

# **The Ridge Scenic Highway Annual Report**



**October 1, 2011**

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## **Corridor Information**

**Road:** State Road 17 (Scenic Highway)

**Limits:** US 27 to US 17/92

**Centerline Miles:** 38.7

**Scenic Highway Name:** The Ridge Scenic Highway

**Location:** Polk County

**Date of Designation:** February 2005

## **CME Contact Information**

**Full Name:** Mimi Reid-Hardman

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325 South Scenic Highway

**City:** Lake Wales

**State:** Florida

**Zip:** 33853

**Phone:** (863) 678-4209

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## **Corridor Conditions**

**1. Discuss the condition of the intrinsic resources and any changes in the corridor since designation. If necessary, provide photographs or other graphical representation of the resources.**

Most of the corridor has been resurfaced by the Florida Department of Transportation. We have noticed several of the properties being cleaned up, buildings getting new paint, and new landscaping being installed on the properties along the highway.

**2. What, if any, intrinsic resources have been degraded or altered?**

Lake Wales' Rails to Trails which begins at the SR 17, The Ridge Scenic Highway was officially designated a Florida Greenway in June 2011 by the State of Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Office of Greenways and Trails.

**3. Identify and discuss enhancement projects that have been initiated or completed.**

SR 17 has several projects listed in the FDOT Fiscal Years 2011/12 – 2015/16 Work Program:

- Intersection
  - Lake Marie Drive at SR 17 – intersection improvements and signalization
    - Construction 2013/14 - \$430,000
  - Mountain Lake Cutoff Road at SR 17 – intersection improvements
    - Construction 2011/12 - \$1,103,980
- Resurfacing
  - Lake Wales Area
    - South of Martin Road to South of Mountain Lake Cutoff Road
      - Construction 2011/12-2012/13 - \$6,339,291
  - Lake of the Hills Area
    - North of Starr Avenue to North of SR 540
      - Construction 2011/12 - \$2,005,137

- Haines City Area
  - SR 544 to US 17/92
    - Construction 2012/13 - \$4,639,596
- Drainage Improvements
  - Lake Wales Area
    - Seminole Avenue to Osceola Avenue
      - Construction 2011/12 and 2014/15 - \$982,751
- Transit Improvements
  - Hillcrest Heights to Frostproof Areas
    - From CR 630 to Webber International University
      - Construction 2012/13 - \$23,219
- Sidewalk Improvements
  - Frostproof Area
    - From F Street to I Street
      - Construction 2012/13 - \$43,607

**4. Describe plans for future development in the corridor and how this issue will be addressed.**

Polk County – A couple of years ago Polk County Board of County Commissioner drafted development regulations and land conservation incentives for the SR 17 Ridge Scenic Highway Resource Protection Overlay corridor for the Land Development Code and Comprehensive Plan. The County voted to send these changes to the former Department of Community Affairs (DCA). The DCA rejected the changes that were sent for approval. Since then Polk County has worked with the DCA and the scenic highway stakeholders to make changes to the regulations. This year Governor Scott abolished the DCA and gave more local control of development regulations. On August 9, 2011, the County transmitted the Comprehensive Plan regulations to the State for their review. The County BoCC will hear them again at their adoption hearing on December 6, 2011. The County and stakeholders will work together next year to develop the Land Development Regulations that will support the Comprehensive Plan changes. To obtain more information on these changes visit <http://www.polk-county.net/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=27668>.

The Southeast Polk Selected Area Study was initiated in 2009 by Polk County. The study area includes Babson Park south to Frostproof east of Crooked Lake. The County and stakeholder are currently in the process of developing the Vision Plan for the area. The process includes three stages: (1) Existing Conditions Profile (completed), 2) Vision Plan (on going), and 3) Land Use Plan/Policy development and implementation. To obtain additional information on this study please visit [http://www.polk-county.net/subpage.aspx?menu\\_id=286&nav=bus&id=1276#Southeast\\_SAS](http://www.polk-county.net/subpage.aspx?menu_id=286&nav=bus&id=1276#Southeast_SAS).

**Goals, Objectives and Strategies**

**5. Mention how effective the goals, objectives and strategies have been in accomplishing the Corridor Vision.**

The goals, objectives and strategies contained in the CME's 2010 Corridor Management Plan Update were used to guide in the CME's efforts to implement the Action Plan. Many of the Action Plan items have been completed or initiated by the CME.

**6. Which goals and objectives have been met thus far and how were they accomplished?**

Since designation, the CME has completed and/or started to implement the following goals through their annual action plan.

This year's action plan includes the following (check marks = completed):

CME Organization

- ✓ Develop a list of Priorities to be adopted at the Annual Meeting. *These Priorities should be consistent with the CME's Adopted Action Plan and Annual Reports.*
- Develop Active Committees to help implement Action Plan Priorities
- ✓ Prepare and submit an Annual Report to the FDOT
- ✓ Maintain Active membership
- ✓ Seek grants for events/organizations/other items
- Attend 2011 State Conference

Education/Awareness/Community Participation

- ✓ Develop a Corridor Brochure-Seek Sponsorship
- Speakers Bureau - Local Gov. and Community Group Presentations
- ✓ Media Coverage/Press Releases
- ✓ Website Development/Enhancement
- ✓ Enhance Member and Public Participation
- Start to Plan for a Scenic Highway Event – Citrus, History, Environmental Theme
- ✓ Public Events: trail, bike, triathlon, yard sale
- Create Planners Forum
- ✓ Work with travel agencies to promote The Ridge Scenic Highway

Scenic Highway Enhancement/Protection

- ✓ Support County Focus Group Efforts for County Comp. Plan/LDC Regulations
- ✓ Encourage/Support City Adoption of similar Regulations
- ✓ Encourage and support Grants that are consistent with the CME's Action Plan
- Seek and support protection/Enhancement of key resources of the Scenic Highway (Prominent View Points, Windy Hill, Lake Wales Trail & Trailhead Interpretive Center, Chalet Suzanne, Historic Downtowns)
- Participate in Keep Polk County Beautiful
- Participate in Adopt-A-Highway

**7. Which goals (unlikely in the first year), objectives and strategies have been or need to be modified in order to attain the Corridor Vision?**

We updated all of these with last year's 2010 Corridor Management Plan Update.

**8. What new ordinances, policies and/or regulations have been issued as a result of the scenic highway?**

See Question 4 under Polk County.

**9. Are there proposed ordinances/regulations that may aid goals?**

See Question 4 under Polk County.

**Community Participation Program**

**10. Discuss the effectiveness of the Community Participation Program to date.**

The CME has been very active in engaging local governments and increasing public awareness. The CME schedules board meetings at a different location every other month and provides opportunity for the public to comment on the CME's plans and programs. The group is well covered by the local newspapers which have published numerous articles about the efforts of the CME. See Appendix C for a few copies of articles.

The CME officially released their website ([www.ridgescenichighway.com](http://www.ridgescenichighway.com)) on June 13, 2011. The website features the story of the Scenic Highway and the surrounding resources, events calendar, board and committee meeting agendas and notes, photos and videos, local resources and links to surrounding business and places to visit as well as the CME Board contact information.

The CME continue to use their Visit Florida profile to post information about events throughout the year ([http://www.visitflorida.com/modules/listings/profile\\_page.php/listing.2858//taggroup.Scenic\\_Highway/filtergroup.attractions](http://www.visitflorida.com/modules/listings/profile_page.php/listing.2858//taggroup.Scenic_Highway/filtergroup.attractions)).

This year was the fourth annual “Scenic 17 Sprint Triathlon” held at Webber International University. Alta Vista Sports and Webber International University coordinated the event. This event has brought people from all over the state to recreate on the Scenic Highway and has brought notoriety to the efforts to preserve and enhance the recreation and aesthetic amenities of the highway. Members of the CME were there cheering on the athletes and set up a table to provide information about the Ridge Scenic Highway and to promote the scenic highway’s historical and cultural locations, birding, fishing, and hiking at the many preserves and parks along the corridor. The Scenic Highway logo was also featured on the t-shirts that were given to the athletes, the awards that were passed out, as well as promotional items. Many of the athletes said this was one of the most beautiful and most difficult courses they have competed in. The event had 150 competitors. To get more information on the event please visit <http://www.webberathletics.com/Sports/mcross/2008/scenic17.asp>. See Appendix A for photos.

This year was the first “Scenic 17 Sprint Triathlon” for children held at Webber International University. The event had 25 competitors. To get more information on the event visit <http://www.webberathletics.com/Sports/mcross/2008/scenic17.asp>. See Appendix A for photos.

This year will be the fourth annual “39-Mile Scenic Highway Yard Sale” on November 5, 2011. Last year’s event was a great success. The CME estimates about 5,000 people participated in the event last year. (See Appendix B for the flyer) The goal is to provide local awareness of the Ridge Scenic Highway as a resource for promoting Economic Tourism in the small unique towns and larger city centers. We had six official locations set up for the event: Avenue C, Frostproof; Babson Park, The Former American Bank Parking Lot; Lake Wales, Lake Wales Trail Welcome Center; Lake of the Hills, Community Club; Dundee, Dundee Community Center; Haines City, St. Ann’s Catholic Church. The CME asked for a monetary contribution from the proceeds of each yard sale. The event was widely attended and visitors had a lot of compliments on how well it was organized and the scenic views along the highway.

**11. Provide a synopsis of major issues discussed at public meetings held in the past year and elaborate on any critical issues that have arisen during these forums and how they were dealt with or will be addressed.**

We have not had many public meetings in the past year. We have had four Board meetings; however, no one from the public showed up to the meetings.

**Funding**

**12. Describe corridor funding needs, acquisitions and expenditures.**

The CME has been able to carry out the administration activities (meeting locations, public notices, meeting materials, copies, postage, etc.) without a budget as these items have been provided free of charge. The group has been able to utilize volunteerism and other in-kind services from its members to its advantage.

In implementing the Action Plan, the CME will continue to research grant opportunities. Grants that require a local match may not be feasible in the short term due to the current fiscal situation in many of the municipalities/jurisdictions that comprise the CME. The CME would appreciate advisement and assistance from the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) in determining appropriate sources for funding enhancements referenced in the Action Plan.

**13. Has funding been a problem?**

Yes. It seems that most of the grants that are available require local matching funds. Based on the actions taken by the Florida Legislature and Governor earlier this year, the climate is poor for matching local government funds, because they had to cut funding to meet their budget needs. As mentioned earlier, the CME would like to study further some of the items contained in the action plan, but the lack of local funding has hindered their ability to do so.

**14. If so, how will the CME attempt to resolve this issue?**

Additional guidance is needed from the FDOT. Particularly for funding and grants that do not require a local match. Without a dedicated funding source, the CME and many of the Action Plan items (particularly construction items) are subject to grant availability and local governments willing to support (contribute funding). The CME will continue to be an advocate for the corridor and promote the projects that support the vision, goals and objectives of the Scenic Highway.

**15. Are funding sources being pursued?**

Yes. Haines City submitted an application to the Polk Transportation Planning Organization for a trail grant.

Dundee submitted a landscaping grant through the Florida division of Forestry. They were awarded \$18,750. Pictures of the landscaping installed can be found in Appendix A and an article can be found in Appendix C..

**16. If so, when does the CME anticipate receiving them?**

N/A

**17. How will the funding be used?**

N/A

**Measuring Success**

**18. Traffic Counts Along the Corridor**

| FDOT Site Location                    | 2009 AADT | 2010 AADT | Percent Change |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|----------------|
| 0064 SW of Livingston Lake Rd         | 2,800     | 2,800     | 0%             |
| 5038 S of CR 630 (Frostproof)         | 6,500     | 6,000     | -8%            |
| 5039 N of CR 630 (Frostproof)         | 3,800     | 3,500     | -9%            |
| 0049 N of McCloud Road (Frostproof)   | 2,800     | 3,100     | 10%            |
| 0122 NW of Libby Rd (Babson Park)     | 5,700     | 6,200     | 8%             |
| 0018 S of Bellview Drive (Lake Wales) | 3,600     | 4,000     | 11%            |
| 5122 SE of Polk Ave. (Lake Wales)     | 4,600     | 4,400     | -4%            |
| 5123 NW of Polk Ave. (Lake Wales)     | 7,400     | 7,200     | -2%            |
| 5124 N of Central Ave (Lake Wales)    | 9,600     | 9,500     | -1%            |
| 0047 S of Mtn. Lake Cut-Off           | 11,400    | 11,000    | -4%            |
| 5212 S of Chalet Suzanne Rd           | 7,600     | 7,200     | -5%            |
| 0048 S of Waverly Road                | 6,000     | 5,800     | -3%            |

|                                    |        |        |      |
|------------------------------------|--------|--------|------|
| 0071 N of Waverly Road             | 6,100  | 5,900  | -3%  |
| 0092 NW of Lk Mabel Lp Rd (Dundee) | 5,600  | 4,700  | -19% |
| 5030 E of Center Street (Dundee)   | 6,400  | 6,200  | -3%  |
| 5031 N of Main Street (Dundee)     | 8,300  | 7,700  | -7%  |
| 0046 S of SR 544 (Haines City)     | 5,900  | 5,900  | 0%   |
| 5049 N of SR 544 (Haines City)     | 10,600 | 10,400 | -1%  |
| 0039 S of US 17/92 (Haines City)   | 11,300 | 11,100 | -1%  |

*This information was obtained from the Florida Department of Transportation.*

## 19. Corridor Resources

### Historical Resources

There have not been any additional historical resources added to the corridor since the 2010 Corridor Management Plan Update.

### Cultural Resources

There have not been any additional cultural resources added to the corridor since the 2010 Corridor Management Plan Update.

### Recreational Resources

There have not been any additional recreational resources added to the corridor since the 2010 Corridor Management Plan Update.

### Lake Access:

There have not been any additional lake accesses added to the corridor since the 2010 Corridor Management Plan Update.

### Natural Resources

There have not been any additional natural resources added to the corridor since the 2010 Corridor Management Plan Update.

### Scenic Resources/Vistas

There have not been any additional scenic resources/vistas added to the corridor since the 2010 Corridor Management Plan Update.

## 20. Marketing and Promotional Efforts – Describe any advertising, brochures, posters, banners, roadway signs, etc. that have occurred or been produced during the past year. Be sure to include any numbers associated with these efforts, such as number of brochures produced, banners sold or distributed, etc. Any partnerships with local businesses should be noted.

The Ridge Scenic Highway CME attended the fourth annual “Scenic 17 Sprint Triathlon” held at Webber International University, see number 10 above. At this event, the CME passed out save the date cards for the 2011 39 Mile Yard Sale event and ridge scenic highway corridor brochures.

## 21. Lodging Facilities

No new lodging facilities have been noted along the corridor.

## 22. Food Facilities

No new food facilities have been noted along the corridor.

## 23. Chambers of Commerce

No new Chambers of Commerce has been established since the last update.

**24. Private Development – Has there been significant private investment along your corridor such as housing developments or new business in the past year? Please explain in greater detail?**

There has not been an increase in private investment in new development along the corridor. We have seen several businesses put on new paint, install new landscaping, and clean up their properties.

**25. Demographic Changes – Has your corridor experienced a change in demographics (ex population, age of population, household incomes) in the past year? Please explain in greater detail.**

There has not been a discernable difference in the areas demographics over the past year.

**26. Property Value Changes – What has the trend in property values been along your scenic corridor in comparison to the rest of the State of Florida? Have property values increased, kept pace with, or decreased in comparison with the rest of the State of Florida? Please explain in as great of detail as possible.**

Property taxes have not changed much since last year.

**27. Changes in Tourist Traffic – Has your corridor experienced an increase, decrease, or equal amount of tourist traffic in the past year? Please explain in greater detail.**

While this corridor continues to be a popular “scenic” alternative to US 27, especially for motorcyclists and bicycle groups, traffic volumes indicate an overall decrease in in the number of visitors in vehicles with the exception from south Lake Wales to north Frostproof. We would like to believe that our special events attract visitors throughout the year; however, US 27 is currently in the process of completing the six lane widening. Many of the commuters could be using SR 17 as the alternate to the construction on US 27.

**28. Other Comments on Measuring Success.**

Not at this time.

**Local Government Comprehensive Plan (LGCP) Relationship**

**29. Discuss how effective the integration of the CMP into the local government comprehensive plans has been.**

At this point, not all of the local governments have incorporated the CMP into the comprehensive plans. As mentioned in previous annual reports, the County has standard policies in their comprehensive plan regarding the Scenic Highway. The policies tie back into the CMP. Most jurisdictions will be adopting policies similar to the County’s in the coming years.

**30. Discuss any actions that are underway or are needed to maintain consistency with the LGCP and other plans.**

See Question 4 under Polk County.

**Problem Areas**

**31. Describe any problems that have arisen regarding the corridor.**

There have not been any problems in the last year.

**32. Describe present and future actions to resolve these issues.**

N/A

## **Other Issues**

### **33. Describe how well the CME has operated.**

The CME has held regular quarterly meetings since last year. In general, participation has been consistent with a few members; however, we have not been able to fill the vacant positions for our At-Large positions (Agriculture, Tourism, Cultural, Historical, Commercial/Developer, Environmental and Educational). Notice of the meetings goes out one week prior to the meeting. Meeting materials are posted on the website at [www.ridgescenichighway.com](http://www.ridgescenichighway.com).

The CME has a committee for the 39-Mile Yard Sale. The committee comes together in April of each year and meets monthly to discuss the details of the event. The committee has been very successful in getting six official locations and this year getting sponsors. Committee notes and flyers are posted on the website at [www.ridgescenichighway.com](http://www.ridgescenichighway.com).

### **34. Describe how partnering and coordination efforts have worked.**

There is excellent coordination on the CME. The CME and its members work very closely with the local governments and the FDOT in implementing the Action Plan items. The CME has been able to carry out all of these activities without a budget. The group has been able to utilize volunteerism and other in-kind services from its members to its advantage.

The CME has partnered with the following groups:

- Alta Vista Sports, Webber International University - Scenic 17 Sprint Triathlon
- Polk County Text Change Focus Group – creation of development standards along the corridor
- Haines City – Polk Transportation Planning Organization's Transportation Enhancement grant application
- Local Chamber of Commerce's and main street directors, and churches – Annual 39-Mile Yard Sale event

### **35. Provide discussion of any other issues the CME feels are relevant to the corridor's success.**

The CME does very well with working with the communities. The more people come to visit our corridor, the greater success we continue to have.

# **Appendix A**

## **CORRIDOR PHOTOGRAPHS**



Figure 1. 2001 Scenic 17 Triathlon Swim



Figure 4. 2010 39-Mile Scenic Highway Yard Sale in Lake of the Hills



Figure 2. Scenic 17 Triathlon Shirts



Figure 5. Dundee Intersection Improvements



Figure 3. Official Signs in Babson Park 2010 39-Mile Scenic Highway Yard Sale

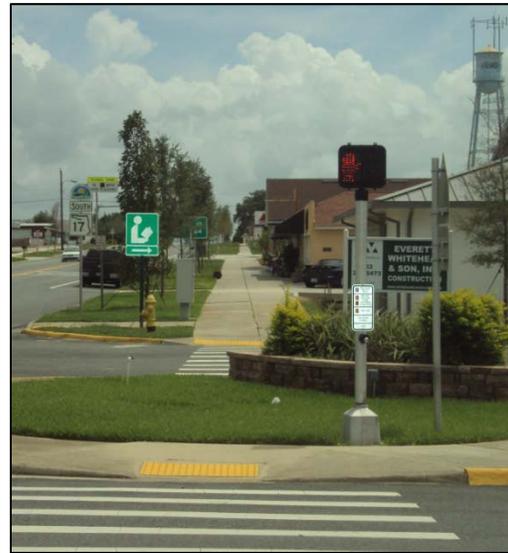


Figure 6. Dundee Landscaping Project



**Figure 7. Dundee's New Public Library**



**Figure 6. Frostproof 2010 Christmas Parade**  
Photo Credit Frostproof News



**Figure 8. Frostproof Barks and Bikes Event**  
Photo Credit Frostproof News



**Figure 6. Lake Reedy Sunrise**  
Photo Credit K.M. Thornton Sr.

# **Appendix B**

## **39-MILE SCENIC HIGHWA YARD SALE FLYER**

# 3rd Annual

**Join us Saturday, November 6  
7 AM - 2 PM**

Travel State Road 17, the beautiful Ridge Scenic Highway  
and visit us at six great locations:

**Haines City:**

St. Ann Catholic Church, 1265 Robinson Drive  
Ronnie Wood, 863.421.4100, [rwood@hainescitymainstreet.com](mailto:rwood@hainescitymainstreet.com)

**Dundee:**

Community Center, 603 E. Main Street  
Jeanette Raines, 863.419.3114, [buildmanager@townofdundee.com](mailto:buildmanager@townofdundee.com)

**Lake of the Hills:**

Community Clubhouse, 47 East Starr Avenue (Off of SR. 17)  
Johanna Buscher, 863.676.4854

**Lake Wales:**

CSX Trailhead Center, 450 N. Scenic Highway  
Rachel Henderson, 863.678.4209, [lakewalesdepot@gmail.com](mailto:lakewalesdepot@gmail.com)

**Babson Park:**

Across from Webber Int'l University, 1050 N. Scenic Highway  
Susan Welborn, 863.638.7308, [scenic17yardsale2010@gmail.com](mailto:scenic17yardsale2010@gmail.com)

**Frostproof:**

Downtown, C Street South to Wall Street  
Wesley Wise, 863.635.4421, [jwwise1@msn.com](mailto:jwwise1@msn.com)

**Rent Your Space for \$10.00 at the above locations.**



**Collectables, Antiques and Treasures**



## Fundraiser Event - Donations Welcome

Sponsored by: The Ridge Scenic Highway Corridor Management Entity, Inc.

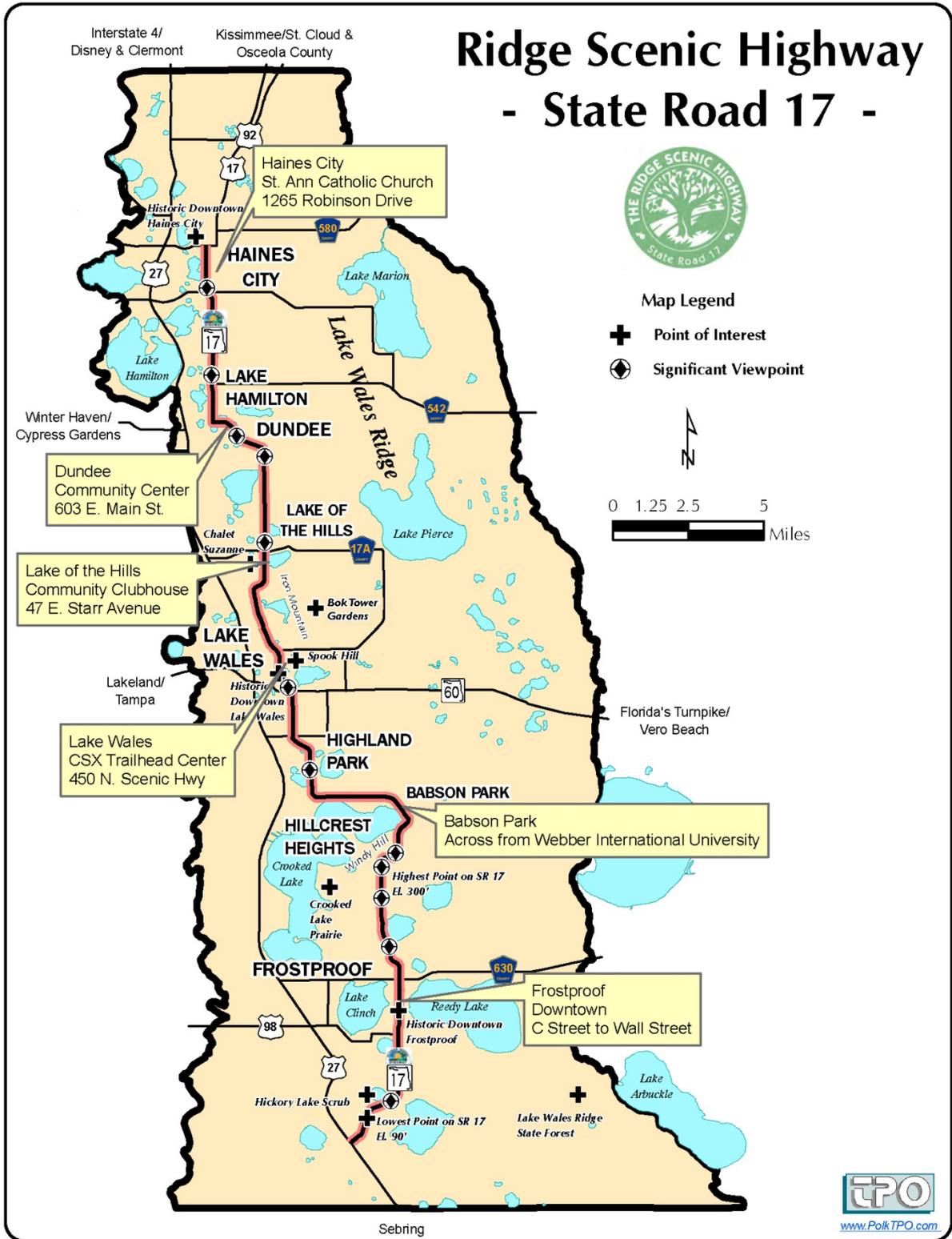
For more information: call: 863.676.4854 or 863.676.8015 or [scenic17yardsale2010@gmail.com](mailto:scenic17yardsale2010@gmail.com)



<http://39milesenic Hwy.homestead.com/index.html>  
Find us on Facebook  
"The Ridge Scenic Highway"



# Ridge Scenic Highway - State Road 17 -



# **Appendix C**

## **NEWSPAPER ARTICLES**

## Dundee receives grant for tree canopy

By DONNA KELLY

News Chief staff

Published: Saturday, April 17, 2010 at 4:01 a.m.

DUNDEE - Dundee's Main Street, also a section of Scenic Highway, will soon become a more picturesque, tree-lined road as it passes through the center of town.

The town recently received a \$18,750 non-matching grant from the Florida Department of Forestry program, "Florida Forest Health Improvement Initiative." The grant is part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act passed by Congress in February 2009.

"The town proposed that, if awarded the grant, that the town would create a tree canopy along a blighted stretch of roadway in downtown Dundee along Ridge Scenic Highway," said Town Manager Andy Stewart.

According to Stewart, Dundee was ranked the highest of 135 cities throughout the state vying for funds.

Stewart said he expects approximately 50 trees to be planted sometime after the first of the new fiscal year, which is Oct. 1. The project must be completed by July 2011 in order to receive reimbursement of funds.

Before the trees can be planted, the town council must develop a detailed landscaping plan in order to receive permitting from the Florida Department of Transportation to landscape state rights of way.

"The town expects to work with local businesses and residents along this stretch of roadway to ensure that the landscaping plan works for everyone that will benefit from this project," Stewart said.

While the grant does not include irrigation, the Dundee-based company MaxiJet, a U.S. manufacturer of low-volume irrigation products, is donating supplies for the project.

Community involvement in the endeavor is important, Stewart said.

"It will be imperative that the town work closely with our businesses on Main Street to make sure, at the end of the day, the project benefits all involved," Stewart said. "This project has the potential to become something all residents will be able to take pride in."

Blake Keen, owner of Blake's Creative Vision on Main Street, is excited about the tree-planting project. Keen is known for the landscaping upgrades she made near her shop.

"It's really important. The downtown needs to be dressed up to draw business," she said. "The aesthetic value of perking it up will bring more people here - businesses and shoppers."

Keen thinks the project will inspire more beautification efforts downtown.

"I think once (business owners) see some progress made, they will be more supportive of the town and be a little willing to put more in front of their places," she said.

Councilman Rick Johnson praised Stewart for his focus on improving the downtown area.

"I think everyone agrees the downtown could use some sprucing up. This will help existing businesses and bring in more," Johnson said.

"I really appreciate the effort he's putting into it and I am sure the citizens will as well," Johnson added.

donna.kelly@newschief.com

## Frostproof dinner show

By PAULA STUART

News Chief Correspondent

Published: Thursday, August 18, 2011 at 6:45 a.m.

FROSTPROOF - The next Murder Mystery Dinner Show in Frostproof is fast approaching. "Evil on the Beach" will be played out at the Ramon Theater, 15 E. Wall Street in Historic Downtown Frostproof, on Aug. 27 at 7 p.m.

The plot takes place on Nov. 12, 1928, after the 10th Anniversary of the signing of the armistice that ended WWI - the war to end all wars. The setting is at a resort at Sea Breeze on the Florida Gulf of Mexico coast.

"We're having a good response," said Tina Miller, representative of both the Ramon Theater and the Frostproof Chamber of Commerce.

Miller said casual beachwear is the recommended attire for the evening and the players invite everyone to join them for an evening of fun and food. There are seven "role players" or "characters" in the show. Jim LeFils plays Woody Hartland, a captain in the U.S. Army. Wes Wise is Colonel Sir Reginald Price Carlisle, a British intelligence officer. Lou Amato will be playing the role of Henri van Ghant, a Belgian Businessman. Diana Biehl will be Mimi LaFleur, a French woman who seemed to know the comrades. Dede LeFils is Marta Rinebergs, the resort owner. Ralph Waters is Andris Varga, a mysterious guest who claims Polish ancestry, and Sherrie Macklin plays Grace Medford, a maid at Sea Breeze.

"The Theater has been presenting these Murder Mystery Dinners for about four years," Miller said. "This show has not been done before. Each MMD is new material. The reviews are always great. Everyone loves the shows and is happy there is this type of entertainment in our small city of Frostproof."

And for a bonus, this great entertainment is accompanied by great food. The caterer is Frostproof Family Restaurant. The menu for the evening will be grilled pineapple/shrimp kabob, Caribbean roasted chicken skewer, garlic mashed potatoes, caesar salad, key lime pie, and iced tea. There will also be an optional cash bar available.

The theater holds up to 120 people.

"The audience loves the competition. Each table of eight is an investigative team solving the crime," Miller said.

The money raised goes back into the Theater as a continuing effort to finish the restoration and refurbishing of the Theater. Some of those projects include lights, curtains, and sound equipment.

"This has been the most wonderful thing to happen to Historic Downtown Frostproof. It is the "heart and soul" of our city. Our theater has become well known in all of Central Florida," Miller said.

Tickets are \$25 and may be purchased at their website - [www.ramonthheater.com](http://www.ramonthheater.com).

For details, call 863-635-9112.



Provided to the News Chief

The Ramon Theater, located 15 E. Wall Street in Historic Downtown Frostproof, has been the location of Murder Mystery Dinner Show for four years.

# Hilda Mitrani's BLOG

[RSS Feed](#) [RSS](#)



Off the Beaten Path

[Back to Hilda's Page](#)

## Ridge Scenic Byway in Central Florida Hosts Threatened Species and One of Highest Points on Peninsula

October 09, 2010

The [Ridge Scenic Byway](#) is home to some of my favorite Florida attractions including [Bok Tower Gardens](#), [Chalet Suzanne](#) and Spook Hill in [Lake Wales](#). It also boasts unique natural features, such as the highest point on the peninsula, 298 feet above ground.

If you're interested in **conservation and eco-tourism**, the Ridge Scenic Byway is a fascinating drive. The ridge is actually an ancient beach and sand dune system formed when Florida was submerged in the oceans, roughly one to three million years ago. Today, the sandy soil supports one of the highest concentrations of threatened and endangered species in the United States.

This scrub habitat supports many wildlife species that are found nowhere else in the world. According to the **Archbold Biological Station**, an independent, non-profit research facility devoted to long-term ecological research and conservation, the Lake Wales Ridge had 19 plants, 3 reptiles and one bird on the federally-protected species list. Many more are on Florida's protected list.

Birders are likely to see the prized Florida scrub-jay. Other rare species include the eastern indigo snake, which lives alongside plants such as the Florida ziziphus and the scrub blazing star.

When I was young, my dad often drove us through Lake Wales to enjoy the rolling hills, manicured rows of citrus trees and cooler climate with little humidity. Though just a few hours away, it was a world apart from our home in South Florida.

The region still maintains much of its natural beauty. With continued conservation, we can protect and keep the many [endangered species](#) in the Lake Wales Ridge alive.

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The Endangered Florida scrub-jay lives in family groups  
Credit: John Millman for [www.Scrubjaytrail.org](http://www.Scrubjaytrail.org)



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