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Key Largo Livable CommuniKeys Plan



Key Largo Community Master Plan Monroe County, Florida

May 2006

HDR

Prepared By:

**Citizens and Residents of Key Largo
and
Monroe County**

With Assistance from Consultant:

HDR, Inc.
2202 N. West Shore Boulevard, Suite 250
Tampa, Florida 33609

Vision

“Key Largo will continue to be a livable island community where protection and enjoyment of the significant natural resources support a unique sense of place as the first island in the Florida Keys. We shall maximize our future by preserving our nationally recognized undersea environments, improve the visual character of our built environments through innovative redevelopment that enhances our quality of life, and strive to increase the sense of a small coastal town ambiance.”

Format for interpreting Strategies and Action Items in the Key Largo Community Master Plan

Since the Key Largo Master Plan is adopted as an addendum to the Monroe County 2010 Comprehensive Plan, the terms Strategy and Action Item will serve as equivalents to the terms Objective and Policy as they are defined in Rule 9J-5.003, Florida Administrative Code (FAC).

Pursuant to Rule 9J-5.003, FAC, the definitions of “Objective” and “Policy” are as follows:

Rule 9J-5.003 (82), FAC; “Objective” means a specific, measurable, intermediate end that is achievable and marks progress toward a goal, and

Rule 9J-5.003 (90), FAC; “Policy” means the way in which programs and activities are conducted to achieve an identified goal.

Strategies

As part of the Master Planning process the planning staff identified and evaluated various strategies to serve as specific, measurable, intermediate ends that are achievable and mark progress toward identified community goals.

- ✓ Denotes Strategies in this Master Plan that are equivalent to an Objective as defined in 9J-5(82), FAC, in that they provide specific, measurable, intermediate ends that are achievable and mark progress toward an identified community goal.

Action Items

Action items were then developed to provide a way in which programs and activities are to be conducted to achieve identified community goals.

- ✓ Denotes Action Items in this Master Plan that are equivalent to a Policy as defined in Rule 9J-5(90), FAC, in that they provide ways in which programs and activities can be conducted to achieve an identified community goal.

Strategies and Action Items without a ✓ next to them are not considered to be consistent with the definitions of “Objective” and “Policy” as in Rule 9J-5.003 (82) and (90) FAC, respectively, and therefore do not serve as equivalents. Furthermore, the Monroe County Planning Department may, in the future, propose amendments to these Strategies and Action Items, in order to bring them into compliance with Rule 9J-5.003 (82) and (90) so that they can serve as equivalents in the future.

Executive Summary

Monroe County's Livable CommuniKeys Program (LCP) is a community-driven planning process that addresses the individual needs of the island communities in the Florida Keys. The Key Largo Livable CommuniKeys Plan covers the area between Mile Markers (MM) 97 and 107, excluding the offshore islands. The Key Largo LCP process, which started in May 2004, engaged the community in a comprehensive planning process, determined important island features, identified issues affecting these conditions, and related the stated desires of the community to future development activities.

The Key Largo LCP's foundation was established through public input at workshops where community participants identified their perceptions and desires for Key Largo. Based upon the discussion in the public meetings and by interpreting responses received from the Community Survey, the following community vision statement was identified:

"Key Largo will continue to be a livable island community where protection and enjoyment of the significant natural resources support a unique sense of place as the first island in the Florida Keys. We shall maximize our future by preserving our nationally recognized undersea environments, improve the visual character of our built environments through innovative redevelopment that enhances our quality of life, and strive to increase the sense of a small coastal town ambiance".

The consensus goals identified by the community were:

Land Use and Redevelopment

- 1) Direct future growth to lands that are most suitable for development and encourage preservation of environmentally sensitive lands.

Community Character

- 2) Preserve and enhance important community qualities within the planning area that define Key Largo's casual village style atmosphere and natural environment and that enhance its status as the first island of the Florida Keys.
- 3) Protect and enhance historic, cultural and archeological resources within Key Largo to maintain the integrity of the community's unique character.

Housing

- 4) Maintain the availability of affordable housing and workforce housing for local residents while preserving the character of the community.

Environmental Protection

- 5) Preserve, manage, and restore where appropriate, the natural resources within the planning area by providing open space, protecting water quality and acquiring and managing environmentally sensitive lands.

Economic Development

- 6) Encourage redevelopment and infill development that supports and enhances the tourist-based economy of the planning area.
- 7) Recognize water-dependent and water-related commercial uses as an important source of economic sustainability within the planning area.

Transportation

- 8) Provide residents and visitors of the planning area with a safe and useable transportation system for vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians with opportunities for transit systems where appropriate.

Recreation

- 9) Provide additional resources for enhancement of existing facilities, expansion of active and passive land-based recreation opportunities and seek to expand public shoreline access for water-based recreational activities for all age groups within the community.

Community Facilities

- 10) Provide adequate public facilities to serve the existing and future needs of the planning area.

Community Involvement

- 11) Continue to support the localized sense of community, which encourages citizen involvement, implementation and monitoring of the Master Plan for Key Largo.

From a planning perspective, and in order to achieve the community goals, the following objectives were identified:

- Resolve issues relating to non-conforming uses and structures. The LCP provides an opportunity to address non-conformities.
- Secure community access to the waterfront. Key Largo, while surrounded by water, has relatively few water access points for the community.
- Ensure the protection of the terrestrial and marine environmental resources.
- Provide a framework to encourage and improve the availability of affordable housing.
- Develop and apply design guidelines that help bring about a sense of identity to the community and improve the aesthetics of the US-1 corridor.

As part of the planning process, the community supported the application of neo-traditional community design principles to establish more pedestrian oriented communities, by creating walkable environments where people live, work and play in close proximity to their daily needs. These principles include:

- Identify important community locations that can be redeveloped to provide increased public realm activity.
- Preserve important natural resources.
- Promote the creation of mixed-use developments that provide access to daily needs within a safe and walkable environment.

- Identify a full range of housing options for members of the community to live in the community throughout their entire life cycle.
- Increase attention to aesthetic improvements so that both public infrastructure and private developments are attractive locales where people want to spend time, and
- Include multiple transportation modes (e.g., pedestrian, bicycle, automobile, or transit) throughout the community to increase mobility and safety.

As a result of the public input, technical analysis, and policy evaluation completed for the planning area, the following design concepts are proposed to guide subsequent activities and communicate the study's key recommendations.

- Establish community focal areas. The planning area lacks strong community identity, or "sense of place" locations. These are locations where walkable environments support mixed-use development and people congregate for their daily needs. Several important geographic locations exist where enhanced development and public realm facilities could add to community identity. The need for compact, mixed-use centers requires complementary land uses in closer proximity to residential areas than typically created in conventional suburban development. The intent of creating such activity centers is to preserve environmentally sensitive areas and promote pedestrian walkability through expanded travel choices for residents, visitors and employees.
- Improve US-1 Corridor conditions. In the Florida Keys, US-1 functions as both the major highway and a "main street" for the local communities. Improvements are needed to increase bicycle/pedestrian accommodation and to enhance and define public realm aesthetics while maintain existing LOS requirements. Controlling speed and providing improved aesthetics within the corridor are important to residents and visitors alike. Visitors should easily be able to discern where they are located and where important community uses occur.
- Establish design guidelines for new development. Define appropriate scale and develop architectural and site design guidelines for community identity center locations that reflect market demand and support local community character enhancement.
- Promote multiple transportation modes. Recognize that US-1 must function as a multi-modal transportation corridor. Identify enhancements within quality redevelopment and new development that features transit-supportive and pedestrian-friendly site design and new infrastructure. Invest in public transportation strategies that reduce dependence on automobile travel between Community Centers for local trips by providing an integrated network of bicycle/pedestrian facilities and convenient island transit service linking key origins and destinations with connections to the regional system.

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Acronyms

AWT	Advanced Wastewater Treatment
CDP	Census Designated Place
DOE	Department of Education
EMS	Emergency Medical Service
ESA	Endangered Species Act
FAC	Florida Administrative Code
FDEP	Florida Department of Environmental Protection
FDLE	Florida Department of Law Enforcement
FDOT	Florida Department of Transportation
FKAA	Florida Keys Aqueduct Authority
FLUM	Future Land Use Map
FWS	Fish & Wildlife Service
GIS	Geographic Information System
HCP	Habitat Conservation Plan
IS	Improved Subdivision
KL-LCP	Key Largo Livable CommuniKeys Program
LCP	Livable CommuniKeys Program
LOS	Level of Service
MCC	Monroe County Code
MM	Mile Markers
NROGO	Non-Residential Rate of Growth Ordinance
ROGO	Rate of Growth Ordinance
ROW	Right-of-Way
SFWMD	South Florida Water Management District
SPA	Special Protection Area
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
TDR	Transferable Development Rights

1. INTRODUCTION

Monroe County's Livable CommuniKeys Program (LCP) is a community-driven planning process that addresses the individual needs of the island communities in the Florida Keys. The Key Largo Livable CommuniKeys Plan (KL-LCP) covers the area between Mile Markers (MM) 97 and 107, excluding the offshore islands (Figure 1). The KL-LCP process, which started in May 2004, engaged the community in a comprehensive planning process, determined important island features, identified issues affecting these conditions, and related the stated desires of the community to future development activities.



Figure 1. Key Largo Livable CommuniKeys Plan Area.

Relationship to 2010 Comprehensive Plan

The County's Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1993 and became effective in its entirety in 1997. It contains the County's guiding goals, objectives, and policies for implementation of the state mandated growth management actions through the year 2010. The Comprehensive Plan applies throughout the County and is implemented uniformly based upon the local community conditions.

The KL-LCP does not replace the County's Comprehensive Plan. It focuses on the specific needs of the local community and identifies actions to meet those needs. The County's Livable CommuniKeys Program and content of the LCP master plan development are outlined in the Comprehensive Plan Policy 101.20.1, which states:

"Monroe County shall develop a series of Community Master Plans. Master Plans will be developed in accordance with the following principles:

1. Each Community Master Plan will contain a framework for future development and redevelopment including the designation of growth boundaries and future acquisition areas for public spaces and environmental preservation;
2. Each Community Master Plan will include an Implementation Strategy composed of action items, an implementation schedule, and a monitoring mechanism to provide accountability to communities;
3. Each Community Master Plan will be consistent with existing Federal and State requirements and overall goals of the 2010 Comprehensive Plan to ensure legal requirements are met. While consistency with the goals of the 2010 Comprehensive Plan is paramount, the 2010 Plan will be updated and amended where appropriate;
4. Each Community Master Plan will be closely coordinated with other community plans and other jurisdictions to ensure development or redevelopment activities will not adversely impact those areas;
5. Each Community Master Plan will include appropriate mechanisms allowing citizens continued oversight and involvement in the implementation of their plans. Through the Community Master Plans, programs for ongoing public involvement, outreach, and education will be developed;
6. Each Community Master Plan will include a Capital Improvements program to provide certainty that the provision of public facilities will be concurrent with future development;
7. Each Community Master Plan will contain an environmental protection element to maintain existing levels of environmental protection as required in the 2010 Comprehensive Plan;
8. Each Community Master Plan will include a community character element that will address the protection and enhancement of existing residential areas and the preservation of community character through site and building guidelines. Design guidelines for public spaces, landscaping, streetscapes, buildings, parking lots, and other areas will be developed through collaborative efforts of citizens, the Planning Department, and design professionals reinforcing the character of the local community context,
9. Each Community Master Plan will include an economic development element addressing current and potential diversified economic development strategies including tourism

management. The preservation and retention of valued local businesses, existing economies, and the development of economic alternatives will be encouraged through the process;

10. Each Community Master Plan will contain a transportation element addressing transportation needs and possibilities including circulation, safe and convenient access to goods and services, and transportation alternatives that will be consistent with the overall integrity of the transportation system not resulting in negative consequences for other communities;
11. Each Community Master Plan will be based on knowledge of existing conditions in each community. The Planning Department will compile existing reports, databases, maps, field data, and information from other sources supplemented by community input to document current conditions; and
12. Each Community Master Plan will simplify the planning process providing clarity and certainty for citizens, developers, and local officials by providing a transparent framework for a continuing open dialogue with different participants involved in planning issues”.

Relationship to State Legislation

The County’s Comprehensive Growth Management Plan was required by Florida Statute 163 and is compliant with the required format and content listed in the Florida Administrative Code (FAC 9J-5). The Key Largo LCP will be adopted as a modification to the existing Comprehensive Plan. The Florida Department of Community Affairs will review the modification for compliance with the applicable statutes and codes.

Historic Context

The largest island in the Florida Keys chain, Key Largo was named by Spanish sailors in the early 1500s. The island had been inhabited long before by native tribes of hunter-gatherers, dependent upon the ocean environment for their staple foods. The earliest physical evidence of habitation in the Florida Keys occurs on the island.

The Florida Key’s history develops as the New World was settled and shipping traffic became more abundant. By the 1850s, the ship wrecking industry in the Keys had become prominent because the reef, which extends off the entire length of the island chain, was not well marked. In the latter part of the 1800s, agricultural production begins on Key Largo; pineapple plantations were successful through the end of the century. By the time the Overseas Railroad linked the Upper Keys to the mainland in 1906, plantation owners hoped that their shipping problems were solved. But that same year, a hurricane destroyed large areas of pineapple growth and a blight quickly followed that would end large-scale agricultural production in the Keys.

Limited improvement occurred until the post World War II era, when the water pipeline from Florida’s mainland brought fresh water all the way to Key West. At around the same time, electricity became available through a private enterprise. Population increases started occurring as public infrastructure and mosquito control became prevalent in the 1950s. The significant portion of the island’s development started to occur in the 1970’s. Key Largo today provides

access to unique natural resources and has become a magnet for scuba divers, fishing and recreational boaters, weekend visitors, and nature enthusiasts.

Current Conditions

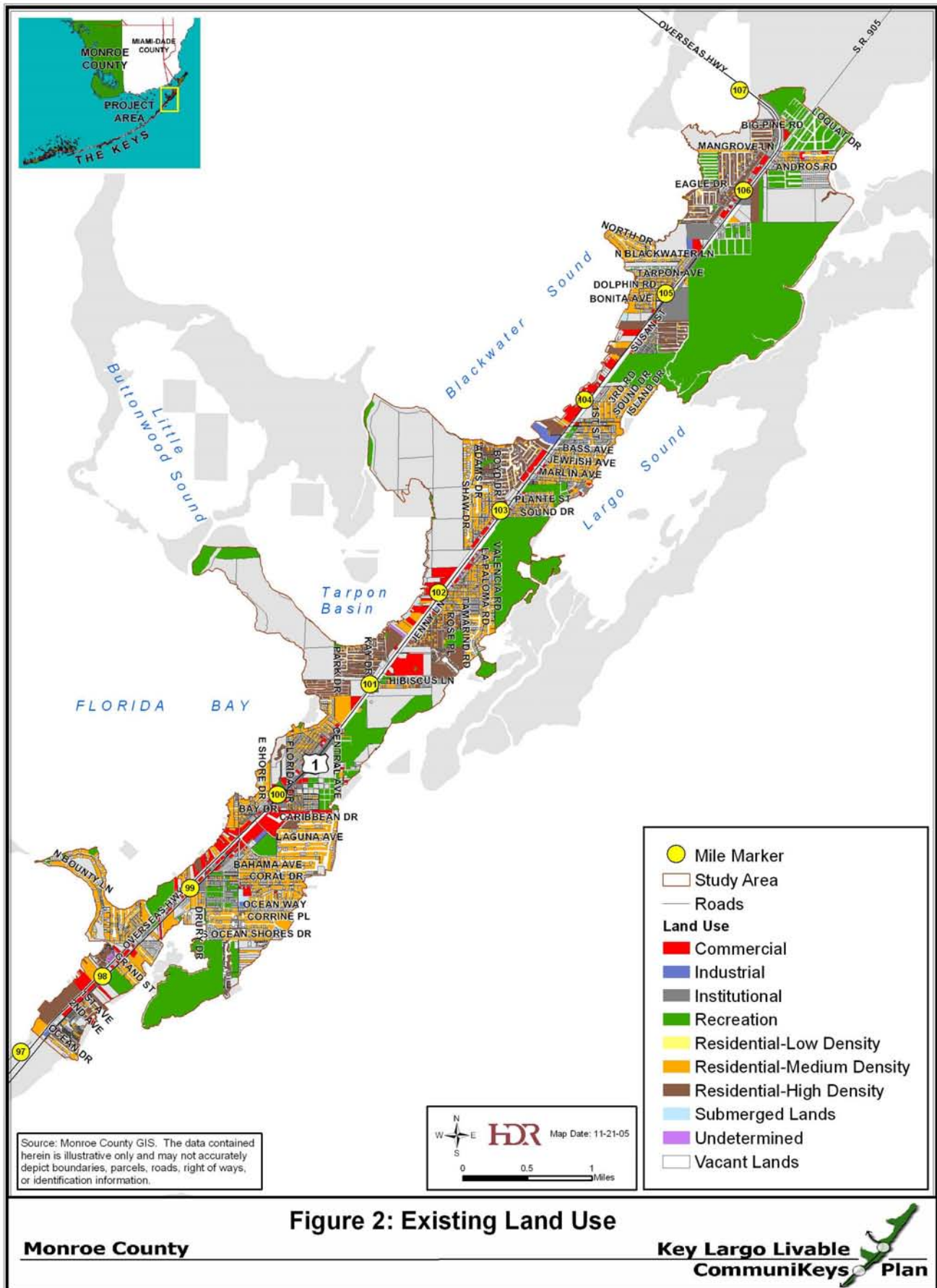
Land Use. The planning area encompasses 10 miles along the US-1 corridor, from MM 97 to MM 107. As in most of the Florida Keys, development is organized largely alongside the US-1 corridor, with commercial uses concentrated in the corridor. The 5,263-acre planning area includes 11,835 parcels. A total of 2,768 acres are developed and 2,495 acres are vacant or undetermined.

Residential land uses occupy 22% of the developed area (Table 1, Figure 2), which makes it the most common land use. Residential uses include single-family detached, mobile homes, multi-family apartments, and mixed-use. Single-family detached homes are the dominant type of residential use. Mobile homes are the second largest residential use, followed by multi-family residential development, such as apartments and condominiums.

Table 1 Existing Land Use	
Category	Acres
Commercial	225
Industrial	19
Institutional	127
Recreation	1,376
Residential-High Density	453
Residential-Medium Density	668
Submerged Lands	13
Undetermined	5
Vacant Lands	1,562
No value (ROW, inlets, etc.)	815
Total Acres	5,263
Source: Monroe County Property Appraiser	

Commercial land uses, broadly defined as those areas associated with the buying and selling of goods and/or services, are generally concentrated as strip development along the US-1 corridor. Commercial uses account for 225 acres, or 5% of the study acreage. The majority of the planning area's commercial businesses are tourism and services industry. Two significant commercial use concentrations occur at the Waldorf Plaza (MM 100) and at the Tradewinds Plaza (MM 101) locations. Commercial uses in the planning area include general commercial, commercial fishing, and tourist commercial types.

A total of 1,562 acres, about 30% of the planning area, is vacant land. These lands include platted lots and subdivisions of varying sized parcels. Residential vacant land represents 804 acres, whereas commercial vacant parcels occupy 774 acres and institutional vacant parcels account for five acres.



There are 3,340 vacant residential parcels and 511 vacant commercial parcels in the planning area. About a third of the vacant residential parcels have development constraints due to environmental conditions, such as including wetlands or being in areas slated for acquisition for conservation.

Demographics. The demographics for the planning area are derived from the review of the 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census for the Key Largo Census Designated Place (CDP), which is the smallest recognized statistical unit in the census but slightly larger than the planning area.

According to the 2000 Census, the planning area has a permanent population of 11,886; permanent population increased by 5% from 1990 to 2000 (Table 2). The proportional increase in males was more than double that of females. Lower age groups increased by 10% or more, whereas the highest age group decreased by 10% from 1990 to 2000.

Assuming a 10% population growth through the next 20 years, the permanent population may increase to approximately 13,000 persons.

Table 2			
Population Change, 1990-2000			
Type	1990	2000	Percent Change
Persons	11,336	11,886	5.0
Families	3,264	3,288	0.7
Male	5,795	6,165	6.4
Female	5,541	5,721	3.2
0-19	2,179	2,553	17
20-54	5,471	5,986	9.4
55 and over	3,686	3,347	-10
Households	4,945	5,245	6.0
Housing Units	7,564	8,043	6.0
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990, 2000			

In 2000, the Key Largo CDP had a total of 5,229 households, which represents nearly 15% of the entire 35,086 County households. The majority of these households represent families (3,348 or 64.0%). Family households include married-couple family (2,703), female householder, and no husband present (343). Non-family households total 1,881 or 36.0%.

According to the 2000 Census, the median income in the planning area is \$42,577, and the median income for a family is \$50,755. A household is defined as including all the people who occupy a housing unit as their usual place of residence. A family is defined as a group of two or more people who reside together and who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption. Males residing in the planning areas have a median income of \$33,588 versus \$25,486 for females. The per capita income is \$25,441. Also 8.3% of the permanent population and 5.9% of families live below the poverty line. Of the total population living in poverty, 8.7% are under the age of 18 and 7.8% are 65 or older.

Environmental Setting

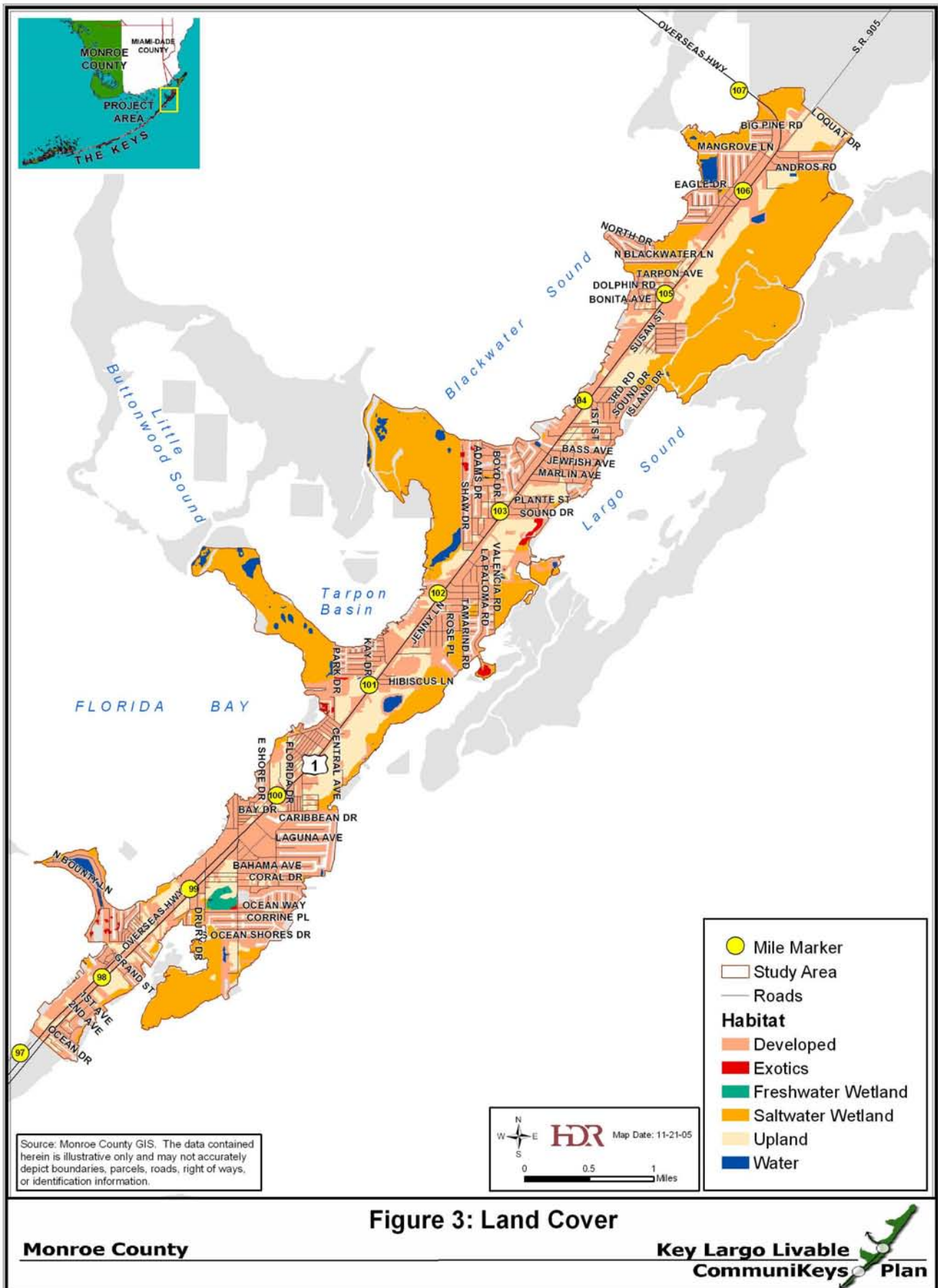
The planning area is underlain by Key Largo Limestone, formed from ancient reefs and made up of mostly very porous material. Geological processes that date to the Pleistocene Period were instrumental in forming the reefs and the Florida Keys of today. Melting glaciers raised sea levels, resulting in submerged conditions over much of the Florida peninsula and all of the Florida Keys. The warm temperatures and shallow waters peculiar to the Keys provide ideal conditions for the growth of coral reefs, which predominate along the Keys island chain.

The main types of vegetation cover in the planning area are tropical hardwood hammocks and saltwater wetlands (mainly mangrove forests; Table 3, Figure 3). Saltwater wetlands are the predominant land cover type, with 1,701 acres or approximately 32% of the area's acreage. Hammocks occupy approximately 15.5% or 819 acres.

Table 3 Land Cover	
Habitat Type	Acres
Developed	2,200
Exotics	22
Freshwater Wetland	18
Saltwater Wetland	1,701
Hammock	819
Water	96
No value (no ROW, inlets, roads, errors)	408
Total Acres	5,263
Source: Monroe County GIS (ADID FMRI maps)	

The planning area provides potential habitat for several threatened and endangered species (Table 4).

Table 4 Federally Threatened and Endangered Species	
Common Name	Scientific Name
Atlantic green turtle	<i>Chelonia mydas</i>
American crocodile	<i>Crocodylus actus</i>
Leatherback turtle	<i>Dermochelys coriacea</i>
Atlantic hawksbill turtle	<i>Eretmochelys imbricata</i>
Atlantic Ridley turtle	<i>Lepidochelys kemp</i>
Southern bald eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>
Wood stork	<i>Mycteria americana</i>
Bachman's warbler	<i>Verivora bachmanii</i>
Key Largo wood rat	<i>Neotoma florida smalli</i>
Key Largo cotton mouse	<i>Peromyscus gossypinus allapoticola</i>
Florida manatee	<i>Trichechus mantus latirostris</i>
Schaus' swallowtail butterfly	<i>Heracles aristodemus ponceanus</i>
Source: Monroe County Comprehensive Plan	



Lands Planned for Acquisition

In the Florida Keys, land acquisition for conservation is primarily framed within Goal 105 of the Comprehensive Plan. Goal 105 establishes land categories, or “tiers” that focus efforts on land acquisition, protecting natural resources, and directing future development to infill areas. Of the 3,340 vacant residential parcels in the planning area, 903 (27%) are in Tier I and targeted for acquisition. Current efforts include identifying habitat patches of one acre or more outside Tier I, which will be added to the acquisition priority list.

Development Context and Constraints

Development in the planning area is subject to several significant constraints. First, the Rate of Growth Ordinance (ROGO) and its companion NROGO (non-residential) limit the number of permits issued in the planning area. In a typical year, 48 market rate permits are issued in the Upper Keys (MM 82.5 to MM 112). The implementation of the Florida Keys Carrying Capacity Study, of which Goal 105 discussed above is part, will ultimately modify ROGO and NROGO, but will likely result in similar levels of development to those seen under ROGO.

Other factors constraining development in Key Largo include concurrency with State requirements, such as maintaining an appropriate Level of Service (LOS) along US-1. Further development will likely increase traffic levels along US-1 and increase the likelihood of surpassing LOS thresholds, either within the Key Largo segment or throughout the Keys. A deficient LOS would trigger a building moratorium in the affected segment.

2. SUMMARY OF THE LCP PROCESS

The Key Largo LCP was developed with multiple opportunities for public participation, discussed below.

Stakeholder Interviews. Stakeholder interviews, conducted at the outset of the project, identified specific issues and/or concerns of major business and neighborhood organizations. The planning area had previously been part of a privately-funded study that looked at economic development and community redevelopment opportunities in Key Largo. The interviews were undertaken to gauge the level of interest and sensitivity to growth management issues. The input received provided additional insight into important community issues.

Community Survey Results. The County mailed a community survey to all 8,560 property owners within the planning area. The 32 survey questions addressed the overall quality of life within the planning area. The response rate was 7.2%, for a total of 617 completed surveys. The following is a summary of the survey results:

- 62% of the respondents were full time residents and 17% of the respondents were business owners.
- 70% supported the development of “affordable housing” and/or “employee housing” opportunities.
- The top reasons people live in, or own a second home on the island, are the recreational opportunities and the natural environment.
- 30% of the respondents work within the planning area limits, 22% travel north of the planning area to jobs, and 8% travel south of the planning area to jobs.
- 80% do most of their shopping within the planning area.
- Bicycle lanes on both sides of US 1, bicycle/pedestrian trails and local trolleys were the top three public transportation desires.
- Safety is the number one concern for bicycle/pedestrian activity.
- The respondents identified beach access, multi-use paved trails and boat launches as the top three recreational facilities needed on the island.
- Most respondents want architectural design guidelines for new construction.
- 65% of the respondents think preservation of natural lands is very important.

Newsletters. Four newsletters were generated and mailed to renters and property owners. The newsletters described the planning process, summarized the existing conditions, notified owners

of upcoming future public workshops, and kept the public informed of the progress of the planning process.

Website. Monroe County included project updates for the Livable CommuniKeys Program in its website (<http://www.monroecounty-fl.gov/>).

Public Workshops. Five public meetings were held between July 2004 and February 2006. Each meeting was held within the planning area, legally noticed, and made available for all interested persons to attend.

- **Visioning Workshop.** The visioning workshop was held on July 27, 2004. This workshop focused on gathering a vision for the Key Largo area. Through a facilitated exercise, the attendees identified and ranked the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that affect Key Largo (Table 5). This “SWOT” analysis helped to develop a picture of the community’s perceptions and helped identify issues to be addressed in the plan.

Table 5 Highest-Ranked Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats	
Strengths	Weaknesses
• Newly-acquired Quay property • Natural environment, including the barrier reef • Location as the first key along US-1 • Small island town atmosphere	• US-1 traffic • Lack of community aesthetics • No strong community image • Lack of public transportation
Opportunities	Threats
• US-1 enhancements • Development of the Quay property	• Uncontrolled development, including in south Miami-Dade County • FEMA regulations • Environmental pollution • Property taxes

- **Goals Workshop.** The second workshop was held October 6, 2004. Through a facilitated exercise, the attendees worked on developing goals for the LCP. The exercise built upon the results of the first visioning workshop, the existing conditions, and the Monroe County Comprehensive Plan. The goals identified by the community are the basis of the LCP and are listed and discussed later in this document.
- **US-1 Design Workshop.** The third workshop was held October 7-8, 2004. Working together, the community attendees and the county and consultant designers generated corridor ideas, identified redevelopment areas, discussed design guidelines, and determined improvements for the planning area. The community identified four focal points in Key Largo: Island Gateway/Welcome Center (MM 106), the Tradewinds Area (MM104), the Government and Cultural Center at the Quay (MM 102) and the Waldorf Plaza/Downtown (MM 100).
- **Findings Workshop.** The fourth public meeting occurred on January 20, 2005. During this meeting, the project team revisited the existing conditions, identified the major goals

and strategies resulting from the previous workshops, and discussed how these major findings were to be incorporated into the Key Largo LCP. Participants provided additional input into the identified plan strategies.

- **Final Workshop.** On February 23, 2006, the project team and the public reviewed the goals, strategies, and action items of the Plan.

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3. BASIS OF THE KEY LARGO LCP

The Key Largo LCP's foundation was established through public input at workshops where community participants identified their perceptions and desires for Key Largo.

Vision

Based upon the discussion in the public meetings and by interpreting responses received from the Community Survey, the following community vision statement was identified:

“Key Largo will continue to be a livable island community where protection and enjoyment of the significant natural resources support a unique sense of place as the first island in the Florida Keys. We shall maximize our future by preserving our nationally recognized undersea environments, improve the visual character of our built environments through innovative redevelopment that enhances our quality of life, and strive to increase the sense of a small coastal town ambiance”.

Goals

The consensus goals identified by the community were:

Land Use and Redevelopment

- 1) Direct future growth to lands that are most suitable for development and encourage preservation of environmentally sensitive lands.

Community Character

- 2) Preserve and enhance important community qualities within the planning area that define Key Largo's casual village style atmosphere and natural environment and that enhance its status as the first island of the Florida Keys.
- 3) Protect and enhance historic, cultural and archeological resources within Key Largo to maintain the integrity of the community's unique character.

Housing

- 4) Maintain the availability of workforce housing, affordable housing and employee housing, for local residents while preserving the character of the community.

Environmental Protection

- 5) Preserve, manage, and restore where appropriate, the natural resources within the planning area by providing open space, protecting water quality and acquiring and managing environmentally sensitive lands.

Economic Development

- 6) Encourage redevelopment and infill development that supports and enhances the tourist-based economy of the planning area.
- 7) Recognize water-dependent and water-related commercial uses as an important source of economic sustainability within the planning area.

Transportation

- 8) Provide residents and visitors of the planning area with a safe and well-designed transportation system for motor vehicles that accommodates bicycles and pedestrians including dedicated trails with opportunities for transit systems where appropriate.

Recreation

- 9) Provide additional resources for enhancement of existing facilities, expansion of active and passive land-based recreation opportunities and seek to expand public shoreline access for water-based recreational activities for all age groups within the community.

Community Facilities

- 10) Provide adequate public facilities to serve the existing and future needs of the planning area.

Community Involvement

- 11) Continue to support the localized sense of community, which encourages citizen involvement, implementation and monitoring of the Master Plan for Key Largo.

Planning Objectives

From a planning perspective, and in order to achieve the community goals, the following objectives were identified:

- Resolve issues regarding non-conforming uses and structures. The LCP provides an opportunity to address non-conformities.
- Secure community access to the waterfront. Key Largo, while surrounded by water, has relatively few water access points for the community.
- Ensure the protection of the terrestrial and marine environmental resources.
- Provide a framework to encourage and improve the availability of workforce housing, affordable housing and employee housing.
- Develop and apply design guidelines that help bring about a sense of identity to the community and improve the aesthetics of the US-1 corridor.

Design Principles

As part of the planning process, the community supported the application of neo-traditional community design principles to establish more pedestrian oriented communities, by creating walkable environments where people live, work and play in close proximity to their daily needs. These principles include:

- Identify important community locations that can be redeveloped to provide increased public activity space.

- Preserve important natural resources.
- Promote the creation of mixed-use residential and non-residential developments that provide access to daily needs within a safe and walkable environment.
- Identify a full range of housing options that will provide community members with housing alternatives throughout the different stages of their life.
- Increase attention to aesthetic improvements so that both public infrastructure and private developments welcome and encourage locals and tourists to take time to explore and enjoy the opportunities presented.
- Include multiple transportation modes (e.g., pedestrian, bicycle, automobile, or transit) throughout the community to increase mobility and safety.

Major Design Concepts

As a result of the public input, technical analysis, and policy evaluation completed for the planning area, the following design concepts are proposed to guide subsequent activities and communicate the study's key recommendations.

- Establish community focal areas. The planning area lacks a strong community identity, or "sense of place". Community identity is promoted by a walkable environment that supports mixed-use development where locals and visitors congregate for their daily needs. This community planning process identified four areas where enhanced development, public spaces, and facilities could add to community identity. The need for compact, mixed-use centers requires complementary land uses in closer proximity to residential areas than typically created in conventional suburban development. The intent of creating such activity centers is to preserve environmentally sensitive areas by concentrating development in the most suitable areas and to promote pedestrian walkability while offering expanded travel choices for residents, visitors and employees.
- Improve US-1 Corridor conditions. In the Florida Keys, US-1 functions as both the major highway and the local community's "main street". Improvements are needed to increase bicycle/pedestrian accommodation and to enhance and better define public spaces while maintain existing level of service (LOS) requirements. Controlling speed within the parameters of the LOS and providing improved aesthetics within the corridor are important to residents and visitors alike. Visitors should easily be able to discern where they are located and where important community uses occur.
- Establish design guidelines for new development. Identify and define the desirable scale of development and create architectural and site design guidelines for community identity centers locations that reflect market demand and support local community character enhancement.

- Promote multiple transportation modes. Recognize that US-1 must function as a multi-modal transportation corridor. Identify design elements that support transit, bicycle and pedestrian friendly site design and new infrastructure that would support and enhance quality redevelopment and new development. Invest in public transportation strategies that reduce dependence on automobile travel between Community Centers for local trips by providing an integrated network of bicycle/pedestrian facilities and convenient island transit service linking key origins and destinations with connections to the regional system.

Format of Master Plan Elements

The Key Largo LCP addresses nine Master Plan elements. For each element, the plan introduces the goals and presents the strategies and action items necessary to accomplish each goal. For each element, introductory discussions provide a context for understanding the current conditions and the community needs.

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4. LAND USE AND REDEVELOPMENT ELEMENT



**GOAL ONE:
DIRECT FUTURE GROWTH TO LANDS THAT ARE MOST SUITABLE
FOR DEVELOPMENT AND ENCOURAGE PRESERVATION OF
ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE LANDS.**

Current Conditions Summary

The Key Largo Livable CommuniKeys (LCP) Planning Area encompasses the contiguous area of Key Largo from MM 97 to MM 107. It is bordered by Tavernier to the southwest and by North Key Largo to the northwest. Most of the high elevation “spine” of the island of Key Largo has been developed, but significant natural areas remain, especially on North Key Largo, directly adjacent to the LCP Planning Area, and in John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park, located from MM 106 to MM 100 on the ocean side of US-1. These features help provide definition and support the development of a sense of place for the community.

There are approximately 11,835 parcels in the planning area, covering approximately 5,263 acres. Key Largo development has followed a pattern typical of much of the Florida Keys with commercial uses, especially commercial retail, fronting on US-1 and residential uses occupying platted lands offset from US-1. Land use was analyzed using the Monroe County Property Appraisers data.

Commercial Lands. There are 796 parcels located within the planning area that are coded for commercial use. Of these, 285 parcels are developed and an additional 343 vacant parcels are located within wetland habitats and are considered unsuitable for development under current Monroe County regulations. The remaining 168 upland vacant commercial parcels are generally considered to have some potential for development. Most of these parcels are located adjacent to the U.S. Highway 1 corridor. During the 1980s, a number of commercially zoned parcels along US-1 were down-zoned to residential use as part of the adoption of the Monroe County Comprehensive Plan (adopted in 1986).

The down-zoning was an attempt to reduce “strip commercial” development along the highway and was generally based on existing habitat, existing use and/or proximity to residential neighborhoods. However, conditions in the planning area have changed significantly since that strategy was employed. The most notable change was the adoption of limits on overall growth of commercial use (controlled allocation of new floor area) under the non-residential permit allocation system, commonly referred to as NROGO, and a resulting shift from new development to redevelopment. Another change was the development and adoption of “smart growth” initiatives under Goal 105 of the Comprehensive Plan. This allowed a major overhaul of the land use classification system that corresponded with updated studies and planning goals for the area. Several changes to the Land Use District Maps have been made based on new information and changed conditions and some of the built parcels that had been down zoned in 1986 have had their commercial use status restored. Corresponding changes to the future land use maps (FLUM) have lagged behind mainly due to the delayed effective date of the Comprehensive Plan. Therefore, the existing FLUM and Land Use District Map do not always correspond and are not completely up to date.

Of the 511 vacant upland commercial parcels, 93 (18%) are located in Tier 1. These are considered to be inappropriate for development and will be targeted for acquisition. The remaining parcels represent sufficient area and probably a surplus area available for the allocation of new commercial square footage over the next 20 years. One trend observed in recent years has been the demolition of existing commercial square footage on one site and replacement of that square footage on a separate site. Developers are exercising flexibility and creativity in response to growth restrictions. The resulting built environment is by no means rigid and with this trend in commercial development and redevelopment, planners will have possibly the best opportunity yet available in the Florida Keys to encourage desired land use patterns.

Residential Lands. Residential lands, as previously mentioned, are found primarily in platted subdivisions of parcels generally on the order of 5,000 square feet (0.11 acres) in size. There are 9,880 residential parcels in the planning area. Vacant parcels total 3,340 in the planning area while 2,232 of those are located in wetlands leaving 1,108 parcels that are considered to have some development potential. Of the 1,108 vacant upland residential parcels, 485 are in Tier I, designated for targeted acquisition and discouragement of development. The remaining parcels (623) are in Tier III, designated for development as transitional and infill area.

Under the residential permit allocation system (ROGO), approximately 40 to 50 permits are issued per year in the entire Upper Keys; assuming that 30 to 40 of these permits are issued in the Key Largo planning area, it is estimated that between 600 and 800 new housing units will be added over the twenty-year planning horizon. With more than 2,000 vacant residential parcels in Tier III, there will be a surplus of Tier III parcels at the end of the planning horizon.

Smart Growth Goal 105. Goal 105 envisions a pattern of future land use and development in the area based mainly on the location of remaining natural resources and of population and commercial centers. Goal 105 directs the classification of lands into general categories for purposes of its land acquisition program and smart growth initiatives in accordance with descriptions contained in Policy 105.2.1 for “Tier I Natural Area” and “Tier III Infill Area.” For the purpose of allocation of permits for development, the map will contain two Tiers: “Tier I” which matches the description in Section 1 of Policy 105.2.1 and “Tier III” which matches the descriptions in Section 3 of Policy 105.2.1. Within Tier III, there are patches of hardwood hammock of one acre or greater which have been identified as Special Protection Areas (SPAs). The allocation systems ROGO and NROGO, including the assignment of points for allocation of permits, will be designed around these two levels. The one acre or greater habitat patches in Tier III will receive fewer points than the true infill areas. For planning purposes, especially acquisition planning, this document considers “Tier III Special Protection Area” and “Tier III Infill” area as two separate subclasses of the new Tier III designation.

As mentioned, wetland parcels are considered unsuitable for development under current Monroe County land development regulations. Development of mangrove wetlands and submerged lands has been prohibited for over 20 years. Development of saltmarsh wetlands and buttonwood wetlands has been prohibited for at least four years. Although some wetland parcels have been targeted for acquisition, this habitat type has not been a priority for acquisition.

Concentration of Land Use Activity. During the public participation process for the Key Largo LCP, the following four areas were identified as possible locations for future concentration of mixed land uses and community activity:

- **MM106 Welcome Area:** This area is concentrated mainly on the bayside of US-1 at MM 106. It is the first concentration of commercial uses that visitors see when arriving on the island of Key Largo as they drive into the Florida Keys. The Chamber of Commerce and Visitor's Center is located here, along with commercial uses catering primarily to tourists. It is a center of activity for tourists that may contain some services for residents.
- **Former Quay Property:** This property, located on the bayside of US-1 at MM 102, was recently acquired by Monroe County. The previous use was a waterfront restaurant. The property will be redeveloped by Monroe County into a center for public use that will include government offices and a theater. It will primarily be geared towards the needs of local residents.
- **Tradewinds:** This is a major shopping district and commercial center for Key Largo. It includes the Tradewinds Plaza, a shopping center with Publix and Kmart anchor stores, a public park for active recreation (Friendship Park), other commercial uses, and the Tradewinds affordable housing development. This area serves both residents and visitors.
- **Waldorf:** This is a major shopping district and commercial center for Key Largo. It includes the Waldorf Plaza, a shopping center with the "Key Largo Shopper" a food store, two major drug stores, other commercial uses, several resort hotels, and a public park for active recreation including Key Largo Park. This area caters to residents and visitors alike.

Analysis of Community Needs

Tier System and Map. The Tier System Map is needed to delineate developable areas and increase landowner certainty and to delineate environmentally sensitive lands to target for acquisition. Certainty will be increased for Tier I owners because these areas will be targeted for public acquisition and will be at a disadvantage in competing for permit allocations mainly due to the presence of natural resources or lack of infrastructure. Therefore, development will be concentrated in Tier III areas, except in the SPAs which are also targeted for acquisition. Landowners in SPA will receive fewer points than Tier III properties that are not within tropical hardwood hammock patches of one acre or greater. The Tier III lots without the SPA designation will know they can compete on equal footing for permit allocations in Tier III. Other planning opportunities are also available. The "shuffling" of floor area from one site to another that is often occurring under NROGO presents opportunities for land reclamation and for retiring old or abandoned uses. Developers may be encouraged to move floor area out of Tier III SPA area into Tier III Infill area and specifically to focal areas.

FLUM/Zoning Map. Existing uses on parcels that were previously down-zoned are generally non-conforming. It is appropriate to re-evaluate these parcels and uses on a case-by-case basis and restore the commercial status where appropriate. Also, due to some interim changes in the Land Use District Map during adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, that map was reviewed for consistency with the FLUM (i.e., categories and districts should match). A general review of all

parcels was conducted as well as review of parcels for which the County received requests for changes during the LCP process. The following general principles were followed in recommending changes:

- The Tier System as outlined in Goal 105 can be used as a guide to appropriate use, density and intensity on individual parcels, with the most critical review concentrated on requested “up-zonings” of Tier I and Tier III SPAs and “down-zoning” of Tier III Infill parcels.
- Site must comply with minimum district requirements to rezone to new designation.
- The character of the entire block is reviewed and analyzed when reviewing Land Use Map District change requests. The entire block must be commercially developed to be considered for a commercial rezoning.
- Rezoning considerations are based on the rezoning of an entire block. “Spot zoning” of single or few parcels is not allowed.
- The application site can not be designated Tier I or part of the Conservation and Natural Area (CNA).
- The entire block or part thereof can not be Tier I lands or part of the Conservation and Natural Area (CNA).
- Parcels with legally established existing businesses previously down zoned to the Improved Subdivision (IS) Land Use District because they are near neighborhoods, but are on US-1 and meet the requirements above.
- Parcels with existing businesses that are in an area predominated by hardwood hammock, wetlands or other natural features with few other businesses nearby or relatively low levels of development should generally be left in the residential zoning status.

Nonconforming Uses. There is a need to bring uses into conformance where appropriate while avoiding strip commercial. This will be accomplished through the appropriate evaluation of these parcels during revision of the FLUM and Land Use District Map based on the general criteria listed above. Proposed changes to the Monroe County Code will address some of the issues related to nonconforming uses and make development and redevelopment a possibility for some existing developments without the need for a rezoning

Focal Areas. The Key Largo master plan process identified four focal areas, the Tradewinds Community Center, the Downtown Key Largo Community Center, the Welcome Center and the Government and Cultural Center.

The designations need to ensure that consistent categories are adopted on the FLUM and the Land Use District Map for each area.

Recommended Strategies and Actions

✓ Strategy 1.1

Designate the entire planning area into Natural Area (Tier I) and (Tier III) Infill and Special Protection Area (SPA) as described in Goal 105.

- ✓ *Action Item 1.1.1:* Prepare a Tier System Overlay Map for the planning area based on the planning principles outlined in Goal 105 and the detailed descriptions of each tier category contained in Policy 105.2.1.
- ✓ *Action Item 1.1.2:* Adopt the Tier System Overlay Map as a separate map to use as a planning and regulatory overlay on the existing Land Use District Map. The Tier System Overlay Map shall be used primarily to focus acquisition efforts into Tier I and Tier III SPA and to guide development to appropriate areas in Tier III as implemented Keys-wide.

Strategy 1.2

Preserve important upland habitats and reduce the surplus of vacant parcels in the planning area through fee-simple acquisition, conservation easement, incentive programs and other means.

- ✓ *Action Item 1.2.1:* Implement the land acquisition strategy detailed in Strategy 5.2 to preserve important habitats and to encourage retirement of development rights.
- ✓ *Action Item 1.2.2:* In addition to fee-simple acquisition, a variety of methods may be used to retire development rights, especially in Tier III SPA. This should be applied especially within residential subdivisions where vacant land can serve as residential yards or neighborhood open space. The County may purchase development rights while the parcel owner retains ownership and maintenance responsibility of the parcel as a yard. Alternatively the County may purchase a property and then sell or deed the property (with development rights removed pursuant to an easement) to a resident or group of residents for maintenance as habitat or neighborhood open space. Variations on this theme that result in feasible retirement of development rights from willing-seller properties may be used.

Action Item 1.2.3: Consider providing incentives for the removal of existing commercial and residential development from Tier III SPA in exchange for replacement of equivalent floor area or density within Tier III Infill areas, especially within focal areas.

Strategy 1.3

Continue to utilize the Land Use District Map and supporting FLUM to regulate land use type, density and intensity on individual parcels within the planning area.

- ✓ *Action Item 1.3.1:* Continue to use the FLUM and Land Use District Maps to regulate development of individual parcels with respect to density, intensity, bulk regulations, and all other land development regulation. This will protect the existing conformance status of most uses and promote orderly development consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.
- ✓ *Action Item 1.3.2:* Revise the FLUM and Land Use District Maps to resolve non-conformities in the planning area where appropriate.
- ✓ *Action Item 1.3.3:* Revise the FLUM and Land Use District Maps to resolve conflicts and inconsistencies between the FLUM and Land Use District Maps.
- ✓ *Action Item 1.3.4:* Revise the FLUM map to identify Church properties as Institutional on the FLUM map.
- ✓ *Action Item 1.3.5:* Revise the FLUM map to identify educational facilities and designate the properties as Educational on the FLUM map.
- ✓ *Action Item 1.3.6:* Adopt the revised FLUM and Land Use District Map for the planning area.
- ✓ *Action Item 1.3.7:* Evaluate future FLUM change and Land Use District Map change requests for nonconforming uses, proposed changes in use, vacant parcels and other requests, based mainly on comprehensive planning principles and the following community-goal related criteria:
 - a. Promote infill, design flexibility and transfer of density to Community Centers.
 - b. Preserve commercial conformance status within sections along US-1 predominated by existing commercial businesses and disturbed lands.
 - c. Encourage sun-setting of intensive commercial uses within sections along US-1 predominated by natural habitat or native-dominated landscape, relatively sparse development and relatively few businesses.
 - d. Preserve commercial use status for existing waterfront uses that support the tourist-based and working waterfront-based economy.
 - e. Give consideration to whether the property provides a unique or outstanding opportunity for enhancement of design, connectivity and other community goals, especially along the US-1 corridor.

✓ **Strategy 1.4**

Designate the Community Center and focal areas as identified by the Key Largo community during the master planning process. Adopt these areas as regulatory overlays of the Land Use District Map.

✓ *Action Item 1.4.1:* Amend the Monroe County Code (MCC) to adopt an overlay district for the Tradewinds Community Center, according to the boundaries shown in Figure 4. The purpose of the Tradewinds Community Center is to retain and expand the mix of retail, public parks and affordable housing uses prevalent in this area for the encouragement of commerce, employment and recreational opportunities available at maximum convenience to the public. The following Land Development Regulations shall apply to development within the Tradewinds Community Center:

- a. Commercial retail high intensity uses that generate more than one hundred and fifty (150) trips per one thousand square feet of floor area shall be permitted.
- b. Outdoor storage and outdoor retail sales as a principal use shall be permitted.
- c. Create and adopt, as part of the MCC, design and development guidelines for the Tradewinds Community Center overlay district.

✓ *Action Item 1.4.2:* Amend the MCC to adopt an overlay district for the Downtown Key Largo Community Center according to the boundaries shown in Figure 5. The purpose of the Downtown Key Largo Community Center is to retain and expand the mix of retail, tourist and public park uses prevalent in this area to encourage commerce, employment and recreational opportunities at maximum convenience to the public. The following Land Development Regulations shall apply to development within the Key Largo Community Center:

- a. Outdoor storage and outdoor retail sales as a principal use shall not be permitted.
- b. Commercial retail high intensity uses that generate more than one hundred and fifty (150) trips per one thousand square feet of floor area shall not be allowed.
- c. Outdoor storage and outdoor retail sales as a principal use shall not be allowed.
- d. Create and adopt, as part of the MCC, design and development guidelines for the Downtown Key Largo Community Center overlay district.

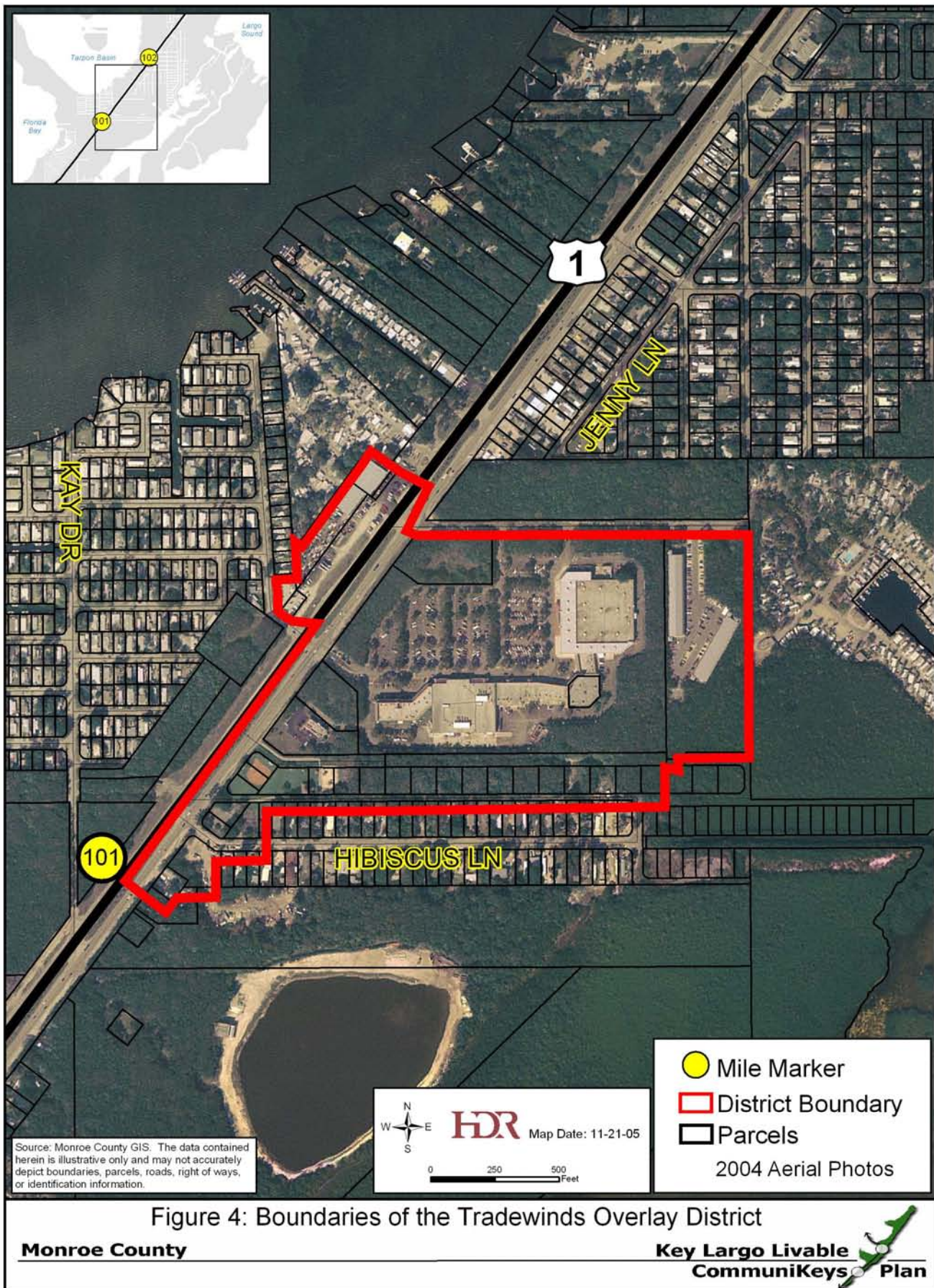
✓ *Action Item 1.4.3:* Amend the MCC to adopt an overlay district for the Welcome Center according to the boundaries shown in Figure 6. The following Land Development Regulations shall apply to development within the Welcome Center:

- a. Commercial retail high intensity uses that generate more than one hundred and fifty (150) trips per one thousand square feet of floor area shall not be allowed.
- b. Outdoor storage and outdoor retail sales as a principal use shall not be allowed.
- c. Create and adopt, as part of the MCC, design and development guidelines for the Welcome Center Identity Center overlay district.

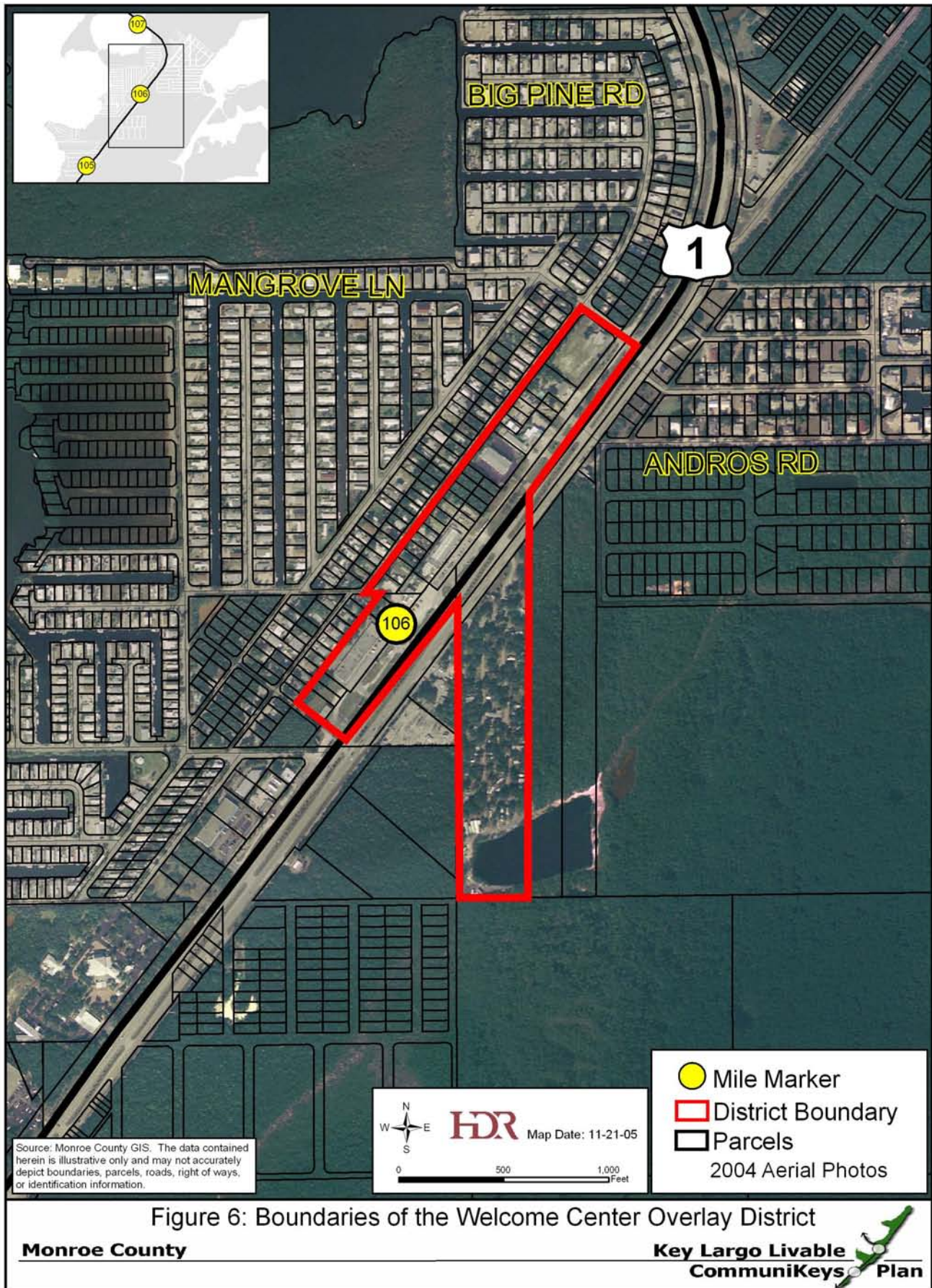
Action Item 1.4.4: Consider amendment to the MCC to adopt an overlay district for the Government and Cultural Center according to the boundaries shown in Figure 7. The following Land Development Regulations shall apply to development within the Government and Cultural Center:

- a.* Commercial retail high intensity uses that generate more than one hundred and fifty (150) trips per one thousand square feet of floor area shall not be allowed.
- b.* Outdoor storage and outdoor retail sales as a principal use shall not be allowed.
- c.* Adopt a final site and building design plan for the Government and Cultural Center that promotes the efficient use of the new government and cultural center property for the maximum enjoyment of the residents of Key Largo.

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5. COMMUNITY CHARACTER ELEMENT



**GOAL TWO:
PRESERVE AND ENHANCE IMPORTANT COMMUNITY QUALITIES
WITHIN THE PLANNING AREA THAT DEFINE KEY LARGO'S
CASUAL VILLAGE STYLE ATMOSPHERE AND NATURAL
ENVIRONMENT AND THAT ENHANCE ITS STATUS AS THE FIRST
ISLAND OF THE FLORIDA KEYS.**

Current Conditions Summary

The discussions of community character and concerns raised by the public during the LCP process generally fell within two areas: the character of the US-1 corridor and the character of community activity centers. US-1 in Key Largo is a four-lane through highway that also serves as a local “main street.” The northbound and southbound lanes are separated by a median throughout the entire length of the planning area. From MM 97 to MM 100 the median is approximately 175 feet wide and occupied mainly by commercial uses. Between MM 100 and MM 107, the median is about 25 feet wide and undeveloped.

The Key Largo/US-1 Corridor Enhancement Plan was developed concurrently with the LCP. It contains recommendations for improving vehicular movement and bicycle/pedestrian movement throughout the planning area. It also contains suggested design ideas for the four community activity centers identified by the public. Among the general recommendations were the following:

- Improve the Overseas Highway Heritage Trail bicycle route alignment.
- Enhance the trail system with route improvements and signage that encourage use of the trail and increases the enjoyment of riders.
- Develop design criteria to guide improvements to the public right-of-way.
- Provide a network of secondary sidewalks connected to the trail and bicycle routes. Provide sidewalks within the community identity center locations.
- Include sidewalks in all future roadway improvement projects.
- Require new development to create functionally linked sidewalk sections as part of site plan approval process.
- Enhance roadway design to increase awareness of community identity center locations while maintaining essential traffic flow through the areas.
- Include provisions for new development that allow for the creation of sidewalks.
- Adopt design guidelines for community identity centers and for rural segments.

Analysis of Community Needs

Corridor Enhancement. The Key Largo/US-1 Corridor Enhancement Plan recommendations need to be implemented through the appropriate mechanisms including regulatory, programs and interagency coordination. This plan also needs to be coordinated with acquisition efforts to preserve remaining native habitat that provides green space along the highway.

Focal Areas. Specific plans are needed to guide the coordination and development of public transportation infrastructure in the Community Centers and Focal Areas. Guidelines are also needed to promote the visual character of private development within these areas.

Recommended Strategies and Actions

Strategy 2.1

Finalize and implement the Key Largo/US-1 Corridor Enhancement Plan recommendations to improve the safe, integrated movement of all transportation modes and to improve visual character.

 *Action Item 2.1.1:* In the land acquisition plan, prioritize Tier I and Tier III SPA bordering US-1 that contain native habitat providing green space along the corridor.

 *Action Item 2.1.2:* Once proposed layouts for the four focal areas are finalized, coordinate with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) on the existing Heritage Trail Plan and future plans for the US-1 corridor. Among the items to be coordinated are:

- a. Any changes that apply to the US-1 roadway (e.g., deceleration lanes).
- b. Frontage road design and space needs.
- c. Curbs, gutters, curb cut locations.
- d. Road and trail landscaping.
- e. Bicycle and pedestrian path design and space needs.
- f. Signage.
- g. Possible mechanisms for funding and implementation of the final plans.

 *Action Item 2.1.3:* Inventory and evaluate DOT surplus right-of-way parcels and coordinate with the FDOT regarding the possibility of transferring them to the County where appropriate.

✓ *Action Item 2.1.4:* Coordinate with the FDOT and FDEP on design standards for new development and redevelopment that will require sidewalks or encouraged installation of sidewalks, bike paths and pedestrian ways so that all sites throughout the corridor are linked with respect to function and design.

✓ *Action Item 2.1.5:* Continue to coordinate with the FDOT and FDEP on roadway signage and landscaping to encourage a design motif that fits the Key Largo community.

✓ *Action Item 2.1.6:* Identify and evaluate options for removal of billboards from the US-1 corridor through purchase or other means.

✓ **Strategy 2.2**

Adopt a guiding site plan for each focal area that attempts to coordinate access, movement, parking and landscaping issues in a manner that promotes a Key Largo visual character and maximum use-ability.

Action Item 2.2.1: Adopt a conceptual layout for appropriate infill of the Downtown Key Largo focal area. Ensure that the County's regulatory and planning framework enables the plan, including:

- a. Appropriate zoning of individual properties for the envisioned range of uses.
- b. Appropriate allowable densities and intensities for the envisioned range of uses.
- c. Flexibility in bulk regulations, shared service areas (e.g., parking and loading) and other site planning regulations to accommodate the Downtown Key Largo Community Center design.
- d. Architectural guidelines that encourage development that is in keeping with the vision for the area and that, while generally reliant on recommendations, coordinate closely with regulatory standards for easy implementation.
- e. Identification of opportunities for public/private partnerships including site access improvements and the installation of landscaping and other common area improvements.
- f. Evaluation of the stormwater runoff conditions and recommendations for resolving drainage problems.

✓ *Action Item 2.2.2:* Adopt a conceptual layout for appropriate infill of the Tradewinds focal area. Ensure that the County's regulatory and planning framework enables the plan including:

- a. Appropriate zoning of individual properties for the envisioned range of uses.

- b. Appropriate allowable densities and intensities for the envisioned range of uses.
- c. Flexibility in bulk regulations, shared service areas (e.g., parking and loading) and other site planning regulations to accommodate the Tradewinds Community Center design.
- d. Possible development of architectural guidelines to be encouraged (not necessarily required) and mechanisms to make the guidelines coordinate closely with regulatory standards for easy implementation.
- e. Identification of opportunities for public/private partnerships (e.g., waiving or reducing impact fees) for building of infrastructure, installation of landscaping and other common area improvements.
- f. Acquisition of remaining vacant lands within the community center including hammock parcels north and south of Tradewinds Shopping Center and parcels east of Hibiscus Park. Clean up and restore these areas and incorporate them into the design plan.

✓ *Action Item 2.2.3:* Adopt a conceptual layout for redevelopment and infill of the Welcome Center Focal Area. Ensure that the County's regulatory and planning framework enables the plan including:

- a. Appropriate zoning of individual properties for the envisioned range of uses.
- b. Appropriate allowable densities and intensities for the envisioned range of uses.
- c. Flexibility in bulk regulations, shared service areas (e.g., parking and loading) and other site planning regulations to accommodate the design.
- d. Possible development of architectural guidelines to be encouraged (not necessarily required) and mechanisms to make the guidelines coordinate closely with regulatory standards for easy implementation.
- e. Identification of opportunities for public/private partnerships (e.g., waiving or reduction of impact fees) for building of infrastructure, installation of landscaping and other common area improvements.

✓ *Action Item 2.2.4:* Adopt a final site and building design plan for the Government and Cultural Center Area that promotes the efficient use of the new government and cultural center property for the maximum enjoyment of the residents of Key Largo.

✓ *Action Item 2.2.5:* Adopt building design guidelines for each of the focal areas that fit the desired types of uses, layout and character of each center.

Action item 2.2.6: Consider providing signage that clearly marks the transition from the Key Largo area to the Tavernier area and coordinate it with the Tavernier planning efforts.

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GOAL THREE

PROTECT AND ENHANCE HISTORIC, CULTURAL AND ARCHEOLOGICAL RESOURCES WITHIN KEY LARGO TO MAINTAIN THE INTEGRITY OF THE COMMUNITY'S UNIQUE CHARACTER.

Current Conditions Summary

As of 2005, there are 13 structures within the planning area that are considered significant as historic structures. Several other buildings in the area are older than 50 years of age but have not been inventoried or evaluated.

Analysis of Community Needs

There is a need to inventory and evaluate the remaining structures within the planning area that are older than 50 years to determine if the owner should be encouraged to apply for historic designation. These structures should be periodically monitored regardless of their status. In addition, local historians and librarians should be actively engaged in the promotion of the history of the area through the heritage trail, development of community design standards, cultural events and other activities promoting the history of the Key Largo area.

Recommended Strategies and Actions

Strategy 3.1

Continue to review and inventory potential building or site resources that may reach the 50-year age threshold or that are significant for other reasons relevant to local history and culture within the planning area.

- ✓ *Action Item 3.1.1:* Using the GAI survey and the Monroe County Property Appraiser's parcel data, update the list of built sites that are 50 years or older and evaluate the sites for potential historic or cultural significance.
- ✓ *Action Item 3.1.2:* Using local resources (library, local historians), identify and inventory all structures (regardless of age) and non-built sites of historical and cultural significance in the planning area.

Strategy 3.2

Encourage the preservation and enhancement of identified historic and cultural resources to promote Key Largo's community character.

Action Item 3.2.1: Encourage owners of significant structures to apply for historic designation through the existing Monroe County process. Review the "Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings" which provide the current guidance for maintenance, alteration and

redevelopment of these structures and refine these standards as needed to be consistent with historical structures and sites in Key Largo.

✓ *Action Item 3.2.2:* Establish an identification system within the Monroe County building permit tracking for historic and contributing properties in order to ensure the protection and proper maintenance of such properties.

✓ *Action Item 3.2.3:* Coordinate with the FDOT and FDEP to incorporate informational media on historical and cultural resources and special places in Key Largo, where appropriate, through educational signage, brochures and other means.

✓ **Strategy 3.3**

Expand availability of sites for holding cultural events by incorporating an indoor auditorium and investigating creation of an outdoor performance space into the Government and Cultural Center focal area plan and explore additional opportunities for expanding the availability of space for cultural events.

6. HOUSING ELEMENT



GOAL FOUR

MAINTAIN THE AVAILABILITY OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND WORKFORCE HOUSING FOR LOCAL RESIDENTS WHILE PRESERVING THE CHARACTER OF THE COMMUNITY.

Current Conditions Summary

Affordability of housing for working residents in the Florida Keys has received significant attention in the last few years. Monroe County's land development regulations have defined affordable housing and provided limited incentives for its development for many years. These regulations were aimed at providing housing for lower wage earners such as service workers, unskilled laborers, minimum wage earners and single-earner households. The annual income for these workers has historically met the criteria to allow them to qualify for affordable housing as defined in the MCC. The most that a single household can earn and still qualify for affordable housing is 120% of the county's median monthly household income

Until recently, housing availability for workers earning more than 120% of the median county income was fairly good, especially non-waterfront housing. Households edging out of the affordable category include professional salaried workers, skilled workers/tradesmen and two-income households. These families may easily earn \$90,000 per year or more annually but are generally below \$200,000 per year in earnings. With the recent rapid changes in the real estate values in the Florida Keys the typical dry-lot single family home often purchased by this group is now out of their projected affordable price range based on income. The steady availability of low mortgage interest rates especially over the past few years and the controlled allocation of permits for new residential units in the Keys have combined to make house prices increase at alarming rates. Data from Tri-Services Multiple Listing Service shows that the average price of a non-waterfront single family home in the Keys rose to \$774,000 in the first quarter of 2005, a 35% increase over first quarter average price of 2004¹. While the market may not be able to continue to sustain price increases at this rate, it is clear that household income for the "workforce" group has not experienced a concurrent increase at a rate sufficient to qualify them for basic housing, even with the lower interest rates. The availability of 100% financing, no down payment, and other such options available in this volatile market make for an unstable situation for these families even if they qualify.

Units qualifying as "affordable" under the MCC must meet regulations listed under Section 9.5-266 and other sections of the MCC. Not the least of these regulations is the requirement for the affordable unit to remain affordable (i.e., available to qualifying families) for 50 years from the time it is established.

The term "workforce housing" is commonly used to refer to housing units that employees working in Monroe County could qualify to purchase or those units which are currently owned by members of the County's workforce.

¹ Coldwell Banker Schmitt Real Estate Company; www.realestatefloridakeys.com

The market-rate housing that our existing workforce has been utilizing has no such restrictions and is now being lost. Units that were purchased by members of the workforce prior to the dramatic increase in housing prices are being sold at the highest possible market price. Houses sold at the highest market price will not likely be available to new members of the workforce who may not be able to purchase the unit at the higher market price.

Another aspect of housing that must be considered for the Key Largo planning area is the fact that a considerable percentage of the lower-wage worker group is bussed in daily from Miami-Dade County via public and private transportation. Some local businesses (especially hotels) provide daily van transportation for their employees. The primary means of transit however is the JGT Bus Service which is a contracted extension of the Miami-Dade County Public Transit System. A total of 168,000 persons used the system in 2004, averaging 500 persons per day. The service currently runs to MM 50 however a connector line has been put into place to complete the service to Key West. This mass transit system is expected to continue to experience a high level of use and, with a significant number of housing units being constructed in south Miami-Dade County, will offer an alternative to workers who otherwise would require housing in the Keys. Key Largo is expected to continue to have a significant contingent of lower-income wage earners commuting from outside the County.

Analysis of Community Needs

Existing Housing Stock. Many of the housing units owned or rented by the resident workforce are not deed-restricted affordable housing, however these units have traditionally housed the workforce. These units should be retained through various mechanisms where possible. It would also be helpful to determine and monitor how businesses are meeting their employee needs such as through the hiring of commuters from Miami-Dade County or through the provision of employee housing.

Creation of Affordable Housing. Affordable workforce housing should be created within the planning area. Opportunities for the creation of this type of housing County-wide are being explored now. Some options include developer-supplied employee housing and County-sponsored housing programs.

Recommended Strategies and Actions

Strategy 4.1

Maintain and improve the existing stock of affordable housing.

- ✓ *Action Item 4.1.1:* Inventory the existing affordable and workforce housing stock within the Key Largo planning area, including government housing, units that are legally bound to affordable standards, neighborhoods and developments that have traditionally housed workers, and employee housing (both on and off employer premises).
- ✓ *Action Item 4.1.2:* Provide incentives to developers to retain affordable units by awarding dwelling unit allocations for building elsewhere.

Strategy 4.2

Enable and promote the creation of affordable and workforce housing.

✓ *Action Item 4.2.1:* Require new developments to supply or fund employee, affordable and workforce housing in return for receiving dwelling unit or commercial floor space allocations.

✓ *Action Item 4.2.2:* Create incentives for the incorporation of employee housing in redeveloping properties, especially in Community Centers.

Action Item 4.2.3: Explore the possibility of County-sponsored housing on County-owned land either through a type of land trust arrangement, traditional rental, or other means.

✓ *Action Item 4.2.4:* Determine to the extent possible the demographics of commuting workers in the Key Largo planning area including typical job types, income levels, residency, hours of work, turnover rates and other useful statistics. Update the information periodically to gauge the level of dependency of the Key Largo economy on commuting workers.

7. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ELEMENT



GOAL FIVE
PRESERVE, MANAGE, AND RESTORE WHERE APPROPRIATE, THE
NATURAL RESOURCES WITHIN THE PLANNING AREA BY
PROVIDING OPEN SPACE, PROTECTING WATER QUALITY AND
ACQUIRING AND MANAGING ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE
LANDS.

Current Conditions Summary

Approximately 50% (2,630 acres) of the parcel coverage in the planning area is within developed and disturbed lands including rights-of-way. Another 1,815 acres (about 34% of the planning area) is within wetlands and submerged lands. These areas have been off limits to development for several years in Monroe County. The remaining 16% of the parcel coverage within the planning area (about 819 acres) is within tropical hardwood hammock habitat. With wetlands being off limits, hardwood hammock habitat is the most vulnerable to development and clearing.

Acquisition of tropical hardwood hammock and wetlands in the area is actively ongoing. The two main acquisition agencies working within the planning area at this time are the State of Florida and the Monroe County Land Authority. In December 2004 the State of Florida added over 6,000 parcels throughout the Keys to their priority acquisition list under the Florida Forever Program. These are parcels within the Tier I areas in the Tier System and include both uplands and wetlands. The FDEP State Lands Division is actively mapping and appraising these parcels during 2005. Offers for acquisition will be made as appropriate. The Monroe County Land Authority has been concentrating purchasing efforts mainly on uplands.

In addition to the direct acquisition of these habitats, Monroe County has addressed their protection over the years through numerous regulatory means including limits on clearing of habitat, assigning of negative points to proposed development in these habitats under the permit allocation systems, and required compensation for removal of native plants. The Tier System continues these restrictions while simplifying the process that land owners must complete to obtain a permit.

North Key Largo, adjacent to the planning area to the northeast provides prime habitat for four federally endangered species, the American crocodile, Key Largo wood rat, Key Largo cotton mouse and Schaus' swallowtail butterfly. The Florida manatee, bald eagle and wood stork are also either common in the planning area or have been documented recently. In 1997 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) began requiring endangered species consultation for development of specified habitat within the planning area. This included parcels within the planning area that contain primarily tropical hardwood hammock. Owners who want to develop these parcels must contact the FWS to determine if habitat on their parcel serves or has the potential to serve the needs of federally endangered species. A Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) under Section 10 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) could be required to develop the parcel. To date, no parcel applying for development has been deemed significant habitat and no HCPs have been required.

Key Largo also serves as habitat for several animal and plant species listed by the State of Florida as either endangered, threatened or species of special concern. Most of these species occur in wetlands and hammock habitats. Monroe County currently addresses protection of these species through the protection of their habitat including complete protection of wetlands (i.e., development prohibited) and severe restrictions on development of hardwood hammock under the Tier System.

The improvement and maintenance of good water quality is a primary goal within the planning area as it has been throughout the Florida Keys especially over the last 10 to 15 years. Establishment of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary in 1992 was in large part a response to a perceived decline in water quality and the health of the coral reef tract along the Keys. Key Largo has long touted itself as the “dive capital of the world” and this identity has set it apart from the rest of the Keys. Monroe County, in conjunction with state and federal agencies, has worked to implement program and regulatory strategies to help improve water quality. Some of the strategies have included adoption of master plans for sewage treatment and stormwater runoff, the elimination of illegal cesspits, improved stormwater management requirements for site development, and the planning of central wastewater collection and treatment. The latter action resulted in the establishment of the Key Largo Wastewater Treatment District in June 2002, an independent utility district with an elected board. The district is responsible for planning, constructing and managing central wastewater collection and treatment for all of Key Largo, excluding Ocean Reef. Construction of a central treatment plant within the planning area is currently underway. The treatment of wastewater must meet stringent state standards for nutrient removal and it must be operational by the year 2010.

Analysis of Community Needs

Tier System/Acquisition. The Tier System needs to be adopted in order to provide a basis for the acquisition of environmentally sensitive lands. Parcels within Tier I lands have already been submitted to the State of Florida and added to the Florida Forever priority acquisition list. The County should track the State’s progress in purchasing these lands within the planning area. The County should be prepared to submit lands that fall within the definition of Tier III SPA to the State for future ranking processes and encourage acquisition of sensitive habitat within these areas. In the meantime, they should be a priority for County acquisition. This includes lands providing green space on US-1 and elsewhere and lands that can possibly be restored to enhance and expand existing habitat.

Habitat Management. One aspect of land acquisition and habitat protection that presents a difficulty in the planning area is the management of acquired lands. Due to the proliferation of platted subdivisions and roads, acquired parcels may form a fragmented patchwork of mixed habitat and disturbed areas. These areas are difficult to manage due to increased resource and manpower requirements and the fact that access/disturbance factors are almost impossible to control in some areas. In the Florida Keys, major habitat management activities include the removal of trash and debris, the removal of invasive exotic vegetation, restoration of habitat through mainly through topographic restoration, and maintenance of parcels in an exotics-free condition.

Threatened and Endangered Species. The adoption of the Tier System is intended to provide for protection of habitat while increasing landowner certainty as to the status of developability of their parcels. The recent status of FWS review of development decreases that certainty. Therefore, the County may need to explore options with the FWS including the possibility of completing a Habitat Conservation Plan for the listed species concerned within the planning area. This plan could incorporate many of the actions that the County and State are already taking such as acquisition and lower points for applications in Tier I or Tier III SPA.

Water Quality. The County is currently addressing the impacts of development on water quality through the implementation of the wastewater and stormwater master plans for the Florida Keys. The County needs to track the progress of these activities and ensure timely implementation within the planning area as well as coordinating these actions with design and roadway improvements called for in the Key Largo/US-1 Corridor Enhancement Plan.

Recommended Strategies and Actions

Strategy 5.1

Adopt the Tier System that specifies Tier I and Tier III lands and Tier III SPA for purposes of guiding development while retaining species habitat and natural areas for acquisition.

Strategy 5.2

Prepare and implement an acquisition strategy for the planning area that prioritizes highly valuable habitat first and that is coordinated with state and federal agencies.

 *Action Item 5.2.1:* Create a basis for acquisition priorities within the planning area that considers wildlife and plant habitat and restorable area first, followed by planning priorities such as green and open space, water access or views, aesthetics and public spaces.

 *Action Item 5.2.2:* Track the status of Tier I parcels in the planning area with respect to the Florida Forever program including the criteria upon which purchase offers are made, the locations where offers are made, the locations where lands are purchased and the final status of parcels not purchased. For parcels containing hardwood hammock on which offers were made but purchase was not completed, evaluate the importance of the parcel with respect to priority criteria for acquisition and the feasibility of a second attempt at purchase by Monroe County if the criteria warrants.

 *Action Item 5.2.3:* Prioritize Tier III SPA according to criteria specified pursuant to Action Item 5.2.1 and implement acquisition and surplus lot reduction actions in these areas as described in Strategy 1.2.

 *Action Item 5.2.4:* Implement acquisition of wetlands as a low priority, especially those parcels where at least one attempt at acquisition has already been made by the County or

the State. Resources should not be expended in making offers to wetlands owners but acquisition may be considered where requested by an owner.

Strategy 5.3

Create and implement a management strategy for County-owned acquisition lands aimed at maintaining and restoring native habitat.

-  *Action Item 5.3.1:* Inventory and evaluate all County-owned acquisition lands to identify and list management needs and challenges. Set up a system for monitoring of these lands and distributing contact information to the public in order to provide for immediate response to complaints and property-related problems such as illegal dumping or camping.
-  *Action Item 5.3.2:* Establish management goals and objectives for the various types of lands inventoried and evaluated under Action Item 5.3.1. The goals and objectives may be aimed at natural resources management, public access management, and other opportunities.
-  *Action Item 5.3.3:* In the management plan, include opportunities and basic plans for habitat restoration. Coordinate with Monroe County Public Works to tailor road maintenance standards in natural areas where the County retains significant lot ownership to further site management and restoration goals.
-  *Action Item 5.3.4:* Develop and carry out a work plan that implements these goals and objectives including a plan for funding and for coordinating actions with other agencies as applicable.

Strategy 5.4

Consider the development of a Habitat Conservation Plan, pursuant to Section 10 of the Endangered Species Act and in coordination with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, for the planning area that addresses the habitat needs of federal endangered species and provides greater certainty to owners of habitat with respect to development.

Strategy 5.5

Continue to ensure the implementation of the County's stormwater and wastewater master plans in order to improve water quality within the planning area. Make sure that infrastructure planning and installation is well coordinated with future plans for transportation and design changes in the planning area as guided by the Key Largo/US-1 Corridor Enhancement Plan.

8. ECONOMIC ELEMENT



GOAL SIX ENCOURAGE REDEVELOPMENT AND INFILL DEVELOPMENT THAT SUPPORTS AND ENHANCES THE TOURIST-BASED ECONOMY OF THE PLANNING AREA.

Current Conditions Summary

Touting itself as the “dive capital of the world”, Key Largo has been a significant tourist destination for the past 30 or more years. Diving and fishing are the primary tourist activities and a large retail, lodging and service economy has grown around the tourist industry. During the Key Largo LCP workshops, the community expressed a desire to enhance Key Largo’s reputation and attraction as a tourist destination, not simply as a stopover to other parts of the Keys. Planning and regulatory programs have not provided businesses with flexibility to enable them to maximize their economic viability when opportunity arises. For example, although the transferable development rights (TDR) program was intended to encourage consolidation and infill of commercial space to better serve residents and tourists, site design standards typically constrained site building layouts to the point that developers were prevented from taking advantage of the TDR program. In fact, it could often be a challenge to develop the allocated density/intensity of a site much less any additional transferred density/intensity. Regulatory constraints have also limited site design creativity that would allow for vehicular and pedestrian mobility, appropriate infill and mixed uses, and other such design features. Regulations governing the redevelopment and improvement of nonconforming uses are inflexible and provide few options.

The tourist economy depends heavily on the availability of tourist housing in transient dwelling units such as hotels, campgrounds, and rental units. The restrictions on the number of available permits in the Florida Keys along with the increasing demand for permanent and seasonal housing has caused an abrupt increase in the redevelopment of existing transient dwelling units to condominiums. While some of these condominiums will likely be marketed as rental units, the true future availability of tourist accommodations is unknown at this time. A preliminary inventory of the planning area shows that there are approximately 2,016 hotel units, rental units and campground spaces handled by approximately 40 owners or property managers. A one-year moratorium on the redevelopment of recreational vehicle parks and mobile home parks was adopted and initiated in June 2005. However, hotel units were not included in the moratorium.

Analysis of Community Needs

Design Flexibility to Retain Businesses. In order to implement design themes and achieve site planning goals for the Community Centers, Focal Areas and the remainder of the US-1 corridor, changes will be needed to provide greater flexibility to business owners to encourage appropriate redevelopment and creative design. Besides changes in bulk regulations, the nonconforming use section of the MCC should be reviewed. For Community Centers, design and density standards should encourage infill and site mobility options, especially for pedestrians. The existing regulations mainly need to be better coordinated to make the different site design standards compatible and flexible and to allow them to be tailored towards the needs of Community Centers and other infill areas.

Tourist Housing Retention. The perceived loss of tourist housing should be investigated further. Existing tourist housing should be inventoried by type. The local community and Chamber of Commerce can assist in identifying changes and trends in the availability and type of tourist housing. It is not certain at this point what, if any, action might be needed to ensure the retention of adequate tourist housing to meet future needs.

Recommended Strategies and Actions

Strategy 6.1

Retain existing desirable businesses that support the economic tourist base of the community.

Action Item 6.1.1: In reviewing the status of nonconforming commercial uses (see Strategy 1.3), the suitability of the subject property to support the local tourist economy and to provide opportunity for enhancement of community design and connectivity goals may be considered.

✓ *Action Item 6.1.2:* Review the existing land development regulations pertaining to density, intensity and site design layout and nonconforming uses/structures and coordinate and update these to encourage the retention of businesses that support the tourist-based economy and the design standards of the community including increased infill and mobility in Community Centers.

✓ **Strategy 6.2**

Inventory and evaluate tourist housing trends and determine what, if any, actions are needed to ensure that tourist housing of appropriate types are retained in numbers and locations adequate to meet future needs in the planning area.

GOAL SEVEN

RECOGNIZE WATER-DEPENDENT AND WATER-RELATED COMMERCIAL USES AS AN IMPORTANT SOURCE OF ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY WITHIN THE PLANNING AREA.

Current Conditions Summary

An important attractant to Key Largo is the presence of traditional waterfront businesses such as dive shops, restaurants and other such uses that are enhanced by a water location. Some of these structures are nonconforming with respect to flood zone regulations, setbacks, stormwater handling and other regulations which post-date their construction. This affects the extent to which they can be repaired or replaced if they are damaged and places limitations on improvement.

Commercial fishing in the planning area is part of the only export industry in the County. Monroe County has historically been at or near the top in revenue produced from commercial fishing when compared with all other counties in Florida. Key Largo Fisheries is a major commercial operation located south of US-1 on Ocean Bay Drive (MM 99). The only other commercial fishing area remaining in the planning area is located on Garden Cove Drive in a mixed residential and waterfront commercial area. These types of working waterfront areas are similar to some of the traditional waterfront tourist uses in that they are older properties with structures that are functionally suited to the use but may be nonconforming with respect to current regulations. They also can require significant land-based support for storage of traps and equipment and processing of the product. Again, retention of traditional working waterfront businesses such as commercial fishing operations, marinas and boatyards is desirable to support as diverse an economy as possible.

Throughout the County, many marinas are being redeveloped to private marinas serving only condominiums. A one-year moratorium on the redevelopment of working waterfront and marinas serving the public was adopted and initiated in July 2005. This trend will be studied over the next year and recommendations made on what actions local government can take to ensure the economic viability of the community. Another aspect relating to waterfront access is the presence of traditional offshore mooring areas in the Key Largo planning area. Currently, these liveaboard and cruising vessels utilize existing marinas with access to services.

The 2010 Comprehensive Plan in Objective 212.1 and Chapter 9J-5.12 of the Florida Administrative Code identified the need to inventory and consider the redevelopment of water-dependent and water-related uses. The public place a high value on water-dependant or water-related uses and their presence adds to the attraction Key Largo has on visitors.

Water-dependent uses include marinas, commercial fishing, boat launching facilities and beaches (Table 6). Water-related uses include concession stands, bait and tackle shops and fish houses. Hotels and restaurants that are located on the water while not water dependent or related as in the traditional definition are economically enhanced by the location on the water and are included in the definition here (Table 7).

Restaurant seating and bars and concessions that are located within the shoreline setbacks and on docks within the planning area are economically enhanced and dependent on their location in close proximity to the water. These uses do not conform to the current environmental protection regulations.

Table 6 Water Related and Water Dependent Commercial Uses			
Name	Land Use	Location	Primary RE #s
Oceanside Marina Inc.	Marina	E 2 nd St.	00554760
Rock Harbor Marina	Marina	36 E 2 nd St.	00554710
Rock Harbor Marina Rentals	Marina	97951 Overseas Hwy	0090650
Calypso Rest & Ocean Bay Marina	Restaurant & Marina	5 Seagate Blvd	00502320
Pilot House Restaurant & Pilot House Marina	Restaurant & Marina	13 Seagate Blvd	00502370
Key Largo Fisheries	Marina and Fish Processing	Ocean Bay Dr	00502870
Ocean Divers & Sharkey's Bar	Dive Shop, Bar and Restaurant	522 Caribbean Dr.	00453475.0135
Horizon Divers	Dive Center	100 Ocean Dr.	0453450.
Best Western	Hotel	201 Ocean Dr.	
Key Largo Harbor Marina	Marina	Ocean Dr.	00453440.0005
Tarpon Flats Inn & Marina	Hotel and Marina	29 Shoreline Dr.	00469720.
Marine Resources Development & Jules Undersea Lodge	Off shore hotel base and marina	51 Shoreline Dr.	00469430.
Koblick Marina & Hideout Restaurant	Marina	49 Shoreline Dr.	00469640.; 00469650.
Garden Cove Marina and Buzzard's Roost Restaurant	Marina & Restaurant	21 Cayman Lane	00539850.
Captain Slate's Atlantis	Dive Center	51 Garden Cove Dr.	00539700.
Travis Boat Center	Boat sales & Service	106280 Overseas Hwy	00538040.000000;
Ocean Divers		105800 Overseas Hwy	00532701.042
Rowell's Marina	Marina (closed)	104550 Overseas Hwy	00508200; 00508210.
Amoray Dive Resort	Motel	104250 Overseas Hwy	00439600.
Kelly's Motel and Dive Center	Motel, Dive Center	104220 Overseas Hwy	00439620.
Neptune's Hideaway Motel Dive and Snorkel Resort	Motel (closed)	104180 Overseas Hwy	00439630.0001
Caribbean Club	Restaurant and boat launch		00439690.000000; 00439700.000000
Black Water Marina	Marina	103950 Overseas Hwy	0084960.
Quiescence Snorkel and Diving	Dive Center	103680 Overseas Hwy	0085780.0001
Dolphin Cove	Dolphin Research	101900 Overseas Hwy	00543940.
Seafarer Resort Motel and Dive Center	Motel and Dive Center	97684 Overseas Hwy	00091010.

Table 7 Water Related/Economically Enhanced by Location on the Water			
Name	Land Use	Location	Primary RE #s
Mariners Club	Condo/hotel	O.K.	00554891
Mariners Club Rest. Mandalay Bay Marina and Tiki Bar	Restaurant & Marina	80 E 2 nd Ave.	00554740
Pilot House Restaurant & Pilot House Marina	Restaurant & Marina	13 Seagate Blvd	00502370
Marina Del Mar and Coconuts Bar and Restaurant	Hotel, Restaurant & Bar	527 Caribbean Dr.	00453475.0141
Port Largo Villas	Hotel, Condo	417 Bahia Ave.	00453475.019209
Holiday Inn	Hotel & Marina	99701 Overseas Hwy	00453440.0006
Ramada Inn	Hotel	99751 Overseas Hwy	00453440.0002
Horizon Divers	Dive Center	100 Ocean Dr.	0453450.
Best Western	Hotel	201 Ocean Dr.	
Key Largo Harbor Marina	Marina	Ocean Dr.	00453440.0005
Tarpon Flats Inn & Marina	Hotel and Marina	29 Shoreline Dr.	00469720.
North Star Resort	RV Park (closed)		00083970.
Flamingo Restaurant	Restaurant	47 Garden Cove Dr.	00539710.
Azur Del Mar	Motel	104300 Overseas Hwy	00439590.
Hobo's Marina and Restaurant	Marina & Restaurant	104200 Overseas Hwy	00439630.
Florida Bay Outfitters	Kayak sales & tours	104050 Overseas Hwy	004397100.000000
Italian Fisherman	Condo, Restaurant Closed		00439720.
Sundowner's Restaurant & Cactus Jack Bar	Restaurant & Bar		00084930.
Senior Frijoles	Restaurant	103900B Overseas Hwy	0084990.0001
Marriott Bay Beach Resort	Hotel	103800 Overseas Hwy	0085080.
Captain Jax	Trailer Resort and Marina	103650 Overseas Hwy	00085760,
King's Kamp	RV Park		00085820.
Howard Johnson's Hotel	Hotel	102400 Overseas Hwy	00543080
Largo Lodge	Motel	101740 Overseas Hwy	00492670.
Campers Cove Trailer Park	RV Park	101640	00492750.0001
Coastal Waterways	RV Park	101620 Overseas Hwy	00492800.
Largo RV Park	RV Park	101600 Overseas Hwy	00492780
Calusa Resort	RV Park		00541810.
Marr Bayside Resort	Motel	99470 Overseas Hwy	00504170.0001
Snook's Bayside	Restaurant	99470 Overseas Hwy	00504170.
Café Largo/Bayside Grill	Restaurant	99530 Overseas Hwy	00504080.
Sunset Cove Resort	Motel	99360 Overseas Hwy	00504070.
Hungry Pelican Motel	Motel	99340 Overseas Hwy	00504060.
Bay Cove Motel	Motel	99446 Overseas Hwy	00504040
North Star Resort	RV Park	99096 Overseas Hwy	0088030.
Rock Reef Lodging	Motel	98750 Overseas Hwy	00091050.
Kona Kai Resort	Motel	97802 Overseas Hwy	00052595.
Bay Harbor Lodge	Motel	97702 Overseas Hwy	00091020.
Riptide	RV Park & Marina	97680 Overseas Hwy	00091090.
America Outdoors	RV Park (being converted to hotel and restaurant	97450 Overseas Hwy	00555010.

Analysis of Community Needs

Retain Traditional Working and Public Waterfront. The rapid changeover of traditional waterfront businesses including marinas, commercial fishing operations, restaurants, charter fleet operations and similar uses to private condominiums and marinas has been a cause for concern in the Florida Keys. A moratorium on this type of redevelopment is in effect and the matter is being studied. Recommendations should be developed to help deal with this phenomenon Keys-wide. Another need is to formalize and provide land-based support to existing offshore mooring areas within the planning area.

Design Flexibility to Retain Businesses. Key Largo would like to retain its casual water-oriented community atmosphere to help maintain its tourist-based economy. New development regulations are needed to help retain traditional waterfront businesses. These new criteria will likely include relaxation or flexibility in existing requirements for setbacks, parking, buffers, landscaping and other bulk regulations and a complete overhaul of the nonconforming use/structures sections.

Recommended Strategies and Actions

✓ Strategy 7.1

Identify and evaluate commercial waterfront businesses that support the tourist-based economy and the traditional waterfront industries of the planning area. Provide for their preservation and continued viability where appropriate.

- ✓ *Action Item 7.1.1:* Preserve and protect the tourist-based and working waterfront businesses such as public marinas, waterfront restaurants, charter operations, multi-use resorts, commercial fishing and boatyards through amendment of the Land Development Regulations including regulations regarding nonconforming uses and structures.
- ✓ *Action Item 7.1.2:* Monitor the ongoing study on waterfront development and evaluate the recommendations to determine their applicability to the planning area and their potential for the retention and preservation of these types of businesses.
- ✓ *Action Item 7.1.3:* Develop and adopt flexible design standards aimed at retaining traditional waterfront businesses to promote function, water access and over-water views. Flexibility in nonconforming use/structure standards, setbacks, parking, buffers, landscaping and other bulk regulations may be adopted to retain waterfront character and function while providing for basic safety, stormwater handling, flood protection and other concerns.
- ✓ *Action Item 7.1.4:* Provide for mooring field development with reliable land-based support in appropriate areas of the planning area.
- ✓ *Action Item 7.1.5:* Inventory the existing commercial uses on the shoreline and document which uses are currently within the shoreline setback.

✓ *Action Item 7.1.6:* Amend the Land Development Regulations to permit existing commercial uses to remain within the shoreline setbacks as long as storm water is managed and shoreline vegetation maintained.

✓ *Action Item 7.1.7:* Prohibit new commercial uses within the shoreline setback unless permitted as accessory uses.

Action Item 7.1.8: Ensure that accessory uses permitted within the shoreline setback are properly managed to protect near shore waters.

Action Item 7.1.9: Water-related, water-dependent and commercial businesses enhanced by their location on the water are of vital economic and cultural importance to Key Largo and are to be protected and enhanced through amendment of the Land Development Regulations including the development and adoption of flexible design standards aimed at retaining traditional waterfront businesses to promote function, water access and over-water views. Flexibility in nonconforming use/structure standards, setbacks, parking, buffers, landscaping and other bulk regulations may be adopted to retain waterfront character and function while providing for basic safety, stormwater handling, flood protection and other concerns.

✓ *Action Item 7.1.10:* The conversion of water-related, water-dependent, and commercial businesses enhanced by their location on the water to businesses that do not similarly require location on the water, is prohibited.

✓ *Action Item 7.1.11:* When creating community design standards or revising regulations, ensure that community organizations and non-profits that serve the community are not unduly burdened and can remain viable.

✓ *Action Item 7.1.12:* Encourage businesses to retain existing and include new public waterfront access. Rely on the waterfront use study to formulate recommended mechanisms for encouragement.

9. TRANSPORTATION ELEMENT



GOAL EIGHT
PROVIDE RESIDENTS AND VISITORS OF THE PLANNING AREA
WITH A SAFE AND USEABLE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM FOR
VEHICLES, BICYCLES AND PEDESTRIAN WITH OPPORTUNITIES
FOR TRANSIT SYSTEMS WHERE APPROPRIATE.

Current Conditions Summary

US-1 is a State facility operating as both a through highway and a local “main street” roadway. This road must meet State concurrency requirements for traffic LOS. The Florida Keys concurrency standard is speed-based rather than volume based and requires that, at a minimum, an overall average speed of 45 miles per hour (mph) be maintained over the entire length of the island chain (from MM 112.5 to MM 4 on Stock Island) and that any individual segment not fall below 45 mph average speed. As of 2005, the Florida Keys and the Key Largo segment were in compliance with concurrency standards. As the standard is not volume-based, available surplus traffic volume can be difficult to predict in terms of numbers of added trips. However, with the projected growth anticipated for the planning area over the twenty-year planning horizon, the projected LOS is expected to be met.

Together, the Key Largo/US-1 Corridor Enhancement Plan and the Overseas Heritage Trail Master Plan lay out a basic concept of the envisioned US-1 corridor plan through the planning area. Reconfigurations to enhance the transportation corridor are proposed for the four focal areas. These designs include the use of controlled access points, frontage roads, deceleration lanes and traffic circles. The engineering feasibility of the conceptual highway designs has not yet been assessed.

Right-of-way ownership and parcel status throughout the corridor has not been studied to date. US-1 through the planning area was built upon what were previously two separate rights-of-way controlled by the Florida East Coast Railway and the old State Road Department. On older properties, buildings were often placed on or very near the property line and vehicles parking in front of a business are often wholly or partially on the right-of-way. Currently, the FDOT routinely retires surplus right-of-way through various mechanisms including transferring or selling it to adjacent property owners. This affects the current parking situation and configuration throughout the planning area.

Other general corridor deficiencies have been identified, including lack of curbs and controlled access, unsafe conditions involving potential vehicle/bicycle/pedestrian conflicts, inadequate cross walks, and other problems. These problems have not yet been specifically analyzed in detail along the corridor with respect to vehicular traffic. The Overseas Heritage Trail Master Plan does lay out specific recommendations for the bicycle/pedestrian trail in the planning area. Trail routes that cross the highway are noted at three points: Ocean Bay Drive, U.S. Post Office and Key Largo Chamber of Commerce/Welcome Center. Signalization or minimal upgrade of the existing condition is called for in the master plan. The plan also notes “points of attraction” that correspond with the Community Centers and the Welcome Center Focal Area. The plan also lays out specific design standards for all portions of the trail categorized according to the different existing right-of-way conditions found along the highway.

The transportation network in Key Largo incorporates some mass transit, such as the JGT bus line (an extension of the Miami-Dade public transit system), Monroe County Social Services, Greyhound bus line and private van pools. The latter two are limited-use facilities. Greyhound Lines has 13 stops in the Florida Keys, one of which is a limited-service stop in Key Largo. It is noted, however that this stop is located at MM 99.6 Overseas Highway, in or near the Downtown Key Largo Community Center. Van pools are used by some businesses, mainly hotels, to transport workers mainly to and from Miami-Dade County. Monroe County Social Services provides pre-arranged transportation for registered elderly and disabled clients. This service operates from 7:00 am to 6:00 pm on weekdays and is tailored to the user's origin/destination needs and schedule. The JGT bus line provides commuter service from Miami-Dade County down to MM 50 in Marathon at this time with a connector line completing service to Key West. Total ridership for 2004 was 168,000 passengers with an average of 500 per day. The bus is run on a "hail stop" model with no set locations for bus stops. However, there are identifiable locations where workers gather and the bus regularly stops, such as at the proposed Community Centers. During the community workshop discussions some participants expressed a desire for a transportation shuttle designed for use by residents and tourists to serve the planning area and link the focal areas.

Analysis of Community Needs

Corridor Design. Much of the community's discussion on improving the planning area focused on upgrading and improving the design of the US-1 corridor. It will be essential to partner with FDOT to make the most of the suggested improvements. The Key Largo/US-1 Corridor Design Plan is a first step in accomplishing the community's vision of Key Largo. Changes may involve reconfiguration of specific areas, installation or changed signalization and crosswalks, and installation of curb cuts or bicycle/pedestrian improvements along US-1. One challenge will be to accomplish these changes in a coordinated fashion over the entire planning area while ensuring that the LOS will be maintained well into the future.

In order to accomplish this, a detailed surveying and engineering study must be made of the entire corridor with specific focus on the conceptual upgrades proposed in the corridor design plan. The study must include identification of all rights-of-way, identification of existing encroachments or use, evaluation of traffic routing options for the proposed frontage road locations, incorporation of the bicycle/pedestrian movement including the design of safe crossovers and identification of opportunities for funding and implementation. The existing regular JGT transit stops and possible future transit stops for a tourist-oriented service should also be incorporated into the study to determine how they could fit into the plan.

Recommended Strategies and Actions

Strategy 8.1

Implement the transportation portions of the Key Largo/US-1 Corridor Enhancement Plan while maintaining traffic LOS standards.

- ✓ *Action Item 8.1.1:* Conduct a detailed survey and engineering study of the conceptual design corridor plan that incorporates bicycle/pedestrian trail plans and opportunities to better service existing and planned transit systems.
- ✓ *Action Item 8.1.2:* Immediately coordinate with the FDOT to stop all surplus right-of-way transfers until the County finishes the engineering study and evaluates them
- ✓ *Action Item 8.1.3:* FDOT to retain right-of-way or County to secure FDOT right-of-way where deemed essential for public improvements including frontage roads, bicycle and pedestrian paths, access and buffer area.
- ✓ *Action Item 8.1.4:* Work with the Key Largo Chamber of Commerce to explore the possibility of design and funding of a tourist-oriented local shuttle service that would connect Community Centers and Focal Areas as well as other businesses and points of interest.

Strategy 8.2

Review local roadways for opportunities to provide safer traffic and bicycle/pedestrian facilities.

10. RECREATION ELEMENT



GOAL NINE
PROVIDE ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR ENHANCEMENT OF
EXISTING RECREATIONAL FACILITIES, EXPANSION OF ACTIVE
AND PASSIVE LAND-BASED RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES AND
SEEK TO EXPAND PUBLIC SHORELINE ACCESS FOR WATER-BASED
RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR ALL AGE GROUPS WITHIN THE
COMMUNITY.

Current Conditions Summary

There are six established State and County parks in the planning area. Three are devoted primarily to active recreation and three are oriented towards water access and passive use. All but the Garden Cove site are fully developed. Key Largo is very fortunate to have numerous neighborhood parks included within their platted subdivisions. These homeowner parks provide open space, limited amenities such as picnic tables and, often, water access (including boating) to members of the areas homeowner's association. The extent of these facilities has not been inventoried. Several County roadways terminate on the shoreline (Table 8) and provide limited public access to the ocean and bay.

Table 8: County Right-of-Ways Ending at the Shoreline	
97 – 106 Oceanside	97 – 106 Bayside
Ocean Drive	Ocean Bay
Coral	Sunset
2 nd Avenue	Shore
Coco Plum	Kay
Harbor	Road E
Canal	Road D
Ocean Shores	Road F
Marina	Canal
Jones Road	Crane
Oceanview	Poinciana
Bonefish	Bonito
Bass	Summerland
Pompano	
Barracuda	
Oceana	
Taylor	
<i>SOURCE: County GIS 2005</i>	

The draft Monroe County Parks and Recreation Master Plan recommends the development of Garden Cove Park with a boat ramp and beach (shoreline) access facilities. Also, development of the Government and Cultural Center will offer limited park facilities and shoreline access for residents and tourists within the planning area.

An inventory of community organizations and services such as churches, clubs, athletic associations, and non-profit groups has not been completed. These entities also offer supplementary recreational and cultural opportunities to the community.

Analysis of Community Needs

Parks. The recommendations of the Monroe County Parks and Recreation Plan should be implemented including park maintenance and enhancement, better incorporation of State Park amenities in the planning area by improved connectivity to the community, and identification and improvement where necessary of neighborhood pocket parks. Community facilities such as churches, clubs, athletic associations, civic organizations and other such groups should be identified. The recreational and cultural benefits of these organizations to the community should be encouraged.

Water Access. The County will evaluate existing rights-of-way that terminate at the shoreline in order to determine the County's waterfront site ownership status. The possibility of improving or developing any of these sites to public water access should be evaluated. At the same time, an inventory of neighborhood parks that provide water access should be completed along with the number of residents eligible to join memberships and use these parks. The purchase of more waterfront for public access similar to the Government and Cultural Center site is important and should be completed where possible. With the previously mentioned changeover of publicly accessible waterfront to uses such as condominiums and private marinas, public purchase of some sites may be one way to ensure future available public access. At the same time, some means of encouraging businesses to provide public water access may also be identified and implemented.

Recommended Strategies and Actions

Strategy 9.1

Provide for maintenance and enhancement of active and passive recreational opportunities and for public shoreline access throughout the Key Largo planning area.

- ✓ *Action Item 9.1.1:* Implement the recommendations of the Monroe County Parks and Recreation Master Plan within the planning area including improvements to be made at the Garden Cove and Government and Cultural Center sites.
- ✓ *Action Item 9.1.2:* Inventory and evaluate neighborhood pocket parks, neighborhood water access and County roads that terminate at the shoreline. Determine if any improvements/expansion is appropriate and how, and program these items into the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.
- ✓ *Action Item 9.1.3:* Water access shall be preserved and maintained in the public interest. Prohibit the abandonment of roads that end at the shoreline, including those listed in Table 6.
- ✓ *Action Item 9.1.4:* Identify locations and prioritize land acquisition for small local "pocket-parks" in neighborhoods, which do not have existing public or private recreational facilities within walking distance of the residents being served.

- ✓ *Action Item 9.1.5:* Coordinate with state and federal agencies, non-profit organizations, as well as other private and public entities to ensure that passive and active recreational opportunities are being provided to all users, in conformance with standards adopted by the American Disabilities Act.

✓ **Strategy 9.2**

Develop a system that will guide the acquisition, design, and development of county owned public parks and recreation facilities within the Upper Keys to ensure that the future needs of the community are being met.

- ✓ *Action Item 9.2.1:* Establish a Parks and Recreation Forum for the Upper Keys, including representatives from public and private agencies as well as interested citizens who are responsible for overseeing parks and recreation development and to ensure the delivery of effective and efficient services.
- ✓ *Action Item 9.2.2:* Build and foster meaningful public and private partnerships within the community to ensure equitable distribution of services throughout the Key Largo MM 97 to MM 107 planning area.
- ✓ *Action Item 9.2.3:* Prioritize development and services which will maximize the number of opportunities while accommodating the needs of all users.
- ✓ *Action Item 9.2.4:* Utilize available resources and potential funding opportunities to fund capital improvements projects to enhance parks and recreation facilities, services, and operational support.

✓ **Strategy 9.3**

Enhance current passive recreational areas to provide adequate accessibility and outdoor education opportunities to all users, while maintaining the sensitive natural and cultural resources within the planning area.

- ✓ *Action Item 9.3.1:* Provide a variety of appropriate quality passive recreational activities and outdoor educational opportunities where consistent with overarching environmental conservation responsibilities.
- ✓ *Action Item 9.3.2:* Design and establish trail improvements to blend with the natural environment. Provide improvements and management practices in sensitive habitats adequate to protect the natural resources.
- ✓ *Action Item 9.3.3:* Advocate responsible stewardship of natural resources through the development of an interpretive education program within passive recreational areas.
- ✓ *Action Item 9.3.4:* Prioritize the acquisition of public recreational lands to maximize the preservation of scenic vistas, undeveloped views, and access to water resources.

- ✓ *Action Item 9.3.5:* Provide a trail system off the U.S. 1 corridor, which posted access points and passive recreational facilities to accommodate appropriate uses that connect existing and future parks to the greatest extent practical.

✓ **Strategy 9.4**

Protect and maintain all existing public shoreline access points within the planning area.

- ✓ *Action Item 9.4.1:* Identify potential shoreline access points and parcels within the planning area.
- ✓ *Action Item 9.4.2:* County-owned land with access to the shoreline shall not be abandoned by the county
- ✓ *Action Item 9.4.3:* Reclaim county-owned public shoreline access points.
- ✓ *Action Item 9.4.4:* Identify and post signage at all public access points whether active or passive sites to identify county ownership and applicable county regulations.

Action Item 9.4.5: Work with interested residents to provide low-impact amenities at public access points within their neighborhoods.

✓ **Strategy 9.5**

Make additional shoreline access available to the public, which offers opportunities for safe and diverse water-based activities while protecting the integrity of the natural environment and the residential community character.

- ✓ *Action Item 9.5.1:* Make the acquisition of land with shoreline access a priority between MM 97 and MM 107.
- ✓ *Action Item 9.5.2:* Coordinate work and activity with other agencies and groups, including but not limited to the Florida Keys Overseas Paddling Trail Program, Monroe County Marine Resources, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the DEP Division of Recreation and Parks, to further ensure harmony and consistency with the overall protection and preservation of beaches and shoreline within the county.

Action Item 9.5.3: Investigate amendment of the MCC and develop programs to work with the private sector to acquire, maintain and improve shoreline access for the public.

- ✓ *Action Item 9.5.4:* Implement appropriate mechanisms for regulating boating activities located within 300 feet of county owned public land with shoreline access in order to provide appropriate location for diverse water-based recreation activities and to ensure public safety and environmental protection.

Fiscal Implication and Anticipated Capital Improvements Projects

The Parks and Recreation element outlines potential capital improvement projects, from the acquisition of pocket parks to the improvement to existing facilities and shoreline access points. However, to determine costs of the proposals outlined in the plan, the types of facilities the community wants must first be determined. The ongoing Parks and Recreation Master Plan process will shed some light on what improvements or acquisitions need to take place, but until the time that specific projects are identified, a cost estimate is not possible.

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11. COMMUNITY FACILITIES ELEMENT



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GOAL TEN

PROVIDE ADEQUATE PUBLIC FACILITIES TO SERVE THE EXISTING AND FUTURE NEEDS OF THE PLANNING AREA.

Current Conditions Summary

Sanitary Sewer. The treatment of sewage and the disposal of wastewater within the study have historically been accomplished either through on-site treatment and disposal using septic tanks or through intermediate sized, privately-owned wastewater treatment package plants. The Comprehensive Plan requires that sewage treatment in the Florida Keys meet Advanced Wastewater Treatment (AWT) criteria in the Keys by 2010. The Key Largo Wastewater Treatment District is currently planning and installing central wastewater collection and treatment services that are expected to meet AWT standards by 2010.

Schools. The Monroe County School Board oversees the public education requirements throughout the entire Florida Keys. The status of school enrollment and capacity is summarized below from the 2004 Monroe County Public Facilities Capacity Assessment Report:

- Service Area – The planning area is included within School Subdistrict 1 which includes Key Largo Elementary/Middle (K-8) and Coral Shores High School (9-12) (serving Key Largo but located in Islamorada outside of the planning area).
- Existing Capacity – The recommended capacity of Key Largo Elementary/Middle is 1,240 students, and Coral Shores High School is 868 students.
- Existing Service – The (2005) current student population of Key Largo Elementary/Middle is 1,003 students, and Coral Shores High School has 792 students.
- Projected Demands – Since 1992 when the student population was 1,310, the elementary and middle school student population has declined, and this trend is expected to continue. During the same timeframe, the high school student population rose. This rise was not in direct proportion with the aging of the student population. The School Board's student enrollment projections do not identify any significant change in student populations.
- Planned Improvements – While overall use at the facility has declined, increased Department of Education (DOE) land requirements have not been met. An additional 43,100 square feet of school space is needed to comply with DOE requirements, but there are site constraints at the elementary school that limit options for expansion.

Potable Water. The Florida Keys Aqueduct Authority (FKAA) is the provider of potable water in Monroe County. The FKAA system uses the Biscayne Aquifer as a groundwater supply from wellfields located west of Florida City, which is located north of Key Largo.

According to the Monroe County Public Facilities Capacity Assessment Report (2004), potable water is provided through a 36-inch diameter pipeline in the planning area. Although countywide demand for potable water increased in the last reporting year by 2%, the report confirms that excess supply is

available in the current SFWMD consumptive use permit to accommodate anticipated increase in demand. The FCAA has a long range capital improvement plan for both the distribution and transmission systems which is expected to provide the needed resources for the planning horizon.

- **Service Area.** The entire planning area is served by the Florida Keys Aqueduct Authority.
- **Existing Capacity.** The FCAA water use permit allows for a maximum of 19.93 MGD average daily withdrawal and a 23.79 MGD maximum daily withdrawal to the Florida Keys.
- **Existing Service.** In 2003, the FCAA distributed an average of 17.29 MGD and a maximum of 22.2 MGD to the Florida Keys.
- **Projected Demands.** The FCAA 2004 projection identifies an average withdrawal of 17.57 MGD and a maximum daily withdrawal of 22 MGD to the Florida Keys.
- **Planned Improvements.** The FCAA has a long range capital improvement plan for both distribution and transmission systems retrofit totaling \$67.5M over the next 5-years. Portions of these projects include planned subdivision distribution system improvements in the planning area to remove galvanized piping.

Fire and Rescue Services. Public safety facilities include the typical services needed for community protection and safety. The following services are provided:

- **Sheriff.** The County Sheriff's Office provides Law Enforcement service to all of the Florida Keys. According to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) 2003 Total Crime Index, the reported annual crime rate has been dropping in the Florida Keys and declined by 10.4% in the last reporting year.
- **Fire Service.** Stations #24 and #25 of Key Largo Volunteer Fire Rescue, located at MM 107 and MM 99, serve the planning area.
- **Emergency Management Services (EMS).** Monroe County's Emergency Management Services Department serves as the central public information source for any planning area emergency and acts as coordinator in disaster situations. One major function of EMS is hurricane preparedness and emergency evacuation of residents. EMS has designated Key Largo as Evacuation Zone #6. Key Largo Elementary School and St. Justin Catholic Church serve as emergency evacuation shelters for Category 1 and 2 storms.

Analysis of Community Needs

A review of the existing KL-LCP planning area conditions and the 2004 Monroe County Public Facilities Capacity Assessment report identifies the following trends:

- The County's school student population has been decreasing over the past five years. The demand for public school facilities does not appear to be generated by increasing population as projections of student populations remain constant and overall population

age rises. However, the need for improved facilities to meet Department of Education requirements has been documented within the planning area.

- The County's functional population (permanent and seasonal residents) has increased by 3.5% over the past five years. With this increase, the potable water demand for the County has increased by 21% over the past five years. The trend for additional water consumption needs to be reviewed to promote reduced consumption and conservation measures.
- A public sanitary sewer system will continue to be needed and is included in the Sanitary Wastewater Master Plan.
- The Fire Marshall identified the need for increased access and availability of fire wells throughout the planning area.

Recommended Strategies and Actions

Strategy 10.1

Supplement the annual public facilities concurrency report and capital improvements report with a section detailing the status of facilities within the Key Largo planning area.

Strategy 10.2

As part of development and redevelopment efforts within the planning area and as part of implementation of public design improvements, increase the availability of fire suppression facilities according to standards set by the Monroe County Fire Marshall.

-  *Action Item 10.2.1:* Bring all residences to within 800 feet of a fire hydrant and all commercial uses within 500 feet of a fire hydrant by working with the Monroe County Fire and Rescue and the Florida Keys Aqueduct authority as the two agencies continue to install hydrants and replace aqueduct pipes.
-  *Action Item 10.2.2:* Identify priority areas for pipe upgrading based on a fire needs assessment conducted by Monroe County Fire Rescue Services and work with the Florida Keys Aqueduct Authority to include priority areas into their work plan.
-  *Action Item 10.2.3:* Identify necessary fire well and hydrant location during construction plan review and make necessary fire wells and hydrants a requirement of construction plan and building permit approval.
-  *Action Item 10.2.4:* Continue the program of the Fire rescue Services to inspect salt water wells annually to determine continuing suitability as a supply of water for fire suppression. Order repair or replacement of fire wells as necessary.

Strategy 10.3

Ensure that new and expanded public facilities are constructed and operated within the planning area according to concurrency and community-identified needs including wastewater handling, stormwater handling, transportation capacity, parks and recreation facilities, library facilities and schools/community facilities.

✓ *Action Item 10.3.1:* Install a sanitary sewage treatment system in accordance with the Monroe County Sanitary Wastewater Master Plan. Components may include centralized or cluster facilities for collection and treatment, all of which shall be developed on disturbed and/or scarified uplands or in existing rights-of-way. The projected sewage treatment requirements for the planning area should be revisited and confirmed to be consistent with the final development plan adopted pursuant to the Master Plan.

Action Item 10.3.2: Allow installation of stormwater treatment systems in accordance with the Monroe County Stormwater Management Master Plan. Any facilities installed for centralized collection and treatment should be developed on disturbed and/or scarified uplands or in existing rights-of-way.

Fiscal Implications and Anticipated Capital Improvement Projects

The largest know public facilities project to be undertaken by the County over the 20 year planning horizon is the provision of sanitary sewer services to the planning area. According to the Sanitary Wastewater Master Plan, the planning area has several “hot spots” identified for priority installation of sanitary sewer facilities. The Key Largo Wastewater Treatment District is the deciding body for they provision of wastewater service to the planning area.

Improvements are currently underway to the Key Largo Fire Station at MM 107.

12. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT ELEMENT



GOAL ELEVEN

CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE LOCALIZED SENSE OF COMMUNITY, WHICH ENCOURAGES CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT, IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING OF THE MASTER PLAN FOR KEY LARGO.

Current Conditions Summary

The Key Largo LCP process included extensive public involvement through newsletters, interview, press releases and workshops. Many of the ideas expressed and the resulting goals formulated will take continued direct involvement from the community to be able implemented.

Analysis of Community Needs

Continued community involvement is needed to update and implement the plan. Input from the community will be needed during future study and design efforts and direct partnering with the community may be needed to implement some identified action items.

Recommended Strategies and Actions

Strategy 11.1

Provide updates to the community on all aspects of plan implementation and the status of public projects in the planning area

✓ *Action Item 11.1.1:* Continue to distribute information through press releases and the postings on the County web site regarding status of plan and upcoming meetings.

✓ *Action Item 11.1.2:* Continue to provide speakers to civic and service organizations to discuss LCP Master Plan issues.

✓ **Strategy 11.2**

Establish a committee to advise the Planning Commission on project proposals within the Key Largo LCP planning area, especially on the US-1 corridor.

✓ *Action Item 11.2.1:* The Board of County Commissioners shall appoint five to seven committee members to include representatives from the business community, the general citizenry, and design professionals to serve as volunteers reviewing and commenting on plans for projects and improvements within the planning area.

✓ *Action Item 11.2.2:* The County shall provide administrative support for the committee and all business of the committee shall be conducted in accordance with County and State law regarding conduct of public business.

✓ **Strategy 11.3**

Develop a detailed staff work program to implement the Key Largo Livable CommuniKeys Master Plan.

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