

*Punta Gorda
East Side and Downtown
Planning Study*



December 2000

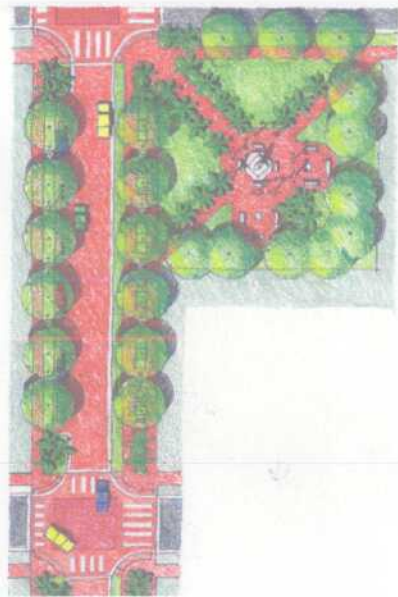
***Punta Gorda
East Side and Downtown Planning Study***
Contents

	<i>Page</i>		<i>Page</i>
1.0 Executive Summary	4	I. Transportation	
		J. Public Service District	
2.0 Introduction		3.4 Focal Area Opportunities	
1.1 Punta Gorda Downtown Development Plan 1990	5	A. Eastside Neighborhood	25
1.2 Plan Preparation Process		a. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard	
		b. Residential Infill	
		c. Public Housing	
		d. Waterfront	
		e. Cooper Street	
3.0 Eastside and Downtown Plan		B. Retail District	36
3.1 Vision Statement	8	a. Sullivan Street	
3.2 Inventory and Analysis of Existing Conditions	12	b. Punta Gorda Shopping Mall	
A. Land Use and Development		c. Charlotte County Memorial Auditorium	
B. Infrastructure		d. Charlotte County Court House	
C. Landscaping		e. Waterfront	
D. Street Furniture		f. Main Street	
E. Public Spaces and Pedestrian Environment			
F. Traffic and Parking			
G. Urban Design Character			
3.3 Area-Wide Planning Concepts	16	4.0 Implementation	55
A. Historic Residential District		4.1 Project Definition and Costs	
B. Central Business District		4.2 Development Sequence Considerations	
a. Retail District		4.3 1990 Plan Recommendations	
b. General Commercial District			
C. Eastside Residential District			
D. Medical Services District			
E. Waterfront District			
F. Highway Commercial District			
G. Southwest Residential District			
H. Southeast Residential District			
		Appendices	
		1.0 Background Data and Analysis Maps	

1.0 Executive Summary

The following report contains the planning and design recommendations for the East Side and Downtown study area. The study area **encompasses** the entire Community Redevelopment Area, which was defined in the Community Redevelopment Plan prepared in 1990. The Community Redevelopment Plan was **prepared** in accordance with Florida statutes and was adopted by the Community Redevelopment Agency and City Council in 1990.

The plan contains area-wide planning strategies, along with additional planning and design proposals for two key focal areas: the East Side Residential Neighborhood **and** the Central Retail District.



Partial plan of proposed streetscape improvements to Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard

East Side Residential Neighborhood

Recommendations for the East Side Neighborhood focus on capital improvements and other types of assistance which will promote the renovation of existing residences and construction of new residences to ensure the continued viability of this residential neighborhood. A key recommendation of the plan for this area is that Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard should receive additional streetscape improvements to upgrade this important element of community identity. In addition to the improvements to the streetscape the plan suggests the

development of a small "town square" along the street at the corner of Virginia and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard. This park can also provide the setting for a memorial to Martin Luther King Jr.

Central Retail District

The plan includes several important recommendations for the retail district. All of the recommendations for this part of the study area are aimed at improving the character, and amount of retail activity so that downtown will become a focal point within the region, with a distinctive **identity**. Included is the recommendation to promote additional retail development along Sullivan Street, which is already experiencing development of new specialty retail shops. A second proposal is to further pursue, with the County, the development of "Herald Square" on the properties immediately adjacent to the old County Court House. A third proposal is to pursue additional improvements to Marion Avenue as part of the overall efforts to enhance the special identity of the downtown retail district.

In addition the plan speaks to the need to continue to improve access to and along the waterfront along the entire Community Redevelopment Area.



Concept plan of the proposed Herald Square development



1.0 Introduction

The following report contains the planning and design recommendations for the East Side and Downtown study area. The study area encompasses the entire Community Redevelopment Area, which was defined in the Community Redevelopment Plan prepared in 1990. The Community Redevelopment Plan was prepared in accordance with Florida statutes and was adopted by the Community Redevelopment Agency and City Council in 1990.

The purpose of the planning study described in this report is twofold: first, it serves as an update to the 1990 Downtown Community Redevelopment Plan; and second it contains additional planning and design strategies for two key focal areas within the Community Redevelopment Area. Those key focal areas are the East Side Residential Neighborhood, and the Central Retail District. The purpose in focusing on these areas in more detail is to address problems and needs of the East Side Neighborhood and to provide guidance to the CRA regarding opportunities for further enhancement of the pedestrian-oriented retail shopping area.

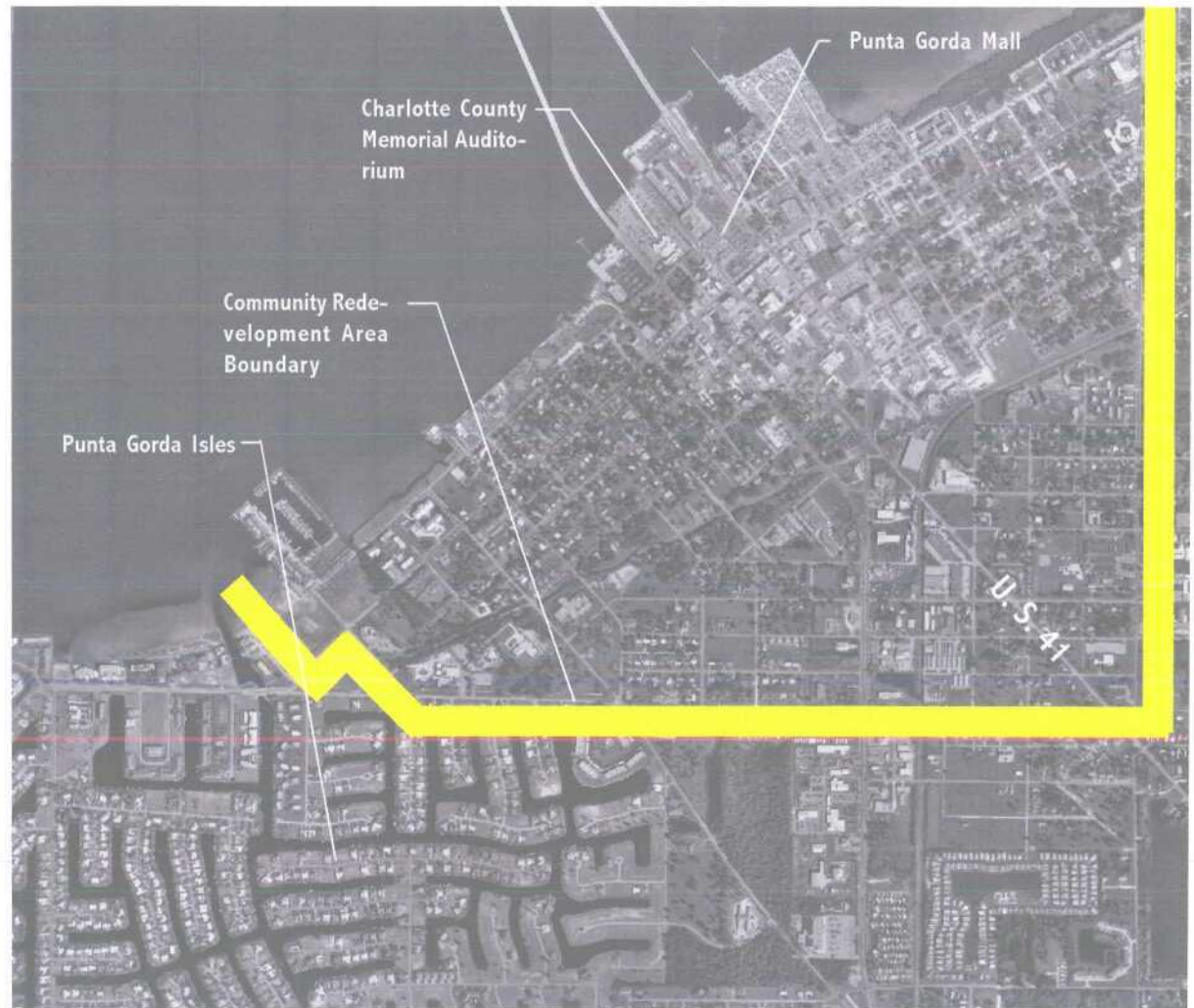
1.1 Punta Gorda Downtown Redevelopment Plan 1990

Beginning in 1989 the City of Punta Gorda undertook the preparation of the Community Redevelopment Plan for the Central Business District. That study built on a growing interest among the members in the community to improve and revitalize the downtown area.

The plan included a number of specific recommendations for improving the downtown. Among the major recommendations of that plan that have been implemented, or are in the process of being implemented are:



The City of Punta Gorda



East Side Neighborhood and Downtown Planning Area

Waterfront: The conversion of the municipal mobile home park to a public and private waterfront-oriented development.

Riverwalk: Construction of a contiguous waterfront harborwalk extending from Cooper Street to Fisherman's Village.

Streetscape enhancements: Implementation of pedestrian streetscape enhancements on West Marion Avenue and Olympia.

Brick Streets Program: Brick streets have been constructed or repaired on a number of blocks in the CRA area.

In addition, there are several redevelopment projects that were identified in the 1990 plan that remain relevant today. These are listed along with the proposed redevelopment projects of this planning study in the final section of this report.

The intent of the following plan is to build on the recommendations and successes of the previous plan. As noted in the remainder of this report the CRA must now extend its focus of action to the East Side neighborhood and to further development and enhancement of the character of the retail district. Both of these focal areas described in the plan must be improved and addressed if the community's Vision for the area is to be achieved.

1.2 Plan Preparation Process

The plan described in the following pages was begun in the summer of 1999 and completed in June 2000. During the plan preparation, a number of public meetings with residents were held. The first series of meetings held in September 1999 focused on developing a "Vision Statement". Participants in the Vision workshops discussed the study area assets and problems to develop an



Implementation of Brick Streets



Implementation of Streetscape Improvements

image, or overall concept for what the Community Redevelopment Area should be like in the future. The Vision Statement, that resulted from that process, is described in the following pages and sets out the overall goals for future development and enhancement of the study area.

In subsequent meetings, the consultant team presented the findings of the inventory and analysis of existing conditions, and the alternative concepts for further enhancement of the overall study area. Through this process of dialog, several conclusions and points of consensus were reached, and are reflected in the following sections of this report.

3.0 East Side and Downtown Plan

3.1 Vision Statement

The Vision Statement represents a general characterization of the way in which the residents would like to see the area developed in the future. The Vision Statement serves as an overall guide to the planning and design concepts that have been developed during the planning process. It will also serve as a guide to future decision-making for the Community Redevelopment Agency.

The Vision Statement consists of the following six principles:

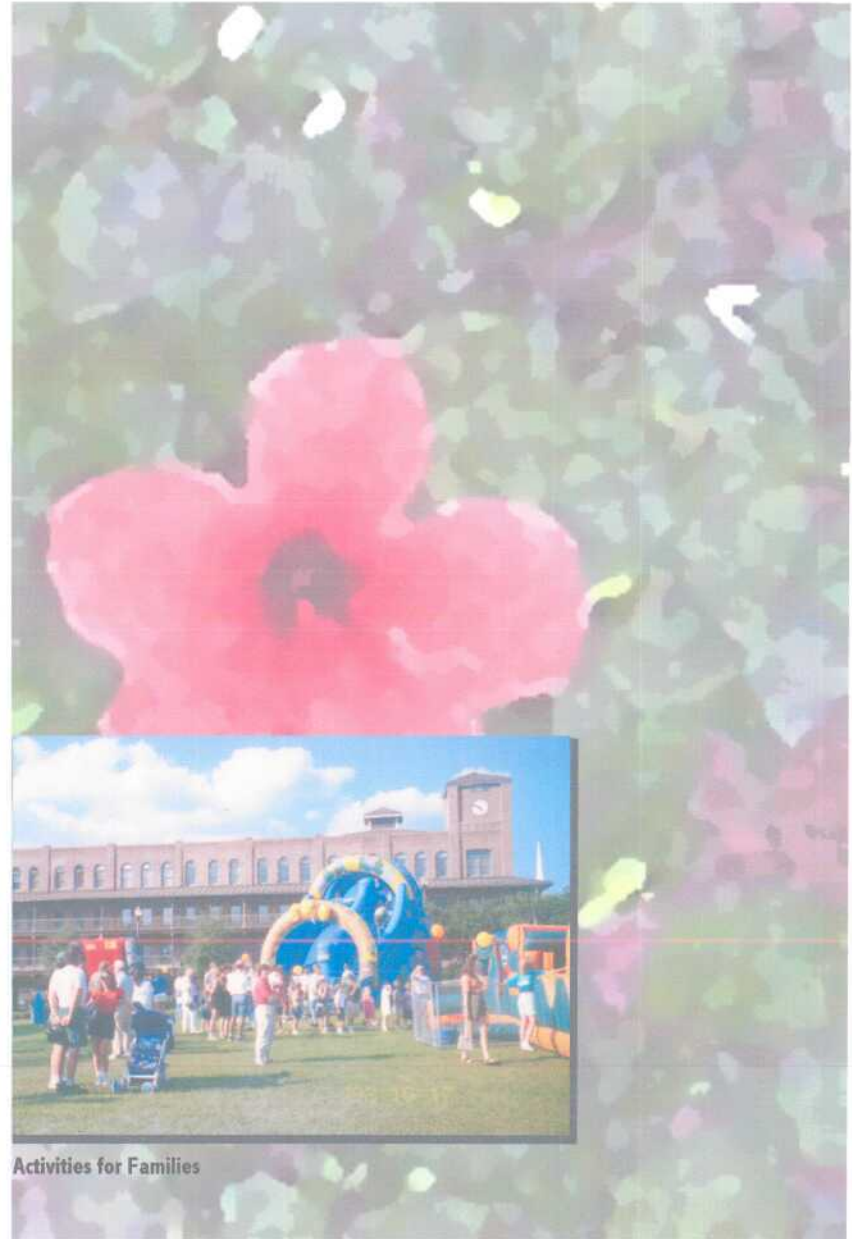
A. Punta Gorda should retain its small town character

This means: *The downtown should retain retail and other services for the residents of the study area and the City*

Activities for Families should be included

Buildings and Streets should be pedestrian in scale

Easy access into the area should be maintained



Activities for Families

B. Punta Gorda should have a lively, publicly accessible waterfront

This means: *The waterfront should be the site of festivals and other special activities*

Linkages to and along the waterfront should be further developed

The waterfront should have an attractive landscaped character

C. Punta Gorda should develop a special identity within the region

This means: *The downtown needs a critical mass of activities to attract residents and visitors*

The City should develop "signature" functions that distinguish it from the other special places in the region

The downtown should present an overall image of quality development

The City should further promote retention and renovation of its historic structures



Enhance the waterfront landscape image

Extend waterfront linkages



Develop a unique "signature" identity in the region



Enhance the quality image of downtown region

ZX The downtown study area should be pedestrian-oriented

This means: *Further enhancement and expansion of high quality streetscape improvements*

Development of clear pedestrian linkages between activity centers

Implementation of "traffic-calming techniques to reduce the impact of automobiles on the downtown

E. Punta Gorda should have healthy neighborhoods

This means: *Preserving and enhancing historic character*

Developing, where needed, neighborhood parks, recreation, schools and services

Providing adequate infrastructure service for water, sewer and storm drainage

Encouraging a range of housing prices



Expand high quality pedestrian improvements



Develop clear pedestrian linkages



Preserve and enhance historic character

F. Punta Gorda should have a high quality community character

This means: *Consistent high quality environments within a variety of distinctive, identifiable districts*

Incorporation of art in public spaces

Encouragement of "old Florida style" architecture

Further expansion of brick streets



Encourage "old Florida" style



Develop Distinctive Districts

3.2 Inventory and Analysis of Existing Conditions

The first step in the planning process was to evaluate the existing conditions within the study area and to identify in that analysis the problems and opportunities that presently exist. The problems and opportunities then became the basis for recommended actions for each of the land use sub-districts identified in the 1990 Redevelopment Plan. The following section summarizes the problems and opportunities identified through the analysis.

A. Land Use and Development

The CRA study area is comprised of commercial and residential land uses. The commercial areas exist primarily along the U. S. 41 corridor running north-south, and the East Marion Avenue - Olympia Avenue corridor running generally east and west.

In general the overall land use pattern in the study area remains as it has for many years. Areas where more change has occurred include the waterfront - as a result of the Punta Gorda Harbor development project, and along the East Marion, Olympia corridor east of U. S. 41. The Punta Gorda Harbor project has added new residential uses to the waterfront, along with additional planned open space and retail commercial uses. Immediately adjacent to the Harbor project is the new County judicial center building. That building caused a shift in the location of a major employer in the downtown (the county), and resulted in the old courthouse left as a vacant building without a clear future function.

The East Marion and Olympia corridor east of U. S. 41 has undergone a transition from old residential use and structures to new medical office-related development. The relationship of this new development to the East Side residential community located two blocks to the south has been the cause of substantial concern to that neighborhood. Some residents have been fearful that the com-

mercial development, along with potential expansion of the adjacent hospital will be allowed to expand and eliminate the East Side residential neighborhood.

B. Infrastructure

As a result of recommendations contained in the 1990 Redevelopment Plan, the Historic Residential District west of the downtown commercial district has had several streets improved through the replacement of asphalt with brick paving. In general no major problems with infrastructure were reported in this area.

Also as a result of the 1990 Redevelopment Plan East Marion and Olympia Avenues east of U. S. 41 were improved. Although new paving and lighting was installed it has been reported that there is a portion of the corridor in which the roadways still experience flooding after significant rain storms.

Immediately adjacent to this section of the East Marion - Olympia corridor is the East Side residential neighborhood. During the planning process, many representatives from this part of the study area commented on the poor drainage throughout the East side. Discussions between the planning team and representatives of the City Engineering department suggest that the storm drainage capacity exists in the subsurface system and that the problem may exist primarily in the improper grading of surface swales alongside the roads.

C. Landscaping

In general, the CRA study area contains a variety of landscape character. Parts of the study area have pleasant landscaping - Gilchrist Park for example. In addition, the west side historic neighborhood, and the east side neighborhood have residential landscape

character defined by the tree canopies. However, the commercial portions of the study area lack significant tree canopy. This is clearly evident from looking both at the aerial photograph of the study area, and at the individual sub areas of downtown. East Marion Avenue for example has street trees, but their small size combined with the width of the street weaken the overall impression of the landscape. In addition, Sullivan Street, noted as an area of new retail businesses, lacks landscaping - particularly street trees.

Another missing element of landscape treatment is in parking lots. The Charlotte County Memorial Auditorium and the Publix parking lot are large parking areas with virtually no landscaping to break up the asphalt appearance. Most of the parking lots in the core commercial areas of the study area exhibit the same problem.

The waterfront open spaces and connected walkways are one of the great assets of the study area, providing public access to the waterfront along virtually the entire study area. Unfortunately the landscape treatment of these areas is very inconsistent, and in some locations entirely lacking. In particular, the waterfront between the Charlotte County Memorial Auditorium and the Punta Gorda Harbor site has little if any landscaping along the waters edge and pedestrian pathways.

These deficiencies are missed opportunities. Introducing significant landscaping in the retail districts and waterfront can further enhance the appearance and add to the distinctive quality that is desired for the study area.

D. Street Furniture

One of the constraints within the core retail portions of the CRA study area is the limited amount of sidewalk space available in many locations. This is the result of streets that in many cases have been widened, combined with on-street parking. Assuming that the major roadways (East Marion, Olympia, U. S. 41) cannot be

reduced in size, the city must look to wisely use the pedestrian space that is available.

Today, the segment of East Marion between U. S. 41 North bound and U. S. 41 southbound presents a somewhat cluttered streetscape appearance. The sidewalks are occupied with benches, planters, street trees, street lights, and sculpture in several locations. In some locations this combination of elements results in too many objects occupying too little space. While small segments of this environment may be attractive, combined they do not now present a strong overall image. In addition, as additional street furniture items are purchased it is important to maintain a continuity of types of fixtures, benches etc. Lack of continuity in purchasing resulting in numerous kinds of lights, benches, etc., can exacerbate the cluttered appearance of a street.

E. Public Spaces and Pedestrian Environment

As noted above, the cluttered appearance of some street segments is in part the result of sidewalks that are simply too narrow to accommodate numerous items of street furniture. The result of placing too many objects in a narrow sidewalk is a reduction in the space available for pedestrians.

In addition, the amount of traffic on the major crossing roadways makes street crossings an important part of the pedestrian environment. Today, the major pedestrian crossings are not tied - through materials, curb ramps etc.- to the pedestrian environment of the sidewalks. The result is a sense of disconnected and discontinuous pedestrian environment. This factor is also evident in the generally poor pedestrian connections between the waterfront and the core retail district.

Another missing element in the core retail area of downtown is a significant public space. The waterfront offers a continuous ribbon of public space, but is located on the edge of the main retail

district, and is therefore not a strong contributor to the character and quality of the core retail district. Other small towns have a central square or park often associated with a courthouse, city hall or other civic structure.

Unfortunately the old County Courthouse does not sit on a large landscaped block. However, the proposed improvements to Herald Court and the property behind the old Courthouse, could provide a sense of civic space in the retail core area, and are discussed in subsequent sections of this report.

The Charlotte County Memorial Auditorium, the other major civic structure in the retail district is somewhat on the periphery of the retail district. In addition the Auditorium is oriented with the front door facing away from the retail district, resulting in a weak connection to the rest of the core area.

Another location that is a potential focal point for public activity is the new park adjacent to the new County Courthouse building. This park, located on the west end of the building includes a small lake and gazebo. However, this facility, like the Memorial Auditorium, is located on the periphery of the retail core, and therefore whatever activity is generated there will not directly benefit the retail district.

F. Traffic and Parking

One-way pair street systems are generally not the preferred pattern of traffic circulation in retail districts, as it limits the exposure of shops to drive-by shoppers, and makes navigating to and from shops and parking more difficult.

Federal highway jurisdictions play a role in determining the traffic patterns in downtown Punta Gorda. Both U. S. 41 along with East Marion and Olympia Avenues (U. S. 17) are subject to federal and state Department of Transportation regulation. While U. S. 41 is clearly a major north-south connector throughout the

state, U. S. 17 effectively ends as a major arterial roadway at its intersection with U. S. 41 northbound and southbound legs. Therefore it might be possible to convince the DOT to remove the federal highway jurisdiction in the downtown area. This could open the potential to modify the one-way system on East Marion and Olympia. This concept is discussed in a subsequent section of this report.

In addition to traffic flow, directional **signage** is important, especially to direct visitors to downtown to parking locations. Today the downtown has no overall traffic signage directing visitors to parking or other features of downtown.

The 1990 Community Redevelopment Plan investigated the amount of parking available in downtown, and compared the supply with the potential need for spaces, based on the amount of development in the area. That study found that the overall supply appeared to be appropriate for the amount of development at the time. However it was noted that a significant amount of the off-street parking supply exists in several large lots - at Publix, the Memorial Auditorium etc. If those are removed from the supply, it was noted that the smaller retail establishments are probably **underserved** by parking, although it should also be noted that on-street parking was not included in the study. The study also investigated the utilization of existing parking and found that the utilization varied widely - from 100 percent (i.e. fully occupied) to 32 percent (very low occupancy). Based on those analyses the study indicated that depending on assumptions about future development, parking needs could vary between 300 spaces and 1,600 spaces, depending on the standard used to calculate need. The lower need results from using 1 parking space per 1000 square feet of development. The higher need results from using a more common standard for retail space of 5 spaces per 1000 square feet of development.

Since that study was completed there has been some, but no

significant private development within the core retail area. Possibly the most significant change in the parking dynamics of downtown was the construction of the new County administration building. The relocation of employees, and the new parking constructed along with that building may have improved the parking situation in the core retail areas as parking shifted to the new building located on the periphery of the retail district.

Regardless of the amount of spaces required, new development will generate the need for additional parking. The accommodation of additional parking in appropriate ways within the downtown is described in subsequent sections of this report.

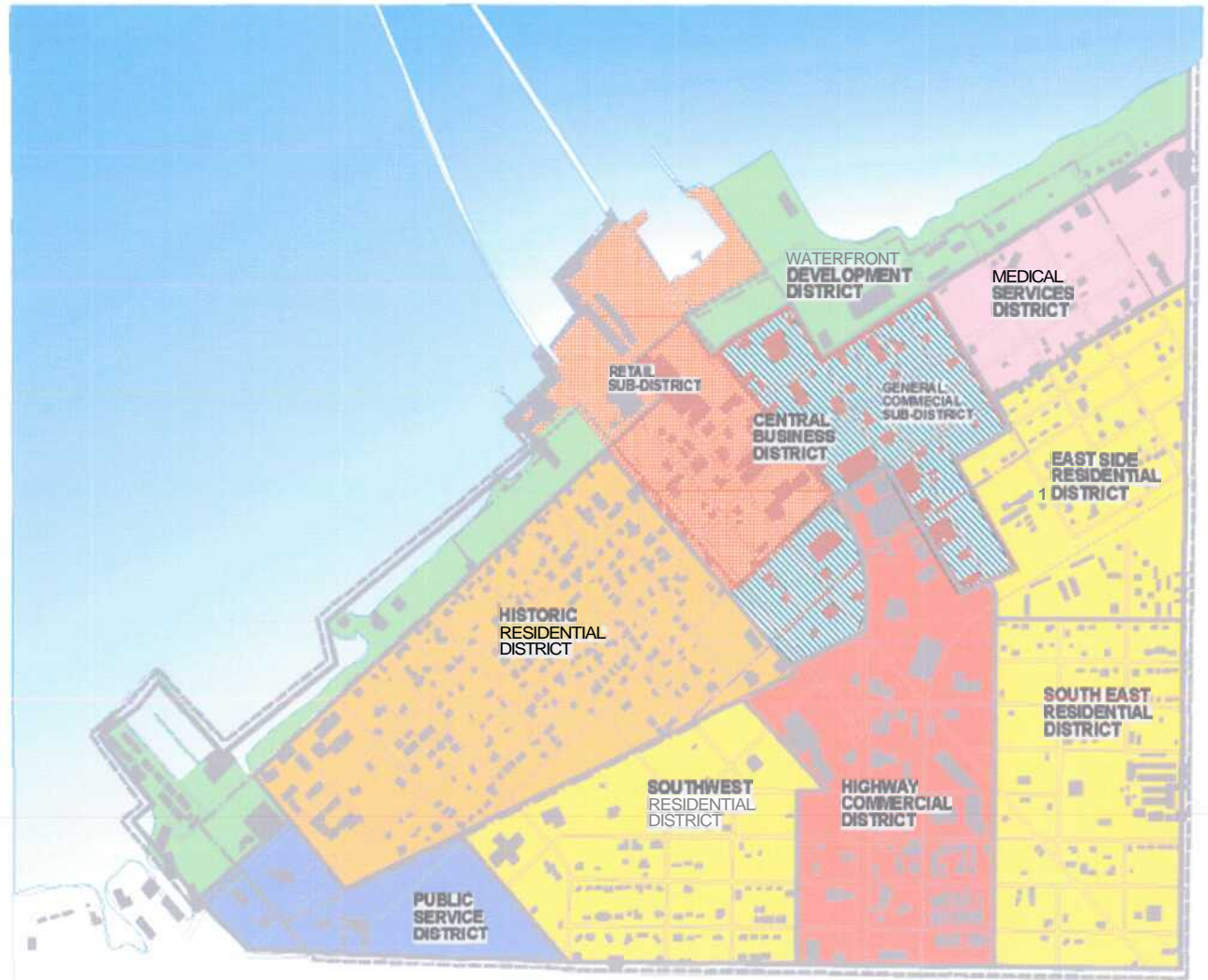
G. Urban Design Character

The preceding sections identify problems and deficiencies among the individual components of the study area. Combined, these individual elements define the overall character of the study area. As noted, the area today has some positive attributes. However, the negatives - discontinuity of the pedestrian environment, lack of pedestrian linkages to the waterfront, lack of a significant civic space in the retail core, one-way street system, and lack of strong streetscape character and identity now outweigh the positives.

In addition, the architectural character of the retail and residential districts affect the perception of the study area. At this point in time there exist a variety of architectural styles within the study area ranging from "old Florida" residential style, to old brick commercial structures, to modern commercial buildings. As in the case of street furniture, some degree of continuity is beneficial to the overall appearance of the area. However, creativity should not be discouraged. Prospective guidelines for general treatments are discussed in subsequent sections of this report.

3.3 Area-Wide Planning Concepts

The following paragraphs describe overall concepts for future development within each of the land use districts defined in the 1990 Redevelopment Plan. While those districts are considered generally valid, several refinements are proposed in several locations as noted below.



Area-Wide Planning Districts

A. Historic Residential District

The residential area west of the downtown retail commercial district is comprised of both a local historic district and a national register historic district. Although their boundaries are not contiguous the districts overlap and together contain the majority of the residential area between U. S. 41 south bound on the east, and Shreve Street on the west. On the north the area is bounded by West Retta Esplanade and on the south by W. Virginia Avenue.

The intent of the plan in this section of the study area is to preserve, maintain, and improve where needed, the quality of the existing historic structures. Of equal importance is the guidance of the design of new construction to ensure compatibility in architectural character and quality with existing historic structures. In general new construction in these areas should follow the "old Florida" architectural style exemplified typically by metal roofs, wood siding and wide porches as illustrated in the accompanying photograph. Additions and remodeling to structures within the national register district should conform to the Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines for renovation and restoration of historic structures.

In addition the City should continue to replace the asphalt streets with brick streets in accordance with the original plan for their replacement. Street lights and **signage** should also be consistent in form and compatible with the residential character.

Although no specific problems were noted for this neighborhood by participants in the planning process, the City should monitor the character and quality of the area carefully and be prepared to take appropriate actions should problems, such as a decrease in property maintenance occur.



Metal roof - 5 V-Crimp style preferred

Combined hip and gable end roof shapes

large porches

Autos, driveway and garage preferred behind the house or in side yard

Picket fence - or no fence

Historic Residential District General Design Guidelines

B. Central Business District

The 1990 Redevelopment Plan defined one district for the central commercial part of the CRA study area. As a result of this planning study, it is proposed that this district be reconsidered as two **subdistricts** - a downtown retail district, and a general commercial district as described below. In addition, the proposed retail district overlaps the previously defined waterfront district, indicating the desire to extend the retail to the water's edge in certain locations.

1. Retail District

The retail district is comprised of the central core of the downtown commercial district, approximately bounded by the waterfront on the north, U. S. 41 northbound on the east, U. S. 41 southbound on the west, and W. Virginia Street on the south. It is within this region of the study area that it is recommended the City concentrate its efforts to expand retail activity and improve and further enhance the pedestrian environment so as to establish a "signature" identity for downtown.

In general terms this district is viewed as the heart of the downtown. As such it must present a strong image - created by the development of appropriate functions, streetscape elements, and architectural character. Functionally the uses in this district should focus on retail commercial activities which may include sales of apparel, art, and interior furnishings. Restaurants are encouraged along with outdoor dining. In addition, in keeping with the vision expressed by Punta Gorda residents, the district should also include a food market, drugstore and other resident-oriented service establishments.

Overall the district should be a recognized "place" which will attract both residents and tourists. The old Florida character of the adjacent residential neighborhood offers a readily identifiable architectural image which can be expanded and enhanced within the retail district. Achieving the unique sense of place envisioned by

this plan will require a coordinated effort on the part of the City and CRA to guide the types of uses, the character of the buildings and the development of a more pedestrian-friendly streetscape.

While development of a unique identity is of great importance in this district, that does not mean that the area is viewed as an isolated zone. Based on the attractiveness and visual appeal of the historic residential district, the retail district should be strongly linked to the residential district with streetscape and **signage** linkages providing orientation and opportunities for walking tours into the historic district.

In addition, it is important to develop better connections between the retail district and the east side residential district. Virginia Avenue connects the southern edge of the retail district directly with the east side residential neighborhood, and should be considered for pedestrian streetscape improvements. The historic Punta Gorda Ice Plant is also located on this link, at the corner of Virginia and U. S. 41 northbound.

The subsequent section 3.3 B of this report contains the detailed proposals for physical improvements in this district.

2. General Commercial District

This district is defined generally as the commercially- zoned lands east of U. S. 41 northbound, and located between Marion Avenue on the north and **Carmalita** Street on the south. In this part of the study area it is proposed that the city continue to allow a broader mix of commercial activities than would be appropriate in the retail district

Since this district is more automobile-oriented in terms of shopping, improvements to the pedestrian environment are not as important as in the retail district. Of more importance in this area are the edges of the commercial uses that abut adjacent residential districts on the east and west. Along the west side of this district the dividing line between commercial and residential uses occurs at the

mid-block property line between U. S. 41 southbound and Goldstein Street. On the east side the **dividing line** occurs along streets as opposed to interior property lines.

In order to conserve the East Side residential neighborhood it is proposed that commercial activity not be allowed to expand eastward beyond its present boundary of Dupont street, south of East Virginia Avenue.

In those locations, the City and CRA should carefully review proposed developments so that they do not adversely affect the adjacent residential uses. Among the proposed guidelines are the following: Where commercial properties face residential properties across streets along the east side of the district, the city should prohibit parking from the front yards of commercial development and should limit the number of curb cuts so as to maintain a residential street appearance. In addition, portions of commercial buildings facing residential uses should be limited in height to one story to maintain an appropriate scale facing residential uses.

C. East Side Residential District

The East Side residential neighborhood has experienced significant stress over the years due to a variety of social, economic and land use changes. The overall intent of this plan is to provide support to the neighborhood and to stabilize and improve its residential character. In general five major issues were raised by residents of the East Side neighborhood during the planning process. These included: the need to prevent further encroachment of commercial uses into the neighborhood; the need to improve drainage conditions along neighborhood streets; the need to improve the character and quality of public housing in the neighborhood; the need to complete the improvements to Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard; and the need for new housing to be constructed on the numerous vacant lots within the neighborhood.

The desired improvements to the public housing units that presently exist within the neighborhood are the **responsibility** of the Punta Gorda Housing Authority. The Authority is interested in making improvements to the existing units **and** is working on renovating them as the agency budget **will** allow. While this is a short range improvement, substantially more funds would be required to completely rebuild the exiting residential units. The federal HOPE VI grant program is one source of such funds. Through that program local housing agencies may apply annually for grants up to \$35 **million** to demolish and rebuild severely distressed public housing units. The new developments being constructed through the HOPE VI program are mixed-income, mixed-finance residential communities which include market rate housing, affordable housing and public housing residences. One of the keys to procuring a HOPE VI grant is that the housing authority submitting the application **must** have strong leadership and a good record of performance in managing its current public housing communities. The Punta Gorda Housing Authority should consider the possibility of applying for a HOPE VI grant and should continue to improve its operations as the foundation for such a grant application.

The need for new housing development within the east side residential neighborhood is an issue that was identified in the previous Community Redevelopment Plan. That plan included a proposal for a cooperative program between the City, CRA and Punta Gorda Housing Authority to provide affordable housing. Another approach that is proposed at this time is that the CRA assist in the creation of a Community Development Corporation (CDC). This type of organization - a non-profit entity dedicated to developing affordable housing has proven successful in other similar situations in communities around the country. In support of a CDC the CRA should consider assisting in the acquisition of parcels on which the CDC could develop housing in the East Side neighborhood.

The subsequent section 3.3 A. describes the specific proposals for improvement of Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard **and** how the City

and CRA can improve the drainage conditions in the neighborhood.

D. Medical Services District

The Medical Services District is located along the northern edge of the East Side residential neighborhood. While the recent development of doctors' offices and related medical facilities in this district has had a beneficial effect on the entrance to the downtown along Marion Avenue and Olympia Avenue, it has become a concern for residents of the East Side Residential neighborhood. Therefore future medical-related commercial facilities should be developed within the previously defined district, and not allowed to expand further into the residential neighborhood immediately to the south.

While the new development in this district can be beneficial to the Community Redevelopment Area through increased tax increment, the CRA should monitor development so that a high level of character and quality is maintained as additional development occurs. Overall it is envisioned that the area can be developed as a campus-like corridor focused on the hospital. In order to achieve a campus-like setting the CRA should monitor the parking situation in the district carefully as additional development occurs. Parking spillover into adjacent areas is a common problem in these kinds of districts. Enforcement of no-parking along the residential streets bordering the Medical Services District should be considered if the parking spillover becomes a problem.

In addition, medical facilities developed along the north side of Virginia Avenue should be designed to minimize the visual and functional impacts on the residential uses across the street. As proposed for the General Commercial District setbacks, curb cuts and landscaping along commercial properties facing the residential neighborhood should maintain the scale and quality of residential properties. In addition, landscape buffers between parking lots on adjacent properties **should** be considered so that large unbroken expanses of parking do

not result.

E. Waterfront District

The waterfront district includes the entire length of waterfront within the CRA study area. Consequently it includes a variety of park spaces and commercial properties. The overall objective for future development within this district is to complete the harbor walk connection along the entire waterfront. Although a significant portion of the walk now exists, there are several sections that still need to be completed. Of most importance is the completion and upgrading of the waterfront connections between Gilchrist Park and the Punta Gorda Harbor development site. Although it is possible to walk along this segment of waterfront, the experience is not consistent nor well coordinated in terms of design execution. Among the things the CRA should do is to work with the County to improve the waterfront for pedestrian use along the Memorial Auditorium site. This publicly-owned property presents a wonderful opportunity to enhance a significant portion of the waterfront edge, as described in the subsequent section **3.3B** of this report.

Another important point for additional public action includes the pedestrian underpasses beneath the U. S. 41 bridges. Although it is possible to get under the bridge the character and quality of the present experience does not encourage expanded public use of the waterfront. The CRA should investigate ways to improve the character of these important locations through addition of lighting and special pedestrian paving. In addition, the light levels along the entire waterfront walkway should be checked to ensure that adequate lighting is provided.

Although in general landscaping is considered desirable along the waterfront, it should not be designed or placed so as to create areas that are not visible from adjacent streets. Where room permits, trees with high branching structures are therefore preferred to shrubs and low-branching trees that may obstruct sight-lines and create a percep-

tion of an unsafe area. Where low plantings are desired they should be kept to no more than **two-three feet** in height so as not to provide hiding places.

In addition, the retail component of the Punta Gorda Harbor development remains to be completed. The completion of the waterfront-oriented retail in that development is considered important to provide additional activities and attractions in the downtown area. That development can also play an important part in developing the "signature" identity for downtown Punta Gorda. To emphasize the fact that the waterfront development is part of the overall downtown, it is proposed that the CRA encourage the developer to adopt the historic character light fixtures used on Marion and Olympia Avenues. In addition use of the same brick proposed for special sidewalk paving and same types of benches and trash receptacles as used in the retail district would assist in developing a consistent theme for the area.

To overcome the distance between the Punta Gorda Harbor waterfront development and the downtown retail district improvements should be made to better link the two activity centers. As illustrated in the subsequent section **3.3B** of this report, an important pedestrian and perhaps automobile linkage to be developed is the extension of West Retta Esplanade from Taylor Street where it now stops behind the Publix shopping Center to U. S. 41 northbound. This connection will be difficult to accomplish because the existing shopping center buildings block the potential path of the extended street. If and when the shopping mall is sold, or is proposed to undergo renovation the CRA should approach the owner regarding the desirability of providing the West Retta connection through the property. If it is developed the connection should have generous well landscaped (shade trees) pedestrian sidewalks to create a strong linkage between the Sullivan Street area and the Punta Gorda Harbor waterfront area.

F. Highway Commercial District

This district extends south of the Central Business District along U. S. 41, to the southern limits of the study area. The intent of this district remains largely the same as described in the 1990 plan - as a location for auto-oriented retail and commercial uses. The most important design characteristic of this district is the appearance of the businesses from the street and the public streetscape itself, particularly along the U. S. 41 corridor. The City should proceed with the implementation of the U. S. 41 corridor landscape improvements, especially the proposed landscaped gateway at the point where the two legs of U. S. 41 come together. As indicated in that plan palm trees are proposed to be installed through much of this part of the study area along U. S. 41. The palms will make a strong visual "statement" signifying the arrival into downtown, making the best possible use of the limited right-of-way available for planting.

G. Southwest Residential District

In the 1990 plan this area was not clearly identified. Today, it is an area experiencing new residential development on vacant lots. In addition it is the location of the History Park - a site on which historic homes are to be relocated to save them from demolition. The area is also adjacent to the proposed linear park along the old railroad right-of-way. As an area in transition, this part of the Community Redevelopment Area may become so desirable (as an extension of the historic residential market) that older, smaller homes may eventually be torn down to provide sites for new larger homes. Although this transition could provide the opportunity to develop higher density housing, it is proposed that the area be retained as a single family residential area.

While this trend is beneficial to the overall character and

quality of the study area, future development should be carefully reviewed to ensure continued quality of development. Already some of the new houses being constructed have adopted the "old Florida" style of building with wood siding and metal roofs. This trend is considered a desirable factor that can enhance the image of the area, and contribute to the overall "signature" image of the CRA in general, and should be encouraged to continue.

In addition, the development trends should be monitored to assess housing needs relative to the supply and potential displacement of affordable housing.

H. Southeast Residential District

This district was labeled "Future Residential District" in the 1990 Redevelopment Plan. Today it is an area of modest homes, surrounding the Charlotte High School with its planned Performing Arts Center, and Sallie Jones Elementary School. It also includes the largest portion of the public housing development in the City.

The City should monitor this area to ensure that residences continue to be appropriately maintained. New housing should be encouraged in this area to maintain and improve the character and quality of the neighborhood.

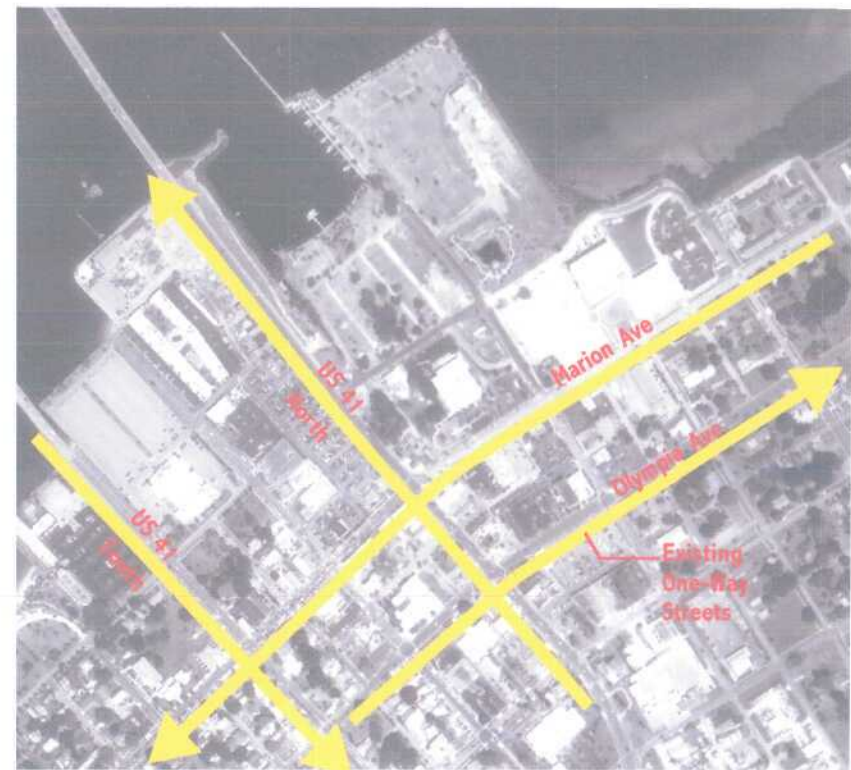
In addition, when appropriate, the City should work with the Housing Authority to determine the best future improvements for the public housing development located within this district. Given the close proximity of this site to the Oak Tree Village site just to the north, both could be combined into a single HOPE VI grant application (provided the federal guidelines allow, as they do now, for combination of sites that are located within 1/4 mile of each other). At the time the housing site is considered for revitalization the CRA should work with the Housing Authority and railroad to determine if additional street connections could be made across the tracks. Addi-

tional connections north - and - south are considered desirable to counter the present isolation of the East Side neighborhood.

I. Transportation

1. Auto Traffic Patterns

The traffic patterns within the study area have been largely determined by the pattern of federal highways that run through the downtown. The traffic planners have converted both U. S. 41 and



Existing Traffic Flow in Downtown

U. S. 17 (Olympia and Marion) to one-way pair streets.

In general, one-way streets are not as conducive to retail commercial development because of the restrictions they impose on access patterns. Therefore it is proposed that the City discuss with MPO and State DOT officials the possibility of converting a portion of the Marion - Olympia Avenue pair to two-way traffic. One option, subject to traffic-flow modeling, would be to retain one-way traffic east of Nesbit Street, but allow two-way traffic on both Marion and Olympia west of Nesbit Street, within the desired central retail district. This would allow somewhat easier circulation within the retail district.



Potential Modified Traffic Flow in Downtown

2. Bicycle and Pedestrian Loop

The implementation of the continuous waterfront harbor walk offers a tremendous recreational resource to the community. In conjunction with previous proposals for a loop pedestrian / bicycle path, there is an opportunity to develop an approximate 4.2 mile loop within the CRA study area.

As shown in the accompanying diagram the route generally follows the alignment previously proposed as part of the 1990 plan. It has been modified slightly to take advantage of the proposed streetscape improvements along Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard.

J. Public Service District

The Public Service District is located in the far southwestern corner of the Community Redevelopment Area. As described in the 1990 redevelopment plan this is an area that includes existing public facilities including the Art Guild, the City of Punta Gorda Public Works facilities and the site now designated for the History Park. In addition the proposed linear park along the old railroad line runs through this area, connecting to the History Park site and the Art Guild.

As in the 1990 plan this is an area where the City could look to locate additional public facilities. However, the functions selected for this area should be compatible with adjacent residential uses.



Potential Bicycle and Pedestrian Loop through the Community Redevelopment Area

3.4 Focal Area Opportunities - Planning and Design Concepts

The Focal Areas included in this section are designed to detail the activities and actions needed to positively influence the development and growth issues affecting these important areas. Presenting a plan for each of the areas listed provides a unique opportunity to detail the improvements and strategies which, if accomplished, will positively affect the entire region.

A. East Side Neighborhood

Introduction

The East Side Neighborhood has been a residential neighborhood since the early settlement of Punta Gorda. Although it contains the historic A. C. Freeman House, most of the residences are of more recent construction. In the previous redevelopment plan this neighborhood was noted to have problems with poor building conditions and crime. In addition, portions of what were once considered by residents to be part of the East Side residential neighborhood have been developed for commercial uses along Marion and Olympia Avenues. This pattern of commercial development has caused great concern among residents that their neighborhood will be totally removed for commercial construction. The commercial district to the west, along with the railroad line to the south and City limit to the east have contributed to the further isolation of this neighborhood.

In response to these conditions the present plan supports renewed efforts to improve the residential neighborhood through several initiatives as described in the following sections of this report. First among these is a proposal to enhance the streetscape improvements along Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard.



The East Side Neighborhood

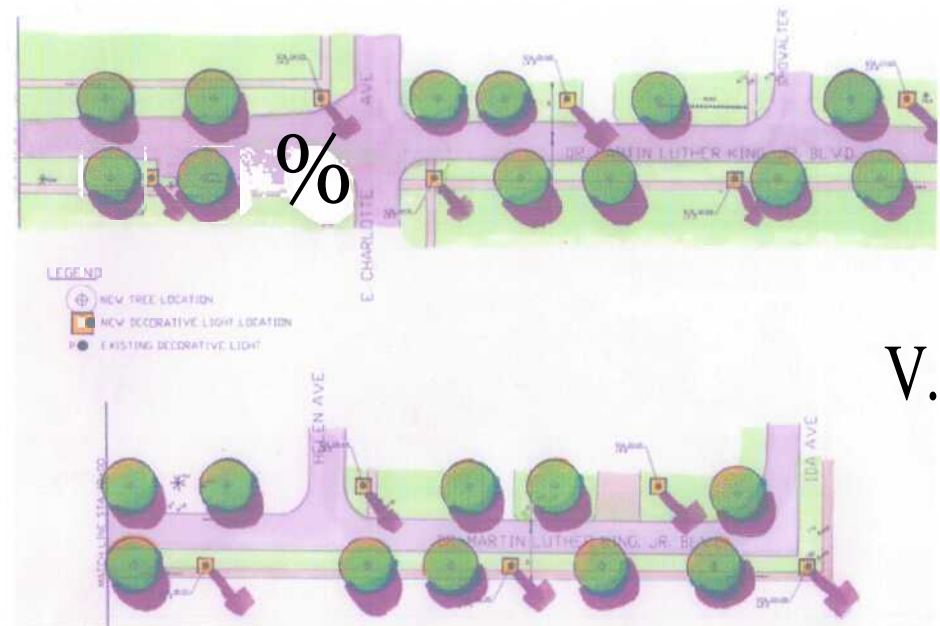
a. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard

Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) Boulevard is the central street of the East Side Neighborhood. In previous years, there were neighborhood-serving retailers located on the corner of Virginia and MLK Boulevard, that gave the street an important function in the neighborhood. However, today, those businesses have closed. In addition the deteriorated condition of the Oak Tree Village public housing development, located on MLK between Fitzhugh and Charlotte Avenues, detracts from the overall character and quality of the street.

Although streetscape improvements were constructed along MLK after the adoption of the 1990 Redevelopment Plan, they were not enough to change the overall character of the street. The installation of the "historic" street lights is the most visible change of those improvements.

In recognition of the need to support the neighborhood and encourage further improvements, it is proposed that a new phase of streetscape improvements be implemented. The general objective of these improvements is to create a substantial change in character and quality of the street, and to create a recognizable identity for the neighborhood - a place from which to begin the process of revitalizing this important historic neighborhood.

The proposed improvements are illustrated conceptually in the accompanying diagrammatic street cross-section. As illustrated, the concept is to enhance the landscaping and pedestrian amenities along the street. The concept calls for installation of a combination of mature live oak trees which will provide shade for pedestrians, along with palm trees to give added character and identity to the street, and distinguish it from other residential streets in the neighborhood. The oak trees should be installed at a minimum height of fourteen feet to ensure the immediate visual quality of the installation. Depending on the final design of the improvements,



Plan View of Existing Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard Streetscape

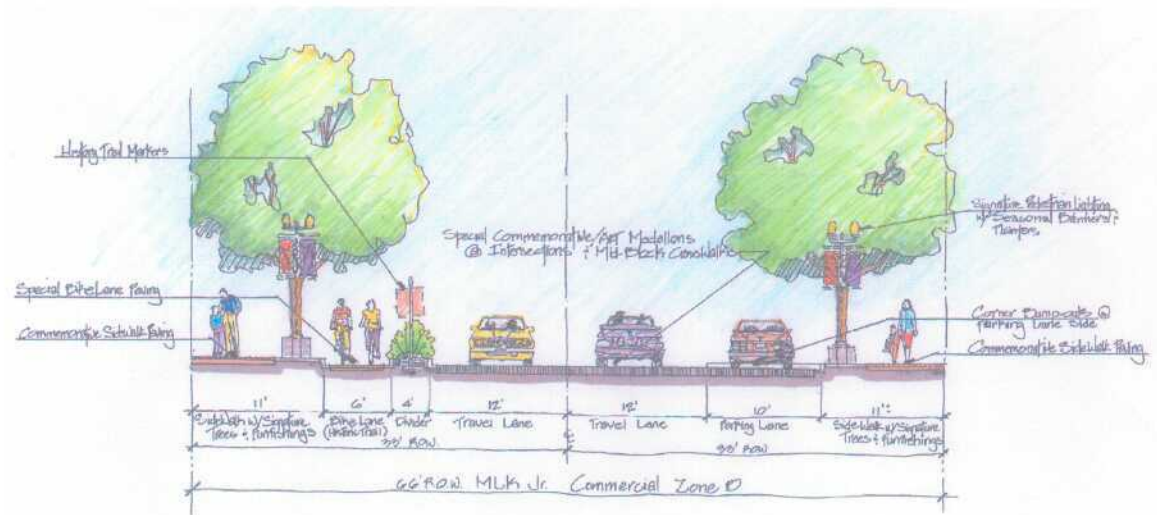
V.

the palms may be interspersed evenly with the oaks or used as accent features in groups at street intersection.

To enhance the pedestrian environment a special commemorative paving is proposed that may have, in addition to a special paving surface such as brick, inset medallions illustrating key excerpts from Dr. King's writings and speeches. In addition the plan illustrates the replacement of the existing light fixtures with the double-globe style of historic lights in order to further signify the symbolic importance of this street. The sidewalks should also be provided with benches and trash receptacles consistent in style with the light fixtures.

One side of the boulevard is also shown with a 6-foot wide on-street bicycle path. This path is part of the overall pedestrian - bicycle loop described in the Area-Wide Planning Concepts section of this report, and can include trail markers and **signage** describing the historic character of the street and neighborhood.

As shown in the accompanying illustration of East Side Residential Neighborhood Improvement Concepts, the improvements to Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard are intended to extend the entire length of the street from Marion Avenue on the north to the railroad tracks on the south. As indicated by the arrow, a long range concept proposed for consideration is the continuation of Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard across the railroad tracks, into and through the public housing site to the south. The intent of this concept is to reconnect the neighborhood across the tracks, and provide improved access to the housing site on the south. In the long range it is proposed that consideration be given to the demolition of that housing site. When local residential market conditions

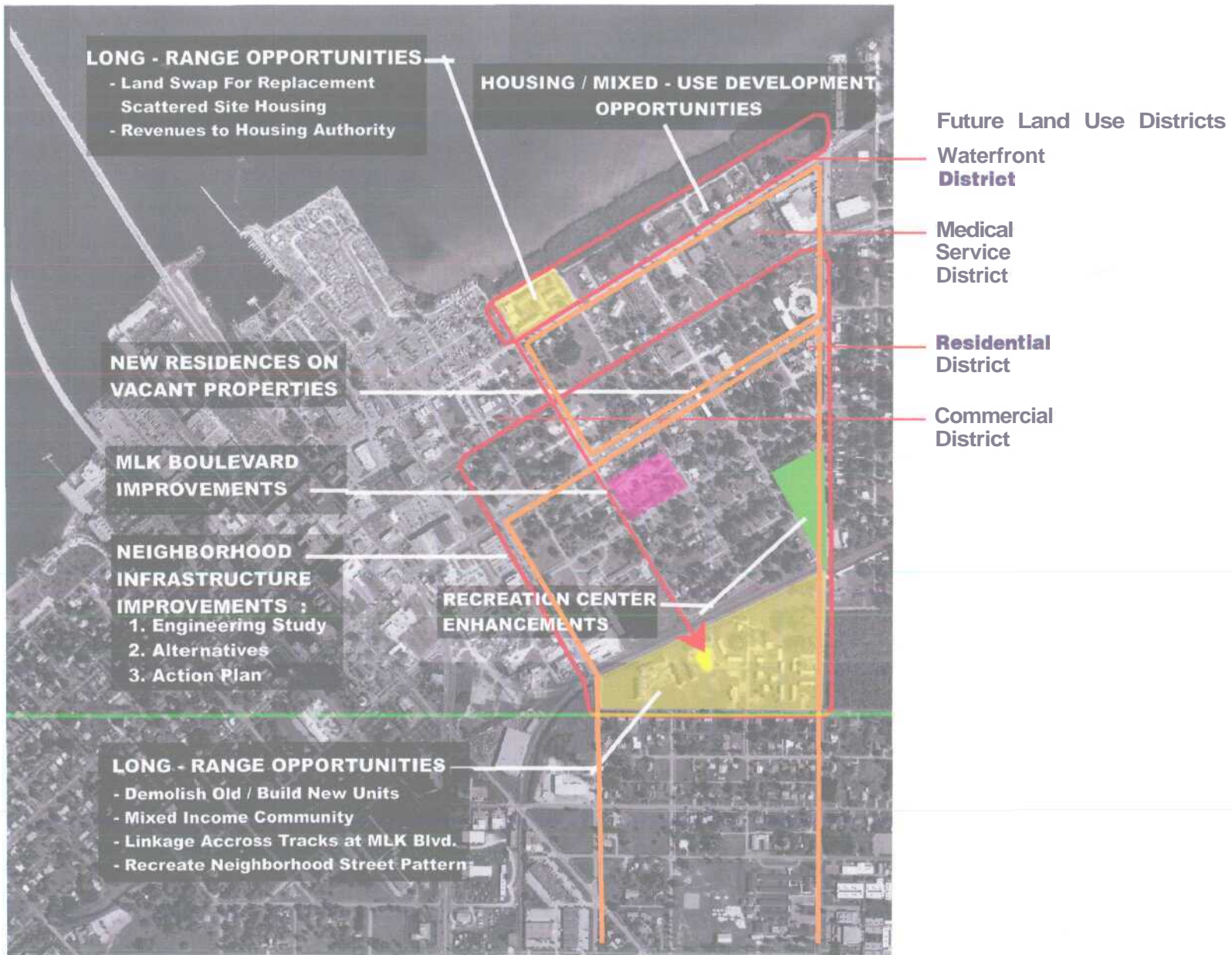


Proposed Prototypical Streetscape Cross Section

allow, a new mixed-income community could be constructed on the site, which could include public housing, affordable and market rate residences.

Another concept illustrated for development along the enhanced Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard is a Memorial Park. As shown in the accompanying illustration, this park could be located on a presently vacant property on the southeast corner of the intersection of Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and Virginia Avenue. The park could include a Memorial to Dr. King along with benches and shade trees. The intent is to provide a small, but symbolic neighborhood "square" along the Boulevard.

The intersection of Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and Virginia Avenue is an important location as it was at one time, the



East Side Residential Neighborhood Improvement Concepts

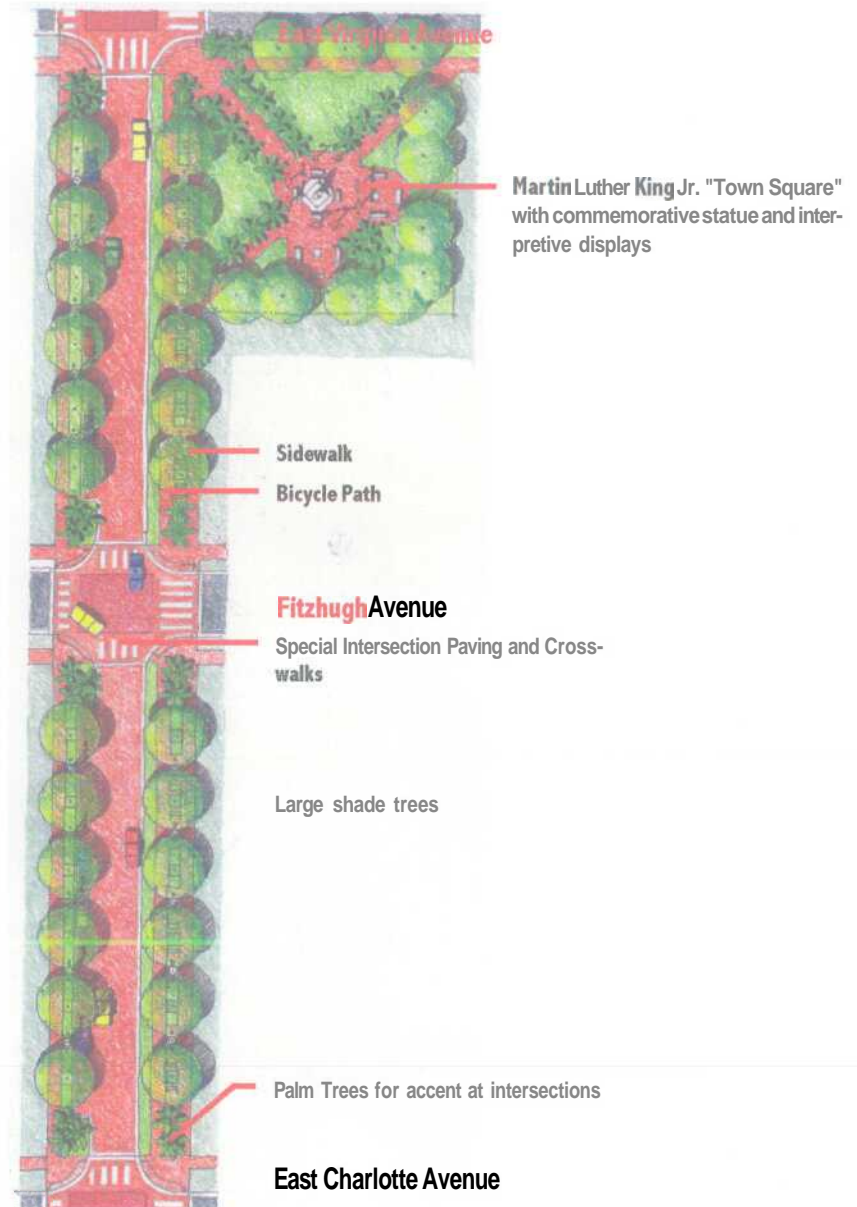
location of neighborhood-serving retail uses. It is hoped that as new housing is constructed in the East Side neighborhood there will be sufficient market to support a small commercial development again serving the neighborhood. Should that occur it is proposed that the commercial uses be located along Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, north of Virginia Avenue, as they were in the past. In order to preserve the scale and character of the adjacent residential uses, it is proposed that the commercial buildings be designed in the old Florida style, in such a way that they appear to be large residential structures. Parking for these uses should be kept to the rear or side yards, to allow the structures to face the street, much like the residences on adjacent blocks.

Ideally the entire length of the streetscape improvements could be constructed at one time. However, it may be necessary to construct the improvements in phases. In that event it is proposed that the segment of street improvements between Marion Avenue and Charlotte Avenue be given the first priority. The segment south of Charlotte could then be constructed in conjunction with a new railroad crossing and the extension of the street to the south, as described previously.

b. Brick Streets

Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard is proposed to become a brick street, similar to those previously implemented in the historic residential district. In order to give further identity to the East Side neighborhood, the following streets are also proposed to receive brick paving to replace the existing asphalt:

East Virginia Avenue between MLK Boulevard and Milus Street
 East Charlotte Avenue between MLK Boulevard and Milus Street
 Milus Street between East Charlotte Avenue and the waterfront
 Mary Street between East Charlotte Avenue and the waterfront



Martin Luther King Jr. Streetscape Conceptual Improvement Plan

c. *New Residential Development*

For the East Side Neighborhood to stabilize and improve, new residential construction must occur. It is anticipated that the proposed improvements to MLK Boulevard will help encourage additional residential construction. However, this improvement alone will probably not be sufficient to change the negative perceptions of the neighborhood. Therefore other actions will be required, among which are stormwater drainage improvements to remove reported conditions of localized standing water.

In order to implement appropriate improvements to the stormwater drainage system, the City should begin by undertaking an accurate survey of existing property and swale elevations. Based on that survey, the extent of problems can be identified and appropriate solutions evaluated.

While some streets, such as MLK Boulevard may deserve curb and gutter treatment with underground drainage, some streets may be better served with an improved swale system of drainage. The City should examine the survey results to determine the most appropriate solution for each block within the neighborhood.

In addition to the streetscape and infrastructure improvements, the city should consider other actions directly related to housing. It is proposed that the CRA assist in the creation of a Community Development Corporation as described in section 3.2 of this report. The purpose of this entity will be to initiate development of new affordable housing within the East Side neighborhood. The CRA can assist by way of providing staff resources to help initiate a CDC. It can also assist by providing, in conjunction with City funds, initial "seed" funding for the new entity. The CRA can also assist through acquisition, of vacant properties for use by the CDC.

The CRA can also assist directly in creating new housing in the East Side neighborhood - an effort that will require the full



Opportunities for new residential development



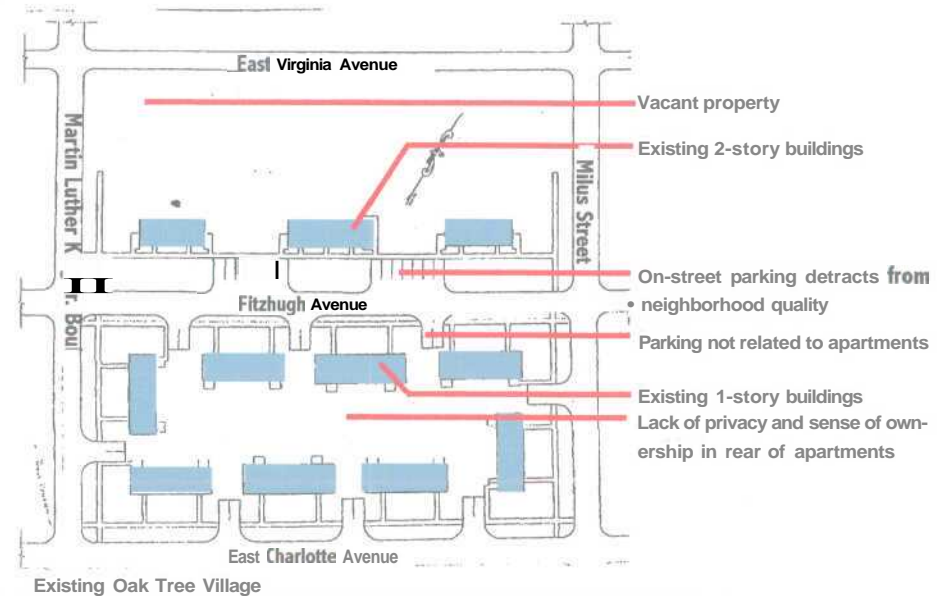
New residences in the East Side Neighborhood should be encouraged in the old Florida style of architecture.

commitment of the CRA and its staff and financial resources. The CRA can assist property owners who may wish to build new homes on vacant properties, but who do not have the expertise to deal with permitting and approval processes. One potential program would involve the CRA providing grants or loans to owners wishing to build new homes, for use in hiring qualified architects and contractors to undertake the work. The CRA could also work with the City to minimize or defer impact fees for new residential construction in the neighborhood.

In addition to assisting in the development of new housing in the neighborhood the CRA should assist in encouraging improvements to existing residences. Among the kinds of assistance the CRA could provide are: low interest loans and grants for home improvements, along with technical support for those improvements; provision of funds to assist home buyers in various ways; and provision of technical support related to issues of zoning and building regulations. These services could be provided by the CRA - on behalf of the owner, through a consultant architect or engineer through a loan or grant program.

The CRA should also guide new residential construction and renovations to assist in enhancing the visual quality of the neighborhood. It is proposed that owners be encouraged to build new houses in the old Florida architectural style, as is happening in other parts of the study area, in order to further develop this as the distinctive character of the Community Redevelopment Area. (see illustration on page 30) While there are examples of residences built in this style that are more ornate, it is also possible to build less elaborately at more reasonable cost.

The City can help improve the overall perception of the neighborhood through positive portrayals of the East Side neighborhood in the City's promotional literature.



Concept Plan for Revitalization of Oak Tree Village

d. Public Housing

The Punta Gorda Housing Authority owns and operates the 30 public housing residences at the Oak Tree Village development which occupies one and a half blocks between East Charlotte Avenue and East Virginia Avenue, with frontage on MLK Boulevard. The Authority also owns and operates 100 public housing residences located south of the railroad tracks along Cooper Street and Myrtle Avenue.

The Oak Tree Village site includes one story and two story buildings. At present, the Housing Authority is renovating interiors of the units and would like to continue with exterior renovations. In addition to needed renovations to the buildings it is proposed that the Housing Authority, subject to funding availability, undertake additional architectural enhancements to the exterior of the buildings, and site improvements to improve the livability, safety and security of the site.

The accompanying illustrations show how the site plan of the development could be modified to improve the sense of "ownership" for residents of individual apartments through the relocation of parking and creation of rear yards.

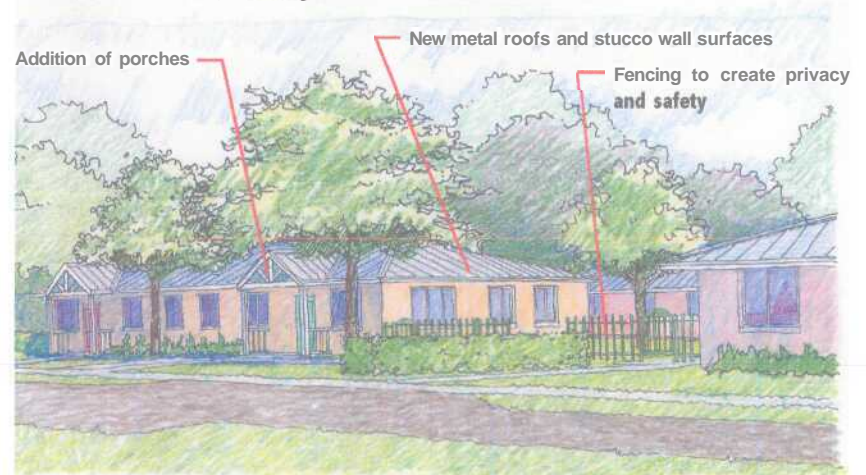
In addition, the sketch illustrates how the exteriors of the buildings could be renovated to give an "old Florida" style to the development through the addition of porches and metal roofs, and through covering the existing brick cladding with stucco.

The CRA should work with the Housing Authority to develop appropriate plans for the renovation of the site and the buildings as part of the overall program to support and enhance the East Side neighborhood.

In the long range it is proposed that the City and CRA consider extending Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard southward across the railroad, and connect through the present Housing Authority site to Myrtle Avenue. This street extension is predicated on the revitalization of the Myrtle Avenue and Cooper Street public housing as



Existing Oak Tree Village 1-story apartments



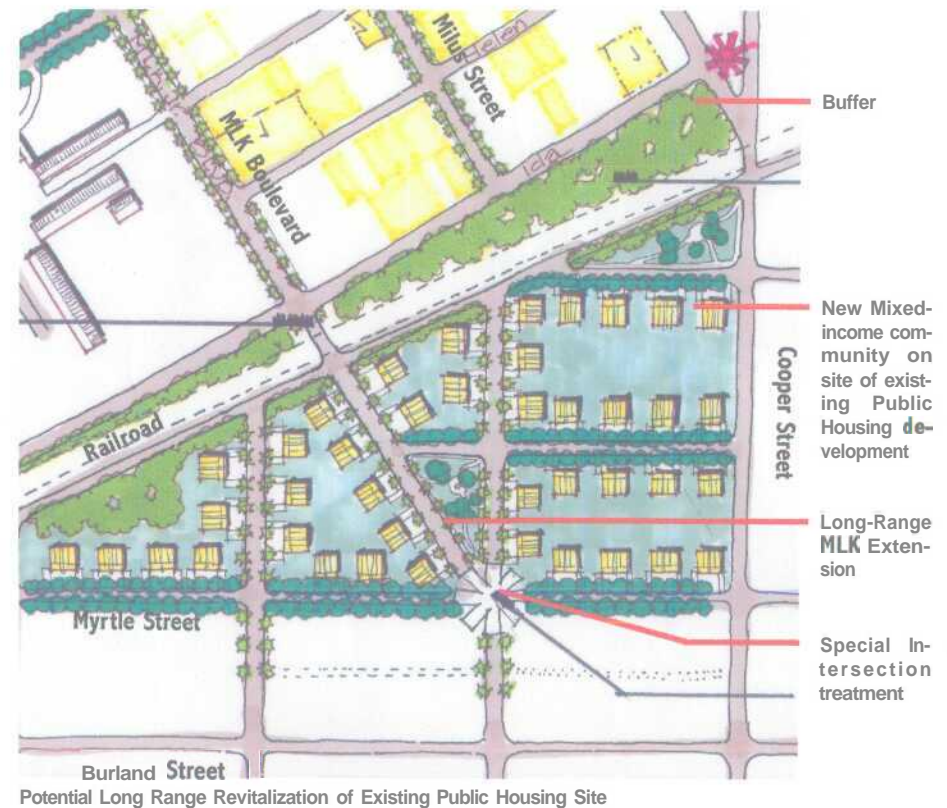
Potential renovation of Oak Tree Village apartments

a mixed-income community containing housing for a wide range of incomes in addition to public housing units. As described in the preceding section 3.3 one approach to fund such a development would be a HOPE VI grant. As noted in section 3.3 the Housing Authority should consider applying for a HOPE VI grant for this purpose.

The planning and design of new communities through the HOPE VI process is extremely important to HUD. To guide the creation of new mixed-income communities HUD has adopted the planning and design principles of New Urbanism. These principles are oriented to reconnecting former public housing sites to the neighborhoods within which they exist in order to remove the isolation and poor design that characterizes most public housing sites. In the instance of the Hazel and Cooper Street public housing sites, the plan for a new community would seek to extend the neighborhood street grid that exists around the sites, into and through the sites so they can once again become part of the larger neighborhood. The proposed extension of Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard is part of this concept to reconnect the site to the neighborhood.

The new mixed income communities built through the HOPE VI process are also designed with the principles of CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design). This means that communities are designed so that residential units face the streets, and there are no "left over" public spaces that are not readily visible and secure. In general the combination of the CPTED and New Urbanism principles create communities that look like traditional single family neighborhoods, even though the majority of the housing may be rental.

If the HOPE VI grant application is not pursued the Housing Authority must still look to maintain, and where financially possible, improve the existing public housing units.



e. Waterfront

The residents of the East Side neighborhood have commented that they believe the creation of visual linkages to the waterfront will improve the identity and attractiveness of the neighborhood to potential new residents. Currently all views toward the water along neighborhood streets are blocked by dense vegetation - some or all of which may be environmentally sensitive and protected mangroves. The CEA should undertake a vegetation survey to determine the extent of the mangroves throughout this section of the waterfront and especially along the ends of Milus, Mary and Booth Streets. If exotic vegetation is found within these street rights-of-way where they extend to the waters edge, it may be possible to remove the exotic vegetation without negatively impacting the mangrove. In that event the CRA should undertake the removal of the exotic vegetation and open the street ends as view corridors and pedestrian access to the water. The CRA should also construct, if possible given the environmental restrictions of the street ends, boardwalk extensions overlooking the river at those locations.

In addition, depending on the extent of protected mangrove vegetation, there may be waterfront land already in public ownership in this vicinity that can be further developed as parks and public open space. Although there may not be enough upland areas to develop a waterfront park as extensive as Gilchrist park, the CRA and City should develop as much waterfront land as possible as park and open space for the East Side community.

This section of the waterfront also affords a unique opportunity to enhance the entrance to the downtown along East Marion Avenue. In this vicinity East Marion Avenue is only one block away from the mangroves and water edge. If the street end vistas can be opened as described in the preceding paragraph, the CRA should



Potential Mini-Park sites along East Marion Avenue

consider purchasing some of the vacant corner lots on the north side of Marion where it intersects the north-south neighborhood streets. These corner parcels could be developed as mini-park gateways to the waterfront. Fountains and additional landscaping provided in these locations could "pull" the waterfront down to Marion, while providing enhancements to the entrance to downtown, and creating a setting for development of this important street frontage.

f. Cooper Street

Cooper Street is the easternmost edge of the East Side neighborhood, and is the City boundary. Today the Street has a rural cross section with swales and without curb and gutters. The street carries substantial auto and pedestrian traffic going to and from the High School and Elementary Schools, and the Cooper Street Recreation facility. Consequently, it is proposed that the City coordinate with the County to determine whether improvements are warranted to the street. Upgrading the street to an urban section, with curb and gutter, subsurface storm drainage and sidewalks may be beneficial in terms of both neighborhood character and safety.

The Cooper Street Recreation Center was also discussed with the residents of the East Side neighborhood during the planning process. In that discussion the desire for expansion of the Center was discussed, with emphasis placed on the perceived need for a swimming pool. Preliminary site plan studies conducted during the plan preparation indicate that the existing site would have to be expanded considerably to accommodate an Olympic size swimming pool. It was also noted that although there are vacant parcels of land immediately to the north of the Center, the owners have not indicated a willingness to sell the property. Toward the west the properties are occupied by residences. Consequently until such time as additional land becomes available it will not be possible to expand the recreation facilities at the Center.

In addition it was also noted during the planning process that a swimming pool may not be appropriate for the Cooper Street Center - which is a neighborhood serving facility. A swimming pool may be more appropriate in a facility designed to serve the larger Punta Gorda community, and located on a site that could better accommodate the access and parking that would be required for such a facility.

B. Retail District

The central portion of the Punta Gorda CRA is comprised of existing and planned retail functions. This part of the study area is already, through previous improvements made to the pedestrian environment of Marion Avenue, somewhat pedestrian - oriented. Major existing functions include the Punta Gorda Shopping Mall located on U. S. 41 northbound, the Charlotte County Municipal Auditorium, and the old Charlotte County Courthouse. Other smaller retail functions extend along Marion (Main Street) and Sullivan Street. The area also includes two hotels and a condominium development immediately adjacent to the Punta Gorda Shopping Mall. In addition, the Punta Gorda Harbor Project located east of the Punta Gorda Shopping Mall includes plans to develop approximately 83,000 - 98,000 square feet of waterfront - oriented retail and restaurant uses.

The **Vision Statement** speaks to the desire to develop a "signature identity" for the study area within the region, through the development of unique functions, with a critical mass of activities that will attract both residents and visitors to the downtown area. The retail district will require a variety of actions, as described in the following section, to improve the existing conditions and achieve those goals.

Although the retail district today contains a number of businesses, it does not function as a traditional pedestrian - oriented shopping "district" in that people coming to downtown are not likely to park their car and walk from Sullivan Street on one side of the district, to Punta Gorda Harbor on the other side. Consequently, a major objective of the following proposals is to improve the overall pedestrian environment so that people will be more inclined to park their cars, and feel comfortable walking throughout the area.

A second major objective of the proposals is to increase the number of retail facilities within the district. Today there is not enough "critical mass" of retail facilities to make people want to stay in and



Retail District Location

explore downtown. Development of additional businesses of the appropriate scale and type defined in subsequent sections of this report, will help the retail district reach the "critical mass" necessary to attract shoppers.

A third major objective for the development of the district is to improve parking. Today parking supply may not be a severe problem. In the future, as additional parking is added to support the retail district, it will be important that the parking is easily accessible and that it does not detract from the quality of the pedestrian experience within the district. The following proposals address the preferred way in which parking should be accommodated in the retail district.

The following subsections of this report describe proposed actions for subareas within the retail district. In most instances several possible future development "scenarios" are presented. The scenarios are created in recognition of the fact that the City presently does not control several of the key properties addressed in the plan. Consequently, while improvements are in all of the following cases desirable, the exact nature of those improvements can not be fully committed at this time.

In this context, the City should be flexible, but proactive in bringing the following proposals forward to the County and other major property owners within the retail district.



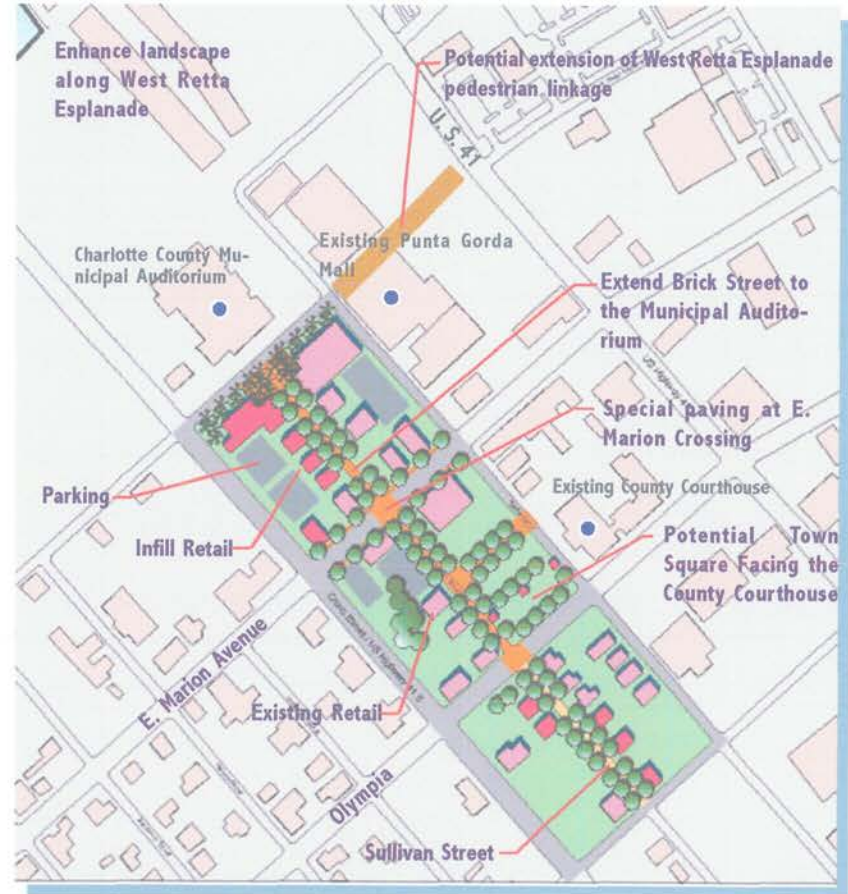
Sullivan Street is an important element of the Proposed Retail District

a. Sullivan Street

Sullivan Street is a street that runs perpendicular to E. Marion, and terminates at the rear of the County Memorial Auditorium. Today it contains a mix of uses and a number of vacant parcels. Most important to the future of this area are the renovations that have occurred along the street just south of Olympia. In that location, several small shops have been added in small one-story, "cottage-like" structures. Also, that block has just had brick installed in replacement of the asphalt street. Combined, the new retail commercial establishments and the brick street have created what could continue to develop as an area of attractive buildings with an appropriate pedestrian scale. These factors suggest that Sullivan Street offers the opportunity to expand the retail uses and create a special - character district within the overall retail district. In order to achieve this result the following actions are proposed:



Existing Conditions



Sullivan Street Proposed Planning and Design Concepts

Legend:

- Pink = Existing structures
- Red = Proposed future structures
- Orange = Special Paving
- Light Blue = Existing Institutional/ Public Facilities
- Dark Blue = Proposed Institutional/ Public Facilities

Sullivan Street proposed actions:

Infill Retail Buildings: Infill retail buildings should be encouraged to match the scale and "old Florida" quality of the recent renovations on the street. Building setbacks and front yard landscaping should match those of existing buildings. To match the old Florida style buildings already in place, new construction should include the use of wood, or simulated wood siding and metal roofs - preferably the 5V- crimp style. Front and side porches are encouraged, along with wood columns and balustrades.

Streetscape Enhancements: The following streetscape enhancements are proposed:

Sullivan Street: Extend the brick street treatment to the block between E. Marion Avenue and West Retta Esplanade. These enhancements should include additional street tree planting, introduction of brick paving on sidewalk areas, addition of benches and trash receptacles and special street lighting. The future lighting should be similar to, if not exactly match, the light fixtures installed on Marion and Olympia. A single globe fixture, as opposed to the two-globe fixtures used along Marion, will probably provide sufficient light, and will be more in scale with the smaller buildings along Sullivan Street.

Sullivan at E. Marion Avenue: Install special paving where Sullivan Street crosses E. Marion Avenue to establish the visual continuity of Sullivan Street.

West Retta Esplanade: Landscape and sidewalk enhance-



Streetscape enhancements in the retail district should include a coordinated set of benches, trash receptacles and bollards that complement the existing historic character light fixtures that have been installed along Marion and Olympia Avenues.



ments are proposed between Taylor Street and U. S. 41 Southbound. This improvement is in preparation for the possibility that the Punta Gorda Mall may be renovated or redeveloped. If and when that takes place, it is proposed that West Retta Esplanade be extended through the Mall site to U. S. 41 northbound. This action will extend the street pattern and retail connectivity of this part of the downtown.

Open Space: The old County Courthouse faces Taylor Street where it crosses Olympia. The plan illustrates the opportunity to develop a civic space or "Town Square" that could extend from Taylor Street to Sullivan Street. This will give the old Courthouse a visual connection to Sullivan Street, and provide it with a better open space and landscaped setting.

Parking: In order to keep the Sullivan Street retail frontage continuous it is proposed that parking that is developed to serve the retail uses along Sullivan Street not be accessed from Sullivan Street, but rather from the adjacent streets. Where possible, it is also proposed that the City encourage the aggregation of parking so that individual lots are not encumbered by large numbers of parking spaces. The implementation section of this document discusses ways in which the City can assist in this process.



Sullivan Street Improvement Concepts



Example of "Cottage Retail" structure encouraged on Sullivan Street

b. Punta Gorda Shopping Mall

The Punta Gorda Shopping Mall has been an important functional part of downtown for many years. It remains a location where residents like to shop, especially for groceries, and therefore makes downtown a place that attracts local patrons. The retention of retail serving the needs of local patrons is an important aspect of the Vision Statement for future development of the study area.

While the shopping center is functionally important in downtown, it was not originally developed in a manner that positively contributes to the pedestrian orientation desired in future development of the retail district. Like most suburban shopping malls the buildings are set far back from the street with large areas of parking between the structures and the street. This sets the mall apart from Main Street and the rest of the retail district.

To improve the physical connections between the Mall and the rest of the retail district, the East Side and Downtown Planning Study



Punta Gorda Shopping Mall Parking lot today lacks landscaping

envisions two possible future development "scenarios" for the shopping mall site, which are described in the following proposals.

Punta Gorda Shopping Mall Scenario 1 Proposed Actions:

In the first scenario the shopping mall buildings would remain largely as they presently exist, with major improvements made to the site and its relationship to surrounding development. To improve its connections to the rest of the retail district, the following actions are proposed:

Parking: Redesign the layout of the parking along U.S. 41 northbound to incorporate generous site landscaping both on the perimeter of the site and in interior areas of the parking lots, with special attention given to developing a landscape buffer along U. S. 41 northbound.

Architecture: The architecture of the mall needs to be improved. Renovations are encouraged to adopt the old Florida style that is proposed throughout the study area.

Signage: Replace the outdated Mall sign with new, smaller scale signage.

Pedestrian Linkages: extend significant pedestrian walkways and associated landscaping to link the enclosed shopping mall with Marion Avenue.

Taylor Street frontage: Clean up the service corridor side (west side) of the buildings and consider opening access from Taylor Street into the stores, where possible and appropriate. Addition of signage, awnings and even windows, where possible, are encouraged to make the west side

of the mall more attractive and better integrated with the adjacent retail area fronting on Sullivan Street.

Punta Gorda Shopping Mall Scenario 2 Proposed Actions:

A second scenario would become possible if the owner of the property were to contemplate total redevelopment of the site. In that scenario, the development that replaces the mall should be designed in accordance with the following guidelines:

West Retta Esplanade extension: West Retta Esplanade should be extended through the site to connect with U. S. 41 northbound, in order to extend the street grid pattern that exists elsewhere in downtown and break the present large tract into walkable street blocks.

Future uses: Develop the created blocks with a mix of ground floor retail, combined with upper level office or residential uses.

Building orientation: Orient new uses toward the streets with paved pedestrian - oriented streetscape developed throughout the new blocks.

Parking: Organize parking so it is located on the interior of the blocks where it will not disrupt the continuity of street-oriented retail.



Existing conditions at the rear of the shopping mall

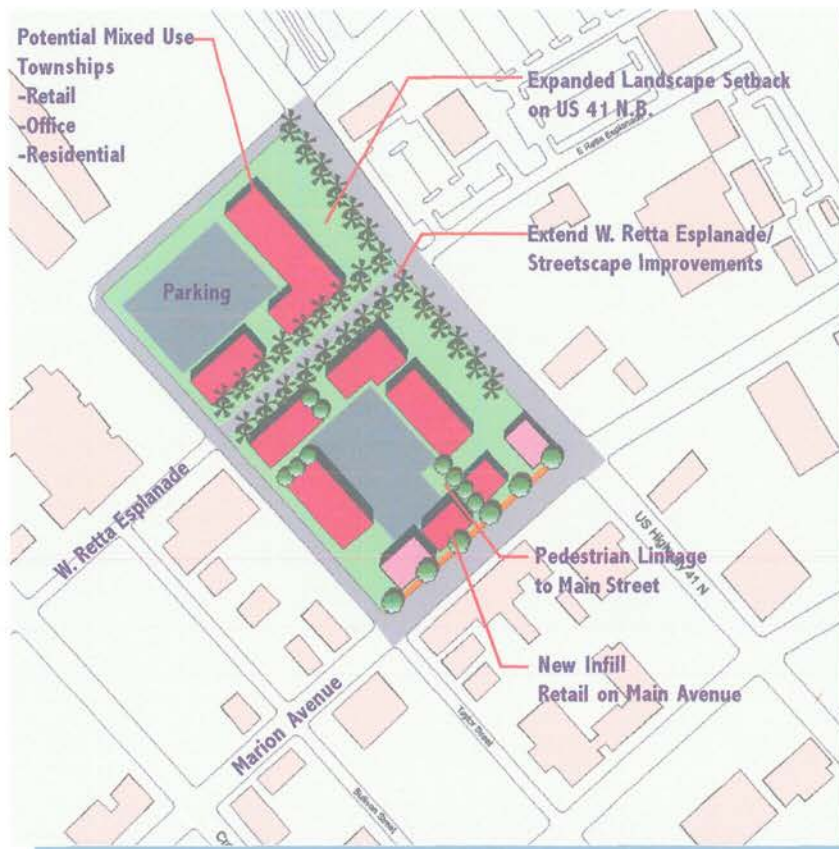


Potential enhancement of the rear of the shopping mall



Punta Gorda Shopping Mall Scenario 1 Planning and Design Concepts

- Legend:**
- Pink = Existing structures
 - Red = Proposed future structures
 - Orange = Special Paving
 - Light Blue = Existing Institutional/ Public Facilities
 - Dark Blue = Proposed Institutional/ Public Facilities



Punta Gorda Shopping Mall Scenario 2 Planning and Design Concepts

Legend:

- Pink = Existing structures
- Red = Proposed future structures
- Orange = Special Paving
- Light Blue = Existing Institutional/ Public Facilities
- Dark Blue = Proposed Institutional/ Public Facilities

c. Charlotte County Memorial Auditorium

The Charlotte County Memorial Auditorium has been an important center of activity in downtown for many years. It is the site of a variety of types of indoor live theatrical performances as well as outdoor events held in the parking lot. As an attraction and entertainment facility serving Punta Gorda residents, the Auditorium is considered an important feature of the downtown, and should be retained.

The Auditorium occupies an important waterfront site located between U. S. 41 southbound and Taylor Street. On the east are the Punta Gorda Shopping Mall, condominiums and the Holiday Inn Hotel. Just west of U. S. 41 is the Best Western Hotel.



Charlotte County Memorial Auditorium today lacks any meaningful relationship to the waterfront or the retail district

As in the case with the Punta Gorda shopping mall, the building was not originally designed to connect with the pedestrian environment of the retail district. The orientation of the building is toward the water, with the rear of the building facing Sullivan Street. Consequently today pedestrian access to the Auditorium and the retail district is not direct nor well provided for. In addition, the parking lot along the waterfront is not well landscaped, nor does it contribute to the City's desire for a landscaped pedestrian - oriented waterfront.

Today the County manages and operates the facility (although there is a reverter clause in the deed that would return the property to the City under certain conditions). Therefore any change to the present facility or site will require the cooperation and approval of the County.

Consequently the following is a description of a concept for improving the auditorium site. The details of this concept will require further refinement and coordination and cooperation with the County. Perhaps most important is the proposed reduction in the amount of surface parking on the site. The CRA should undertake a parking utilization study of the Auditorium parking lot to assess the need for all of the existing spaces. Should the spaces be demonstrated not to be needed for special events, the proposed concept can be further developed for implementation. If the parking is found to be needed, through the utilization study, the proposed concept should be modified to reduce the number of existing parking spaces removed. In either instance the CRA should take a proactive role in getting as much waterfront land along this site converted to open space as is practical.

Charlotte County Memorial Auditorium proposed actions:

This scenario illustrates several improvements proposed to be undertaken on the site. Included are the following:

Waterfront Esplanade: Convert approximately 235 feet of asphalt parking immediately adjacent to the waterfront to a waterfront "mini-park". This park will provide an enhanced route for the waterfront walkway across the Auditorium site. It can also provide a site for outdoor events, used alone or in combination with the parking lot. This action will reduce the existing parking in the lot by approximately 160 spaces (504 existing spaces).



Charlotte County Memorial Auditorium Planning and Design Concepts

Legend:

- Pink = Existing structures
- Red = Proposed future structures
- Orange = Special Paving
- Light Blue = Existing Institutional/ Public Facilities
- Dark Blue = Proposed Institutional/ Public Facilities

Parking lot landscape: Increase landscaping within the parking lot through the addition of landscape planters and through the creation of a landscaped walkway connecting the Auditorium building with the waterfront esplanade.

Pedestrian connections to Sullivan Street: Improve and expand walkways around the east and west sides of the Auditorium building to better connect the front of the building with Sullivan Street and the rest of the retail district.

West Retta Esplanade: Add landscaping and a special pedestrian feature along West Retta Esplanade on the south side of the Auditorium. Royal palms and a fountain are possible enhancements to "terminate" the Sullivan Street view of the Auditorium.



Existing South Side of Auditorium



Potential landscape and streetscape enhancements on the south side of the Auditorium

d. Old Charlotte County Courthouse and Herald Court

With the construction of the new County Justice Center, the old Charlotte County Courthouse building no longer functions as the center of County governmental activities in the downtown. Consequently, the future use of the old Courthouse remains to be determined.

Since this facility is owned by the County, the City, at present, does not have control over the future use of the building or site. Consequently the following proposed modifications to the building and site will require the cooperation of the County, or acquisition of the property by the City.

As a result of building additions to the Courthouse over the years, the original building facade fronting on Taylor Street is largely obscured, and the building has lost the historic character of the much smaller original structure. This fact, along with a reported problem with the mechanical systems in the newer portions of the structure has prompted the idea that the newer sections should be demolished. This would allow the original structure to once again be revealed and restored to its former appearance.

If these improvements were made, the Courthouse could then become available for other functions, perhaps more in keeping with the retail orientation proposed for this part of downtown. During the course of this planning study, two options were posed for reuse of the building. The first option would be to demolish the newer portions of the structure, restore the original building, and construct a new, smaller addition on the east side of the building. This new addition would be designed to be more compatible in scale and architectural character with the original structure than was done with the present structure. This new structure could also be designed to provide a small landscaped courtyard on the east side of the Courthouse. The new structure could function as either a small office building or an historic "inn". In either

scenario the original part of the building could function as common lobby, meeting and conference space.

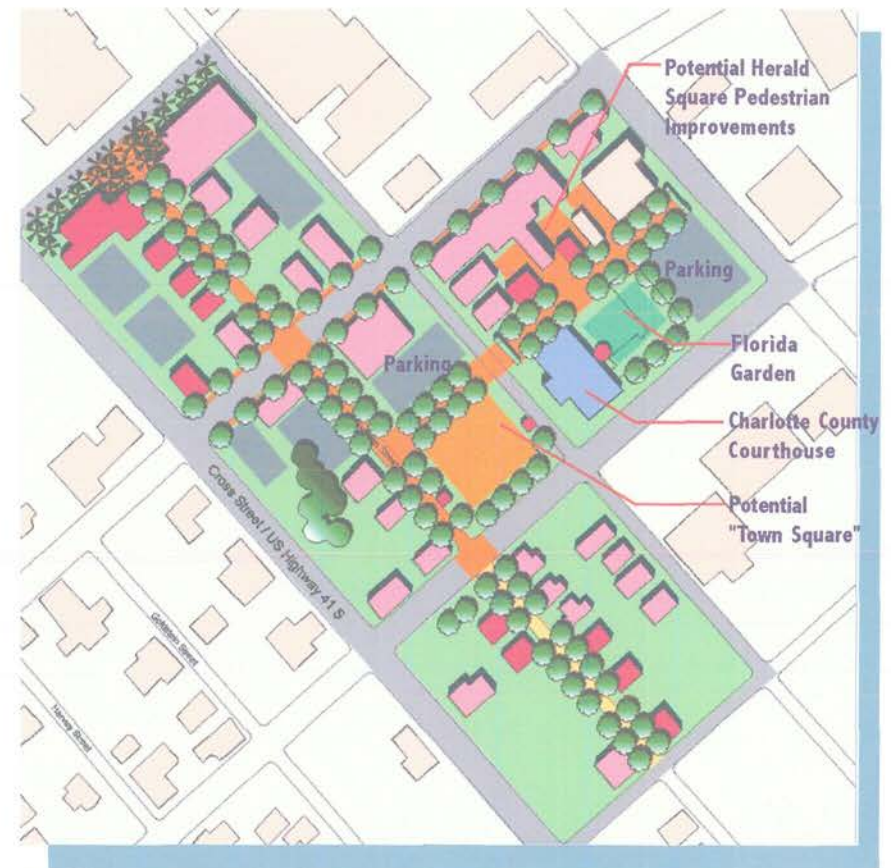
A second scenario for reuse of the Courthouse would be the demolition of the newer additions, and the restoration of the original structure to its former appearance. In this scenario, the space on the east side of the structure could be developed as a "Florida garden" of native plants with a small gazebo, as has been previously proposed by property owners and merchants in the vicinity. The building itself could function



Old County Courthouse as it appears today

as a community building, providing space for meetings and small conferences, as well as for a history museum. Alternatively, a portion of the building could be converted to a restaurant, perhaps opening onto the garden to the east, along with offices on the upper floors.

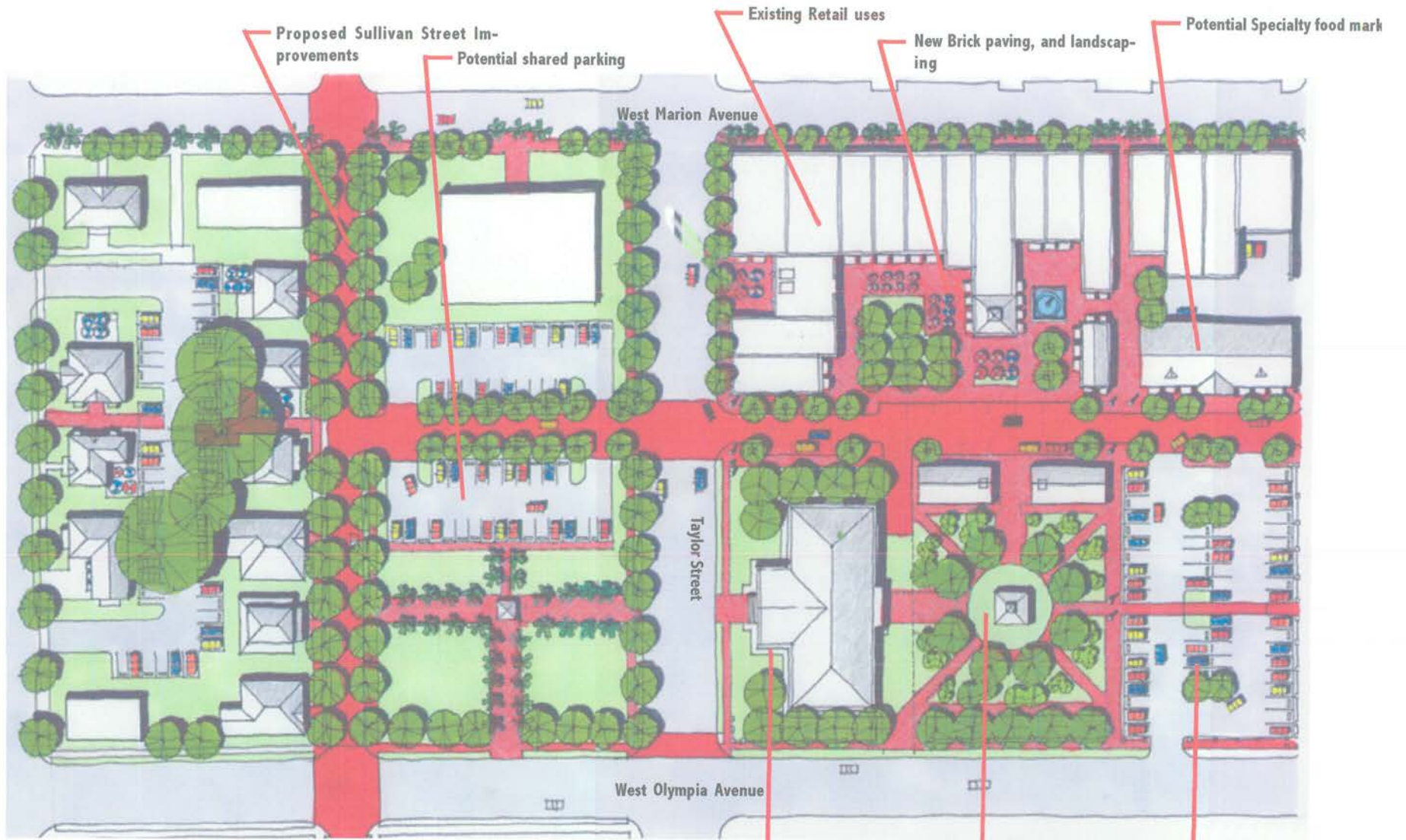
Also part of the restoration of the Courthouse, proposed by merchants and owners in the retail district, is the concept of improving Herald Court. As previously proposed, this improvement would include replacing the asphalt street and service areas behind the buildings facing Marion Avenue with brick. The street would still remain available for limited service access, and emergency vehicle access, but would be transformed to a pedestrian-oriented courtyard. In conjunction with improvements in the public right-of-way, this concept also depends on improvements to private property. The service areas of buildings fronting on Herald Court will need to be cleaned up, and new brick paving installed. In addition, building owners are encouraged to develop new entrances to their businesses from Herald Court.



Herald Court Planning and Design Concepts

Legend:

- Pink = Existing structures
- Red = Proposed future structures
- Orange = Special Paving
- Light Blue = Existing Institutional/ Public Facilities
- Dark Blue = Proposed Institutional/ Public Facilities



Herald Court Conceptual Plan

Existing Retail uses

New Brick paving, and landscaping

Potential Specialty food market

Proposed Sullivan Street Improvements

Potential shared parking

West Marion Avenue

Taylor Street

West Olympia Avenue

Florida Garden with open air market structures and gazebo

Potential expanded public parking

Old County Courthouse - with modern additions removed

Other potential enhancements include the construction of new "gateways" at either end of Herald Court, similar in character to the existing gateway leading from Marion Avenue, along with additional street landscaping and furnishings.

Implementation of either concept for reuse of the Courthouse would benefit the downtown retail district. The key to transforming the structure will be the identification of a funding source for the desired improvements, and a financial or business plan for the future operation of the facility. Implementation will also require provision of parking to support the new uses. In general, on-site parking should be considered and accommodated along with the Florida Garden, on lands made available by the demolition of the newer parts of the Courthouse. The conceptual site plan illustrates parking in a surface lot along with on-street parking along Herald Court, as one way to provide a modest level of on-site parking that would not overwhelm the quality of the proposed development.

e. Waterfront

The Punta Gorda waterfront has long been recognized as one of the "signature" features of the community and downtown. The Vision Statement developed early in the planning process of this study reiterated the importance of the waterfront, and called for the development of a lively, publicly accessible waterfront with an attractive landscaped character, and with strong linkages to the central portions of the downtown. While a number of improvements have already been made to the waterfront, including implementation of walkways in several locations, there remain segments of the harbor walk that still need to be implemented.

The diagram illustrates the improvements that are proposed, and still need to be undertaken to create the continuous waterfront pedestrian experience that is desired.

Proposed Waterfront Improvement Actions:

Bridge Underpasses: The pedestrian underpasses at both the northbound and southbound legs of U. S. 41 need fur-



Waterfront Planning and Design Concepts

Legend:

- Pink = Existing structures
- Red = Proposed future structures
- Orange = Special Paving
- Light Blue = Existing Institutional/ Public Facilities
- Dark Blue = Proposed Institutional/ Public Facilities



Existing Bridge Underpass

ther improvements. Additional improvements include possible widening of the path available for pedestrians, along with installation of lighting and appropriate / required handrails along the water edge.

Memorial Auditorium parking lot: As noted previously in this section, the Memorial Auditorium parking lot should be pulled back from the water's edge to allow for an expanded harborwalk, or esplanade to be developed on this important public property.

Punta Gorda Harbor Project: The marina and waterfront enhancements proposed in this project still need to be implemented. The completion of the Harbor Project is essential to expanding the range of activities and attractions that will draw people to downtown Punta Gorda. The CRA and City should vigorously continue their efforts to see this project completed.

East side Neighborhood Waterfront Access: As discussed with the residents of the east side neighborhood, the City should investigate the potential for clearance of vegetation at the street ends of Milus, Mary and Booth Streets, and the construction of waterfront overlooks and park amenities at these locations. As more fully described in preceding sections of this report.

f. "Main" Street

West Marion Avenue, between Nesbit Street in the east and U. S. 41 southbound on the west, comprises the core of the local commercial historic district. This district contains two national register historic structures, including the Old First National Bank and the Smith Arcade.

As a result of the 1990 CRA plan, West Marion Avenue received streetscape improvements which included the addition of brick pavers on the sidewalks, installation of new "historic" character street light



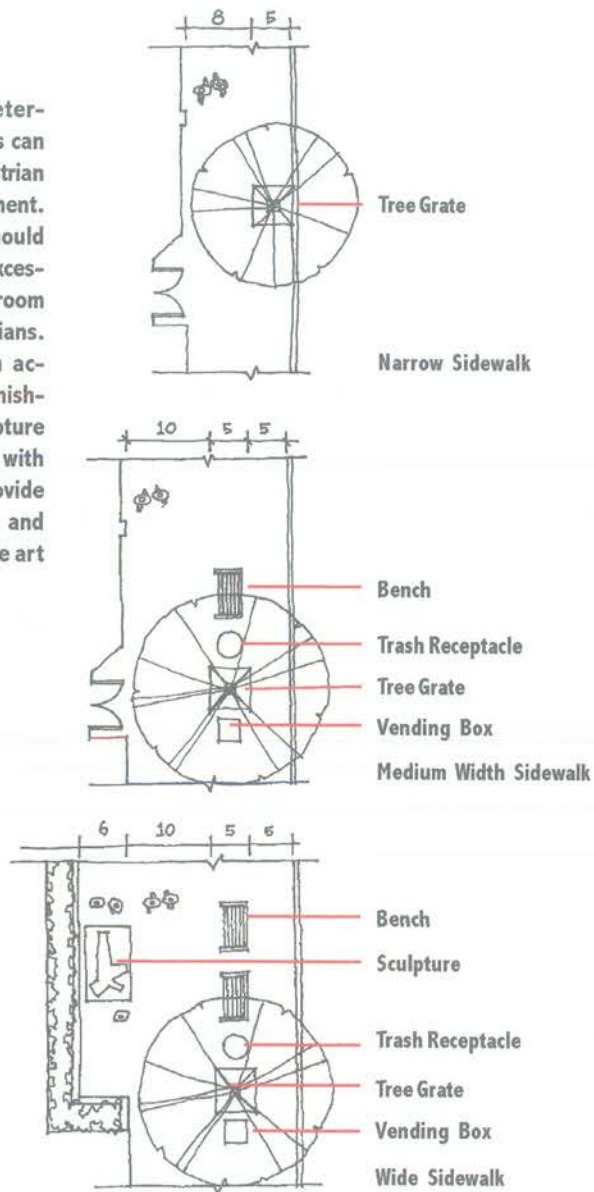
Existing Conditions on W. Marion Avenue



Potential use of palm trees and brick paving if Marion were two-way automobile traffic

Street Furnishings

Sidewalk widths determine how many items can be added to the pedestrian streetscape environment. Narrow sidewalks should not be cluttered by excessive furnishings, as room is needed for pedestrians. Wider sidewalks can accommodate more furnishings. Outdoor sculpture should be provided with sufficient space to provide an attractive setting, and to allow viewing of the art object.



Streetscape enhancements in the retail district should include a coordinated set of benches, trash receptacles and bollards that complement the existing historic character light fixtures that have been installed along Marion and Olympia Avenues.



fixtures, and new benches. The blocks on which these improvements were made provide a good base from which to expand the pedestrian enhancements in the retail district.

To further enhance the "signature" appearance of Main Street, the following actions should be considered.

Main Street Enhancement Proposed Actions:

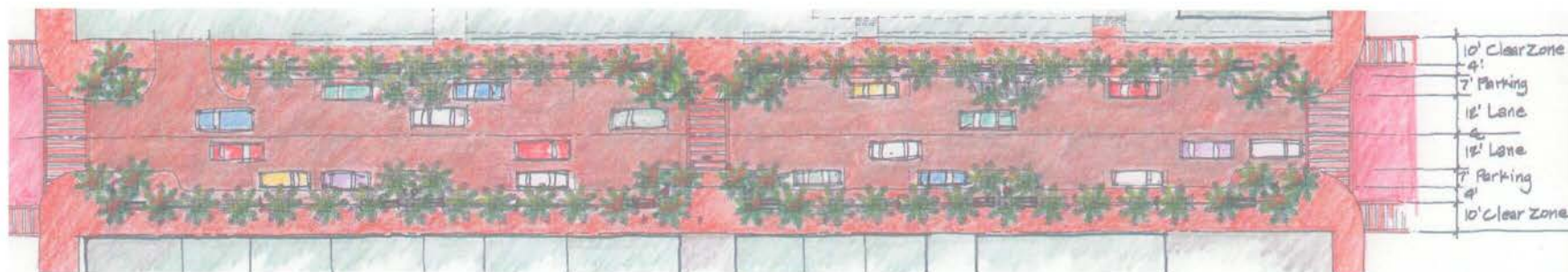
Automobile Circulation: The City should discuss with the MPO and FDOT the possibility of relaxing the controls on the section of West Marion Avenue between U. S. 41 north- and southbound legs, to allow the installation of brick streets. If allowed, this will help visually tie the retail district with the historic residential district to the west. In addition, as discussed in the section of this report on Area-Wide Planning concepts, the City is encouraged to explore with DOT the possibility of two way traffic on the central segments of W. Marion and Olympia Avenues. This could allow for consideration of a landscaped median in the street, if parking were removed from one side to provide that room needed for the median.

Pedestrian Circulation: If new brick streets are installed, crosswalks should be given a special color or pattern of brick to distinguish them

from the rest of the street. If brick streets are not implemented, the City should pursue the installation of special paving of the crosswalks at Marion and Nesbit, Marion and U. S. 41 northbound, Marion and Taylor Street, Marion and Sullivan Street, and Marion and U. S. 41 southbound.

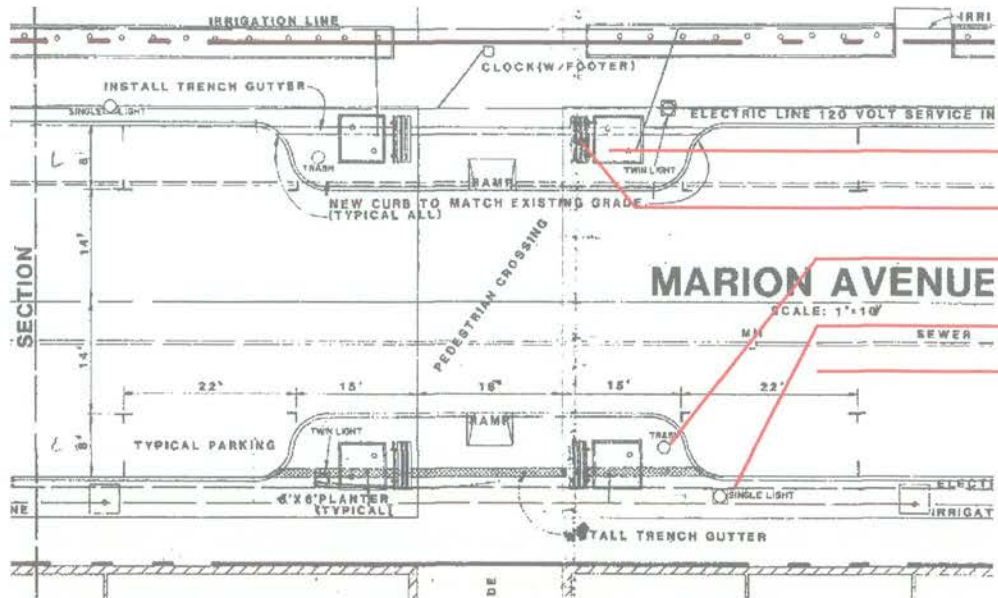
Landscape: The existing landscape does not contribute strongly to the development of a unique, signature identity for downtown. It is proposed that the existing plant materials be further evaluated for quality and functional and visual impact, and removed and replaced where inappropriate. To provide more dramatic visual impact it is proposed that palm trees be introduced in key locations, such as the intersection of Marion and Sullivan Streets, in lieu of the existing trees. Palms selected should be something other than cabbage palms to further add to the special identity desired for downtown. Other trees should be selected which will provide shade for pedestrian movement through the downtown.

Signage and Graphics: It is proposed that the CRA commission a consultant to develop a wayfinding and signage program for the down-



Potential Marion Avenue Streetscape with the introduction of Palm Trees

Existing Marion Avenue Streetscape



Raised Planter

Bench

Trash receptacle

Light Fixture

Asphalt Street



Tree Grates/ not planters

Potential Streetscape Improvements



Light Fixture

Widened Sidewalks

Brick Street

Royal or Foxtail Palms



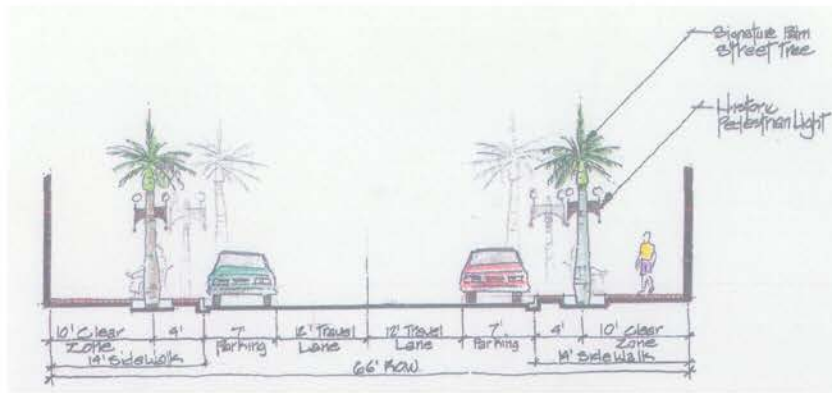
Bench



Special crosswalk paving



Trash receptacle



Potential Marion Avenue Streetscape Improvements Cross Section

town core retail district. This program should build on the "City of Hibiscus" as part of the graphic concept for signage. The overall signage should address orientation signage, wayfinding signage for parking, pedestrian directional signage and where appropriate, historical markers and interpretative panels. As in other cities, banners related to the special sub-districts within the downtown should also be considered.

Retail business signs should be designed to fit the architecture of the building on which they are placed, and not overwhelm the facade of the building. It is important to remember that the intent of this plan is to further develop the retail district as a pedestrian-oriented place. Therefore business identification signs should be oriented to the sidewalk and be scaled appropriately for pedestrian viewing.

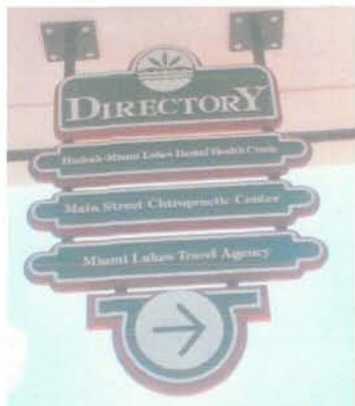
Art: The City has an existing "Art Around Town" program with some



Directional and traffic signage should be integrated into the streetscape furnishings vocabulary of style

forty locations identified for placement of art objects. In order to enhance the impact of this program, it is proposed that within the retail district, an evaluation be undertaken to assess the appropriateness of the art objects that have been placed. In some instances, the placement does not appear to enhance the art: in other locations the artwork placement may conflict with pedestrian movement. In general, it appears that the art objects are not given sufficient space, and therefore lose visual impact. It is proposed that the CRA consider revising its art placement program, to focus placement of art pieces in the waterfront parks, and along the waterfront pedestrian esplanade, where appropriate settings and space can be given to individual sculptures. This concept will develop the waterfront as one extended outdoor sculpture garden, which can become part of the signature identity for downtown.

Parking: Clearly the current zoning requirements will not likely provide sufficient parking for future retail businesses. On the other hand,



Directory Information should be included in the wayfinding sign system



Business identification signs should be oriented to pedestrians, and in-scale with the architecture of the building

simply increasing the parking requirements for all types of uses may do more harm to the physical character of downtown. As more of each individual development site is devoted to parking there will be less site available for landscaping and pedestrian-oriented improvements.

It is proposed that the CRA investigate a strategy wherein the smaller retail developments - those occurring on 5,000 - 7,500 square foot lots, would have one level of parking required to be provided on-site, with the remainder of the "actual" parking need accounted for through a payment-in-lieu of parking provision. Larger commercial developments would be required to fully provide 5 spaces per 1,000 square feet of development (exact standard to be determined by a parking study). This type of system would prevent the smaller sites from being converted largely to surface parking lots. In this system a change of use from one retail function to another within an existing building would not be required to provide any additional parking than it may already have on-site.

This system will likely require the City and CRA to, at some

point in time, provide additional parking that the smaller individual properties are not providing as part of their on-site development. While many communities find that developing parking structures becomes necessary, it may be some time before that level of development and demand is reached. Until there is sufficient unmet demand to warrant construction of a parking deck it is proposed that the CRA begin acquiring parcels for use as surface parking lots to serve the core retail district. Ideally these lots would be located behind properties on major pedestrian-oriented retail streets such as Marion, and Sullivan.

While access to these surface lots may be provided from those streets, it is preferred that parking lots not be developed in front setbacks along Marion Avenue, and Sullivan Street. Where parking is developed fronting on other streets in the retail district it should be landscaped and screened with trees and shrubs.

Before adopting a concept as outlined above, or undertaking any change to the parking regulations, the CRA should undertake a special parking study of the downtown retail district to assess the current utilization of parking spaces, and evaluate current and future parking needs. With that data in hand the CRA and City can determine the extent to which existing parking regulations should be changed.

4.0 Implementation

4.1 Project Definition

This report identifies a number of projects for the CRA to implement over the coming years. Some of these projects are considered to be of major importance - in that they will provide the basis for significant enhancement of the image and functionality of downtown. Other projects are considered "supportive" of the major concepts, and of slightly less importance to the overall improvement of downtown. The following is a list of the "Major" and "Supportive" projects identified in this report. Individual projects are not listed in order of importance or sequence.

Major Projects

East Side Neighborhood

1. Assist in acquisition of vacant land in the East Side neighborhood for construction of new residences
2. Assist in establishing a Community Development Corporation (CDC) as a means to construct new affordable housing in the East Side neighborhood.
3. Improve Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard as proposed in preceding sections of this plan.
4. Improve the Oak Tree Village public housing site through architectural renovations and site design enhancements as proposed in this plan.
5. Upgrade and improve the facilities at the Cooper Street Recreation Center.
6. Undertake an area-wide storm drainage study to determine the extent and nature of surface water drainage problems in the neigh-

borhood and recommend solutions. Implement the recommended improvements identified in the study.

7. Develop a grant and/or loan program to assist existing homeowners with improvements to the houses and properties.

Retail District

1. Assist in the expansion of unique retail shops along Sullivan Street through new infill construction.
2. Assist in developing an interior-block parking scheme for the Sullivan Street corridor.
3. Continue the brick street and pedestrian enhancements of Sullivan Street between West Virginia Street and the Charlotte County Memorial Auditorium.
4. Enhance West Retta Esplanade between Taylor Street and U. S. 41 southbound.
5. Work with the County to improve the waterfront edge of the Memorial Auditorium site as part of the implementation of the continuous waterfront walkway.
6. Work with the County to further explore and develop the concept for development of the Herald Court project as described in this plan.
7. Continue to work with the owner of the Punta Gorda Harbor project to ensure the implementation of active waterfront uses.
8. Further explore the design, and implement additional pedestrian-oriented streetscape enhancements along West Marion Street.

9. Develop a wayfinding and consistent graphic signage plan for the downtown retail district.

10. Undertake a special parking study of the retail district to determine the future needs for on and off street parking and develop specific recommendations for implementation of the recommended parking plan.

Supportive Projects East Side Neighborhood

1. Extend Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard as proposed in the plan to reconnect the residential neighborhoods on either side of the railroad tracks.

2. Revitalize the public housing site south of the railroad tracks as a mixed-income community with new residences.

3. Assist in the development of neighborhood-serving retail commercial at the intersection of Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and Virginia Street, when the neighborhood population is expanded and can support retail services in that location.

4. Improve the community's perception of the East Side neighborhood by developing historical interpretive materials - such as the inclusion of sections in the City's public relations materials that describe the historical context of the East Side neighborhood, and installation of interpretive displays as part of the proposed enhancements to Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard

5. Further explore through a follow-on design study, the potential for developing small mini-parks along East Marion Avenue, at the

Milus, Mary and Booth Street intersections.

6. Further explore the construction of waterfront viewing platforms at the Milus, Mary and Booth Street-ends.

7. Work with the County to design and implement an improved cross-section for Cooper Street along the CRA boundary.

Retail District

1. Continue to explore the opportunities for redevelopment of the Punta Gorda Shopping Mall site, with the owner of the property.

2. Continue to implement the continuous waterfront walkway through improvements to the bridge underpasses.

3. Further refine the Art Around Town program as to the location and site requirements for placement of art in public places.

4. Continue to implement the brick streets program as originally conceived.

4.2 Project Costs

The implementation of the many concepts discussed in the preceding sections will depend to a large extent on actions that are not entirely within the control of the CRA. The future outcome of the proposed development of the Memorial Auditorium site and the old Charlotte County Courthouse site will depend on coordination with the County. Of the actions discussed in the preceding sections, the following four have been considered significant enough to proceed with preliminary cost estimating.

For each of these "project areas" the following preliminary costs have been estimated. The costs presented are for planning and budgeting purposes only, and do not represent specific design cost estimates.

Sullivan Street

The preliminary budget estimate for proposed improvements to Sullivan Street is \$725,000 as indicated below.

Sullivan Street Cost Estimate					
ITEM	QUANTITY	UNIT	UNIT COST	ITEM TOTAL	REMARKS
Clearing & Grubbing	1.2	AC	\$6,440.00	\$7,728.00	
Limerock Base	4,947	SY	\$6.00	\$29,682.00	6" thick
Curb & Gutter	1,820	LF	\$10.00	\$18,200.00	Type "F"
Curb	250	LF	\$7.00	\$1,750.00	6" x 12"
Street Paving	21,840	SF	\$11.00	\$240,240.00	Brick pavers/sandset
Intersection Paving	4,690	SF	\$20.00	\$93,800.00	Special Pavers
Pedestrian Paving	18,000	SF	\$8.00	\$144,000.00	Brick pavers/sandset
Concrete sidewalk	0	SF	\$5.50	\$0.00	4"
Seal Pavers	44,530	SF	\$0.20	\$8,906.00	
Pedestrian Lum. / Pole	28	LS	\$3,500.00	\$98,000.00	Signature Luminaire
Benches	4	EA	\$1,600.00	\$6,400.00	
Trash Receptacle	6	EA	\$650.00	\$3,900.00	
Street Trees	36	EA	\$500.00	\$18,000.00	Oaks
Palm Trees	16	EA	\$800.00	\$12,800.00	Signature Palms
Irrigation	832	SF	\$0.50	\$416.00	
Irrigation Controler	1	EA	\$4,000.00	\$4,000.00	Maxicom Satelite
Mulch	832	SY	\$4.13	\$3,436.16	
SUBTOTAL				\$691,258.16	
Contingency				\$34,562.91	5%
TOTAL				\$725,821.07	

Key:

AC = Acres
 SY = Square Yards
 LF = Linear Feet
 SF = Square Feet
 LS = Lump Sum
 EA = Each

Herald Court

The preliminary budget estimate for proposed improvements to Herald Court is \$2,100,000 dollars, as indicated below. These costs do not include any demolition, renovation or new construction associated with the Courthouse building itself.

Herald Court Cost Estimate					
ITEM	QUANTITY	UNIT	UNIT COST	ITEM TOTAL	REMARKS
Clearing & Grubbing	2.5	AC	\$6,440.00	\$16,100.00	
Limerock Base	10,181	SY	\$6.00	\$61,086.00	6" thick
Curb & Gutter	0	LF	\$10.00	\$0.00	Type "F"
Curb	1,820	LF	\$7.00	\$12,740.00	6" x 12"
Square Paving	100,790	SF	\$11.00	\$1,108,690.00	Brick pavers/sandset
Concrete sidewalk	0	SF	\$5.50	\$0.00	4"
Seal Pavers	100,790	SF	\$0.20	\$20,158.00	
Pedestrian Lum. / Pole	28	LS	\$3,500.00	\$98,000.00	Signature Luminaire
Benches	8	EA	\$1,600.00	\$12,800.00	
Trash Receptacle	8	EA	\$650.00	\$5,200.00	
Street Trees	44	EA	\$500.00	\$22,000.00	Oaks
Palm Trees	4	EA	\$800.00	\$3,200.00	Signature Palms
Florida Garden	18,500	SF	\$30.00	\$555,000.00	Native Florida Plants
Turf	0	SF	\$0.75	\$0.00	St. Augustine
Irrigation	18,608	SF	\$0.50	\$9,304.00	
Irrigation Controler	1	EA	\$4,000.00	\$4,000.00	Maxicom Satellite
Mulch	18,608	SY	\$4.13	\$76,851.04	
Gazebo	1	EA	\$100,000.00	\$100,000.00	
SUBTOTAL				\$2,005,129.04	
Contingency				\$100,256.45	5%
TOTAL				\$2,105,385.49	

Memorial Auditorium Site Improvements

The preliminary budget estimate for proposed improvements to the Memorial Auditorium site are \$3,200,000 dollars, as shown below. These costs are based on improvements described in preceding sections of this report.

Memorial Auditorium Site Improvements Cost Estimate					
ITEM	QUANTITY	UNIT	UNIT COST	ITEM TOTAL	REMARKS
Clearing & Grubbing	9.5	AC	\$6,440.00	\$61,180.00	
Limerock Base	67,555	SY	\$6.00	\$405,330.00	6" thick
Road	14,855	SY	\$14.00		
Curb & Gutter	1,200	LF	\$10.00	\$12,000.00	Type "F"
Curb	3,500	LF	\$7.00	\$24,500.00	6" x 12"
Museum Entry Paving	8,400	SF	\$20.00	\$168,000.00	Stone/Brick pavers
Park Pedestrian Paving	44,300	SF	\$11.00	\$487,300.00	Brick pavers/sandset
Concrete sidewalk	0	SF	\$5.50	\$0.00	4"
Seal Pavers	52,700	SF	\$0.30	\$15,810.00	
Pedestrian Lum. / Pole	67	LS	\$3,500.00	\$234,500.00	Signature Luminaire
Benches	30	EA	\$1,600.00	\$48,000.00	
Trash Receptacle	30	EA	\$650.00	\$19,500.00	
Street Trees	34	EA	\$500.00	\$17,000.00	Oaks
Parking Lot Trees	74	EA	\$400.00	\$29,600.00	
Palm Trees	90	EA	\$800.00	\$72,000.00	Signature Palms
Shrubs/Groundcovers	50,000	SF	\$15.00	\$750,000.00	Native Florida Plants
Turf	85,832	SF	\$0.75	\$64,374.00	St. Augustine
Landscape Lighting	1	Allow	\$20,000.00	\$20,000.00	
Irrigation	137,306	SF	\$0.50	\$68,653.00	
Irrigation Controler	1	EA	\$4,000.00	\$4,000.00	Maxicom Satellite
Mulch	137,306	SY	\$4.13	\$567,073.78	
Sound System	1	Allow	\$30,000.00	\$30,000.00	
Pavillion	1	Allow	\$100,000.00	\$100,000.00	
SUBTOTAL				\$3,068,820.78	
Contingency				\$153,441.04	5%
TOTAL				\$3,222,261.82	

Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard Improvements

The preliminary combined budget estimate for proposed improvements to MLK Boulevard is approximately \$1,200,000 dollars, as shown below for each individual block.

Block 1

BLOCK 1) E. Marion Ave. to E. Olympia Ave.					
ITEM	QUANTITY	UNIT	UNIT COST	ITEM TOTAL	REMARKS
Clearing & Grubbing	0.7	AC	\$6,440.00	\$4,508.00	
Limerock Base	1,617	SY	\$6.00	\$9,702.00	4" thick
Road/Bike Path	1,617	SY	\$14.00	\$22,638.00	Asphalt
Curb & Gutter	890	LF	\$10.00	\$8,900.00	Type "F"
Curb	820	LF	\$7.00	\$5,740.00	6" x 12"
Commemorative Sidewalk	4,770	SF	\$11.00	\$52,470.00	4" & 8" pavers/sandset
Concrete sidewalk	4,040	SF	\$5.50	\$22,220.00	4"
Clean & Seal Pavers	4,770	SF	\$0.30	\$1,431.00	
Pedestrian Lum. / Pole	16	LS	\$3,500.00	\$56,000.00	Match Lyric Plaza
Benches	4	EA	\$1,600.00	\$6,400.00	
Trash Receptacle	4	EA	\$650.00	\$2,600.00	
Street Trees	28	EA	\$500.00	\$14,000.00	Oaks
Palm Trees	28	EA	\$800.00	\$22,400.00	Royal Palms
Shrubs / Ground Cover	2,760	SF	\$6.50	\$17,940.00	3 gal.
Turf	3,280	SF	\$0.75	\$2,460.00	St. Augustine
Mulch	2,760	SY	\$4.13	\$11,398.80	
SUBTOTAL				\$260,807.80	
Contingency				\$13,040.39	5%
TOTAL				\$273,848.19	

Block 2

BLOCK 2) E. Olympia Ave to Hargreaves Street					
ITEM	QUANTITY	UNIT	UNIT COST	ITEM TOTAL	REMARKS
Clearing & Grubbing	0.31	AC	\$6,440.00	\$1,996.40	
Limerock Base	746	SY	\$6.00	\$4,476.00	4" thick
Road/Bike Path	746	SY	\$14.00	\$10,444.00	Asphalt
Curb & Gutter	420	LF	\$10.00	\$4,200.00	Type "F"
Curb	340	LF	\$7.00	\$2,380.00	6" x 12"
Commemorative Sidewalk	2,340	SF	\$11.00	\$25,740.00	4" & 8" pavers/sandset
Concrete sidewalk	1,920	SF	\$5.50	\$10,560.00	4"
Clean & Seal Pavers	2,340	SF	\$0.30	\$702.00	
Pedestrian Lum. / Pole	8	LS	\$3,500.00	\$28,000.00	Match Lyric Plaza
Benches	2	EA	\$1,600.00	\$3,200.00	
Trash Receptacle	2	EA	\$650.00	\$1,300.00	
Street Trees	12	EA	\$500.00	\$6,000.00	Oaks
Palm Trees	11	EA	\$800.00	\$8,800.00	Royal Palms
Shrubs / Ground Cover	1,200	SF	\$6.50	\$7,800.00	3 gal.
Turf	1,320	SF	\$0.75	\$990.00	St. Augustine
Mulch	1,200	SY	\$4.13	\$4,956.00	
SUBTOTAL				\$121,544.40	
Contingency				\$6,077.22	5%
TOTAL				\$127,621.62	

Block 3

BLOCK 3) Hargreaves Street to E. Virginia Ave.					
ITEM	QUANTITY	UNIT	UNIT COST	ITEM TOTAL	REMARKS
Clearing & Grubbing	0.33	AC	\$6,440.00	\$2,125.20	
Limerock Base	782	SY	\$6.00	\$4,692.00	4" thick
Road/Bike Path	782	SY	\$14.00	\$10,948.00	Asphalt
Curb & Gutter	440	LF	\$10.00	\$4,400.00	Type "F"
Curb	370	LF	\$7.00	\$2,590.00	6" x 12"
Commemorative Sidewalk	2,440	SF	\$11.00	\$26,840.00	4" & 8" pavers/sandset
Concrete sidewalk	2,000	SF	\$5.50	\$11,000.00	4"
Clean & Seal Pavers	2,440	SF	\$0.30	\$732.00	
Pedestrian Lum. / Pole	8	LS	\$3,500.00	\$28,000.00	Match Lyric Plaza
Benches	2	EA	\$1,600.00	\$3,200.00	
Trash Receptacle	2	EA	\$650.00	\$1,300.00	
Street Trees	12	EA	\$500.00	\$6,000.00	Oaks
Palm Trees	11	EA	\$800.00	\$8,800.00	Royal Palms
Shrubs / Ground Cover	1,200	SF	\$6.50	\$7,800.00	3 gal.
Turf	1,400	SF	\$0.75	\$1,050.00	St. Augustine
Mulch	1,200	SY	\$4.13	\$4,956.00	
SUBTOTAL				\$124,433.20	
Contingency				\$6,221.66	5%
TOTAL				\$130,654.86	

Block 4

BLOCK 4) E. Virginia Ave to Fitzhugh Street					
ITEM	QUANTITY	UNIT	UNIT COST	ITEM TOTAL	REMARKS
Clearing & Grubbing	0.33	AC	\$6,440.00	\$2,125.20	
Limerock Base	782	SY	\$6.00	\$4,692.00	4" thick
Road/Bike Path	782	SY	\$14.00	\$10,948.00	Asphalt
Curb & Gutter	440	LF	\$10.00	\$4,400.00	Type "F"
Curb	370	LF	\$7.00	\$2,590.00	6" x 12"
Commemorative Sidewalk	2,460	SF	\$11.00	\$27,060.00	4" & 8" pavers/sandset
Concrete sidewalk	2,040	SF	\$5.50	\$11,220.00	4"
Clean & Seal Pavers	2,460	SF	\$0.30	\$738.00	
Pedestrian Lum. / Pole	8	LS	\$3,500.00	\$28,000.00	Match Lyric Plaza
Benches	2	EA	\$1,600.00	\$3,200.00	
Trash Receptacle	2	EA	\$650.00	\$1,300.00	
Street Trees	12	EA	\$500.00	\$6,000.00	Oaks
Palm Trees	12	EA	\$800.00	\$9,600.00	Royal Palms
Shrubs / Ground Cover	1,200	SF	\$6.50	\$7,800.00	3 gal.
Turf	1,480	SF	\$0.75	\$1,110.00	St. Augustine
Mulch	1,200	SY	\$4.13	\$4,956.00	
SUBTOTAL				\$125,739.20	
Contingency				\$6,286.96	5%
TOTAL				\$132,026.16	

Block 5

BLOCK 5) Fitzhugh Street to E. Charlotte Ave.					
ITEM	QUANTITY	UNIT	UNIT COST	ITEM TOTAL	REMARKS
Clearing & Grubbing	0.34	AC	\$6,440.00	\$2,189.60	
Limerock Base	800	SY	\$6.00	\$4,800.00	4" thick
Road/Bike Path	800	SY	\$14.00	\$11,200.00	Asphalt
Curb & Gutter	440	LF	\$10.00	\$4,400.00	Type "F"
Curb	340	LF	\$7.00	\$2,380.00	6" x 12"
Commemorative Sidewalk	2,440	SF	\$11.00	\$26,840.00	4" & 8" pavers/sandset
Concrete sidewalk	2,000	SF	\$5.50	\$11,000.00	4"
Clean & Seal Pavers	2,440	SF	\$0.30	\$732.00	
Pedestrian Lum. / Pole	8	LS	\$3,500.00	\$28,000.00	Match Lyric Plaza
Benches	2	EA	\$1,600.00	\$3,200.00	
Trash Receptacle	2	EA	\$650.00	\$1,300.00	
Street Trees	12	EA	\$500.00	\$6,000.00	Oaks
Palm Trees	11	EA	\$800.00	\$8,800.00	Royal Palms
Shrubs / Ground Cover	1,200	SF	\$6.50	\$7,800.00	3 gal.
Turf	1,360	SF	\$0.75	\$1,020.00	St. Augustine
Mulch	1,200	SY	\$4.13	\$4,956.00	
SUBTOTAL				\$124,617.60	
Contingency				\$6,230.88	5%
TOTAL				\$130,848.48	

Block 6

BLOCK 6) E. Charlotte Ave. to Helen Ave.					
ITEM	QUANTITY	UNIT	UNIT COST	ITEM TOTAL	REMARKS
Clearing & Grubbing	0.68	AC	\$6,440.00	\$4,379.20	
Limerock Base	1,600	SY	\$6.00	\$9,600.00	4" thick
Road/Bike Path	1,600	SY	\$14.00	\$22,400.00	Asphalt
Curb & Gutter	880	LF	\$10.00	\$8,800.00	Type "F"
Curb	800	LF	\$7.00	\$5,600.00	6" x 12"
Commemorative Sidewalk	4,780	SF	\$11.00	\$52,580.00	4" & 8" pavers/sandset
Concrete sidewalk	4,000	SF	\$5.50	\$22,000.00	4"
Clean & Seal Pavers	4,780	SF	\$0.30	\$1,434.00	
Pedestrian Lum. / Pole	16	LS	\$3,500.00	\$56,000.00	Match Lyric Plaza
Benches	4	EA	\$1,600.00	\$6,400.00	
Trash Receptacle	4	EA	\$650.00	\$2,600.00	
Street Trees	26	EA	\$500.00	\$13,000.00	Oaks
Palm Trees	27	EA	\$800.00	\$21,600.00	Royal Palms
Shrubs / Ground Cover	2,700	SF	\$6.50	\$17,550.00	3 gal.
Turf	3,520	SF	\$0.75	\$2,640.00	St. Augustine
Mulch	2,700	SY	\$4.13	\$11,151.00	
SUBTOTAL				\$257,734.20	
Contingency				\$12,886.71	5%
TOTAL				\$270,620.91	

Block 7

BLOCK 7) Helen Ave. to Ida Ave					
ITEM	QUANTITY	UNIT	UNIT COST	ITEM TOTAL	REMARKS
Clearing & Grubbing	0.43	AC	\$6,440.00	\$2,769.20	
Limerock Base	995	SY	\$6.00	\$5,970.00	4" thick
Road/Bike Path	995	SY	\$14.00	\$13,930.00	Asphalt
Curb & Gutter	520	LF	\$10.00	\$5,200.00	Type "F"
Curb	460	LF	\$7.00	\$3,220.00	6" x 12"
Commemorative Sidewalk	2,610	SF	\$11.00	\$28,710.00	4" & 8" pavers/sandset
Concrete sidewalk	2,560	SF	\$5.50	\$14,080.00	4"
Clean & Seal Pavers	2,610	SF	\$0.30	\$783.00	
Pedestrian Lum. / Pole	9	LS	\$3,500.00	\$31,500.00	Match Lyric Plaza
Benches	3	EA	\$1,600.00	\$4,800.00	
Trash Receptacle	3	EA	\$650.00	\$1,950.00	
Street Trees	17	EA	\$500.00	\$8,500.00	Oaks
Palm Trees	16	EA	\$800.00	\$12,800.00	Royal Palms
Shrubs / Ground Cover	1,600	SF	\$6.50	\$10,400.00	3 gal.
Turf	1,880	SF	\$0.75	\$1,410.00	St. Augustine
Mulch	1,600	SY	\$4.13	\$6,608.00	
SUBTOTAL				\$152,630.20	
Contingency				\$7,631.51	5%
TOTAL				\$160,261.71	

Summary

ITEM	ITEM TOTAL
Block 1	\$273,848.19
Block 2	\$127,621.62
Block 3	\$130,654.86
Block 4	\$132,026.00
Block 5	\$130,848.00
Block 6	\$270,621.00
Block 7	\$160,261.00
GRAND TOTAL	\$1,225,880.67

4.3 Development Sequence Considerations

To a great extent, the implementation sequence for the actions proposed in the plan will depend on public priorities and funding availability. In some instances, the sequence of actions must be considered, so that future actions are not comprised or precluded. The development of streetscape improvements around the Punta Gorda Shopping Mall should probably be undertaken only when the future prospects for development of that property are better known. In similar fashion, improvements to the Memorial Auditorium site should not be undertaken until the County has made a firm commitment to the continuation of that facility and function. Also, the improvements to Herald Court will depend on the determination of the future use of the Courthouse. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard streetscape improvements, unlike the others just mentioned, can be undertaken independent of other actions, except for the overall storm drainage study. The outcome of that study will be necessary input to the design of the proposed streetscape improvements.

The determination of a priority sequence for implementation of the proposed projects will be a decision of the CRA based on the need to balance considerations of cost, need etc. From a purely planning perspective, the following proposed projects are suggested as appropriate for "early action" implementation - within the first five years following adoption of the plan:

East Side Neighborhood

Improve Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard as proposed in preceding sections of this plan.

Improve the Oak Tree Village public housing site through architectural renovations and site design enhancements as proposed in this plan.

Develop a grant and/or loan program to assist existing homeowners with improvements to the houses and properties.

Assist in establishing a Community Development Corporation (CDC) as a means to construct new affordable housing in the East Side neighborhood.

Retail District

Assist in the expansion of unique retail shops along Sullivan Street through new infill construction.

Assist in developing an interior-block parking scheme for the Sullivan Street corridor.

Continue the brick street and pedestrian enhancements of Sullivan Street between West Virginia Street and the Charlotte County Memorial Auditorium.

Work with the County to further explore and develop the concept for development of the Herald Court project as described in this plan.

Continue to work with the owner of the Punta Gorda Harbor project to ensure the implementation of active waterfront uses.

Further explore the design, and implement additional pedestrian-oriented streetscape enhancements along West Marion Street.

4.4 1990 Redevelopment Plan Recommendations

The following plan recommendations from the 1990 Redevelopment Plan have been identified by City Planning staff as being still relevant to the implementation of the recommendations of that study. They are listed below for inclusion as part of the implementation of the recommendations of this plan.

Linear Park

The City/CRA will develop the old abandoned railroad right-of-way as a linear park, to include a walkway / bikepath, drainage improvements, and public recreation facilities."

Mangrove Park

The City/CRA will examine the mangrove area contained in Blocks A-E and 1 for purchase and use as a passive waterfront park, riverwalk/bicycle path, and public-boating access.

Public Boat Ramp

The City/CRA will undertake a site study for a new boat ramp somewhere in or near the redevelopment area."

Land Development Regulation Changes

Modified as follows: The City should undertake a review of commercial zoning regulations in the Central business district to determine modifications that will support and encourage the retail commercial functions desired in the proposed retail district.

Vending Cart Program

The City/CRA will consider expansion of its vending cart program to include specific location designations in the redevelopment area. As with the current vending cart guidelines for Gilchrist Park, the City Council should retain special exception approval of such an activity.

West Marion and Olympia Streetscape enhancements

The City/CRA will consider further enhancement to the pedestrian streetscapes on West Marion and Olympia as part of the efforts described in this plan to upgrade the overall character and quality of the retail district..

Brick Street Program

The City/CRA will consider continuation of the brick street program as recommended by this plan update

4.5 Funding Sources

The implementation of the many projects and programs listed previously in this section will likely require the CRA to tap numerous funding sources. The following is a list of candidate sources. To the extent possible, the CRA should seek to use other available funds so as to make the maximum use of the tax increment funds directly generated within the CRA district itself.

1. CRA bonds: The CRA can issue bonds for capital improvements based on the future income of the Redevelopment Trust Fund. This is typically the major way CRA's fund capital improvements. The best way to ensure an increasing availability of funds for this purpose is to promote additional development within the CRA that will increase the tax base and thereby increase the potential bonding capacity of the CRA.

2. City funds: City general funds could be used to support programs of the CRA that are of City-wide benefit.

3. County funds: County-generated funds could legitimately be used on the two County owned properties described in the plan -

the Charlotte County Memorial Auditorium and the old County Court House.

4. Grants: State grants for cultural facilities may be appropriate to pursue for the renovation of the County Court House. The federal HOPE VI program is a grant program for Housing Authorities to revitalize severely distressed public housing sites, and create new mixed-income communities.

5. Business Improvement District: Creation of a business improvement district is one way that many communities use to fund specific improvements as well as maintenance within retail districts. These entities are funded by the property owners within the designated district.

Appendix 1.0
Background Data and Analysis Maps