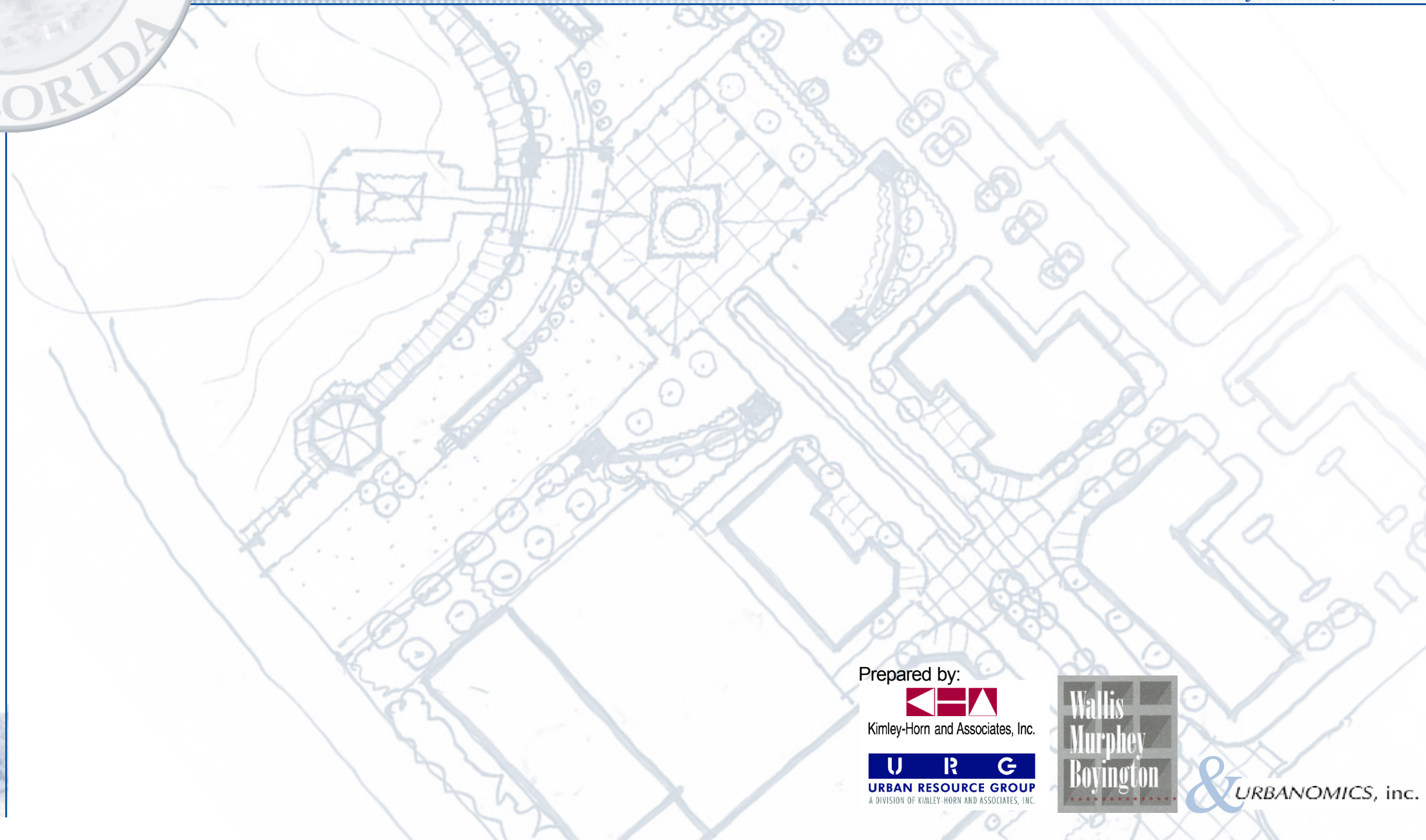


Punta Gorda

CRA Charrette

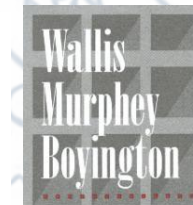
January 20-21, 2005



Prepared by:



Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc.

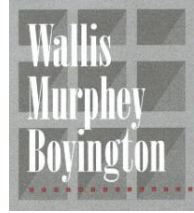




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March 2, 2005

City of Punta Gorda
Director of Community Development
326 West Marion Avenue
Punta Gorda, Florida 33950

Dear Mr. Hennis –

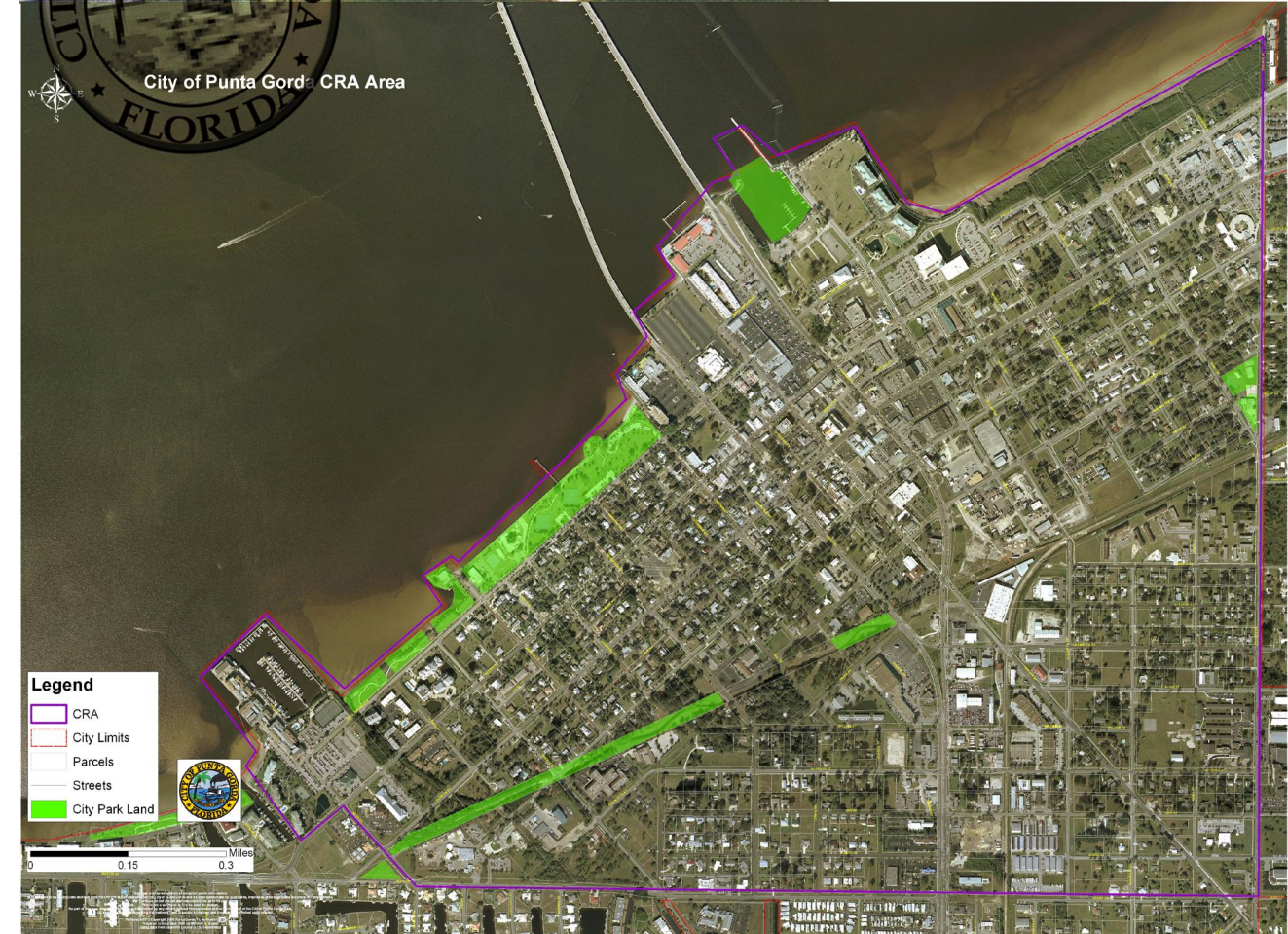
We are pleased to submit this process summary for the Punta Gorda CRA Charrette. This workbook puts together the issues, analysis, and recommendations discussed to date with the stakeholders, City staff and the general public. It also contains additional infrastructure and market analysis performed after the charrette.

After our work on Lashley Park and the marina, we were delighted to return to Punta Gorda to help the community achieve its larger goals for the downtown and nearby neighborhoods. Once again, we were impressed with the amount and quality of citizen input at the charrette. This "civic capital" is among the resources Punta Gorda can count on as it plans for its future. And our experience working across Florida suggests that the future is now for Punta Gorda. Few communities are blessed with Punta Gorda's magnificent waterfront, historic downtown, and small-town character, plus local cultural amenities and proximity to larger markets. We are confident that Punta Gorda will continue to attract investment and new residents who value these things.

We hope that this workbook delineates key issues and choices in a way that allows the community to make the best decisions for its future. We appreciate the opportunity to be a part of this exciting project and hope to continue to assist you in any way we can.

Cordially,

William Waddill, ASLA
Landscape Architect and Planner
Urban Resource Group





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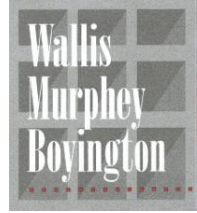


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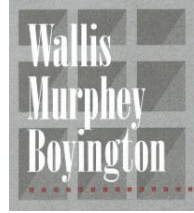




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BACKGROUND

PURPOSE OF THE CHARRETTE

On January 20 and 21, 2005, citizens of Punta Gorda gathered to talk about their community and their hopes for its future. The charrette was hosted by the City of Punta Gorda and was focused on the downtown, nearby neighborhoods, commercial and industrial areas that make up the Community Redevelopment Area. One reason for holding a charrette at this time was to begin the update of the CRA plan. The last update took place in 1999-2000 and the next is due by January 2006. The charrette also created an opportunity to update citizens on the progress of Lashley Park and the nearby waterfront. A charrette held in January 2004 had generated considerable enthusiasm for this project, and citizens were anxious to see continued progress. And the timing was affected by the events of August 13, 2004, when Hurricane Charley swept through Punta Gorda.

The devastation of Hurricane Charley is still very apparent in Punta Gorda and surrounding Charlotte County. It was clear from the comments of citizens that the effects were not only physical. This is clearly a community still suffering from the emotional aftermath of the storm, compounded by the frustratingly slow process of rebuilding. However, the Chinese language provides us with a

helpful perspective. The Chinese character for "crisis" is made up of two other characters – one for "danger," one for "opportunity." This charrette focused on the opportunities created by the hurricane, including the opportunity to re-create key portions of the community, and to access additional funding sources to aid that re-creation.

THE TEAM

A team with broad skills and experience was assembled for the charrette. City staff included a core team of David Hennis, Community Development Director, and members of his staff including David Hilston, Bob Crispin, and Mitchell Austin. Assistance was also provided by the Acting City Manager and Utilities Director. The consultant team included architect Steve Boyington of Wallace, Murphey, Boyington, David Troemel, a transportation engineer with Kimley-Horn and Associates, and Peter Van Buskirk, an engineer specializing in utilities, also with Kimley-Horn. Not present at the charrette, but acting as economic advisor, was Ken Creveling, an economist with Urbanomics. Leading the charrette was Bill Waddill and a team of architects, landscape architects, and planners from Urban Resource Group, including Patricia Castellano, Scott Kuyper, Casey Collins and Olga Ronay.

In addition to City staff, all the CRA Board members participated, including the five City Council members, as well as two candidates who were subsequently elected to the Council in February 2005. Most importantly, the charrette was informed by the thoughts, hopes, and experiences of the citizens of Punta Gorda.

WHAT IS A CRA?

Florida law enables the creation of a Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) as a means of improving conditions within a specific geographic area. A CRA has a governing body, which is often the local city council. In Punta Gorda's case the CRA Board includes all five City Council members, plus two additional citizens. CRAs have a unique funding source, called TIF or Tax Increment Financing. When the CRA is created, the value of the real property within the district is "frozen" at the current level. The taxes from that frozen value continue to go to the city and county for general use. However, if the taxable value within the district rises, any additional tax revenue can be spent within the CRA, in accordance with the adopted CRA plan. Last year, Punta Gorda's CRA generated approximately \$1 million in TIF revenue.



BACKGROUND



CRA ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Punta Gorda CRA was created in 1990 to revitalize the downtown area. The graphic below shows the CRA boundary, as well as locations of key projects that have been completed or are substantially underway. Examples of projects include:

- ✗ Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard Streetscape
- ✗ U.S. 41 and U.S. 17 Gateway Features
- ✗ Historic Preservation Ordinance
- ✗ Development Agreement for Redevelopment of Punta Gorda Mall
- ✗ Streetscape Plan for Marion Avenue and Herald Court
- ✗ Updated Zoning Code following traditional planning principles

It is important for the community to recognize and take pride in its accomplishments, especially as it embarks on the next series of steps to preserve and improve the quality of life in Punta Gorda.

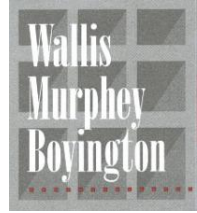
The Punta Gorda CRA was created in 1990 to revitalize the downtown area.



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THE PROCESS

AGENDA

It was a grey, chilly day. Rain threatened – and fell. Still, people came. It was just a few at first, clutching cups of coffee as they made their way into the Black Box Theatre at the Charlotte County Performing Arts Center. People milled around looking at the maps, plans, and aerial photos on the walls. They asked questions of the city staff and consultant team, and greeted neighbors and friends in the room. By nine o'clock the room was full. For two hours, people spoke of their hopes and fears for their community, what they had seen work, and what they thought was needed. The charrette team listened, asked questions, and took notes. These comments are summarized in the following pages, and are the basis for the design work and recommendations in this book.

Following the first morning session, the team drove through the CRA area, stopping to walk, measure and photograph key sites. Upon returning to the theatre that would serve as studio for the next day and a half, the team talked about what they had seen and heard, and where to focus their efforts. Throughout that day and most of the next, the team worked on sketches and alternatives while citizens dropped in to watch, ask questions, or share observations. On the evening of the second day, citizens reconvened at the theatre/studio for a presentation of the team's work.

As in previous planning efforts, citizens of Punta Gorda and Charlotte County demonstrated a high degree of civic interest and involvement. These engaged citizens will continue to be a strong force in implementing this and other planning efforts in the Punta Gorda area.



COMMUNITY COMMENTS

CRA PLAN VISION

While the comments speak for themselves, a few things bear highlighting. One is the extent to which citizens supported the vision of the current CRA plan. Although it's unlikely that most citizens have read the CRA plan, its themes clearly continue to be important in the community. These are:

- ✗ Punta Gorda should retain its small town character
- ✗ Punta Gorda should have a lively, publicly accessible waterfront
- ✗ Punta Gorda should develop a special identity within the region
- ✗ The downtown study area should be pedestrian-oriented
- ✗ Punta Gorda should have healthy neighborhoods
- ✗ Punta Gorda should have a high quality of community character



The CRA plan continues to guide action in this area. In addition to its overall vision statements, the plan includes recommendations for the following geographic areas:

- ✗ Historic Residential District
- ✗ Central Business District
- ✗ Eastside Residential District
- ✗ Medical Services District
- ✗ Waterfront District
- ✗ Highway Commercial District
- ✗ Southwest Residential District
- ✗ Southeast Residential District
- ✗ Public Service District

The plan focuses on two areas as having an especially great opportunity for positive change that will affect the entire region:

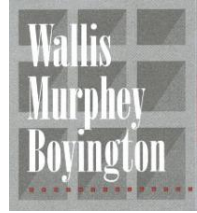
- ✗ East Side Neighborhood
- ✗ Retail District



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THE PROCESS

CONSTRAINTS

Need to look at outside CRA. Envision area as a whole

Sign ordinance restricts visibility for businesses

Parking issues limit downtown access cause traffic issues

Proposed projects need to move and take immediate action

Lack of economist position within city administration

Need to retain people in the downtown area to shop and dine

Need a business plan to determine the availability of funds

Widen scope to include larger scale vision for the city

Need to address implementation in terms of the chronological phases necessary for implementation

Debris removal needs to be addressed

Lack of pharmacy and local grocery store

Hotel may hinder waterfront views

Lack of support from council members

CONSTRAINTS

Provide additional marina access to accommodate the city as a destination

Need to resolve and move on with auditorium and courthouse

Determine how infrastructure will be affected by higher density and the costs involved in upgrading

Need to consider school districts in direct association of growth and development

Do not allow Retta to become a highway

Flooding is an issue with waterfront development

Small businesses before Hurricane Charlie experienced difficulty related to lack of parking, streetscape elements hiding business signs, traffic congestion, and access difficulties

Develop special-use districts in terms of height issues. Determine what is appropriate for the city.

Need to involve private sector investors to confirm economic results

unable to control US 41

Need cultural draw

WHAT IS A CHARRETTE?

The French word, "Charrette" means "cart" and is often used to describe the final, intense work effort expended by art and architecture students to meet a project deadline. This use of the term is said to originate from the Ecole de Beaux Arts in Paris during the 19th century, where proctors circulated a cart, or "charrette," to collect final drawings while students frantically put finishing touches on their work.

Today we used charrettes as a planning tool to address a very specific issue or a plan for a small area of a community. They serve as an effective tool at engaging and involving citizen input.

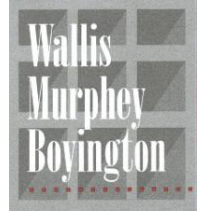




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THE PROCESS

OPPORTUNITIES

Possibly relocate the A.C. Freeman House as a method of preserving historic architecture.

Promote collaboration amongst agencies, city, and county.

Preserve the history of Hurricane Charley through damaged sculpture pieces to be located in civic spaces.

Support, preserve, and assist small businesses.

Determine the need for a hotel in terms of size, location, and architecture.

Incorporate Fisherman's Village as part of downtown through water taxi or trolley service.

Provide transient dock space where water vessels can refuel.

Preserve fishing history & culture through themes.

Possible trolley service used to assist with traffic.

ultimately develop Punta Gorda into a destination city.

Continue bike paths under US 41.

Preserving history of the city.

OPPORTUNITIES

Downtown is "Heart of the City" establishes sense of place.

Remove density of the downtown by relocating hotel across harbor.

Eliminate ugly shopping centers.

Need to ally with Charlotte Harbor.

Team Punta Gorda - Develop vision for the city. Master plan to guide future development. Shorten timeframe by providing grants.

Incorporate mixed use - Residential/ Retail/ Commercial.

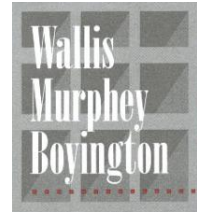
Preserve public access if possible.

Private entities assist in cost of developments.

Before Hurricane Charley, small businesses thrived due to adjacent development occurring, potential for pedestrian activity such as strolling, and waterfront development.

Waterfront community needed to tie into downtown.





THE PROCESS

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Support small businesses by creating strategies for success.

Explore possible connections of Fisherman's village with the downtown area.

Preserve the city's history by incorporating a fishing theme to be used in key locations as a marketing strategy.

Continue bicycle path across US 41.

Promote connections to key locations through an alternate transportation mode such as trolley or water taxi.

Attract boaters through entertainment services such as restaurants, shops, theatres, civic spaces, etc.

Incorporate mixed-use zones within city blocks and buildings.

Protect established public spaces and continue to grow and enhance future public space.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Take action on developed plans.

Determine regulating height constraints for future developments.

Determine future growth impacts on existing infrastructure, i.e. utilities, roads, etc.

Realize downtown businesses attract consumers to spend money within the community.

Realize residential density is needed to support commercial uses.

Consider school districts when determining future growth and development.

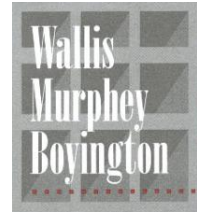
Develop an economically viable plan for small businesses.

Offer services for the residents such as grocery stores, pharmacies, etc.

Provide strategic parking sites to accommodate the density of the services offered in the downtown area.

*It was a grey,
chilly day.
Rain threatened —
and fell.
Still, people came.
It was just a few
at first...*



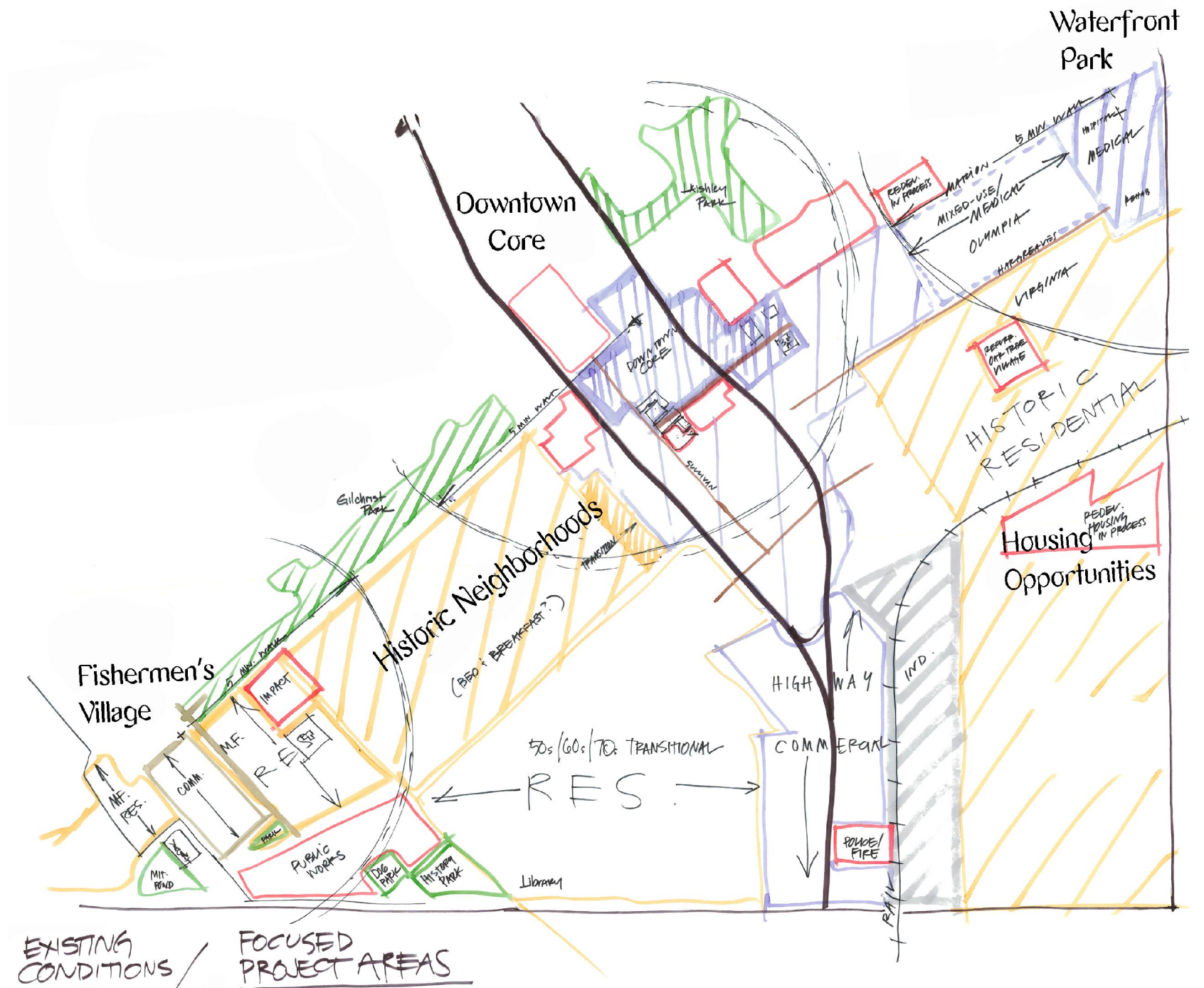


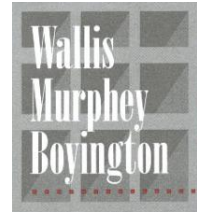
KEY AREAS

After listening to citizens and staff, reviewing previous planning reports, and touring the CRA area, the planning team identified five key areas on which to focus attention. They are:

- x Downtown Core and Civic Center
- x Fishermen's Village
- x Historic Neighborhoods
- x Housing Opportunities
- x Waterfront Park

Each of these areas is detailed in the following pages. However, it is important to consider each area not only individually, but in balance with one another and in the context of the whole community. It is also important to continue to implement the CRA plan, which has a particular focus on the City's south and east side neighborhoods, and on the vitality of the downtown as a whole. Only in this way will Punta Gorda maintain its family-friendly, pedestrian-oriented, small-town character, even as it becomes the hub of a large and cosmopolitan community.





KEY AREAS

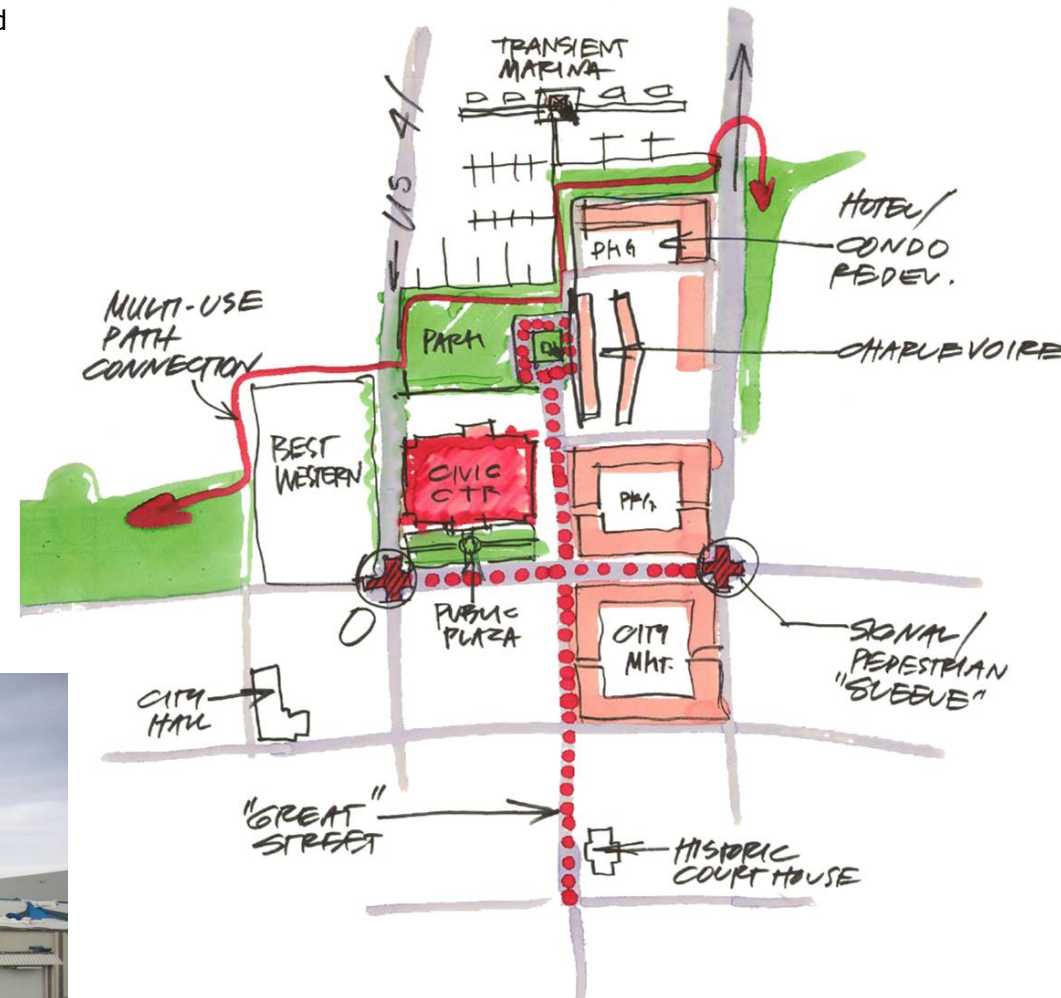
DOWNTOWN CORE

The area considered as the Downtown Core lies between the two bridges, and extends from the waterfront south to Retta Esplanade, plus the block south of Retta between Taylor and U.S. 41 North. Existing uses in the Downtown Core include:

- ✗ Hotel - Demolished
- ✗ Residential condominiums - Under Reconstruction
- ✗ County Auditorium to be demolished
- ✗ Surface parking
- ✗ Service Station - Demolished
- ✗ Strip mall - Demolished

Most of the existing structures in this area suffered heavy damage in Hurricane Charley. This has given rise to a discussion of creating a master-planned, mixed-use development in this location. However, the land remains in separate ownerships, and the owners each have separate goals and economic imperatives. This is especially true of

the Charlevoire condominiums and the former Holiday Inn site, which are individually owned and moving forward with development proposals.



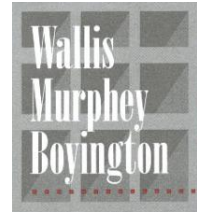
Charlevoire

NOTE: Subsequent to the Charrette, the City and County held a joint workshop on February 18, 2005 to discuss the auditorium site. From this meeting came consensus from both boards to pursue demolition of the existing building and to pursue construction of an events center addressing local needs. The option of mixed use and a partnership with a hotel was deemed inappropriate.



Civic Auditorium





KEY AREAS

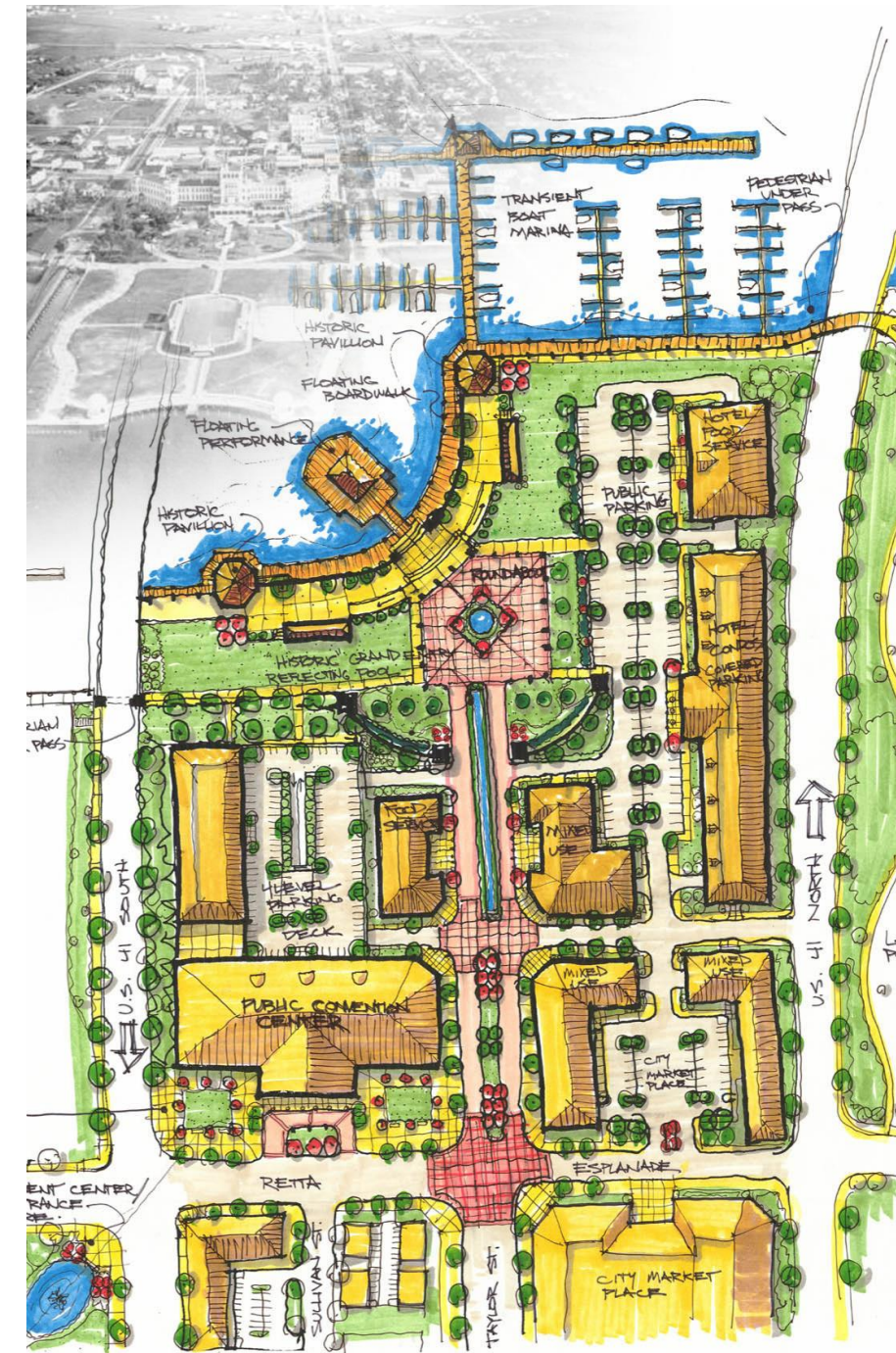
CONSIDERATIONS:

The team drew several alternatives for this area, showing different responses to the following considerations.

OPPORTUNITY TO CREATE A HIGH-QUALITY, MIXED-USE, PEDESTRIAN CORE

✗ Whatever the ownership pattern, this should be the overriding principle for development and redevelopment of property in this area. In addition to the buildings themselves, it is important to invest in the streets and pedestrian areas that will define the experience for residents and visitors.

✗ Buildings should be built to the sidewalk to define the space, not set back with a parking lot between the sidewalk and the building. There should be a generous sidewalk or pedestrian zone, where it is pleasant and safe to walk. This means that vehicular traffic moves slowly and may also be separated by physical barriers, such as on-street parking, bollards, planting areas, and the like. Where pedestrian ways cross streets that have significant vehicular traffic, the pedestrian should be recognized and protected through such techniques as pavement markings and pedestrian signals. The environment should be interesting for people on foot, with a richness of detail in building facades, paving treatments, landscaping, and "street furniture" such as benches, banners, and lighting fixtures. Retail uses should predominate on the ground floor, and all types of uses should have a considerable amount of windows that allow passers-by to see what

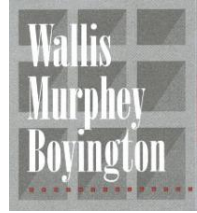




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KEY AREAS

is going on inside. Parking should be either in surface lots or parking structures, but in either case should be screened from view, especially along the key pedestrian streets. A mix of uses, including retail, office, civic, and residential, is desirable because it invites many different users, at different times of day and night, thus creating a vital area. Multi-story development helps to create the critical mass of people that enables businesses to succeed and residential areas to have the services they desire.

GATEWAY OPPORTUNITY

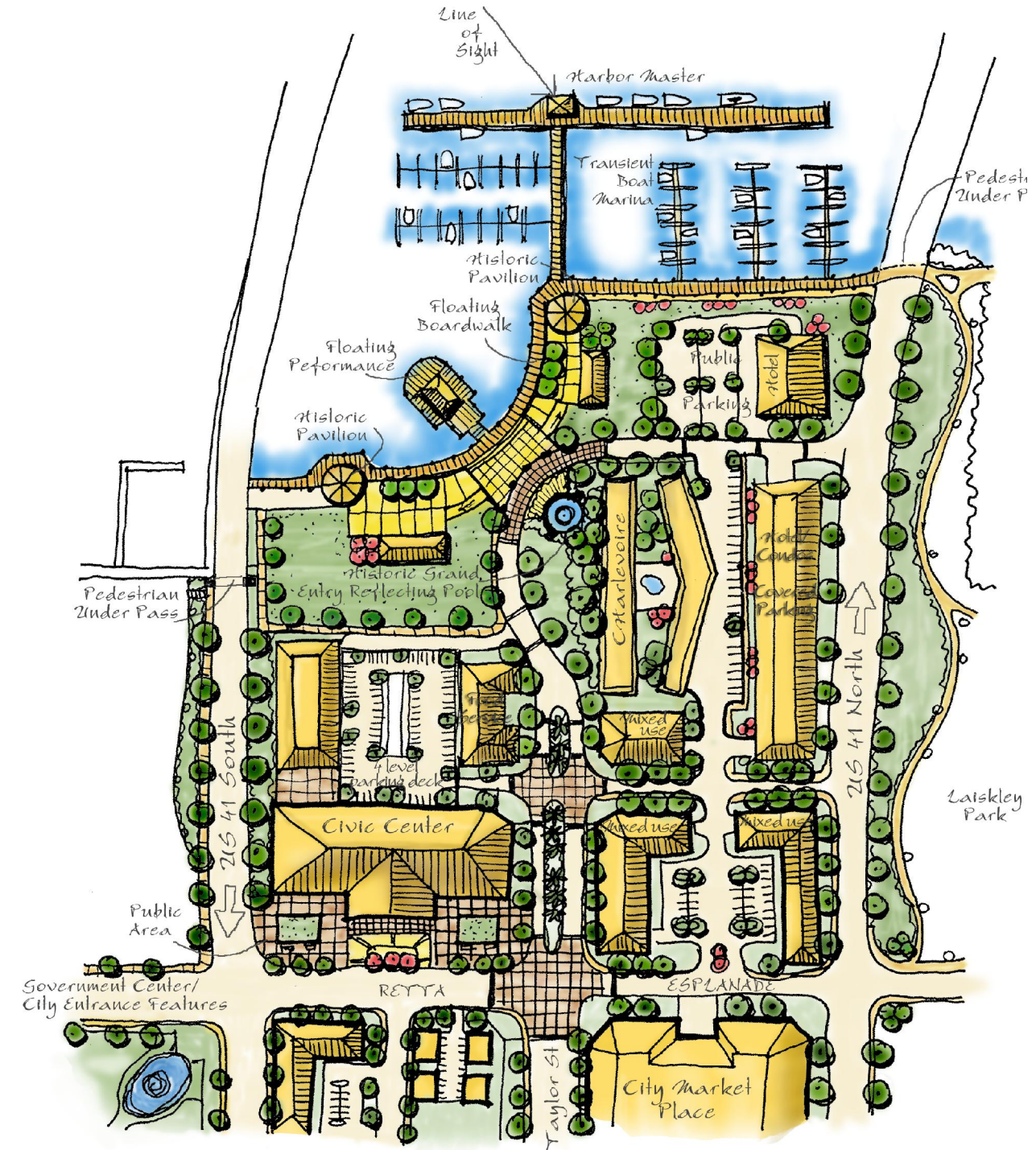
✘ This is the initial and character-defining visual experience for anyone entering over the south bridge into Punta Gorda. As such it presents a tremendous opportunity to create a gateway and definition for the city. Treatment of the Civic Auditorium frontage along US 41 South is especially important, as it meets the road not only at the first floor level, but at the second and third story, as well. Gateways should create a sense of arrival, letting people know that they have come to a special place. This should include not only signage and wayfinding elements that identify downtown Punta Gorda, but also elements such as landscaping, lighting, color, street furniture, and architectural features. The use of coordinated elements throughout the city can tie the downtown to other key areas and create an identity for Punta Gorda. Gateways are also the starting point for a wayfinding system that guides people to various destinations within the city.

USE OF CIVIC AUDITORIUM SITE

✘ There has been discussion of replacing this community-oriented facility with a convention center oriented to visitors, possibly coupled with a hotel. It is unclear whether this use would be permissible under the terms of the deed that conveyed the land to Charlotte County for public use. Another consideration is the economic impact of a convention center, and whether it would pay for itself or require public subsidy. This is discussed more fully in the Economic Analysis Chapter.

THE GRAPHIC AT RIGHT ILLUSTRATES THE FOLLOWING KEY COMPONENTS:

- ✘ Continuous public waterfront path
- ✘ Parking in structures or lots screened from view
- ✘ Gateways tell people they're in a special place
- ✘ Continuation of Retta Esplanade
- ✘ "Great Streets" support shopping and strolling
- ✘ Mixed-use redevelopment with retail on ground floor
- ✘ Rebuilt Civic Auditorium supports local events
- ✘ Civic green space instead of parking lot
- ✘ Existing condominium use remains
- ✘ Existing hotel use remains

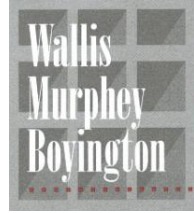




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KEY AREAS

RECOMMENDATIONS:

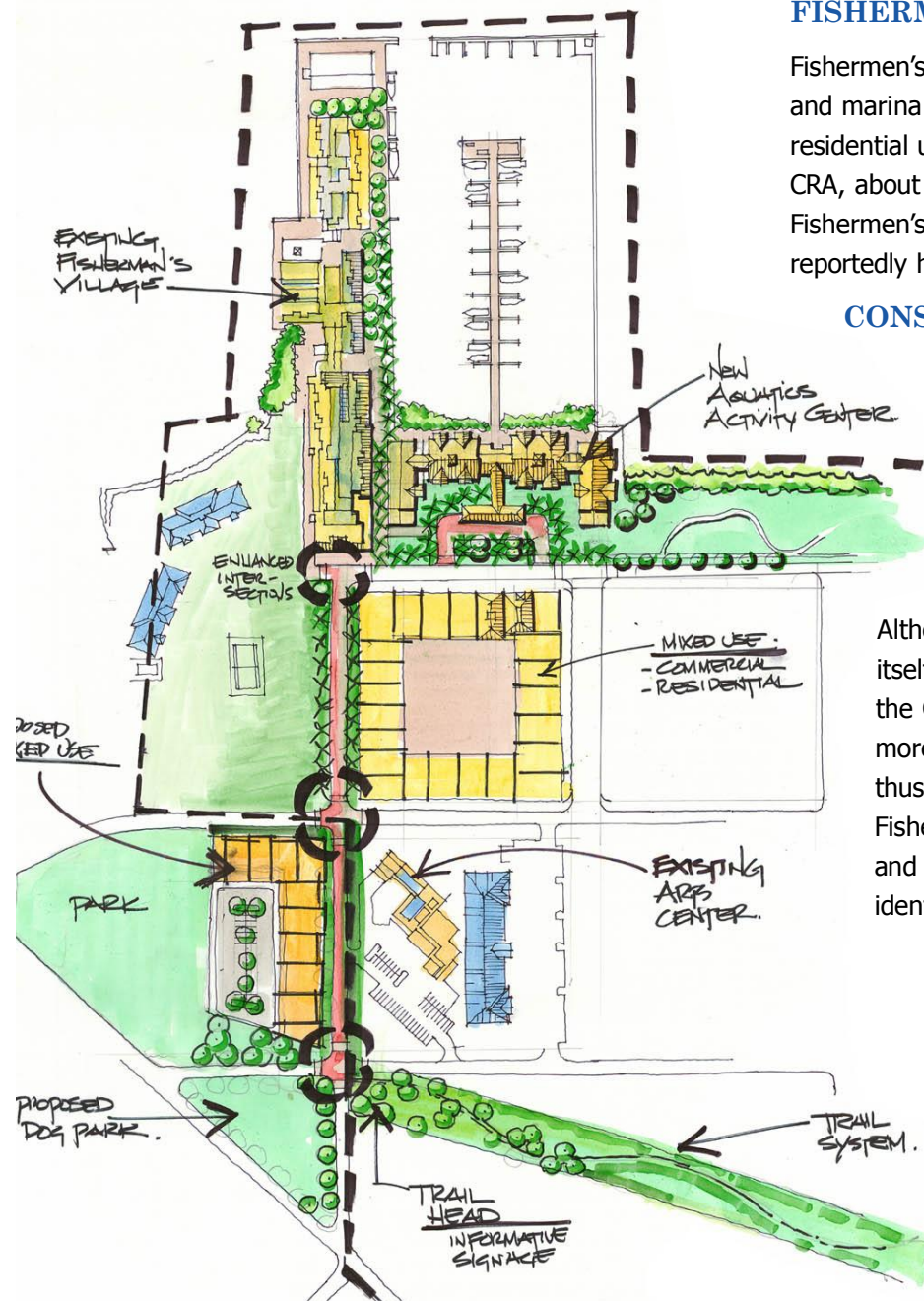
- × Retain historic small town character as Punta Gorda grows
- × Rebuild the downtown core as a coordinated mixed-use development, including residential, retail and public/civic uses
- × Pursue mixed use throughout the downtown
- × Minimize/screen surface parking areas
- × Insist on great streets, with a high-quality pedestrian environment
- × Connect Retta Esplanade between Taylor Street and U.S. 41 North
- × All development should contribute to the creation of a waterfront pedestrian path
- × Limit height to maintain pedestrian scale
- × Consider a zoning code provision to allow additional height in exchange for specific public benefits, such as step-backs in height along the water, and contributions to the waterfront path
- × Encourage a variety of architectural styles that relate to Punta Gorda's varied historic fabric
- × Limit signs in number, size, and location
- × Plant trees in prominent locations, especially signature species of palms such as foxtail, washingtonian and royal



All development should contribute to the creation of a waterfront pedestrian path



KEY AREAS



FISHERMEN'S VILLAGE

Fishermen's Village is a mixed-use project which includes boat slips and marina facilities, as well as retail shops and restaurants with residential units above. It is located at the western edge of the CRA, about a mile from downtown Punta Gorda via Marion Avenue. Fishermen's Village is clearly a lively entertainment destination, reportedly hosting over a million visitors each year.

CONSIDERATIONS:

Two considerations are key to the continued success of Fishermen's Village within the fabric of the CRA:

- ✗ Strengthen the Connection with Downtown
- ✗ Continue to Develop in a Mixed-Use Form

Although Fishermen's Village is a successful destination in itself, there is an opportunity to better link it with the rest of the CRA, especially the downtown. This would create a more multi-faceted "Punta Gorda experience" for the visitor, thus increasing the attractiveness of both downtown and Fishermen's Village. The connections should be both physical and programmatic: transportation linkages and a common identity.

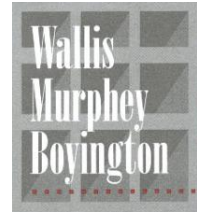
The other consideration is the form of future development. Over time, the surface parking lots adjacent to Fishermen's Village can be developed in a mixed-use fashion that adds to the vibrancy of the area and enhances the pedestrian experience. The graphic shows a mixed-use structure with retail on the ground floor and residential above, enveloping a

parking structure. It also proposes a westward extension of the waterfront park, with a new aquatics activity center. This center would support water and waterfront recreational activities such as kayak and bicycle rentals.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- ✗ Strengthen transportation connections between Fishermen's village and the rest of the CRA
- ✗ Explore a trolley link between Fishermen's Village and downtown
- ✗ Improve bicycle and pedestrian connections along waterfront park
- ✗ Clarify that the waterfront path in front of condos is public
- ✗ Improve bicycle and pedestrian connections along Maud Street to the dog park and future bike trail
- ✗ Consider adding a sports rental facility in the waterfront park (Kayaks/canoes/bikes/rollerblades/Segways)
- ✗ Promote a Punta Gorda experience that includes Fishermen's Village and the rest of the CRA through wayfinding and coordinated advertising and events programming
- ✗ Continue to develop in a mixed-use form
- ✗ Pursue additional landscaping opportunities within parking areas and street edges
- ✗ Longer term goals should incorporate a parking structure wrapped by retail and mixed use





KEY AREAS

HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOODS

The neighborhoods west of downtown include both local and national register historic districts. These residential areas give Punta Gorda much of its visual character, including the theme of brick streets. In addition, the residents of these in-town neighborhoods support downtown goods and services, and animate the adjacent waterfront parks.

CONSIDERATIONS:

These neighborhoods are strongly influenced by the waterfront and the public space along it. Improvements here directly improve the quality of neighborhood life. The graphic shows several possibilities, including:

- ✗ Moving a historic structure to the park
- ✗ Adding water taxi service with stops along the park
- ✗ Creating overlooks and features that suggest the presence of the water from a distance
- ✗ Creating a continuous, high quality pedestrian connection from Fishermen's Village to Lashley Park

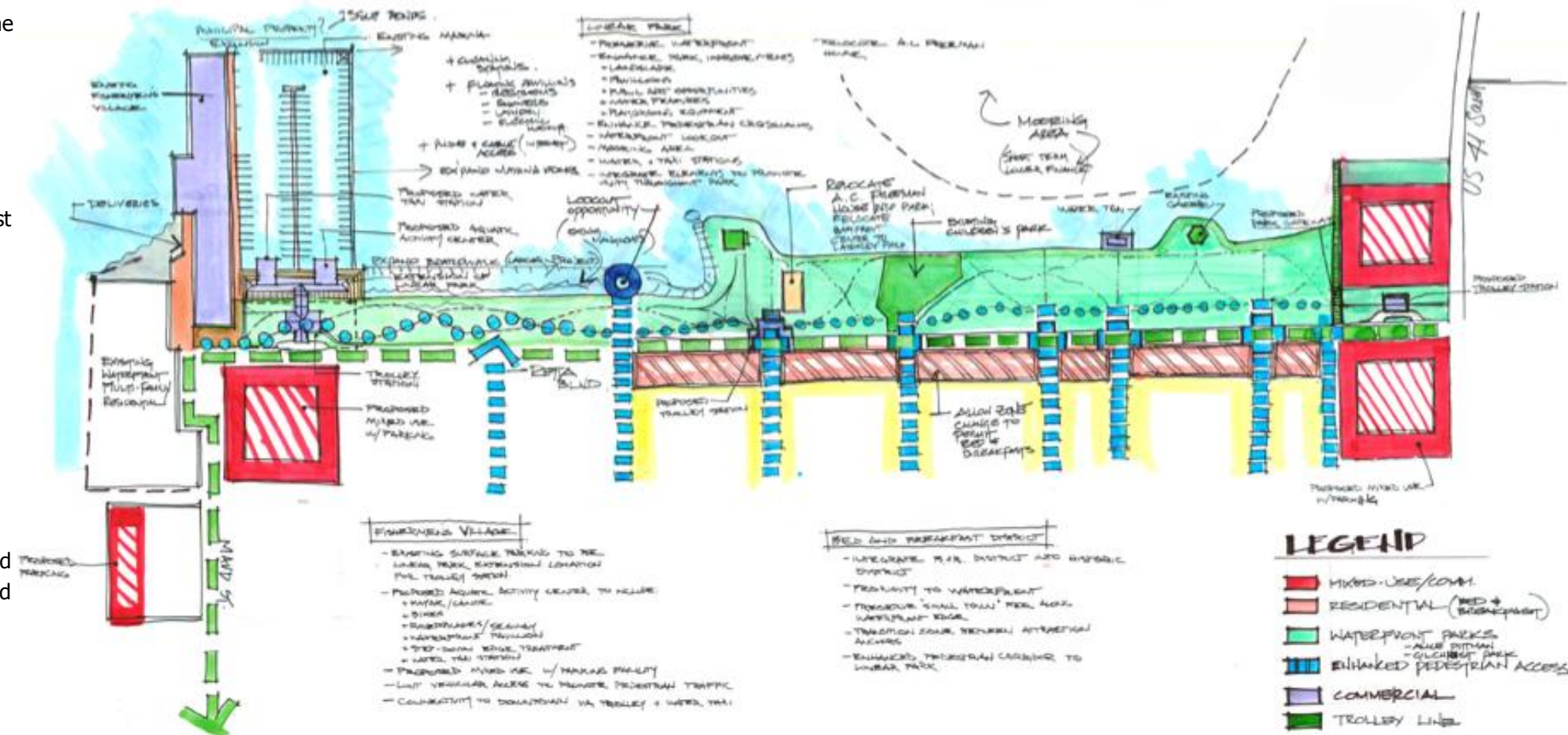
One of the opportunities the team saw was to add small-scale, historically-appropriate Bed-and-Breakfasts in these neighborhoods. This would add to the stock of accommodations available in Punta Gorda, while maintaining the scale and character of the community. In particular, this use was envisioned as appealing to boaters, who could moor nearby and enjoy the downtown experience without needing a car. In the location recommended, along Retta

Esplanade, this use would act as a transition between the more active public waterfront and the more private residential parts of the neighborhood.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- ✗ Maintain the historic, mostly residential character of these neighborhoods
- ✗ Continue to expand the quality and variety of the waterfront experience

- ✗ Improve the pedestrian connections to the waterfront parks
- ✗ Create a Bed-and-Breakfast district along Retta Esplanade
- ✗ Create a mooring field for boaters near the waterfront park
- ✗ Continue to create a transition to the Downtown Core with mixed-use development

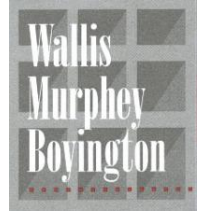




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KEY AREAS

HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES

Much of Punta Gorda’s public housing was damaged or destroyed by Hurricane Charley. However this housing stock was not only showing signs of age, but also of an outmoded design concept. The Myrtle Street project, for example, is what one pictures when one thinks “housing project” — a cluster of apartment buildings arrayed on a large site, without individual streets, and not connected with the surrounding neighborhood.



CONSIDERATIONS:

- ✗ Rebuild housing in a form that contributes to neighborhood vitality
- ✗ Support the neighborhoods that support public housing



The opportunity exists to rebuild Myrtle Street and other public housing sites in a way that contributes to the fabric of the neighborhood, rather than being clearly set apart as a low-income housing project. HUD’s HOPE VI program has pioneered a number of such projects. Although funding for HOPE VI is becoming scarce it is worth incorporating the features that have made these projects successful, such as:

- ✗ Continuation of the surrounding street pattern into the development
- ✗ Providing an individual address and identity for each unit
- ✗ Using CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) principles to define space and create a sense of ownership
- ✗ Mixing incomes and housing types within the development
- ✗ Including neighborhood-serving facilities, such as neighborhood retail, within the development



KEY AREAS

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- x Design new housing developments for a mix of incomes and housing types
- x Include neighborhood-serving facilities, such as retail, schools, or parks within or near the development
- x Continue to support the neighborhoods around new housing developments
- x Neighborhood identification signs, markers, and gateways
- x Clean-ups and code-enforcement as appropriate
- x Streetscaping creates attractive identity
- x Infill houses using approved design guidelines

PROPOSED REDEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC HOUSING

Elements illustrated on neighboring graphic:

- x Variety of housing types and sizes
- x Units have individual addresses and identity
- x Streets reconnected to neighborhood network
- x Continuation of Martin Luther King Jr Blvd. and streetscaping
- x Gateways and neighborhood markers
- x Neighborhood-serving commercial
- x A public "green" space provides recreation & civic identity

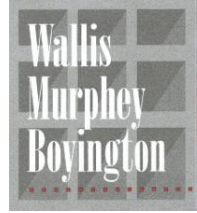




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KEY AREAS

WATERFRONT PARK

The section of the waterfront park shown here is a currently undeveloped site just east of Laishley Park. The walking trail ends here and there is an existing water overlook. This site forms the northeastern end of a public waterfront that extends over a mile and includes a variety of distinct uses, from active recreation areas to quiet spots for reflection and enjoying water views. This variety of experience is one of the great strengths of Punta Gorda's waterfront.

CONSIDERATIONS:

- × Opportunity for environmental education
- × Potential site for historic A.C. Freeman House
- × Transportation stops for trolley and trail

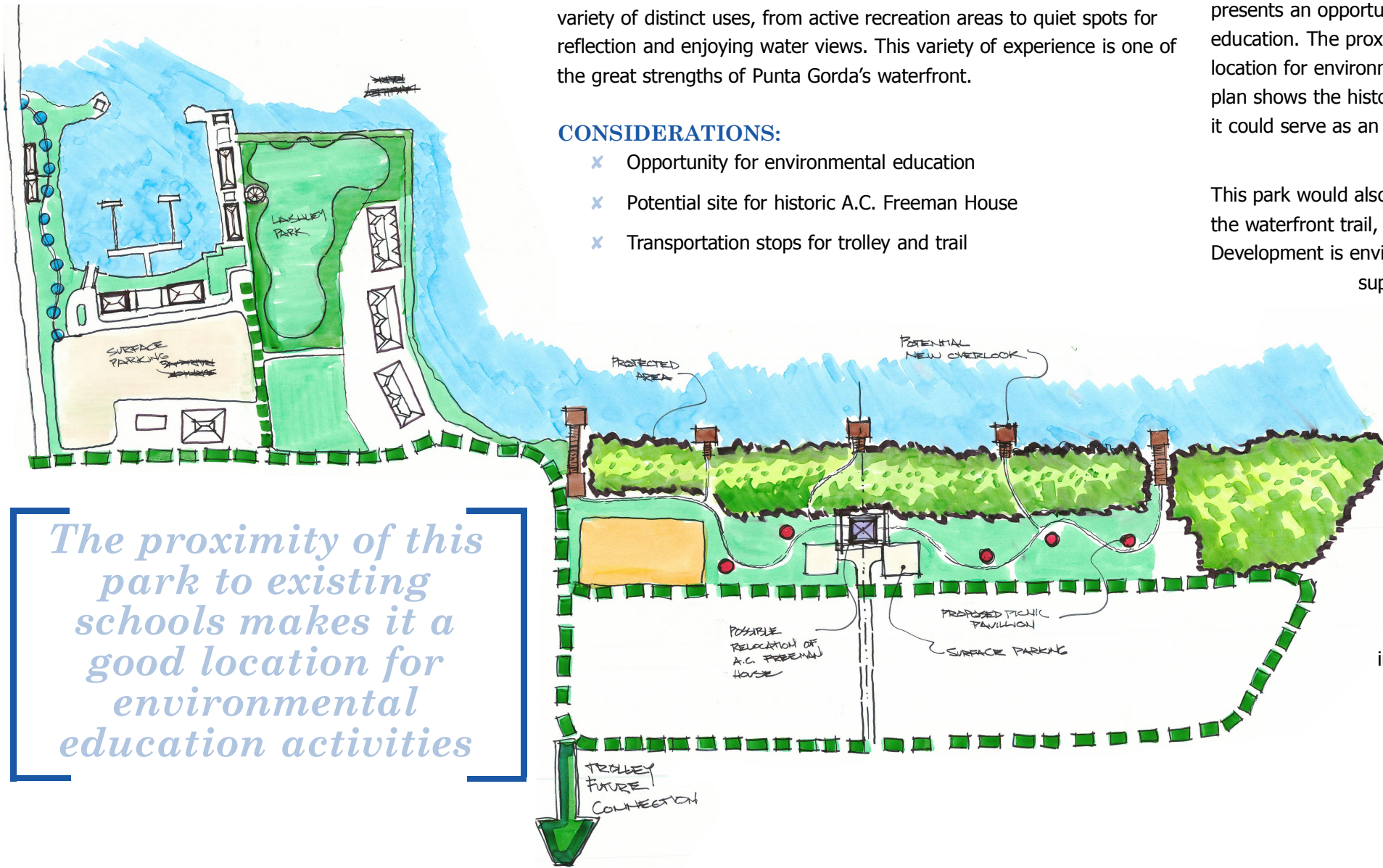
- × Gateway from I-75
- × Connection between east side neighborhoods and water

The land at the shoreline is native habitat that should be preserved, however the landward portion of the site, adjacent to Marion Avenue, presents an opportunity for passive recreation and nature-based education. The proximity of this park to existing schools makes it a good location for environmental education activities for children. This concept plan shows the historic A.C. Freeman House relocated to this site, where it could serve as an environmental and historical education center.

This park would also serve as a transportation node, with a trail head for the waterfront trail, and a stop and turnaround for the proposed trolley. Development is envisioned as very light, with the historic house supported by a few parking spaces, and a trail leading through the park and to additional water overlooks.

Overlook structures can also create a "terminated vista" - a visible reminder of the water, which strengthens the connection between the east side neighborhoods and the nearby river.

The park would serve as a convenient lunch spot for workers in the downtown and act as a gateway from I-75 and could include a visitor information center.



The proximity of this park to existing schools makes it a good location for environmental education activities

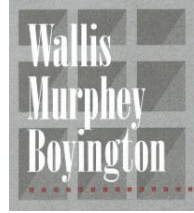




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KEY AREAS

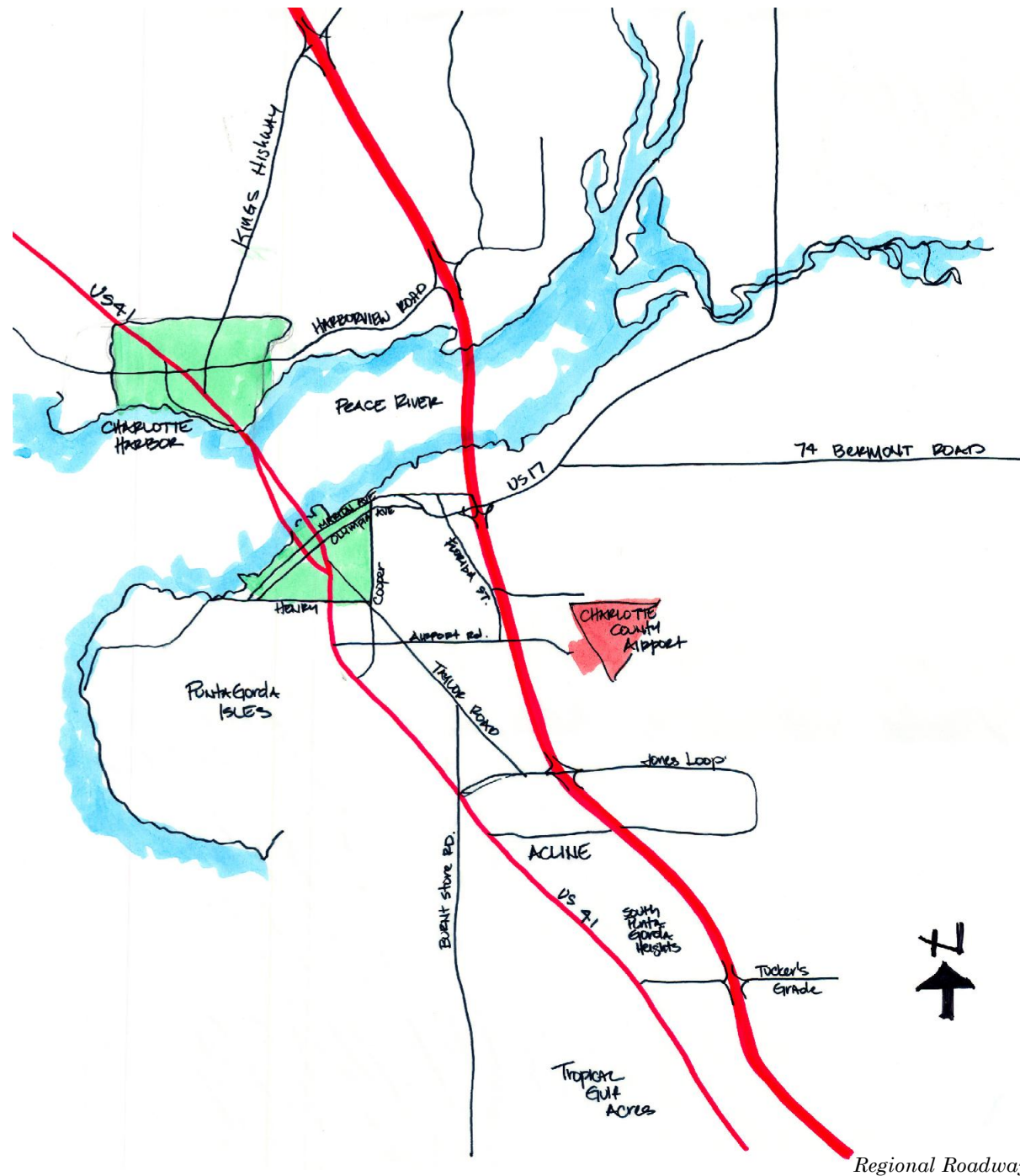
RECOMMENDATIONS:

- x Use this portion of the waterfront park as a passive recreation area, emphasizing environmental education and providing for a trail head and trolley stop

The graphic at right shows the plan for Laisley Park, which lies just west of the proposed waterfront park extension. The Laisley Park improvements will add another key piece to Punta Gorda's chain of public waterfront, and support the CRA plan vision of a "lively, publicly accessible waterfront." The park design resulted from a charrette held in January 2004. Design development was delayed due to the hurricane, but construction is scheduled to begin in Spring 2005 and be completed near the end of the year.



TRANSPORTATION



Regional Roadway Network

REGIONAL ROADWAY NETWORK

As part of the City of Punta Gorda charrette visioning process, Kimley-Horn worked with the City of Punta Gorda and the public to better understand the existing transportation system and to project future transportation needs including some that might result from desired new development. The existing transportation network around the downtown core consists of two major routes: the north-south route of U.S. 41 and the east-west route of U.S. 17, supplemented by a local street network.

In an effort to revitalize the downtown area and maintain its small city feeling, City staff has shown interest in converting the downtown east-west pairs of U.S. 17 (Marion Avenue and Olympia Avenue) to two-lane two-way streets; thus encouraging the use of these streets for patrons destined for downtown Punta Gorda, as well as to vitalize the pedestrian and retail aspects of the downtown core.

With this proposed change, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) has stipulated that the City would be required to remove U.S. 17 (from I-75 to U.S. 41) from the state highway system.

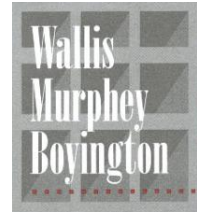
As part of this process, it is anticipated that the regional surrounding roadway network will need to be enhanced to provide additional capacity for neighboring communities including Punta Gorda Isles, and Port Charlotte.

The regional 2025 MPO plan was reviewed and discussed with City staff. Many of the planned improvements in the 2025 needs plan serve as a foundation to support the proposed land use intensity in the downtown core of Punta Gorda, in particular by providing alternative routes for traffic around the downtown core.

Several improvements should be further investigated to determine feasibility. Partnerships between the Punta Gorda CRA, Charlotte County, the Airport, private entities (such as new development and Edison College), and the FDOT will be critical in assimilating these viable options.

Creating an identity to the downtown core is critical





TRANSPORTATION

Due to the lack of roadway links, drivers sometimes pass through downtown Punta Gorda, not as a destination, but as a quicker route to other areas. Specifically, patterns have been observed where vehicles have traveled across the Peace River twice (once on I-75, and once on U.S. 41) due to the ease of accessing the interstate through downtown Punta Gorda. Partnering with Charlotte County to widen Harborview Road, as planned in the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) can serve as a good alternative to the circuitous patterns observed today.

Punta Gorda Isles residents' primary access is provided through the one-way pairs of U.S. 17 (Marion and Olympia Avenue). This is due to a fragmented regional network of streets currently providing limited access between I-75 and Punta Gorda Isles. Longer range improvements such as the proposed Burnt Store Road extension and proposed interchange at U.S. 17 and Florida Avenue, and widening plans for Airport Road and Cooper Street (Aqui Esta Drive) will serve as additional routes serving U.S. 41 and Punta Gorda Isles. The City is encouraged to evaluate the potential of advancing these roadways in an effort to provide economic stimulus to this area as well as provide alternative routes to the downtown network.

Interim improvements include enhancing Cooper and Henry Street to serve as alternative routes around the CRA area until longer range improvements (such as Burnt Store Road) can be constructed. With the proposed change in travel patterns, additional enhancements to maintain pedestrian safety around the school zones will need to be considered as part of these improvements. In addition, Henry Street will need to be enhanced to connect across the Seminole Gulf Railway.

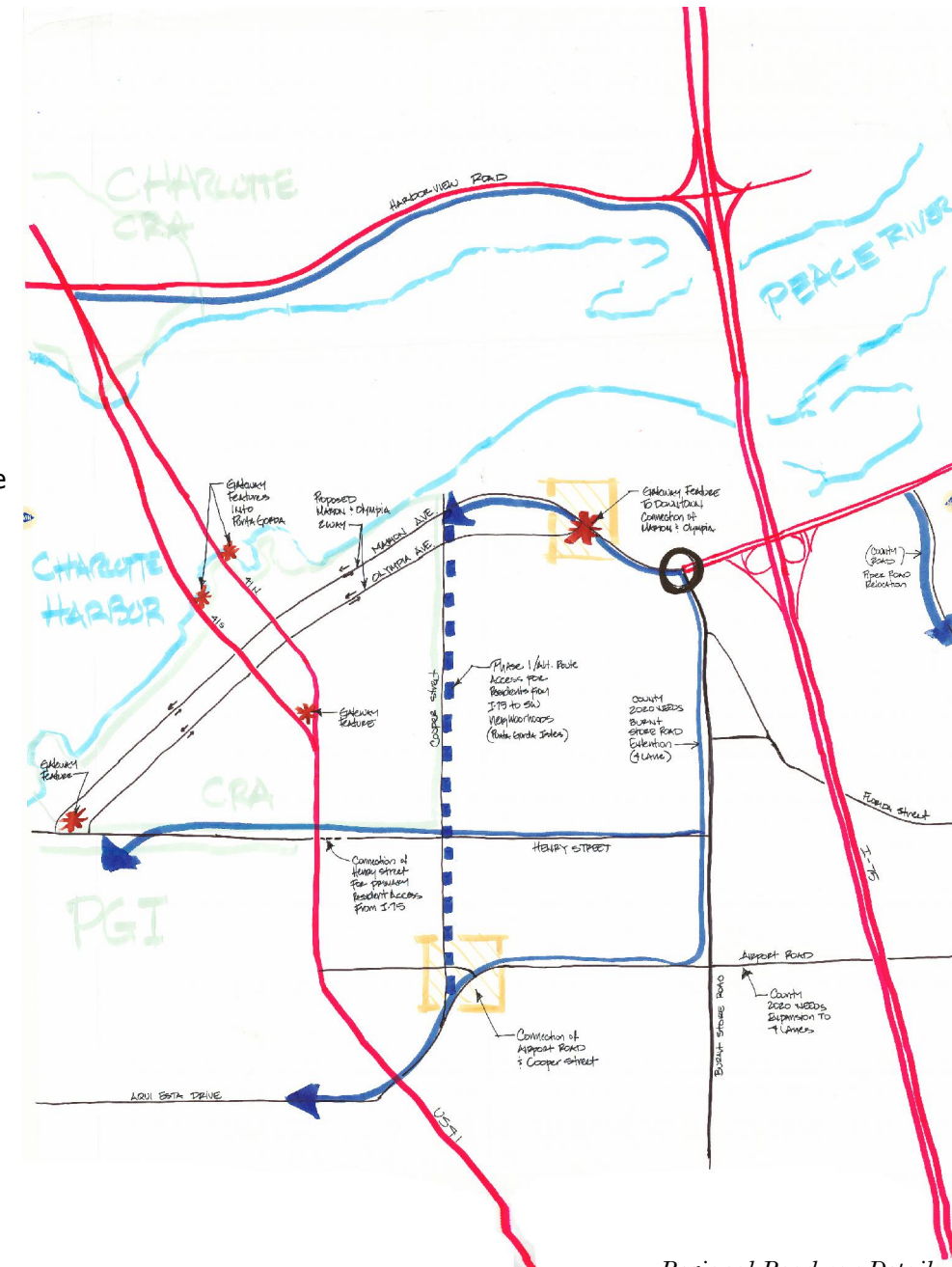


GATEWAYS

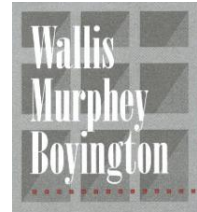
Creating an identity to the downtown core is critical to informing its visitors that they are entering a destination. The current roadway configuration provides one-way pairs of U.S. 41 and U.S. 17 allowing high speed travel by the general public through the heart of the city. This does not support Punta Gorda as a destination city.

Several locations along the roadway network create prime points of entry into the downtown. At these locations, strategically placed "gateways" will serve as the identity to the City improving visitor recognition of this unique historic city. Within these gateways, the City is encouraged to change the streetscape and focus on enhancing the multi-modal interaction between vehicles, pedestrians, bicycles, and transit. This could include elements such as:

- ✗ Slowing traffic by narrowing lanes, adding decorative paving, allowing on-street parking
- ✗ Widening pedestrian areas and distinguishing through paving, landscaping, and street furniture
- ✗ Using coordinated landscape, signage, and lighting
- ✗ Providing facilities for bicycles and transit riders



Regional Roadway Detail



TRANSPORTATION

HISTORIC DOWNTOWN CITY

In the historic downtown, much of the focus of the transportation network is centered on not only the vehicle but its interaction with other modes. Connectivity between these modes is critical to a successful downtown. Many things are being considered in this area of the city including "the great street" concept of integrating the use by pedestrians, bicycles, transit and vehicles. Taylor Street is one of these streets and is planned to serve as a downtown "event" street (for art exhibits, etc.). Retta Esplanade also provides characteristics of these streets integrating a trolley, pedestrian and bicycle features and connecting the waterfront park areas.

A multi-use path is being considered in the downtown area. This path will interconnect Laishley Park and Fisherman's Village, with a linear park planned along the abandoned Seminole Gulf Railroad and with enhancements along Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard.

A trolley system is being considered to run along Retta Esplanade connecting the existing medical district with Fishermen's Village.



Expansion of the trolley line routes is desired to provide connectivity through the heart of the City.



Possible routes include Taylor Street, through the linear park along the railroad alignment, and/or along Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard adjacent to Trabue Woods Village.

As development intensities increases in the downtown, key areas designated for parking are being considered throughout the City. These locations will be a mix of surface and structure lots and are being considered through private/public partnerships. Possible locations are being considered throughout the downtown with ease of access to destinations, public transit, and pedestrian and bicycle facilities.

Potential locations are shown in the illustration at right, however, further analysis related to the size and management of these facilities is needed prior to final siting.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ✗ Pursue alternate routes to access I-75 (e.g., Harborview Road)
- ✗ Pursue U.S. 17 alternatives to access Punta Gorda Isles
 - ✗ Burnt Store Road
 - ✗ Cooper & Henry Streets
- ✗ Consider converting Marion and Olympia Avenues from one-way to two-way streets
- ✗ Build consolidated parking facilities downtown

- ✗ Create gateways to mark key entrances to the city
- ✗ Consider a downtown trolley
- ✗ Develop a connected multi-use path using the waterfront trail, the abandoned Seminole Gulf Railroad, and enhanced Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard.



Potential areas for parking lots/structures

INFRASTRUCTURE

UTILITIES

As part of the City of Punta Gorda Downtown CRA process, Kimley-Horn worked with the City Utility Engineer, Steve Adams, to better understand the existing utility system by reviewing as-built utility drawings and planned improvements. The study reviews the size, location, and material of the existing utility system and assesses the need to improve the system during the downtown revitalization process.

Numerous water mains in the downtown area were installed years ago and are made of materials that are no longer acceptable. For example, the 8-inch asbestos concrete (AC) water main that runs north along the Taylor Road right of way from Marion Avenue to West Retta Esplanade behind the old Punta Gorda Mall is being replaced with polyvinyl chloride (PVC) pipe. AC pipe is no longer used in the area for underground utility purposes. It has qualities that make it difficult to maintain in areas where construction activity can disturb it. PVC pipe is used along with ductile iron pipe (DIP) for both potable water mains and sanitary sewer lines. The old Punta Gorda Mall site is currently undergoing redevelopment and the City is taking the opportunity to replace inadequate and unacceptable utility lines before future problems arise. To replace the lines after the redevelopment is complete would potentially be more expensive and more difficult, not to mention unsightly.

Similar to the aging water mains in the downtown area, sanitary sewer lines were also installed years ago and are made of materials that are no longer acceptable. For example, an 8-inch vitrified clay

(VC) gravity line that runs south along the Taylor Road right-of-way from West Retta Esplanade to an alley just north of Marion Avenue behind the Punta Gorda Mall is being replaced with PVC pipe. Similar to AC pipe, VC pipe is no longer used in the area. VC pipe has a tendency to allow groundwater infiltration into the sanitary sewer system through the pipe joints. This groundwater increases flows at the treatment plants and costs tax payers money to treat the additional influent. The infiltration of groundwater into the sewer system also decreases capacity of the sewer lines and treatment plants. For this reason, it is recommended that the outdated sanitary sewer lines be replaced as redevelopment occurs in the downtown area.

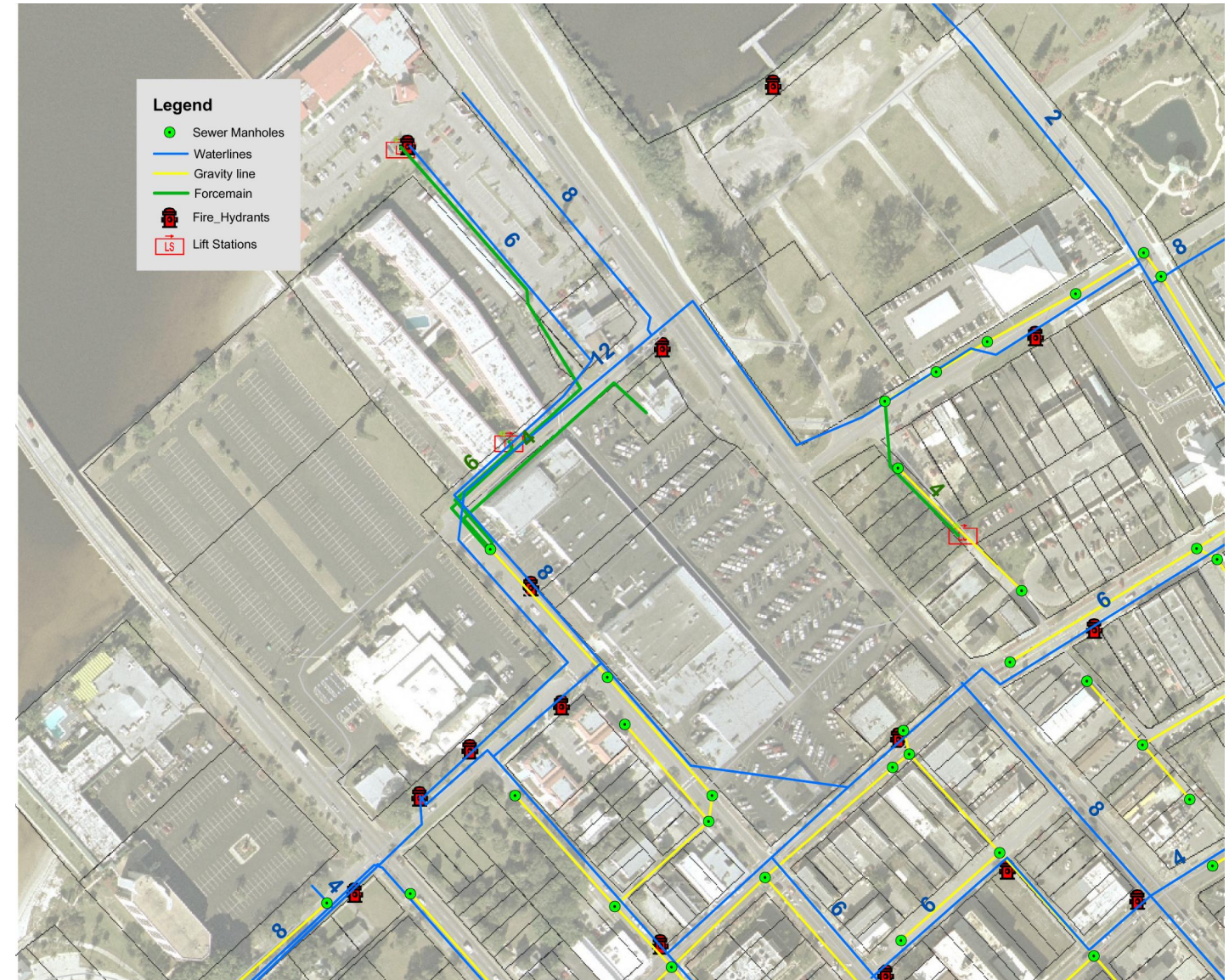


INFRASTRUCTURE

STORMWATER

To better understand the existing stormwater drainage system in the downtown area, Kimley-Horn referenced the City of Punta Gorda Stormwater Master Plan Phase I Draft Report, dated October 1992 and prepared by Camp Dresser & McKee. According to this report, flooding is a problem within the study area due to low pavement elevations and discharge to tidally influenced waters. FDOT has recently completed drainage improvements in the area along U.S. 41 North. Although these improvements helped drainage along U.S. 41, it did little for the local roads. Through the redevelopment process, local roads that experience flooding could be raised to decrease the probability of flooding. Improvements to the existing stormwater drainage system can be accomplished by increasing pipe sizes. Increasing pipe sizes allows stormwater to discharge faster, and therefore, decreasing flood stages. However, the increase in discharge rates can also increase pollutant loading to the Peace River and local canal systems. A couple of options can be pursued to alleviate the increase of pollutants to the receiving waters. Treatment ponds could be added to accept stormwater prior to discharging to receiving waters. This option requires open land, which, in the downtown area is not readily available and not the best and highest use. Another option is to add Stormceptor Systems or Suntime Technologies to the existing stormwater drainage system. The Stormceptor System has been tested to have an 87% removal rate of total suspended solids (TSS) and a 99% removal rate of total petroleum hydrocarbons (TPH). The Suntime system has similar pollutant removal capacities and can be used to retrofit existing inlets. Maintenance of the Suntime system is approximately every 3 to 6 months depending on the location. The Stormceptor System does not require the frequent maintenance as compared to the Suntime system, but initial costs are greater.

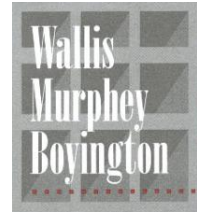
Charlotte Harbor is the main attraction to the downtown area and should be protected from pollutants. Water quality can be increased by including a pretreatment system prior to discharging to the receiving waters of Charlotte Harbor. This will help preserve the beauty of Charlotte Harbor, which attracts citizens to the downtown area.



RECOMMENDATIONS:

- ✘ Replace outdated water and sanitary sewer lines as part of redevelopment
- ✘ Improve treatment of stormwater prior to discharge into surrounding waters, using treatment ponds or pollutant-removal technologies





ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

MARKET FACTORS AND CONSIDERATIONS

This market overview focuses on three elements of the development/redevelopment strategy for downtown Punta Gorda and nearby activity centers. These elements are:

- ✗ Auditorium/Civic Center
- ✗ City Marketplace
- ✗ Fishermen's Village

All three elements and their surroundings serve and are impacted by local and regional markets, which are defined and dimensioned below.

LOCAL MARKET

The local market for downtown Punta Gorda and environs is Charlotte County. Because of its rapid growth and population, the County achieved metropolitan status as the Punta Gorda-Port Charlotte Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), as defined by the US Census Bureau and Federal Office of Management and Budget in the early 1990's. This designation provides significant market visibility for the County and Punta Gorda as a viable competitor in the economic development, housing, and retail marketplaces.



Charlotte County almost doubled in population from 1980 to 1990, when it was among the fastest growing counties in the U.S. From 1990 to 2000, the County added another 31,000 residents to finish

the decade with over 141,000 residents. The Census Bureau estimates the County population in 2003 at over 153,000. The University of Florida's Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR) projects that the County population will reach around 215,000 by 2025, which is considered very conservative. A more realistic projection would be in the range of 250,000, or almost 100,000 more residents than existed in 2003. This optimistic view of County population growth stems from recent growth trends and various testimonials the Punta Gorda area has received from



national sources including Forbes and Money magazines. Forbes voted the Punta Gorda MSA the Best Small Place for Business and Career three years in a row (2001-2003). Money has recognized the Punta Gorda MSA as one of the top five in the U.S. to live for four years.

The Punta Gorda-Port Charlotte area is the population center of Charlotte County, accounting for the majority of the county population. According to the 2000 Census, the County had approximately 63,900 households, of which almost one-third (20,900+) had annual incomes of \$50,000 or more, including more than 4,600 households with incomes of \$100,000 or more. The vast majority live in or near the Punta Gorda-Port Charlotte area.

Assuming that the County continues to grow at its recent pace, it will add over 1,800 new households per year, including approximately 600 households with incomes over \$50,000 (in 2000 dollars) and 130 households with incomes over \$100,000 (in 2000 dollars).

As the entertainment, cultural, and specialty retailing center of the County, downtown Punta Gorda will continue to benefit from local market growth.

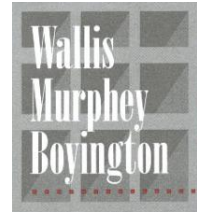
REGIONAL MARKET

The regional market for downtown Punta Gorda and environs is primarily the three adjacent counties: DeSoto, Lee, and Sarasota. Population centers in all three counties are only a 30 to 60 minute drive from downtown Punta Gorda by major highways. Approximate distances from these population centers are as follows: The combined population of these three counties has increased from 799,000 in 2000 to an estimated 873,000 in 2003, an average annual

County	Population Center	Distance (miles)
DeSoto	Arcadia	less than 25
Lee	Fort Myers	less than 25
	Cape Coral	less than 25
Sarasota	Sarasota	less than 50
	Venice	less than 30

gain of nearly 25,000. BEBR projects that the three counties will increase in population to 1.2 million by 2025, a gain of only 15,200 per year, which is very conservative. A more realistic projection would be in the 1.3-1.4 million range.





ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

According to the 2000 Census, the three counties had a combined 350,000 households, of which nearly 40 percent (136,700) had annual incomes of \$50,000 or more, including 39,500 households with incomes of \$100,000 or more. Assuming that these counties continue to grow at their combined recent pace, they will add more than 10,500 new households per year, including 4,100 with incomes over \$50,000 (in 2000 dollars) and nearly 1,200 households per year with incomes over \$100,000 (in 2000 dollars).

As a convenient and accessible location via I-75, U.S. 41, and U.S. 17, Punta Gorda can benefit greatly from the size and growth potential of this nearby external market, particularly if it can maintain and promote successfully its distinctive small town riverfront character and amenities.

NON-RESIDENT MARKETS

Seasonal residents and tourists from outside the local and regional market areas provide an extra dimension of potential support for downtown Punta Gorda. There are no accurate counts or estimates of visitors, but they are likely the equivalent of 15-20 percent of the resident local and regional populations, particularly in peak seasons. These non-residents also tend to purchase goods and eat out more frequently than permanent residents, thus, their impact on local retail outlets is greater on a daily basis.

The Punta Gorda-Port Charlotte area has limited hotel/motel capacity, but resort rentals and second homes provide the greater source of visitor population. This is particularly true in Lee and Sarasota counties, which not only have much larger inventories of hotel/motel rooms, but significant number of second homes and resort rentals. All four counties comprising local and regional markets also have a number of seasonally-used mobile home and recreational vehicle communities.

AUDITORIUM / CIVIC CENTER

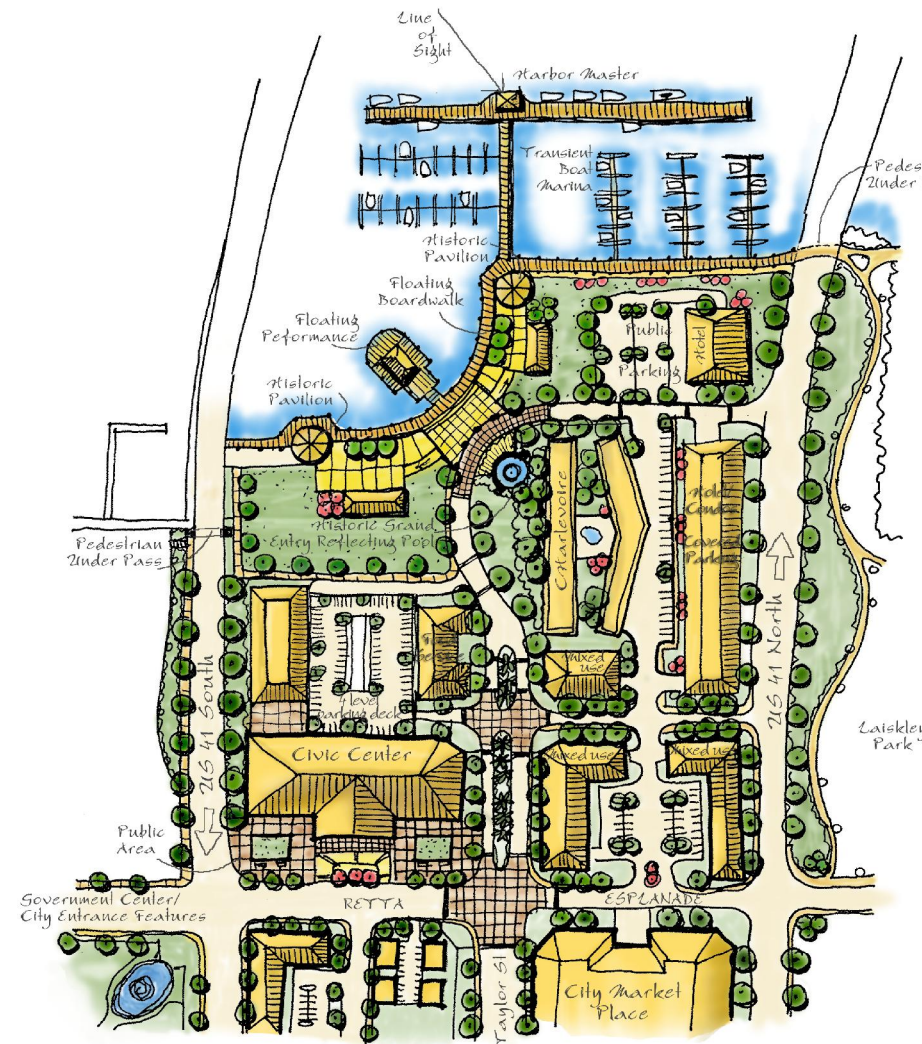
The existing Charlotte County Memorial Auditorium & Civic Center on the downtown riverfront in Punta Gorda sustained severe hurricane damage in 2004. With damages estimated at \$3 million or more, the City and County have the need and opportunity to consider how best to rebuild or replace the facility, including restoring it to its original size and function, expanding it to accommodate more and larger uses and events, or altogether re-thinking the viability and concept for a special events center in downtown Punta Gorda. The existing facility was built in the 1960s when Charlotte County was perhaps only one third of its present size.

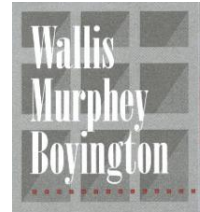
Clearly, downtowns benefit from the presence of such centers and the business activity they generate. These centers, however, are not self-amortizing and rarely are self-sustaining. Unless supported by a major sports franchise, they generally require extensive up-front public capital

investment and their on-going operations must be subsidized by public funding. They exist largely to promote other economic activity and enhance local quality of life.

Civic centers, convention centers, and/or arenas of one sort or another are found in almost every city or urban area of size, and there is not enough conference, convention, trade show, sports, and/or entertainment activity to support them all. Thus, it is important to identify your niche in the marketplace and size and design a center accordingly. For Charlotte County and Punta Gorda, the concept of a locally-oriented civic auditorium/civic center is most appropriate. Given recent and expected future growth in the County, consideration should be given to expanding the old center from 16,000 square feet in the main hall to the 25,000 square foot range,

perhaps up to 30,000 square feet, with up to 2,500 square feet of meeting rooms, plus pre-function and support areas.





ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

This would accommodate a larger number and variety of local uses, but would be generally smaller than facilities found in larger neighbors north and south. Both the Fort Myers and Sarasota-Bradenton area have two centers: the Harbourside Events Center and Lee Civic Center in Fort Myers and the Manatee County Civic Center and new (opened in 2003) Sarasota-Bradenton International Convention Center in Sarasota-Bradenton. Harbourside Center is the smallest of these facilities, with a main hall of 30,000 square feet. The new Sarasota-Bradenton Convention Center has a 93,000 square foot event floor.

The City and County should examine costs, usage, financing needs, and operating requirements in detail as a basis for expanding and redesigning the facility, recognizing that it will not be self-amortizing or self-sustaining, nor should it be sized and designed to compete with the array of facilities throughout the state for large non-local events. While the focus should be primarily on local events, the downtown riverfront location and ambiance of the facility will make it attractive to the non-local small meetings and conferences market, which would also provide support for hotels in the vicinity.

CITY MARKETPLACE

The City Marketplace concept, as first proposed a few years ago, involved redevelopment of the large downtown block bounded by northbound U.S. 41 on the east, Marion Avenue on the south, and Taylor Street on the north and west. This block previously contained an old shopping center, which sustained heavy hurricane damage in 2004, and several other commercial buildings. The concept involves extending Retta Esplanade through the site, creating two redevelopment blocks. Right-of-way for this street extension has been acquired by the City.

The project developer is proposing a four-story mixed-use retail, office, and residential development totaling approximately 200,000 square feet and designed around a four-story core parking garage. Components include 50,000 square feet of ground floor retail space and 40,000 square feet of office space and 72 residential units on the upper three floors.

This project would occupy one of the two redevelopment blocks, but could be expanded to the second block if the first phase proves successful. If successful, the City Marketplace, in tandem with an expanded Civic Center and riverwalk improvements, will help promote redevelopment of adjacent and nearby downtown properties for retail, service-oriented, and residential use.

Comparisons of gross retail sales per capita indicate that Charlotte County is under-supplied and has significant opportunities for retail expansion, particularly with its growing population base. Charlotte County had per capita retail sales of \$18,472 in 2000, compared to \$28,620 in Sarasota County and \$27,324 in Lee County. Several other Florida counties of similar size had higher per capita sales, including Hernando (\$30,023), Martin (\$30,258), and Indian River (\$25,218). In the past, shares of local shopping needs were met in the larger adjacent counties, but recent and projected growth of the County population is such that it can support increased retail activity.

Downtown Punta Gorda, as the traditional center for small specialty shops, restaurants, and entertainment venues in Charlotte County, has significant growth opportunities in the retail and services sectors to support the City Marketplace concept and other redevelopment.

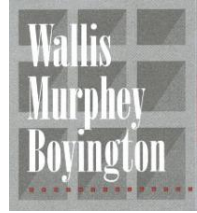




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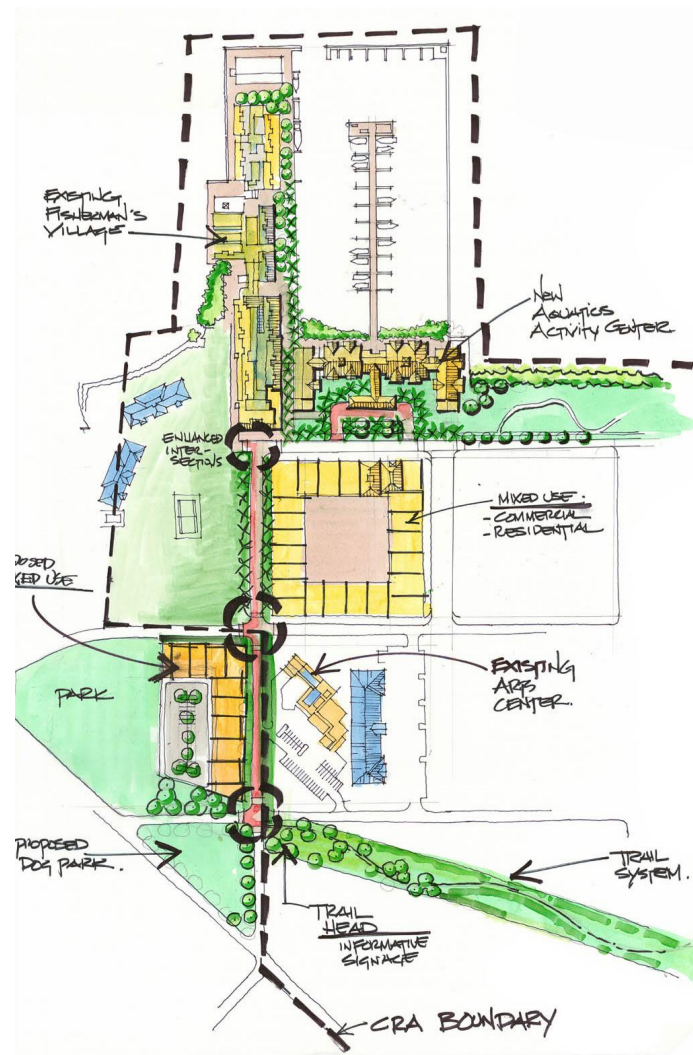


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ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

Downtown Punta Gorda is a small but promising office market, despite relocation of the County government and its judicial functions to Port Charlotte. The Punta Gorda-Burnt Store area of the County south of the river is its most affluent section, making downtown Punta Gorda attractive for private banking offices, financial planners, and security brokers. The presence of the river, proximity to shops and restaurants, and general character also make downtown attractive for various other types of business and professional offices, including accountants, architects, attorneys, and consultants.



The residential aspect of City Marketplace is a comparatively new concept for Punta Gorda, but interests in living downtown and in mixed-use settings are gaining footholds in many small and medium-size cities. However, this component should be studied carefully to determine potential numbers of and levels of interest among young professionals, empty nesters, and others in this lifestyle and in the pricing of units, factoring in the added costs of downtown real estate and garage parking.

FISHERMEN'S VILLAGE

Fishermen's Village is a specialty retail center on the riverfront located several blocks west of downtown. The Village includes approximately 40 shops and restaurants, a 98-slip marina, and residential units above the shops. Village management indicate that the center attracts more than one million visitors per year.

The Village is somewhat isolated, being located primarily in a low density residential area away from the downtown commercial core. However, this apparently has not affected leasing of retail space and patronage. There may be some support for other commercial activity in this area to help reinforce this activity center, as indicated by mixed-use commercial/residential concepts for two adjacent/nearby blocks. The caution here, however, is to limit competition for additional commercial space with the downtown core while ensuring that Fishermen's Village can continue as a viable operation. The trolley link between downtown and the Village is a sound proposal in this regard, as there is additional residential development near the Village.

ORGANIZING FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The concept of establishing a non-profit Community Development Corporation (CDC) to steer downtown redevelopment was raised at the charrette, suggesting that greater attention and business acumen should be focused on downtown. The theory is that a CDC is autonomous from City government and would have the ability to decide and act more readily than the public sector, which is slowed and influenced by various procedures and political considerations, even though CDC members would be appointed and the organization would be funded largely by the City.

CDCs are workable and have been successful in other cities, but there are various options which can be considered. The common and desirable element of all is engaging a group of property owners and business people in debating the issues, advising local government, and promoting needed actions.

One approach is a Downtown Development Advisory Board, Council, or Commission, appointed and staffed by the City. This organization would focus debate and advise local government, but would be a public entity and required to operate under Florida's public meeting, or "sunshine" provisions. However, in most communities having similar organizations, public interest is minimal since the organization lacks authority to act and commit resources.

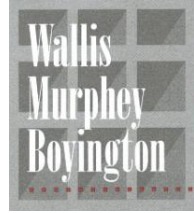




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ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

Another approach is a Business Improvement District (BID), a form of special assessment district administered by an internally-appointed board. A BID raises funds for downtown promotions and improvements through special ad valorem tax assessments on properties in the district. A BID may also receive funds from the City for specific purposes and may contract with the City for staff assistance.

Still another approach is to reconstitute the existing Community Redevelopment Agency as an appointed board of property owners and business representatives, with the City providing staff assistance. This, too, is a public entity which must operate in the sunshine, but would engage private sector representatives into the debate and decision process.

FUNDING

The public sector has a key role in leveraging private investment in downtown. Leveraging can take on many forms, including assembling properties for resale, improving roads and other infrastructure, building and operating parking facilities, and providing incentive grants for facade improvements and creation of jobs.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) has become a major funding source for downtown development throughout Florida and beyond. The City of Punta Gorda expects to collect \$1 million in TIF revenues in FY03-04 and projects another \$1.2 million in FY04-05. A common practice in many communities is



to bond the projected TIF revenue stream over a period years to provide upfront capital to make catch-up investments and improvements needed as a platform for growth and private investment.

TIF revenues in Punta Gorda have been gaining strength in recent years, but hurricane damages in 2004 may diminish the revenue stream over the next few years because of reduced property valuations. In addition, the City has committed most of its TIF revenues to date to a \$9 million line of credit at a local bank in lieu of bonding. When practicable, tax increment bonding should be considered by the City as a viable option to speed up delivery of needed public investments.

Redesign, repair, expansion, and operation of the Memorial Auditorium & Civic Center should be approached as a joint City-County endeavor, funded by a combination of sources, including City and County general funds, tourist tax revenues, local option sales tax revenues, TIF revenues, Federal and state grants, and private fund raising. The facility is operated currently as part of the Charlotte County parks and recreation department. Ultimately, it will be desirable to shift oversight and operations to a separate Board consisting of City and County appointees, with both local governments providing operating funding support.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- ✗ Plan for Charlotte County's population to reach 250,000 by 2025 — 100,000 more than today
- ✗ Rebuild the civic auditorium with a focus on locally-oriented events, using a combination of City and County funding sources
- ✗ Consider tax increment bonding when practicable
- ✗ Consider ways to increase business participation in downtown redevelopment, including Business Improvement Districts

Redesign, repair, expansion and operation of the Memorial Auditorium & Civic Center should be approached as a joint City-County endeavor

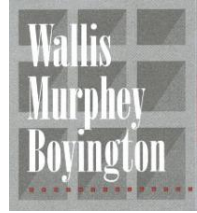




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IMPLEMENTATION

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

DOWNTOWN CORE

- ✗ Retain historic small town character as Punta Gorda grows
- ✗ Rebuild the downtown core as a coordinated mixed-use development, including residential, retail and public/civic uses
- ✗ Pursue mixed use throughout the downtown
- ✗ Minimize/screen surface parking areas
- ✗ Insist on great streets, with a high-quality pedestrian environment
- ✗ Connect Retta Esplanade between Taylor Street and U.S 41 North
- ✗ All development should contribute to the creation of a waterfront pedestrian path
- ✗ Limit height to maintain pedestrian scale
- ✗ Consider a zoning code provision to allow additional height in exchange for specific public benefits, such as step-backs in height along the water, and contributions to the waterfront path
- ✗ Encourage a variety of architectural styles that relate to Punta Gorda's varied historic fabric
- ✗ Limit signs in number, size, and location
- ✗ Plant trees in prominent locations, especially signature species of palms such as foxtail, washingtonian and royal

FISHERMEN'S VILLAGE

- ✗ Strengthen transportation connections between Fishermen's village and the rest of the CRA
- ✗ Explore a trolley link between Fishermen's Village and downtown
- ✗ Improve bicycle and pedestrian connections along waterfront park
- ✗ Clarify that the waterfront path in front of condos is public



- ✗ Improve bicycle and pedestrian connections along Maud Street to the dog park and future bike trail
- ✗ Consider adding a sports rental facility in the waterfront park (Kayaks/canoes/bikes/rollerblades/Segways)
- ✗ Promote a Punta Gorda experience that includes Fishermen's Village and the rest of the CRA through wayfinding and coordinated advertising and events programming
- ✗ Continue to develop in a mixed-use form
- ✗ Pursue additional landscaping opportunities within parking areas and street edges
- ✗ Longer term goals should incorporate a parking structure wrapped by retail and mixed use

HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOODS

- ✗ Maintain the historic, mostly residential character of these neighborhoods
- ✗ Continue to expand the quality and variety of the waterfront experience
- ✗ Improve the pedestrian connections to the waterfront parks
- ✗ Create a Bed-and-Breakfast district along Retta Esplanade
- ✗ Create a mooring field for boaters near the waterfront park
- ✗ Continue to create a transition to the Downtown Core with mixed-use development

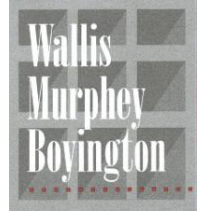




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IMPLEMENTATION

HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES

- ✗ Design new housing developments for a mix of incomes and housing types
- ✗ Include neighborhood-serving facilities, such as retail, schools, or parks within or near the development
- ✗ Continue to support the neighborhoods around new housing developments
- ✗ Neighborhood identification signs, markers, and gateways
- ✗ Clean-ups and code-enforcement as appropriate

WATERFRONT PARK

- ✗ Use this portion of the waterfront park as a passive recreation area, emphasizing environmental education and providing for a trail head and trolley stop

TRANSPORTATION

- ✗ Pursue alternate routes to access I-75 (e.g., Harborview Road)
- ✗ Pursue US 17 alternatives to access Punta Gorda Isles
 - ✗ Burnt Store Road
 - ✗ Cooper & Henry Streets
- ✗ Consider converting Marion and Olympia Avenues from one-way to two-way streets
- ✗ Build consolidated parking facilities downtown
- ✗ Create gateways to mark key entrances to the city
- ✗ Consider a downtown trolley
- ✗ Develop a connected multi-use path using the waterfront trail, the abandoned Seminole Gulf Railroad, and enhanced Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard.

ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

- ✗ Plan for Charlotte County's population to reach 250,000 by 2025 — 100,000 more than today
- ✗ Rebuild the civic auditorium with a focus on locally-oriented events, using a combination of City and County funding sources
- ✗ Consider tax increment bonding when practicable
- ✗ Consider ways to increase business participation in downtown redevelopment, including Business Improvement Districts

Expect Charlotte County's population to reach 250,000 by 2025

INFRASTRUCTURE

- ✗ Replace outdated water and sanitary sewer lines as part of redevelopment
- ✗ Improve treatment of stormwater prior to discharge into surrounding waters, using treatment ponds or pollutant-removal technologies

