

December 2004

DeSoto County *Long-Term Recovery Plan*



Conceptual drawing of a revitalized downtown.



FEMA

Federal Emergency Management Agency

FEMA Region IV
3003 Chamblee Tucker Rd.
Atlanta, GA 30341

FEMA Headquarters
500 C Street, SW
Washington DC 20472

www.fema.gov



The DeSoto County Long-Term Recovery Plan



In this Long-Term to Recovery Plan you will find DeSoto County's vision for rebuilding in the aftermath of the summer 2004 hurricanes, which caused widespread destruction. Responding to the severe impact of the hurricanes, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the State of Florida's Department of Community Affairs (DCA) instituted a Long-Term Recovery Initiative designed to provide an extra measure of support for DeSoto County's recovery effort.

The DeSoto County Long-Term Recovery Plan is the product of a highly intensive eight-week process involving a multitude of meetings between the Long-Term Recovery Team, local officials, business owners, civic groups, and citizens. Hundreds of your neighbors either turned out for our public meetings or stopped by the Long-Term Recovery Office to share their ideas on how to rebuild Arcadia and DeSoto County. Nearly 250 comment sheets provided an invaluable source of feedback used to refine and prioritize the projects.

DeSoto County was a special place before the hurricanes, and that has not changed. Your unshakable community spirit, and your resolve to build back better and safer, will continue to serve you well as you move forward with implementation of the plan. At the heart of the DeSoto County Recovery Plan is a simple guiding principle - keep the things that have always made DeSoto County a great place to live, work and own a business, and then suggest ways to build upon the strengths of the community in order to make it even more prosperous, appealing, and livable.

Unlike a traditional planning document that presents general guidance to a community, the Long-Term Recovery Plan is an action-oriented menu of key projects intended to be used for making critical funding and resource allocation decisions. To further the on-going planning process, the plan is also available on the DCA website along with the DeSoto County and Hardee County plans, at: www.dca.state.fl.us/recovery/index.cfm. The City and County have been given a companion CD-ROM to this Long-Term Recovery Plan which contains, among other useful reference materials, an electronic version of the plan and detailed cost estimates of each project. Within this Recovery Plan, you will find 25 projects that form the foundation of a revitalized DeSoto County. These projects are divided into three categories based upon their "recovery value": High, Moderate, and Community interest. The High Value recovery projects are the most urgently needed and all available resources should be focused on immediate implementation. The Moderate Value projects, although not essential to recovery, are likely to produce substantial benefits for the community, and should be pursued as time and funding permit over the next few years. Community Interest projects are those that are of relatively less significance, but are still probably worthy of more discussion and thoughtful consideration as recovery proceeds.

Now that the Recovery Plan has been completed, the challenge is to find funding for the key projects. As we have discussed from the outset, the Long-Term Recovery Initiative does not come with a dedicated funding source, so we must rely on our partners in the federal and state governments to help. Since most of the major government agencies have actively participated throughout this planning process, and have expressed a strong willingness to aid DeSoto County, there is much reason for optimism.

It is important to remember that not all projects are of equal importance, and not all need to be initiated simultaneously. Recovery from a disaster of this scale is a process, not an event, and it will continue for several years; although, as funding is committed to the first few high priority projects, progress in

DeSoto County will become evident in a relatively short time period. Based upon our experience on similar recovery projects, DeSoto County can expect to see a significant amount of activity during the first year post-disaster, and then gradually transition into a more normal growth and development pattern.

One of the first things that we talked about is how disasters create opportunities, and now with the Recovery Plan in place, DeSoto County is well positioned to take full advantage of the chance to rebuild a more vibrant community. Unity is vital to your ultimate success. You cannot expect to be unanimous in all your decisions, nor should you necessarily agree with everything that is proposed, but you should stay united as a community and do your best to maintain a common vision for the future of DeSoto County.





December 8, 2004

Dear Citizens of DeSoto County:

Last week, the most traumatic hurricane season in Florida history came to a welcome end. Just over 100 days ago, Hurricane Charley slammed into Florida's west coast and was quickly followed by Frances, Ivan, and Jeanne. Already devastated by Charley, DeSoto County was twice more in the path of nature's fury.

Thousands of DeSoto County residents are among more than one million Floridians who registered with FEMA for hurricane relief and together with other Floridians have filed nearly 1.5 million insurance claims. The total estimate of damage in our state now exceeds \$42 billion. While we measure the financial impact of the storms by damage estimates and claims numbers, they don't tell the real story. The strong hearts and generous spirits of the people who live here tell the true story – your faith, tenacity, and hard work as you recover and rebuild convey your message of determination and commitment to your community.

Even as federal, state and local agencies launched emergency response efforts, the people of DeSoto County recognized the need to do more than just replace what the storms ruined. You seized the opportunity to rebuild in a way that makes the most of your community's natural and economic assets, while preserving your strong agricultural heritage.

The plan captures the collective community vision for DeSoto County's long-term recovery. My administration, through the leadership of the Secretary of the Department of Community Affairs, stands ready to help DeSoto County achieve its goals. I also thank FEMA for its partnership in facilitating your development of the plan.

DeSoto County can take pride in this achievement because it represents a tremendous spirit and willingness to do what it takes to rebuild a better Florida. Your plan also provides a roadmap for overcoming the significant challenges ahead. Rebuilding and creating economic vitality is a long-term effort. It will not be easy. It will not be quick. But, you have my commitment and support to help make it happen.

Sincerely,

Jeb Bush



STATE OF FLORIDA
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

"Dedicated to making Florida a better place to call home"

JEB BUSH
Governor

THADDEUS L. COHEN, AIA
Secretary

December 9, 2004

Dear Local Officials and Citizens of DeSoto County:

In just over three months, the people of DeSoto County have made remarkable progress in responding to the devastation created by Hurricanes Charley, Frances and Jeanne. While the destruction necessitates a painful and difficult rebuilding effort, I commend you for developing a roadmap for a brighter future.

Thanks to strong leadership and broad community participation, DeSoto County citizens, businesses and governments have created a visionary plan for a better DeSoto County. This long-term plan will guide both rebuilding and create opportunities for economic expansion. This plan serves as a unified vision and exemplifies the type of participation and partnership required for effective community planning that I hope to cultivate in each Florida community during my tenure at the Department of Community Affairs.

I am grateful for this opportunity to express my deep appreciation to the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Long-Term Recovery Initiative. Its innovative support for this community planning effort and close partnership with the Department of Community Affairs will pay dividends in sparking economic growth and assuring that as rebuilding occurs, new and rehabilitated structures will withstand the effects of future storms. In particular, I commend the use of a planning approach that is both sensitive to what makes DeSoto County unique and is unwaveringly focused on the communities' expressed priorities.

As I stated during the first community forum for developing this plan, the Department of Community Affairs will be your partner each step of the way. Through the coming year, the Department will work closely with the Governor's Office, other state agencies, FEMA, and the federal Long-Term Recovery Task Force to coordinate available resources and use creative approaches for existing programs to help you make this plan a reality.

Now is the time to move forward in shaping the new DeSoto County.

Sincerely,

Thaddeus L. Cohen, AIA
Secretary

TLC/cp/ts

2555 SHUMARD OAK BOULEVARD TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA 32399-2100
Phone: 850.488.8466/Suncom 278.8466 FAX: 850.921.0781/Suncom 291.0781
Internet address: <http://www.dca.state.fl.us>

CRITICAL STATE CONCERN FIELD OFFICE 2796 Overseas Highway, Suite 212
Marathon, FL 33050-2227 (305) 289-2402
COMMUNITY PLANNING 2555 Shumard Oak Boulevard
Tallahassee, FL 32399-2100 (850) 488-2356
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT 2555 Shumard Oak Boulevard
Tallahassee, FL 32399-2100 (850) 413-9969
HOUSING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT 2555 Shumard Oak Boulevard
Tallahassee, FL 32399-2100 (850) 488-7956

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20472



December 7, 2004

Citizens of DeSoto County and the City of Arcadia:

I commend you on the remarkable progress that you have made in your recovery from the devastating hurricanes that occurred earlier this year. I have seen the devastation first hand as I traveled to Florida on many occasions in the aftermath of the storms, and have received regular updates on your efforts to clean up and start the rebuilding process. In turn, I provide progress briefings to President Bush and the Secretary of Homeland Security on your recovery. It is encouraging to witness a community pulling together with strength and determination of its residents as you have done.

As you know, in the aftermath of Hurricane Charley, the U. S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) initiated a Long-Term Recovery initiative for Hardee, DeSoto and Charlotte County. This is the first time that Homeland Security, through FEMA, has implemented a Long-Term Recovery effort in Florida. The three County Long-Term Recovery Plans are among a very few number of like-projects in the country.

Since early October, a team of technical experts has worked with you to help develop a vision for the redevelopment of your community. FEMA has delivered this final DeSoto County Long-Term Recovery Plan as a guide for rebuilding. As part of this process, FEMA will fund local recovery management staff through the Florida Department of Community Affairs for the next year to support you in the implementation of the key projects identified in the plan.

Now is the time for you to move forward in shaping the new DeSoto County – including the City of Arcadia. The process will take time and will require a significant commitment of your collective energies, as well as substantial resources. Be assured that Homeland Security, through FEMA, will continue to be there and will assist by coordinating the numerous federal agencies that stand ready to help you, and by working in partnership with the State of Florida to coordinate state agencies.

I wish you the best of success in your recovery and look forward to visiting you as the rebuilding progresses.

Sincerely,

Michael D. Brown
Under Secretary
Emergency Preparedness and Response

www.fema.gov

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
3003 Chamblee-Tucker Rd.
Atlanta, Georgia 30341



December 6, 2004

DeSoto County Board of County Commissioners and
The Mayor of the City of Arcadia

Dear Sir or Madam:

The terrible damages wrought by Hurricane Charley throughout Arcadia and DeSoto County have changed the communities and created a unique opportunity for sustainable redevelopment into the future. A complex process of local, state and federal partnership has culminated in a vision for the sustainable redevelopment of DeSoto County and the City of Arcadia. It is with the greatest pleasure that we offer our sincere congratulations on the hard work you have undertaken in the Long Term Recovery planning process for your communities. Your community, citizens and leadership have been integral to the success of this planning effort and will continue to be crucial to the successful implementation of the plan in the future.

The Long Term Recovery Plan for DeSoto County and Arcadia is part of a new beginning for the communities. We stand prepared to work with you and our partners in the State of Florida to ensure the county and city create a brighter future in the aftermath of this devastating natural disaster. The FEMA Region IV staff will work with you to make the vision described in the plans a reality.

We heartily endorse the vision within the Long Term Recovery plan for DeSoto County and Arcadia. We know that together we can build a stronger and better community.

Sincerely,

Mary-Lynne Miller
Acting Regional Director

www.fema.gov



BILL NELSON
FLORIDA

November 30, 2004

Dear Residents of DeSoto County:

I would like to take this opportunity to commend you for resiliency, commitment, and strong sense of community. Despite the damage wrought by Hurricane Charley, you have remained strong in your resolve to rebuild and move forward. I would also like to extend thanks to the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA), the State of Florida, and local volunteer agencies for their dedication to the community.

I understand FEMA, in cooperation with residents, is currently developing a Long Term Recovery plan. This plan, the product of local, state, and federal collaboration will be used as a guideline for the redevelopment of DeSoto County. The input and insight you have provided is invaluable. I offer my full support for your efforts.

I will continue to work closely with you and your elected officials to implement the recovery plan. Please feel free to contact my Ft. Myers office at (239) 334-7760, should you need any assistance.

Sincerely,

Bill Nelson
U.S. Senator

KATHERINE HARRIS
13th District, Florida
FINANCIAL SERVICES
Capital Markets
Domestic International Monetary Policy
Housing
INTERNATIONAL
RELATIONS
Western Hemisphere
Middle East & Central Asia
GOVERNMENT REFORM
National Security, Emerging Markets
and International Relations
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PLEASE REPLY TO:
 116 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-5015
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SARASOTA, FL 34236
(941) 551-6667
(888) 473-4184
 1112 MANATEE AVENUE WEST, SUITE 802
BRADENTON, FL 34209
(941) 747-9801

December 1, 2004

DeSoto County Long-Term Recovery Effort
c/o FEMA Disaster Field Office
4300 Kings Highway
Port Charlotte, FL 98765

Dear Friends:

I write today in enthusiastic support of the Long-Term Recovery effort underway in DeSoto County. During the months of August and September, Hurricanes Charley, Frances, and Jeanne devastated this rural community. Thankfully, the challenges that lay in their wake have been met with extraordinary leadership and community spirit. As a result, I am confident that DeSoto County will eventually be an even better place to live, work, and raise a family.

Having endured the fury of three major hurricanes, Hardee, DeSoto, and Charlotte County residents from all walks of life have linked arms in the determined effort to rescue, recover, and rebuild. The Federal Emergency Management Agency Long-Term Recovery Team has worked closely with state, county, and local leaders, as well as the residents of these counties to produce three individual Long-Term Recovery Plans for each county. As DeSoto County's representative in Congress, I strongly encourage the appropriate federal and state agencies to make available every possible resource to assist the County with implementation of its Long Term Recovery Plan.

With an economic base dependent on agriculture, DeSoto County faces unique challenges in their hurricane recovery efforts, including limited resources for economic diversification. The successful implementation of this thoughtful plan will result in the preservation of the county's rural character, history, and traditions, while encouraging more varied, vibrant, and vivacious economic opportunities for the good people of DeSoto County.

I congratulate the residents of DeSoto County for meeting the unprecedented destruction of three hurricanes with extraordinary courage, determination. The task of rebuilding will continue to demand unprecedented unity, understanding, and patience. My staff and I will be at their side for ever step of this arduous effort to rebuild and strengthen their community. Please don't hesitate to contact my office if you require additional information.

Sincerely,

Katherine Harris
Member of Congress



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
DESOTO COUNTY

Administration Building
 Suite 201
 201 East Oak Street
 Arcadia, Florida 34266
 (863) 993-4800
 SunCom 740-4800
 Fax (863) 993-4809

December 7, 2004

Dear DeSoto County Recovery Supporters:

At the regular meeting of the DeSoto County Board of County Commissioners on November 23, the Board agreed to express its support of the FEMA Long Term Recovery Plan project. The Board appreciates the extensive amount of time and effort that has been put into this project to the benefit of the citizens of DeSoto County.

August 13, 2004 is a date that will be forever remembered in Arcadia, Florida. Our people have proven themselves historically to be strong and resourceful, but no one in DeSoto County was emotionally prepared for the destruction wrought by Hurricane Charley.

Charley was the first significant hurricane to hit DeSoto County in more than forty years, and it made the most devastating impact of any natural disaster in local history.

This catastrophe forced half our population from their homes. Nearly four months later, many of our residents are still living in travel trailers or sharing houses with friends or family members. Countless trees and structures that graced our roadways and properties are gone. Businesses that operated in DeSoto County for generations were destroyed. The local landscape was forever altered.

Florida Governor Jeb Bush several years ago designated DeSoto County as a rural area of critical economic concern. Our average annual household income according to the most recent U.S. Census is under \$31,000. Twenty-four percent of our residents live below poverty level.

Our finances may be low, but our spirit is high. Visitors to DeSoto County since the storm, from national news reporters to regular folks, have marveled at the optimism and the resilience of our citizens. We have made remarkable progress since those dark days of mid-August. However, much is left to be done, and we cannot do it alone.

The DeSoto County Board of County Commissioners stands solidly behind FEMA's long term recovery initiative. As a county, as a community, DeSoto needs this initiative, and we are thoroughly supportive of the Federal Emergency Management Agency and their local and regional recovery teams.

Thank you, recovery supporters, for all you have done and will continue to do.

Sincerely,

Ronald P. Neads, Chairman
 DeSoto County Board of County Commissioners



P. O. Drawer 351 • Arcadia, Florida 34265

December 1, 2004

City of Arcadia/DeSoto County Long Term Recovery Supporters:

The citizens of Arcadia survived four horrific hurricanes during the 2004 season.

Our determination to rebuild our community remains constant and progress is evident every day. However, we need assistance from a myriad of sources that will enable our historic community to emerge stronger and continue to grow as a thriving, self-sustaining city.

The residents, City Staff and the Council, have worked closely with technical personnel and agencies to provide input and support to generate a list of projects for the revitalization of our community, resulting in a Long Term Recovery Plan.

The City of Arcadia is a great place now, but with much needed assistance from you, Arcadia will come back stronger and better than before.

CITY OF ARCADIA

Paul P. Whitlock,
 Mayor

Arcadia . . . A Good Town Year Round



Community Involvement

The DeSoto County Long-Term Recovery Plan is a community-driven document that reflects both the priorities expressed by the community and the experience of the planning team. The projects outlined are based on input received from hundreds of interviews, two public meetings, e-mails, and comment sheets.

Five-hundred people attended the first public meeting on October 21, 2004. The purpose of the meeting was to identify what the community felt were its key issues and concerns. Several hours were spent with the recovery planning team discussing these issues and describing their community vision. Thousands of comments were received and a Rough Draft Plan was created in response to discussions with local officials and community leaders.

The Rough Draft Plan was then presented back to the community at a second public meeting on November 15, 2004, attended by 400 people who were able to review the draft, discuss

the issues and provide input through an "electronic town hall" format.

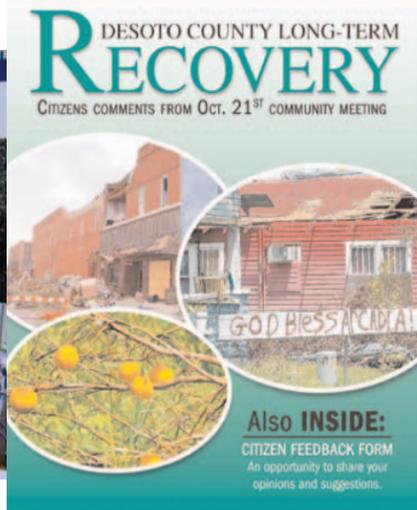
The electronic town hall format presented various issues to the participants and asked for discussion and feedback. The format allows for real-time polling of participants regarding key projects contained in the plan.

Key results of this polling include:

- The most popular recovery projects included preservation of historical buildings and downtown revitalization.
- More than half thought that it was important to encourage housing above businesses downtown.
- 82 percent of the participants favored building an expanded rodeo/equestrian facility.
- Many participants want to attract new businesses, expand higher education and vocational training opportunities, provide expanded health services and build new housing.

5. Build a new rodeo/equestrian complex
 These community priorities and general discussions with DeSoto County residents, elected officials, and community leaders provided guidance to the planning team as they continued to prepare the recovery plan document. The recovery team used this input to further study and strengthen the projects in the plan.

The Final Plan was presented at a public meeting that included the DeSoto County Board of County Commissioners and the Arcadia City Council, as well as key federal and state officials on December 8, 2004



Also at the second meeting, participants and the community in general were asked to pick their top five projects. Survey questionnaires were distributed, published and available on line. The following top five projects were identified through the survey:

1. Build affordable housing
2. Improve roads and bridges
3. Revitalize downtown Arcadia
4. Improve water/ wastewater/ stormwater systems

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CREATE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

A constant theme the planning team heard from DeSoto County citizens is the urgent need to improve the county's economy with good jobs with living wages and benefits and more business opportunities. The planning team, responding to the community's input, used two guiding principles to identify strategies to respond to this high-priority need:

- Build upon and support the county's existing, traditional economy and lifestyle
- Identify new businesses and industries that reflect the DeSoto County and the City of Arcadia's vision for their future

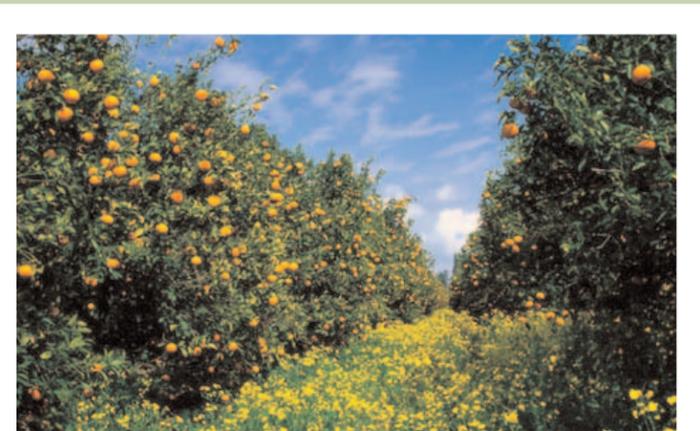
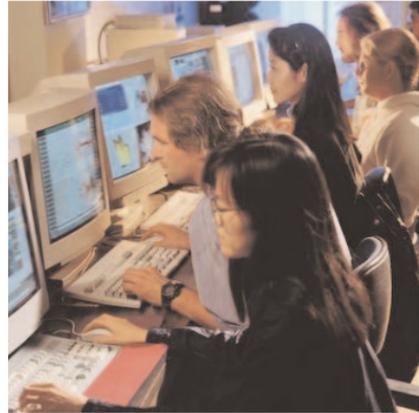
Three key economic development projects were developed based upon these principles:

- 1) Developing a joint economic development strategy for the City of Arcadia and DeSoto County,
- 2) Revitalizing Downtown Arcadia, and,
- 3) Building a New Rodeo and Equestrian Complex.

Developing a joint economic development strategy recognizes that the City of Arcadia and DeSoto County are connected and their futures are tied together, with each benefiting from improvements to the other. A comprehensive and coordinated approach to economic development is critical to effectively leveraging the resources for the benefit of both the city and the county. The joint strategy will focus on current strengths in the local economy, such as agriculture, and explore ways to strengthen these areas while also looking at attracting new business and industry.

Revitalizing downtown Arcadia will be a complex task with several components, including creating a comprehensive development plan, fostering a Community Redevelopment Area, enhancing community appearance and linkages, and encouraging new business and residential development, will contribute to a successful and vibrant downtown.

The Arcadia Rodeo is highly valued throughout the City of Arcadia and DeSoto County for the tradition and lifestyle it represents. The Rodeo, in operation since 1928, was severely damaged by the hurricanes, and needs substantial repairs. This presents the community with the opportunity to rebuild the Arcadia Rodeo as an improved and expanded facility with increased capacity for additional events and uses. The expanded attractions and events at an expanded Rodeo will have the potential to greatly increase the number of visitors drawn to the Rodeo, the City of Arcadia and DeSoto County.



Create Economic Opportunity

Develop a Joint DeSoto County/City of Arcadia Economic Development Strategy

Recovery Value: HIGH



RECOVERY VALUE

The City of Arcadia and DeSoto County lag far behind most of the state in their ability to attract well-paying jobs with good benefits, per capita and household income levels, and overall economic health. This project has a high recovery value because both City and County will both greatly benefit from a coordinated approach to improving their economies in a way that efficiently leverages their existing and potential resources. Coordinated economic development planning will provide a more efficient, cost-effective approach than pursuit of independent strategies.

GOAL

Improve overall economic conditions and employment opportunities

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

- **Create an economic development plan.**
Evaluate how the Tri-County area can attract future industries and identify gaps in infrastructure and job skills. As a first step, a comprehensive study will identify preferred economic development goals and strategies and gauge how well the current workforce and infrastructure can meet these goals.
- **Create a Business Development Center**
Create a Business Development Center to serve the City and the County to obtain funding and implement economic development strategies identified in the economic development plan, develop and manage investment programs for supporting existing and initiating new businesses, and facilitate partnerships between public agencies, authorities, and the private sector.
- **Joint City/County involvement in Florida's Heartland Rural Economic Development Initiative**
Florida's Heartland Rural Economic Development Initiative (FHREDI) is a regional economic development organization serving six rural counties, including DeSoto. The County is participating with FHREDI partners to develop economic development goals and strategies. Governor Jeb Bush declared this multi-county area a "Rural Area of Critical Economic Concern"

in 2001, providing it greater access to the state's economic development initiative. FHREDI provides one-stop assistance and coordination with all six counties, plus Workforce Florida Inc., the state workforce agency. FHREDI also coordinates with the Governor's Office of Tourism, Trade and Economic Development and Enterprise Florida, the state's public-private economic development unit.

Estimated Costs	\$95,000
Develop a Joint Economic Development Plan	\$50,000
Create a Business Development Center (1 Employee/year)	\$45,000



Recovery Value: **HIGH**

Build a New Rodeo and Equestrian Complex



RECOVERY VALUE

A new and expanded Arcadia Rodeo has a high recovery value because of its potential to assist the County's economic recovery by generating business opportunity in and around the Rodeo, attracting additional tourists, and providing a central location for community gatherings and celebrations.

GOALS

- Create a focal point of equestrian activity to serve as a tourist attraction and recreational opportunity for local and regional equestrian groups.
- Develop an event space as a new destination within Arcadia to attract tourists, while responding to local demand for traditional recreation opportunities.
- Diversify existing provisions for agriculture-based recreation. Promote agricultural and environmental stewardship through education programs.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Repairing the existing structure will allow the Rodeo to continue its tradition of being the longest running rodeo in the State of Florida and one of the most popular attractions in Arcadia.

Expanding the facility to include an equestrian center and livestock show arena will provide additional programs and activities allowing the facility to be used more often and attract more visitors to the area.

When considering potential locations for a new Rodeo, the community should evaluate the trade-offs associated with each potential site. For example, a smaller facility closer to downtown may have a greater positive effect on downtown businesses than a larger facility outside the City.

Options include:

- Repair the existing Rodeo to pre-disaster conditions,
- Repair the Rodeo and enhance the facility with better ticket office facilities, parking improvements and better seating
- Construct a new multi-functional equestrian facility to include facilities for championship level competition including a covered rodeo arena livestock show arena, holding barns and an RV Park.

Estimated Costs

Repair existing structure	750,000
Enhance existing structure	TBD
Parking Improvements/Ticket Office/Seat Upgrades	
Build a new facility	\$8,135,000
Rodeo Building	\$5,800,000
90,000 s.f./8300 fixed seats	
Livestock Show Arena	\$1,200,000
18,000 s.f./760 fixed seats	
Holding Barn--21,600 s.f.....	\$690,000
RV Park--50 Full service hookups..	\$445,000



Revitalize Downtown Arcadia

Recovery Value: HIGH

RECOVERY VALUE

Revitalizing downtown Arcadia has a high recovery value because of the irreplaceable role of downtown Arcadia for the entire city, and indeed, for all of DeSoto County. Revitalizing downtown Arcadia is an important key to addressing several important issues identified by DeSoto County citizens - a strong desire for pride in Arcadia's appearance as the county's signature city, the need for more shopping, dining and entertainment opportunities, preserving Arcadia's historic resources, and increasing business opportunities and jobs for local residents.

The city now serves as an important economic resource for the county. Thousands visit antique shops in downtown Arcadia every weekend - these visitors spend money at businesses throughout the county and provide increased sales tax revenues for both the city and the county. A vibrant, improved downtown Arcadia can draw additional tourists, provide additional shopping opportunities and entertainment amenities for county residents, and support more businesses and new jobs.

GOAL

Revitalize downtown Arcadia with improvements to make it a more attractive destination for residents, tourists and businesses.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Revitalizing downtown Arcadia will be a complex, long-term effort with multiple components, described below, to be implemented in a phased, comprehensive approach.

- A redevelopment agency with a dedicated funding source
- A comprehensive downtown plan
- A historic preservation program
- Encourage housing in the downtown business area
- Enhanced visual appeal through design guidelines, gateways, enhanced public gathering spaces and improved code enforcement



ACTION STEPS:

IMPLEMENT A COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (CRA)

A Community Redevelopment Authority (CRA) is an agency empowered by local governments to pursue redevelopment projects. Most CRAs are funded through tax increment financing (TIF), a tool that utilizes incremental increases in local property tax revenues. Downtown Arcadia could serve as the initial focus of redevelopment and revitalization efforts by a CRA created by the City. The CRA's efforts can later be broadened to include other areas of the city. By working with local property and business owners, elected officials and residents, a CRA can unite the community toward the goal of improving the downtown area.

Estimated Costs **\$105,000**

Finding of Necessity/Slum and Blight Study	\$20,000
Community Redevelopment Plan	\$35,000
Community Redevelopment Authority	\$50,000
1 Employee/year	

CREATE A DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Conduct a visioning process and create a comprehensive downtown redevelopment plan including a parking study. Elements may include design guidelines, gateway improvements, facade and streetscape improvements and plans to improve parking and traffic circulation.

Estimated Cost **\$150,000**

REVIVE THE CITY'S MAIN STREET PROGRAM

The City of Arcadia was selected as one of Florida's first 'Main Street' communities. The community desires to recertify as a "Florida Main Street" and provide for a Main Street program manager. A Community Redevelopment Authority (CRA) could be used to implement the Main Street program activities.

Estimated Cost **\$45,000**

One staff position per year

DEVELOP A BUSINESS/NON-PROFIT INCUBATOR IN DOWNTOWN ARCADIA

A business incubator can provide space, staffing support and education for start-up businesses and non-profit organizations.

Estimated Cost **\$45,000 per year**

1 Employee/Year

ENCOURAGE 2ND FLOOR HOUSING DOWNTOWN

Successful revitalization of downtown Arcadia will largely depend on the area's ability to attract people as a place to live and work. Utilizing existing downtown structures for housing can provide additional support for downtown businesses, provide additional sales tax revenue to the City and County, and help address the local housing shortage. Strategies to encourage people to live in downtown Arcadia include:

- Review and revise local zoning ordinances to ensure that residential uses are allowed above businesses in the downtown business district.
- Set up a revolving loan program using Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) money to provide funding for residential development.
- Rebate a portion of the incremental tax increase realized from new residential development to the property owner.
- Waive building permit fees for residential projects in the downtown development area.

Estimated Costs **\$15,000**

Review and revise local zoning ordinances

Recovery Value: **HIGH**

PRESERVE AND SHOWCASE HISTORIC ARCADIA AND DESOTO COUNTY

A comprehensive effort to preserve historic resources includes the following components:

- Inventory Historic Resources in Arcadia and DeSoto County and update the National Register of Historic Places.
- Adopt a Local Historic Preservation Ordinance to establish a process for local government review of proposed modifications to historic structures and resources. The ordinance will provide for a review body and an appeals process.
- Support the existing Historic Walking Tour of the city's historic sites with signs and related educational materials.
- Establish a History Museum to house and showcase the history and culture of DeSoto County. Locating the museum in historic downtown Arcadia will maximize the number of visitors and walking tour of downtown Arcadia.

Estimated Cost **\$352,000**

Historic Resource Inventory	\$50,000
Historic Preservation Ordinance	\$15,000
Historic Walking Tour (Brochure/Map and tour signs)	\$5,000
History Museum	282,000



IMPROVE LINKAGES TO DOWNTOWN

Downtown Arcadia's street, sidewalks and bike paths need to be improved to provide better access between neighboring communities. Many of the existing sidewalks are in poor condition, and there is also a lack of sidewalks along many streets between downtown Arcadia and adjoining neighborhoods. Specific improvements include reconstructing and improving the sidewalks and crosswalks in downtown Arcadia and implementing a comprehensive streetscape program, including such elements as historic streetlights, planters, and trees.

Estimated Cost **\$341,000**

Oak Street Improvements (3 blocks/Orange to Brevard)	
Road Asphalt (2" overlay)	\$106,000
Curb (both sides)	\$26,000
Concrete Sidewalk (both sides)	\$77,000
Landscaping	\$132,000



Downtown Pedestrian Improvements- Example: Oak Street

ENHANCE COMMUNITY APPEARANCE

The way a community appears is a fundamental factor in whether it is a place that people want to visit and live - it affects both the quality of life for people who live there, and also the community's ability to attract new residents and businesses. Many in DeSoto County expressed a strong desire to take pride in their community and want effective methods and adequate resources to improve and maintain the county's overall visual appearance

- **Create and Enforce Community Appearance Codes**
 - Review local nuisance and community appearance codes for consistency with community standards.
 - Create a City of Arcadia code enforcement program including staff and resources



Revitalize Downtown Arcadia

- Provide for Downtown-Specific Improvements
 - Create an improvement program to encourage existing businesses to improve storefronts and enhance the overall appearance of the downtown district. Design guidelines would be a helpful first step. Providing either low-interest loans or grants could fund the program.
 - Improve the gateways to Arcadia with consistently designed signs and improved landscaping at the city's four major highway entrances on State Route 70 and US 17.
 - The Tree of Knowledge park serves as a central plaza and pedestrian entryway into the city. It can be enhanced through improved landscaping, historic lights, and a welcome center.

Estimated Cost **\$495,000**

Local Ordinance Review and Adoption	\$50,000
Code Enforcement Program/Annually	\$120,000
3 Employees	
Geographic Information System	\$50,000
Hardware/Software/Development	
Facade Improvement Program	TBD
Improve Gateways to the Community	\$20,000
Improve Tree of Knowledge Park	\$175,000



BUILD HOMES AND COMMUNITIES

Projects identified within this section address the severe housing shortage in DeSoto County in a progression, starting with planning, moving to developing housing resources at the local and regional level, and finally implementation of physical housing projects to address the needs of the community.

Initially, projects focus on planning for housing development. Assessing the needs of the community and the resources available creates an understanding of where to begin the difficult task of providing appropriate housing. In addition to gathering information, organizations at the local and regional level will help drive and prioritize the needs of the community. The creation of a Community Development Corporation can provide organization at the local level to address the housing needs of low-income residents.

Finally, the projects identified in Building Homes and Communities, demonstrate the ability of housing to move beyond the physical structure of the home to impact the greater community. Creating a safe and stable environment benefits not only individuals moving into a new home or apartment, but also helps stabilize neighborhoods that may be experiencing decline, resulting in a stronger community and greater economic investment.



Build Homes and Communities

Recovery Value: **HIGH**

RECOVERY VALUE

The demand for housing in DeSoto County is enormous. To best utilize potential and existing resources a study must be undertaken to identify the most effective way to build new and rehabilitate existing housing.

GOAL

Develop the planning capacity and resource infrastructure to provide a comprehensive approach to housing. Identify housing options for all income ranges and encourage housing growth, which meets the unique needs of DeSoto County. Develop a plan to target resources and funding where they will achieve the greatest impact.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

A housing study and comprehensive plan should be undertaken to identify various housing needs, resources, locations, and housing delivery systems. Once the needs have been identified, local organizations can build capacity to plan, develop, and implement housing and community development programs and projects. The city and county governments can then engage community organizations, nonprofit housing providers, and for-profit developers in partnerships to develop targeted housing.

DEVELOP A COMPREHENSIVE HOUSING PLAN

As a result of the disaster, the demand for housing in DeSoto County is substantial. A comprehensive housing study should be undertaken to identify the best way to incorporate new and existing housing into DeSoto County. A Comprehensive Housing Plan will identify the appropriate balance of housing opportunities and locations. Elements of the Housing Plan should include:

- Housing Assessment/Needs Study
- Infill Housing Plan
- Relocation Plan
- Housing Strategy
- Consider establishing a regional consortium to apply to HUD for federal HOME and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding.

ESTABLISH A COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Establish a Community Development Corporation (CDC) with the assistance of private or public local, state and/or federal partners. The CDC could build capacity and experience by initially partnering with an established organization, such as Centro Campesino, Everglades Community Association, Homes for Hillsborough, Volunteers of America, and others. The CDC can be effective in developing projects providing decent, safe and affordable housing for low and moderate-income persons. Projects the CDC may potentially undertake include:

- Coordinate and partner with housing organizations and developers to construct affordable housing developments.
- Build infill housing to utilize existing land within targeted neighborhoods.
- Acquire and rehabilitate housing for homeownership opportunities.
- Homeownership Counseling and Fair Housing Programs

CREATE A REGIONAL COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY

A regional, multi-service, organization could provide an opportunity to obtain local dedicated funding from federal sources through an establishment of a consortium. The regional agency would also provide the opportunity to consolidate administrative overhead for operating existing programs such as the State Housing Initiative and Florida's Small Cities Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) programs. Combining programs under one organization would allow the agency to hire experienced staff and management. Some of these programs could include:

- A Housing Referral and Resource Center to provide information and services on housing opportunities throughout the County.
- A Rental Registration and Licensing Program to protect the health, safety and well being of the occupants of rental housing. A permitting process would require properties to be inspected annually and prior to occupancy.
- A Title Clearance Program to assist DeSoto County residents, non-profit organizations and the local

Build Housing Capacity

government, in obtaining clear title to property for access to public programs and assistance.

DEVELOP A COMMUNITY LAND TRUST

A Community Land Trust (CLT) will enhance the community by acquiring neglected property and making it available for the purpose of affordable housing developments.

INCREASE CONSTRUCTION CAPACITY

The number of skilled trade workers in DeSoto County could be increased through innovative programs that benefit both the individual and the community. These programs are job-training initiatives that increase the labor base, and teach trade skills, while potentially reducing labor costs for constructing homes across DeSoto County. Programs might include:

- An apprenticeship program that could partner professionals and organizations with individuals interested in learning and working in specific trades for on the job training and future employment programs
- A Section 3 Program to provide job training, employment, and contracting opportunities for low- or very-low income residents in connection with projects and activities funded with federal dollars.
- A Youthbuild program to train and employ local youth who have dropped out of high school.
- Self-Help housing initiatives, which lower the cost of home construction by reducing labor costs through volunteer and homeowner participation in building. Organizations currently working on self-help initiatives include Habitat for Humanity and Catholic Charities.
- Rehabilitation Specialist Program to help homeowners with assessing repair costs, negotiating with contractors, and obtaining permits.

Estimated Cost \$705,000

Comprehensive Housing Study	\$60,000
Community Development Corporation	
(3-yrs)	\$225,000
Community Action Agency (3-yrs.)	\$300,000
Community Land Trust (3-yrs.).....	\$60,000
Interfaith/Interagency Coordinating organization/Increasing Capacity	\$60,000

Create Housing

Recovery Value: HIGH

RECOVERY VALUE

As a result of the hurricanes, over 800 homes were damaged or destroyed. This represents a large portion of the housing stock, making housing a critical need in DeSoto County and this project of a high recovery value. The extensive damage to existing buildings and lack of adequate housing choices prior to the hurricanes make housing of all types an essential aspect of community stability and long-term recovery in DeSoto County.

GOAL

Provide a wide range of housing options within DeSoto County and the City of Arcadia.



PROJECT DESCRIPTION

A variety of housing options can be constructed to meet the needs of the diverse community. Multiple organizations, associations and government agencies can develop and implement each project however; a newly formed Community Development Corporation (CDC) could play a large role in forming partnerships and initiating the development of each of the projects.

Neighborhood Revitalization

To revitalize existing neighborhoods, a CDC could develop a "Model Housing Project", in a key location, with a mix of housing options that include homeownership and rental units. The development could serve as

a magnet for additional investment in rehabilitation and growth of housing in the surrounding community. This planned community development initiative would include: community facilities, recreation and other amenities to support the people that live there and the surrounding community.

Potential locations for development include Southwest Arcadia and Nocatee due to their concentration of sub-standard housing and need for housing, economic and social recovery and revitalization. A more detailed description Neighborhood Revitalization and the facets of the project are found on page 9.

Develop an Affordable Senior Community

Construct a senior living facility in Arcadia to utilize available land for seniors wishing to move to a community environment or who can no longer afford to live in their current location. A development of 60 small one-bedroom apartments or clustered units could potentially serve low-income elderly. In addition to the living units, space can be designed to include a small community center for social and educational activities. Partnerships could be formed with the DeSoto Housing Authority, Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Florida Department of Elder Affairs and private partners. A location should be selected that is close to other facilities and retail developments to avoid isolating residents. Potential locations include: Orange Avenue, and along US 17 north of Arcadia.

Develop Mixed-Use Housing Opportunities

Create livable space combined with retail to increase economic viability. Business owners will experience an increase in profits as residents seek out services nearest their homes.

Renovate or construct new buildings in Downtown Arcadia to provide rental units over commercial establishments. Mixed-use residential developments in this area could foster a vibrant downtown. Renovating two story buildings with at least 8,000 square feet of second story space would provide the greatest return on investment. To encourage the development of housing in conjunction with existing retail, tax credits could be offered for owners converting upper level downtown space to residential.

Rebuild or Replace Public Housing

Rebuild and enhance public housing stock to provide long term housing solutions to public housing residents displaced by the disaster. The DeSoto County Housing Authority will demolish and replace the 60 public housing units destroyed by the hurricanes. Units should be designed to ensure people with disabilities could access any unit.

Options

- Rebuild public housing units on land occupied by destroyed units.
- Relocate public housing units to available tract of land large enough to accommodate replacement housing, at a location to be determined.
- Construct replacement public housing units on scattered sites throughout the community.

Potential locations include areas near southern and eastern Arcadia, as well as sites throughout the community. Replacing public housing units throughout the community instead of in one concentrated area could assist in encouraging mixed income housing developments, creating a diverse socio-economic community.

Develop Housing for Agricultural Workers and Families

Construct community targeted toward farm workers to provide an affordable, safe and sanitary environment. The development can include housing for families and single individuals, as well as services, such as daycare, health facilities and educational opportunities. Potential locations for development include Nocatee and Eastern Arcadia due to the large amount of available land for housing, facilitates and leaving room for expansion. Organizations experienced in developing farm worker housing, such as Catholic Charities and the Everglades Foundation can take a leading role in developing and implementing these projects.

Build a Mixed Income Rental Housing Project

Create opportunities for rental through public-private partnership. Provide incentives for developers, such as tax credits. Potential locations for development include: northeastern Arcadia, near US 70 and US 72 and near the Wal-Mart Distribution Center.

Estimated Cost

\$52,808,358

Neighborhood Revitalization	\$34,263,358
Phase I-120 Units, Phase II-60 Units	
Park and Recreation Facilities	
Affordable Senior Communities	1,725,000
Mixed Use Housing Opportunities	3,000,000
Rebuild or Replace Public Housing	5,720,000
Agricultural Worker Housing	8,100,000
Mixed Income Rental Project	TBD



Recovery Value: **HIGH**

Neighborhood Revitalization

RECOVERY VALUE

A centrally located multi-purpose development in an area experiencing economic decline can provide the catalyst for social and economic growth. DeSoto County is in need of such a stimulus not only to develop quality housing but also to encourage business and educational growth through community facilities. A project of this scope would give residents of DeSoto County a model for future growth and expansion.

GOAL

The goal is to create a community, supported by a mix of housing, recreation, and education, to act as a catalyst for neighborhood revitalization.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

An example of a neighborhood revitalization project can be illustrated through Smith Brown Park, which is centrally located in southwest Arcadia and has suffered from neglect in recent years. The surrounding area is predominantly residential and in close proximity to downtown. The park could be redesigned to better suit the desires of the surrounding community and will assist in turning the park from an underutilized space to a safe and active community center. The revitalization of the existing community park can serve as the focal point for a number of other development activities, which will contribute to overall community neighborhood revitalization.

Each aspect is discussed in full on other pages of the plan but are identified here to demonstrate the connection of each element to neighborhood revitalization.

Housing (Pages 7-8)

A wide range of housing options could give all residents the chance to live in the house they can most comfortably afford. 60 single-family homes for low to moderate homeownership opportunities could be built. 60 market rate and subsidized rental units could be constructed, in addition to the single-family homes.

Community Center (Page 11)

A central community and recreation facility could accommodate a multitude of activities. The Community Center could contain indoor basketball courts, a stage for meetings and performances, a weight room and locker rooms, a kitchen/concession area and four

meeting rooms which can be joined together to create larger meeting space. A small, central pavilion could serve as an outdoor meeting and gathering place.

Parks and Recreation (Page 11)

Parks could be designed to suit the desires of the surrounding community and to promote safety without barriers or fences. Smith Brown Park and Louis C. Anderson Park could be expanded to include: a baseball field, four outdoor basketball courts, a swimming pool, five small play parks, a soccer field and open green space for general use.

Connectivity (Page 13)

Enhancing existing links is critical. Within the community, 5' walkways could be built through the development to connect people with places, increasing mobility and accessibility. Infrastructure investment could be focused on key streets connecting neighborhoods, services, employment, and recreation. Streets which could help the economic and social growth and expansion of the neighborhood include: Orange Avenue, Martin Luther King Street (MLK)/Hargrave, and Harris Road.

Economic Opportunities (Pages 1-5)

A community facility could be used for computer classes and job training workshops to increase employment opportunities for residents. A small business incubator could also be developed to help residents start new businesses. A micro-business loan program to encourage small businesses along key streets could also assist in the economic recovery of the neighborhood and the City.



STRENGTHEN NEIGHBORHOODS AND COMMUNITIES

Projects within this section respond to community and neighborhood-based needs as expressed by residents and leaders. These projects seek to provide and enhance community and recreation centers, provide reliable access to quality health care, create pedestrian-friendly streets, protect critical emergency operations centers and update vital shelter and evacuation plans.

These projects address the need to improve the overall quality of life for residents in DeSoto County with adequate provision of some of the basic services and amenities that allow communities to survive and attract new businesses and residents. Access to adequate health facilities is frequently a major consideration in choosing where to live and locate a business. Many of the health-care facilities in DeSoto County were outdated and in need of improvement long before the hurricanes of 2004. The hurricanes dramatically proved the need for quick response by local police, fire and other agencies to emergencies, along with adequate capacity to evacuate and shelter people.

The planning team heard frequently about the need for a multi-use community facility to be used for a wide range of social and recreational events and activities and to serve as community meeting places. Improved connections between neighborhoods and schools, shopping centers and educational, health and other services was identified as valuable improvements by the planning team.



Strengthen Neighborhoods and Communities

Recovery Value: **MODERATE**

Develop Parks and Promote Recreation

RECOVERY VALUE

Developing community centers and parks within the City of Arcadia and DeSoto County has a moderate recovery value because these facilities help to create interesting and active communities which over time will retain existing and attract new residents. Community centers can be used to accommodate a wide range of community activities and serve as a townhall or community meeting place. Parks and recreation centers can be used to attract visitors to natural resources, generate tourist revenue and protect natural resources.

GOALS

- Provide a community center to accommodate a wide variety of social and recreational needs
- Strengthen existing community assets as resources for residents and visitors.
- Enhance public use of natural open-space areas
- Create a regional attraction that highlights DeSoto's natural resources.
- Create and enhance recreation activities and facilities

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Planning efforts should be focused on key recreation opportunities. Improve existing parks for revitalization and recreation linking sports fields, picnic areas, trail systems, and bike paths. Develop community centers, municipal recreation opportunities, and regional attractions that capture the value of local natural resources and greenway corridors.

Build attractive community centers to be used by groups for meetings and events, serve as a focal point for important community services, and provide neighborhood meeting and recreation places for all ages. There is an especially high need for new programs and spaces for teens and seniors.

Develop and revitalize neighborhood and community parks to provide a wide range of recreational opportunities, including organized team sports activities. Efforts should be focused on key recreation opportunities at the neighborhood, city and regional levels.

The following projects highlight key parks in mature neighborhoods and along the Peace River, and also options for a new community center and other recreational facilities.

Develop a Local Component Study for the Peace River Heritage Corridor.

A high recovery value project in this plan is the Peace River Heritage Corridor. Enhancing existing parks along the Peace River will support the goals of the Heritage Corridor and build on the community's ability to attract tourists. Enhancements to existing area need to be studied and programmed into a capital improvement program.

Build a Multi-functional Community and Recreation Center

DeSoto County residents often mentioned the need for a multi-use community center(s). Community centers can be designed to serve a wide range of social, educational, and recreational needs. DeSoto County has initiated the planning and development of a Walt Brewer Sports Complex that includes a community center and recreational facilities.



Option 1- Complete construction of the Walt Brewer Community Recreation and complex.

Option 2- Construct a community center in Nocatee Village to serve the neighborhoods in and around Nocatee Village.

Option 3- Construct a Community Center at another location such as the Smith Brown facility at the Louis Anderson Park in Arcadia.

Build a Community Swimming Pool

The new pool could be located at either the DeSoto High School, Walt Brewer Sports Complex or another location.

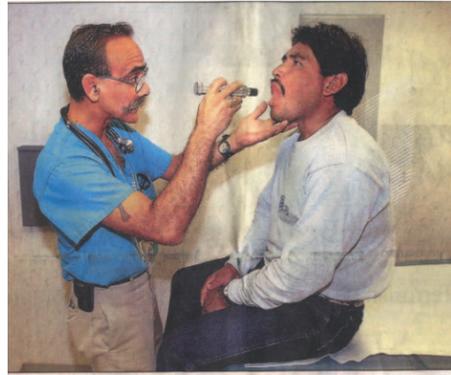
Build a Skate Park

The new Skate Park could be located at either the Walt Brewer Sports Center, or as an independent facility at another location.

Estimated Cost	\$19,790,000
Heritage Corridor Enhancement Study	\$25,000
Build Community Centers	
<i>Walt Brewer Complex-Cost to Finish</i>	\$10,140,000
<i>Walt Brewer Community Center</i>	\$5,000,000
<i>Other Community/ Recreation Center</i>	\$4,450,000
Build a Community Swimming Pool	\$800,000
Build a Skate Park	100,000

Improve Health Facilities

Recovery Value: **MODERATE**



RECOVERY VALUE

People throughout the community indicated that the value of reliable healthcare services was important. Having local access to modern, well-staffed and equipped medical facilities stands out as an essential reason that people decide to remain in or relocate to an area. The quality of an area's hospital, public health department and other health services also ranks as key criteria for companies in deciding where to locate and bring jobs. It also influences the hospital's ability to attract additional physicians, ranging from surgeons to other specialists. DeSoto County's permanent residents, seasonal residents and migrant workers will be the initial beneficiaries. Longer term, the County will benefit from its ability to grow and attract additional businesses and residents.

GOALS

- Improve the quality of medical facilities and services for people within the county.
- Create a more efficient overall medical infrastructure, both for major medical needs and primary care, dental and vision support.
- Ensure the ability to provide shelter and deliver services during major disasters.
- Support facility improvements with tri-county mobile clinic, 2-1-1 Helpline, Web site and Volunteer Resource Center (see Regional Projects section).

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Upgrade and/or replace the DeSoto Memorial Hospital and the DeSoto County Public Health Department buildings with larger, up-to-date facilities that will also serve as shelters during weather-related emergencies. Through either the existing or a new facility, expand the hospital's services, including emergency room, operating rooms, patient rooms and diagnostics.. Also, consolidate the public health department's health, dental and vision clinics in one, larger building. Build hurricane-resistant structures.

• Expand Hospital Facility and Services

- **Expand current hospital structure.**
Construct additional space for patient services, including emergency room, operating rooms, patient rooms and radiology. Renovate portions of existing facility to current codes and standards. Purchase selected medical equipment.
- **Replace hospital with new, larger facility.**
Replace the current hospital with a larger facility instead of expanding the present structure. Support the community's needs for the next 25+ years with a structurally safe facility equipped with modern diagnostic technology, emergency rooms, operating capabilities and other patient services. Increase the number of surgeons and specialty programs

provided on site. Enable people to obtain most of their major medical services locally.

• Replace and Expand the Current Public Health Department Building.

Consolidate clinics into one facility. Expand and replace the County's existing Public Health Department building that has outgrown current and future needs. Consolidate the medical, dental and vision clinics in one facility to improve access for those with limited transportation and to reduce overall operating costs. Increase client service offices to ensure client's privacy and comply with Patient Privacy Rules. Expand space to serve more low-income patients who have used the hospital's emergency room for their primary care needs.

• Improve Patient Emergency Transport Services.

Improve ambulance and rescue teams' support for patients who have been diagnosed at the hospital with medical conditions which require highly specialized services, such as heart surgery, that are only provided outside the county.

Estimated Costs

Hospital Options

Repair the existing facility	\$2,000,000
Expand current hospital structure	\$24,000,000
Replace hospital with new, larger facility	\$40,000,000

Public Health Department

Improvements.....	\$8,700,000
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Emergency Transportation Services

Improvements	\$500,000
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Recovery Value: MODERATE

Repair/Replace Public Safety Facilities

RECOVERY VALUE

In times of disaster and beyond, communities rely on the assistance of police, fire and emergency services. Facilities that house these services need to be rebuilt and hardened against storms so that critical services can continue to function.

GOAL

To have a safe and secure Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to coordinate public safety services for the City of Arcadia and/or DeSoto County.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Repair and/or replace facilities housing the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and the 911 Dispatch emergency communications center.

- Option 1: Joint EOC Facilities

Build a new combined City of Arcadia and DeSoto County Public Safety facility housing an Emergency Operation Center and 911 dispatch facility. The City of Arcadia and DeSoto County will continue to use separate Fire, Emergency Medical Service and Law Enforcement facilities. This option establishes a combined Emergency Operations Center that would be shared and maintained by the City of Arcadia and DeSoto County. A single Emergency Operations Center allows improved emergency response coordination by both agencies. A combined Emergency Operations Center will reduce overall facility equipment and administration expense.

- Option 2: Separate EOC Facilities

Estimated Costs

Joint Facilities\$2,000,000
 Separate Facilities-\$1.5 Million each\$3,000,000



Recovery Value: MODERATE

Update/Develop Shelter and Evacuation Plans

RECOVERY VALUE

Adequate shelter and evacuation plans and the subsequent building of shelters and safe rooms have a high recovery value and are critical to providing safety to citizens and visitors when dangerous, often life-threatening storms, approach.

GOAL

Reduce the overall threats to DeSoto County residents with comprehensive identification of the county's shelter and evacuation needs.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Update and develop the existing Hurricane Evacuation Plan and Comprehensive Shelter Plan.

Evacuation and Shelter Plans

Update the community's existing Hurricane Evacuation Plans and Comprehensive Sheltering plans. Tie the sheltering scheme to overall evacuation scheme for various emergency/disaster scenarios, examine options and scenarios of "crossing storms" and/or "parallel storms." Plan elements should consider:

- Incorporating appropriate hardening technologies and rebuilding damaged public structures that have been identified by the county as public shelters and shelters of last refuge.
- Constructing two or more new multiple-use facilities to meet a variety of community needs to Hurricane Category 4 survival levels, out of the 100-year flood plain. Generally, the construction cost for shelters will range between \$80-100 per square foot, depending upon final finish and multiple use options. Potential funding sources include: FEMA Pre-Disaster Mitigation Competitive Grant Program (PDM-C); FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP); Department of Transportation (for Evacuation Route Studies); and others.
- Developing an incentive-based and/or financial assistance program to encourage retrofitting of existing structures, as well as new construction of homes, businesses and public buildings to incorporate Safe Room technologies.
- Retrofitting existing community centers as hardened shelters for manufactured home parks.
- Building one or more shelters for special needs populations.
- Creating a comprehensive educational program on evacuation and sheltering issues.

Estimated Cost

\$80,000

Evacuation and Shelter Plans

IMPROVE INFRASTRUCTURE

DeSoto County must continue to invest in improving their transportation and water Infrastructure in order to meet the increasing demands of a growing region.

The key projects that comprise the improve infrastructure recovery strategy include:

- Improve Local Roads and Bridges
 - State Road 70
 - State Road 72
 - County Road 769
 - Public Transportation Feasibility Study
 - City of Arcadia Local Road Assessment and Improvement Program
- Improve Water, Wastewater and Stormwater Systems
 - City and County Utility Master Plan Feasibility Study
 - City of Arcadia Wastewater System Improvements
 - City of Arcadia Water System Improvements
 - Geographic Information System (GIS)
 - County Wide Stormwater and Flood Control Master Plan
- Regional Water Supply Interconnect
- Update the Local Mitigation Strategy

LOCAL ROADS AND BRIDGES

Hurricane Charley reaffirmed the fact that it is essential to alleviate the congestion and flooding that occurs on key evacuation routes. The transportation improvement projects are primary transportation routes in DeSoto County and also serve as evacuation routes.

WATER, WASTEWATER AND STORMWATER SYSTEMS

Growth in DeSoto County and the City of Arcadia is dependent on reliable water supplies, appropriate wastewater treatment and competent stormwater systems and

- Development of a county-wide stormwater master plan.
- Extend and expand water infrastructure.
- Create a network of back-up generators.

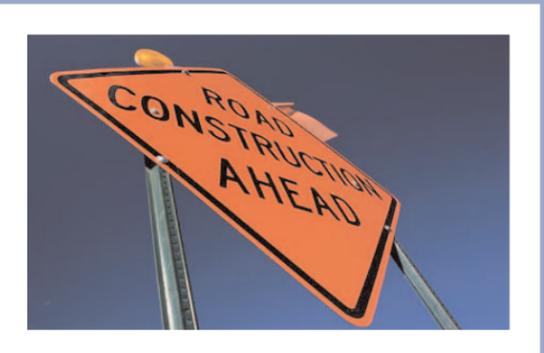
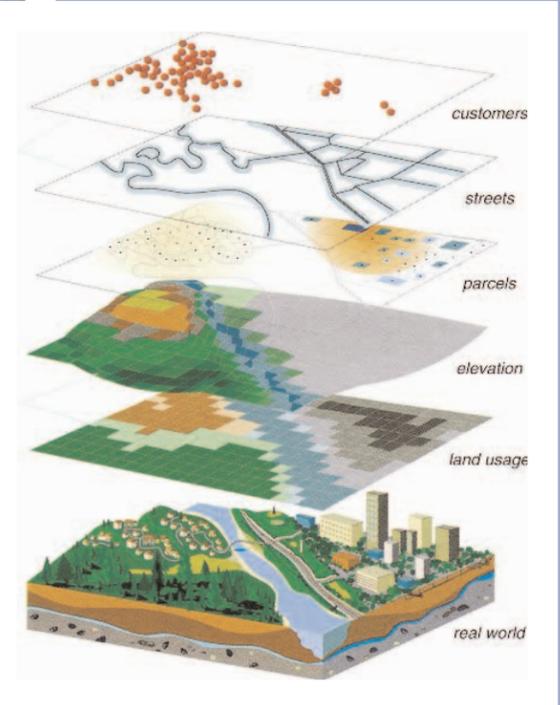
REGIONAL WATER SUPPLY INTERCONNECT

A regional water main interconnect system, supported by the Peace River - Manasota Regional Water Supply Area, will provide efficient water transfers within the region and ensure that drinking water will be available to residents during times of emergency, drought, breaks or power outages. A connected loop system would enable communities within the jurisdictional boundaries of the area to transfer water to and from other communities in order to increase supply and meet demands.

- Complete Phase I (and pursue funding of Phase II) of the DeSoto County Water/Wastewater Program
- Pursue funding and implementation of the Regional Water Supply Interconnect.

UPDATE LOCAL MITIGATION STRATEGY

The Development of a Local Mitigation Strategy (LMS) is a prerequisite for project related funding under FEMA's Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program and Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. This program allows communities to compete for mitigation funding both before and after disasters.



Improve Infrastructure

Recovery Value: MODERATE

Improve Roads and Bridges

RECOVERY VALUE

The ability to move goods and services is an essential component to the economic recovery and development of DeSoto County and the City of Arcadia. Storm water and the impact of heavy truck traffic during post-storm clean-up operations severely damaged aging road infrastructure. A comprehensive capital improvement road plan will help the City and County to maintain existing levels of service and prepare for future growth.

GOAL

To improve DeSoto County's transportation infrastructure by reducing congestion, expanding vital roadways and providing evacuation routes.

PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS

Expand and improve vital roadways and transportation services within DeSoto County to alleviate congestion and flooding.

- **State Highway 70 Improvements**
 - Investigate options for expanding State Highway 70 to four lanes to provide increased evacuation capacity and regional east/west connection from I-75 to I-95.
 - Extend State Highway 31 north from State Highway 70 to Roan Road
 - Improve the safety condition at State Highway 70/Wal-Mart Entrance intersection by installing traffic signals in order to reduce cross street conflicts.
- **County Road 769 Enhancements.**

The safety and capacity of County Road 769 (King's Highway) should be enhanced to provide better service levels for existing users and to provide evacuation route capacity. The improvement could be either;

 - An upgrade of the existing 11' lanes to 12' lanes and add 5' paved shoulders, or
 - An upgrade of the existing 11' lanes to four-12' lanes and add 5' paved shoulders.
- **Public Transportation System Feasibility Study for Arcadia/DeSoto County**
- **State Highway 70/State Highway 72 Intersection Improvements**

- Conduct a warrant study at the intersection to determine need for a signal.
- **City of Arcadia Local Road Assessment and Improvement Program**
 - Prepare local road needs assessment.
 - Repair and replace local roads.

Estimated Cost	\$24,060,000
State Highway 70 Improvements	\$5,940,000
State Road 70 Improvements/ from	
Turner Road to E of SR 31	3,500,000
Extend State Highway 31 North from	
SR 70 to Roan Road	\$2,300,000
State Highway 70/Walmart Entrance	
Intersection	\$140,000

County Road 769 Enhancements/Rhodes	
Creek to SR-72	\$2,300,000
Public Transportation Feasibility Study ..	\$110,000
State Highway 70/72 Intersection	
Improvements	\$310,000
City of Arcadia Local Road Assessment	
and Improved Program	\$15,400,000



Recovery Value: MODERATE

Improve Water, Wastewater, and Stormwater Systems

RECOVERY VALUE

Safe drinking water, appropriate wastewater treatment and effective stormwater infrastructure are basic needs. The hurricanes damaged portions of the water and the wastewater systems in Arcadia. The capacity and reliability of these systems affect the amount and rate of economic growth in Arcadia and DeSoto County.

GOAL

- Provide reliable water and sewer systems within the City of Arcadia and DeSoto County.
- Analyze storm water systems and make repairs/modifications/additions as needed to reduce flood loss.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Numerous improvements could be made to existing infrastructure systems. Additionally, there are some programs that if implemented could help the County position itself for future growth and economic development. Improvements should consider flood and wind mitigation measures to ensure sustainability. The following list identifies a menu of discrete projects that can be implemented as resources allow.

- Prepare Utility Master Plan and Feasibility Study for both DeSoto County and the City of Arcadia. The plan should evaluate existing water, wastewater and stormwater systems and include:
 - Modeling of existing water system capacities and evaluation of how future growth and demand will impact existing systems.
 - Evaluation of alternatives for improvements to existing water, wastewater and stormwater systems to meet regulatory requirements, and prepare for future growth.
- Wastewater Collection System Improvements for the City of Arcadia. Prepare Inflow and Infiltration (I/I) Study to analyze condition of existing wastewater systems for both the City of Arcadia. If required as a result of the I/I study, replace portions of the wastewater collection network. Replacement of the process portion of the wastewater treatment

plant, immediate benefits would be: meeting current standards, add water reuse component, more cost-effective than expensive repairs that barely meet standards.

- Water Distribution System Improvements for the City of Arcadia
 - Replacement of the water treatment plant.
 - Replacement of older segments of the water distribution system to reduce water losses.
 - Add one more groundwater well to the water supply system.
 - Provide Backup Generators. Build a network of back-up generators for the County and the City of Arcadia to support main lifting water and wastewater stations or facilities.
 - Create Geographic Information System (GIS). Computerize water and sewer line work to document location and condition of existing network and streamline repairs and reduce network downtime.
 - Create a database of stormwater information useful for upgrade, maintenance, and repairs of the stormwater management system.
 - Prepare a countywide stormwater and flood control master plan.

Estimated Cost \$ 29,605,000

Prepare Water and Wastewater Master Plan and Feasibility Study	\$500,000
City of Arcadia Water Treatment Plant Upgrade	\$5,000,000
City of Arcadia Wastewater Collection System Improvements	\$5,000,000
City of Arcadia Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade	\$8,000,000
City of Arcadia Water Distribution System Improvements	\$10,000,000
Create Geographic Information System (GIS)	\$105,000
Back-up Generators	\$600,000
Countywide Stormwater and Flood Control Master Plan, Phases I and II	\$400,000

Recovery Value: **MODERATE**

Build a Regional Water Supply Interconnect

RECOVERY VALUE

A Regional Water Supply Interconnect is important to the long-term economic recovery of the region and follows water policies set by the Southwest Florida Water and Wastewater Management District (SWFWWMD) for water use, and conservation. A project of this magnitude will provide the region with the needed water resources to sustain development at all economic levels.

GOAL

Provide efficient water transfers within the region.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Build an interconnect main for drinking water from the Wal-Mart Distribution Center in DeSoto County to the Punta Gorda and Deep Creek water facilities in Charlotte County. This project includes upgrading several pumping station facilities; hardening current water facilities, and upgrading distribution facilities throughout DeSoto and Charlotte County.

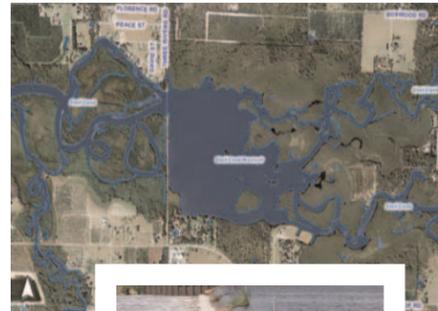
The Peace River Manasota Regional Water Supply Area (PR/MRWSA) provides water to their members; Manatee, Sarasota, Charlotte, and DeSoto Counties. Currently, all members with the exception of DeSoto are being supplied treated surface water. DeSoto County, the City of Punta Gorda, City of North Port and Deep Creek will immediately benefit from the interconnection.

PURSUE FUNDING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REGIONAL WATER SUPPLY INTERCONNECT

The Southwest Water Management District is the state partner of the PR/MRWSA for the funding and implementation of the Regional Water Supply Interconnect.

Estimated Costs

Charlotte County	\$154,000,000
DeSoto County.....	\$12,000,000



Recovery Value: **COMMUNITY INTEREST**

Update Local Mitigation Strategy

RECOVERY VALUE

The Development of a Local Mitigation Strategy (LMS) has a moderate recovery value and is a prerequisite for project-related funding under FEMA's Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program and Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. Implementing projects contained in the LMS such as hardening critical facilities will protect lives and reduce property losses.

GOAL

Analyze recent hurricane impacts to the City and County and update and revise the existing LMS and project lists to reduce losses from future events.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

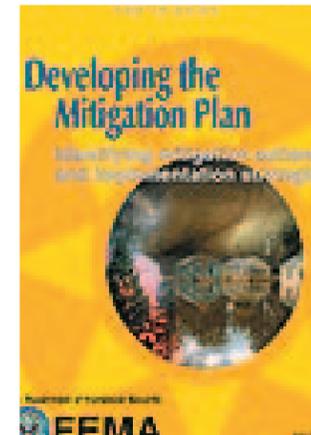
The preparation of an LMS includes identifying potential hazards, analyzing vulnerability to those hazards, and identifying specific mitigation measures to reduce future losses.

ACTION STEP

LOCAL MITIGATION STRATEGY

Reach out to community leaders, local government leaders, non-governmental agencies, private non-profit groups, the school district, and others to examine the current LMS status and list projects and actions that are consistent with local mitigation priorities. Integrate historic preservation into the LMS and emergency management process, including local response, recovery and mitigation.

Estimated Cost **\$10,000**



Sample elevated home

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REGIONAL PROJECTS

The hurricanes affected a large section of south central Florida, uniting communities in Charlotte, DeSoto, and Hardee Counties behind the goal of recovery. Although the disaster presented many challenges, it also provided opportunities for the three counties to combine their efforts on projects with a regional impact that could not be undertaken by a single entity.

The following projects address a variety of important regional community needs for the Florida heartland region, including better regional transportation connectivity, enhanced telecommunications, higher education and training opportunities, health programs, and environmental assessment. Taken as a group, these projects have the ability to build unprecedented cooperation and collectively leverage the region's influence for long-term recovery.

Regional Projects

Improve Regional Transportation Connectivity

Recovery Value: HIGH

RECOVERY VALUE

Improving the regional transportation connectivity has a high recovery value due to the strong relationship between transportation networks and commerce. Upgrading major transportation routes within the region will improve transportation flow; inter-regional linkages and access to markets; and the functional effectiveness of the state's emergency evacuation routes. Immediate improvements to regional routes, such as US 17 and potential east/west routes, will foster existing and new business opportunities.

US 17 is the economic spine of the region. Substantial economic development within Hardee and DeSoto Counties is highly unlikely without these improvements. Completion is critical to Charlotte County, as well, for both economic development and public safety as the primary evacuation route. The projects mentioned below, which are both short- and long-term in nature, support the local, county, and state transportation initiatives and Florida's Strategic Intermodal System (SIS).

GOAL

Provide continuous north-south and east-west linkages from Charlotte and through DeSoto and Hardee Counties to improve inter-regional linkages and access between economic regions.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

EXPEDITE COMPLETION OF US 17 IMPROVEMENTS

Fast-track the construction schedule of US 17 to complete four lanes from Charlotte County (US 17/SR41) to Hardee County (US 17/SR 664). These upgrades are critically needed to increase inter-regional mobility for people and freight while also providing better community linkages between the Tampa Bay, Heartland, and Southwest economic regions.

The proposed project action is to upgrade the existing two 12-foot lanes to four 12-foot lanes with median and 5-foot paved shoulders along certain segments of the corridor. Choke points and two-lanes in Charlotte County and at other segments along the US 17 corridor limit the highway's full capacity and ability to serve the region. Other seg-

ments that are in need of upgrade are from Charlotte County to Arcadia, DeSoto County; from Arcadia to Zolfo Springs, Hardee County; and from north Wauchula to Bowling Green, Hardee County.

CREATE A DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND ACCESS MANAGEMENT STRATEGY ALONG US 17

Because transportation investment shapes land use patterns, livability of communities and the quality of the environment, in conjunction with the completion of the four-lane upgrade of US 17, a land use/development plan would serve several purposes: (1) where appropriate, provide a land use and access management strategy especially for those areas along the corridor near downtown and other focal points of commercial concentration; (2) address how to optimize economic opportunities especially for damaged, vacant buildings, and vacant/underutilized lots along the corridor.

EVALUATE EAST-WEST TRANSPORTATION CORRIDORS

Improving the reliability, operational performance, economic opportunities and evacuation route options are objectives in evaluating east-west transportation alternatives between State Route (SR) 70/SR72 and SR 62.

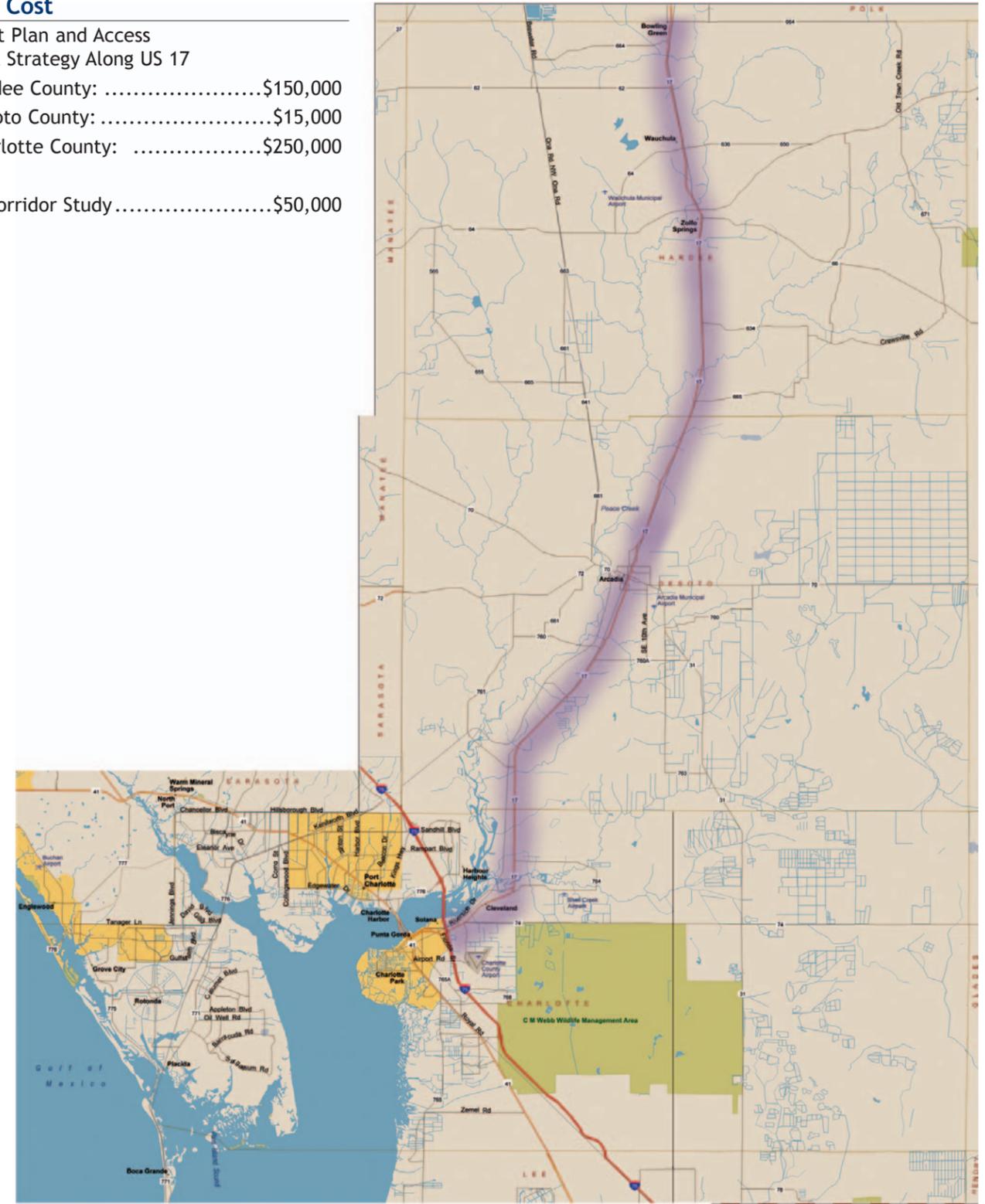
SR 62 and SR 64 function as key east/west corridors and are in need of upgrading to facilitate economic development and better serve as evacuation routes. A transportation alternative analysis would evaluate upgrading these and other east-west alternate routes in the county. FDOT gives greater emphasis to strategic links, and this corridor would provide links between coastal routes, relieve Interstate 4, and link Port Manatee facilities to the east as well as facilitate evacuation. Options for this project could include:

- Analyze and upgrade SR 62;
- Analyze and upgrade SR 64; or,
- Analyze and upgrade a different route.

Estimated Cost

Development Plan and Access Management Strategy Along US 17	
Hardee County:	\$150,000
DeSoto County:	\$15,000
Charlotte County:	\$250,000

East/West Corridor Study.....\$50,000



Recovery Value: **HIGH**

Improve Telecommunications and Internet Access

RECOVERY VALUE

Upgrading the telecommunications and broadband infrastructure will significantly improve the region's ability to attract new and progressive businesses that compete within the global marketplace and utilize e-commerce over the next 20 years. This project will greatly improve the economic conditions of the counties by increasing the higher-wage job opportunities.

The modernization of the telecommunications system for the tri-county region will be a long-term initiative with multiple benefits. State-of-the-art wireless technology advances training and educational programs are essential to expanding economic opportunities for individuals and businesses and the quality of life for residents who use the Internet.



PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Develop a Telecommunications Plan and Implementation Strategy

In coordination with the state, counties, regional economic development entities, and private partners, evaluate the existing telecommunications system. Develop a plan that identifies desired systems (broadband, wireless technologies, cellular and local internet services), and establish a plan for phasing in necessary telecommunications upgrades. The plan will assess present capabilities and facilities and include the following steps:

- Inventory current sub-networks and functionality
- Evaluate the location of current nodes and service providers
- Develop a possible network of the above and vendors
- Identify telecommunications upgrades and new infrastructure
- Implementation strategy to include estimated costs and funding sources.

The plan will provide strategies for installation efficiencies, including the coordination of telecommunications upgrades with other public and private infrastructure improvements, such as the extensions and improvements planned for US 17 and other roadways.

Improve Linkages within Florida's High-Tech Corridor

The tri-county area is well positioned to incorporate a fiber-optic backbone for a network to connect to Florida's High-Tech Corridor along US 17. By expanding this designated corridor to Charlotte, an infrastructure project will link Charlotte, DeSoto, and Hardee counties to the Tampa/Sarasota/Orlando/Space Coast High-Technology corridor. This crucial link will advance educational opportunities and training programs essential to expanding economic opportunities of individuals and businesses in the tri-county region.

INFRASTRUCTURE OPTIONS

Work with public partners, such as the U.S. Economic Development Administration and Federal Trade Commission, other federal and state agencies, private partners, utility companies, telecommunication industries, and local businesses to identify appropriate telecommunications upgrades and new infrastructure options. New or enhanced infrastructure could include:

- Cell towers
- Fiber-optic cable
- Digital Subscriber Line
- Local multi-point distribution system
- Multi-point, multi-channel distribution system

Estimated Cost

Planning:	\$200,000
Cell towers:	\$220,000/tower
Fiber-optic cable:	\$35,000/mile of cable
Digital Subscriber Line:	To Be Determined
Local multi-point distribution system:	To Be Determined
Multi-point, multi-channel distribution system:	To Be Determined



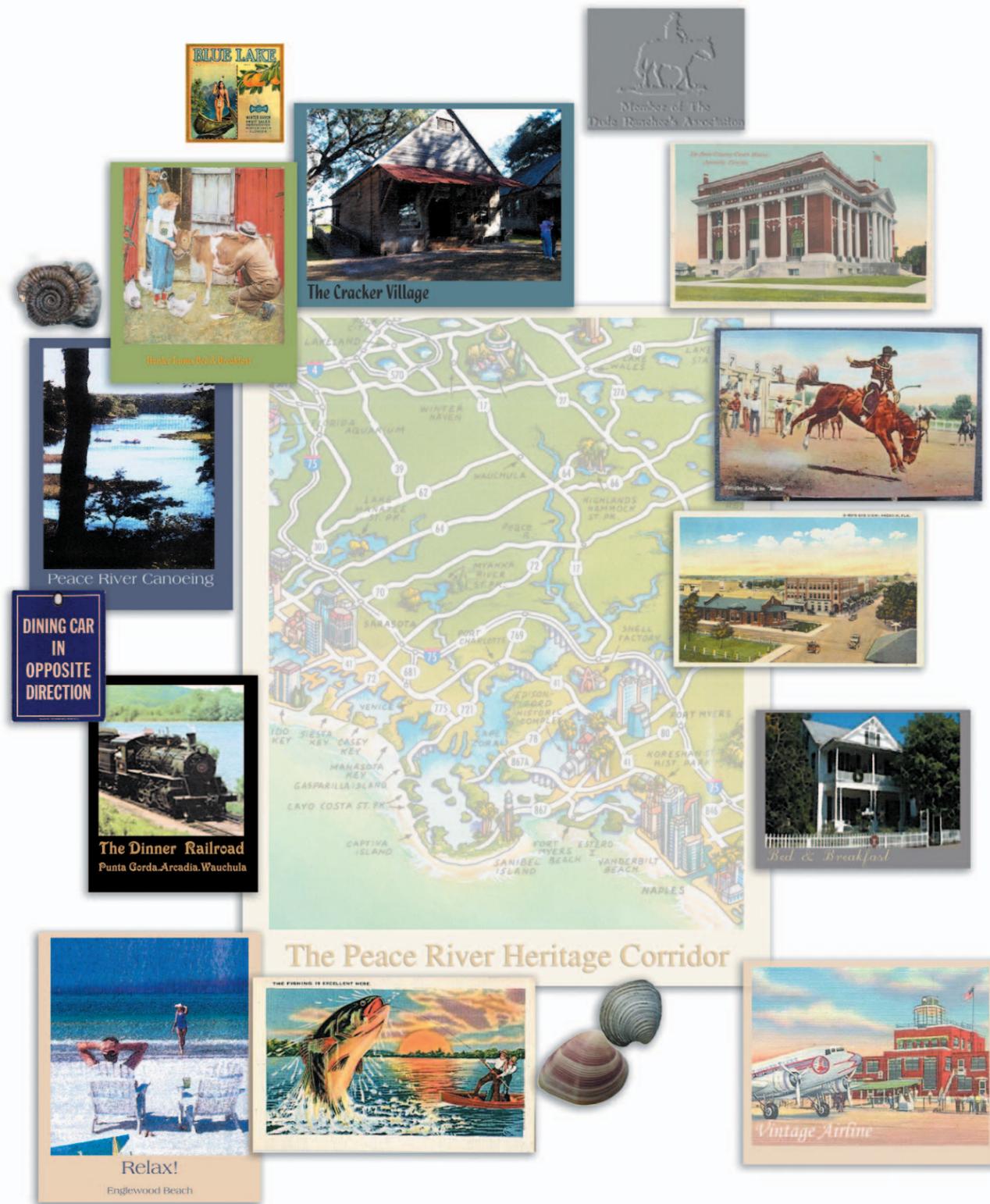
This project is identified in the state's strategic plan for economic development of rural areas and is consistent with the mission of Florida's High-Tech Corridor Council.

GOAL

Enhance regional competitiveness and support sustainable enterprises to grow the regional economy. Improve telecommunications infrastructure and capabilities within the tri-county region.

Develop a Peace River Heritage Corridor

Recovery Value: HIGH



RECOVERY VALUE

Increased tourism within the region has a high recovery value and will foster economic recovery by stimulating new businesses and job opportunities within each county. Attracting more visitors to the region will immediately improve the climate for small businesses and is critical to their recovery. This tourism initiative will have multiple benefits, with opportunities to create jobs, provide new facilities and parks, and preserve habitat. Projects identified below are consistent with the three counties' plans and policies.

GOAL

Expand the existing economic development base of the three-county region by increasing tourism opportunities.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Develop a Peace River Tourism Plan that will assess regional and local county assets and define the unique identity of the Peace River Heritage Corridor. A marketing strategy should also be developed that will include surveys of visitors to the region, a targeted campaign, and recommendations for new and appropriate signage. Designing a brand for the Peace River Heritage Corridor will help to market the area to tourists who may not be aware of the region's unique ecology, archeology, and recreational opportunities.

A Peace River Heritage Association should be organized, which can be a non-profit or county-sponsored organization to champion and implement tourism strategies for the Peace River as defined in the tourism plan and marketing strategy. A permanent staff member will ensure that identified tourism projects are carried out.

These coordinated efforts will enhance existing and create new unique regional attractions.

OPPORTUNITIES

ECOTOURISM/ NATURE-BASED TOURISM

- Acquire properties within the Peace River floodplain to extend continuous recreational trails (approximately 100 linear miles) that provide opportunities for nature walks, bird watching, fossil hunting, jogging, and biking.

- Extend state-designated canoe trails from Arcadia to Port Charlotte.
- Improve the 12 existing public boat/canoe launches and associated park facilities with improved ramps, restrooms, lighting, picnic tables, and parking.
- Build a canoe terminus facility in Port Charlotte (0.5 acre land acquisition, 3,000-square-foot building, two docks, restrooms, picnic tables, and parking).
- Increase marketing efforts to encourage larger freshwater fishing within the Peace River and saltwater sport fishing in the Harbor and Gulf.

AGRI-TOURISM / RURAL TOURISM

- Establish a heritage and agricultural tour to increase day-trips within the three counties. The program, facilitated by the Peace River Heritage Association, will require a touring van and an agreement with a local orange grower and/or cattle rancher.
- Enhance sidewalks that extend from Arcadia's Hickory Street and Wauchula's Main Street to the Peace River (approximately 0.4 miles in Arcadia and approximately 1 mile in Wauchula) and signage.

Estimated Cost

Plan/Marketing Strategy/Brand:\$500,000
Peace River Heritage Association:\$35,000 for staff person
Options for Regional Attractions:	
Floodplain acquisition/ recreational trails	TBD*
Improved boat launch facilities\$440,000
Charlotte Harbor canoe terminus\$290,000
Market recreational fishing\$50,000
Heritage/agriculture tours (Van)\$35,000
Sidewalks/Signage linkages to the Peace River\$212,000

*Property acquisition costs are dependent on the nature of the property interest acquired (i.e., fee simple, easements or private agreement) and the location and conditions impacting the specific parcel.

Recovery Value: MODERATE

Expand and Promote Higher Education and Training

RECOVERY VALUE

Education supports the growth of local businesses by attracting new companies and assisting in economic recovery of the area. Educational and training opportunities in a community directly affect the ability of people to pursue good jobs and move forward in their careers. In addition, people of all ages enjoy a higher quality of life through new learning opportunities.

Expanded educational and training opportunities will improve workforce capabilities. This project supports the Florida Heartland Rural Economic Development Initiative (FHREDI) in linking academics to job creation.

GOALS

Provide additional training programs to increase the community's ability to grow and attract businesses. Ensure that young people and adults can obtain locally the educational training they need to pursue rewarding careers that support the area's economy.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Identify emerging or unmet educational needs in DeSoto, Hardee and Charlotte counties. Confirm additional courses or training programs that should be offered through the high schools, technical centers, community colleges, and regional universities. Promote the value of higher education and increase awareness about local offerings to increase participation.

OPPORTUNITIES

DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT AN EDUCATIONAL/TRAINING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

A needs assessment study will identify the kind of jobs and training that people in the community need today and in the future. Participants would include students, parents, educators, area businesses, economic development specialists, government, faith and civic leaders.



ESTABLISH EDUCATION TASK FORCE

Establish a collaborative Education Task Force comprised of leaders from the county school board; education institution directors, presidents and/or superintendents; business leaders; and economic development specialists. This multi-agency group would meet regularly to coordinate efforts. Their goal would be to use the latest information available to provide the best overall mix of classes and courses of study to support current and future workforce development needs locally.

OFFER ADDITIONAL COURSES OR TRAINING PROGRAMS

Additional courses should be offered, based on the needs assessment study, in each county. They should include dual-enrollment (high school and college), vocational and agricultural extension training, college credit, workforce development and continuing education courses. These should be coordinated across the tri-county area to avoid unnecessary duplication while expanding the educational choices available. Remote learning options should be provided for place-bound individuals who cannot commute long distances.

PROVIDE MORE CLASSES FOR NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENTS

Provide additional off-site and night classes to increase access throughout community.

Expand English as a Second Language classes to include advanced levels.

Expand the number of vocational certificate training classes for working adults who have completed their high school classes, but have not graduated or obtained their GED.

EXPAND BACHELOR AND MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAMS AND RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

Expand the number of programs offered locally through major universities, such as the University of South Florida, Florida Gulf Coast University, University of Florida and/or Barry University, in conjunction with area community colleges. Pursue graduate research opportunities on selected topics with area businesses.

DEVELOP EDUCATIONAL AWARENESS INITIATIVES

Develop marketing materials that educate and encourage middle and high school students to pursue advanced education and training opportunities.

Expand outreach efforts by local college and technical center counselors and increase the number of advisors and career fairs within the county school systems.

Set up additional mentoring and internship programs with area businesses to expose middle- and high-school students to career opportunities. This can include the Youth Build program for the construction profession.

Develop outreach marketing strategy and materials to promote Farm Workers Tuition Reimbursement program.

Estimated Costs

Needs Assessment\$35,000 - \$45,000/county
Education Outreach Programs\$30,000 - \$50,000/county

Reduce Wildfire Risks

RECOVERY VALUE

This project will reduce future damages to property and help to sustain future development. The implementation of these strategies will significantly enhance the safety of the region over the next several years.

GOAL

Reduce potential loss of life and property damage by identifying and addressing potential wildfire risks.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This project will use proven mitigation techniques and develop a multi-step process in coordination with the Florida Department of Forestry and other partners, to reduce the overall wildfire risks and vulnerabilities to lives and property.

ACTION STEPS

DEFENSIBLE SPACE AND FUEL REDUCTION

Identify at-risk properties and create defensible space around them. Conduct fuel reduction efforts by priority in Wildland-Urban Interface (where buildings and structures meet forests). Educate community members to create defensible space for their own properties, and allow downed trees and other vegetative debris to decompose naturally.

BUILDING CODES AND ORDINANCES

Enhance construction codes and improve better enforcement of existing codes in the Wildland-Urban Interface.

REFORESTATION

Replant in strategic areas using specific species of trees. Allow existing trees and other plants to reproduce according to their normal cycles.

TREE TRIMMING AROUND POWER LINES

Thin trees near power lines to reduce vulnerability to power interruption.

Estimated Costs

Defensible Space	\$250/acre
Fuels Reduction	\$400/acre
Building Codes and Ordinances	Minimal
Reforestation	\$50/acre
Tree Trimming near Power Lines	\$5000/mile



Reinstate Tri-County Mobile Health Clinic

RECOVERY VALUE

Providing a health outreach initiative through a tri-county mobile health clinic is a Community Interest project that will help ensure a more productive workforce, healthier families who contribute to the community's economic growth, children who are ready to learn in school, and essential services for the elderly and disadvantaged.

Reinstating convenient access to affordable health care within the next 12 months will support people's ability to return to work, keep their jobs, and perform effectively for current employers and prospective new businesses. This project supports FHREDI's initiative to link health care with economic development.

GOAL

Ensure that all people, including those who are low-income and/or lack adequate transportation and live in outlying areas of Charlotte, DeSoto and Hardee counties, can receive vital medical, dental and vision services.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Reinstate the mobile health clinic, known as the Care-A-Van, through a collaborative partnership with the county health departments, area hospitals, physicians, dentists, optometrists, volunteers and other social service agencies. Provide complementary services through a local clinic as appropriate in each county.

OPTIONS:

Operate a Care-A-Van

Provide basic medical services through the Care-A-Van from Tuesday through Saturday in Hardee, DeSoto, and Charlotte counties. Staff the van with a physician's assistant, licensed nurse practitioner, and intake coordinator. Also involve medical and nursing program interns from the University of South Florida, University of Florida, Florida Gulf Coast University, Edison Community College and/or South Florida Community College. Provide medications to clients on a donation payment basis.

Operate a Care-A-Van and Local Clinic

Operate a local health clinic that complements the Care-A-Van's outreach services. The local clinic would provide more primary care services, pre-natal, pediatric and women's services, laboratory and diagnostic services. It also would provide dental and vision services. Staffing would include: a medical director, advanced registered nurse practitioner, three licensed practical nurses, one medical intake coordinator, two dental coordinators, one dental hygienist, and one dental and vision intake coordinator. Ten to 12 volunteer dentists and optometrists, as well as graduate-level interns, would participate on a rotating basis.

Estimated Cost

Operate Care-A-Van:	\$300,000/year
Operate Care-A-Van and One Local Health Clinic:	\$650,000/year

Note: Costs do not include the acquisition of the van which is currently owned by Bon Secours-St. Joseph Healthcare.



Recovery Value: **COMMUNITY INTEREST**

Assess Water Quality and Environmental Issues

RECOVERY VALUE

The residents of the three counties care about the quality of the rivers, streams, and natural resources. Maintaining that quality is critical for their economies. An environmental assessment will ensure that important natural resources are preserved and development occurs in a sustainable manner over time.

GOAL

Assess the current environmental quality of key regional resources and determine what mitigation efforts are needed to maintain and/or improve the environmental quality of the area.

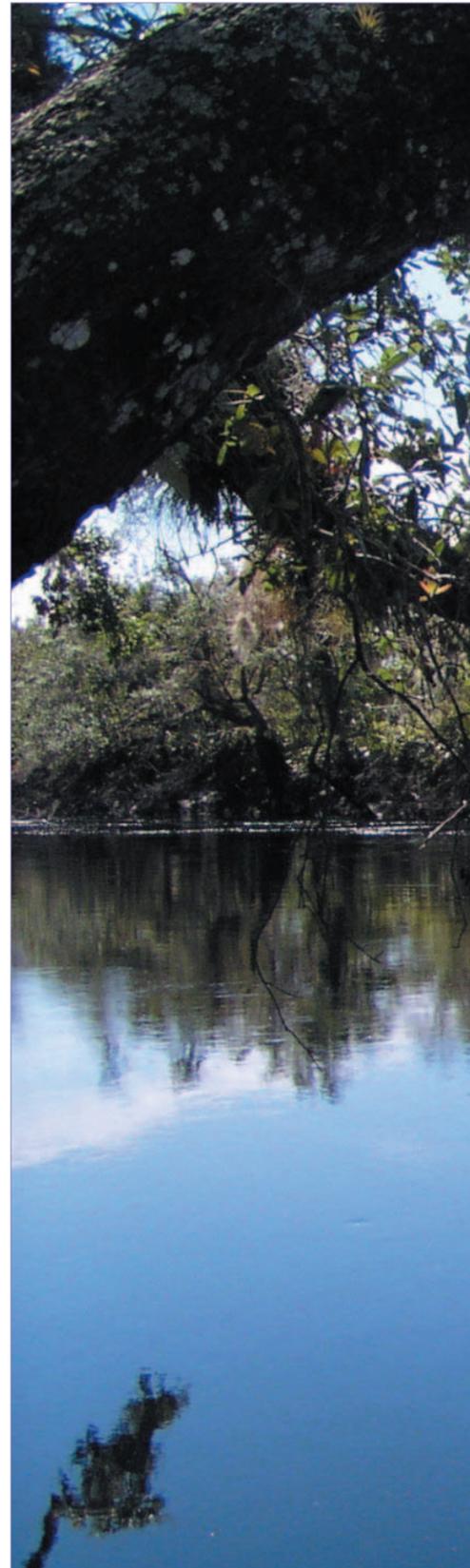
PROJECT DESCRIPTION

PREPARE A REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Undertake an environmental assessment to resolve questions related to existing and future water quality, potential environmental impact of significant projects in the region, and other key environmental issues identified by the state and the political subdivisions in the region.

Estimated Cost

Planning\$1,000,000



Recovery Value: **COMMUNITY INTEREST**

Develop Agricultural Water Conservation Programs

RECOVERY VALUE

With 2003-2004 revenues in excess of \$71.5 million, citrus production is important to the economy of DeSoto County. Enhancing the ability of growers to remain competitive by reducing their water distribution costs will help local enterprises continue to operate. These enterprises include: grove caretaking businesses, harvesting companies, juice processing plants, ladder producers, and fertilizer companies. In addition to reducing costs, participation in water conservation programs ensures that citrus growers will have the water needed to maintain healthy groves for generations to come.

GOAL

Develop mechanisms to strengthen citrus production in the region and conserve water. To reduce citrus grower's up-front costs for participation in the FARMS (Facilitating Agricultural Resource Management Systems) program operated by the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD).

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Existing programs such as FARMS provide a means for citrus growers to reduce the amount of water used while maintaining the grove's health. Currently, participation in these programs is minimal due to the large up-front investments required of the growers who over a 5- to 20-year period receive a 50 or 75 percent reimbursement of those costs.

- Increase funding to the FARMS program operated by the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) in order to provide citrus growers with 100 percent of all up-front costs. Require that the grower pay either the 25 or 50 percent match back to the funding agency over a period of five to twenty years.
- Establish a Community Development Corporation (CDC) in order to provide citrus growers with 100% of all up-front costs to participate in the FARMS program. Require that the grower pay either the twenty-five or fifty percent match back to the funding agency over a period of five to twenty years.

Estimated Cost: \$5 million (initially)
Annual Appropriations\$1.5-2 million.



Launch 2-1-1 Helpline, Web Site, and Volunteer Resource Center

Recovery Value: **COMMUNITY INTEREST**



RECOVERY VALUE

The community has shown interest in launching a 2-1-1 helpline, web site, and a volunteer center. Non-profit and government health and human service agencies contribute to a community's vitality by assisting individuals and families with critical quality-of-life issues. Needs for these services exist on a daily basis, both within each county and throughout the region. They also must be addressed rapidly in crisis situations, which include the recent hurricanes, as well as major influenza outbreaks or other illnesses. Providing effective support requires the ability to connect people with the most appropriate services as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Launching a 2-1-1 Helpline, web site and Community Volunteer Center will improve communications and help people in Charlotte, DeSoto and Hardee counties address health and service needs that adversely affect their livelihoods and quality of life.

Charlotte County has started development of a 2-1-1 Helpline and website and a volunteer center. The three counties could explore partnering on these programs, and expanding Charlotte County's projects on a regional basis.

GOALS

Ensure that people have easy, centralized ways to access the community's extensive network of health and human service organizations and specialized programs. Also fully leverage the community's investment in its social services infrastructure and volunteers' offers to provide support.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Create a 2-1-1 Helpline and web site that will provide easy-to-remember, single points of contact that people can use to access needed services. Also establish a comprehensive, centralized Community Volunteer Center that effectively matches volunteers and donations with appropriate agencies and supports volunteer housing needs. Integrate the related databases.

ACTION STEPS

LAUNCH 2-1-1 HELPLINE AND WEB SITE

Establish a 2-1-1 Helpline to provide people with convenient access to comprehensive information

about health and human service agencies and programs. DeSoto County could explore the option of coordinating with Charlotte County to expand its currently planned 2-1-1 Helpline. By calling one number, callers can get information 24 hours a day, seven days a week, from trained information and referral counselors. A related web site and comprehensive social services database will be maintained and updated regularly.

In the tri-county area of DeSoto, Hardee and Charlotte counties, the initial 2-1-1 Helpline could be operated by the Charlotte County Human Services Department. It will be staffed by two full-time, trained information and referral counselors with additional support from the CARE agency. They will provide callers with helpful information from a database that includes 650+ support agencies and 1300+ programs.

The 2-1-1 Helpline and web site for DeSoto and Hardee counties will be established either as local county initiatives or in partnership with the Charlotte County operations to increase operating efficiencies. Other counties, such as Sarasota and Manatee, may also provide support or help create a larger, regional database about health and human services.

ESTABLISH A COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER CENTER

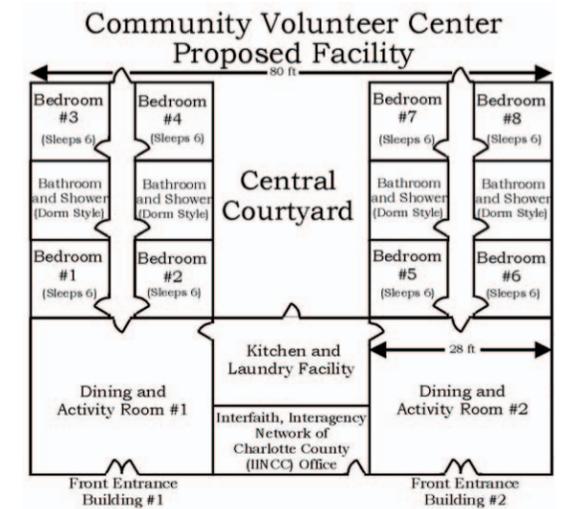
Charlotte County has initiated a Community Volunteer Center that connect volunteers with agencies that need assistance. The center will support hurricane response needs initially, then ongoing volunteer assistance requests. DeSoto and Hardee Counties could consider partnering with Charlotte County to provide these services on a regional basis.

MARKETING CAMPAIGN TO PROMOTE THE NEW 2-1-1 HELPLINE, WEB SITE AND VOLUNTEER CENTER PROGRAMS

Launch these new programs with public awareness marketing campaigns.

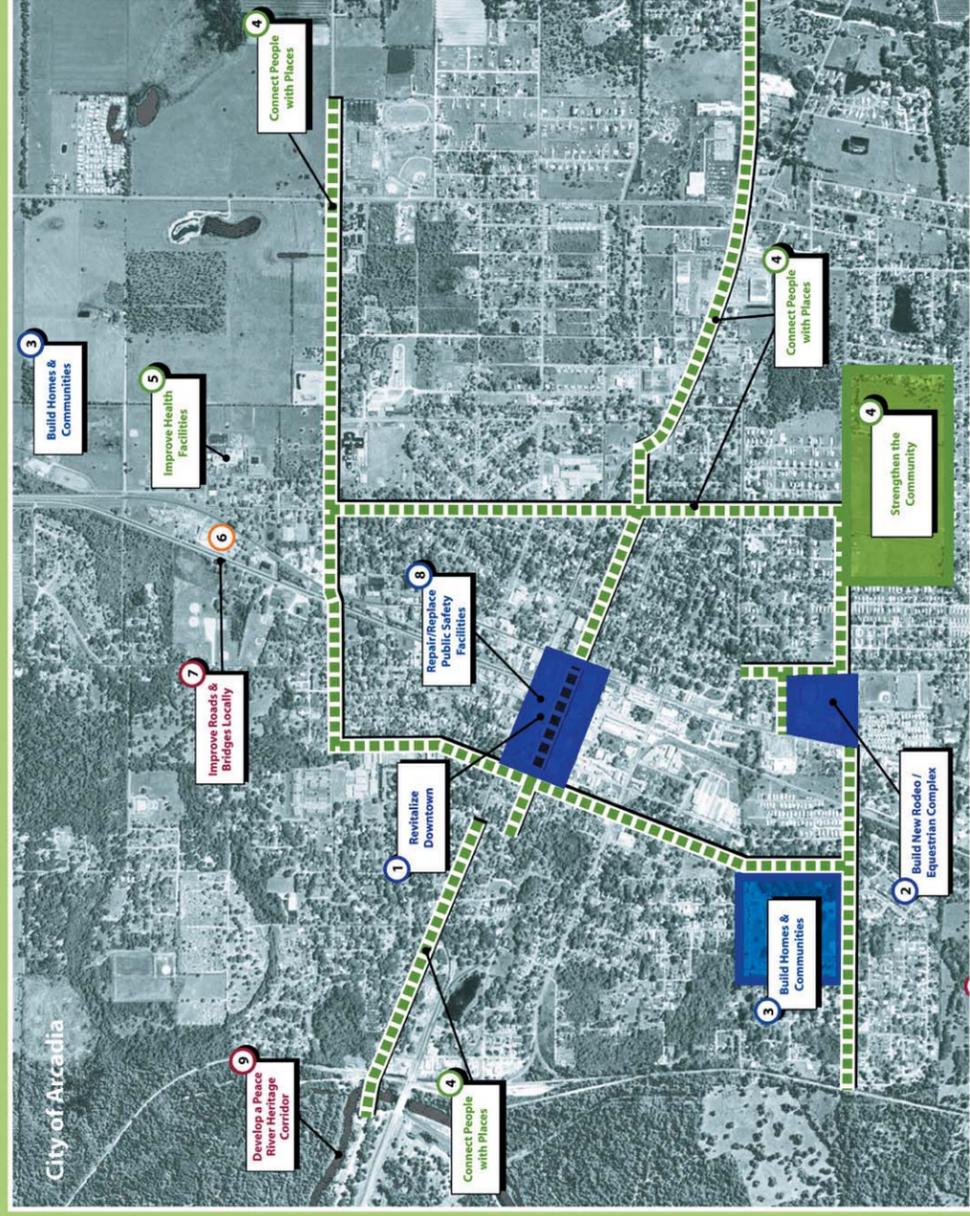
Estimated Costs

2-1-1 Helpline and Web Site	\$80,000
Volunteer Community Center (Charlotte County)	\$400,000
Marketing Campaign/County	\$10,000 - \$15,000





DeSoto County Long-Term Recovery Projects



COMMUNITY VISION

Any plan should have a vision that forms the foundation for its recommendations. The various projects contained in DeSoto County's Long-Term Recovery Plan are based on common threads that weave their way through the discussions and meetings held over an eight-week period. The projects are included in the plan based on their long-term recovery value to the community. Hundreds of individual and group discussions were held over these several weeks, and the first community meeting brought out approximately 500 residents who provided their input on the issues affecting DeSoto County and the City of Arcadia and on what kind of future they wanted for the city and county. Many issues were raised and discussed during these meetings. The community told us that they want the City of Arcadia and DeSoto County to be:

- A progressive community that respects its historic past and agricultural economy.
- A community that understands the need for a variety of different housing types in order to meet the needs of a varied and changing population.
- A community that desires to provide opportunities for their young people in the way of jobs, education, and recreation.
- A community that recognizes the importance of the natural environment and balances the need for growth and economic development with the need to maintain and improve the quality of its natural features.
- A community that is proud of its appearance and desires to enhance and maintain its small town character.

1



Revitalize Downtown Arcadia

Promote residential housing downtown and make improvements to roads & gateways, facades & sidewalks, and connections to other neighborhoods in order to attract new businesses and economic development.



Implement a DeSoto County Community Redevelopment Area



Create a Downtown Development Plan



Allow and Develop 2nd Floor Housing Downtown



Enhance Community Appearance



Improve Linkages to Downtown

2



Build a New Rodeo/Equestrian Complex

Rebuilding the existing rodeo or constructing a new facility at a different location will allow the Rodeo to build on existing economic success. An equestrian center could also be added.



Develop a County Economic Development Strategy

Prepare a strategy to build on existing strengths such as tourism to bring more visitors to the area and encourage the creation of new jobs and businesses.

3



Build Homes and Communities

Build a variety of housing options to appeal to diverse community members, including seniors, agricultural workers, people with special needs, and low- and moderate-income residents.



Plan for Housing Development



Create Housing

4



Strengthen the Community

Identify community focal points within existing neighborhoods. Encourage development of new neighborhoods that feature a mix of housing types and price, commercial areas and community facilities. Create links between neighborhoods.



Connect People with Places



Develop Parks and Promote Recreation

5



Improve Health Facilities

Upgrade and/or replace the DeSoto Memorial Hospital and the DeSoto County Public Health Department buildings with larger, up-to-date facilities that will also serve as shelters during weather-related emergencies.

6



Improve Regional Transportation Connectivity

Expedite completion of US 17 improvements, and create a development plan for the highway. Evaluate upgrading existing east-west highways. Create a Rural Transportation Planning Organization (RTO).



Improve Telecommunications and Internet Access

Develop a Telecommunication Plan and Implementation Strategy. Improve links within Florida's High Technology Corridor. Work with government agencies, utilities, and local businesses to identify telecommunications upgrades.

7



Improve Roads and Bridges

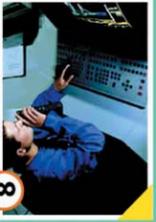
Expand and improve vital roadways within DeSoto County to improve mobility, increase the capacity of evacuation routes, and promote commerce.



Improve Water, Wastewater and Stormwater Systems

Make improvements to existing infrastructure, such as replacing the lime softening process used by the water treatment plant with an ion exchange process. Prepare plans that factor in future growth.

8



Repair/Replace Public Safety Facilities

Repair and/or replace buildings housing police, fire, emergency medical services, and emergency communications operations as joint or separate facilities that can serve as shelters.



Update/Develop Shelter and Evacuation Plans

Update and develop the existing Hurricane Evacuation Plan and Comprehensive Shelter Plan to consider recent growth and changes to infrastructure and demographics.



Promote Higher Education and Training Opportunities Locally

Identify emerging or unmet educational needs. Offer additional courses or training programs for high schools, technical centers, community colleges, and regional universities.

9



Increase Tourism: Develop a Peace River Heritage Corridor

Develop a Peace River tourism plan and marketing strategy. Establish a Peace River Heritage Association. Enhance eco-tourism and rural tourism options with property acquisitions and facility improvements.



Connect Regional Water Supplies

Connect member counties in the Peace River/Manasota Regional Water Supply Authority in a loop to increase efficient water transfers and ensure emergency water needs are met.



Update Local Mitigation Strategy

Reach out to community members, groups, and government agencies to prepare a new LMS, identifying potential hazards, analyzing vulnerabilities, and specifying measures to reduce future losses.



Assess Water Quality and Environmental Issues

Undertake an environmental assessment of the tri-county area to examine water quality, the potential environmental impact of significant projects in the region, and other key environmental issues.



Reinstate Tri-County Mobile Health Clinic

Reinstate Care-A-Van through a collaborative partnership with county health departments, hospitals, physicians, dentists, optometrists, volunteers, and social service agencies.



Reduce Wildfire Risks

Use proven mitigation techniques, developed in coordination with the Florida Department of Forestry and other partners, to reduce overall wildland fire risks and vulnerabilities.



Launch 2-1-1 Helpline, Website, and Volunteer Resource Center

Create a 2-1-1 Helpline and Website to provide a point of contact for needed services. Establish a comprehensive Community Volunteer Center to match volunteers and donations with agencies.



Develop Agricultural Water Conservation Programs

Provide incentives to increase participation in the Facilitating Agricultural Resource Management Systems (FARMS) programs by citrus growers to ensure water supply for future generations.

Recovery Value Indicators

High

Moderate

Community Interest