



COMMUNITY VISIONING CITY OF GREEN COVE SPRINGS

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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

VISION 2025

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 Highway 17
- 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