

2.27: Urban Development Pattern - Extent of Redevelopment within the CRAs

A. Introduction and Background

On March 14, 2000 the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) adopted Resolution 2000-82, determining that two areas in unincorporated Collier County suffered from conditions of blight, as defined in Section 163.340 (8) of Florida Statutes. According to the Board, "the rehabilitation, conservation or redevelopment, or a combination thereof is necessary in the interest of the public health, safety, morals or welfare of the residents of Collier County, Florida." As a result of this finding, Resolution 2000-83 was adopted establishing the Collier County Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA), which, in accordance with Section 163.357 of Florida Statutes, declared the Board of County Commissioners the CRA Board. This resolution also provided for the creation of two advisory boards for each of the newly designated community redevelopment areas—the Bayshore/Gateway Triangle area and the Immokalee area—to be composed of citizens, residents, property owners and business owners (or persons engaged in business) in these areas.

On May 23, 2000 the Collier County CRA met for the first time. As required by State Statute, a redevelopment plan that provided a framework for the effective redevelopment of the Community Redevelopment Area was eventually prepared and presented to the Collier County Planning Commission, the CRA Board, and the Board of County Commissioners. The BCC adopted the Collier County Community Redevelopment Plan, as set forth in Resolution 2000-181, on June 13, 2000. The Plan outlined goals for each community redevelopment area and recognized several funding sources for their implementation, including the use of Tax Increment Financing (TIF).

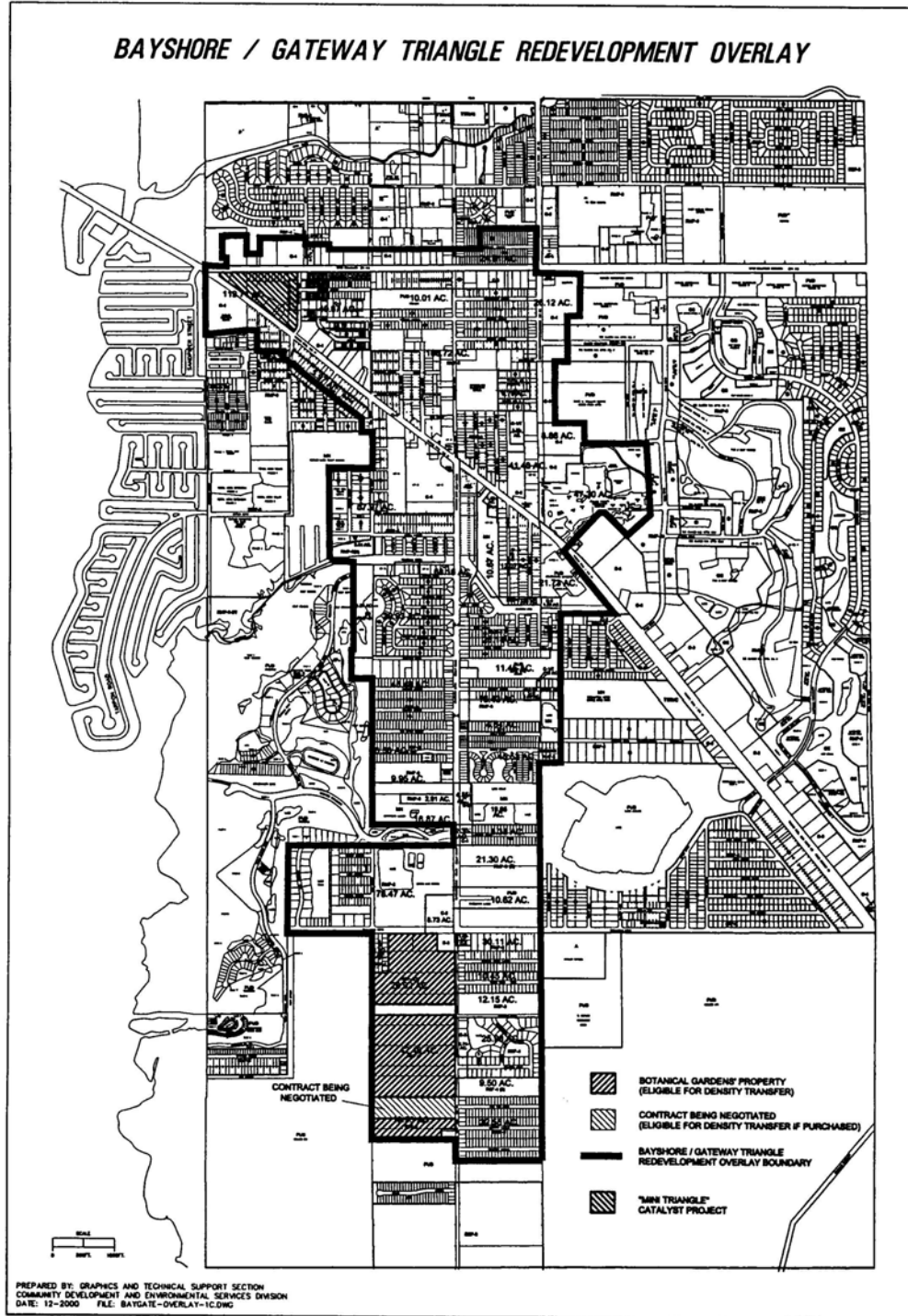
Overview and Accomplishments of Redevelopment Areas

As stated, two areas in unincorporated Collier County received Community Redevelopment Area designation. The following is an overview of each of the areas, and a summary of their redevelopment objectives, as defined in the Redevelopment Plan:

The Bayshore/Gateway CRA

In the Bayshore/Gateway redevelopment area (see Map 2.27-1), two communities are targeted: (1) the Bayshore community and (2) the Gateway Triangle community. These two areas are adjacent to one another but divided by U.S. 41, a six-lane divided highway. This major, regional arterial links the redevelopment area to the east coast of Florida, and the City of Naples' highly successful 5th Avenue redevelopment project to the west. The area is less than one mile to the beaches of the Gulf of Mexico further to the west. However, in spite of this seemingly ideal location, neither of these communities ever managed to redevelop on its own.

Map 2.27-1



Programs and Incentives

The most significant redevelopment objectives of the Bayshore/Gateway CRA are being accomplished through a variety of programs, services, and funds provided to encourage private investment in the area. The special incentives created by the CRA, for which new and existing businesses and residents may be eligible, include the following:

1. The Bayshore Drive Mixed Use Zoning Overlay

This overlay, developed between 2000-01, was the first within the redevelopment area and established zoning principles designed to change the suburban corridor into a vibrant main street with numerous residential possibilities. The overlay provides for the following criteria:

- A maximum of 12 units per acre for approved projects in specific areas of the overlay.
- Flexible commercial standards to produce mixed use buildings.
- Flexible residential standards to allow for larger lot coverage while also establishing a traditional neighborhood design for all residential projects that allows for the redevelopment/expansion of current marinas.
- A waterfront subdistrict.

2. Site Improvement Grants

Site Improvement Grants provide up to 50% of the total cost of site improvements, up to a maximum of \$8000. As of the writing this report, disbursable funds available for this program total approximately \$48,000. As of November 2003 there have been two grant cycles:

- The first grant cycle had three applicants, two commercial and one residential. Among these, one applicant has finished all improvements and received reimbursement monies.
- The second grant cycle is in process, and there are presently 8 applicants who are slated to receive reimbursement monies (3 commercial, 5 residential).

3. Impact Fee Assistance Grants

These grants provide up to 50% of the total impact fees for a project, depending upon the total funds available.

- In November 2003, an application from CVS Pharmacy was the first approved. As a result, the company will be reimbursed \$24,000 for impact fees paid to the County.

4. Other Programs and Incentives

Although not yet adopted, additional redevelopment incentives, such as enhancements to the fast track permitting program, are also being considered.

To complement the redevelopment efforts of the CRA, several other state and local programs have been initiated in the Bayshore/Gateway redevelopment area. These include capital improvement, policy, and community-led programs such as:

- Roadway beautification projects, including median landscaping along major arterials in the designated area.
- Special Growth Management Plan designation providing for mixed-use and higher densities.
- Stormwater and drainage improvements, including an engineering study for dredging Haldeman Creek to improve boat access.

All these strategies have been designed and implemented to provide greater flexibility in meeting commercial and residential redevelopment goals.

Additional Accomplishments and Activities

In addition to the aforementioned programs and incentives, the following redevelopment accomplishments and activities have occurred since the inception of the Bayshore/Gateway CRA:

2002

- Creation of an urban design planner position to help facilitate programs within the entire Collier County CRA (\$15,000 a year was provided for funding of this position).
- Creation of a marketing brochure.
- Approval of a CDBG in the amount of \$379,000 for stormwater improvements on Linwood Avenue.
- Approval from the CRA Board to support the creation of an annual art festival.
- Modification of the Bayshore Drive Mixed Use Zoning Overlay.

2003

- Expansion of the Advisory Board from 7 to 9 members.
- Hiring of HDR, INC. to develop a comprehensive zoning overlay to cover the entire Bayshore/Gateway Triangle Redevelopment Area. (approximately \$340,000).
- Expansion of the Bayshore Drive Mixed Use Zoning Overlay (to cover the entire Bayshore portion of the redevelopment area).
- Pending approval by the CRA Board for the creation of an Executive Director position.

The Immokalee CRA

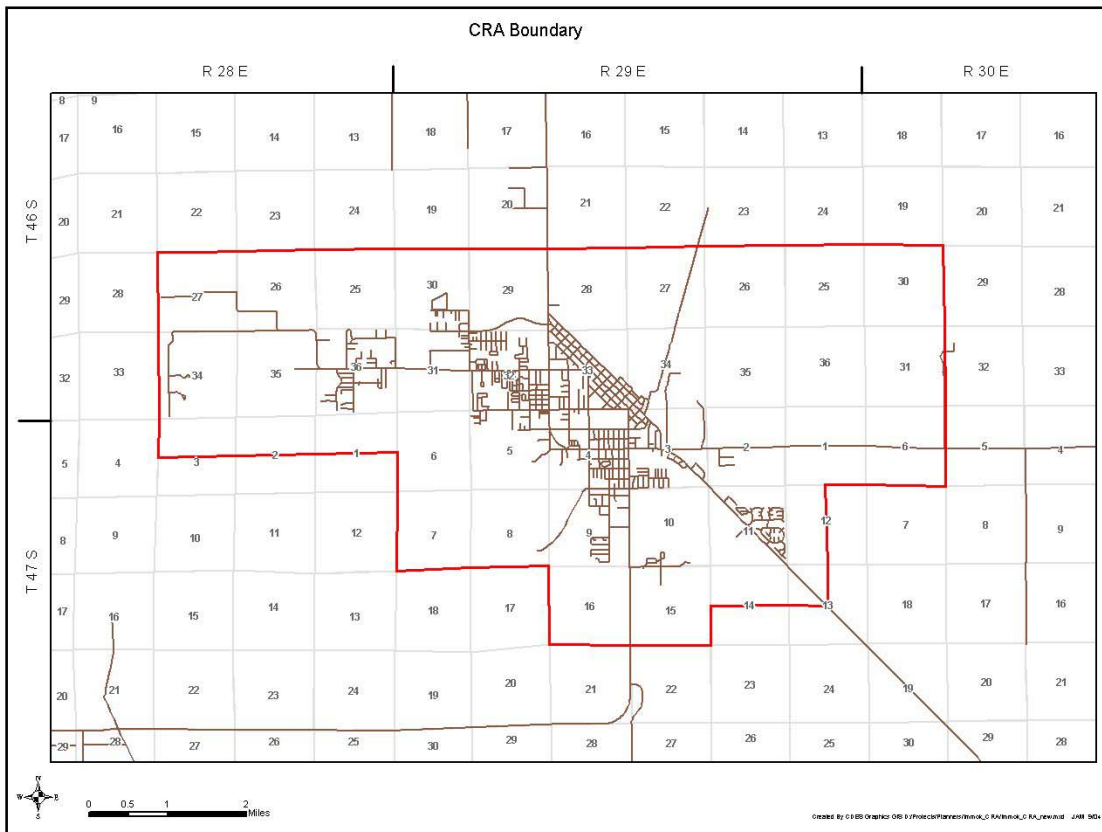
Unlike the Bayshore/Gateway area, the Immokalee redevelopment area has been relatively isolated from the coastal portion of the county both geographically and demographically (See Map 2.27-2). Like the rest of rural Southwest Florida, Immokalee's economic development has been based on its agricultural resources, which have enabled the area to become the leading producer of winter vegetables in the United States. However, this economy has also brought social problems associated with low wages, an unskilled labor force, and a seasonal, transient, multicultural population. One of the results of these unique conditions has been a lack of reinvestment in the area.

Immokalee Redevelopment Area Plan

The Immokalee Redevelopment Area Plan was formulated in close cooperation with the residents of Immokalee, and was based on objectives identified by community members in a series of public workshops. According to the community during the course of these workshops, the four main areas of concern were:

- Diversification of the economic base by focusing on agricultural production, processing and research; industrial development, including manufacturing, distribution and aviation services; and nature tourism.
- Provision of safe, affordable housing to all area residents.
- Enhancing the perception of the community as a safe, friendly, and family-oriented small town.
- Making both education and training accessible and appropriate.

Map 2.27-2 Immokalee Community Redevelopment Area



These objectives were subsequently translated into Redevelopment Area Goals that were designed to guide the physical and economic revitalization of the Immokalee community. The goals were also meant to capitalize on existing programs such as the Main Street Program and the Federal Enterprise Community designation (described below), as well as community assets such as the Regional Airport Industrial Park and Lake Trafford, among others.

Programs

Below is a summary of the programs at work in Immokalee that assist with the implementation of the area's Redevelopment Plan and create catalysts for the community's revitalization.

1. *Immokalee Main Street*

In 1996, Immokalee applied for and was selected as one of Florida's "Main Streets." From 1996-1999, utilizing the national VISTA (Volunteers in Service To America) program to coordinate its projects, the Immokalee Main Street program successfully carried out the following projects: three downtown Clean Ups; a Facade Grant Program that assisted nine businesses with design services and grant funds to renovate their buildings; a successful gift brick fund-raising campaign raising approximately \$23,000; organization of The Friends of Roberts Ranch; and a partnership with The Community Foundation of Collier County to apply for the second round of the Federal Empowerment Zone/Enterprise Community designation. In 1999, the Immokalee Main Street received a Certificate of Achievement at the Florida Redevelopment Association's Annual Redevelopment Awards Program for its management programs and creative partnerships.

Unfortunately, due primarily to a re-allocation of staff resources, the Main Street program gradually became relatively inactive in recent years. However, as a result of renewed interest on the part of the CRA this year, the program is presently being reconsidered as a tool to assist with the return of the downtown area into a sustainable activity center, primarily through façade improvements.

2. *"Building Immokalee Together"*

In 1994, the Immokalee Foundation made an application to the USDA for federal Empowerment Zone/Enterprise Community status, referring to their application as "Building Immokalee Together." Comprised of three volumes, it included a proposed strategic plan, a vision of the community, and an assessment of the area. Through this application, Immokalee was designated a "Champion Community." In 1999, this application was revised through a joint effort by County staff and the Community Foundation, whereby Immokalee (along with parts of eastern Hendry County and the Seminole Tribe of Florida) was awarded Rural Federal Enterprise Community designation. The Empowerment Alliance of Southwest Florida, a local non-profit organization, is the lead entity in this effort, and consistently shows great success in leveraging funds to promote training programs in Immokalee as well to provide affordable housing alternatives for Immokalee residents.

3. *Immokalee Enterprise Zone*

Immokalee was designated a Florida Enterprise Zone in 1997. This program provides tax credits and sales tax refunds to businesses and homeowners located within the geographic boundary of the Zone. Since its designation, over 25 Immokalee businesses and a few homeowners have received more than \$500,000 in tax refunds and credits. The Zone boundary was expanded in 1999 to include those areas within the newly designated Rural Federal Enterprise Community.

4. Immokalee Weed & Seed

The U.S. Department of Justice designated Immokalee a Weed & Seed community in 2001. South Immokalee and the area of Eden Park are targeted as places to “weed out” criminal elements and “seed in” positive activities, such as safe havens and other social services. There are several groups involved with this program, as well as a very active Steering Committee comprised of residents living within the Weed & Seed area. At the most recent community awareness event, over 300 residents and volunteers were in attendance.

5. Foreign Trade Zone #213

Comprising 60 acres within the Immokalee Airport Industrial Park, the Foreign Trade Zone (FTZ) is a financial benefit for firms importing products into the U.S., as goods can be held in the FTZ and not assessed customs duty until released into the U.S. market or are: 1) re-exported, or 2) damaged and returned to sender. Unfortunately, no companies have yet utilized the FTZ. However, the Collier County Airport Authority and the Economic Development Council of Collier County have recently completed a marketing program to attract firms that could benefit from the Zone.

6. Foreign Entrepreneurial Investment Zone

This program works to the benefit of foreign investors who are interested in establishing a business in the U.S. According to the terms of the program, the owner’s financial threshold to gain permanent U.S. residency is significantly lowered over 2 years, from \$2-3 million to only \$500,000. Although no companies have yet utilized this program, many South American companies have expressed strong interest in the past several years.

7. NADBank Community Adjustment & Investment Program

By way of waiving the points assessed to loan packages, this program offers low-cost financing through the Small Business Administration (SBA) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to businesses expanding or relocating to Immokalee. To date several companies have expressed interest in pursuing this program, but none have qualified.

8. HUBZone

Immokalee, as well as several other areas in Collier County, received HUBZone designation from the SBA. Defined as a “historically underutilized business zone,” a HUBZone provides for federal contracting opportunities to small businesses located within these areas. Typically, the SBA increases its guaranty on surety bonds making it easier for HUBZone companies to compete for government and private sector contracts. Thus far, only one company in Immokalee has taken advantage of this program.

9. Front Porch Florida

This initiative, lead by Governor Bush, is designed to provide designated communities the means by which to “take back” their neighborhoods. Based upon its Action Plan, South Immokalee was granted this designation in 2001. Once fully implemented, the Plan is intended to create sustainable community change resulting in physical and social

improvements. Furthermore, because of this designation, the community is automatically eligible to receive funding from a number of state and private sources.

Additional Accomplishments and Activities

The goals of the Immokalee Redevelopment Plan are divided into phases, which focus on specific activities and become more general into the future. Each phase of activities attempt to build upon the successful outcome of earlier phases. Below are several of the goals of the Plan that have been accomplished since the inception of the Immokalee CRA:

2002

- Community Development Block Grant in the amount of \$60,000 for street light improvements.
- \$15,000 toward drainage improvements on 5th Street.
- Public infrastructure improvements up to \$200,000 on 10th Street and Clifton.
- Funding for 40 single-family homes in South Immokalee secured by the Empowerment Alliance.
- USDA funds were acquired to build dorm-style apartments in South Immokalee secured by Collier County Housing Authority.

2003

- Immokalee Housing Initiative Phase I (mobile home park Site Improvement Plan submission) completed.
- Immokalee Housing Initiative Phase II (a survey of the community's approximately 5000 housing units to determine their actual condition) presently underway.
- Approximately \$3500 allocated in SHIP funds and \$350 in HOME funds
- The "Lesser Study" promoted by the Immokalee Community Development Corporation and funded by CRA TIF funds to identify and/or develop economic incentives for the area.
- County Board approval of a Residential Impact Fee Deferral Program for Immokalee that will postpone payment of impact fees until a home is sold, transferred or refinanced (on owner-occupied units only, valued at \$175,000 or less).

Recommendations

Collier County recommends continued implementation of the Collier County Community Redevelopment Plan, as set forth in Resolution No. 2000-181.