

Lake Helen, Florida

Downtown Master Plan



Report completed by the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council and the City of Lake Helen
for

The Florida Department of Economic Opportunity

June 2018





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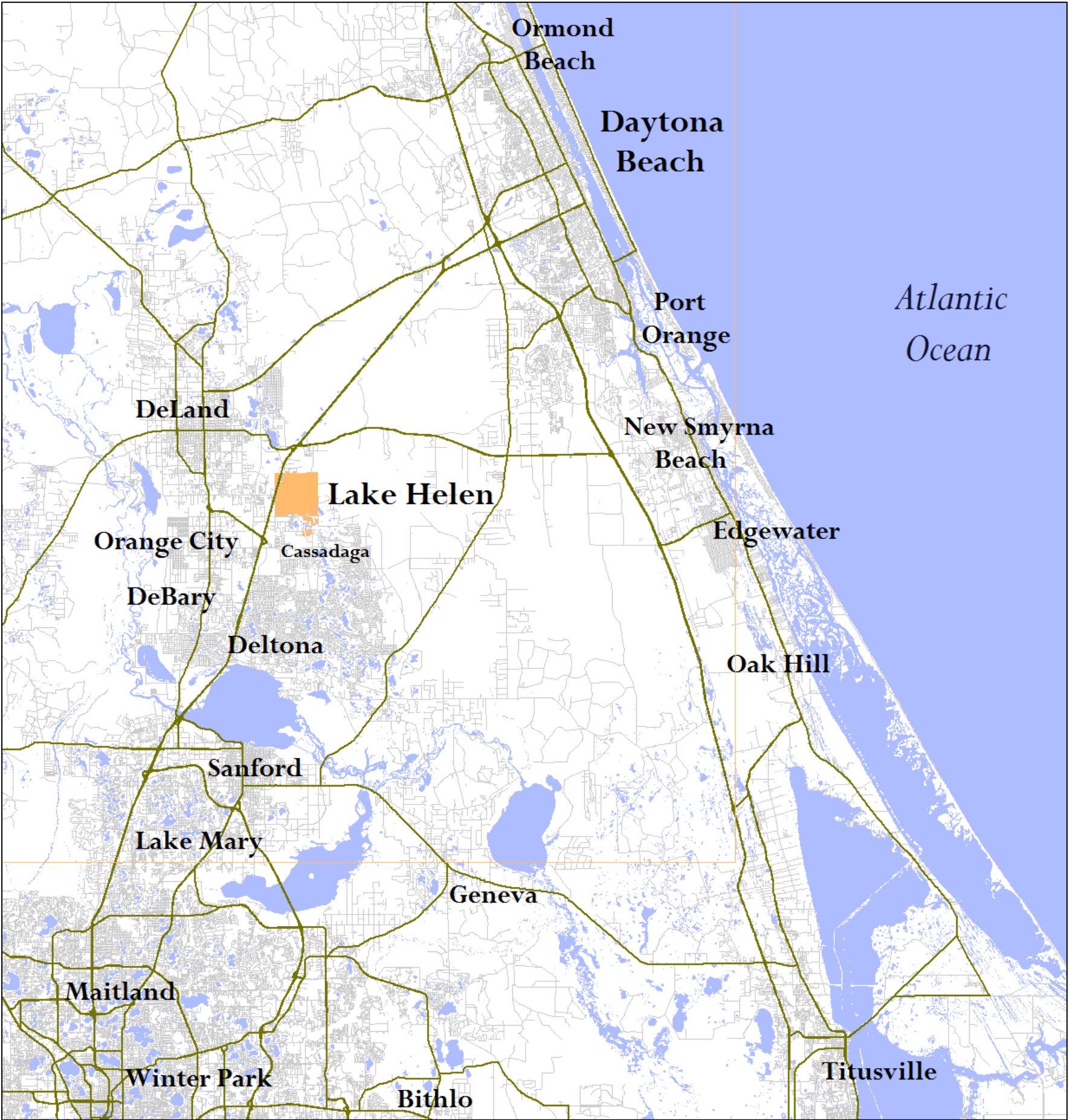
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City Commissioners



I. Executive Summary

Through a grant awarded by the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, the City of Lake Helen, Florida and the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council embarked on a one-year master planning process to re-envision the downtown area. As part of this process, the following analysis steps were completed.

- **1. Existing Conditions Analysis:** The project team researched and summarized a number of important town metrics, growth trends and potential conflict areas utilizing Geographic Information Systems (GIS).
- **Comparative Downtown Assessment:** The project team researched downtowns across the United States similar in scale and size to Lake Helen. From this research, the project team compiled marketing strategies and incentives utilized to implement the most successful downtown areas.
- **Comprehensive Plan Assessment:** The project team analyzed Comprehensive Plan policies and language to ensure that plan allows for the development of a traditional downtown corridor.
- **Public Workshops:** Two public workshops were held with elected officials and residents of the City to gather feedback regarding potential downtown features, design styles and other information to inform the master plan. Notes from these workshops are included in this document.
- **Visual Preference Survey:** Residents of the City completed a visual preference survey to gauge development styles, scales, and other metrics to further influence the final design of the downtown area.
- **Design of the Master Plan:** The project team completed a conceptual downtown area design for the City using the results of the existing conditions analysis, comparative downtown assessments, public workshops and visual preference survey. The design team also worked with City staff to incorporate other planned or funded projects external to the formal master planning process into the design.
- **Design of Signage and Bicycle and Pedestrian Enhancements:** The project team designed wayfinding signage and street crossings for bicyclists and pedestrians in the downtown area.
- **Comprehensive Plan Amendments:** The project team compiled Comprehensive Plan Amendments for the City to consider moving forward.



II. Existing Conditions Analysis

Study Area Information

Sub-Regional Context

Lake Helen is located in Volusia County in East Central Florida, 20 miles inland from the Indian River Lagoon. The City is located 28 miles north-northeast of the City of Orlando and 17 miles southwest of the City of Daytona Beach in a rural, largely agricultural portion of the state of Florida. The City of DeLand is to the west.

Demographics

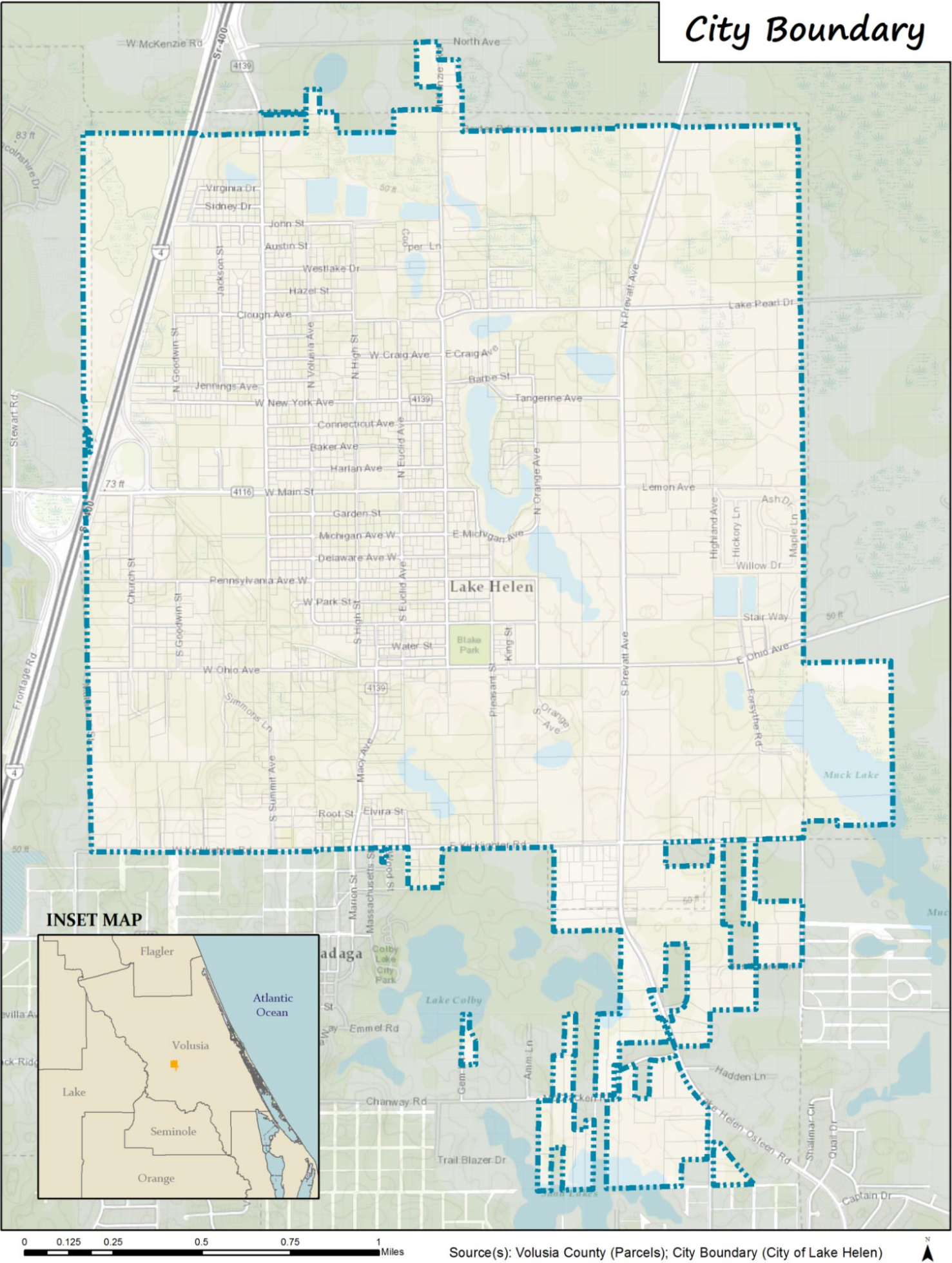
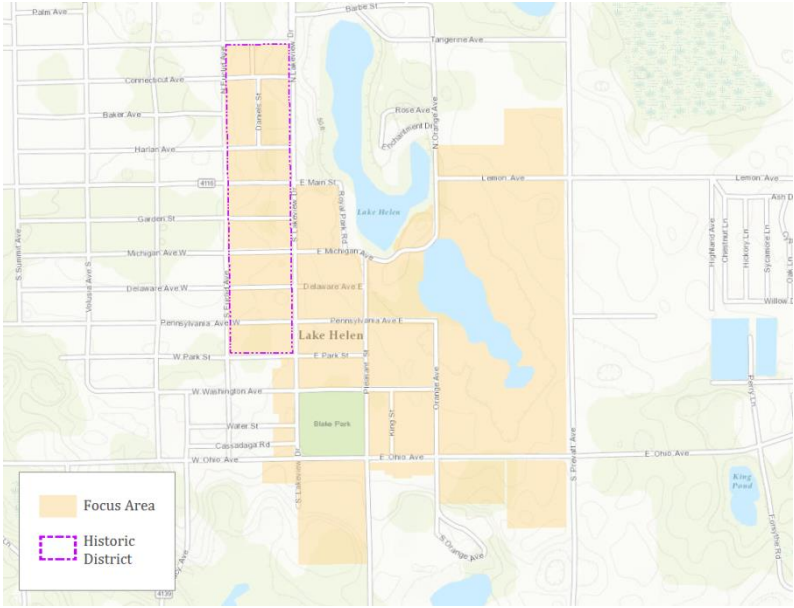
The estimated population of Lake Helen as of 2016 was 2,470 according to the U.S. Census Bureau. This represents a 4.1% increase in population from the 2010 U.S. Census figures. The demographic makeup according to the U.S. Census is 87.0% white, 10.7% African-American and less than 2% other races. Median household income within the City is \$34,577, and 9.7% of the population is living in poverty.

Focus Area Delineation

The focus area for this report encompasses all parcels located within the Lake Helen Historic District as well as parcels with frontages along Lakeview Drive, Ohio Avenue, the west side of Prevatt Avenue, Lemon Avenue, and properties on the southern shores of Lake Helen. This plan will focus on the City as a whole from an analysis perspective with particular emphasis on community assets within the focus area. The entire City is within a walkable or bike-rideable distance to the focus area.

Master Plan Area

The boundary of the Master Plan area (see Section XI of this report) was determined after the completion of the Existing Conditions Analysis. This boundary was determined by further refining the “Focus Area” map (to the right) during the two public workshops.



Land Use Analysis

General Land Use Pattern

The land use designations for the City portray a traditional development style with a majority of the commercial and higher intensity uses located within the center of the City and along primary roadways such as Main Street, Ohio Avenue, Euclid Avenue and Lakeview Drive. Two primary non-residential activity centers are present; one is the ‘downtown’ area centered along Lakeview Drive, while the second is the ‘gateway’ district near the Interstate 4 ramps. Residential intensities decrease as proximity from these two activity centers increases. A number of publicly-owned lands are present within the City and are spread uniformly throughout the central and western portions of the City.

Zoning & Future Land Use Compatibility

On a parcel-by-parcel basis, the zoning and future land use designations within the City are completely consistent. This will ease the process of developing a long term vision for the City, as no future land use designations need to be altered for future development to occur within the existing City limits. In addition, the location of the ‘Downtown Commercial’ and ‘Business Services and Residential’ zoning classifications will allow for development to occur in the ‘downtown proper’ area as infill development.

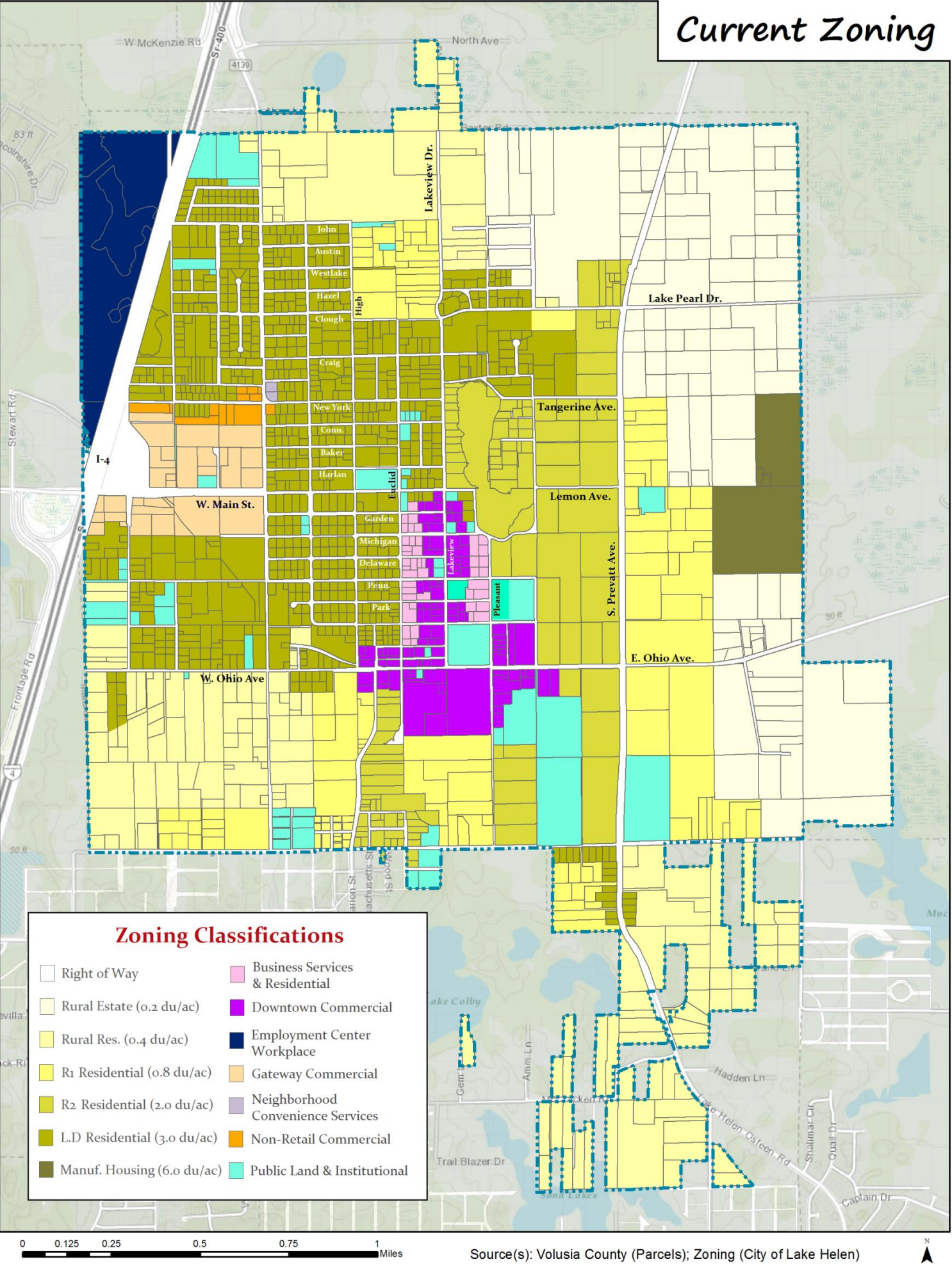
Compatible Land Uses

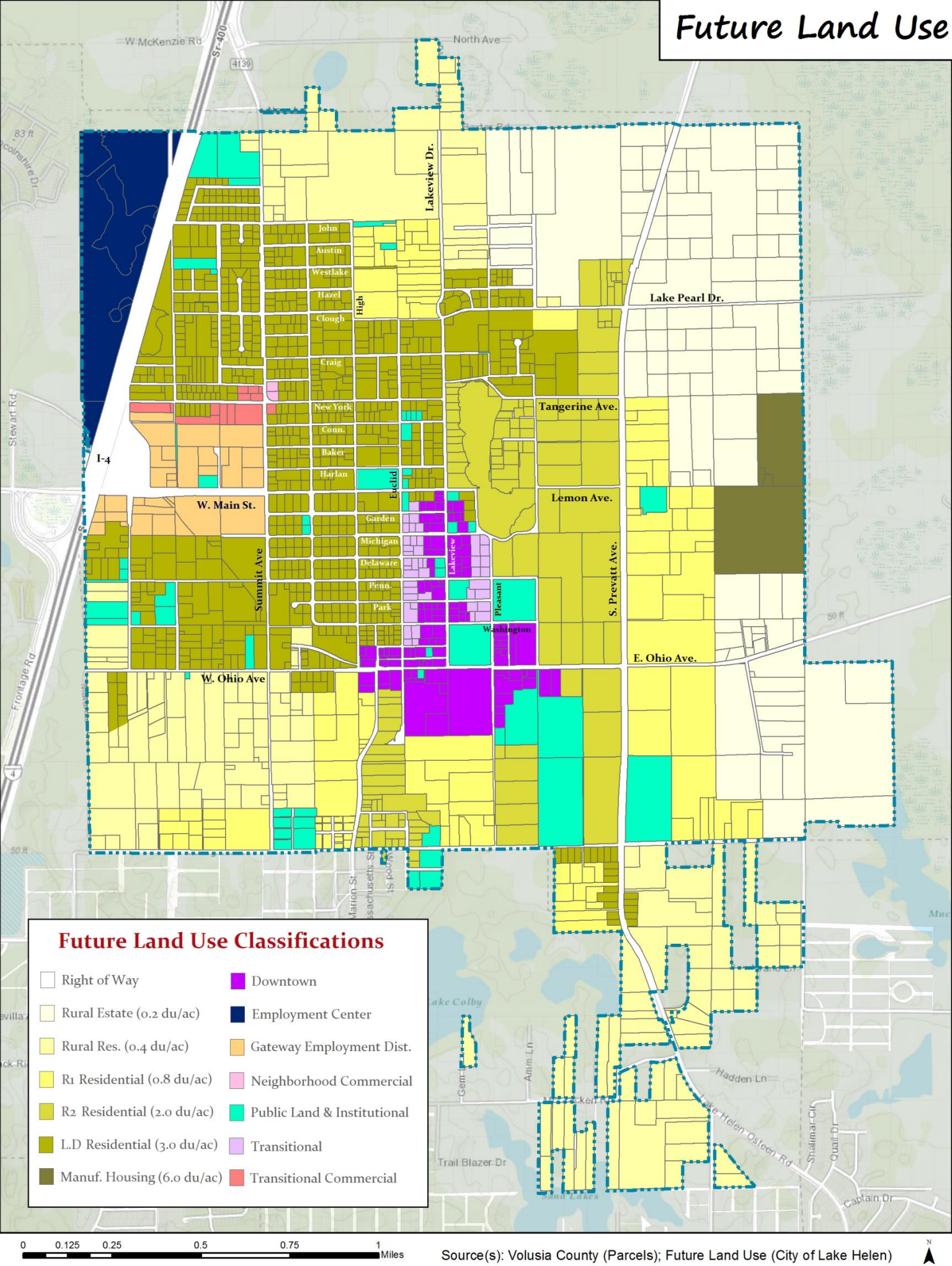
The following table depicts the corresponding Zoning classifications and Future Land Use designations as determined by the City. As discussed previously, there is a one-to-one relationship between these classifications on a parcel-by-parcel basis within the City, with zero inconsistencies. The ‘primary commonality’ field displays the primary factor that each classification and designation have in common. The Future Land Use map is located on the following page.

Corresponding Land Use Classifications		
Zoning Classification	Future Land Use Designation	Primary Commonality
Rural Estate	Rural Estate	0.2 du/acre
Rural Residential	Rural Residential	0.4 du/acre
R1 Residential	R1 Residential	0.8 du/acre
R2 Residential	R2 Residential	2.0 du/acre
Low Density Residential	Low Density Residential	3.0 du/acre
Manufactured Housing Residential	Manufactured Housing Residential	6.0 du/acre
Business Services & Residential	Transitional	Mixed Use
Downtown Commercial	Downtown	Commercial
Employment Center Workplace	Employment Center	Large Scale Jobs Area
Gateway Commercial	Gateway Employment District	Highway-Centered Uses
Neighborhood Convenience Services	Neighborhood Commercial	Limited Commercial Uses
Non-Retail Commercial	Transitional Commercial	Limited Commercial Uses
Public Land & Institutional	Public Land & Institutional	Public Uses

Potential Impediments to Development

While a number of barriers and opportunities for future development were identified by members of the community, the general layout and consistency of the City’s land uses do not impede potential development. It is recommended, however, that the zoning and future land use classifications of the Costa site be reviewed to ensure that flexibility in design is promoted. Commercial uses may need to be allowed in this location.





Parcel & Building Valuation

Overall Tax Base Distribution

The distribution of the tax base within the City is largely sporadic without a defined city center. From a value per square footage perspective (see the map on this page), however, the primary areas of higher-than-average valuation are located in the west-central and northwestern portions of the City in close proximity to Main Street, Euclid Avenue, Lakeview Drive and High Street. When comparing the Assessed Values Map on the following page to the Year Built Map in the following section, it is clear that the most recently-built parcels, primarily those in the far northern and southern extents of the City, provide a substantial amount of the tax base to the City. These are generally large residential lots.

High-Impact Parcels

Nine parcels within the City exceed the \$500,000 assessed value threshold. These include Blake Park, the Ivy Hawn Charter School and City Hall in the downtown area; Volusia Pines Elementary School and Central Fellowship Baptist Church to the south of downtown; the Lake Helen Villa community to the east of downtown; Blake Memorial Day School located off of Main Street; and finally, Hayes Pipe and Central Florida Academy near Interstate 4. Unfortunately, all of these sites are tax-exempt. A potential auto center being considered across Interstate 4 near the Main Street on-and-off-ramps would be a potential boon for the City’s tax base and could greatly enhance the City’s ability to fund future infrastructure in the downtown area.

Residential Affordability

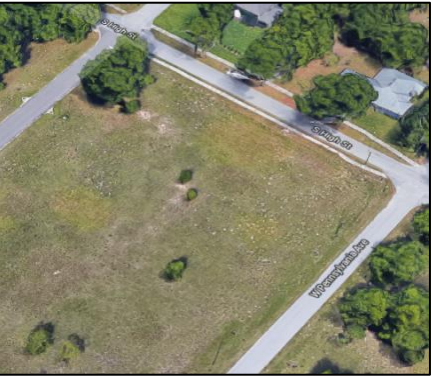
The vast majority of residential assessed values within the City fall short of a \$250,000 assessed value, but a wide ranging array of homes and associated values exist within the City. In general, large, ranch-style lots account for a majority of the residential properties listed in the \$250,000 to \$500,000 range, while most of the single family, less-than-one acre lots are valued between just under \$100,000 and \$250,000. Perhaps most important from a future development perspective is the vast presence of vacant single family residential lots with valuations that do not exceed \$50,000 in close proximity to the downtown area. Providing incentive for individuals to develop these lots with historic-styled homes could provide an opportunity for investors, residents or from families outside of City looking for a piece of the small town life or to start a bed and breakfast. In general, the City’s current existing and vacant residential lots provide opportunities for a wide range of income levels. Examples of different residential lots are included in the pictures below:



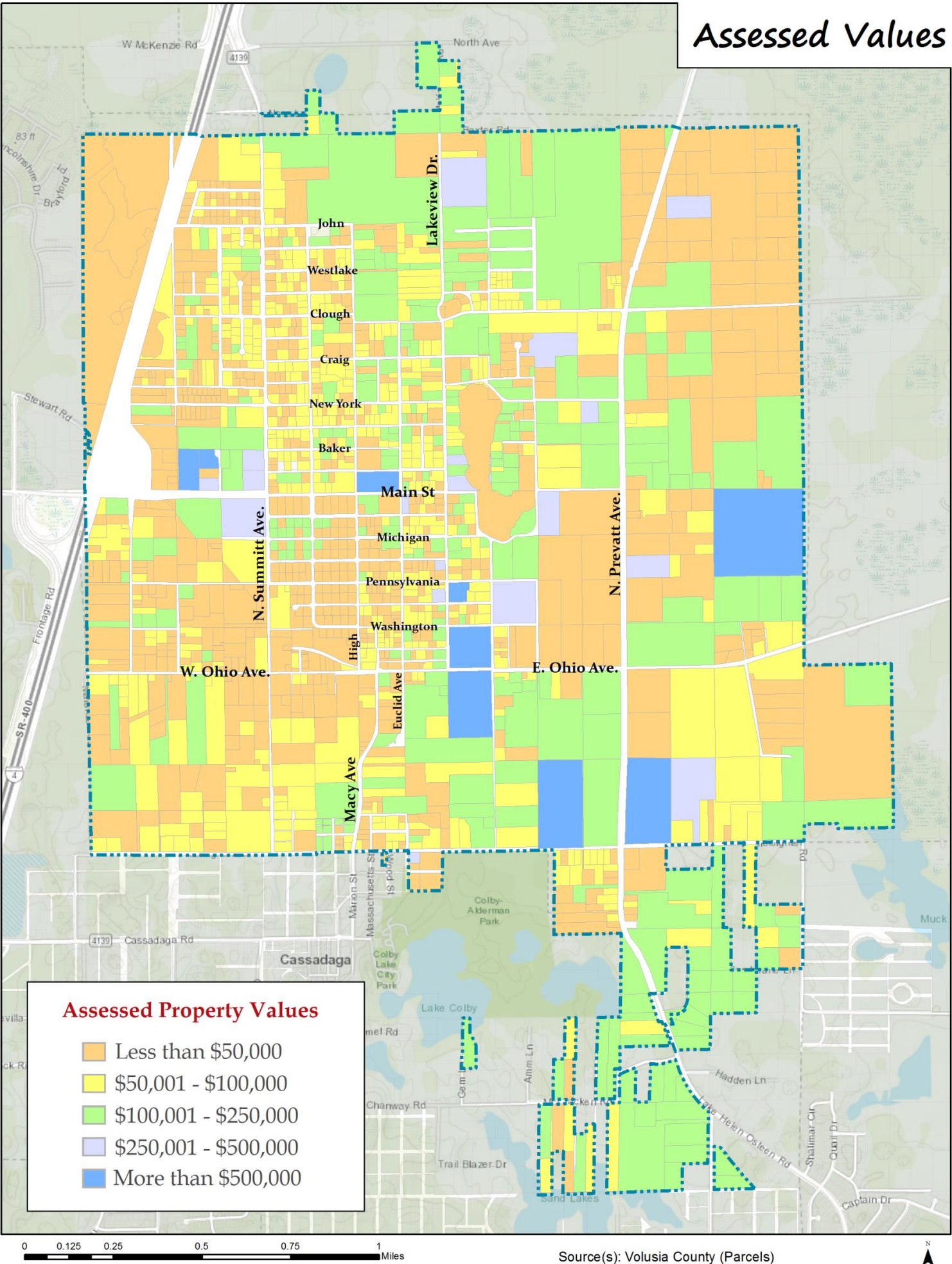
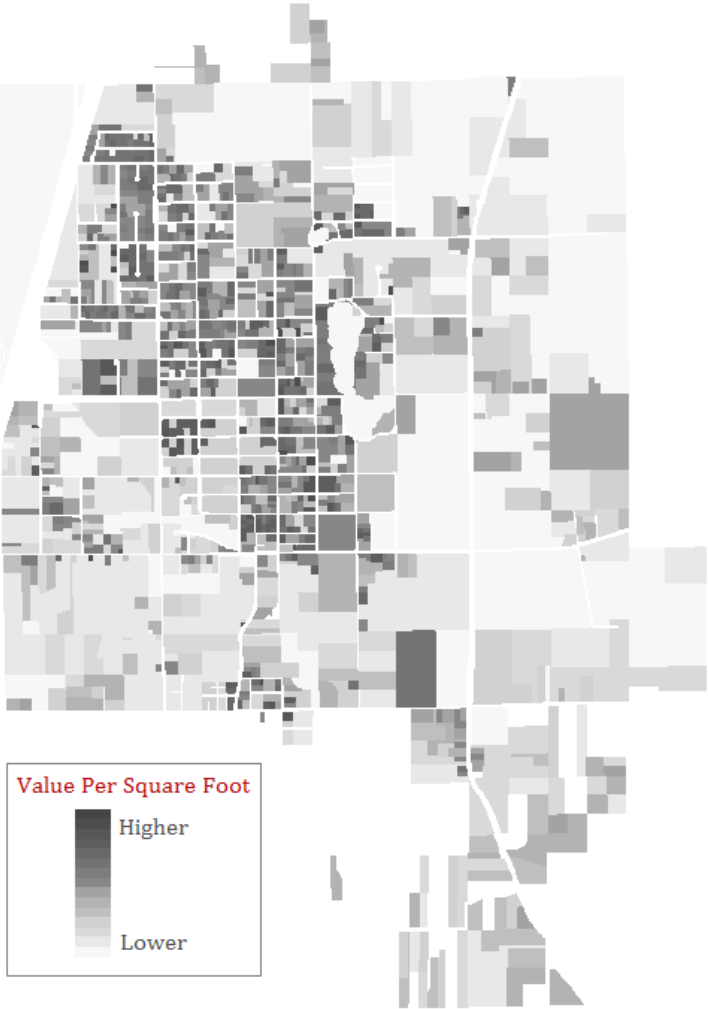
Ranch-style lot (\$250,000 - \$500,000 valuation)



Bungalow-style lot (\$100,000 - \$250,000 valuation)



Empty Lots (< \$50,000 Valuation)



Build Year Analysis

Development Trend Overview

Historic Lake Helen was primarily focused along Lakeview Drive and centered along Main Street. A large portion of the community’s civic and commercial development occurred during this time, before the 1950’s, although some of these historic structures are no longer standing. Development continued along Lakeview Drive and to the north of Main Street through the 1950’s, 60’s and 70’s. However, since this time, development has largely occurred along the outskirts of the City. A large number of residential parcels to the immediate west of the downtown area have not been developed, contrary to traditional development patterns. It would be advantageous for future development to be focused to the south of Main Street and north of Ohio Avenue in close proximity to Lakeview Drive to reestablish an economic base in the downtown.

New Development Trends

As discussed previously, development has become spread out within the City since original development occurred along Lakeview Drive before 1950. A relatively high number of newly developed parcels – primarily those from the 1980’s and 1990’s – within the City are large, ranch-style residential lots that were primarily built outside of the historic downtown area. Due to this gap in development, future development could feasibly occur on the undeveloped parcels (gray areas in the Year Built map on the following page) located between the traditional City boundary (orange areas in the map) and the newer development (green and blue areas of the map). The area is centered on N. Summit Avenue south of Main Street and north of W. Kicklighter Road. This development style is referred to as ‘infill’.

Future Residential Development

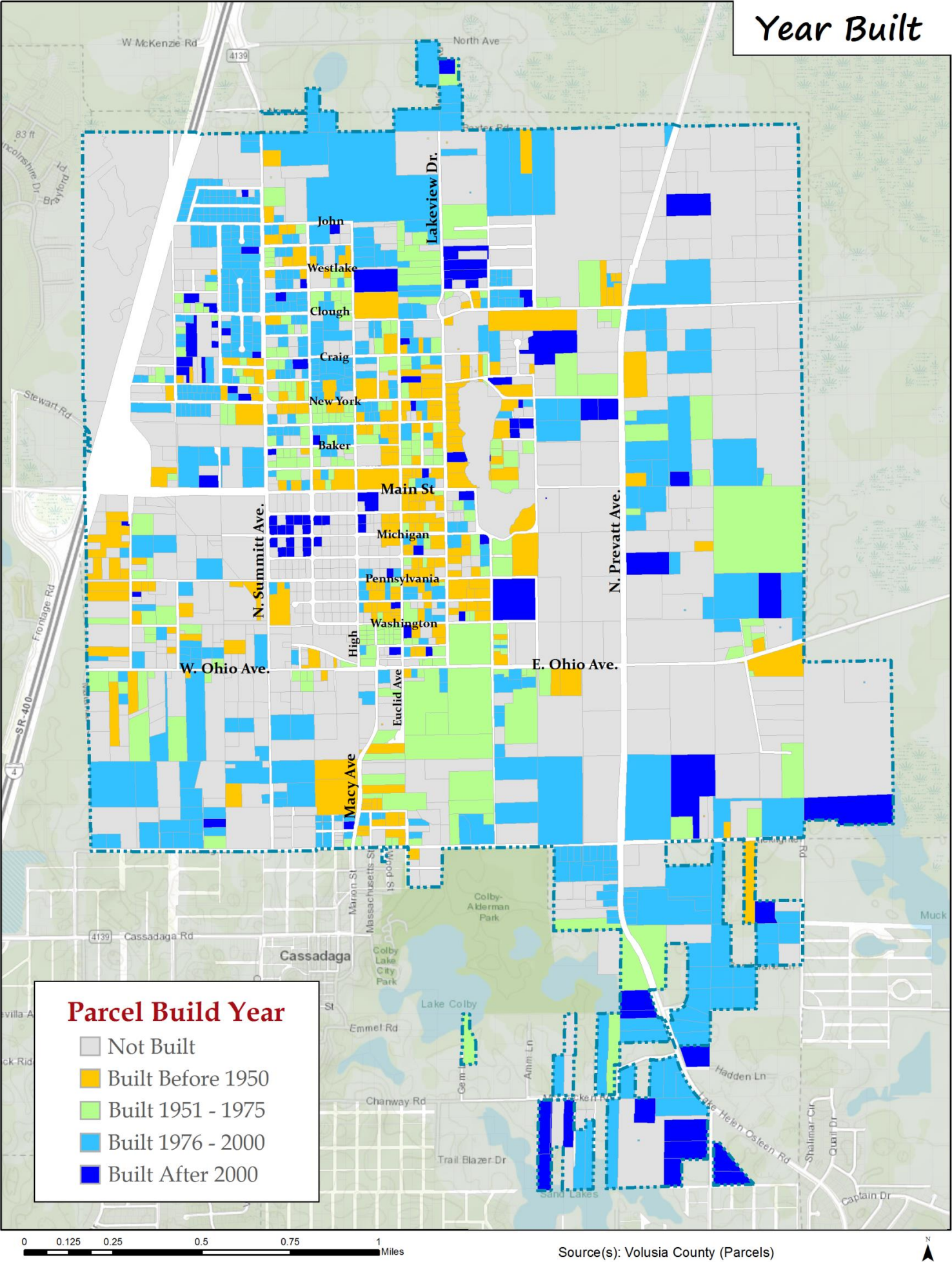
It is also recommended that the City increase the number of residences to the west of downtown proper. As can be seen in the map on the following page, a number of residential parcels have been developed in this area since the year 2000 and it is recommended that these lots continue to be developed with restrictive architectural styles that fit the historic nature of the City. Development of these parcels will help to increase residential density near the downtown area, increasing its overall usage.

Replicating the Old

From a thematic perspective, the Lakeview Drive corridor can be described as ‘old Lake Helen’ and it may be advantageous for the City to focus on this historic area for future development. A number of vacant lots are located within this area and could be developed to increase the number of residential units as well as goods and services, depending on the zoning classification and future land use of the parcel. The following image represents the style of infill development that is possible within this historic district if certain barriers (such as small lot sizes and sewage) are addressed by City staff.



<http://www.iewonline.be/Etalement-urbain-action>



Origins and Destinations

Overview

A majority of the origins and destinations within the City are located in close proximity to Lakeview Drive, which serves as a ‘backbone’ street for the community, connecting many of the City’s attributes. Thus, this roadway and the parcels surrounding it have great potential for future development or redevelopment. A variety of functions exist along this roadway, including retail, public buildings, parks, schools and historic sites. Outside of the Lakeview Drive corridor, Volusia Pines Elementary School (to the south) and the Shoestring Theater (to the west) are primary points of interest in the community.

Access to Schools

Volusia Pines Elementary School and Ivy Hawn Charter School are located to the south of Ohio Avenue in close proximity to the primary activity areas of the City. From an access perspective, these facilities are located adjacent to the Safe Routes to School projects that have been planned along Pleasant Street, East Ohio Avenue, and through the Mitchell Brothers Sports Complex. While the Ivy Hawn Charter School is primarily accessed by car, the elementary school is potentially walkable for many students who live in the City. Thus, it is recommended that sidewalk segments connect to the Safe Routes to School infrastructure from the residential areas to the west of downtown in addition to new residential areas planned as part of this plan.

Access to Public Facilities

The City Hall complex and the Post Office are currently highly visible and highly accessible to residents of the City, as they are primary destination points along Lakeview Drive. The public library, on the other hand, is located to the north of this area and outside of the main activity center. It is recommended that signage is added to the downtown area and in the vicinity of Main Street that points bicyclists and pedestrians to this facility as well as Hopkins Hall.

Access to Parks

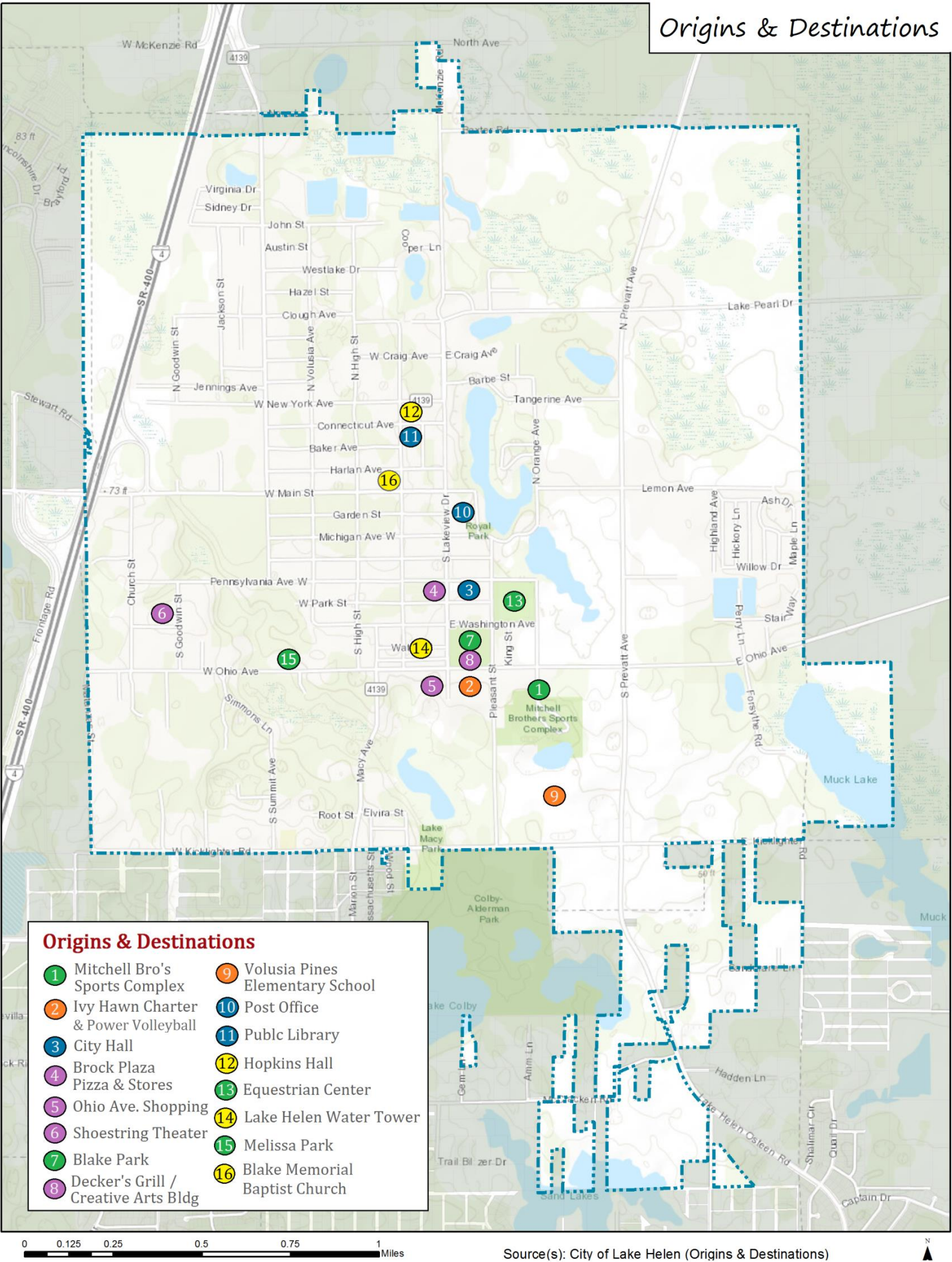
Blake Park, the Equestrian Center and the Mitchell Brothers Sports Complex provide a solid recreational backbone to the downtown activity center, and are located in good proximity to one another, affording the opportunity for the City to implement land use patterns that leverage their combined effects on the downtown area. Ensuring that sidewalks connect each one of these facilities is paramount to community connectivity and cohesion of the citywide parks system. In addition, directional signage for bicyclists and pedestrians leading to these facilities could increase public usage of the parks system.

Access to Shopping & Entertainment

The shopping areas located along Lakeview Drive and Ohio Avenue are currently highly visible and highly accessible. The Shoestring Theater, however, is located well to the west of the downtown area. This theater would benefit from the addition of signage in the downtown area.

Access to Historic Areas

As discussed previously, wayfinding signage pointing bicyclists, pedestrians and motorists to Hopkins Hall from the Main Street and downtown areas could greatly improve its use. The second historic area described in this section, the Lake Helen Water Tower, is located in the primary activity center of the City. It is recommended that City staff “beautify” this facility with landscaping and a direct pedestrian connection from Lakeview Drive. The gas station could potentially be given an “old Florida” theme in the future, complete with retro signage and design features, so that the gas station and water tower complement each other from an architectural and thematic point of view.



Bicycle & Pedestrian Network

Sidewalk Network Overview

While the City of Lake Helen has a largely incomplete sidewalk network, the City is composed primarily of low-volume, low-speed, two-lane roadways that do not necessitate the inclusion of sidewalks to be safe for pedestrians and bicyclists. The sidewalk network is currently focused along primary connecting roadways such as Lakeview Drive, Prevatt Avenue and Main Street, which is a good strategy for connectivity with a City the size of Lake Helen. These sidewalk connections currently provide access to and from residential areas and the downtown, although some can certainly be improved. Specifically, the addition of sidewalks to the east side of Lakeview Drive through the entirety of the City would provide residents with a primary north-south route connecting to a majority of the activity centers within the City. The same improvement can be implemented along the southern side of Ohio Avenue to provide a primary east-west connector for residents. This strategy would ensure that residential roadways that do not have sidewalks are not the primary north-south and east-west connectors for bicyclists and pedestrians. In addition, this strategy will also help increase “window-traffic” to businesses located along these roadways by “collecting” bicycle and pedestrian trips along these routes.

Current Trail and Bicycle Connectivity

Infrastructure designed specifically for bicyclists is currently lacking within the City. There are currently no wide sidewalks within the City, however the Cross-Volusia Trail Corridor is planned to traverse along Main Street, Lakeview Drive, Washington Avenue, King Street, and East Ohio Avenue in the long term. This trail system would provide excellent connectivity within the City and also from the City to sub-regional destinations if it is implemented. This would also enhance tourism opportunities within the City. It is recommended that City staff implement wide sidewalks along this corridor in the short and intermediate term.

Planned Bicycle and Pedestrian Projects

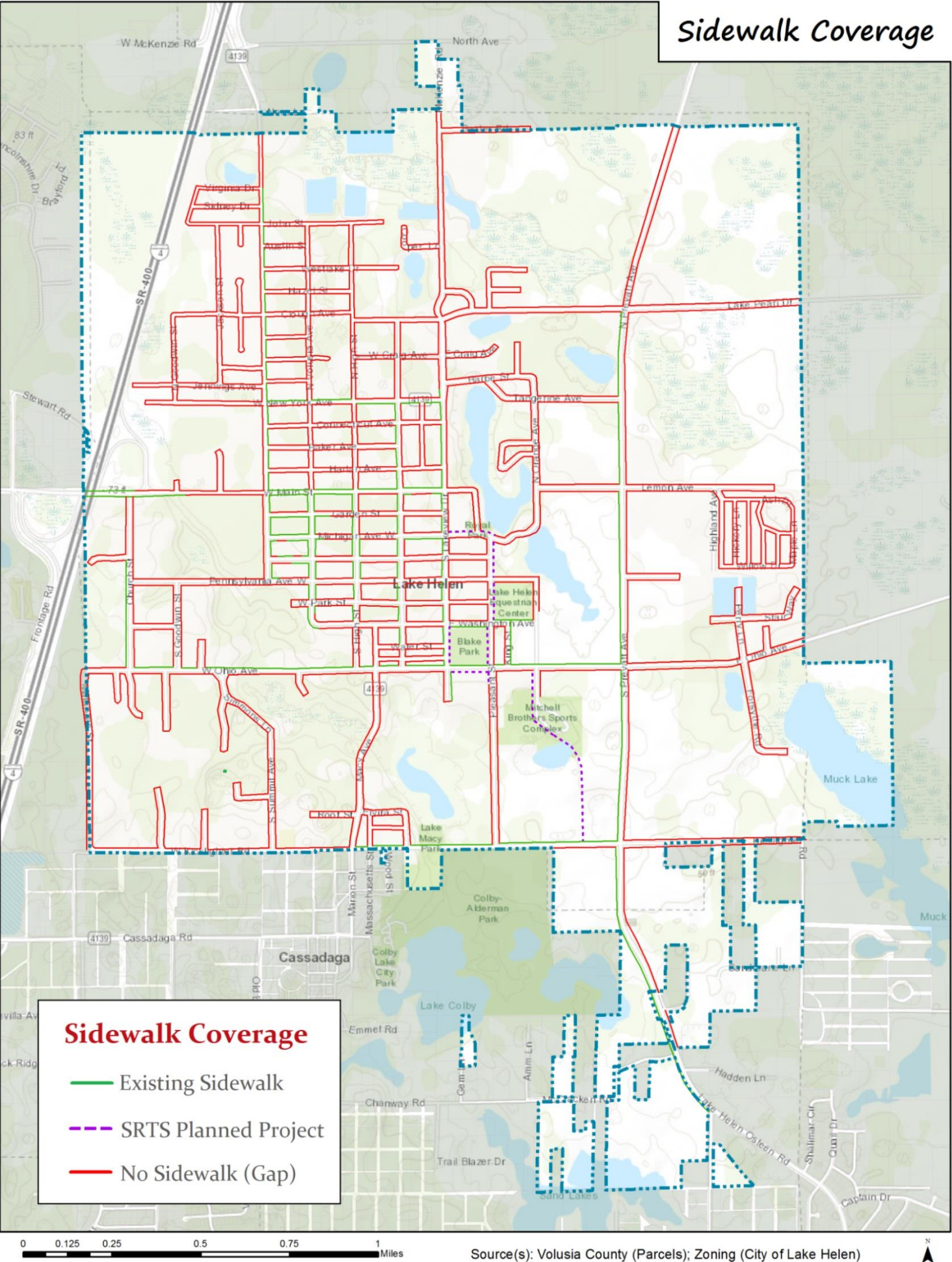
A number of Safe Routes to Schools sidewalks are planned for implementation over the next few years within the City. These projects provide connectivity to and from Volusia Pines Elementary School from the historic downtown area near Blake Park. Current plans depict a number of wide sidewalks that both bicyclists and pedestrians will be able use, which will greatly improve bicycle infrastructure in the short to intermediate term before the regional trail corridor is adopted. These projects are depicted as dashed purple lines in the map on the following page. The picture on this page depicts the eastern boundary of Blake Park, where one of the sidewalk projects will be implemented.



Sidewalks and parallel parking spaces will be added to the east side of Blake Park as part of a Safe Routes to School project.

Current and Planned ADA Infrastructure

A general lack of curbs within the City render a number of ADA infrastructures obsolete within the downtown in its current condition. However, a number of options are currently available. For example, Blake Park could potentially be reevaluated for suitability to the disabled. As new development comes downtown and curbs become a possibility, it is paramount that ADA infrastructure becomes a priority. This includes the addition of curb ramps, disabled parking areas, bumped warning systems at high-volume crossings, and ensuring that future raised crossings (perhaps on the Costa property) do not exceed maximum cross-slope angles.



Bicycle & Pedestrian Crash Locations (2008-2017)

10-Year Crash Summary

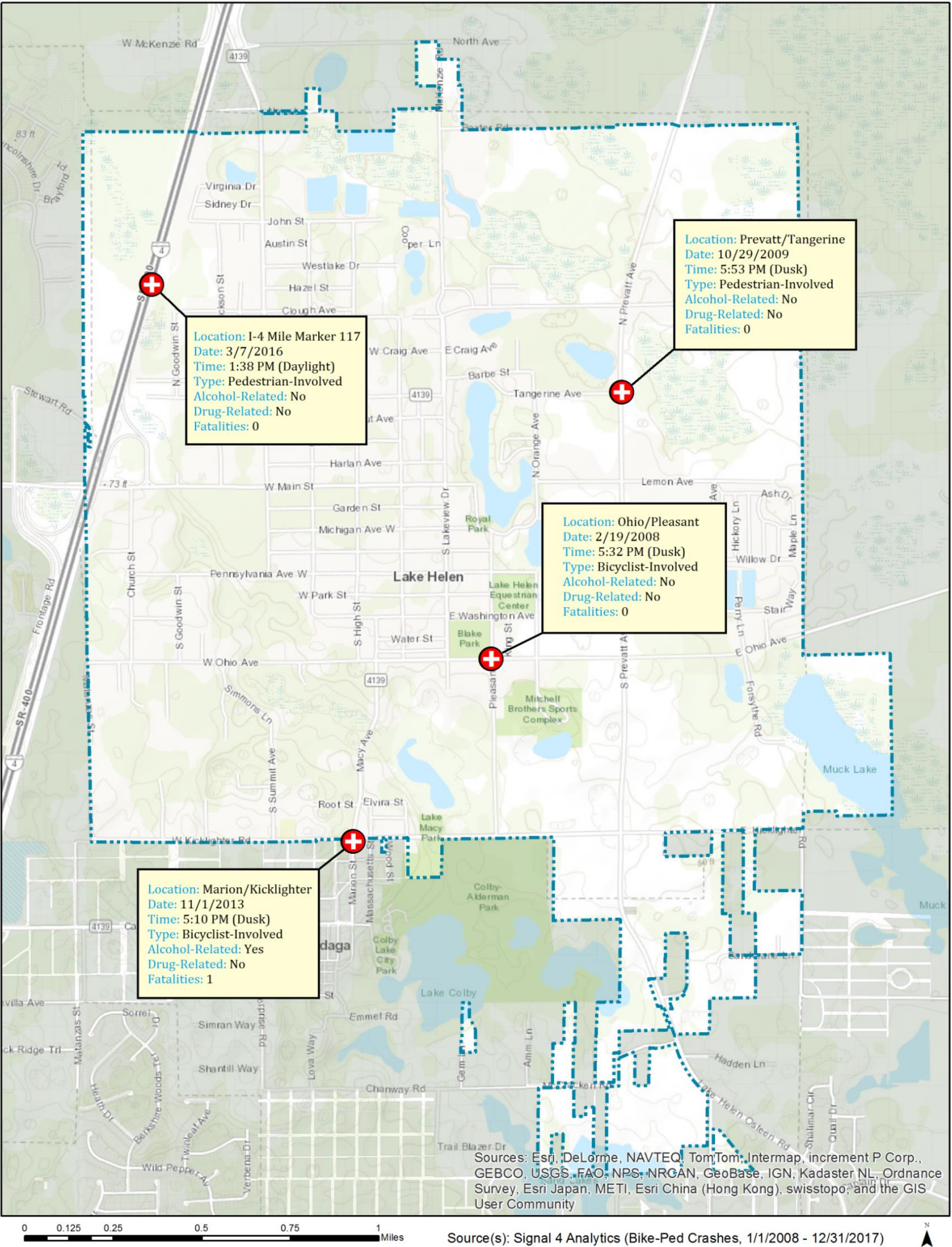
The City of Lake Helen experienced four bicycle and pedestrian crashes over the ten-year period from January 1st, 2008 to December 31st, 2017. All of the crashes located in separate parts of the City, thus a pattern has not been established from a statistical perspective. It is noteworthy that each crash that was on local roadways occurred along the highest-volume local roadways within the City. This includes the pedestrian-involved crash on Prevatt Avenue, the bicyclist-involved (and fatal) crash on Ohio Avenue, and the bicyclist-involved crash that occurred near the southern gateway to the City along Marion Street. The fourth crash occurred along Interstate 4. Please see the notes below concerning each of the crash intersections.

- Prevatt & Tangerine:** This intersection is lacking a crosswalk connecting the sidewalk segments along the west side of the roadway. A marked crosswalk added to this location along with pedestrian warning signage for oncoming traffic could increase driver discretion in this area, improving the safety of the intersection. Prevatt Avenue currently has a speed limit of 40 miles per hour, which could potentially be revisited if development is to occur at the Costa property.
- Ohio & Pleasant:** This intersection is located in a high-volume pedestrian area adjacent to Blake Park. This intersection is part of the Safe Routes to School planned improvements. This intersection would benefit from the addition of four marked crosswalks and signage warning motorists of the pedestrian crossing. East Ohio Avenue currently has a speed limit of 30 miles per hour, which fits the context of the roadway and does not need to be altered to enhance bicycle and pedestrian conditions.
- Marion & Kicklighter:** This intersection functions as a gateway into Lake Helen from the Cassadaga community. In addition to a lack of crosswalks, Marion Street completely lacks sidewalks. It is recommended that sidewalks be added to the east side of Marion Street to serve as a walking and biking path between the Lake Helen and Cassadaga communities. Right of way may be limited in some areas. The speed limit of 30 miles per hour fits the context of the roadway and should remain unchanged.



Comparative Crash Statistics

From a statistical perspective, the City of Lake Helen has experienced a lower number of bicycle and pedestrian crashes per resident than Volusia County as a whole. Over the 10 year period analyzed, the entire county experienced 3,773 bicycle-and-pedestrian-involved crashes, which averages to 76.28 annual bicycle and pedestrian crash incidents per 100,000 residents. Within the City of Lake Helen, this figure is 15.20 crashes per 100,000 residents, per year, a relative 90.1% reduction. This differential is likely due to low traffic counts, a lack of high-volume intersections and a lack of 3-plus-lane-roads within the City.



Floodplains & Wetlands

Overall Floodplain Coverage

While not a coastal city, Lake Helen is located on low-lying land 20 miles inland from the Indian River Lagoon. The 100-Year FEMA floodplain covers approximately 542 of the 2,968 total acres of the City of Lake Helen, or 18.2%. The floodplain is primarily located in close proximity to water bodies and swampland depressions, but development is by-and-large located away from these areas.

Affected Parcels

A number of rural residential parcels along Clough Avenue in the northeast portion of the City are located within the 100-year floodplain. In the downtown area, the Costa property is approximately 50% covered by the floodplain; however the outskirts of the property along Ohio Avenue and Prevatt Avenue are largely unaffected. The northeast portion of the Equestrian Center Property, including the horse field, is located within the 100-year floodplain, however all structures are outside of the zone. The floodplains extending to the northwest from Lake Macy infringes on four residential properties but largely avoids development.

Implications for Downtown Development

Redevelopment of the Costa site (highlighted in blue) in the downtown area would require meticulous avoidance of the floodplain (yellow areas) or mitigating measures implemented on any structures located within the hazard zone. Fortunately, large clusters of the property are located outside of the floodplain and can be developed in the future. The centralized nature of the floodplain on the property also increases its potential to be used as a community feature.

Strategies for Leveraging the Floodplain

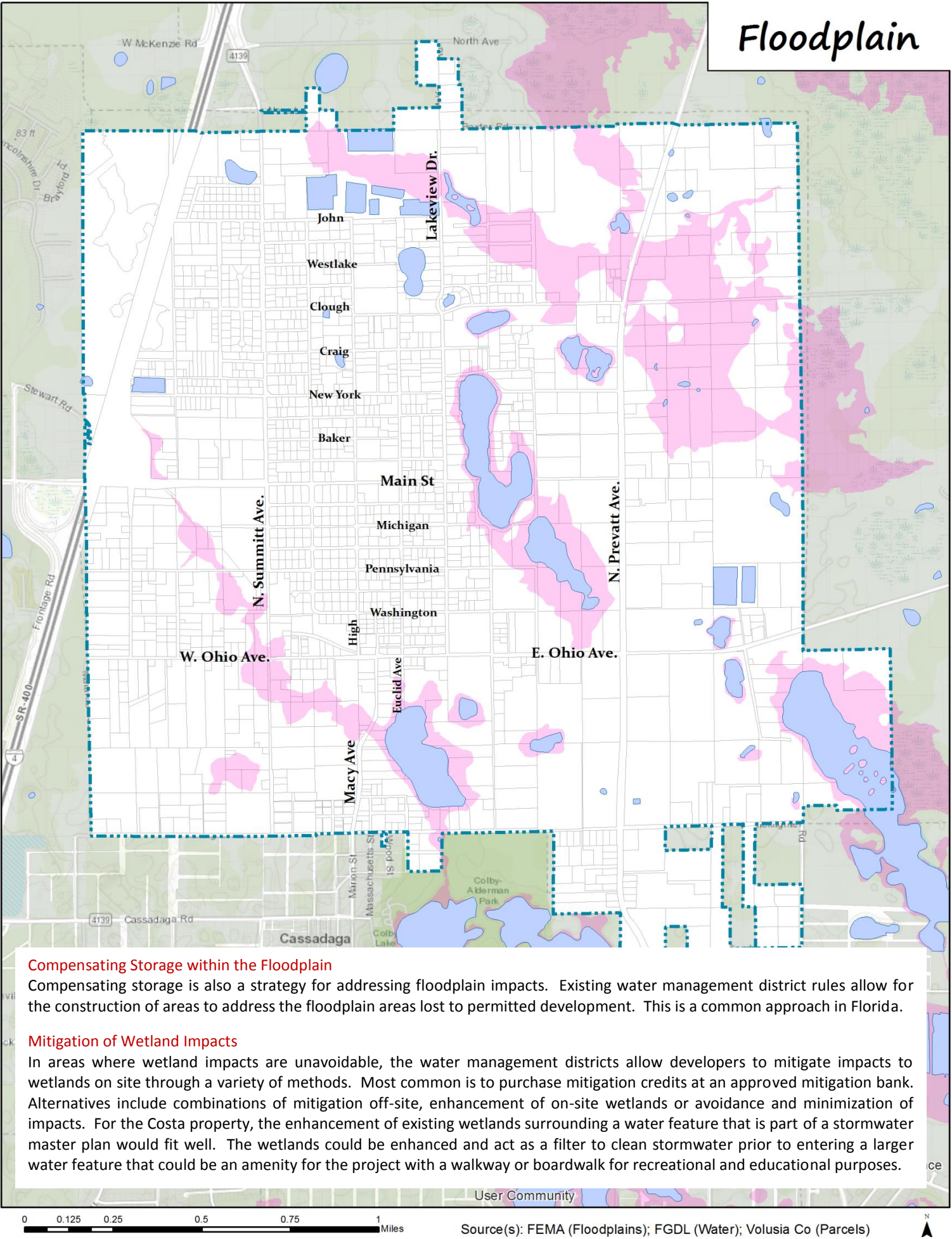
Floodplains can be seen as a hindrance to development or an asset that can be interwoven into the urban fabric as a natural asset. A number of communities have begun to do the latter, often utilizing floodplain areas as assets that act as parks and stormwater retention areas simultaneously. As discussed previously, the floodplain on the Costa property is largely centered and leaves three large portions of the site untouched. This provides potential for low intensity development that “activates” the central greenspace by focusing the frontages of units to the floodplain area. A few examples of this style of greenspace are included in the pictures below. Note: These pictures are not accurate comparisons of Lake Helen’s “urban scale”.



Fourth Ward Park, Atlanta Georgia



Liupanshui City, Guizhou Province, China



III. Comparative Downtown Assessment

Marketing & Place Making Strategies

The project team reviewed three downtowns of comparable size and scale to Lake Helen in order to gauge potential solutions for the downtown area. The three downtowns included Black Mountain, North Carolina; Elkin, North Carolina; and Nelsonville, Ohio. Following the identification of these three towns, findings were presented to Lake Helen residents during the public workshops and additional downtowns were added to the comparative downtown inventory. This portion of the report identifies marketing strategies, place making strategies, and incentive programs that were utilized in the three towns identified by the project team as well as picture examples of other comparable downtowns identified by residents of Lake Helen.

Comparative Town #1: Black Mountain, North Carolina

Artistic Economic Development

Introduction

Black Mountain, NC is a town of an estimated 8,079 persons in the mountains of western North Carolina (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). It has a rich history in the area of arts and culture due to the past presence of Black Mountain College, which existed in the City from 1933 until its closing in 1956. During World War II, a group of noted professors of the arts fled Nazi persecution in Germany and came to the college to teach in a number of artistic areas. Following the closing of the college, the City’s downtown went into decline. When the City moved into a new building in the 1970’s, the City sold the former City Hall to a local consortium of artists and business persons. By the year 2000, the former City Hall had been renovated, and reopened as the Black Mountain Center for the Arts (BMCA). As a result, the tourist visitors to the town have increased, as have the number of arts-related businesses and new residents with ties to the BMCA and the related artistic community (North Carolina Rural Economic Development Center, 2008).

Marketing Strategy

One advantage of the private-public partnership leading to the creation of the BMCA is that part of the marketing of the downtown Arts District is handled through the private sector BMCA and the Black Mountain Chamber of Commerce. Marketing the City to tourists is made easier due to the town’s proximity to the much larger arts and cultural mecca of Asheville, NC, with a projected 2015 population of 56,769 (U.S Census, 2015), located approximately 30 miles to the east, which provides an almost direct connection to Black Mountain via Interstate 40.

Place Making Strategy

The genesis of the Town’s economic development utilizing the arts occurred in the 1980’s, with the City utilizing funding from the North Carolina Governor’s Community of Excellence program. This led to the creation of a downtown worthy of attracting outside tourists in conjunction with the BMCA and art businesses. Following the purchase of a new City Hall, the City sold its old building to a consortium of artists and business persons, hoping this would be a catalyst for the return of the City to its days as an arts and culture center. In 1995, the purchasing group officially formed as a non-profit organization, the Black Mountain Center for the Arts. To increase the chances for the project’s success, the City provided a low-interest loan for the project, as well as providing a donation towards the BMCA’s capital funding drive (NCREDC 2008).

Incentives Utilized

A key incentive of the City was the decision to find a reuse for the former City Hall building that could result in economic development for the City. To insure that this occurred, the City offered a low-interest loan for the purchase of its building, making it affordable to the group of artist and business investors which would eventually become the BMCA. During the process of renovation and planning for the center, the City also contributed \$88,000 towards the eventual \$1.2 million in capital needed to bring this dream into reality. Finally, to ensure the long-term success of the BMCA, the City of Black Mountain paid off the remaining \$200,000 owed on the property and in turn again received title to the land (NCREDC, 2008).



Comparative Town #2: Elkin, North Carolina

Artistic Economic Development

Introduction

The City of Elkin, NC is a small town in central North Carolina that had a projected 2015 population of 6,444 persons (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). It is located along Interstate 77, approximately 40 miles from Winston Salem, NC. The city's economy was traditionally based on the cultivation of tobacco, textile mills, and the manufacturing of furniture. As these traditional industries declined, farmers turned to the growing of grapes for wine and the production of wine, as well as the development of bed and breakfasts and restaurants/bars tied to the wine industry. However, the wine industry itself was not enough to carry the City's entire economy, so further economic development opportunities were researched.

A 2003 study to determine economic development opportunities found that the City of Elkin and the surrounding Yadkin Valley had a growing concentration of artists. It was determined that through a program to further develop these artist's abilities and provide them the entrepreneurial skills needed to run a successful arts/crafts business, a new economic engine could be developed. Such trained artisans could add to the industry which the North Carolina Arts Council reports at of around 2008 employed 6,100 persons and brings the State \$538 million in revenue annually (NCREDC, 2008). These findings led to the creation of the Yadkin Valley Art Guild.

Marketing Strategy

The City of Elkin's location along Interstate 77 and within 40 miles of the larger city of Winston-Salem, NC, with an estimated 2015 population of 236,642 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015), put it in an easier position to market its artistic community to potential out-of-town visitors. The primary marketing comes through the web site of the Yadkin Valley Art Guild and its Facebook page, as well as web sites for Visit North Carolina and the Yadkin Valley Chamber of Commerce.

Place Making Strategy

The City of Elkin's place-making strategy is focused primarily on the development of the work force of artists in the downtown area. Fortunately, the downtown provides plenty of attractive and affordable storefronts for artisans. To start this economic transformation, the Piedmont Council of Government worked with three (3) local artists to create the Yadkin Valley Art Guild (Art Guild). Now that a core arts advocacy group was in place, a year later the Art Guild partnered with the City of Elkin to create a program entitled Growing Entrepreneurs, which aimed to not only develop skilled artists, but also create savvy entrepreneurs who could reap financial benefits from their new craft. Funding for establishing Growing Entrepreneurs came from a grant from the Homegrown Jobs program of the North Carolina Rural Economic Development Center (NCREDC), and served this organization as a good demonstration project of how an artistic economy could be developed. Growing Entrepreneurs launched with eight (8) apprentices under the tutelage of four (4) experienced professional artists (NCREDC, 2008).

Incentives Utilized

The incentives used in creating the Growing Entrepreneurs program were programs from organizations seeking to encourage local economic development. The initial demonstration grant from the Homegrown Jobs program of the North Carolina Rural Economic Development Center allowed Growing Entrepreneurs to get started. Once the program was established, several members of the Arts Guild received certification as Intake Professionals for the Microenterprise Loan program of the NCREDC. This allows local artists to get assistance in receiving financing to get their artistic enterprises started (NCREDC, 2008).



Comparative Town #3: Nelsonville, Ohio

Artistic Economic Development

Introduction

The City of Nelsonville, OH is a small town in the hills of southeastern Ohio with a projected 2015 population of 5,184 persons (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). In the past, the town was the epicenter of the local coal industry. However, the combination of the declining coal industry and the Great Depression let to the economic decline of the community. Despite this, the City was left with its City Square, fine Victorian buildings, and the Stuarts Opera House as a historic reflection of the City’s once lofty economic position. Following this economic decline, the National and State forests surrounding Nelsonville and local colleges and universities became the emphasis of the City’s economy. Hocking College, a two-year college is located in Nelsonville. Miami University is located in Oxford, OH, located 12 miles away. The City does not have an interstate or major highway nearby. There are no major metropolitan areas within the vicinity.

In the 1970’s, an effort was made to preserve the historic Victorian buildings downtown, and a non-profit was formed, which resulted in design standards for preservation being established. Despite this, the Town’s economy and its buildings continued to decline. Through the effort of Hocking College, private donations, and a grant from the Ohio Arts Council, an effort was begun to redevelop downtown Nelsonville through the arts. The synergy for artistic development started with the Foothills School for American Crafts, which opened in a downtown building. The school trains up-and-coming artists in their selected craft, as well as teaching business skills to create a successful artistic enterprise. After this, other strategies to be discussed in full later were developed to entice artists to take up shop downtown. In four (4) short years, the downtown occupancy rate soared from 25 percent to 85 percent. Since the development of the arts economy and improvements to the historic buildings downtown, Nelsonville’s public square and surrounding buildings were added to the National Register of Historic Places (NCREDC, 2008).

Marketing Strategy

The main marketing for Nelsonville’s artistic community downtown is through the web site for the Nelsonville Area of Chamber of Commerce. One of the categories of businesses listed is arts, which currently displays listing for 10 artistically-based businesses. Clicking on each business provides more information on the business, as well as web links to those businesses having web sites. Nelsonville does not have the advantage of the other communities examined of being located in close proximity to a major population center or interstate. Because of this, its proximity to Miami University and Hocking College has played an important role in getting out the word about the arts community in Nelsonville (NCREDC, 2008).

Place Making Strategy

The development of a place-making strategy for Nelsonville rests in its greatest asset, the existing square and the historic Victorian buildings surrounding it. At the advent of the artistic renaissance, these buildings were in some disrepair. Through the work of artists transforming these buildings for their businesses, many of them have been returned to their former glory. The subsequent inclusion of the square and the historic building in the National Register of Historic Places will help to maintain the place-making work done to date perpetually, and aid in drawing additional tourists interested in architecture and design into the City (NCREDC, 2008).

Incentives Utilized

The transformation of downtown Nelsonville started with a grant from the Ohio Arts Council, as well as donations from Hocking College, and the general public. Following this initial investment, City leaders and property owners initiated a program of allowing artists to move into downtown buildings at reduced rent in exchange for fixing up the buildings (NCREDC, 2008).



Lessons from Case Studies

Location is Important

Two of the cities used as case studies had locations near metropolitan areas and interstate highways. This helped in marketing efforts (bigger market media advertising, brochures in multitude of hotels, etc.). Lake Helen is in a similar situation, being within 45 minutes of both Orlando and Daytona Beach, as well as the City having direct access to Interstate 4 via an on/off ramp at Main Street. The City of Nelsonville did not have these advantages of urban cities and highways, but did have institutes of higher learning; Hocking College and Miami University are located close by.

These universities played a role in the early development of the City’s arts district, and have helped to make the artist’s presence known. The well-developed art programs and community resources at nearby Stetson University, Daytona State College, Bethune Cookman University, the University of Central Florida and other colleges/universities could provide such assistance in the growth of an artistic community in Lake Helen.

Advocacy Groups are Essential

In all the cities studied, two (2) types of groups advocating the development of the arts were essential. First are groups providing capital/assets for the arts. These included: in the City of Black Mountain, the donation of the former City Hall and forgiveness of the loan for the arts group; for the City of Elkin, the initial grant from the NCREDC and later support in helping artists get financing for their business ventures; and in the Case of Nelsonville, OH, financial support from the grant from the Ohio Arts Council and the donations from Hocking College and local donors.

A second key ingredient in all three (3) cities were local groups developed to train, encourage, and provide small business skills to aspiring artists. These included: the Black Mountain Center for the Arts in Black Mountain, NC; the Yadkin Valley Art Guild in Elkin, NC; and the Foothills School for American Crafts in Nelsonville, OH. The development of such groups will be essential to the establishment of a successful arts economy in the City of Lake Helen.

Availability of Incentives

Resources available as incentives to budding artists to develop thriving businesses were something present in all the communities examined, and will be needed for a successful economic development based on the arts in Lake Helen. As we have seen, this can include: the provision of building space; forgiveness of mortgages; low rents for artists in exchange for building renovations; and grant money to assist artists in the development of artistic and entrepreneurial skills. In addition to these examples, many communities provide grants for business owners wishing to improve the appearance of their business space/building.

Marketing of Arts Community

Lake Helen will need to market such an artistic community if it is to develop and succeed. In the case studies, this was done through local chamber of commerce agencies, state tourism agencies, local media, colleges, and through the web sites of the artists themselves. Training provided to artists should include developing marketing skills, particularly as related to Internet advertising.

Comparable Downtowns Identified by Residents

Micanopy, Florida



Savannah, Georgia



Gatlinburg, Tennessee



St. Augustine, Florida



These four towns have certain features (some similarities) that can be applied to the Downtown Lake Helen Master Plan. They include:

- Historic Architecture
- Large Tree Canopy
- Traditional Public Plazas

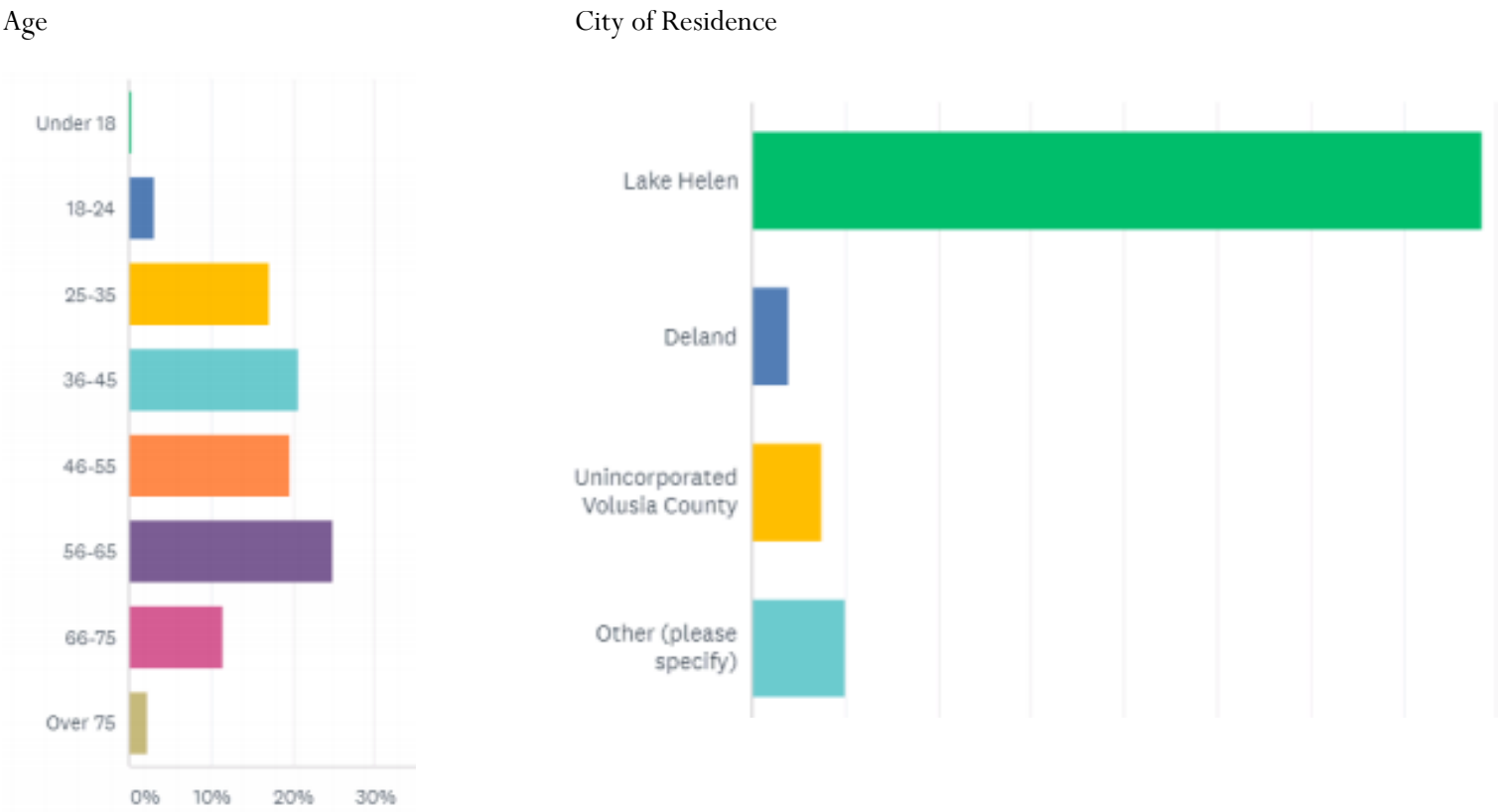
IV. Visual Preference Survey Results

A visual preference survey was administered during the month of January to obtain input from the community into the look and feel of a downtown for the City of Lake Helen. The survey provided an opportunity for input regarding how the downtown should be developed, a review of architectural styles and densities, as well as identification of vehicular and non-vehicular preferences. The information derived from the survey will help the City create codes and incentives to attract the desired and appropriate development for the area. The survey was comprised of photographs of the following components of a downtown: residential and commercial development, civic/institutional uses, the sidewalk environment, open space design, gateway and access features, overall town center design, and corridor design. Notice of the survey was provided by the City.

The survey was conducted as a ranking survey. A ranking question asks respondents to compare photographs indicating a level of surveyor preference. An average ranking is calculated for each answer choice, allowing the evaluation of the most preferred answer choice. The weight of the ranking corresponds with the “most preferred”. For example, a ranking of -3 (least preferred) had a weight of 1, while a ranking of 3 (most preferred) had a weight of 7.

A total of 252 respondents accessed the survey with 78% being residents of Lake Helen. The survey completion rate was 71%. The synopsis of this report analyzes only the respondents who indicated that they live in Lake Helen. The number of survey responses from Lake Helen represents 10% of the population, while the completion average represents 5% of the total Lake Helen population.

Survey Respondent Profile



1/9: Preferences for Residential Development

The top three visual preference survey photos are 2-story traditional southern style single family detached homes. The frontage of each of the top photos has direct access from the street and sidewalks to the entryway of the home. No garage is seen from the front of the home indicating rear access or alleyway garages. The number one choice is a larger lot size while the second and third choices represent more of a zero-lot lined home. Single family homes all ranked in the top six. All mixed-use, multi-family, multi-story development ranked below the single family detached housing options. This finding identifies the community desire to remain single family residential. Below are the top three residential images in order of ranking.

Residential #1: 6.22 Rating Average



Residential #2: 5.22 Rating Average



Residential #3: 4.84 Rating Average



2/9: Preferences for Commercial & Mixed Use Development

The top visual preference images were very closely rated with the top two being tied and the third very close behind. Overall, the top three are similar as they do not exceed two stories and can be considered rural or village style architecture with intimate, smaller square footage stores fronting the sidewalk with large windows. The bottom five ranking preferences were similar in ranking (none exceeded 3.9) and represent multi-story, more urban type architecture. Below are the top three images by ranking.

Commercial & Mixed Use #1: 5.34 Rating Average



Commercial & Mixed Use #2: 5.34 Rating Average



Commercial & Mixed Use #3: 5.27 Rating Average



3/9: Preferences for Civic & Institutional Development

The top-ranking preferences for civic and institutional uses represent free-standing, single story buildings representative of classical, colonial style architecture. The top-ranked image depicts more of a classic train depot theme. It is noticeable that the top three images do not show parking lots in front of the building, but rather landscaping and hardscaping. The only parking shown is on-street parking. The preference for this style of building keeps with the theme of single to two-story, intimate buildings as shown in the residential and mixed-use preferences.

Civic & Institutional #1: 4.90 Rating Average



Civic & Institutional #2: 4.89 Rating Average



Civic & Institutional #3: 4.64 Rating Average



4/9: Preferences for Sidewalk Environment

The top five sidewalk images all ranked above 5.0, illustrating the strong desire of the community to have sidewalk environments with inviting features and a variety of landscaping typologies. The top-ranking preferences for the sidewalk environment showcase sidewalks that allow for intimate gathering areas with tree coverage and various landscaping and other features in the area. The third ranked preference shows the use of the sidewalk and frontage environment used for larger gathering areas and dining. It also illustrates that not all of the sidewalk and pedestrian environments need to be paved, leading to a more rustic or rural character. The bottom ranking images have somewhat side sidewalks with no trees, vegetation or seating areas.

Sidewalk Environment #1: 5.50 Rating Average



Sidewalk Environment #2: 5.22 Rating Average



Sidewalk Environment #3: 5.21 Rating Average



5/9: Preferences for Open Spaces

All open space concepts had an average rating of 4.24 or higher, except for one, with six concepts rated over 5.00. This highlights the priority of respondents to have a diverse array of greenspace types. The top three preferences range from a small, quaint, greenspace pocket area to open spaces to be used for farmers markets and equestrian uses. This mirrors the findings from the sidewalk environment concepts. The runner-ups included a small open space park with rural character and a concept of utilizing a water feature in a park. Two main concepts were showcased in the top three ranking images: flexible open gathering space and the incorporation of water features.

Open Space Environment #1: 5.68 Rating Average



Open Space Environment #2: 5.41 Rating Average



Open Space Environment #3: 5.37 Rating Average



6/9: Preferences for Downtown Features

The top ranking attribute featured in the downtown features images focuses on wayfinding in a rustic theme. The second ranking image includes a number of features including a banner and lamp post and other rustic items. The third ranking image features a fountain in a small roundabout as a gateway feature into the district. The image showcases a simple iron archway signifying entry into a special district. The two least preferred images, the only images to rank below a 3, include a large modern “median” between parking areas with a monument at one end. The lowest ranking image featured a roundabout with a large stone monument at its center.

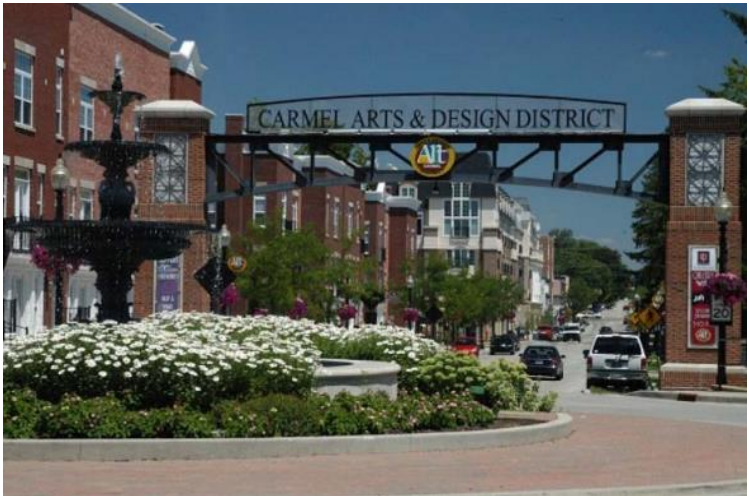
Downtown Features #1: 5.16 Average Rating



Downtown Features #2: 4.95 Rating Average



Downtown Features #3: 4.42 Average Rating



7/9: Preferences for Parking Areas

The top two ranking parking images were the only images to rate above a 4.0. The top-ranked image features on-street angled parking while the second image shows 90-degree pull in parking. On-street parallel parking is the third-ranked image. The bottom ranking images comprise the typical parking lot (facing the street) and the lowest-ranking image features a parking garage.

Parking Areas #1: 4.15 Rating Average



Parking Areas #2: 4.06 Rating Average



Parking Areas #3: 3.93 Rating Average



8/9: Preferences for Overall Downtown Design

The images ranked in this category encompass design and layout of downtowns and how they relate to the surrounding environment. The top three images were the only images to rate above a 5.0 and are similar in that all are two-story development with a sidewalk-meeting frontage with minimal setbacks. The number one image shows rustic storefronts, with a second floor for potential living space or office space. The second and third photos tied for second place and again show 2-story mixed use commercial development with large sidewalks and minimal setbacks. These top three images restate the findings from the previous survey categories, which focus on an intimate downtown with a unique rural feel. The lowest-ranking image (which rated a 3.77) is somewhat similar to the 2-story development; however the façade of the buildings was more modern.

Overall Downtown Design #1: 5.46 Rating Average



Overall Downtown Design #2: 5.27 Rating Average



Overall Downtown Design #3: 5.27 Rating Average



9/9: Preferences for Roadway Design

The images ranked in this category encompass roadway design options for the downtown area; include bicycle and pedestrian features, lane width, number of lanes, and other options. Each of the top three images depict wide, versatile sidewalks. The number one image also illustrates a separated bike lane with street trees and other foliage in the buffer area. It also shows transit and a 4-lane separated roadway, which may not be completely applicable to Lake Helen. The focus of the image, however, is the sidewalk and dedicated bicycle lane. The second-ranked image includes a mid-block crossing with flashers on a two-lane road. The final image includes a one-way street in the middle of a downtown with wide sidewalks, street trees, lighting, planters and a crosswalk.

Roadway Design #1: 4.93 Rating Average



Roadway Design #2: 4.85 Rating Average



Roadway Design #3: 4.72 Rating Average





V. Downtown Lake Helen Master Plan

Planning Process

Public Workshops

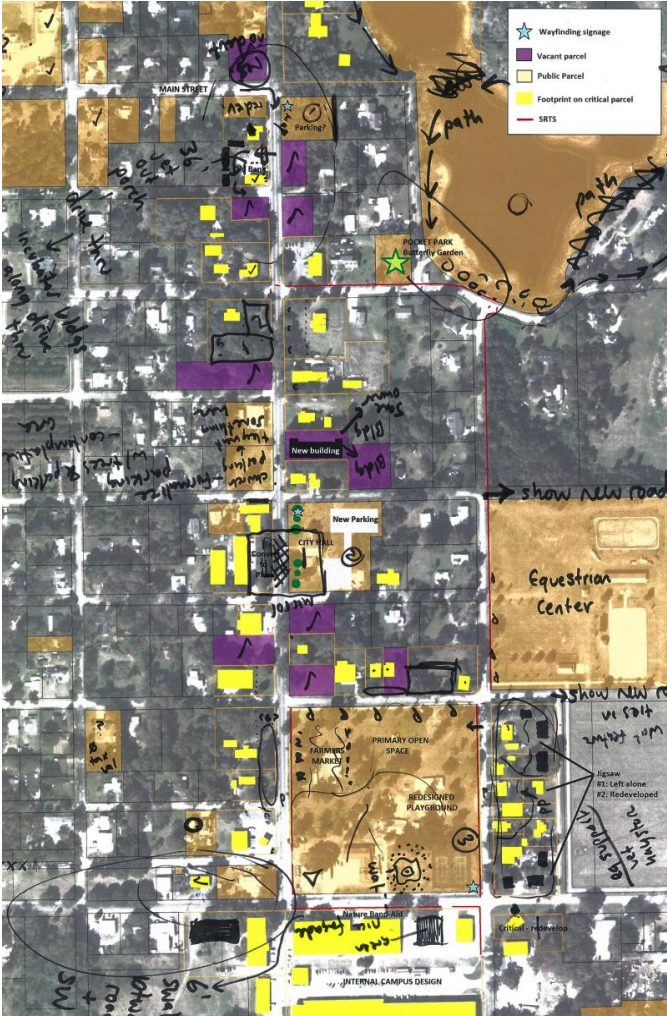
As discussed previously in this report, two public workshops were held with residents of Lake Helen to gauge the style and ‘feel’ of future development in the downtown area. These recommendations were compiled and sorted for future phases of the master plan process.

Visual Preference Survey

After the conclusion of the first public workshop, a visual preference survey was completed by 10% of the town’s residents to determine architectural styles, urban scale, the sidewalk environment, and other plan features. The highly-ranked preferences were utilized to inform the design of the plan.

Final Parcel Review

Before working on the final design for the downtown area, the design team met with City staff to review the results of the public workshops and visual preference survey. The design team provided City staff with a map depicting publicly-owned and vacant parcels within the study area vicinity. Utilizing this information, the design team and City staff determined other parcels that were deemed ‘critical’ to the continuous flow of the downtown area. On a parcel-by-parcel basis, the design team and City staff discussed potential redevelopment strategies. These discussions led to the final development of the plan design. The plan image provided to City staff, complete with notes, is shown to the left.



Geographic Extent

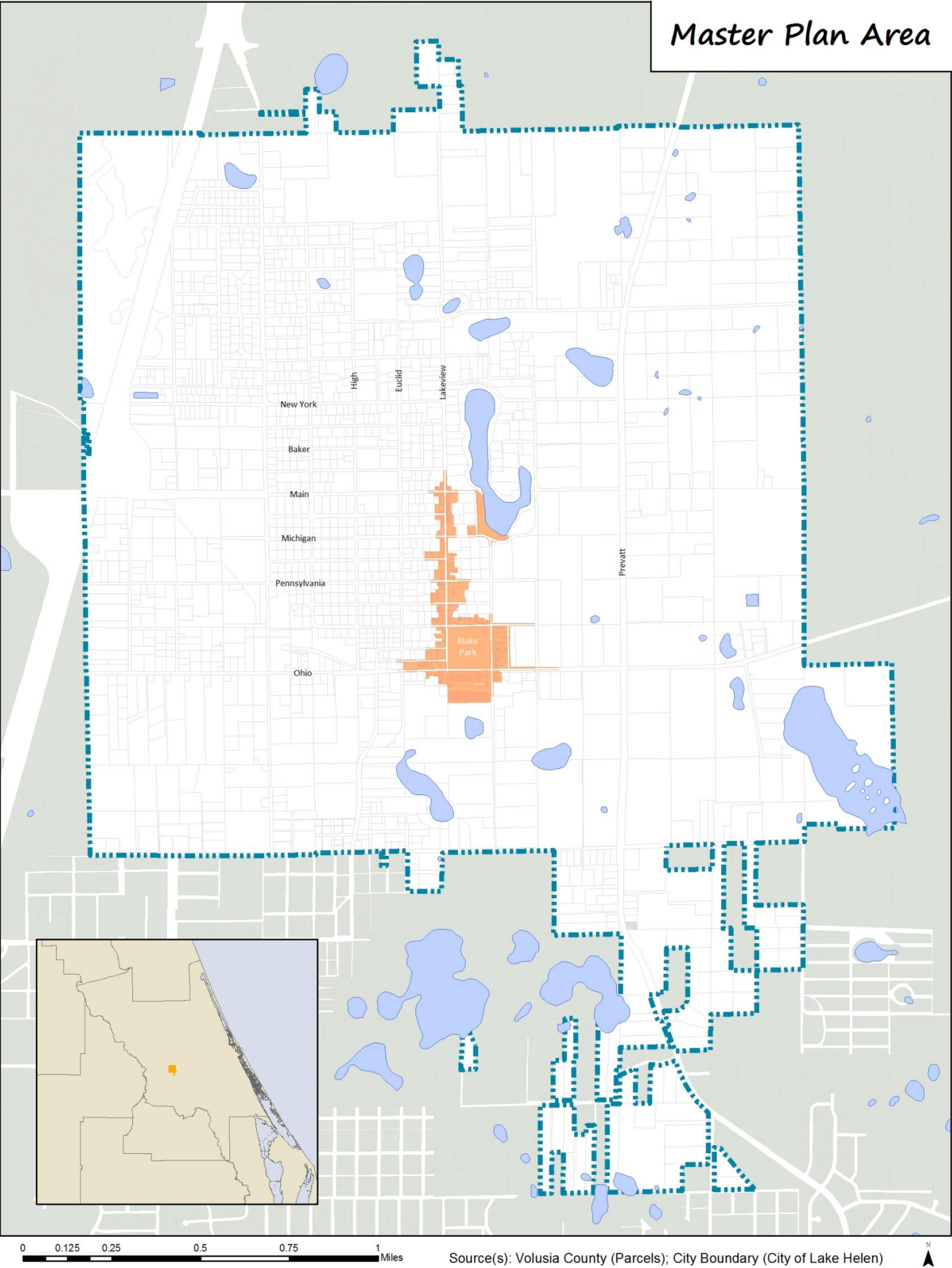
The master plan area is centrally located within the City of Lake Helen as shown on the image to the right. The plan is centered along Lakeview Avenue and runs north-to-south from Main Street to Ohio Avenue. All parcels adjacent to Blake Park were included in the plan area due to City staff’s recommendation to utilize Blake Park as a “central gem” to the downtown area. In addition to these parcels, the southwestern lakefront of Lake Helen is included in the plan, as this area is the connecting point of two planned Safe Routes to School (SRTS) sidewalk projects.

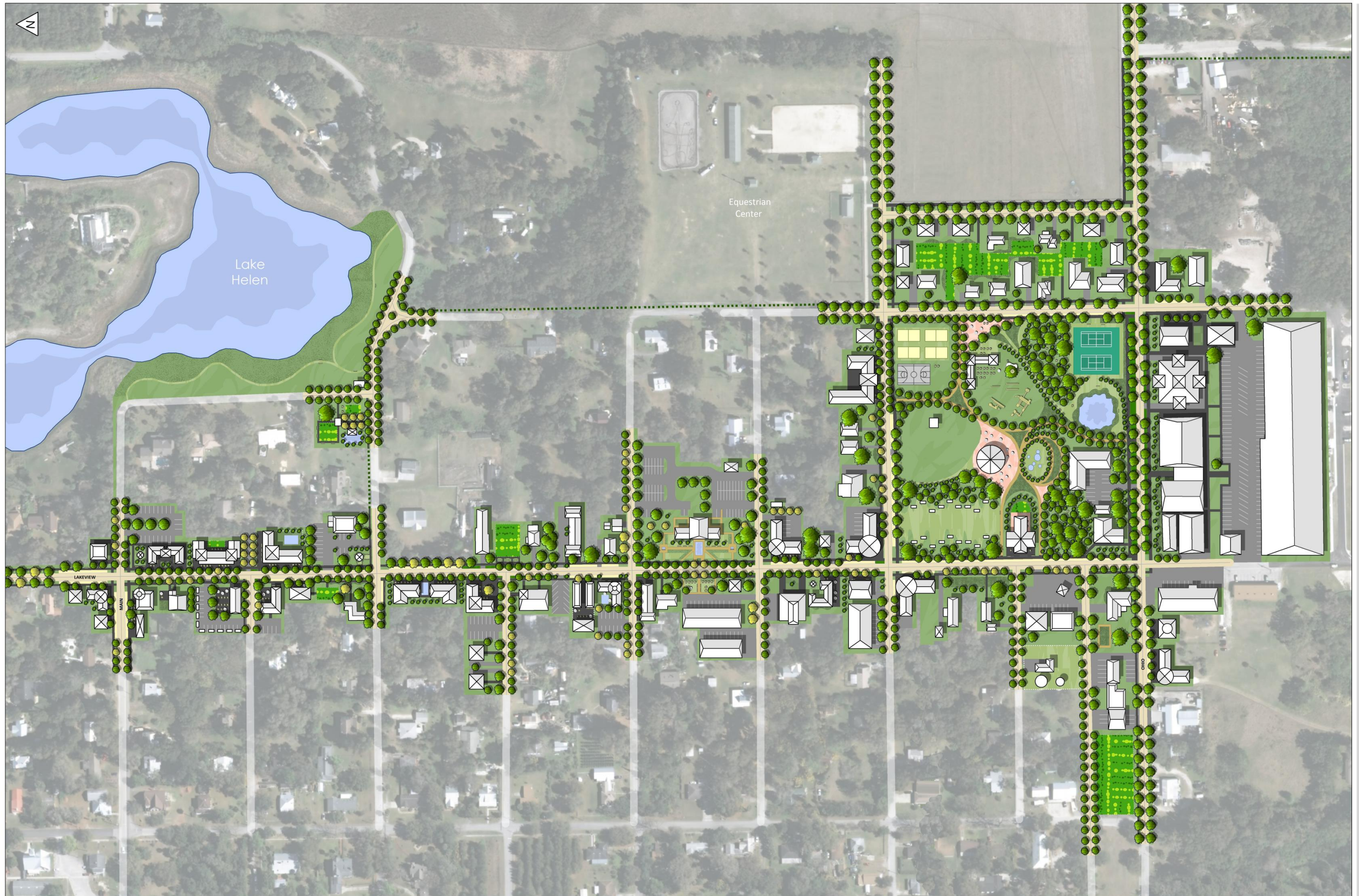
Plan Detail

The design team determined that it was critical to propose a design plan with building footprints included as opposed to a sector plan with future parcel delineation as the primary design feature. This level of detail is included in order to include the nuances of the Visual Preference Survey results, as well as to assist potential developers with options for specific parcel improvement techniques. This section of the master plan document contains information on the entire plan area, while Sections 6, 7, 8 and 9 detail specific aspects of the plan.

Overall Plan ‘Feel’

As opposed to a highly urban downtown environment, this master plan aims to create a low-key, quaint, but activity-filled downtown area with detached 1-to-2 story buildings, pleasant sidewalk environments and a diverse array of active, passive and civic open spaces. Large tree canopies are planned to create a highly-shaded walking environment that is similar to existing residential areas throughout the City of Lake Helen. The primary changes made to existing lots include landscaping within the public right of way that blend into, in some instances, redone landscaping within private lots. These recommendations would assist in enhancing the curb appeal of these parcels.





Lake Helen Downtown Master Plan

Master Plan Legend: Accessory Information

The map legend associated with the detailed master plan image contains 26 codified markers. The information below provides important information regarding these map points.

A. City Hall: The plan incorporates the parking lot that is currently planned for the City Hall site that will serve as a shared parking lot for this portion of the downtown area. The City Hall site has also been redesigned to include landscaping and hardscaping that soften the appearance of the downtown building, with heavy use of southern live oaks, fountains and benches in this location. The design takes away one row of parking from the commercial plaza across Lakeview Drive and repurposes this area as a small pocket park that mirrors the landscaping/hardscaping of City Hall. It is recommended that stamped concrete and flat shoulders be added to this portion of Lakeview Drive to create a pedestrian-friendly environment. It is also recommended that the City add at least one electric charging site to the new parking lot.

B. Lake Helen United Methodist Church: A formal parking lot has been designed within the Church lot in addition to on-street parking added along Lakeview Drive to the south. One of the proposed commercial buildings to the south of the church could potentially be repurposed to surface parking if not enough parking is provided. Church-goers could also potentially use the City Hall parking lot.

C. Post Office: Landscaping has been added to greatly soften the Post Office building façade and parking lot. The southwestern corner of the parcel has been repurposed as a shaded pocket park with benches.

D. The Old Bank: The old bank site is one of the original downtown buildings and has been completely repurposed as an activity center (food and entertainment) as part of this design. An open outdoor deck with seating areas has been added to the north of the building to improve the ‘curb appeal’, and a parking lot wraps around the building to provide ample parking. This parking lot can potentially be repurposed at times to allow for food trucks or pop-up-shops.

E. Gas Station: The gas station can potentially be redesigned to feature “art deco” or “retro” design styles that accentuate its features to fit into the context of downtown Lake Helen. This redesign would add character to the building and could potentially make it an aesthetic-boosting, one-of-a-kind asset for the downtown area. A “goods and services” building has been added to this site to the north of the existing gas station structure.

F. Lake Helen Police Department: Parallel parking can potentially be added in front of the Police Department building if the current parking is removed, as can be seen in the master plan image. The design focuses on softening the façade of the building with street trees and landscaping.

G. Ivy Hawn Charter: Site visits to this area showed that the parking lot is not near capacity. Therefore, it is proposed that a portion of the school parking lot serve the commercial businesses to the north of the school site along Ohio Avenue.

H. Equestrian Center: There are no proposed changes to the equestrian center area. However, it could be beneficial to add a hay vendor or an equestrian center clubhouse to the parcels surrounding the equestrian center in the future.

I. Existing Residential: All existing residential structures but one remains within the plan area.

J. Existing Commercial: All existing commercial structures remain within the plan area.

K. Proposed Shops: Residents of the town determined that the following business types would be beneficial for the “Shops” business locations: Artisan (specialty) shops; Equestrian-themed shops; Cake Store; Jewelry Store; Music Store; Arts & Crafts Store

L. Proposed Food & Entertainment: Residents of the town determined that the following business types would be beneficial for the “Food & Entertainment” business locations: Restaurants and Diners; Bars; Coffee Shops; Convenience Store; Pop-up Shops; Cafes

M. Proposed Goods & Services: Residents of the town determined that the following business types would be beneficial for the “Goods & Services” business locations: Barber Shop; Hardware Store; Pet Store/Grooming; Small Grocer/Butcher; Electronics Store (Phone Repair); Dentist; Doctor; Mechanic Shop

N. Proposed Hotel: There is potential demand for a 2-story, boutique hotel in close proximity to the equestrian center and Blake Park. The hotel would likely benefit from featuring balconies and decks overlooking the park and equestrian facilities and would serve families visiting the equestrian facilities, car shows or the ‘Market in the Park’ farmers market.

O. Proposed Civic/Flex Space: The exact land uses for these buildings can be quite variable, from residential, to commercial or vertical mixed use. The “flex space” parcel proposed for the northwest corner of the Lakeview Drive and Main Street intersection, in particular, could benefit from a land use change to commercial, but this is not required as the urban scale is set to “meet the street”. The flex space building located to the immediate southeast of the old bank site could potentially be a community center with aquatic and workout facilities as requested by residents of the city.

P. Proposed Bed & Breakfast -or- Bungalow: Proposed residential structures could be private homes or bed and breakfasts and would need to meet the architectural styles promoted by the City. The proposed residential building to the north of City Hall was included in the plan due to the property owner sending potential renderings of the site to City staff. The plan within the master plan image closely resembles the building footprint provided to the City.

Q. Proposed Barbeque Pavilion: The barbeque pavilion is a covered pavilion area with barbeque grills, hitching posts (for horses) and a voluminous share of tables for gathering and cooking. This would replace the existing pavilion.

R. Proposed Main Park Pavilion & Gazebo: The main park pavilion, or “the Gazebo”, is the primary meeting point within the park and would feature covered tables, benches, hitching posts, chess and checkers tables, and electric equipment to support concerts at the gazebo. This space is located directly to the south of the open flex space, allowing the gazebo to serve as a band stand for concerts, a movie projector stand for movie nights, or a meeting area for car shows. The flexibility of the gazebo site would match whatever use is in place in the “open flex space” at any given point in time.

S. Proposed Splash Park: The splash park is located in close proximity to the playground, allowing activities for children.

T. Proposed Playground & Tree House: City staff provided the design team with renderings of a planned playground, and this playground has been added to the park site. The playground facilities have not changed, but the playground site has been shifted a little bit to the south of the originally-planned location.

U. Proposed Athletic Facilities (Volleyball & Basketball): The northeast corner of the park site has been enclosed to feature a newly-paved basketball court and four beach volleyball courts. Areas for stretching and sitting in between matches have been added in this location.

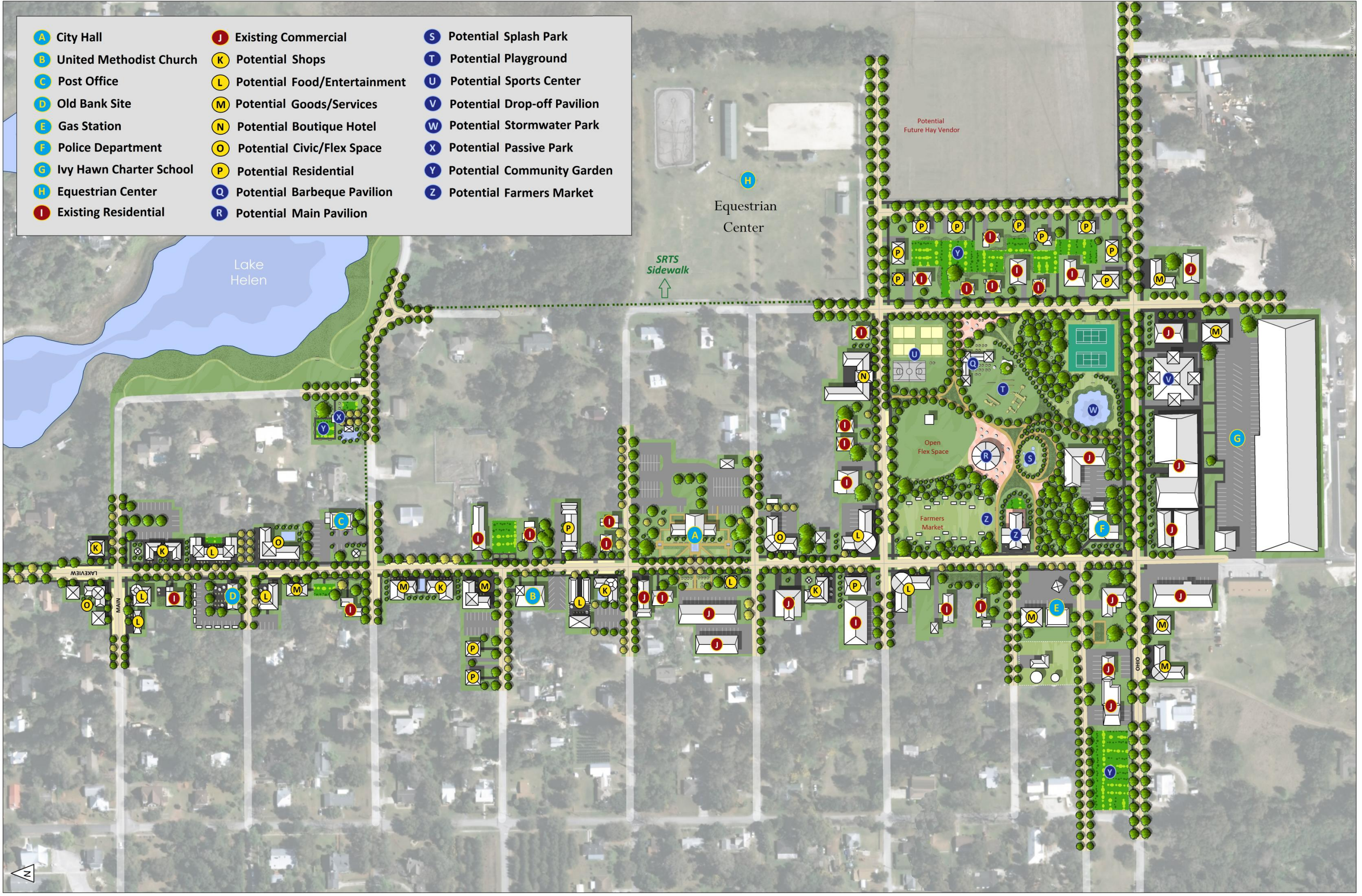
V. Proposed Student Drop-off Pavilion: This pavilion would provide shade and would reduce exposure to the elements for school children waiting for their parents to pick them up. A one-way-driveway rings around the pavilion for parents to pick up their children. It is important to note that ‘enclosing’ this portion of Ohio Avenue is extremely important for the urban scale of this area of downtown.

W. Proposed Stormwater Park: This stormwater park would utilize native vegetation to treat stormwater before it flows into the pond. Benches and landscaping have been added to this location. In addition, an arboretum has been added to the northeast of the pond and includes tables for passive recreation. The path to the west of the stormwater pond leads directly to the planned mid-block crossing on Ohio Avenue.

X. Proposed Butterfly Garden/ Passive Park: This park would be ‘passive’ in nature and could include a butterfly garden, which is a plan feature that many residents wanted.

Y. Proposed Community Garden: A number of potential sites for community gardens have been identified as part of this master plan process. The community garden located along Ohio Avenue (in the far western extent of the master plan) could potentially work due to the awkward width of these lots and the low potential for redevelopment for other uses. The other community garden, located to the east of Blake Park, would surely be a very-long-term endeavor and would require working with current property owners to split the parcels to allow for more residential units. This community garden closely resembles a “Pocket Neighborhood”, which is potentially the highest-and-best use for this site if all houses are to remain in the long term.

Z. Proposed Farmers Market & Market Hub: The farmers market and market hub are the “life of the party” in Blake Park, and the master plan formalizes this area with a permeable walking surface and space for food trucks and vendor stalls. The market building to the south of this site could become similar to the East End Market in Orlando, and could work in unison with one (or more) of the planned community gardens by selling the local crops. Please see the next section of this report for alternative design options for Blake Park. In alternative plans, the shuffle board court remains and other alterations have been made in the vicinity of the farmers market and dog park.



Lake Helen Downtown Master Plan

Planned or Funded Projects Incorporated into the Master Plan

A number of planned and funded projects were incorporated into the master plan design. This portion of the plan details how these projects were incorporated.

#1: City Hall Parking Lot

A 59-space parking lot has been planned for the eastern portion of the City Hall parcel. The exact layout of this parking lot has been incorporated into the plan design. The plan for this parking lot is on this page, labeled as #1.

#2: Blake Park Playground

The planned Blake Park playground has been added to the master plan; however it has been shifted slightly to make room for a new pavilion. This will likely not impact the build process in any way.

#3: Safe Routes to Schools Sidewalks, Parking and Mid-Block Crossings

A comprehensive Safe Routes to Schools sidewalk master plan was completed for the City, and all of the sidewalk segments and parallel parking locations identified in this master plan were incorporated into the downtown master plan as part of the design process. Two mid-block crossings along Ohio Avenue were also a part of this project and are included in the design.

#4: New Building at 287 South Lakeview Drive

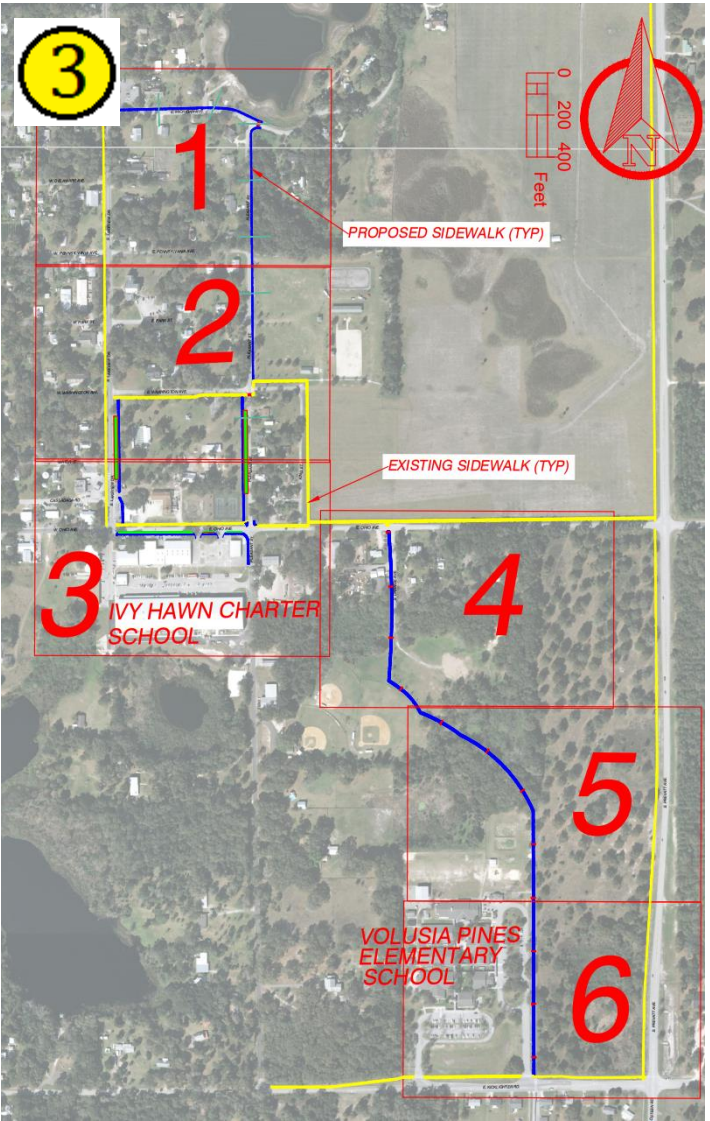
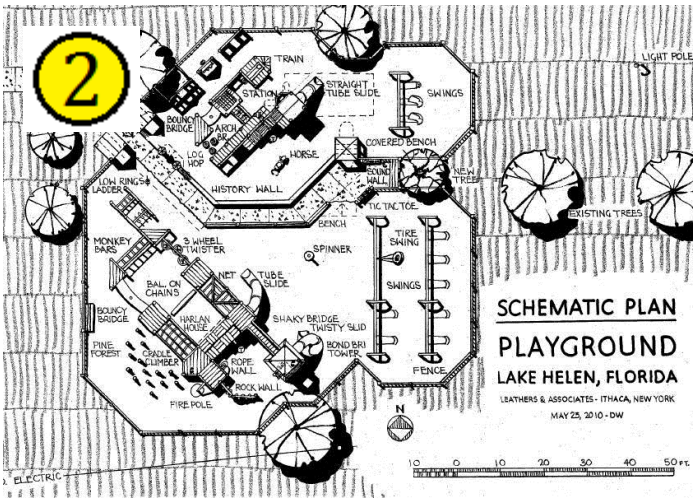
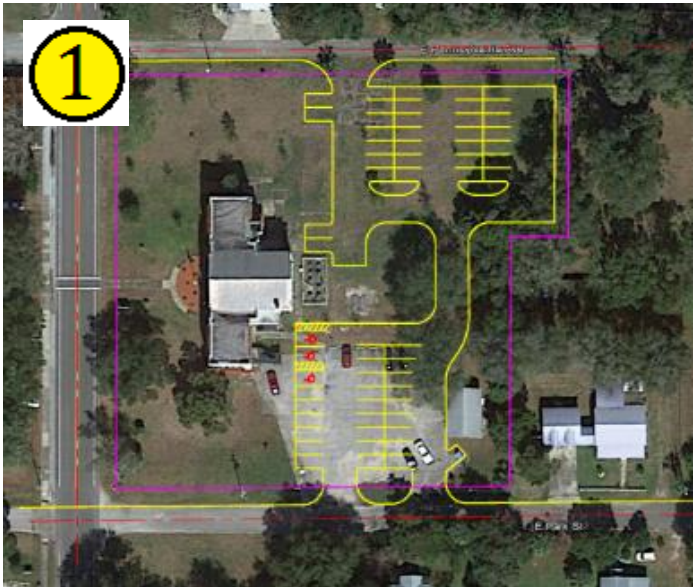
The landowner conceptualized a new building on this parcel site. This building has been added to the master plan.

#5: Potential Sewer Investment

The master plan primarily consists of detached buildings with room on site for septic systems, however it is recommended that the City of Lake Helen add sewer infrastructure along Lakeview Drive and around Blake Park. The following cost estimate (below) has been provided to City staff.

COMMERCIAL AREA SEWERAGE COST ESTIMATE
CITY OF LAKE HELEN
Engineer's Estimate

Base Bid					
Item No.	Description	Est. Quantity	Units	Unit Price	Total Amount
	Engineering & Permitting	1	LS	\$ 250,000.00	\$ 250,000.00
	Geotech	1	LS	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 10,000.00
	Survey	1	LS	\$ 15,000.00	\$ 15,000.00
				Sub-Total	\$ 275,000.00
1	Mobilization & General Conditions	1	LS	\$ 250,000.00	\$ 250,000.00
2	Sanitary Sewer Manhole	30	EA	\$ 6,500.00	\$ 195,000.00
3	Gravity Sewer Piping	8,000	LF	\$ 125.00	\$ 1,000,000.00
4	Gravity Sewer Service Lateral	80	EA	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 1,600,000.00
5	Sanitary Sewer Lift Station	2	EA	\$ 250,000.00	\$ 500,000.00
6	Santary Sewer Force Main	12,500	LF	\$ 50.00	\$ 625,000.00
7	Restoration	1	LS	\$ 75,000.00	\$ 75,000.00
8	Appertenances	1	LS	\$ 75,000.00	\$ 75,000.00
				Total	\$ 4,595,000.00
	Contingency			20%	\$ 919,000.00
				Total	\$ 5,514,000.00



Additional Plan Information

During the community workshops, many vital pieces of information were collected and summarized by the ECFRPC. The information as part of this section further summarizes this information in the context of the completed master plan.

Ranch Location (East of Equestrian Center & Blake Park) – Preferred Amenities

The following amenities were requested by Lake Helen residents if the “Costa site” to the east of Blake Park is to be developed in the future:

- Shared Gardens & Sheds
- Bridle Trails: Interweaving bridle trails for horses to explore the site
- Bungalow Residential: Clustered bungalows overlooking a central park feature are preferred
- Leverage the Wetland: Enhance the wetland to be a central park feature
- Cross-Country: Potentially add paths for a cross-country course on site
- Hay Vendor: Attract a hay vendor to set up shop near the existing equestrian center
- Horse Stalls & Hitching Posts: Horse stalls and hitching posts are a must, as the site should be designed for both people and horses
- Potential RV area on site or to the north of the site
- Equestrian Community Center: Potentially build a community center in the long term that has facilities including a café, swimming pool, workout facilities and a club.
- There is a potential demand for a hotel on the site in the long term to serve equestrian center users
- The site could be developed like a “conservation subdivision”. Research work done by Randall Arendt

Blake Park – Open Flex Space

The open flex space designed within Blake Park can be used for a number of events including concerts (staged at the gazebo), movie nights (with a projector), barbeque competitions and car shows. A driveway has been incorporated into the design for automobile access into this portion of the park. This portion of the park may also serve as overflow parking if hundreds (or thousands) of people attend a community event. This parking would benefit from staying informal if instituted.

Blake Park – High Shade Areas

Two high-shade areas have been added to Blake Park, one to the north of the tennis courts and one to the north of the Police Department building. These could potentially be high-tree-cover areas consisting of southern live oaks and benches. These “urban forests” would be planted, over time, by residents of the community. Arbor Day events could potentially be tied into planting the trees in these areas. *The proposed tree canopy at the dog park site (to the north of Decker’s) may need to be reviewed, as this is the current drainage area for Decker’s septic system. If sewage is not installed, this area should remain canopy-free.*

Lake Helen Lakefront Park

It is proposed that the City preserve the viewsheds provided along Lake Helen, and add, if possible, native vegetation and landscaping to the sloping areas along the lakeshore. This can help to ensure the preservation of the water quality. While not shown in the plan, in addition to benches and a winding path, the use of pine trees in this area could restore the “old Lake Helen” feel that this area used to have.

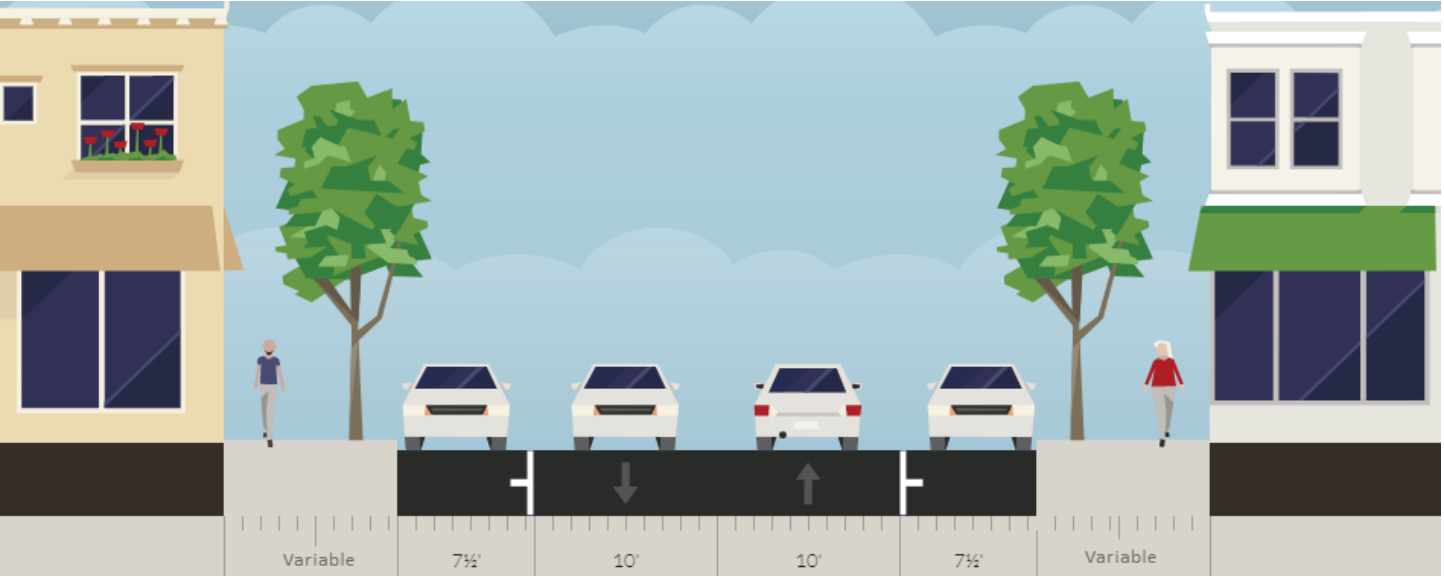
Other Design Specifications

- Roads: Brick or Stamped Concrete (wherever possible)
- Fencing: White Picket
- Private Signage Style: Craftsman (wooden) or Antique (iron)
- Maximum Stories on Buildings: 2
- Primary Tree Types: Southern Live Oak; Long Leaf Pine; Tabebuia; Magnolia

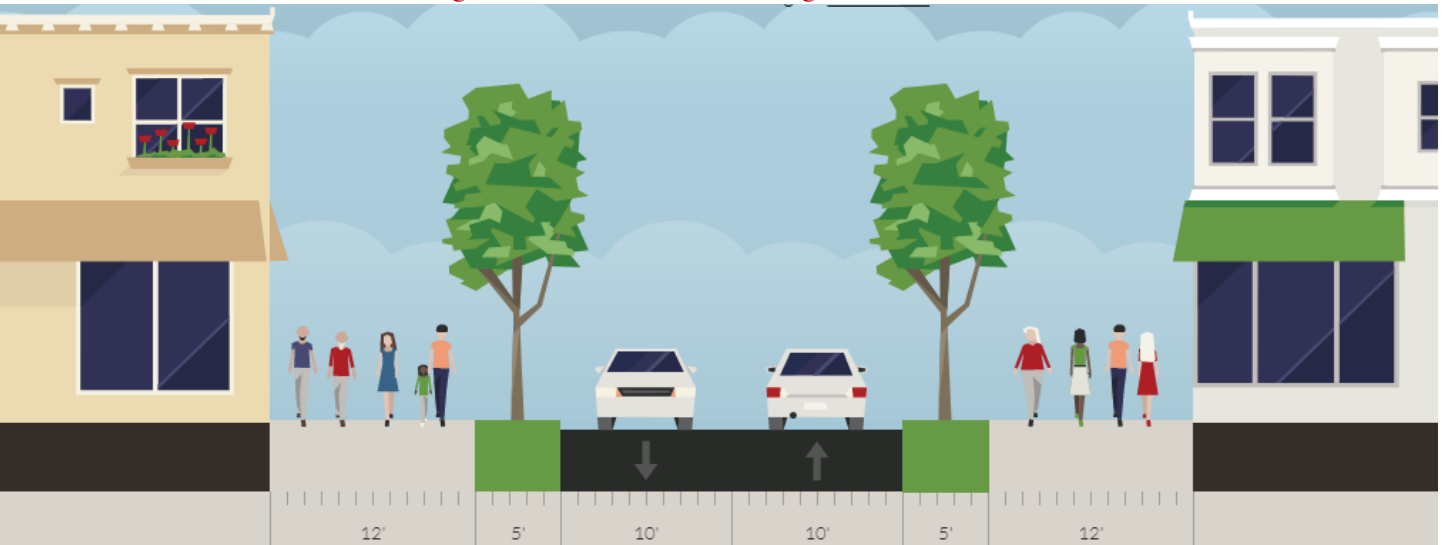
Shared Parking Zones

It is recommended that three shared parking zones be instituted to assist in parking within the downtown corridor. Parking lots serving each zone would include the following: 1) North Zone – New parking lot off of Main Street (to the east of Lakeview Drive); 2) Central Zone – City Hall parking lot; 3) Southern Zone – Blake Park Parallel Parking and Ivy Hawn Charter School parking lot.

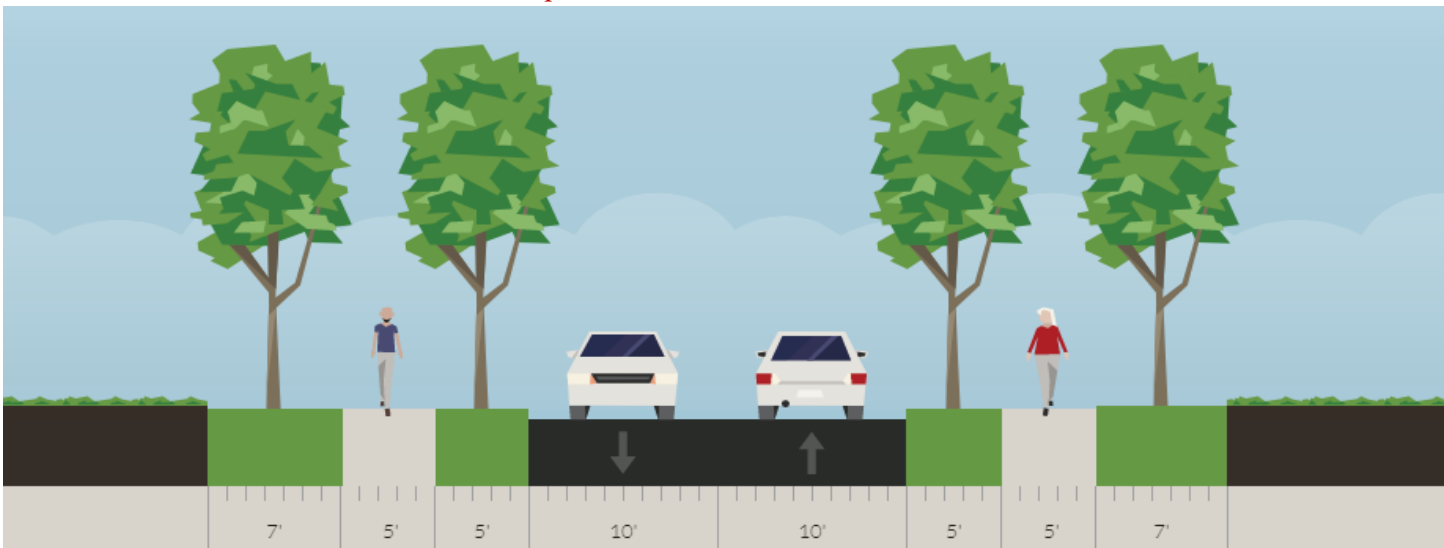
Lakeview Drive – Urban Frontage with Parallel Parking

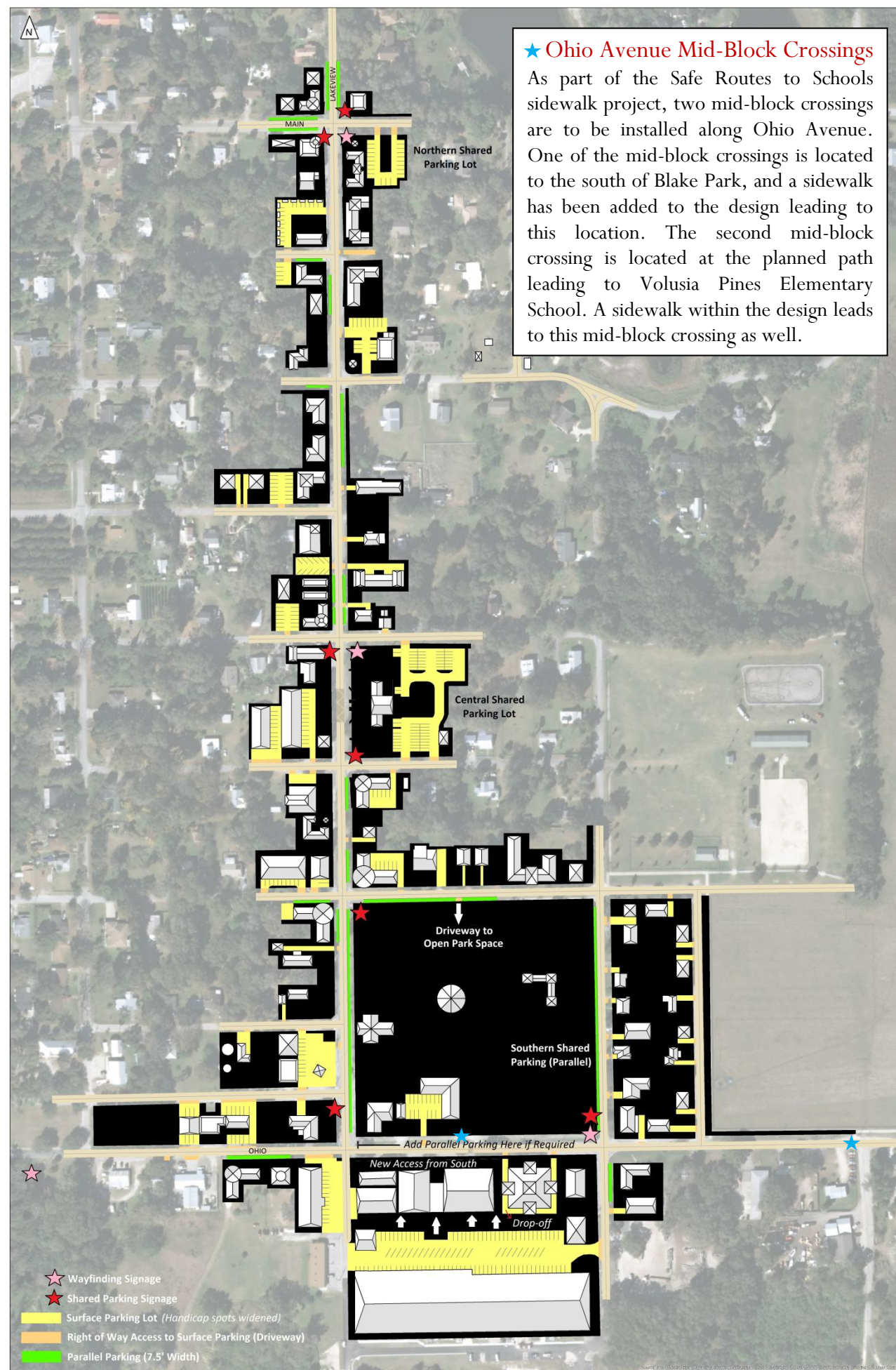


Lakeview Drive – Urban Frontage without Parallel Parking



Lakeview Drive – Natural & Undeveloped Sections



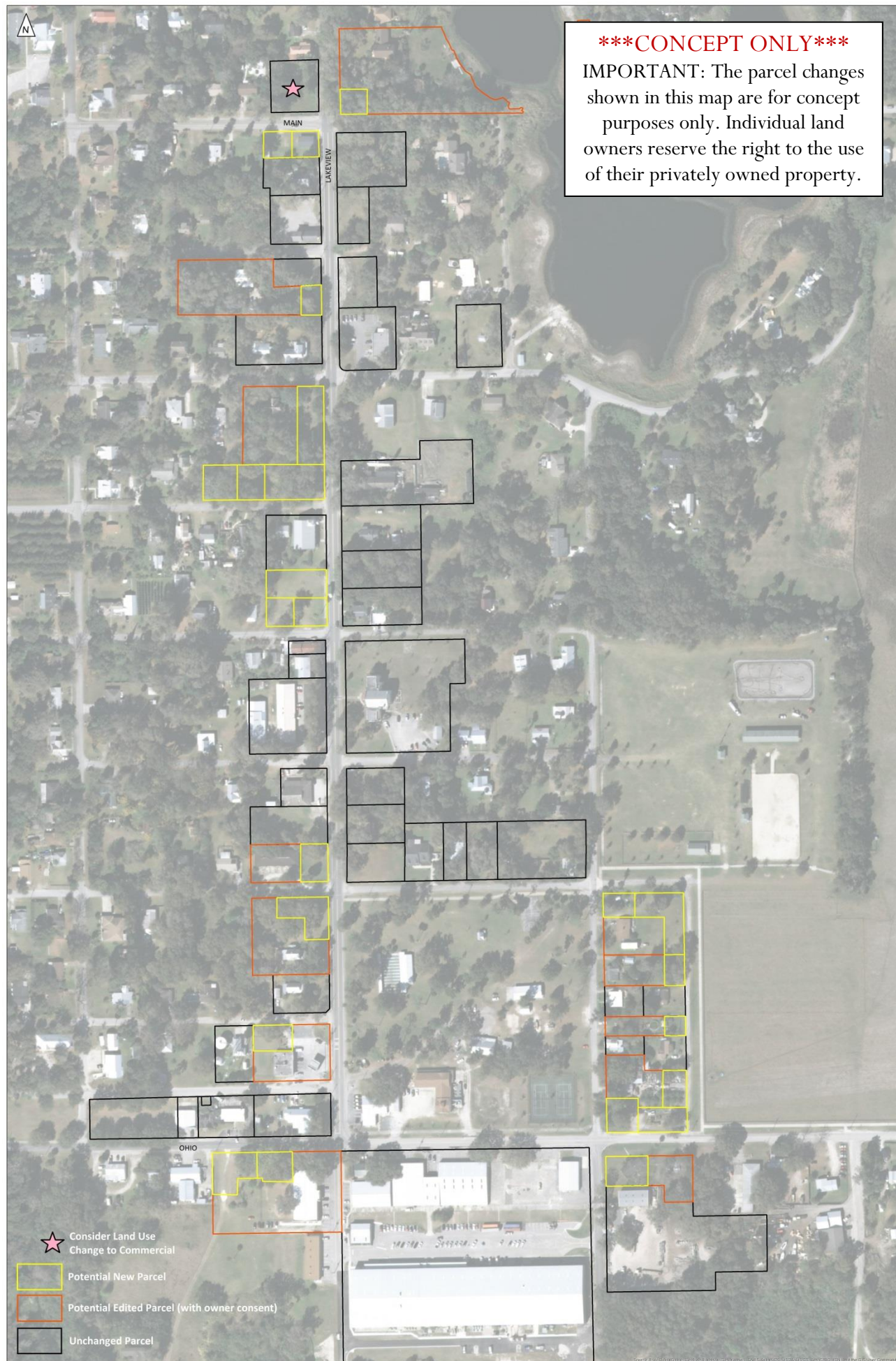


Existing and Potential Buildings

The map on the left depicts whether buildings in the downtown master plan are existing or potential. As can be seen, the design team worked within the existing urban fabric to complete the master plan. An effort was put in place to increase the urbanism in the northern portion of the plan near the intersection of Lakeview Drive and Main Street. Within the central portion of the plan, some new potential buildings have been added by splitting the current parcel lines of a few parcels with large setbacks. In the southern portion of the plan, an effort was made to “frame” the outside of the Blake Park block with buildings in order to establish an urban scale while “activating” the energy level in the park as the City’s center gem.

Parking and Signage

A shared parking strategy is being utilized by the City in order to minimize the amount of parking in the downtown area and maximize space for common areas. The new parking lot proposed near the intersection of Lakeview Drive and Main Street, the improved city hall parking lot, the Post Office parking lot, as well as voluminous amounts of parallel parking have been added to meet future demand. If additional parking is needed along the northern side of Ohio Avenue to the south of Blake Park, right-of-way has been saved for this potential addition. In addition to parking, signage directing visitors to shared public parking areas has been proposed (with locations on the map to the left). Directional signage and map signage has also been proposed. Additional information concerning signage locations and signage types are included within the Signage section of this report.



Potential Parcel Split Locations

In order to complete a design of a quaint urban environment, the design team completed a thorough review of the current boundaries on all built parcels within the downtown master plan area. Utilizing this information, the design team then determined which parcels could potentially be altered to make room for additional buildings adjacent to Lakeview Drive and Blake Park. The map on the left depicts the parcels in the plan area that have remained the same as part of the design and which parcels have a “cut” proposal. It is important to note that any changes to parcel boundaries are completely under the discretion of the property owners.

Public Art Locations

Public art was deemed one of the most important features for the downtown area by residents of the community. As a result, the design team designated four primary areas for public art installations. Details are below.

Location #1 – Main/Lakeview

A fountain feature and benches are present at this pocket park location. In this area, it is recommended that the City incorporate public art into the design of the fountain structure.

Location #2 – Post Office

Similar to #1, it is recommended that the City use the underutilized public right of way to incorporate art into a fountain or obelisk structure. A horse theme could tie-in well.

Location #3: City Hall

Murals can be hung in front of City Hall showing the work of local artists. Stand-alone art can also be added.

Location #4: Blake Park

It is recommended that Blake Park be utilized for art shows. These can take place in the farmers market area or the open flex space area.

Intersection Art

The Lakeview Drive and Main Street intersection could include street art.

VI. Master Plan Area Descriptions

Overview

The downtown master plan can be broken down into three primary areas. This section of the report discusses more in-depth details regarding the design of the following three plan areas:

- North Business Cluster
- City Hall & Brock Plaza
- Blake Park

Plan Area #1: North Business Cluster

The primary gateway into the downtown district occurs at the intersection of Main Street and Lakeview Drive. This area is potentially primed for redevelopment efforts due to the vastly undeveloped Lakeview Drive frontage in this area. As a result, the design team appropriated a number of potential minimal-setback buildings in this location in order to create an enclosed urban environment with a diverse array of shops and stores.

The Urban Scale

The urban scale of the northern business cluster would be similar to that of Micanopy, Florida. Buildings would max-out at two stories as to not be overbearing for the scale of the town. In addition, street trees would enclose the urban environment and create a comfortable walking area for pedestrians.

Public Parking

A public parking lot has been designed for visitors along Main Street. This parking lot would serve as the “shared parking lot” for the northern business cluster. It will be important for City staff to add a vegetative buffer and opaque fencing to the east side of this parking lot in order to ensure a smooth transition to residential properties to the east. In addition to this parking lot, parallel parking (pale yellow in plan) could be added to segments of Lakeview Drive and Main Street.

Road Alignment

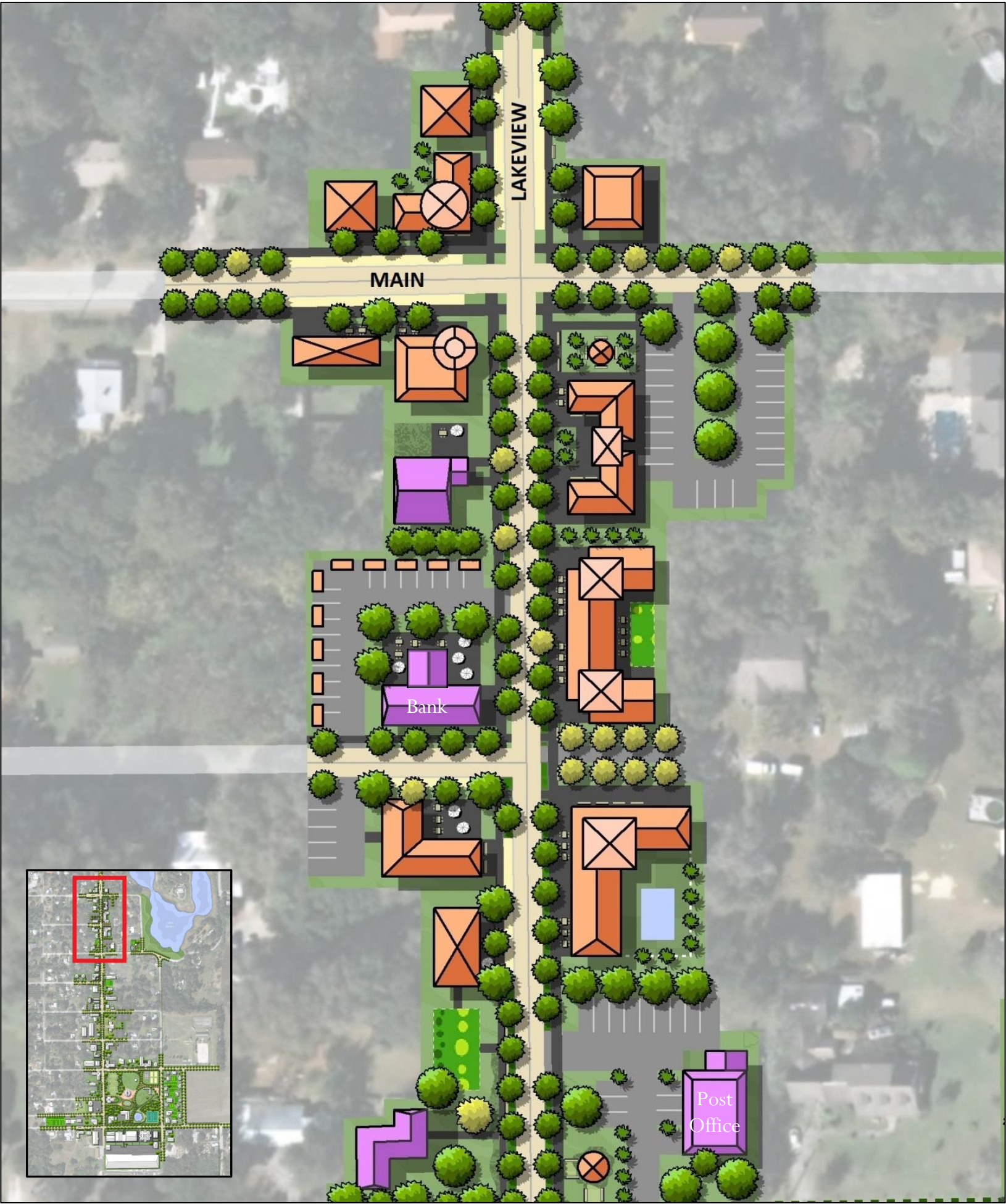
All road alignments within the plan utilize the current centerline of the roadway and are 20 feet in width. This was done in order to maximize the public right-of-way for an enhanced pedestrian environment and to minimize redesign costs.

Area Activities

A diverse array of business types would flourish in this location. This includes goods and services such as a barber shop, entertainment venues such as bars or restaurants, boutique stores, and more general spaces for other business types.



Historic Downtown: This area was originally one of the main activity centers in historic downtown Lake Helen. The picture above depicts the bank property and Lakeview Drive in the early 20th century.





Urban Form Example



Sidewalk Environment: Outdoor seating would be located at the edge of the public right-of way to enhance the sidewalk experience.



Tree Canopy: This portion of the downtown would greatly benefit from a mirrored tree canopy. Comfort for pedestrians should be a priority.



The Old Bank Property: The owner of the old bank property is considering updates to the façade of the structure. The downtown design team included space for this potential addition by including a public seating area to the north of the bank building.



Old Bank Property Food Trucks: Space has been allotted on the future bank site for pop-up shops and food trucks. This property could potentially serve as a catalyst for other businesses to open in the area.

Plan Area #2: City Hall

City Hall and Brock Plaza are centrally located within the downtown area and would benefit from the addition of hardscaping, landscaping, and public space amenities. The following components were incorporated into the design of this area.

City Hall Shared Parking

The planned shared parking lot has been incorporated into the design for this area. This shared parking lot reduces parking demand on private lots within this area of downtown.

City Hall Landscaping & Hardscaping

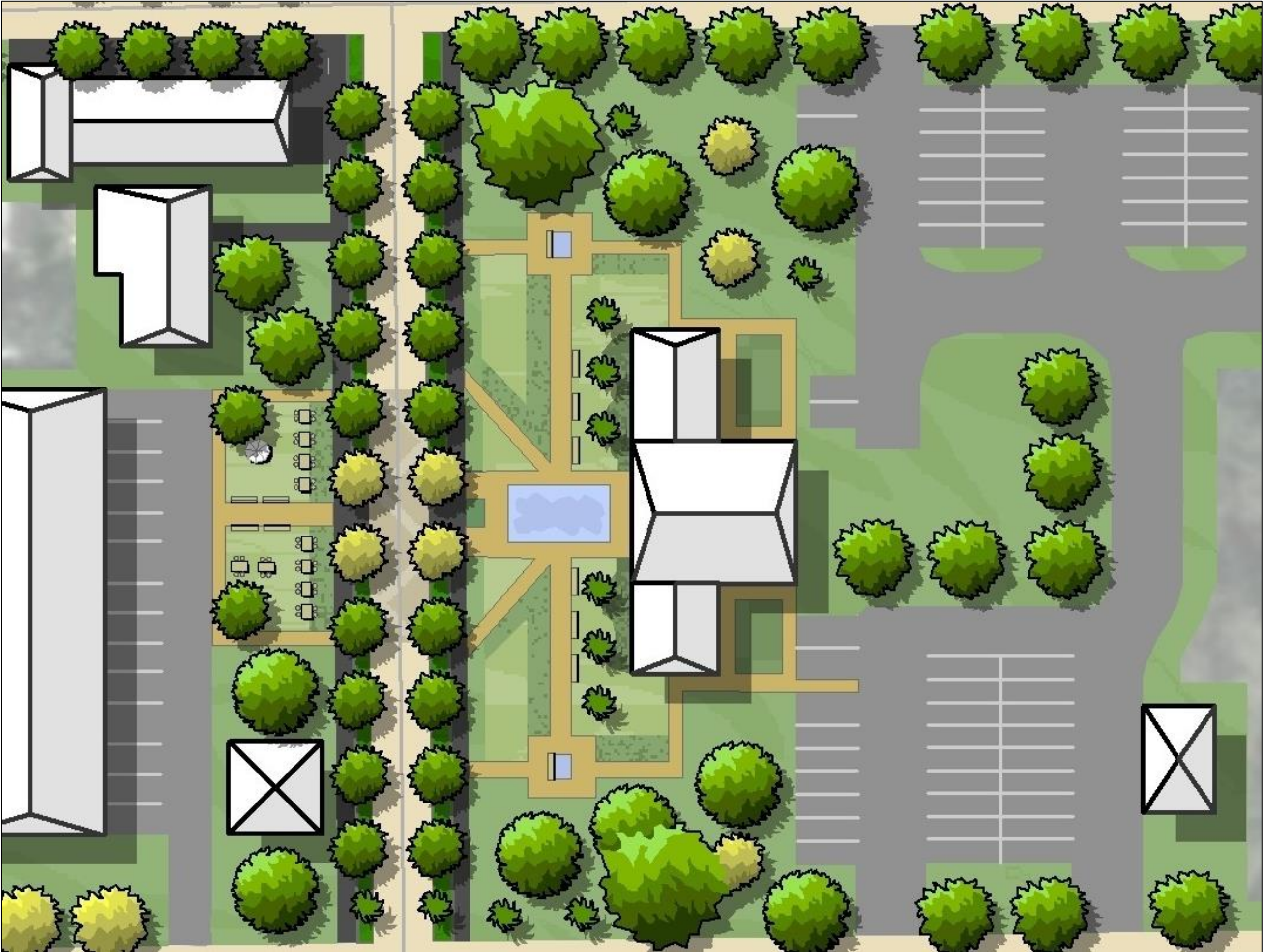
Landscaping and hardscaping have been added to the frontage of City Hall along Lakeview Drive. This includes ornate paths, benches, a fountain and plants.

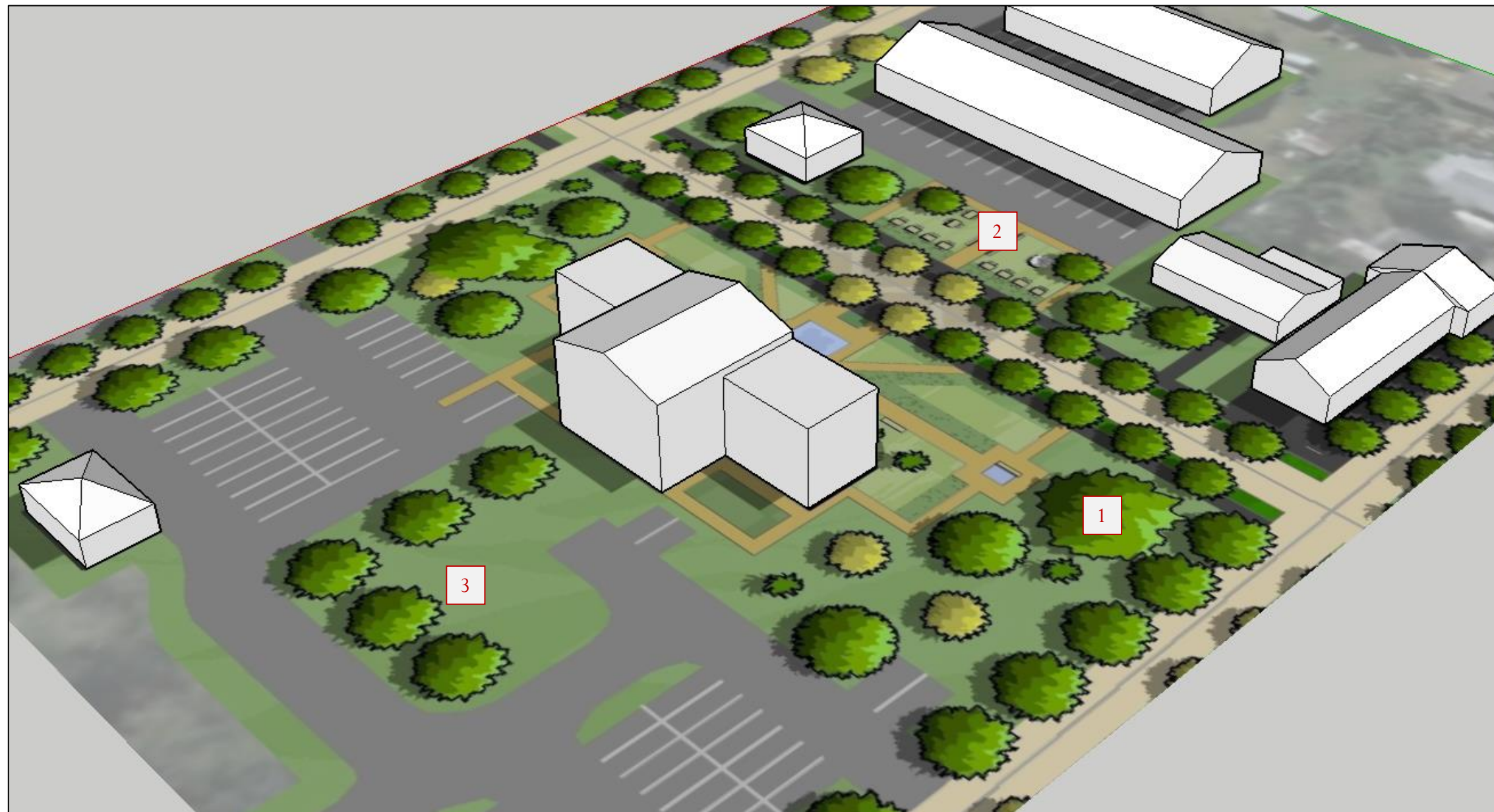
Brock Plaza Seating Area

A shaded seating area has been added across the street from City Hall. Connectivity in this area would benefit from a reduction in curb heights and stamped concrete on the roadway. This would also assist in calming traffic in this area.

Maximized Tree Canopy

The City Hall area would greatly benefit from the addition of high-canopy trees such as southern live oaks.





Tree Canopy: The southern live oak (pictured) is a high-canopy tree native to central Florida.



Brock Plaza Public Area: A shaded eating area at Brock Plaza (similar to the one pictured) could improve business in the corridor. A row of parking would need to be removed from Brock Plaza to make way for the public space.



Fountain Art: As discussed in the previous section of this report, the design adds a fountain in front of the City Hall building, which could be a potential opportunity to tie-in the citywide horse and equestrian theme.



City Hall: City Hall has a nice architectural feel that blends well into the downtown area. Therefore, the goal of any landscaping and hardscaping efforts to the City Hall property should be to enhance the historic architectural features of the building. While a number of high shade trees are proposed in the area, overall masking of the building façade should remain minimal. Ornamental palm trees are potentially a good choice to enhance the architecture.



Bioswale: The grass area in the new parking lot could potentially function as an on-site water treatment system utilizing native plants.

Plan Area #3: Blake Park

Blake Park has been redesigned to feature a diverse array of activities and events. Located to the southwest of the Equestrian Center, this park is planned to function as an active space where visitors can dine, relax, have picnics, or attend events such as concerts, movie nights, barbeque competitions, car shows, farmers markets, and other recreational activities. The park is designed to have a number of open “flex spaces” that can function for different types of events.

Potential Blake Park Plan Alterations

#1: Blake Park Dog Park

The dog park (across Lakeview Drive from the gas station) is designed to have a high tree canopy (see image on next page). Due to its current use as a septic drain field for Decker’s, this area would likely not have a tree canopy unless sewer is installed in the corridor.

#2: Shuffle Board Court

While this concept shows the removal of the shuffle board court, this facility could remain in place while allowing room to the north for the farmers market.



Blake Park Features & Picture Examples

Parallel Parking (1)

Parallel parking has been added to the west, north and east sides of the park within this design. In addition to the parking areas in the design (pale yellow), parking could also potentially be added to the south side of Blake Park, along the north side of Ohio Avenue. This would increase parking for the businesses to the south.

Barbeque Areas (2)

Barbeque areas were a priority for residents in the Blake Park area. This would allow residents to spend a day at the park and potentially use the market store for cooking materials.

Market Store & Farmers Market (3)

The market store (to the south of the farmers market) could sell vegetables and meats grown locally and could function similarly to Orlando’s East End Market. This market store would be a more permanent fixture that works in unison with the farmers market.

Treehouse & Playground Area (4)

The planned playground has been incorporated into the Blake Park design. In tune with the city’s tree theme, a treehouse has been added as a unique park feature.

Shaded Dog Park (5)

While the shading may be a long term endeavor due to drainage issues, the dog park could potentially be a passive park area where visitors relax with their pets. The shaded environment at Fleet Peebles Park in Orlando (picture #5) is a good example of how to create a comfortable outdoor area in the Florida sun.

Hitching Posts (6)

The equestrian center to the northeast of Blake Park would tie into Blake Park much more effectively if hitching posts are added for horses. Horses would be permitted in certain areas of the park.

Boutique Hotel (7)

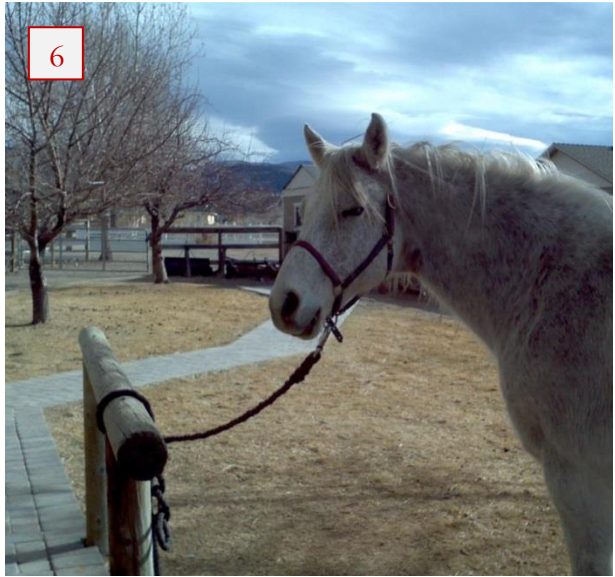
The City would greatly benefit if a boutique hotel was added to Blake Park. This would allow equestrian center visitors to stay overnight, increasing the odds that they will spend money at local businesses and infuse dollars into the Lake Helen economy. The hotel could be modeled after the old Harlan Hotel, but smaller.

Beach Volleyball (8)

In order to attract a younger demographic to the park, a number of residents expressed interest in the addition of beach volleyball courts to the Blake Park area. This would likely flourish due to the sport’s growing popularity. These courts would need to be covered by City staff before tropical storm events.

Landscaping Southern Façades (9)

The building façades to the south of Blake Park are currently an aesthetic issue that residents and City staff would like to solve. This area would benefit from the addition of a landscaping buffer along the façades of the buildings. The picture to the right (#9) shows a good example of masking using landscaping.



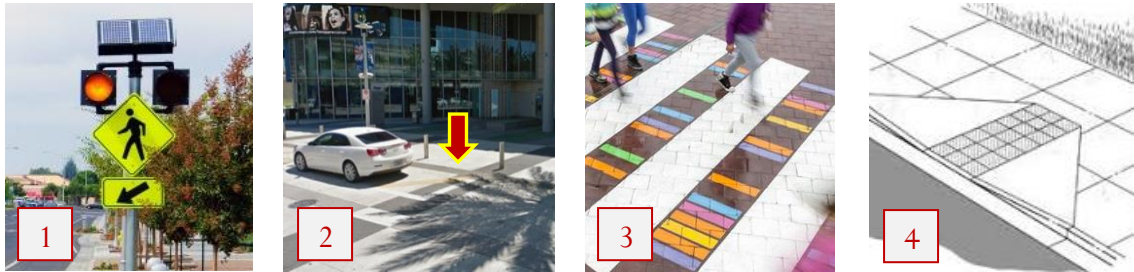
VII. Bicycle and Pedestrian Enhancements

Overview

The bicycle and pedestrian network within the downtown area receives a major upgrade in the master plan design. The main goal of the design team was to create an interconnected sidewalk system that enhances safety for bicyclists and pedestrians while lowering ambiguity for motorists. A number of techniques are utilized to make the sidewalk experience quaint and comfortable while ensuring that pedestrians are visible to motorists. This portion of the report determines best practices for the sidewalk network and includes renderings of potential intersection and mid-block crossing upgrades.

Mid-Block Crossing Features

- Flashing Beacons (1)
- Flat Curbs (*at City Hall*) (2)
- Colored Crossings (3)
- ADA Ramps (4)



Potential Sidewalk Patterns

- Earthy Tones (1)
- Rustic (2)
- Permeable (3)



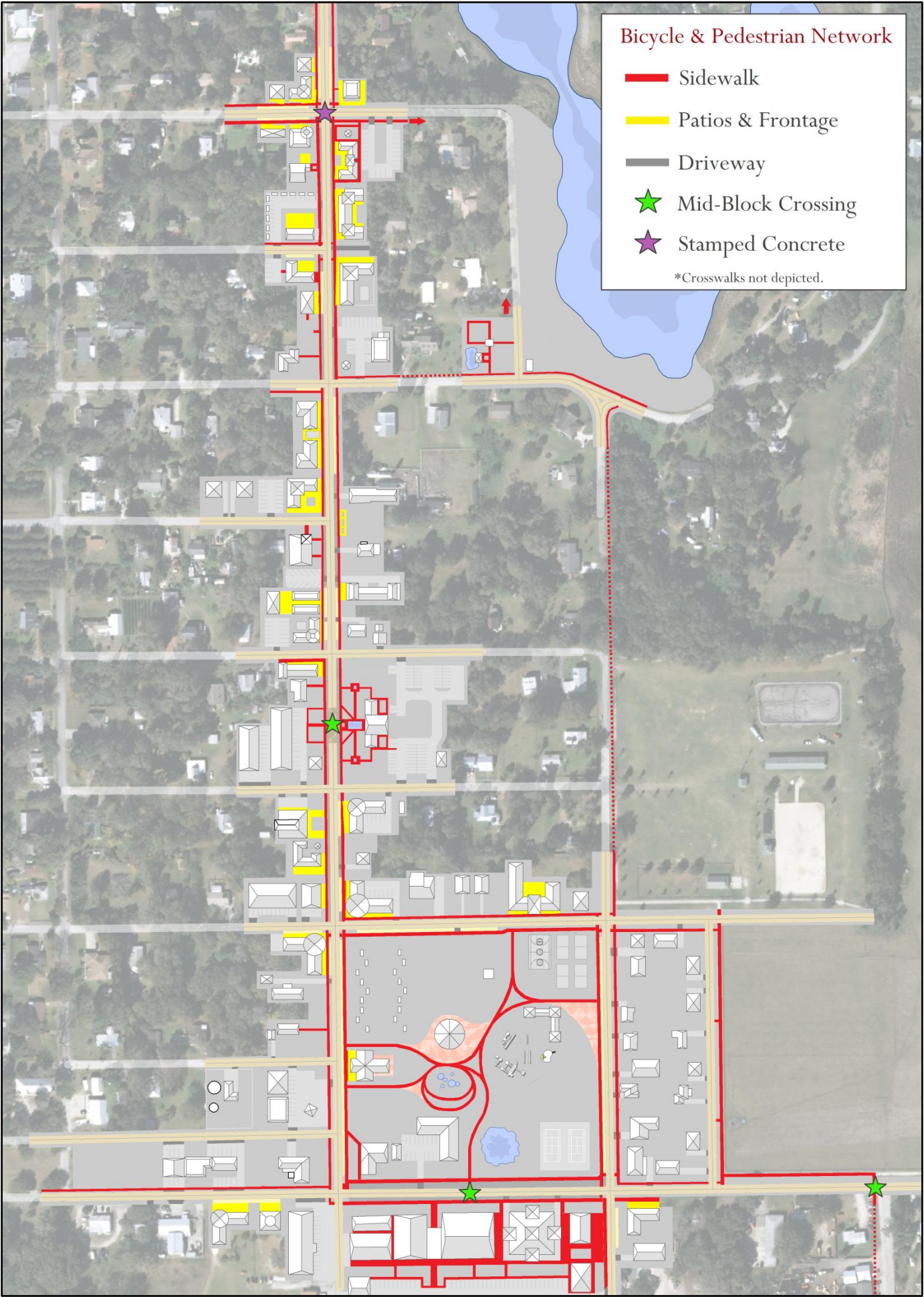
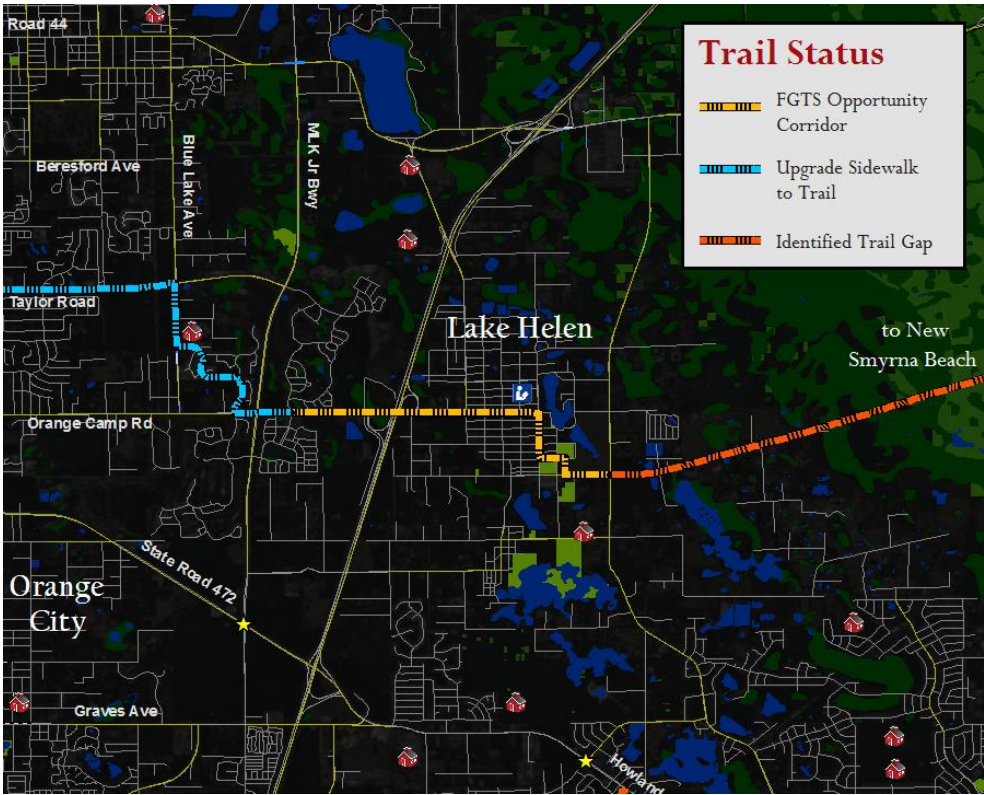
Regional Connections

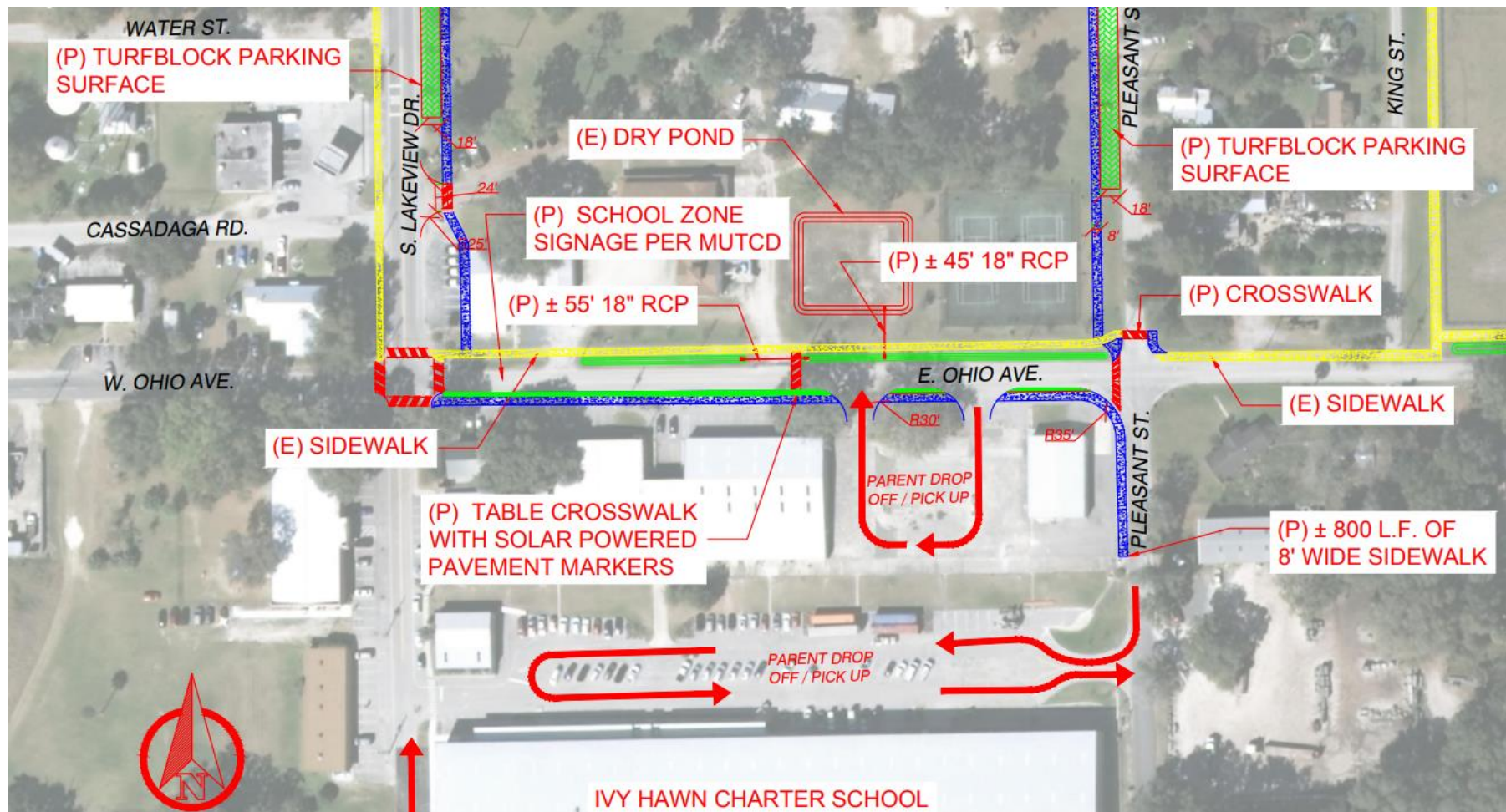
The River to Sea Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) recently updated the countywide trails master plan, and a priority segment is planned for Lake Helen.

As part of the master plan design process, wide sidewalks have been added along the planned trail corridor which travels from the west along Main Street, down the east side of Lakeview Avenue, along the northern side of Washington Avenue to the north of Blake Park, and then down King Street and along Ohio Avenue.

These conceptual trail alignments are primarily at the beginning stages, and none of the proposed segments have been funded as of June 2018.

The image to the right depicts the regional connectivity of the TPO's trail plan as well as the current status of the trail segments.





ECT
Environmental Consulting & Technology, Inc.
707 East Third Ave., New Smyrna Beach, FL 32168
Phone: (386) 427-0694 Fax: (386) 427-0889

LAKE HELEN
SAFE ROUTE TO
SCHOOL GRANT

CONCEPT
PLAN
LAYOUT 3

SCALE: 1" = 100' @ 11" x 17"

PROJECT NO.: 13-0082

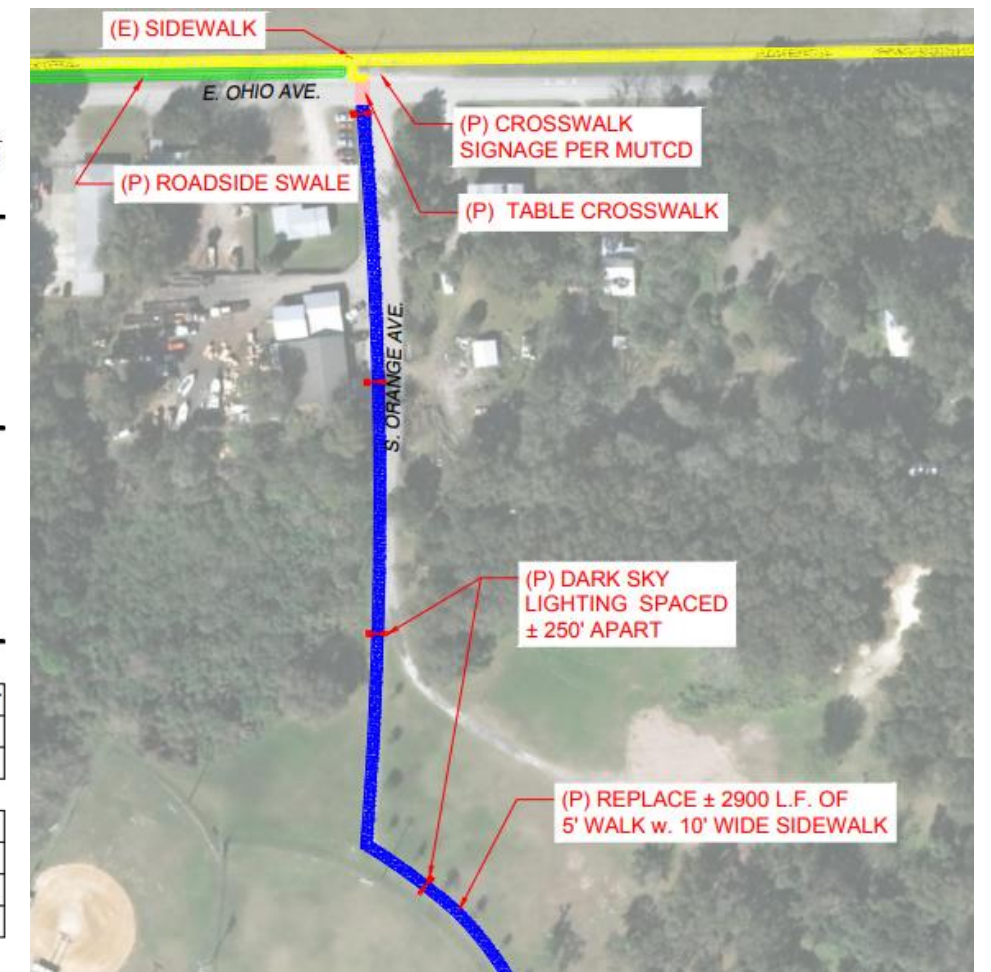
PROJECT DATE: 11 - 23 - 2016

DESIGNED BY: SGD

DRAWN BY: WPC

CHECKED BY: JSM

APPROVED BY: SGD

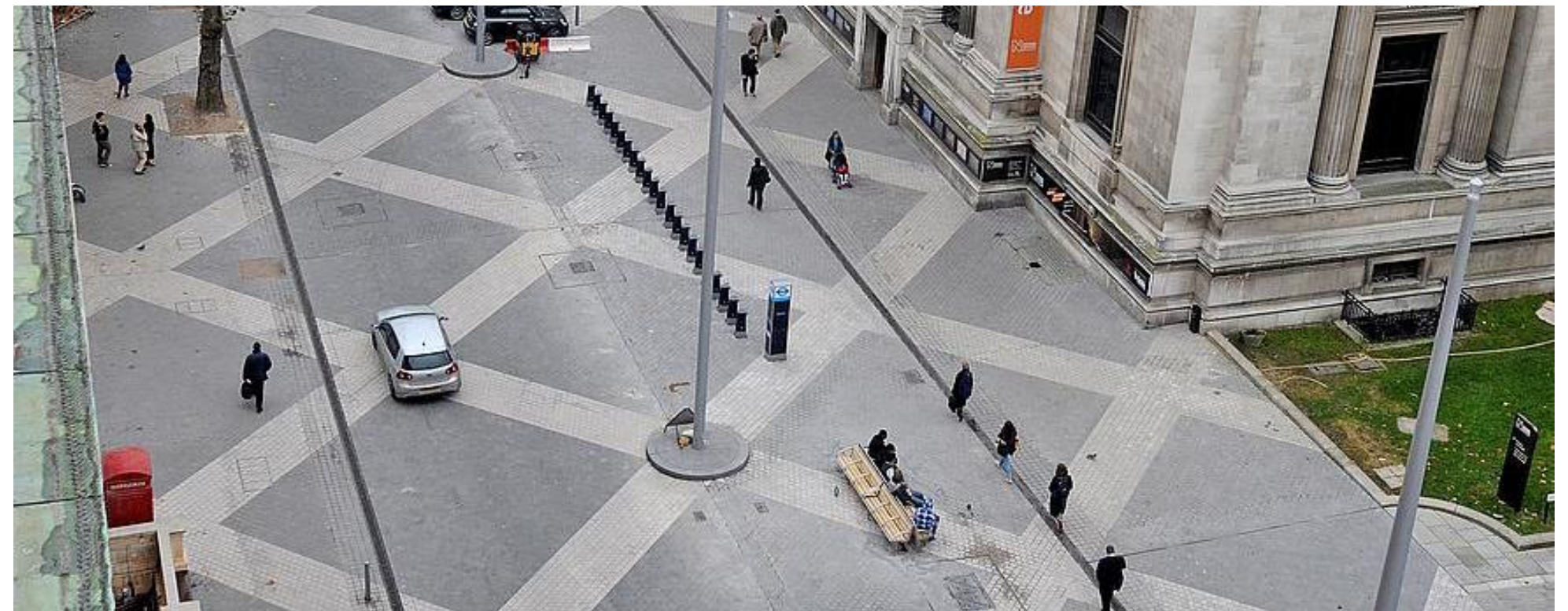


Ivy Hawn Charter School Mid-Block Crossing: This mid-block crossing and the student drop-off and pick-up loop have been incorporated into the master plan design. Bolstering the aesthetic value of the frontages along this stretch of roadway with landscape masking techniques is recommended.

Volusia Pines Elementary School Mid-Block Crossing: This mid-block crossing has also been incorporated into the master plan.



Main Street and Lakeview Drive Intersection: This intersection could potentially morph into an art piece, like this intersection in Portland, Oregon.



City Hall Pedestrian Environment: The section of Lakeview Drive at city hall could benefit from flat shoulders, stamped concrete and bollards. Similar to the picture above, these features put drivers in a "discretionary position" to pedestrians. Visual cues give pedestrians the priority on such a stretch of roadway.

VIII. Design Guidelines

The downtown area would benefit from the use of a uniform set of design guidelines for buildings and private property. The City of Lake Helen previously put together design guidelines for the Gateway Corridor, and these standards match the input received from citizens in terms of the design and components of the downtown corridor. Therefore, the following design guidelines would also benefit the downtown area.

Architectural Styles

The following architectural styles are preferred in the downtown area:

- Bungalow (Primary Use)
- Classical Revival
- Colonial Revival
- Frame Vernacular
- Gothic Revival
- Italianate
- Mediterranean Revival
- Queen Anne
- Shingle Architectural Styles



Roof Materials

- Metal (1)
- Shingle (2)



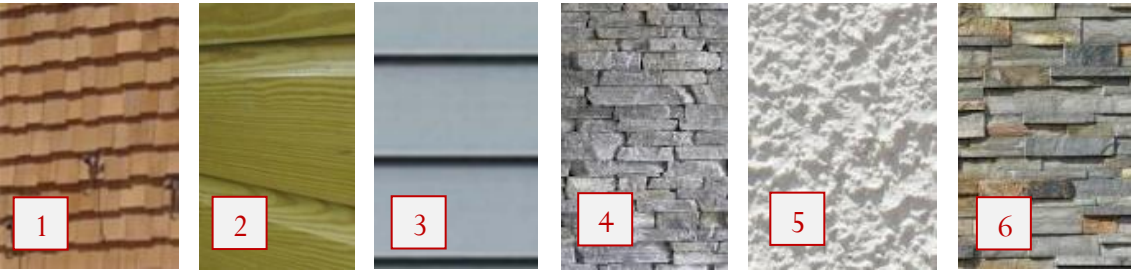
Roof Design

- Low-Pitched, Gabled with Wide Overhang (1)
- Hipped Style (2)



Exterior Materials

- Wood Shingle (1)
- Drop Siding (2)
- Clapboard (3)
- Stone (4)
- Stucco (5)
- Masonry (6)



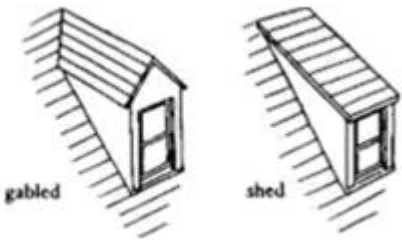
Height

- One Story (1)
- One ½ Stories (2)
- Two Stories (3)



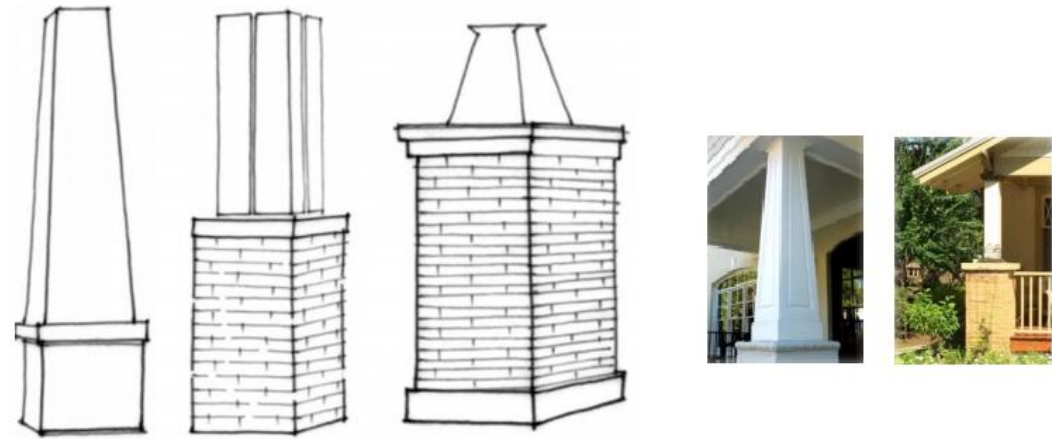
Windows

- Multi-Pane Sash (1)
- Dormers (2)



Columns

- Tapered Square Columns



Doors

Typical use would include panel doors, usually with the top half glazed. Occasionally, doors have sidelights or transoms in clear or divided glass.



Side Entry & Detached Garages

- Wood-style doors
- Reflects character of historic swinging doors
- Preferably located at the rear of structure
- Detached garage located at rear
- Breezeway to home



Lighting

- Antique
- Craftsman



Paint

- Dark Colors & Earth Tones
- Dark Stains in Place of Paint
- Unpainted Brick, Stone, Stucco



Front Porch

Either full-or-partial width supported by tapered square columns.



IX. Signage and Banners

The following signs have been designed for City staff. The names below (letters and numbers) match the file names of the signs as provided to the City. It is important to note that the signage JPEG files (showing the sign mounted to a pole) are lower-quality images than the base JPEG design files. The higher-resolution images should be sent to sign vendors for quotes.

Master Sign Listing and Approximate Costs

The following costs are associated with the signs included in this portion of the report.

- Sign A1 (4 Versions): Mounted 30” x 48” Banner --- Single Side --- Directional --- \$443 + installation
- Sign A2 (3 Versions): Mounted 30” x 48” Banner --- Single Side --- Map --- \$443 each + installation
- Sign B (4 Versions): Mounted 24” x 36” Banner --- Double Sided --- Directional & Farmers Market --- \$498 each + installation
- Sign D1 (4 Versions): Free-Standing 30” x 48” Sign --- Directional --- \$341 + sign/installation (quote required for sign)
- Sign D2 (3 Versions): Free-Standing 30” x 48” Sign --- Map --- \$341 + sign/installation (quote required for sign)
- Sign F: Custom Parking Sign --- Cost Not Available; contact vendor for custom sign
- Sign G: Custom Horse Crossing Sign --- Cost Not Available; contact vendor for custom sign
- Sign H: Custom Street Sign --- Cost Not Available; contact vendor for custom sign
- Sign J (4 Versions): Custom Directional Sign --- Cost Not Available; contact vendor for custom sign or construct a sign

Sign A1: Directional Banners (Single Side)



Sign A2: Map Banners (Single Side)



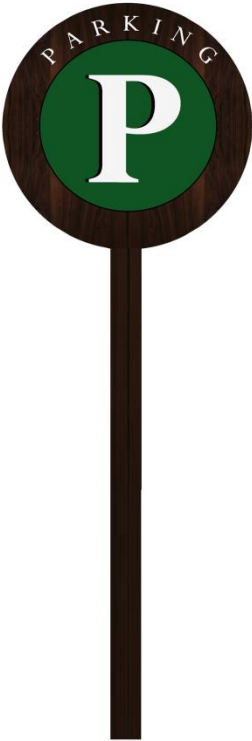
Sign B: Directional & Farmers Market Banners (Double Sided) – 2 of 4 Options



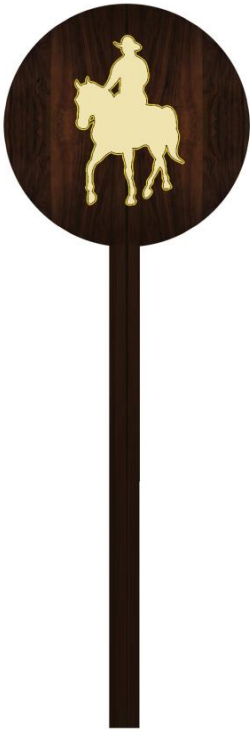
Sign D1: Free Standing Directional Signs



Sign F: Parking Sign



Sign G: Horse Crossing (MUTCD)



Sign H: Street Sign



Sign D2: Free Standing Map Signs



Sign J: Wooden Directional Sign



Appendix 1: Public Workshops

The project team held two public workshops with residents of the community to determine consensus items regarding the future of the downtown Lake Helen area. The first meeting was held on December 13th, 2017 and a follow up meeting was held on February 7th, 2018. The following information was obtained from these meetings.

Public Workshop #1: December 13th, 2017

Introduction

On December 13, 2017, the City of Lake Helen and the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council held a stakeholder workshop to obtain recommendations regarding the potential actions that the City could undertake to address the vision for the Downtown Master Plan and to discuss best practice findings, barriers and opportunities for the downtown area. This was accomplished pursuant to Deliverable #1 of the FDEO contract, which states, “Conduct a stakeholder meeting of invited members of the City to include board members, business representatives and others as determined by City staff to discuss existing conditions and obtain recommendations and a beginning vision for the Downtown Master Plan and educate them on best practice findings, barriers and opportunities for the downtown area.” A list of attendees accompanies this document along with the agenda and presentations shown at this stake holder workshop. The workshop was interactive, meaning that the discussions occurred as the presentation was given, with ongoing conversations and question/answers.



Welcome and Introductions

The City of Lake Helen extended invitations to the elected boards, adjacent local government staff and the general public through emails, personal invitations, newspaper notification and posted information at City Hall. The City manager, Jason Yarborough, spoke about the purpose of the meeting and had everyone introduce themselves and state their interest in the meeting.

Presentation

Fred Milch from the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council gave a PowerPoint presentation and discussed existing conditions, the vision for the City, best practices and barriers and opportunities for the Downtown. The presentation was interactive with the audience prompted to add their thoughts during the presentation. Also, an interactive Mentimeter survey was embedded into the presentation so that participants could use their smart phones to vote on questions posed on the screen.

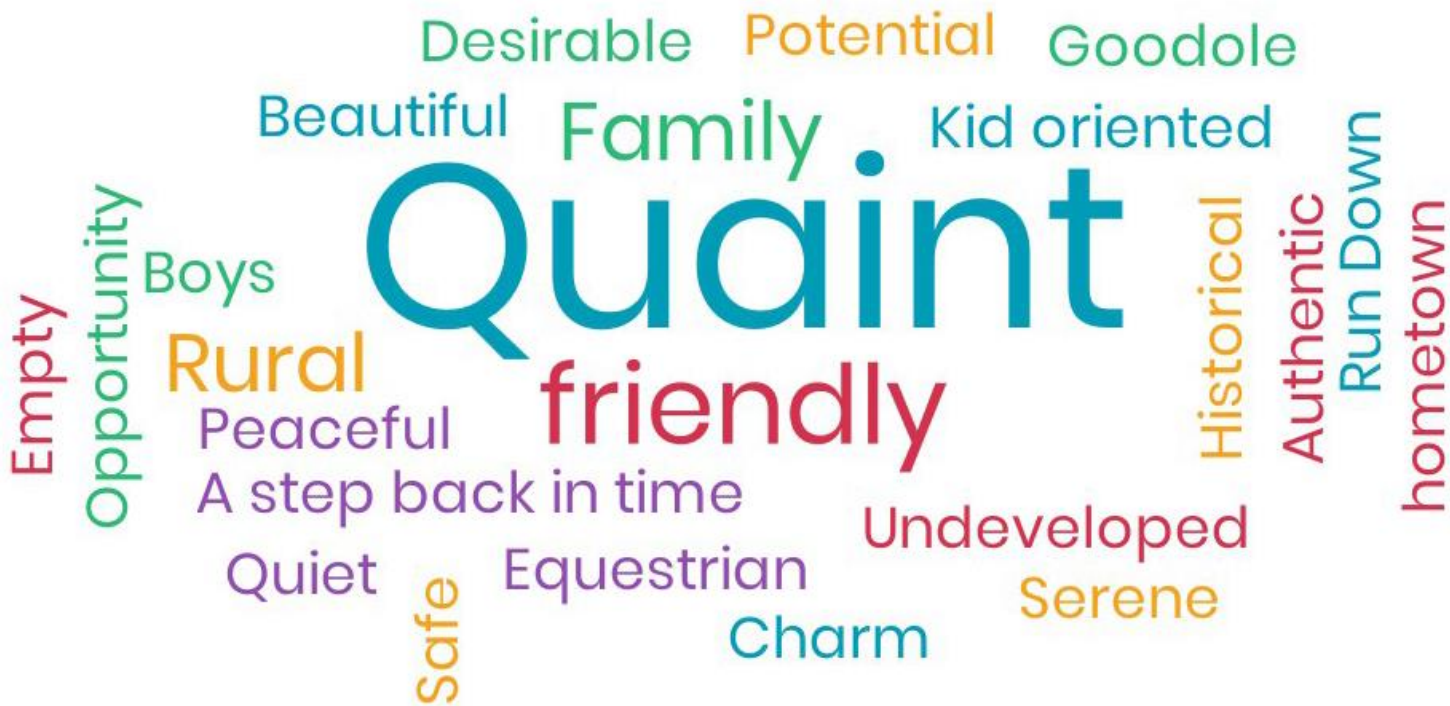
Mentimeter Survey Results

Mentimeter is a web based survey tool that allows participants to use their smartphones to let their thoughts be known regarding various aspects of Lake Helen. The survey used at the stakeholder meeting included seven questions:

- 1. In what capacity are you here tonight?
 - a. Interested Resident: 6
 - b. Elected Official: 4
 - c. Business Owner: 4
 - d. Horse Enthusiast: 2
 - e. Government Employee: 4

Comment on Results: Out of 26 attendees, only 20 voted. Relatively even split, with elected officials and government employees in the majority.

- 2. The following word description question was posed:
Type two words that describe your feelings about Lake Helen presently:



3. The following word description question was posed:

Type two words that describe your vision for Lake Helen in the future:



Comment on Results: Added are words reflecting a more prosperous city with Restaurants being most prominent. Shops, Quaint, Vibrant, friendly, and Green are the other most common words. Words such as traffic and touristy are the only negative words that are discernable, although “touristy” could be a positive attribute in some situations. Overall, the future scenario seems relatively positive.

4. Lake Helen's future should:

- Incorporate more businesses: 11
- Concentrate on new residential areas: 1
- Add mixed use areas: 3
- Remain like it is today: 2

Comment on results: More business activity is the clear preference, with mixed use areas a distant second. It may be advantageous that the businesses on the ground floor could have offices and/or residences, thereby having the mixed-use areas contain businesses.

5. For the new development occurring to the east of town, which appeals to you:

- e. Large residential lots: 0
- f. Compact development with dedicated open space: 3
- g. Horse themed development that links with the existing equine center: 6
- h. Mixed use development (office, retail and residential): 8

Comment on Results: With this question, mixed use development is most preferred, which is somewhat contrary to the previous questions where mixed use areas scored relatively low. An explanation of what each type of land use contains may have resulted in a more similar answer.

6. What is your preference for vehicle parking?

- Provide in front of businesses: 3
- Provide parking behind businesses: 9
- Allow parking on streets without much restriction: 5

Comment on Results: Most respondents preferred parking behind the businesses followed by less restrictive parking throughout the town, which would include in front of businesses. Currently, parking is relatively restricted, however, the City has made a concerted effort to provide shared parking in City owned lots that could also serve future businesses.

7. Is a roundabout a good option for Lake Helen?

- d. Yes: 7
- e. No: 7
- f. Not Sure: 2

Comment on Results: The results are split evenly. This could change once residents learn more about roundabouts or once they experience them in action.

Public Workshop #1 Breakout Sessions

Two breakout sessions were conducted and each person attended approximately twenty minutes at each session. The sessions were: *Vision for the Downtown Master Plan- Share your Ideas*, and *Best Practices, Barriers and Opportunities for the Downtown*. The results of the sessions are summarized below:

Breakout Session #1: Vision For the Downtown Master Plan – Share Your Ideas

- 1. Sidewalk and bicycle path combinations are beneficial, and funding could be through a grant, the City funds and/or some other organization that is committed to sidewalks and bicycle facilities.
- 2. Street lights that are LED for lower operating costs and that look like gas lamps are desired. The lights should emanate from City Hall and go to the downtown and historic district.
- 3. Central Sewer is necessary if the City wants to have restaurants because this land use requires copious amounts of water and wastewater capacity. Also, if a hotel was to be built in Lake Helen, sewer would be required.
- 4. Equine trails and associated retail is an avenue the City can pursue for future retail.
- 5. Bicycle facilities should be enhanced and Lake Helen should be a “cyclist community” and include a niche such as antique bikes.
- 6. Urban trails and interactive apps will bring bicyclists. Wayfinding signs as well.
- 7. There could be a median down Lakeview with brick crosswalks.
- 8. More Mom and Pop retail establishments will add to the ambiance of Lake Helen.
- 9. Public Art and art shows will work well in the Downtown.
- 10. The parks can be multi-use and a band shell/amphitheater would enhance the use of the park.
- 11. The existing equine center can be used to enhance the horse theme. Carriage rides would be great and work well for other events such as weddings and other celebrations. The equine theme can work well with folks travelling to events and spending money. The development of the land to the east of town could include an equine theme with clustered development or conservation subdivisions. More stalls and accommodation for horses would be a great amenity.
- 12. There are plans for public parking areas that will count for business requirements.
- 13. The history of the City along with arts and culture can be emphasized. Cassadaga is very close and the connection should be enhanced. Ann Stevens Bed and Breakfast can be used to support equine or other events.
- 14. A business alliance should be formed with Cassadaga and the hotel.
- 15. A food theme can be pursued. Example is the Florida & Company that makes wholesale smoked meats.
- 16. More businesses are needed, including a hardware store.
- 17. The cities of Perry, GA and the area of Jacksonville Square Center were pointed out as models.
- 18. Open space should be included.
- 19. Natural gas should be added to the downtown area.
- 20. Art festivals or “Equina-fests” would enhance the Lake Helen experience and economy.
- 21. Golf carts are allowed in Lake Helen and future plans should include accommodation for this form of transportation.

Breakout Session #1 Analysis

Based on the information related through the stakeholder meeting, the following themes became evident relating to the vision for the downtown master plan.

- 1. The physical appearance of the downtown could be enhanced with more pedestrian amenities to make the area feel welcoming to visitors and a safe environment. Enhanced sidewalks with paved crosswalks, wayfinding to direct people to highlights within the City and decorative streetlights for night time safety. In addition to walking, other modes were mentioned including horses, bicycles and golf carts. Both horses and golf carts are allowed within the Lake Helen city limits, and this could be a draw for visitors, particularly horse riders. Connections to urban and regional trails could be made to attract visitors using trails systems.
- 2. More economic growth within the downtown master plan area with the introduction of more restaurants and other businesses is necessary. A hardware store, food themed businesses and bed and breakfasts establishments were cited as good for the downtown. It was noted that, in order to make this feasible, sewer service would be mandatory.
- 3. Lake Helen should capitalize on the great features that are in the City through festivals and other events. The equine theme was brought up several times, along with the City’s rich history, arts and culture. The community of Cassadaga is very close and the connections between the areas should be enhanced. Blake Park is an excellent location for several types of events.

Breakout Session #2: Barriers, Opportunities & Best Practices

Barriers

- Lack of parking for 1) Downtown and 2) The Equestrian Center
- New development could increase traffic, which residents do not want
- A lack of residential density surrounding downtown may hurt future businesses
- Many citizens do not want any additional development
- There are not many safe sidewalks to use
- Right of way is an issue for some frontages (like the historic bank)
- Some city policies do not allow local businesses to thrive
 - Alcohol not permitted during events in the downtown area
- Lack of investment from local residents
- Small lot sizes hinder future development
- ADA infrastructure is lacking
- Lack of central sewage hinders future development
- Historic surveys may be inaccurate

Opportunities

- Create a Business Improvement District
- Create a business development working group to fix city codes & steer development
- Theme the CBD: Equestrian, arts & crafts, antiques, volleyball
 - Create a regional niche to increase investment
- Add something that accommodates families in the downtown
- Add the following places to the downtown:
 - Bed & Breakfasts, Live-Work units
 - Artisan shops, cafes, coffee store, cake store, barber shop, hardware store
 - Small grocer
 - Hay vendor
 - Dentist & doctor
- Shared-use parking has been approved for the downtown
- Southern live oaks provide excellent canopy and are everywhere in the town (use them!)
- New homes should have front porches that create conversations between neighbors
- Add a community garden to the downtown that produces food for local restaurants
- Add a water feature to the downtown
- Add basketball & tennis courts to the park
- Add unique features such as antique street lamps
- Complete a master bike/ped & sidewalks plan
- Apply for a grant that allows for electrical wiring to go underground
- Marketing for downtown events could boom business
- Add public wifi to the downtown area
- Add carriage rides to the downtown area in the future once it is developed
- Conglomerate some parcels to allow for future development
- Empty lots on the west side of town, and at the Costa site can be developed to help up the downtown density
- Allow one mortgage for a home and an office in transitional zones
- Add an events center that allows for the following
 - Music festivals
 - Farmers markets
 - Outdoor movies

Best Practices

- 1. Architecture: Florida Cracker, Georgian Colonial, Victorian, Colonial Revival
- 2. Homes: Bungalows; Close-to-medium setback with front porches
- 3. Maximum Stories: 2
- 4. Flora: Southern Live Oaks, Cypress Trees
- 5. Fences: Picket
- 6. Development Intensity: Low, detached
- 7. Street Layout: Mixed-grid, traditional; view-sheds obstruct grid
- 8. Street Style: Brick (or stamped concrete), tree-lined

Overall Themes

Residents provided an in-depth and rather consistent vision for the future of downtown Lake Helen. This vision includes the addition of new low intensity development (at a maximum of two stories) to be placed in close proximity to Blake Park and the equestrian facility. New development will include commercial, residential and potentially live-work units as well as limited usage of office-over-retail units in only the highest-intensity areas. Residents are adamant that the future downtown must keep the “quant, small town feel” of Lake Helen, and view-sheds that provide natural and rural views should be preserved, particularly on the currently-undeveloped Costa Site. In addition to keeping the “quaint” feel of the town, a sense of nostalgia was palpable with residents, and a consistent sentiment among all residents was the need for “old Lake Helen” to be reinvigorated and expressed anew in the design of the new downtown area. This “old Lake Helen” strategy includes branding and marketing for a “regional niche” such as equestrian facilities that make the town unique – yet still genuine – to outside visitors.

Activities & Uses

According to residents, the equestrian uses in the downtown area should provide the backbone for a well-defined cluster of uses that includes a number of specific commercial, recreational and residential uses. Commercial uses in the downtown area should include bed and breakfasts, live-work units, artisan shops, a café, a coffee shop, a cake store, a barber shop, a hardware store, a small grocer, a hay vendor, a dentist and a doctor. Recreational uses, primarily at Blake Park, can include volleyball, basketball, tennis, playground facilities for children, leisure activities, and open space for food trucks or potentially a community garden. In addition to Blake Park, residents would like to see the development of an additional events center, potentially at the Costa site, that provides space for music festivals, farmers markets and outdoor movies. Residents agree that the residential units abutting these businesses and facilities should be similar in scale and architecture. “Bungalow” style homes in the Georgian Colonial, Florida cracker, Victorian and colonial revival architectural forms (with an emphasis on front porches) are seen to residents as the natural and genuine choice of style for the town. Southern live oaks will help to complement the low-key, traditional southern development styles. Modern architecture and ornamental trees should not be used.

Addressing the Barriers

Residents identified a number of barriers that could potentially hinder the development of the downtown, as well as some potentially unintended consequences of future development. The potential for future increased traffic was not something the residents looked forward to, but this issue could potentially be solved by prioritizing Prevatt Avenue as the primary regional access roadway alongside Interstate 4.

Additionally, residents and business owners commented on small lot sizes, the lack of sewer infrastructure, and minimal available right-of-way that, from a design and development perspective, could complicate future plans. These issues will need to be solved creatively utilizing design and parcel-conglomeration tactics.

In addition, an overall lack of parking in the downtown area was an issue, but City staff mentioned that this was partially addressed by a shared parking provision in the City ordinances and plans for future parking near City Hall, along the east side of Blake Park, and near the intersection of Main Street and Lakeview Drive. It is, however, a goal to create a downtown that is as walkable as possible so that a large proportion of visitors do not need to park in the downtown area. This strategy addresses two other barriers presented: the lack of residential density near the downtown area and the lack of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure near the downtown. Specific remedies to these issues could include the development of vacant lots in the area of High Street and Volusia Avenue; development of residential parcels at the Costa site; and finally, investing in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure that makes their walk (or bike ride) to the downtown as seamless as possible.

Public Workshop #2: February 7th, 2018

Introduction

The second public hearing for Lake Helen was held on February 7, 2018 at Lake Helen City Hall Council Chambers, 327 S. Lakeview Drive, Lake Helen, FL 32744. The agenda and sign-in sheet are attached.

Pursuant to the agenda, Mr. Jason Yarborough, the City Administrator, welcomed participants and had them introduce themselves. Residents were encouraged to state why they were interested in the meeting and speak a little about themselves. Mr. PJ Smith from the ECFRPC staff discussed the existing conditions analysis which was a part of Deliverable 1 of the FDEO Technical Assistance Grant. The PowerPoint presentation is attached.

Mr. Smith discussed the current zoning map and the future land use map and how similar they were. Few changes were necessary. Blake Park is the focus of the plan and will reactivate the traditional town center. Place-making ideas were discussed and examples from other cities were displayed. The land values were discussed and that the economic value is concentrated near the downtown. The trend analysis was discussed along with the attractions in town that draw people. Conservation subdivision ideas were also deliberated. Sidewalk coverage was displayed and the major east-west and north-south routes pointed out. The concept of complete streets was also shown.

Floodplains and wetlands were discussed and how they could also present opportunities and not just areas to avoid. They can be integrated into an overall plan.

Banner, Signage & Business Types Discussion

Design Style Feedback

- 1. Older, wood, craftsman signage – Will work in the downtown
- 2. Antique signage – Will work in the downtown
- 3. Signage – Artistic design representing different cultures preferred
- 4. Community-based mural – Will work in the downtown
- 5. Modern Signage – Will not work in the downtown
- 6. Street signs? – Wayfinding signs are preferred
- 7. Neo-traditional signage – Will work in the downtown
- 8. Banners on street poles for events – Will work in the downtown
- 9. Colors – Natural, earthy tones, rusty tones
- 10. Historic Harlan Hotel – Incorporate this design style in the downtown

Preferred Business Types

- Meat market
- Laundry store
- Jewelry store
- Electronics store
- Bars, cafes
- Retrofitted gas station
- Beauty salon, barber shop
- Pet grooming
- Services: Dentist, doctor, mechanic
- Convenience store

Appendix 2: Contact Information

Florida Department of Economic Opportunity

Phone Number: 800-204-2418
Address: 107 East Madison Street, Tallahassee, FL 32399

East Central Florida Regional Planning Council

Phone Number: 407-245-0300
Address: 455 North Garland Avenue, Orlando, FL 32801, 4th Floor

City of Lake Helen, Florida

Phone Number: 386-228-2358
Address: 327 South Lakeview Drive, Lake Helen, FL 32744

