

North Port Gateway Master Plan

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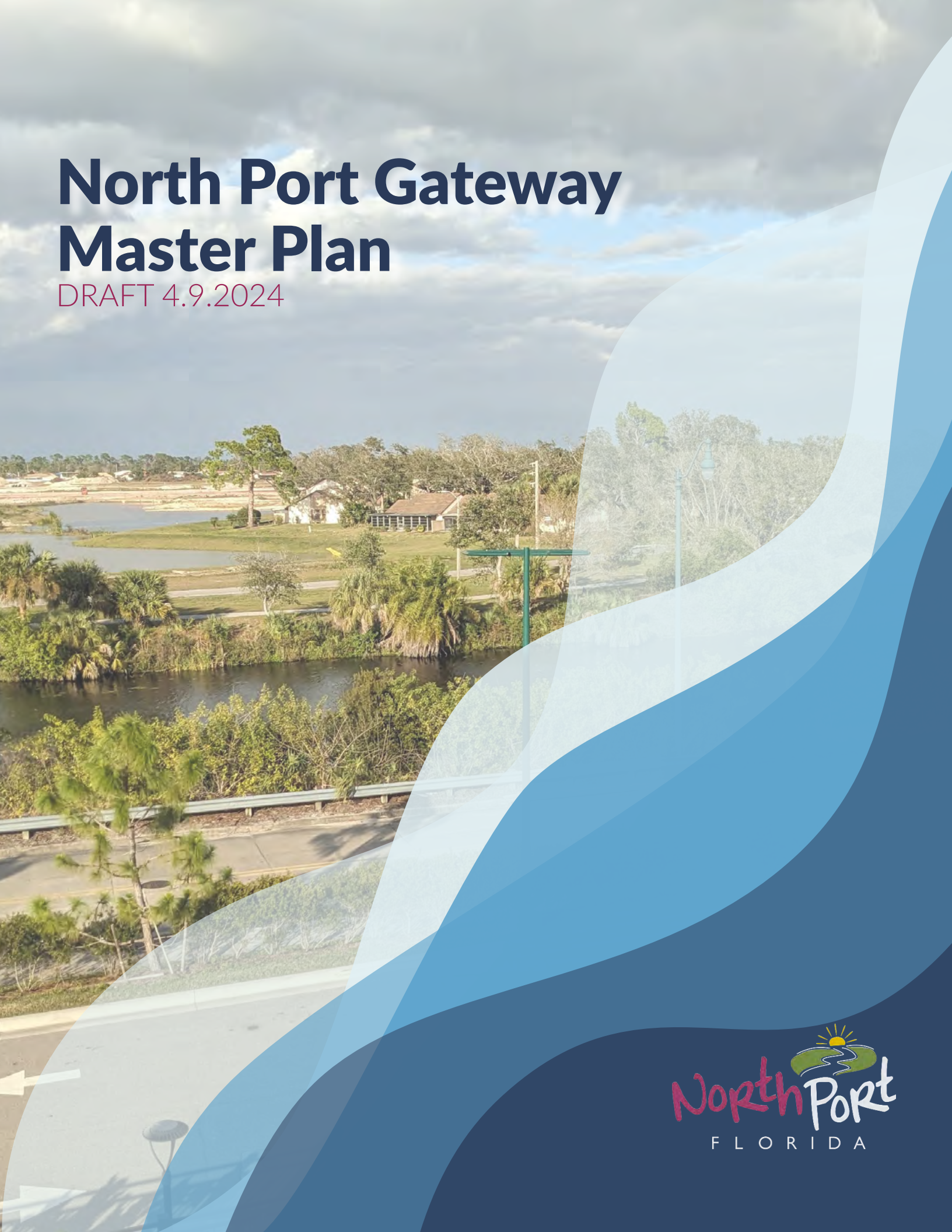


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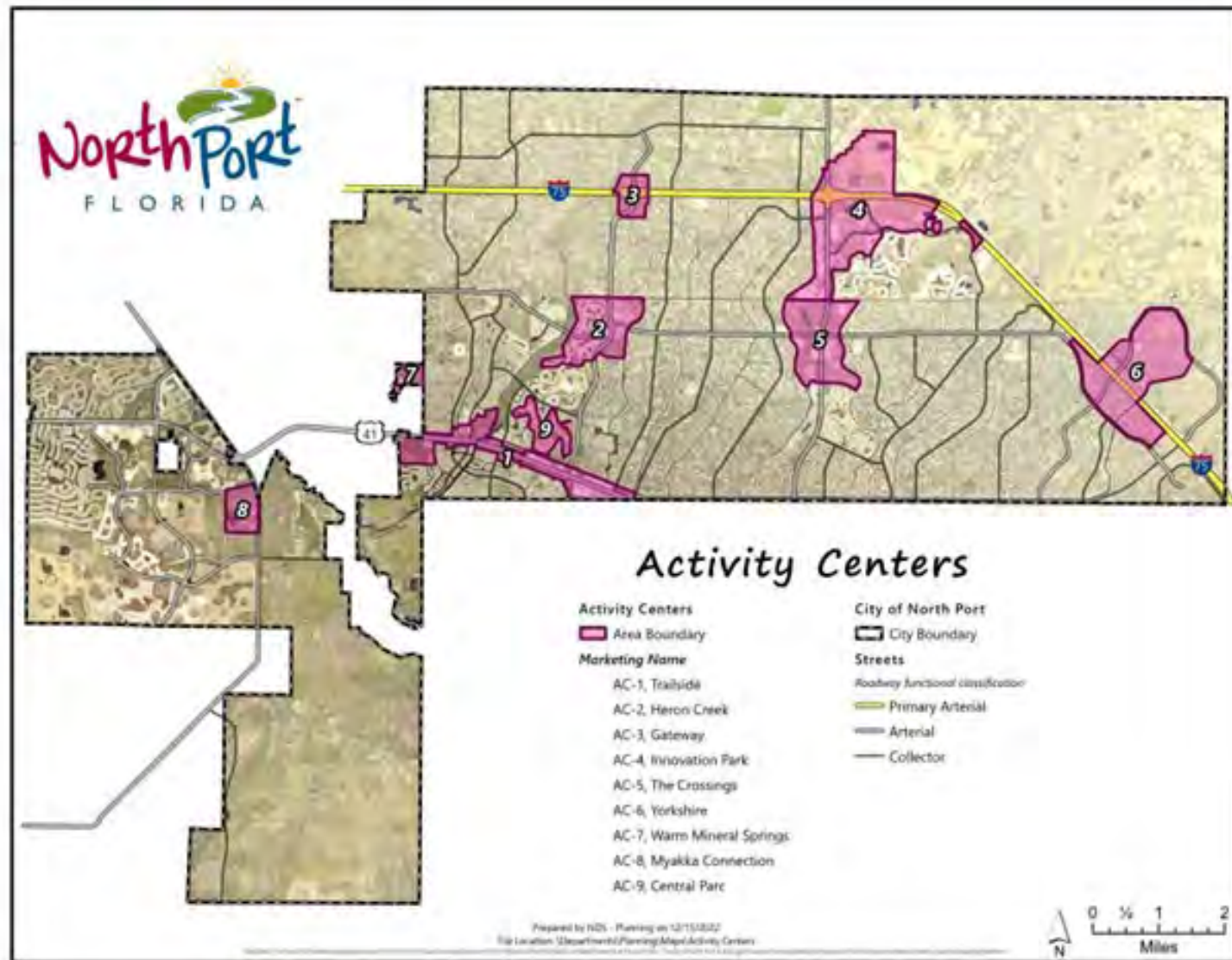
INTRODUCTION

Activity Center Overview

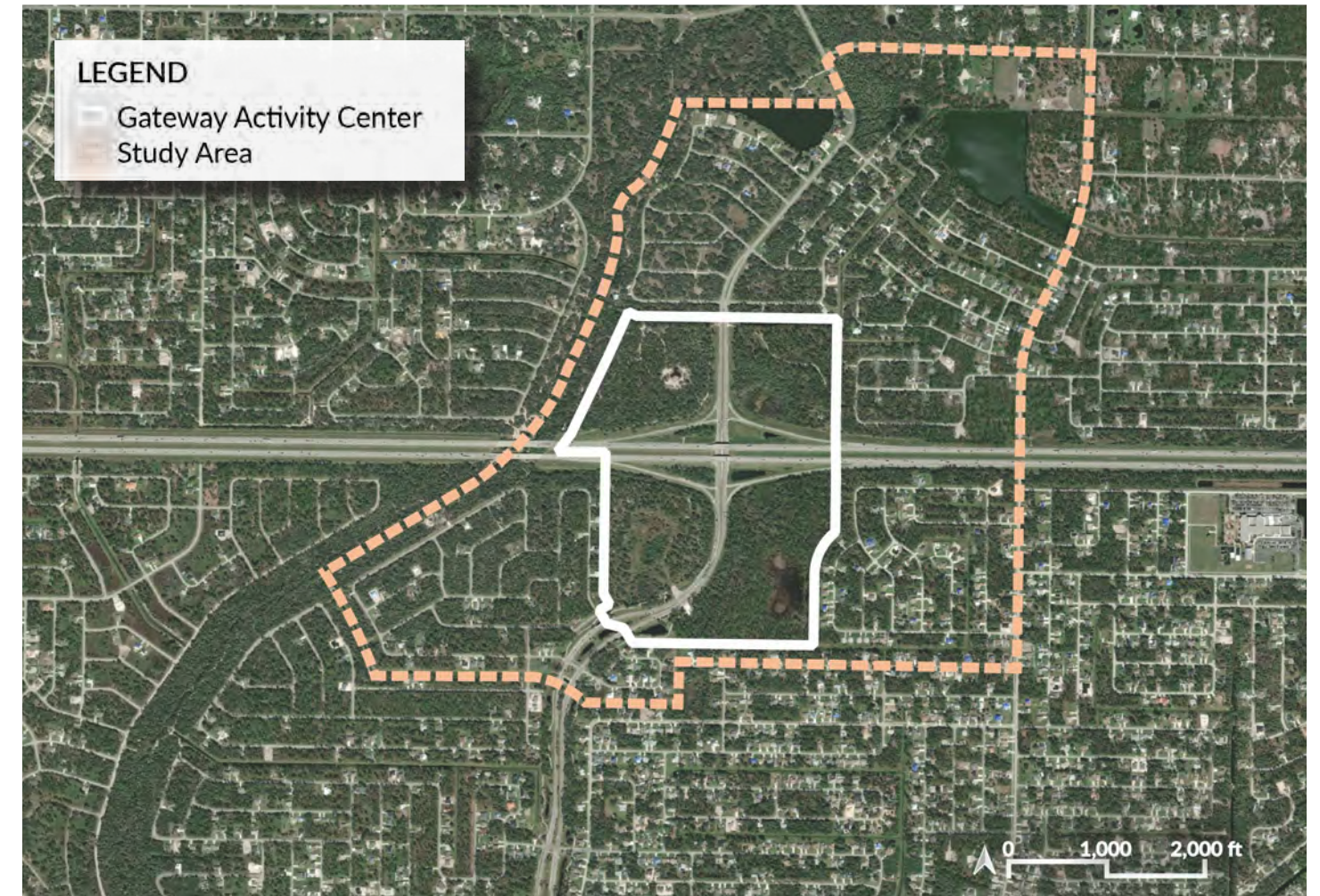
The City of North Port's designated Activity Center 3, also known as the Gateway Activity Center, is a 177.8-acre area identified as a future activity center in the North Port Comprehensive Plan. The Gateway Activity Center is one of nine Activity Centers in the Comprehensive Plan, pictured below. Activity Centers are defined as lands "designated to provide an area for coordinated development of industrial, commercial, professional office, residential, public, and recreational uses."

The Gateway Activity Center comprises five undeveloped parcels of land surrounding the I-75 interchange at Sumter Boulevard. North Port's updated Comprehensive Plan extends the Activity Center to include the neighborhood to the north.

In addition to the Activity Center, the Gateway Master Plan also addresses a wider study area that includes the Activity Center itself, as well as the neighborhood to the southwest, which is reclassified as High-Density Corridor in the updated



North Port Activity Centers. Source: City of North Port



Aerial Imagery of Gateway Activity Center and Study Area.

Comprehensive Plan, and the neighborhoods to the east. The western boundary of the study area is Myakkahatchee Creek (also called the Big Slough Canal), a tributary of the Myakka River. This wider study area shares some of the same issues as the Activity Center itself, and will be affected by development that occurs in the Activity Center.

Purpose of the Gateway Master Plan

The Gateway Activity Center has the potential to develop quickly due to its prime location at the Sumter Boulevard and Interstate 75 interchange. To that end, a 100-bed hospital is in early development stages on the southeast quadrant. The purpose of the Gateway Master Plan is to encourage development that addresses the area's needs and fosters its opportunities.

MASTER PLAN PROCESS

Master Plan Initiation

The City of North Port made a request to the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity's Community Planning Technical Assistance grant program in 2023. As detailed in that request, the City's population growth over the past 10 years has accounted for over a fifth of Sarasota County's growth, but only two and half percent of the county's job growth. This mismatch between population and jobs is a trend North Port's elected officials, staff, and community members are determined to address.



The project team conducted three site visits to assess the Activity Center

The City of North Port was successful in their grant request to help fund a Master Plan for their Gateway Activity Center, a targeted major employment center, and will integrate strategic land use scenarios with effective stormwater solutions

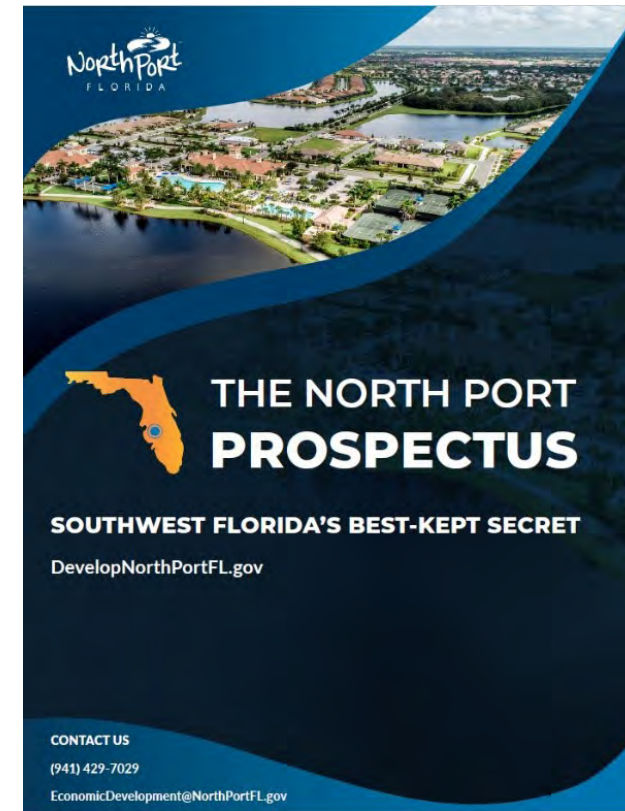
to allow the area to become both a commercial and environmental asset for the City. In addition, recent infrastructure investments, such as the installation of water and sewer service to the Activity Center parcels south of I-75, have spurred interest in the development potential of the Gateway Activity Center, exacerbating the need for a localized master planning approach.



Pillars of the 2022 - 2025 Strategic Vision Plan

Master Planning Process

The process of creating the Gateway Master Plan began with an in-depth assessment of the study area to explore the unique conditions of the site and document the issues and opportunities relating to land use, transportation, environmental conditions, stormwater, and economic development. The project team conducted three site visits to understand the Activity Center's existing context. The first focused on land use and transportation connectivity; the second on environmental and ecological features, such as species and wetlands; and the third on the risk of flooding and potential mitigation strategies.



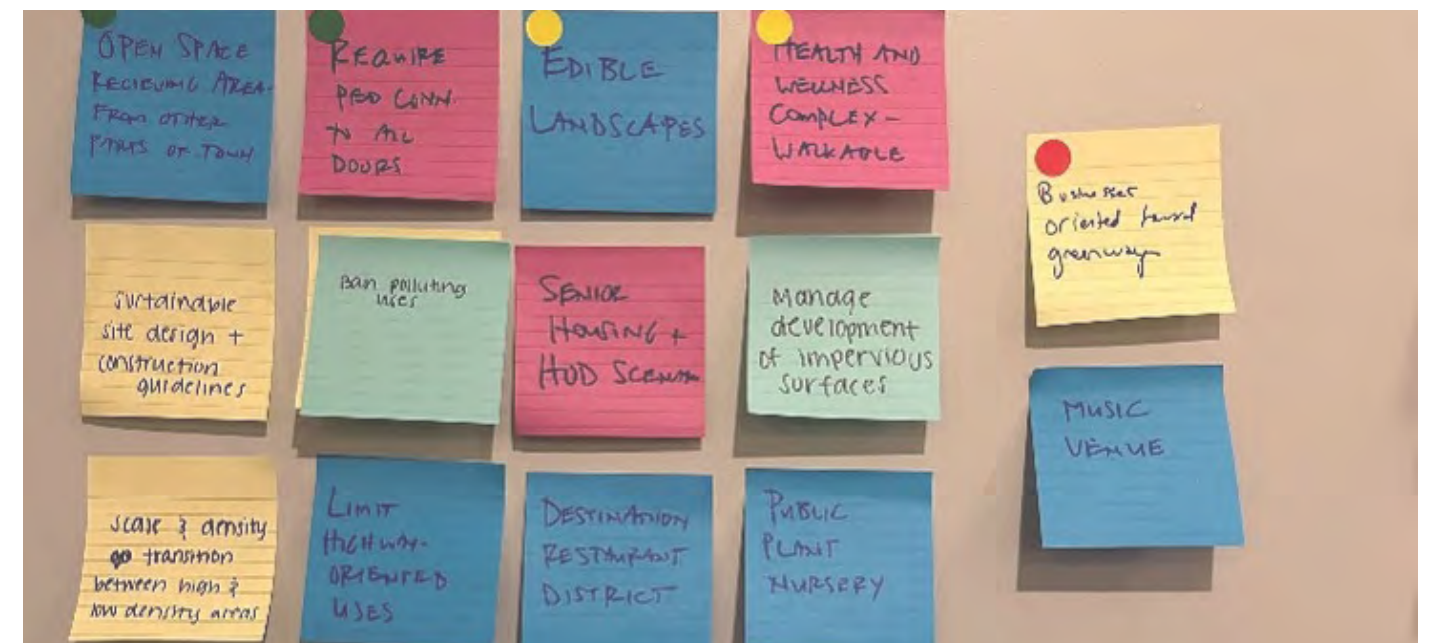
The North Port Prospectus, North Port's economic development plan

The assessment led to the development of a framework and guiding principles for moving forward with scenario planning and recommendations. The framework was based on North Port's existing plans, such as the 2022-2025 Strategic Vision Plan and The North Port Prospectus economic development plan, and discussions with City staff about what they wanted to achieve in the Activity Center.

The findings of the assessment report are summarized in the next section, and the full report can be found in Appendix A.

The next step was to develop the scenarios and recommendations. The project team engaged with the owners of undeveloped land in the Activity Center, and held a work session to develop recommendations.

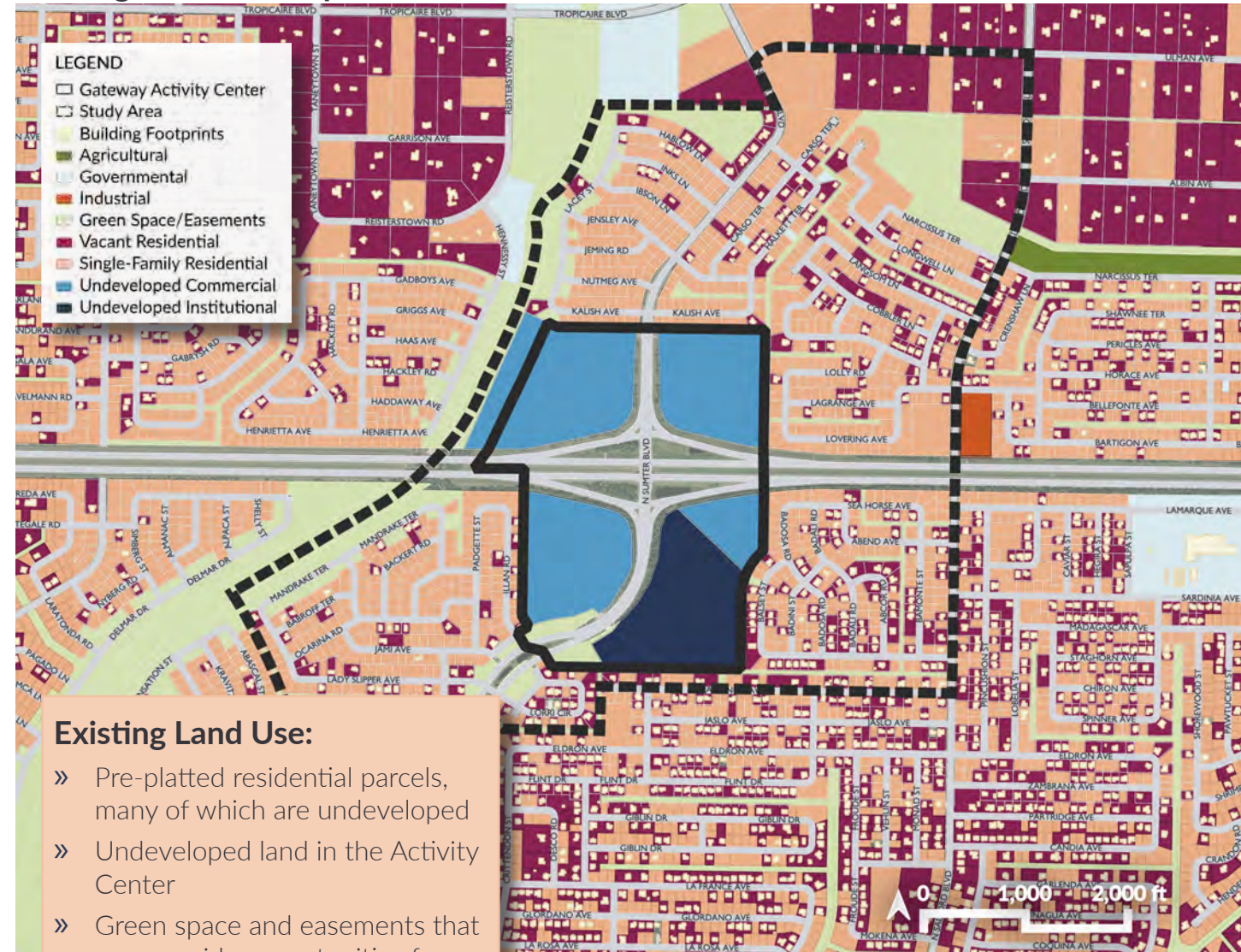
The team presented the draft Master Plan to the stakeholders and the North Port City Commission in April 2024. Feedback from the commission was used to evaluate the land use scenarios and develop a final set of recommendations.



The project team held a brainstorming session to develop recommendations.

ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

Existing Land Use Map



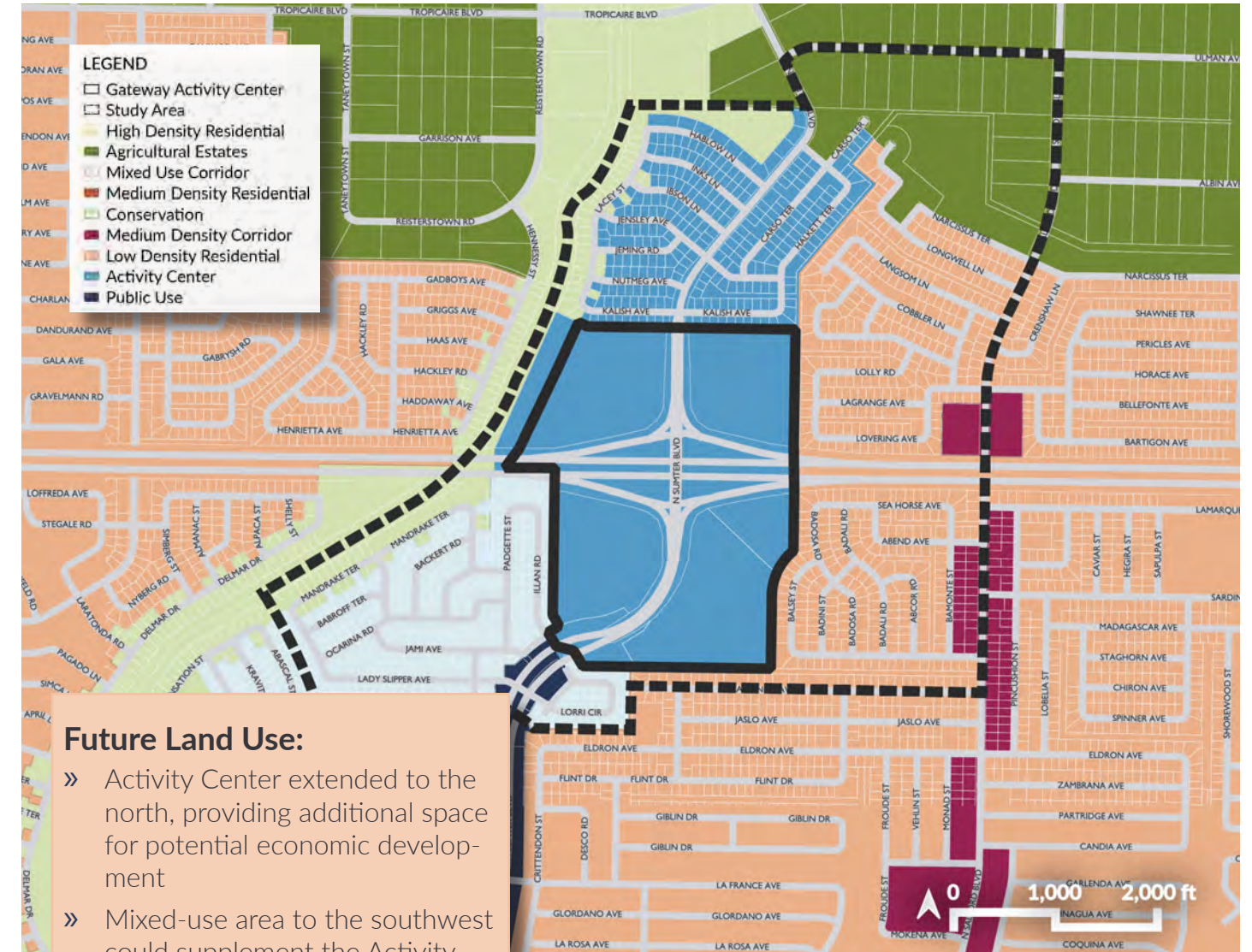
Land Use

The parcels within the Activity Center are currently undeveloped. Most of the study area outside the Activity Center is low-density residential land. The parcels are pre-platted, and a majority of them are vacant. A recent utility expansion occurred along Sumter Boulevard south of I-75 that extended water and sewer service to the southern parcels in

the Activity Center. However, the utility expansion does not continue north of I-75, which means the northern parcels will not have water and sewer in the near term.

North Port's Unified Land Development Code (ULDC) and Comprehensive Plan are both undergoing extensive updates. The proposed update

Future Land Use Map



establishes Activity Center 3 as an area supportive of commercial, medical, and recreational uses. The map shows the existing boundary of the Activity Center (black line), the proposed expansion to the north, and the residential area to the southwest that would be recategorized as High Density Corridor (in light blue).

Wetlands, Flood Zones, and Waterbodies



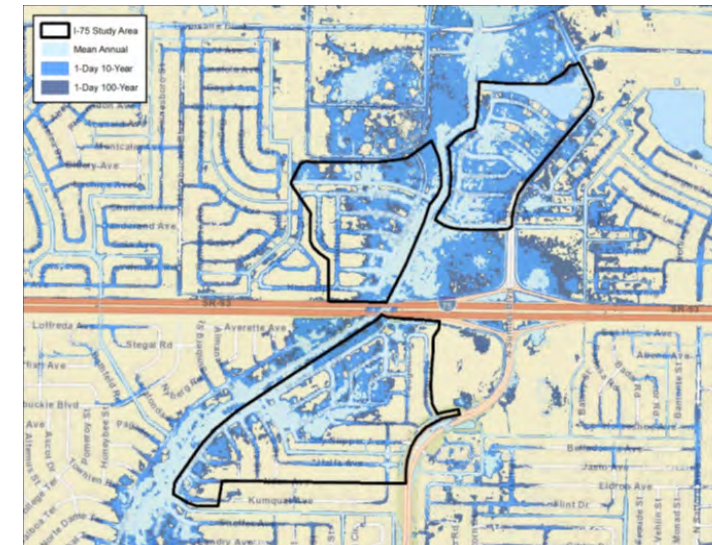
Environment and Stormwater

All four quadrants contain isolated wetlands of varying qualities. Some wetlands are relatively undisturbed, and others have been highly damaged by vehicles. The most prominent water feature in the vicinity is the Myakkahatchee Creek. A series of canals drain toward this creek, which feeds into ground water wells and then ultimately discharges to the Myakka River, a Florida-designated Wild and Scenic River.

North Port commissioned two stormwater studies of Myakkahatchee Creek (also called Big Slough), in 2014 and 2019. The studies found that to effectively combat the impacts of flooding on the Gateway study area and beyond, a regional storm-

water management approach is needed. Additional stormwater investigation was done in the Activity Center as part of the assessment, and is detailed in Appendix B.

A combination of regional and local strategies can be employed to mitigate the impacts of potential flooding. This can take the form of promoting green infrastructure within new developments, retrofitting existing stormwater infrastructure, building new stormwater infrastructure, preserving wetlands that naturally store water, and raising evacuation and emergency routes.



Historic Flooding Near the I-75 / Sumter Blvd Interchange. Source: City of North Port Big Slough Flood Reduction Study, 2019

Transportation

There is overall a lack of connectivity between the four quadrants of the interchange, and between the neighborhoods and Sumter Boulevard. Currently, residents in the neighborhoods must travel circuitous routes to access Sumter Boulevard and I-75. This lack of connectivity created an additional hazard for residents during Hurricane Ian.

In the heart of the Gateway Activity Center, the City of North Port is working with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) to signalize the intersection of I-75 at Sumter Boulevard at both the northbound and southbound ramp termini intersections. The signalization will include pedestrian call buttons for the crosswalks across the



Shared-use path along Sumter Blvd

interchange ramps, but no pedestrian crossings are planned to be added across Sumter Boulevard.

The existing pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure within the study area consists of the sidewalks on both sides of Sumter Boulevard within the I-75 interchange and a sidewalk/shared-use path on both sides of Sumter Boulevard south of the I-75 interchange, near the North Port Park and Ride parking lot. However, there is a gap of about ¼ mile between the interchange sidewalks and the shared-use path. There is also an unprotected bike lane along Sumter Boulevard. There are currently no sidewalk facilities within the northern portion of the study area.

Additionally, there is no public transportation in the Gateway Activity Center. The closest transit stop is located at City Hall Boulevard, over a mile and half south of the I-75 and Sumter Boulevard interchange. However, Sarasota County's transit agency, Breeze, operates an east/west route along US 41/Tamiami Trail (known as Route 09 Venice/North Port) which connects North Port City Hall and Park & Ride, located off Sumter Boulevard, to Downtown Venice.

Economic Development

According to the 2022 US Census, North Port is the 5th fastest growing city in the U.S. (among cities 50,000 people or larger), and the single fastest in all of Florida. However, jobs in North Port lag far behind population. Only about 10% of employed North Port residents work in North Port.

The pending Sarasota Memorial Hospital development has the potential to be a significant driver of future Gateway Activity Center growth. Case studies identified as part of the assessment (see Appendix A) demonstrate immense growth fueled by the construction of a hospital in an underdeveloped part of a city. This growth includes activities that are complementary to a hospital, including retail and restaurants, medical offices, a hotel, and pharmacies. It is reasonable to assume that tax revenues for the City of North Port from this area will increase substantially with the development of the Gateway Activity Center.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES / FRAMEWORK

Strategic Framework

The strategic framework for developing Gateway Activity Center land use scenarios is informed by the North Port Comprehensive Plan, the North Port Strategic Vision Plan, and the findings of the assessment (Appendix A).

The Gateway Master Plan considers three land use scenarios for the Activity Center, along with five recommendations for stormwater management. The scenarios and recommendations are guided by the existing plans and strategic vision for North Port.

Four Guiding Principles

The desired outcomes of the land use models are summarized in the four Guiding Principles on the following page.

Guiding Principles Icons

Throughout the document, we will use the Guiding Principles icons to represent which of the land use scenarios and recommendations support one or multiple of the Guiding Principles. We will use the abbreviation "GP", short for Guiding Principle throughout.



GP 1: Economic Development



GP 2: Placemaking



GP 3: Transportation



GP 4: Flood Mitigation

Guiding Principle 1: Economic Development



Develop a land use strategy focusing on mixed-use development that spurs economic development to attract visitors and provide employment, services, and amenities for North Port residents.

Guiding Principle 3: Transportation



Improve multi-modal transportation connectivity and access within and through the Activity Center.

Guiding Principle 2: Placemaking



Create a cohesive gateway district vision that establishes a sense of place for North Port residents and welcomes visitors.

Guiding Principle 4: Flood Mitigation



Reduce flooding risk and mitigate the cumulative stormwater impacts from existing conditions and anticipated development projects.

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The Gateway Activity Center assessment (see Appendix A) identified a variety of Gateway Activity Center development opportunities that can create benefits for North Port. The assessment also identified challenges that will need to be addressed in order to deliver those benefits. The recommendations in this Master Plan focus on alleviating the issues while taking advantage of the opportunities.

Opportunities

The following opportunities have been identified:

- » The Activity Center's location at the interchange and the imminent development of the hospital provide an opportunity to serve local goods and services needs through hospital- and highway-oriented development.
- » The utilities expansion taking place in the southern quadrants increases the parcels' development potential.
- » Locations are available on site and in the surrounding neighborhoods to create shared-use stormwater management infrastructure, such as ponds, that can double as neighborhood amenities.

- » The topography of the study area presents an opportunity to create a network of trails along waterways that can connect neighborhoods, parks, existing trails, and the Activity Center. This trail network can be implemented as part of new development and would allow for better public access to parks and other recreation opportunities on public land.
- » The FDOT safety work at the I-75 interchange, which includes signalization of the highway ramps, may create an opportunity to connect trails across Sumter Boulevard.
- » The signalization project also creates an opportunity for a gateway treatment across Sumter Boulevard, which could improve safety and create a sense of place for North Port and the Activity Center.
- » The expected level of development in the Activity Center could facilitate a Tax Increment Financing district (or similar tax benefit structure) to finance infrastructure improvements.
- » The future mixed-use area in the southern quadrant would support affordable housing for seniors or workers with proximity to the

hospital.

- » The hospital creates a strong opportunity to develop a hotel and other visitation uses, supported by the interstate and the existing market in North Port.
- » The Activity Center land could support light industrial and employment-intensive uses to create jobs.
- » Land that is conserved in the study area can be established as a natural environment that helps to manage stormwater and provides natural habitat for wildlife. These areas can also be leveraged for economic development through outdoor recreation.

Issues / Challenges

The following challenges, or issues, have been identified:

- » Most of the land within and surrounding the activity center is in a flood hazard zone, and was recently severely impacted by flooding in Hurricane Ian.
- » Existing single-family homes exist in areas where mixed-use or Activity Center development is desired, and will need to be considered in any redevelopment plans.
- » Land surrounding the Activity Center has been pre-platted for residential use, and parcels are owned by many different owners, many of whom are not local, making assembly of parcels for large projects difficult.

- » With the exception of the hospital, there is uncertainty surrounding the interest and feasibility of current development prospects.
- » The topography of the land, with its wetlands and waterways, as well as the current stormwater management system, creates a challenging landscape for building.
- » While water and sewer utilities are currently being installed in the parcels south of I-75, there are no plans to extend utilities to the parcels north of I-75.
- » The transportation network between the four quadrants of the interchange and the surrounding neighborhoods is lacking in connectivity.
- » The presence of an archaeological site on the northern Activity Center parcels creates additional development impediments.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Gateway Activity Center Areas

This section presents the recommendations for the Gateway Activity Center and surrounding study area. The study area, shown in the map below, is made up of the following pieces, based on North Port’s Future Land Use map:

- » The Core Activity Center – the five undeveloped parcels of land surrounding I-75.
- » The Northern Extension of the Activity Center – an existing residential area with few homes and a significant amount of vacant land that has been reclassified as Activity Center.
- » The Mixed-Use Area to the southwest of the Activity Center - an existing residential area with few homes and a significant amount of vacant land that has been reclassified as High-Density Corridor.

» The residential neighborhoods to the east of the Activity Center, which have not been reclassified and are planned to remain low-density residential.

This section presents three land use scenarios for the Core Activity Center. The three scenarios focus on possibilities for the undeveloped land at the interchange. In addition, the City of North Port has reclassified the neighborhoods to the north and southwest of the Activity Center for future growth, and these areas must be considered alongside the Core Activity Center. Unlike the five undeveloped parcels in the Core Activity Center, these areas have the additional challenge of pre-platted land with multiple owners. Therefore, the development of these areas is likely to occur after the Core Activity Center, as new development activates the area and creates demand for more opportunities. Separate

Gateway Activity Center Study Area



land use scenarios have not been developed for the Mixed-Use Area and the Northern Extension of the Activity Center because development depends on what occurs in the Core Activity Center.

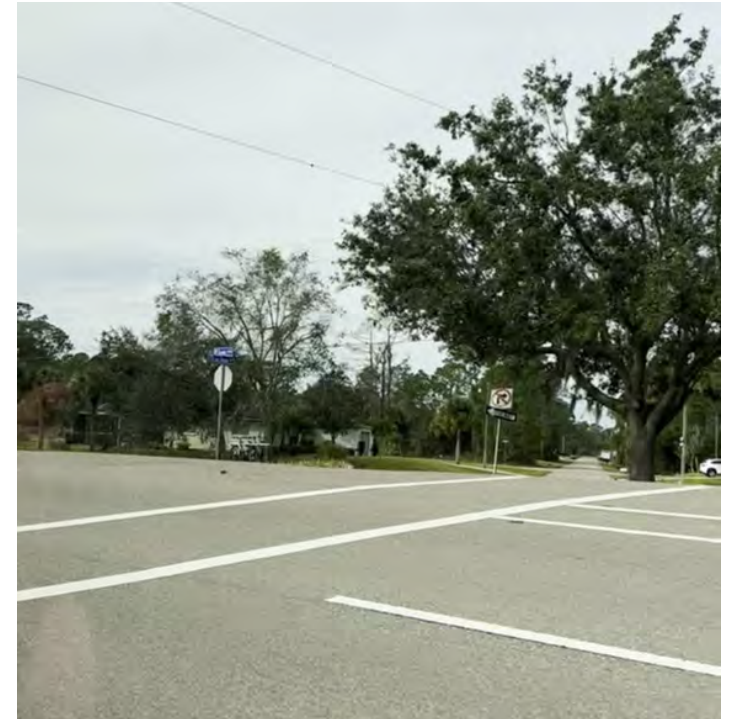
The land to the southwest of the Core Activity Center has been reclassified as High-Density Corridor. This area is expected to develop accordingly, with a mix of uses including housing, small office, and retail development that complement the activities in the Core Activity Center. Senior housing may be located here to take advantage of the proximity to the hospital; however, a large portion of this area is in the 100-year flood zone. Residential development will need to be particularly sensitive to flooding concerns and residents’ safety.

The land in the Northern Extension is almost entirely in the 100-year flood zone. Like the northern parcels in the Core Activity Center, development of this area will be challenging. However, as the Activity Center develops and creates demand for more activities at this interchange, the land to the north may be important to provide additional capacity for activities that complement those in the Core Activity Center.

Transportation Connections

One of the key challenges identified for the Core Activity Center is the lack of transportation connections for vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists between the four quadrants around the interchange and with the surrounding neighborhoods. The Recommended Transportation Connections map (on the following page) shows locations where connections can be added to make movement easier as the area begins to develop.

As the land around the interchange becomes developed, safe and easy ways to cross, enter, and exit Sumter Boulevard will need to be provided for all users, including vehicles and those on foot or on bike. It is recommended to place entrances to the two southern parcels directly across from each other, where there are existing stubs on Sumter Boulevard. This location is as far as practicable from the I-75 interchange, and minimizes conflict between the two intersections. Traffic signals are recommended at these intersections, along with highly visible crosswalks with all applicable



Existing intersection of Sumter Blvd. and Lady Slipper Ave.

safety enhancements, as cars coming from the interstate are likely traveling at a high speed. The same configuration is recommended for the two northern parcels, with a signalized intersection for both entrances placed as far north as practical. The approximate recommended locations of these intersections is shown with purple arrows on the map.

The neighborhoods to the east of the Core Activity Center currently have no direct connection to Sumter Boulevard. Section 53-3 of North Port’s ULDC requires that any development in the undeveloped eastern parcels must connect to these neighborhoods with two-lane vehicular bridges with sidewalks on both sides. The approximate location of these future connections is shown with orange arrows on the map.

The assessment found that there is a need for more pedestrian connectivity and bicycle facilities within the Gateway Activity Center and study area. Developing multimodal connectivity to historical, cultural, and recreational locations, including neighborhoods and environmental points of interest, is a priority of the City’s Strategic Vision Plan. One way the Vision Plan aims to improve the pedestrian experience is by designing and filling gaps identified in North Port’s sidewalk network beginning in Fiscal Year 2025. There are opportunities to work toward this Vision within the Gateway Activity Center.

Gateway Activity Center Recommended Transportation Connections.



The existing pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure in the study area consists of the sidewalks on both sides of Sumter Boulevard within the I-75 interchange and a sidewalk/shared-use path on both sides of Sumter Boulevard south of the I-75 interchange, near the North Port Park and Ride parking lot. However, there is a gap of about ¼ mile between the interchange sidewalks and the shared-use path. Closing that gap, as well as extending this off-street facility to the northern boundary of the Activity Center, would significantly expand bicycle and pedestrian access to the Activity Center and other places of interest in North Port. There is also an opportunity to create a new pedestrian connection for the neighborhood on the south end of the study area using an existing road stub on Lorri Circle. These connections are shown in yellow on the map.

Finally, the City of North Port created a master plan for the Myakkahatchee Creek Greenway, a proposed recreational corridor following the creek from Myakkahatchee Environmental Park in the north to Tamiami Trail in the south. This corridor would pass along the Activity Center's western edge, creating an opportunity for residents, workers, and visitors to connect to recreation along with better connectivity between the southwest and northwest quadrants of the Activity Center. This greenway corridor is shown in green on the map.

LAND USE SCENARIOS FOR THE CORE ACTIVITY CENTER

Purpose of the Scenarios

Scenarios A, B, and C explore potential land use possibilities within the undeveloped land at the core of the Activity Center. These parcels are likely to be the first to develop and will set the tone for the surrounding area.

The purpose of these scenarios is three-fold: present multiple ways that the undeveloped land around the I-75 interchange could be developed; evaluate the benefits and feasibility of each type of development; and form a basis for recommendations that will guide future development in the Activity Center. They consider the issues identified in the assessment, the guiding principles, and the City of North Port's vision for the Activity Center. Each scenario is evaluated by the following:



Guiding Principle 1: Economic Development How well the proposed scenario supports mixed-use development that spurs economic development, attracts visitors, and provides employment, services, and amenities for North Port residents.



Guiding Principle 2: Placemaking How well the proposed scenario creates a cohesive gateway district that establishes a sense of place.



Guiding Principle 3: Transportation How well the proposed scenario improves multi-modal transportation connectivity.



Guiding Principle 4: Flood Mitigation How well the proposed scenario reduces the risk of flooding and mitigates stormwater impacts.

Environmental Responsiveness How well the proposed scenario responds to the environmental challenges of the area and prioritizes environmental outcomes, such as conserving green space and preserving wildlife habitat.

Economic Return How well the proposed scenario is expected to drive economic development, create jobs, and generate tax revenue.

Development Feasibility The feasibility of the scenario in terms of cost, market demand, and stormwater considerations.

SCENARIO A: HOSPITAL-ORIENTED HIGH-INTENSITY DEVELOPMENT

Scenario Overview

This scenario is based on the Hospital-Oriented Development case studies explored in the assessment (see Appendix A) and represents a high level of development for this Activity Center. The pending Sarasota Memorial Hospital development at 4900 Sumter Boulevard can be a significant driver of future Gateway Activity Center growth. The case studies demonstrated that following the development of a new hospital, the surrounding area is commonly developed with uses that are complementary to the hospital and serve hospital patients, workers, and visitors.



In addition to the hospital itself, the uses considered in the Hospital-Oriented Development scenario are:

- » Hotel
- » Medical offices
- » Retail, including restaurants, pharmacy, and medical supply
- » Non-medical offices
- » Housing, especially senior housing

This scenario aligns with the guiding principles of economic development and economic return. However, it places a significant amount of impervious surface on the northern parcels, which are almost entirely in the AE flood zone. Because there is no opportunity for stormwater storage on those parcels, the costs to manage stormwater for those sites would be exorbitant and would likely involve large-scale mitigation. In addition, buildings would need to be designed to withstand flooding, and any residential included would need to be elevated.

Amendments needed for Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Regulations

No amendments are needed for this scenario. A base FAR of 1.0 for buildings in the activity center allows for tall buildings on parcels where impervious surface needs to be limited.

How This Scenario Supports Economic Development

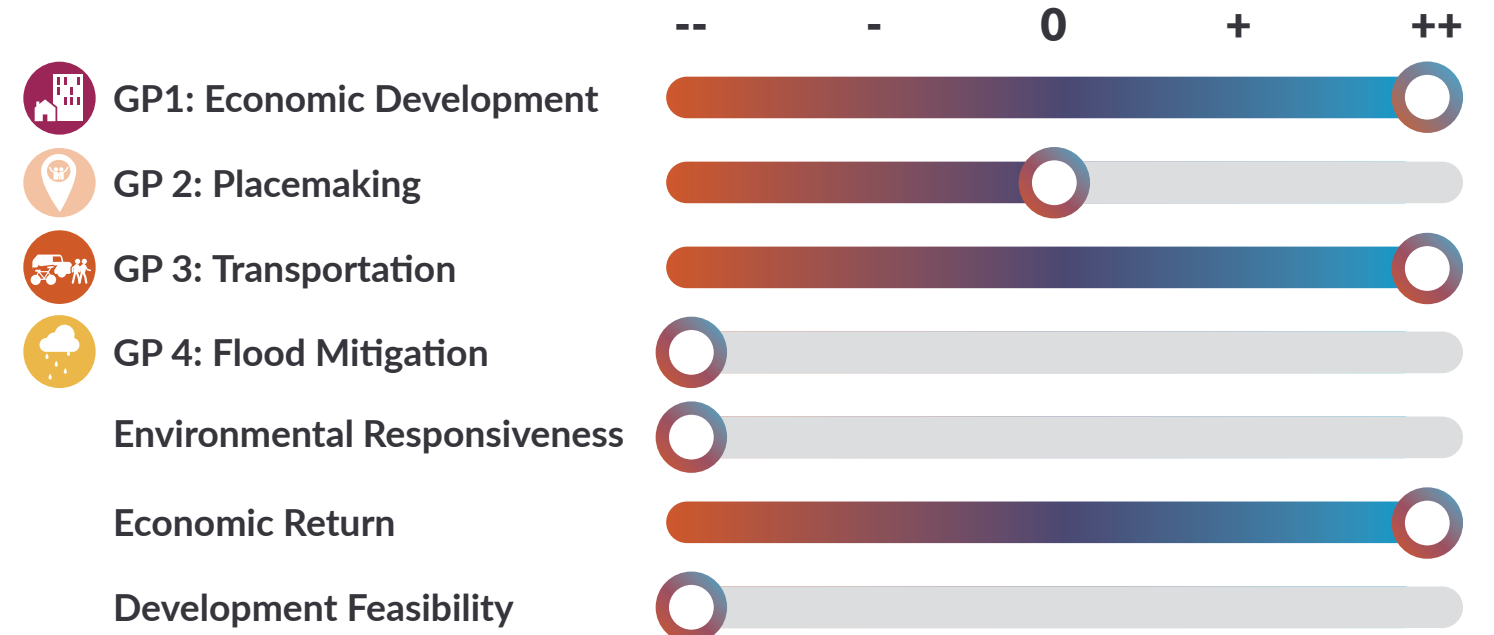
As demonstrated by case studies (see Appendix A), in addition to jobs directly created at the hospital, the attraction of complementary services and amenities (such as medical practices, pharmacies, retail outlets, dining options, and hotels), will create more job opportunities. These jobs would cater to all levels of education and skill, from healthcare professionals to roles in hospitality, retail, and other service industries, thereby diversifying employment opportunities and supporting the community's economic resilience. This "healthcare ecosystem" of complementary and downstream services can create a multiplier effect, stimulating further economic activity and attracting more investment into the area. Creating incentives for local entrepreneurs to open businesses in the Activity Center can boost placemaking and help keep money in the local economy.

Furthermore, hospitals draw visitors from outside the immediate area, including patients seeking specialized medical care and their families. This influx of visitors supports local businesses, increases demand for accommodations, and boosts

Scenario A: Hospital-Oriented High-Intensity Development Future Land Use



Scenario A: Hospital-Oriented High-Intensity Development Evaluation Criteria



spending in the area, further enhancing economic development. Lastly, the development surrounding the future hospital is expected to necessitate improvements in infrastructure, including roads, utilities, and transportation networks. These improvements will not only support the hospital and associated developments, but they will also enhance the overall livability and attractiveness of the entire area for future investment and growth.

How this scenario supports the Guiding Principles

The hospital-oriented development scenario will spur economic development by creating diverse employment opportunities. This development scenario will also create amenities for North Port residents in the form of expanded access to healthcare services and expanded dining and retail options. In addition, this scenario will attract visitors, primarily those seeking hospital care and their visitors, particularly if the future hospital develops a specialization.



SCENARIO B: RECREATION AND CONSERVATION

Scenario Overview

The Recreation and Conservation scenario is based on an environmental review of the study area, which identified significant stormwater management and flood mitigation concerns on several of the Activity Center parcels. In response, Scenario B is focused on limiting impervious surfaces while still creating an Activity Center that improves quality of life for North Port residents and generates economic activity.

This scenario still assumes that the hospital will develop as planned in the southeast quadrant. However, it is very possible that environmental management and mitigation challenges may deter interest in intensive building on the northern parcels. To maintain some productive and economically beneficial use of these parcels, this scenario envisions ways to activate these parcels with minimal impervious surface development.

The northwest parcel has the greatest environmental constraints, but it also has some of the highest quality natural features. These natural features could be leveraged into a conservation park with trails and other outdoor activities that connect to the Myakkahatchee Creek Greenway and the local trail system. There is also potential for a small-footprint retail business, such as kayak rentals or a food and drink stand with outdoor seating to serve greenway users.

The southwest quadrant is the next most likely place for development since a significant portion of it is outside the AE flood zone. This parcel could support a significant facility for indoor entertainment activities, such as concerts, sports, or other events that would make it a popular destination, attracting many attendees and visitors to the area. The quadrant also includes modest retail or office space to complement the hospital and indoor entertainment.

The northeast parcel is in the flood zone but could be activated with environmentally-sensitive outdoor recreational uses, such as ballfields.



Overall, this scenario would give a health and wellness focus to the Activity Center while acknowledging the economic implications of sites with major environmental development hurdles.

Amendments needed for Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Regulations

No amendments are needed for the suggested development in the southern parcels. Medical, office, and retail are all permitted uses. The base FAR of 1.0 for buildings in the Activity Center allows for tall buildings on the southeastern parcel as long as flood zone land is avoided. Recreational uses, including public, private, passive, and commercial, are also allowed, as well as conservation.

If serious conservation is to occur in the northwestern parcel, its zoning will need to be updated to ensure the land is protected.

How This Scenario Supports Economic Development

Establishing this activity center as a recreation and conservation focused area has potential to attract some visitors and contribute to North Port's economy, though to less of an extent than in Scenario A. The park and recreation facilities can attract locals and tourists, especially with connections to the existing trail and blueway network. An

Scenario B: Recreation and Conservation Future Land Use



attractive park and recreation amenities are also likely to boost property values in nearby residential areas and contribute to enhanced community resilience and an increased quality of life for residents.

This scenario will also result in jobs creation, though fewer than Scenario A. The hospital is still expected to bring a significant number of employment opportunities, complemented by retail and office space across Sumter Boulevard. In the northern parcels, maintenance and park management staff will be needed; for example, the City can explore the expansion of a blueway entry point where visitors can rent kayaks or canoes. Furthermore, a park could spur the creation of a range of business opportunities, such as equipment rentals, food and beverage sales, guided nature tours, an outdoor amphitheater, event planning, and space rentals.

How This Scenario Supports The Guiding Principles

This scenario focuses primarily on mitigating the flood risk by limiting the amount of impervious surface that would displace stormwater on the northern parcels. However, it still supports the other guiding principles by creating a Gateway district that can attract visitors and economic development through recreation. It leverages the area’s natural features and resources, improves quality of life, and increases property values in North Port.



Scenario B: Recreation and Conservation Evaluation Criteria



SCENARIO C: LOCAL ECONOMY AND ACTIVE ENVIRONMENTAL

Scenario Overview

This scenario has been developed as a middle ground between Scenarios A and B. The scenario still attempts to minimize impervious surface on the northern parcels, but takes a more active approach to the outdoor activities encouraged on those parcels.

All scenarios assume that the hospital will develop as planned in the southeast quadrant, but this scenario seeks to maximize economic development in the southwest parcel through the development of a mixed-use “Mini-Downtown” area concentrated around an internal main street. The southwest parcel would support commercial, retail, and residential uses. This type of development would attract local entrepreneurs and businesses, creating a resilient local economy through jobs creation and reinvestment, and could spur additional mixed-use development in nearby areas currently lacking commercial development. The scenario also includes building a new stormwater retention area that is purposefully designed as an attractive community gathering space, such as a pond with a multi-purpose trail surrounding it.

While Scenario B envisioned a more passive park on the northwest parcel, this scenario proposes an active park that includes low-impervious but economically oriented “adventure” activities that take advantage of the site’s trail network and blueways. Active parks can support recreation and stormwater management, bolster placemaking, and attract residents and visitors to the area.

The northeast parcel has many possible opportunities that prioritize both conservation of the natural environment and recreation. One option is outdoor recreation, such as ballfields or soccer fields. Another option is utilizing the open space as a high-end camping or “glamping” area, which could generate rental revenue. Both options would be complimentary to the northwestern and southwestern proposed uses.



Amendments Needed For Comprehensive Plan And Land Development Regulations

No amendments are needed for this scenario due to the suggested development in the southern parcels. Retail and residential are both permitted uses, as long as the residential portion of the mixed-use development does not exceed 65% of the buildings total FAR. The base FAR of 1.0 for buildings in the Activity Center allows for tall buildings on the southeastern parcel if flood zone land is avoided. Recreational uses, including public, private, passive, and commercial, are also allowed, as well as conservation. If serious conservation is to occur in the northwestern parcel, its zoning will need to be updated, ensuring the land is protected.

How This Scenario Supports Economic Development

Establishing this activity center as a recreation and economic area that is conservation-conscious has potential to attract visitors and contribute to North Port’s economy to an extent somewhere between Scenarios A and B. The park and recreation facilities can attract tourists, especially with connections to the existing trail and blueway network. An active

Scenario C: Local Economy and Active Environmental Future Land Use



Scenario C: Local Economy and Active Environmental Evaluation Criteria



park can market the town as a tourist attraction while also serving local residents. An engaging public use could promote foot traffic to the activity center and retain visitors for longer periods of time. These recreation amenities are also likely to boost property values in nearby residential areas and contribute to enhanced community resilience and an increased quality of life for residents.

Downtown-style development will attract businesses, resulting in jobs creation and economic reinvestment, especially if paired with incentives for local entrepreneurs. This scenario will support neighboring hospital and recreational uses by providing residents and visitors a place to shop, eat, and socialize.

The hospital is still expected to bring a significant number of employment opportunities, complemented by retail across Sumter Boulevard. In the northern parcels, maintenance and park management staff will be needed. Furthermore, recreation uses could spur the creation of a range of business opportunities, such as equipment rentals, food and beverage sales, guided nature tours, event planning, and space rentals.

How This Scenario Supports The Guiding Principles

This scenario focuses on mitigating the flood risk by limiting the amount of impervious surface that would displace stormwater on the northern parcels and managing stormwater through an active park



facility. However, it still supports the other guiding principles by creating a Gateway district that can attract visitors and economic development through recreation. Like Scenario B, it fully leverages the area's natural features and resources, improves quality of life, and increases property values in North Port.

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Consider the development of a park that doubles as a stormwater mitigation tool, with design features such as retention ponds and streams, underground channels, and a major box culvert system.

Sustainable design elements can provide improved stormwater mitigation and enhance the aesthetics of a future park. New and existing trees and other plants absorb rainwater during intense storms. A retention pond and creek can be employed to mitigate runoff and abate flooding, enhance water quality, filter pollutants from runoff, and provide a unique wildlife habitat. In addition, an underground filtration system can be developed to help alleviate water that overflows from the stream.



Cascades Park, via National Recreation and Park Association



Downtown Cary Park, via Town of Cary, NC

The Downtown Cary Park in Cary, North Carolina utilizes an upper retention pond and a winding creek that slows the water flow down as it moves into a middle pond. The water then cascades across a stone weir that aerates the water before it enters the largest, lowest pond.

Tallahassee's Cascades Park contains an attractive and effective stormwater management system consisting of a network of underground channels, box culverts, above-ground streams, and retention ponds. The park is purposefully designed to flood during major storm events and helps to mitigate runoff and absorb pollutants. The centerpiece of the park is its amphitheater, providing an outdoor venue that attracts a variety of artists and music lovers.

Establish a definitive plan for water and sewer extension north of I-75, involving assessments, planning, regulatory compliance, permitting, implementation, and management.

Establishing a definitive plan for water and sewer extension north of I-75 requires several actionable steps:

- a. Preliminary Assessment and Planning – This phase would include an assessment of the anticipated water and sewer needs, and site assessments to identify environmental sensitivities. The city should consult with environmental scientists, regulatory bodies, civil engineers, and other stakeholders to ensure a comprehensive approach.
- b. Environmental Impact Assessment – The city should determine how the proposed extensions could impact the environment and should identify measures to mitigate negative impacts to the greatest extent possible.
- c. Regulatory Approval and Permitting – The city should ensure all plans comply with environmental laws and land use regulations and should submit plans to relevant bodies for approval.
- d. Implementation Planning – The city should assist in developing construction plans, environmental management plans, and monitoring and contingency plans.

e. Long-Term Management and Monitoring – Lastly, the city should ensure that the water and sewer systems are managed sustainably. The performance and environmental impact should be closely monitored, and any identified adverse effects should be mitigated as necessary.

Consider applying for state and federal resilience grants to fund infrastructure improvements, such as RAISE and the Resilient Florida Program. Consider applying for federal Technical Assistance Innovative Finance Grants, economic development grants, and recreation development grants.

a. USDOT RAISE – Grants intended to support road, rail, and other transit projects, with funding priorities for projects that improve environmental sustainability, economic competitiveness, and quality of life.

b. Resilient Florida Program – Grants intended for projects that improve resilience to climate-related hazards, such as flooding and stormwater runoff. The funding supports the planning, design, and construction of infrastructure improvements that support resiliency goals.

c. Build America Bureau’s Innovative Finance & Asset Concession Grant Program – This program makes \$100 million available over five years to assist public entities in facilitating and evaluating public-private partnerships and exploring innovative financing and delivery opportunities for Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) eligible projects (roadways, bridges, and bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure).

d. FHWA’s Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program (ATIIP)- This funding is available for projects that will strengthen safety and improve bicycling, walking and access to public transit in communities across the country. As part of the program, FHWA will award competitive grants to help communities plan, design, or construct safe and connected active transportation networks such as sidewalks, bikeways, and trails that connect destinations such as schools, workplaces, residences, businesses, recreation areas and medical facilities within a community or metropolitan region.

e. Florida Small Cities Community Development Block Grant Program - grants for economic development and community revitalization projects, including infrastructure improvements.

f. U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance Programs – offer grants to help communities revitalize or develop their infrastructure to attract new businesses and diversify their economies.

g. Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program (FRDAP) – grants for developing land for public outdoor recreation purposes, including infrastructure improvements related to recreational facilities.

Construct a new gateway treatment (including signage, landscaping, decorative lighting, traffic calming, and other elements) across Sumter Boulevard south of I-75.

A gateway treatment for the Gateway Activity Center would create a classic, elegant, and memorable entrance into the city limits. Gateway treatments involve the use of design elements that welcome a visitor to an area and create a unique sense of place for a city or area. Gateway treatments typically include welcome signage, aesthetically pleasing landscaping and lighting, and distinctive branding, among other elements.

Gateway treatments enhance the walking environment and sense of community of a neighborhood or business district. They also function as a traffic calming strategy, alerting drivers they are entering a slower area. In addition to making the area safer for pedestrians and cyclists, slower speeds allow drivers to better take in the scenery of the activity center. To enhance the experience of visiting the Activity Center, the city should employ traffic calming measures on Sumter Boulevard such as reducing speed limits, narrowing lanes, and curb treatments. More information on these traffic calming strategies can be found below:

a. Lane narrowing reduces speeds and minimizes crashes on city streets by reducing the right of way. They also make drivers wary of traffic and adjacent users such as pedestrians or bicyclists.

One of the recommendations from the Global Designing Cities Initiative is to use the additional space for green infrastructure and/or pedestrian and bicycle facilities.

b. New intersections should be designed with narrow curb radii. Curb radii narrowing reduces vehicle turning speeds as well as the crossing distance for pedestrians. Tightening and/or reducing corner radii is an important step to take in creating safer and more compact intersections.

c. The National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) recommends combining stormwater management features, such as bioswales or rain gardens, with curb extensions to absorb rainwater and reduce the impervious surface area of a street. These stormwater management features can also visually enhance the area.

The gateway treatment could include landscaping with native plants and using a consistent font and branding on a welcome sign and signage throughout the activity center to develop a specific “gateway brand.” The Federal Highway Administration provides a variety of examples to consider when identifying a district, including welcome signs, flower planters, banners, decorative street lighting, unique street name signs, and other details to celebrate unique characteristics. Gateway treatment examples can be viewed on the next page, and include the following:

- » Ybor City in Tampa, FL utilizes unique architectural elements to create a beautiful gateway into the historic district.
- » The City of Lenior, NC incorporates landscaping in their gateway treatment, as well as lights to ensure the sign still captures attention at night.
- » San Pedro, CA utilizes consistent local branding in their gateway signage, helping to welcome visitors to the downtown.



Ybor City Gateway, via Karl Greeson



Lenior Gateway Sign, during the day (left) and at night (right), via City of Lenior, NC



San Pedro Gateway, via San Pedro Property Owners Business Improvement District/Integrated Engineering Management IEM

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1

Avoid/minimize development in the northern quadrants: As reflected in Table 2, essentially all the NW and NE quadrants are within an AE flood zone. Compensatory storage will need to be identified at off-site locations that are not within a FEMA flood zone. Most properties adjacent to the north quadrants are within a FEMA flood zone and are not suitable for stormwater storage.

Development in AE flood zones should be restricted to natural/environmental park areas with extremely limited impervious area. Any impervious area will require compensatory storage – cup for cup - that will be very challenging to accommodate with the Gateway Activity Center.

Recommendation 2

Avoid housing with the AE flood zones. This Gateway Activity Center should not be slated for any land use that includes housing. It may put residents and first responders at risk during a major flooding event.

Recommendation 3

Preserve wetlands to the extent practicable: Wetlands are a critical piece of “natural infrastructure” when dealing with stormwater. Wetlands can also be utilized as emergency overflows during periods of high water and heavy rainfall.

Preservation of wetlands and natural/environmental areas can be utilized as overflow area during flood events.

Recommendation 4

Any proposed development in the Gateway Activity Center should utilize an updated H&H model. An updated H&H model should be developed for the watershed that includes the Gateway Activity Center in a more widely used model format than has been previously used to model stormwater.

Recommendation 5

Maximize use of Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) where practicable within the Gateway Activity Center: GSI can be utilized to infiltrate rainwater into the ground at or near the location where it falls. It can also provide aesthetic appeal to the landscape. In the area of the Gateway Activity Center because of the hydric soil, GSI should not be utilized to address flooding issues during times of high-water tables and heavy rainfall.