

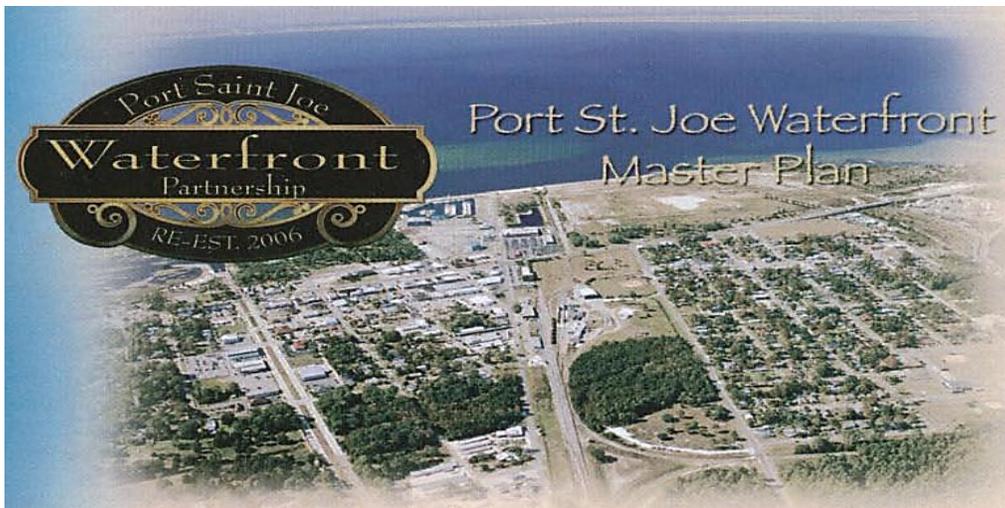


“Improving Our Community Your Way”

**FINAL REPORT
WATERFRONTS FLORIDA PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM**

**City of Port St. Joe
Year Ending August 31, 2007**

**Submitted By:
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I. Executive Summary:

Having lost the primary industry, the paper mill, Port St. Joe turned its attention to the waterfront and downtown districts, recognizing each as vital to economic survival. Improving public facilities and access to the water, creating jobs in the waterfront district, attracting eco-tourism opportunities and providing affordable housing were objectives of the community. The Florida Coastal Management Program would provide invaluable technical assistance.

The City of Port St. Joe was designated a Waterfronts Florida Partnership community in September 2005 by the Department of Community Affairs. Port St. Joe Waterfronts Florida Partnership, a collaborative effort between the City of Port St. Joe and the Port St. Joe Redevelopment Agency adopted as its mission: "Port St. Joe Waterfronts Florida Partnership will enhance and promote the unrealized potentials of our waterfront to revitalize the aesthetic, economic and cultural environment in Port St. Joe."

During the first designation year, 2006, Port St. Joe Waterfronts Florida Partnership actively engaged the community to create a vision for its waterfront. This comprehensive Master Plan would identify long-term redevelopment projects to provide residents and visitors increased access to St. Joseph's Bay; would promote water-based businesses and afford an opportunity to learn of Port St. Joe's colorful history and the integral role the waterfront played in the City's history.

In the second designation year, the Partnership worked to expand upon the concepts outlined in the Master Plan. Along the waterfront, the Partnership looked to construct a boardwalk with mini-parks and trail head facilities. Downtown, efforts to acquire and preserve the Port Theatre were undertaken.

II. Methodology:

The primary methodology for accomplishing our objectives was through public meetings and communication. Our numerous accomplishments are the result of consensus building and hard work on the part of citizens, business owners and advisors with local action groups. With public input, we were able to construct projects with broad appeal.

III. Outcome:

Port St. Joe is fostering a strong and growing commitment to revitalization. Many projects are ongoing and future projects are already being considered. In the short-term, a Farmers' Market will open in downtown Port St. Joe to invigorate the commercial corridor. After a short period, the Market can expand to the waterfront and offer consumers a chance to purchase fresh breads and seafood (for example) in a picturesque setting. The primary long-term project, Bay Walk, will complement the waterfront open-air market perfectly.

The small-scale Bay Walk constructed with private funds is a testament to the efforts of Port St. Joe Waterfronts Partnership. Because the Partnership produced a true COMMUNITY vision, private enterprise is helping to implement the project. With a funding decision expected mid-September, expansion of Bay Walk can and will continue.

This community, through its working groups, will continue to thrive and prosper due to its shared commitments.

IV. Further Recommendations:

There were countless lessons learned during this two-year period, not the least of which is the importance of consensus. Citizen input is critical to the success of an organization seeking to improve a community. Port St. Joe is a city that has experienced little to no change over a long period of time. Human nature, typically, is to resist change – to be apprehensive to that which is different. Therefore, community input was crucial for us. We were able to gain trust and respect with citizens feeling as though their voices were being heard. Change, all of a sudden, was being welcomed.

Once the community becomes excited with the concept and organization, communication is imperative. Without constant communication (regarding progress, next steps or timelines), the community interest will wane and efforts will begin to stall. This, of course, requires that the Partnership have measurable objectives and must maintain records to quantify success. Lack of documentation or milestones will make communication difficult, because you are unsure of what to report.

DCA and staff did a wonderful job of communicating throughout the designation period with Port St. Joe Waterfronts Florida Partnership. In retrospect, data collection for us was less than perfect. My only recommendation would be for DCA to fully explain the BENEFITS of data collection and to dissuade communities from viewing the reporting as a necessary evil. The reports are truly beneficial. If, somehow, that point could be stressed initially, communities could better track milestones, which would lead to improved communication and more community engagement overall.