

Cycling The Villages

A BICYCLE FRIENDLY COMMUNITY



A Vision of Safe
and Enjoyable Bicycling for
Residents of The Villages



The Villages®
Recreation & Parks



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I. Preface

The Villages Recreation & Parks Department is pleased to present *Cycling The Villages: A Vision for Safe and Enjoyable Bicycling in The Villages, Florida*, prepared by the Bike Friendly Advocacy Council, one of the Resident Lifestyle Groups (RLGs) in The Villages.

When envisioning The Villages retirement community, developers knew that golf carts, biking and walking would be important transportation alternatives and so they purpose-built them into the community's infrastructure from the beginning. Thus, The Villages has been constructed with cycling facilities that far exceed those found in most other communities.

Unlike the bicycle planning documents for other communities — which have to focus on the engineering and construction of numerous facilities and structures to be added to their transportation network — *Cycling The Villages* incorporates our ideal existing infrastructure as

the foundation for better cycling. Starting with our superior *Engineering* that is already in place, it layers a variety of biking improvement programs organized around The League of American Bicyclists' Bicycle Friendly Community criteria of *Equity, Education, Encouragement and Evaluation*.

The Villages Recreation & Parks Department is accredited by the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA), which, along with *Cycling The Villages* support the Department's mission. We believe that it will provide direction for improving cycling in our community. The recommendations it makes offer a sound basis for planning and implementation of activities for cycling safety and enjoyment today, tomorrow and into the future.



The Villages® Community Development Districts Recreation & Parks

John Rohan, Director
Department of Recreation & Parks
The Villages, Florida





II. Introduction

Cycling The Villages was prepared by the Bicycle Friendly Advocacy Council (“BFAC”). BFAC comprised of residents who work as volunteer advocates for the highly active cycling community, along with staff of The Villages Community Development Districts’ Department of Recreation & Parks. BFAC is one of the 3000+ Resident Lifestyle Groups (RLGs) in The Villages.

In 2014, BFAC applied to the League of American Bicyclists (LAB) for The Villages to be recognized as a Bicycle Friendly Community and received a Silver award. In submitting the application, the original intent was to simply describe The Villages’ wonderful environment for cycling. However, the self-examination required to complete the application and the feedback it received from LAB that led BFAC to realize that much remained to be done to make cycling in The Villages as safe and enjoyable as possible. In 2018, when the BFAC reapplied to LAB to update its Bicycle Friendly Community recognition, these efforts were recognized with a Gold award.

The Villages is the largest single-site residential real estate development in the United States, at 130,000+ residents and over 80 square miles. The Villages was master planned and developed with a system of multi-modal paths and golf cart/ bike lanes as part of an array of amenities that most cities and counties would find impossible to match with tax dollars or grant programs. In recognizing The Villages as a Gold Bicycle Friendly community, the LAB understood The Villages’ unique status and importance as an incubator for developing bicycling facilities and programs for seniors.

Cycling The Villages describes existing conditions for cycling in The Villages, analyzes needs and lists recommended actions for future improvements. It is organized around LAB’s “5-E’s” criteria: **Equity, Engineering, Education, Encouragement and Evaluation.** (See Appendix 18) Given the unique and exemplary physical infrastructure of The Villages, *Cycling The Villages* focuses primarily on the soft areas of Equity, Education, and Encouragement. Goals for each of the 5- E’s are:



FIGURE 1: Bike Club Ride Start

Goal: *EQUITY*

Promote the unique qualities of The Villages to assure that its bicycling amenities are equally available regardless of income level, gender, ethnicity, health issues or other factors that may serve to discourage or limit participation. Particularly in the presence of physical disabilities, strive to accommodate special needs for equipment modifications, training, or personal assistance.

Goal: *ENGINEERING*

Maintain and enhance bicycle facilities in The Villages to continue to meet or exceed accepted standards and guidelines, throughout the existing community and as each new village is constructed.

Goal: *EDUCATION*

Educate cyclists, motorists, golf cart operators, pedestrians and other users of the roads and multi-modal paths so everyone knows the laws and behaviors that will make The Villages safe and enjoyable for cycling.

Goal: *ENCOURAGEMENT*

Encourage increased ridership among all levels of cyclists, including new cyclists and those who have not ridden for many years. Enhance awareness of cycling through charity rides, bike expos and other organized events, and communicate the health, fitness and social benefits of cycling at any age.

Goal: *EVALUATION*

Evaluate progress toward the goals of *Cycling The Villages* on a regular basis and advocate for cyclists' needs as the area continues to grow in the future.

III. Description of The Villages

The Villages master planned active adult community that occupies portions of Sumter, Lake and Marion counties, located in central Florida approximately 45 miles northwest of Orlando and 20 miles south of Ocala. The Villages covers 80+ square miles. The Villages consistently ranks as one of the highest growth areas in the United States.

History: In the 1960s Harold Schwartz, a Michigan businessman, began selling land tracts via mail order in the Lake County portion of what is now The Villages. He and his business partner, Al Tarrson, closed the mail order aspect of the business due to a 1968 Federal law banning sales of real estate by mail order. In the early 1970s Schwartz and Tarrson began development of a manufactured home park, Orange Blossom Gardens, in the northwestern corner of Lake County. By the early 1980s, they had sold only 400 units. In an attempt to expand the business, Schwartz bought out Tarrson's interest and brought his son, H. Gary Morse, on board in 1983.

Schwartz and Morse noted that successful retirement communities offered numerous amenities to the residents as well as convenient nearby commercial development. They decided that golf courses would be ideal amenities since there was a huge demand from golf lovers all over North America, abundant available land, sandy alkaline soil suited for growing grass and plentiful rainfall. Thus was born the "golf cart community," master planned so that residents could drive a golf cart directly from their homes to any of the golf courses or any other destination in the community. This was the genesis of a huge network of roads and trails to serve golf carts, which also happen to be ideal for cycling. **FIGURE 2**

Home sales improved dramatically as the golf courses and other amenities were built, making it possible for the developers to buy large tracts of land in nearby Sumter and Marion counties.

The Villages is a community made up of 60,000+ homes within 90+ neighborhoods that contain a wide variety of amenities, nestled among the golf courses, ponds and open space preserves. In 1985, the overall development name was officially changed to "The Villages." The development is still operated under the guidance of descendants of Schwartz and Morse (Harold Schwartz died in 2003 and H. Gary Morse died in 2014).

Demographics: As of 2020, the average age of residents of The Villages is 67. About 80 percent of residents are married couples, while about 20 percent are single. The median income for households is about \$98,000. Home prices range from \$100,000 to \$2,000,000+, with the majority of homes currently priced between \$250,000 and \$400,000.

Age Restriction: To qualify for an exception to the Housing for Older Persons Act prohibitions against discrimination, at least 80 percent of the homes within The Villages must have at least one person 55 years of age or older residing in the home. Persons under the age of 19 years are not permitted to reside within The Villages for more than 30 days per year. Several neighborhoods within and near The Villages are designated as "family" neighborhoods which are not subject to age restriction, but residents of those neighborhoods do not have access to the recreation centers, executive golf courses, pools and other amenities that require a resident ID card.

Government: The Villages is managed by 17 Community Development Districts (CDDs) that share a District Manager. CDDs are a form of special purpose local government available under Florida law and used by more than 600 communities. Law enforcement, taxation and infrastructure maintenance occur through the three counties and three municipalities in which The Villages resides.



FIGURE 2: Golf Cart Community Sign

Covenants: A Declaration of Restrictions is created for each neighborhood, which regulates design and operational aspects such as landscaping, repairs and maintenance, and placement of satellite dishes, ornaments and hedges. An Architectural Review Committee (ARC) approves any exterior changes to residential properties within The Villages. The ARC, composed of Villages residents, reviews and approves proposed alterations or modifications. Committee members serve for three years and are selected by the sitting committee.

Traffic and Crime: The Villages is a relatively low-density development so its internal roads tend not to have high volumes of traffic. Various traffic calming measures such as traffic circles and semaphore gates help to control traffic speeds; for more detail see Section V, Existing Conditions. At the gates, residents have pass cards while non-residents push a button or are waved through. All traffic is photographed with live cameras.

The Villages has low crime rates. Residents report unusual activities to law enforcement officials via 911. The Villages Community Watch service

provides active surveillance, passing on the roads of all of the 90+ neighborhood villages several times each day/night.

Golf Courses: The Villages has 50+ golf courses with 700+ holes, with more in development. Golf on the 40+ 9-hole Executive courses is included in the monthly amenity fees. Golf on the thirteen Championship courses requires a modest fee. Each championship course has an associated Country Club with clubhouse, pro shop and restaurant. Residents of any village may use any of the golf courses and country club facilities.

Recreation Centers and Swimming Pools:

The Villages Recreation & Parks Department operates 100+ recreation centers and 100+ swimming pools, with more in development. There are three classes of centers: **FIGURE 3**

- **Neighborhood Recreation Areas - NRA**
(67) - these recreation areas offer adult-only pools as well as outdoor bocce, horseshoes, and shuffleboard courts.

Recreation Centers

MULBERRY GROVE AREA

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------|
| 1 Mulberry Grove RRC | 5 Phillips NRA |
| 2 Chatham VRC | 6 Springdale NRA |
| 3 First Responders VRC | 7 Soulliere NRA |
| 4 Calumet NRA | |

PARADISE AREA

- | | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| 8 Paradise RRC | 10 Southside VRC |
| 9 Silver Lake VRC | 11 Hilltop NRA |

LA HACIENDA AREA

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| 12 La Hacienda RRC | 14 Tierra Del Sol VRC |
| 13 Chula Vista VRC | 15 Rio Grande NRA |

SAVANNAH AREA

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| 16 Savannah RRC | 18 Saddlebrook VRC |
| 17 El Santiago VRC | 19 Summerhill NRA |

LAUREL MANOR AREA

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 20 Laurel Manor RRC | 26 Bonnybrook NRA |
| 21 Bridgeport VRC | 27 Lake Miona Shores NRA |
| 22 Churchill Street VRC | 28 Lynnhaven NRA |
| 23 Pimlico VRC | 29 Tall Trees NRA |
| 24 Ashland NRA | 30 Winifred NRA |
| 25 Belvedere NRA | |

LAKE MIONA AREA

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| 31 Lake Miona RRC | 38 Lake Shore Cottage NRA |
| 32 Bacall VRC | 39 Largo NRA |
| 33 Canal Street VRC | 40 Mallory Square NRA |
| 34 Coconut Cove VRC | 41 Mission Hills NRA |
| 35 Bonita NRA | 42 Sabal Chase NRA |
| 36 Caroline NRA | 43 Virginia Trace NRA |
| 37 Creekside Landing NRA | |

SEABREEZE AREA

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| 44 SeaBreeze RRC | 51 Pennecamp NRA |
| 45 Allamanda VRC | 52 Poinciana NRA |
| 46 Fish Hawk VRC | 53 St. Charles NRA |
| 47 Hibiscus VRC | 54 St. James NRA |
| 48 Sterling Heights VRC | 55 Sunset Pointe NRA |
| 49 Buttonwood NRA | 56 Tamarind Grove NRA |
| 50 Liberty Park NRA | |

COLONY COTTAGE AREA

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| 57 Colony Cottage RRC | 61 Duval NRA |
| 58 Odell VRC | 62 Hadley NRA |
| 59 Truman VRC | 63 Hemingway NRA |
| 60 Amelia NRA | |

EISENHOWER AREA

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| 64 Eisenhower RRC | 71 Collier NRA |
| 65 Big Cypress VRC | 72 Dunedin NRA |
| 66 Bradenton VRC | 73 Fernandina NRA |
| 67 Manatee VRC | 74 Gilchrist NRA |
| 68 Trillium VRC | 75 Hillsborough NRA |
| 69 Alden Bungalows NRA | 76 Lake Deaton NRA |
| 70 Antrim Dells NRA | 77 Pinellas NRA |

ROHAN AREA

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| 78 Rohan RRC | 84 LaBelle NRA |
| 79 Burnsed VRC | 85 Osceola Hills NRA |
| 80 Captiva VRC | 86 Pine Hills NRA |
| 81 Moyer VRC | 87 Pine Ridge NRA |
| 82 Charlotte NRA | 88 Sanibel NRA |
| 83 Chitty Chatty NRA | |

FENNEY AREA

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| 89 Fenney RRC | 94 Spanish Moss NRA |
| 90 Riverbend VRC | 95 Sugar Cane NRA |
| 91 Blue Heron NRA | 96 Swallowtail NRA |
| 92 Dudley NRA | 97 Willow Tree NRA |
| 93 Hummingbird NRA | |

EVERGLADES AREA

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| 98 Everglades RRC | 100 Water Lily VRC |
| 99 Cattail VRC | |

EZELL AREA

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| 101 Ezell RRC | 106 Cason Hammock NRA |
| 102 Aviary VRC | 107 Citrus Grove NRA |
| 103 Franklin VRC | 108 Hawkins NRA |
| 104 Homestead VRC | 109 St. Catherine NRA |
| 105 Bradford NRA | 110 St. Johns NRA |

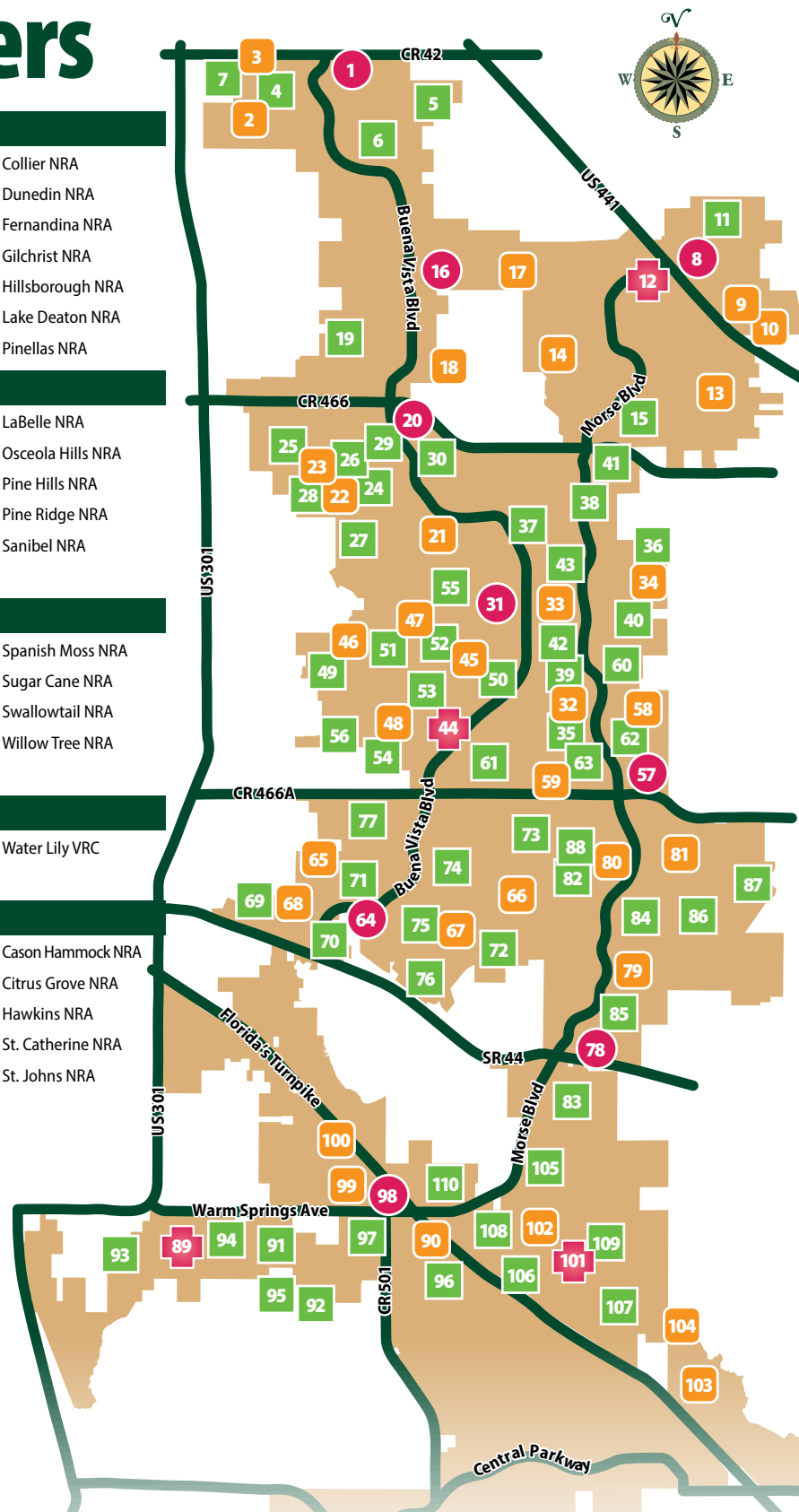


FIGURE 3: The Villages Recreation Centers Map

- | | | | |
|---|---|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| = Regional Recreation Complex (RRC) with AT YOUR SERVICE + | = Regional Recreation Complex (RRC) with Recreation Services | = Village Recreation Center (VRC) | = Neighborhood Recreation Area (NRA) |
|---|---|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|

Some facilities may not be open at the time of printing this map.

- **Village Recreation Centers - VRC**

(35) - these recreation centers offer family pools, indoor facilities with billiard rooms, meeting rooms, full kitchens, bocce, horseshoes, shuffleboard, tennis and pickleball courts.

- **Regional Recreation Complexes - RRC**

(13) - these recreation centers offer mainly resident-only sports pools, large meeting rooms including at least one with a stage for theatrical and musical productions, and many of the same features as the Village Centers. Seven of the Regional Complexes include a Fit Club for which a membership must be purchased.

Other Amenities: The Villages Recreation & Parks Department operates 30+ parks, this includes dog parks, nature trails, and fitness trails, which are separate from the recreation centers. The department also operates 5 softball complexes with 15 fields, The Villages Polo Stadium, 2 Archery Ranges, 3 Air Gun Ranges, and 2 Woodshops. The Villages is the center for pickleball in the U.S. with 223 courts.

Clubs and Organizations: In addition to the bicycle clubs listed in Appendix 1, The Villages has more than 3,000+ clubs and organizations covering virtually every imaginable interest, as well as geographic area clubs, support clubs, alumni clubs and other organizations. Club notices are published each week in the *Recreation & Parks Publication*, which is distributed in The Villages *Daily Sun* newspaper and are available at each of the recreation centers.

Live Entertainment at the Town Squares: Bands, singers and musical ensembles appear from 5PM to 9PM every night of the year at the three town squares: Lake Sumter Landing Market Square, Spanish Springs Town Square and Brownwood Paddock Square.

Theaters: Each town square has a multi-screen movie theater complex. The Sharon Performing Arts Center located at Spanish Springs Town Square, an 1100-seat theater that opened in 2015, draws a wide variety of performers and shows, as does the older 832-seat Savannah Center theater.

Media: The Villages' developers established their own newspaper, radio station and cable TV station which have been or are being transitioned to other ownership and operation:

- The Villages Magazine
- The Villages Daily Sun Newspaper
- The Villages News Network (VNN), aired on Comcast Cable Network
- Radio station WVLG AM 640 (a Fox News Radio affiliate).

Other Local Media: Regional media include television channels from the Orlando and Tampa markets, radio stations from the Orlando and Gainesville/Ocala markets, and area newspapers such as the Orlando Sentinel, the Tampa Tribune, the Tampa Bay Times, the Leesburg Daily Commercial and the Ocala Star-Banner.

Transportation: Sumter County Transit operates The Villages shuttle, which provides various weekday loops through the Villages. The Villages sales office offers free trolley-style bus tours of the community leaving from the sales and information centers.

There are various options available for travel between Orlando International Airport and The Villages, including a shuttle service provided by Workman Transportation. Travel between The Villages and The Orlando International Airport takes approximately 90 minutes.

Amtrak serves The Villages by connecting bus to Jacksonville and Lakeland.

Political Districts: The Villages is in Florida's 11th congressional district, Florida Senate District 20 and Florida House of Representatives District 42. The portion of The Villages in Lake County is within Lake County District 1, and the portion in Marion County is within Marion County District 3. Areas of The Villages in Sumter County are divided between Sumter County District 1, which includes areas east of Morse Boulevard, and Sumter County District 3, which includes areas west of Morse Boulevard.

Schools: The Villages Charter School is a PK-12 charter school in unincorporated Sumter County. Children are eligible to attend the charter school only if one or both of their parents work directly for The Villages or its subcontractors, or for a business that leases from The Villages.

The following school listings are primarily for tax base purposes, as the Villages does not allow full-time residents under age 19 except in the family neighborhoods. While Villagers do not have children who attend the local schools, their property taxes are used to pay for those schools. The portion of The Villages located in Marion County is zoned to Lake Weir High School of the Marion County School District. The portion of The Villages located

in Sumter County is zoned to Wildwood Middle High School of Sumter District Schools. The portion of The Villages located in Lake County is zoned to Leesburg High School of the Lake County Schools.

Adult Education: Sumter District Schools operates the Sumter County Adult Community Education Center. For residents of Lake and Sumter counties, Lake-Sumter State College provides adult education at the South Lake Campus in Clermont, the Leesburg Campus in Leesburg and the Sumter Campus. The College of Central Florida serves residents of Marion County, operating the Ocala Campus and the Hampton Center in Ocala. In 2017, The Villages Recreation & Parks Department established The Enrichment Academy (TEA) to provide a variety of fee based extra-curriculum courses that enhance and expand learning opportunities for residents and the general public. Course curricula complement the existing resident-led lifestyle and recreation services offered in the recreation facilities, providing even more choices to fulfill residents' passion for learning. Examples of courses include writing, foreign languages, history, art, dance, science, technology, Bicycle Safety, Maintenance and Skills. (Appendix 20 - TEA Catalog).

IV. Overview of the Process

Efforts to provide safe and enjoyable cycling in The Villages began many years ago with the formation of The Village Bicycle Club in 2002, the Sumter Landing Bicycle Club in 2005 and the PANTHERS Tandem Club in 2009 (see Appendix 1 for descriptions of each of the clubs). Officers and other leaders of these clubs now coordinate their efforts to improve cycling in The Villages through the Bicycle Friendly Advocacy Council (BFAC) (Appendix 19).

A. VISION

The vision of BFAC is enjoyable, convenient and safe bicycle riding in The Villages, contributing to better health and social relationships.

BFAC assesses progress toward its vision through growth in the number of residents participating in cycling activities, reduction in the number of bicycle related crashes and injuries, and progress toward a Platinum Bike Friendly Community award when judged against the national standards from the League of American Bicyclists (LAB).

B. BICYCLE FRIENDLY ADVOCACY COUNCIL HISTORY

The BFAC evolved out of the desire of bicyclists in The Villages to involve residents in cooperatively improving the generally good safety and security residents enjoy during their bicycling activities. These activities include bike club sponsored rides, charity events and individual rides throughout The Villages and the surrounding area, as well as a wide variety of social activities for club members and guests.

The Villages is a community comprising mainly retired senior citizens whose average age is 67. They are very active as seniors, perhaps more active than

most senior communities in the USA. The Villages says that it is “America’s Healthiest Home Town,” which reflects the lifestyle of active senior living and outstanding health care. With 50+ golf courses, 100+ swimming pools and 100+ recreation centers, live music and dancing in three town squares 365 days per year, and more than 3,000+ social and service clubs, there is every reason to be active.

Despite all of the good things about retirement, residents do have issues such as being more frail than when they were younger. If hurt, it takes longer to heal. This is a fact of life. As beneficial as bicycling is for our health, falling off a bike can be disastrous. With safety and security in mind, a number of bicyclists convened to discuss a formal process to enhance the bicycling experience in The Villages.

Officers and other leaders from the bike clubs gathered to discuss a way ahead to enhance bicycle safety. They decided to approach the Director of The Villages Recreation & Parks Department to get guidance and buy-in for their goals. He proved to be a receptive audience but pointed out that the decision making process in The Villages is made complex by the number of players: the developer, the 17 Villages Community Development Districts (CDDs), the involved agencies of three counties and three municipalities, and the residents who may support or oppose a proposition.

The three counties and three municipalities have developed their own comprehensive master plans. BFAC reviewed these plans and found that The Villages complies with them as they pertain to residents within the boundaries of these governing bodies. These plans are summarized in Appendix 2.

Because of the multiple jurisdictions covering various parts of The Villages, there is no single entity that represents the interests of the bicycling community.



FIGURE 4: Presentation of the LAB Gold Award in 2018

The BFAC was created to fill this need. The BFAC meets three times a year and at other times as needed, to provide advocacy on bicycle issues, to raise visibility and to coordinate educational efforts. All of these efforts dovetailed perfectly with the Bicycle Friendly Community program conducted by the League of American Bicyclists (LAB).

C. LEAGUE OF AMERICAN BICYCLISTS (LAB) BICYCLE FRIENDLY COMMUNITY PROGRAM

Members of the BFAC found that one of the most effective ways to gain attention and support from the multiple governing bodies was to demonstrate how The Villages compares with other communities across the USA. More than 400 cities and communities have already competed for the Bicycle Friendly Communities award program conducted by LAB, so there is a huge and impressive database available for comparison and goal-setting.

The LAB Bicycle Friendly Community award program provides a comprehensive model for enhancing safety, security and enjoyment, both for

bicycle riders and for other users of the roads and pathway systems. The LAB organizes its model with the 5-Es:

- **Equity, Diversity & Inclusion:** A Bicycle Friendly America for Everyone
- **Engineering:** Creating safe and convenient places to ride and park
- **Education:** Giving people of all ages and abilities the skills and confidence to ride
- **Encouragement:** Creating a strong bike culture that welcomes and celebrates bicycling
- **Evaluation & Planning:** Planning for bicycling as a safe and viable transportation option

After many months of effort to submit its first application, The Villages received a Silver award from LAB in 2014, becoming the first retirement community in the country to receive a Bicycle Friendly Community award. Each award is accompanied by a “report card” from LAB that outlines recommendations for improvement in each of the 5-E categories. For the next four years the BFAC, the bicycle clubs and the Recreation & Parks Department worked diligently to meet these

recommendations and to surpass LAB’s expectations for improvement. These efforts were rewarded in 2018, when The Villages was recognized with a Gold award. **FIGURE 4**

D. PROGRESS TOWARD A PLATINUM AWARD IN 2022

The BFAC, the bicycle clubs and the Recreation & Parks Department are now working to see if we can attain recognition for accomplishments and improvements made since 2018. Again, with the Gold award, LAB presented the community with a report card (see Appendix 4), with several suggestions and goals that LAB feels would be necessary to gain recognition as a Platinum level

community — an achievement attained so far by only five cities in the USA. Many of these accomplishments are described in this update of *Cycling The Villages*, including the four new bicycle/pedestrian/golf cart bridges, the new multi-modal path directional signage system, new educational programs based on the two fully-equipped bicycle trailers from FDOT, and the pedestrian/bicycle pathways parallel to collector roads with golf cart/bicycle lanes that have been implemented in the newer villages south of SR 44 and much more. **FIGURE 12**

FIGURE 5: Road Categories Diagram



V. Existing Conditions and Guidelines for Bicycles

A. BICYCLE INFRASTRUCTURE

The network of roads and multi-modal paths in The Villages provides cycling conditions that are among the most favorable in North America. Planned, engineered and built by the developer over a period of more than 30 years, with more than 500 miles of roads suitable for cycling and more than 146 miles of paved multi-modal paths connect all of the residences, businesses and amenities within the community. This is in stark contrast to most communities, which often require significant infrastructure changes to accommodate safe and convenient bicycling.

This section of *Cycling The Villages* describes each component of The Villages road and multi-modal path network and offers guidelines for their use by cyclists. The guidelines are based on Florida traffic laws, established procedures in The Villages and safety practices recommended by the bicycle clubs.

B. CATEGORIES OF ROADS

The Villages was planned with a time-tested hierarchy of roads used in many other master-planned communities: **FIGURE 5**

- **Arterial Roads** are major through roads that are expected to carry large volumes of traffic.
- **Collector Roads** collect traffic from the local roads and carry it to and from arterial roads or to other collector roads or local roads.
- **Local Roads** serve the residential neighborhoods and other areas that have low traffic volume and little or no through traffic.

Easy Summary of Road Categories in The Villages

- Generally, if it has four lanes and a separate paved multi-modal path near it, it is an **Arterial Road**.
- If it has two lanes plus painted golf cart/bike lanes on each side, it is a **Collector Road**.
- If it has neither a multi-modal path or painted golf cart/bike lanes, it is a **Local Road**.

C. ARTERIAL ROADS

The arterial roads in The Villages typically have four vehicle lanes, landscaped medians and parallel or nearby multi-modal paths. Arterial roads are designed to collect and carry the highest volumes of traffic and to move that traffic efficiently. Most of The Villages' arterial roads have speed limits of 35 mph, while a few have speed limits of 45 mph.

FIGURE 6

Typical Dimensions: Two vehicular lanes in each direction, each lane typically 11' wide, separated by a landscaped median that is typically 20' wide.

Speed Limits: Usually 35 mph, slowing to 20 mph at traffic circles and signals. Golf carts are not permitted on roads with 35 mph or higher speed limits, so alternate options to the arterial roads are always provided within The Villages: multi-modal paths, tunnels or bridges. It is legal for bicycles to travel on any of these roads (except the Florida Turnpike), or they may choose to use the adjacent paths, tunnels or bridges.

Intersections and Entrances: Intersections on the 35 mph arterial roads are frequently traffic circles, with some signalized intersections. There are very few other entrances/exits on these roads (i.e., fire station, treatment plant, recreation center) and no residential driveways. Roads with speed limits of 45 mph or higher often have many entrances to

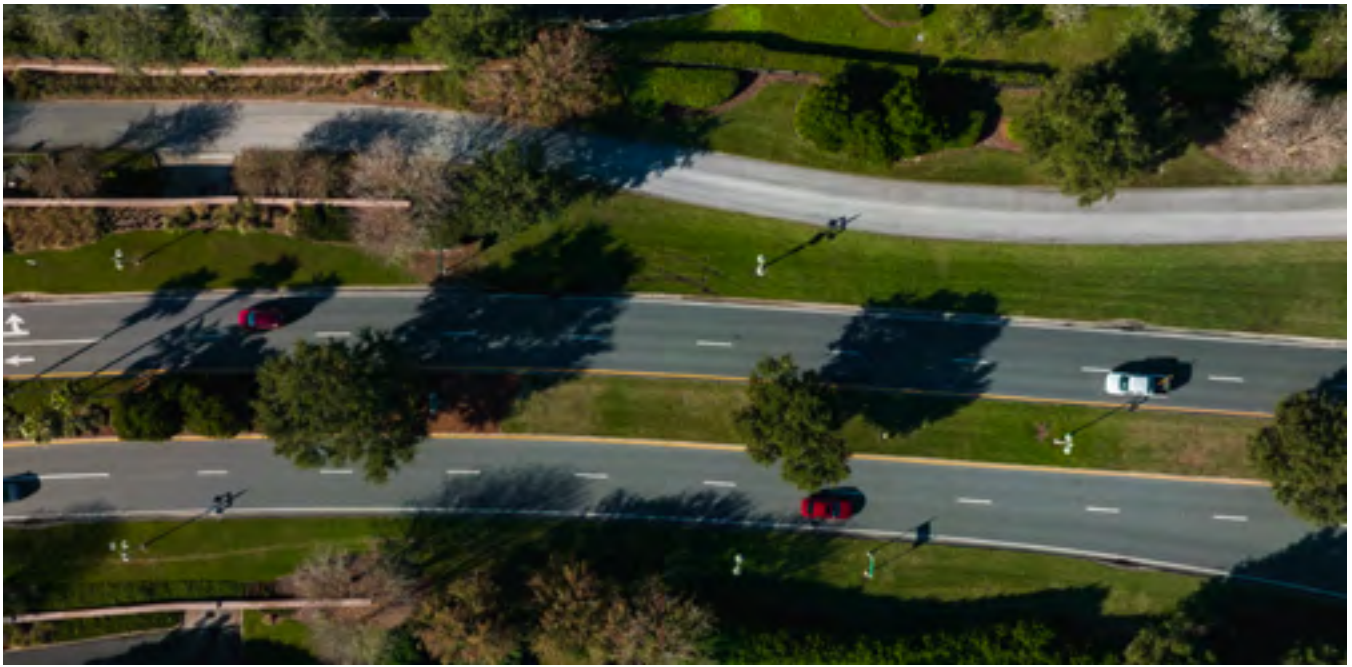


FIGURE 6: Arterial Road example

commercial, medical and other business areas, with frequent additional turn lanes.

Guidelines for Bicycles: The 35 mph roads are suitable for experienced cyclists or groups of cyclists with an experienced leader. The vehicular lanes on the 35 mph roads are not wide enough for both a car and a bicycle to occupy a lane simultaneously; safe passing requires the passing vehicle to move to the left when it is clear to do so. Novice cyclists and slow cyclists are advised to use the multi-modal paths, tunnels and bridges.

Roads with speed limits of 45 mph or higher are not comfortable for recreational bicycles; the heavy traffic, narrow lanes and frequent turning vehicles can make them risky for cyclists of any level of experience. Use of the multi-modal paths, parallel or crossing roads, or alternate routes is strongly recommended. Novice cyclists and slow cyclists are advised to avoid these roads; use the multi-modal path or use The Villages App (see Appendix 5) to find alternate routes.

D. COLLECTOR ROADS

The collector roads collect traffic from the local roads and carry it to and from arterial roads or to other collector roads or local roads. Collector roads in The Villages typically have two lanes for vehicular traffic and a golf cart/bike lane on each side. Lanes are separated with painted stripes. **FIGURE 7**

Dimensions: One lane in each direction, typically 11' wide, plus one golf cart/bike lane on each side, typically 7' wide.

Intersections and Entrances: Cross streets on collector roads may have a signal, 4-way stop signs or 2-way stop signs. Golf cart/bike lanes end before each intersection, with painted markings indicating that all traffic is to merge into the vehicular lane. Left turn lanes are provided at some intersections.

Collector Roads have frequent entrances/exits into neighborhood pools, recreation centers and so forth, but typically have no residential driveways. **FIGURE 8**

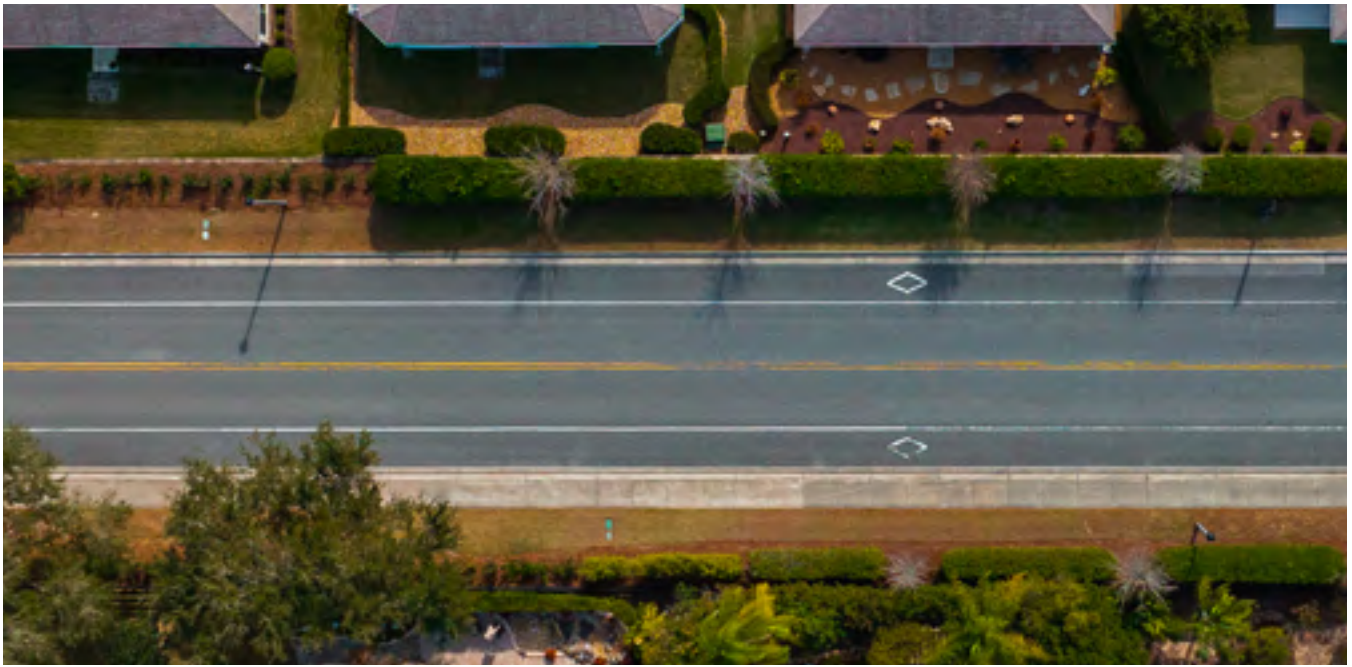


FIGURE 7: Typical Collector Road

(Note: Some collector roads north of CR466 have residential driveways; i.e., Southern Trace, Talley Ridge Circle).

Speed Limits: Typically 25 mph or 30 mph, as posted.

Guidelines for Bicycles: Use the golf cart/bike lane unless passing a slower-moving vehicle or preparing to turn. Make sure the vehicular lane is clear before moving into it, and signal your intention. Watch for traffic entering, exiting or crossing your lane. Groups of bikes should travel single file in cart/bike lanes.

E. LOCAL ROADS

Local Roads in The Villages serve the residential neighborhoods, Town Squares, shopping and office plazas, country clubs, assisted living facilities, regional recreation complexes and other destinations within The Villages. The roads are designed to serve the traffic just for that local destination and typically do not encourage through traffic.

RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD ROADS

There are more than 500 miles of neighborhood roads suitable for cycling in The Villages. Most of The Villages' 90+ residential neighborhood villages have only one point of entry/exit onto a collector road. From the entrances into each neighborhood, the local roads are arranged in loops and cul-de-sacs. These roads generally do not serve through traffic, so they are low-volume and low-speed. Neighborhood roads have no lane markings but are wide enough for two-way traffic. There is little on-street parking because by custom, residents and most guests park in their garages and driveways. However, service trucks and overflow guests do park on these streets, so passing vehicles need to use caution and yield to oncoming vehicles. **FIGURE 9**

Dimensions: Typically 19' wide, with no lane markings.

Intersections and Entrances: Cross streets and side streets are controlled with stop signs. Residential driveway entrances line the streets and there may be entrances to neighborhood pools and mail centers with their parking areas. Golf cart paths from





FIGURE 8: Typical Merge Section on Collector Road

golf courses or connecting to a multi-modal path occasionally intersect with neighborhood streets; traffic on the cart path has the stop sign.

Speed Limits: 15 or 20 mph, slower by custom. Neighborhood roads are typically not posted, which means that they are covered by the signs at each of The Villages entrances that say “20 mph unless otherwise posted.” **FIGURE 25**

Guidelines for Bicycles: Neighborhood roads are ideal for novice riders and slow riders, and are used by all levels of riders. High-speed riding in neighborhoods is not appropriate. Cycling is a great way to get to know your way around The Villages, but if you are exploring a new neighborhood, be aware that it is easy to lose your bearings. Watch the street names at each turn or refer to The Villages App (see Appendix 5), if you get lost.

TOWN SQUARE ROADS

Roads leading into the Town Squares are usually collector roads, but in the areas around the town squares, the golf cart/bike lanes are replaced with on-street parking. These roads may have parallel or

angled parking along their edges. The roads typically have two lanes for vehicular traffic, usually two-way, but portions of the roads may be one-way with angled parking on both sides. Large parking lots are located behind the town square buildings, within easy walking distance to all of the attractions. The Town Squares have heavy pedestrian traffic and there are numerous pedestrian crosswalks, marked with striping and brick pavers.

Dimensions: Traffic lanes are typically 11’ wide with additional paving marked for parallel or diagonal parking.

Intersections and Entrances: Intersections within the Town Squares are controlled by stop signs plus a few stoplights. The roads have multiple entrances to the many parking lots that serve visitors and employees of the Town Square businesses. Usually there is ample parking in these lots but during special events the entire area can become very congested.

Speed Limits: 20 mph, much slower by custom. Town Square roads are typically not posted, so they



FIGURE 9: Local Roads – typical residential neighborhood roads with very low traffic volume

are covered by the overall signs at each The Villages entrance, “20 mph unless otherwise posted.”

Guidelines for Bicycles: Heavy pedestrian traffic, golf carts and cars moving in and out of parking spaces, and distracted drivers, call for a high degree of caution on all Town Square roads. During special events cyclists are generally required to walk their bikes inside the central area, as marked by barriers and directed by event personnel.

OTHER LOCAL ROADS

The Villages many strip shopping centers, medical facilities, offices, recreation centers, country clubs, assisted living/memory care/rehab centers and other community features each have their own system of entrance roads, circulation and parking. Roads and parking lots in all of these businesses and amenities are held to The Villages high standards for design, development and maintenance.

Speed Limits: 20 mph unless posted otherwise; slower by custom.

Guidelines for Bicycles: When visiting these facilities by bicycle, follow the street markings and stop signs, watch for pedestrians and anticipate vehicles that may move into your path, particularly in the parking lots.

F. MULTI-MODAL PATHS, TUNNELS AND BRIDGES

The multi-modal paths in The Villages are wide, asphalt-paved pathways for shared use by pedestrians, golf carts, bicycles and various other human-powered or small-motor-powered devices. They all include a way-finding system to ease navigation for all path users, including bicycles. The multi-modal path routes parallel the arterial roads throughout The Villages and feed into the cart/bike lanes on collector roads and thus to the local roads, providing an uninterrupted network of routes for golf carts to travel to any destination in The Villages. Golf carts are not permitted to travel on or to cross roads with speed limits of 35 mph or higher (except street-legal carts, which may travel on 35 mph roads), so they are required to use the tunnels that go under arterial roads. Florida state law permits



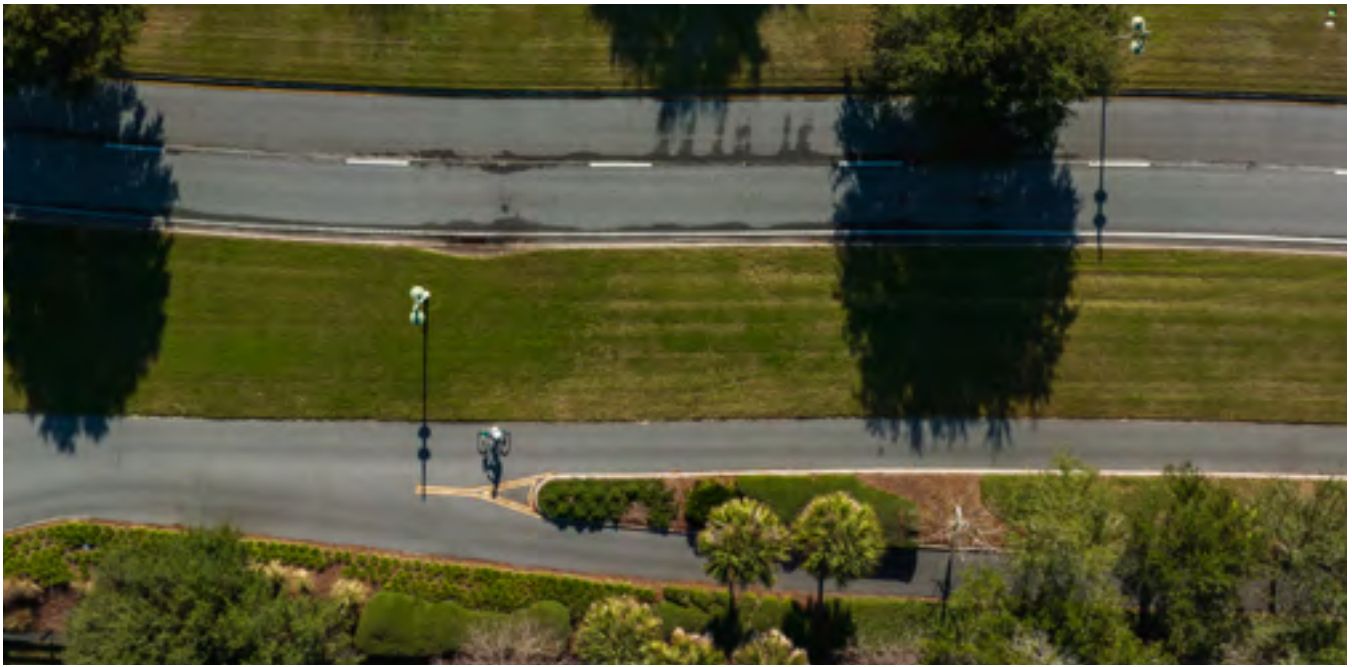


FIGURE 10: Multi-Modal Path Divided and Undivided

bicycles to use any of the roads in and around The Villages, cyclists can choose whether to use the roads or the multi-modal paths and their tunnels.

FIGURE 10

The multi-modal paths have alternating sections with and without a central landscaped island. Golf carts and cyclists travel on the right side of the path, while walkers and runners use the left side, facing toward approaching vehicle traffic. Any user wishing to pass another user must wait until it is completely safe to do so, and then provide a comfortable passing margin (3' is recommended) and a comfortable distance before moving back into their line of travel.

Dimensions: Typically 16' from edge to edge, or in divided sections, 8' of paving in each direction separated by a landscaped median of variable width, generally 6' wide.

Intersections, Tunnels and Bridges: At road crossings, multi-modal path traffic is always required to stop for road traffic and to wait until it is safe to cross. Because golf carts are not permitted on roads with speed limits of 35 mph or more, multi-modal

paths are routed under arterial roads in tunnels or over bridges. At traffic circles, multi-modal paths typically cross collector roads on a specially-paved and marked section of pavement that is typically located inside the Entrance/Exit Gates.

Speed Limits: There are no posted speed limits on multi-modal paths, but standard golf carts are not allowed to be sold with motors that exceed 20 mph, so that is their general speed limit.

Guidelines for Bicycles: Bicyclists have full use of the multi-modal paths and also have the legal right to travel on any of the roads in and around The Villages, except for Florida's Turnpike and I-75. Each cyclist, or each ride group leader, should make the choice based on their skill level, current conditions and personal preference. Cyclists using the multi-modal paths follow the same rules as golf carts, stopping and yielding to cars at all road intersections or entrances. Cyclists may travel at any speed that is comfortable for them, but should always be mindful of safety and courtesy toward other users. Divided sections of MMPs are too narrow to safely contain a bicycle and a golf car



FIGURE 11: Typical Tunnel Under Arterial Road

traveling side by side. To discourage golf cart drivers from attempting to share the lane, cyclists should ride in the middle of the lane until they reach the end of the divided section.

Tunnels: Tunnels on the multi-modal paths require cyclists to use special caution because users may have difficulty seeing other users, particularly when turning in or out of a tunnel. This can be an issue for groups of riders since the steep exit hill can cause unexpected stops. A tunnel entrance/exit may require a sharp turn and may serve traffic from two or even three directions. Some tunnels have speed bumps or divider curbs which can be difficult to see and to maneuver. Novice cyclists need to be aware that the path leading out of a tunnel can be quite steep, requiring lower gears or even walking the bike up the short hill. Cyclists using multi-modal paths need to be alert to traffic at tunnel entrances even if they are not using the tunnel. Cyclists may choose to use the at-grade road crossings instead of the tunnels. **FIGURE 11**

Bridges: There are five current bridges and one under construction within the multi-modal path

network, and it is up to each cyclist to decide whether to use a bridge (required for golf carts) or to stay on the roadways and cross at signalized intersections. **FIGURE 12**

Route 44 and the Florida Turnpike: Four new multi-million dollar pedestrian/bicycle/golf cart bridges are complete or under construction:

- The Brownwood Bridge crosses Route 44 at Meggison Road near Brownwood Paddock Square and connects to a smaller bridge that crosses the pond leading to the Barnstorm Movie Theatre and the town square.
- The Chitty Chatty Bridge crosses Route 44 near Rohan Recreation Complex and Lake Deaton Plaza.

FIGURE 13

- The Water Lily Bridge crosses the Florida Turnpike near Meggison Road south of Brownwood Paddock Square.
- The Southern Oaks Bridge crosses the Florida Turnpike with Bexley Trail, which connects residential neighborhoods north of the Turnpike with lifestyle recreational facilities and the Wellness Village to the south.

FIGURE 12: Villages Multi-Modal Path Bridges south of SR 44



The Villages®

These bridges are constructed of Corten steel, which weathers to form a rust-like appearance that eliminates the need for painting. The bridges are designed to be reminiscent of steel train trestle bridges of a bygone era. The bridges are 15' wide and more than 250' long. They were each constructed offsite and then placed over their roadways in a single night (Appendix 8 –Bridge article and video).

Bicyclists may choose to use these new bridges and their connecting multi modal paths, or they can use the signalized intersections used by other vehicular traffic to cross the highways. Note that no bicycle traffic is permitted on the Florida Turnpike or I-75 (to the west of The Villages), but there are vehicular bridges that bicycles can use to cross over or under these limited-access highways. If you plan to ride outside of The Villages toward these roads, check with a bicycle club member or other experienced rider for advice on the best routes.

SR 27/441 at Spanish Springs: Bicycles are permitted to use the multi-modal path bridge over SR 27/441 at Spanish Springs, but it is steep and narrow, and most cyclists find it uncomfortable. The many signalized intersections are better choices for most cyclists to cross this busy road, leaving the bridge for golf cart use. **FIGURE 15**

Morse Blvd across Lake Sumter: Cyclists may use the road lanes or the multi-modal path lanes on this bridge, and either choice requires caution. The roadway has four 10' lanes with a double yellow line in the center. Cyclists need to be aware that the lanes are too narrow for both a bike and a car, so cars must change lanes to pass, which can be hazardous for all concerned when traffic is heavy. On the multi-modal path, when the pathway reaches the bridge it narrows into two 5' lanes of opposing traffic, with a posted speed limit of 10 mph for golf carts and bikes. A one-foot-high concrete curb separates multi-modal path traffic from cars traveling on the bridge.

A 4' wide sidewalk parallels the cart/bike lanes along the outside (western) edge of the bridge. Novice riders or very slow riders may feel more comfortable walking their bikes along the sidewalk, or riding there if no pedestrians are present. **FIGURE 16**

G. PEDESTRIAN/BICYCLE PATHWAYS AND SIDEWALKS

Until 2016, the collector roads in The Villages (two-lane roads with golf cart/bicycle lanes painted on each side, Section 5.D.) were typically built with a traditional 4' wide sidewalk along at least one side. In the State of Florida, it is legal for bicyclists to use sidewalks as long as they practice common courtesies (low speed, audible signals when passing and so forth). In practice, cyclists almost never use the sidewalks in The Villages north of SR 44; they typically travel within the painted golf cart/bicycle lanes and follow the same rules as golf carts for merging, passing and so forth.

As new villages were planned and constructed south of SR 44, the traditional sidewalks were replaced with a new design: 12'-wide dedicated pedestrian/bicycle pathways to provide a comfortable shared environment along the collector roads. These paths are set back from the road edge with grass and landscaping. The network of pedestrian/bicycle pathways also has segments that branch away from the collector roads to loop around ponds, preserves and other scenic areas, so cyclists and other users can enjoy a route of 15 miles or more. These pathways are marked with user symbols and have two posts at each entrance or intersection to remind users that golf carts are not permitted. (The multi-modal paths that are used by golf carts as well as cyclists and walkers have a single post at the center of each entrance, to mark them as off-limits to cars.)

FIGURE 17



FIGURE 13: The Chitty Chatty Bridge over Route 44

Guidelines for Bicycles: While the pedestrian/bicycle pathways have generous widths and good visibility, they need to be used with care to avoid conflicts between users. Walkers may be socializing, dogs on leashes may move into a bicyclist's path, and people on cell phones may be distracted, so these pathways are not suitable for high-speed cycling. When using the shared pedestrian/bicycle pathways, use the same courtesies that are required on traditional sidewalks. Slow to a reasonable speed as you approach walkers or other users, and give an audible signal (voice or bell) if you wish to pass. Always be prepared for other users to do something unexpected.

Cyclists can choose whether they wish to use the golf cart/bicycle lane painted on the main road, or the shared pedestrian/bicycle pathway. If they intend to travel at or near the speed of the motor vehicles, the better choice will probably be to stay on the roadway in the golf cart/bicycle lane. Note that cyclists traveling in the golf cart/bicycle lanes are to observe the stop signs on the collector (main) street, while cyclists using the pedestrian/bicycle pathway

need to stop at each intersection if a car or golf cart is approaching the main street from any of the side streets.

H. INTERSECTIONS

TRAFFIC CIRCLE INTERSECTIONS ("ROUNDABOUTS")

Many of the intersections on arterial roads are traffic circles (roundabouts). Traffic circles are circular roadways where all entering vehicles yield to traffic that is already in the circle, travel counterclockwise around a central landscaped island and leave the circle to continue traveling in their desired direction. See Appendix 6 (Navigating Roundabouts) for detailed instructions. There are 40+ traffic circles in The Villages, so all residents and visitors need to learn to use them safely. **FIGURES 14, 18, 19, 20**

The Villages traffic circles may be 4-way, 3-way or 3-way with a bypass lane.

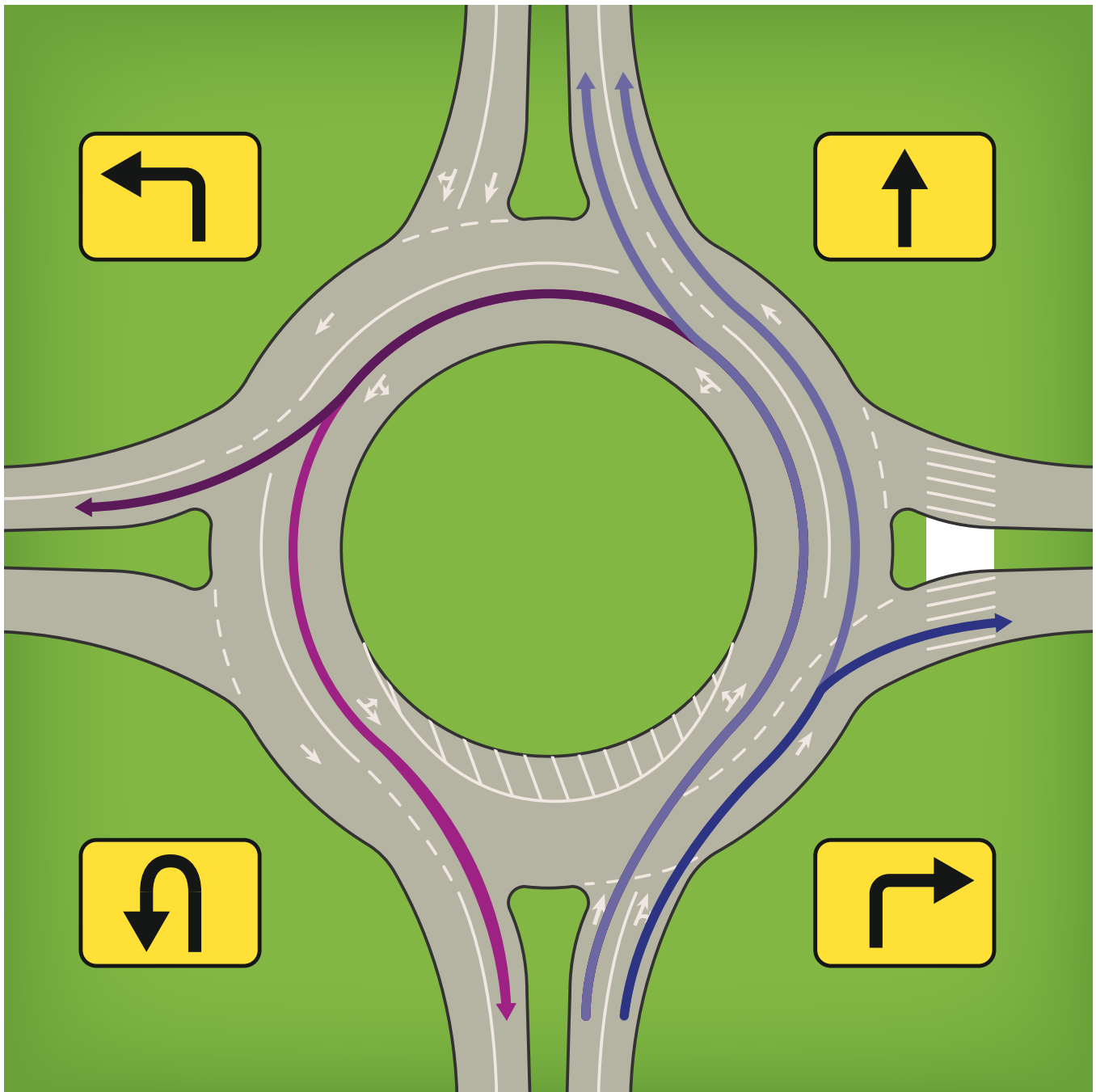


FIGURE 14: Typical 4-way Traffic Circle Diagram

Speed Limit: 20 mph approaching and within the Traffic Circle, regardless of the speed limits of the roads it serves.

Guidelines for Bicycles: Bicycles follow the same instructions as cars for navigating the circles, but must remember they are not as visible as a car and are much more vulnerable, and so must use extra

caution. Cyclists should not encourage cars to stop in the circle to let them through. If a car stops when it should be moving through the circle, cyclists should stop at the circle entrance, and not proceed until the car goes by. The driver thinks he/she is doing the cyclist a favor, but is actually setting up both the car and the cyclist for a crash when other cars approach from behind.



FIGURE 15: Multi-modal Path Bridge over SR 441/27

SIGNALIZED INTERSECTIONS

Many of The Villages' busiest intersections are controlled with traffic signals using standard configurations of turn lanes and turning light cycles. Traffic signals may also occur where two collector roads intersect and in various other places.

Guidelines for Bicycles: Bicycles shall follow the same laws as other vehicles at traffic signals. The traffic signals in The Villages have excellent sensors that pick up bicycles even when no other vehicles are present.

STOP SIGN INTERSECTIONS

On every type of road or path, virtually every intersection or entrance that is not governed by a traffic circle or a signal light will have stop signs indicating who is expected to stop and who has the right of way. Usually the standard red octagonal sign is used, but on multi-modal paths the stop sign may be painted on a post or on the path itself.

Guidelines for Bicycles: Bicycles are always governed by the same laws as all other vehicles at stop sign intersections.

GOLF COURSE PATHWAY INTERSECTIONS

Golf course pathways occasionally intersect with collector roads, neighborhood roads and multi-modal paths. These paths are for the exclusive use of golfers. They are typically paved with concrete and are clearly marked as part of the golf course they serve. When a path crosses a street, the crossing is typically marked with stripes similar to a pedestrian crosswalk.

Guidelines for Bicycles: Bicycles are not permitted on the golf course paths. When approaching a path crossing, cyclists must watch for golf carts since they may not be aware of the cross-traffic.

I. ENTRANCE/EXIT GATES

Entrance/Exit Gates are located at many of the village entrances throughout The Villages. However, The Villages is not a "gated community" in the sense of restricting entrance since anyone can enter any of the gates just by pressing a button. Since the roads are county roads, the three counties require that all roads must be fully accessible for emergency



FIGURE 16: Multi-modal Path on Bridge over Lake Sumter (Morse Boulevard)

equipment and maintenance. The Villages gates serve several purposes:

- to provide public ingress and egress
- to slow traffic
- to provide security, both actual (with surveillance cameras) and perceived
- to give directions and information if needed

There are two types of gates: staffed and unstaffed. Locations of staffed gates appear to be based on traffic volume, but some busy gates are unstaffed. Gate attendants are available to give directions, answer questions and call for assistance if needed. Assistance is also available at unmanned gates, from the operator who answers when the gate button is pressed. **FIGURE 22, 23**

Some of the gates serve more than one village, and some villages have no entrance gate. Most of the entrance gates have two lanes, one for residents and one for visitors. At staffed gates, residents use gate cards in the right lane while visitors pass by the attendant. At unstaffed gates, the gates in both lanes

can be opened with a gate card or by pressing the red button. If the red button is pressed, a greeting voice is heard and will provide help if needed. Some unstaffed entrance gates have only one lane that serves both residents and visitors.

Almost all of the exit gates are a single lane with a gate that lifts automatically when activated by the sensor/camera. A few exit gates are double exit gates activated by sensors; both gates lift at the same time with the opening in the center.

Dimensions: Typically each lane is 11' wide.

Speed Limits: Traffic approaching entrance gates is expected to come to a full stop. The speed limit at exit gates is 5 mph.

Guidelines for Bicycles: Bicycles are expected to follow the same procedures as any other vehicle using the gates. Some gate arms are spaced far enough from the curb for a bicycle to pass through without opening the gate, but cyclists must be aware that if there is a golf cart path crossing behind the gate, golf carts tend to use a closed gate arm as a





FIGURE 17: Pedestrian/Bicycle Paths with additional on-street bicycle/golf cart lanes

sign that it is safe for them to proceed. All vehicles including bicycles are expected to exercise caution and courtesy in the gate area. Gates close after each vehicle, so cyclists should be aware that if a car passes them after the cyclist has activated the sensor, the gate may close before the bicycle can get through. There is a \$250 fine for hitting and breaking away a gate arm. The fine applies to cyclists as well as to other vehicles, and 24-hour cameras are in operation at each gate to identify the offender.

J. SIGNAGE

Signs in The Villages serve several functions: traffic control, instruction, identity and information. The Villages has very strict signage controls. Advertising signs and billboards are generally not permitted on properties within The Villages, so the visual clutter that is rampant in the rest of Florida is virtually absent.

Traffic Control and Instruction Signs: At major entry points, signs announce “Speed Limit 20 Unless Otherwise Posted.” **FIGURE 25** Throughout The Villages, standard traffic control signs are mounted on attractive posts. The instruction signs

at the approach to each traffic circle are particularly important since many drivers are not familiar with traffic circles. **FIGURE 24**

Identity and Information Signs: The “Welcome to The Villages” signs announce that it is a golf cart community, which alerts newcomers to the presence of unusual vehicles and the need for slower speeds and extra caution. “Bicycle Friendly Community” signs appear near main traffic entrances to The Villages. Wall-mounted or free-standing monument signs identify most of the neighborhood entries as well as recreation centers, country clubs and other community features. Street name signs are consistently placed at corners in the residential neighborhoods and on standard overhead mounts at traffic signals. Street names are also included in the traffic circle instruction signs. All tunnels have an identity number sign which should be used in reporting maintenance problems or for emergency 911 calls. **FIGURE 26**



FIGURE 18: Typical 4-way Traffic Circle

Pavement Markings: Various traffic control messages are conveyed with markings and signs painted onto pavement, particularly on traffic circles, collector roads and multi-modal paths. These include diamonds and lettering to identify the golf cart/ bike lanes, turn arrows, merge arrows and lane endings at intersections, and stop signs at tunnel exits. Raised reflectors are used to mark curves on the Multi Modal Paths, fire hydrant locations and where otherwise needed. In addition to heeding the messages, cyclists need to be aware that the painted markings can be slippery when wet and that hitting a raised reflector can cause loss of control of the bike.

Multi-Modal Path Directional Signs: When LAB awarded its Gold designation as a Bicycle Friendly Community to The Villages in 2018, one of their major recommendations for future improvements was a re-do of the directional signs on the multi-modal path (MMP) system. At that time, the existing signs had faded and were difficult to read, and many critical junctions had no directional signs at all. Since 2018, The Villages has designed and implemented a completely new directional sign system for the entire path network. The new signs have a high-visibility palette of white lettering on

a dark green background and a red border, that is reflective and fade-proof. Samples of the new directional signs are shown in **FIGURE 28**.

K. FACILITIES FOR BICYCLISTS

Cyclists can go from their homes directly to any The Villages destinations – 100+ recreation centers, 100+ swimming pools, 12 country clubs with championship golf courses, 42 executive golf courses, 5 multi-field softball complexes, a polo stadium, theaters, countless restaurants and stores and much more.

At most of these facilities cyclists will find restrooms, water fountains, bike racks and shelters that are accessible to all residents and their guests. Restrooms and water fountains can be found within less than a five-minute bicycle ride from any point in The Villages. The Villages is considered a very high thunderstorm risk region, particularly in the summer, and if a thunderstorm threatens, cyclists can take shelter at the neighborhood mail pick-up centers, recreation centers and pavilions located throughout The Villages.





FIGURE 19: Typical 3-way Traffic Circle

Public Safety facilities, including two sheriff's offices, local police stations and nine fire stations, have facilities to support riders. More than 4500 Villagers have received training in first aid, including CPR and use of defibrillators. There are over 70 first-response teams of volunteers in the communities able to help in medical emergencies.

A large bicycle shop is located within The Villages and there are several others nearby; see Appendix 7 for details.

The Villages bike clubs conduct scheduled rides virtually every day of the week. These rides are open to any resident and offer different speed groups so each new rider can find a group that matches his or her skill level. The ride leaders and other club members mentor new riders, explaining ride procedures and safety practices. The rides and club

meetings are publicized in the weekly Recreation & Parks Publication that is distributed in The Villages Daily Sun newspaper and is available free at all recreation centers every day. Ride schedules are also publicized on the recreation website and bike clubs' websites. See Appendix 1 for details. The clubs are:

- The Village Bicycle Club
www.thevillagebicycleclub.com
- The Sumter Landing Bicycle Club
www.slbikeclub.org
- PANTHERS Tandem Bicycle Club
www.floridatandemclub.org



FIGURE 20: Typical Traffic Circle: 3-way with bypass lane

The Villages App® is a free way-finding and information app for mobile devices. It provides routes for either motorists or golf carts (via the multi-modal paths) to any destination within The Villages, with excellent maps. For new cyclists or anyone who wants to explore an unfamiliar area, The Villages App makes route planning easy. It is also helpful if a cyclist gets lost or disoriented and needs to find the best way “home”, since it always knows where one is. The app can be downloaded from app stores. See Appendix 5 for more information. **FIGURE 21**

Bike Trails in the Surrounding Area: The State of Florida has numerous paved multi-purpose trails and several of them are located within easy driving distance of The Villages. The Withlacoochee Trail, West Orange Trail, Van Fleet Trail and others provide destinations for cyclists and cycling groups (Appendix 10). The Santos Trail, located 30 minutes north of The Villages, contains some of the most highly rated mountain biking trails and features in the US. A large portion of it that is part of the Greenway Beltway was recently paved, giving cyclists an opportunity to ride up to 31 miles in the trees with every quarter mile being marked. This is a trail shared by walkers and runners.

FIGURE 21: The Villages App



*Want to get
cycling and golf
cart directions
to your favorite
recreation?*

With **The Villages® App,**
You Can

Download for
FREE Today!





FIGURE 22: Aerial View, typical staffed gate (with gatehouse)

VI. Needs Analysis

A. EQUITY DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Goal: *Promote the unique qualities of The Villages to assure that its bicycling amenities are equally available regardless of income level, gender, ethnicity, health issues or other factors that may serve to discourage or limit participation. Particularly in the presence of physical disabilities, strive to accommodate special needs for equipment modifications, training, or personal assistance.*

The Villages exceeds the standards most communities strive for in equity and inclusion, tailored to the needs of its large and diverse population of retirees. This very large, master-planned retirement community has none of the physically imposed historic divisions found in most older cities and towns, where neighborhoods and facilities have been developed over decades or even centuries, based on then-current transportation methods, ethnicities, income levels and so forth.

Income and Status: One of the many ways The Villages differs from most other communities is that EVERYONE comes from somewhere else. The residents are all retirees who have chosen to leave the place where they grew up, worked and/or raised a family, to relocate to a new place where they can enjoy the freedoms of retirement. Once they arrive and have settled into their chosen neighborhood (one of more than 90 villages), it makes no difference how important or unimportant they were in their old job, or how their income and family connections influenced whether they lived in the “right” or “wrong” part of town.

The development pattern of The Villages has generally proceeded from north to south, and about 80 percent of the homes are less than 20 years old. Typically a neighborhood “village” of about 500-1000 homes will be completed with its nearby amenities before the next ones are marketed. No matter what the cost of their home is or where it is located, every resident can use any of the pools, golf



FIGURE 23: Cyclist View, typical staffed gate

courses, country clubs, multi-modal paths, recreation centers, softball fields, and every other facility anywhere in The Villages.

In The Villages, people from all walks of life congregate and socialize based primarily on shared interests. Whether they golf, play pickleball, enjoy Mah Jongg, bridge, quilting, photography or you name it, they soon gravitate to the many opportunities to join up with other like-minded retirees. One of the most popular sources of recreation and socialization is bicycling.

Combating Ageism: The typical retirement development in older cities and towns usually caters to people who have aged to the point where they require assistance or feel they can no longer take care of a “regular” home. They have often passed the stage of life where they make regular use of recreational or cultural facilities, so the typical retiree can be physically isolated from the city’s recreational assets unless special transportation is provided. None of this is true in The Villages. Retirees are attracted to this community specifically because of the active lifestyles that are possible, so they relocate while

they are mobile, healthy and often younger than the stereotypical retiree — in their 50s or even 40s.

In The Villages, bicyclists are able to “age in place” in a community that allows them to ride directly from their home onto the bicycle-friendly roads and a huge network of trails and pathways. Every resident who wants to cycle can get from his or her home to any destination in The Villages with no physical barriers — for recreation, shopping, appointments or socializing. The mild climate allows riding 12 months a year, and even though the annual rainfall is fairly high, the typical pattern of clear mornings and scattered afternoon thunderstorms means that cyclists almost never need to miss a day of riding because of rain.

Inclusion of the widest possible segment of seniors into the active cycling community is perhaps our greatest challenge. For every resident who is an active rider, there are probably 10 who have a bicycle hanging in their garage, unused for a variety of reasons. They haven’t ridden for a long time and are uncertain of their skills or balance, or they are not sure where to go or how to navigate outside





FIGURE 24: Typical Traffic Circle Instruction Sign

of their neighborhood, or their bike needs some maintenance work and they don't know how to do it, or they are just too busy with other activities. The many ways that we are working to overcome all of these objections are outlined in the Education and Encouragement sections of this document.

Dealing with Disabilities: Perhaps the most common barriers to safe and enjoyable cycling among seniors are physical disabilities and health problems. The most active cyclists may find themselves stricken with failing joints, loss of vision, partial paralysis from a stroke, doctor-imposed limitations because of irregular heartbeats, tremors or balance problems — the list seems endless. Solutions that can help with a long-standing handicap or a new condition need to be highly individualized, and the first step may be finding people with similar problems who can share their experience, perhaps with different equipment (a tricycle? an e-bike?) or a supportive partner (tandem bicycle captain for a blind stoker?). The efforts outlined in the Education and Encouragement sections need to be expanded and publicized.

Special success stories are always welcomed by the local news media.

Gender Equality: Bicycle clubs in The Villages have long known that their membership is heavily skewed toward males (except for the tandem club, which has a high score for gender equality — 50 percent!) In the recent Survey of Bicycling in The Villages (Section VII), 63 percent of the 1239 respondents were male and 37 percent female. Club riders note that the faster ride groups attract more male riders, while the slower ride groups include more females.

Of the survey respondents, 719 were not members of any bike club, and of those, 40 percent were female. This suggests that there may be many women cyclists who ride alone or with neighborhood friends, and many more non-riders who already have bikes but are not currently using them. Ongoing efforts to communicate with these female riders and potential riders are outlined in the Education and Encouragement sections.



FIGURE 25: The Villages’ “Speed limit 20 unless otherwise posted” sign

Frequent rides and bike club social activities geared toward women have been well attended and have received strong attention in the local news media. More of these activities, and more extensive publicity efforts, will be an ongoing need as we progress toward gender equality.

B. ENGINEERING

Goal: *Maintain and enhance bicycle facilities in The Villages to continue to meet or exceed accepted standards and guidelines.*

The bicycle club members and cycling advocates need to remain aware of potential and proposed road projects in The Villages and the surrounding area, and work to ensure that bike lanes, appropriate traffic direction signs and other bicycle friendly features are included in any new projects. An ongoing need will be to monitor road and multi-modal path conditions and make recommendations for repairs, maintenance and minor enhancements: signs, bike racks, adjustments to gates, speed bumps, reflectors and any potential hazards to safe cycling.

C. EDUCATION

Goal: *Educate cyclists, motorists, golf cart operators, pedestrians, children, and other users of the road and multi-modal paths so everyone knows the laws and behaviors that will make The Villages a positive environment for safe, healthy, collegial, and fun bicycling.*

The Villages retirement community currently has 130,000+ residents. The Villages, including full-time residents, seasonal residents, guests, and those who work here but live outside the age-restricted areas, need to be made aware of laws and safety practices relating cyclists on the roads and multi-modal paths and their interaction with automobiles, golf carts and other users. BFAC, partnering with the three bike clubs, The Villages Recreation & Parks Department, Community Development District Management and Safety Divisions, local law enforcement, and community groups are using all means available to disseminate and promote bicycling safety, including:





FIGURE 26: Tunnel Identity Sign

League Cycling Instructors (LCIs): LCIs have increased from having only one LCI five years ago to *nineteen* today. These LCIs invested in bicycle safety education by participating in the rigorous League of American Bicyclists training process. The bicycle clubs helped pay the training fees, in some cases, as a commitment to the team effort of having trained bicycle safety instructors. BFAC's plan is to conduct LCI training at regular intervals and possibly to develop a League Certified Organizational Coach to perpetuate the bike safety program as our senior LCIs retire. Current LCIs are used for training at schools in the three-county area (Sumter, Lake, and Marion) as well as the surrounding towns. BFAC coordinates with the Florida Department of Transportation, University of Florida, and University of South Florida on opportunities to teach bicycle and pedestrian safety, and the schedule is frequently busy.

Newspapers and Other Local Media: Media serving The Villages are a key component of the education effort. Media are contacted to assure coverage at every event, whether a children's class, bike rodeo, community service, or charity event. Cycling

advocates feed the media a continuous stream of interesting stories and articles that embody the messages of safe cycling through awareness of laws and best cycling practices. These efforts are featured in all aspects of the media: print, electronic, radio, and television. Plans are being made to expand the current levels of media coverage into short public safety awareness messages by community and law enforcement figures.

Bike Club Education Programs: Each of the three bicycle clubs complements these educational programs. Each club has a Safety Officer on its board of directors. The Safety Officer is responsible for club safety policy and making sure that members know the rules of the road. They coordinate with Florida Bicycle Association and League of American Bicyclists for the latest news and developments in bicycle safety. The Safety Officers have organized club rides so that there is always a ride leader and ride sweep. Ride leaders provide route guidance and safety briefings before each ride. Rides are conducted with a maximum of ten bikes in single file as much as practicable so as not to impede traffic. Lights and helmets are mandatory. Rides are grouped according



FIGURE 27: Bike Club Safety Briefing

to individual performance levels to help keep riders reasonably close to each other. Riders help each other inspect bicycles for safety and maintenance before the ride starts. BFAC plan to continue and expand its Educational programs in concert with the bike clubs as our bicycling community continues to grow.

FIGURE 27

Area Bike Shops: The bike shop located in The Villages and several nearby shops that serve residents of The Villages are often the first point of contact for new cyclists, so shop employees play an important role in distributing information on safety and best cycling practices. The Village Cycles shop provides bicycle education classes as well as shop rides for the community. They then seek opportunities to reinforce safety messages with their returning customers and seasoned cyclists who come in for repairs.

Hands-On Instruction for New and Returning Cyclists: BFAC conducts hands-on private lessons for novice cyclists, residents who want to take up bicycling or residents who have not ridden for a long time. It will even provide a bicycle for residents

who do not have one. One of BFAC and bike clubs' activities is refurbishing and recycling bicycles for those who need them in the community. Students are not charged for either the training or the bicycles; this work an additional way of reaching non-club members and encouraging them to ride bikes safely.

Cycling Education for Children: The Villages is an age restricted retirement community and so those under 19 are not allowed to live in The Villages. This does not mitigate the need to for cycling safety instruction for the children living in the surrounding area. Because Villagers are usually retired, they have large support needs including medical, fire and police, retail, home and landscape maintenance. These support workers have many children that attend public schools, including The Villages Charter School. Residents of The Villages also have grandchildren who visit regularly, especially during school vacations. BFAC views these children as opportunities to teach bicycle and pedestrian safety. The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), through grants to the University of Florida (UF), has provided BFAC with access to literature, lights and helmets that are provided to children who need



FIGURE 28: Typical New Way-finding Sign

them. All Village LCIs are trained helmet fitters, per FDOT requirements. FDOT and UF have provided two sets of bicycles, one configured for children and the other for adults, to use in teaching bicycle safety. The bicycles are stored in mobile trailers that are towed to the venues, whether a recreation center or school, where our LCIs and volunteers teach. BFAC has capitalized on using “Camp Villages” for visiting grandchildren in four sessions per year, and has taken its school classes to eight schools in the three-county area. In all, it has presented instruction and skills training (also known as bike rodeos) to approximately 4,000 children since The Villages received its Gold level designation from the LAB in 2018.

Cycling Education for Adults: We believe that living in The Villages can add years to the life of a retiree, which is attributed to active and generally healthier lifestyles than typical retirees experience. Bicycling is an integral part of Villagers lives whether as club members or simply casual bicyclists. BFAC has addressed the need for adult cycling education through several efforts: The Enrichment Academy is an adult education program taught by residents of

The Villages. Programs range across a spectrum from literature, and history to scuba diving and bicycling. BFAC offers classes that include six hours of training in three two-hour sessions. The first session covers Florida laws and rules of the road. The second session focuses on maintenance, equipment, and preparing to ride. The last session is a bike rodeo and group ride to enhance skills.

BFAC presents bicycling safety lectures and demonstrations to resident lifestyle groups (also known as “clubs”) in The Villages. It receives requests to talk about issues relating to bicyclist-motorized vehicle (i.e., cars, trucks, golf carts) interface and space sharing. It presents insights about how to get along through knowing and adhering to the Florida laws governing bicycles and motor vehicles.

BFAC cooperates with The Villages Recreation & Parks Department to support new recreation facilities, such as the opening of a new bike trail or a new recreation center. This is proven to be a popular activity because it becomes a hands-on event. BFAC provides bicycles and helmets for current and potential residents to use as they ride the new trails.

Hundreds have received exposure to BFAC bicycling program from such rides.

Awareness of Laws: BFAC will work to disseminate knowledge of laws that govern all users of the roads and multi-modal paths in The Villages, such as publishing articles and letters to the editor, distributing “safety tips” handouts, conducting LCI presentations at new residents’ meetings and club meetings, and participating in expos and activities sponsored by the Recreation & Parks Department. (Appendices 14 and 16).

Easy access to bicycling information for bicyclists: The bicycle clubs websites will support a series of on-line connections to information and data supplied by the State of Florida, League of American Bicyclists and Florida Bicycle Association. These sites demonstrate bicycle handling skills and test the users’ knowledge and application of bicycle law. This portion of the websites are extended to all Villagers and the public free of charge. The on-bicycle parts of these skills training exercises will be conducted by the LCIs at various locations both inside and outside The Villages.

Education of Automobile and Truck Drivers: The greatest obstacle to safe and comfortable bicycling in and around The Villages is the need to share roads with distracted, unskilled or hostile drivers. Cyclists everywhere recognize that the advantage in any accident always goes to those drivers. The League of American Bicyclists (LAB) has addressed this situation with templates for educational programs for professional drivers. The BFAC has customized these tools to address the specific traffic conditions and issues in The Villages, such as sharing roundabouts, golf cart merge lanes and intersections with multi-modal paths. The resulting Bicycle Friendly Driver videos and PowerPoint presentation are now available for use (Appendix 21). BFAC members and other volunteers will need to develop and participate in efforts to take these presentations to the widest possible audience of vehicle drivers.

D. ENCOURAGEMENT

Goal: *Encourage increased ridership among all levels of cyclists, including new cyclists and those who have not ridden for many years; expand awareness of cycling through charity rides, bike expos and other organized events; and raise awareness of the health, fitness and social benefits of cycling at any age.*

When LCIs speak at the New Residents Meetings, they ask, “How many of you have a bicycle in your garage?” A surprising number (almost half the attendees) raise their hands. But with the second question “How many of you ride your bike?” most of the hands disappear. Clearly there are many residents in The Villages who could be encouraged to become regular riders and join one of the three bike clubs to increase their enjoyment and safety when cycling. It is also surprising when asked, how few people realize a bicycle is considered a vehicle and must follow the same rules of the road as a car. The one major difference, which has led to some confusion among drivers, is they can ride on either the road or a multi-modal path when there is a choice. It is our goal to encourage and support all non-riders to honor the rules and courtesies that make a safe, comfortable experience for cyclists and vehicle drivers.

Fitness and Health Benefits: The main motivator among regular cyclists in The Villages is improved fitness. Information on the health benefits of cycling needs to be spread to the widest possible audience. Many personal success stories have already been shared through the media and the bike club websites which is an effective way to convey the messages of health and fitness through cycling. BFAC and clubs are also finding more doctors willing to talk about and promote the benefits of cycling to all ages. Many runners are switching to cycling as their joints and knees require a kinder cardio-fitness routine.

Socialization: The social connections forged through a common interest in cycling are important to health, happiness, and a balanced lifestyle. Building

lasting and meaningful relationships on and off the bike enhances the quality of life and expands the activities and interests shared by one another. The bike clubs work hard to offer a variety of activities – dances, dinners, guest speakers, pool parties, golf, book clubs, pickleball, away rides – that allow members to mingle and socialize with one another. Including and reaching out to the non-riding members as well is also an important goal to unite riders and non-riders into a single family.

Confidence for New or Returning Riders: Older people who have not ridden a bike for a long time, or perhaps never learned to ride, are often fearful and afraid of getting lost, afraid of falling, afraid of not being strong enough to get up a hill or to get back home, afraid of looking foolish and so forth. The bike clubs often attract people who are already confident cyclists. However, this is changing with an expanded presence in the community welcoming and encouraging the newcomer to try the clubs out. The clubs are now at most town square events, outdoor expos, recreation centers, and offer safety and riding instructional classes through The Enrichment Academy. (Appendix 20, TEA Catalog) Villages LCIs teach classes for the young and old, providing refresher courses as well as the beginning basics. Bicycle clubs should consider adding beginner rides under experienced leadership to their offerings to recruit new riders and enhance their safe and enjoyable riding by joining other beginners.

Special Events: The occasional cyclist is often inspired by a special event, a charity ride or an interesting remote destination. Special events also raise awareness of cycling and its benefits among the non-cycling population. Several annual cycling events attract wide participation in The Villages; such as the Fall Hearts for Our Hospital Challenge and the Spring Yalaha Bakery ride. There is always room for additional events, volunteers, new ideas for publicity, additional sponsors and additional participants.

Image and Public Relations: Despite the fact that cyclists are everywhere in The Villages, they are considered a visible minority, and many non-cycling residents have negative perceptions that can contribute to unsafe riding conditions or even crashes. An Australian study has shown that half of motorists see cyclists as “less than human,” which correlates with more aggression toward them; putting a human face on cyclists by motorists should improve their safety. (*Science Direct*, Volume 62, April 2019, Pages 681-689) It was for this reason that the Sumter Landing Bicycle Club launched a “charm offensive,” with cyclists greeting all pedestrians passed in hopes that they would view the bikers as more human when the pedestrians were behind the wheel. In addition to the Education and Equity needs outlined above, each cyclist can be a goodwill ambassador in every encounter with drivers on the roads or multi-modal paths.

E. EVALUATION

Goal: *Evaluate progress toward the goals of Cycling The Villages on a regular basis and advocate for cyclists’ needs as the area continues to grow in the future.*

Cycling The Villages is intended to be a dynamic document that can be easily updated and changed to meet new circumstances. The Bike Friendly Advocacy Council and The Villages Recreation & Parks Department need to establish a review process that provides annual evaluation of the goals, needs and recommendations, noting progress and making additions or changes as needed, and based on bicycle usage figures. This could be most easily understood and communicated if such a review process included a matrix of all recommendations that was updated periodically to gauge their implementation.

VII. Survey of Bicycling in The Villages

At the request of the Bicycle Friendly Advocacy Council (BFAC), a team of volunteers designed and conducted a survey of bicyclists in The Villages. The goal of the survey was to help document the existing state of all aspects of cycling in the community, prior to completing our update of *Cycling The Villages*. After developing the survey and getting the necessary approval from The Villages Recreation & Parks Department, the survey was posted on the website of the Sumter Landing Bicycle Club (SLBC), with open access for all (no log-in required). Requests for participation in the survey were circulated to the three primary bicycle clubs — SLBC, TVBC (The Village Bicycle Club) and the PANTHERS Tandem Club. Further requests for participation appeared in the local daily newspapers and in the weekly Recreation & Parks Publication.

The survey was opened for initial responses in mid-March and closed on May 5, 2021. When the survey was closed, 1,239 responses had been received. This is more than three times as many responses as the BFAC received when it conducted the last survey of bicycling in The Villages in 2016. A full analysis of the 2021 survey is available in Appendix 11.

A. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Demographics: More than 85% of the respondents were between 60-79 years of age, 63% were male, and 67% were full-time residents of The Villages.

Riding Habits: 67% of respondents ride four or more hours a week, and most ride both in groups and by themselves. 13% of the respondents were non-riders. Morning was the most popular time of day for riding. 72% of respondents said bicycling is important or very important to them.

Bicycle Use and Maintenance: Road bikes and hybrid bikes were most often used (78%). Ebikes accounted for 14% of users, a category that did not

even exist when the previous survey was conducted in 2016. Most riders reported both doing their own maintenance and using bicycle shops for repairs.

Cycling Activities: The dominant purpose of bicycling in The Villages was recreation, with lesser amounts of use for basic transportation or shopping.

Infrastructure: The multi-modal paths, bicycle/golf cart lanes and neighborhood streets were rated “very good” by wide majorities of riders.

Education and Safety: 52% of respondents were aware of the bicycle education classes given by The Enrichment Academy, and 48% were members of bicycle clubs. Almost all of the riders reported that they wear helmets, and other personal safety devices such as lights and mirrors were commonly used.

Wants: Among non-riders who might become bicyclists, interest was expressed in having more bicycle paths separate from golf carts and cars. They also requested neighborhood group ride opportunities, socials and fun rides. Smaller numbers indicated that they did not have access to a bicycle or needed training classes.

B. DETAILED SURVEY FINDINGS

Full-Time Residents v. Snowbirds: A majority of survey respondents live in The Villages for twelve months per year (67%). 20% spend 6-11 months in The Villages, while only 12% are classic “snowbirds” who spend less than six months here, usually during the winter months.

A Senior Population: The sample of bicycling population reached with this survey is overwhelmingly “senior,” with only 8% younger than 60 years of age. 86% were 60 to 79 years old, and 6% were 80 or over.

Gender Split: Respondents were 63% male and 37% female. In the 2016 survey the split was 73%/27%. This change may reflect the larger number of non-club members who participated in this year's survey, rather than an actual proportionate increase in female ridership in the community. Club riders have noted that the faster rides draw more males, while the slower rides attract more females. The growing popularity of eBikes may also be expected to add more female riders.

Awareness of Educational Opportunities: 52% of respondents were aware of the bicycle education classes offered by The Enrichment Academy (TEA), and 54% had already attended or were considering attending. These numbers speak well for TEA's promotional efforts, and also signal a future opportunity to expand these class offerings.

Levels of Cycling Experience and Riding

Preferences: The survey revealed a surprisingly high level of experience among bicyclists in The Villages; 65% of respondents have been riding for 11 years or more, and another 22% have 2-10 years of experience. Only 164 respondents (13%) were either non-riders or had less than two years of experience.

67% of the respondents ride four or more hours each week, with an impressive 16% who ride 11 or more hours. 34% ride fewer than four hours per week or do not ride. 68% of riders prefer to ride in the morning, while 19% prefer the afternoon or evening. With the opportunity to choose multiple answers, they expressed preferences for riding alone (44%), in a small group (23%), in a club ride (16%) or all of the above (28%).

According to this survey, just about any style of bicycle can be seen on the roads and paths in The Villages. In descending order of popularity, respondents have road bikes (670), hybrid bikes (300), ebikes (179), dirt bikes (98), recumbent bikes or trikes (85), tandem bikes (70), unspecified styles (59), and upright trikes (16). 135 respondents said

they do not ride. Note that many cyclists have more than one type of bike and the survey permitted them to claim them all, so the total number of bikes reported is 373 higher than the number of survey respondents.

Infrastructure Use and Preferences: When asked where they ride in The Villages, respondents were allowed to give multiple answers. Neighborhood streets were used by nearly all of the riders (984, or 79% of total respondents). Next in popularity were the multi modal paths (870 or 70%) and the two-lane streets with dedicated bicycle/golf cart lanes (812 or 66%). The four-lane roadways were far less widely used, (391 or 32%). This reflects the awareness that the multi-modal paths run parallel to the four-lane roadways, so all riders have a choice of either to get to their destinations, depending on comfort levels and personal preference. The multi-modal paths, two-lane roads with painted bicycle/golf cart lanes, and neighborhood streets were rated "very good" by wide majorities of the bicycling respondents.

Maintenance and Repairs: Cyclists in The Villages are a self-sufficient group, with 45% (556) reporting that they do their own maintenance and repairs, but — since multiple answers were allowed — 57% (707) acknowledged that they also relied on the bicycle shops. Spouses (170) and friends or acquaintances (54) also were credited, by 14% and 4% respectively.

Use of Safety Equipment: Survey respondents report high levels of use of a variety of devices for their personal safety and visibility while bicycling. Helmets were nearly universal, with 1062 reported users. When the non-riders are subtracted from the 1239 survey responses received, that means only about 38 of the cyclists were admitting to riding without helmets. Unfortunately, cyclists without helmets are often seen in The Villages, so despite the encouraging number of helmet wearers in the survey, continuing education efforts on these life-saving

devices are needed. Reported use of other safety items was also high: lights and reflectors, 79% (984); mirrors, 78% (962); reflective attire, 54% (672); and a horn, whistle or bell, 33% (403).

Membership in Bicycle Clubs and Organizations:

Sumter Landing Bicycle Club had 444 of its 821 members responding to the survey, The Village Bicycle Club had 97 of its 180 members, and the PANTHERS Tandem Club had 50 of its 76 local members responding. A surprising result of this survey was that 719 of the respondents (58%) were not members of any of the local bicycle clubs or other cycling organizations, a wake-up call for the local clubs of opportunities for recruiting new members and to tap into apparently unmet needs, such as informal neighborhood rides, scheduled socials and fun rides.

C. ACTION ITEMS

The survey responses described above suggest a number of action items that are discussed in other portions of the current update of *Cycling The Villages*. Some of these action items are already being addressed, while implementation of others is proposed for future action by the bicycle clubs and The Villages Recreation & Parks Department. These include:

EXPANDED EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES (QUESTIONS 5, 6, 7, 16)

- The Enrichment Academy (TEA) has expanded its bicycling course offerings, adding to the basic safety and skills class with new courses in bicycle maintenance and hands-on skill instruction. All classes are taught by League Certified Instructors (LCIs) who reside in The Villages and are members of the bicycle clubs. The three courses appear in both semesters of the TEA catalogs beginning with Fall-Winter then Spring/Summer programming. The Camp Villages summer program of instruction in bicycle skills for grandchildren of residents has been expanded to two sessions for summer

programming. This popular Bike Rodeo program will continue to grow to try to meet the demand.

- Opportunities for future TEA courses include an eBike class and a Bicycle-Friendly Drivers class. See Section VIII Recommended Actions, Subsection C. Education.

NEIGHBORHOOD GROUP RIDES, SOCIALS AND FUN RIDES (QUESTIONS 5, 10, 17)

- Recognizing the interest in more informal, easy-pace rides at the neighborhood level, the bicycle clubs and Recreation & Parks Department are proposing models based on programs that have worked in some of the existing neighborhoods.
- Bicycle clubs have expanded their offerings of slower rides and social rides, and should continue to add more. Ways to expand publicity of these activities are needed to reach wider audiences. See Section VIII Recommended Actions, Subsection D. Encouragement.

MORE BICYCLE PATHS SEPARATE FROM GOLF CARTS AND CARS (QUESTIONS 5, 17, 18)

- The Villages has experienced dramatic growth since the original *Cycling The Villages* was adopted in 2016, and a new style of pathway has been added in the growth areas. These pathways are for the use of cyclists, walkers and joggers, and exclude golf carts. More than 90 miles of these pathways have already been constructed, and many more miles are expected to be completed in the near future. See Section VIII Recommended Actions, Subsection B. Engineering.

ACCESS TO BICYCLES (QUESTION 5)

- Some survey respondents mentioned that they do not have access to a bicycle. Programs to address this need are in place and proposed for expansion: Rental programs, the bicycle clubs' bike loan efforts, and our highly successful Used/Donated Bicycle Re-homing programs. All of these ways to provide access to bicycles need wider publicity in the future. See Section VIII Recommended Actions, Subsection C. Education.***

ADDITIONAL BICYCLE PARKING (QUESTION 18)

- Meeting the desire for convenient bicycle parking is an ongoing effort of the Recreation & Parks Department. A preferred design has been selected, and is being installed at new recreation facilities and other public areas. While Villages recreation facilities include 150+ bike racks, more are available at Villages commercial uses, such as shopping areas. A proposed action item for the bicycle clubs is a survey/count of existing bike racks and existing locations where additional bike parking is desired. See Section VIII Recommended Actions, Subsection B. Engineering.

EXPANSION OF EBIKE EDUCATION, RIDE OPPORTUNITIES AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES (QUESTION 13)

- Cyclists in The Villages began to discover the merits of eBikes several years ago, and their popularity is increasing rapidly. As riders of regular bicycles get older and as physical problems inevitably occur, being able to ride an eBike will make it possible for them to continue to ride, hopefully for the rest of their lives. The demand is so great that local bike stores have had trouble keeping eBikes in stock and the major manufacturers had trouble meeting the demand. When the pandemic hit and it became even more difficult to find an eBike for sale (or any bike for that matter).
- As eBike owners in The Villages became acquainted with each other, volunteers organized an informal club that had almost 100 members from the start. As the number grew, the eBike club and the Sumter Landing Bicycle Club (SLBC) decided that a merger would be most efficient, so the eBikers

became a distinct group within the SLBC. The pandemic limited their ability to have group rides in the beginning, but eBikers were encouraged to ride with the regular groups. In the future, eBikes will have the option to ride with the established ride groups or to organize rides specifically for the eBikers. Each of the bicycle clubs will seek additional publicity for their eBike rides and social activities. See Section VIII Recommended Actions, Subsection D. Encouragement.

OUTREACH FROM ALL BICYCLE CLUBS TO RECRUIT NEW MEMBERS (QUESTIONS 4, 5, 10, 15)

- New member recruitment for all of the bicycle clubs in The Villages typically occurs through the club notices in the weekly Recreation & Parks Publication, which is circulated through The Villages Daily Sun newspaper and the recreation centers or by word-of-mouth and announcements in news articles or at social events. New membership opportunities through the normally-scheduled EXPO events, new resident meeting and so forth were severely curtailed by the Covid-19 epidemic but are resuming now that recreation activities have been fully re-opened. Each of the clubs will seek re-vitalized and new channels for publicizing their desire for new members. See of Section VIII Recommended Actions, Subsection C. Education.

VIII. Recommended Actions

A. EQUITY DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Goal: *Promote the unique qualities of The Villages to assure that its bicycling amenities are equally available regardless of income level, gender, ethnicity, health issues or other factors that may serve to discourage or limit participation. Particularly in the presence of physical disabilities, strive to accommodate special needs for equipment modifications, training, or personal assistance.*

The unique character of The Villages supports the goals of equity, diversity and inclusion for all of its residents, including cyclists. The greatest challenge is reaching current and potential cyclists with the information they need to take advantage of all The Villages has to offer. Volunteers from the BFAC and the bicycle clubs assist the Recreation & Parks Department in the activities that are underway or planned for the near future. Continuing alliances with local government departments and school districts will allow the bike club members (including 19 LCIs) to speak with one voice when offering advice, education and services to cyclists in The Villages and surrounding communities.

The Recreation & Parks Department: All of the bicycle clubs and the Bicycle Friendly Advocacy Council (BFAC) work with and are supported by the outstanding Recreation & Parks Department. The department has earned national accreditation for excellence in operation, high quality services and experiences by the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA). The department and its dedicated staff are committed to providing productive and enriching leisure time pursuits, extraordinary services and experiences to residents of The Villages through the core values of Hospitality, Stewardship, Innovation & Creativity,

and Hard Work. In addition to the full time and part time staff, recreation functions throughout The Villages are carried out by volunteers in more than 3000+ clubs and organizations. All of the activities of the three bicycle clubs and the BFAC are conducted by volunteers under the umbrella of the Recreation & Parks Department.

Other Community Alliances: The BFAC and bicycle clubs will continue to interact with the Lake-Sumter MPO, Florida Bicycle Association, the five area police/sheriffs departments, The Villages Charter School and school districts of the three counties. This interaction will take the form of cycling infrastructure recommendations, safety classes conducted for seniors and students, presentations at the newcomers meetings, and the provision of several hundred new and refitted bicycles to disadvantaged adults and children each year.

Fair, Impartial and Inclusive Treatment of All Villages Residents:

This will continue to be assured since all of the programs, services and amenities described in this document are available to every Villages resident and their visiting guests, regardless of age, physical conditions, ethnicity or income. (Note that as a 55+ community, services to guests who are children and grandchildren under age 19 will adhere to the 30-day visit limitation). Special efforts will continue to be made to make cycling possible for residents with special needs. For example, wide coverage has been given to the story of a disabled rider who needed help from the cycling community. Sgt. Pam Kelly, a 17-year Army veteran was injured in a helicopter loading accident that left her a paraplegic. She found joy in using her one working limb to operate her handcycle, but her triathlon career was ended by a repetitive injury to her left elbow. She reached out to a bicycle club member she had met through Villagers for Veterans, for help to get back to riding



FIGURE 29: Sgt. Kelly with Her Handcycle

her handcycle. A group of volunteers now assists her with getting on and off of the cycle, and then rides with her in a group so she is safe and highly visible in traffic on frequent 12-mile rides around The Villages. **FIGURE 29**

Most of the Recommended Actions in support of equity, diversity and inclusion are described in the Education and Encouragement sections that follow. Specific actions targeting this goal include:

Expanded Education Opportunities: The Enrichment Academy (TEA) should continue to expand its bicycling course offerings. TEA has already added to the basic safety and skills class with new courses in bicycle maintenance and hands-on skill instruction. Opportunities for future TEA courses include an eBike class and a Bicycle-Friendly Drivers class. All classes will continue to be taught by League Certified Instructors (LCIs) who reside in The Villages and are members of the bicycle clubs.

Short Neighborhood Group Rides and Fun Rides: The Recreation & Parks Department has initiated a pilot program from one of the Regional Recreation

Complexes to gauge interest in informal, easy-pace rides at the neighborhood level. If this pilot program is successful, it can be expanded to other Regional Recreation Complexes. Bicycle clubs have also expanded their offerings of slower rides and social rides, and should continue to add more. Ways to expand publicity of these activities are needed to reach wider audiences.

Access to Bicycles: Some respondents to the Survey of *Cycling The Villages* mentioned that they did not have access to a bicycle and could not afford to buy one. Programs to address this need are in place and should be expanded: rental programs, the bicycle clubs' bike loan efforts, and the highly-regarded used/donated bicycle re-homing programs. All of these ways to provide access to bicycles need wider publicity.

Outreach to Enlist New Bicycle Club Members: New member recruitment for all of the bicycle clubs in The Villages typically occurs through the club notices in the weekly Recreation & Parks Publication, which is circulated through The Villages Daily Sun newspaper and the recreation centers,



FIGURE 30: Bike Rack at Recreation Center

or by word-of-mouth and announcements in news articles or at social events. New membership opportunities through the normally-scheduled EXPO events, new resident meeting and so forth were severely curtailed by the Covid-19 epidemic but are resuming now that recreation activities are being re-opened. Each of the clubs will seek re-vitalized and new channels for publicizing the many advantages of bicycle club membership.

Publicly Accessible Information on Bicycle Club Websites and Social Media: As we seek additional channels to communicate the equity, diversity and inclusiveness of bicycling opportunities in The Villages, we should take advantage of the existing club websites and social media pages. Some public information is available, but much more could be added to provide education and encouragement to people who are mildly interested in cycling but are not ready to join a club.

B. ENGINEERING

Goal: *Maintain and enhance bicycle facilities in*

The Villages to continue to meet or exceed accepted standards and guidelines.

As described in Existing Conditions (Section V) and the Needs Analysis (Section VI), virtually all the cycling infrastructure has been planned into The Villages as new parts of The Villages are built. Only minor engineering changes or additions are envisaged in *Cycling The Villages*. In addition to monitoring the improvement of current bicycling infrastructure (e.g., bicycle racks, illumination in tunnels) improvements yet to be installed should also be monitored to see that they have the positive impact on cycling. Current bicycling infrastructure items include:

Multi-Modal Path Signs: Review the inventory of the way-finding sign system and monitor updates. Request design and installation of small educational signs or decals along the multi-modal paths with cart/bike/pedestrian symbols and a PASS WITH CARE message. These could be placed on the existing posts at each multi-modal path intersection.



Road Signs: Request installation of signs with bike symbol instructing motorists BICYCLES MAY USE FULL LANE in numerous locations both within The Villages and in the surrounding area. Monitor roads for increased traffic and other conditions that may call for additional signage to help ensure the safety of cyclists and other roads such as CR501 and CR470. **FIGURE 31**

Bike Parking: Review the placement of the current 148 bike racks at recreation facilities and inventory the racks at Villages commercial properties as well. Continue to request installation of bike racks at locations where cyclists are known to congregate and at other locations where existing racks have proven to be insufficient. Request installation of bike racks in the supermarkets and other businesses frequented by cyclists. **FIGURE 30**

Speed Bump Gaps: Continue to advocate for removal of speed bumps, which pose hazards to cyclists. Many of the previously installed speed bumps have been removed in the past few years. Where they remain, and are felt to be necessary, request wider gaps in speed bumps to allow bikes to go between sections.

Report Hazards and Maintenance Problems: Publicize the need to call 352-753-4022 or email sam.wartinbee@districtgov.org to report any repair or maintenance issues such as malfunctioning gates, construction debris or broken glass on a roadway, broken pavement or landscape overgrowth that is blocking visibility.

Consistent Gate Operations: Publicize the need to call 352-753-4022 or email sam.wartinbee@districtgov.org to report any location where gate operations are malfunctioning or are not consistent. Cyclists need to know what to expect at each gate to prevent crashes and injuries.

Bike Facilities on Nearby Roads and Trails Outside of The Villages: Advocate for new bike lanes and widening of existing bike lanes on roads in the surrounding area outside The Villages. Encourage the counties to add wider bicycle lanes that are separated from the car lanes where possible. Monitor the appropriate agencies in each of the three counties to keep posted on proposed road projects and advocate for accommodation of bicycles; attend public hearings as needed. Continue to advocate for the needed section of the Coast-to-Coast Connector Trail in south Sumter County (Appendix 13).



FIGURE 31: May Use Full Lane Sign

C. EDUCATION

Goal: *Educate cyclists, motorists, golf cart operators, pedestrians, children, and other users of the road and multi-modal paths so everyone knows the laws and behaviors that will make The Villages a positive environment for safe, healthy, collegial, and fun bicycling.*

Traffic Laws and Bicycle Status: Use the Florida Bicycle Association and League of American Bicyclists to influence public policy. Use the educational materials from both to promote educating bicyclists and the public on traffic laws. Maintain a positive perspective even though many motorists falsely believe that bicycles do not belong on the roads. Education efforts should stress that bicyclists must obey the laws. The 3-Foot Law should be clarified because it is unmeasurable and misunderstood as a safety margin. Support the Florida Bicycle Association and lobby the Florida Legislature to change the three feet law to a move-over for people law similar to the law that helps protect law enforcement and safety personnel.

League Cycling Instructors (LCI) Presentations: Recognizing that The League requires that each LCI participate in twelve hours of instruction annually to maintain good standing, continue the education program using The Villages nineteen LCIs by delivering educational presentations to neighborhood groups and clubs, including the newcomers meetings sponsored by The Villages Homeowners Advocates (VHA) for new residents of The Villages. Develop a variety of presentations of different lengths and topics so organizations can choose the presentation that fits their needs. Continue to publicize the availability of these sessions through notices in the weekly Recreation & Parks Publication, newspaper articles, bike club websites and other media.

Training of Additional LCIs: Work with LAB to arrange another training session for LCIs in

The Villages and recruit participants. The Director of the Recreation & Parks Department has assigned a liaison staff member to the Bicycle Friendly Advocacy Council. The Recreation & Parks Department has also committed to sponsoring the liaison for the next LCI certification course. In addition, pursue with the LAB having one of The Villages LCIs become an LCI Coach who could then train additional LCIs.

Orientation for New Residents: Continue to have LCIs speak at the VHA's monthly New Residents Meetings (with attendance often more than 150), to help make motorists, new cyclists and potential cyclists aware of biking in The Villages. Provide bicycle safety and lane use information and distribute "Safety Tips" brochures or cards.

Bicycle Friendly Driver Videos: In addition to our many efforts to educate bicyclists, we recognize the great need for automobile and truck drivers to understand the laws and courtesies necessary for driving safely near cyclists. Following models provided by the League of American Bicyclists (LAB), the BFAC created videos to educate vehicle drivers about the laws associated with bicyclists and motorists sharing roadways." Two versions are available: a short version (8 minutes) aimed at professional drivers (contractors, landscapers, real estate sales people, bus drivers and others who use their vehicles for work), and a longer version (20 minutes) to be shared with new residents, clubs and other groups who want more detailed information on issues such as negotiating roundabouts. The narrated videos are on YouTube and are available to anyone. A PowerPoint version is also available, for live presentation to groups. The ongoing challenge will be finding ways to distribute these educational programs to a wide audience. (Appendix 21)

Bike Club Meetings and Safety Briefings: Continue and expand the emphasis on safety in all bike club activities. LCIs and volunteers should do the



FIGURE 32: Bike EXPO

presentations to enhance club members knowledge of bicycle safety and laws.

Safety Brochures and Cards: Expand distribution of LAB Quick Check brochures, “Safety Tips” cards and brochures (Appendix 14) in LCI presentations, new residents meetings, recreation centers, bike shops, expos, special events and any other appropriate venues. Work to have them inserted in information packets for new owners and renters.

Classes or One-on-One Assistance for New Riders: Explore the possibility of classes for novice riders through The Enrichment Academy or the Recreation & Parks Department. Discuss other ways to reach out to residents who may need help to get started or who are interested in the “special” bikes such as tandems, recumbents, trikes or e-bikes.

Media Coverage of Cycling: Continue to publish monthly bike friendly columns published in the VHA’s Village Voice on bike safety topics. Work with reporters from all media to have frequent stories about cycling, cyclists, special bike club events and charity rides (examples in Appendix 15). Increase

the frequency of media coverage as to convey the messages of safe driving around cyclists, legal cycling and best cycling practices.

Area Bike Shops: Work with staff of the bike shops located in The Villages and nearby shops to take advantage of educational opportunities, particularly with new riders and experienced riders who are new to the area. Keep the shops supplied with safety brochures, club information and notices of upcoming events. Work with each of the owners or managers to help them earn LAB Bicycle Friendly Business awards. Description of each of the shops can be found in Appendix 7.

Cycling Education for Children: Continue to expand the work in children’s cycling safety instruction at the schools in communities contiguous to The Villages, as well as to those in the three county areas. Employ the trailers and bicycles that the FDOT supplied to teach these children.

Liaison and Updates: Continue to forward and discuss cycling safety issues with the Sumter County Sheriff’s Office Villages Commander and

establish similar communications with the other law enforcement agencies. Discuss the need for training materials and on-site trainers, particularly for updates on annual legislative changes.

Law Enforcement Guidebooks: Continue to provide Law Enforcement Guidebooks (Appendix 16) to Sumter County Sheriff's Office and begin providing them to the other law enforcement agencies.

Bike-Mounted Video Cameras: Share information on use of these cameras with cyclists who may wish to use the technology so they have a record in case of a crash or near-miss incident. See article in Appendix 17.

Routes for Special Events: Thoroughly discuss routes for charity rides with law enforcement agencies for any of the jurisdictions included in the routes. (Sumter County Sheriff, Lady Lake and Wildwood Police Department, Lady Lake Town Manager, and Marion County Sheriff).

D. ENCOURAGEMENT

Goal: *Encourage increased ridership among all levels of cyclists, including new cyclists and those who have not ridden for many years; expand awareness of cycling through charity rides, bike expos and other organized events; and raise awareness of the health, fitness and social benefits of cycling at any age.*

The Villages offers many incentives and activities to encourage biking. Most are organized by volunteers from BFAC or the 1,200+ members of the bicycle clubs. A variety of actions are being taken to boost participation and increase enjoyment of the clubs daily rides and special events.

Bike Clubs Meetings and Outreach: Continue to expand existing programs that vary the speakers, information, interaction and involvement of its members; explore new ways to reach potential

riders, encourage novice riders and make them feel welcome.

Bike EXPO: Continue to hold The Villages Bike EXPO and expand its size and scope. This event has been held annually since 2012 and draws more than 600 attendees. Sponsored by The Villages Community Development District Recreation & Parks Department, Bike EXPO focuses solely on cycling in and around The Villages, with displays by local cycling clubs, public safety officials, cycling related tour vendors and health focused organizations. The Bike EXPO has been scheduled to precede the Hearts for Our Hospital Bicycle Challenge to make the Big Bike Weekend an attention getter that draws cyclists and potential cyclists as well as opportunities to educate the non biking public. **FIGURE 32**

Charity Rides: Continue to sponsor and support charity rides: especially the big event in the fall, Hearts for Our Hospital Bicycle Challenge / Big Bike Weekend. This is a bike ride that raises money for our local Village Regional Hospital Auxiliary Foundation (TVRHAF). The funds raised are put towards purchasing medical equipment requested specifically by the attending doctors and scholarships for future medical students in the surrounding area. In 2015, the H4H ride consisted of 200 riders and raised over \$30,000, with an initial pledge to TVRHAF was \$75,000, then in 2017, it was increased by \$250,000 for a total pledge of \$325,000. In 2019, there were 340 riders with \$257,000 given towards the \$325,000 goal. Continue to expand and publicize the health fair portion of this event throughout the entire community and plan new educational seminars for the Bike Expo and educational materials to be distributed. Thoroughly discuss routes for charity rides with law enforcement agencies for any of the jurisdictions included in the routes. (Sumter County Sheriff, Lady Lake and Wildwood Police Department, Lady Lake Town Manager, and Marion County Sheriff).



FIGURE 33: Sheriff's Bicycle Drive

Outdoor EXPO: Continue to participate in the Outdoor EXPO organized by the Recreation & Parks Department in February, a two-day event featuring clubs and businesses that cater to residents' outdoor interests. Volunteers from the local cycling clubs staff the Expo to answer questions on bicycle safety and cycling in The Villages as well as distribute educational materials. This has been an especially useful opportunity to clear up questions about how to approach and maneuver The Villages roundabouts.

Girl Scout Camp Support: Continue to work with Camp Wildwood, a regional Girl Scout camp located near The Villages. For more than 12 years, the camp has provided a friendly rest stop for group rides and charity rides. The cyclists have reciprocated by donating money, bicycles, camp signs and benches, performing camp maintenance including painting, fixing bicycles and constructing a horse shelter. Continue to explore new opportunities for LCIs and other volunteers to provide cycling educational programs for campers and for the bicycle clubs to adopt the camp and pledge to replenish their operating bicycle supply. (Appendix 19).

Bike Month Events: Host, sponsor and encourage a greater variety of bicycle-themed events and programs for Bike Month in upcoming years; check bikeleague.org/bikemonth for ideas. Consider organizing "Bike to Your Recreation Center" events (where other communities have "Bike to Work" events) in coordination with the Recreation & Parks Department. Continue the "Ride in Silence" (initiated in March 2020 in The Villages), along with other groups throughout the nation, to remember those that lost their lives riding bicycles.

Tandem Bike Rally: Continue to host the annual regional tandem bike rally run by the PANTHERS tandem club, based at the Waterfront Inn or Brownwood Hotel. More than 50 couples from across the U.S. and Canada have attended this high-visibility cycling event each year since 2009.

Inclusion of eBikes: Continue to support and encourage the use of eBikes. As riders of regular bicycles get older and as physical problems inevitably occur, being able to ride an eBike will make it possible for many people to continue to ride. Since eBike owners in The Villages will continue

to participate in existing cycling activities and to organize new ones, this segment of the cycling community can be expected to grow dramatically. Each of the bicycle clubs will seek additional publicity for their eBike rides and social activities

Bike Rodeo: Consider organizing a ‘Ciclovía’ or Bike Rodeo type event, possibly in conjunction with the fund-raising event at The Villages Charter School stadium.

Bicycle Friendly Businesses: Continue efforts to encourage local businesses to promote cycling to their employees and customers and to seek recognition through the LAB’s Bicycle Friendly Business program. Three businesses have received recognition and four others are in the process of preparing applications. Work with the LAB to gain recognition for businesses in and around this community where bicycle commuting for employees is not a realistic option, instead recognizing their valuable contributions through sponsorship of special events, participation in bike expos and health fairs, provision of bike club rest stops, accommodation of cycling customers, and other support of the cycling community.

Sheriff’s Bicycle Drive: Continue this yearly drive to collect unwanted and donated bicycles from Villagers and surrounding neighbors. Originally begun by the The Villages Bike Club and now run by the Sumter Landing Bicycle Club, this event has for many years allowed members of all of the bike clubs and other volunteers to evaluate, clean and repair the donated bicycles and give them to the Sumter County Sheriff’s Department for distribution throughout the area to those who could not otherwise afford a bike. In 2019, more than 342 bicycles were donated and rehabilitated, many them brand new. **FIGURE 33**

Media Coverage: Continue to work closely with the local reporters assigned by The Villages Daily Sun to the three bike clubs to increase coverage of cycling in The Villages. Since a specific reporter has been assigned, the clubs’ exposure in The Villages Daily Sun has grown, raising more interest and awareness of cyclists and charitable activities. In addition, The Villages Homeowners Advocates continues to provide space for a column on cycling in The Villages (examples in Appendix 15) in The Villages Voice, the VHA’s monthly insert to The Villages Daily Sun.

The Villages App: Make cyclists aware of the paper maps of multi-modal paths and roads with cart/bike lanes (a less detailed version is available free at all Sales & Information Centers in The Villages). A more detailed map with each street in The Villages is sold in the Logo Store. Encourage more to use The Villages App®, a free smartphone app that provides navigation to any destination in The Villages using either roads or multi-modal paths (See Appendix 5). The app is kept up to date, features are added frequently, and it has a variety of other useful information, as well as very detailed maps that can be viewed at any scale.

Other Route Mapping Resources: Continue to publicize the available resources for ride maps and help newcomers become familiar with the area where any direction they head will be a good bike ride. The bike clubs maintain collections of favorite routes for club rides and many riders use apps such as Ride with GPS, Map My Ride or Strava to record additional routes. Dozens of cue sheets, with maps for rides in and around The Villages are available at on the Sumter Landing Bicycle Club website; slbikeclub.org (see Appendix 1). Cyclists can also use Google Maps, which contains biking trails and directions for all The Villages and the surrounding area.



FIGURE 34: Adopt-a-Highway Program

Adopt-a-Highway Program: Continue the SLBC and the PANTHERS Tandem Club road cleanup days as a public service. The signs noting bike club clean-up activities on a busy road help to build a positive image for cyclists. **FIGURE 34**

Image and Public Relations: The bicycling community recognizes that many non-cyclists consider bicycle riders a nuisance, which can result in dangerous incidents. Moreover, since research cited above has shown that drivers behave riskier to cyclists they perceive as less human, it is vital cyclists use every ride as an opportunity to demonstrate courtesy and friendliness, as well as lawful behavior and caution. The clubs should also continue to work constantly to sponsor and participate in public service activities that help to build a positive image for cyclists in The Villages. The SLBC has given out numerous plaques to many local business in appreciation of their courtesy and helpful service and allowing riders to use their facilities. The club

officers and members attend ribbon cuttings, anything related to the local hospital, newly established Recreation centers, meetings with local commissioners, law enforcement and have presented boxes of candy The Villages Gate House personnel and firemen.

Recruiting by Bicycle Clubs to Improve Safety:

Since The Villages bicycle clubs have rules, structures to enforce them, and supervised rides, foster membership in them as a way to improve the safety and enjoyment of Villages cyclists. Consider using days where members wear their club jerseys as recruitment opportunities when jersey-clad members are in public places such as the recreation facilities, town squares or food shops during a break or after a ride. Provide members with easily carried club business cards that can be handed out when recruiting. Ensure that club websites are modified to make joining clubs especially easy.



FIGURE 35: Bicycle Friendly Community Sign

E. EVALUATION

Goal: *Evaluate progress toward the goals of Cycling The Villages on a regular basis and advocate for cyclists' needs as the area continues to grow in the future.*

Data Collection and Analysis: Collect and analyze crash report data available from local law enforcement and road planning agencies incident reports from the bike clubs' websites and other data sources. Report conclusions to the appropriate staff or agencies.

Periodic Review and Updating: Establish a review process that provides periodic evaluation of the goals and needs and recommendations of this report, noting progress and making additions or deletions as needed. This could be most easily tracked if a matrix of recommendations were developed to display each recommendation and its status.

Advocacy for Bicycles in the Surrounding Area:

Continue participation in the Lake~Sumter Metropolitan Planning Organization's Community Advisory Committee and seek other opportunities to advocate for bicycle facilities as the surrounding area. Monitor changes to the comprehensive plans of the three counties and three municipalities (see Appendix 2), and meet with the appropriate entities if proposed changes appear to affect cyclists or cycling facilities.

Costs and Funding: At this point, The Villages has no identified needs for outside funding since residential bonds, maintenance fees and amenity fees support infrastructure maintenance and recreation programs. Future funding might become desirable as bicycling interests and opportunities present themselves. Funding sources for cycling-related projects will be monitored through BFAC's participation in the Lake-Sumter Metropolitan Planning Organization's Community Advisory Committee. **FIGURE 35**



IX. Appendices

- APPENDIX 1. [LIST OF BIKE CLUBS](#)
- APPENDIX 2. [AREA PLANNING DOCUMENTS RELATED TO CYCLING](#)
- APPENDIX 3. [LAB SILVER AWARD REPORT CARD AND FEEDBACK \(CHECKLIST\)](#)
- APPENDIX 4. [LAB GOLD AWARD REPORT CARD](#)
- APPENDIX 5. [THE VILLAGES APP](#)
- APPENDIX 6. [NAVIGATING ROUNDABOUTS BROCHURE](#)
- APPENDIX 7. [LIST OF BIKE SHOPS](#)
- APPENDIX 8. [CHITTY CHATTY BRIDGE PLACEMENT](#)
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- APPENDIX 18. [LAB BICYCLE FRIENDLY AMERICA FIVE E'S](#)
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If you are reading this on paper, the appendices above are available by typing this link into your web browser: tinyurl.com/CTVappendixlist