

Scenic Watch



Special
Edition

July
2021

Special Edition: City Waterfronts Master Planning and Redevelopment

Urban waterfronts are big news this summer with a dramatic increase in new large scale projects.

Our cities are struggling to balance their waterfront scenery with many bold new proposals for large scale redevelopment including a fresh look at master planning.

Bonita Springs, Clearwater, Jacksonville, New Port Richey, Miami, Palm Beach, Pensacola, St. Pete Beach, Sebastian are referenced below, yet are just a few of this month's many examples featured in the news across the our state.

"Bonita Springs wants private development, water access and more on riverfront land"



Photo: Alex Driehaus, Naples Daily News, USA Today - Florida Nework

"A two-hour Bonita Springs City Council workshop on Wednesday ended with a 17-item design guide for developers interested in 5 acres along the Imperial River...

The property sits on Old 41 Road and straddles the Imperial River, and councilors regard it as the most important piece of undeveloped land downtown.

They were left with a list of 17 features they would like to see on the property. All developer applications will be tested against the guidelines. Councilors want to see all unsolicited design bids during a July 21 meeting when they could approve a plan.

The list tells developers what City Council does and does not want on the property. Unsolicited property applications made to the city did not have a concrete guideline to follow.

A previous workshop last month had tangents and varying opinions. Some councilors wanted to leave details in the hands of developers. Others wanted to be specific. Mayor Rick Steinmeyer wanted to keep the land as a city-owned park.

A facilitator, Ken Tinkler, guided councilors through the process and kept discussion on track. He began the workshop by reminding councilors how long the property has sat undeveloped under city ownership.

'You've been at this for 6,683 days,' Tinkler said. 'A child born that day just graduated high school or maybe finished their first year of college.'

The ideas were all high level, allowing developers leeway to design around the features. All councilors agreed on some core ideas, first and foremost being public park space.

'We need public access along the (Imperial River),' Councilor Mike Gibson said.

Other public features, including parking, commercial space and 'destination' businesses, topped the list.

Residential units should be integrated in proposed designs, but only for people that will live in the buildings permanently, City Council stated.

'People that are going to be there most of the year, that are going to take advantage of everything that's downtown, that will frequent the businesses and make it more attractive for businesses to be downtown,' Gibson said...

Before the workshop, four presentations were made to City Council. Design plans by three developers showcased commercial spaces, parks and about 100 residential units. They proposed public-private partnerships, mostly by letting the city own and operate any public park space. One plan called for a long-term lease of the land.

Charlie Strader, former president of the Bonita Springs Historical Society, gave a presentation against major development and presented ideas for a public park and event space.

Public speakers asked councilors to vote against any plans with residential units.

'I would implore that you guys consider a museum, attraction, a Seminole village, an assortment of other options for the Bonita property other than residential housing and a mall,' said John Paeno, owner of CGT Kayaks."

-- Thaddeus Mast, Naples Daily News

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[City of Bonita Springs](#)

Clearwater: Imagine Master Plan for Downtown and Waterfront



CLEARWATER

BRIGHT AND BEAUTIFUL • BAY TO BEACH

"Imagine Clearwater is an investment in the redevelopment of Downtown Clearwater and its waterfront - including construction of a new 4,000-seat covered amphitheater in Coachman Park - that will be a must-see destination point in the Tampa Bay area.

Designed to connect the waterfront and the Downtown Clearwater community, Imagine Clearwater includes an expansive park and recreational spaces, a gateway plaza and bluff walk that connects the park to downtown, a bay walk promenade overlooking the Intracoastal Waterway, a lake area with picnic shelters, and an ocean-themed play area with an interactive pop-jet water feature.

The additions to Coachman Park also include the amphitheater which will accommodate a year-round performance schedule that promises to continue the city of Clearwater's reputation as a premier location for diverse live entertainment. Construction is slated to take around two years. "

[City of Clearwater Coachman Park Imagine Redevelopment Project](#)

Clearwater:

Vote on 15th raises final price tag to \$84 million



Artist Rendering: Stantec

"In May, as costs of building materials soared, City Council members postponed a groundbreaking for the downtown waterfront's transformation until they got a final construction price from the contractor.

Now Imagine Clearwater's final price tag is in at \$84 million, which is \$20 million higher than the estimate officials had long discussed.

About \$14.5 million of the increase comes from higher prices of building materials and the council's decision to add back amenities that had previously been downsized, like water features, shade structures and landscaping, according to engineering director Tara Kivett. The project also had additional design costs and staff hours resulting from the council's decision to change aspects of the plan over the last few years, Kivett said.

The renovation of the 22-acre waterfront into a regional park with an outdoor amphitheater, bluff walk, gateway plaza, garden and lake area has been pitched as a way to bring life to a downtown that has been depressed for decades.

Assistant City Manager Michael Delk said the price reflects the scope of one of the largest infrastructure projects the city has ever undertaken and the impact it is attempting to bring.

'This will define our waterfront for the remainder of the century,' Delk said. 'You don't tackle something like this very often. And when you do, I think you need to construct what has lasting value, lasting significance, and I think that's where we're ending up...'

If the council votes to proceed, construction is expected to be completed in July 2023. Underground utility work is already underway...

Last month, the City Council also began negotiations with City Center Development, led by Craig Govan, for the redevelopment of the three parcels bordering the park. Govan has proposed building a two-story food hall and brewery on the corner of Osceola Avenue and Cleveland Street; a 207-unit multifamily building with a grocery, retail stores and a restaurant on the site of the vacant City Hall on Osceola Avenue and Pierce Street; and a 100-room hotel on the vacant lot on Pierce Street..."

-- Tracey McManus, Tampa Bay Times

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Jacksonville:
Editorial - "For real though, Downtown Jax needs a master plan"



"Jacksonville has long approached downtown development in a secretive and piecemeal fashion, and over the last few weeks this has resulted in several different groups offering up competing plans for parts of the city center. It's time for Jacksonville to create something many cities with successfully revived

Downtowns have done: create a comprehensive, strategic, publicly vetted Downtown master plan.

What would a Downtown master plan do?

Bayboro/ Salt Creek District

Port Discovery

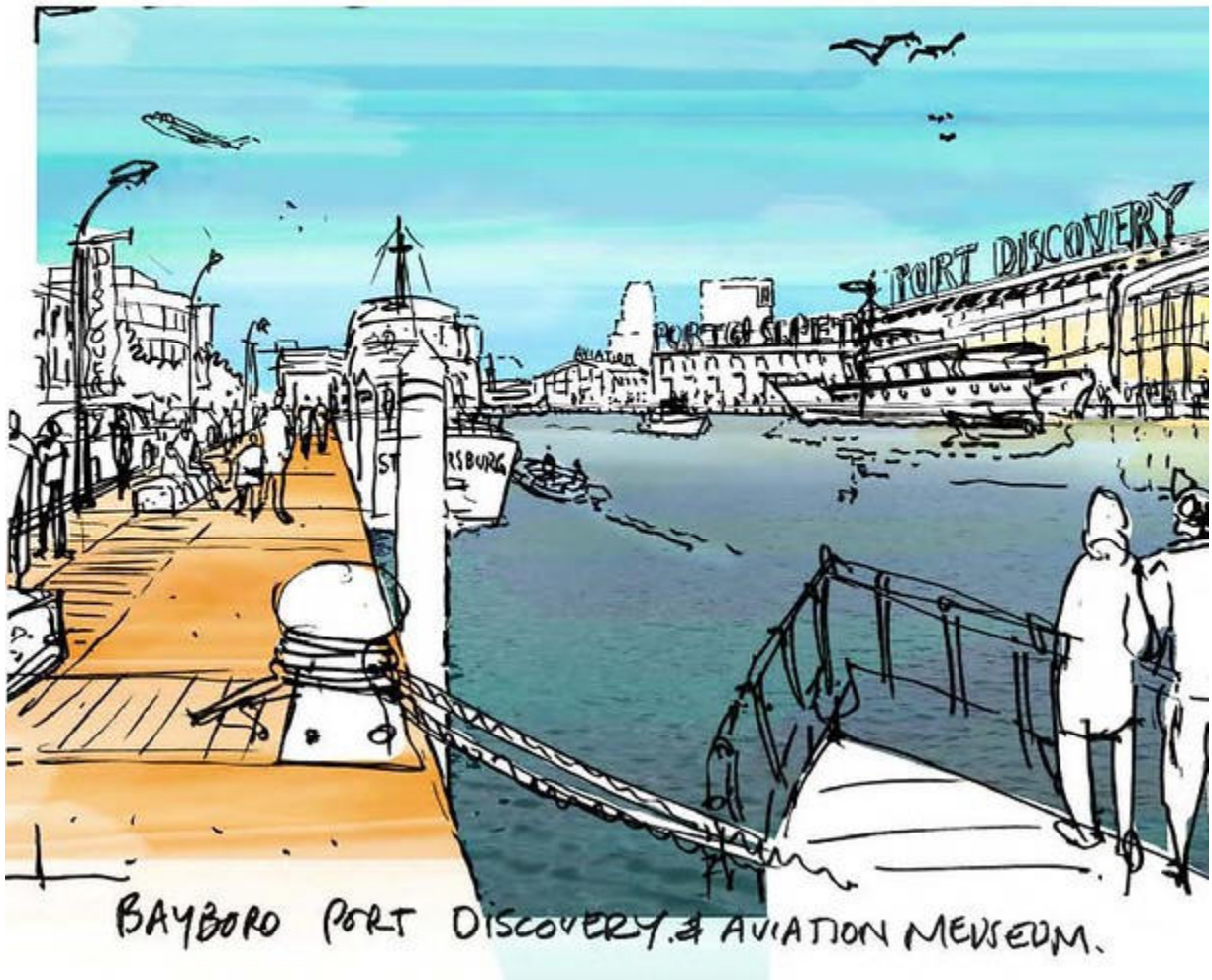


Illustration: St. Petersburg Downtown Master Plan

The City of St. Petersburg, through the Downtown Waterfront Master Plan, envisions a continued legacy of preserved and enhanced open space that is inclusive and offers opportunities for all.

Essentially, a Downtown master plan is simply a long-term guide for future planning and development. Very many cities have master plans for their downtowns, from

Atlanta, Georgia to Erie, Pennsylvania and everywhere in between. One of Jacksonville's peer cities, Oklahoma City, has seen a tremendous impact from its elaborate plans, both inside and outside Downtown.

Common elements of master plans include:

Defining public, semiprivate, and private amenities
Downtown Laying out the concrete, longterm vision for key public sites and amenities
Determining areas to cluster complementing uses in a compact setting
Identifying primary streets (high traffic commercial corridors) versus secondary or service streets
Identifying locations and timelines for public amenities that may spark private development
Creating an implementation schedule for moving development phases forward.
Community outreach and engagement to ensure the stated vision matches the vision of citizens.

A master plan should not dictate what takes place on private property; instead it should focus on public amenities and making sure land use policies and zoning are set up so that private owners can achieve their property's fullest potential. In general, a Downtown master plan allows a city to guide development over time, instead of just putting a library here and a museum there like a SimCity player who just got the game and hasn't quite gotten the hang of it yet.

Why don't we have one?



Rendering: from the Downtown Savannah 2033 Master Plan

According to the Downtown Investment Authority (DIA), we do. They have referred to the Downtown Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) Plan released in 2015 as the city's "Downtown master plan". As DIA CEO Lori Boyer told the Jacksonville Daily Record in February 2021, 'In recent months we have repeatedly heard from members of the public and in the media that there is no master plan for Downtown and we are simply looking at projects piecemeal... In fact there is.'

The Jaxson argues that the 2015 CRA Plan is not a true master plan. Or at least if is, it's a bad one. The CRA Plan is a decent start with a lot of positive features, but just doesn't have many elements that absolutely should be in any true, effective, comprehensive master plan..."

-- Editorial by Bill Delaney and Ennis Davis, AICP, The Jaxson

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Jacksonville:

"Our last best chance for a Jacksonville riverfront for all"



Illustration: Riverfront Parks Now

"Downtown Jacksonville is clearly at a defining crossroads, and we implore city leaders to recognize what is at stake: the last, best chance to create a "Riverfront for All."

Jacksonville should follow the lead of cities that have successfully combined signature riverfront parks, connected trails and well-designed Riverwalks to attract residents, visitors, events, and developer investment, while also providing protection from sea level rise and flooding.

This proven approach will cost less and give us more, especially since the city already owns riverfront land. Riverfront parks yield returns on investment that are superior and long term. What's more, they improve the quality of life for city-wide residents of all socio-economic groups.

Other river cities have faced similar forks in the road. Civic, business and elected leaders from these cities, including Chattanooga, St. Petersburg and Greenville, have all recognized the wisdom of their decisions to prioritize public space. In fact, these destinations have become great sources of civic pride and economic growth.

We can, and should, do the same thing for Jacksonville. Now is the time to ask City Council leaders to implement this 10-point path.

1. **Prioritize public space.** First and foremost, prioritize and invest in meaningful public riverfront parks and green spaces.

2. **Go big, world-class, and inclusive.** Engage a world-class urban design firm to design a 40+ acre connected park between Metropolitan Park and the Shipyards. We need spaces that are welcoming and accessible to all people and provide ways for our community to come together with a variety of desired amenities and activities.

3. **Promote connectivity.** Preserve a generous and continuous ribbon of green spaces and connected parks and trails along the Northbank to allow for multiple paths for bikers and pedestrians, shade and landscaping. These paths should connect to the Emerald Trail and all downtown destinations including the Southbank.

4. **Let our river breathe.** It is essential to significantly expand the setbacks from 25' to 175' for new development proposed for city-owned property along the St. Johns River to allow for a natural green buffer to protect against flooding.

5. **Utilize green resilient solutions.** Implement proven green solutions for stormwater management and to mitigate sea-level rise, storm surge and climate change. Incorporate plenty of shade trees to protect against the heat, add beauty, and help slow and filter runoff.

6. **Don't block our existing views.** We support robust development across Bay Street which maximizes the benefits for both the development and the public to enjoy the park amenities and river views. Any structure on the river side of the street should directly enhance the public uses and be located along Bay Street, leaving a green buffer of at least 175' from the river.

7. **Make streets into boulevards.** Transform Bay Street and A. Philip Randolph into pedestrian-friendly, tree-lined boulevards incorporating wide sidewalks, planted medians, shade and street furniture.

8. **Plan for maintenance.** Support the creation of a non-profit Riverfront Parks Conservancy.

9. **Riverfront playing, not parking.** Refrain from building visible parking structures between Bay Street and the river.

10. **Plan for the Jacksonville we all desire.** This is a game-changing opportunity for the city, not just an amenity for a downtown neighborhood. By planning a well-designed, visually interesting public space with a variety of attractions and amenities, our riverfront can entice Jaxsons from all walks of life to come and spend the day.

Let's make sure we have ample space not only for play areas, cafes and bars, native plants, and cultural activities, but also for hosting large events, concerts, tailgates, and festivals such as our future Super Bowl, NFL Draft, Gator Bowl, and Florida-Georgia parties!"

-- Nancy Powell, Jimmy Orth, Natalie Rosenburg, Susan Caven, Ted Pappas, Barbara Ketchum, Michael Kirwan, The Riverfront Parks Now Coalition, Guest Columnists, The Florida Times Union

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[Visit Riverfront Parks Now](#)

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Cotee River:
"New Port Richey gets ready for a downtown renaissance"



Photo: Chris Urso, Tampa Bay Times

"City leaders have pledged it is just the beginning.

While the landscape changed for nearly everything in the last year due to the coronavirus pandemic, one Pasco County community managed to blossom, making tangible changes for its future.

City leaders have pledged it is just the beginning.

Last year, about the time of the COVID-19 lockdown, New Port Richey officials were beginning a months-long project to rebrand their community and kick off a conceptual plan for redevelopment.

Blessed with a historic downtown and the Cotee River winding through both business and residential areas, city officials knew that New Port Richey had unique attributes to allow it to experience a renaissance.

Earlier this month, Tom McGilloway, a consultant with Mahan Rykiel, presented the final report on downtown redevelopment to City Council. He described the public investments New Port Richey can make to bring significant financial dividends down the road, once private investors come aboard.

The city will dip into its own coffers, spending up to \$37 million to complete its goals over the next decade, but it could see \$235 million in private investment for its efforts, McGilloway said.

Public investments could include adding lanes for bicycles and motorized scooters, improvements to the facades of city-owned buildings, and adding needed shade by planting trees or constructing shade structures in public areas like Railroad Square or along city streets. Signage, more interesting pavement treatments and development of Oak Park on River Road could be other areas slated for improvement.

'Private investment will follow public investment,' city economic development director Charles Rudd assured council members earlier this month. But he said the city's recent successes are going to spur that on. 'They (private developers) will have more of a sense of security, that this is long term and it's going to continue...'

An ongoing project has been the renovation of the historic Hacienda Hotel by Jim Gunderson, who also renovated the Lakeside Inn in Mount Dora. The hotel is on the National Register of Historic Places, and Gunderson is hoping to have the 42-room boutique hotel in the heart of downtown ready to open in September, Manns said.

The city's waterfront garnered plenty of interest from the consultants. Changes were recommended for Sims Park and its boat launch, including finding a better solution for boat trailer parking so that more of the waterfront could be opened up for other uses.

Much of the consultant focus, fueled by public input gathered at several sessions last year, was mindful of a desire to keep future New Port Richey development to scale and consistent with the community's character. A community that was safe and walkable were also on the list of priorities. And while the focus was centered on downtown, the consultant and the City Council were clear that there needed to be a way to also improve residential areas, which will drive business development...

Even as New Port Richey's conceptual planning process ends, its chance to show off what has been accomplished will come next month, when the city hosts the 2021 Preservation on Main Street conference, presented in partnership with New Port Richey Main Street and the Florida Trust for Historic Preservation.

Entitled "Reimagining the Road Ahead," the conference will be held in New Port Richey from July 21-24 and will feature education sessions and other activities featuring New Port Richey's special attributes.

Conference participants will visit the Oelsner Mound, recently added to the National Register of Historic Places, and several cemeteries, and they will also hear how the city rebranded itself during a pandemic and about the restoration work at the Hacienda.

Other side activities for participants will include boat rides on the Cotee River, a tour of Pasco's stilt houses and a ghost tour."

-- Barbara Behrendt, Tampa Bay Times

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Miami:

Video - "Watch the Miami skyline evolve over decades"
1937 - 2019



Video: Miami Herald Facebook

Miami: Waterfront 62-story towers "This waterfront neighborhood continues to sprout. This time it's getting twins"



Illustration: Arquitectonica

"Think Edgewater's dense enough? Just wait. The bayfront neighborhood is slated for the country's tallest waterfront residential twin towers...

The project will have two 62-story towers with a total of 782 units, said Melo Group Co-Principal Martin Melo. The project's developer, Edgewater-based Melo Group, launched pre-sales for the five-acre project at 700 NE 24th St. in June...

'This is the type of project that's accommodating the newcomers coming to Miami. This is for tech people coming from New York City and California,' Bozovic said. 'It's pricing people out, [but] this project is symbolic of where Miami is heading. These condos are targeting people planning to live in Miami for the long term.'

Edgewater, spanning the bayfront from Northeast 15th Street to the Julia Tuttle Causeway, is known for its proximity to the Arts & Entertainment District, Wynwood, Midtown and Miami Metrorail. The neighborhood is home to about 7,600 residents — up by 30% since 2000, according to data from the U.S. Census and the Miami Downtown Development Authority's 2018 Greater Downtown Miami Demographics report.

The already-dense area has a variety of boutique buildings and high-rises, partly thanks to the area's pioneers the Melo Group. The firm has 10 residential buildings in the neighborhood, including the similarly named Aria on the Bay. Besides Aria Reserve, it has another one in the works — a pair of 15-story buildings on the corner of Second Avenue and Northeast 22nd Street...

More is on the way for the neighborhood, including a 400-unit project by the Kushner Companies and a 322-unit condo by Grupo T&C. Although many developers are scooping up empty lots, some are buying existing buildings and evicting tenants to upgrade buildings, including Aimco/AIR with its Hamilton on the Bay.

The changes in the neighborhood exemplify Miami's struggle to provide and maintain housing for all residents. Residents near the urban core continue to be priced out of evolving and increasingly desirable neighborhoods. Many opt for Homestead or neighborhoods in Broward County to gain more space at a lower cost."

-- Rebecca San Juan, Miami Herald

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Pensacola unveiled the latest designs to make Bruce Beach a waterfront city park last week.



Illustration: HDR

"The city has been working on a plan to improve Bruce Beach since it reopened to the public in 2018.

In 2019, as part of CivicCon, the landscape architecture firm SCAPE developed a

concept to improve Bruce Beach as one of its "catalytic" projects to activate the city's waterfront, along with a sister project known as the "hashtag" that will improve the intersections of Main, Palafox, Jefferson and Cedar streets...

Pensacola Mayor Grover Robinson also pushed forward a bond refinancing plan that generated more than \$18 million to be used on projects inside the city's urban core. The city has set aside about \$8.6 million of those funds for the Bruce Beach project.

The designs released last week during a virtual public workshop show much of the original 2019 SCAPE plan intact, with a bridge over Washerwoman Creek, a bluff overlooking the water, a learning garden and a kayak launch.

The biggest change in the plan is the absence of an education center that would have been used to teach students about the ecology of Pensacola Bay and the area's cultural significance and history.

Robinson told the News Journal on Friday that the city still wants to add the education center, but it will have to come from a later round of funding..."

-- Jim Little, Pensacola News Journal

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St. Pete Beach Waterfront: "Developer unveils plans for \$90M mixed-use project in St. Pete Beach"



Rendering: Ram Realty Advisors

"The development team behind the proposed \$90 million mixed-use project in St. Pete Beach publically unveiled conceptual renderings and plans for the first time.

On Thursday, South Florida-based real estate firm Ram Realty Advisors presented glossy renderings of the planned waterfront development dubbed Corey Landing during a public meeting at St. Pete Beach Community Center. The images revealed a modern building that would have 243 Class-A residential units along with more than 10,000 square feet of retail space to the east end of Corey Avenue...

The images also revealed a potential 3,000-5,000-square-foot waterfront restaurant, a park that the group would partner with the city to create, and boat docks that would be split between residents of the residential tower and for public use...

Although the plans are preliminary as the engineering plans must be filed, it sparked concern in a crowded room as many questioned the needed parking spaces, the transient users of the units and the height of the building; the maximum height the complex can reach is 85 feet or roughly seven stories...

This isn't the first time the property has garnered interest from a developer. Through the years, there have been multiple failed attempts to develop it as the proposals were met with opposition from the public and officials, according to numerous reports.

The team, which is working with North Carolina-based design consultant Kimley-Horn, is planning to submit an application to the city by August. They hope to break ground in June 2022 and complete the project by June 2024."

-- Veronica Brezina, St. Pete Catalyst

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Protecting a working commercial fishing waterfront:

"City of Sebastian gives presentation on Fisherman's Landing"



Photo: Sebastian Daily

"Fisherman's Landing is a working waterfront that secured funding from the Stan Mayfield Working Waterfront program administered through the Florida

Communities Trust (FCT) ...the property containing Crab E Bills and the new parking area are a loading/unloading zone for fishermen.

'We purchased this property back in 2009 to 2010 with funding from the Florida community's trust in regards to their [Stan Mayfield working waterfront program](#). It was specifically purchased as a working waterfront,' Lisa Frazier said. [Community Development Director for the City of Sebastian]

'In addition, the Florida Inland Navigation District (FIND) has provided significant funding to the city for many of the improvements that you find on this property,' Frazier added.

The property itself protects and promotes commercial fishing by providing dockage for licensed commercial fishing vessels. In addition, the area near the new parking area is a loading zone for the packing and shipping of freshly caught seafood and aquaculture products. The commercial fishermen are leasing the property and the loading zone, and it has been that way since day one.

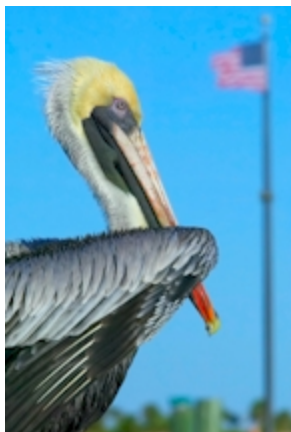
The objective is to rebuild the historic fish house, which will once again serve the area with seafood/aquaculture. It is also used to showcase local seafood at the fish market/eatery at Crab E. Bills.

'Our city was founded on commercial fishing; we want to support that industry. It is one of our economic drivers. We are very fortunate and lucky that we have this property, and we have two very well-known distributors working out of this facility,' Frazier said at the meeting.

Read the Fisherman's Landing Working Waterfront PDF file that explains everything about the project for more information."

-- Andy Hodges, Sebastian Daily

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