

CHAPTER 9 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

GOALS

This section specifically identifies the overall goals for revitalization in the City of Brooksville. The goals are broad and general in structure. The listed objectives that follow are more specific and identify activities necessary to achieve the desired goals. Measurable outcomes are identified where possible and completion dates have been proposed within the objectives.

- Goal 1: Public Health and Safety** — Foster an attractive, safe and comfortable environment that is conducive to activities during the day and evenings.
- Goal 2: Supporting** — Ensure the provision of adequate and efficient public services to support additional development.
- Goal 3: Beautification/Property Enhancements** — Increase the identity and enhance the visual impact of the downtown area and thereby establish the downtown area as a focal point through development of an aesthetically pleasing and somewhat uniform image.
- Goal 4: City Codes & Development** — Improve processes, codes, and policies adopted by the City of Brooksville to encourage renovations, development, growth and revitalization throughout the City.
- Goal 5: Economic** — Diversify the area's economic base, increase sales receipts and heighten business profitability. Enable growth and development within that economic base. Establish the downtown area as a focal point for the community to attract more shoppers and visitors for longer periods of time and from a wider geographic area.
- Goal 6: Recreation** — Improve and enhance the recreational areas that are available to the city residents and visitors. Attract and increase the number of visitors in the downtown area through recreational facilities and recreational/cultural events.

OBJECTIVES

Public Health & Safety Goal

- Goal 1: Foster an attractive, safe and comfortable environment that is conducive to activities during the day and evenings.**

It is in the best interest of the community for citizens to keep a watchful eye on their neighborhood and to facilitate police efficiency. To that end community involvement should be encouraged and crime watches established where needed. The City should review procedures used for fire and police protection to ensure that these services are coordinated where they overlap.

To facilitate crime prevention, streetlight assessments should be made. Sidewalks should be assessed for safety of existing and addition of new ones where foot traffic is forced into the street, particularly in neighborhoods surrounding schools.

- Objective 1.1** Assess the status of streetlights and sidewalks throughout the City.
- Objective 1.2** The Revitalization Effort will identify funding sources to add sidewalks and streetlights that are deemed lacking and will assist with applications for those sources.
- Objective 1.3** Analyze fire protection capabilities for meeting current and future needs. Upon conclusion of the review and analysis, establish a plan to correct deficiencies and plan for future needs.
- Objective 1.4** Review Policies and Procedures for Fire and Police Departments to ensure coordination of services when applicable.
- Objective 1.5** Develop community crime watch programs where deemed appropriate.

Supporting Goal

Goal 2: Ensure the provision of adequate and efficient public services to support additional development.

Infrastructure improvements must be made to assure that renovations, development, growth and revitalization can occur throughout the City.

- Objective 2.1** A comprehensive analysis of existing infrastructure should be done to determine each system's capacity as it relates to existing land uses and possible increases in land use intensity.
- Objective 2.2** Repair old and replace undersized water and sewer lines as needed and in conjunction with other construction projects.
- Objective 2.3** Analyze the feasibility of underground installation of aerial utility facilities in certain areas within the redevelopment area.
- Objective 2.4** Conduct additional traffic circulation studies of the downtown and surrounding areas to determine the best circulation patterns by 2010.
- Objective 2.5** The Revitalization Effort will identify funding sources to facilitate the improvement, maintenance or expansion of the current system of sidewalks and bike paths and will assist with applications for those sources. Particular attention should be given to connecting the Good Neighbor Trail to other areas of the City and any other travel interests of recreational visitors that are projected.

- Objective 2.6** Complete a downtown parking needs analysis and develop an effective management system for the current parking system by 2010. This should include unified signage that is distinctive to the downtown, and a parking lot improvement/maintenance program.
- Objective 2.7** Develop a master plan for accessibility improvements for the disabled to and within the City by 2010. The master plan should update and include current analysis conducted on city-owned properties.

Beautification/Property Enhancements Goal

Goal 3: Increase the identity and enhance the visual impact of the downtown area and thereby establish the downtown area as a focal point through development of an aesthetically pleasing and somewhat uniform image.

This is a multi-faceted initiative including reconstruction of intersections, bricked pedestrian walkways, landscaped buffers at intersections and sidewalks, old fashioned street lamps, antique-style benches and decorative trash receptacles. It also includes brick recovery of traditional brick street buried under asphalt, facade renovations and landscaped parking areas. The amenities are designed to entice public appreciation and use and are intended to slow the rate of motor traffic making it pedestrian friendly.

This section is divided into six areas: Streetscaping, Brick Recovery, Landscaping Standards, Preservation/Restoration, Facade Grants, and Signage.

STREETSCAPING

- Objective 3.1** Increase the visual attractiveness and unity of downtown Brooksville by identifying a Streetscaping theme by 2010.
- Objective 3.2** Begin a phased program by 2000 for streetscaping with emphasis on pedestrian orientation in downtown Brooksville through landscape features, pedestrian-scale lighting and street furniture. Currently ongoing.
- Objective 3.3** Begin a visual enhancement program through the elimination of visual pollution and by screening surface parking areas with landscaping or other means by 2010.
- Objective 3.4** Develop unified signage that is distinctive by 2010.
- Objective 3.5** The Revitalization Effort will identify funding sources to procure and install pedestrian oriented aesthetic improvements and will assist with applications for those sources.
- Objective 3.6** Review city services for provision of adequate sidewalk maintenance and landscaping by 2010.

- Objective 3.7** The Revitalization Effort will encourage building improvements by property owners.

BRICK RECOVERY Restoring Brooksville's historic streets necessitates the original brick's resurrection to ensure quality, longevity and historic preservation. Community residents and civic groups could participate in the resurrection program with community work days. Any brick recovered should be utilized.

- Objective 3.8** Examine asphalted brick streets in need of repair to determine their potential for brick recovery. Future planning should incorporate brick recovery within the city's pavement management program.

LANDSCAPING STANDARDS

- Objective 3.9** Consider policies to encourage shade trees and other canopy features in the pedestrian areas by 2010. Furthermore, the Revitalization Effort will identify funding sources to promote the use of shade trees within the City and on city rights-of-way and assist with applications for those sources.

- Objective 3.10** A landscape plan should be designed for both rights-of-way and parking areas. The Revitalization Effort will identify funding sources in order to facilitate the implementation.

- Objective 3.11** Review the feasibility of developing a landscaping plan to buffer industrial zones.

PRESERVATION/RESTORATION Standards should reflect the time period most indicative of a particular zone's history. A phase-in program should be considered for existing non-conforming properties within the districts. This program could include some type of funding assistance such as facade and landscaping grants, tax breaks and fee reductions. Owners of income-generating properties who undertake upgrades may qualify for up to 20% in federal tax breaks under the Federal Investment Tax Credit program.

Enforcement of those standards could be overseen by an Architectural Review Committee. If a Committee is created, it should include persons from the following professions: architecture, engineering, development, historical preservation (museum) and other lay people, particularly those with experience and knowledge of history and renovation.

- Objective 3.12** Consider the feasibility of drafting specific architectural and design standards for historic zones. Establish guidelines for preservation and restoration of historic assets.

- Objective 3.13** Research tax breaks and fee reductions used in other cities and consider utilization within the City. Implement where feasible and communicate existing state and federal tax breaks for historical restoration projects to the citizens.

Objective 3.14 The Revitalization Effort shall encourage the renovation of buildings to promote commercial office and residential facilities within and around the downtown redevelopment area. Specific review and development should be sought in the renovation of second story building space. The downtown area has a considerable amount of second story space that is currently empty or not used for revenue generation. A program that would work to encourage the development of this space for either commercial or resident use could greatly assist property owners in revenue generation and enhance the downtown area.

Objective 3.15 The Revitalization Effort will work with local lending institutions to establish a loan pool program to provide local businesses and residents with assistance in rehabilitating existing structures.

FACADE GRANTS Facade grants have become an integral part of most city redevelopment plans with the average grant ranging between \$2,000 and \$5,000. Other options rest in facade banking or facade easements. Facade banking allows property owners to lease the front of certain structures to the City or Community Redevelopment Agency for improvement or maintenance. Similarly, historic facade easements may be donated to the Florida Trust which then accepts stewardship for that asset. The Trust also considers conservation easements.

Objective 3.16 The Revitalization Effort will analyze the need for facade improvements to commercial structures in the downtown area by 2012.

Objective 3.17 The Revitalization Effort will identify funding sources and assist with applications in order to assist property owners with renovations to exposed front, back and sides of structures by 2012.

Objective 3.18 The Revitalization Effort shall investigate the feasibility of facade banking and facade easements.

Objective 3.19 The need for facade improvements should be considered by the City Council during the budget allocation of the community redevelopment trust funds and during at least one public hearing related to the Small Cities Community Development Block Grant application process.

Objective 3.20 The City of Brooksville will review the need for facade improvements to government structures and will coordinate with other government entities regarding the need for improvements to their structures.

SIGNAGE This section is divided into two areas: Gateway Welcome Signs and Other Signage.

Gateway Welcome Signs

Eye-catching entry signs will be located at strategic entry points into the city, large enough to be readable and artistic enough to be impressive. The signs will be heavily landscaped with seasonal and year-round vegetation including azaleas, dogwoods and flowering perennials.

Donations can be sought to help cover the cost of the project, and volunteer labor should be available for construction. A number of people have already volunteered to assist with landscaping and a local garden group could be solicited to handle routine maintenance. Other charitable groups such as the Boy/Girl Scouts or retirees would be approached for the construction phase.

Priority Locations:

- Apex of East Jefferson Street (Hwy. 50A) and Summit Road
- Apex of Howell Avenue and Broad Street (US 41North)
- West Jefferson Street (Hwy. 50A) and Cortez Blvd. (Hwy 50)
- US Hwy. 41 South

Objective 3.21 Obtain any necessary easements/rights-of-way required for the entry signs by 2011-2012.

Objective 3.22 The Revitalization Effort will plan and organize construction of "Welcome to Downtown Brooksville" signs and landscape entryways by 2011-2012.

Other Signage

Objective 3.23 The Revitalization Effort will study the need for distinctive signage to focus attention on the assets in our community.

Objective 3.24 The Revitalization Effort will identify funding sources and methods of implementation for improved signage and will assist with applications for those sources.

City Codes & Development Goal

Goal 4: Improve processes, codes, and policies adopted by the City of Brooksville to encourage renovation, development, growth and revitalization throughout the City.

This section is divided into two areas: Zoning and Development Criteria and Development Incentives.

ZONING AND DEVELOPMENT CRITERIA A thorough examination is needed to determine what blockades are in place that hinder new businesses and residents from moving into the City, particularly the downtown district. Specifically, review and development should be sought in the renovation of second story building space. The downtown area has a considerable amount of second story space that is currently empty or not used for revenue generation. A program that would encourage development of this space for either commercial or residential use could greatly assist property owners in revenue generation and enhance the downtown area.

Objective 4.1 Review and revise existing codes and policies to ensure the encouragement of quality development and preservation of our historic assets. At the same time, the City should promote and encourage revitalization of substandard or

deteriorating housing and commercial property through code enforcement and abatement.

- Objective 4.2** Review and revise policies and procedures regarding code enforcement to ensure an aggressive posture, particularly with regard to run-down properties that devalue adjacent lots and the overall quality of Brooksville.
- Objective 4.3** Create development incentives in the downtown redevelopment area to achieve the desired mix of land for commercial and housing uses.
- Objective 4.4** Provide adequate public services and amenities in the City (such as water, sewer, parking and streetscaping) to encourage private investment.
- Objective 4.5** Review and revise policies and procedures to maintain and enhance existing development and encourage an additional 25% development of undeveloped or underdeveloped property in the City by 2015.
- Objective 4.6** Review and revise current annexation policies to ensure property receiving city services is annexed as soon as it becomes contiguous to the City.
- Objective 4.7** The Revitalization Effort has identified funding sources to assist in the elimination of blighted and dilapidated structures in order to improve appearance of lots/parcels by 2010 and has proceeded with completing the application from these sources.

DEVELOPMENT INCENTIVES The Brooksville Revitalization Effort will seek investment initiatives that bolster local business and residential activity. Those options vary in extent from property ownership and leasing, to encouraging building improvements by property owners, to recruiting developers who will comply with local revitalization standards. Such initiatives are negotiated efforts.

There are a number of incentive options worth exploring to help stimulate downtown business activity. Incentive programs must be managed by the agency that regulates them, and many of these options would be coordinated with existing economic groups.

- Objective 4.8** Review the current Utility Program to ensure developers are encouraged through fee credits to upgrade or build utility systems within the City. (See further discussion under Financial Considerations for Revitalization.)
- Objective 4.9** Reconsider the establishment of an economic tax exemption program. The Revitalization Effort could provide significant public education to facilitate citizen acceptance. (See further discussion under Financial Considerations for Revitalization.)
- Objective 4.10** Explore obtaining a Rural Business Enterprise Grant. These grant opportunities are designed to promote development of small and emerging business enterprises

in municipalities of more than 50,000 in population in any area other than a city or town. One million dollars of federal money is available with no match required. During the fiscal year of 2007, approximately \$40.8 million was available for the RBEG program.

Objective 4.11 The Revitalization Effort should work toward establishing a Contribution Tax Incentive Program. (See further discussion under Financial Considerations for Revitalization.)

Objective 4.12 Exploration should be made into the availability and application process outlined for Facade Grants. (See further discussion under Financial Considerations for Revitalization.)

Objective 4.13 Review the applicability and use of Tax Increment Financing. The use of Tax Increment Financing revenues is administered by a Community Redevelopment Agency appointed by the City Council. (See further discussion under Financial Considerations for Revitalization.)

Objective 4.13.a The Community Redevelopment Agency shall develop a quarterly meeting schedule for the purposes of conducting and overseeing Community Redevelopment Area business.

Objective 4.13.b The Community Redevelopment Agency will work to aggressively develop, plan, finance and construct improvements to the Community Redevelopment Area.

Objective 4.13.c The Community Redevelopment Agency shall adopt a strong policy of utilizing redevelopment trust funds for those projects that can show justifiable gain in the property value or redevelopment impact in the Community Redevelopment Area by the year 2010.

Objective 4.13.d The Community Redevelopment Agency shall promote participation by local financial institutions in the Community Redevelopment Area loan pool, which could be utilized in conjunction with funds maintained in the Redevelopment Trust Fund.

Objective 4.13.e The Community Redevelopment Agency shall encourage and promote cooperation between the city and county governments in furtherance of these goals.

Economic Goal

Goal 5: Diversify the area's economic base, increase sales receipts and heighten business profitability; enable growth in that economic base. Establish the downtown area as a focal point for the community to attract more shoppers and visitors for longer periods of time and from a wider geographic area.

Objective 5.1 Complete an overall economic assessment for the City. An economic assessment will allow enhancement projects to be guided based on the city's needs and should include the following components:

- **Economic Analysis:** To determine the types of businesses within the City, how much is being spent, earned and generated; includes payroll, and generation of sales and property tax
- **Needs Analysis:** What types of businesses are lacking to the community's needs and desired goals
- **Space Analysis:** Vacancies and use
- **Parking Analysis:** How much parking is realistically needed to support business and social activity, particularly downtown. This would include examination of current parking standards and potential modifications.
- **Asset Inventory:** Assets to the community including historic sites, public facilities, accommodations, utilized and unutilized public lands
- **Infrastructure Need Assessment:** Policy, plans and incentives related to business and asset development

The economic assessment should be completed no later than October 2010.

Objective 5.2 Utilize the economic assessment in marketing efforts for business recruitment and retention.

Recreation Goal

Goal 6: Improve and enhance the recreational areas that are available to the City residents and visitors. Attract and increase the number of visitors in the downtown area through recreational facilities and recreational/cultural events.

This section is divided into two areas: The Good Neighbor Trail and the Cultural Affairs and Community Efforts.

THE GOOD NEIGHBOR TRAIL Brooksville has been given the opportunity to connect the Suncoast Trail with downtown Brooksville through the creation of a local trail network that links to the greater Tampa Bay. There have been additional discussions regarding connection of the Withlacoochee Trail to the Van Fleet Trail in Sumter and Polk counties and then on to the Orange County Trail. If these links come about as anticipated, Brooksville could be the hub for regional bicycle events that take bikers from Dunellon to St. Petersburg.

Regardless of whether these connections come to pass, the number of bikers and recreation seekers who utilize the Croom area and the Withlacoochee State Trail in the eastern portion of Hernando County are enough reason to proceed. It is essential to develop a broad-based master plan that goes beyond the four-foot wide slab of asphalt to include an entire complex of public amenities. The impact of these offerings on the community at large should be explored.

- Objective 6.1** The Revitalization Effort will work with the Heritage Museum which owns the trail depot to create a community complex not only for public recreation but also community gatherings, social interaction, and business development. This trail head can be a southern gateway/welcome center designed to capture the stream of usage and ensure the trail works to the city's economic benefit.

The design envisioned will create an atmosphere that epitomizes Brooksville's southern charm, one that emphasizes the city's historic nature, and one that compels visitors to explore what else the City has to offer.

Brick crosswalks and paths could lead to a trio of gazebos south of the trail. The middle gazebo could be large enough to host a small band for an outdoor concert. Vacant land to the south could be turned into a staging area for outdoor community happenings of any magnitude. Benches should be installed beneath planted trees to give users a comfortable place to rest. Restrooms and water fountains should be provided, as will on-site parking. The site would be heavily landscaped with azaleas, dogwoods and cascading Live Oak trees.

Russell Street between Main Street and South Brooksville Avenue is envisioned as a community crosswalk location. A limited quantity of bricks could be sold in support of the project and engraved with the buyer's name. The project would not only ensure community buy-in for the park, but also enhance the area's historic flare.

- Objective 6.2** Encourage small businesses attractive to trail users to set up shop and spread growth into areas radiating from the complex.
- Objective 6.3** The Revitalization Effort will continue the streetscaping theme envisioned for the downtown redevelopment area along Main Street and onto Russell Street where it borders the complex.
- Objective 6.4** The Revitalization Effort will identify sources of funding that could be used to complete the project and will assist with applications for those sources.

CULTURAL AFFAIRS AND COMMUNITY EFFORTS Many efforts in the past have been made by the Downtown Development Corporation, the County Recreation Department, the Heritage Museum, the Greater Hernando County Chamber of Commerce, the Brooksville Business Alliance, the Hernando County Fine Arts Council, the Bandshell Bash Committee, the Brooksville Kiwanis Club, the Rotary Club, the Red Mule Runners Club and others to hold events in Brooksville that will attract local residents

and out-of-county visitors. These efforts should continue and be supported by the Revitalization Effort. Further encouragement and support should be given to those that want to plan and organize new events in the downtown area. All events and activities that are community inclusive and inviting to visitors go a long way in building an interest to visit, shop, eat, and work in Brooksville. Cultural and community events and activities improve the city's image of viability and vitality.

Closely related to the perception of a town's viability and vitality is the perception of occupancy. This is particularly important to vacant structures with large display windows. Giving the appearance of occupation heightens a visitor's perception of that community's viability; vacant windows diminish that perception. Vacant window space could be turned into display cases for other businesses, community events, or holiday displays.

- Objective 6.5** Encourage additional civic activities and community events in the downtown area, beginning immediately upon the adoption of this plan.
- Objective 6.6** The Revitalization Effort will coordinate the development of a handbook to assist civic groups with community events to be held in the City of Brooksville by 2010.
- Objective 6.7** The Revitalization Effort will coordinate the utilization of vacant window space for display purposes with the schools, libraries and local cultural/event related interests.