

City of Carrabelle

Community Redevelopment Plan



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I. Introduction

The Carrabelle Community Redevelopment Plan was prepared in accordance with chapter 163.330, Florida Statutes, commonly known as the Community Redevelopment Act of 1969.

The plan contains several elements, all of which are aimed at identifying and developing activities to eliminate and prevent the spread of blighted conditions and to develop workable programs to aid in rehabilitation, conservation, and redevelopment.

II. Socioeconomic Characteristics of Carrabelle

A. Local Economy

Incorporated in 1893, the City of Carrabelle is a small community located in southern, Franklin County on the Gulf of Mexico. The City, consisting of 2,182 acres is bounded on the west by the Carrabelle River, and its northern and eastern limits are surrounded by marshes and wetlands. Up until the 1940's, Carrabelle had a thriving lumber industry. Citizens were employed in all phases of production, and a large export market resulted in extensive shipping activity.

In the recent past, the City's main industries have consisted of tourism, building, and seafood industry. However the seafood industry has been in decline for over a decade and tourism and building related economic activity has suffered dramatically as a result of the 2008-2012 recession. Table 1 below shows the employment by industry in the City of Carrabelle for 2007. The primary industries include agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining as well as public administration.

Table 1: Employment by Industry for Employed Persons 16 and Over for 2007

Occupation by Industry	Number of Employees	Percent of Businesses
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	157	21%
Construction	79	10.6%
Manufacturing	0	0.0%
Wholesale trade	11	1.5%
Retail trade	83	11.1%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	50	6.7%
Information	17	2.3%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	0	0.0%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative	0	0.0%

Occupation by Industry	Number of Employees	Percent of Businesses
and waste management services		
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	81	10.8%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodations and food services	75	10.0%
Other services, except public administration	37	4.9%
Public administration	158	21.1%

Source: 2001-2011 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates

B. Population Patterns

Carrabelle’s population has changed dramatically since 1960. There was a population influx between 1970 and 1980. However between 1980 and 2000, the population decreased considerably. Then, between 2000 and 2010, there was another dramatic change with an increase of over 100%. To a large extent the increase in job figures involving public administration and population are attributable to the Department of Corrections work camp located in the northern portion of the City. Table 2 shows the population statistics for the City of Carrabelle from 1960-2010.

Table 2: City of Carrabelle Population

Year	Population	Percent Change
1960	608	-
1970	688	13%
1980	1,304	90%
1990	1,200	-8%
2000	1,303	9%
2010	2,778	113%

Source: US Census Bureau 1980, 1990, 2000, and 2010

Educational levels of the area have increased since the 1980’s. At that time, more than half of the population had not completed high school. As of the 2010 Census, approximately 70.9% of the population are high school graduates or higher. That is comparable to the County’s rate of 79.4% and slightly less than the State’s rate of 85.5%.

The mean household income in Carrabelle is \$35,006 which is less than that of Franklin County’s mean income of \$51,840. And well below the state average of \$67,065.

The percentage of families whose income is below the poverty level for the last 12 months is significantly higher in the City of Carrabelle as compared to Franklin County

and the State. Approximately 26.4% of Carrabelle residents are below the poverty level while 18.6% of families in Franklin County are below the poverty level, and 10.6% in the State.

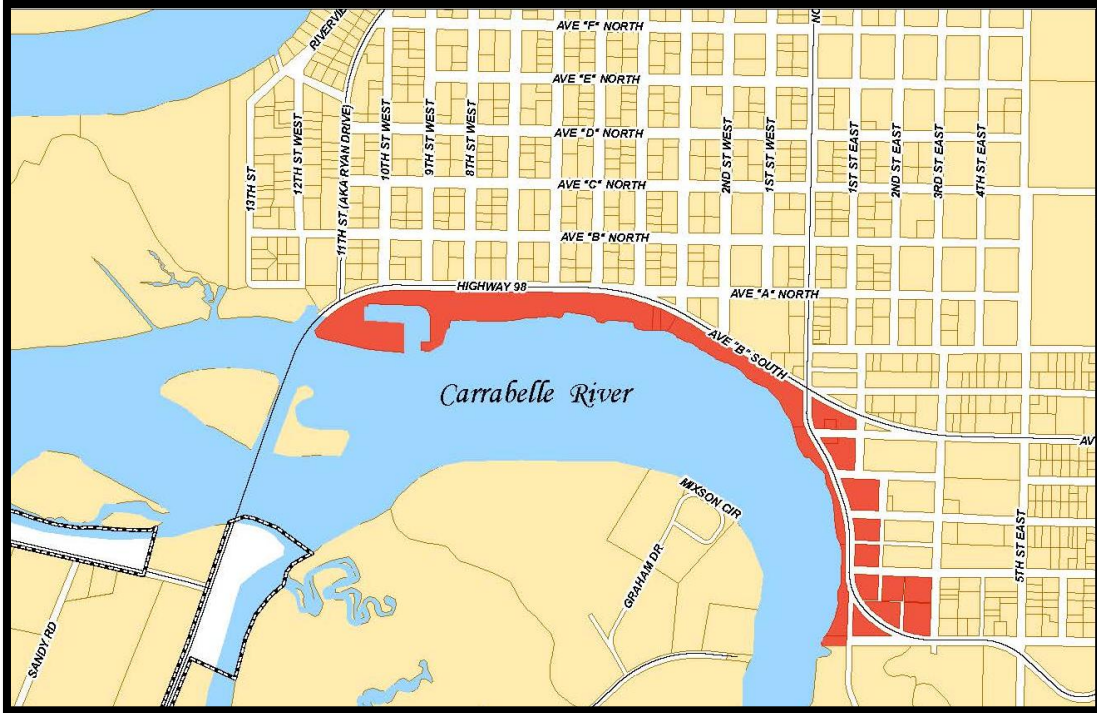
III. Description of the Carrabelle Redevelopment Area

The Redevelopment Area of the City of Carrabelle has as its focal point the commercial properties fronting the Carrabelle River and those commercial properties on the north side of US Highway 98. As well as the commercial properties branching off Hwy 98 onto Marine St. along the City waterfront. The area encompasses approximately 68 acres and occupies nearly one mile of river frontage. The area's boundaries can be described more specifically as follows:

Beginning at a point on the east bank of the Carrabelle River approximately 250 feet west of the intersection of Avenue "F" and Marine Street, proceed east along Avenue "F" South (Calhoun Avenue) to its intersection with Ridge Street. Thence proceed north along Ridge Street to its intersection with Avenue "A" North. Thence proceed west along Avenue "A" North to its intersection with Third Street West. Thence proceed one block north along third Street West to its intersection with Avenue "B" North. Thence proceed west along Avenue "B" North to its intersection with Thirteenth Street West. Thence proceed south along Thirteenth Street West to the north bank of the Carrabelle River. Thence proceed along the bank of the Carrabelle River in a east-southeast direction to the point of the beginning.

Figure 1 shows the boundaries of the Carrabelle Redevelopment Area. (Update legal description and Map based on findings of Comm. LaPaz.)

Figure 1 Carrabelle Redevelopment Area



IV. Existing Conditions in the Redevelopment Area

Discuss and verify that the existing conditions section is correct?

A. Streets and Drainage

All streets in the redevelopment area are paved; however, many of the streets are in need of resurfacing. Not including US highway 98 (Avenue A), there are approximately 2.8 miles of streets within the redevelopment area. Not all street/roads are the responsibility of the City. The streets and roads should be evaluated and a determination made as to which are County, City or State rights of way. An effort should be made to coordinate activities with each of the responsible entities.

A Stormwater Master Plan was completed by Baskerville-Donovan, Inc. in October 2006. The plan recognizes that “the existing stormwater system consists primarily of open drainage ditches and closed conveyance piping. Stormwater is collected in roadside swales or inlets and pipes, with the runoff transferred directly into downstream watercourses. These conveyances provide little or no water quality treatment or attenuation.” A number of improvements have been constructed which provide downstream benefit to the CRA area. Specifically the Sand Memorial Park stormwater facility improvements and those located adjacent to the Cemetery have resulted in significant improvement in the control and treatment of stormwater impacting the CRA.

The Redevelopment Area is generally well drained, but substantial efforts are needed to limit the extent of impervious surfaces, and increase on-site retention and pre-treatment before discharge into the surrounding surface waters. Local land development regulations have been updated and should address these factors.

B. Water and Sewer Facilities

Water and sewer facilities could become a limiting factor to growth in the Redevelopment Area. Central water and sewer is available to all sites within the area. While the treatment facilities and water distribution have sufficient capacity to service an expanded population. The mix of gravity/force main and Air-Vac system and reserved capacity on the same from customers/potential customers in the downtown area presents challenges which must be addressed as to the collection and transmission of wastewater. Further many old sewer collection mains should be evaluated and replaced as required to reduce infiltration/inflow. The Redevelopment area should consider expansion or upgrade of existing facilities in order to better integrate into the overall City system.

C. Sidewalks and Bicycle Paths

Sidewalks, along with street plantings, have been added along Highway 98, State Road 67 and a sidewalk and related improvements have been added along the waterfront on Marine Street.

A system of bicycle paths should also be added to enhance safety and promote the use of bicycles as an alternative means for transportation to residents and tourists alike. A bicycle path within the Redevelopment Area should access the riverfront, retail storefronts, and other points of interest.

D. Parking Facilities

Parking is not a major limiting factor in the Redevelopment Area, but will become more of an issue as increased development occurs. Parallel parking has been limited along Highway 98. Angle parking, however, is provided to those retail shops along Avenue A South and State Road 67. Retail shops on the local access roads have, in general, severely limited off-street parking possibilities. As the tourist trade grows, and vacant storefronts are occupied, the need for a centrally located parking lot will be imperative. The City should seek a site suitable for a parking area as a target for acquisition in addition to the facilities recently added off Hwy 67. The preferred location for such a site would be south of Highway 98.

E. Parks and Recreation

Parks and recreation in the Redevelopment Area should focus on tourist-related, resource-based facilities. The concept of a riverwalk that combines passive and active water-based recreation could be the cornerstone of attraction in a City that wishes to expand its economic base by leveraging its natural beauty.

V. Land Uses in the Redevelopment Area

The predominate land use within the Redevelopment Area is Commercial and a few parcels with the Public Facilities designation. The Commercial category is described as follows in the Comprehensive Plan “land used for retail and wholesale trade, offices, motels, restaurants, automobile service stations, repair facilities, or other uses where goods or services are made available to the general public; light industrial/commercial associated with seafood processing; and schools.” The Public Facilities category provides “for the health, safety, and well-being of the residents of Carrabelle through adequate provisions of public buildings, educational complexes, and other public facilities. The uses permitted in this category include government offices, schools, water and sewer facilities, medical facilities, and similar uses. Residential uses

are prohibited except for security purposes.” The City owns a number of historic buildings within the Redevelopment Area. These facilities should be identified, analyzed and options developed to leverage these facilities for the benefit of the overall Redevelopment Area. Data should be collected by any lessees of these facilities provided for this purpose.

Additionally, a Waterfront Overlay may be added to the Comprehensive Plan and will include the Redevelopment Area. In its current form, the overlay is “established to promote the redevelopment and revitalization of the downtown waterfront by providing opportunities for a broad range of commercial, government, professional, entertainment, and residential uses. This area will be subject to developer incentives, grant funding, streamline permitting, the relaxation of fees, or other similar incentives to be specified in the Land Development Code.” The Land Development Code would also be updated to include a mix of uses along the waterfront including commercial, governmental, professional, entertainment, and residential uses.

VI. U.S. 98 Corridor

Primary entry, while driving east or west, to Carrabelle is via automobile on US-98. From either the east or the west, the US-98 corridor presents itself as the heart of Carrabelle to the casual onlooker. It is also the primary artery of business in Carrabelle with the majority of businesses located on or near the corridor. Local regulations position US-98 with commercial zoning and land-use, but fail to designate the area beyond the general classification.

A. US 98 Corridor, Marine St./Tallahassee St. to West 11th St.

The parcels on the south side of US 98 along the river are irregular in size and shape, potentially limiting their usefulness. The parcels on the north side of US 98, western Marine/Tallahassee St and West 11th Street are regular in size and shape, though the buildings typically face east and west, except where aggregation and assembly allows for south facing buildings. This north side is interspersed with functioning, though aging commercial businesses, vacant land, residential units, and vacant commercial buildings. There is a continuous sidewalk which provides visual continuity and pedestrian connectivity, but it doesn't overcome the visual discontinuity created by the various property uses and the unkempt appearances of many buildings and the landscaping. Also, there are damaged signs, odd parking lot configurations. Efforts through an incentive program should be made to encourage compatibility and continuity through this vital corridor. A working group should be set up among property and business owners through this corridor for this purpose.

The south side of this corridor has many of the same conditions including irregular lot sizes, residential units, commercial businesses, and limited or unkempt landscaping. More industrial in feel, the south side contains a number of marinas and boat storage

facilities some boats and equipment are stored in open view. Efforts should be made to enhance the appearance of these areas. Such enhancement should recognize that Carrabelle has a working commercial and recreational waterfront. Enhancements are not intended to favor tourist or recreation based activities. Enhancements to appearance should reflect the wide variety of mixed uses along the waterfront in Carrabelle and provide a demonstration as to how this variety of uses can co-exist in an aesthetically pleasing manner.

B. US 98 Marine St./Tallahassee St. to East 13th St.

Immediately East of the Marine Street/Tallahassee St intersection conditions have benefited from the recent sidewalk and streetscape project. This project involved installation of planters, street hardscape and parking facilities. These improvements should be leveraged through expansion of aesthetic improvements in the vicinity. The City should consider moving more effectively into the regulation of signage in the Redevelopment Area to ensure they are more visually appealing. Competing gas stations and convenience stores at East 1st St anchor this entryway, these businesses should be encouraged and incentivized to increase their visual appeal.

Further east to 13th Street, the corridor transitions from a mix of older commercial, and the new park to a mix of vacant parcels, church, and retail auto sales. This area provides plenty of locations for new businesses and an enhanced entryway to Carrabelle.

C. Tallahassee and Marine Streets

Tallahassee and Marine Streets appear to be the symbolic center of economic activity, with a variety of brick buildings, angle parking and sidewalks. This area is ideal for new development, redevelopment and enhancements that will increase and concentrate shopping and tourism. Consider the opportunity to redevelop the Moore House into a tourist center, Bed & Breakfast/Inn, or other facility designed to attract tourists to the area. With the development of accommodations, this is also a great location to pick-up guests for charter fishing and eco-tourism adventures.

The Moore House is owned by the CRA. This is an asset that could be renovated and utilized directly or through lease arrangements for a variety of functions including:

- Bed and Breakfast, or Inn
- Visitor Center
- Aquaculture showcase and event center
- General Store
- Eco-tourist education center

The Moore House is an important asset in Carrabelle to anchor the eastern end of the business district with the Moorings of Carrabelle anchoring the western end. This barbell approach to the district would encourage additional development and tourist and activity in the core. This would promote economic development, create jobs and establish the corridor as a tourist and business district. Efforts should be made to acquire additional property that would complement the goals and objectives of the CRA during this historic period of depressed property values.

VII. Factors Affecting Development

Certain factors, environmental, financial, political, and social, can affect – beneficially or adversely – the effort to revitalize the business district of Carrabelle.

Because Carrabelle is located within the Apalachicola Bay Area of Critical State Concern, all development orders receive close scrutiny from the various state agencies. Particular attention is paid to those developments that impact state waters. Due consideration needs to be given to the natural and navigational features of the Carrabelle River as the City plans improvements. Proper planning and design can eliminate the need for interagency conflict and assure a speedy resolution of any potential problems.

In order to keep the appearance of the downtown appealing to the residents and tourists, the City must adopt and enforce a Land Development Code which includes an unsafe building ordinance and noise abatement ordinance. The City must establish a trend towards cleaning up unsightly structures and yard trash in order to rekindle investment in the downtown. Also, the City should establish architectural standards for new structures and façade improvements in the Redevelopment Area.

Inherent in any revitalization effort is investment by the private sector. A community-supported, conceptual plan is essential to communicate an image of the proposed revitalization. The plan must be “sold” to each and every property owner. Once an image or theme is developed and accepted, financing in the form of grants or low-interest loans can be used to promote façade improvements in keeping with the popular theme.

Regulatory challenges and uncertainty are one of the greatest inhibitors of investment. Carrabelle has an opportunity to define its position as a destination for tourists, business and investment by creating certainty in the real estate development industry. One recommendation is to match the Future Land Use (FLU) map and the zoning map to provide continuity for future development. In several areas of the city the FLU map allows one use and the zoning map permits a different use. In addition, the Permitted Uses table in the Land Development Regulations should be reworked to permit certain uses and prohibit others in the various

districts. For example the various types of accommodations i.e. Hotel/Motel, Resort Condominiums, Timeshare Vacation Unit, Recreational Vehicles, Room & Board, and Bed & Breakfast should all be permitted in the C1 commercial district. Making changes to the Permitted Uses Table as well as the zoning districts, Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Regulations will act as an economic incentive and give developers more of a sense of certainty when planning for the future. These changes will make long range planning and development easier and more certain for all involved. In addition, the City Commission should consider clarifying the authority of the City Manager to approve in an administrative manner certain development activities set forth in the CRA Plan, District overlays or other guidance documents in order to reduce permit approval cost and delays.

Real Estate is one of Carrabelle's most important assets. Upon a review of the real estate ownership patterns in the Redevelopment Area it appears that the foreclosure crisis has impacted the Area in a number of ways that are consistent with the state of Florida and the nation, particularly by depressing real estate sales prices and taxable values as supply exceeds demand. Indications are that the real estate boom may have also led to an increased number of out-of-town property owners. This is of particular concern; if the residents don't control their own real estate, then they will have greater challenges in stimulating investment, economic development and redevelopment or reuse of the property. Out-of-town property owners may be less motivated and less accessible, to address or invest in, local issues and concerns. Re-establishing local ownership will require an extended period of time, financial capital and community (buyer) desire.

Carrabelle has an opportunity to build and formalize its eco- and nature-based tourism industry, but it will take coordination. A coordinated effort should be made to create an organized connection between nature-based tourism or eco-tourism, with the hospitality industry. The ideal situation would be for a company or organization to bring the various businesses together to promote tourism in a manner that showcases all parts of the industry and connects them so that each component promotes another. By coordinating communications and promotion, Carrabelle has an opportunity to significantly expand its tourist industry. Both the Chamber and EDC should be approached regarding this concept.

VIII. Implementation

The inadequate ad valorem tax base in the City does not allow for investment spending on "luxury" items such as downtown revitalization absent state or federal grant funding. Current levels of revenues allow for just operation and maintenance spending on basic services such as water, sewer, streets, and drainage. Historically the City has relied heavily on grant funding opportunities to finance improvements related to revitalization and public amenities.

Since inception in 1992 the tax increment fund established by the Carrabelle City Commission acting as the Redevelopment Agency has allowed the City to reinvest the tax revenues generated by improvements in the redevelopment area. The “increment” is the tax revenues generated by the increase in value of those properties in the redevelopment area after the improvements are made. This long awaited update of the CRA Plan is accompanied by updated budget and capital improvement plans designed to leverage the revenue generated by the tax increment.

A. Projects funded and completed or currently under construction

- *Carrabelle Wharf*
Boat ramps, a staging dock, a fish cleaning station and general parking and site improvements.
- *Waterfront Dock Improvement*
In coordination with the Carrabelle Waterfront Partnership, improvements to the Waterfront Partnership dock and office (Coast Guard dock on Marine Street) were made.
- *Riverwalk and Park on Marine Street*
- *Sidewalk on west side of Marine Street*
- *Purchase of the Moore House*
- *Road and stormwater improvement on Marine St.*
- *Any other projects that have been completed or are under construction??*

B. Recommendations for Future Revitalization Efforts

- Formally organize a merchants association comprised of those property owners and businesspersons in the Redevelopment Area.
- Contact nearby FSU Planning Department to assist in the possible creation of conceptual plans for the Redevelopment Area.
- Update Land Development Regulations and requirements to better reflect the Redevelopment Area’s needs and opportunities.
- Consider various overlay districts on a City wide(including RA) or Redevelopment Area basis only to promote the various goals set forth in the Plan.
- Revise the zoning standards and future land use designations to allow for more flexibility while encouraging development in specific locations.
- Develop, refine, and enforce signage regulations.
- Include high quality landscaping requirements for new development and install and maintain landscaping in public rights-of-way.

- Encourage aggregation of properties to allow for larger, more impactful development. Eliminate some of the constraints in place resulting from antique platting.
- Create a hospitality district with restaurants, lodging and a General Store that caters to locals and tourists.
- Invest in the area by acquiring a larger percentage of the land.
- Create specific locations for hospitality uses to improve the tourist experience, concentrate the traffic and create greater opportunities to promote local businesses.
- Coordinate the marketing and promotion of the hospitality and eco- and nature-based tourism industry to work together and build on each sector.
- Organize a seamless way to combine the various types of lodging with all tourism activities for ease of use by visitors. (Enhance the visitor experience by making lodging, dining, fishing, tours, and shopping easy and fun).
- Develop a culture of businesses promoting other local businesses.
- Continually monitor all projects, public and private, within the Redevelopment Area to ensure consistency with the Redevelopment Plan.

IX. Implementation

Create a table with associated approximate costs, from the recommendations above, in the separate recommendations material and public input.