



Our community focused on our future

**Community Change:
Redevelopment & Infill
Study Group Report**

Spring 2004

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study considers how our community can improve the quality of life and further the creation of a “sense of place” for existing developed areas within Sarasota County in a manner that fulfills the vision of neighborhoods and the vision of the greater community. It also considers how redevelopment and infill can be a tool for change throughout Sarasota County. This study explores:

- The stressors and challenges that affect developed areas throughout Sarasota County
- The creation or improvement of a sense of place in a community
- The role of redevelopment and infill strategies in community and economic development

- The role of local community, neighborhoods, businesses and government in creating community and neighborhood change
- The principles currently used by the unincorporated county and each municipality in Sarasota County
- The barriers and incentives to redevelopment projects valued by the community
- The promising practices and guiding principles used in this and other communities

The scope of this study includes both residential and non-residential issues. The study does not include a detailed analysis of zoning regulations nor recommendation of specific areas for redevelopment.

HIGHLIGHTS

Major Problems

- The community needs greater understanding of the benefits and challenges of successful redevelopment and infill, and access to relevant information, in order to participate meaningfully in the planning of redevelopment and provide community support.
- Redevelopment and infill offers the opportunity to use land efficiently and create a sense of community. The current regulatory environment and lack of incentives often make redevelopment and infill less attractive than new development.
- Declining commercial centers have a negative effect on adjacent neighborhoods, leading to lower property values, increased crime, and economic decline which impacts the entire community. Redevelopment and infill is more likely to succeed long-term if a community develops a vision, strategy and a plan, and efforts are consistent with a long-term vision. The lack of a community plan or vision for an area could lead to incompatible development proposals.
- Areas with a history of economic decline must be given the opportunity and resources to redevelop. Public dollars or financial incentives may be needed to spur redevelopment in areas declining or vulnerable to decline.

Recommended Solutions

- Local governments should collaborate with community organizations including developers and neighborhood – based organizations to increase the community’s understanding of the benefits of redevelopment and infill. Completing a countywide relational database of neighborhood characteristics and improving the public involvement processes will help accomplish this.
- Local governments should ensure redevelopment is competitive with greenfield development by allowing some flexibility of regulations and, where necessary, creating incentives tied to specific redevelopment goals.
- Local governments should take additional steps to coordinate for redevelopment and increase neighborhood participation by creating a redevelopment and infill plan that includes developers, the business community and neighborhoods; provide a toolkit for neighborhoods to develop their vision; and, identify and seek out public-private partnerships. The plan should identify areas requiring public investment as well as those favored by the market.
- Local governments should cooperate to make adequate public investment in areas vulnerable to decline or not currently favored by the market. This includes developing public-private partnerships to stimulate private investment and provide new opportunities for the established residents of those areas.

Message from Chair & Executive Director

“You must be the change you wish to see in the world.”

Mahatma Gandhi

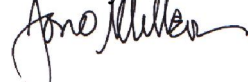
In this global age, we can connect to just about anywhere electronically. Yet the desire to live and work in a place with identity and connection is still important. Approximately 89.9% of the population of Sarasota County lives in the developed areas within the Urban Service Boundary. These neighborhoods, commercial areas and communities are in various stages of lifecycle. Redevelopment and infill occur daily as shaped by market forces, regulatory parameters and planning. Determining the best ways to work together as a community to create meaningful redevelopment and infill is at the heart of this study report.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Study Group members, resource people, and community leaders who contributed knowledge and insight to the Redevelopment and Infill study. For six months, these volunteers worked to understand a multi-faceted community issue and develop recommendations for change. It's through their dedication and efforts that this study and the community change that will result are made possible.

Additionally, we thank those community activists, business owners, professionals, and developers who volunteered to share their thoughts on redevelopment and infill with SCOPE's documentary filmmaker. Their efforts have resulted in a film that connects the stories of places throughout the county. Throughout this report you will find their quotes excerpted from the film, "Faces of Places".

As a reader of this report, you demonstrate commitment to the power of an engaged community, on the path to improving quality of life for Sarasota County residents. We extend our deepest gratitude to you. Never doubt that we can learn and work together to realize bold visions for our community.

Sincerely,



Jono Miller
Chair, Board of Directors



Tim Dutton
Executive Director

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FOREWORD

Redevelopment and infill is an essential tool to help sustain our communities and allow them to thrive. It is important to create the environment and incentives to maximize the potential of this tool. While many of the recommendations in this report are directed to local government, the Study Group recognizes that government doesn't create successful redevelopment and infill alone. It is a challenge that involves partnerships with developers, the business community and neighborhood residents.

Attention to market forces and the regulatory environment is critical. All parties must be engaged in the tasks of helping direct private development to deliver a future consistent with the community's vision and to use public dollars or financial incentives to encourage redevelopment and infill in areas that are vulnerable to decline and not currently favored by the market. The collective impact of all redevelopment and infill projects should benefit the immediate neighborhoods as well as the entire community.

Successful redevelopment and infill can:

- forge alliances in place of divisions among those groups necessary to the process
- incorporate schools, parks and the arts, when appropriate, for the benefit of the immediate neighborhood and surrounding communities
- create a vibrant and useful place from what often has outlived its function or market
- be a means of generating community pride and excitement which flow from accomplishment and positive change.

The Study Group is not alone in its focus on this issue. Currently there are numerous efforts focused on improving the climate for meaningful redevelopment and infill, including those of local governments and Chambers of Commerce. Working together, government, developers, the business community and neighborhoods, can meet the challenge of redeveloping in a manner that maintains or improves the communities that make Sarasota County a great place to live.

"...when you build a thing you cannot merely build that thing in isolation, but must also repair the world around it, and within it, so that the larger world at that one place becomes more coherent, and more whole..."

A Pattern Language, Christopher Alexander et al.

STUDY GROUP MEMBERS

Study Group Members met 22 times from October to April. In addition, the Process Team met several times to provide guidance and direction for the study. The Study Group received information from knowledgeable resource people and published information researched by SCOPE staff.

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CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions express the value judgements of the Study Group, based on the findings.

1. Redevelopment and infill should help meet community objectives throughout Sarasota County.

Goals and objectives include:

- Revitalization of depressed areas
- Economic development
- Neighborhood preservation and enhancement
- Creation of a sense of place
- Improved social interaction
- Improved tax base
- Increase in affordable housing for the workforce
- Infrastructure efficiency
- Decreased road congestion
- Reduced sprawling development patterns

2. Planning is essential.

Redevelopment and infill will occur as driven by the market and governed by regulations, regardless of whether a community has a plan. Redevelopment and infill is more likely to succeed long-term if a community develops a vision, a strategy and a plan and efforts are consistent with the long-term vision. The lack of consensus regarding a plan or vision for an area leads to the potential for incompatible development proposals. Residents may have an “unpublished” vision of their neighborhood and developers may target opportunities that are not consistent with the vision. Communities throughout Sarasota County need guidelines and authority and may need monetary resources in order to develop their vision, encourage neighborhood involvement and determine how best to be proactive.

There is a need to identify appropriate locations for redevelopment. Communities that garner support from a cross-section of citizens have projects that are more easily implemented. Developers planning large-scale commercial spaces are a particular challenge to effective, local planning.

3. Community participation is limited by information availability.

The development process is complicated and not easily navigated by the average citizen. Pertinent information is not easily accessible to the public. Parity in accessing information is needed, including:

- Market analysis
- Long and short-range plans for infrastructure projects
- Explanation about the processes and how a resident can participate
- Comprehensive plans, zoning ordinances, land and development regulations and the relationships among them
- Impact of changing demographics

4. Displacement of residents because of gentrification is a concern.

Redevelopment of certain areas may lead to displacement of long-term residents. This may occur because of some of the consequences of gentrification:

- Long term residents sell their properties to “cash out”
- Renters are unable to afford rent increases
- Property values increase and higher income households replace lower ones
- The businesses in the area may change and not necessarily meet the needs of the residents

Some communities have developed strategies to minimize the negative consequences of gentrification and create a context for equitable development.

5. Arts and cultural organizations can be a resource in redevelopment and infill efforts.

Arts and cultural organizations can help anchor community revitalization efforts. Their activities can help work through

conflicts, heal community divisions and provide creative and unique ideas and approaches to redevelopment and infill.

6. Market forces and government regulations shape redevelopment efforts.

The market drives demand and usage. Redevelopment must make economic sense to the investor. The availability of greenfields for new development outside of the areas of existing urban development discourages urban infill and redevelopment. Also, regulations and a lack of incentives make redevelopment and infill less attractive. There are tools and strategies available to help government make redevelopment proposals more competitive with greenfield development. They include incentives, customized zoning regulations and public/private partnerships to create a wise and balanced approach.

7. Early and continuing communication is essential to effective redevelopment and infill.

Redevelopment and infill pose a challenge for developers, residents and businesses. Neighborhoods often have difficulty entering the redevelopment/infill discussion. Government, citizens, businesses and the developer are often forced into adversarial relationships and neighborhoods are often left out of the process until it is too late to avoid confrontation. Over the years, distrust has built up between neighborhoods and developers as a result of bad development practices in the past; poor regulations (zoning and land development); lack of enforcement; and inflexibility, fear of change and lack of communication on all sides. Understanding among all the participants from beginning to completion of the project is a major challenge. All sectors need a consistent process with some degree of certainty and transparency. Despite well-intentioned governmental efforts to educate people, frustration still occurs. The ever changing composition of the community adds to the lack of understanding. All parties need to take greater responsibility in the redevelopment and infill process and leadership is essential.

8. Declining commercial centers offer an opportunity for redevelopment.

Derelict and declining commercial centers have a profoundly negative effect on adjacent and nearby neighborhoods. This results in:

- decrease in property values
- decrease in tax base (both residential and commercial)
- decrease in desirability of the neighborhood
- increase in crime rate
- loss of local jobs
- increase of traffic (as residents have to drive farther to shop and work).

These old strip malls and vacant or underused shopping centers, known as greyfields, represent an opportunity for creative rehabilitation or redevelopment. Rehabilitation may include changes which improve walkability for the customer and improve integration with the surrounding business and residential areas. One strategy that has been successful in greyfield redevelopment is mixed-use. Schools, libraries, parks, fitness centers, and community centers are public uses that have been shown to be good elements as part of that redevelopment.

9. Sprawling development has a negative impact on developed areas.

Regardless of the cause (vacant land availability, poor planning, consumer preferences), sprawl has resulted in the relocation of people. As a result, goods and service providers move away from core areas, leaving empty commercial areas and at-risk neighborhoods. Some conditions that result are:

- decrease in property values
- decrease in tax base (both residential and commercial)
- decrease in desirability of neighborhood
- increase in crime rate
- loss of local jobs
- increase of traffic (as residents have to drive farther to shop and work)
- depletion of open areas, agricultural lands, environmentally sensitive areas and endangered species habitats
- increase in cost of infrastructure
- loss of “sense of place,” and thus, community

Successful redevelopment offers the opportunity to use land more efficiently and create a sense of community.

10. Successful redevelopment occurs when the entire community is engaged.

Successful redevelopment involves the entire community including government, neighborhoods, businesses, educational and cultural institutions, and developers working in concert. Zoning ordinances alone are insufficient to provide the incentives and create redevelopment. Additional components to address include:

- Education of the community
- Infrastructure issues
- Neighborhood impacts, both positive and negative

11. Parks, schools and community centers can be used as redevelopment elements in creating the relationships and personal connections that signify “community”.

A lack of walkability and common meeting places interfere with the ability to connect with one another. Neighborhood parks, schools and community centers are vital elements in quality redevelopment. Parks and community centers offer opportunities for people to meet and connect and this enhances social capital; schools are often well-placed to be the “center of a community”.

The current state education funding model does not encourage neighborhood-sized schools. The design of any school and its integration with the surrounding community are important considerations for new and renovated schools, and community planning.

12. Community awareness of the principle of sustainability is key to successful redevelopment and infill.

The principle of sustainability means that every decision must consider its impact on the people, the economy and the environment. Sustainable development is defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Decision-making is interconnected and each decision results in consequences, both intended and unintended. Regarding redevelopment and infill, land use decisions, storm water management and transportation planning are examples of issues that are interconnected. Recent studies note a relationship between the built environment and the physical

health of members of the community; communities with walkable mixed-use design encouraged interactions and relationships that were tied to positive health outcomes.

13. Maintaining and relocating historic or architecturally significant structures is an important principle in redevelopment.

Historic structures and the older built environment contribute to our community’s sense of who we were and who we are. The old buildings and fabric of our communities are sometimes discarded and this erodes the character and limits the diversity of design. Recent commendable efforts in the reuse of historic structures include maintaining and redeveloping the Venice Train Depot and the Federal Building in the City of Sarasota.

14. Increased density may be appropriate in some areas.

Failing to support increased density in urban areas may have the unintended consequence of supporting sprawl. At the same time, density which is placed in certain locations or which is achieved by certain methods may create traffic gridlock, neighborhood incompatibility or other problems. Increased density may be appropriate in certain areas and inappropriate in others. Good design can improve the compatibility and value of a project to the community. Nationally, there are numerous examples of increased density that have made positive contributions to a community.

15. Overlay districts may be a good tool for creating and maintaining unique communities.

Overlay districts provide a community the opportunity to adapt zoning and other regulations to its particular community needs and vision. Differentiation and unique surroundings are the markers that speak to our physical sense; the same “generic” in every city strips us of those senses such that each community begins to look the same. Overlay districts approved in Englewood and Siesta Key are examples of using this tool to maintain and improve a community’s unique attributes.

16. Neighborhood characteristics promote cohesiveness and should be encouraged in redevelopment.

Neighborhoods vary in style and there are many characteristics that define a neighborhood. The connections and relationships between neighbors are important and contribute to the feeling of community. Characteristics of desirable neighborhoods include:

- Varied environments
- Gathering places
- Diversity
- Walkable streets
- Human scale blocks
- Visible public spaces
- Unique identity
- Adequate infrastructure such as sidewalks, bike paths and lighting

17. It is critical that those areas with a history of economic decline are given the opportunity and resources to redevelop in a manner embraced by its community.

Public dollars and incentives are often needed as an impetus to redevelopment in an area which is declining or vulnerable to decline. Planning efforts must identify areas at the “tipping point” and establish priority spending areas.

Examples include among others:

- Newtown has developed a community redevelopment plan with citizen input. However, Newtown is not in the City’s Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) and does not benefit from the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) funds available to the area designated in the CRA.
- In Laurel, a historical lack of planning has resulted in current infrastructure issues and regulatory and zoning barriers.
- North Port is concentrating redevelopment efforts along U.S. 41, in an area comprised of aging strip malls. This area has been identified as a potential Community Redevelopment Area (CRA).

18. Numerous local government initiatives have impact on redevelopment and infill.

Examples include:

- Sarasota County 2050. The identification of the Urban/Suburban and Economic Development Resource Management Areas in the Sarasota 2050 plan, and subsequent zoning code updates by the county are significant tools available for the community to implement and regulate change.
- Sarasota Downtown Master Plan 2020.
- Transit Element of the MPO 2025 Long Range Transportation Plan.
- Sarasota County Neighborhood Initiative.
- Neighborhood Partnership Office, City of Sarasota

19. Community redevelopment goes hand in hand with economic development, including cultural and tourist development.

Community redevelopment and economic development influence each other and citizen participation is a must for a successful strategy. Good economic development strategy includes encouraging involvement and preservation of the cultural and historical structures and institutions in an area.

20. Transportation and the mobility of people are integral considerations to any land use decision.

Land use decisions require awareness of the future vision for public transportation as well as traffic mobility. A comprehensive regional public transportation plan is part of good long-term planning for redevelopment and infill.

Redevelopment and infill which causes traffic congestion is problematic because of the numerous adverse consequences of traffic congestion.

21. Design that is thoughtful and compatible to an area is an important principle in redevelopment and infill.

The thoughtful design of infill and redevelopment projects that are compatible with neighborhood and community can play a significant role in the success of the project. Design issues include the architecture, physical design, intensity and density of the project and the manner in which it maintains or improves the identity and spirit of the area.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations are the Study Group's specific suggestions for change, based on findings and conclusions.

The phrase "all local governments" refers to the City of North Port, City of Sarasota, City of Venice, Sarasota County Government, and the Town of Longboat Key. The extent to which a recommendation applies and the specific steps to be taken may vary by jurisdiction. The study group respectfully requests that each jurisdiction consider each recommendation in light of local need and conditions.

1. Community Awareness, Understanding and Participation

In order to encourage community understanding and participation in redevelopment and infill, all local governments, working collaboratively with community organizations such as Chambers of Commerce, the Argus Foundation, the League of Women Voters, Sarasota Council of Neighborhood Associations (CONA), Coalition of City Neighborhood Associations (CCNA), South Venice 2010, Southwest County Alliance of Homeowners Associations, the Nokomis Area Civic Association (NACA) and other civic, development and business associations should begin education of the general public, and include the following information:

- The benefits of redevelopment and infill for the community: revitalize residential and commercial areas, achieve economic development goals and create a sense of place and social interaction through neighborhood preservation and enhancements.
- Market influences.
- The value of neighborhood plans and citizen involvement in the process.
- Neighborhood grant programs and publication of grant awards.
- The value of overlay districts and other strategies to maintain or improve a community.
- The principle of sustainability and the relationships of transportation, storm water management, economic

development and physical health to planning for redevelopment and infill.

- The role of increased density in appropriate areas.
- Mechanisms available for proactive citizenry to identify further redevelopment and infill opportunities by means of government planning and regulatory processes, neighborhood initiatives and accessible information.

2. Cooperation Between Communities and Developers

In order to improve community and developer interactions in redevelopment and infill planning processes, all appropriate agencies in local governments should:

- Examine ordinance models such as the Public Involvement Ordinance in Glendale, Arizona, and develop an ordinance to require that developers create and implement a citizen participation plan and use a variety of public involvement techniques.
- Develop a process and handbook to help developers and citizen groups understand and navigate the project approval process. Involve a core group of developers and residents in creating this resource.
- Expand the area of mailed notice to a ¼ mile minimum radius for rezonings, special exceptions and other redevelopment public hearings, at the developer's expense.
- Require that neighborhood workshops on proposed land use changes, rezonings and other exceptions be conducted and summarized by a neutral facilitator from local government or another source.

3. Regulations and Incentives

All local governments need to encourage redevelopment and infill within the existing urban service boundary by ensuring redevelopment is competitive with greenfield development.

The regulatory environment should be flexible yet provide a reasonable degree of predictability. Government incentives must be scrutinized, analyzed and tied to specific goals. To ensure redevelopment and infill is competitive, specific steps include:

- Review and amend existing zoning ordinances, building codes, regulatory processes, parking requirements and budgets, etc.
- Streamline the permitting process.

4. Public Investment in Identified Areas

All levels of government should cooperate to make adequate public investment in areas vulnerable to decline or not currently favored by the market. Develop public-private partnerships to leverage public dollars so that private investment will occur. In determining the mechanism for providing public dollars, local governments should consider such strategies as amending existing Community Redevelopment Areas (CRAs), creating new CRAs, developing Interlocal Agreements and creating special taxing districts. Additional ways to encourage private development include tax credits, incentives, and enterprise zone or development credits. Examples of areas to consider are Newtown and Laurel.

5. Collaboration and Planning

All local governments should take additional steps in planning and increasing neighborhood participation in project development.

Planning:

- Each local government should create a redevelopment and infill plan through a community-based consensus building process. Sarasota County's plan should address, but not be limited to, the Urban/Suburban Resource Management Area (RMA) and the Economic Development RMA.

- The plan should include the development of a databank of individual properties which meet prescribed redevelopment or infill goals. Neighborhoods, the business community, developers and planners should provide input to the plan.
- The plan should identify areas where redevelopment is likely to occur as a result of market forces, as well as those areas vulnerable to decline and that merit public investment.
- Plans should include the redevelopment of aging strip centers and other greyfields, encouraging mixed-use development, and locating public facilities in these sites, where appropriate. The creation of an overlay district should be considered for the aging commercial centers.
- Conduct consolidated rezonings (including overlay districts) and area plans for redevelopment and infill locations identified by the redevelopment and infill plan.
- Continue to co-plan with the School Board and administration in the siting of new schools and consider greyfields as potential sites. Encourage the development of new schools in ways that consider schools as building blocks for neighborhoods.

Neighborhood visions:

- Provide a toolkit in collaboration with neighborhood associations, identifying a process and providing guidelines that will help neighborhoods and commercial areas develop their own vision and improvement plans. This toolkit would help residents and business owners prepare a plan with minimal staff assistance.
- Provide organizational development training and resources to those neighborhoods without active associations or organizations, that desire to create a neighborhood association.

Project development:

- Develop a mechanism for developers to access neighborhood and community plans by location, to aid in understanding the community visions for a potential project site.

- Include arts groups, cultural institutions and educational institutions as potential assets for redevelopment and infill efforts.
- Use existing and new schools and/or parks as assets for a redevelopment/infill neighborhood plan.
- Identify and seek out public-private partnerships for projects.
- Government neighborhood offices should engage the community to facilitate redevelopment and infill efforts.

6. Transportation Planning

The redevelopment and infill plan should reflect long-range public transportation plans, consider traffic management and improve the mobility of people of all ages.

Transportation elements should address:

- Developing nodes of increased density that coordinate with the future transportation vision.
- Minimizing the impact of redevelopment and infill on traffic flow.
- Strengthening multi-modal connectivity including pedestrian and bicycle travel modes.

7. Compatibility and Design

In order to help maintain or improve identity, sense of place and compatibility, local government planners should collaborate with community representatives and developers to:

- Determine design guidelines for infill and redevelopment that will assure quality projects. Issues of human scale of design and appropriate integration into the community are key considerations.
- Encourage compatibility with surrounding neighbors and provide flexibility so districts and neighborhoods can maintain their unique character.

8. Gentrification

Each local government should maximize the benefits and minimize the adverse consequences of gentrification that often occur with redevelopment. Specific strategies should be adopted as appropriate for the locality. Suggested strategies to consider include:

- Create a unified vision for the community, including residents, businesses and community planning groups in the process.
- Enforce existing regulations and policies that help ensure affordable housing or protect residential or commercial tenants.
- Create policies as needed to minimize the negative impact of gentrification.
 - Assess the potential for displacement and develop a plan to minimize displacement before property values begin to escalate.
 - Educate residents on legal rights, and home buying and selling, so that they can participate and benefit from the increasing property values.
- Plan in advance to secure public facilities, commercial buildings or apartment complexes in order to separate these assets from market pressures. These assets can be used to encourage redevelopment consistent with the vision for the area.
- Use business assistance programs or loan funds to help existing businesses take advantage of new markets.

9. Accessible Information

In order to increase the understanding of residents and developers in redevelopment and infill issues, appropriate departments of each local government should collaborate to:

- Complete a countywide relational, mapping database of communities and neighborhoods to examine neighborhood characteristics on a comprehensive basis. The location of historic and significant structures should be included in the database. Expansion of data sources

should occur through public-private partnerships, and data collection should be systematic and ongoing.

- Develop a master list of all neighborhood, civic and community associations and make it available on the Internet.

10. Affordable Housing Options

All local governments should ensure that planning for redevelopment and infill coordinates with affordable housing planning, and specifically identifies appropriate opportunities to increase the supply of affordable housing. This includes examining the appropriateness of granny flats, garage apartments, mixed-use projects and residential projects with mixed price ranges.

11. Density

Increased density plays a role in urban development provided that neighborhood compatibility and the character of the community are considered. All local governments should consider increased density and height in appropriate areas to encourage mixed-use development, and should incorporate this into their plans. The development of nodes or sectors of increased density should be consistent with public transportation plans.

12. Architectural History

The uniqueness of a community is defined, in part, by its physical space including architectural elements. In order to encourage the rehabilitation of historic and significant structures, local governments should:

- Adopt or strengthen policies to discourage the demolition of significant structures and encourage the rehabilitation and reuse of existing significant historical stock.

13. Sense of Community

All local governments should:

- As part of neighborhood planning efforts and parks programs, endeavor to create neighborhood “pocket” parks as gathering places to foster interaction among neighbors.
- Integrate schools and libraries into the neighborhoods where practical, to encourage opportunities for relationships and community interaction.
- Maintain the urban cores of our county as centers for commercial, civic, cultural and recreational activities.

FINDINGS

Findings represent the information received by the Study Group. They are derived from published materials, from facts reported by resource people and from a consensus of the Study Group's understanding of the opinions of resource people.

Note: Sarasota County refers to the entire county; the unincorporated county refers to that area outside of the four municipalities: City of North Port, City of Sarasota, City of Venice and Town of Longboat Key.

INTRODUCTION

In the early 1970s, the Sarasota County Comprehensive Plan, *Apoxsee*, established the Urban Service Boundary with the intention to encourage development west of this boundary and that has largely occurred. Sarasota County has approximately 325,957 full-time residents (Census 2000) and approximately 89.9% live within the Urban Service Area, which roughly follows I-75 in some areas. (See Appendix A for map delineating the Urban Service Boundary.)

Redevelopment refers to the revitalization of existing properties through the renovation or replacement of structures and/or use of the property. The goal is to take the property to a higher, more productive use. Infill is the development of vacant lands in an urban or suburban setting that were not previously developed. Together they include single vacant lots, aging strip malls, shopping centers, parking lots, etc. Redevelopment and infill are tools that should encourage revitalization of existing developed areas, both residential and commercial.

Redevelopment decisions occur every day in Sarasota County. Examples include revitalizing an ailing commercial district in Englewood; determining the best use of an historic high school in Sarasota; creating overlay districts to maintain community character on Siesta Key; determining how to improve a declining strip mall in North Port; and how to recreate an industrial district along the intracoastal waterway in Venice.

While there are commonalities throughout Sarasota County, each jurisdiction has its unique issues and challenges regarding redevelopment and infill. This results from the jurisdiction's plans, philosophic frameworks, development history and land use decisions made along the way. Redevelopment is no different from new development in that it is market-driven and subject to regulation. Redevelopment will occur, in response to the market and

regulated by land use controls, even without a community vision or plan. As redevelopment and infill recasts the function and form of a physical space, it has an impact on the social and cultural aspects of that space as well.

Planning for redevelopment and infill is intertwined with other community visions and decisions including water management, transportation and mobility. This study attempts first to provide an understanding of how the physical realm impacts the social connections and relationships that are the foundation of community. Then it focuses on opportunities and challenges, broad community planning principles that shape redevelopment and infill decisions, and barriers. Lastly, it discusses strategies and tools to consider and provides examples of redevelopment and infill issues throughout Sarasota County.

One thing is certain, change is happening everywhere. As each community throughout Sarasota County continues to grow and age, it will either move toward that which is desirable, toward that optimum place where folks want to live, or it will move toward decline where businesses falter, property values decline, and people move away. Our wise use of redevelopment and infill can help create the future desired in Sarasota County.

"At the end of the day revitalization is imparting energy into something that is dead."

Developer, The Stories Project

UNDERSTANDING REDEVELOPMENT AND INFILL

In order to understand redevelopment and infill, a basic knowledge of market forces, the issues of sprawl and appropriate density, and the characteristics that create community is useful.

Benefits of Redevelopment and Infill

Successful redevelopment and infill helps a community use land more efficiently since the use occurs where the community has already invested in public infrastructure such as roads, sidewalks, water and sewer. Oregon's *Infill and Redevelopment Code Handbook* notes that redevelopment and infill can help achieve local and regional planning objectives such as:

- Economic development and improved tax base
- Revitalization of downtown and area neighborhoods
- Development of needed housing in close proximity to employment and services
- Neighborhood preservation and enhancement
- Transportation choices and connectivity
- Walkable neighborhoods and, where applicable, transit-supportive development
- Decrease in commuter road congestion
- Efficient use of existing urban services and facilities, as an alternative to extending new facilities
- Energy conservation through reduced reliance on the automobile
- Completing communities, and providing community centers
- Public cost savings as numerous studies have shown that a more compact development pattern saves millions

of dollars in capital costs for public infrastructure as well as annual savings in operation and maintenance costs (i.e. over sprawl development)

Several speakers discussed the economic benefits of redevelopment including the creation of jobs, expanded tax base and the creation of new economic assets that support new or emerging economic sectors. One resource stated that in order to attract young professionals to the area, our community needs to meet their desires including offering mixed-use areas and urban settings that are often desired by the “creative class.”

Currently, the profile of people moving to Sarasota is that of “empty-nesters.” One speaker noted that research shows that 30% of “empty-nesters” prefer mixed-use as well, yet there is little of that to offer in Sarasota County. With this demographic profile, the ability to “age in place” becomes important. As the population ages and decreases or gives up driving, mobility options become increasingly essential. Collectively, all the benefits noted above help create a vibrant economy and support or enhance those things in a community that foster the interactions and connections valued by its residents.

Market Forces

Market demand and land use limits determine what is built and where it's built. Sarasota's market is shaped in part by the seasonal fluctuations of the population, continued arrival of retiring baby boomers and high median age in many parts of the county. Sarasota County is a desirable place to live and a resource speaker remarked that there is constant demand for new and larger homes here. Commercial development follows residential development; the economic climate created by the residential development will help determine the type of commercial development that occurs.

“The smart money is coming here so if we can just get the regulations right to protect the environment but also have a real sensible way to redevelop these skipped over areas then we will really have something of value.”

Business Owner, The Stories Project

The market is fluid and should be reassessed periodically. Some factors are relatively stable and others change more frequently. The market may be influenced by local, regional or national occurrences. It's important to understand the market and factors affecting it, in order to avoid expectations for development to occur where it may not, because of insufficient demand or excessive costs.

Regulations can help the market by providing enabling zoning in areas targeted for redevelopment and creating limits on areas that the market might desire but the community does not. For example, the City of Sarasota has increased residential density in a targeted area to increase residential use in that area; the City of Venice has height restrictions which support the community's desire.

Sprawl

Defining Sprawl

As previously stated, one of the benefits of redevelopment and infill is that it helps a community use land more efficiently. In the report, *Sprawl in Florida, A Conversation with the Experts* (Feb. 2002), **sprawl** is defined as “poorly planned development characterized by the conversion of natural or agricultural land to low-density residential enclaves, commercial centers and business parks, all separated from one another by roads and parking lots. Sprawl means long distances between homes and work or shopping, heavy reliance on freeways and automobiles, and the destruction of the very feature that has induced many to move to Florida - the natural landscape.” These patterns of development have dominated the United States since World War II. The popularity of the automobile has helped promote design that is more vehicle- than pedestrian-friendly, and meaningful public spaces and connections to the community have been lost in the process.

In Florida, 1.9 million acres were developed between the years 1982 and 1997. That development transformed 1.3 million acres of rangeland, 800,000 acres of cropland and 300,000 acres of forest. The widely dispersed patterns of growth that characterize sprawl have had an adverse impact on the fragile ecosystem of Florida, destroying natural water systems and fragmenting wildlife through the invasion of natural habitats. Water and air supplies have decreased in quality and traffic has increased.

“If we can find sensible ways to develop properties where there are already roads to them then we will reduce the urban sprawl phenomenon and allow people to visit commercial properties, retail stores, office buildings that are closer to where they live.”

Business Owner, The Stories Project

Principles to Restrain Sprawl

Experts generally concur that the proposals made by Florida's Growth Management Study Commission (2001) are not sufficient to restrain sprawl. Some policies may even exacerbate the problem of sprawl. *Sprawl in Florida* recognizes that there is no “magic bullet” solution, but that tools exist to help create a multi-pronged approach to restrain sprawl. The report concludes with the recommendation that Floridians adopt the following principles to address the problem of sprawl:

- Direct future growth into already developed or developing areas, and design those areas to accommodate a variety of uses and residents of all income levels.
- Reorient the state's transportation system to focus on the efficient movement of people and goods – not vehicles. Florida's transportation policy should support, not undermine, the state's growth management goals.
- Protect Florida's remaining farms, forests, open spaces and wetlands.
- Eliminate taxpayer subsidies for sprawl. This includes developing a full-cost accounting model for new development, and reviewing impact fee policies in relation to sustainability and affordable housing goals.
- Increase opportunities for the public to participate in planning and development decisions and give them more and better tools to do so effectively. This includes public input at all stages of the planning process and public education on growth management issues, enabling “citizen planners” to participate at all levels of the process.

Thus, redeveloping in existing developed areas is identified as one principle to combat sprawl.

Density

Definitions

The subject of density is part of understanding redevelopment and infill. **Density** is defined as “the amount of residential development permitted on a given parcel of land and is typically measured in dwelling units per acre.” While density determines the maximum number of dwelling units that can be built on a piece of land, **intensity** refers to how “big” the units will be in terms of square footage and height. It’s the combination of density and intensity that determines if a project is compatible with the existing development around it.

Increased density is a controversial issue, often unwelcome in a community, and blamed for traffic problems, crime and parking shortages. Poorly designed density (e.g., office parks with no sidewalks, poorly designed housing infringing on privacy, etc.) has contributed to this negative response. However, low-density restrictions can contribute to sprawl as market forces drive development outward. When a community begins to acknowledge the negative consequences of sprawling developments, it begins to examine how density can be a part of halting sprawl and creating desirable communities. (Refer to Appendix B, Population Density in Sarasota County)

Community Concerns

Some common concerns about increasing density in a community are:

- Increasing density may deplete open space
- High density is often unattractive
- Increasing density may hurt property values
- Increasing density may cause some unintended negative consequences as the area gentrifies
- Increasing density may cause traffic congestion
- Higher density doesn’t work in a car-dominated world

Community Benefits

Some sources report that there may be community gains with appropriate concentration of density in key places. Balancing density by creating different types of development and developing nodes (sectors of concentrated activity) can contribute toward a vibrant community and build those attributes of connection that create a sense of place and community.

Research indicates that balancing density in a community can:

- Help create walkable neighborhoods
- Support housing choice and affordability
- Help expand transportation choices
- Support community fiscal health by using infrastructure more efficiently
- Help improve security as increased activity can be a deterrent for crime
- Help protect the environment by reducing land consumption elsewhere

Several issues that should be considered when examining density are:

- Good design and the appropriateness of density
- Availability of affordable housing
- Framing mobility in terms of moving people rather than moving vehicles

A resource speaker reported that infill and redevelopment provides a more desirable, compact form of development using less land and resources as compared to suburban development. Compact development is consistent with Smart Growth principles that encourage development of urban communities that are diverse, compact and walkable.

It has been stated that workplace density is the most important factor in determining the type of transportation used by people commuting from the suburbs. Research also suggests that increased residential densities are required to make public transportation viable. (Cervero, University of California at Berkeley)

Quality Design

A recent report concludes that good **design** is key to creating density that adds value to a community. Experience in other communities such as Arlington County, Virginia and Sacramento, California, affirms the importance of balancing higher and lower density development and using quality design. (*Creating Great Neighborhoods: Density in Your Community* The Local Government Commission, 2003)

The report notes five proven principles of good density design. An integral part of the process to realizing good design is the involvement of residents, community officials and business leaders in the process.

The primary principles of good density design are:

- **Increase density in appropriate locations.** Increasing residential density in appropriate locations helps create neighborhoods and a stronger community. Appropriate locations usually center on some neighborhood “hub” such as town centers, existing or planned transit stations or major retail or employment destinations.
- **Connect people and places** through a complete street network that invites walking and bicycling and provides convenient access to bus or rail.
- **Mix uses** to create a quality of life where people may chose to live near their work, walk to the local store, or bike to the library with their kids.
- **Create inviting places to walk** through sensitive placement of parking, for example, behind homes or on-street for residential areas and mid-block parking for commercial areas.
- **Create great places for people.** A “great place” is one that encourages interaction and connections, providing gathering places, parks and focal points, combining streetscapes and interesting buildings.

Creating Community

Neighborhoods and Communities

Historically, “neighborhood” is an urban concept. The term means different things to different people. Each definition spills from ones own experience and is rich with spatial boundaries, physical characteristics, landmarks, people and social behaviors. Neighborhoods come in many shapes and sizes and residents within the same area may define their neighborhood differently. For the children it may be the four streets to the corner store; for more mobile adults, it may mean a larger area accessible by vehicle. In *The Regional City*, Calthorpe and Fulton define neighborhoods as areas that are true “communities of place”. A neighborhood is full of people and activity, there are shared spaces and opportunities for interaction that help foster a

“How can we help this older neighborhood become what we are trying to build for the new residents?”

Neighborhood Activist, The Stories Project

sense of community. The authors note that neighborhoods are hard to design but easy to design away.

Conventional zoning has encouraged development that is separate, our residential areas are separate and defined from commercial and industrial uses. Calthorpe and Fulton (2001) note:

In concrete terms, many of the underpinnings of strong neighborhoods and community have been lost in postwar suburban development. The local institutions, unique history, cultural diversity, and common meeting places that once knitted neighborhoods together have been undermined by urban decay in the city and sprawl in the suburbs. The physical basis of community – walkable streets – has been degraded by crime in some areas and by auto congestion in others. Usable public space and civic facilities have decayed, resulting in loss of community and loss of sense of place....

Each element – whether for new growth, infill, rehabilitation, or redevelopment – should reinforce local identity, history and character... Street improvements should favor the pedestrian and in many circumstances reduce auto speeds. Small parks should be distributed to be within walking distance of most homes, and they should be configured to have active edges and adequate visual surveillance. Buildings should support connections within the community by facing toward the neighborhood's public spaces: its streets, parks, commercial centers, and civic facilities.

Social Capital

Neighborhoods have a spatial component and also a social and cultural component. The term “**social capital**” is used to capture the rich web of connections that bring people together. Robert Putnam, author of *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, defines social capital as “civic engagement, healthy community institutions, norms of mutual reciprocity and trust.” This makes it easier for people to interact and work together and helps change the focus from “I to we.” It’s the sociological and psychological connections between people that create that sense of community. Social capital is as important a resource as physical capital such as tools, and human capital such as technical skills and education. A community may have a lot of physical or human capital, however, without the connections (social capital) the potential for these contributions goes unrealized. In many areas today, a lack of walkability and common meeting places interfere with the ability to connect with one another. In terms of redevelopment and infill, the physical and spatial characteristics of a neighborhood and the greater community will define opportunities for connections.

A recent study suggests that the built environment of a community or neighborhood affects social interactions and connections, and in turn this affects physical and mental health. Those communities with walkable mixed-use design encouraged interactions and connections more so than automobile dependent single-use neighborhoods; this was tied to positive health outcomes. (American Journal of Public Health, September 2003)

Some presume that the seasonal flux in Sarasota’s population would have a negative impact on the relations and connections developed in the community. In late 2003, the Gulf Coast Community Foundation of Venice conducted a social capital survey in Sarasota County. Of those surveyed, 14% were seasonal residents. The data collected

neither supported nor rejected the idea that seasonal residents are less civically engaged in their community.

Sense of Place

Social capital begins at the neighborhood level and contributes to **sense of place**. Sense of place is more than just a location or a community having an “identity.” It’s about emotional attachment and connection that creates feelings of inclusion, connectedness, comfort and security. With social capital, communities thrive; without it, they weaken and fade. Donovan D. Rypkema (2003) nationally known economist, helps define the concept with the following distinctions:

Place is “a piece of the whole environment that has been claimed by feelings.”

Location is “a point on the globe; an intersection of longitude and latitude.”

Community is “a place in which people know and care for one another – the kind of place in which people do not merely ask ‘How are you?’ as a formality but care about the answer.” Place and community are inseparable; place without community is only a location, and community is like a spirit that imbues location with a “sense of place.”

Thus a **community of place** is one that is rich with connections and relationships, interactions beyond common interests and like-mindedness. And it’s the neighborhoods that form the foundation of community identity. Rypkema (2003) also observes that the ability to be anywhere and everywhere electronically has actually increased our need to be *somewhere* that is differentiated from other places. The place with some identity and connection becomes important.

“People are so afraid of the concept of commercial and rightfully so because when you see suburbia and see the separation of uses it isn’t attractive. The challenge is to try to educate folks as to what it is to really live and work in an urban setting versus a suburban setting. And you do that through design examples.”

Developer, The Stories Project

Community Qualities

Rypkema (2003) identifies “Quality of Life” as the most important value of a viable, competitive community and defines Quality of Life as composed of five senses:

- **Sense of place.** Differentiation and unique surroundings are the markers that speak to our physical sense; the same thing in every city strips us of those senses such that it is impossible to tell which city we might be visiting.
- **Sense of evolution.** Seeing and remembering change creates a powerful history both personally and collectively.
- **Sense of ownership.** The belief that “this is my community” stems from opportunity - economic, political, and social opportunities as well as the opportunity to participate.
- **Sense of identity.** A community must be different and distinguished from other communities in order to have value. The historic built environment is integral to a community’s physical distinction.
- **Sense of community.** The author quotes historian and art critic Lucy Lippard: “Community doesn’t mean understanding everything about everybody and resolving all the differences; it means knowing how to work within differences as they change and evolve ... It includes all ages, races, preferences, like and unlike, and derives its richness from explicit disagreement as much as from implicit agreement.”

This definition of “Quality of Life” creates core values necessary for a community to become or remain strong and vital in the future.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

There are several issues that can be considered both opportunity and challenge. This section discusses the consequences of gentrification, redeveloping aging commercial centers, design issues of large retail stores and community assets such as schools, parks, cultural institutions and historic structures.

“One of the biggest fears of the Newtown residents is that with all of this new development coming in they are going to be forced out. And this is on the business side as well as the residential side.”

Redevelopment Professional, The Stories Project

Gentrification

Gentrification is a term with both positive and negative connotations. The term can signify improved value to a community as urban revitalization leads to an upsurge in property values; and it can indicate the loss of community for existing residents forced out by increased costs in terms of rent, property taxes and daily goods or services. Some community leaders and residents see gentrification as only positive and others, as only negative. In *Gentrification: Practice and Politics* (Kennedy and Leonard 2001) gentrification is defined as “the process by which higher-income households displace lower income residents of a neighborhood, changing the essential character and flavor of that neighborhood.”

That report discusses contributing factors and consequences, both positive and negative, of gentrification and some strategies to encourage a positive outcome. The following factors may contribute to gentrification in a community:

- Rapid job growth
- Housing market dynamics
- Preference for city amenities by certain demographic groups such as “empty-nesters” and the “cultural creatives”
- Increased traffic congestion and lengthening commutes enticing people back to a more urban environment
- Targeted public sector policies aimed at revitalizing an area

Gentrification may result in numerous consequences to a community including:

- Increased housing and property values
- Displacement of renters, homeowners and local businesses
- Increasing tax revenues
- A greater income mix in the area and deconcentration of poverty
- Changing street flavor and new commercial activity
- Changing community leadership and power structures
- Discord between old and new residents

Throughout Sarasota County, we have experienced rising costs in property values with and without redevelopment efforts. Maximizing the positive consequences of gentrification and minimizing displacement of residents and businesses is a concern. Housing affordability and displacement of the workforce and the elderly of moderate income were also cited by resource speakers.

“We want to make sure that this redevelopment benefits the residents and not just the people that are coming in from the outside. Both groups can benefit, we just have to do it in such a way that both can benefit.”

Redevelopment Professional, The Stories Project

Kennedy and Leonard (2001) examined numerous case studies and describe strategies that can help community leaders, elected officials, and residents create the “best case scenario” when gentrification is likely to occur. The suggested strategies are not new to community revitalization. Timeliness and implementing strategy are integral to creating the best outcome. Suggested strategies include:

- **Anticipate the pressure.** There is opportunity to prepare and minimize the negative outcomes if

community groups, residents, foundations and governments anticipate gentrification and take appropriate steps.

- **Create a unified vision and implementation plan.** Including residents, the business sector and community planning groups in the process helps establish relationships and a shared plan.
- **Regulatory and policy solutions for increasing affordable housing and commercial real estate.** Gentrification of an area often happens quickly with little time to create regulatory or policy changes. A community may have policies and regulations “on the books” that can help ensure preservation and production of affordable housing stock or protect residential and commercial tenants.
- **Controlling community assets.** With advanced planning, assets such as public facilities, office space or apartment buildings can be secured and separated from market price pressures. These assets can be used to encourage redevelopment consistent with the vision for that neighborhood.
- **Economic development strategies and income-raising tools.** Expand strategies to link original residents to new jobs in the area and in the region.
- **Legal rights and other education efforts.** Education on landlord/tenant laws may help manage displacement; education on home buying and home selling helps original residents respond more successfully in the climate of escalating property values.
- **Public education system improvements.** High-quality schools can help expand the life chances for original city residents in a depressed area.
- **Creating forums to unify the gentrifying community.** Neighborhoods should create opportunities for old and new residents to meet and explore common ground to create a unified whole, one that recognizes both old and new interests.

Greyfields and Strip Malls

Definition

Today, the redevelopment of **greyfields** is considered one of the biggest planning issues faced by communities across America. A greyfield is a developed commercial site that is declining or abandoned. These sites include deteriorating strip centers and abandoned or underused shopping malls with large parking lots. They become lost opportunities for employment or tax revenues. ¹A number of factors may contribute to the decline of a commercial center including changing demographics, new retail formats, overbuilt retail or the loss of an anchor store in a mall.

Local examples include declining commercial strip centers along U.S. 41 in Sarasota, Nokomis, Venice and North Port. Greyfields are the focus of the County's Economic Development Resource Management Area (RMA) and of North Port's Community Redevelopment Area (CRA).

Opportunity and Benefits

Redevelopment of a greyfield means reclaiming that site and changing a lost asset into a new use that can enhance the local economy. Experts realize that a greyfield is an opportunity, because of the size and location of the commercial site; to create a place "that is walkable, human-scale, meaningful and memorable." The Pavilion at Gulf Gate was cited as a "lost opportunity" as the redevelopment that occurred there is not pedestrian friendly. Some resource

We have to deal with skipped over deserted strip centers or abandoned office buildings and see how we can bring them to useful purpose. If we can accomplish this we will reduce traffic congestion because we will reduce the pressure from new development farther away from the urban area, control environmental impacts of breaking new greenfield developments and increase the ad valorem tax base."

Business Owner, The Stories Project

¹ A recent study indicates that once mall sales drop to or below \$150 per square foot, a site qualifies as a greyfield. [Congress for New Urbanism (CNU) and PricewaterhouseCoopers]

speakers stated that the redevelopment there could have interfaced better with the surrounding area.

One approach considered optimum for some greyfields is a mixed-use project, mixing residential and commercial uses. Examples of successful mixed-use design in Florida include Winter Park Village in Winter Park and Mizner Park in Boca Raton. Winter Park Village was created from a "dead mall" and while the focus remains retail, it incorporates public spaces, is pedestrian friendly and interfaces with the residential in the area. Mizner Park was also redeveloped from a failing mall, and includes retail, restaurants, residential, and businesses. The values of the residential properties surrounding Mizner Park increased substantially and the City of Boca Raton concluded that this property value increase would not have occurred if the redevelopment had been a typical "big box" large-scale retail store rather than the mixed-use project. Also, the pedestrian environment was seen as a plus for the surrounding residential areas.

As stated previously, the profile of people moving to Sarasota is that of "empty-nesters." Research shows that 30% of "empty-nesters" prefer mixed-use, yet we have little of that to offer in Sarasota County. One resource speaker stated that mixed-use settings and live/work/sell environments are needed to attract young professionals and "creatives" to our area. This is part of attracting and keeping a talented workforce, a component of Sarasota County's Economic Development Plan.

Research also indicates that lease rates and occupancy rates increase in mixed-use projects. Sarasota County Government's new Zoning Ordinance (adopted October 2003) encourages mixed-use. Several resource speakers remarked of the importance of educating the community about the benefits of mixed-use projects.

The issue of increased vehicular traffic is often a community concern in the redevelopment of commercial areas. Too much traffic or poorly planned traffic can be a detriment to the commercial businesses as well as undesirable for the surrounding area. One source stated that redevelopment as a mixed-use project would not necessarily increase traffic in the immediate area because traffic was coming to the commercial area before it declined. Nevertheless, it is critical to plan appropriately and avoid negative impacts on vehicular traffic.

It has been demonstrated that greyfield redevelopment can yield benefits to the community:

- Increased property tax base
- Increasing access of people to jobs
- Strengthening surrounding property values
- Making better use of existing infrastructure and lowering costs of public services such as ambulances, water, sewer, schools and public safety (due to increased residential and commercial use)
- Reducing the time, expense and pollution of single occupancy vehicle commutes
- Adding to the economic diversity of a region

Alternatives

The alternatives to redeveloping a greyfield are limited and leave negative consequences. One alternative is choosing to develop **greenfields** instead. As discussed previously, (see the section on Sprawl), this development of raw, undeveloped lands on the fringes of existing developed areas requires significant infrastructure investment and perpetuates the transportation dilemma that sprawl has generated.

There is a truism that “not to decide is to decide.” A second alternative is to do nothing to the aging commercial centers and abandoned malls. A course of “no action” will erode the tax base if the property is underused or vacant and will be a visual blemish on the area with a negative impact on the surrounding community both residential and commercial.

Principles

Several sources identify the following principles to guide the redevelopment of declining commercial centers (Urban Land Institute, Atlanta Regional Commission):

- **Ignite leadership and nurture partnership** – Local government and the business community should develop a smart growth partnership to determine the future of declining commercial areas and the strategies needed to reach that vision. A successful partnership should include individual citizens, landowners, local

interest groups, commercial tenants, and local economic development and planning agencies.

- **Anticipate evolution** – Retail development needs to anticipate the market and be ready to respond to changing consumer preferences and lifestyle trends. This includes how people shop, the livability and convenience of the environment and the demand for other amenities near the strip mall.
- **Know the market** – All strip malls and greyfields are not created equal. Solutions will vary depending on the market forces that drive it and a solution for one area may not fit another.
- **Prune back retail-zoned land** – Strategies include but are not limited to: limiting the quantity of commercially zoned land along emerging suburban strips; scaling retail-zoned land to reflect a realistic assessment of the size, strength and character of the market; limiting the extension of infrastructure if the existing infrastructure is underused; and reserving some previously zoned retail land for housing, office space, civic uses, recreational facilities or open space.
- **Establish pulse nodes of development** – A pulse node of development includes higher intensity, mixed-use development interspersed by low-intensity land uses or open spaces. Key intersections or major transit stops offer opportunity to create a node of development that has its own character and purpose and is friendly, attractive and walkable. Public facilities such as government offices, libraries, schools, cultural and community centers can be sited in these higher-density areas.
- § **Tame the traffic** – Determine how to balance the through-traffic and the vehicular traffic coming to the strip itself. There are strategies to employ to create a pedestrian friendly environment, make it convenient for vehicles and public transportation, and allow for adequate parking while minimizing the visual blight of the parking lot.
- § **Create the place** – Maximize the quality of the environment by designing a coordinated, entertaining and lively place where people can interact and enjoy others.

- § **Diversify the character** – Plan for different types of districts along the strips, accommodating different densities and uses such as mixed-use, residential, hotels, offices, cultural, entertainment and civic uses. Arrange these land uses in ways that encourage walking and concentrate mixed-use along the major arteries to preserve single-family neighborhoods.
- § **Eradicate the ugliness** – Improve community aesthetics with good design, addressing signage, landscaping, parking and a pedestrian-friendly environment.
- § **Put your money (and regulations) where your policy is** – The public sector needs to support the public policies needed and make the investments to redevelop suburban strip malls. Strategies include integrating public facilities into the redevelopment plan, and designing zoning regulations that facilitate the developer’s implementation of the public’s strategy.

Large-Scale Retail Stores

Large-scale retail stores, commonly called “big-box retailers” are part of the landscape across the country. They usually occupy more than 50,000 square feet and sometimes exceed 150,000 square feet in size. They include the Wal-Marts, Best Buys, Home Depots and warehouse clubs. The market niches may vary. However, some physical characteristics are fairly common: large rectangular stores with standardized facades surrounded by large parking lots. These stores offer low prices and convenience, however, some communities are concerned about how these giant retailers interface with the surrounding community as well as the impact if the store closes. Competition and new markets lead to new stores, sometimes at the expense of the same retailer’s older location. In Sarasota County, there are numerous examples of the successful opening of new large-scale retailers and on the other hand, the community objection to and regulatory denial of others.

Experiences from elsewhere would suggest the following issues and guidelines be considered:

- **Architectural character of the building** – Strong standards to encourage better architectural design that goes beyond the common faceless, windowless standard box.

- **Color and material of primary structure** – Standards to encourage a better fit with existing commercial development and surrounding residential neighborhoods, requiring higher-quality materials and limitations to neon-tubing and incompatible color schemes.
- **Relationship to the surrounding community, including civic amenities** – Policies to improve the relationship between the retailer, residential areas and public streets. Standards for setbacks, facades, entrances and the requirement to “contribute to the establishment or enhancement of community or public spaces” such as pedestrian plazas.
- **Pedestrian flows** – Standards to increase the safety and attractiveness of pedestrian walkways around the store and through the parking lot.
- **Parking** – Standards to limit the percentage of parking space located between the front of the store and the street, and a more aesthetically pleasing parking area broken up by landscaping and other features.

Generally, it was found that developers and large-scale retailers provided better proposals in an effort to meet the desires of the community. Debate continues on the practicality of some of the standards. Any community considering such standards must examine its own market, the political landscape and perceived impact of large-scale retail stores and customize its approach accordingly.

Community Assets

Schools, cultural institutions and parks are assets in a community that can create opportunities for interaction and connection. Historic structures provide connections to an area’s history and helps a community identify “who and where they are.”

Schools

A federal report (*Schools as Centers of Community*, US DOE 2000) states one of the six design principles for designing better learning environments is that the learning environment serve as center of the community. The report states, “A successful **school** can strengthen a community’s

sense of identity, coherence and consensus. Like a new version of the old town square, it can serve as a community hub and a place where students and others can learn about collaboration and the common good.... Today’s educational facilities should be designed to strengthen the integral relationship between a school and its community.”

This design principle is premised on the recognition that:

- Learning is a lifelong process
- Mutual benefits are reaped from school and community relationships:
 - The community gains use of the facilities for community purposes or family-centered learning activities promoted by the school.
 - The school may gain volunteers, mentors, and opportunities for apprenticeships, and work-based or service learning to name a few.

The Sarasota County School District advised that the state statutes and regulations strongly support elementary schools as centers of community and to a lesser extent middle schools. High schools tend to be driven more by issues of transportation due to their size and potential impact. School administration stated that Florida’s funding model does not support smaller schools, resulting in the typical school for 970 students on 25 to 30 acres. The City of North Port partnered with the School Board to expand the auditorium facilities of the new high school in order to increase the school’s connection to the community.

In Florida, the decision to build or rebuild a school requires the approval of the state Department of Education. In order to receive state approval, the school district must have a current shortage of capacity meaning the district has significant numbers of students already in portables, and further projected student growth. The location of a school is not directly impacted by the state’s regulations regarding schools. Local governments do have a say regarding the location of new schools and significant renovations or rebuilding of schools. In 2003, the school district and the local governments enacted the Interlocal Agreement of School Facility Planning (IASFP), which outlines numerous steps the district and school administration must take to coordinate school facility issues. This agreement is intended to result in better planning of schools and surrounding infrastructure.

Arts and Cultural Institutions

Sarasota is often called the cultural coast for its abundance of **arts and cultural institutions**. In *Better Together* (2001), the report on civic engagement in America, it’s reported that the arts play another role in the community, in addition to that of providing channels for artistic expression, cultural enrichment, personal enjoyment or entertainment. Research continues to show that the arts contribute to civic renewal by helping communities understand and communicate. Arts are a mechanism for strengthening the relationships and connections among people, a way to increase the social capital in a community. *Better Together* suggests that arts spaces should be used more as public spaces, similar to a public library or a town square, helping a community interact and build relationships. Research also indicates that arts institutions can anchor revitalization efforts in a neighborhood, and their activities can help heal community divisions.

Parks

Resources from County Parks and Recreation noted that **parks** play a vital role in the economic health (rising property values), physical health of residents (opportunities for exercise), and social interaction, in addition to opportunities for natural habitat enhancement and other quality of life issues. Additionally, parks can provide a means of embracing an areas history, architecture and other “identities” by using a themed approach through the preservation of true historic elements.

Neighborhood parks provide opportunity to develop partnerships between residents and organizations for park improvement and maintenance. The resource stated that parks help enhance social capital via the interaction that occurs within parks both during park work efforts and park leisure activities.

Parks have been found to have a positive economic impact on neighborhoods. One study stated that increasing tax revenue stemming from rising property values was more than the cost of the acquisition of the land and the improvements for small neighborhood parks. (National Parks and Recreation Association)

The City of Sarasota has a Parks and Connectivity Plan and the County is developing a Parks Master Plan and a Trail Master Plan. Sarasota County Government has Interlocal Agreements with North Port, Sarasota and Venice for park operation and maintenance. These agreements allow either

the municipalities or the county to develop new parks or new park amenities. It was reported that coordination of planning of parks has improved since the county has increased staff dedicated to park planning and is collaborating with neighborhood initiatives.

All park plans are developed through a public process that usually involves two public workshops. Some parks have originated from community plans, for example, the 50 acres purchased at Bee Ridge and Honore as a result of the Bee Ridge Community Plan. Others are the result of park specific efforts with the neighborhood. (See the Neighborhood Plans section for more information.)

A resource noted that the best way for a neighborhood to incorporate parks in its plan is to explore their needs and opportunities. Finding opportunities includes the identification of common or public lands, stormwater facilities and preserves, vacant lots being sold for taxes, sidewalks and drainage ways. Sarasota County Government has a neighborhood grant program in which matching funds may be used to improve public lands and commonly owned property. The *Sarasota County Parks and Recreation Master Plan, 2000 to 2020*, will be presented to the Board of County Commissioners in 2004. It identifies the need for public/private partnerships to create and operate neighborhood parks.

Historic Structures

An integral part of creating a sense of place is maintaining a strong ethic of historic preservation. Rypkema (2003) states that “more than any other element, our historic built environment tells us who we were, who we are and who we can be.” He warns that tearing down unique historic buildings and replacing them with new less interesting designs will ultimately bring down the overall quality of a given district. In addition to helping retain a sense of place, historic preservation creates new jobs, and spurs revitalization resulting in increased tax revenues.

A recent study reported that historic preservation helps maintain property values in Florida. This conclusion resulted from the review and analysis of 18 historic districts compared with 25 non-historic districts, primarily residential, throughout Florida. (*Economic Impacts of Historic Preservation in Florida*)

A local resource stated that sometimes historic preservation may cost more than new construction, but often it costs

less. He commented that it may be irresponsible to be lured by new buildings that are a great financial gain, but chip away at the character of the community. The community must support historic preservation and provide the foundation for the political will required to preserve key structures in the face of redevelopment opportunities.

The recent restoration of the Venice Train Depot into a bus transfer station is an example of saving a piece of history for future generations and spurring a revitalization effort. The restoration of the Federal Building in the City of Sarasota demonstrates the importance of a local icon adding to the beauty and identity of the community.

PLANNING AND PRINCIPLES

Decision Making and Sustainability

A number of resource speakers emphasized the relationship between all planning, for example, land use, water management, transportation, housing and economic development. Redevelopment and infill issues are connected to all of these decisions. Each individual project can deliver the desired future, if as a community, we are clear about the overall vision. A transportation example was provided to illustrate: If a community has a future vision for a comprehensive public transportation system, the mapping of that system should be part of the vision that shapes where redevelopment and infill occurs and what density and intensity of structures would be appropriate.

Another example was provided that illustrates the interrelationship of watershed and land use decisions. In Sarasota County, there are small infill parcels in the floodplain that have infrastructure, however they are the last remnant greenways and open space. The watershed could be negatively impacted if density was increased on certain parcels. A resource speaker noted that every thing we do should implement the long-term vision.

Every decision must consider its effect on the people in the community, the economy and the environment. Development should meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. These are basic concepts of **sustainability**. A vibrant community relies on the sustainability of commercial, residential and environmental interests.

Smart growth and sustainability are often considered synonymous. One source summarized smart growth as follows, “The common thread among different views of smart growth is development that revitalizes central cities and older suburbs, supports and enhances public transit, promotes walking and bicycling, and preserves open spaces and agricultural lands. Smart growth is not no growth; rather, it seeks to revitalize the already-built environment and, to the extent necessary, to foster efficient development at the edges of the region, in the process creating more livable communities.”

The Smart Growth Network lists ten principles of smart growth which work together to benefit the community:

1. Mix land uses
2. Take advantage of compact building design
3. Create a range of housing opportunities and choices
4. Create walkable communities
5. Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place
6. Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas
7. Strengthen and direct development toward existing communities
8. Provide a variety of transportation choices
9. Make development decisions predictable, fair and cost-effective
10. Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions

Urban Land Institute Report

The *Urban Land Institute (ULI) Report* on Sarasota County (1999) provided recommendations and principles to guide Sarasota County Government in growth management. The mission statement that guided their work stated:

“Sarasota County Government seeks a ULI advisory panel’s recommendations on how Sarasota County can continue to grow, yet balance economic development, the preservation/conservation of environmentally sensitive land, maintain sound county fiscal policy, and maintain or improve quality of life.”

Several key development principles were recommended to guide future development and help the county achieve its objectives of economic prosperity, environmental protection and a vibrant quality of life:

- Land is not just a commodity; it is a living ecosystem. All development decisions should be based on an accurate understanding of the sensitivity of land to development and the permanent reservation and buffering of the most environmentally sensitive areas, so that they are not altered by new construction.
- Infill development within the existing urban service boundary should be facilitated by exempting or delaying as much of this area as possible from concurrency requirements. Other regulatory techniques also can facilitate infill development, so that as much future growth as possible is accommodated within already built-up areas.
- The infrastructure deficit – unpaved streets and incomplete sewer and water service – within existing developed areas should be remedied as soon as possible so that existing areas can compete effectively with new development.
- Affordable housing requirements should apply in all areas of the county. The county should work with the cities to improve older, less affluent neighborhoods.
- County development regulations should, as appropriate encourage mixed-income and mixed-use development in compact communities.
- All development should be based on a transportation system that includes alternatives to automobile transportation, including (but not limited to)² bicycle paths and exclusive busways that might be converted to rail systems should demand ever require them.

² Phrase in parentheses was added by the study group.

- New development should be planned so that it does not undermine the viability of current urban centers and neighborhoods.
- Community development districts should be used for all large-scale planned developments, so that all capital and operating costs for infrastructure are assumed by the development.

One of the panel’s recommendations was the establishment of a comprehensive Urban Enhancement Program, suggesting that the county and its municipalities work together. The program would be comprised of four key pieces:

- Infill development
- Redevelopment
- Neighborhood stabilization and revitalization
- Addressing the infrastructure deficits

The report provides further detail of specific strategies for creating each component of an Urban Enhancement Program, described in the report as follows:

- Infill Development
 - Inventory infill lots
 - Identify regulatory barriers
 - Establish high-priority neighborhoods
 - Develop a set of incentives
 - Prepare neighborhood design guidelines
 - Establish partnerships with civic, nonprofit, institutional, and business groups for implementation support
- Redevelopment
 - Inventory sites of deteriorated or blighted properties
 - Work with neighborhoods to prepare redevelopment plans

- Package incentives to encourage redevelopment
- Neighborhood Stabilization and Revitalization
 - Enforce codes to ensure structural and zoning integrity
 - Provide rehabilitation loans for deteriorating properties
 - Provide façade easements for commercial revitalization
 - Support streetscaping and sidewalk programs
 - Address the infrastructure deficit in urbanized neighborhoods including streets, water and sewer service, parks and other community facilities
- Addressing the Infrastructure Debt
 - Designate funds to address current infrastructure deficits and ensure the stabilization of existing neighborhoods

The ULI report notes the importance of neighborhood-based planning and ensuring that infill development is compatible with the surrounding community.

Sarasota 2050 Plan

For the past four years, Sarasota County Government has worked to develop the Sarasota 2050, an amendment to *APOXSEE*, the *Sarasota County Comprehensive Plan*. This work stemmed from the recommendations in the Urban Land Institute report. Within Sarasota 2050, the Sarasota County **Resource Management Area (RMA)** Goal, Objectives and Policies are designed as a supplement to the Future Land Use Chapter of *APOXSEE*. The goal is to “establish a development policy framework that enhances the livability of the county and preserves its natural, cultural, physical and other resources, by creating a Resource Management Area (RMA) system that addresses development issues within six unique resource areas:

- Urban/Suburban

- Economic Development
- Rural Heritage/Estate
- Village/Open Space
- Greenway
- Agriculture Reserve

Two RMAs, the Urban/Suburban RMA and the Economic Development RMA, relate to issues of redevelopment and infill, both residential and commercial.

Urban/Suburban RMA

The Urban/Suburban RMA focuses on existing neighborhoods with the goal to preserve and enhance neighborhoods. Objectives of the Urban/Suburban RMA are:

- To protect and enhance neighborhoods and historic communities through the establishment of a Neighborhood Planning Program.
- To ensure that sufficient resources are available to support and sustain existing and future neighborhoods.
- To encourage infill development within the Urban Service Area.

In part, these policies direct the county to: formalize a process for neighborhood planning that is based upon a high degree of citizen participation; develop neighborhood plans that define community character, identify issues or problems, assess design features and infrastructure and review land use and density ranges for consistency with community character; provide resources to the neighborhoods for planning; and develop a conceptual framework for infrastructure improvements. (For further information refer to the pages on Neighborhood Planning.)

Economic Development RMA

The Economic Development RMA provides a framework for economic development activities and includes redevelopment corridors, mixed-use centers and identifies programs that are designed to promote economic

development. It focuses on major employment centers and redevelopment along corridors such as Bee Ridge Road, Clark Road, and US 41. Objectives of the Economic Development RMA are:

- To sustain a diverse and stable economic base
- To redevelop, revitalize, and refill the county's Redevelopment Corridors and Mixed-Use Centers

In part, the policies direct the County to:

- evaluate economic development incentives
- use a high degree of citizen participation in the creation of plans for redevelopment corridors
- design streets to create a sense of place and accommodate a mix of travel modes
- create a minimum of one new zoning district to facilitate economic development and redevelopment within this RMA
- evaluate zoning and land use regulations for consistency with the design principles established
- use refined methodologies such as multi-modal analysis to review roadway level of service
- consider remedies other than road widening when restoring a deficient roadway to a satisfactory level of service.

Recently, Sarasota County Government took steps that work toward improving the environment for redevelopment and infill.

- The October 2003 Sarasota County zoning code update contained some changes that support or encourage redevelopment efforts. The changes help provide incentives and a way to balance redevelopment with the surrounding neighborhoods. Changes include:
 - Mixed-use in commercial and office zoned districts
 - More parking options (i.e. shared, use of valet)

- Economic redevelopment districts such as Englewood. (Osprey and Nokomis are cited as possibilities.)
- In December 2003, Sarasota County Government created a workgroup to look at the land development regulations (LDRs) and zoning ordinance amendments that will help facilitate redevelopment efforts. This workgroup consists of developers, consultants, development planners, staff and a community representative. The workgroup is examining issues such as stormwater management, buffers and landscaping, access, and parking and loading areas. One resource speaker summed up zoning regulations as the mechanism for defining two parameters:
 - The type of structure and density (maximum number of units)
 - The intensity or overall size of the structure

The committee is proposing changes to redevelopment regulations for all commercial centers and corridors developed prior to 1981, for example, strip centers and older shopping malls such as those at Bee Ridge and McIntosh or Lockwood Ridge and 17th Street in Sarasota. These proposed amendments were separated from the 2050 process and should be presented to the Planning Commission in the Spring, 2004. This is one part of the Economic Development RMA. The other part, a Planned Economic District (PED) that focuses on a mixed-use zoning district, will be addressed through the 2050 process.

The Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce is collaborating with the Siesta Key, North Port and Venice chambers to ensure that development regulations in the cities and unincorporated county promote redevelopment and are economically feasible. Their work will include an education component that may include speakers, a public forum and written material for existing businesses.

Sarasota County Economic Development Strategic Plan

The Economic Development Strategic Plan, adopted in January 2004, is a collaborative plan that represents the interests of the entire county. Its primary goal states:

Sarasota County fosters the formation, expansion and retention of quality jobs and competitive businesses that maintain or improve the quality of life and lead to a diversified, year-round and sustainable economy.

The four main thrusts of the plan are:

- **Value-added Industry Cluster Development** – The ability to diversify the economy with industries that create quality jobs and build on the unique assets and strengths of Sarasota County. A value-added business often pays above average wages and is one that exports their goods or knowledge outside the region, bringing new income to the community.
- **Innovation and Entrepreneurial Development** – The ability to transform new ideas into new businesses that can compete on an international scale.
- **Local and Regional Cooperation** – Enhanced cooperation that increases external awareness of the county and is better equipped to capitalize on economic opportunities.
- **Business Climate Issues** – A business attitude and infrastructure that supports the county’s enhanced ability to successfully compete in a global and knowledge-based economy.

The implications of this plan for redevelopment and infill center on:

- attracting people
- ensuring affordability
- creating great places
- maintaining a great social environment

The age of computers allows an individual to work anywhere “virtually” and live elsewhere. Our community can attract individuals and businesses that are able to export their goods and services easily. Our challenge is to take care of the needs of this emerging “creative class” in order to develop a critical mass of highly qualified people. This translates into creating a diversity of housing options at reasonable cost, developing live/work/sell settings, creating

attractive and lively urban settings and thinking regionally to meet these goals.

Some cities and states are expanding the availability of affordable housing by allowing zoning for “granny flats” and “in-law suites” in residential districts. (For purposes of this report, affordable housing is defined as housing that does not financially cost burden a family and that is safe and in decent condition. Federal guidelines define affordable housing as costing an owner or renter no more than 30% of the household’s gross monthly income for housing costs, including utilities.) The granny flat option helps provide affordable rental housing in areas where housing is expensive and the housing needs are unmet for students, the workforce and the elderly. Support for granny flats is not universal. Some communities are uncomfortable or resentful of the change in their neighborhoods zoned for single-family residences.

A resource speaker offered three suggestions regarding successful infill and redevelopment:

- Keep economic development objectives in mind.
- Consider different types of regulatory solutions for different areas.
- Educate the public about the importance of economic development and its relation to land use, redevelopment and infill issues.

Neighborhood Planning

Planning occurs at the neighborhood level that influences redevelopment and infill. Neighborhood and planning departments of local government focus on key neighborhood issues in conjunction with residents and neighborhood associations. Though not every neighborhood is represented by an association, many are throughout the county. Table 1 lists the coalitions of neighborhood or homeowner associations and the number of member organizations. The following section reviews neighborhood planning services throughout the county.

Neighborhood Initiative, Sarasota County Government

The goal of the **Neighborhood Initiative** for Sarasota County Government is to improve quality of life in the

neighborhoods and consists of four parts: Neighborhood Planning, Neighborhood Atlas, Neighborhood Grants, and Neighborhood University.

- **Neighborhood Plan:** Plans may be requested by a neighborhood or the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) may identify a neighborhood for plan development. Eventually, staff plans to begin identifying neighborhoods based on some indicators and target those at a tipping point for decline.

The Neighborhood Initiative Coordinating Council (NICC), composed of staff from different business centers, reviews the data provided by the neighborhood and looks at its needs. The council also reviews the resources, i.e. staff time and Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) dollars, required to meet the needs. The council selects the neighborhood, the recommendation goes to the BCC for approval, and plan development begins. Once a plan is drafted, it is sent to the BCC with proposed funding options and a timeline.

Since June 2003, staff have met with five neighborhoods requesting plans and the council advanced four for plan development. The NICC coordinates the CIP projects from different departments within county government. The benefit of creating a neighborhood CIP is its

Coalitions of Neighborhood Associations	Number of Member Associations
Sarasota County Council of Neighborhood Associations (CONA)	50
Coalition of City Neighborhood Associations (CCNA)	31
Nokomis Area Civic Association (NACA)	38
Southwest County Alliance of Homeowners Associations	27
South Venice 2010	15

This does not represent all neighborhood or homeowner associations in the county nor does it include neighborhoods without an association. For example, there are 53 active neighborhood associations in the City of Sarasota and 31 are members of CCNA.

usefulness in helping both the BCC and the public track what is happening in a neighborhood. The county has earmarked approximately \$1.2 million annually for the Neighborhood Initiative. These funds are used for the Neighborhoods Grant program and the balance is for CIP funding.

- The **Neighborhood Atlas** is a geographic information system (GIS) that provides a comprehensive database available online in the future. This collection of objective data is a resource for assessing a neighborhood and developing plans. The layers of data can help create a vision at the neighborhood scale and help predict neighborhoods in decline. Part of the RMA objective in the 2050 was to determine priority-spending areas and the Neighborhood Atlas helps with this. It is currently in development.
- The **Neighborhood Grants** program is a matching (1:1) grant program and 47 grants have been approved as of March, 2004, totaling \$206,194. The purpose of this program is to help neighborhoods improve their quality of life as determined by the residents. The maximum grant is \$12,000 and requires a 1:1 match of dollars or in-kind contributions.
- The **Neighborhood University** also supports an RMA goal of providing resources and support to the neighborhoods. The university will be based on the County’s Citizens Academy concept and curriculum is being developed, based on a survey of neighborhoods’ needs. This resource is still in development.

“We need help. We need a road map. We need the people who have the expertise and the time to join in with the neighborhoods so that we can get to where we need to be.”

Community Activist, The Stories Project

Neighborhood Partnership Office, City of Sarasota

The **Neighborhood Partnership Office (NPO)** is a department in the City of Sarasota. The NPO works as a partner with the 53 active neighborhood associations in the City of Sarasota and has begun outreach to business and

merchant associations as well. It also works with areas where there is no formal neighborhood association. They provide tools for the grassroots leadership and work to build a “hands-on” sense of community.

Functions and accomplishments include:

- Attending neighborhood association meetings regularly.
- Developed a neighborhood resource center, which provides technical assistance and resources to help neighborhoods manage their associations.
- Monitoring the availability of state and national neighborhood funds.
- Publishing newsletters for the associations.
- Created “Organizing Neighborhood Associations” – an association management tool for current and new neighborhood associations.
- Managing a grant program to enhance associations and very small infrastructure improvements. The city budgets approximately \$60,0000 annually for this.
- Developing a Leadership Academy with workshops to cover issues such as interacting with City Hall, and the neighborhood role in the redevelopment process.
- Planning to develop a Regional Neighborhood Summit with workshops, and schedule it to complement the schedules of the Florida and the National Neighborhood Conferences.

City of North Port

North Port is considered a young city. To date, only 15% of the land is developed. There are a few neighborhood associations, and neighborhood concerns are addressed through the Planning and Zoning Department. Currently no strong neighborhood coalitions have been identified. The policies in North Port’s Comprehensive Plan address neighborhoods for new development. The challenge is to protect stable neighborhoods as development and infill occur around them.

City of Venice

The City of Venice has several neighborhood initiative policies adopted through their Comprehensive Plan. While they do not have a specific neighborhood department, there is a Citizen Liaison Officer that responds directly to citizen inquiries. Venice addresses neighborhood challenges and opportunities on a citywide level at City Council meetings. The City Council has used town hall meetings and public workshops to address community concerns, both immediate and longer range.

The City of Venice encourages neighborhood participation with the following:

- The city's website, www.venicegov.com, is used to track the ongoing assessment of development proposals. A neighborhood group can follow the petition through the website information. This helps connect the community and increases their involvement in the decision-making process.
- Neighborhoods and property owners associations can register with the City's Growth Management Department to receive copies of agendas for the City of Venice.

One of the challenges for both Sarasota County Government and City of Sarasota programs is limited resources in terms of both staff and funding. This limits the number of neighborhoods developing plans. One resource speaker observed the need to develop a process that would satisfy the desire for neighborhood plans and require less staff involvement. Access to information is also critical to neighborhood groups in order to fully understand the issues and participate in the process.

BARRIERS TO REDEVELOPMENT AND INFILL

Six overarching barriers to redevelopment and infill were recognized by the Center for Livable Communities:

- Infill and redevelopment projects often cost more to build than those on undeveloped land.
- Policymakers tend to overlook the public cost savings of infill and redevelopment. Nationally over 500 studies have focused on the costs of public services based on

different development patterns. The majority of these studies conclude that it costs considerably less to provide linear services such as sewer, water and streets to a compact, efficient development pattern than to a sprawling pattern.

- Some community members actively oppose infill and mixed-use projects often due to past experiences with poor quality examples.
- Developers often avoid infill or redevelopment projects in inner-city neighborhoods due to the perceived risk of reduced marketability.
- Finance and capital markets can be a barrier to the infill developer. Residential and commercial loan functions are usually separate in a lending institution. Mixed-use projects are not prevalent and are perceived as risky.
- Conventional zoning has encouraged development that is separate resulting in residential areas as separate and defined from commercial and retail uses.

In addition, resource speakers discussed the following barriers in Sarasota County.

Land Cost

Throughout Sarasota County, one of the biggest challenges is the cost of land in a developed area. Over the past six years (1998-2003), property values have increased by 46% countywide. While historically North Port has had land prices more affordable, property values there have increased 87% since 1998. (Refer to Appendix C.)

Lengthy Processes

Generally, any development is full of risk because time is expensive. Interest on money borrowed is paid daily so every day is important in the timeline of zoning, permitting and building. A developer needs tenants and purchasers in order to get funding for a project and they come with an expectation of when a building will be ready for occupancy. The permitting and zoning processes often take many months and the desires of the marketplace may change in

the interim. Sometimes a commercial center will end up abandoned surprisingly soon after it has opened.

Regulations and Lack of Incentives

A speaker noted that regulatory costs have increased over the years and estimated that 20% to 25% of the project costs are related to regulations due to additional requirements and timing issues. In the unincorporated county, codes require that redevelopment projects meet the same standards as new or vacant land construction. Current standards to be met for stormwater retention and treatment require 15% - 20% of the site for retention. For sites developed before stormwater regulations were in effect, this could mean a serious loss of building square footage, creating a disincentive to redevelopment.

Other regulatory factors creating problems include landscape buffers, open space, yards (setbacks), parking, and access and circulation standards. In some cases, road rights-of-way have eliminated buffers, yards, and parking spaces. This results in little motivation for redevelopment.

“It’s far more expensive to develop or even to invest in an infill community than it is to buy it from a farmer somewhere who has 100 acres and all you have to do is rezone it.”

Developer, The Stories Project

The need for flexibility was suggested. For example, insufficient depth of the commercial corridor occurs along parts of some commercial areas such as Bee Ridge Road, Fruitville Road or Tamiami Trail. The strips of land are insufficient for development within current regulations or market standards. Speakers remarked that in order to be redeveloped, these commercial strips would need to be made deeper or wider yet they abut residential areas in many instances. The neighborhoods typically don’t want the strips widened as that would invite commercial development further into their neighborhood. This dilemma creates an impasse with little redevelopment occurring in these commercial areas that have already declined.

The City of Sarasota has some incentives in the Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) for the downtown area and partnering attracts private sector investments. The City of Venice has a quick local process and is viewed as “friendlier” to redevelopment projects. The City of North Port is also considered by some to have easier processes; the challenge in North Port is the task of accumulating enough land for a project.

Resource speakers cited the need for incentives in the unincorporated county. As discussed previously, the October 2003 zoning code update for the unincorporated county contained some changes that support or encourage redevelopment efforts. The changes help provide incentives and a way to balance redevelopment with the surrounding neighborhoods. Sarasota County Government has also created a workgroup that is examining the land development regulations (LDRs) and zoning ordinance amendments that will help facilitate redevelopment efforts.

“We need government to really partner with us so that we can get some of the zoning and permitting and rules and regulations to favor our community.”

Community Activist, The Stories Project

Ineffective Community Process

By definition, a “redevelopment and infill” site is surrounded by developed land with neighbors living, working and playing. There may be neighborhood opposition due to different visions or desire for an area. Neighborhood meetings are required by the City of Sarasota and Sarasota County Government for re-zonings or land use changes. Neighborhood representatives, developers and planners noted that neighborhood meetings are part of the process and serve a good purpose. Yet all echoed frustration with the process. The community often feels they are invited to the table too late in the process and no one is listening to their concerns. The developers and planners experience at times a “moving target” with objections and concerns of the neighborhood changing frequently. The process of redeveloping in an area may remain adversarial if “what’s in it for the neighborhood” is not addressed.

“We need to restore this community to the people that live in it.”

Neighborhood Activist, The Stories Project

Neighborhoods have concerns about property values and the “sense of place” they want to maintain or improve. Property owners have the right to develop their property as permitted by regulations. Developers have the right to a fair and timely process in creating a project. There is fiscal impact on a project when there is neighborhood opposition and extra stipulations on a project may undermine its value, discouraging redevelopment in the community.

A common community concern is the compatibility of a new project with existing neighborhoods in terms of density and design. Some examples of compatibility concerns cited:

- How to improve an existing strip mall next to a residential area
- Trying to infill with a project that doesn’t fit in the middle of a single-family residential neighborhood

It was stated that there is a lack of certainty for both the neighborhoods and developers in the redevelopment process. Neighborhood groups cited working with a developer early in the process as a challenge. Several speakers maintained that listening to the needs of each other and working together were key.

The City of Venice requires the developer to have a pre-application meeting with key staff prior to submission of plans for new and redevelopment proposals. It was stated that staff tends to know residents on a more personal level, due to the smaller size of the city. As neighbors express concerns and ask questions, staff will share those concerns with the developer and encourage them to have a meeting with residents to address their concerns. Also, residents can track a development proposal on the city’s website.

In the City of North Port, the city code does not require neighborhood meetings though they are suggested to developers of infill projects. Most developers see the benefits of such a meeting and they have been held with varied success. Citizen concerns are also addressed through the public hearings process.

STRATEGIES AND TOOLS

Basic Strategies

Several resource speakers discussed basic strategies to successful redevelopment efforts:

- **Engage the community and garner support.** All perspectives are needed in order to create a plan and it’s considered better for local government, planners and developers to err on the side of too much public involvement. Charettes and workshops are methods that have been useful for engaging the residents and businesses in the community. Listening is key; developers and planners must prove they are listening by responding accordingly to the concerns and ideas of the community. Community support is essential.
- **Create a bold strategy.** It’s important for local government, in concert with the community, to develop the long-range vision for an area, and at the same time, begin to tackle and complete some short-term items. This includes analysis of what is working in an area and building on it. West Palm Beach and Boca Raton are examples of successful redevelopment driven by a long-term community vision. In St. Petersburg, the strategy was built on the principle that no part of the city would be left behind.
- **Develop public/private partnerships.** Government can be proactive by creating incentives to engage the private sector; and consider overlay zones as a method to achieve the type of redevelopment desired. Public dollars can help leverage other funds from both public and private sectors. Sometimes a project offered is not the right fit for the community’s identity and vision. The public sector should be firm, but flexible and patient.
- **Improve the public realm.** Effective public sector investment will attract the private sector. Opportunities to improve the public realm include corridor and streetscapes, public spaces and public art. Design is important to creating places the community wants to live in. One speaker suggested that considering local art displayed in the public realm was a way to connect the community. Communities have benefited from

“following the money” and leveraging local dollars with state and federal sources. Numerous examples were provided of successful partnerships with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), which helped the community achieve that “sense of place” desired.

“It’s a real fascinating domino effect that starts to take place. People start to get a sense of pride and a sense of ownership. It’s fascinating because it started with the city first coming in and spending some money here.”

Developer, The Stories Project

Several tools were discussed that help support redevelopment and infill efforts:

- Community process and visioning
- Community Redevelopment Areas (CRAs)
- Corridors/Overlay districts

Community Process/Visioning

The Economic Development RMA stipulated a high degree of citizen participation in the process of determining redevelopment. Numerous resource speakers discussed the need to involve the community in planning for change, beginning with neighborhood and community plans to create a vision at the neighborhood level. Visioning and an ongoing community process were identified as tools to help implement redevelopment strategies. One speaker noted that increasing education of the public on the issues and the processes, as well as opportunities for community discussion are important strategies.

“If you are going to do it right, it needs to be a long-term vision.”

Redevelopment Professional,
The Stories Project

The toolkit, *Effective Public Involvement in the Community Planning Process*, states:

“The best experts on any community are the people who live there. Livable, healthy and vibrant places can be created and sustained only when that place represents the vision and values of the people who live there..... Certainly, the professional guidance of planners, engineers and urban designers is a necessary component of a successful plan for the future, but it is only the community’s vision that will sustain a place over time.”

Across the country, communities prosper when people work together toward a high quality of life. It’s been found that communities that gain support from a cross-section of citizens results in a better project that’s implemented more easily.

Public involvement is defined as a process by which public concerns, needs, and values are incorporated into governmental decision-making. Its goal is better decisions supported by the public as their involvement helps create ownership of the solution. Public involvement goes hand-in-hand with public information, as the latter is necessary to informing the public and keeping them engaged.

Comprehensive public involvement is not one tool. It requires a variety of approaches for issue identification, stakeholder identification, public information, issues analysis and management, formats for discussion, and opportunities for visioning. The goals of these tools are to generate solutions, ease policy implementation and make decisions count.

In Sarasota County our local governments have created opportunities for public involvement in formal planning processes. Public workshops are held and opportunities exist for public input. A number of resource speakers stated that the communications and planning process was less than desirable at the project level. Resource people noted that the challenge was influencing and communicating with the private developer. By the time a neighborhood meeting occurs, the developer usually has a design to present to the residents and may not want to incur more cost to re-work the design. Loss of identity of a neighborhood is often a primary concern.

The city of Glendale, Arizona adopted the **Citizen Participation Ordinance** to improve the communication process between neighborhoods and developers at the project level. The goal was to increase communication and require an applicant requesting a land use change to address the concerns of the residents. It was recognized that consensus would not be reached on every issue, however, dialogue leading to informed decision-making would result. The citizen participation process outlined in the ordinance consists of three steps:

- The applicant prepares a Citizen Participation Plan, with assistance from the government planner, customizing participation and outreach strategies. There is a guidebook available to help develop the plan. This plan took participation beyond one mandatory meeting.
- The applicant implements the plan which may include sending letters, holding meetings and calling property owners. The applicant listens to the issues and concerns and determines the best solution.
- A final report is presented to the decision-makers and includes a description of the process, and the issues raised, noting the resolutions reached or not.

This process has resulted in better information to the decision-makers and better prepared residents, resulting in public hearings that are reasoned and civil.

Envision Utah is an example of a public process that helps residents examine the options and understand the relationships and consequences, intended and unintended, from any given decision. Different scenarios were offered for the community to consider, varying certain criteria to create different levels of urban development. The different scenarios illustrated to the residents that infill is less expensive when development is compacted.

Community Redevelopment Areas

The Community Redevelopment Act of 1969 was created by the State Legislature so that county and municipal governments could address the adverse conditions of slum and blight. It allows local government to designate a **Community Redevelopment Area (CRA)** if that area meets certain criteria such as the presence of substandard or inadequate structures, a shortage of affordable housing, inadequate infrastructure, or inadequate parking or roadways. The purpose of a CRA is to allow a portion of tax dollars to be used specifically for redevelopment purposes in the designated area. One resource speaker remarked on the importance of engaging the community in the discussion about the geographic area of a potential CRA. The outcomes desired by the Legislature include: using appropriate private and public resources to eliminate and prevent the spread of slums and urban blight; encourage private investment; provide for redevelopment; and to provide housing affordable to residents of low or moderate income, including the elderly.

A **Community Redevelopment Agency** administers the programs and plans within the CRA. The agency receives its direction from a board comprised of local government officials and other appointees. The agency develops a plan, which includes the goals of the redevelopment and specific projects designed to achieve those goals.

Table 2: CRAs in Sarasota County

CRA District in	CRA Created	TIF \$ Generated (approximate)	Improvements
Englewood	1999	\$1.9 million (thru FY 2004)	Street improvements, purchase of land for parking, marketing, creation of architectural design guidelines, Storefront Improvement program, landscape maintenance
City of Sarasota	1986	\$17 million	The majority was used to improve public infrastructure such as Five Points Park, the Bayfront Project and Main Street Streetscape.

Sources: City of Sarasota, Sarasota County Government

Funding for these projects begins with **tax increment financing (TIF)**, which is a method for leveraging public dollars to stimulate private investment in the CRA district. The dollar value of all property in the CRA is determined as of a given date and “frozen.” All tax revenues generated from any increases in real property values (over the frozen value) are available to the agency for redevelopment efforts in the CRA district. The tax revenues generated from the frozen property values are deposited in general revenue. The TIF revenue is entirely dependent on the rise in property values in the CRA district and is often limited. However, it may help leverage dollars from other sources, both public and private.

There are 130 CRAs in Florida and two in Sarasota County: Englewood and in the downtown core of the City of Sarasota. CRA designation is approved in North Port and financing options are being explored. Venice has completed the initial steps for a proposed CRA for the Seaboard Industrial Business Park. Throughout the state there are examples of successful CRA redevelopment including St Petersburg, West Palm Beach, Englewood and downtown Sarasota.

By design, CRAs are long-term tools and may be in place for up to 30 years. Throughout Florida use of CRAs has generated concern regarding two issues:

- An overdependence on tax increment financing which diverts too much income from general tax revenues. CRAs are prolific in some areas of the state.
- The return on investment considering the long-term commitment of tax revenues without specific performance obligations.

Some organizations such as the Florida City/County Managers Association are examining best practices and principles for the formation of new CRAs. One source examining the use of CRAs included questions a community should consider before establishing any new CRAs:

- § Is there a clear need for redevelopment / development in the area being considered?
- § Does the proposed redevelopment plan align with the vision and values of a community’s overall strategies?
- § Does the importance of the redevelopment rise to the level of being a priority for public investment, to the exclusion of other projects?

§ Are there other tools that could be used to accomplish the same outcome?

There are different funding mechanisms that may accomplish the same objectives of a CRA. One example is creating a special taxing district and an interlocal agreement. After creating a special taxing district, the county government and the district enter into an interlocal agreement. The special taxing district allows the district to issue debt to fund the improvements; the county agrees to share revenue generated by the project to help repay the district’s debt. From a government perspective, the benefits to this approach include providing greater flexibility, providing more control to government and placing the risk of performance on the developer.

Government sources also noted other techniques that can help spur economic development:

- Comprehensive plan amendments
- Rezoning
- Specialized overlay district
- Corridor studies

Overlay Districts

The purpose of an **overlay district** is to help create the place desired by allowing for certain additional characteristics specific to the district. An overlay district gives developers additional standards that are mandatory. One speaker noted that overlay districts help encourage quality development while providing a level playing field for the developer in that all must follow the standards. Overlay districts have been used successfully in Englewood, Siesta Key, City of Sarasota and the City of Venice to help each community achieve its redevelopment goals. Members of the community and business sectors working with government in the creation of the overlay districts are a key part of the process.

There are several special purpose overlay districts in the unincorporated county:

- **Historic Preservation Incentive Overlay District** is intended to provide design incentives and design flexibility in order to encourage the preservation of historic resources in Sarasota County.
- **Commercial Transition Overlay District** (formerly the Arts and Office Overlay District) is intended to further the goals, objectives and policies of the Comprehensive Plan relating to the development and redevelopment of specific areas identified for certain activities such as home-based office, art gallery, artists studio, bed and breakfast establishments and low-intensity office or professional uses.
- **Main Street Overlay District** (formerly the Englewood Business District) is intended to further the goals, objectives and policies of the Comprehensive Plan relating to the development and redevelopment of a town center identified as part of, and developed consistent with, an adopted revitalization plan.
- **Siesta Key Overlay District** is intended to further the goals, objectives and policies of the Comprehensive Plan relating to the development and redevelopment within those areas of Sarasota County shown on the Siesta Key Community Plan.

The City of Sarasota uses three overlay districts:

- Fruitville Gateway Corridor overlay district (FCOD)
- Conservation overlay district (COD)
- Downtown Residential overlay district (DROD)

The City of Venice has three architectural overlay districts. The Architectural Review Board administers the Historic and Venetian Theme Districts, which provide design controls for residential and commercial uses. The Planning Commission administers the Venetian Gateway which provides standards for commercial and multi-family developments located along the East Venice Avenue corridor.

The City of North Port has one overlay district, the Conservation Restricted Overlay District, along the creek. There is no such district for redevelopment.

EXAMPLES IN SARASOTA COUNTY

Sarasota County is composed of five distinct political jurisdictions: City of North Port, City of Venice, City of Sarasota, the Town of Longboat Key, as well as the unincorporated county under the jurisdiction of Sarasota County Government. Each jurisdiction has its own challenges and opportunities. The following sections provide illustration of some of the different factors and issues that shape redevelopment and infill discussions throughout Sarasota County. It is not intended to be an exhaustive nor comprehensive list of all issues.

City of North Port

Characteristics

- The City of North Port was founded in June 1959 by General Development Corporation (GDC) as a city of 87,000 residentially platted lots, and 200-plus acres available for commercial development in the 76-square miles of the city.
- The two factors that affect North Port's sense of community are the population growth and square mileage. Population has increased from 22,797 (2000 US Census) to an estimated 31,500 (BEBR) in 2003, a 38% increase over three years. The average age of residents in North Port is 40.8 years and the community has changed from a retirement community to one of families with children.
- Several recent voluntary annexations have expanded the city to 102 square miles, increasing the amount of land available for non-residential purposes from 7% to approximately 14%. (This is below the average of 17% cited by the American Planning Association for cities with populations less than 100,000.) One resource speaker noted that it is difficult to discern specific growth patterns in North Port except for a tendency to concentrate within 5 miles around schools.

Issues and Challenges

- To date, only 15% of the land in North Port is developed. It is difficult to amass parcels of land for meaningful infill development because the undeveloped lots

(50,000) are owned by thousands of individuals who don't reside in the area. (GDC development of North Port was during a period in Florida's history when developers sold lots to out-of-state individuals, who were eager to invest in a piece of Florida sunshine.) The newly annexed areas provide undeveloped lands earmarked for non-residential development.

- One speaker noted that infill in North Port will become more of an issue as the city extends services to the community. It is more economical to provide these services from a central core and work out gradually, as outlined in the water/sewer master plan. This may not be possible as there are many undeveloped lots in the city. Currently, 25% of the homes have central water and sewer.
- North Port is concentrating its redevelopment efforts on the US 41 corridor between Charlotte County and the western border of North Port. This area is comprised of aging strip malls which have not shown an increase in commercial property value; inconsistent with the increased property values in other commercial areas of North Port. This area has been defined as a Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) and designation has been approved. North Port is exploring financing options. (See the section entitled Community Redevelopment Areas for more information.)
- The lack of a town center has been identified as important to creating community in North Port. A new city hall will create a central district along with the Community Redevelopment Area. North Port High School was completed in 2003 and the city partnered with the School Board to expand the auditorium facilities in order to increase the school's usefulness to the community.

City of Sarasota

Characteristics

- The City of Sarasota has a population of 52,715 (US Census 2000) and 53 neighborhood associations.

- The city's infrastructure and structures are older than those in the unincorporated county. The median year built for housing in the City of Sarasota is 1957; the median year in the unincorporated county is 1978. Lot sizes are smaller and densities are higher in the city. In the city, assessed property values have increased significantly (25% median increase) over the past four years.
- There are many issues throughout the city including older neighborhoods on the cusp of revitalization, some in the midst of it, others vulnerable to decline; and waterfront properties with mega house concerns. For the purposes of this study, the areas of focus are the Downtown Master Plan and Newtown.

Downtown Master Plan (City of Sarasota)

- Language from the original plan prepared by John Nolen in 1925 is still valid today and ties in with the concept of place making. In the original plan, zoning was either residential or commercial with some mixed-use. Much of the original grid is maintained today and preserving the storefronts is one of the city's goals.
- The Downtown Master Plan (2000) built on the earlier plans (Downtown Master Plan, 1986; City of Sarasota Vision Plan, 1994) and establishes priorities, increases precision and provides a tool for implementation in the form of a new zoning code. The City Commission adopted this plan now known as the Sarasota Downtown Master Plan 2020. Major themes in the new plan are:
 - Connecting the Downtown to the Bayfront
 - A system of walkable streets
 - A balanced transportation system
 - Walk-to town neighborhoods
 - Civic improvements
 - Strategic, pragmatic implementation
- Redevelopment efforts occur throughout the city and the major goal is to implement redevelopment projects that are consistent with the principles in the Downtown Master Plan. This includes:

- providing housing that is affordable to a broad range of household income levels
- providing public infrastructure consistent with the Plan
- expanding the economic base to create increased employment, property tax assessments and economic diversity
- The city’s goal is to provide a walkable downtown core where residents may live near where they work, shop or play. Preservation of existing neighborhoods is also important. The residential areas included in the Plan are the Rosemary District, Park East and Gillespie Park.
- A resource speaker noted that one of the biggest challenges in the downtown core is achieving a varied housing mix. The high cost of land in the city contributes to this challenge.
- A Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) was created in 1986 for the downtown core, an area of approximately one square mile. The general boundaries of the CRA are 10th Street to the north, Mound Street to the south, the Bayfront to the west and a varied eastern boundary that does not extend past School Avenue. The tax increment financing (TIF) district has generated approximately \$17 million since 1986. The majority of the funds has been used to improve public infrastructure such as Five Points Park, the Bayfront Project and Main Street Streetscape. For fiscal year 2004, the TIF revenue is approximately \$4.5 million. All of the dollars are committed for debt service on previous bonds and incentives for projects such as the Whole Foods project. By regulation, TIF dollars may be used only in the designated geographic area from which they are generated. (Refer to the CRA section, for further explanation)
- Newtown is historically an African-American community. It is a distressed area and began to decline in the 1960s. As the economic base declined, a concentration of subsidized housing and social services increased, residents moved away following the businesses, resulting in disinvestment in the entire area.
- The average annual income is \$12,000, however, residents on low fixed incomes (disability, retirement or welfare) are part of that calculation and the City of Sarasota’s subsidized housing projects are also in this area. The average value of homes in the area is currently \$63,400 (Census 2000). This figure is expected to increase in the next year or so.

Plans and Challenges

- There are currently three plans with slightly different boundaries all aimed at stimulating economic growth and improvement to the area (Refer to Appendix D, which outlines the plans and programs and some of the activities and accomplishments.)
- The Newtown Comprehensive Redevelopment Plan covers that portion of Newtown that lies in the City of Sarasota. Sarasota County Government is developing a plan for that section of Newtown in the unincorporated county.
- One of the biggest challenges is lack of funding for redevelopment in Newtown. Newtown is not included in the geographic area designated as the CRA in the City of Sarasota, and therefore, is not eligible to receive redevelopment funds from the TIF. Florida statutes allow for the modification of a CRA district, following specific requirements and needing approval from the governing body.
- Another challenge is ensuring that current residents reap maximum benefits as property values increase. This includes minimizing the displacement of residents and local businesses.

Newtown

Characteristics

- The area in the city named Newtown begins about a mile north of the downtown core and approximately 60% to 70% or 2 square miles are in the City of Sarasota and the balance is in the unincorporated county.

City of Venice

Characteristics

- The City of Venice is a planned community but has a longer history and a different origin than North Port. Venice was planned also by John Nolen in 1926 and was designed as a resort and retirement community. The population in the City of Venice is 17,764 (US Census 2000) and the average age of the population is 68 years.³
- Original community design elements included:
 - Open spaces and plazas
 - Variety of interconnected roads including boulevards, avenues, streets, alleys
 - Enhanced pedestrian access
 - Streetscape plantings
 - Architectural treatment is northern Italian/Mediterranean revival style
- The city drifted from this architectural design for a number of years. However, it has returned to this design and works to advance the other original design elements as well. For example, Venice continues to improve pedestrian access and plan medians and street widths to accommodate plantings. Shopping center design emphasizes elements supporting pedestrian access and creation of seating areas to encourage gathering and passive community uses. Signage is also regulated (height and style) to help create the sense of community consistent with the character of Venice. There continues to be community support to keep density low and restrict the height of buildings.

Issues and Challenges

- Current redevelopment efforts are aimed at embracing the character of the community. The city is currently investing in the downtown area at a rate of \$250,000 to

\$500,000 a year in public improvements such as sidewalks, lights and landscaping. The Venice Waterway Park is an example of public dollars as a catalyst for private improvements. Homes are improving and property values are increasing. This park runs along the intracoastal waterway and it is projected that the Sarasota County trails project will connect to this.

- One of the biggest challenges in the city is redevelopment of the industrial areas along the Intracoastal Waterway. The city has proposed CRA designation for this area.
- The handling of stormwater runoff and the higher cost of redevelopment compared to vacant land development also pose challenges as the city redevelops aging areas. In the past two years, zoning codes have been rewritten in order to simplify them and make them as developer-friendly as possible (i.e. utilities and permits are less expensive and turnaround time has improved). Some resource people from the private sector noted that it was easier to do business in Venice.
- The city has recently amended its land development regulations to permit mixed-use land uses within several non-residential zoning districts in order to encourage tenant space over commercial or professional uses.

Town Of Longboat Key

Characteristics

- The Town of Longboat Key is 11 miles long spanning the length of the key, and is primarily a residential town with about 5% non-residential properties. The northern half of the island town lies in Manatee County and the southern half lies in Sarasota County. The housing stock is about 77% condominium and the town is approximately 98% built out.
- The average age of the population is 68 years and the population swells from approximately 7,600 to 23,000 in season. In the past twenty years the seasonal population has increased 57% . The average annual household income is nearly \$160,000.

³It is a common misperception that South Venice is in the City of Venice. South Venice is part of unincorporated Sarasota County.

- In 1984, the Comprehensive Plan was adopted which reduced the potential future density of the town by approximately two-thirds. Also, the town’s charter was amended to create the need for a charter referendum in order to increase density. Since the 1980s, public sentiment on Longboat has been “no growth,” and a 2002 referendum to allow mixed use redevelopment for existing commercial was defeated. One resource speaker stated that it may be difficult to maintain the current quality and character without some growth.

Issues and Challenges

- The biggest challenge is maintaining commercial and tourism uses. Some of the larger tourist spots, for example the Holiday Inn, are being replaced by condominiums. Some tourist spots are zoned low density or are “nonconforming” meaning that they can’t be redeveloped as commercial. The town’s goal is to keep only enough commercial to meet the needs of the residents.
- There continues to be a demand for more residences on the key and property values are high. The trend is the purchase of a lot and the rebuild of a “mega-house” which overshadows the original homes around it. This affects the character of the key and the neighborhood. This is a trend that affects some neighborhoods in the City of Sarasota as well.

Sarasota County (Unincorporated)

There are over 572 square miles of land in the county and approximately 470 square miles are unincorporated (Census 2000). Approximately 227,669 residents reside in the unincorporated county (Census 2000) living in communities with varied issues that relate to redevelopment and infill. This includes a wide range of residential and commercial areas such as Southgate, Kensington Park, Desoto Lakes, Sarasota Springs, South Venice, Plantation and Warm Mineral Springs. The following areas, Englewood, Laurel, Nokomis, Osprey, and Siesta Key, provide a sampling of some of the issues faced in the unincorporated county.

Englewood

Characteristics

- Englewood is a large community that straddles two counties, Sarasota and Charlotte. It has a population of 16,198 (Census 2000) and the characteristics of a small town. The two Boards of County Commissioners work together and Englewood has an Advisory Board with representatives from both counties in order to coordinate services.

Issues and Challenges

- As local customers were drawn to major shopping centers elsewhere, commercial areas declined in Englewood. Two strategies used for redevelopment in Englewood are the creation of a Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) and the establishment of overlay districts. The CRA district is a combination of the historical commercial downtown area of Englewood and the surrounding residential area.
- Redevelopment efforts have had much community involvement beginning with a series of studies in 1995 and a redevelopment plan completed in 1999. There was opposition to working with the county, and there was community resistance to a finding of “slum or blight,” for the area which is one of the criteria for CRA designation. This redevelopment plan had a commercial focus and did not address residential areas in “greater” Englewood.
- The CRA was created along Dearborn Street and the TIF allows for the increase in property tax revenues (resulting from the increase in property values) to be reinvested in the area. The creation of the CRA and TIF have been useful tools for the revitalization of this area. Since 1999, the TIF has generated approximately \$1.9 million and the funds have been used for capital improvements such as as lighting, sidewalks, and streetscaping.
- There are two overlay districts in Englewood, the Commercial Transition Overlay District (CTOD) and the Main Street Overlay District (MSOD). An overlay district gives developers additional standards to follow that are mandatory for the area included in the district. The overlay helps create the place desired by allowing

for certain additional aspects. Both overlay districts help to create transition areas between residential and commercial zones. These districts allow for such uses as bed and breakfast establishments and allow on-street parking. The overlay encourages “cracker-style” architecture, which is part of Englewood’s identity.

- Private investment has followed the public dollars invested and new restaurants, shops and a mini-mall have been developed. Other projects have been funded by the one-cent surtax.

Laurel

Characteristics

- A resource speaker stated that Laurel and Nokomis are great places to live with businesses, services, and public transportation available for commutes, making this area desirable for the workforce. Laurel has a population of 8,383 (Census 2000) and has been called “a hidden gem that has been polished and is showing its potential.” People moving to the area from outside Sarasota see the value.

Issues and Challenges

- Laurel is an area that has many different facets. Parts of Laurel used to be an area of turpentine stills and “quarters” for African-American workers. When the land and homes were sold to the resident workers in the early 1940s, people purchased what they could afford, sometimes little more than the land the home covered. This area was never platted and there were no roads or right-of-way for roads. It was not customary for government planning rules or ordinances to be made for or enforced in communities of color. This has resulted in infrastructure issues for wells and septic because of the lack of platting and different sizes of the lots. The challenge is to “retrofit,” that is, redevelop the area under the same rules as other areas, despite the built-in obstacles created by the past lack of planning. It’s difficult to redevelop as the lots sizes don’t fit and conform to the current regulations.
- In 1992/1993 a community plan was completed for the Laurel/Nokomis area. A diverse group of neighborhoods was included in the plan. That plan recommended creating an additional plan focusing on

a Town Center in Nokomis. The county government has completed the Town Center plan. Laurel has requested a new plan; however this has not yet occurred.

- There are some zoning issues in this area as well. Certain areas are zoned for single family, and new duplexes are not allowed. There are businesses mixed in among the single-family homes and some are there in violation of current codes. Efforts have been made over the past 20 years to change this but to date this code enforcement issue has not been resolved.
- A resource speaker noted that other communities have created special zoning ordinances that apply to a limited geographic area. This type of exception could help overcome the challenges to redevelopment in parts of Laurel. Another area to explore would be creating some special exceptions to help with redevelopment of affordable housing. For example, Laurel Civic Association’s cost to build a single-family home (including infrastructure) exceeds the maximum project cost allowed in qualifying for SHIP funds.(Refer to glossary for State Housing Initiative Partnership Program.)

Nokomis

- Nokomis has a population of 3,334 (Census 2000). Nokomis Center is a two square mile area located within the greater Nokomis area. Residential areas in the Center vary in home size and price. There are three commercial areas; each with distinct character and US 41 is part of this area as well.

Issues and Plans

- The Nokomis Center is one of the largest zoned Residential Combination (RC) zone districts in Sarasota County. This district signifies a residential area containing conventional single-family and mobile homes. Over half the homes in the center are mobile homes, lacking central water and sewer, and lot sizes do not meet current minimum lot standards. Creating affordable housing is a major concern of the community.
- There are areas of vacant and rundown properties along US 41, Albee Road and Colonia Lane. Commercial development is hindered by insufficient lot size and depth and lack of central water and sewer for many of

the parcels. Existing businesses have parking limitations. The issue is similar to Laurel's, that is, trying to overcome some of the obstacles that interfere with compliance with current codes and regulations.

- The Nokomis Center Revitalization Plan, developed in 2000, provides a framework for the preservation, revitalization, long-term development and redevelopment of this area. This plan was developed with substantial resident input resulting in the following ten priorities:
 - Water and sewer lines
 - Colonia Lane reconstruction and streetscape
 - Waterway dredging and improvements
 - Pocono Trail environmental lands
 - Rails to trails
 - Residential sidewalks and traffic calming
 - Landscaping on US 41
 - Transportation enhancements
 - Code enforcement and community outreach
 - Urban design and community beautification
- Steps have been taken on many of the priorities: water and sewer lines are being installed along US 41; Colonia Lane reconstruction and US 41 landscaping will be timed with the US 41 widening project; the Pocono Trail area and the Railway Corridor have been purchased; sidewalks and traffic calming are in the process; and the new zoning code has an Urban Design component.

Osprey

- Osprey has a population of 4,143 (Census 2000). Most of the homes in the Village Center were built between 1920 and 1960. The replacement of older homes, the development of new subdivisions and other urban growth prompted the need for a community plan.

Issues and Challenges

- Current challenges that relate to redevelopment and infill are: lack of central sewer service, lack of sidewalks and streetlights, absentee landowners, frequent code violations, lack of access to the bay for boaters and fishermen; and cut through traffic in some residential areas.

- The Osprey Revitalization Plan was created in 1999 to provide the structure for the preservation, revitalization and long-term development of the Osprey Village Center. This plan, created with resident input, outlines priority projects to improve quality of life for the residents and promote redevelopment of the Osprey Village Center. Part of the vision is to create a vibrant "Main Street" along Washington Avenue, pedestrian-friendly with local businesses and places to shop. Other local goals include strengthening the business community, increasing community stewardship of residents and locating grants to help elderly residents fix up their homes.
- One outcome of the plan was the creation of the Osprey Revitalization Committee (ORC), which allowed the residents to have continued input into the implementation of their revitalization plan.
- The plan identified the following priority projects:
 - Construction of Bay Street park
 - Water and sewer line extensions
 - New community center
 - Bay access improvements and accessibility
 - Creation of an Urban Design Overlay District
 - Land development regulations and zoning relief in commercial core
 - Assess alternatives to widening US 41
 - Improvements for pedestrians and bicyclists at various roadways including US 41 and Bay Street, Old Venice Road, and Blackburn Point Road
 - Residential traffic abatement
 - Residential sidewalks
- Community members have worked closely with a local developer to bring a super Wal-Mart and establish a village center in Osprey.

Siesta Key

Characteristics

- Most of Siesta Key is residential, with a population of 7,150 (Census 2000), which is estimated to increase to 22,000 during "season." Property values are high and continue to climb; there is no surplus property on Siesta Key. The land value is so high, that some restaurants are being torn down and replaced with condominiums.

Previously, most restaurants on Siesta Key were allowed in areas zoned for multi-family, for example, Chez Med, the Surftrider and the Summerhouse.

Issues and Challenges

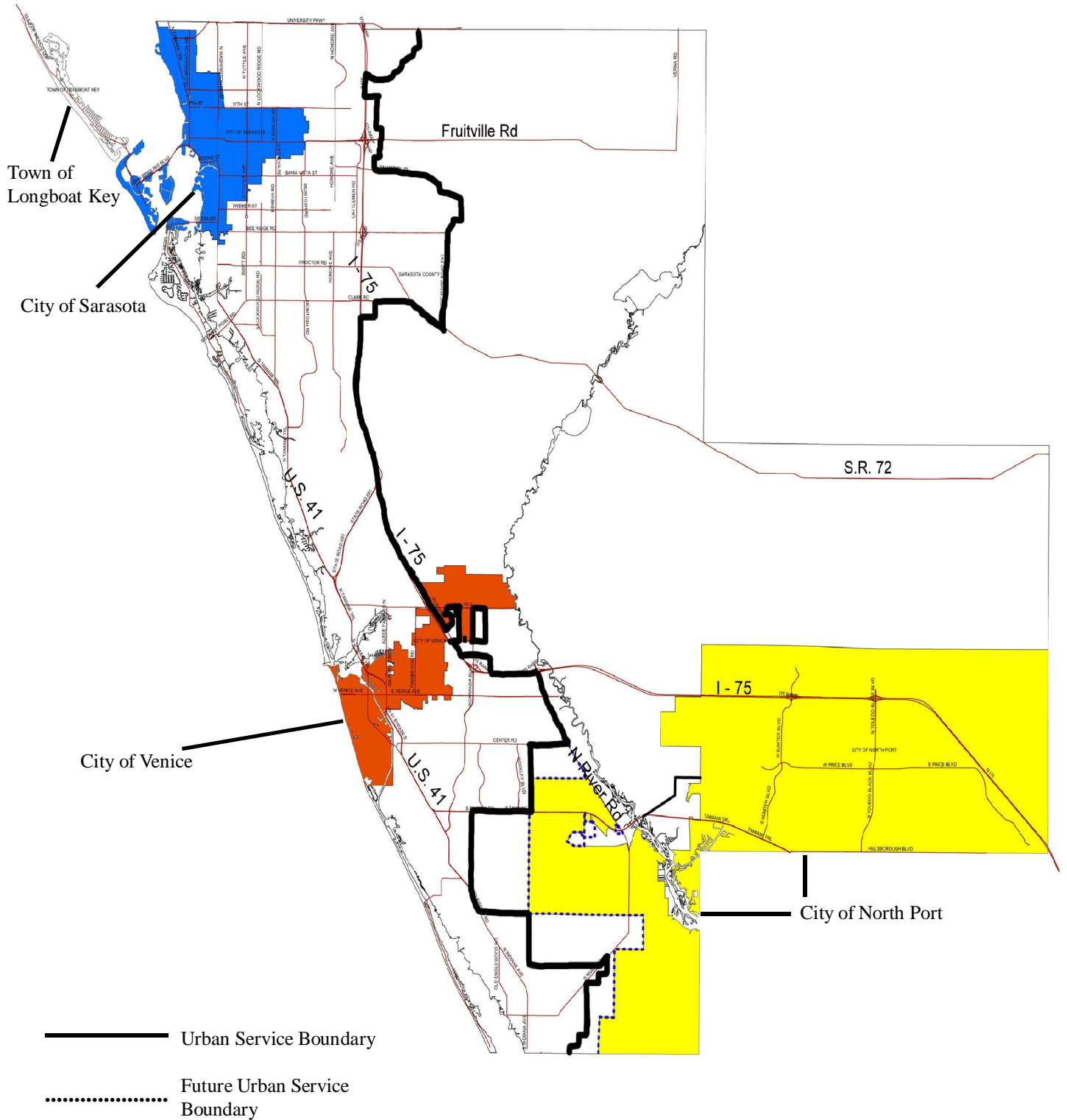
- The Siesta Key community found that there was no vehicle for making changes specific to Siesta Key and to help it develop in a more residential-friendly manner. Some things that were of concern to residents on Siesta Key were not issues elsewhere in the county. The creation of an **overlay district** allowed the residents to maintain the community they desired. Restricting density on the Key was consistent with Sarasota County’s Comprehensive Plan, which mandates that density should not increase on the barrier island of Siesta Key.
- The process of creating an overlay district began with much involvement of the community, residents and merchants, working with county staff. The resulting **Siesta Key Overlay District (SKOD)** addresses these issues important to the community:
 - Pedestrian friendly
 - Signage
 - Dumpster screening
 - Short-term rentals
 - Height limit
 - Walls
 - Parking lots
 - Dog friendly
- Houses have increased in height, in part, due to flood level requirements, etc. This creates a tower wall effect with the next home. A Daylight Plane was created requiring that the structure must taper inward after 25 feet above flood elevation. This reduces the visual bulk of the structure.
- Parking lots may be shelled rather than paved. This helps with stormwater runoff and is also not as hot as asphalt.

The following examples illustrate some of the changes achieved through the overlay district:

- The commercial areas were not pedestrian friendly with parking out front. The SKOD provides for only a two-foot setback from the sidewalk, which is more pedestrian friendly.
- Sign requirements limit the height and eliminate neon signage. These new requirements are geared toward pedestrians and slower vehicular traffic.
- Short-term rentals posed a problem in the residential areas. Siesta Key allowed for rentals of less than 30 days if zoned multi-family because this helps tourism. There were no development standards and this policy

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: SARASOTA COUNTY MAP WITH URBAN SERVICE BOUNDARY



APPENDIX B

Population Density in Sarasota County 1990-2000

Geographic area	2000			1990			Change	
	Popula- tion	Land area*	Density per square mile	Popula- tion	Land Area*	Density per square mile	Change in area	Change in Density
Bee Ridge CDP, Sarasota County	8,744	3.9	2,238	6,406	3.9	1,643	0%	36%
Desoto Lakes CDP, Sarasota County	3,198	1.3	2,538	2,807	2.1	1,337	-40%	90%
Englewood Sarasota County (part)	10,617	6.2	1,718	15,025	9.8	1,533	-37%	12%
Fruitville CDP, Sarasota County	12,741	7.0	1,810	9,808	7.2	1,362	-2%	33%
Gulf Gate Estates CDP, Sarasota County	11,647	2.8	4,143	11,622	2.8	4,151	0%	0%
Kensington Park CDP, Sarasota County	3,720	1.4	2,765	3,026	1	3,026	35%	-9%
Lake Sarasota CDP, Sarasota County	4,458	1.4	3,258	4,117	1.4	2,941	-2%	11%
Laurel CDP, Sarasota County	8,393	5.2	1,610	8,245	4.9	1,683	6%	-4%
Longboat Key town	7,603	4.9	1,546	5,937	4.9	1,212	0%	28%
Nokomis CDP, Sarasota County	3,334	1.7	1,999	3,448	1.7	2,028	-2%	-1%
North Port city, Sarasota County	22,797	74.8	305	11,973	74.8	160	0%	90%
North Sarasota CDP, Sarasota County	6,738	3.8	1,781	6,702	3.8	1,764	-1%	1%
Osprey CDP, Sarasota County	4,143	5.5	760	2,597	2.1	1,237	160%	-39%
Plantation CDP, Sarasota County	4,168	2.5	1,703	1,885	2.5	754	-2%	126%
Ridge Wood Heights CDP, Sarasota County	5,028	1.4	3,518	4,851	1.4	3,465	2%	2%
Sarasota city, Sarasota County	52,715	14.9	3,540	50,961	14.6	3,490	2%	1%
Sarasota Springs CDP, Sarasota County	15,875	3.6	4,390	16,088	3.6	4,469	1%	-2%
Siesta Key CDP, Sarasota County	7,150	2.3	3,120	7,772	2.3	3,379	0%	-8%
South Gate Ridge CDP, Sarasota County	5,655	1.8	3,123	5,924	1.8	3,291	1%	-5%
South Sarasota CDP, Sarasota County	5,314	2.0	2,724	5,298	2.1	2,523	-7%	8%
South Venice CDP, Sarasota County	13,539	6.2	2,179	11,951	6.2	1,928	0%	13%
Southgate CDP, Sarasota County	7,455	2.0	3,648	7,324	2.1	3,488	-3%	5%
The Meadows CDP, Sarasota County	4,423	2.3	1,910	3,437	1.5	2,291	55%	-17%
Vamo CDP, Sarasota County	5,285	1.8	2,981	3,325	1.8	1,847	-2%	61%
Venice city, Sarasota County	17,764	9.1	1,949	16,922	7.4	2,287	23%	-15%
Venice Gardens CDP, Sarasota County	7,466	2.5	2,988	7,701	2.5	3,080	0%	-3%
Warm Mineral Springs CDP, Sarasota County	4,811	2.6	1,834	4,041	2.7	1,497	-3%	23%
All other areas in Sarasota County	61,176	175	350	38,583	173	223	1%	57%
Florida Comparison			296					
Florida Urban Comparison			2,328					
Florida Rural Comparison			36					
National Comparison			80					
National Urban Comparison			2,404					
National Rural Comparison			17					

* In square miles (rounded)

Source: US Census
Prepared by SCOPE 10/6/03

APPENDIX C

Assessed Property Values of All Property: 1998-2003*

	Sum of Assessed Values 1998	Sum of Assessed Values 2003	Absolute Change	Percent Change
County Total	\$25,749,468,108	\$37,710,909,184	\$11,961,441,076	46%
City of Sarasota	\$3,203,461,429	\$6,647,302,013	\$3,443,840,584	108%
City of Venice	\$1,581,321,705	\$2,342,776,196	\$761,454,491	48%
City of North Port	\$862,230,397	\$1,608,297,762	\$746,067,365	87%
Town of LBK **	\$2,048,676,392	\$3,437,535,787	\$1,388,859,395	68%
Unincorporated County	\$18,053,778,185	\$23,674,997,426	\$5,621,219,241	31%

*Adjusted for Inflation (1998 dollar amounts are reported in 2003 annual price levels for the US City Average for all items consumer price index for all urban consumers.)

**Represents that portion of LBK in Sarasota County

Source: Sarasota County Property Appraiser: 1998 and 2003 Property Values, Property Data CD
Prepared by SCOPE

APPENDIX D: Newtown Redevelopment

Plan or Program	Activities and Accomplishments (partial list)
<p><i>Newtown Comprehensive Redevelopment Plan</i> The Newtown Comprehensive Redevelopment Plan (NCRP) is a conceptual plan, developed with the city, the community and consultants. The city's redevelopment office is working with the community to ensure the plan achieves what the community wants.</p>	<p>In 2003/2004, the administrative groundwork has been laid. Next steps are developing individual projects and securing financing.</p> <p>The Gateway project (US 301 and Dr. ML King, Jr. Way) and Fredd Atkins Park project have begun.</p> <p>An open-air market has been approved for Dr. ML King Jr. Way, east of 301.</p>
<p><i>Enterprise Zone</i> The EZ is an area targeted for economic revitalization and offers financial incentives to businesses located in designated areas. This is a state-funded program.</p>	<p>Additional incentives have occurred: Sarasota County government has waived their impact fees for all property (residential and commercial) in this zone.</p> <p>Nineteen homes and one business have applied for a refund averaging \$2,500 each.</p> <p>A micro loan fund has been established for new businesses or the expansion of existing businesses in the zone. The first loan has been granted to an existing business for expansion.</p> <p>The Newtown Business and Merchants Association was established in April 2004 to be a collective voice from the business community.</p>
<p><i>HUBZone</i> A designation from the U.S. Small Business Administration as a historically underutilized business zone, qualifying by a high rate of poverty. Allows small businesses located in the zone to receive preferential consideration for Federal contracting opportunities. The boundaries include the EZ, but are greater. To qualify, 35% of the employees must reside in the zone.</p>	<p>Pedro's Iron Works and South Sun Energy Conservations d/b/a Winsulator, have qualified as certified HUBZone businesses.</p> <p>Both businesses are exploring contract opportunities.</p>
<p><i>Front Porch Community</i> The Front Porch Community Program gives local residents the opportunity to design programs that improve quality of life in their community. This is a state-funded program.</p>	<p>Youth programs were funded in FY 2002/2003 with initial state funds of \$25,000.</p> <p>The 2003/2004 focus is the rehabilitation of senior residences, based on a local needs assessment. Operation Re-Habitat provides minor repairs to homes of senior residents in the designated area. The City of Sarasota committed a \$50,000 match to the state funds of \$75,000.</p> <p>A \$50,000 Mitigation Grant is being used to retrofit homes in the designated area against high-wind storms.</p> <p>Neighbor Helping Neighbor Program uses volunteers from community organizations to paint homes, and works in partnership with the Board of Realtors.</p>

GLOSSARY

Affordable housing – Housing that does not financially cost burden a family and that is safe and in decent condition. Federal guidelines define affordable housing as costing an owner or renter no more than 30% of the household's gross monthly income for housing costs, including utilities.

CIP –Capital Improvement Plan

Cluster development – A cluster is a geographic concentration of firms and other organizations associated with a particular industry. Lead firms comprise the cluster “core”; firms around the core include specialized suppliers, service and infrastructure providers as well as schools and research centers, regulators and trade associations.

Community - Can relate to geographic location and/or social ties. For the purposes of this study, community is defined as people who live in a geographically defined area and who have social and psychological ties with each other and with the place where they live.

CRA – Community Redevelopment Area or Community Redevelopment Agency – A designation by local government that an area meets certain criteria and is eligible for a portion of tax dollars to be used specifically for redevelopment. The agency administers the programs and plans within the CRA.

Density – The amount of residential development permitted on a given parcel of land, typically measured in dwelling units per acre.

Gentrification – The process by which higher income households displace lower income residents of a neighborhood. It has both positive and negative connotations.

GIS – Geographic Information System

Greenfield – Raw, undeveloped lands on the fringes of existing developed areas

Greyfield – A developed commercial site that is in decline or abandoned

Infill - Development of vacant lands in urban areas passed over by previous development.

Infrastructure – The system of public works in a community, including roads, sidewalks, water, sewer and lighting.

Intensity – The size of dwelling units in terms of square footage and height. The combination of density and intensity determines if a project is compatible with the existing development around it.

Neighborhood- As much a feeling as a physical setting. A government agency will often define geographic boundaries; however, it is often best defined by those who live within that area. “Neighborhood” is a term that is relative to the particular discussion and includes residential and non-residential buildings and uses.

Overlay district – A planning development tool that helps create the place desired by allowing for certain additional characteristics specific to the district. An overlay district gives developers additional standards that are mandatory

Pulse nodes – A development term used to denote higher intensity, mixed-use development interspersed by low-intensity land uses or open spaces.

Redevelopment - Revitalization of existing properties by renovation or replacement of structure and/or use resulting in increased value to the community.

RMA – Resource Management Area

Sense of place – The emotional attachments and connections that create feelings of inclusion, connectedness, comfort and security around a location.

SHIP – State Housing Initiative Partnership Program

Smart growth – Development that seeks to revitalize central cities and older suburbs, supports and enhances public transit, promotes walking and bicycling, and preserves open spaces and agricultural lands.

Social capital - Refers to civic engagement, healthy community institutions and norms and values of mutual reciprocity and trust that create the rich web of connections that bring people together.

Special taxing district – This designation allows the district to issue debt to fund improvements.

Sprawl – Poorly planned development characterized by the conversion of natural or agricultural land to low-density residential enclaves, commercial centers and business parks, all separated from one another by roads and parking lots.

Sustainability – Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It balances the needs of the environment, economy and people.

TIF- Tax Increment Financing – A method for leveraging public dollars to stimulate private investment in the Community Redevelopment Area (CRA).

Tipping Point – used to describe neighborhoods at the cusp of change, potentially positive or negative.

ULI - Urban Land Institute – A nonprofit research and education organization that promotes responsible leadership in the use of land in order to enhance the environment.

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