



Town Center Vision Plan St. Nicholas

City of Jacksonville
Planning and Development Department
Town Center Program
Phase I Initiative



Town Center Vision Plan St. Nicholas

Prepared for the
City of Jacksonville Planning and Development Department
As part of the Town Center Program Phase I Initiative
for the applicant
St. Nicholas Area Preservation

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Acknowledgements

This document was prepared for the City of Jacksonville Planning and Development Department. It was developed through input from dozens of local participants. The development process spanned 12 months, from March 2003 through March 2004. We are grateful to the many community members who participated in the neighborhood workshops and contributed their time, energy, and Visions to this report.

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A special recognition is due JaxPride, a nonprofit coalition for visual enhancement, for their early and ongoing community visioning activities in Jacksonville. Their volunteer efforts have helped raise community awareness about the importance of having a Vision for neighborhood improvement.

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1 Overview

What is a town center? The phrase conjures an image of Main Street, of activity and livelihood, of a space that is historic, active, interesting, and inviting. A Town Center is typically an urbanized area, condensed and pedestrian oriented, with commercial enterprises that serve the local community, and other amenities such as parks and plazas. As the hub of the community, Town Centers should be attractive and well-maintained.

“A neighborhood is, first and foremost, designed for people, and not solely for cars. It must allow for a range of housing options to accommodate people in all stages of life: families with children, young college students, empty nesters, single professionals, and employees of local businesses. It must feature narrow, slow-speed streets where cars and pedestrians peacefully co-exist and residents can walk safely along tree-shaded sidewalks. A true neighborhood must also offer the pedestrian someplace worth walking to: a corner store, a cozy park, a nature trail, or a friend’s house down the street. The walk itself must be interesting, featuring landscaped gardens, architectural details, and places to meet informally with neighbors.” ([Welcome to Vermillion](http://www.vermillion-tnd.com/default.html). 2000. Bowman Development Group. <<http://www.vermillion-tnd.com/default.html>>)



While this description hints at the character of a Town Center, the specific form and function can vary greatly. This report represents an effort by the St. Nicholas community to define and redefine their Town Center with assistance from the City of Jacksonville. To be part of the City’s Town Center Program, a Town Center must be at least 30 years old and must have been at one time an established commercial district or corridor at the heart of an existing community or neighborhood.

The St. Nicholas commercial district is a prime example of a Town Center that once actively supported the community but has experienced changes over time that have lessened its function. Despite some decline, the St. Nicholas community recognizes

the value of this area as a neighborhood and cultural resource. This Vision Plan is an effort to restore and improve the Town Center through a community-based initiative and with the help and resources of the City of Jacksonville.

Background

The City of Jacksonville, through the leadership of City Council member Suzanne Jenkins, developed the Town Center Program as a means of providing support to local organizations for redeveloping areas of town that have served the community and that still retain some character, historically,

aesthetically, or otherwise. The City also recognizes the role these Town Centers can serve as Jacksonville grows: to provide shopping, service, and entertainment alternatives, support small and local businesses, and create meaningful and memorable places that define the City as whole.

“Older communities want their commercial corridors that are the front doors to their neighborhood to reflect the character of their community...It’s about the community first coming together because the plan has to be put together by the community--not done for them or to them, but done with them.”

--Suzanne Jenkins

In the fall of 2002, St. Nicholas Area Preservation (SNAP) applied for and received a grant from the City of Jacksonville for Phase I Visioning as part of the Town Center Program. Specifically, this Phase I effort creates a Vision for redeveloping the Town Center located along Beach and Atlantic Boulevards, from I-95 east to Gay Avenue (see map on page 4). Once a Phase I Vision is completed, organizations are eligible to apply for Phase II funding that will enable development of construction plans; however, Phase I recipients are not guaranteed Phase II funding through the program. Phase III applicants seek construction funds to apply toward implementation. The Town Center Program is administered by the City of Jacksonville Planning and Development Department.

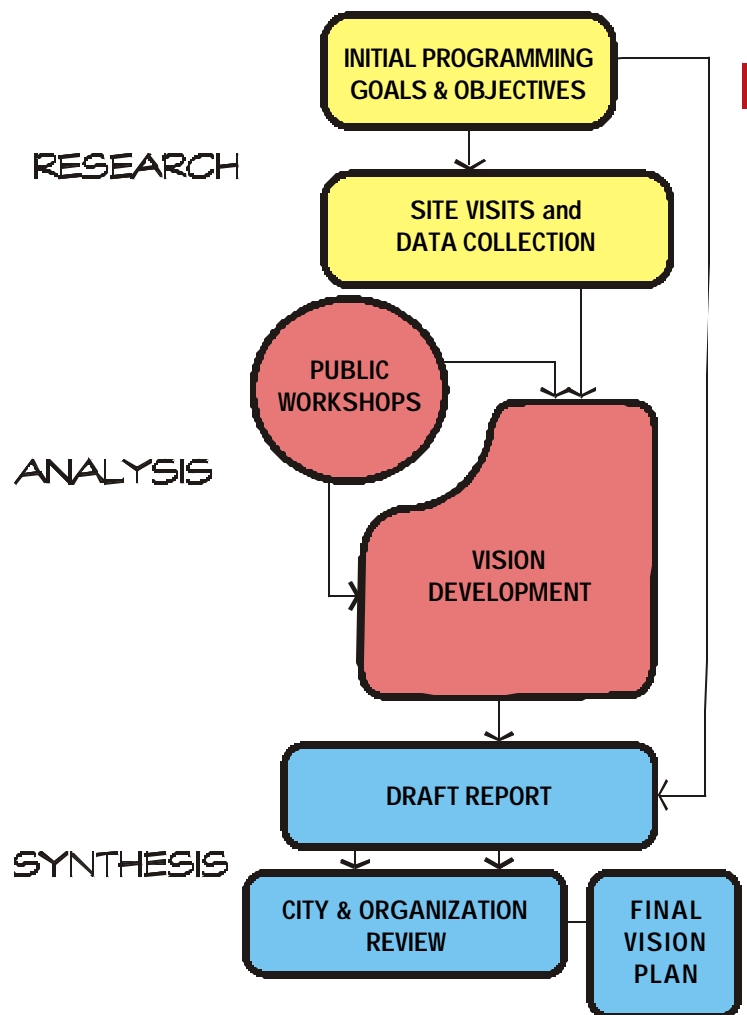
Mission

The mission of this project is to develop a Vision for St. Nicholas that activates the needs and desires of the local community while incorporating the realities of cost, condition, and other constraints. Neighborhood workshops were conducted to

gather community ideas and opinions, and this final Vision Plan is a direct result of that input.

Planning Process

To generate a Vision, a Project Team was assembled to guide the Vision from initial programming through completion of the final report. The Team included SNAP representatives, City staff, and the project consultant. The Team developed a streamlined process to encourage as much citizen participation and input as possible. Team leaders initiated the planning process with a meeting to identify key issues concerning the area and identify times and locations for workshops. The Project Team then conducted a site visit to walk the area, discuss opportunities and constraints, and record information. Follow-up site visits by the project



consultant provided supplemental information during the development of the Vision.

With preliminary analysis and information collected, the Team conducted two public workshops that were scheduled around community interests and located as close as possible to the Town Center. The workshops were carefully organized to allow direct participant input, at both a personal level and a communal level. This community response is detailed in the next section. The workshops concluded with presentations of participant Visions and a prioritization of projects by the participants, allowing the Team to then develop a plan for Phase II and Phase III implementation, as presented in this report.

It is important to emphasize that the recommendations in this report are conceptual in nature and as such serve as a guide for decisions to be made during a Phase II application, when the Town Center Vision concept will be transformed into detailed construction plans. Phase II will provide the details, drawings, and design work needed to undertake construction.

Plan Area

The St. Nicholas Town Center is the commercial corridor along Atlantic and Beach Boulevards, between I-95 on the west and Gay Avenue and Linden Avenue on the east. The concentration area, or focal point, is the intersection of these two roads, primarily between San Mateo Road and Palmer Avenue. The plan area is shown on the following page.



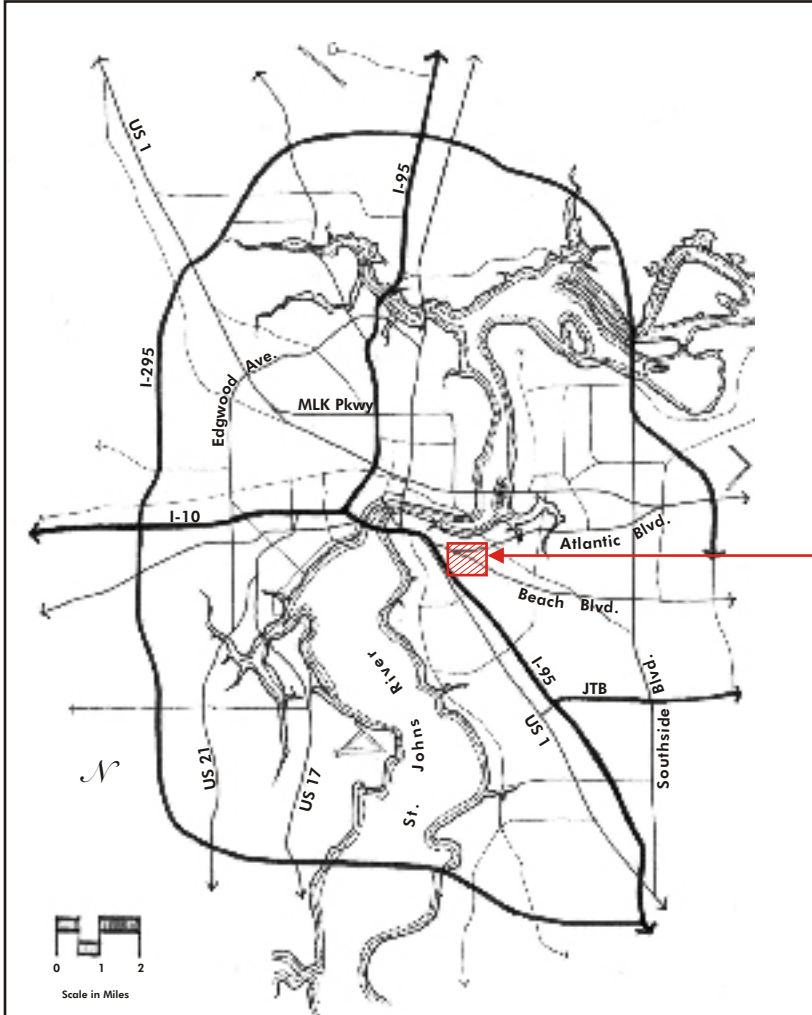
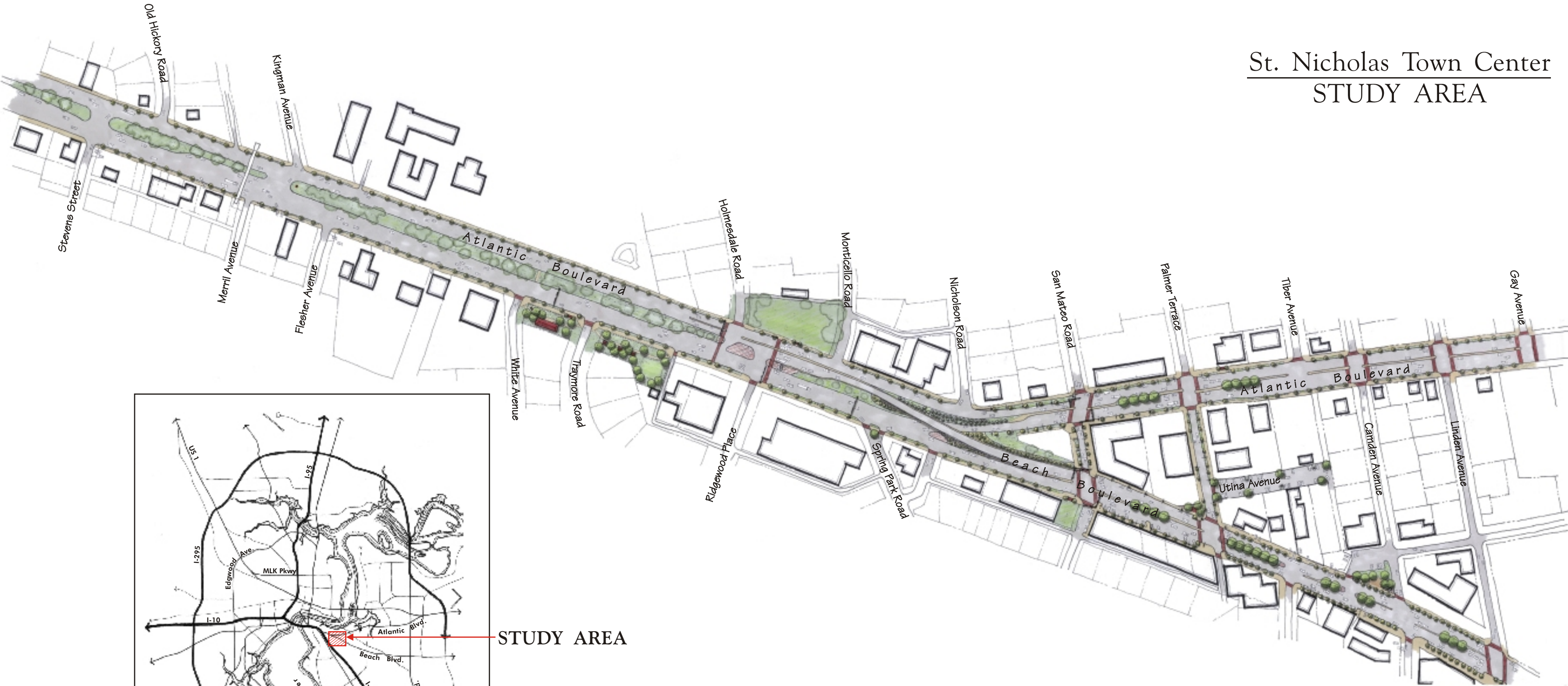
Example of a new Town Center in Jacksonville (San Marco Square)

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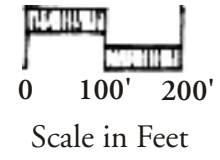


Example of an old Town Center (St. Augustine, FL)

St. Nicholas Town Center STUDY AREA



STUDY AREA



2 Community Vision

At the heart of this Visioning process are the comments, concerns, and dreams of the area residents. These are the people who know St. Nicholas best, who live and work in the area, who use the roads and sidewalks, who work to improve neighborhood conditions, and who enjoy the use of the neighborhood. To create a realistic Vision for redevelopment, their input must be included. Therefore the Project Team developed a careful program to gather as much direct input as possible within a short time frame.

Background Data

Prior to the first workshop, the Project Team conducted a site analysis and site visit to confirm significant existing conditions that would likely influence Town Center planning. A background data summary and zoning map are provided at the end of this section.

First Workshop

For the first workshop, the Project Team developed a workbook that included a survey to gather demographic information. This workbook also asked the participants two important questions: “Where are we now?” and “Where would we like to be?” Participants reflected on these questions in a



personal way to try to identify important issues, concerns, and Visions for the future that would not be influenced or overshadowed in the open discussion to follow. The following is a summary of their response to these questions. Their answers guided our Vision concept throughout its development.

Who are we?

The following questions were asked in the survey. (There were 38 respondents.)

Are you married?

Yes: 65%
No: 35%

Do you have school-age children?

Yes: 17%
No: 83%

What neighborhood do you live in?

St. Nicholas: 83%
Other: 17%

How long have you lived there?

Less than 5 years: 30%
5 to 15 years: 17%
Over 15 years: 53%

Are you within walking distance of the Town Center?

Yes: 87%
No: 13%

How often do you visit the Town Center?

Once a week or more: 50%
Monthly: 45%
Never: 5%

Do you own a business in the St. Nicholas area?

Yes: 22%

No: 88%

Do you work in the St. Nicholas area?

Yes: 26%

No: 74%

Where do you typically go for entertainment?

San Marco: 41%

Regency: 24%

Tinseltown: 19%

St. Nicholas: 8%

Other: 8%

Are there enough parks in the area?

Yes: 21%

No: 79%

Why did you attend this workshop?

- Neighborhood interest
- Curious
- Show support
- Business interest



Based on the survey response, the Project Team concluded that St. Nicholas is an area with an elderly population that is transitioning to a younger community with a higher proportion of singles, young married couples, and children. While most indicated no children, we assume many with children did not attend the evening meeting. The frequency of Town Center use and typical entertainment destinations indicate a commercial area not responding directly to many local needs. While some regarded the nearby school ball fields as adequate park space, the majority felt a need for parks and open space that are more proximate and related to the community.

Where are we now?

To evaluate participant’s perspective on current corridor conditions and issues, the survey included a section that asked “where are we now?” Participants were asked to consider how they feel about their Town Center today and list their primary concerns. This question created a reference point on which to base the emerging Vision. The primary survey responses are listed below:

Perspectives about St. Nicholas today.....

“There is too much traffic.”

“This area needs a face lift.”

“Shopping is limited, doesn’t support the residents.”

“The commercial area is in decline.”

“Pedestrian conditions are unsafe.”

“The residential area is on the upswing.”

“Entertainment is too limited.”

“Crime, drugs are a big problem.”

“The area is growing more fragmented.”

“This is a small, friendly community.”

Where would we like to be?

Participants were also asked in the survey to answer the question “where would we like to be?” They were instructed to share the top three changes they would like to see in their Town Center in the future. The intent of both survey questions was to gather an unbiased and personal vision from each individual. Again, the primary responses are listed on the next page:

Desired future changes for St. Nicholas....

“Better eateries and shopping within the Town Center.”

“Improve the appearance of the area with landscaping and facade treatments.”

“Better pedestrian access with improved sidewalks and intersections.”

“A police substation built in the area.”

“More open space, parks along the corridor.”

“An event location for the community: a center, a theater, etc.”

“Entrance monuments or features to identify the neighborhood.”

“Improved parking near the commercial center.”

“Follow the pattern established in San Marco Square.”

“More outdoor dining opportunities.”

Issues and Possibilities

Workshop participants were given an opportunity to discuss and debate major issues that the project team identified or that they raised. The following summarizes those issues:



- Commercial buildings need attention.
- The area lacks identification as St. Nicholas.
- There is too much concrete and not enough landscaping.
- The Beach Boulevard overpass is stark.

Community and Cultural Resources



- Lots of churches in area.
- A small park exists nearby, along with historic markers and an old train depot building.
- There are not enough places to eat or gather.
- Proximity to the river, schools and downtown are a plus.

Transportation



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- Traffic along Beach and Atlantic moves too quickly for a pedestrian-oriented district.
- On-street parking, especially angle parking, is dangerous.
- There are no bike lanes or bike racks.
- Bus stops are unattractive and do not shelter riders.
- Traffic signal poles are unattractive.

Drainage, Utilities and Lighting



- Utility poles create visual clutter.
- Very little accent lighting to highlight architectural features.
- Area drainage is generally good.

Signs



- Signs are disorganized with no unity or theme.
- Standard FDOT signs suggest a freeway and hinder a neighborhood feel.
- Area billboards are ugly.

Landscaping



- More landscaping would soften buildings and pavement and give the neighborhood added character.
- Street trees would be especially nice along the corridor.
- Maintenance for existing and proposed landscaping is critical.

- Landscaping would help screen views of cars in parking lots.
- The large Atlantic Boulevard median has nice trees, but needs definition.

Pedestrian Access/Walkability



- It is hard and sometimes dangerous to walk from the neighborhood to the Town Center.
- The existing sidewalks are wide but in poor condition.
- We need more benches for outdoor seating.
- We need better crosswalks that slow traffic and make crossing easier.
- The neighborhoods are close and within a five minute walk.

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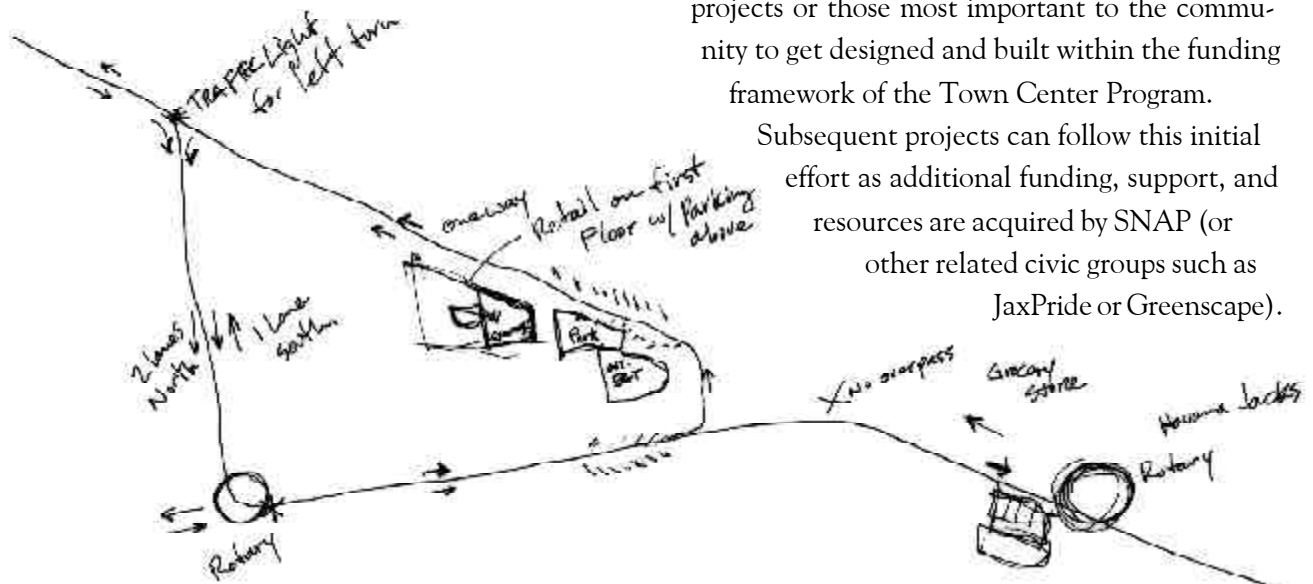
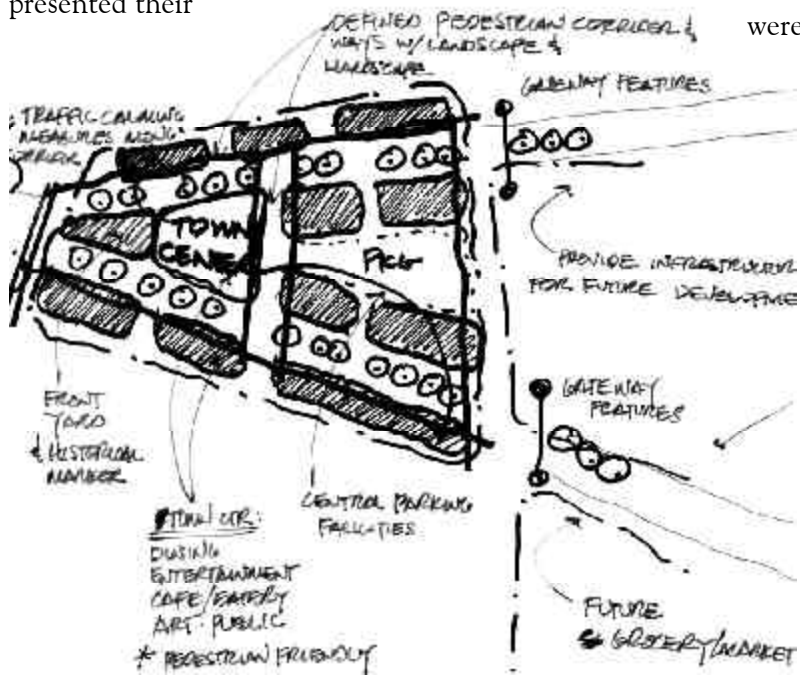
Architecture and Building Improvements



- The architecture of our Town Center is unique and has a lot of character.
- Building owners need to take more interest in painting, awnings, and other details that would highlight the building character and make them more inviting.

Group Work

With personal visions and primary issues identified, workshop participants divided into groups centered around tables to brainstorm and begin the process of putting ideas and concerns onto paper. The project consultant provided plan sheets, aerial photographs, zoning maps, and plenty of pens, markers, scales, tape, tracing paper, and other tools needed to translate ideas into images. Team members were on hand to help in the translation process, with the goal of developing a graphic Vision that responded to earlier comments and ideas. Once complete, the groups presented their



plans or Vision concepts to the overall group and responded to questions and comments.

Second Workshop

During the second workshop, the project consultant presented participants with a Vision concept plan based on input from the first workshop. The concept was presented via projection to allow an overall group discussion. Table-sized versions of the plan were then distributed among the groups to facilitate smaller group discussions. Details such as timeline and budget were discussed to assess the feasibility of the concept. Groups

were encouraged to prioritize projects based upon the projected funding for the Town Center Program. Groups were also asked to consider projects that could be eligible for implementation through other funding programs. Each group presented their revised Vision plans with preferred projects noted to the rest of the participants for feedback and general approval. From these plans, the Project Team identified a staging approach that echoed participant desires.

The resulting program, described fully in the next section, is a logical sequence that allows for highly visible projects or those most important to the community to get designed and built within the funding framework of the Town Center Program.

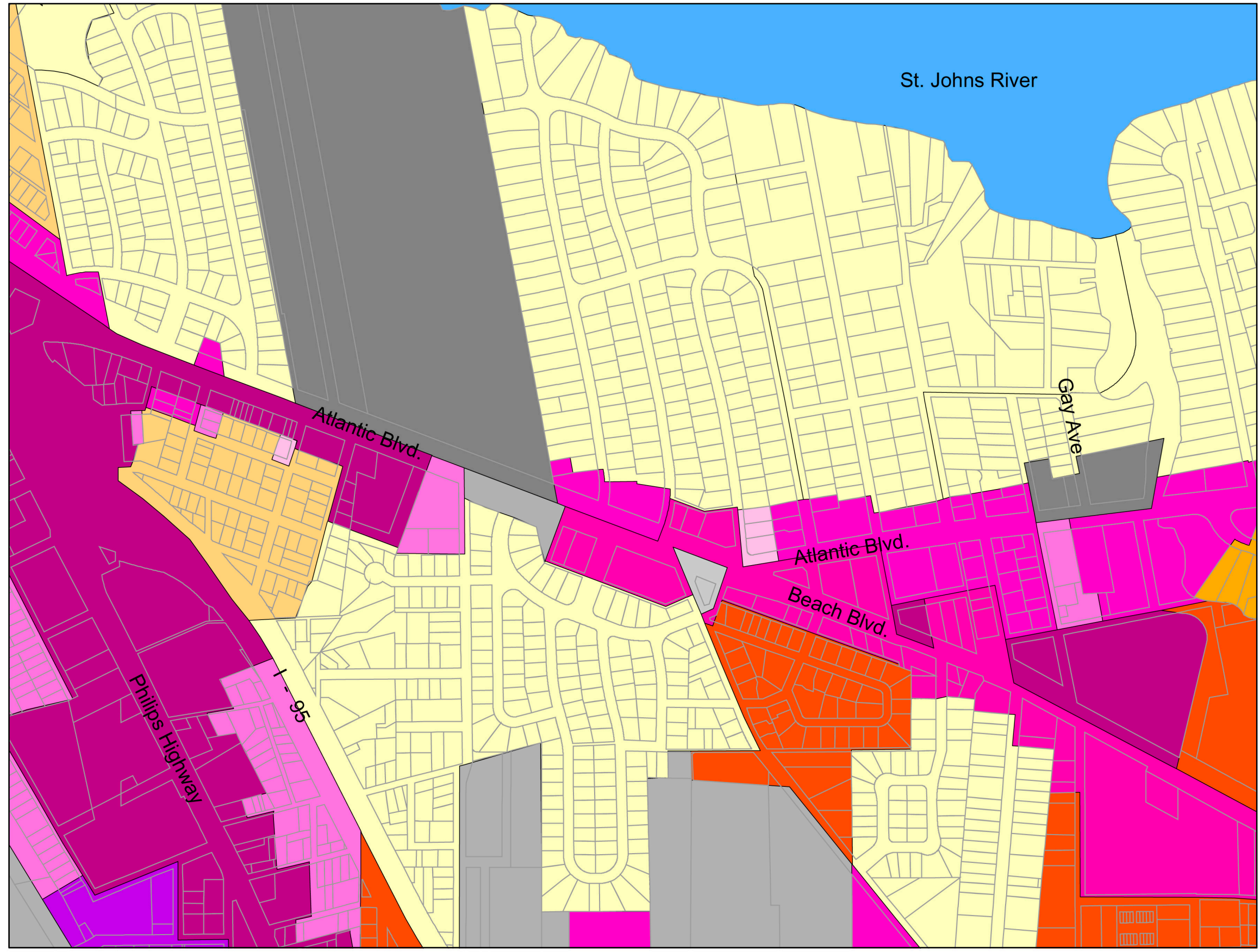
Subsequent projects can follow this initial effort as additional funding, support, and resources are acquired by SNAP (or other related civic groups such as JaxPride or Greenscape).

Project Background Summary

The following summary provides general information about the project area considered in establishing the Vision:

Planning District(s):	3 (Southeast)		
City Council District(s):	4		
City Council District Representative(s):	Suzanne Jenkins (2003-2007)		
Length of Town Center Corridor:	.91 miles		
Major Cross Streets:	Holmesdale Road (COJ) Spring Park Road (COJ) San Mateo Road (COJ) Linden Avenue (COJ)		
Corridor right-of-way jurisdiction:	FDOT		
Width of Right of Way:	100 to 180 feet		
Number of Corridor Property Parcels:	77		
Zoning:	CCG-1 (28)	CRO (17)	PBF 1 (1)
	CCG-2 (17)	CO (2)	PUD (1)
Curb to Curb Width:	40 to 80 feet		
Roadway Classification:	Principal Arterial		
Posted Speed Limit:	30 mph		
Number of Lanes:	3 to 5		
Lane Width:	12 feet		
	Atlantic Boulevard	Beach Boulevard	
Maximum Peak Hour Traffic:	3700	2500	
Percent of Total Capacity Used:	77	65	
Total Capacity Available:	1100	2100	
2003 Level of Service:	C	C	
Average Daily Trips (2003):	48,000	29,000	
Number of Signalized Intersections:	5		
Number of Bus Stops:	Over 10		
Electrical Service Location:	Overhead		
Historic Buildings and Sites:	Merrill-Stevens Shipyard Administration Building (The Assumption School), c. 1917		
Churches along Corridor:	Assumption Catholic Church First Korean Baptist Church Mayfair Baptist Church St. Nicholas Park Christian Church		
Civic Buildings along Corridor:	None		
Public Parks along Corridor:	None		
Sidewalk Material:	Concrete		
Width of Sidewalks:	6 feet		
Street Light Type:	Cobra Head		
Typical Street Light Spacing:	150 feet		

St. Nicholas Town Center Zoning Map (2003)



Legend

- Residential Low Density (RLD-G)
- Industrial Heavy (IH)
- Residential Low Density-Mobile Home (RLD-MH)
- Residential Mixed Density (RMD-A)
- Residential Mixed Density (RMD-B)
- Residential Mixed Density (RMD-E)
- Commercial Neighborhood (CN)
- Commercial Office (CO)
- Commercial Residential Office (CRO)
- Commercial Community General (CCG-1)
- Commercial Community General (CCG-2)
- Industrial Business Park (IBP-1)
- Industrial Business Park (IBP-2)
- Industrial Light (IL)
- Public Buildings & Facilities (PBF-1)
- Public Buildings & Facilities (PBF-2)
- Planned Unit Development (PUD)
- Water



3 Focusing the Vision

Following the second workshop, the Project Team undertook the task of refining the Vision developed during the workshops. The final plan addresses participant desires while incorporating budget parameters and construction constraints in order to reflect the area's Vision. The projects described in this section fit within the Town Center funding parameters and allow for maximum benefit of these funds. A graphic plan depicting these improvements is located at the end of this section. Additional projects that do not fit within this initial staging program are described in Section 4 as part of the long range Vision.

Right-of-Way Improvements

Town Center funds are limited to public land improvements. The Project Team's effort focused primarily on improvements to the right-of-way along the corridor. The FDOT has jurisdiction over the right-of-way along both Atlantic and Beach Boulevards and City of Jacksonville over the right-of-way of the intersecting cross streets along the corridor. Proposed improvements and maintenance within both right-of-ways are subject to the final approval of each agency. The improvements recommended below are typically agreeable to the City of Jacksonville, FDOT, and other governing bodies, provided they meet established design guidelines and that provisions are made regarding additional maintenance requirements.

While Phase II of the Town Center Program deals with final design and permitting issues, we have attempted even at this conceptual level to steer clear of design approaches that could become

contentious or problematic. Section 5 of this report addresses maintenance issues for the proposed improvements. The maintenance recommendations can be used to guide final design and ultimately to build an acceptable partnership with the FDOT and the City for ongoing maintenance.

The following group of projects were identified as first priority projects that would qualify for Phase II and Phase III funding under the Town Center Program* and that would make a significant, positive impact to the corridor. These projects are right-of-way improvements that could be accomplished without excessive difficulty. They fit together as a package that meets many of the objectives identified by the workshop participants. Some of these improvements make possible private property enhancements that respond to participant visions for renewal. Most importantly, these improvements are highly visible and fit within the available funding parameters. Other viable projects identified as part of the Vision but outside the funding parameters of the Town Center Program are described in Section 4. The projects are listed in order of priority as determined by participants during the second workshop.

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* Funding for Phase II and Phase III requires a separate application and approval process through the Planning and Development Department. Satisfactory completion of Phase I Visioning does not guarantee funding for Phase II and Phase III of the Town Center Program.

Street Lighting

Workshop participants identified the need for new street lights. It is important to distinguish the need and function of street lighting versus pedestrian lights. Street lights provide for the lighting of City and State roads and must meet current minimum illumination standards. They are typically located high overhead and broadcast light down to the road. The cobra-head fixture is the City and State standard for meeting street light requirements. While area residents do not view these as aesthetically pleasing, they provide the necessary street light distribution and fit within established budget and maintenance programs. It may not be feasible or even possible to find decorative replacements that fulfill illumination requirements, especially for wider roads. Also significant is the issue of securing approval through the City, FDOT, and JEA to maintain these fixtures.

Pedestrian lights in contrast, are lower in height, typically 8 to 12 feet, and may broadcast light globally and at a lower intensity. Pedestrian lights are closer to eye level and create the ambiance associated with a successful Town Center.

To avoid street lighting issues and liabilities, Pedestrian lights should be used in addition to street lights, rather than to replace them. Pedestrian lights that supplement street lights would not be required to meet street lighting requirements and could have lower wattage bulbs that would create the desired aesthetic appeal without jeopardizing roadway or pedestrian safety. Pedestrian lights are designed to be viewed as much as provide night viewing. In this capacity, they would focus attention to themselves and away from existing street lights, further establishing a Town Center sense of place.

Pedestrian Lights

Install new pedestrian lights at the heart of the Town Center corridor. Pedestrian lighting is the single most costly element recommended for installation and therefore new fixtures have been judiciously concentrated at the central part of the district to maximize their visual impact.

The recommended fixture is a single, round globe mounted on a simple, black, 12-foot post. This style is appropriate for the age of the community and complements a wide range of architectural styles. The style illustrated in the accompanying photograph has decorative banding that reinforces an Art Deco style which would be particularly suitable for St. Nicholas.

Approximate locations for these fixtures are illustrated in the plan. An estimated 60 new posts and fixtures would be required for the Town Center focus area.



Art Deco style pedestrian light fixture



Existing pedestrian lights at the Park and King area of Jacksonville with cobra head fixtures in background

Street Trees

Install new street trees along Atlantic and Beach Boulevards, on both sides of the roadways where space allows.

Street trees, perhaps more than any other single element, will greatly improve the appearance of the corridor. Evenly spaced trees create a pleasing visual rhythm along the roadway and provide added protection for pedestrians when located between sidewalks and roadway. Trees also add environmental value to the corridor by increasing shade, filtering dust and pollutants, and providing a habitat for birds and other animals.

Space for street trees is generally limited to the area between the curbs and the property lines. In many instances however, especially along the south side of Atlantic between Stevens and Spring Park, businesses have apparently encroached into the right-of-way, limiting the available space for sidewalks and planting. Property owners will need to comply with relocating fences, parking

areas, signs, and other impingements along the corridor if renovation efforts are to be successful.

Small trees such as cabbage palms (*Sabal palmetto*), crape myrtles (*Lagerstroemia indica*) or holly trees (*Ilex species*) would be suitable street trees where right-of-way space or sidewalk space is limited and that would not interfere with street traffic.

Where space allows, larger shade trees such as live oaks (*Quercus virginiana*) are recommended. The table on the following page lists the recommended street trees species and spacing; however, final determination of species and locations will be made during the public participation part of Phase II.



East Palatka holly at planting size

Recommended Species: Where space between the back of curb and the sidewalks is greater than 8 feet:

Live oak
(*Quercus virginiana*)

Where space is 8 feet or less between curbs or sidewalks:

East Palatka Holly
(*Ilex x attenuata* 'East Palatka')

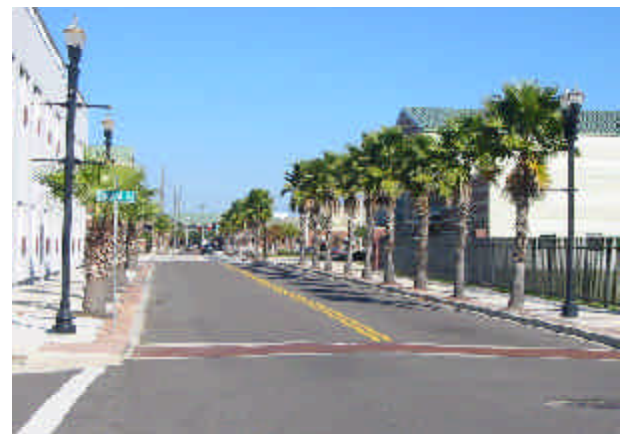
Cabbage Palm*
(*Sabal Palmetto*)

*Cabbage palm is recommended where space is limited to 3 feet or less between curbs or sidewalks

Recommended Spacing:
Live oak: 30 feet, on center
East Palatka Holly: 12 feet, on center
Cabbage Palm: 8 feet on center



Live oaks used as median and street tree in Southpoint



Washington palms as street trees in La Villa

Median Landscaping

Replace existing trees within the Atlantic Boulevard medians between San Mateo and Linden with new trees. Remove concrete and add trees to existing median on Beach Boulevard, between San Mateo and Palmer Terrace. Create new curbed medians with turn lanes and trees with sod on Beach Boulevard, between Palmer Terrace and Linden.

The existing medians along Atlantic Boulevard should be enhanced and new matching medians created on Atlantic and Beach as shown in the concept plan.

Median landscaping should be composed primarily of trees and sod to reduce construction costs and for ease of maintenance. Shrubs and ground covers can be added as desired at a later time through other funding and with additional maintenance issues resolved (see Section 6).

Median trees should be planted where possible to create visual relief from paved expanses of roadway and parking. Trees in

roadway medians help to slow traffic by introducing imposing vertical elements near the travel lanes. Median trees help link street trees across the roadway and create a unified canopy, an aesthetically appealing feature. Proposed tree locations are shown in the plan. Proposed tree species and spacing are the same for street trees as listed on page 14.

San Mateo Improvements

Extend curb and sidewalks on both sides of San Mateo between Beach and Atlantic, maintaining two 12 foot lanes along the existing center line.

The existing lanes are 5 to 8 feet wider than is necessary to meet current minimum lane width requirements, generally 11 or 12 feet. The opportunity exists to capture this space for increased sidewalk area. Reducing current lane widths

would not hamper existing automobile circulation but would improve pedestrian access to the focal point of the Town Center.

This action would also allow room for new tree plantings and other landscaping along with sidewalk seating associated with the Mudville Grille restaurant, the current tenant of the adjacent



San Mateo roadway existing



Conceptual rendering of San Mateo roadway improvements

Intersection Improvements

The following intersections should be modified to improve pedestrian access to the commercial district, better connect the north and south residential areas, and improve safety for crossing pedestrians.



Holmesdale/Ridgewood and Atlantic Boulevard intersection existing conditions

Holmesdale/Ridgewood and Atlantic Boulevard:

*Replace existing signals with single mast arms, colored black and consistent with other City intersection improvements. Install new 8-foot crosswalks with median refuges on both sides of intersection using red brick or concrete road pavers, locked in place with 10-inch concrete header curbs. Remove concrete signal post and asphalt in center median and replace with grassy groundcovers such as cord grass (*Spartina bakeri*) or muhly grass (*Muhlenbergia capillaris*) (See illustration below).*



Illustration of proposed improvements at Holmesdale/Ridgewood and Atlantic Boulevard intersection

Spring Park and Beach Boulevard:

Remove pavements within striped triangle and add new curb and gutter, sod, and trees. Install new 8-foot crosswalks and median refuge on both sides of intersection using red brick or concrete road pavers, locked in place with 10-inch concrete header curbs.

San Mateo and Beach Boulevard:

Replace existing signals with single mast arms colored black and consistent with other City intersection improvements. Install new 8-foot crosswalks and median refuge using red brick or concrete road pavers, locked in place with 10-inch concrete header curbs. Construct bulb-outs on the east side of the intersection to protect on-street parking on Beach and to narrow the roadway crossing for pedestrians.

Palmer Terrace and Atlantic Boulevard:

Install new 8-foot crosswalks and median refuges on all sides of intersection using red brick or concrete road pavers, locked in place with 10-inch concrete header curbs.

Palmer Terrace and Beach Boulevard:

Install new 8-foot crosswalks and median refuges on all sides of intersection using red brick or concrete road pavers, locked in place with 10-inch concrete header curbs. Construct bulb-outs to protect on-street parking on Beach and to narrow the roadway crossing for pedestrians.

Kenneth Street and Beach Boulevard:

Install new 8-foot crosswalk to cross Kenneth Street using red brick or concrete road pavers, locked in place with 10-inch concrete header curbs. Construct bulb-outs to protect on-street parking on Beach.

Tiber Avenue and Atlantic Boulevard:

Install new 8-foot crosswalks to cross Tiber Avenue using red brick or concrete road pavers, locked in place with 10-inch concrete header curbs.

Camden Avenue and Atlantic Boulevard:

Install new 8-foot crosswalks with median refuges on all sides of intersection using red brick or concrete road pavers, locked in place with 10-inch concrete header curbs.

Camden Avenue and Beach Boulevard:

Install new 8-foot crosswalk to cross Camden on north and south side of Beach using red brick or concrete road pavers, locked in place with 10-inch concrete header curbs. Construct bulb-outs to protect on-street parking on south side of Beach.

Linden Avenue and Atlantic Boulevard:

Install new 8-foot crosswalks and median refuges on all sides of intersection using red brick or concrete road pavers, locked in place with 10-inch concrete header curbs.

Linden Avenue and Beach Boulevard:

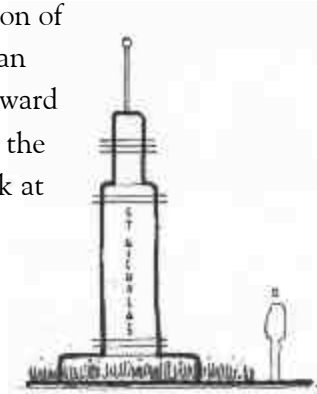
Replace existing signals with single mast arms, colored black and consistent with other City intersection improvements. Install new 8-foot crosswalks and median refuges on all sides of intersection using red brick or concrete road pavers, locked in place with 10-inch concrete header curbs. Construct bulb-outs to protect on-street parking on south side of Beach.

Gay Avenue and Atlantic Boulevard:

Install new 8-foot crosswalk to cross Gay Avenue and both sides of intersection using red brick or concrete road pavers, locked in place with 10-inch concrete header curbs.

Entry Signs

Install new masonry entry signs or monuments at each end of the corridor. Entry features should be of brick or stucco veneer with a legible nameplate in metal designating St. Nicholas. Recommended locations are in the grassed median just east of the intersection of Atlantic and Kingman Avenue, oriented toward eastbound traffic; in the proposed pocket park at the intersection of Beach and Camden Avenue, oriented toward westbound traffic; and in the existing median on Atlantic Boulevard near Gay Street, oriented toward westbound traffic.



Entry sign monument concept

Several buildings along the corridor are built in the Streamline Moderne style of architecture (Mudville Grille, Pulido's Automotive, The Old Book Shop, etc.). This style is unique in the city, and incorporating this style into the entry signs and other prominent features would help create a singular identity for St. Nicholas.

In addition to the entry signs identifying the Town Center boundaries, a vertical monument is recommended for the median east of the Holmesdale/Ridgewood intersection. A vertically-oriented monument would be visible for west bound traffic on the overpass and would be a unique and identifiable feature for the St. Nicholas, Town Center. As stated earlier for

other architectural improvements, the Project Team recognizes the unique, contributing aspects of Streamline Moderne to the commercial area and recommends its use in the monument design.

Overpass Wall Improvements

Add cabbage palms (Sabal palmetto) in masses along Beach Boulevard overpass walls to disguise their stark and ugly appearance. Remove existing asphalt between roadway and walls as required. Sod underneath palms or use grassy groundcovers such as lirioppe (Liriope muscari 'evergreen giant') for shady areas and cordgrass, muhly grass, or pampas grass (Cortaderia selloana) for sunnier areas (see illustration on next page).

Bus Stop Improvements

Upgrade bus stops along the corridor with new benches and shelters where space allows.

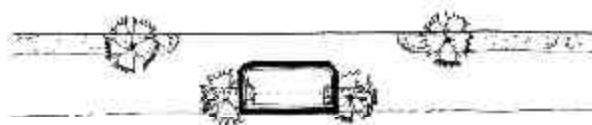
All stops along the corridor should have places for people to sit while waiting on the bus. High

use bus stops near primary intersections should be designated for new shelters. The Jacksonville Transportation Authority has released a new manual with several options for upgraded bus stop shelters. JTA is also developing a program to encourage local communities to design shelters that are unique to their area of town. If the

design meets with approval, JTA may assist with funding and implementation as a way to promote bus use and contribute to the neighborhood character.



Elevation



Plan

Proposed Bus Stop Design and Placement

St. Nicholas should participate in the JTA program as another means of creating an identity for the corridor. The Project Team developed a concept for a new bus shelter that incorporates the Streamline Moderne style. The Project Team also considered a modified placement on the sidewalk for shelters that better accommodates bus and sidewalk users and allows for integrated landscaping.

Additional Parking

Close Utina Avenue as a road and convert to a parking area with a connecting drive aisle. Adjacent property owners currently use this road for parking and circulation. This recommended measure would formalize the arrangement, providing additional parking to the commercial core and creating a safer environment for cars and pedestrians.



Overpass wall existing conditions



Overpass wall proposed improvements

Sidewalk Improvements

Repair and replace sidewalks as required along Atlantic Boulevard and Beach Boulevard, on both sides of the roadway as possible, between Stevens and Linden. In many cases, sidewalks are in good condition and do not require attention. Sidewalks that are visibly cracked, depressed, or badly worn should be replaced. Even more significant improvements are the creation of new sidewalks where none exist now, and widening sidewalks to 6 feet where space allows. Sidewalk widths of at least 4 feet and preferably 6 feet are necessary for adequate pedestrian access.

Pocket Park

Use existing ROW space at the intersection of Beach Boulevard and Camden Avenue for a pocket park with accent lighting, landscape improvements, and a masonry (brick or

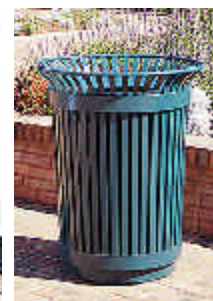
stucco) **entry sign or monument.** A small, paved seating area in this location, shaded with trees, would be a welcome addition to the commercial area and answer many calls for more green space and parks. It would utilize a part of the right-of-way that is currently vacant, except for parking by adjacent property owners. Even more, this pocket park would help to identify the eastern entrance to St. Nicholas along Beach Boulevard.

Reduction of Curb Cuts

Remove superfluous concrete curb cuts and aprons along the corridor as possible, especially along the south side of Atlantic Boulevard between Stevens and Spring Park, and replace with sidewalks, curbs and gutters, and plantings to match either side. Superfluous curb cuts are typically remnants of former businesses and are often not needed for current business needs. The number and frequency of these access points onto the roadway create a safety hazard. Businesses located on corners can better utilize side street driveways. This proposal may not be possible in every location and will require a case by case analysis performed during Phase II.

Street Furniture

Install new benches and trash receptacles along the corridor in appropriate locations and as space allows. Workshop participants indicated a strong need for additional outdoor seating and trash receptacles as part of new street furniture upgrades. The Project Team has selected a typical bench and trash receptacle that would be well-suited to the corridor in terms of aesthetics, historic appropriateness, and durability. The Project Team recommends a color choice that will stand out as an identifiable feature of the Town Center but that will not fade objectionably or become dated after a short time. Images for bench and trash receptacles that suggest favorable types



Typical bench and trash receptacles appropriate for the St. Nicholas corridor

and colors are provided on this page. Specific types, colors, and locations will be identified during the Phase II process. Forty-five benches and 45 trash receptacles are estimated to be needed to complement the proposed Town Center improvements and recommended locations are indicated in the graphic plan.

Irrigation

Supplemental irrigation for the plants specified in this report is recommended but is not critical to their success. The recommended plant species are hardy and well-suited to the harsh urban environments typical of this corridor. Once established, ordinarily a one-year process, these plants should live without supplemental irrigation with typical seasonal conditions.

The cost estimate provides a broad estimate for an automated irrigation system for the plants recommended in Section 3. The Department of Public Works will provide final requirements, designs, and feasibility of irrigation systems as a part of Phases II and III. In every circumstance, maintenance responsibility for an automated irrigation system must be resolved prior to completion of Phase II plans.

Cost Estimate

The Project Team prepared a cost estimate for the projects described in this section. It is based upon current construction trends and material and labor costs. It is also based upon a conceptual plan. Dimensions and takeoffs are averages and based upon some assumptions. This estimate must be accepted as such and not be interpreted as absolute. A more accurate budget will be developed during the Phase II construction plan development.

A note on methodology: Each project was broken into its major components and calculated with fixed unit costs that are representative of current construction averages. Quantities were taken from the plan shown at the end of this section. All totals include a 15 percent contingency to cover non-included or unforeseen costs such as mobilization, buried utilities, etc. All totals are rounded to the nearest thousand dollars. Unit costs include labor and installation hardware.

PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS	ESTIMATED COST
Ornamental Lighting	\$242,000
60 new fixtures (12 foot aluminum post, single globe) @ \$3,500 = 210,000	
Street Trees	\$88,000
Trees: 307 @ \$250 = 76,750	
Median Landscaping	\$71,000
Trees: 25 live oak (4-inch caliper) @ \$750 = 18,750	
Pavement removal: 683 sy @ \$18 = 12,294	
Curb and gutter: 1,370 lf @ \$15 = 20,550	
Groundcovers (4-inch pot): 3500 sf @ \$2 = 7,000	
Sod: 6,150 sf @ \$.45 = 2,768	
San Mateo Improvements	\$21,000
Pavement removal: 167 sy @ \$18 = 3,006	
Curb and gutter: 300 lf @ \$15 = 4,500	
New sidewalk: 1000 sf @ \$11 = 11,000	
Trees: included under Street Trees above	
Intersection Improvements	\$179,000
Signal replacement: City/FDOT provided	
New crosswalks: 12,336 sf brick pavers @ \$11 = 135,696	
Bump-outs: 10 @ \$2,000 = 20,000	
Entry Signs	\$46,000
4 @ \$10,000 = \$40,000	
Overpass Wall Improvements	\$71,000
Palms: 107 @ \$250 (12 ft avg. ht) = \$26,750	
Groundcovers (1 gallon container): 8800 @ 4 = \$35,200	
Bus Stop Improvements	\$35,000
New Shelters (with JTA assistance): 6 @ \$5,000 = \$26,750	

Additional Parking	\$19,000
Curb and gutter: 414 lf @ 15 = 6,210	
Pavement removal: 180 sy @ 18 = 3,240	
Sod: 1,620 sf @ .45 = 729	
Trees: live oak (4-inch caliper): 9 @ 750 = 6,750	
Sidewalk Improvements	\$7,000
200 lf (5 foot avg. width) @ 30 = 6,000	
Pocket Park	\$27,000
Pavers: 800 sf @ 11 = 8,800	
Trees (4-inch caliper): 6 @ 750 = 4,500	
Groundcover (4-inch pot): 500 sf @ 2 = 1,000	
Benches: 6 @ 1,500 = 12,000	
Reduction of Curb Cuts	\$7,000
300 lf @ 20 = 6,000	
Street Furniture	\$36,000
Benches: 15 @ 1,500	
Trash Receptacles: 15 @ 800	
Irrigation	\$135,000
Street trees: 307 @ \$300 = \$92,100	
Sod and groundcover areas: 20,570 sf @ \$1 = \$20,570	
Bump outs: 10 sf @ \$500 = 729	
TOTAL	\$984,000

Note: Some or possibly all of the costs listed above for new trees and associated irrigation could be assumed through the City of Jacksonville’s Tree Protection and Related Expenses Trust Fund (see Section 5).

The Graphic Plan

The following four pages illustrate the proposed Town Center Vision projects in graphic form. The plan is meant to provide a conceptual and legible image for visualizing the proposed improvements. It was prepared at a standard scale of 1 inch equals 100 feet, but reproduction may alter this scale slightly. This scale is appropriate for developing a feel for plan elements and for beginning to define improvements, but it is not

appropriate for detailed design. This plan should be used by the layperson to better understand the improvements described above with the understanding that a more detailed design will be accomplished in Phase II of the Town Center Program. The Phase II consultant should use the plan as a guide reference in developing construction drawings for the corridor.

St. Nicholas Town Center

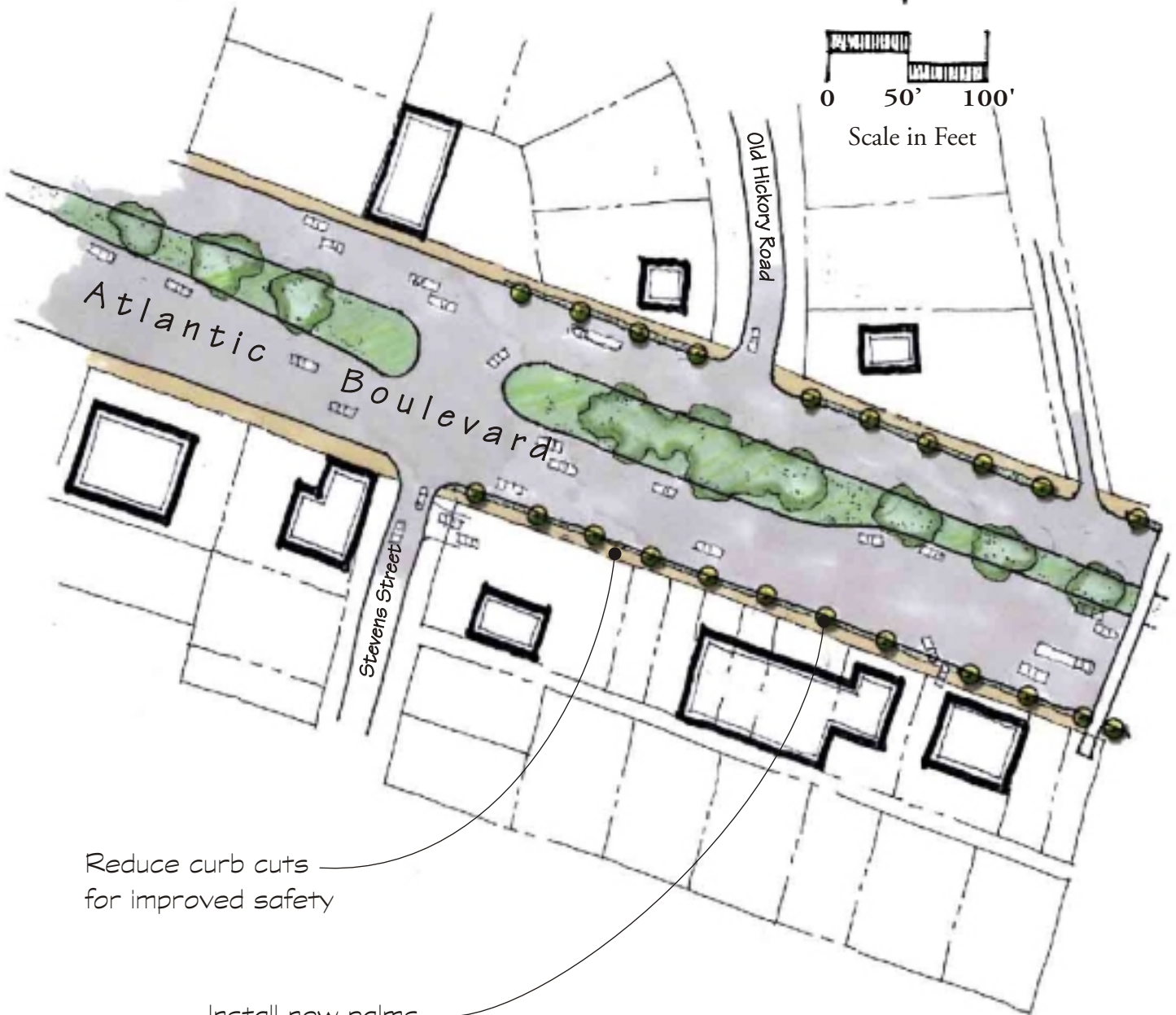
CONCEPT PLAN

Stevens Road to Pedestrian Overpass

N



Scale in Feet

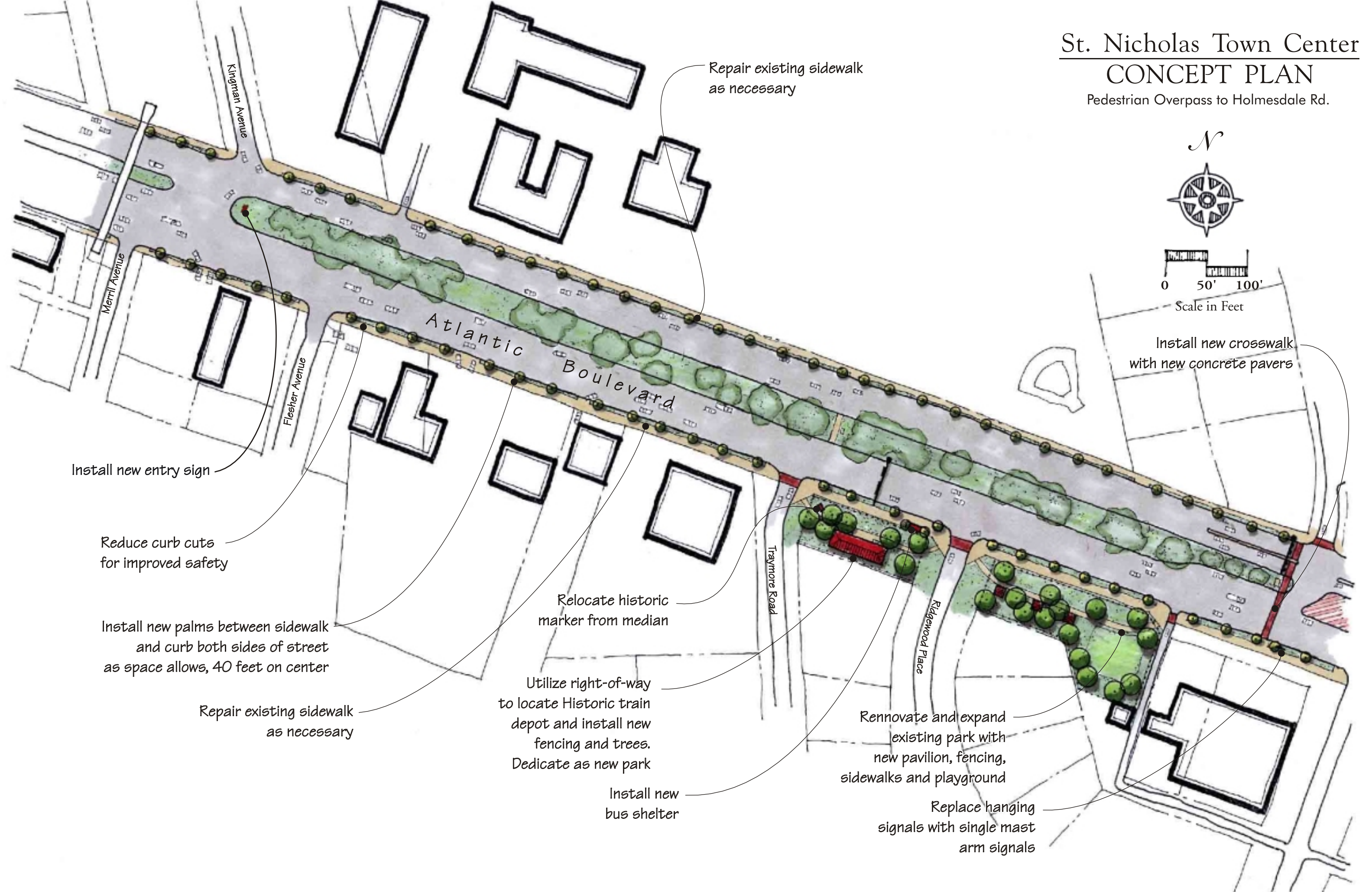
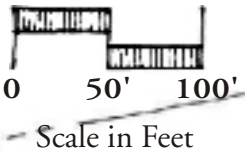


Reduce curb cuts
for improved safety

Install new palms
between sidewalk and curb,
both sides of street where
space allows, 40 feet on center

St. Nicholas Town Center CONCEPT PLAN

Pedestrian Overpass to Holmesdale Rd.



Repair existing sidewalk
as necessary

Install new crosswalk
with new concrete pavers

Install new entry sign

Reduce curb cuts
for improved safety

Install new palms between sidewalk
and curb both sides of street
as space allows, 40 feet on center

Repair existing sidewalk
as necessary

Relocate historic
marker from median

Utilize right-of-way
to locate Historic train
depot and install new
fencing and trees.
Dedicate as new park

Install new
bus shelter

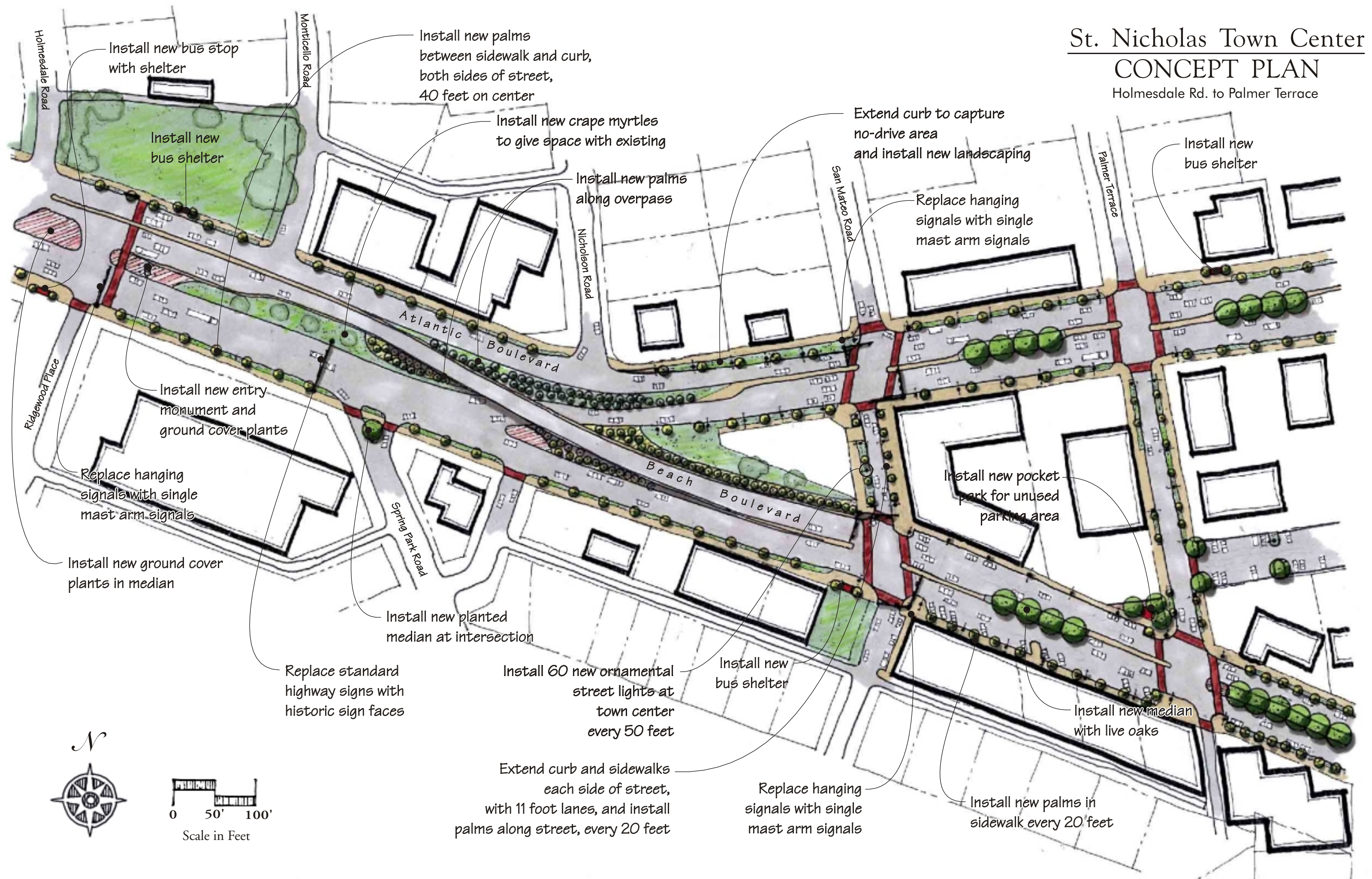
Renovate and expand
existing park with
new pavilion, fencing,
sidewalks and playground

Replace hanging
signals with single mast
arm signals

St. Nicholas Town Center

CONCEPT PLAN

Holmesdale Rd. to Palmer Terrace



Install new bus stop with shelter

Install new bus shelter

Install new palms between sidewalk and curb, both sides of street, 40 feet on center

Install new crape myrtles to give space with existing

Install new palms along overpass

Extend curb to capture no-drive area and install new landscaping

Replace hanging signals with single mast arm signals

Install new bus shelter

Install new entry monument and ground cover plants

Replace hanging signals with single mast arm signals

Install new ground cover plants in median

Install new planted median at intersection

Replace standard highway signs with historic sign faces

Install 60 new ornamental street lights at town center every 50 feet

Install new bus shelter

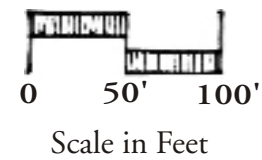
Install new pocket park for unused parking area

Install new median with live oaks

Extend curb and sidewalks each side of street, with 11 foot lanes, and install palms along street, every 20 feet

Replace hanging signals with single mast arm signals

Install new palms in sidewalk every 20 feet



St. Nicholas Town Center
CONCEPT PLAN
Palmer Terrace to Linden/ Gay Ave.



Configure right-of-way for 90° parking



Brick tone concrete pavers at primary intersections

Install new palms between sidewalk and curb, both sides of street, 40 feet on center

Create new pocket park with benches and trees

Install new entry sign

Install new palms between sidewalk and curb, both sides of street, 20 feet on center

Remove concrete to accommodate new palms

Install flowering ground covers at intersections

Install bump-outs at intersections to define on-street parking

Install new curbed medians with grass and live oaks

4 Future Visions

The following projects and improvements are listed outside of the primary group of projects because of their dependency on external elements or unknown variables to reach fruition. They are important projects that were identified and discussed in the workshops, and they should continue to be considered for coordination, funding, design, and implementation.

Speed Limits

Workshop participants identified the need for reducing speed limits in two primary areas, around Bishop Kenny High School and within the central district area.

Westbound Atlantic Boulevard

The section of westbound Atlantic Boulevard, adjacent to the Bishop Kenny and Assumption Schools, becomes congested during school hours and particularly at morning rush hour times. Traffic in turn lanes and exit lanes backs up and presents a danger for through traffic travelling at or above posted speed limits in adjacent lanes. This condition also presents a hazard to children walking to school, despite the pedestrian overpass. The posted speed limit along this stretch of the roadway is 45 miles per hour. Reducing the rate to 35 miles per hour and enforcing that speed limit would slow traffic rates and reduce the potential for accidents.

Central Commercial District

In order to make the central commercial district, the area in the center of San Mateo, Linden, Beach and Atlantic, a viable Town Center that functions as a pedestrian-oriented space, the speed of traffic along Atlantic and Beach must be reduced. The

two and three lanes of traffic currently travelling at or above the posted limit of 45 mile per hour offer an unappealing and intimidating environment for pedestrians. Reducing the speed limit to 35 miles per hour within this area, and enforcing it, would greatly improve the pedestrian quality and safety of this area.

Underground Utilities

Workshop participants unanimously agreed that locating overhead utilities underground would improve the aesthetics of the corridor. Aging utility poles could be removed, sidewalk space expanded, ugly wires buried from sight, and trees no longer required to be, but there are many difficulties in reaching this objective. JEA has indicated in word and practice a desire to put their wires underground, and this is their general preference with new development. Burying existing wires in an older neighborhood, however, presents other challenges. The technology exists to “jack and bore” the wires underground without disturbing the surface, but it is an expensive process. Additionally, other service providers that share the overhead lines with JEA, such as telephone and cable, must also agree with this direction for it to occur. It is not clear who would be responsible for paying for this service as no one party feels they should assume the full cost. Nevertheless, it remains part of the long-term vision for the community.

The most likely scenario would be to actively coordinate burying overhead utilities with the next major roadway construction to Beach and Atlantic Boulevard. In other areas of town, JEA

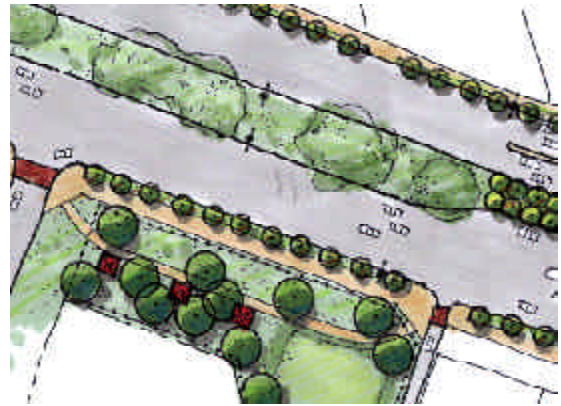
has participated in burying their overhead lines when major road or utility work has occurred. Repair or replacement of existing underground utilities, like storm sewers or water lines would be a prime example of projects that would require major roadway construction that would be ideal for relocating utilities underground.

Neighborhood Parks

The following two projects constitute a subsequent phase, outside of the Town Center funding program. They answer the need for additional neighborhood park space and a public event location and gathering place. The two proposed locations are ideally suited for this purpose: one on each side of the corridor and each serves a different function. As potential City parks, these projects could be accomplished through coordination with the City's Parks and Recreation Department. Additional support and funding could be sought through the aid of City Council Representatives and the Better Jacksonville Plan that includes a component for park development. Additional funding and support resources are described in Section 5 of this report.

Existing Park Improvements

Improve the existing city park on the south side of Atlantic Boulevard between Traymore Road and Ridgewood Place (the western half of this block). Improvements to this space are suggested in the plan, beginning with ornamental fencing, with or without a gate, that would separate and protect the space from the street. Dedicated parking could be accommodated along the east side of the parcel, accessed by the existing alley right-of-way at the center of the block. The adjacent commercial complex houses Havana Jax, a restaurant whose owners expressed an interest during the workshops in improving this park. To better serve the neighborhood and commercial establishments, this park area could be used as

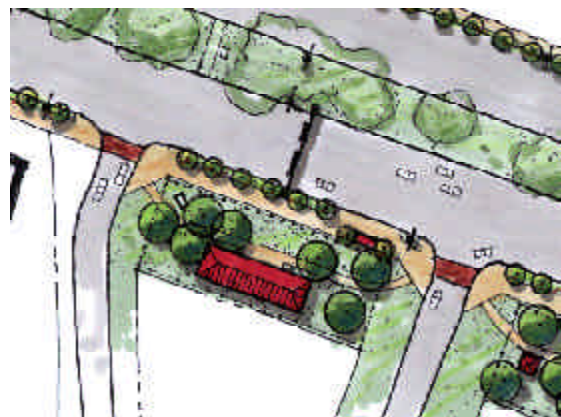


Vision Plan detail of proposed existing park improvements

both a playground with new equipment and as a picnic area with small pavilions. A designated sidewalk would connect these elements with the street sidewalk. A preliminary cost estimate for the proposed improvements is \$121,000.

New Historic Park

Improve the vacant right-of-way on the south side of Atlantic Boulevard between Traymore Road and White Avenue to create a new city park. This area as shown in the plan should be set apart and protected with ornamental fencing. The historic train depot identified by SNAP for preservation could be relocated into this space, giving the park a historic theme. If this depot were used to house a transportation-related museum, it would be eligible to receive FDOT Enhancement funding (see Section 5). To complement this theme, the historic marker located



Vision Plan detail of proposed historic park

nearby in the Atlantic Boulevard median and describing the old Fort San Nicholas could be relocated into this park. In its current location, the marker is invisible and is dangerous to access. A new sidewalk running through this park would connect these elements as part of the park and not the street. A preliminary cost estimate for the proposed improvements is \$83,000.

The Atlantic Boulevard Median

The following projects relate to potential improvements to the existing and wide Atlantic Boulevard median, west of the merger. Workshop participants and the Project Team recognized this area as a unique opportunity for public use. These projects, however, were also recognized as less important than others because the median is already landscaped and maintained by the City of Jacksonville. Nonetheless, these projects would help to create a stronger visual identity for St. Nicholas and provide a unique public space, connecting the pedestrian overpass at Bishop Kenny to the intersection at Holmesdale.

- Re-landscape Atlantic Boulevard center median with formal alley of live oak trees, new sod, and irrigation.
- Add 6-foot wide sidewalk down the center of the median, between new oak trees.
- Create access to the Atlantic Boulevard center median from the existing pedestrian overpass at Bishop Kenny.
- Create a new visual focal point around the existing historical marker located in the central median on Atlantic Boulevard. This project would not be part of this vision element if the historical marker is relocated as proposed above under “Neighborhood Parks.”

Miller Creek Connection

During the first workshop, participants recognized the potential for connecting the Town Center with nearby Miller Creek, the eastern boundary of St. Nicholas. This connection could be as simple as a pedestrian walk terminating in a seating area or as grand as a large dock from which boats from the nearby St. Johns River could dock and walk to the Town Center.

At the time of the workshops, the host site, Mayfair Baptist Church, was for sale, and significant discussion developed over the possibility of using that building, its parking, and its adjacency with Miller Creek as a major Town Center amenity. Because Town Center funds cannot be used for private property enhancement and because the property was under contract for a new owner before this report was complete, the idea of that parcel becoming a community center was abandoned. However, there remains available right-of-way to create a pedestrian connection from Atlantic Boulevard to the water’s edge near the Miller Creek Bridge. The Project Team recommends this project be developed as a worthwhile Town Center amenity, but as a future project to be funded through alternative resources described in Section 5.

Private Property Projects

The following projects are listed to identify several that workshop participants considered as part of the Vision for St. Nicholas. These projects are associated with private property ownership and cannot be developed through the Town Center Program directly, but could be through other resources identified in Section 5.

- Shown on the plan is a pocket park, or small seating area with landscaping, located at the northwest intersection of Beach Boulevard and Palmer Terrace. This proposed park area is located on private property but could perhaps be negotiated for development as part of this plan. This area is a triangular piece of parking lot south of the Curry Thomas building that could be easily designed to accommodate the same amount of parking while offering this leftover space as a public amenity.
- Convert the parking area behind the Mudville Grille, et al., to a pedestrian plaza with new paving, landscaping, outdoor seating, lighting, and water feature. The proposed new parking area converted with the closing of Utina Avenue would support the loss of parking in this area. Palmer Terrace could also be realigned to support parallel parking on each side of the road.
- Solicit in-fill tenants to re-use existing buildings as a grocery, pharmacy/soda shop, coffee shop, bakery, etc.
- Seek city purchase of Mayfair Baptist Church for conversion to a St. Nicholas community center with an expanded parking area to also support the commercial district.
- Create a pedestrian access from Mayfair Baptist Church /converted community center to Miller Creek inlet with public landing and boat dock.
- Consideration was given during the workshops for creating a district bounded by San Mateo on the west, Linden on the east, Atlantic on the north and Beach on the South to allow mixed-use development. This district would have its own written development guidelines, similar to a PUD, that could preserve the desirable characteristics of the area while providing for in-fill development that would blend commercial, residential, and recreational uses to meet the needs of the community. More work is needed to coordinate owner wishes and City requirements before this project could be realized.

Building Improvements

Buildings are one of the primary elements defining the Town Center corridor. Their architectural style, history, arrangement, and use create a sense of place more than any other single corridor feature. Buildings older than 40 or 50 years (from the date of this report) were built in an era when raw materials, especially lumber, were of a much higher quality. Craftsmanship had a higher social value at that time, and attention to form and detail was important.

Also significant is the location of older buildings; they were typically built with storefronts facing the primary road and close to the right-of-way. This placement is in contrast with development trends that evolved with the automobile and shifted priorities toward parking convenience, resulting in buildings being pushed toward the rear of lots. The placement of buildings close to the road is a visually defining element that is desirable from a pedestrian point of view.

These factors make older buildings visually apparent and an immediate indicator of a historic place. For these reasons they are usually worth preserving and renovating. The following recommendations are among the most important for creating an appealing Town Center:

- **Awnings for commercial storefronts that abut the right-of-way.** Building awnings add visual interest as well as much needed shelter from the elements, especially at building entrances. Awnings that project are preferable over ones that hang vertically. Awnings should extend a minimum of 4 feet to provide adequate shelter for pedestrians.
- **Restoration of storefront windows.** Traditional storefront windows should be preserved and alteration with metal frames or excessive paint should be avoided.

- **Removal of burglar bars on windows.**

Invisible security measures, such as automated electrical systems, should be implemented in place of metal window burglar bars that are visually unappealing and promote the perception that crime is a problem in the area.

- **Traditional door replacement.**

Traditional building doors are wood with possibly a glass insert. Replacement doors if made of modern materials such as metal or fiberglass should be manufactured to look historically correct or at least sympathetic to the prevailing historic theme.

- **Do not paint exposed brick.**

Many of the storefronts along the corridor are unpainted brick. They should remain unpainted to preserve the original appearance. Painting of brick is most often irreversible and should be avoided whenever possible.

5 Implementing the Vision

The previous two sections describe many projects that make up the overall Vision for St. Nicholas. Those projects described as Stage One qualify for Phase II funding and fit within the established budget. At least some of the Vision elements will be realized within a relatively short time, probably 2 to 4 years from the date of this report. Nevertheless, these measures alone are not enough to ensure that St. Nicholas will grow into the energetic, pedestrian-oriented community envisioned by the workshop participants. There are still several implementation measures that SNAP and the community need to consider. Fortunately, a model exists that provides an established framework on which SNAP could base their own Town Center initiative.

The Florida Main Street Approach

The Town Center corridor that is the heart of St. Nicholas functions similarly to a small town Main Street. In this regard, we feel the Florida Main Street program provides a useful model for developing implementation strategies.

Florida Main Street is a program of the Department of State, Division of Historical Resources, Bureau of Historic Preservation. The program provides training and technical assistance to local Florida Main Street programs in accordance with the National Main Street Center Four Point Approach and with assistance from the National Main Street Center.

“Design improvements alone will not bring about meaningful change; effective marketing, a strong

organizational base and solid economic development strategies are all necessary to reverse the cycle of decay from which many downtowns suffer and to sustain preservation activity.” (Florida Main Street)

Design

“Design involves improving the downtown’s image by enhancing its physical appearance—not just the appearance of buildings, but also that of streetlights, window displays, parking areas, signs, sidewalks, promotional materials and all other elements that convey a visual message about the downtown and what it has to offer.” (Florida Main Street)

Of the four points, design is the one most addressed in this report. Through this study and its subsequent Town Center phases, major design initiatives will be implemented. There remain, however, other important issues that need to be addressed.

Develop a St. Nicholas Logo. We recommend that SNAP commission a design competition or hire a professional designer, depending on available fund, to create a new logo for St. Nicholas. This logo should be simple, clean and recognizable, ideally incorporating some visual element of the Town Center that best embodies St. Nicholas.

Develop a Handout We recommend that SNAP design a handout that briefly outlines that vision goals and progress to date, as well as solicits involvement and input. This handout would be used as a promotional tool.

Form a Subcommittee Dedicated to Stage Two Programming. Stage Two projects will not be funded under the City’s Town Center Program.

We recommend that a subcommittee be formed that will be responsible for coordination with Parks and Recreation, the District 5 City Council representative, FDOT, and other stakeholders effected by this proposed Stage Two projects. Additionally, this group should identify alternative funding sources to create more development options for SNAP.

Organization

“Organization means building consensus and cooperation among the groups that play roles in downtown. Many individuals have a stake in the economic viability of the downtown, including: bankers, property owners, city and county officials, merchants, downtown residents, professionals, chamber of commerce representatives, local industries, civic groups, historic societies, schools, consumers, real estate agents, and local media.” (Florida Main Street)

Form a Steering Committee. Organization is at the heart of Main Street success. Main Street programs always have a dedicated manager. Often this is a full-time paid position. SNAP as the sponsoring group is already a dedicated organization. To ensure that needs specific to this vision are met, the Project Team suggests that a Town Center steering committee be formed to oversee the implementation of this Vision. The steering committee would be responsible for enacting the remaining three points of the program.

Form a Local Merchant’s Organization. Because the local business owners are part of this process and can benefit greatly from its success, we also recommend that a local merchant’s group be formed that can represent its significant interests.

Promotion

Promotion involves marketing the area’s unique characteristics to shoppers, investors, new businesses, residents, and others. Effective promotion creates a positive image of the area through retail

promotional activity, special events and ongoing programs to build a positive image of the district.

Involve Local Merchants. To gain the support necessary to enact this Vision, the program and St. Nicholas itself must be actively promoted. The local merchants need to be a part of this promotion effort and involved in its organization. It is important that promotion planners understand merchant needs such as access and visibility and it is just as important for business owners to understand that promotion often involves extra effort, such as extending store hours at certain times.

Create a New Event. Regular events are an excellent means of generating interest and activity for a Town Center. We recommend that SNAP create at least one new event that is unique to the area that would attract local residents as well as people from around the City. Dade City Main Street used a two-event-per-year program to effectively build support for Main Street and at the same time create new local traditions. They created one event to be family-oriented, inexpensive and fun (a Halloween carnival) and one event that was purely for the merchants (a Christmas walk). Both events require a great deal of organization but have resulted in a very successful redevelopment for their Town Center.

Economic Restructuring

“Economic restructuring means strengthening the existing economic base of the downtown while diversifying it. Economic restructuring activities include helping existing downtown businesses expand, recruiting new businesses to provide a balanced mix, converting unused space into productive property and sharpening the competitiveness of downtown merchants. By strengthening the downtown’s economy, communities are able to support the ongoing use of historic commercial buildings, preserving unique community assets.” (Florida Main Street)

Conduct a Market Study. A market study would examine in detail the economic and demographic conditions specific to St. Nicholas. Initial efforts might include identifying sources of funding to pay for a professional analysis. Alternatively, SNAP could conduct their own market study, using volunteers to research available data and draw conclusions regarding the current and potential conditions of the environment. In either case, this would be a significant first effort toward economic restructuring, lending the necessary information to make informed decisions.

Town Center Program Phase II

With the completion of this report, St. Nicholas is eligible to apply for Phase II funding through the City's Town Center Program. SNAP, as the sponsoring agent for Phase I, is the logical choice to make the Phase II application.

The types of improvements found in Section 3 of this report and their estimated costs can serve as the guide for the Phase II application. The Phase II effort would include continued community input as well as coordination with the City and other affected agencies for construction details.

Other Funding Opportunities

Several funding opportunities could be used by SNAP (or other viable party) to help implement the Future Projects described earlier in Section 4. The following list is meant to be a starting point; numerous other opportunities exist and may provide the best fit for implementing one or more of these projects.

City of Jacksonville

The following City programs are accessible but often competitive, requiring the sponsoring agent to be organized and persistent as recommended earlier. Nevertheless, the projects outlined in this report as community building initiatives are ideal candidates for funding from many of these sources. The following list is meant to be a starting point as other opportunities exist and may provide a better fit for implementing one or more of these projects.

Small Business Development Initiative Program

This program is aimed at small and start-up businesses and provides low interest loans to qualified applicants for up to 30% of the project cost, and not to exceed \$250,000.

Mayor's Neighborhood Matching Grants Program

"The Mayor's Neighborhood Matching Grants (MNMG) Program makes awards of up to \$5,000 to specific neighborhood projects that build relationships and enhance the community. As part of the city's continuing efforts to improve and strengthen Jacksonville neighborhoods, the Mayor will propose to the City Council during the Fiscal Year 2003-2004 budget cycle an appropriation of \$250,000 for projects that promote stronger, healthier neighborhoods. If authorized, the funds will become available October 1, 2003.

Any neighborhood association, civic organization or community group that has been in existence for at least six months and is located in Duval County is eligible to submit an application."

(<http://www.coj.net>)

The Matching Grant Program offers neighborhood organizations the opportunity to initiate and implement smaller scale projects and manage the projects themselves. This program may offer opportunities to develop some of the smaller projects identified in this report or pieces of larger

ones. Local information about the program can be obtained at 630-7041 or on-line at www.coj.net.

Community Development Block Grant

“The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) is an entitlement grant awarded to the City of Jacksonville through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (U.S. HUD) that is based upon need factors including population, income, unemployment level and housing conditions.

CDBG grants are to be used for a wide range of housing and community development activities directed toward neighborhood revitalization, economic development and improved community facilities and services, and must give “maximum feasible priority” to activities that will benefit low-and moderate-income persons or aid in the prevention or elimination of slums or blight. Funds may also be used to meet other community development needs that present a serious and immediate threat to the health or welfare of the community.” (<http://www.coj.net>)

Some of the projects outlined in this report could be eligible for CDBG funding. Local information about the program can be obtained at 630-7030 or on-line at www.coj.net.

Historic Properties

“In November 1992, the State of Florida authorized local governments to provide a partial tax exemption on historic properties. The City of Jacksonville approved an ad valorem tax exemption for locally designated properties that undergo a substantial rehabilitation.” (<http://www.coj.net>)

To be eligible for Historic Property benefits, the property or area must have a historic designation. Properties can seek “landmark” status at the local level or apply for a listing on the National Register of Historic Properties through the Trust for Historic Preservation. St. Nicholas is not part of an established historic district; therefore, each building or property would apply individually.

Tree Protection and Related Expenses Trust Fund

In 1997 the Jacksonville City Council approved the creation of the Tree Protection and Related Expenses Trust Fund. Contributions to the fund come primarily from property owners, both private and public, that remove protected trees (as defined by the ordinance) and elect to pay for each protected tree removed (at \$108 per caliper inch for 2004), rather than replace them with new trees according to the ordinance requirements. Trust funds are to be used for the replacement of removed protected trees within the public right-of-way and for their establishment and care. The proposed trees in this report are located in the right-of-way and may be eligible for funding through the Tree Protection and Related Expenses Trust Fund.

State of Florida

The following resources and contact information are listed for potential state funding and assistance. They are listed in order of applicability to this Vision report.

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Florida Department of Transportation

ISTEA Enhancement Program

Transportation enhancement projects, including bike and pedestrian trails.

Robert Crimm (850) 487-3985
605 Suwannee Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0450

“The Transportation Enhancement Program (TEP) is a federal program administered by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT). TEP guidance and direction are provided by the Environmental Management Office, whereas the selection and implementation of most enhancement projects are handled by the FDOT District Offices with input from Metropolitan Planning Organizations or County Commissions.

Funding for transportation enhancement projects is provided by the Federal Highway Administration

(FHWA) through the Federal Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21). This funding is intended for projects or features that go beyond what has been customarily provided with transportation improvements. This program is for projects that are related to the transportation system but are beyond what is required through normal mitigation or routinely provided features is transportation improvements. TEP is not a grant program, rather projects are undertaken by project sponsors, and eligible costs are reimbursed.”

TEP Activities Defined -

1. Provision of facilities for pedestrians and bicycles.
 2. Provision of safety and educational activities for pedestrians and bicyclists.
 3. Acquisition of scenic easements and scenic or historic sites.
 4. Scenic or historic highway programs (including the provision of tourist and welcome center facilities).
 5. Landscaping and other scenic beautification.
 6. Historic preservation.
 7. Rehabilitation and operation of historic transportation buildings, structures, or facilities (including historic railroad facilities and canals).
 8. Preservation of abandoned railway corridors (including the conversion and use thereof for pedestrian or bicycle trails).
 9. Control and removal of outdoor advertising.
 10. Archaeological planning and research.
 11. Environmental mitigation to address water pollution due to highway runoff or reduce vehicle-caused wildlife mortality while maintaining habitat connectivity.
 12. Establishment of transportation museums.”
- (<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov>)

The current TEP provides enhancement funds for improvements that are recommended in this report as well as other improvements not specifically addressed, such as provisions for bike lanes. The proposed “Historic Park” that is part of this plan’s Stage Two program is especially suited for TEP funding. If the historic depot were relocated to this park and converted at least partially to a

transportation-related museum, the justification for funding would be greatly improved.

Department of Community Affairs

Florida Communities Trust

Janice Browning (850) 922-2207
2555 Shumard Oak Boulevard
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-2100

“Florida Communities Trust (FCT) is a state land acquisition grant program housed at the Florida Department of Community Affairs.

FCT provides funding to local governments and eligible non-profit environmental organizations for acquisition of community-based parks, open space and greenways that further outdoor recreation and natural resource protection needs identified in local government comprehensive plans.” (<http://www.dca.state.fl.us>)

This program could provide another funding mechanism for acquiring the land for the “New Neighborhood Park” proposed as a Stage Two project in Section 3.

Department of State

State Historic Preservation Grants-in-Aid Program

Historic and archaeological site identification, preservation, restoration and education.

Fred Gaske (850) 487-2333
500 South Bronough Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0250

Historical Museums Grants-In-Aid Program

Development of exhibits on Florida history.

David Gregory (850) 487-1902
The Old Capitol, Room B-11
400 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0250

Cultural Facilities Program

Funding for acquisition, construction and renovation of cultural facilities.

Don Blancett (850) 245-6483
1001 DeSoto Park
Tallahassee, Florida 32301

Challenge Grant Program

Funding to support unique or innovative cultural projects.

Gaylen Phillips (850) 245-6482
1001 DeSoto Park
Tallahassee, Florida 32301

6 Maintaining the Vision

Maintenance is a significant issue determining the success or failure of proposed improvements, whether on public land or private. Maintenance represents care, and the care of a place is visually apparent even from a speeding car. The degree of care offered to a place, whether building or landscape, is usually a factor of time and money, but also depends greatly on varying attitudes about what is visually acceptable by a community.

The broad design measures recommended in this report are prepared with the benefit of training and expertise. The use of certain materials and their arrangement will create a more ordered and appealing environment, even with little continual maintenance. Where a more manicured appearance is desired, supplemental maintenance will be required. The recommendations below are aimed at providing the necessary coordination and practice to achieve a higher quality appearance and longer lasting product for the proposed corridor improvements.

Partnerships

With regard to public right-of-ways and parks, the immediate solution for elevated maintenance is the creation of partnerships. Partnerships between public and private entities many times allow for a win-win situation, with each often getting what they want. Public agencies aim to please the community while maintaining a budget; private entities desire a higher degree of control over the look and upkeep of their shared environment. In many partnerships, all or a percentage of the public maintenance budget is allotted to the

private entity for maintenance purposes under a contract clearly stating minimum requirements. In some cases, the established public budget is adequate to fund the desired maintenance, supplemented with volunteer labor, donations, and other resources not available to the public entity.

To move this Vision forward, it is important for SNAP to coordinate with FDOT and the City the implementation goals of this plan. Ultimately, a contract may be required between the residents or business owners who desire an enhanced level of maintenance and the public agencies impacted by this proposed maintenance.

Landscaping

Landscape plants are one of the most visible clues to the degree of maintenance an area or place undertakes. Basic landscape maintenance is relatively inexpensive when compared to the cost of roadway, infrastructure, utility, building, or other maintenance efforts. Typical landscape routines for public sector entities are limited to regular mowing with occasional edging and trimming.

Extended Maintenance Period

The critical maintenance period for landscape plants is the first year of establishment following installation. To address this need, installation contracts can include a maintenance period to cover that first year. Many times with no irrigation system, the contractor will require an extended maintenance agreement to warranty the installed plants. None of the landscape improvements in this report are envisioned with or

budgeted for an automated irrigation system. Typical City projects specify a maintenance period of 90 days. To compensate for no irrigation and minimal care, the Project Team recommends installation contracts include an extended maintenance program for at least one year to provide better establishment of new plants.

General Maintenance Practices

General maintenance practices should conform to industry standards. While the plants recommended in this report are hardy and should do well with little attention once established, they will grow faster, be healthier, and look much better with regular attendance.

Plants should be fertilized annually, according to their specific need. Plants should be inspected annually for pests or disease, and pesticides should be applied as needed to infested or diseased plants. Pruning should be accomplished only by licensed personnel and according to ANSI A-300 pruning standards. Pruning should only be performed to remove dead or low-hanging branches. Crape myrtles especially should not be cut back severely from the top but instead allowed to achieve a natural, small tree form. Weeds should be removed at least twice per year during establishment, and after shrubs and groundcovers have been established, on an as needed basis. To limit weed intrusion, an annual application of mulch and pre-emergent herbicide is recommended annually for all planting beds. Pine straw and pine bark are recommended mulch selections. Cypress bark should be avoided as a non-renewable resource and colored mulches avoided due to their artificial appearance.

Sidewalks, Crosswalks, and Seating areas.

Paved areas outside of the roadway itself need to be inspected annually for cracking, settlement, and other conditions that pose a hazard to pedestrians.

Weeds that appear in cracks and spaces should be spot-treated as needed with an herbicide.

Light Posts and Signal Posts

Light and signal posts should be inspected annually and damage reported to JEA. Repainting should occur when fading or peeling is visible.

Buildings

Older buildings such as the ones along the Town Center corridor require continual maintenance. Facade treatments, storefronts and street-facing, publicly visible features, are of concern in this report. Exposed wood materials should be kept painted, stained, or treated to maintain the quality of the wood and a well-kept appearance. St. Nicholas climatic conditions necessitate repainting on a five-year average. Faded or torn awnings, or other cloth or plastic material mounted to the facade, should be replaced with new material. Property owners should keep sidewalks in good repair and clean of all litter and debris to maintain a well-kept appearance. Graffiti should be removed immediately from sidewalks or building walls. Graffiti that lingers signals to residents and vandals that the neighborhood does not care, while prompt removal has the opposite effect. Products are available for this purpose, and standard oven cleaner apparently works well.

7 Final Recommendations

As a final measure of ensuring the ongoing realization of the St. Nicholas Town Center Vision, some recommendations are offered to address other issues discussed by the group.

Overlay District

During the workshops, participants discussed the value of creating an overlay district for all or part of the St. Nicholas area. An overlay district would allow St. Nicholas property owners to develop written guidelines specific to the neighborhood and geared toward protection and promotion of its valuable assets. Guidelines would give greater understanding, form, and direction to renovation and new development efforts. Establishment of a district could also give an added measure of protection to historic properties. If additional historic property protection is desired, St. Nicholas may wish to consider establishing a historic district for significant parts of the area. Initially, there are two primary areas of concern discussed in the workshops: commercial signs and commercial building renovation.

Commercial Signs

Signs along the corridor, including commercial signs and transportation signs, have significant visual impact. Because transportation signs must maintain a universality for effectiveness, the commercial signs along the corridor should be the primary focus. As part of the overlay guidelines, SNAP should develop sign guidelines specific to St. Nicholas. Sign guidelines would aid new businesses attracted to the Town Center through this initiative by developing a consistent approach.

Guidelines would also aid existing business owners in communicating the long-term objectives of the program and, while not obligating them to change or replace their current signs, at least inform them of the Vision. Sign attributes such as size, location, height, color, shape, and material should be considered.

Architectural Guidelines

As with sign guidelines, SNAP should create architectural guidelines for the overlay district, specific to the needs and Vision of the St. Nicholas Town Center. Such guidelines would serve to assist business owners in providing renovation standards, while also boosting investor confidence in the strength of local commitment to the Town Center Initiative. Architectural guidelines should address facade improvements initially as the most visible and public aspect of commercial buildings. General guidelines for facade improvements are offered in Section 4 but additional measures specific to the district should be developed, especially given this report's recommendation to expand on the Art Moderne architectural theme.

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CPTED

"CPTED is the acronym for Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design. CPTED is defined as "the proper design and effective use of the built environment that can lead to a reduction in the fear and incidence of crime and an improvement in the quality of life." CPTED addresses crime problems through controlling the environment.

CPTED is based on these three overlapping strategies:

1. **Natural Surveillance** - The placement and design or physical features to maximize visibility. This includes building orientation, windows, entrances and exits, parking lots, walkways, guard gates, landscape trees and shrubs, fences or walls, signage and any other physical obstruction.

2. **Natural Access Control** - The use of sidewalks, pavement, lighting and landscaping to clearly guide the public to and from entrances and exits. Also, the use of fences, walls or landscaping to prevent and/or discourage public access to or from dark and/or unmonitored areas.

3. **Territorial Reinforcement** - The use of pavement treatments, landscaping, art, signage, screening and fences to define and outline ownership or property.

Program Goals

The goal of CPTED is to reduce opportunities for crime that may be inherent in the design of structures or in the design of neighborhoods. The goal is accomplished through the involvement of CPTED trained law enforcement officers in the planning, development, and design review of community projects.

How does CPTED impact me?

CPTED impacts each citizen by increasing safety, promoting secure environments and improving the appearance of neighborhoods and public amenities. CPTED improves existing services by working with neighborhoods, businesses, community groups and law enforcement.” (<http://www.coj.net/jso/>)

Called “Septed,” this City of Jacksonville’s Sheriff’s Office (JSO) program from the JSO helps communities identify crime-causing elements in the environment and solutions to rectify them. JSO has designated officers specially trained to communicate this process to the community and to find solutions specific to the area. Many of their observations are intriguing and escape notice by the layperson. Often it is little changes to the environment that make big differences in reducing crime. As this is a free service, we strongly recommend that St. Nicholas coordinate a CPTED survey through the JSO.

Officer Laurie Dill (904) 630-2160
JSO Community Affairs Division
501 East Bay Street, Room 204
Jacksonville, Florida 32202

Code Enforcement

Workshop participants cited greater code enforcement as a high priority to ensure a cleaner and more appealing corridor. Significant problems noted by participants included:

- Private property maintenance, especially concerning deteriorating residences and yard maintenance
- Trash removal from the right-of-way
- Cars parked in front yards
- Vandalism and graffiti
- Crime

The Jacksonville Ordinance Code provides for minimum acceptable social practices to maintain a consistent appearance and pleasant, healthy living environment. Citizens may register complaints and violations directly with the City through City Link and the C.A.R.E. system.

City Link

117 W. Duval Street
Suite M-150, City Hall
Jacksonville, FL 32202.
(904) 630-2489 or
630CITY@coj.net

JaxPride is another resource available for assisting with local code enforcement through their Neighborhood Inventory of Visual Pollution (NIVP) program.

JaxPride

904-398-4646
jaxpride@fcol.com

8 Conclusion

The St. Nicholas commercial district has a viable opportunity through the City's Town Center Initiative to restore and revitalize its character, provide better, safer shopping, service, and entertainment alternatives for area residents, and create a more meaningful and aesthetically pleasing environment. This report represents the first step in effecting those changes. The Vision we have defined for St. Nicholas through data collection, Vision concepts, and implementation recommendations is a fundamental requirement for moving forward.

This report meets Town Center Program Phase II funding requirements and contains the necessary ingredients to steer development of construction drawings; however, Phase I recipients are not guaranteed Phase II funding through the program. If selected by the City for Phase II funding, the Phase II design consultant should use this report as a guide to identify the primary themes and recommendations we have developed for St. Nicholas.

The Vision Plan illustrations provided in this report are meant to be used for developing construction drawings. Prepared at a workable scale, they are reasonably accurate and should be used by the Phase II consultant as an overlay once a more accurate base plan is developed. Where changes must occur due to unforeseen circumstances, the

Phase II consultant should make needed adjustments while keeping the theme of the Vision in mind.

SNAP has taken a strong first step in pursuing this program to create a revitalized St. Nicholas Town Center.

The Vision we have

developed in this report responds directly to the needs and desires of the community. Through the fulfillment of this Vision, St. Nicholas will become a more successful community, recognized as a unique and desirable place within the greater city of Jacksonville.

