

Vero Beach Vision Plan

City of Vero Beach, Florida

Prepared in cooperation with:

The Vero Beach Vision Team and The Citizens of Vero Beach

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p r e f a c e

In 2003, with the City of Vero Beach addressing significant issues regarding growth, development, and overall city character, the City Council decided to pursue a "visioning process." Different from a comprehensive plan, which is mandated by State statute and has substantial technical requirements, a "vision plan" broadly engages the public and seeks a community consensus for the future direction of the City. From the visioning effort, future comprehensive plan amendments, ordinance changes, and administrative adjustments may be pursued.

e x e c u t i v e s u m m a r y

During the visioning process, which began in early 2004, a significant number of Vero Beach citizens and "stakeholders" engaged in community town hall meetings, interviews, focus groups, and a community-wide survey that elicited opinions regarding key problems, issues, opportunities, goals, priorities, and visions for the community. The City Council appointed a diverse fifteen member "Vision Team" to work with the staff and consultants to develop a cohesive vision statement and report that was consistent with public input.

Priorities that emerged included preservation of the community's character, the maintenance of vibrant commercial centers, architectural and site design considerations, community and economic development issues, and implementation strategies.

ALTERNATIVE FUTURES AND VISION

Based on the community's input and an understanding of the demographic trends for Vero Beach, a series of diverse alternatives were formulated. They were developed to encourage a community debate concerning the future city "patterns." One alternative represented a "status quo" or "stay the course" attitude. A second alternative sought to enhance the unique character of specific city districts. Finally, a third alternative attempted to direct market and development influences.

From the discussion that followed in both a community-wide open house and Vision Team meetings, a vision and concept plan emerged. The vision statement:

"Vero Beach...the crown jewel of the Treasure Coast."

Inherent in this statement is the desire of Vero Beach citizens to continue to be one of central Florida's premier places to live. Along with inevitable change, Vero Beach must be proactive in maintaining its unique character and attributes.

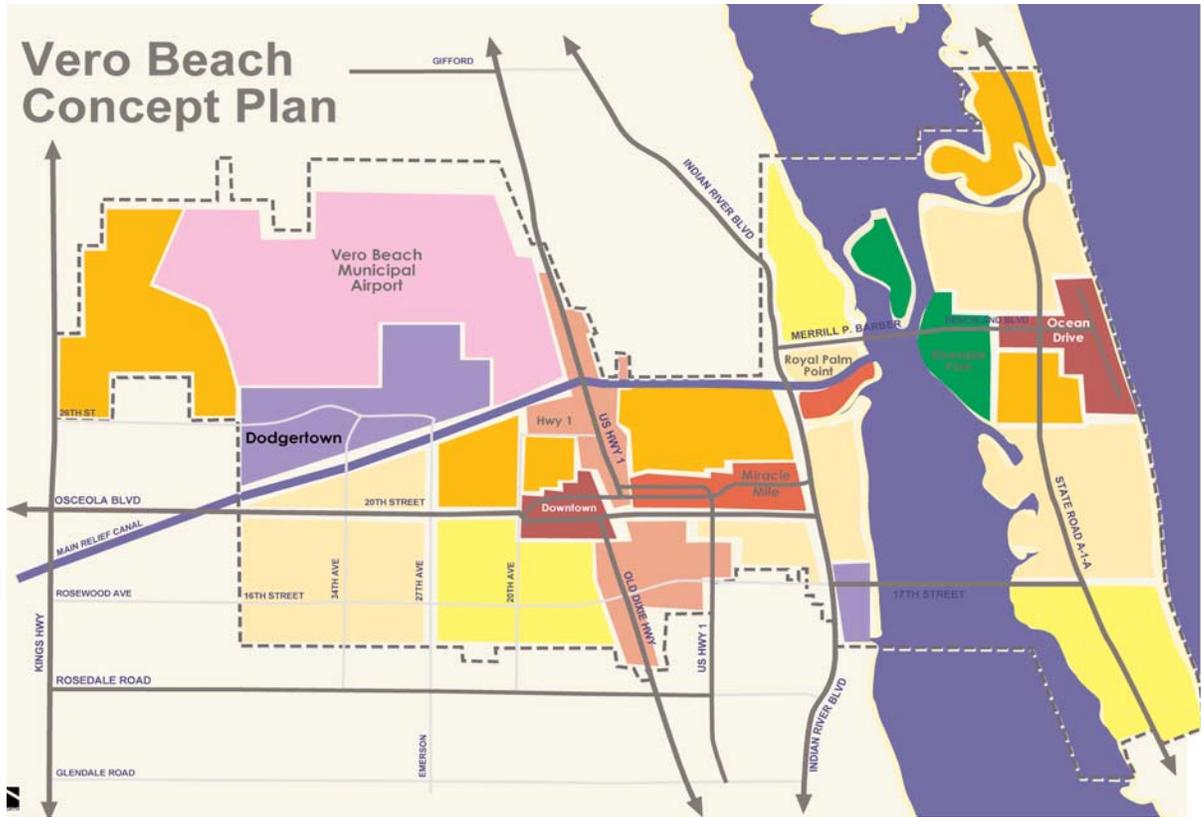
CONCEPT PLAN

Working with the Vision Team, a concept plan was developed that sought to maintain the City's key positive attributes and physical elements. For each, a series of strategies were formed.

Commercial Districts

The key commercial districts of Vero Beach include its historic downtown, Royal Palm Pointe, Miracle Mile/US 1, Ocean Drive/Cardinal Drive, and Beachland Boulevard. For each district, strategies include the enhancement of its unique characteristics, as well as addressing key threats to its future success. In some cases, it is recommended that a district wide, participatory, comprehensive master plan be developed.

VERO BEACH CONCEPT PLAN



SOURCE: GOULD EVANS ASSOCIATES

Downtown Vero Beach

Downtown should be reinforced as a mixed-use office and governmental center, as well as a unique cultural, arts, entertainment, and residential enclave, with shopping and dining opportunities that support the district and its surrounding neighborhoods. Addressing the "twin pair" arterials that bisect downtown is a key strategy to enhance the pedestrian nature of the district.

Royal Palm Pointe

Royal Palm Pointe should continue its transformation as a regional mixed-use residential, commercial, and entertainment district; focusing on restaurants, recreation, and boutique retail venues. It is also desirable that a stronger connection be made to the Indian River Lagoon.

Miracle Mile/US 1

The existing character, marketability, and long-term sustainability of the Miracle Mile and US 1 commercial corridors should be enhanced, while allowing for their future evolution in accordance with changing commercial development trends. Innovative parking requirements and concepts should be pursued that will encourage a more diverse future land use pattern.

Ocean Drive/Cardinal Drive

The Ocean Drive/Cardinal Drive district should be maintained as a destination and quality-oriented boutique retail center for both residents and visitors, while accommodating a demand for office development and the desire for a quality residential environment. Like several commercial areas in Vero Beach, a district parking solution is a key to accomplishing the dual objectives of accommodating new development and maintaining the district's character.

Beachland Boulevard

Beachland Boulevard, from Mockingbird Drive to Ocean Drive, should be reinforced as a premier office corridor, particularly for professional services and banking and financial activities. Maintaining the corridor's "green spine" setback and protecting the vitality of adjacent neighborhoods are keys to successful development along Beachland Boulevard.

Neighborhoods

The Vision Team decided that, while neighborhoods in Vero Beach are distinctive, policies regarding their future development or redevelopment strategies should spring from neighborhoods at a "grass roots" level.

The goal is to reinforce Vero Beach as a "community of neighborhoods" by developing strategies for both neighborhood preservation and conservation, as well as neighborhood revitalization and stabilization. There are, however, overriding strategies that should be applied to all neighborhoods:

- Preserving the native tree canopy on both the Barrier Island and the Mainland
- Developing design standards, zoning modifications, and review procedures that protect the character and integrity of neighborhoods
- Limiting all housing construction to a height of 35 feet as measured from the natural grade to the top of the roof
- Requiring site plan review for all single-family development
- Integrating neighborhood development with the existing and "resilient" network of arterial roadways
- Creating ordinances that more easily allow for mixed-use residential development in appropriate commercial districts
- Instituting aggressive code and public safety enforcement in stabilization neighborhoods
- Using landscape treatment to buffer existing neighborhoods from industry or busy highways
- Creating a series of neighborhood gateway features where appropriate and practical
- Preparing plans and considering incentives for redevelopment and renovation of stabilization and revitalization neighborhoods
- Allowing for individual neighborhoods to request additional regulations on a "supermajority" basis

Industry and Employment

Most cities seek economic diversity in order to better assure long-term stability. It is recognized that Vero Beach is a desirable community for retirees and "snow birds." This creates a strong demand for seasonal workers in the service economy.

The goal, however, is to create a diversity of good employment opportunities in Vero Beach for the benefit of workers, to support younger residents in their desire to remain in Vero Beach, and to create a more stable and sustainable tax base.

The strategies to accomplish this goal involve the pursuit of the three primary activities of job creation: new job attraction; existing job retention and growth; and entrepreneurship. Also, new and infill development of businesses should be pursued in appropriate districts and corridors, as well as at the Vero Beach Municipal Airport.



VERO BEACH MUNICIPAL AIRPORT

Roadways and Wayfinding

The goal of the City's transportation network is to create a roadway and supplemental transportation network that enhances the image of Vero Beach, while providing a framework for a multi-modal transportation system.

The vision plan seeks an interconnected arterial network that serves all of the city's districts. It also seeks to develop a series of entrance gateway markers that will enhance the sense of arrival in Vero Beach. The identification of storm routes, as well as enhancing the potential for bicycles, pedestrian trails, and public transit are also important.



WAYFINDING IN DOWNTOWN

Planning and Development Regulations

Many of the directions and changes suggested in the Vision Plan will require alterations to the City's planning or regulatory structure. Therefore, the City's plans and regulations should be aligned to support the Vision Plan and followed through with appropriate training and public information programs.

Strategies for addressing this include updates to the City's Comprehensive Plan and zoning ordinance, including the potential creation of zoning "overlay" districts when requested by specific communities. The creation of a historic preservation enabling ordinance will allow for neighborhoods, districts, or owners of qualifying individual buildings to seek protection and, potentially, the financial benefits allowed by the federal tax code. Finally, future training of elected and appointed officials, as well as public educational efforts and input, should be undertaken to better understand the long-range planning and development implications of the Vision Plan.



Implementation Strategies

An implementation matrix has been prepared that lists all key strategies in the plan, along with their time frames. It should be used by the City Council, appointed boards and commissions, the City staff and the public-at-large as a guide or "check list" to track implementation success.

The Future of Vero Beach

The *Vero Beach Vision Plan* sets forth a future direction for Vero Beach. This future direction, or vision, was developed with public involvement and adopted by the City Council, giving the community ownership of the Vision Plan.

Success of this endeavor will be accomplished through the proper implementation of the Vision Plan's strategies and key concepts. Perseverance and the recognition that implementation is not the culmination of the planning process, but rather another step in the process is crucial to the Plan's success. Likewise, a partnership involving city officials, citizens, public entities, and the private sector is paramount to Vero Beach's future. In unison, Vero Beach now moves forward, soon to discover its crown jewel.