

## I. INTRODUCTION & HISTORY

The City of Sebastian has recognized for many years that significant areas of the downtown and surrounding community are in need of redevelopment, as evidenced by the City's initial efforts in the early 1990's towards the establishment of a Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA).

In 1990, the Riverfront Study Committee was created, and was charged with developing recommendations regarding the future development of the riverfront area. In 1995, the City of Sebastian completed a study to identify and delineate the boundaries of a redevelopment area, which resulted in the adoption of a CRA and a Redevelopment Plan for the waterfront and U.S.-1 area. In 2000 and 2001, the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council (TCRPC) conducted two (2) urban design visioning charettes with the community to create conceptual designs for the Sebastian Boulevard corridor as well as the Riverfront area.

In 2002, the City renewed its commitment to redevelopment by completing a study (Appendix A) to assess the feasibility of adding approximately 106 acres of land generally centered around the Sebastian Boulevard Triangle just west of U.S.-1 ("Triangle Area"), and further resolved to update and rewrite the 1995 Redevelopment Plan to reflect existing conditions and community needs and incorporate this expansion area. The City Council subsequently passed Resolution R-02-57 (Appendix B) in December 2002, making a finding of necessity for redevelopment and directing the amendment of existing CRA boundaries to include the Triangle Area.

This Plan presents a unified vision for the redevelopment of Sebastian's CRA . It has been developed with the intent that it be reevaluated and updated on a five (5) year basis to reflect current conditions, and uses a ten (10) year planning horizon for capital projects and Tax Increment Financing (TIF) revenue projections. The urban design recommendations, development of conceptual districts, and specific site recommendations presented herein are intended to be phased throughout the life of the CRA to ensure gradual and progressive redevelopment of the area as funding becomes available.

### **A Brief History of the Sebastian Area**

The following early historical timeline is adapted from *A Guide to Historic Sebastian and Roseland*, published by the Sebastian Area Historical Society, Inc:

- 1882: Reverend Thomas New opened a post office in the Sebastian area, naming it "Newhaven".
- 1884: Silvanus Kitching takes over the post office, renaming it "Sebastian".
- Late 1880's: The first road in Sebastian, Louisiana Road, is created on the sand ridge.

- 1893: The Jacksonville, St. Augustine and Indian River Railroad is completed, spurring shipping and commerce. A railroad station is subsequently built in Sebastian.
- 1903: Pelican Island is designated the nation's first National Wildlife Refuge.
- 1905: The area's first schoolhouse is constructed on Louisiana Avenue.
- 1920: The population of the Sebastian-Roseland area increases to over 200. Sebastian is considered an "established fishing center".
- 1924: Sebastian is incorporated as a municipality. By this time, the City had "a municipal power and light plant, a telephone company and an ice plant."
- 1926: The land boom ends as the Great Depression begins.

The City recently completed a study delineating a National Register of Historic Places District in the downtown area, including portions of the CRA. Approximately 13 contributing historic structures were identified within the part of the District boundary inside the CRA, as well as several contributing structures not within the District boundaries but within or adjacent to the CRA.

#### **A. *Redevelopment Planning Process***

This Community Redevelopment Master Plan is intended to serve as a guide for the effective redevelopment and enhancement of the redevelopment area. The following ten step planning process was employed in the preparation of this Plan:

1. Assess existing conditions in the proposed Sebastian CRA Area;
2. Conduct stakeholder interviews and distribute a survey, and subsequently establish a community vision;
3. Use Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council charettes, public input, and staff input to define guiding principles;
4. Identify problems and opportunities;
5. Outline land use and zoning changes necessary to facilitate appropriate development;
6. Identify public projects to help solve problems and spur redevelopment;
7. Review private development plans for consistency with redevelopment efforts;
8. Identify opportunities for public/private partnerships;
9. Prepare a realistic Redevelopment Plan oriented to effective implementation; and
10. Provide for Redevelopment Plan updating as conditions change.

This process proved effective in the preparation of this Community Redevelopment Master Plan, as well as in helping community participants understand the steps involved and how they fit together.

## **B. Public Participation Program**

Community involvement was an essential component in the planning process for this Redevelopment Plan.

Stakeholder interviews were held with community leaders and CRA property owners to identify key redevelopment issues in the proposed CRA Area. The Sebastian community provided opinions regarding building height, traffic circulation and parking, zoning issues, density and intensity of development, and redevelopment opportunities. Additionally, CRA and City Council workshops were held on September 10 and November 12, 2003 to present preliminary Plan concepts and solicit comment.

The Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council (TCRPC) conducted two community visioning charettes with the City of Sebastian in November 2000 and March 2001. The community feedback resulting from these charettes was incorporated into two reports, entitled *County Road 512, A Citizen's Master Plan*, and *Riverfront District, a Waterfront Town*, respectively. With the guidance of City leadership and the community, implementable design recommendations from each of these documents have been incorporated into this Redevelopment Master Plan.

A community redevelopment area opinion survey was included in the June edition of the Sebastian River Area Chamber of Commerce's newsletter. A cross-section of community citizens and business owners responded to this survey, providing additional community input to help guide the Plan's principles and recommendations.

Through this process, City staff and the consulting team were able to develop a Redevelopment Master Plan for the City of Sebastian tailored to the community's vision for this very unique area.

## II. EXISTING CONDITIONS IN THE REDEVELOPMENT AREA

### A. *Regional Relationships*

Figure 2 shows the geographic relationship of the Sebastian Redevelopment Area to the rest of Sebastian and Indian River County. Sebastian's most significant natural resource is the Indian River, with which the City shares the majority of its eastern boundary. The City of Vero Beach lies near the southern boundary of Indian River County, and the Town of Fellsmere is located generally west of Sebastian along C.R. 512. Sebastian also lies between the unincorporated communities of Roseland to the north and Wabasso to the south, and has nearby access to Interstate 95, Florida's Turnpike, and U.S. Highway 1, the latter of which bisects the redevelopment area.

### B. *Sebastian Community Redevelopment Area*

The boundaries of the Sebastian Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) are delineated in Figure 3. A legal description of the CRA is located in Appendix C. The CRA, including the Triangle Area, is generally bound by the Indian River to the east, City limits to the north and south, and the Florida East Coast Railroad right-of-way to the west. The Sebastian Boulevard Triangle Area is centered on the east and westbound split of Sebastian Boulevard.

*For the purposes of this Plan, that part of the Indian River included in the City and the CRA are excluded from all calculations and analyses. This area, zoned "Conservation", makes up approximately 437 acres.*

Lessing out the "Conservation" zoned area overlaying the Indian River, the gross area of the Sebastian CRA Area is 401 acres (including the Sebastian Boulevard Triangle Area), comprising 4.6% of the City of Sebastian's total land area. Excluding road rights-of-way, the acreage decreases to 299 acres ("net area"). Approximately 66% (196 acres) of the net area is developed and supports a variety of uses including residential, commercial retail, heavy commercial/light industrial (typically automobile repair facilities, self-storage facilities, etc.), parks and recreation, public/institutional, and marine-related uses. Approximately 34% (103 acres) of the net area is undeveloped, excluding existing parklands. Vacant land is depicted on Figure 4.

### C. *Land Use and Zoning*

Figures 5 and 6 show the land use and zoning patterns, respectively, in the Redevelopment Area. The City's Future Land Use and Zoning are nearly identical