



**DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. & VERONICA S. SHOEMAKER BOULEVARDS  
REVITALIZATION PLAN**

# DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR & VERONICA S. SHOEMAKER BOULEVARDS REVITALIZATION PLAN

*was created by:*

## **Fort Myers City Council**

Mayor Jim Humphrey  
Warren J. Wright, Ward 1  
Veronica Shoemaker, Ward 2  
Levon Simms, Ward 3  
Micheal A. Flanders, Ward 4  
Randall Henderson Jr., Ward 5

## **City of Fort Myers Staff**

Anne Mullins, Principal Planner  
Elly Soto McKuen, Planning Manager  
Mellone Long, Director of Community Development

## **Dover, Kohl & Partners**

Victor Dover  
Joseph Kohl  
Margaret Flippen  
James Dougherty  
Amy Groves  
Canan Mutlu  
Andrew Zitofsky

## **Spikowski Planning Associates**

Bill Spikowski

## **Florida Gulf Coast University**

Lee Duffus, Ph.D.

## **Hall Planning & Engineering**

Billy Hattaway

## **A+S Architects, Planners**

Derek Smith

## **Kiss & Company**

Jeff Kiss

## **Stephanie Bothwell, ASLA**

Stephanie Bothwell

## **Florida Gulf Coast University**

Edgardo Welch, Ph.D.

*and Hundreds of Fort Myers Residents*



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

executive summary	
research	1
process	2
by the numbers	3
cornerstones of the plan	4
special places	5
implementation	6
appendix	A Previous Studies
appendix	B Design Guidelines
appendix	C Transportation Analysis
appendix	D Enterprise Zone Incentives
appendix	E Historic Sites of Dunbar: A Self Guided Tour





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Veronica S. Shoemaker Revitalization Plan presents a process for envisioning the future and setting out on the journey to turn that vision into reality.

A consulting team headed by Dover, Kohl & Partners began by asking the people of Dunbar to share their concerns about conditions in their neighborhood and their ideas for the future. A week-long community planning workshop in December of 2005 included an interactive design session where residents worked in small groups and drew their ideas on maps of their neighborhoods.

A design studio was then set up at the Quality Life Center where many residents, city staff, and community leaders stopped by to help guide the plan's development. Several public meetings and presentations gave residents and property owners more chances to understand ideas as they evolved and a chance to criticize or support those ideas.

This Revitalization Plan was shaped from this extensive input. The plan includes potential physical improvements plus critical regulatory changes, with detailed strategies for their implementation. The plan is a guidebook to help residents, property owners and the city of Fort Myers to steer the future development of Dunbar including its major road corridors and nearby neighborhoods.

The major revitalization ideas are summarized here; full details are provided in later chapters.

**COMPLETE, WALKABLE, PEOPLE-FIRST NEIGHBORHOODS**  
One of the key revitalization tasks along Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevards is establishing walkability while maintaining road capacity for through traffic.

- An essential goal is identifying key segments along the boulevards where walkability needs to be improved.
- Within these segments, vehicular capacity should be maintained by using avenue and boulevard designs, with walkability improved through speed management, more opportunities for pedestrians to cross, and the creation of superior pedestrian environments.



### FACING STREETS & MAKING GREAT ADDRESSES

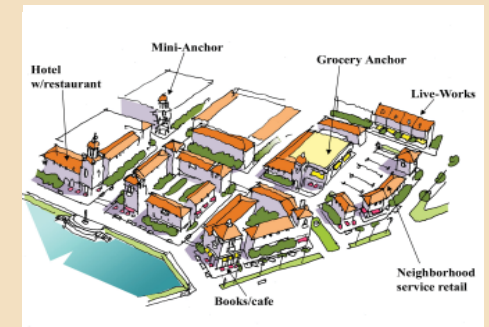
The fronts of buildings should have doors and windows facing streets and public spaces, making the streets more attractive and desirable places to be. Parking should be on-street or behind the buildings.

- Michigan Court's redevelopment plan should be modified to a network of traditional streets and blocks, which will create a safer and more diverse neighborhood of desirable houses and apartments.

### MIXED-INCOME, MIXED-USE, MIXED-DESIGN

To create a complete neighborhood that can be enjoyed by a diverse population, it is crucial to provide housing for a mix of incomes and a variety of building types allowing for diverse lifestyle options and incomes to live in the same neighborhood.

- Eastwood Village should be one of the neighborhoods integrating a variety of market-rate and workforce housing on traditional interconnected blocks.
- Towles Garden should also be developed as a site for affordable housing in a way that improves the entire neighborhood. With diverse housing types placed on traditional city blocks, Towles Garden can become a model of development for other Fort Myers neighborhoods.
- The automotive junkyards near Franklin Park elementary school should be relocated to a suitable industrial site and replaced with housing that improves the neighborhood.



### SHOWCASE & HONOR THE COMMUNITY HERITAGE

Preserving and restoring the existing community resources and creating new facilities to host cultural events is vital in honoring the community heritage and identity.

- The intersection of Cranford Avenue and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard was once a neighborhood center and could be brought back better than ever. Anchored by a renovated McCollum Hall and the Imaginarium, this corner could fuse tourism with local culture and serve as a western gateway to Dunbar.
- Clemente Park should become the highly visible and much-frequented centerpiece of Dunbar. Its park amenities and Black History Museum can be supplemented through time with additional community buildings and a major cultural center. A crossing of the Ford Street drainage canal can reunite nearby neighborhoods and link Clemente Park to Dunbar Park.
- The new intersection of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard is too important to be left to the vagaries of generic roadside strip development. This intersection deserves a prominent cultural landmark, and dignified housing should be added nearby.

### BRING UP THE PEOPLE WITH THE PLACE

This Revitalization Plan was created through close cooperation with the Dunbar community. While improving the physical attributes of the place, a more upwardly mobile community can be created with programs assisting local residents and businesses.

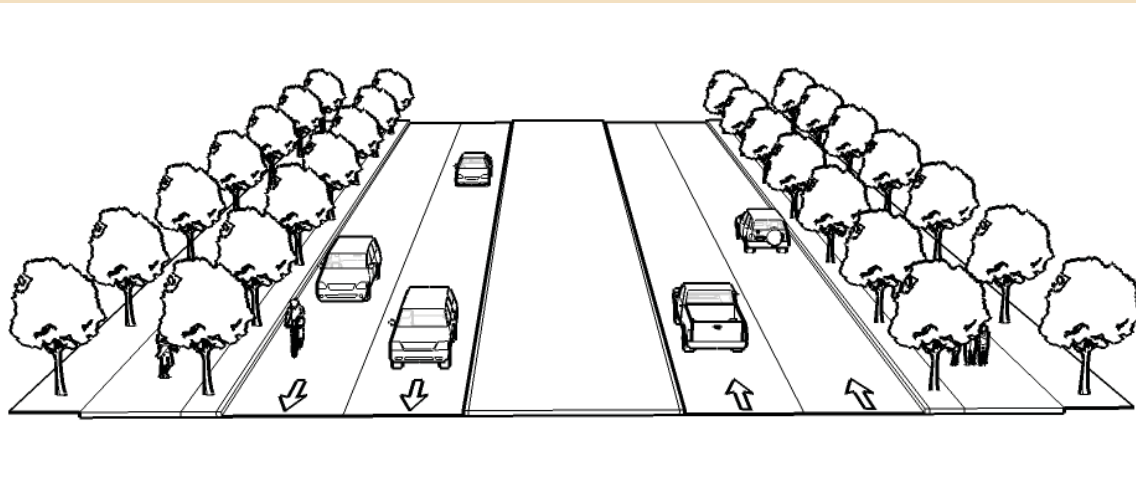
- Expanding the number and variety of local businesses will make more consumer choices available to local residents, offer more opportunities for entrepreneurial activity and retain more wealth in the community. Business training and start-up facilities are important for the launching and flourishing of local businesses.
- The city should continue to support and publicize the entrepreneurial assistance offered by the Southwest Florida Enterprise Center and the FGCU-based Small Business Development Center.
- The newly expanded Enterprise Zone for central and east Fort Myers offers numerous valuable benefits for new homes and for certain businesses, especially those employing residents in the Enterprise Zone.
- An expanded redevelopment area for Dunbar could provide a recurring source of funds to help carry out this revitalization plan.
- A Dunbar Development Fund should be established to coordinate training and financial assistance to local entrepreneurs so the community fully benefits from Dunbar's untapped economic potential.



## NEW STANDARDS

The City of Fort Myers must begin transforming its outdated land-use regulatory system to allow the city to improve over time. The current system is overly rigid yet still does not embody the aspirations of its citizens for a better future.

- The recent four-laning of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard has added new hurdles that interfere with redevelopment of the traditional business district. Some of these hurdles can be removed by creating an overlay district in the city's Growth Management Code to waive unnecessary dimensional restrictions on small B-2 business lots, particularly the minimum setbacks and lot sizes and the excessive parking requirements.
- Well-tended vacant lots owned by adjoining homeowners are a welcome addition to most neighborhoods, but vacant lots owned by absentee investors are rarely an asset. City regulations that forbid a 50' wide vacant lot from having a home built on it should be lifted.
- Neighborhoods suffer when houses or lots are abandoned. The city's program to convert eyesore lots into affordable housing should be accelerated and its standards should be reevaluated to ensure they meet the twin goals of neighborhood improvement and affordable housing.
- Duplexes can provide more variety in housing, but they have proven problematic when not designed to fit into single-family neighborhoods. Strict design standards for new duplexes can resolve this incompatibility.
- Rows of street trees should be placed between the sidewalk and traffic lanes in order to make sidewalks attractive to pedestrians.









# research 1



“It’s a historical day for the city. We’re trying to get new economic development in the Dunbar area. I believe that (Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard) is the gateway of the city.”

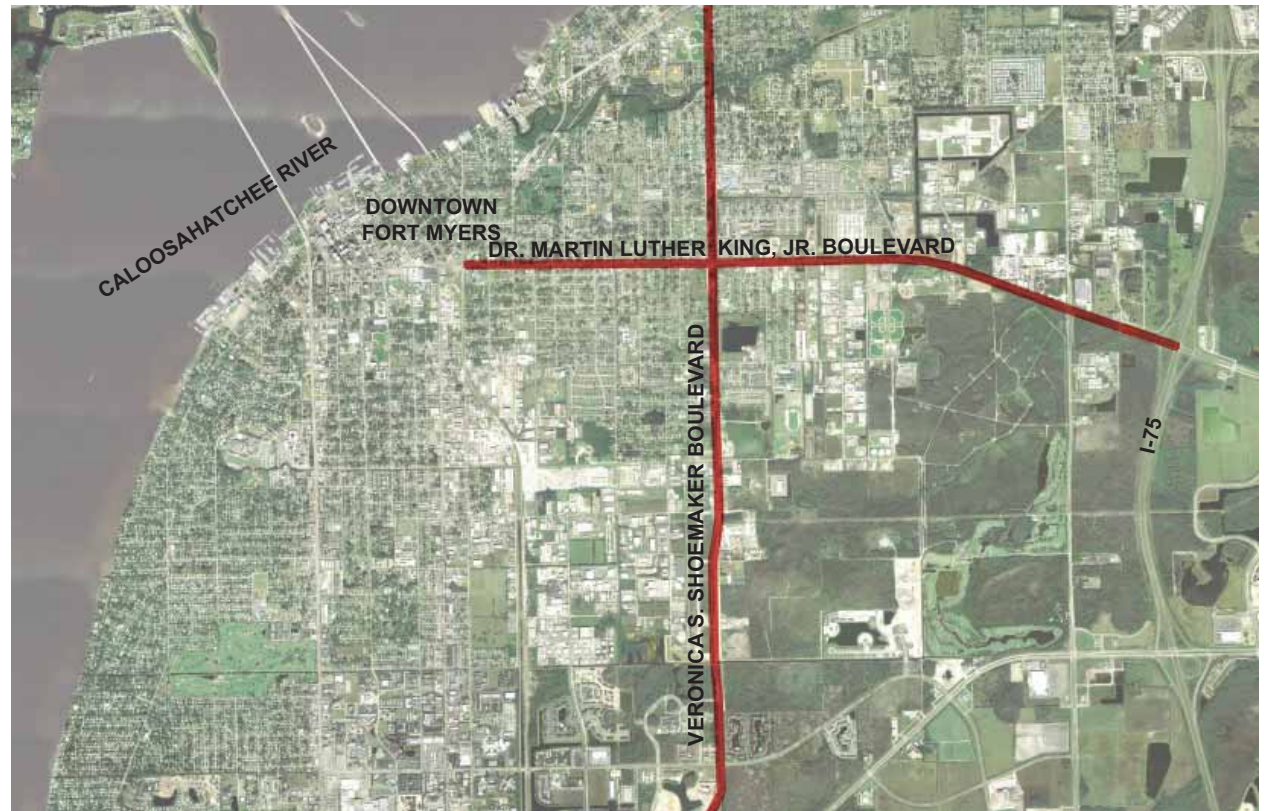
- Councilwoman Veronica S. Shoemaker  
*The News-Press*, November 2, 2005

Communities need to work together to guide growth and assure quality development for future generations. The Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard / Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard Revitalization Plan demonstrates this kind of teamwork.

The Revitalization Plan seeks to balance the needs of both vehicles and pedestrians while preserving and improving the culture and community character of Dunbar. In doing so, this document represents a cohesive plan for the future of the corridors. The plan details specific design solutions and a feasible implementation strategy.

In 2005 and 2006 the City of Fort Myers, along with the town planning firm of Dover, Kohl & Partners, worked together to create a plan for the redevelopment of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard.

The planning process for the corridors began with a review of all relevant previous plans and studies and a detailed analysis of the study area. This chapter details the analysis of the corridors and the community planning process; the chapters following describe the resulting plan and strategies for implementation.



Aerial view of the two corridors

## ANALYSIS

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard are major thoroughfares that serve as important connections in the regional transportation network, but more importantly, both corridors are embedded in the heart of the Dunbar community. Running east and west, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard goes from Interstate 75 to Downtown Fort Myers. Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard heads north – south from Palm Beach Boulevard to Colonial Boulevard. The study area defined for the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard / Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard Revitalization Plan includes approximately 8 miles of

roadway and extends two blocks in all directions from each corridors.

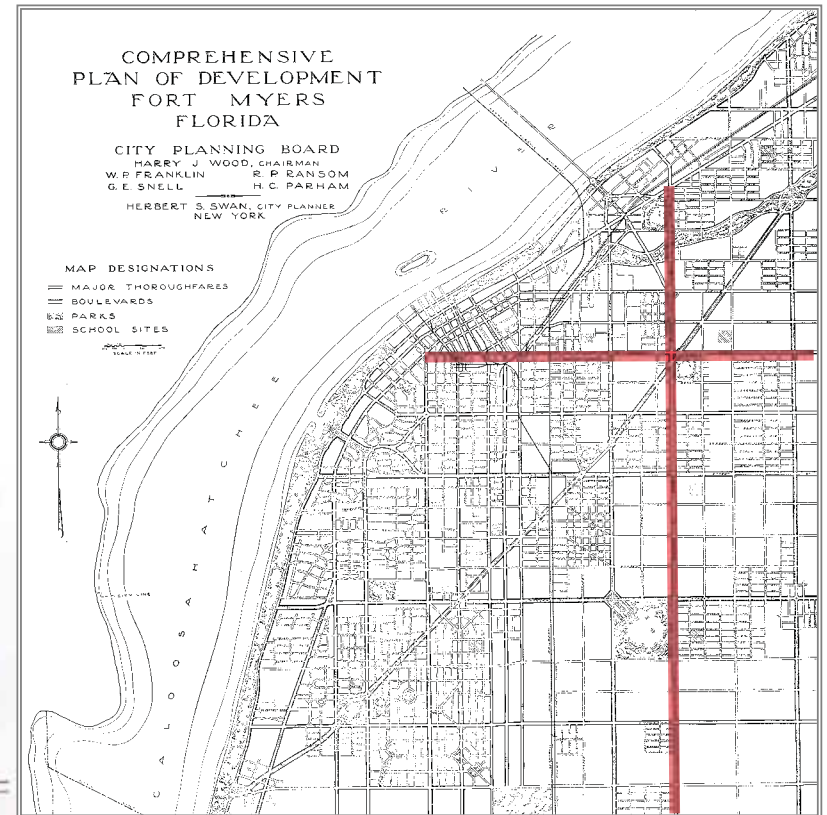
Realizing the importance of both corridors as transportation and community connectors, the city and Dunbar residents recognized the need to join together to create a comprehensive strategy for growth and redevelopment of the corridor. A comprehensive strategy for the future of these important corridors is needed to address their physical form and redevelopment, as well as to promote and preserve the community character of the Dunbar area.

## STUDYING THE PAST

Prior to creating the plan for the future of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard, the planning team researched the history of the corridors by reviewing the city's and local residents' collections of historic maps and photographs. From its inception, Anderson Avenue, now Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, has served as a primary transportation route connecting Downtown Fort Myers with the region. In addition to being a major transportation corridor, the roadway has served as a

centralizing element for African-American history and culture in Fort Myers. In its long history the corridor has been home to locally-owned African-American businesses, as well as a location for entertainment and cultural venues.

In addition to studying the history of these corridors, the planning team reviewed all previous plans and studies relative to the corridors and Dunbar community (see Appendix A).



The 1926 plan for Fort Myers by Herbert S. Swan shows Palmetto Avenue (now Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard) as a continuous road.



Anderson Avenue, looking west, World War II  
Photo courtesy of the Southwest Florida Historical Society



## DUNBAR / BELLE VUE ANNEXATION

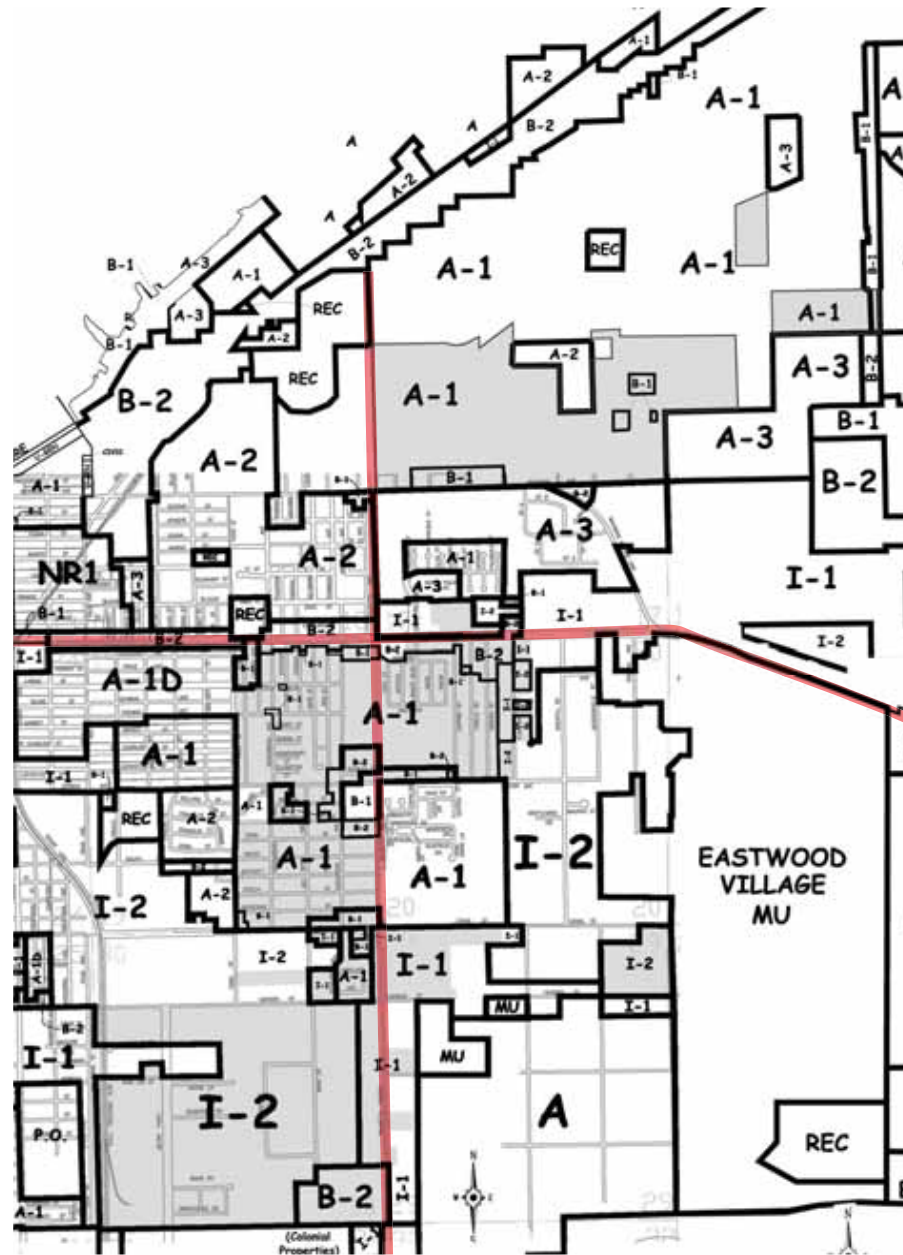
The entire study area is within the City of Fort Myers. However, a central portion, including nearly all of Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard south of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, became part of the city only recently. A small area known as Belle Vue, which lies immediately to the north of Michigan Avenue, was also annexed at that time.

For over 15 years, Lee County and city officials worked on details of annexing these unincorporated enclaves into the city. Under Florida law, annexations are fairly simple if a city and 100% of the landowners are in agreement. However, these enclaves were so large that it would have been impossible to achieve 100% agreement.

In 1998, the Florida legislature agreed to let Fort Myers annex these enclaves without the 100% requirement, provided the city and county agreed on the terms through an interlocal agreement and that residents of the enclaves supported the terms of that agreement in a referendum. The interlocal agreement was finalized in January of 2003. Voters approved the referendum on March 4 and annexation took effect on October 1, 2003.

Under terms of the interlocal agreement, essential services are being phased in over a five-year period. These include police, fire, code enforcement, sidewalks, street lighting, housing, potable water, wastewater, streets, solid waste, parks, and drainage.

In addition, the city agreed to amend its comprehensive plan to assign city land use designations to all annexed property. This was completed during 2004 and 2005. The map on this page shows the new designations (in the shaded gray areas) for land near Veronica S. Shoemaker and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevards (which are highlighted in red).



## ANALYSIS OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard is an east-west thoroughfare that serves as the entrance to Fort Myers. The corridor, once known as Anderson Avenue, leads from the intersection of Interstate 75 to Downtown. Located on both sides of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard (MLK) from Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard (VSS) to Cranford Avenue is the Dunbar neighborhood. Dunbar, named after the famous African-American poet Paul Laurence Dunbar, is the historic center of the African-American community in Fort Myers.

On the western end of the corridor, properties along the road are typically one-story set close to the road. These buildings are a mixture of neighborhood commercial and residential buildings. Many of the structures were built in the 1950s and are in need of repair. The eastern end of MLK, from VSS to I-75, is a mixture of commercial and industrial buildings. The buildings are also one-story tall set back further from the street.

In 2002, the city and FDOT began a complete overhaul of MLK. The widening of MLK has improved aesthetics and traffic flow but has jeopardized the neighborhood fabric of the community. The absence of on-street parking, narrow sidewalks, and too few crosswalks, coupled with high vehicle travel speeds, makes the corridor feel unsafe for pedestrians.

Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard, named for Fort Myers Councilwoman Veronica S. Shoemaker, varies in character from residential to industrial buildings. The northern portion of the roadway is bordered by residential neighborhoods, High Tech Center, Alternative Learning Center, and Shady Oaks and Terry Park. The corridor also crosses Billy Creek, a tributary of the Caloosahatchee River. The southern portion opened for traffic in 2006. From Edison Avenue south to Colonial Boulevard mid-sized industrial facilities line the corridor. In recent years, multi-family residential units have been built along this portion of the corridor.



MLK West – McCollum Hall



MLK West – Imaginarium



MLK East – Fleamasters



MLK & VSS Intersection



VSS North – Michigan Avenue



VSS South – Winkler Avenue

**SCALE COMPARISONS**

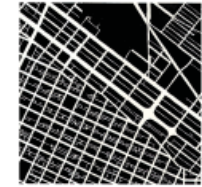
These scale comparisons helped the planners and community participants to better understand the scale of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard in relation to other memorable corridors and great places. Below are the corridors at the same scale as other well-known towns and corridors. The scale comparisons give light to the vast amount of large parcels available for redevelopment along the corridor, and make vivid the need to complete the street network as development occurs.



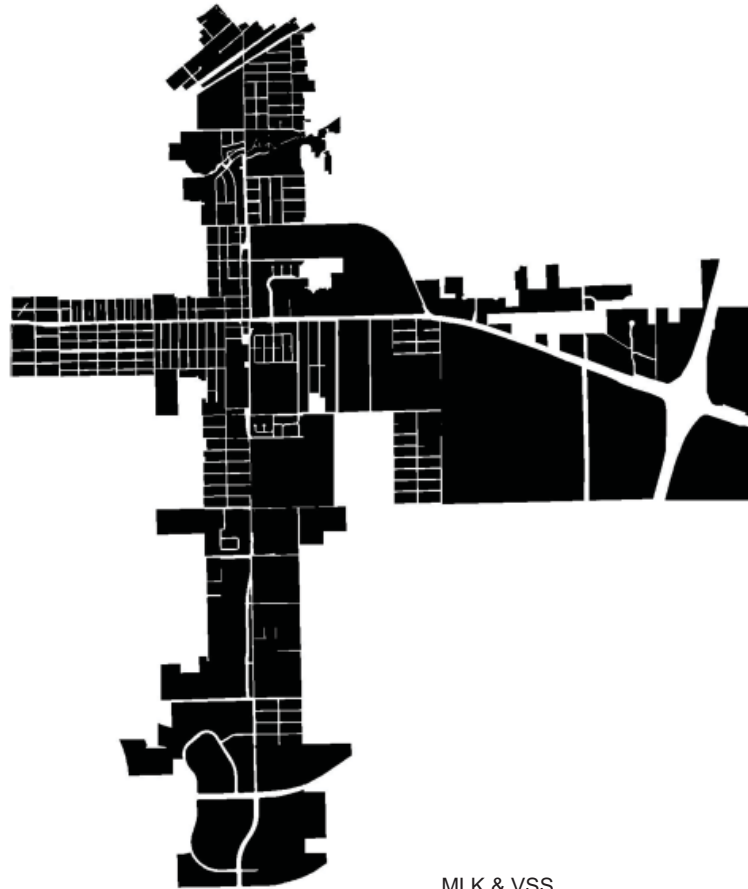
Historic Downtown  
Fort Myers, FL



Downtown  
Boston, MA



Monument Avenue  
Richmond, VA



MLK & VSS  
Fort Myers, FL



Saint Augustine, FL



Miami Beach, FL

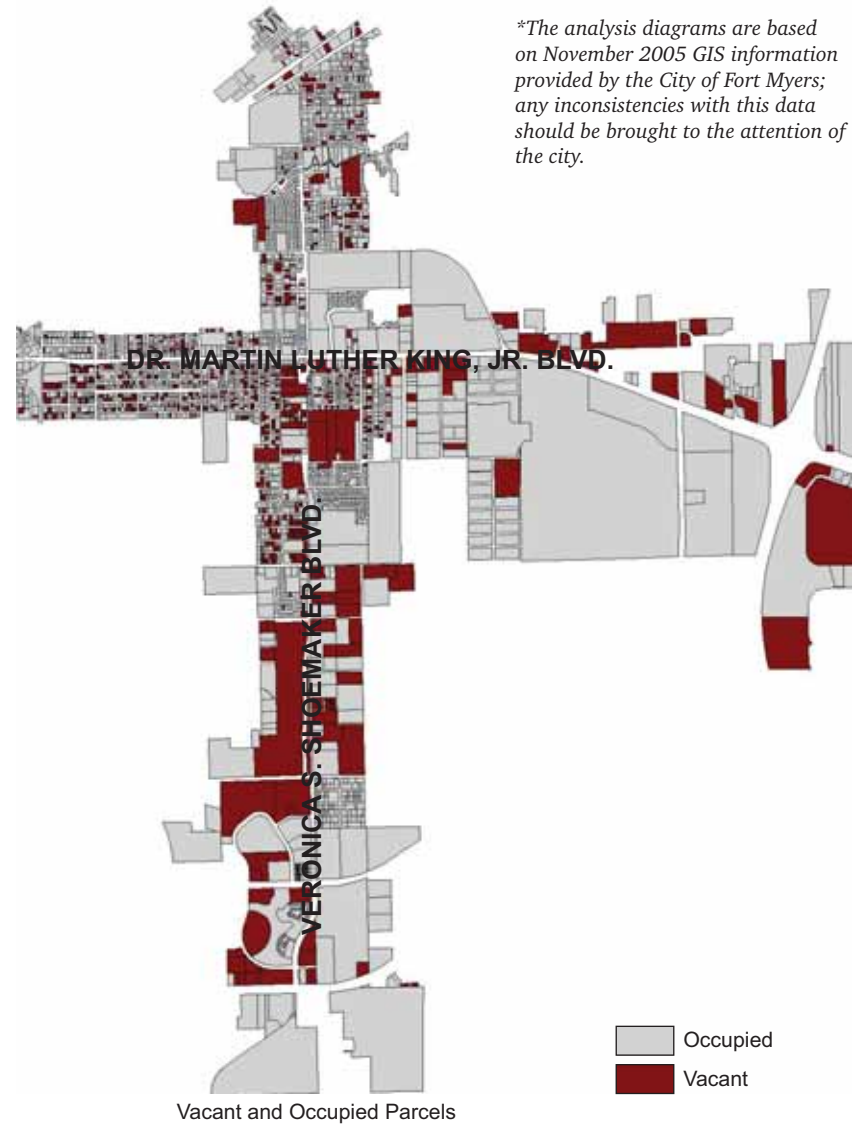
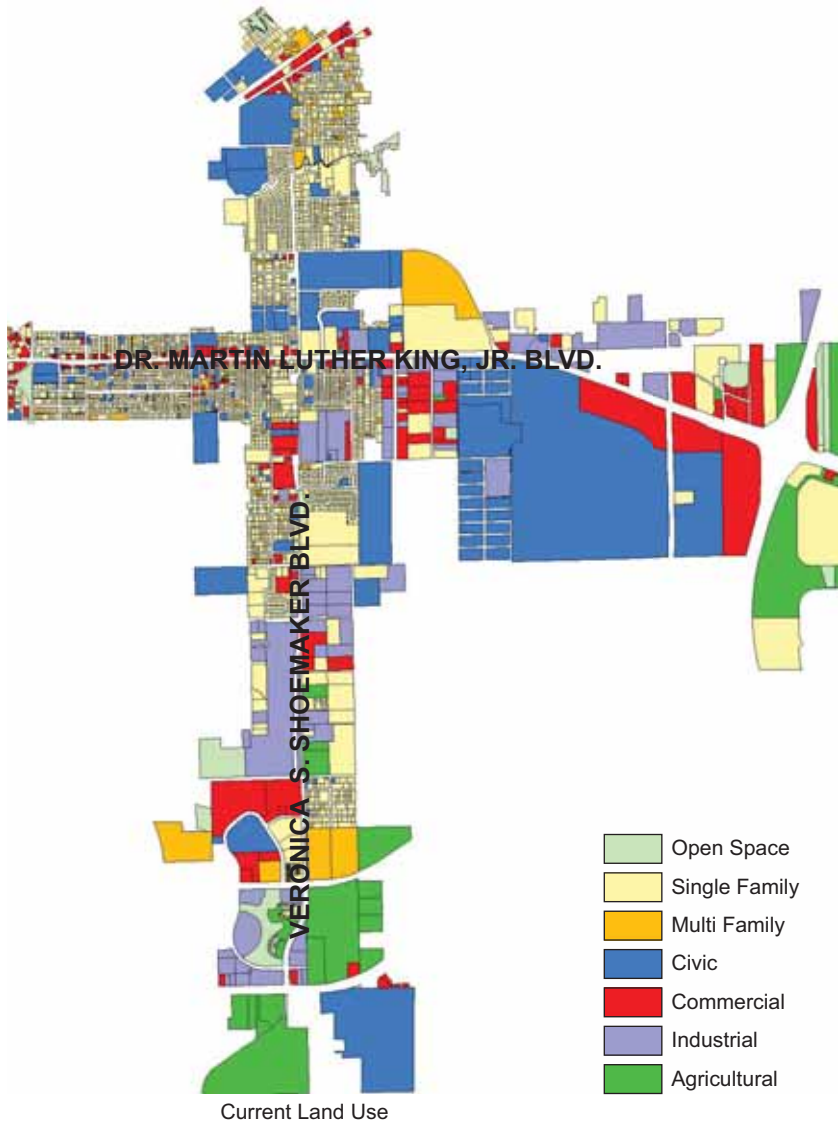


The Mall  
Washington, DC



**ANALYSIS DIAGRAMS\***

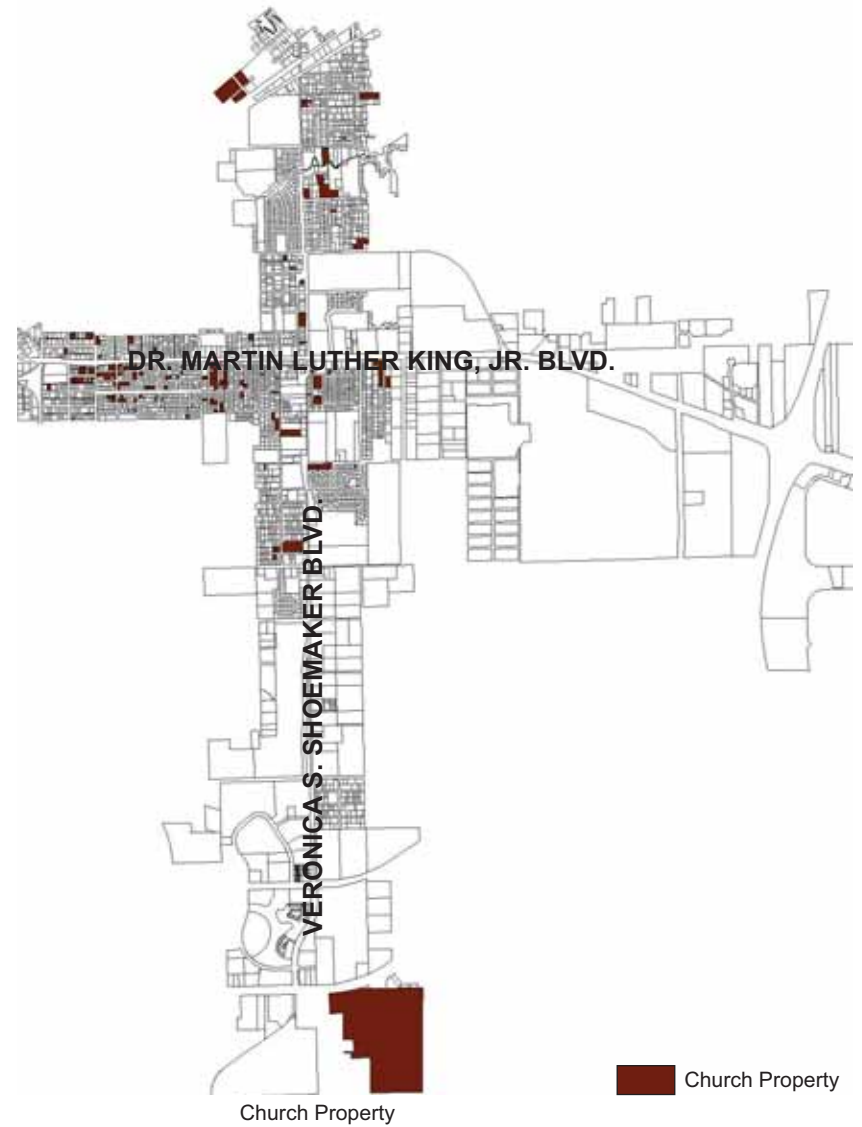
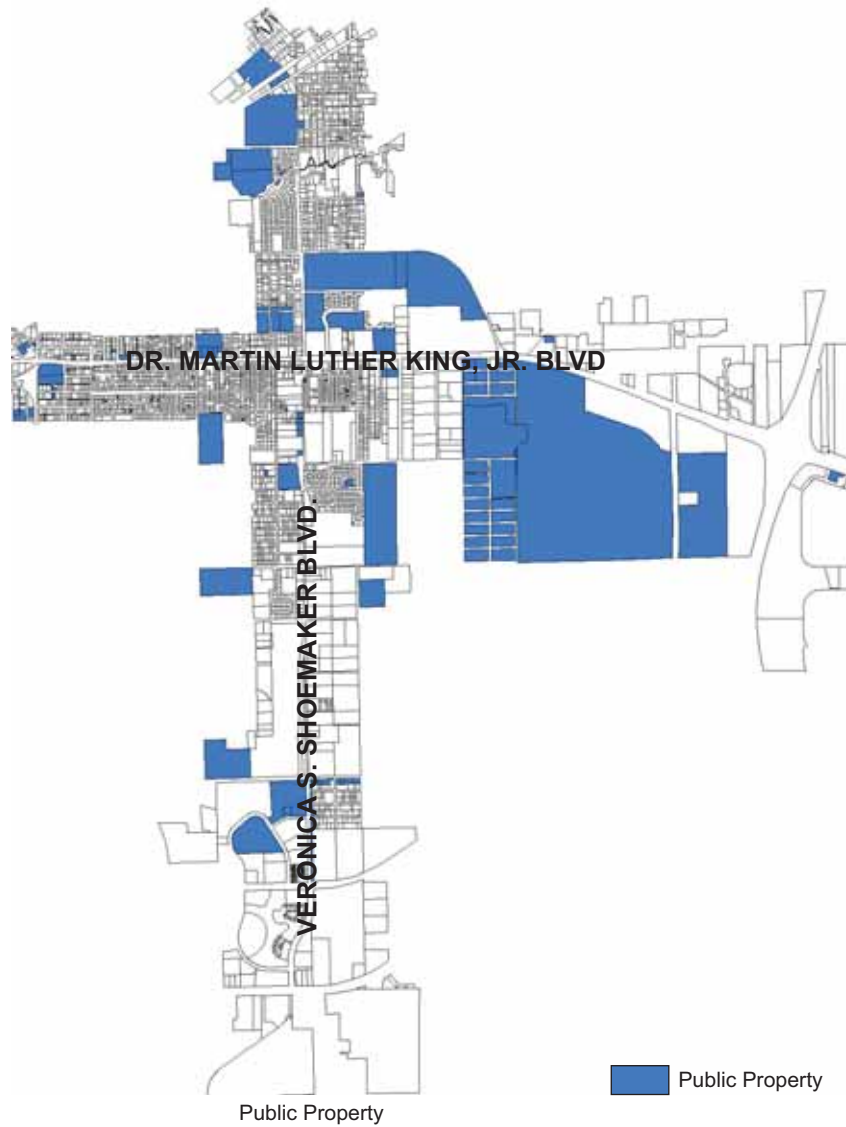
Using the city's Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data, the team created a series of analysis diagrams to better understand the dynamics of the planning area.

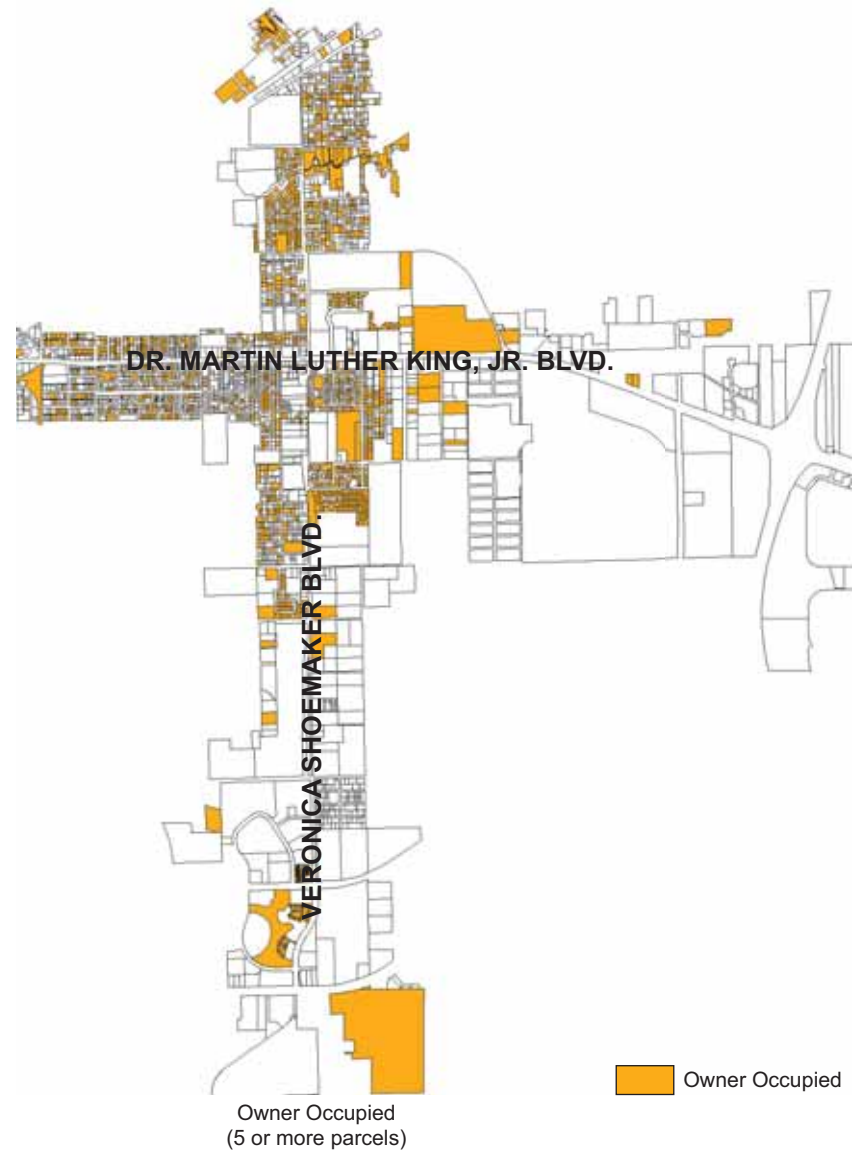
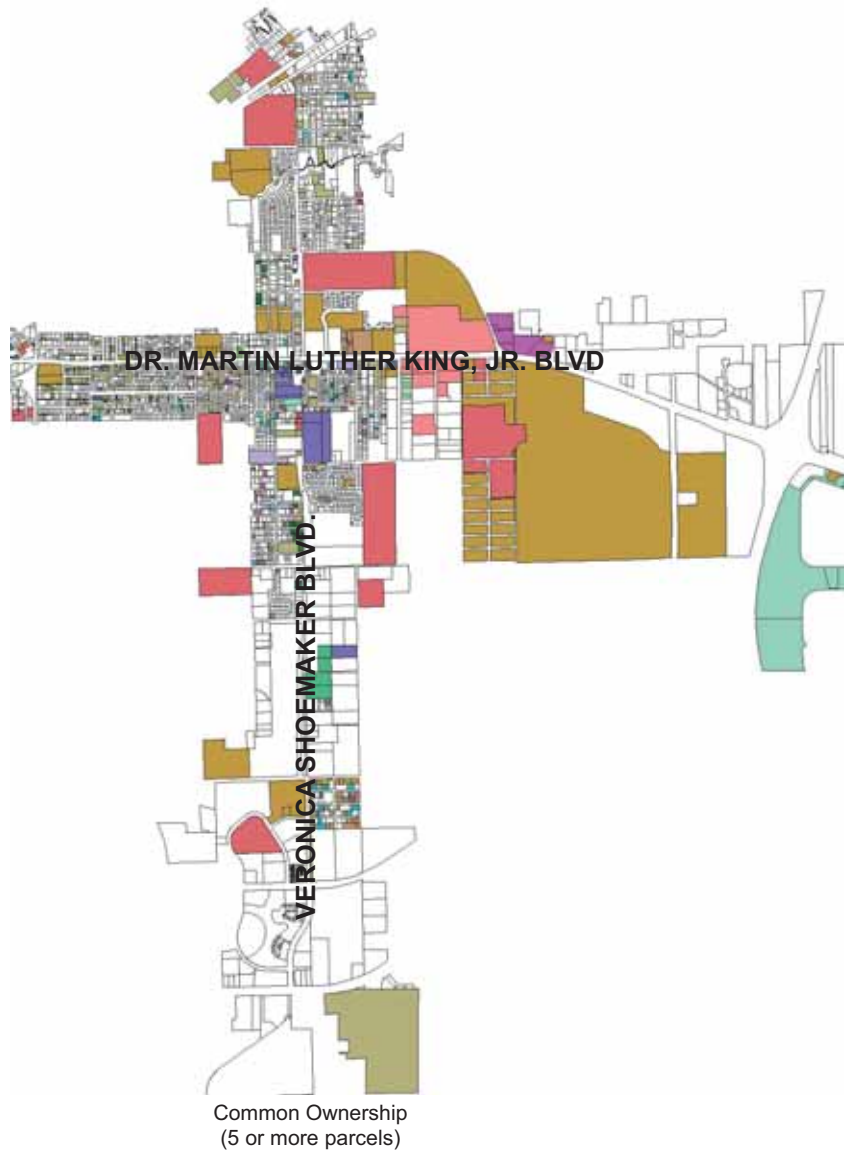


*\*The analysis diagrams are based on November 2005 GIS information provided by the City of Fort Myers; any inconsistencies with this data should be brought to the attention of the city.*



ANALYSIS DIAGRAMS, continued







# process 2





## COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

“Designing in public,” the Dover-Kohl team conducted an open planning process beginning in December 2005 to identify the ideas, needs and concerns of the community. Participants helped to create the Revitalization Plan through an intensive design event called a *charrette*. Over the course of seven days, the community and the team of design professionals worked together to create the plan. Interested residents and stakeholders participated in the planning process, including property owners, neighbors, business people, developers, elected officials, city staff, and community leaders.

### WHAT IS A CHARRETTE?

Charrette is a French word that translates as “little cart.” At the leading architecture school of the 19th century, the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, students would be assigned a tough design problem to work out under pressure of time. They would continue sketching as fast as they could, even as little carts, charrettes, carried their drawing boards away to be judged and graded. Today, “charrette” has come to describe a rapid, intensive and creative work session in which a design team focuses on a particular design problem and arrives at a collaborative solution. Charrettes are results-oriented. The public charrette is fast becoming a preferred way to face the planning challenges confronting American communities.

### Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. & Veronica S. Shoemaker Blvds. Revitalization Plan PLAN TO ATTEND:

#### Community Kick-off Presentation

Monday, November 28th from 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm at the Dunbar Community School.  
An informative presentation to introduce the community to the planning process.

#### Hands-on Design Session

Saturday, December 10th from 9 am to 2 pm at the Quality Life Center.  
Come work alongside your neighbors on the plan for the future of these two corridors.

#### On-site Design Studio

Sunday, December 11th from 1pm to 7 pm; Monday, December 12th through Thursday, December 15th, from 9 am to 7 pm at the Quality Life Center.  
Stop-by throughout the day and review the work in progress. On Tuesday, December 13th from 6pm - 8pm there will be a design studio Open House.

#### “Work in Progress” Presentation

Thursday, December 15th at 6:30 pm at City Hall Council Chambers.  
A “wrap-up” presentation of the work completed to-date by the consultant team.

For more information please visit [www.cityofmyers.com/mlk](http://www.cityofmyers.com/mlk)  
or contact Anne Mullins, Principal Planner at the City of Ft. Myers, 461-2696.

The City of Fort Myers mailed and delivered flyers to property owners to announce the planning events.



Dover-Kohl team members noted areas of interest in detailed base maps of the study area.



Team members walked and photographed the corridors.



Articles in the *News-Press* helped to inform the community about the planning process.

## CHARRETTE PREPARATION

Prior to the charrette, the planning team focused their efforts on gathering base information and studying the existing physical conditions of the area. This included learning about local history, reviewing previous plans and studies, examining existing city ordinances and land development regulations, and analyzing the physical, social, and economic characteristics of the study area. Members of the team visited Fort Myers throughout the fall of 2005 and met with city officials, city staff, property owners, community leaders, business owners, and other local stakeholders in preparation for the charrette and to better gauge the vision and ideas for the future of the corridor.

A key element in preparing for the charrette was generating public awareness. City staff spread the word about the planning process by including ads in the local newspaper, posting public notices and sending extensive mailings, and providing updates on the city's website.

## SITE ANALYSIS

The team examined the corridors and intersecting streets on foot and by car. With base maps in hand, the planners and designers studied the existing urban fabric, paying careful attention to street connections, pedestrian safety, redevelopment opportunities and unique conditions and characteristics of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard.

Team members photographed the corridors, noting building form, building placement, architectural character, and street design. Particular attention was devoted to analyzing the existing conditions of key intersections of MLK and VSS corridors to help prepare for redevelopment scenarios. The analysis enhanced the team's understanding of current issues, concerns, and redevelopment prospects.

## THE CHARRETTE

On Monday, November 28, 2005 a Community Kick-off Presentation marked the start of the planning process. Residents, city leaders, and local stakeholders gathered at the Dunbar Community School for an evening presentation. A welcome message was provided by Mayor Humphrey. Victor Dover, Principal of Dover, Kohl & Partners, then outlined the challenge for participants during the planning process. He stressed the importance of citizen involvement throughout the process to ensure the creation of a plan truly representative of community ideals. He emphasized that the revitalization plan for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard would be created by the community, for the community. He provided background information on traditional town building, redevelopment, and preserving community character.

Victor Dover introduced other members of the team, including Billy Hattaway of Hall Planning & Engineering, who spoke about advances in transportation planning and showcased examples of livable streets across the country. Dr. Lee Duffus spoke about economic and community development strategies. Bill Spikowski of Spikowski Planning Associates discussed issues related to policy and implementation. At the end of the presentation attendees were encouraged to ask the consultant team questions about the process and project and present ideas and issues to guide the planning process. Approximately 80 citizens attended the kick-off presentation to begin working together to create a plan for the Dunbar community and for both corridors.

**DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. /  
VERONICA S. SHOEMAKER BOULEVARDS  
REVITALIZATION PLAN**

<p><b>My Biggest Question is:</b></p> <p>1) As the Dunbar Community is improved and new housing is built, what would happen to those people who will be displaced? Will housing be available for these people?</p> <p>2) Would there be any incentives or assistance as part of the development plan for the Dunbar Community?</p> <p>3) How will the development help local entrepreneurs?</p>	<p><b>My #1 Idea is:</b></p> <p>1) That we give priority to helping people and the elderly tenants of Affordable for you-you people</p> <p>2) Many of the houses are old and many homes could be better for these displaced people</p> <p>3) Provide some source of local funding that will give some priority to the same mission</p>
---	--

Please leave at the sign-in table, or hand to a Dover-Kohl team member. Thanks! © J.S.P. 2005

At the Kick-off Presentation, residents were asked to write their "Biggest Question" and "#1 Idea" on how to revitalize the area.

**DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. /  
VERONICA S. SHOEMAKER BOULEVARDS  
REVITALIZATION PLAN**

<p><b>My Biggest Question is:</b></p> <p>Will the residents be considered in the planning of road, turning lanes, pedestrians, bicycling, etc.</p>	<p><b>My #1 Idea is:</b></p> <p>Shaded bus stops</p>
--	--

Please leave at the sign-in table, or hand to a Dover-Kohl team member. Thanks!



Approximately 80 citizens attended the Kick-off Presentation.

- MY BIGGEST QUESTION IS:**
- How will the development help local entrepreneurs?
  - What is going to happen north of Michigan with the highway on VSS – will the revitalization continue through to Palm Beach Boulevard?
  - What steps will be taken to include the Dunbar area in the tourism market?
  - What incentives and assistance are going to be available for property owners and for these businesses to thrive?
  - As the Dunbar community is improved and new housing is built, what would happen to those people who will be displaced? Will housing be available for those people?
  - How can churches leverage their resources to facilitate development of the community?
  - What mechanisms will be created to facilitate community economic development? What resources will be recommended to expand debt and equity capital?
  - What will happen to my real estate taxes under the plan you are proposing as you envision substantial economic development and escalation of real estate prices will likely occur?
  - Will the city acquire any of the resident property during the revitalization?







Residents worked together and shared ideas for the future of the corridors and Dunbar neighborhood.



A sample of the drawings produced during the hands-on session



One representative from each table presented their work to the group.



On Saturday, December 10, approximately 30 community members gathered at the Quality Life Center for the Hands-on Design Session. The event began with a short introduction and briefing by Joseph Kohl, Principal of Dover, Kohl & Partners, to further explain the challenge for participants, orient participants to base maps, and set ground rules and goals for the session. Working in small groups of approximately five people per table, participants gathered around tables to draw and share their varied ideas for the future of their neighborhood and the MLK and VSS corridors. Each table was equipped with base maps, markers, scale bars, scale comparisons, and aerial photos of the study area. A facilitator from the Dover-Kohl team was assigned to each table to assist participants in the design exercises.

During the first part of the table sessions, community members identified the important issues associated with the overall future of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard. Participants actively drew on base maps to illustrate how they might like to see the corridor evolve in the future by describing the uses, open spaces, building design, street design, transportation, parking, and services to be located along the corridor. During the second part of the workshop participants focused on Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard. During both exercises, the table groups identified specific redevelopment areas along the corridors. At the end of the workshop, a spokesperson from each table reported their table's ideas for the revitalization plan for their community and the corridors, to the entire assembly. Of the many ideas heard, some of the most widely shared ideas included:

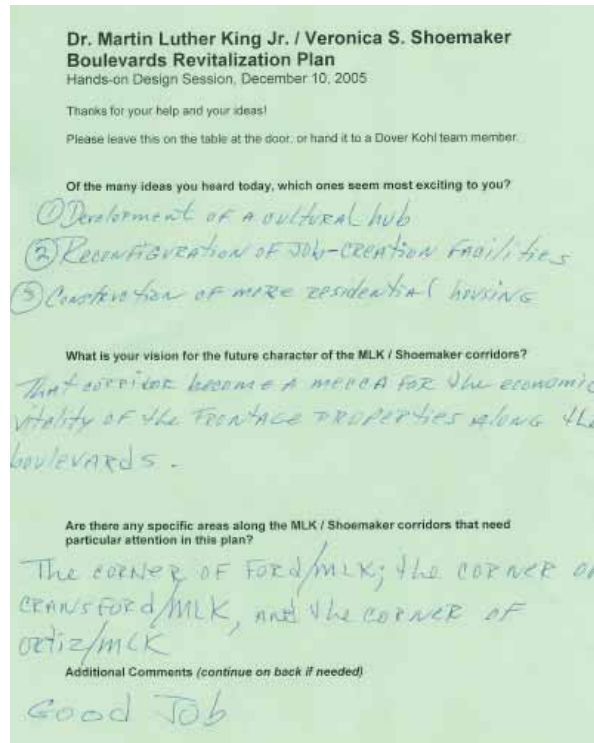
- Create a community center celebrating African-American history and culture
- Maintain affordable housing
- Encourage business development and local enterprise
- Improve pedestrian safety along the corridors
- Create a gateway to Fort Myers and the Dunbar community
- Provide opportunities for infill development
- Include police sub-stations in neighborhoods
- Concern over potential traffic bottlenecks where VSS intersects MLK and Michigan

In addition to the group presentations, each participant filled out a survey at the end of the session. The survey responses reveal additional ideas from the individuals that participated. The goal of the hands-on session was to forge an initial consensus and develop an overall community vision.

From Sunday, December 11 through Thursday, December 15 the design team continued to work with the community in an open design studio at the Quality Life Center on MLK. Citizens and local leaders were encouraged to stop by the studio throughout the week to check the status of the plan, provide further input, and to make sure the design team was on the right track. The table drawings and plans from the Saturday design session were placed around the room for easy review as new people became involved. While community members visited the studio, the design team continued to analyze the information gathered at the hands-on session and site analysis in order to formulate the initial concepts for the plan. The team was tasked with synthesizing the many ideas heard from the community throughout the week into a single cohesive revitalization plan. The planners and designers created lists, diagrams, draw-



The design studio was located in the Quality Life Center, offering easy access for community members and local leaders to stop-by and add further input to the plan.



Sample survey response



The multi-disciplinary team worked together on the technical components of the plan.



The design team created illustrations of how the corridors could grow more complete.



Citizens were encouraged to stop by the studio daily to check the status of the plan.





Technical meetings during the week helped to shape the details of the plan.



Victor Dover presented sketches illustrating the hypothetical build-out of the corridors



Community members asked questions and offered comments at the end of Work-in-Progress Presentation.



Mayor Jim Humphrey responded to citizens' questions.



While Councilwoman Veronica Shoemaker answered questions from the media, some residents studied the sketches for the different areas.

ings, and plans, working to combine and refine the ideas. Working in Fort Myers allowed the design team ready access to the study area during all hours and on different days of the week.

In addition to the public design studio, members of the design team met with community stakeholders and experts in scheduled technical meetings. The meetings were used to answer design questions, discuss the draft plan, and further gain input in regards to details associated with the redevelopment of the corridors. Technical meetings included sessions with city staff, elected officials, business owners, church representatives and property owners. The technical meetings helped to further shape the detailed elements of the plan and to ensure that the ideas being processed were balanced by awareness of many viewpoints.

The charrette week ended with an evening “Work-in-Progress” presentation on Thursday, December 15 at City Council Chambers. Over 40 citizens attended the presentation to hear and see how the planners and designers were able to synthesize the community’s ideas into the vision for the future of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard. Victor Dover began the presentation with a summary of the week’s events, then presented sketches and visualizations illustrating the hypothetical future build-out of the corridors. Focusing on specific areas, Mr. Dover walked the audience through a “future tour” showing both short and long-term changes that are possible under the plan. Renderings showed “before” and “after” illustrations of possible redevelopment scenarios. At the end of the presentation, another survey was distributed to gauge the community’s opinion on the ideas presented that evening.

## AFTER THE CHARRETTE

At the conclusion of the week-long charrette, the design team returned from Fort Myers to their own offices. They produced a charrette bulletin that documented the initial ideas and drawings from the charrette. This bulletin was printed and widely distributed by city officials to increase public awareness and solicit further citizen input to the plan.

In addition to distributing additional project information in the charrette bulletin, Bill Spikowski and Dr. Lee Duffus set-up a booth at the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration at Centennial Park. Throughout the day, Duffus and Spikowski responded to community questions and distributed brochures showing initial ideas from the plan.



Sample pages from the Charrette Bulletin

January 12, 2006 The Community Voice

---

**Help Shape the Future of Dunbar**  
 Your neighbors are contributing ideas for a revitalization plan for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. & Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevards

**Two more chances to participate are coming up soon:**

Visit the Dover-Kohl booth at the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration Monday, January 16 - noon-5:00 pm at Centennial Park  
 Pick up a brochure showing initial ideas!

Second Hands-on Design Session Thursday, February 23 - 6:30-9:00 PM Stars Complex, 2690 Edison Avenue

*Revitalization Plan is being prepared for the City of Fort Myers*



Lee Duffus answered questions at the Dover-Kohl booth during the MLK day celebration at Centennial Park.

The Community Voice January 5, 2006

---

**LOCAL**

Members of the Dover-Kohl team.

**DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR./VERONICA S. SHOEMAKER CORRIDORS REVITALIZATION PLAN HELD AT CITY HALL DECEMBER 15, 2005**

**Community Ideas**  
 Submitted by community members during the planning process so far:

- Support for existing community economic development entity that can manage and leverage debt and equity capital.
- Just stick with the plan would make us happy. Could make things happen if you find a way to publicize these meetings on the wall of a local building
- Would this area not be better suited for the development of commercial office, shops, light industrial facilities

Revitalization events were published in the local paper, *Community Voice*, to increase public awareness.

Fort Myers, Florida



**SECOND HANDS-ON SESSION**

An additional public meeting was conducted to engage new participants to help refine the proposed plan on Thursday, February 23, 2006 at the STARS Complex. Over 50 residents attended the session. Victor Dover began the presentation with a brief summary of the process and designs to date, then asked the participants to critique and improve the proposed plans. During the table sessions, community members identified problem areas along the corridors and came up with a list of improvements of what they would like see happen in Dunbar.

The goal of the second hands-on session was to give the community a further opportunity to provide ideas for the plan. The meeting also helped to continue the momentum for the planning effort, build consensus, and mobilize the residents of Fort Myers to work together as a community on the revitalization of the MLK and VSS corridors.

**REVITALIZATION PLAN**

Over a period of ten weeks the plan drawings produced during the charrette and the February public hands-on session were refined and the revitalization plan was created. The plan was then submitted for city and community review. The following report represents the community's desires and goals for the future of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard and sets forth a workable framework of specific implementation measures.



Approximately 60 residents attended the workshop.



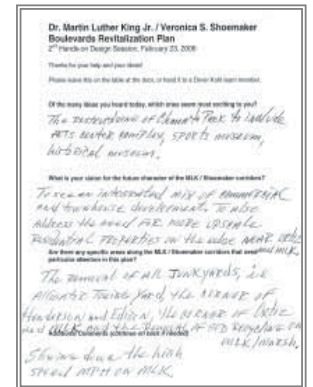
Community members worked together.



Representatives from the tables presented their ideas.



Sample table drawing



Sample exit survey







# by the numbers 3



Planning for economic revitalization is just as important as planning for physical revitalization.

Planning always begins with a thorough understanding of the current situation and what led to it. This chapter outlines the results of research conducted by the Dover-Kohl team to better understand the communities that surround both corridors and to identify the problems that have held them back from sharing the prosperity experienced in most of Lee County in recent decades.

### DEMOGRAPHICS IN 2000

Compared to the City of Fort Myers:

- Dunbar has larger household size (3.02 versus 2.52 persons per household).
- The Dunbar population is younger (median age is 25.1 years versus 32.4 years).
- Dunbar has lower average household income (\$23,913 versus \$41,649).
- The percentage of the Dunbar population that is African-American is higher than the city as a whole (90.3% versus 32.9%).
- The percent of the Dunbar population with income below the national poverty level is higher than the City of Fort Myers (48.4% versus 21.8%). The statistic for Lee County is 9.7%.
- Dunbar's unemployment rate is much higher than either the City of Fort Myers or Lee County (10.7% versus 6.0%, and 3.7% respectively).

## A COMMUNITY POISED FOR TAKEOFF

The Dunbar community meets the following well-established criteria for economic development:

### COMMUNITY CONFIDENCE:

There is heightened confidence within the community that Dunbar is poised for economic development.

### ACCESS TO MARKETS:

Because of its location along the principal corridor (MLK) to the City of Fort Myers, Dunbar has excellent communications with and access to attractive markets throughout the region.

### SAFETY AND SECURITY:

According to police statistics, crime has noticeably decreased in recent years. There now is renewed confidence in Dunbar, both as a safe place to invest and as a residential community.

### GROWING POPULATION:

According to US Census statistics, between 1990 and 2000, Dunbar's population declined 5.8%, from 9,113 to 8,590.

### AVAILABILITY OF CAPITAL:

Public and private capital has shown a willingness to invest in the community. Public capital includes upgrading of both major boulevards, public housing, and other infrastructure. Public capital includes plans for additional housing.

### ACCESS TO LABOR FORCE:

At 10.7%, Dunbar's unemployment rate is almost three times higher than the Lee County average. The community possesses the labor to drive the community-wide expansion in construction and small business development which is expected to occur over the next few years.

### SUPPORTIVE REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT:

The city has an expanded Enterprise Zone and a commitment to support administrative and regulatory changes that will enhance new business development and eliminate zoning practices that have degraded the community.



Buildings in Dunbar, such as McCollum Hall, are waiting for reinvestment.

## WHY PEOPLE RELOCATE FROM DUNBAR

As part of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard/ Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard study, a group of African-Americans with strong ties to the Dunbar community were interviewed between December 15 and 23, 2005. Respondents, about 33% of whom live outside the community, were presented a list of questions that were previously identified as important “reasons for people to relocate from Dunbar” by a panel of community residents, and asked to select five that they perceived as most contributory. The top five choices identified are shown in Table 1.

Respondents, regardless of where they lived, agreed on the top five reasons for relocating from Dunbar. Especially among persons living outside of Dunbar, “land use and zoning practices that degrade residential communities” and “lack of decent housing that is aesthetically pleasing” were the top reasons selected. Interestingly, the large differential response to “an environment characterized by high levels of crime” suggests that residents perceive it as a less determinant factor in the relocation decision than non-residents. Also, Dunbar residents had a higher opinion of their neighborhood schools, reflecting the equality of a county-wide school system and the local School Board’s successful emphasis in the past 15 years on improving in-town schools.

The statistics provide support for the notion of replenishing the housing stock in the Dunbar community. In addition to meeting the needs of residents, there is a demand for suitable and affordable housing by workers in the city of Fort Myers who commute long distances to and from work. The likely mix of housing needs suggest a mixture of affordable and pricier homes.

The research did not inquire if non-residents would return or live in Dunbar if appropriate housing were available. Nevertheless, some persons volunteered that they lived elsewhere because of lack of suitable housing

Questions	Dunbar Residents	Non-Residents
Lack of decent housing that is aesthetically pleasing	79 %	85 %
Land use and zoning practices that degrade residential communities	78 %	92 %
Shortage of suitable and affordable rental accommodation	67 %	73 %
An environment characterized by high levels of crime	61 %	84 %
Better access to quality neighborhood schools for children	57 %	74 %

\* The sample consisted of 67 persons identified as Dunbar residents and 32 persons living elsewhere in Lee County



Table 2: Organizations Along Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard Corridors						
Organizations	Dr. MLK Blvd. Corridor		VSS Blvd Corridor		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Contractor/Building Supplies	2	2.3	2	7.7	4	3.5
Government Services *	5	5.7			5	4.4
Social Services	3	3.4			3	2.7
Education/Child Care	5	5.7	1	3.8	6	5.3
Foods: Home/In-Store	16	18.4	3	11.5	19	16.8
Funeral Services	1	1.1	1	3.8	2	1.8
Hair Care/Beauty Salon	9	10.3	1	3.8	10	8.8
Auto Services	8	9.2	2	7.7	10	8.8
Clothing/Fashions	2	2.3	1	3.8	3	2.7
Miscellaneous Household	3	3.4			3	2.7
Churches	12	13.8	6	23.1	18	15.9
Petroleum/Service Stations	4	4.6			4	3.5
Trucking/Equipment	1	1.1	1	3.8	2	1.8
Industrial **	5	5.7	6	23.1	11	9.7
Health	1	1.1			1	0.9
Mass Retailer - Fleamaster's ***	1	1.1			1	0.9
Miscellaneous	9	10.3	2	7.7	11	9.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>100.0</b>
* Including The Business Development Center/SWF Enterprise Center, which currently houses 15 businesses in a 13,000 square foot building. Current plans envision about 180 businesses in a 40,000 square foot building.						
** Including Pepsi						
*** The Fleamasters's Fleamarket occupies 400,000 sq. feet under roof and houses over 900 businesses						

## DUNBAR BUSINESS PROFILE

There are 113 individual business, civic, social, and religious organizations located along the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard corridors not counting Fleamaster's Fleamarket, which occupies 400,000 square feet and houses over 900 businesses, and the Southwest Florida Enterprise Center (formerly the Business Development Corporation) which hosts 15 businesses (Tables 3, 4, 5).

As shown in Table 2, these MLK and VSS corridor organizations can be further categorized as:

- Social, Education, Government: 14 (12.4%)
- Churches: 18 (15.9%)
- Industrial: 11 (9.7%)
- Other Businesses: 70 (62%)

Over 90% of the individual businesses are small, with 1-5 employees, and owner managed. These include a high percentage of auto repair shops and services, restaurants, bars, mom-and-pop grocery stores, and hair care salons. These businesses are representative of typical inner city African-American communities. However, significant gaps in businesses typical of similar communities exist. Members of the community who participated in the charrette and visited the various work sessions identified many of these. The most noteworthy gaps include:

- Supermarket
- Bank
- Pharmacy
- Fast Foods
- Laundromat
- Video/Music
- Real Estate
- Check Cashing

## CURRENT AND RECENT ECONOMIC STUDIES

In recent years, several changes have occurred in the community's business profile. For example, there now exists a Family Dollar store and Western Union, which provides limited financial services and check cashing opportunities. Also, a branch of Family Health Center of Southwest Florida is located along Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and addresses some of the community health needs. On the negative side, the single community bank located along Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard no longer exists.

Overall, the profile of product needs and business opportunities has not changed dramatically in recent years. According to the 1992 Dunbar Retail Market Study and the 1992 Economic Feasibility Analysis and Business Plan for the Dunbar Shopping Center, the Dunbar community spends \$65 million dollars annually for retail purchases; food items (at home), food items (away from home), clothing/apparel, personal care items, health care items, beer/wines/ coolers, household furnishings, recreational/entertainment, packaged alcoholic beverages, and miscellaneous household items. Of the \$65 million expenditure, less than \$8 million was spent in the community.

The bulk of community shopping still occurs on the community periphery, Palm Beach Boulevard, US 41, and recently, at the new super Wal-Mart located at the intersection of Ortiz and Colonial Boulevard. The community-identified retail and business gaps correlate well with those identified in the 1992 studies, which presented community perceptions of possible entrepreneurial opportunities in Dunbar.

The top identified retail and business gaps were:

- Supermarket (79%)
- Drugstore/Pharmacy (98%)
- Clothing/apparel (98%)
- Hardware store (100%)
- Fast food store (85%)
- Music/Video rental store (80%)

The 1992 studies also presented community perceptions of the reasons for out-shopping. Then, as now, there was "strong support for economic development and revitalization of the Dunbar community." However, the studies also identified "a sense of abandonment of the community by major commercial interests and, specifically, by the absence of convenient modern retail facilities with ample parking, good security, large inventories, and competitive prices."

The reasons for community out-shopping voiced during the 1992 studies were:

1. Limited assortment of product offerings
2. Unavailability of one-stop shopping opportunities
3. Prices too high relative to stores outside of Dunbar
4. Poor management/impolite workers
5. Fear for personal security
6. Unpainted/unkept buildings and premises
7. Lack of clean, well-lit exterior parking areas
8. Loud music, drunks, prostitutes and idlers, and surroundings not free from litter, garbage, and overgrown shrubbery.

Except for items 7 and 8, these are exactly the reasons for out-shopping expressed during this current study.

**Table 3: Individual Business, Civic, Social, and Religious Organizations Along MLK Corridor**

Blanding Diamonds	Island Paradise Bar and Grille	Cutters Edge Barber shop
Miracle Fashions	Community Coop Ministries Soup Kitchen	Essence Beauty Salon
Natural Elegance Beauty Salon	West Coast Batteries	Lorenzo Tires
Bryson's Insurance and Bail Bonds	Blake Repair and Tire Services	Pepsi Cola Bottling Plant
City of Fort Myers Utility Center	Family Dollar	Unique Beauty Supply
I Like It Like That Bakery	Allied Recycling	Lee Charter School
Afrocentric Fashions	Western Union	Flint and Doyle
Cold Grills	D and D Convenience Store	Fort Myers Business Development Center *
Promiseland furniture	Magic Touch Beauty and Barber	CITGO Service Station
Boyd's Funeral Home	Shoemaker's Florist	Fort Myers Rescue Mission
Utopia Unisex Salon	Family Health Center	Edison Oil Company
Blossom Child Care Center	Big Daddy's Crab Shack	Fleamaster's Flea Market **
R. L. Dabney American Legion	Pop's Grocery	Daniel's Welding
B and H Tires	Hi-Tech Collision	Forestry Resources
The Ultimate Carwash	Woods Metal Works	Benchmark Corporate Park
Quality Life Center	J and D Grille	Alligator Towing
Cornerstone Ministries	AWF Auction/Dealers Registration	Sunguard Window Tinting
Mildred's Kitchen	City of Fort Myers Public Works	Damron LKQ Corporation
Dunbar Redevelopment	Bucket Mart Certified Slings – Contractors Supply	CITGO Service Station
Dunbar Housing Association	Jerry Scheutz Nursery	SUNOCO Service Station
Dunbar Improvement Association	Metro PCS	Peterbilt
Trans Seafood Mart	Family Food Mart	
* The Fleamasters's Fleamarket occupies 400,000 sq. feet under roof and houses over 900 businesses		
** Including The Business Development Center/SWF Enterprise Center, which currently houses 15 businesses in a 13,000 square foot building. Current plans envision about 180 businesses in a 40,000 square foot building.		

Friendship Baptist Church	Archie's Barber Shop
Mount Hermon Church	Sam's Foodmart
Mount Hermon Church School	Moses Fast Food
Wright's Grocery	Grocery Store (no longer in business)
Mr Z's Unisex Salon	Church of Jesus Christ of the Apolostic Faith
Palm Discount Grocery	The Apostolic House of God
Dave's Store	The Miracle Prayer Band of Deliverance
Dunbar Christian Preschool	New Gale Baptist Church
St John First Missionary Baptist Church	B-Unique Beauty and Barber Supply
Lincoln Boulevard Church of God	Full Gospel Pentecostal Missionary Baptist Church
Trinity United Methodist Church	Mount Olive AME Church

Cornerstone Kitchens	Hickson's Funeral Home
Allied Recycling	Paul's Auto Body
Press Printing	Big Daddy's
Storm Safe Manufacturing	Waste Services Inc
Shamrock Electric	New Apostolic Church
Wilderness Yukon	Chaney's Barber and Beauty
Pelliccione Builders Supply	Fellowship Christian Church
A Storage Quarters	Church of Christ
Cameron Ashley Building Products	The New Robinson Chapel
Thompson's Grocery	Palmetto Avenue Church of God
Unity Christian Church	LA Total Fashion
All Star Equipment	Big B #3 Food Store
Dennis Quality Auto Body	Quality Life Academy



## DISINVESTMENT IN THE DUNBAR COMMUNITY

In recent years substantial disinvestment has occurred in residential and commercial Dunbar. This disinvestment is reflected in:

- The large number of vacant lots currently available (Table 6 and 7),
- The relatively low cost of Dunbar residential units compared to elsewhere in Lee County (Table 8), and
- The comments of respondents to a consumer survey which was conducted as part of this study.

Currently, over twenty-nine percent (29.5%) of the lots in Dunbar are vacant. Of this total vacant acreage, 176 acres (36.7% of the vacant lots) are less than 1 acre in size, and 220 acres (45.9%) are 4.50 acres and above. Empirical and anecdotal evidence suggest that people are currently buying the small lots and assembling them into larger parcels preparatory to development.

As shown in Table 8, in 2005 the median price for single family residential units in Central Fort Myers where Dunbar is located was \$145,000, substantially lower than any other Lee County or contiguous market areas. The value of these properties, like those throughout the county, has increased substantially in recent years. For example, between 2004 and 2005, the value of Central Fort Myers homes increased 28%. This compares to a 54% increase for single-family homes throughout Lee County during the same period.

Currently, over 266 acres (40%) of the lots along the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard/Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard corridors are vacant (Table 7). Of this vacant acreage, 109.5 acres (41.1%) involve lots under 1 acre in size, and 108.2 acres (40.6%) 4.75 acres and above.

The median Central Fort Myers values include both new and older homes. Since the Dunbar housing stock consists of mostly older homes, indications are the values there are substantially below the median shown.

Even though the price of Dunbar real estate is currently lower than comparable properties in Lee County, Dunbar land is no longer cheap. During the latter part of 2005, average sales prices reached the mid-\$40,000 range for typical 15,000-square-foot residential lots in nearby Lehigh Acres. In Dunbar, average sales prices varied from \$2 to \$4 per square foot, resulting in average prices from about \$30,000 to \$60,000 for residential parcels of that same size; however, Dunbar parcels of that size can usually accommodate two homes instead of one. Though the number of lots sold in Dunbar in 2006 has been relatively small, the downward pressure on prices seen elsewhere in the county is also evident here, with selling prices declining 15-20%.

There are many factors suggesting that Dunbar is poised for substantial development activity:

- The shortage of affordable homes near downtown Fort Myers;
- The aggregation of vacant Dunbar land into larger developable parcels;
- Efforts by investors to purchase prime Dunbar properties and demolish buildings for later development;
- Relatively low lot prices in Dunbar compared to elsewhere; and
- The frenetic pace of construction of high-priced riverfront condominiums contiguous to Dunbar in downtown Fort Myers.
- As illustrated in Table 1 (Reasons why some people chose to relocate from Dunbar), from

a residential perspective, the reasons for the disinvestment vary from lack of decent housing that is aesthetically pleasing, and perceptions of high levels of crime, to land use and zoning practices that degrade residential communities. From a commercial perspective, the reasons vary from poor merchandising practices by local businesses, absence of capital to upgrade properties to acceptable commercial standards, emergence of mega-retailers on the outskirts of Dunbar, which may provide more economical shopping experiences, and the business disruptions during the widening of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard which both increased the cost of and reduced the economic incentives for conducting business for many local entrepreneurs.

**Table 6: Vacant, Improved, Church and Public Lots: Census Tracts 5.02 and 6**

Lot Size	Vacant		Improved		Church		Public		Grand Total	
	Lots	Acres	Lots	Acres	Lots	Acres	Lots	Acres	Lots	Acres
0.00 - 0.24	777	110.43	1595	253.76	23	3.91	127	17.72	2522	385.82
0.25 - 0.49	132	43.84	358	117.78	14	5.05	39	13.61	543	180.28
0.50 - 0.79	22	13.10	45	27.41	5	2.85	12	7.77	84	51.13
0.75 - 0.99	10	8.63	23	20.13	4	3.41	7	6.11	44	38.28
1.00 - 1.24	11	12.11	15	16.72	1	1.20	4	4.20	31	34.23
1.25 - 1.49	6	8.45	8	10.63	3	3.96	4	5.38	21	28.42
1.50 - 1.74	5	8.18	8	13.54	4	6.32	2	3.27	19	31.31
1.75 - 1.99	3	5.74	8	15.06	0	0.00	0	0.00	11	20.80
2.00 - 2.24	1	2.24	7	14.61	0	0.00	2	4.23	10	21.08
2.25 - 2.49	4	9.34	6	13.89	1	2.45	1	2.26	12	27.94
2.5 - 2.74	2	5.37	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	2.71	3	8.08
2.75 - 2.99	1	2.90	2	5.60	0	0.00	2	5.93	5	14.43
3.00 - 3.24	0	0.00	3	9.23	1	3.06	0	0.00	4	12.29
3.25 - 3.49	3	10.23	2	6.69	0	0.00	0	0.00	5	16.92
3.5 - 3.74	3	10.98	2	7.43	0	0.00	0	0.00	5	18.41
3.75 - 3.99	2	7.66	1	3.83	0	0.00	3	11.48	6	22.97
4.00 - 4.24	0	0.00	3	12.29	0	0.00	4	16.39	7	28.68
4.25 - 4.49	0	0.00	1	4.44	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	4.44
4.50 - 4.74	2	9.23	4	18.62	0	0.00	2	9.38	8	37.23
4.75 - 5.00	2	9.73	6	29.57	0	0.00	2	9.82	10	49.12
Over 5.00	20	201.04	14	165.88	0	0.00	21	361.58	55	728.50
Total	1006	479.20	2111	767.14	56	32.21	233	481.82	3406	1760.37
Percent	29.54	27.22	61.98	43.58	1.64	1.83	6.84	27.37	100.00	100.00

**Table 7: Vacant and Improved Lots (depth of two blocks on each side) in Dunbar: MLK/VSS Corridors**

Lot Size (acres)	Vacant		Improved		Grand Total Lots	Grand Total Acres
	# of Lots	Total Acres	# of Lots	Total Acres		
0.00 - 0.24	446	61.25	581	90.58	1027	151.83
0.25 - 0.49	90	30.00	163	54.98	253	84.98
0.50 - 0.79	23	13.83	23	14.67	46	51.50
0.75 - 0.99	5	4.42	15	12.96	20	17.38
1.00 - 1.24	7	7.78	5	5.59	12	13.37
1.25 - 1.49	6	8.34	3	4.00	9	12.34
1.50 - 1.74	4	6.57	5	8.13	9	14.70
1.75 - 1.99	2	3.88	3	5.65	5	9.53
2.00 - 2.24	0	0.00	1	2.00	1	2.00
2.25 - 2.49	1	2.45	2	4.71	3	7.16
2.5 - 2.74	1	2.65	0	0.00	1	2.65
2.75 - 2.99	2	5.87	2	5.78	4	11.65
3.00 - 3.24	0	0.00	3	9.21	3	9.21
3.25 - 3.49	1	3.47	0	0.00	1	3.47
3.5 - 3.74	2	7.38	0	0.00	2	7.38
3.75 - 3.99	0	0.00	2	7.62	2	7.62
4.00 - 4.24	0	0.00	1	4.12	1	4.12
4.25 - 4.49	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
4.50 - 4.74	0	0.00	4	18.62	4	18.62
4.75 - 5.00	2	9.58	4	19.65	6	29.23
Over 5.00	7	98.58	6	127.47	13	226.05
Total	599	266.12	823	395.73	1422	661.65
Percentage	42.1	40.2	57.9	59.7	100.00	100.00

**Table 8: Median Residential Real Estate Prices – 2004 and 2005**

Market Area	Median Sales Price (\$)		
	2004	2005	Percent change
North Cape Coral	169,400	277,485	29%
Central Cape Coral	175,000	259,900	49%
South Cape Coral	212,000	349,900	65%
North Fort Myers	180,300	178,500	(1%)
East Fort Myers/Alva	128,250	188,000	47%
Lehigh	135,000	204,000	51%
Central Fort Myers (ZIP Codes 33901, 33916)	113,500	145,000	28%
South Fort Myers – Summerlin /Iona	220,000	374,900	70%
South Fort Myers – I 75	215,000	325,000	51%
Estero/Bonita Springs	287,000	419,000	46%
Lee County (all)	185,000	284,500	54%
Source: Denny Grimes and Company, Residential Market Watch, The News Press Market Watch, 2006			



## ANALYSIS OF RECENT DEMOGRAPHIC STATISTICS: 1990 TO 2000

Table 9 presents summary demographic statistics for Dunbar, the City of Fort Myers, and Lee County. Data are from the 1990 and 2000 US Census. In this analysis, Dunbar is defined as:

- Block Groups 1-2-3-4-5-6, Census Tract 5.02
- Block Groups 1-2-3-4, Census Tract 6

In 2000, Dunbar had larger household sizes, higher unemployment rate, lower average household income, lower educational attainment, and a larger percent of the population with income below the poverty level than either Lee County or the City of Fort Myers.

### ACCORDING TO THE 2000 CENSUS STATISTICS:

- The Dunbar population was 8,590 persons. This represented a 5.8% decline in population, from 9,113 in 1990.
- Over ninety percent (90.3%) of Dunbar residents were African-American. This compares to African-American representation in Lee County and Fort Myers of 6.6% and 32.9% respectively.
- Other Dunbar data including comparisons with Lee County and Fort Myers:
- 2,839 households in Dunbar (3.02 persons per household compared to 2.34 in Lee County and 2.52 in Fort Myers).
- 3,069 housing units in Dunbar, of which 40.7% were owner-occupied and 51.8 were renter-occupied.
- 2,780 persons in the labor force, of which 2,482 (89.3%) were employed and 298 (10.7%) were unemployed.
- The average household income was \$23,913. In comparison, the average household income for Lee County and the City of Fort Myers were \$56,642 and \$41,649 respectively.

- Dunbar's population is comparatively young. The community's median age was 25.1 years, compared to 45.2 years for Lee County and 32.4 years for the City of Fort Myers.
- 48.4% of the population had income below the poverty level. This compared to 9.7% for Lee County and 21.8% for the City of Fort Myers.
- Dunbar's level of education was low compared to Lee County and the City of Fort Myers. The distribution by level of educational attainment was: Grades K to 12 – 49.9%, High school graduate – 30.4 %, Some college/no degree - 9.3%, and College graduate -10.1%. Equivalent statistics for Lee County and the City of Fort Myers were: 16.7%, 32.5%, 22.6%, 27.1% and 27.4%, 29.2%, 18.2%, 23.3%.

### IMPLIED HOUSING TRENDS

Anecdotal comments, and empirical findings, suggest a shortage of housing units currently available within the Dunbar community. Additional units are needed to meet the needs of residents of Dunbar and replace the limited supply of older houses currently available within the community. Dunbar housing shortages also represent an opportunity cost for those City of Fort Myers employees (and potential employees), who because of this deficiency, must commute longer distances for work and entertainment within the city.

Dunbar households are likely to adjust through time to more closely resemble that of the City of Fort Myers. Household sizes will tend to become smaller, less black, more affluent, and more demanding of the better and newer housing choices available elsewhere in the community.

Statistics on the community savings rate and measures of investment potential are unavailable

but may be inferred from the above statistics. For example, the deficit between household income and household expenditures suggest a relatively low saving rate for the Dunbar community. This in turn suggests the need both for substantial public and private infusion of capital, creative financing programs, and social intervention strategies to facilitate upgrade in housing stock, and community revitalization.

Table 9: Demographic Statistics* – 1990 and 2000												
	Dunbar				Lee County				Fort Myers			
	1990		2000		1990		2000		1990		2000	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total Population	9,113		8,590		335,115		440,888		44,759		48,203	
Male	4,318	47.4	3,845	44.8	161,919	48.3	215,504	48.9	21,845	48.8	23,882	49.8
Female	4,795	52.6	4,745	55.2	173,196	51.7	225,384	51.1	22,914	51.2	24,321	50.2
Black	8,805	96.6	7,760	90.3	22,184	6.6	29,035	6.6	13,767	30.8	15,844	32.9
White	218	2.4	298	3.5	306,202	91.4	386,598	87.7	29,360	65.6	27,289	56.6
Hispanic	264	2.9	574	6.7	15,095	4.5	42,042	9.5	3,512	7.9	7,265	15.1
Total households	2,753		2,839		140,123		188,599		18,141		19,104	
Persons per household	3.31		3.02		2.39		2.34		2.47		2.52	
0 to 4 years old	1,085	11.9	1,000	11.6	19,937	6.0	22,970	5.2	3,767	8.4	3,937	8.2
5 to 19 years old	2,766	30.4	2,735	31.8	52,583	15.7	71,759	16.3	8,855	19.8	10,212	21.2
20 – 64 years old	4,504	49.4	3,970	46.1	179,601	53.5	279,257	53.3	25,008	55.9	27,332	56.6
65 years and older	701	7.7	885	10.4	77,281	23.0	112,111	25.4	5,119	13.7	6,721	13.9
Median age (years)	25.6		25.1		42.0		45.2		32.1		32.4	
Average household income	\$18,817		\$23,913		\$37,010		\$56,642		\$29,232		\$41,649	
Average household expenditures**	NA		NA		NA		NA		NA		NA	
Percent of population with income below poverty level***				48.4				9.7				21.8
In labor force	3,578	89.1	2,780		151,496		193,893		21,943		22,071	
Employed	3,188	11.0	2,482	89.3	144,374	95.3	184,499	96.2	20,549	93.7	20,749	94.0
Unemployed	394	40.1	298	10.7	6,736	4.5	7,232	3.7	1,376	6.3	1,317	6.0
Not in labor force	2,397		2,691	49.2	124,744	45.2	169,927	46.7	12,665	36.6	14,667	39.9
Total housing units	3,085		3,069		189,053		245,405		21,238		21,719	
• Owner occupied	1,323	42.9	1,249	40.7	101,094	53.5	144,245	58.8	7,800	36.7	7,591	32.5
• Renter occupied	1,430	46.4	1,590	51.8	39,032	20.7	44,354	18.1	10,341	48.7	11,513	52.1
• Vacant	332	10.8	230	7.5	48,928	25.9	56,806	23.1	3,097	14.6	2,615	15.4
Education												
• Grades K to 12	2,797	60.4	1,974	45.9	56,244	23.0	54,733	16.7	8,950	31.6	8,192	16.6
• High school graduate	1,121	24.2	1,308	30.4	82,818	33.8	106,480	32.5	8,285	29.2	8,769	16.1
• Some college, no degree	392	8.5	400	9.3	51,461	21.0	74,119	22.6	5,036	17.8	5,446	9.7
• College graduate	320	6.9	435	10.1	54,313	22.2	88,790	27.1	6,087	21.6	6,977	18.3
• No schooling complete			185	4.3			3,221	1.0			601	

\* U. S. Census

\*\* U. S. Census/Poverty Status in 1999 by Age

\*\*\* Lee County Office of Economic Development



# cornerstones of the plan 4





## A BOLD PLAN FOR A PROUD COMMUNITY

Through the charrette process, the community and design team arrived at a series of basic urban design and policy principles to guide the redevelopment of the MLK and VSS corridors. Shaped from input by Dunbar residents during the planning process, the “Cornerstones of the Plan” embody the citizenry’s vision for the future of these important corridors. The Cornerstones of the Plan summarize the results of the open planning process and promote responsible growth and development. The principles apply to MLK and VSS boulevards, but are also essential planning principles that should apply to the redevelopment of similar corridors in our region.

This chapter presents the broad scope of the community’s vision for MLK and VSS boulevards; specific design components of each principle are further described and illustrated in Chapter 5. General guidance on implementing each principle is included; detailed implementation strategies can be found in Chapter 6.

### *Cornerstones of the Plan*

- Citizen Involvement In Every Step
- Complete, Walkable, People-first Neighborhoods
- Facing Streets & Making Great Addresses
- Mixed-income, Mixed-use, Mixed-design
- Showcase & Honor the Community Heritage
- Bring up the People With the Place

### 1. CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT IN EVERY STEP

The MLK and VSS Revitalization Plan was created based on input received from the community throughout the planning process. Residents and stakeholders— which included property owners, neighbors, business people, developers, elected officials, City staff, and community leaders— worked together to create a vision to guide future growth and assure quality development for generations of Dunbar residents.

Plans that get implemented are the ones where the people who created the plan remain involved and stay active. Citizens and leaders of Fort Myers will need to continue to work together confidently to make the MLK and VSS Revitalization Plan a built reality.

Implementation can prove to be a long and difficult endeavor, so Dunbar residents should pull together and become stewards of the plan. Public and private sectors, civic groups, residents, business owners, local government agencies and state government agencies must all work together to successfully implement the plan for the corridors. The formation of public-private partnerships will send a positive message to residents as well as people and businesses looking to relocate to the area.

*The best plans are made by many hands.*



Residents worked together during the hands-on session.



All generations stopped by the design studio to check on the progress.



The team and residents worked together to refine ideas.

## 2. COMPLETE, WALKABLE, PEOPLE-FIRST NEIGHBORHOODS

As cities grow, it is natural to add or fill-in existing neighborhoods and to build new neighborhoods. Whether completing an existing neighborhood or creating a new one, it is important to keep the entire neighborhood unit in mind – not just the creation of residential or industrial lots or office buildings, but complete neighborhoods that respond to everyday needs. A neighborhood contains not just houses, but a mix of uses that are adaptable for change over time. And houses aren't all the same size or style; many housing types occur on a variety of lot sizes and building types.

Walkable, safe streets are important to neighborhood character. "Great streets" are those that are walkable, accessible to all, interesting, comfortable, safe, and memorable. While great streets accommodate vehicular and pedestrian travel, they are also *signature public spaces*. Great streets showcase high quality buildings; mixed-use streets provide good addresses for sustainable commerce while residential streets are key to livability in neighborhoods. To achieve urban places that encourage (and thrive with) pedestrians, bicycles, and transit vehicles, the patterns of proposed development must be specified first, during the community planning stage. Then, balanced transportation plans can be crafted for both walkability and vehicular movement.

The key to walkable communities is creating neighborhoods with a true mix of uses within walking distance – not creating isolated areas solely for residential subdivisions, business uses, or civic uses. Dunbar must be a protected, cherished part of town that is continually improved with long-term care and planning.

### Traditional neighborhoods:

1. *Have an identifiable center and edge.*
2. *Are of a walkable size.*
3. *Include a mix of land uses and building types.*
4. *Have an integrated network of walkable streets.*
5. *Reserve special sites for civic purposes.*



Complete neighborhoods include a mix of building types and pedestrian-friendly streets.



### 3. FACING STREETS & MAKING GREAT ADDRESSES

Over the course of the 20th century, the American home, like other aspects of our lives, has increasingly been designed around the automobile. Large garages have replaced porches as the dominant feature on the front of new homes, while parking lots have engulfed streetscapes. As a result, buildings no longer have the same desirable relationship to the street that they once did – they are increasingly hidden behind garages or placed in virtual seas of asphalt.

The fronts of buildings should include doors and windows, and not blank walls, making the street a more attractive and desirable place to be. Moreover, by bringing houses closer to the street, building porches, adding residential units above garages or stores, and promoting pedestrian activity will create more “eyes on the street.” “Eyes on the street” would help to mitigate against crime – making gates unnecessary. Finally, if each redevelopment project could follow this simple rule of buildings facing streets, it will add value to the public realm and enhance community character.



Houses built close to the street with porches or stoops facing the street help to promote “eyes on the street”.

Fort Myers, Florida

### 4. MIXED-INCOME, MIXED-USE, MIXED-DESIGN

To make MLK and VSS boulevards functional as they grow, it is important that the corridors support retail, housing, workplaces, green spaces, and civic uses. Mixing uses allows multiple destinations to be located within walking distance of homes, creating a walkable community and reducing the need to drive to other areas of town for daily needs. One of the most important advantages to mixed-use neighborhoods is the opportunity for a person to live close to his or her place of employment. When employees, regardless of income level, can live near their jobs, everyone benefits, for example:

- Residential property tax bases are strengthened
- Employees save time on their commutes
- Reduced congestion
- Stable workforce living near their employment
- Increased support for local businesses

Housing for a mix of incomes must be provided. A variety of building types allows for diverse lifestyle options and incomes to live in the same neighborhood. For example, in a shop front building, a business owner could live above his or her shop, or rent the upper floors as offices or apartments. Including affordable and market rate housing in same community creates a diverse neighborhood that is desirable to people of all ages and income levels.

Providing a mix of housing types requires some flexibility in the city’s thinking about land development, about density, and about how close together things are. The two corridors can serve as a place where the city can allow smart, sensible developments, including denser and moderately taller buildings. This revitalization can also be accomplished without unnecessarily displacing anyone. Great towns and neighborhoods have mixed-design where large and small buildings coexist and accom-

modate a variety of users while offering a mixture of architectural styles. It all adds up to an interesting variety of structures, that creates the character of a neighborhood. Sample building types and architectural styles are included in Appendix B.

By mixing the income, uses, and design, a complete neighborhood can be created and enjoyed by a diverse population.



Delray Beach, FL



Miami Beach, FL



## 5. SHOWCASE & HONOR THE COMMUNITY HERITAGE

In cities, new uses, social patterns, and economic activities emerge every decade, while others become outdated and get replaced, or transformed. This nonstop evolution of use and form is inevitable. By preserving and renewing historic buildings, the continuity and the evolution our society is improved. McCollum Hall is one example of a great building that could be restored to its former prominence and again be a community treasure.

In addition, efforts should be made to encourage the arts and culture of the community to thrive,

including creating new facilities to host cultural events. Clemente Park has the opportunity to emerge as an important community resource; the existing Black History Museum could be enhanced by other buildings with a mix of uses, including cultural arts facilities, neighborhood commercial businesses, and a community pool. Subsequently, Clemente Park would create a cultural oasis along MLK Boulevard.



McCollum Hall redeveloped as a vibrant neighborhood center along MLK Boulevard

## 6. BRING UP THE PEOPLE WITH THE PLACE

This Revitalization Plan was created through close cooperation with the Dunbar community. As revitalization takes place along the corridors, it is important that residents not be priced out of the area. This can be accomplished by creating a more upwardly mobile community while improving the physical attributes of the place.

Improved physical and economic conditions will provide many new opportunities to local residents:

- Those who own property will accumulate wealth as property values increase.
- Those of working age will have more job opportunities.
- Those pursuing business will have a more experienced workforce and more customers and clients.
- Parents will have better opportunities for their children than they had for themselves.

The revitalized Dunbar of tomorrow will be a better place for the people of Dunbar today.



Clemente Park should be designed to showcase the proud heritage of the Dunbar community





# special places 5



This Revitalization Plan for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard sets forth a coordinated strategy to guide appropriate growth and infill development along both corridors. The plan identifies key redevelopment sites and illustrates special gateways where civic spaces or attractive buildings can be placed in prominent positions along both corridors.

The corridors will mature around a series of special centers that are located at key intersections; each center becomes part of the foundation for the entire corridor. This chapter explains in detail the evolution of these centers and includes specific recommendations for each.

This chapter begins where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard leaves the downtown area and crosses Evans Avenue. This intersection is about to change dramatically with the imminent construction of three new northbound lanes just west of the railroad tracks that will feed traffic from Hanson Street into the existing northbound lanes that lead from the boulevard across the Caloosahatchee.

Heavy traffic flow will create a new barrier for pedestrians between Downtown and Dunbar. The intersection of Evans Avenue and Market Street will be closed entirely, blocking all east-west movement across Evans north of Edison. Two blocks of the original Evans Avenue from Larmie Street to MLK will be removed entirely.

In the distant future, the rail line that runs between the original Evans Avenue and the three new northbound lanes could become a commuter rail line that would have the opposite effect — reconnecting downtown with Dunbar, with pedestrians flowing to and from a Downtown station at MLK.



Florida DOT is evaluating the purchase of the rail right-of-way so that in the future it would be available for bus rapid transit or a commuter rail line that could run from Collier County through Bonita Springs and Fort Myers to Punta Gorda.

### NEIGHBORS' SUGGESTIONS

Here are some of the suggestions made by citizens' during initial meetings:

- Dunbar Main Street**
- Gateway to Dunbar
  - Infill Development
  - Community-based Retail
  - Entertainment
  - Variety of Housing Stock
  - Walkable Area

#### Major Intersections

- Corner stores

#### Neighborhood Retail

- Walkable Node
- Community-based Retail
- Take Advantage of Proximity to I-75: Entertainment, Hotels
- Fast food, restaurants, grocery store

#### Residential

- Walkable Node
- Housing – Townhouse, Rowhouse, Single Family
- Rehab Existing Housing

#### Industrial

- Clean Industry
- New Development Potential
- Mix of Uses: Commercial & Residential
- Affordable Housing
- Variety of Housing Types: Condo Warehouses; Buildings with Liners, Utilize Street Frontage

#### Parks

- Cultural Hub
- Tourist Attraction
- Entertainment, Recreation
- Infill Development
- Mix of Uses
- Neighborhood Serving Retail



## MCCOLLUM HALL

During the planning workshops the community identified McCollum Hall as an important community resource. Located at the western entrance of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard at the intersection of Cranford Avenue, McCollum Hall is a landmark building along the corridor.

McCollum Hall was built circa 1938. The building has a long history as a center for African-American culture and entertainment. Well known African-American musicians performed on the second floor

of McCollum Hall, which housed the renowned “dance hall,” making Dunbar an entertainment destination. Jazz music and entertainment filled the Hall on a regular basis for almost two decades.

Today McCollum Hall sits empty. While the use of the building has changed over time, the building itself has remained a constant reminder of a vibrant past. McCollum Hall should be restored and preserved to once again serve as the centerpiece of the community.

The draft plan illustrates how McCollum Hall could be restored, and adjacent parcels along Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard near Cranford Avenue could be filled in with new buildings, creating a gateway to the Dunbar neighborhood. Restoring this historic treasure is just the beginning – filling in the rest of the street scene with the fronts of new buildings will create a walkable pedestrian zone that can serve as an anchor for arts and entertainment in the community.



McCollum Hall could once again serve as an anchor in the community.



## WESTERN DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. BOULEVARD

The area immediately east of McCollum Hall is comprised of a series of shallow parcels that were affected by the recent widening of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard. It will be necessary for property owners to work together to make redevelopment and infill possible on these smaller lots. For example, church parking lots could be shared during the week to satisfy the parking requirements for local businesses on shallow lots.

In addition, changes to the existing zoning could make many of these parcels usable again. Some properties are just too small, even if the zoning is adjusted. In these instances, small park spaces may be the best use for the land.

Infill and redevelopment in this area will be very visible, as it is at the entrance to Downtown and in the heart of the Dunbar community. Redevelopment efforts in this area can serve as models and stimulate redevelopment along other areas of the corridor.



If church parking lots could be shared during the week, it is possible that the shallow lots along the south side of MLK might again support local businesses or civic endeavors, as shown in this drawing

Small parcels unsuitable for development can become parks and plazas.

### ACTION STEP # 1 WESTERN GATEWAY

The intersection of Cranford Avenue and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard was once a neighborhood center and could be brought back better than ever. Anchored by a renovated McCollum Hall and the Imaginarium, this corner could fuse tourism with local culture and serve as a western gateway to Dunbar.

- Encourage redevelopment of the southeast corner of Cranford Avenue and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard to link McCollum Hall with the Imaginarium. Remove any regulatory roadblocks, including lot depth and on-site parking requirements for lots facing sidewalks (as described elsewhere in this plan) or rules which would preclude the adjoining church from sharing its parking lot when not needed for its own functions.
- Design a landscaped gateway to Dunbar immediately east of Cranford Avenue, using the retention areas on the north side of the boulevard and the lot remnants east of Palm Avenue.
- Encourage a joint venture between the owners of the historic McCollum Hall and private investors to restore the facility as a dining or entertainment venue. Ensure that city code enforcement liens don't make such a venture impossible.

## CLEMENTE PARK

Clemente Park is emerging as an important community resource; well-designed public spaces can enhance adjacent properties, creating special addresses. During the charrette, two potential options for redevelopment were illustrated. The first depicts a park dedicated to open space, with a large playfield for football and soccer, and a large amount of passive open space. The existing Black History Museum would remain, enhanced by its new surroundings. A new street through the park could be lined with on-street parking for visitors; this street would be faced with new buildings, providing a public edge to the park (rather than the backyards of existing homes which face the property today).

A pond located on the property could be part of a system that cleans storm water that now flows unfiltered down the Ford Street ditch before emptying into Billy Creek and the Caloosahatchee River. The existing canal on the western edge of the site could be piped to allow for bicycle and pedestrian connections to Dunbar Park north of Indian Street and then along the Fort Myers Cemetery to Billy Creek and Shady Oaks Park.

A civic building, potentially a cultural center, can be located across the playfield, with views over the park and toward Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard. Sculptures could honor local heroes of Dunbar such as educators or sports figures. Clemente Park could even be extended to Dale Street as shown if private lot owners were interested in selling their lots.







A second option for the park reduces the amount of open space, but increases the number of community buildings. These buildings would have visual prominence along Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, and could hold a mix of uses, including cultural arts facilities, neighborhood commercial businesses, a community pool, and perhaps even residential uses. The buildings would create a cultural oasis for the Dunbar community; a smaller village green located directly to the north would be defined on all edges by new buildings. A new civic building (envisioned to be a cultural center) would have a prominent location at the end of the park. In this scenario, the historic Williams Academy (now serving as the Black History Museum) could be relocated to the western end of the park, into a more picturesque setting. On the western side of the park, passive open space and walking trails provide a relaxing environment for community residents.

A third park option would replace smaller community buildings with one or two larger buildings, which may be more suitable for a large cultural center. (See illustration on page 5.8.)







Park option #1 with a playfield



Rough Cost Estimates for Initial Phase of Clemente Park Improvements				
Item	Quantity	Unit	Unit Cost	Estimated Cost
Construct new east-west street w/parking both sides	750	LF	\$506.00	\$379,500
Add parallel parking on one side of side streets	1,200	LF	\$155.00	\$186,000
Edge treatment along MLK frontage	700	LF	\$100.00	\$70,000
Remove parking lot pavement	3,100	SY	\$7.00	\$21,700
Sod new park	25,652	SY	\$1.73	\$44,378
Pipe ditch, MLK Blvd. to Dale St.	750	LF	\$355.00	\$266,250
			TOTAL	\$967,828



Park option #2 with more community buildings and a town square





Park option #3 with one large community building on the corner of MLK Boulevard and Henderson Avenue

A variation on the second park option would replace smaller civic buildings with a single larger complex that could house a cultural center and other community activities

## ACTION STEP # 2 CLEMENTE PARK AND DUNBAR PARK

Clemente Park can become a highly visible and much-frequented centerpiece of Dunbar. Now that the city has acquired the lots that had separated the park from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, the abandoned buildings can be removed, the Ford Street ditch can be crossed to reunite neighborhoods, and the park itself can be expanded once a community debate results in a consensus over its design.

- Many park design decisions remain to be made, but some features are common to each design:
  - Retain an open view across the park from the boulevard;
  - Improve park access and reconnect neighborhoods with a new street that crosses the Ford Street ditch;
  - Offer parallel parking in place of large parking lots;
  - Bring water into the park for ambience and to filter Stormwater flowing along the Ford Street ditch toward Billy Creek; and
  - Allow human-scaled building in the park to serve community functions.
- The new street will also provide a pedestrian link to nearby Dunbar Park and then through the Fort Myers Cemetery to Billy Creek, where a pedestrian bridge could connect directly to Shady Oaks Park and Terry Park.

## REGULATORY CONSTRAINTS ON SHALLOW LOTS

The recent widening of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard has made many business lots along the boulevard too small for redevelopment. The new eastbound lanes were built in part on land acquired from lot owners on the south side of the boulevard. The new westbound lanes were then rebuilt near where the original lanes had been or slightly to the north (see photograph taken during the widening, looking toward downtown, with the new eastbound lanes already completed).

In some cases, business lots became so shallow and isolated that they are suitable only for widened sidewalks, landscaping, or parallel parking. This situation occurs on the south side just east of Palm Avenue where the new road was placed even further to the south and almost immediately abutting a residential neighborhood.

In other cases, particularly from High Street to Ford Street, the lots were reduced from their original depth of 100' to 80' deep, making them difficult to redevelop under any circumstances but nearly impossible under the current regulations. Ironically, such lot reductions are explicitly forbidden by the city's Growth Management Code, yet despite being forced on landowners by government action, compensating code relief has yet to be provided.

Two sets of strategies are required to restore business potential to these lots:

- The first strategy is the formal waiver of several unnecessary dimensional restrictions. For example, the B-2 land-use designation has several requirements that waste precious space on these small lots: 25' front setback, 10' side setback, and 45% maximum lot coverage, and a height limit that depends on side setbacks. In addition, lots must be 100' wide and 100' deep, with no allowance for lots that no longer meet the depth requirement due to the widening of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard.
- The second set of strategies would modify the wasteful practice of requiring ample parking spaces on every building site. Some parking strategies are regulatory in nature:
  - Eliminate (or lower) the city requirement for a set number of off-street parking spaces, given the accessibility of these sites to public transit and pedestrian traffic.

Others would require city-sponsored public works:

- Reconstruct selected side streets one block north and south of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard to provide on-street (parallel) parking spaces that can be used by all local businesses.

Others would require cooperation between owners:

- Encourage shared parking among adjoining businesses even if they are under separate ownership and management.
- Encourage adjoining churches to share their parking lots with businesses, since these parking spaces would rarely be used during the same time period.





There are various ways that the regulatory strategies can be accomplished. One would be a new mixed-use classification that would replace B-2 entirely; another would be to create an overlay district that would retain the B-2 designation but make the necessary regulatory changes. Either approach could be applied to all lots in the city that are reduced in size by road widening projects, or to all land adjoining the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard corridor, or to all land in one of the four redevelopment areas along the boulevard (see Chapter 6).

The strategy of constructing on-street (parallel) parking on the first blocks north and south of the boulevard can be accomplished within existing rights-of-way. Most side streets are at least 50' wide, which is wide enough for parallel parking on both sides. The pavement would need to be widened, curbs added, drainage adjusted, and sidewalks moved to the edge of the right-of-way. These improvements can be made on individual blocks as tax-increment funding from the four redevelopment areas along the boulevard becomes available.

Rough Cost Estimates to Add On-Street Parking Both Sides, Add Curb and Gutter, and Move Sidewalks				
Item	Quantity	Unit	Unit Cost	Estimated Cost
North Street (assume 400' on each side)	400	LF	\$272.00	\$108,800
South Street (assume 200' on each side)	200	LF	\$272.00	\$54,400



### ACTION STEP # 3 BUSINESS LOTS DAMAGED BY FOUR-LANING OF MLK

The recent four-laning of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard has added new hurdles that interfere with redevelopment of the traditional business district. Some of these hurdles can be removed by changes to city development regulations and others can be offset by pooling parking spaces.

- Create an overlay district in the city's Growth Management Code to waive unnecessary dimensional restrictions on small B-2 business lots, particularly the 25' front setback, 10' side setback, height limit that depends on side setbacks, 100' lot width and depth, and 45% cap on lot coverage.
- Provide in this same overlay district that the minimum number of off-street parking spaces normally required by § 134-115 do not apply.
- Near business districts, reconstruct side streets one block north and south of the boulevard to provide on-street (parallel) parking spaces that can be used by all local businesses.



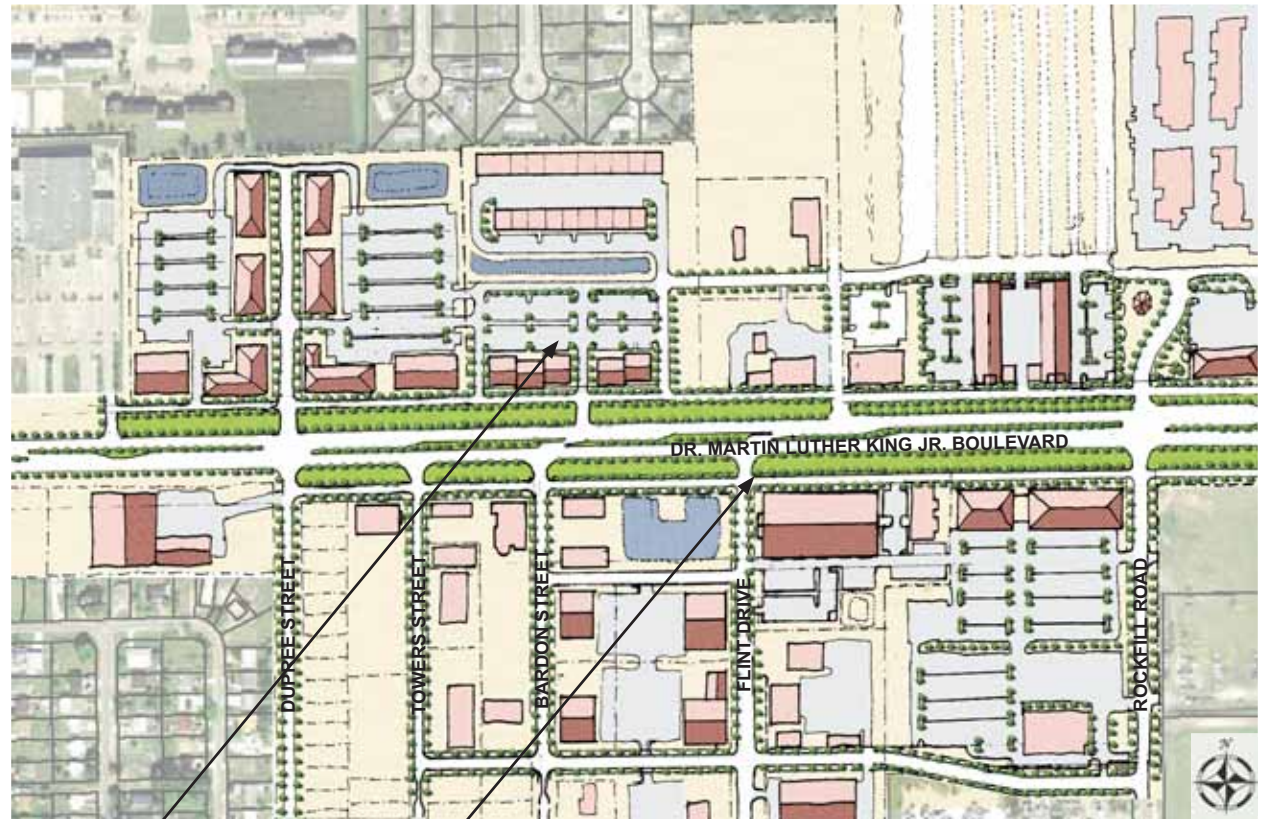
**EASTERN DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. BOULEVARD**

Traveling east on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, the character of the roadway and the adjacent built environment changes from a small-scale neighborhood to a more industrial setting of larger buildings and industrial complexes. The large-footprint industrial buildings are set back from the street in an auto-dominated environment. The industrial uses are separated from other land uses by large expanses of asphalt.

The plan for the eastern portion of the corridor calls for appropriate infill development over time. The industrial uses, which greatly contribute to the local economy, should remain, with complementary uses and building forms filling in the lost space along the corridor.

Infill development should follow good urban design principles to continue to improve the streetscape. Buildings should face the street, with parking located to the rear. A “boulevard slow lane” (a type of frontage road) could be constructed here to create a pedestrian-friendly frontage for new development. Over time, several pockets of pedestrian-oriented development should occur along this stretch of the corridor.

Specific areas for infill development are noted in the plan. The city should work with property owners to establish a comprehensive strategy for infill development and parcel assembly.



The site for the expanded Southwest Florida Enterprise Center; buildings can be located along the street, with parking behind.

A boulevard-style “slow lane” is an option to provide a pleasant pedestrian environment along the corridor.

Rough Cost Estimates to Construct a Boulevard Slow Lane - MLK from Dupree to Rockfill				
Item	Quantity	Unit	Unit Cost	Estimated Cost
Add 8' parking + 9' vehicle lane + Sidewalk	2,000	LF	\$242.00	\$484,000
Add 1 6' sidewalk to above estimates	2,000	LF	\$42.00	\$84,000
			TOTAL	\$568,000



#### **ASSISTANCE FOR SMALL BUSINESSES**

The city's Southwest Florida Enterprise Center (SWFEC, formerly known as the Business Development Center) and the FGCU-based Small Business Development Center (SBDC) are eager to expand their assistance to both start-up and established businesses in the community. The services offered by SWFEC are not well-enough known in the community despite the prominent location at 3901 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and the many startup businesses they have assisted.

Currently, SWFEC is home to 19 start-up businesses involved in service, construction, and light manufacturing, and has a waiting list of potential tenants. In addition to facilities from which start-up businesses can operate, the SWFEC offers tenants support services including business counseling and workshops to enhance management skills and efficient operations.

SWFEC has just received a \$1.5 million grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration toward increasing its business incubator space from 8,000 to 40,000 square feet. SWFEC will make space available to even more startup businesses by limiting the time period each may stay in this facility. This expansion is part of the joint redevelopment of the SWFEC site, which will be aided by available funding for the relocation of administrative offices for the Fort Myers Housing Authority.

There is no need to create new organizations to provide these services; better publicity can make more people aware of the services that are already available. Continued cooperation between the SBDC and SWFEC and other city programs will expand the range of businesses accommodated and the services that can be provided.

#### **ACTION STEP # 4 SOUTHWEST FLORIDA ENTERPRISE CENTER**

Expanding the number and variety of local businesses will make more consumer choices available to local residents, offer more opportunities for entrepreneurial activity, and retain more wealth in the community. Business training and start-up facilities are important for the launching and flourishing of local businesses.

- The city should continue to support and publicize the entrepreneurial assistance offered by the Southwest Florida Enterprise Center and the FGCU-based Small Business Development Center and the training opportunities of the High-Tech center located on Michigan Avenue.
- The new joint facility for the Enterprise Center and Housing Authority should place the business offices close to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. to extend the pedestrian character of the boulevard. Parking should be placed behind the offices, with the new business incubator space furthest to the rear.



## MICHIGAN COURT

Michigan Court is a public housing complex comprised of 470 multi-family units. Built in the 1960s as farmworker housing, the complex consists of primarily 2-story barrack style buildings scattered throughout the 54-acre site. Recognizing the need to completely redevelop the housing project, the Fort Myers Housing Authority applied for a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) HOPE VI grant. The Housing Authority was recently awarded the grant and plans are now underway to demolish the aged structures and to rebuild Michigan Court as a mixed-income neighborhood. The HOPE VI effort was founded upon the belief that public housing complexes could be turned into real neighborhoods; there are several successful examples of this type of transformation found throughout Florida and the country.

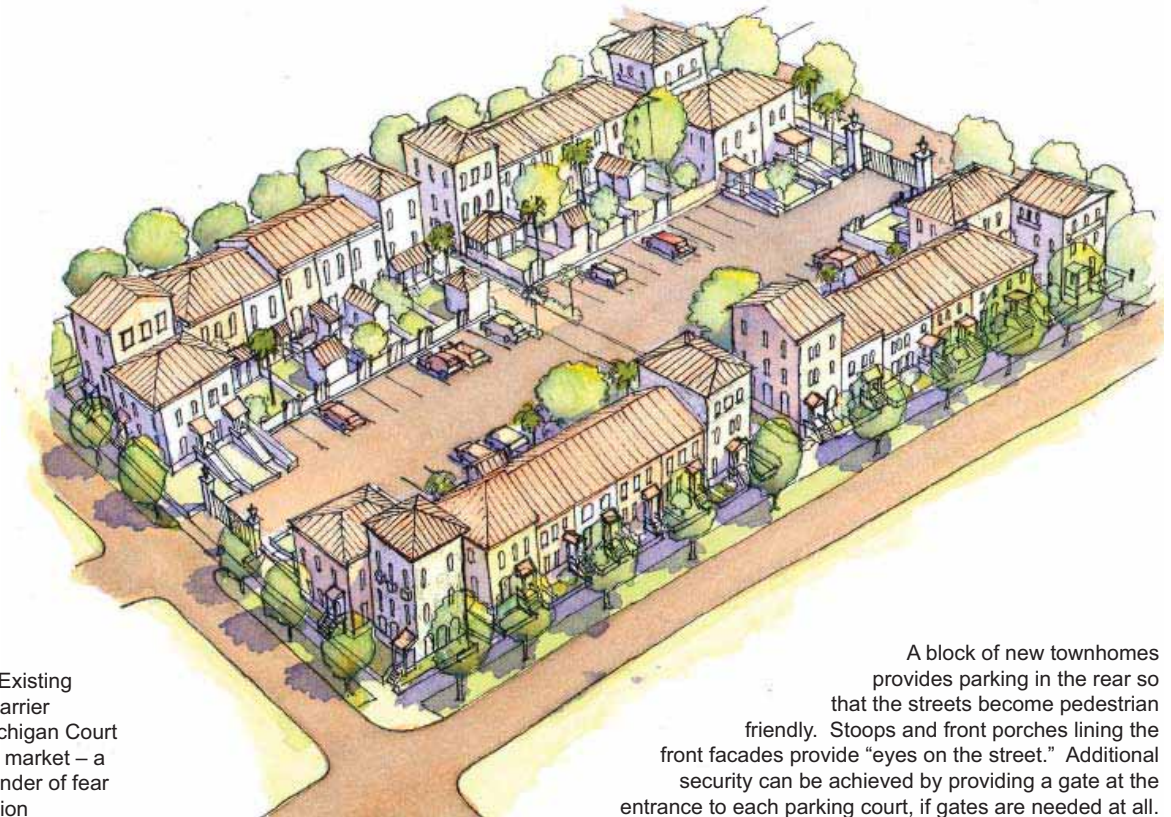


*On the left:* Existing razor-wire barrier between Michigan Court and the flea market – a chilling reminder of fear and separation

During the planning workshop the design team reviewed and revised the preliminary Housing Authority plan for the redevelopment of Michigan Court. The revised plan modifies the proposed campus-style plan into a connected network of streets and blocks. In doing so, the streets and blocks are re-knit with the surrounding neighborhoods, including a future connection to the Sabal Palms site, ensuring the long-term formation of a complete community.. A variety of housing types are proposed for the site, including single-family homes, duplexes, and townhomes. Regardless of

housing type, all buildings in the new development should have doors and windows facing streets and public spaces. Parking would be located on-street or behind the buildings. Facing streets with the front of buildings, and locating the parking to the rear, the streets can form high-quality public spaces which can be enjoyed by pedestrians and community residents.

The city and Housing Authority should modify the preliminary site plan so that it is based on an interconnected network of streets and blocks.



A block of new townhomes provides parking in the rear so that the streets become pedestrian friendly. Stoops and front porches lining the front facades provide “eyes on the street.” Additional security can be achieved by providing a gate at the entrance to each parking court, if gates are needed at all.





Preliminary plan



Revised plan

#### ACTION STEP # 5 MICHIGAN COURT

Over-concentrations of public housing are inherently problematic. The Fort Myers Housing Authority has a rare opportunity to entirely rebuild Michigan Court; it can replace the housing stock for its residents on a network of traditional streets and blocks, which will create a safer and more diverse neighborhood of highly valued houses and apartments.

- Modify the preliminary campus-style site plan into a connected network of streets and blocks, including a future connection to the neighborhood to the southwest.
- All types of housing should have doors and windows facing streets and public spaces, with parking on-street or behind the buildings.

## SAVE OUR HOMES

During the planning charrette for this revitalization effort, it became apparent that many local homeowners fear that successful revitalization would increase their property values and force them out of their homes due to rising property taxes. In fact, the "Save Our Homes" program in Florida's constitution limits tax increases on homestead properties regardless of how much the value of the property may increase.

A lot becomes a homestead property when it is the primary residence of the lot owner. Owners of homestead properties do not pay property taxes on the first \$25,000 of the property's value.

A much larger benefit began to accrue to homestead properties when the Florida Constitution was amended in 1992 to add an additional benefit. This amendment was the result of a referendum called "Save Our Homes," which limits property tax increases to 3% each year regardless of how much the property value may have increased during that year. This benefit continues each year until the property is sold or until the owner no longer resides there.

Wider knowledge of this program should reassure homeowners and make them more willing to support revitalization efforts (although it must be acknowledged that this program helps owners of homestead properties at the expense of renters and owners of commercial properties).

## STATE FUNDS FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

In 1992, the state created a Housing Trust Fund funded by a small tax on real estate document stamp fees. Until 2003, this fund was used exclusively to help build affordable housing across the state. In recent years, state officials have been placing as little as one-fourth of the available revenue into the Housing Trust Fund. This shortfall starves the revenues available to local officials to address the burgeoning housing affordability crisis. City and county officials should continue to press the governor and legislature to restore funding to previous levels.

Lately, property values have increased faster than the rise in the income levels. For example, the relatively slow growth of Lee County's 2005 median income level to \$54,100 has been dwarfed by the significant rise in the area's average single-family home price of nearly \$300,000. This gap will make the development of new affordable housing more difficult; many additional steps are needed, including new emphasis on infill housing near important transportation corridors like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevards.

## THE SHIP PROGRAM

The State Housing Initiative Partnership (SHIP) Program is a housing initiative funded through the state of Florida documentary stamp tax, which is employed by the City of Fort Myers, as its primary vehicle in assisting eligible households to purchase a home. It is administered through the City of Fort Myers Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA).

Eligible candidates must apply for participation in the SHIP program, attend homeowner classes presented by the CRA, clear up any outstanding credit problems that exist, agree to a second mortgage, and find an eligible house.

The City of Fort Myers SHIP Program provides potential homeowners with assistance in:

- Determining their funding options
- Accessing credit situation, and where relevant, providing guidance in credit repair.
- Obtaining first mortgage from a local lender
- Monitoring closing costs, and
- Providing a qualified contractor.

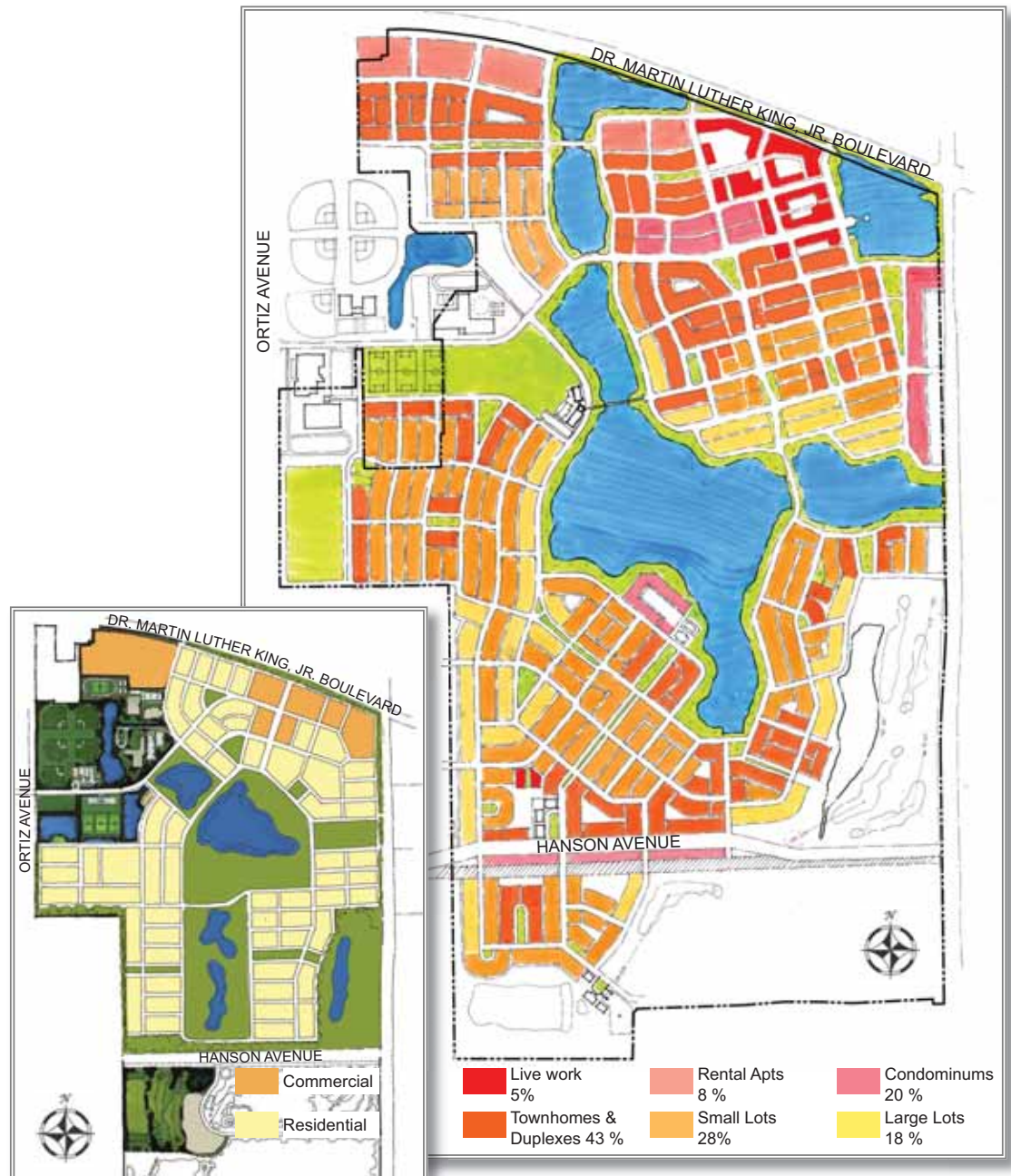
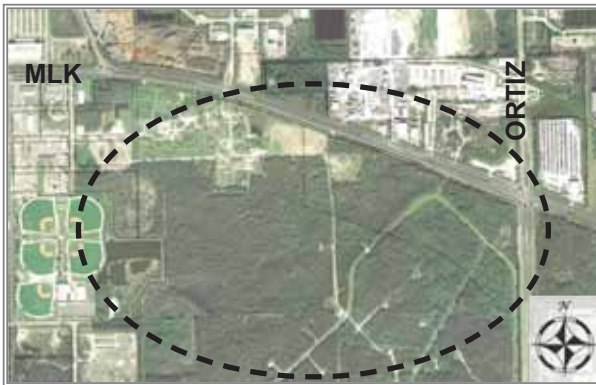


**CITY WELLFIELD SITE - EASTWOOD VILLAGE**

The City of Fort Myers is negotiating with the Bonita Bay Group to redevelop the former city wellfield at the corner of Ortiz Avenue as a series of neighborhoods to be known as Eastwood Village. The area between the Edison Avenue extension and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard has great potential as a neighborhood-oriented town center around a new pedestrian-friendly Main Street that would run perpendicular to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard.

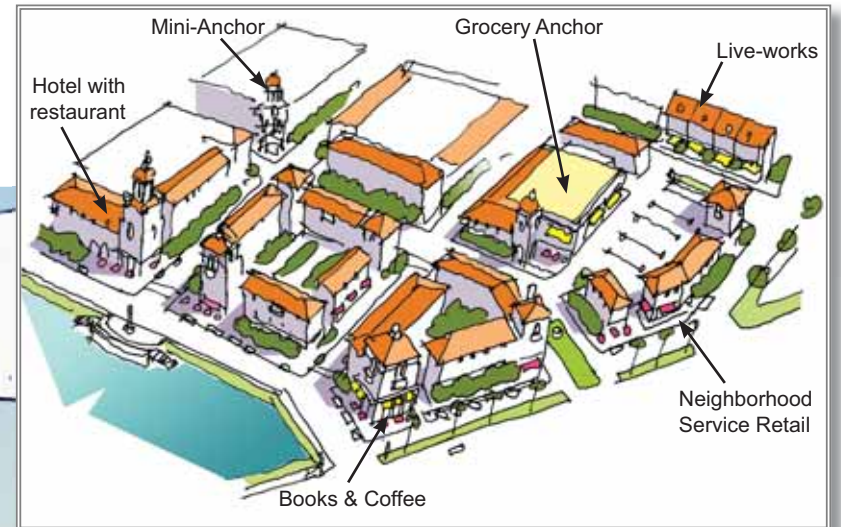
Housing within the new development should include market-rate and workforce housing, and a wide variety of housing types. The cost of workforce housing can be reduced through higher densities and through a portion of the taxes generated by the market-rate housing. A site is being reserved for a new neighborhood school.

Below is the first alternative plan designed during the charrette in December 2005, showing a network of streets and blocks with a traditional town center to the north near Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard. Edison Avenue and Hanson Street are extended eastward to Ortiz Avenue. To the right, another development option created during a follow-up workshop hosted by the Bonita Bay Group. This plan, a product of collaboration between Glattig Jackson Kercher Anglin Lopez Rinehart, Tunnell-Spangler-Walsh Associates, Bonita Bay Group, Dover Kohl and Partners, and City of Fort Myers, shows a truly mixed-income neighborhood composed of several different housing types.





An aerial view of what Eastwood Village town center might look like is shown to the right. When fully developed, it would serve the daily needs of the residents of Eastwood Village and all other nearby neighborhoods. The town center would anchor the eastern end of the MLK study area and would convert this nondescript intersection into a memorable gateway into Dunbar and all of Fort Myers from points east.



Above is a rendering looking to the town center from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard.

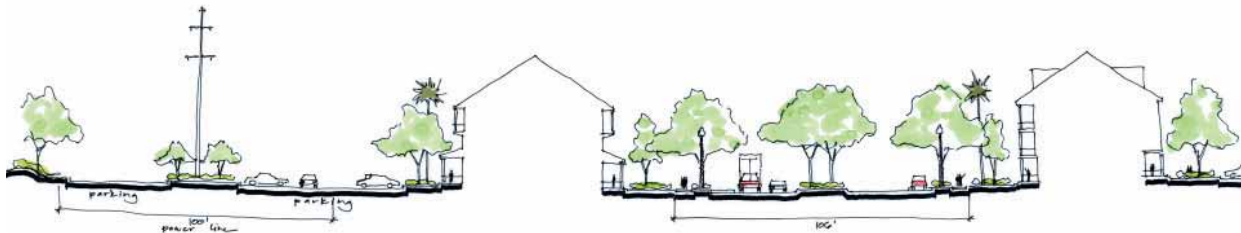
Below is a sample of the sections the design team studied to understand the existing conditions and create special places in the plan.

To the right is a conceptual diagram showing the major elements of the plan:

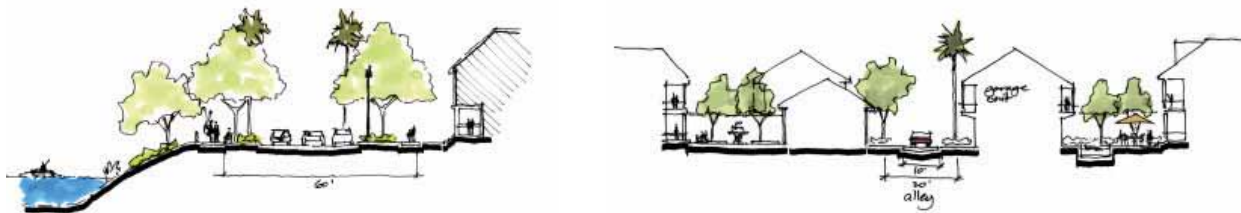
- The town center and its key location with its proximity to the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and I-75
- Neighborhoods and their centers
- Connecting the neighborhoods
- Water system



Proposed section for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard



Proposed section for Hanson Avenue



Proposed section for Eastwood Village lake drive

Proposed section for Eastwood Village alley

#### ACTION STEP # 6 EASTWOOD VILLAGE

The city's abandoned wellfield at Ortiz Avenue offers Fort Myers an opportunity to stimulate city living by creating new neighborhoods that will rival the best in the city. Through the city's ownership of the land, housing can be priced at levels that are affordable for year-round residents.

- The city should insist that Eastwood Village thoroughly integrate a variety of market-rate and workforce housing on traditional interconnected blocks.
- Eastwood Village must accommodate the extension of Hanson Street to Ortiz Avenue and allow Edison Avenue to flow through the property providing access to the north, east, and south.

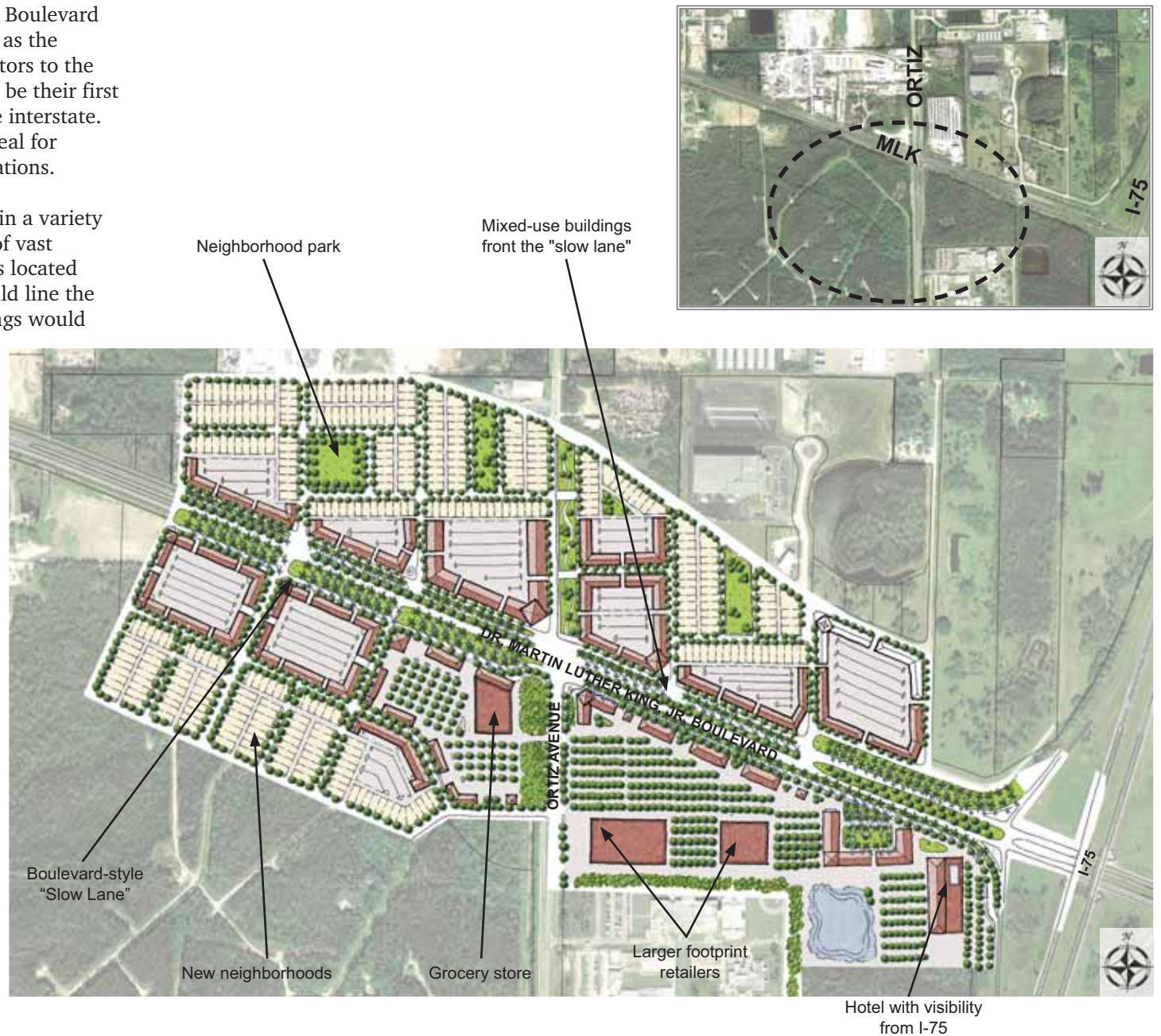


## GATEWAY TO THE CITY

The area of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard between Ortiz Avenue and I-75 serves as the gateway to the City of Fort Myers. Visitors to the City will pass through this area; it will be their first impression of the City after exiting the interstate. Due to this visibility, this location is ideal for commercial and entertainment destinations.

The plan allows for a mix of uses within a variety of building types and forms. Instead of vast expanses of surface parking, parking is located on-street or mid-block. Buildings would line the parking areas and the fronts of buildings would face pedestrian-scaled streets. Doors and windows facing the street in commercial uses allow for viable shopfront addresses. Large sites are included in the plan to accommodate larger retailers. Ample space for a hotel is provided adjacent to the interstate, and fueling facilities could be located in convenient but not visually dominating locations.

If good urban design principles are followed as parcels are developed (such as facing the street with the front of buildings), the future redevelopment of these parcels will add value to the entire corridor.





**MID-TOWN DUNBAR**



The intersection of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevards will be a very visible place in the community– the intersection of two main north/south and east/west corridors. A mixture of uses will help to create a walkable center at this important intersection. Housing– both rental and owner-occupied– could be located above commercial uses, and in the blocks beyond.

Along the south side of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, the commercial parcels have been compromised by the recent road improvements. West of Veronica S. Shoemaker, these parcels can still be suitable for neighborhood businesses. Between the northbound and southbound lanes of Shoemaker Boulevard, limited access makes the area a difficult site for commercial redevelopment, but the site does have the potential to become a formal civic space. The visual prominence of the site calls for an important landmark to be located here; suggestions have included commemorating local culture by placing a statue at the north edge of this park showcasing a noted local figure, poet Paul Laurence Dunbar, or civil rights pioneer Rosa Parks, for example.



Affordable housing – both rental and owner-occupied – could be located along the new Shoemaker Boulevard.

A memorial statue celebrating local culture could be placed at the intersection of MLK and VSS Boulevards

If the FDOT retention ponds were relocated, new commercial or mixed-use buildings could be located on these parcels near the sidewalk, giving better access for pedestrians along the street, with parking in the rear.

## **ACTION STEP # 7 MID-TOWN DUNBAR**

The new intersection of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard is too important to be left to the vagaries of generic roadside strip development. This intersection deserves a prominent cultural landmark, and dignified housing should be added nearby.

- The city should acquire the two small lots on the south side between the new lanes of Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard and combine them with the adjoining lake into a small formal park with sculpture that commemorates local culture.
- The southwest quadrant of this intersection is an ideal location for an affordable multifamily housing complex. Much of the site was recently acquired by an experienced developer for this purpose. The city should encourage this proposal and grant development approvals if it complies with the site design and standards in this plan. These approvals should allow a 5%-10% reduction in minimum dwelling unit sizes to improve affordability.

### **AFFORDABLE HIGH-QUALITY RENTAL HOUSING**

New high-quality rental housing can be constructed by private developers with housing tax credit subsidies. The resulting housing is similar in quality to the apartments built in recent years along Winkler Avenue. Due to program requirements, housing built under this program must provide many on-site amenities, forcing such housing to be built in increments of at least 100 or more dwelling units. Housing built under this program must retain its affordability for at least 30 years after construction. Generally a county only can qualify for one such project each year. Last year the 160-unit "Hibiscus Isle" affordable family housing development on Ortiz Avenue at the corner of East Michigan was funded; and the Fort Myers Housing Authority may seek this funding to replace their Flossie Riley senior housing complex.

Sites near Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard will be treated favorably by this program due to their proximity to shopping and public transit routes. A particularly favorable site has been assembled by developers just south of the boulevard between Highlands Avenue and Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard. During the charrette and in consultation with the new owners, preliminary site plans were developed for this property, as shown in the illustration. (The urban design techniques used are similar to those applied to the Towles Garden site, as described later in this plan.)

One impediment to the realization of this project is the minimum dwelling unit size requirements in the city's Growth Management Code. Based on recently completed housing developments in other parts of the state, the code's minimum sizes are about 5%-10% larger than needed by many families; affordability would be promoted by reducing these standards accordingly.



**VERONICA S. SHOEMAKER BOULEVARD:  
MICHIGAN AVENUE TO BILLY CREEK**

Established residential neighborhoods surround Shoemaker Boulevard from Michigan Avenue to Billy Creek. Community members’ ideas for this area included infill housing for vacant parcels and property rehabilitation programs for existing dilapidated houses.

The existing drainage canal along the western edge of Shoemaker Boulevard is problematic due to dangerous slopes, litter accumulation, and sediment contamination as stormwater rushes into Billy Creek. Because this is the only crossing of Billy Creek between Seaboard and Marsh, there is a large volume of traffic and very poor facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists. This canal provides almost no stormwater detention or treatment and could be replaced by a linear park that would provide pedestrian and bicycle connections northward to Shady Oaks and Terry Park and to all adjoining neighborhoods. At each point where stormwater now enters this canal, oil separators and other filtration devices could be installed to cleanse the water before it enters the new culverts that would replace the canal.

An alternative would be to divert this water flow to vacant land between Brookhill Drive and Fort Myers Cemetery where it could be treated in lakes before flowing into Billy Creek. These lakes could be configured as a stormwater park and be tied in with the new pedestrian system connecting Clem-

ente Park, Dunbar Park, Fort Myers Cemetery, and Shady Oaks Park. This alternative would be similar to another combined water quality and recreational project being planned by city officials further upstream on Billy Creek.



Rough Cost Estimates for Piping Drainage Canal along VSS from Michigan to Billy Creek				
Item	Quantity	Unit	Unit Cost	Estimated Cost
Pipe Ditch	2,100	LF	\$355.00	\$745,500
Linear Park/Multi-Use Path	2,100	LF	\$98.00	\$205,800
			TOTAL	\$951,300





#### **ACTION STEP # 8 VERONICA S. SHOEMAKER BOULEVARD DRAINAGE CANAL**

The drainage canal along Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard north of Michigan Avenue is not safe for children or pedestrians and it provides very little cleansing of stormwater flowing toward Billy Creek. Both problems could be improved within the existing right-of-way.

- Some stormwater treatment could be provided underground in the space now used for the drainage canal. This would improve water quality in Billy Creek and the Caloosahatchee while allowing the creation of a linear park along Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard, eliminating the safety hazard and restrictions on pedestrian and bicycle travel north of Michigan Avenue.
- As an alternative, the canal could be filled to create the linear park while Stormwater is routed west under Michigan Avenue to new stormwater detention lakes on vacant land along the south bank of Billy Creek. These lakes could be configured as a stormwater park and be tied in with the new pedestrian system connecting Clemente Park, Dunbar Park, Fort Myers Cemetery, and Shady Oaks Park.

## VERONICA S. SHOEMAKER BOULEVARD: BILLY CREEK TO PALM BEACH BOULEVARD

The intersection of Shoemaker Boulevard with Palm Beach Boulevard is a major commercial location now dominated by older buildings, many in need of upgrading or replacement. Palm Beach Boulevard suffers from many of the same problems as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard: obsolete building stock; an overly wide road dominated by the automobile yet serving high pedestrian volumes; and dangerous pedestrian crossings. Most of the strategies proposed in this plan for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard apply equally near this intersection.

From the commercial strip southward to Billy Creek, older residential neighborhoods are on the east side of Shoemaker Boulevard. Many homes are in need of rehabilitation, and there are opportunities for infill housing on vacant lots.

On the west side of Shoemaker Boulevard are two jewels of the local park system: Shady Oaks Park and Terry Park. Shady Oaks Park is owned and managed by the city of Fort Myers on parcels extending from Marion Street to Billy Creek. The park includes softball and soccer fields, a picnic pavilion, a recreation center, mature oak trees, and a walking trail leading to a fishing pier on Billy Creek, one of the few public access points to the creek.

Just north of Shady Oaks Park is Terry Park, a historic Lee County facility. One hundred years ago Terry Park began as a yacht and country club. Since then it has been home to the Lee County Fair (later the Southwest Florida Fair, until 1978), motorcycle and horse races, professional wrestling, high school and college sporting events, and spring training for major league baseball (until 1989).

Shady Oaks Park and Terry Park are ideally located near the heart of Fort Myers; however, they are not easily accessible from the south because Billy Creek greatly limits road connections. Two improved connections are suggested in this plan: better bicycle and pedestrian access along Shoemaker as described on the previous page, and a pedestrian bridge over Billy Creek that connects Shady Oaks Park to a trail through the Fort Myers Cemetery leading to Clemente Park.



Terry Park, (looking towards Downtown Fort Myers) in the late 1930s; Shady Oaks Park is in the upper left; Palmetto Avenue (now Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard) begins at the lower right; produce and livestock exhibits for Southwest Florida Fair were located in the circular buildings

*\* Courtesy of Sporting News*





#### **ACTION STEP # 9 TERRY PARK AND SHADY OAKS PARK**

Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard ends at Terry Park. This historic facility, and the adjoining city-owned Shady Oaks park along the north bank of Billy Creek, are located and equipped well but are underutilized in part due to limited access to the south.

- Access to both parks would be improved with a pedestrian bridge connecting Fort Myers Cemetery with Shady Oaks Park and with a new linear park replacing the drainage canal along Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard.



**VERONICA S. SHOEMAKER BOULEVARD & EDISON AVENUE**

The intersection of Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard & Edison Avenue is prominently located within the community, and would make an ideal location for neighborhood-oriented, mixed-use development. Once the new roadway is complete, parcels that were previously underutilized will have new visibility in the community.



The Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) currently owns the southwest corner of this intersection and plans to develop it with affordable townhouses. This housing would enhance the surrounding areas if designed with blocks and streets that connect to the adjacent neighborhood. A frontage road could be utilized along Veronica S. Shoemaker to create a pedestrian-friendly entrance to new homes.

The city could purchase the junkyard a few blocks to the west and add housing there that could also become part of the neighborhood while improving property values for surrounding blocks. (see more details of this proposal in Chapter 6).



- A slow lane allows pedestrian-friendly access to new homes.
- A neighborhood park will provide a formal gathering space for residents, and preserve a portion of the existing tree canopy.
- The existing junkyard can be redeveloped as housing and integrated into the existing residential neighborhood.





Proposed redevelopment of the intersection of Shoemaker Boulevard and Willard Street





Frontage road allows easy access to the warehouses

New warehouses should be built close to the street, with parking and service access behind

Potential mixed-use neighborhood

### VERONICA S. SHOEMAKER BOULEVARD: SOUTH

Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard between Canal Street and the North Colonial Waterway is designated for business and industrial uses. New businesses and infill development should be supported and encouraged along this corridor. As with the eastern end of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, there exists a great opportunity for infill development, and if done properly, the new development will enhance the surrounding area. New design standards for this section of roadway should regulate where buildings are placed, and prohibit blank walls from facing Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard.





**VERONICA S. SHOEMAKER BOULEVARD & WINKLER AVENUE;  
VERONICA S. SHOEMAKER BOULEVARD & COLONIAL BOULEVARD**

The intersections of Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard and Winkler Avenue and Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard and Colonial Boulevard have similar physical characteristics. These intersections have the potential for additional infill development. The width and number of travel lanes at these intersections hamper pedestrian flow across the street; however, new development at the corners should be designed with pedestrian flow in mind, to foster connections to other surrounding areas.

Lee County is now proceeding with plans to extend Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard further south of Colonial, to tie into Plantation Road which ultimately leads all the way to Daniels Parkway and to Six Mile Cypress Parkway. As this road is extended further to the south, its economic and traffic-flow benefits becomes increasingly important.



Potential infill site

Neighborhood green

Parking areas are lined with buildings





# implementation 6



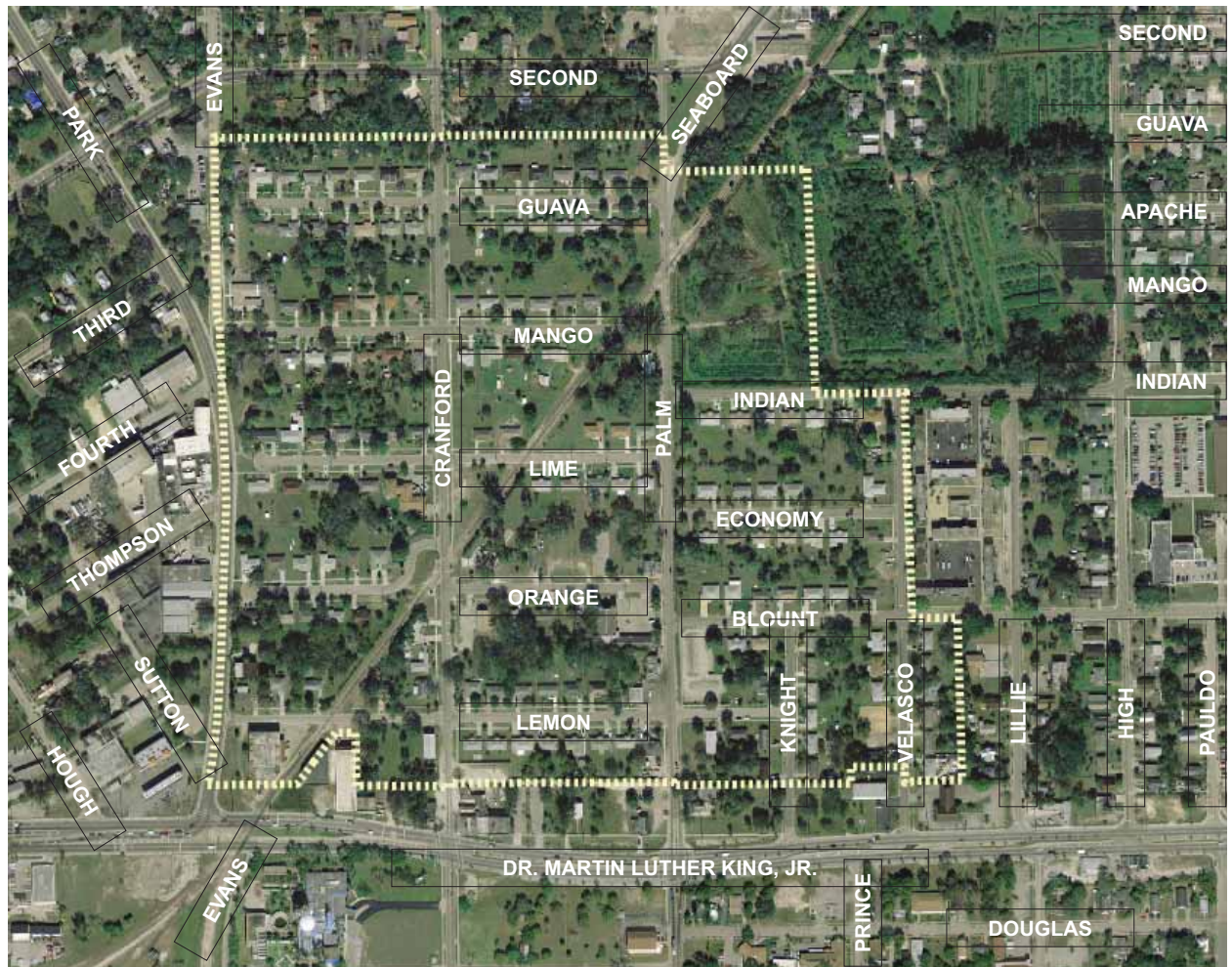


## STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION

To take maximum advantage of the potential of the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard / Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard corridors, the revitalization plan recommends specific policy, regulatory, and financing strategies to the city of Fort Myers. Strategies that are specific to special places along these corridors were presented in Chapter 5. Additional design strategies are presented in Appendix B.

Policy and regulatory strategies that would apply throughout the study area or outside the immediate corridors are presented in this chapter. In addition, financing strategies are presented that will assist and encourage private entities to make the major investments that will revitalize both road corridors and the surrounding neighborhoods.

Government funds alone will never be able to revitalize these corridors. However, strategic use of tax incentives and careful allocation of tax revenues can catalyze private investments that will more than cover the cost to the city over time.



Velasco Village, 83-acre redevelopment of affordable, owner-occupied housing by the Fort Myers Community Redevelopment Agency and DIAD, Inc., a nonprofit housing provider with a strong track record in central Fort Myers

**REGULATORY CONSTRAINTS ON NEW HOUSES**

Many requirements in the city’s growth management code were intended to govern the creation of new subdivisions. When applied to older neighborhoods, these same standards can make redevelopment on existing lots difficult or even impossible.

Table 1 shows eleven subdivisions in the study area, including the year each was originally platted, the size of the original lots, and their current zoning classification.

Compared to recent suburban standards, most of these lots are somewhat narrow but quite deep. Many original lots have been reconfigured over the years, often simply by combining adjoining lots into one larger building site. This is especially prevalent in Lincoln Park, where only a dozen homes have been built on the original 30-foot-wide lots.

Most of the residential neighborhoods in the study area are classified “A-1” (single-family) or “A-1D” (duplex). Both require single-family lots to be at least 60’ wide and 100’ deep.

In several of these neighborhoods, two adjoining lots are now only allowed to have one single-family home because the original lots were platted at 50’ wide, smaller than the current 60’ regulation.

The city’s code softens this problem somewhat by allowing a previously platted lot to be used at its original dimensions (§118-582). If this provision were better known, more attention would be paid to the potential of vacant 50’ lots.

However, this provision goes on to say that if an adjoining lot is under the same ownership, only one house can be built on the two 50’ lots. In areas

that are in need of redevelopment, this restriction is an unnecessary impediment to revitalization. A well-tended vacant lot owned by the homeowner next door is a welcome addition to most neighborhoods, but a vacant lot owned by an absentee investor is rarely an asset.

Minor changes to city regulations could ensure that a traditional 50’ wide lot is always eligible for one single-family house (without allowing new houses on the substandard 30’ lots in Lincoln Park). Appendix B of this revitalization plan shows numerous house plans that will fit perfectly on 50’ wide lots.

This restriction on commonly owned adjoining 50’ lots should probably be lifted city-wide. If the city wishes to lift this restriction in a smaller area, it could be accomplished through a code change that would apply only to designated areas (either a special overlay district, or to some or all of the city’s CRA areas, or other suitable boundary).

**ACTION STEP # 10  
CONSTRAINTS ON NEW HOUSES**

Well-tended vacant lots owned by adjoining homeowners are a welcome addition to most neighborhoods, but vacant lots owned by absentee investors are rarely an asset. City regulations that forbid a 50’ wide vacant lot from having a home built on it should be lifted.

- Modify §118-582 of the city’s code to allow one single-family house on an original 50’ wide lot even if the lot was owned by the adjoining lot owner in the past.

**TABLE 1: Early Subdivisions**

Subdivision Name	Plat Date	Original Lots	Typical Zoning
Franklin Park	1923	50' by 130'	A-1
Lincoln Park	1913	30' by 100'	A-1D
City View Park	1925	50' by 137'	A-1
Carver Park	1949	50' by 100'	A-1
Harlem Lake	1959	50' by 105'	A-1
Belle Vue Park	1924	50' by 140'	A-1
Santa Anna Park	1924	50' by 140'	A-1
Brookhill	1960	70' by 110'	A-1
Sunny Crest	1913	50' by 150'	A-2
Barden	1953	60' by 105'	A-2
Evans Addition	1905	50' by 105'	A-1, NR1

**TABLE 2: Fort Myers Land Use Designations**

Minimum Dimensions For Single-Family House			
Zone	Width	Depth	Size
A-1	60'	100'	6,000
A-1D	60'	100'	6,000
A-2	50'	100'	5,000
NR1	75'	100'	7,500



## STANDARDS FOR FORECLOSED INFILL LOTS

Many neighborhoods are plagued with vacant lots or lots with abandoned houses. These lots often have clouded titles or liens greater than the lot's value, making the lots unsalable in the real estate market. Untended lots and abandoned houses always blight surrounding neighborhoods.

The city of Fort Myers has an ongoing program to foreclose on such lots, cure liens and title defects at the same time, and then make the lots available free to non-profit and for-profit providers of affordable housing or to individuals who wish to construct a home for themselves.

The process is slow because the rights of existing lot owners must be protected, but the long-term benefits to the surrounding neighborhoods and to families needing housing are very significant.

Non-profit developers have two years to build and for-profit developers have one year; the lots revert to city ownership if these deadlines are not met.

The city has adopted specific standards that all houses on these infill lots must meet. A reevaluation of these standards should be undertaken to eliminate any that do not further the program's twin goals of neighborhood improvement and providing safe and affordable housing for local residents.

Some of the standards are matters of taste more than quality, energy efficiency, longevity, or affordability. For instance, exterior walls must be concrete block with stucco, unnecessarily forbidding many conventional or innovative construction techniques that are frequently used throughout Lee County.

Houses built under these lots cannot use insulating concrete forms, in which foam blocks serve as forms for the concrete as it is being poured and later as insulation. Also banned is modular wood construction using manufactured, load-bearing wood paneling and plywood I-beams. Even conventional wood-frame construction and newer light steel framing cannot be used. (The city's building official has some latitude to waive these standards, but is given no guidance whatever in making these decisions.)

Other standards unnecessarily drive up the initial cost of housing, pricing out some potential recipients or requiring them to pay for options they may not need or be able to afford. For instance, those building houses without this city subsidy can provide a driveway of whatever width they choose, whereas these houses must have 16' wide concrete driveways (wide enough for two large vehicles side-by-side). On a typical 50' lot, nearly one third of the front yard must be concrete. This is expensive and unnecessary when house plans are designed specifically for 50' lots; examples are provided in Appendix B that do not need to convert front yards into parking lots.

These houses must all have 3 bedrooms and 1¾ bathrooms, even if they are being purchased by a couple or single person who may not need that much space, or who would prefer less but higher quality space, or who would prefer to expand the house if more space is needed in the future.

Other standards are reasonable for those who can afford them (such as the required garage), but the sum total of so many standards raises the cost of housing unnecessarily and may make it impossible for a builder to provide the features an individual buyer may really want or need.



### ACTION STEP # 11 INFILL HOUSING STANDARDS

Neighborhoods suffer when houses or lots are abandoned. The city's program to convert eyesore lots into affordable housing should be accelerated and its standards should be re-evaluated to ensure they meet the twin goals of neighborhood improvement and affordable housing.

- Modify the standards so that high-quality conventional and innovative housing technologies are not forbidden.
- Reconsider the standards for paved driveway widths, mandatory garages, and professional landscaping.
- Consider options for allowing smaller or expandable house size in lieu of mandatory minimum sizes.

## CITY VIEW PARK (TOWLES GARDEN)

The neighborhoods south of Edison Avenue and east of Ford Street were platted into 10-acre homesites in 1916 as Towles Garden Spot subdivision. Less than ten years later, they were replatted into 50' wide lots as City View Park. Unfortunately, incompatible industrial uses now mar otherwise pleasant neighborhood streets. Current conditions in the northern quarter of City View Park are shown in an aerial photograph on the following page.

Two 10-acre tracts were omitted from City View Park. One, at the southeast corner of Edison Avenue and Ford Street, was originally developed as Southward Village Annex, a public housing complex that fell into disrepair and was demolished in 1989. Recently this tract has been redeveloped by the city's Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) as "Hope Gardens" with 30 single-family homes.

The other unplatted tract is the southwest corner of Edison Avenue and the new segment of Veronica Shoemaker Boulevard. This tract is also owned by the CRA which intends to develop it with affordable housing. (The tract has been reduced in size to accommodate the extension of Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard and future turn lanes on Edison Avenue.)

The CRA is now ready to undertake this venture. In the absence of funding to develop the site on its own, the CRA plans to solicit private developers for a joint venture.

This new neighborhood should set the tone for a new era of in-town housing diversity and greater consumer choice. Instead of replicating the nearby Hope Gardens gated subdivision, the CRA should develop this site using traditional neighborhood



Proposed townhouses, viewed from southeast

techniques that will improve the surrounding neighborhood rather than shunning it. This approach would signal that city officials believe this neighborhood deserves dignified housing that would be highly desirable anywhere in the city.

This site is heavily wooded and faces two busy streets; it also has commercial and quasi-industrial uses on two other sides. In consultation with CRA officials, two traditional lot-and-block site plans have been prepared to respond to these conditions. Both preserve nearly a fourth of the site as a small neighborhood park that also provides some separation from off-site commercial uses.

Without any buildings taller than two stories, both site plans provide many more homes than were provided on the larger Hope Gardens site. Plan A contains 35 townhouses and 16 duplex units; Plan B (shown above) contains 20 townhouses, 12 duplex units, and 24 apartment or condominium units.

The development proposed on this tract should become a model for future development and redevelopment of housing in this area.



### ACTION STEP # 12 TOWLES GARDEN AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The city should commit to developing the Towles Garden site for affordable housing in a way that improves the entire neighborhood. With diverse housing types placed on traditional city blocks, Towles Garden can become a model for development for in-town neighborhoods.

- The site plan and accompanying illustrations should become part of the CRA's solicitation for a development partner on the Towles Garden site.



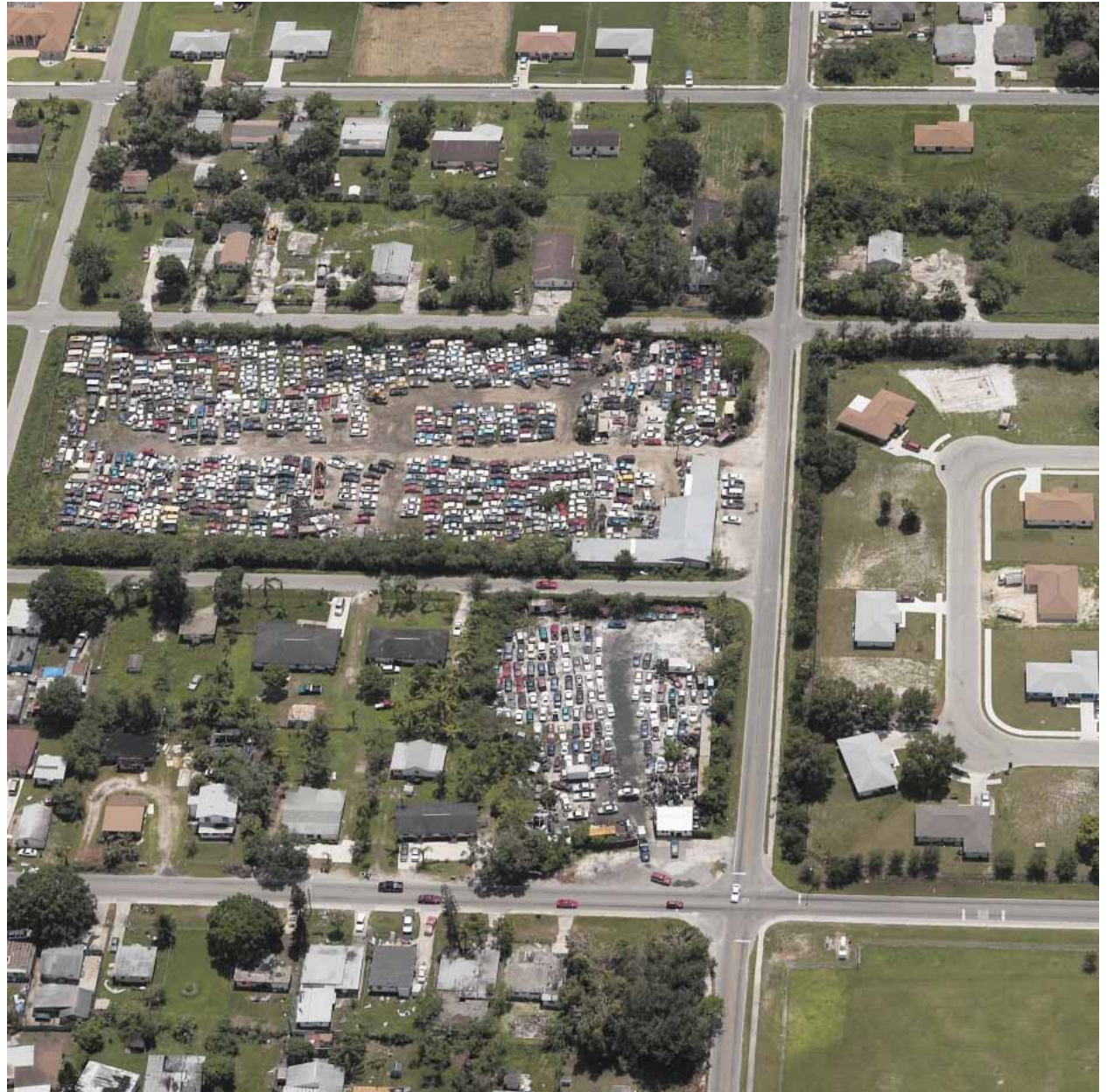
### CITY VIEW PARK (JUNKYARD REMOVAL)

The automotive junkyards immediately southeast of Franklin Park Elementary School have been a source of community friction for decades. These properties have recently been annexed into the city of Fort Myers and steps should now be taken to eliminate such utterly incompatible uses from this neighborhood.

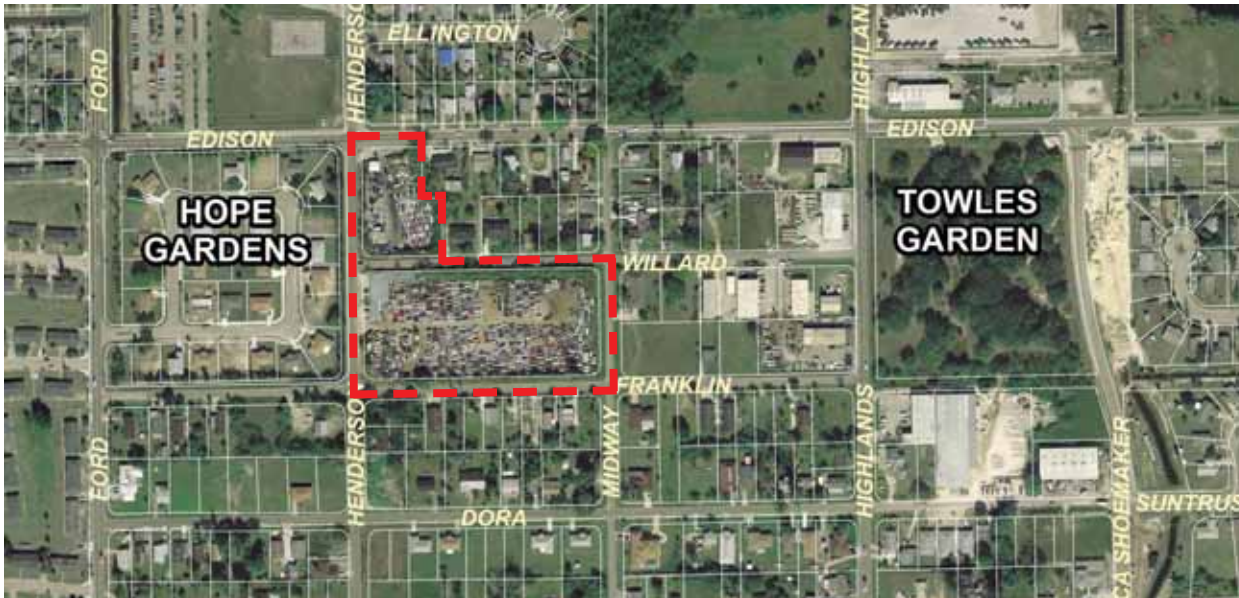
The properties are located between Edison Avenue and Franklin Street, immediately east of Henderson Avenue. They contain about five acres of land and operate as Doug's Foreign Auto Salvage and Auto Parts Salvage Inc. This use of land blights the entire surrounding residential neighborhood. The photograph, looking to the south along Henderson, shows how close these properties are to homes; Hope Gardens is on the right, Franklin Park school is to the lower right, and existing neighborhoods surround the remainder of the junkyards.

The owner of these sites has publicly stated his willingness to sell the properties if the city would assist him in relocating to a suitable industrial site. A cooperative effort as proposed by the landowner would avoid the cost and uncertainty of an eminent domain action, although that possibility should be exercised if necessary.

One complication is that the city's Growth Management Code forbids any "new junkyards" from being located within city limits. Four "existing junkyards" can be relocated to industrial districts, but the code doesn't include these two facilities because they were outside the city when that portion of the code was written. The code should be amended to add these facilities to this list, allowing them to be relocated to industrial districts within the city (as well as outside the city) if an acceptable site can be identified.







Aerial photograph showing the junkyards and surrounding neighborhoods



Proposal for redevelopment of the junkyard site

If an agreement can be reached, both junkyards should be purchased by the city once a new site for the junkyards is identified, a task that the city should assist with. A logical funding source may be the sale of less critical vacant land owned by the city.

Once purchased, remediation of any soil contamination can be carried out; then the entire 1¼ blocks should be redeveloped with detached homes, townhouses, or other needed forms of housing.

DIAD or the city's CRA are the logical entities to undertake this redevelopment. The CRA could partner with a private developer as proposed for Towles Garden, or DIAD could redevelop this site on its own.

### ACTION STEP # 13 JUNKYARD REMOVAL

The automotive junkyards near Franklin Park elementary school blight the surrounding residential neighborhoods. They should be relocated to a suitable industrial site and replaced with housing that improves the neighborhood.

- Add these junkyards to the list of “existing junkyards” in the Growth Management Code to prohibit their expansion and allow their relocation to a suitable industrial district.
- Direct city staff to assist the owners in finding suitable relocation sites.
- Identify surplus city property that could be sold to fund the acquisition of the junkyards and any necessary site cleanup.
- Immediately after completion of the Towles Garden housing development, the CRA should develop housing on these sites.

## EXPANDED ENTERPRISE ZONE

The “Enterprise Zone” boundaries for central and east Fort Myers were officially expanded in early 2006. This expansion doubles the land area where numerous state tax benefits are provided to stimulate economic revitalization:

- Job credits, applicable to either corporate income or state sales taxes, are available for eligible companies that create new jobs and hire Enterprise Zone residents.
- Community contribution tax credits against corporate income taxes are available for donations to eligible sponsors of community development projects. (Project sponsors must obtain approval from the state in advance.)
- Property tax credits up to \$50,000 are available against corporate income taxes for new or expanding businesses that create at least five new jobs.
- Sales tax refunds are available for building material purchases for new construction or building rehabilitation. The maximum refund is \$5,000, although it may reach \$10,000 if 20% of employees are residents of an Enterprise Zone. Similar credits are available for purchase of certain business property.

In Enterprise Zones, Lee County waives county impact fees that would normally be charged to new homes for roads, parks, fire, and EMS service. In March 2006 the city of Fort Myers re-authorized its local incentives for the expanded Enterprise Zone. These additional local incentives apply to Enterprise Zone locations within city limits:

- Sales tax exemption for electricity (50% of the sales tax paid, or 100% if 20% of employees are residents of an Enterprise Zone).
- 50% rebate on occupational license fees.



- Water and sewer impact fees are waived for construction of a new single-family home.

These benefits can be very valuable for the construction of new homes and for certain types of businesses. This program needs the active assistance of city officials and the county’s new Enterprise Zone Board to help business owners identify which incentives are available to them. Once they are aware of these incentives, the Lee County Economic Development Office, which serves as Enterprise Zone coordinator, has staff who are qualified to identify all necessary steps to qualify for these incentives.

## ACTION STEP # 14 ENTERPRISE ZONE MARKETING

The newly expanded Enterprise Zone for central and east Fort Myers offers numerous valuable benefits for new homes and for certain businesses, especially those employing residents in the Enterprise Zone. Aggressive marketing is needed.

- City staff and the new Enterprise Zone Board should assist the Lee County Economic Development Office in aggressively marketing Enterprise Zones to support job opportunities and affordable housing. Responsibilities of the city designated coordinator should include:
  - Development and administration of an Enterprise Zone Plan (in conjunction with the Lee County Office of Economic Development).
  - Providing leadership in recruitment of candidates to the City Enterprise Zone.
  - Developing relationships with firms planning to relocate to or currently located within the Enterprise Zone, and seeking incentives to encourage them.
  - Working with Enterprise Zone candidates on ways to better enhance their operations by explaining Enterprise Zone incentives, and removing obstacles to utilization of city, county, and state ordinances incentives.

**REDEVELOPMENT FINANCING**

The city of Fort Myers has designated five redevelopment areas along the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard corridor. In these areas, taxes generated by rising property values are generally dedicated to revitalization efforts in those same areas, a process known as “tax increment financing” (TIF).

However, these redevelopment areas are very small. Three include only business parcels along MLK; two others cover the residential neighborhoods of Velasco Village and Lincoln Park. They constitute just a small part of the city’s redevelopment program, yet they need revitalization and redevelopment more than most other parts of Fort Myers. (The redevelopment areas immediately adjoining MLK did not accrue any TIF revenue until 2005, a side-effect of the four-laning of the boulevard.)

With the exception of the successful Velasco Village redevelopment, much of the city’s redevelopment work over the past twenty years has been focused on downtown. Those efforts have now borne fruit.

The program’s focus should begin to shift back to the outlying neighborhoods with equally great needs. This shift has already begun with this planning effort (plus another along Cleveland Avenue); the next step is to provide a continuing funding source for redevelopment efforts along MLK and VSS Boulevards, as has already been done for Cleveland Avenue.

Table 3 summarizes the city’s current redevelopment areas. Note that 3 of the 14 areas have never generated TIF funding because they were set up only for assembly of vacant lots. The Westwood area will begin TIF funding next year; the other 2 will be dissolved once land assembly is complete.

The “Central” area surrounding the City of Palms stadium had been expected to generate TIF funds to help pay for construction of the stadium, but has never done so because total taxable property value actually dropped due to the land that was taken for the stadium site and thus removed from the tax rolls. The city’s recent evaluation of its com-

prehensive plan suggested eliminating the Central redevelopment area. A map on the following page identifies the current redevelopment areas plus three potential new redevelopment areas:

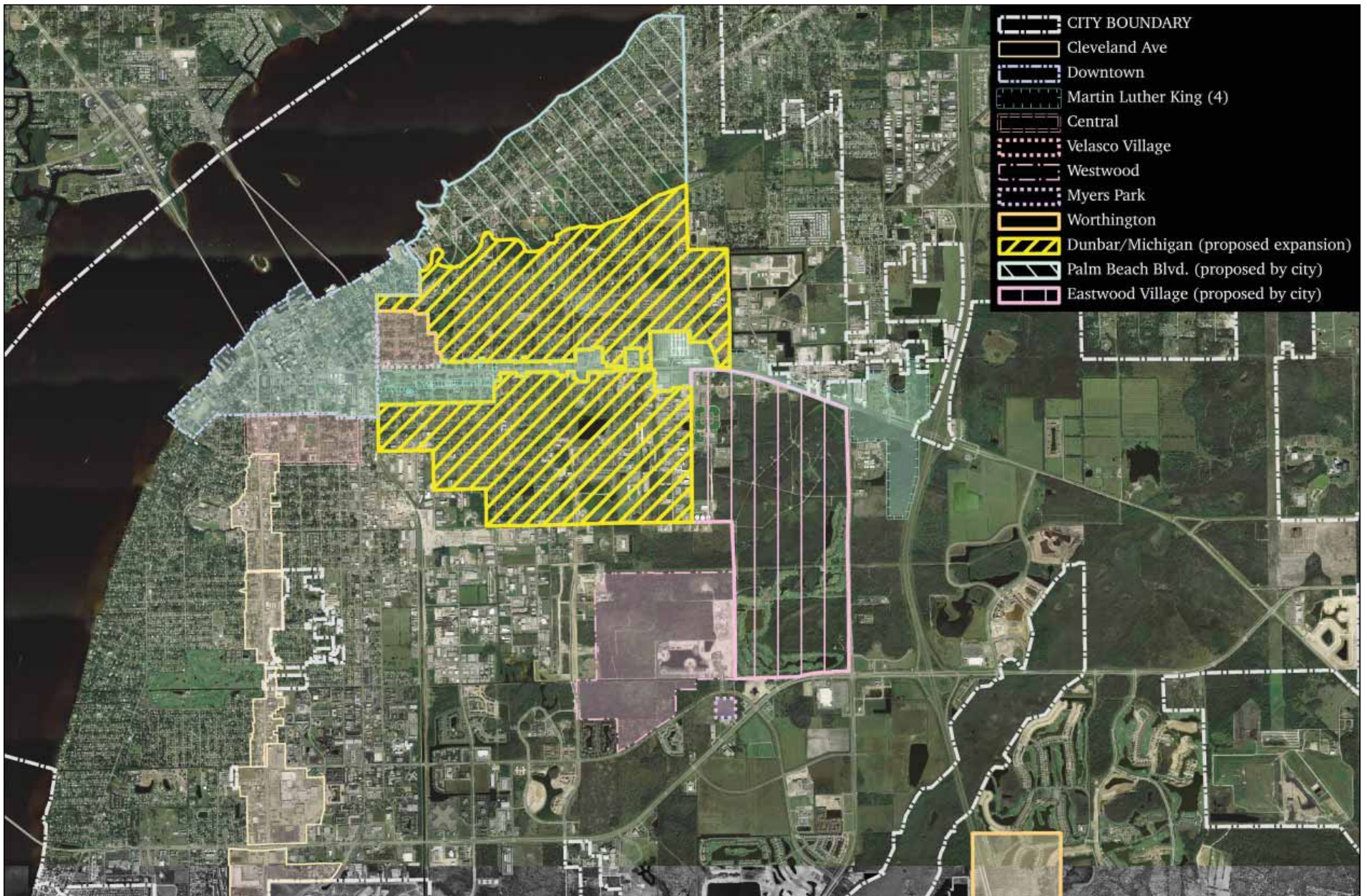
- DUNBAR/MICHIGAN AVENUE, extending from Canal Street northward to Billy Creek, as proposed in this revitalization plan.
- PALM BEACH BOULEVARD, from Billy Creek to the Caloosahatchee and eastward to Marsh (a similar area is currently under consideration by city officials).
- EASTWOOD VILLAGE, covering the old city wellfield property, the Eastwood public golf course, and the Calusa Nature Center (this area is also currently under consideration by city officials to raise mortgage assistance funds for future residents of Eastwood Village).

The new Dunbar / Michigan Avenue redevelopment area could be formed in addition to the five existing redevelopment areas near MLK or it could be consolidated with them. New or expanded redevelopment areas require approval of Lee County; the county has already committed to that approval, at least for the newly annexed areas, through the 2003 interlocal agreement that is governing the annexation process.

Another potential boundary would be to use the area identified in the city’s 2002 Urban Infill and Redevelopment Plan, which extends from Edison Avenue to Michigan Avenue and eastward to I-75. The state statute authorizing that plan allows it to be used as the basis for TIF funding independent of the usual redevelopment area statutes. A third potential boundary is shown on Map E of the city’s comprehensive plan.

Current Redevelopment Areas	Tax base year	Geographic Area		Taxable Value, 2005		2005 Tax Increment
		Sq. miles	% of City	Value in 2005	% of City	
Cleveland Avenue (4 subdistricts)	2000	0.90	2.3%	\$350,940,970	8.6%	\$676,300
Downtown	1984	0.84	2.1%	\$312,302,197	7.6%	\$2,355,900
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard (4 subdistricts)	2001	0.72	1.8%	\$35,694,370	0.9%	\$146,600
Central (stadium area)	1990	0.22	0.6%	\$21,979,880	0.5%	\$0
Velasco Village	1987	0.13	0.3%	\$5,663,740	0.1%	\$24,000
Westwood	2006	0.81	2.1%	\$31,528,190	0.8%	\$0
Myers Park	n/a	0.02	0.1%	\$25,910	0.0%	\$0
Worthington	n/a	0.28	0.7%	unknown		\$0





Existing redevelopment areas (solid colors) and new redevelopment areas under consideration (hatched lines)

In either case, it is essential that the city use its powers under Florida Statutes to upgrade the Dunbar / Michigan area and eliminate blighted conditions that have impaired sound growth. Improvement of such areas are a priority of state government, which has provided the redevelopment statutes to assist cities in this important task.

The amount of recurring funds that could be generated by a Dunbar / Michigan Avenue redevelopment area cannot be predicted with confidence

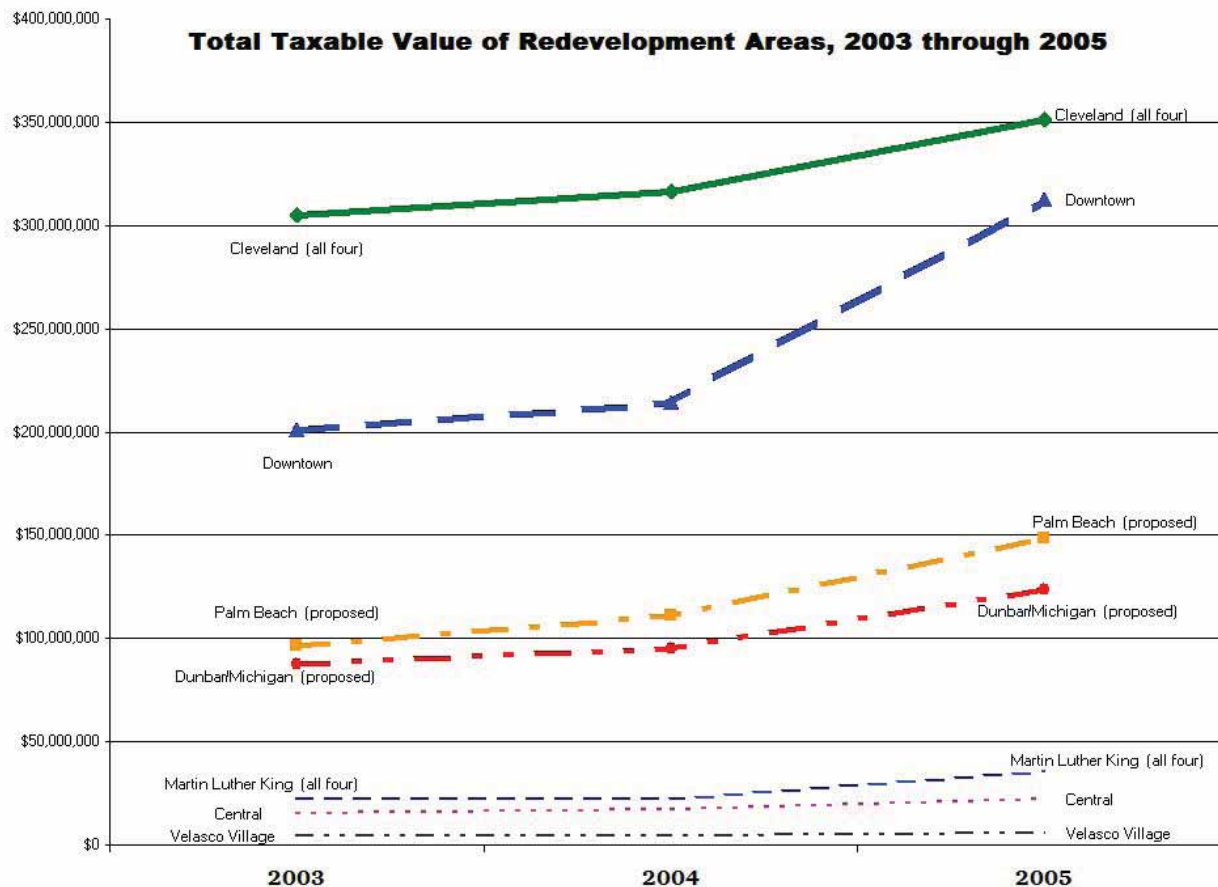
because the amount depends on taxable value increases from two indeterminate sources:

- From existing properties beginning just after property values peaked after several years of strong appreciation; and
- From new construction on existing vacant or underdeveloped properties.

It is safe to assume that annually recurring funds would not approach the level currently being gen-

erated for Cleveland Avenue (\$676,300 in 2005), but over time would be considerably greater than the level generated by the five existing redevelopment areas in Dunbar (\$170,600 in 2005).

The graph below shows the city's major redevelopment areas and the trends for taxable values from 2003 through 2005.



**ACTION STEP # 15  
DUNBAR / MICHIGAN AVENUE  
REDEVELOPMENT**

Now that the city's redevelopment plans for downtown have borne fruit, similar efforts should resume in outlying neighborhoods that have at least equally great needs. An expanded redevelopment area for Dunbar could provide a recurring source of funds to help carry out this revitalization plan.

- A new Dunbar/Michigan Avenue redevelopment area should be established by city officials to carry out detailed redevelopment planning and to provide a recurring source of funds to assist with plan implementation.
- Map E of the city's comprehensive plan should be modified to show the boundary selected for this redevelopment area.



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

This revitalization plan looks beyond the immediate economic horizon in anticipating socio-economic changes that will energize and diversify the surrounding communities. This plan suggests economic strategies to revitalize both corridors through business and economic activities that produce well-paying jobs and improve the quality of life for residents.

This plan proposes strategies to remove regulatory roadblocks to local business activities; equally important are strategies that will actively spawn entrepreneurial activities and support them to success. These strategies include assessing tourism potential and buying power, mobilizing the human, religious, political, and capital resources of the community, and leveraging them for added support from outside of the community.

## TOURISM POTENTIAL

Dunbar is one of the few culturally and historically distinct communities in Lee County that does not directly benefit from tourism. Tourism potential has not been achieved because of a high crime rate, general socio-economic and demographic factors, and the rundown nature of visible parts of the community.

Institutions, activities, themes, and places that could be promoted to benefit from the tourism potential of the community include:

- Churches of Dunbar such as Mount Olive African Methodist Episcopal Church
- Other historic buildings of Dunbar such as McCollum Hall, Dunbar Community School, and the Williams Academy
- Black History Museum

- Culinary delights of Dunbar such as Mildred's restaurant
- Fleamasters, which attracts thousands of people to its 900 shops every weekend
- Fort Myers Imaginarium
- Birth place of many sports heroes including NFL players Deion Sanders, Earnest Graham, Jevon Kearse, Greg Spires, Anthony Henry, and Phillip Buchanon
- City of Fort Myers Cemetery

Appendix E, "Historic Sites of Dunbar: A Self Guided Tour", identifies many of the historic buildings and churches and provides a brief history.

A high crime rate in Dunbar has indeed been a serious deterrent to tourism. However, in recent years, because of community policing and proactive efforts by community members to control drugs and prostitution, it has become more a perception than reality.

Development of the community's tourism potential will require vision, strategic planning, infrastructure and building upgrades, and integration into the Lee County tourism planning network. It also will require development of a partnership between the City of Fort Myers and the Dunbar community to carry out this planning.

## MARKET POTENTIAL AND BUYING POWER

The Dunbar community has tremendous market potential and buying power. A 1992 consumer survey of Dunbar residents identified community out-shopping of over \$57 million and concluded that over 83% of respondents would be regular purchasers of food items if a supermarket were located in the community. The survey also identified

substantial need for community-sourced apparel/clothing, retailing, drugs, pharmacy, dry cleaning, banking, financial services, fast food, miscellaneous household items, etc.

The research identified a strong community commitment to support a shopping center in Dunbar, provided:

- It was well managed;
- Its operations were sensitive to typical concerns over cleanliness, security, convenience, and value;
- It was anchored by a well-stocked supermarket;
- It had enough shops to represent a critical mass of retail activities at the location.

These conditions still exist. Furthermore, additional factors further enhance the economic potential. For instance, since 1992, despite a reduction in the population, the community buying power has increased substantially. In addition, the recently completed four-laning of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, and the soon to be completed changes to Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard corridor, will make the community more accessible from every direction.

Businesses along the corridor can attract workers from downtown Fort Myers, other community residents wanting a "Main Street" retail/shopping/dining experience without downtown congestion, and anyone entering Fort Myers from I-75. Attractive businesses would include café-type restaurants, specialty services with an ethnic flair, and retail stores/boutiques that cater both to local and tourist markets.



The proposed cultural-entertainment-retail nodes centered around Clemente Park and the new Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard / Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard intersection both offer possibilities to energize small businesses for existing and new local entrepreneurs and their employees and customers.

#### SERVICE/QUALITY EXPECTATIONS

Both corridors offer substantial economic potential, but there are important caveats to successful development. Here as everywhere, the consumer is the key to economic success; products and services must satisfy genuine needs and must be attentive to the high service/quality needs of the American consumer. Dunbar consumers will not buy shoddy products or accept substandard service just to support community entrepreneurship.

Historically the business and economic profile of Dunbar has been characterized by small service-type businesses that cater primarily to community needs, with a high percentage of auto service, construction, hair care salons, restaurants, bars, and mom-and-pop grocery stores.

Common denominators include labor intensiveness of the work force, low management sophistication, and limited access to capital to respond to dynamic consumer needs by upgrading inventory and facilities. This profile speaks to the need for technical training in management, marketing, business planning, credit management, and better access to both loans and equity capital. These deficits are major deterrents to community driven entrepreneurship and business development.

#### MOBILIZING CAPITAL RESOURCES

Small businesses in Dunbar, including those at the Southwest Florida Enterprise Center, need access to loans and equity capital. A logical source of such capital is the federal New Markets Tax Credit program which was created to offer incentives to such investors. The New Markets Tax Credit program is extensively used by many communities with business and economic profiles similar to Dunbar.

Various organizations have been attempting to address these issues. For example, LEEDCO is a Dunbar-based community development corporation with a history of technical training, loan packaging, micro loans, business planning assistance and actual lending. More recently, FGCU's Small Business Development Center has provided technical assistance and also advised businesses on federal procurement opportunities. However, lack of dedicated funds for economic development and technical support and limited access to banks and traditional capital sources have frustrated these efforts.

Technical assistance and access to loans and capital are essential for economic revitalization.

Mobilization of such funds could be coordinated through a community-based and managed non-profit Dunbar Development Fund (DDF), which could:

- Be structured to include representatives from churches, qualified business owners, public representatives, and other credible persons identified as banking/financial experts or capable of fiduciary discipline necessary for successful operation of the fund.
- Be charged with working with existing community organizations to mobilize resources, offer

technical assistance, and arrange micro-loan guarantees and participatory loans with local banks.

- Act as a lender of last resort, providing capital in situations where sound business planning, responsible management, and evidence of adequate owner participation are in place, but where banks are unwilling to provide loans.

Successful launching of DDF would require planning resources and capitalization of a multi-year revolving loan fund with sufficient resources to support a business development and technical staff. DDF would organize and develop the mechanism for obtaining and utilizing New Market Tax Credits and other related equity or investor capital sources.

Possible investor or equity sources include:

- New Markets Tax Credits.
- Tax-increment funds from the redevelopment areas described in the previous section of this revitalization plan.
- Grants (e.g., contributing direct grants and matching funds to facilitate business development activities).
- Community investment clubs (e.g., resources from affluent pro sports figures to fund specific projects such as community housing, etc.).

The New Markets Tax Credit program was enacted in December 2000 as part of the bipartisan Community Renewal Tax Relief Act. The purpose of the NMTC is to spur private investment in low-income urban and rural communities. The program is based on the idea that there are viable business opportunities in low-income communities and that a federal tax credit would provide attractive incentive to increase the flow of investment capital to such areas.

## CHURCHES AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Self-identity plays a critical role in how a community sees and develops itself. No issue of self-identity is more important in African-American culture than religion; religious faith is the bedrock of personal and community life. Deliberate actions are needed to translate the word into reality (Parable of the Talents – Matthew 25: 14-30). Successful outcomes are the result of affirmations of faith, preparedness for challenges, and acceptance of personal responsibility for the future. Everyone assumes responsibility for the talents they are given and the outcomes they can produce.

Community revitalization involves the mobilization of community talents including labor, capital, and faith. Because of the nature of the community and culture in Dunbar, involvement of the religious-spiritual community, particularly church leadership, is critical.

Churches are legally prevented by their nonprofit status from engaging in many business activities. This of course does not preclude activities such as church schools or providing housing, even if they

involve tuition or other payments, in furtherance of their social, educational, or religious missions.

Churches can participate in community revitalization in many direct ways:

- Providing leadership and resources in developing and managing nonprofit community development initiatives such as the proposed Dunbar Development Fund.
- Allowing church resources to be used by civic and community organizations.
- Sharing facilities with adjoining businesses to the mutual benefit of both parties, for instance as shown on page 5.3.
- Mobilizing community capital resources such as investment clubs, grants, and contributions to support the community economic initiatives.
- Contributing direct grants and matching funds to local nonprofit community foundations to facilitate business development activities.

## HUMAN RESOURCE EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Deficiencies in technical business understanding is a major deterrent to successful revitalization.

Bankers and investors need assurance that borrowers have the requisite education, skills, and capabilities to effectively manage enterprises in which they invest. For business operators, a prerequisite to accessing capital is an active effort to enhance their education and training.

Entrepreneurs can avail themselves of expertise and education in business, marketing, accounting, planning, etc., provided by organizations such as LEEDCO, Lee County High Tech Center, and FGCU/SBDC. LEEDCO and others provide technical training in business planning and credit management that are targeted to client needs.

### ACTION STEP # 16 DUNBAR DEVELOPMENT FUND

Economic revitalization is even more important than physical revitalization. Dunbar has untapped economic potential from its own residents, from tourism, and from its key location between I-75 and downtown Fort Myers. A new Dunbar Development Fund could coordinate training and financial assistance to local entrepreneurs so the community fully benefits from this potential.

- City officials should assist community leaders as they organize a Dunbar Development Fund to stimulate the economic revitalization of Dunbar.
- Assistance should be sought from the Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau to advise city officials and community leaders on strategic planning for tourism in the Dunbar community.

### Lee County Economic Development Cooperation (LEEDCO)

Since its creation in 1992, LEEDCO has provided technical and entrepreneurial training to hundreds of entrepreneurs and small businesses. This facet of its business continues to be in great demand in the Dunbar community.

LEEDCO has historically played the role of “lender of last resort” to small businesses and entrepreneurial operations. Almost \$3,000,000 in loans has been made to businesses through a combination of participatory loans with local banks (e.g., Provident National Bank, Wachovia, etc) and direct loans. Clients include: Lyons Transportation, Mildred’s Restaurant, Heritage Bookstore, New York Press, Touched by Angels, Ella’s Cleaner, and McCoy Sod.

LEEDCO continues to facilitate micro loans, primarily through the SBA Community Express Loan program. It serves as a technical assistance intermediary and loan conduit for this program, and serves numerous community businesses, including “Deep Down South Barbeque.”

## OVERLY RIGID LAND-USE CONTROLS

The city's method of regulating land uses is very unusual. Most cities have a zoning map that can be modified by elected officials through simple public hearings when the need for change is demonstrated. All changes must be consistent with the long-range vision for the city as embodied in the comprehensive plan and in particular with that plan's generalized "future land use map."

In 1989, Fort Myers essentially adopted its zoning map as the comprehensive plan's future land use map, cementing a map that was somewhat obsolete at the time as being the city's vision for the future. By design, state law makes comprehensive plans difficult to amend, even requiring approval by state officials. What should be minor zoning decisions by local elected officials thus become a matter of state concern.

The practical complications of this process are so enormous that the city has resorted to another complex system of allowing "planned unit development" (PUD) approval to effectively override the future land use map, substituting for what should be routine zoning changes.

For major development proposals, this system, while far from ideal, is generally workable. However, it penalizes the kind of incremental redevelopment that is needed on existing lots throughout much of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard corridors. For instance, a landowner proposing a simple mixed-use building on an existing lot just outside the existing B-2 business designation must follow the complete PUD process to learn whether this building type would be allowed on that lot.

Another example occurred in 2001 when a barber shop was displaced to accommodate the widening of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard. The barber wanted to relocate his small shop to a vacant corner store a few blocks away. Because the city does not provide the ability to consider this request through a simple zoning process, the very complex PUD process had to be followed.

Another negative effect of this system is that PUD approvals are not reflected on the future land use map. This is because under Fort Myers rules, PUD approvals override the existing designations but do not replace them. Adjoining landowners have no notice that the official maps may be essentially outdated. For instance, PUD approval was given in 2002 for a trucking terminal along Ballard Road in an expansion to the Benchmark Corporate Park, yet adjoining landowners may still believe that the existing A-3 multifamily designation indicates the future use of that property.

There are two major approaches the city could follow to change its regulatory system:

- Adopt a conventional and more generalized future land use map into the comprehensive plan, while retaining the current map as the city's zoning map.
- Adopt a transect-based future land use map, similar to approach that has just been applied downtown, where the map identifies zones of differing intensity but does not attempt to determine and isolate all future commercial and residential uses. This map would also identify zones where revitalization or intense urbanization are desired and others where retention of the current community character is more important. The current map could be retained as

an interim zoning map, but would be phased out over time as detailed plans are developed for individual communities.

The city's recent evaluation of its comprehensive plan came to a similar conclusion about the need for simplified categories on the future land use map.

Either approach would be a long-term commitment on the part of the city, but change must be initiated so that the city can continue to evolve rather than being frozen by past land-use decisions.

### ACTION STEP # 17 OVERLY RIGID LAND-USE CONTROLS

The City of Fort Myers must begin transforming its outdated land-use regulatory system to allow the city to improve over time. The current system is overly rigid yet still does not embody the aspirations of its citizens for a better future.

- The city should evaluate both approaches outlined above during its upcoming cycle of comprehensive plan amendments and commit to an overhaul of its future land use map, with subsequent amendments to the growth management code.





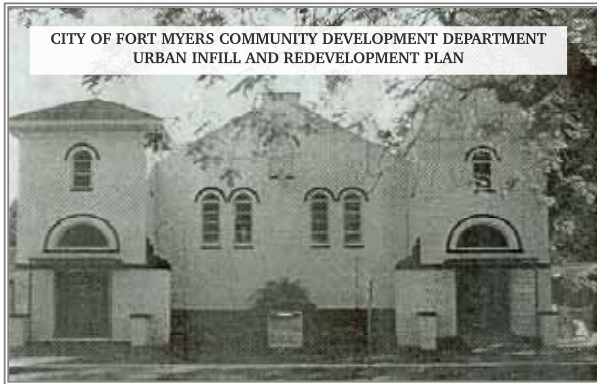
# previous studies – appendix





## URBAN INFILL & REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

Prepared by City of Fort Myers Planning Division 2002



In 1999 the Florida legislature authorized cities to designate “urban infill and redevelopment areas” to stimulate investment in distressed urban centers. This plan was prepared using a state planning grant under the program.

This plan designated a Fort Myers urban infill and redevelopment area bounded by Evans Avenue on the west, Michigan Avenue on the north and east, and Edison Avenue on the south. It included land both inside and outside the city of Fort Myers (although all of the area outside was annexed into the city in 2003).

This plan echoes most of the themes of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard Redevelopment Plan from two years earlier (as described on the next page) and contains four major enhancements.

The first is a new emphasis on brownfield redevelopment. The prior plan focused on brownfields as contaminated sites that required environmental cleanup before reuse was possible. Newer terminology refers to brownfields as abandoned, idled, or underused industrial or commercial facilities

where expansion or redevelopment is complicated by real or perceived contamination. The urban infill area has one of the highest concentrations of such sites in the entire city.

Another enhancement followed the realization that, while Dunbar has a rich history and unique character, it has no single center or place that epitomizes the community. An opportunity presented itself when Lee County offered to turn Clemente Park and nearby Dunbar Park over to the city. If these two facilities were linked and Clemente Park were expanded to front on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, a highly visible centerpiece could be created that would serve as an anchor for community gatherings, cultural events, and public recreation.

A third new emphasis is on the preservation of ten historic structures, including three churches. All ten were documented in a brochure created for a self guided tour. (This brochure is reproduced in Appendix E of this report).

Finally, an appendix to the infill plan presented recommendations of the Dunbar Revitalization Committee. Most notable was the idea to create a cultural/commercial district along Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard. This district would build on the preservation of McCollum Hall and the historic community center concept for Clemente Park, expanding that theme to the entire boulevard from Evans Avenue to Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard.

The end result would be a working, growing, attractive business center and tourist attraction. Local entrepreneurs would be encouraged to develop establishments that celebrate the culture of the neighborhoods, combining entertainment with a

unique shopping experience. This district would focus on the strengths of the historic culture, reinforce values of community, rekindle economic vitality, and solidify the image of the business corridor as a unique commercial center, while also serving as the social heart of the community.

The entire urban infill and redevelopment plan was approved by the City Council in October 2002 and endorsed by the Board of County Commissioners that same month.

*NOTE: The state has not yet implemented its ambitious plans for urban infill and redevelopment areas. In the program’s initial year, sixteen planning grants and six implementation grants were given. Since that time, the state has not authorized any further funding for this program.*

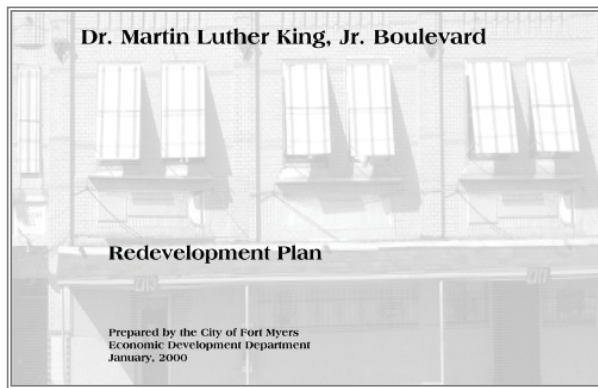
*However, the statutes authorizing urban infill and redevelopment areas are still in place. They provide an alternative way to implement TIF or tax-increment financing (in addition to the more common “community redevelopment area” designations as described later in this report).*

*To continue eligibility for the economic and incentives such as TIF, the city must demonstrate during the evaluation and assessment of its comprehensive plan that within designated area, the amount of annual residential, commercial, and institutional development has increased by at least 10 percent.*



## DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. BOULEVARD REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

Prepared by City of Fort Myers Economic Development Department, 2000



While the Florida Department of Transportation (DOT) was designing the four-laning of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, city officials decided to establish formal redevelopment areas on both sides of the boulevard. This action would complement the city's commitment of \$3 million in infrastructure improvements along the boulevard for storm sewers, landscaping, irrigation, new utilities, and enhanced lighting.

This plan was one of the statutory prerequisites for new redevelopment areas. The first step was completion of studies in 1999 documenting blighted conditions.

Although the plan recognized the needs of the unincorporated enclaves, the new redevelopment areas could only include land that was within the city limits at the time. The planning area was initially broken into three sub-areas along both sides of the boulevard:

1. Evans Avenue to Ford Street
2. Ford Street to Michigan Avenue
3. Michigan Avenue to I-75

The Lincoln Park residential neighborhood was added as fourth sub-area.

This plan identified 19 properties with serious environmental concerns including abandoned service stations, salvage yards, and vacant commercial buildings. The plan also noted the large concentration of aging and obsolete buildings and the inadequate depth of most commercial lots on the south side of the boulevard.

Here are the major recommendations of this plan:

### Land Use / Zoning Changes:

- Adopt an overlay zoning district along the boulevard to relax parking and setback requirements for lots that were reduced in size to accommodate the road widening.
- The primary pedestrian-oriented zone is west of Ford Street where parking should be behind buildings and streetscape improvements are needed along comfortable sidewalks.
- Phase out undesirable uses such as pawnshops, pool halls, tire repair shops, check-cashing establishments, and recycling facilities.
- Chain link and barbed wire fencing should be eliminated; where fencing is necessary, use aluminum or wrought iron fences.
- Eliminate commercial and multifamily uses from Lincoln Park.

### Land Acquisition:

- Assist Pepsi Cola in acquiring property behind their plant as an incentive to stay at their present location; provide access from their plant to Palmetto Avenue (now Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard) to replace access the plant lost due to four-laning of the boulevard.
- Assist in the rehabilitation of McCollum Hall; if necessary, acquire that property and adjacent parcels and identify a master developer to adaptively reuse this facility.
- Acquire brownfield sites such as abandoned

service stations to clean them up and prepare them for productive uses.

- Acquire surplus sites from the Florida DOT after the four-laning is completed and use them for pocket parks and roadway landscaping.
- Expand uses at the Imaginarium site, including reuse of the "red brick" building and the cleanup of residues from the coal gasification plant so that site can be reused by private enterprise.

### Housing:

- Housing should not be placed on properties fronting the boulevard; reserve these sites for commercial, industrial, and institutional uses.
- Retain newer homes in Lincoln Park but consolidate ownership of other lots and assist a master developer in creating a new middle-income community centered on Lincoln Boulevard.

### Economic Development:

- Expand business incentives to create new jobs and encourage desirable commercial uses on vacant and underutilized properties.
- Develop a facade grant program to encourage upgrades of commercial properties.
- Develop a micro-lending program to assist small businesses.
- Restructure the Business Development Center (now the Southwest Florida Enterprise Center) into a non-profit organization.
- Assist the Lee County Employee and Economic Development Corporation (LEEDCO) with completion of the Dunbar Shopping Center.
- Designate major segments of the redevelopment area as a brownfield area, making it eligible for cleanup funds.

## ECONOMIC FEASIBILITY ANALYSIS AND BUSINESS PLAN FOR DUNBAR SHOPPING CENTER

Prepared for Dunbar Chamber of Commerce, 1992

### Physical Improvements:

- Upgrade landscaping along the boulevard including attractive fencing around visible retention ponds.
- Enhance the visible identity of “Historic Dunbar” west of Ford Street.

### Annexation:

- Annex the unincorporated enclaves into the city and use county funds to upgrade infrastructure in those areas.

### Public Safety:

- Enforce anti-loitering laws and work toward eliminating crime and drug problems in the area.

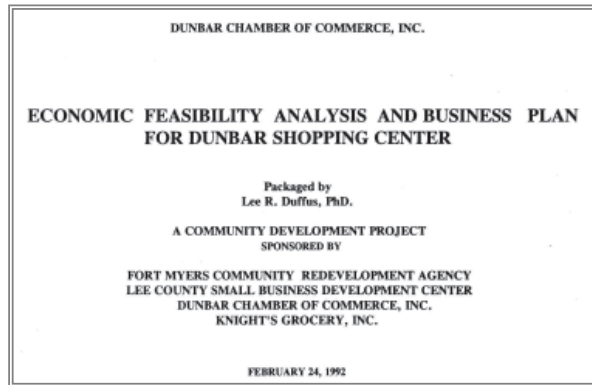
### Miscellaneous:

- Place murals on exposed sides of buildings.
- Remove dilapidated and unsafe structures.
- Discourage industrial uses west of Palmetto Avenue and clean up those to the east.

### Funding:

This plan recognized that tax-increment funds from these small areas would not begin to accrue for about five years and, even then, could not be relied on as a major source of funding. Other funding sources were suggested in the plan:

- City general funds and bond proceeds
- Florida DOT (for roadway landscape funds)
- Brownfield grants and loans
- Enterprise Zone incentives
- Historic preservation grants for McCollum Hall
- Lee County funding for areas to be annexed
- Private investment (the major source of funds for redevelopment along the boulevard)



- The Dunbar community strongly supported a neighborhood shopping center located in Dunbar.

The study concluded that based on the strong community and market demand identified, a well-managed and marketed shopping center, anchored by a supermarket and having a critical mass of other retail activities, would succeed.

The Economic Feasibility Analysis and Business Plan for the Dunbar Shopping Center was prepared in February 1992. It examined the economic basis for a new shopping center in Dunbar which was being considered at that time (it was constructed about eight years later).

The research-based study outlined the social and economic determinants, demand factors, and economic development benefits from locating a shopping center in Dunbar.

Major findings of the study were:

- A substantial amount of community purchasing dollars (the Dunbar community spent in excess of \$81 million per annum on retail purchases) and, consequently community jobs, were transferred outside Dunbar because of out-shopping by residents.
- The closest retail shopping area from which householders in Dunbar purchase the basic mix of retail items is located 2-5 miles from the intersection of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Veronica Shoemaker Boulevards, the approximate population center of the community.

## DUNBAR COMMUNITY GROWTH PLAN

*Prepared by Florida Institute of Urban Affairs, 1981*

This plan addressed a portion of Dunbar that was outside the city limits until 2003 - the area between Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and Canal Street, and between Ford Street and Flint Drive.

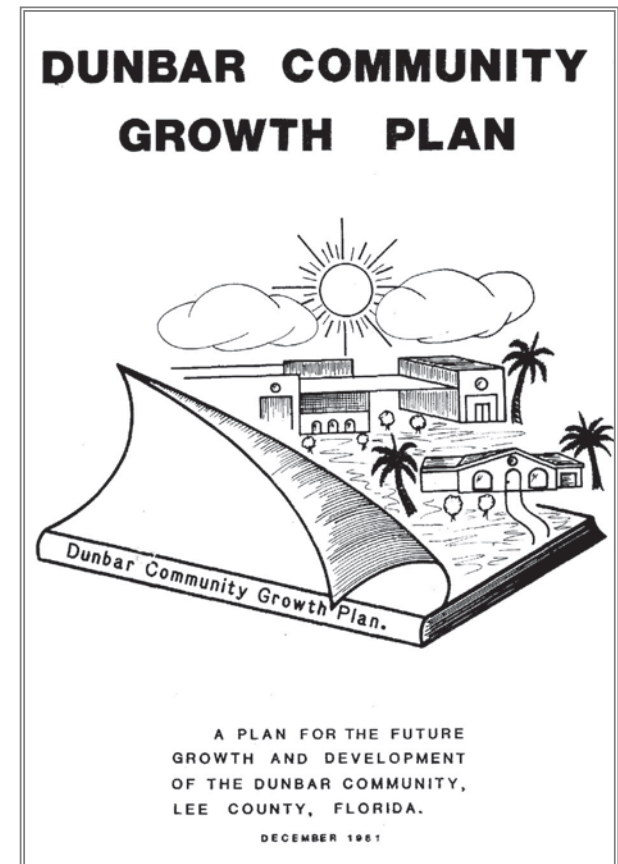
The plan's primary focus was on zoning designations that were continually allowing incompatible non-residential land uses. These included 71 special permits, special exceptions, and variances since zoning was instituted in 1962. The plan recommended that 20 of these be rescinded immediately and limitations be placed on 27 more. The plan also recommended removing heavy commercial zoning from the north side of Canal Street and from lots on the north side of Fairview Avenue in Harlem Lakes, and recommended the removal of industrial zoning from vacant land throughout the planning area. Dozens of other specific rezoning recommendations were also presented.

A future land use map was prepared to designate the eventual uses of every parcel of land. Note the following comments:

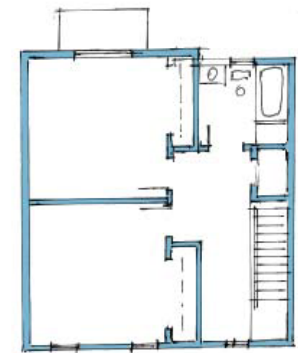
[M]any commercial, industrial and nonresidential uses [have been] established in residential areas which are not capable of handling the excessive traffic, noise, and other activities and nuisances which are inconsistent with the enjoyment and upkeep of the homes located in the Dunbar Community. The continued encroachment of these uses into the residential areas will ultimately displace the residents from an area which has been traditionally valued by a relatively immobile homeowner who will find it difficult to seek comparable homes in other areas of the community. The only way to prevent such displacement is to safeguard home ownership by prohibiting any further infiltration of incompatible land uses.

This study was accepted by the Board of County Commissioners, but very few of its recommendations were carried out.

*NOTE: A comprehensive re-evaluation of zoning in the planning area did not take place until after the 2003 annexation of the unincorporated parts of Dunbar. In 2005, all prior Lee County zoning actions in the annexed areas were replaced with new Fort Myers designations.*







# design guidelines – appendix **B**



## DESIGN GUIDELINES

As discussed earlier in this report, in some cases the city's Growth Management Code does not match either the community's existing character or the goals of this Revitalization Plan. Correcting these mismatches is one of the primary methods to implement the vision for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard.

In addition to the specific code changes discussed in this report, a concept for design standards for the study area is presented in the following pages. Design standards could reassure the local residents that future development will be built in accordance with the recommendations of this Revitalization Plan and thus their neighborhoods will be protected and will improve over time. The standards would also assure developers that other developers would match or exceed their investment in type and quality.

The city should work with the community to tailor the suggested standards to achieve the desired outcomes. The standards could either be adopted within the framework of the existing Growth Management Code or they could be the first step toward transforming the city's existing code into a form-based code, where the physical form of the buildings and their siting on their lots becomes a priority purpose of the code.

### EXISTING REGULATIONS

Regulations that guide the development of land can work like DNA, in effect serving as the genetic code for a city's evolution. When these regulations are flawed or not adjusted to reflect the aspirations of its citizens, the city that is desired will not evolve regardless of the volume or rate of new construction.

For example, most of the residential neighborhoods

in the study area are classified "A-1" (single-family) or "A-1D" (duplex), requiring single-family lots to be a minimum of 60 feet wide and 100 feet deep. These requirements do not match the slightly smaller lots historically found in Dunbar; in some cases, lot owners must seek a variance to build a house on a lot that is the same size as every other lot in the neighborhood (see discussion and recommendation on page 6.2). Such regulations unintentionally disrupt the historic fabric of these neighborhoods.

Another example of needed code reform can be accomplished only through design standards. This reform could sidestep the trend in recent years toward new homes being hidden behind large garages, as opposed to the traditional pattern where garages or carports are placed to the side or rear of homes. Although this trend has not reached most of the study area, the relatively narrow lots in Dunbar require careful treatment to avoid the garage-dominated facades often seen in new developments. This subject is discussed for single-family homes on page B.14 and for duplexes on page B.15. Page B.8 illustrates the elements of a healthy neighborhood street.

Another example of code reform is discussed on pages 5.9 and 5.10; the widening of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard has made many business lots along the boulevard too small for redevelopment under the existing "B-2" standards.

Unlike many cities, Fort Myers does allow a mix of uses in all of its business districts, an aspect of the existing code that should be retained. However, the specific standards in the code are not conducive to mixed-use environments. Many areas along the corridors would benefit from street-level uses that lend vitality and make walking interesting. Buildings at street level, for the sake of safety, need to have win-

dows and doors facing the street as opposed to long stretches of blank walls. Shopfront windows should be transparent to provide clear views of merchandise and to provide natural surveillance of exterior street spaces. Page B.9 illustrates the elements of a healthy commercial street. Regulations to achieve these goals are often applied through simple design standards, but are more effective when part of a more complete form-based code.

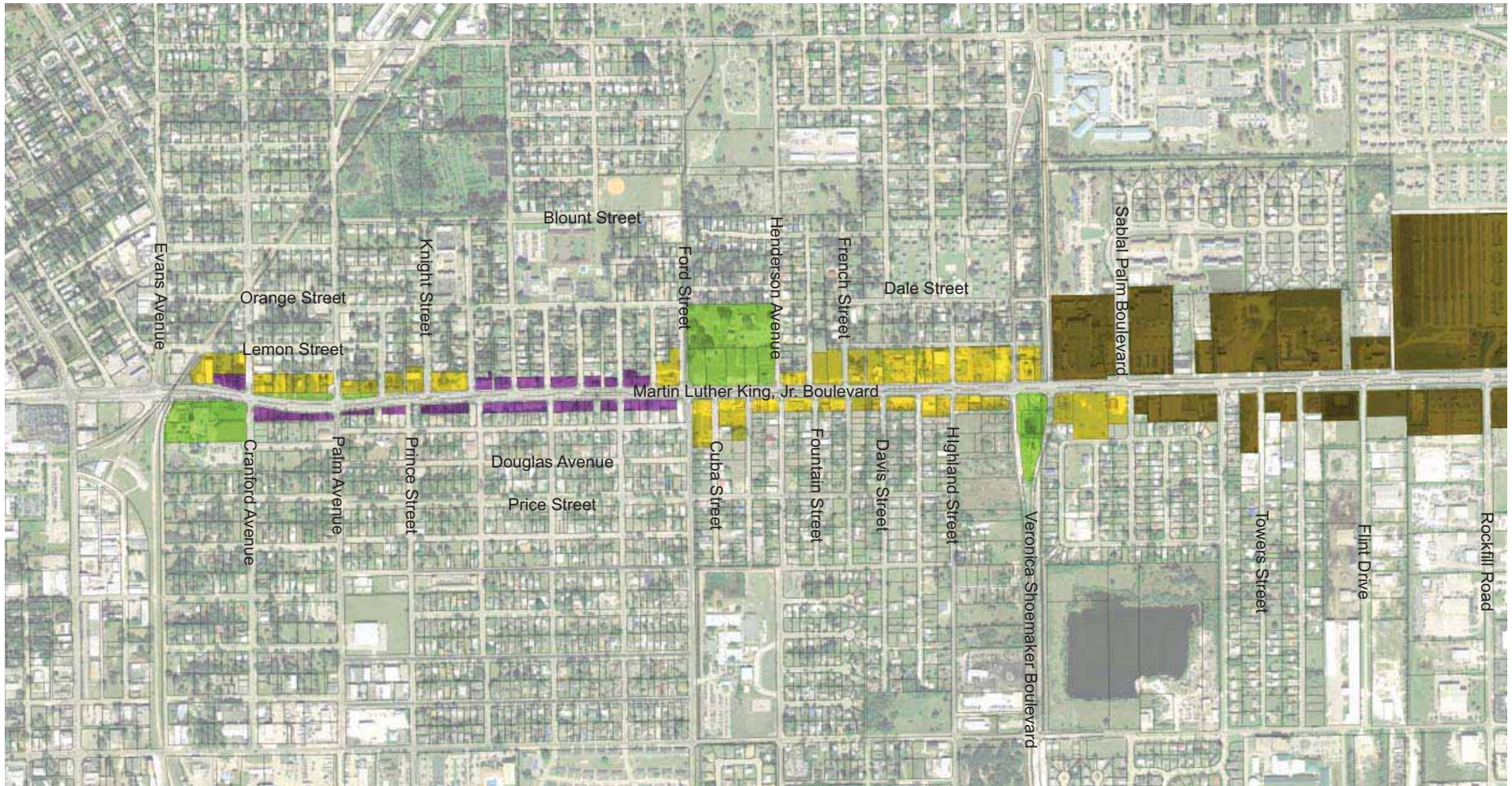
Industrial uses found along parts of both corridors are important to the local economy; their continued location beyond residential neighborhoods should be encouraged. Specific design standards can be applied to industrial buildings to minimize the physical and visual impact on the corridors while not hampering the functionality of industrial uses. Page B.10 illustrates possible results of design standards for industrial buildings.

The city should use its municipal powers to control development via regulations, yet not over-use this power to the point of stifling investment or limiting creativity. Regulations can be far more than a routine permitting hurdle if they are linked to outcomes desired within their communities. Carefully written regulations provide the necessary control without requiring everything to be the same, either as to land uses, building types, or architectural styles.

The maps on the next four pages identify types of lots and existing land uses throughout both corridors. The matrix that follows the maps contains design recommendations keyed to these maps, with references to other parts of this report addressing similar topics. The remainder of this appendix includes illustrations of healthy patterns for streets and buildings.



## DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. BOULEVARD WEST



- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: purple; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Small commercial lots compromised by road widening</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: green; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Existing residential lots fronting on MLK or VSS</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: lightgreen; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Parks and civic sites</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: orange; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Large parcels</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: blue; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Existing residential lots with backs or sides facing VSS</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: brown; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Commercial and industrial areas with buildings spaced far apart with fields of vehicle storage</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: yellow; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Small and medium sized parcels</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: gray; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Public Housing</li> </ul> |
|---|---|



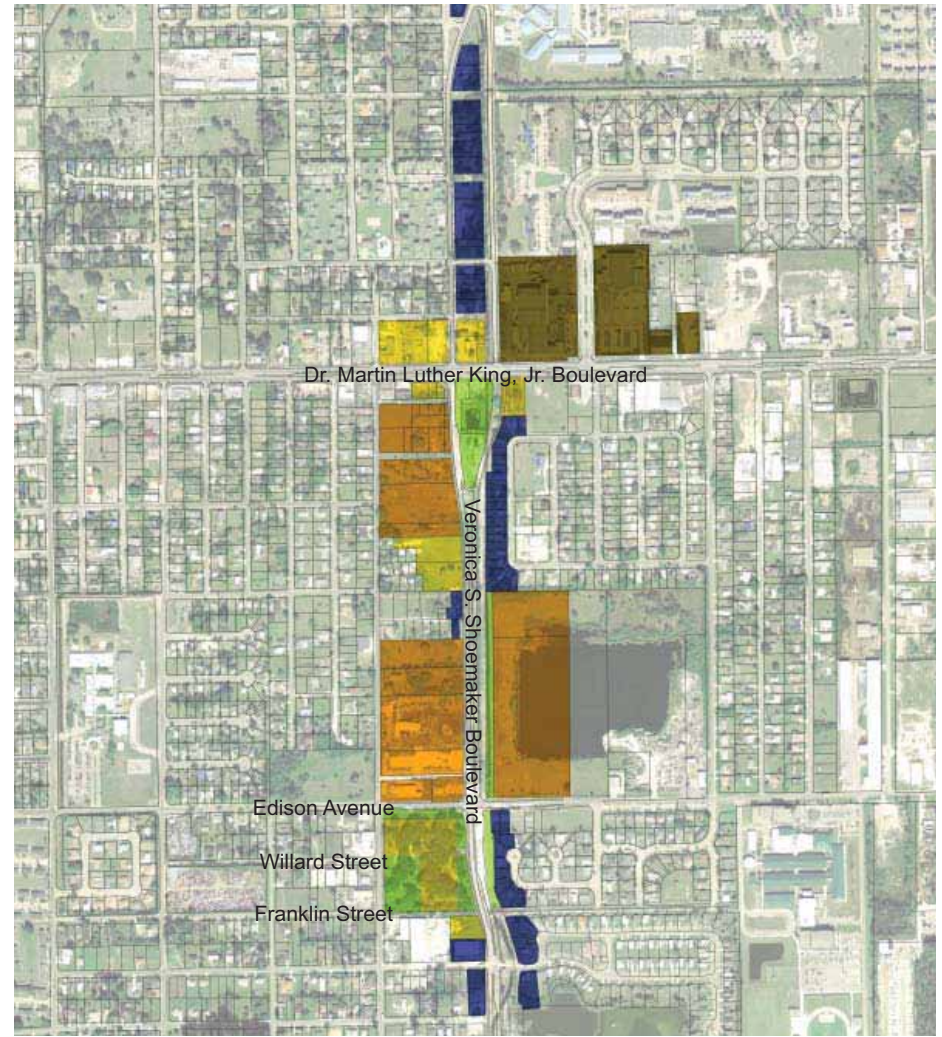
## DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. BOULEVARD EAST



- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: purple; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Small commercial lots compromised by road widening</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: green; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Existing residential lots fronting on MLK or VSS</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: lightgreen; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Parks and civic sites</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: orange; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Large parcels</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: blue; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Existing residential lots with backs or sides facing VSS</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: olive; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Commercial and industrial areas with buildings spaced far apart with fields of vehicle storage</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: yellow; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Small and medium sized parcels</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: grey; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Public Housing</li> </ul> |
|---|---|



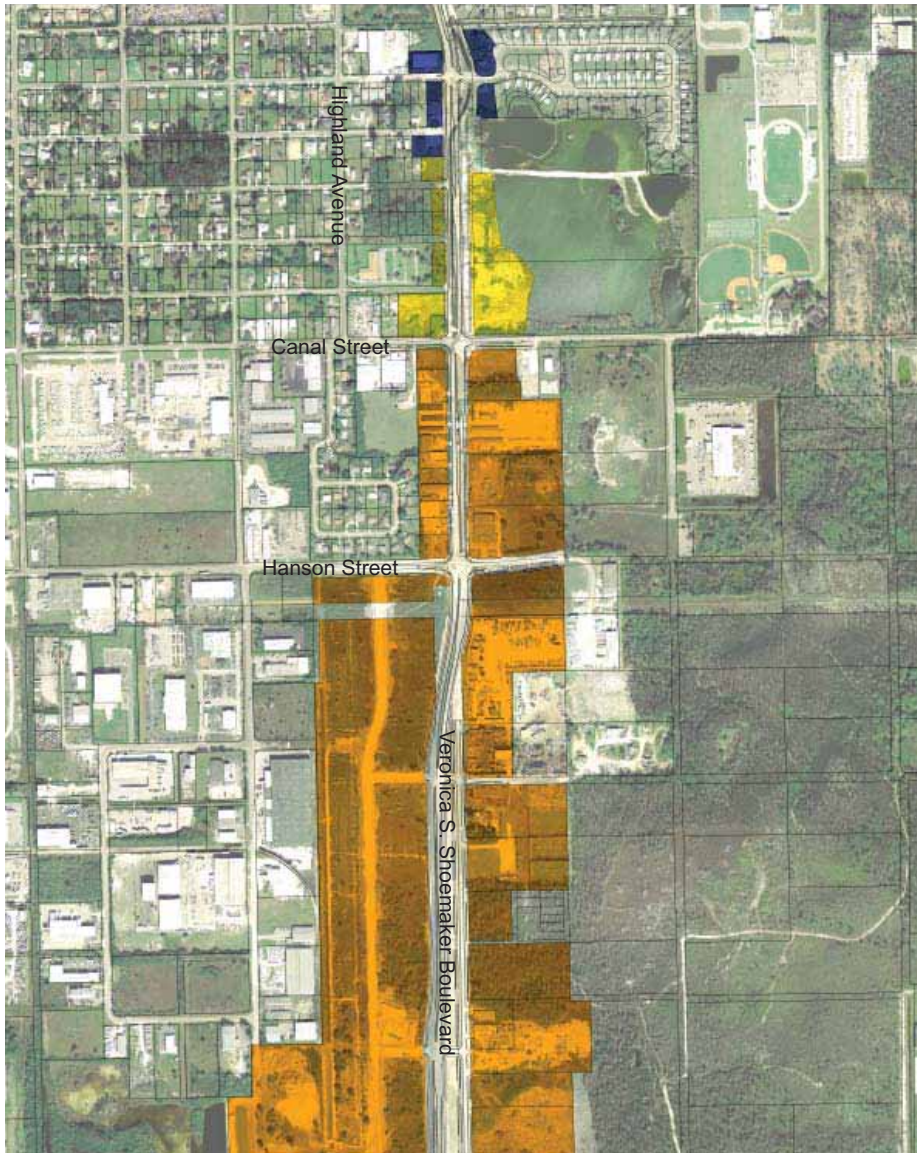
## VERONICA S. SHOEMAKER BOULEVARD NORTH



- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: purple; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Small commercial lots compromised by road widening</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: green; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Existing residential lots fronting on MLK or VSS</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: lightgreen; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Parks and civic sites</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: orange; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Large parcels</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: blue; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Existing residential lots with backs or sides facing VSS</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: brown; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Commercial and industrial areas with buildings spaced far apart with fields of vehicle storage</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: yellow; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Small and medium sized parcels</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: grey; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Public Housing</li> </ul> |
|---|---|



## VERONICA S. SHOEMAKER BOULEVARD SOUTH



- |   |   |  |  |
|---|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: purple; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Small commercial lots compromised by road widening</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: green; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Existing residential lots fronting on MLK or VSS</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: blue; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Existing residential lots with backs or sides facing VSS</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: brown; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Commercial and industrial areas with buildings spaced far apart with fields of vehicle storage</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: lightgreen; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Parks and civic sites</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: orange; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Large parcels</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: yellow; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Small and medium sized parcels</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: grey; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Public Housing</li> </ul> |
|---|---|--|--|

Existing Conditions	Recommendations for City Redevelopment	Recommendations for Private Redevelopment	Illustrated Recommendations
Small commercial lots compromised by road widening (Dunbar Historic Center)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shallow parcels too small for redevelopment may be utilized as park spaces.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small mixed-use buildings with shared parking behind</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See Chapter 5, Special Places, page 5.3 &amp; 5.9</li> <li>• See Appendix B, Design Guidelines, page B.11-B.13</li> </ul>
Existing residential lots fronting on MLK or VSS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sidewalks needed if not present</li> <li>• Street trees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fences, hedges, or garden walls facing boulevard</li> <li>• Front porches &amp; front door facing the street</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See Chapter 5, Special Places, page 5.10</li> </ul>
Existing residential lots with backs or sides facing VSS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sidewalks needed if not present</li> <li>• Street trees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landscaping or garden walls to screen lots from MLK or VSS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See Chapter 5, Special Places, page 5.23</li> </ul>
Side street on Western MLK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sidewalks needed if not present</li> <li>• On-street parking</li> <li>• Alley access</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared parking for neighboring businesses, located in the mid-block</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See Chapter 5, Special Places, page 5.10</li> </ul>
Large vacant parcels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sidewalks needed if not present</li> <li>• Street trees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop as Traditional Neighborhood Development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Block, streets and alleys</li> <li>• Parking: on-street, in the rear and/ or mid-block</li> <li>• Buildings fronting streets</li> <li>• Mixed-design &amp; mixed-use &amp; mixed-income</li> <li>• Walkability</li> <li>• Identifiable centers and edge</li> <li>• Contributing to high-quality public spaces</li> <li>• 1/4 mile walking circle</li> <li>• Extending the neighborhood grid for further extension to vacant lots.</li> <li>• Frontage street along MLK &amp; VSS</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See Chapter 5, Special Places, page 5.16-5.19</li> <li>• See Appendix B, Design Guidelines, page B.8</li> </ul>
Small and medium sized parcels		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop as traditional Fort Myers block with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alleys</li> <li>• Parking: on-street, in the rear and/ or mid-block</li> <li>• Building fronting streets</li> <li>• Mixed-design &amp; mixed-use &amp; mixed-income</li> <li>• Walkability</li> <li>• Contributing to high-quality public spaces</li> <li>• Any historic building should be restored or re-used</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See Chapter 5, Special Places, page 5.10, 5.20, 5.26 &amp; 5.27, 5.29</li> <li>• See Appendix B, Design Guidelines, page B.8</li> </ul>
Public housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re-develop as Traditional Neighborhood Design, features should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Block, streets and alleys</li> <li>• Parking: on-street, in the rear and/ or mid-block</li> <li>• Fronting streets</li> <li>• Mixed-design &amp; mixed-use &amp; mixed-income</li> <li>• Walkability</li> <li>• Center</li> <li>• High-quality public spaces</li> <li>• 1/4 mile walking circle</li> <li>• Extending the neighborhood grid for further extension to vacant lots</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See Chapter 5, Special Places, page 5.13 &amp; 5.14</li> </ul>

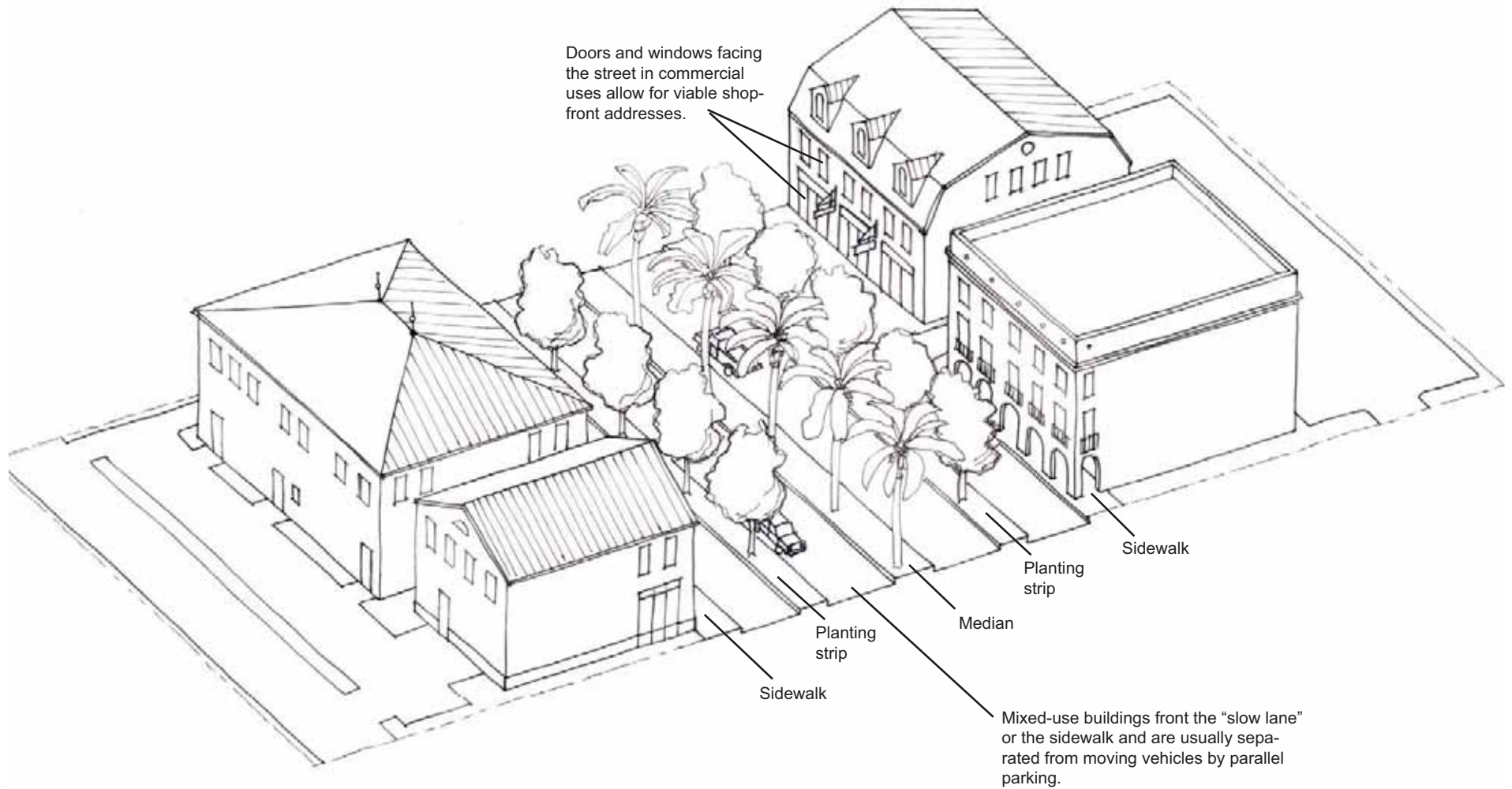
Existing Conditions	Recommendations for City Redevelopment	Recommendations for Private Redevelopment	Illustrated Recommendations
Commercial and industrial areas with buildings spaced far apart with fields of vehicle storage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sidewalks needed if not present</li> <li>• Street trees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If buildings are to face MLK or VSS, construct frontage lanes with on-street parking. Position buildings within 20 feet of frontage lane.</li> <li>• If the sides or backs of buildings are going to face MLK or VSS, screen the frontage with walls or landscaping. Set back buildings and parking areas minimum of 50 feet from property lines fronting MLK or VSS.</li> <li>• Parking in the rear</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See Chapter 5, Special Places, page 5.11, 5.28</li> <li>• See Appendix B, Design Guidelines, page B.9 &amp; B.10</li> </ul>
Parks and civic sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respond to neighborhood needs with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active and passive recreational uses</li> <li>• Provide shade</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surrounding houses should face the park to provide a public edge to the park</li> <li>• On-street parking for visitors, instead of large off-street parking lots that use valuable park space</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See Chapter 5, Special Places, page 5.2, 5.4-5.8, 5.20</li> </ul>
Vacant 50 feet wide lot with single family zoning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modify code – See Action Step 13, Chapter 6, Implementation, page 6.x</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Single family homes on single or double lots</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See Appendix B, Design Guidelines, page B.14</li> </ul>
Adjoining 50 feet vacant lots where duplexes are permitted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modify code – Allow duplexes only if they conform to design restrictions – See Action Step 11, Chapter 6, Implementation, page 6.x</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Duplexes on double lots (where permitted)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See Appendix B, Design Guidelines, page B.15</li> </ul>



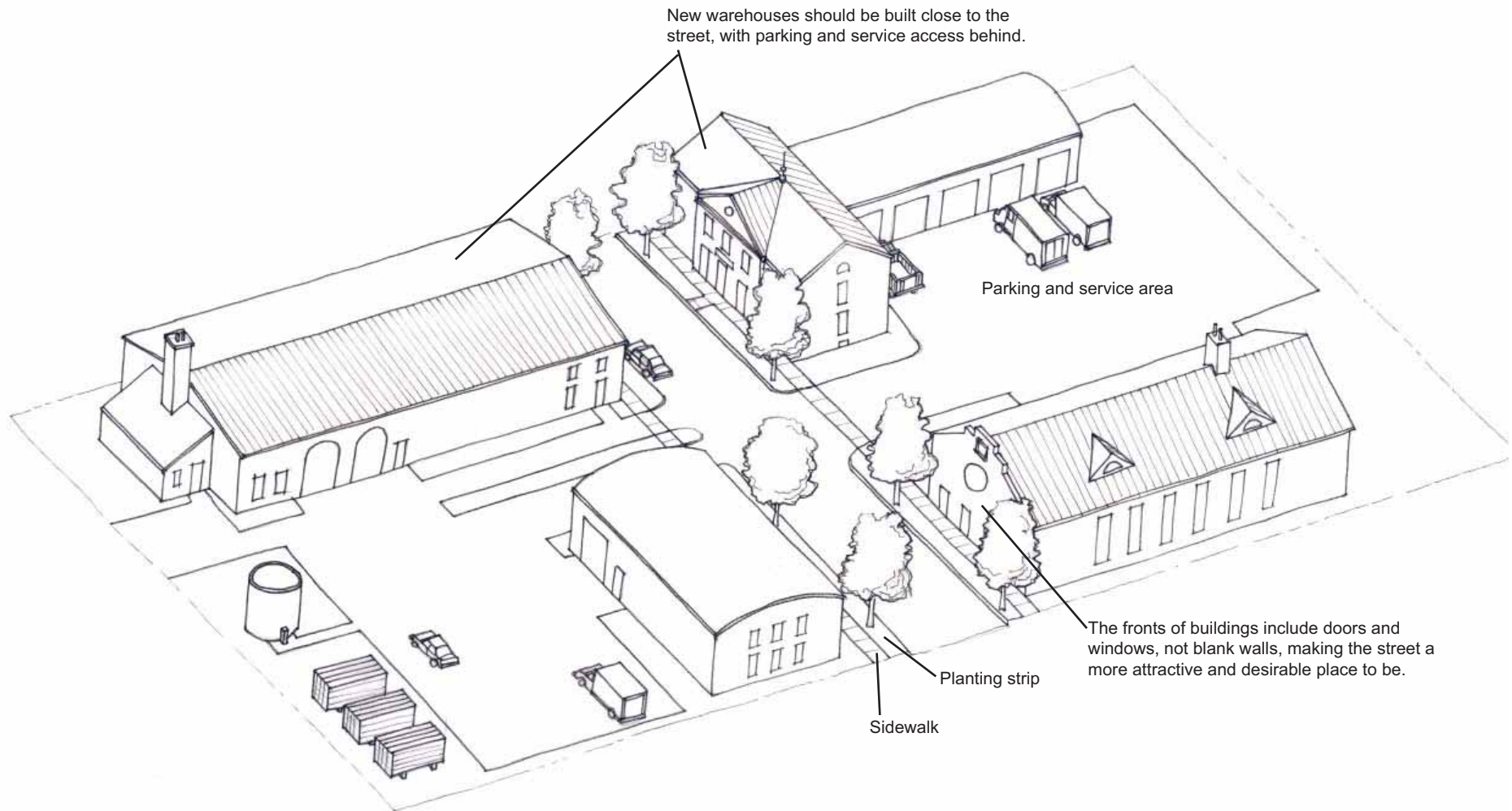
## RESIDENTIAL STREET ELEMENTS



## COMMERCIAL STREET ELEMENTS



## INDUSTRIAL STREET ELEMENTS

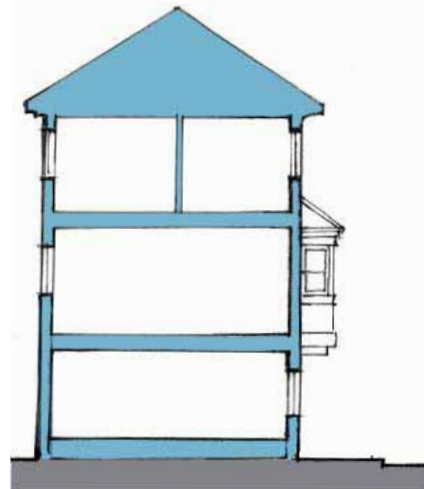




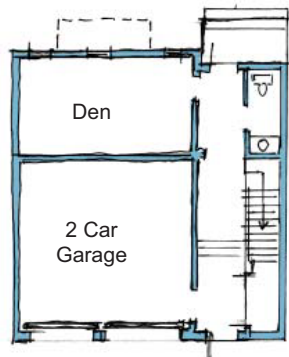
# MIXED-USE BUILDINGS ON NARROW LOTS



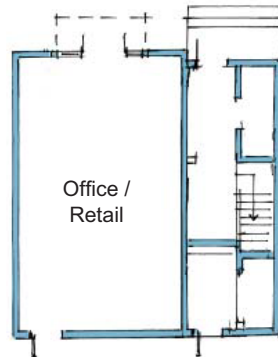
Rowhouse - Elevation



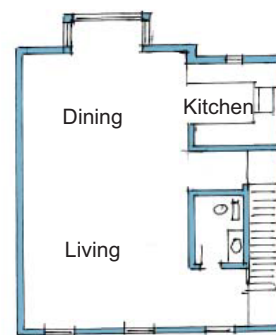
Rowhouse - Section



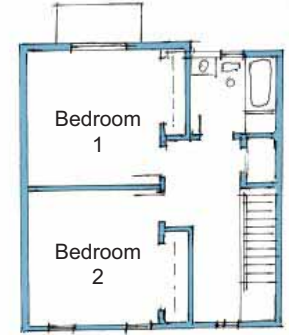
1st Floor



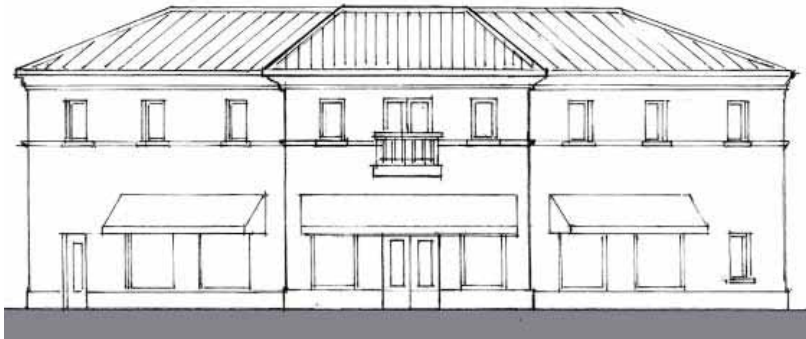
Alternate 1st Floor



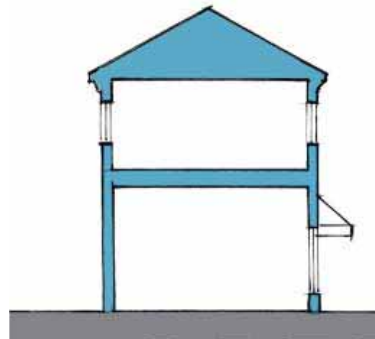
2nd Floor



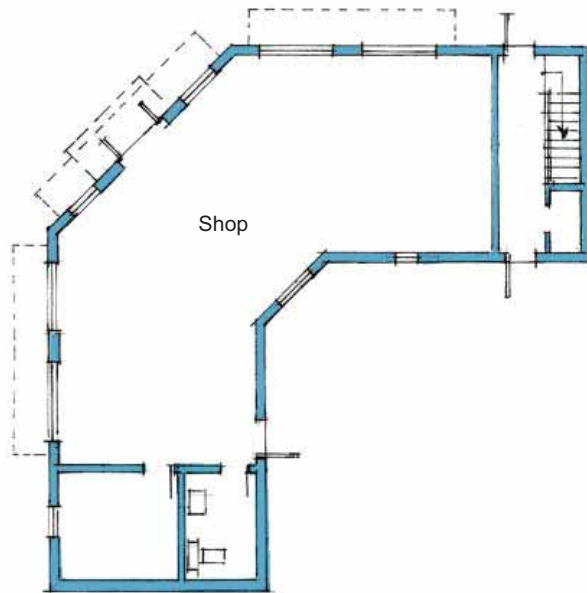
3rd Floor



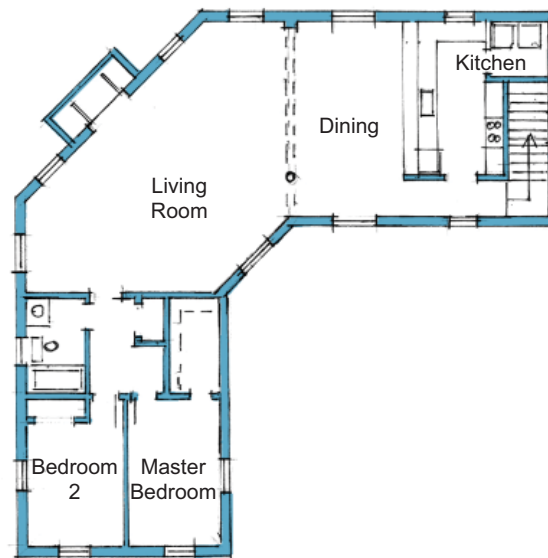
Corner Building - Elevation



Corner Building - Section



Alternate 1st Floor



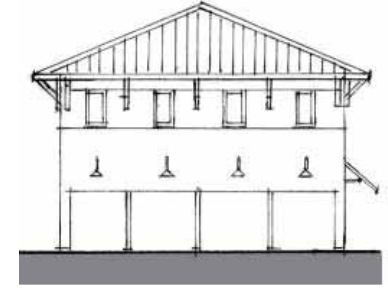
2nd Floor



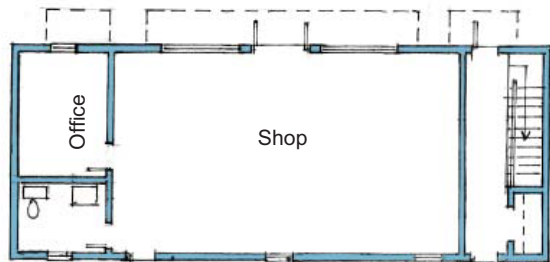
Front Elevation



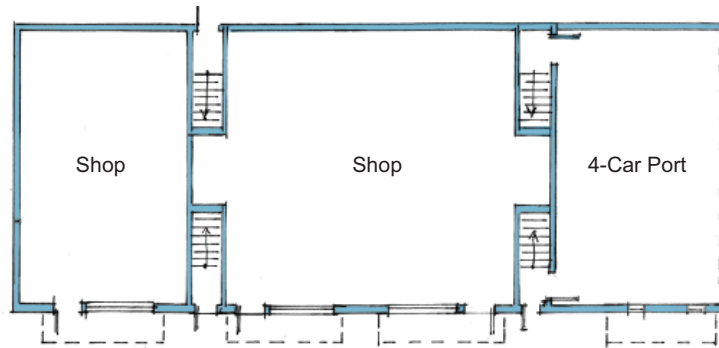
Front Elevation



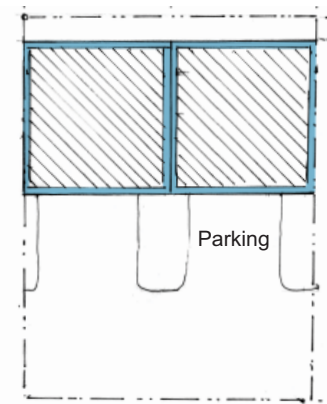
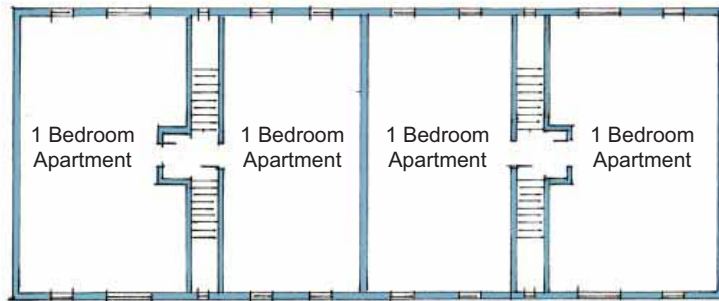
Side Elevation



1st Floor



2nd Floor



Alley

Parking in the rear



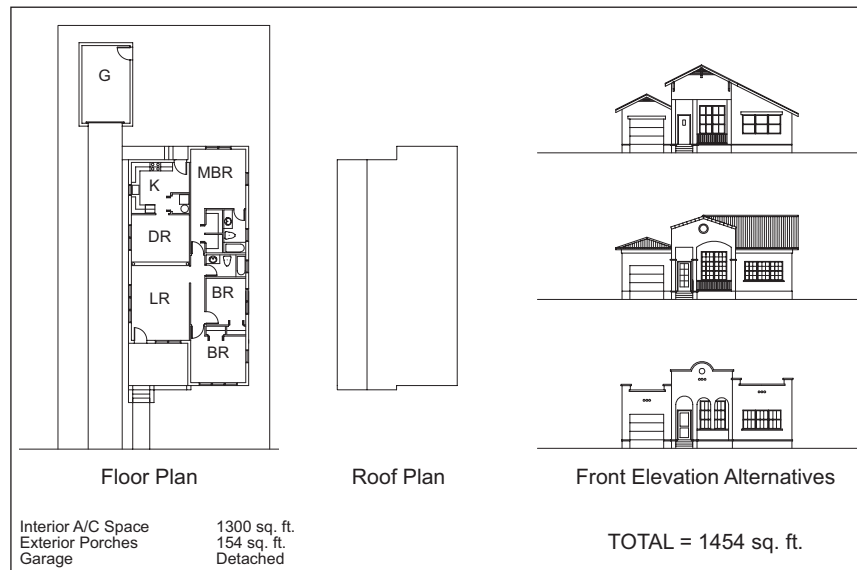
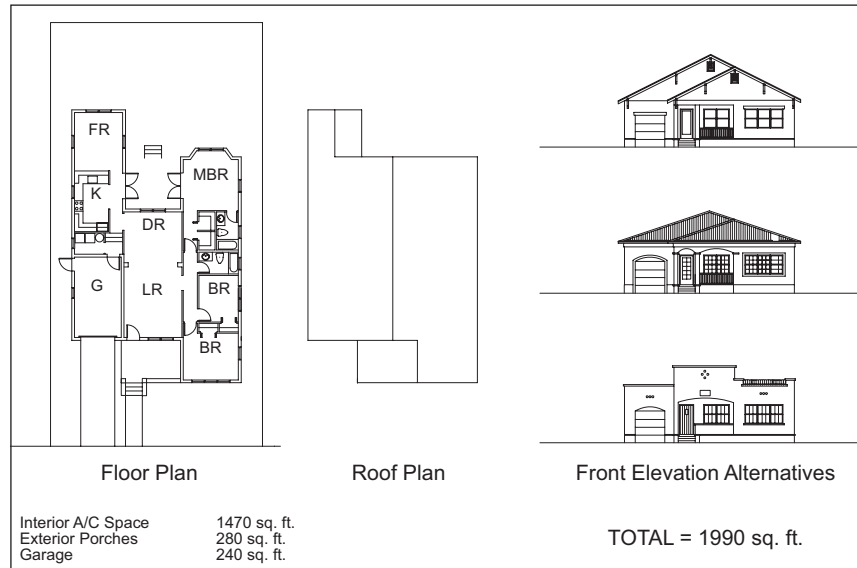
**SINGLE-FAMILY HOMES FOR NARROW LOTS**

Most of the residential neighborhoods north of Canal Street were platted with lots that are somewhat narrow but quite deep compared to recent suburban standards (see Table 1 on page 6.2).

The latest trend in neighborhood design is a return to narrower lots. In part this is a reaction to rising land prices, but it also due to dissatisfaction with neighborhoods that have become less walkable due to overly wide lots and front yards that are dominated by multiple garage doors or parked cars instead of neighborly front yards and porches.

A key feature to avoiding the parking-lot-as-front-yard syndrome is the careful placement of garages, either behind the homes or off to the side. The homes shown on this and the following pages all will fit on a typical Fort Myers 50' lot without garages dominating the fronts of houses.

Note that this careful placement of garages does not depend on any particular style of house. Each house plan is shown here with three different facade styles. Many communities adopt design regulations or guidelines to ensure that new homes fit with existing neighborhoods. At a minimum, Fort Myers can insist that homes that are built on lots acquired from the city are suited to the narrow but deep lots.

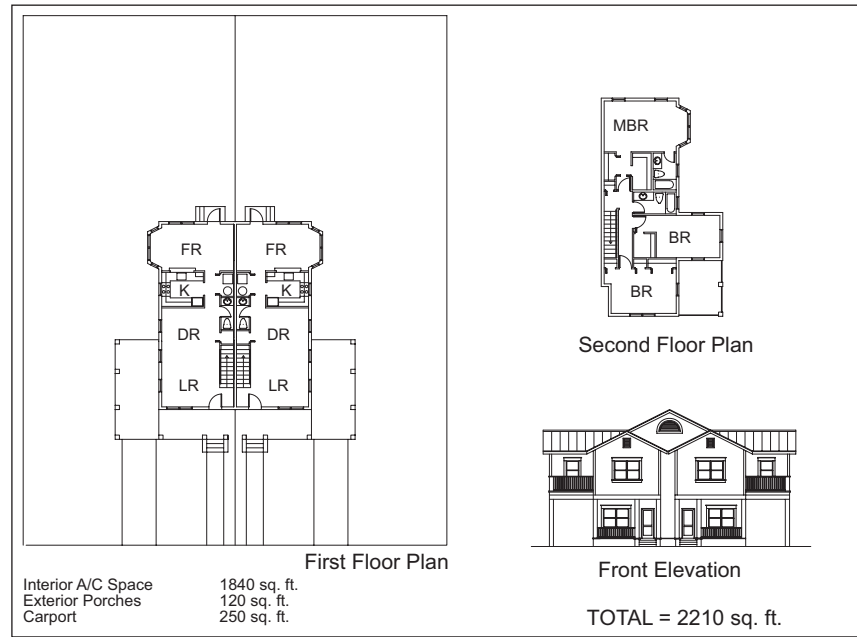


## DUPLEXES FOR TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOODS

Duplexes can provide more variety in housing but they have proven problematic when not designed to fit into single-family neighborhoods and especially when rentals are poorly managed or the buildings are not maintained.

At present, much of the residential land along the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard corridor allows new duplexes without restrictions that would ensure that they are in scale with their neighborhoods. In the newly annexed neighborhoods of Dunbar and Bellevue, this absence of restrictions led to the outright prohibition of new duplexes despite 50 years of zoning that had allowed duplexes.

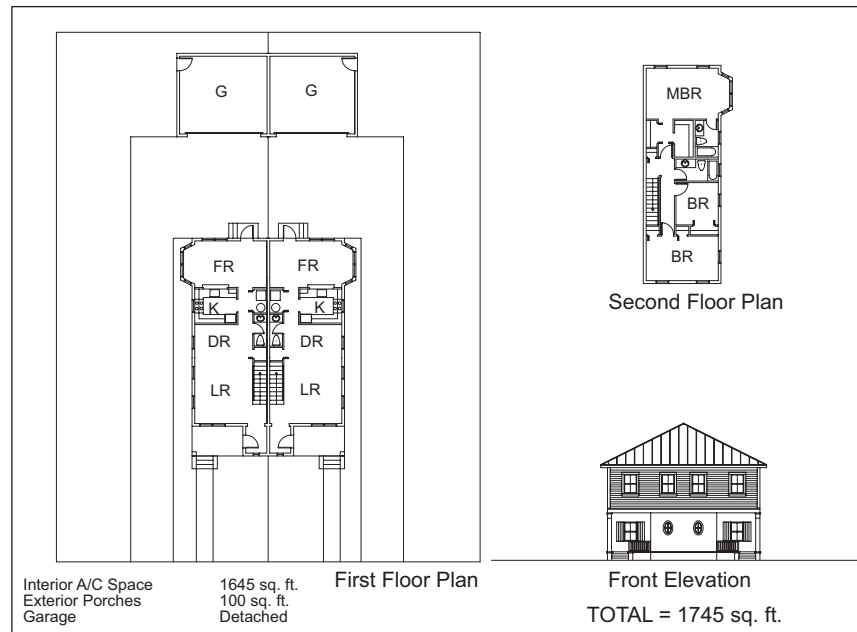
The drawings on this page illustrate how duplexes can be designed to fit on pairs of adjoining 50' lots while matching the scale of detached homes, providing more yard space, and avoiding paved front yards through careful placement of garages.



### ACTION STEP # 18 DESIGN STANDARDS FOR DUPLEXES

Duplexes can provide more variety in housing, but they have proven problematic when not designed to fit into single-family neighborhoods. Strict design standards for new duplexes can resolve this incompatibility.

- The city's Growth Management Code should be modified to include strict design standards for duplexes and to reconsider the decision to forbid new duplexes on newly annexed land.









# transportation analysis – appendix

# C



## I. INTRODUCTION

The Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevards (MLK and VSS) Revitalization Plan provides a comprehensive plan for the revitalization of the Dunbar community, the MLK, VSS corridors, and other streets. With careful planning, engineering and implementation, safe and healthy streets can be built to handle the movement of people and goods while contributing to the creation of a viable and highly desirable community. During the December 2005 design charrette, Hall Planning & Engineering (HPE) worked as part of the Dover Kohl & Partners team in the Master Plan process to assist with the transformation of the character of this important community and its transportation corridors.

The purpose of the charrette was to propose design solutions that could create a livable urban character for the Dunbar community along revitalized Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard corridors, while simultaneously preserving the function of MLK and VSS corridors as major traffic corridors.

The charrette process included interviews with stakeholders, including the citizens of the Dunbar community, City of Fort Myers Public Works, Police Department, City staff, LeeTran and the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) to identify transportation issues and future plans for the area. HPE studied the area's transportation systems, existing streets, traffic speeds along MLK, traffic patterns on MLK, Ford Street, Edison Avenue, Hanson Street, VSS and surrounding streets, as well as the street design for the section of VSS currently under construction. This appendix includes findings and specific recommendations for improvements to pedestrian and roadway features.

## II. CORRIDOR ISSUES

### A. IDENTIFY A SPECIFIC VISION FOR URBAN DESIGN PATTERNS

The urban design vision for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard, as refined by the design team during the charrette, is for specific locations along the MLK and VSS to become more urban in character, with walkable mixed use development, on-street parking, short block faces, buildings oriented to the street, and maintenance of a network of street north and south of the MLK and east and west of VSS corridors to provide local circulation.

From a transportation planning context, HPE recognizes a fundamental tension in the design of the MLK and VSS corridors, between the need to move large volumes of traffic and the desire to create a walkable thoroughfare to support the revitalizing Dunbar community. The challenge of the charrette was to create some balance in this tension.

Much of America's suburban land development pattern results from street and highway networks dictating urban structure. Highways designated as arterials change little as they approach developed areas. Generally speeds drop from 55 to 45 and 35 miles per hour, but on-street parking is usually not allowed in emerging areas, and is often removed from older areas.

Most existing development in the study area, and Fort Myers in general, consists of conventional strip-center, automobile-oriented land uses with large parking lots between the street and the front doors of buildings. Outside of the central part of downtown Fort Myers, all of the major arterial streets have those kinds of development patterns and land uses. The study area contains numerous

vacant properties with potential for revitalization. Unless a new vision and new land use patterns are put in place for the Dunbar community, auto-dominated land uses will continue and walkability will take a back seat to the motor vehicle. The land uses adjacent to these transportation corridors must include wider sidewalks to facilitate pedestrian traffic, parking on-street to support local business, and mixed use development, with retail, office and residential units located in buildings at the back of sidewalk. Higher density is also needed to support the growth of transit along the corridor.

MLK has been constructed as a suburban and rural road, when in fact it is located in an urban area as it passes through the Dunbar area, approaching downtown Fort Myers. This mismatch between street design and context is important and applies to both MLK and VSS. Suburban and rural road design encourages automobile use by discouraging other forms of transportation. This design is more appropriate for a suburban or rural area where local traffic is a smaller part of the traffic mix and through traffic comprises the major use of the street. In an urban area, however, local travel comprises a much greater percentage of trip making. If made by automobile, these additional trips contribute to congestion.

Transportation planning has begun to recognize that in urban areas, additional street widening beyond the leap from two lanes to four provides diminishing returns in terms of transportation system efficiency. In urban or urbanizing areas, the most productive way to maintain transportation system efficiency is by shifting trips to other modes whenever possible. Local trips of short length and great frequency can often be made by other modes such as walking, bicycling, or transit, if these



modes are supported as part of the transportation system. A suburban and rural road design does not support these modes. MLK does provide minimal alternative mode support through bicycle lanes and sidewalks. However, due to long blocks and high speeds, the street is not optimal for walkability. Consequently, there is every reason to expect most local trip making to occur by automobile, which threatens the long-term viability of this important corridor.

One benefit of an urban street system is that a network of streets provides multiple routes to destinations. In the case of MLK, there are several parallel east-west streets which could provide additional connectivity and allow MLK to operate more efficiently. In order to reach these streets, additional north-south connectors are required to complete an urban transportation network. Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard is exactly such a connector, but the physical design of its new segments are not optimal to fulfill this role.

In fact, VSS is even more suburban and rural in design than MLK. Whereas MLK provides bicycle lanes and sidewalks, VSS provides neither of these on portions of the street. Therefore, as VSS eventually suffers from the same congestion problems as other urban streets, there will be few opportunities to shift travel to alternative modes.

One of the goals of the charrette was to increase urbanism and walkability along the MLK and VSS corridors. The suburban street design of these streets is contrary to this goal. In order to achieve sustainable infill development, walkability must be incorporated into the DNA of the urban fabric in the area. Specifically, lower travel speeds along the street must be achieved, as well as providing for

pedestrian travel through sidewalks, shade, street enclosure and other elements of walkability.

## B. IMPROVING THE THOROUGHFARE NETWORK

Arterial street designs, by definition, tend to exclude intersections with side streets, leading to longer block size (600 to 1,000 feet or more) and speeds of 45 miles per hour or more, both of which cause difficulty for pedestrians. The arterial design concept emerged from a rural heritage and rarely serves urban peak travel demand due to exclusive reliance on the single facility serving a single mode – the motor vehicle. The two corridors in this study area have these traits.

Generally speaking from a design perspective, both the MLK and VSS corridors are currently configured as suburban arterial design, with four 12' lanes of traffic, medians, no on-street parking, and design speeds of 45 and 55 miles per hour, posted speeds of 30, 40 and 50 miles per hour, and operating speeds in the 40 and 55 miles per hour range. Sidewalks and/or multi-use paths are provided on both sides of the street in many locations, but roads have limited signals in their corridors, providing limited crossing opportunities for pedestrians.

Signalized intersections are infrequent along MLK and VSS in order to provide a greater automobile level of service. There are very few continuous streets parallel to MLK and VSS corridors within the study corridor, therefore requiring much of the local traffic to use MLK and VSS corridors for even fairly short trips.

To achieve urban places that encourage pedestrians, bicycles, and transit vehicles as part of the mo-

bility mix, the patterns of proposed development must be specified during the community planning stage. Next, transportation plans for balanced mobility can be crafted with walkability considered first and vehicle mobility second. This is not to imply that motor vehicle mobility will be dramatically reduced, but that pedestrians, being exposed to the open environment, are more vulnerable than when they are drivers, and solutions for their comfort are more complex. Often greater walkability yields only small reductions in vehicle capacity, even though vehicle speeds are lower.

## C. IMPROVING SPECIFIC INTERSECTIONS

In the case of MLK and VSS, where substantial suburban-style road construction has recently occurred, there are limited opportunities to provide high levels of walkability along the entire road corridor. However, development can be focused to occur in a walkable fashion at key intersections over time. Dividing a long road corridor into walkable intersections helps create smaller block sizes, which are themselves more walkable, as well as break up the entire corridor into a series of walkable components.

Under this type of design, the overall character of the road itself changes as the road enters and leaves a walkable intersection area. Speeds are slowed through increased enclosure, decreased lane width, the addition of on-street parking, and related speed management techniques. Since both MLK and VSS have been recently reconstructed, modifications to the curb line are not recommended as part of this report, although modifications can be made in the future as intersections are redeveloped. Keeping the curb lines in place means that the most significant modifications will

occur behind the curb line and the sidewalk, on what is now private property. As property adjacent to the intersections is redeveloped, the walkability features can be added.

The key elements that need to be added to the intersections to create walkability include narrower through lanes, increased enclosure through landscaping (trees) and building mass, and the addition of on-street parking. A design of this type is known as an “Avenue Section” and is conceptually illustrated in Figure 1.

#### D. TREE PLACEMENT

Whenever walkability is a design goal, planning guides including the authoritative “Guide for the Planning, Design, and Operation of Pedestrian Facilities” by AASHTO support the placement of rows of street trees between the sidewalk and the vehicle traffic lane. A conceptual view of this type of design, as it would be applied to VSS, is shown in Figure 2.

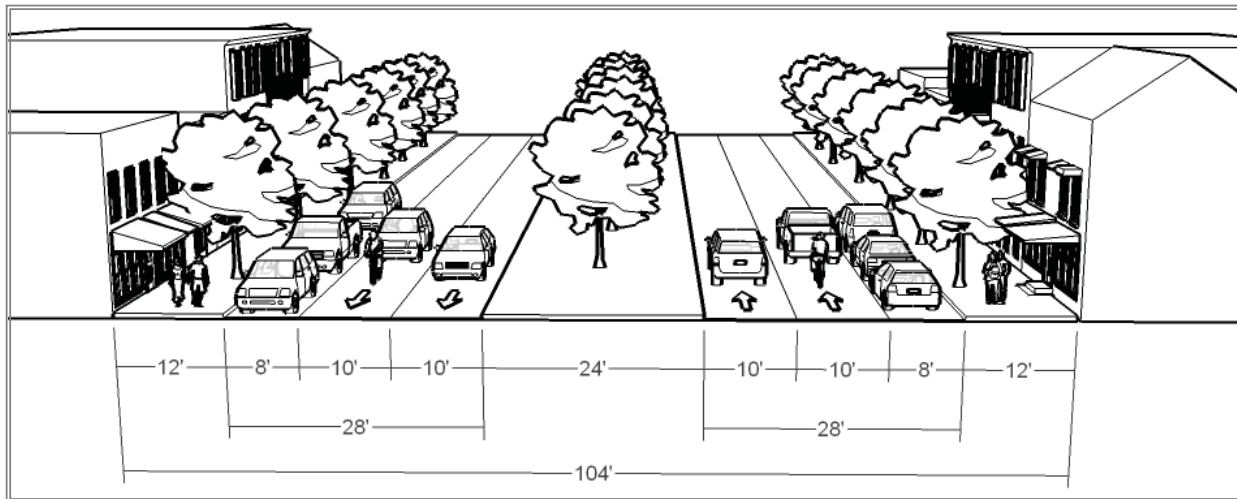


Figure 1: Avenue Section

In contrast, Section 138-72 of the Fort Myers Growth Management Code specifically indicates that street trees are to be placed behind the sidewalk, outside of the public right-of-way (ROW). A conceptual view of this requirement, as applied to VSS, is shown in Figure 3.

The Fort Myers code is consistent with suburban arterial design but is contrary to walkable design. Unless changed, it will seriously hamper all attempts to create pedestrian-friendly streets in Fort Myers.

By requiring street trees to be located outside the ROW instead of between the vehicle lane and the sidewalk, the Fort Myers code limits the effectiveness of enclosure as a speed management tool, deprives pedestrians of the buffer effect of street trees, and limits the options of designers to place trees in the optimum locations for pedestrian comfort. The negative effects of the Fort Myers code’s tree placement on the pedestrian environment and the street enclosure are shown in Figures 4 and 5.

The city should reconsider this section of the code and allow street trees to be placed as required for good walkable development. An optimal design, with trees placed on both sides of the sidewalk for maximum shade and pedestrian comfort, is shown in Figure 6.

#### E. PROVIDING MOBILITY FOR ALL MODES

Bicycling is a popular and primary mode of transportation for a number of adults, and there are existing bike lanes on both corridors, but the high vehicle operating speeds, high truck traffic, and the apparent lack of confidence of bicycle riders tends to discourage cyclists from using the street for bicycling. Instead, virtually all of the cyclists resort to using the sidewalk (see Figure 7) along the MLK and VSS corridors, and the same behavior should be expected along the new segments of VSS.

Sidewalk riding is usually unsafe and problematic for many reasons, which will not be discussed here. Currently, the majority of users are riding at very slow speeds and with the currently low utilization of MLK and VSS by pedestrians there is not

#### ACTION STEP # 19 TREE PLACEMENT

Rows of street trees should be placed between the sidewalk and traffic lanes in order to make sidewalks attractive to pedestrians.

- The city’s Growth Management Code should be amended to eliminate the insistence in Section 138-72 that rows of street trees be placed only between sidewalks and buildings.

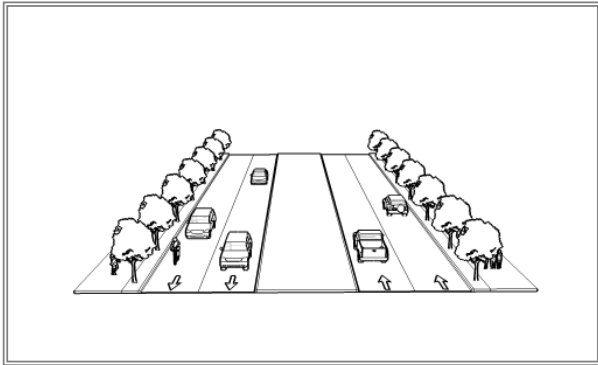


Figure 2: AASHTO recommended placement of trees between sidewalk and travel lanes.

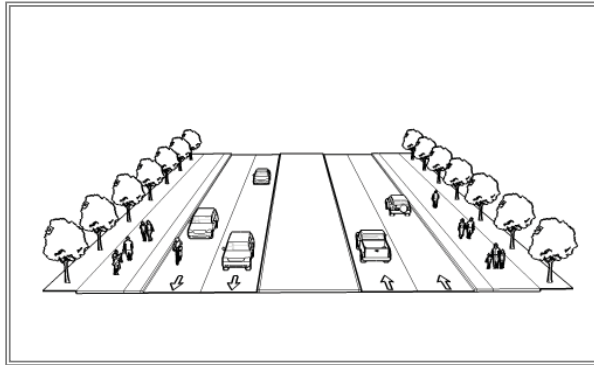


Figure 3: Fort Myers required placement of trees outside of ROW.

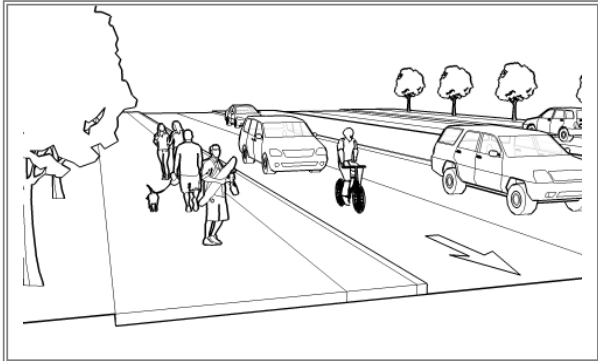


Figure 4: Trees outside ROW leave pedestrians exposed.

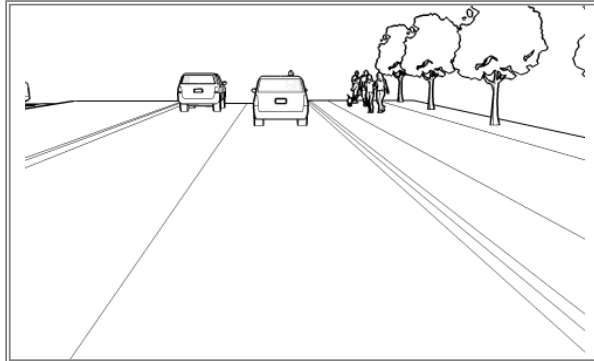


Figure 5: Trees outside ROW offer no enclosure and encourage faster travel speeds adjacent to unprotected pedestrians.

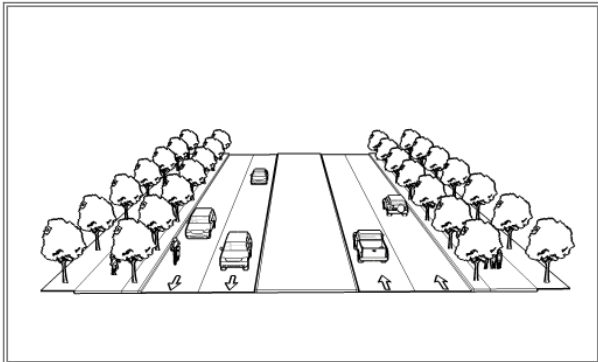


Figure 6: Recommended design – trees adjacent to travel lanes and outside of ROW/Back of sidewalk



Figure 7

an imminent problem with bicycle and pedestrian conflicts. This could become more problematic as revitalization becomes a reality, and more pedestrians are using the sidewalks along these corridors.



### III. THE TRANSPORTATION CHALLENGE – DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. BOULEVARD

#### A. EXISTING CONDITIONS & ISSUES

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard runs east and west connecting downtown Fort Myers through the Dunbar community to Ortiz and I-75 (see Figure 8). MLK was recently widened to a median-divided four-lane suburban highway by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT). During the widening, access management was implemented, controlling crossing and turning movements through the corridor. Extensive landscaping was installed along with decorative lighting, bike lanes, and sidewalks, greatly improving its appearance.

The right-of-way purchased for the widening eliminated many businesses along MLK, reducing pedestrian activity along the corridor. With a strong tradition of neighborhood-oriented businesses and many vacant lots, there is considerable opportunity for revitalization.

#### 1. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard And The Strategic Intermodal System

MLK is part of FDOT’s “Strategic Intermodal System” (SIS) because of LeeTran’s new transfer center in downtown Fort Myers, which is considered a SIS Hub (see the SIS Goals in Figure 9): Hubs are ports and terminals that move goods or people between Florida regions or between Florida and other markets in the United States and the rest of the world. These include commercial service airports, deepwater seaports, spaceports, interregional rail and bus terminals and freight rail terminals.

Interstate 75 is also an SIS Corridor: Corridors are highways, rail lines and waterways that connect major markets within Florida or between Florida and other states or nations.

Since MLK connects I-75 and the LeeTran transfer center, it is considered to be a SIS Connector: Connectors are highways, rail lines and waterways that connect hubs and corridors.

FDOT’s state investment policy will allocate 75 percent of state discretionary transportation capacity funding to the SIS by 2015, up from approximately 62 percent today. Therefore, funding of projects for MLK would have a higher priority for approval than the rest of the state system. Projects that improve the efficient movement of passengers and goods onto and off of SIS hubs will be eligible for funding, but most internal functions on the hubs will not be funded by FDOT with SIS funds.

**SIS Goals**

1. **A safer and more secure transportation system for residents, businesses and visitors**
2. **Effective preservation and management of Florida's transportation facilities and services.**
3. **Increased mobility for people and for freight and efficient operations of Florida's transportation system**
4. **Enhanced economic competitiveness and economic diversification**
5. **Enriched quality of life and responsible environmental stewardship**

Figure 9

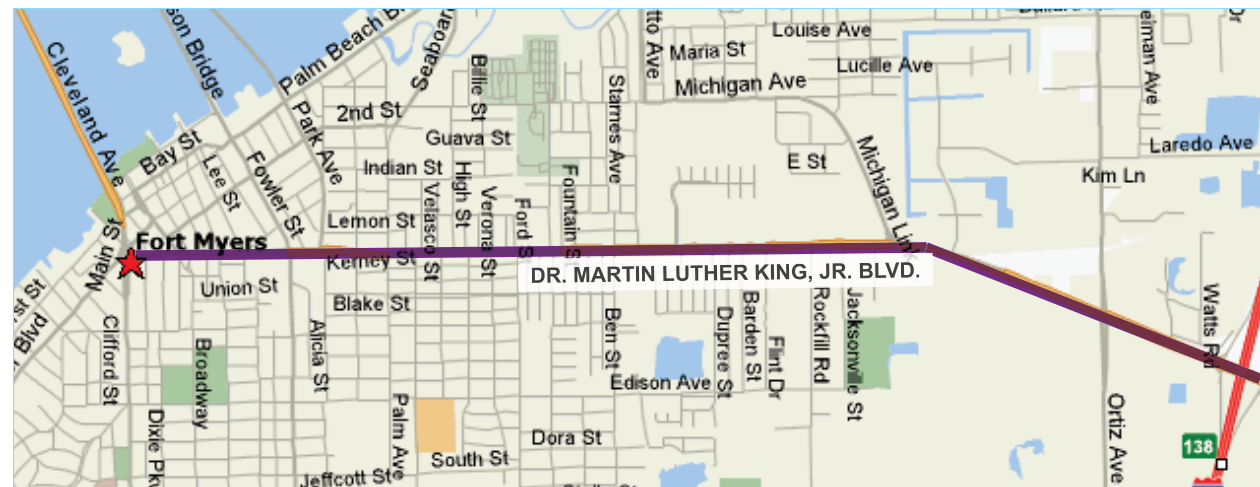


Figure 8

## 2. Traffic Data

FDOT traffic counts of average daily traffic in 2004 are shown on Figure 10. Based on those counts, the existing four lane MLK provides a level of service of C approaching D. The traffic data also reveals that MLK carries a high percentage of truck traffic; traffic with 10% or more trucks is considered high truck traffic by FDOT. The businesses located in the industrial areas to the south of MLK generate the majority of this truck traffic. The opening of new segments of VSS, plus the future extension of Hanson and Edison, will greatly reduce truck traffic along MLK.

## 3. Speed

Further challenging to the pedestrians and bicyclists in the MLK corridor is the speed of vehicles moving through the corridor. During the charrette, an evaluation of speeds in the section (posted at 30 miles per hour) between Palm and VSS was performed. The vast majority of motorists were traveling in the 38 and 45 miles per hour range, while several were clocked at speeds over 50 miles per hour, see Figure 11. These speeds combined with the heavy traffic volumes and large signal spacing creates a very challenging environment for the pedestrian. In order to create a safer and more pedestrian friendly environment, the speeds will need to be managed.



Figure 11

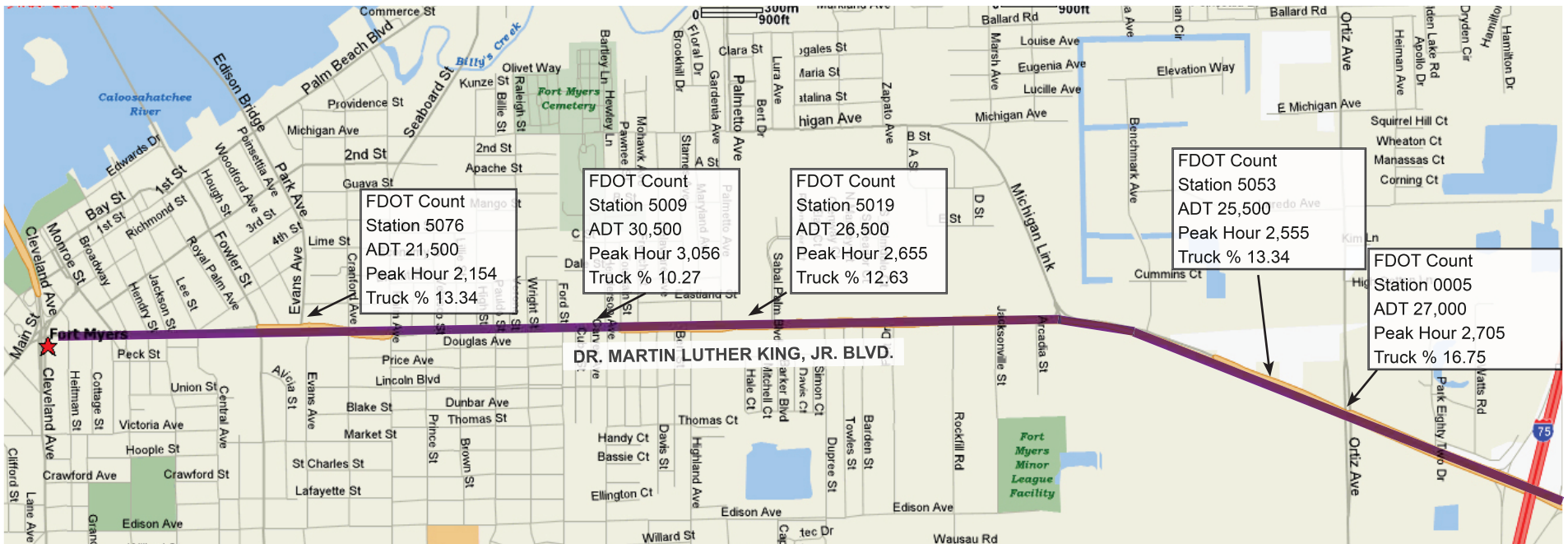


Figure 10

One cause for the speed is the design of the roadway. Since the road is designed for 45 miles per hour, the roadway feels extremely comfortable to drive at this speed and even faster. When driving through the corridor from Evans to Ortiz, the only physical change in the roadway is that the sidewalk is moved right up to the curb where the 30 MPH speed limit is posted. Consequently, there is almost no visual cue to drivers that the roadway is supposed to be different and that drivers should slow down, other than the easy-to-miss sign noting the lower speed limit.

Likewise, the developments of property adjacent to the corridor are few and many are set well back from the roadway. Therefore there is little sense of enclosure, which is necessary to create a different feel for the driver. Those conditions and the small number of pedestrian friendly businesses contribute to a lower level of pedestrian activity.



Figure 12

#### 4. Signals

From a transportation design perspective, the roadway was designed primarily to serve motorized vehicle movements. As mentioned above, the design speeds were 45 and 55 miles per hour and as a result, the geometry and other features are typical of a higher speed roadway, even in the sections that are currently posted at 30 miles per hour. This is not atypical of designs used in major urban areas throughout the state.

The current signal spacing does not adequately provide for pedestrian movements across MLK. Signals are currently located at Evans Avenue, Cranford Avenue, Palm Avenue, Ford Street, VSS, Michigan Link and Ortiz Avenue. The approximate signal spacing is shown in Table 1.

With the exception of the spacing between Evans Avenue, Cranford Avenue, and Palm Avenue, all of the signal spacing is in the range of ½ - 1 mile apart. This spacing is intended to reduce delay to the automobile. However, it also means that pedestrians have very few opportunities for

Table 1: The approximate signal spacing	
Section of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard	Distance Between Signals
Evans Avenue– Cranford Avenue	1,056 feet
Cranford Avenue – Palm Avenue	528 feet
Palm Avenue – Ford Street	2,640 feet
Ford Street – VSS	2,112 feet
VSS – Michigan Link	5,280 feet
Michigan Link – Ortiz Avenue	4,200 feet

protection when crossing MLK. Since the spacing between signals is so large, most of the pedestrian crossing occurs randomly throughout the corridor as shown in Figure 12.

#### 5. Trucks

Our interviews with the City revealed that there is a significant demand for expansion in the industrial area, so it is important to the local economy for truck traffic and future growth in truck traffic to be accommodated. Presently a significant percentage of the truck traffic is using Ford Street next to the Quality life Center as shown in Figure 13. When the four laning of Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard is complete, the majority of truck traffic will shift to VSS. This will positively impact pedestrians at the intersection of Ford Street and MLK, and between Ford Street and VSS, as the percentage of trucks decreases.



Figure 13



## 6. Transit

LeeTran, the transit provider for Lee County, recently adopted their new 2030 Transit Element in the Lee County MPO 2030 Transportation Plan. Plans for existing bus lines identified in this new document include increasing the frequency of service in and across the MLK corridor, providing bus stop shelters, and replacement of the existing bus inventory. LeeTran has bike racks on 100% of their fleet and they have received an award for the high percentage (4%) of bicyclists using the transit system.

LeeTran will also be studying the possibility of implementing Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) both north-south and east-west in the study area. The north-south routes to be considered are the Seminole Gulf Railway/US 41 corridors and the east-west routes include MLK/Lee/Colonial Boulevards & Veterans Parkway. The east-west corridor is intended to serve from downtown Fort Myers to Lehigh Acres. They plan to phase in the system with a goal to have a full-scale BRT system operation in place.

The Intermodal Center located at Evans Avenue and MLK provides an opportunity for transit to become a more viable force in the study area, and should be strongly considered in plans for the revitalization of the Dunbar community.

### B. FUTURE HIGHWAYS PLANS

The Lee County Metropolitan Planning Organization's MPO's 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan, 2005 Update shows that there is a plan to widen MLK to six lanes within the study area, between Michigan Link and Teter Road, just east of I-75, as

shown in Figure 14, below. The FDOT's 2006-2010 Adopted Work Program lists right of way currently being purchased between Michigan Link and Ortiz Avenue for future six laning of MLK. Since the SIS has an important part role in the FDOT's future transportation plans, funding of SIS projects will have a high priority for funding, making them more likely to occur. There are no other plans shown in the FDOT or MPO plan for six laning of MLK west of Michigan Link.

### C. SUMMARY OF ISSUES

There are three major transportation challenges for MLK:

1. The high speed suburban highway design encourages only one travel mode.
2. Limited protected crossings for pedestrians
3. The built environment adjacent to the corridor does not support higher levels of pedestrian activity.

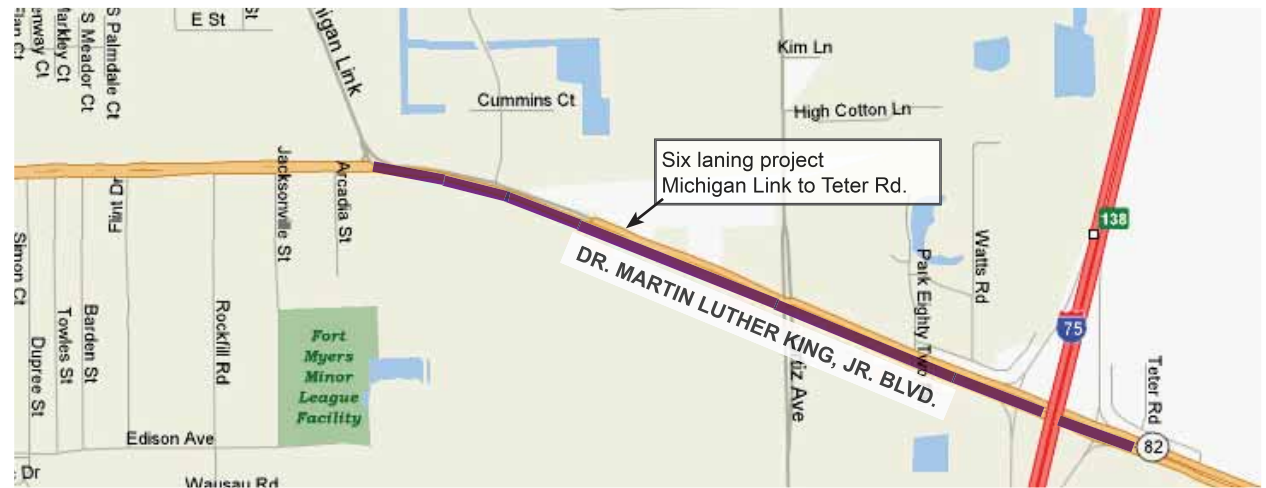


Figure 14

### D. RECOMMENDATIONS

The urban design vision for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard corridor, as refined by the design team during the charrette, is for specific locations along the MLK to become more urban in character, with walkable mixed use development, on-street parking, short block faces, buildings oriented to the street, and a grid or network of thoroughfares north and south of the MLK corridor to provide better local circulation. Those locations are:

- MLK/Cranford
- MLK/VSS
- MLK/Dupree-Rockfill
- MLK/Ortiz
- VSS/Edison
- VSS/Hanson
- VSS/Winkler

At some point after the city has selected the desired urban character for MLK and adjusted its regula-

tions accordingly, MLK can be modified to manage speeding by making minor changes in its layout. This change can be implemented with fairly minor changes to the physical configuration of the roadway by adding on-street parking at key locations as described on this page.

On-street parking conflicts with two goals of the recent widening project. One is the FDOT goal of having MLK function as a high volume SIS arterial. The other is the local Bicyclist & Pedestrian Coordinating Committee, who has created a plan with designated bike lanes on all state roads.

The reason for this conflict is the constrained right of way in the corridor. The new cross section consists of four 12' lanes with 5' designated bike lanes

and 6' sidewalks at the back of curb. Generally, the right of way for the road is at the back of sidewalk. Since the construction project was completed recently, obtaining additional right of way is unlikely.

The only viable way to get on-street parking in the proposed urban places in the corridor is to eliminate the designated bike lanes in combination with reducing the lane widths. Ideally, traffic lane widths would be reduced from 12' to 10', but with current high levels of truck traffic, 11' lane widths are recommended. This narrowing could provide 2' additional, that in combination with the 5' bike lane could provide a 8' wide parking stall (measured to the face of curb, including the gutter pan). The proposed cross-section is shown below in Figure 15. Table 2 presents rough cost estimates to

replace bike lanes with on-street parking and pave 6' of additional sidewalk (which would have to be placed on private property).

These changes in combination with wider sidewalks and the other characteristics of properly designed urban form will create higher levels of activity and manage the speeds to the intended 30 miles per hour posted speed limit. This will make the corridor safer for pedestrians traveling along and across MLK and make it safer for bicyclists to travel in the roadway. With the lower traveling speeds, experienced bicyclists will be able to more safely share the travel lanes with motor vehicles.

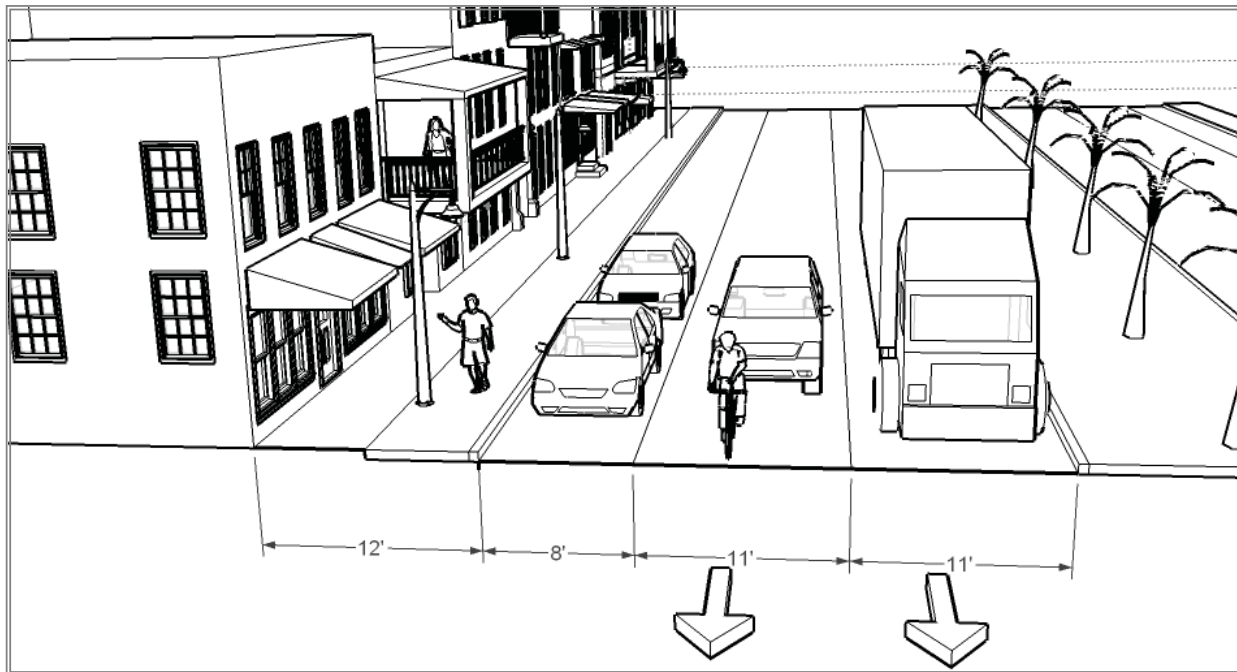


Figure 15: Proposed adjustment to MLK cross section at key pedestrian locations

Item	Quantity	Unit	Unit Cost	Estimated Cost
Remove Striping Cranford Ave. to Palm Ave. south side	600	LF	\$1.53	\$918
Remove Striping Ford St. to Clemente Park, north side	700	LF	\$1.53	\$1,071
Remove Striping Highland Ave. to VSS, both sides	800	LF	\$1.53	\$1,224
Remove Striping VSS to Sable Palm Blvd., south side	400	LF	\$1.53	\$612
Stripe Parking Bays, Cranford Ave to Palm Ave south side	600	LF	\$0.35	\$210
Stripe Parking Bays, Ford Street to Clemente Park, north side	700	LF	\$0.35	\$245
Stripe Parking Bays, Highland Ave. to VSS, both sides	800	LF	\$0.35	\$280
Stripe Parking Bays, VSS to Sable Palm Blvd., south side	400	LF	\$0.35	\$140
Widen Sidewalk 6' Cranford Ave. to Palm Ave., south side on private ROW	600	LF	\$42.00	\$25,200
Widen Sidewalk 6' Ford St. to Clemente Park, north side on private ROW	700	LF	\$42.00	\$29,400
Widen Sidewalk 6' Highland Ave. to VSS, both sides on private ROW	800	LF	\$42.00	\$33,600
Widen Sidewalk 6' VSS to Sable Palm Blvd., south side on private ROW	400	LF	\$42.00	\$16,800



#### IV. THE TRANSPORTATION CHALLENGE – VERONICA S. SHOEMAKER BOULEVARD

##### A. EXISTING CONDITIONS & ISSUES

Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard (VSS) is becoming as a major north-south transportation corridor, beginning on the south end at Colonial Boulevard, continuing through the Dunbar community and connecting at the north end to Palm Beach Boulevard (Figure 16).

Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard was created by renaming Palmetto Avenue and connecting the existing sections of former Palmetto Avenue with the new roadway. The missing sections are nearing completion in June 2006. VSS will be a four lane divided suburban highway from Colonial Boulevard to just south of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard.

The section of Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard between Colonial Boulevard and Edison Avenue has suburban character with four twelve-foot travel lanes, five-foot designated bike lanes, a raised median, and curb-and-gutter drainage. The design speed of this area is 45-55 miles per hour. There is a multi-use trail on the east side and a sidewalk on the west side of the road.



Figure 17

a one-way pair of travel lanes for the last few hundred feet prior to the intersection with MLK, and connecting to the one-way pair of travel lanes north of MLK. Typical sections for this street are shown as photographs in Figures 17 and 19.

The section between MLK and Michigan will consist of one-way pairs with the northbound alignment located just west of the Pepsi property and the southbound section along the existing two lane section of VSS. The one-way pairs are more urban in character, so speeds will be reduced between MLK and Michigan.

The remaining section of Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard is located between Michigan Avenue and Palm Beach Boulevard. Between Michigan Avenue and Brookhill Drive, just south of Billy's Creek, VSS is a two lane road with no sidewalks and a large open ditch on the west side of VSS behind a guardrail and the line of trees shown in the Figures 19 and 20.

North of Billy's Creek, the roadway is two lanes (Figure 21), with a sidewalk on the west side of the road adjacent to Terry Park. Many of the citi-



Figure 18



Figure 16

zens and business owners who use or live along the two-lane section of Veronica Shoemaker are very concerned about the traffic impacts of the four-lane section of Veronica Shoemaker ending at Michigan, fearing that the increased traffic using the four-lane section is going to create severe congestion as the roadway transitions to two lanes.

### 1. Traffic Data

Since the construction of Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard is not complete, the current traffic counts south of MLK have no relevance to the recommendations in this plan. There is a permanent traffic count station north of MLK, and the counts for 2004 are 9,100 ADT. The count station is on the two lane section between Marion Street and Palm Beach Boulevard. It will be important to monitor the effects of traffic growth on this section once the four laning of VSS to Michigan is complete. The results of that growth may place the four laning of VSS north of Michigan higher on the MPO's Transportation Plan.

### 2. Speed

A speed study was not performed on the southern or northern portions of Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard. Most of the southern section is still under construction so there is limited traffic at present. Since the corridor is designed similarly to MLK's suburban highway section, speeds should be expected to be in the 50+ miles per hour range in the 45 MPH section. As the roadway approaches MLK, speeds should be expected to drop closer to 40+ miles per hour, similar to that on MLK. North of Michigan, drivers are generally driving close to the speed limit due to the narrower two lane roadway. The speeds should remain about the same on

the section north of Michigan until the four laning is completed all the way to Palm Beach Boulevard.

### 3. Signals & Stop Signs

From a transportation design perspective, the roadway was designed primarily to serve motorized vehicle movements. As mentioned previously, the design speeds are 45-55 miles per hour and as a result, the geometry and other features are typical of a higher speed roadway, even in the sections that will be posted at 30 miles per hour. This is not atypical of designs used in major urban areas throughout the state. The primary consideration is to move motorized vehicles at high volumes, higher speeds, and with little disruption to traffic movements. In the same fashion as MLK, signal spacing along VSS is provided with the motor vehicle in mind. The current signal spacing does not adequately provide for pedestrian movements across VSS. Signals will be located at Winkler Avenue, Edison Avenue, MLK, Michigan Avenue and Palm Beach Boulevard. There are stop signs located at the intersections of Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard with Colonial Boulevard, Hanson Street, Canal Street and Marion Street. The approximate spacing between traffic control features is shown in Table 3.

The spacing of intersections with some form of traffic control to allow pedestrians to cross is greater than a quarter mile, and most are a half mile or more. These spacings are intended to reduce delay to the automobile, but the unintended side effect is that pedestrians have very few opportunities where traffic must stop to allow pedestrians to cross VSS. Signals do provide more opportunity for pedestrians to cross, because automobiles will not necessarily yield to pedestrians at stop signs. In the same



Figure 19



Figure 20



Figure 21

way MLK performs, most of the pedestrian crossings will occur randomly throughout the corridor.

#### 4. Trucks

As discussed previously, there will continue to be high truck volumes in the region, especially on Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard between Edison Avenue and MLK. When VSS is complete, a significant percentage of the truck currently using Ford Street will shift to VSS, due to the general direction of flow (to the east), the higher possible travel speeds, and ease of turning movements for tractor trailers. This will make VSS less desirable to pedestrians due to the noise and smoke created by heavy trucks.

#### 5. Transit

Currently, transit service runs north to Palm Beach Boulevard on VSS but plans are not in place to operate south of MLK.

### B. CURRENT CONSTRUCTION PROJECT

HPE reviewed the construction plans for extending VSS from Michigan Avenue to Colonial Boulevard. As a result of that review the following issues were identified that should be considered in light of the goals of the charrette.

VSS is designed for 45 miles per hour for most of the section between Colonial Boulevard and MLK. The speed limit is reduced to 35 miles per hour approaching MLK, but there is no change in street design that would send a signal to drivers to reduce speed. Changes in street design could include narrowing the lanes, increasing enclosure through buildings or plantings, adding on-street

parking, and providing shorter block lengths by increasing the number of intersections. The critical feature of any solution is that there must be a visible indication to the driver that the street section has changed and requires lower driving speeds. Narrower lanes and increased enclosure are two of the more effective ways to achieve this indication. Lines of street trees, for instance, can help reduce driver speeds.

To achieve walkability and increased urbanization of the area, the design speeds must be lowered. This can be done in several ways, including narrower lanes, shorter blocks, greater enclosure, and on-street parking. There is no need to apply these design features along the entire length of either street – in fact, doing so could be counterproductive. On-street parking, for instance, should only be used in places where people are likely to park on the street. Otherwise, the empty parking spaces create a wide open pavement width which can encourage speeding.

On the section from Colonial Boulevard north to MLK, the design has a 5' sidewalk on the east side,

and an 8' multiuse path on the west side. There are no bike lanes. The lack of bicycle lanes is critical. Although the area around the VSS extension is very suburban today, it will be urban in the future. Bicycle lanes provide for fast bicycle transportation today, and in the future can be turned into on-street parking as urban development type buildings are built at the back of sidewalk along the street.

An urban transportation system manages congestion by distributing traffic over a grid or network of smaller streets, rather than concentrating trips onto a few very wide arterial streets. MLK is constrained to 4 lanes, having just been rebuilt, and VSS is also designed to be four lanes. Four lanes is a very reasonable size for an urban street, in terms of walkability, if the street is designed to discourage high speeds (>35 miles per hour) and encourage walking and bicycling.

In order to maximize the efficiency of these streets, the street network must be highly interconnected. This is contrary to conventional suburban and rural street design, which strives for limiting any connections to the arterial road system. In an urban area

Section of Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard	Traffic control feature	Distance btwn intersections
Colonial Boulevard - Winkler Avenue	Stop sign	2,540 ft.
Winkler Avenue - Hanson Street	Signal	6,650 ft.
Hanson Street - Canal Street	Stop sign	1,380 ft.
Canal Street - Edison Avenue	Stop sign	2,570 ft.
Edison Avenue - Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.	Signal	2,620 ft.
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. - Michigan Link	Signal	2,660 ft.
Michigan Link - Marion Street	Stop sign	2,695 ft.
Marion Street - Palm Beach Boulevard	Signal	1,820 ft.



with many types of trips occurring, the best model is one that accommodates a choice of routes and modes, which is a highly interconnected network. Under this model, links or streets that become congested can be bypassed by taking another route. This approach requires sufficient additional links and connections in the network. Because cyclists and pedestrians are much more sensitive to trip length than automobile drivers, this approach also accommodates pedestrian and bicycle trips better, because it allows the construction of shorter routes from shorter segments. Suburban street design creates long block sizes and long uninterrupted segments of roadway, and therefore longer routes, which are undesirable for walking and bicycling transportation.

#### C. FUTURE HIGHWAY PLANS

The Lee County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) 2030 Transportation Plan has two widening projects identified for Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard. The section from Michigan Avenue to Marion Street is one project and the section from Marion Street to Palm Beach Boulevard the other. The MPO's Transportation Plan improvement for both of these projects is widening the road from two to four lanes. There is no time shown in their plan for when this would occur. Based on the current design for Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard, it is safe to assume that the City would continue with designing primarily for vehicle movement through the corridor. Further investigation into these plans should be performed because this revitalization plan may be able to influence the design of the future widening, creating an environment that is more sensitive to the pedestrian's needs. In particular, the Avenue treatment described in Section II.C should be implemented as part of any new construction or reconstruction.

#### D. SUMMARY OF ISSUES

To sum up the major transportation challenges:

1. High speed suburban and rural highway design encourages only one travel mode, the automobile
2. Limited crossing opportunities for pedestrians
3. Sidewalks missing in sections north of MLK
4. Facilities not supportive to bicycling
5. The built environment adjacent to the corridor does not support higher levels of pedestrian activity

#### E. RECOMMENDATIONS

The urban design vision for the Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard corridor, as refined by the design team during the charrette, is for specific locations along the VSS to become more urban in character, with walkable mixed use development, on-street parking, short block faces, buildings oriented to the street, and a grid or network of thoroughfares along the VSS corridor to provide better local circulation. Those locations are:

- VSS/MLK
- VSS/Edison
- VSS/Hanson
- VSS/Winkler

At some point after the city has selected the desired urban character for VSS and adjusted its regulations accordingly, traffic speeds will need to be managed to walkable levels by physical changes such as the Avenue treatment described in Section II.C. To expand the opportunity for people to use another travel mode, transit should be expanded along VSS both north and south of MLK.

As development patterns continue, additional locations will be needed to provide for safe pedestrian crossing. A monitoring plan to determine where those locations will be should be developed to ensure that pedestrians are provided for as infill development continues.

A principal rule of urban transportation planning is start with the pedestrian. Plan for the pedestrian first, and the other modes will be able to work. Without sidewalks, for instance, transit does not have a chance of being an attractive mode choice, forcing greater reliance on the automobile. More automobiles mean more congestion, and without sidewalks, there are no options for safe trips other than the automobile. Therefore, the section of VSS north of MLK should include sidewalks. Failure to include sidewalks will ultimately degrade the efficiency of both MLK and VSS, because it will require additional trip making via automobile.

The AASHTO Guide to Design of Bicycle Facilities recommends 10' for the width of a shared use path. The path shown in the design of VSS is 8'.

The AASHTO Guide recommends against the use of a shared use path in lieu of on-street bike lanes. VSS is shown without bike lanes. HPE recommends that bike lanes be included on VSS.

Finally, at the locations designated as walkable mixed use districts, the characteristics of a properly designed urban form must be fully developed, including on-street parking using the Avenue design. This will create higher levels of pedestrian activity and manage the traveling speeds to walkable levels, making the corridor safer for pedestrians traveling along and across VSS, and make it safer for bicyclists traveling along the roadway.

## V. THE TRANSPORTATION CHALLENGE – NEIGHBORHOOD STREET SYSTEM

### A. EXISTING CONDITIONS & ISSUES

Previous sections have discussed the importance of providing an interconnected grid of streets to encourage bicycle and pedestrian activity, thereby reducing the dependence on automobile traffic. There is a fairly good grid system of streets in the Dunbar community. What is missing is continuity in the grid, due to interruptions by features such as drainage canals and empty lots such as that shown in Figure 22.

Sidewalks are essential in urban neighborhoods to create a safe environment for walking. There are sidewalks on many neighborhood streets in Dunbar and the rest of the study area; however, there are still opportunities to improve the system. There are areas where there is only a sidewalk on one side of the street; where there are no sidewalks; where sections are incomplete (Figure 23); and where maintenance of sidewalks is not being performed (Figure 24).

Many of the streets in the neighborhood are wider than necessary, which contributes to drivers traveling too fast in areas where people of all ages are bicycling, walking, playing, and socializing. As a result, the installation of traffic calming features (Figure 25) becomes more and more common. These features have the positive result of reducing traveling speeds of automobiles, but can have negative side effects such as higher maintenance, poor ride ability, and increased response times for emergency services.

### B. RECOMMENDATIONS

Locations for potential connections should be evaluated throughout all neighborhoods, and priorities set for connection based on potential for improving pedestrian/bicycle activity along with the usual factors includes cost and ease of construction. A good example is the drainage ditch that runs adjacent to Clemente Park. There are several locations north of MLK where enclosing the ditch by use of a box culvert would allow several connections to be made in the street system, facilitating east-west movement by all modes of travel and improving access to the elementary school and to the park.

The city should improve connectivity of the sidewalk system by ensuring that all streets have sidewalks on both sides, completing missing sections of sidewalks, and maintaining sidewalks to ensure that they are passable for pedestrian use. A brief analysis of all neighborhoods could identify locations, establish priorities for improvements, and establish budgets to complete the sidewalk system.



Figure 23



Figure 24



Figure 22



Figure 25

In terms of general placement criteria, Figure 26 is a drive thoroughfare type. This type of street is designed with narrow lanes and parking on one side of the street, sidewalks, and street trees. This section is appropriate for locations where one side of the street is open space such as a park or pond. The next section, shown in Figure 27, is a Road thoroughfare. This thoroughfare type also has ten-foot lanes to manage traffic speeds, but no on-street parking. This section should be used in locations where there is no demand for on-street parking. Sidewalks and street trees are still provided. The final section, shown in Figure 28, is a Street thoroughfare type. This thoroughfare has narrow lanes and parking on both sides of the street, and should only be used where sufficient parking demand exists to keep the parking spaces at least half filled. Sidewalks and street trees are provided. None of these proposed sections includes bike lanes, as these sections should manage traffic speeds sufficiently to allow bicycles to share the lane with automobiles.

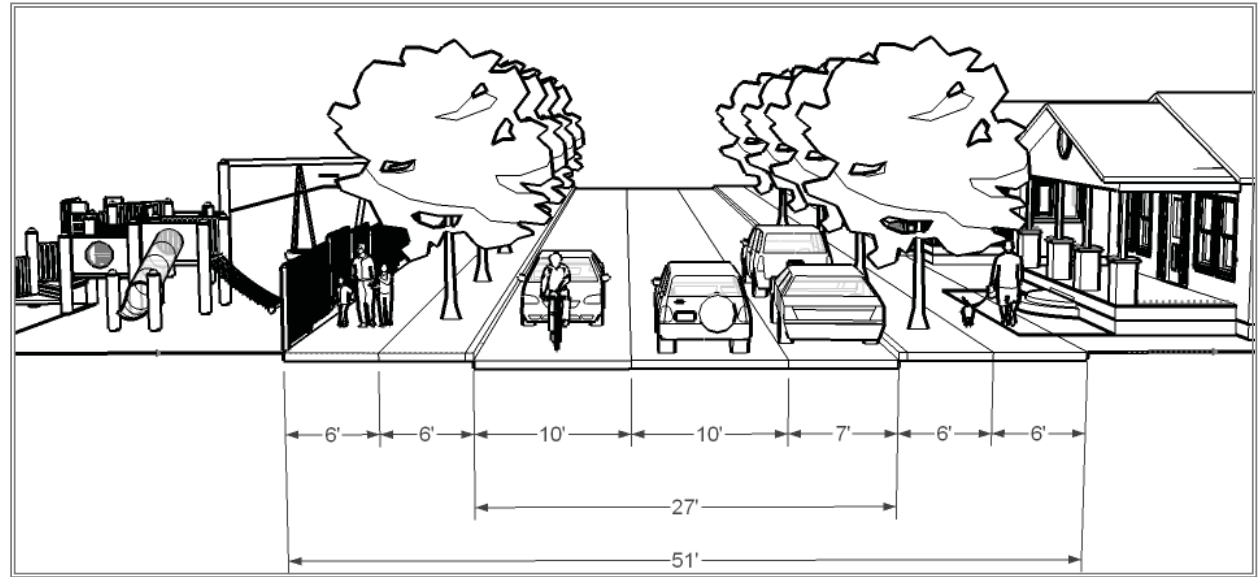


Figure 26: DR 51 27 7/10/10



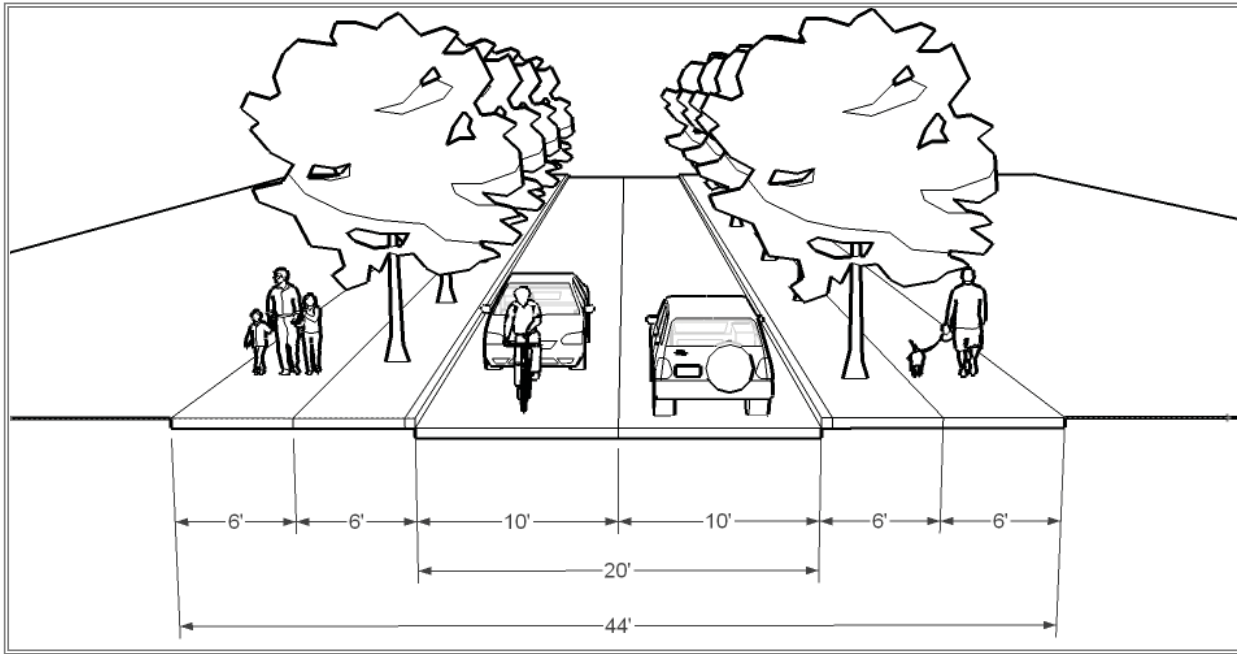


Figure 27: RD 44 20 10/10

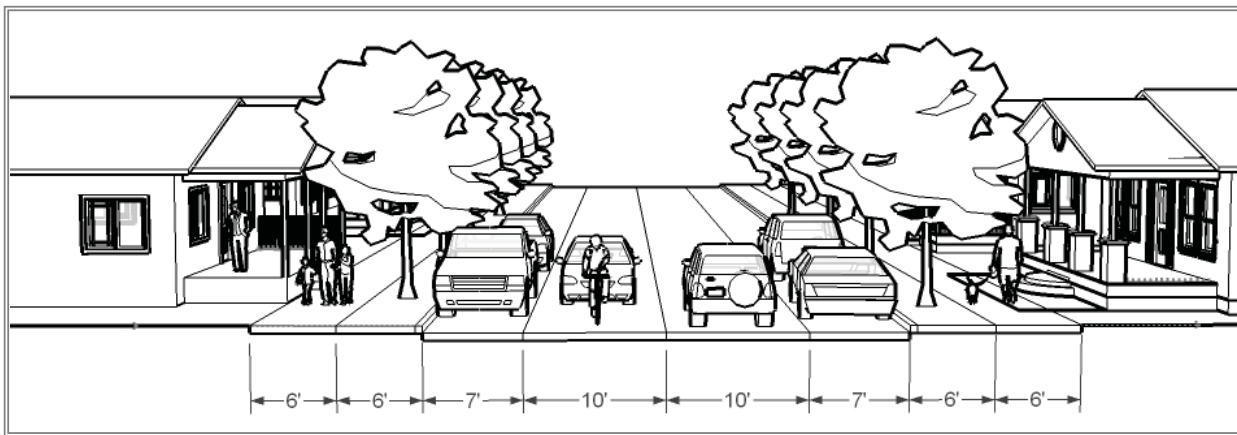


Figure 28: ST 58 34 7/10/10/7



# enterprise zone incentives – appendix **D**







# Enterprise Zones

City of Fort Myers and Lee County

## **What is the Enterprise Zone?**

An Enterprise Zone, designated by the State of Florida, is an area targeted for economic revitalization. Investing capital and creating jobs in Enterprise Zones provides the foundation for revitalizing the quality of life in Florida's distressed communities. Towards this end the State of Florida has developed the Enterprise Zone Program through which it offers state tax incentives to eligible companies.

## **What benefits are offered in the Enterprise Zone?**

The State of Florida's Enterprise Zone Program consists of six tax credits against corporate income taxes and state sales taxes. Job credits, applicable to either corporate income or state sales taxes, are available for eligible companies who hire Enterprise Zone residents. Community contribution tax credits against corporate income taxes are available for cash and specified goods donated to eligible sponsors. Property tax credits up to \$50,000 are available against corporate income taxes. Finally, building materials state sales tax refunds, and utility tax exemptions (municipal utility and state sales tax) are also available. If the business is located within the City limits of Fort Myers the following applies: sales tax exemption for electrical energy used; 50% fee rebate for occupational license; and water and sewer impact fee waiver for new construction.

## **Where is the Enterprise Zone?**

Two non-contiguous business districts make up the City of Fort Myers/Lee County Enterprise Zone. A map included in this booklet shows the boundaries of each area.

## **When can I apply?**

The program was reauthorized July 1, 2005, and is in effect for 10 years. Most of the tax savings require that part-time or full-time, permanent employees be employed for at least three calendar months before the business is eligible to receive benefits.

## **How do I apply?**

The Fort Myers/Lee County Enterprise Zone Coordinator must certify all applications for the Enterprise Zone programs. For applications and more information, call (239) 338-3161 or visit web site [www.floridaenterprisezone.com](http://www.floridaenterprisezone.com) to download forms.

**FORT MYERS / LEE COUNTY STATE ENTERPRISE ZONE PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

	<p align="center">ENTERPRISE ZONE JOBS TAX CREDIT (Sales &amp; Use Tax)</p> <p align="center">Section 212.096, Florida Statutes</p>	<p align="center">SALES TAX REFUND FOR BUSINESS MACHINERY AND EQUIPMENT USED IN AN ENTERPRISE ZONE</p> <p align="center">Section 212.08(5)(h), Florida Statutes</p>	<p align="center">SALES TAX REFUND FOR BUILDING MATERIALS USED IN AN ENTERPRISE ZONE</p> <p align="center">Section 212.08(5)(g), Florida Statutes</p>
<p>What is the program?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Allows businesses located in an enterprise zone that collect and pay sales and use tax, a credit against tax due.</li> <li>•This credit is for wages paid to new employees who have been employed by the business for at least 3 consecutive months and are residents of a Florida enterprise zone (or are welfare transition program participants who aren't required to live in the zone to be eligible).</li> <li>•A new job must be created before the business earns a tax credit. New employee cannot be an Owner, Partner, or Stockholder.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•A refund is available for sales taxes paid on the purchase of certain business property, (e.g. tangible personal property such as office equipment, warehouse equipment, and some industrial machinery and equipment), which is used exclusively in an enterprise zone for at least three years.</li> <li>•Business equipment purchased must have a sales price of at least \$5,000 per unit.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•A refund is available for sales taxes paid on the purchase of building materials used to rehabilitate real property located in an enterprise zone.</li> <li>•Incentive is limited to owners, lessors, and lessees of the real property that is rehabilitated within an Enterprise Zone.</li> </ul>
<p>What are the advantages?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•If 20% or more of the permanent, full-time employees are residents of a Florida enterprise zone the credit is 30% of monthly wages paid to new employees who are residents of a Florida enterprise zone.</li> <li>•If less than 20% of the permanent, full-time employees are residents of a Florida enterprise zone the credit is 20% of monthly wages paid to new employee.</li> <li>•Tax credits shall be allowed for up to 24 months per new employee.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•This incentive reduces the cost of purchasing new and used qualified tangible personal property that is used in an enterprise zone.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•This incentive reduces the cost of new construction or rehabilitating real property that is located in an enterprise zone.</li> </ul>
<p>What are the limitations?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•The credit is limited to the amount of sales tax owed. There is no refund or carry-forward for credit in excess of the tax due.</li> <li>•Employee must work at least 36 hours per week (no part-time employees)</li> <li>•Employees leased from an employee leasing company (Chapter 468) must be continuously leased to an employer for more than 6 months.</li> <li>•This credit is not available if the Enterprise Zone Jobs Tax Credit, (corporate tax), is taken.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•The total amount of the sales tax refund must be at least \$100, but no more than the lesser of \$5,000 or 97% of the tax paid.</li> <li>•If 20% or more of the permanent, full-time employees of the business are residents of a Florida enterprise zone, the refund will be no more than the lesser of \$10,000 or 97% of the tax paid.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•The total amount of the sales tax refund must be at least \$100, but no more than the lesser of \$5,000 or 97% of the tax paid.</li> <li>•If 20% or more of the permanent, full-time employees of the business are residents of a Florida enterprise zone, the refund will be no more than the lesser of \$10,000 or 97% of the tax paid.</li> </ul>
<p>How do I receive the credit?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Form DR-15ZC must be submitted to an Enterprise Zone Coordinator for signature and filed within 6 months of the hire date.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Form DR-26S and Form EZ-E must be certified by an Enterprise Zone Coordinator and must be filed with the Department of Revenue within 6 months or when the business equipment is purchased.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Form DR-26S and Form EZ-M certified by an Enterprise Zone Coordinator must be filed with the Department of Revenue within 6 months of when the improvements are certified by the building inspector as being substantially complete or within 9 months after the property is subject to assessment.</li> </ul>



**FORT MYERS / LEE COUNTY STATE ENTERPRISE ZONE PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

	ENTERPRISE ZONE JOBS TAX CREDIT (Corporate Income Tax)  Section 220.181, Florida Statutes	ENTERPRISE ZONE PROPERTY TAX CREDIT (Corporate Income Tax)  Section 220.182, Florida Statutes	COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTION TAX CREDIT PROGRAM (Corporate Income Tax)  Section 220.183, Florida Statutes
What is the program?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Allows businesses located in an enterprise zone who pay state corporate income tax an income tax credit for wages paid to new employees who have been employed by the business for at least 3 consecutive months and are residents of a Florida enterprise zone (or are welfare transition program participants who don't have to live in the zone).</li> <li>•A new job must be created before the business earns a tax credit.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•New or expanding businesses located in an enterprise zone are allowed a tax credit against Florida corporate income tax equal to 96% of ad valorem taxes paid on the new or improved property (the assessment rate varies by County).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Allows businesses anywhere in Florida a 50% credit on Florida corporate income tax, insurance premium tax or sales tax refund for donations to local community development projects. Donations must be made to an eligible sponsor conducting an approved community development project.</li> <li>•The annual amount of credit granted is limited to \$200,000 per firm and \$10,000,000 for the state.</li> </ul>
What are the advantages?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•If 20% or more of the permanent, full-time employees are residents of a Florida enterprise zone the credit is 30% of monthly wages paid to new employees who are residents of a Florida enterprise zone.</li> <li>•If less than 20% or more of the permanent, full-time employees are residents of a Florida enterprise zone the credit is 20% of monthly wages paid to new employee.</li> <li>•Tax credits shall be allowed for up to 24 months per new employee.</li> <li>•A five-year carry-forward provision is available for unused portions of past credits.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If 20% or more of the full-time employees are enterprise zone residents, the maximum of \$50,000 annual credit can be claimed for 5 years.</li> <li>•If less than 20% of the full-time employees are enterprise zone residents, the maximum of \$25,000 annual credit can be claimed for 5 years.</li> <li>•Any unused portion of the credit can be carried forward for 5 years.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•For each dollar donated, businesses may receive a 55.5-cent reduction in Florida tax liability (50 cents from the credit, 5.5 cents from the deductibility of the donation). The donation may also be deducted from Federal taxable income.</li> <li>•A five-year carry-forward provision is available for any unused portion of the tax credit (sales tax refunds are available for up to three years after the first sales tax refund application is submitted).</li> </ul>
What are the limitations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Employees leased from an employee leasing company (Chapter 468) must be continuously leased to an employer for more than 6 months.</li> <li>•Firms must earn more \$5,000 to take advantage of the credit.</li> <li>•The Federal tax burden may increase since state tax liability is reduced. The amount of the credit also must be added back to Florida taxable income.</li> <li>•This credit is not available if the business claims the enterprise zone jobs credit against sales tax.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Firms must earn more than \$5,000 to take advantage of the credit.</li> <li>•New businesses must establish 5 or more new jobs.</li> <li>•Expanding business must establish 5 or more new jobs.</li> <li>•Rebuilding businesses must have suffered damage in an "emergency".</li> <li>•The Federal tax burden may increase since state tax liability is reduced. The amount of the credit also must be added back to Florida taxable income.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Firms must earn more than \$5,000 to take advantage of the credit.</li> <li>•IRS rules for the valuation of donated goods may require depreciation recapture; therefore, the deduction may be decreased.</li> <li>•By reducing the state tax liability, state taxes deducted from federal income are decreased; therefore, the federal tax burden may increase.</li> </ul>
How do I receive the credit?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Form F-1156Z must be certified by an Enterprise Zone Coordinator and filed with corporate tax return for each tax year in which the credit is claimed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Businesses must file Form DR-456 with the county property appraiser before April 1 of the first year in which the new or expanded property is subject to assessment. •An Enterprise Zone Coordinator must certify Form F-1158Z. Firms must include copies of receipts for applicable ad valorem taxes paid with tax returns and Form F-1158Z with the return.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•The project sponsor submits a proposal to O.T.T.E.D. for approval and solicits donations from businesses. Businesses file form 8E-17TCA#01 to O.T.T.E.D.</li> <li>•Once the donation has been approved; a copy of the approval letter must be submitted with the state tax return.</li> <li>•Project proposals must be recertified on an annual basis.</li> </ul>

**CITY OF FORT MYERS APPROVED ENTERPRISE ZONE INCENTIVES OVERVIEW**

	<p align="center">CITY OF FORT MYERS ENTERPRISE ZONE OCCUPATIONAL LICENSE FEE REBATE</p> <p align="center">Section 8-467 (Code of Ordinances)</p>	<p align="center">CITY OF FORT MYERS ENTERPRISE ZONE WATER &amp; SEWER IMPACT FEE WAIVER</p> <p align="center">Article I, Section 39-5 &amp; Article II, Section 39-18 (Code of Ordinances)</p>	<p align="center">CITY OF FORT MYERS SALES TAX EXEMPTION FOR ELECTRICAL ENERGY USED IN AN ENTERPRISE ZONE</p> <p align="center">Section 16-29 (Code of Ordinances)</p>
<p>What is the program?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Allows any business, occupation or profession located in the City of Fort Myers portion of the enterprise zone to receive a partial exemption of the occupational license tax imposed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Allows for any new construction for a business or single family dwelling located in the City of Fort Myers portion of the enterprise zone to receive a waiver of the water and sewer impact fees imposed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•A 100% sales tax exemption is available if 20% or more of the permanent, full-time employees are residents in the zone.</li> <li>•A 50% sales tax exemption if less than 20% of the permanent, full-time employees are residents of the zone. Effective January 1, 2002, eligible businesses are: (1) businesses located in a newly occupied structure; (2) renovated structure (no electrical service for 3 months); or (3) has received a building materials sales tax refund.</li> </ul>
<p>What are the advantages?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•A 50% rebate each year for the cost of the occupational license.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•A 100% waiver of the fees.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•The 50% or 100% exemption of state sales tax on utilities and the 50% abatement of municipal utility tax are available for up to five years.</li> </ul>
<p>What are the limitations?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•To qualify, the permanent business location or branch office must be located in the approved enterprise zone within the City limits.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•To qualify, the new construction of the business or single-family dwelling must be located in the approved "Impact Fees Exemption Areas" of the City enterprise zone.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•The tax exemption is limited to municipalities that have passed an ordinance to reduce the municipal utility tax for enterprise zone businesses.</li> <li>•If 20% or more of the businesses employees are residents of an enterprise zone; the business will receive a larger abatement. Available only to businesses located in the City of Fort Myers portion of the Enterprise Zone.</li> </ul>
<p>How do I receive the credit?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•An application for partial exemption shall be submitted on forms provided by the City to the license inspector. Such application shall be filed with the initial application for a license for new businesses, occupations or professions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•When you apply for a building permit, if you know that your business is located in the City portion of the enterprise zone you need to indicate this; or if you don't know then ask.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Form DR-15JEZ must be filed with an application certified by an Enterprise Zone Coordinator.</li> </ul>

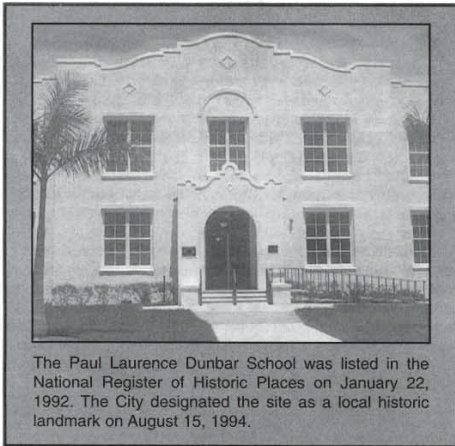


# historic sites of dunbar – appendix **E**





## Historic Sites of Dunbar A Self Guided Tour



The Paul Laurence Dunbar School was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on January 22, 1992. The City designated the site as a local historic landmark on August 15, 1994.

When Fort Myers was active as a fort during the Civil War it was manned by "U.S. colored" (black) troops. Blacks and whites lived in the same neighborhoods when the fort was abandoned and the city established. The earliest known black settler, Nelson Tillis, arrived in Fort Myers on Christmas day in 1867. Tillis and his family at one time lived in a house on McGregor Boulevard, near the Thomas Edison Estate, where it is said his children used to play on the Edison lawn.

Both blacks and whites inhabited an area known as Pine-tucky. The area was geographically located on both sides of Cleveland Avenue between McGregor Boulevard on the west, Grand Avenue on the east, Victoria Avenue on the north and Edison Avenue on the south. By the 1900's newly arriving white settlers didn't like blacks living in the same communities with them.

By the mid-1930's most black families had moved into a segregated area originally referred to as Safety Hill. Some people say it was given that name because the area is the highest elevation in Fort Myers. Others say it was the only place that blacks could feel safe. In the mid-forties, the community began to be referred to as Dunbar, after the name of the high school. The high school was named after the famous black poet Paul Laurence Dunbar. Until desegregation, blacks were only allowed to live in the Dunbar section of Fort Myers.

When "Jim Crow" laws segregated the City of Fort Myers, though separate, the Dunbar community thrived. The area had a strong sense of community. After desegregation when blacks were allowed to participate in commerce throughout the City, the economic structure within Dunbar faltered. Another significant factor in the economic decline of Dunbar has been the exodus of young blacks away from Fort Myers.

Through the years, the historic resources of blacks located within the Dunbar community have been lost, mainly due to neglect and code enforcement, without conscious knowledge by its residents. Research finds there has been limited documentation or recording of historic sites within the Dunbar community in past years.

The Florida Master Site File (FMSF), a statewide inventory and clearinghouse of historic sites reflects this condition. To date, there are only 8 sites located within the Dunbar community identified in the FMSF. Only two of the sites selected for inclusion in this brochure were identified in the FMSF. Compounding the inadequacy of documentation and recording of historic sites in the Dunbar community, is the fact that over 90% of the City's demolition permits currently are, and historically have been, for the removal of structures located there.

By publicizing this loss and highlighting the valued assets remaining, it is hoped that public support for preservation of black community assets will increase. It is hoped an enhanced cultural and historical awareness will occur so that past trends do not continue. Preservation of these remaining historic and cultural resources in the black community will allow future generations to gain a sense of heritage and pride by having a documented and physical evidence of their past.

This preservation effort is designed to enhance and complement the work efforts of the Lee County Black History Society, Inc., by providing the foundation for an educational and cultural awareness program to be located at the Black History Museum and archives.

### DUNBAR'S HISTORIC CHURCHES:

In the early 1900's, most of the original black churches and congregations were located in areas which became exclusively white communities with the establishment of segregation laws. Trinity United Methodist Church is the oldest established black congregation in Fort Myers and dates back to May 30, 1889. Their first sanctuary was located at the corner of Anderson Avenue and Lee Street. In 1908 the church was relocated to the corner of Lime Street and Cranford Avenue. The current sanctuary, located at 2979 Lincoln Boulevard, was constructed in 1963, and for purposes of this brochure, is not considered a historic structure, and therefore a photo was not included.



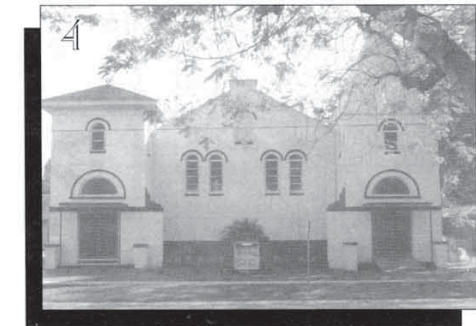
ST. JOHN FIRST MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH  
2044 BROWN STREET

St. John First Missionary Baptist Church was organized as a congregation in 1898. The two-story red brick church located on Brown Street between Price and Douglas Streets, originally served as the Chapel at Buckingham Air Field during World War II. After Buckingham Air Field closed, the building was acquired by the St. John Congregation. The building was moved to its present location in 1951.



FRIENDSHIP BAPTIST CHURCH  
2030 PALM AVENUE

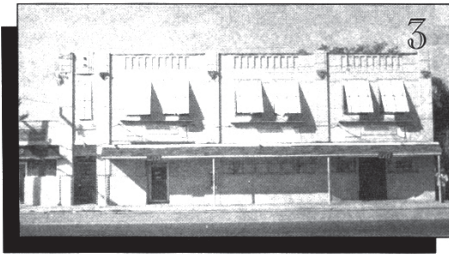
Friendship Baptist Church was organized as a congregation in 1912. In 1930 the church congregation purchased a plot of land located at the corner of Palm Avenue and Kerney Street. On the second Sunday in November 1950, after many years of struggle and sacrifice, the first church service was conducted in the new building.



MT. OLIVE AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
2754 ORANGE STREET

Mt. Olive African Methodist Episcopal Church is one of the oldest churches in the Dunbar community with the formation of the congregation dating back as early as 1895. For a number of years church services were held at several different locations, including the Lee County Courthouse, which was where the congregation was originally organized. The church was built at its current location at Orange Street and Palm Avenue ca.1929.





**McCOLLUM HALL  
2717 DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. BOULEVARD**

McCollum Hall was built ca. 1938 by black businessman and entrepreneur Clifford McCollum Sr. and his wife Gertrude as a commercial and recreational building for the Dunbar community. McCollum Hall, located at the northeast corner of Cranford Avenue and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, was considered at one time to be located in the heart of the Dunbar community. Dunbar's community social celebrations were a large part of the significance of McCollum Hall.

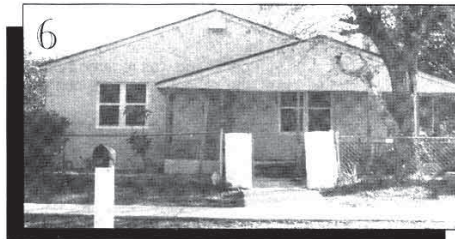
McCollum Hall also served as the USO for black servicemen stationed at Page and Buckingham Air Fields. The second floor housed the renowned "dance hall" and for almost two decades was a popular entertainment location for many famous musicians and entertainers. Many nationally famous blacks including Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Louis Armstrong, and B.B. King performed at McCollum Hall which was part of the "Chitlin' Circuit", a name commonly used to refer to the places across the country where black entertainers performed during segregation.

The dance hall continued in operation until the late 1970's catering more to the teenagers of the community. In the mid-1980's, the second-floor hall was changed to a rooming house. McCollum Hall was determined to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places in a report prepared May 19, 1994 by Archaeological Consultants, Inc.



**THE BEAUTY BOX - 2775 ORANGE STREET**

This site is the location of one of the first beauty salons in the Dunbar community. It is also one of the oldest black business establishments still in existence. The structure built ca. 1926, was originally a residential structure, and through the years has been changed to a commercial use. The building is currently occupied by a beauty salon called the Beauty Box.



**ETTA POWELL'S HOUSE - 2764 LIME STREET**

The small wood frame house at 2764 Lime Street was the family home of Charlie and Etta Powell. In the 1950's, the family rented rooms to black professional baseball players in town for spring training. During the 1950's there were no hotels in the area which provided lodging to blacks. The Powell home was one of several private residences in the Dunbar community that provided lodging for many black baseball players.



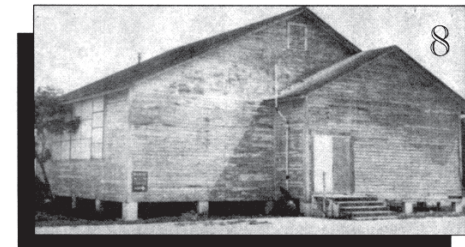
**DUNBAR COMMUNITY SCHOOL - 1857 HIGH STREET**

Dunbar High School was built in 1927 at a cost \$99,000.00 and was partly financed by black citizens in Lee County. The school is located at the corner of High and Blount Streets in the heart of the black community. It was named for the renowned black poet Paul Laurence Dunbar. The building's layout was copied from architectural plans prepared for a white school built across town called Edison Park Elementary. It saved the school board money because another set of architectural plans did not have to be commissioned.

Prior to the opening of Dunbar High School, public education for black children in Lee County was limited to the eighth grade. With the opening of Dunbar, black students could now receive four years of high school education. Black students throughout Lee County including Sanibel and Charleston Park were bussed to Dunbar. Because there were no black high schools in Charlotte and Collier Counties black students in these counties were also bussed to Dunbar until 1962.

The school became the hub of activity in the black community. In 1962 a new Dunbar High School was built on Edison Avenue. The original Dunbar High School became Dunbar Junior High from 1962 to 1964. In the fall of 1964 seventh and eighth grades joined the other high school students at the new Dunbar High School located on Edison Avenue.

The school building at High and Blount has been utilized for various educational functions over the years. At the beginning of desegregation in the 1970's the school became a center for seventh grade students and was renamed Dunbar Community School. Later, the school became a center for adult and community education.



**THE 1942 ADDITION TO THE WILLIAMS ACADEMY  
1936 HENDERSON AVENUE - CLEMENTE PARK**

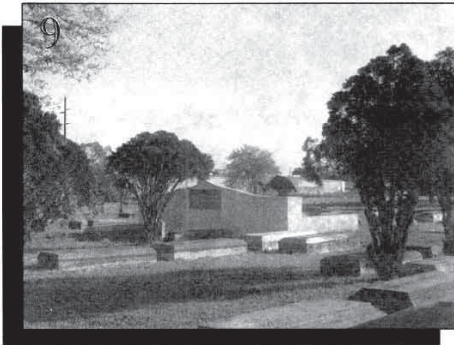
The building known as the 1942 Addition to the Williams Academy is currently located at the county-owned Clemente Park on Henderson Avenue. It is the remnant of a 1942 addition to the original 1913 Williams Academy structure. Williams Academy was the first government-funded school for black students in Fort Myers. The original two-story building was located at the corner of Anderson and Cranford Avenues. Classes went from first to eighth grades. The building was moved to the Dunbar High School site on Blount Street between 1935 and 1937. When Dunbar High School was opened in 1927, the Williams Academy was renamed Williams Primary and used for first and second grade classes.

The architecture of the building reflects the vernacular construction of the era. It remains generally in its original plan. The building represents the value that Lee County placed on black education in 1942 and provides a visual comparison with facilities provided to the white students. It serves to remind the community of past inequities in education, which should not be allowed to recur.

The Williams Primary School portion was dismantled in 1958 and the 1942 addition was relocated easterly on the Dunbar campus site. The 1942 addition remained as a stand-alone building, serving variously as a band/chorus building, day care center, and migrant health clinic. It was covered with aluminum siding in the mid 1980's. From then until its relocation to Clemente Park in 1995, the building was used exclusively for storage by the Lee County School District.

In November 1994, the Lee County School Board slated the building for demolition to make room for a parking lot. The Lee County Black History Society, Inc. (LCBHS) acquired the building from the school district on the condition that LCBHS move the building from its location on the Dunbar Community School property. The LCBHS moved the building to its present location. Clemente Park has served various functions in the Dunbar community through the years. The park in addition to serving as a recreational facility was also a senior retirement facility for black citizens when such facilities were still segregated. The park also housed a counseling center and the first library for the Dunbar community.

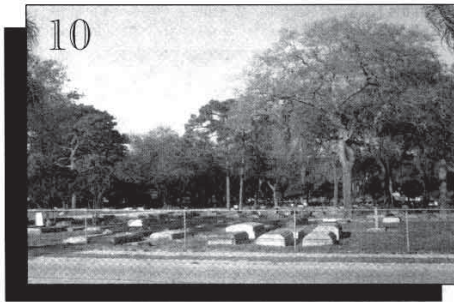




**WOODLAWN AND OAKRIDGE SECTIONS OF THE CITY OF FORT MYERS CEMETERY - HENDERSON AVENUE**

For many years, there were two distinct sections of Fort Myers' Cemetery used exclusively for black burials. The Woodlawn Section is located on the east side of Henderson Avenue, just north of "C" Street. City records indicate Woodlawn was established in 1915. Oakridge is directly across the street from Woodlawn on the west side of Henderson Avenue and was established in 1943. Both cemetery sections are approximately 5 acres in size.

The black cemetery sections lack any distinct entry feature or marker and are located at a significant distance from the once exclusive white cemetery to the north. The black cemetery sections were situated in the middle of the block with a dirt path for access. The cemetery's random location, lack of identification and limited access was typical of black cemeteries in segregated communities.

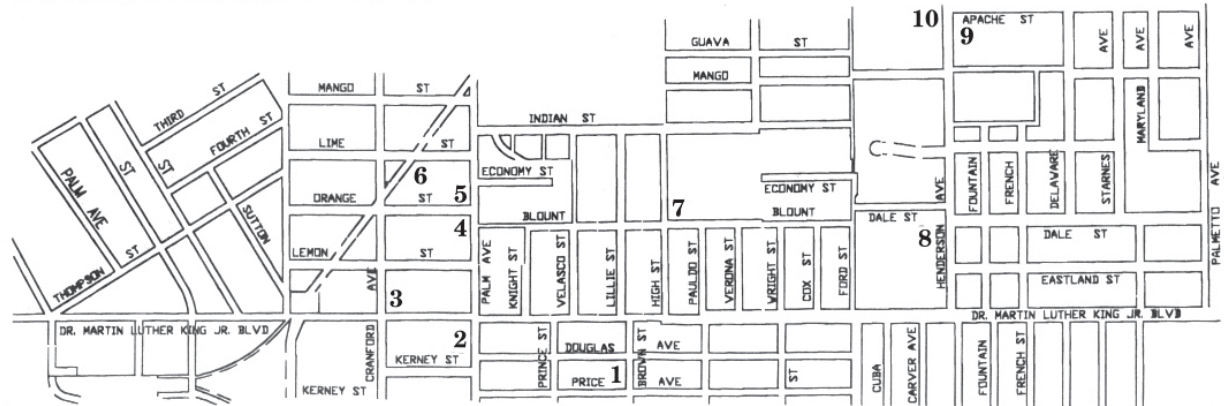


Many prominent black residents and community leaders are buried in the Woodlawn and Oakridge Sections of Fort Myers Cemetery. The family plot of Dr. Ella Piper, a local philanthropist and podiatrist is located the Woodlawn Section and is noted in photograph # 9.



- 1) St. John First Missionary Baptist Church - 2044 Brown Street
- 2) Friendship Baptist Church - 2080 Palm Avenue
- 3) McCollum Hall - 2717 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
- 4) Mt. Olive African Methodist Episcopal Church - 2754 Orange Street
- 5) The Beauty Box - 2776 Orange Street
- 6) Etta Powell's House - 2784 Lime Street
- 7) Dunbar Community School - 1887 High Street
- 8) 1942 Addition to Williams Academy (Clements Park) - 1986 Henderson Avenue
- 9) Woodlawn Section of the City of Fort Myers Cemetery - Henderson Avenue
- 10) Oakridge Section of the City of Fort Myers Cemetery - Henderson Avenue

## Historic Sites of the Dunbar Community



This brochure was a joint project between the City of Fort Myers' Planning Department and the Lee County Black History Society, Inc. Special thanks to Janice Cass, Chairperson, Board of Directors, LCBHS

This project has been financed in part with historic preservation grant assistance provided by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, administered through the Bureau of Historic Preservation, Division of Historical Resources, Florida Department of State, assisted by the Historic Preservation Advisory Council. However, the contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of the Department of the Interior or the Department of State, nor does the mention of trade names or commercial products constitute endorsement or recommendation by the Department of the Interior or the Florida Department of State. This program receives Federal financial assistance for identification and protection of historic properties. Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended, the U.S. Department of Interior prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability, or age in its federally assisted programs.