

Waterfronts Florida Partnership Program

COMMUNITY CASE STUDIES





Waterfronts Florida Program ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Cover photos clockwise from top left: Hurricane
Dennis damage at Navarre Beach, FL (FEMA
image); Pineapple Peir, Eau Gallie, FL; Mayport, FL;
St Andrew Church, St Andrews, FL; Vilano Beach
Nature Boardwalk, Vilano Beach, FL.

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INTRODUCTION

Sunshine and sandy beaches top the list of Florida's best known assets, followed by a world class collection of natural resources that includes 1,200 miles of coastline, along with wetlands, marshes, inlets, and rivers. The waterfronts – those edge places and spaces used historically by people for commerce, leisure, and community – are part of the brand, often characterized as unspoiled, off-the-beaten path, picturesque, or quaint.

Florida's waterfronts and their inhabitants gained a champion in the mid-1990s soon after voters approved a Constitutional Amendment that weakened a key component in Florida's traditional coastal economy – commercial fishing. The Florida Department of Community Affairs established the Waterfronts Florida Partnership Program (WFPP) soon after to support community-based revitalization of waterfronts, selecting three communities in 1997 for the first designation cycle to focus on the priorities of economic revitalization, environmental/cultural resource protection, hazard mitigation, and creating public access.

By 2008, 21 coastal communities held the coveted designation as a Waterfronts Florida Partnership Community. This booklet presents the stories of these settlements, villages, and small cities, some of which have 11 years of work to their credit improving, protecting, and enhancing their waterfronts and others with barely a year's work at reversing decline of the local waterfront. The map on this page illustrates the locations of the 21 designated communities; red stars indicate those communities designated in 2007. A team of researchers visited each of the communities between April and September 2008, spoke with the program managers and citizen leaders, reviewed documents, and collected photos. Some communities are moving ahead, project-by-project; some have stalled, at least for the moment, but are working to boost the energy of the volunteer force and rekindle relationships

with local government; and others have redirected, incorporating waterfront issues within a larger constellation of local initiatives. Yet each community had a story to tell and a set of lessons learned to share.

This Introduction provides an overview to give a sense of the kinds of communities that seek designation in the Waterfronts Florida Partnership Program, what the designation means at the local level, and how the community responds. The chapter begins with a discussion about the history of the

Waterfronts Florida Partnerships, followed by community context, what the WFPP provides communities, and visioning – a must-have action plan for each community. Other sections summarize the ways that communities structure their organizations and handle the day-to-day work; the WFPP priority areas; accomplishments, and types of alliances or partnerships created to make positive change happen at the waterfront. Also highlighted is how communities handle succession – in other words, what happens to the local Waterfronts Partnership after becoming a “graduate” community. The Introduction is followed by 21 individual stories, all of which are intended to inspire leaders in other communities to revitalize this critical legacy of their hometowns. Each story is illustrated with present-day and historic photos, the latter collected from the online Florida Memory Project, and features a “Snapshot” to capture some of the key information for each community.



THE SETTING

The communities vary widely in their locations, histories, connections to local government, physical features, and demographics. The Waterfronts Florida communities are scattered along the coastline of the peninsula and the Panhandle; seven on the Atlantic, five on the southwest-south central edge near

the Gulf of Mexico, and nine in the Big Bend-Panhandle area. Eight of the communities are located in unincorporated areas of a county; the remainders are situated within incorporated cities.

Steinhatchee, Cortez, Mayport, Fernandina Beach, Oak Hill, San Carlos, Old Homosassa, Carrabelle, Apalachicola, St. Marks, Port Salerno, and Panacea all share a tradition in commercial fishing; Bradenton Beach, Daytona Beach, Fort Walton Beach, Vilano Beach, and Olde Eau Gallie are linked more with the “built” Florida environment and tourist economy while Bagdad, Port St. Joe, and Carrabelle grew up as timber and mill towns before present-day conversion to commuter or coastal fishing communities. Economies are changing: sport and recreational fishing and boating are strong in most of the communities. Kayaking, bicycling and hiking are emerging in areas such as Bagdad, Carrabelle, and St. Andrews, among others, where passive recreation and ecotourism are envisioned as a central part of the future. Waterfront access means piers for fishing or promenades at Vilano Beach, Fort Walton Beach, Fernandina Beach, Port Salerno, and Olde Eau Gallie, all of which foster retail shops more than resorts or seafood processors. For Fernandina Beach, access means retaining a view of the Amelia River along privately owned property.

Crystal River, Fernandina Beach, and Old Homosassa are located along rivers or intracoastal waterways while Steinhatchee is located at the point where the Steinhatchee River empties directly into the Gulf of Mexico. Bradenton Beach and Vilano Beach are flanked by two water bodies on each side. Bagdad is upriver on the Blackwater: boaters must pass through East Bay and Pensacola Bay to reach the Gulf. Several of the communities draw volunteers for Waterfronts revitalization from extremely small labor pools: St. Marks, Bagdad, and Panacea have estimated populations of approximately 300 residents. Some communities are tiny outposts within much larger cities or counties. The historic Village of Mayport—located within the consolidated City of Jacksonville with a population of 774,000—is also home to 300 residents.



HISTORY OF THE WATERFRONTS FLORIDA PARTNERSHIP

The WFPP evolved from research conducted after the net ban in 1994 to identify the factors that facilitated or impeded revitalization of declining waterfronts. The first communities had to meet several prerequisites: sponsorship of a local government; a vision in place; a steering committee or board; and a paid program manager to keep the projects moving. For its contributions to the local partnerships, the WFPP provided technical assistance with planning and policy – from master planning to comprehensive planning – that could be used to protect waterfront areas; small, “seed money” grants to fund planning projects, such as visioning or design guidelines; workshops

on special topics, and, of prime importance to the communities, a high level of technical assistance to help the local community develop and implement a waterfronts protection strategy. The Waterfronts Florida Coordinators listened to problems, talked through options, worked to keep the morale up, and pointed community members in the right direction to take the next step.

The economies of the first communities relied heavily on commercial fishing. By the second round of designations, the WFPP had expanded its own vision of what constitutes a waterfront. One of the designated communities was Vilano Beach, located near St. Augustine. Vilano was a planned development from the 1920s that suffered economic losses in the 1990s because of a Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) decision to re-route a bridge from the mainland away from the community’s main street. Vilano Beach’s selection paved the way for participation by Olde Eau Gallie, Daytona Beach, Fort Walton Beach, and Bradenton Beach in subsequent years.

The Program was solidified in 2005, when it was officially adopted into Florida Statutes, stating that DCA would provide “financial and technical assistance” to communities revitalizing their waterfront areas. The legislation also provided an official definition of a “Recreation and Commercial Working Waterfront”:

“...a parcel or parcels of real property that provide access for water-dependent commercial activities or provide access for the public to the

navigable waters of the state. Recreational and commercial working waterfronts require direct access to or a location on, over, or adjacent to a navigable body of water. The term includes water-dependent facilities that are open to the public and offer public access by vessels to the waters of the state or that are support facilities for recreational, commercial, research, or governmental vessels. These facilities include docks, wharfs, lifts, wet and dry marinas, boat ramps, boat hauling and repair facilities, commercial fishing facilities, boat construction facilities, and other support structures over the water.” Chapter 342.201(2)(b), F.S.

APPLICATION

Communities apply for Waterfronts Florida Partnership designation to receive technical assistance in developing regulations to protect the waterfront area as well help assistance in building partnerships for funding and planning.

The City of Apalachicola’s request for designation highlights the community’s need for technical assistance.

“... This area is experiencing great pressure from real estate speculation and development and there is a strong desire among the residents, the city government and the waterfront stakeholders to develop and implement a plan for the future of Apalachicola’s waterfront.”

Other applicants are looking to network with sister waterfront communities, and some are looking for structure – a way to get folks on the same page and decide what to change and what to keep. As an added incentive, designated communities are awarded bonus points on other state funded grant applications given their proven dedication to improve their communities and track record for successfully implementing local projects.

Some communities applied for designation because they wanted revitalization of their declining

downtowns and waterfronts – such as Port St. Joe, St. Andrews, and Crystal River. Others were afraid of becoming too successful and losing the heritage and charm they already had, such as Fernandina Beach, Cortez, and Old Homosassa. Many have tried their hand at revitalization more than once and in different ways. Several applied for Waterfronts designation more than once - in some cases, the third time was a charm. Others applied for Main Street designation, and several are within community redevelopment areas and have had varying degrees of success, depending on the levels of community and political support. All communities are subject to regular reporting requirements and oversight by the WFPP which supports local efforts and keeps the groups on target.

The motto for the program might be “Once a Waterfronts community, always a Waterfronts community.” While DCA’s financial support to designated communities is limited to the first two years in the program, the agency continues to help the graduate communities, providing the same kind of personal attention to keep the communities in the Waterfronts network. DCA is sometimes able to allocate additional funding to help implement projects in their vision plans. The WFPP sponsors quarterly Program Managers’ Meetings at various locations around the state: usually within a designated community, and sometimes in a community not affiliated with Waterfronts that might have a successful program to share. The meetings feature speakers on a range of topics important to redevelopment or protection of the waterfront, including environmental issues, disaster resiliency, and new or proposed statewide laws and regulations. Waterfronts Florida communities share information on a recent problem and solicit suggestions for resolution from the experiences of the other community program managers.

VISION

As noted, the early communities were required to have a vision in hand at application with the intent that the Waterfronts Florida Partnership Program would help with implementation. The requirements changed over the nine years since the program’s initiation. Some communities arrive with a vision, others prepare



the vision during the first year in the program, and others developed more creative means of expressing their dreams in lieu of a vision document. Daytona Beach, for example, prepared an architectural model to illustrate what the community wanted its downtown and waterfront to look like; Port St. Joe developed a graphic master plan and put it on a mass mailer to citizens to get the vision out. St. Andrews, a distinctive community within the City of Panama City, prepared a vision prior to application with funding from the Florida Coastal Partnership Initiative (CPI). The Vilano Beach Partnership developed its vision as part of a larger St. Johns County effort before designation as a Waterfronts Florida Partnership community. Some visions are faithfully followed, with the Partnership Board or Steering Committee ticking off goals and projects on a regular basis. Others have “re-visited” to reflect changes, particularly given the changes at the waterfront in some communities because of the real estate market and recent reconstruction. Other communities have abandoned their vision, either because political support has waned or because other agencies, such as a Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA), have taken on many of the physical projects.

WATERFRONTS FOCUS AREAS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Waterfronts Florida Partnership communities must incorporate the program’s four priority focus areas into their waterfront vision plans: economic revitalization, environmental/cultural resource protection, creating public access, and hazard mitigation – more recently known as “resilience.” Community projects often address more than one priority. The City of Apalachicola has received some \$29.6 million since 2003 to purchase and improve waterfront property for public access and to design and install new stormwater/water re-use systems to improve water quality. The same projects – plus implementation of the Waterfronts Florida Partnership’s vision for upgrades to a commercial dock area – also support economic revitalization.

Vilano Beach is funding development of a “Town Center” and improvements to its main street with help from St. Johns County and CRA money for public access from the Intracoastal Waterway to the Atlantic Ocean to create a business-friendly environment. Over eleven years the St. Andrews Waterfronts Partnership developed city docks available to sport, recreation, and

commercial boaters and fostered a dockside seafood market. The Partnership also developed boat ramps – with waterfront access for canoes and kayaks. The Port Salerno Commercial Fishing Dock Authority (PSCFDA), a member group of the Port Salerno Waterfronts Partnership, created docks and low-cost, low-maintenance kiosks in a high hazard area that can easily be replaced.

Some accomplishments fall into what are known as the “small wins” categories; other communities make contributions to the social infrastructure. In its early years, the Panacea group created partnerships with other community groups to improve a park and a roadside wall with a mosaic composed of scenes of the area. The same group recently set up a series of new clean-up-fix-up projects that includes an award for yard cleanup. Separately, the Panacea Partnership rallied after Hurricane Dennis in 2005 to boost the morale of the community by sponsoring a parade, importing snow, and serving up free food at the new event, which celebrated its 3rd anniversary in December 2008 and raised money for their waterfront revitalization efforts.

DAY-TO-DAY STRUCTURE AND OPERATIONS

Some of the Waterfronts Florida Partnership communities are incorporated as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. This IRS designation provides a long-term structure focused solely on waterfront issues and allows the organization to also receive grants from non-governmental sources such as foundations as well as donations from private sources. These groups operate with a board of directors, set of by-laws, and sub-committees. The “work” of the group is done in the sub-committees, which are commonly chaired by a member of the board. Four other Partnership communities are closely associated with a local non-profit, allowing for access to outside funding streams. Eight of the Partnerships were either initially or recently institutionalized in the sense that the boards function solely as an advisory group to local government.

The St. Andrews Partnership maintains a full-time program manager to work with the corporation’s board of directors, implement plans, and oversee projects. Bradenton Beach is the only other community to employ a full-time manager who works solely on implementing goals in the community’s vision plan. Some Partnerships depend on grant coordinators or



planners from local government to handle the day-to-day work, while others rely on grassroots volunteers. Five of the Partnerships maintain offices at or near the waterfront, providing a place to meet and serving as a constant reminder of the waterfront's importance to the community.

The day-to-day work of the program managers – paid or unpaid – is similar. The individual keeps up with the board or committee, schedules meetings, prepares briefing materials, and keeps up with the larger world, which usually starts with local government and local organizations. The same person generally watches for grant opportunities and requirements and is always looking for funding to implement projects and programs in their waterfront area. The program manager – or in some cases the Board or Committee Chairman – from a different tact, makes speeches, attends community functions, and develops relationships with regional and state agencies also functions as a peacemaker, working to keep internal relationships smooth and sub-committees running. These same individuals make sure that the board revisits the vision from time-to-time and, in best case scenarios, works to create a strategic plan on an annual basis.

ALLIANCES, PARTNERSHIPS AND SPINOFFS

All of the Waterfronts Florida Partnership Communities work to develop partnerships with other local organizations, local government, and regional and state agencies. Four of the communities developed a partnership with one another. St. Andrews, Panacea, Apalachicola, and Port St. Joe banded together to create the "Panhandle Peers," obtained a grant, and created a brochure that encourages travelers to follow scenic U.S. 98 to visit each of the Florida Waterfronts Partnership Communities. Other communities have talked about creating a similar sub-group by geography. At one point, several of the commercial fishing-oriented waterfronts discussed sponsoring a brochure to route tourists to communities that could include Fernandina Beach, Mayport, Port Salerno, San Carlos, and Cortez.

Daytona Beach, Fort Walton Beach, St. Andrews, and Fernandina Beach each have an active commercial district as well as a working waterfront. In some cases, these communities also sought designation under the Florida Main Street program, which provides services to expand funding and capacity-building opportunities for economic revitalization in the community's historic downtown.

CHALLENGES

Waterfront communities face many challenges. Over the last year, many communities faced significant budget cuts and, in some cases, have lost financial

support from the local government agency that sponsored them. Fort Walton Beach eliminated its program manager once it reached graduate status. The Waterfronts Partnership was encouraged first to form a non-profit corporation but the city ultimately decided to leave operations as is with the board being an advisory group to the commission. Without support from the local government – in staff or overhead costs such as paper, office space, or computers and telephones – it is difficult for the committees to carry on or remain focused. Oak Hill lost support because the retraining of the local fishermen to other jobs after the net ban generally failed and the locals moved away; although most recently the city is once again gaining interest in the Waterfronts network due to a strong citizen leader. Mayport lost local government staff support largely in part because of a battle between the Waterfronts committee and the City of Jacksonville, over a proposed cruise ship terminal in the village. Other communities are struggling with the preservation of the exact industry that Waterfronts Florida was created to help save - the commercial fishing industry. Currently, property value in Florida is assessed on its maximum potential use, not on what it is being used for today, based on comparisons to similar properties in the surrounding area. Legislation that was passed in 2005 that was meant to help waterfront property owners with tax relief through a 'tax deferral program' was generally considered a failure. In a survey conducted by the University of Florida Conservation Law Clinic, less than 20 percent of the respondents indicated interest in the tax deferral program, citing that "they have already experienced an increase in debt in large part due to rising property taxes, and are concerned that if they used the tax deferral program, their financial situation would only worsen in the long run" (http://www.law.ufl.edu/conservation/waterways/waterfronts/pdf/property_tax_deferral.pdf).

The law has also been criticized for helping to encourage and allow hotels and motels to qualify as a working waterfront use – land uses that usually edge out commercial fishermen. Cheaper seafood from foreign sources does not help the plight of the industry, and without being able to make a living doing what they know, many local fishermen have cashed out and sold their property to those who want to redevelop this "underutilized" property. However, a November 2008 ballot measure may help alleviate the working waterfront tax burden starting in 2010. Approximately 70 percent of Florida voters decided that assessments of working waterfront property should be based on current use, with "working waterfront property" being defined as:

"land used predominantly for commercial fishing purposes; land that is accessible to the public and used for vessel launches into waters that are navigable; marinas and drystacks that are open to the public; and

water-dependent marine manufacturing facilities, commercial fishing facilities, and marine vessel construction and repair facilities and their support activities.”

Additionally, Florida’s growth management laws have long prohibited increases in residential uses along what is known as the Coastal High Hazard Area which is currently defined as coastal areas subject to inundation by storm surges from a Category 1 hurricane. However, non-residential properties are not subject to this rule, and local governments have been able to change their zoning and land use to designations that allow for the construction of condominiums and hotels, limiting public access and views to the waterfront. Faced with the choice of keeping a declining, blighted waterfront or encouraging re-development and an increase in the local tax base, many communities have chosen the latter.

In spite of these pressures, some communities, like the Village of Cortez, manage – with the help of their local government – to keep the character of their community intact through the skillful use of zoning, design guidelines, and raising money to leverage grant funds to purchase waterfront property outright so that it can never be developed.

The Waterfronts Florida Program acts as a community’s advocate and ombudsman to find answers to specific waterfront issues raised by communities. Solutions to the challenges above will continue to be explored through partnerships at the state and local levels.

TAKE AWAYS / LESSONS LEARNED

Waterfronts program managers and activists in each community discussed the challenges they have faced – the short-term and the enduring, including finding funding, recruiting volunteers, and learning to navigate political systems. They were also able to put these difficulties into a framework that we have titled “Lessons Learned” – offered by the experienced partnerships in their own words to emerging leadership in other Florida communities:

- “One-on-one contact with lots of different stakeholders is important. Kids for example, get to the kids; a lot of older people won’t come to meetings – go to senior center lunches.”
- “Everything is at a local level...political and personal.”
- “Find the most effective person to send to ask for something, may be a brother, an aunt, or somebody who’s been around for a while.”

- “We spent a year selling to one bunch of commissioners, then community switched commissioners in an election and waterfronts wasn’t their thing. It’s been an uphill challenge, selling this to them.”
- Every time the elected officials change, the staff changes. It’s scary when you don’t know the people any more.”
- “Persistence can be effective.”
- “Develop – and maintain – relationships with the press.”
- “Develop – and maintain – relationships with the people that want to stop you.”
- “Ask other clubs to help you.”
- “Involve your community at the beginning.”
- “Work with your local government, follow up with the vision, let them know you’re there, these are the things we’re doing, we want you here to help.”
- “Set realist goals – goals you can meet.”
- “The four priority areas helped to keep the board focused.”
- “Have local government staff, get a long-term written commitment by local government for monetary support for a staff person – or it won’t matter.”
- “Publicize what the group is doing, no less than once a month.”
- “Keep up with the reports, the bureaucracy of the grant.”
- “Make sure you know who has the state lands submerged lands leases.”
- “We’re blazing trails, which is still a weakness. Everybody is learning something they didn’t know before.”
- “Get a liaison with the local government – but remember that staff change, they retire or move on.”
- “Keep in touch with other local government groups, get a seat for the Waterfronts group on advisory boards.”
- “Don’t be afraid of the task – everything is doable, have a good attitude.”
- “Be sure you find – and use – all of the resources that are available.”
- “The People are the most important thing – with the people nothing happens, but you’ve got to learn to get along, to unite.”
- “Don’t be afraid of opposition. Invite the loudest opponent to be a part of the committee.”

Waterfronts Florida Program Snapshots

COMMUNITY CASE STUDIES

Apalachicola

Bagdad

Bradenton Beach

Carrabelle

Cortez

Crystal River

Daytona Beach

Eau Gallie

Fernandina Beach

Fort Walton Beach

Old Homosassa

Mayport

Oak Hill

Panacea

Port Salerno

Port St. Joe

San Carlos

St. Andrews

Steinhatchee

St. Marks

Vilano Beach



APALACHICOLA



APALACHICOLA

Community Snapshot

VISION: “Maintain the unique character, scale and small-town feel of Apalachicola through support of the local seafood industry. The Waterfronts Partnership will work to preserve and promote the history and traditional commercial uses that make this district so unique.”

DESIGNATION: 2003

APPLICANT: City of Apalachicola

STATUS: Active; the Chamber of Commerce turned administration of the Partnership over the City of Apalachicola in 2007. The city, in turn, appointed a seven-member advisory committee that reports to the City Commission; the committee meets as needed by project. City staff serve as Program Managers and attend Waterfronts Florida functions including the quarterly Program Managers’ Meetings.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Key waterfront property acquisition for public spaces and parks; upgraded walkways and car parks; docks and piers repaired; renovated Battery Park marina; marketing brochures; design guidelines; named one of the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s Dozen Distinctive Destinations for 2008.

CURRENT CHALLENGES: Identification of funding; derelict vessel removal.

FUTURE ENDEAVORS: Implement Phase 1 at Scipio Creek (the Mill Pond); work to connect waterfront to off-water parks; create a kids’ water park at the waterfront; establish a waterfront site for the sale of fresh seafood; make improvements to sewer and wastewater systems to protect Apalachicola Bay.

FLORIDA ASSESSMENT OF COASTAL TRENDS DATA:

Number of Active Volunteers: 6

Public Dollars Contributed: \$12.5 million

APALACHICOLA



Apalachicola flanks the Apalachicola Bay, an estuarine system that serves as a nursery ground for shrimp and seafood harvested inshore and in the north and central reaches of the Gulf of Mexico. The Panhandle City's namesake — the Apalachicola Oyster, which is known to chefs across the nation — is harvested from the bay that is recognized as a national treasure and one of Florida's Outstanding Waters.

The City serves as the county seat of Franklin County, where some 85 percent of the land is either preserved for conservation by federal and state governments. The 12,000 or so inhabitants are divided between two cities — Apalachicola and Carrabelle, another Waterfronts Florida Community — and a string of unincorporated communities, such as Lanark Village, St. James Island, Alligator Point, and Eastpoint that mark the scenic coastal highway U.S. 98, and the offshore barrier isles of St. George and Dog Islands. With more than 200 historic homes located inside the city limits, Apalachicola joined the ranks of the

Dozen Distinctive Destinations in 2008, a title bestowed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

THE WATERFRONTS

Apalachicola and the whole of Franklin County are defined by water—the river, the creeks, the bay, the estuary, and the Gulf of Mexico. The County functioned as a major port up to and during the U.S. Civil War, with warehouses and businesses supporting shipment of cotton and goods from inland plantations to other parts of the United States and overseas. The oyster and fishing industry emerged by the 1880s, helped along by development of the ice machine by Apalachicola's own Dr. John Gorrie in 1851. His story and local grave contribute to the historical importance of the community.

Today, Apalachicola produces roughly 80 to 90 percent of the oysters harvested in Florida and is the home of the Florida Seafood Festival, where King Retsyo (oyster spelled backwards) reigns over the oldest maritime event in the state.

Oysters are hand-tonged by oystermen working from homemade wooden boats, landing the catch at the waterfront in Apalachicola, "the Miles" west of town, or alongside U.S. 98 in Eastpoint on the eastern shore, depending on time-of-year and long-term relationships with seafood dealers. Crabbers set traps in the bay and produce soft-shell crabs or "peelers" in backyard tanks. Commercial shrimpers remain offshore for extended periods of time, depending on ice or onboard-freezers to process the catch at sea, then sell at the dock. Semi-



tractor trailers and local trucks haul seafood to markets in Florida, around the Gulf Coast, and to other parts of the country. Sport and recreational fishermen plow the same waters with hook-and-line. Timber and seafood sustained the local people for generations, both declining in recent years with competition of global markets, changes in corporate business plans, government regulation, and loss of freshwater to upstream cities. Government, utilities, and work in construction and tourism contribute to the constellation of economic opportunities as the area becomes a destination for short-term and seasonal tourists interested in a water-based



REVITALIZATION: A CASE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Apalachicola's work to revitalize its waterfront reflects a continuum: the story is based on a collection of ideas, plans, and activities, some that go back to the 1980s and the town's first planner, John Myers. While the community became a Waterfronts Florida Partnership in 2003, the City itself has long been active in the planning and grant-getting sphere, the life-blood of protecting, rebuilding, and renovating public property.

Funding is bolstered in part by the potential for line item allocations from the Legislature and points awarded to communities holding state designation as an Area of Critical State Concern. The City was awarded grants over the last eight years from local, regional, state, and federal organizations to purchase waterfront buildings and open space, upgrade walkways and car parks at Veterans Park, repair Water Street docks damaged in the 2004-2005 hurricanes, and renovate the Battery Park Marina at the south edge of town.

THE WATERFRONTS FLORIDA PARTNERSHIP

experience, ecotourism, and the world class beaches off St. George Island. Apalachicola, rich with historic and cultural activities, shops, picturesque waterfront — and all within a walkable community — has its own strong draw for visitors. Tourism has been a leading economic engine in recent years.

PICTURESQUE BUT FRAGILE: THREATS TO WATERFRONT

In 1985 the oysters — and the local economy — failed after Hurricane Elena and a series of tropical storms flooded the bay with freshwater and wind-whipped waves scoured the beds. In 1994, Florida voters amended the Constitution to ban the use of most nets for seafood harvest in state waters, a decision that weakened the commercial fishing industry and the fish house/seafood processing system that maintained the working waterfronts statewide. By 2003, ad valorem taxes shot up on individual properties, fueled by real estate “flippers,” threatening small, traditional waterfront businesses. In 2005, Hurricane Dennis damaged oyster bars and destroyed waterfront buildings and processing equipment. Then the harmful algal bloom known as red tide broke out, closing the bay to harvesting and leaving behind local damages that, compounded by the wreckage of the storms, tallied more than \$40 million.

The Apalachicola Bay Chamber of Commerce partnered with the City of Apalachicola to seek designation as a Waterfronts Florida Partnership Program in 2003 at the height of the nationwide real estate run up. The City's application painted a picture all too familiar to coastal communities in that economic period:

“...This area is experiencing great pressure from real estate speculation and development and there is a strong desire among the residents, the city government and the waterfront stakeholders to develop and implement a plan for the future of Apalachicola's waterfront.”

The area of interest is bounded by Water and Commerce Streets on the east, 6th Street on the west, and the two marinas — one known for sport and recreational boats and another for commercial vessels — to the south and north. The waterfront restaurants, hotels, a Coast Guard outpost, and seafood processors busy with the buying and selling of fish, oysters, shrimp, and crabs all frame Veterans Park, the current centerpiece for revitalization and a part of the walkable downtown.

The Waterfronts Committee first encouraged property owners to think about what they could do with their properties, individually and collectively; to

think about reasons to stay in business instead of selling out to waterfront development; and to think about how to preserve a place at the waterfront for offloading fish. This work led to the formation of a Waterfront Property Owners Committee.

By August 2004, after a year of committee and sub-committee meetings, the Waterfronts Group was ready for broad-based community contact. The scheduled public workshop drew in 80 individuals involved in the development of a common vision, and more came for subsequent meetings.

The Partnership initiated work to revitalize the Scipio Creek marina area at the north end of the waterfront to add a restaurant, dock space, and a market for selling seafood directly from the boats. In 2006, the group worked through the City Commission and obtained a \$50,000 grant from the Governor's Office of Tourism, Trade, and Economic Development (OTTED) to consider the feasibility of haul out services for large commercial and recreational boats and yachts.

The Partnership also produced "soft changes" that strengthened the social infrastructure beyond the traditional business of revitalization by speaking in favor of the creation of an independent Seafood Advisory Committee, which in 2008 spearheaded public acquisition of waterfront property at Two Mile to preserve a seafood landing area for oystermen. The Partnership worked to bring disaster planning for historic homes to the attention of local government,



Photo: Paul W. Puckett www.flickr.com/photos/paulstravelpics

participating in a survey of buildings conducted by 1000 Friends of Florida. On a regional scale, the group participated in "The Panhandle Peers," a collection of Waterfronts Florida Partnerships, to market Northwest Florida as a destination.

SUSTAINING THE WATERFRONTS INITIATIVE

The Chamber of Commerce stepped back from the Waterfronts Partnership and passed leadership off to the City Commission in 2007. In turn, the commissioners appointed a six-member Waterfronts Working Advisory Committee to oversee the implementation of the community vision, including the start of Phase 1 that would make improvements to the Scipio Creek dock and set up haul out services. Other projects for 2008 included continuation of renovations at Battery Park Marina and design and construction of renovations at Riverfront Park that include a 420-foot boardwalk/pier to create new space for offloading seafood from commercial boats. The City also has plans to begin to tie the waterfront park areas to off-water parks such as the Three Service Men South Veterans Memorial. The City contracted the Fanning Institute at the University of Georgia to develop visions of the public waterfront, with an eye toward landscape, physical improvements, and historical design.

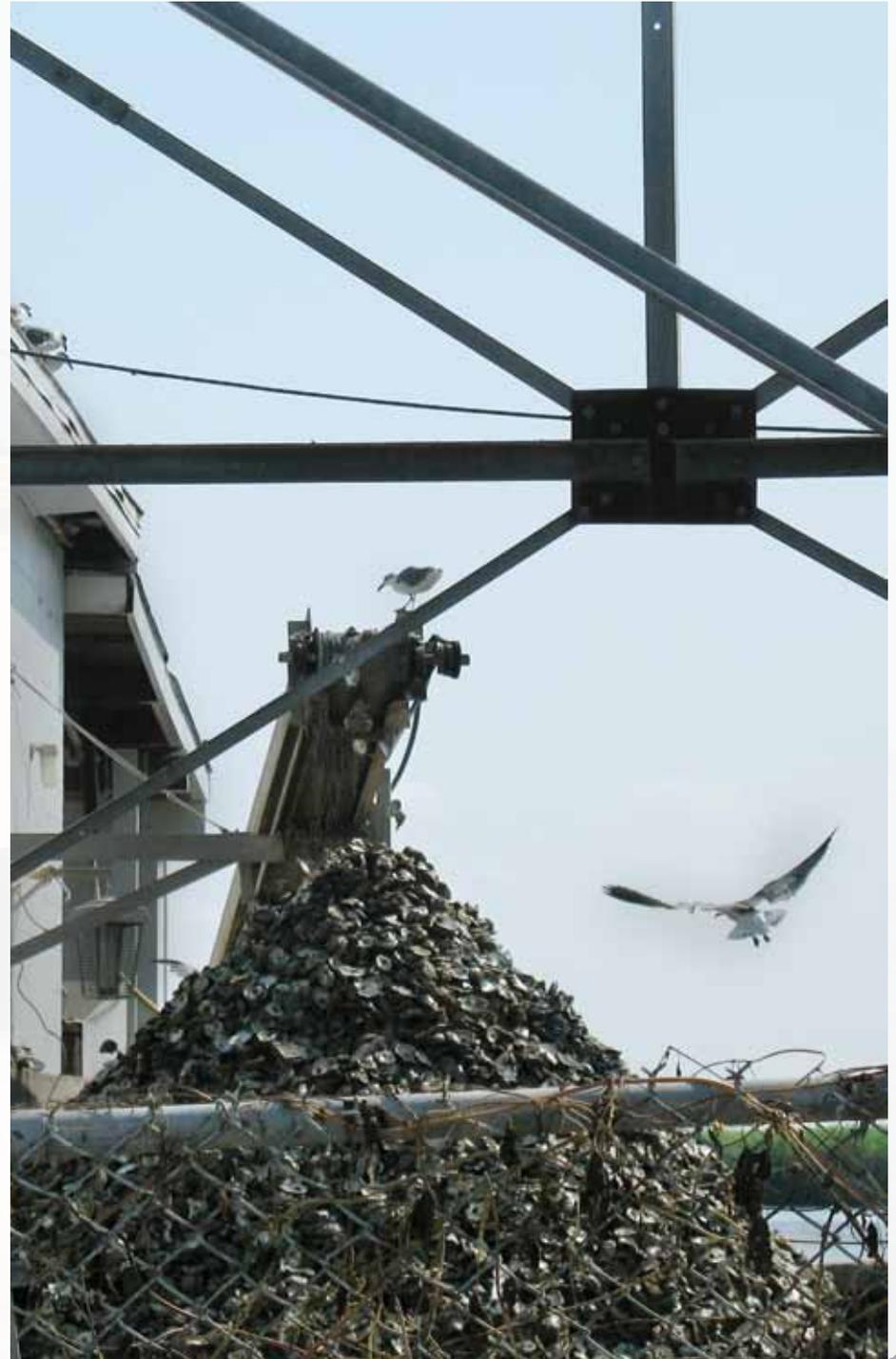


Two separate initiatives — one sponsored by the City, the other by waterfront property owners — focus on updates to the local comprehensive plan. The City, which is an Area of Critical State Concern, will receive technical assistance from the Florida Department of Community Affairs to prepare its Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR) for the plan, which has not been updated since 1991. The recommendations will resolve, among other things, conflicts between the comprehensive plan and the land development code as applied to the waterfront area. The goal is to maintain a historic working waterfront district in the City of Apalachicola. Separately, the property owners, a continuation of the Waterfronts Committee by the same name, hired a planner to conduct research and draft an economic development element for the comprehensive plan, which can be taken into consideration by the Commission.

CHALLENGES

The biggest challenge in Apalachicola, as in most communities, is money. Where can the City get the funding to take on the next phase of the vision, the next project? Beyond the dollars and cents of buying, improving, and managing waterfront property, the City continues to experience problems with derelict vessels — the sunken or half-sunken boats abandoned by owners. Removal can be difficult: owners have to be located and notified, in some instances a process that delays other projects. Yet the City moves on with its long-term vision melded with the Waterfronts Partnership plans, underscoring what could be the motto for waterfront revitalization in Apalachicola — steady as she goes.

“...This area is experiencing great pressure from real estate speculation and development and there is a strong desire among the residents, the city government and the waterfront stakeholders to develop and implement a plan for the future of Apalachicola’s waterfront.”



BAGDAD





BAGDAD

Community Snapshot

VISION: “A beautiful and safe community closely connected to the water, the Village of Bagdad is a residential community committed to maintaining and enhancing its unique historic character and natural resources. Recreation and cultural opportunities abound, and small businesses complement the natural and historic character of the area. Bagdad residents enjoy a quality of life that fosters pride, welcomes visitors, and encourages families to remain for generations. ”

DESIGNATION: 2005

APPLICANTS: Blackwater River Foundation and Santa Rosa County

STATUS: Active; committee and sub-committees meet regularly; Partnership formed a separate non-profit corporation in 2007 to work solely on waterfront issues.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Update to Land Development Code clarifying Historic Zoning District development regulations, creation of design guidelines and conservation overlay; Mill Site Park Master Planning; Community Lighting Program; Vegetation survey of Bagdad’s waterfront; Creation of the Bagdad Front Porch Art Stroll; Adoption and Development of the Ollinger & Bruce Shipyard Trail Pocket Park; Bagdad Community Award Program for Beautification and Historic Preservation; Community-wide Cleanups; Development of Intensive Outreach Program to Enhance Public Participation.

CURRENT CHALLENGES: Need for additional volunteers; seeking funding to complete projects in vision plan.

FUTURE ENDEAVORS: Waterfront District Master Plan; construction of Bagdad Heritage Trail; streetscaping.

FLORIDA ASSESSMENT OF COASTAL TRENDS DATA:

Number of Active Volunteers:	25
Volunteer Hours Contributed:	20,735
Public Dollars Contributed:	\$5.2 million
Private Dollars Contributed:	\$2.5 million

BAGDAD



with the state, eventually donated the 20-acre waterfront tract to the State of Florida for use as a park, now known as the Mill Site Park.

The once industrialized waterfront stands vacant today. What buildings remain have been damaged by hurricanes and vandals, and plans to turn the site into a community park were delayed by Hurricanes Ivan and Dennis. The site is littered with debris and barricaded by chain link fencing, gates, and locks. The Partnership and Santa Rosa County developed a master plan which will guide the eventual development of the park.

The present-day village is a mix of one and two story houses, mostly frame; some historic, all clustered under a heavy canopy of live oaks draped with Spanish Moss. People fish and put in boats at Oyster Shell Pile Boat Landing. Churches, an elementary school, and the Bagdad Volunteer Fire Department bespeak community life. Many of the people have been here for generations. Residents old and new like the character of the community — the feel of a small, off-the-beaten-path village with the absence of big box stores, and where people know one another by name.

The Village of Bagdad lays claim to a rich waterfront history told in many chapters, each reliant on access to natural resources and the waterfront. The community grew up as a mill town, dependent on freshwater from Pond Creek for power and the Blackwater River's link to the Gulf of Mexico for shipping. Lumber mills and shipyards appeared in this Florida Panhandle settlement by 1760, creating an infrastructure for factories and freight handling operations that sustained residents for more than 150 years. The waterways were the lifeblood for all industrial activity – from powering steam engines to transporting goods throughout the world.

After years of decline, the 1970s saw a revival on the Bagdad waterfront when a concrete plant set up shop to make pre-stressed concrete products at the old lumber mill site located at the confluence of Pond Creek and Blackwater River. During the 1990s asphalt producers used the site for production but departed after a series of problems and legal action linked to alleged pollution and destruction of natural resources. The owners, as part of a global settlement



The lack of a modern, local economic base is an issue in Bagdad, which serves as a bedroom community for nearby Milton and Pensacola. While no one foresees revitalization of the industries that created the village, locals hope to take a “non-consumptive” approach to draw attention to the area’s abundant natural resources through its heritage and ecotourism, perhaps drawing in small shops, a seafood restaurant, and a bed and breakfast to complement the few existing businesses.

HISTORY OF THE WATERFRONTS FLORIDA PARTNERSHIP

Bagdad needed a way to envision and set a path toward a positive future of the village. Yet, when community projects were discussed, they were met with skepticism and often viewed as items on someone’s private agenda or haphazard attempts to control community process.

Enter the Waterfronts Florida Partnership Program, which recognizes visioning as the catalyst for change within a community. A local non-profit organization — the Blackwater River Foundation — partnered with the Santa Rosa County government to seek the designation in 2005, with the hope of developing a community-based vision to revitalize the waterfront area and protect the existing Bagdad National Register Historic District.



The Partnership established a steering committee of 20 and hired a program manager to oversee and manage the day-to-day business. With an eye to the past, the group worked to involve the community. They established a separate, ad hoc “visioning committee” to guide development of the plan and to solicit broad-based public participation. The committee staged a series of small group sessions as orientation to maximize involvement, define the process and build trust.

The Partnership and its predecessor, the Blackwater River Foundation, began to establish working relationships throughout the broader Santa Rosa County community soon after designation. Invitations went out to civic organizations, churches, the fire department, and the elementary school within the program area. Members of the Partnership met with Santa Rosa County officials and made presentations to the County Commission and the City Commission in nearby Milton. The committee mailed invitations to property owners, posted notices in public areas, published articles in community newspapers, and sent volunteers house-to-house to spread the word about the upcoming visioning. The Partnership extended office hours, inviting those who could not attend meetings at scheduled times to drop by when convenient.

The hard work paid off. At its first meeting, the Partnership welcomed dozens of village residents and community groups, as well as numerous representatives from Santa Rosa County, the City of Milton, state agencies, Main Street Milton, the West Florida Regional Planning Council, and The Nature Conservancy.

Nearly 200 people took part in the visioning process. They expressed concerns that focused on guidelines for the historic district, environmental protection for the previously industrialized waterfront, opening now-closed waterfront public lands, and recovery after hurricanes. The Mill Site Park was identified as the focal point for a hoped-for ecotourism waterfront economy, in part because of its proximity to thousands of acres of public lands and waterways. The committee staged a separate visioning workshop for the Bagdad Mill Site Park to accommodate specific interest in the area. The creation of a cohesive, all-inclusive community vision plan is credited with defusing criticism and developing support for new project ideas.

The Waterfronts Partnership worked closely with various Santa Rosa County agencies to accomplish the following actions:

- Develop the Bagdad Conservation Overlay District, creating architectural guidelines for the historic district that includes zoning standards tailored to various parts of the Village to underscore the community's distinctive elements.
- Work with the Santa Rosa Sheriff's Office to explore options available to curb crime in Bagdad by creating a lighting and signage program that is credited with a decrease in Village crime.
- Held pre-visioning meetings to develop traffic calming options that deters speeding through the Village.

In 2007, the Partnership adopted a one-acre riverfront parcel from the Northwest Florida Water Management District adjacent to the Oyster Shell Pile Boat Landing to develop a passive-use pocket park. Volunteers, in partnership with Santa Rosa County, cleared the land and built a picnic pavilion in 2008. Native trees have been planted and a split rail fence set up to define the park beside the Blackwater River, which is designated as one of Florida's Outstanding Waters.

The people of Bagdad are determined to maintain the residential atmosphere of the Village while encouraging development of a small base of commercial activities related to ecotourism. The Partnership intends to develop a master plan for the Bagdad Mill Site Park and the surrounding waterfront area to identify commercial activity compatible with waterfront recreation and the Village's quality of life. The Partnership with local government paid off in other ways. In addition to providing administrative and professional services for the Waterfronts Committee, the County waived permitting fees and provided labor for projects that included relocation and installation of signs, construction of a picnic pavilion, and roadway improvements.

The people of Bagdad are determined to maintain the residential atmosphere of the Village while encouraging development of a small base of commercial activities related to ecotourism.



SUCCESSION

At the end of the two-year designation cycle, the Bagdad Waterfronts Florida Partnership recommended creation of a non-profit organization focusing exclusively on implementation and extension of the Waterfronts vision. The Partnership's steering committee served as the initial board of directors for this inclusive new organization. The Blackwater River Foundation transferred all grant assets to the Bagdad Waterfronts Florida Partnership. The Board of Directors includes a Santa Rosa County planning official, the district's County Commissioner, representatives from civic groups, and many residents. All meetings remain open to the public and decisions and recommendations are made with broad community input.

CHALLENGES

The historic district was a lightning rod for disagreement in Bagdad throughout the first year of the Waterfronts Partnership. Soon after designation, a cadre of Bagdad residents petitioned the Santa Rosa Board of County Commissioners to remove the Village from the National Register of Historic Places, a designation that had been in place since 1987. The request included elimination of all development regulations attached to land within the historic district. The Commission unanimously tabled the request until after completion of the Waterfronts Partnership visioning process. The development of the Bagdad Village Historic Conservation Overlay District emerged from that work.

Like many groups in small communities, the Bagdad Partnership is long on ideas and perpetually short on money, yet they persist, reaching beyond the waterfront to meet the needs of the whole community and to recruit additional volunteers. In 2008, the Public Access Committee began to prioritize items from the vision plan for the Mill Site Park, which included tasks such as setting goals and actions to reduce invasive plants and replant native flora and finding funding to get the engineering work done. Beyond the mechanics of organizing and getting the work done, the Partnership and its members maintain an enthusiasm and energy for the future of their village.





BRADENTON BEACH



Photo: dara caudill/islandphotography.org

BRADENTON BEACH

Community Snapshot

W.A.V.E.S.: Waterfronts: Accessible, Viable, Ecological, Sustainable

VISION: “Bradenton Beach is a small, friendly island community that values the civic pride of both permanent and seasonal residents, maintains its “Old Florida” charm, and respects its bountiful natural resources. History, hospitality and spirit are the hallmarks of our thriving waterfront, offering ease of mobility by land and sea.”

DESIGNATION: 2005

APPLICANT: City of Bradenton Beach

STATUS: Active; meets at least once a month. The W.A.V.E.S. Committee combined with the Scenic Highway Committee in 2007 to become Scenic WAVES.

PARTNERS: Scenic Highway; CRA; Island Chamber of Commerce; Manatee County’ FDOT; Manatee/Sarasota MPO; Sarasota Bay Estuary Program; Historic Bridge Street Merchants Association; Anna Maria Island Historical Society; FWCC.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Visitor’s Guide; Cloth Bag Project; parking master plan; “Enviroscape” traveling stormwater education program; “Trolley~Up” campaign; Eco Expo; gateway enhancement; shoreline restoration; installation of biodegradable “doggie bags” to reduce pet-waste runoff into the bay.

FUTURE ENDEAVORS: Recreational Boating Master Plan; Scenic Byways plan update; Communities for a Lifetime.

FLORIDA ASSESSMENT OF COASTAL TRENDS DATA:

Number of Active Volunteers:	15
Public Dollars Contributed:	\$1.6 million
Private Dollars Contributed:	\$3.8 million

BRADENTON BEACH



No matter where you stand, you are never more than 350 feet from a waterway.

The City of Bradenton Beach stretches four miles along the southern end of Anna Maria Island as a gateway to the Gulf of Mexico. Beach-goers head for the sugar sand beaches, and boaters ply the waters of Anna Maria Sound and Sarasota Bay. The community of some 1,500 persons is located in Manatee County and is known for tourism and beachside homes for permanent and seasonal residents.

The modern-day economy of the City is linked to tourism. The first hotel here was built in 1906. The community was accessible only by boat until 1922 when the first bridge was constructed between the mainland and the island. Originally known as Cortez Beach, Bradenton Beach eventually became the center of commerce on Anna Maria Island, sporting a grocery store, gas station, a dance hall, a bathhouse, and an inn. A portion of the original wooden bridge serves today as a community fishing pier – located at the end of the aptly named Historic Bridge Street.

W.A.V.E.S. – THE FIRST WATERFRONTS COMMITTEE

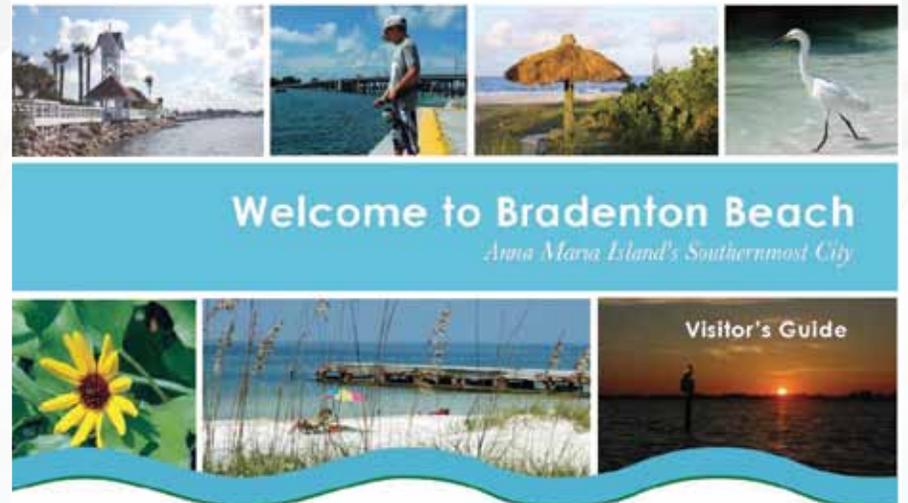
The City of Bradenton Beach – the entire five square miles of the municipality – was designated as a Waterfronts Florida Community in 2005. The committee – known as W.A.V.E.S., an acronym for “Waterfronts: Accessible, Viable, Economical, and Sustainable” — worked with a program manager, who served

simultaneously as an elected official during the first two years of the partnership, to develop a vision, mission, and action plan.

The vision reflects the residents’ intent to be known as “a small, friendly island community that values the civic pride of both permanent and seasonal residents, maintains its “Old Florida” charm, and respects its bountiful natural resources.” Treasures and dreams identified in Bradenton Beach focused on access to the water and waterfront – by foot, boat, and automobile – and protection of natural resources and residential areas. The vision also considered “possible but undesirable futures;” including:

- We become a privatized, gated, unaffordable community with fewer permanent residents and less community pride and involvement;
- There has been a loss of historical structures and everything is brand new; and
- We don’t want to drive down the street, can’t see the water and can’t tell we are in a beachfront community.

With technical assistance from DCA, W.A.V.E.S. designed and published a visitor’s guide to the city, highlighting tourist attractions that focus on the natural amenities the community has to offer. The guide promotes bird, dolphin,



and manatee watching, biking on the multi-use trail that runs along the beach, kayaking, and scuba diving at the Regina Shipwreck Underwater Archeological Preserve, as well as education information for tourists regarding sea turtles and the “how to” for disposing of trash, filling holes, and refraining from using flashlights or shining headlights on the beach.

The committee initiated programs to market itself and the goals of the vision. The 4th annual Eco – Expo was held in March 2008. The expo focused on environmental issues such as water conservation, sea turtles, wildlife, biodegradable products, native landscaping, and water quality. The group added a native plant sale to last years event; local vendors offered plants and information to help attendees take the guess-work out of finding drought-tolerant, native plants for landscaping. The committee also co-hosts the Bridge Street Festival, where the City’s main street is closed to vehicular traffic and open for local merchants to sell their wares on the sidewalk, where musicians and artists line the street.

Individual establishments and merchants also work to promote the Bradenton Beach area. The Beach House restaurant, whose owner is a committee member, hosts an annual “Sand Blast” featuring a sand sculpting competition. Proceeds from the competition go to Keep Manatee Beautiful, a local offshoot of the Keep America Beautiful program that organizes volunteers to participate in litter cleanups, outdoor beautification projects, and tree and flower plantings.

W.A.V.E.S. used the “Girl Scout” approach to increase membership and meeting attendance: members encouraged each other to “bring a friend.” The start-up group, comprised of local business owners, residents and at least one journalist who reported committee activities in the local newspaper, met at least monthly.

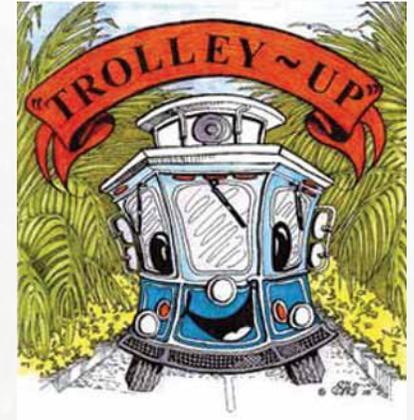
SCENIC WAVES

The original W.A.V.E.S. committee merged in 2008 with Bradenton Beach’s Scenic Highways Committee to form the “Scenic W.A.V.E.S. Partnership Committee,” which serves as a “super” advisory board to the City Commission. The group functions with co-chairs, consisting of one person from each of the original groups. The program manager, who worked with W.A.V.E.S., stayed on as a full-time employee to organize capital projects, grants, and meetings related to the City’s Community Redevelopment Area.

While the timing of projects sometimes overlaps the organizational shift, the Scenic W.A.V.E.S. committee recently obtained partial funding from the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program for two of its



signature public awareness programs: the use of cloth bags instead of plastic and the pet waste eradication project. The cloth bag program seeks to eliminate the use of plastic shopping bags in the City, particularly on the beaches. The cloth bags showcase the W.A.V.E.S. logo on the front as well as local vendor sponsors. Scenic Waves installed pet waste “disposal stations” that offer biodegradable bags to pet owners in areas with high dog-walking traffic.



The group partnered with the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program, Sierra Club, and Manatee County Volunteer Services to remove 12,000 pounds of concrete rubble and replace it with salt marsh cordgrass at the Herb Dolan Neighborhood Park. The new grass beds provide additional marine habitat stabilization of the shoreline.

Through a DCA technical assistance grant, Scenic W.A.V.E.S. also hired a consultant to conduct a parking study for the CRA to ensure accessibility to local businesses. Once completed, the committee weighed the options and decided to pursue a “Trolley~Up” campaign, where signage and communication with the business community would be improved to promote the use of the trolley that provides service along Anna Maria Island from Holmes Beach to St. Armands Circle and downtown Sarasota. While public parking is available at the local beaches, the community wanted to reduce the number of cars that use the road and park on nearby neighborhood streets – yet, at the same time, support the growth of the local economy. A local artist donated her time and talent to sketch the logo for the campaign.

The Bradenton Beach Partnership initiated – and maintains – many accomplishments. The Partnership’s new organizational structure will allow for the Partnership to expand the list of community improvements. Upcoming projects for the City and Scenic W.A.V.E.S. include consideration of a mooring field, development of a recreational boating master plan, an update to the Scenic Highway Corridor Management Plan, and boat launches for non-motorized craft.

CARRABELLE





CARRABELLE

Community Snapshot

VISION: “Carrabelle is a community that cares about our neighbors and our environment. We are committed to protecting, preserving, promoting and enhancing:

- Our cultural and historical resources
- Our waterfront environment
- Our aquatic ecosystem
- Our access to the waterfront
- Our unique history, character and sense of community

We are equally committed to:

- Working to sustain marine industries and
- Enhancing public safety and
- Creating an environment for economic growth and prosperity”

DESIGNATION: 2007

APPLICANT: City of Carrabelle

PARTNERS: Carrabelle C.A.R.E.S.; Friends of the Carrabelle Waterfront.

STATUS: Active; Steering Committee and Sub-Committees meet regularly.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Establishing the Carrabelle Waterfronts Florida Partnership office at the waterfront; wharf-side improvements for accessibility and education; historical resources survey grant

FLORIDA ASSESSMENT OF COASTAL TRENDS DATA:

Number of Active Volunteers:	45
Volunteer Hours Contributed:	11,329
Public Dollars Contributed:	\$1.8 million
Private Dollars Contributed:	\$112,000

CARRABELLE



The City of Carrabelle is located in Franklin County, some 80 miles south of Tallahassee and 80 miles east of Panama City. The town of 1,300 is defined by the Carrabelle, Ochlocknee, New, and Crooked Rivers, the St. George Sound and the Gulf of Mexico. The community's way-of-life is tied to its natural resources. The timber industry began to thrive after the Civil War, continuing in some form and varying in intensity into modern times and characterized recently by corporate plans for large scale land development. The City and other parts of coastal Franklin County are known for production of seafood and for easy access to the Gulf for sport and recreational fishing. Carrabelle was known in the 1950s for party boats that carried tourists offshore for day-long fishing expeditions. Carrabelle is the last deepwater port near the eastern terminus of the protected Gulf Intracoastal Waterway that begins at Brownsville, Texas.

Often described as unspoiled, Carrabelle straddles U.S. 98, a designated Scenic Byway that winds its way along the Florida Panhandle in an area known as the Forgotten Coast. The City is situated between Apalachicola to the west and Panacea to the east, both designated Waterfronts communities. Low, single and two-story homes prevail, located near the highway with commercial buildings

or perched atop a series of ancient dunes. Newer structures claimed parts of the waterfront and some off-water locations over the last 10 years, jutting two- to three-stories into the sky to meet flood height restrictions imposed on new coastal construction, providing second homes or short-term rentals for tourists. Three seafood processors remain active in the City, each operating at off-water locations. One packs and ships shrimp and fish, another is licensed to shuck and sell raw oysters, and the third handles clams grown on leased beds at Alligator Harbor at the eastern edge of the County.

Most of the commercial shrimp boats have moved on in recent years as waterfront property once used for tie-ups was sold for marinas and/or housing. An eastside stretch remains home to two or three captains who anchor at abandoned piers. Another shrimper purchased waterfront property to secure a place for his boats, selling seafood nearby at The Fisherman's Wife, a tiny establishment located alongside U.S. 98.

A Coast Guard station sits at the end of Marine Street on the east side of the river, sharing a spit of land with an Air Force defense tracking outpost. Nearby City-owned docks, built in recent years with state grant money, provide landside fishing for non-boaters and tie-up space for sport/recreational boats. Traditional dock space was lost on the west side of the river circa 2004, when state-owned property at Timber Island was sold to a land development company. The remaining island waterfront provides a county boat ramp, condo development with a restaurant, a major marina, landing space for law enforcement and an off-water site for dry stacks and a boat repair yard.

FROM FRIENDS OF THE WATERFRONT TO WATERFRONTS FLORIDA

Carrabelle has faced dramatic changes in recent years. The frenzied pace of real estate development in the early 2000s led to discussions about height restrictions, changes in the zoning codes, and questions about what to do with the waterfront. The local Chamber of Commerce and a developer conducted separate visioning processes within a year or two of one another, neither of which was accepted by the City Commission. The groundwork for a third vision — with a goal fixed on revitalizing the waterfront and the entire local economy — began in 2006 with a group known as Friends of the Carrabelle Waterfront. The 16-member steering committee met every couple of months to consider what could be done. Committee members represented the local Chamber of

Commerce, the library, the historical society, and a non-profit organization known as Carrabelle C.A.R.E.S. In 2007, the group partnered with the City of Carrabelle to apply for — and achieve — designation as a Waterfronts Florida Community. In all, the Carrabelle Waterfront Partnership sponsored three town hall meetings, mailed out questionnaires, and sent retired engineers and boat builders to Carrabelle boat ramps to find out what boaters wanted. The group kept the nautical heritage of the community as it worked toward completing its vision, “Charting a Course for the Carrabelle Waterfront,” which was completed in 2008.

The Partnership shows a strong interest in finding a way to make a place for commercial as well as sport/recreational fishing at the Carrabelle Wharf. Preservation of the commercial seafood industry — or at least its place at the waterside — is a challenge here, where waterfront real estate still commands a price far and above the revenue generated by a food-producing industry. The idea is to make the dock space inclusive, to preserve the fishing heritage and culture and to retain space for other uses including transient boaters and non-motorized water craft such as kayaks, paddleboats, and canoes. The group is also interested in a yacht basin to support the larger boats that ply the Intracoastal Waterway and to integrate the waterfront and off-water economies, perhaps with the brand “Carrabelle by land, Carrabelle by sea.”

THE PRACTICALITIES OF PARTNERSHIP

The Carrabelle Waterfronts Partnership office has waterfront access. The Partnership office, staffed by the program manager and an administrative assistant, is located in a tiny dock master’s house perched over the water alongside a walkway, ramp and dock. The City Commission pays for the rent, water, sewer, and phone. The Carrabelle City Commission contracts with Carrabelle C.A.R.E.S., a non-profit organization, for administration of the Carrabelle Waterfronts Florida Partnership.

The Partnership functions through a set of by-laws designed to make sure that the group’s work is done in the committees. The Board of Directors serves as the strategy team and decision makers, and, just as

importantly, intends to act as a catalyst, convener, and consensus builder for the community-at-large. The Partnership draws volunteers from a pool of long-time residents and newcomers, many of whom are retirees with expertise in research, engineering and/or business. Locals include a banker, a representative from the Chamber of Commerce, and a commercial shrimper who owns waterfront property.

SUCCESSION

As the second year of designation began, the Partnership looked back and saw the future. The group applied for and received grants to upgrade parts of the Carrabelle Wharf to provide accessible dockage, a fish cleaning station, and an historical information kiosk, seagrass restoration along the sea wall and other waterfront amenities. They also won funding to survey and inventory historical and cultural resources within the City.

With those projects funded, the Partnership began looking for financial assistance to purchase and restore waterfront property along Marine Street to develop a working waterfront that includes commercial dockage and exhibits related to the commercial fishing and shrimping industry. The group is also seeking grants to buy an environmentally sensitive and degraded area known locally as “the frog pond,” located within the designated area to restore as conservation wetlands. With the vision and implementation plans in place and active projects on the board, the Partnership expects to work toward the organization’s long terms goals and the question of how to maintain Carrabelle’s Waterfront Partnership beyond the initial two-year designation.





CORTEZ



CORTEZ

Community Snapshot

MISSION: “The mission of the Cortez Waterfronts Ronda Committee is to protect and maintain the values and neighborhood spirit of the Village of Cortez by guiding change in a way that preserves our community and our commercial fishing heritage.”

DESIGNATION: 1999

APPLICANT: Manatee County

STATUS: Inactive as Waterfronts Partnership; still participates in state Waterfronts network.

PARTNERS: 1000 Friends of Florida; Manatee County Planning Department; Manatee County Clerk of Court; Florida Institute of Saltwater Heritage (FISH); Cortez Historical Society; the Selby Foundation; FDOT; local fishing families and residents of Cortez.

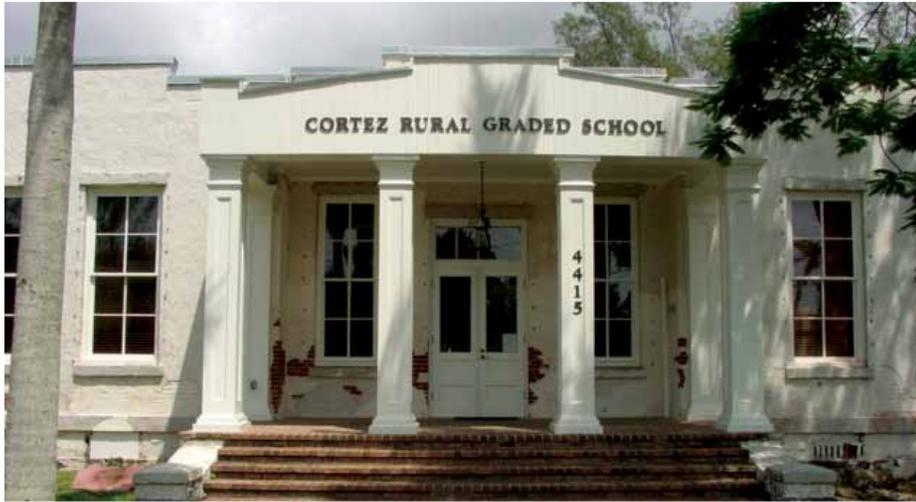
KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Preservation and restoration of the Burton Store and 1912 School; purchase of 100 acres for the FISH preserve; removal of invasive exotics from preserve property; zoning code overlay and design guidelines; establishment of the Florida Maritime Museum at Cortez.

CURRENT CHALLENGES: Finding funding to purchase additional waterfront property

FLORIDA ASSESSMENT OF COASTAL TRENDS DATA:

Number of Active Volunteers:	45
Public Dollars Contributed:	\$1.1 million
Private Dollars Contributed:	\$62,000

CORTEZ



The Village of Cortez is tucked away off of the highway connecting Bradenton with Anna Maria Island. Nestled on the shores of Sarasota Bay and located off Cortez Road, there are a few visual cues that the village exists. Pedestrian crosswalks with red-stamped concrete pavers on Cortez Road connect the village to “the other side” where an upscale community resides. The other clue that civilization exists off the beaten path is the cleared property where the freshly restored 1912 school house and an old cistern sit under tall palms and pines. If you hit the brakes and turn onto one of the side streets in the village, you will see old cracker-style homes with a rustic patina, some of whose front yards still carry signs opposing the net ban; boats on dry docks that are in various stages of restoration or decomposition; and crab traps tucked away under pole barns and carpports.

DEFYING DESTINATION

Cortez is not the tourist destination that many coastal communities have become in Florida. In fact, it is unlike any other Waterfronts Community, as it strives not to become a destination. There are no signs for boat tours or other attractions. It is a fishing village stubbornly striving to maintain its family-based operations as well as celebrating its maritime heritage. The community’s vision plan describes it best.



“There is a certain tolerance required of residents in Cortez, and those who move here are expected to understand that need. Cortezians build, refurbish and repair boats in their yards. They build crab traps and mend fishing nets. They store commercial fishing equipment in their front yards. These activities have been a part of community life in Cortez for over 110 years. Putting up with the noise, unsightly clutter and accompanying odors is not for everyone. Those who move here need to not only tolerate the impacts of this commercial fishing culture, but embrace it. Almost all who live in Cortez understand that the sense of community is what makes this a special place.”



PRESERVATION, PREVENTION, AND PROCESS

The Waterfronts Florida Program plays a significant role in the Village’s ability to maintain its identity. 1,000 Friends of Florida, the stewards of the Waterfronts Program in its infancy, conducted several workshops with the residents and the business owners to develop a vision plan in 2000. The vision can be summed up in three words — preservation, prevention, and process. Preservation refers to the preservation of the historic character and fishing economy; prevention refers to the prevention of land uses that would be incompatible with or intolerant of what can

be perceived as a nuisance — living and working next to a fishing operation; and process refers to establishing a formal process that would allow the review of site plans and designs for compatibility with the working waterfront and scale of existing historic buildings.

With the support of the County, the village succeeded in making changes to the zoning code to provide for a zoning overlay, design guidelines, and a process to review development plans. The most important element of the zoning overlay is that it specifically allows for boat and fishing equipment storage to be permitted in a home's front yard. The overlay also limits uses on the waterfront to fish houses, boat building and repair, aquaculture, marine research, maritime museums, and restaurants.

The Waterfronts Partnership Committee met on a regular basis in the first two years of designation. Once Cortez became a graduate community, the group no longer met as part of the Waterfronts Partnership, but its members are now active participants in either or both the Cortez Historical Society and the Florida Institute for Saltwater Heritage, or F.I.S.H. Both of these non-profit groups existed prior to the Village's Waterfronts designation and are still going strong today. With small annual fundraisers and donations, F.I.S.H. has managed to purchase 100 acres of environmentally sensitive land just east of the village that was once slated for development. Over the years, the site was used as a dumping ground and was infested with invasive exotic plants such as Australian Pine and Brazilian Pepper. Through negotiations with organizations such as the Florida Department of Transportation and grants from various local charitable organizations and foundations, the site has been cleared of debris and exotic plants. F.I.S.H. has further improvements planned for the site, including a trail bridge through the preserve so visitors can meander through the various habitats and hammocks without disturbing the flora and fauna.



IT'S FOR THE CAUSE

Two other major victories for the village include the restoration of two historically significant buildings, the 1912 school and the 1890 Burton Store. The 1912 school has been almost completely restored and now serves as the Florida Maritime Museum at Cortez. The main room of the old schoolhouse is used to display local artist's works and houses a small library, while the remainder of the building exhibits photos, boat models, fishing tools and gear, and other maritime related objects. Volunteers donated time and materials to hand-craft the bead board displays, and most of the collection is on permanent loan from the village families — items gradually pulled out of attics, drawers, and carports and given to the museum “for the cause.”

The Burton Store was built in 1890 and was the first commercial building constructed in Cortez. It served as a post office, store, and community gathering place. In 1990, the store was in a severe state of disrepair and slated for demolition, as was the fate of many other buildings in Cortez over the years.

However, F.I.S.H., with funding from Manatee County and the Selby Foundation in Sarasota, was able to purchase the store and move it to its present location next to the schoolhouse. The store, currently undergoing a complete restoration, will be a small classroom and research center to educate visitors on the symbiotic relationship of uplands, hammocks, wetlands, and estuaries and their impact on the health of fisheries. The school and store are located on property adjacent to the F.I.S.H. preserve, and visitors will be able to walk through the preserve and view its coastal habitat. For the graduate community of Cortez, it has been all about leveraging money to meet its goal of education and preservation. Their continuing efforts for self-preservation, and maybe isolation, have kept them one of “Old Florida's” best kept secrets.

An aerial photograph of a river winding through a dense, lush forest. The river's water is a deep, clear blue-green color, contrasting with the various shades of green in the surrounding trees. The forest appears thick and undisturbed, with sunlight filtering through the canopy in some areas.

CRYSTAL RIVER



CRYSTAL RIVER

Community Snapshot

VISION: “To promote and support efforts to revitalize waterfront areas in a manner which incorporates environmental resource protection and integration of the viable traditional waterfront economy of Kings Bay.”

DESIGNATION: 2003

APPLICANT: City of Crystal River

STATUS: Active; meets monthly

PARTNERS: Save the Manatee; Friends of Chassahowitzka Wildlife Refuge; the Rotary Club; Manatee County; FWCC.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Community has risen over \$2 million to purchase Three Sisters Springs; City has been awarded over \$6 million in FCT grants; Kings Bay park improvements; “Bayfest” celebrations; stormwater treatment systems; “Manatee Manners” education for the public.

CURRENT CHALLENGES: Raising the remainder of the money needed to acquire Three Sisters Springs; creation of a collector street alleviate traffic; additional stormwater treatment systems.

FLORIDA ASSESSMENT OF COASTAL TRENDS DATA:

Public Dollars Contributed: \$1.2 million

Grant Funding Pending: \$6 million

CRYSTAL RIVER



Crystal River is located on Florida's Nature Coast. An area dotted with deep, clear, cold springs and rivers that feed the brackish waters along the coast and home to sluggish West Indian manatees.

Crystal River has been "discovered" more so than the neighboring towns of Homosassa, Inglis, and Yankeetown. It has a general aviation airport, a shopping mall, and national chain restaurants. But beyond the car culture of new Crystal River lies the crossroads of the old downtown at the intersection of U.S. 19/U.S. 98 and Citrus Avenue. Citrus Avenue has old storefronts lined with new street lamps and landscaping, and eventually dead-ends at a city park and boat ramp into Kings Bay. If you look closely enough at Kings Bay, you understand the reason for the City's name.

Unfortunately, Kings Bay is choked with the results of too much nitrogen from lawn fertilizers and human and animal waste. Eutrophication has taken hold of the bay. Water quality was certainly one of the issues that the Waterfronts Committee was hoping to tackle when the City was awarded the designation in 2003.

The CRA director wrote the application for waterfronts designation, and the City hired a program manager, developed a Waterfronts Advisory Board, and, through community workshops, developed several goals, including:

- Studying and monitoring the water quality of Kings Bay and the surrounding waters and making legislative recommendations regarding these waters to the City Council;
- Studying and monitoring the Floridian aquifer and making legislative recommendations regarding the aquifer to the City Council;
- Studying and monitoring the flora and fauna in the areas surrounding the waters of Kings Bay and the surrounding waters and making legislative recommendations regarding the same to the City Council;
- Studying and monitoring the care and protection of the Florida manatee and other wildlife native to the waters of Kings Bay and the surrounding waters and making legislative recommendations regarding the same to the City Council;
- Studying and monitoring the impact that stormwater runoff has on the waters of Kings Bay and the surrounding waters and making legislative recommendations regarding the same to the City Council; and
- Studying and monitoring the impact septic tanks have on the waters of Kings Bay and the surrounding waters and making legislative recommendations regarding the same to the City Council.

In the first two years of designation, the City, in conjunction with the advisory board, held annual "Bayfest" celebrations, which had more environmental





and historic preservation information booths than vendors. The City was also awarded \$300,000 in Florida Recreational Development Assistance Program grants to continue improvements to Kings Bay Park.

Unfortunately, the relationship between the program manager and the advisory board eroded and little progress was made toward the Waterfront goals. The advisory board stopped meeting, the program manager was fired, and the program was dormant for a few years.

In 2007, the group resurfaced, thanks to community outcry regarding the development of the Three Sisters Springs — a 60-acre parcel with three natural springs whose owners want to develop it into a single-family residential



community, along with a bottling plant to capture the fresh water flowing out of the springs. The advisory board has partnered with Save the Manatee, the Friends of Chassahowitzka Wildlife Refuge, and the Rotary Club to pressure City leaders to purchase the property. The City was awarded a Florida Communities Trust grant of more than \$6 million to purchase the property or turn it into a passive park where people can swim and view the manatees. The City now

has to raise \$2.7 in matching funds. Members of the Advisory Board and other groups set out to raise the matching funds to carry out this vision and were successful—the Felburn Foundation pledged \$2 million and Citrus County, Crystal River and the Citrus County Tourist Development Council each pledged \$100,000. The push is so popular that at a recent town meeting in Crystal River, residents came forward to write \$1,000 personal checks to the City Council. The developer is expected to ask for \$15 million for the property, but the community is confident in its ongoing fundraising efforts.

DAYTONA





DAYTONA BEACH

Community Snapshot

MISSION: "To promote and enhance the continued economic development of downtown Daytona Beach while protecting its historic heritage."

DESIGNATION: 2003

APPLICANT: Daytona Beach Partnership Association

STATUS: Inactive; work under auspices of Main Street Downtown Partnership

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Market Study; Riverfront Park/Open Space model to demonstrate the relationship and scale of the park to its water-based surroundings; reopened Manatee Island Park and improved infrastructure and amenities.

FLORIDA ASSESSMENT OF COASTAL TRENDS DATA:

Volunteer Hours Contributed: 4,177

Public Dollars Contributed: \$350,000

Private Dollars Contributed: \$1,800

DAYTONA BEACH



The City of Daytona Beach, “the world’s most famous beach,” long known for spring breakers and Bike Week, has a softer side across the Halifax River. Its quaint downtown shops are lined with tall, swaying palms and it has a “sense of place” unlike the condo-hotel lined beachfront.

Also a Main Street Community, the Waterfronts Florida Partnership for Daytona Beach is housed under the Daytona Beach Partnership, a non-profit group charged with implementing the redevelopment for the downtown’s historic Main Street and Waterfronts Florida designations. The executive

director was appointed as the program manager at the time of the group’s application in 2003.

The Daytona Beach Partnership envisioned a new business cluster in an eight-block district along the banks of the Halifax River that focused on water-based business to support the large, publicly owned marina. During World War II, the area was filled with boat making and marine-related businesses, but the area experienced a decline in the 1960s.

The Daytona Beach area is valuable for its historic, economic, cultural and physical location within the community, and the Partnership wanted to refocus the river as part of the local economy, as was recommended in the City’s redevelopment plan. The Partnership’s tasks for the Waterfronts committee were to:

- Produce a development feasibility study to identify business development and retention opportunities, including marketing and recruitment materials;
- Design and install wayfinding markers for district environmental, cultural and historical destinations; and
- Create a riverfront park/open space model to demonstrate the relationship and scale of the park to its water-based surroundings.

Daytona Beach hired a consultant to provide a market study for the waterfront area. However, the study failed to provide a list of viable waterfront businesses that could be targeted for the waterfront area and related marketing materials, which was the Partnership’s goal in commissioning such a study. The architectural model was constructed and is housed in the Partnership’s offices.



The executive director who acted as program manager at the time of designation has left the position. Daytona Beach has not actively participated in any of the statewide program manager's meetings within the last several years, and unlike many of the other designated communities, did not hold community visioning and did not prepare a vision or master plan for the waterfront. A separate organization, Daytona Vision, developed a city-wide vision in 2007.

Despite the lack of participation in the Waterfronts program since 2005, Daytona Beach has continued to develop and improve the Halifax riverfront. By adding a public park that is just a short walk from Daytona's downtown



center, community members and tourists are encouraged to explore and enjoy the riverfront. This park area provides a place for residents and visitors a relaxed, natural environment, versus the busy beachfront of Daytona.

Along other portions of the Halifax waterfront, Daytona continues to develop and enhance the docking areas and the city buildings that line the water. While Daytona will always have the tourist-infused bustle of the beach, the City continues to value and highlight the beauty and benefit of its riverfront areas.



EAU GALLIE





EAU GALLIE

Community Snapshot

VISION: “Olde Eau Gallie is a charming, thriving place, and with its centerpieces being it’s unique riverfront environment, an economically viable marketplace, and cultural and historic areas. It is a place where people want to live, work and play for many generations to come.”

MISSION: “Maintain the current character and historic essence of Olde Eau Gallie, enhance cultural opportunities, and develop the waterfront’s potential for public use, while encouraging new investment from both the public and private sectors.”

PARTNERS: The City of Melbourne; the Downtown Merchants Association, the Brevard Cultural Alliance; FDOT; the Rotary Club.

DESIGNATION: 2003

APPLICANT: City of Melbourne

STATUS: Inactive.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Completion of construction of the new pier, construction of a bandshell and landscaping of Eau Gallie Square, installation of bike racks painted by local artists, retail market study, parking study.

CURRENT CHALLENGES: Lack of city budget to finance full time program manager and to attend statewide program events.

FLORIDA ASSESSMENT OF COASTAL TREND DATA:

Volunteer Hours Contributed: 1,870

Public Dollars Contributed: \$1.1 million

EAU GALLIE



Eau Gallie is a waterfront village situated on the Eau Gallie River and the Indian River Lagoon. Although it is a distinct area, it merged with the City of Melbourne in 1969. Due to a declining economic and residential base, the City designated Eau Gallie as a Community Redevelopment Area in 2000, and, in partnership with the City of Melbourne, applied to be a Waterfronts Florida Community in 2003.

For a short time in the 1870s Eau Gallie served as the county seat for Brevard County. The centerpiece of the community is the Eau Gallie Pier. Several historical accounts of the area state that the major celebration for the community was George Washington's birthday, when people would gather along the Pier and celebrate with their famous fish fries. In 1883, the Pier was the southernmost terminus of the Florida East Coast Railroad. The Pier was expanded in the 1930s to include a large pier head and landing piers, but the pier head was destroyed in the 1940s and only the main portion of the Pier remains intact.

The main focus of the Waterfronts Florida Partnership Committee was to restore the Pier to its 1930s design, maintaining its use as a community fishing pier, as well as adding a roof and a few boat slips. After working out various permitting and submerged land lease issues with the state, the City was permitted to construct

a 404-foot pier with five new boat slips, two pavilions, and two additional finger piers. The City held a ribbon cutting ceremony for the new pier in 2007.

The Committee is comprised of local business owners and property owners both within and outside of the designated area, and the Committee also serves as the CRA advisory committee. The Committee is appointed by the City Commission and the program manager is a City staff member whose position is funded in part by the CRA. The position is currently held by the City's CRA manager, but the City plans to hire a full-time program manager in the near future.

Along with the City of Melbourne, the Downtown Merchants Association, the Brevard Cultural Alliance, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), and the Rotary Club, the Partnership completed several tasks to revitalize the area. FDOT provided \$25,000 for landscaping Eau Gallie's signature square, where there is a weekly farmers' market and several events are held every year. The Rotary Club contributed \$25,000 to the construction of a community band shell in the same park.

Along with the community's vision to rebuild the City Pier, Eau Gallie is striving to enhance its main street, Highland Avenue, to become a vibrant artist community. Highland Avenue is located two blocks from the Pier and Pineapple Park.





Several arts-related organizations have moved to Highland Avenue, including the Museum of Arts and Sciences, the Brevard Art Museum, and the Brevard Symphony Orchestra.

Once a month, the community sponsors an event called “Art Works,” where residents and visitors can stroll along Highland Avenue and view various works of art created by local artists. The City of Melbourne purchased bike racks for Eau Gallie, and local artists are donating their time to paint the racks vibrant colors to blend in with the emerging arts district.

Through the Waterfronts process, the City hired consultants to provide a retail market analysis and a parking study to determine what changes should be made to encourage private investment. Although the City has not been actively participating in regional Waterfronts events since becoming a graduate community, the Committee still meets on a monthly basis and reviews all plans for redevelopment activities in the area.



Ultimately, the City hopes to partner with the Main Street program, so that there is one full-time staff person who can provide hands-on assistance, marketing strategies, and public relations to the community — a visual presence in the community who can represent redevelopment initiatives and keep the public informed and engaged.



FERNANDINA BEACH

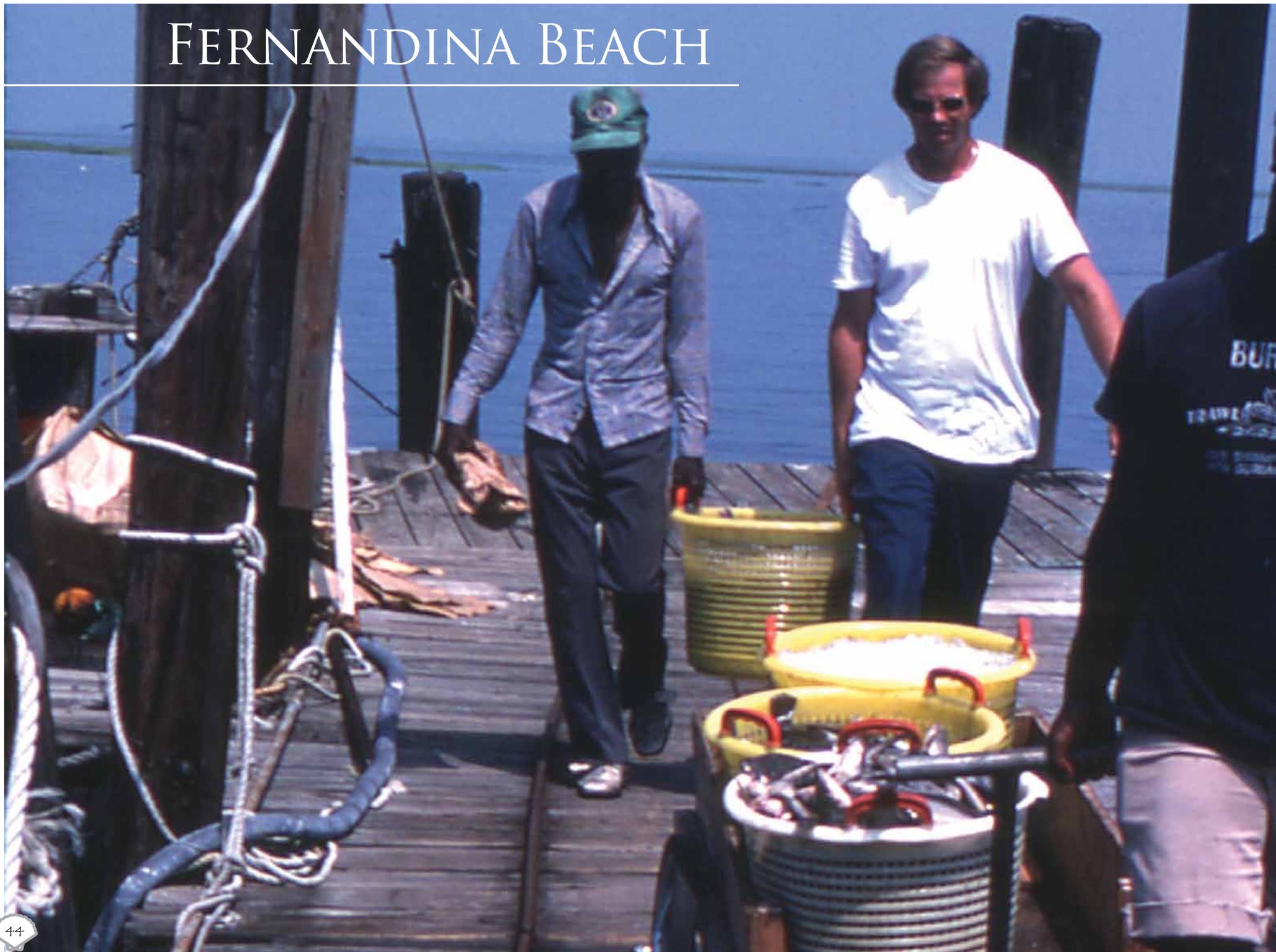




Photo: State Archives of Florida

FERNANDINA BEACH

Community Snapshot

MISSION: “To organize and manage the revitalization of the Fernandina Beach waterfront through a comprehensive revitalization strategy, which shall focus on environmental and resource protection, hazard mitigation, public access to the waterfront, and maintaining the traditional waterfront economy.”

DESIGNATION: 2005

APPLICANT: City of Fernandina Beach

STATUS: Active, meets monthly

PARTNERS: City of Fernandina Beach CRA; Recreation Committee; the Port of Fernandina; downtown merchants.

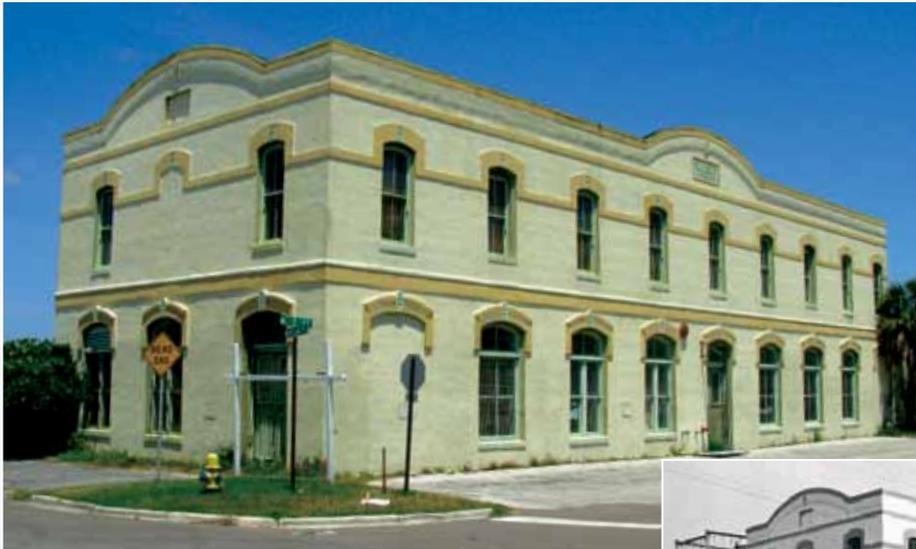
KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS: CRA Design Guidelines; Waterfront Master Plan; zoning code change requiring public access to the waterfront; Historic Property Survey update; new Waterfront Mixed Use future land use category; marina improvements; mooring field; planned streetscape improvements for Front Street.

CURRENT CHALLENGES: Financial incentives for shrimp industry; addressing loss of retail establishments in the traditional downtown.

FLORIDA ASSESSMENT OF COASTAL TRENDS DATA:

Number of Active Volunteers:	13
Volunteer Hours Contributed:	1,640
Public Dollars Contributed:	\$3.1 million
Private Dollars Contributed:	\$1.5 million

FERNANDINA BEACH



Located in the far northeastern corner of the state, closer to Georgia than to Jacksonville, the City of Fernandina Beach is a historic waterfront industrial town. With two working paper mills, a deepwater port, and a small shrimping and fishing fleet, Fernandina Beach is a prime example of a true working waterfront. Situated on a barrier island flanked by the Amelia River and the Atlantic Ocean, Fernandina Beach is one of the oldest cities in Florida. The City was settled by the French in 1567 and incorporated in 1824.¹ Today, a 50-block area is designated as the Fernandina Beach Historic District; nearly 300 Victorian, Queen Anne, or Italianate structures are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Fernandina Beach has long been called the birthplace of the modern shrimping industry. In the early 1900s local fisherman began to adapt “otter trawl” nets for shrimping, and the commercial shrimping industry began. By 1917, over one hundred shrimp boats made up the shrimping fleet, producing over 10 million pounds of shrimp. Historic records illustrate that by the mid 1920s, several fish houses had been constructed along the Amelia River waterfront. Commercial shrimping-related businesses, such as packaging and net making, were also prevalent from the 1940s through the 1980s.



Shrimpers maintain a presence on the waterfront, but many support businesses evolved or retooled as the industry weakened because of fishery regulations and imported shrimp. The Burbank family, who has manufactured nets for three generations, refocused from making trawl nets to nets for batting cages and backstops for major and minor league baseball stadiums. Several of the buildings that once housed these water-related businesses are in a state of disrepair, but their owners have been reluctant to tear down the structures in fear of losing their right to rebuild over the water.

Redevelopment of the City’s waterfront area has long been a topic of discussion over the years. The City underwent a series of efforts to establish a vision for the revitalization for the waterfront area that included the Waterfront Task Force Plan, Vision 2000, and the Community Redevelopment Area (CRA). However, citizens and local stakeholders still viewed the waterfront, especially at the city’s marina, as “piecemeal” and in need of a more comprehensive approach with input from a variety of interests.

THE WATERFRONTS FLORIDA PARTNERSHIP

To jump start revitalization efforts and get all of the stakeholders on the same page, the City submitted an application for designation as a Waterfronts Florida Partnership community in 2005. A City-appointed committee spearheaded the application and continued with a mission to develop a comprehensive strategy



¹ Sources consulted included Bland, 2007 and Pacetti, 1980



to revitalize the waterfront while working to maintain the traditional economy. The committee was structured to include representatives of the two paper mills, the port, shrimping, property owners, a member at-large, and the City's Planning Advisory Board and Historic District Council. Downtown business owners were added later. Similarly, the original Waterfronts Florida area focused exclusively on the properties that faced the Amelia River but was later amended to include the CRA and the commercial portions of the City's historic district adjacent to the waterfront.

The designation came at the tail-end of the real estate boommarket when waterfront property commanded over-the-top dollars. After a year of organizing and study, the Waterfronts Florida Committee sponsored a series of community meetings to create a vision for the Fernandina Beach waterfront that produced a host of ideas that focused on the need to:

- Maintain views and public access to the water;
- Establish a sense of place along the water's edge; and
- Maintain the character of Fernandina Beach as reflected in its working waterfront and historic district.



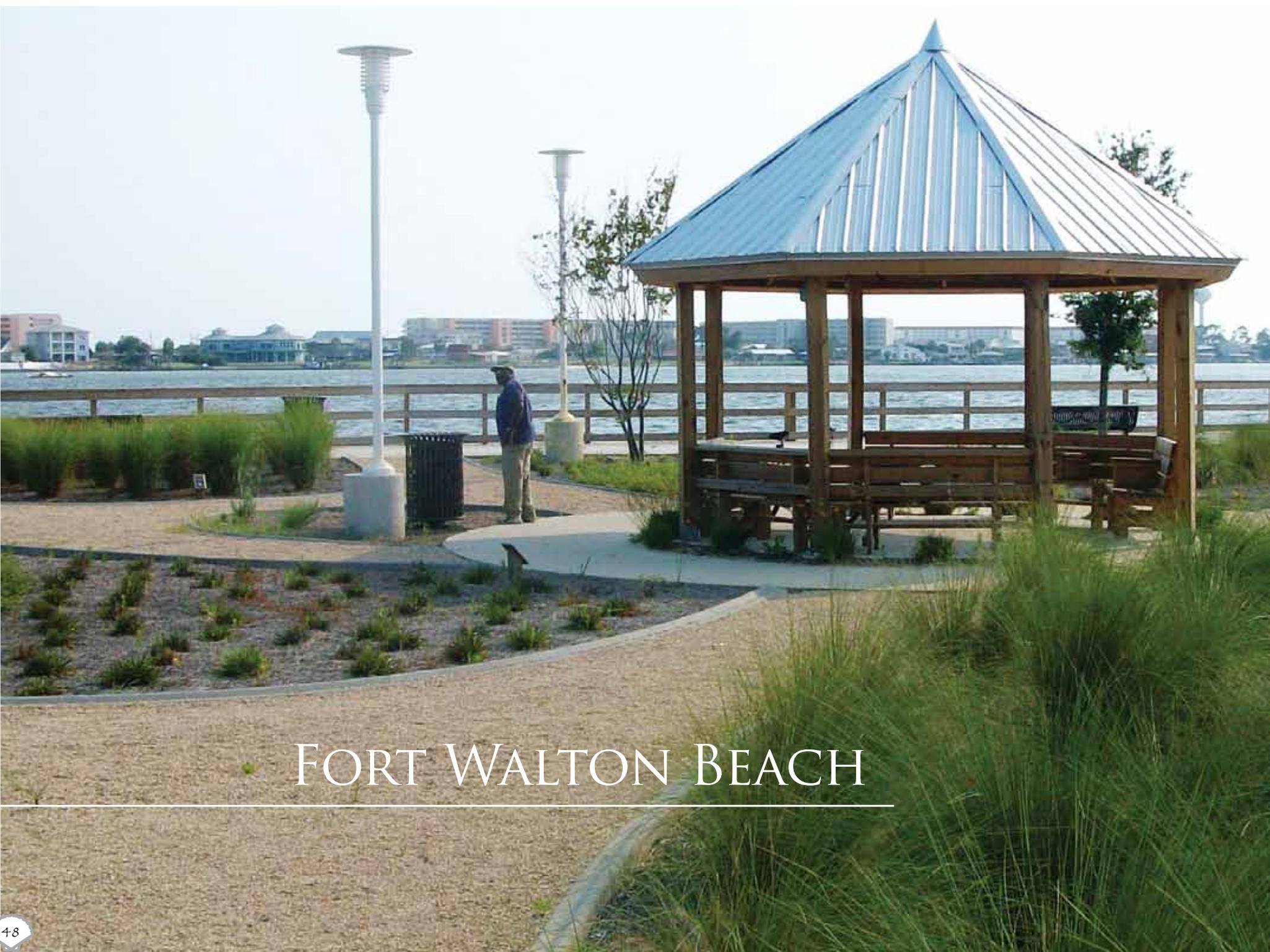
The goals included protection of historical resources — critical to a community where the local and name brand businesses are located in historical structures; integration of the historic structures into the City's plans to recover from a disaster — important in a City adjacent to a river and an ocean; provisions for public access to the water and the waterfront vistas; and retention of the traditional waterfront industries that include the local shrimping industry.

As a complement to the vision plan, design guidelines were prepared for the CRA by the University of Florida to focus on view corridors and public access to the waterfront. A zoning overlay was put in place to protect view corridors so that waterfront residential and other types of development do not obliterate vistas of the Amelia River. The City is working to establish green space along the waterfront where parking is currently under-utilized and a new welcome station with improved shower and laundry facilities are being designed for boaters.

BEYOND PLANNING: THE REALITIES OF A WATER-BASED LIFE

Implementation of some ideas that eluded the City are coming to fruition, such as hiring an engineer to redesign and improve Front Street, adoption of the Waterfront mixed use designation in the comprehensive plan that allow for both working waterfront uses as well as limited residential uses, and the construction of a mooring field for transient boaters.

The shrimping industry continues to face competition from imports plus a new problem — the cost of fuel. A long-time shrimper from the Fernandina Beach area told the Waterfronts Partnership Committee in May 2008 that shrimpers had to catch at least four boxes of shrimp per day to pay for the fuel. Others are looking for state or federal money to purchase property within and just outside the designated area to set aside for dock space for shrimp boats to offload or to establish a processing facility that would sell locally and internationally, plus take advantage of shell waste to create marketable byproducts for agricultural use. Although the City has yet to decide how to protect the industry it celebrates, it has made great strides in protecting the area from over-development.



FORT WALTON BEACH



FORT WALTON BEACH

Community Snapshot

VISION: “Our vision is a vibrant waterfront area that will be a regular haunt for all of our citizens and our many visitors, to fish, to walk or jog the boardwalk, to enjoy a cold drink at a Sound-side restaurant, to sit on a bench by the water and enjoy a sunset. We see a waterfront that will be a magnet for boaters traveling the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway, a not-to-be-missed stopover or a delightful destination. We see a waterfront that can serve as a model for other Florida communities attempting to balance the rights of individual property owners with the needs of the general public in an environment of intense development pressure.”

DESIGNATION: 2005

APPLICANT: City of Fort Walton Beach

STATUS: Active; Committee meets quarterly but City no longer funds a program manager

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Improved public access though the acquisition of new waterfront park; improvements to existing waterfront parks; “drains to bay” stencils on storm-water drains.

CURRENT CHALLENGES: Lack of financial and staff support from city due to budget cuts; developers have been reluctant to provide an easement for waterfront boardwalk.

FLORIDA ASSESSMENT OF COASTAL TRENDS DATA:

Number of Active Volunteers:	3
Volunteer Hours Contributed:	2,211
Public Dollars Contributed:	\$104,788

FORT WALTON BEACH



Fort Walton Beach is located in Florida's Panhandle in Okaloosa County, nestled between the Santa Rosa Sound, Choctawhatchee Bay and the U.S. military installations of Hurlburt Field and Eglin Air Force Base. Compared to many of the designated Waterfronts Communities, Fort Walton Beach is a relatively young city. The community has been a popular destination for tourists over the last 30 years, many of whom were drawn by miles of bright white, sugar sand beaches bounded by the Gulf of Mexico, which at Fort Walton offers Caribbean-like aquamarine water.

The Santa Rosa Sound – while less appreciated by the beach-going tourist population – provides sheltered passage for barges and boaters, and is a critical element of the local economy. The Sound is part of the 1,000-mile Gulf Intracoastal Waterway that stretches from Brownsville, Texas, to Apalachee Bay just south of Tallahassee, Florida's capital city.

U.S. 98 serves as the main commercial corridor that runs along the "Emerald Coast," moving traffic through the city and connecting Fort Walton Beach to Panama City to the east and Destin and Pensacola to the west. Fort Walton's waterfront has been dominated historically by single-family homes, water-related businesses that include a marine supply store and a boat dealership, and a few chain restaurants. The four-lane roadway, coupled with the privately owned parcels, forms physical and visual barriers to the waterfront.

The small 1950s-era downtown is located just west of Brooks Bridge, which connects the City to its Gulf-front persona. The business district declined over the years as most cities do when shopping malls are built on the fringe. In the

1980s the old downtown remained viable, supported by airbrush t-shirt shops, a popular barbeque joint, gas station, surf shop, an old movie theater and two quality local department stores. Although it was not a walkable, pedestrian-friendly area, the downtown retained some charm, and, most notably, a great deal of underutilized waterfront property.

The City established the Water's Edge Committee in 2004 to advise the City Commission on ways to deal with land use, transportation, and water quality issues on U.S. 98 and along the Sound. A year later, the City applied for and was designated a Waterfronts Florida Partnership Community.

The City hired a full-time program manager and re-established the Water's Edge Committee to serve as the Waterfronts Committee. Soon after designation, they hosted a series of public workshops to develop a waterfront vision. "Charting the Course" sets out multiple objectives related to enhancing the economy, increasing public access, and enhancing hazard mitigation – all of which support revitalization of the waterfront and meet the priorities of the Waterfronts Florida Partnership Program.

The Waterfronts Committee and the City set to work and accomplished a lengthy list of objectives identified in the vision. The "complete" column now includes:





In addition, the City-made improvements to Liza Jackson Park, adding 32 new boat/trailer parking spaces in 2007 along with upgrading the park's playground equipment and landscaping. The City also acquired a waterfront parcel across the street from City Hall and created Sound Park — a passive park that includes a 98-foot long fishing pier, two walking paths, a playground, picnic tables, a seawall and native plants.

Budget cuts have taken a toll on Fort Walton's plans to upgrade the waterfront. The City dropped the funding for the program manager position. Without financial assistance from the City, including staffing and overhead costs, the future of the Committee remains unclear. City staff has encouraged the Waterfronts Committee to form a non-profit organization and to pursue projects on its own. While such organizations may still draw from local funds – when available – they can also reach out to foundations and other private sources grants. The Waterfronts Committee now meets on a quarterly basis and is considering the non-profit option.

- Allowable heights reduced from 150 feet to 70 feet or less for new buildings at the waterfront to ensure public views of the water;
- Land Development Code provides a density bonus to encourage developers to create waterfront boardwalk easements to promote waterfront access
- Grants received to install stormwater pollutant separators at four waterfront sites and stencils for educational messages – “Don't Dump! Drains to Bay” – at some 230 stormwater inlets to improve water quality;
- Grants received to rehabilitate a portion of the shoreline with native plants and teach children about native plant and animal species to protect the shoreline;
- Chamber of Commerce and Historic Downtown Association to include property owners and merchants in events such as Arbor Day / Earth Day, Friday Night Flicks, and Coastal Beach Clean-up to reorient the downtown and provide activities to draw people to the waterfront; and
- City's Emergency Management Plan and zoning regulations posted to a Web site to foster public education on waterfront issues.





OLD HOMOSASSA



OLD HOMOSASSA

Community Snapshot

VISION: The community envisions a “Walk to the River” intended to provide a sense of pride and identity to the historic community and to serve as an example to future development in the area.”

DESIGNATION: 2001

APPLICANT: Citrus County

PARTNERS: The Homosassa Civic Club; Citrus County; the Homosassa Water District Board; FWC; local residents and business owners.

STATUS: Inactive; although there has been recent interest on the part of Citrus County to reactivate the committee and hold future visioning meetings.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Old Homosassa Community Plan was included in the Citrus County Comprehensive Plan; County adopted an overlay district and design standards; a landmark sign and information kiosk were constructed.

CURRENT CHALLENGES: Budget cuts impede the program manager from attending statewide Waterfront’s meetings; County no longer funds a full-time position dedicated to local Waterfront’s activities.

FLORIDA ASSESSMENT OF COASTAL TRENDS DATA:

Number of Active Volunteers: 6

Public Dollars Contributed: \$103,500

OLD HOMOSASSA



Old Homosassa is a small pocket of the “Old Florida” located off the beaten path near Florida’s Gulf Coast in Citrus County. Although it does not have a defined center or edge, Old Homosassa still retains a “sense of place.” Meandering through winding rural roads canopied by live oak trees and Spanish moss, you eventually find yourself in the middle of a small artist colony, whose works include wonderful metallic fountains and fish sculptures, colorful hand-blown glass, and pottery. In the same cluster of old buildings, you can view a few alligators in their own personal swimming pool, sign up for a boat tour or scuba diving lessons, or try the area’s famous smoked mullet.

Along this journey, you can also view the ruins of the old sugar mill owned and operated by David Levy Yulee, one of Florida’s first senators. Yulee, who once owned several thousand acres in Homosassa, was responsible for the development of another Waterfronts Community — Fernandina Beach in Nassau County in Northeast Florida. Yulee eventually sold the Homosassa property, which was platted as a traditional town by three developers from the northeast in 1886. They envisioned a resort town, not unlike the neo-traditional resort towns that popped up along Florida’s Panhandle late in the 20th Century. Elements of

the original plat call for short, pedestrian-oriented blocks that connect to the waterfront. Although the plat was never fully implemented, remnants of the street pattern are visible today.

Strangely out of place is a newly constructed faux Mediterranean-style condominium complex. This type of development, along with the extension of a central sewer service and the impending alignment of the Suncoast Parkway Extension, sparked fear and unity in the residents of Homosassa. Along with other actions to prevent over-development, the community applied for Waterfronts Florida designation in 2001.

Homosassa is not an incorporated city, and therefore the Waterfronts application was sponsored by Citrus County. The County appointed a staff member as the program manager, appointed a steering committee, and held a series of workshops to define the vision for the community.

The main goal of the Homosassa Waterfronts Partnership was to preserve the community’s character, along with protecting its environmentally sensitive resources, promoting redevelopment, and public recreation and access to the river, re-establishing the design elements of the original plat, and supporting commercial fishing.



To that end, the County adopted a redevelopment plan and zoning overlay for the area. The overlay limits some uses such as mobile home parks, multi-family dwellings, and hotels, and allows single family and live/work units and “water-related” uses, such as bait and tackle stores, fish camps, dive shops, campgrounds, and seafood processing plants. The overlay also regulates how buildings are placed on a lot, how they relate to the waterfront, building materials, lighting, signage, and a building’s height and scale.

The Redevelopment Plan was incorporated into the County’s Comprehensive Plan. The Plan incorporates three study areas to implement the goals the community identified — Walk to the River, the core study area, and the proposed overlay district.

Walk to the River includes the Yulee Drive Corridor to the County boat ramp facility on the Homosassa River and incorporates four subareas; a fishing village, a river portal, an artist colony/business district, and a heritage portal. Identified as the central area of Old Homosassa, this corridor includes historical elements, such as the sugar mill ruins, that give the town its unique character.

The core study area includes the area contained in the original 1886 plat and the overlay district stretches just beyond the area known as Old Homosassa. A few “sticks and bricks” projects were taken on in the first two years of the community’s participation in the program. The Committee coordinated staff and volunteers to design and install the landmark sign at the center of Old Homosassa. Citrus County Community Development staff provided graphic design for the sign face, with completion of the sign made possible by donations from local

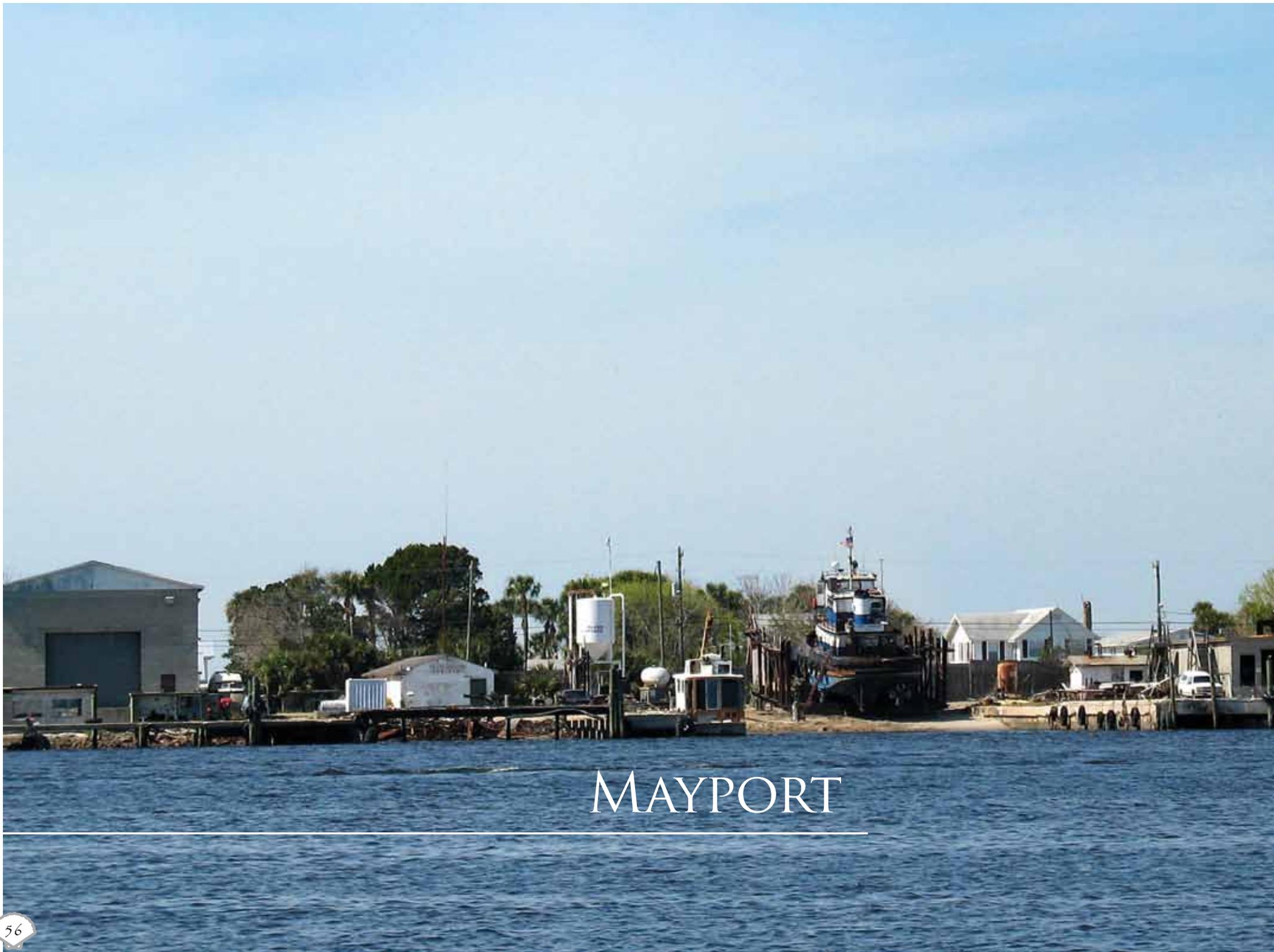


businesses, and a local electrician donated lighting for the sign. Landscaping was provided by a grant to the County for tree replacement. Additional financial assistance funded design and construction of the information kiosk at the county boat ramp parking area. Community Development staff provided graphic design of the permanent acknowledgement sign and a local artist has donated a metallic fish sculpture for a weathervane. Displays were provided by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (manatee protection and other environmental issues), the Homosassa Civic Club (local recreation), and Citrus County (heritage). The Walk to the River entrance was enhanced by the Homosassa Water District Board’s agreement to paint the water tower to be similar to the landmark sign.

In the last few years, redevelopment of the old Riverside Resort has become a contentious issue in the community. Several public meetings were held over the design of the redevelopment of the site. Since then, the steering committee has not met on a regular basis and County staff has had little time to devote to management of the program due to severe budget cuts. However, the area still plugs along as a sleepy, out-of-the-way tourist destination for those who are looking for the real Florida.



Although it does not have a defined center or edge, Old Homosassa still retains an “Old Florida” sense of place.



MAYPORT



MAYPORT

Community Snapshot

VISION: “Although Mayport is a part of the City of Jacksonville, the fishing village’s charm sets it apart from the rest of Jacksonville. The present zoning in the village is not conducive to Mayport’s unique character. The Partnership feels that the village will need to have its own zoning (overlay zone). This new zone will be incorporated into the Mayport Waterfront Revitalization Plan that will aid in the future development, growth, and revitalization of the Village. The plan will also address architecture, ecotourism, landscaping, parking and recreation, as well as other issues. The plan will be used by the Partnership to achieve the goals and objectives that were derived from the visioning sessions: the ‘Mayport of the Future, the Mayport of the Past.’”

DESIGNATION: 1997

APPLICANTS: City of Jacksonville and City of Atlantic Beach

STATUS: Active; steering committee and sub-committees meet regularly; Partnership now established as a non-profit organization.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Master plan for recreational facilities; installed underground utilities and sidewalks; participated in Mayport Road corridor study; drafted Working Waterfront language for planning overlay; completed Historic Resources Survey for Mayport Village; developed Design Guidelines for Mayport Village.

CURRENT CHALLENGES: Loss of city supported planning staff in early 2008; Jacksonville Port Authority (JAXPORT) announced plans to locate a cruise ship terminal and parking garage along the Mayport waterfront.

FLORIDA ASSESSMENT OF COASTAL TRENDS DATA:

Number of Active Volunteers:	20
Volunteer Hours Contributed:	1,900
Public Dollars Contributed:	\$4.9 million

MAYPORT



Mayport Village is a community in flux. One of the first three communities to enter the Waterfronts Florida Partnership Program, this historic fishing village faces large scale change if the Jacksonville Port Authority — JAXPORT — carries out plans to shift super-size cruise liners from upriver wharfs to the St. Johns River Inlet, a move that would likely displace shrimp boats and other fishing vessels from the Village waterfront.

With less than 300 souls, modest homes, limited commercial or industrial fare, and empty lots and buildings, Mayport is an out-of-the-way pocket in the consolidated City of Jacksonville, which tallies a population of 745,000. The settlement is waterside to the St. Johns River, backside to the Mayport Naval Station, and split down the middle by Scenic Florida Highway A1A.

JAXPORT operates the car ferry — the last of its kind in the state — that connects Mayport to industry, communities, and federal and state parks and preserves north of the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway. The mile-long waterfront supports a waterfront seafood restaurant, day-trip gambling ship, seafood exporter, and, until recently, a net shop and traditional fish house, the latter cantilevered over the water to ease offloading.

THE WATERFRONTS FLORIDA PARTNERSHIP

Mayport has seen better days — in the early 1900s the draw was fishing, hotels, and amusements; in the 1950s and 1960s “head boats” lured tourists from Jacksonville to try their hand at fishing like no one had ever seen in Ohio, Indiana, or other parts of the Midwest. The Village lost ground — literally — eginning in the 1950s when the U.S. Navy set up shop beachside, creating a base that grew over the years to serve as home port for various submarines and surface carriers in the Atlantic fleet.

By the time Mayport joined the first cycle of the Waterfronts Florida Partnership Program in 1997, the community had been through more than one round of redevelopment over a 20-year period. The designation promised hands-on technical help from the state planning agency, seed money for studies, support from the City of Jacksonville, and hope.

The Mayport Waterfront Partnership set up shop in space provided by a local businessman for \$1 per year, outfitted with donated air conditioners, desks, a conference table, and chairs. A steering committee was formed, establishing itself as a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation to better attract grants. The City of Jacksonville provided much of the support, including meeting space and a part-time planner. In collaboration with the City and the Mayport Civic Association, the group worked to open and maintain a police station that created a law enforcement presence to quell drug-related crime. Waterfronts Florida paved the way with ideas and encouragement, offering guidance on the fundamentals of the work.

By July 1998, locals set about creating a vision of the future, establishing that the fishing industry, the ferry, and the Marine Science Center were essential to the Mayport way-of-life and agreeing to do something about

St. Johns River Ferry	
<i>Gateway to Fort George Island</i>	
Pedestrian/Bicycle	1.00
Motorcycle	2.50
2 axle (Private)	3.25
2 axle (Commercial/RV)	3.50
3 axle (Private/Commercial/RV)	3.25
4 axle (Private/Commercial RV)	4.00
5 axle (Private/Commercial/RV)	4.50
Passenger Bus	8.00
Semi-Tractor/trailer	Prohibited
TOLLS COLLECTED ONBOARD	
(M-F) 6:00am, 8:20am, 7am, and continuing on the hour and half hour Final Departure 10pm	
(S-S) 6:20am, 7am, and continuing on the hour and half hour Final Departure 10pm	
Operated by: <i>Hornblower Marine Services</i>	



the rundown look of the place and the need for central sewer and other infrastructure. The visioning exercises were facilitated by Waterfronts Florida planners.

Between 1998 and 2006, the Mayport Waterfronts Partnership worked its way through a series of research and design projects and installed parts of the modern-day public services needed to

revitalize the Village — underground utilities, sidewalks, a master plan for recreational facilities, and a study of the Mayport Road corridor. Additionally, the group, which met monthly at a waterfront cottage in Mayport and acted as an advisory committee to the City, drafted language that could be added to future building permits, hoping to put new property owners on notice that Mayport has a working waterfront, complete with the sounds and smells associated with the business of commercial fishing.

In 1999, the Partnership used a \$650,000 award from the City to bury the town's power and cable lines, re-build a parking area, and install new street lights; they attended to landscaping and signage; relocated the old Spanish cemetery and sold bricks to support the project; and they crafted the language for a zoning overlay to protect Mayport in future discussions on development.

Then a developer bought some of the riverside property, envisioning low-rise condominiums and shops. The Mayport Waterfronts Partnership initiated conversations about possibilities for a public-private partnership that could build the waterfront boardwalk suggested in the recreational plan. Buildings were bulldozed, and sites made ready for action. The real estate market then collapsed.

In 2008, the developer sold the property to JAXPORT and the plans to add multi-story cruise ships to the Mayport waterfront came to the forefront. The City of Jacksonville, because of budget cuts, recalled the Mayport planner and shuttered the meeting space. The Waterfronts group was left without its long-term, valued partner and without a home.

SUCCESSION: A NEW ERA

The Mayport community sees itself as strong with grassroots leadership. The Civic Association started the ball rolling in the early 1990s with a cleanup-pickup trash removal project, then followed up with development of a local park supported by City decisions and funds. At a time when the main waterfront industry — commercial fishing — faces increasing regulation and economic pressure, the recent disagreement with the City have undermined local morale. Local residents fear that a cruise ship terminal and companion parking garage will dominate the mostly single-story Mayport skyline.



The Partnership and the rest of the community are pulling together. Although heavily outnumbered, the locals hope that they can work out a continuing relationship with the City, a feat they see as critical to creating a kind of revitalization that keeps in character with Mayport Village over time. They are reaching back to their roots with the Waterfronts Florida Partnership Program by attending quarterly meetings to draw on the experience of sister communities. The Jacksonville Maritime Museum recently expressed interest in relocating from downtown Jacksonville to Mayport, which could be symbolic and an economic boost.

For now, the plan is to develop local leadership and take revitalization one project at a time. The organization's non-profit status puts the Partnership in position to receive grants from foundations and other sources independent of the City. The Mayport Village Waterfronts Partnership plans to follow its own advice — if you want to be able to predict the future, help build it.

OAK HILL





OAK HILL

Community Snapshot

VISION: “An Oak Hill waterfront which promotes/preserves the environmental and cultural/historical resources of the area and where activities maintain a tie to the inherent ecotourism and commercial/recreational fishing and aquaculture opportunities of the Mosquito Lagoon. Oak Hill Waterfront activities will maintain and improve the quality of life while preserving our history, and provide pristine waters for our sport and commercial fishing industries.”

DESIGNATION: 1997

APPLICANT: City of Oak Hill

STATUS: Inactive; member from original waterfront committee trying to bring back community support for program.

PARTNERS: University of Florida; Florida Marine Patrol.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Derelict vessel removal; acquisition of waterfront property; construction of boardwalk.

CURRENT CHALLENGES: Few people left from waterfront committee; no institutional memory; success of aquaculture re-training is questionable.

FUTURE ENDEAVORS: Reactivating local Waterfronts Florida Partnership Program; creating fishing cooperative; acquiring key waterfront property for use by commercial fishermen.

FLORIDA ASSESSMENT OF COASTAL TRENDS DATA:

Volunteer Hours Contributed:	650
Public Dollars Contributed:	\$102,096

OAK HILL



Oak Hill is located in Volusia County, in the northwestern area of Mosquito Lagoon. The area was once known as a thriving commercial fishing industry and has recently transitioned to a small, yet popular, recreational fishing area. The net ban, adopted by Constitutional amendment in 1994, dealt a heavy economic blow to the commercial fisheries-based economy that Oak Hill once relied on. In response, the State of Florida designated Oak Hill as a Florida Enterprise Zone in 1997.

This program provided a variety of tax breaks for businesses and entrepreneurs, including sales tax credits for hiring local residents. Some of the local fishermen were also re-trained in aquaculture — specifically, harvesting hard clams.

HISTORY OF THE WATERFRONTS FLORIDA PARTNERSHIP

With the aid of the Waterfronts Florida Partnership, the City of Oak Hill planned to redevelop the waterfront area in a way that maintained the character of the area while still improving in ways that would attract new water industries, such as ecotourism.

As part of its mission to improve the waterfront, the City removed derelict boats and navigational hazards from Mosquito Lagoon. The City partnered with the

Florida Marine Patrol and other agencies to notify the owners of the vessels, and assembled volunteers and equipment to remove 24 boats from Mosquito Lagoon.

DEVELOPING A VISION

On May 16, 2000, members of the Oak Hill Waterfronts Florida Committee and other citizens of Oak Hill met to discuss several issues as part of the continuing community visioning process and local action plan development for the Oak Hill waterfront area. The objective of this meeting was to have the participants express their views on a future Oak Hill waterfront and develop and agree upon a common vision statement for the area.

Oak Hill began its visioning process by asking participants to share their opinions about the City's needs for the next two to 10 years. They were asked to identify areas that needed improvement, areas that needed to be developed, preserved, or changed in any way. In gathering this information, the hope was to identify common concerns and views from the residents that would provide a clear vision of what the area should become:

- Not built up into a tourist area;
- Beauty of the waterfront preserved;
- Development of a fishing pier out into the Mosquito Lagoon;
- Public access along the waterfront, focusing on nature and the environment;
- Traditional working waterfront with commercial and recreational fishing opportunities; and
- Availability of wetlands as a recreational resource.

Oak Hill began its visioning process by asking participants to share their opinions about the City's needs for the next two to 10 years.

VIEWS AND VISTAS

After the vision was completed, the City began to work on the construction of a fishing pier and bird watching tower. With planning and technical assistance provided by the Waterfronts Florida Program, the City of Oak Hill successfully completed both a fishing dock and a bird watching tower in their community. Both the tower and the pier are easily accessible by the public and have added to the waterfront appeal. They also carried out their efforts to remove derelict boats from the Lagoon. The two main additions to the waterfront area of Oak Hill have created a community gathering place that accents the aesthetics of the waterfront view and invites the community to enjoy both fishing and bird watching.



Today a small group of residents and commercial fishermen is working independently to revive the seafood industry and the once-renowned Oak Hill brand by creation of a seafood cooperative. Still in the fledgling state, the group has identified three waterfront properties for acquisition to provide space for docks, processing, and education; separately, the emerging cooperative hopes to buy or rent property on U.S. 1 to establish a retail seafood market in a highly visible location.

The primary challenge, particularly in the weak economy, is funding. The group is completing a due diligence on the “how-to” of incorporation and business operations. Next, the start-up operation will be looking for support from local

elected officials; money from economic development and other grant agencies, and technical assistance from the Waterfronts Florida Partnership Program. The group knows that waterfront access and visibility are critical, yet it recognizes that education will be of equal importance. The group intends to work with the Oak Hill community to raise awareness about the economic development benefits to reestablishing the commercial fishing in this once-highly productive setting.



PANACEA





PANACEA

Community Snapshot

VISION: “When we think about the community that we want to become, we see a waterfront community with the following features:

- A cleaner, more beautiful community that embraces and enhances its waterfronts
- A community that has maintained its heritage as a fishing and tourism center while adopting the newest technologies and strategies
- A community in which new development or redevelopment is compatible with the historic look of the community and protective of the natural environment
- A community that has maintained its tree canopy
- A community that provides family wage jobs
- A community that has recreational opportunities, medical services and shopping opportunities
- A community with an active civic life of fraternal organizations, social clubs and religious institutions
- A community of outstanding schools”

DESIGNATION: 2001

APPLICANT: Wakulla County

STATUS: Active; committee meets monthly; Partnership now established as a non-profit organization.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Boardwalk connecting the Welcome Center to Maritime Museum and Woolley Park beside Dickerson Bay; continue to work to recognize and rehabilitate the historic Mineral Springs area; local festivals; Vision 2020.

CURRENT CHALLENGES: Finding a Program Manager; identifying project-related funding; investigating options for dedicated source of funding.

FLORIDA ASSESSMENT OF COASTAL TRENDS DATA:

Number of Active Volunteers:	25
Volunteer Hours Contributed:	2,000
Public Dollars Contributed:	\$4.5 million

PANACEA



Panacea is known for fresh fish, blue crabs, and community spirit. Visitors to this unincorporated part of Wakulla County use U.S. 98, a two-lane Scenic Byway that defines Florida's Panhandle coast along the Gulf of Mexico. Dickerson Bay, just off the main road, is edged by a fishing pier, a public park, private homes, restaurants, a future maritime museum, and a hands-on locally owned aquarium catering to families and scientists alike. Most houses are one to two stories, rising occasionally to three stories to meet flood zone requirements; a mini-mall, restaurants, boat yards, and small businesses flank the highway. The community is located on a sand flat between St. Marks Wildlife Refuge to the east, the Apalachicola National Forest to the north, marshes to the west, and the bay at the south.

Panacea was a tourist town in the early 1900s, attracting visitors from across the country and around the world to its mineral springs and hotel. They came by train from Tallahassee to nearby Sopchoppy then by mule-powered tram to Panacea. The Panhandle coastal area was host to military activities and Camp Gordon Johnston during World War II. The fishing industry took off after the war with mullet the primary catch-of-the-day until technology changed in the 1950s, adding blue crabs to the commercial catch. The commercial fisheries

declined somewhat in the 1970s when sport and recreational fishing joined the constellation of economic opportunities in Panacea.

In 1994, the Florida electorate passed a Constitutional Amendment that banned the use of most nets for the commercial harvest of seafoods, putting a locally estimated one-third of some 300 to 400 local fishermen out of work. Some individuals retooled, using smaller legal-sized nets, others shifted effort to the already active blue crab and offshore fisheries, and some added the title of guide for sport/recreational fishers to the economic toolkit.

HISTORY OF THE WATERFRONTS FLORIDA PARTNERSHIP

With the local economy weakened by the net ban, the County scrambled to find new options for Panacea. By 1999, they began looking to the newly created Waterfronts Florida Partnership Program as a way to get technical assistance and small grants, but applicants needed to have a community vision in hand before designation as a Waterfronts Community. The Waterfronts Program was intended to implement an existing vision, not to start from scratch. With an eye toward the next cycle of solicitations, the Partnership coordinators helped Wakulla County officials obtain a grant through the Coastal Partnership Initiative program to support a visioning process and establish a steering committee.



The County hired a consultant who held community meetings, conducted interviews, and visited at restaurants, coffee shops, and other local gathering places to capture the ideas of as many people as possible — including those individuals who do not normally attend or speak up at meetings. Panacea 2020 was adopted in April 2001; the group put together a winning application and became a Waterfronts Florida Partnership Community within months.

The Partnership created a board of directors and adopted a set of by-laws. At the first meeting, the Committee took out the vision, looked at the goals and objectives, set priorities, and developed a work plan for year one. The Partnership Committee continues to implement the vision, holding an annual meeting in December to review accomplishments and give themselves a pat on the back. They meet in January to revisit the vision and prioritize the goals and objectives for the coming year.

The new Committee focused on small, visual projects in 2001-2002: they wanted the community to see that things could get done. They took the idea of partnership seriously, reaching out to other community minded-groups in Panacea and the surrounding area to leverage funding. The Committee received a grant from the Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program that was used to spruce up waterfront Woolley Park and the Ladies of the Moose raised money to add the playground equipment. The Committee partnered with county-wide Keep Wakulla County Beautiful for cleanups; likewise, Keep Wakulla Beautiful received a grant from Learn-N-Serve, an educational organization, to beautify a roadside concrete block wall with mosaics of community scenes.

THE VISION

Vision 2020 aimed to protect the community's culture, history, environment, and natural resources, with an eye toward leadership, the use of new technologies and awareness of the local carrying capacity. The document envisions three economic engines anchored in tradition and suitable for the future; the strategies are expected to guide actions to support:



- Sustainable fishing village for commercial, sport, and recreational fishing/tourism;
- Eco-friendly retirement/vacation community; and
- High value seafood.

Some goals have been incorporated into the Wakulla County Comprehensive Plan. The Future Land Use Element includes policies that encourage aquaculture, and the land development regulations provide a zoning district for commercial seafood processing. A proposed special overlay, intended to address public access, the historical integrity of Panacea and height restrictions, may be revisited in the near future if the County Commission — not the Committee — can guide the community to consensus.

THE BUSINESS OF A WATERFRONTS FLORIDA PARTNERSHIP

Learning to be a Waterfronts Community came by way of on-the-job training and mentoring from other communities and the Waterfronts Florida support team. What the Panacea group gained was knowledge of how to bring people together and how to keep them involved. The 19-member Panacea Committee

had an elected chair, vice chair, and secretary/treasurer. Subcommittees focus on the Waterfronts priorities, recast in local terms as economic development, environmental and natural resources, historical resources, beautification, and events and promotions. The work takes place in the committees, which report back to the board; each of the committees is chaired by a member of the board.

Until recently, the Panacea Committee functioned largely from the office of the Wakulla County Grants Coordinator, who served as program manager at the direction of the County Commission. The group now has an official home co-located with other community groups at the waterfront Panacea Welcome Center, which is staffed by volunteers. The manager's everyday jobs include organizing meetings, arranging for speakers to educate the Partnership on special topics such as Community Redevelopment Areas, and acting as a liaison to the county and state agencies.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Panacea Partnership spearheaded plans to replace the Rock Landing Dock at Dickerson Bay, long considered to be an integral part of making a living from the Gulf. The Panacea group also



drew from its own experience and interviews to create a set of Best Practices for the development of a Waterfronts Florida; the booklet is distributed throughout the Waterfronts Florida network.

The greatest source of pride, and the greatest accomplishment to date, is "Christmas in Panacea." The event was started by the Waterfronts Committee after the Hurricane Dennis devastation in 2005, leaving property owners to clean up and out-of-town visitors to stay home. The economy sank and the Partnership stepped forward to create local fellowship. In the process they started a tradition: No admission fee and no vendors, U.S. 98 is closed off for the evening, snow is brought in. With the help of the Volunteer Fire Department, the Coastal Optimists Club, and others in the community, the Waterfronts group serves free hot dogs, hot chocolate, and candy. Volunteers set the tree, decorated with "Panacea Nikes" — the white boots worn by fishermen and crabbers — and use a crane to set a mermaid holding a star at the top.

"So many people lost so much...homes, boats, they needed to make a living. We said something needs to be done to make these people happy, even if it's just for one night," offered a board member by way of explanation. "Dennis was our tsunami."

CHALLENGES

The Partnership faced a firestorm of objection in 2006 — some five years after designation — when the group opened a community conversation on the potential for adding a Panacea Waterfronts overlay district to the Wakulla County Comprehensive Plan. Word-of-mouth and rumors took over, assisted by the Internet, and property owners raised fears that an overlay could restrict options for development in years to come. Next came questions about the Partnership itself — who was it, when did they meet, and what authority did the members have to make such a proposal.



The steering committee refocused discussion on the Panacea Waterfronts Partnership and made sure that people knew how to get involved. Next the Partnership changed the time for some of the regular sessions from mornings to evenings to accommodate more people. While the overlay was shelved for the time-being, the Waterfronts Committee gained new members and a reputation for openness.

SUCCESSION: THE FUTURE OF THE PARTNERSHIP

The founding Program Manager stepped down in 2007, taking on the same position with the newly designated St. Marks Waterfront Partnership. The Panacea group took the change in leadership in stride. They now have a 17-member board, meet monthly at a local restaurant, and continue the community cleanup campaign and the other reoccurring projects started by the Partnership. The current board initiated a “Yard of the Month” award. With less than six months of visibility, local residents now call in to be nominated.

The Partnership is also picking up junk to encourage people to get rid of old boats, refrigerators, and washing machines, collecting over a half-a-million pounds of junk in a recent bout of cleaning. The Board is in the process of bringing in new members, recruiting first from the pool of individuals who show up regularly to meetings. They are also asking for a new County-sponsored program manager who knows the system and can help them learn how to make deals and find funding.

The Partnership is looking toward restoration of the Mineral Springs area, which is already marked by signs, and they hope to continue the work to cover the concrete block with a mosaic mural, if funding can be found. From a safety perspective, the group will seek permission from the St. Marks Wildlife Refuge to use a high ridge road through the Refuge to provide an alternative route for evacuation when coastal highways flood.

The Partnership is also looking for funding to “re-vision” the community, taking into consideration the changes that have occurred since 2001, which reflects the community’s belief that Panacea is “a work in progress.”





PORT SALERNO



PORT SALERNO

Community Snapshot

VISION: “The ‘2020 Vision for a Sustainable Martin County’ created the foundation for Port Salerno’s vision of the future and its Community Redevelopment Plan with a focus on: Retention of Port Salerno’s historic character and strengthening of neighborhoods, commercial centers, parks and the environment.”

DESIGNATION: 2001

APPLICANT: Martin County

STATUS: Inactive; participates as a member of the Port Salerno CRA Neighborhood Advisory Committee.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Established the Port Salerno Commercial Fishing Dock Authority; Initiated Phases 1-2 of Waterfront Boardwalk; Obtained funding for dredging at Manatee Pass; designed way-finding signs for downtown and the commercial pier.

CURRENT CHALLENGES: Assisting local businesses and homeowners with the dredging project; assisting the Port Salerno Commercial Fishing Dock Authority to design and build a more efficient and up-to-date dockside area for its operations.

FLORIDA ASSESSMENT OF COASTAL TRENDS DATA:

Number of Active Volunteers:	12
Volunteer Hours Contributed:	948
Public Dollars Contributed:	\$9.3 million

PORT SALERNO



Port Salerno is a historic fishing village tucked away at the side of a protected harbor known as the Manatee Pocket. The community is located just south of Stuart, the governmental seat of Martin County, on Florida's Central Atlantic Coast. "The Pocket" is rimmed with small shops and restaurants; centers for boat storage, haul out, and repair; resorts; and a string of commercial fishing docks. The waterway opens into the St. Lucie River estuary and the St. Lucie Inlet, putting recreational boaters and sport and commercial fishermen within three miles of open waters — and federal regulation — in the Atlantic Ocean.

HISTORY OF THE WATERFRONTS FLORIDA PARTNERSHIP

Located in an unincorporated area of the County, Port Salerno was among the first communities in 1997 to apply for the newly created Waterfronts Florida Partnership Program. While not selected as one of the first Waterfronts Florida communities, Port Salerno reapplied and gained designation in 2001.

In the intervening years, Port Salerno became one of the first areas to participate in Martin County's Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA), taking part in charrettes and vision exercises to prepare a plan for what the fishing village should look like in the future. One of the key elements of the CRA vision was the development of the Manatee Pocket Walk, a boardwalk that would eventually allow the public to walk around the edge of most of the harbor, another priority aimed to preserve the fishing industry.

The CRA Neighborhood Advisory Committee and the County were ready to move into action by the time Port Salerno became a Waterfronts Community;

the program and its focus were viewed as tools critical to implementation of the vision. The designation came with seed money for planning and the potential for extra points on applications for some state grant funds. The CRA tax money paid for a planner to staff the Port Salerno Waterfronts Partnership and work associated with the boardwalk and other waterfront projects. Waterfronts Florida staff provided technical assistance to Martin County planners, helping them to work through unexpected problems encountered with obtaining environmental permits and securing a submerged land lease for the commercial fishing docks.

PRESERVATION OF WORKING WATERFRONT

Waterfronts Florida Partnership Communities must focus on a set of four priority topics: provide for public access to the waterfront, attend to environmental and cultural resources, revitalize the economy, and pay attention to how to mitigate property damage and loss of life in hazardous situations. As it turned out, preservation of the historic commercial fishing industry served as part of the Partnership's work on both cultural resources and hazard mitigation. It also turned out to be one of the biggest challenges — and learning experiences.

Commercial operations traditionally lined the banks of the Manatee Pocket. Some say that fishing was among the first industries at Port Salerno, but the industry nearly collapsed here and in other parts of Florida after the 1994 Constitutional Amendment that outlawed most nets to harvest fish for commercial purposes in Florida waters. Commercial crabbers and hook and line fishermen who docked at Port Salerno survived the net ban, and some of the net fishermen adapted, switching to the smaller, more labor intensive cast nets still legal in state waters. But the fish houses — the waterfront businesses where fishermen got ice and sold their catch — failed, in part because of losses associated with the change in public policy and in part because of market forces. The last fish house was eventually converted to an art center and gallery.

In 1999 the Partnership began work on plans to create the waterfront boardwalk that would pass through the commercial fishing docks. In the course of design and permitting, the Partnership and the fishermen learned that the fishermen did not own the upland and that no one held a submerged land lease for the state-owned underwater property. The County, as owner of the adjacent upland, was the only organization that could apply for the lease.

In a complex and protracted series of events, the County obtained the state lease to support continuation of the working waterfront. The County, in turn, needed a lease from the fishermen, who up to that point had functioned as individuals, not as an organization. With encouragement from the County, the fishermen formed the non-profit Port Salerno Commercial Fishing Dock Authority, negotiated a lease, and preserved their place on the water at the Manatee Pocket. While the original agreement was based on the premise of “last man standing,” which prevented the Authority from adding or replacing new members, a new lease established in 2008 provides for successive three-year leases and permission to replace members as individuals leave or pass on.

The Authority’s waterfront set up is unique. While fish and crabs are landed at Manatee Pocket, none of the seafood is processed in Port Salerno. The waterfront investment consists of the wooden docks and four tarp-covered tube metal kiosks. The Authority as an organization contracts with the fish dealers — known as vendors in the agreement — who make arrangements with individual fishermen to purchase the catch. The vendors pick up fish and deliver ice on a daily basis, then haul the catch to off-water processing facilities in South or Central Florida or as far away as Destin in the Panhandle. The low-maintenance, low-cost kiosks and the off-water processing provides an example of how to reduce investment — public or private — in a high hazard area. The Authority is active in the Waterfronts Partnership and the broader local community; they recently sponsored the second annual dockside seafood festival that attracted 18,000 visitors to the waterfront for food and education about fish, fishing, and the environment.

The market for waterfront real estate challenged the revitalization of Port Salerno at other points. Several businesses provide haul out and repair services and store boats, yachts, and commercial vessels. Some of the property owners began to wonder how they could stay in operation, given the soaring prices and taxes associated with waterfront property. The recent economic downturn cooled the market and state-level policy changes may provide relief on taxes, encouraging business owners to stay put.



SUCCESSION: THE FUTURE OF THE PARTNERSHIP

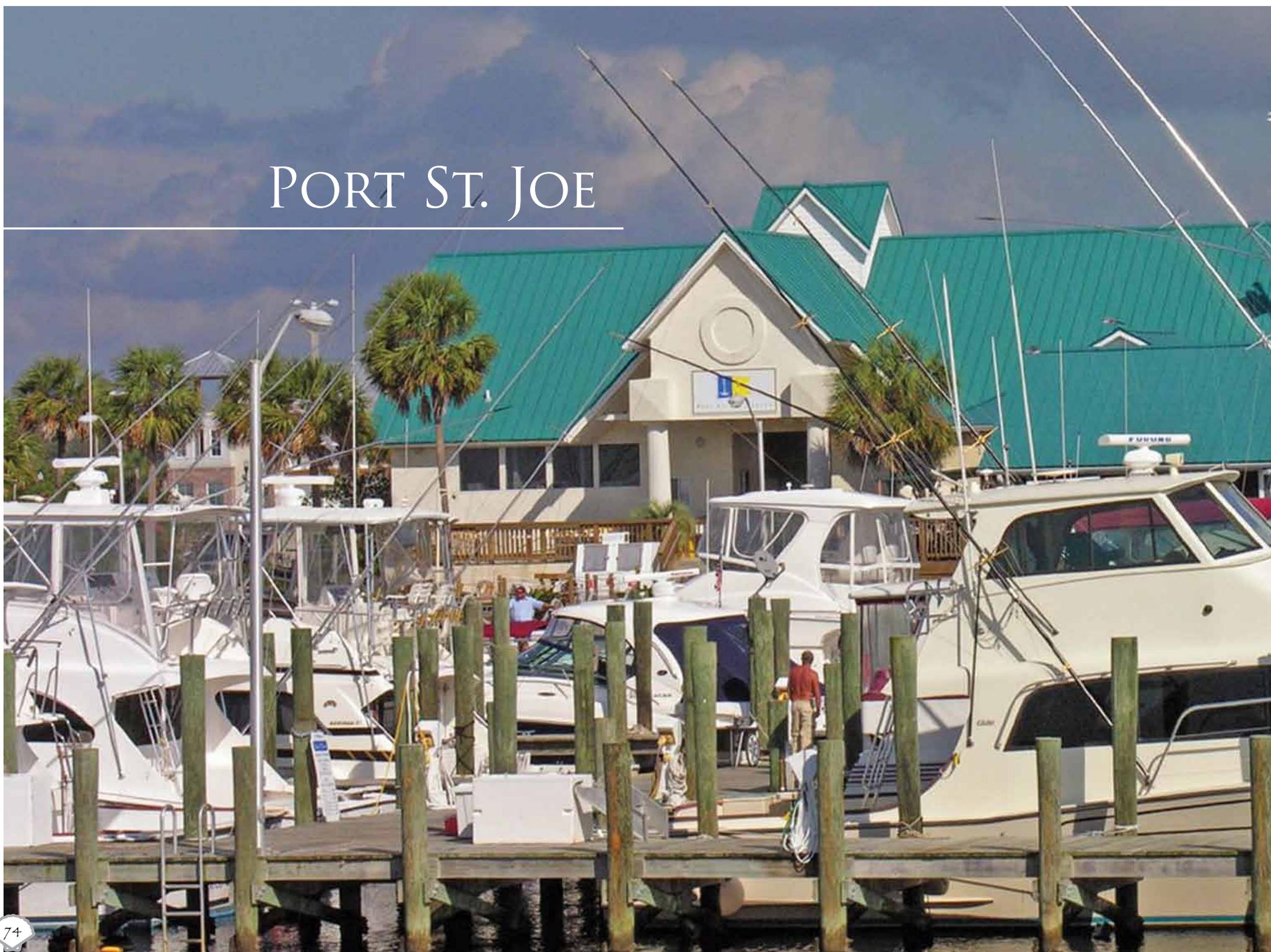
Some five years after Port Salerno became a graduate of Waterfronts Florida Partnership, the CRA Neighborhood Advisory Committee (NAC) does double duty and makes recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners to continue revitalization of the Port Salerno waterfront. Waterfront topics appear regularly on the agenda along with a report from the Partnership chair. One of the key Waterfronts projects is the development of Design Regulations for Port Salerno, a planning tool that is expected to help retain the architectural “look” of the fishing community. The day-to-day business of the Partnership is managed by County staff, who also administer the CRA. These individuals attend Neighborhood Advisory Committee meetings, write grant applications, oversee design and construction of individual projects, and manage CRA and grant funds.

The Port Salerno Waterfronts work is also guided by the “Manatee Pocket Bunch,” a collection of business owners, operators, and residents who meet on an occasional or as-needed basis to talk about what’s happening and what should happen in the Pocket. The group provides an opportunity and informal mechanism to integrate the interests and needs of a diverse population including the commercial and sporting fishing groups, which historically have a less than congenial relationship.

Two major projects are in the works—both funded largely by the County through the CRA. The County will extend the boardwalk that will someday ring the Manatee Pocket, giving the public access to the waterfront for fishing and a promenade. The County is also preparing to oversee the long-awaited maintenance dredging of the channel into and around the Manatee Pocket to make navigation easier for sport, recreational, and commercial boats. The County Engineering

Department obtained \$12 million in grants to support the dredging; the CRA Neighborhood Advisory Committee has contributed \$360,000 toward the project and is also pursuing additional funding to assist local businesses and homeowners to dredge access to their properties along with the County project.

PORT ST. JOE





PORT ST. JOE

Community Snapshot

VISION: “Provide increased access to St. Joseph’s Bay, promote water-based businesses, and provide an opportunity to learn about Port St. Joe’s colorful history.”

DESIGNATION: 2005

APPLICANT: City of Port St. Joe

STATUS: Inactive; City works on implementing waterfront projects through CRA.

PARTNERS: City of Port St. Joe Community Redevelopment Agency.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Waterfront Master Plan integrated into updated CRA Plan; Port St. Joe waterfront park land acquisition; cultural center feasibility

CURRENT CHALLENGES: Line item funding from CRA removed; future funding for program is unclear; currently there is no program manager.

FLORIDA ASSESSMENT OF COASTAL TRENDS DATA:

Number of Active Volunteers:	7
Volunteer Hours Contributed:	1,860
Public Dollars Contributed:	\$5.1 million
Private Dollars Contributed:	\$250,000

PORT ST. JOE



Port St. Joe is similar in many ways to its sister Waterfronts Communities. Like Fernandina Beach and Bagdad, it has a history as a mill town; like Fort Walton Beach, U.S. 98 is a physical barrier to the waterfront; like Steinhatchee and Old Homosassa, it is off the beaten path; like Vilano Beach, it was not significantly scathed by the net ban. But here along the Gulf coast between Apalachicola and Panama City, Port St. Joe is unique in that it may be one of the only coastal cities in Florida that has not feared overdevelopment even though the town is in the shadows of Florida's largest private land-owner and master planned community giant, the St. Joe Company (JOE).

Located in what is now branded by JOE as "Florida's Great Northwest," Port St. Joe had dignified beginnings but developed in fits and starts. In the early 19th century, St. Joseph was the most populous community in Florida, and was the site of the Florida Territory's first Constitutional Convention in 1838. With a natural deepwater port, two rail lines were constructed to connect to the Apalachicola River to take advantage of the goods being shipped downriver to overseas destinations. Plagued by yellow fever and hurricanes, this bustling place was a ghost town by 1843 and remained so until the 20th century.

Port St. Joe was resurrected in the early 1900s as a paper mill town. Fumbling a bit in the 1920s after most of the natural pine forest was harvested, the town boomed through the war years until the 1990s when the paper mill fell on hard economic times. JOE began to turn its eyes to residential development of its vast land holdings. After struggling under the ownership of another paper company for a few years, the paper mill—the largest employer in the area—closed for good in 1998. The mill was torn down in 2003 and JOE has put forth a mixed-use redevelopment plan for the site, just north of the city marina.



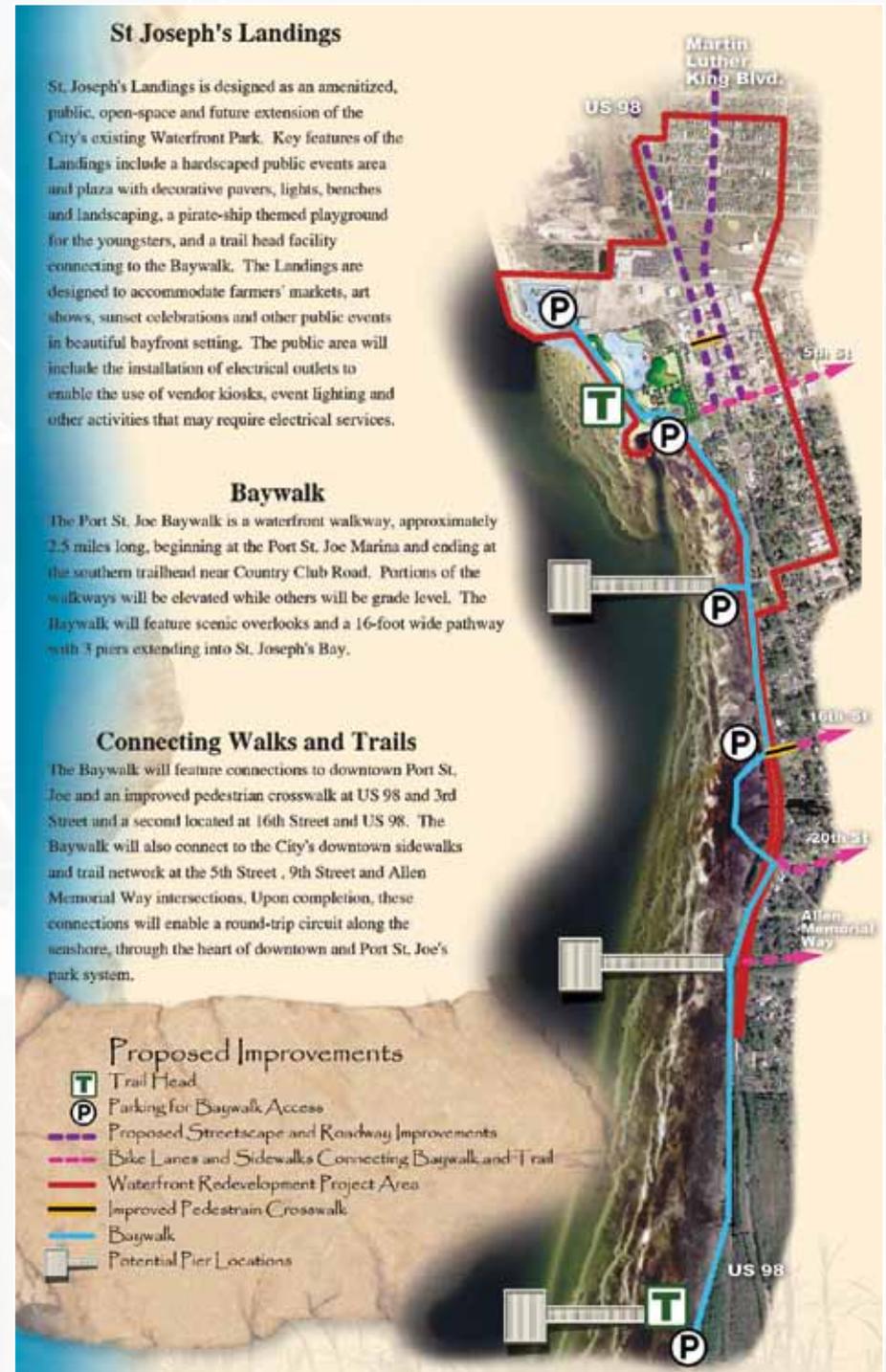
The City adopted a Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) in 1989 that encompassed the downtown. By 2004, the City realized its redevelopment plan was in need of an update and also wanted to capitalize on its underutilized waterfront location. The City applied for the Waterfronts Florida designation and was chosen with four other communities for the 2005-2007 cycle.

Partnering with the Redevelopment Agency and with funding from the Waterfronts Florida Program and the Coastal Partnership Initiative through the Department of Environmental Protection, the Waterfronts steering committee conducted a series of visioning workshops in 2005 that contributed to the Waterfront Master Plan. The Master Plan was adopted as part of the overall redevelopment plan for the CRA. The Waterfront Master Plan recommends several physical projects to make the waterfront more accessible, including:

- Baywalk — a 2.5-mile waterfront pathway that connects the City Marina to a trailhead to the south. Baywalk will also feature three piers extending into the bay;
- St. Joseph's Landings — a multiuse waterfront park featuring an amphitheater, kiosks for a farmer's market, and walking paths that connect to the Baywalk; and
- Two trail head facilities and trail connectors—pedestrian and trail connections are proposed at 3rd Street, 5th Street, 16th and 20th Streets and at Allen Memorial Way. Improved pedestrian crosswalks with brick pavers, pedestrian safety zones and increased signage are proposed for the U.S. 98 intersections at 3rd Street and 16th Street for better access to the waterfront.

These projects were put into the redevelopment plan and planning-level costs were estimated. Because they are in the plan, these projects may be eligible for tax increment financing funds. The community has put forth a great deal of effort to ensure that the visions for each of the three areas are integrated to create a master vision for the waterfront.

The steering committee obtained grant funds from the Florida Communities Trust in 2008 to build the trail facilities. While the steering committee lost its program manager in late 2008, participants say the group has initiated work to form a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Meanwhile, the City of Port St. Joe is leading current waterfront activities. Plans call for purchase and restoration of venues to host community events; the old theatre is a candidate if grants can be obtained.



SAN CARLOS





SAN CARLOS

Community Snapshot

VISION: “San Carlos Island is a people-oriented community with an important working waterfront that includes vibrant commercial seafood and other marine-based industries and recreational opportunities. These assets contribute in making San Carlos Island an attractive community for its permanent and seasonal residents as well as an interesting area for visiting tourists.”

DESIGNATION: 1997

APPLICANT: Lee County Economic Development

STATUS: Active; committee meets quarterly; Partnership now established as a non-profit organization.

PARTNERS: Lee County; Ostego Bay Foundation; U.S. Coast Guard; local marinas; local fishermen; University of Florida; Florida West Coast Inland Navigation District.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Working Waterfront Trail tour; Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code “Water Dependent” Overlay; Ostego Bay Oil Spill Co-op.

CURRENT CHALLENGES: Incorporation as a city desired but not allowed by Florida Statutes; high property taxes in addition to submerged land leases.

FLORIDA ASSESSMENT OF COASTAL TRENDS DATA:

Number of Active Volunteers:	12
Volunteer Hours Contributed:	3,000
Public Dollars Contributed:	\$71,642

SAN CARLOS



San Carlos Island is a small working waterfront tucked under the Matanzas Pass Bridge connecting Fort Myers with Fort Myers Beach. The half-mile long barrier island is dotted with fish houses, commercial fishing docks, an open-air waterfront restaurant and seafood market, a mix of single family homes and trailer parks, and various small businesses.

A HEALTHY BAY = HEALTHY SEAFOOD

In 1997, a self-created committee, with the help of the Lee County Office of Economic Development, applied for Waterfronts Florida designation to help the community deal with the capacity of shrimping and fishing boats that docked there seasonally, as well as educate residents and visitors about the Island's working waterfront.

To implement the public education portion of the committee's goal, the community developed a self-guided working waterfront tour called "A Healthy Bay = Healthy Seafood." Starting at Main Street with an informational kiosk, the tour takes participants along a short trail to a boardwalk where there is a clear

view of the shrimp and fish boats that line the waterfront. The kiosk provides information about the bay, the habitat, and fish that live in it. Although originally designed to be a self-guided tour, a volunteer is available to provide a narrated tour every Wednesday.

During its second year of designation, the Waterfront Partnership attempted to tackle the issue of crowding along the docks by commissioning a study to come up with alternatives. The resulting recommendation was to construct an enclosed basin large enough to dock 40 shrimp boats. Although well received by the public, the construction of the basin has not yet been undertaken.



The Waterfronts Committee has been spearheaded by the same volunteer program manager since its inception. Also serving as the CRA board, the Committee morphed into a non-profit Community Redevelopment Corporation that meets quarterly. The program manager is also the executive director of the Ostego Bay Foundation Marine Science Center, and the activities of the two groups gel together. The Ostego Bay Oil Spill Co-op, made up of volunteer commercial fishermen and marina employees and partnering with the Coast Guard, provides first response in the event of an oil spill. The Marine Science Center provides a marine science experience through interactive exhibits,



aquariums, hands on tank, collections and displays, and holds a children’s day camp during the summer months.

In 1999, the Florida West Coast Inland Navigation District commissioned a study to determine the affects of the local fishing industry on Lee County’s overall economy. The study found that although the impacts vary from year to year depending on economic conditions the shrimping industry contributes \$55 million and over 1,500 jobs to the economy. The study reported that:

“The shrimp processing/packing industry on San Carlos Island represents an important component of the Lee County economy. Activities associated with the harvesting, off-loading, processing, packing, and shipping of shrimp from San Carlos Island facilities have been shown to be intrinsically linked with several factors of the local economy. These activities create positive economic impacts to the local economy as shrimp products are sold to buyers located outside of Lee County and as shrimp is purchased locally by non-residents. The sale of shrimp to both local and non-local buyers results in the purchase of inputs from a variety of services and supply firms, and the distribution of

incomes to local employees. These expenditures are circulated within the Lee County economy as these dollars are spent and re-spent...¹”

Recognizing the need to protect the local fishing fleet and related waterfront uses, Lee County amended its Comprehensive Plan to include the “San Carlos Island Water-Dependent Overlay Zone.” This land use overlay allows for marinas, marine-related industrial and commercial uses, and marine storage areas such as dry-docks. Ancillary uses, such as restaurants, are also permitted under certain conditions. The County’s Land Development Code was also modified to permit marine-related businesses.

In spite of these protections, a 40-acre parcel is slated for redevelopment into a condo/hotel and a yacht club. At one point, the committee explored the possibility of incorporation to gain autonomy over its zoning and land use issues, but Florida Statutes generally limit the creation of a new city if it is within two miles of another city. San Carlos Island’s proximity to Fort Myers Beach stifles its ability to become an independent city. As of late, taxes have also been an issue for San Carlos Island—taxing on the highest and best use of the property, as well as paying the submerged land lease to the State of Florida, has been a strain on the commercial fishing industry.

Despite these pressures, San Carlos Island prides itself on its public education regarding the health of sea grass and mangrove communities and how they relate to the health of the bay and the fishing industry.

¹ Adams, Chuck; David Mulkey, and Alan Hodges. 1999. An Assessment of the Economic Importance of the San Carlos Island Shrimp Processing Industry to the Lee County Economy, p. 9. Food and Resource Economics Department, Institute of Food and Agricultural Department (IFAS), University of Florida: Gainesville, Florida.



ST. ANDREWS





ST. ANDREWS

Community Snapshot

MISSION: “To organize and manage the revitalization of St. Andrews through a comprehensive revitalization strategy, advocate public and private partnerships, and promote economic development while preserving the scope, character, and identity of the area.”

DESIGNATION: 1997

APPLICANT: City of Panama City

STATUS: Active; meets monthly; Partnership established as a non-profit organization.

PARTNERS: St. Andrews Community Redevelopment Agency; AmSouth Bank; Florida Department of Health; Surfside Middle School; University of West Florida; Florida Humanities Council; Florida Department of Transportation; Florida Department of Environmental Protection; All Departments in the City of Panama City.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Construction of Bayside Boardwalk and gazebos; renovation of the publishing building for Waterfronts office; façade grant program; bird trail; boat ramp enhancements; neighborhood design overlay; Beck Avenue streetscape improvements; business recruitment plan and market study.

CURRENT CHALLENGES: Attracting desired commercial enterprise.

FLORIDA ASSESSMENT OF COASTAL TRENDS DATA:

Number of Active Volunteers:	50
Public Dollars Contributed:	\$7 million
Private Dollars Contributed:	\$38 million

ST. ANDREWS



St. Andrews, a historic community within the City of Panama City on St. Andrews Bay, is one of Florida's oldest known settlements, with artifacts and middens attesting to a legacy of Native Americans dating back many thousands of years. The area has historic ties to a few of its sister Waterfronts Communities — it was slated in the early 1800s by St. Joseph (Port St. Joe) as a seaport, and an entrepreneur from Bagdad developed a large saw mill near St. Andrews in the late 1800s. During the Civil War, it was a strategic supplier of salt to the Confederate troops, which made it a target for the North. Many raids were made in the area by Federal troops, and eventually the town was destroyed in 1863.

The town flourished again in the late 1800s with salt, fishing, boat building and shipping along the Gulf coast. About this time, the St. Andrews Bay Railroad, Land, and Mining Co., locally known as the Cincinnati Company because they were based in that town in Ohio, advertised mail-order real estate. Homes in historic Cincinnati Hill and other neighborhoods date from that era. St. Andrews is known as one of the first communities in Florida to fall victim to the Florida purchase-by-mail land schemes; the town could have had a population rivaling the City of Fort Lauderdale by the turn of the century — had everyone who had purchased a lot for \$1 actually developed their property (or had their property been developable). The area was marketed by mail order as:

“The loveliest location in all Florida. In a land where the genial climate of a winterless round of years will reward your every effort with the most bountiful harvests; where the summers are joyous seasons of refreshing breezes and invigorating nights of cool and healthful slumber; and where the winters are but bewitching contrasts to the summers in heightening and intensifying the delicious pleasure of a life in the fairest land the sun ever blessed with its genial kiss. There is but one Florida, and St. Andrews Bay is its brightest jewel.”

Incorporated for a time in the early 1900s, Panama City annexed St. Andrews in 1927. During the Second World War, Panama City became a boat building center and the Air Force developed Tyndall Field, making St. Andrews' restaurants and hotels a destination. Since then, St. Andrews and Panama City grew steadily from the military and growing tourism presence.

By the 1980s, St. Andrews' historic commercial district saw an economic decline as interest in condominium development in Panama City Beach soared. The City declared the area blighted in 1989 and established a Community Redevelopment Area, and after a slow start to revitalization, applied for a Coastal Partnership Initiative Grant to develop a vision for the area. In 1994, the Oaks by the Bay Park was purchased and the visioning process drew more than 200 citizens within and around the district to participate.

By the time the City was designated a Waterfronts Florida Community in 1997, the vision was complete. The vision was broken down into five focus areas:

- Economic Development — increase visitation to St. Andrews, assist current businesses, and attract new businesses and developments in keeping with the community vision.
- Design and Planning — employ traditional town planning approach compatible with vision of St. Andrews as a historic village, and promote St. Andrews' environmental quality and provide for public access and enjoyment of natural resources; and promote a clean, green appearance.
- Promotion — develop a regular calendar of festivals and events to attract people to St. Andrews, find individuals and organizations to carry out these events, and carry out joint advertising campaigns through various media.



- Organization — form a partnership consisting of key stakeholders in St. Andrews who will see revitalization through, form a citizens' group to aid in grassroots efforts to strengthen St. Andrews' central business district and neighborhoods, and help with fundraising for revitalization.
- History — promote awareness of St. Andrews' history and find ways the community's past can catalyze revitalization.

To complete these goals, the City and the Partnership took on several projects with the help of various partners and re-visioning in 2001 to stay focused. The City completed the following projects: construction of a police substation; construction of the Bayside Boardwalk and gazebos; implementation of a storefront grant program; adoption of design standards for new construction; development of a Web site; development of a historic biking/walking trail; renovation of the Truesdale Park playground; construction of the pavilion at the Oaks by the Bay Park; placement of gateway signage; development of a bird watching trail; award of a historic preservation grant for the renovation



of the Panama City Publishing Company building; construction of streetscape improvements to Beck Avenue, the town's commercial corridor; and completion of design guidelines for infill housing to maintain compatibility with the area's historic character and charm.

Through a technical assistance grant from the Department of Community Affairs, in 2007 the Partnership completed a marketing study and recruitment plan based on the vision plan and what citizens believed made the community different and unique. The marketing study took a look at what businesses already exist and thrive in St. Andrews and looked at what gaps could be filled by incoming businesses. By using hospitality and real estate industry components to anchor business development, recruitment and retention of businesses will continue to refine the shape of the community. The recruitment plan created a list of desired businesses to be invited to the area and its recommended strategy is currently being explored by the City.

After completing so many planning and sticks and bricks projects, the program manager is an expert at coordinating activities and projects with the various non-profit, for-profit, city, county, and state agencies; applying for and administering grants; and keeping the community informed about project activities. The Partnership Committee reviews all development plans within the

designated Waterfronts area and makes recommendations to the CRA Board. What's still lacking in St. Andrews is an influx of desired businesses despite the significant investment in streetscaping, the boardwalk, the historic restoration of various buildings, and the large condominium next to the marina. The recent recruitment study has provided a plan for attracting businesses — particularly recommending incentives to attract new commercial ventures once the economy rebounds. Knowing the City's proclivity for follow through, they will certainly give it 100 percent.



STEINHATCHEE

STEINHATCHEE
FISH



STEINHATCHEE

Community Snapshot

VISION: “Steinhatchee prospers – the north end of the community along River Side Drive, directly on the Steinhatchee River, serves as a town center. A marina complex is located nearby with shops, restaurants, a maritime museum, community fishing pier with charter boats, parks, and green spaces. The height restrictions in place in Steinhatchee since early in the 21st century remain in force; residential development architecture is subject to the ‘Florida Cracker Style’ that retains the look of this coastal community.”

DESIGNATION: 2007

APPLICANT: Taylor County

STATUS: Active; Steering committee and sub-committees meet regularly.

PARTNERS: Steinhatchee Projects Board; Steinhatchee River Chamber of Commerce.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Awarded grant to buy the former waterfront Steinhatchee Fish Market; disaster recovery guide; Fort Steinhatchee project; flushing model feasibility study.

CURRENT CHALLENGES: Fuel costs for boating; current economic downturn; organizational arrangements to sustain the Steinhatchee Waterfronts Partnership after 2009.

FUTURE ENDEAVORS: Trailhead for canoes and kayaks; initiate research on location of Fort Frank Brooke; work with OTTED to conduct research on economic options for Steinhatchee.

FLORIDA ASSESSMENT OF COASTAL TRENDS DATA:

Number of Active Volunteers:	31
Volunteer Hours Contributed:	1,559
Public Dollars Contributed:	\$8.5 million
Private Dollars Contributed:	\$135,100

STEINHATCHEE



Steinhatchee sits atop an ancient dune ridge on the north bank of the Steinhatchee River near the Gulf of Mexico in an unincorporated part of Taylor County. This Big Bend community is a collection of older cottages and low-frame houses, restaurants, marinas, and newer, multi-story brightly colored and sea-gray condos, located some 38 miles southwest of Perry, the county seat.

Like other coastal settlements in North Florida, Steinhatchee's past is linked to commercial fishing and the timber industry. The 21st century economy depends on real estate and recreational and sport fishing, with both sectors weakened in recent years by high prices, tighter lending practices, and now the price of fuel for boats and cars, waterfront communities like Steinhatchee face serious threats to their economic livelihood.

Local jobs depend on the water, yet most of the waterfront is privately owned. Public access was lost as marinas and fish houses were bought and bulldozed in recent years to make way for private marinas, docks, and condo developments - some of which have never been built. Public access is limited to small, upstream creeks, undeveloped street ends with no parking, and two marinas that charge to put boats in the water.

The annual rhythm of life is punctuated by holiday celebrations, fishing tournaments, and summer scallop season. People shop locally at a hardware store, a grocery, and the "Steinhatchee Mall" — local speak for a dollar store. Public buildings include the post office, a community center, and the water company. The nearest neighbors are Keaton and Dekle Beaches to the north in Taylor County and Jena, which borders the river on the south, in Dixie County.

Individuals work on the water as guides or commercial fisherman or in restaurants or motels that cater to people who visit Steinhatchee for boating, scalloping during the summer season, and access to the Gulf. Some people drive back and forth to Perry or beyond to work at a paper mill or a prison: a large-scale timber operation in Cross City to the south has closed down. Construction provided some jobs during the real estate boom, but those jobs are gone, the saws and hammers silenced by the economic downturn.

Steinhatchee is no stranger to rough times — or recovery — so the people here are looking at ideas to showcase the community's number one asset — the water. Yet the history of the hard times bears repeating to see the current situation in the context of events.

Coastal communities are familiar with the vagaries of fishery harvests and disease — a red tide outbreak wiped out the thriving sponging industry along Florida's Gulf Coast for a time in the 1940s — and the 1990s brought a boatload of trouble that seemed to start with the Storm of the Century that rolled in unannounced off the Gulf of Mexico in March in 1993, damaging property and taking lives in the coastal area. Next, Florida voters amended the Constitution to ban the use of nets in state waters in 1994, virtually wiping out the net-dependent commercial fishing industry in Steinhatchee.

Property prices — and property taxes — shot up near the turn of the 21st century; most fishing families and marina owners eventually sold waterfront property to developers in the real estate bubble of 2000-2005 only to see the construction industry collapse with the larger nationwide recession. Fishing tournaments moved in, but with non-local sponsors the money goes to other communities or to private coffers outside Steinhatchee. Charter boat captains and recreational fishermen face increasing regulation and limitations on size and seasons for catch, diminishing the value — and likelihood — of a trip to Steinhatchee and the Gulf for a day of fishing.

THE WATERFRONTS FLORIDA PARTNERSHIP

Steinhatchee spotted an opportunity when it learned about the Waterfronts Florida Partnership Program in 2007, an opportunity to bring attention to its best asset — the waterfront.

With the support of the Board of County Commissioners and the help of the County Grants coordinator, Steinhatchee residents solicited letters of support from local organizations and won designation. They went to Tallahassee for the presentations and felt like they'd gotten long overdue recognition for this coastal community.

Steinhatchee, like St. Marks to the west in Wakulla County, is a startup Waterfronts organization. The first year was spent getting familiar with the kinds of grants available to buy or improve waterfront properties to provide for public access. Three concept drawings, prepared by students from Florida A&M University in Tallahassee, envisioned the renovation of a now defunct fish market and creation of a town center. The Hazard Mitigation Committee is working to identify evacuation routes, generators available for public use, and how to get the community back up and running after any one of the kinds of disasters that might befall a community set among the Gulf of Mexico, sinkholes, and thousands of acres of pine trees.

The Environmental and Cultural Resources group is looking for grants to delve into the history of Fort Frank Brooke, which stood within the present-day footprint of Steinhatchee at the time of the Second Seminole War in Florida, circa 1835 to 1842.

The Economic Development and the Public Access Committees are busy working to provide public access to the waterfront. Everyone realizes that Steinhatchee's economic health is tied to access to the water: no access, no business. Yet the only public boat ramp available is at Jena, across the bridge in Dixie County where boaters may wait for hours for access.

The Steinhatchee properties designated for parks in the 1921–1922 plat are all inland, not on the river, and recent attempts to open County-owned rights-of-way where streets dead end into the river were met with threats

of legal action from adjacent property owners. This added hard feelings to the community that sometimes divides itself along the lines of those who've been there for a while and those who've just arrived, those who want things to stay the same and those who want transformation.

The Partnership — which consists of the County Commission, the Steinhatchee Waterfronts Committee, and the long-standing Community Projects Board — applied for a laundry list of grants to purchase waterfront property for boats and fishing, develop upland trails that would connect Steinhatchee to Dekle and Keaton Beaches to the northwest, and renovate the remnants of the old bridge to provide a fishing pier and off-street parking. So far, the County has been awarded money to refurbish a playground and parking lot at the Community Center, as part of the old bridge project, and ranks high on pending lists.

By tradition, Steinhatchee is a community of independents. When they need something done, they hold a fish fry or special event. With Waterfronts Florida, the community is hoping to expand its funding options. State grants will help, but the Partnership intends to develop a financial relationship with the Taylor County Tourism Development Council, which receives the ten percent tax charged for every bed rented out. The Partnership may investigate the concept of a Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) to capture for the host community some of the tax money that comes from high priced waterfront property.

The Partnership started work in the summer of 2008 on developing its vision for the future, focusing first on a five-year planning horizon. Some talked of creating a town center on the hill or up the river; while others wanted to make sure that whatever happens, Steinhatchee remains a place that's home to people with all sizes of pocketbooks. Others want to clean up alongside CR 51, the entrance to the community. Some individuals are adamant that Steinhatchee should not be

home to tall buildings, certainly nothing greater than the recently built three story condos set atop pilings to meet coastal flood height requirements. In Steinhatchee some folks say they're looking to start over with the waterfront development — they want to buy the waterfront and restore it for public use.

Whatever happens, the people of Steinhatchee know what they need — boat ramps, fishing piers, and docks; they need access for locals and visitors to get to and enjoy the waterfront.



ST. MARKS





ST. MARKS

Community Snapshot

VISION: “To promote controlled economic development while preserving the “Genuine St. Marks Experience.” We see St. Marks as a waterfront community that:

- Preserves the fishing community and enhances the experiences of the natural environment, including life on the water
- Preserves and enhances the unique, significant history of the City of St. Marks and adjacent areas
- Ensures public access and open areas on the river
- Provides a retreat/getaway atmosphere
- Is a place to live, work, and relax for a lifetime
- Is a fruitful place to invest financially and personally”

DESIGNATION: 2007

APPLICANT: City of St. Marks

STATUS: Active; committee and subcommittees meet regularly; Partnership acts as Advisory Board to City Commission.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Boardwalk along river; upgrades to boat ramps and parking; feasibility and marketing study for conference center; oral histories of St. Marks residents; historical marker development; Historic St. Marks symbol for marketing and branding.

CURRENT CHALLENGES: Recruiting additional volunteers to be members of subcommittees; funding sources for stormwater planning.

FUTURE ENDEAVORS: Evaluation of the goals and objectives associated with the vision; setting priorities; consider organizational options for 2009 including creation of a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization to maintain focus on the waterfront.

FLORIDA ASSESSMENT OF COASTAL TRENDS DATA:

Number of Active Volunteers:	29
Volunteer Hours Contributed:	1,704
Public Dollars Contributed:	\$59,858
Private Dollars Contributed:	\$21,200

ST. MARKS



St. Marks lies along a stretch of Florida's coastline, 25 miles south of Florida's capital in Tallahassee, known for sea grass not sand beaches, slow moving rivers, and towns just off the beaten path. With barely 300 inhabitants, the City is one of Florida's smaller municipalities and only one of two incorporated areas in Wakulla County.

Commercial, recreational, and sportfishing boats line the waterfront; some are tied to docks, others are stored in over-water sheds, off-the-water dry stack buildings, or on trailers parked behind chain link fences. Just one waterfront restaurant remains open since Posey's Oyster Bar suffered storm damage in 2005 that led to condemnation of the two-story hotspot. Off-water eateries keep up the coastal tradition, promising shrimp, fish sandwiches, and other seafood to visitors who arrive by road, water, or the Tallahassee–St. Marks Historic Railroad State Trail that ends at the water's edge.

VISIONS OF REVITALIZATION

St. Marks has transitioned from a 16th century Spanish fort and military trading and distribution center, to a 20th century industrial center to more recent decline. From its origin during the period of Spanish settlement in Florida through the Civil War, St. Marks served as an important outpost, as a distribution point for arms and, later, cotton. The fort – San Marcos de Apalache – and a lighthouse constructed in the 1830s are on the National Register of Historic Places. A state park provides interpretive displays on the community's rich history.

Today, an oil refinery and supporting docks are defunct, relics of a time when tugs pushed barges of crude oil from Pascagoula, Mississippi to North Florida. At one time party boats carried tourists out to fish on the river and the Gulf. Now restaurants, bars, marinas, and a general store are the economic engine, dependent on weekend and summer boaters from Tallahassee and South Georgia. The revitalization — now in the start-up phase with help from Waterfronts Florida — reflects the resilience of local folks and a panel of supportive elected officials confronted by a natural disaster named Dennis.

First the disaster, then the response. Nothing in recent memory prepared St. Marks or other coastal communities in Florida's Big Bend for the devastation that rolled in July 2005 on a 10- to 12-foot storm surge linked to Pensacola-bound Hurricane Dennis. Posey's and other waterfront establishments were flooded. By 2007, some 69 percent of the buildings in the waterfront area were vacant, victims of the storm and a sagging regional and national economy.

Yet, the aftermath of Dennis sparked a grassroots initiative that set the citizens on course to revitalize their hometown. Everybody pitched in, including a gentleman known for offering pickup and delivery service to get people to meetings. The visioning paralleled the City's work to develop a master plan and investigate the ins and outs of the Community Redevelopment Area concept, so elected officials endorsed the work and appointed a special committee. The resulting vision is straight-forward and to-the-point:

- People do not want to see St. Marks lose its flavor, the community is laid back and comfortable, it's not a Panama City Beach
- Encourage sportfishing
- Support local business

By 2007, with less than a year under its belt, the St. Marks Waterfronts Florida Partnership set out a strategy to dream big, create foundations for reality, and capture small wins along the way. The Partnership hired a program manager — the individual who was instrumental in launching the Panacea Waterfronts Partnership



in 1999 — and started plans to beautify the local post office.

GETTING THINGS DONE: THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF A STARTUP OPERATION

The Waterfronts Partnership works through a 15-member steering committee, and a program manager handles the day-to-day tasks. The group set up the organizational structure early on, established sub-committees, then wrote and adopted by-laws. Sub-committees are headed by members of the steering group and populated by the community-at-large. The program manager keeps up with the committees, handles the paper work, and makes sure that committee members know about public meetings important to waterfronts — including the regular reports to the City Commission.

One of the biggest challenges to date has been an abundance of ideas and the limitations of the labor pool in a community with less than 300 people. Yet person after person continues to step up and volunteer for hands-on work or serve on ad hoc or standing committees.

The Partnership depends on regular meetings and casual opportunities to talk about ideas, plans, and what needs to be done — to get the word out to the community about what's happening. Each individual knows how to turn a trip to the general store for a bag of ice into a conversation with neighbors who want to know “what's going on with Waterfronts?”

THE DREAM

While the spirit for revitalization started from Hurricane Dennis, the dream for the future followed on the heels of an announcement that a developer planned to build multi-storied condos along the St. Marks riverfront. The Waterfronts Partnership and others in St. Marks opposed the project, saying that such a development would bring in few people, block public access to the water, and conflict with the low-rise character of the St. Marks they know and love. They wanted something everyone would enjoy, not just the few; and it would have been an inefficient use of a community asset—the waterfront.

Then they came up with a better idea — a conference center, hotel, cottages, and a waterfront boardwalk. A Waterfronts board member followed up with



a presentation that was complete with photos, goals, and objectives on how to “brand” St. Marks, distinguish this city from other coastal areas, and, ultimately, tie itself to a network of historic communities including St. Augustine.

So far, few people are saying the idea will be “a piece of cake” or — more importantly — “this isn't going to work.” Instead, the Partnership rolled up its collective sleeves and raised \$20,000 in private funds, issued a request for proposals, and hired a consultant to conduct a study for an off-water “green” conference center. If it comes to pass, the

center will be the focal point of a yet-to-be-created town center and the link to a waterfront plaza that replaces some of the buildings condemned after Dennis. Architecture will be important, people here want a town center that gives the impression that the conference center and other new structures evolved over time, eschewing the more recent trends toward new urbanism and instant planned communities.

Separately, with the step-by-step support of the Waterfronts Florida Partnership Program, the Historical Committee began work to create an historic district within St. Marks. By resolution, the City Commission authorized the Waterfronts Partnership to serve as an advisory committee and to talk directly with the Bureau of Historic Preservation to explore options for formal recognition. The Partnership is also partnering with the Office of Greenways and Trails and a local business sponsor to establish interpretive signs on the Tallahassee-St. Marks Trail.

Tasks for the second year of designation include evaluation of the goals and objectives and setting priorities. The Partnership will also consider organization options and explore potential for creating a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation to maintain focus on the waterfront as it moves into the “graduate” phase of its relationship with the Waterfronts Florida Partnership Program.

The thinking in St. Marks tends toward the positive and the practical. Questions focus on the “what if” of success and the “how to” of constructing and maintaining streets and other public services in a riverfront community where people know the question is not if the City of St. Marks will flood again, but when. The people of St. Marks also have a saying: “We're managing what happens here instead of someone else coming in and telling us what to do.”

VILANO BEACH





VILANO BEACH

Community Snapshot

VISION: “The visioning group developed individual broad statements for areas of focus which included: Land Use and the Environment, Infrastructure, Architectural Review, Culture and Leisure, and Governance.”

DESIGNATION: 1999

APPLICANTS: North Shore Improvement Association and St. Johns County

STATUS: Active; Vilano Beach Waterfronts Florida Partnership is a sub-set of the North Shore Improvement Association.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Received Sustainable Florida Best Practices Award from the Council for a Sustainable Florida; worked with St. Johns Board of County Commissioners to create a Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) and a special zoning overlay for Vilano Beach; with County partner, oversaw infrastructure improvements and installation of public art and upgrades to facilities at the waterfront fishing pier and purchased oceanfront property for a community center; obtained grant from Waterfronts Florida Partnership Program to develop business marketing plan, Town Center designs, and handbook for developers.

CURRENT CHALLENGES: The economy and the price of gasoline; need for volunteers.

FLORIDA ASSESSMENT OF COASTAL TRENDS DATA:

Public Dollars Contributed: \$18.7 million

Private Dollars Contributed: \$75,000

VILANO BEACH



Vilano Beach, one of Florida’s earliest land development communities, is flanked by the Atlantic Ocean on the east and the Intracoastal Waterway on the west. A cluster of mostly single-family homes and a smattering of small businesses are situated at the northern edge of the inlet to the Tolomato River, some two miles seaward of the historic City of St. Augustine.

The community was built in the 1920s by New York philanthropist August Heckscher and the St. Augustine & Atlantic Corporation. The oceanfront Grand Vilano Casino was the centerpiece at a time when a casino was a venue for entertainment, not gambling. The structure was known for its “monumental architecture, salt water swimming pool, and fine dining.” The development failed in the Florida land bust circa 1926, and the Casino washed away in a Nor’easter in 1939 despite Heckscher’s battle to protect it from the sea.

Vilano Beach transformed itself in the years following World War II as a string of small motels and restaurants grew up along then-SR A1A, catering to the newly mobile American public that arrived from the mainland by bridge. When the Florida Department of Transportation relocated SR A1A two blocks to the north to accommodate the ramp for a high-rise fixed span bridge, the community floundered, becoming a cul-de-sac of sorts with homes but little or no stable

businesses. While Vilano kept its community footprint, the new route sent travelers away from the community with little more than a glance before the turn to the beach road. Motels converted to long-term rentals and commerce withered.

Some of the buildings and a kind of large-scale memorabilia that gives a taste of “Old Florida” survive today. The historic 1950s sign at Haley’s Motor Lodge Court — a comet — has been refurbished and reinstalled; the Blue Bird of Happiness — two orange balls and a beak stuck together to promote fresh Florida orange juice — came home the summer of 2008. It will be repainted and relocated in what promises to be Vilano’s Town Center in the 21st century.

THE VISION

Vilano Beach is one of a series of residential developments lined up alongside SR A1A up to Ponte Vedra in northern St. Johns County. These unincorporated communities — working together as the North Shores Improvement Association (NSIA) — began development of a vision for the area in 1995 as part of a County initiative, spurred at least in part by rapid growth in the coastal areas. Accepted by the Board of County Commissioners in February 1999, the vision goals include:

- A town center and business district along Vilano Road (old SR A1A) from the Intracoastal Waterway to the Atlantic Ocean; and
- A focal point for recreation and special events at Vilano Pier at the waterway side and at Vilano Beach at the Atlantic side.

Just as importantly, the NSIA vision created a path for doing business with government, called for civic education of citizenry, and set out the initial list of partners to help implement their vision. Within months, the St. Johns County Commission applied for designation as a Waterfronts Florida Partnership Community.

THE VILANO BEACH WATERFRONTS FLORIDA PARTNERSHIP

The Vilano Beach Waterfronts Florida Partnership was the first community without ties to the commercial fishing industry to receive assistance from the Waterfronts Florida Program. The review committee decision considered the economic loss imposed on the community by the state-supported re-alignment of A1A. For structure and practicality, the Waterfronts Committee was formed as a sub-group of the NSIA, a non-profit corporation, thereby expanding its options



for financial support. Unlike some Waterfronts Partnerships, the Vilano Beach committee is a collection of self-selected members who volunteer for projects, serve as officers, or do both; the working partners are not appointed by local government and the group does not hold elections.

The idea of a town center captured the imagination and the energy of the Partnership from the beginning. Still, the group recognized that it would

take large sums of money and more than grants to convert the Vilano Beach main street to a vibrant town center and so began learning about Community Redevelopment Areas (CRA) and Tax Increment Financing (TIF). The Partnership and others hesitated upon learning the community must be designated as a “blighted” area to become a CRA, but then yielded because of the long-term financial gains. The County Commission created the Vilano Beach CRA in 2002 and so far it has produced some \$12.5 million for streetscape improvements, a zoning overlay, and a companion handbook for developers.

The linchpin for revitalization came in 2007 with the public purchase of Fiddlers Green Restaurant to be used for a community and environmental educational center and Vilano Beach Oceanfront Park. The Florida Communities Trust put up a grant for \$4.1 million, matched with \$1.4 million from the County, to buy the 1.7 acres of waterfront property. The park is in line for designation as an official trailhead for the East Coast Greenway, a stop on the Florida Birding Trail, and the A1A Scenic and Historic Highway Scenic Byway.

The Vilano Beach list of accomplishments and future goals is lengthy. In 2007 alone, the County revamped the urban streetscape design and constructed pavilions; installed public art; and widened Vilano Road to install sidewalks and angled parking. Separately, a marketing plan was developed for Vilano

and technical assistance is being provided to business and property owners on business recruitment.

Vilano Beach’s key to success may be linked to the abilities of the Partnership to learn the language of planning and government, form partnerships, and to renew itself with fresh advocacy organizations and members. The Vilano Beach Waterfronts Partnership joined forces with another group aimed at revitalizing the area — the Vilano Beach Main Street program — that draws from the same cadre of volunteers. Together the programs depend on the energy of local residents and the financial support of St. Johns County to make the Vilano Beach vision a reality.

CHALLENGES

Development activity at Vilano Beach – as elsewhere in Florida and the nation – slowed in 2007 and 2008, putting the plans for the Town Center on hold. The Partnership and its various iterations and local residents say the work to make this community a destination is moving forward, although at a diminished pace; they are waiting for the economy to rebound and looking for developers to take the next steps toward making the Town Center a reality. Meanwhile, the County is working with property and business owners, offering training on the comprehensive plan and on code enforcement, and encouraging people to “clean up and fix up” existing structures. Some things, communities have learned, can be done with little or no money or grants; sweat equity still spends.



Waterfronts Florida Program Snapshots

COMMUNITY CASE STUDIES



AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS

CPI	Coastal Partnership Initiative
FBIP	Florida Boating Improvement Program
FCT	Florida Communities Trust
FDCA	Florida Department of Community Affairs; also DCA
FDEP	Florida Department of Environmental Protection; also DEP
FDOT	Florida Department of Transportation; also DOT
FRDAP	Florida Recreational Development Assistance Program
FWC	Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
OGT	Office of Greenways and Trails
OTTED	Office of Tourism, Trade and Economic Development
SERT	State Emergency Response Team
TIITF	Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund
WFPP	Waterfronts Florida Partnership Program

PLANNING TOOLS

Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA)
Design Guidelines/Regulations
Downtown Development Authorities
Impact Fees
Local Government Comprehensive Plans
Local Historic Preservation Programs
Master Plans
Minimum Level of Service (LOS) Standards for Recreation
Overlays
Proportionate Fair Share
Special Taxing Districts
Tax Increment Financing (TIF)
Florida Assessment of Coastal Trends (FACT) Data



Waterfronts Florida Program



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