treatment facilities.*

Objective 4.4: Coordinate with City of Freeport/Walton County, Coast Guard and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to regulate informal anchoring and abandoned, at-risk and derelict vessels, which may represent an environmental or community hazard.

- ❖ *Strategy 4.4.1: Provide annual update information regarding identification of potential at-risk vessels in Fourmile Creek to local law enforcement agencies.*
- ❖ *Strategy 4.4.2: Submit for the FBIP grant for removal of derelict vessels as requested by the Freeport City Council on June 28, 2012 for removal of two (2) vessels in the Lafayette Creek area.*

ENHANCEMENT OF WATERFRONT ECONOMY

Traditional working waterfronts are comprised of a variety of businesses and industries that are tied to commercial fish and shellfish harvesting and processing, involve ship building or repair, or require direct water access as a means of shipping products that are manufactured or processed on site or were transported to the site for shipping. Marinas for recreational boating purposes are also a traditional waterfront business. Like many older communities, Fourmile Creek has lost its commercial fish and shellfish industries; however, it has retained some businesses and industries that are related to shipbuilding or repair and some that are located on the waterfront for shipping purposes. There are also marinas that service recreational boaters. With numerous vacant parcels located along the Fourmile Creek waterfront, Fourmile Creek has the opportunity to enhance its traditional water-dependent businesses and industries and also expand economic development prospects to development of water-related or water-enhanced businesses. Economic restructuring and development were two of the overall top five priorities identified at the Fourmile Creek Waterfronts Florida Partnership Committee's Public Visioning Workshop in March 2012.

GOAL 5: Promote beautification of all the public facilities located on Fourmile Creek and Lafayette Creek that may encourage private investment into adjacent properties.

Objective 5.1: Coordinate with the City of Freeport/Walton County Economic Development Alliance to implement strategies, programs and projects identified in the Fourmile Creek Vision Plan that address improvements to public space areas.

- ❖ *Strategy 5.1.1: Prioritize streetscape, gateway, way finding and other improvements identified in the Fourmile Creek Vision plans and request that Walton County include funding the Budget Process to address these needs.*
- ❖ *Strategy 5.1.2: Pursue funding mechanisms listed in Appendix D of this plan for the installation of the prioritized streetscape, gateway, wayfinding and other improvements selected from the Fourmile Creek Vision Plan.*

GOAL 6: Provide opportunities for water related businesses on and near the Fourmile Creek Basin.

Objective 6.1: Provide physical improvements necessary to accommodate increased visitors to the Fourmile Creek community.

- ❖ *Strategy 6.1.1: Develop a Fourmile Creek-themed way finding signage system to direct motorists along Hwy 20, US-331, and other major roadways to the Fourmile Creek community and its waterfront amenities.*
- ❖ *Strategy 6.1.2: Create a Fourmile Creek-themed way finding signage system that will direct boaters from shoreline access points to pedestrian, bicycle and transit linkages to Fourmile Creek and Lafayette Creek.*
- ❖ *Strategy 6.1.3: Promote the creation of a Port Authority with Walton County and City of Freeport officials that could govern the implementation of a plan to attract businesses through incentives such as dock space at Fourmile Creek Park and approval of mooring slips that could be provided for sale of fresh seafood by the local commercial shrimping and fishing boat owners. Additional tasks for the Port Authority would be to create a task force for seeking dredging on the Lafayette Channel as directed by the 1890 Rivers and Harbours Act that*

required the ACOE to maintain the channel depths to the Intracoastal Waterway that leads to Freeport through the Fourmile Creek channel.

- ❖ *Strategy 6.1.4: Create a Port Authority that could seek federal funding to promote an unloading port for raw materials such as Rock, Sand, and Liquid Asphalt that could significantly reduce the costs of infrastructure that currently relies on freight by train to provide materials for all types of construction. The funding could be used to purchase property and install bulkheads with mooring facilities to the barges that would bring in raw materials to the area and could regulate costs associated with the use of the facility that would be collected to improve the infrastructure required for unloading.*

Objective 6.2: Create a Fourmile Creek marketing program that focuses on the community's historical waterfront character.

- ❖ *Strategy 6.2.1: Fourmile Creek Waterfront partnership staff will evaluate opportunities to partner with local marketing, publishing and advertising firms to develop targeted marketing pieces and programs that highlight Fourmile Creek's historic waterfront character.*
- ❖ *Strategy 6.2.2: Fourmile Creek Waterfront partnership staff will coordinate with the City of Freeport/Walton County and Walton County Tourist Development Council and VisitFlorida to develop and distribute tourism marketing materials.*

Objective 6.3: Provide maximum opportunities for fishing and boating supplies shops, maritime-related craft shops, informal marketplaces such as fish or shrimp stands, restaurants and other similar water-related and water-enhanced businesses.

- ❖ *Strategy 6.3.1: Initiate the Vision Plan recommendations to amend the City of Freeport/Walton County Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code so that they allow for more diverse, mixed-use development along and near Fourmile Creek and Bayloop Road areas*
- ❖ *Strategy 6.3.2: Initiate the Vision Plan recommendations to amend applicable provisions of the City of Freeport/Walton County Land Development Code to allow and encourage public festivals, informal marketplaces, temporary water-related special business activities, expanded home occupations and similar supplementary uses within the Fourmile Creek Waterfront area.*

Objective 6.4: Provide multimodal access from Fourmile Creek as part of a comprehensive transportation system to link the Lafayette Creek areas into the main business areas of Madison Street and Hwy 20 restaurants that run from Bayloop to US-331.

- ❖ *Strategy 6.4.1: Evaluate the sidewalk and bicycle facilities in Fourmile Creek to determine which streets have sufficient right-of-way to construct sidewalks and bicycle facilities. Based on this evaluation, prepare a sidewalks/bicycle master construction scheduling plan that prioritizes which sidewalks and bicycle facilities should be funded each year through the Walton County and City of Freeport budgeting process as well as other funding sources such as CTST with FDOT.*
- ❖ *Strategy 6.4.2: Develop a parks, green ways and trails system to provide an alternative means of access and connectivity between Hammock Bay Subdivision and Freeport Regional Sports Complex through Bayloop to the access areas on Shipyard Road and Madison Street.*
- ❖ *Strategy 6.4.3: Provide information to transient boaters about shoreline facilities such as public transportation, lodging, restaurants, shopping, and the Freeport Regional Sports Complex.*
- ❖ *Strategy 6.4.4: Coordinate with Fourmile Creek vicinity property owners to create interest in developing accessory facilities to supply bicycle, scooter, electric vehicles, etc, to boaters allowing them access to amenities in the City of Freeport and the central portion of Walton County.*
- ❖ *Strategy 6.4.5: Submit a list of priority projects for path connections to the Community Traffic Safety Team of Walton County for consideration for ranking and submitting to FDOT for funding with Safety Grant Funds.*

GOAL 7 – Provide Maximum Opportunities for Water Dependent businesses on Fourmile Creek and Lafayette Creek with changes to the Land Development Codes and City regulations that may be required.

Objective 7.1: Encourage the development of water-dependent businesses at appropriate locations along Fourmile Creek that would not be detrimental to the water quality or to the character of surrounding land uses.

- ❖ *Strategy 7.1.1: Establish regulations in the City's Land Development Code that encourage green industrial processes and practices for existing heavy industrial uses along Fourmile Creek, particularly industries with the potential to harm environmental resources.*
- ❖ *Strategy 7.1.2: Resolve future land use and zoning designation inconsistencies identified in the Walton County Future Land Use and Zoning Maps. Several changes should be made that would encourage industry to expand along the waterfront.*
- ❖ *Strategy 7.1.3: Coordinate with the City of Freeport/Walton County and all applicable regional and state economic development agencies to develop a marketing strategy to attract appropriate water-dependent businesses along Fourmile Creek such as an unloading port for raw materials that could compete with the high costs of rail delivery.*

Objective 7.2: Provide a variety of short-term and long-term mooring facilities for local, regional and international boaters to enjoy day trips and longer stays in Fourmile Creek.

- ❖ *Strategy 7.2.1: Evaluate the feasibility of developing a public mooring field in Fourmile Creek based on a review of the challenges and successes similar communities have observed from their experience with mooring fields and lessons learned from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's pilot mooring project.*
- ❖ *Strategy 7.2.2: Prepare a list of shoreline amenities that would support short-term and long-term boaters' needs, including rental shops, repair and maintenance facilities, temporary lodging (hotel) and access to the Freeport Regional Sports Complex located in Hammock Bay (**Figure 14**)*
- ❖ *Strategy 7.2.3: Create a Fourmile Creek-themed wayfinding signage system that will direct boaters from Destin and Panama City shoreline access points to pedestrian, bicycle and transit linkages to Fourmile Creek and City of Freeport/Walton County.*



FIGURE 14 – Freeport Regional Sports Complex is well within walking distance from all boatramps along Fourmile Creek including the Fourmile Creek Park and Steel Bridge Boatramp at Bayloop Road.

SECTION 5 – RECOMMENDED PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS

Create and Maintain a Matrix of Funding Sources

The funding matrix outlined below includes an initial listing of all current funding sources that could be used for the plan's implementation including Federal, State, and local funds obtained from public and private grant programs. The funding matrix briefly describes each funding source (agency or organization), the purpose of the funds or grant program, matching funds requirements, and a timetable of the grant application or budgeting cycle. The matrix shall be updated on an annual basis or when the partnership is notified of a new funding source. The objectives and strategies in the vision plan identify the need to pursue funding sources for the following activities:

1. The Florida Boating Improvement Program submittal due July 20, 2012 will be used to extend the Lafayette Creek Boardwalk by at least 400 feet at a cost of approximately \$200,000 with a 50% county match. The permits are in place to extend the boardwalk 745 feet including ACOE and DEP permits to complete the project. The overall project cost is \$450,000 and will be implemented in phases shown in **Figure 15**.
2. The Florida Boating Improvement Program submittal due July 20, 2012 was approved by the City of Freeport on June 26, 2012 to seek \$40,000 to remove two derelict vessels on Lafayette Creek.
3. Seek funding for a mooring field along the Fourmile Creek area south of the residential neighborhoods for large boats to tie off during storm events. Seek funding for permitting, design, and construction of the facilities that would be used for both barges that stage along the creek and for large vessels seeking shelter during hurricane events.
4. Purchase of waterfront property that could be used for festivals and parking near the parks.
5. Seek funding for additional stormwater

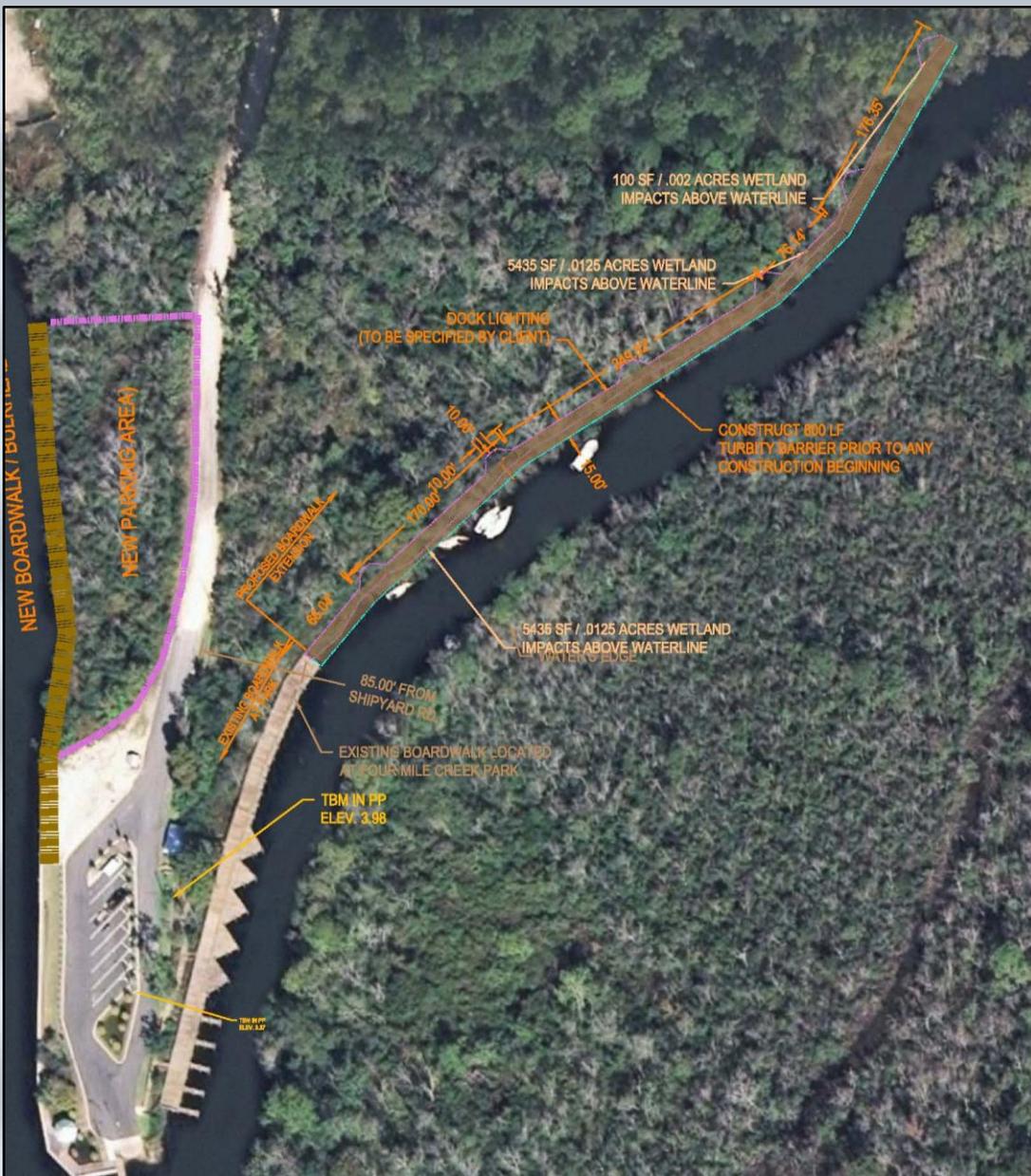


FIGURE 15 – Fourmile Creek Parking and Bulkhead expansion project approved June 26, 2012

treatment facilities in areas where Madison Street and Shipyard Road discharge directly into the Lafayette Creek basin.

6. Seek funding for permitting and construction to dredge the entire channel from the entrance of Lagrange Bayou to the turn basin near the bridge at Bayloop Road.
7. Seek assistance through Federal agencies for enforcement of the 1890 Rivers and Harbours act that requires ACOE to maintain the depth of the channel to promote industrial use of the Intracoastal Waterway that is Fourmile Creek.
8. Seek funding for design, permitting, and construction of docks along Bayloop road for rent to commercial fisherman that want to sell fresh seafood from the turn basin.

9. Seek funding for boat storage facilities that could service the needs of Hammock Bay and Marina Village homeowners as well as private citizens within the Freeport and central Walton County areas.
10. Seek funding for construction of the bulkhead on Fourmile Creek Park that would extend the parking and bank fishing an additional 300 feet north. This initiative was approved June 26, 2012 by the City of Freeport Council that directed PRI to begin survey and permitting required for development of the plans for additional parking and boardwalks as shown on **Figure 16**.
11. Seek economic development funds to purchase the Shipyard property for future festivals and additional parking.
12. Seek FRDAP funds to develop the park that is identified on Figure 13 for future access to Lagrange Bayou within the boundaries of the Vision Plan and to provide connectivity to the Bayloop bikepaths that are over 13 miles in length.
13. Seek funding for wayfinding signage in the surrounding areas including Destin and Panama City launching facilities so that direction can be provided to the Freeport Waterfront areas.
14. Seek funding for design, permitting, and construction of gateways to the waterfront areas from Bayloop Road and SR-20 since the Freeport waterfront is hidden in the neighborhood and most visitors don't know it exists.
15. Seek assistance from Economic Development Alliance to target waterfront areas to businesses and utilize the Chamber of Commerce for distribution of information on the area



**FIGURE 16 –
Fourmile Creek Park
showing the Lafayette
Creek Boardwalk
Phase II Expansion
Project**

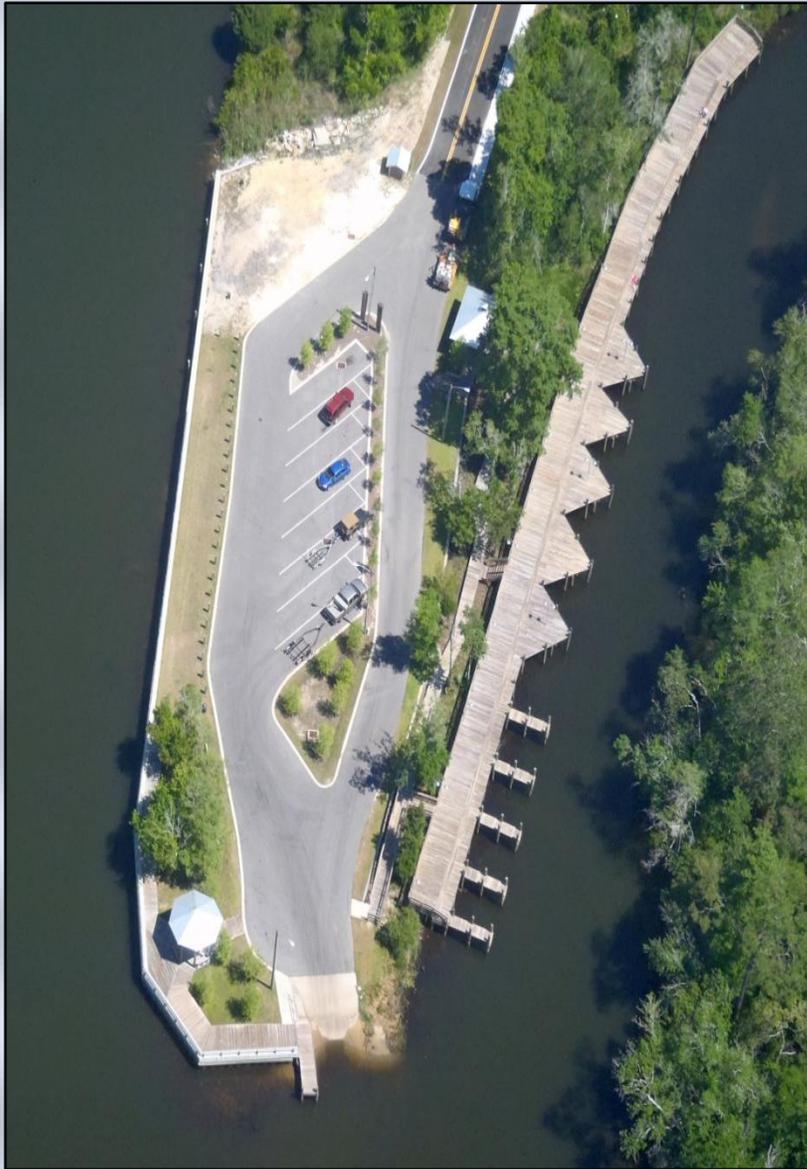


FIGURE 17 – Fourmile Creek Park Existing Conditions – Completed 2009 with 6000 square feet of boardwalks and boats slips for large vessels, new boat ramp, bank fishing bulkhead, and restrooms

Evaluated Grant Program Opportunities:

1. Florida Boating Improvement Program (FBIP) Tier II funding opportunities – This program is administered by the State Fish and Wildlife Commission and includes opportunities for docking facilities, boat ramp improvements, educational campaigns, signage and channel marker improvements, and any other improvements associated with boating. The program is fully funded and the submission is typically due in July of each year. The docking concept at Bayloop Road would be eligible under the grant program

2. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) – Several programs provide funding to implement long term hazard mitigation measures however these programs are generally not available unless a declaration is made by the county. Flood Mitigation Assistance, Hazard Mitigation Grant Programs, and Severe Repetitive Loss programs are all eligible programs after a declaration is made and may provide good opportunities for enhancement of stormwater management within the boundaries of the waterfront areas after a storm event declaration.

3. Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) – The DEP programs that would be evaluated include the Clean Vessel Act Program which funds the construction of pumpout facilities along with educational outreach and public awareness programs. The Coastal Partnership Initiative Grants provide funding for innovative local coastal management projects in the areas of resilient communities, public access, working waterfronts, and coastal stewardship. This program requires a 100% matching fund and would need to be budgeted prior to submittal

through the Walton County Grant Coordinator. Section 319 Nonpoint Source Stormwater Management Grants provide funding for prevention of TMDL discharge into waters of the state and should be evaluated for some of the current industry that adjoins Fourmile Creek that are on septic tanks.

4. Florida Recreational Development Assistance Program (FRDAP) – The FRDAP through DEP has not been funded for the past two years but will be a good source for funding for the new City Park at Marina Village that is identified as Figure 13 of the Vision Plan. The points that would be scored on the project include public access, restrooms, pavilions, bank fishing, and preservation which would be very competitive on the application when the program is funded

SECTION 6 – IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The Implementation Plan of the Fourmile Creek Waterfront Vision Plan presents in a tabular format a specific schedule of recommended programs and projects described in Section 6 that implement the goals, objectives and strategies of the Fourmile Creek Waterfront Vision Plan.

<u>ACTION REQUIRED</u>	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
1. The Florida Boating Improvement Program submittal due July 20, 2012 will be used to extend the Lafayette Creek Boardwalk by at least 400 feet at a cost of approximately \$200,000 with a 50% county match. The permits are in place to extend the boardwalk 745 feet including ACOE and DEP permits to complete the project. The overall project cost is \$450,000 and will be implemented in phases shown in Figure 15 .	SUBMIT JULY 20	SUBMIT FEB. 5						
2. The Florida Boating Improvement Program submittal due July 20, 2012 was approved by the City of Freeport on June 26, 2012 to seek \$40,000 to remove two derelict vessels on Lafayette Creek.	SUBMIT JULY 20	SUBMIT FEB. 5						
3. Seek funding for a mooring field along the Fourmile Creek area south of the residential neighborhoods for large boats to tie off during storm events. Seek funding for permitting, design, and construction of the facilities that would be used for both barges that stage along the creek and for large vessels seeking shelter during hurricane events.		SUBMIT FEB. 5						
4. Purchase of waterfront property that could be used for festivals and parking near the parks.			FRDAP					
5. Seek funding for additional stormwater treatment facilities in areas where Madison Street and Shipyard Road discharge directly into the Lafayette Creek basin.		319 GRANT						
6. Seek funding for permitting and construction to dredge the entire channel from the entrance of Lagrange Bayou to the turn basin near the bridge at Bayloop Road.	MEET ACOE	SUBMIT DEP / COE	PERMIT	PERMIT	DREDGE			
7. Seek assistance through Federal agencies for enforcement of the 1890 Rivers and Harbours act that requires ACOE to maintain the depth of the channel to promote industrial use of the Intracoastal Waterway that is Fourmile Creek.	MEET ACOE	SUBMIT DEP / COE						
8. Seek funding for design, permitting, and construction of docks along Bayloop road for rent to commercial fisherman that want to sell fresh seafood from the turn basin.		FBIP-2013						
9. Seek funding for boat storage facilities that could service the needs of Hammock Bay and Marina Village homeowners as well as private citizens within the Freeport and central Walton County areas.				DEO - 2015				
10. Seek funding for construction of the bulkhead on Fourmile Creek Park that would extend the parking and bank fishing an additional 300 feet north. This initiative was approved June 26, 2012 by the City of Freeport Council that directed PRI to begin survey and permitting required for development of the plans for additional parking and boardwalks as shown on Figure 16 .		SUBMIT NWFWM						
11. Seek economic development funds to purchase the Shipyard property for future festivals and additional parking.						DEP		
12. Seek FRDAP funds to develop the park that is identified on Figure 13 for future access to Lagrange Bayou within the boundaries of the Vision Plan and to provide connectivity to the Bayloop bikepaths that are over 13 miles in length.			FRDAP					
13. Seek funding for wayfinding signage in the surrounding areas including Destin and Panama City launching facilities so that direction can be provided to the Freeport Waterfront areas.		DEP- OTHER						
14. Seek funding for design, permitting, and construction of gateways to the waterfront areas from Bayloop Road and SR-20 since the Freeport waterfront is hidden in the neighborhood and most visitors don't know it exists.						BUDGET CITY AND COUNTY		

SECTION 7 – ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The City of Freeport and Walton County extend appreciation to the individuals that provided assistance through the vision plan development process including the following:

Department of Economic Opportunity

The funding for the vision plan development was obtained through the Department of Economic Opportunity with assistance from Julie Dennis and other staff that provided invaluable guidance and encouragement

Individual Contributors

Billy Mclean – Commercial Shrimper and waterfront land owner
Michelle Ray – Commercial Shrimper and waterfront land owner
Buddy Gentry – Owner of G&S Boats and waterfront land owner
Jim Massey – Owner of Marina Village and waterfront land owner
Mike Snell – Manager of Fisherman’s Boatyard
Eddie Farris – Planning Commission and Walton County Deputy
Sara Comander, District 4 Commissioner
Scott Brannon, District 1 Commissione



Vision Meeting Activities and Participants