

MIDTOWN VISION PLAN

**DOWNTOWN FORT MYERS
INTEGRATED REDEVELOPMENT
STRATEGY**

FORT MYERS, FL



November 2018

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Physical Model- Proposed Town Center and Midtown Square Park

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1 ***PROJECT SUMMARY***

The Midtown Vision Plan is a long-term conceptual strategy for redeveloping the Midtown area of Downtown Fort Myers. The Plan is the result of a one-year effort that engaged the Fort Myers community in crafting a vision for the future of this part of the Downtown Redevelopment Area. It is a shared vision that reflects the desires and aspirations of the Fort Myers community. As part of a broader integrated redevelopment strategy for this area, the Plan proposes a long-term build-out scenario that focuses on physical conditions related to form, function, visual character and human dimensions. The plan defines an urban and community design framework that serves as a guide for transforming Midtown into a vibrant, mixed-use district. It is comprehensive in scope and incorporates a number of strategies that address physical conditions at multiple scales. These strategies are intended to identify the redevelopment potential of the area and how to foster market conditions that will lead to long-term viability and enduring value through repurposing much of the area's vacant and under-utilized property.

Early analysis indicates that the Midtown area can support several mixed-use activity centers in the future. These activity centers could emerge as diverse destinations and serve as small economic and employment hubs, as well as new residential neighborhoods. The transformation of Midtown would significantly expand the commercial core of Downtown and create a range of new opportunities for Fort Myers' resident to live, work and participate in leisure activities. The Plan also envisions redevelopment in Midtown as a complement to the Historic district and the nearby Riverfront, and as a way to strengthen connections with adjacent neighborhoods.

The Midtown Vision Plan is further intended to serve as: a strate-

gic agenda for coordinating future growth in an orderly manner; a framework for private and public investment; and a basis for policy decisions and regulatory revisions in this part of the Community Redevelopment Area (CRA). The Plan builds on previous planning efforts in the Downtown CRA, is consistent with the most recent Comprehensive Plan amendments and integrates a number of current public and private initiatives already underway.

The Midtown Vision Plan is not a development plan for a particular project. It's a comprehensive vision that proposes an urban design framework for economic development throughout the Midtown focus area. This framework would amplify the existing street network and other conditions by creating an integrated system of "multi-modal paths and places"; or connected destinations. This framework also addresses other physical conditions at multiple scales. In doing so, it seeks to: clarify the redevelopment potential of the area, identify opportunities for "placemaking" and intra-neighborhood connections and identify conditions for vibrant and diverse social spaces. The Plan anticipates future market demands for expanded commercial development and housing options, as well as the need for enhanced public realm conditions identified by the community.

The redevelopment strategy for the 243-acre Midtown area envisions repurposing the existing City of Palms Park baseball complex as a "mixed-use town center". This 25-acres of publicly-owned land offers development opportunities for several catalyst projects and a major public open space – all of which are needed to revitalize the larger Midtown area. Initial and later phases of development would culminate in a range of residential and commercial building types and densities that are not available in other parts of the

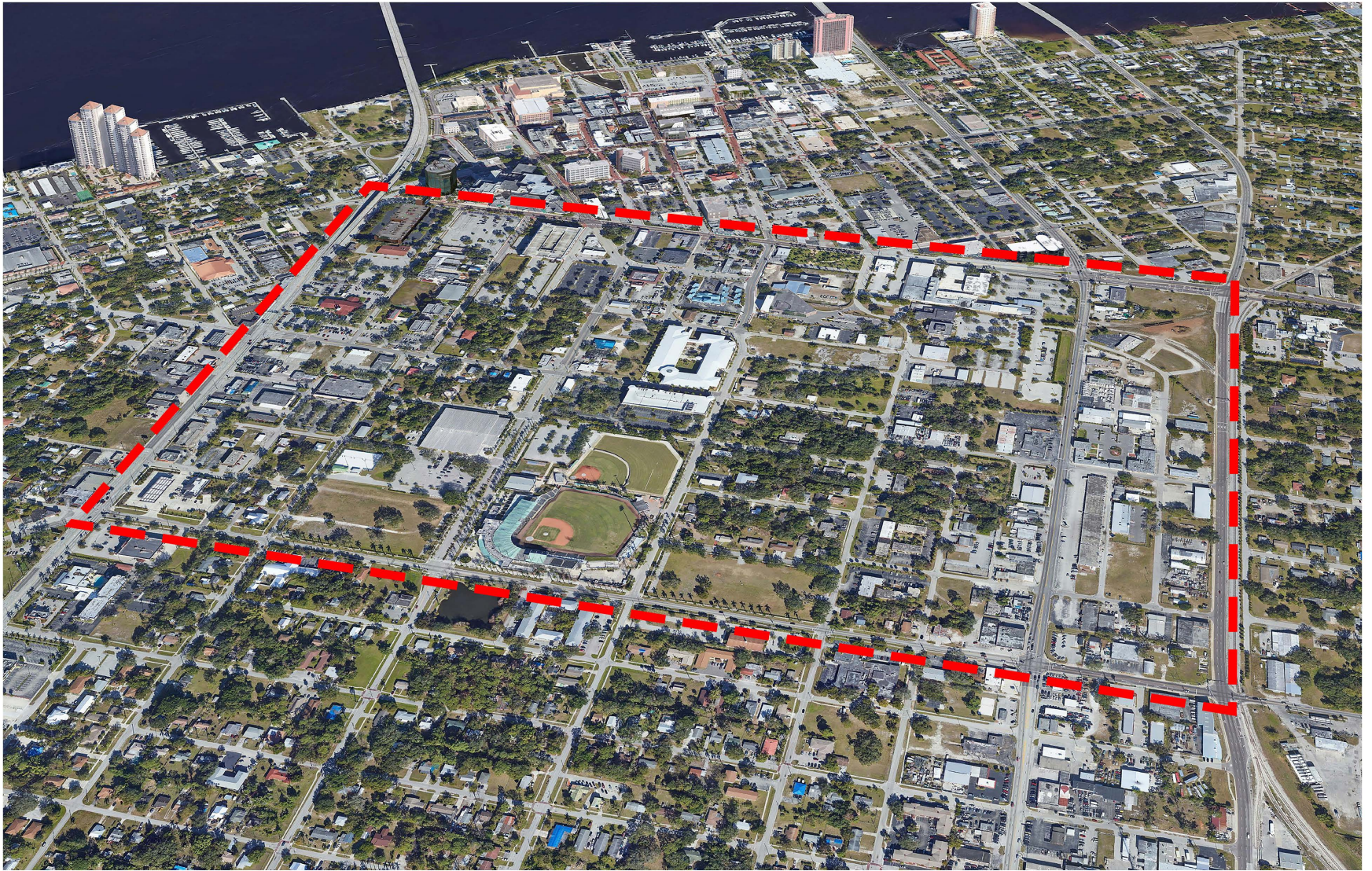


Figure 1.1 View of Midtown and Project Focus Area

city. A number of public realm amenities are also envisioned that would complement future development and appeal to residents. The Midtown Vision Plan is meant to be a “living document”. It

should be utilized as a flexible redevelopment tool that responds to changing market conditions, demographic changes and other dynamic trends over time.

2 ***INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND***



1994



1999



2010

Midtown Over Time

The Midtown area in Fort Myers is a two hundred forty (240) acre district just south of the historic Downtown core. This area is characterized by an eclectic mix of uses, buildings and street conditions. These physical conditions, along with a significant amount of under-utilized property, the lack of investment and its adjacency to Downtown, make this area an ideal candidate for redevelopment. The Midtown Vision Plan proposes a strategy for transforming this area into a revitalized mixed-use community. The Plan follows on the heels of several efforts that anticipate a new direction for this area. Unlike other parts of the city, Midtown has not benefited from the recovery of the 2007 recession. While the area is home to a number of small businesses and a number of institutional uses, Midtown is not defined by a critical mass of workforce or residents that's necessary for a vibrant Downtown neighborhood.

The existing City of Palms Park baseball complex, which is one of the defining features of the area, has had a significant presence in the area for almost twenty five (25) years but is largely dormant now. As the Spring Training home of the Boston Red Sox until 2011, current uses do not attract enough people to activate the area. Also intended as a catalyst development when erected in 1993, it hasn't fostered any redevelopment on the surrounding blocks. Repurposing this land with new uses will reinvigorate the area and allow Midtown to once again become an active destination in the city.

Midtown is also home to a large commercial/industrial parcel once used as a newspaper printing plant and distribution center. This property has two high visibility street frontages and is strategically located at the entrance to both Downtown and Midtown.

However, its current state which is characterized by vacant land and closed buildings convey a negative image for the commercial heart of the city. During the community workshops, many residents thought the area has a lot of potential, but currently there's no reason to go there.

All these conditions pose a major challenge for the future of Midtown as vital part of Downtown. As such, City officials and local residents are interested in the redevelopment potential of this area as an extension of the commercial core. Its adjacency to Downtown and the number of development opportunities available in the area suggest Midtown could become a sought-after destination for living, working and leisure activities. As part of a coordinated and comprehensive revitalization process for this part of the city, the Midtown Vision Plan was commissioned to help the Fort Myers community identify new possibilities for area.

The Plan was conceived as a part of an ongoing redevelopment effort. Its long-term conceptual vision is for transforming the Midtown area into a vibrant new, mixed-use district. The plan is based on a long-term redevelopment horizon that envisions significant physical changes in the area through overlapping phases of incremental investment.

Downtown and Midtown Density Study

City of Fort Myers
TRANSMITTAL PACKAGE
4/17/17 City Council Transmittal Hearing



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Downtown and Midtown Fort Myers Utility Capacity Analysis

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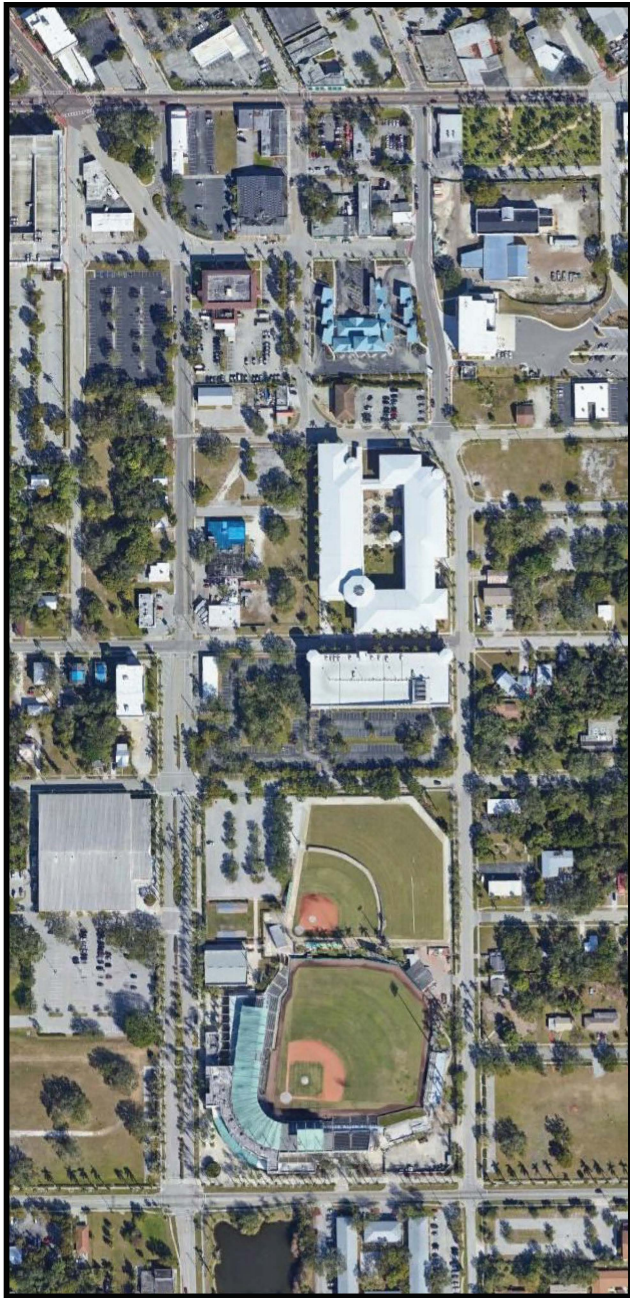
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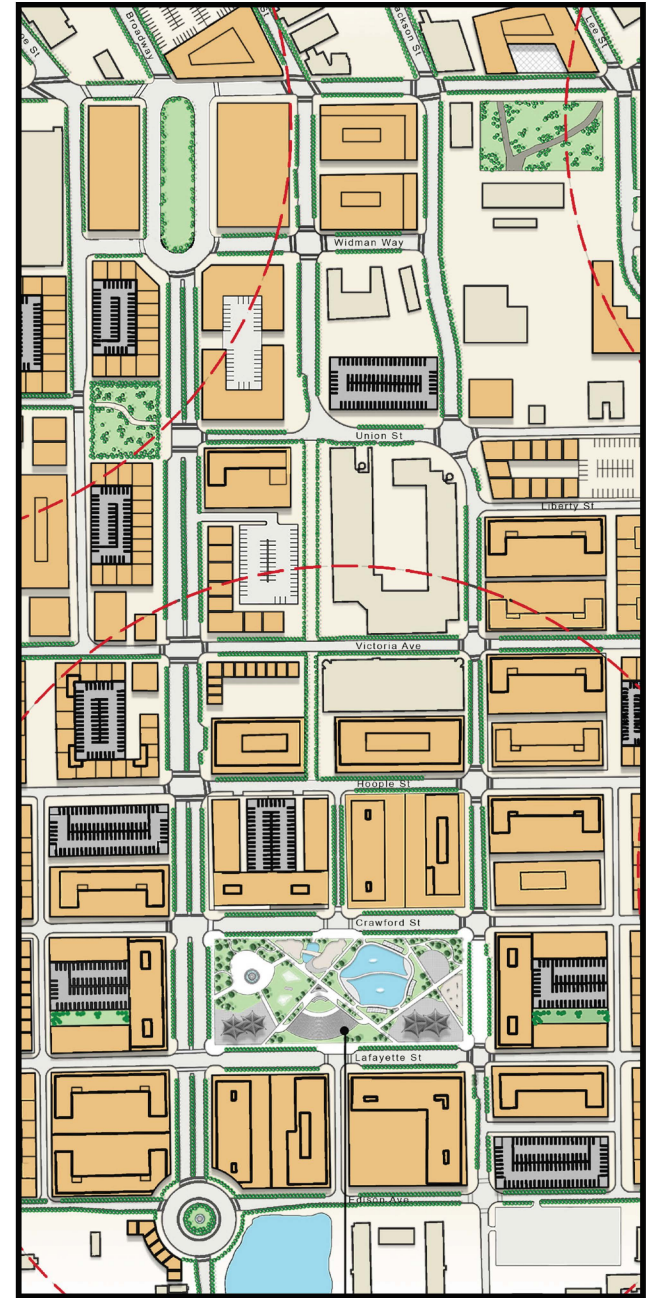
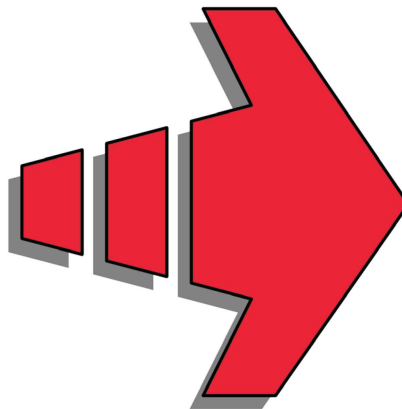
Figure 2.1 Previous Midtown Studies

3

***PROJECT
PURPOSE***



...From Existing Conditions



...To A Bold, New Future

3.1 WHAT THIS PLAN HOPES TO ACHIEVE

The Midtown Vision Plan is intended to serve as a shared community vision for transforming this part of the city into a vibrant, new, diverse, mixed-use destination. It's a conceptual urban design plan that defines a strategic development framework for private and public investment, for policy decisions, and as a basis for regulatory revisions. The plan is comprehensive in scope and seeks to clarify the feasible redevelopment potential for this part of the Downtown Community Redevelopment Area (CRA). The Plan proposes a long-term redevelopment strategy that reflects the ideas and aspirations of the community and the types of physical, functional and visual conditions that will lead to lasting economic value.

The Midtown Vision Plan is informed by previous planning efforts completed for Downtown and Midtown over the last fifteen (15) years. The plan acknowledges the completion of many projects recommended as part of the 2003 *Downtown Fort Myers Plan* (e.g. the *Duany Plan*) and proposes future conditions that are compatible with this earlier effort. The previous plan's focus on Midtown only extended south of the Historic area to Victoria Avenue. Until recently, Midtown was separated into two land-use districts. North of Victoria Avenue, Midtown was considered part of the Historic Downtown. South of this street, Midtown was considered more a part of the Central Fort Myers neighborhood. The

Midtown Vision Plan addresses the larger Midtown area from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard down to Edison Avenue as a consolidated district. Although the Plan incorporates the spirit and intent of previous efforts, it proposes a more updated redevelopment approach that highlights the area's economic development, placemaking and revitalization potentials.

In 2016, a redevelopment plan was completed for the entire Midtown area (enSite). This conceptual plan explored the potential of extending commercial and residential development into Midtown, with a greater emphasis on open space and public realm conditions. This plan was the first to propose an adaptive re-use strategy for the City of Palms Park baseball complex. While this plan provided a number of plausible ideas for expanding public open space, stormwater management and public realm conditions, it was not adopted.

Although Downtown has realized a number of redevelopment successes since the Downtown Fort Myers Plan was adopted in 2003, Midtown has languished since the last Spring Training games were held at the baseball stadium in 2010. Before this, the area's residential population had already been in decline since the early 1990's. While some small businesses thrive in the area today, Midtown has a lot of derelict and underutilized institu-



Figure 3.1.1 View of proposed conditions at Midtown Square Park

tionally-owned land that detracts from its visual character. The combined effects of these circumstances, along with the recent closure of the News-Press facility and the large public and institutional land holdings in the area indicate the need for a new, “fresh” approach that has the potential to transform Midtown into a desirable location. In response to these and other condi-

tions critical to the evolution of this area, the Midtown Vision Plan prioritizes such issues as economic development, mixed-use destinations, expanded housing options and creative placemaking. Ultimately, the Plan attempts to coordinate these issues as a strategy for creating conditions in Midtown where people want to be – to live, work and participate in public life.

3.2 MIDTOWN AS PART OF AN INTEGRATED DOWNTOWN REDEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The strategic context for the Midtown Vision Plan is the ongoing coordination of redevelopment efforts throughout Downtown Fort Myers. As the City advances a number of different initiatives, *the Midtown Vision Plan can be viewed as an integral component of the larger redevelopment strategy. It identifies Midtown's development potential and demonstrates how this area can evolve as a one of the economic drivers of the city.*

To accomplish this, the planning process integrates current market forecasts, infrastructure and public facility investments, public realm enhancements and other initiatives as base conditions. During several community workshops, there was expressed interest in identifying a feasible, long-term strategy for transforming Midtown as an extension of Downtown and as a vibrant mixed-use destination.

Recognizing the importance of the larger urban context, the Plan identifies opportunities for creating physical, functional and visual connectivity between Midtown, the Downtown Core and residential neighborhoods such as Gardner's Park, Lincoln Park, Franklin Park, Central Fort Myers and Altamont Manor. In order for Midtown area to evolve as a viable market for mixed-use de-

velopment and grow into a vibrant community, the Plan identifies a range of buildings, uses and other conditions that would foster meaningful synergies within the area and with other established parts of Downtown.

Although the Midtown focus area is bordered on three sides by State roads, the Plan envisions a number of potential modifications to these thoroughfares that are compatible with future transportation, as well redevelopment objectives. These modifications relate to traffic operations, right of way usage, public safety and roadway beautification.

To further advance the Midtown Vision Plan's integrated nature, a density visualization exercise preceded this effort. This exercise helped the general public visualize different levels of density and the varied massing and height proportions that could define future development throughout the Downtown. This exercise played a major role in setting base density criteria for Comprehensive Plan's Future Land Use Element and subsequent adoption of amendments. Following this, the proposed densities for Midtown were revised to be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

Relative to transportation, the Plan integrates aspects of the City’s Complete Streets Guidelines, the 2013 Downtown Mobility Plan, FDOT’s Cleveland Avenue (US 41) Safety Project, and aspects of the MPO’s 2035 Long-Range Transportation Plan. Each of these documents has influenced the form and character of proposed street and public realm conditions exhibited in the Plan.

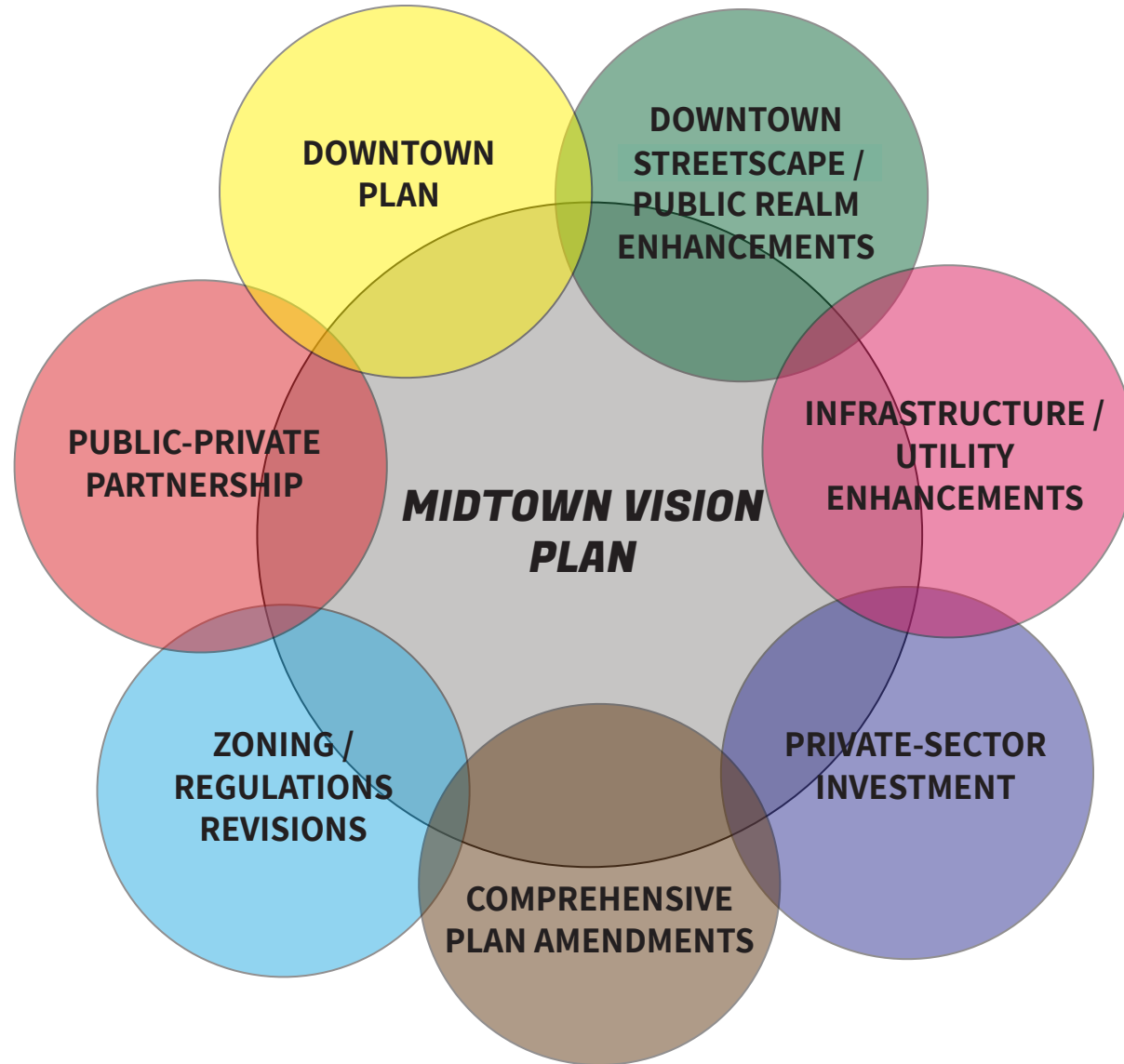


Figure 3.2.1 Integrated Downtown Redevelopment Strategy

3.3 REDEVELOPMENT TIME-FRAME

For large-scale redevelopment initiatives such as Midtown to be successful, the public sector has to identify private-sector partners and make long-term commitment to work together to achieve the stated objectives. The timeframe for this process could span several years and several economic cycles. For the city of Fort Myers, this means a sustained level of planning, marketing, management and coordinating a range of other development-related activities. Redevelopment of the Midtown area will start with a number of small projects that are already in the planning, development or entitlement stages. As the redevelopment momentum increases in the area, the Plan envisions a multi-phase, long-term redevelopment timeframe that could span up to twenty years to realize substantial buildout. The Midtown Vision Plan is intended as a growth scenario based on feasible projections of incremental. The Plan is further intended as a flexible template for development to happen in an orderly manner. It can be used as a part of a strategic framework for coordinating both public and private investment in the area, as well as a point of reference when introducing new priorities that reflect changing conditions over time.

Although a number of variable or unforeseen circumstances such as, the local or regional economy, regulatory revisions, land costs and real estate market conditions could significantly influence

the projected redevelopment timeframe, this Plan should serve as a “living” document – revised and modified over time to reflect these changes as needed. The Midtown Vision Plan anticipates redevelopment occurring throughout the focus area over three to four major phases or cycles. Each of these phases could span several years and overlap with other phases. Using the Plan as a benchmark for success, each phase should yield one or more major components of the redevelopment vision. The following describes the anticipated major development phases and some of the activities and outcomes projected as part of this initiative:



4-6 Years

- ▶ Lean urbanism accomplishments (i.e. small-scale, incremental and community-initiated projects)
- ▶ Regulatory revisions
- ▶ Current projects in development
- ▶ Infrastructure enhancements
- ▶ Town Center catalyst development
- ▶ Activity Center development
- ▶ Scattered-site infill development
- ▶ Housing production
- ▶ Public realm enhancements
- ▶ Transportation improvements
- ▶ New wayfinding, branding and identity features



5-7 Years

- ▶ Expanded Town Center mixed-use development
- ▶ Activity Center development
- ▶ Infrastructure enhancements
- ▶ Expanded housing production and diversification
- ▶ Mixed-use and commercial development
- ▶ Public realm enhancements
- ▶ Branding and identity features



6-7 Years

- ▶ Town Center completion
- ▶ Expand housing production and
- ▶ Diversification
- ▶ Commercial development
- ▶ Activity Center buildout
- ▶ Public Realm Enhancements



3.4 HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

The Midtown Vision Plan should be used as a reference document during the projected redevelopment timeframe. As much as it embodies a growth scenario for the future of Midtown, the Plan seeks to provide local residents, the City and private-sector investors with a clear vision of the redevelopment objectives for the focus area. Due to the scalar nature of the Plan, these redevelopment objectives can be understood at three distinct tiers: the macro, or ‘big picture’ scale; the intermediate or sub-area scale; and the micro, or human scale.

For the community, the Plan can be considered a user’s guide. It should clarify most of the dimensions of the planning process and how they have culminated in this shared vision for the future of Midtown. The plan should inform the general public about what direction this area is expected to take with regards to future growth and the expectations for transforming the area. Although the Plan is ambitious in outlook, it should be understood that not all of what’s being proposed will happen exactly as depicted in the Plan. The redevelopment outcome will depend on the influence of a range of variables and often unforeseen circumstances. However, the Plan should provide a greater degree of consolation that the process is guided by ideas and aspirations that originated from the community. As such, the Plan can be described as a type of redevelopment “play book” that is utilized

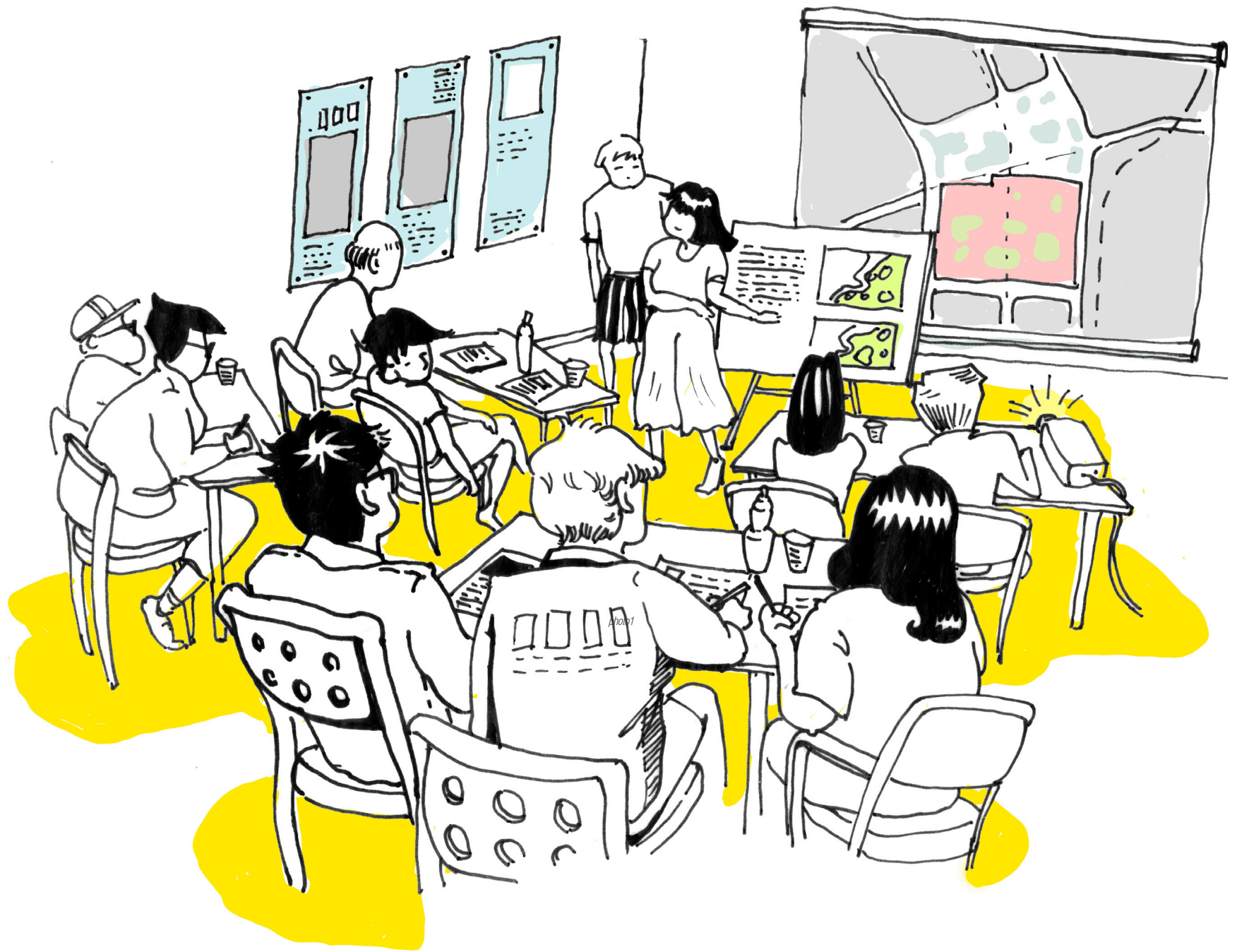
by the community, the City, private-sector investors and other prospective stakeholders.

For the City, this Plan can be utilized as an official redevelopment document for the Midtown area. It can also be used as point of reference for assessing certain redevelopment objectives. It can be aligned with the City’s Strategic Plan as well as its capital improvement plan budget for the area. Although the Plan can further be used to broaden and advance many of the conditions identified in the City’s Smart Code, it should also serve as a basis for the creating new land development regulations for the new “Midtown” zoning category.



Figure 3.4.1 View of Broadway along Midtown Square Park

4 *COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT*



4.1 ACTIVE COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

As a precursor to the Midtown Vision Plan, the Project Team engaged the community in a density visualization exercise. This effort was needed to identify density preferences for the Downtown, Gardner’s Park and Midtown areas. The limits needed for the revising the Comprehensive Plan, the community engagement process began with a five-month effort to identify appropriate densities for new development in the Downtown CRA areas, including the Historic District, Gardner’s Park and Midtown. Unlike previous debates that lacked clear visual references for comparison and assessment, the Project team generated a Density Scenario catalog to help guide the conversation. This document cataloged a range of densities that were deemed appropriate for each of the Downtown CRA subareas. This catalog served as a visual preference guide and a way for citizens to help visualize density relative to building size, massing, height and relationships with abutting streets. After this, the community engagement process focused exclusively on the Midtown Vision Plan.

Engaging the local community in the planning process from the outset is critical for creating better understanding of the process and its objectives. It’s also beneficial in garnering broad community support and acceptance. Participatory planning processes attempt to create a level playing field - where the community is just as informed as all other stakeholders. Community members



and understanding of existing local conditions. For the Midtown Vision Plan, the community engagement process began with a general listening session. This helped the Project Team better understand community concerns, desires and aspirations. This was followed by a number of interim workshops and presentations. This process culminated with a workshop presentation of the final Plan. Comments, ideas and preferences were solicited at every stage of this process and helped identify a preferred direction for the Plan and advance its final development. This process generated input from a cross section of the Fort Myers community and included local residents, stakeholders, business and property owners, developers and other interested community members.

compact development
 smart / connected infrastructure
downtown *retail frontage*
 night life **density** **public open space**
 activity centers **economic development**
 bicycling **people** **town center** **midtown** **housing option**
 local businesses **place making** **mixed use neighborhood** **multi modal**
sustainable urbanism
live + work + play **town center**
 design resiliency
 pedest ian ame i ies
 walkabili



DIRECT INPUT AND IDEA INTEGRATION

Through a series of workshops, interviews and phone conversations, the Project Team documented subsequent input from over two-hundred individuals. These comments and suggestions reflected a range of preferences related to all of the components of the Plan. When processed, many of these comments identified a set of priorities that tended to coalesce around a number of recurring themes such as the following:

- Midtown as a new mixed-use, vibrant activity center and destination district for all city residents (i.e. “place-making”)
- Midtown as an extension to the Historic Downtown and the need to bolster economic development and commercial activity
- Midtown as an opportunity area for creating attainable, workforce housing, along with different types of market-rate housing options
- Quality of the public realm and new open space features
- Public safety and walkability
- Identity and visual character
- Infrastructure deficiencies



“ ... catalyst development that transforms Midtown into a walkable activity center”

“ ... repurpose Midtown, begin with a ‘blank sheet’ approach”

“ ... Midtown should complement the Historic Downtown and riverfront”

“ ... create more housing options – both market rate and workforce units”

“ ... market-driven design that blends different levels of density and building types”

“ ... more mixed use buildings that create employment opportunities, commercial value and shared activity”

“ ... public realm and open spaces that are inviting to the entire city”



“...DEFINE A NEW DIRECTION FOR MIDTOWN!”



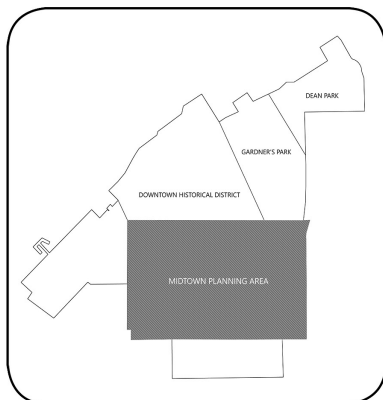
Subsequent to these initial workshops, the community was engaged to help to identify a direction and the types of urban design conditions that could accommodate their ideas and suggestions. The concept of a new town center in Midtown emerged as the preferred strategy for transforming Midtown into an active and diverse part of the city. This was perceived to be the most viable approach for realizing community and City redevelop-

ment objectives, and for bolstering economic development in the area. In both oral and written comments, most citizens expressed support for this strategy and viewed it as the “shot in the arm” that Midtown needed. Workshop participants were able to recognize how this approach could lead to the realization of preferred conditions at multiple scales and how it could benefit the city as a whole.

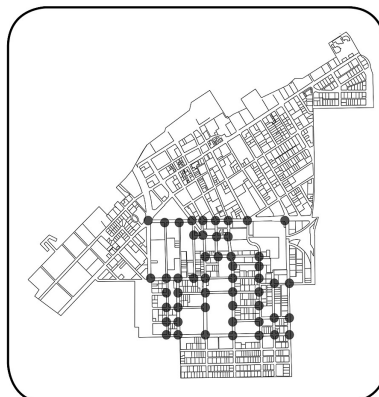
5 ***EXISTING CONDITIONS***



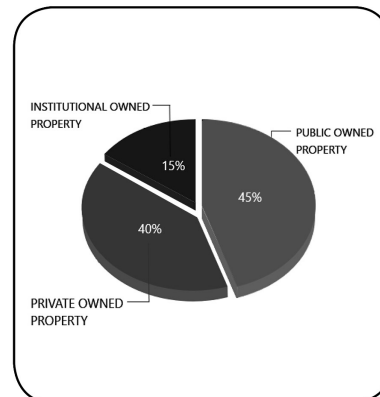
5.1 ANALYSIS AND GENERAL FINDINGS



MIDTOWN'S LOCATION IN THE DOWNTOWN CRA



STREET GRID CONNECTIVITY - INTERSECTION DENSITY



LAND OWNERSHIP



POPULATION



COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY



HOUSING

Figure 5.1.1 Midtown at a Glance

THE MIDTOWN FOCUS AREA

The Midtown focus area is one of several subareas of the Downtown Community Redevelopment Area (CRA). Like other CRA's, Midtown is a designated redevelopment district. It has a tax increment finance (TIF) district designation. This allows for the capture of annual incremental ad valorem tax revenue increases which can be used for redevelopment purposes in the Midtown focus area. The focus area lies directly south of the Historic Downtown and is anchored by the City of Palms Park baseball stadium complex, the former News-Press newspaper press/distribution site, the State of Florida office building and several Lee County government facilities. Midtown is also home to number of small commercial and industrial uses, several church complexes and City of Fort Myers municipal agencies. As part of the Downtown CRA, the redevelopment of Midtown is intended to extend the Downtown core south of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard.

Midtown today is characterized by low level of activity. Aside from some auto-related uses in the western part of the focus area, most commercial activity is internalized in smaller stand alone structures. The dearth of pedestrian activity and street life is readily evident throughout most of the focus area. After the Boston Red Sox Spring Training baseball games ended in 2011, economic activity appears to have tapered off as well. Over the past eight or nine years, the area has become less attractive for private investment and does not function as a Downtown destination.



Figure 5.1.2 Downtown Redevelopment Areas

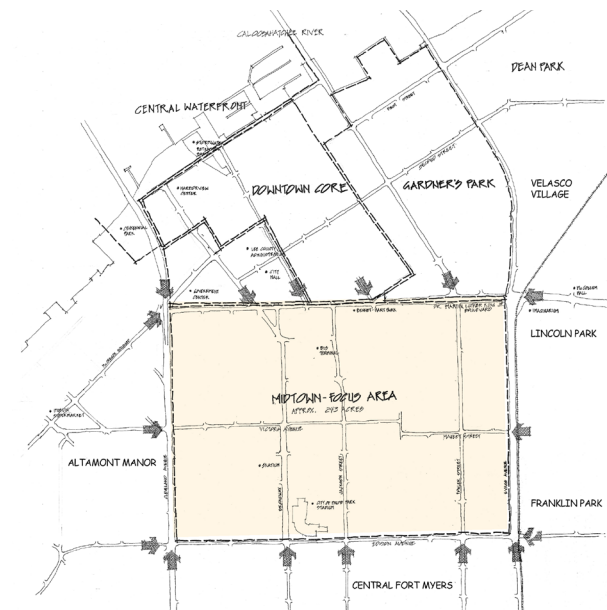


Figure 5.1.3 Midtown Connectivity

MIDTOWN AREA EXISTING CONDITIONS



Figure 5.1.4
Fowler Street, south of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard



Figure 5.1.5
Cleveland Avenue at Victoria Avenue



Figure 5.1.6
Broadway, north of Victoria Avenue



Figure 5.1.7
Victoria Avenue, west of Broadway

MIDTOWN AREA EXISTING CONDITIONS



Figure 5.1.8
Fowler Street, south of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard



Figure 5.1.9
Edison Avenue at Fowler Street



Figure 5.1.10
Evans Avenue, north of Edison Avenue



Figure 5.1.11
Edison Avenue, west of Broadway

The purpose of the Midtown Vision Plan is to identify the unrealized potential of this area and assist the community with developing a vision plan that can transform Midtown into a desirable location to live, work and play. A major redevelopment objective is for this area to become a sustained economic driver for Downtown. Initial analysis of the Midtown focus area was intended to foster a thorough understanding of its physical, functional, visual, social and market conditions. This analysis was also intended to identify any constraints or limitations that would hinder future redevelopment objectives.

The Midtown Neighborhood Planning Area encompasses approximately two-hundred and forty three (243) acres. The area is delimited by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard on the north, Evans Avenue on the east, Edison Avenue on the south and Cleveland Avenue (US 41) on the west. The Midtown focus area lies directly south of the Historic Downtown core and the Gardner's Park neighborhood – separated by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard. To the east, the Midtown focus area is bordered by the Lincoln and Franklin Park neighborhoods across Evans Avenue. The focus area is just north of the Central Fort Myers neighborhood south of Edison Avenue. The focus area is bordered by the Altamont Manor neighborhood across Cleveland Street along its western edge.

The focus area has a dispersed development pattern, consisting of stand-alone buildings, surface parking lots and vacant parcels. This existing building stock is a mixture of one and two story commercial, industrial, public and residential structures. There are one hundred ninety-eight (198) businesses scattered throughout the area - with most concentrated around the pe-

riphery of Midtown. The focus area is also home to a number of City, County and State government facilities, as well as several churches and affiliated structures.

Relative to demographics, Midtown is one the least populated areas of the City. The current population of the area is about four hundred ninety-eight (498) residents. The area has two types of residential buildings. Approximately thirty-nine (39) are single-family houses and two hundred twenty-three (223) are multi-family apartments.

Understanding these conditions is a critical step in assessing the area's redevelopment potential. Broader insights into these conditions could lead to a more effective method of defining priorities and determining how these conditions should be addressed in the Midtown Vision Plan.



Figure 5.1.12 Block Structure Diagram



Mini-Block
Block Bifurcation

Super Block
Street Removal / Block Consolidation

Typical Residential Block
Historic Subdivision

Figure 5.1.13 Aerial view of Midtown Focus Area showing various block types

5.2 CURRENT MARKET CONDITIONS AND LAND AVAILABLE FOR REDEVELOPMENT

While the area has experienced some recent land sales transactions, Midtown has not realized any significant private investment or vertical development in almost a decade. The last major structures to be erected in the area have been public facilities - the State of Florida DC Office building, and the recently completed City of Fort Myers fire station and the Southwest Florida Community Foundation's Collaboratory addition to the historic train depot. When the City of Palms Baseball Stadium was constructed in 1992, it was viewed as a "catalyst project" - in addition to its primary purpose as a Major League Baseball Spring Training facility, it was also expected to help revitalize this portion of the Midtown area. However, very little private investment was made in the ensuing years. The Stadium itself has not generated much activity in the area since the Boston Red Sox moved to a new Spring Training facility in 2011. Today, Midtown is not a destination, doesn't have any activity generators, nor does it offer residents any reason to visit this part of the city.

A significant factor influencing these and other market conditions in Midtown today is the inordinate amount of public and institution-owned land concentrated in the area. Figure 5.2.3 indicates the location and size of these parcels in Midtown and Downtown. These land holdings include the City of Palms Park stadium complex and its associated parking areas, the Skatium

facility, several scattered City and County facilities, and a number of other church complexes. All total, this amounts to approximately sixty to sixty-four (60% - 64%) percent or approximately one hundred fifty-seven (157) acres of the entire Midtown land area. The majority of this land is either vacant or is dedicated to surface parking. These conditions have existed for some time and have contributed to the uncertainty of Midtown's role as a Downtown district. Repurposing much of this land with more productive uses should be a major priority as part of a long-term redevelopment initiative for this part of the city.

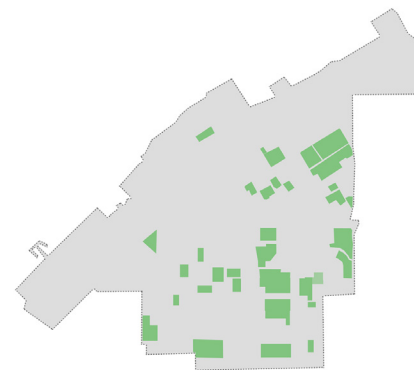


Figure 5.2.1 Opportunity Sites (Vacant Lots)

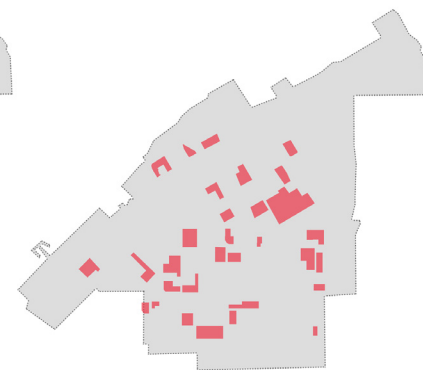


Figure 5.2.2 Opportunity Sites (Surface Parking Lots)

THE MIDTOWN FOCUS AREA

Midtown also has a number of other privately-owned vacant or underutilized properties scattered throughout the area. Similar to other parts of the city, vacant property on Midtown blocks create a number of discernible “voids” in the continuity of the urban fabric. Although many of these properties are smaller in area, they lend themselves to public or private assembly or land banking strategies.

Other land in the Midtown focus area that could play a role in future redevelopment efforts is the underutilized commercial and institutional property that defines much of Midtown. Institutional land holdings in Midtown amount to approximately twenty eight (28) acres. As these institutions reassess the economic value of their land holdings, new partnership opportunities with private-sector investors could emerge. A significant number of smaller commercial parcels concentrated along Fowler Street in the eastern portion of the focus area are auto-related uses that require a significant amount of surface parking and vehicle storage areas. Redeveloping much of this property with more intensive commercial land uses would strengthen the eastern edge of the focus area and reinforce Fowler as an employment corridor.



Figure 5.2.3 Public and Institution-Owned Land Map

CURRENT MARKET CONDITIONS

For several years, real estate prices in the Midtown area have remained stable, with little to no appreciation in value. Property assessments for much of the focus area averages around five hundred-thousand dollars (\$500,000.00) per acre according to Lee County Property Appraiser data. The City of Palms Baseball Stadium site and several smaller, publicly-owned scattered sites have property assessments that exceed one and a half million dollars (\$1,500,000.00) per acre. Figure 5.2.4 indicates land value assessments for Midtown and Downtown in 2017. If repurposed, this property could be redeveloped as a major catalyst project. It would maximize the redevelopment potential of this property and create favorable market conditions for other subsequent development. Although no new buildings have been erected in the Midtown area in recent years, several new developments are being proposed. This indicates a more optimistic outlook for private-sector investment that will introduce different types of new development in the focus area.

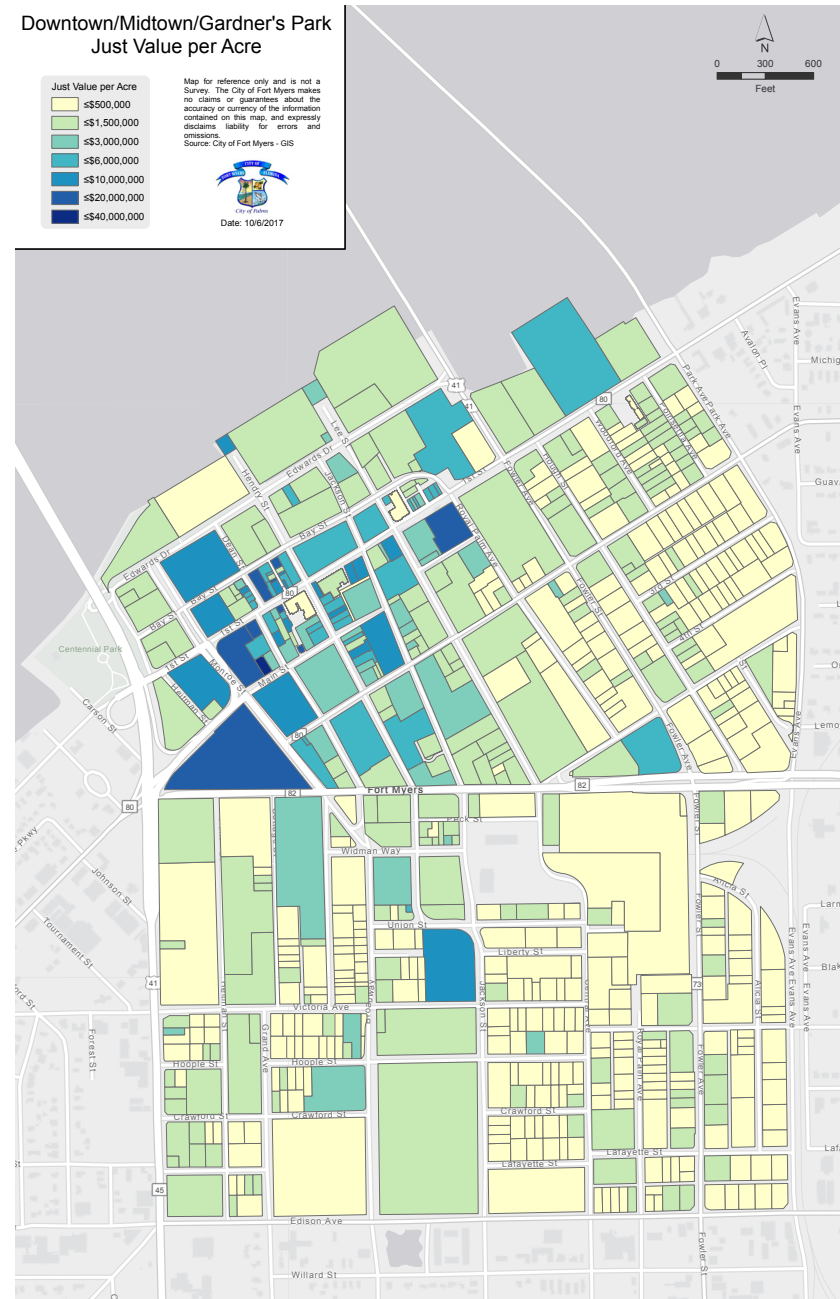


Figure 5.2.4 Property Values Map

5.3 ZONING

Prior to the adoption of the recent Comprehensive Plan Amendments earlier this year, the Midtown area was split between three zoning districts. The area north of Victoria Avenue had a “U-CTR” (*Urban Center*) zoning designation, while the area to the south of Victoria had a “CG” (*Commercial General*) designation. Below Victoria, the areas straddling Cleveland Avenue and Fowler Street had a “CI” (*Commercial Intensive*) zoning designation. Figure 5.3.1 shows these three zoning districts in Midtown. The Comprehensive Plan amendments consolidated all three of these into a single zoning district with an “M” (*Midtown*) designation. In doing so, new regulations, standards and other site development criteria are being generated. They should be directly aligned with redevelopment objectives in a much more strategic manner and embody the spirit and intent of the Midtown Vision Plan when adopted.

The previous commercial and industrial zoning, which influenced the evolution of Midtown for decades, allowed a much broader range of commercial uses along the Cleveland Avenue and Fowler Street corridors. These land uses vary widely and define much of the southern portions of the focus area today.

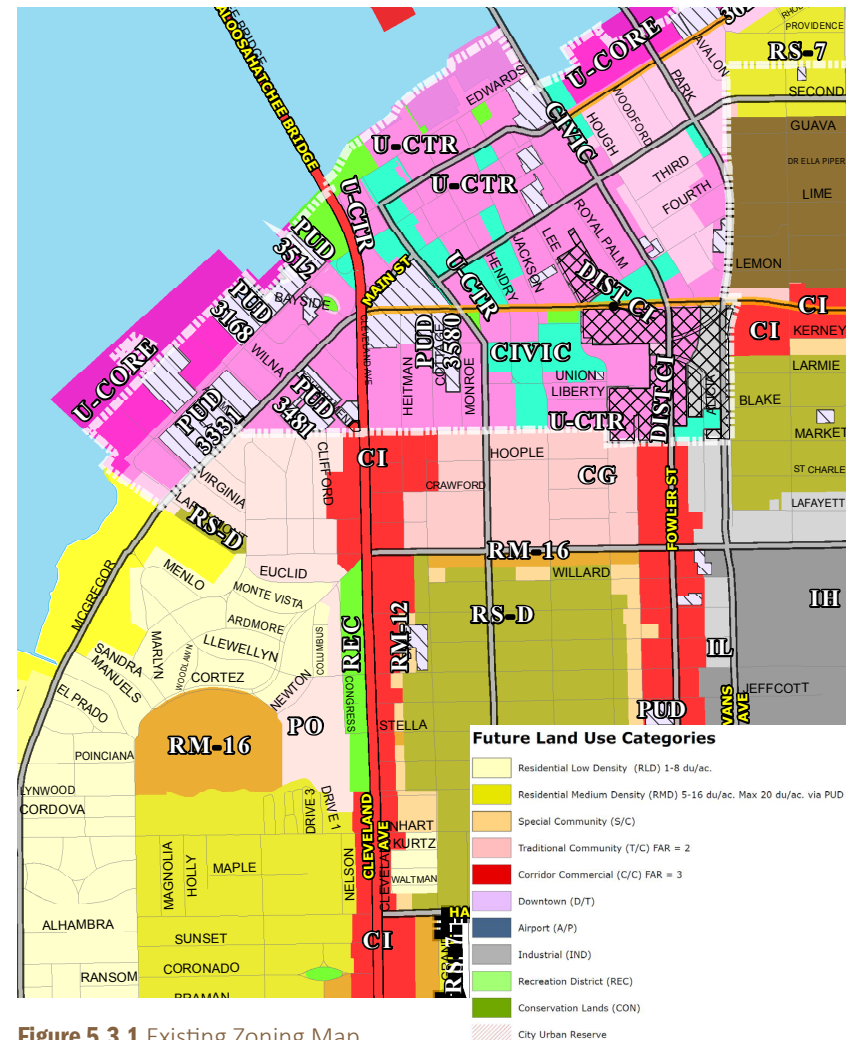


Figure 5.3.1 Existing Zoning Map

5.4 STREETS AND RIGHTS OF WAY

The Midtown focus area has a well-defined street grid with mostly four-way intersections and streets that continue into adjacent neighborhoods. The frequency of intersections along these streets contributes to perceptions of scale and walkability. Most of the rights of way in the focus area are fifty (50) feet in width and reflect preexisting residential street conditions. Most of these streets extend the full length and width of the focus area, however a few have been discontinued to accommodate the City of Palms Park baseball stadium complex and the State office building. Basic roadway infrastructure such as sidewalks, curbs and gutters present on most of these streets.

The wider rights of way exist on a portion of Broadway and the four (4) State roads in the area. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard to the north, is a four lane, median separated roadway that's one hundred (100) feet to one hundred twenty (120) feet in width as it comes into Downtown and Midtown from the east. It then necks down to fifty (50) feet at Jackson Street as it continues west. Evans Avenue is a three (3) lane arterial that is fifty (50) feet in width. Fowler Street is a four (4) lane thoroughfare that is fifty (50) feet in width as well. Cleveland Avenue is a seven (7) lane thoroughfare that is approximately eighty five (85) feet in width. Aside from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, the other State roadways all function as regional arterials - extending north-south through the

focus area and the entire city. All roadways in the focus area carry two-way traffic except, Fowler Street and Evans Avenue. These are classified as one-way pairs and connect to two bridges that cross the Caloosahatchee River.

Several roadway transportation modifications are being considered for the State roadways around Midtown. The only one underway is the Florida Department of Transportation's Cleveland Avenue Pedestrian Safety Project. This project will extend south from Martin Luther King Jr, Boulevard and introduce a number of intersection and midblock crosswalks and planted medians along the western edge of the focus area.

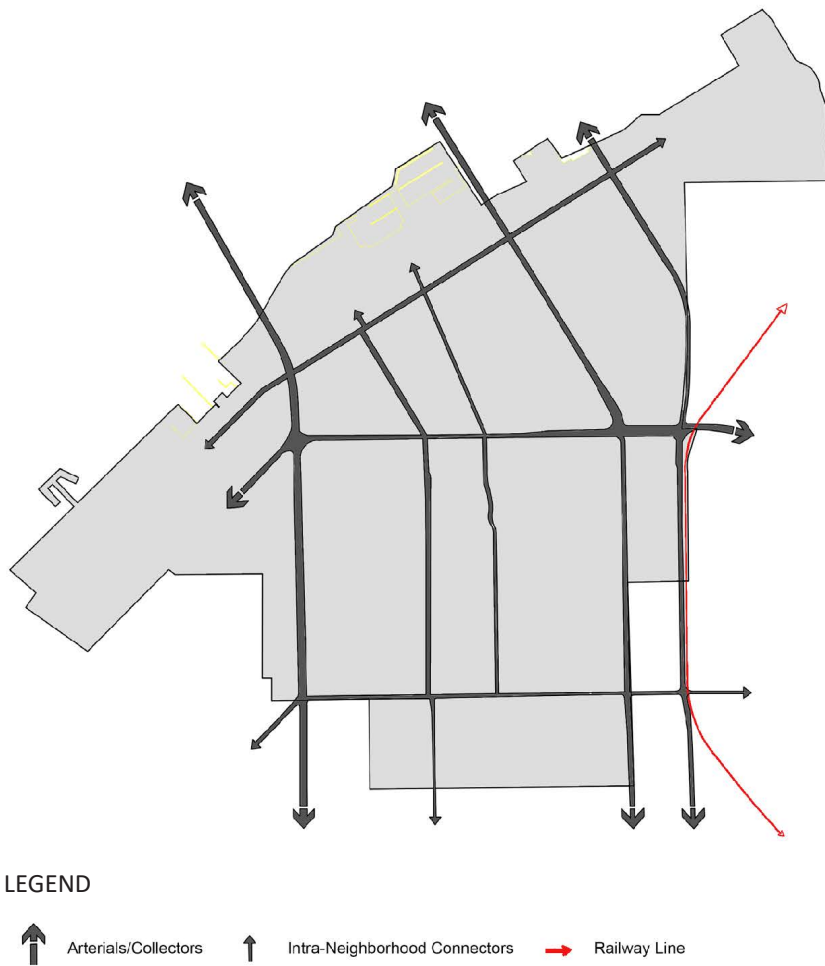


Figure 5.4.1 Street Network Hierarchy

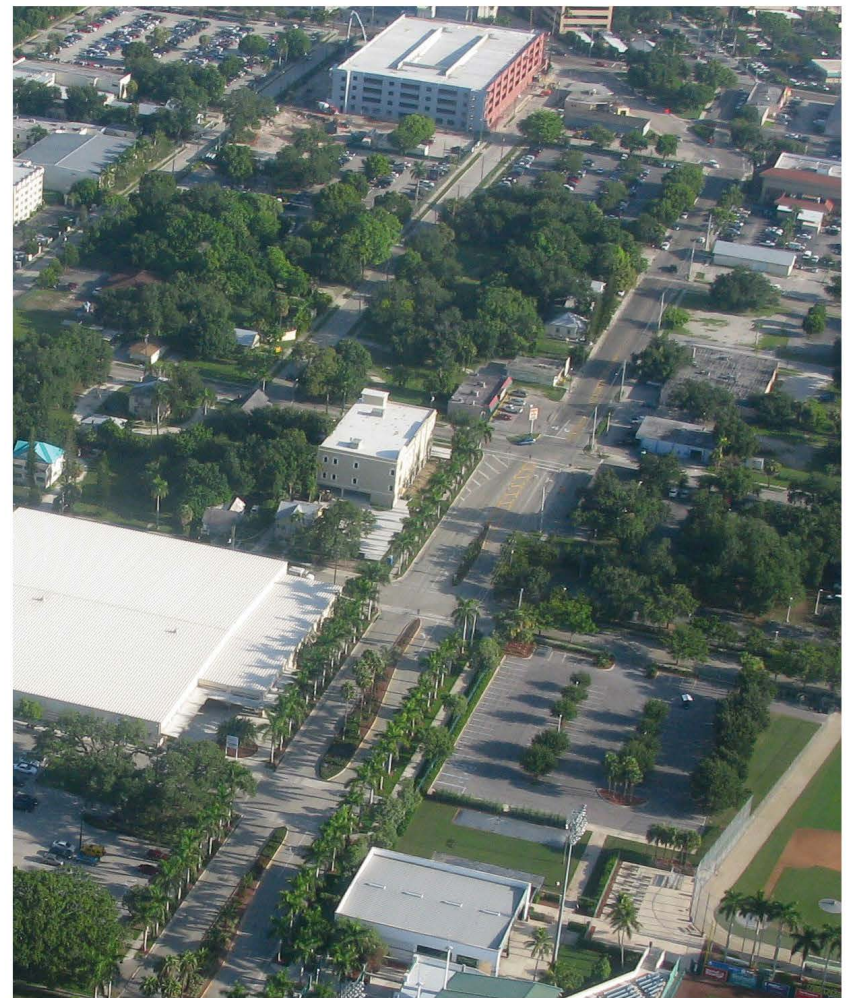


Figure 5.4.2 View of Broadway, south of Dr. MLK Jr. Boulevard

5.5 BLOCK STRUCTURE, DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS AND PARCEL SIZES

Like much of central Fort Myers, blocks in Midtown are typically rectangular in shape and encompasses three (3) to four (4) acres of land. They vary in length from two hundred-ten (210) feet up to six hundred forty (640) feet along their primary frontages. The short side of these blocks, which vary from two hundred-ten (210) feet to two hundred-forty (240) feet, appear to retain some characteristics of preexisting residential subdivision platting.

Parcels sizes in Midtown are also varied. Where single-family parcels still exist, they're dimensions are typically sixty (60) to eighty (80) feet of street frontage, by one hundred-twenty (120) feet deep. Where commercial uses occupy blocks with these parcels sizes, they tend to have at least one – hundred (100) feet of street frontage. Many of these smaller parcels lend themselves to assemblages for larger developments in the future.

In addition to a range of smaller parcels from one eighth (1/8) of an acre to just under one acre, the focus area has three (3) large consolidated properties. The former News-Press site at the corner of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and Fowler Street is one of these. It's approximately eight and a half (8.5) acres in size and has a number of commercial and industrial buildings and surface parking lots on it. Another large property in the area is the City of Palms Park baseball stadium complex and its adjacent surface parking

areas. The County-owned portion of this property is approximately fourteen and a half (14.5) acres in area. The City's portion of this land is approximately eleven and a half (11.5) acres. The combined area of these parcels is approximately twenty-five (25) acres (including the Stadium facility, practice/softball field, the Skatium, and the adjacent grass parking lots). The other large consolidate property in the area is owned by St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church. Their property holdings are concentrated in the northwest section of the focus area and encompass approximately fifteen (15) acres.

Development patterns in the Midtown area are quite varied. The area has an eclectic mix of building types, configurations and uses. Unlike the Historic Downtown, Midtown does not have a consistent development pattern from one block to another. Instead, it has a number of disparate physical circumstances that give the area an inconsistent or patchy look. This detracts from the overall character of the area and portrays a negative image of local market conditions.



Figure 5.5.1 Figure Ground Diagram

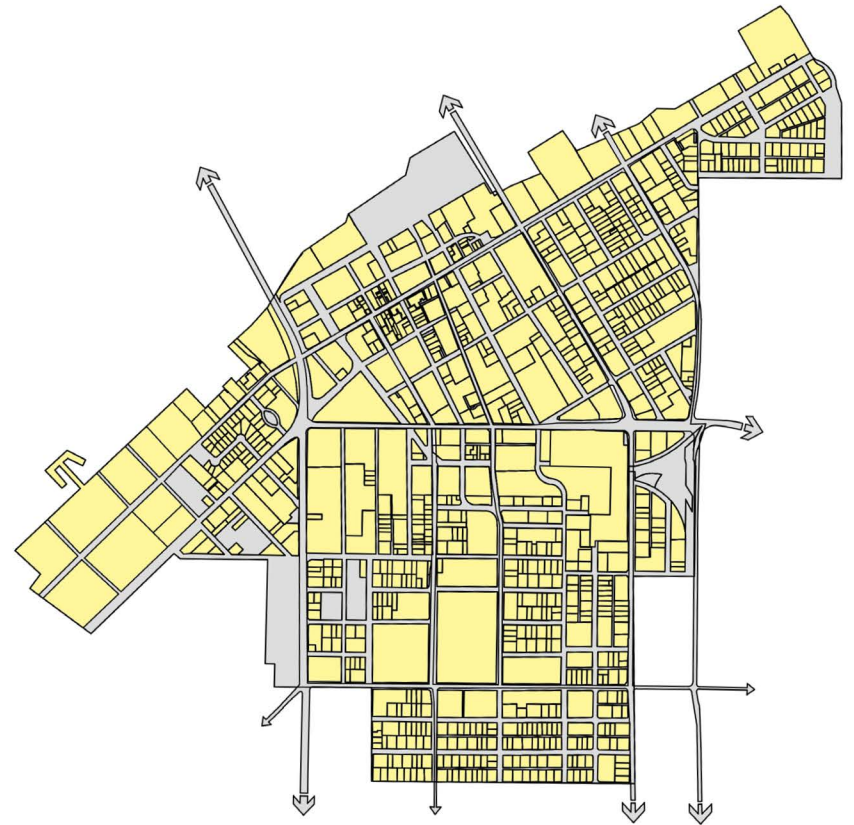


Figure 5.5.2 Parcel Diagram

5.6 BUILDINGS AND USES

Currently, Midtown has one of the lowest densities in the city relative to the area's total land mass. Although it has a diverse range of building types and uses, most buildings are modest in size. Commercial buildings in the area are typically one or two-story structures that average less than ten thousand (10,000) square feet in size. These buildings accommodate uses such as small professional offices and business-to-business services closer to Downtown. There is very little retail in the focus area. There are a number of used car lots, auto repair businesses and other light commercial and industrial uses concentrated along the Fowler Street and Evans Avenue corridors. Some of the commercial uses in this part of Midtown have been criticized as unsightly because of poor building conditions and cluttered site conditions.

The focus area has several public buildings that house several City, County and State agencies. In addition to surface parking, several of these facilities also have parking structures in the area. Midtown is home to the City's Police Headquarters, its Central Fire Station and the Skatium facility. Lee County Justice Center parking garages are located here, as well as the Library Administration building and the Rosa Parks Transportation Center. The State of Florida's Joseph P. D'Alessandro Office Complex has a major presence in the Midtown area, along with its associated parking garage. All of these structures are currently fixed assets,

however some may have a longer presence in the area than others.

Midtown is also home to the City of Palms Park baseball stadium complex. This facility was used as the Boston Red Sox Spring Training home until 2011. It includes an eight thousand seat stadium, a practice field and several small support structures. This facility does not have a regular programming schedule and does not meet the standards for another Major League Baseball team. As such, the stadium complex land would play a major role in the redevelopment and transformation of Midtown.

Unlike the Downtown core, Midtown has only a few historic structures. The most prominent one is the historic Atlantic Coastline Railway depot, which has recently been renovated as an adaptive re-use project. This project included the Collaboratory building addition that is used as a shared community workspace and new home of the Southwest Florida Community Foundation. In addition to this, the only other historic structures are the small wood-frame St. Vincent DePaul Church on Lafayette Street and a few wood-frame single family houses that may be eligible for some type of historic designation.

Residential uses in the area include several single-family and

small multi-family structures. These buildings occupy parcels that range in size from five thousand (5,000) to eight thousand (8,000) square feet. Current demographic information indicates the Midtown area has approximately two hundred sixty-one (261) dwelling units and four hundred ninety-eight (498) residents. Thirty-nine (39) of these structures are single-family residences and two hundred twenty-three (223) are rental units in small apartment buildings. Most of these residential units are located in small clusters to the west and east of the Stadium complex. There are no other residential units in the Midtown focus area.



Figure 5.6.1 Aerial view of Midtown Focus Area existing conditions

5.7 OPEN SPACE AND PUBLIC REALM CONDITIONS

The Midtown focus area has little designated park or public open space. Although the area is anchored by the City of Palms Park baseball stadium, there is no actual public park in this complex that is accessible to local residents on continuous basis. The stadium is essentially a fixed asset that hosts public events on a periodic or infrequent basis. Initial analysis of this facility did not yield any practical solutions for repurposing it to accommodate another public use. While college and high school baseball and softball games represents over fifty percent (50%) of the stadium's events, it was not identified in a recent Sports Tourism Facility Expansion Study as a key component of Lee County's ongoing Sports Tourism Program. Due to certain limitations on its size and number of playing fields, this facility was not recommended for any type of expansion or upgrades (source: Lee County Sports Tourism Facility Expansion Study, Victous Advisors, 2017).

Aside from this, the Midtown area has three (3) small designated public open spaces. The Bennett-Hart Park on the south side of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard is a 1.2 acre passive urban plaza just north of the historic train depot. This space is in a prominent location, but suffers from underutilization and a lack of activity-generating uses around it. Two blocks to the west of this park on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, the city has created a small triangular-shaped public open space at the inter-

sections between Broadway and Monroe Streets. Resulting from the shifting street grids of Midtown and Downtown, this space appears to function as a type of "pocket park" – attracting only the occasional passing pedestrian. In the southeast portion of the focus area, the City has created Yawkey Park. This is a .4-acre playground at 2991 Jackson Street, just adjacent to the baseball stadium. This open space is a tot lot and is only used by a small number of residents who live nearby.

Public realm conditions in Midtown are pretty basic. While there are sidewalks on a majority of area streets, there are no other discernible public or pedestrian amenities in the area. Modest streetscape enhancements along four blocks of the Broadway corridor and along Edison Avenue near the stadium appear to have been installed when it was originally built. These include different species of palm trees and a landscaped median. These are the only places in the focus area with streetscape enhancements.

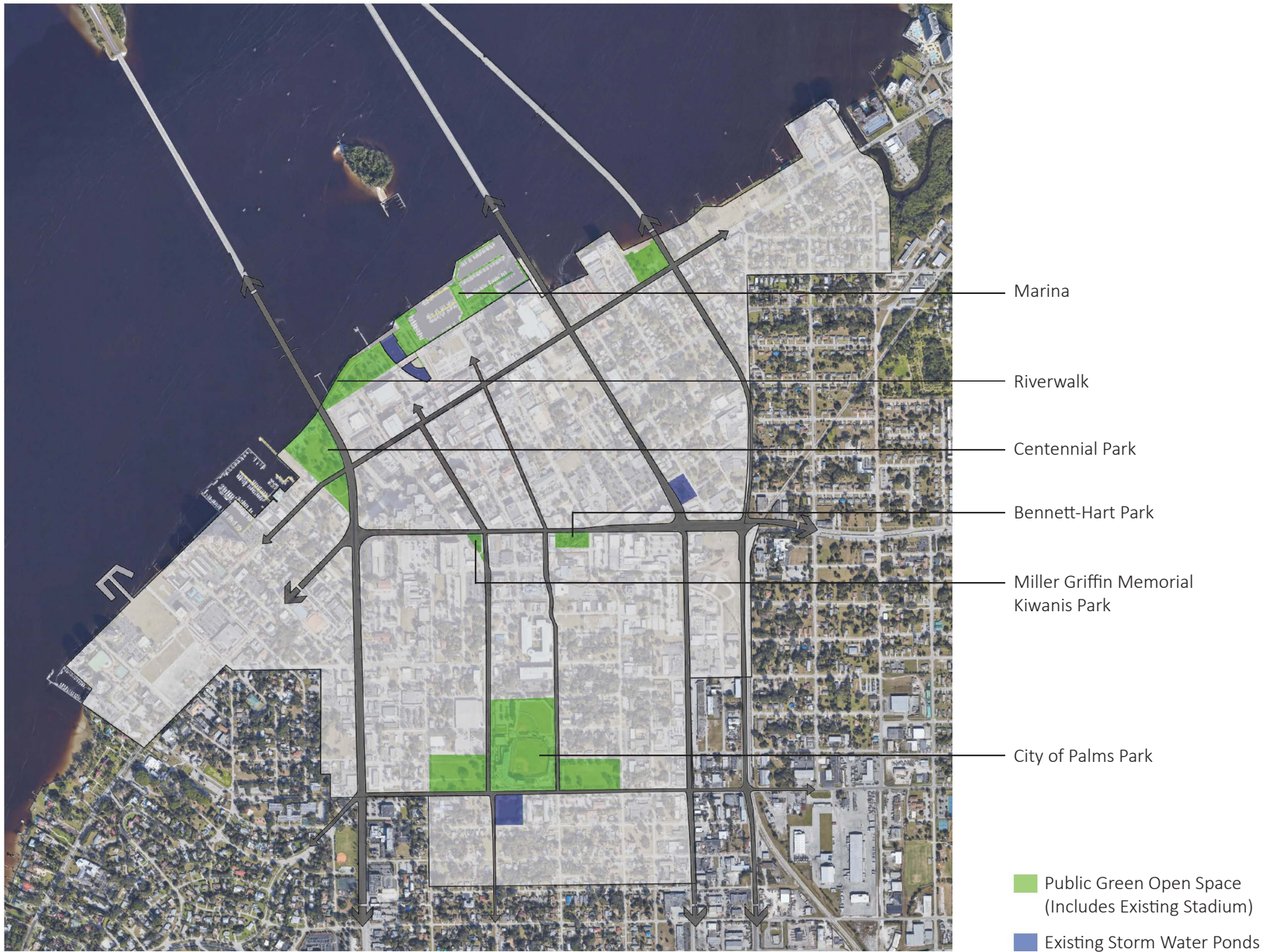


Figure 5.7.1 Opportunity Sites (Public Open Spaces)

INSTITUTIONS, CULTURAL AND OTHER COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Midtown has a number of churches along its western and southern edges. These institutions are situated primarily along Cleveland and Edison Avenues. Their properties are occupied by primary worship structures, support buildings and large expanses of surface parking lots. Most of these parking lots are only used on a weekly basis. These institutions and their associated parking are situated along some of the focus area's most prominent edges. The combined area of these surface parking lots totals approximately four (4) acres. As the value of this land increases in or near downtown commercial areas, many churches around the country are partnering with private-sector investors to redevelop it. These partnerships often result in ground leases, transfer of development rights or new projects that provide residential and commercial uses.

Midtown is home to one educational facility – the pre-K through 8th grade St. Francis Xavier Catholic School. This school is located on Heitman Street in the northwest section of the focus area, just south of one of a County parking lot. Due to the narrow width of this street, the school faces ongoing challenges with student drop off and pick up. These activities pose some problems for traffic operations on Heitman Street during these times. The only community facility in Midtown is the Skatium. This is a recreation facility that houses an ice skating rink, gymnasium and a fitness

center. It occupies a half-block site along Broadway, between Hoople and Crawford Streets. Adjacent to this are City volleyball courts, which occupy a parcel previously used as a skate park.

After relocation of the History Museum from the historic Atlantic Coast Line Railway depot, the Southwest Florida Community Foundation has renovated, expanded and re-branded this facility as the Collaboratory. This is a new community asset that provides shared work space, and space for other community gatherings and events. This facility will make a significant contribution to the market appeal for new development in the northern part of Midtown.

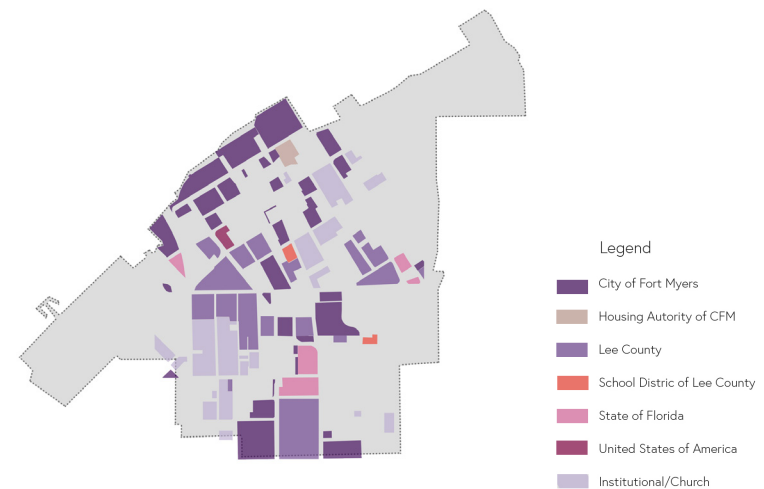


Figure 5.8.1 Public Owned Land



Figure 5.8.2 View of northwest section of Midtown Focus Area, showing St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church and School



Figure 5.8.3 Aerial view of City of Palms Park Stadium and State Office Building

5.9 EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE



Figure 5.9.1 Aerial of Midtown Focus Area, along Dr. Martin Luther King Boulevard, between Cleveland Avenue and Evans Avenue

Basic infrastructure and underground utilities in Midtown seem adequate to support existing buildings and uses. However, certain vertical infrastructure features, such as street lights, drainage inlets and curbs are noticeably absent along portions of some streets. These conditions will need substantial upgrades in anticipation of future redevelopment. Recognizing this, the City has already started aligning certain infrastructure initiatives in the focus area with projected levels of new development.

Some streets in the Midtown focus area are prone to standing water and flooding after major storm events. Stormwater management will be a major issue in the Downtown planning area. In response to this, the City will be installing larger pipes in phased manner in certain portions of the focus area. These enhance-

ments are intended to improve overall stormwater management and minimize localized street flooding. The City has also completed an updated utility capacity analysis for sewer and potable water. In the area (“City of Fort Myers Downtown and Midtown Utility Capacity Analysis”, TKW Consulting Engineers and Johnson Engineering, 2017). This study “... *identified opportunities for future development that exceeds base density parameters by optimizing the capacity for existing and proposed infrastructure*”. This study also “... *quantified excess capacity intrinsic to existing or proposed utility systems that can support development at higher densities*”. Higher development density based on excess capacity in both water and sewer systems is considered “surplus density”. The Midtown Vision Plan took these parameters into consideration and reflects a compatible level of development.

5.10 MOBILITY AND TRANSPORTATION

Mobility in the Midtown area is primarily vehicular oriented and based on a hierarchy of local and arterial roadways. Roadways within the focus area generally carry a small amount of local vehicular traffic, whereas the State arterial roadways at its periphery carry between ten-thousand (10,000) and forty-thousand (40,000) vehicles a day. Due to the lack of people and public realm activity, pedestrian movement, bicycling or other alternative modes of mobility in the focus area are negligible.

Midtown is home to the Rosa Parks Transportation Center. This is a bus transfer facility operated by LeeTran and Greyhound – the local county and long distance bus services. This transportation asset could provide a number of benefits for future redevelopment in the focus area. As the Midtown area is envisioned to have higher densities in the future, this facility could evolve into a much more diverse multi-modal transportation center and mobility hub for all of Downtown Fort Myers.



Figure 5.10.1 Aerial of Midtown Focus Area, showing Fowler Street and Evans Avenue, south of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard

6 *URBAN DESIGN AND PLANNING FOCUS*



6.1 PROCESS

The process for generating any vision plan is critical to consensus-building, defining priorities, coordination and ultimately coming together around a shared outlook for the future. This process typically includes multiple iterative phases, such as: analysis, community engagement, refining priorities, clarifying project direction, conceptual development and crafting a final vision plan. All of these activities were vetted as part of the urban design and planning process for generating the Midtown Vision Plan. This integrated approach was intended to ensure that the ideas and concepts for transforming the Midtown area were feasibility and could prove to be effective in guiding a long-term redevelopment initiative.

In crafting this vision plan, public engagement throughout the duration of the project was essential at every step. This participatory approach allowed for direct citizen and stakeholder involvement through a series of interviews, workshops and presentations. This ongoing involvement led to the incorporation of a number of significant insights that were factored into the Plan's development. From the early stages of this process, one of these was the need to integrate these five basic objectives into the visioning process:

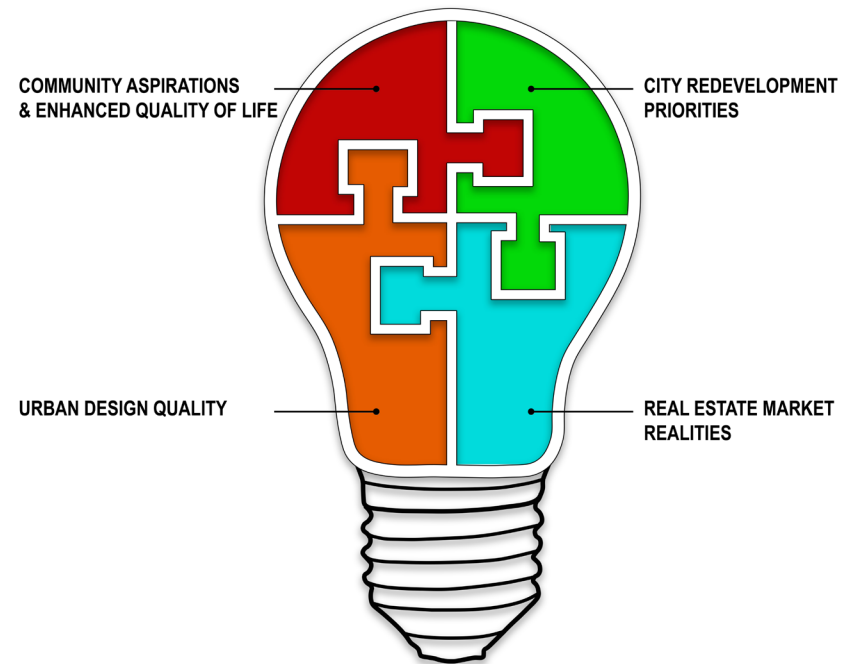


Figure 6.1.1 Initial Idea for an Integrated Redevelopment Strategy

- The vision for Midtown's future must reflect the aspirations of the community and identify opportunities to enhance the quality of life for local residents
- Balance this with the redevelopment priorities of the City and identify opportunities for long-term economic viability in the Midtown area
- Maximize the redevelopment potential of Midtown and align it with projected real estate market conditions
- Indicate how the Midtown area can better connect with and complement the Historic Downtown and other adjacent neighborhoods
- Ensure the Plan aspires to a high level of urban design quality for future development and public realm conditions throughout the Midtown focus area

In addition to these, a number of more specific priorities were identified as part of this process. These priorities would define the overall scope of the Plan and influence the urban design and planning process at multiple scales. These priorities included the following conditions:

- Maximize the potential for mixed-use development (MXD) in the focus area
- Plan for a range of new housing options
- Create opportunities for sustained commercial viability
- Create street conditions that are safe for bicyclists and walkable for pedestrians
- Introduce a range of new public realm and open space features
- Plan for “smart infrastructure”
- Incorporate sustainable and resilient measures where possible
- Create a discernible sense of place that will appeal to all city residents and visitors alike

With the project scope and direction defined, these objectives and priorities would serve as the drivers for next phase of plan development. This involved processing this information in the form of an initial urban design or redevelopment concept.

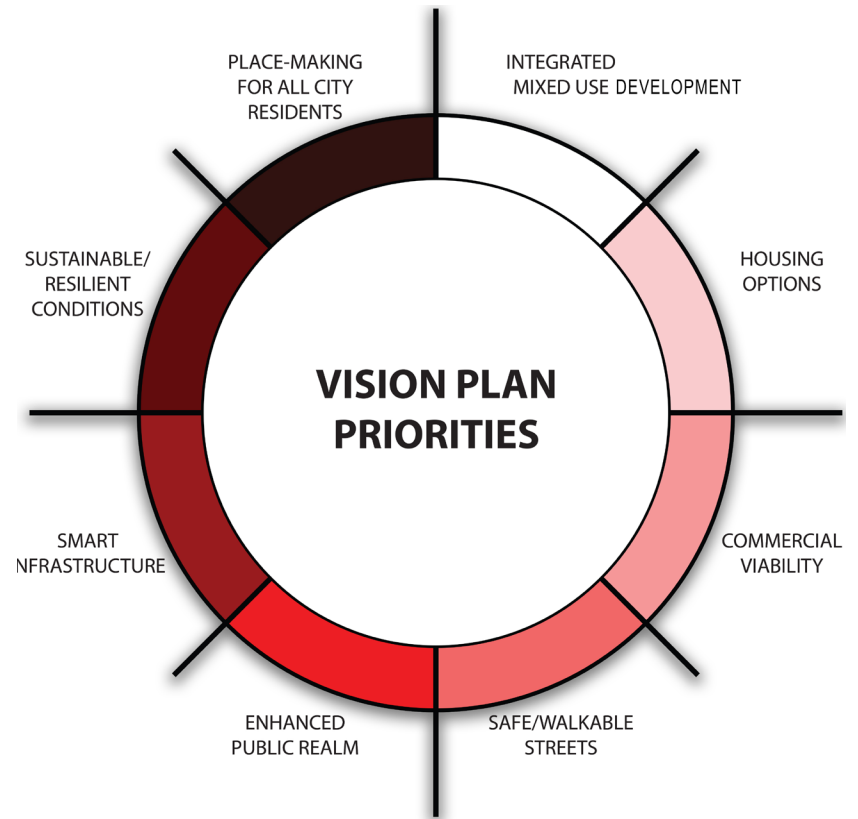


Figure 6.1.2 Vision Plan Priorities

6.2 URBAN DESIGN PRINCIPLES AND STRATEGIES

As the Midtown Vision Plan evolved, a number of urban design principles and strategies were introduced into the process to ensure that the community's ideas and aspirations were reflected and to identify the most appropriate redevelopment strategies for the area. Most of these principles relate directly to desired physical conditions, usage patterns and visual character. These include a number of shared community values such as:

- **Safe and pedestrian-friendly public realm conditions**
- **Walkable conditions and enhanced connectivity to adjacent neighborhoods**
- **Desirable, attractive destinations that have a discernible “sense of place”**
- **Vibrant street-life along commercial and neighborhood streets**
- **Unique visual identity**
- **Human scale conditions**
- **Diversity in uses and densities**

As a value system, these principles influenced all aspects of the Plan's development and led to the development of a number of urban design strategies that were incorporated into the Plan.

These strategies were developed for different scales of the focus

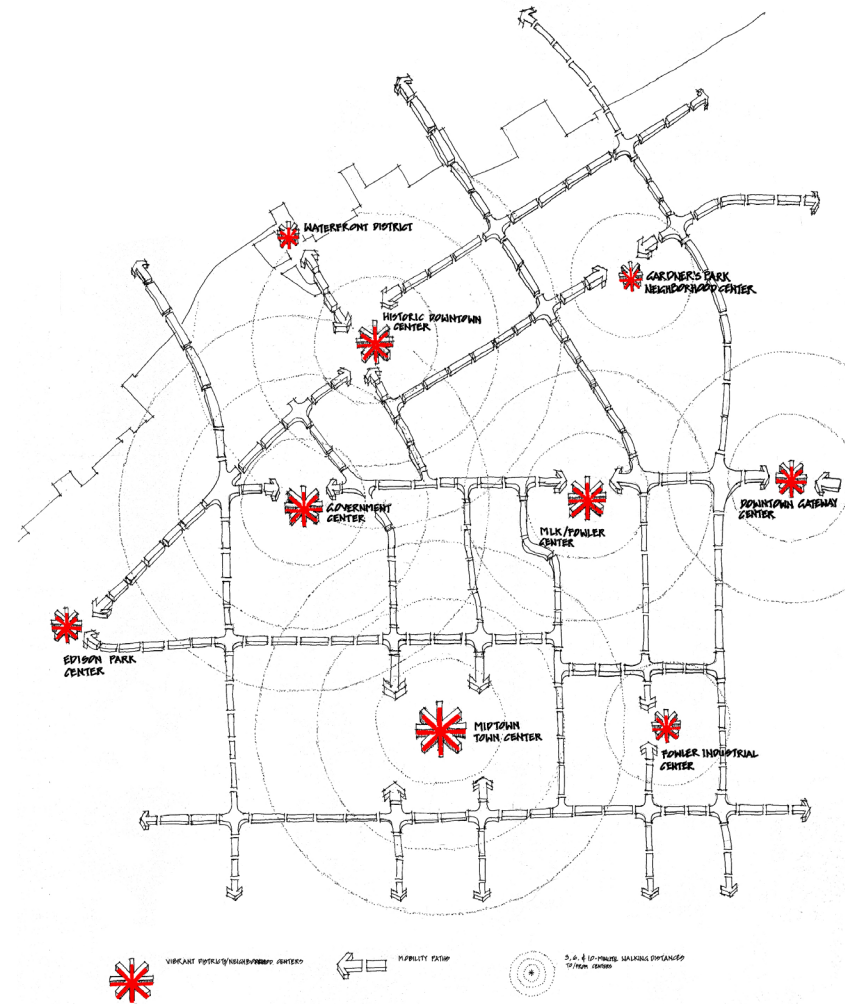
area. With any redevelopment planning process, there is usually a central idea or set of ideas that provide a conceptual foundation or focus for the Plan. For the Midtown Vision Plan, these were “big ideas” or conceptual strategies that could influence future development in Midtown in the following ways:

- **General development patterns**
- **Spatial arrangement and distribution of other non-building features**
- **Three-dimensional urban form**
- **Visual character and nature of the public realm**
- **Functional order and mobility patterns**

These concepts related to the larger Downtown Redevelopment Area, the Midtown focus area, the intermediate or sub area scale and at the smaller scale of physical conditions experienced at the street level.

At the large or macro-scale (i.e. “big picture”) level, one of the early concepts to emerge was all of Downtown Fort Myers functioning as an integrated framework of connected paths and places. This concept was introduced to maximize the potential of existing and future activity centers working as a constellation of connected destinations. To foster greater connectivity and access

between them, this concept envisions transforming (selected) existing roadways into a series of multimodal paths. These paths would contain a number of public realm amenities and the able to accommodate a range of mobility options, including walking, biking, driving and public transit. These “multi-modal” paths would also provide strategic connections from Midtown directly to the adjacent neighborhoods surrounding the focus area.



“A city is not an accident but the result of coherent visions and aims.”

Leon Krier

Figure 6.2.1 Initial Urban Design Concept: A Framework of Connected Paths and Places

URBAN DESIGN STRATEGIES

The urban design strategy incorporated at the intermediate scale (i.e. smaller sub-areas), focuses on the potential for creating a number of activity centers within the Midtown focus area. These activity centers could emerge as destinations with clusters of similar building types, increased activity levels and usage diversity, and with features that gives each a unique physical character and discernible sense of place. Each of these activity centers was envisioned with a different redevelopment focus and mix of uses. They would become destinations for living, working and participating in a leisure activities.

This is a familiar redevelopment theme in many cities around the country. These activity nodes are proving to be major economic engines for downtown areas. At the district or sub area levels, they typically incorporate three noticeable conditions: concentrated commercial mixed-use development that includes office and other types of work spaces; a range of residential options; and different types of open space features. Where they exist, they are increasingly the most sought after and desirable places in the city. They are destinations to a broad demographic spectrum that includes seniors/retirees, families with children, millennials, as well as teenagers. Districts that are based on this type of urban design model are also the economically viable places in the city – capitalizing on the internal synergies between different uses and the larger volume of residents, workers and visitors.

The Plan envisions four activity centers that could emerge in the in the Midtown area in the future. These activity centers are essentially sub-areas or smaller districts with a differentiated physical conditions, concentrations of certain building types and uses

and heightened level of vitality. These activity centers are as follows:

- **Government Center**
- **Gateway Center**
- **Commercial / Small Business District**
- **Town Center**

Although Midtown does not currently function as a destination Downtown district, three of them have base conditions that can be expanded over time to realize the envisioned conditions.

At the micro-scale (i.e. human scale conditions), a major urban design strategy focused on how to foster active street life and enhanced public realm conditions. This strategy also addressed other issues, such as future mobility options that could emerge in the Midtown area, complete street conditions and open space provisions.

The Midtown Vision Plan is further informed by a number of strategies and approaches that have been tested and implemented in other cities around the United States – many of which have proven to be feasible for this type of redevelopment initiative. These strategies have become universal standards for realizing desirable redevelopment conditions and metrics for measuring success. Some of the strategies that have influenced the Midtown Vision Plan include:

URBAN DESIGN STRATEGIES

National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO)

Urban street design guidelines and sustainable stormwater management measures.

Project for Public Spaces (PPS)

Principles for “place-making” and the Power of 10+ (when people have a range of reasons (10+) for visiting or remaining in a particular place).

Urban Land Institute (ULI): Principles of compact, mixed-use development (MXD)

diverse sub-areas, districts and buildings that integrate multiple uses, public realm conditions and usage patterns to create conditions for people to live, work and play in a single location.

Vertical and horizontal mixed-use development (MXD)

concentration of different, yet complementary buildings that create diverse usage patterns, increased activity and enduring economic value.

“Four Characteristics of Compact Development”

Design, Density, Development patterns and Distance to transportation.

Walkability, Complete Streets and Multimodal transportation

shared streets and public realm conditions that are safe and convenient for pedestrians and bicyclists, and can accommodate a broader range of existing and future mobility options.

“Ten Principles for Developing Successful Town Centers”

Create an Enduring and Memorable Public Realm; Respect Market Realities; Share the Risk, Share the Reward; Plan for Development and Financial Complexity; Integrate Multiple Uses; Balance Flexibility with a Long-Term Vision; Capture the Benefits That Density Offers; Connect to the Community; Invest for Sustainability; Commit to Intensive On-Site Management and Programming

7

***MIDTOWN
VISION PLAN***



Macro-Scale
Conditions



Intermediate-Scale
Conditions



Micro-Scale
Conditions

7.1 A LONG-TERM VISION FOR THE FUTURE



Macro-Scale Conditions

MACRO-SCALE CONDITIONS

The Midtown Vision Plan is intended as a “shared” community vision for transforming the Midtown area into a revitalized part of the city. It reflects the priorities, preferences and long-term aspirations identified by the community during the planning process, as well as the projected redevelopment potentials of this part of the city. The Plan is the outcome of a planning process that began with a single question – ***How can the Midtown area be redeveloped as an extension of Downtown and what type of physical conditions should it have in the future?*** While developing the Plan, community participants expressed the desire for a fresh, new direction for the Midtown focus area. A consensus favored repurposing Midtown as a vibrant urban destination that can achieve a more promising, enduring and sustainable future. Although many workshop participants were well aware of the area’s current shortcomings, most were enthusiastic about its redevelopment potential and eager to identify a feasible strategy that held the most promise for realizing community, City and other stakeholder objectives.

The Plan is a conceptual vision that proposes transforming the Midtown area into a vibrant, mixed-use district. It addresses potential physical conditions in the future at multiple scales. These include the large or macro scale, the sub area or intermediate

scale, and the human or micro scale. In doing so, the Plan proposes a strategic framework for enhancing market conditions in the area to stimulate growth and foster economic development across the entire two hundred forty-three (243) acre focus area. This framework creates a context for private and public-sector investment decisions and for coordinating future development in an orderly and predictable manner. Although the area currently suffers from a lack of investment, the Plan attempts to illuminate the area’s long-term redevelopment potential.

Using the existing street and block network as a foundation, the Plan envisions broadening its purpose to serve as a system of connected multimodal paths that connect to active destinations and adjacent neighborhoods.

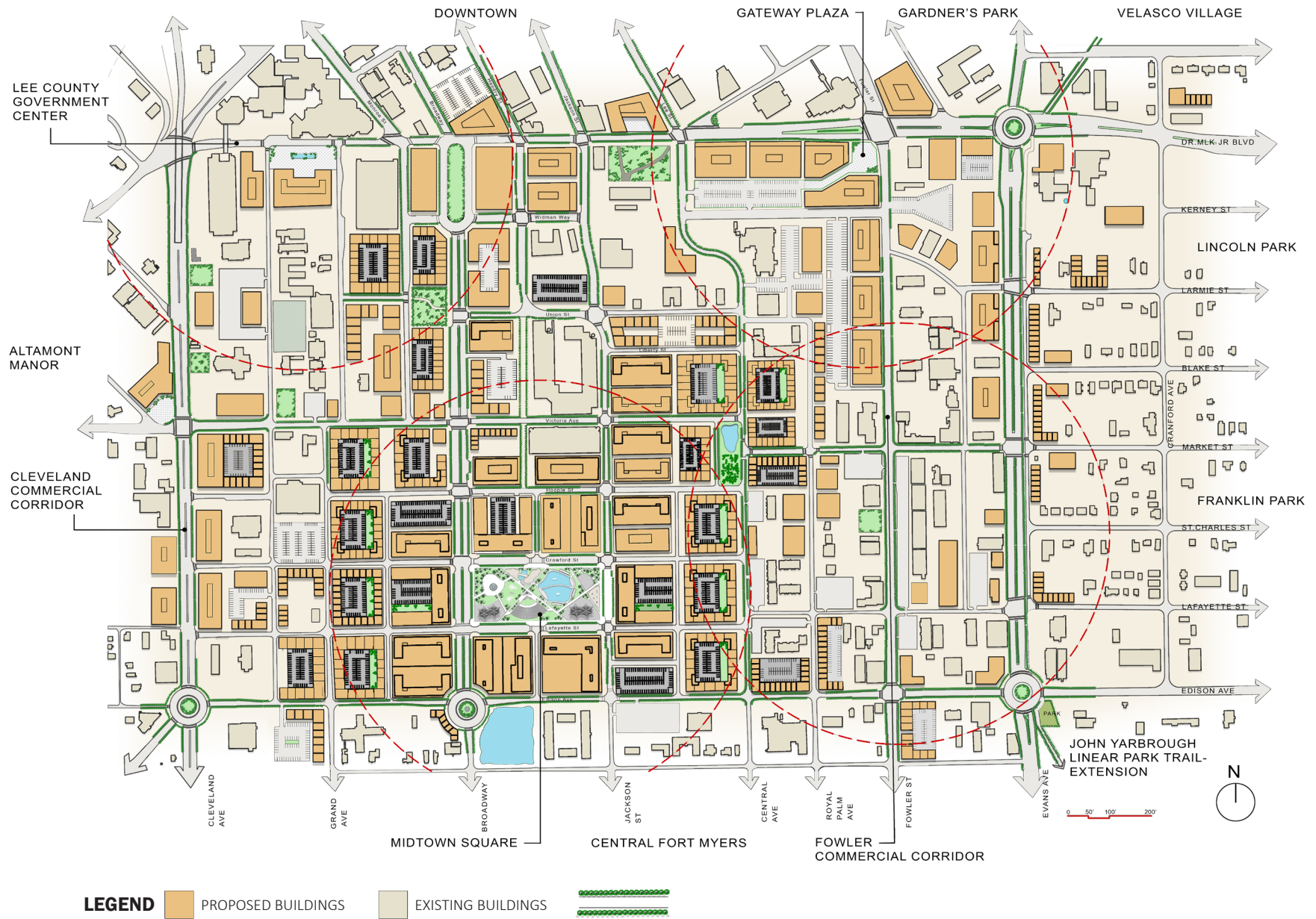


Figure 7.1.1 Midtown Vision Plan

Although the existing roadway network already provides good connectivity, the Plan envisions the addition of streetscape and other public realm enhancements on certain streets to redefine the mobility hierarchy of area. This multimodal path system expands the concept of “complete streets” and envisions it extending throughout the Downtown area.

At this larger scale, future development patterns are intended to reinforce this system by creating different density gradients in the focus area. New development along the multimodal path system is expected to incorporate more mixed-use projects and acknowledge the value its public realm conditions. The Plan envisions mixed-use vertical development in the future fulfilling the following urban design objectives:

- **Indicate a feasible level of density that could be achieved over a twenty (20) year timeframe**
- **Create compact development patterns that contribute to “placemaking” and public realm activity**
- **Vary densities and building heights to establish different areas of intensity and urban form**
- **Identify infill opportunities for buildings of different types and sizes**

The Plan envisions three types of development patterns emerging in the area: full-block development, partial block development and small, scattered-site infill development. Full-block development would occur on large vacant parcels or through the

assemblage of smaller parcels. Infill development in Midtown is anticipated to occur in a more dispersed manner on parcels of five thousand (5,000) to ten thousand (10,000) square feet.

The general development pattern proposed in the Plan is based on a type of spatial order that promotes walkability. Over sixty (60) percent of the blocks in the focus area have one or both dimensions of approximately two hundred eighty (280) feet by two hundred sixty (260) feet. This allows for one or two building contiguous frontages per block, slower vehicular speed and more frequent intersection crossings for pedestrians.

Longer-term, the Plan envisions the retention of a number of existing buildings in the area. Aside from public and institutional facilities, many of the privately-owned structures would be subject to evolving market conditions. Most of the area’s assets are located around the periphery of the focus area and will serve as references for blending new building massing and densities with existing conditions.



Figure 7.1.2 Midtown Vision Plan: Model Photo of Town Center Area

7.2 PLAN COMPONENTS



Figure 7.2.1 Envisioned conditions at Intersection of Broadway and Lafayette Street (extension)

The Midtown Vision Plan is comprehensive in scope and proposes a number of features and conditions that are intended to transform the area into a vibrant mixed-use urban district.

One of the major challenges facing the Midtown area will be how to create more diverse conditions and how to introduce buildings and uses that generate activity or contribute to the public realm. All of the area's current uses seem isolated from each other and have no relationship with each other. None of the current uses foster conditions that allow people to stay in the area for an extended period of time. This is antithetical to conditions envisioned in the Midtown Vision Plan. The Plan addresses this challenge by proposing a range of potential uses that could com-

plement each other and achieve synergistic relationships as part of a mixed-use environment. Achieving diverse building uses are known to contribute to public realm activity throughout the day and much of the evening, promote diversity in demographics and support local economic viability. The Plan envisions a range of different usage components emerging in in Midtown as the market matures. These could include such uses as different types of residential buildings, Class A office space, cultural facilities, retail, and healthcare and educational facilities. Many of these uses should be clustered around the four envisioned activity centers, while others are expected to be dispersed throughout the Midtown area. Figure 7.2.2 indicates the different subareas where these different types of uses are anticipated.



LEGEND

- ① CLEVELAND AVE COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR
- ② GOVERNMENT CENTER PLAZA
- ③ BROADWAY MIXED-USE CORRIDOR
- ④ PUBLIC PARKING STRUCTURE
- ⑤ ROSA PARKS TRANSPORTATION CENTER
- ⑥ STATE OF FLORIDA OFFICE CAMPUS
- ⑦ MIDTOWN SQUARE PARK
- ⑧ HOTEL
- ⑨ MEDICAL OFFICES
- ⑩ CITY OFFICES / TECH INCUBATOR / MAKER SPACE
- ⑪ OFFICE BUILDING / CULTURAL VENUE
- ⑫ EDUCATIONAL / R&D
- ⑬ FOOD HALL / MICRO-BREWERY
- ⑭ COMMUNITY GARDEN
- ⑮ PROPOSED POLICE STATION RELOCATION
- ⑯ GATEWAY PLAZA
- ⑰ FOWLER COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR
- ⑱ EVANS 2-WAY CONVERSION
- ⑲ LINCOLN PARK / FRANKLIN PARK EDGE INFILL
- ⑳ JOHN YARBROUGH LINEAR TRAIL EXTENSION AND PARK

Figure 7.2.2 Midtown Vision Plan Components

7.3 ENVISIONED BUILDING USAGE



Redevelopment plans typically propose a wide range of new buildings and uses that could be realized over time. These assumptions are based on demand, favorable market conditions in the future and a range of other variables. A major challenge is identify the right combination of uses that can be achieve their primary objectives and still benefit from close proximity to each other complementary uses. While this approach is commonplace, many redevelopment plans propose a number a creative or nuanced

strategies that have greater potential for success in the marketplace. The long-term vision for Midtown focuses on a clustered and dispersed mixed-use development (MXD) strategy. Coupled with varying densities that maximize the area’s redevelopment potential, this approach is aimed at creating several diverse destinations or activity hubs in different parts of the focus area. The proportional mix of uses projected for the long-term redevelopment buildout of Midtown are as follows:

The proportional MIX OF USES PROJECTED for the LONG-TERM REDEVELOPMENT HORIZON.



Figure 7.3.1 indicates the types of uses envisioned throughout the Midtown focus area. This diagram also indicates the types of building masses that would accommodate these uses and their respective locations. The Plan envisions the following density levels are possible in the Midtown area over the projected redevelopment timeframe:

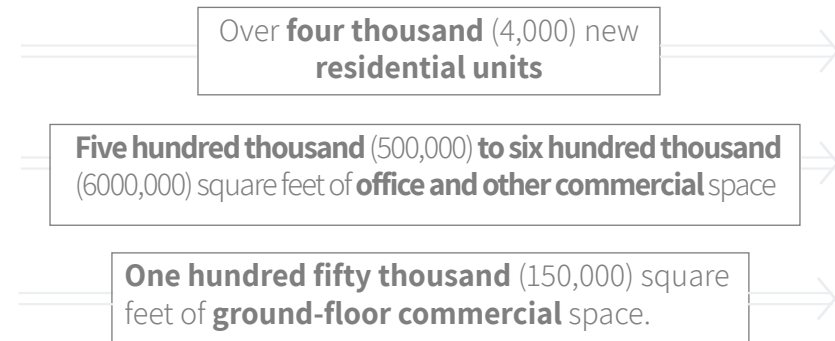
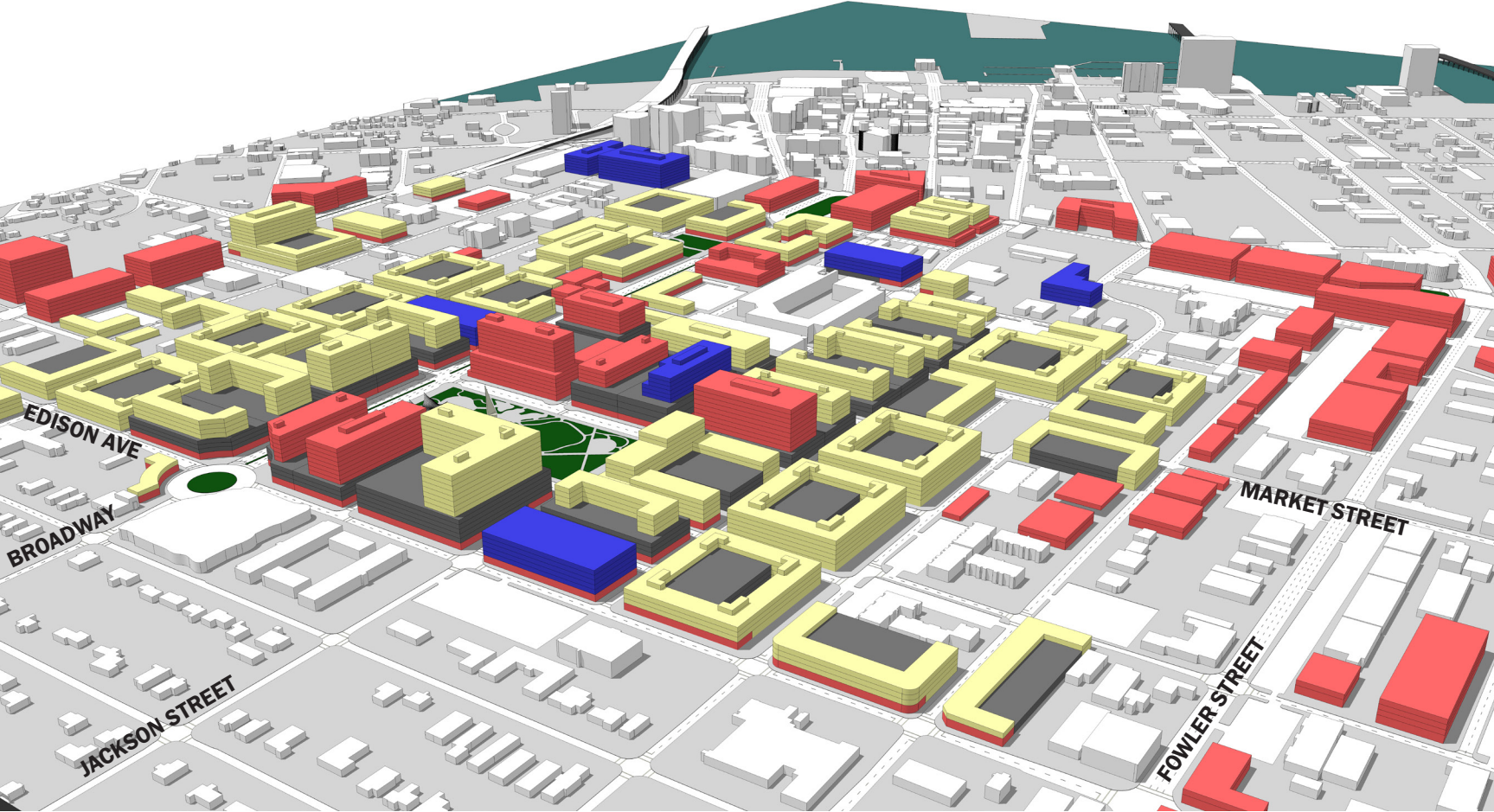


Figure 7.3.1 Building Usage Program

LEGEND

- COMMERCIAL
- PARKING
- RESIDENTIAL
- CIVIC, CULTURAL, INSTITUTIONAL



HOUSING

One of the recurring themes of the public workshops related to future land uses in the focus area was housing – how much, for who and where will it be located. Given the amount of residential development that is possible, the Plan envisions new residential options at all price points are possible in the focus area. As the primary land use component of the Plan’s mixed-use strategy, a number of new residential building types and housing options are envisioned for Midtown that may not be available in other parts of the city. The range of multi-family building types and the potential densities they could achieve range from eighteen (18) dwelling units per acre up to seventy (70) dwelling units per acre, not including density bonuses. Although the Plan does not indicate specific price points or occupancy types, it does envision a diverse mix of housing that responds to market demands for all of the following conditions:

- **Market-rate housing**
- **Workforce housing**
- **Elderly housing**
- **Live-work housing**
- **Micro-unit housing**

Similar to other cities around the county, Fort Myers is challenged with providing housing options that is affordable for young adults and moderate-income families. Along with rising home values and recent residential development geared towards the higher end of the market, the city’s deficit of moderately priced or workforce housing (i.e. young families, young professionals, service sector and public service employees that provide essential city services) continues to broaden. The Midtown Vision Plan assumes that this type of housing is vital to the overall success of future redevelopment efforts in the area and to create a more diverse residential demographic.

OFFICE SPACE

The Plan also acknowledges the city’s lack of Class A office space. In addition to housing, office space is a highly sought after building use in any Downtown redevelopment initiative. As one of the three standard office classifications, Class-A office space is typically in the most recently constructed commercial office buildings. They’re primarily constructed to attract “high quality” business tenants and other prospective companies that require the range of benefits and amenities they offer. This space is often created in buildings with larger floor plates, smart technology infrastructure, high visibility and prestige addresses. As the market for commercial office space matures and a more favorable context emerges in Midtown, the Plan envisions the area becoming an employment hub. New office space would contribute to the diversity of the area, could be included as both a primary or secondary building use.

Along with other types of commercial buildings that could emerge over time, the Midtown Vision Plan incorporates commercial office buildings as part of the “work” component of its mixed-use strategy. Longer-term, the Midtown area could realize over five hundred thousand (500,000) square feet of commercial office space. This amount of office space concentrated in the Midtown area would signal the emergence of a new economic engine for the City of Fort Myers, allow the City to realize its economic development objectives and significantly increase contributions to the Downtown CRA’s TIF (Tax Increment Finance) fund.

GROUND FLOOR COMMERCIAL SPACE

Ground floor commercial space plays a major role in determining how well buildings are integrated into a network of active street frontages. Although they're often secondary uses in a multi-story or mixed-use structures, this type of commercial space is one of essential in promoting active sidewalks and shaping the pedestrian experience. Ground floor commercial uses oriented to public sidewalks define the interface between the private and public realms. These conditions are strategically located in the Plan, particularly in four areas:

- **Along both sides of Broadway and Jackson Street – extending from the Downtown core south to Edison Avenue**
- **On the streets surrounding Midtown Square Park – buildings fronting the Park**
- **Along the multimodal paths that connect Midtown to adjacent neighborhoods**

These areas are projected to have the most active streets. Ground floor commercial spaces in future buildings would help activate public realm conditions and determine how certain streets function. As the Midtown area becomes more populated, ground floor uses such as general retail, service retail, food service establishments, entertainment, financial services and other customer service uses are expected to emerge. The Plan projects over one hundred fifty thousand (150,000) square feet of ground floor commercial space can be realized in future buildings in throughout the focus area.

OTHER COMMERCIAL USES

The Midtown Vision Plan also sees the potential for a new, limited service hotel with conference space in the area. This would complement the mix of uses anticipated in the Midtown area and expand the inventory of hotel rooms available to the local community, tourists and future businesses. The Plan also recognizes the number of small businesses currently distributed throughout the focus area, as well as those concentrated along the Fowler Street and Evans Avenue corridors. As the area evolves, the Plan envisions the potential for retaining, expanding or repurposing several of these uses. Other small businesses in this part of the focus area may be subject to relocation as a result of increasing land values, zoning revisions or incompatibility with surrounding conditions. The Plan also envisions over one hundred fifty thousand (150,000) square feet of new commercial and light industrial space can be added to this area over the projected redevelopment timeframe.

CIVIC USES

The plan envisions a number of new civic uses emerging in the focus area. Some of these will be cultural facilities. They may be in single-use, stand-alone facilities or incorporated in other mixed-use buildings. The cultural uses identified in the Plan are intended to fill a current need in the community, complement other commercial and residential uses, and enhance the quality of life for local residents. Cultural uses that could be realized in the area include gallery space for the region's burgeoning arts community, a new museum and a community playhouse or performing arts theater.

Other civic uses envisioned in the plan are new City and County facilities. The County's substantial land holdings in the northwest corner of the focus area provides adequate room for growth of its physical plant. In anticipation of City and County population growth projections and a transformed Midtown, the Plan envisions the future expansion of the Rosa Parks Transportation Center into a multimodal hub. As Midtown realizes incremental development and increased population densities, this facility will have to accommodate all forms of mobility – including long distance Greyhound bus service, LeeTran County bus service, bicyclists, paratransit and automated and electric vehicles.

In addition to this, a certain amount of new public parking will have to be added to this facility to accommodate destination parking and transportation modal splits. Recognizing this and the need for additional public parking throughout the Midtown area, the Plan proposes three (3) new public parking structures for the area. One at the multimodal transit facility and two others adjacent to the Town Center area.

VERTICAL MIXED-USE BUILDING - USAGE STACKING CONCEPT

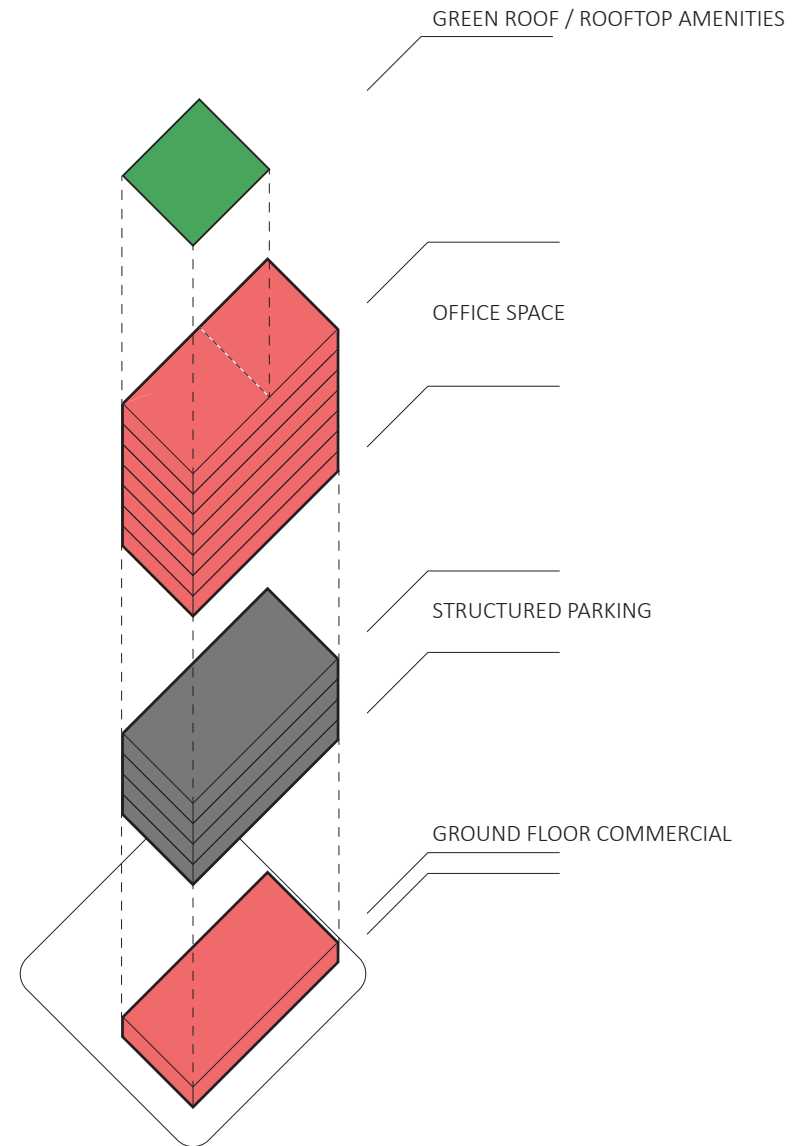


Figure 7.3.2 (Office) Commercial Mixed-Use Podium Building

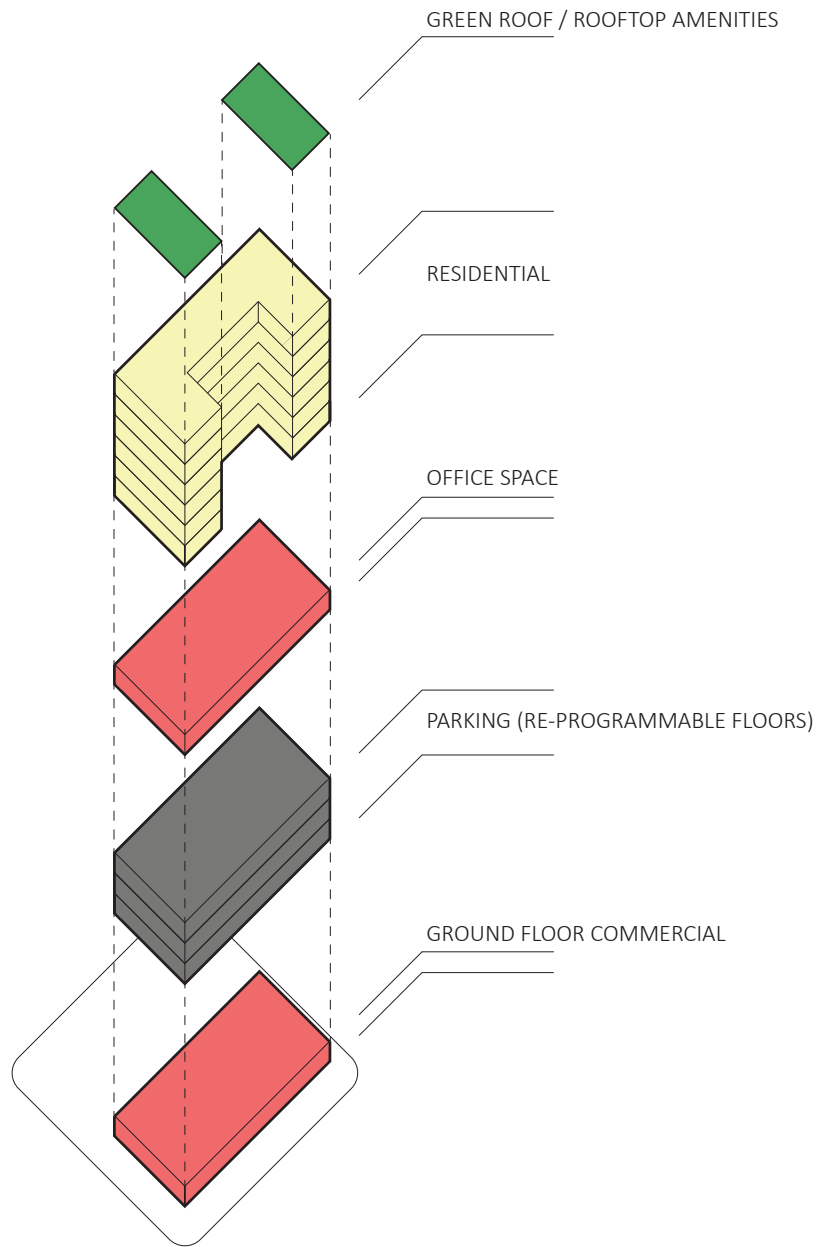


Figure 7.3.3 Residential Mixed-Use Podium Building

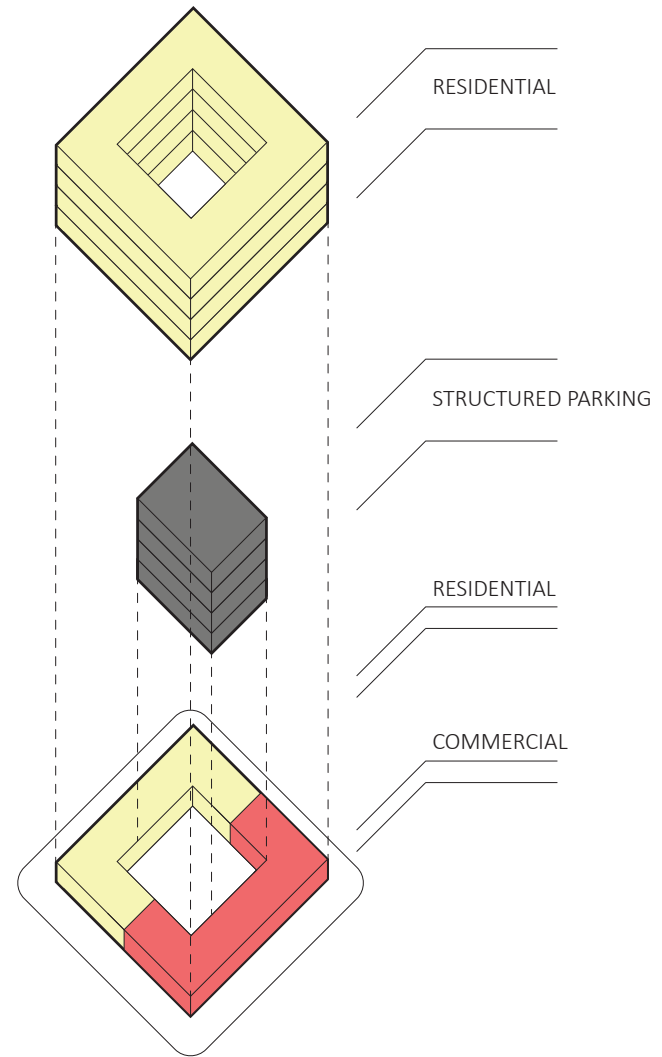


Figure 7.3.4 Residential Mixed-Use Perimeter Block Building

7.4 PUBLIC REALM AND OPEN SPACE SYSTEM



Public realm and open space features are essential to creating and maintaining healthy, active and desirable places in neighborhoods throughout the city. These are the places that generate and support street life. Public rights of way, open spaces and other public realm conditions are inextricably linked to other physical conditions and are prominent features of the Midtown Vision Plan.

The public realm and open space system envisioned for Midtown is intended to function at the larger (Downtown) district scale and at the subarea or activity center scale. As part of the multimodal path network, public rights of way are envisioned as enhanced linear public open spaces. They have smaller open space features (e.g. “pocket parks”) distributed along them, then connect with “destination” open spaces at the envisioned activity centers. This creates a safe and convenient wayfinding system for the general public that is internally connected within Midtown and externally connected with surrounding neighborhoods. Figure 7.4.2 indicates the extent of this system.

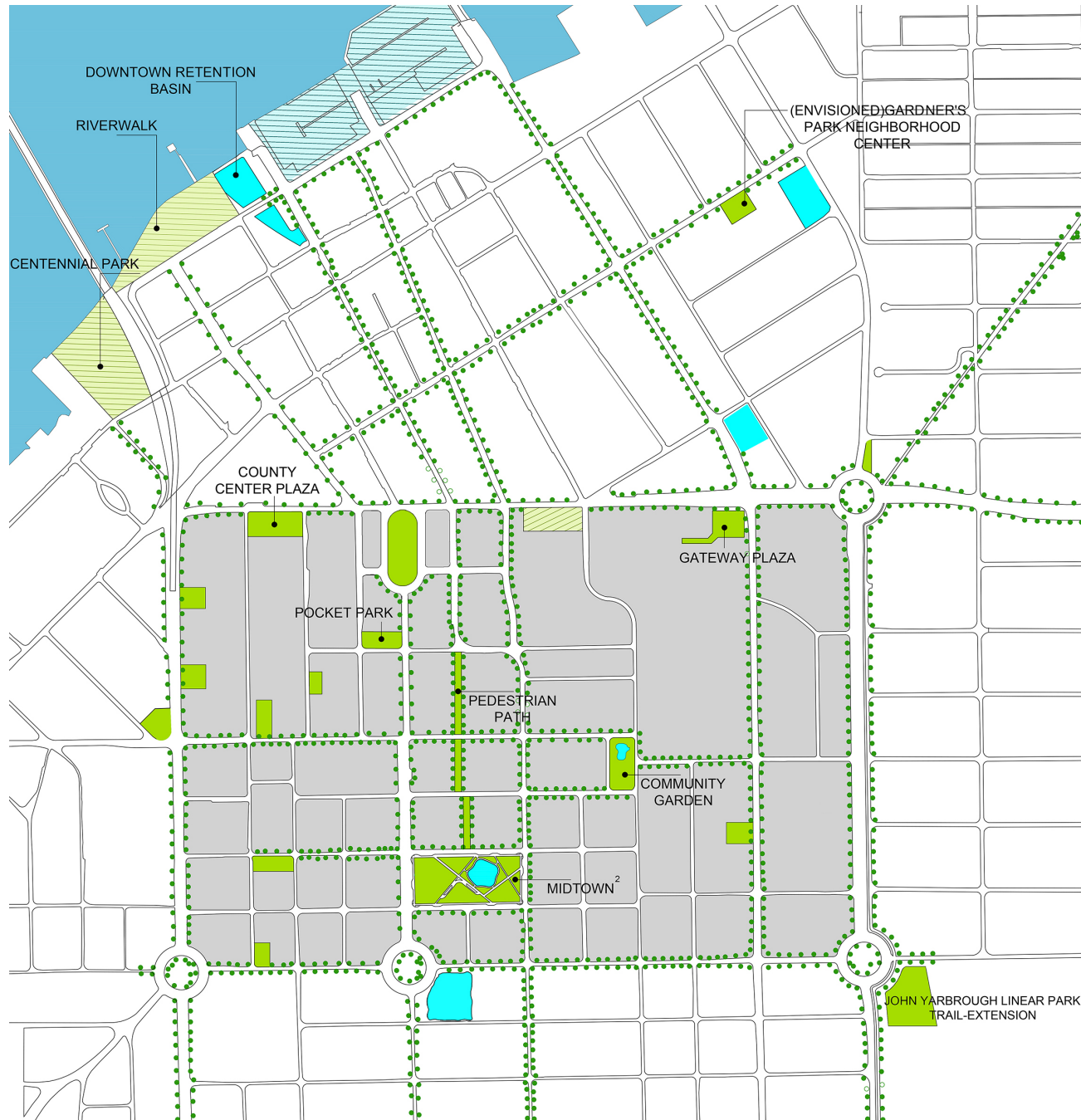
Public open space features that accommodate a broad range of public activities are also critical to the success of commercial areas. Open spaces that are situated in close proximity to retail, food service and entertainment establishments generate usage






Figure 7.4.1 View of Public Realm Conditions at Midtown Square Park

synergies and other mutual benefits. Recent research indicates that buildings in close proximity to open spaces often realize up to a three (3%) percent increase property values. The Midtown Vision Plan’s proposed open space features are strategically located for this purposes and to create visual landmarks that contribute to “placemaking”. Each of the four activity centers envisioned for Midtown is anchored by a central open space feature. The largest open space feature in this system is the Midtown Square Park (see section 7.14), which is intended as the new center of Midtown.

Figure 7.4.2
Public Realm and Open Space System



LEGEND

-  EXISTING PUBLIC OPEN SPACES
-  ENVISIONED NEW PUBLIC OPEN SPACES
-  "MULTI-MODAL PATHS" WITH PRIORITY STREETScape

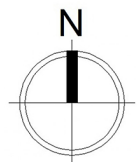




Figure 7.4.3 View of Midtown Square Park looking North

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7.5 REDEVELOPMENT SUB AREAS

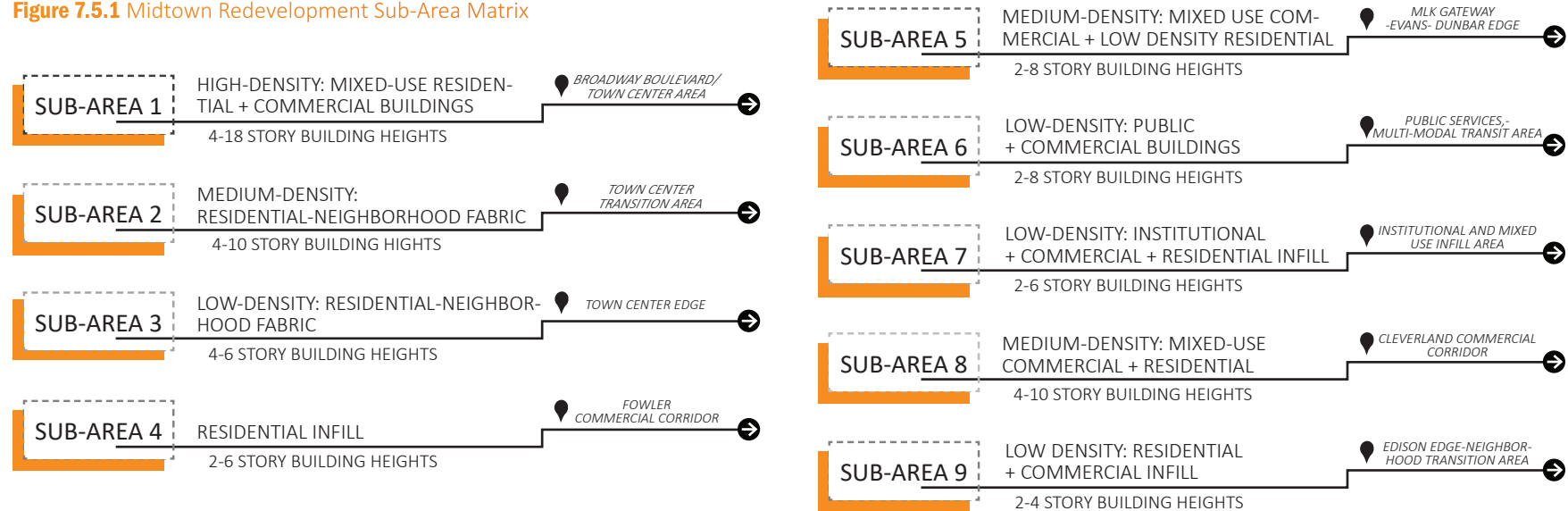


Several portions of the focus area have the potential to accommodate a range of different types of infill development at different scales. The Plan anticipates a number of “scattered-site” projects emerging in smaller sub areas or concentrated on certain blocks. Many of these “opportunity sites” are vacant or underutilized parcels located primarily on side streets. To indicate the types of redevelopment that could happen throughout the focus area, the Plan identifies nine (9) infill subareas throughout the focus area. Each one of these could accommodate a range of

different uses, building types and densities. Figure 7.5.1 indicates the type of development that could happen in each of these infill areas.

Several infill projects are already underway in Subarea 6, near Union and Liberty Streets and represent an early phase of development. The Plan envisions these new pockets of infill development as completing the built form of certain blocks, helping to strengthen neighborhood conditions and reinvigorating some of Midtown’s areas of physical deterioration.

Figure 7.5.1 Midtown Redevelopment Sub-Area Matrix



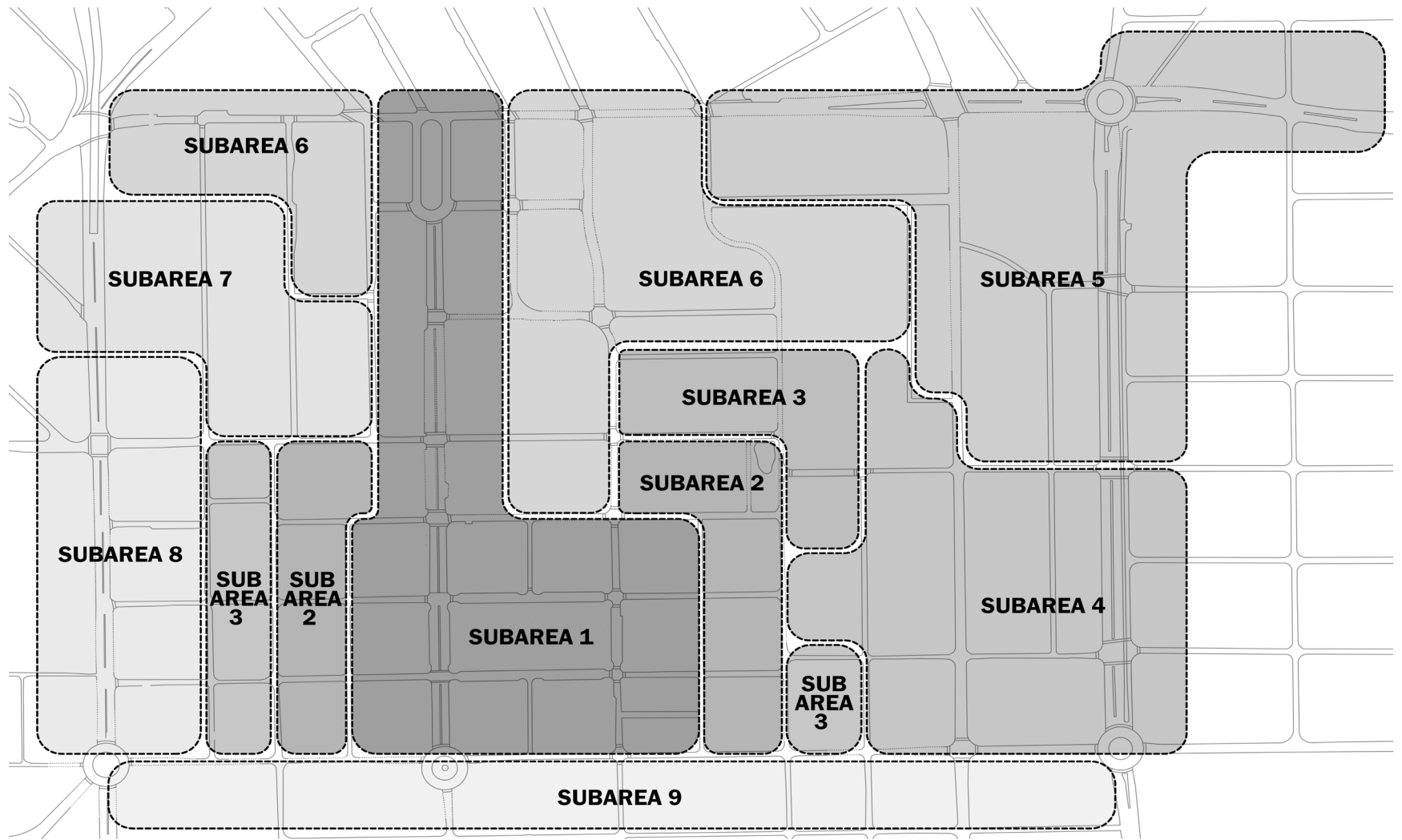


Figure 7.5.2 Midtown Redevelopment Sub-Areas / Density Zones

7.6 MIDTOWN ACTIVITY CENTERS



Intermediate-Scale
Conditions

One of the main issues that resonated with workshop attendees was the idea of creating “places” in Midtown, as opposed to a lot of uncoordinated development. The Midtown Vision Plan incorporates conditions that reflect a growing trend in redevelopment initiatives around the country – the creation of activity nodes or lively urban districts. Cities of all sizes are implementing strategies that are aimed at leveraging the potential of compact, high intensity development to generate social and commercial activity. This approach is also being used to create branded and memorable places and to maximize the potential for economic development. These types of neighborhood or district contexts that are energized by a local workforce, residents and frequent visits by locals and tourists alike. These places offer a unique experience and have broad appeal across the demographic spectrum. These are the “cool places” that people seek out, where they feel welcomed, safe and comfortable and want to spend time in. This high level of activity is directly associated with an area’s commercial success.

Regardless of the classification, as activity centers, village or town centers or mixed-use districts, are all contexts that are based on familiar urban design conditions. This approach concentrates singular or disparate land uses, building types, open spaces and other public realm features in close proximity to each

other to generate mutually beneficial interactions. These areas then evolve into vibrant mixed-use districts that function as destinations for living, working and leisure activities.

The Plan identifies the potential for four activity centers that could emerge in the Midtown area over the next twenty (20) or more years. These activity centers represent one of the major components of the original urban design strategy that envisions linked destinations dispersed throughout Midtown and Downtown. Each of these activity centers would have a different focus or usage makeup, and be within a convenient walking distance from each other.

These activity centers would have a number of physical properties that would differentiate them as a unique localized context. The following are the four activity centers identified in the Midtown Vision Plan:

- **Government Center**
- **Gateway Center**
- **Fowler Business Corridor**
- **Town Center**

Figures 7.6.1 through 7.6.5 indicate the location and configuration of each four envisioned activity centers.

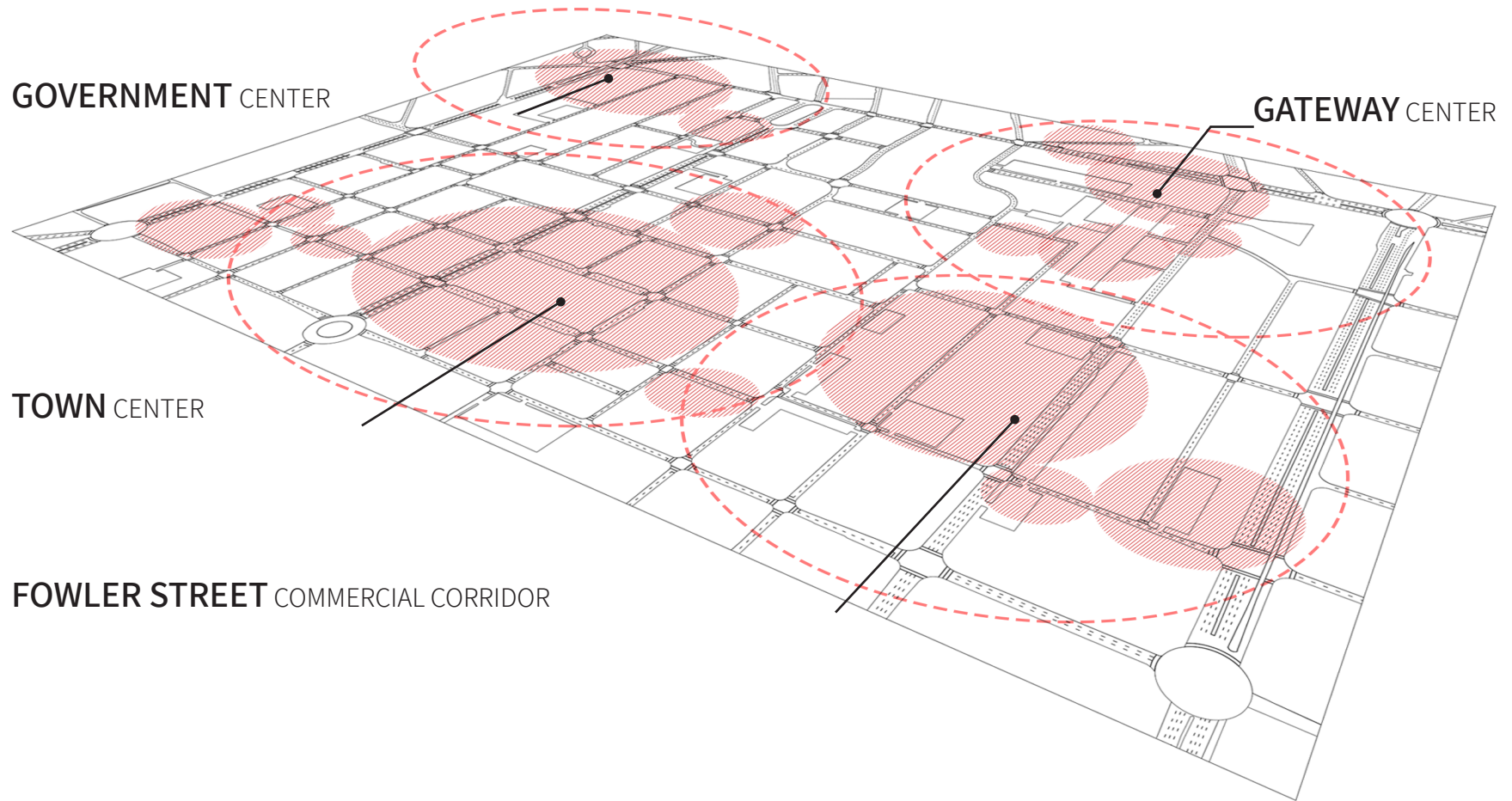
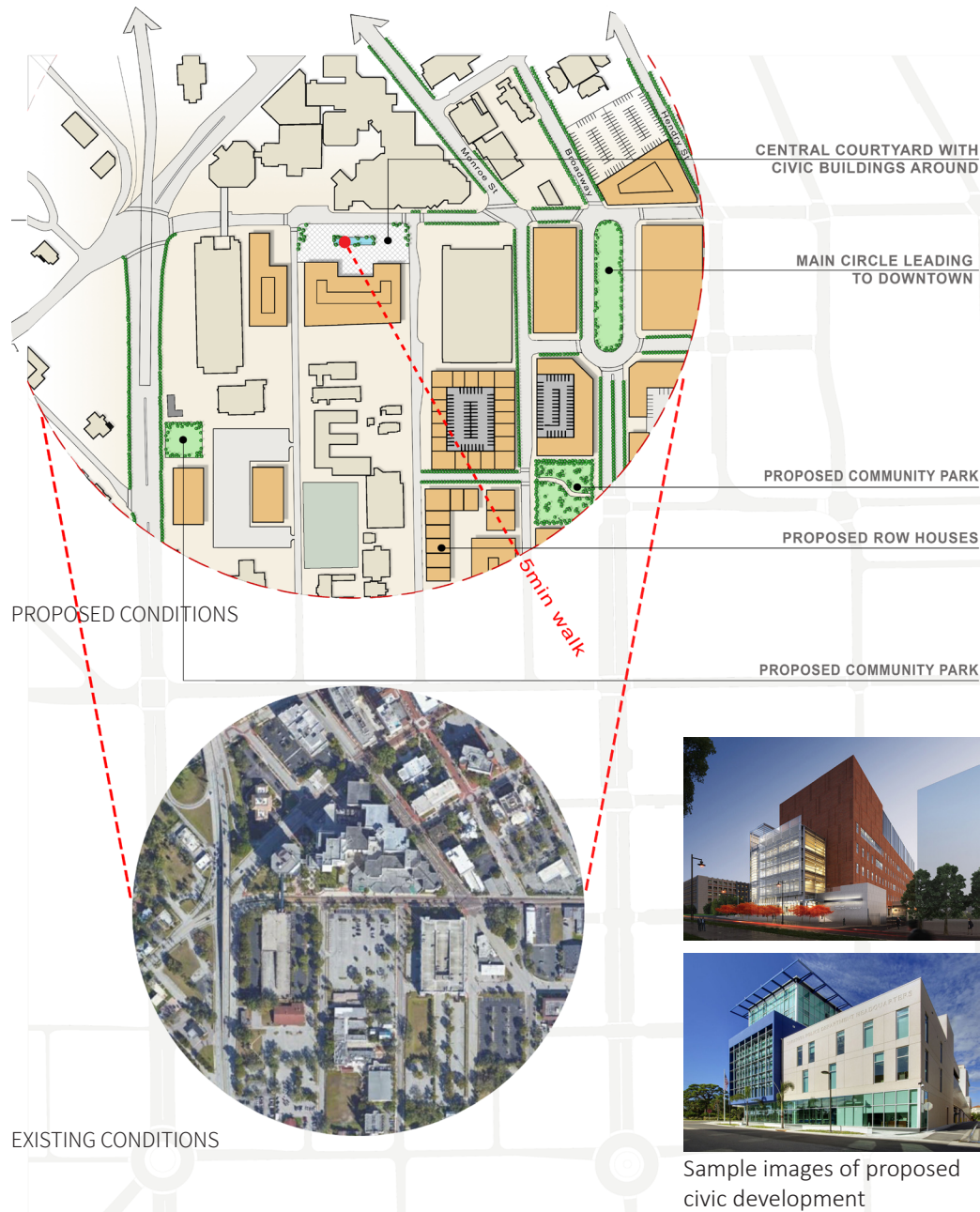


Figure 7.6.1 Midtown Activity Centers Concept: Compact Development Catalysts



1. Government Center

The Government Center is envisioned as an expanded and enhanced complex of Lee County and City of Fort Myers government facilities that straddle Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard in the northwest portion of the focus area. Currently this area generates a large amount of door to door pedestrian traffic related to government functions. However, the area has few public amenities or other features that would enhance their experience or encourage people to spend time there. Lee County and City of Fort Myers have long term expansion plans in this area that includes new government facilities. As they do so, this would provide opportunities to coordinate with other building uses, foster public realm activities and create a sense of place. The Plan envisions a new central plaza on the south side of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard. This space would complement new Lee County government facilities on the south side of the street and integrate it with existing buildings on the north side of the street. Traffic calming features along this portion of the street would allow for safe pedestrian access between the two areas.

Figure 7.6.2 Government Center

2. GATEWAY CENTER (FORMER NEWS-PRESS SITE)

The former News-Press site, is envisioned as a symbolic entrance into Downtown and Midtown. It's strategically located at the intersection of two busy arterial roadways that carry both local and regional traffic. This redevelopment site is strategically situated and encompasses over eleven (11) acres of land. Aside from the publicly-owned City of Palms Park complex, this is the largest redevelopment opportunity in Midtown. This site could accommodate a number of new and renovated structures. A phased redevelopment strategy could organize new structures around a central plaza or green open space to create a privately-owned, public open space.

Along with other development in the area, such as the nearby IMAG History & Science Center and the historic McCollum Hall, this area could function as an implied gateway. The Plan envisions this site being redeveloped with new corporate offices, light industrial, R&D/technology or some other commercial uses. As such, this site could become a major employment center - significantly adding to the Downtown/Midtown workforce. This would generate a considerable amount of pedestrian activity at this location and could become another destination and a landmark location in the city.

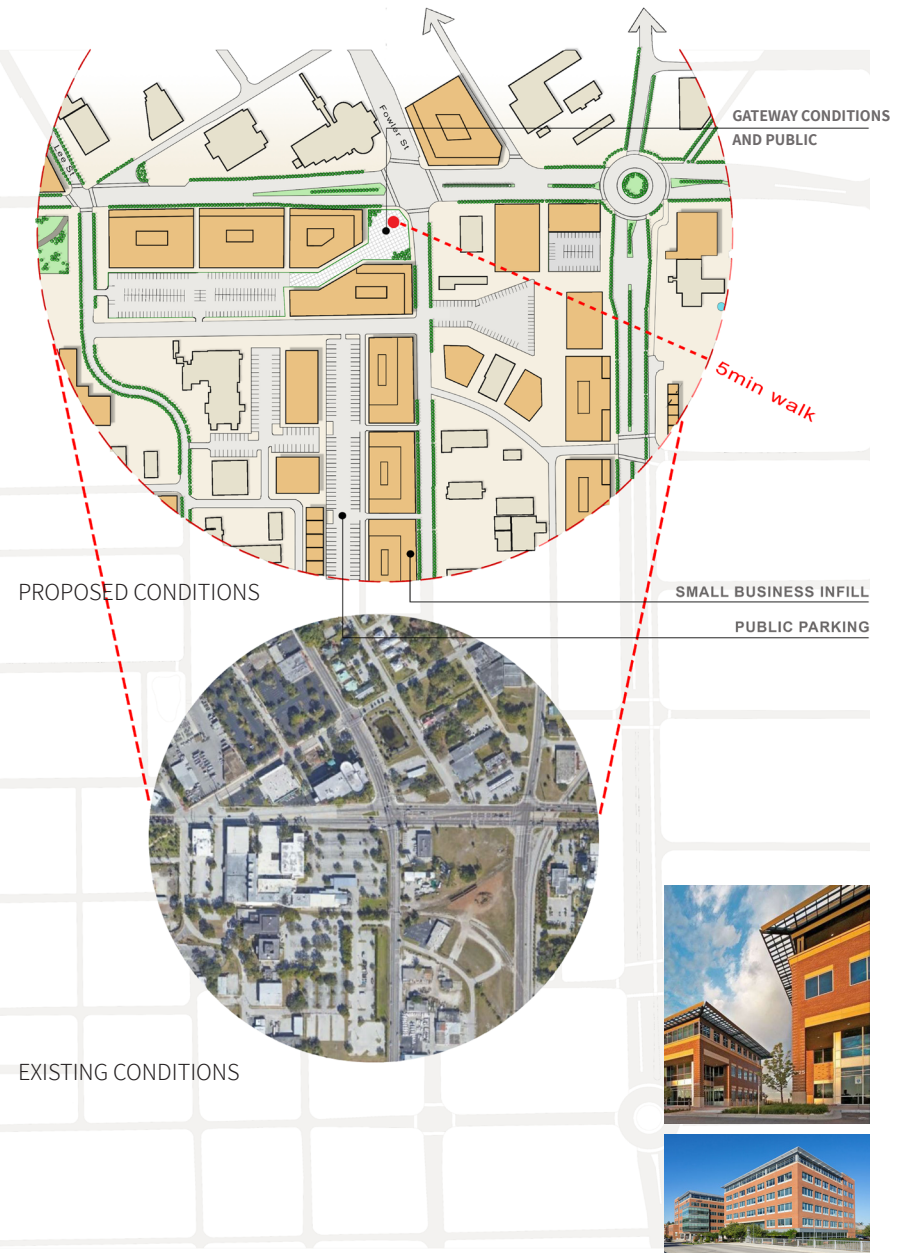


Figure 7.6.3 Gateway Center (Former News-Press Site)

Sample images of proposed development

3. FOWLER COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR

The Fowler Commercial Corridor reflects the current nature of this commercial and industrial strip that extends from the south through the Midtown focus area. It currently functions as a linear employment center. The Plan envisions the Midtown portion of this business corridor with higher densities, enhanced public realm conditions, better access management and parking operations. Along with public realm enhancements, this area could also be anchored by a modest public open space that would serve as a both a “convertible” or flexible park and as a visual landmark. Given the number of businesses already existing along this corridor and the number infill and redevelopment opportunities it presents, it can be further intensified as another employment center that contributes to the Midtown workforce.



Sample images of proposed development

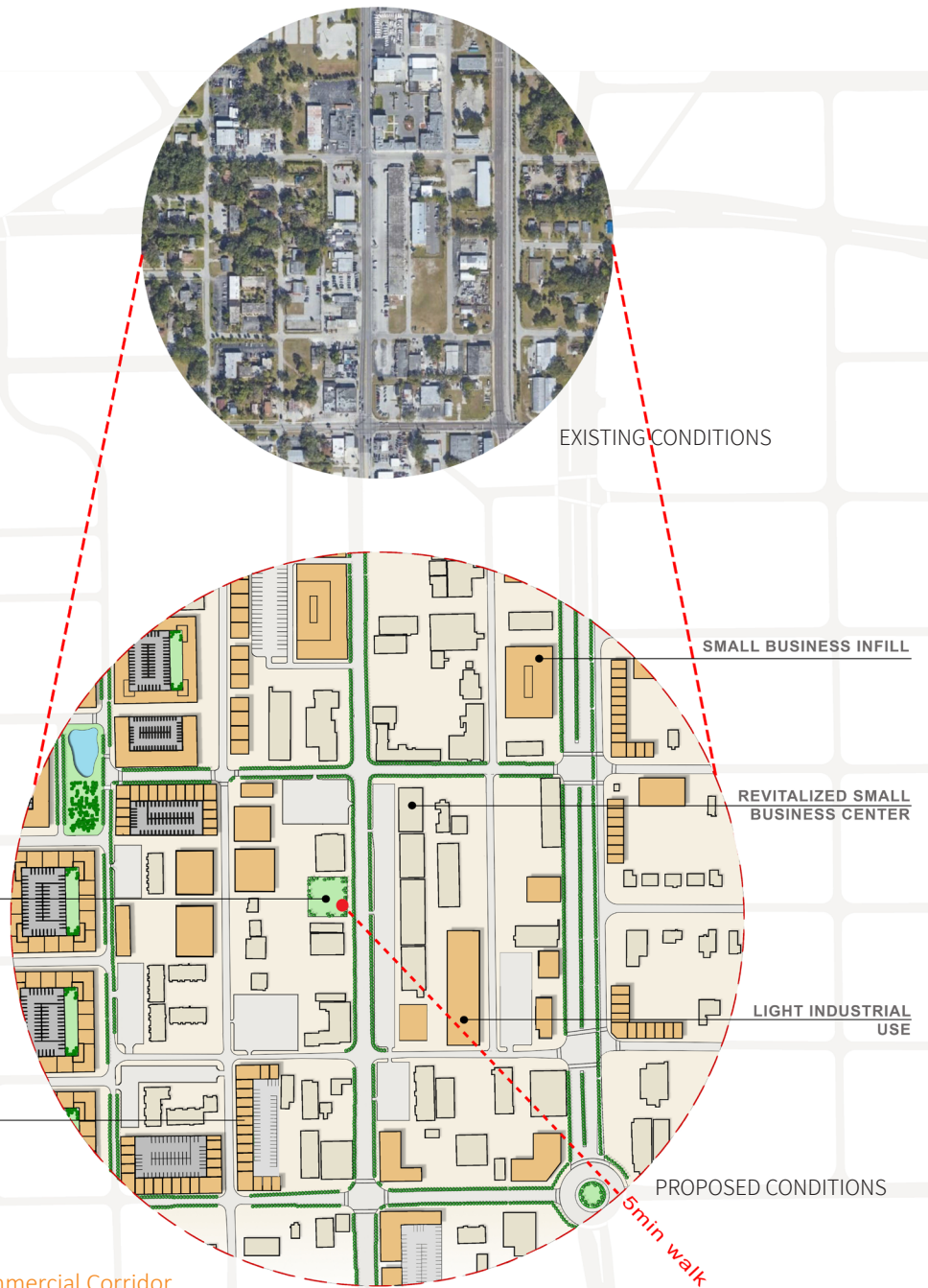


Figure 7.6.4 Fowler Commercial Corridor

4. TOWN CENTER

The most prominent activity center that could emerge in Midtown is a Town Center area. Redevelopment of the City of Palms Park stadium complex presents a unique opportunity to create a new, vibrant, mixed-use urban destination in the heart of the city. This idea emerged during early workshop discussions as a way to repurpose this area as a major redevelopment catalyst for midtown and was considered one of the most feasible approaches to bolster long-term economic development in the area and create a place that appeals to all residents of the city. This Town Center could also be a catalyst that fosters redevelopment in other parts of Midtown. This area would be comprised of a number of mixed-use buildings and public realm features that are oriented towards a major public open space. This area is intended to be a major node of activity, where public life, living, working and leisure activities come together to generate a sustained level vibrancy on a daily basis.



Sample images of proposed town center conditions



EXISTING CONDITIONS

PEDESTRIAN WALKWAY

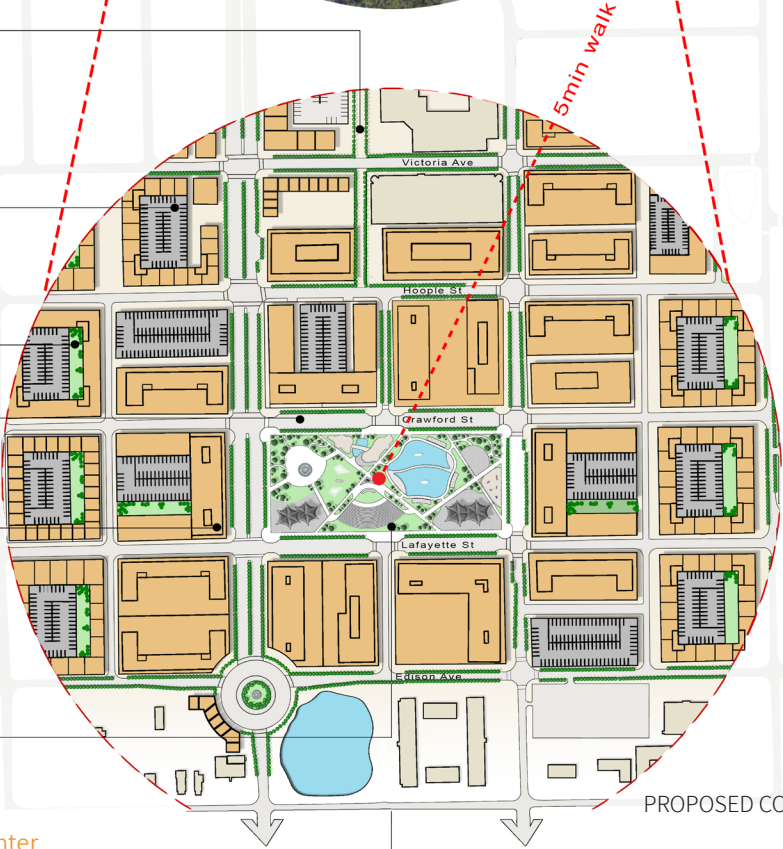
PARKING GARAGES WITHIN THE BUILDING

ROOF TOP GARDENS

PARALLEL PARKING AROUND THE PARK

MIXEDUSE BUILDINGS AROUND THE PARK

MIDTOWN SQUARE PARK



PROPOSED CONDITIONS

Figure 7.6.5 Town Center

7.7 TOWN CENTER FOCUS AREA



Intermediate-Scale
Conditions

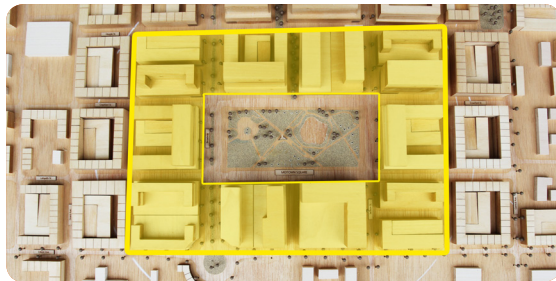


Figure 7.7.1 Mixed-Use Buildings

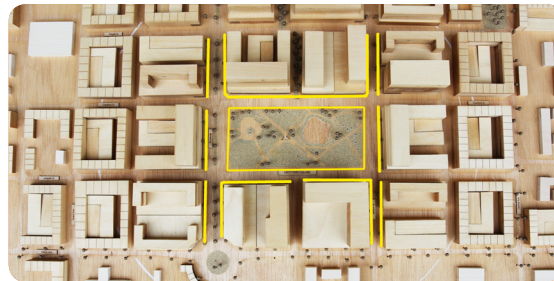


Figure 7.7.2 Active Sidewalks



Figure 7.7.3 Midtown Square Park

The Town Center envisioned for Midtown is one of the most important components of the Plan. It is the largest of the four activity centers that could emerge in the focus area over the next twenty years. The basic configuration of the proposed Town Center is a series of blocks with residential, commercial and other complementary uses framing a central public open space. Although town centers in general tend to vary in composition, both historic and contemporary examples have these base conditions in common. Places that function as centers also tend to be familiar conditions in most “placemaking” strategies or similar urban design strategies.

With much of the Town Center situated on land currently occu-

pied by the former Spring Training baseball complex, the Town Center area could encompass over twenty five (25) acres of land. To ensure this area evolves into the type of vibrant, mixed-use destination envisioned by workshop and community participants, the Plan proposes a compact development pattern that concentrates different building types, uses, and public realm features around a large public open space. This urban design strategy seeks to maximize relationships between all of the different building uses, create new market opportunities in midtown, foster eighteen (18) hours a day activity cycles and enrich the quality of life for all local residents.

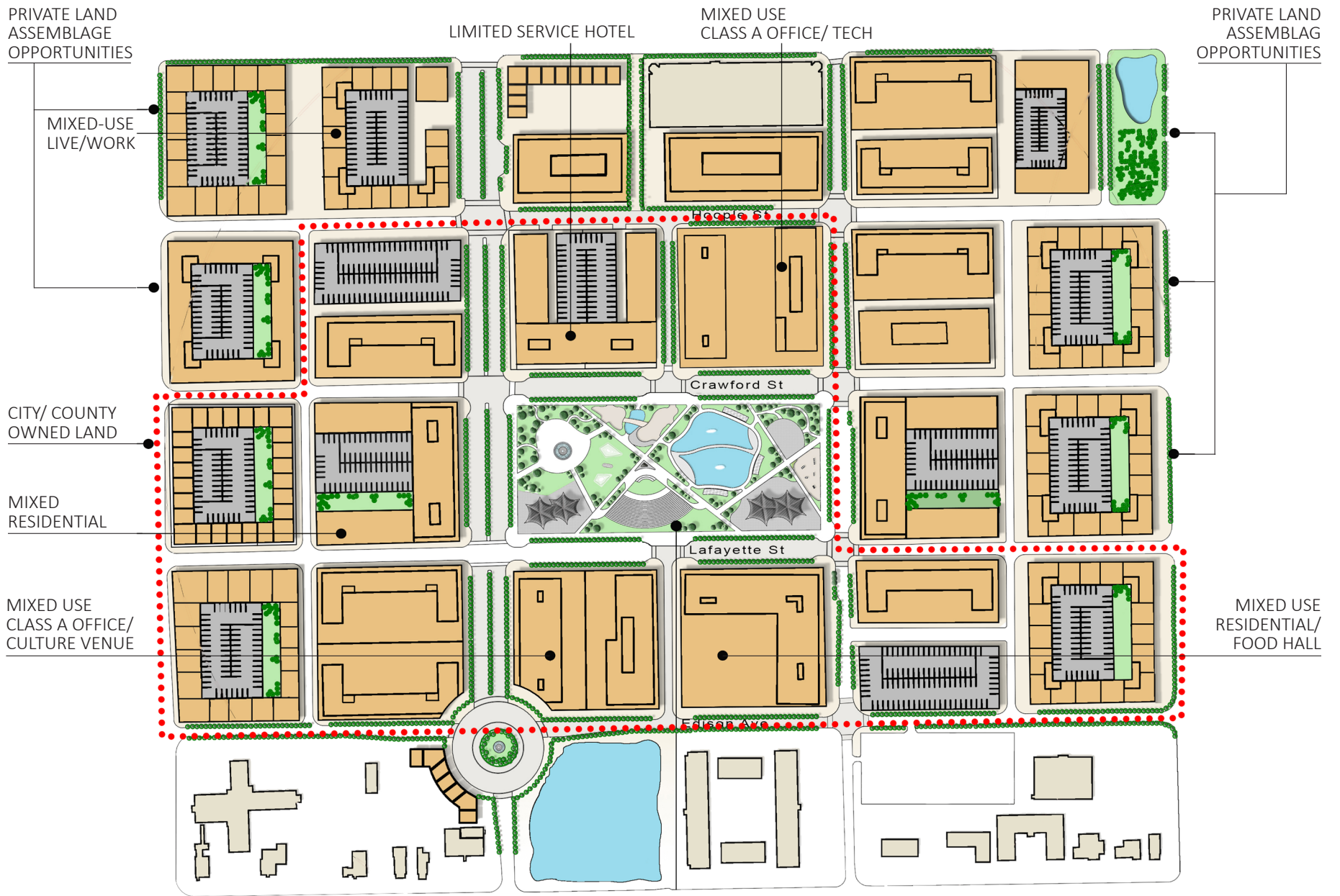
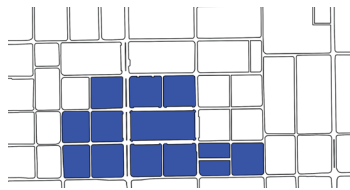


Figure 7.7.4 Town Center Area Partial Plan

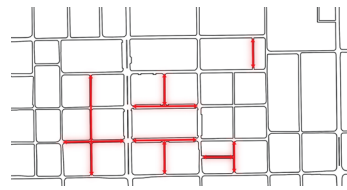
7.8 PUBLIC LAND RE-USE AND SUBDIVISION STRATEGY



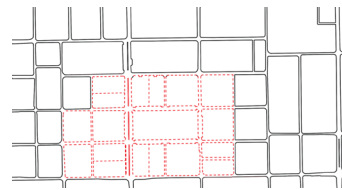
Intermediate-Scale
Conditions



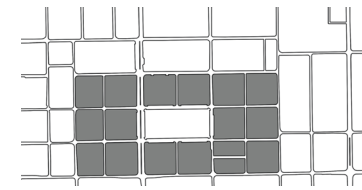
25 Acres of Publicly Owned
Land As Redevelopment Catalyst



Street Extensions to Foster
Walkability and connectivity



Block Subdivision to Create
Varied Parcel Sizes



Compact Town Center
Conditions

Figure 7.8.1 Town Center Definition

The proposed Town Center hinges on the redevelopment of both public and private-owned land in the southern portion of the Midtown focus area. This land includes the City of Palms Park baseball stadium complex, its surface parking areas, the Skatium facility and several adjacent properties under private ownership.

Public land in this area controlled by the City of Fort Myers and Lee County equates to approximately twenty five (25) acres. As part of the redevelopment strategy for this area, the Plan proposes repurposing this public land as a catalyst for the Town Center. Under favorable market conditions throughout the redevelopment timeframe, this publicly-owned land could accommodate

over one thousand five hundred (1,500) units of new housing, over five hundred thousand (500,000) square feet of commercial office and retail space, a two hundred fifty (250) room limited service hotel and a three and three quarter (3.75) acre public open space. To help bring these conditions to realization, this public land can be used as an equity stake in future public-private development partnerships.

To better understand the potential redevelopment capacity of this property, the Plan proposes a subdivision strategy that supports the Town Center concept. This strategy proposes two parcel sizes directly fronting on the Park open space. These parcels range in size from approximately one (1) acre up to one and

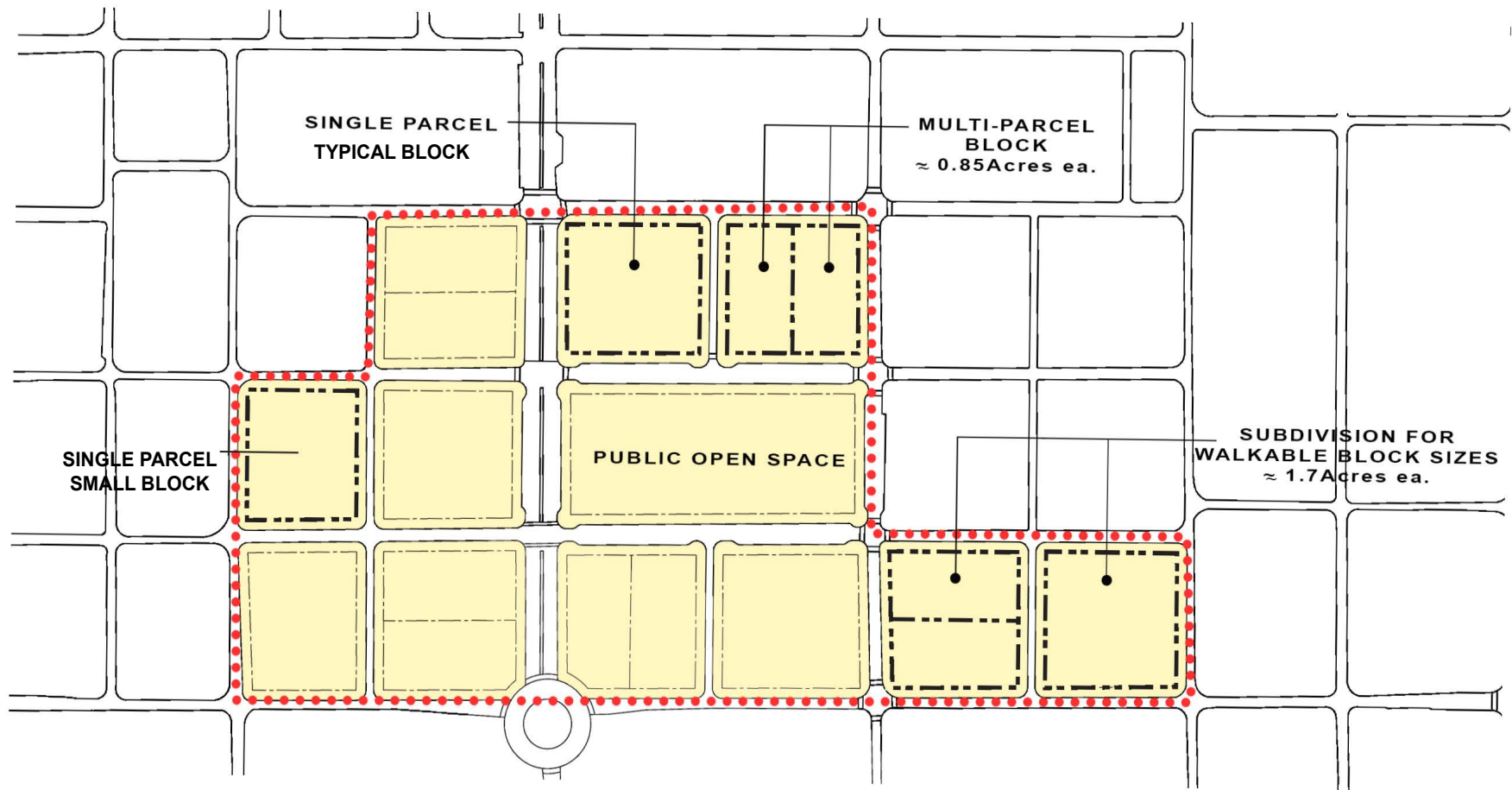


Figure 7.8.2 Public Land Subdivision Strategy

three quarters (1.75) of an acre. These parcel sizes anticipate larger mixed-use buildings with full or half block frontage on the proposed Midtown Square Park. Each of these parcels should accommodate projects planned at the highest allowable densities in order to achieve the “critical mass” of mixed-use development needed to establish town center conditions. This subdivision strategy would restore portions of Lafayette and Crawford

Streets that were discontinued when the Stadium complex was built. This strategy eliminates several large “super block” conditions and restores the network of “walkable” block sizes in the immediate area. Figure 7.8.2 depicts the proposed public land subdivision strategy for much of the envisioned Town Center and Midtown Square Park.

7.9 URBAN FORM AND MASSING CONCEPT



Intermediate-Scale Conditions

The aggregate (three-dimensional) form of any portion of the city is subject to a broad range of variables and unpredictable circumstances. Although density and height are characteristics of urban form, many workshop participants express preferences for moderate scale buildings as development activity takes hold in Midtown. As an extension of Downtown, the Midtown Vision Plan proposes a strategy that blends building heights in a transect-like manner. This approach recognizes the need for densities higher than the Historic Downtown to accommodate modern structures in the future that are economically feasible and competitive in the marketplace. However, the proposed building heights for future redevelopment projects in Midtown should be lower than the taller structures proposed along the Riverfront. The Plan envisions clustering the tallest and more dense buildings, between **fourteen (14) and seventeen (17) stories** (including structured parking), around the Midtown Square Park. These structures would frame this large open space and to further reduce the perceptions adverse height conditions. This strategy envisions building heights on surrounding blocks gradually stepping down to create a base height for residential areas – ultimately blending in with low rise conditions at the periphery of the focus area. This massing strategy attempts to balance community scale preferences, City redevelopment priorities, urban design quality and market potentials.

Figure 7.9.2 indicates two massing profiles across the Midtown focus area. One is a section profile that extends west from Cleveland Avenue, east to Evans Avenue. The other section profile extends from south from Edison Avenue, north to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard. Both of these graphics demonstrate how this form strategy works in terms of how buildings transition in height away from the Midtown Square Park in both a north-south and east-west direction.

This strategy also takes into consideration how the maximum allowable densities established in the recently adopted Comprehensive Plan Amendments could influence the height, massing and form of future development projects in Midtown. The urban form and massing envisioned in the Plan accommodates a maximum of **seventy (70) dwelling units per acre** (not including bonuses) for residential development and a maximum **floor area ratio (FAR) of eight (8)** for commercial development.

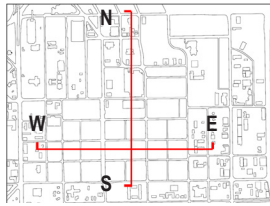


Figure 7.9.1 Key Plan

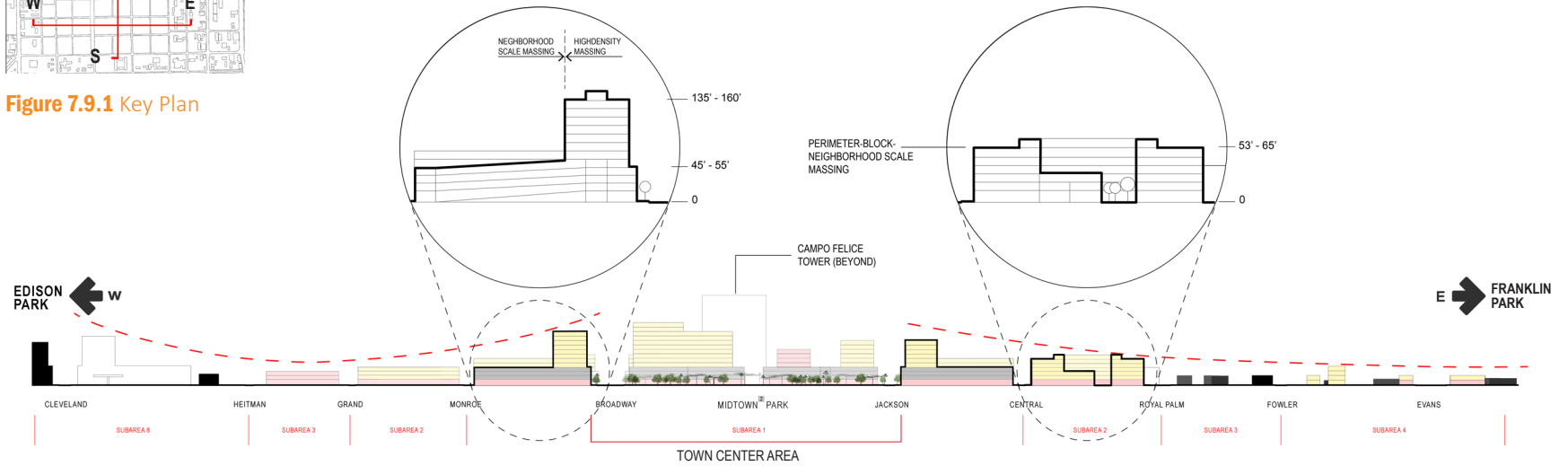


Figure 7.9.2 West-East Massing Profile From Cleveland Avenue to Evans Avenue

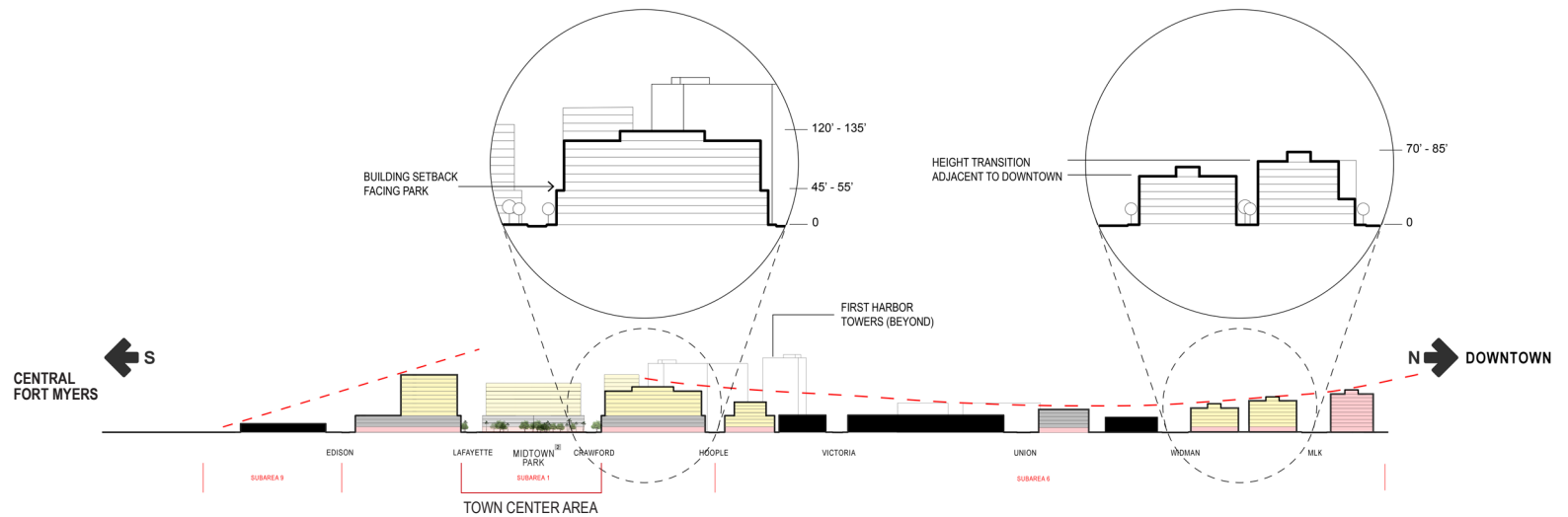


Figure 7.9.3 South-North Massing Profile From Edison Avenue to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard

7.10 MOBILITY, TRANSPORTATION AND PARKING



Intermediate-Scale
Conditions



Figure 7.10.1 Mobility Options Near Town Center

MOBILITY

The Midtown Vision Plan addresses mobility, transportation and parking in a more integrated manner. Although these conditions have their own unique complexities, the Plan attempts to sort these issues out in a more practical manner based on: how people might get to the Midtown area in the future; how would they move around; and if they have a vehicle, how can they store it and shift to another mobility option. As a key feature of the broader mobility picture, the proposed “multimodal path” system is intended to function as a prioritized mobility frame-

work. It would accommodate all current and future mobility options including walking, biking, transit, driving and automated vehicles. The focus on compact development patterns, activity centers and mixed-use conditions suggest a potential significant influx of new residents, workers and visitors in the area. As Midtown realizes an increase in population, the path system would play a major role in wayfinding for pedestrian mobility, and clarify the roadway hierarchy and parking access for motorists.



Figure 7.10.2 Mobility Options Along Broadway

TRANSPORTATION

State roadways are currently the major vehicle mobility corridors in the Midtown area and will likely remain so well into the future. However, the Midtown Vision Plan envisions an expanded role for these roadways as part of the “multimodal path” network. The four State roadways in the area (i.e. Cleveland Avenue, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, Fowler Street and Evans Avenue) are all projected to be upgraded to one of the Florida Department of Transportation’s (FDOT) Context Classifications of C-4, C-5 or C-6. Although the proposed Cleveland Avenue “road diet” is the only planned project by FDOT, the plan anticipates a number of other potential modifications to these roadways to enhance mobility in the focus area.

A current mobility condition that affects the implementation of the path system is the future status of the first seven blocks at the western end of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard. There is no direct connection from here with Cleveland Avenue. Although this is still part of a State roadway, right of way conditions here are more similar to local City streets. The Plan proposes intersection enhancements at the five cross streets along this portion of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard to create strategic “multi-modal path” connections between Downtown and Midtown. At the eastern corner of the focus area, the Plan envisions re-routing through traffic from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard south on to Evans Avenue, then west on to Edison Avenue and then over to Cleveland Avenue. With these potential roadway modifications, all vehicular traffic destined for the Midtown area would still have multiple points of access from all directions.

An emerging trend in mobility that will affect future transporta-

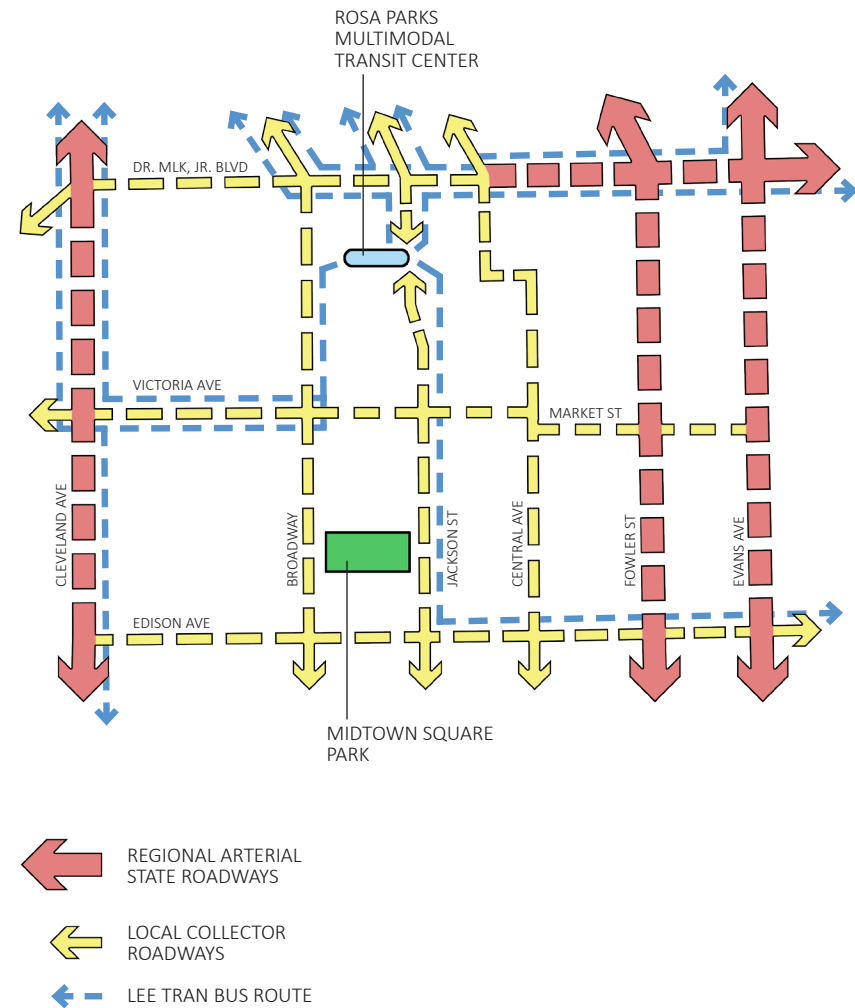


Figure 7.10.3 Envisioned Vehicular Transportation Network

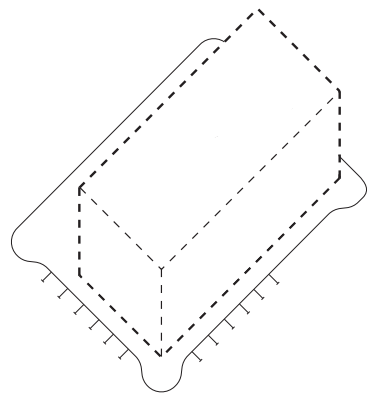
tion and redevelopment decisions in Midtown is autonomous vehicle (AV) technology. Although there's no clear indication of all of its potential impacts, it's clear that it will influence mobility in general, roadway infrastructure, traffic operations and parking. The Midtown Vision Plan acknowledges this trend in the following ways:

- Mobility:** Provisions for mode changes and dedicated circulators.
- Infrastructure:** Re-striping existing rights of way with narrower roadway travel lanes.
- Parking:** Introducing “flexible” parking garage spaces that can be converted to other uses as parking demand projections decrease. Using parallel parking for AV drop-off, storage and electric charging zones.
- Traffic Operations:** Installation of “smart signage” and signalization.
- Public Safety:** Enhanced intersections with pedestrian safety features that communicate with AV's.

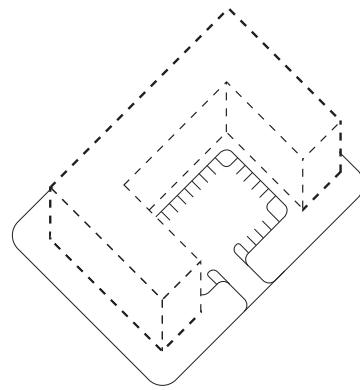
The Plan also envisions an expansion of the County's LeeTran bus service between Midtown and other parts of the city and region. As redevelopment intensifies in the future, the existing Rosa Parks Transportation Center is envisioned as a multimodal transit hub for Downtown Fort Myers. As the metro region grows and new bus routes in the city and county connect will with this facility. This facility will become a transfer point for transit patrons as well as people changing to different modes of transportation as they traverse the Downtown and Midtown districts.

As the Midtown area evolves, travel behavior and lifestyle choices will influence mobility throughout the area. Parking is addressed in the Midtown Vision Plan as both a program requirement for future development and as it relate to mobility in general. Emerging societal changes, such as increased on-demand transportation services (e.g. Uber/Lyft), the desire for more livable community conditions, changes in commuter habits and AV technology will influence parking demand, requirements for development related parking and as well as parking infrastructure.

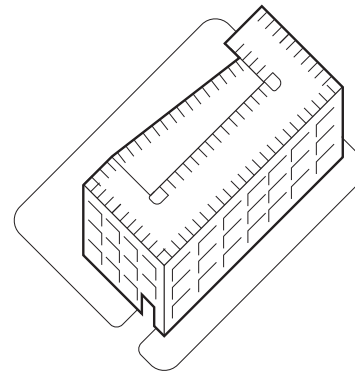
For the Town Center area, the Plan incorporates four (4) basic types of parking: parallel parking; structured public parking; private, on-site structured parking; and surface parking. Within this sixteen (16) block area, two (2) public parking structures are envisioned. They could accommodate up to one thousand, six hundred eighty (1,680) spaces. Figure 7.10.5 indicates a potential scenario for how this parking could be distributed. As parking demand in many areas is expected to decrease over time, certain floors in these structures could be designed for greater flexibility in use. One trend that is gaining acceptance for both public and private garage projects is the ability to convert certain floors to occupant uses as overall parking demand decreases. A major uncertainty related to future parking supply in downtowns and commercial areas is the impact of autonomous vehicles. Although this technology will likely lead to fewer spaces, there is still a lot of ambiguity among parking industry experts and planners as to how much public parking and development-related parking will actually be needed in the future. In addition to this denser, walkable, compact development patterns like those envisioned in this Plan are also contributing to decreases in standard parking ratios and requirements.



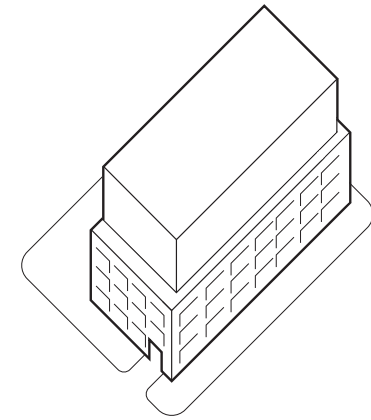
① ON-STREET PARKING



② SURFACE PARKING



③ PARKING STRUCTURE



④ INTEGRATED PODIUM PARKING

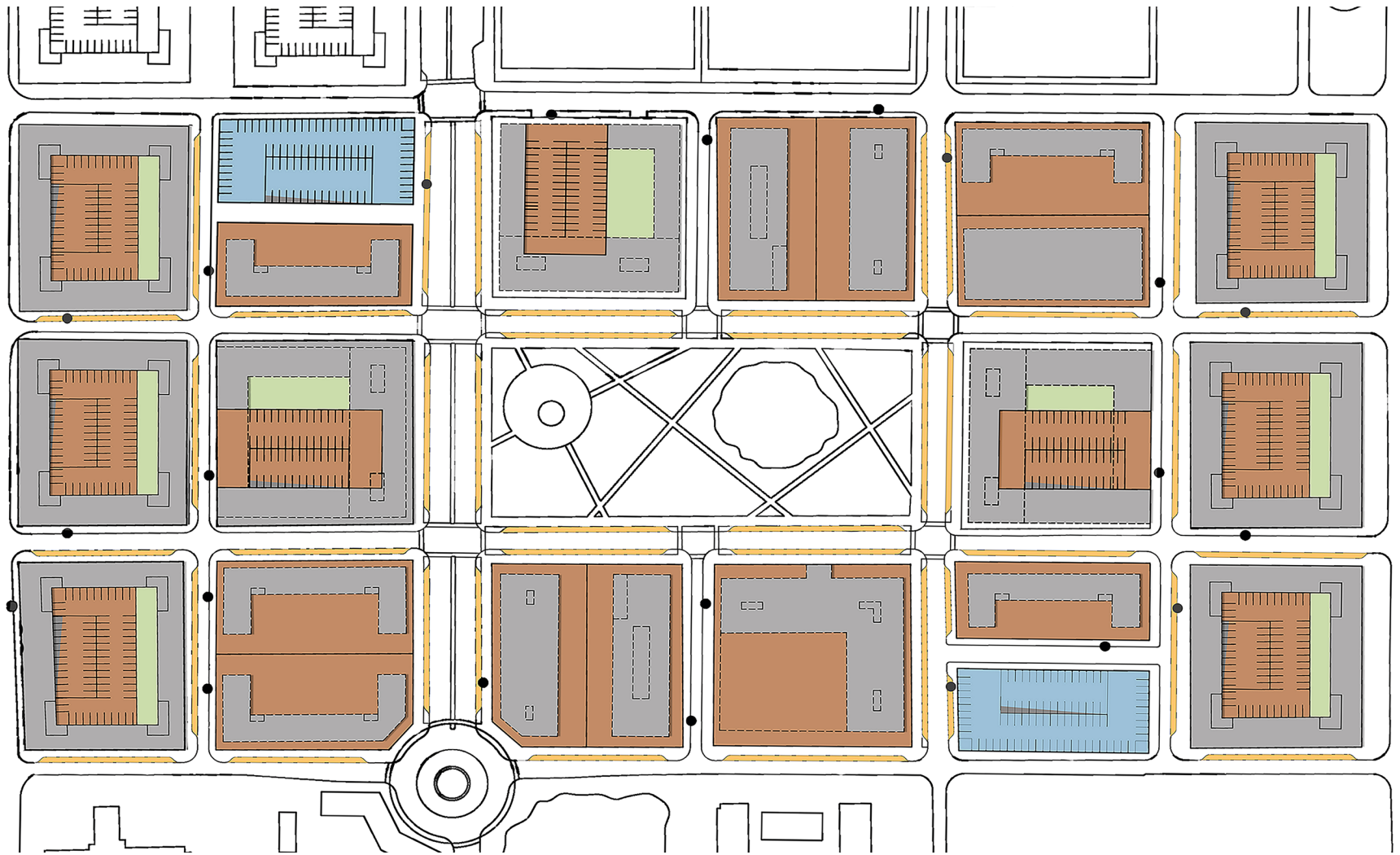
PARKING

The Plan envisions on-street, or parallel parking located on one side of the narrower rights of way. These are the streets with residential block-faces in and around the Town Center area. Along the wider commercial streets and those fronting on the proposed Midtown Square Park, parallel parking spaces could line both sides of the street. These spaces could provide visitor parking, electric car charging stations, as well as pick-up and drop of space for buses, circulators and future autonomous vehicles.

In addition to this, public parking is also envisioned in close proximity to the Rosa Parks Transportation Center. As transportation and mobility intensifies in Midtown, this facility will become increasingly important to the redevelopment effort. Longer-term, it's envisioned as a multimodal transit hub with an adjacent public parking facility. This facility would accommodate commuter parking, short-term parking, AV fleet storage and bike storage. This structure could also be planned

Figure 7.10.4 Parking Types

with the flexibility to convert floors to other uses in the future. For all high density buildings in the Town Center area parking should be integral with the primary structure. While surface parking lots are likely to occur on parcels in other parts of Midtown, surface parking should not be allowed in the Town Center area. Buildings developed at higher densities should incorporate structured parking that does not have a presence on ground floor street frontages. This is intended to maximize active building frontage and minimize dead zones along the sidewalk. The amount of parking associated with future development will vary depending on a number of factors. As the area evolves, the compact nature of development patterns in the Town Center area and expanded mobility options may decrease the need to maximize parking to attract visitors and business patrons. Shared (public and private) parking strategies and standard parking ratios for private development may be reduced to allow greater flexibility in determining space requirements for project feasibility.



- PUBLIC PARKING ≈ 1,680 SPACES
 - ON-STREET PARKING ≈ 360 SPACES
 - PRIVATE STRUCTURED PARKING ≈ 5,160 SPACES
- PRIMARY BUILDING USE
 - OPEN SPACE
 - PARKING ACCESS

Figure 7.10.5 Town Center Area Parking Plan

7.11 SAMPLE BUILDING TYPES



The Midtown Vision Plan envisions a range of different building types that can emerge as part of a long-term, sustained redevelopment initiative. Each new structure in the area will contribute to the critical mass of building stock and uses required to transform this part of the city into a vibrant, mixed-use urban destination. From the largest to the smallest, all buildings envisioned for Midtown would play a role in helping to bring about these conditions. These structures are intended to accommodate a diverse new resident population, an expanded workforce and a host of leisure, entertainment, cultural and other uses. Figure 7.11.1 is a diagram that indicates subareas where certain building types are envisioned to be constructed throughout the focus area.

The buildings depicted in the Plan were identified as massing scenarios feasible for the focus area. They are appropriate for the local market, reflect the scale and densities desired by the community and are compatible with many of the land development regulation's SmartCode zoning conditions. Initial buildings in the focus area are likely to be single-use structures. As the area evolves and becomes more populated and diverse, the Plan envisions a greater number of mixed-use structures emerging on streets around Midtown Square Park, along Broadway and other "multimodal paths".

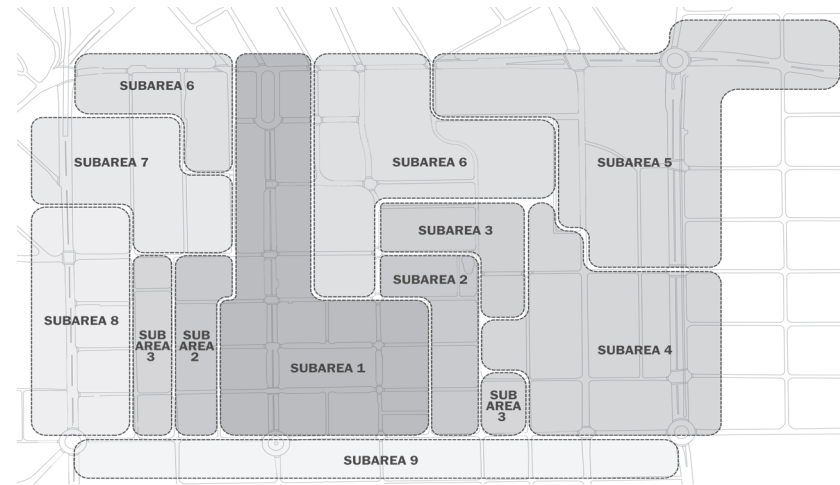


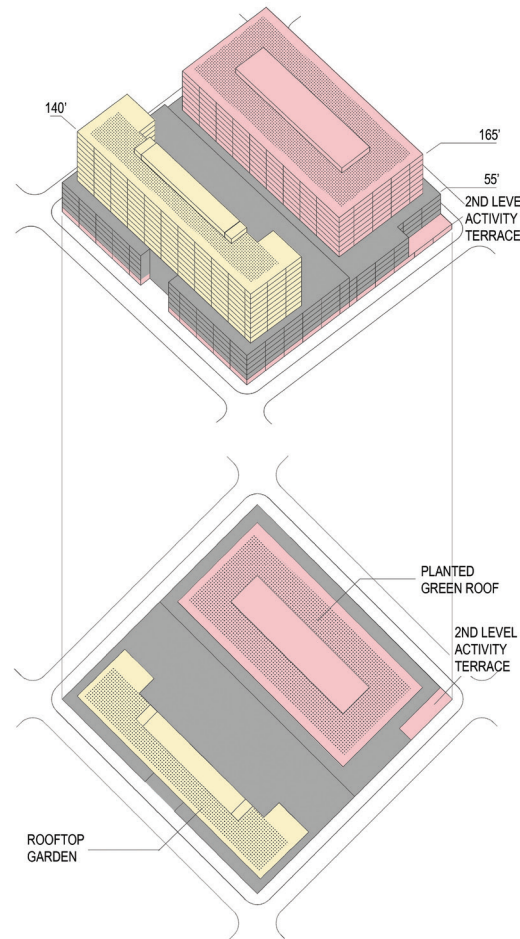
Figure 7.11.1 Key Plan - Building Type Locations

In the Town Center area, higher density buildings with intensive usage programs should front directly on to Midtown Square Park. The Park would provide a number of benefits for these structures and could contribute to increased property values. Considered "density carriers", these are structures that are configured to lessen the perception of excessive bulk or obtrusiveness, while still achieving a good urban design fit with their surroundings. These would be vertical mixed-use structures that incorporate primary uses such as residential, Class-A offices or a hotel over parking and ground-floor commercial uses. The tallest portion of these

structures would vary height from approximately one hundred thirty (130) feet to one hundred-sixty (160) feet, or ten (10) to fourteen (14) floors. Envisioned as occupying public Land in the Town center area, these structures could be constructed on either a full block of one and three-quarter (1.75) acres or a half block parcel of point eight fifths (.85) of an acre. As such, these would be catalyst projects that re-populate the focus area with new residents or workers, generate activity in the public realm and contribute many of the base urban design conditions needed to establish a viable Town Center destination.

To accommodate larger buildings in the future, the City’s Smart Code will have to be revised to reflect the scale and uses associated with contemporary mixed-use developments. In addition to site development criteria, these new regulations should incorporate some general urban design criteria to ensure the area evolves with a discernible level of cohesiveness. This criteria is as follows:

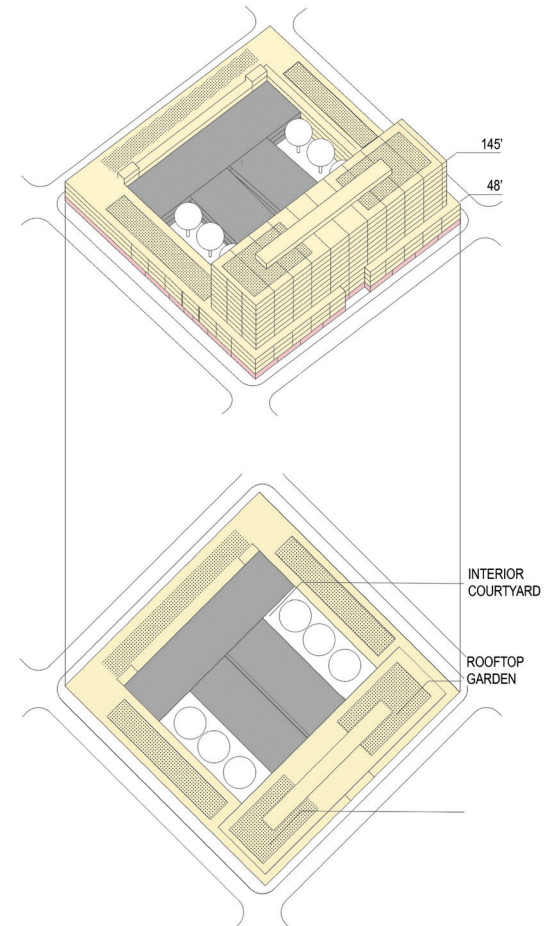
Figure 7.11.2 Sample Building Type - Subarea 1



SINGLE LOADED CORRIDOR RESIDENTIAL BUILDING
70-90 DU'S/ ACRE

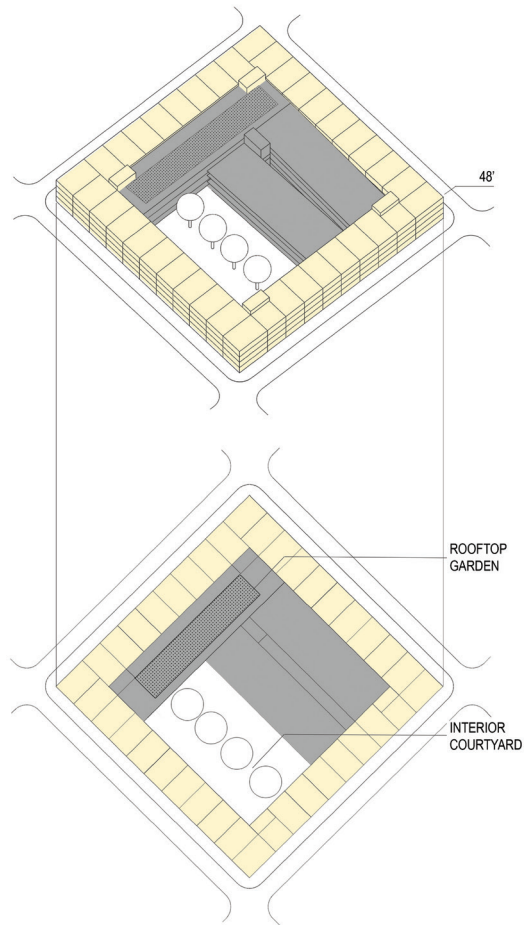
OFFICE BUILDING
80,000 + SQ.FT
3.5 Base FAR

Figure 7.11.3 Sample Building Type - Subareas 1 & 8



MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL BUILDING
90 DU'S/ ACRE

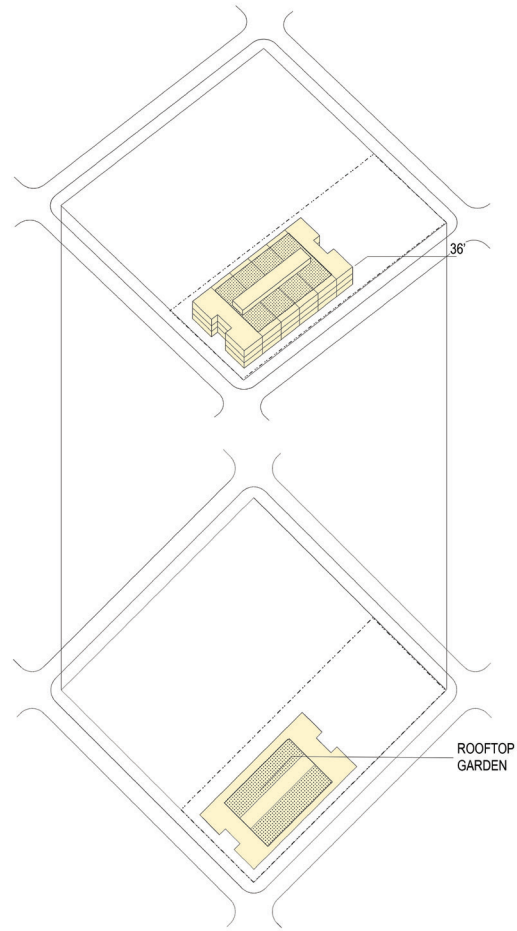
Figure 7.11.4 Sample Building Type - Subareas 2 & 3



APARTMENTS OVER TOWNHOUSES

80 DU'S/ ACRE
4 STORIES

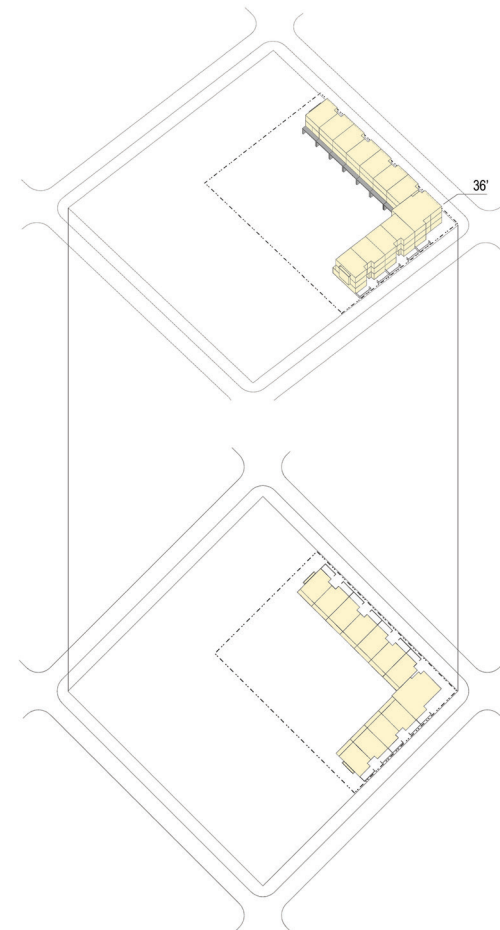
Figure 7.11.5 Sample Building Type - Subareas 4, 5 & 6



LOW DENSITY LOFTS

24-30 DU'S/ ACRE
30-36 UNITS

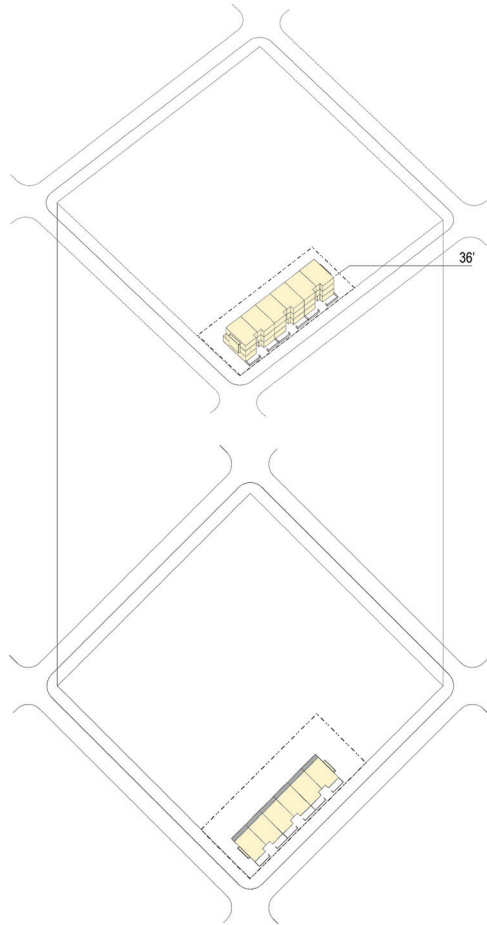
Figure 7.11.6 Sample Building Type - Subareas 3, 4 & 5



LOW DENSITY TOWNHOMES

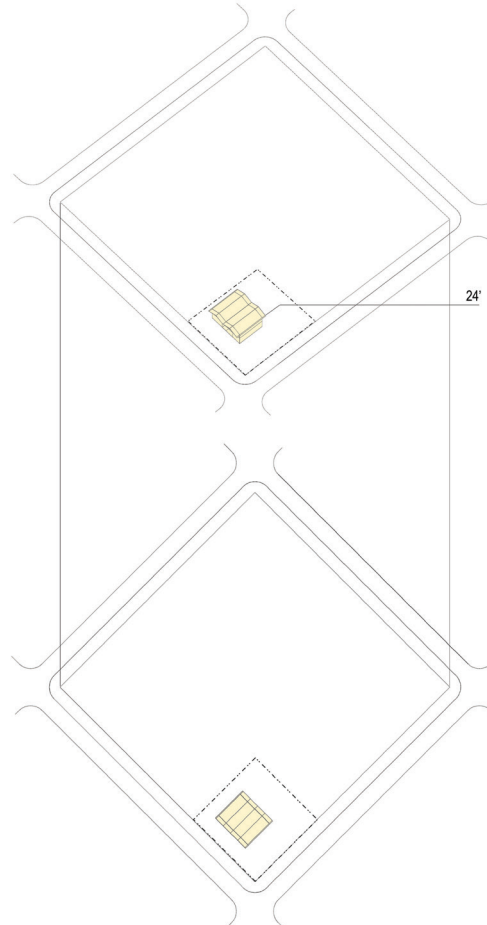
18-24 UNITS/ ACRE
3 STORIES

Figure 7.11.7 Sample Building Type - Subareas 4 & 5



SMALL LOT TOWNHOMES
18-24 UNITS/ ACRE
3 STORIES

Figure 7.11.8 Sample Building Type - Subareas 4, 5, 6 & 7



QUADRAPLEX
12-16 UNITS/ ACRES
2 STORIES

PROPOSED BUILDING CONDITIONS

- Minimal or no setbacks from building property line.
- Active ground floor commercial uses along multimodal paths and commercial streets.
- Base streetwall height of thirty six (36) to sixty (60) feet above the sidewalk.
- Multiple entrances spaced at thirty (30) feet or less along all sidewalks.
- No visible parking or blank walls along the ground floor.
- A minimum ten (10) feet setbacks for taller building masses above the base height.

These base conditions are further intended to create many of the conditions identified by workshop participants. They will help future buildings achieve a good urban design fit and contribute to better contextual relationships with other structures, sidewalks and other public realm conditions. Larger residential buildings facing the Park should achieve a minimum density of seventy (70) dwelling units per acre, while commercial office buildings should achieve the allowable floor area ratio (FAR) of eight (8). Although building configurations can vary widely, all future structures in the Town Center area should reflect the broader spirit and intent of the Midtown Vision Plan. Figures 7.11.2 through 7.11.8 depict different scenarios for building types envisioned throughout the focus area.

As building types gradually step down in scale beyond the Park, they reflect the types of massing and height transitions envisioned from the Town Center area to the focus area boundaries. Often referred to as “fabric” buildings, these structures would constitute a majority of Midtown’s future building stock. Most would be single-use buildings that occupy sites ranging from a full block to small infill parcels. Smaller residential buildings on these parcels would reflect what is often referred to as the “missing middle”, or the range of residential building types that not being constructed, or often missing in the urban landscape. The inclusion of these types of buildings in the Midtown Vision Plan are seen as a way to realize a diverse, expand the range of housing options and contribute to the city’s inventory of affordable dwelling units. These smaller buildings include low to medium density structures such as fourplexes, townhouses, live-work units and small apartment buildings.



Figure 7.11.9 Aerial view of model depicting mix of building types



Figure 7.11.10 View along Broadway depicting varied building massing

7.12 STREET AND PUBLIC REALM CONDITIONS



Intermediate-Scale
Conditions

Streets, or public rights of way are the primary vessels for all types of urban public life and activity. Aside from their primary function as vehicular arteries, streets in Midtown are envisioned as having an expanded or broader purpose relative to its redevelopment potentials. Their composition, visual character and other functional characteristics are all central to Midtown’s long-term appeal, its re-branded identity and its economic viability. Streets are the primary settings where people develop personal impressions or perceptions of the place they are in. The Midtown Vision Plan recognizes the importance well-defined streets as part of a comprehensive and integrated redevelopment strategy. The Plan proposes creating a new street hierarchy for Midtown that would accomplish the following goals:

- **Redefine the visual character of streets in Midtown to address its negative perceptions**
- **Transform certain streets to enhance market conditions and benefit future development**
- **Create safe conditions for pedestrians and bicyclists, as well as other mobility**
- **Facilitate better connectivity from adjacent neighborhoods to the Midtown area**
- **Install public realm enhancements that will foster active street life along designated streets throughout the focus area**



Figure 7.12.1 Key Plans - Street Profiles

The envisioned “multimodal path” system could accomplish these goals. This strategy reflects a key component of the Plan’s original urban design concept, where certain streets are transformed to create a larger network that promotes multiple mobility options and enhanced internal and external connectivity.

These “multimodal paths” are consistent with many of the conditions outlined in the City’s “Complete Streets Guidelines” document. The Plan envisions “shared street” conditions in Midtown that accommodate a range mobility options including, conventional vehicles, electric and autonomous vehicles, transit, pedestrians and bicyclists. A total of nine (9) of these “multimodal paths” would extend north-south and east-west through the focus area and connect with surrounding neighborhoods. These streets include: Cleveland Avenue; Broadway; Jackson Street; Central Avenue; Fowler Street; Evans Avenue; Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard; Victoria Avenue/Market Street; and Edison Avenue.

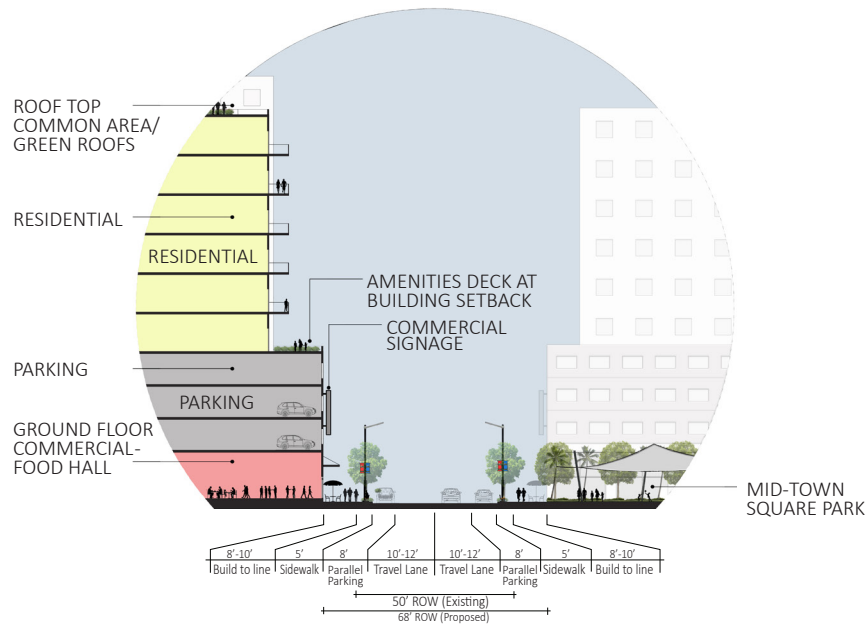


Figure 7.12.2 ① Street Profile at Lafayette Street (Extension)

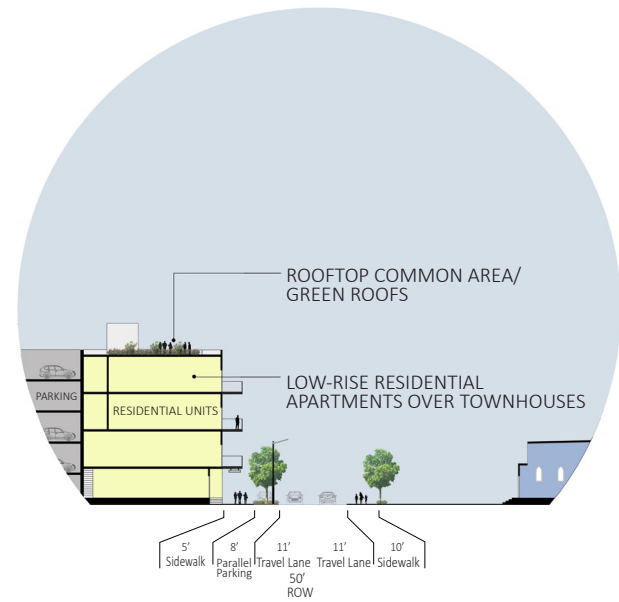


Figure 7.12.3 ② Street Profile at Lafayette Street

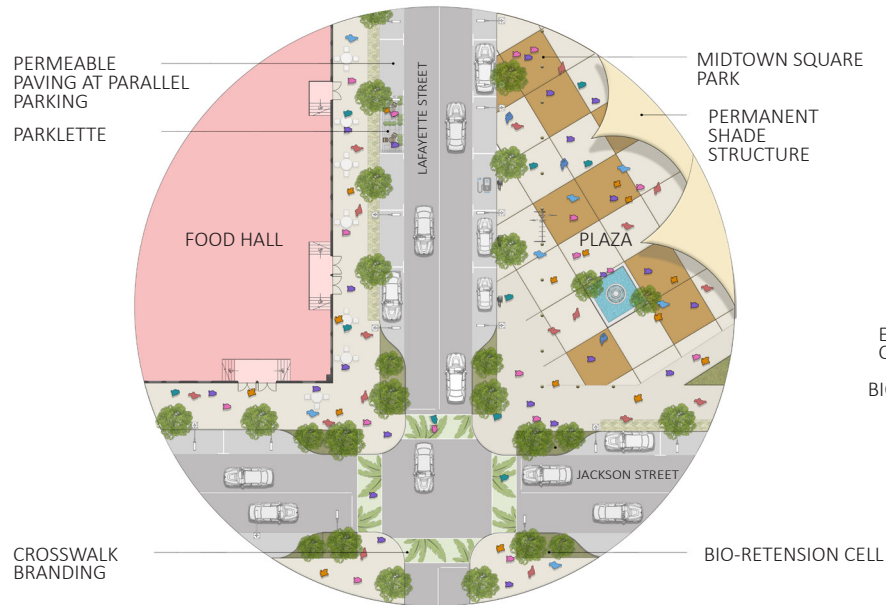


Figure 7.12.4 Plan of Intersection at Lafayette and Jackson

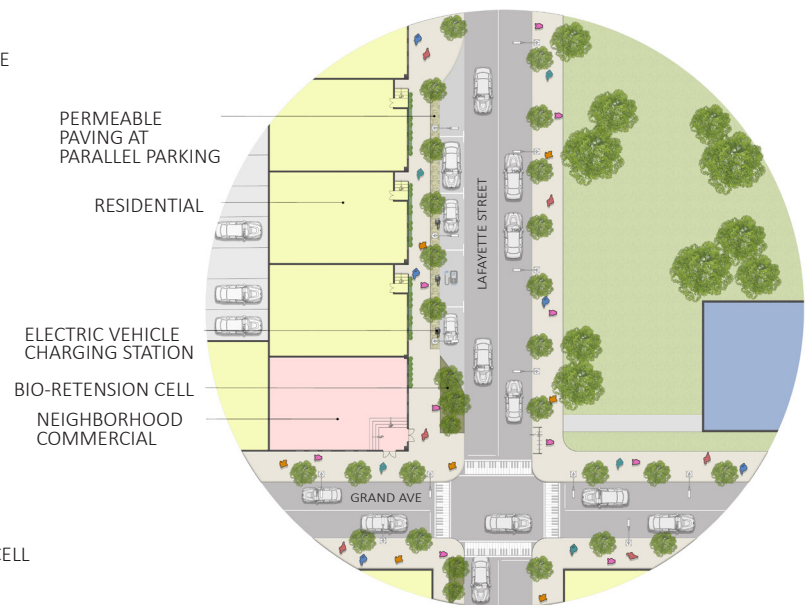


Figure 7.12.5 Plan of Intersection of Lafayette and Grand

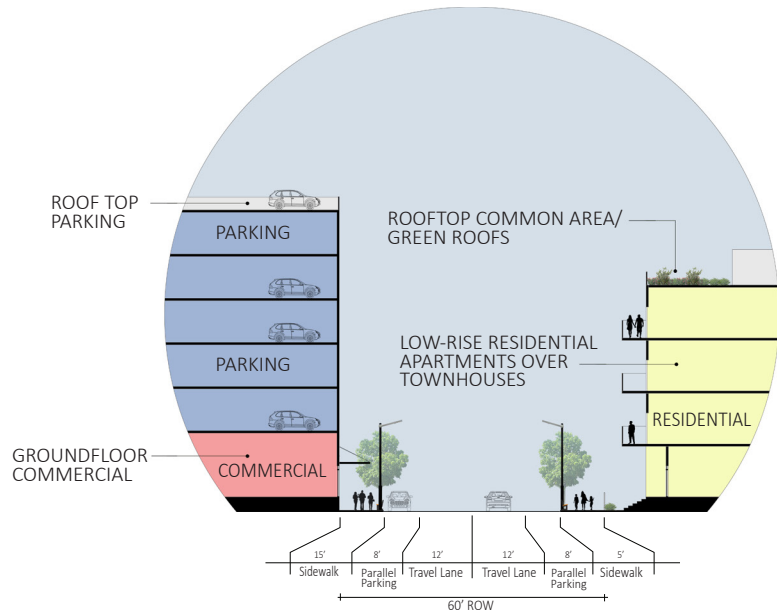


Figure 7.12.6 ③ Street Profile at Jackson Street

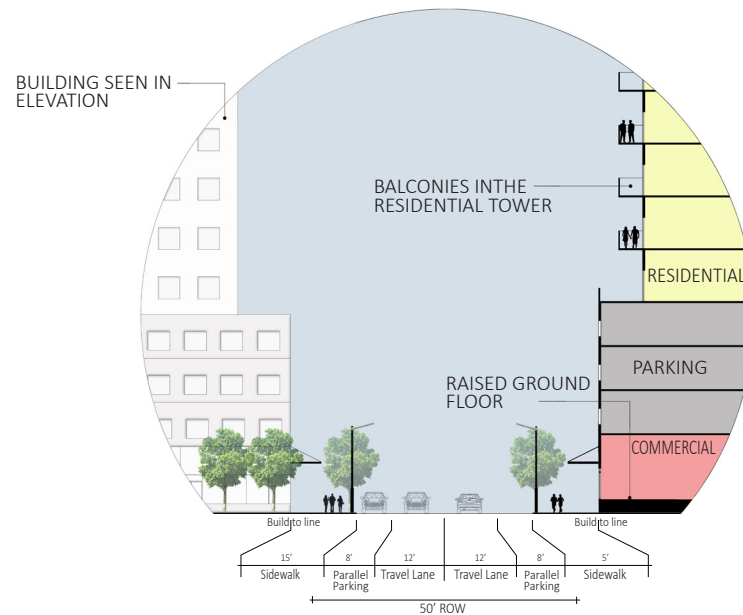


Figure 7.12.7 ④ Street Profile at Jackson Street

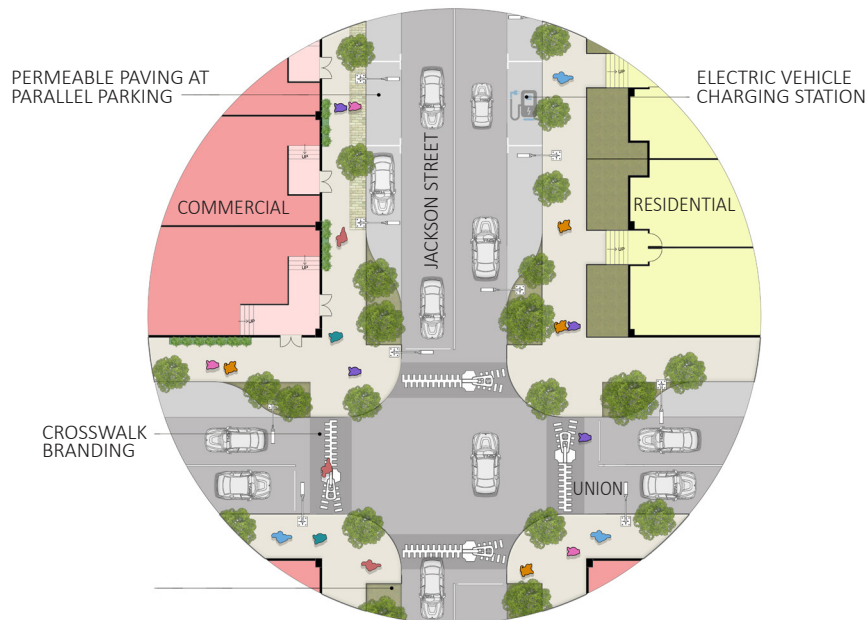


Figure 7.12.8 Plan of Intersection at Jackson and Union

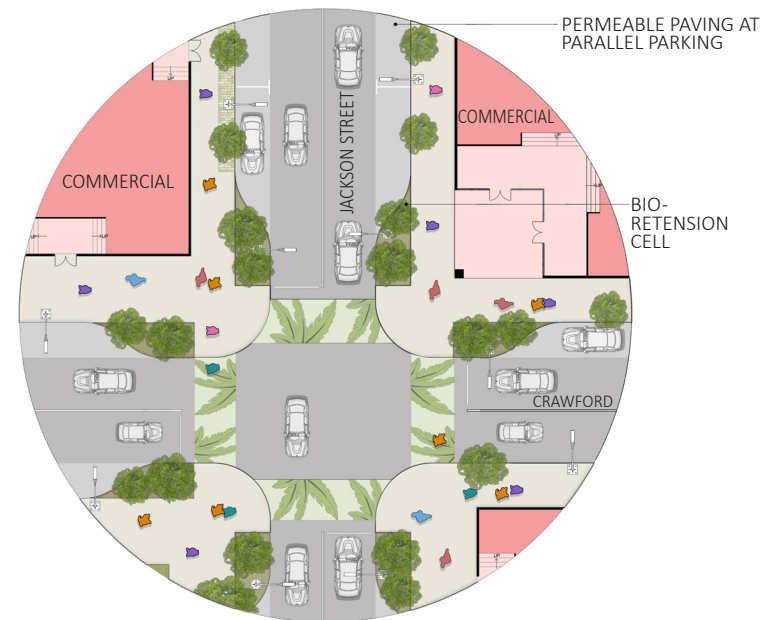
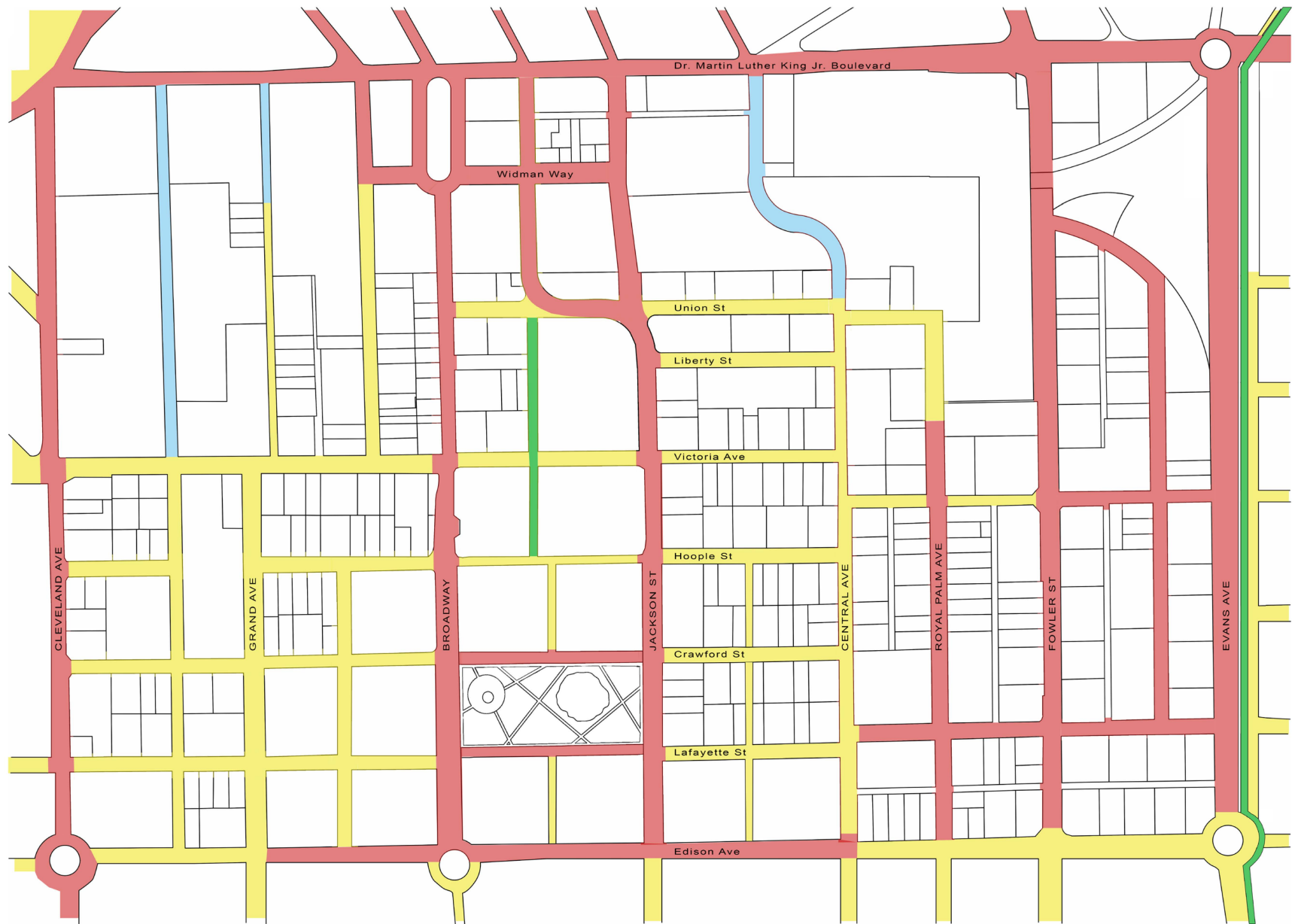


Figure 7.12.9 Plan of Intersection at Jackson and Crawford



MULTIMODAL PATH / COMMERCIAL STREET
 RESIDENTIAL OR NEIGHBORHOOD STREET
 STREET WITH PREDOMINANT GOVERNMENT OR INSTITUTIONAL PRESENCE

Figure 7.12.10 Street Type Diagram

STREETROOM

To strengthen multimodal conditions along these streets, they would receive enhancements such as canopy trees and other streetscape features, public art, sidewalk accents, street furnishings, intersection improvements, and visual character and branding elements. Throughout the project area, the Plan classifies streets based locational, land-use and building type, and public realm conditions. These include: “multimodal paths” (i.e. primary commercial, mobility and high activity corridors); neighborhood streets (streets on mostly residential blocks leading away from the Town Center area) and streets with a predominant government or institutional presence.

Aside from Cleveland Avenue, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, Fowler Street, Evans Avenue (all State-owned roadways) and Broadway, most rights of way in Midtown are only fifty (50) feet wide. Through roadway re-striping, many of these streets could be configured with two vehicular travel lanes of eleven (11) feet, an eight (8) feet wide parallel parking lane and two ten (10) feet wide sidewalks on either side.

To demonstrate the potential for creating appealing, active and desirable streets, the Plan explores their composition at an even smaller scale. Sectional profiles in Figures 7.12.1 through 7.12.8 indicate the spatial context, scale, general character and composition of different types of streets in the focus area. Often referred to as the “street-room” because of the way building facades on both sides of the street contain the three-dimensional volume of space and all of its public realm features, this condition gives each street its unique physical character. In addition to building

faces, these conditions include roadway surfaces, sidewalks, on-street parking and streetscape features. Within the Town Center area, two standard sidewalk widths are envisioned: a minimum sidewalk width of ten (10) feet on streets that are predominantly residential in nature and a minimum of fifteen (15) feet along commercial streets and around Midtown Square Park. To further enhance public safety in the Town center area, crosswalks at certain intersections, particularly those around the Park, would also be enhanced. Although most streets in Midtown aren’t wide enough for separate bike lanes, the Plan calls for bike “sharrows”, or shared roadway markings along all of the proposed multimodal paths.

ENCISIONED STREET ROOM CONDITIONS

All of these public realm conditions are inextricably tied to the success of Midtown's redevelopment. They will always influence people's general perception of local conditions and how "human scale" is defined. Building heights relative to the width of the street is a widely used criterion for this purpose. Given the mostly narrow rights of way in the focus area, the Plan proposes a base "streetwall" height (i.e. the height of the building directly adjacent to the sidewalk) in the Town Center area ranging from thirty six (36) to sixty (60) feet, or about three to five floors. Taller structures in the Town Center area would have setbacks between these levels to create a sense of "human scale" along the street and minimize the perception of obtrusive building height.

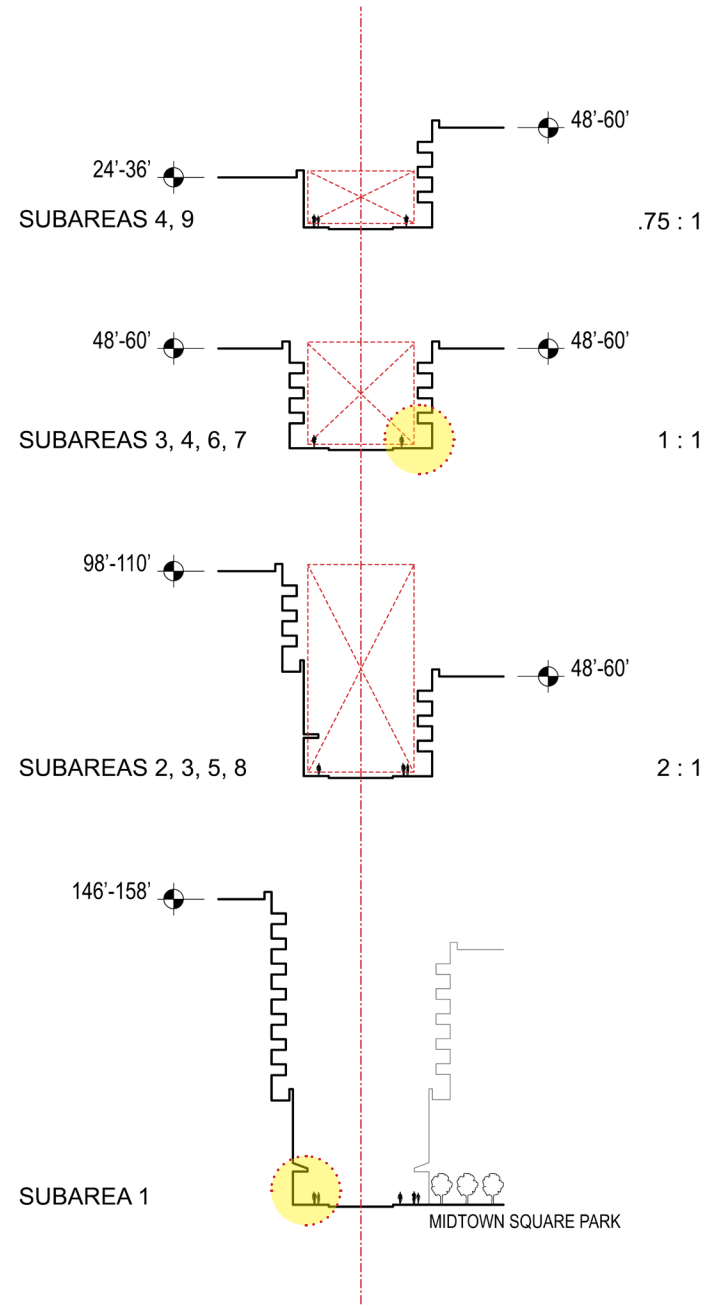


Figure 7.12.11 Street Room Profile

7.13 THE COMMERCIAL AND SOCIAL BENEFITS OF ACTIVE SIDEWALKS



Micro-Scale
Conditions

At the micro or human-scale, the Midtown Vision Plan recognizes the importance of active sidewalks in both commercial and residential areas. As key components of public rights of way, sidewalks play a major role in the definition and vitality of the public realm, as well as how people develop personal perceptions of a place. Although they primarily function as linear paths for pedestrian movement and connectivity, they also define the “edge context” or transition between the public realm and private property. Sidewalks work best when they are utilized on a more frequent basis to connect people with their destinations and foster social life along the street. Where these conditions exist, adjacent commercial uses often benefit from local foot traffic and other sidewalk activity. To enable these conditions in Midtown, the Plan envisions two standard sidewalk widths associated with street type and locational criteria.

Sidewalks along commercial streets, such as Broadway, Jackson Street, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, Fowler Street and streets fronting Midtown Square Park should be a minimum of fifteen (15) feet in width on both sides of the street. This is to foster increased pedestrian and other public realm activities adjacent to ground-floor commercial building uses. This sidewalk width should exist along commercial streets that are part of the proposed “multimodal path” network. They should be characterized by enhanced streetscape and other public realm features.

Wider sidewalks such as this would delineate most of Midtown’s primary pedestrian routes.

Sidewalks fronting ground floor commercial uses typically have three distinct zones of activity: the frontage zone, the pedestrian passageway and the furnishing or curb zone. Each of these zones can vary in width depending on usage patterns, legal requirements and other physical conditions. The frontage zone is the portion of the sidewalk directly adjacent to ground floor commercial building uses such as retail, food service establishments or service uses. It accommodates the “spill over” of many of these uses that have sidewalk displays or cafes in the public realm. This is a type of transition zone where the interaction between public and private dimensions of the street interact. This sidewalk zone is either partially or altogether non-existent along residential streets.

The second sidewalk zone is the pedestrian passageway. It is evident on both types of sidewalks envisioned for Midtown. This is the portion of the sidewalk that provides the clear linear path for pedestrians to navigate the public realm and reach their destinations. Adequate width for this sidewalk zone is essential for way-finding purposes, busy pedestrian conditions and clear paths for people with strollers, carts or wheelchairs. Often relegated to a narrow strip at the edge of the roadway, pedestrian passageways

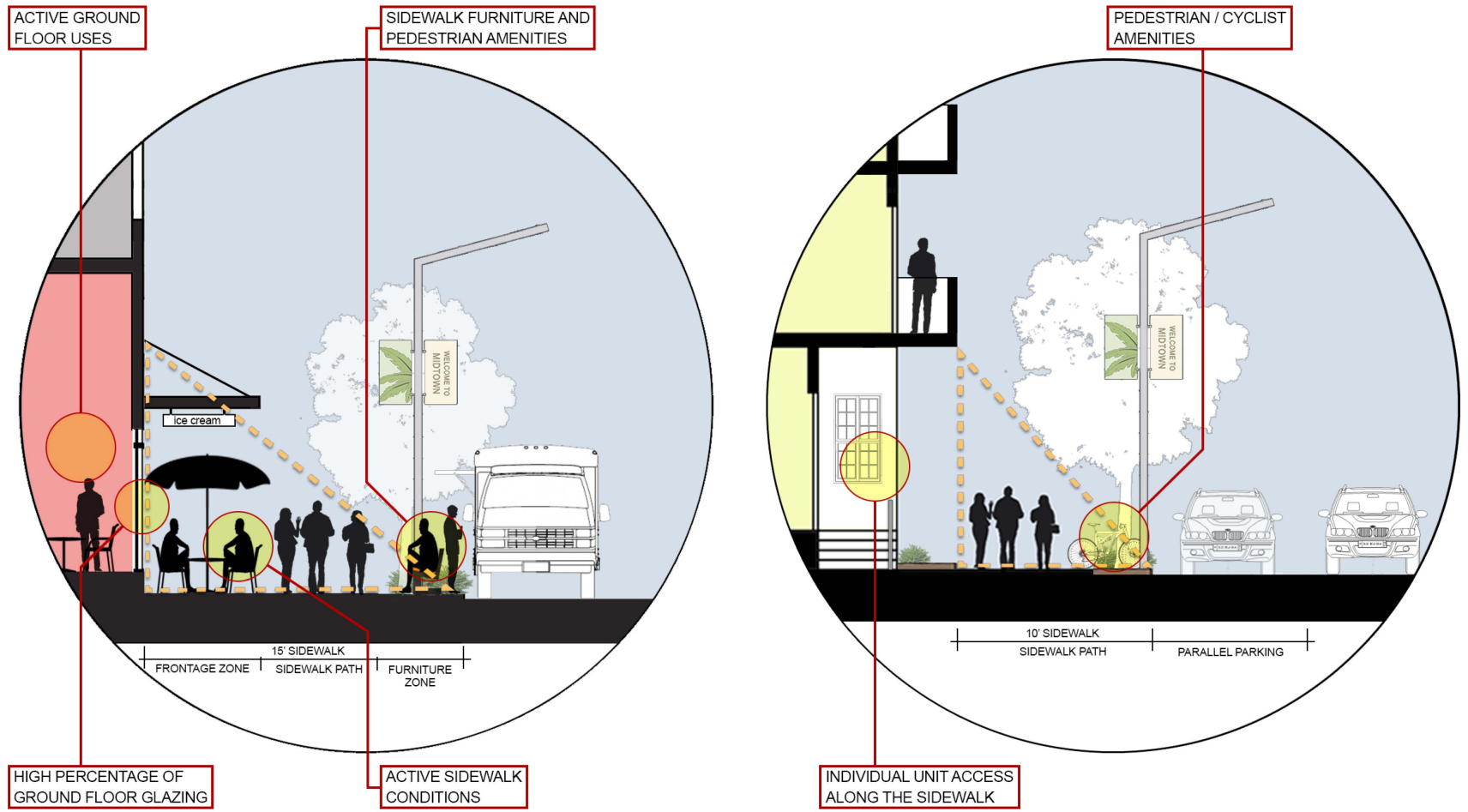


Figure 7.13.1 Golden Triangle

are frequently too narrow for evolving local conditions and intermittently obstructed by vertical infrastructure elements. The Midtown Vision Plan proposes a minimum pedestrian passage-way width of five (5) to eight (8) feet on all sidewalks in the focus area to foster active streets and to accommodate anticipated growth in the local population.

The furnishing or curb zone is the third portion of the sidewalk. This is where different types of street furnishings such as benches, bus shelters, signage and other public realm amenities are located. This portion of the sidewalk is situated directly adjacent to the curb of the roadway and often serves as a buffer when the sidewalk is adjacent to moving traffic.

A common strategy being used around the country to activate sidewalks is to synchronize each of these sidewalk zones and their respective public realm conditions with adjacent commercial, cultural or other active frontage conditions. Often referred to as calibrating the “golden triangle”, this process attempts to foster street life and sidewalk activity by creating as many symbiotic relationships as possible between all of these conditions. This approach would allow businesses to capture the value of an active public realm similar to the Historic District and cultivate more diverse and memorable sidewalk experiences. The Midtown Vision Plan proposes combining these three sidewalk zones in this manner as a tested approach for creating lasting sidewalk vitality and bolstering commercial activities over time.

Along residential or quieter streets, the second tier of sidewalks should be a minimum of ten (10) feet in width. These sidewalks would occur along Midtown’s narrower rights of way where the anticipated land uses and development patterns are primarily residential in nature. These sidewalks are expected to coincide with future buildings that have multiple entrances and other semi-private features along their respective street frontages. Consisting primarily of the pedestrian passageway and curb zones, these sidewalks are intended to facilitate direct connectivity from home to work, business establishments, open spaces or other walkable destinations in Midtown, Downtown and nearby neighborhoods. Although pedestrian activity along narrower sidewalks along residential streets would be less than that envisioned for commercial streets, activating them as a major component of creating new urban neighborhood conditions is also a priority in the Midtown Vision Plan.



Figure 7.13.2 View of envisioned sidewalk activity



Figure 7.13.3 View of Potential Building Types in the Midtown Town Center Area

7.14 MIDTOWN SQUARE PARK

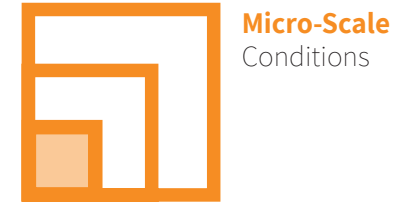
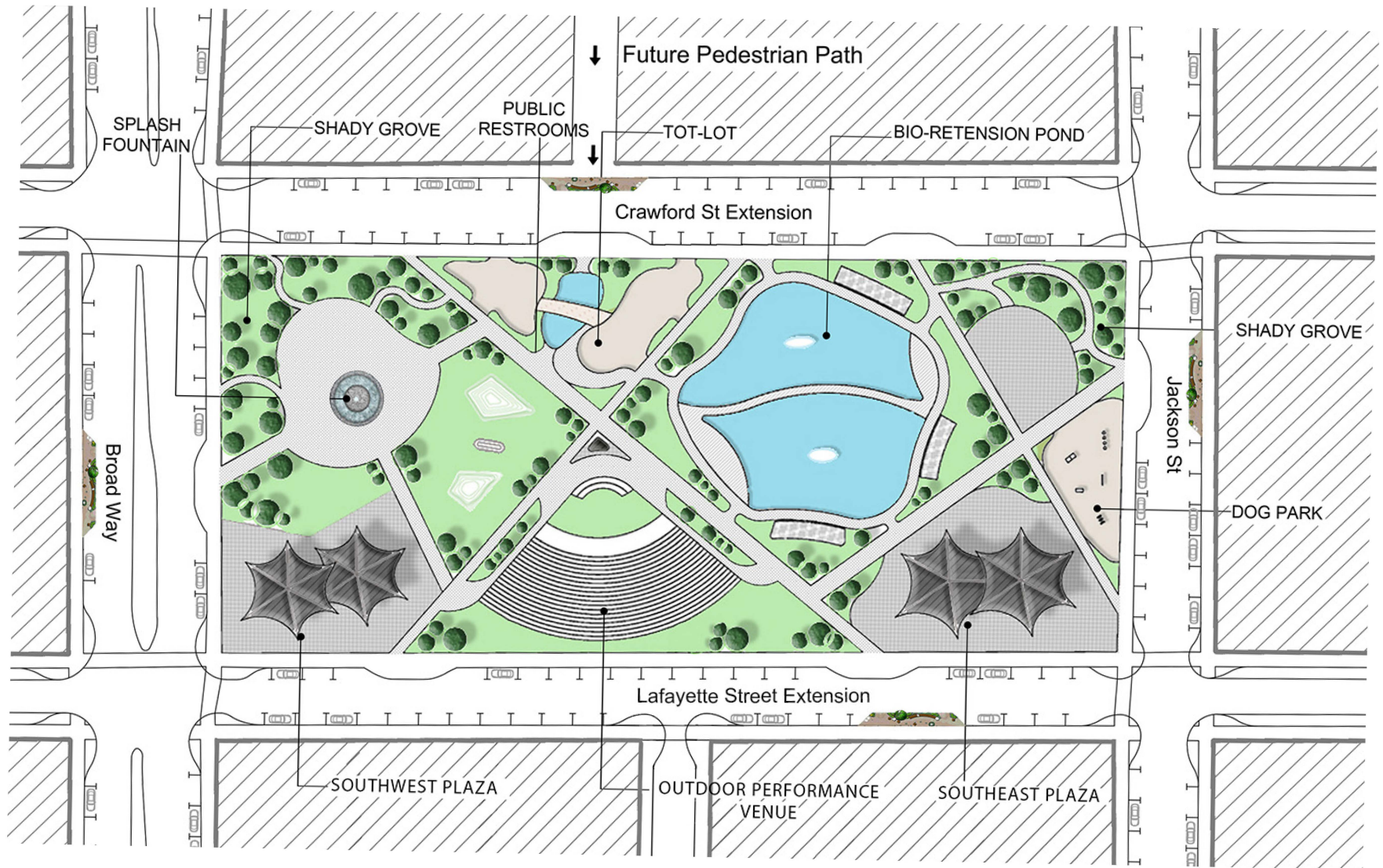


Figure 7.14.1 Sample Images of Envisioned Open Space Features

Open space features are common in most village, community or town center areas. In addition to their social characteristics, they often function as visual and physical landmarks, or as “anchors” that unify an area. Public open spaces are intrinsic to the lifestyles of most people. They create memorable experiences of urban places and in many ways contribute to our health and well-being. Public open spaces are amenity features that instill a greater sense of pride in the local community. When strategically located, they have the ability to attract a variety of commercial land uses along their edges – creating conditions that often lead to a synergistic relationship between the two. The proposed Midtown Square Park is intended to accomplish this as a new public open space that energizes the heart of the city.

Midtown Square Park was conceived as a cornerstone feature of the future Town Center activity area. As a new public open space, the Park has four basic priorities in the redevelopment of Midtown. First, it’s intended as a critical component of “placemaking”. Although the city has several public open spaces where local residents gravitate to or gather, Midtown does not have one of them. The Park is intended to evolve as a new destination in the city – a place where residents and visitors want to be and desire to return on a frequent basis. Second, the Park is intended as a multi-use public open space amenity for all residents. The size of the Park should allow for greater programming and usage flexibility. It should offer a range of features that appeal to residents from across the city. Establishing a new public open space in Midtown



TOTAL AREA ~ 3.75 Acres
 PERVIOUS AREA ~ 3.2 Acres (~85%)

Figure 7.14.2 Midtown Square Park Plan

that could simultaneously accommodate a range of passive outdoor activities was described by workshop participants as creating a “green jewel” in the Downtown open space system. Third, the Park is intended to enhance market conditions in the area and create prominent addresses for higher density commercial office and residential uses. As the Park evolves over time, it’s intended to have a positive effect on surrounding property values. Fourth, the Park is intended to function as a major component of the City’s efforts to introduce sustainable and resilient infrastructure elements and an opportunity to expand the use of best practices in stormwater management.

Midtown Square Park is envisioned as a rectangular block in the middle of the Town Center area. It is part of the existing publicly-owned land of the City of Palms Park baseball stadium complex. It’s approximately three and three quarter (3.75) acres in area. The Park is situated in the southern portion of the focus area and bordered by Broadway on the west, Lafayette Street (extension) on the south, Jackson Street on the east and Crawford Street (extension) on the north. The Park would intersect with the “multimodal path” system and be directly accessible to adjacent neighborhoods in all directions. This location is within a five (5) to fifteen (15) minute walk to Downtown, the Riverfront and other proposed Midtown activity centers. As a new destination in the city, this public open space that could evolve as a type “third place” – one characterized by frequency of usage by local residents across the city.

The different usage areas of the Park would constitute a series of series of “outdoor rooms” with simultaneous passive activities. Along with nearby ground-floor building uses, Park activity and

usage cycles could be extended for up to eighteen (18) hours of the day. Uses in different parts of the Park could be phased in over time and include such features as: paved plazas with seating, grassy areas, public art, shade structures; an outdoor performance area; splash pads, play grounds and tot lots; a dog park; space for public restrooms and public art; and space for festivals and other “pop-up” public events. The uses envisioned for the Midtown Square Park would signal renewed interest in the area as a safe, inviting and comfortable public open space destination – a place where people want to be.

In addition to the passive functions envisioned for the Park, this open space is also intended to enhance opportunities for economic development in the area. For most redevelopment initiatives, public open spaces are essential in providing supportive public realm contexts for different commercial activities to flourish. The envisioned Midtown Square Park is also intended to foster symbiotic relationships between the public realm and private property – particularly those between the Park and adjacent ground floor building uses. From an economic perspective, the Park could enhance adjacent property values by up to three (3) percent. Although the Park would be a public expense, recent research indicates that **“... the private sector is more than willing to invest in open spaces if the right type of investment vehicle is available and if the space is managed properly”.** (Source: ULI/Gensler). The addition of a major public open space feature in Midtown could be the stimulus needed to foster initial growth in the Town Center area. The Midtown Square Park is the type of public open space that is envisioned as having an enduring, positive impact on local market conditions. Introducing this type of open space be an effective tool in helping to transform Midtown into a revitalized Downtown neighborhood.



Figure 7.14.3 View of Open Space Features in Midtown Square Park

7.15 OTHER OPEN SPACE FEATURES



Figure 7.15.1 View of pedestrian path in Midtown Square Park

Currently, there are only a few public open spaces or parks in the Midtown focus area. As the area is redeveloped and becomes more populated, the need for a variety of open space features will increase. In addition to the Midtown Square Park, the Plan envisions a number of smaller public open spaces that could emerge in different parts of the focus area to enrich individual projects and subareas. These are smaller, contemplative open spaces that are usually less than one-quarter (1/4) acre in area. In addition to the Midtown Square Park, the Plan envisions over three (3) additional acres of open space could be realized in this manner. These open spaces and could be developed on either public or private property. They could include “pocket parks”, plazas, courtyards, sidewalk alcoves, community gar-

dens, pedestrian paths and an extended John Yarbrough Linear Park Trail. Smaller public open spaces such as these are intended to provide individuals and small groups with a different type of public realm experience. While the Plan strategically locates many of these of these small open spaces to complement the future development, land prices and other variables will determine if and where they get constructed. The addition of these spaces would ensure that future residents and workers the area are within a one-quarter (1/4) mile, or five minute walk to some type of open space encounter.



Figure 7.15.2 View of “Pocket Park”

7.16 STREETLIFE AND OPEN SPACE ACTIVITIES



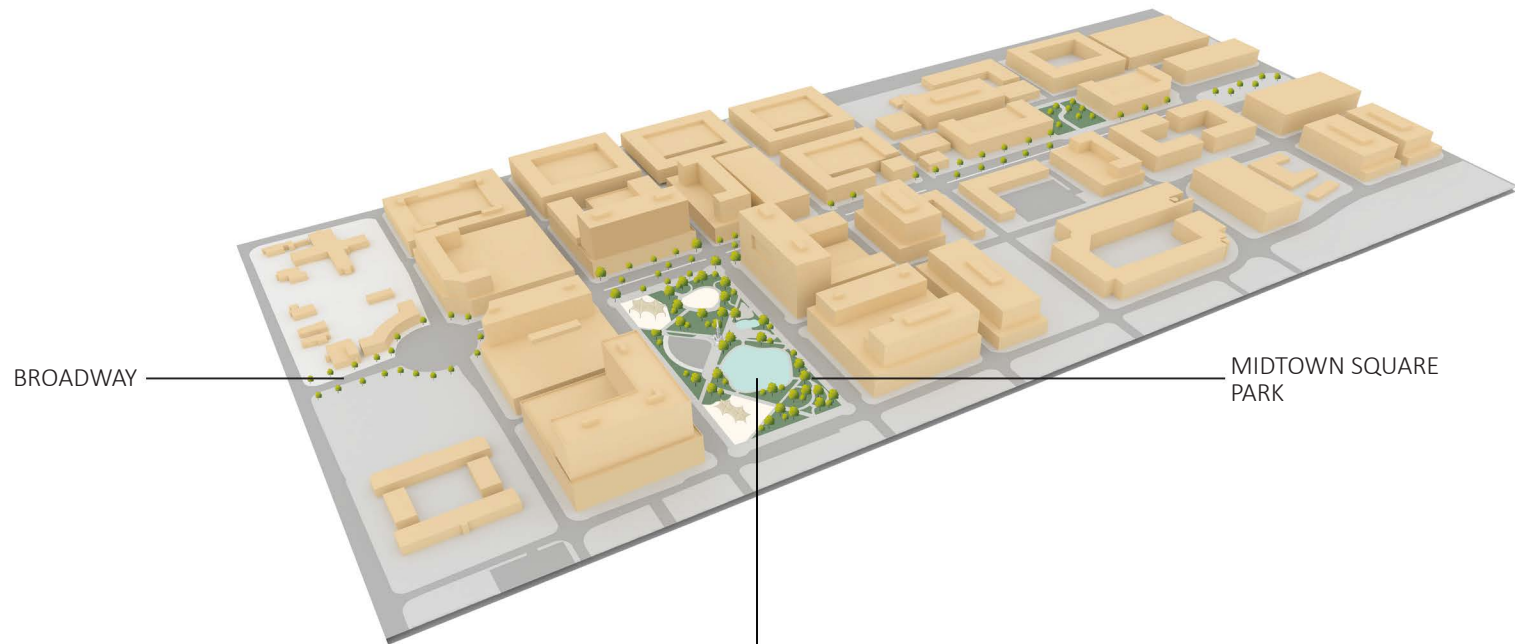
The Midtown Vision Plan prioritizes street life and active public realm conditions throughout the focus area. This is vital to the future success of the area evolving with multiple appealing destinations. A major objective of the Plan is to demonstrate the combined benefits of the “multimodal path” network, the strategic placement of public realm enhancements and the diverse features of Midtown Square Park as they relate to potential vibrant conditions in the future. As redevelopment in Midtown intensifies, it is essential that each new increment of development reflect the spirit and intent of this objective. This condition is also critical for area residents to recognize Midtown as an emerging active, vibrant destination and to foster enhanced market conditions in the area.

To accomplish this, the Plan envisions a rich and diverse range of public realm activities that could emerge in the future. Most of these activities are envisioned along the designated “multimodal paths”, but would be intensified along Broadway and around the proposed Midtown Square Park (see Figure 7.16.2). These locations create a great opportunity for “creative placemaking” in the Midtown focus area. This is a frequently used approach for creating desirable, active and diverse places in the city. It brings together “... public, private, not-for-profit and community sector partners to strategically shape the physical and social character

of a neighborhood, town or city”. It leverages arts, culture, entertainment, commercial and open space activities “... to spur economic development, promote enduring social change and improve the physical environment”. The Midtown Vision Plan envisions this approach being applied in different ways to help realize the four proposed activity centers.



Figure 7.16.1 Envisioned Active Sidewalk Conditions



SAMPLE IMAGES OF ENVISIONED OPEN SPACE ACTIVITIES AT MIDTOWN SQUARE PARK



ENVISIONED STREET LIFE ACTIVITIES

Figure 7.16.2 Envisioned Public Realm Activites in the Town Center Area

7.17 SUSTAINABLE, RESILIENCY AND LIVABILITY MEASURES



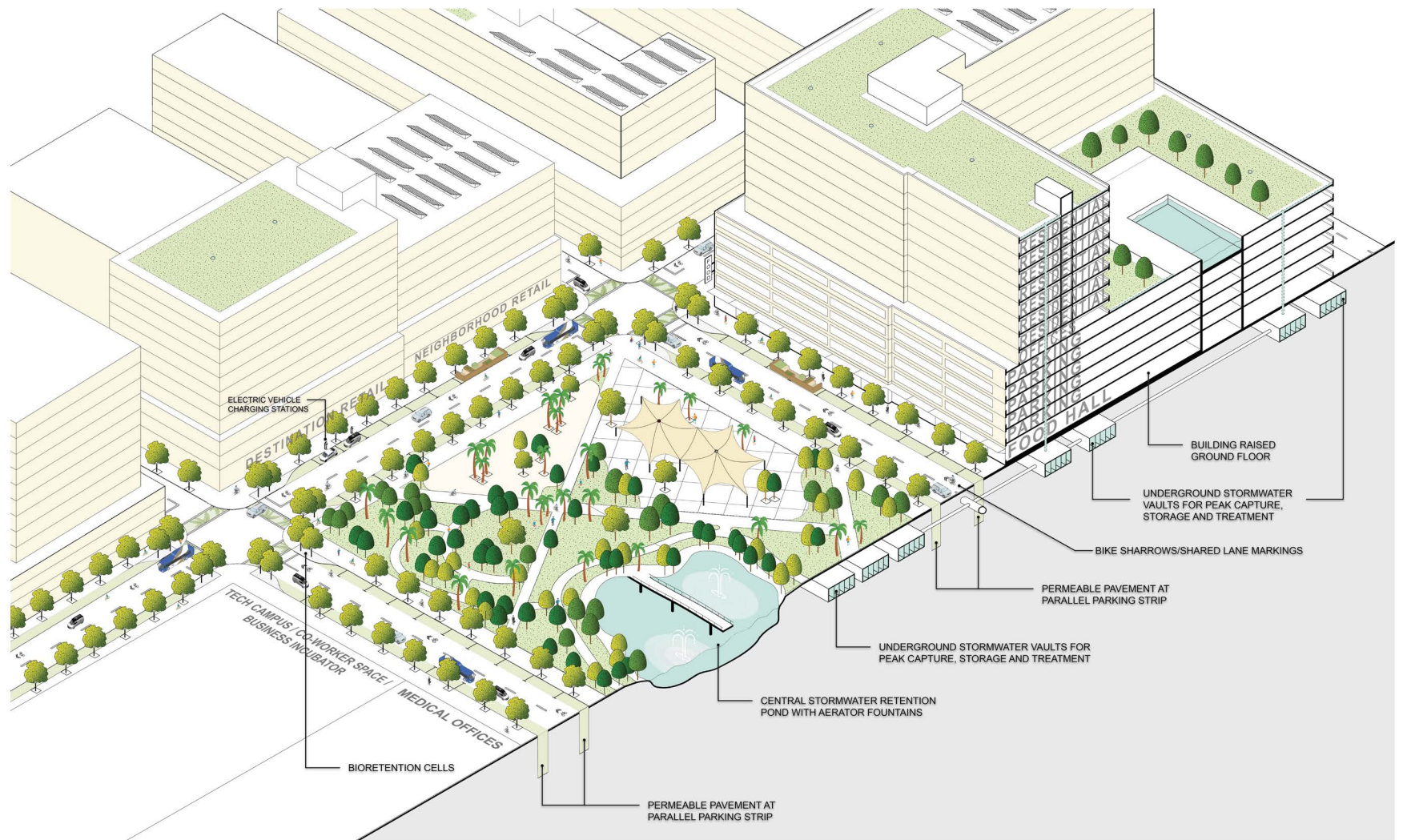
Micro-Scale
Conditions

Sustainability (i.e. long-term resource and economic efficiency), resiliency (i.e. minimized vulnerabilities and ability to recover from adverse impacts), and livability (i.e. overall quality of life and conditions that enhance the human experience) were all voiced as major concerns among workshop participants. As the Midtown area is redeveloped, these issues should be prioritized as strategic objectives and form the basis for new policy measures. The Midtown Vision Plan addresses these concerns through a more holistic approach. It proposes a number of associated physical features and conditions that establish some baseline criteria for creating sustainable, resilient and livable conditions throughout the focus area. The Plan illustrates how these conditions can contribute to diverse local contexts and generate mutual benefits between the community, the City and the private sector.

At the large scale, future development envisioned in the focus area complies with the projected utility water and sewer capacities identified in the “Downtown Midtown Utility Capacity Analysis” completed in January of 2017. As a sustainable metric, proposed levels of density do not exceed the excess utility capacity projections for the focus area. This provides assurances that Midtown could accommodate the higher levels of density envisioned in the future.

Over time, the Midtown redevelopment process will displace a significant amount of pervious land in the focus area. In addition to ongoing infrastructure investments by the City to enhance storm drainage, the Plan envisions additional features to address the potential adverse impacts of excessive stormwater runoff. The proposed Midtown Square Park is intended as an open space amenity, as well as a sustainable and resilient feature in the Town Center area. As different components of the Park are phased in over time, a minimum of eighty five (85) percent of its three and three-quarter (3.75) acre land mass should be programmed with open space features that allow for direct percolation of stormwater – providing opportunities for both filtration and groundwater recharge. The one acre central stormwater retention pond envisioned as part of the Park would provide additional storage capacity for runoff from local streets in the Town Center area.

The Plan also envisions the potential installation of stormwater vaults under portions of the Park. These would further increase storage capacity for the area and could be leveraged as an incentive in lieu of on-site stormwater retention requirements for nearby private development. In addition to this, the Plan proposes other small-scale features that could enhance stormwater management in the focus area. These include porous paving in all on-



PUBLIC OPEN SPACE



STORMWATER MANAGEMENT
RAINWATER HARVESTING /
GREEN ROOF



INTEGRATED
TECHNOLOGIES



SUSTAINABLE
BUILDINGS



MULTIMODAL
MOBILITY OPTIONS



SMART CONNECTED
INFRASTRUCTURE

Figure 7.17.1 Sustainability, Resiliency and Livability Information Graphic

street, parallel parking areas. With over three hundred sixty (360) on-street public parking spaces in the immediate Town Center area, this amounts to over one and a half (1.5) acres of additional permeable surface area, as opposed to impervious asphalt. At street corners where these on-street parking strips end, the Plan envisions small planter areas that could function as “bioretention” cells. Although small in size, they can also contribute to the overall stormwater management strategy for this part of the focus area. The amount of pervious land in the Park, the central retention pond, the underground vaults and other smaller features are all proposed as supplementary stormwater management features. In addition to other ongoing capital improvement projects, these amount to a sustainable infrastructure approach for Midtown that’s aimed at greater efficiencies and the long-term mitigation of adverse impacts of seasonal downpours and other storm events.

Although all of the above measures are typically public-sector investments, the Plan also identifies a contributing role for the private-sector in achieving sustainable and resilient conditions in Midtown. Future buildings should incorporate as many architectural, real estate and construction industry sustainability standards as feasible to achieve this objective. Features such as solar arrays, green or planted roofs and underground stormwater vaults would benefit individual projects and contribute to the focus area’s overall sustainability. With the focus area averaging about ten (10) to twelve (12) feet above sea level, the Plan proposes another measure to minimize the potential impacts of localized street flooding. A sustainability practice that’s becoming more common in different parts of the state is elevating the ground floors of certain buildings a few feet above the adjacent

sidewalks. With internal transitions from the sidewalk up to the ground floor, this condition is intended as a safeguard against water intrusion from major storm events or a one hundred (100) year flood.

Livability is addressed in the Plan in a number of ways. At the scale of the larger Midtown focus area, pairing the existing street grid with envisioned activity centers, compact development patterns and mixture of land uses would contribute to walkable conditions and lessen the need for driving. Local streets designated as “multimodal paths” are intended as enhanced rights of way that accommodate vehicles, buses, bicyclists, pedestrians and other forms of mobility. The proposed Midtown Square Park is intended as a new central public open space that attracts residents from across the city. Given its size, the Park is envisioned as a collection of “outdoor rooms” that can be programmed with a variety of passive and semi-active recreational and leisure uses. To appeal to a broader spectrum of the community, these could include uses such as plazas with rain and sun protection, open air lawns, a playground/tot lot, a performance venue, a dog park and public restrooms. In addition to these, public realm conditions along area streets are planned to have a number of features that enhance the quality of life of local residents. Throughout the “multimodal path” network, certain streets are planned for public art installations and other pedestrian amenities such as “pocket parks” and “parklettes”. The addition of these smaller public spaces will enrich the Midtown environment, contribute to the perception of safety, make the area more pedestrian friendly and enhance people’s public realm experience.

Another “smart cities” approach to livability envisioned in the

Plan is the integration of certain technology features that would provide constant information, communications and internet connectivity within the public realm. To appeal to a diverse cross section of residents, member of the workforce and visitor groups, the Midtown Square Park is envisioned as a wi-fi zone. Not only

would this feature attract people to the area from across the city, it would also encourage them to spend more time in Midtown – adding to the level of activity in and around the Park and benefiting local businesses.



Figure 7.17.2 Midtown Square Park as the Area’s “Outdoor Living Room”

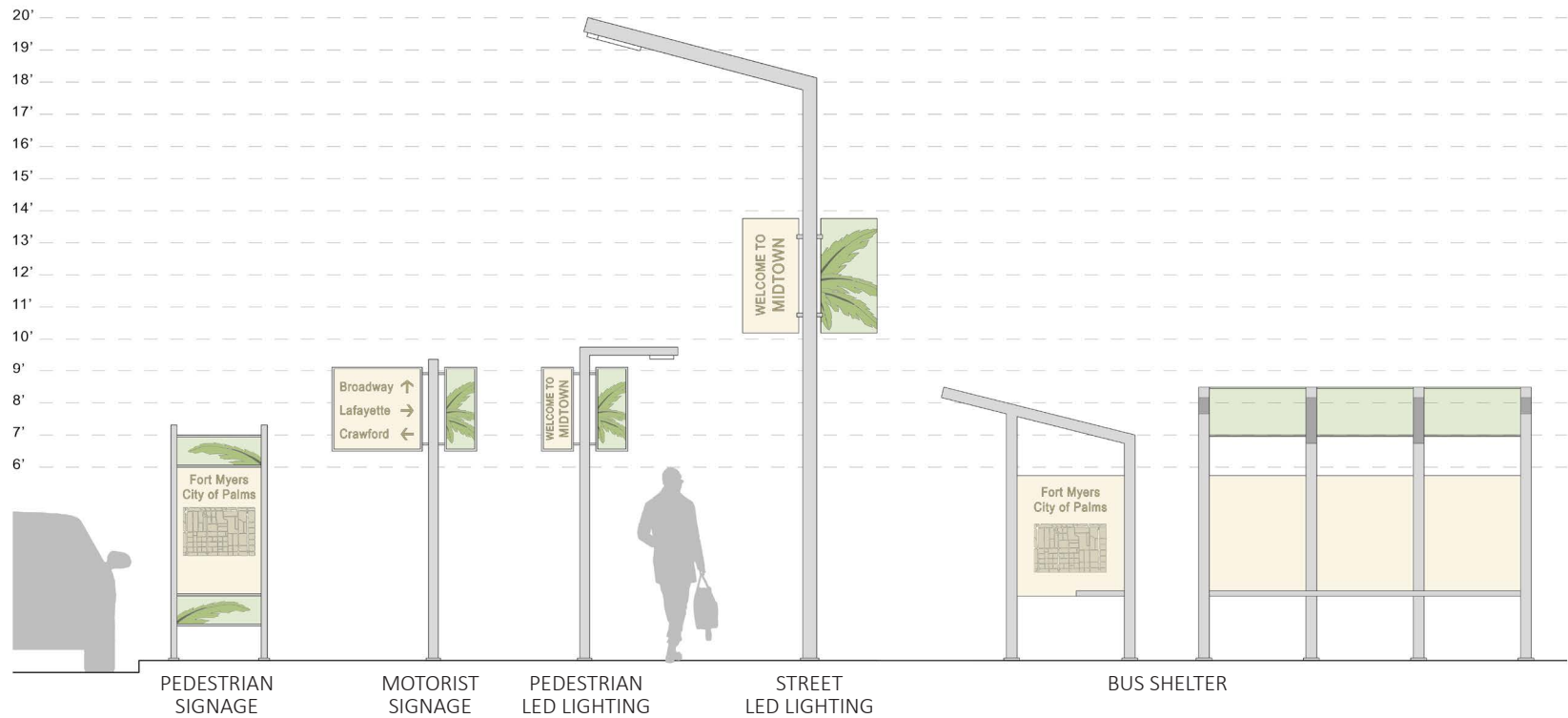
7.18 **BRANDING AND VISUAL CHARACTER FEATURES**



Figure 7.18.1 Branding and Visual Character Features Along Midtown's Streets

The Midtown redevelopment initiative faces a major challenge in overcoming deficiencies in the area's visual character and identity as an appealing place in the city. The proposed Midtown Square Park, the enhanced streetscape conditions along the "multi-modal paths" and future buildings in the area will certainly have a positive impact on this condition. However, a clearly discernible, new visual brand in the public realm would help the average person on the street fully appreciate Midtown's transformation as a unique part of the Downtown landscape. Smaller, human-scale features and furnishings that people come in contact with on a frequent basis would reinforce these conditions.

Over the last several years, the character of Midtown has contributed to local community perceptions and has no doubt, affected the area's market appeal. In many similar initiatives these conditions are often left to chance or implementation measures prove to be ineffective. A key metric in transforming an area into a new destination is whether or not branding and other measures will encourage people to return to it on a regular basis. Recognizing current pessimistic perceptions of the Midtown area, the Plan proposes a number of public realm features that would directly address the area's visual identity as a safe, desirable and welcoming destination.



Although the Midtown area is viewed as an extension of Downtown, it should evolve with its own unique visual brand and identity. The Plan proposes a cohesive set of small-scale features that create a sense of order, convenience and visual interest. Signage, graphics and secondary street furnishings are common public realm features. The design, color and materials used for these elements help people quickly assess their surroundings and develop opinions. The proposed suite of identity features for Midtown include: pedestrian and motorist signage, wayfinding elements, light standards, public art, sidewalk and crosswalk markings and other street furnishings. A standard color pallet for these features would should be established that clearly differentiates Midtown’s new visual identity.

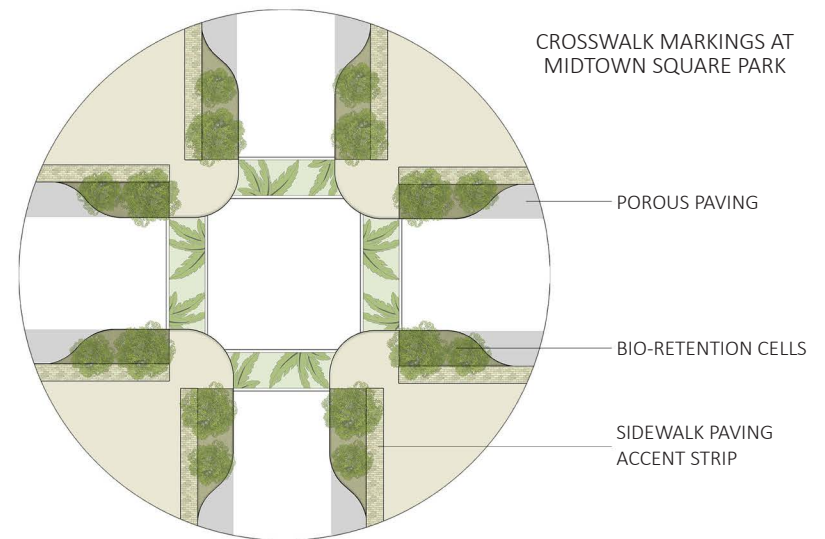


Figure 7.18.2 Midtown Visual Identity Features

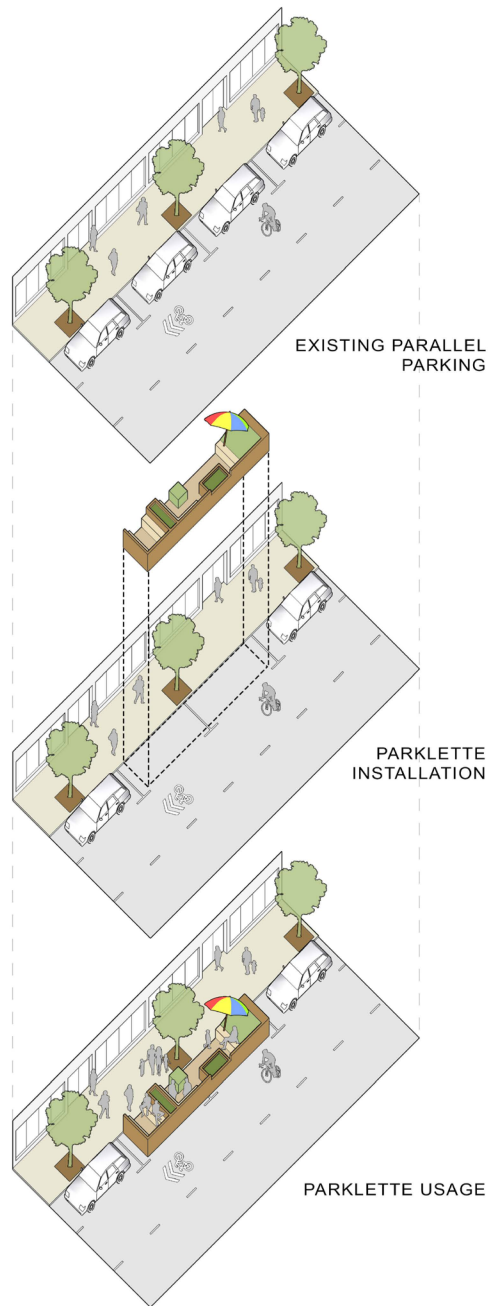
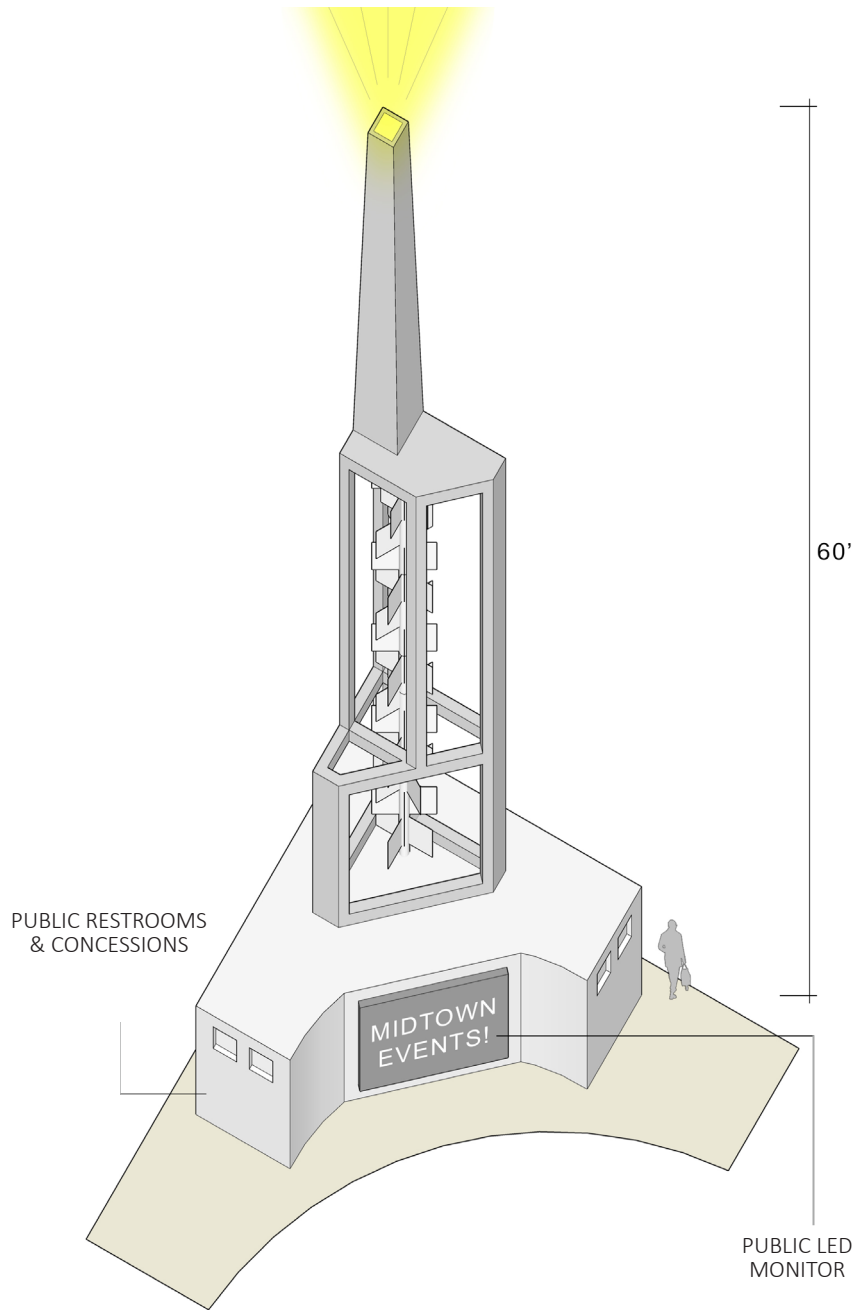


Figure 7.18.3 Parklette Installations Along Midtown Streets

Other features that are proving to be effective in contributing an area’s image and its public realm usage are “parklettes”. These are small public gathering booths that are installed on either a permanent or semi-permanent basis along commercial streets with slow-moving traffic. Often installed in one or two parallel parking spaces, “parklettes” are strategically placed in front of active ground floor building uses such as coffee shops, small restaurants, retail shops and other activity generators. The Midtown Vision Plan proposes these types of features in two areas—along Broadway and on the streets facing Midtown Square Park. Although small in size, these features are the new “social spaces” along busy streets. They would contribute to the identity of Midtown as a place with streets for people, amplify street life in general and contribute to a sense of place.



Figure 7.18.4 View of parklette along Broadway



In addition to this, the Plan envisions a landmark feature in Midtown Square Park. This would be a vertical feature that is easily recognizable and associated with this location. It should be visible from a distance and contribute to a memorable experience of this part of the city. For this purpose, the Plan envisions a vertical public art feature that could incorporate public restrooms and other amenities for Park users at its base. The inclusion of this and other types of way finding features in the public realm would complement future development, contribute to perceptions of an revitalized place and play a major role in the defining a new visual brand for Midtown.

Figure 7.18.5 Landmark Public Art Feature in Midtown Square Park

8

***LONG-TERM
REDEVELOPMENT
POTENTIALS***

***“A VISION WITHOUT A TASK IS BUT A DREAM.
A TASK WITHOUT A VISION IS DRUDGERY.
BUT A VISION WITH A TASK CAN CHANGE
THE WORLD.”***

- STREETS OF HOPE

The Midtown area presents a unique redevelopment opportunity for the City of Fort Myers. The area has been dormant for a number of years and has seen very little private investment in over a decade or more. As the City and the CRA mobilize for change, many local residents are optimistic about the long-term redevelopment prospects for the focus area. Community workshop participants expressed a desire for the area to evolve as a diverse, mixed-use neighborhood and a new vibrant Downtown destination. The Midtown Vision Plan incorporates these objectives and other redevelopment priorities as part of a conceptual strategy for transforming Midtown over a twenty (20) year time-frame. To accomplish this, the Plan offers a graphic depiction of physical conditions that could emerge in the future at multiple scales. Based on Midtown's capacity for growth, the Plan envisions the focus area as a seamless extension of the Historic Downtown core and evolving into a well-defined, diverse urban neighborhood. The gradual transformation of the area would include new Class-A office space that expands the Downtown workforce, a range of rental and for sale housing options, new public open spaces and public realm enhancements. All of these features were identified by City staff and workshop participants as priorities or aspirational goals. Throughout the process for developing this Plan, a number of strategies were identified to reflect these goals and maximize the redevelopment potential of the area. Creating a new vibrant, mixed-use destination was deemed the most feasible approach to bolster economic, generate tax revenue, grow the CRA's Tax Increment Finance (TIF) fund and transform Midtown into a place for all city residents.

Midtown's real estate development market potential hinges on number of conditions. Along with a favorable local economy,

some of these include: the ability to repurpose a significant amount of the publicly-owned land in the focus area; opportunities to assemble a number of small privately-owned parcels; prospects for attracting "catalyst" development projects on property such as the former News-Press site; the ability to foster new market conditions; and the creation of new public-private partnerships to implement new projects. With sixty four (64) percent of the focus area's property under public ownership, disposition of this land will be critical to the initial and long-term success of this redevelopment process. This property alone could accommodate a substantial number of new multi-family dwelling units ranging from market rate to workforce housing options. The recently completed market analysis by Jones, Lang, Lasalle supports this assessment. As the Midtown market matures, this land could also allow the City to capture a significant amount of commercial office development that may otherwise built elsewhere.

Recent proposals on private property in the focus area are already signaling investment opportunities. As the redevelopment process gains momentum, a number of existing small businesses in the area will likely invest their properties, expand or take advantage of rising property values and relocate. In addition to this, other private-sector development that could have the most significant impact on the area are larger "catalyst" developments. These could occur in the four activity centers identified in the Plan and could provide the basis for formulating a series of "public-private partnerships". They would provide the "shot in the arm" that's needed to revitalize different parts of Midtown and attract other collateral development.

The development of a major public open space and other pub-

lic investment in Midtown will also help stimulate private investment. As the centerpiece of the proposed Town Center area, the Midtown Square Park would send a clear message to prospective investors of the City’s level of commitment to redevelopment in the focus area. The Park would create an opportunity for land value capture from development on surrounding blocks and could serve as a potential source of revenue as a shared infrastructure and amenity feature. The City should conduct a value capture analysis to reveal the fiscal impacts of this type of public investment.

Midtown’s redevelopment potential also hinges on how well new regulations and incentives are aligned with long-term objectives. Coupled with a clearly defined vision for the area and a streamlined approval process, this redevelopment initiative would not only appeal to potential investors from the area, but investors beyond the Fort Myers region.

Initial projections for the long-term redevelopment potential of Midtown include the following:

- **Four mixed-use activity centers: the Town Center; Government Center; Gateway Center; and the Fowler Commercial Corridor**
- **Over four thousand (4,000) new residential units**
- **Up to six hundred fifty thousand (650,000) square feet of new Class-A office and light industrial space**
- **A total of thirteen (13) new public open spaces of different sizes – equating to over five and a half (5.5) acres of dedicated park land**
- **Nine (9) transformed roadway corridors into “multimodal paths”**

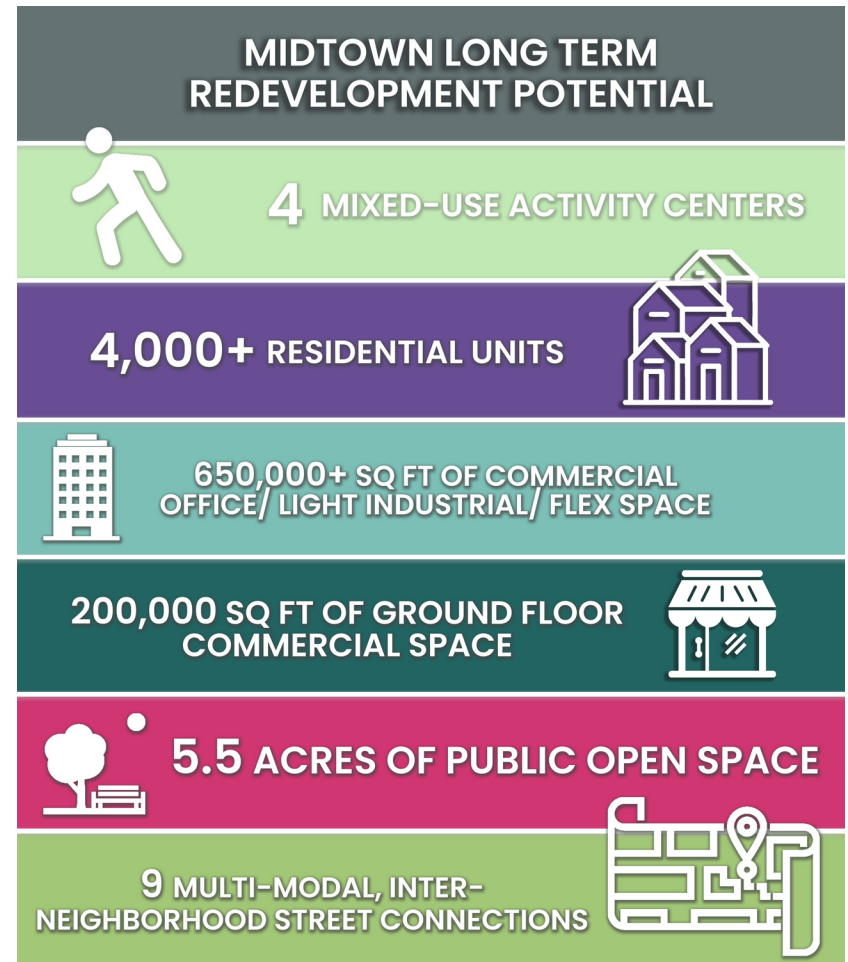
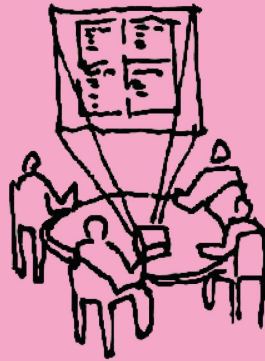
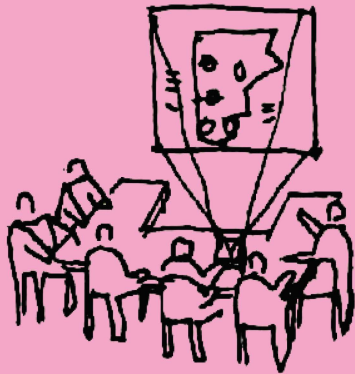


Figure 8.1 Midtown Long-Term Redevelopment Potential

9

***RECOMMENDED
NEXT STEPS/
FOWARD MOVES***



The Midtown Vision Plan proposes a broad and diverse strategy or redeveloping the focus area. It reflects the ideas and aspirations of the community, as well as the redevelopment objectives of the City. The Plan is intended to serve as a critical component of this process and provide a foundation for implementation decisions and a forward direction. To accomplish this, the Plan proposes a general plan of action and next steps.

These recommendations are meant to be flexible and aligned with other proposed, current and ongoing projects in the focus area. Although several private-sector initiatives may be in the early stages of development, this implementation strategy should harness this energy to further increase the potential for future redevelopment initiatives. One indication of this initial activity is increased interest in new residential and commercial development in the area and a number of property transactions over the last few years. Next steps in the implementation process should recognize this and address an even broader range of conditions that will further enhance Midtown's potential to attract new investment. These include the City's ongoing utility enhancements that are being implemented in anticipation of future growth, the recent adoption of amendments to the City's Comprehensive Plan and new zoning and land development regulations.

Some general recommendations for forward moves that are critical in this part of the process are outlined as follows:

- **Policy Actions:** The Midtown Vision Plan should be adopted as the official redevelopment strategy for this part of the Downtown Redevelopment Area. It should be integrated into the Downtown Plan or serve as part of the CRA Plan. The Vi-

sion Plan should serve as a flexible template for defining the types of future conditions preferred by the community. Although minimum revisions may be needed, the City's Smart Code should also reflect conditions in the Plan that should be regulated.

- **Land Disposition and Potential Assembly:** With the twenty five (25) acres of publicly-owned land in the southern portion of the focus area, the Midtown Vision Plan sees this as a unique opportunity to leverage these land holdings for the development of a Town Center and major public open space. This land should be reserved for "catalyst projects" that embody the spirit and intent of the Plan. Privately-owned property on surrounding blocks should be considered for assemblage to accommodate other types of development. The City should clarify whether further strategic land acquisitions are needed in the future, or if these actions will be driven by the private sector other market forces.
- **Marketing:** Although Midtown may have limitations in the current real estate market, every effort should be made to promote a range of redevelopment opportunities in the area. The City should market Midtown as a future vibrant, mixed-use that offers a range of investment opportunities. As part of a targeted marketing strategy, a range of potential investors should be identified to include local developers and national developers with town center development experience. Public advertisements, RFP's (requests for proposals) and other measures should be considered for land disposition and the potential for creating public-private partnerships. Future partnerships that emerge should focus on larger multi-build-

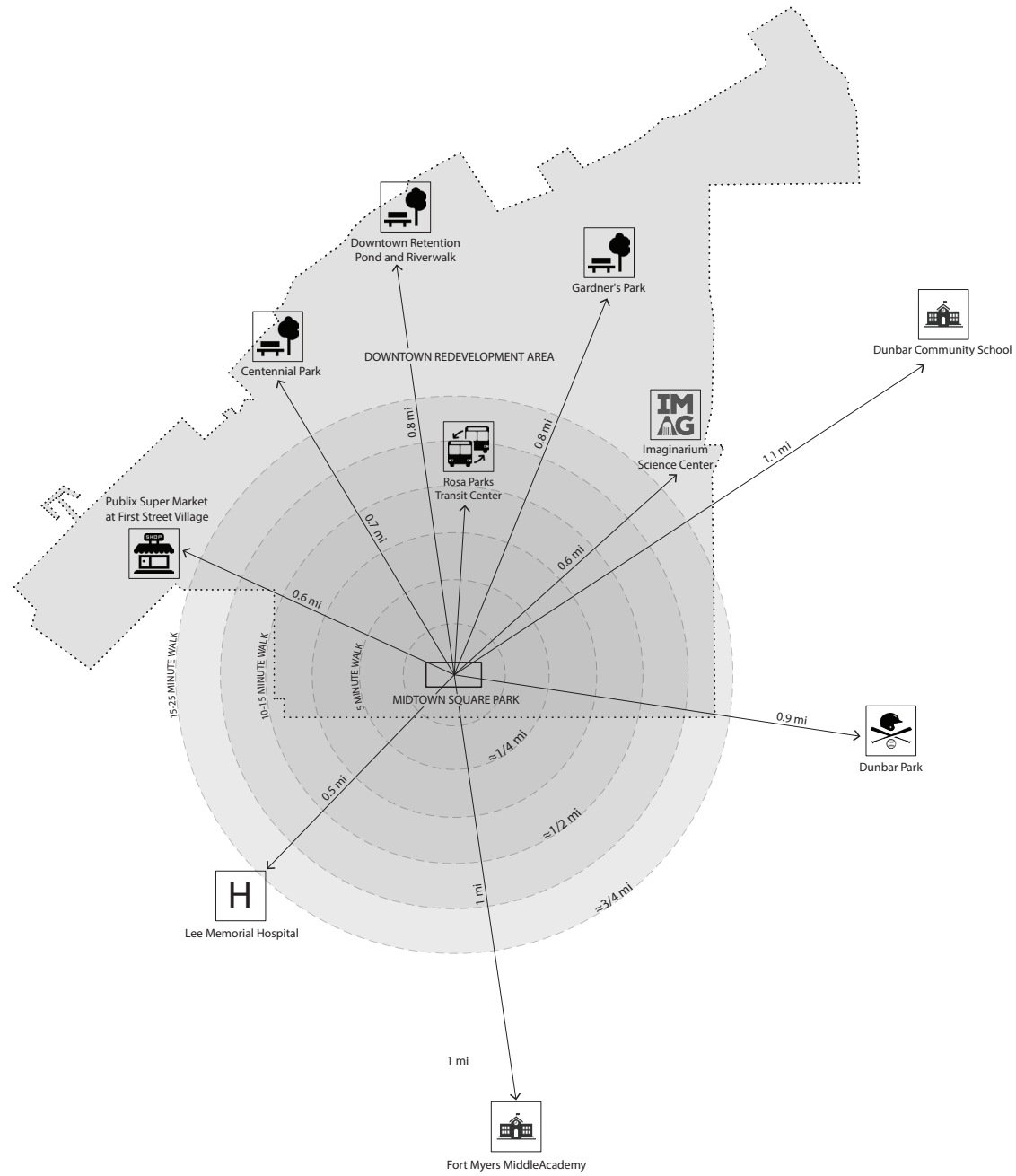


Figure 9.1 Proximity Diagram

ing or multi-block developments that will be essential in establishing the critical mass of people, diverse uses and activities needed to create the envisioned Town Center atmosphere.

- **Regulatory Revisions:** With the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan amendments earlier this year and establishment of the Midtown land-use designation consolidates the entire focus area under a single future land use district. As such, the existing Smart Code should be revised and new land development regulations should be crafted to accommodate a revised incentive program. These measures should reflect the spirit and intent of the Plan and identify opportunities to provide a more streamlined approval process and a greater degree of outcome predictability.
- **Infrastructure:** Although many underground utility upgrades are well underway in Midtown, some existing rights of way are lacking features such as sidewalks, curbs, gutters and street lighting. These features should be included in either the City's capital Improve Plan for the area or as priority projects for the CRA. The City should continue to engage the Florida Department of Transportation District 1 office in discussions about redevelopment priorities and modifications to State roads in the area. New transportation measures should be integrated into the Long Range Transportation Plan and new projects should be identified for the Transportation Improvement Program. In anticipation of the arrival of AV technology in the near future, roadway, parking and other infrastructure features should be explored to better understand the impacts of this trend and planned to accommodate this

mobility option.

- **Sustainability and Resiliency:** Although the Midtown area is not in the Coastal High Hazard Area or in a designated flood zone, the area averages only ten (10) to twelve (12) feet above sea level. As such, some streets are subject to localized flooding. Ongoing stormwater management efforts in the area should explore ideas proposed in the Plan as supplementary measures. The Midtown Square Park can serve as both a recreation and open space amenity and an integral stormwater management feature to mitigate runoff in the area. The private-sector should also play a role in the sustainability and resiliency of Midtown. Future buildings should incorporate a range of appropriate features and conditions that reflect sustainable industry standards and minimize adverse environmental impacts.
- **Development Approval Process:** The City should identify ways to revise the lengthy planned development (PD) process and create a more streamlined development approval process. Although it's the preferred method for project review and approval, one of the primary complaints heard at the community workshops is that its too time consuming, inefficient and could be a hindrance to potential private-sector investments as the pace development is expected to accelerate. Once zoning and site development standards are defined, a formal design review process may prove to be an alternative approach that is more beneficial to the redevelopment process.

- **Visual Character and Identity:** In order to broaden the market appeal of Midtown, the visual character of the area’s public realm will need to be enhanced. The area should evolve as an extension of the Historic Downtown core, but with its own unique identity and visual brand. This can be advanced through the coordination of signage, graphics, colors, public art and other amenity installations that embody the CRA’s motto of “New Direction- New Energy-New Life”.

In addition to these recommendations, the City should establish a series of baseline metrics for measuring ongoing success of the redevelopment initiative. To do so, the proposed implementation strategy should incorporate the following criteria as guiding values:

- **Economy:** The Midtown area should evolve as a significant economic driver for the City. As an extension of Downtown, the area must function as a mixed-use commercial and residential destination. Initial efforts must help bring about a critical mass of people, a range of businesses and concentrated workforce and retail activity that are needed to create the envisioned town center conditions. As market conditions continue to improve, efforts should focus on creating an enduring mixed-use environment in Midtown. The area should evolve as a new, economically vibrant and stable neighborhood that can attract a range of private-sector investments over time.
- **Vibrancy:** To maximize the redevelopment potential of the area, Midtown should evolve as the most vibrant activity center envisioned in the Plan. Repurposing public and private land for this purpose would foster and sustain a number of symbiotic relationships between the area’s disparate land uses and public realm activities. Streets and other public realm conditions should include pedestrian amenities that

promote active and safe street life throughout the Midtown focus area.

- **Inclusion:** The Midtown area should be promoted as a diverse, mixed-income neighborhood. It should evolve with a range of different businesses, housing options and demographics. The area should provide something for all residents in the city and become a place where people want to be. The proposed mixed-use development approach should include commercial, residential, cultural, entertainment, recreational uses and other services that are essential to attract people to the area on a frequent basis.
- **Urban Design Quality:** Midtown should ensure that the area evolves in a coordinated manner. With the Plan as a general framework, future urban design conditions should reflect priorities identified by community workshop participants relative to Midtown’s physical form, function and visual character. At a smaller scale, individual buildings should achieve a good urban design fit relative to their respective locations and engage adjacent public realm conditions to create enduring value, vibrancy and a discernible sense of place.

***“...A SPECIAL THANKS TO THE CITY OF FORT MYERS,
STAFF, THE CRA AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS FOR THE
OPPORTUNITY TO ASSIST WITH CRAFTING THIS VISION
FOR THE FUTURE OF MIDTOWN.”***

THE PROJECT TEAM



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