

BALM COMMUNITY PLAN

DRAFT Vision Statement

August 7, 2012

...The community of Balm's success in retaining its rural character envisioned by residents and stakeholders came true. The laid back atmosphere and relaxed lifestyle continue to be cherished attributes of the community. Large and small property owners worked together to achieve their mutual desire to maintain a rustic atmosphere. Balm's natural assets including its scrub lands, water bodies, and wildlife continue to be preserved. New residential development has been compatible with the existing housing styles, creating an eclectic, low-density mix of housing options. Consequently, Balm has managed to distinguish itself from other communities that have medium and high density subdivision development.

...Balm drastically improved its means of mobility. Roads like Sweat Loop Road, once a roadway designed solely for vehicles, now have widened shoulders and/or bicycle paths/lanes. Roadways in disrepair have now been resurfaced. These improvements have made things better for pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular traffic. New construction of multi-modal trails has led to increased connectivity among neighborhoods and recreational opportunities for residents. Additionally, equestrian ridership has become very popular, with the use of the numerous equestrian trails throughout the area, with many riders stopping at the new rest areas at the Village or Balm Park.

...Agriculture remains a viable and profitable business in Balm. Property owners continue to make a living by growing and selling their own crops using traditional methods as well as incorporating new sustainable agricultural farming techniques to streamline production. The community has introduced alternative agricultural activities, such as, ecotourism, organic farming, alternative energy production, tractor sales/services and community gardening to boost local revenues. Residents have established a farmers market which sells organic goods as well as locally grown food and local products. The University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) Research Center has expanded and formed a partnership with local citizens keeping residents up-to-date on activities and significant breakthroughs in agricultural research.

...Well preserved Open Space in Balm. This is evident through the acquired ELAPP approved sites and buffers which contain palmettos, pines, scrub oak, natural lakes; wildlife corridors connecting Balm to our neighboring communities, and mixture of public and privately owned lands offer natural panoramic views of the countryside. Some of the open space serves for uses, such as, our community gardens and Farmers' Markets, some of which are the most prosperous in the region. The 'dark sky' initiative minimized the impact of artificial light, allowing residents to enjoy the night sky.

...Balm's core landmarks give the community a sense of identity and help to build a strong community center. Thanks to the generosity and resources of Balm's residents, the Balm Park has reopened providing expanded services for the entire community - young, old, rich or poor - including free, open access, playing fields, recreational youth sporting leagues, and a renovated civic center. Balm's downtown village exhibits an 'Old Florida Flavor,' that contains a mix of neighborhood serving commercial/retail uses, such as, a country store, bed and breakfast inn, beauty parlor/barber shop, and several family owned cafes/dinners. This thriving rural activity center is also home to a local farmers' market which displays organic goods stands, canning classes, compost demonstrations, and rain barrel workshops. The Balm Post Office along with a new sheriff sub-station add to the small town feel of Balm.