



Agenda Item Summary

File #: 25-00322

Agenda Date: 4/17/2025

Agenda Item Name:

Bike Path Tourism and Economic Development

Presenter:

Alison Moss, Jessica Hurov, Sean McLendon

Description:

Staff will provide a brief County update on bike path tourism and economic development opportunities in Waldo. Information will be shared on bicycle and pedestrian safety, the Safe Streets SS4A High Injury Network study, roadway infrastructure investments, and Waldo's Forward Focus economic development and tourism priorities.

In January 2025, the Forward Focus team had an opportunity to hear about Waldo residents' economic development needs. They are very proud of their community and want to see it thrive. A key theme was the desire to build upon Waldo's authentic character rather than see it replaced by large-scale development. They want to see the empty downtown buildings revitalized and parking issues addressed, as current conditions may deter new business.

Tourism and recreation were identified as significant opportunities, with ideas ranging from a sports complex to festivals that celebrate Waldo's unique culture. There is also a strong desire to promote outdoor activities, especially around Lake Waldo.

Residents also emphasized the need for direct support for local businesses through grants, advertising, and community engagement. They see the expansion of the new Constellation Charter School to attract families to the area. Finally, the development of local food businesses, such as a country store, was discussed.

Waldo residents want economic development that respects their community's identity and provides growth opportunities.

Waldo Forward Focus Economic Development Key Themes:

- **Preserve & Enhance Local Character:**
 - Build upon Waldo's authentic community rather than replacing it.
 - Address empty downtown buildings, parking issues, and low property values to attract businesses.
- **Tourism & Recreation:**
 - Develop tourism opportunities: festivals (Swamp Fest, Sweet Potato Festival).
 - Promote outdoor activities, especially Lake Waldo.

- **Business Support:**
 - Provide grants, advertising, and community engagement to support local businesses.
 - Expand Constellation Charter School to attract families.
- **Local Food Access:**
 - Develop local food businesses, such as country stores.

Forward Focus Summary:

- Waldo residents want economic development that respects their community's identity.
- Tourism, local business support, and improved infrastructure are key priorities.

Other Key Themes:

- **Transportation & Safety:**
 - Address dangerous speeds on 301 and SR 24.
 - Increase police presence and speed limit enforcement.
 - Improve communication with the DOT.
 - Enhance pedestrian safety: crosswalks, caution lights, and signage.
- **Healthcare Access:**
 - Address the lack of healthcare facilities, such as pharmacies, medical facilities, fresh groceries, and senior care.
 - Restore the UF Health Bus with expanded hours.
 - Explore UF Health satellite location or Azalea Health in small municipalities.
 - Assisted living facilities.
- **Community Engagement & Trust:**
 - Improve communication about county programs and events.
 - Increase outreach to residents outside the main Waldo area.
 - Amplify local voices to county departments.
 - Addressing the perception that the county neglects eastern Alachua County.