

Community Visioning

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Through participation in committee meetings, attendance at community-based activities and hosting workshops to involve residents, every effort has been made to enlist the desires of the community and earn their trust.

Downtown LaBelle Committee Meetings

The Downtown LaBelle Committee was formed to represent the interests of the community and to provide guidance throughout the visioning process. The



Downtown LaBelle Committee Meeting

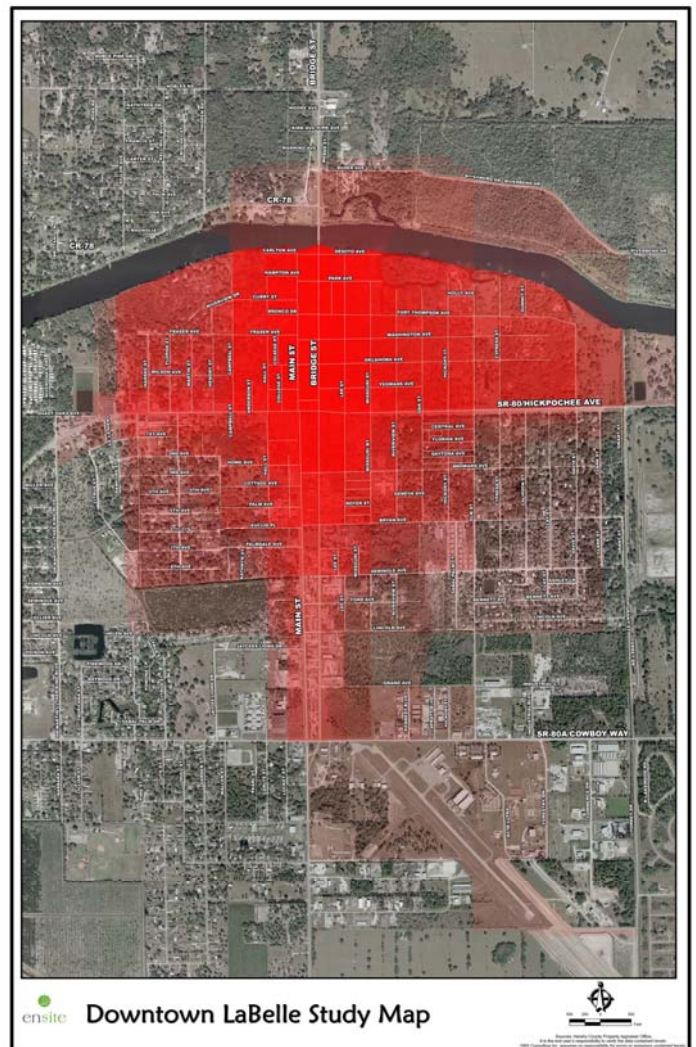
Downtown LaBelle Committee was key to the success of this planning effort. To kick off the visioning process, the Committee

held a public workshop attended by residents, local elected officials and business owners to help define the vision for LaBelle and its

downtown area. Potential areas of focus were identified, as well as areas of concern. The Committee has been meeting once a month (since June 2007) to provide direction and assistance with communication to concerned citizens. The Committee also held joint meetings with the Code Review Board to seek input and coordination.

Stakeholder Interviews

The next step in the visioning process was to conduct stakeholder interviews. Stakeholders are citizens, business owners, elected officials and interested parties that are directly affected by the out come of a decision or event. Stakeholder interviews are crucial in gathering a cross-section of the community's ideas and



The area in red represents a layering of where each stakeholder was asked to identify the boundary of Downtown LaBelle.

opinions as to areas of greatest concern and potential improvement. A list of key stakeholders was compiled and individual interviews were held.

Thirty-five interviews were conducted, most lasting between one-half and one full hour. During the interviews, stakeholders were asked a series of twelve questions to help identify opportunities and constraints.

When asked in what direction LaBelle was headed, stakeholder opinions were evenly split. Those with a positive view felt that as long as the city and community were actively involved in the City’s growth, things would continue to move in the right direction. Those with a negative view felt that the downtown was stagnant and if future “big box” development came to LaBelle, it would be extremely detrimental to the viability of current businesses in the downtown area.

and entertainment. It should also be the link for all future development activity. Most important to the stakeholders is renovation of



Downtown LaBelle Committee

Example of Pedestrian Friendly Business

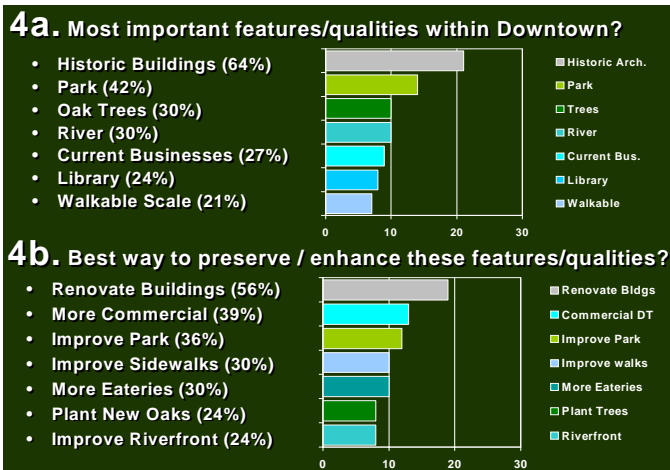
historic buildings and improvements to the park. Providing a more pedestrian-friendly feel by improving sidewalks and solving current traffic issues on both SR 29 and SR 80, was also identified. They would like to see current businesses kept downtown and new businesses brought in to fill in gaps and create a draw to the area. Examples include eateries, shops and professional offices. Cleanliness and appearance were considered very important, as well as preservation of existing oak trees.

The majority of stakeholders believe there should be controls in place to limit the type of architecture allowed in the downtown area. It was also the majority consensus that existing structures should be improved and required to adapt to these new standards for older buildings. However, it was strongly suggested that business owners be given incentives to make such improvements.



Downtown LaBelle Committee

Pedestrian Friendly Walkway



Stakeholder Responses

Several stakeholders also recognized the challenges to the downtown revitalization effort due to uncertainty regarding the bridge on SR 29.

When stakeholders were asked what role the downtown should serve, it was nearly unanimous that the Walking District should be the destination and focal point of the community. It should be the city’s center and include commerce, essential services, culture



Several stakeholders believe maintaining residential areas within the Walking District would be of value since the older homes contribute greatly to the history and character of the city.

It is clear that area residents and business owners want improvements. Some stakeholders placed a greater emphasis on the repair and extension of existing sidewalks and parking.



Downtown LaBelle Committee

Example of Aesthetic Bridge Improvements

Others mentioned the desire for more aesthetic improvements including landscaping in the form of planted medians and roadsides, streetscape improvements, such as lighting around the oak trees, coordinating benches and planters, light poles with banners or baskets, as well as paved crosswalks to provide clearer pedestrian crossings, which would also serve as traffic-calming measures.



Downtown LaBelle Committee

Example of an Interactive Fountain

The river is considered an important character element to the downtown. Incorporating a restaurant on the river with a boardwalk was viewed favorably, as well as a larger dock, and pedestrian connections. A kids' park and an interactive fountain also received a positive response. There was also interest in providing connection to the proposed park on the north side of the river.

8. Development in Downtown LaBelle:

Desirable

- Small businesses
- Specialty shops
 - Clothing
 - Bookstore
 - Ice cream
 - Artisan shops
- Restaurants/cafes
- Professional offices
- Government offices
- Lodging
 - Hotel
 - B & B
- Mixed use
- Large meeting/events venue

Undesirable

- Big chains/big box
- Convenience stores
- Gas stations
- High rise
- Steel buildings
- Bars/nightclubs
- Liquor stores
- Pawn shops
- Heavy commercial/industrial
- Parking structures
- Low-income housing

Stakeholder Responses

Small businesses, specialty shops and restaurants would be of greatest benefit to the downtown. Some felt that there was a need for lodging and space for events.

When asked concerning their goals and/or vision for the Walking District, all those interviewed want to see Downtown LaBelle as a destination for both locals and tourists. They want a beautiful city that is vibrant and appealing to potential new businesses. They would like to see an alluring waterfront that ties to the park and the city, and provides a safe environment to walk through and spend time in. Through this process, they would like to adopt a plan, coordinate funding and establish community support in order to achieve the intended goal – revitalize the charm and create a more desirable location to live, work and play.



Downtown LaBelle Committee

Example of a Waterfront with Decorative Railing and Low-Level Pedestrian Lighting

Visit Florida Workshop

"It's About the Oaks"

A visioning workshop was awarded to LaBelle by Visit Florida, the official tourism marketing corporation for the State of Florida. This workshop, held November 14-16, 2007, was



Visit Florida Workshop

conducted by the community planning and design firm of Glatting Jackson, Kercher and Anglin (GJ) of Orlando, Florida, and covered the Land Use

District, Bridge Street Corridor, Gateways, Native Landscape Restoration, LaBelle Heritage Trail, Barron Park and the Riverwalk.



Visit Florida Workshop

Glatting Jackson

The workshop culminated in a presentation that offered suggestions on land use designations, provided gateway entry features and signage, presented streetscape designs, traffic calming ideas, and roadway sections for Bridge and Main Streets. The final

presentation also provided a plan to restore native plantings, a walking and biking trail with interpretive signage, as well as three waterfront park designs.



Possible Streetscape Enhancements

Glatting Jackson



Possible Biking and Walking Trail

Glatting Jackson



Possible Entrance Signage

Glatting Jackson

Bridge and Traffic/Pedestrian Circulation “A planning exercise that will lead to an engineering solution”

Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and URS Corporation are conducting a Project Development and Environmental Study (PD&E) of SR 29 from Cowboy Way in Hendry County to its intersection with SR 27 in Glades County.

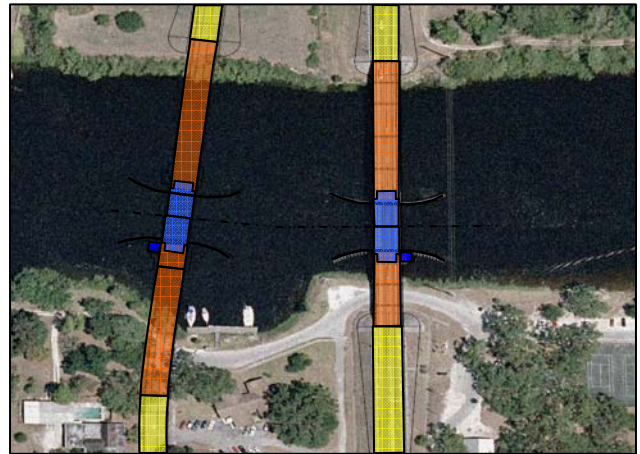


Five Steps of the Highway Development Process

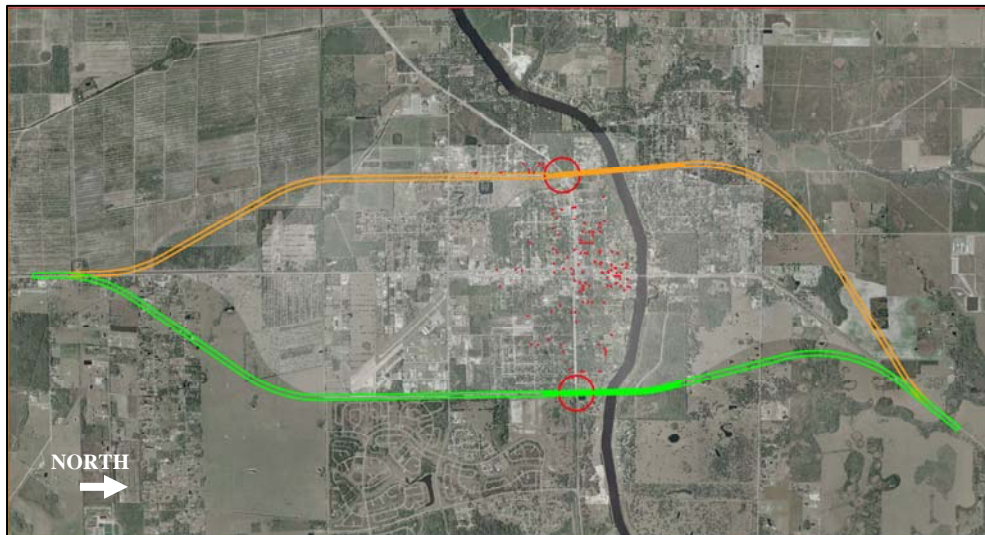
Part of the scope of this study is to determine the fate of the drawbridge that currently crosses the Caloosahatchee River at LaBelle. A joint workshop with FDOT and URS was held on January 17, 2008 with the express intent of addressing citizen concerns regarding the future of the bridge and how that outcome will relate to development and revitalization efforts in the downtown area.



FDOT / URS



FDOT / URS



FDOT / URS

Above: Conceptual dual span bridges on Bridge Street and Main Street, oblique view and plan view.

Left: Proposed bypass bridge locations

Funding Sources

- Federal Matching
- State Funds
- Developer Funding via Transportation Concurrency Requirements
- Public Private Partnership (P3)

The workshop also focused on interim projects the City could do while waiting for the results of the PD&E and completion of any subsequent work on the bridge. The general consensus supports keeping the bridge alignment downtown.

Some of the interim projects suggested were: strengthen side streets by providing on-street parking which would make these areas more attractive for future development, rewrite existing codes so that future development is required to have broader setbacks, thereby creating wider walkways and allowing areas to be used for sidewalk dining and seating.

It is critical that the City of LaBelle continue to work with FDOT and their consultant throughout the entire PD&E process to ensure the goals of the City are met.

*Left: Sequence of streetscape for Yeomans Avenue.
Below: Options for enhancing the existing SR 29 Bridge and tender house over the Caloosahatchee River.*



FDOT / URS



FDOT / URS

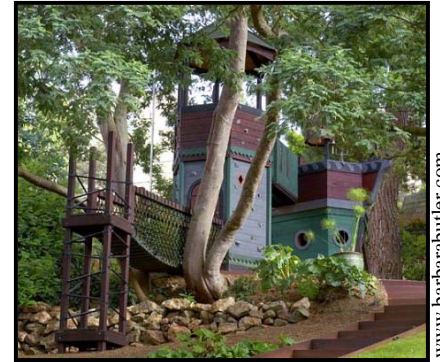


Barron Park and the Waterfront "The Caloosahatchee Runs Through It"

On March 11, 2008, a workshop focusing on Barron Park and the waterfront was held at the Barron Library. The focus area was from Main Street to the western edge of the park property, and from Park Avenue to the Caloosahatchee River.



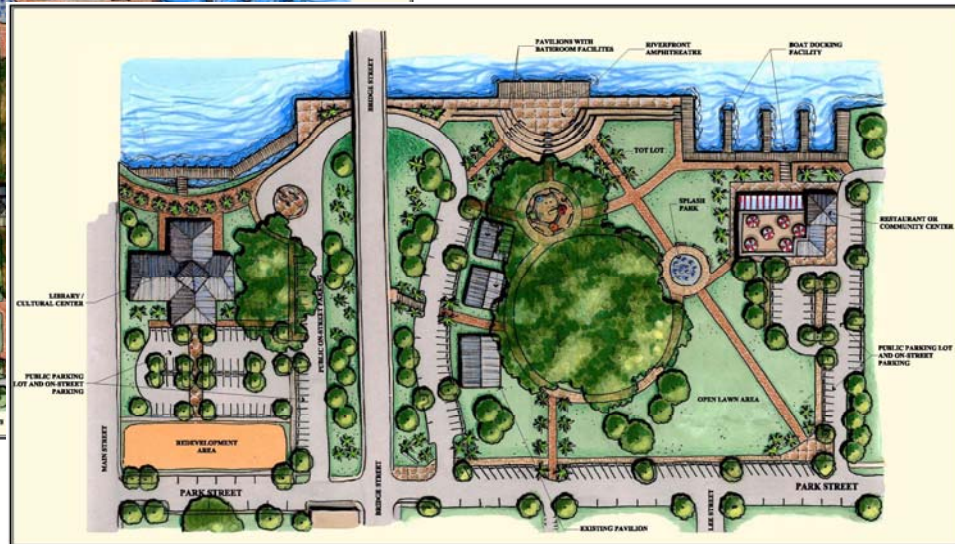
Clockwise from left: Examples of a riverside restaurant, interactive fountain, and two types of play areas



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Barron Park Concept 1



Barron Park Concept 2 - Winner

featured a central gazebo/bandstand structure, a splash pad on the waterfront, a community center located on the river, and a kayak and canoe launch. Design II featured an amphitheater on the waterfront, a play area incorporated into the trees, and a waterfront restaurant.

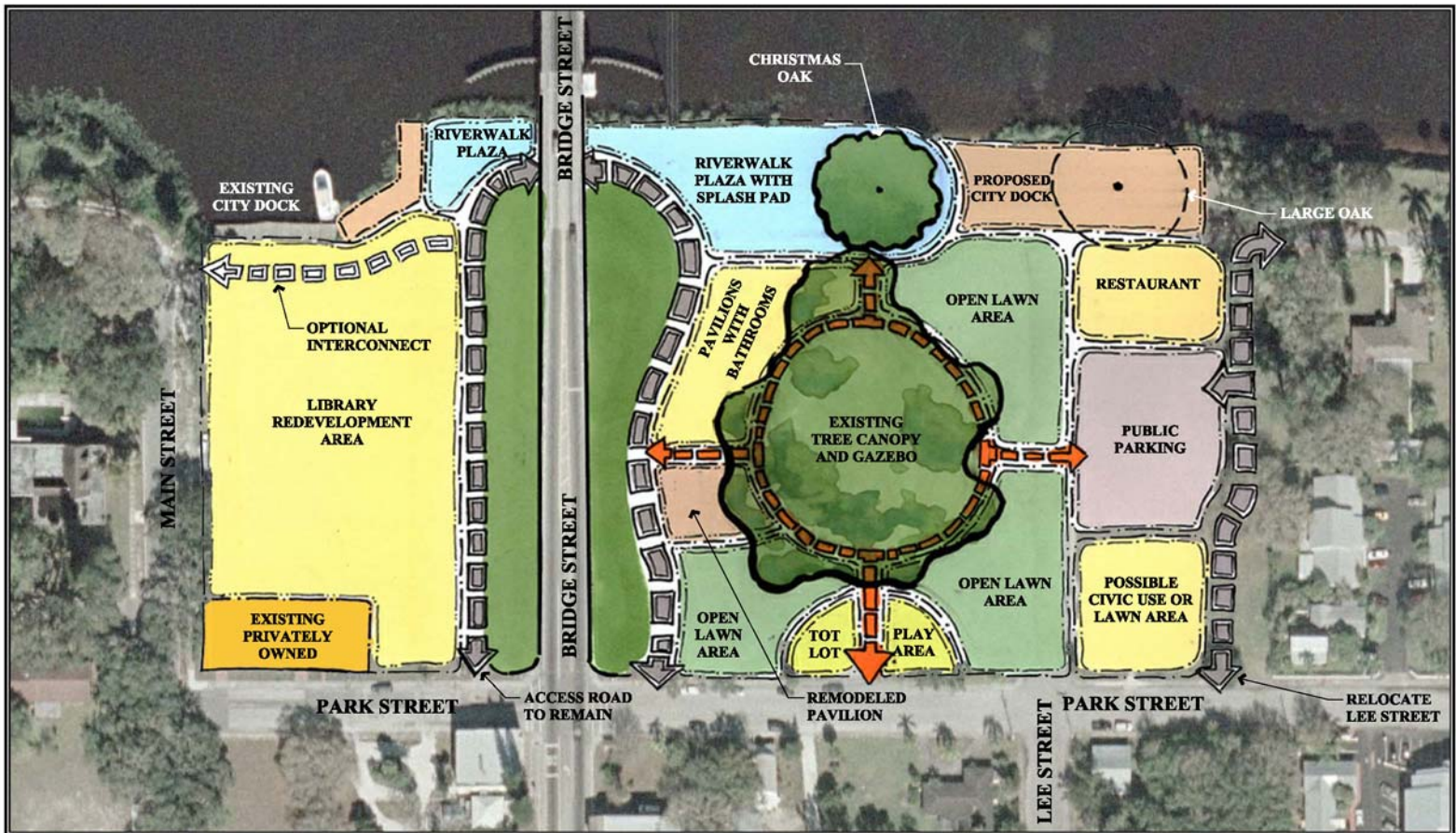
The two concepts and the ballot box were left at the library for several weeks to allow residents and library patron who were unable to attend the workshop to vote on their preferred design.

From 46 ballots submitted, the tally showed that overall, the desired elements for the park were a splash pad, an amphitheater on the water, a restaurant or community center on

the water, a larger and relocated docking facility, a tot lot, open lawns, a riverwalk, more pavilions, additional public parking, and the removal of Lee Street through the park.

Keeping the existing Christmas oak was also the clear consensus.

Based on this input, the following composite plan has been provided.



Barron Park Composite Plan