

# 106

## SUCCESS STORY

### Bridge of Lions Illustrates Early Community Involvement Key in Maintaining Historic Character in a Contemporary Bridge

St. Augustine, Florida



“The Bridge of Lions rehabilitation and restoration project in St. Augustine, Florida, is a stunning example of how the unique, aesthetic elements of an historic structure can be incorporated into a modern design.”

— *REBUILDING AMERICA'S  
INFRASTRUCTURE*  
July 2009



#### THE STORY

On the feast day of St. Augustine, 1565, Admiral General Don Pedro Menéndez de Avilés sailed through an inlet into a natural harbor protected by a barrier island along the north coast of present day Florida. He founded St. Augustine, the oldest European city in the continental United States with the longest continuously serving port. The city was growing in the early 20th century, and the Bridge of Lions was built in 1927 to connect Anastasia Island—the barrier island—to the mainland. The graceful 1,574-foot-long drawbridge designed by the J.E. Greiner Company of Baltimore uses Mediterranean Revival elements to complement the city's architecture and Spanish origins. It was named for a pair of lions sculpted in Carrera marble bracketing the west end of the bridge. Upon completion, the *St. Augustine Record* praised it for demonstrating in structural form the “good taste, daring optimism and faith of the people of this progressive community.”

#### THE PROJECT

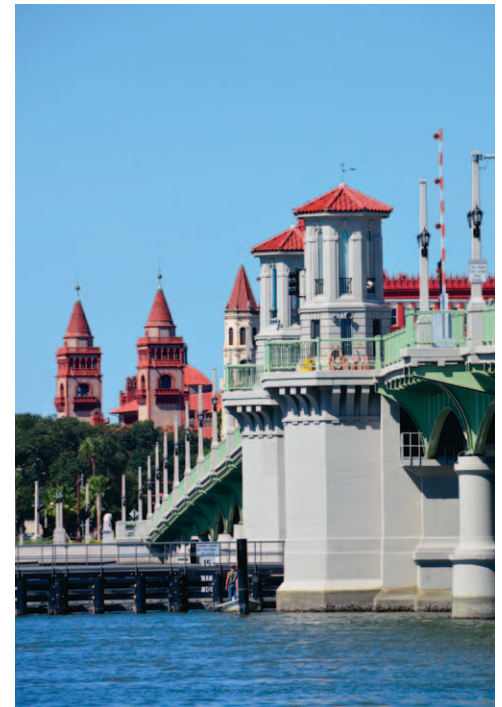
By the 1970s, the Bridge of Lions was in serious need of attention, carrying 21,500 people daily, and both bridge and boat traffic were increasing. Its narrow travel lanes, safety railings, and pedestrian features did not meet Florida Department of Transportation safety standards. Its horizontal clearance did not meet U.S. Coast Guard guidelines. When cracks were found in the bridge's support structure, the time for decision making and action could no longer be delayed. It was closed in 2006 presenting the major challenge of preserving the historic elements of the bridge, listed in the National Register of Historic Places, while bringing it to current safety and engineering standards. The preservation challenges warranted the bridge being named to the National Trust for Historic Preservation's “America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places” list.

Bridge of Lions photos courtesy America's Byways.

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Above: Temporary bridge with lift; bridge for boat traffic adjacent to the historic bridge. © L. Barnwell  
 Right: Bridge of Lions © Paul Brennan



## THE 106 PROCESS

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) provided funding for the project and was the federal agency responsible for conducting the Section 106 process under the National Historic Preservation Act. Section 106 requires that federal agencies identify historic properties and assess the effects of the projects they carry out, fund, or permit on those properties. Under Section 106, agencies also consult with Indian tribes, state and local governments, and organizations and individuals that have a demonstrated interest in the historic property to seek agreement on measures to address the effects.

A large number of consulting parties, including the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), were involved in the Section 106 process from the outset. A team of engineers, designers, landscapers, architects, and historians was created by the Florida Department of Transportation to work with preservationists ensuring the bridge was built using sustainable construction practices. Open in 2010, the contemporary bridge is three feet wider and has piers 75 feet deeper to carry current heavier loads. The bridge retained the towers, drawbridge, and 23 graceful pairs of arches, and was returned to its original 1927 color. It incorporated some 450 tons of steel from the original structure but otherwise was largely replaced at a total cost of \$76.8 million. Lost features including railings, gates, and light posts were replicated, and roof tiles salvaged from other local buildings were used to roof the bridge's towers.

## THE SUCCESS

From the beginning, the new bridge project brought disparate groups together to create a design that retains elements of the original bridge, rehabilitated to its 1927 design, and incorporates a larger and stronger structure to serve contemporary needs.

### Consulting Parties:

ACHP  
 Federal Highway Administration  
 Department of the Interior  
 U.S. Coast Guard  
 Florida Department of Transportation  
 Florida State Historic Preservation Officer  
 Florida Department of Environmental Protection  
 Florida Department of Community Affairs  
 Northeast Florida Regional Planning Council  
 Saint Johns River Water Management District  
 St. Johns County Commission  
 City of St. Augustine City Commission  
 Save Our Bridge, Inc.

For more about Section 106 and the ACHP go to [www.achp.gov](http://www.achp.gov).

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