

Village of Bagdad Community Vision Plan

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facilitated by the
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Introduction

The Village of Bagdad Community Vision Plan provides a strategy to help the Village of Bagdad shape and develop a plan for the future of their community. The primary goal of this process is an open dialogue with citizens to raise and discuss many concerns and issues facing residents and property owners. The Village of Bagdad Waterfronts Florida Partnership wants to know the citizens' views on the Village's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Conversations at this level will help when plans for transportation, open space and recreation, maintaining and/or retaining commercial or tourism uses, Mill Site Park usage, hurricane and residential redevelopment are formulated. In other words, this process will help articulate a future for the Village of Bagdad. From this process a Vision Plan has taken shape that utilizes the input from the citizens and property owners in the Village of Bagdad. This Vision Plan has goals and tasks that the Village of Bagdad Waterfronts Florida Partnership will achieve.

The Waterfronts Florida Partnership is a program that works with coastal communities to revitalize and preserve waterfront communities. In 2005, the Blackwater River Foundation applied for a Waterfronts Florida grant that would enable a partnership of various state and local government agencies, non profit organizations, and the citizens and property owners in the community to come together to identify long term sustainable goals for the Village of Bagdad.

Vision Statement

The following vision statement was gleaned from public input received during the course of the visioning process. It provides a snapshot of what the village will look like in future.

The Village of Bagdad

A beautiful and safe community closely connected to the water, the Village of Bagdad is a unique residential community committed to maintaining and enhancing its unique historic character and natural resources.

Recreation and cultural opportunities abound, and small businesses complement the natural and historic character of the area. Bagdad residents enjoy a quality of life that fosters pride, welcomes visitors, and encourages families to remain for generations.

Goals

The following sections identify specific Goals of this Community Vision Plan, grouped according to the five focus areas:

- Environmental Protection
- Cultural Resource Protection
- Hazard Mitigation and Public Safety
- Public Access to the Waterfront and Recreation
- Economic Revitalization

The goals were derived from input received from the community, and reflect the current desires of the vision plan participants.

Specific “Tasks,” or action items, have been assigned to each goal with the intent of laying the framework for action toward goal completion. Each task has been assigned to one of the Partnership members or to one of the Partnership subcommittees for action.

Focus Area: Environmental Protection

Goal 1: Protect the quality of waterways surrounding the Village of Bagdad (Blackwater River, Pond Creek, and Oakland Basin).

Task 1: Reduce direct discharge of stormwater into waterways. (Santa Rosa County)

Task 2: Identify sources of pollution. (Department of Environmental Protection)

Task 3: Continue to expand sanitary sewer service and reduce septic tank usage. (Santa Rosa County coordinating with utility providers)

Goal 2: Enhance and protect the upland natural resources of the Village.

Task 1: Implement the Community Forestry Program including establishment of a community forestry outreach and educational program, tree planting, and Arbor Day celebrations, each with an emphasis on native trees that perform well in urban areas and have shown a higher level of resistance to wind. (Blackwater River Foundation)

Task 2: Explore ways to maintain the shoreline in a natural state. (Environmental Protection Subcommittee)

Goal 3: Provide environmental education to Village residents and property owners.

Task 1: Explore opportunities to educate residents on topics such as invasive species, hurricane resistant species, natural vegetation landscaping, etc. (Environmental Protection Subcommittee)

Focus Area: Cultural Resource Protection

Goal 1: Revise County codes to clarify Historic Zoning District regulations for the purpose of protecting historic character and property values.

Task 1: Amend the zoning map to ensure that the Historic Zoning District aligns with the National Register District. (Santa Rosa County)

Task 2: Develop a text amendment to the Land Development Code to clarify Historic Zoning District development regulations, including but not limited to:

- clear requirements for new development and redevelopment of existing structures;
- role and function of the County's Architectural Review Board; and
- fair application of the code to existing structures that are not considered "historically contributing" to the district. (Santa Rosa County)

Task 3: Increase code enforcement. (Santa Rosa County)

Task 4: Consider adoption of minimum property maintenance standards. (Santa Rosa County)

Goal 2: Provide information to the community on the cultural resources unique to the Village of Bagdad.

Task 1: Continue to conduct tours of the Village explaining the historic and cultural heritage of the area. (Bagdad Village Preservation Association)

Task 2: Prepare an "oral history" of the Village by interviewing long-time area residents. (Cultural Resources Protection Subcommittee)

Task 3: Work with the Florida Department of Historic Resources to explore ways to educate the community about the historic use of the mill site and historic occupations typical of the Village. (Bagdad Village Preservation Association)

Goal 3: Identify archaeological resources in the area.

Task 1: Explore opportunities to work with the University of West Florida to identify archaeological resources in the area, including the Mill Site and Island Number Two. (Cultural Resources Protection Subcommittee)

Focus Area: Hazard Mitigation and Public Safety

Goal 1: Reduce crime in Bagdad.

Task 1: Establish a Neighborhood Watch Group. (Hazard Mitigation and Public Safety Subcommittee)

Task 2: Work with the Sheriff's Department to identify specific measures to reduce crime in Bagdad. (Hazard Mitigation and Public Safety Subcommittee)

Task 3: Create and implement a community lighting plan. (Hazard Mitigation and Public Safety Subcommittee working with the Economic Revitalization Subcommittee)

Goal 2: Relocate the Bagdad Firehouse out of the storm surge area.

Task 1: Work with the Bagdad Volunteer Fire Department to identify alternative locations and funding to accomplish relocation. (Hazard Mitigation and Public Safety Subcommittee)

Goal 3: Relocate overhead utility lines underground.

Task 1: Explore the costs and advantages (or disadvantages) of underground utilities in Bagdad. (Hazard Mitigation Subcommittee)

Goal 4: Improve traffic safety.

Task 1: Continue to identify and implement measures to calm traffic within the Village, such as appropriate roadway striping, signage, awareness (speed trailers), and gateway treatments. (Hazard Mitigation and Public Safety Subcommittee)

Task 2: Continue to identify and implement measures to reduce conflicts between motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians such as bike lanes, cross walks, and sidewalks. (Hazard Mitigation and Public Safety Subcommittee working with the Economic Revitalization Subcommittee)

Task 3: Evaluate the feasibility of amending the current Transportation Planning Organization Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan to move the following projects up on the priority list:

- Bike lanes and multi-use trail on Henry Street from Old US 90 to Old Bagdad Highway.
- Bike lanes on CR 191 from Avalon Blvd on South Garcon Point to Henry Street. (Hazard Mitigation and Public Safety Subcommittee working with the Economic Revitalization Subcommittee)

Task 4: Submit an application to FDOT for Transportation Enhancement Program funds to repair/replace sidewalks in the Village, and to provide sidewalks to the community center. (Santa Rosa County)

Task 5: Work with the School District to identify ways to improve the school drop off and pick up process. (Hazard Mitigation and Public Safety Subcommittee)

Goal 5: Improve the ability of the community to respond to and recover from hurricanes.

Task 1: Enlist volunteers to establish a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), which is a FEMA initiative sponsored by the County. (Hazard Mitigation and Public Safety Subcommittee)

Task 2: Identify resources available to property owners for “hardening” their homes against the effects of a storm. (Hazard Mitigation and Public Safety Subcommittee)

Focus Area: Public Access to the Waterfront and Recreation

Goal 1: Develop the Mill Site as a passive park that capitalizes the area's unique resources and serves as a location for special events.

Task 1: Review the current Land Use Plan for the Mill Site Park to ensure that proposed activities are consistent with this Vision Plan and input received from the community. (Santa Rosa County)

Task 2: Prepare a detailed implementation plan for the Mill Site Park Land Use Plan which includes specific tasks, target date ranges, responsibilities and potential funding sources. (Santa Rosa County)

Goal 2: Improve Dorr's Fence Landing for use as a canoe and kayak launch area.

Task 1: Identify Dorr's Fence Landing as canoe and kayak launch area. (Santa Rosa County)

Task 2: Designate parking area. (Santa Rosa County)

Goal 3: Shell Pile

Task 1: Increase available parking. (Santa Rosa County through the Marine Advisory Committee)

Task 2: Establish a no-wake zone on the west side of Island Number 2 from the northern tip to the southern tip. (Santa Rosa County)

Task 3: Improve the public right-of-way between Ella Street and Cross Street to provide pedestrian connectivity between the Shell Pile and the Mill Site Park. (Santa Rosa County)

Goal 4: Provide restroom facilities at public access locations.

Task 1: Explore safe and cost effective options for providing restroom facilities at public access locations. (Public Access to the Waterfront and Recreation Subcommittee)

Goal 5: Continue to improve the Bagdad Ball Park as an active recreation area.

Task 1: Evaluate the need for sidewalks and traffic improvements near the park site. (Public Access to the Waterfront and Recreation Subcommittee)

Focus Area: Economic Revitalization

Goal 1: Create a new tradition for the economy of Bagdad focused on small businesses that are compatible with the historic character of the village and capitalize on the recreation and natural resources of the area.

Task 1: Work with TEAM Santa Rosa, the Santa Rosa Chamber of Commerce, and Main Street Milton to identify appropriate commercial activities in keeping with the community's character. (Economic Revitalization Subcommittee)

Task 2: Identify tax breaks available to historic property owners. (Economic Revitalization Subcommittee and Santa Rosa County)

Goal 2: Enhance the historic character of the community with the use of streetscape improvements.

Task 1: Identify needed streetscape improvements. (Economic Revitalization Subcommittee)

Note: Accomplishment of the goals and tasks identified under the previous focus areas is important for realization of Economic Revitalization in Bagdad.

Public Participation Process

The focus of the visioning process is to allow the residents of Bagdad to be the driving force behind the changes within their community. To accomplish this goal, the Bagdad Waterfronts Florida Partnership held a series of community meetings during the month of July 2006. These meetings were planned with the participation of Santa Rosa County staff, the Partnership program director, as well as a special visioning committee of Bagdad residents. The first meeting provided information for residents about the Partnership and other community groups, as well as informed meeting participants on local government's role in community planning.

The second meeting provided participants several ways to communicate their desires for the future of Bagdad, including a general survey; a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats analysis; a map exercise; and small group discussions. In order to offer residents a chance to ponder the survey questions, and also provide a chance for those who could not attend the meeting to participate, the Partnership offered an opportunity for residents to return surveys up to five days following the meeting and maintained extended office hours the final three days.

The third meeting was conducted to present this collective information to the community, and recommend tasks for implementation of the identified goals.

Visioning participants included Bagdad residents, property owners and community groups. To solicit community participation, the Partnership mailed postcards to all Bagdad property owners asking for their participation during the visioning meetings, indicating meeting times and dates, as well as how they could find out more information. In addition, volunteers passed out to each house within the program area door-hanger tags that indicated meeting times and dates.

The Village of Bagdad Community Vision Plan is intended to be a "living" document and an integrated component of the ongoing planning and development process. This plan, like all plans, may be amended as the community grows and changes. This plan is intended to act as a guide and catalyst for positive and continuing change in the community. The Partnership encourages and welcomes village residents to participate in the community implementation process.

Residents armed with a vision plan can better reinforce the changes they desire, and discourage changes that detract from their collective vision. Having a shared vision allows a community to focus its diverse energies on identified community issues.