

**RESOLUTION  
NO. 09-CC**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF FELLSMERE, INDIAN RIVER COUNTY, FLORIDA, RELATING TO COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT IN THE CITY OF FELLSMERE; DESCRIBING THE LAND AREA TO BE ADDED TO THE EXISTING COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AREA; FINDING THE EXISTENCE OF BLIGHTED CONDITIONS IN THE LAND AREA TO BE ADDED THAT WARRANT THE EXPANSION OF THE REDEVELOPMENT AREA IN ACCORDANCE WITH CRITERIA SET FORTH IN CHAPTER 163, PART III, FLORIDA STATUTES; PROVIDING FOR LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS; MAKING FINDINGS OF NECESSITY; EXPANDING THE COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AREA; ESTABLISHING THE NECESSITY FOR REHABILITATION; SEVERABILITY AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.**

**WHEREAS**, the City of Fellsmere, Florida finds the existence of one or more blighted areas, as defined in the "Community Redevelopment Act" of Part III, Chapter 163, Florida Statutes, within the boundary of the land area to be added to (the "Expansion Area") and incorporated in the existing land area of the City of Fellsmere Redevelopment Area, and determines that the rehabilitation, conservation or redevelopment, or a combination thereof, of the Expansion Area by the Community Redevelopment Agency is necessary and in the best interest of the public health, safety, morals, or welfare of the residents and citizens of the City of Fellsmere; and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Fellsmere has commissioned a Blight Study ("Study") which has confirmed the findings of blight in the Expansion Area based upon the best available data, analysis and evaluation, and that but for the use of Chapter 163 Part III Florida Statute Redevelopment programs the conditions will continue to arrest sound growth and development; and

**WHEREAS**, conditions are present which are detrimental to the sound growth of the Expansion Area and which substantially impair or arrest the growth within the Expansion Area and adjacent territory, and present conditions and uses which are detrimental to the public health, safety, morals and public welfare; and

**WHEREAS**, the Expansion Area contains a substantial number of deteriorated, or deteriorating structures, in which conditions, as indicated by the Study, are leading to economic distress or endanger life or property; and

**WHEREAS**, there is a predominance of defective or inadequate street layout, parking facilities, roadways, culverts, or public transportation facilities in the Expansion Area; and

**WHEREAS**, aggregate assessed values of real property in the Expansion Area for ad valorem tax purposes have failed to show any appreciable increase and in fact building values have shown a decrease, compared to land values, based upon the available information from the Indian River County Property Appraiser's records; and

**WHEREAS**, there exists faulty lot layout in relation to size, adequacy, accessibility, or usefulness in the Expansion Area; and

**WHEREAS**, there exists unsanitary or unsafe conditions in the Expansion Area; and

**WHEREAS**, there exists deterioration of sites or other improvements in the Expansion Area; and

**WHEREAS**, there exists inadequate and outdated building density patterns in the Expansion Area; and

**WHEREAS**, there exists residential and commercial vacancy rates higher in the Expansion Area than in other areas of Indian River County; and

**WHEREAS**, there exists incidence of crime in the Expansion Area higher than in other areas of Indian River County; and

**WHEREAS**, there exists a greater number of violations of the Florida Building Code in the Expansion Area than the number of violations recorded in other areas of Indian River County; and

**WHEREAS**, action must be taken to prevent further blight and deterioration and to protect and enhance public expenditures previously made by the City in the Expansion Area; and

**WHEREAS**, the City desires to proceed under Part III, Chapter 163, Florida Statutes, to establish the necessary means by which redevelopment can be accomplished in the Expansion Area; and

**WHEREAS**, the City Council finds that the Expansion Area meets the criteria of Section 163.340(8) Florida Statutes and constitutes "blighted area" within the parameters of state law necessitating a Community Redevelopment Area; and

**WHEREAS**, the City Council in December, 2005 established a Community Redevelopment Area that is bordered by the proposed Expansion Area and therefore, will incorporate the Expansion Area into the existing Community Redevelopment Area; and

**WHEREAS**, all prerequisites having been accomplished, it is now appropriate and necessary in order to proceed further that an amended community redevelopment plan be prepared.

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, by the City Council of the City of Fellsmere, Florida, as follows:

**SECTION 1. LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS.** The recitals set forth above are hereby ratified, adopted and incorporated herein as legislative findings of the City Council.

**SECTION 2. FINDINGS OF NECESSITY.** The City Council, based upon evidence presented to it and in the public record does hereby expressly find that blighted areas as defined in Section 163.340(8), Florida Statutes (2008) as amended, exist within the land area to be added (Expansion Area) to the Community Redevelopment Area as defined in Section 163.340(10), Florida Statutes (2008) as amended, as described in the City of Fellsmere 2009 CRA Expansion

Findings of Necessity Technical Memo attached hereto as Exhibit "A", and by this reference made a part hereof.

**SECTION 3. EXPANDING THE COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AREA.** For the purpose of this Resolution and any community development project undertaken pursuant hereto, the Expansion Area shall be added to and incorporated in the existing Fellsmere Community Redevelopment Area (FCRA) as described in the Blight Study Area Map attached hereto as Exhibit "B", and by this reference made a part hereof.

**SECTION 4. ESTABLISHING THE NECESSITY FOR REHABILITATION.** The City Council does hereby expressly find that rehabilitation, conservation or redevelopment, or a combination thereof, of the area described in Section 3 above is necessary in the interest of the public health, safety, morals or welfare of the residents of the City of Fellsmere and that amendments be made and incorporated into the adopted Community Redevelopment Plan to identify and implement strategies therefore for the Expansion Area and new CRA as a whole.

**SECTION 5. SEVERABILITY.** If any section, part of a sentence, paragraph, phrase or word of this Resolution is for any reason held to be unconstitutional, inoperative or void, such holding shall not effect the remaining portions hereof and it shall be construed to have been the legislative intent to pass this Resolution without such unconstitutional, invalid or inoperative part.

**SECTION 6. EFFECTIVE DATE.** This Resolution shall take effect immediately upon its adoption.

The foregoing Resolution was moved for adoption by Council Member Tyson. The motion was seconded by Council Member Herrera, and upon being put to a vote, the vote was as follows:

Mayor, Susan P. Adams  
Council Member Fernando Herrera  
Council Member Joel Tyson  
Council Member Sara J. Savage  
Council Member Daniel Naranjo

yes  
yes  
yes  
yes  
absent

The Mayor thereupon declared this Resolution duly passed and adopted this 17<sup>th</sup> day of September, 2009.

CITY OF FELLSMERE


Susan P. Adams  
Susan P. Adams, Mayor

ATTEST:

Deborah C. Krages  
Deborah C. Krages, City Clerk



**I HEREBY CERTIFY** that the Notice of Public Hearing on the foregoing Resolution was given in accordance with State Statutes that the foregoing Resolution was duly passed and adopted on the ~~17<sup>th</sup>~~ day of September, 2009, and the public hearing and reading was held on the ~~17<sup>th</sup>~~ day of September, 2009.



Deborah C. Krages, City Clerk  
R-09-CC\_090831

# Fellsmere

Exhibit "A"

to

Resolution No. 09-CC

cultivate. nurture. grow...

## *City of Fellsmere 2009 CRA EXPANSION Findings of Necessity Technical Memo*

Prepared by:  
Lawandales Planning Affiliates  
August, 2009

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## INTRODUCTION-HISTORICAL SETTING

Fellsmere Farms, owned in part by Fellsmere Joint Venture (FJV), carved hundreds of miles of canals to provide a drainage system for the fruit to grow and settlements to develop in the early 1900's. They continue to have a major influence on the City today. Never part of the incorporated City limits, FJV annexed over 18,545 acres in 2007: 157.5 acres, shown on Figures 1 and 2, surrounds the Hall-Carter-James (HCJ) neighborhood in the northeast quadrant of the City; and, 18,377 acres (more or less) which lie between the former western City boundaries westward to the Blue Cypress, north to the Stick Marsh and C-54 canal, and South towards SR 60. The annexation, an element of the City's economic development strategy will continue to provide sustenance for and employ the majority of the City's residents for years to come.

These greenfields surround the original 1 square mile City center, or "inner City". Laid out in a sought after grid pattern using rectilinear blocks, with small building lots and a central park, a cross hatch of interwoven streets feed from and to the main Street, Broadway Street. The original City settlement expanded over time from the HCJ area, as the need for laborers increased with the development of packing houses and planting of new citrus groves and vegetable fields. Between 1912 and 1914, J.G. Carter, R.L. James, and Murray Hall, Fellsmere merchants and community leaders, subdivided the property. However, the "inner city", has languished for years as the City struggled with demographic and economic issues that were caught in time, unless new lands were brought in to stimulate new development.

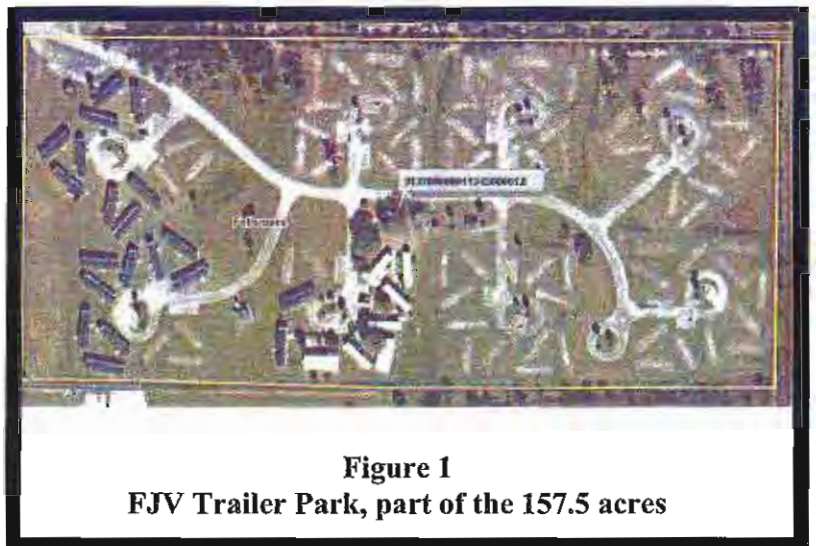
By the mid 1920s, a relatively comprehensive community had emerged that supported some 25 families. Nearly thirty buildings dotted the settlement, including dwellings, churches, and a general store. Several new buildings appeared during the 1920s land boom and the period of the Great Depression of the 1930s. The old Trans-Florida Railway line right-of-way, site of a former active goods transport system, is being dedicated to the City for use as part of a massive greenways and trails network and will be included in the Indian River County "Rails to Trails" network.

FJV's 157.5 acre site contains the 'SUN-AG' trailer park, which has been the site of migrant/farmworker residential housing for years. Practically demolished in the 2004 hurricanes, the inability to replace all of the hurricane ravaged trailers has also put a strain on the housing stock in the remaining areas of the city to accommodate the affordable housing needs in the area.

Portions of Broadway, CR 512, and the HCJ neighborhood, and other areas were included in the 2005 Blight study and were adopted in the boundaries of existing Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) as shown on Map 1.

The remaining sections of the inner city and FJV lands continue to be affected by poverty, lack of jobs, substandard/dilapidated buildings, unpaved roads, outdated or inefficient land use patterns and other factors that have hindered the City's ability to bring sustainable growth and development to the historical city limits.

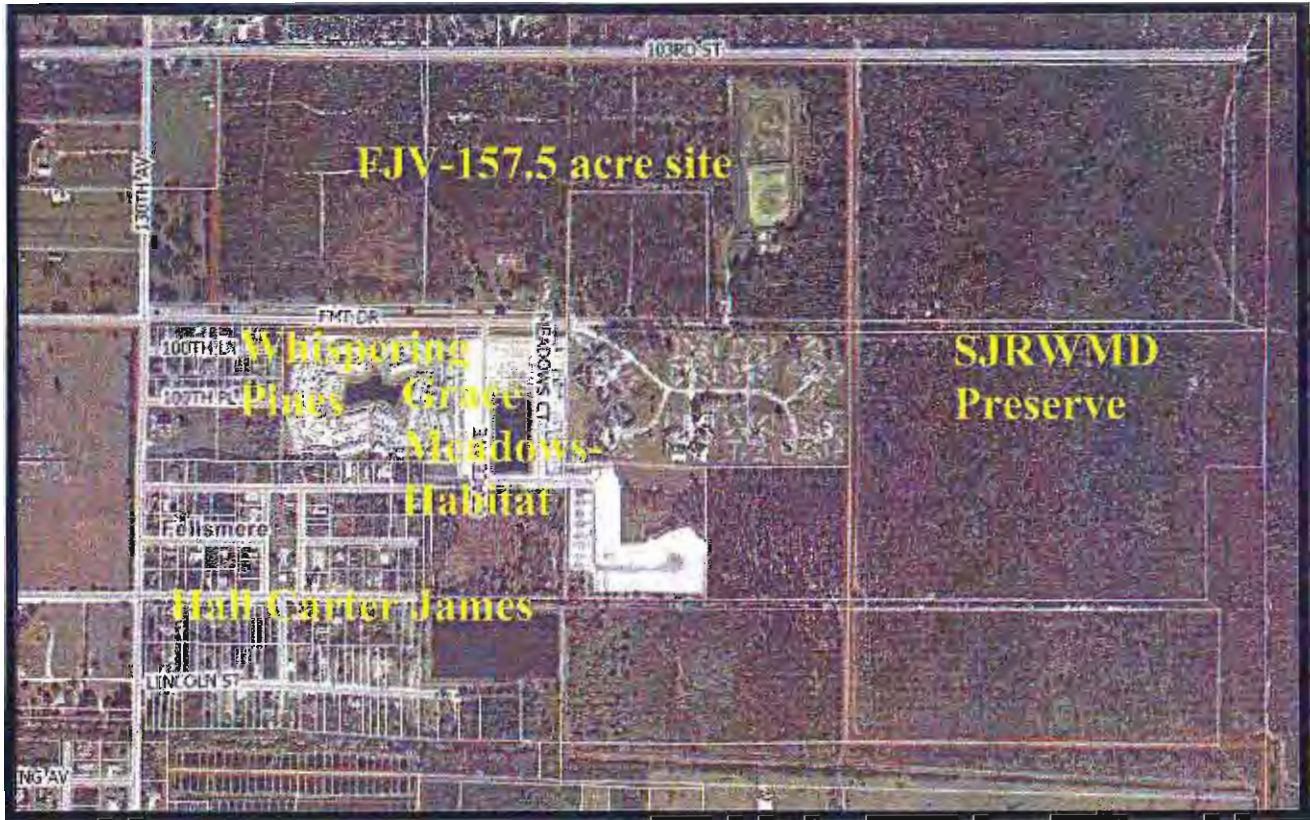
Therefore, the City engaged Lawandales Planning Affiliates (LPA) to conduct an evaluation to determine whether the 157.5 acre FJV lands and inner City areas as shown on Map 2 qualify for designation as Blighted under Chapter 163, Part III for inclusion into an expanded CRA. In summary, the evaluation has shown that the "inner" city and the FJV neighborhood suffer from blighting conditions that keep the City from receiving new private and



**Figure 1**  
FJV Trailer Park, part of the 157.5 acres

public investment—high crime, dilapidated buildings, high vacancy rates, property values disproportionately lower than the rest of the area, transportation problems, inappropriate land uses, lack of parking, vacant lands and a general lack of beautification that hampers development potential. Historic structures have been lost. Dirt roads and open drainage ditches dot the landscape leading to often unsanitary or unsafe health conditions.

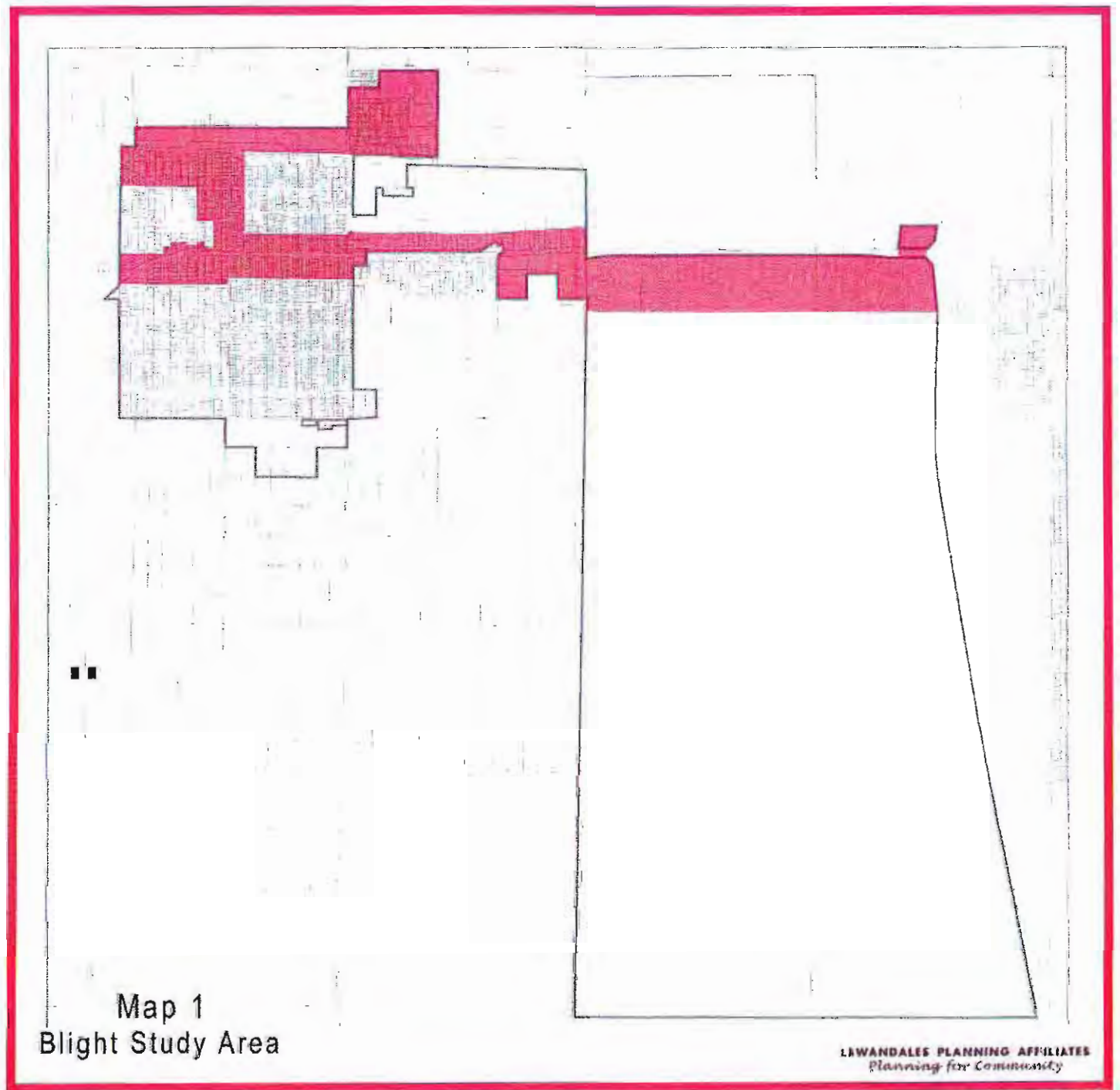
Figure 2  
Lands East of Willow Street within the Expansion Area



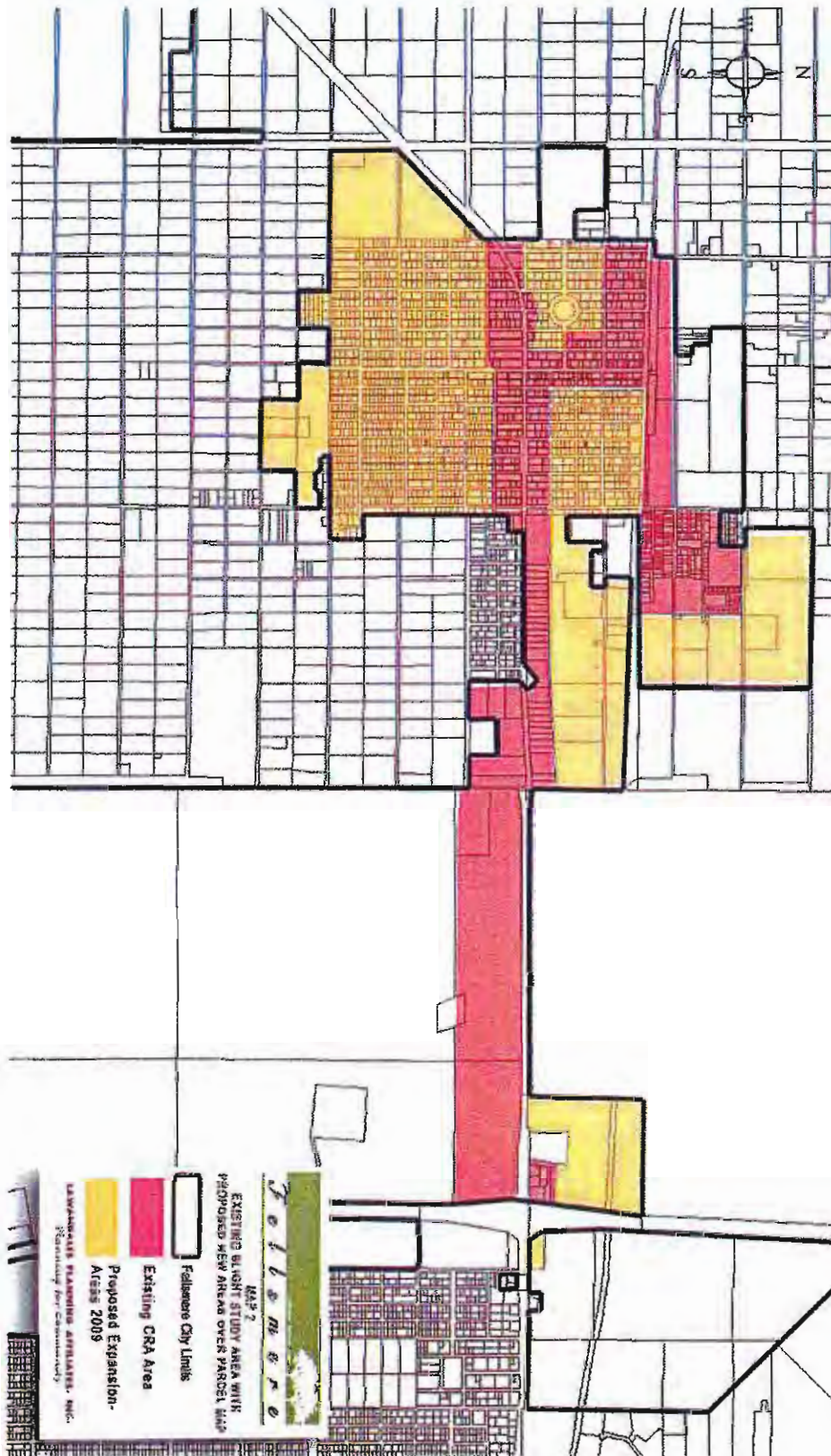


MAP 1

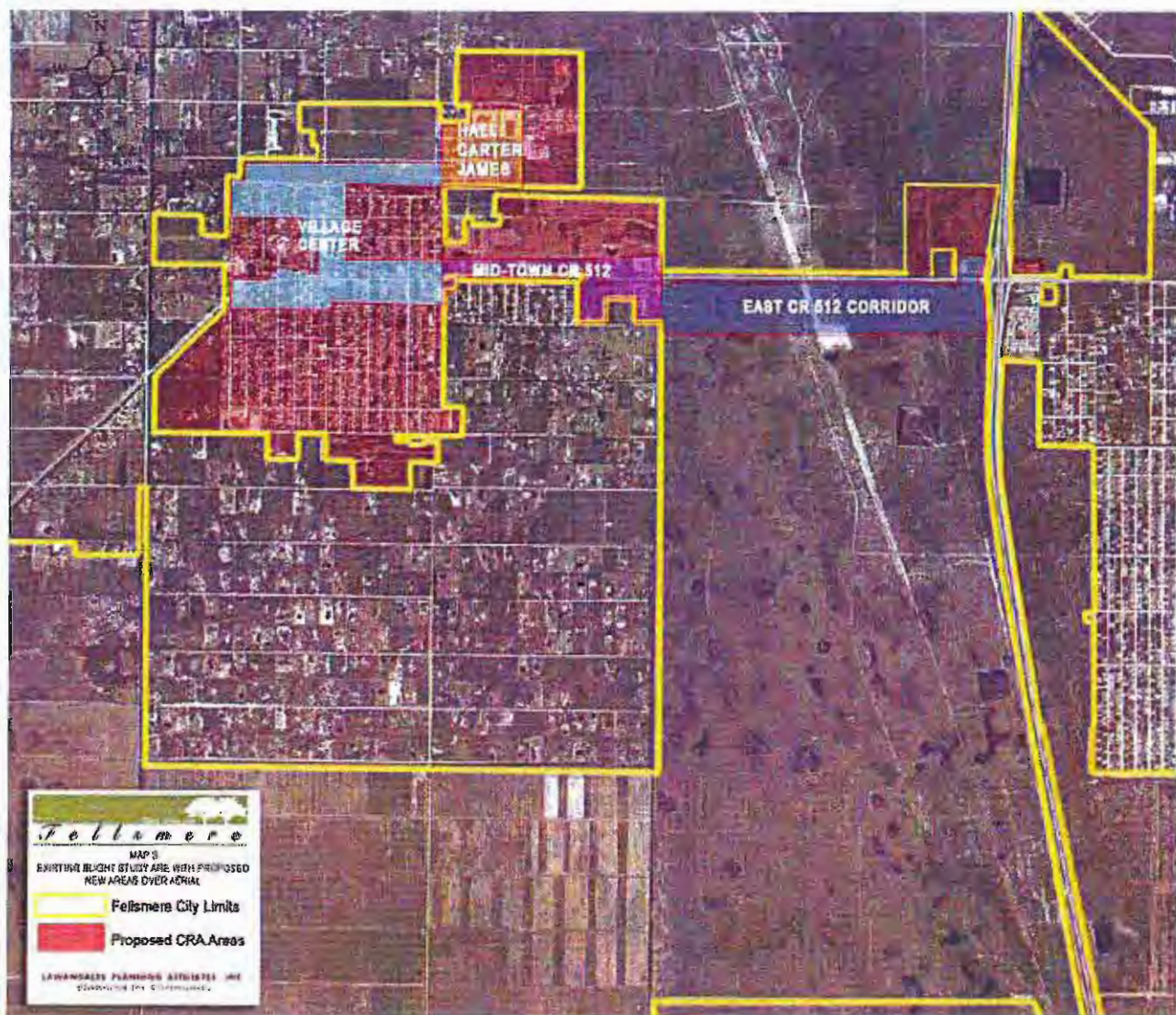
ORIGINAL BLIGHT STUDY AREA (BSA) AND EXISTING COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AREA



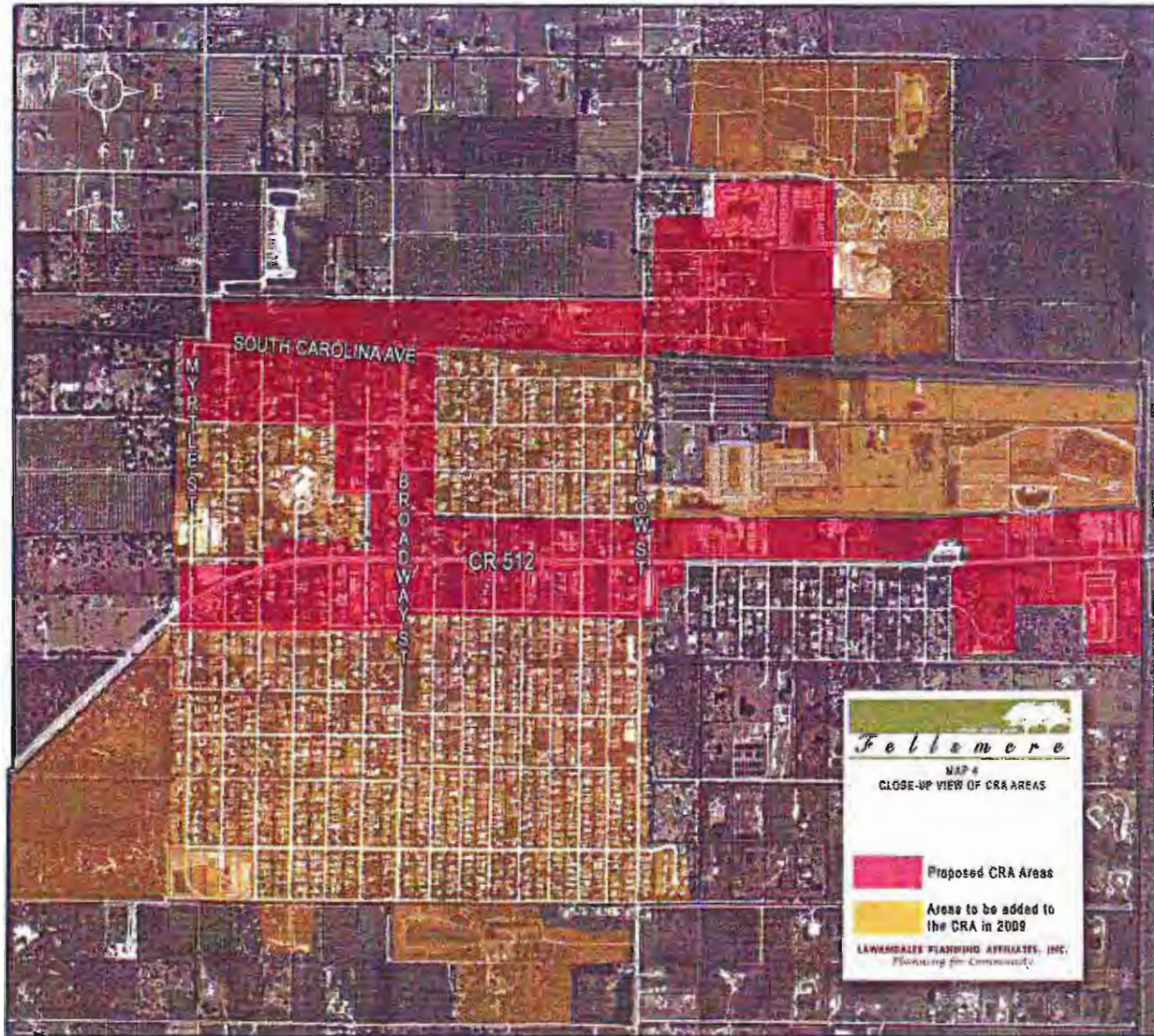
**MAP 2 - EXISTING BLIGHT STUDY AREA WITH PROPOSED NEW AREAS OVER PARCEL MAP**



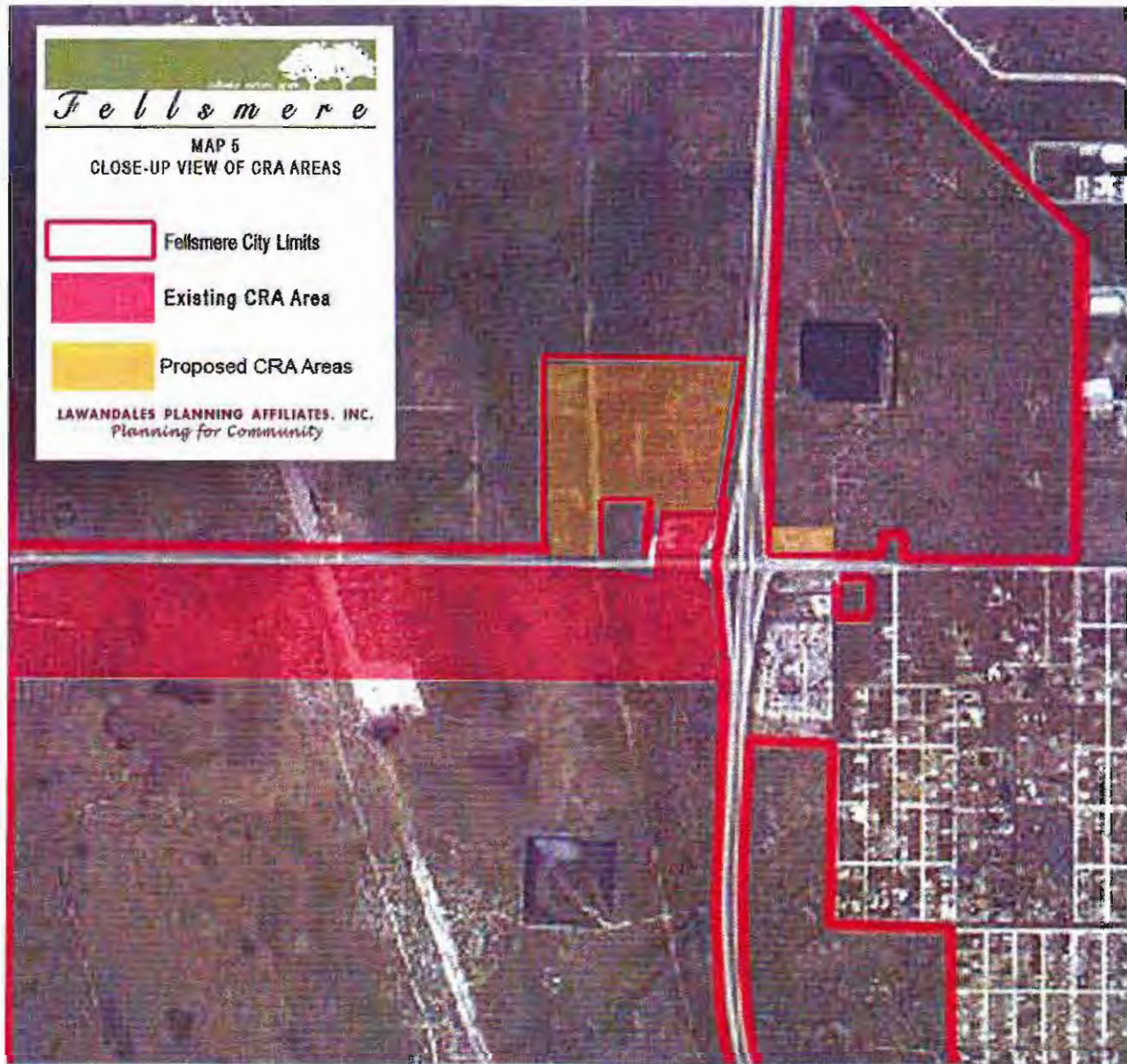
**MAP 3 - EXISTING BLIGHT STUDY AREA WITH PROPOSED NEW AREAS OVER AERIAL**



**MAP 4 CLOSE-UP VIEW OF BLIGHT STUDY AREA**



**MAP 5 CLOSE-UP VIEW OF BLIGHT STUDY AREA**



## STATUTORY BACKGROUND

Local Governments must establish that a given area is blighted, and that the revitalization and redevelopment of that area is in the interests of the community. Using the best available data, this blight study: establishes the existence of blighted conditions; identifies the specific problems that may be addressed through adoption of a Redevelopment Plan; and more importantly, creates the findings of necessity for use by the City in designating the area and expanding the existing CRA.

### Chapter 163, Part III "Blight"

In general, Blight is a set of negative physical circumstances that makes an area a burden to the greater community. As a whole, these circumstances discourage the development and redevelopment of individual properties in the area and within the surrounding neighborhoods. Blight is rooted in a basic lack of investment and maintenance. The Community Redevelopment Act requires that the Blight Study Area (BSA) fit the definition of a "blighted area" if the City is to use the powers provided by the Act for redevelopment activities.

**"Blighted area," means either of the following as paraphrased from section 163.340 Chapter 163 FS:**

1. "Blighted area" means an area in which there *are a substantial number of deteriorated, or deteriorating structures, in which conditions, as indicated by government-maintained statistics or other studies, are leading to economic distress or endanger life or property*, and in which two or more of the following factors are present:
  - (a) Predominance of defective or inadequate street layout, parking facilities, roadways, bridges, or public transportation facilities;
  - (b) Aggregate assessed values of real property in the area for ad valorem tax purposes have failed to show any appreciable increase over the 5 years prior to the finding of such conditions;
  - (c) Faulty lot layout in relation to size, adequacy, accessibility, or usefulness;
  - (d) Unsanitary or unsafe conditions;
  - (e) Deterioration of site or other improvements;
  - (f) Inadequate and outdated building density patterns;
  - (g) Falling lease rates per square foot of office, commercial, or industrial space compared to the remainder of the county or municipality;
  - (h) Tax or special assessment delinquency exceeding the fair value of the land;
  - (i) Residential and commercial vacancy rates higher in the area than in the remainder of the county or municipality;
  - (j) Incidence of crime in the area higher than in the remainder of the county or municipality;
  - (k) Fire and emergency medical service calls to the area proportionately higher than in the remainder of the county or municipality;
  - (l) A greater number of violations of the Florida Building Code in the area than the number of violations recorded in the remainder of the county or municipality;
  - (m) Diversity of ownership or defective or unusual conditions of title which prevent the free alienability of land within the deteriorated or hazardous area; or
  - (n) Governmentally owned property with adverse environmental conditions caused by a public or private entity.

## BLIGHTED CONDITIONS ANALYSIS

### HOUSING AND DEMOGRAPHIC ISSUES

The same factors that existed in 2005 in the original Blight Study Area (BSA) and Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) area exist today in the original City's 1 square mile area. The overall demographics have not changed. Although the size of the City has grown 3 fold, the inner city portion of Fellsmere remains economically

distressed. A review of demographic data from the Florida Housing Data Clearinghouse indicates several key facts, many of which are unchanged from 2005:

1. Fellsmere has a higher number of substandard dwellings than the County; and a higher percentage per capita than other cities in Indian River County.
2. Fellsmere has a higher percentage of renters to owners than the County-29% versus 22%.
3. 34% of Fellsmere residents have more than 1 person per room, versus 2.9% in the County.
4. While Fellsmere grew by 15%, which amounted to only 600 people, other sections of Indian River County grew by the thousands.
5. SR 60 saw a boom with developments such as Pointe West and other major commercial developments, and Wal-Mart and Publix went to nearby Cities. Fellsmere's commercial corridors languish.
6. While the County's homesteaded properties grew, meaning rising ownership levels, Fellsmere's did not keep pace. Furthermore, almost half of the new units built in Fellsmere were mobile homes or tax credit low-income housing.
7. While the County and its cities have enjoyed a variety of housing stock, Fellsmere has seen a rise in mobile home and affordable housing multi-family complexes, along with some sporadic single family.
8. Commercial and industrial assessed values have remained stagnant, rising slightly within the core over in 2006 and dropping in 2008, based upon records from the Indian River County Property Appraiser.
9. While additional housing has been built in the last 4 years, few new commercial developments have occurred. The preponderance of mobile homes that lie south of CR 512 within the R-1MX zoned area have begun to deteriorate as they provide a large portion of the affordable housing for the citizenry.

In addition to the above, Fellsmere continues rank behind the Sebastian and Vero in population, housing starts, housing values, and types and diversity of housing. The following tables indicate blighted conditions as reflected in the average values, sales prices, tenure, and other demographic data. The sources for all data tables, unless other noted, were compiled from the Shimberg Center for Affordable Housing.

**TABLE 1  
POPULATION**

Population, 2007		
Place	Population	Rank by Population
Indian River County	139757	1
Sebastian	22427	2
Vero Beach	18059	3
Fellsmere	4687	4

Notes: [Housing Needs Assessment, Population and Household Projection Methodology User Guide](#).

Sources: Shimberg Center, 2009

Table 2 shows the City's 2008 single family home value compared with the County and 2 other cities. We are \$37,000 below the lowest ranking and \$220,000 lower than the highest, making Fellsmere 4<sup>th</sup> in the county.

**TABLE 2 AVERAGE HOME VALUES**

Average Single Family Home Just Value, 2008		
Place	Average Single Family Home Value (\$), 2008	Rank by Average Value
Vero Beach	335374	1
Indian River County	276711	2
Sebastian	147362	3
Fellsmere	110649	4

Table 3 shows the differences in homeownership rates in comparison to the county and cities. In this instance, Fellsmere ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> behind Indian River County and Sebastian in ownership rates. This is indicative of the very high rental rate for our community. While rental communities are not generalized as negative, some conditions at rental communities lead to blighting influences.

**TABLE 3  
HOMEOWNERSHIP RATE**

Homeownership Rate, 2007 (Owner Households as a Percentage of All Households)		
Place	Homeownership Rate (%)	Rank by Homeownership Rate
Sebastian	86.4	1
Indian River County	77.6	2
Fellsmere	69.1	3
Vero Beach	62.8	4

Table 4 provides a comparison of gross rents, with the latest data from the Census (Shimberg Center) from 2000.



TABLE 4 MEDIAN GROSS RENTS, 2000

Median Gross Rent, 2000		
Place	Median Rent (\$)	Rank by Median Rent
Sebastian	689	1
Indian River County	615	2
Vero Beach	598	3
Fellsmere	480	4

Fellsmere has a higher percentage of renters to owners than the County-29% versus 22%. 34% of Fellsmere residents have more than 1 person per room, versus 2.9% in the County. Fellsmere boasted 41% mobile homes as permanent units in 2002, vis-à-vis the 10.5% in the County. Fellsmere remains the highest ranked city with the number of mobile homes.

Today, 46% of the residential parcels and 26% of the residential acreage in the proposed CRA house mobile homes. Their values are \$10M compared to site built single family homes, whose buildings are assessed at \$25M. The land values of the R-1MX and R-2 zoned areas exceed the building values. Only, in the R-3 and R-1 districts, the building values exceed the land values. Overall, the land values exceed the building values. Table 5 shows comparative sales prices and rankings. Despite increases, Fellsmere ranks at the bottom in home sales values.

TABLE 5  
MEDIAN SINGLE FAMILY HOME PRICE, 2001-2007

Place	Median Single Family Home Price (Nominal \$)							% Change 2001-2007	Rank by 2007 Median Price
	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007		
Vero Beach	160000	175000	250000	210000	250000	250000	289000	81%	1
Indian River County	120000	127400	142500	171100	215000	235000	230000	92%	2
Sebastian	98500	111200	126500	164000	199900	218900	198650	102%	3
Fellsmere	72900	77450	85200	109600	144500	150000	149850	106%	4

Notes: Not Available.

Sources: County property appraiser tax rolls, compiled by Shimberg Center - Florida Housing Data Clearinghouse.

Housing stock conditions are reflected by the relationship between land values and building values. Table 6 reveals differentials, particularly in the R-1MX, (mobile home zoning district) and the R-2, (medium density residential) district. It is also predominately reflective of the age of the structures within the proposed district.

**TABLE 6  
RESIDENTIAL ZONING ASSESSMENTS**

Residential Districts, Values, and Acreage for Proposed CRA Expansion									
Districts	Parcels	% of Parcels	Assessed Value	Land Value	Bldg Value	Misc Value	Acres	PropTaxes	% of Total
R-1/R-1B	535	51%	\$ 50,268,230.00	\$ 23,286,490.00	\$ 25,681,400.00	\$ 1,300,340.00	222.27	600,075.00	42%
R-1MX	486	46%	\$ 30,104,510.00	\$ 18,431,300.00	\$ 10,497,040.00	\$ 1,176,170.00	147.4	364,450.00	28%
R-2	26	2%	\$ 1,832,850.00	\$ 1,249,510.00	\$ 560,940.00	\$ 22,400.00	10.94	21,675.00	2%
R-3	1	0%	\$ 4,038,850.00	\$ 229,100.00	\$ 3,525,400.00	\$ 283,780.00	16.51	81,826.00	3%
R-1-MH-8	3	0%	\$ 1,581,500.00	\$ 2,792,040.00	\$ 1,095,590.00		138.28	3,182.43	26%
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>1051</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$87,825,940.00</b>	<b>\$45,988,440.00</b>	<b>\$41,360,370.00</b>	<b>\$2,782,690.00</b>	<b>535.4</b>	<b>1,071,208.43</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: IRCPA, 2009; LPA

The median income for the County hovers around \$59,000 for a family of 4. The median income for the City has not changed since 2005. The median ranges from \$18,000 to \$25,000 from demographic data for agricultural workers, the primary "industry" in Fellsmere. In 2007, 14% of Fellsmere's population making below 50% of the median income paid more than 30% of their income on housing. 6.4% of the extremely low income in Fellsmere pays more than 50% of their income on housing. This is the highest percentage of any City in the County.

**TABLE 7  
HUD COST BURDENS**

Households With Cost Burden Above 30% and Income Below 50% AMI - All Households, 2007			
Place	Households	Percent of All Households (%)	Rank by Percent of All Households
Vero Beach	1349	15.6	1
Fellsmere	151	14.1	2
Indian River County	8108	13.3	3
Sebastian	1125	11.7	4

Fellsmere's non-seasonal occupancy and vacancy rates exceeded the County and other Cities with the exception of Vero Beach, which tied at 6.5% with Fellsmere. This City has a more permanent resident base rather than second home or tourist base, making our seasonal rate lower. Our seasonal population generally stays in multiple quarters, with family/friends, or tenement housing and is not always counted in the Census seasonal population.

**TABLE 8  
SHIMBERG VACANCY AND OCCUPANCY STATUS**

Vacancy And Occupancy Status, 2000 - Summary								
County	Place	Occupied	Vacant	Total	Vacancy Rate (%)	Vacant Seasonal, etc. Units	Total Units	Vacancy Rate Total Units (%)
Indian River	Fellsmere	850	59	909	6.5	27	936	9.2
Indian River	Sebastian	6980	177	7157	2.5	278	7435	6.1
Indian River	Vero Beach	8525	596	9121	6.5	1111	10232	16.7
Indian River	Indian River-Unincorporated	30942	1735	32677	5.3	3640	36317	14.8

The overcrowding of our units is a clear indicator the blighting influences affecting our 'inner city' areas. 34% of our units were overcrowded at the last census. As the demographics have not changed, neither have the characteristics noted herein.

**TABLE 9  
OVERCROWDED UNITS**

Overcrowded Units, 2000			
Place	Overcrowded Units	Percent of All Units (%)	Rank by Overcrowded Units
Indian River County	1431	2.9	1
Fellsmere	289	34.0	2
Vero Beach	227	2.7	3
Sebastian	85	1.2	4

**HEALTH ISSUES**

The Department of Health's Protocol for Assessing Community Excellence in Environmental Health has become an active partner in redevelopment efforts within the existing CRA. In a recent survey however, some issues continue to be a problem, necessitating the need to expand the CRA to encompass larger areas that are "feeders" of crime and blighting conditions. Some of the pertinent survey results are shown as responded to by community members:

The answers to the questions in the survey provide valuable insight into the need to expand the redevelopment efforts to in eradicate the problems noted above.

- Lack of housing choices: 69.8%
- Transportation: 65.1%
- Neighborhood lighting: 58.1%
- Lack of business opportunity: 55.8%
- Expanding community parks: 53.5%
- Safety: 44.2%
- Deserted buildings and/or cars: 41.9%
- Access to health care: 32.6%
- Sewage and sludge disposal: 30.2%
- Meeting basic needs: 30.2%
- Polluted land: 27.9%
- Other: 25.6%
- Personal hygiene and sanitation: 23.3%
- Do you feel you home is environmental safe to live in?  
Yes: 74.4% No: 18.6%
- Are there abandoned buildings that you think should be demolished? Yes: 53.5% No: 39.5%
- Are there abandoned cars that you think should be removed? Yes: 37.2% No: 58.1%
- Community has access to public bus transportation? Yes: 65.1% No: 20.9%
  - If you used transportation, does it meet your needs?: Yes: 42.9% No: 46.4%

- If no transportation, would you use it if it was available? Yes: 22.2% No: 11.1%
- How would you rate the police service in your community?
  - Good: 16.3%
  - Somewhat good: 16.3%
  - Neither good nor bad: 20.9%
  - Somewhat bad: 9.3%
  - Bad: 32.6%
  - No response: 0%
- How safe from crime do you consider your community to be?
  - Extremely safe: 4.7%
  - Safe: 48.8%
  - Neither safe nor unsafe: 18.6%
  - Unsafe: 20.9%
  - Extremely unsafe: 2.3%
  - No response: 0%
- Are there areas of standing/stagnant water near or around the roads?
  - Yes always: 18.6%
  - Sometimes: 55.8%
  - No never: 14%
  - No response: 4.7%
- How long have you lived in Fellsmere?
  - Less than 1 year: 0%
  - 1-4 years: 2.3%
  - 5-9 years: 0%
  - 10-19 years: 9.3%
  - 20 or more years: 69.8%
  - No response: 11.6%
- What is your age?
  - 0-17: 0%
  - 18-24: 7%
  - 25-44: 18.6%
  - 45-64: 27.9%
  - 65-older: 18.6%
  - No response: 18.6%

### Sites, Building Condition and Appearance

A windshield survey conducted in May and June indicated that approximately 55% of the structures or sites within the BSA were substandard or dilapidated. Mobile homes constituted more than 1/2 of the substandard or dilapidated structures. 46% of the total residential parcels in the expansion area are devoted to mobile homes, with 51% being single family dwellings.



The areas between the south City Limits and CR 512 are in severe transition. Over 30% of the structures in these areas are substandard or dilapidated; contain code violations; are not built according to code standards and some could not be rebuilt to current codes. These areas consist of the old 25' and 50' platted lots, which causes assemblage problems. Lot lay-outs, access, zoning anomalies/non-conformities or incompatible uses deter private sector investment. Housing conditions, open ditches, lack of sidewalks, dirt streets, and lack of landscaping are factors which contribute to a disaffected environment which inhibits good growth and redevelopment.

While the newly annexed area and inner city contain buildings which are in sound condition, many of the buildings and sites are deteriorating from age, lack of maintenance due to income or absentee ownership issues. There are aesthetic issues, potential health and environmental problems. The pictures show broken storm-water drainage systems, outmoded solid waste handling, lack of maintenance, and disconnected properties. The City's Code enforcement capabilities could become stressed by the amount of rising derelict properties.



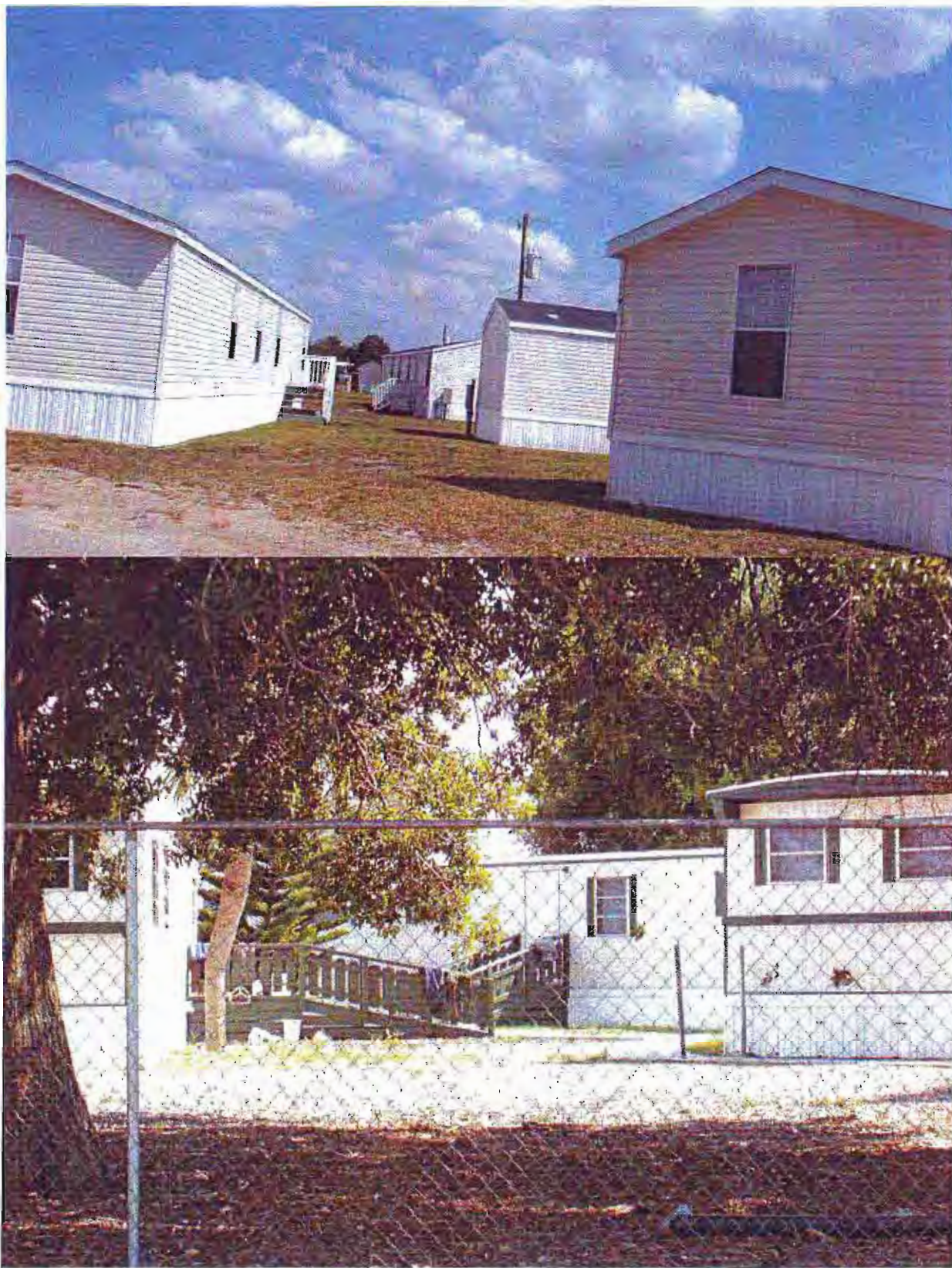
The two BSA areas are similar yet have differences. Ninety spaces exist for mobile homes in the R-1MH area within the FJV parcel to the NE. There are only approximately 28-30 at present. The site has no current stormwater systems, little to no vegetation, and the trailers are all replacement for storm-ravaged mobiles that were demolished in 2004. There is a wastewater treatment package plant that provides for wastewater removal.

The disinvestment of the inner city lands and structures is evidenced in the photo's, which show dilapidated buildings, poorly maintained properties, large numbers of vacancies, and inconsistent land uses. The majority of the area proposed for expansion is designated for residential and mixed uses. Lack of stormwater, dirt roads, and very poor drainage also deteriorate property values, keep investment options limited, and keep new investors or home buyers away. These facts are evidenced in the Shimberg data.



The following pictures are from the 157.5 acres west.







**City of Fellsmere**

The following pictures represent a sampling of the substandard or dilapidated buildings and conditions within the BSA. The photos are not given specific addresses or locations in order to protect the privacy of the dweller. They are all within the areas shown on Maps 1-5.

Some of the substandard conditions relate to the sites, code enforcement issues, lack of maintenance, junk cars, overgrown weeds, and other nuisances.

*Findings of Necessity for expanding the CRA*







**AGE OF STRUCTURES/DECAY**

The majority of the infrastructure, buildings and site improvements within the BSA were built before 2000's. With the exception of Vero Beach, Fellsmere has the oldest housing stock. This is a clear market indicator of economic disinvestment and the need for public intervention through a strategic redevelopment program.



**TABLE 10 A AND B  
AGE OF STRUCTURES**

Proposed CRA Expansion Area Age of Structures	
Year built	Number of Structures
1900	1
1910	9
1920	13
1930	13
1940	12
1950	16
1960	42
1970	137
1980	207
1990	175
2000	156

Year Built - Mean and Median, 2008 Preliminary Roll Year						
County	Place	Median Year Built				
		Single Family	Mobile Home [1]	Condominium	Multi-Family 9 or Less units	10 or More Units
Indian River	Fellsmere	1989	1982	0	-100	-100
Indian River	Sebastian	1992	1988	1985	1996	-100
Indian River	Vero Beach	1970	-100	1977	1973	-100
Indian River	Unincorporated Area	1991	1979	1988	1971	-100

Notes:  
 [1] Does not include all units. Excludes mobile homes in mobile home parks.  
 \* -100 means less than 25 observations.  
 Sources: County property appraiser tax rolls, compiled by Shimberg Center - Florida Housing Data

**LAND USAGE/ZONING/LOT SIZE/LOT LAY-OUTS**

There are 1101 parcels on 853.7 acres within the expansion area. The area contains a small mix of land uses. Mostly residential, there are a small number of commercial and industrial uses. Residential lands primarily consist

of mobile homes. The following tables sort the acreage by the City's land use and zoning designation systems.

**TABLE 11  
LAND USE PERCENTAGES**

Percentage of Use				
Districts	Parcels	% of Parcels	Acres	% of Total
A1	19	2%	149.35	17%
Commercial	6	1%	6.43	1%
Industrial	20	2%	59.5	7%
Public	5	0%	103.02	12%
R-1/R-1B	535	49%	222.27	26%
R-1MX	486	44%	147.4	17%
R-2	26	2%	10.94	1%
R-3	1	0%	16.51	1%
R-1-MH-8	3	0%	138.28	16%
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>1101</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>853.7</b>	<b>100</b>

Map 1 not only identifies the study area, but moreover, gives a clear indication of the early settlement pattern laid out by Mr. Fells and others. The lot sizes were platted at 25' by 50' on a grid with 20' alleyways separating the rear of the house lots. This configuration allowed for all houses to have a front face on the roadway, with a rear alley. However, the rear alleys soon gave way to drainage swales, and no drives were installed over the years. An aggressive yearly CDBG grant funded paving and drainage program has accomplished miles of paving, but several roads remain unpaved.

The grid network is a solid foundation on which to build a "new urban/smart growth" regulatory and development framework. 27% of the lands in the expansion area are vacant-predominately due to "left-over" lots that were sold off which now do not meet the City's rules for use; others are in obscure locations; many stand vacant due to the condition of the surrounding parcels, and some are the newly annexed vacant pasture land. This is blight affecting the development and developability of a City. Government owned lands constitute 12% of the lands.

**Table 12  
Vacant Lands by Zoning District**

VACANT LANDS					
	Parcels	%of Total New CRA Parcels	Assessed Value	Acres	%of Total New CRA Acres
Vacant R-1/R-1B residential	166	15%	\$ 73,634,803.00	89.44	10%
Vacant Public	3	0%	\$ 1,432,810.00	83.49	10%
Vacant Industrial	10	1%	\$ 423,250.00	4.65	1%
Vacant Commercial	2	0%	\$ 127,560.00	1.23	0%
Vacant Ag	21	2%	\$ 4,657,800.00	149.35	17%
Vacant R-1MX	75	7%	\$ 2,819,190.00	21.88	3%
Vacant R-2	18	2%	\$ 734,700.00	6.37	1%
Vacant R-1MH-8	1	0%	\$ 2,660.00	19.68	2%
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>296</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>\$ 83,832,773.00</b>	<b>376.09</b>	<b>44%</b>

This means that 12% of the total lands in the inner city are off the tax rolls. This leads to delinquencies and unduly burdens other tax payers to provide services. If the area becomes redeveloped within a CRA, implementing existing and planned development programs can lessen the burden. Private sector assemblage of lands to re-orient the buildings, control the numerous access points, and re-invest in the area with a mix of uses that will introduce economic vitality can be crucial to the economic development of the City.

However, Broadway was the historical downtown commercial center. It should be thriving today, but it isn't. All of the surrounding rooftops should be feeding and supporting a sustainable mix of shops, groceries, restaurants, feed stores, and other mom and pop or local entrepreneurial efforts.

The Act recognizes that faulty lot sizes and configurations affect development patterns and often impair the sound economic growth of a given area. The BSA was platted in the late 1800's and early 1900's, but has been disfigured due to a variety of factors. Faulty lot sizes, shapes, location, and problematic title situations offer little if any value to a community. Lots and buildings are left vacant, leaving them havens for vagrants, illicit behavior, crime, and physical deterioration. These conditions contribute to visual and physical blight. This will hamper new investment opportunities and contribute to further deterioration area.

The BSA is affected by a lack of parking, stormwater, small buildable areas, insufficient land to expand, incompatible adjacent uses, and problematic access due to archaic rights-of-ways, canal systems, and dirt roads. Changing the land development regulations will address these issues, while creating a new plan and zoning system in the area will aid in attracting new development. Maps 7 and 8 show the existing zoning and land use categories for the area.



In some residential areas of the BSA, homes are in standard condition and have assembled 3 or more lots for a buildable site. However, many of them are substandard and are rental; housing many more people than the homes were designed for and against current zoning. This area is devoid of paved roadways, much less sidewalks and good drainage.



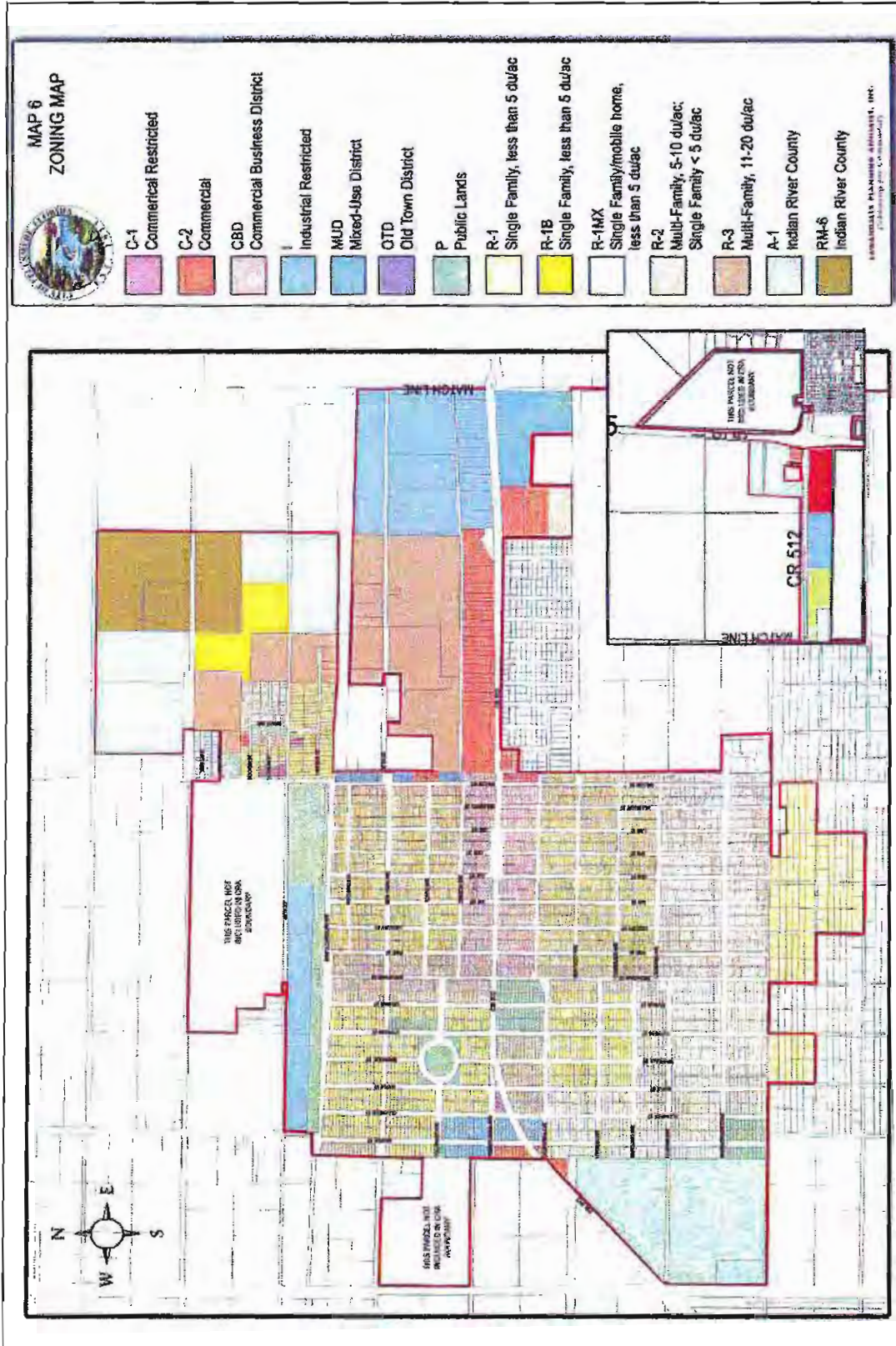
Many code violations exist in this area. Some of the houses are small historic bungalows that if cared for, could revitalize the area into a quaint neighborhood. City or CRA investments of infrastructure, sidewalks, landscaping, stormwater management, paving, and the like, could re-energize this decaying area. Otherwise, the crime and decay will continue, until someone aggregates the parcels for other commercial or mixed-uses.



Through a redevelopment program, the City can do improvements and aid the market in ways that a City cannot. This would include: creating

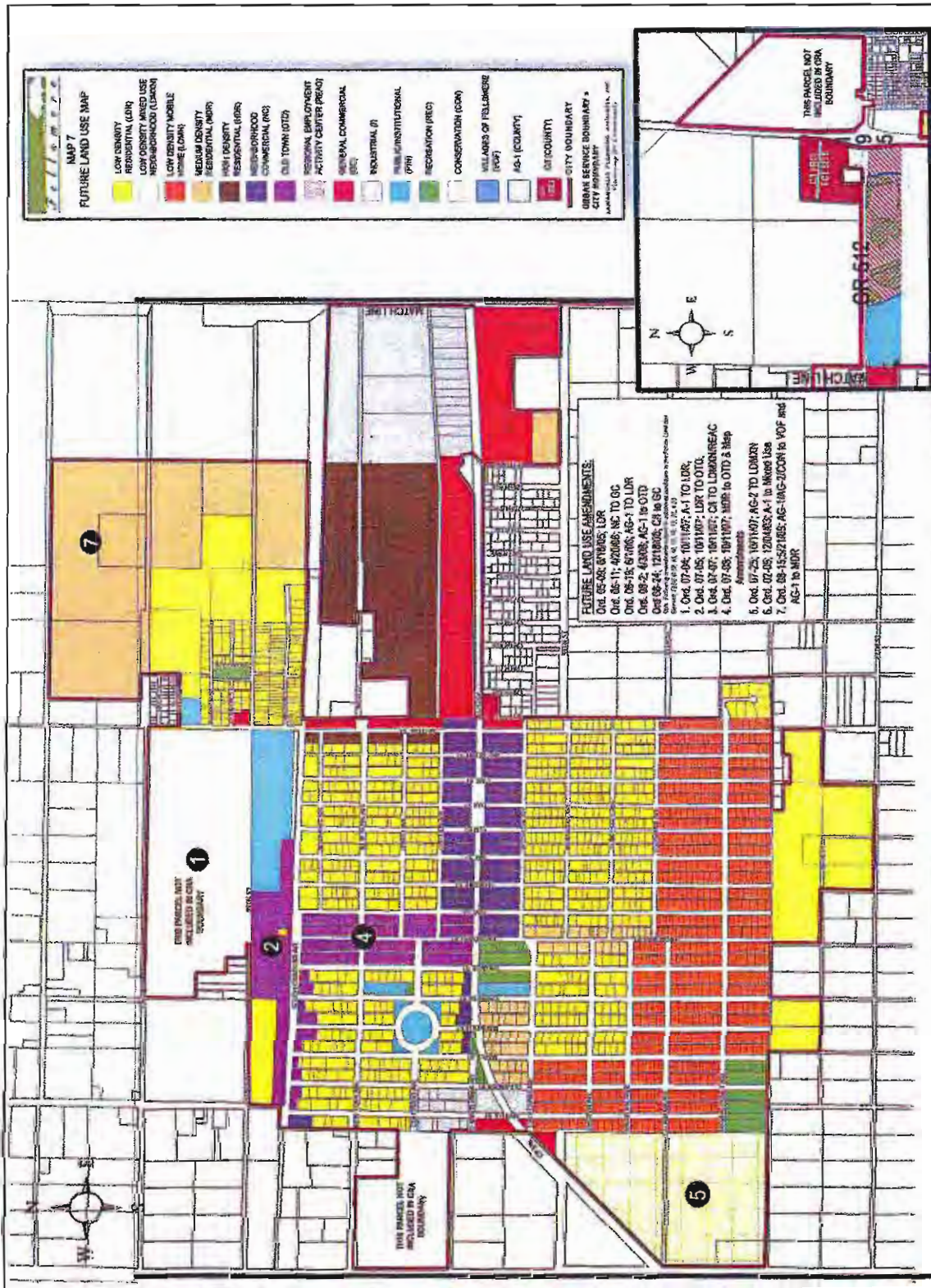
incentives and grant/loan programs for existing business retention and recruitment; starting a business development assistance program; allowing for small lot developments to spur quality and value, but demanding certain architectural/site design features; providing incentives for lot assembly; provide waivers of some regulatory requirements that inhibit new quality business or residential development.

MAP 6 ZONING MAP





MAP 7  
FUTURE LAND USE MAP



**TAXABLE VALUES AND MARKET FORCES**

Current assessed values of the area show the lack of significant investment as they relate to the City as a whole. The total assessed value of the City is at \$142 million per the Property Appraiser. The assessed value of the expansion area is \$101M. Assessed values for both the City and the BSA rose over the last few years, due to annexations, new residential development outside the BSA, and property upgrades. Based upon the best available data from the Indian River County Property Appraiser's (IRCPA) office and web-site, each piece of land within the BSA was cataloged.

**TABLE 13  
ASSESSED VALUATIONS**

District Valuations and Property Tax Levy						
Districts	Parcels	Assessed Value	Land Value	Bldg Value	Misc Value	PropTaxes
A1	19	\$ 4,657,800.00	\$ 4,657,800.00			60,154.00
Commercial	6	\$ 188,190.00	\$ 161,350.00	\$ 608,170.00	\$ 118,670.00	37,025.00
Industrial	20	\$ 2,568,840.00	\$ 1,792,410.00	\$ 630,720.00	\$ 145,710.00	43,146.00
Public	5	\$ 5,798,870.00	\$ 2,228,950.00	\$ 399,600.00	\$ 167,320.00	1,135.00
R-1/R-1B	535	\$ 50,268,230.00	\$ 23,286,490.00	\$ 25,681,400.00	\$ 1,300,340.00	600,075.00
R-1MX	486	\$ 30,104,510.00	\$ 18,431,300.00	\$ 10,497,040.00	\$ 1,176,170.00	364,450.00
R-2	26	\$ 1,832,850.00	\$ 1,249,510.00	\$ 560,940.00	\$ 22,400.00	21,675.00
R-3	1	\$ 4,038,850.00	\$ 229,100.00	\$ 3,525,400.00	\$ 283,780.00	81,826.00
R-1-MH-8	3	\$ 1,581,500.00	\$ 2,792,040.00	\$ 1,095,590.00		3,182.43
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>1101</b>	<b>\$101,039,640.00</b>	<b>\$54,828,950.00</b>	<b>\$42,998,860.00</b>	<b>\$3,214,390.00</b>	<b>1,212,668.43</b>

Source: IRCPA, 2009

Table 13 is indicative of the "depressed" economic conditions and disinvestment in the area. The telltale characteristic of disinvestment and blight is the ratio of building to land value. In this case, land values are rising faster than the building values. Once land values continue to rise disproportionately to building values, the buildings have outlived their useful, expected lifespan and redevelopment is necessary and feasible.

Table 15 shows an evaluation of the lands within the "Use Codes" (100-Residential, 4000-Vacant Industrial) categories as set forth by the IRC Property Appraiser. The most telling are the low values of the commercial, residential and industrial parcels, considering their values elsewhere in the City and the County. Land values are rising across the state, and that is true for Fellsmere, but the conditions and quality of the built environment are blighted, affecting the whole City. Without new private sector investment, the remaining lands cannot continue to support and contribute to the service provision needs of the City.

Willow Street is a mixed use area containing single family, multi-family, duplexes, churches, schools, industrial, and public uses. Table 16 is the best indicator of blight on this street. It reveals that the Industrial lands, which are generally are the highest valued of the land use categories, contain buildings whose values are half the land value, the acreage value is the same or less than R-2 and R-1MX lands, and the taxes paid per acre are close to the residential taxes. This indicates under utilized land and buildings that are not producing at their potential.

Table 17 confirms the value disparity between Fellsmere and other areas in the County.

**TABLE 14  
RESIDENTIAL VALUE COMPARISONS**

Valuations in Dollars, 2008 Preliminary Roll Year											
County	Place	Median assessed value(\$)					Total assessed value(\$mls.)				
		Single Family	Mobile Home	Condominium	Multi-Family 9 or Less units	10 or More Units	Single Family	Mobile Home	Condominium	Multi-Family 9 or Less units	10 or More Units
Indian River	Fellsmere	\$76,655	\$47,340	\$0	\$109,865	\$3,650,620	\$49.65	\$19.19	\$0.00	\$1.40	\$9.85
Indian River	Sebastian	\$119,035	\$44,855	\$88,950	\$156,960	\$3,820,220	\$1,165.97	\$6.49	\$46.56	\$26.52	\$7.64
Indian River	Vero Beach	\$154,700	\$129,520	\$131,500	\$136,585	\$581,170	\$1,268.59	\$0.13	\$666.15	\$76.78	\$14.56
Indian River	Unincorporated Area	\$138,610	\$45,870	\$104,230	\$125,370	\$5,048,315	6,403.72	\$45.27	\$1,572.25	\$35.42	\$92.50

Source: Shimberg Center, compiled from IRCPA, 2008

While other Cities have a solid housing base, Fellsmere does not. Nor does it have a commercial base. Presently, according to the City's data, the land values are over 50% of the assessed values. The trends show that the building values are either decreasing or not increasing like other areas of the County. As the land values increase and the buildings values decrease, the need and capacity for redevelopment strengthens. The area will be desirable when land values rise. With building values not increasing, further decay is imminent. Without City intervention through redevelopment, rehabilitation and restoration, the area will continue to decline.

**TRANSPORTATION ISSUES: STREETS, TRAFFIC AND PARKING**

This issue is one of many factors contributing to the blight of the area. The gridded street pattern in the center of the City lends itself well for redevelopment and improved parking and access. However, few of the interior sites have a pedestrian connection to the limited commercial areas. There is no formal pedestrian connection to City's amenities, downtown, the schools, or City Hall. One of the major benefits of the pedestrian system internal to the residential area is that it brings people out and contributes to a natural surveillance. This often leads to crime reduction. Pedestrian accessibility provides alternatives to vehicular transportation as well.



Only a few of the roadways in the BSA are paved, and despite the City's tremendous efforts and success at getting Community Development Block Grant funds for paving and drainage, many of the roadways in the area are inadequate, poorly maintained, and need repair. The roads that have been paved have open swales along the sides, no sidewalks, and no bike paths. Lack of pavement, curb and gutter, sidewalks, poor signage, and overall general conditions are problematic. This poses severe safety hazards for the residents. The appearance and condition of these roads, which serve primarily residential areas or are feeders to the rear parking lots, detracts from the potential development of the area. Lack of curb and gutter also contributes to stormwater management problems, an issue that could be addressed through a regional stormwater management system.

Trucks barrel through the City on SR 507 (Babcock Street) through Broadway to CR 512 disrupting traffic flow, tearing up the roadway, and disturbing businesses and residents alike. A truck route, to eliminate the truck traffic from the City's downtown has been discussed for years, but no action has been taken. Alternatives include using Myrtle Street, extending South Carolina Street to Willow, adding a perimeter or using another of the County's east-west roads (99<sup>th</sup>, 101<sup>st</sup>, etc) as a link from Babcock to Willow Street. This would correct some of the blighting influences affecting the inner city.

#### LAW ENFORCEMENT STATISTICS

Crime is a critical blighting factor in that police service demands for the area burden the City's ability to provide adequate services elsewhere. It also burdens the taxpayer by causing increases in taxes to provide proper coverage and protection. As the need for police protection increases, a larger percentage of tax revenues are used to provide additional services and takes away from other services that an area could receive. High crime rates discourage investment and a vicious cycle starts: real/perceived lack of safety for personal and tangible property; new investment decreases; property values decline; tax revenues decline; no one invests; crime increases; and it starts over.



The following tables identify the amount of criminal activity in the area.

**TABLE 15  
CRIMES BY YEAR**

Year	Number of Crimes
2002	307
2003	283
2004	267
2005 (as of 5/27/05)	136
2007	81
2008	104

Source: LPA; City of Fellsmere Police Department Records

**TABLES 16 AND 17 CRIME RATES AND RANKINGS**

Agency/County	Total Arrests	Arrest Rate per 100,000	Total Adult Arrests	Total Juvenile Arrests	Murder	Forcible Sex Offenses	Robbery	Aggravated Assault	Burglary	Larceny	Motor Vehicle Theft
<b>2008</b>											
Indian River County Sheriffs Offc	4,487	4,881.6	3,802	685	3	15	39	160	132	510	46
Sebastian Police Department	546	2,381.8	449	97	0	2	0	20	38	98	3
Vero Beach Police Department	988	5,522.9	900	88	0	1	17	40	36	138	10
Fellsmere Police Department	252	4,933.4	231	21	0	0	5	2	5	0	1
FHP - Indian River Co	605		598	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Indian River-Florida Game Comm	207		201	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Indian River Shores PD	116	3,029.5	112	4	0	0	0	1	0	1	2
Indian River-DEP Div of Law Enforce	4		3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>2007</b>											
Indian River County Sheriffs Offc	5,202	5,722.1	4,456	746	2	21	55	133	108	454	38
Vero Beach Police Department	1,088	6,024.4	968	120	0	3	15	45	44	99	12
Sebastian Police Department	763	3,402.3	684	79	0	5	0	32	24	76	4
Fellsmere Police Department	334	7,126.1	307	27	0	0	5	10	4	2	0
FHP - Indian River Co	509		496	13	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Indian River Shores PD	114	3,102.9	107	7	0	0	0	0	5	6	0
Indian River-DEP Div of Law Enforce	18		15	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Indian River-Florida Game Comm	138		137	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>2006</b>											
Indian River County Sheriffs Offc	5,493	6,307.6	4,909	584	4	11	31	142	92	398	38
Sebastian Police Department	635	2,930.9	580	55	0	4	1	18	16	55	6
Fellsmere Police Department	349	7,541.1	325	24	1	0	9	6	2	2	5
Vero Beach Police Department	779	4,289.6	757	22	0	4	3	35	21	43	5
FHP - Indian River Co	605		590	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Indian River-Florida Game Comm	224		217	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Indian River-DEP Div of Law Enforce	20		15	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Indian River Shores PD	69	1,853.8	69	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0

Source: Florida Department of Law Enforcement Statistics, 2009

Rankings	Total Arrests	Arrest Rate per 100,000	Total Adult Arrests	Total Juvenile Arrests	Murder	Forcible Sex Offenses	Robbery	Aggravated Assault	Burglary	Larceny	Motor Vehicle Theft
2008 ranking	5	2	5	4	0	0	3	4	4	0	5
2007 ranking	5	1	5	4	0	0	3	4	5	5	0
2006 ranking	5	1	5	3	2	0	2	4	4	5	3

The crime rate in the City is high for its size and in comparison to the other communities in the County. While the rates are going down with the 2008 ranking, the consistency of rates shows that impacts from lack of economic development and redevelopment, poverty, substandard dwellings, and other factors are contributing to the City's blighted condition.



### HISTORIC STRUCTURES AND PRESERVATION

This issue was also noted in 2005 and remains important in 2009. The Historic Inn and old School are being rehabilitated for new uses. The City is obtaining control of the Marion Fell Library. Around the City there are wonderful array of remaining historic structures that provide an intrinsic value to the City. However, many if not all of these structures are rapidly moving from substandard into a dilapidated conditions, making their rehabilitation and adaptive re-

use not economically feasible. The land values of these parcels exceed the buildings' values, making them ripe for demolition and redevelopment. Through a redevelopment program, the City can institute measures to preserve, protect, rehabilitate, and incentives the restoration of these parcels. Some examples are shown below.



In addition, many of the structures are homesites, which the City might want to consider allowing for other uses or a mix of uses therein to create feasible opportunities for redevelopment. There is a wonderful neighborhood of older bungalows located off Broadway that could be enhanced,

maintaining its residential zoning, doing streetscape improvements, including decorative lights, landscaping, sidewalks, and other amenities adding to its quaint charm, walkable nature, and historic character. It may also be an opportunity where if the home is not of an historic nature, allow the lot to be redeveloped into Townhomes, or urban type duplexes, that add enormous value increasing property values.

Some of the structures are too dilapidated to keep. However, the City can adopt architectural and site design guidelines that mimic the historic flavor for use in both residential and commercial settings within the district and surrounding neighborhoods. A Neighborhood Strategic Plan built from residents' consensus how to reclaim the neighborhood would help direct programs, funding, and human resources. These efforts will have far reaching positive consequences on the human capital that is being lost.

As land values outpace building values, due to age and conditions demolition of derelict structures will occur. Demolition delays for historic properties can aid in keeping some structures alive until other alternatives are sought if possible. If not, redevelopment of those sites becomes a natural market response. Having guidelines to direct the styles and types of replacement dwellings becomes crucial to maintaining the quality of the neighborhood.

### **REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

Part II of this study will be to explore and present redevelopment opportunities within the new BSA and amend the current Redevelopment Plan to set forth sound strategies for redevelopment and economic development efforts. High value, quality growth has occurred north, south, and east. New lands have been annexed to the west and across I-95 that will naturally bring a different form, price, and quality of development. Little development has occurred in the BSA despite an upsurge in surrounding residential populations. This is clearly in part because of the blighted conditions that exist in the study areas. If Fellsmere does not take appropriate steps today to arrest the decline in the inner city, the conditions will worsen, causing strains on services, reducing interest in investing in Fellsmere, and decreasing the marketability of the City.

Fellsmere is ripe for carefully planned, quality development and redevelopment due to several key factors, some negative, but many more positive:

1. Increased demand to use and convert existing land uses to meet market trends and population demands
2. Rising land costs, exceeding building values
3. Lack of paving, drainage, sidewalks, and bike paths
4. Increased public transportation through the "GO LINE" transit system
5. Water Treatment Plant expansion to 1.6 MGD; the existing infrastructure base of water, roadway, and sewer capacity
6. Extension of and designation of CR 512 and Broadway as part of the Indian River Lagoon Scenic By-Way
7. Annexation of large tracts that now link the City directly to the Blue Cypress, Lake Egan, C-54 canal, Stick Marsh, and 20,000 plus acres of state-owned preserve lands
8. Purchase of 86 acres at the I-95 interchange for use as public recreation, conservation, and access to the Preserves
9. Obtaining the rights-of-way for over 5 miles of former Railroad Right-of-Way, that was the Trans-Florida (Dinky) Railroad, for inclusion in the County's Greenways and Trails and Rails to Trails program
10. New Indian River County solid waste transfer center
11. The proximity to I-95, SR 60
12. The proximity to and location of historic resources and areas
13. The amount of land that can be assembled to achieve new development opportunity
14. A solid internal roadway network that can be improved

The location of the Stick Marsh, the old historic railroad, 20,000+ acres of St. Sebastian Preserve, and due east on CR 512-510, the north county Park, Sebastian River, and Indian River Lagoon, are the major links in the City's Economic Development Strategies for focusing on eco-tourism, bringing in events, hotel/motel/RV campgrounds, new businesses to bring in jobs, which breeds people, which leads to commerce. These wonderful sources of eco-tourism, paired with the rural nature of the external community, and the enormous amount of public lands, can be a source of revenue attraction for a CRA.

### **PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following represents initial observations and recommendations for prospective strategies, actions and projects, some of which are still applicable from the 2005 study and Plan. This list will be expanded as we move into Part III, The Plan.

1. Amend the land development codes and zoning map to promote mixed-use developments within the BSA, allow for expanded recreational, tourism, lodging, and event opportunities.
2. Continue to focus/target efforts at creating a City Center, which is occurring with the conversion of the 'OLD SCHOOL' to a new City Hall/Boys and Girls Club, along with upgraded site features, public parking, drainage enhancements, decorative lighting, landscaping, and public art.
3. Creation of community policing, with sub-stations in satellite areas, officers on horseback, bicycles, "walking the beat", all paid for through tax increment financing
4. Apply for additional grants, such as Brownfield's designation and obtain funding for site assemblage and redevelopment
5. Identify and market incentives for development bonuses to capture market demands, eco-tourism opportunities, and aggregate parcels, particularly if eco-tourism, public access to the St. Sebastian preserve, equestrian features, historic preservation and natural landscapes are enhanced or included.
6. Apply architectural and site design guidelines through adoption of a Pattern Book, to promote a style or quality of new construction that would maintain the desired theme and scale of development in the City.
7. Create a system of strategic, planned improvements of publicly owned lands and right-of-ways to maximize their usefulness for the residents of the City and surrounding community, such as with trailheads, greenways, riding trails, special areas for hiking, cycling, horseback riding, and eco-tours; a pedestrian system for walking and bicycling to the City center and environs. These would be superb amenities and attractors to bring people to the area to support existing and new businesses. Using the lands that are off the tax rolls as "people generators" provides remuneration from the loss of tax revenue through sales taxes, fair-share contributions through leases, user fees, and/or rentals, such canoe, kayaks, building leases, walking tours, historic tours, educational classes, etc.
8. Provide protections for historic structures and historic neighborhoods where there are opportunities for market forces to improve and upgrade existing structures or features. Allow for smaller lots where neighborhoods can be preserved and rehabilitated.
9. Provide resources for residential, commercial and industrial façade grants to upgrade existing buildings, retain existing business, or aid in business location
10. Amend the zoning maps to remove inconsistencies and conform to logical property boundaries and work with property owners to eliminate non-conforming uses.
11. Target and strengthen code enforcement efforts to handle initial "clean-up" of the areas
12. Create a business development program to aid, expand or retain existing businesses and promote new business opportunities; consider a small business administration loan program to aid small business start-ups from the community; create incentives for business location and retention.
13. Implement plans to improve Broadway through infrastructure and beautification improvements, including water/wastewater, drainage, parking, traffic lights, sidewalks, landscaping, new signage, approve industrial and heavy commercial opportunities for lands CR 512, where compatible with nearby residential (phasing out incompatible uses).
14. Create a system of waivers for parking, setbacks, or other elements, where owners can do site and building improvements that can upgrade existing properties and retain business.
15. Promote private project on development sites throughout the area: vacant lands; derelict properties; historic sites; and others.
16. Identify a phased streetscape program for each of the north-south streets; when paving and drainage project are being planned-include sidewalks, on-street parking, piping the ditches, lighting, and landscaping as feasible
17. Continue plans to improve the gateways into the City to solidify and create Fellsmere's image/theme as you enter the City
18. Identify new parking areas, access management controls for existing locations, and other transportation solutions, including an alternative truck route along Myrtle Street to eliminate truck traffic through downtown.



19. Create a series of special events to complement the existing Frog Leg and Fellsmere Days, such as closing Broadway for a Farmers Market once per month, Friday Fests, and other events as appropriate.

The existing plan suggests that the district capitalize on its proximity to the St. John's, Sebastian and Indian River, the inherent historic character, Melbourne and Palm Bay to the north, Sebastian/Vero to the east and south, and its close proximity to the Stick Marsh, Fellsmere Farms, and Highway 60, along with other existing public and private amenities. Expanding the CRA enables many other options for accomplishing these strategies and arresting the decline.

Vacant lands could become new housing opportunities or new mixed-use projects with new roadways to link to the older city area for connectivity and walkability. Reconnecting and re-invigorating the corridors, the internal streets, improving community policing, and expanded residential, commercial, mixed-use, and entertainment would create an unbreakable link to success. New housing opportunities could reach a diverse clientele. Recreating commercial opportunities downtown and allowing for new housing styles would bring new life, economic development, and help the restore the aging inner city areas.

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In my opinion, the Blight Study Area, as shown on the enclosed maps, meets the statutory requirements for establishing a Community Redevelopment Area primarily from building conditions, taxable values, and lot lay-outs dating back to early plats, transportation and crime issues. This study examined the blighted conditions evident in the proposed redevelopment area, and clearly the need is established for adopting these findings of necessity and creating a strategic plan to capture a vision, address opportunities for public and private reinvestment, redevelopment and overall revitalization.

Despite 600 new residents, commercial development has not found its way to the City. New annexations will enable additional residential rooftops to spawn support for commercial development once the economy returns. A CRA is needed to aid the market in finding and directing the right kinds of development, installing infrastructure, providing rehabilitation assistance to businesses and homes, preserving neighborhoods and quality residential areas, retaining and supporting existing businesses, and expanding new business opportunities through the BSA.

Blighted areas in general:

- ◆ Impose a costly burden on local communities in terms of service requirements;
- ◆ Cause the loss of much needed tax revenues;
- ◆ Infringe on the general health, safety and welfare of the residents within the area of deterioration; and,
- ◆ Have the effect of impairing and arresting economic growth and vitality because few will invest or reinvest in the area.

There are several key indicators that the proposed Fellsmere BSA qualifies for being designated as a community redevelopment area:

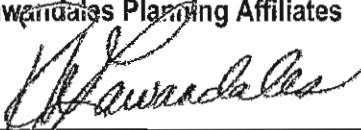
1. Steadily rising crime rates uncharacteristic of the rest of the community.
2. Transportation problems associated with impacts from projects that have left defective or inadequate lots, little access management, poor parking provisions, problems with remaining local streets and their layout or pattern, other internal roadway issues, poor, if any pedestrian access; and few public transportation facilities.
3. Deterioration or stasis in property values, particularly building values which are declining geometrically.
4. Faulty lot layout in relations to size, adequacy, accessibility, or usefulness.
5. Deterioration of site or other improvements as shown in over 60% substandard or dilapidated building stock within the expansion area.

6. Lack of beautification, stormwater management and code enforcement issues, storage and proliferation of junk and other nuisance problems.
7. Disconnection of neighborhoods.
8. Building decay and dis-use.

Map 2 identifies LPA's recommended boundaries for the proposed District. Without the intervention of the City, through establishing a Community Redevelopment Area, the declining conditions in this area will worsen, causing further strain on the City's resources and ultimately affecting the nearby fairly stable residential neighborhoods. The City and community both recognize that sound infrastructure investments, access management, appropriate development codes and incentives for private investment, actions which stem from creating a CRA and adopting a Redevelopment Plan, will contribute to arresting blighting influences in this area. A Community Redevelopment Program provides opportunities for the community to design a new future for the BSA and create opportunities for public and private investment. By encouraging new public and private investment and other physical and social improvements, crime rates decrease and values increase.

In conclusion, it is my opinion that this area qualifies as Blighted under the statutes to become a Redevelopment area. It has been my privilege to serve the City and conduct this study. I appreciate the opportunity and any assistance rendered. I look forward to your comments and questions, and the opportunity to present these findings to the staff, the Council and community as desired.

Respectfully submitted,  
Lawandaes Planning Affiliates



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Rochelle W. Lawandales, AICP

**Exhibit "B"**  
to  
**Resolution No. 09-CC**

