

City of Brooksville
COMMUNITY
REDEVELOPMENT
PLAN

Introduction

The City of Brooksville, through the City Council has recognized the importance of establishing a Community Redevelopment Area. The Community Redevelopment Area boundaries have been outlined through a 1998 Resolution of the Council. The Area boundaries are provided in Map 1 in Appendix B of the City of Brooksville, Revitalization Plan.

This Redevelopment Plan has four objectives:

1. Establish a Redevelopment Agency for the Community Redevelopment Area.
2. Assess the current status of the Redevelopment Area, through the identification of the Area's strengths, needs and deficiencies.
3. Establish Goals and Objectives for the Redevelopment Area.
4. Identify funding sources to accomplish the Goals and Objectives.

The Redevelopment Agency

The Brooksville City Council has established the Redevelopment Agency by using the existing City Council as the first Redevelopment Agency. The powers of the Redevelopment Agency are not covered within the Plan, but are specifically addressed in separate resolutions and ordinances. The Redevelopment Agency will be responsible for implementing the Goals and Objectives of this Plan in a timely manner.

If the Goals and Objectives cannot be achieved, it is the responsibility of the Community Redevelopment Agency to make the necessary adjustments to the plan in order to properly represent the current status of the Redevelopment Area and establish new achievable goals.

BROOKSVILLE'S STRENGTHS, NEEDS AND DEFICIENCIES

In October 1996, the Brooksville City Council hired Robert Johnson with Clark, Roumelis & Associates as a consultant to assess the need for revitalization in the central downtown. Following the study and considerable public input, the City Council adopted a resolution in 1998 creating a redevelopment area (see Map 1 in Appendix B of the Revitalization Plan). The establishment of the redevelopment area was based on a Finding of Necessity report prepared by the consultant. We will utilize the boundaries of the adopted redevelopment area for identifying the City's strengths, needs and deficiencies. The primary findings of the report were as follows:

- **Building deterioration.** A substantial number of deteriorated structures exist and are dispersed over a great proportion of the study area.
- **Site deterioration and deficiencies.** Site deterioration and deficiencies were found in the form of broken sidewalks, inadequate disability access and inadequate on-site parking.
- **Unsanitary conditions.** Unsanitary conditions included accumulation of trash and debris.
- **Non-conforming structures.** Non-conforming unit size was identified in blocks where dwelling units do not meet minimum code standards.
- **Closed buildings.** Closed buildings indicate economic disuse and obsolescence.
- **Vacant lots.** Vacant lots indicate that land is not being put to productive use, which limits the efficiency of local services, limits tax revenues, and can serve as a breeding ground for crime, unsanitary conditions and other social ills.
- **Property maintenance and commercial property code violations.** Violations of property maintenance standards are substandard conditions that inhibit investment and sound development of the area.¹

Land Use

The primary land uses within the redevelopment area are commercial, governmental, retail, residential, recreation, restaurants, financial, light industrial and service businesses. Additionally, the traffic circulation system including right-of-way for streets and sidewalks as well as separate parking lots is a major use of downtown land.

The redevelopment area offers minimal shade to pedestrians. A number of buildings in the downtown have neither vegetation nor storefront canopies to provide shade. As a result, these areas can become hot and undesirable by pedestrians.

1 Johnson, Robert, Finding of Necessity, Brooksville, 1996, pages 1-2.

Structural Character and Conditions

The character of the redevelopment area is represented by three different time periods. The first is the historic period that began around the 1880's and ended around the mid 1930's. This period is seen throughout Brooksville in the form of downtown businesses, banks, the railroad depot, churches, and residential homes. The buildings were constructed in the style of Frame Vernacular, Folk Victorian, Queen Anne, Gothic Revival, Colonial Revival, and Bungalow.² There are a significant number of residential and commercial structures within the redevelopment area that are historically significant. An historic survey that was conducted in 1986 recommends that the City consider establishing an historic preservation element in the Comprehensive Plan to ensure the preservation of these important structures and to provide architectural guidance to owners during renovation efforts

A complete structural survey was conducted in October 1996 by Clark, Roumelis & Associates to assess the current conditions (See Map 2 in Appendix B for study area). A supplemental study was conducted in August of 1998 related primarily to the structures on South Main Street. Based on the data collected, 18% of the structures were deteriorating or dilapidated. These deficiencies, if not corrected, will result in the continued decline of the area. If corrections are not made, the area may be less desirable for the location of new residences and businesses. Additionally, existing businesses and residences may find it necessary to relocate to a better area. The decline in structural conditions within the area will have a direct impact on the taxes collected, which in turn will impact the City's ability to properly maintain infrastructures.³

The Clark, Roumelis & Associates survey concluded the following:

CONDITION	RESIDENTIAL	COMMERCIAL	TOTAL
STANDARD	15	69	84
SLIGHTLY DETERIORATED	17	40	57
DETERIORATED	12	16	28
DILAPIDATED	2	1	3
TOTAL UNITS	46	126	172

Non-Conforming Structures

Clark, Roumelis & Associates used several factors in determining non-conforming structures for the purpose of their study. The factors included inadequate parking, on-site storage and setbacks, and site deterioration. Site deterioration and deficiencies are present in the form of broken

-
- 2 Florida Preservation Services, Preliminary Historical and Architectural Survey: Downtown Brooksville, 1986, pages 25-35.
 - 3 Johnson, Robert, Finding of Necessity: City of Brooksville, Altamonte Springs: Clark, Roumelis & Associates, Inc., pages 4-5.

pavement and sidewalks and deteriorating parking lots. They determined that 23% of the sites in the area had non-conforming uses. The non-conforming uses include limited setbacks, code violations and lack of sufficient on-site parking.

Closed Structures

Closed structures indicate economic disuse and obsolescence. In the study area there were five vacant buildings noted in the October 1996 structural condition survey. Many of the vacant structures are severely dilapidated or have other site conditions that do not make the site attractive for current business development.

Vacant Lots

Vacant lots indicate that land is not being put to productive use, which limits the efficiency of local services and tax revenues. These spaces also serve as a breeding ground for crime, unsanitary conditions and other social ills. In the study area 23 vacant parcels were identified with an approximate value of \$625,000. The availability of vacant land is important to the redevelopment of the area through several means. Commercial development and revitalization will require additional land to meet current structural setback requirements, as well as parking and drainage retention requirements. Furthermore, the available land can be used for additional municipal activities such as parks, right-of-way acquisition, streetscaping, sidewalk and roadway development. The use of vacant land and unoccupied structures needs to be based on an analysis of economic development growth projections and needs.

Housing Development Needs

The City of Brooksville's Growth Management Plan indicates that between the years of 1987 and 2000 an additional 2,450 residences will be needed within the City to meet the population demands.⁴

Revitalization efforts should consider addressing the residential needs in the City. Governmental agencies will need to "reach-out" in assisting development, as opposed to putting up bureaucratic obstacles. Housing needs and developments should be planned through meeting infrastructure needs and encouraging private investment into the City.

Economic Development Needs

The Visioning Committee in 1995 took action to assess the economic and market needs of the downtown by commissioning a market analysis study by Anderson and Associates. This study analyzed needs by shoppers, downtown employees and business owners/operators. The study showed three points:

- ***Shoppers*** — The downtown area should be able to provide shoppers with a unique shopping experience. The retail businesses should attempt to develop and market itself as a regional retail location.

- ***Downtown Employees*** — The downtown employees represent a large market for downtown activities and use during the weekdays.

4 City of Brooksville, Growth Management Plan, 1989, page III-39.

- ***Business Owner/Operators Survey*** — The study identified that approximately 50,000 square feet of second floor space in the downtown that is being underutilized. Additionally, the study stated that it was their belief that if the use of the downtown areas increases, the need for adequate parking will also increase.

Retail Space Demand Analysis

The marketing analysis report does not adequately estimate the amount of retail space that will be needed in the downtown based on the current spending patterns of shoppers and the projected growth of population within the market area. The marketing report recommends the establishment of antique oriented business district. While there are several antique specialty stores, there is no specific analysis to suggest the need for more stores. However, it is important to build on the known community businesses while attempting to create a positive image for future mixed use of the downtown.

Sidewalks

A visual observation of the pedestrian system in the Community Redevelopment Area indicates that sidewalks are insufficient in meeting either the recreational or commercial pedestrian traffic needs. While the need for sidewalks may not be viewed by some as a top priority item, a successful downtown does require safe and convenient pedestrian movement. This need is for both the day-to-day user of the downtown for essential services and for those visitors that come for recreation or shopping.

Approximately 31 percent of the residents in the City are over the age of 65 and 19 percent of the residents are under the age of 14.⁵ This leaves 50% of the City's population between the ages of 15 and 64. These various indicators identify a need for improved pedestrian access to the downtown. The downtown does have "anchor" stores and services that are needed by the community (i.e., Social Security and unemployment offices, library, City Hall, etc.). By improving the pedestrian access to these "anchor" stores and services, this will help improve the future development of specialty stores. The downtown can improve market share by improving pedestrian access for both the residents and the workers in the downtown. Clark, Roumelis & Associates recommended that an additional study of the pedestrian access should be done to completely assess current use patterns and to properly prioritize needs. This additional study needs to consider the needs of the residential neighborhoods surrounding the downtown as a means of delivering additional shoppers. Improvements in the pedestrian access and visual appearance of the walkways can result in additional time spent in the downtown by shoppers.

In order to make an area attractive for pedestrians, improvements to the appearance, or the Streetscape, are necessary. While individual property owners have made improvements to their building facades and, in some cases, upgraded and installed landscaping, there has not yet been a comprehensive program throughout the entire downtown to upgrade the Streetscape. Additional sidewalk improvements are needed but as part of an integrated effort to improve the aesthetics and feel of the downtown.

Another method of increasing the available pedestrian space along street right-of-ways is the construction of a curb “bulb-out” (neck-out or flare). While providing additional space for pedestrian amenities, neck-outs also decrease the width of the street crossing required by pedestrians which provides an additional measure of safety. Typically, bulb-outs occur at street corners and are designed to include pedestrian amenities such as benches, trash receptacles and specialized paving. In downtown Brooksville, landscaping in at-grade planters and bollards, which provide a means of separation between pedestrian and vehicular traffic, can also be used in these areas to further enhance the pedestrian environment.

Drainage

The drainage system in the downtown area is primarily controlled by the inlets and outflows owned by the City. However, the stormwater generated on U. S. Highways 41 and State Road 50 are the responsibilities of the Florida Department of Transportation. Every effort should be made to establish a master drainage plan in coordination with Hernando County government which can be referenced during phased improvements to specific locations. The City has recently started a planning process to properly assess the needs of the City’s stormwater system. Currently, there are several areas in the City that have localized flooding. Until this analysis is complete, no additional estimation of cost or need can be made. However, upon the completion of the study, plans should be made for the necessary improvements.

As renovations are made to the infrastructure (i.e., water lines, sewer lines, sidewalks), consideration must be given to the cost-effective renovation or replacement of decaying or deficient stormwater lines or inlets.

Water Facilities

Small lines are currently sufficient to provide water services to most residential areas. As future development or revitalization occurs, consideration must be given to the continued analysis of the water facilities as it impacts both water service and fire protection capability.

Fire Protection

As additional water service is provided within the Community Redevelopment Area, fire protection should be improved through the installation of sufficiently-sized water lines to meet commercial and residential fire flow requirements. In addition, sufficient fire hydrants and valves should be installed with all new water line extensions. These improvements will have a positive impact on the current fire protection system and will provide an incentive for the location of new businesses and the expansion of existing businesses. Fire protection appears adequate for most of the redevelopment area; however, fire protection capabilities should be analyzed for meeting current and future needs of the City.

Sewer Facilities

A large portion of the City currently has sewer service. A preliminary review of the sewer service indicates that the principle improvements to the system at this time need to be maintenance and expansion as required by future developments. There are some aged lines in the Community Redevelopment Area that will require repair or replacement as can be identified

through various tests. However, additional television inspection of the sewer lines is necessary to assess the amount of infiltration and deterioration that exists.

Parks

The City of Brooksville has many recreational resources. The recreation facilities within the downtown Redevelopment Area include Hernando Park and the Lykes Memorial Library. Both of these facilities are operated by Hernando County. Additionally, the City has Tom Varn Park and Sports Complex and the Quarry Golf Course, which are wonderful areas for recreational purposes. Soon to be completed in the same area is the Jerome Brown Community Center which will provide needed facilities for indoor recreation and meeting rooms.

The City is developing a trail head park for the Rails-to-Trails to be constructed on Russell Street between Main Street and Brooksville Avenue. This park, also known as the Good Neighbor Trail, will be achieved through the conversion of the former Seaboard Coast Railroad line. The State of Florida is a primary developer of Rails-to-Trails paths throughout the State. In addition, Hernando County has become one of the principal locations within the State for current and future development of this unique type of park. The City of Brooksville and the Community Redevelopment Agency can play a critical role in ensuring that access to this linear parcel is not lost to development. Rails-to-Trails' parks in commercial corridors are not a new concept in Florida. The impact in other cities has been an increased development of weekend related retail along the trail corridor. This park should be connected to the downtown and other areas through Streetscape improvements that conform to those proposed in the downtown area. The improvements will provide shade trees, signage and other amenities to attract the park users.

Traffic Circulation

This section will cover the needs of both pedestrians and motorists within the redevelopment area. The majority of available traffic circulation information centers on the downtown as defined by specific traffic count and the City's Comprehensive Plan. A review of the traffic count statistics indicates the following:

- Primary access to the downtown appears to be from State Road 50 to East Jefferson Street, with secondary access from U. S. Highway 41 down Broad Street.
- Available public parking is in close proximity to high traffic areas where the need for parking exists.⁶
- There are two primary intersections within the center of downtown: Main Street and East Jefferson Street and Main Street and Broad Street.

These findings are important to other aspects of traffic circulation, parking and retail marketing of the downtown and will impact the resolution of other redevelopment related issues.

Because of the two highways that run through Brooksville, traffic moves fast. As a result, many potential shoppers to the downtown are whisked around the downtown area without realizing it exists. There is a need for both improved signage along the highways (U. S. Highway 41 and State Road 50 and a primary North/South corridor developed on Main Street).

6 Note, the sufficiency of existing parking for the traffic being generated is discussed in the subsection on parking.

In addition to the streets that service the traffic study area, there are several roadways that serve as gateways that require improvement. These gateways require traffic calming and appropriate signage. In addition, the gateways should be considered for appropriate streetscaping facilities that are consistent with those proposed for the redevelopment area. This conformity of design will provide a “sense of place” and help define the area. The gateways only include the existing City right-of-ways, not the adjoining properties. The gateways are generally defined as follows:

1. Howell Avenue: This northern gateway proceeds from the northern City limits into downtown.
2. Main Street: This southern gateway proceeds from the southern City limits into downtown.
3. East Broad Street/U. S. Highway 41: This northeastern gateway proceeds from the northeastern City limits into downtown.
4. West Broad Street/ U.S. Highway 41: This southwestern gateway proceeds from the southwestern City limits into downtown.
5. West Jefferson Street: This western gateway proceeds from the western City limits into downtown.
6. East Jefferson Street / SR 50A: This eastern gateway proceeds from the eastern City limits into downtown.

The above gateway descriptions are approximate. An accurate description of the gateway areas is provided in the proposed boundary description. The redevelopment area maps do not specifically identify the gateways due to size, but they are included in the redevelopment area.

Improvements to sidewalks and improved pedestrian accessories (i.e., trash cans, benches, shade trees, etc.) will result in improved pedestrian access to the downtown by neighboring residential areas. In addition, there is limited “express parking.” This type of parking is the ability to park within 20 to 100 feet of the store the vehicle operator wishes to visit. As a result, many motorists use centralized public and private parking lots. The aesthetics of the parking area and the walkway to the intended business are important to the pedestrian/motorist. In addition, the feeling of safety within the parking area, walkways and roadway crossings are important to the potential downtown patron. Therefore, it is important to prioritize pedestrian-related improvements based on the vehicle traffic counts and location of public and private off-site parking facilities.

The ability to improve safety to pedestrians within highly congested areas can be in the form of aesthetically pleasing items that form either an actual physical or psychological barrier between vehicles and pedestrians. The physical barriers can be in the form of landscaping, bollards, street furniture and planters. Psychological barriers can be in the form of small landscaping, signage and designated crosswalks on roadways that utilize color and texture of material to signify the area as a pedestrian zone.

Parking

The current needs for parking are not based strictly on the number of on and off-site spaces currently available, but are also tied to the need to improve the downtown landscaping (which would promote greater use by pedestrian traffic); the safety of available parking on existing

major roadways; and the grand-fathering of existing land use which may adversely impact the availability of downtown parking. The City of Brooksville utilizes a traditional parking strategy in which parking requirements are tied to zoning, specific structural use and the size of the structure being used.

The current planning system requires the utilization of prime commercial property for parking, hindering the expansion or development of many of the vacant parcels in the downtown. A reverse strategy has been utilized in other communities that were facing decline in which the parking space requirements were minimized, allowing for greater in-fill. The result is the creation of greater pedestrian traffic due to the increased distance of vehicle parking from the destination. However, this strategy does not work unless aesthetic improvements are made to make the experience pleasing for the vehicle driver/pedestrian. With the increased growth and tax revenues, parking concerns and planning can be dealt with as an infrastructure need. Centralized parking lots, which minimize the use of prime commercial property, could be purchased and improved through funds generated by the Tax Increment Financing District or through special assessments on the business district that created the need or other identifiable funding sources/methods.

It is important to analyze the need for parking in any downtown when discussing redevelopment. The non-downtown portion of the redevelopment area is not subject to the level of build-out or congestion as the downtown. Therefore, for the purpose of this report, the parking analysis will focus on the downtown as defined in the Anderson & Associates' marketing plan. Shoppers have indicated that there is insufficient parking in the downtown area during the weekdays. The problem appears to be most acute during those periods when the Courthouse is active.

TABLE 3 DOWNTOWN PARKING LAND ANALYSIS	
Property Use	Size (Sq. Ft.)
Total Area of the Downtown	510,000
Right-of Ways and Streets	-247,500
Commercial/Government Structures	-216,750
PROPERTY AVAILABLE FOR PARKING	45,750

In order to determine the amount of parking that is required in the downtown, an assessment of the land that is available for parking must first occur. Table 3 identifies the land that is available for parking spaces. Table 4 calculates the number of parking spaces that can be created with the available land in the downtown or that already exists. A count of the number of private parking spaces was not utilized in this study due to the number of private parking lots that use standardized parking designs. As a result, this study focuses on determining the land mass that is currently being used for parking or could be used for parking.

TABLE 4 DOWNTOWN PARKING SPACE ANALYSIS (BASED ON 100% OCCUPANCY)		
Property Use	Size (Sq. Ft.)	Parking Space
Property available for private parking	45,750	
Estimate land use per parking space	300	
Parking spaces that either exists or could be developed on private property		153
Off-site private parking		155
Existing public parking in the downtown		160
Estimated need for parking spaces based on industry standards (based on building Sq. Ft.)		-946
DOWNTOWN PARKING SPACE DEFICIT		(479)

Currently, the downtown core has 160 public parking spaces and the private property in the downtown can produce approximately 308 parking spaces. Using a standard guideline for off-street parking requirements for retail businesses (One parking space per 200 square feet of gross floor area), a parking deficit of 479 spaces is estimated. However, this parking needs' calculation assumes that all structures in the downtown are being fully utilized. This calculation does not assume that the 50,000 square feet in upper floor space is being used for active commercial use. A more detailed analysis should be considered that uses the various parking requirements for the various land uses in the downtown (i.e., restaurants, churches, businesses, etc.).

Regardless of the limitations of this parking analysis, the downtown does face a parking need at this time, which will only continue to get worse as improvements generate more vehicle traffic. The utilization of off-site parking for downtown employees should be considered and a new needs' analysis should be completed, since the Anderson & Associates' report was completed several years ago.

General Streetscape

An important part of redeveloping any area is its appearance. Many aspects of appearance will improve as buildings are renovated, as revitalization takes place for economic reasons, as streets are repaired and the infrastructure is upgraded. However, some aspects of the appearance of a downtown must be given special attention. Public improvements in a downtown are often concerned with the appearance of the Streetscape. The Streetscape is the combination of all elements in a pedestrian or vehicular area, usually the public right-of-way, and includes street furniture, landscaping, sidewalks, lights, signs, and the relationship of each of these elements both to each other and to adjacent buildings. Standards need to be adopted for the redevelopment area with regard to these elements of the Streetscape. For the purposes of this discussion, the Streetscape includes the street furniture (items such as benches, planters, banners, bollards, bike

racks, trash receptacles, kiosks, etc.), landscaping (trees, tree grates, guards and irrigation), and lights. Encouragement should be given to continue this theme into public and private alleyways. The Streetscape plan is composed of four categories of elements, as described below:

Street Furniture

The street furniture program will include a variety of elements, including benches, tree grates, bicycle racks, trash receptacles, bollards, including those bollards with integral lighting for illuminating intensive pedestrian activity areas and street lighting. All seating could be specially coated to reduce heat transmission in hot summer months.

Paving Materials

The paving program will include resurfacing sidewalks and roadway crosswalks with decorative paving (e.g., brick, concrete pavers, etc.). In addition, all paving materials and sidewalks will meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Specialized paving (i.e., brick or concrete pavers) and concrete should be utilized for sidewalk replacement. Concrete utilized for paving in these areas will have broom, rock salt or other approved textural finish and should comply with all applicable design specifications as established by the City of Brooksville. Both pavers and concrete should be utilized to identify/accent pedestrian walkways, crosswalks and seating areas. Concrete should serve as the primary replacement material with paver accents when feasible.

Banners and Signage

Another primary objective of the Streetscape plan is the development of an enhanced and unified identity for the downtown area. One of the key design elements that should be utilized to achieve this objective is the implementation of a banner and signage program throughout the project area. The program should include decorative banners:

- Downtown Banners
- Seasonal/Special Event Banners
- Downtown Entry/Welcome Signage
- Public Parking Signage
- Enhanced Street Name Signage

Designated banner poles will require field verification before banners, brackets and arms are ordered to make sure that the poles are suitable for banner display (i.e., banners should not conflict with trees, utility wires, traffic signals, signs, etc.).

The Downtown Banner is intended to remain up all year and will provide a consistent identity feature for downtown. Its design will reflect the character of historic downtown architecture and will use images, type styles and graphics which are compatible with Brooksville's historic character.

Seasonal/Special events' banners will stand opposite the downtown banners and will provide the opportunity to announce special events and to celebrate the change of seasons. They will be designed so that the colors are compatible with the Downtown Banner.

Colorful Downtown Entry/Welcome Signs should be placed at the entrances to the downtown area to help define the downtown area, welcome visitors, and direct them to public parking areas. On the way to parking areas, visitors will encounter directional signage and parking area identification signs in the same colorful, historic style as the entry/welcome signs.

Existing street name signs located within the project area could be replaced with signs that display a logo next to the street name and have a colored background that differentiates them from the City's other street name signs.

Landscape Specifications

Consistent landscape design, installation and maintenance will play a crucial role in the successful implementation of the Streetscape plan for the redevelopment area. While the intensity of landscaping enhancement may vary among the different districts, the design theme will remain consistent throughout the project area.

A design with a strong repetitive nature which utilizes a limited number of canopy tree species should be utilized for both right-of-way and parking area landscaping. Plant materials should be selected from a recommended list. These materials will be selected based on their ability to withstand the urban environment; their ability to enhance the pedestrian environment; and their overall aesthetic value. "Preferred" plant species, based on their success in the Brooksville area, should be selected in a follow-up document. Indigenous plant materials which have low water and maintenance requirements should be utilized where appropriate. As is typically the case with landscape design, a thorough analysis of the existing micro climatic conditions will be required to determine plant material suitability.

When feasible, the average spacing of canopy trees along a typical block face should be thirty (30) feet from the center. Additional tree plantings can be used in outdoor plaza spaces, cafe areas and at bulb-out locations; spacing in these areas will depend on the growth characteristics of the selected tree species. All at-grade planters will include an appropriate ground cover and/or shrubs. Irrigation to trees, shrubs, ground covers and flowers will be most efficient when utilizing low volume drip systems, spray, or bubbler emitters. Each system will be designed to provide full coverage of planted areas with minimal over spray to non-planted areas.

During the design of the downtown Streetscape program, particular attention will be placed upon locating shade trees to minimize conflicts with any overhead lines (for those that cannot go underground) and views to building signage.

Maintenance

All the proposed Streetscape enhancements in the Streetscape plan will require routine maintenance to ensure longevity. Landscape areas will be maintained to present a healthy and orderly appearance and will be kept free of refuse and debris. This includes pruning, fertilizing and replacing plant materials as needed as well as taking preventive measures to ensure that plant

materials are not damaged due to chemicals, insects, diseases, lack of water or improper pruning techniques. All Streetscape trees should be pruned in such a manner so as not to alter their natural form or character. Additionally, street furnishings will require cleaning and paver/concrete areas may require cleaning and resealing on occasion. Maintenance of the irrigation and special events electrical systems and installation and replacement of banners should also be included as part of the maintenance program.

Intersection Improvements

The corners of Broad Street and Main Street and Jefferson and Main Street are the center points of the functioning downtown. This is the site of major north-south traffic flow from U. S. Highway 41 to State Road 50. These intersections currently produce a considerable amount of vehicle and pedestrian traffic should be upgraded with aesthetic barriers previously discussed. These intersections need pedestrian crossing designations on the roadway (i.e., paver blocks or bricks) to provide a physical and psychological signal to motorists, to slow down. In addition, the intersections can be aesthetically enhanced by removing the overhead power and traffic signalization poles at the various corners. This can be achieved by placing the power lines underground.

Historic Preservation

Currently there are at least 26 structures within the redevelopment area that are considered historic and should be preserved. As improvements to both infrastructure and buildings are considered as part of this plan, consideration and care should be taken to preserve and restore these historic structures. It is important to coordinate all renovations of historic structures with the Florida Department of State. In addition, the City may wish to pursue establishing an historic district. Upon establishing an historic district, design guidelines can be adopted to ensure the preservation of the historic structures.

Commercial Facade Improvements

Commercial facades are an important aspect to an overall theme or aesthetic design. Currently there has been no government effort to establish a design theme for the downtown. However, as the commercial corridor continues to develop and in-fill is completed, the City and the commercial business community will not be able to afford to make the design theme improvements. Therefore, it is necessary to both modify the existing zoning regulations to encourage or require certain design constraints. The City should establish a public/private partnership to assist businesses in making the necessary facade improvements. A loan pool of local lenders should be established to provide preferential consideration to businesses located within the redevelopment district. Additionally, assistance can be provided to businesses through assistance and identification of available state and federal grants for individual interests. Based on a preliminary field review of the businesses located within the redevelopment district, there are at least 15 businesses in the redevelopment area that could utilize facade improvements of one kind or another. An additional 15 to 20 businesses may desire to modify the facades for architectural or aesthetic reasons. These improvements can be in the form of new entrance ways (disable accessible), canopies, and even complete facade redesigns. The design of the facades should be directly related to the overall theme that is utilized for the downtown.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

GOALS

This section specifically identifies the overall Goals for revitalization in the City of Brooksville. The Goals are broad and general in structure. The listed Objectives that follow are more specific and identify activities necessary to achieve the desired Goals. Measurable outcomes are identified where possible and completion dates have been proposed within the Objectives.

GOAL 1: Public Health and Safety — Foster an attractive, safe and comfortable environment that is conducive to activities during the day and evenings.

GOAL 2: Supporting Goals — Ensure the provision of adequate and efficient public services to support additional development.

GOAL 3: Beautification/Property Enhancements — To increase the identity and enhance the visual impact of the downtown area and to thereby establish the downtown area as a focal point through development of an aesthetically pleasing and somewhat uniform image.

GOAL 4: City Codes & Development Goal — Improve processes, codes, and policies adopted by the City of Brooksville to encourage renovations, development, growth and revitalization throughout the City.

GOAL 5: Economic Goal — To diversify the area's economic base, increase sales receipts and heighten business profitability. To enable growth and development within that economic base. To establish the downtown area as a focal point for the community to attract more shoppers and visitors for longer periods of time and from a wider geographic area.

GOAL 6: Recreation Goal — To improve and enhance the recreational areas that are available to the City residents and visitors. To attract and increase the number of visitors in the downtown area through recreational facilities and recreational/cultural events.

OBJECTIVES

PUBLIC HEALTH & SAFETY

GOAL 1: Foster an attractive, safe and comfortable environment that is conducive to activities during the day and evenings.

It is in the best interest of the community for citizens to keep a watchful eye on their neighborhood and to facilitate police efficiency. To that end community involvement should be encouraged and crime watches established where needed. The City should review procedures

used for fire and police protection to ensure that these services are coordinated where they overlap. To facilitate crime prevention, streetlight assessments should be made. Sidewalks should be assessed for safety of existing and addition of new ones where foot traffic is forced into the street particularly in neighborhoods surrounding schools.

Objective 1.1 Assess the status of streetlights and sidewalks within the Community Redevelopment Area.

Objective 1.2 Identify funding sources for the Community Redevelopment Area to add sidewalks and streetlights that are deemed lacking and will assist with applications for those sources.

Objective 1.3 Analyze fire protection capabilities for meeting current and future needs of the Community Redevelopment Area. Upon conclusion of the review and analysis, establish a plan to correct deficiencies and plan for future needs.

Objective 1.4 Develop community crime watch programs where deemed appropriate within the Community Redevelopment Area.

SUPPORTING GOALS

GOAL 2: Ensure the provision of adequate and efficient public services to support additional development.

Infrastructure improvements must be made to assure that renovations, development, growth and revitalization can occur within the Community Redevelopment Area.

Objective 2.1 A comprehensive analysis of existing infrastructure should be done to determine each system's capacity as it relates to existing land uses and possible increases in land use intensity.

Objective 2.2 Repair old and replace undersized water and sewer lines as needed and in conjunction with other construction projects within Community Redevelopment Area.

Objective 2.3 Analyze the feasibility of underground installation of aerial utility facilities in certain areas within the Community Redevelopment Area.

Objective 2.4 Conduct additional traffic circulation studies of the downtown and surrounding areas to determine the best circulation patterns within the Community Redevelopment Area by 1999.

Objective 2.5 Identify funding sources to facilitate the improvement, maintenance or expansion of the current system of sidewalks and bike paths and will assist with applications for those sources within the Community Redevelopment Area.

Particular attention should be given to connecting the Good Neighbor Trail to other areas of the City and any other travel interests of recreational visitors that are projected.

Objective 2.6 Complete a parking needs' analysis of the Community Redevelopment Area and develop an effective management system for the current parking system by 2000. This should include unified signage that is distinctive to the downtown and a parking lot improvement/maintenance program.

Objective 2.7 Develop a master plan for accessibility improvements for the disabled to and within the Community Redevelopment Area by 2000. The master plan should update and include current analysis conducted on City owned properties.

BEAUTIFICATION/PROPERTY ENHANCEMENTS

GOAL 3: To increase the identity and enhance the visual impact of the downtown area and to thereby establish the downtown area as a focal point through development of an aesthetically pleasing and somewhat uniform image.

This is a multi faceted initiative including reconstruction of intersections, bricked pedestrian walkways, landscaped buffers at intersections and sidewalks, old fashioned street lamps, antique-style benches and decorative trash receptacles. It also includes brick recovery of traditional brick street buried under asphalt, facade renovations and landscaped parking areas. The amenities are designed to entice public appreciation and use and are intended to slow the rate of motor traffic making it pedestrian friendly.

This section is divided into six areas: Streetscaping, Brick Recovery, Landscaping Standards, Preservation/Restoration, Facade Grants, and Signage.

STREETSCAPING

Objective 3.1 Increase the visual attractiveness and unity of downtown Brooksville and the Community Redevelopment Area by identifying a Streetscaping theme by 2000.

Objective 3.2 Begin a phased program by 2000 for streetscaping with emphasis on pedestrian orientation in downtown Brooksville through landscape features, pedestrian-scale lighting and street furniture.

Objective 3.3 Begin a visual enhancement program through the elimination of visual pollution and by screening surface parking areas with landscaping or other means within the Community Redevelopment Area by 2001.

Objective 3.4 Develop unified signage that is distinctive for the Community Redevelopment Area by 2001.

Objective 3.5 Identify funding sources to procure and install pedestrian oriented aesthetic improvements and submit applications for those sources.

Objective 3.6 Review city services for provision of adequate sidewalk maintenance and landscaping for the Community Redevelopment Area by 1999.

BRICK RECOVERY There are many brick streets within the Community Redevelopment Area that have been covered with asphalt. Restoring Brooksville's historic streets necessitates the original brick's resurrection to ensure quality, longevity and historic preservation. Community residents and civic groups could participate in the resurrection program with community work days. Any brick recovered should be utilized.

Objective 3.7 Examine asphalted brick streets within the Community Redevelopment Area in need of repair to determine their potential for brick recovery. Future planning should incorporate brick recovery within the city's pavement management program.

LANDSCAPING STANDARDS

Objective 3.8 Consider policies to encourage shade trees and other canopy features in the pedestrian areas of the Community Redevelopment Area by 2001. Furthermore, the identification of funding sources to promote the use of shade trees within the City and on City rights-of-way must be sought and application made.

Objective 3.9 A landscape plan should be designed for both right-of-ways and parking areas within the Community Redevelopment Area.

PRESERVATION/RESTORATION Standards should reflect the time period most indicative of a particular zone's history. A phase-in program should be considered for existing non-conforming properties within the Community Redevelopment Area. This program could include some type of funding assistance such as facade and landscaping grants, tax breaks and fee reductions. Owners of income-generating properties who undertake upgrades may qualify for up to 20-percent in federal tax breaks under the Federal Investment Tax Credit program.

Enforcement of those standards could be overseen by an Architectural Review Committee. If a Committee is created, it should include persons from the following professions: architecture, engineering, development, historical preservation (museum) and other lay people, particularly those with experience and knowledge of history and renovation.

Objective 3.10 Consider the feasibility of drafting specific architectural and design standards for historic zones. Establish guidelines for preservation and restoration of historic assets.

Objective 3.11 Research tax breaks and fee reductions used in other cities and consider utilization within the Community Redevelopment Area. Implement where feasible and communicate existing state and federal tax breaks for historical restoration projects to the citizens.

Objective 3.12 Encourage the renovation of buildings to promote commercial office and residential facilities within and around the downtown redevelopment area. Specific review and development should be sought in the renovation of second story building space. The downtown area has a considerable amount of second story space that is currently empty or not used for revenue generation. A program that would work to encourage the development of this space for either commercial or resident use could greatly assist property owners in revenue generation and enhance the downtown area.

Objective 3.13 Work with local lending institutions to establish a loan pool program to provide local businesses and residents with assistance in rehabilitating existing structures.

FACADE GRANTS Facade grants have become an integral part of most city redevelopment plans with the average grant ranging between \$2,000 and \$5,000. Other options rest in facade banking or facade easements. Facade banking allows property owners to lease the front of certain structures to the City or Community Redevelopment Agency for improvement or maintenance. Similarly, historic facade easements may be donated to the Florida Trust which then accepts stewardship for that asset. The Trust also considers conservation easements.

Objective 3.14 Analyze the need for facade improvements to commercial structures in the downtown area by 2000.

Objective 3.15 Identify funding sources and assist with applications that will assist property owners with renovations to exposed front, back and sides of structures by 2002.

Objective 3.16 Investigate the feasibility of facade banking and facade easements within the Community Redevelopment Area.

Objective 3.17 The need for facade improvements should be considered by the City Council during the budget allocation of the community redevelopment trust funds and during at least one public hearing related to the Small Cities Community Development Block Grant application process.

Objective 3.18 The City of Brooksville will review the need for facade improvements to government structures and will co-ordinate with other government entities regarding the need for improvements to their structures.

SIGNAGE This section is divided into two areas: Gateway Welcome Signs and Other Signage.

Gateway Welcome Signs

Eye-catching entry signs will be located at strategic entry points into the city and into the Community Redevelopment Area. The signage must be large enough to be readable and artistic enough to be impressive. The signs will be heavily landscaped with seasonal and year-round vegetation including azaleas, dogwoods and flowering perennials.

Donations can be sought to help cover the cost of the project and volunteer labor should be available for construction. A number of people have already volunteered to assist with landscaping and a local garden group could be solicited to handle routine maintenance. Other charitable groups such as the Boy/Girl Scouts or retirees would be approached for the construction phase.

PRIORITY LOCATIONS:

1. Apex of East Jefferson Street (Hwy. 50A) and Summit Road (Winter 1999)
2. Apex of Howell Avenue and Broad Street (U. S. 41 N) (Spring 2000)
3. West Jefferson Street (Hwy. 50A) and Cortez Blvd.(Hwy 50) (Spring 2000)
4. U. S. Highway 41 South (Mid 2000)

Objective 3.19 Obtain any necessary easements/right-of-ways required for the entry signs by 1999-2000.

Objective 3.20 Plan and organize construction of "Welcome to Downtown Brooksville" signs and landscape entryways by 1999-2000.

Other Signage

Objective 3.21 Study the need for distinctive signage to focus attention on the assets in the Community Redevelopment Area.

Objective 3.22 Identify funding sources and methods of implementation for improved signage and prepare applications for those sources.

CITY CODES & DEVELOPMENT GOAL

GOAL 4: Improve processes, codes, and policies adopted by the City of Brooksville to encourage renovation, development, growth and revitalization throughout the City.

This section is divided into two areas: Zoning and Development Criteria and Development Incentives.

ZONING AND DEVELOPMENT CRITERIA A thorough examination is needed to determine what blockades are in place that hinder new businesses and residents from moving into the City; particularly the downtown district or the Community Redevelopment Area. Specifically, review and development should be sought in the renovation of second story building space. The downtown area has a considerable amount of second story space that is currently empty or not used for revenue generation. A program that would encourage

development of this space for either commercial or residential use could greatly assist property owners in revenue generation and enhance the downtown area.

Objective 4.1 Review and revise existing codes and policies to ensure the encouragement of quality development and preservation of our historic assets. At the same time, the City should promote and encourage revitalization of substandard or deteriorating housing and commercial property through code enforcement and abatement.

Objective 4.2 Review and revise policies and procedures regarding code enforcement to ensure an aggressive posture, particularly with regard to run-down properties that devalue adjacent lots and the overall quality of Brooksville.

Objective 4.3 Create development incentives in the downtown redevelopment area to achieve the desired mix of land for commercial and housing uses.

Objective 4.4 Provide adequate public services and amenities in the City (such as water, sewer, parking and streetscaping) to encourage private investment.

Objective 4.5 Review and revise policies and procedures to maintain and enhance existing development and encourage an additional 25 percent development of undeveloped or underdeveloped property within the Community Redevelopment Area by 2004.

Objective 4.6 Identify funding sources to assist in the elimination of blighted and dilapidated structures within the Community Redevelopment Area in order to improve appearance of lots/parcels by 2002 and will assist with applications for those sources.

DEVELOPMENT INCENTIVES Investment initiatives that bolster local business and residential activity are needed within the Community Redevelopment Area. Options vary in extent from property ownership and leasing, to encouraging building improvements by property owners, to recruiting developers who will comply with local revitalization standards. Such initiatives are negotiated efforts.

There are a number of incentive options worth exploring to help stimulate downtown business activity. Incentive programs must be managed by the agency which regulates them and many of these options would be coordinated with existing economic groups.

Objective 4.7 Reconsider the establishment of an economic tax exemption program. Significant public education should be provided to facilitate citizen acceptance. (See further discussion under Financial Considerations for Revitalization)

Objective 4.9 Explore obtaining a Rural Business Enterprise Grant for the Community Redevelopment Area. These grant opportunities are designed to promote development of small and emerging business enterprises in municipalities of less than 50,000 in population. \$400,000 of federal money is available with no match required.

Objective 4.10 Establish a Contribution Tax Incentive Program. (See further discussion under Financial Considerations for Revitalization)

Objective 4.11 Exploration should be made into the availability and application process outlined for Facade Grants. (See further discussion under Financial Considerations for Revitalization)

Objective 4.12 Review the applicability and use of Tax Increment Financing. The use of Tax Increment Financing revenues are administered by a Community Redevelopment Agency appointed by the City Council. (See further discussion under Financial Considerations for Revitalization)

Objective 4.13.a The Community Redevelopment Agency shall develop a quarterly meeting schedule for the purposes of conducting and overseeing Community Redevelopment Area business.

Objective 4.13.b The Community Redevelopment Agency will work to aggressively develop, plan, finance and construct improvements to the Community Redevelopment Area.

Objective 4.13.c The Community Redevelopment Agency shall adopt a strong policy of utilizing redevelopment trust funds for those projects that can show justifiable gain in the property value or redevelopment impact in the Community Redevelopment Area by the year 2000.

Objective 4.13.d The Community Redevelopment Agency shall promote participation by local financial institutions in the Community Redevelopment Area loan pool, which could be utilized in conjunction with funds maintained in the Redevelopment Trust Fund.

Objective 4.13.e The Community Redevelopment Agency shall encourage and promote cooperation between the city and county governments in furtherance of these goals.

ECONOMIC GOALS

GOAL 5: To diversify the area's economic base, increase sales receipts and heighten business profitability; to enable growth in that economic base. To establish the downtown area as a focal point for the community to attract more shoppers and visitors for longer periods of time and from a wider geographic area.

Objective 5.1 Complete an overall economic assessment for the City, including the Community Redevelopment Area. An economic assessment will allow enhancement projects to be guided based on the City's needs and should include the following components:

- **Economic Analysis:** To determine the types of businesses within the city, how much is being spent, earned and generated; includes payroll, and generation of sales and property tax.
- **Needs Analysis:** What types of businesses are lacking to the community's needs and desired goals.
- **Space Analysis:** Vacancies and use.
- **Parking Analysis:** How much parking is realistically needed to support business and social activity, particularly downtown. This would include examination of current parking standards and potential modifications.
- **Asset Inventory:** Assets to the community: including historic sites, public facilities, accommodations, utilized and unutilized public lands.
- **Infrastructure Need Assessment:** Policy, plans and incentives related to business and asset development

The economic assessment should be completed no later than October 1999.

Objective 5.2 Utilize the economic assessment in marketing efforts for business recruitment and retention for the Community Redevelopment Area.

RECREATION GOAL

GOAL 6: To improve and enhance the recreational areas that are available to the City residents and visitors. To attract and increase the number of visitors in the downtown area through recreational facilities and recreational/cultural events.

This section is divided into two areas: The Good Neighbor Trail and the Cultural Affairs and Community Efforts.

THE GOOD NEIGHBOR TRAIL Brooksville has been given the opportunity to connect the Suncoast Trail with downtown Brooksville through the creation of a local trail network that links to the greater Tampa Bay. There have been additional discussions regarding connection of the Withlacoochee Trail to the Van Fleet Trail in Sumter and Polk counties and then on to the Orange County Trail. If these links come about as anticipated, Brooksville could be the hub for regional bicycle events that take bikers from Dunellon to St. Petersburg.

Regardless of whether these connections come to pass, the number of bikers and recreation seekers who utilize the Croom area and the Withlacoochee State Trail in the eastern portion of Hernando County are enough reason to proceed. It is essential to develop a broad-based master plan that goes beyond the four-foot wide slab of asphalt to include an entire complex of public amenities. The impact of these offerings on the community at large should be explored.

Objective 6.1 Encourage small businesses attractive to trail users to set up shop and spread growth into areas radiating from the complex, including location within the Community Redevelopment Area.

CULTURAL AFFAIRS AND COMMUNITY EFFORTS Many efforts in the past have been made by the Downtown Development Corporation, the County Recreation Department, the Heritage Museum, the Greater Hernando County Chamber of Commerce, Brooksville Again, the Brooksville Kiwanis Club, the Rotary Club, the Red Mule Runners Club and others to hold events in Brooksville that will attract local residents and out-of-county visitors. These efforts should continue and be supported by the Revitalization Effort. Further encouragement and support should be given to those that want to plan and organize new events in the downtown area/Community Redevelopment Area. All events and activities that are community inclusive and inviting to visitors go a long way in building an interest to visit, shop, eat, and work in Brooksville. Cultural and community events and activities improve the City's image of viability and vitality.

Closely related to the perception of a town's viability and vitality is the perception of occupancy. This is particularly important to vacant structures with large display windows. Giving the appearance of occupation heightens a visitor's perception of that community's viability; vacant windows diminish that perception. Vacant window space could be turned into display cases for other businesses, community events, or holiday displays.

Objective 6.2 Encourage additional civic activities and community events in the downtown area, beginning immediately upon the adoption of this plan.

Objective 6.3 Coordinate the utilization of vacant window space for display purposes with the schools, libraries and local cultural/event related interests.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR REDEVELOPMENT

This list is by no means all-inclusive. It simply represents a random sample of available dollars that should be reviewed and requested where appropriate.

1. **Florida Rails-to-Trails** -- DEP. \$3.9 million available annually for transforming abandoned rail beds into recreational green ways.
2. **Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program** -- Funds local outdoor recreation projects. Competitive matching grants through DEP.
3. **Land and Water Conservation Fund** -- Funding for acquisition and development of outdoor recreation facilities. Matching grants through DEP and U.S. Dept. of Interior.
4. **Trust for Public Land** -- Financial and technical support for development of green ways. Particularly interested in projects of a historic, recreational and cultural nature.

5. **Florida Communities Trust** -- Trail and Trail Head. Deadline Aug. 16. No match required for communities under 10,000. \$39 million available in 1995.
6. **Public Works and Development Facilities Program** -- U.S. Dept. of Commerce. To assist distressed communities attract new industry, encourage business expansion, diversify their economies and create private sector jobs. Money can be used for access roads to parks, such as the planned Good Neighbor Trail Head and improvement of water and sewer facilities. Grants range from \$99,000 to \$4.7 million.
7. **Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA)** — Transportation enhancement program. Financial and technical assistance for developing bicycle/pedestrian facilities, renovation of historic transportation facilities and associated parking. Federal allotment to DOT requires 10 percent of pass down be spent on transportation enhancement such as bicycle paths and historic preservation. \$40 million a year available state-wide. May be used toward streetscaping, road improvements adjacent to or leading to state highways and possibly the Good Neighbor Trail. Additional funds may be available for enhancing state designated scenic byways to protect historic and cultural resources adjacent to the highways and to provide information to tourists. Of Florida's portion of this allotment, 80 percent must be used for enhancing scenic byways.
8. **National Historic Trust** -- Has funded projects promoting stylistic preservation; for example, maintaining an area's southern theme.
9. **USDA** -- In June, 1998, the city secured a loan from the USDA to build a new 1.5 mgd. wastewater treatment plant and accessing utility lines. USDA awards grants to promote the theme of telecommunications in rural America. Possible revenue source for underground utilities. \$1.3 million awarded in 1997.
10. **State Budget Allotment** -- Work should be done with our State legislators to determine the feasibility of State funding for specific projects in Brooksville to assist in the redevelopment/revitalization efforts.
11. **Florida Department Of Transportation Highway Beautification Grant** -- Available to communities impacted by state highways. Could be used toward streetscaping; specifically, placing utility lines underground along Main Street, Broad and Jefferson. Future source to help beautify U.S. 41 south. A 50 percent match required. \$1.5 million available statewide. Deadline Feb. 1.
12. **Historic Preservation Small Matching Grants** -- Deadlines are Aug. 31 and Dec. 15. Requires a minimum 50 percent match and/or a \$50,000 local match. Potential use includes streetscaping, whereby the METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION's allotment may constitute a financial match.
13. **Economic Development Transportation Fund** -- Up to \$2 million available for transportation projects which induce the recruitment, retention and expansion of local business. Open application, Florida Dept. of Commerce.

14. **Community Facilities Loan Program** -- For populations under 20,000. To assist in building public facilities including those used for cultural purposes. 40-year loans through RECD. Interest rates range from 4.5% - 6.25%.
15. **State and Community Highway Safety Program** -- Designed to lower vehicular crash ratios in small communities.
16. **Rural Community Water and Waste Disposal Loan and Grant Program** -- RECD program. For small cities under 10,000. Funds new or upgraded water storage or distribution systems, wastewater systems and storm drainage problems. Federal money. Offers no-match grants or 40-year loans with 4.5-6.25% interest. Could be used to improve water quality and water pressure in older sections of town, including streetscaping areas.
17. **MainStreet** — Offers \$10,000 start-up grant and years of guidance. Also comes with lots of hoops. July Deadline.
18. **Economic Adjustment Program** -- U.S. Department of Commerce. Title IX. Helps areas design and implement strategies for facilitating adjustments to changes in their economic base. Could be tagged to one-way pairs or the shift of population from the east side to west side. Could be used toward operating the not-for-profit or hosting a community charrette. Grants range from \$16,000 to \$1.5 million.
19. **State Revolving Fund (SRF) Loan Program** -- Provides 20-year loans three percent below current market value for wastewater facilities. March 15 deadline to DEP.
20. **General Obligation Bonds** -- Backed by Ad Valorem taxes; would require a public referendum. One mill levied city-wide could generate several million dollars.
21. **Financing Pools** -- The Florida League of Cities offers loans at various rates and limits.
22. **Special Assessment District** -- The majority of property owners within a specified district would pay an assessment tacked onto their annual property tax bills. Revenue from the assessment would be used toward pre-stated purposes. Revenue could be used to secure bonds.
23. **Special Taxing District** -- Voters within the designated area would approve limited taxing power for district improvements. Revenue can be used to secure bonds.

TAX INCREMENT DISTRICT A number of methods exist for Florida communities to generate annual revenue necessary to stimulate revitalization. Among the most lucrative is the Tax Increment District. The tax increment district is, perhaps, the simplest and least problematic method available to communities looking to ensure a steady revenue stream. It requires no approval from other taxing entities; therefore, its implementation avoids many of the political pitfalls that can accompany other taxing mechanisms.

Establishment Of A Tax Increment District: Chapter 163 of Florida Law defines the criteria for establishing a tax increment district. A community redevelopment plan must be in place prior to enacting a tax increment district. Its creating ordinance must specify legal borders. It must include a stated plan for revenue use including major capital improvement projects. Money generated through a tax increment district can only be spent within the confines of the district and the creating ordinance must state which taxing authorities would be impacted. The borders of the tax increment district should be carefully selected:

- a) to enhance its manageability and effectiveness; and
- b) to deter political contention between taxing authorities.

State law allows a city to include in the tax increment district area most taxing districts which operate within the city's jurisdiction without their express approval. In this case, the potential list would include Hernando County, the Hernando County School District and any special taxing district such as a hospital authority, though it would not have to. (State law exempts the Southwest Florida Water Management District from inclusion.) Some municipalities choose to exclude certain taxing authorities. However, the city may want to consider including the county's portion to better offset the impact of county operations on city taxpayers.

The Brooksville City Council would select a base year of implementation. In each subsequent year, assessments on properties included within the stated district would be weighed against the year of implementation. Taxes generated from the increased assessment would be placed into a special pot and designated exclusively for revitalization purposes.

The Tax Increment District method is a long-term tool used toward an overall solution. It is not a quick fix. A tax base as flat as Brooksville's will initially generate very little revenue. Between 1993 and 1994, Brooksville's combined property assessment values rose 7.2%, from \$186.95 million to \$200.94 million. As the city's economy and tax base improve, so will the tax increment district's annual revenue stream. While it may not be much, particularly at first, it would at least ensure that something is being done toward the end goal.

INCENTIVES There are a number of incentive options worth exploring to help stimulate downtown business activity. Many of those options would be coordinated with existing economic groups but must be managed by the agency which regulates them. Among those which may be appropriate to examine:

1. *FACADE GRANTS* -- A facade grant program should be developed to assist property owners in improving the aesthetic quality of their structure's exterior and in complying with architectural standards.
2. *UTILITY PROGRAM* -- The City of Brooksville has commenced construction on a \$5.3 million, 1.5 mgd. wastewater treatment plant on Cobb Road. The City will spend \$2.5 million to install connection lines leading to the plant and to replace lines along U.S. 41 and the truck route to accommodate the widening of those roads. While the projects are mandated to accommodate the City's current needs, they will also allow the city to accept new customers and grow. A utility program that provides fee credits to developers who

upgrade or build utility systems within the City should be developed to the greatest extent possible.

3. *COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTION TAX INCENTIVE PROGRAM* -- A Community Contribution Tax Incentive Program should be developed through defining enterprises zones and outlining who is eligible. A corporate tax credit program should be designed to encourage private investment within Florida Enterprise Zones. A tax credit program should also encourage private investment in low-income housing projects. This program generally offers a 50-percent corporate income tax credit or insurance premium tax credit for contributions to eligible projects. \$200,000 tax credit limit per business. It is offered through the Florida Department of Commerce.
4. *RURAL BUSINESS ENTERPRISE GRANT* -- These grant opportunities are designed to promote development of small and emerging business enterprises in municipalities of less than 50,000 in population. \$400,000 of federal money is available with no required match.
5. *ECONOMIC TAX EXEMPTION* -- In 1996, the City of Brooksville attempted to establish an economic tax exemption policy allowing the city to grant up to a 10-year tax break for improving commercial property. Its success, however, required a public vote and significant public education. Both of those endeavors met with negative results. An enterprise program of this type may be worth exploring further in the future. With the proper research, presentation and implementation, it may prove to be a valuable tool for revitalization.