



WHAT'S NEXT BRADFORD? HOW CAN CITIZENS CONTRIBUTE TO IMPROVING THE COUNTY'S QUALITY OF LIFE?



About This Issue Guide

The purpose of this issue guide is to help us talk productively about our community's challenging issues.

Deliberative Dialogue

It's not a debate. It's not a contest. It's not even about reaching agreement or seeing eye-to-eye. It's about looking for a shared direction and seeking common ground for action by carefully listening to one another, sharing our thoughts and what we hold valuable.

Introduction

In *Extraordinary Results in Communities: Transforming Towns and Growing People*, Vaughn Grisham, Director of the McLean Institute for Community Development and Professor of Sociology at the University of Mississippi states:

"Like all places, the communities in this study must adjust to macro changes in the economy and shifting aging demographics and urbanization, over which they have little control. In addition, they must cope with internal challenges: How do they mobilize themselves? How can they overcome the divisions and diversions that dilute their strength? Once mobilized, how do they sustain the work?"

Grisham's report for the Kettering Foundation, an organization studying democracy and citizen engagement, tells the story of four rural communities, Bakersville, North Carolina; Haven Acres (a neighborhood in Tupelo, Mississippi); Houston, Minnesota; and Colquitt, Georgia. Starke and neighboring Bradford County towns share similar characteristics to each of these communities. One of the key findings asserts that citizen engagement

and their human resources are keys to their survival. In each community there were at least 20 citizen “catalysts” who provided creative and dedicated service to improve community life.

This evening, Bradford County residents will deliberate and endeavor to make some choices regarding involvement in community planning and enhancement. We will discuss three areas to which residents can be actively engaged: relationship building, workforce development, and comprehensive planning. The outcomes from consultations and public forums including the Bradford County Economic Recovery Program (September 2018), the North Florida Economic Development Project (October 2018) and the Resilience Dialogue (October 2018) informed the discussion guide.

The overarching questions for tonight:

- What will it take for Starke and Bradford County residents to actively participate in local and regional democratic activity?
- How can all residents feel welcome in community decision-making?
- What will the impact of the new bypass be on the community?
- What should we do? What actions should be taken?

Ground Rules for a Forum

- Listen to understand. Keep an open mind.
- Everyone is encouraged to speak. No one or two individuals should dominate.
- Consider the options and actions fairly.
- Disagree respectfully and out of curiosity with others’ ideas.
- Move toward greater mutual understanding.
- Endeavor to find the common good.

Option One: Relationship Building

What do Bradford County residents value about their communities? People undoubtedly share what they enjoy about living in North Central Florida, but what are their expectations about community improvement? This option asks participants to give some thought to strengthening relationships among their friends and neighbors and between leaders and residents. A community's quality of life is reflected in how people care for one another and the natural resources that surround their residences.

The public forums and reports from 2018 raised concerns about the relationship of longtime residents and newcomers. Some perceive a "good ole boy" dynamic that resists new ideas. As well, people are concerned about strengthening the working partnerships between city and county-elected leaders. Productive community relationships grow when people work for a common purpose or positive vision.

What will it take to move forward? How will Bradford County communities capitalize on the assets and talents of their citizens?

Examples of what could be done

ACTIONS	DRAWBACKS
Expand the Bradford County Community Steering Group to include more community members to better represent the county's diversity and promote the group's efforts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires additional leadership and coordination.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schedule a regular "drop-in lunch" where residents can discuss city and county concerns and projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This could conflict with Florida Sunshine Laws.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a strategy for access to the area's natural resources and creation of parks and nature trails. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Several county, state, and federal agencies would need to collaborate.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate a volunteer playground building project by connecting to a community build organization like KaBoom! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land would need to be acquired.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a public library book-reading group to discuss small town creative development ideas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A coordinator would need to organize and publicize the program.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a weekly Farmers' Market. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Farmers are already committed to other markets.

Option Two: Workforce Development

K-12 and post-secondary education institutions in collaboration with local business and industry are central to a healthy and productive workforce. Complaints from the nation’s employers indicate that too many high school graduates are ill-prepared for the jobs they seek. We live in a global economy that requires a strong work ethic, technological ability, and the six C’s, collaboration, communication, content competencies, critical thinking, creative innovation, and confidence.

Bradford County schools have C grades with the exception of a B for Bradford High School. What steps might parents and volunteers take to work closely with public schools, especially elementary schools to ensure student success?

Bradford County provides strong post-secondary education and career and technical training through North Florida Technical College and Santa Fe College. People can take advantage of regional degree and certificate programs taught by University of Florida, North Florida University, and St. John’s River State College among others.

This option calls for creative thinking about how to prepare skilled workers for North Central Florida industry and agriculture.

Examples of What Could Be Done

ACTIONS	DRAWBACKS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the high school graduation rate from 72% to 82%. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only positive outcomes can be realized.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare development property in order to attract new industry. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tax incentives might be needed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand programs to inform middle and high school students about diverse and viable career paths in cooperation with Santa Fe College and NFTC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colleges may need to hire more faculty based on increased enrollment.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create business and industry public school partnerships. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This would require significant coordination.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase community volunteerism and collaboration with elementary school principals in support of academic performance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More school administrative responsibilities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify Bradford County enhancement projects that will benefit from BHS and NFTC partnerships. For example, creating new signs for the entrances to county communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there people who will step forward to provide leadership?

Option Three: Comprehensive Planning

Encouraging resident involvement in comprehensive planning is central to this third option. People will have opportunities to weigh in on bypass interchange development. But there are critical needs that call for advocacy including high-speed internet and broadband service. Only 65.4% of Starke residents subscribe to a broadband service and 72% of residents have computers in their homes. Internet connectivity is essential for community development.

Bradford County is located in a Florida region located between the St. John’s River, Florida springs and the Gulf Coast. The Osceola National Forest to the North and Ocala National Forest to the South, as well as significant land and lake acreage, provide many opportunities for Eco-tourism and outdoor recreation. However, climate change and natural disasters threaten economic stability. Bradford County, along with Winters, California and Beaumont, Texas are participating in a Resilience Dialogue, a public-private collaboration supported by the Kresge Foundation that works to build climate-resilient communities through facilitated dialogues among scientists, practitioners, and community leaders. Leveraging and conserving natural resources is an important factor in becoming a resilient community.

How might residents help the town and county address infrastructure needs and develop a creative approach to leveraging the area’s natural resources?

Examples of What Could Be Done

ACTIONS	DRAWBACKS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase high speed internet access for county residents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban areas attract broadband providers based on population density.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a flood mitigation strategy for county neighborhoods affected by heavy rains. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some residents might lose their homes and need to relocate.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate interest and attendance at Starke bypass interchange and railroad overpass planning meetings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audience members could be relegated to passive listeners.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a master recreation and Eco-tourism plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple government agencies would need to collaborate with citizens.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize a resident action booth for county fairs, the annual strawberry festival, and other city and county gatherings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addition work on the part of a community agency or nonprofit organization would be needed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County residents should become actively involved in reviewing the Special Permit application for a phosphate mine. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A final decision could be made without an independent environmental impact study.

Reflection, Agreement, and Next Steps?

After deliberating through each of the approaches and considering many of the specific actions and corresponding tradeoffs, participants may recognize some areas of agreement. How might Bradford County residents become more engaged in community enhancement and planning projects? Consider several of the following questions to find common ground.

1. Can we detect any shared sense of direction or any agreement?
2. What did you hear the group saying about tensions in this issue?
3. Are there any particular values we hold in common?
4. Are there next steps we might want to take?
5. What do we still need to talk about?
6. Who else needs to be here? What voices were missing?

PLEASE COMPLETE THE PRE & POST-FORUM QUESTIONNAIRES. THANK YOU!

What's Next Bradford? How Can Citizens Contribute to the County's Quality of Life? was produced through a series of conversations and meetings with University of Florida Extension agents and community leaders. Gregg Kaufman, Consultant, The Deliberative Voice and Kettering Foundation Research Associate wrote the dialogue resource.

CIVIC (Community Voices, Informed Choices) is the Florida Cooperative Extension program that builds community capacity for solving local problems. It is jointly managed by FAMU and UF, bringing people together to create productive dialogue and responsible solutions. We welcome partnerships with agencies and organizations seeking to improve the quality of life for Floridians.

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The
Deliberative
Voice
Helping citizens
become the stars and stripes of democracy



