COMMUNITY VISIONING
CITY OF GREEN COVE SPRINGS

MARCH 3, 2018

Facilitated by
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INTRODUCTION

The City of Green Cove Springs held a community visioning workshop on March 3, 2018. Ms. Marilyn Crotty, director of the Florida Institute of Government at the University of Central Florida, designed and facilitated the session.

Green Cove Springs residents, businesses, organizations, and other stakeholders were invited to the workshop to share their hopes and dreams for the future of the city. Approximately 75 people attended the session. While the Mayor, members of the City Council, and staff were present at the workshop, their role was to observe and listen to the ideas generated by the participants.

The attendees were assigned to small groups in which they responded to questions posed by the facilitator. This report is a summary of the ideas that were generated with special attention to the emerging consensus on issues that became apparent at the workshop.

This information will be shared with the City Council as they plan for the future of the city.
COMMUNITY TREASURES AND VALUES

The participants were asked to identify the treasures and values of the City of Green Cove Springs…the things that they love about the city and want to see continued, protected or improved. These might be physical places or intangibles like community character. There were ten small discussion groups with about 7 or 8 people in each group. The responses have been grouped into seven categories (environmental, city facilities/infrastructure, qualities/characteristics, community assets, events/activities, government services, values) with the number in front of the item indicating the number of groups (10 groups total) that included this issue on their lists. A complete list of each small group’s comments is included in Appendix A of this report.

PART I – Treasures and Values

*What are the treasures and values of Green Cove Springs...the things (whether physical places, or intangibles like community character) you love about the city and want to see continued, protected or improved? What would you want to ensure is preserved as Green Cove Springs plans for the future?*

**Environmental**

(4) Trees
(1) Weather – 3 seasons
(1) Nature
(1) Conservation area

**City Facilities/Infrastructure**

(5) Brick streets
(2) Trails and trail plans
(2) Senior Center
(1) Courthouse
(1) Jail
(1) County administration building
(1) DMV
(1) Fire Station
(1) Clay transit hub
(1) Town Center
(1) Gateway corridor
(1) Four Parks
  (1) Vera Francis Park
(1) Augusta Savage Community Center
Qualities and Characteristics

(6) Historic feeling
(5) Small town – quaint, cozy
(3) Walkability
(3) Sense of community – relationships
(2) Home town feel
(2) Small businesses – no chains
(1) Potential for growth
(1) Tourism
(1) Diversity
(1) Security in schools
(1) Single family and older homes
(1) Close to big stores
(1) Congruency – feel, look, mood
(1) Old Florida style of architectural design
(1) Character
(1) Greatest generation
(1) Charm

Community Assets

(10) River – waterfront
(9) Spring Park
(3) Bed and breakfast
(3) Public access to river
(3) Museums
(3) Historical triangle
(2) Historic buildings
(2) Clay Theater
(2) Schools
(2) Governors Creek
(1) Clay Port area
(1) Fairgrounds
(1) Churches
(1) Golf course
(1) Industrial Park
(1) Airport
(1) Charitable organizations – VFW, Elks, etc.
(1) Cemetery
(1) Antique shops
(1) Walnut St.
(1) Railroad
(1) Like Avondale
**Events/Activities**

(4) Festivals/Events
   - Arts & Crafts Festival
   - Riverfest
   - CalaVida
   - Christmas on Walnut
   - Christmas parade
   - Soul Food Festival
   - Clay County Fair
   - Antique Car Show
(2) Kayaking and boating
(1) Fishing

**Government Services and Personnel**

(5) Police Department
(1) Waste/sanitation crew
(1) Easy access to city staff – responsive
(1) City electric value
(1) VA representative
(1) Code Enforcement
(1) Supervisor of Elections
(1) City Council
(1) Customer focus
(1) Professional services
(1) Well run

**Values**

(2) Family oriented
(1) Spirituality
(1) Community service and caring
(1) Protection
(1) Trust
The second task assigned to the small groups was to discuss the City of Green Cove Springs seven years from now. What will the city be like? What does it look like? What is it like to live here, work here, retire here? What kinds of economic activity take place here? The participants were invited to share their hopes and dreams for the future of the city. The responses have been organized into seven categories (appearance/beautification, quality of life, economic development, development/redevelopment, education, government services/operations, and infrastructure) combining information from all the groups. The number in front of the item indicates the number of groups at the workshop (total of 8) that included this issue on their lists. A separate listing of the responses from each group is found in Appendix B.

**Appearance/Beautification**

(2) Remove “trashy” look Hwy 17  
(1) US 17 and Walnut St. beautification  
(1) Maintaining city look when beltway comes in  
(1) Treescape plan – beauty and safety  
(1) Cleaner – streetscape, medians improved  
(1) Remove shuttle fuel tank  
(1) Improve face structure of buildings – Walnut St.  
(1) Reclaim brick roads  
(1) Uniform architecture  
(1) Incentives to add landscaping barriers

**Quality of Life**

(3) Family friendly activities  
   Children’s activities  
(3) River life – boating, canoeing, kayaking  
   River Access  
   Canoe and kayak slide – City Park and Governor’s Creek  
(2) Activities to stay alive  
   Increase opportunities for seniors  
(2) Community involved in decisions  
   Community involvement in completing tasks – getting things done  
(1) Keep small town feel  
(1) Improvements in outdoor activities  
(1) Noise restrictions – trucks  
(1) Historic area preserved  
(1) Preserve architecture  
(1) Keep next generation here
**Economic Development**

(6) Restaurants – walking distance, open at night  
(4) Grocery store – Trader Joes, Whole Foods, Fresh Market  
(4) Employment opportunities  
  Job opportunities for college students  
  Generation friendly jobs  
  Good paying jobs  
(3) Retail shops – Vibrant shops, a Mt. Dora North  
(2) Hotel  
(1) Center of attraction for families to come  
(1) Movies  
(1) Port  
(1) Riverfront condos  
(1) Commercial building on SR16  
(1) Light industrial on SR16  
(1) Water taxi – port and pier  
(1) Train stop – Amtrak, light rail Jacksonville  
(1) Local taxi service  
(1) Marketing – promoting Green Cove Springs  
(1) Industry - $50,000  
(1) Tours  
(1) Pedestrian tourism  
(1) Young adult entertainment  
(1) Cafes, like Avondale

**Development/Redevelopment**

(3) Parking accessibility  
(3) Annexation  
  At least to service area  
(2) Redevelop Reynolds Park  
(1) Affordable housing  
(1) Better retirement facilities  
(1) Development on Hwy 17  
(1) More freedom of development/bigger/less restrictions  
(1) Blend new buildings with old  
(1) Canvas canopies  
(1) Historic fixtures  
(1) Redevelopment of west side Green Cove Springs – upgrade housing  
(1) Less strip malls  
(1) Waterfront development for recreation, banquet hall  
(1) Zoning that makes sense – restrict certain businesses  
(1) Managed growth  
(1) No Blanding Blvd.
**Education**

(1) Opportunities for young minds
(1) Better schools
(1) Schools teaching to the whole person and management
(1) Community involvement in schools

**Government Services/Operations**

(2) Improved parks/playgrounds
   Make each park unique in its own way
(2) Multi modal transportation hub – improve ride choice
(1) Consolidate transportation items
(1) Self driving transit – trams
(1) Traffic control – traffic lights, speed bumps
(1) Traffic diversion from Hwy 17
(1) Lower electric rate
(1) Have County maintain/upgrade their buildings
(1) City communication strategy, surveys

**Infrastructure**

(3) Underground utilities
   Different electric company
(2) Pedestrian bridge over Hwy 17
(2) Internet
   City-wide WiFi
   Outstanding social media to attract more people
(1) Drainage
(1) Improved infrastructure
(1) City pier improvement
(1) More sidewalks
(1) Grove St. opened for canoe access to river
(1) Fix the dock
(1) Waterfront benches at end of streets
(1) Trails – proposed; master trail plan
CONCLUSIONS

The community visioning workshop was well attended with a mix of participants who were fairly new to the city along with long-time residents. However, one common characteristic was evident and that was the love the residents of Green Cove Springs have for the city and their optimism to see it continue as a wonderful place to live in the future.

There was no shortage of ideas generated and as the City Council plans for the future, it is important that the Council keeps in mind the identified treasures and values that the residents would like to see continued or improved upon. There was broad agreement upon the following:

- The river is a major asset that must be preserved with access available for water-centric activities;
- City parks are highly valued, particularly Spring Park;
- The historic nature of the city, brick streets, and the quaint environment are treasured;
- Residents love the small town feel of Green Cove Springs, its walkability, and sense of community;
- Events and festivals play a major role in the city; and,
- A safe city with the security of having a police department is important.

While numerous suggestions were made for projects and programs to be initiated to create a desired future for the city, there was not a great deal of consensus on what that should consist of. It is clear however that the following issues were supported by many of the people in attendance at the workshop:

- Efforts to cleanup and beautify the city should happen;
- Anything that enhances and maintains a high quality of life for the residents would be welcomed;
- There is a need for economic development, particularly a desire for more options in the city for shopping, restaurants, grocery stores, hotels, and entertainment;
- Job development, for all ages, is seen as essential;
- There is an acceptance that growth will occur, but it should be managed to maintain the historic nature of the city and its small town, family-friendly culture;
- Housing variety and upgrades are important;
- There is a need for transportation alternatives; and,
- The city should invest in technology, particularly WiFi for all residents.

The City of Green Cove Springs is poised to embrace a future that maintains the qualities that have drawn people to the community in the past and that will ensure it is a city that provides new opportunities for the people who choose to call this home.
APPENDIX A

The treasures and values identified by participants who attended the Community Visioning workshop held on March 3, 2018:

**Table #1**
- Security in Green Cove schools
- Love as small town
- Keep/save historical feeling of town
- Waterfront attractions
- Our big treasure – Spring Park
- Potential of growth
- Family oriented
- Waste/sanitation crew (pick up route crew)
- City’s own police department
- Easy accessibility to the City staff

**Table #2**
- Spring park/pool
- Historic buildings/day theatre
- Arts and craft festival
- Tourism/small town feel
- Bicyclist/Bed and Breakfast
- River/Riverfront
- Public access to river
- Clay Port area
- Museums/historic triangle military
- Diversity/people
- City electric value
- Small businesses

**Table #3**
- Maintain the character of the older parts of the city
- Balance of use of the riverfront
- Public access
- Preserve single family and older homes
- Cautious with multi-family or condos
- The City Police Department is an asset
- Ambiance: trees, brick roads, each home unique
- Citizen inclusion/involvement
- City festivals/events
- County seat of government
Table #4
The river is a value
Water attractive
Kayaking and boating
Only Clay County non-boating access
Brick streets (historic appearance)
Walkability
County seat
Court house
Jail
County administration
DMV
Police Department
Fire station
Veteran’s administration representative
Trails and trail plan
Tree city
New pool and Spring Park renovation
Historical triangle
Proximity Fairgrounds
Florida weather (3 seasons)
Market in the park
Events
River fest
CalaVida
Christmas on Walnut and Christmas Parade
Soul Food Festival
Clay County Fair
Antique car show
River cruise stop
Senior Center
Clay Transit hub
Churches
Schools
Governors Creek
Charitable organizations
VFW, Elks, FOE, Food Pantry, Etc.
Nana’s, Rotary, VIA
Nature
Recreation
Spirituality
Governance (law, order)
Town Center
Sense of Community
Community service and caring
Museums
Military History
Cemetery in St. Johns Landing
Improved Code Enforcement
Police presence
Commercial building cleanup
M Law building, Walgreens, CVS
Sup Elections
Gateway Corridor

Table #5
Treasure – City Park, spring, boat slips, fishing
Military museum
Old court house and jail
The river
Bed and Breakfast
Having 4 parks – enhance 3 parks
Augusta Savage Community Center
We are the County seat
Walking trails/nature
Festivals
Historic History – small town values

Table #6
River
City dock and harbor
Green Cove History
Brick Street (Walnut St.)
Spring Park and Pool
Small town feel (people and property)
Governor’s Creek Boat Ramp (County property)
Close to big stores in Fleming Island so Green Cove can keep quaint shops with the small town feel
Table #7
Historical homes (many…)
Trees/replanting/replacement
   Regulation?
   Protection
Cobblestone – streets
Congruency – feel/look/mood
Antique shops
Rx
Park
River
Railroad
Courthouse
Military history
River Park Inn
Character
Greatest generation
Trust/family

Table #8
Sidewalk (walkability)
History
Charm
Hometown feel
Park (Spring Park/Pool)
Council
Access to the River!

Table #9
Police response
Customer focus
Professional services
Well run town (won’t survive without growth 25,000+)
Quiet/cozy
Good schools
Close community
River (capitalize on the resource)
Walkability (golf carts) (but heavy traffic is a problem)
Hometown non-chain restaurants
Spring and new pool
History
Technology (energy cove court)
Table #10
Spring Park – river, trees, pier
Brick streets
Small town feel
Walnut Street
Like Avondale
Increase local owned café, shops
Less franchise
Golf course – River Bend
Industrial Park
Airport
Historical Triangle
Historical society
Senior Center
Conservation area
Recreation, fishing, boating, trails
Police Department
Relationship with community, seniors, children
Vera Francis Park
Land north of Elks Club potential park
Clay Theatre
Old Florida style
  Architectural design
APPENDIX B

VISION 2025

Vision for the City of Green Cove Springs in 2025 as described by the small discussion groups on March 3, 2018. Because some attendees left before these discussions, the groups were consolidated into 8 tables for this portion of the agenda. Items highlighted with an asterisk in front of them are the priorities each group designated for the future.

**Table #1**
- In 2025, outstanding social media/internet presences to attract more people
- Improved infrastructure
  - Underground electricity/different electric company
  - Drainage
  - Lower electricity rate
- Center of attraction for families to come
  - Family friendly activities
  - Improved parks/playgrounds
  - Movies
  - Sports organizations
  - Employment opportunities
  - Affordable housing
- Opportunities for young minds
- Increase opportunities for seniors
  - Better retirement facilities
  - Activities to stay active

**Table #2**
- Keep small town feel, with commercial enhancements, walkable
- River life – boating, canoeing, kayaking
- US 17 and Walnut Street beautification
  - Pedestrian bridge over US17
  - Legal golf cart community
- Evening businesses
- Restaurants
- Mount Dora North shops/restaurants/pubs
- Parking accessibility
- City wide Wi-Fi/residents
- Improvements on outdoor activities – biking, hiking, nature walks
- City pier improvement
- Children’s recreation
- All ages activities
Table #3
*Annexation to at least service area
*Maintaining city look when beltway comes in (core)
*Development (planned) on Hwy 17
Have county maintain/upgrade their buildings
Allow out city more freedom of development/bigger/less restriction

Table #4
*Port
   River front condos with marina
   Commercial building on #16
   Light industry in south of #16
   Water taxi between port and City pier
   Remove shuttle fuel tank
   River access
*Core city
   Vibrant shops (no vacancy)
   Canvas canopies
   Adequate parking
   Eateries within walking distance, especially evening dining
   Blend new building with old structures
   Trader Joes (Whole Foods, others)
   Remove “trashy” look of Highway 17
*Consolidate transportation items
   Local taxi service
   Self-driving transit for residents (maybe tram)
   Multi-modal transport hub
   Train stop in GCS (not only Amtrak, Light Rail Jax)
   Improve ride choice
Keep trees (treescape plan, beauty and safety as focal point)
Underground electric
Cleaner (streetscape, row/medians improved)
Historic fixtures
Adequate street lighting in business area and residential area
Traffic diversions from Highway17
Redevelop Westside of GCS. (Upgrade housing stock)
Develop local good paying jobs
Senior housing (carriage house concert)
Annex to service area boundaries
**Table # 5**
*Job opportunities for college students*
*Marketing (promoting schools) (what GCS has to offer)*
*Grocery Store, hotel, 5 Star restaurant*
Industry ($50,000)
US17
Augusta Savage Center (service center stores)
Cove Life – marketing
Tours (for cruises that come in)
Improve face structure of buildings – Walnut St.
Keep next generation here
Children have no place to go, community center, arcade, keep off streets, move structure
Why should people retire here? + Community center, hospital
Economics in GCS with Beltway coming in
More businesses needed
Tax deduction for businesses
Luring businesses into the City

**Table #6**
*Canoe and kayak slide at City Park and Governor’s Creek also*
*Reclaimed brick roads – remove the asphalt*
*Electric utilities underground*
Less strip malls
Uniform architecture
Better schools
Young adult entertainment options
More restaurants (not chains) (open for dinner)
More sidewalks (walkable sidewalks)
Grove Street opened up for canoe access to the river
Pedestrian bridge crossing, Hwy 17 large enough for bicycles (located in the Core area)
Reynolds Port Development – docks, pier
Traffic control – speeding (traffic light at McDonalds) (speed bumps Magnolia Ave)
Noise restriction for trucks
City incentives to businesses to add landscaping buffers along Magnolia Ave.
Zoning that makes sense – restrict certain businesses (certain commercial areas)
Preserved plans for the future
Small town feel
City bypass to relieve Hwy 17 traffic (part of vision for the future)
Maintain proper buffers for property values
Table #9
*Lodging – limited place to stay once you are here
*Community involved in solutions
*Entertainment lacks opportunities, waterfront development for recreation, banquet hall
Fix the dock (enhancements)
Functional Golf Cart Community
Schools teaching to the whole person and management
Waterfront benches at the end of streets
More restaurants
City communication strategy including survey strategy
Make each park unique in its own way
Community involvement in schools
Redevelop Reynolds Park
Community involvement completing tasks getting things done
Grocery store
Retail stores
Annexation
Fresh Markets

Table #10
*Managed Growth
*Historic area – preserved
  Central business district – defined
*Trails – proposed
  Master trails plan
  Parking
Grocery store – small mom and pop
Pedestrian Tourism
  Walnut Street
  Pedestrian only – bridge 17 across
  Cafés, Avondale
Pier – enlarge, improve, more slips
Walking to Walnut
Historic garage – 3 stories
Preserve architecture
  Rebuild similar design
Jobs – industry
Generation friendly jobs
Restaurants
No Blanding Blvd