

# INDIAN ROCKS BEACH - SPECIAL AREA PLANS

## “A VISION FOR GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT”



CITY OF INDIAN ROCKS BEACH, FLORIDA  
JUNE, 2009



FLORIDA CENTER FOR COMMUNITY DESIGN + RESEARCH  
SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE AND COMMUNITY DESIGN  
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA

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R. B. Johnson	_____	Mayor
Terry Wollin-Hamilton	_____	Vice-Mayor
Cookie Kennedy	_____	City Commissioner
Daniel Torres	_____	City Commissioner
Phillip Hannah	_____	City Commissioner
Chuck Coward	_____	City Manager
Danny Taylor	_____	Planning and Zoning Director
Bert Valery	_____	Former City Commissioner

Action 2000



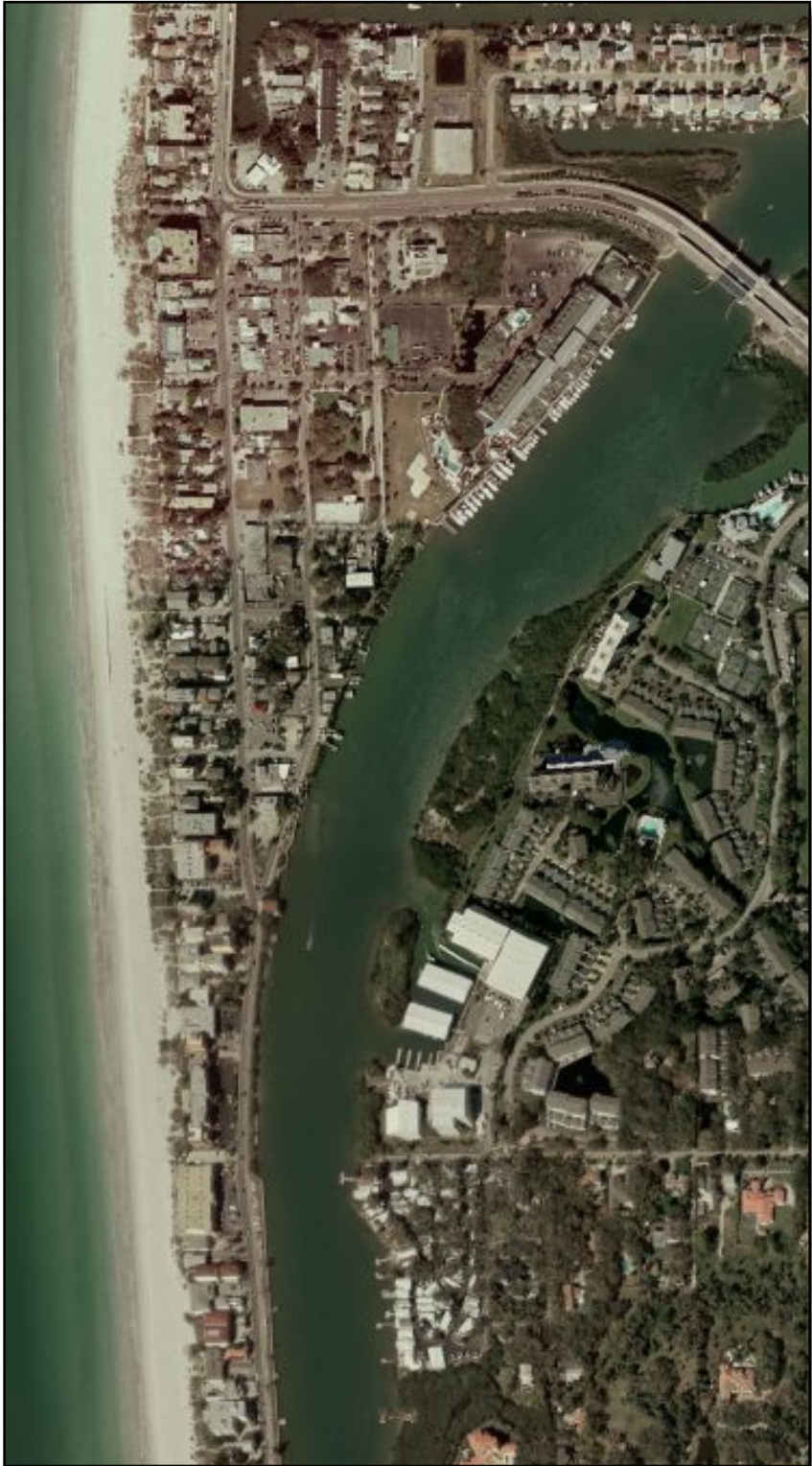
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The Florida Center for Community Design & Research, the research division of the USF School of Architecture and Community Design, would like to thank the City of Indian Rocks Beach, its citizens, businesses, property owners, and Action 2000 for allowing us to assist in defining this vision for future growth and development. We hope this effort has been mutually beneficial and welcome the opportunity for future partnerships.

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## 1.0 PLAN SUMMARY

The Special Area Plans for the City of Indian Rocks Beach are intended to define a long-range vision and strategy for growth and development in the City's three commercial areas: the Business District Triangle (The Narrows), the Midtown Commercial Area, and the Uptown Commercial Area. This effort has focused primarily on physical planning in the subject areas and has been completed in accordance with the City's Comprehensive Plan with input by local residents and City officials. As such, the Special Area Plans project reflects the goals, objectives and policies outlined in the Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR) process. In compliance with both the Comprehensive Plan and the EAR, the Special Area Plan seeks to maintain the "coastal, small town character" of Indian Rocks Beach that is consistent with the future land use element of the Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan, as well as the County-wide Rules.

The community design plans for the three project areas also identify a framework for smart, orderly growth and identifies a number of physical enhancements that will transform these areas into vibrant, diverse, pedestrian-scale neighborhood commercial centers. With the proposed enhancements, these zones will have even broader appeal for the local and visitor markets. The plans for the subject areas have been developed with broad community input and reflect conditions desired by local residents, business and property owners, and elected officials.

### 1.1 THE NARROWS

The plan for the Narrows envisions the existing commercial area as a revitalized business district anchoring the southern end of the city. The area currently has a variety of small-scale commercial uses, but has not realized much private-sector investment over the last thirty or more years. The planning focus for this area is to identify opportunities for transforming the area into a mixed-use village center, with enhancements to the area's public realm conditions. In addition to this, the strategy for the

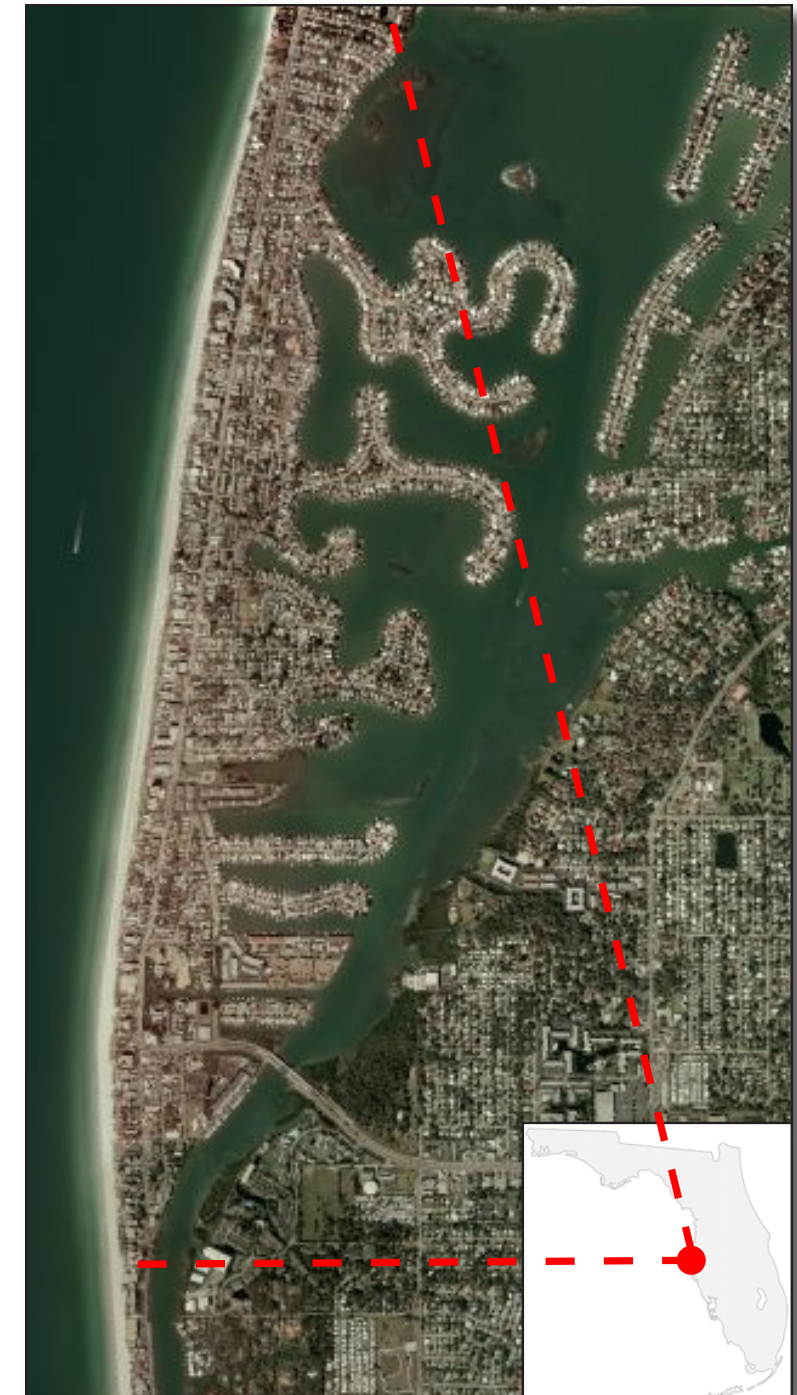
Narrows also includes ideas for expanding basic infrastructure (i.e. parking and stormwater requirements), definition of a "coastal village" image, recommendations for phased interventions and needed regulatory revisions.

### 1.2 THE MIDTOWN COMMERCIAL AREA

For the Midtown commercial area, the Plan proposes a series of modest interventions that will help guide growth in the area as it evolves into a more cohesive "linear neighborhood commercial center". In order to accomplish this, the plan envisions a number of strategic infill developments, targeted building renovations and well-placed public realm enhancements. New structures envisioned for this area would be multi-use buildings of no more than two or three stories in height with active ground floor uses. The Plan for this area creates a framework for orderly growth while responding to the scale of existing conditions. As such, the Plan envisions changes in this commercial area occurring in a more predictable manner. The block frontages from 11th Avenue to 17th Avenue have the potential of becoming a vibrant neighborhood commercial node with "main street-like" conditions. Future structures with active ground-floor uses will also help energize the eastern edge of Gulf Boulevard in the Midtown Commercial Area.

### 1.3 THE UPTOWN COMMERCIAL AREA

Physical conditions proposed in the Uptown Commercial Area are envisioned as a framework for transforming this area into a neighborhood commercial node. With recognizing the redevelopment potential of several vacant parcels in this area, the Plan envisions the opportunities for introducing an "anchor" commercial development here. The full block parcel at 26th Avenue and Gulf Boulevard could be developed with a "junior market" (less than 30,000 square feet) or some other midsize commercial use. In addition to this, the area would also benefit from a number of public realm enhancements such as small corner plazas, crosswalks and other landscape features.



## 2.0 PROJECT OVERVIEW

The City of Indian Rocks beach is a linear barrier-island community along the Pinellas County coastline. The city's corporate limits extends just over two miles north-south and varies between one quarter and a half mile east to west.

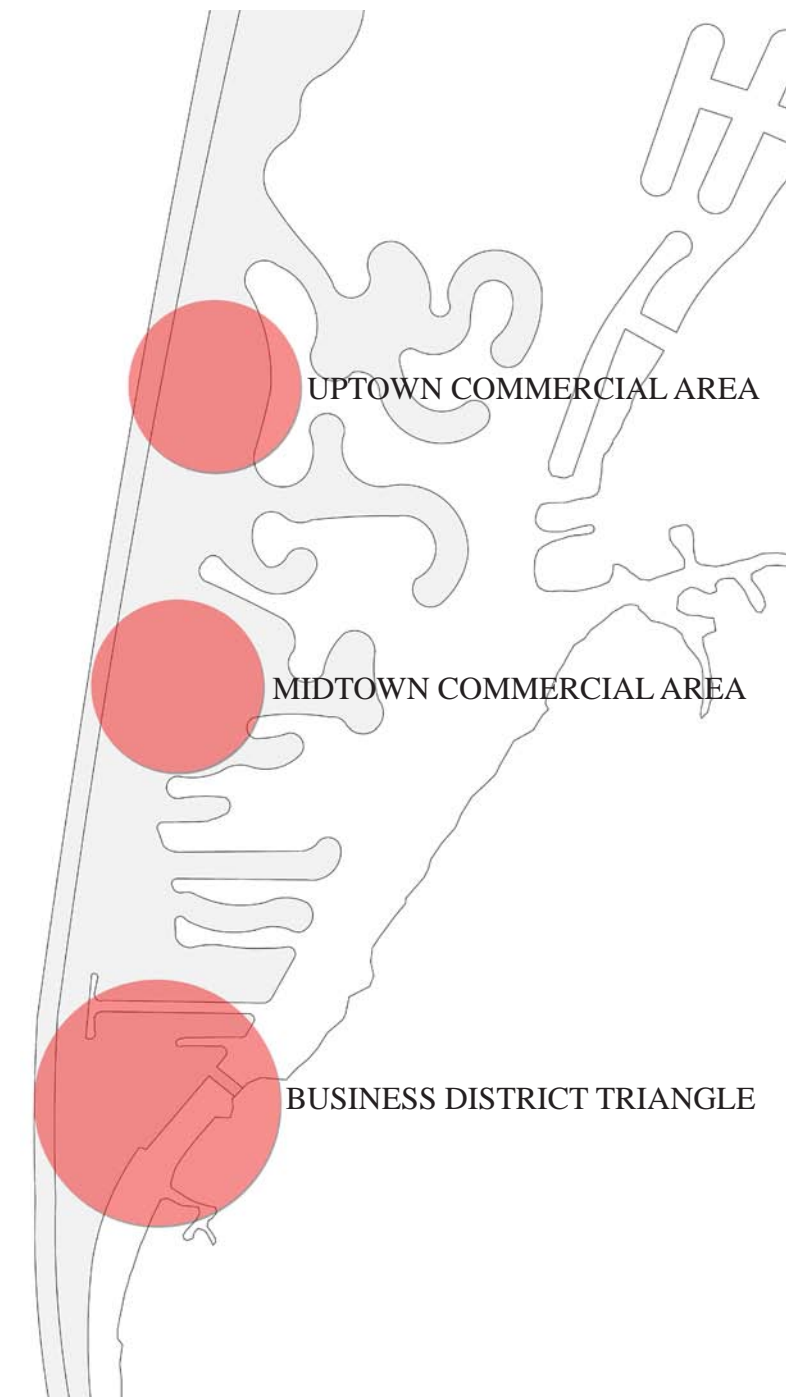
The City is linked north to south by Gulf Boulevard, a two-lane State roadway from the southern city limits to 5th Avenue, and a three-lane County road from 5th Avenue to 28th Avenue. Gulf Boulevard functions as the primary thoroughfare through the City and each of its commercial areas. The City's secondary circulation system is organized as a number of streets that begin as beach access points on the west extending into neighborhoods on the east.

Indian Rocks Beach is defined by a number of diverse physical and visual conditions. Its overall form is largely defined by the prominent streetwall of beachfront condominium buildings on the west side of Gulf Boulevard and the one to two-story single-family dwellings in the neighborhoods to the east.

Some of the major issues confronting the City relative to physical growth and development are as follows:

- Concern on the part of residents that recent condominium development on the west side of Gulf Boulevard has set a bad precedent for future structures.
- A business district that has not realized its potential as a vibrant, stable neighborhood commercial center.
- Two smaller commercial nodes that have several viable businesses, but lack the diversity of goods and services desired by most residents.

- A lack of public parking in the commercial areas that is needed to accommodate existing and future businesses.
- Public realm conditions in the commercial areas that fall short on fostering pedestrian vitality.
- The lack of a distinctive, cohesive visual image and identity for the commercial areas.
- Zoning regulations that seem to be a factor in discouraging private sector investment in the commercial areas.





### 3.0 PROJECT AREAS/PHYSICAL CONTEXT

This project focuses on the three areas in the city where all of the city's commercial activities are concentrated: The Narrows, the Midtown Commercial Area and the Uptown Commercial Area. Each of these areas currently have a small, but diverse collection of commercial uses and businesses situated at the southern, mid-point and northern portions of the City. Given their small size and limited offerings, these areas are secondary markets for goods and services for local residents. Aside from some convenience and food service uses, most of the city's residents patronize nearby business in adjacent communities.

#### 3.1 THE NARROWS

The Narrows is a forty-acre, triangular shaped area at the southern end of the city. The majority of the city's commercial uses are situated here. The area is bordered by the Intracoastal Waterway on the east, the city limits to the south, the middle of Gulf Boulevard to the west and Walsingham Road (5th Avenue) to the north. The area is flanked by condominium structures and beach access points on the west side of the street, and has a diverse commercial frontage on the east side of the street.

#### 3.2 THE MIDTOWN COMMERCIAL AREA

The Midtown Commercial Area is comprised of a collection of small businesses at the block frontages along Gulf Boulevard, from 11th Avenue to 16th Avenue. This area extends approximately .34 miles north-south and is two blocks from City Hall and other public features. This area is home to many of the city's retail, business, restaurants and professional offices.

#### 3.3 THE UPTOWN COMMERCIAL AREA

The Uptown Commercial Area is a collection of commercial businesses at the northern end of Gulf Boulevard. These businesses are randomly distributed along six block frontages from 22nd Avenue to 28th Avenue. Most of the commercial establishments in this area appear to have a more transient patronage base.



Midtown Commercial Area: View looking north along Gulf Boulevard



The Narrows: View looking south along Gulf Boulevard



Uptown Commercial Area: View looking south along Gulf Boulevard



## 4.0 PLAN OBJECTIVES

In order to initiate this effort, several objectives were identified. These objectives were developed with input from both public and private sector interests. Along with these objectives, the following offers a response to how these objectives were addressed throughout the project.

- *To complete the EAR process with a vision for physical development that can then help inform the Comprehensive Planning process.*

The Special Area Plans project provides a vision for short and long-term enhancements to each of the three project areas. The proposed interventions are compatible with the objectives stated in the City's EAR document. The vision for each project area provides a better understanding of how aspects of the City's Comprehensive Plan could be realized.

- *To engage the Mayor, City Commission and Indian Rocks Beach citizens in an urban design visioning process aimed determining the manner in which physical growth and development should occur in the future.*

The Special Area Plans project was conceived as a public participation effort from inception. A number of discussions with the City and other stakeholder interests were held initially to identify priorities and other relevant issues. This was followed by a series of interviews with business and property owners, and other concerned citizens.

- *To identify opportunities for transforming the Downtown Triangle and portions of Gulf Boulevard into vibrant mixed-use areas that will enhance opportunities for economic development, accommodate growth in a*

*sustainable manner, foster a range of "pedestrian-friendly" activities, and preserve the historic fabric and "coastal village" character of Indian Rocks Beach.*

The plan for the Narrows is based on the concept of a well defined coastal "village center" – an area that functions as the commercial and civic heart of the community. This concept envisions the area evolving in a coordinated manner, with future buildings and other enhancements contributing to a sense of destination and place.

The plans for the Uptown and Mid-Town commercial areas envision these business districts as neighborhood commercial nodes – a secondary market for convenience shopping and entertainment.

- *To identify opportunities that will contribute to the creation of a discernible "village center" that achieves a "unique sense of place" for the City of Indian Rocks Beach. Also, to identify opportunities that will contribute to Gulf Boulevard as the city's "main street" with a number of diverse neighborhood conditions from north to south.*

The plan for the Narrows is based on a time-tested urban design model. The proposed configuration of this area includes appropriately scaled mixed-use and singular-use buildings and public spaces that work together to define a discernible sense of place. The public amenities and other open spaces that are envisioned will ensure that the area becomes a vibrant community destination along Gulf Boulevard.

Proposed conditions along Gulf Boulevard at the Uptown and Midtown Commercial Areas are based on a cohesive neighborhood commercial node. Through the use of selective



Vacant Property in the Uptown Commercial Area



Business Frontage in the Midtown Commercial Area

infill development and renovations, these areas can become more stable and beneficial to local residents.

- *To propose a strategy for coordinating public parking in the Narrows and other commercial areas along Gulf Boulevard. This strategy would include the identification of different alternatives for increasing the area's public parking inventory.*

The parking strategy for the Narrows envisions the use of an existing vacant parcel as an interim surface parking lot. Long-term, the plan envisions a joint-use parking garage between the city and the Holiday Inn. The parking strategy for the Midtown Area envisions no new public parking, but rather increased on-site parking for each new development. Parking in the Uptown Area also envisions increased on-site parking as part of each new development and a rooftop parking deck associated with a full-block development.

- *To explore alternatives for introducing the streetscape enhancements and pedestrian amenities along Gulf Boulevard, and the creation of a cohesive visual identity for public realm conditions that convey a sense of arrival and destination into Indian Rocks Beach.*

The Special Area Plan envisions new streetscape and public realm enhancements within the three commercial districts. These enhancements would include street plantings, pedestrian features and other amenities. These enhancements would be located at intersections leading to the beach access streets and along the business frontages.

- *To develop a strategy and standards for infill development that is sensitive to the existing context and reflects physical conditions that are desired by city residents.*

The Plan envisions infill development and targeted renovations in each of the three commercial areas that will redefine them, while respecting certain existing conditions.

- *To assist City staff in modifying current land development regulations and other development standards in order to preserve desirable conditions.*

Recommendations for revising certain aspects of the City's zoning ordinance are made to ensure that new development occurs in a more predictable and desirable manner. These recommended regulatory revisions are also intended to assist in the implementation of the Special Area Plan.



The Narrows: Commercial frontage at intersection of Fifth Avenue & Gulf Boulevard



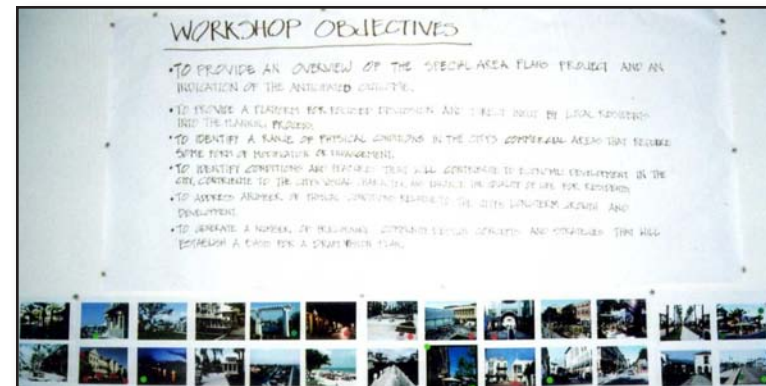
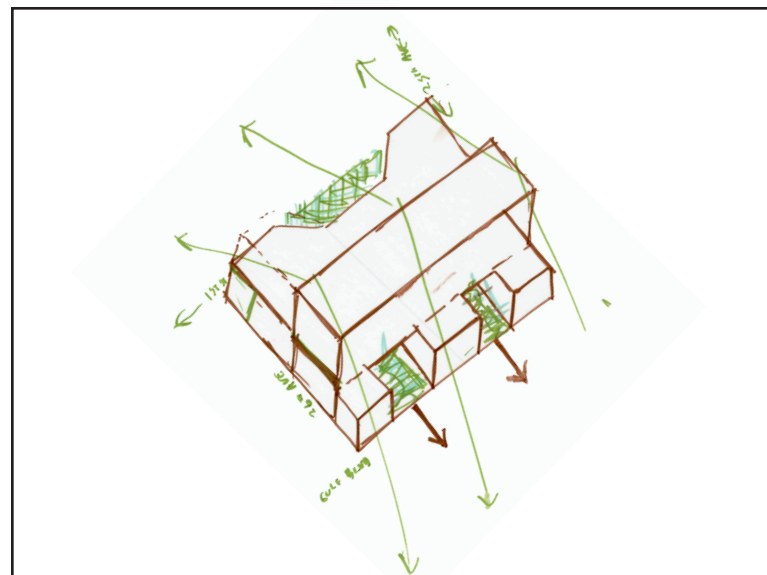
The Narrows: Commercial frontage along Gulf Boulevard



## 5.0 PARTICIPATORY PLANNING PROCESS

The Special Area Plans project began with a commitment to engage local citizens, business and property owners, and elected officials in defining a vision for the future of the commercial areas in Indian Rocks Beach. Once underway, the project team began by clarifying project objectives and the project scope with community input. Next, a number of interviews with local residents, business and property owners and City staff were conducted. These interviews were intended to identify the main issues related to the City's short-term and long-term growth and development.

After this, a public workshop, or charrette, was held in order to engage an even broader segment of the local citizenry in generating ideas for the future of the city. During the charrette, a number of concepts emerged for how to address certain conditions in each of the three commercial areas. A number of informative sketches and diagrams were developed throughout the full day work session. Many of the ideas generated at the charrette were integrated into the final proposed vision - directly reflecting the aspirations of local residents.



Indian Rocks Beach residents and property owners participating in a one-day charrette



**5.1 PLANNING WORKSHOP MAY 3, 2008**  
**LIST OF ATTENDEES**

**Baker**  
**Barbour**  
**Baugh, Ned**  
**Bonner, Heiko**  
**Bowers, Tom**  
**Coreno, Guy & Sherry**  
**Decarolis, Angela**  
**Downing, Jackie**  
**Fenwick, Susan**  
**Flowers, Hal**  
**Gardella, David**  
**Gerwig, Larry & Linda**  
**Goines, Alan**  
**Griffin, Bob & Becky**  
**Holmes, Dwight**  
**House, Don**  
**Hummer, Citdy**  
**Jackson, Martin**  
**Johnson, RB**  
**Johnston, Lilian**  
**Kerr, Chris & Lisa**  
**Kitenplon**  
**Loder, Matt**  
**Lover, Lorna**  
**Malley, Bev**  
**Maloney, Betty**  
**Maney, Punki**  
**McGlaughlin, Carol**  
**Merriman, Bill**  
**Meyer, Eric & Diane**  
**Montgomery, Ralph**  
**Munce, Bob**  
**Muneio, Patti**  
**Obarski, Nancy**  
**Palamara, Jim**  
**Piniero, Ed**  
**Plumlee, Todd**

**Price, Diane**  
**Priest, Trisha**  
**Ritchie, Mark**  
**Roberts, Bob**  
**Rogers, Serge**  
**Roth, M**  
**Sullivan, Sandy**  
**Tadros, Maher**  
**Taylor, Laura**  
**Todia, John**  
**Torres, Daniel**  
**Valery, Donna**  
**Vitale, Emily & Jerry**  
**Walker, Rick**  
**Watt, Dave**  
**Williams, William**  
**Wollin, Terry**

**Burgess, Islay**  
**Green, Trent**  
**Hurlbut, Benjamin**  
**Mayta, Raul**  
**Taylor, Danny**

## The Narrows



The Oval: Proposed conditions at Gulf Boulevard



## 6.0 THE NARROWS

The Narrows is home to just over thirty businesses. This collection includes a mix of general retail, food service, service retail, professional offices and hospitality uses. Most of these establishments are viable businesses with a market base that includes Indian Rocks Beach residents, daytime beachgoers, vacationers and the through traffic along Gulf Boulevard. Aside from the area's hospitality and restaurant uses, only a few of these businesses can be considered first-choice alternatives for local residents.

### 6.1 ISSUES, PROBLEMS & CONSTRAINTS

The Narrows has evolved as the City of Indian Rocks Beach's downtown area with a concentration of commercial uses on the east side of Gulf Boulevard. The area suffers from the lack of a "critical mass" of commercial activity, insufficient pedestrian-friendly conditions, a deficit in public parking and regulations that appear to be a disincentive for investment by the private sector.

The problems and issues in the Narrows that were expressed by community residents, business and property owners, and elected officials seemed to be focused on the area's image, its practical convenience and everyday use, and whether the area could evolve into more of a community destination.

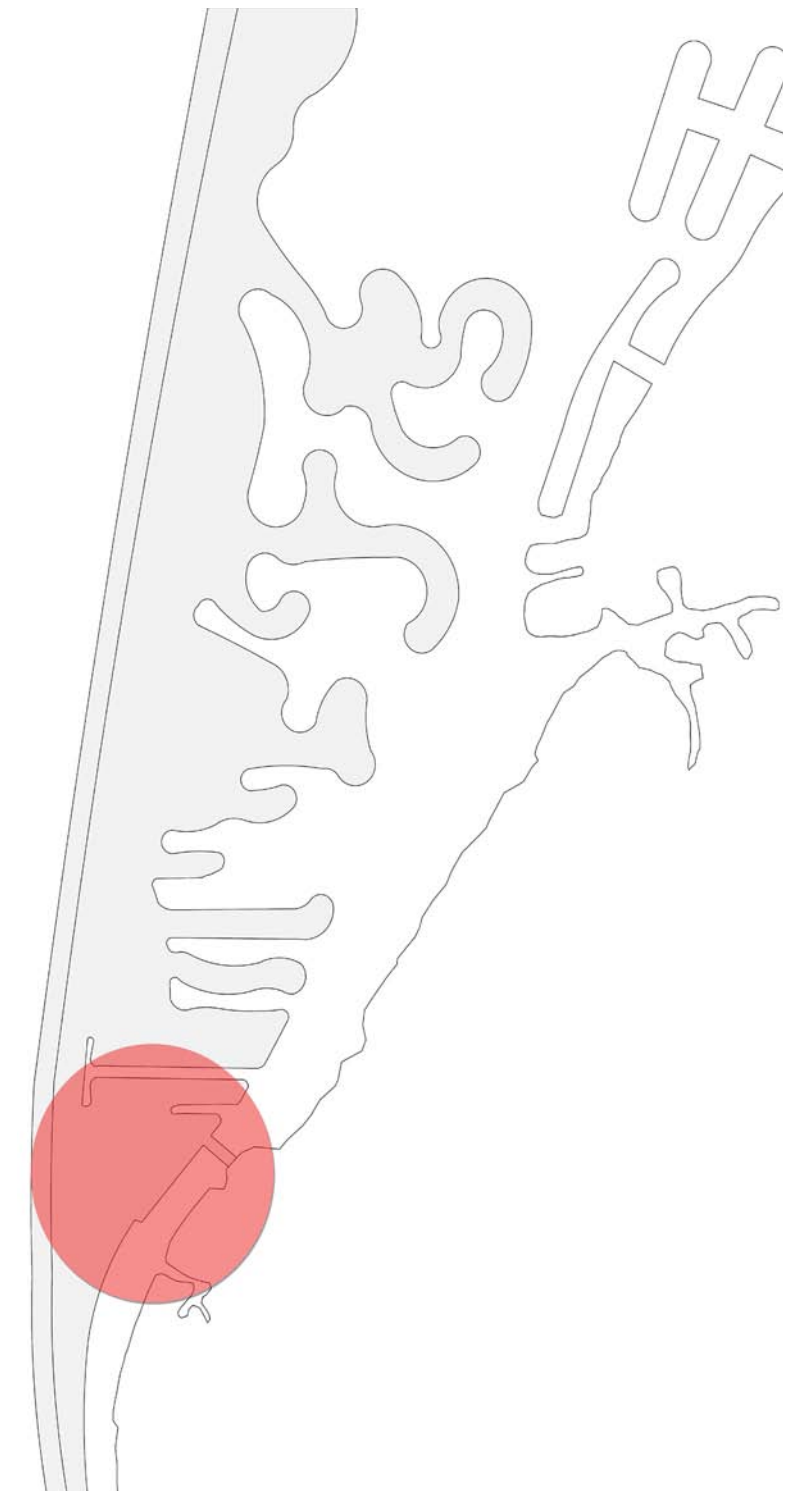
Business and property owners were the most vocal about zoning and development regulations that govern new structures in the Narrows. Even though the area has multiple opportunities for redevelopment, it appears that compliance with existing regulations pose an insurmountable hurdle. In other words, rather than foster desirable conditions, regulations have essentially stifled development.

## 6.2 ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE/ STREET GRID

The functional and spatial order of the Narrows is defined by the north-south traffic pattern along Gulf Boulevard, the east-west traffic pattern along 5th Avenue and the compact grid of the triangular commercial district. This order is reinforced by the orientation of most commercial structures in the area. This spatial order can be adapted to a more recognizable set of conditions.

## 6.3 COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY

Commercial activity in the Narrows is currently comprised of a limited range of small-scale businesses. These commercial uses include professional offices, hospitality, food service and general retail. Although the area clearly has a commercial focus, it does not equate to the critical mass of uses and activities necessary for a vibrant neighborhood destination. The Narrows does however, appear to have the potential to realize this condition. Evolving over time with a clearly defined framework, this area could be transformed into a lively commercial node. Along with a flexible plan as the framework, a diverse mixed-use program, public realm enhancements, and additional parking spaces, this area could be transformed into a more coherent neighborhood commercial center.





## Commercial/Business Usage Inventory

COMMERCIAL /BUSINESS USE	APPROXIMATE AREA
PROFESSIONAL OFFICES	≈ 23,225 sq. ft.
HOSPITALITY	≈ 350 rooms
FOOD SERVICE	≈ 40,700 sq. ft.
GENERAL RETAIL	≈ 16,400 sq. ft.
CIVIC	≈ 3,800 sq. ft.
SERVICE RETAIL	≈ 2,100 sq. ft.
RESIDENTIAL	≈ 14 d.u's.

## 6.4 IMAGE AND VISUAL CHARACTER

The image and visual character of the Narrows is one of the area's discernible shortcomings. The absence of any new structures and the fact that few structures have been recently renovated, casts the area as a dated commercial district. Several vacant storefronts along Gulf Boulevard and other public realm conditions also detract from the visual character of the area. The right of way enhancements currently being constructed along Gulf Boulevard will help improve the image of the area, but considerable attention is needed for the commercial frontages from 5th Avenue south to the City limits.

## 6.5 EXISTING PARKING INVENTORY

The lack of public parking in the area seems to be a factor in limiting the area's commercial potential. At present, the area has less than twenty-five designated public parking spaces along 1st and 2nd Avenues. In addition to these, there are twenty-five spaces available for general public use on the Holiday Inn property. All total, the area appears to have critical shortage of parking spaces during the weekend evening peak. This shortage in public parking spaces is also directly related to the area's inability to attract private sector investment.

## 6.6 BUILDING TYPES

Building types in the Narrows are largely one and two story structures that have been in use for twenty or more years. A majority of these structures are single-use buildings ranging in size from about 5,000 square feet to about 20,000 square feet. The physical conditions and character of structures in the Narrows also varies greatly. While all buildings in the area appear to be structurally sound, few buildings exhibit any type of architectural distinction. Aside from the historic museum cottage in Chick-A-Si Park, the area has no other historic resources.

## 6.7 INFRASTRUCTURE

The vertical or above ground infrastructure in the Narrows is relatively minimal. Other than the streetscape improvements (e.g. parallel parking spaces, street lighting, etc.) that were undertaken by the City along portions of 1st and 2nd Streets in the recent past, there has been no other modifications to the area's visible infrastructure. Basic utilities such as water, electricity and sewage all appear to be adequate for the existing commercial uses.

All of the area's infrastructure elements would have to be further assessed to begin implementation of the proposed plan. While existing utilities have additional capacity to accommodate some new development in the area, the prospects of future development would necessitate capacity study at some point. The biggest infrastructure hurdle for the Narrows is likely to center around storm-water retention. Given the compact size of the commercial area and the small size most commercial parcels in the Narrows, the City should pursue an alternative that meets the regulatory requirements and achieves the best fit for the circumstances.



The Narrows: View looking north along Gulf Boulevard



The Narrows: View at southern end of commercial area





Intersection: Gulf Boulevard and 5th Avenue



Gulf Boulevard



Gulf Boulevard South Condition



The Narrows: Streetscape buildings and open space conditions



Entrance conditions along 5th Avenue



Chick-A-Si Park



South Point Entry Conditions



## 6.8 REGULATIONS

The existing regulations for the Narrows are codified in the City's Code of Ordinances or the zoning ordinance. This ordinance was amended in 2005 with the addition of a set of Architectural Design Guidelines that were intended "... to enhance new development and substantial renovation projects; and to generate a harmonious architectural character that reflects the City's unique resident and tourist friendly environment". These guidelines equate to additional regulatory compliance for numerous physical conditions associated with new buildings and their sites. Regulations pertaining to development in the Narrows are primarily located in sections 110 of the zoning ordinance. Section 110-131 establishes a "Business District Triangle Overlay" for the Narrows, with a general "Business" land-use designation. Specific areas that are regulated under this designation are as follows:

### ZONING/DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

Overlay District /Land-Use Designation	Regulations & Development Standards
Business District Triangle (Business)	Code of Ordinances Section 110: (Legal) Non-conforming structures; 0 – 18 UPA; 0.55 max FAR; 0.70 max ISR; 25' front yard and street frontage setback; 15' side and 20' rear yard setbacks; 5,800 sq. ft. min. lot size; 25' height above pilings; 2 habitable floors over parking; 1 parking space per 250 sq. ft.; 200 sq. ft. min. unit size; restricted and prohibited uses (see section 110-135 for list of uses)*; Signage; Lot consolidation; On-site stormwater retention.

\* Note: The Schedule of Use Controls and Permitted Uses indicates that retail, personal services, business and financial service uses, offices, service stations and restaurants are permitted within the "Business" land-use designation. Single and multi-family housing are permitted as special exceptions.

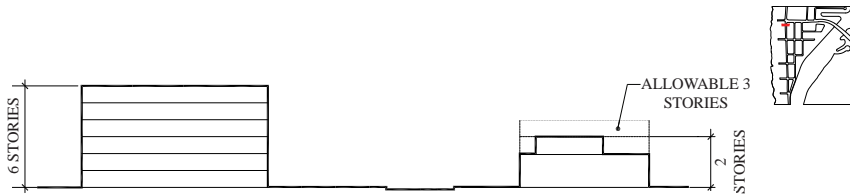
### ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

Business District Triangle	Regulations & Development Standards
	Code of Ordinances Architectural Design Guidelines section 110-800: Prohibited features; Articulation of building mass; Building entrance and parking; Building walls; Building roof; Windows and doors; Additional design elements.

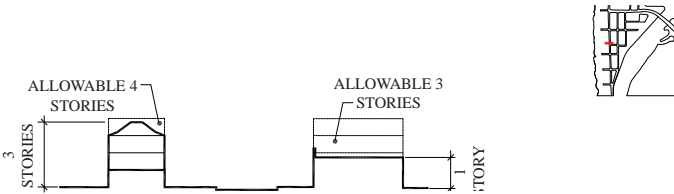
### FEMA FEDERAL FLOOD REGULATIONS

Current FEMA regulations would affect all new development in the Narrows. Specific regulations pertaining to flood proofing non-residential construction are found in Technical Bulletin 3-93. The narrows falls within the A-10 and A-11 flood designation categories. Under these designations, it is projected that a 100-year flood may reach 10 or 11 feet. With the average grade in the Narrows at 5 or 6 feet, potential flood levels could reach 5 or 6 feet – the base flood elevation for the area. This would require all new commercial construction be flood-proofed above the base flood elevation.

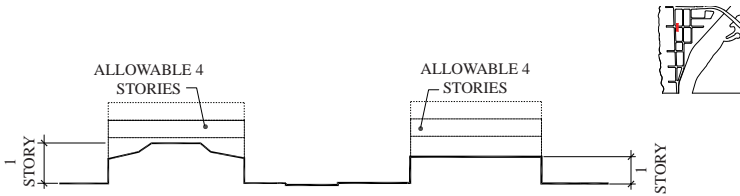
More specifically, the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) regulations section 60.3(c)(3) states: "... all new construction and substantial improvements



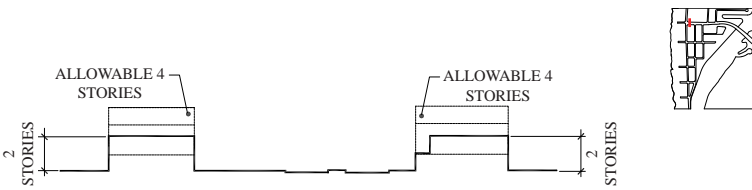
STREET PROFILE AT GULF BOULEVARD



STREET PROFILE AT GULF BOULEVARD



STREET PROFILE AT 4TH AVENUE



STREET PROFILE AT 5TH AVENUE



to non-residential structures within zones A1–A30 ... have the lowest floor elevate to or above the base flood level, or ... be designed so that below the base flood level the structure is watertight with walls substantially impermeable to the passage of water ... “.

## 6.9 EFFECT OF CURRENT REGULATIONS

Currently, all new construction in the Narrows is affected by multiple layers of regulations. With a single “Business” land-use category that is consistent with the City’s Comprehensive Plan, the Narrows also has an Overlay Zoning District designation. This designation allows for a range of permitted uses in the Narrows and includes single/multi-family residential, professional, medical offices, retail and personal services, financial services, and restaurants. Other uses such as: drive-thru restaurants, service stations, churches, schools, adult entertainment, palmists and pawn shops are prohibited in the Narrows.

The current list of permitted uses seems broad enough to accommodate a range of potential commercial and residential buildings that could be added to the Narrows in the future. With the primary market consisting primarily of local residents and seasonal visitors, the existing range of permitted uses would likely meet the demands of this market well into the future – any new uses should be considered as a special exception or an accessory use.

## 6.10 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

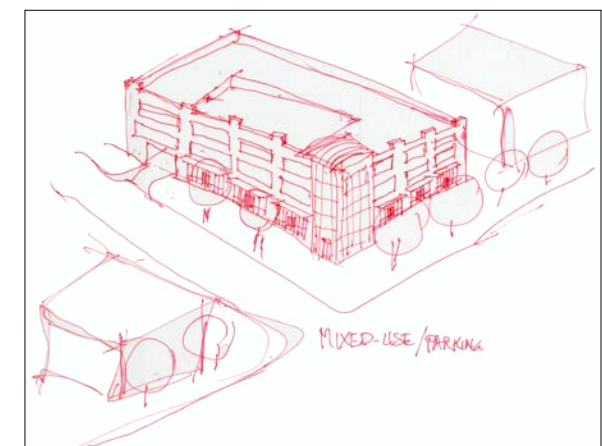
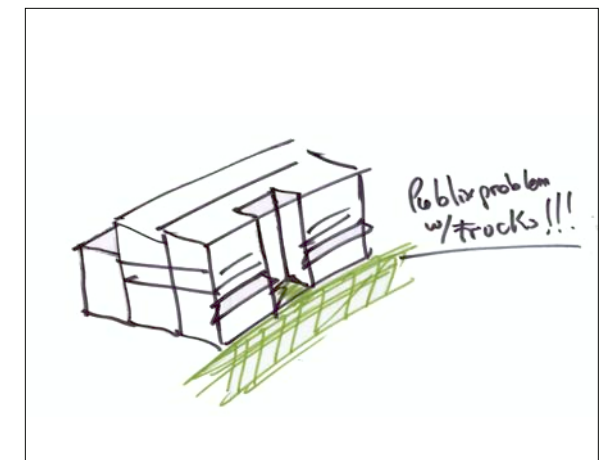
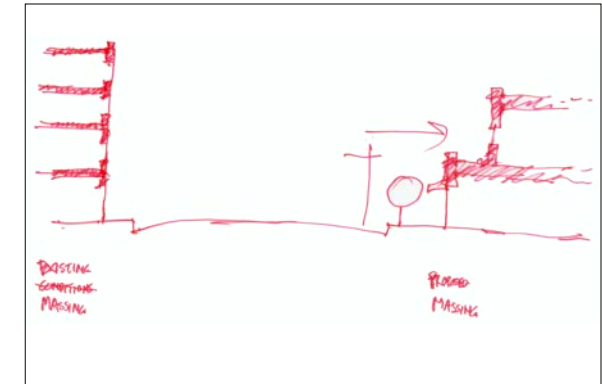
With a single land-use designation of “Business”, the Narrows contains the majority of the City’s commercial establishments including a limited amount of general and service retail, professional services, hospitality and restaurants, and food service uses. All together, the Narrows currently has less than 100,000 square feet of commercial space.

One of the primary challenges faced by the area has been its shortcomings as a neighborhood commercial center. While several restaurants in the area function as local destinations and enjoy brisk patronage, the area as a whole does not serve the Indian Rocks Beach community well. The general perception of the area is that it lacks an overall cohesiveness and synergy between its uses.

After an analysis of some of the parcels in the area that are currently available for sale or can be redeveloped, initial findings suggest several of these parcels are constrained in many ways. A combination of minimum lot size requirements, setbacks, maximum Floor Area Ratio (FAR), and on-site parking and stormwater retention pose major challenges to any new development. In fact, some of these issues were also cited by business and property owners as hindrances to their own redevelopment plans.

While some of these may appear to be formidable obstacles to the area’s redevelopment potential, a strategy that employs public/private partnerships, “selective infill”, regulatory revisions, and a flexible vision and framework for strategic intervention should create conditions that will allow the area to realize its potential as a vibrant, small-scale, mixed-use commercial district.

With its land-use designation, existing inventory of commercial and business uses and the greater regulatory flexibility under the Overlay District zoning designation, the Narrows has the potential to be evolved as a small-scale coastal “village center” – an area with a redefined image, with a diverse mixture of uses and activities, an enhanced public realm and a high level of pedestrian accessibility, achieves a distinct “sense of place” and functions as an economic engine for this part of the City.

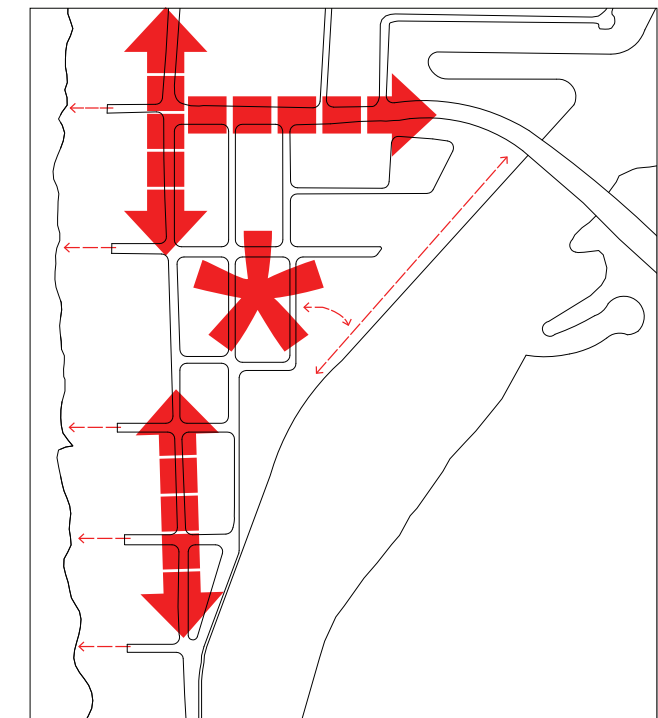


Conceptual Sketches from Charrette

## 6.11 LONG-TERM CONCEPTUAL VISION

The long-term conceptual vision for the Narrows is based on the gradual transformation of the area into a small-scale, compact, walkable and vibrant commercial district. This idea was initially posed by residents at the community design workshop. Local citizens expressed an interest in seeing the area become a well-defined commercial destination. From this idea, the “village center” concept emerged. This “village center” would meet the everyday and occasional demands of local residents and function as the primary location for convenience shopping and entertainment, as well as a place for public gatherings and special events.

This “village center” concept would be realized largely through strategic investment by the public sector and targeted investment by the private sector. The combination of a well defined plan as a redevelopment framework, improved market conditions and a regulatory climate that provides enough of an incentive, would contribute to conditions that would help renew local interest in the area and create a favorable climate for private-sector investment.



Conceptual Vision: Village Center



Aerial View of the Narrows looking southwest



## 6.12 “VILLAGE CENTER” PLAN

The plan for the Narrows is based on a framework that will guide its evolution as a diverse, mixed-use “village center”. This “village center” would function as a daily destination for local residents and create a new image for the area. The “village center” model seems particularly appropriate for the Narrows given its size and configurations, and would incorporate a number of proven urban/community design strategies:

- Strategic public sector investments intended to leverage private-sector investment
- Targeted mixed-use, infill development
- Enhanced open space, public realm and infrastructure conditions
- Enhanced visual image and identity through branding with distinctive architectural character for buildings
- Conditions that create a sense of place

These approaches have been considered within a framework for growth that is both practical and flexible. Specific components of the plan include the following:

## 6.13 MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM/STREET EDGE COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY

The development program for the Narrows envisions the gradual expansion of the existing commercial base over a twenty year period. In order to realize the proposed “village center” conditions, the area will have to reach a “critical mass” of new structures, uses and activities. The most appropriate type of development to achieve these conditions would be modest-scale multi-use buildings, ranging in size from 20,000 square feet to 30,000 square feet – with the potential for a few structures to exceed 40,000 square feet. These structures could be configured with ground-floor commercial activity (e.g. retail shops, food service establishments, offices, services, etc.) and

either commercial, residential or hospitality uses on the upper floors. By combining two or more uses in a single building promotes interaction between the different uses, puts more people in closer proximity to businesses and helps to energize the adjacent sidewalks and public realm for longer periods of the day.

Although local market conditions and other development decisions will determine the range of individual commercial uses in lower levels of any future multi-use buildings, this strategy of mixing compatible uses has proven to be viable in other parts of the region and the state. Along with other local contextual conditions, the presence of these multi-use structures would also contribute to the Narrows as a true commercial destination.

The ground-floor commercial program for the Narrows could reach upwards of 100,000 square feet over a twenty-year timeframe. This figure could be expanded by an additional 40,000 square feet of ground floor commercial uses, depending on the development agenda of the Holiday Inn. The plan for the Narrows envisions a range of ground-floor uses that will appeal directly to the local resident population and visitors. These uses would include the following commercial categories:

- Convenience retail
- Service retail
- Professional offices
- Hospitality
- Food service/entertainment

## 6.14 BUILDING TYPES AND ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

In order to accommodate the envisioned development program in the Narrows, the Plan identifies a number of new multi-use building types, as well as a number of renovation opportunities for certain existing buildings. The long-term vision for the Narrows envisions up to twenty-



ILLUSTRATIVE MASTER PLAN



five new multi-use structures and a multi-use parking structure in the Narrows over a twenty year timeframe. These new structures could potentially add a total of 450,000 square feet of new commercial and residential space to the area during this time.

With regulatory relief, these multi-use buildings could be configured as three and four-story structures with distinctive features that convey a more discernible “coastal” or “key west” style of architecture. More specifically, these structures would feature such elements as stepped massing, extensive shopfront windows and entrances at the ground floor, upper floor balconies, awnings and canopies, expansive roof forms and active sidewalk zones, among others. All together, these features are intended to create a unique image and identity for the area – one that will contribute to its ongoing revitalization and the visual branding for the entire City.

## 6.15 “THE OVAL”

“The Oval” is envisioned as a new “convertible” open space linking Gulf Boulevard with an expanded Chick-A-Si Park. This space would create a physical and visual linkage into the entire “Village Center” area. This space is envisioned as an active pedestrian zone that would occupy the .7-acre vacant lot that currently exists at this location. This space would have a small number of public parking spaces at its periphery and a central lawn anchored by a small amphitheater. This space is further defined by flanking multi-use buildings with active ground floor commercial uses. A number of small plazas could exist at the corners of this space with room for outdoor cafes or “spillover” sidewalk commercial activity. The “convertible” nature of this open space would allow it to be modified to accommodate public gatherings and other special events. The flexibility afforded by this space would ensure that the “village center” remains active and vibrant on a regular basis.

The existing parcel identified for this future open space amenity is a key component of the “village center” plan. Currently, this parcel is privately owned and is likely to be used as a surface parking lot in the interim. While it is expected to remain in private ownership for the foreseeable future, the City should approach the property owner to seek an agreement to keep it as an open space or negotiate an open space easement for this parcel.

## 6.16 CHICK-A-SI PARK

The existing Chick-A-Si Park is a 1.1-acre open space bordered by 1st Street, 4th Avenue and 2nd Street. A small wood-frame cottage is situated at the northwest corner of the park and serves as the City’s historical museum. The park has a small bus stop at its northwest corner. The remainder of the park has a number of mature oak trees. At the northern and eastern edge of the park is a small number of angled parking spaces.

In order to fully realize the “village center” concept and create a sense of place in The Narrows, the plan envisions the expansion of the existing park to just over 2-acres in area. This expansion would be realized through the acquisition of two small duplex apartments and a one-story commercial building at the southern end of the park block. This displaced commercial use could be accommodated in a new structure on an adjacent block.

The expanded Chick-A-Si Park is envisioned as the anchor for the “village center”. It would provide residents and visitors with a large open space amenity that could be used for any number of public events and would function as the “living room” of the community. The park would also incorporate a new central stormwater pond that doubles as a “community lake”. This pond is intended to meet most of the stormwater retention needs for the commercial development in the Narrows. With its enhanced plantings and fountain, the pond would also serve as a visual amenity to the area.







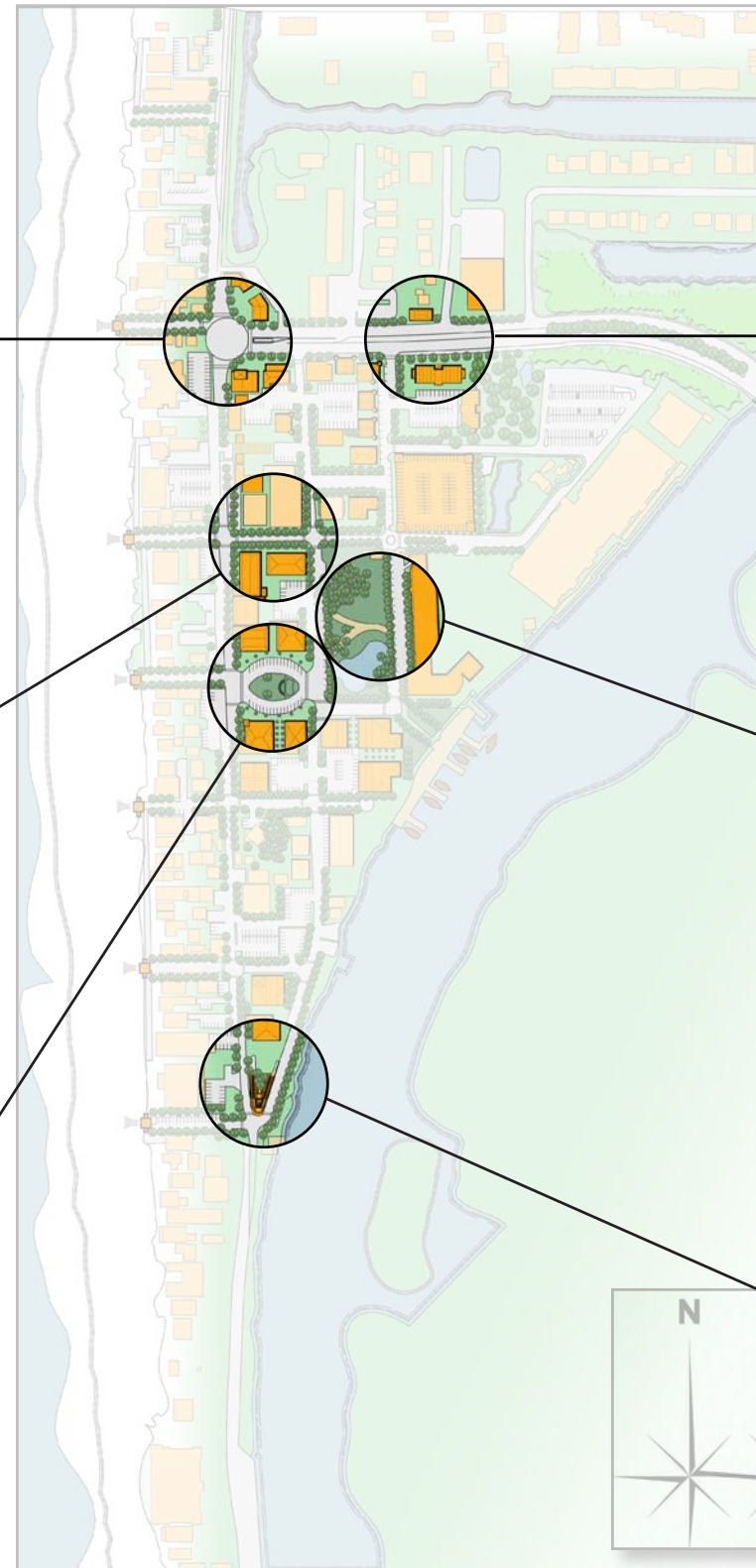
View of intersection at Gulf Boulevard & 5th Ave.



View of 4th Ave. at Gulf Boulevard



View of the Oval at Gulf Boulevard



The Narrows: Streetscape buildings and open space conditions.



View of Fifth Ave.



View of Chick-A-Si Park



View of southern entrance tower landmark



## 6.17 OTHER PUBLIC REALM ENHANCEMENTS

Consistent with the “village center” vision, the plan identifies several other public realm enhancements for the Narrows. These enhancements are intended to create conditions that will foster greater pedestrian activity and make the village center a destination.

The Plan proposes a public realm enhancement program that includes sidewalks, crosswalks, decorative paving, water features, information kiosks, and street plantings. Altogether, these features will help to transform public realm conditions in the Narrows and provide a greater level of pedestrian convenience in this commercial area.

## 6.18 PARKING STRATEGY

All parking in the Narrows for commercial uses is handled through small surface lots. The general parking inventory, or the limited number of spaces, has always appeared to be a problem for existing businesses. This condition also appears to be a factor in attracting new development to the area. The addition of several on-street, public parking spaces along 1st and 2nd Streets in the recent past has helped accommodate daytime parking demand, but has done little to alleviate the need to accommodate the evening crowds frequenting the area restaurants.

One of the primary reasons for the shortage of parking in the area is the inability of certain businesses to provide adequate on-site parking due to the relatively small parcel sizes. Another circumstance that can be attributed to the shortage of parking is the absence of publicly-owned land that could be used for this purpose.

Given these conditions, the Plan identifies an alternative approach to addressing parking within the Narrows. Rather than require all new commercial or mixed-use structures to provide on-site parking as current zoning

requires, the City should seek to develop a “joint use”, central parking structure. This proposed structure would provide a majority of the parking needed for different commercial structures in the Narrows and would satisfy the general parking demand for the area well into the future. This parking structure could be developed in conjunction with the Holiday Inn and located on an existing surface lot at 1st Street and 4th Avenue. Although it would be considered a small-scale parking facility at approximately three-hundred ten (310) spaces, this garage could incorporate up to three levels while maintaining the height of a two-story building. In addition to this, the ground floor of this facility could incorporate over 10,000 square feet of leasable space.

## 6.19 5TH AVENUE ENTRY

The sequence of conditions descending from the Walsingham Bridge and up to the intersection of 5th Avenue and Gulf Boulevard defines one of the main entry or gateway points into Indian Rocks Beach. At present, the roadway conditions do not suggest arrival at the beach. This intersection is further defined by a variety of conditions and building types. The Special Area Plan for the Narrows acknowledges the importance of this entry sequence and arrival condition by proposing a number of new structures and public realm features along 5th Avenue leading up to Gulf Boulevard. From the Bridge heading west, the Plan envisions a re-located fire station at the site of the existing GTE property. This structure could also serve other uses by including space for a new Municipal Services Center. In addition to this, new planted medians, street trees, crosswalks, and decorative parking combine to create new entrance conditions.





## 6.20 KEEGAN CLAIR WATERFRONT PARK AND MARINA

Keegan Clair Park is currently a small triangular waterfront parcel just over .2 of an acre adjacent to the Solid Waste facility. The Plan envisions the park being expanded to include the dead-end right of way portions of both 2nd Street and Miami Avenue. This would make the park to just under .5 of an acre in area. Along with the expanded park, the Plan envisions a new 350 feet long municipal marina and boardwalk along the Intracoastal. As an alternative means of access to the “Village Center”, this marina would provide up to twenty slips for local residents and visitors from other beach communities. The boardwalk feature would allow for pedestrian activity along the Intracoastal and could be connected to the boardwalk behind the Holiday Inn to the north and potentially, an extended boardwalk south of 3rd Avenue.

## 6.21 SOUTHERN ENTRY CONDITIONS

The southern entry to the “Village Center” is also the southern entry into the City. With the southern end of the City configured as a fork off of Gulf Boulevard, only one commercial building announces the arrival into the Village Center area. As such, the Plan envisions new streetscape enhancements, a renovated restaurant building and a new landmark tower feature at this location - creating a “gateway” north into the City and the Village Center. The tower is proposed as a landmark feature and would announce the arrival into the City. In addition to this, the structure could also be an observation tower and water station. Regardless of its functions, this tower is further intended as an element that “brands” the “village center” and the city.



Keegan Clair Waterfront Park and Marina



Southern Entry Conditions

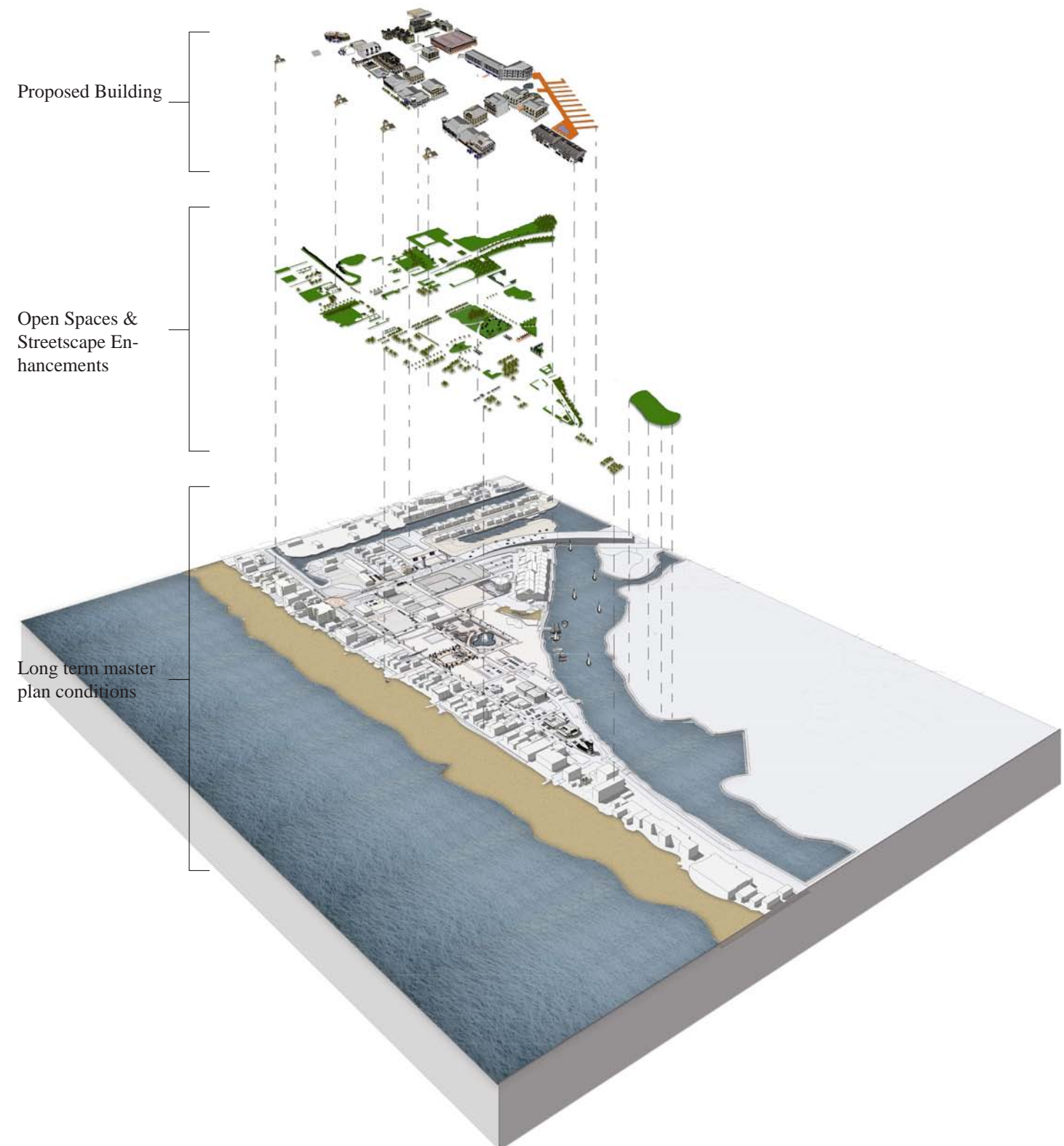




View of 2nd Street looking south

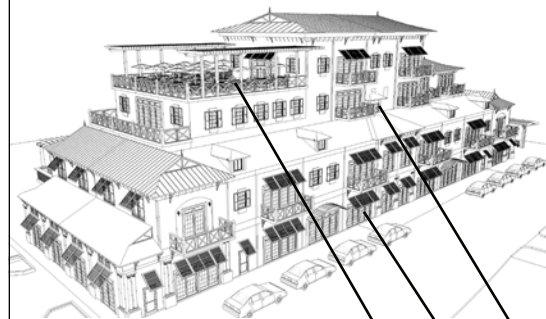


View of Village Center with event conditions



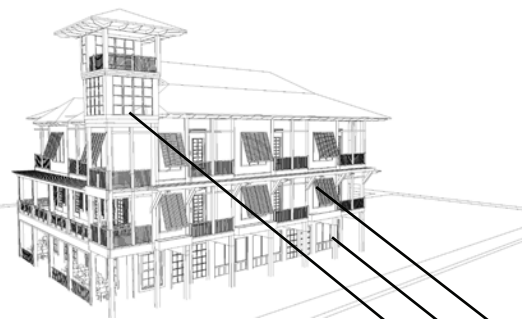


## PROPOSED BUILDING TYPES



- ROOF-TOP RESTAURANT
- GROUND FLOOR COMMERCIAL
- UPPER FLOOR BALCONIES

MIXED-USE COMMERCIAL WITH ROOF-TOP RESTAURANT



- LANDMARK CORNER ELEMENT
- GROUND FLOOR COMMERCIAL
- UPPER FLOOR BALCONIES

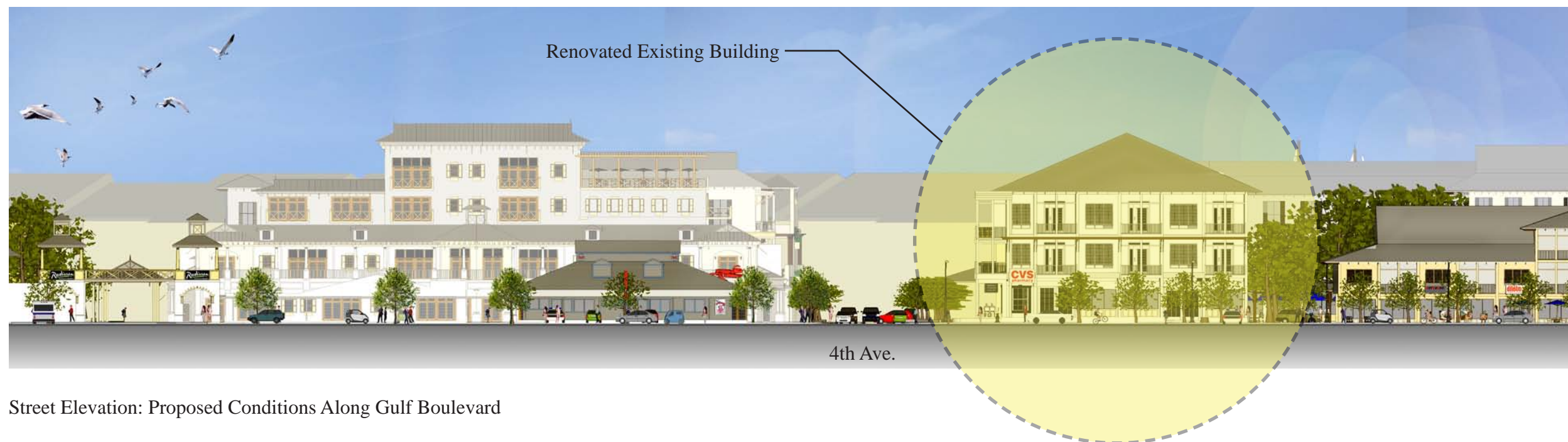
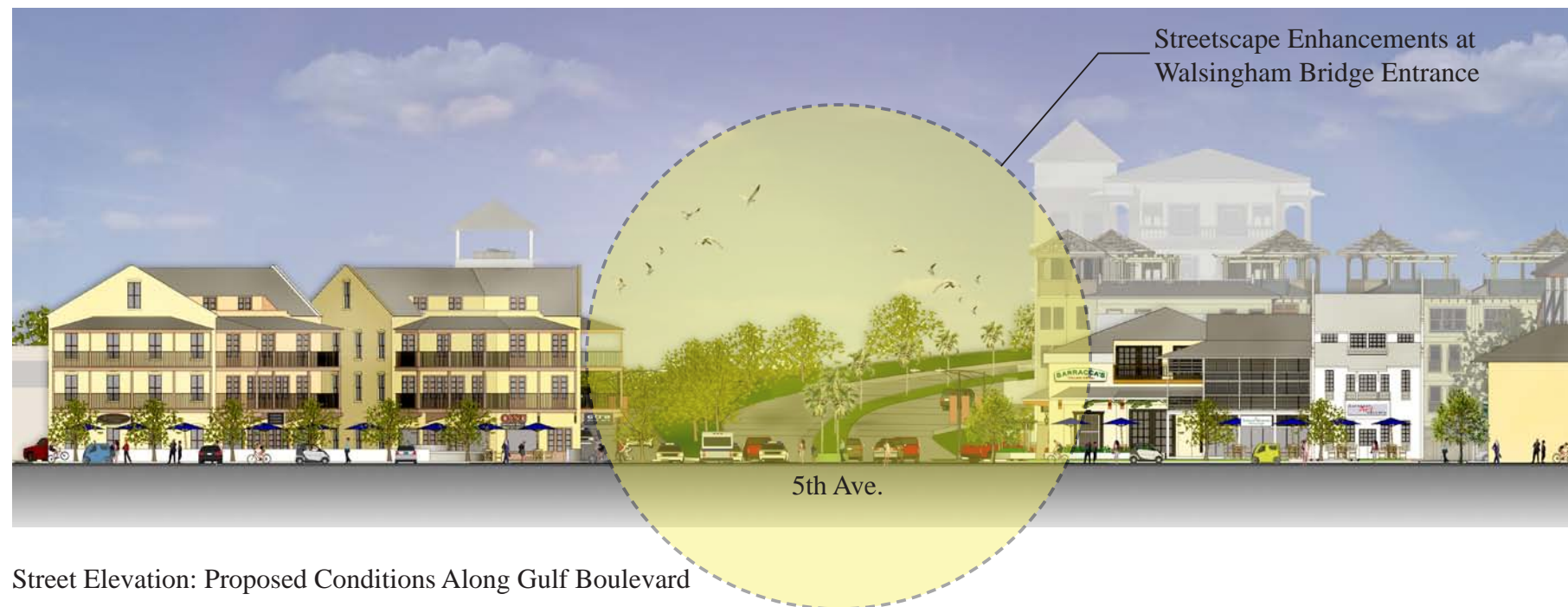
MIXED-USE RESIDENTIAL



- TUCK UNDER PARKING
- UPPER FLOOR BALCONIES
- DISTINCTIVE ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

MULTI-UNIT TOWNHOUSE







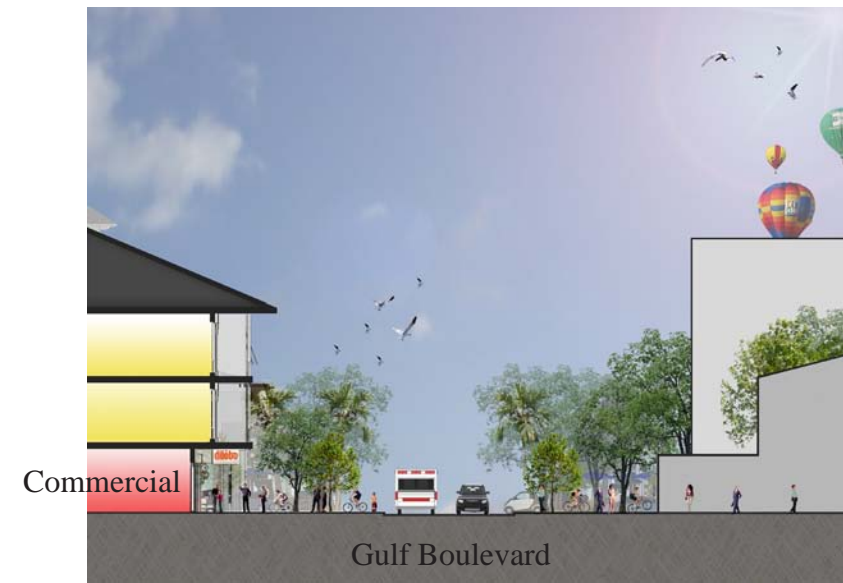


Street Elevation: Proposed Conditions Along Gulf Boulevard



Section at Chick-A-Si Park and the Oval looking south





Street Section looking South along Gulf Boulevard



North South Section at the Oval



Section Location



Section Location





View of the Oval at Gulf Boulevard



## Midtown Commercial Area



## 7.0 MIDTOWN COMMERCIAL AREA

### 7.1 ISSUES, PROBLEMS & CONSTRAINTS

The Midtown Commercial Area is comprised of approximately seventeen small commercial structures clustered along the east side of Gulf Boulevard, from 11th Avenue to 16th Avenue. These structures include one to two story buildings that house a variety of uses, including professional offices, general/convenience retail and food service establishments. Most of the structures in the Midtown Commercial Area were built over thirty years ago, while a few were erected since then. All but a few of these structures are situated on “block-end” parcels – shallow lots at the Gulf Boulevard block face and directly adjacent to the single-family neighborhoods to the east. The parcels for most of these structures are somewhat irregular in shape, due to the angle of Gulf Boulevard relative to the order of abutting blocks.

The primary issues addressed in the plan for this area are: its image and utility as a neighborhood commercial node, the introduction of public realm enhancements that would foster greater pedestrian activity, and opportunities for introducing new multi-use structures with businesses that cater to local residents.

### 7.2 IMAGE AND VISUAL CHARACTER

The visual image of the Midtown Commercial Area can be described as a set of stable conditions, with a diverse architectural character. Several buildings in this area have some architectural distinction and contribute to its small-scale and coastal village character, while other structures have a non-descript character.

The public realm conditions in the Midtown Commercial Area also appear lacking in visual character. Aside from the sidewalks along Gulf Boulevard and a few misplaced crosswalks, the area has no other amenities

that enhance the pedestrian experience, nor contribute to a sense of place. Residents have commented that the area could benefit from new investment that introduces “context sensitive” structures and other features that promote a more cohesive, or updated visual expression.

Although there are numerous commercial buildings concentrated along the six block frontages, the area lacks a cohesive commercial character. The range of architectural styles and physical conditions of individual buildings and the distances between some structures gives the area a fragmented appearance.

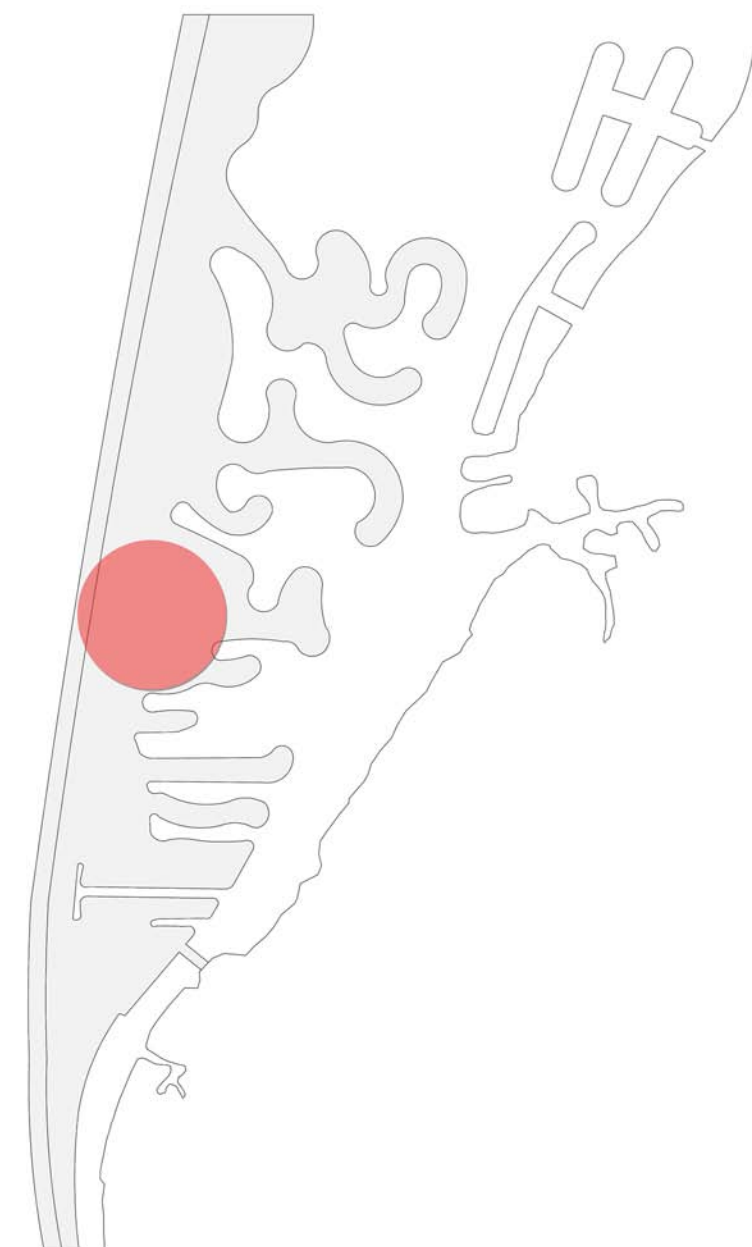
### 7.3 PARKING

Consistent with City zoning, parking is handled on a site by site basis – with all commercial uses providing a prescribed amount of on-site parking. Due to site area limitations, most commercial properties in the area have a limited number of parking spaces – some building uses appear to function with a parking deficit.

Other than along the beach access streets, there is no public parking in the Midtown Commercial Area. Although the area could benefit from additional parking spaces, at present there is no land available for this purpose. Any new construction or substantial renovations should continue to provide a minimum number of on-site parking spaces. However, the inability to provide parking will surely limit the potential for commercial development. In order to promote a safer pedestrian environment along Gulf Boulevard, any new surface parking areas should be located at the rear of the building.

### 7.4 BUILDING TYPES/CONDITIONS

The inventory of commercial structures includes one and two-story, single and multi-tenant buildings configured as basic rectangular volumes. Two of these structures are arranged in a “strip mall”-like or multi-tenant configuration. These structures range in size from 5000 to 15,000



Midtown Commerical Area



square feet with direct ground-floor access to all uses and tenant spaces. About half of these structures are sited with the “short side” or building fronting the street. The other half is sited with the “long side” parallel with the street frontage. Both these conditions allow for different types of building facade improvements envisioned in the future.

Although the area has a few distinctive commercial structures, it would benefit from replacing several older structures overtime with new modest-scale, multi-use buildings. Other structures in the area should be targeted for such enhancements as building additions and façade renovations.

## 7.5 REGULATIONS

The Midtown Commercial Area is currently zoned with two designations. The block frontage parcels at 11th and 18th Avenues have a “Professional Office” designation. Land uses permitted under this designation include Residential and General Office – which allows for up to 15 dwelling units per acre, a maximum Floor Area Ratio of .5, and a maximum Impervious Surface Ratio of .7.

The other block frontages between these have a “Business” designation. Land uses permitted under this designation includes only Commercial General - which allows up to 18 dwelling units per acre, a maximum Floor Area Ratio of .55 and a maximum Impervious Surface Area of .70.

The site development criteria for these designations are as follows: 25 ft. front setback; 20 ft. side yard setbacks, 2 habitable floors (over pilings); and a maximum building height of 35 ft.

The effect of these regulations in the Midtown Commercial Area appears to be ongoing. Given the small size of the commercial parcels in this area, some of the site development standards seem to have discouraged any new development, or substantial renovations. While the allowable building height is appropriate for the area, adherence to other restrictions such as the side yard set-

backs, onsite parking and stormwater retention, would make most new development economically infeasible. As an incentive to attract private-sector investment in this area, a general recommendation would be to relax or waive some of these restrictions. Removing the burden of compliance with these requirements could encourage the development of new commercial buildings, as well the renovation of existing structures in the area.

## 7.6 PEDESTRIAN ACCESS AND PUBLIC REALM

The public realm in the Midtown Commercial Area is defined by the sidewalk network along Gulf Boulevard. Although open space facilities are a block to the east, there are no defined pedestrian connections with the commercial area. A majority of the activities in the Midtown Commercial Area are pedestrian-oriented and relate directly to the ground floor uses in commercial buildings. With most of the commercial structures and uses situated at the eastern end of the blocks along Gulf Boulevard, the Midtown Commercial Area enjoys good pedestrian access for neighborhood residents to the east and beachfront dwellers across Gulf Boulevard. Although the area has good proximity and direct access to the beach, pedestrian and public realm conditions are lacking. At present, there are no public spaces that interact with the commercial uses in the area, nor are there any other amenity features present.

As the Midtown Commercial Area evolves, it would benefit from the introduction of some modest enhancements to the public realm. New features such as small public spaces, plazas, continuous shopfronts, crosswalks at intersections, and streetscape enhancements would promote a higher level of pedestrian activity throughout the area.



Midtown Commerical Area



## 7.7 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

The current commercial mix in the Midtown Commercial Area is comprised of a range of business activities that caters to a small segment of the city's residents. It is likely that these uses will continue to define the commercial area for some time to come. Together, these uses generate a modest level of vitality that is confined to the six-block commercial frontages. This activity level can be largely attributed to regular patronage by local residents and passersby, and a modest degree of synergy.

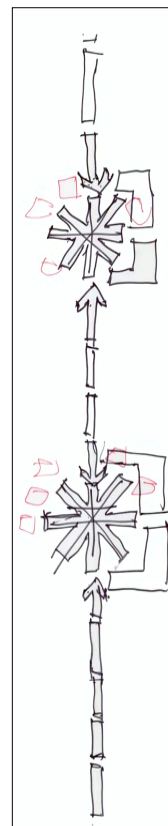
Even though the economic development potential is limited to a small area, redevelopment of some parcels and the renovation of other structures, offers an opportunity for commercial activity to intensify slightly and for the area to become more diverse and cohesive. This expanded economic development potential for the Midtown Commercial Area can best be realized through the addition of a number of small-scale commercial mixed-use buildings and other selective building improvements. These new and renovated structures should introduce commercial uses that are complementary to those that already exist, and respond directly to the demands of the local market. These uses would likely include convenience and service retail, professional offices and food service establishments.

## 7.8 LONG TERM CONCEPTUAL VISION

The long-term vision for the Midtown Commercial area is based on a "linear neighborhood activity center" model. The six-block frontages along Gulf Boulevard are envisioned as becoming even more of a local destination in the future. Although the area has seen little private-sector investment over the last twenty years, the economic development potential of the area is promising. With certain regulatory revisions, other incentives and public realm enhancements initiated by the City, the area would be well-suited to attract private-sector investment.

The "linear neighborhood commercial center" conditions envisioned respond directly to the existing structure of the area – but even more so, the need to make the area more desirable and easily accessible to local residents. The combination of singular-use and multi-uses structures with active ground floor uses such as service retail, general retail and food service establishments will foster greater pedestrian activity along each block front in the area -- and make it a walkable commercial area.

These conditions would also contribute to the area's "place-like" qualities and its overall image. The plan for this area defines a framework that ensures growth will evolve in a coordinated and predictable manner. The plan also ensures that this business district will become even more responsive to local market demands for a number of basic goods and services.



Conceptual Sketch: Linear Neighborhood Activity Center

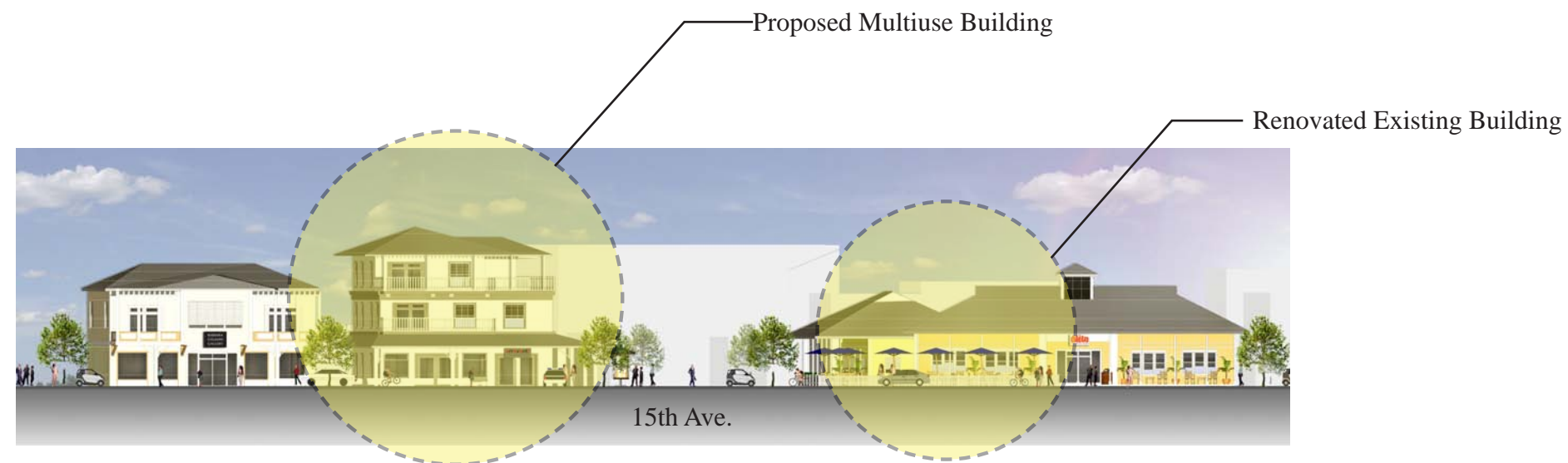


Illustrative Master Plan



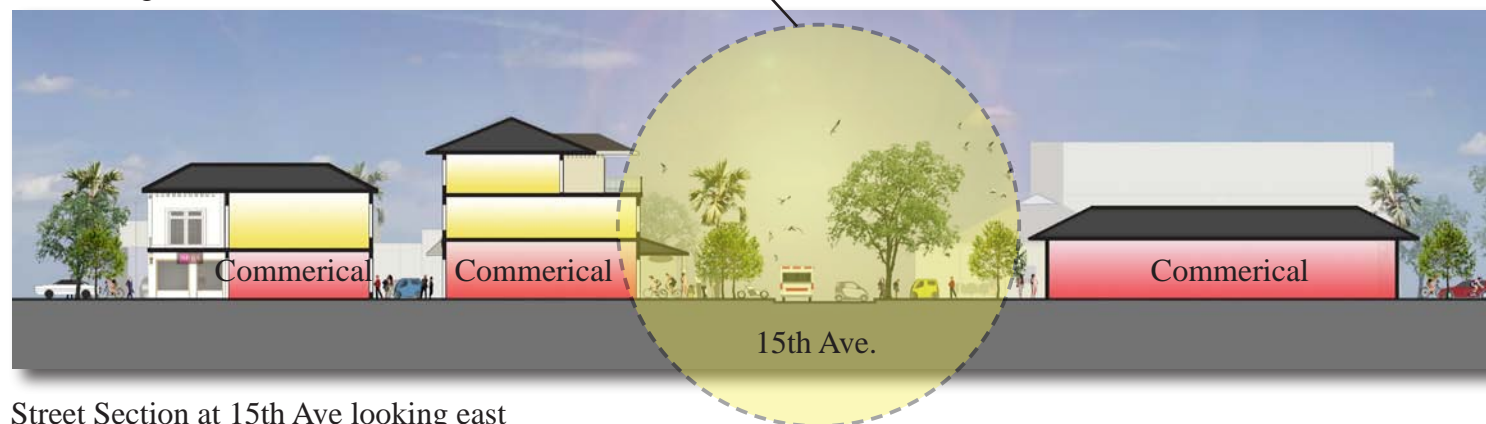


Street Elevation: Proposed Conditions



Street Elevation: Proposed Conditions

Proposed Streetscape Enhancements-  
From Neighborhood to Commercial Area to Beach



Street Section at 15th Ave looking east



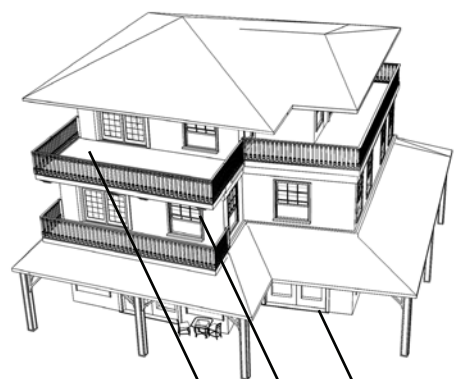
View at 15th Ave. looking south along Gulf Boulevard





View looking North along Gulf Boulevard





- UPPER FLOOR SETBACKS
- DISTINCTIVE ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES
- GROUND FLOOR COMMERCIAL & OVERHEAD PEDESTRIAN PROTECTION

PROPOSED MULTI-USE BUILDING



- OUTDOOR SIDEWALK CAFE
- DISTINCTIVE ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

RENOVATED EXISTING BUILDING





View looking South along Gulf Boulevard



## Uptown Commercial Area





## 8.0 UPTOWN COMMERCIAL AREA

### 8.1 ISSUES, PROBLEMS & CONSTRAINTS

The Uptown Commercial Area currently suffers from a lack of definition and a “critical mass” of business activity. As a loose collection of commercial uses distributed along six block frontages, this area currently falls short of functioning as a cohesive neighborhood commercial district. With less than ten viable commercial establishments spread out in this manner, the area’s commercial activity appears more fragmented – with relatively little synergy between uses. However, unlike the Midtown Commercial Area, the Uptown Commercial Area has a number of vacant parcels that could lend themselves to new development opportunities. New development on these parcels could also help better define this area and make it more appealing to local residents.

### 8.2 IMAGE AND VISUAL CHARACTER

Along with the structure of the area, the visual character and image of the Uptown Commercial Area is less well defined as a business district. Although the area has a number of small businesses, it lacks a “signature expression” or “anchor” use that identifies the area, or creates conditions that contribute to a visually attractive commercial setting.

### 8.3 PARKING

Like the other commercial areas of Indian Rocks Beach, parking in the Uptown Commercial Area is handled on an individual business basis. Also like the rest of the City, public parking in the area is located only at the beach access streets across Gulf Boulevard. While no other public parking exists in this area, most of the area businesses provide on-site parking that appears to be adequate for their respective uses.

The Plan for the Uptown Commercial Area envisions the opportunity for several new commercial structures to be built in this area. Each of these new developments would also provide on-site parking as well. The mixed-use structure and its associated parking facility envisioned at Gulf Boulevard and 25th Avenue, although privately owned, would significantly increase the parking inventory in this area. This facility could accommodate up to one-hundred twenty parking spaces in an “integrated” garage for its ground floor uses.

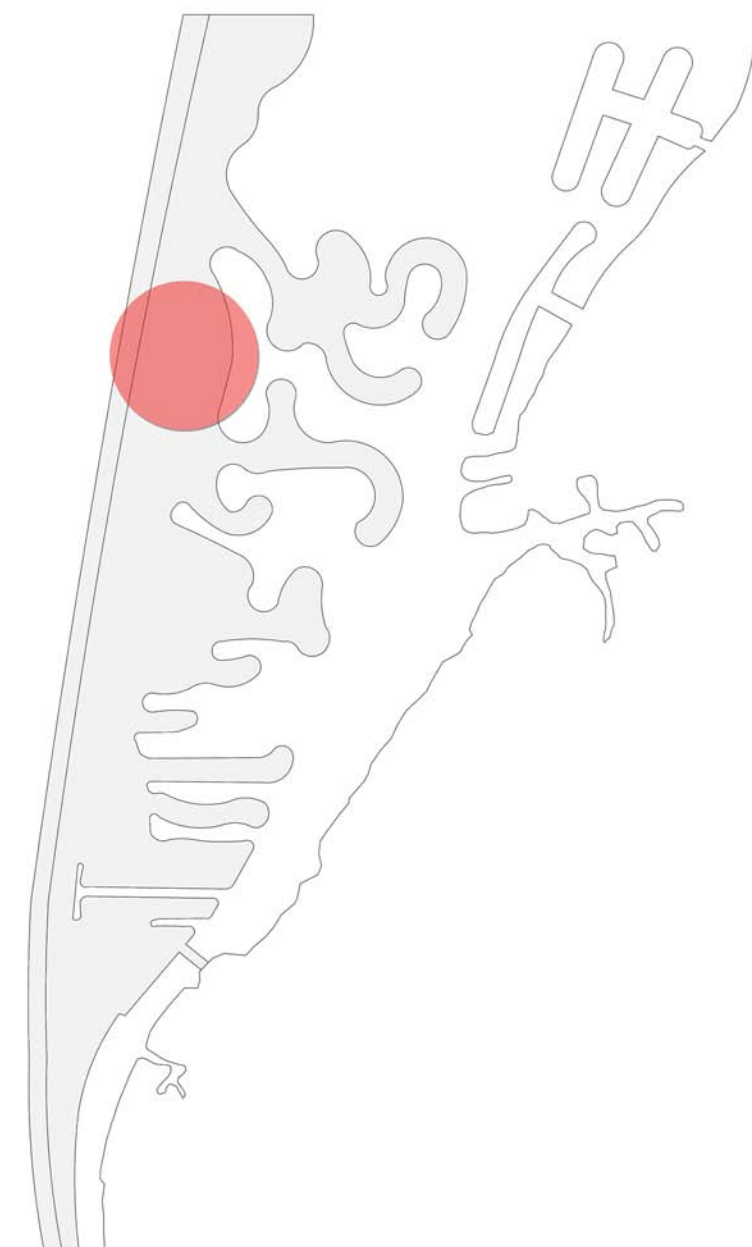
### 8.4 BUILDING TYPES/CONDITIONS

Existing commercial buildings in the Uptown Commercial Area vary in terms of configuration and type. However, most can be characterized as non-descript one and two-story rectangular volumes.

The Plan for the Uptown Commercial Area envisions the addition of a number of new structures over the next twenty or more years. New development could include an “anchor” mixed-use facility at Gulf Boulevard and 25th Avenue. This facility could serve as a primary destination for local residents and better define a commercial focus for this area. A smaller commercial structure across the street to the south is envisioned as a complementary development – making 25th Avenue and Gulf Boulevard the primary intersection in the district. With their ground-floor uses and open space features flanking the intersection, the two proposed developments at this location would introduce a new set of physical conditions and a new sense of vitality into the area.

### 8.5 REGULATIONS

The Uptown Commercial Area currently has a “Business” zoning designation for Gulf Boulevard facing parcels from 23rd Avenue to 28th Avenue. The commercial or “Business” zoning designation applies to parcels that are generally no more than one-hundred twenty feet



Uptown Commerical Area



deep. Most of these parcels appear to have been platted initially as residential parcels and in later instances assembled and rezoned for a range of neighborhood-scale commercial uses. Aside from the one full block between 25th and 26th Avenues, this zoning designation applies only to the Gulf Boulevard facing parcels. The eastern portion of the vacant block at 25th Avenue facing 1st Street is zoned for “Medium Density Residential”. With half the block zoned for “Business” and the other half zoned for “Medium Density Residential” would pose a significant challenge to realizing the vision for this area. In order for any type of mixed-use development to occur on this block, zoning for the parcels on the eastern half of the block should be rezoned with the same “Business” designation as the Gulf Boulevard facing parcels.

In addition to the land-use designations for parcels in this area, existing zoning regulations also identifies another significant development criteria. Height restrictions for this area limit any new infill building to two stories over parking. Given the small size of these commercial parcels and the challenge of meeting other site development criteria, such as setbacks, other zoning revisions are needed to encourage development that achieves a good urban design fit in the area. Although it’s unclear as to why the area hasn’t seen any new private-sector investment in recent times, meeting all requirements appears to have been a contributing factor.

## 8.6 PEDESTRIAN ACCESS AND PUBLIC REALM

The Uptown Commercial Area with its collection of businesses along Gulf Boulevard, functions as an entrance to the adjacent residential neighborhood to the east and to the city from the north. Along with the beachfront condominiums on the west side of Gulf Boulevard, these residential areas have direct access to commercial uses in the area.

The addition of several new developments and a number of public realm enhancements envisioned

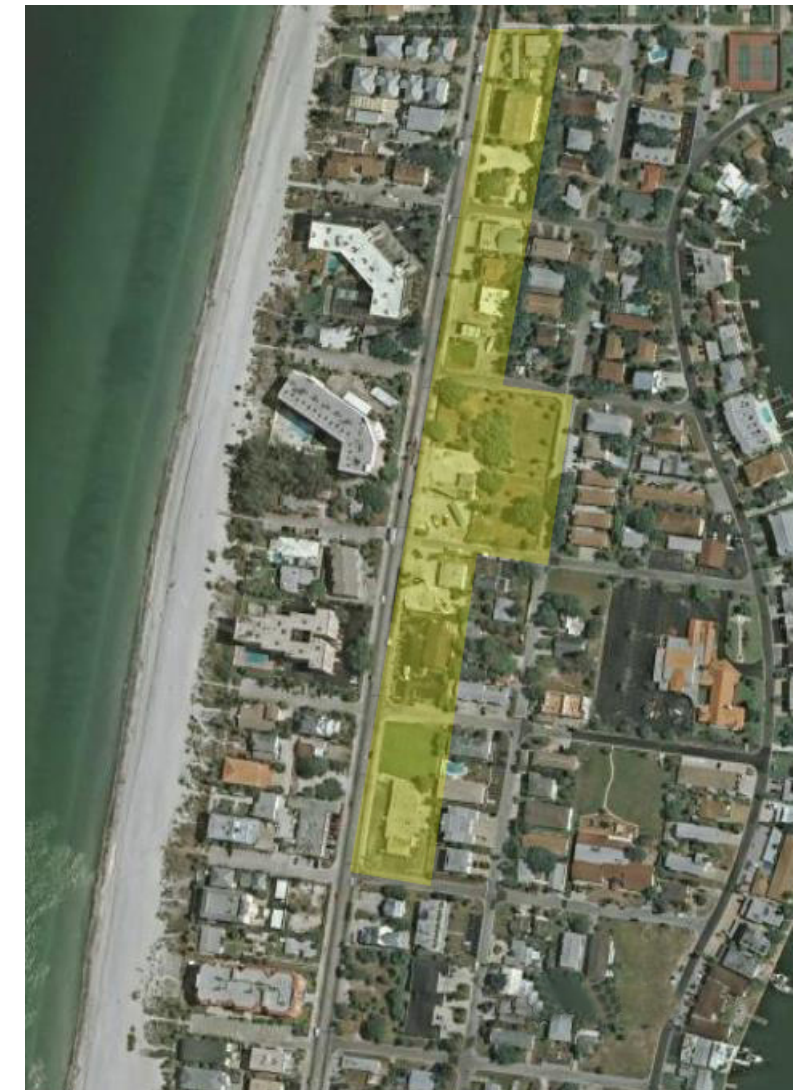
by the plan will transform this area into a more vibrant pedestrian environment. Streetscape enhancements such as sidewalks, plantings, and crosswalks will welcome local residents as well as visitors to the area. Altogether, these improvements will foster greater pedestrian activity and help stabilize the area.

## 8.7 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

The economic development potential of the Uptown Commercial Area also appears promising. With its vacant parcels and opportunities for other building renovations, the area could realize an additional 20,000 to 30,000 square feet of commercial space over the years.

With the addition of a mixed-use development at 25th Avenue anchoring the northern end of Gulf Boulevard, this area could begin to function as a well-defined, linear commercial destination for residents in adjacent neighborhoods. This parcel has the potential to accommodate a “junior” commercial anchor use such as a market, or a complex of professional offices.

Complemented by other interventions such as neighborhood-scale storefront businesses and restaurants, public realm enhancements, and beach access enhancements, the area could become an economically stable, linear commercial district from 22nd Avenue to 28th Avenue. Altogether, these types of public and private-sector interventions would significantly enhance the area’s local market appeal and its visual identity as a neighborhood asset.



Uptown Commerical Area

## 8.8 LONG TERM CONCEPTUAL VISION

Neighborhood commercial districts like the Uptown Commercial Area are often less cohesive with many businesses operating on very small profit margins. Although these areas can't compete with primary commercial market areas, they do provide local residents direct access to a number of "commercial oriented", locally-owned businesses. As such, neighborhood commercial areas like this may evolve for decades with few, if any physical improvements and little new investment.

The long-term vision for the Uptown Commercial Area is a framework for stabilizing the area and allowing it to evolve as a small-scale, yet cohesive neighborhood center. The proposed structure is based on the model of a compact commercial district with "main street-like" characteristics along Gulf Boulevard. This condition would create a somewhat continuous commercial frontage along the six block district.

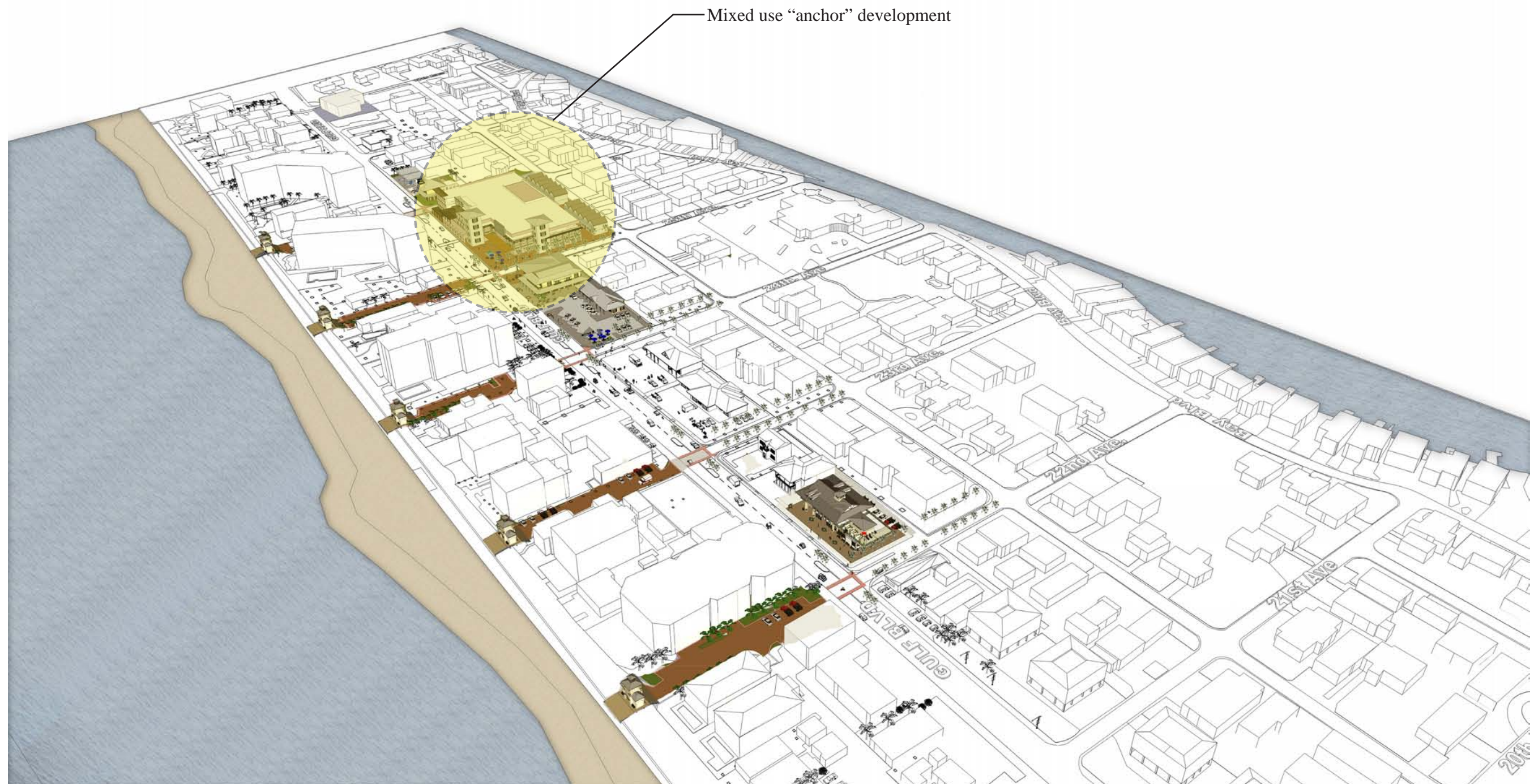
Unlike the Midtown Commercial Area, the Uptown Commercial Area has several vacant parcels which could be developed with structures that would help "anchor" the commercial area and contribute to its "placelike" qualities. These structures would have active ground floor uses, continuous shop fronts, outdoor cafes and other pedestrian amenities.

Open space and streetscape enhancements are also envisioned as part of the neighborhood commercial district framework. In addition to the envisioned structures, enhancements such as neighborhood sidewalks and street trees along the avenues, pedestrian plazas along Gulf Boulevard and other pedestrian-friendly sidewalk conditions will help the area become a more cohesive and legible neighborhood commercial area.



ILLUSTRATIVE MASTER PLAN

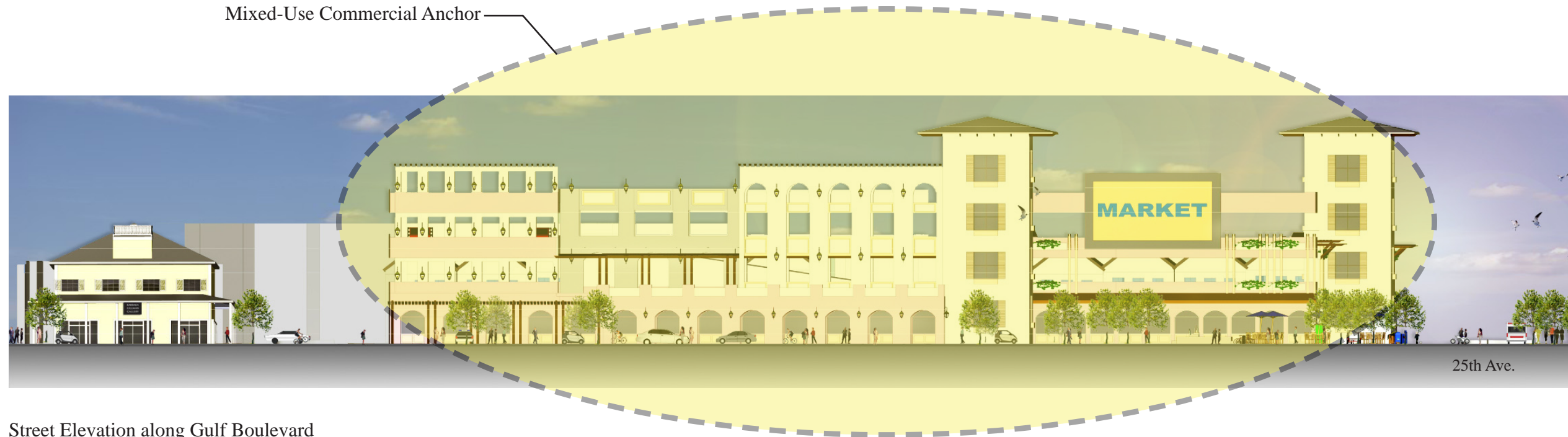




Proposed Interventions: Physical Context



Mixed-Use Commercial Anchor



Street Elevation along Gulf Boulevard



Street Elevation along Gulf Boulevard



Street Section at 25th Ave looking east









View looking North along Gulf Boulevard



## 9.0 GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made for each of the three commercial areas in Indian Rocks Beach in order to implement certain portions on the Special Area Plans. These recommendations pertain to ongoing planning and community development, regulatory revisions, economic development, parking and public realm enhancements.

### 9.1 THE NARROWS

At present, the Narrows appears to be at a transitional stage in its development as a business district. The area has at least one viable business in most of the use categories identified in the Plan. However this does not represent a threshold or critical mass of business activity needed to define the area as a vibrant neighborhood commercial center. With so few businesses and the inability to foster a greater level of synergy and viable commercial activity, the area is likely to continue to struggle in a loosely defined manner, or fall into irreversible decline. While some businesses may prosper in the short-term, others will be challenged in attracting and sustaining a market for their goods or services. As a result, local residents would likely find little reason to go to the area or patronize any of the area's businesses.

However, the area does have the potential to reserve the current trend and evolve into a more cohesive, small scale commercial district. The "Village Center" plan envisioned for the Narrows, proposes a rational framework for realizing these conditions. Implementing a redevelopment plan for the Narrows will however require a number of public and private sector initiatives that are both strategic and coordinated in order to achieve the type of neighborhood center conditions desired by the community. The feasibility of any future development projects in the area depends on both entities willingness to work together to realize new opportunities.

In order to move towards implementation, one of the pri-

mary issues that should be addressed is that of regulations. Prevising current regulations will be crucial in any redevelopment scenario for the Narrows. While current zoning and site development standards have been in effect for some time, they seem to have had the effect of discouraging investment in the area. In order to ensure the area's orderly growth and help bring about the conditions desired by local residents, the City should consider modifying certain zoning standards. Three restrictions that should be reconsidered are: two habitable floors over parking; relief from on-site parking requirements; and relief from on-site stormwater requirements. These restrictions, combined with the small size of many of the commercial parcels in the Narrows, have made it economically infeasible to invest in the area. Relieving private-sector interests of these requirements, while providing a public-sector response to these basic infrastructure elements could be an effective incentive in fostering redevelopment in the Narrows. This would also ensure the area evolves in a coordinated rather than piecemeal manner.

Coupled with regulatory relief for these two site development requirements, the Plan for the Narrows encourages the City to explore constructing a joint-use central parking facility (with Holiday Inn) and a central stormwater pond (on an expanded Chick-A-Si Park). The proposed joint-use parking structure anticipates the long-term future parking demand for additional public parking in the Narrows and for the Holiday Inn's expanded conference and hospitality business. Over three-hundred new spaces and over 10,000 square feet of leasable space could be realized in a modest-scale structure that would be mutually beneficial to both entities.

These public-sector investments represent the most promising strategy for meeting these essential infrastructure requirements. These types of investments on the part of the City would be an effective tool in leveraging future private sector investment in the area and would communicate a renewed commitment to redeveloping the Narrows on the part of the City. (While it is understood that on-site

stormwater retention is a requirement of the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFMD) on an individual property basis, the proposed central stormwater facility is intended as a "regional pond" and would be adequate for the level of new development envisioned).

In addition to these, the following recommendations are made to implement other portions of the Special Area Plan for the Narrows:

- Initiate discussions with Pinellas County to establish conformance of the Special Area Plans with the County-Wide Rules.
- Coordinate various proposals in the Special Area Plans with the City's Comprehensive Plan.
- Explore the potentials and hurdles of establishing a Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) in the Narrows. Determine potential for Tax Increment Financing (TIF) as a financing tool for redevelopment.
- Initiate discussions with private-sector property owners to explore joint development and property acquisition opportunities.
- Conduct a review of future infrastructure requirements and associated costs, as well as a cost benefit analysis (economic feasibility) of other key elements of the Plan.
- Initiate a "phased" streetscape enhancement program that emphasizes pedestrian and public realm conditions along 5th Avenue, Gulf Boulevard and 4th Avenue.
- Continue discussions with the County regarding relocation of the fire station to the former GTE property on 5th Avenue.



- Explore alternatives for relocating the Solid Waste facility to another location.
- Initiate discussions with the County and private property owners regarding streetscape enhancements along the Gulf Boulevard right of way.
- Obtain an open space easement for interim use of vacant parcel on Gulf Boulevard.
- Develop a marketing strategy for attracting new development and desired businesses, and promote regular events in the area.
- Consider incorporating regulatory revisions within a form-based code for the area.
- Revise the land development standards for the Narrows to allow for new mixed-use projects that are economically feasible and contribute to the desired physical conditions.

## 9.2 THE MIDTOWN AND UPTOWN COMMERCIAL AREAS

The Midtown and Uptown Commercial Areas also appear to be at a critical stage. They each have the potential to evolve as either vital neighborhood commercial areas, or decline as marginalized business nodes. Similar to the Narrows, these areas have seen very little investment over the years compared to the west side of Gulf Boulevard. They have evolved as small scale commercial nodes with limited patronage from nearby residents for all but a few businesses.

On the other hand, with modest levels of public and private sector investment, these areas can begin to function as “niche” markets for certain goods and services. Should this occur, they would have a much better chance of evolving with the desired

physical conditions described by local residents.

With community concerns focusing on limiting the expansion of these areas, defining their practical use and improving their physical image, the Special Area Plan proposes a strategy of selective infill, building renovations, and phased public realm enhancements as a way to transform these areas into active and vibrant neighborhood business districts. These types of interventions will be essential in stabilizing these areas. In order to implement these ideas, the City should consider revising certain development standards for both the Midtown and Uptown Commercial Areas as well.

Revised standards and the project approval process should incorporate greater flexibility to allow for appropriate building types and other physical conditions to be introduced in these commercial areas. The twenty five-foot set back requirement appears to conflict with the desire to strengthen these areas as “pedestrian friendly” sidewalk and plaza areas. Buildings with commercial uses on the ground floor should be required to provide pedestrian amenities such as wide sidewalk plazas (15 ft. max. to accommodate outdoor cafes), covered arcades, balcony overhangs, and continuous shopfronts. These conditions at the ground level, coupled with setback requirements for upper levels, should occur within twenty feet of the property line. Parking should not be allowed along the commercial frontages. In order to promote pedestrian access to businesses and avoid the unsafe continuous curb cut conditions like those on the West side of Gulf Boulevard, parking should be placed at the rear of the site whenever possible.

In addition to these, the following recommendations are also made for the Midtown and Uptown Commercial Areas:

- Begin discussions with the County and commercial property owners about potential public realm improvements along the Gulf Boulevard frontage.

- Coordinate plan proposals with the City’s comprehensive plan.
- Initiate discussions with the county to acquire the parcel at 24th Avenue for development purposes.
- Implement a phased streetscape enhancement program concentrated on the commercial block frontages and the avenues leading from the neighborhoods.
- Market the commercial areas as opportunities for various types of private-sector investments.
- Conduct a review of infrastructure requirements and costs associated with the proposed level of development.
- Rezone the eastern half of the block between 25th and 26th Avenues to “Business” to allow for the flexibility and feasibility of a mixed used development.
- Rezone the eastern parcels at 1st Street adjacent to commercial parcels at 25th Avenue and 28th Avenue.
- Attract a mid-size retail anchor as a catalyst for redevelopment of Uptown Commercial Area.
- Consider incorporating regulatory revisions for this area within a form-based code.
- Identify bicycle lanes along the northern portion of Gulf Boulevard
- Encourage the use of hybrid or electric vehicles for daily use between the commercial areas in the city.



## 10.0 SPECIAL AREA PLANS CONSISTENCY WITH THE EVALUATION AND APPRAISAL REPORT, THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AND THE CODE OF ORDINANCES

While the Special Area Plan envisions the long-term transformation of the City's three commercial sub-districts, it also reflects the spirit and intent of the objectives identified in the recently completed Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR). The Special Area Plans specifically address sections 1c (Encourage mixed-use development), 1d (Encourage redevelopment as a land development strategy with special emphasis on infill, reuse and revitalization), and 1e (Address issues of non-conforming uses within the context of redevelopment).

Relative to mixed-use development, the Special Area Plan identifies a number of opportunities for developing mixed-use buildings in each of the City's commercial areas. The mixed-use structures envisioned are both context-sensitive and reflect the desired community conditions. The Special Area Plan also proposes a land development strategy that proposes infill development that achieves a good urban design fit in the three commercial areas. In addition to this, existing non-conforming uses and other conditions that are incongruent with the Plan. As a response to these conditions, the Plan proposes a number of alternatives intended to ensure greater compatibility with surrounding development patterns.

With regards to the Comprehensive Plan, the Special Area Plans are largely consistent with its Future Land Use Element (FLUE). While all of the proposed conditions in the Special Area Plans reflect the objectives of the Future Land Use Element, a small inconsistency exists between an existing land use designation and the proposed conditions on the full-block mixed-use development between 25th and 26th Avenues in the Uptown Commercial Area.

With half the block under the "Business" zoning designation and the other half zoned for "Medium Density Residential", this type of project would not be feasible without a rezoning of the eastern portion of this block. The Special Area Plans recommendation is to rezone the subject parcels in order to facilitate a mixed-use development on this block that functions as a neighborhood commercial anchor and a gathering place for residents.

In addition to this, the Plan recommends a few additional map amendments and rezoning for a select number of other parcels. These rezoning designations are intended to make Gulf Boulevard commercial development more feasible. These parcels are directly adjacent to Gulf Boulevard commercial parcels, but front on 1st Street. Because several of the commercial parcels in the northern part of the City are typically too shallow (i.e. less than 150 feet) to accommodate certain commercial uses and their site development requirements, pairing them with abutting 1st Street properties would make commercial development along Gulf Boulevard significantly more feasible. Although these parcels are currently zoned for residential development, a commercial rezoning would not represent an incursion into the neighborhood fabric. The subject properties include: the parcel that was used for parking behind the former (Portofino) restaurant at 28th Avenue; the two parcels behind the former convenience store on the southern edge of 25th Avenue at Gulf Boulevard;

The only other inconsistency between the Special Area Plans and the existing zoning are the development intensity standards posed by the existing zoning in the Narrows. The current standards have effectively served as a disincentive for private sector real estate investment and redevelopment in the area for over twenty years. At present, these standards would render almost any new mixed-use commercial project economically un-feasible. These standards will need to be revised in order to facilitate a favorable private-sector response. The Special Area Plan for the Narrows envisions several parcels with new and renovated buildings

constructed up to four stories – and a few key parcels with "landmark" projects constructed up to six stories.

The rationale for this proposed modest increase in density is provide an incentive for private-sector investment, to ensure that the appropriate types of mixed-use development occurs here, and to ensure that the future buildings are economically viable in the market place..








The other inconsistency between the Comprehensive Plan and the Special Area Plan is related to the full-block commercial development envisioned between 25th and 26th Avenues. As proposed, this mixed-use development would not be possible under current zoning for this block. The inconsistency with existing zoning results from the western half of the block zoned for "Business" and the eastern half zoned "Medium Density Residential". In order to facilitate such a project here, the eastern half of the block would need to be rezoned, along with a map amendment to the Land-Use Element of the City's Comprehensive Plan. The recommendation for this rezoning is intended to bolster the City's economic development agenda and encourage the type of development on this block that would benefit all of the City's residents.



11.0 BUILDING FEATURES

The Plan for each of the commercial areas proposes an addition to the City’s design guidelines that promotes the type of architecture desired by local residents. Throughout the planning process, residents indicated a desire to see new structures exhibit a “coastal” or “Key West-like” architectural character. Used in all of the illustrative images in this Plan, this style of architecture is characterized by a number of distinctive features and other building elements.

The building features that would best promote the desired character of the commercial areas and define a more cohesive visual character for these areas includes: covered sidewalks with balconies and awnings; stepped massing and building setbacks, louvered shutters and window shading devises; expansive metal roofs; ground floor shopfront windows; horizontal siding and stucco wall finishes; and other small building details. Altogether, these features would begin to create a new visual image for the commercial areas that further contributes to an overall distinctive identity for the City and its sense of place.

Proposed Building Features	
Covered Sidewalks/Balconies	<div></div> <div>AwningBalcony</div>
Upper Floor Setbacks	
Expansive Metal Roof	
Window Treatment/Shading	<div></div> <div>Bahamma Style ShuttersContinental Style Shutters</div>
Waterproof Storefront	



## 12.0 PHASING

Redevelopment in each of the project areas will be a longer term endeavor. However redevelopment of the Narrows could be ongoing for several decades. While the Plan for this area establishes a framework for orderly growth, redevelopment is likely to occur in a series of stages that relate to general economic conditions, the construction cycles associated with the commercial real estate market, the provisions of basic infrastructure, and regulatory relief.

The Plan identifies four distinct development phases as part of the long-term transformation of the area into a compact, mixed-use “village center”. These phases are: 3 to 5 years; 5 to 8 years; 8 to 12 years; and 12 to 20 years. At each phase, the plan envisions the addition of new buildings, representing private sector investments, and public realm and infrastructure enhancements, representing public-sector investments.



Phase 1: 3-5 Years



Phase 3: 8-12 Years



Phase 2: 5-8 Years



Phase 4: 12-20 Years