



Hardee County

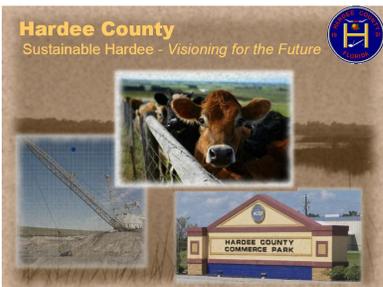
Sustainable Hardee – Visioning for the Future



Visioning Background

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Hardee County embarked on a community-wide visioning process to help develop a framework for balanced future growth and development while retaining the County's quality of life assets, preserving and enhancing the rural heritage, diverse economic opportunities and values of the community. The visioning efforts are aimed at identifying community goals and a means to achieve those goals, both short and long-term through various groups and "community champions". These champions are intended to facilitate and coordinate the recommended strategies and also to help identify those in the community that can assist in these efforts.

The Visioning process is intended to utilize a broad

range of community comments, issues and opportunities, and develop a framework within which to proactively plan, develop milestones and identify potential community champions for the recommendations. With each successive meeting, the community has refined the broader comments into more focused, action oriented recommendations that will be used to develop the overall final vision. Along with these recommendations and the

"community champions", the focus groups have also identified community collaborators and provided specific actions and strategies. Since the community-wide meeting in early 2011, the five focus groups (Economic Development, Infrastructure, Land Use/Environment/Open Space, Education and Quality of Life) have met numerous times to continue the identification and refining of community goals and objectives.



For more information and updates, please check the Visioning website:

www.hardeecounty.net/visioning

Community Workshops

The third and fourth round of focus groups have completed their reviews and community input with the identification of community collaborators, community champions and specific actions. Results from these focus

group meetings have been posted on the Visioning website and are available in the Planning office. These summaries and recommendations now go to the Steering Committee on November 17th at 6:00 p.m. for their review and direction. The

community workshops and review of the preliminary plan is scheduled to be held in November and December. The Board of County Commissioners will be reviewing the plan shortly thereafter.

Community Feedback and Focus Group Summaries -

Based on the results of the previous focus group meetings, the team reviewed the communities' priorities and rankings and then asked the attendees to identify who should be involved in developing specific actions and strategies to achieve these items. The focus groups identified "community collaborators" (those that are recommended to be involved and or those that may have insight into the action/strategy) and from that list identified "community champions" (those that were identified to help facilitate a specific action). In some cases, multiple community champions were identified due to the breadth of the action, their respective expertise or their commitment to the community. In some cases, it was determined that the group should identify their own champion once meetings commence so that they may be better able to further identify the community need at that time.

Due to the number of specific actions identified during previous focus group meetings, each group identified a smaller sub-group of priority recommendations that included the top two to three actions.

Quality of Life

1-1. Community beautification/code enforcement/improve image:

Who in the Community should be involved in this?

- Garden Club
- BoCC (includes identified County staff)
- Cities
- Main Street Board
- CRA
- Peace River Explorations
- Builders Association
- Realtors Association
- "Citizens"
- Neighborhood Association
- Farm Bureau
- County Extension office
- Law Enforcement
- Churches
- Cattlemen's Association

Who should lead the effort?

- Above noted group to decide based on the specific topic and focus; Advisory Committee to be appointed

Specific Actions/Strategies:

- Develop/implement a "help thy neighbor" attitude and strategy; involve the local

ministerial association and habitat for humanity, civic groups to identify and assist individual properties and or neighborhoods.

o Develop a citizen/community outreach program

- Develop community education programs about programs and services including establishing "community pride"
- Modify the process of code enforcement including following state statutes. Allow code enforcement officers to visit and inspect sites on adjacent properties when called out to a site

1-2. Opportunities for youth/family recreation:

Who in the Community should be involved in this?

- Newspaper & High School
- School Oriented Service Groups
- FFA/4-H
- Churches/Youth Services
- FFCC
- USF-PolyTech
- YMCA

Who should lead the effort?

- Above noted group to decide based on the specific topic and focus; Advisory Committee to be appointed

Other Discussion Items:

- Need to take Pride In the Community
- Be More Positive
- Be Family Oriented
- This is a "Place to Raise Family"
- Need to get the word out to others

Specific Actions/Strategies:

- Establish a mentoring program and process for kids; also develop a mentoring program for parents
- Identify and list a "menu" of good choices and activities available in the community.
 - o "get the word out" on FFA, 4H Summer Camps, religious based youth groups, etc.
- Develop a community education component targeting parental involvement in children's lives; establish positive role models and activities.

1-3. Education system improvements/ Reduce drug and alcohol use/teen pregnancy rates:

The Focus Group recommended this item be moved to and become part of Quality of Life and Education specific goals and/or action items.

Who in the Community should be involved in this?

- Families
- Need to make the right choices

- Library (need to look to extend hours and services)
- Use Senior Citizens as Mentors

Economic Development

1-4. Recruit Trades & Technical Jobs:

Who in the Community should be involved in this?

- Economic Development Director/EDC
- Board of County Commissioners
- Colleges
- School Board
- Chamber of Commerce
- Jim Kelly
- Media
- Technical Experts/Headhunters
- Banks (local and outside)
- Real Estate Offices/Realtors
- Farm Bureau
- Healthcare/FINR
- Cities ("what's good for the County is good for the Cities")
- Power providers
- Main Street/CRA

Who should lead the effort?

- Economic Development Director/EDC

Specific Actions/Strategies:

- Identify existing opportunities beyond the existing commerce park
- Update/create a master downtown/county-wide list of available properties
- Pre-identify workforce and skills (and update on a regular basis)
- Expand and identify collaboration with school system and colleges
- Focus on expanding trade/technical jobs and businesses
- Identify "green" jobs and business opportunities

1-2. Eco-Tourism:

Who in the Community should be involved in this?

- Peace River Explorations
- People for Protecting Peace River
- Water Management District
- Parks (County and State)
- Friends of the Parks
- Chamber of Commerce
- Florida's Heartland Redevelopment Initiative (FHREDI)
- EDC
- State Department of Commerce
- Visit Florida
- Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWCC)
- Florida Birding Trails

- Audubon Society
- Center for Great Apes
- Charlotte Harbour Estuary Program
- FDOT (including Blueways & Greenways)
- Pioneer Village
- Board of County Commissioners
- Solomon's Castle
- Passion Play
- Main Street/CRA

Who should lead the effort?

- Peace River Explorations
 - Chamber of Commerce
 - FHREDI
 - Main Street/CRA

Specific Actions/Strategies:

- Identify property owners along the Peace River (willing to participate); also provide public education on use conflicts
- Confirm central location for public access sites/local eco-tourism sites and activities (i.e., clearinghouse of information)
- Develop a master blueways/greenways plan, including marketing approach
- Educate users on available activities
- Identify liability issues (see also public education on use conflicts)

2-1. Attract corporate offices, management oriented, regional offices

Who in the Community should be involved in this?

- Economic Development Director/EDC
- Board of County Commissioners
- Colleges
- School Board
- Chamber of Commerce
- Jim Kelly
- Media
- Technical Experts/Headhunters
- Banks (local and outside)
- Real Estate Offices/Realtors
- Farm Bureau
- Healthcare/FINR
- Cities ("what's good for the County is good for the Cities")
- Power providers
- Main Street/CRA

Who should lead the effort?

- Economic Development Director/EDC

Specific Actions/Strategies:

- Build on hometown values and feelings ("Hardee way of life")

- Invest and expand health care and medical services
- Discuss with Florida Hospital and FINR roles for generating additional interest
- Create and or update a list of amenities and community-wide activities for potential employers/employees

2-2. Continue/expand agriculture (crops, technology)

Who in the Community should be involved in this?

- Peace River Citrus
- Farm Bureau
- Cattlemen's/women's Association
- IFAS
- EDC/IDA
- USF-Polytechnic
- Water Management District
- Florida Nurserymen's Association
- Florida Foreign Trade
- USDA
- Bankers/Farm Credit
- SBA
- SBDC
- Board of County Commissioners
- Mining Industry
- Dairyman's Association

Who should lead the effort?

- EDC/IDA

Specific Actions/Strategies:

- Identify/inventory all existing agricultural products produced/grown in Hardee County – look for opportunities to expand and or re-establish, including opportunities for diversification
- Supply locally grown produce to local/regional restaurants
- Provide incentives for risk/change
- Establish a mentoring program between agricultural community and schools/those interested in agriculture; knowledge sharing
- Establish a community identity/branding
 - Provide and promote awareness through internet and other media sources
- Identify and fill gaps in existing services
- Analyze transportation and infrastructure availability

3-1. Target industry(s) with needs for rail, high energy use

Who in the Community should be involved in this?

- Mining Industry

- Energy Production Industry (Natural Gas, Peoples TECO Gulfstream, Florida Gas Transmission
- Chamber of Commerce
- Economic Development Director/EDC
- Board of County Commissioners
- Colleges
- School Board
- Jim Kelly
- Media
- Technical Experts/Headhunters
- Banks (local and outside)
- Real Estate Offices/Realtors
- Farm Bureau
- Healthcare/FINR
- Cities ("what's good for the County is good for the Cities")
- Power providers
- Main Street/CRA

Who should lead the effort?

- EDC/IDA

Note: Hardee County has a public electrical surplus (including Vandolah facility) and also has alternative energy projects proposed within the community (alternative energy projects are not cost-effective overall at this time; however, are anticipated to become more efficient and provide additional electrical supplies as needed and/or reduce the public demands on electricity).



3-2. Agricultural support services

Who in the Community should be involved in this?

- Peace River Citrus
- Farm Bureau
- Cattlemen's/women's Association
- IFAS
- EDC/IDA
- USF-Polytechnic
- Water Management District
- Florida Nurserymen's Association
- Florida Foreign Trade
- USDA
- Bankers/Farm Credit
- SBA
- SBDC
- Board of County Commissioners
- Mining Industry
- Dairyman's Association
- Large farm/land holdings
- Farmers/livestock market
- Fertilizer Association
- "unnamed suitors"

Who should lead the effort?

- EDC/IDA

Infrastructure:

1-1. Airport expansion including marketing and corporate fly-ins:

Who in the Community should be involved in this?

- Board of County Commissioners
- Law Enforcement
- Airport Board
- City of Wauchula
- FAA
- Mosaic/Corporate Industry/CF
- Military
- Benson Ultra-light
- EDC
- Chamber of Commerce

Who should lead the effort?

- Airport Board
- City of Wauchula

Specific Actions/Strategies:

- Analyze and expand the range of uses: aviation and non-aviation at/close proximity to the airport
- Build and or expand:
 - o Recreational activities and opportunities
 - o Aviation uses
 - o Aviation support uses
 - o Non-aviation uses

- o Support agriculture uses/other eco-development activities
- Need expertise from the aviation users

1-2. More ADA compliant sidewalks within both Neighborhoods/ communities and the County:

Who in the Community should be involved in this?

- County Departments (Multiple – Planning, Engineering, Utilities, Community Development, etc.)
- Cities
- School Board
- Neighborhood Organizations
- FDOT
- Law Enforcement
- CRA



Who should lead the effort?

- Planning & Zoning Department

Specific Actions/Strategies:

- Continue grant programs to add sidewalks in neighborhoods/around schools
- Prioritize where demand is evident and right-of-way is available.
 - o Review and identify historical pedestrian routes and where roads are used (i.e., where there is a lack of sidewalks)
- Evaluation sidewalk needs and conditions (where sidewalks are present) beyond internal development areas
- Weigh/identify long-term maintenance costs
- When designing/installing sidewalks and pedestrian connections, separate users, where feasible, and reduce opportunities for conflicts

1-3. Code enforcement; enhanced and increased: *The Focus Group recommended this item moved to and be more a part of Quality of Life and Land Use due to:*

- Community responsibility
- Community pride

- *Community involvement*
- *Help each other/love & caring*
- *Outreach*
- *Community clean up(s)*
- *Board vs. Court System (look to set up/establish a County Code Enforcement Board to review complaints before it goes to the Courts)*

1-4. Enhanced Parks & Recreation infrastructure:

Who in the Community should be involved in this?

- Planning & Zoning
- School Board
- County Community Development
- Neighborhood Groups
- County Parks & Recreation
- City Representatives
- Water Management District (grants)
- DEP (grants)
- FRDAP (grants)
- Service & Civic Groups

Who should lead the effort?

- Planning & Zoning
- County Parks & Recreation

Specific Actions/Strategies:

- Hardee Lakes – provide more campsites, horse/equestrian areas, trails, etc.
- Better develop/support existing facilities
- Keep up Pioneer Park
- Consider overall maintenance costs
- Look for additional water access
- Augment/increase festivals and special events
- o Create “Orange Blossom Festival”
- Identify and develop bike trails/courses
- Identify/establish birding opportunities and butterfly gardens
- Analyze need/location for additional soccer fields and facilities
- Prepare and provide a map identifying uses, parks and similar facilities

Land Use/Environment/Open Space

1-1. Strengthen agricultural land uses and support services (through policies and/or practices):

Who in the Community should be involved in this?

- Farm Bureau
- Cattleman Association
- Horticultural Association
- Peace River Valley Citrus Growers Association
- Farm Worker Housing
- Peace River Explorations
- Florida Citrus Mutual
- FFA
- 4-H
- People for Protecting Peace River (3PR)
- Packing Houses

- Farmers
- Banker/Realtors
- Key Land Owners
- Elected Officials – Cities and County
- Regional Planning Council
- Extension Office
- Planning & Zoning Department

Who should lead the effort?

- Planning & Zoning Department

Specific Actions/Strategies:

- Use reclaimed land for agricultural uses; identify lands suitable for various agricultural activities
- Note: 25% of the County is identified by the Mining Overlay and subject to current and/or future mining activities
- Establish a farmer’s market; identify and provide opportunities for local and regional restaurants to use local products. Also target school system
- Increase the exposure of the “7 Baskets”
- Establish a fund/identify funding sources for agricultural activities (i.e., off-set start-up costs, expansion costs, diversification) and support services (i.e., processing facilities)
- Develop migrant worker support services
- Ensure there is an adequate, available workforce
- Identify ways to reduce or minimize regulatory barriers to agricultural activities (state and local)
- Monitor regulations and preliminary discussions that may alter practices
- Also need to look at habitats, water use consumption and water quality
- Identify ways to protect agricultural and water withdrawal; balance agricultural needs/mining needs/growth
- Promote home rule in the County and discourage pre-emption
- Provide permit assistance at both the local and state levels

1-2. Mining/Limitations/Post-Reclamation:

Who in the Community should be involved in this?

- Board of County Commissioners
- Planning & Zoning/Mining Department
- 3PR
- Mining Industries
- SWFWMD
- IFAS
- USGS
- DEP
- ACOE
- EPA
- Florida Native Plants Society (FNPS)
- Realtors
- EDC
- Property Owners adjacent to the mines
- Sierra Club
- Manasota 88

Who should lead the effort?

- BoCC
- Planning & Zoning (including Mining Division)
- 3PR
- Mining Industries

Specific Actions/Strategies:

- Develop more lakes on post mining lands; need to work with the State to allow/permit lakes as part of reclamation plans
- Need to undertake a water use study (mining vs. agricultural needs)
- Protect water sources (balance future needs and verify county/users are not overcommitted for providing water)
- Look at ways to balance the eco-system based on water withdrawals
- Provide a means for an independent testing mechanism for water levels and quality
- Require/ensure closure and reclamation plans are sufficient and funded. Note: the County requires a per acre fee/bond for reclamation.
- Make information on mining/mining permits more accessible; consider establishing a location on the County's website
- Develop ways to balance the fertilizer and agricultural needs (including a better understanding)
- The community needs to better understand the current regulations and reclamation requirements
- Review the criteria needed for a variance to the regulations
- Include an informational workshop or materials that explain the new state laws, county regulations and the review processes.



1-3. Agricultural/Eco-Tourism Planning and Development (including ranching lifestyle/farming and citrus/Peace River tours, connected trails and parks (including master plan for greenways and blueways):

Who in the Community should be involved in this?

- Peace River Explorations
- People for Protecting Peace River
- Water Management District
- Parks (County and State)
- Friends of the Parks
- Chamber of Commerce
- Florida's Heartland Redevelopment Initiative (FHREDI)
- EDC
- State Department of Commerce
- Florida Birding Trails
- Board of County Commissioners
- Main Street/CRA

Who should lead the effort?

- County Parks
- EDC
- Planning & Zoning

Specific Actions/Strategies:

- Tie Agricultural activities to educational components (co-ops, classes, mentoring)
- Establish a program to support and build agriculture in the community (i.e., meet quarterly or monthly)
- Establish an "Orange Blossom Festival" or similar; identify a festival(s) based on the growing seasons to draw visitors to the community; look to partner with a local civic or service organization ("start small and build")
- Provide funds/grants for startup, expansion or diversification of products (see also 1-1 Strengthen Agricultural Land Uses and Support Services)
- Identify and remove/streamline regulatory barriers for agricultural activities, festivals and similar, including those "on-site" (i.e., on the farm)
- Identify properties that may be interested in hosting festivals
- Change the mindset in government – have faith in the people and owners to do what's right
- Need to study a local citrus processing plant/facility; work with the co-ops to understand the needs
- Identify location(s) for a facility
- Partner with the USDA

1-4. Protection of Property rights; prescriptive vs. restrictive development regulations

Who in the Community should be involved in this?

- Land Owners
- SWFWMD (Technical Support)
- Builders Association
- Farm Bureau
- Realtors
- Planning & Zoning
- BoCC
- Chamber of Commerce
- EDC
- Mining Owners

Who should lead the effort?

- Planning & Zoning

Specific Actions/Strategies:

- See also recommended strategies for item 1-1, specifically with regard to regulatory barriers
- Review the current regulations and identify obstacles/challenges that can be removed or reduced to achieve this goal
- Wayfinding/marketing including Hardee County maps, flyers with points of interest
- More public information on mining
- Protection of property rights; prescriptive vs. restrictive development regulations
- Specialty hospital, hospital services
- More residential (clustered)
- More affordable/workforce housing
- Public-private partnerships for development
- Bike trails/cross county trails
- Strengthen agricultural land uses and support services
- Local incentivized businesses (including a farmer's market)
- Privately funded projects

Education/Workforce:

1-5. Public-Private-Partnerships (help fund gaps in education system) and partnerships with businesses and trusts:

Who in the Community should be involved in this?

- Businesses (Publix, Banks, EDC, Chamber)
- Farm Bureau
- Cattleman's Association
- Workforce Development
- Churches
- State Agencies
- Civic Organizations/Service Clubs/Interest Clubs (Garden Club, Music, Art)
- Extension Agents
- Hospital
- Industry (Industrial Certifications) (Mosaic, CF)
- SFCC/USF-Polytechnic
- Utility Companies
- Senior Citizens (SCORE)
- Education Foundation

Who should lead the effort?

- Chamber Representative
- School Board
- Ministerial Representative
- Business Leader (CORE)
- SFCC

* Discussion Items:

- *Need to balance certifications, graduates with business needs
- *Teach work ethic
- *Create community trust for "student businesses" (own and work grooves and properties)

*Involve State Legislators with interest to change educational requirements

1-3. Accountability for parents; create successful opportunities:

Who in the Community should be involved in this?

- Churches
- Migrant Outreach
- *Businesses Support for employees – school related activities with their children*
- Rotary (mentoring program with the schools) and other Civic Groups
- Teachers
- Pre-School Providers
- Hospitals/Pre-Natal
- School Assistance

Who should lead the effort?

- Planning & Zoning Department

1-4. Programs to engage kids (educational) and Expand technical-vocational programs:

Who in the Community should be involved in this?

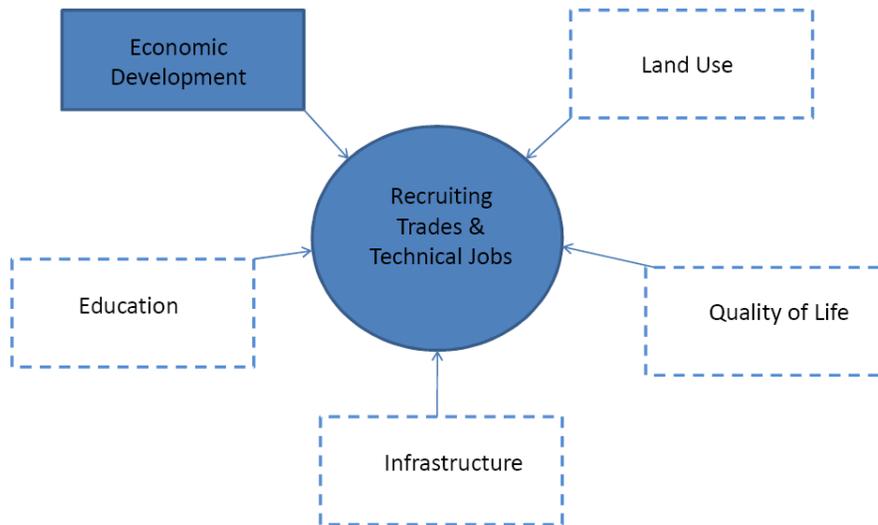
- USF/SFCC
- EDC/IDA
- Parents-Parent Organizations
- Farm Bureau
- Regional – CFRPC, County Legislative/School Board
- Heartland Educational Consortium (Lake Placid)
- Federal & State Legislators
- Businesses (Internships)
- DCT
- Junior ROTC
- Regional Vo-Tech (*Look at Travis in Polk County*)

Who should lead the effort?

- Florida Workforce Development
- Heartland Educational Consortium

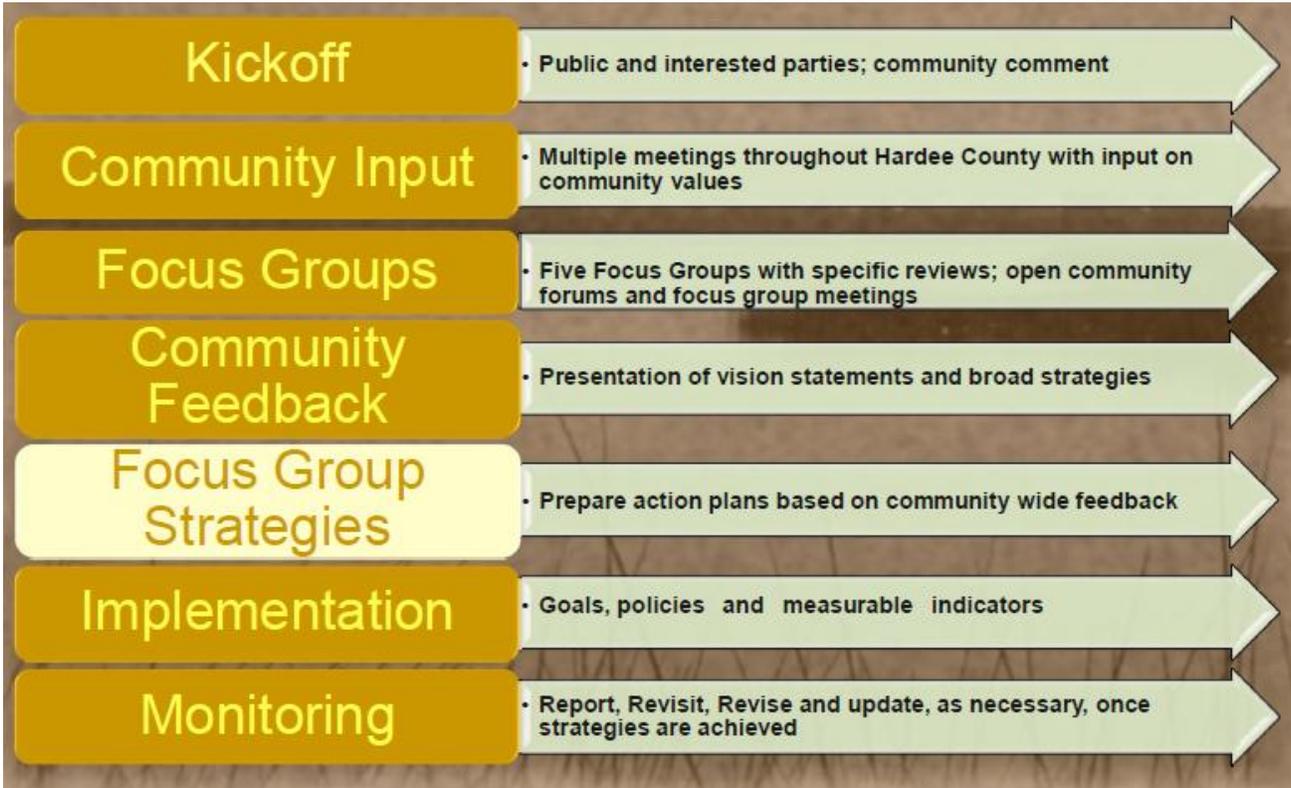


The Consulting Team also asked the attendees to review the Newsletter summarizing the community priorities and identify within each of the respective focus groups, how items 1-1 and 1-2 are related (or could be related) to all of the other focus groups and their priorities. Priority 1-1 is provided below as an example.



Visioning Process – Current Status - *“Where We Are In The Process”*

The County staff and its consultant team have received community comments from the five focus groups and are beginning to develop the community-wide plan



Focus Groups — Each Focus Group identified a series of Goals, Community Collaborators & Champion, and Specific Actions/Strategies.

Hardee County Visioning
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOCUS GROUP
 August 15, 2011 6:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
 Hardee County Board of County Commission Chambers
 Agenda

Hardee County Sustainable Hardee - Visioning for the Future

- I. Introduction, Welcome & Recap (6:00 p.m.)
- II. Review of Community Comments, Top Community Priorities, Community Collaborators and Community Champions (6:10 p.m.)
 - a. Identification of Specific Actions
- III. Linkages between Community Priority and Focus Groups
- IV. Adjourn

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Hardee County Sustainable Hardee - Visioning for the Future

2-2. Continue/expand agriculture (crops, technology)

Who in the Community should be involved in this?

- Peace River Citrus
- Farm Bureau
- Cattlemen's/women's Association
- IFAS
- EDC/IDA
- USF-Polytechnic
- Water Management District
- Florida Nurserymen's Association
- Florida Foreign Trade
- USDA
- Bankers/Farm Credit
- SBA
- SBDC
- Board of County Commissioners
- Mining Industry
- Dairyman's Association

Who should lead the effort?

- EDC/IDA

Specific Actions/Strategies:

- Identify/inventory all existing agricultural products produced/grown in Hardee County – look for opportunities to expand and or re-establish, including opportunities for diversification
- Supply locally grown produce to local/regional restaurants
- Provide incentives for risk/change
- Establish a mentoring program between agricultural community and schools/those interested in agriculture; knowledge sharing
- Establish a community identity/branding
 - o Provide and promote awareness through internet and other media sources
- Identify and fill gaps in existing services
- Analyze transportation and infrastructure availability

3-1. Target industry(s) with needs for rail, high energy use

Who in the Community should be involved in this?

- Mining Industry

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What's Next? With each Focus Group having identified preliminary Goals, Identifying who should be involved and Developing preliminary community strategies, the Steering Committee will review and provide recommendations to develop the Preliminary Visioning Plan that will be presented to the public for additional review and comment. The Visioning Plan will set forth the foundation for future recommendations and strategies, directed at allowing Hardee County to experience a healthy and viable economy, providing strategies aimed at protecting and enhancing its natural resources, and allowing its citizens the opportunity to grow and prosper. The intent of a shared community based vision is to gather information from residents, civic organizations, businesses and the government as a whole, in order to develop an approach in the form of key principles and strategies that can be implemented.

