

Good Neighbor Trail

CONCEPT PLAN



A recreational trail and trailhead facility linking Brooksville's past with its future

Project Purpose

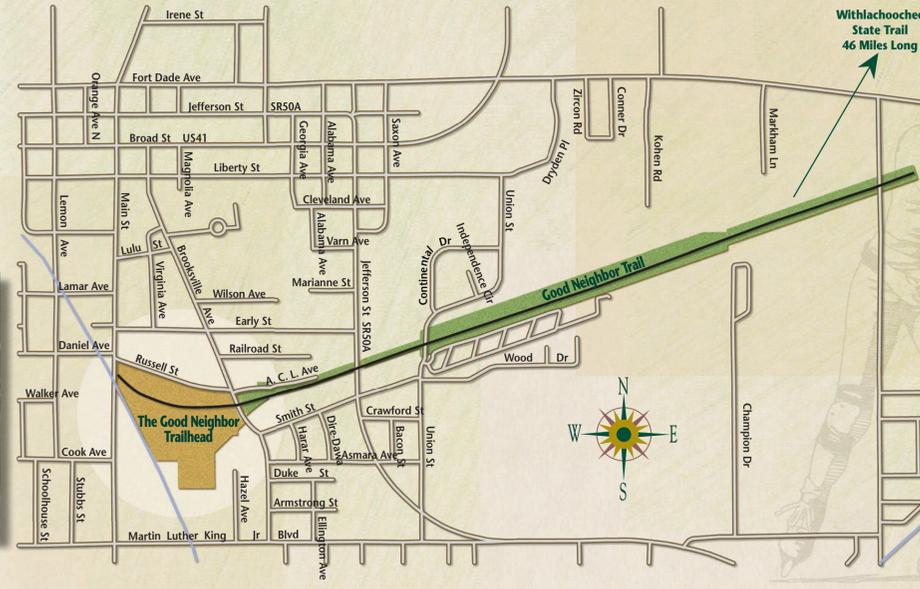
To develop a multi-use, non-motorized recreational trail

Known as the Good Neighbor Trail and Trailhead Complex, this urban greenway links historic Brooksville with the existing Withlacoochee State Trail. As such, the Good Neighbor Trail and Trailhead Complex carries the potential to be the recreational, historic, cultural and economic hub of not just Brooksville, but all of Hernando County.

Visitors will enjoy a variety of historical, cultural and nature-based activities offered at the trailhead complex. And in keeping with its natural and historic surroundings, the project will implement environmental restoration, enhance wildlife habitat and promote environmental education.



Canopy walk along beautiful Brooksville Avenue



About The Area

Established in 1856 and incorporated in 1880, the City of Brooksville is one of Florida's 30 oldest communities according to the Florida League of Cities. This is evidenced in the numerous anti-bellum houses, many brick paved streets lined with century-old trees and a historic downtown.

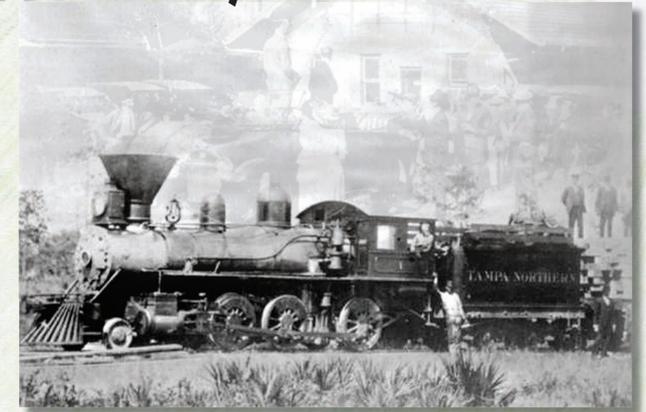
Hernando County, located in west central Florida, is uniquely positioned close to Tampa, Orlando and Ocala. Brooksville is centrally located at the heart of Hernando County.

Parts of Brooksville are over 200 feet above sea level making it one of the highest cities in Florida affording vistas of stately live oaks and magnolias. The Good Neighbor Trailhead is approximately 130' above sea level.

Despite its rapid, projected growth, the City of 10-square miles is still considered a rural community. Pasture land, loaded with cattle and horses, surrounds the City and reflects the area's agricultural tradition. These are the characteristics that helped earn the City the designation of "Rural Community of the Year" in 2002.

These uncommon natural and historic assets also provide an inviting backdrop for the Good Neighbor Trail and Trailhead Complex. The proposed project area incorporates approximately 35 acres within the city limits of Brooksville. Phase I of the project, which includes paving the Trail from the Trailhead to Jasmine Drive, will serve as a focal point of the community, providing a key link between neighborhoods and recreational areas. As such, the Good Neighbor Trailhead will serve as a hub of community activity.

History



Recapturing the historical essence of the trailhead property is a vital element of the Good Neighbor Trail project. The original site along Russell and Main streets was platted between the 1850s and 1870s and used primarily as a railroad depot and switching yard. At that time, the property was virtually clear-cut when a railroad company built connecting lines to transfer goods from the east-west main line to the north-south trunk line.

The Hernando Historical Museum Association, Inc. acquired the train depot and transformed it into a genealogical resource center showcasing the area's history. The Southwest Florida Water Management District later discovered an 1880s rail car abandoned in the Green Swamp and donated it to the museum. The wooden relic, known as the "Cook Car," was relocated to the Brooksville Train Depot.



In 1998, the City of Brooksville acquired the surrounding 10 acres of railroad land using a grant from Florida Communities Trust. The grant also allowed the City to purchase a corridor more than a mile long that once served as the railroad line. The remaining nine miles of abandoned rail line were acquired by private interests and Hernando County, both of which are committed to connecting the corridor to the Withlacoochee State Trail.

The Brooksville Train Depot dates back to 1886 when local businessmen raised \$20,000 to secure an extension of the Florida Southern Railroad line. The line pushed south from Jacksonville to Gainesville, reaching Pemberton's Ferry Crossing on the west bank of the Withlacoochee River in Hernando County.



Members of the Good Neighbor Trail Advisory Committee.

Organization and Hernando County staff, the Southwest Florida Water Management District, the Florida Division of Forestry, downtown merchants and property owners and trail enthusiasts across the county.

Many thanks to our agency and organization funding partners: The Department of Community Affairs/Florida Communities Trust, Florida Division of Historical Resources Bureau of Historic Preservation, Florida's Nature Coast-Hernando County Tourist Development Council, Hernando County Board of County Commissioners, Florida Department of Transportation and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Florida Recreation and Development Assistance Program.

Thank you to the following partners for their donated services: Hernando Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society, Florida Division of Forestry, Hernando Historical Museum Association, Inc., and the Hernando Audubon Society.

A very special thank you to our technical assistance project partner – the National Park Service Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program who brought planning and landscape architectural skills to our project and inspired us to keep running toward the finish line.

Never Too Late to Join the Team

The Good Neighbor Trail group continues to seek community support for this extraordinary journey. Anyone can volunteer. Professionals are needed to assist with designing and building as well as land preparation. Volunteers are needed for ongoing work to enhance and maintain the natural beauty and historic integrity of the project area. And, of course, any financial assistance or in-kind donation is welcomed and appreciated.

The road to success is paved by the generous and supportive spirit of community. It is a road that spans the generations.

For more information about the Good Neighbor Trail project or how you can help turn the plan into pavement, please contact the City of Brooksville's Community Development Department:

Address: 201 Howell Ave. • Brooksville, Florida 34601
Phone: (352) 544-5430 • Fax: (352) 544-5429
E-mail: cityhall@ci.brooksville.fl.us
Website: www.ci.brooksville.fl.us

Did you know?

In 1991 alone, bicycling and walking trips in the U.S. replaced nearly 18 billion motor vehicle miles. These non-motorized trips saved about 850 million gallons of gasoline which would have added 10.4 million metric tons of exhaust emission air pollution to the atmosphere.

Cultural Enrichment and Historic Preservation

The Hernando Historical Museum Association, Inc. plans to relocate several historic structures to the Brooksville Train Depot site and will create an historic village. Buildings dating as far back as 1840 will be renovated, refurbished, and furnished with era-appropriate displays.

Did you know?

As of February 2004, almost half (49.7%) of those who visited Florida in the preceding twelve months participated in history-based activities while on vacation in Florida.

Economic Benefits

The Good Neighbor Trail is an important factor in the City's redevelopment efforts. It is envisioned that businesses will experience increased traffic as a result of the Trail. In addition, regionally important recreational activities can be organized utilizing the Good Neighbor Trail and Trailhead amenities.

Did you know?

Outdoor recreation represents one of the most vigorous growth areas in the U.S. Economy. According to the Outdoor Recreation Coalition of Americans, outdoor recreation generated at least \$40 billion dollars in 1996, accounting for 768,000 full-time jobs and \$13 billion dollars in annual wages. Local trail systems encourage residents to participate in local, rather than out-of-town recreational opportunities. Dollars spent by the residents for leisure activities therefore are spent within the local economy.

Did you know?

For Florida's West Orange Trail, the average annual expenditure for equipment, clothing, books and other trail-related expenses amounted to \$190.34 per user.

Did you know?

In 2003, 70.3% of respondents who traveled within Florida enjoyed nature based activities, such as trail use.

Benefits

Social and Recreational Benefits

The Good Neighbor Trail and Trailhead will provide a number of recreational amenities. The ten-mile Trail will connect to the 46-mile Withlacoochee State Trail with planned future links to the 42-mile Suncoast Trail utilizing existing rights-of-way thereby making it an important east-west connector to two of Florida's longest trails.

Multi-use trails such as this provide an attractive outlet for hiking, cycling, rollerblading and even birdwatching. They are also a proven benefit to communities by encouraging personal interaction, neighborhood socialization and unified community.

Trail communities across the nation have demonstrated significant social and economic benefits. These include urban renewal, increased employment opportunities in nearby business districts and decreased crime.

Additionally, the trailhead complex will offer on-site passive recreation such as a path along Parson's Brook, a gazebo to host entertainment, a children's playground and a festival field.

Health and Wellness Benefits

The goal of creating a trail and park amenities for the City of Brooksville is to enhance close to home recreation opportunities to reduce obesity and the chronic health problems associated with a sedentary lifestyle. Regular physical activity provides short-term benefits and reduces long-term risks for disability and premature death.

Environmental Benefits

Natural resource protection will fall into three main categories: habitat enhancement, species protection and ecosystem restoration. Nuisance exotic vegetation will be removed while native species will be preserved. Restoration of the Trailhead site also calls for stormwater improvements, re-establishment of historic creek flow to Parson's Brook and planting of native vegetation.

The Good Neighbor Trail, along with on-road facilities and sidewalks for a future connection to the Suncoast Trail, will encourage the use of non-polluting transportation alternatives to the automobile for those short trips to work, school or the local store.



The Good Neighbor Trail

Phase I – Paving of the Trail from the Trailhead to Jasmine Drive (1.3 miles) on City-owned land.

Phase II – Paving of the Trail from Jasmine Drive to Weatherly Road (2.2 miles) on County-owned and privately owned land.

Phase III – Paving of the Trail from Weatherly Road to the Withlacoochee State Trail (6.6 miles) on County-owned land.

Historic Village

The Hernando Historical Museum Association, Inc. will create a historic village at the Trailhead by relocating historically significant structures to sites around the Brooksville Train Depot and railroad car.



Russell Street Park

Planned Features

Parson's Brook Path

A paved path on ten acres around the Parson's Brook located at the Trailhead will be ideal for nature lovers, walkers and joggers. The Parson's Brook area will be restored by improving the water flow and naturalizing the streambed. Additionally nuisance exotic vegetation will be removed and stormwater ponds will be created improving water quality and enhancing wildlife habitat. Environmental education will be a component to the Creek restoration activities.

Festival Field

A large tract of land at the Trailhead will serve as dedicated open space for special community events, weddings and festivals. A gazebo is planned for this outdoor open space.

Complementary Improvements

Parking, restrooms, lighting, benches, trash receptacles, identification signs, ornamental water fountain, drinking fountains, concession stands, a gazebo, children's playground and other structures will be developed to enhance the visitor experience at the Good Neighbor Trail and Trailhead.

The Big Picture

It is envisioned the Good Neighbor Trail will eventually link to the Suncoast Trail to the west. Such a project would include designated bike lanes, sidewalks and/or shared road facilities.

History & Timeline

1850s to 1880s	Present day Trailhead was first platted and used as a railroad Depot and switching yard.	1999	The City, with the help of interested citizens, creates the Good Neighbor Trail to Russell Street Management Plan which outlines the development and preservation of the Good Neighbor Trail and Trailhead area.	2004	The Good Neighbor Trail Festival, a celebration with live entertainment, food and information about the Good Neighbor Trail, was held in conjunction with the Flatlanders Challenge (a 10K footrace through downtown Brooksville).
1886	The Brooksville Train Depot is built after local businessmen raise \$20,000 to extend the Florida Southern Railroad line.	2000	The City Council creates the Good Neighbor Trail Advisory Committee who is charged with the implementation of the Management Plan.		The City and the Hernando Historical Museum Association, Inc. request a Special Exception Use Petition to the City's Planning and Zoning Commission for the purpose of utilizing the Good Neighbor Trail properties as a recreational facility. The petition was approved at the public hearing.
1991	After years of non-use and neglect, the Hernando Historical Museum Association, Inc. acquires the Brooksville Train Depot for use as a museum and genealogical research center.	2001	Volunteers cleaned up debris and exotic plants from the Trailhead site.		The City is awarded a FRDAP grant totaling \$260,000 from FDEP to construct Parson's Brook Path.
1993	A "Cook Car" boxcar dating back to the late 1800's is found in the Green Swamp and is relocated to the historic Brooksville Train Depot.	2002	The City is awarded a Rivers Trails and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA) technical assistance grant, a program of the National Park Service Recreation & Conservation Programs Branch, to provide on-going coordinative and in-kind service planning and logistical support for the successful implementation of the Good Neighbor Trail.		The Hernando Historical Museum Association, Inc. receives a grant from the Florida's Bureau of Historic Preservation in the amount of \$12,000 to re-roof and paint the Train Depot as well as install central air conditioning.
1997	The City builds picnic pavilions at Russell Street Park using Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program (FRDAP) grant money.	2002 - 2003	Vegetation surveys are conducted with the assistance of the Florida Native Plant Society and Division of Forestry to identify native and exotic plant species on the property as well as specimen trees. Bird surveys were also conducted on the project site.	2005	Concept Plan Completion.
1998	The City acquires ten acres at the Trailhead and one mile of linear corridor from CSX with funding from the Florida Department of Community Affairs (DCA) Florida Communities Trust (FCT) grant program. The remaining nine miles of abandoned corridor were acquired at different intervals by private interests and Hernando County, both of which are dedicated to connecting the Good Neighbor Trail to the Withlacoochee State Trail.	2003	A logging encroachment on City-owned land by an adjacent land owner resulted in a settlement of cash in the amount of \$60,000 and land donation with an assessed value of over \$40,000, both of which will be used as local match for future funding requests.	2008	Anticipated Phase I construction of the Good Neighbor Trail utilizing Department of Transportation Enhancement Funds administered by the Hernando County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). Additional phases of construction will follow in subsequent years.

Potentially interested parties and all adjacent property owners of the Trail in the City were invited to attend and discuss the plans for the Trail at a public workshop held at City Hall.

Public Involvement

Community involvement has been invaluable to the successful planning and implementation of the Good Neighbor Trail Project.

On March 6, 2000, the Brooksville City Council appointed twelve members from the community to serve on the Good Neighbor Trail Advisory Committee to ensure public involvement in the implementation of the Good Neighbor Trail Management Plan. The Committee has organized plant and wildlife surveys of the site for native and exotic nuisance vegetation and animals, (including a specimen tree survey and an initial historic resource survey). The Committee has also assisted in development of the restoration plan and design planning for the Good Neighbor Trailhead facilities and nature trail.

The Committee meets regularly to work on project components of the Good Neighbor Trail. The Committee also has coordinated numerous public workshops, events and festivals (see History & Timeline) to raise awareness and to encourage public support for the project. These public workshops, festivals, and clean-up events have been well attended by the public and will continue well after the Trail and Trailhead facility are built.



Good Neighbor Trail Festival 2004



Good Neighbor Trail Workshop 2003

- trees**
- Loblolly Pine
 - Laurel Oak
 - Southern Red Cedar
 - Water Oak
 - Live Oak
 - Cabbage Palm
 - Magnolia
 - Slash Pine
 - Black Cherry
 - Flatwoods Plum



birds

- Northern Cardinal
- Red-Bellied Woodpecker
- Downy Woodpecker
- Piliated Woodpecker
- White-eyed Vireo
- Red Shouldered Hawk
- Yellow-rumped Warbler
- American Robin
- American Kestrel
- Carolina Wren
- House Wren
- Common Yellowthroat Warbler
- Barred Owl
- Great Crested Flycatcher
- Chimney Swift
- Northern Mockingbird
- Blue-grey Gnatcatcher
- Carolina Chickadee
- Morning Dove
- Eastern Blue Bird
- Rubycrowned Kinglet
- Hermit Thrush
- Palm Warbler
- Black-and-White Warbler
- American Goldfinch
- Black Vulture
- Great Egret



Did you know?

In 2001, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission estimated that 3.24 million people participated in some form of bird and wildlife viewing. The net effect was the creation of 28,400 jobs with a total economic impact of \$2.861 billion dollars for Florida's economy.

Pileated Woodpecker



CONNECTION TO SUNCOAST TRAIL
(42-MILE MULTI-USE TRAIL SYSTEM CONNECTING HILLSBOROUGH CO. WITH HERNANDO CO.)



Cyclist enjoying the Suncoast Trail.

Good Neighbor Trailhead



Mountain biker enjoying the off-road trails at Croom in the Withlacoochee State Forest.

CONNECTION TO WITHLACOOCHEE STATE TRAIL
(46-MILE MULTI-USE TRAIL SYSTEM CONNECTING PASCO CO. WITH CITRUS CO.)



GOLDENROD



EVENING PRIMROSE

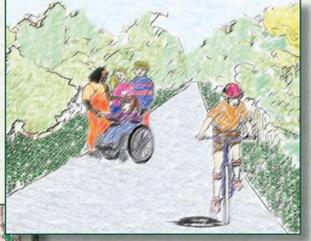


DANDELION

Some of the beautiful native vegetation found on the Good Neighbor Trail site.

"The true meaning of life is to plant trees, under whose shade you do not expect to sit."

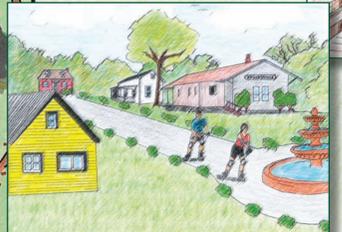
Nelson Henderson



Rendering of the future Good Neighbor Trail.



Rendering of the future Parsons Brook Path.



Rendering of the future Historic Village.

Planning Neighborhood Space with People

"Recreation trails are for people. They allow us to go back to our roots. Trails help humans make sense of a world increasingly dominated by automobiles and pavement. They allow us to come more closely in touch with our natural surroundings, to soothe our psyches, to challenge our bodies, and to practice ancient skills."

Randolph T. Hester, Jr.

Members of the Florida Native Plant Society conduct a survey of plants growing at the Trailhead site.

