



CITY OF FREEPORT 2005 DESIGN CHARRETTE

I. Background

The City of Freeport hired its first in-house professional planner in January of 2005, establishing a City Planning Department. The City Planner polled the City Council, Planning Board, the community organizations and citizens to evaluate how the community viewed the City's growth and the City's ability to shape its future. The overwhelming response was that the community welcomed growth but wanted to preserve Freeport's history and preserve the character of Freeport. Many of those interviewed wanted to see development which was "attractive" and "fit the community". The Planner requested and received permission from the City Council to hold a design charrette to formalize the community's vision for growth.

II. Public Notice

The Freeport Design Charrette was advertised in several ways; ¼ page ads in the DeFuniak Herald-Beach Breeze, fliers mailed to all residents and businesses within Freeport, and to the bulk of residents/businesses within the Freeport Franchise area. Fliers were made available at the City Water Department and were posted at City Hall. The Planning Department also sent an e-mail notice to everyone on the department's e-mail notification list.

III. Program Outline

October 20, 2005	Introduction/Goals and Objectives
Speaker:	Latilda Henninger, Freeport City Planner
November 3, 2005	Historic Structures and Events/Freeport's Character
History of Freeport	Becky Buxton, Freeport Historian
Preserving the Past	Lois Orsak, Freeport Town Planters
Uniting the Past with the Future	Scott Brannon, District 1 County Commissioner
November 17, 2005	Landscaping /Architectural Elements/Signage
How Right-of Ways Function	Tonny Peters, Freeport City Engineer
Landscape to Shape a City	Brett Smith, Landscape Architect
Inviting Architecture	Shelton Stone, Architect
December 1, 2005	Wrap Up/Scheduling for Planning Board Review and Recommendations/Discuss of Process
Speaker:	Latilda Henninger, Freeport City Planner

IV. Goal and Objectives



The following goal and objectives were identified during the Freeport Design Charrette:

Goal: To preserve the history and character of Freeport, while creating a viable and sustainable community.

Objective 1: To identify and preserve the history of Freeport.

Significant preservation discussions centered around historic structures, historic sites, historic persons, and historic events.. Archeology was also identified, specifically Native American artifacts and structures.

Objective 2: To identify and enhance the character of Freeport based on its unique characteristics.

Characteristics identified with the City of Freeport included but were not limited to: ship-building industry, farming community, lumbering/mills/naval stores, Eglin AFB liaison, fishing village, port town.

Objective 3: To create scenic corridors which are attractive, inviting and pedestrian-friendly.

III. Participation

The charrette was held at the Freeport Community Center over an 8-week period from October 20th through December 1, 2005. The following table lists the number of persons who signed in; there were a quite of few people who did not sign in, but participated. The average sign-in attendance was 33. There were usually 5-10 people who came in late so the actual average attendance was 38-45 people per session.

October 20, 2005:	32
November 3, 2005:	35
November 17, 2005:	29
December 1, 2005:	34

36 of those who attended submitted preference surveys. The make-up of those persons who participated was a mixture of persons from many different walks of life.

Freeport Residents:	11
Freeport Businesses:	5
Franchise Area Businesses:	5
Franchise Area Residents:	20
Freeport Based Non-Profit:	11
Town Planters:	6
Friends/Library:	5
Habitat/Humanity:	1
Grit & Grace:	4
Little League:	1



- Parent Teacher Assoc.: 1
- YMCA: 2
- Freeport Business Assoc.: 2
- Land Use Professionals: 7
(planner, architect, surveyor, engineer)
- Real Estate Professionals: 10
(realtor, broker, developer, developer representative, development consultant)

IV. Preference Survey

The following table gives the results of the preference survey. The percentage of the overall surveys received is shown in parenthesis.

	Not Important	Important	Very Important
Freeport needs to identify and preserve its history.	0	6 (16%)	30 (83%)
Freeport needs to identify and enhance the character of Freeport.	0	8 (22%)	28 (77%)
Freeport needs to create scenic corridors to make the City of Freeport attractive and inviting to the traveling public	1 (2%)	11 (30%)	24 (66%)
Sidewalks	0	16 (44%)	20 (55%)
Street Trees	1 (2%)	11 (30%)	23 (63%)
Landscaping	0	13 (36%)	23 (63%)
Signage regulations	3 (8%)	14 (38%)	19 (52%)
Roof pitch regulations	12 (33%)	14 (38%)	10 (27%)
Porches for benches/chairs	11 (30%)	16 (44%)	9 (25%)
Functional vertical/horizontal shutters	14 (38%)	13 (36%)	8 (22%)
Unified park bench/waste receptacle/street light design	2 (5%)	18 (50%)	16 (44%)
Staggered facades for non-residential structures ("big box") over 5,000 square feet	6 (16%)	17 (47%)	13 (36%)
Façade materials	7 (19%)	19 (52%)	10 (27%)

Of the choices given, 100% of those surveyed believe that Freeport needs to preserve its history and enhance its character. 96% of those surveyed believe Freeport needs to create attractive travel corridors.

Of the scenic corridor design elements given, the majority agreed that those items were either important or very important.



The preference surveys provided space for additional comments regarding the previous items. Comments received were as follows:

- ✓ *Based upon FDOT relocation of 331N, it is important that the City Planners of Freeport look to the future face of Freeport, define the center of town by Charter and preserve the historical features which have defined Freeport.*
- ✓ *We have recently moved to Freeport. We are encouraged that you are seeking input and that you are planning for growth. We are excited about living here and look forward to being part of this community.*
- ✓ *That Freeport have a firm reputation as being one area with an established and known rule that no developers even dare approach without already having a plan that incorporates design of all structures with the mind to protect and enhance the whole environment.*
- ✓ *We need a bike path along Highway 331.*
- ✓ *Excellent opportunity for community awareness and involvement.*
- ✓ *Excellent timing! Pro-active planning, ahead of the coming "boom", is critical to avoiding mistakes/regrets and ensuring quality built environment. The consensus-building process will result in "ownership" of the City's future.*
- ✓ *Freeport should focus on providing services such as sidewalks and enhanced public parks as priority. The creation of scenic guidelines would affect business (new and established) in their ability to invest in future to meet growth needs. Any money spent to satisfy a scenic ordinance at this time would be unnecessary. Freeport should spend priority efforts on infrastructure improvements to meet growth changes and quality of life. This means all tax dollars.*
- ✓ *I feel that pedestrian traffic should be an important consideration in all future plans involving Freeport. I would like to see as many old oaks saved with any development and wetlands protected.*
- ✓ *Need an overall architectural plan design and theme consistent to history.*
- ✓ *Overhead electrical: ugly, dangerous, unstable, and unsightly.*
- ✓ *Sidewalks: balance of straight and curved concrete walks, wood bridges; line with various tropical palm trees, oaks (shade providers, etc.) create tropical/sub-tropical ambience.*
- ✓ *Would like to see a village center (or circle) where we can park on periphery (outside center) then walk to various facilities, e.g. stores, City Hall, parks, Community Center, Post Office, etc.*
- ✓ *Landscaping with native plants (imported palms just don't look natural here)*
- ✓ *Within the major corridors of Freeport, a Design Review Board should be installed.*

IV. Process and Implementation

1. Design Charrette
 - a. Goals and Objectives
 - b. Preference Survey
 - c. Consensus Building
2. Planning Board Workshop(s)
 - a. Charrette Results
 - b. Areas of Impact/Overlays
 - c. Options
 - d. Structure & Administration
 - e. Recommendations
3. Draft Ordinance(s) Developed



- a. Goals and Objectives
 - b. Area(s) of Impact
 - c. Overlay Zones
 - d. Revisions to the Comprehensive Plan
 - e. Revisions to the Land Development Code
4. City Council Public Hearings
 - a. Review of Design Charrette Summary
 - b. Review of Planning Board Recommendations
 - c. Review of Proposed Ordinance(s)
 5. Ordinance Administration by City Planning Division

Note: This information is being forwarded as a portion of the City's Evaluation and Appraisal Report due in 2007. The EAR-based amendment will contain information gleaned from the Design Charrette.