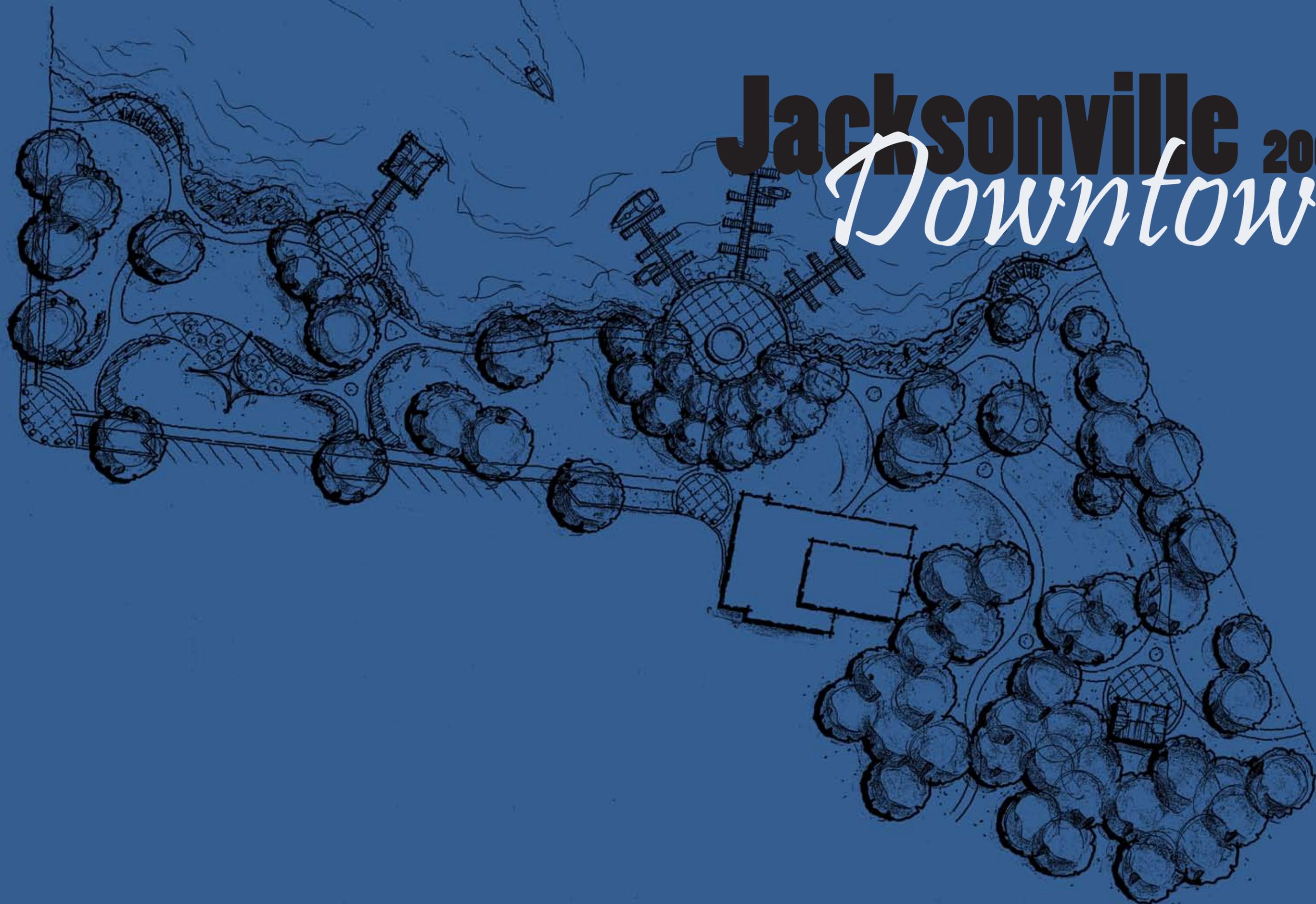


Jacksonville 2007 *Downtown*



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ONLOW COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1	5: TRANSPORTATION & PARKING	56
2: INTRODUCTION & ANALYSIS	5	5.1 Introduction	57
2.1 A Brief History of Jacksonville	6	5.2 Existing Conditions	58
2.2 Previous Planning Efforts	7	5.3 Streets & Boulevards	60
2.3 Sturgeon City	9	5.4 Pedestrian Facilities	65
2.4 The Onslow County Jail	13	5.5 Bicycle Facilities	66
2.5 Ripe and Firm Analysis	14	5.6 Parking	68
2.6 Figure/Ground Analysis Diagram	15	6: PLANNING AREAS	69
2.7 Comparison Diagrams	16	6.1 The Conceptual Plan	70
2.8 Pedestrian Analysis	17	6.2 Chaney Avenue/ New Bridge Middle School	71
2.9 Environmental Analysis	18	6.3 New Bridge Street/Eastern Gateway	74
2.10 Existing Zoning	19	6.4 Bayshore Estates	77
2.11 Market Analysis-Existing Condition	20	6.5 Johnson Boulevard/Chaney Heights	78
2.12 A Critical Assessment	23	6.6 Riverfront North	81
3: CIVIC DIALOGUE AND PARTICIPATION	25	6.7 Riverfront/Courthouse	83
3.1 Charrette Preparation	26	6.8 Mill Avenue/Riverwalk Crossing Park	88
3.2 Kickoff Workshop and Tour	27	6.9 Court Street/Sturgeon City	91
3.3 Charrette Schedule	28	7: DEVELOPMENT IMPACT ANALYSIS	93
3.4 Charrette Media	29	7.1 Development Totals	94
3.5 Charrette Participation	30	7.2 Final Market Analysis - Summary	95
3.6 The Charrette	31	7.3 Final Market Analysis - Retail	96
3.7 Charrette Deliverables	32	7.4 Final Market Analysis - Office	97
4: GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS	33	7.5 Final Market Analysis - Housing	98
4.1 Leadership & Organization	34	7.6 Final Market Analysis - General Comments	100
4.2 Marketing & Branding	36	A1: PLACE GAME RESULTS	101
4.3 Government Buildings	37		
4.4 Building Placement & Design	38		
4.5 Lighting	39		
4.6 Storefront Signage & Murals	40		
4.7 Parks & Public Space	41		
4.8 Public Art	44		
4.9 Landscaping	45		
4.10 Wayfinding & Signage	46		
4.11 Retailing	47		
4.12 Housing	48		
4.13 Historic Preservation	50		
4.14 Sustainable Design	51		
4.15 The Regulating Plan	53		
4.16 Zoning Changes	55		



1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE PAST

When the *Downtown Jacksonville Revitalization Plan* was adopted in 1998, the New River was nearly devoid of life and it was considered unhealthy for human contact. The Court Street area had recently transitioned from being the “red light” bar and entertainment district for young Marines to a series of empty storefronts. And, construction had not yet begun on the US 17 bypass.

Fast forward ten years and there is a much different picture. . . in some respects. The US 17 bypass has been completed taking a large volume of traffic away from Marine Boulevard, Johnson Boulevard as well as the downtown area. The Riverwalk Crossing Park was completed in 2002 and began hosting a series of very successful community-wide events, most notably the Riverwalk Festival. The hugely successful Wilson Bay Initiative has led to the establishment of Sturgeon City at the City’s former waste water treatment center and restored life to the New River in less than five years. (It is likely that the rise of this effort drew from the resources and attention of the previous downtown plan, but necessarily so. Further environmental damage by the waste treatment center was not morally acceptable and needed to be corrected.)

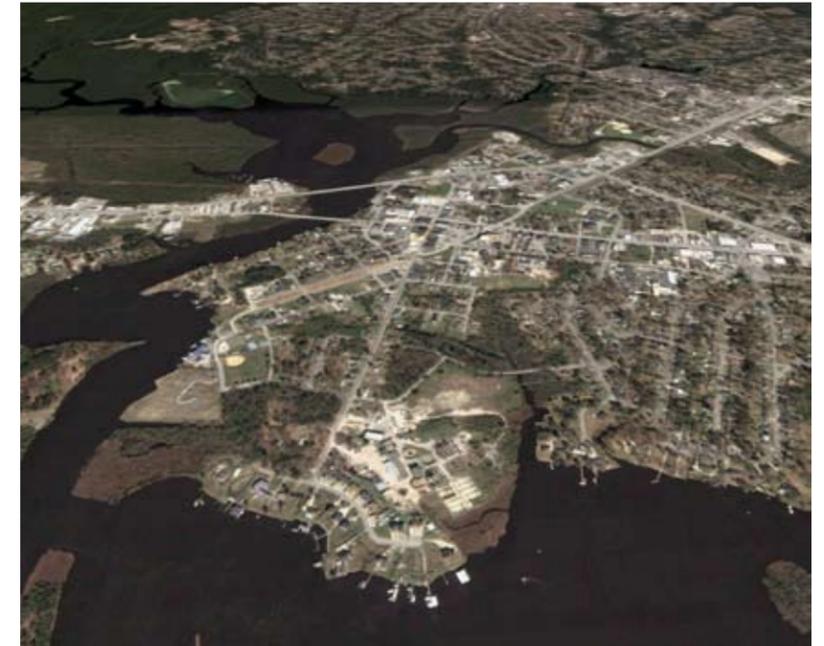
Yet, decline continued in the downtown core with storefronts remaining either vacant or occupied by office tenants, most notably the County government. And recently, the tension in the community has been raised by the proposal and eventual decision to construct a five story jail in the block behind the old courthouse.

THE FUTURE

This plan was commissioned in January, 2007 to serve as both an update of the *Revitalization Plan* as well as an opportunity to look at this area with fresh eyes given the number of changes that have occurred beyond the assumptions of the 1998 plan.

In many respects, this plan is a radical departure from the previous effort. Where the previous effort focused on large public infrastructure projects (streetscapes and parks) and even larger private projects (hotels, convention centers, and large office buildings) this plan is charting a much different course.

The future envisioned for the next twenty years views is one of vibrant interconnected neighborhoods and pedestrian-friendly, locally-serving services and shops. The Court Street/Old Bridge Street has completed its transformation into a formalized government district. Small shops and offices thrive along New Bridge Street with their easy accessibility by foot or by car from the surrounding neighborhoods. Hundreds of new homes in all different forms have been constructed. The public has gained almost 1/2 mile of frontage along the main channel of the river with a continuous boardwalk connecting from a new full service hotel to the Mill Avenue Historic District. Sturgeon City has completed its exhibition and education facilities, opening its doors to thousands of visitors, students, and researchers each month from across the country and the world.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There are five fundamental tenets that are necessary to achieve this vision.

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE RIVER

In short, the *2007 Jacksonville Downtown Master Plan* suggests that a new focus be created, one that centers on the principle natural resource that defines the geography of this area—the New River. Ten years ago the river was a heavily polluted waterway that could not sustain aquatic life or support sustained human contact. Today, the Wilson Bay Initiative and Sturgeon City present an exciting program of ecological sustainability that shows how focused stewardship can reclaim a jewel.

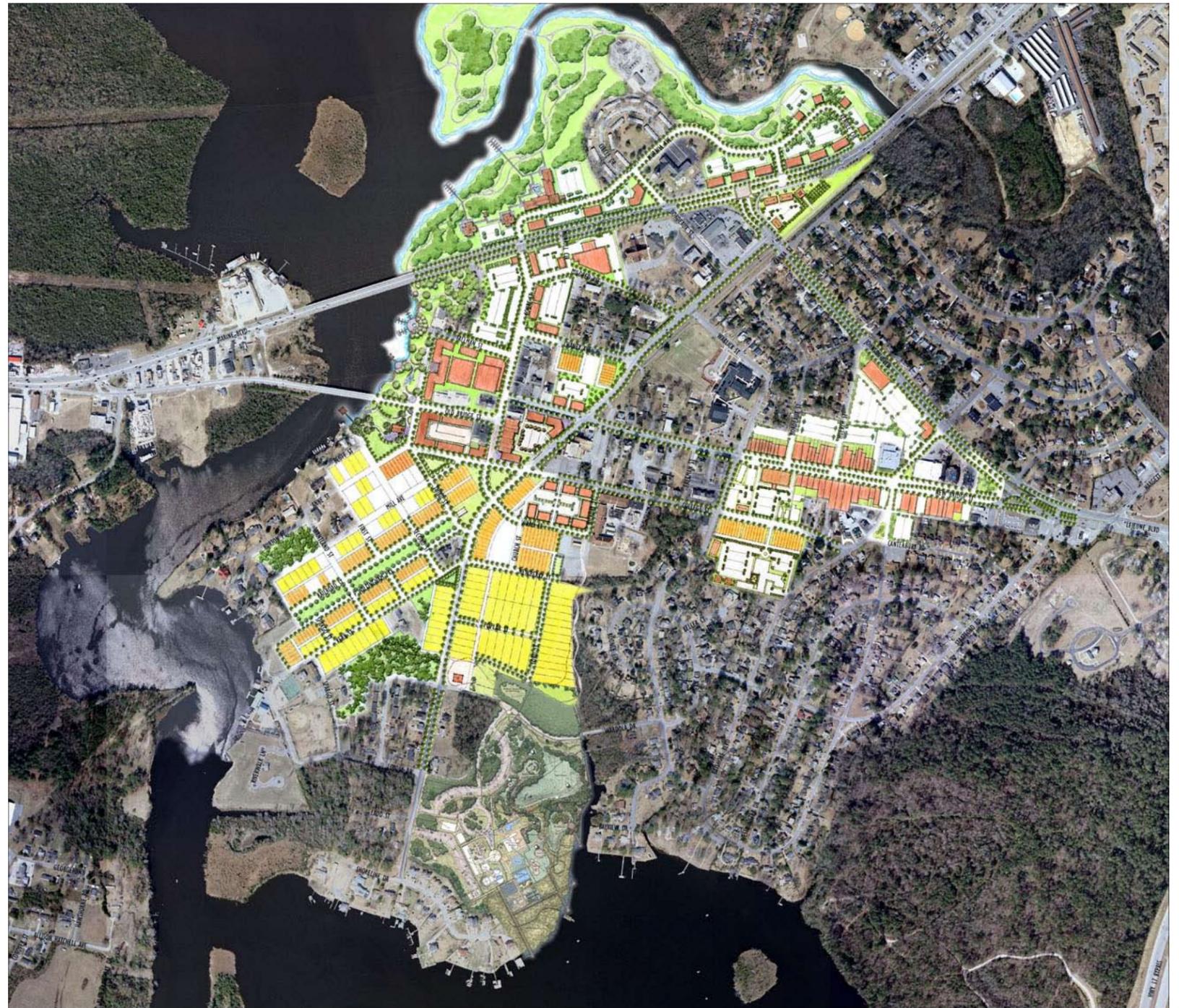
Now that it has been restored biologically, the next step is to reclaim public accessibility, both visual and physical, so that the river can once again be shared by residents and visitors. Tourism is one of the top industries in Onslow County, in part because of the thousands of families who visit their Marinas. Activities along the river—riverboats, kayaks, boardwalks, parks, and activities at the USO—create an opportunity to capitalize on an audience that is seeking out recreation and entertainment.

The river must, therefore, be rigorously guarded and protected. Where possible, views of the river should be opened to the public, not secluded in the backyards of private buildings. Every public project, every new development, every initiative must ask how it will impact the river, its quality, its accessibility, and its serenity. Projects that will have negative impact, visually or physically, must be reconsidered. Downtown Swansboro has proven that even a small amount of frontage on the water can yield enormous dividends. Jacksonville has the same potential.

CLEAR OUT THE BLIGHT

Based on the market study, there is a clear oversupply of tenant space in the downtown. Much of this under-utilized space is in vacant, utilitarian, or otherwise sub-standard buildings that have little character. Every so often a community needs to open its windows and air out the house. For other cities, this equates to investments in streetscapes, facade reconstruction, or new awnings or signage. In Jacksonville's case, a number of blocks should be considered for demolition as a means to eliminate visual eyesores and to better market redevelopment opportunities.

There are a few historic structures and buildings that have received a level of investment that would justify their preservation. Otherwise, the City and B.O.L.D. should focus their resources on the acquisition, demolition, and resale of these blighted properties. This plan recommends that much of the redevelopment of these properties take the form of mixed-use buildings or urban-scale housing.



▲ THE CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FOCUS ON THE NEIGHBORHOODS

The quality of any urban environment is judged not only by the destination—what you find when you arrive—but also by the journey: what you walk or drive by to get there. When it comes to urban environments, the most successful areas are those where the neighborhoods are healthy and thriving, and where new development regularly exceeds market expectations. In truth, successful neighborhoods are those where the intrinsic property values are measured not by the size of the home, but by the quality of the place.

Older neighborhoods like Bayshore Estates, Chaney Heights, and the Mill Avenue Historic District must be protected and preserved. New high quality infill housing must be encouraged throughout the area. Mid-density urban-scale housing should line the Riverwalk Crossing Park to maximize the value of this public asset as well as to provide the greatest number of potential users in close proximity.

Children should be able to walk to school; young mothers stroll to the playground; and active adults take their evening walk along a safe and interesting route, perhaps stopping along the way to shop or eat.

DESTINATION, STURGEON CITY

No other facility has the potential to attract more people to the downtown area than does Sturgeon City. Sturgeon City offers a promise of a facility that will serve as a regional education center for all ages and a bona fide eco-tourism destination.

Signage and wayfinding should be installed to direct visitors; streetscapes should be installed to visually enhance the journey; and key gateways and corridors should be improved to provide clear routes to this facility. This effort should also include the renaming and realignment of Chaney Avenue/Railroad Street/Court Street to create Sturgeon City Parkway to create a single corridor leading to the eco-campus, including the completion of the gap in the multi-use trail system between the Middle School and the Thompson School.

Marketing efforts should be co-branded with the downtown and the riverfront to build continued identification of Sturgeon City to the community, to the region, and to the world. Public art, wall murals, and other visible emblems should be placed liberally throughout the downtown area and the greater community as a means to build continued brand identity with Sturgeon City and to recast the downtown as a gateway to this resource.

HOUSING, TOURISM, AND THEN SHOPPING

At this time, the promotion of new business, particularly new retail shops and restaurants is putting the cart before the horse. The area lacks a sufficient resident population, visibility, and traffic to sustain a lively retail environment. Only when the overall population of the area increases and the successes of the various tourist destinations take hold can an effective campaign to promote new commercial investment be implemented.

The key to a successful retailing environment is a function of two primary factors: a sufficient population within 1-3 miles and traffic generated by series of anchors to draw people to the area. New housing will bring more people to the area that can either walk or take a short car trip to their destination. And, the emerging collection of cultural offerings in the immediate area including the Beirut Memorial, the Museum of the Marine, and Sturgeon City will attract thousands of tourists to this area looking for quality shops and restaurants. Retail will come but it will follow, not lead the rooftops.

Importantly, the various cultural attractions - the Beirut Memorial, the Museum of the Marine, and Sturgeon City - must have a clear, visual connection with signage and streetscaping along Lejeune Boulevard and cooperative marketing.

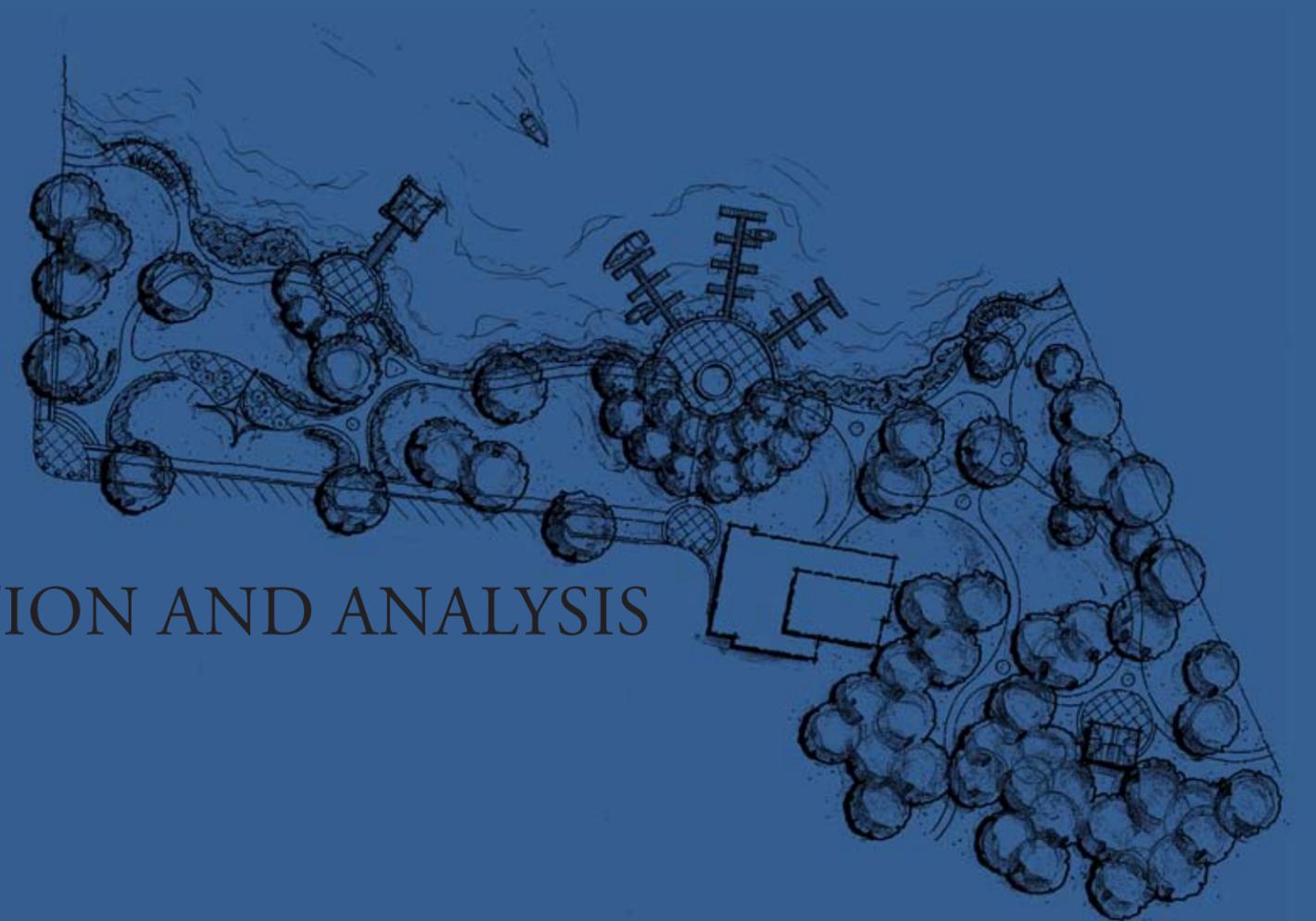
And once the market is established for retail to return to New Bridge Street, the key in fostering commercial success will be in clustering activities within a few blocks. Follow the rule of three: three restaurants (or shops) in a block provide choice to the consumer but also drive traffic to each.

▼ A PROPOSED VIEW
LOOKING SOUTHWEST
DOWN THE RIVERWALK
CROSSING PARK WITH
NEW HOUSING LINING THE
EDGES OF THE PARK



▶ A PROPOSED VIEW
LOOKING NORTH AT
THE RENOVATED AND
EXPANDED FREEDOM PARK





2: INTRODUCTION AND ANALYSIS

2.1 A BRIEF HISTORY OF JACKSONVILLE

The early history of Jacksonville starts with the end of the Tuscarora wars in 1713. The pacification of hostile Native American tribes allowed for permanent settlement of the regions between New Bern and Wilmington. The headwaters of the New River became a center of production for naval stores, particularly turpentine. It is also one of the few rivers in the continental U.S. with its headwaters and mouth in the same county, and one of the few larger rivers that flows almost due south. The New River, as Native American legend has it, was formed after a strong hurricane crossed through Onslow County.

The County of Onslow was formed in 1731 from New Hanover. It was named in honor of Arthur Onslow, who for more than thirty years was speaker of the House of Commons in the British Parliament. In the early years the county Court, which also operated the government, sat at several different locations. After storms, a fire and other calamities destroyed or damaged early courthouses and homes where the court sat, a new courthouse was ordered built at Wantland's Ferry. The downtown waterfront park is built on the site of Wantland's Ferry, with bridges being constructed on either side of the original ferry site. The first court was held there in July 1757. Jacksonville was authorized as a town in 1842 to honor President Andrew Jackson. It was not until 1849 that the town was laid out.

Jacksonville and Onslow County continued to rely on naval stores, lumber, and tobacco crops for industry. Historical writer Bill Sharpe described the time as "the river yielded world-famous oysters and the hogs, world-famous hams." In 1939, Colonel George W. Gillette of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers surveyed and mapped the area from Fort Monroe, Virginia to Fort Sumter, South Carolina which included the Onslow County coastline and the New River. The map is believed to have fostered the interest of the War and Navy Departments in establishing the "World's Most Complete Amphibious Base" in the area. Congressman Graham A. Barden of New Bern lobbied Congress to appropriate funds for the purchase of approximately 100,000 acres along the eastern bank of the New River.

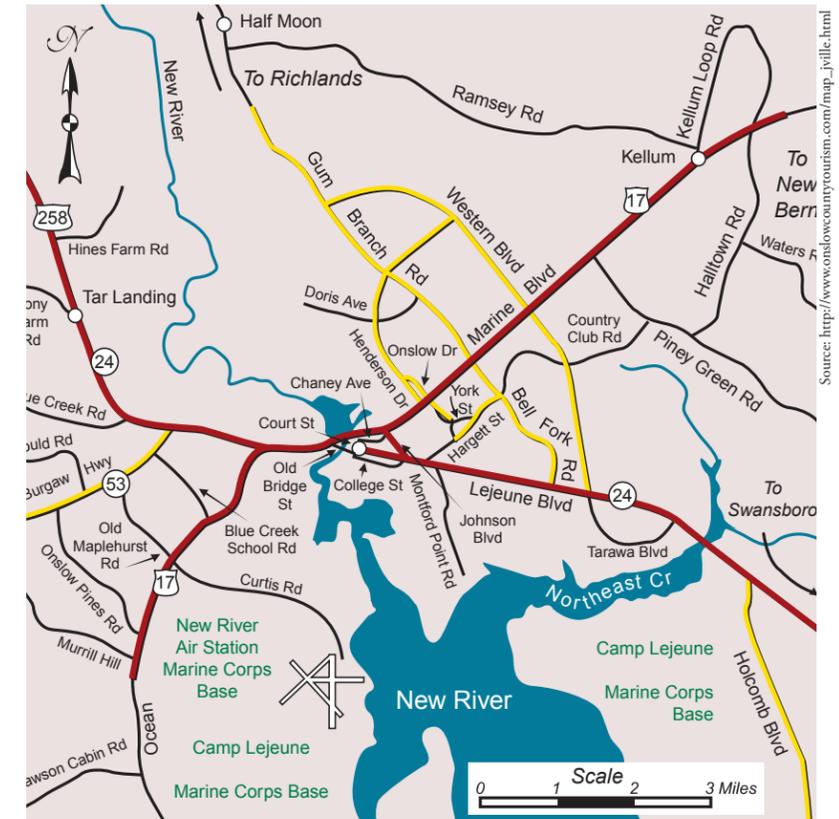
Everything changed after December 15, 1940 when the decision was made to locate Camp Lejeune in Onslow County. Prior to that time, private business was conducted in the county courthouse because there was no other place. Former newspaper and magazine editor Billy Arthur wrote: "Agricultural income was \$4 million from tobacco, corn, peanuts and hams. The fishing industry was comparably profitable." He described the town before Camp Lejeune as quiet and where the most profitable business was operating a restaurant that fed the 10-member Kiwanis Club.

The establishment in 1941 of Marine Barracks, New River, later renamed Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune led to the relocation of 700 families. While the landowners were compensated, many of the families displaced were sharecroppers who did not own the land their houses were built on, and did not receive compensation for their structures. Some African American families were able to purchase property from Raymond Kellum and established the community of Kellumtown. Other displaced families established communities in Georgetown, Pickettown, Bell Fork, and Sandy Run. The latter communities have since been absorbed by Jacksonville. Col. Gillette had planned to retire near the small village of Marines, ironically named after a local family whose surname was Marine, but lost his land to the acquisition as well.

Within a few days, the population doubled from 800, with hundreds more workers coming to the area to work on defense projects as part of the war effort. Property values escalated according to how close they were to the base of operations. The Riverview hotel, where now the USO sits, was taken over by the Navy for the construction headquarters. The Register of Deeds office stayed open late into the night to accommodate the condemnation of land and the recording of the deeds. The USO on Tallman Street, which opened in 1941, is the oldest continuously operating USO in the country.

Today, Jacksonville is the business, retail, medical, banking and cultural hub of Onslow County and home to Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune and Marine Corps Air Station New River. Some 73,121 people (according to State Demographer's Office-certified for 2005) make the city their home with about half the population stationed at Camp Lejeune and the New River Air Station.

Note: Text in this section has been adapted from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacksonville,_North_Carolina and <http://www.ci.jacksonville.nc.us>.



▲ MAP OF THE JACKSONVILLE AREA

2.2 PREVIOUS PLANNING EFFORTS

1998 DOWNTOWN JACKSONVILLE REVITALIZATION PLAN

Prior to this master plan, the most recent master plan to date had been completed by Allison Platt & Associates for the City of Jacksonville in 1998. This plan, entitled the Downtown Jacksonville Revitalization Plan accompanied by its corresponding design guidelines, contained many sound proposals and delineated a path towards revitalization. Unfortunately, for various reasons, many of the 1998 Plan's recommendations failed to be implemented. Nonetheless, a brief survey of its merits is worth mention.

The 1998 Downtown Revitalization Plan represents a broad framework to begin re-building the downtown's infrastructure. As the report notes, Jacksonville "has a rare opportunity to create a legacy for the future." In order for this to begin, however, several key projects must be undertaken. Specifically, the 1998 Plan suggested improving the appearance of downtown so as to distant the area from its seedy past. It called for substantial gateway features, including not just landscaping but definitive buildings, at the Marine Boulevard-Chaney Street and Johnson Boulevard-New Bridge Street intersections. The Plan aptly pointed out that these necessary improvements contained not just aesthetic promise but economic potential as well—for if external perceptions about downtown changed, so, too, could its ability to attract high-quality investment.

Moreover, the Revitalization Plan rightly noted that access to downtown was not an issue but that circulation within caused considerable confusion to patrons, especially visitors. The Plan sought to change these conditions and others through various measures, such as improved way-finding systems and the proposed Anne Street and Old Bridge-New Bridge Street re-alignments that never materialized.

Other notable recommendations included: Extend Chaney Street to waterfront, eliminating Tallman Street; Relocate the boat launch; Redevelop the Iwo Jima theatre; Expand waterfront walkway under Marine bridge and north into new wetlands preserve; and, Provide for future jail expansion on-site, downtown.

Undoubtedly, the Riverwalk Crossing Park remains the 1998 Plan's most outstanding achievement, though it lacks the residential density envisioned by the authors. In general, the Revitalization Plan failed to consider the value of the stable neighborhoods adjacent to downtown. Outside of the Mill Avenue district, it references these areas only in passing, failing to even consider the proximity of Bayshore Estates or the Court Street area as vital to downtown success.

Perhaps most interestingly, the 1998 Plan emphasized the strength of the downtown economy as the driving force for revitalization—given Jacksonville's enduring history as a government center. It called for the expansion of jail facilities and increased prominence of City/County complexes.

Yet, more than these, the Plan fully believed that success in revitalizing downtown revolved around the waterfront's flourishing. Various designs called for less parking and increased public space lined by retail shops along the waterfront. A hotel or large inn with conference facilities was proposed on the former Baptist church site. While various ideas have come and gone, this fact still remains: the river holds the key to downtown Jacksonville's reinvention.

Commentary: The 1998 Plan represented a sound approach to making significant changes to downtown Jacksonville. As noted, with the exception of the Riverwalk Crossing Park, little else was implemented. This is likely due to a number of factors including but not limited to the political acceptance of the plan (City and County), the depressed housing market in this section of the City because of the pollution of the River, and the lack of available property for easy development. Also, the Plan was predicated on a series of very expensive streetscape projects that never found favor amongst an ever growing list of needs throughout the City.



Clockwise from Top: Front cover of 1998 Plan; Conceptual view looking down Court Street; Conceptual view looking east on New Bridge Street; Composite master plan

2.2 PREVIOUS PLANNING EFFORTS

1999 DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR DOWNTOWN JACKSONVILLE, NC

As a companion document to the 1998 Plan, the guidelines produced by Allison Platt & Associates the following year were intended to carry out the vision set forth in the Revitalization Plan. Essentially, they sought to undergird the Plan's conceptual ideas with well-established urban design principles.

Overall, the guidelines offered a solid foundation upon which to build consensus regarding downtown revitalization. The standards outlined balance functions and aesthetics within the downtown well. For instance, they propose appropriately-sized “parking screens” to mitigate against the visual impact of automobiles downtown, encouraging such screens to be constructed of aesthetically-pleasing materials (i.e. brick) while establishing an attractive environment conducive to pedestrian activities. Indeed, the guidelines fittingly propose this and other measures (such as rear-access parking and active ground-level uses) to discourage suburban-style development patterns incongruous to the downtown.

Furthermore, the design guidelines embrace the local and regional architectural vernacular evocative of eastern North Carolina. Far from mandating strict compliance, the report suggests key parameters that honor such tradition while permitting flexibility in design. As such, the guidelines are appropriately concerned with consistency but not uniformity in building patterns throughout the downtown. The design principles establish the manner in which buildings and spaces relate to one another, leaving the opportunity to “enliven building composition” up to the individual owner.

Accordingly, the 1999 Guidelines intentionally advocate the replacement of many post-1940's structures, as these are not historically valuable or financially viable to the downtown. The authors even state that “if buildings are not deemed of significance, there should be no restrictions on their removal as long as new construction follows the design guidelines.” This advice, though bold, aptly characterizes the action needed to transform downtown.

Concerning transportation matters, the guidelines seek to provide mobility for all users. These are highlighted by the provision of wide sidewalks and bike lanes in key areas downtown. While the sidewalks have been implemented to some degree, further efforts are needed—especially around the Courthouse. No bike lanes exist in the downtown even though the guidelines specifically incorporate this transportation feature into many suggested roadway designs.

Commentary: Comprehensive in their scope, these guidelines represent a best practices guide to downtown development practices. Unfortunately, the guidelines were prepared using a narrative format rather than a more concise code format. As a result, there has long been confusion about how to properly implement these guidelines particularly when it came to the “compliance to the greatest extent practical” clause.

And, with virtually no new construction in this area since the adoption of the guidelines, their implementation was often mis-used by local developers to explain this lack of investment. In truth, the lack of available sites and general market forces were probably much more to blame. Though the complexity of the guidelines should not be overlooked. The 44 page document is written with a highly discretionary tone that makes administrative implementation without guidance from an active and informed Appearance or Historic Preservation Commission difficult at best.



Design Guidelines for Downtown Jacksonville, NC

*for
The City of Jacksonville, North Carolina
April, 1999*

*Allison Platt & Associates
Maune Belangia Faulkenberry Architects
Mortar & Ink*

2.3 STURGEON CITY

THE STURGEON CITY STORY

Sturgeon City is part of a commitment made to help restore habitat in Wilson Bay, provide economic redevelopment and to provide environmental education to our citizens to help avoid environmental mistakes of the past.

For forty years, the City of Jacksonville had discharged its treated wastewater into the New River through Wilson Bay. Combined with the other problems of the New River, this left a thick blanket of sludge material on the bottom of the Bay, little to no life in the water column, and a wonderful natural resource that was not being used for recreation, commercial fishing or just visiting.

The City leaders decided to abandon the concept of river discharge, and build an environmentally friendly, expandable and modern land application plant. It costs more than \$50 million and since 1998, all the City's wastewater has been treated by this plant located in the northeast section of Onslow County.

With that decision, City of Jacksonville leaders declared that they had a "moral responsibility to help clean up Wilson Bay." That led to the Wilson Bay Initiative, a program to restore water quality in Wilson Bay. The success of that program led to the consideration of what to do with the old plant; sell it for development, use it for a park, or allow the City's workshops at the site to expand into much needed space.

Instead, the vision of Dr. Jay Levine, a scientist working with the Wilson Bay Initiative, was to use the large tanks to raise Sturgeon. Sturgeon were once native to the New River, but the thick blanket of sludge and pollution along the river, prevented these bottom feeders from returning to spawn.

The idea grew to include a concept; use the former plant as an environmental education center to help prevent the environmental mistakes of the past, make it the headquarters for the City's water quality initiatives and use it as an example of how environmental restoration can be compatible with economic redevelopment.

Today Sturgeon City hosts restored wetlands that help cleanse the waters of Wilson Bay, the first phase of an award-winning park design that provides sweeping vistas of the Wilson Bay and serves as the home to youth and environmental education programs designed to instill appreciation for our community and its people.

Text adapted from www.sturgeoncitiy.org

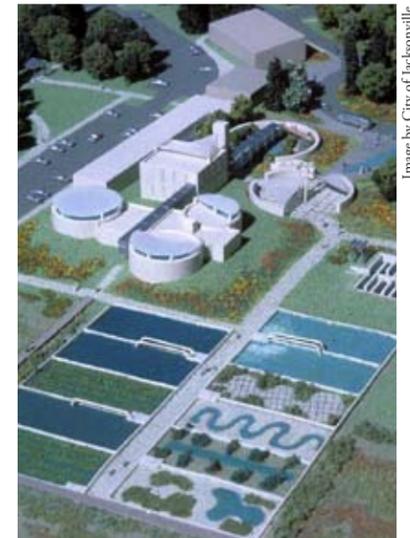


Image by City of Jacksonville

VISION TO REALITY

Tremendous efforts by local citizens and state agencies have been made to improve the quality of the New River. What used to be a negative element for downtown has now become its saving grace. Once complete, Sturgeon City will serve the City of Jacksonville and the surrounding region with a state of the art education center for children of all ages.

2.3 STURGEON CITY

THE CLEAN MACHINE : HOW A NORTH CAROLINA TOWN REVIVED A DEAD WATER BODY — TO THE BENEFIT OF FISH, FOWL, AND HUMANS.

BY CAROLE MOORE

The following article appeared in the March 2007 Edition of Planning Magazine, the Magazine of the American Planning Association and can be found at <http://www.planning.org/planning/member/2007/mar/cleanmachine.htm>

When Horace Mann, AICP, built his dream home, he picked a spot on Wilson Bay in the older part of Jacksonville, North Carolina. Mann's lot is a short distance from the city's former wastewater treatment plant, once the source of effluent so foul that it had turned the bay into a virtual septic tank. Mann, the city's first planner and a former assistant city manager, laughs when explaining why he built his house on the edge of an environmental disaster.

The reason is that the city found a way back from the brink. Today, the bay is clean and life for Mann — as well as for numerous birds, fish, and oysters — is just fine.

"It's really exciting to be a part of this rebirth," says Mann. Every night as he watches the sun dip below the horizon, Mann is even more convinced this is the place he was meant to be.

Sitting on the dock of the bay

Court Street snakes through Jacksonville's original downtown, beginning at its intersection with U.S. Hwy. 17 and ending at Shoreline Drive. Well before the city grew to its current population of 79,000, land use within these 49 square miles was a totally mixed bag. Although zoning has changed things, Court Street still reflects those hodgepodge days: The Onslow County courthouse and its inevitable entourage of law offices anchor one end. Small businesses, vacant buildings, and the former city wastewater treatment plant, as well as a smattering of older homes, are scattered along the street.

Shoreline Drive parallels Wilson Bay, a 108-acre body of water ringed by privately owned piers that jut from the yards of the large, expensive homes owned by Mann's neighbors. Crab pots hang in the water, and here and there someone sits on a dock holding a pole, feet dangling over the brackish bay.

Fishing — or catching crabs — isn't remarkable. Thousands do it every day in this coastal strip of North Carolina. The remarkable thing is that there's anything worth catching, much less eating, in water once so rank with pollution even birds avoided it.

Closing Jacksonville's wastewater treatment plant would have been enough to start the bay's natural healing process. But left to its own devices, nature would take decades to bio-remediate water this degraded. Jacksonville — and a hungry mollusk — did the job in less than five years.

The man with the plan

The Wilson Bay Initiative got its start in 1998, when the old, failing wastewater treatment plant was replaced with a \$50 million environmentally sound land application treatment system. Although the city wasn't legally compelled to clean up the bay, city officials felt a moral obligation to do so, rather than wait for nature to take its course. The problem was that no one knew how to proceed.

The bay, a combination of fresh and salt waters, was so dangerous that it was off-limits to recreational use. Pat Donovan-Potts, a water quality specialist with the city's Habitat Protection Division, says the water contained abnormally high nutrients: ammonias, nitrates, phosphates, and fecal coliform.

"You're allowed 200 organisms per 100 mils [milliliters] of water for recreational water, and we had anywhere from 35,000 to 75,000 on a weekly basis," says Donovan-Potts. "When [we] first came to work, we actually had to wear gloves and masks because if that water entered a membrane, we were hugging the porcelain goddess for a day."

The city wasn't the only source of pollution in Wilson Bay. Across the water stands Camp Lejeune, one of the largest Marine Corps bases in the U.S. The Marines once sunk 400 creosote-soaked posts into the floor of the bay, thereby adding to the pollution. Agricultural byproducts from nearby farms, including animal waste and pesticides, also tainted the water. And a nearby subdivision contributed stormwater runoff.

It took half a century, but the once-pristine bay turned toxic. As a result, not only was recreational use impossible, but the few fish that lived in the bay became inedible.

The pollution caused the death of the benthic community, the organisms that lie at the bottom of the bay and constitute its basis for life. "Without a benthic community, you don't have fish, and without fish, there's nothing to draw birds," Donovan-Potts says.



2.3 STURGEON CITY

As the bottom layer of food died, each subsequent link in the chain succumbed, until the bay ended up essentially lifeless and depleted of oxygen. Without oxygen, organic matter could not break down, further adding to the water's pollutants.

Enter Jay Levine, a Harvard-educated professor of veterinary science at North Carolina State University. In 1996, Levine and Walter Timm, a Jacksonville resident, had recently returned from a visit to France, where they observed mariculture techniques involving oysters. Timm suggested that the city talk to Levine about applying some of those techniques to Wilson Bay.

Levine studied the problem and offered a different approach: combining the natural filtering abilities of bivalves with aeration in order to speed up the water's self-cleansing process. Levine says he never expected the oysters to do the entire cleanup, just to kick start it. "We hoped to reduce the organic load," says Levine.

Laughter greeted the proposal. The idea of enlisting oysters to correct 50 years of abuse struck many — including scientists — as unrealistic. The oysters were given little chance of survival in the dirty bay. But the city went with the plan, reasoning that the bay was so degraded it was an environmental hazard, anyway. What, city officials asked, did they have to lose?

By this time Mann, the city's former planner, had left to help run a family business, but after running successfully for the city council, he voted to implement the project. Like the rest of the council, he held his breath to see what would happen next.

Eureka!

It worked. Starting in 1998, and using volunteers — mostly teenagers — researchers filled plastic mesh bags with small oysters native to this habitat and placed them near the surface of the water, high enough to benefit from the sun. In the meantime, large aeration units were established to begin adding oxygen to the water.

Donovan-Potts describes the team's reaction several months after the project got under way. "Scientists doubted us in the beginning," she says. "Because of the pollution and the salinity, they thought it was far-fetched that we would be able to keep the oysters alive in Wilson Bay." But the oysters did more than simply live. They thrived.

"Basically, it's like putting a 17-year-old boy at the Pizza Hut buffet for a year," Donovan-Potts explains. "The oysters grew three times as fast" as they normally would.

As the oysters filtered the detritus and consumed it, the water became cleaner and as it became cleaner, the benthic community reestablished itself. That attracted fish, which in turn attracted birds. Soon even sea otters splashed in the bay.

But city officials knew the project couldn't begin and end with fixing the bay. "While initially the city's only goal was to improve water quality, the success drove residents to question why we shouldn't also improve habitat," says Glenn Hargett, a project manager with the city manager's office.

Wetlands were reconstructed, resupplying lost habitat to many species that had previously abandoned the area. An environmental engineer oversaw construction of rain gardens and swales in the neighborhoods bordering the bay. Then the city extended the project to the New River, which feeds into the bay, and to its tributaries.

City officials also decided this type of environmental disaster should never be repeated. To educate residents, the city established an institute called Sturgeon City, which functions as an environmental educational center for the area's youth, who also monitor the bay and keep track of the wildlife, salinity conditions, and the dissolved oxygen level.

A new day in the neighborhood

"I caught a two-and-a-half-pound trout in my backyard yesterday," says Horace Mann. He leans back in his seat with a grin and confides that a friend beat his catch by landing a six-pounder. He's a big fan of the Wilson Bay Initiative and sits on the Sturgeon City board of directors. Without the initiative, Mann says, the revitalization of downtown Jacksonville would never have gotten this far.

"I wouldn't have built over a sewage hole or gone out back to catch supper," he says.

City officials say the bay and river have experienced a rebirth both environmentally and in popularity. The city has constructed new waterside parks from which residents watch fishing and pleasure boats while strolling along the banks. The Wilson Bay Initiative has also been a boon to downtown revitalization, with new businesses opening up and developers building high-end houses, which in turn increase the tax base. "We're seeing projects that were not envisioned when the downtown master plan was created," says the city's planning administrator, Rhonda Parker. "Sturgeon City and the habitat restoration efforts changed that. People want to be near clean water; people want to be near success." Mann points out that most cities must worry about urban sprawl, but Jacksonville's growth has been redirected inward. "Before it was totally outward, but now it's core growth," he says.



Credit: Sturgeon City, Inc.

2.3 STURGEON CITY

He says the project has helped increase public interest and thus public investment in the old downtown area. “It draws people back to where we have water, sewer, firefighters, and the like already in place,” says Mann. The city has also learned a lot from its past mistakes. Instead of allowing waterside development that might reintroduce pollution, officials allow a very limited amount of impervious surface in new housing projects. Mann cannot build more on his property — something the majority of the city’s property owners take for granted.

“I can’t add a storage building, but I knew that before, and besides, living here is worth it,” he says.

The flip side

Directly across from Mann’s property, on the banks of the New River, sits the Georgetown Community, a traditionally lower middle class, African American neighborhood. Georgetown has seen a recent influx of wealthy people buying and building on riverfront lots. A recent county tax revaluation resulted in a five- or six-fold increase in property values on or near the water. The result has both a positive and negative effect on the city, Mann says.

“We cleaned up the river and made it more desirable,” he says. But even though the tax base has benefited from the Wilson Bay Initiative, those who have traditionally lived near the water in inexpensive homes now find themselves strapped to pay their property taxes and stay in their own neighborhoods.

The councilman says the city shouldn’t be in the business of displacing people from their homes. “We need to do a better job of meshing the new and the old,” he says. “From a planning point of view, we need to mediate better.”

The city has benefited both from the extra value generated by property along the water and the added quality of life a clean bay brings. Some \$1.7 million in startup funds for remediation of Wilson Bay came primarily from grants. Those grants — from the Clean Water Management Fund, EPA brownfield funding, and others — kept Jacksonville’s investment in the initial project down to only \$313,365. The city continues to fund the remediation project, which costs about \$250,000 annually, from funds generated by a stormwater fee added to residents’ water bills. A second remediation project on Chaney Creek, a small tributary of the New River, has received about \$162,000 from the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, while Jacksonville’s costs are about \$63,000.

And now, the Wilson Bay Initiative may have found a surprising new source of funding.

Fish farm

When Wade Watanabe, a research professor and coordinator of the University of North Carolina at Wilmington’s Center for Marine Science Aquaculture Program, toured the Sturgeon City facilities on the recommendation of a colleague, he found an opportunity: The drying beds and other parts of the facility would be ideal for an aquaculture project.

Harry Daniels and Tom Losordo, both professors at North Carolina State University, helped Watanabe design the project, which was scheduled for completion this winter.

Basically, the project will consist of a pilot-scale recirculating system for marine finfish. The project will use the same size tanks as a full-scale operation, but fewer of them. The system, which is land-based, allows for the recycling and reuse of water by removing waste and supplying the fish with oxygen.

“These systems grow fish under high densities and are therefore compact and do not require large amounts of land,” says Watanabe.

Waste generated by the fish will be used to produce microalgae, which will be fed to oysters that will then be stocked into Wilson Bay. Watanabe says this particular circle of life fits nicely into Sturgeon City’s goals of environmentally friendly economic development. Southern flounder and black sea bass will be bred in captivity and raised until they can be marketed. “These technologies will also help to conserve the wild populations, which are being depleted through overfishing and habitat degradation,” Watanabe says.

Shawn Longfellow, who, as part of his MBA project, will manage the program under contract with the university, says local fishermen needn’t worry about competition from the aquaculture program. “We’ll be serving the off-season market,” Longfellow explains. Plans are to live-haul the fish to market, and Longfellow says if everything goes as planned, the new program will generate both income and jobs, not only for the city of Jacksonville, but for others interested in aquaculture. As for the fish: Longfellow promises they will taste divine. “They will be pellet-fed,” he says. “No one will be feeding them other fish that aren’t fit for human consumption.”

Often duplicated, never equaled

Although bivalves such as oysters have been used elsewhere to help clean water, Jacksonville cleaned the water and restored the wetlands in a fraction of the time nature would have taken to repair the damage; in addition, the city is on the cutting edge of environmental education. “We now have life where we only used to have death,” Mann says. “I’ve

not seen anyone else turn a sewer treatment plant into an environmental education center. It’s a crazy success story.”

Not too long ago, Wilson Bay was abandoned — a place where fishermen never dropped a hook and birds never visited. Today, the sky above Wilson Bay swirls with hundreds of pairs of beating wings as seabirds swoop and dive over the water, looking for the tell-tale silver flashes of fish swimming beneath the surface. Restored to life through this unique project, the bay was repopulated, and the habitats of keystone species such as eagles and ospreys reestablished.

Fishing and pleasure boats dot the horizon as turtles and frogs cling to grass and logs in the surrounding wetlands. Crab and fish have staged comebacks in the bay and on dinner tables. The bay’s chain of life has been rebuilt.

Carole Moore is a North Carolina-based writer.

2.4 THE ONSLOW COUNTY JAIL

The decision to construct a new jail facility in downtown has not been made lightly. The proposed 5 story detention facility with its wrap around Sheriff's Office is the result of years of public debate and negotiation between the City and County.

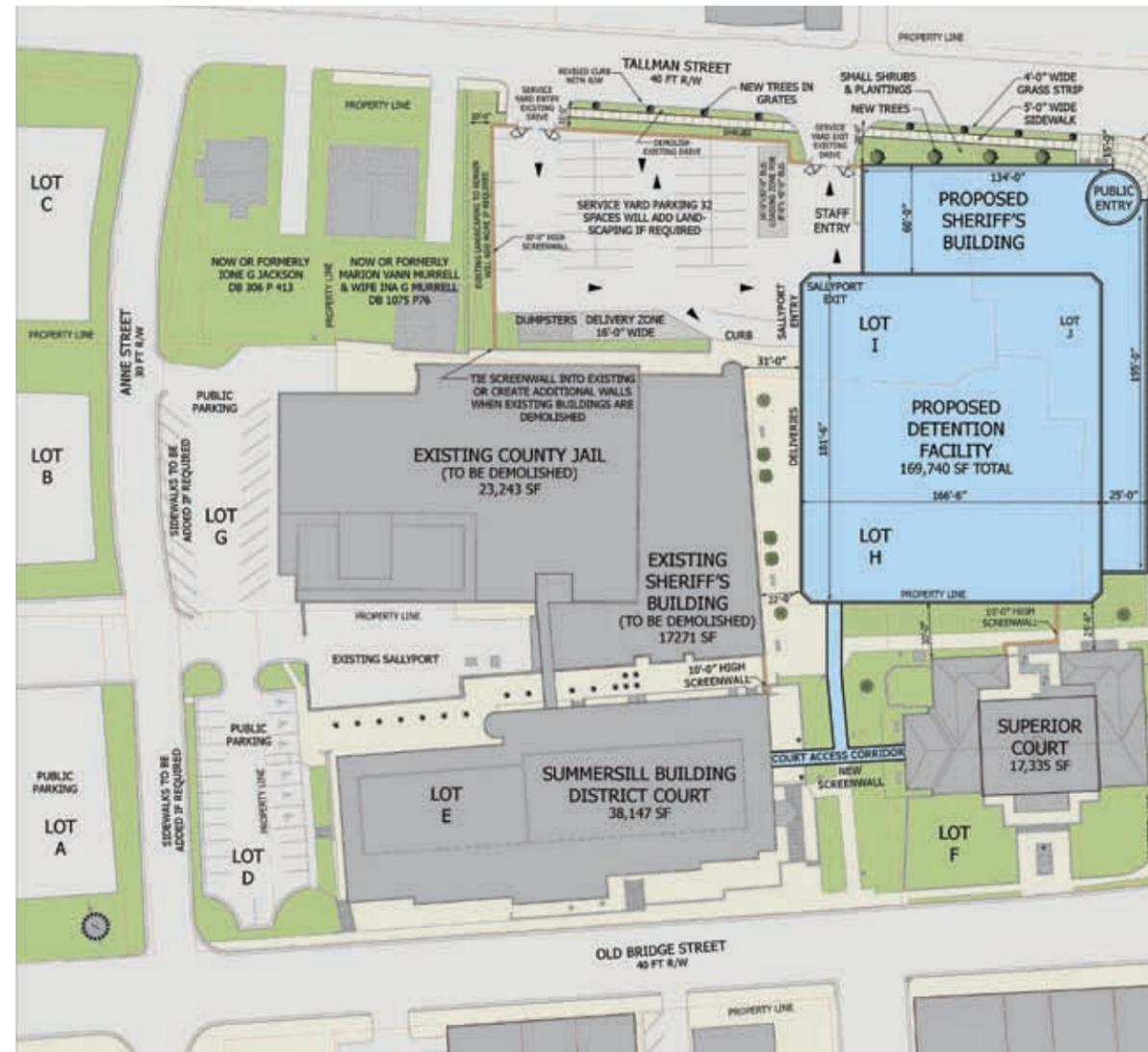
As a means to break the stalemate between the two governments, Brennan Associates Inc, an architectural firm with extensive jail planning and design experience, was hired in summer of 2006 to negotiate a win-win scenario. The resultant plan, presented at a joint city/county workshop in January, 2006 illustrated a 3-story, 64,000 square foot, 256 bed expansion to the jail with the remaining block being redeveloped with mixed-use development towards the riverfront.

Less than a year later, the facility had grown to 5 stories, 170,000 square feet, and 500 beds. Its location is a function of the desire to be proximate to the courthouse in order to avoid costly and less secure prisoner transportation for court dates. The increase in size is based on the projected growth in detainees for Onslow County over a 50+ year time horizon. Though the current need is far less than this amount, the County anticipates the opportunity to house prisoners from surrounding counties and from federal jurisdictions on a rental basis as a means to provide a revenue stream in the interim. It is felt that the economies of constructing the larger facility at one time in a single tower would be a more prudent use of the county's resources.

The current site plan also reserves a location immediately east of the planned tower for a second 500 bed tower to accommodate any long-term (50+ year) needs. On April 17, 2007 the City issued a special use permit to the County to construct the facility; construction is expected to begin in 2008. The construction will also include the demolition of the existing county jail and sheriff's building. This area will likely be converted to parking and other related facilities for the courts.

Relocation evaluations have included looking at available sites within a five-mile radius of the current site. Discussions have ranged from a stand-alone detention facility to an all-inclusive county government complex including most county government functions. As would be expected, cost factors, relocation issues and most importantly, citizen service elements were all considered.

In the end, it was decided that the removal of these facilities would mean that the surrounding downtown buildings, comprised largely of court-related services such as bail bondsman and lawyers, would become completely vacant. City and County leaders were unhappy with this perceived "worst-case scenario" and therefore the retention of the jail decision was rendered as a means to avoid a complete vacancy of the downtown.



Credit: Brennan Associates

APPROVED SITE PLAN FOR THE JAIL AND SHERIFF'S BUILDING

The proposed expansions, shown in blue, would be placed in the existing parking lot to the north of the old courthouse. A future dormitory tower site is reserved immediately to the east.

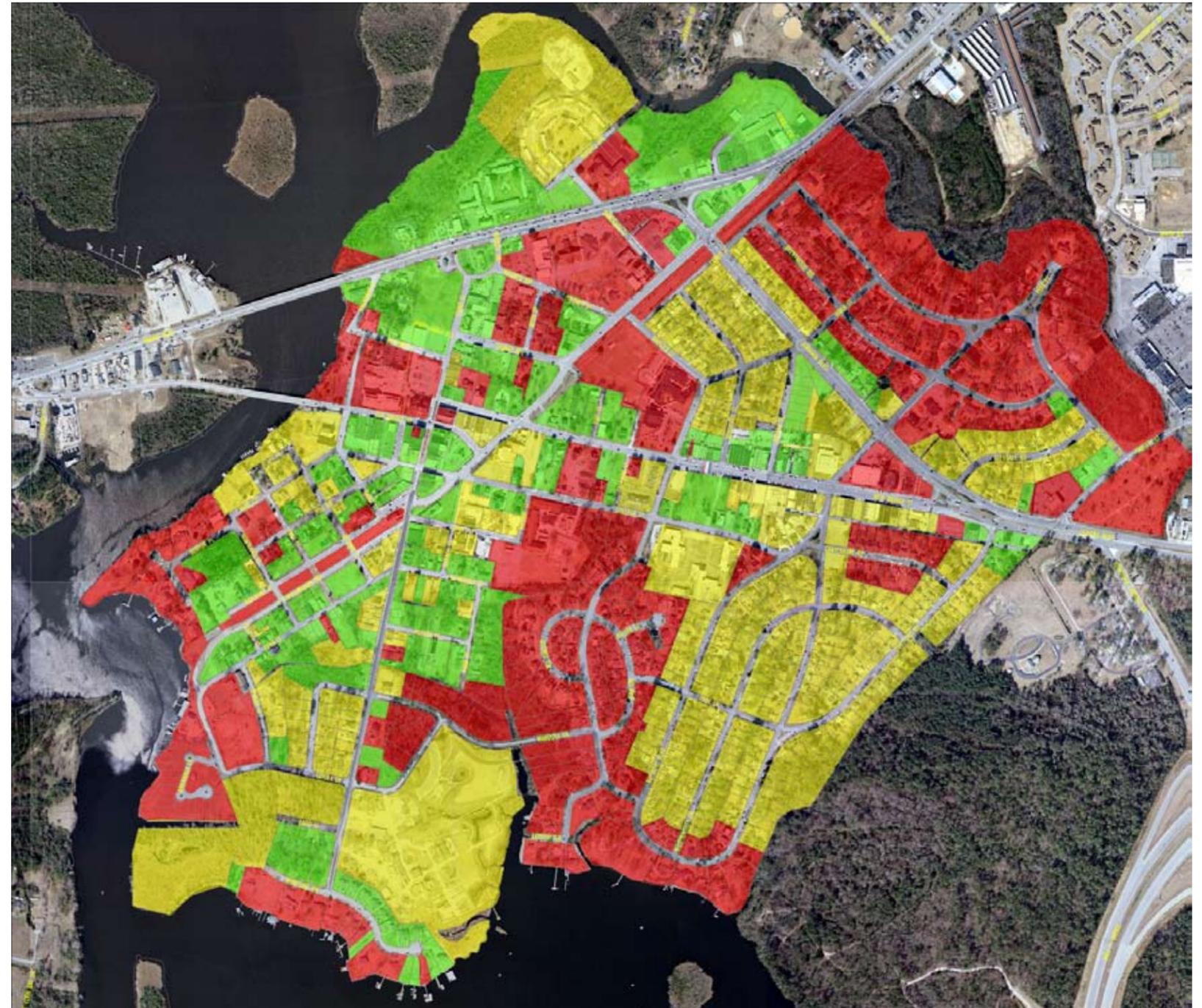
2.5 RIPE AND FIRM ANALYSIS

Before beginning any design work, the project team conducted extensive surveys of the study area in order to analyze the existing conditions in Downtown. The project team identified property conditions through several walking tours and windshield surveys, in addition to meetings with citizens, property and business owners, City and County officials, and other stakeholders. Numerous members of the community participated in each part of the process, helping to guide the design team towards specific areas requiring extra focus. The Ripe and Firm Analysis map depicts the community's collective assessment of properties and conditions in the study area. It includes suggestions gathered before, during, and after the public charrette process.

The Ripe & Firm Analysis provides a working map that helps to evaluate the downtown's current property conditions. Parcels determined to be "Firm" are generally in their final building/land-use pattern and reflect the "highest and best use" according to real estate and appraisal forecasts. Such properties typically require little to no intervention, though improvements might further enhance their appeal.

"Ripe" properties, on the other hand, typically offer significant development/redevelopment opportunities. These include those parcels that are currently undeveloped, underdeveloped (able to accommodate additional on-site expansion/development), or in need of redevelopment (such as a vacant shopping center). Parcels appearing in yellow lie somewhere in-between, or the exact future of the property's future is uncertain/unknown.

This analysis enables the project team to focus efforts on specific, high-priority areas. It also helps to protect areas in the community believed to be important for their civic value or other community interests.



**RIPE FOR
DEVELOPMENT/
REDEVELOPMENT**

**POSSIBLE
OPPORTUNITY SITE**

**FIRM (NO
INTERVENTION
NEEDED)**

2.6 FIGURE/GROUND ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

▼ HIGHLIGHT OF DOWNTOWN CORE

Note the large vacant areas in the historic core which are largely devoted to surface parking..



▲ THE FIGURE/GROUND DIAGRAM

The figure/ground is an illustrative diagram showing the relationship between buildings and publicly accessible space (including streets) by presenting the former in black and the latter as a white background. This analysis illustrates the amount of undeveloped or under-developed land in the downtown by clearly highlighting the voids. (Note: Information was gathered from existing aerial photography and digital planimetrics, and may not accurately depict existing conditions)

2.7 COMPARISON DIAGRAMS

Early interviews produced two models of successful retail environments noted by the participants, the mall and downtown Swansboro, NC. The diagrams below superimpose those areas to scale on downtown Jacksonville to give participants a physical idea of how much land area would be consumed by each if they were replicated in downtown Jacksonville.



▲ JACKSONVILLE MALL SUPERIMPOSED ONTO NEW BRIDGE STREET

Note that the mall itself is approximately 1200 feet from one extreme end to the other and approximately 800 feet from the end of one interior corridor to the other (anchor to anchor). Also note how much parking is provided relative to the downtown area. This diagram illustrates how physically unsustainable it is to plan for a lively retail environment from the river to the end of New Bridge Street at nearly 1 mile in length.



▲ DOWNTOWN SWANSBORO SUPERIMPOSED ALONG THE RIVERFRONT

Numerous participants noted downtown Swansboro for character and riverfront views. When placed into the scale of downtown Jacksonville, the entire commercial area fits within the courthouse block bound by Court Street, Tallman Street, Old Bridge Street, and the river. This illustrates how a small number of blocks, when properly detailed to the pedestrian, can create a memorable and successful experience.

2.8 PEDESTRIAN ANALYSIS

A series of diagrams was developed to review the potential pedestrian activity in the downtown area. Using fixed points, it determined the approximate distance that an average adult could walk in 5 minutes (1/4 mile) and 10 minutes (1/2 mile).



▲ PEDESTRIAN DISTANCE FROM COURT STREET AND OLD BRIDGE STREET



▲ PEDESTRIAN DISTANCE FROM THE RIVERFRONT PARK, RIVERWALK CROSSING PARK, AND STURGEON CITY



▲ PEDESTRIAN DISTANCE FROM THE RIVER

2.9 ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

COMPOSITE MAP OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS
Existing wetlands, rivers and streams, public parks, and funded bio-restoration projects were identified and mapped using City GIS data.



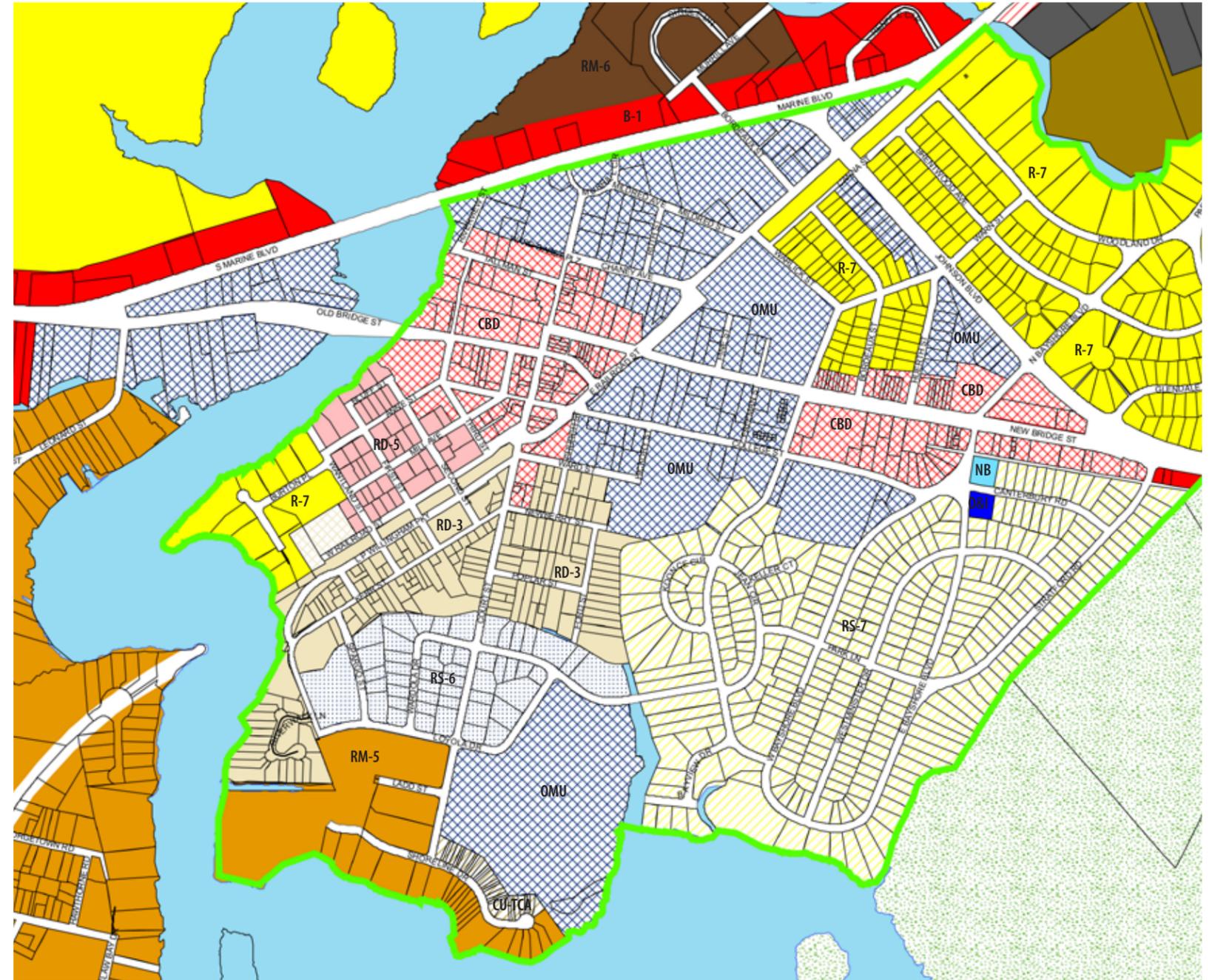
2.10 EXISTING ZONING

The downtown area includes 13 separate zoning districts to regulate the built form. As part of the 1998 Plan, the City has also adopted Design Guidelines to be applied to the CBD (Central Business District) and OMU (Office Mixed-Use) districts. The neighborhoods surrounding the downtown are largely zoned for suburban categorizations with small to medium lot sizes with deep setbacks (25+ feet).

The R-7 (Residential-7000 square feet) and RS-7 (Residential Single Family-7000 square feet) districts comprise most of the neighborhoods to the south and east of the core area and are largely built-out. Clearly, a change in the requirements for this area would represent a significant deviation from the built-form and might result in non-compatible infill development. The City should consider the creation of a neighborhood conservation overlay district that can be used to preserve older neighborhoods while permitting sensitive infill development and appropriate redevelopment. Therefore, if there is to be any change, it must be done on a block-by-block basis where the transition is at the rear property line rather than across the street or next to an existing structure.

The differences between the remaining residential districts are subtle and slight. Lot sizes range from 3000 square feet (1/16 acre) to 6000 square feet (1/8 acre). At this narrow range, there is often very little difference between the various home styles and the average citizen cannot necessarily discern the lot size. Though there are a few areas that have some environmental factors that should preclude development; most other areas are suitable for urban neighborhoods that are pedestrian-supportive and connected to the commercial areas. In fact, as is the case with most downtown areas, they are capable of handling the effects of much higher density than the suburban areas because of the presence of open space and a coherent network of streets.

Not surprisingly, the commercial encroachment into the residential district is being fueled by inhospitable roads and incompatible zoning. The vast expanse of CBD and OMU covers an excessive area for the total population. Further, while higher-density residential development is permitted in the OMU and CBD, it is subject to the issuance of a Special Use Permit. This is a cumbersome process that often dissuades good applications. And, with so much land tied up in government uses that close at 5 pm, the incorporation of an evening and weekend population is a necessity for long-term sustainability.



▲ EXISTING ZONING MAP

2.11 MARKET ANALYSIS - EXISTING CONDITIONS

The following text was adapted from a Market & Economic Study conducted by Rose & Associates, Southeast, Inc. for the City of Jacksonville and Onslow County, North Carolina. Encompassing both the study area and metropolitan region, it provides a broad analysis of demographic, retail, and real estate trends used to guide the master plan's development decisions.

STUDY AREA SUMMARY

Jacksonville is located along the southeastern coastline of North Carolina in Onslow County. The Jacksonville Downtown Study Area lies in the south central portion of the City and includes the area outlined below. The primary business district is bounded by Marine Boulevard to the north, Johnson Boulevard to the east, College Street to the south, and the New River to the west. This area includes City Hall, the Courthouse, County Offices and the riverfront. The boundaries of the study area also include the Old Bridge Street gateway to the west and the entrance to Camp Lejeune to the east, which plays a major role in the downtown.

Situated at the junction of US 17 Business and NC 24 Business, downtown Jacksonville is easily accessible from these and other primary corridors that surround the City. In addition to vehicle traffic, the City is serviced by air travel at nearby Albert J. Ellis (OAJ) Airport and by boat via the intercoastal New River waterway—located at the downtown's western edge.

Market potential considers the economic status of a community, demographic and socio-economic trends of its citizens, and quality of life parameters - which determine the goals for both creating and sustaining a market. The City of Jacksonville has embarked on a number of planning initiatives over the past two years.

As outlined during interviews conducted before and during the Design Charrette, there are both opportunities and challenges for the downtown:

- A housing market that reflects strong activity and appreciation in the region overall, with renewed interest in the downtown. However, some downtown neighborhoods continue to experience decline.
- A housing market that has little product offerings beyond single family or base-related housing.
- An office market that is limited in size and scope, with little data available as to market vacancy, as many buildings are owner occupied. Downtown office is limited to the Court House area and government uses with little quality space available for lease.
- A retail market that is suffering in the downtown, with depressed values and pricing.
- A waterfront that has experienced renewed interest with the clean up

of the New River, and waterfront land that is underutilized.

- A jail and courthouse facility planned on the waterfront, which could be privately developed to energize the waterfront and facilitate additional private and public investment, on property which the highest and best use is mixed-use development.
- A collection of parks and public spaces that are disconnected and underutilized.
- Limited amenities and buildings of historical value/significance in the downtown.

FACTORS IMPACTING THE STUDY AREA

Regional Development Patterns

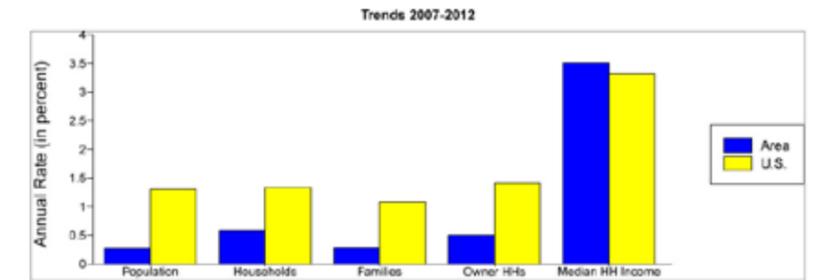
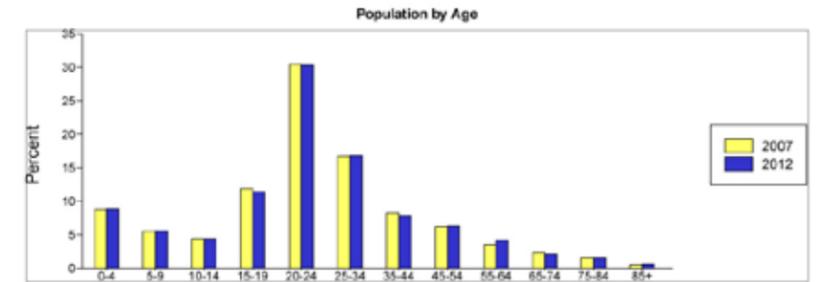
The Jacksonville MSA (Metropolitan Statistical Area) encompasses and is inclusive of only Onslow County. Therefore, MSA and County figures are the same throughout this report. Onslow County's flat, gently rolling terrain covers 767 square miles in North Carolina's southeastern coastal plain, lying approximately 120 miles east of Raleigh and 50 miles north of Wilmington. Development patterns have spread from the downtown to the outlying areas along primary transportation corridors. Land use has focused on predominately commercial development and new housing outside of the central business district along these corridors.

This underscores the importance of the land planning that reduces sprawl and provides transitional areas between primary clusters of business/employment, retail centers, neighborhoods and recreation. Quadrants between these centers of influence have been developed for residential housing to serve the growing MSA. Further details regarding population and growth are in the following section and appendix of this report.

The pending Comprehensive Plan Update (draft dated November 14, 2006) and Downtown Master Plan will further highlight historical development patterns and future growth. Underlying these concepts are market dynamics that will drive this growth.

Demographic Changes

The preliminary report reviewed the demographic trends from a macro to micro perspective, including the County/MSA and the City, and defined the downtown trade areas. The primary growth areas have occurred outside of the downtown. The population is predominately young families with children and are very mobile.



Transportation

The regional transportation network is firmly in place, providing access from other areas of the state and the southeast region, which includes a multi-modal approach with highway, air and water. Now, the challenge is to provide an internal network that connects in and around these corridors, while defining the community's boundaries and character. The master plan's purpose is to outline specific parameters that will assist in defining the downtown and its linkages.

Key factors in the downtown include providing attractive and obvious gateways to identify the downtown area, and the Highway 17 Bypass and its relationship to the downtown. Transportation issues are a key factor driving both markets and land use patterns, therefore they are an important factor in the planning process. Traffic volume together with other demographic and economic factors are key components affecting retail viability downtown. The 2035 Transportation Plan adopted in March 21, 2005 addresses these areas.

Camp Lejeune & Military Installations

Camp Lejeune has been the home of "Expeditionary Forces in Readiness" for the past 65 years. Throughout the years, it has become the home base for the 2nd Marine Expeditionary Force, 2nd Marine Division, 2nd Marine Logistics Group and other combat units and support commands. Camp Lejeune and the related military installations are the region's primary and largest economic drivers. These facilities encompass approximately 153,000 acres, with a substantial portion annexed into Jacksonville in 1990 for shared revenue and funding

2.11 MARKET ANALYSIS - EXISTING CONDITIONS

opportunities.

The base and surrounding community is home to an active duty, family member, retiree and civilian employee population of nearly 150,000 people. The base generates almost \$3 billion in commerce each year, coming from payrolls and contracts to support the structure required to train and equip the Marines. It is the largest employer, accounting for over 56% of the earnings in the region. These facilities are a stable asset in both the community and in overall US military operations.

Connection to the Water

Downtown Jacksonville forms a peninsula situated on the New River. The river historically provided transportation and agriculture (oysters). This unique asset now provides opportunities for eco-tourism, recreation and entertainment. There are four waterfront park areas in the downtown study area which should be connected - both in a tangible and non-tangible way with a marketing strategy to provide expanded opportunities for tourism and economic development.

Hotels and Tourism

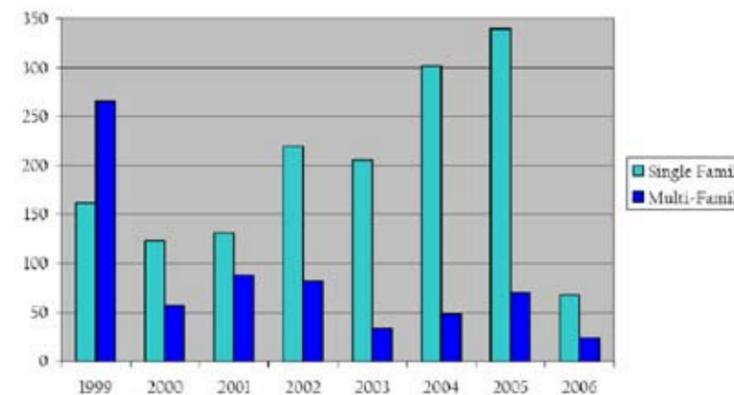
Activities within Camp Lejeune and related military installations often stimulate demand outside of the base. Further, Jacksonville's coastal location and regional attractions will continue to bring visiting families, vendors, special events and other activities that drive demand for hotel room nights. These, together with a growing and diversifying economy, will continue to create opportunity for improving occupancy.

In 2000, a study was conducted by Hunter Interests, Inc. for the City of Jacksonville and Onslow County regarding the feasibility of a Civic Conference Center facility to include a Marine Corps museum and related facilities. Subsequently, in 2001, a study was conducted by Atlantic Hospitality Advisors to determine the feasibility of a full service hotel and conference center in Jacksonville, just north of the downtown on the north side of US 17 Business (Marine Boulevard). As a result of these efforts, a master development and operating agreement between the City and Mesirow/Summit was initiated but failed to proceed. The Marine Corps Museum is currently being planned on the site of the Beirut & Vietnam Veteran's Memorial on Lejeune Boulevard. Funding is underway with an estimated completion date set for 2008.

Economic Development

While the military and tourism continue to be the area's main revenue sources, significant other employment opportunities and resources exist. The Jacksonville MSA posted an unemployment rate of 4.5% in December of 2006, showing improvements over an annual average rate of 5.5% in 2005-2004 and 6.6% in 2003. In 2006 the City of Jacksonville generated 25% of its tax revenue from commercial property and 53% from residential property (the balance is from personal property tax), demonstrating a revenue ratio that meets threshold benchmarks as it relates to services. The benchmark for similar size municipalities is to achieve 25-30% of its revenue from commercial property to ensure a self sustaining balanced community.

JACKSONVILLE MSA LABOR STATISTICS (2007)							
	2007			2006	2005	2004	
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Average	Average	Average
Labor Force	58,693	60,598	60,980	60,503	58,957	56,287	55,462
Employed	57,193	57,782	58,417	58,036	56,231	53,294	52,452
Unemployed	2,670	2,816	2,563	2,467	2,726	2,993	3,010
Rate	4.5	4.6	4.2	1.1	4.6	5.3	5.4



▲ JACKSONVILLE NEW HOUSING STATISTICS 1999-2006

MARKET POTENTIAL

Jacksonville's size and steady growth will continue to attract future investment in various sectors. The Market & Economic Study reflects the macro-level needs of the region's trade area. The downtown represents a unique market within this region and should position itself to capitalize on potential investment in market niches.

For office space, a void of Class A or large-plate facilities exist in the Jacksonville region. The best opportunities for such space downtown are on the waterfront, combined in a mixed-use retail format to anchor the urban core. Government offices could and should consolidate/remain there.

The downtown also contains significant retail potential. The City/County should focus recruitment efforts on local and regional clientele, which will provide a unique tenant mix not found in traditional shopping center formats. New commercial development should be concentrated in and around the waterfront and New Bridge Street areas.

Lastly, the downtown greatly needs higher density residential housing. At present, however, a lack of alternative housing options limits the demand for downtown living. The current supply is predominately traditional single family homes in the neighborhoods surrounding the downtown. A mix of townhomes, condominiums and apartments, both for sale and for lease, will add the population needed to support certain types of retail uses and restaurants.

2.11 MARKET ANALYSIS - EXISTING CONDITIONS

DOWNTOWN JACKSONVILLE TRADE AREA

The primary target market for the downtown includes those residents and businesses residing within the region. Companies seeking to locate here will draw from within the region for employees and consumer dollars. In many markets in the southeast, quality of life indicators will attract not only families relocating for job opportunities, but also those at or nearing retirement seeking new lifestyle options. While some will visit or relocate from other regions, the underlying demand comes first from within this primary trade area.

Trade areas identify the market potential for goods and services within an area. These assist in determining threshold demographics such as population, income, workers, education and other factors required to support various uses. The primary trade area for data collection and real estate survey has become commonly defined as a distance radius around a specific intersection/location. This is predominately used to analyze threshold population and consumer dollars for retail uses. This can be measured in terms of distance or drive time, depending on transportation issues. For the purposes of this study, three different trade areas were utilized for analysis. The downtown Study Area was reviewed at a 1, 3 and 10-mile radius around the primary intersection of Court Street and the Old Bridge Street.

The profiles provided in the preliminary report indicate that the downtown must serve two markets simultaneously. First to provide goods and services to the immediate trade area which includes the resident population in the neighborhoods surrounding the downtown; and also as a destination to the region, with downtown being the primary location for employment, commerce, recreation, culture and social interaction.

The primary trade area for the downtown, given traffic patterns, threshold populations, competitive regional shopping and other factors is within three miles of the primary intersection. The trade area within the ten mile radius includes regional competition from the mall and other shopping areas along the Western Boulevard corridor which capture consumers and limits the draw to the downtown. Access via the east-west and north-south connections make the downtown a convenient and accessible destination. Therefore, the one mile and ten mile radius were determined to be the primary and secondary trade areas for the analysis.

The demographic patterns within the County, City and in each of the trade areas are detailed in the Appendix of this report and are highlighted below:

MARKET AND TRADE AREA DATA: JACKSONVILLE, NC				
	2000 Census Population	2007 Certified Population Estimate	% Change	Median HH Income
County	150,355	163,334	8.63%	\$43,055
City	66,715	74,441	11.58%	\$42,578
Radius				
1 Mile	3,495	3,246	-7.12%	\$34,495
3 Mile	28,719	28,711	-0.03%	\$40,796
10 Mile	113,712	123,737	8.82%	\$43,335

Source: US Census, ESRI 2006, Acxiom

FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Review of the study area, data and demographic information, together with preliminary interviews with key stakeholders of the community, revealed the following observations:

- Jacksonville, a small city situated on the New River and Wilson Bay, is located in Onslow County. Together, the City and County represent one MSA, the state's ninth largest.
- The Jacksonville MSA is driven by its military presence, tourism, retail trade, real estate, recreation and status as a government center. The area's increasing popularity as a place for re-located and retired military personnel and their families also drives the local economy.
- Jacksonville benefits from its proximity to Camp Lejeune and neighboring Onslow/Carteret County beaches. It is primarily a suburban residential community with a small downtown area that has suffered from decline.
- The New River waterfront location, nearness to many recreational and civic attractions (including Sturgeon City and its role as a government center), together with accessibility via waterways, rail and major transportation corridors makes downtown Jacksonville and the waterfront area ripe for revitalization and redevelopment.
- Jacksonville's competitive advantages include its relationship to the river, accessibility, constant military population and infrastructure.

Therefore, the plan recommends that the City/County focus on priorities that would result in diversification of its tax base—to provide a balanced ratio between residential needs and commercial services to create a sustainable local economy. These include:

- *Re-create a town center, tied to the waterfront, to provide the community a safe and pleasant area for commerce and community interaction, as well as a destination for tourists;*
- *Create economic development strategies to balance tax base between commercial and residential land uses;*
- *Diversify the housing stock, to include townhomes, condominiums and multifamily, to provide a variety of styles and price ranges downtown.*

2.12 A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT

Downtown Jacksonville is an area of great contrast. Against the natural beauty of the New River is an urban environment that is severely eroded. This degradation is likely a function of a number of factors:

- An overwhelming number of commercial buildings with little character hastily constructed in the early days of the base construction and initial deployment;
- The lack of historic traditional building infrastructure to reinforce a set character;
- Unremodeled buildings following decades of serving as an off-base “bar district”;
- A heavily polluted river through the mid 1990’s;
- A movement of commercial (shopping) and institutional (hospital and community college) uses out to Western Boulevard;
- An excessive ownership of land and buildings by the City and County;
- Numerous leases by the County in storefronts around the courthouse in buildings that are undercapitalized.

The waterfront has become dominated by the courthouse and related services such as bail-bondsman and attorneys and there are few retail establishments near the river. Because the area lacks any night time population, most of the restaurants are closed in the evening.

Most of the existing buildings are simple block construction with brick veneer and can be characterized as utilitarian in design. To be blunt, they appear to be the “public housing” of commercial structures and the rental rates reflect this low level of investment. Many of the buildings have not been modernized except those that have undergone a major tenant upfit. Based on conversations with tenants in this area, it appears that few building owners have been willing to make any investments in their buildings as a means to attract tenants. The tenants are then expected to pay rent and finance their own basic life/safety code improvements, placing a hardship on the startup businessperson.

The courthouse area is dominated by the car, a problem caused by the lack of any real parking strategy. This problem is exasperated on jury selection days when people from throughout the County come into the area to serve their civic duty. The wide fluctuations in peak parking leave the area a wasteland after 5 pm and on the weekends.

There are few direct paths to find the river from the rest of the community with the road network established to go around downtown, not through it. Once in downtown, the road network is connected but disorienting due, in large part, to diagonal streets and a partial closing of Court Street.

Once a visitor does find the river, they discover what a jewel this natural resource can be, though it wasn’t but a few years ago that this resource was heavily polluted and unsuitable for human contact or fishing. In fact, the river was declared dead. This, in turn, depressed housing values and continued a pattern of general decline that included a slow transition from ownership to rental and an emerging crime-ridden area.

The decision to cease operations at the waste-water treatment plant and convert it into a major environmental resource center has had a larger effect on property values than any other public investment. The Sturgeon City story, outlined in Section 2.3, is a remarkable tale of how a community pulled together and focused on solving a problem.

New housing is beginning to return and is being constructed at a premium for market segments that are normally very conservative in their location choices - the active adult market. This is a testament to the comeback that this area is making.

This is also girded with the investment in the Riverwalk Crossing Park, converting an abandoned railroad right-of-way to a festival-scaled park reaching from the old depot building to the river. A direct result of the 1998 Downtown Plan, this is the only visible implementation of that effort. Given the lack of public investment for the decade previous, this was a long overdue project. Today, this park is beautiful but largely underutilized. It’s large size makes it visually and physically able to support dense urban residential development along its edges like one of Savannah’s graceful squares.

Now that values are beginning to stabilize and increase, there are a number of investors who are looking to the older neighborhoods like Bayshore Estates for rental property to add to their portfolio. As noted in Section 6.4, this neighborhood has eclipsed 35% in investor-owned homes. As a result, maintenance on a number of properties is beginning to decline and is likely affecting adjacent resale values and the quality of life of neighbors.

Finally, the decision to fortify government occupation of the prime riverfront block with a large jail facility is one that will likely have a chilling effect on the surrounding blocks. If it is intended that this area will simply be the government district, then this is likely a value neutral decision. As the market study indicates, there is likely to be little investment interest in housing or mixed-use development in this area with a five-story jail across the street. Unless the current tenants (e.g. attorneys, title search companies, bail bondsman) in the surrounding storefronts are willing to pay a higher rent per square foot, it is not likely to spur any new office space investment. The impact of the jail location will likely have little effect on the property values of the surrounding

neighborhoods due to the perceived distance from the facility.

The current vacancy rate in the downtown is expected to visibly skyrocket around the year 2010 due to of the planned consolidation of various County administrative offices into a new building. Presently, the many leases that the County maintains around the downtown accounts for a high percentage of storefronts around the courthouse.

These issues represent the initial impressions of a first time visitor to this area. Yet, with its challenges, this area presents an opportunity. While large scale commerce has relocated to Western Boulevard, the downtown has the potential to emerge as a vibrant neighborhood center. As Swansboro has shown, a few small scale restaurants and shops along the water (with less area than a typical grocery-anchored shopping center) can create a memorable experience for the tourist and neighborhood resident alike. The challenge will be in finding that two block area along the water.

And, as was mentioned previously, the growing success of Sturgeon City will likely pay enormous dividends into the future, drawing visitors from far beyond Onslow County. The environmental stewardship of Wilson Bay is also extending an environmental expertise to other surrounding neighborhoods. In twenty years, this entire area may likely become one of the most environmentally-friendly downtowns in North Carolina.

Downtown Jacksonville At A Glance	
Total Assessed Value	\$139,925,373 (4% of City)
Total Tax Exempt Property	\$28,643,934 (20% of Downtown)
Housing Units	750
Commercial Space	1.4 Million Square Feet (More than Jacksonville Mall + Wal-Mart combined)

2.12 A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT

Schedule of Expectations					
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Jail Construction	—————●				
US 17/Marine Blvd Bridge Reconstruction		—————●			
County Administration		—————●			
County Office Relocation			—————●		

▲ **TABLE OF VARIOUS MAJOR CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS THAT WILL AFFECT THE DOWNTOWN AREA**

As the table indicates, the three major planned projects around the downtown area will likely have a significant impact on any investment activity. It will be at least four years before things will be complete and a sense of order and predictability are returned. Patience, therefore, will be warranted as expectation of a full turnaround of the downtown area in the next few years will be unlikely. In truth, with the planned consolidation of many of the leased storefront office space by the County to a new administration building, it is expected that in the year 2010, the downtown will hit bottom with regard to overall vacancy.



▲ **PROPERTY OWNERSHIP BY THE CITY (IN BLUE) AND THE COUNTY (IN RED)**

3: CIVIC DIALOGUE AND PARTICIPATION



3.1 CHARRETTE PREPARATION

Preparation for the week-long charrette began several months ahead of the official kick-off. In the weeks leading up to the charrette, the design team traveled to Jacksonville several times to conduct stakeholder interviews, coordinate workshop efforts and perform preliminary site analysis.

The stakeholder interviews consisted of consultant-led sessions in which local officials, agency representatives and interest groups described the pressing issues facing downtown Jacksonville. These meetings provided the consultant with insight into the local successes achieved and the challenges remaining as the City prepares to re-assess its development future.

In addition, the design team took to the streets and gathered first-hand evidence of the urban landscape's existing conditions. Team members documented examples of both good and bad design elements, noting how each contributed to the overall downtown environment. Ultimately, the field work produced a working "Ripe & Firm Analysis" map intended to frame the design team's understanding of the downtown and surrounding neighborhoods (See Section 2.5 for more information).

Lastly, the design team reviewed the City's previous master plans. The most recent plan, produced by Allison Platt & Associates in 1998, provided the consultant with detailed knowledge of Jacksonville's recent planning history. Together, each of these exercises supplied critical background information, thoroughly preparing the consultant for the public design charrette.



3.2 KICKOFF WORKSHOP & TOUR

On Saturday, March 24, 2007, the design team gave an overview presentation of the charrette process, general planning principles and a brief review of Jacksonville's planning history. Afterwards, the consultant led citizens on a walking tour of downtown Jacksonville. During the tour, participants evaluated the downtown's existing conditions, recording their thoughts on surveys specific to each site visited. The tour generated dialogue, ideas and insight into Jacksonville's urban landscape and set the tone for the next week's upcoming events.

The following items represent ideas listed by those present on the tour:

SACRED PLACES

- Riverfront
- Old Theater
- City Hall
- Masonic Lodge
- Historic homes (both residences and businesses)
- USO
- Courthouse
- Depot
- Parks: Riverwalk Festival, Kerr Street
- Pellitier House
- Sturgeon City

STREET IMPROVEMENTS

- Landscaping: Planters/flowers, canopy trees, replace Juniper
- Trash receptacles: Empty more frequently, add more locations
- Sidewalk repairs needed: Replace curbs
- Pedestrian connections: Depot, Tallman Street waterfront
- Crosswalks needed
- Add bike lanes
- Narrow streets
- Court Street: Two-way from Old Bridge & New Bridge Streets
- Way-finding/Informational/Interpretive signage downtown
- Hide dumpsters! Tallman Street waterfront, Courthouse area
- Benches & seating
- Modernize lights/poles
- Terminating views

TRAFFIC

- Improve circulation
- Way-finding signage
- Narrow streets/Reduce street width

PARKING

- Locate parking behind structures, make accessible
- Re-stripe streets. Alternatives: parallel, angle
- Consolidate government employee parking
- Ensure capacity with growth
- Limited time parking for patrons directly in front of buildings
- Reduce visual impact of cars (especially at waterfront)

BUILDINGS

- Façade improvements, update storefronts
- Paint fronts/street-facing sides
- Identify & address dilapidated structures
- Code clarification/flexibility needed for renovations
- Maintenance standards (for storefronts, in particular)
- Add second story to buildings

BUSINESS

- DIVERSIFY downtown businesses (private investment!)
- Provide incentives to attract businesses to downtown
- High density needed
- Nice storefront feel (pedestrian-scaled)

TRANSIT

- Add Onslow Transit Loop stops in downtown area

PARKS

- Programming/events, host events at waterfront (ADVERTISE!!)
- Provide public access, not just views
- River(front) cleaning program
- Remove waterfront billboards

RESIDENTIAL

- New housing
- Residential above stores/offices
- Maintenance standards

ENVIRONMENTAL

- Flooding issues at USO/Waterfront



SITE #:

Rate the Place:

	POOR	GOOD
COMFORT & IMAGE		
Overall attractiveness	1 2 3 4	
Feeling of safety	1 2 3 4	
Clearness/Quality of maintenance	1 2 3 4	
Comfort of places to sit	1 2 3 4	
Comfort & Image average rating: (sum/4)		
Comments/Notes:		
ACCESS & LINKAGES		
Visibility from a distance	1 2 3 4	
Ease in walking to the place	1 2 3 4	
Transit access	1 2 3 4	
Clarity of information/signage	1 2 3 4	
Access & Linkages average rating: (sum/4)		
Comments/Notes:		
USES & ACTIVITIES		
Mix of uses/services	1 2 3 4	
Frequency of community events/activities	1 2 3 4	
Overall busyness of area	1 2 3 4	
Economic vitality	1 2 3 4	
Uses & Activities average rating: (sum/4)		
Comments/Notes:		
SOCIABILITY		
Number of people in groups	1 2 3 4	
Evidence of volunteerism	1 2 3 4	
Sense of pride and ownership	1 2 3 4	
Presence of children and seniors	1 2 3 4	
Sociability average rating: (sum/4)		
Comments/Notes:		

1. New Bridge Street at Old Theater

2. New Bridge Street at Railroad Street

3. Water Access Park at the USO

4. Old Bridge Street at Court Street

5. Court Street at Riverwalk State Depot

6. Kerr Street Park at the River

PLACE GAME ▲

This tool was used during the public tour to give the design team a sense of what areas the community values and what makes those "places" successful. See Appendix A1 for the result of this survey.

3.3 CHARRETTE SCHEDULE

To guide the master-planning process, the design team paired with the City of Jacksonville to host a four-day public design charrette. This endeavor began with an opening presentation on Saturday, March 24, 2007, followed by a public walking tour and review of the downtown Jacksonville area.

On Monday, March 26, the consultant team assembled a temporary design studio in the City of Jacksonville’s Council Chambers. The new facility served as the design team’s “home base” for the charrette’s duration, March 26-29. The studio, complete with design tables, maps, pin-up boards and graphic work stations, provided an open space in which both formal and informal meetings occurred, as well as room for designers to craft the plan’s details with the public’s help.

Throughout the week numerous citizens, residents and property owners, businesspersons, public officials and agency representatives met to discuss the City’s future. The program featured both formal meetings led by the consultant and open to the public, as well as informal sessions that emerged out of these meetings and other design-related activities. Topics discussed ranged from transportation and pedestrian-mobility to historic preservation, public safety, utilities, environmental protection, building codes and parks and recreation. At the end of each day, the design team facilitated an informal review and public critique of the day’s progress.

Importantly, the public’s participation in each of these meetings and events shaped the master plan’s final recommendations. Citizens were encouraged to voice their opinions and often injected superb insight into the planning and design underway. The public comments, along with information gleaned from stakeholders, public officials and other representatives, guided the design team in their work and, eventually, the plan’s recommendations.

On Thursday, March 29, 2007, the charrette closed with a final presentation highlighting the week’s achievements and the plan’s final recommendations. This plan represents the consensus opinion gained through a week of collaboration between the City’s residents, staff and the design team. It embodies the vision to be carried forth by Jacksonville’s citizens and officials in the years to come.



Downtown Jacksonville Master Plan Schedule

Public Kickoff

Saturday, March 24th

Kickoff Presentation and Public Workshop—
Walking Tour of Downtown Jacksonville

Planning and Design Charrette

Monday, March 26th

8am Design Team Arrives—
Charrette Studio Set-up
8:30am Downtown Business Owners
10:30am Utilities & Public Works
2pm Transportation
4pm Police, Fire & Public Safety
5:30pm Pin-Up Session & Project
Update

Tuesday, March 27th

8:30am Building Codes/Zoning
Standards
10am Historic Preservation
2pm Environmental Protection
3pm Parks & Open Space
4pm Special Events
5:30 Pin-Up Session & Project
Update

Wednesday, March 28th

9am Real Estate Agents &
Developers
11am Post Office
1pm Interest Group Meetings &
Interviews
5:30pm Pin-Up Session & Project
Update

Thursday, March 29th

9am Design Studio Open
1pm Preparation for Closing
Presentation
7pm Closing Presentation

3.4 CHARRETTE MEDIA

As with any effective public process, the public must not only be invited but eagerly encouraged to participate. Awareness is the key to a successful civic program. That's why, together with the City of Jacksonville, area non-profit organizations and other local media groups, the consultant team went to great lengths to publicize the charrette process and schedule.

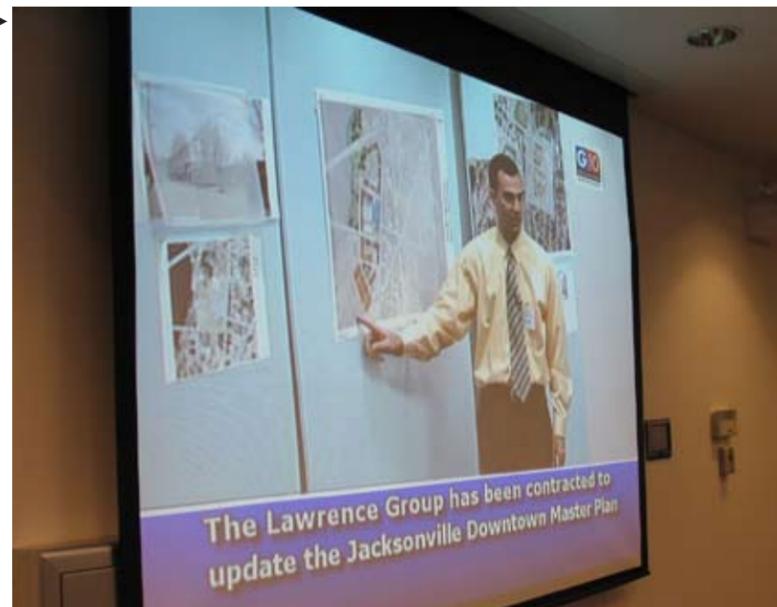
Prior to the charrette, post-card mailings were sent to every property owner in the study area. These bulletins served notice to the public of the approaching charrette, inviting all interested persons to attend and participate in the workshop activities. In addition, the City called every resident with an available phone number in the downtown area. This outreach was well-received and helped citizens become active participants in the exciting design work and visioning for downtown Jacksonville's future. Citizens were also alerted through internet applications, as well, by postings listed on the City's website and emails sent to registered citizens.

Publicity efforts also extended to television media. With the enthusiastic and faithful help of the G10 Television crew, the consultant team was able to reach persons all across the City of Jacksonville and Onslow County via the government channel. It truly seemed to be a popular way to reach people, as many participants showed up saying they had seen an announcement or the previous day's pin-up session on air and wanted to share their ideas!



MEDIA APPLICATIONS ▶

The images above portray the various media capacities, ranging from television to internet, used to raise awareness about the charrette program.

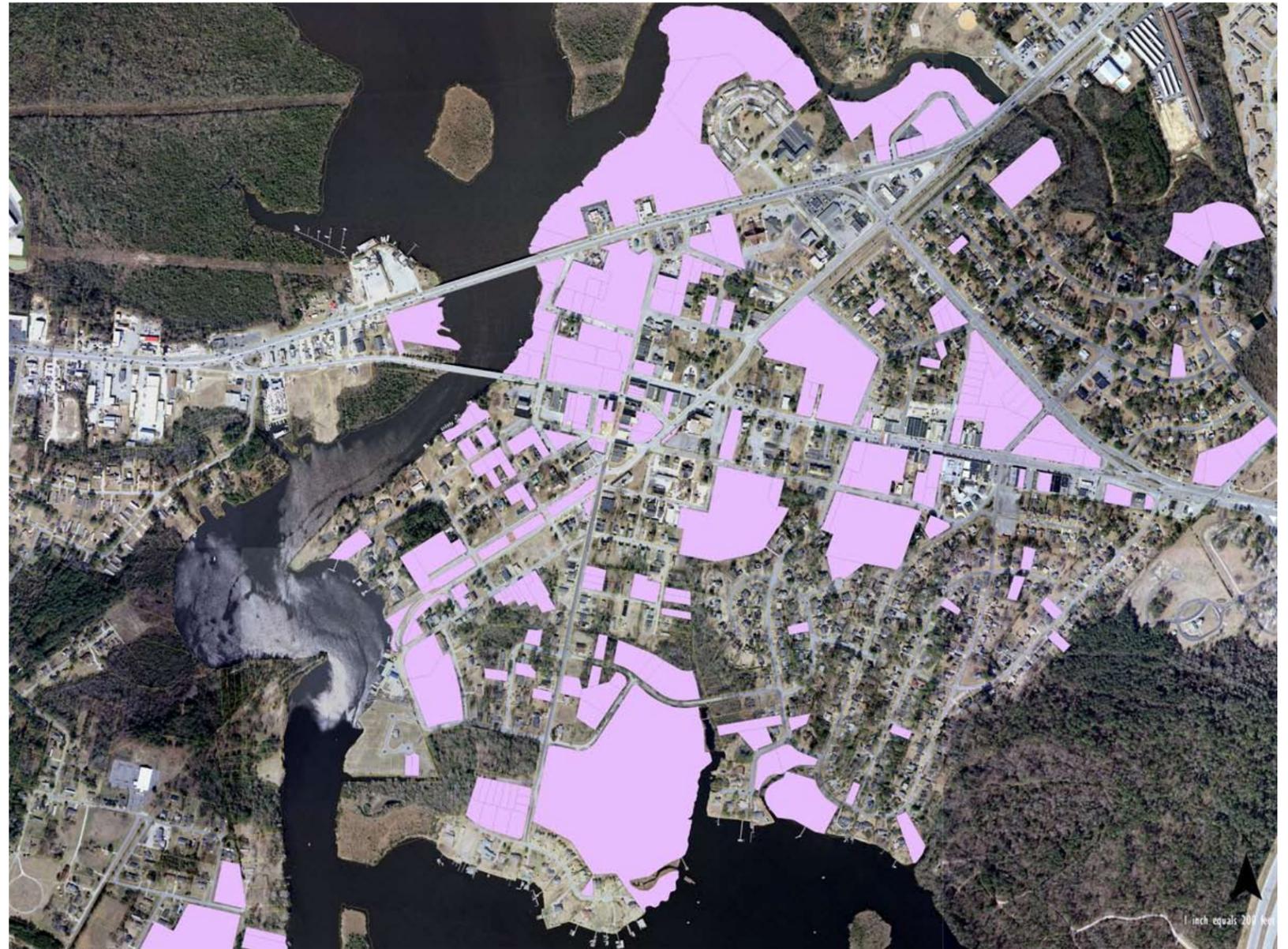


3.5 CHARRETTE PARTICIPATION



◀ CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT

The public turnout for the charrette grew increasingly larger as each day passed, culminating in over 100 persons attending the final presentation.



▲ DESIGN CHARRETTE PARTICIPATION MAP

The above map displays the number of persons owning property in the downtown area that participated in the week-long charrette.

3.6 THE CHARRETTE



▲ CHARRETTE IMAGES

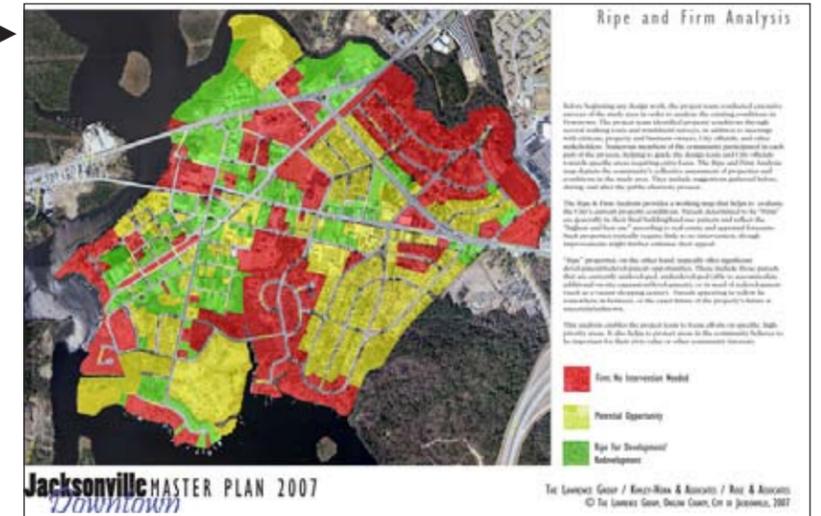
The images above reflect the varying aspects of the charrette process—public tours, stakeholder meetings, input sessions, design work. The experience gave the citizens of Jacksonville a chance to be heard. The resulting plan truly reflects the vision of everyone that participated.

3.7 CHARRETTE DELIVERABLES

By week's end, the charrette's comprehensive scope had enabled the design team to provide detailed recommendations for downtown Jacksonville. The on-site design studio and graphic work stations allowed the team to produce detailed, three-dimensional illustrations depicting the downtown area's potential build-out and redevelopment of buildings, streets and open spaces.

The progress made through the intensive charrette process culminated in a final presentation featuring a digital portrayal of the Downtown Master Plan vision. In this session, the design team set forth the specific recommendations generated by the week's publicly-driven efforts. The proposals highlighted the necessary changes required to improve Jacksonville's urban landscape. Upon leaving, the design team presented the City of Jacksonville with a published package of materials, including a high-quality PowerPoint presentation and Drawings Booklet containing the design team's completed renderings.

PAGES FROM THE CHARRETTE NOTEBOOK



CHARRETTE DRAWINGS

The images to the right were produced during the four day charrette held in Jacksonville. Hand drawings were scanned into the computer so they could be overlaid with an aerial of the City. This technique gives the citizens a better idea of how the ideas discussed fit into the fabric of their community. The team was able to present the City with copies of everything produced before returning to their office.





4: GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 LEADERSHIP & ORGANIZATION

Many of downtown Jacksonville's current issues stem from a lack of consolidated, collaborative leadership. While very serious infrastructure problems exist, effective leadership is perhaps the downtown's greatest single need. Downtown Jacksonville's success as a vibrant gathering place hinges upon effective organization and stewardship of City and County resources. To this end, the Master Plan makes the following recommendations:

Time to take a BOLD new direction. The local downtown organization, B.O.L.D. (Bettering our Local Downtown), has operated much like a traditional Main Street organization with a focus on Organization, Promotion, Design, and Economic Restructuring. Largely though, the organization has focused mainly on Promotion, namely advertising and events. As it is likely that downtown Jacksonville will not mature for many years into a traditional Main Street community, this organization must make a radical restructuring to both maintain its relevance as well as be an agent for change.

Of the four points of the Main Street approach listed previously, B.O.L.D. must transition into an organization that focuses on Economic Restructuring for the next 5+ years. In a very real way B.O.L.D. must become both a clearinghouse for development related initiatives and a redevelopment agency. They must work with the City to identify key blocks for redevelopment and acquire them and release them to developers via a RFQ/RFP process and/or seek developers to initiate these actions as a private transaction.

As long as the blight remains in the downtown area, efforts to promote investment will remain stunted.

The organization should transition to a full-time staff person to oversee its projects. Likewise, departments in the City and County governments should maintain close relationships to B.O.L.D., offering liaisons to support joint downtown affairs.

Continue Seed Funding. The City and County should continue their financial support of Jacksonville's downtown organization. For mid-sized communities, the Main Street Center recommends annual allocations between \$50,000-\$80,000. Initially, this funding should cover staff expenses, promotions and project start-up costs. Ideally, funding for their on-going activities should come from profits or fees in the redevelopment of property or the leasing of space.

THE MAIN STREET FOUR-POINT APPROACH™ TO COMMERCIAL DISTRICT REVITALIZATION

The National Trust Main Street Center offers a comprehensive commercial district revitalization strategy that has been widely successful in towns and cities nationwide. Described below are the four points of the Main Street Approach which work together to build a sustainable and complete community revitalization effort. Coincidentally, the four points of the Main Street Approach correspond with the four forces of real estate value, which are social, political, physical, and economic.

1. Organization involves getting everyone working toward the same goal and assembling the appropriate human and financial resources to implement a Main Street revitalization program. A governing board and standing committees make up the fundamental organizational structure of the volunteer-driven program. Volunteers are coordinated and supported by a paid program director as well. This structure not only divides the workload and clearly delineates responsibilities, but also builds consensus and cooperation among the various stakeholders.

2. Promotion sells a positive image of the commercial district and encourages consumers and investors to live, work, shop, play and invest in the Main Street district. By marketing a district's unique characteristics to residents, investors, business owners, and visitors, an effective promotional strategy forges a positive image through advertising, retail promotional activity, special events, and marketing campaigns carried out by local volunteers. These activities improve consumer and investor confidence in the district and encourage commercial activity and investment in the area.

3. Design means getting Main Street into top physical shape. Capitalizing on its best assets — such as historic buildings and pedestrian-oriented streets — is just part of the story. An inviting atmosphere, created through attractive window displays, parking areas, building improvements, street furniture, signs, sidewalks, street lights, and landscaping, conveys a positive visual message about the commercial district and what it has to offer. Design activities also include instilling good maintenance practices in the commercial district, enhancing the physical appearance of the commercial district by rehabilitating historic buildings, encouraging appropriate new construction, developing sensitive design management systems, and long-term planning.

4. Economic Restructuring strengthens a community's existing economic assets while expanding and diversifying its economic base. The Main Street program helps sharpen the competitiveness of existing business owners and recruits compatible new businesses and new economic uses to build a commercial district that responds to today's consumers' needs. Converting unused or underused commercial space into economically productive property also helps boost the profitability of the district.

Source: www.mainstreet.org

4.1 LEADERSHIP & ORGANIZATION

THE MAIN STREET PHILOSOPHY: EIGHT PRINCIPLES OF SUCCESS

The National Trust Main Street Center's experience in helping communities bring their commercial corridors back to life has shown time and time again that the Main Street Four-Point Approach succeeds. That success is guided by the following eight principles, which set the Main Street methodology apart from other redevelopment strategies. For a Main Street program to be successful, it must whole-heartedly embrace the following time-tested Eight Principles.

1. Comprehensive: No single focus — lavish public improvements, name-brand business recruitment, or endless promotional events — can help revitalize Main Street. But for successful, sustainable, long-term revitalization, a comprehensive approach, including activity in each of Main Street's Four Points, is essential.

2. Incremental: Baby steps come before walking. Successful revitalization programs begin with basic, simple activities that demonstrate "new things are happening" in the commercial district. As public confidence in the Main Street district grows and participants' understanding of the revitalization process becomes more sophisticated, Main Street is able to tackle increasingly complex problems and more ambitious projects. This incremental change leads to much longer-lasting and dramatic positive change in the Main Street area.

3. Self-help: No one else will save your Main Street. Local leaders must have the will and desire to mobilize local resources and talent. That means convincing residents and business owners of the rewards they'll reap by investing time and money in Main Street — the heart of their community. Only local leadership can produce long-term success by fostering and demonstrating community involvement and commitment to the revitalization effort.

4. Partnerships: Both the public and private sectors have a vital interest in the district and must work together to achieve common goals of Main Street's revitalization. Each sector has a role to play and each must understand the other's strengths and limitations in order to forge an effective partnership.

5. Identifying and capitalizing on existing assets: Business districts must capitalize on the assets that make them unique. Every district has unique qualities like distinctive buildings and human scale that give people a sense of belonging. These local assets must serve as the foundation for all aspects of the revitalization program.

6. Quality: Emphasize quality in every aspect of the revitalization program. This applies to all elements of the process — from storefront designs to promotional campaigns to educational programs. Shoestring budgets and "cut and paste" efforts reinforce a negative image of the commercial district. Instead, concentrate on quality projects over quantity.

7. Change: Skeptics turn into believers and attitudes on Main Street will turn around. At first, almost no one believes Main Street can really turn around. Changes in attitude and practice are slow but definite — public support for change will build as the Main Street program grows and consistently meets its goals. Change also means engaging in better business practices, altering ways of thinking, and improving the physical appearance of the commercial district. A carefully planned Main Street program will help shift public perceptions and practices to support and sustain the revitalization process.

8. Implementation: To succeed, Main Street must show visible results that can only come from completing projects. Frequent, visible changes are a reminder that the revitalization effort is under way and succeeding. Small projects at the beginning of the program pave the way for larger ones as the revitalization effort matures, and that constant revitalization activity creates confidence in the Main Street program and ever-greater levels of participation.

Source: www.mainstreet.org



◀ PRECEDENT IMAGES

Images taken from Roanoke, Va, Wilmington, NC and Spartanburg, SC that show the characteristics of a vibrant downtown—active storefronts, attention to detail and an established public realm.

4.2 MARKETING & BRANDING

While effective leadership provides the internal framework for downtown success, a community's ability to market its unique features is the key to generating a sustained interest that will fuel growth over many years. In Jacksonville's case, a history colored by seedy establishments downtown means the community must diligently labor to shatter previous stereotypes and present to the world a new, fresh experience. The ensuing points underscore the need to develop a dynamic branding and marketing strategy.

Build the Brand. The City, County and B.O.L.D. must work together to create a Branding & Communications Plan specific to downtown Jacksonville, including: Branding Strategy, Brand Messaging, Marketing Strategy, and Marketing Programs. In short, the brand establishes the values associated with the product—the experiences and qualities offered downtown—while marketing generates product demand/awareness. Brands take time to build, and should be thoroughly considered and developed before marketing. This is often a faster process working within short feed-back loops and cycles.

The brand's identity must be unique and memorable, appropriately considering and valuing the community's assets embodied downtown—the river, the parks, Sturgeon City, and the nearby Marine museums. The resource *Successful Branding: Five Key Elements and One Mantra* (http://www.gotomarketstrategies.com/tip_03_02.htm) will assist in further developing Jacksonville's branding/marketing strategies.

Incorporate the new logo into way-finding signage and displays downtown. Differentiate special areas or districts by color-coding the signage, encouraging each area to take ownership of its specific applications through general maintenance and decorative practices (i.e. festivals, holidays, etc.).

Work with neighborhoods to create identifiable features including gateway landscaping, logos, and signage. The health of any downtown remains inextricably connected to its surrounding neighborhoods. That said, the plan encourages the City and B.O.L.D. to work with the neighborhoods adjacent to downtown in order to create definitive improvements that will serve as community landmarks. These may be extensions of the downtown signage program, or may constitute original concepts developed by each neighborhood. Such participation creates community buy-in to revitalization initiatives, instilling pride and ownership in the downtown.

Develop a unified marketing and communications plan to advertise locally, regionally, and beyond. As the suggested brand evolves, the City, County, B.O.L.D., and the Chamber of Commerce should market the downtown to specific audiences with the intent of attracting key investors and developers regionally and beyond. The Chamber should partner with B.O.L.D. to host events downtown, coordinating press releases and media efforts to showcase activities.

Create a database of available space in the downtown and promote this inventory to new and existing tenants. A simple but effective starting-block to downtown revitalization, this database should be centralized and available to the public. It should be updated regularly and contain a list of existing conditions and needed improvements for each site. Consolidating this information will assist not only the public sector, but private investment efforts, too, as expectations will be clarified. The real estate community and Chamber of Commerce should support this work, offering any available help or information, particularly through web site links.

Program consistent annual events in the downtown area. Success stories from other communities range from "Jazz on the Square" to Halloween Parades. Regional examples include Swansboro, which hosts "Art by the Sea" every June. While B.O.L.D. has made past attempts to promote concerts or other events, these events did not generate enough community-wide interest. Part of this was due to the Riverwalk Crossing Park's size—a considerably large open space requiring a high turnout (in the thousands) in order to feel full.

For Jacksonville, the focus should be on building access and awareness of the two keys to downtown's success - the river and Sturgeon City.

Coordinate and cross-market events with the USO and military community to program more events downtown. At the charrette, several participants voiced their desires to bring visiting family and friends to the downtown area. It offered something different, they said, than the standardized commercial establishments found on Western Boulevard. The plan encourages the City and B.O.L.D. to further pursue downtown partnerships with the USO and military community, promoting and co-sponsoring events on their behalf downtown as well as specifically targeting the military audience for each event.



▲ PRECEDENT IMAGES

These images depict how dressing the storefronts of downtown with signage adds interest and life to the street. Directional way-finding signage can also be aesthetically pleasing and enhance the experience for pedestrians and drivers alike.

4.3 GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS

As part of this planning process, a number of public buildings were proposed for construction within the downtown area. The recommendations in this section offer programmatic, siting, and design considerations for the responsible local government. Though the City and County maintain a high percentage of land ownership, they are also large employers with daytime employees who provide needed activity. In general, those facilities such as administrative offices that have a high employee per square foot ratio should remain in the downtown area if possible. Other support services, equipment and vehicle storage areas, and low-density office spaces should be located away from the central core.

ONSLOW COUNTY JAIL AND SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Please see Section 6.7 for specific guidance on this facility.

CITY PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDING + FIRE STATION #1

The present 26,000 square foot public safety building housing both police and fire operations is located on Marine Boulevard next to the Infant of Prague Catholic Church. The aging former City Hall facility is no longer suitable for either operation.

Construct a new 90,000 square foot Public Safety facility along Court Street across from the courthouse. As this area will be consumed by an entire block of county facilities, an additional facility will have a negligible impact. The City should still follow best practices in urban design in its construction. Also, in constructing a new Public Safety Building across from the Sheriff's Office on Court Street, both the City and County should cooperate in creating a new, pedestrian-friendly streetscape that runs the length of Court street from Marine Boulevard to New Bridge Street.

This plan assumes that the actual fire station facilities would be decoupled from the facility as was recommended in the facility space needs study completed by Stewart Cooper Newell Architects and located away from the downtown area.

ONSLOW COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

The County has purchased property along Johnson Boulevard just west of the existing City Hall site for a new administration facility. Currently, these functions are scattered throughout the downtown area in various storefronts, back offices, and on the old hospital campus on College Street. To accommodate the programming needs, the facility is expected to be approximately 80,000 square feet and four stories tall.

Consider moving this facility to the western edge of the courthouse block.

Though Johnson Boulevard is wide enough to visually receive a four story building, all of the other structures in that corridor are generally one story residential structures. City Hall at two stories, is the tallest structure in that area. By constructing this facility in the courthouse block, a number of goals are achieved. First, the building could serve to screen the 5 story jail dormitory tower parking and service areas from the view across the river. More importantly, the building would provide a better frontage along the renovated and expanded Waterfront Park (proposed Freedom Park).

The primary concern for this site will be the accommodation of parking. As most of these employees are parking in this area already, there should be a negligible impact, especially when a new lot is constructed on the north side of Anne Street.



Possible County Administration Bldg
 Future 2nd Jail Tower
 Planned Jail Tower
 Public Parking Lot
 Possible Public Safety Building Site and private development



▲ RENDERING OF POSSIBLE COUNTY OFFICES OVERLOOKING THE RENOVATED FREEDOM PARK

4.4 BUILDING PLACEMENT & DESIGN

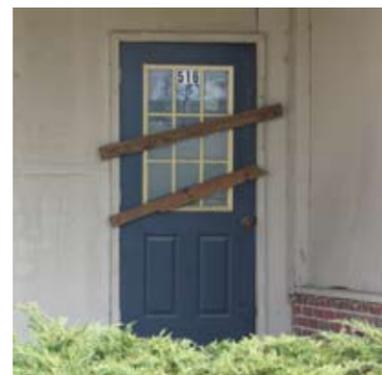
Within downtown Jacksonville, significant development/redevelopment opportunity exists. This section offers some general principles to guide future projects in the downtown area.

Require building placements at or close to the back of the sidewalk or public space, with entrances fronting on such space. This practice aides efforts to establish a vibrant public realm, creating a “front room” between the building and the street. Downtown Jacksonville contains a few examples of this practice—such as the buildings at the intersection of Court and Old Bridge Street. But, future development in the urban core (like the new jail facility) and around the Riverwalk Crossing Park area should incorporate these building patterns.

Building facades should be unique in design. The City should encourage varied and articulated building fronts. The Masonic Lodge and Margolis buildings illustrate this tenet. Renovations and new development should continue this practice in order to foster interesting visual pathways downtown, especially on Court Street towards Sturgeon City and New Bridge Street to/from the Courthouse.

Encourage ground level uses to maintain active storefronts, at-grade pedestrian entrances, and a high percentage of fenestration (windows and doors) facing the sidewalk or public space. This matter is critical to the downtown’s success. Presently, many storefronts appear abandoned and deteriorated, furthering the perception of blight. B.O.L.D. should work with the City and County to create temporary displays in each storefront windows. Ideas range from school art work and projects or Sturgeon City advertisements to local artists’ providing pieces for display. This should be done rent-free until new tenets arrive.

Furthermore, this plan strongly recommends that the City and County implement design guidelines requiring new jail buildings to maintain an active street presence, either through window displays or retail/office buildings “wrapped” around the facility’s walls. *See Section 6.7 for more detailed recommendations for the proposed jail design.*



◀ BUILDINGS IN DISREPAIR
When residents and visitors see storefronts boarded up or in general disrepair, there is a negative judgement made about the area around them. Simple things such as displaying school children’s art work in vacant store windows can change that impression significantly.

Designate certain streets as “high-traffic” pedestrian zones and implement the ground level building uses (described previously) along these avenues. As suggested in the Transportation section, the City should plan for both short- and long-term pedestrian improvements downtown. To begin this undertaking, key pedestrian corridors should be identified and required to adhere to minimum design standards regarding pedestrian-scaled design. Potential designations include: New Bridge, Court, Old Court, Tallman, Chaney and College Streets, among others.

Promote pedestrian circulation through the physical layout of buildings and use of visual corridors. Though similar to other recommendations in this section, this point emphasizes the need to clearly denote intended pedestrian travel corridors. Building placement and orientation serves a crucial function in this respect, giving pedestrians informal directional cues that intuitively lead to activity centers. New Bridge heading west into downtown embodies this principle as it showcases the Onslow County Courthouse at the street’s terminus. Such “terminating vistas” should be incorporated in downtown development opportunities.

Prohibit parking on any downtown property’s front layer. Compel properties to locate parking to the side or rear of the building hidden or screened from public view. Several buildings downtown, including those located on Chaney Avenue and New Bridge Street (between Railroad and Court Streets) permit off-street parking directly in front of the building or immediately to its side. These large, unsightly parking lots detract from the building facade and denigrate the overall downtown environment. Parking standards should require parking-screens, increased on-street parking opportunities, or rear-access parking to diminish this negative effect.



▲ SUCCESSFUL BUILDING PLACEMENT AND DESIGN
Locating civic or iconographic structures in the viewshed of a main thoroughfare highlights their importance and architecture. When planning the space in front of a building, it is important to create outdoor dining and gathering space. These elements, along with lighting and vegetation create an energetic street life.

4.5 LIGHTING

The downtown area lacks any consistent lighting scheme that would A) Distinguish the area; and B) Ensure safe pedestrian travel to and from destinations. This brief section highlights ways in which the City and County can augment the downtown's lighting system.



Consider a uniform lighting package for the downtown. While certain areas around the Courthouse and City Hall have lighting, the downtown as a whole lacks an overall strategy to install lighting conducive to pedestrian safety. Riverwalk Crossing Park contains the City's best lighting example. Here, full cut-off fixtures are set to pedestrian-scaled heights, meaning that the lighting is geared towards people walking not automobiles. In addition, the Park's lights contain "hats" which mitigate against light pollution and direct more light down to the sidewalk. The plan encourages the City to establish a standard lighting program throughout the downtown, considering full cut-off products as the preferred choice.

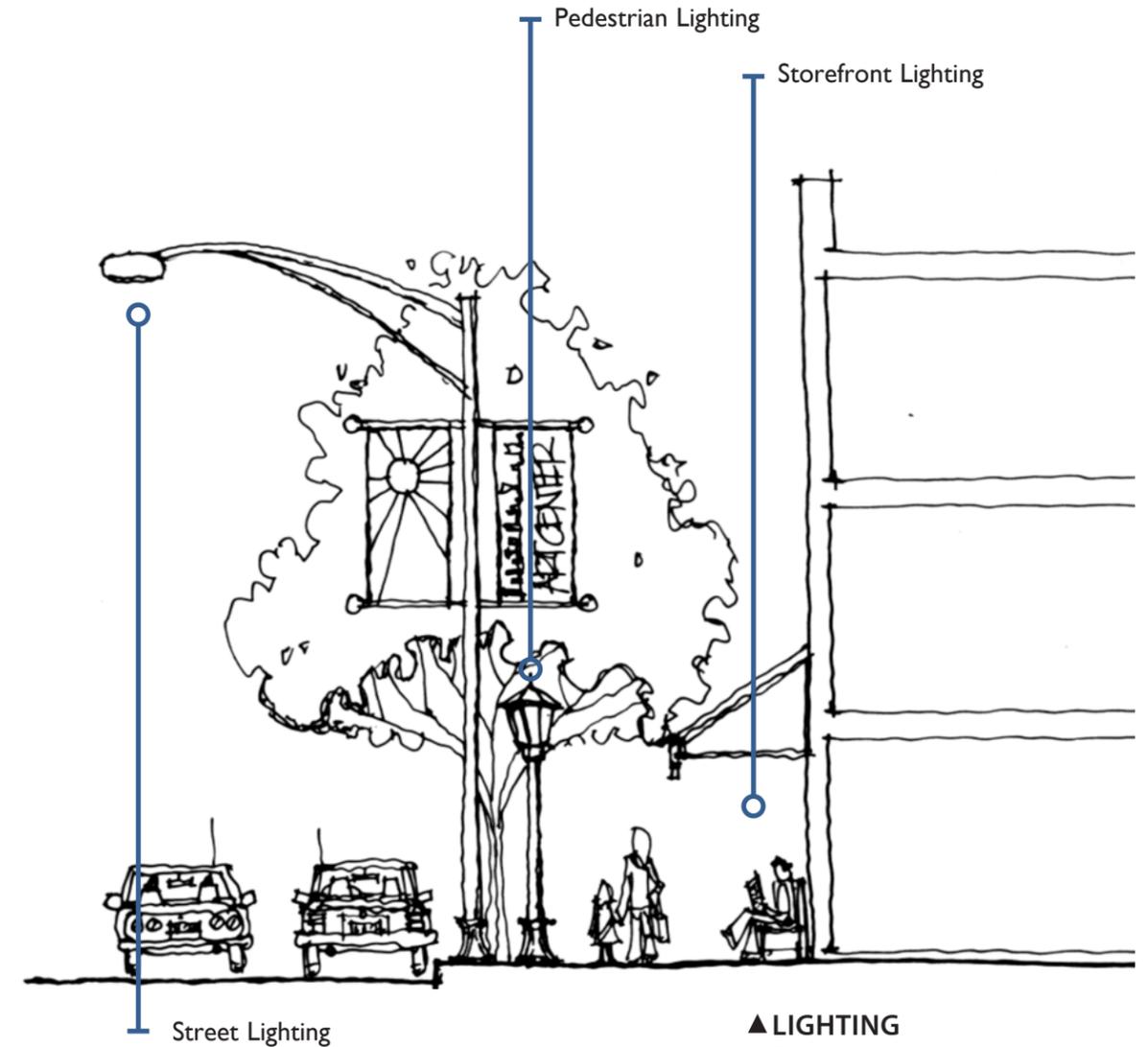


Encourage all merchants and ground level spaces to leave the lights on in their display windows and doorways. The two main lighting types, street and pedestrian-scaled lighting, effectively cover most areas. At night, however, even the best of these two approaches leave some areas cast in dark shadows. Interestingly, simply encouraging storefronts to leave their awnings or displays lit at night usually solves this problem. The indirect light supplied by the storefronts fills in the gaps, increasing feelings of safety as well as aesthetic value. The plan urges new and existing tenets to use storefront lighting, both internal and external, throughout downtown.



◀ LIGHTING IN PUBLIC SPACES

These images depict various places in which lighting should be found throughout the city—pedestrian alleys, public streets, and public parks.



▲ LIGHTING

The above diagram illustrates various lighting types and their different impacts on pedestrian- and automobile-scaled activities. Jacksonville boasts a few quality examples of pedestrian-scaled lighting, though such application is inconsistent at best. The City and County should standardize this practice through the downtown area.

4.6 STOREFRONT SIGNAGE & MURALS

One of the clearest expressions of downtown revitalization, storefront signage is a small but important way to bring positive change to distressed urban areas. This Plan recommends implementing the following strategies:

Review and change the Zoning Ordinance to permit appropriate urban, pedestrian-oriented signage. In order to allow businesses and organizations to showcase interesting signage downtown, the City should revise the ordinance to include provisions for local merchants to display creative signs in the urban core. Section 109 of the City’s ordinance currently prohibits signs projecting more than 18 inches from a building wall (Part M, No. 2). Likewise, the chapter also forbids portable signs (Part O, No. 5), which make for interesting sidewalk displays—an integral part of the public realm. While sign regulations do ensure certain aesthetic benefits, the current standards proscribe features that would improve the downtown’s visual appearance. Within reason, the City should work to include more flexibility in Section 109.

Encourage the use of creative signage that reflects local personality and adds visual interest to the streetscape. Changing the ordinance is not enough. The City and B.O.L.D. must encourage property owners, especially those conducting renovations, to develop new and interesting signage. As part of the renovation incentives, B.O.L.D. could offer funding grants to be applied specifically towards signage improvements.

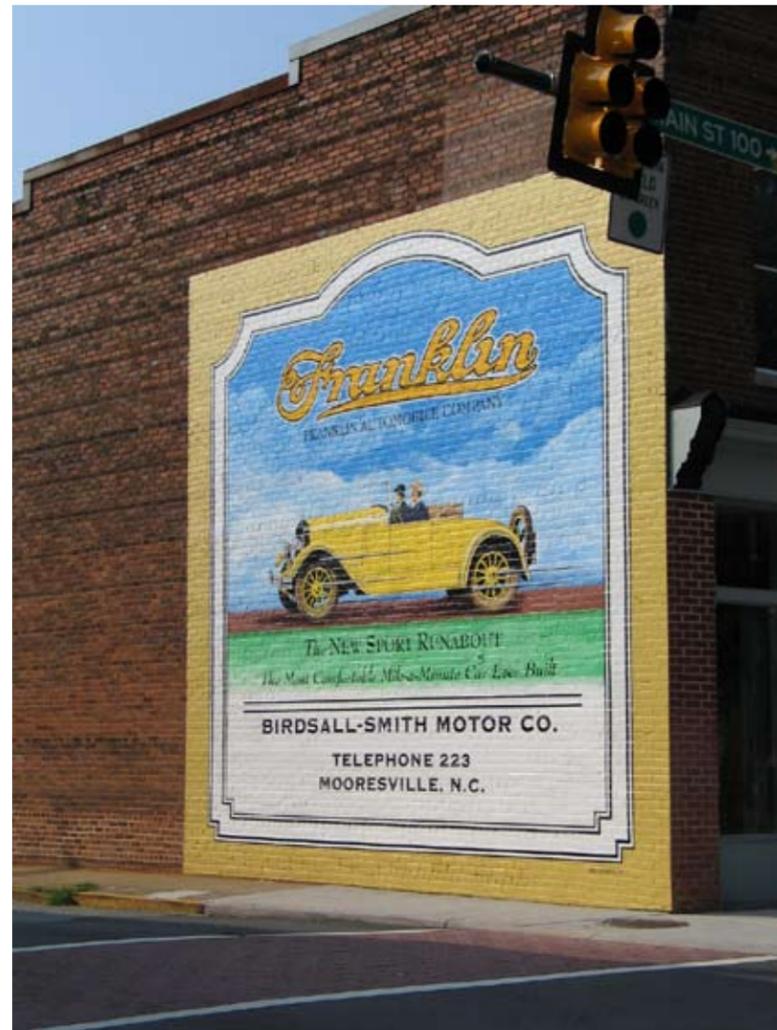
Educate new merchants on signage guidelines. To further promote new signage downtown, B.O.L.D. should prepare and distribute an information packet concerning sign develop/operation/maintenance standards for the urban core. National retailers have a required signage and presentation package for each of their franchises. Distributing a similar product for downtown merchants would foster creativity while standardizing the practice.

Identify and catalogue buildings as candidates for wall murals, developing a “Signage and Mural Grant Program” to fund improvement projects. Recently, downtowns have renewed efforts to recapture past nostalgia by commissioning murals in their historic districts. In Jacksonville, several buildings with large, blank walls exist in the downtown. Many of these surfaces front at least one prominent roadway. B.O.L.D. should inventory these structures and prioritize a list of the buildings where a wall mural would positively impact the downtown’s visual appeal. This recommendation should also be combined with 4.8 Public Art.

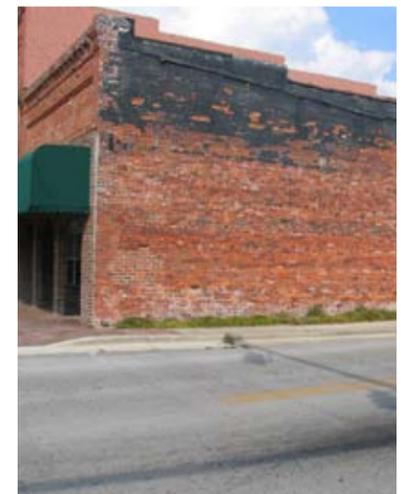
It is interesting to note that the current ordinance reflects changes that helped to clean up the former “red light district” along Court Street by eliminating substandard signage and wall “murals” that advertised many

of the unacceptable business ventures. Now that these businesses have been cleared from the downtown, it is appropriate to reconsider more acceptable artistic forms of wall murals.

Concurrently, the City and B.O.L.D. should establish a program to fund such improvements. Partnerships with local arts groups, tourism bureaus and other organizations are encouraged. The Plan recommends murals displaying Jacksonville’s local attractions, such as Sturgeon City, Camp Lejeune and the USO, the New River and area beaches. These murals may range in size, cost and appearance, but their overall impact serves dual purposes—both reinvigorating the downtown’s visual attractiveness while advertising/broadcasting Jacksonville’s heritage and history. Ideal candidates include the Embarq Building on Railroad Street, as well as the two corner buildings at the intersection of Old Bridge and Court Streets.



Colorful wall mural used to enhance an otherwise bland public space, Mooresville, NC



The above images depict creative, original signs that add character to the streetscape. Spartanburg, SC

Downtown Jacksonville contains several key opportunities to construct wall murals, such as the prominent Embarq building on Railroad Street (top) and at the corner of Old Bridge and Court Streets (bottom)

4.7 PARKS & PUBLIC SPACE

Jacksonville's downtown area and surrounding neighborhoods contain several parks and public spaces that offer a variety of activities. This section explores the three most prominent public spaces, recommending certain improvements to bolster each place's contribution to the urban fabric. Above all in these recommendations, the priority must be given to opening up access (visual and physical) to the New River.

Riverwalk Crossing Park/Willingham Park

Perhaps the downtown's most prominent space, this linear park stretches from the historic Depot to the Willingham/Kerr Street Park area. It was master-planned by Allison Platt & Associates as part of the 1998 *Downtown Revitalization Plan*. The park occupies a significant amount of land downtown, stretches through several different land-use patterns (commercial, residential and recreational) and features some of the City's best lighting and sidewalks. Maintenance in the past few years, however, has been clearly lacking. In fact, many of the plantings throughout the park are in poor condition, a circumstance that accentuates the park's limited seasonal appeal. This last comment refers specifically to the under-plantings, which fail to complement the park's principal flora (spring/summer oaks and crepe myrtles) during the fall/winter season.

Furthermore, the park's immense size and lack of surrounding development make the space seem rather empty. Even efforts to program events in the park fall far short of attracting enough persons to create a sense that the park is full—such a turnout would require thousands upon thousands of persons. Accordingly, the considerable development gaps surrounding the park undermine the necessary sense of enclosure created by the best public spaces. Vast sections along both Railroad Street and Willingham Parkway remain vacant and under-utilized. When combined, these elements make the space unsuitable to routinely host the smaller, more intimate events associated with downtown programming. Based upon these observations, the plan suggests the following improvements:

Diversify the plantings throughout the park. For the reasons listed above, the City and B.O.L.D. should consider significant landscape improvements to the park's under-plantings. Primarily, the plan recommends seasonal annuals such as daffodils and pansies to bolster the off-season's color. Suggested shrub under-plantings to accompany the park's trees include hollies, azalea, loropetalum, abelia, and dwarf gardenias. These plantings will help to increase visual interest at all levels during all seasons, adding a year-round aesthetic element that will enhance the overall experience. Secondarily, the City and B.O.L.D. should devise and implement a schedule for routine maintenance of the park's flora. The aforementioned plantings will require more attention and effort, but the efforts will be well worth the results.

Encourage infill residential development around the park's edge.

Specifically, future development projects should target the existing vacant parcels along Railroad Street and Willingham Parkway. New development should be street-fronting, with parking making use of the existing on-street facilities or located in the rear of the building. All buildings should be pedestrian-scaled, meaning that they are built to the individual walking by on foot rather than passing through in an automobile (i.e. front porches and sidewalks should be pulled close to the street).

This infill development pattern serves a variety of purposes. Namely, it will provide the expansive park with a sense of enclosure. The buildings will help to frame the park, clearly defining the public space and delineating its edges while providing a visual transition to the surrounding residential area. Moreover, the increased residential density will supply more users for the park, which frequently appears empty and desolate, as well as supplement the number of "eyes on the street." This phrase, pioneered by urban sociologist Jane Jacobs, alludes to the informal but highly effective social-policing done by watchful parents, residents and property owners that improves an area's overall safety.

Riverfront Park/Freedom Park

This waterfront park lines the New River in downtown Jacksonville, stretching from the Old Bridge Street bridge to the Marine Boulevard bridge. By comparison, the area is roughly the same size as neighboring Swansboro's historic and celebrated waterfront. The space attracts many outdoorsmen as the park provides the only public water access for many miles. To accommodate the high volume of trucks with trailers, however, parking comprises the majority of the park's surface area. Indeed, on weekends or on summer evenings these vehicles and apparatuses clog the parking area for other users, forcing persons to find parking elsewhere in downtown and detracting from the park's waterfront views.

In addition to the negative visual impacts, the lack of space makes the area difficult to program. The park contains a very small, sloping lawn surrounding the Pelletier House on the park's south end. Lastly, a well-maintained boardwalk running the length of the park's shoreline offers views of the New River. Constructed around several willow trees, the boardwalk is by far the park's best feature. Unfortunately, the aforementioned trucks often obstruct access to the walkway.

Extend the boardwalk north under Marine Boulevard bridge. This move requires working with the NC DOT to ensure an appropriate bridge height/structure to accommodate the pathway. The proposal extends Jacksonville's most prominent piece of waterfront property and maintains it as a public space—an essential point given its location and frequency of use. (See Section 6.6)



▲ FUNCTIONAL PUBLIC SPACE

Townhomes lining a public green in Davidson, NC (Top). The residential units provide "eyes on the street" and frame the common area nicely on both sides, all while enjoying views over the local landscape. Proper plant selection can give a public space year-round interest, as suggested in the aerial rendering of Riverwalk Crossing Park (Bottom).

4.7 PARKS & PUBLIC SPACE

Re-locate the public water access to another suitable site. Though highly-used, the access area inhibits the park's functioning as a vibrant public space. The Plan recommends shifting the public launch further south along the New River, perhaps to the Willingham waterfront park area. Because of the Kerr Street recreation facilities' parking capacity, this site seems to be a suitable alternative for the truck/trailer needs demanded by a public launch. The City should further investigate this and other opportunities.

Expand public greenspace along the waterfront. With the access relocated, the City and County should increase the amount of open area at the site. This will mean finding new parking solutions to replace the spaces converted to greenspace. A balance between on-street, surface and deck parking facilities (all discussed in Section 5.6) will help to conveniently meet these needs while allowing the park to expand. The Plan encourages the City and County to develop a park master plan for the new area.

Purchase the Jacksonville Bible Church on Anne Street and the adjacent private marina for a public park. Because of the long term visual impact of the jail tower on the courthouse block, specifically on the Riverfront Park, the City should plan for the contingency that the public will not

accept an active, public park in that location as a place to congregate and hold festivals. The river is too valuable an asset to turn its back on in relation to the downtown area. As such the City needs a "Plan B" for a location that is proximate to the historic core that is not overshadowed by a jail tower or its related support facilities. The most logical location is the current Jacksonville Bible Church. The City could purchase the property and prepare a land lease to permit the congregation to continue to use the building as long as they desire. If the congregation should move or cease, the full ownership would revert to the City.



EXPAND THE WATERFRONT PARK

The Plan recommends a waterfront park that stretches from the current Jacksonville Bible Church property to the city-owned property on the north side of Marine Boulevard, extending public accessibility to this natural resource for almost 2600 feet along the main channel of the New River.

Sturgeon City

The Sturgeon City project offers one of the most compelling coastal revitalization stories in modern times. Prominently set on Wilson Bay, the 27.5 acre property represents a combination of efforts by various federal, state and local agencies, non-profit organizations and universities to establish an environmental education center and 250,000 gallon aquarium. Complete with restored wetlands and the accompanying City park (already mostly constructed), the area will surely draw thousands of visitors a year to downtown Jacksonville. The Master Plan firmly believes that the success of Sturgeon City directly affects the downtown's revival and future vitality. Therefore, the Plan strongly encourages the City to:

Include Sturgeon City in all planning and development dialogue regarding downtown Jacksonville. The anticipated visitor volume will place unique demands on the infrastructure immediately surrounding the property. Priority roadway and sidewalk improvements to Court Street are explained in the transportation section of this report. In general, the City and B.O.L.D. should work with Sturgeon City to develop an attractive and direct corridor leading through downtown to the site. Furthermore, the City and B.O.L.D. should ensure that attractive way-finding signs placed through the downtown and along Marine, Johnson & Lejeune Boulevards easily direct visitors to Sturgeon City.

Heavily promote and market Sturgeon City to regional and national audiences. The scope of the project's size and its revitalization efforts have received national attention from a host of organizations and disciplines, including the marine biology, conservation, planning and educational fields. The site's potential to attract visitors from across the east coast and beyond cannot be understated. The City, County, B.O.L.D. and Chamber of Commerce must capitalize on this wonderful opportunity by promoting Sturgeon City nationally. These groups should work with Sturgeon City to develop a sophisticated marketing campaign targeting educational and school groups, researchers, conservation organizations and more.

Advertise Sturgeon City locally in the downtown area. Section 4.6 of this chapter explicitly detailed this proposal, which includes opening up vacant storefronts to display information concerning upcoming activities and events at Sturgeon City. One display could even feature a projected time line highlighting key milestone dates. The plan also recommends painting a giant Sturgeon City mural on the Embarq building to enhance the downtown's visual appeal and colorfully advertise in a unique, enduring way. Belief and pride in Sturgeon City will motivate residents downtown and around the City to support other revitalization initiatives.



The boardwalk is one of Jacksonville's most memorable public spaces



The public water access at the Waterfront Park creates parking and aesthetic issues



When complete, Sturgeon City will be one of Jacksonville's most celebrated features

4.7 PARKS & PUBLIC SPACE



Pink Lady Indian Hawthorn



Annuals



Liriope



Shrub Rose



Encore Azalea

FOUR SEASONS

One great asset of cities in the South is the ability to plan for four seasons of interest. New plantings are suggested for the park that give the space just that. This goal can be achieved by planting flowering shrubs, evergreen foundation shrubs, interesting ground covers, and annual flower plantings.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The images to the left depict the park as the design team found it during the charrette. Live oak and crape myrtle plantings have set up a great foundation to be built upon. It will take several decades for the live oaks to make the kind of physical impact a space of this size needs. In the mean time, adding interest at the ground level can increase the aesthetics of the park, and in turn, bring more people to the space.



Blush Lorapetalium



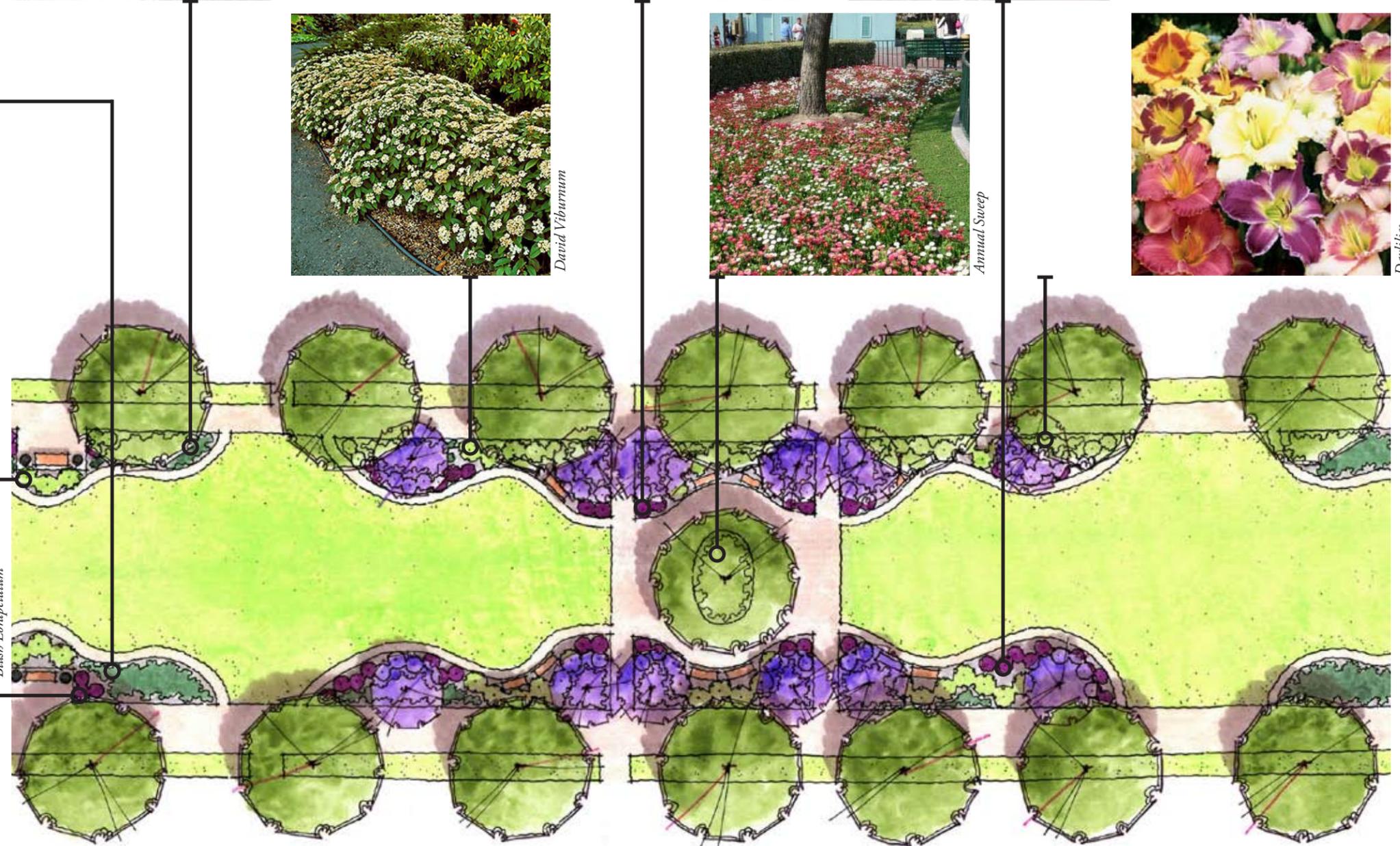
David Viburnum



Annual Sweep



Daylilies



4.8 PUBLIC ART

In contemporary times, public art has become integral to community fabric through art's potential to enhance neighborhood identity, strengthen economic development and tourism, educate children and adults, and enrich the spirit and pride of its citizens. Public art encourages activity in public spaces, enlivening the atmosphere and often creating places with a child-friendly focus. Jacksonville currently lacks this key urban element, and this plan encourages the following changes:

Create a Public Art Commission to oversee the selection and placement public art around the city. Representatives from various community sectors, including citizens and neighborhood groups, should comprise this committee. Since no established art tradition exists in the City, this group should contain persons capable of developing and implementing a vision. The Commission should work with other area organizations to begin arts programs in the downtown area, as well as solicit, review and select projects to enhance the urban landscape. In its early years, the City/County should allocate seed funding to this group.

Encourage property owners, especially those bordering public spaces, to commission/provide outdoor public art experiences. The City and B.O.L.D. should foster participation in public art projects by encouraging business owners to privately commission artworks and projects that improve the public realm. Such action may require that Jacksonville amend its zoning regulations to allow for the placement of public art downtown.

Diversify the types and applications of public art, incorporating "interactive" or contemporary artworks into the public setting. The detailed adornment of the public realm is one factor that distinguishes downtowns from suburban shopping environments. Offering interactive art makes such experiences even more appealing—especially to families with children. Examples range from sprayground fountains to movable type settings that children re-arrange at will (shown right). Potential sites for such displays include Riverwalk Crossing Park, Freedom Park, downtown school blocks, the Courthouse, etc.

Develop an "Adopt-A-Street" program, partnering with the local arts community and area schools. With three schools and several neighborhoods in or near the urban core, Jacksonville should develop programs to generate local interest and ownership in public art. Such involvement inspires citizens to remain active while supporting the revitalization of downtown. Different groups, such as Sturgeon City, the USO and government services, should all be included too.

Dedicate 1% of all capital funds for public projects towards public art. Lastly, city and county authorities should consider adopting ordinances that appropriate 1 percent of eligible capital improvement project funds for public art. This will ensure that artworks enhance Jacksonville's public spaces and become an integral part of urban and economic development efforts. Specifically, the city should reserve locations for public art around all public buildings and facilities, perhaps cataloguing existing potential locations and prioritizing each site.



▲ GREAT PUBLIC ART
Interactive public art creates memorable community focal points and gives children a place to enjoy urban areas safely.

4.9 LANDSCAPING

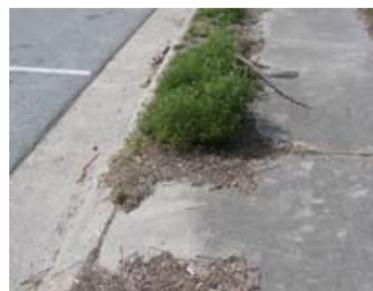
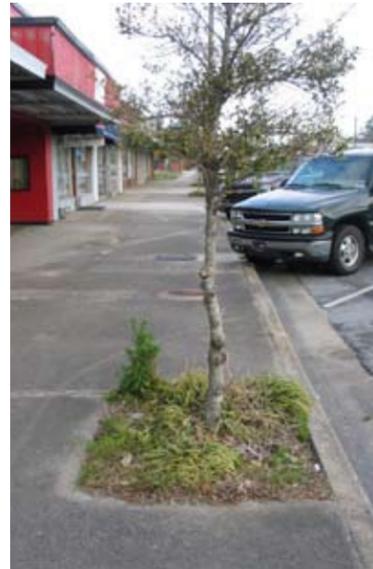
During the charrette’s various field exercises, it became apparent that the downtown Jacksonville is in need of a landscaping overhaul. Numerous city blocks in the urban core have deteriorated over time, failing to be adequately maintained or replaced with newer vegetation as needed. While existing conditions are troubling, increased attention to the issue at hand should improve the downtown’s flora deprivation.

Develop a comprehensive landscaping master plan for downtown. The City should earmark funding to conduct a professional study concerning downtown landscaping. The plan should be comprehensive in scope, detailing vegetative prescriptions for different thoroughfares and districts downtown. In conjunction with this measure, the City should prepare funding for the plan’s immediate implementation.

Establish and implement a regular maintenance schedule. Existing conditions throughout the downtown showed that plants had remained in place long after they had died. This proved especially true around some of the downtown’s major focal points, the Courthouse and New Bridge Street. Problems with plantings should be identified early, before the plant has died. The City should then seek to redress the issue through adequate maintenance or, if this proves ineffective, abrupt replacement of the vegetation. To aid in this process, a record should be kept of the planting schedule and required maintenance dates—and strictly monitored.

Remove the juniper from around the Onslow County Courthouse. At the corner of Court and Old Bridge Streets, the planting beds are filled with foot after foot of dead juniper. To make matters worse, lots of loose trash were also found in the vegetation. This is both unattractive and disgraceful to the County, who should work to remediate the situation as soon as possible.

Encourage local participation through an “Adopt a Street” program. As with the suggested art proposal, the City and B.O.L.D. should not assume the burden of this issue alone. Drawing the community together to participate in area’s revitalization will do more for the City’s future preservation and flourishing. With this in mind, the City and B.O.L.D. should partner with the three downtown schools, plus churches, neighborhoods and businesses to develop an informal landscaping maintenance and improvement effort.



▲ EXISTING LANDSCAPING

◀ Existing conditions reveal that landscaping downtown is inconsistent and deteriorated. Some bright spots exist, but the public sector must take a larger role in developing a coherent planting/maintenance strategy for downtown.

▲ POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS

A solid investment in landscape improvements for downtown will make an enormous impact on the vitality of the city. Large caliper tree plantings with understory shrubs and annual flowers for color can make a street extremely inviting.

4.10 WAYFINDING & SIGNAGE

The term way-finding was originally coined by Kevin Lynch in his 1960's book *Image of the City*, which resulted from a five-year study on how users perceive and organize spatial information as they navigate through cities. It refers to the ways in which people orient themselves in physical space and travel from place to place. Given its confusing series of roadway terminations and extensions, Jacksonville should make every effort to clarify its downtown attractions for visitors through various signage improvements:

Install a comprehensive way-finding system for the downtown area.

While conducting fieldwork during the charrette, the consultant was stopped by visitors and asked the location of certain places on numerous occasions, thus illustrating the need for a more effective way-finding system. Like any downtown, the City of Jacksonville contains several different areas of interest. The City and B.O.L.D. should prioritize these places, creating a navigable series of signs that will effectively direct persons via the easiest route to their destination. This effort should not be limited to the urban core, but should extend out to Marine, Johnson and Lejeune Boulevards so as to provide enough lead time for motorists to safely adjust their routes. Currently, motorists may miss downtown if not paying attention due to a lack of established, attractive signage.

Create distinct cultural districts in the downtown according to use and function.

As part of the above effort, the City and B.O.L.D. should highlight the attractions and destinations downtown through signage - namely the river, Sturgeon City, the USO, the Marine museums and visitor sites and the various government buildings. The plan recommends coordinating each district's signage, basing the schema on an over-arching master template but varying the specific colors/designs used for each area. For instance, blue could be used to denote waterfront attractions, green for parks and recreation opportunities, etc. Importantly, the signage should be sure to correctly denote and emphasize the most direct route to Sturgeon City, as this will be a major attraction in the coming years.

Incorporate public parking signage into comprehensive way-finding system.

Though detailed more in Chapter 5 of this report, the point deserves mention here. Existing conditions, especially around the Courthouse area where parking is in high demand, have created a perception that not enough parking exists in downtown Jacksonville. Field observations contradict this belief, in both total capacity and turnover. Since enough adequate parking exists, the City and County should strive to make persons aware of this fact through appropriate signage leading to/from parking facilities. Identifying these areas will help visitors to both the Courthouse and waterfront destinations better enjoy their experience.



Credit Atlanta Downtown Improvement District



▲ SIGNAGE

Way-finding signage improves the downtown experience for visitors and residents, as seen in Greenville, SC, Atlanta, GA, and Cary, NC

4.11 RETAILING

A strong retail environment is another key ingredient missing from Jacksonville's urban core. While the downtown may never match its suburban rivals in terms of sales volume, strategic improvements to downtown retailing practices will help to establish a niche market for goods. Offering a unique shopping experience will be the downtown's biggest strength. Therefore, the City/County should work towards these ends:

Encourage the rotation of display windows with education, incentives, and awards. The City/County should partner with B.O.L.D. to organize efforts to fill each storefront, regardless of whether or not the space is occupied. From restaurants to dry cleaners, jail facilities to legal offices, no property with a storefront should be exempt from providing a pleasant experience to a passerby. The display need not be elaborate nor even related to retailing/marketing. The point is to create signs of life in the downtown core. To encourage participation, sponsors should consider a mix of incentives—awards, free display space, etc.

Storefront displays may range from advertisements to educational exhibits. For instance, the new jail facilities could dedicate street-level window space to educating the public about law enforcement, the legal system, or even career opportunities. Sturgeon City, local artists, and school arts programs all represent other opportunities to create a vibrant storefront atmosphere.

Provide education/training on store merchandising. The City/County should also develop an educational program for new property owners and merchants. The focus should target specific strategies proven to help small businesses succeed. As part of this program, the City/County should consider distributing a copy of “*Why We Buy - The Science of Shopping*,” with every new membership in B.O.L.D.

Expand overall business hours for all stores into the evenings. Presently, few downtown restaurants/businesses keep evening hours. This practice must change, especially as new jobs and other businesses expand. The City/County and B.O.L.D. should encourage store owners to keep later hours, until 9 p.m.—especially for enterprises such as restaurants and coffee shops.

Consider forming a local Jacksonville store selling goods particular to the city or area. This concept contains significant potential, given the particular institutions prominent in/around Jacksonville. Goods ranging from USMC apparel and Sturgeon City memorabilia to local art and historical resources are all appropriate. The City/County and local downtown organization should investigate partnerships, perhaps temporarily locating the store in the USO building or B.O.L.D. depot.

15 Retail Tips to Attract New Shoppers

1. Wash your windows at least once a week; wash your front door daily because it is so visible.
2. Polish your brass door handle or scrub your aluminum knob weekly. First impressions matter.
3. Scrape off old stickers from windows - Visa, MasterCard, etc. It is assumed that you take plastic in today's retail environment.
4. If you don't take plastic, begin immediately. It is a proven fact that shoppers using plastic have larger average sales than those using cash.
5. Remove old posters and window clutter so shoppers can see into your store. Look inviting to curious eyes.
6. Post your hours on the door so shoppers know when to come back and make a purchase.
7. Change your window displays frequently. The Gap changes its windows once a week.
8. Replace burned-out light bulbs so your store looks maintained and well lit.
9. Increase the wattage of light bulbs throughout your store. Have you shopped in Benetton lately?
10. Leave your display window lights on at night to highlight your merchandise 24 hours a day. Your windows are free advertising!
11. Remove bars on your windows to show shoppers that the neighborhood is safe. Don't feel comfortable doing that yet? Move the bars inside to the back of the display window.
12. Replace your yellowed Plexiglas windows with clear glass. All the cleaning in the world won't make a difference if your windows look dingy.
13. Ask your customers what they like about the appearance of your business and what they would like to see change. Then, implement the suggestions.
14. Go on vacation. When you come back, you will have a fresh perspective. Walk through your store with a pad in hand and jot down anything "you never noticed before" that should be repaired, cleaned, upgraded, or replaced.
15. Hire a part-time employee and ask what he or she would change. Or, assign your new employee to make the upgrades!

Source: William McLeod, Main Street News, October 2003



4.12 HOUSING

Residential housing represents one of the downtown's greatest strengths and greatest needs. The downtown benefits from its surrounding stable neighborhoods, such as Bayshore Estates and the areas around Mill Avenue, Court Street, New Bridge Middle School and Brentwood Avenue. Still, opportunities for infill development abound in and around the downtown core. Such development will boost the downtown population, aiding the "built-in" market for stores and shops while providing visible pedestrian traffic in the evening hours. Ultimately, the goal is to create an "18-hour environment" in which activity extends beyond the business day and into the evening.

Identify vacant parcels and distressed areas that lack any historical value in the neighborhoods. Allocate government resources to aid the private sector in these areas' redevelopment opportunities. Knowing where to direct development is a great first step to building quality downtown neighborhoods. The City and B.O.L.D. should catalogue all parcels in the downtown area, prioritizing which properties are ready for redevelopment and which need demolition/other mitigating work. The City and B.O.L.D. should direct new development, in accordance with the Master Plan recommendations, towards specified areas while funding (or aiding private development efforts) measures to prepare future sites.

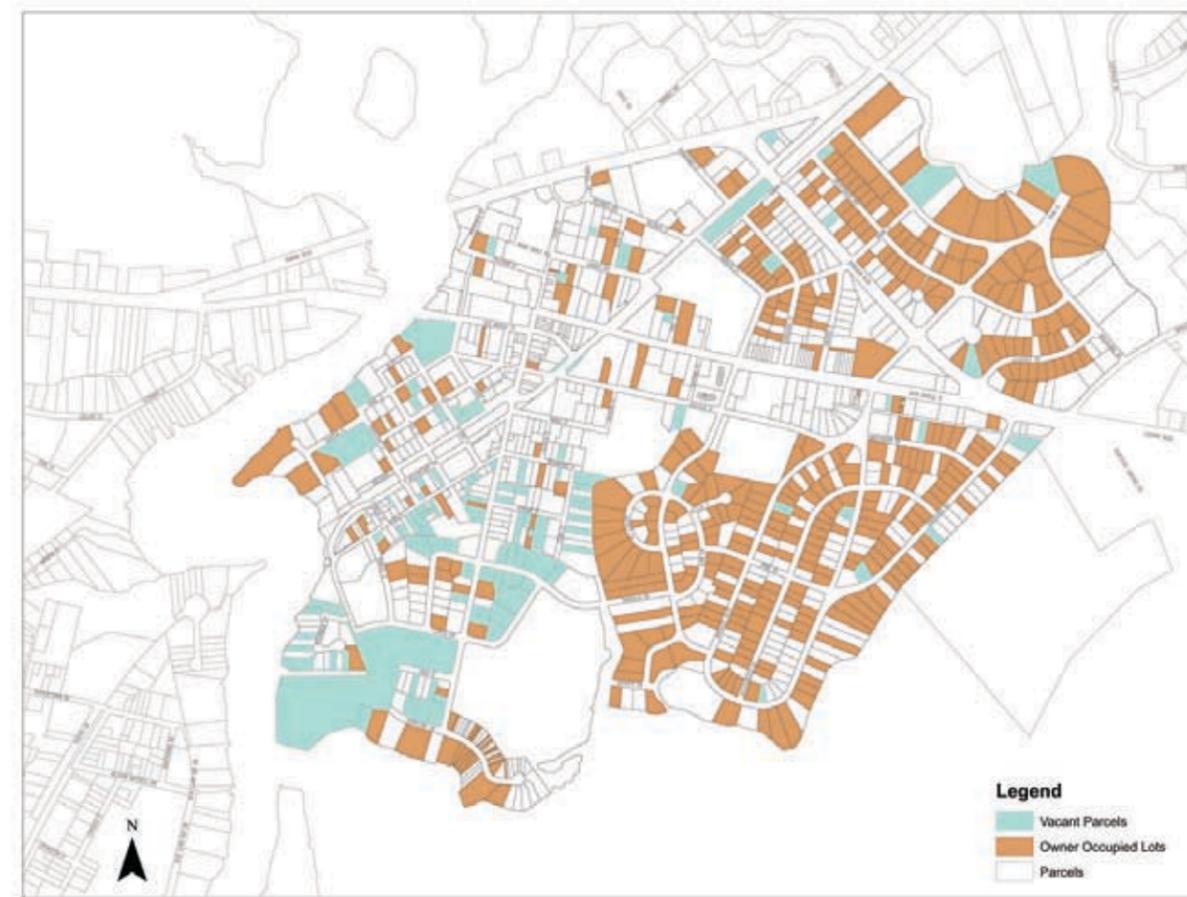
Expand the public and business sectors' support of neighborhood revitalization efforts for Mill Avenue, Riverwalk Crossing Park and South Court Street, etc. These each have local projects underway, or are able to accommodate greater development densities based on market trends. The City and B.O.L.D. should promote these efforts, implementing the Master Plan's development proposals for each area. Local real estate groups, developers and contractors should be made aware of this Plan, as well as the opportunities for redevelopment projects in these areas.

Balance renovation with strategic infill opportunities to attract higher quality investment, while preserving historic character. The Plan does not advocate tearing down all existing buildings nor saving every structure for historic preservation purposes. Each scenario is both extreme and equally impractical. Calculated infill development, however, offers a context-sensitive approach that incrementally improves neighborhoods through key, high-visibility projects that enhance the surrounding urban features. The City should evaluate each neighborhood/district's needs and channel development accordingly. For example, a new multi-family project on Old Bridge Street is ill-conceived; fronting Riverwalk Crossing Park, though, it would be well-placed.

Stabilize fragile/threatened neighborhoods adjacent to downtown, such as the Court Street and Kerr Street areas. Currently, rental units comprise a considerable proportion of all downtown properties (shown below). Generally speaking, renter-dominated areas tend to have lower home values, higher turnover and higher crime rates. This reality is most pronounced in the Court Street area, where very few owner-occupied units exist. Interestingly, 113 out of 314 properties (36%) in Bayshore Estates, which is perceived by many to be a relatively stable neighborhood, are not owner occupied.

In recent years, the Jacksonville Police Department has drastically improved safety downtown and in the surrounding neighborhoods. To attract quality development to these places, the City/County should continue to improve ownership conditions, purchasing key properties and releasing them for private development.

Provide sites for housing students and staff for Sturgeon City. The redevelopment of the Kerr, Ford, and Poplar Streets area may present an opportunity to provide not only affordable housing for existing downtown residents but also short and long-term housing for Sturgeon City activities. The reach of Sturgeon City summer institutes can be broadened beyond the Jacksonville area with the provision of housing. Having a direct connection to the facility via the greenway from this area make it a logical choice. Another potential opportunity is the Shoreline Drive area where approximately half of the townhome units are currently investor-owned.



PROPERTY DYNAMICS

The prevalence of rental properties (white) in the downtown area reflects both the military presence in the community, as well as areas of instability. The downtown also contains numerous vacant parcels (teal), which the City/County should consolidate and release for private development interests.

4.12 HOUSING

Ensure high standards for the design and construction of all housing and minimize parking impacts. Revitalization should contain a representative blend of different price points. The City and B.O.L.D. should attract development that preserves or enhances the downtown’s architectural vernacular. This means requiring developers and builders to thoroughly implement the design recommendations found in this report. Details such as building setbacks, orientation and densities should follow an urban pattern (concepts shown at right), regardless of target market or price point. New development should be sensitive to surrounding interests, whether historical or otherwise, and seek to further invigorate the downtown’s built environment.

Encourage and appropriately detail new, urban housing units adjacent to downtown and on the upper floors of existing/new downtown buildings. New, urban-scaled housing immediately adjacent to downtown as well as in the upper floors of new buildings should be actively pursued. High quality urban housing shows that density coupled with quality design can promote a vibrant pedestrian environment. New building types such as narrow-lot detached homes, flats, condominiums, and live-work units should be introduced in every block around the downtown.

Urban housing units compete with suburban options when they provide superior interior and exterior environments. Buyers of downtown housing want to be able to enjoy the shopping and the culture when they walk out of their door, but they also want well-detailed interiors. To this end, there are some basic design elements specific to the design of urban housing that should be considered:

- Buildings should be pulled close to the street to maximize the building envelope and provide an active pedestrian environment.
- When units are constructed on the ground level, they should be raised above the level of the sidewalk at least 18” and preferably 3 feet or more to provide privacy to the occupants.
- In urban environments, the building design should be secondary to the environment of the street with wide sidewalks, street trees in grates, and pedestrian-scaled lighting.
- Facades should generally be simple in form but highly detailed with cornices, window treatments, and accents such as lighting and balconies.
- Public/common space is fine grained with rooftop gardens, intimate courtyards, and small squares or plazas.
- Private spaces such as balconies, rooftop decks, and porches,

also afford greater opportunity to enjoy the outdoors.

- Residential parking should be provided but be out of sight. Where possible, provide parking on-street for convenience and to the rear for longer term vehicle storage.
- Parking decks should not front directly on a street. This is tantamount to death for a pedestrian-oriented street. Studies have shown that pedestrians will avoid these blocks by choosing alternate routes or simply turning around.



Upper story balconies that provide “eyes on the street” in downtown Plano, TX



Good urbanism with a highly walkable environment is not a function of architectural style (Abacoa, FL).



Entries that are raised above the street to provide privacy in the Cedar Mill neighborhood in downtown Charlotte, NC



These units, in Wilmington, NC, have dramatically turned around a formerly distressed neighborhood

4.13 HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Historic preservation constitutes a vital part of any vibrant city, fostering the protection and celebration of cultural icons for many generations. In Jacksonville, the Onslow County Historic Society directs efforts to preserve and refurbish historic structures. The City's urban core features a few buildings and areas worth noting:

PELLETIER HOUSE

Perhaps the downtown's most well-preserved structure, the Pelletier House sits atop the old Wantland Spring on the New River waterfront. The building played a key role in Jacksonville's early history, first as a distillery and then, purportedly, as the town's post office during Rufus Pelletier's two terms as postmaster in the mid-to-late nineteenth century. Today, the house still maintains a strong presence downtown, anchoring Freedom Park's south end. All future activity in and around this area should promote and preserve this historic jewel.

MILL AVENUE HISTORIC DISTRICT

Just a few blocks away from the Pelletier House the Mill Avenue Historic District is positioned on the downtown's southern tip, between the New River and Riverwalk Crossing Park. This area contains the George and Mary Bender House, Richard Ward House, Jarman Hotel and other historic buildings. Despite the area's designation as a historic district, the degree of preservation varies from structure to structure. While new construction projects are underway, other historic sites like the Jarmon Hotel have fallen into disrepair. The area needs a clearly defined vision and coherent strategy to guide future renovations and development. The City and B.O.L.D. should coordinate neighborhood efforts to revitalize, directing residents towards available resources and promoting sensitive infill development where appropriate.

USO BUILDING

In operation since 1942, the Jacksonville USO has been one of the downtown's most active venues in the last 50 years. The original building was constructed just after the 1941 Lanham Act, which set up community facilities for military personnel and their families. Since that time, the building has undergone many renovations, though the site has never closed due to construction and has remained continuously open as long as the broader USO has been operational.

This Plan encourages the continued maintenance and improvement of the USO building. Specifically, the USO should be further incorporated into the Freedom Park area. This means improving the building relationship to the park by eliminating Riverview Street and extending the park's open space to the USO building line. Additionally, the Plan

recommends the construction of a porch, preferably a design that wraps around the building's water-facing side, to overlook the park and the New River. This facility has been an integral part of Jacksonville's recent history and embodies its ties to the military community. All future plans should seek to promote this facility as a Jacksonville landmark.

MARGOLIS & PETTEWAY BUILDINGS

These two buildings sit side-by-side at the heart of the urban core, between the intersections of Court Street and Old/New Bridge Streets. Their history dates back to the turn of the nineteenth century as Max Margolis established his men's clothing store in one of the buildings, updating the other with a black architectural glass following World War II. They are some of the few buildings on historic Court Street that maintain decent storefront displays. The Plan recommends the full restoration of these structures (especially the upper cornices) as time and finances permit.

MASONIC TEMPLE

Directly across from the Onslow County Courthouse, the Masonic Lodge stands as the most iconic structure downtown. Its history dates back to 1919, and over the years it has seen both the best and worst days of Jacksonville's downtown history. The building is presently empty, but should be restored (including opening up its storefront) to provide for active uses in the downtown core.

IWO JIMA THEATER

This building on New Bridge Street is one of the best symbols of the area's military influence. The theater, appropriately titled "Iwo Jima," once provided a diversion from base life at Camp Lejeune. It currently houses a local radio station. The City and B.O.L.D. should work to restore this building, perhaps creating a new film theater, museum or activity center out of its shell.

ADDITIONAL SITES

In addition to the aforementioned structures, Jacksonville contains numerable other historic sites in various states of use. These include, but are not limited to, the Ransom and Ellie Hinton House and Bank of Onslow County. The City, County, B.O.L.D. and Onslow Historical Society should continue efforts to preserve and celebrate Jacksonville's historic sites. This should be done with discretionary interest, as many of the area's buildings only date to just after World War II.



◀ HISTORIC CHARACTER

◀ Jacksonville contains many distinct buildings, several of which are clustered around the Court Street-Old Bridge Street intersection.

4.14 SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

Sustainable design and development comprise two main areas of action: building design and site design. Based on the exemplary activities related to the Wilson Bay Initiative and Sturgeon City, this area is becoming the City's focus for sustainable development practices with numerous rain gardens, bio-restoration projects, and stream corridor enhancements. As such, it is appropriate to continue aggressive implementation of best development practices for environmental, friendly design.

As development occurs within this area, protection of the local floodplains is critical. Unmanaged upstream urbanization of a floodplain results in a dramatic increase in the flood storage needs of the creeks as they traverse Jacksonville. With an increase in the width of the floodplain comes a greater incidence of flooding and a reduction in overall amount of property available for development.

Fully implement low-impact development (LID) techniques. An important tool in managing stormwater quantity and water quality is the use of Low Impact Development (LID) Standards. The goal of LID is to develop site design techniques, strategies, and best management practices to store, infiltrate, evaporate, retain, and detain runoff on the site to more closely replicate pre-development runoff characteristics and to better mimic the natural and unique hydrology of the site thereby limiting the increase in pollutant loads caused by development. (See "What is Low Impact Development" on the next page). In urban areas, these techniques will range from conventional underground retention to rain barrels and planted roofs. In addition, the City should consider regional structures that serve a larger area within the drainage basin.

If this area is to thrive as a pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use center, it must have wide sidewalks, small lots, and buildings built close to the street and to each other. Therefore care must be taken to implement these technique in a manner which is sensitive to the urbanism required for a human-friendly habitat.

Make all New Public Buildings LEED Certified. This Master Plan encourages the use of the LEED guidelines for certifying all new City and County public buildings as energy efficient and environmentally sustainable. Developed by the USGBC membership, the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System is a national consensus-based, market-driven building rating system designed to accelerate the development and implementation of green building practices. In short, it is a leading-edge system for designing, constructing and certifying sustainable buildings.

The City and County should consider sustainable building techniques at a minimum equal to the Silver level of the LEED standards

with all new or expanded public buildings. The City of Chicago is implementing a similar requirement across all of its public buildings and is retrofitting many of them to achieve the goals. The most widely publicized of their retrofits is the installation of various roof systems. They are using "green" roofs such as a planted garden or "white" roofs (white painted surfaces to reflect sunlight rather than absorb it) for all new construction, particularly for public uses such as fire stations and schools.

Such roofing systems not only reduce energy costs on the buildings, but garden roofs can also be designed to capture and filter stormwater during a rainstorm. These techniques reduce the environmental footprint of a building and promote sustainable development practices.

Encourage/Incentivize Green Building Standards with Private Developments. The City should consider an allocation at the local level for developers who use the LEED rating system for implementing sustainable building practices. While it is generally agreed that the upfront capital costs average approximately 2% more than conventional construction, the lifecycle costs and return on investment with reduced energy and resource usage more than provides sufficient payback.

Arlington County, VA (www.arlingtonva.us) has a LEED Certification Incentive Program entitled "Building Green, Building Smart." If projects achieve the minimum LEED certification of Silver then they can receive up to 3 additional stories and/or .35 additional Floor Area Ratio (FAR). The City of Seattle (<http://www.seattle.gov/light/conserve/sustainability/leed/>) provides direct grant funding and technical assistance for soft costs related to the LEED documentation, building commissioning and certification. This can be quite valuable as these soft costs can run \$10,000 - \$20,000 or more depending on the size of the project.



Rain Garden



Garden Roof

L.E.E.D. LEADERSHIP IN ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

The LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Green Building Rating System® was created to:

- Define "green building" by establishing a common standard of measurement
- Promote integrated, whole-building design practices
- Recognize environmental leadership in the building industry
- Stimulate green competition
- Raise consumer awareness of green building benefits
- Transform the building market

LEED provides a complete framework for assessing building performance and meeting sustainability goals. Based on well-founded scientific standards, LEED emphasizes state of the art strategies for sustainable site development, water savings, energy efficiency, materials selection and indoor environmental quality. LEED recognizes achievements and promotes expertise in green building through a comprehensive system offering project certification, professional accreditation, training and practical resources.

LEED standards are currently available or under development for:

- New commercial construction and major renovation projects (LEED-NC)
- Existing building operations (LEED-EB)
- Commercial interiors projects (LEED-CI)
- Core and shell projects (LEED-CS)
- Homes (LEED-H)
- Neighborhood Development (LEED-ND)

Source: <http://www.usgbc.org>

4.14 SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

WHAT IS LOW IMPACT DEVELOPMENT (LID)?

LID is an ecologically friendly approach to site development and storm water management that aims to mitigate development impacts to land, water, and air. The approach emphasizes the integration of site design and planning techniques that conserve natural systems and hydrologic functions on a site. The practice has been successfully integrated into many municipal development codes and storm water management ordinances throughout the United States. Specifically, LID aims to:

- Preserve Open Space and Minimize Land Disturbance;
- Protect Natural Systems and Processes (drainage ways, vegetation, soils, sensitive areas);
- Re-examine the Use and Sizing of Traditional Site Infrastructure (lots, streets, curbs, gutters, sidewalks) and Customize Site Design to Each Site;
- Incorporate Natural Site Elements (wetlands, stream corridors, mature forests) as Design Elements; and
- Decentralize and Micromanage Storm Water at its Source.

LID BENEFITS

In addition to the practice just making good sense, low impact development techniques can offer many benefits to a variety of stakeholders.

FOR MUNICIPALITIES

- Protect regional flora and fauna
- Balance growth needs with environmental protection
- Reduce municipal infrastructure and utility maintenance costs (streets, curbs, gutters, sidewalks, storm sewer)
- Increase collaborative public/private partnerships

FOR DEVELOPERS

- Reduce land clearing and grading costs
- Potentially reduce infrastructure costs (streets, curbs, gutters, sidewalks)
- Reduce storm water management costs

- Potentially reduce impact fees and increases lot yields
- Increase lot and community marketability

FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

- Preserve integrity of ecological and biological systems
- Protect site and regional water quality by reducing sediment, nutrient, and toxic loads to water bodies
- Reduce impacts to local terrestrial and aquatic plants and animals
- Preserve trees and natural vegetation

HYDROLOGIC COMPARISON BETWEEN CONVENTIONAL STORM WATER MANAGEMENT AND LID

Hydrologic alterations within the landscape occur whenever land is developed. Conventional development approaches to storm water management have used practices to quickly and efficiently convey water away from developed areas. Usually these practices are designed to control the peak runoff rate for predetermined storm events, usually the 2- and 10-year storms. While these systems have worked to some degree, they still have not accounted for the increased runoff rates and volumes from smaller, more frequent storms, nor have they addressed the larger watershed functions of storage, filtration, and infiltration.

In contrast, LID utilizes a system of source controls and small-scale, decentralized treatment practices to help maintain a hydrologically functional landscape. The conservation of open space, the reduction of impervious surfaces, and the use of small-scale storm water controls, such as bioretention, are just a few of the LID practices that can help maintain pre-development hydrological conditions.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Low Impact Development Center
<http://www.lowimpactdevelopment.org>

Prince George's County, Maryland
<http://www.goprincegeorgescounty.com>

NAHB Research Center Toolbase Services
<http://www.toolbase.org>

U.S. EPA
<http://www.epa.gov/owow/nps/urban.html>

Source: Municipal Guide to Low Impact Development, National Association of Home Builders



"Green" garden roof on Chicago City Hall



Bioretention rain garden at North Carolina State University

4.15 THE REGULATING PLAN

The proposed Regulating Plan is a summary of the composite conceptual plan. It indicates a gradation of development intensity from the urban core of the downtown and the New Bridge Street area into the neighborhoods. Civic space and buildings are noted because they serve as gathering places and destinations for pedestrians and are often surrounded by a more intense development pattern.

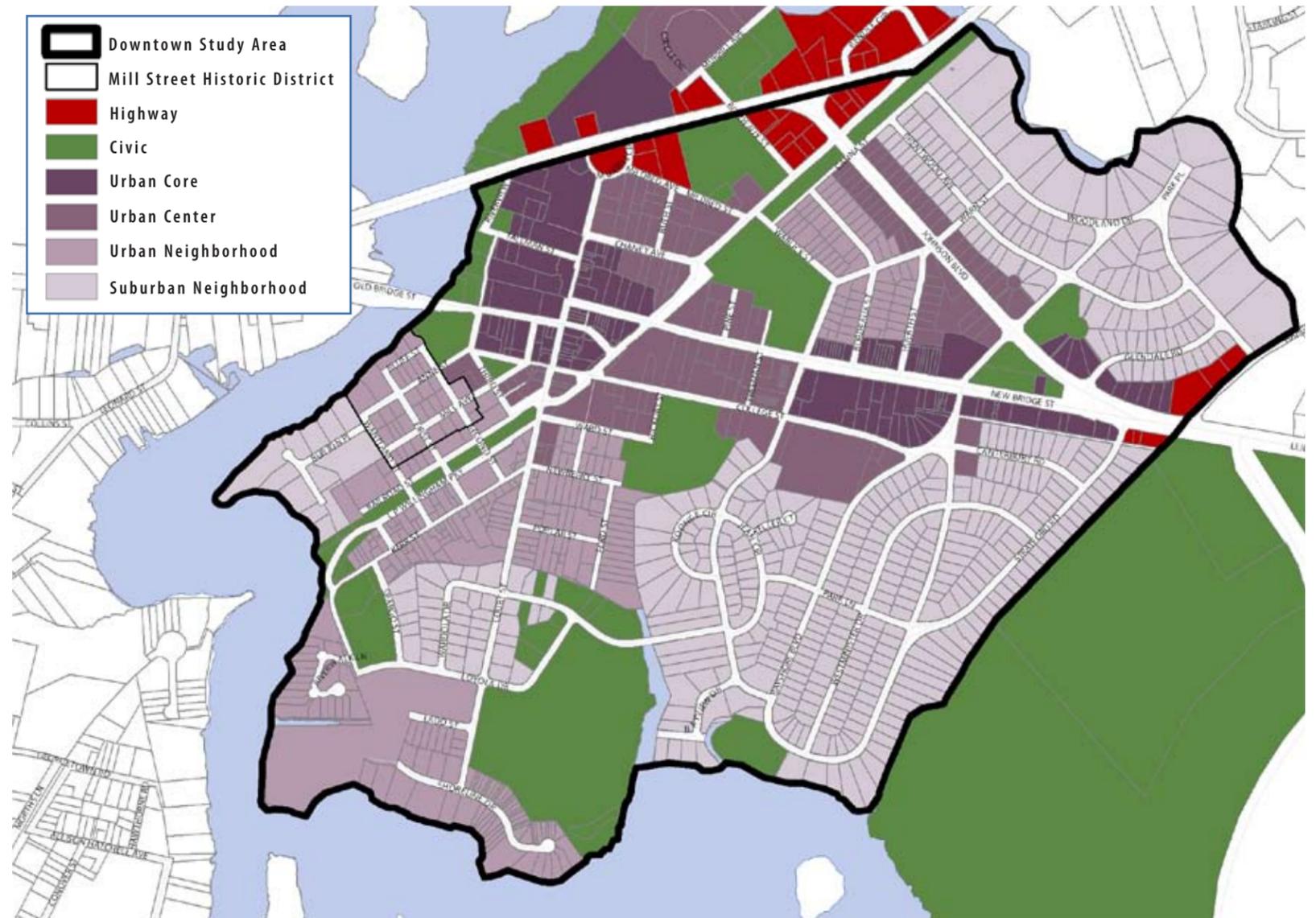
The colors are chosen as shades of purple rather than the conventional land use planning colors of red (retail), blue (office), yellow (residential), and gray (industrial). The purple shading indicates that each zone is an immersive environment. That is, elements of mixed-use would be expected in each area, though the more intensive uses are reserved for highest order zones. Even within primarily residential neighborhood, small home-based businesses could occur, along with local civic buildings such as churches and schools.

The Regulating Plan is based on the Rural-Urban Transect concept of context-based land development. The Transect is a method of, first, classifying the natural and built environments as a continuum of six conditions, ranging from the most natural to the most urbanized; and, second, detailing the specific development and design details for each condition. The graphic on the bottom right shows the generalized features the Transect, with intensities of development and formal arrangement of buildings and streets increasing as Transect zones become more urban.

Each Transect category has detailed provisions for density, building height, street design, the design of parks, the mix of uses, building design, parking, and other aspects of the human environment. These categories define the type, intensity, and design of development for each specific Transect zone.

Based on existing and proposed development, the plan area was classified into four Transect zones (shown on the Regulating Plan on the previous page): T-3 Suburban for areas that area to remain low-density residential in nature; T-4 General Urban for areas that are to be developed with moderate density residential; T-5 Urban Center for areas that are appropriate for a wide range of uses from high density residential to retail and office; and, T-6 Urban Core, for the areas of the plan that are to be the most densely developed. The T-6 zone is proposed at the center for the historic core and the New Bridge Street area. The other zones radiate out from this point in decreasing density.

The Regulating Plan on the previous page also indicates recommended locations of Civic spaces and buildings including parks, community facilities, churches, schools. Government buildings where the access and uses is restricted (e.g. courthouse, jail, post office) are not included.



▲ THE REGULATING MAP



◀ THE TRANSECT
A diagrammatic cross-section of a traditional community with a dense urban core, connected street network, and series of open spaces scaled to the context.

4.15 THE REGULATING PLAN

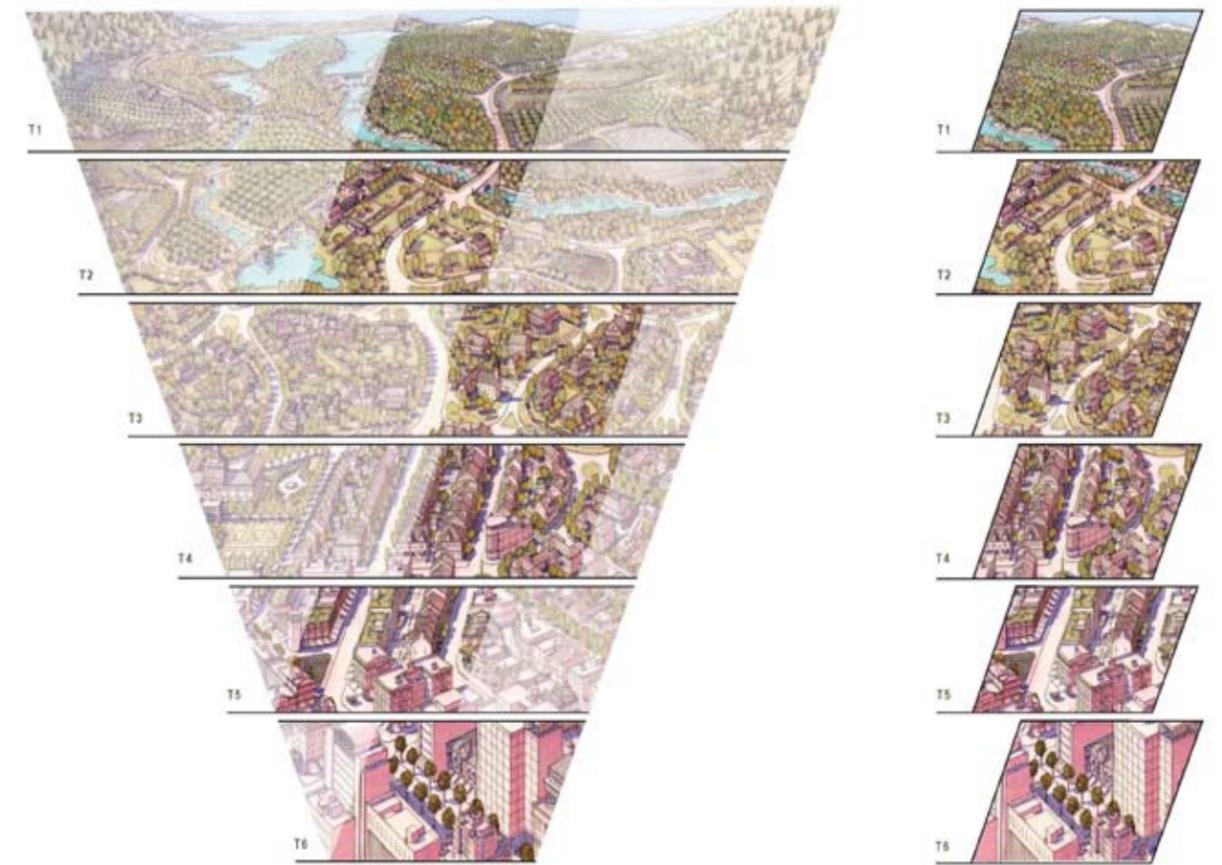
▼ TRANSECT ZONE DESCRIPTIONS

This table provides description of the character of each Transect Zone.

<p>T1 THE NATURAL ZONE consists of lands approximating or reverting to a wilderness condition, including lands unsuitable for settlement due to topography, hydrology or vegetation.</p>	
<p>T2 THE RURAL ZONE consists of lands in open or cultivated state or sparsely settled. These include woodland, agricultural lands, grasslands and irrigable deserts.</p>	
<p>T3 THE SUB-URBAN ZONE, consists of low density suburban residential areas, differing by allowing home occupations. Planting is naturalistic with setbacks relatively deep. Blocks may be large and the roads irregular to accommodate natural conditions.</p>	
<p>T4 THE GENERAL URBAN ZONE consists of a mixed-use but primarily residential urban fabric. It has a wide range of building types: single, sideyard, and rowhouses. Setbacks and landscaping are variable. Streets typically define medium-sized blocks.</p>	
<p>T5 THE URBAN CENTER ZONE consists of higher density mixed-use building types that accommodate retail, offices, rowhouses and apartments. It has a tight network of streets, with wide sidewalks, steady street tree planting and buildings set close to the frontages.</p>	
<p>T6 THE URBAN CORE ZONE consists of the highest density, with the greatest variety of uses, and civic buildings of regional importance. It may have larger blocks; streets have steady street tree planting and buildings set close to the frontages.</p>	

▼ TRANSITION FROM RURAL NATURE TO URBAN CORE

The illustration below shows how a compact development pattern can provide a range of building types within a short walk while maintaining compatibility between the various zones.



Graphic Courtesy of DPZ

4.16 ZONING CHANGES

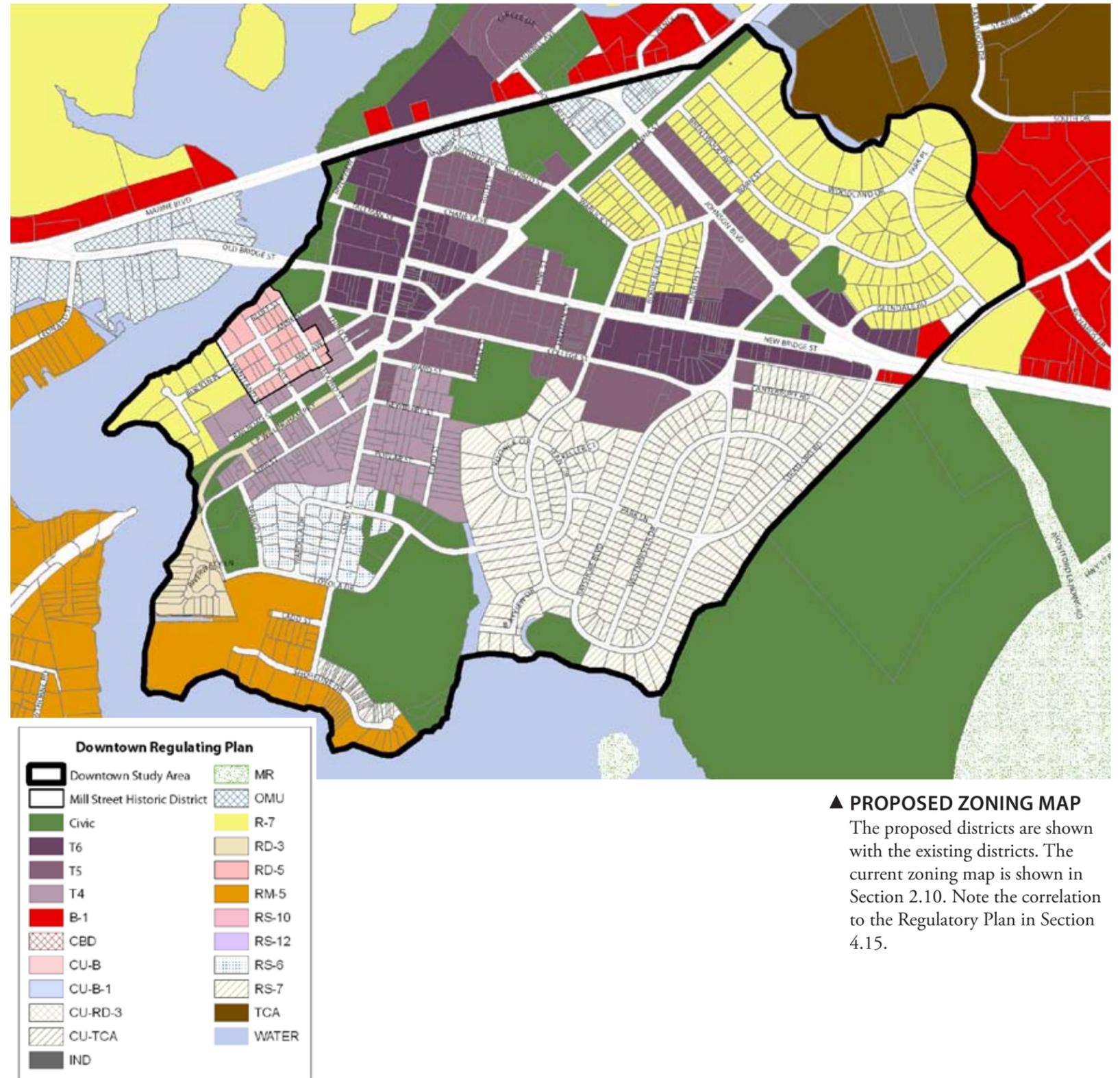
Presently there are 13 zoning districts that apply to the downtown area. This unusually high number leads to the complexity in the completion of development in this area. In addition, while the CDB and OMU encourage more urban scaled development, there are restrictions on multi-family development that are inconsistent with the encouragement of a lively 18-hour environment.

Also, many of the current residential districts cover areas that are substantially built-out. A significant change to these areas might offer. And finally, it is important to note that while the Downtown Design Guidelines have been in effect since 1999, they have gone virtually unused due to the lack in new construction in this area. Those guidelines, while comprehensive and thorough, are also complex and not definitive enough to be easily implemented.

Adopt a form-based code that combines the urban design guidelines and a simplified use table and district provisions. Form-based codes are quickly becoming the preferred method of creating more human-friendly communities because they place the regulatory emphasis on those elements that impact the public realm. Most zoning codes are pre-occupied with excessive parking standards and a heavily fractured use matrix and are generally silent on how the individual building will look. In fact, most codes have very explicit design standards for each parking stall to satisfy the automobile but are silent on those items that promote the human habitat.

Form-based codes combine easy to understand graphics and simplified language to provide a more user-friendly document for use by both the City and resident.

Rezone the current CBD, OMU, the portion of the RD-5 district that fronts along the Riverwalk Crossing Park and the entire RD-3 district (except the Riverwalk subdivision). While there will be many similarities between the CBD, OMU and the new form-based code, it is recommended that the names be changed so as to indicate a new way of doing things. There appears to be a general consternation with the existing rules. Hopefully, this change will better facilitate new development.



▲ PROPOSED ZONING MAP
The proposed districts are shown with the existing districts. The current zoning map is shown in Section 2.10. Note the correlation to the Regulatory Plan in Section 4.15.



5: TRANSPORTATION & PARKING

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The streets, sidewalks, and bikeways within a downtown embody essential elements contributing to the urban form and community character of the area. In fact in many towns, the right-of-way utilized by streets represents the largest area of publicly owned land. Streets, sidewalks, and bikeways provide critical connections to homes, jobs, schools, restaurants, parks, shops, and many other destinations. Even as goods, services, and people move between destinations within the public right-of-way, streets provide a notion of how a town invests in its community.

The transportation network that exists in Jacksonville and countless other towns across the nation has evolved through decades of land use, transportation funding and public investment decisions. Prior to the widespread introduction of the automobile in the early 1900s, streets formed in an interconnected grid pattern. As automobiles became more common on downtown streets, roads became wider and alternative routes around the city center were constructed. These alternative routes increased access to adjacent land, in turn making the area more attractive to development. With new development comes congestion and the assumption that wider or alternative routes are needed. This cyclical pattern is repeated until the effectiveness of the transportation network breaks down.

An efficient transportation system connects neighborhoods and activity centers via a network of streets, paths, and trails that are safe and supportive of pedestrians, bicyclists, transit patrons, cars, and trucks. Such a system offers choice for short and long trips alike and promotes convenient movement of people and goods. The vision for Downtown Jacksonville involves the traditional philosophy of street planning. This vision includes an interconnected network of community-friendly streets that provides for the safe, effective, and efficient movement of all modes of travel including walking, cycling, riding, and driving. All new and improved transportation options should respect the land use/ transportation connection by supporting established neighborhoods while anticipating new growth and changing travel patterns.

A network of different size streets encourages connectivity and balances the need for mobility with the (need) for access to properties adjacent to roadways. Narrow two-lane streets with on-street parking and safe pedestrian crossings provide an environment accessible for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists. On the other hand, multi-lane roads with landscaped medians provide more mobility. Both types of facilities are needed in cities, and determining how and where to use each type of street requires careful consideration of both land use and transportation.

The transportation network in the vicinity of downtown Jacksonville includes a range of street types that serve various roles in the existing transportation system and offer unique opportunities to balance access and mobility and unite land use and transportation.

COMPLETE STREETS

Today, the elements that encompass a great street are similar to the features found on streets at the turn of the 20th Century. These “complete streets” have balanced land use development with transportation facilities to create a safe, efficient, walkable, and interconnected transportation network. The logic behind complete streets extends beyond the edge of the pavement to encompass the sidewalk, buildings, and everything in between. Complete streets shift the focus from the movement of vehicles to the movement of people, in turn balancing the use of the travelway with the use of the pedestrian realm within the intended framework of the street’s context:

- The travelway encompasses that portion of the public right-of-way between the curbs that is dedicated partially or exclusively to travel. The travelway incorporates the main travel lanes, auxiliary turn lanes, bike lanes, bus lanes and stops, parking lanes and roadway shoulders.
- The pedestrian realm is the space that extends between the building face, or front of the private property, and the travelway.
- The context of a street includes the buildings and sites adjacent to the street, or right-of-way. This area is described in terms of land use, physical form, and intensity. These factors fundamentally shape the context zone, both in terms of how people use the street and how travelers perceive the street.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING FOR DOWNTOWNS

Planning improvements to the downtown transportation network requires a new way of thinking. All can agree that getting to downtown is important and that the provision of efficient traffic routes that lead into the center city are desirable characteristics of streets. However, when these same streets pass through the downtown, it’s important that their design reflect the balanced needs and vision for an urban center where getting there faster isn’t the sole objective. Likewise, the construction or expansion of streets such as Marine Boulevard and Johnson Boulevard was intended to provide relief to increasing congestion by providing routes that pass near, but not through, the middle of downtown. Now, trips that once utilized these roads have shifted to the US 17 Bypass. The history of street building shows similar patterns of original farm-to-market roads being bypassed several times.

These workhorse streets are serving the community well but could be doing more. Traffic will remain on streets where ample capacity exists and where delays don’t exceed the time required to take an alternate travel route. Simply stated, in an urban setting, roadway capacity has the effect of attracting traffic. While considering traffic counts and turning movements helps paint a precise picture of the needs and opportunities of a corridor, a singular focus on moving automobiles undermines the basic premise of creating complete streets.

A more holistic approach – one that considers the street’s role in moving people and shaping urban form – represents a better way to plan. Many communities take such an approach to support larger revitalization efforts of downtowns. The Jacksonville Downtown Master Plan advocates that streets shift the balance in favor of the pedestrian in an effort to create an environment that encourages walking and pedestrian activities downtown. The short- and long-term transportation recommendations aim to achieve the sustainability of the transportation network and associated land uses and urban form.

Through the public design charrette and other public outreach initiatives, the citizens of Jacksonville supported leveraging transportation improvements in a way that enhances the quality of life and character of downtown. The desire to improve the pedestrian environment and vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle circulation system was first documented in the 1998 Downtown Jacksonville Revitalization Plan. The recommended facilities and policies that follow represent the collective vision of a context sensitive transportation system which equally balances all modes of transportation for Jacksonville. With this plan must come the understanding that implementation will be challenging and time-consuming and will require long-term support by residents, business owners, and local officials.

5.2 EXISTING CONDITIONS

STREETS

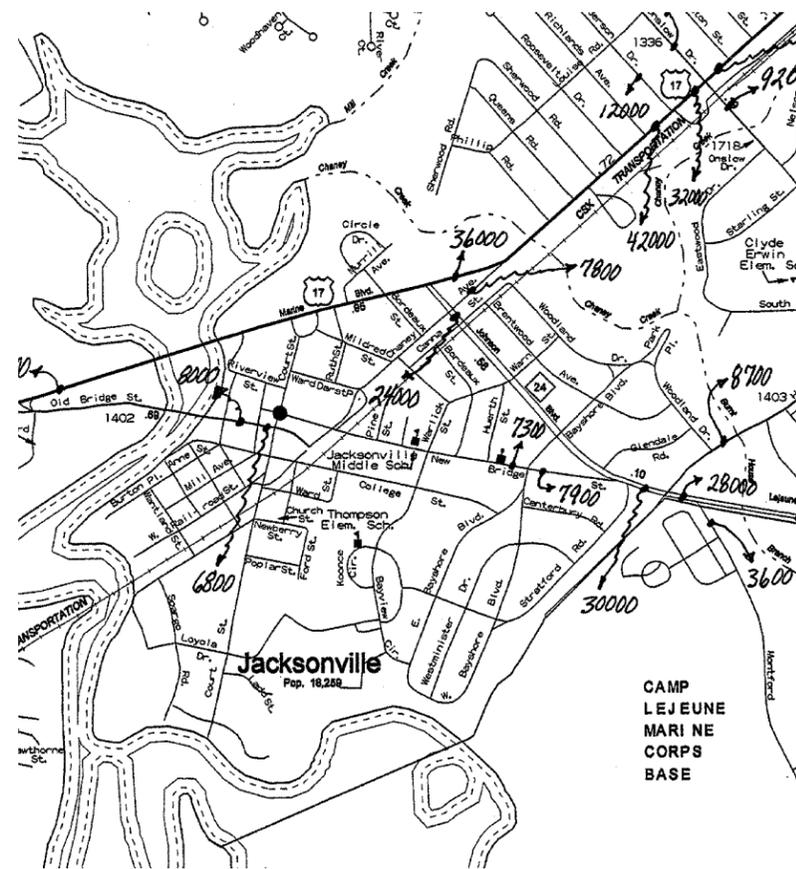
The existing condition of Jacksonville's streets can be described in terms of physical features (number of lanes, right-of-way width), strategic location (east-west or north-south routes, connections to destinations), and function (traffic volumes and congestion). While a detailed traffic analysis was not included as a part of the downtown planning process, traffic volumes for 2005 supplied by NC DOT gave planners insight to traffic conditions prior to the opening of the US 17 Bypass. The new bypass has diverted much traffic from the downtown area. According to the 2004 NC DOT Urban Area traffic counts, 24,000 vehicles per day (vpd) traveled along Johnson Boulevard. A study of traffic conditions on the same road in April 2007 indicated an average daily traffic (ADT) count of less than 10,000 vpd though this measurement is expected to grow, albeit slowly, in the future.

These traffic counts, coupled with field observations, allowed the team to make informed recommendations regarding the configuration of many downtown streets. Observations clearly documented the impact that existing street designs had on a number of elements including: pedestrian access and circulation, parking, traffic circulation, and congestion. Some streets were identified as being unbalanced with strong favor being given to automobile traffic as opposed to a balance between pedestrian, bicycle, transit, and automobile.

The downtown transportation system has evolved over many years. During that time, the purpose of streets has changed while their design has remained constant. The original "main street" – the heart of commercial and civic activity downtown – was located along Court Street. Through the years, activity shifted to New Bridge Street. Today, Court Street is aligned from north to south in the western part of downtown and provides access to Sturgeon City and existing neighborhoods located south of West Railroad Street. Court Street to the north, serves the county courthouse, Sheriff's Department and jail as well as a number of small businesses. As Camp Lejeune has grown over the years so too have the roadways leading to the base; specifically, Marine Boulevard and Johnson Boulevard grew to seven lanes and six lanes respectively. Although these streets continue to serve commuter traffic, the construction of the US 17 Bypass with direct access to Camp Lejeune has left behind roads with a disproportionate amount of vehicular capacity compared to traffic volumes

The remaining streets in the Downtown are those which provide cross town access or direct links to existing activity centers such as city hall and county courthouse. These streets include Chaney Avenue (7,800 vpd), Old Bridge Street (up to 8,000 vpd), and New Bridge Street (up to 7,900 vpd). Chaney Avenue serves as a main connector from New Bridge Street to the Johnson Boulevard and Marine Boulevard intersection.

Old Bridge Street (as the name implies) is the older version of the existing US 17 crossing of the river providing direct access to the center of the historic sections of downtown. This corridor is now a secondary entrance to the downtown with relatively low volumes. New Bridge Street travels from Court Street eastward through the heart of the downtown commercial area and then intersects Johnson Boulevard. Together with Marine and Johnson Boulevards, these streets facilitate the majority of trips entering and exiting the downtown. The cross-section of downtown streets varies not only among different roads but also between segments of the same road. These inconsistencies, coupled with the excess capacity of some roads and confusing geometry at major intersections, represent some of the major problems with the existing street network.



▲ 2004 NC DOT URBAN AREA TRAFFIC COUNTS FOR DOWNTOWN JACKSONVILLE

SIDEWALKS AND BIKEWAYS

The ability to move safely along and across a city's streets is a cornerstone of a community's transportation system. Every trip begins and ends as a walking trip, whether driving to the grocery store, riding a bus to work, or walking to a neighborhood café. Still, walking often is forgotten when planning future improvements to the transportation network. When a proper pedestrian environment exists, walking provides a practical choice and benefits both individuals and their communities. These benefits include improved personal health, reduced traffic congestion, and lower automobile parking demands. Furthermore, multi-lane highways tend to be uninviting and often unsafe environments for pedestrians, especially when their pedestrian facilities are inadequate in design or completely absent. Features that contribute to walkable communities include a healthy mix of land uses, wide sidewalks, buffers between the edge of pavement and the sidewalk, and trees to shade walking routes. Slowing traffic, narrowing streets to reduce pedestrian crossing distance and incorporating pedestrian infrastructure (i.e. signage, crosswalks, and adequate pedestrian phasing at signals) into future roadway design plans also make communities more walkable.

In order for walking to be considered a realistic transportation alternative, existing conditions need to be favorable for pedestrian use. Pedestrian-friendly cities have a logical system of interconnected facilities that allow for safe travel between origins and destinations. Typically, these facilities do not occur by accident but rather result from careful planning and diligent implementation. Like most downtown settings, sidewalks are present on many streets in downtown Jacksonville. However, the quality of these sidewalks – both in form and function – varies. Moving away from the downtown core, pedestrian facilities are substandard or absent altogether. The core of downtown Jacksonville is an area that must be inviting to pedestrians.

The courthouse area, USO and Riverfront Park are pedestrian generators and Court Street's continued role as the traditional "main street" are compelling reasons to ensure that the pedestrian experience is both convenient and attractive. This need will continue to grow as improvements to downtown occur, new investments are made and places like Sturgeon City reach their peak.

On-street dedicated bicycle facilities in Jacksonville are limited, however, some roads with lower traffic volumes and moderate traffic speeds are conducive to bicycle travel. In addition, bicyclists can share with pedestrians the city's greenways. An existing greenway parallels Chaney Avenue from downtown north to Onslow Drive. The Plan Recommendations section provides more detail on the type and function of different bicycle facilities as well as best planning practices for pedestrian facilities.

5.2 EXISTING CONDITIONS

CURRENT TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS

There are a number of transportation projects underway in the Jacksonville area; however there are two projects that will have direct impact on the downtown. The first is continued improvements to the new US 17 bypass from its current terminus north to Drummer Kellum Road. The construction of the bypass has significantly reduced through trips on the US 17 Business route which passes by downtown. The bypass has also significantly influenced trips with origin or destination at Camp Lejeune by providing direct freeway access. This has resulted in a reduction of base related trips on Lejeune Boulevard and Johnson Boulevard in vicinity of the downtown. The second project is the replacement of the existing Marine Boulevard bridge crossing the New River. This bridge is scheduled to begin construction in 2009. The bridge is located at the northern edge of downtown, and will likely result in increased traffic volumes on downtown surface streets as motorists attempt to avoid construction related delays. A summary of these projects as described in the North Carolina Transportation Improvement Program is as follows:

- TIP U-4007, the NCDOT plans to widen US 17, the Jacksonville Bypass to a four-lane median for 1.4 miles to Drummer Kellum Road. The Draft 2007-2013 TIP lists project U-4007, US 17 Bypass widening as in progress for planning and design, and mitigation will begin in 2010.
- TIP B-4214 the NCDOT plans to replace the New River bridge on Marine Boulevard. The Draft 2007-2013 TIP lists that project B-4214 has already undergone planning/design, right-of-way acquisition is currently in progress, mitigation is scheduled for 2008, and construction is funded and will take place in 2009.



5.3 STREETS & BOULEVARDS

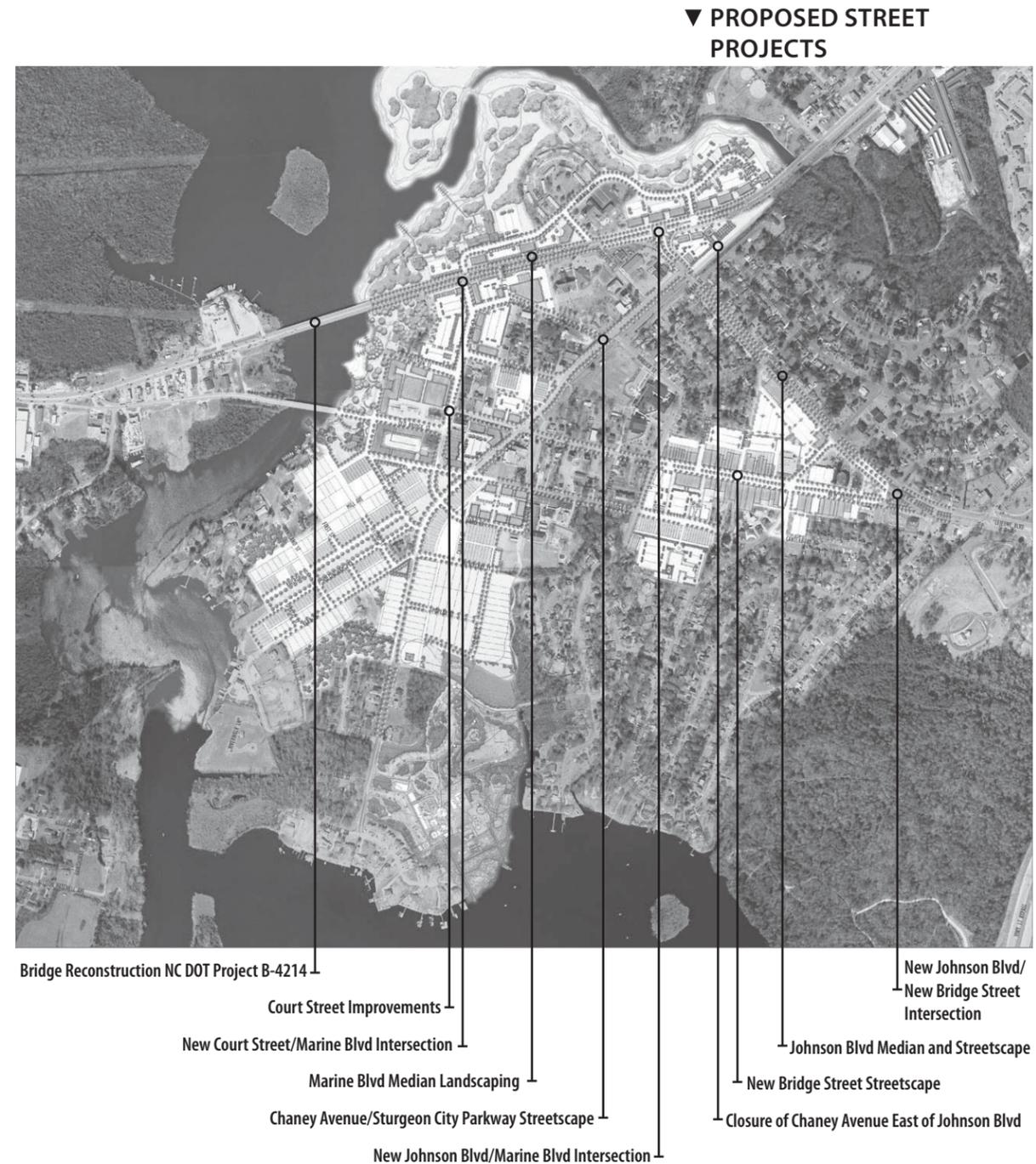
One of the more encouraging characteristics of the downtown transportation network is that it remains fairly well connected. The grid network is most evident in the area between Old Bridge Street and Kerry Street. Other areas have some connectivity, though it exists largely outside the framework of a typical grid network. Still, the potential for a well-connected Downtown transportation network exist by implementing short- and long-term solutions including pedestrian and bicycle related connections. This potential is representative of many successful downtowns and consistently is cited as a crucial element that promotes balanced street design.

Street connectivity refers to the directness of routes and the density of connections within a transportation system. As connectivity increases, travel distances decrease and route options increase, allowing the transportation system to be used more efficiently by pedestrians, bicyclists, transit, and automobiles. Connectivity improves circulation and allows for street designs that can be responsive to the practical needs of a downtown. Rather than streets assuming a more suburban form with multiple lanes, no parking, and dedicated turn-lanes, the street can be a place where wide sidewalks, on-street parking, and pedestrian trips are not only possible, but prevail over the auto-dependent alternative.

For the aforementioned reasons (both quantitative and qualitative), Court Street, New Bridge Street, and Johnson Boulevard appear ripe for consideration of alternative designs. In addition to recommendations specific to these corridors, several intersections have been identified for enhancements. The concepts behind the corridor and intersection recommendations presented here – namely the construction of complete streets that support all modes of travel – can be extended to other locations throughout the Downtown Jacksonville area.

The landscape features of these roadway improvements – whether within a planted median or planting strip – should convey a consistent image throughout Downtown. It should be noted that these major arterials serve not only a movers of traffic but also function as a gateway to downtown. Over time, the City should partner with NCDOT to develop enhanced streetscapes for these important corridors.

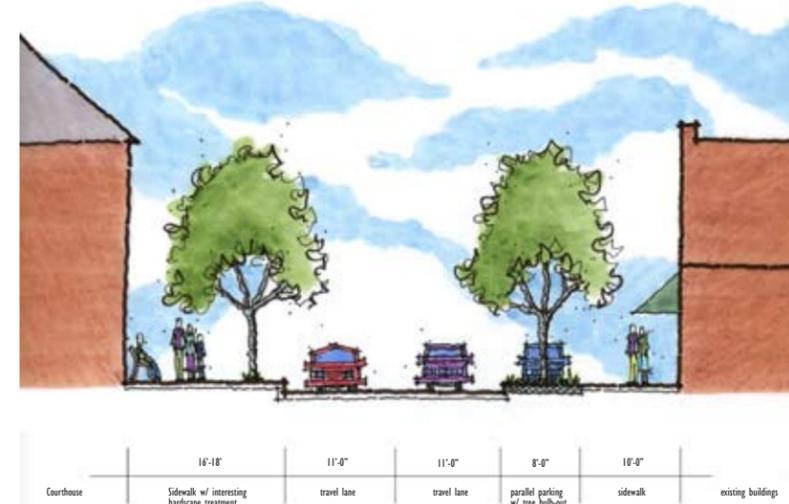
As a result of the Downtown Jacksonville Master Plan process, numerous recommendations for the existing and proposed street network have been developed. These enhancement corridors include both high and lower priority initiatives. High priority projects include improvements to Court Street and Chaney Avenue/East Railroad Street. Lower priority projects include enhancements to Johnson Boulevard, New Bridge Street, and Marine Boulevard. A summary of these recommendations follows.



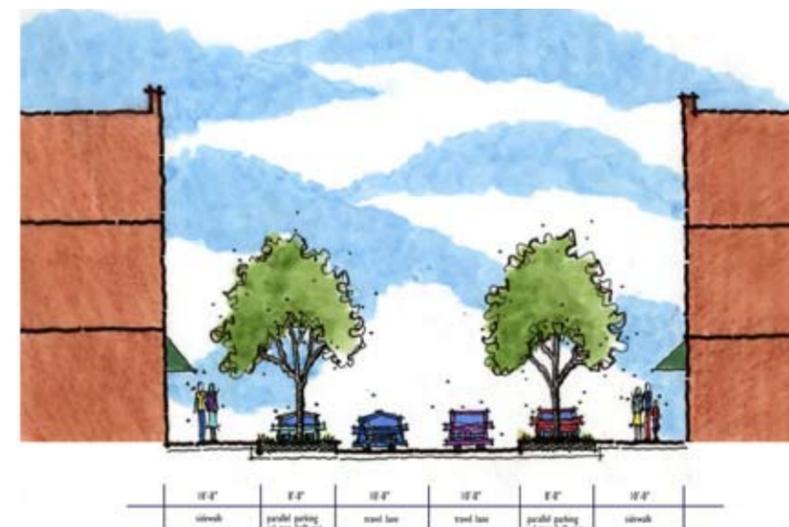
5.3 STREETS & BOULEVARDS



◀ **COURT STREET SECTION A: MARINE BLVD TO NEW BRIDGE STREET**
 Revise Court Street from US 17 (Marine Boulevard) to New Bridge Street to include one travel lane and one bike lane in each direction, angled parking on both sides of the street, and a 16-foot planted median.



◀ **COURT STREET SECTION B: NEW BRIDGE STREET TO OLD BRIDGE STREET**
 Re-introduce two-way traffic at the courthouse, with enhanced sidewalk treatments, street trees, and parallel parking northbound.



◀ **COURT STREET SECTION C: OLD BRIDGE STREET TO STURGEON CITY PARKWAY**
 Modify Court Street from Old Bridge Street to College Street to include two-way traffic with parallel parking and tree bulb-outs.



◀ **CLOSE OLD BRIDGE STREET EAST OF COURT STREET**
 Close Old Bridge Street east of Court Street to provide redevelopment opportunities and to create a more consistent block on Court Street.

5.3 STREETS & BOULEVARDS

JOHNSON BOULEVARD ► OPTION A

28 foot landscaped median with two travel lanes



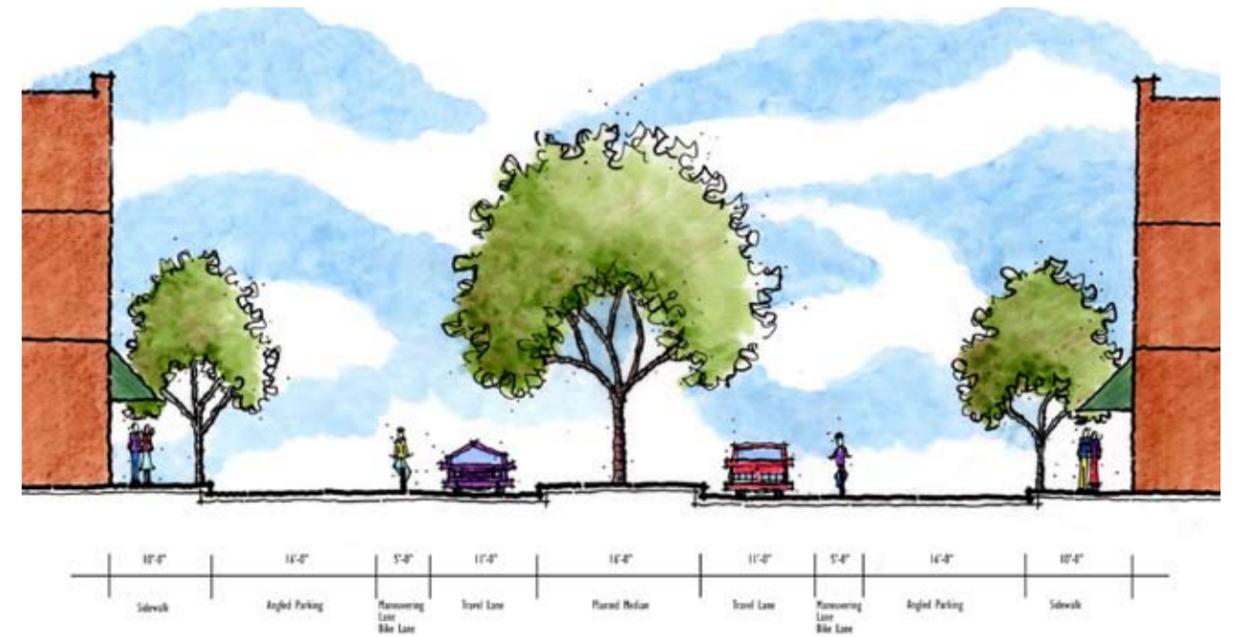
JOHNSON BOULEVARD ► OPTION B

18 foot landscaped median with two travel lanes and a bicycle lane



▼ PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS TO NEW BRIDGE STREET

Replace one travel lane in each direction with a 16-foot planted median and bike lanes on both sides of the street.



5.3 STREETS & BOULEVARDS

INTERSECTIONS

The roadway system within downtown can be confusing to infrequent or first time visitors. Creating a logical system of roads and visual queues to travelers is a priority. Likewise, many intersections are in need of repair and should be brought into compliance with ADA standards. *The Plan offers the following intersections improvement recommendations for consideration:*

- Modify the intersection of Johnson Boulevard and US 17 to a standard “T” intersection; Close the free flow right turn from US 17 onto Johnson Boulevard.
- Close the short segment of Chaney Avenue east of Johnson Boulevard to US 17 to create a larger development parcel and redirect traffic to the improved Johnson Boulevard/US 17 intersection.
- Simplify the intersection of Johnson Boulevard and New Bridge Street by realigning New Bridge Street with Glendale Road to create a standard four-point intersection; Construct median opening at Stratford Road.
- Install gateway features at the key entrance points to Downtown, including Court Street near Murrill Circle, Old Bridge Street near US 17, New Bridge Street near Lejeune Boulevard, and Johnson Boulevard near Lejeune Boulevard.
- Upgrade all intersections with appropriate pedestrian accommodations that meet or exceed ADA requirements and include high visibility crosswalks at intersections. Include a dedicated pedestrian phase at all signalized intersections.

Throughout the non-motorized network of bike lanes, bike routes, and pedestrian friendly areas, there are nodes or intersection points where greater attention to detail should be placed. The needs for these enhancements are related to the proximity of points of interest such as the new jail/courthouse complex, parks; commercial main streets, the volume of traffic on the roadways; or the intersection of major streets. Enhancements may include improved crossing equipment such as high visibility crosswalks, pedestrian signals, pedestrian refuge islands (that reduce the pedestrians’ time at risk by reducing the crossing distance), bike detection, improved signage, pedestrian scale lighting, and landscaping. Throughout the downtown four priority locations were identified where enhancements should be placed. These intersections include:

- Johnson Boulevard at East Bayshore Boulevard
- New Bridge Road at East Bayshore Boulevard
- Old Bridge Street at Court Street
- New Bridge Road at Johnson Boulevard

▼ PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS TO MARINE BOULEVARD

Install a planted median, create new intersections with Court Street and Johnson Boulevard, and close the existing Murrill Circle intersection



5.3 STREETS & BOULEVARDS

STREETSCAPES

A number of streets have been identified for improvement to their overall streetscape, including improvements to sidewalks, bike lanes, parking, and landscaping. The following chart indicates the priority for streetscape improvements identified throughout this plan.

STREETSCAPE PRIORITY TABLE		
Project #	Name/Description	Priority
1	Johnson Blvd (from Chaney Ave to Lejeune Blvd)	Medium
2	Johnson Blvd/New Bridge Street Intersection	High
3	New Bridge Street Streetscape (Johnson Blvd to Warlick St)	Medium
4	New Bridge Street Streetscape Warlick St to Chaney Ave)	Low
5	Johnson Blvd/Marine Blvd Intersection	Medium
6	Marine Blvd Streetscape	High
7	Court Street/Marine Blvd Intersection	High
8	Court Street (Marine Blvd to Depot)	Medium
9	Court Street (Depot to Sturgeon City)	High
10	Chaney Ave (Johnson Blvd to New Bridge St)	Low
11	Chaney Ave/E Railroad Street (New Bridge St to Depot)	High

METHODOLOGY FOR DETERMINING PRIORITIZATION

The prioritization of capital projects are subject to the availability of funds as authorized by the approving entity. As resources are scarce, they must be prioritized and phased over a period of time, in this case up to 20 years.

For these particular projects, the following principles were applied in determining the priority rating in order:

1. Improving accessibility to the river
2. Improving accessibility to Sturgeon City
3. Improving aesthetics of travel to Sturgeon City
4. Improving accessibility to commercial areas
5. Improving accessibility to the courthouse area
6. Improving aesthetics in the courthouse area
7. Improving general aesthetics

In addition, though the overall aesthetics for Marine Boulevard would not normally be highly prioritized, it is considered High for these purposes because of the pending bridge reconstruction project that will disrupt the entire corridor. If a median and related landscape improvements were to be contemplated, the timing should be considered so that the corridor is only disrupted once in this corridor.

▼ STREETSCAPE DIAGRAM



5.4 PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES

In an urban setting, sidewalks represent the critical interface between building forms and the street. These same urban settings often have multiple constraints and obstructions that make implementing a continuous sidewalk section throughout a downtown difficult if not impossible. Many downtowns evolved prior to the development of specific guidelines for sidewalks design and placement, and as a result, communities have sidewalks conditions that are less than ideal. Still, any sidewalk is better than no sidewalk. While full streetscape improvements are needed for many locations, the intermediate provision of badly-needed sidewalk maintenance and construction of new sidewalks where links are missing is paramount.

As continued investment occurs in the downtown and surrounding neighborhoods, it will be important to have a strategy for sidewalk construction that addresses requirements for infill and redevelopment projects as well as future roadway streetscapes projects and other larger roadway improvements. Primary concerns related to sidewalk construction include the placement and design of sidewalks. The following represents general guidance for sidewalk width and side street buffers. Ultimately, the development of a sidewalk design manual and pedestrian master plan is recommended.

- **Sidewalk Width** - Providing appropriate width for a sidewalk is a primary design consideration. Sidewalks that are too narrow often go unused. In general, sidewalks should be wide enough to allow at least two adult pedestrians to pass each other in opposite directions without either person having to step off the sidewalk. They should also be wide enough to allow a person in a wheelchair or person pushing a stroller to pass a pedestrian traveling in the opposite direction without either person diverting from the sidewalk. Federal and state guidelines specify a 5 foot minimum width for sidewalk construction. However in a downtown setting, 6-10 foot wide sidewalks are recommended.
- **Street-Side Buffers** - Street-side buffer areas are a key element of successful sidewalks. Pedestrians feel safer and more comfortable where there is physical separation between themselves and adjacent traffic. In addition, street-side buffers are areas where utilities, signs, fire hydrants, trees, and street furniture can be located without obstructing a sidewalk. Street-side buffer width varies according to land use and adjacent physical conditions. In instances where immovable objects or other physical barriers limit the ability to provide the minimum required street-side buffer and sidewalk, it is preferable to maintain the sidewalk minimum width and appropriately adjust the width of the street-side buffer or convert the buffer space to additional sidewalk width.

Downtown sidewalks are typically constructed to a width that is equal to the lateral dimension between the back of the curb and the face of the adjacent building. This distance varies, but is typically 10 feet or more. The optimum width allowed for sidewalks in the CBD is 8 feet unless otherwise approved by the City. In cases where the lateral dimension is greater than 16 feet, a suitable hardscape plan incorporating landscape features should accompany the sidewalk installation. Although a continuous street-side buffer is not required, a street tree/landscape plan indicating locations and sizes of planted areas and plant matter should be required. Specific sidewalk and planting recommendations for streets in the downtown master plan study area have been provided to communicate the ideal dimensions for priority streets in downtown Jacksonville.

Two fundamental elements contribute to a satisfactory pedestrian environment – the destination and the journey. While several destinations exist throughout Downtown, these locations are not always clustered nor are they always convenient to get to depending on the origin of the trip (e.g. Main Street, surrounding neighborhoods, offices). The best way to manage and encourage the journey between destinations is improved streetscapes, wider sidewalks, and more interesting storefronts and building facades. Current attractions for pedestrians include the “main street” area of New Bridge Street, the County Courthouse as well as the Riverfront Park and USO. As the allure of Riverwalk Crossing Park, Riverfront Park, and Sturgeon City increase, so will the need for adequate pedestrian facilities in these areas.



5.5 BICYCLE FACILITIES

As a part of the downtown master plan process, several corridors have been identified for bike lanes and signed bike routes. The roadways recommended as Bicycle-Friendly Streets include neighborhood streets with existing design features and traffic volumes that make them more conducive to bicycle travel. Finally, a system of greenways is recommended to connect with these facilities and provide access to parks and other destinations. Together, these bicycle facilities create an interconnected network of safe and convenient paths. While the recommendations are not a substitute for an overall bicycle master plan, they do represent an initial strategy for consideration by bicycle advocates, the City, and NCDOT.

In an effort to minimize ad hoc implementation and to avoid disconnected facilities, it is recommended that the City of Jacksonville initiate a comprehensive master plan for bicycle facilities. Given the competition for transportation resources it's important to comprehensively plan for bicycle routes and bike lanes. Potential funding for this planning process may include participation by the City, the Jacksonville Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, NCDOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning Grant, and non-profit organizations such as the Thunderhead Alliance, Pedestrian & Bicycle Information Center, and League of American Cyclists. Local bicycle advocates should be included in the process as well as the general public. The result will be a plan that includes an interconnected and coordinated system of bicycle facilities and routes that works in concert with bicycle-friendly streets and greenways to provide safe and effective bicycling in Jacksonville.

BIKE LANES

Bike lanes consist of an exclusive-use area adjacent to the outermost travel lane. The area delineated for cyclists is a minimum of 4 feet wide and is marked by a solid white line on the left side, frequent signs, and/or stenciled pavement markings to deter vehicles other than bicycles from traveling in the lane. In situations where a striped lane encounters on-street parking, extra width is required, most often a minimum of one additional foot (5-foot total bike lane width). The minimum width for striped bike lanes does not include any gutter that may exist. Striped bike lanes are one of the facilities of choice for basic and intermediate cyclists because they offer a measure of security through separation from vehicles.

Bike lanes are recommended for the following corridors:

- New Bridge Street east of E Railroad Street
- Court Street south of Old Bridge Street
- Chaney Avenue/E Railroad Street
- Johnson Boulevard

SIGNED BIKE ROUTES

Signed bike routes can be an option where room does not permit or the need does not exist to create additional pavement width for cyclists. Local routes are typically found on low volume, low speed local streets. Often, signed routes lead cyclists through the “quieter” streets of a town, using neighborhood streets where traffic speeds and volumes are low. This type of route is used by cyclists of all levels, provided it is planned on streets that have low traffic volumes and speed. The routes typically are not the first choice of advanced cyclists because local signed routes and streets do not provide the most direct route. Signed routes are helpful in wayfinding to link neighborhoods with networks of other bike facilities and greenways.

The following bike routes are recommended for consideration by the City for implementation. Proper guide signage and documentation of the bike routes should be communicated to the community.

- E Bayshore Boulevard/W Bayshore Boulevard
- Brentwood Avenue and Woodland Drive
- College Street
- Warlick Street south of New Bridge Street
- Kerr Street and L.P. Willingham Parkway
- Loyola Drive and Wardola Drive

BICYCLE-FRIENDLY STREETS

Roads with bicycle lanes and signed bicycle routes are very important for riders traveling longer distances from origins and destination within the City. For more leisurely or locally concentrated bicycle transportation, bicycle-friendly streets can be equally important, these streets connect the signed routes and greenways with the residents who plan to use them. *The following streets have been identified as bicycle-friendly streets based on design elements and low traffic volumes:*

- Anne Street
- 3rd Street
- Tallman Street
- Court Street north of Old Bridge Street
- Chaney Avenue west of E. Railroad Street
- New Bridge Street west of E. Railroad Street
- Warlick Street north of New Bridge Street
- Warn Street southwest of Johnson Boulevard

GREENWAYS

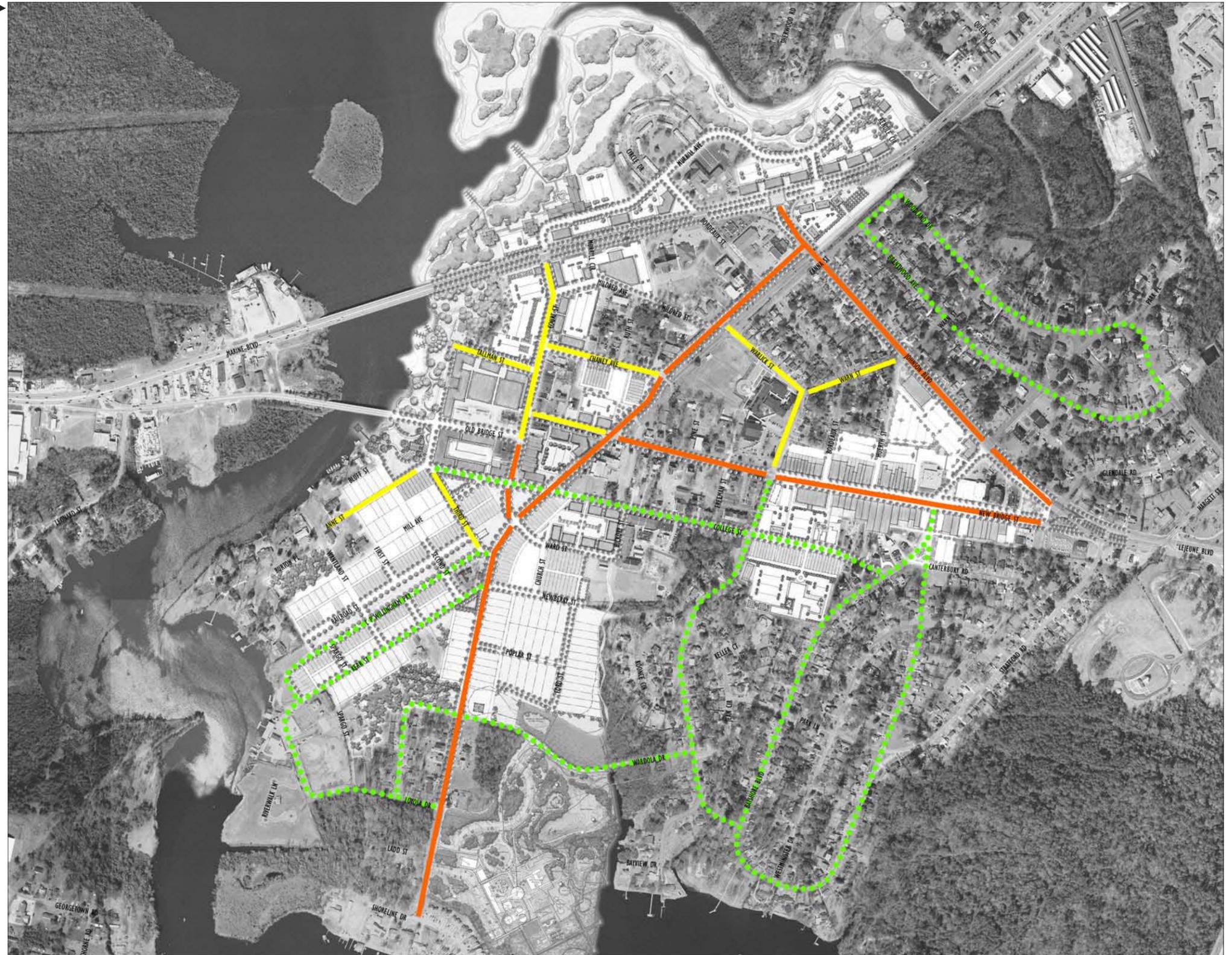
Connect Sturgeon City and the linear Riverwalk Crossing Park to the existing greenway and other proposed bicycle facilities via greenways/multi-use paths. In addition to these on-street bicycle facilities and routes, several off-street greenways/multi-use paths are proposed. The downtown non-motorized transportation system is connected to the greenway system at several locations. The largest proposed greenway extends from the heart of Sturgeon City to New Bridge Street and then along Chaney Avenue and eventually Marine Boulevard. This greenway can be accessed at different locations including Wardola Drive, College Street, New Bridge Street, Johnson Boulevard and Marine Boulevard. Another proposed greenway creates a connection between Wardola Drive and Kerr Street, thereby creating an important connection between Sturgeon City and Riverwalk Crossing Park. The map on the following page illustrates existing and proposed on- and off-street bicycle facilities.



5.5 BICYCLE FACILITIES

BICYCLE FACILITIES DIAGRAM

-  Recommended Bike Lane
-  Recommended Bike Route
-  Bicycle Friendly Street



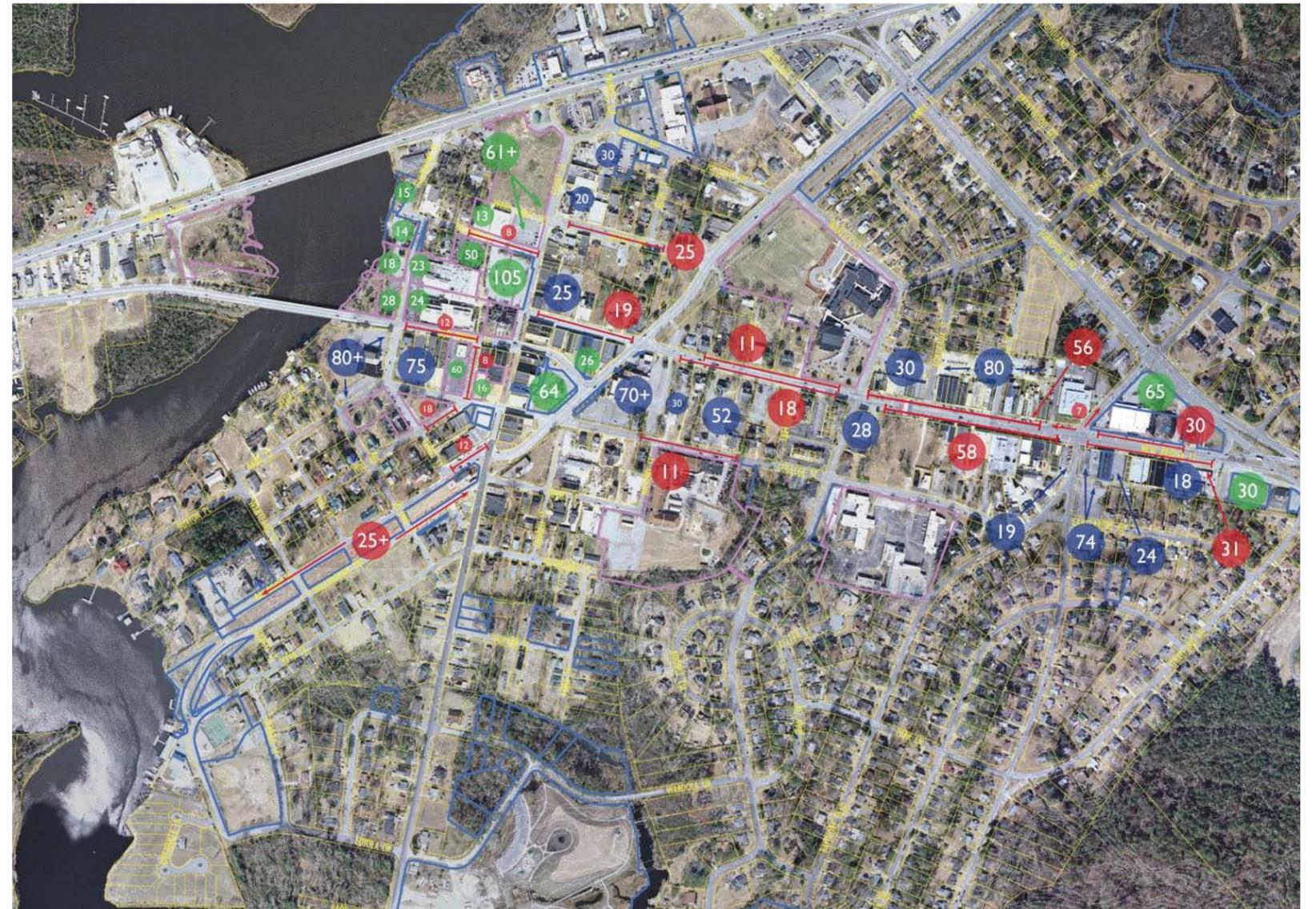
5.6 PARKING

Many people that express parking concerns likely desire closer parking rather than more parking. Prior to the City considering the construction of any new parking structures, it is recommended that a comprehensive parking inventory and study be conducted. This process will ensure that future decisions regarding public parking (on-street and off-street) are made based on accurate supply and demand data. Urban Land Institute (ULI) recently published shared use parking characteristics for land uses. The shared use concept suggests the ability for various land use activities to share a particular supply of parking without impediment. Different land use activities (commercial, public, residential, etc.) exhibit different parking demand allowing for a more efficient use of parking supply.

Effective management of on-street parking spaces is critical to providing adequate and convenient access for residents, business owners, and customers to shops, stores, offices, and homes. While hourly restrictions are in place along some streets, inconsistent enforcement and insufficient penalties fail to influence parker behavior. Many of the remaining parking spaces – those on adjacent side streets, residential streets, and alleys – mostly are unregulated. Parking spaces in the most desirable parking locations, (including Court Street and New Bridge Street) should be managed more efficiently to provide a turnover of spaces. On the “main” downtown streets, two-hour parking restrictions are recommended to be implemented, signed, and enforced. For those seeking parking options for longer periods, additional public surface parking is recommended. The diagram on this page shows the existing and future public surface parking lots.

The City should evaluate the following strategies to help maximize the use of existing facilities and help promote continued infill development Downtown:

- Designate and enforce “A” streets (primary pedestrian corridors) for 2-hour on-street parking
- Provide more publicly-owned surface parking in strategic locations (i.e. not on “A” streets)
- Enhance the design and lighting of public parking
- Provide specialty signage that is clear and direct for motorists entering downtown. Parking signage should work in concert with an enhanced way-finding strategy for the downtown. In addition, kiosks and brochures for downtown should include locations where public parking is permitted and encourage.
- Develop parking strategy for larger-scale trip generators. (City, County, and Federal Buildings)
- Conduct a comprehensive parking study and develop a plan for the future.



PARKING INVENTORY DIAGRAM ▲

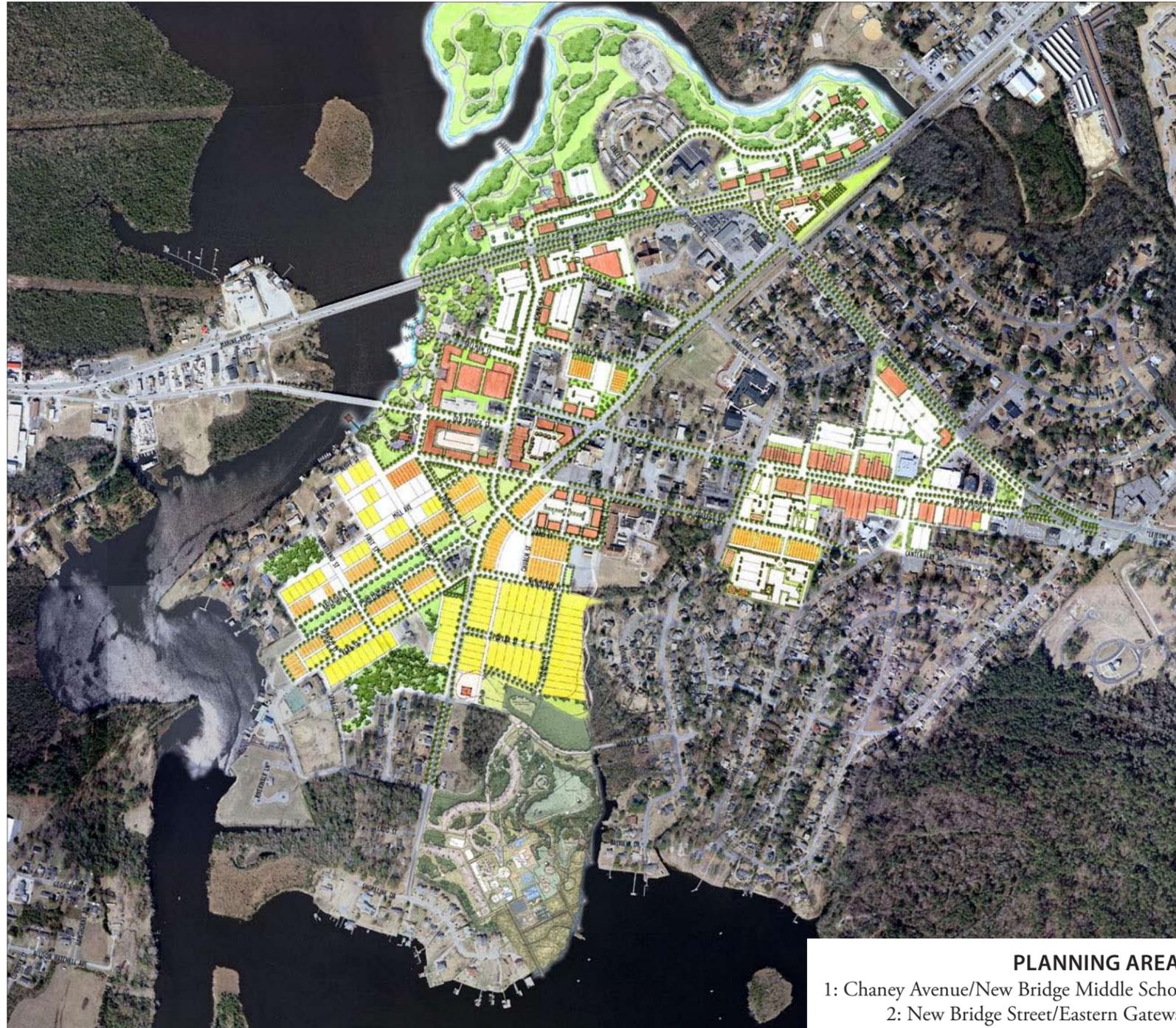
A majority of the charrette participants perceived the lack of available parking to be a high priority issue. To evaluate this, a parking inventory was conducted to evaluate public and private spaces within the study area.





6: PLANNING AREAS

6.1 THE CONCEPTUAL PLAN



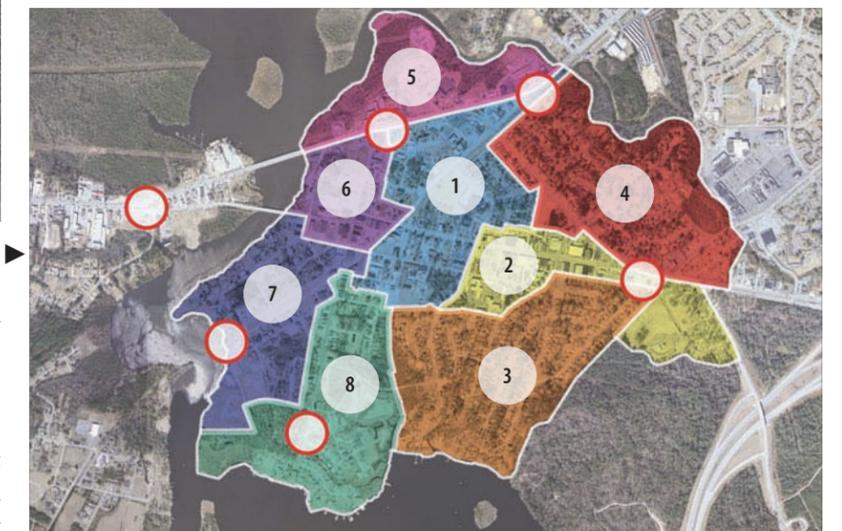
The plans illustrated in this section and elsewhere represent realistic conceptual build-out scenarios for sites within the downtown area. When envisioning these preferred development opportunities, existing property boundaries, ownership rights and the potential consolidation of parcels along with market conditions and trends were considered.

The plan assumes that site-specific modifications to the arrangements shown here will occur once more detailed studies are undertaken for each site, including more detailed programming and market analyses. The purpose of the designs in the Master Plan is to show appropriate patterns, scales and intensities of development; it is not necessarily expected that new development will always conform to each building as drawn.

Nonetheless, the following considerations embodied in this plan should be actively incorporated in each design proposal:

- General intensity of development
- Mixture of uses as appropriate
- Urban pattern (i.e. relationships of buildings to streets, public spaces, parking and adjacent properties)
- Street character and pedestrian circulation patterns
- Three-dimensional massing and size of buildings
- Open space provision

- PLANNING AREAS** ▶
- 1: Chaney Avenue/New Bridge Middle School
 - 2: New Bridge Street/Eastern Gateway
 - 3: Bayshore Estates
 - 4: Johnson Blvd/Chaney Heights
 - 5: Riverfront North
 - 6: Courthouse/Riverfront
 - 7: Mill Avenue/Riverwalk Crossing Park
 - 8: Court Street/Sturgeon City



6.2 CHANEY AVENUE/NEW BRIDGE MIDDLE SCHOOL

EXISTING CONDITIONS

This zone can best be characterized as a transition zone. It is surrounded to the north by Marine Boulevard, to the northeast by Johnson Boulevard, to the east by the New Bridge Street commercial area, to the south by existing neighborhoods, and to the west by the courthouse area. Though this area is generally less developed than its adjacent neighbors, it does have a few key features worth noting including the New Bridge Middle School (former Jacksonville High School), a number of key historic homes, and the fortress-like Embarq building.

Serving as the primary gateway from points north and east, Chaney Avenue is both understated and oversized. There is no signage or entry landscaping that indicates this route as a primary route and its odd intersection with Marine Boulevard is awkward at best. As it progresses through the area, Chaney Avenue feels more like a service street because it passes behind a number of properties, specifically the school.

The current five lane cross-section of the street is excessive given the low volume of traffic in that area. To add to the confusion, Chaney Avenue actually turns and heads west one block before New Bridge Street. The extension becomes East Railroad Street and continues on past the Riverwalk Crossing Park to the riverfront.

The bicycle path parallels Chaney Avenue on the former railroad right-of-way. It then runs along the rear of the New Bridge Middle School campus. This path terminates at New Bridge Street though the old right-of-way alignment extends beyond New Bridge Street towards the river and becomes the Riverwalk Crossing Park.

Along Marine Boulevard there are some scattered commercial buildings and the Infant of Prague Catholic Church and PK-8 School. This area also includes a few small blocks of housing. Like most of the housing in the downtown area, the scale is modest.

There are a number of historic homes on New Bridge Street west of the middle school that have been converted to commercial use. College Street feels more like an alley than a street. Many deep lots extend from the New Bridge Street frontage to College Street and have more parking areas than buildings. The area bound by Hickory Street, College Street, East Railroad Street and Ward Street is ripe for redevelopment.



Images from the Chaney Avenue area clockwise from the far left: historic home on New Bridge Street; looking east on Chaney Avenue towards the New Bridge Middle School campus; historic home on New Bridge Street; New Bridge Middle School; looking southwest on Chaney Avenue; the Embarq building; multi-use trail behind the Middle School

6.2 CHANEY AVENUE/NEW BRIDGE MIDDLE SCHOOL

RECOMMENDATIONS

Close the current intersection at Marine Boulevard and create a new gateway entrance at Johnson Boulevard. The current alignment makes for a very awkward gateway into the downtown area. In truth it favors travel away from the downtown rather than into it. By closing the current intersection and consolidating access at Johnson Boulevard there is an opportunity to create a full movement intersection that is clearly distinguished with landscaping and signage.

Abandon the Chaney Avenue right-of-way between Johnson Boulevard and Marine Boulevard. In closing this right-of-way, additional property can be added to the undersized parcels fronting on Marine Boulevard, thereby encouraging their much needed redevelopment.

Upgrade the Chaney Avenue/Johnson Boulevard intersection with improved streetscaping and pedestrian/bicycle design. After a true gateway has been established from Marine Boulevard it will then be necessary to improve the next intersection to signal motorists to turn right towards downtown. Unlike the current intersection at Marine Boulevard, this new intersection should be balanced for use by motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists. Pedestrian count-down signals, colored and/or textured marked crosswalks, and pedestrian-scaled lighting should be incorporated in the final design.

Encourage redevelopment/infill with higher density residential or live-work units along Chaney Avenue and College Street. Wherever possible, new better quality, higher density housing or live-work units should be encouraged. Additional housing in this area increases the overall population for the downtown. This, in turn, improves the market for attracting new restaurants and shops.

Preserve the historic buildings on New Bridge Street between East Railroad Street and Warlick Street. Though this area would likely not qualify for a National Register historic district, the individual buildings may still be eligible for landmark status. There are so few truly historic buildings in Jacksonville that those that meet the basic qualifications and have a distinctive character should be protected. The placement of an individual building on the National Register for Historic Place permits the use of both federal and state income taxes for qualifying improvements. As referenced in "The Architectural History of Onslow County", 1998 by J. Daniel Pezzoni the following buildings should be considered:

- Ransom & Ellie Henton House (1903), 310 New Bridge Street
- Cyrus & Florence Thompson House (Ca. 1904), 320 New Bridge Street



◀ CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

- Partial Closure of Chaney Avenue
- Infill Commercial
- Proposed Full Intersection of Johnson Blvd and Marine Blvd
- Landscaped "Sturgeon City Parkway"
- Civic Building
- Infill Residential & Small Mixed-Use

6.2 CHANEY AVENUE/NEW BRIDGE MIDDLE SCHOOL

Rename Chaney Avenue to Sturgeon City Parkway and extend its alignment from Johnson Boulevard to Shoreline Drive. The future of this area lies in the success of Sturgeon City. At present there is no one route that is appropriate to serve as the grand entrance to this important destination. Chaney Avenue is the most logical street as it presently has few properties that face it and it also is paired with the multi-use trail along the old railroad corridor. The route for the Parkway would then include Chaney Avenue, East Railroad Street and Court Street.

Improve the façade of the Embarq Building. Because of the phone equipment housed inside this large building, the reconfiguration of the facades to provide a more human scale (with windows and doors) is not practical. However the large walls present an opportunity to introduce public art to enliven the vast spaces. The most logical theme is one which highlights Sturgeon City and the river. Wall murals, applied sculpture, and artistic lighting will help turn this sows ear into a silk purse.

Preserve the Thompson Elementary School. This architecturally interesting building should be preserved. Presently used as an early childhood center, this building is ideally located and suited to continue as a school or community center. With the termination of a greenway trail from Sturgeon City, it is expected that this site will serve as both satellite lot for parking for Sturgeon City as well as a trailhead for walking tours.

Redevelop the block across from the Thompson Elementary School. This underdeveloped area is ripe for redevelopment. The plan envisions low scale mixed-use development with office and residential uses.



◀ PROPOSED PUBLIC ART ON THE EMBARQ BUILDING FACING "STURGEON CITY PARKWAY"



Wall mural in Mooresville, NC



Applied wall sculpture in Lockport, Illinois

Credit: City of Lockport, IL

6.3 NEW BRIDGE STREET/EASTERN GATEWAY

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The New Bridge Street corridor is presently the heart of retail activity for the downtown area. It connects to NC 24/Johnson Boulevard to the east and to the courthouse area to the west.

The City recently completed a significant renovation and expansion of the City Hall. This building—a combination of a former Sears Building and First Citizens Bank—has been completely redesigned and serves as a true civic landmark on the eastern edge of the downtown area.

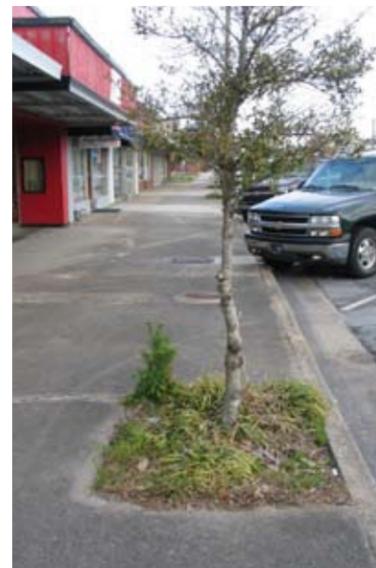
The New Bridge Street corridor at nearly 100 feet from building face to building face is unusually wide in this area. Diagonal parking is easily accommodated on both sides of the road along with two travel lanes in each direction. Though there may have been reasons in previous decades for this now under-utilized expanse of asphalt, those conditions are clearly no longer present. Marine Boulevard/Business 74 to the north, Johnson Boulevard to the east, and the recently opened US 74 bypass to the south have all moved any significant traffic away from or around the downtown.

The buildings along the corridor consist largely of aging single-story buildings. Many of these buildings lack any significant sign of re-investment since their original construction. They are utilitarian brick shells with any adornment reserved for the signs or awnings. The exception to this is the old Iwo Jima Theater building at the southeast corner of Warlick Street and New Bridge Street with the remnants of the old marquee and brick detailing. There is a large vacant site to the east of this building.

The sidewalks on the street are aging and are in need of significant repair in some places. Most of the street trees are either dead, showing signs of severe stress, or have outlived their useful life.

To the far east of this gateway along Lejeune Boulevard and Montford Landing Road is the Beirut Memorial honoring “the 241 Marines and Sailors that were killed by a suicide bomber in Beirut, Lebanon October 23, 1983.” In 2007, the organizers of the Museum of the Marines announced that their project will also be located here, solidifying this site as a major destination for thousands of tourists and visitors.

Lastly, along College Street, is the old hospital campus located on approximately 6 acres. Originally constructed in 1943, it is the current home to a number of County services including the County Health Department, the Planning & Community Development Department, and the Code Enforcement Department.



Images from the New Bridge Street area clockwise from above: Typical landscape treatment along New Bridge Street; New City Hall building; Looking east on New Bridge Street towards the new City Hall; One Story Commercial Buildings along New Bridge; Historic Iwo Jima Theater

6.3 NEW BRIDGE STREET/EASTERN GATEWAY

RECOMMENDATIONS

Strongly encourage the redevelopment of the existing single story commercial buildings as multi-story mixed-use buildings. The buildings in this area of New Bridge Street are not substantial—physically or aesthetically. Though a number of them contains retail operations, many are either vacant or house small offices or storefront churches. As a result, the area has the look and feel of a first tier highway corridor rather than a pedestrian-friendly downtown.

Because the existing width of the New Bridge Street right-of-way is an excessive width for a pedestrian-friendly downtown street, the buildings along its perimeter could be reconstructed with at least 3 or 4 stories as a means to better enclose the overall streetscape and create a more intimate, human-scaled presence.

Reserve any grants/loans in this area for new construction or substantial re-construction only. Because of the utilitarian appearance and construction of the existing buildings, it would not be wise to invest any monies from a facade grant program in this area. To do so would be the equivalent of putting “lipstick on a pig.” Instead, if public monies were to be used in this area, it should be directed at either acquisition, demolition, or new construction.

Preserve the old Iwo Jima Theater building and encourage its adaptive re-use. The only building of any architectural or historical significance on the corridor is the old Iwo Jima Theater at the southeast corner of Warlick Street and New Bridge Street. The adjacent vacant lot can be developed as a mixed-use site with a parking lot(s) that serve the needs of both sites. The 1998 Plan called for the construction of a “family entertainment complex.” This plan continues this recommendation. If possible, the building should be renovated for an adaptive re-use, perhaps as a museum or children’s activity center.

Redevelop the old hospital campus on College Street with new buildings that better serve the needs of the county employees and their clients. The original 1943 building is surrounded by a number of more recent buildings on this six acre campus. Rather than purchase additional land and take it off the tax rolls, it would be more efficient to reconstruct more modern facilities on the existing campus. As of the writing of this plan, the programming of the new County Administration facility on Johnson Boulevard is expected to relocate the Planning, Community Development, and Code Enforcement operations. This will permit the redevelopment of a portion of the existing site for present or future County needs.

▼ CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN



Multi-story Main Street buildings in Athens, GA and Roanoke, VA

6.3 NEW BRIDGE STREET/EASTERN GATEWAY

Complete the streetscape improvements on Old Bridge Street with changes to include the removal of the median and the installation of reverse angle parking. The 1998 Plan prioritized the renovation of the New Bridge Street streetscape. It proposed the installation of a median with trees, wider sidewalks, and the conversion of the existing parking from diagonal to parallel.

In evaluating this recommendation, there are two considerations. First, the installation of a planted median is not supportive of retail. Retailers prefer as few obstructions of their storefronts as possible. Medians tend to channelize traffic and therefore the driver and other occupants views forward rather than in a broader field of view. This plan recommends the installation of a median only if it is the desired intention to encourage office and residential uses over retail on this corridor.

Second, the 1998 Plan called for the installation of four rows of parallel parking, two outside rows adjacent to the sidewalks and two adjacent to the medians. This type of arrangement has been used in very urban areas, but in the introduction of parallel parking on the left side would introduce a maneuver that is foreign for many drivers. Instead, this plan advocates for the installation of reverse angle parking (see Section 5.6 Parking). This arrangement is more efficient and safer than the current proposal.

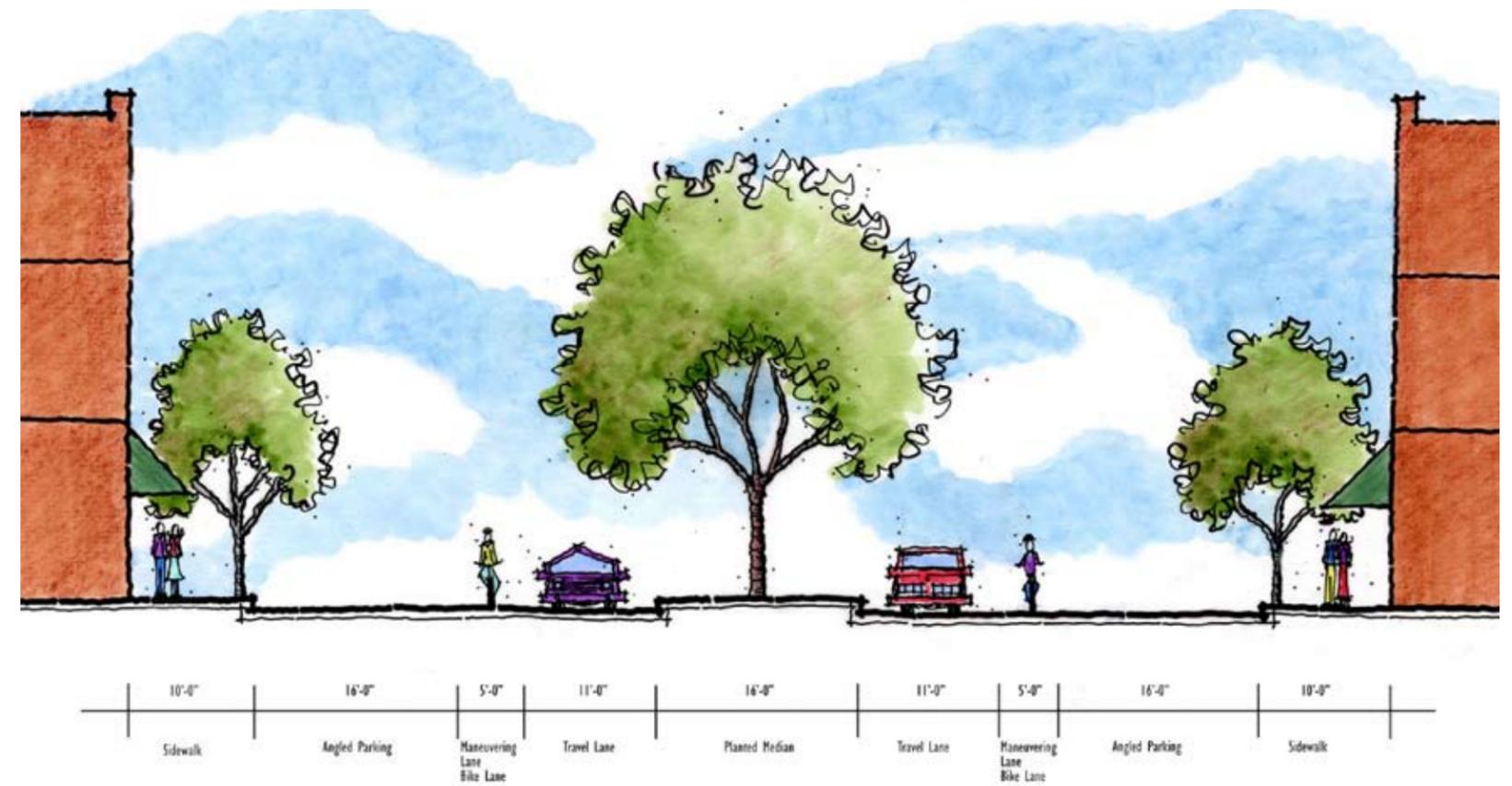
Permit the encroachment of new construction over the existing sidewalk area using arcades. The excess right-of-way width that was previously allocated for the median could be given over to either additional sidewalk, potential building envelope expansion, and/or “air-rights” expansion. In permitting the construction of an arcade over the sidewalk, the City would allow for the construction of leaseable floor area above the public right-of-way. The International Building Code would permit this provided there are suitable height clearances above the sidewalk. A minimum of eight (8) feet is recommended. The increase in floor area of up to ten to twelve feet can have a significant impact on the financial feasibility of a proposed redevelopment.

Realign the intersection of New Bridge Street and Johnson Boulevard to create a signal supported, pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly intersection with Glendale Road. Like the intersection of Chaney Avenue and Marine Boulevard the geometry actually favors leaving the downtown area instead of driving towards it. The proposed realignment creates a signalized intersection with Glendale Road. This signalization still requires a left turn to head towards downtown, but it creates the opportunity to rationalize the existing spaghetti weave and create a more visually attractive gateway treatment. In addition, a signal-controlled intersection will dramatically improve pedestrian and bicycle safety in that area.

Create a public parking strategy that serves the needs of the merchants, the County, the City, and the Post Office. The current hodge-podge of parking lots in this area makes shared parking arrangements quite difficult. City employees are requested to park in a lot about a block to the east of the City Hall, though by observation many choose more opportunistic spaces on the street or in private lots closer to the building. The same is true for the office tenants as well as the merchants themselves.

Though there are plenty of on-street spaces, ideally they should be reserved for the customers of the retailers. Further, there should be a time limit, generally two hours per space, to encourage turnover. While the area has a noticeable commercial vacancy rate at present, this may change thus creating greater demand for the on-street spaces. (For more on this topic, please refer to Section 5.6 Parking.)

▼ PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS TO NEW BRIDGE STREET



6.4 BAYSHORE ESTATES

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The Bayshore Estates neighborhood comprised of modest-sized housing on relatively small lots. The condition of the homes and lots varies greatly from those that are meticulously maintained to those that are clearly derelict and overgrown.

Along Bayshore Boulevard is Wilson Bay Park. This park has frequently been referred to as the community's best kept secret. Few residents outside of Bayshore Estates that were polled during the charrette knew of the existence of the park. With a 180 degree view of the now reclaimed Wilson Bay, the City is very fortunate to have this location preserved as public open space.

In 2005, nearly \$1.5 million in water, sewer, and street infrastructure improvements were programmed with construction in 2006 and 2007. There are currently no sidewalks within the neighborhood.

The City has recently installed three rain gardens - two at the Bayshore Boulevard East & West intersection and one at the Bayshore Boulevard West/Canterbury Road intersection. These rain gardens are intended to filter pollutants from the stormwater before it enters the storm sewer. These have been installed as a part of a continuing partnership with Sturgeon City to improve the water quality of Wilson Bay.

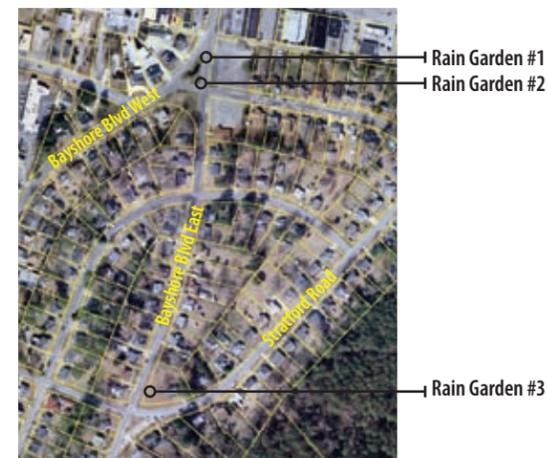
The most pressing issue facing this neighborhood is a pattern of land sales that are decreasing the percentage of owner-occupied homes below 65%. Of the 314 homes, approximately 113 are estimated to be non owner-occupied based on the tax records. This is probably due to two contributing factors.

First, their low prices/affordability makes them prime candidates for investors. And, second, in a real estate condition unique to Jacksonville (and perhaps other military towns) many of the home are owned by Marines who are re-assigned to other bases but maintain ownership in the hopes of returning to Jacksonville. Clearly there is a desire to return because of the proximity to the base and its services, the community's overall quality of life (good schools, parks, and access to the river and the beaches).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Conserve the Bayshore Estates neighborhood with appropriate code enforcement, environmental improvement, and increasing the percentage of owner-occupied housing. Though much of the neighborhood is in good condition there are emerging factors which can threaten the long-term stability if not addressed. There are clearly areas in the neighborhood where the percentage of rental housing approaches 50% within a block. Though rental housing is not inherently a negative, the trend can often impact adjacent property values. Further, the general maintenance of the homes and cleanliness of the yards is typically higher with the owner-occupied homes.

In order to address this potentially negative trend, the City, with the support of local housing agencies and community development funds should target this area with ownership incentives and assistance. The infrastructure, with the recent City improvements, is improving. Now, the underlying economics of home ownership need to be addressed.



▼ **DIAGRAM OF TAX PARCEL ANALYSIS SHOWING LOCATION OF OWNER-OCCUPIED & VACANT PARCELS**



Images of neighborhood highlighting positives and negatives.

6.5 JOHNSON BOULEVARD/CHANEY HEIGHTS

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Johnson Boulevard is a very unique corridor. Serving as a connection between Marine Boulevard (Old US 17) and NC 24 (and new US 17), the traffic volumes are far below the capacity that is provided on this 6-lane road. Unfortunately though, the amount of decline caused by this multi-lane road along the fronting properties has been substantial. All but six of the current single family home lots along this corridor are investor-owned.

These lots lack sufficient depth to create usable commercial sites while maintaining a reasonable transition to the homes to the rear. As a result, there has been little re-investment in the area and most of the existing homes are being used for small offices and related businesses.

To the northeast of Johnson Boulevard is a stable neighborhood with a high percentage of owner-occupancy, though there are a few pockets of rental housing starting to emerge. In general, though, the infrastructure and the housing appear to be well-maintained.

In early 2007, the County announced its intention to purchase land behind the post office along Johnson Boulevard for use as a new County Administration building. The program for this site calls for the abandonment of many of the scattered storefronts and leased spaces that the County occupies close to the courthouse as well as some buildings on the old hospital campus. Preliminary estimates calculated a need for a 4 story, 80,000 square foot building to accommodate this consolidation.



Wide, auto-oriented neighborhood streets with no amenities for pedestrians or bicyclists



A sidewalk in need of extension

6.5 JOHNSON BOULEVARD/CHANNEY HEIGHTS

RECOMMENDATIONS

Reduce the number of lanes on Johnson Boulevard; provide bike lanes and on-street parking where possible; and install a planted median. The need for six lanes on Johnson Boulevard has been displaced by the new US 17. With the dramatic reduction in traffic volumes, there is now ample opportunity to soften this corridor with a planted median. In addition, consideration should be given to providing on-street parking as a means to improve the redevelopment potential of the fronting properties, as well as bike lanes. It is expected that a reduction of at least one lane in each direction is possible, permitting the median installation and either on-street parking or bicycle lanes without disrupting the existing curb line and, thereby, keeping cost relatively low.

Encourage the redevelopment of the fronting properties as small professional offices. Retail is not appropriate in this corridor, nor is it needed given the already high amount of commercially-zoned property in the immediate area. Small professional offices are also better able to maintain an overall residential character to their buildings, improving the transition to the adjacent neighborhoods.

Front the County Administration Building along Johnson Boulevard with a pedestrian-friendly facade and place parking to the side and rear. As a four story building, it would be the tallest structure in the area. The overall width of the corridor is more than sufficient to support it visually, though it will be very important that all facade design be scaled to the pedestrian. This means that the building must have an orientation towards the street with a lower level that is at least 60% windows and doors. In general, buildings of that size should be broken down into coherent vertical bays as a method to avoid a monotonous facade.

Conserve the Chaney Heights neighborhood. This neighborhood maintains a high level of home ownership, although there are some early signs of transition particularly with those lots that are adjacent to Johnson Boulevard lots. The City should evaluate these conditions on an annual basis and work with the residents to protect this in-town area.

Protect and improve the environmental conditions of Chaney Creek. As a branch of the new river, Chaney Creek is a critical waterway. Unfortunately, given the amount of adjacent development, the conditions of this creek have been severely impacted over the years. The problem is severely exacerbated by the New River Shopping Center to the east with its vast amounts of paved surfaces and no real stormwater controls. The City, as part of their environment improvements related to Sturgeon City, should install or encourage the installation of pollutant removal devices such as bio-swales and rain gardens in the neighborhood as well as in the shopping center's parking lot and drainage areas.



Protect Chaney Creek
New County Administration Building
Johnson Blvd. Streetscape

Filter stormwater pollutants from impervious areas of New River Shopping Center using rain gardens and bio-swales

6.5 JOHNSON BOULEVARD/CHANEY HEIGHTS

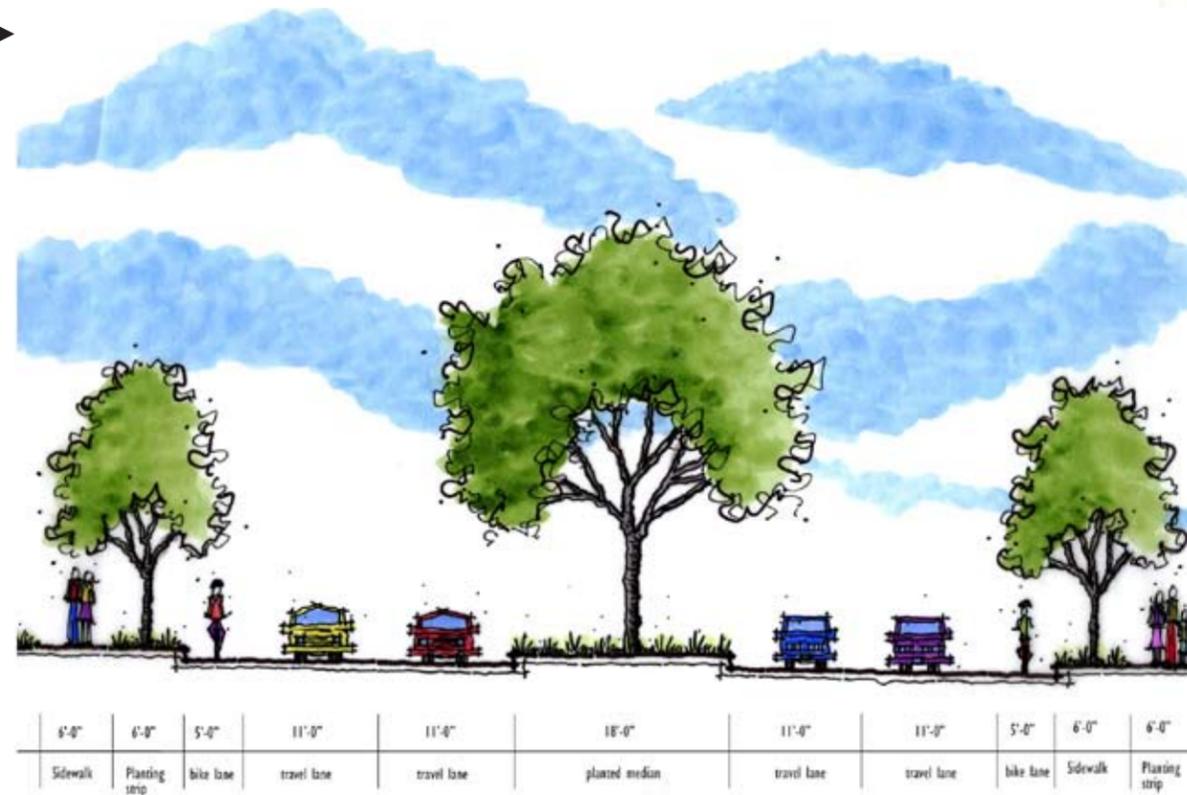
JOHNSON BOULEVARD ► OPTION A

28 foot landscaped median with
two travel lanes



JOHNSON BOULEVARD ► OPTION B

18 foot landscaped median with
two travel lanes and a bicycle lane



6.6 RIVERFRONT NORTH

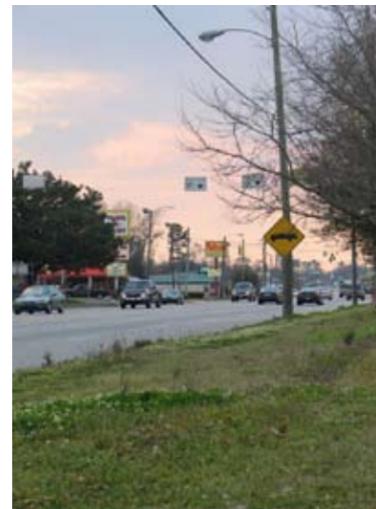
EXISTING CONDITIONS

The City owns approximately 15 acres on the north side of Marine Boulevard. This tract was originally reserved for a full-service hotel and conference center. A substantial amount of work and study was completed on this site by the City as well as by private interests. Both concluded that this site would be successful for the proposed use. Due to a failed public referendum regarding the site, no activity has occurred and the private developers who were previously considering the site are long gone.

The site borders a branch of the New River that is formed by the outlet of Chaney Creek. This portion of the river is relatively shallow and not easily navigable by large motorized watercraft. Because of the current bridge conditions, only smaller boats are able to sail south in the main channel towards the coast. There is a substantial floodplain as well as major Progress Energy and US Navy power line rights-of-way that limits development on the site.

The remaining area includes Circle Drive Apartments, Trinity United Methodist Church, a few scattered highway commercial outparcels, and a Progress Energy substation.

The eastern portion of this area will be affected by the re-construction of the Herbert G. "Buddy" Phillips Bridge. It is anticipated that the span of the new structure will be taller and wider than the current bridge.



Clockwise from top: Looking west on Marine Boulevard; Circle Drive Apartments; Infant of Prague Catholic Church; looking west on Marine Boulevard

6.6 RIVERFRONT NORTH

RECOMMENDATIONS

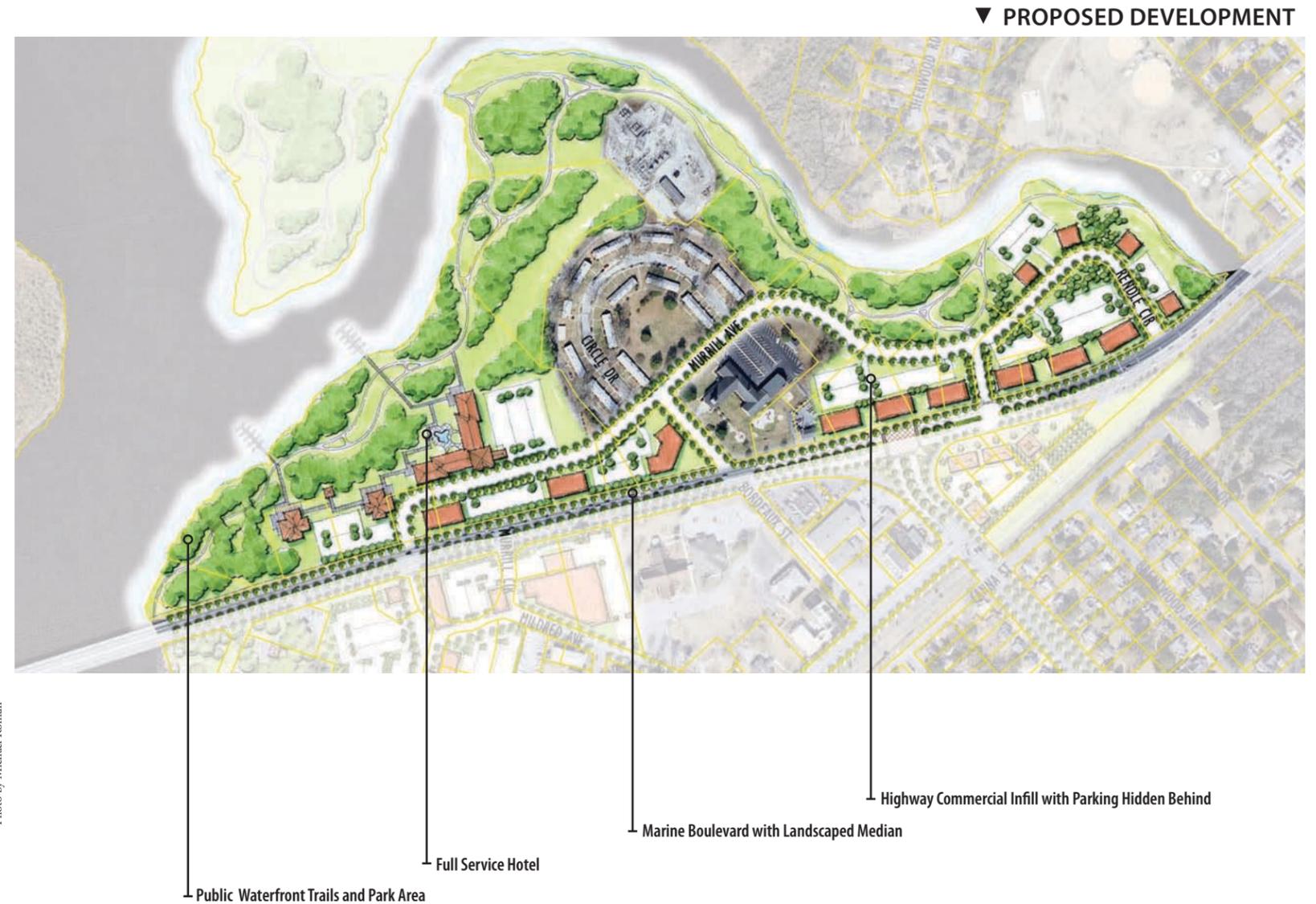
Encourage the development of a full-service hotel and conference center. Though an old idea, a hotel and conference center still makes sense in today's market conditions. The previous proposal was made in 2000 and 2001 and was affected by the uncertainty following the terrorist attacks of 9/11/2001. The City does not have such a facility and has clearly demonstrated both a need and market. Easy accessibility to the base, along a major thoroughfare, and within sight of the New River make this location ideal.

Improve Marine Boulevard with a tree-landscaped median and sidewalks. This western gateway to the City is unsightly. The City would do well to negotiate with NC DOT to install this median as part of the bridge reconstruction project. Because of the significant disruption to the traffic patterns during construction, it would appropriate to try and complete both the bridge and the median concurrently.

Construct a pedestrian/bicycle path/boardwalk under the new bridge. If investment is to occur on the north side of Marine Boulevard that is connected to the downtown area, there must be a pedestrian/bicycle connection between the two. Given Marine Boulevard's width and traffic volumes, it will be difficult to create a pedestrian-friendly intersection. The alternative is a path that is constructed under the new bridge and along the waterfront. This path should be constructed as part of the bridge project regardless of the development timetable on the City-owned land.



Image of a typical landscaped boulevard (Fort Lauderdale, FL)



6.7 RIVERFRONT/COURTHOUSE AREA

EXISTING CONDITIONS

As the core of the downtown and the city, the riverfront/courthouse area carries with it a significant history. Most of the structures in this area date from the beginning of the construction of the Marine Base in 1941, though there are a few buildings from earlier eras. The most prominent of these is the courthouse on Old Bridge Street.

In 2007, the City of Jacksonville agreed to permit the construction of a replacement jail facility and sheriff's office for Onslow County behind the courthouse and along Court Street. The proposed jail facility is proposed to comprise a 500-bed dormitory in a five story tower. The long-term plans also reserve space for a second 5-story tower to the west of the proposed tower closer to the riverfront. When combined with the blank wall of the E. W. Summersill Courts Building, this block will have a deadening effect along its entire perimeter.

With few exceptions, unadorned, single-story brick shopfronts line the streets surrounding the courthouse square. Once part of a thriving and often rambunctious bar district serving young Marines throughout the week, these buildings are now home to a few restaurants, law offices, bail bondsman, and county administrative offices.

Along the riverfront on the high bluff along Old Bridge Street is the Pelletier House (CA. 1850), reputed to be Jacksonville's oldest surviving structure. This small Greek Revival house, acquired by the Onslow County Historical Society in 1957 and renovated in 1974, sits in front of the Wantland Spring, a primary determinant for the location of the original courthouse in 1753.

Behind the Pelletier House is the New River Waterfront Park. In addition to the park benches and boardwalk area, the park includes one of the only public boat launches along the New River. Most of the park space is dedicated to parking areas.

Overlooking the Park along Tallman Street, is the Jacksonville United Service Organization (USO). This simple structure, constructed in 1942, serves as "a home away from home" for servicemen and women. It is reputed to be the longest continuously operating USO in the county.

As was mentioned in the previous section, the reconstruction of the Herbert G. "Buddy" Phillips Bridge will have dramatic impacts on both ends of the project. Specifically in this area, it is expected that Riverview Street will be closed and the real estate agency that is located along Marine Boulevard will be purchased and demolished to make way for new bridge abutments.

The landscaping in the area is aging and in need of replacement. There is an odd assortment of low shrubs incorporated into the planting strips between the sidewalk and the curb and there is no existing signage or wayfinding program. Signs of poor maintenance abound with broken pedestrian signal heads and street lights.

Court Street is currently one-way southbound adjacent to the old courthouse, requiring the northbound driver to find an alternate route to get back to Marine Boulevard. Court Street has a landscaped median in the first block south of Old Bridge Street along with red street pavers for the travel lanes. This one-way street has been created by a large sidewalk and landscaping area in front of the buildings, much of which appears windswept and unused. The historical need for this intentional mis-direction disappeared more than a decade ago when the Court Street bars closed.



Images from the courthouse area clockwise from top right: the Freedom Fountain behind the old courthouse; the boardwalk at the Riverfront Park; the old courthouse; the E.W. Summersill Court Building; the historic Masonic Temple building; buildings along Court Street; the USO building on Tallman Street

6.7 RIVERFRONT/COURTHOUSE

RECOMMENDATIONS

Remove the existing blighted structures and clear select underdeveloped blocks to encourage new investment in multi-story, mixed-use buildings. Little investment has occurred since the 1998 Plan because of a number of factors. Based on a cursory evaluation of the general condition of many of the buildings in this area, they have not been modernized to accept tenants or otherwise appear undercapitalized (lack owner investment). If the buildings had historic value and were multi-story, this plan would advocate for their preservation, in spite of the higher-than-normal renovation costs that often befall such projects. However, with just a few exceptions noted elsewhere in the plan, most buildings in the downtown can hardly be considered as worthy of preservation because of their inherent lack of character. As such, there is no reason to invest in these structures. Lastly, based on the market study, there is a substantial excess inventory of leaseable space in downtown, particularly Class C space that typically offers lower than market rates, but with higher than normal tenant upfit costs.

As a means to encourage investment that requires larger parcels or buildings for economies of scale, it is recommended that the City, B.O.L.D., a separately incorporated agency, or private interests pursue the purchase, demolition, and sale of certain key parcels, particularly buildings that are south of Old Bridge Street on Court Street and along West Railroad Street by the Depot. These blocks are particular blights on route to Sturgeon City and appear to lack any aesthetic value. A secondary area to consider for redevelopment is the New Bridge Street area east of Court Street. These unappealing buildings lack any character expected in a downtown and serve as a poor gateway from the east to the riverfront and courthouse area.

Focus façade grant money on historic buildings and along New Bridge Street. As mentioned in the previous recommendation, to use grant funds on many of the existing buildings would be the equivalent of “lipstick on a pig”. The City and B.O.L.D. should instead target their limited resources to areas where incremental investment may be more viable long-term.

Remove the shrubbery from the landscaping around the courthouse. Shrubs generally serve little purpose in an urban environment except as places to collect trash. They are generally installed as low maintenance vegetation, but they often make the area look more unkempt without regular maintenance. All the shrubs in the streetscape should be removed and replaced with either grass or pavers.

CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN



6.7 RIVERFRONT/COURTHOUSE

Move the boat access ramp parking area to the County property on Tallman Street. Though accessible, the New River Waterfront Park, has effectively been dedicated to cars. The large parking lot to accommodate all-day parking for trucks and boat trailers dominates the landscape for what is otherwise one of the few public riverfront viewing areas in Jacksonville. As an all day lot, it prevents casual usage by others interested in enjoying the river. The County owns a large tract only two blocks away that could provide parking for trucks and trailers. This tract could be inexpensively improved by using a grass-reinforcing system (e.g. Grasscrete) and concrete wheel stops.

Consider relocating the boat launch to the private marina at the end of Kerr Street. There is an existing boat launch south of the Old Bridge Street bridge. Furthermore, the Kerr Street location is far superior for many boaters as the fluctuation of the tides does not impact the passability of larger boats under the bridge. Though Kerr Street marina lacks a parking area, some limited accommodations can be made with little overall impact.

Renovate the New River Waterfront Park to enlarge its natural environment and create greater opportunities for events and activities. The current park design does not adequately reflect the location's prominence as one of the City's only public spaces along the river. At a minimum, once parking is removed, a more extensive landscape plan should be developed. The design should also consider the inclusion of the Freedom Fountain that will be relocated with the expansion of the jail and the planned sundial fountain for the Riverwalk Crossing Park. The consolidation of these features into one viable project will be more effective and dramatic than two separate projects that will compete for funding. In addition, the re-construction of the Herbert G. "Buddy" Phillips Bridge is expected to require the purchase of the real estate office at the corner of Marine Boulevard and Riverview Street and force the closing of Riverview Street. This should result in the addition of 1 acre of land to the current 2.2 acre park. It would also permit clear visibility of the park from Marine Boulevard to Old Bridge Street and provide more than 820 feet of public river frontage. By comparison, Sneads Ferry has approximately 900 feet of frontage on Bogue's Inlet/Hawkins Bay.

Open up Court Street to two-way traffic. Though there was a traffic management issue that prompted the partial closing of the block adjacent to the courthouse, this need has been gone for more than a decade. With a lack of signs and an odd street configuration, the casual guest in the downtown area has a difficult time getting around. This will be of particular importance as more activities occur at Sturgeon City as its importance increases. The wide sidewalk and curb that has narrowed this street should be removed and reset to its historic location.



◀ PROPOSED PLAN FOR THE EXPANDED NEW RIVER WATERFRONT PARK/ "FREEDOM PARK"

▼ EXISTING WATERFRONT TREATMENT



▼ RENDERING OF PROPOSED MIXED USE BUILDINGS OVERLOOKING THE RENOVATED NEW RIVER WATERFRONT PARK



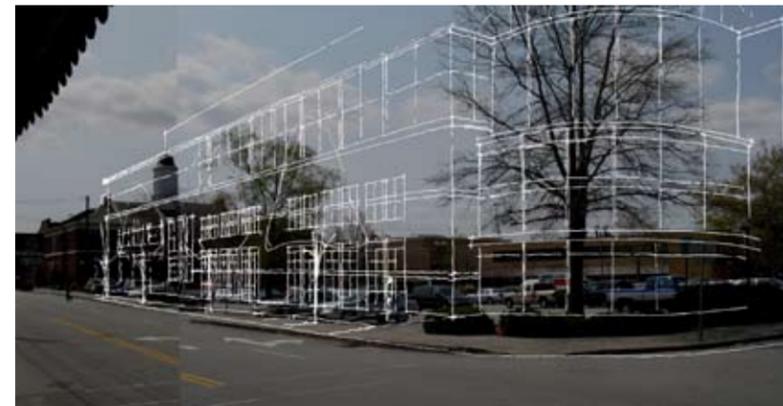
6.7 RIVERFRONT/COURTHOUSE

CONCEPTUAL ELEVATIONS OF THE JAIL AND SHERIFF'S OFFICE

The conceptual elevations express a suburban office style that lacks any pedestrian-scaled elements necessary for a vital and healthy streetscape. The jail dormitory tower behind, as the tallest building in this area, is planned as a concrete structure.



Source: Brennan Associates



▲ PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS TO FACADE DESIGN

The jail tower should be minimized to the greatest extent possible with colors and materials that permit it to blend with the sky. The Sheriff's Office lining Court Street should be designed with the pedestrian in mind with lots of windows, doors, and changes in materials along the base that break down the bulk of the facade.

◀ WHITE LINE SKETCHES TO ILLUSTRATE IMPACT OF JAIL ON PUBLIC VIEWSHED

Note how the proposed jail tower will dominate the view coming across the Old Bridge Street bridge. It will appear to be taller than the cupola of the old courthouse because of the overall bulk and size.

6.7 RIVERFRONT/COURTHOUSE

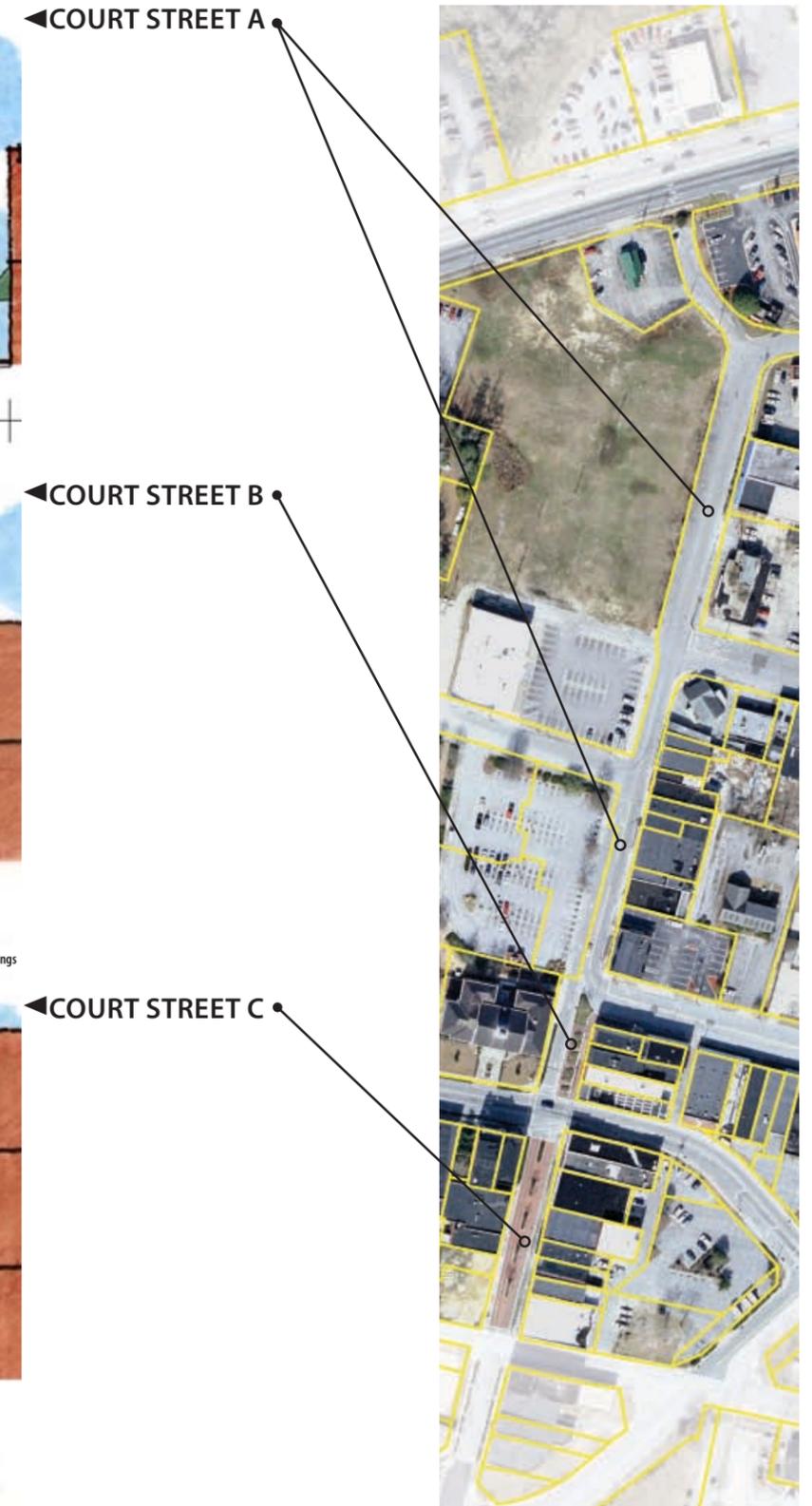
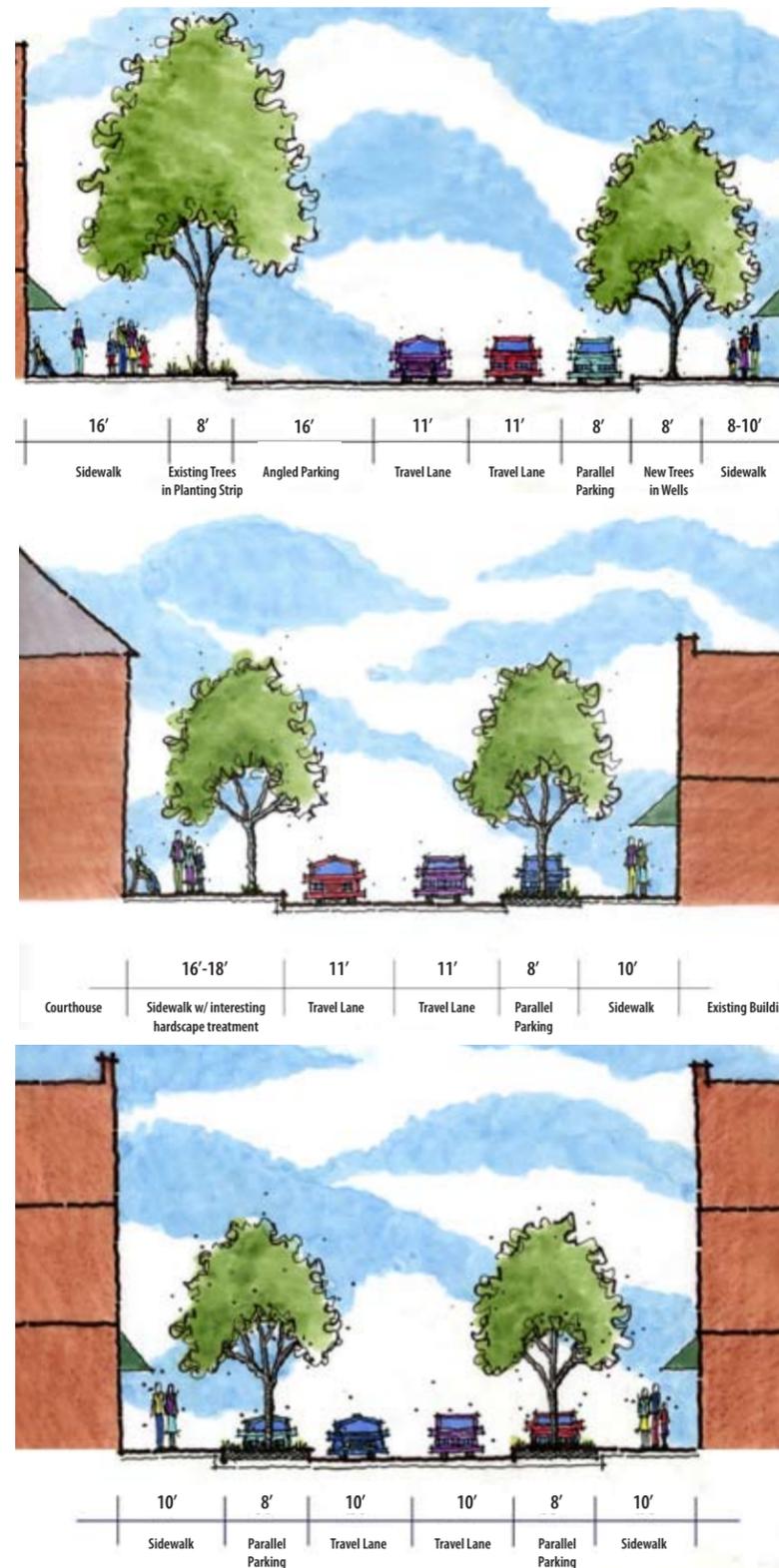
Re-orient the development along Old Bridge Street towards the river. As redevelopment occurs within the first block of Old Bridge Street across from the courthouse, it should be re-oriented to face Anne Street rather than its present orientation towards the fortress-like E.W. Summersill Courts Building. Parking would then be placed in mid-block. Given the needs of the court building, particularly on jury pool days, a deck would be warranted and appropriate here.

Establish the courthouse area as a County government district and utilize the property surrounding the courthouse for government uses. Given the visual prominence of the new jail over the entire area, the market study suggests that it will have a deadening effect over potential real estate investment in the surrounding block. As a result, it makes more sense for the County to purchase the surrounding buildings and either renovate the interiors or demolish them and build new facilities as needed. Since most of the existing storefronts in this area are already being leased by the County, keeping those employees in this area is all the more important. An abandonment by the County of this area to a new facility on Johnson Boulevard could be the final death knell for the courthouse block.

Realign Court Street to provide a direct connection to Marine Boulevard. Currently, visitors to the area must drive around Murrill Circle in order to access Marine Boulevard. This is both confusing and unnecessary. Close the eastern driveway connection to Marine Boulevard and open up the western alignment.

Landscape and sign Court Street to direct visitors to the Government Center, the USO, Riverwalk Crossing Park, and Sturgeon City. Signage and streetscape improvements should be installed to add prominence to the newly opened Court Street and its direct connection to Sturgeon City. With Riverview Street soon to be closed, this will be an even more important connection to the USO as well.

Construct mixed-use liner buildings on the western perimeter of the courthouse block. If the New River Waterfront Park is to be used for anything other than long-term boat trailer storage it is vitally important that the back side of the jail tower(s) be concealed to the greatest extent possible. Because it is not likely that private investment will desire to back directly up to the jail, this plan assumes build-out to be in County government space. If possible, the ground level of the buildings should permit the leasing of space for restaurants to overlook the park. The upper two or three stories would then be expected to be government offices. The preference is for the new County Administration building planned for Johnson Boulevard to be located in this area. This will help soften the deep-rooted community concern over the jail by clustering these services in one location rather than in many disconnected facilities.



6.8 MILL AVENUE/RIVERWALK CROSSING PARK

EXISTING CONDITIONS

One of the most successful outcomes of the previous downtown plan was the conversion of the unsightly railroad right-of-way to the Riverwalk Crossing Park. Originally the site where young recruits would arrive from across the country to Camp Lejeune, the depot and the northeast end of this park serves as a reminder of the history of Jacksonville.

To the north of the park is the Mill Avenue neighborhood. Though it is a locally designated historic district, it lacks the cohesion and consistency of character that are usually found in historic neighborhoods. The few historic homes that remain in this area are surrounded by vacant lots and insensitive infill. There are a number of homes along the riverfront extending from a small private marina south of the church at Anne Street and Old Bridge Street all the way to Sturgeon City.

There is an old water plant at the end of Railroad Street that is considered available for development by the City. Across Railroad Street from the old water plant is the Kerr Street Recreation Complex including an aging underutilized community building, popular lighted ballfields, tennis courts and a playground. Across the street from the ballfields is a private marina and boat launch. Adjacent to this marina is a swath of land along the river referred to as the L.P. Willingham Park.



Images clockwise from left: view looking southwest down the Riverwalk Crossing Park; the train station depot building and picnic shelter; Kerr Street Recreation Center; infill housing in the Mill Avenue neighborhood; small commercial building across from the depot; the Colonel's Lady Bed and Breakfast Inn at 215 Mill Avenue; morning runners in the Riverwalk Crossing Park; old waterworks building on W. Railroad Street

6.8 MILL AVENUE/RIVERWALK CROSSING PARK

RECOMMENDATIONS

Purchase the Jacksonville Bible Church on Anne Street and the adjacent private marina for a public park. Because of the long term visual impact of the jail tower on the courthouse block, specifically on the Riverfront Park, the City should plan for the contingency that the public will not accept an active, public park in that location as a place to congregate and hold festivals. The river is too valuable an asset to turn its back on in relation to the downtown area. As such the City needs a “Plan B” for a location that is proximate to the historic core that is not overshadowed by a jail tower or its related support facilities. The most logical location is the current Jacksonville Bible Church. The City could purchase the property and prepare a land lease to permit the congregation to continue to use the building as long as they desire. If the congregation should move or cease, the full ownership would revert to the City.

Remove the existing one-story commercial buildings around the depot and replace with infill housing or live-work units. As mentioned previously, there is excess commercial space for what the market could absorb into a vibrant, mixed-use area. At present and for the long term viability of the area, the focus should be placed on providing more housing (and more population) in this area. These buildings should be removed as soon as possible to attract a residential developer to the area.

Protect the existing historic homes in the Mill Avenue Historic District. The City should consider creating a loan pool for the acquisition, renovation, and deed-restricted sale of historic properties. As part of this, a Design Review Commission should be established to ensure that all renovations, additions and new construction are consistent with the architectural character of the area.

CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN



▼ **PROPOSED SEASONAL LANDSCAPING FOR PARK**
For more detailed information, see Section 4.8 Parks & Public Space



- ← Redevelopment of waterworks site as infill housing
- ← Planting Improvements for Riverwalk Crossing Park
- ← Infill Residential - High Density
- ← New waterfront park
- ← Infill Residential - Low Density
- ← Infill Residential - High Density
- ← Court Street Re-Alignment with Sturgeon City Parkway

6.8 MILL AVENUE/RIVERWALK CROSSING PARK

Provide higher density infill housing along the perimeter of the Riverwalk Crossing Park. Riverwalk Crossing Park is one of the most underutilized assets in the area. Though it is able to easily accommodate community or regional events, the challenge remains on how to program this asset the remaining 360 days of the year. Very simply, the construction of higher density housing, such as a townhomes, mansion homes (3 to 4 units per building), and 3 and 4 story condominiums should be permitted and encouraged around the park. The market study has shown that there is an opportunity for mid- to higher-end, low-maintenance lifestyle living in the Jacksonville area. At present, there is little available to serve this need. With a large park and access to the downtown and the river, there is no more logical place in Jacksonville for higher density development than along this park edge.

Provide four-season landscaping in the Riverwalk Crossing Park. As outlined in Section 4.8 Parks & Open Space, additional funding should be provided to enhance the landscaping in the park during each season. This facility is too large and too important to not provide an adequate level of maintenance and visual interest throughout the year.

Extend Third Street to Sturgeon City Parkway (former Court Street). The odd angles formed by the various intersections around the depot make for a confusing street network. Opening Third Street directly to the Sturgeon City Parkway would also provide a clear connection from Old Bridge Street for those heading to Sturgeon City from the west.

Terminate Court Street into Sturgeon City Parkway. This area needs a new brand—one that is built upon the progressive, sustainable ideals of Sturgeon City. As such, the continuation of Court Street as a moniker is contrary to this evolution. By terminating Court Street into Sturgeon City Parkway, it gives greater prominence to the Parkway and all gives a logical end to the courthouse district.

Expand the boat launch at the Olde Towne Marina for broader public use. This plan prefers the closure of the boat launch at the Riverfront Park and the relocation of those services to this existing private launch area and marina. Though not as easily accessible as the Riverfront Park location, it is better located in the main channel of the river and below Old Bridge Street bridge. The current fees to launch at this location are fair and reasonable (\$5 in July, 2007) and it is open to the public. Therefore, with no membership requirements and low fees, the only strategies needed to expand this operation after the closure of the other is a larger parking area, well-placed signage, and some good advertising.



RENDERING OF INFILL ▲ HOUSING ALONG THE EDGES OF THE PARK

Higher density housing such as narrow lot single-family homes, townhomes, and multi-unit condominiums should be permitted and encouraged.

EXISTING RIVERWALK ► CROSSING PARK CONDITIONS



4 Unit Urban Mansion in Denver, CO



12 Unit Condominium in Davidson, NC



Duplex Unit in Davidson, NC

6.9 COURT STREET/STURGEON CITY

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Less than a decade ago, the Sturgeon City area was the center for environmental degradation and public safety concerns for the entire downtown area. Today, there is a much different story to tell, though there is still progress left to be made.

The Wilson Bay Initiative is an award winning, nationally recognized, environmental reclamation project. What was once an environmental disaster was cleaned up in less than five years largely through the aggressive use of oysters to act as a natural filtration device. At the heart of this program is the approximately 27 acre Sturgeon City facility, the former City wastewater treatment plant that is being converted to a hands-on environmental education center. The facility is planned to include a 43,000 square foot education center “to focus on the Sturgeon and other fauna and flora that share ancient lineage and habitats found in coastal Carolina.” (www.sturgeoncitiy.org) This Initiative has already paid enormous dividends in property values in the immediate area and along the riverfront.

Across Court Street, on the site of a former crime-ridden trailer park, is the Osprey Pointe neighborhood with approximately 22 duplex units and a private marina. More than 7.5 acres of wetlands are being protected as part of the development. To the south of this neighborhood is the Shoreline Drive development, a mix of townhomes and single family homes overlooking the river.

North of Sturgeon City on the east side of Court Street, is a less successful story. Along Kerr, Ford and Poplar Streets, is the least desirable area in the downtown. Vacant, substandard homes, excessive trash, overgrown lots, and higher than normal incidences of crime have contributed to this area’s decline. There are only five owner-occupied homes in this entire area.

There are no sidewalks along Court Street though it is quite wide. Approximately 10-12 well kept homes maintain a Court Street address. The remainder are dilapidated or are otherwise not well-maintained.



Images clockwise from top: view of old wastewater treatment plant facilities at Sturgeon City; view across Wilson Bay from Sturgeon City; old cemetery near Ladd Street; townhomes on Shoreline Drive; dilapidated homes off of Court Street (2 images)

6.9 COURT STREET/STURGEON CITY

RECOMMENDATIONS

Improve the Court Street (proposed Sturgeon City Parkway) streetscape with street trees, sidewalks, and bicycle lanes. There is sufficient right-of-way and plenty of front yard to improve this stretch of the Parkway for pedestrians and bicyclists. The few residents that live in homes that front on this street will see a marked improvement in their quality of life with the planting of trees to soften the harsh conditions. And, because this corridor is long and straight it will be necessary to add visual interest and potentially insert specific techniques for traffic calming.

Redevelop the Kerr, Ford and Poplar Street neighborhood. The conditions in this area are so severe that the most likely remedy will be a planned acquisition, demolition and reconstruction of what few structures remain. Any redevelopment activity should focus on the preservation of affordable housing with a particular focus on providing it for those few elderly residents that remain. Because the Thomson School greenway travels behind the lots on Ford Street, it will be necessary to clean up this area as soon as possible to ensure a strong perception of safety.

Provide sites for housing students and staff for Sturgeon City. The redevelopment of the Kerr, Ford, and Poplar Streets area may present an opportunity to provide not only affordable housing for existing downtown residents but also short and long-term housing for Sturgeon City activities. The reach of Sturgeon City summer institutes can be broadened beyond the Jacksonville area with the provision of housing. Having a direct connection to the facility via the greenway from this area make it a logical choice. Another potential opportunity is the Shoreline Drive area where approximately half of the townhome units are currently investor-owned.





7: DEVELOPMENT IMPACT ANALYSIS

7.1 DEVELOPMENT TOTALS



DOWNTOWN JACKSONVILLE AT A GLANCE (EXISTING)	
Total Assessed Value	\$139,925,373 (4% of City)
Total Tax Exempt Property	\$28,643,934 (20% of Downtown)
Housing Units	750
Commercial Space	1.4 Million Square Feet (More than Jacksonville Mall + Wal-Mart combined)

CONCEPTUAL PLAN TOTALS	
New Residential	452 Units
Single Family	113 Units
Townhomes	278 Units
Multi-Family/Live-Over	61 Units
Office	132,000 square feet*
Retail	230,550 square feet*
Civic	271,200 square feet
Parking (new)	2,204 spaces
Taxable Value (Incremental Increase)	\$153,640,550 (100%+ Increase)**
*This total is for new construction, more than 80% of which is replacing existing substandard structures	
**Does not exclude value of existing structures that would be removed	

7.2 FINAL MARKET ANALYSIS - SUMMARY

The following material has been adapted from the Market & Economic Analysis conducted by Rose & Associates, Inc. June 2007.

The following is a summary of the final conclusions and recommendations for downtown Jacksonville, NC. The factors and findings detailing these recommendations are found in the Pre-Charrette Brief (Summary Qualitative Assessment) and in this Final Report.

- The key to revitalization of the downtown is people, who provide energy and activity 24/7.
- People living in downtown - additional housing options add population to support commercial uses.
- People working in downtown - additional jobs add daytime employment to support both commercial and residential uses (allowing residents the opportunity to live and work in downtown).
- People visiting downtown - the opportunity for expanded tourism is water - the parks, the USO, and Sturgeon City all tied to each other and the reclaimed New River. This is the City's greatest opportunity for revitalization and economic development, while enhancing the Quality of Life in Jacksonville, therefore, we recommend reconsideration of the Jail location and County office relocation.

MARKET POTENTIAL FOR RETAIL USES

- The demand for downtown retail space will grow commensurate with residential population and daytime employment, which will provide threshold traffic to attract restaurants and retail to the downtown.
- Downtown should focus on both local and regional tenants - to provide a unique tenant mix not found in traditional shopping center formats.
- Differentiate trade areas between local, convenience-oriented (within 3 miles of downtown) and regional destination-oriented (5+ miles from downtown) goods and target retail tenants accordingly.
- Retail should focus on clustering in two primary areas: 1) The waterfront from the waterfront park to Court Street; and 2) New Bridge Street in the area of City Hall - rename this Main Street.
- The clean up of the New River, together with the model ecological project Sturgeon City, provides a rare opportunity for downtown mixed-use waterfront redevelopment.
- Main Street can provide a mix of small convenience-oriented goods and services for downtown residents and employees, together with locally-owned/operated restaurants and boutiques.
- Currently, there is a limited supply of retail space in the downtown core, most of which is obsolete or in need of substantial tenant improvements.
- Market dynamics support approximately 200,000 square feet of

retail, clustered in a mixed-use entertainment oriented format along the riverfront, which may be absorbed over a 10-15 year period.

- The Downtown Master Plan includes approximately 230,000 square feet of space throughout the study area, which includes replacement of existing space in most areas. The absorption of this space is estimated to occur over a period of approximately 7-10 years.
- Target markets include full service restaurants, grocery & specialty food, office supply, gifts in addition to entertainment venues.

MARKET POTENTIAL FOR OFFICE USES

- The demand for downtown office space is dependent upon job recruitment for economic development. This includes both small professional businesses (1-50 employees) and large companies (50+ employees).
- There is a limited office market in the trade area(s). There is virtually no Class A (new) space available, and a limited supply of Class B and C (existing/older) space, a majority of which is obsolete or in need of tenant improvements.
- There is no available office space with large floor-plates, allowing tenants to occupy more than 5,000 or more square feet per floor. The greatest opportunity is at the waterfront, in a mixed-use format with retail to anchor the downtown - thus government (County) offices could and should consolidate and remain here.
- Projected job growth supports approximately 150,000 square feet of office space in the downtown.
- The Downtown Master Plan proposes approximately 132,000 square feet, of which approximately 80% is replacement of existing obsolete Class B/C space. The majority of this space can be absorbed organically over time, with full build-out estimated to occur over the next decade.
- Target markets include professional and medical services; technology and service sectors; government and military. Rental rates for Class A space in the mid/high teens and low twenty dollar per square foot range can be expected.

MARKET POTENTIAL FOR RESIDENTIAL USES

- The demand for downtown living is limited by the availability of alternative housing options.
- The current supply is predominately traditional single family homes in the neighborhoods surrounding the downtown.
- A mix of townhomes, condominiums and apartments both for sale and for lease will add the additional population needed to support certain types of retail uses and restaurants.
- There is limited supply of urban upscale condominiums and townhomes in the market. While there is currently little multifamily product above \$200,000 available for sale, the downtown has a unique opportunity to create a housing market where one currently does not exist.
- A variety of products, sizes, styles and prices in both single family and multifamily product should be considered to include bungalows, urban brownstones, townhomes, lofts and apartments/condominiums above retail.
- Market dynamics support up to 3,200 new units of housing in the downtown, which is needed to increase the population to support additional retail.
- There are 452 units of housing proposed in the Downtown Master Plan, to include 113 single family, 278 townhomes and 61 apartments. This housing can be absorbed into the urban fabric of the downtown over the next 5-10 years.

OTHER KEYS TO DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION

- Attitude. Create pride in the downtown through educating the public about strengths and successes in the downtown.
- Marketing. Provide information regarding leasing, investment and development opportunities and promote new ideas and events through public offerings. B.O.L.D. can play a key role in this effort.
- Public/Private Partnership. Streamline the regulatory and permitting process and provide opportunities for alternative funding sources, such as Tax Increment Financing (TIF) to encourage private development.
- Program. Knit together the programming and events of Parks and Recreation, BOLD and other sources to create an atmosphere in downtown of "go do" in addition to "go buy" retail opportunities.
- Neighborhoods. Promote strong neighborhoods through continued preservation and revitalization efforts. This supports and provides pedestrian traffic and energy for the downtown.

7.3 FINAL MARKET ANALYSIS - RETAIL

RETAIL DEMAND CHARACTERISTICS

Within each trade area defined, there are a number of components which determine which retail operators might find adequate demand for its goods/services, or retail sales potential. These include not only population and households, but most importantly disposable income to spend on those goods/services. Retail sales potential is a function of the average dollars (based on a national average) spent on goods and services by households in the market area(s). Current estimates for the City of Jacksonville show that, based upon the 2007 median disposable income of \$35,089, there is a total retail demand potential is \$387,800,784.

When compared to actual sales estimates, which exceeded \$1,232,000,000 for the same year, it indicates that consumers are being drawn into the city limits to shop. The demand potential for retail goods and services is outlined in the preliminary report, and additional information regarding retail demand for the City, County and the trade areas is further detailed in this section of the report.

Analysis by the State Department of Tourism in North Carolina estimate that top five visitor activities in 2005 in North Carolina included: Dining (28%), Shopping (20%), Touring/Sightseeing (19%), Entertainment (18%) and Beach/Waterfront Activities (12%). Jacksonville is in a unique position to provide all of these within its downtown area.

RETAIL SUPPLY

The supply for retail uses is measured in two ways: square feet of existing stores in the trade area; and by dollars, measuring the expenditures already occurring in the trade area, both within the downtown and competitive venues.

Growth in sales can be seen based upon sales tax revenue reported to the State. There has been continued growth in sales tax revenue both in the City and the County, however, the rate of growth was greater in the County from 2005 to 2006, with the sales tax revenue growing at 9.93% versus 6.92% in the City. This demonstrates the reality that with the increased growth in population in the suburbs and outlying areas, so too consumers are shopping outside of the City and downtown.

It is estimated that there is over two million square feet of retail shopping in the City of Jacksonville. The largest shopping area is located northwest of the downtown along the Western Boulevard corridor, dominated by the Jacksonville Mall, the only regional mall in a fifty mile radius. Anchored by Belk, Sears and JC Penney, it totals 475,737 +/- square feet and enjoys nearly full occupancy. Other large retail venues in and around the mall constitute the majority of the retail shopping in the City.

Additionally, a new Wal-mart and related retail is providing shopping on the other end of town on Wilmington Highway (US 17). There are also a number of other grocery-anchored and strip shopping centers located along primary commercial corridors. With the density of population growing in the suburban markets, the retailers seeking to locate in this market are focusing their efforts in these popular areas.

Data collected from a walking tour, property owners, brokers and the City staff indicates that there is approximately 3,500 square feet of retail space available in downtown. Much of the space is located in older buildings that have major renovation requirements or have depths that are a challenge for most retail formats.

Competition includes approximately 15,000 square feet of retail space on Western Boulevard (excluding the space at the mall) and approximately 3,500 square feet of retail space on Highway 17. Rents for retail space range from a low of \$4.00 per square foot in the downtown, to a high of \$21.00+ per square foot in and around Western Boulevard.

RETAIL GAPS/OPPORTUNITIES

In measuring supply in dollars with actual retail sales, the comparison between supply and demand determines the degree of gap between average dollars available for certain goods/services and those spent. Where there is a gap between supply and demand, it can be demonstrated as a positive value, or "leakage" of retail opportunity, indicating that consumers must travel outside the trade area for goods. Conversely, a negative value, or "surplus" indicates oversupply of goods, or consumers being drawn into the trade area from the outside. When factors discourage consumers being drawn to the area, due to competition, ease of access, or perceptions of safety issues, then retail opportunity is hindered, or in terms of space - over supplied.

Retail sales potential must be compared to actual sales figures, as in demand estimates, as those operators already in the market are presumably tapping into these dollars. Therefore, each operator must individually assess whether adequate gaps or sales are possible given competitors already existing in the marketplace.

The Retail Marketplace Profiles on the following pages include a comparison view of the city and the primary trade areas to assess both demand and supply factors to determine gaps in the market for the major industry group segments. Positive values (leakage) determine target opportunities for retail in downtown Jacksonville. The profile is first reviewed for the entire county (also the MSA) and city to determine categories that may be underserved. There is a gap for office supplies, stationary and gift stores in the MSA, and in specialty food and lawn/garden stores for the entire city, which may provide an opportunity for

the downtown. Most notable are the opportunities within the 1 and 3 mile radius - the primary trade area. These include a limited variety of food categories which may vary depending upon consumer preferences.

The key to revitalizing shopping in the downtown is to create an area which provides a different experience than the typical suburban shopping center, is unique enough in its offerings and has the size and scale which will create synergy with other uses and functions, such as public events. In the downtown, existing furniture stores, boutiques and restaurants are scattered throughout the area. Clustering of uses such as restaurants can create synergy, which combined with other retailers such as boutique food and gift stores, can be a catalyst for additional operators. Further, local operators such as boutiques, art galleries and other uses may be supported in the downtown core to add unique character and interest to the shopping experience.

Collectively, these suggest and support clustering some categories focused on destination-oriented retail, food, drink and entertainment, together with complementary civic/public uses around the underutilized asset of the New River waterfront. Convenience oriented retail, such as small food/grocer adjacent to the downtown neighborhoods and employment centers (i.e.; City Hall and other county offices). The target market includes professionals and government staff working in the downtown, military personnel and their families, visitors and all generations of citizens within the trade area.

TARGET RETAIL CATEGORIES FOR DOWNTOWN JACKSONVILLE
Stationary, card & gift store
Lawn & garden store
Specialty food store(s)
Grocery store
Jewelry & art store

DESIGN

The downtown core should provide a catalyst for destination oriented retail, restaurants, and other venues for entertainment, and expanded social interaction. This should include first floor retail in a mixed-use format with office and/or residential above, whose employees and residents will provide additional traffic for retail operators and restaurants.

SIZE (FLOORPLATE/FOOTPRINT)

Given the proximity to other regional destination oriented centers in the county, limited retail and restaurants on a smaller scale (1,200 - 30,000 square foot formats) can be supported when the population, employment base, and traffic volume is established to meet minimum thresholds. Future inventory requirements are contingent upon retail company expansion plans (i.e., mergers & acquisitions), location criteria and consumer trends.

7.4 FINAL MARKET ANALYSIS - OFFICE

OFFICE DEMAND CHARACTERISTICS

The market potential for commercial real estate, including office and industrial space relies upon a number of factors, including but not limited to, local economic cycles, a business-friendly environment, workforce dynamics (wage, employment and job training), and central places (i.e.; colleges or hospitals) or companies that are demand generators for ancillary uses. For office uses, demand indicators include estimated job growth in non-manufacturing sectors. For industrial uses, demand indicators include estimated job growth in manufacturing and wholesale sectors.

The primary and basic industries fueling the economy in the region are those with a ratio of employment in an industry that exceeds the national average. For Onslow County, these include Construction; Utilities; Retail Trade; Information; Administrative; Leisure & Hospitality; Other Services. The highest ranked is Accommodation and food services, followed by Unclassified, which would include Military and some Government/Public Administration Services.

A segment that should be given consideration is in healthcare services. While this segment (NAICS 62) as a whole is not above the national average, Onslow Memorial Hospital is a major employer in the region. Plans are currently underway for a two to three year renovation and expansion of this facility. The initial phase will add approximately 93,000 square feet to the hospital's existing 250,000 square feet. Details of each industry are highlighted in the preliminary report.

Office demand is generated by both new and existing businesses/ companies (or governmental agencies and related services) who may have a desire or need to locate within downtown. Based on 2006 employment estimates, approximately 2900 new jobs were created in the MSA/ County. Most were in the military and other service sectors which do not support office uses. However, a substantial portion of those new jobs were in sectors such as government and medical which support office uses.

Using an economic base multiplier for the MSA, and assuming job growth continues at a similar pace, it is estimated that for every 2,900 new jobs created in the region, approximately 42% (or 1,218 jobs) would support office uses. Thus, according to estimates for office workers at an average of 206 square feet per employee, annual demand for 250,908 square feet of office space is estimated for the region.

OFFICE SUPPLY

Historically, much of the office development in Jacksonville was driven by government agencies, the military and other education and health services who located in and around the city. Most are single-tenant, single-purpose buildings serving the entities and employees who occupy them. In addition, a scattering of small, suburban offices began to evolve along commercial corridors with retail, for professional service related business such as banks and financial services, doctors, insurance and other professionals. According to estimates from regional commercial brokers and appraisers the overall office market is estimated to total less than 500,000 square feet. While most are owner occupied, rental rates range from a low of \$6.00 for Class B/C office (existing product in need of renovation) to a high of \$18.00 per square foot for Class A (new) space.

For example, the Piney Green Medical Center has recently been refurbished and is offering space for sale or lease at \$127.40 and \$16.50 per square foot respectively.

The downtown office market now has few choices for office locations. There is no new Class A buildings and limited existing Class B and C buildings (which are in need of renovation, or tenant retro-fit). Given the number of small buildings which can be used for a variety of commercial uses, the current overall vacancy rate for the downtown is difficult to determine. The challenge will be whether new space can be supplied to the market at rental rates which are achievable in the marketplace. One cost factor which may determine this is the land, which the City and/or County can provide as a tool for economic development through Tax Increment Financing (TIF) vehicles now available in the state.

OFFICE GAPS/OPPORTUNITIES

The recent investment in the New River and the downtown provides improved opportunity to recruit companies to locate here. Such success is largely dependent upon the price and availability of property. The key for economic developers is to have readily available competitive product, or to have sites for build to suit or speculative development.

Onslow County has been successful in recruiting approximately 2,900 new jobs to the area in the past year. If this trend were to continue, and 25% of the region's new job growth is captured in the downtown, then the opportunity for office development could support absorption of approximately 57,000 square feet per year or more. This would also provide additional daytime population to support new restaurants and retail uses.

Issues such as location, accessibility, parking, safety, building condition and configuration all determine the success of attracting business to

the downtown. Time and cost become critical factors when weighing the options. New buildings with larger floor plates (5,000+ s.f.) could provide ground floor retail built in a phased plan that would allow for market absorption. The opportunities for the development of large plate formats and/or headquarters locations in the downtown is limited.

The waterfront park and Court Street area offers the best substantial opportunity to create a mixed use format to combine waterfront restaurants, retail, entertainment and office uses in one area. Such environments in and around other supporting amenities such hotels, parks and other civic uses create synergy between these uses, and generally fair better than their stand alone counterparts. Therefore, the downtown market could support approximately 130,000 square feet as outlined in the master plan, which is estimated to be absorbed over a 5 year period. Pricing is dependent upon land costs, design, construction costs and tenant improvement allowances.

OFFICE ANALYSIS - DOWNTOWN JACKSONVILLE	
New Employees - County	2,900
25% Capture for Downtown	725
New Office Employees (42%)	305
Office Space per Employee	206
New Office Space Demand	62,727
Current Est. Office Supply	5,300
New Office Gap/(Oversupply)	57,427

DESIGN

Urban scale office space from 3-6 stories clustered around primary intersections/blocks. This should be focused on the downtown core. Linkages to the Courthouse and/or waterfront are the best location within the study area viable for a corporate environment. Parking decks may be shared and corporate uses could generate synergy for retail and restaurant activity, and use of the waterfront park (for functions, lunchtime recreation, etc.).

Residential scale office buildings from 1-2 stories clustered around service/convenience oriented retail and adjacent to neighborhoods. These should be clustered at edges of central business district .

Size (Footprints/Floorplates)

- Urban Scale - Medium business (50-100 employees) - 5,000—20,000 square feet
- Residential Scale - Small business (1-50 employees) - 1,000—5,000 square feet

7.5 FINAL MARKET ANALYSIS - HOUSING

HOUSING DEMAND CHARACTERISTICS

The economic growth of a region includes growth in population and households. Families moving to the region driven by the job market, retirement or lifestyle changes provide opportunities for new housing in areas where amenities and quality of life characteristics meet changing needs. These are both tangible and non-tangible components of what defines and drives a market. We must first understand the existing market, then determine market potential for new housing within the downtown. This includes a variety of socio-economic factors including lifestyle, income/affordability and age.

There are currently 19,108+/- housing units in the City and 59,974+/- units in the County/MSA. The median home value for the City is estimated at \$124,140, somewhat higher than the MSA/County value of \$116,750. This is markedly lower than the national median home value of \$181,127.

Of the total, 37.9% of the housing units are owner occupied in the City, versus 51.8% in the County/MSA. In the City, 53.8% of the units are renter occupied with a vacancy rate of 8.3%. In the County/MSA, 34.3% of the units are renter occupied with a vacancy rate of 14%.

GEOGRAPHIC MOBILITY

American households historically have been mobile. In 2005, an average of 16% of households moved from one location to another. Mobility is higher in urban areas, where there is a higher percentage of renters versus owners, and younger versus older households moving. Though this varies by region, Onslow County is no exception. The high percentage of renter occupied housing, together with the regional dynamic of off base housing, suggests that housing market for the region will continue to be cyclical and dependent upon military deployment.

JACKSONVILLE SEGMENTATION AREA PROFILE - TARGET MARKET FOR DOWNTOWN			
Tapestry Group	Tapestry Segment	Rank (top 5)	Households
American Quilt	Midland Crowd	1	8,462
	Crossroads	2	8,311
Scholars & Patriots	Military Proximity	3	6,212
High Hopes	Aspiring Young Families	4	5,280
Family Portrait	Milk & Cookies	5	3,817
Total Households (MSA)			32,082

Source: ESRI Community Tapestry

DEMAND FOR NEW CONSTRUCTION

Analysis of the ratio between population and employment suggests that most residents within the downtown either travel outside the neighborhood to work or are not employed. One indicator of demand for new housing is the benchmark of the ratio between employment and building permits (housing starts) for new homes. A ratio greater than 1.0 indicates opportunities for new housing. The ratio for 2005 was far above 1.0, signaling a healthy new housing market.

New housing starts in Jacksonville have grown consistently over the past years. The chart below demonstrates the expansion of the single family offerings versus multifamily product, such as condos, townhomes and apartments.

TARGETED BUYER SEGMENTS

Based upon mobility estimates and demand, the primary target buyers for housing in downtown Jacksonville would come from within the city and/or county. The secondary target would be from other areas of North Carolina or top inbound states from which families are relocating. This would include those relocating associated with the military, job opportunities or those retiring or moving for lifestyle changes.

In addition to providing information on consumer preferences for retail goods and services, Tapestry Segmentation™ identifies those households with a preference for living in downtowns and other urban neighborhoods. Of sixty-five total potential segments, the top five segments within both the city and county were reviewed. After discounting for those segments of the potential market that have preferences for traditional single family dwellings in suburban and/or rural locations the distribution of market potential for new market-rate dwelling units in Downtown Jacksonville would be as follows:

It is interesting to note that within the 3-mile radius of downtown, the top segments vary and include Great Expectations, Inner City Tenants, Rustbelt Retirees, and Sophisticated Squires. These provide more detailed insights as to the primary market for downtown urban dwellers. The details outlining the buyer preferences of each of these segments are included in the appendix of this report, and support alternative housing preferences to traditional single family living.

Interviews with area Realtors and review of MLS data reveals that sale prices of new homes average \$110 per square foot, with sales climbing most recently to \$150 in some new communities. Waterfront homes are commanding prices in excess of this amount. While a substantial number of new buyers come from military sources, their buying potential is great as they realize large equity returns from the homes they are selling elsewhere. However, national trends over the past 2 quarters

indicate a housing market that is rapidly cooling off and eroding such appreciation.

Tapestry Group	Housing Type	Potential Households	Capture Rate	Potential New Units
American Quilt	Ownership	16,773	10%	1677
Scholars & Patriots	Ownership	6,212	10%	621
High Hopes	Ownership	5,280	10%	528
Family Portrait	Ownership	3,817	10%	382
Subtotal	Ownership	32,082		3208
Family Portrait	Rental	3,817	15%	573
High Hopes	Rental	5,280	15%	792
Scholars & Patriots	Rental	6,212	15%	932
Subtotal	Rental	15,309		2296

Note: Details of Tapestry Target Segments are included in the appendix of the Market and Economic Analysis Report by Rose and Associates.

CAPTURE

Jacksonville is a desirable coastal metropolitan area within the Carolinas. Given the socioeconomic, quality of life and political factors contributing to its location, growth in population and income is expected to continue. Current projections expect the population to grow in Onslow County to 167,875.

Using data from various cities across the country, it is estimated that, for new development where few new targeted housing units currently exist, an annual capture of between 10 and 15% of the potential market, depending on housing type is achievable. Based on a 10% capture of for-sale single family and multifamily units and a 15% capture of rental multifamily units, then the market should support the following new units in Jacksonville:

This reflects the primary target market within the MSA. If downtown were able to capture 25% of the total market, particularly offering alternative housing product to traditional single family homes, then 802 units of ownership and 574 units of rental housing could be supported.

7.5 FINAL MARKET ANALYSIS - HOUSING

ABSORPTION

The North Carolina Association of Realtors reported in April that Jacksonville was among the strongest with year to date total sales growth (at 19%), ahead of Charlotte (10%) and the Triangle (9%). The largest price appreciation was also seen in Jacksonville at 20%. In 2006 a total of 3,485 units were sold at an average price of \$152,455. Based upon these total sales for new and existing housing, together with permit activity and interviews with local realtors, it is estimated that 5-6 units per month are being absorbed for market rate product. However, the majority of that product is traditional single family housing.

The potential demand within market segments and introduction of new product type, despite a slowing housing market, should easily achieve absorption of 4 units per month. With the transition to a broader variety of housing product offerings within the downtown, it is expected that the 452 new housing units proposed in the Master Plan, to include 113 single family, 278 townhomes and 61 apartments, should be absorbed over a 5 to 10 year period.

HOUSING PRODUCT RECOMMENDATIONS			
SINGLE FAMILY	TYPE	STYLE	SQUARE FOOTAGE RANGE & NUMBER OF BEDROOMS
	Detached 1 Unit	Bungalow, Infill House	1,200-2,600 3 or 4
	Detached 2 Unit Duplex	Bungalow, Infill House	1,000-1,500 2 or 3
MULTIFAMILY			
	Attached 2-4 Units	Urban Mansion	1,100-1,500 2 or 3
	Condominium 1 Level Flat	Multistory, Urban	900-1,500 2 to 4
	Condominium 2 Level Flat	Multistory, Urban	900-1,500 2 or 3
	Townhome 1 Level	Patio Home, Cottage	1,500-2,600 3 or 4
	Townhome 2 Level	Rowhouse, Townhouse	1,200-2,400 2 to 4
	Townhome 3 Level	Live-Work; Rowhouse; Townhouse	1,400-2,400 2 to 4
Rental			
	Apartments	Garden Style; Multistory	600-1,100 1 to 3
	Lofts	Multistory, Urban	600-1,000 1 or 2

7.6 FINAL MARKET ANALYSIS - GENERAL COMMENTS

WHAT ABOUT HOTELS, CONVENTION CENTERS AND TOURISM?

The Onslow County Tourism agency and Smith Travel Research report a healthy and growing hotel and tourism market. While the monthly estimates are seasonal and impacted by factors such as weather (hurricanes) and the movement with military installations, the addition of the military memorials and other attractions will continue to support demand for rooms and meeting space.

One attraction that should not be overlooked is Sturgeon City. This national model for eco-tourism will provide additional revenue into the local economy estimated at \$138 million dollars per year from over 150,000 visitors according to studies compiled for this facility.

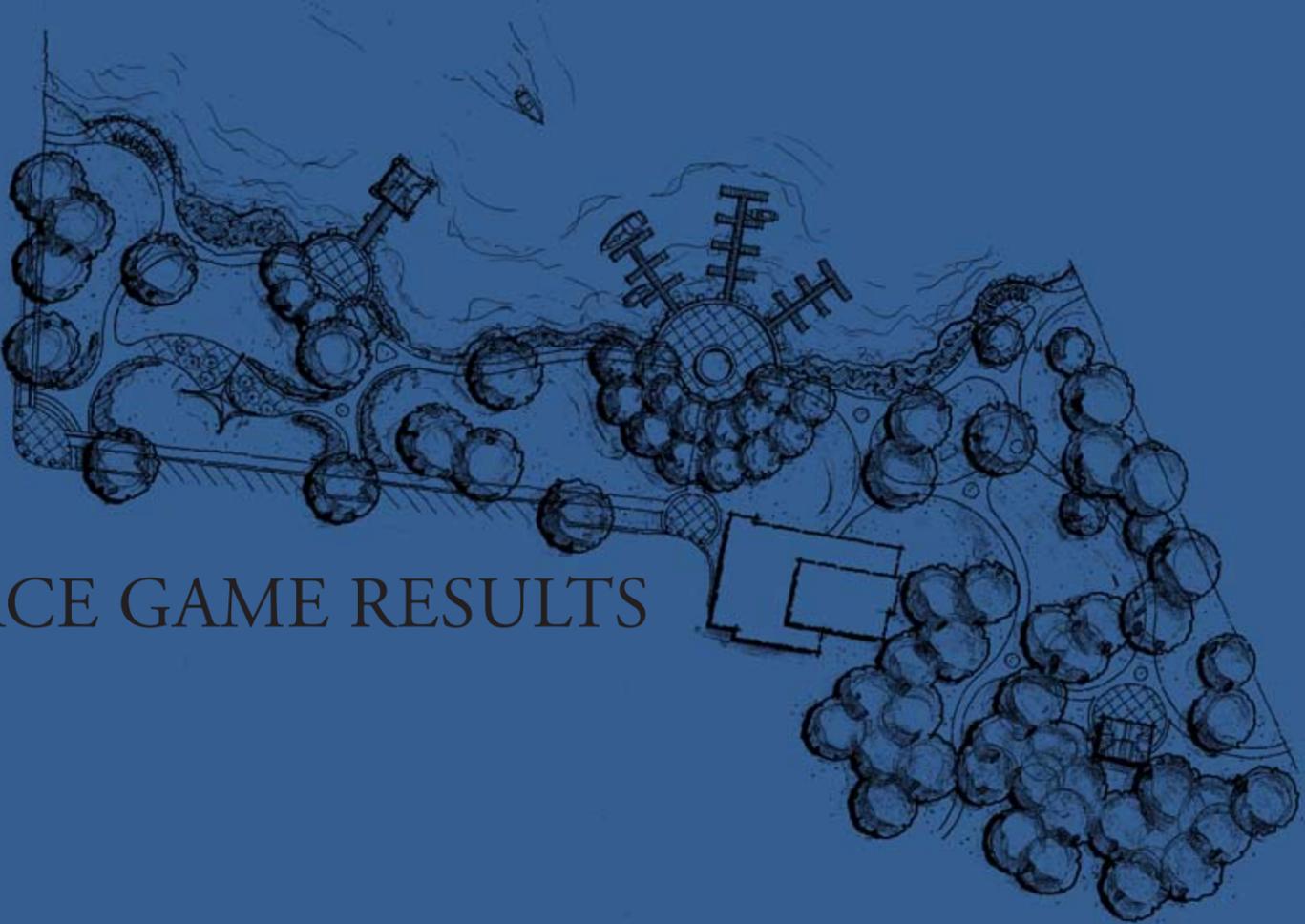
When Sturgeon City, the parks and waterfront are connected (physically or graphically through wayfinding signage) and there is an established retail & entertainment district at the waterfront in Downtown, then there will be adequate amenities and “things to go do” to create demand generation to provide a new full service hotel facility. This hotel, located at the Marine Boulevard site at the terminus of Court Street (the site of the previously proposed Hotel and Convention Center), would provide the bookend for the corridor and could include banquet and meeting room facilities for large functions, exclusive of a convention center.

ONSLow COUNTY HOTEL OCCUPANCY	2005	2006	2007 Jan-Feb
Occupancy	65.3%	66.1%	61.5%
Room Rate	\$63.51	\$68.29	\$66.29
RevPar	41.46	45.12	40.75
Room occupancy taxes have grown by 10.75% from July, 2006 to January, 2007.			
<i>Source: Smith Travel Research</i>			

WHAT ABOUT THE PROPOSED JAIL AND COURTHOUSE BLOCK?

The area at the waterfront presents the best opportunity for downtown revitalization and private development. The highest and best use of this block is for mixed-use development, combining office space (including County offices), retail, restaurants and residential to energize the waterfront and public areas.

The jail facility will create a “dead block” around the entire perimeter, limiting street activity and other private investment, particularly housing, which could impact adjacent streets as well. Many communities are successfully moving jail facilities to areas at the edge of downtown or in outlying areas in locations that provide ease of access and room for future expansion, separate from the courthouse. Therefore consideration should be given to moving the jail facilities to another location, while expanding the courthouse and other government offices in a new mixed use format.



A1: PLACE GAME RESULTS

A1: PLACE GAME RESULTS



NEW BRIDGE STREET

What you like:

- Accessible [to street front] (2)
- Businesses starting to care about appearance
- Potential (3)
- Clean
- Recent neighborly awareness
- Wide street
- Open space: Pecan grove, birds, green grass
- Stripe in road
- Carolina Gallery
- Historical Theater (2)
- New City Hall (2)
- Clean businesses maintained very well
- Fairly clean (2)
- Safe
- No jail
- Quaint

Quick/Inexpensive changes:

- Re-stripe parking, being able to back out into street, change parking arrangement, being able to back out into street (6)
- Power-wash sidewalks
- Landscaping, add flowers & planters (8)
- Re-face existing structures, façade improvement + signs, new awnings & canopies (7)
- New paint, paint old theater (8)
- Informational signs, uniform (9)
- Add seating (2)
- Store signs facing walking traffic
- More public trash receptacles, empty more frequently
- Lights down street
- Marketing plan to attract businesses
- Re-pave street
- Adjust/enforce speed limit
- Curb access
- Create entertainment in area, infill old lot
- Looks dirty—clean it up!
- Clean broken limbs up off empty lot, place bird houses
- Weed sidewalk

Long term changes:

- Infill vacant lot in front of hospital, vacant businesses (2)
- Re-pave roadway/re-stripe (2)
- Tree canopy
- Infill vacant lot in front of health center

- Groups taking care of area
- Have a reason to come to area
- Storefronts conforming to period
- Signage: Way-finding for additional parking, standards for bldgs—uniformity (6)
- Handicap facilities (3)
- Increase on-street parking capacity, variety on-street parking (re-verse angle, parallel), reserve for customer—put employees behind bldg (8)
- Recruit businesses to occupy stores
- Utilize open space
- Renovate old theater, into a concert hall (2)
- Façade improvement, paint buildings (3)
- Underground utilities
- Improve streetscape: Sidewalk repairs, landscaping, lightposts (4)
- Reduce street width
- Local eateries
- Attractive storefronts geared towards “window shopping”, maximize retail storefront space (2)
- Add 2nd story for office & residential spaces

What to improve:

- Re-use theater for movies or performing arts
- Update building code requirements, manage consistency, flexible codes for old buildings—affordable measures that ppl can afford to implement (2)
- Street-scaping
- Renovate buildings (2)
- Limited time parking for patrons directly in front of buildings

Partnerships:

- Adopt a sidewalk for merchants
- High school students needing scholarship points from Garden Clubs can earn points by cleaning up lots
- Trade classes from college getting practical experience in downtown re-hab
- B.O.L.D. (façade grants)
- Local school groups
- Coalition of business owners
- Govt & non-profit initiatives
- Garden clubs, Master Gardeners
- Coastal Carolina Internships
- Community service
- High school clubs
- Code review/enforcement committee
- City/County Public Works

NEW BRIDGE & RAILROAD STREET

What you like:

- Souvenir shop Southern Comfort (3)
- Potential, possibilities (2)
- No jail
- Safe
- Clean
- Quiet
- Use of historic structures for offices
- Most bldgs well-kept, maintained, owners care (3)
- Trees (2)
- Sidewalks
- Parallel parking
- Accessibility of area
- Open space
- Big houses

What to improve:

- Remove big grey house
- Underground utilities (2)
- Implement traffic calming devices
- Reface bldgs
- Signs for visitors, to indicate courthouse, BOLD, historic district, directing traffic to 17/24 (5)
- Pedestrian accessibility—re-do sidewalks
- Street-scaping
- Build upwards, add 2-3 stories
- Bike lanes
- Narrow street
- Accessible parking areas, use vacant lots for parking, consolidate state/county employee parking into one location (4)
- Clean up bldg fronts
- Conduct traffic study
- Sidewalk repair
- Recruit business owners
- Maintenance standards, landscaping [storefronts, owner 311] (4)
- Small, unique retail
- Benches (2)
- Re-pave street
- Tree-plantings needed, city-friendly trees

A1: PLACE GAME RESULTS

4: Old Bridge Street at Court Street



WATERFRONT/USO

What you like:

- USO (5)
- Boardwalk (3)
- Water front/view/access (10)
- Park well-maintained, clean (3)
- Lighting at night
- Concerts in park
- Pellitier House
- Old trees

Quick/Inexpensive Solutions:

- Directional/Interpretive signage, storyboards, uniform signage, better signage from Hwy 17 (7)
- Remove billboards on waterfront
- Fix existing curbs
- Move dumpsters off New River (5)
- Restaurant on water
- Parking, more needed
- Plants along boardwalk
- Advertise events and activities at waterfront, inform public of accessibility/availability (2)
- Trim overgrown trees
- Replace lighting
- Snack bar, restrooms in USO
- Increase parking capacity, find other parking for courthouse, share parking between USO-Wildlife Access (3)
- Move jail (3)

Long-term changes:

- Move jail, sell to developer—increase tax base! (7)
- Move Sheriff's dept & tax office elsewhere
- Improve traffic flow (3)
- Flooding issues (4)
- Increase parking capacity, but push it back from waterfront, reduce visual impact of cars at park (3)
- Enlarge park amphitheater
- Public restrooms (3)
- Provide covered areas [for picnics, etc]
- River cleaning program
- Small shops along waterfront, eateries & giftshops (2)
- Boardwalk ramp needs railing—too steep for comfort
- Handicap access
- Seating
- Signage improvements: USO, restrooms, historic district
- Make park more pedestrian-oriented [connections to/from],

maintain waterfront's accessibility, improve sidewalks (3)

- Underground utilities
- Host events at waterfront

Partnerships:

- USO...Federal Gov funds?
- USMC—Volunteers for all USO needs
- Historical Society
- Parks & Rec.
- Community development
- Zoning & Code
- Private landowners/business owners

OLD BRIDGE STREET & COURT STREET INTERSECTION

What do you like about the place?

- Old courthouse (5)
- Historic bldgs, architecture—Old Masonic Lodge (8)
- Safe
- Cleaned-up (2)
- Original center of activity
- Potential [existing infrastructure]
- History
- Landscaping (2)
- Jail not big/imposing
- Nice storefront feel
- Parking is behind structures

Quick/Short-term Improvements:

- Landscape treatments: tear out existing bushes and replace with different plants [not Juniper] (4)
- Require new facades, owner maintenance
- Signs! Directional/interpretive (4)
- Businesses! Cafes, coffee shops, galleries, stores, arts, culture (2)
- Dense buildings
- Paint: bldgs, traffic poles
- Curb appeal
- Modernize stop lights/poles
- Replace terminating view of Embarq
- Trash receptacles
- Make Court Street a 2-way thoroughfare (2)
- Paint building side(s)
- Provide benches downtown (2)
- Create handicap access to courthouse
- Get ride of dumpster(s) visible from road
- Increase parking capacity

Long-term Improvements:

- Re-locate jail (4)
- Ensure parking capacity (4)
- Draw businesses downtown
- Add Onslow Transit Loop stops
- Flexible codes for old bldgs
- Underground utilities (2)
- Update storefronts along street
- New businesses (2)
- Ground floor retail, upper floor apartments. replace ground level offices with restaurants
- DIVERSIFY DOWNTOWN BUSINESSES

5: Court Street at Historic Train Depot



6: Kerr Street Park at the River



TRAIN DEPOT

What do you like about the place?

- Old center of town
- New housing
- Lighting [at night]
- Landscaping, flowers
- Park (7)
- Bldgs that have been saved [depot, historic retail shops] (2)
- View
- Welcoming
- Safe
- Walk
- Proximity to water, riverwalk
- Events
- Peaceful

Improvements:

- Create a reason to come to park, add an anchor (playground, pavilion, bike rental, children's museum, ice cream parlor, concerts)
- Demolish vacant/unsafe structure
- Advertising for events (2)
- Occupied storefronts
- Expand community events programming downtown, NC Symphony
- Stop (2)
- Informational signage (2)
- Landscaping, seasonal
- Façade improvements
- Underground utilities
- Wash/paint brick bldgs
- Lease stores
- Open shops/stores
- Apartments on second floor of bldgs

A1: PLACE GAME RESULTS

- Flexible codes (so that ppl can afford to renovate)
- Picnic tables at park
- Add public transit stops downtown
- Incentives to renovate bldgs
- Make sure bldgs are structurally safe
- Improve traffic circulation

KERR STREET PARK AT THE RIVER

What do you like?

- Waterfront access
- Park
- Scenery, views (can't see highway or bridge), beauty
- Peaceful, quiet
- The water!

Improvements:

- Signage to park
- Sidewalk ends before park
- Give public access, not just view. Wider waterfront access for events
- Water ferry to connect up/down/across river
- Re-design marina to give public better view of water
- Clean up the litter
- Promote water activities
- Boat access for public