



EVERGLADES CITY BIKE /PEDESTRIAN MASTER PLAN

AUGUST 2020

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City of Everglades

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INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND

History of Everglades City

The town of Everglade was settled in the late 1800s by early pioneers who fished and farmed the area. They also traded goods with the Seminoles who lived throughout south Florida. When Barron Gift Collier arrived by boat in 1921 to examine the citrus farm at nearby Deep Lake, he immediately saw the potential of this “undiscovered” part of Florida and purchased the town from the Storter family in 1922 and the town of Everglade (“s” was added later) was founded in 1923 as the first county seat for Collier County. Barron Collier immediately started laying out a plan for developing his new town as the center of commercial activity for the construction of the last section of the Tamiami Trail between Naples and Miami. The county courthouse was built in the center of town with businesses lining West Broadway with the first bank in the county just two blocks away and across from the famed Rod & Gun Club where guests enjoyed dinners prepared by a Bavarian chef. Homes and office buildings were built for the growing population and there were laundry services, a post office, administration building, a hospital, a grocery, barbershop, drugstore, the Manhattan Mercantile department store, a machine shop, a sawmill, boatyard, recreation hall, bowling alley, church and school. Collier brought in a battery-powered streetcar and founded the Tamiami Trailways to provide bus transportation to Naples and Ft. Myers. There was a movie house and beautiful landscaping throughout town. The benefits and amenities of a company town were apparent.



Demographic Background

Everglades City is a true small town, with a population consisting of both permanent local residents- many of whom are fifth and sixth generation – and seasonal residents who come here for the environment, and the low-key, authentic character of the place. Both the population and the economy are seasonal in nature, with the stone crab season running from October 15 through May 1, and many of the winter residents arriving in November and departing after Easter.

- Local population: 426
- Median Age: 51
- Median HH Income \$61,000 (includes Retirees)
- Average Income Males \$34,000
- Average Income Females \$22,000
- Visitors Annually: Between 1 and 1.3 Million
- Cost of living: 50% of population from \$1000 to \$1900 / month for housing
- Median Housing Cost: \$1083/month
- Total Housing Units: 476
- Seasonal Units 293
- Owner Occupied 137
- Hotel Rooms: 96 plus an additional 20 recently completed at the Ivey House



Economic Conditions

The main economic drivers of Everglades City are:

- Ecotourism – kayaking, hiking, biking, airboats, swamp buggies
- Stone Crabbing
- Sport Fishing & Guides
- Heritage tourism
- State and National Parks visitation
- Restaurants/Accommodations/Services for all of the above



Everglades Area Communities

While this Bike/Ped Master Plan is primarily focused on facilities within the Everglades City jurisdictional limits, we are also considering connections to local neighboring communities such as Plantation Island, Chokoloskee, Copeland, Jerome and Ochopee. These communities are considered part of the “Everglades Area” and are economically connected to Everglades City. The children attend the Everglades City School, and many families have extended relations throughout the Everglades Area.

Existing Roadways and Drainage

Sea level rise and resiliency planning are a major topic of concern for Everglades City. The City was originally built in a low-lying area and was created by dredging and filling from the (now named) Barron River to raise the elevation. The town generally lies an average of 1 foot above sea level. During Hurricane Irma in September 2017, the entire town was submerged 4-5', which caused widespread damage from which the community is still recovering. Existing roadways were built at lower elevations, and frequently flood during big storm events or king high tides. The storm drainage system was also impacted by Irma and drainage pipes were plugged with mud. The City has currently solicited bids for removing the mud from the storm drainage pipes.

Bike/Ped improvements are linked to the roadways and drainage conditions; upgrades are often required to construct the sidewalks/bike lanes.

Florida Trail Town Program

Florida's Office of Greenways & Trails of the Department of Environmental Protection established a Trail Town Program in 2018 and designated Everglades City in January 2019.

Everglades City is surrounded by seven national and state parks and the area offers many outdoor sport activities, including fishing, kayaking, canoeing, bird watching, photography, hiking and biking. Everglades City is the gateway to the Ten Thousand Islands and an important hub for several paddling trails, including the Florida Circumnavigational Saltwater Paddling Trail. It is a place where trail users can venture off a hiking, biking, or paddling trail to enjoy the services and unique heritage of the community, benefiting the town economically and socially. The town is also bike-friendly as evidenced by bicycle racks and rentals in town and at the airport.

Everglades City School

The Everglades City School is the only public K-12 school in the state.

- Number of students: 170
- Percentage of students riding buses: 44%
- Percentage of students dropped off: 41%
- Percentage of students walk/bike/golf cart: 10%
- Percentage of students driving own car: 5%



EXISTING CONDITIONS

Everglades City was built in the traditional town manner, with blocks laid out on a grid and the circle in the middle of town anchored by important civic buildings. This layout provides the basis for a walk-able community, and with low traffic volumes and low speeds (15, 25 and 35 mph), it is already a pedestrian and bike-friendly area and short distances to public places in the central part of town. Safety is the number one concern for our mobility and with the thousands of tourists who visit our national and state parks every year, it is vital that the City (which is the hub of our parks with its many amenities) provide the necessary infrastructure to ensure the safety of our residents and visitors.



Since being designated a Florida Trail Town in January of 2019, Everglades City has made great strides in making improvements to appeal to trail users of all types, including developing maps for the area, installing bike racks at restaurants and public facilities around town and installing a bike repair station in McLeod Park. The sidewalks and bike lanes envisioned in this Master Plan will greatly enhance the safety, comfort and usability of our city streets to create a welcoming and enjoyable experience for our visitors, children and local residents.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

A Bike/Pedestrian Committee was established in 2019, to assess the needs and set priorities for projects in the City. The primary goals are to create a local Bike/Ped network, and offer residents and visitors safe and accessible places to walk, bike, hike and jog. Since Everglades City's central area is conducive for visitors and residents to walk or bike, it is important to upgrade the roads and sidewalks in this area with appropriate bike/ped facilities

The Bike/Ped Committee met several times and made observations on the facilities needed. The intent was to conduct a survey to identify the potential users and types of facilities they would be comfortable utilizing, however COVID prevented that this year. In lieu of a formal survey, the Committee used their collective local knowledge to identify the different types and nature of walkers/riders/paddlers.



- Local permanent residents – for exercise, to get to work, to run errands – some casual, some serious
- Seasonal residents – Walkers, bike riders, mostly casual riders, many from RV Parks, to access local destinations, run errands, exercise
- ENP – local bike tours, day-trippers
- Regular long-distance bike tour groups - 72 hrs to Key West, Ends of Earth Cycling, etc.
- Individual cross-state bike riders that stop in
- Day-trip excursions on bike – from Marco, Port of the Islands to have lunch
- Historic walking tours, Museum events
- Multi-activity tourists – people who want to kayak, bike, hike, fish, bird-watch
- School kids- more facilities would encourage kids to walk or ride bike to school



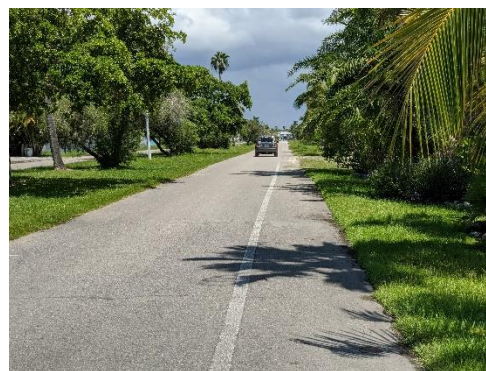
CURRENT SIDEWALKS & BIKE LANES

PHASE 1: Copeland Avenue North Bike Lanes and Collier Avenue Sidewalk.

Completed in 2006, these two projects were the last known improvements funded by the MPO. For purposes of reference, we have designated these two projects as PHASE 1 of the Bike/Ped Master Plan.

- **Copeland Avenue North Bike Lanes**

The edges of the roadway were striped as bike lanes on both east and west sides of Copeland Ave, beginning at Begonia St and continuing south to the Circle/Broadway Ave, City Hall and McLeod Park. This area of town is primarily residential and Copeland Avenue with its wide median was the original main artery into Everglades City when built by Barron Collier in the 1920s.



- **Collier Avenue Sidewalk**

A six-foot wide sidewalk was built on the west side, connecting from Begonia Street to Broadway Avenue, ending in front of City Hall. This sidewalk provides a connection from the north commercial area to the center of town. There is a one-block gap at the beginning of the sidewalk, between Begonia Street and the Everglades Isle RV Resort.



Plantation Parkway Paved Shoulder

A paved / striped shoulder exists on the south side of Plantation Parkway, which connects from Copeland Avenue South to the

“bend” on Plantation Parkway. Being a constricted causeway surrounded by mangroves, there is not room to add a paved shoulder on the north side.

Chokoloskee Causeway Pathway

This separated pathway connects from the southern City limits, across the newly completed Chokoloskee Bridge to the entry to Chokoloskee, ending in front of Outdoor Resorts. The pathway is approximately 5 feet in width, but varies due to grass encroachment. It is heavily used by both permanent and seasonal residents and multiple types of users, including walkers, runners, casual cyclists and people fishing or kayaking off the sides of the causeway. Currently, the restricted width does not allow for 2-way multi-use traffic to pass comfortably.

PROPOSED SIDEWALKS & BIKE LANES

PHASE 2 PROGRAMMED SIDEWALK: Copeland Avenue South

This sidewalk is programmed along the east side of Copeland Avenue South as FDOT project #437096-1. The sidewalk is to replace the existing asphalt sidewalk which is in very poor and deteriorated condition. The project is currently under design and is scheduled for construction in FY 2022. This sidewalk will connect from the Circle south to the City limits, terminating approximately in front of the Diving Pelican Restaurant (formerly the Oyster House).

PHASE 3 MPO /FDOT APPLICATION 2019: Broadway Ave, Hibiscus Ave, Copeland Ave South

Phase 3 of the Everglades City Bicycle / Pedestrian Master Plan (Exhibits A and F) will connect businesses and public places in central downtown Everglades City and provide a non-motorized connection to Everglades Airpark and the Everglades National Park. These bike lanes and sidewalks will provide a safe connection to the central businesses, City Hall, McLeod Park, the Public Dock on the Barron River, the Everglades Community Church, and the Museum of the Everglades which currently conducts guided Walking Tours on Broadway Avenue and Hibiscus Street; sidewalks will provide safety for visitors to this county Museum.

- **Broadway Avenue**

Bike Lanes - Reduce 4 vehicular lanes to 2 lanes and convert the outer lane to a buffered bike lane, from Collier Ave (CR 29) to Riverside Dr.

Sidewalks - Add sidewalks from the Circle to Riverside Dr (north and south sides). The sidewalk would also continue from the existing sidewalk in front of City Hall, around the Circle where it would



connect to the Phase 2 Project #437096-1 on Copeland Ave South (CR29). Crosswalk striping around the Circle to connect the various segments.

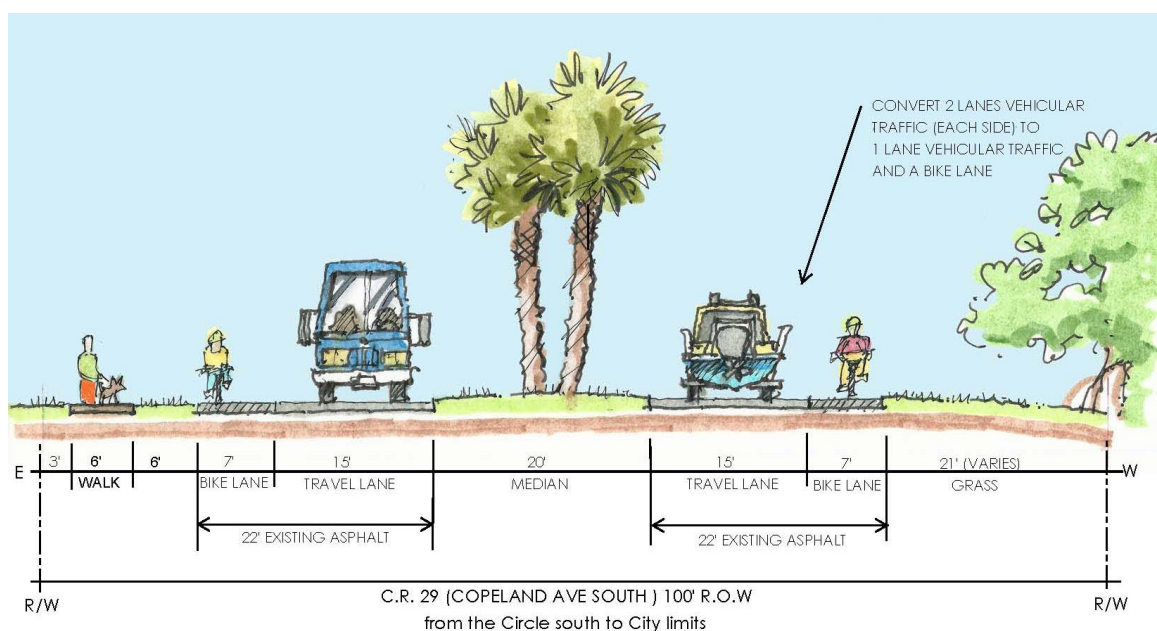
- **Hibiscus Avenue**

Bike Lanes - Stripe the edges with bike lanes (existing pavement is extra wide for 2 lanes) from Collier Ave (CR 29) to Broadway Ave.

Sidewalks - Add sidewalks around McLeod Park, starting from the current sidewalk in front of City Hall, going north on Copeland Ave to Hibiscus St, then west, (south side only) to N. Storter Ave, then south to West Broadway. An alternate route for the sidewalk on Broadway Ave in case of conflict at the Bank building would cross N. Storter Ave and continue on the north side of Hibiscus to West Broadway Ave.

- **Copeland Avenue South (CR29)**

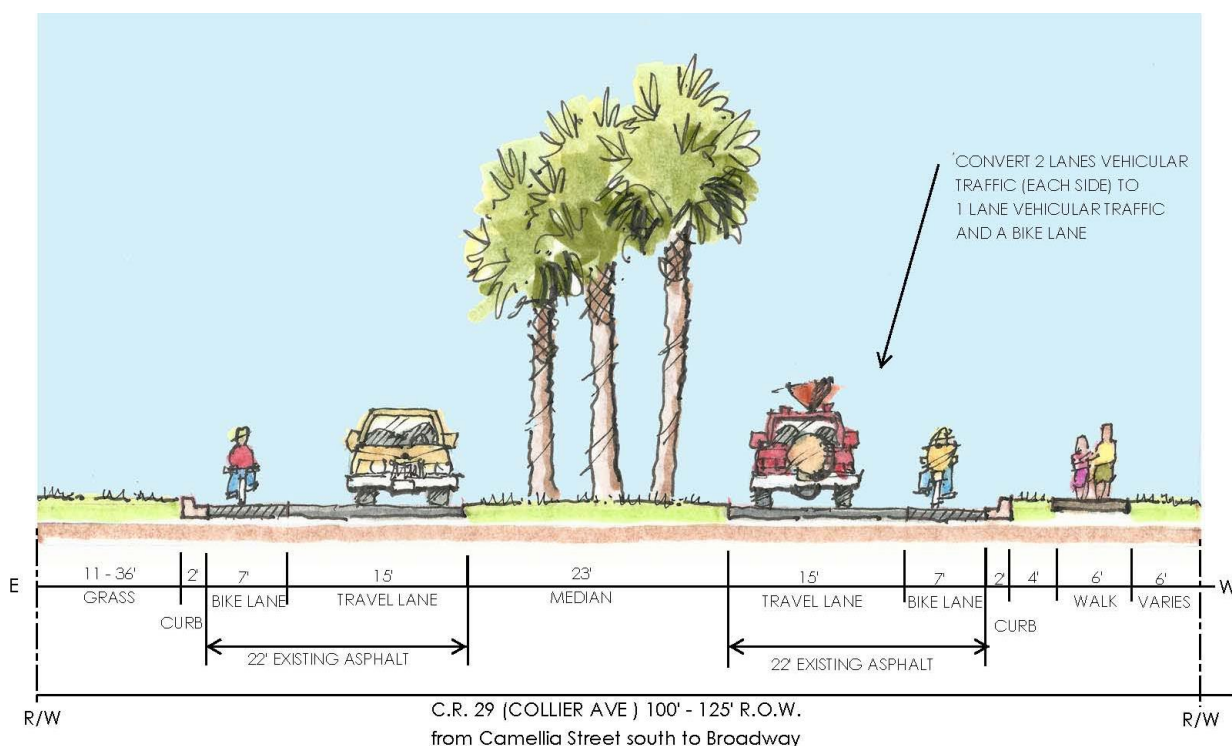
Bike Lanes - Reduce 4 vehicular lanes to 2 lanes and convert the outer lane to a buffered bike lane, from Broadway Ave connecting south to the Everglades Airpark and the Everglades National Park Gulf Coast Visitor Center, terminating at the City limits. These bike lanes will tie into the existing paved shoulders which continue across the Chokoloskee Causeway.



At the time of the Phase 3 Application submittal, discussions were ongoing between Everglades City and Collier County regarding the maintenance responsibility of CR 29 through town. It was determined that Collier County is responsible for the maintenance of the roadway. The County has since scheduled re-surfacing and re-striping work for the roadway, which could coincide with the improvements for the Copeland Ave South (CR 29) portion of the application. Thus, the bike lanes may be implemented through Collier County Maintenance rather than through MPO funding. In addition, the same cross-section proposed for Copeland Ave South could be extended north on Collier Avenue (CR29), from Broadway to Camellia Street, where the current 4-lane starts.

▪ **Collier Avenue (CR 29)**

Possible extension of the same cross-section to reduce 4 lanes to 2 lanes with a buffered bike lane from Broadway Ave north to Camellia Street, by Collier County Maintenance.



PHASE 4 – NORTH COMMERCIAL AREA

Future plans will evaluate the needs of connecting establishments (restaurants, hotels, RV parks, churches and Post Office) in the north end of town where visitors and residents currently walk and bike on the major roads. This phase will also consider Datura Street (from CR29/Collier Avenue to the Everglades City School) which was requested on a previous MPO application. This phase

should also include closing the gap of the sidewalk between the Everglades Isle RV Resort and Begonia Street.



Informal overflow parking typically occurs on the edges of Begonia St and Camellia St. in front of the restaurants and will have to be considered in selecting the appropriate bike/ped facilities for this area.

The roadways in this area are prone to flooding after a heavy rain or high tide, and the drainage issues will need to be solved in order for bike/ped improvements to be accomplished. Many potholes and eroded areas emerge after water stands for a few days. Bike/ped facilities should be planned as part of the road reconstruction process.



The gap in the sidewalk along Collier Avenue will be addressed as part of this Phase of work.

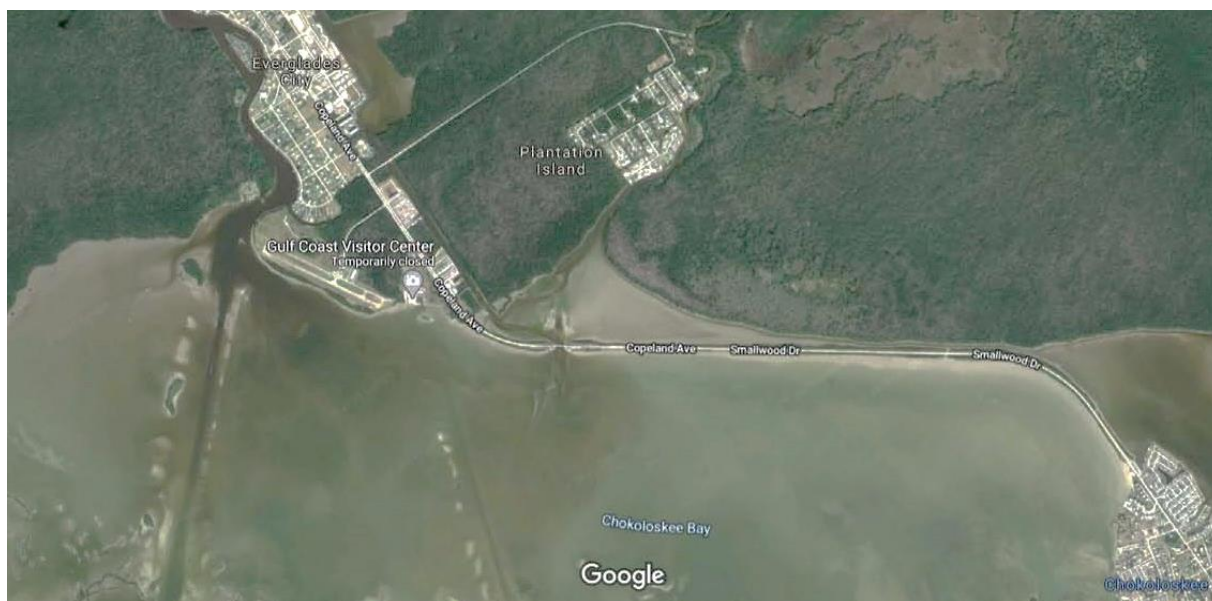


PHASE 5 – CHOKOLOSKEE CAUSEWAY LINEAR PARK

This project will propose an upgrade of the current separated pathway along Copeland Avenue connecting Everglades City to Chokoloskee. Recommendations include widening of the current pathway and provide a linear park with shelters, picnic tables, benches, shade trees and landscaping to allow a more enjoyable experience for cyclists and pedestrians who often travel between the two communities. Since the new bridge was completed in 2018, it provides much better bike and pedestrian facilities, and it would be beneficial to provide additional amenities for the many people and families who fish at the bridge.

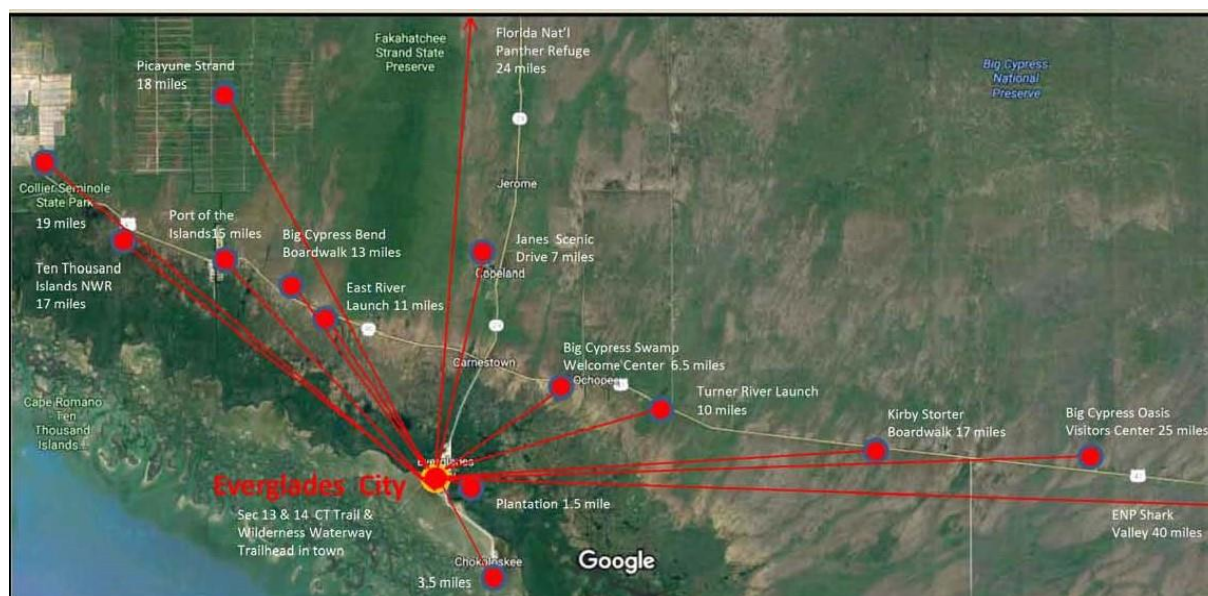


The Causeway Linear Park will provide an important connection to the historical assets, restaurants and paddling trail access points on Chokoloskee. It is a family -friendly length at 2.5 miles and offers great water views across Chokoloskee Bay.



LOCAL/REGIONAL CONNECTIONS

Everglades City is one of the few remaining coastal towns in Florida that continues to offer Old Florida charm. Ideally located as the “hub” of seven national and state parks and preserves, Everglades City offers the amenities that visitors and residents seek as they enjoy our natural environment and take advantage of the many recreational activities. Naples and Marco Island are 25-30 miles to the west and the outskirts of Miami are 60 miles to the east, all connected by the Tamiami Trail which is the southernmost road for long-distance cyclists biking to the Florida Keys from the west coast; there are several organized charity rides along this corridor each year. In addition, SR 29 is becoming the preferred route for long-distance cyclists to continue north to avoid the urban traffic of Naples.



The sidewalks and bike lanes envisioned in this Master Plan will enhance the appeal of Everglades City as an eco-tourist destination as well as a bike-friendly place to stay and explore.

An intriguing opportunity exists in the form of the old Railroad right-of-way which connects from Everglades City to Copeland/Fakahatchee Strand. A potential Rails-to-Trails could be developed on the old r.o.w. The property is currently under private ownership, so it would take a great deal of coordination with a willing partner to accomplish. This trail connection would provide a safer, more enjoyable route to the Fakahatchee Strand. The existing paved shoulders on SR 29 provide access for cyclists who are comfortable riding on the road, but the trail would be more pleasant for families and casual riders.

COMMUNITY BENEFITS / SUPPORT

A well-developed system of sidewalks and bike paths will provide additional economic benefits to our local businesses and will complement the historical and cultural assets of the community.

- Museum – The Museum of the Everglades is one of the most successful museums in Collier County (total of 5 throughout the county). It attracts over 25,000 visitors a year, including people from all over the world.
- Visitor Center – On February 1, 2020, a new Visitor Center located in Everglades City was opened to the public with over 100 guests attending the ribbon cutting ceremony. Unfortunately, it was forced to close due to the coronavirus later in the year but is expected to re-open as soon as it is safe to receive the public.
- Historic structures/ Heritage tourism/ walking tours – Visitors to Everglades City are captivated by the history and historical structures throughout the City. The Museum offers guided walking tours around town. Bicycle tours are also provided during the year.
- Eco-tourism of all types – The primary draw to Everglades City and its surrounding area is eco-tourism (paddling/hiking) and fishing. Millions of visitors come each year to see the wildlife and the Everglades and enjoy the serenity it provides.
- McLeod Park, heart of town activities – McLeod Park is the center of activity for the Everglades community with its new children's playground, tennis courts, basketball courts, picnic tables, visitor information map, dolphin bike rack, and a bike repair station.
- Bike racks distributed to various businesses around town – After Everglades City was designated by the State as a Florida Trail Town, bike racks were purchased and made available to all restaurants, motels, and other public places.
- Benefit to restaurants/lodging – Everglades City, Chokoloskee and Ochopee provide a wide selection of restaurants and lodging (www.visitevergladescity.com). Providing more sidewalks and safe bicycling around town and the community will benefit all businesses, especially restaurants and lodging facilities.
- Try to capture more overnight stays than day trippers on the bus – An opportunity exists to entice people to stay longer in the Everglades City area. Transit services would be beneficial to the parks and Everglades City.
- We are ideally located to provide support services to explore the nearby Parks – Everglades City and the area offer all the amenities to those visiting the surrounding state and national parks/preserves.



SUMMARY

This Bike/Pedestrian Master Plan is meant to lay out a vision for improvements that will serve our residents and visitors in a way that provides a comfortable, safe and memorable experience, as well as create economic benefits to the local businesses and community.

EXHIBITS

Bike/Ped Master Plan graphic (Exhibit A)
Phase 3 Photo sheets and Diagram (Exhibit F)






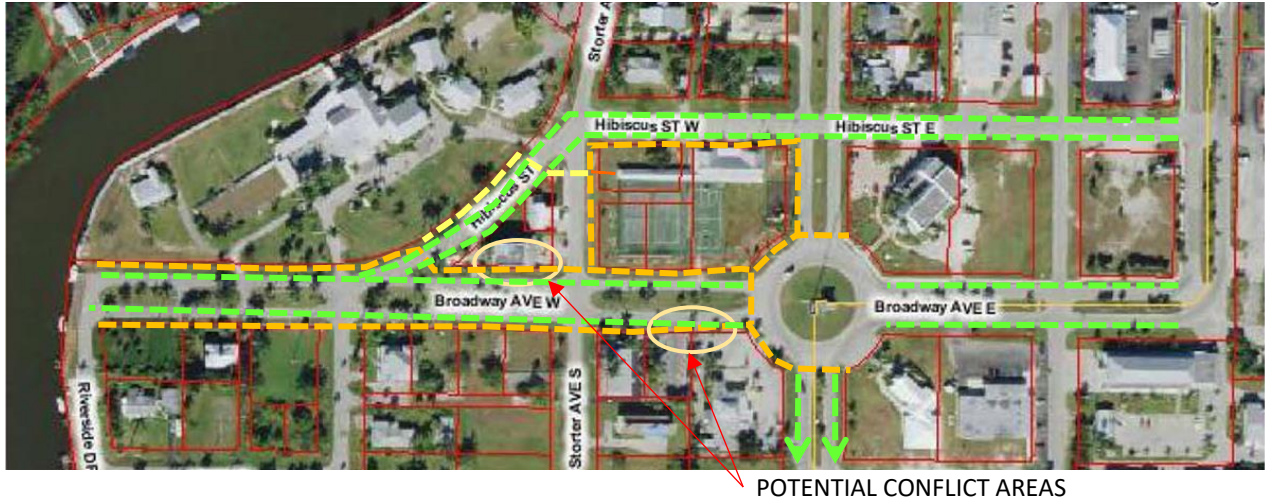
EVERGLADES CITY PHASE 3 BIKE/PED PROJECT PHOTOS

Broadway Avenue, Hibiscus Street and Copeland Avenue South

EXHIBIT F

August 2019

Sidewalks  Alternate route 
Bike Lanes 



BROADWAY AVE - NORTH LANE LOOKING WEST



View from near Circle

Open area along McLeod Park allows sufficient room for sidewalk

Striped-off bike lane



POTENTIAL CONFLICT AT BANK BUILDING

Drainage structure, existing sidewalk at lower grade, ramp at building may conflict w/ sidewalk

Provide alternate route or alternate construction method (boardwalk, etc)

Striped-off bike lane

BROADWAY AVE - SOUTH LANE LOOKING WEST



POTENTIAL CONFLICT AT
SUSIE'S RESTAURANT WALL

Remove approx. 15' of wall
that encroaches into r.o.w.
to allow for sidewalk

Striped off bike lane



Open area along vacant lot
and the former Glades Bldg
allows room for sidewalk

Striped-off bike lane



Old sidewalk exists along
vacant lot – may be
historic in nature; may
remain or be replaced

Striped off bike lane

HIBISCUS STREET LOOKING WEST



View from near Collier Ave
(CR 29)

Striped-off bike lane each side



View from intersection
at Copeland Ave North

Sidewalk proposed on
south side only along
McLeod Park

Striped-off bike lane
each side



View from intersection
of Hibiscus & N. Storter

Alternate route for
sidewalk around Bank
bldg. in case of conflict
along Broadway

Sidewalk along west
edge of McLeod Park
on N. Storter

Striped-off bike lanes
on Hibiscus

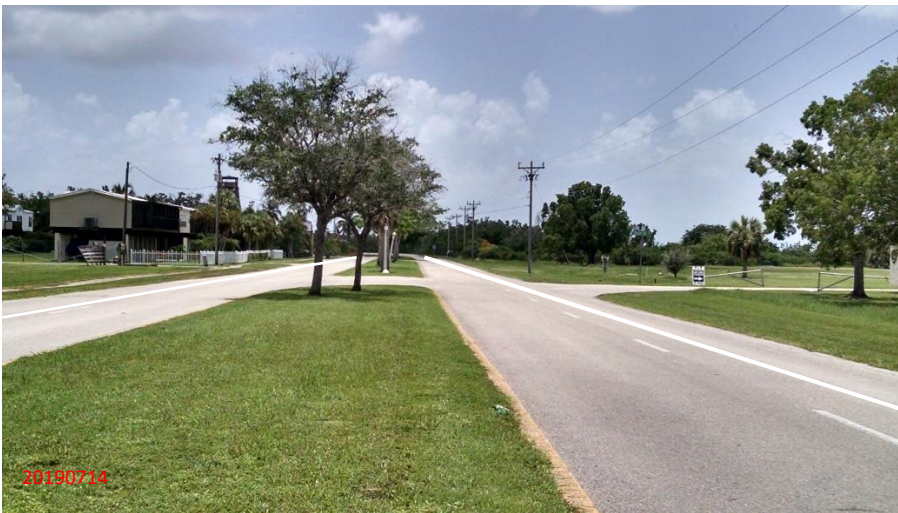
COPELAND AVENUE SOUTH (CR 29) LOOKING SOUTH



View from near Circle

Striped-off bike lane
each side

Some reconstruction
of edges may be
required due to
depressions, pot-
holes, etc.



Near Everglades National Park
entry

Striped-off bike lane each side

Will reduce vehicular travel
lanes to 2 lane divided (one
lane each side)



South end of project at
City limits - tie into
existing bike lanes that
continue onto the
Chokoloskee Causeway

Striped-off bike lane each
side