

Redevelopment Plan for Haines City, Florida



July, 2003

Prepared for

The City of Haines City CRA

July, 2003

by

THE
RMPK
GROUP



Community and Regional Planning
Environmental Planning
Landscape Architecture
Land Planning
Urban Design



Table of Contents

PART I INTRODUCTION	1
THE CONTENT OF THE PLAN.....	2
LOCATION	2
CLIMATE:.....	3
POPULATION	5
HISTORIC ROOTS	5
<i>A Railroad Town...</i>	5
<i>Citrus Industry</i>	6
<i>Cattle</i>	7
BOOM AND BUST	8
<i>Highway Construction</i>	8
<i>Historic Buildings</i>	9
<i>Professional Sports</i>	10
PART II VISION STATEMENT	11
<i>Haines City, Florida</i>	11
PART III FUTURE LAND USE CONCEPT PLAN	12
U.S. HIGHWAY 27 CORRIDOR.....	14
<i>Objective I</i>	14
<i>Action Strategies</i>	14
<i>Objective II</i>	14
<i>Action Strategies</i>	14
THE HISTORIC DOWNTOWN	15
<i>Objective I</i>	15
<i>Action Strategies</i>	15
<i>Objective II</i>	17
<i>Action Strategies</i>	18
<i>Objective II</i>	19
<i>Action Strategies</i>	19
HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS	20
<i>Objective</i>	20
<i>Action Strategies</i>	20
RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE.....	21
<i>Objective</i>	21
<i>Action Strategies</i>	21

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.....	22
<i>Objective I</i>	22
<i>Action Strategies</i>	22
<i>Objective II</i>	22
<i>Action Strategies</i>	22
<i>Objective III</i>	23
<i>Action Strategies</i>	23
TRANSPORTATION.....	24
<i>Objective</i>	24
<i>Action Strategies</i>	24
ADMINISTRATION.....	25
<i>Objective I: Administration and Finance</i>	25
<i>Action Strategies</i>	25
<i>Objective II - Community Planning and Development</i>	26
<i>Action Strategies</i>	26
<i>Objective III Government Services</i>	27
<i>Action Strategies</i>	27
CAPITAL PROJECTS	28
REVENUE PROJECTIONS	31
<i>Tax Increment Financing</i>	31
<i>Tax Increment Projections</i>	33
NOTES	35
APPENDIX A PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT REPORT	36



Part I Introduction

With its favorable climate, historic access to the rail system and close proximity to major transportation routes, Haines City is recognized as one of the most significant citrus producing regions in the world. Despite the strength of the citrus industry, the City has experienced an economic decline in recent years. According to an economic assessment prepared in 2002 by the Ferguson Development Network, the City is competing to keep pace with the growth and development of neighboring communities. In recent years City leaders have actively pursued strategies to improve Haines City's economic position in the regional economy. One of the most progressive strategies employed by the City was the recent expansion of its Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) to incorporate nearly the entire city limits.

Having accomplished the CRA expansion, the next step in the process was to develop a Master Plan for the redevelopment of this area. In July of 2002, the RMPK Group, Inc. was selected to work with the City on this master plan project.



Downtown Haines City Today

The Content of the Plan

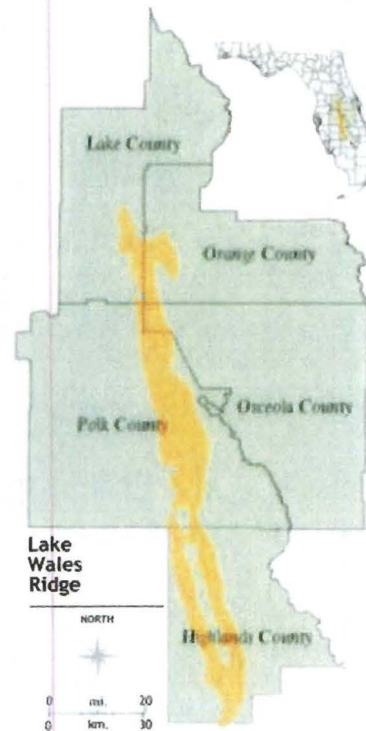
The Haines City Redevelopment Master Plan was derived from public involvement that included a series of focus group meetings and general public meetings where members of the community expressed their opinion about current conditions in the City and their desires for the future. Appendix A of the document provides a summary report of the citizens' in-put obtained during these meetings.

The Redevelopment Plan is designed to address primary public concerns related to economic development, future land use, transportation, downtown development, land use, redevelopment, housing, recreation and community aesthetics.

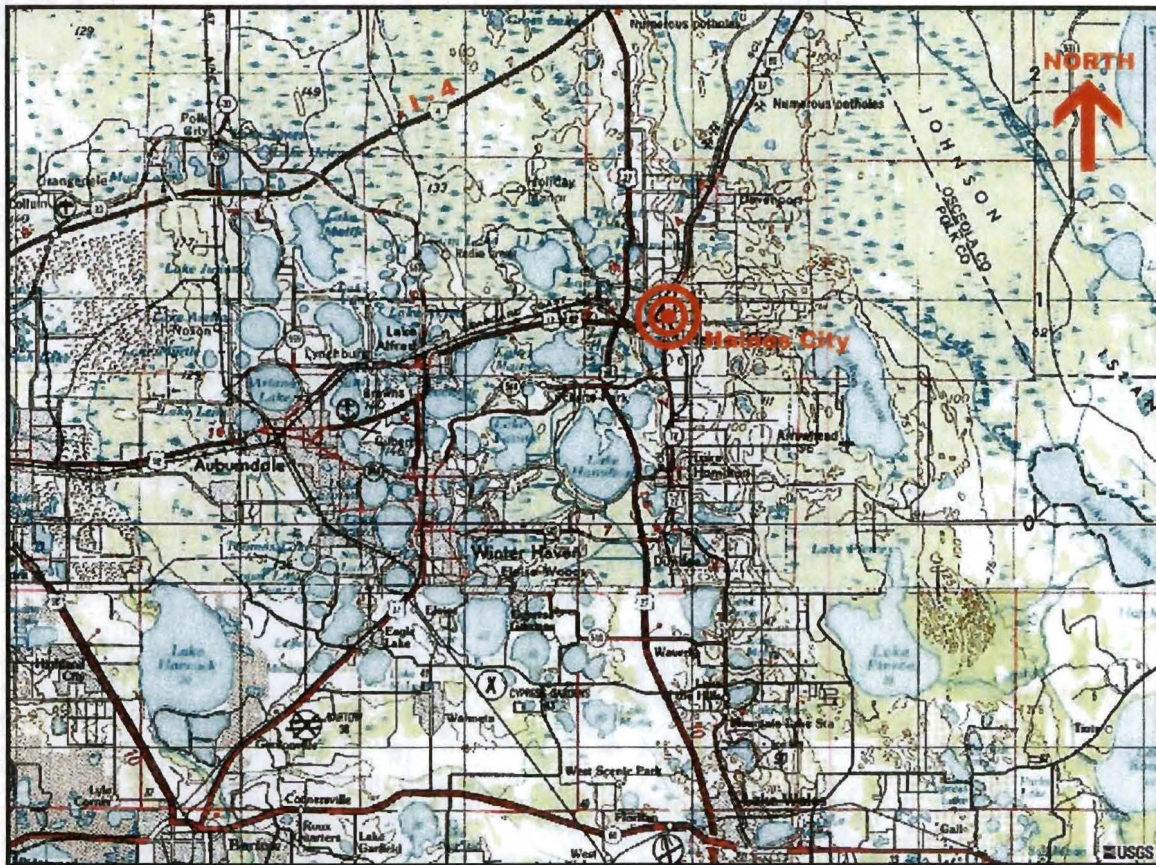
The Plan is presented through geographic reference with mapping and photo illustrations depicting the intent of stated proposals. It is described through a series of objective statements that refer to The Future Land Use Concept Plan followed by appropriate action strategies and a description of proposed capital improvement projects, plans, programs or studies required to fulfill the Plan objectives. The Plan also includes a narrative describing tax increment financing, which is the primary funding source for proposed redevelopment activities and provides revenue projections based on anticipated growth in the City's advalorem tax base. Finally, the Plan describes anticipated costs, funding sources and phasing of the various projects and programs that have been identified.

Location

Haines City, Florida is located forty miles southwest of Orlando along the I-4 and US 27 corridors in northeastern Polk County. With land features including lakes, swamps, and pine uplands; this portion of Florida enjoys considerable topographic variety. Perhaps it was for this reason that Haines City first proclaimed itself "Gateway to the Scenic Highlands". Geographically, Haines City is located within the Lake Wales Ridge, a unique ecosystem in central Florida extending from Lake County south, through Polk and Highlands Counties. The ecosystem manifests itself as a sandy, desert scrub and includes the highest elevations in the Florida peninsula. Geologists believe that these high points were once ancient islands as the remainder of the peninsula was covered with shallow seas.¹



The Lake Wales Ridge Ecosystem

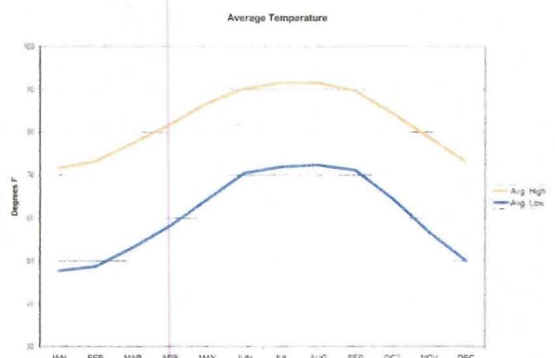
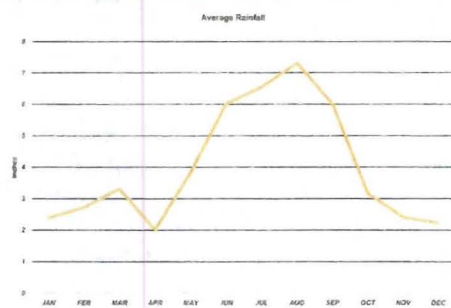


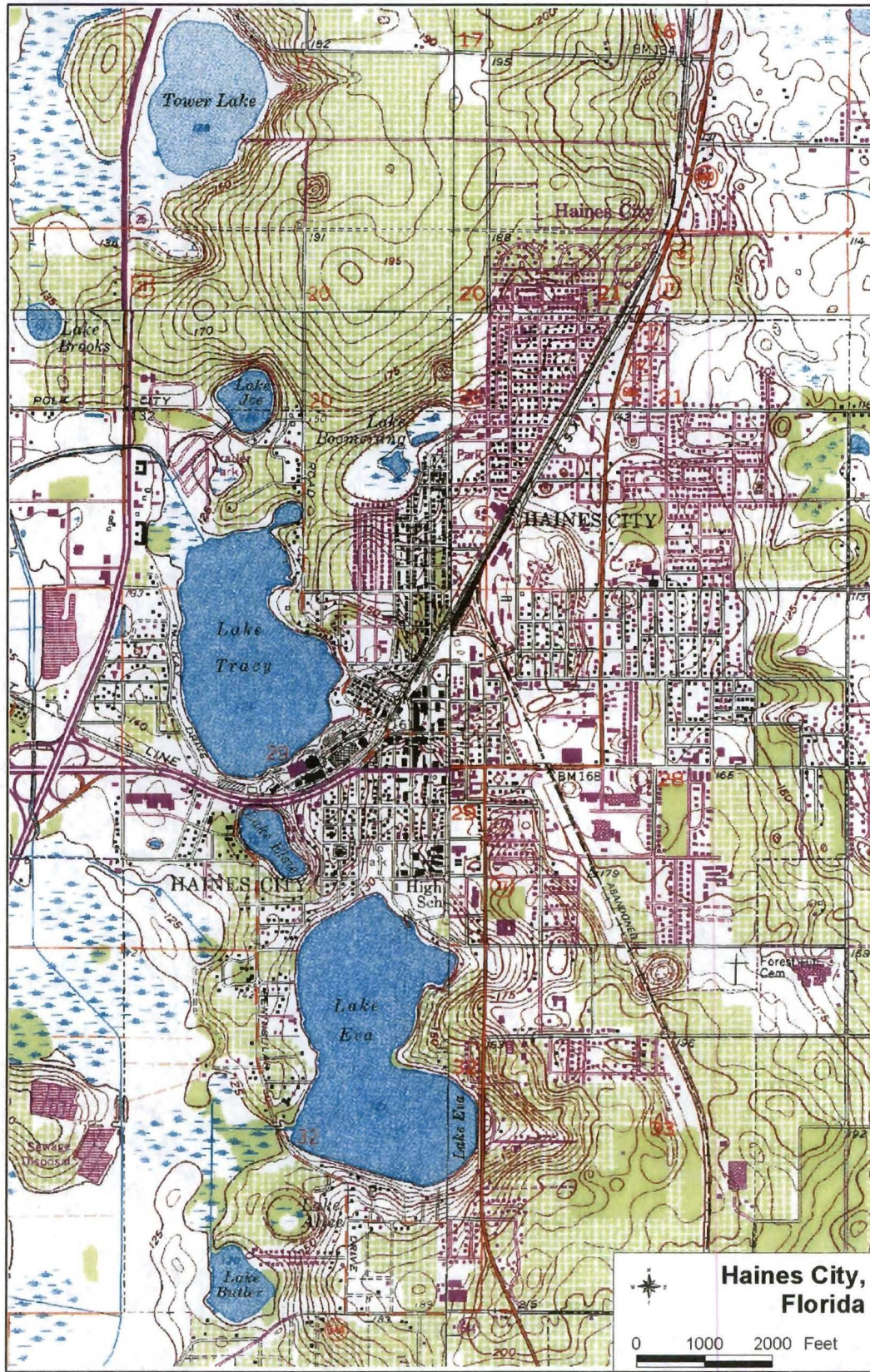
USGS Quadrangle Map of the Haines City Vicinity

Climate:

Haines City enjoys a mild climate, with typical winter lows in the upper 40's and summer highs in the low 90's. From 1971 to 2000, average temperature readings were recorded for the Haines City region and are presented in the graph below.² While summers are hot and humid, the winters are generally mild which has allowed the citrus industry to grow and strengthen the local economy. Occasionally, however, hard freezes do cause damage to the citrus crop and, in turn, to the local economy.

This portion of Polk County, like much of the southeastern United States, receives substantial rainfall. The Haines City vicinity averages nearly fifty inches of rain annually. The bulk of that precipitation occurs during the summer months due to thunderstorms and tropical weather activity.



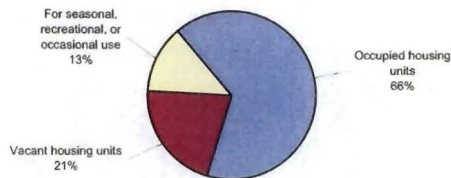


Population

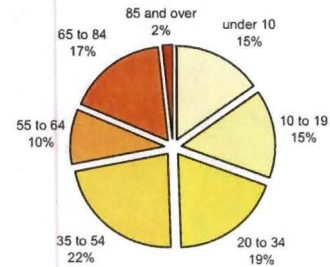
Haines City had a total population of 13,174 persons according to the 2000 census. The racial composition of the population is illustrated in the pie chart below. Of significance is that, combined, the “minority” population is actually the majority in Haines City. The second pie chart shows that the population is divided fairly evenly into age groups with the exception of those age 85 and over.

According to the 2000 Census, approximately 66 percent of Haines City’s housing was occupied during that year, with another thirteen percent being seasonally occupied as winter homes and the remaining twenty-one percent being vacant. This number seems exceptionally high and is perhaps indicative of an error in the Census data. Of occupied dwellings, approximately thirty-five percent are rental units.

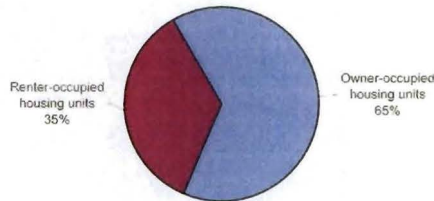
Housing Occupancy



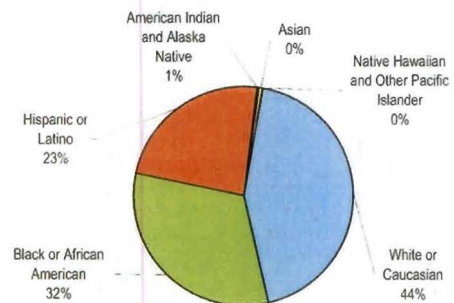
Haines City Population by Age Group (2000)



Housing Tenure



Haines City Population by Race (2000)



Historic Roots

A Railroad Town...

First known as Clay Cut, Haines City is named in honor of railroad official Col. Henry Haines.³ The town was first formed in 1883 with the construction of the South Florida Railroad. The railroad allowed for the settlement of Haines City and other towns in central Florida that lacked ports or river access. Initially, there was no stop in Clay Cut and residents were not well served by the railroad, so the town fathers decided to change the name of the town to encourage the railroad company to add a depot there.⁴

In 1883, when the “Iron Horse” reached Polk County from the northeast, the towns of Loughman, Davenport, Haines City, Lake Alfred, Auburndale, and Lakeland were born in almost the exact order in which the South Florida Railroad reached the area. It was completed January 23, 1884, in the Lakeland vicinity.⁵



the Haines City Depot and Downtown

Another line, the Florida Southern Railroad, had completed its rails southward from Leesburg to Pemberton’s Ferry, with a spur line reaching Brooksville, ten miles to the west... The Florida Southern resumed the laying of rails southward from Bartow to Charlotte Harbor, a distance of 73 miles. The road was finished on July 24, 1886. Both lines became part of the Plant System.⁶

The railroad was key to the settlement of central Florida because it provided a means of getting raw materials and agricultural products to market. It also provided a mode of transporting tourists from the northern United States and Canada to refuges from winter’s cold in warm Florida towns.

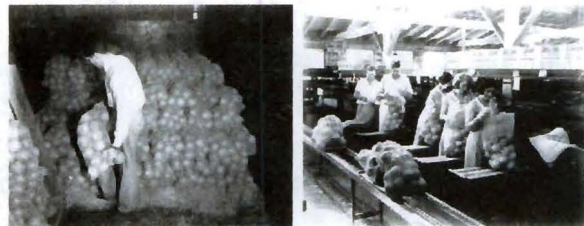


Downtown Haines City

The pine forests provided industries producing lumber and turpentine. Others became farmers in the muck areas of the region, and early citrus growers began clearing the land for what was to become the heart of the present-day industry.⁷

Citrus Industry

The high, well drained sandy soils of the Lake Wales Ridge proved ideal for growing citrus and soon vast areas were cleared and planted with groves. “In 1909, a small group of growers banded together to form a citrus growers association, which would become one of the largest such co-ops in the state, and the largest employer in the city.”⁸



With hard work and innovation, the citrus industry grew rapidly. Haines City is in fact home to the first citrus processing plant in America. Built in 1916, it was a four-story brick structure that housed the Florida Fruit Products Company. The facility utilized a steam-powered mechanism to extract and bottle grapefruit juice.⁹



Florida Fruit Products Company, circa 1916.

“In 1915, Florida Fruit Products Co. pioneered the production of bottled grapefruit juice, later adding guava juice to its line of products. In the 20s, Ralph Polk established his grapefruit sectionizing plant, resulting in the construction of the Polk Hotel (renamed the Palmcrest, and now home to Landmark Baptist College). This company was the leading processor of citrus in Florida throughout the 20s and 30s. In the late 40s, experimentation in frozen citrus concentrate began in Haines City, another pioneering venture that has changed the character and future of the citrus industry.”¹⁰



Bird's-Eye View of Haines City

Haines City Citrus Growers Association was founded as an agricultural cooperative by six local citrus growers in 1909. The packing house has undergone many expansions over the years, but is still located at its original 7.5 acres in downtown Haines City, Florida.

Today, Haines City Citrus Growers Association is a full service cooperative, offering its grower members complete grove care, harvesting, fresh fruit packing and marketing. HCCGA has 170 members and 9,000 acres of citrus enrolled in membership. All 9,000 acres are located within a 120 mile radius of Haines City, and produce 22 commercial varieties of Florida citrus. HCCGA is also a member of Florida's Natural Growers (Citrus World) where all of its surplus fruit is processed into juice and marketed in a cooperative manner.



HCCGA's regular season typically begins in September and ends early June. At the peak of the season, HCCGA employs 500 employees, of those, 160 are year-round employees. Many employees both year-round as well as seasonal, have been with the organization for more than 20, 30, and even 40 years.

HCCGA is the second oldest citrus co-operative in Florida and the fifth largest packing operation in the state (out of 75 commercial packers), and is still packing under its original HillTop Brand since 1909. Other brands include, HillTop Gold, Fresh Squeezin's, Red Cloud and Canoe Creek. HCCGA is recognized as an innovative and technologically advanced leader in the Florida citrus industry.¹¹

Cattle

Florida has a strong history of cattle production dating to Ponce de Leon's second visit to the St. Augustine area in 1521. These were the first cattle to reach what is now the United States, preceding by almost 100 years those brought by the Pilgrim's to Plymouth Colony.¹² Within Florida, cattle ranches are centered around the Kissimmee River in Central Florida.¹³ The railroads allowed the ranching industry to expand in central Florida by providing the means of transporting herds to market. While cattle are not prevalent in the immediate vicinity of Haines City, ranching remains an important component of Haines City's regional economy as Polk County ranked 4th among Florida counties in its inventory of beef cattle during 2002.¹⁴

Boom and Bust

Polk County mushroomed in 1924 and 1925. Tall hotels were built (or started) during this period to house prospective real estate buyers. In Haines City, the Polk Hotel on Hinson Avenue (now Landmark Baptist College) and The Groves Hotel (now the Sky Line Apartments) on Ledwith Avenue were examples of this.

In nearby cities within Polk County, tourist attractions were being constructed at this time including Bok Tower Gardens in Lake Wales and Cypress Gardens in Winter Haven.¹⁵

The Florida economy crashed in 1926, well before the stock market crash of 1929. Additional hardships came in the form of devastating hurricanes and the Mediterranean fruit fly in 1929 which cut citrus production as much as sixty percent and forced troops to set up roadblocks and checkpoints to search vehicles for contraband fruit.¹⁶



A scene on 6th Street



Another Bird's-Eye View of Haines City

Highway Construction

US Highway 27



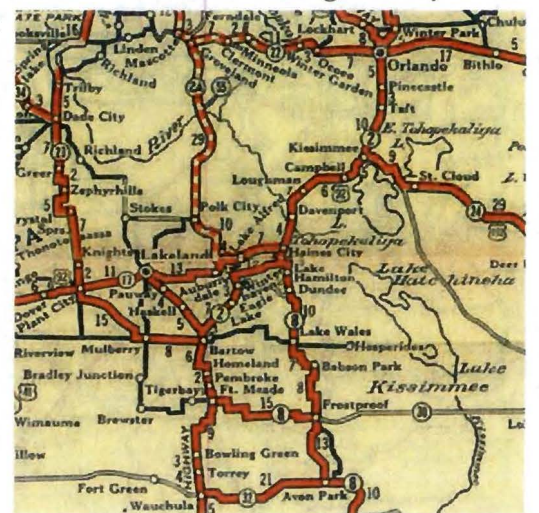
Though it was not the first road to reach Haines City, US 27 through Polk County is now the primary highway. In the 1990's it was upgraded to a four lane divided highway and is a favorite alternative for truckers to Interstate 75 and Florida's Turnpike.

Not surprisingly, it is lined with businesses that cater to the trucking industry. US 27 is today's "Central Florida Expressway" because it runs from Ocala right down the middle of the peninsula until it turns east beneath Lake Okeechobee and continues to Miami. Haines City is on this important thoroughfare.

US Highway 17



Preceding today's US 27 in Polk County was US 17 - the Old Dixie Highway (West) which was also named "Temp US 27". It is technically the Central Florida Connector, a loop component of the Old Dixie Highway system. This system was conceived as a grand scheme to bring people and goods from the



A clip from a 1927 Rand McNally road map of Florida.

Midwest and Canada to Florida. It was over 5,700 miles long and “was the brainchild of Carl Graham Fisher, who was also a big backer of the Lincoln Highway and the Indianapolis Motor Speedway... The Dixie Highway today exists primarily on street signs. Local roads bear witness of a grand past as major interstate corridors.”¹⁷ Interstates 75 and 95 now largely accomplish the intended goal of the Dixie Highway system.



Governor Fuller Warren celebrates the dedication of the section of U.S. highway 27 which passes Haines City. (Circa between 1949 and 1953.)

Portions of US 17 are referred to as the Orange Blossom Trail (since it leads right through the heart of the State’s citrus groves). It was paved through Polk County in 1917,¹⁸ and its route passed right through Haines City where it is co-signed US 92. By 1932, US 17 extended from Jacksonville through Orlando and Haines City to Arcadia and finally to Punta Gorda on the Gulf Coast. “Scenic Highway” is another local name for portions of this road (old Temp US 27/Alt 27) because it passes through the Lake Wales Ridge - some of the hilliest land in peninsular Florida.

US Highway 92



Before the construction of Interstate 4, US 92 was an important east-west corridor linking Daytona with St. Petersburg. Known as the Dixie Highway - Central Florida Connector and the Lee-Jackson Highway, the roadway is co-signed US 17 and US 92 through the Haines City area. US 92 is among the state’s earliest roadways having been around “since the earliest planning stages, it is in the 1925 BPR [USDA Bureau of Public Roads] plan”.²⁰



U.S. Highway 17/92 Today - Hinson Avenue.

Together, these highway systems allowed Haines City and surrounding towns in central Florida to grow rapidly during the years before the Great Depression. Businesses and industries boomed, making many entrepreneurs and speculators very wealthy. Some of this wealth was evident as buildings having unique and attractive architectural character.

Historic Buildings

POLK HOTEL. 800-810 Hinson Ave. 1926. Italian Renaissance Revival. Frederick Wallick, architect. 9 stories. First skyscraper built in city and still one of the largest buildings. A reminder of economic development in the community during the land boom.

DOWNTOWN HAINES CITY COMMERCIAL DISTRICT. 1913-1937. 25 buildings, 20 of historical interest. Masonry Vernacular, Mediterranean Revival, and other Revival styles predominate. The historic commercial area of downtown. Retains some of the city's commercial functions today, although much diminished from before World War II.



The Polk Hotel - Now Landmark Baptist College

OLD CENTRAL GRAMMAR SCHOOL. 801 Ledwith Ave. 1925. Mission Revival. E.C. Hosford, architect. 2 stories. 5 main bays on front facade. It was the first modern educational facility erected in the city. Presently, this is a multi-use facility housing seniors recreation, a community theater, and the Historical Society of N.E. Polk County.



The Old Central Grammar School

OLD HAINES CITY NATIONAL GUARD ARMORY. 226 S. 6th St. 1932. Colonial Revival. 2 stories. Parapet-gable roof and pilasters that vertically divide the building. The only historic facility in the community that is related to the state militia and U.S. National Guard.

ST. MARK'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH. 102 N. 9th St. 1890. Late Gothic Revival. 1 story. Steeply pitched cross-gable roof. Oldest standing structure in the town. Private. N.R. 1994.



St. Mark's Episcopal Church

STATE BANK BUILDING "The State Bank of Haines City was located on Ingraham Avenue and had a capital of \$20,000 in the early 1920's."²¹

The Mar-Lea Theater was located on 6th Street at Jones Avenue in 1925.²²

Professional Sports

Baseball City Stadium located at the intersection of I-4 with US Highway 27 - just a few miles north of Haines City - has traditionally been the spring training facility of the Kansas City Royals. Spring training games have been a tremendous economic and entertainment asset for residents of Haines City and many other Florida towns who host these teams. Regrettably, the Royals will be joining the "Cactus League" training in Arizona during the 2003 season.



Part II Vision Statement

In their effort to strengthen economic development activity, the City leaders decided to prepare a Vision Statement to define its future direction as part of this planning process. The Vision Statement could then be used to fortify community consensus as the City pursues efforts to secure a competitive position in the regional economy. The following Vision Statement was crafted through community involvement as part of the redevelopment planning process.

Haines City, Florida

Located in northeastern Polk County, in the Heart of Florida, Haines City is situated at the juncture of two of the States most dynamic growth corridors, Interstate 4 and US Highway 27. This community's historic economic base has been in the agricultural industry, more specifically the farming, packing and distribution of citrus products. While maintaining an economic relation to the citrus industry, Haines City embraces the opportunities for economic development in a competitive and ever increasingly technological market place. The community acknowledges that education and economic development are the fundamental elements required for generating the highest quality of life for its residents.

Haines City is composed of a culturally diverse population and promotes nurturing the best attributes of these cultures toward a harmonious community of economic and educational opportunity. The citizens of Haines City agree that the City we envision today and create tomorrow is the legacy we leave for the next generation. This legacy will be one that cultivates positive relationships between races within a stable social and political environment.



Part III

Future Land Use Concept Plan

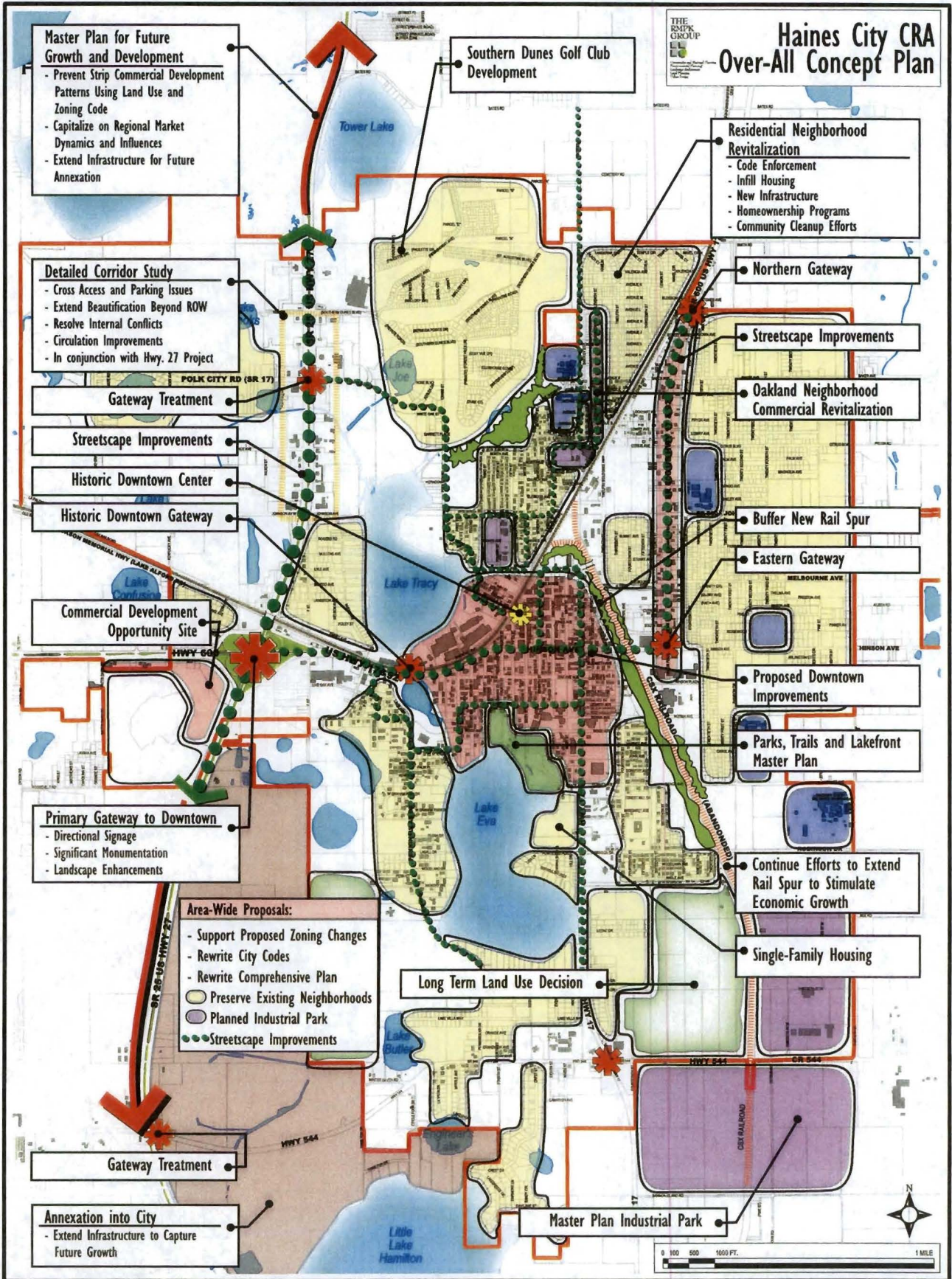
The descriptive narrative of the Mater Plan is based on the Future Land Use Concept Plan that summarizes the general intent of the Redevelopment Program

The Future Land Use Concept Plan is a graphic illustration that has been developed as a guideline for promoting the sound development and redevelopment of the City. The Plan was developed after analyzing the existing conditions in the City and reflects community objectives obtained during the public involvement process.

The plan is not intended to be static. Over time, this plan should be updated and revised based upon changes in the economy, public concerns and private development proposals. The Future Land Use Concept Plan graphically and in general terms describes the required elements of a Community Redevelopment Plan as provided in Section 163.362 F.S.

The Plan supports stated land use and economic positioning strategies, including:

- Taking advantage of anticipated road improvements on U.S. Highway 27.
- Expansion of the City's boundaries through annexation.
- Consolidation of retail, office, entertainment and residential uses in the historic downtown.



- Infill, renovation and enhancement of residential areas and the prevention of commercial encroachment.
- Maximizing use of the City's lakefront areas and recreational assets.
- Development of the regional trail system and an integrated local pedestrian system of trails walkways and bikeways.
- Ensuring adequate public facilities and government services as the City continues to grow.

U.S. Highway 27 Corridor

Objective I

Ensure that planned improvements to U.S. Highway 27 have the greatest positive impact possible on the function and appearance of the City.

Action Strategies

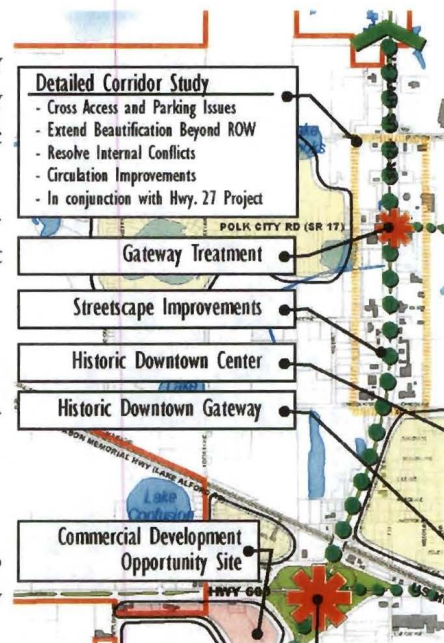
- Design and construct gateway treatments at key locations including northern and southern City limits, Old Polk City Road, and 17-92 Historic District directional signage.
- Proposed improvements should be incorporated with the Hwy 27 project through a Joint Project Agreement (JPA) with FDOT.

Objective II

Plan for future growth along the U.S. Highway 27 corridor.

Action Strategies

- The City should continue to work FDOT to evaluate proposed road improvements on Hwy 27 north of the current City limits.



Commercial sprawl along Highway 27 in Haines City



Heart of Florida Regional Medical Center

- Additional coordination would enable the City to plan for the impacts of the future roadway alignment while considering annexation and future land use alternatives along the corridor ensuring that proposed improvements and policy decisions are consistent with the objectives of the redevelopment plan.
- Work with Polk County to revise its Selected Area Plan (SAP) in order to prevent strip commercial development patterns along the Hwy 27 corridor.
- Extend infrastructure along the corridor in anticipation of future annexation.
- Through revisions to the land development regulations and future land use element of the comprehensive plan develop regulations for newly annexed areas.
- Work closely with large - scale land owners to devise master plans for their properties to be integrated into the City's Comprehensive Plan subsequent to annexation.

The Historic Downtown

Objective I

Re-establish the downtown as a regional destination for commercial activity and entertainment.

Action Strategies

- Ensure that new development in the downtown consists of appropriate land uses that will stabilize and enhance the area while representing the desires and interests of area residents and property owners.
- Evaluate locating government offices providing public services such as an expanded library or post office in the downtown to attract patrons and encourage spin-off economic activity.
- Stimulate local business by attracting an appropriate mix of uses including, residential, office, and commercial uses as well as restaurants and evening entertainment.



Railroad Park in Downtown Haines City



*Downtown Haines City, Florida
A postcard of Haines City's 6th Street*

Haines City CRA Downtown Concept Plan

THE RMPK GROUP
Environmental & Regional Planning
 Urban Design
 Urban Design

- FIGURE**
Polk City Road Improvements:
- Widening
 - Street Lighting
 - Drainage
 - Landscaping
 - Bike Paths & Sidewalks
 - Gateways

Investigate Opportunity for Lily Ave. Underpass

Relocate Public Works Maintenance Yard

Owner-Occupied Infill

Main Street Sponsored Park Improvements

Round-About Concept

Downtown Gateway Feature

Streetscape Improvements

Strengthen Pedestrian Linkage to Lake Eva Park

Parks, Trails, & Lakefront Master Plan

Lake Eva Trail Improvements
TEA 21 / FRDAP

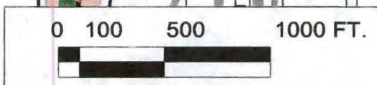
Streetscape Improvements

Buffer Residential Uses from Proposed Railroad Spur

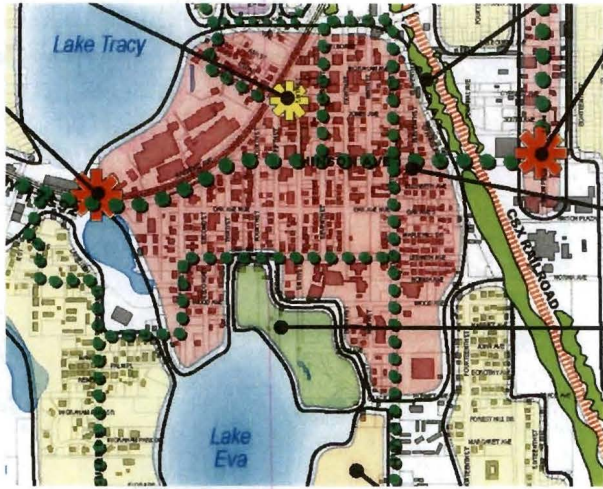
Development Opportunities:

- Land Assembly
- Parking Structure
- Private Sector Development

Buffer Residential Uses from Proposed Railroad Spur



- Devise strategies including land assembly and other means of participating in land development to partner with the private sector in initiating development activity at appropriate locations in the downtown area.
- Work closely with area businesses, merchants' associations, and the Chamber of Commerce to address the needs of existing businesses through the redevelopment process.
- Support on-going Main Street efforts for downtown business recruitment, retention and expansion.
- Working with the Main Street program to initiate programs to improve and strengthen existing businesses, including marketing and promotion, small business loans and other financial incentives.
- Revise development codes to enable a desired mixed of uses and where appropriate to allow for temporary on-site advertising of products and services for special sales and events.
- Ensure sufficient parking for anticipated downtown activity by providing angled on-street parking throughout the downtown where possible.



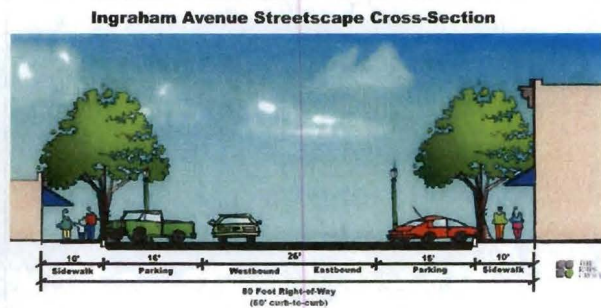
A Vacant Parcel in Downtown Haines City

Objective II

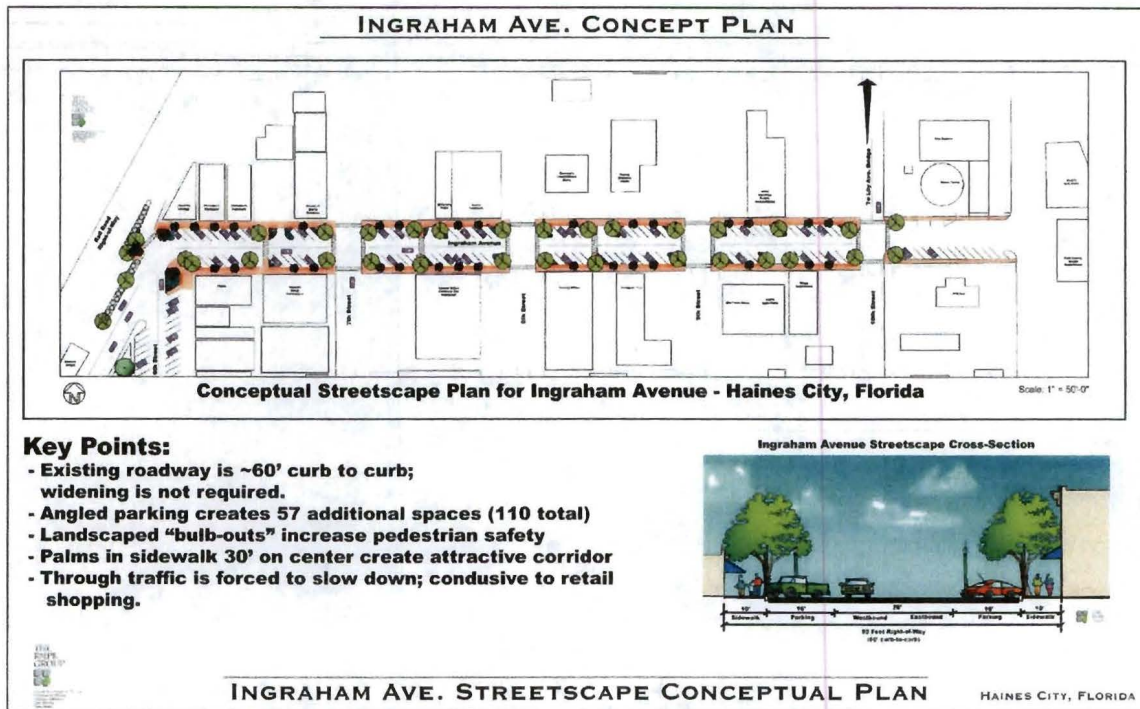
Improve the physical appearance of the downtown to stimulate private investment.



Ingraham Avenue facing east from 6th Street



Proposed retrofit of Ingraham Avenue



Proposed Streetscape Improvements for Ingraham Avenue

Action Strategies

- Secure CDBG Grant funding and pursue improvements to Ingraham Avenue as proposed.
- Work with existing property owners to replace dilapidated, nonconforming structures through property assembly to enable development of higher and better uses at appropriate locations.
- Utilizing tools made available through Chapter 163, F.S., target sites such as those located on 7th Avenue, for public/private projects in the downtown for in-fill mixed-use development to serve as anchors to attract further investment.
- Expand the urban edge of the downtown beyond 6th Street by systematically undertaking streetscape projects along the primary road network grid in the historic downtown creating an attractive pedestrian environment.
- When undertaking streetscape improvements, new private construction, and building rehabilitation, place utility lines underground where it is feasible to improve visual qualities and remove impediments to safe pedestrian access.
- Invest in physical improvements at Railroad Park as proposed by the Main Street program.
- Establish a façade improvement program providing design assistance and financial incentives to



Utility lines should be buried to remove this visual clutter from the streetscape.

encourage building renovations that will provide compatible design and strengthen existing architectural features.

- Ensure that future development in the redevelopment area is consistent with the existing architectural character of Downtown Haines City.
- Ensure architectural integrity of future development through design standards and the establishment of an architectural review board for downtown development and renovation projects.
- Enforce City codes to ensure proper maintenance of vacant lots and buildings.



This vacant land and buildings on 7th Street are a development opportunity.

Objective II

Improve access and visibility for the downtown.

Action Strategies

- Provide gateway features and directional signage on U.S. Hwy 27 and 17-92.
- Provide alternate downtown access through the design and construction of road improvements on Old Polk City Road.
- Explore ways to improve access to the Oakland neighborhood and other residential areas north of downtown.
- Improve downtown access from surrounding residential areas through an integrated trail and bikeway system.



Penninsular Drive Neighborhood



The current exit sign for Downtown Haines City from Highway 27 is inadequate.



The railroad grade cuts off the Oakland Neighborhood from Downtown Haines City.

Housing and Neighborhoods

Objective

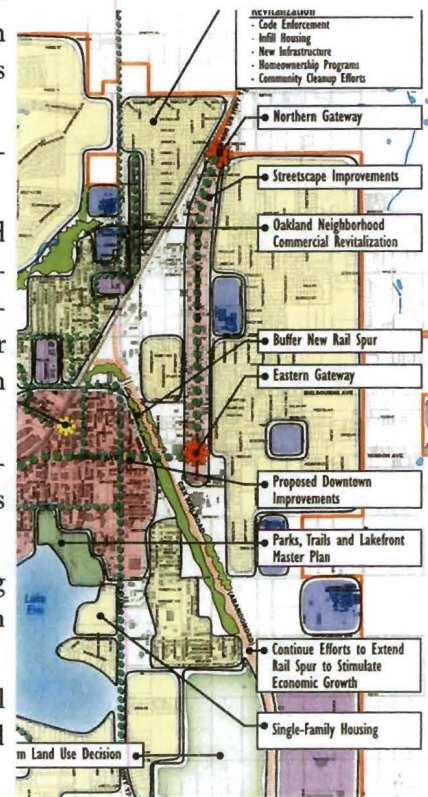
Reestablish old neighborhoods through redevelopment and revitalization of the housing stock, establishing a safe, functional, and aesthetically pleasing community environment.

Action Strategies

- Systematically conduct neighborhood planning studies to determine issues and concerns of area residents starting with the Oakland neighborhood as the City's highest priority.
- Act upon issues identified by residents and invest in infrastructure improvements such as drainage, sidewalks, street lighting and neighborhood entrance signage that support the stabilization of residential areas.
- Plan for neighborhood parks and strategically utilize tax increment financing and grant sources for proposed parks and/or other multi-purpose neighborhood facilities.
- Work with local real estate professionals, identify and market areas where private interests can develop housing and necessary support facilities in the City.
- Encourage private efforts toward building quality housing throughout the city.
- Evaluate zoning and development codes and where possible remove restrictions to market-wise housing development such as inappropriate minimum lot size requirements or other standards that may inhibit private investment in the development of housing.
- Discourage the intrusion of inappropriate businesses, office, commercial and industrial uses into neighborhoods.
- Devise land acquisition, demolition and housing rehabilitation strategies to remove or refurbish unsafe or dilapidate structures.
- Using tax increment revenues, initiate infill housing development projects on existing and newly vacated properties.



The Oakland Neighborhood north of Downtown



The Neighborhood East of Downtown

- Work with community and/or city volunteers to clean-up vacant, unattended properties.
- Where possible, identify and restore historic housing that may be in a state of deterioration, but otherwise structurally sound.
- Consider being a catalyst in the establishment of a non-profit housing corporation or Community Development Corporation to increase owner occupied housing through home ownership programs including housing bonds for down payment programs and low interest loans.
- Address issues related to public safety and the provision of government services.



Recreation and Open Space

Objective

Provide recreational opportunities for the citizens of Haines City, which are readily accessible and improve the quality of life for residents. Preserve land to serve as public parks and open space for current and future neighborhoods.

Action Strategies

- Prepare a Waterfront, Parks, Trails, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan for the City to identify existing recreational assets and needs while devising an implementation program that includes:
 - Operations and management analysis.
 - Maintenance requirements.
 - Capital improvements programming
 - Budget recommendations.



Master Plan Suggested For Lake Eva Park and Trails



- Identify potential revenues including tax increment financing, grants, impact fees and other assessments to provide adequate funding for proposed improvements and maintenance of public facilities.
- Institute creative measures, such as land set aside requirements in subdivision regulations to secure land for parks, trails and open space as determined in the Master Plan.
- Provide safe connection to the City's primary activity centers including the downtown, schools and neighborhoods through sidewalks and bikeways.

Economic Development

Objective I

Improve Haines City's competitive position in the regional market.

Action Strategies

- Make the City competitive with major activity centers in the region by developing an economic positioning strategy.
- Capitalize on anticipated growth trends in the regional market by preparing for growth through public policy and investment related to annexations and the provision of adequate land and infrastructure for new industries and manufacturing ventures.
- Foster communication between the public sector and private sector for the purpose of understanding the mutual benefits of proposed economic development programs and redevelopment projects.
- Create a positive investment environment by utilizing selected public actions to stimulate private investment including land assembly and the reinvestment of public funds into private co-venture development projects.
- Capitalize on development and redevelopment opportunities associated with the revitalization of the downtown such as improving the housing stock to satisfy demand for city versus suburban living.



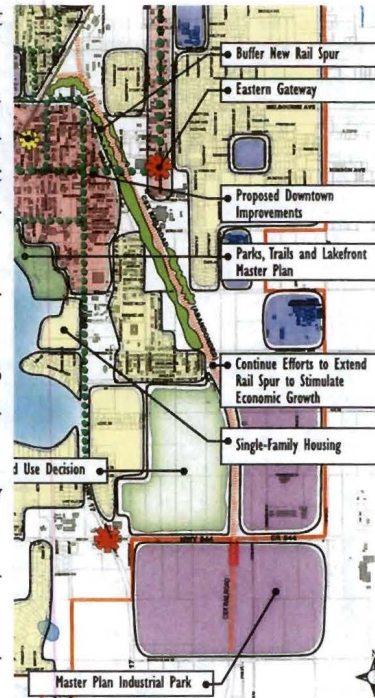
Objective II

Encourage growth and development in the commercial and industrial sectors of the local economy.

Action Strategies

- Master plan, develop and promote industrial parks and business development centers.

- Ensure that infrastructure is available to support future commercial and industrial development.
- Concentrate commercial development in key locations to avoid the negative effects of strip commercial development patterns and stimulate economic synergies to sustain growth in the commercial sector.
- Identify sites for large-scale development and redevelopment opportunities.
- Utilize tools made available through Chapter 163 Part III of the Florida Statutes to assemble properties when necessary.
- Implement land banking and cooperative property assembly strategies for future development.
- Seek creative financing opportunities for new development in conjunction with the private sector.
- Capitalize on regional market dynamics and influences.



Pursue Re-Opening of the Rail Spur to Encourage Industrial Growth.

While the CRA encompasses the downtown, it is affected both positively and negatively by activities occurring outside of downtown including development along the Highway 27 corridor and suburban sprawl. City officials in general should:

- Plan for regionally significant economic activity near the Heart of Florida Regional Medical Center as the City grows to the north.
- Pursue annexations.
- Continue efforts to extend the rail spur southward to stimulate economic growth in the City.

Objective III

Provide necessary public facilities at acceptable levels of service to accommodate existing needs as well as new demands as proposed development occurs within the City.

Action Strategies

- Work with all appropriate government and private utilities to ensure the provision of adequate services including, electricity, telecommunications, cable television, water, storm water, sanitary sewer, gas, and solid waste.
- Secure grant funding when possible to leverage tax increment revenues to accomplish stated goals related to the provision of ade-



Haines City's 6th Street Downtown

quate infrastructure.

- Assess existing infrastructure conditions such as sidewalks, sanitary sewer and water lines, storm drainage systems and utilities to identify specific needs for upgrading older systems in conjunction with proposed improvements within the City.

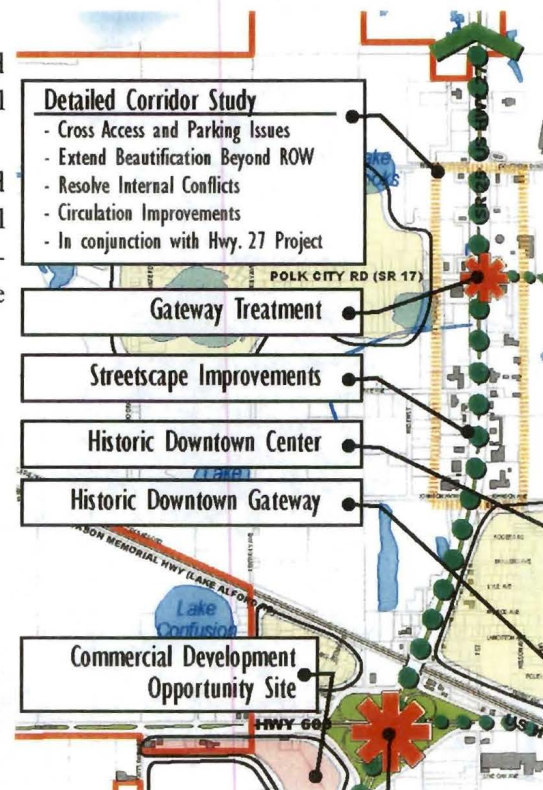
Transportation

Objective

Create a safe, efficient traffic circulation system that provides sufficient access by all modes of transportation between activity centers within the redevelopment area and the balance of the community.

Action Strategies

- Assess existing traffic patterns and pursue any automotive transportation improvements that may include vacating of rights-of-way, redistribution of traffic, roadway realignment, directional changes in traffic flow, and other measures that will increase traffic carrying capacity and traveling convenience on area roads.
- Work closely with the Polk Transportation Planning Organization, TPO, FDOT, and Polk County to coordinate and establish priorities for proposed transportation improvements that will further the objectives of the Redevelopment Plan.
- Minimize the impacts of increased traffic and activity levels on residential areas.
- Create a safe, secure, appealing, and efficient pedestrian system linking all major activity centers, parking facilities, alley ways, and other interchange points.



- Construct sidewalks, bikeways and trails throughout the City, appropriately designed to be used as positive tools to improve the area's environment through the use of landscaping and other visual treatments.

Administration

Objective I: Administration and Finance

Establish the administrative, financial and programmatic mechanisms necessary to achieve the goals and objectives of the Haines City Redevelopment Plan.

Action Strategies

- Work with the City Manager, Finance Director and Community Development Director to strategically devise annual operating and capital improvements budgets to maximize the use of anticipated tax increment revenues.
- Annual budgets must address the need to provide funding for on-going staff support, requisite planning studies, operations, and maintenance for City and agency activities.
- Through successful implementation of projects and programs, as described in the Redevelopment Plan, increase the tax base to generate additional revenue for capital improvements and municipal services.
- The City should leverage tax increment revenues through grants, commercial loans, or other financial mechanisms to expedite the completion of projects.
- Based on revenue projections contained in the Redevelopment Plan the City should seek short-term interim project financing with anticipation of long-term bond financing.
- The CRA should work with the Polk County Property Appraiser to ensure updated property valuations that are consistent with valuation assessments in neighboring communities.
- The Redevelopment Agency, and its staff must continue to oversee the planning process and develop the appropriate strategies and policies necessary to implement the plan.
- The City should prepare the Comprehensive Plan, which includes a Capital Improvement Element that will enable effective programming of the annual budget to accomplish objectives pertaining to the provision of adequate infrastructure and public services as the community grows.
- The CRA and staff should provide public information concerning all aspects of the redevelopment program such as news letters, radio, television and newspaper reporting as well as neighborhood and civic organization meetings to generate public support.

- Staff should work with area residents, property owners, and businesses to establish channels of communication that foster support for the redevelopment effort and facilitate program implementation.

Objective II - Community Planning and Development

Devise planning strategies and develop an effective regulatory framework to ensure well managed growth throughout the City while accomplishing redevelopment program directives.

Action Strategies

- Based upon the outcome of the redevelopment planning effort, the City should continue to work with area residents and property owners to re-write the Comprehensive Plan and schedule adoption proceedings to coincide with the State mandated Evaluation and Assessment Review in 2006.
- The City's Comprehensive Plan should embrace the following planning principles:
 - Establish a land use pattern that reflects the City as a total community of diversified interests and activities, while promoting compatibility and harmonious land-use relationships.
 - Promote and locate strategic land use activities that will support tourist and commercial attraction to the historic downtown.
 - Encourage mixed-use development at an appropriate scale in the area.
 - Introduce multi-family development in close proximity to the historic downtown strengthening the local market for retail and services.
- The City should support recently proposed zoning revisions.
- Work with the community, the City Staff, Planning Commission, and the City Commission to rewrite the Land Development Code and implement regulatory policies to encourage:
 - Zoning and land-use categories that will assist the City in diversifying its tax base.
 - Zoning and land-use regulations that provide housing opportunities for all income levels.
 - A high degree of design and development standards for new construction and rehabilitation.
- Create programs for land development and property rehabilitation, using financial or other economic incentives, to facilitate new investment in the redevelopment district, thereby increasing the tax base.
- Formulate policies and procedures for developer solicitation and development agreements to enable strategic development practices.

Objective III Government Services

Provide for the public health, safety, morals, and welfare of the community

Action Strategies

- Budget for additional City staffing as revenues increase resulting from the success of proposed redevelopment efforts.
- Continue the work begun by the Haines City Police Department and other organizations to implement neighborhood-based police and safety programs.
- Incorporate accredited safe neighborhood design techniques for all public places and for proposed public/private redevelopment projects.
- Whenever possible, increase the visibility of the police force in the area to prevent crime.
- Increase code enforcement efforts and evaluate policies to ensure effective enforcement practices to improve conditions and stabilize neighborhoods.



Capital Projects

This section shows how the Concept Plan translates to capital improvements, public/private sector opportunities, and program administrative and regulatory requirements. The community should understand that the Redevelopment Agency, working closely with the City and other government entities, will be pursuing multiple elements of the Plan at all times.

The Community Redevelopment Plan contains projects consisting of public, private and joint public/private efforts that may take up to thirty (30) years to complete. It is critical that the City incorporates a sound project implementation strategy to accomplish the most effective results in terms of addressing the community's needs while stimulating private sector investment. It is important that the redevelopment program is flexible enough to take advantage of unforeseen opportunities such as private sector development initiatives or newly created government programs and funding sources which may provide additional leverage for tax increment financing. The following section of the plan sets forth recommendations concerning proposed projects and funding sources. To streamline the process and simplify the presentation, project priorities have been reduced to phases that include, Short term (1-5 years), Mid term (5-10 years) and Long term projects that will take more than ten years to complete.

Short Term Projects – Those that should be implemented immediately and should be completed within one to five years.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Project</i>	<i>Cost</i>	<i>Source</i>
2003	Highway 27 Road Project	\$15 M	FDOT
2004	Gateways	\$375,000	TIF
2003	Oakland Multi-purpose facility	\$400,000	Grant, TIF
2003/04	Ingraham Avenue streetscape	\$1m	CDBG Grant/TIF
2003/04/05 /06/07/08	Oakland Neighborhood Plan Infrastructure improvements per plan	\$30,000 \$2m	TIF, Grants
2004	Parks and Rec. Master Plan	\$125,000	TIF
2004/05	Lake Eva Improvements	\$2.5m	Grant stacking , TIF
2004	Write Land Development Code	\$200,000	EDA Grant/TIF
2005/06	Write Comprehensive Plan	\$275,000	EDA Grant/TIF
2005	7th St. Streetscape/parking	\$1m	TIF
2005	Rail Spur extension	\$2m	EDA Grant
2005	Railroad Park Improvements	\$1m	TIF, Grants
2005-2008	Housing program, Development Corp., demolition, rehab, acquisition, in-fill	\$5m	TIF, private funding
2005-2008	Public/Private Dev. 7th St.	\$1m	TIF
2005-2008	Façade Grant Program	\$300,000	TIF, match
2003-2008	Total Expenditures	\$32,205,000	
2003-2008	TIF Expenditures	\$5,730,000	
2003-2008	Other Sources	\$26,475,000	

Mid Term Projects – Those to be completed within five to ten years

<i>Year</i>	<i>Project</i>	<i>Cost</i>	<i>Source</i>
2008-13	Annual Streetscape Imp., Gateways	\$5.375 M	TIF, Gas Tax, Grants
2008	Old Polk City Road Improvements	\$3m	TIF, Gas Tax
2008-13	Annual Housing Program	\$5m	TIF, private funding
2008-13	Annual Neighborhood Plans	\$150,000	TIF
2008-13	Neighborhood Improvements	\$2m	TIF
2008	Horticulture Master Plan	\$50,000	TIF
2008-13	Annual Tree Planting	\$250,000	TIF, SBA-KAB Gr.
2008-13	Annual Façade Grants	\$500,000	TIF
2008-13	Annual Trails and Bikeways	\$5m	TIF, Grants
2008-13	Annual Park Capital Improvements	\$5m	TIF, Grants
2008-13	Infrastructure, roads, sewer, etc.	\$5m	TIF, City Sources
2008-13	Public/Private Dev. Reserve	\$1m	TIF
2008-13	Total Expenditures	\$32,325,000	
2008-13	TIF Expenditures	\$15,012,500	
2008-13	Other Sources	\$17,312,500	

Long Term Projects – Those projects that will likely take more than ten years to complete.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Project</i>	<i>Cost</i>	<i>Source</i>
2013-23	Annual Housing Program	\$10m	TIF, private funding
2013-23	Annual Tree Planting	\$250,000	TIF, SBA-KAB Gr.
2013-23	Annual Façade Grants	\$500,000	TIF
2013-23	Annual Trails and Bikeways	\$10m	TIF, Grants
2013-23	Annual Park Capital Improvements	\$10m	TIF, Grants
2013-23	Infrastructure, roads, sewer, etc.	\$10m	TIF, City Sources
2013-23	Public/Private Dev. Reserve	\$2m	TIF
2013-23	Total Expenditures	\$42,750,000	
2013-23	TIF Expenditures	\$19,625,000	
2013-23	Other Sources	\$23,125,000	
	Grand Total	\$107,280,000	
	TIF Grand Total	\$40,367,500	
	Other Sources Grand Total	\$66,912,500	



Revenue Projections

Tax Increment Financing

Tax increment financing is the most popular method for cities throughout the country to redevelop urban areas through public improvements, which promote private sector activity. Although the legal requirements are complex, the basic concept is relatively simple.

In tax increment financing, property values in a certain defined area are capped or frozen at the assessed value for a particular base year. Thereafter, any tax revenues due to increases in value in excess of the base are dedicated to the redevelopment area. The municipality and the county both continue to receive property tax revenues based on the frozen value. These base revenues are available for general government purposes.

The tax increment revenues can be used immediately, saved for particular projects, or can be bonded to maximize the funds available. Any funds received from a tax increment financing district, however, must be used for the redevelopment of the area and not for general government purposes.

In the early 1980's, many Florida cities established Community Redevelopment Agencies to facilitate the redevelopment of urban areas. As the tax increments have increased, many redevelopment areas now have sufficient revenues to support significant levels of bonds.



Revenue Projections

Tax Increment Financing

Tax increment financing is the most popular method for cities throughout the country to redevelop urban areas through public improvements, which promote private sector activity. Although the legal requirements are complex, the basic concept is relatively simple.

In tax increment financing, property values in a certain defined area are capped or frozen at the assessed value for a particular base year. Thereafter, any tax revenues due to increases in value in excess of the base are dedicated to the redevelopment area. The municipality and the county both continue to receive property tax revenues based on the frozen value. These base revenues are available for general government purposes.

The tax increment revenues can be used immediately, saved for particular projects, or can be bonded to maximize the funds available. Any funds received from a tax increment financing district, however, must be used for the redevelopment of the area and not for general government purposes.

In the early 1980's, many Florida cities established Community Redevelopment Agencies to facilitate the redevelopment of urban areas. As the tax increments have increased, many redevelopment areas now have sufficient revenues to support significant levels of bonds.

History of Tax Increment Financing

Tax increment financing was originally developed over 30 years ago as a method to meet the local match requirements of federal grant programs. With the reduction in federal funds available for local projects, however, tax increment financing is standing on its own as a method to finance local redevelopment.

State law controls tax increment financing. Because of this control, tax increment financing takes on a number of different techniques and appearances throughout the country.

In Florida, tax increment financing is derived from the Community Redevelopment Act of 1969, which is codified as Part III, Chapter 163 of the Florida Statutes. This act provided for a combination of public and private redevelopment efforts, but did not authorize the use of tax increment financing. The Act was amended in 1977 to allow tax increment financing. Under the Statutes, municipalities must go through a number of steps to establish a redevelopment area and implement a tax increment district.

Upon approval of the governing body a Trust Fund for each Community Redevelopment area may be established. The revenues for the Trust Fund are obtained by allocating any increases in taxable assessed value to the area. The assessed value of the district is "frozen" and any increases (the tax increment revenues) are available for improvements to the area. The tax collector collects the entire property tax and subtracts the tax on the base value, which is available for general government purposes. Of the remaining tax increment revenues, 95% are deposited to the Trust Fund. The remaining 5% is kept by the local government as a collection fee.

Type of Expenses Allowed

There are five major types of expenses allowed under Florida Statutes 163.387(6) for tax increment revenues.

Establishment and Operations - they can first be used for the implementation and administrative expenses of the Community Redevelopment Agency

Planning and Analysis - they can then be used to develop the necessary engineering, architectural, and financial plans

Financing - the revenues may be used to issue and repay debt for proposed capital improvements contained in the Community Redevelopment Plan

Acquisition - the revenues may be used to acquire real property

Preparation - finally, the revenues may be used for site preparation, including the relocation of existing residents.

According to F.S. 163.370(2), however, the funds may not be used for the following purposes:

To construct or expand administration buildings for public bodies unless each taxing authority involved agrees,

Any publicly-owned capital improvements which are not an integral part of the redevelopment if the improvements are normally financed by user fees, and if the improvements would have otherwise been made without the Redevelopment Agency within three years,

Or general government operating expenses unrelated to the Redevelopment Agency.

Tax increment revenue is typically the major source of funding for redevelopment projects under the State of Florida Community Redevelopment Act.

Tax Increment Projections

The City of Haines City, working closely with Polk County, expanded the boundaries of the redevelopment area and established the base year for the Community Redevelopment Trust Fund as 2001. The base year taxable value of properties located within the boundaries of the redevelopment district was \$180,646,166. In the following year the tax base has grown by 9.1% to a value of \$198,949,312 in 2002.

The following spreadsheet provides tax increment revenue projections for the Haines City redevelopment area. Revenue estimates are based on a conservative annual increase in the tax base of 3%. The model also does not contain assumptions concerning anticipated development that will further increase the property value in coming years.

Based on the revenue stream established through this conservative model, the proposals contained in this Plan have a very reasonable chance for success. With tax increment levels expected to nearly double within the first few years of the program the City is positioned to make tremendous strides in upcoming years. The agency has several options for obtaining initial financing to enable immediate planning and design of the projects contained in this plan.

The CRA can obtain interim financing through a bond anticipation note, commercial loan or commercial line of credit based on projected revenues. Several recently approved housing projects will not only fulfill many of the program's land use objectives, but will also have a substantial positive impact on the tax base. The City may also consider bonding of the annual gas tax revenues that could be applied toward infrastructure improvements for roads, drainage and sidewalks as well as several of the streetscape improvement projects identified in the Plan. These funds combined with other possible funding sources identified in this plan should enable the CRA to embark on an aggressive public improvement program that will serve as a catalyst for future private sector investment.

Tax Increment Finance Projections

Years	Annual Increase in Assessed Value	Annual Incremental Increase	Gross Incremental CRA Revenue	Net (95%) Incremental CRA Revenue
2001	\$170,233,293	\$0	\$0	\$0
2002	\$188,237,190	\$18,003,897	\$265,125	\$251,869
2003	\$210,610,608	\$40,377,315	\$594,233	\$564,521
2004	\$225,203,691	\$54,970,398	\$796,356	\$756,538
2005	\$231,959,802	\$61,726,509	\$894,232	\$849,520
2006	\$238,918,596	\$68,685,303	\$995,044	\$945,292
2007	\$246,086,154	\$75,852,861	\$1,098,880	\$1,043,936
2008	\$253,468,738	\$83,235,445	\$1,205,832	\$1,145,540
2009	\$261,072,800	\$90,839,507	\$1,315,992	\$1,250,192
2010	\$268,904,984	\$98,671,691	\$1,429,457	\$1,357,984
2011	\$276,972,134	\$106,738,841	\$1,546,326	\$1,469,009
2012	\$285,281,298	\$115,048,005	\$1,666,700	\$1,583,365
2013	\$293,839,737	\$123,606,444	\$1,790,687	\$1,701,152
2014	\$302,654,929	\$132,421,636	\$1,918,392	\$1,822,473
2015	\$311,734,577	\$141,501,284	\$2,049,929	\$1,947,433
2016	\$321,086,614	\$150,853,321	\$2,185,412	\$2,076,141
2017	\$330,719,213	\$160,485,920	\$2,324,960	\$2,208,712
2018	\$340,640,789	\$170,407,496	\$2,468,693	\$2,345,259
2019	\$350,860,013	\$180,626,720	\$2,616,739	\$2,485,902
2020	\$361,385,813	\$191,152,520	\$2,769,227	\$2,630,765
2021	\$372,227,387	\$201,994,094	\$2,926,288	\$2,779,974
2022	\$383,394,209	\$213,160,916	\$3,088,062	\$2,933,659
2023	\$394,896,035	\$224,662,742	\$3,254,689	\$3,091,955
2024	\$406,742,916	\$236,509,623	\$3,426,315	\$3,254,999
2025	\$418,945,204	\$248,711,911	\$3,603,089	\$3,422,935
2026	\$431,513,560	\$261,280,267	\$3,785,167	\$3,595,909
2027	\$444,458,967	\$274,225,674	\$3,972,707	\$3,774,072
2028	\$457,792,736	\$287,559,443	\$4,165,874	\$3,957,580
2029	\$471,526,518	\$301,293,225	\$4,364,835	\$4,146,593
2030	\$485,672,313	\$315,439,020	\$4,569,765	\$4,341,277
			\$67,089,009	\$63,734,558
		1.030	Annual increase in assessed value	

Notes

- 1 Archbold Biological Station website [<http://www.archbold-station.org/fai/index.html>]
- 2 U.S. Weather Service data for Kissimmee, Florida [<http://www.ohwy.com/fl/w/wx084625.htm>]
- 3 Florida Division of Historical Resources website [<http://dhr.dos.state.fl.us/flafacts/city.html>]
- 4 Website of the Polk County Republican Party [http://www.polkrepublican.com/brief_histories.htm]
- 5 Frisbie, Louise. Yesterday's Polk County. E. A. Seemann Publishing, Inc. Miami FL. 1976. p. 21.
- 6 Frisbie, Louise. Yesterday's Polk County. E. A. Seemann Publishing, Inc. Miami FL. 1976. p. 23.
- 7 Greater Haines City Chamber of Commerce website [<http://www.hainescity.com/history/>]
- 8 Greater Haines City Chamber of Commerce website [<http://www.hainescity.com/history/>]
- 9 Frisbie, Louise. Yesterday's Polk County. E. A. Seemann Publishing, Inc. Miami FL. 1976. p. 60.
- 10 Greater Haines City Chamber of Commerce website [<http://www.hainescity.com/history/>]
- 11 Haines City Citrus Grower's Association - Hilltop website [http://www.hilltopcitrus.com/our_history.htm]
- 12 Florida Cattlemen's Association website [<http://www.floridacattlemen.org/history.htm>]
- 13 Florida Bound website [<http://floridabound.com/floridatrivia.html>]
- 14 Florida Cattlemen's Association website [http://www.floridacattlemen.org/beef_report_stats1.htm]
- 15 Frisbie, Louise. Yesterday's Polk County. E. A. Seemann Publishing, Inc. Miami FL. 1976. pp. 105-106.
- 16 Short History of Florida website [<http://dhr.dos.state.fl.us/flafacts/shorthis.html#florida>]
- 17 Historic Roads and Highways of Florida website [<http://www.us-highways.com/dixiehwy.htm>]
- 18 Frisbie, Louise. Yesterday's Polk County. E. A. Seemann Publishing, Inc. Miami FL. 1976. p. 48.
- 19 Historic Roads and Highways of Florida website [<http://www.us-highways.com/flus.htm#US%2017>]
- 20 Historic Roads and Highways of Florida website [<http://www.us-highways.com/flus.htm#US%2092>]
- 21 Frisbie, Louise. Yesterday's Polk County. E. A. Seemann Publishing, Inc. Miami FL. 1976. p. 77.
- 22 Frisbie, Louise. Yesterday's Polk County. E. A. Seemann Publishing, Inc. Miami FL. 1976. p. 92.
- 23 [<http://www.golfflorida.com/departments/features/polk-county.htm>], [<http://www.orlandogolf.com/departments/coursereviews/southern-dunes.htm>]



Appendix A

Public Involvement Report

September, 2002

INTRODUCTION

Following is a summary report outlining the information obtained during work sessions conducted August 21 and 22, 2002 in the City of Haines City, Florida. The information includes an overview of the process and basic format of the meetings, the attendees, and a brief summary of the information provided by the participants. This information is used during the inventory and analysis phase of the redevelopment planning process and will be incorporated when formulating the goals and objectives of the Redevelopment Plan.

DOWNTOWN BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY – AUGUST 21, 2002

Business owners and Chamber Members gathered to discuss issues that directly affect the local economy and the downtown, including transportation, the neighborhoods, and various cultural and social issues. Frustration with restrictive codes was brought up, as well as the difficulty in spurring economic activity for downtown businesses. Concern about pending transportation projects was voiced, as well as the question of how to attract more middle and high-income housing and residents. Socio-cultural issues were addressed, such as the difficulty in bridging the gap between the White, Black and Hispanic residents and businesses.

ATTENDEES:

- Denise Watts
- Tom Patton
- Tim Lawhorn
- Ronnie Cotton
- Dr. Earle Eblee
- Charlie Tonno
- Lee Hydechuk
- Steve Hore
- Bobbi Freeman
- Gloria DeVito
- Susan McGinn
- Eddie Dyess
- Paul Leuff
- Kathy Prince

- Larry Baldwin
- Joy Pruitt
- Steve Levine
- Richard Greenwood, Community Development Director
- Kurt Easton, The RMPK Group, Inc.
- James Taylor, The RMPK Group, Inc.

ISSUES:

DOWNTOWN

- There are some antiquated, unrealistic codes and restrictions. Difficult for both new and existing businesses.
 - Antique stores are not allowed to put anything on the sidewalk such as eye-catching merchandise, banners, or benches.
- Zoning is highly restrictive to the type of businesses allowed downtown.
- Economically, there is a dilemma with bringing old buildings up to code. It is cost-prohibitive to renovate or raze and rebuild.
- Is downtown really just 6th Street? Need to expand the concept of downtown.
- Historically, 6th Street was the center of commerce. It thrived until the 70s.
- Need to develop strategies for anchors downtown.
- Lack of a clear vision of uses for the downtown.
- Parking is an actual issue, not merely perceived. It could be a problem of poor pedestrian environment rather than a lack of parking spaces.
- Need downtown boosterism to attract shoppers.
- Poor directional signage at 27 and 17/92
- Does the downtown have an identity?
- Need a gateway identity structure at the 17/92 – Hinson Avenue split.
- We are looking to achieve success. If the first business is not successful, they should move or try a different type of business.
- Adjust the regulations and find niche markets to achieve success.
- Consider building rehabs on 7th and 5th Streets to use public funds to buy down the cost of bringing these up to code.
- Wal-Mart on Highway 27 has killed the downtown.

TRANSPORTATION

- Highway 27 is going from four to six lanes.
- Major capital improvement suggestion: Four-lane the Polk City Road from 27 to downtown. Remove the sharp curves.
- The 17/92 corridor is Haines City's back door. There is concern about the possibility of re-routing of 17/92 around town thus losing the through traf-

fic.

- Consider scenic re-route off 27 through downtown.
- Johnson Street (Marion Creek Road?) access problem. It does not link to downtown.
- Drivers license office building has closed from downtown. Post office is out on 27. Library is downtown on the lake.

NEIGHBORHOODS

- Federally subsidized housing in the 70s and available platted building lots resulting in a surplus of low-income housing attracting poor residents. This has contributed to the shift in population demographics.
- The high percentage of low income, largely ethnic minority population is occupying the low-end housing stock and is dragging down the City.
- Zoning codes and ordinances aimed at improving the caliber of businesses and larger houses are not effective; the population demographics do not support them.
- If Haines City can improve its quaintness, it can attract more middle and upper income homebuyers.

CULTURAL/SOCIAL

- School system is vitally important to attracting new residents. Classrooms are currently as large as 45 to 50 students.
- Plans must market to all citizens of all ethnicities; bring the community together.
- The Chamber of Commerce lacks adequate representation by minorities and from the downtown.
- Chamber should consider a minority division with a lower dues structure.
- Language barrier affects everything: business, schools, politics, etc.
- In the past there has been reluctance for various entities (downtown business associations, COC, government, industry, etc) to work together.
- Consider teaching Spanish to business owners and chamber leaders to reach out to the Hispanic population. Hispanics have a word of mouth network for obtaining and referring services.
- Cultural differences between various Hispanic groups need to be better understood.
- Many Hispanics lack a credit history since they often pay cash and do not use banks or credit cards.
- There has been a substantial increase in Hispanic-owned businesses.
- Racism is still endemic and it is not just from "Florida Cracker Rednecks."
- Egos sometimes get in the way of progress

NEIGHBORHOODS – AUGUST 21, 2002

The meeting with the neighborhood residents included discussion on land use issues, such as commercial encroachment into the residential areas and overly restrictive development regulations that make rehabilitation difficult. Infrastructure issues were also addressed, such as the inadequacy of the current sidewalk system and the lack of parks. Appearance of the neighborhoods was also discussed, including the deterioration of older homes and problems with maintenance liens and absentee landlords.

ATTENDEES:

- Elba Cherry
- Rudela Melo
- Denise Watts
- Lonnie Cotton
- Cherie Senft
- Lois Robinson
- Jimmie Myers
- Lee Wheeler
- Tom Patton
- Joel Decker
- Lisa Harden
- Keshonda Walker
- Richard Greenwood, Community Development Director
- Kurt Easton, The RMPK Group, Inc.
- James Taylor, The RMPK Group, Inc.

ISSUES

LAND USE

- Businesses are encroaching into neighborhoods:
 - Convenience store backing up to neighborhood
 - Older neighborhoods experiencing loitering
- Community newsletter produced by the City.
- Historical survey – some commercial buildings made it to the register but residential properties did not. Why?
- High school is poor. There is a proposal to construct a new high school. Locational criteria could be established during redevelopment process.
- Anticipate three-year horizon for a new high school. The Chamber of Commerce has applied a lot of pressure.
- The majority of growth occurs along 27/ I-4 corridors, rather than in the City.
- Annexation: There is a plan to annex up to the hospital. New subdivisions

nearby have signed agreements to become annexed once they become contiguous with the City.

- Overly restrictive housing ordinances and codes need to be relaxed to allow construction and rehabilitation of affordable homes.
- Many existing lots are smaller (5,000 sf) than the smallest zoning classification (7,000 sf).
- Many of the newer PUDs are building garden homes on small lots, but these small lots in older neighborhoods are declining due to past exploitative real estate practices.
- Wal-mart has wiped out most neighborhood services
- The recently changed liquor law prevented restaurants from opening on Sundays.

INFRASTRUCTURE

- Sidewalks
 - Lacking in key areas, specifically leading to the schools.
 - Sidewalk/asphalt path network system is needed.
 - Consider recreational path around the lakes.
 - Connect to regional trail systems with Winter Haven, Lake Alfred.
 - Cyclists come to the hilly terrain in Haines City to train.
- Inadequate maintenance of street lighting. Police are supposed to report pole number to public works, which then faxes it to Florida Power.
- Some neighborhoods lack sanitary sewer.
- No existing parks system
- How to fund a tree program?

APPEARANCE

- Quality of housing stock: some nice neighborhoods, some are declining.
- Historic Residential: Some were built in the 1920s and have been maintained. Others are crumbling.
- Unkempt vacant lots
- Absentee ownership, unknown owners
- Consider adjudication for unpaid taxes or maintenance (grass cutting, etc) liens.
- The redevelopment agency can have power to force clearing of abandoned, derelict buildings to make the property marketable.
- Currently, grass cutting and other liens are forgiven by the City once conditions are corrected.

TRAFFIC

- Cut-through traffic is a major complaint in several areas, including the Grace Avenue route to high school.

- Safety lighting is needed on paths and streets that are considered major routes.

REGIONAL GOVERNMENT – AUGUST 22, 2002

The regional government meeting focused on three main topics: infrastructure/ transportation, the school system, and land use. Difficulty in coordination of resources and projects due to jurisdictional boundary issues with the water management districts was a concern. Issues affecting the school system were also discussed, such as the low graduation rate and the high turnover rate of educators, as well as the work being done by the new high school task force. Land use issues raised included discussion of possible update of the Land Development Regulations and Comprehensive Plan.

ATTENDEES:

- Ron Burchfield
- Tom Patton
- Ronnie Cotton
- Waymon Smith
- Lee Wheeler
- Richard Greenwood, Community Development Director
- Kurt Easton, The RMPK Group, Inc.
- James Taylor, The RMPK Group, Inc.

ISSUES

INFRASTRUCTURE/TRANSPORTATION

- Three-year, three-phase stormwater master plan and utility fee have recently been established. The City has major flooding issues that the plan is expected to solve.
- City is trying to obtain additional monies for immediate maintenance of stormwater infrastructure from FDOT and St. Johns, South Florida, and Southwest Florida Water Management Districts.
- SJWMD, SFWMD, and SWFWMD boundaries converge in or near Haines City along Highway 27, creating jurisdictional issues. The agencies all have different testing and permitting requirements and fee schedules, which adversely impacts private developers.
- The lakes are clean with the exception of issues with Little Lake Hamilton south of town.
- Highest priority transportation plan is the widening of Highway 27, to begin 2003. The project will begin at the south end and head north to I-4 in four phases. There will be no acquisition of right-of-way except at major intersections and for a few stormwater detention basins.

- \$1 million for landscaping along 27 from Johnson Road north to City Limits (Blue Heron).
- City needs a comprehensive traffic study.
- Bridge at Lily Avenue over railroad spur may need extensive repairs soon based on impending inspection. There are two fuel pipelines parallel to the CSX rail line that might prevent tunneling Lily under the tracks to connect to Polk City Road.
- Highway 544 widening to four lanes from 27 to 17 to service trucking for industrial park.

SCHOOL SYSTEM

- There is \$32 million for a new high school. Currently building cafeteria for high school and converting the old one to classrooms.
- Dundee Elementary, one of the worst in the district, is scheduled for renovations.
- The high school has had four principals in two years.
- There has been a recent population shift from the west side of Polk County (Lakeland) to the east side (Haines City). Correspondingly, Haines City has been receiving allotments previously garnered by other municipalities—67% of the population is not in eastern Polk County.
- The existing high school will remain functioning after the addition of a new, second high school north of town. The old high school will share a sports complex with the middle school across the street.
- New high school task force of about thirty members has been very effective lately. They meet monthly, with guest speakers, and have been stirring things up politically in order to draw attention to the needs of the school system.
- Need GED programs and adult education program.
- Only seven of the 140 doctors at the Heart of Florida Hospital live in Haines City. The others live in nicer communities with better school systems, such as Celebration.

LAND USE

- Retirees desire homes on smaller lots with little maintenance.
- City of Lake Alfred dropped the zoned minimum lot size from 7,500 sf to 6,000 sf.
- What areas within or close to the City limits are appropriate for high-end residential?
- Winter Haven is rapidly approaching Haines City from the south. The City needs to build water and sewer infrastructure toward the southwest to claim this territory for annexation.
- Haines City codes and LDRs need to be the same as surrounding cities to create a level playing field for developers. They are choosing to develop in other cities around Haines City because of the codes.

- The LDR has been “patched” to death with ordinances and it is confusing. The whole thing needs to be overhauled.
- What is the most efficient way to adopt a good LDR?
- The Comprehensive Plan is very poor and needs a rewrite.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT – AUGUST 22, 2002

The consultants met with City Staff to discuss administrative and operational issues facing the City. The lack of revenue as well as other resources needed to effectively provide municipal services to area residents was the overriding issue discussed during the work session.

ATTENDEES:

- Lon Cheney, Haines City Fire Department
- Kim Miller, Haines City Fire Department
- Lonnie Large, Haines City Fire Department
- Steve Pruitt, Parks Division
- Bob Neidrauer, Parks Division
- Tom Patton, Economic Development Department
- Bob Hague, Finance Department
- Kari Giddens, Finance Department
- James Rosser, W/WW Plants
- Ronnie Cotton
- Jane Patton
- Margaret Barthe, Haines City Public Library
- Ann Toney-Deal, City Manager’s Office
- Amy Arrington, City Manager’s Office
- Richard Greenwood, Community Development Director
- Kurt Easton, The RMPK Group, Inc.
- James Taylor, The RMPK Group, Inc.

ISSUES

BUILDING DEPARTMENT

- Deals with new construction and rehabilitations
- Wants to see infill housing in older neighborhoods.
- There is only one code enforcement officer, recently hired, and there is need for another.
- It is difficult to be proactive with only one officer and one building official.

FIRE DEPARTMENT

- Good water supply system, adequate pressure in most areas.

- Hydrant systems are being improved.
- ISO rating is coming up in 2005.
- Need more manpower but have good equipment.
- Current fire station is too small but is landlocked.
- Might need a second station north along 27.
- Free smoke detectors to residents.
- Fire safety education in the schools.
- Fire prevention needs more inspectors.

PARKS DEPARTMENT

- Don't yet have a parks and recreation master plan.
- Organize ball leagues, summer recreation programs.
- There are two swimming pools.
- Maintenance of four major athletic facilities: one softball, one baseball, and two softball/football complexes. Includes road ROW and three cemeteries.
- Department is able to keep up with maintenance except during special events.
- They are understaffed. There are fourteen grounds maintenance staffers and four more in parks only.
- Irrigation costs are exorbitant; they are looking for new water conservation techniques, such as remote control valves, etc.
- Limited availability of reclaimed water.
- Current effluent water is sold to agricultural and golf course interests.
- No funding from the County.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

- Development for industry, jobs, and higher salaries.
- North industrial park to be hi-tech corresponding to the I-4 corridor.
- (The Economic Development Director was interviewed for two hours at a separate meeting due to an unavoidable scheduling conflict)

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

- Be sure to plan for funding of maintenance of capital improvements to ensure their continued good looks.
- Provide infrastructure to service area boundaries to beat the fast approaching growth of adjacent communities (Winter Haven).
- Update technologies to automate tasks such as electronic meter reading. Save time and limit need for additional permanent personnel.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

- Need for more officers.
- Good vehicles, technologies are up to date.

- Manpower is strained to cover special events or bad traffic accidents.
- Only two patrol officers and one supervisor on duty at any given time, which is inadequate.
- Department would like to have at least five officers on duty at any given time.
- Facilities are adequate.
- Department has a difficult time attracting and keeping employees.
- Lose employees to National Guard duty, Worker's Compensation claims, training, etc.
- No substations, location of headquarters really doesn't matter.
- There is an unmanned substation in the Oakland neighborhood.

FINANCE DEPARTMENT

- Need an additional accountant and an MIS technician.
- Very low revenue stream, a poor city.
- Not laying off employees or freezing positions.
- There is a desire to increase the tax base by annexation of quality areas.
- Gasby 34, a new, nationally driven accounting practice will require that the City keep two sets of books, for which they will need additional accountants to accomplish.
- The computers are from 1995 and are sorely in need of upgrade.
- Need increased access to the Internet.
- Technology is moving too fast, requiring frequent upgrades, new software, and training.
- The Save-Our-Home initiative restricts appreciation of residential to only 3% annually.

WATER/SEWER

- Self-sustaining
- Future growth will require an additional TXT plant, probably to the north.
- Difficulty keeping qualified, state-certified staff.
- Need additional employees, but there is difficulty finding and hiring.
- Professional licensure is causing difficulty in hiring. Competition for available people is fierce.
- Running at 34% current capacity.
- There is no surplus effluent water.
- They pay private security.
- Need to install wells for future population growth.
- There are two water plants, north and south of the downtown.
- Water restrictions—they follow countywide policies.

ROADWAY LOS

- Polk City Road needs resurfacing – in CIP.
- Lots of snowbirds live in mobile home parks fronting Polk City Road.
- There are numerous “paper streets,” which make property development difficult or expensive.
- Area-wide traffic analysis is needed.
- Consider hiring a permanent grant writer.

LIBRARY

- Municipal library is funded largely by the County.
- Current library size is too small; new library will need to be more than twice as large.
- It is the only library in northeast Polk County.
- Obtained some funding from the Gates Foundation (\$35-40K for software license fees—did not include staffing or training.)
- Only public source of free Internet access; the public schools do not provide Internet services.
- Students need access, so they come to use the twelve public stations at the library.

CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE

- Understaffed, need one more.
- There is no Citywide email or voicemail system.
- There is a need for MIS staff
- Many departments have nice tech features but they are not interconnected. Need information sharing between departments.
- Key: Demolitions, rehabilitation, infill housing—each department needs to maximize access to grant funding.
- CRA was created to revitalize downtown; this needs additional attention.
- Many professionals in the City have inadequate staff support.
- A separate maintenance department is needed to alleviate parks and recreation.
- City requested bids to privatize some tasks but the cost estimates were too high.
- Need a master plan for the service area, not just the CRA/City.

FINAL OVERVIEW – AUGUST 22, 2002

The final meeting, which was attended by 27 residents, business owners, and staff members, focused on economic development and recapped all of the issues discussed in the earlier meetings.

ATTENDEES

- Lee Wheeler
- B.J. Pugh
- Howard Aldin
- Janie Large
- Lonnie Large
- Louie McLean
- Kurt Vahle
- Herman Hill
- Wayne Smokay
- Denise Watts
- Dave Carter
- Phil Hinkle
- Joanna Wilkinson
- David Wilkinson
- Joseph Hamilton
- Horace West
- Ron Burchfield
- Ann Toney-Deal
- Janet Smith
- Jane Patton
- Tom Patton
- Marty Bowen
- Hedy Weddington
- Barbara "Bonnie" Brock
- Owen Flowers
- Ben Graham
- Ted Brock
- Steve Levine
- Richard Greenwood, Community Development Director
- Kurt Easton, The RMPK Group, Inc.
- James Taylor, The RMPK Group, Inc.

ISSUES

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Projected first year revenue for the CRA \$135,000; second year \$315,000.
- Prior to the expansion of the CRA, the revenue was less than \$1,000.
- Inadequate road infrastructure is going to limit business and industry.

- How can downtown compete with Highway 27 commercial?
 - The road widening and landscaping project will visually improve the entry into downtown.
 - Gateway treatments with directional signage will help.
 - Improved alternate access (Polk City Road)
- Previous idea of removing buildings east of orange processing plant along Lake Tracy and building multi-family housing— is it still viable?
- Does the vision for the master plan unite the “two Haines Cities?”
- Investigate beautification along rail line on both sides through neighborhoods, similar to Winter Park.
- The site plan review for a 7-acre development project cost \$18,000 so a Palm Beach developer decided to pursue a similar project in an adjacent city. He wants the LDRs revised and simplified now to create a level playing field between Haines City and neighboring cities.
- Everyone needs to look closely at the LDR’s because it is the blueprint for development patterns. A code that is too strict will be more costly and will discourage development.
- Develop a master plan for annexation to prioritize and substantiate the inclusion into the City.
- Oakland is visually blighted. These conditions must be addressed for investment to occur.
- Parks are needed in many neighborhoods.
- Haines City is unique in Polk County in its multicultural population.
- Crossing the railroad tracks with additional access is critical.
- Is the current downtown large enough? It is about critical mass. Right now there is only 6th Street. It must grow one street at a time to 5th, 7th, etc. More synergy is needed.
- The railroad creates a barrier to force people to go around downtown rather than through it.
- Consider marketing Haines City as a commuter suburb of Orlando. Current LDR’s discourage auto traffic within downtown.
- The development and regulatory process needs to be predictable, consistent, and even easier than it is in nearby cities.
- The LDR’s prevent construction of affordable housing. The square footage requirements are too large. Affordable housing is \$90-95,000 and these new houses cannot be built here.
- Consider more levels of zoning that have higher standards in nice neighborhoods and lower standards in poorer, smaller lot neighborhoods.
- Concern about why the post office left downtown.
- Does the library need to be relocated? The civic buildings need to be clustered downtown.

- What can we do to create traffic downtown?
- Parks department is overburdened with inappropriate tasks. A new maintenance department needs to be created.
- 35% are paying ad valorem taxes in CRA.
- Haines City is currently enjoying double-digit (12%) growth in the tax base.
- MLK, the gateway into the Oakland neighborhood, needs to be strengthened.
- Identify surplus public land and return it to private uses and to the tax rolls.
- Consider new crossings of the railroad into Oakland.
- Consider appropriateness of industry along 17/92 at entry into the City.
- Schedule a meeting with the neighborhood of Southern Dunes. A wall of dirt separates the rich from the poor. It is time to start tearing down physical barriers that contribute to the social problems. Southern Dunes service entrance facing Oakland is not well kept.
- Boomerang Lake (between Southern Dunes and Oakland) is a muddy swamp and a mosquito breeding ground.
- Discussion about gateways and scenic vistas to lake. Scotty's parking lot is a possible eastern gateway.
- Capital project: Year one could have \$1 million. Need to see cost estimates for various potential projects to assist them in making a decision.
- Annexation: moving north and south along 27 will be the revenue-generating engine to make major future improvements in the CRA.
- There is concern about future land use along 27— strip commercial is not desirable. Consider large business parks or medical offices that will keep an attractive frontage. Strip commercial will further drain the downtown.
- Foreign investors are an untapped market.