



**DOWNTOWN**

**PALM HARBOR**

master plan

2020



## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

**A special thank you to the contributing efforts of:**

**DOWNTOWN PALM HARBOR FOCUS GROUP**

**DOWNTOWN PALM HARBOR MERCHANTS ASSOCIATION**



**PREPARED BY:**  
**PINELLAS COUNTY HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

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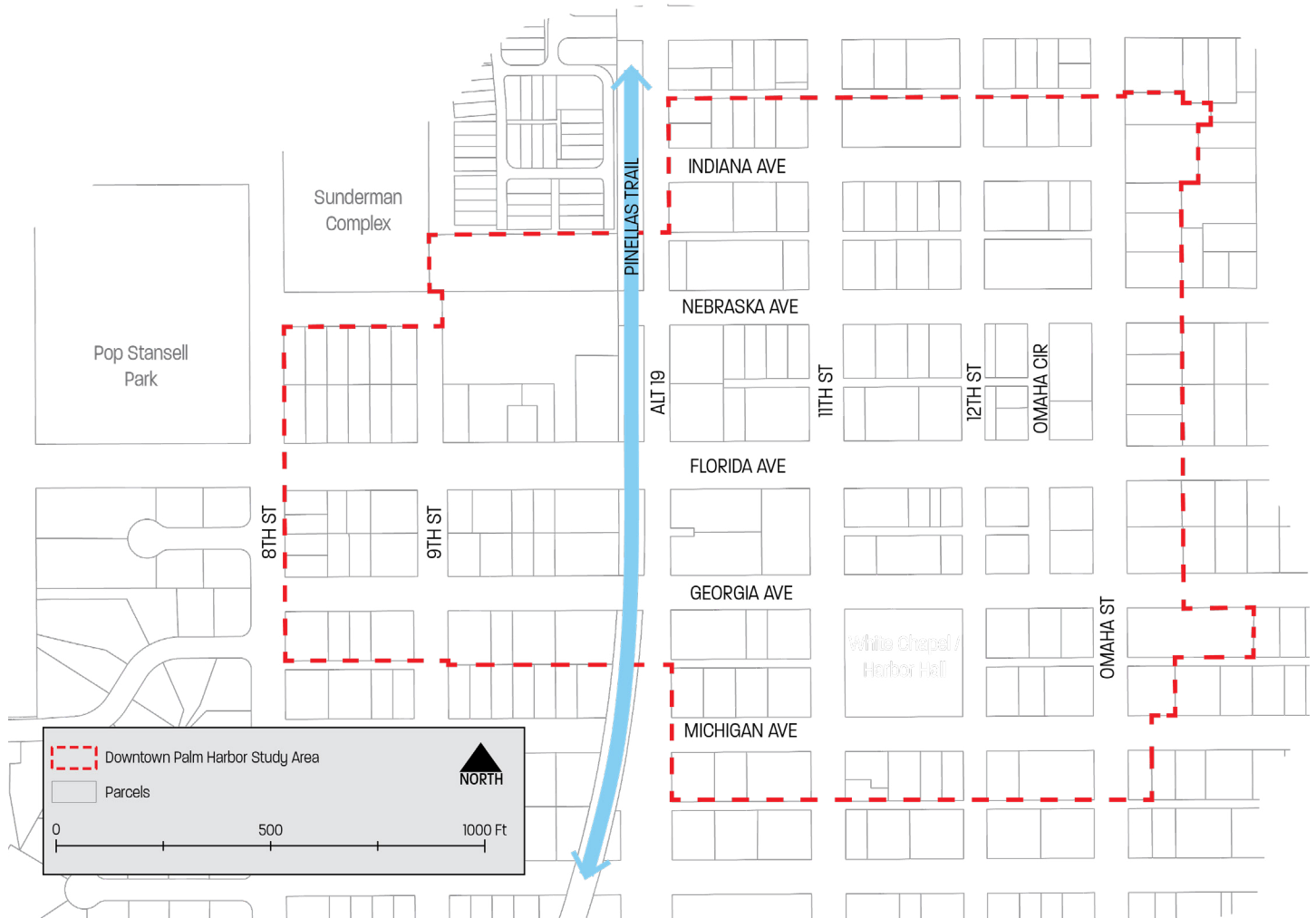
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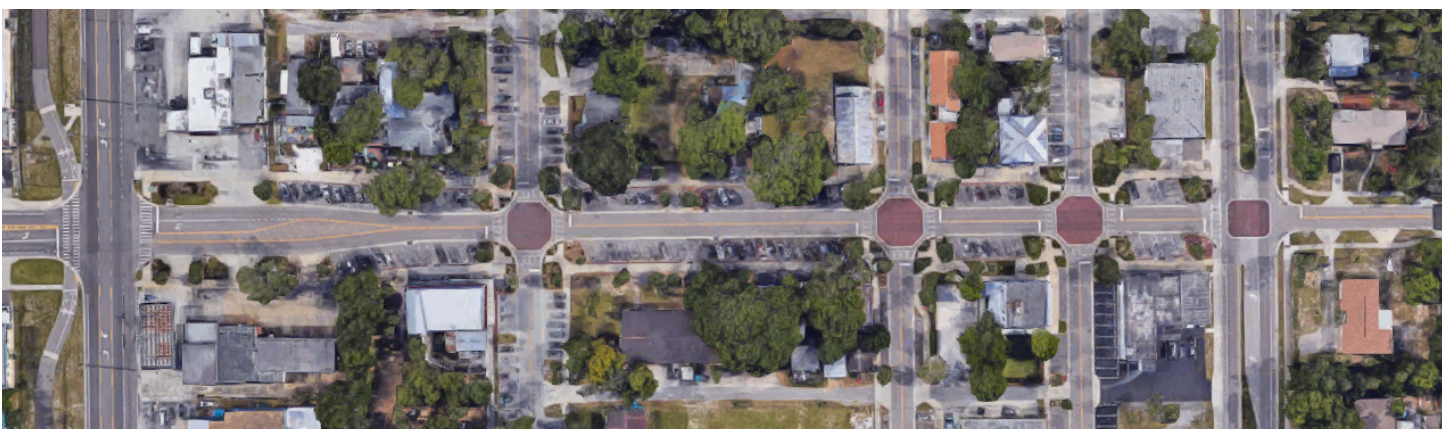


# INTRODUCTION

**P**alm Harbor is located in unincorporated Pinellas County, roughly three miles south of Tarpon Springs and two miles north of Dunedin; between the Gulf of Mexico to the west and Lake Tarpon to the east. The Downtown Palm Harbor study area captures approximately 64 acres. The downtown core is primarily situated between Alternate 19 (Alt 19) to the west and Omaha Street to the east, with the northern and southern boundaries at Indiana and Michigan Avenues, respectively. Florida Avenue acts as the community's quintessential 'main street'. The boundary extends 1/2 block to the north, south and east across Indiana Avenue, Michigan Avenue, and Omaha Street. The study area also extends along Florida Avenue west across Alt 19 as it connects over to the area's recreational facilities. (See Figure 1.1)



**FIGURE 1: DOWNTOWN PALM HARBOR STUDY AREA**







In 1994, community members recognized the need to create an attractive downtown that would maintain the character and heritage of the area. Partnering with the Pinellas County Planning Department, these stakeholders created the Downtown Palm Harbor Historic District (DPHHD). Between 1998 and 1999, collaboration between the key members of the Downtown Palm Harbor Merchant's Association, Palm Harbor Historical Society, Downtown Palm Harbor property owners, Palm Harbor residents and Pinellas County resulted in the creation of a Main Street Program, a state and national sponsored program whose purpose was to help small communities revitalize their downtown commercial districts. The Old Palm Harbor Main Street Program (OPHMS) was established in 1999 and remained active until 2013. The OPHMS worked with the County to help create a plan for the Downtown. In December of 2001, Pinellas County adopted the Downtown Historic Palm Harbor Master Plan<sup>1</sup>, which outlined a series of recommendations for improvement within the downtown, resulting from a history of past investment in the community and a public participation process, including design workshops to identify specific community needs.

In 2002, the Old Palm Harbor-Downtown Zoning District (OPH-D) was adopted, providing design standards, as well as development regulations that encourage density and compatible development patterns. The pedestrian experience and urban form were the overarching themes considered in the process of creating the design standards that supplement the Land Development Code regulations.

Since the time of initial adoption of the 2001 Plan, two amendments<sup>2</sup> were made; the first, in 2012 adding a transfer of development rights (TDR) provision in the downtown; and the second, in 2015 amending the permitted uses in the downtown to allow for accessory outdoor sales and the addition of two permitted uses - artisan establishments and alcoholic beverage production facilities. Ultimately, the Plan outlines a series of improvements for the downtown relating to roadway and parking improvements; drainage and utilities; streetscape design and amenities; and Land Development Code revisions that could support revitalization.

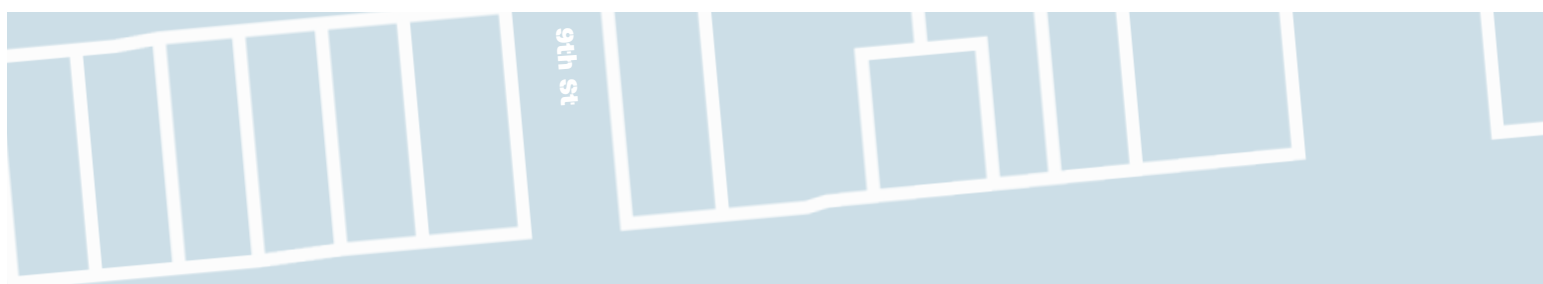
<sup>1</sup> Ordinance No. 01-85; December 18, 2001

<sup>2</sup> Ordinance No. 12-16 and 15-07, respectively

As displayed in **Table 1**, many of these initial recommendations have been completed, while others were never fully realized. With much of the initial of the Master Plan addressed, County staff revisited the community to identify the latest issues and opportunities within the downtown.

**TABLE 1: 2001 MASTER PLAN IMPLEMENTATION STATUS**

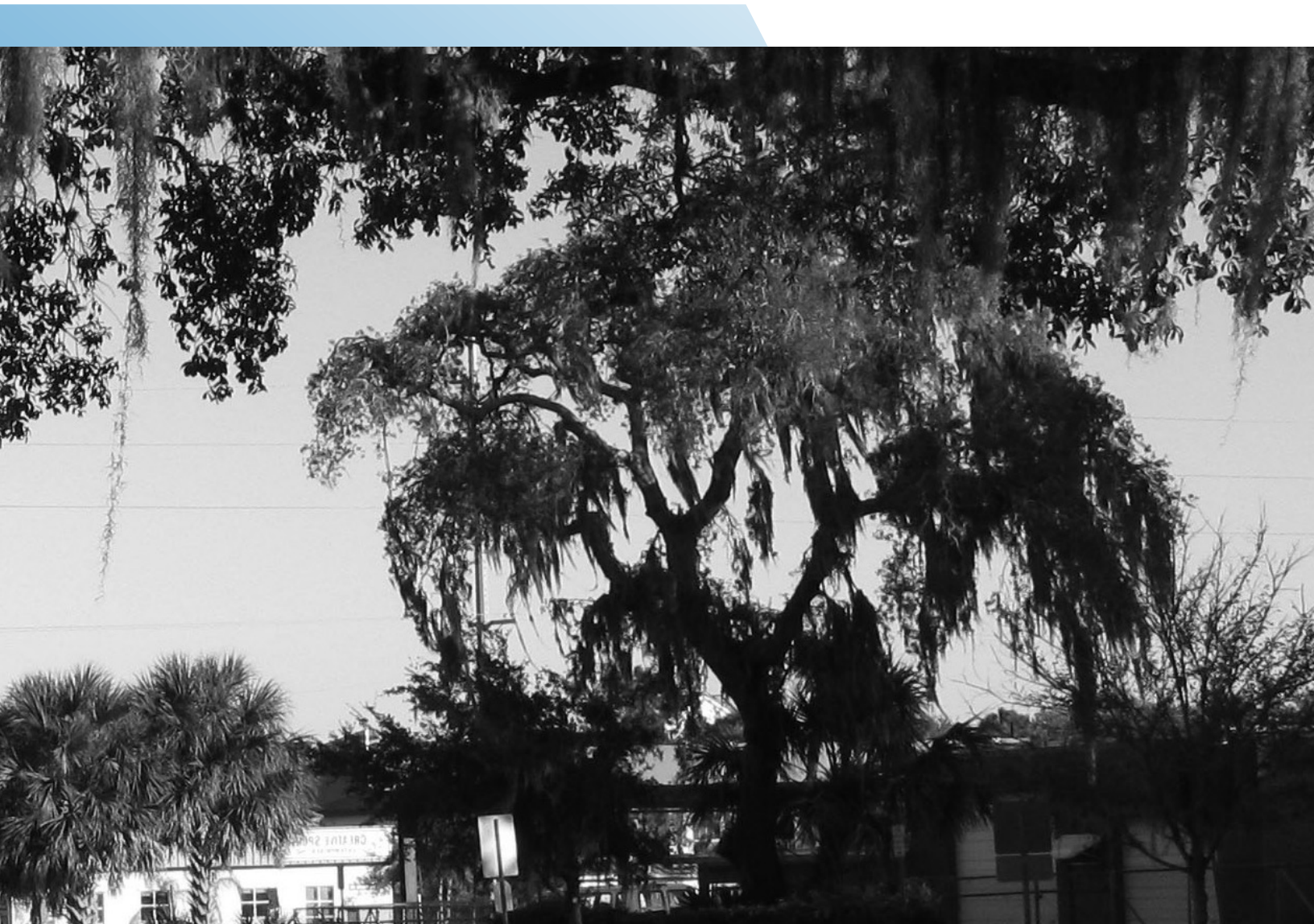
OPPORTUNITY	IMPLEMENTED
<b><i>Roadway and Parking</i></b>	
Urban cross-section on Florida Avenue	Yes
General street improvements as needed (full/partial reconstruction; widening; resurfacing)	Yes
Pave unpaved alleys	Partly
Paved, striped, and up-to-Code parking spaces at Church	Yes
Alt 19 and Florida Ave. intersection reconfiguration and signalization	Partly
<b><i>Drainage and Utilities</i></b>	
New drainage system in coordination with CR1 reconstruction	Yes
Closed sewer system in coordination with Florida Ave. reconstruction	Yes
Placement of underground utilities along Florida Ave.	Yes
<b><i>Downtown Streetscape Design and Features</i></b>	
Change Florida Ave. right-of-way cross-section (angled parking; 12' drive aisle; widened pedestrian corridor; street trees; congregation / plaza areas; event space; pedestrian scale; street front commercial exposure)	Partly
Installation and maintenance of street lights; establishment of street lighting district	Partly
Pedestrian crossing signalization and pedestrian-scale lighting	No
Installation of streetscape furniture, landscaping, and special features (Street icons and markers that emphasize civic pride; transit stops; benches; special pavement features in traditional sidewalk areas; trash receptacles; ornamental benches; bike racks; water fountains) along Florida Ave. corridor	Partly
Potential architectural gateway features that are historically relevant to Palm Harbor (train depot; significant trees; intersection markers)	Partly
<b><i>Downtown Revitalization Code</i></b>	
Amend requirements to allow for: reduced setbacks; reduced parking; reduced stormwater; customer-oriented uses; first floor commercial and personal service uses b/w Nebraska Ave and Georgia Ave; application of historic guidelines throughout zoning district	Yes
Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs) Criteria to allow for redistribution of development rights within the Old Palm Harbor East Sub-District	Yes



INTENT OF RECOMMENDATION	NOTES
To support proposed streetscape; curb and gutter; ADA compliance; wider sidewalks; defined travel lanes; striped parking spaces	
General upkeep and to provide additional parking opportunities	
To provide additional parking opportunities	Some have been paved; some have crushed shell
To improve safety for pedestrians, trail users and cars; to provide a gateway.	Reconfiguration has been completed; it was found by FDOT that signalization was not warranted based on traffic volumes.
To improve stormwater management	Seen as a development incentive since improved conditions would minimize need for individual on-site stormwater management facilities; improves compact walkable design
To improve aesthetic character; to protect from natural disasters	
To build a pedestrian-friendly streetscape	Most improvements have been made; Plaza areas and outdoor event space not installed
To improve safety and pedestrian experience	Street Lighting District not established; partial lighting installation has occurred
	Pedestrian crosswalks installed
	Most of these amenities have been provided
To create an identifiable gateway	Gateway art pieces have been installed at intersection of Alt 19 and Florida Ave; does not include historic feature
To establish a compatible development pattern based on the historic lot pattern and existing urban design features	Focuses on the inherent compact urban, walkable, mixed-use development pattern
To provide opportunities for increased densities	







# 2 EXISTING CONDITIONS

The 2001 Plan recognized the eclectic nature of the downtown and attempted to build on those characteristics and identify projects that addressed the area's character and improved the urban form. Many of the improvements that have been made in the downtown came out of that Plan and can be seen in the community today. The following summary outlines the existing conditions of Downtown Palm Harbor.

## STREET NETWORK & PEDESTRIAN AMENITIES

Downtown Palm Harbor is adjacent to several transportation corridors, including Alternate 19 (Alt 19) and Omaha Streets (aka County Road 1), which act as the primary north-south corridors for the area. Alt 19 provides direct access to popular nearby community Tarpon Springs to the north and Dunedin to the south. (See Figure 2)

Nebraska Avenue serves as the area's primary east-west connection between Alt 19 and a major regional thoroughfare US 19; however, this is often only convenient for those who travel north onto Alt 19 from Nebraska Avenue. Due to traffic volumes and the lack of signalization at this intersection, it can be difficult to make a left from Nebraska Avenue onto Alt 19 to travel south. Florida Avenue, which is another east-west route, acts as the downtown's walkable 'main street'.

Since Florida Avenue had not historically aligned across Alt 19, the 2001 Plan called for the reconfiguration of Florida Avenue, which has since been completed. It also called for Florida Avenue to be a signalized intersection; but at the time it was being considered, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) determined signalization was not warranted based on traffic volumes.

The surrounding residential neighborhoods are connected to downtown with a gridded street pattern. The grid structure and the existing sidewalk system enhance the urban character of the area and support walking. While the sidewalk network is mostly connected, there are gaps. There are a number of streets in the downtown that benefit from alley access, many of which were paved as a result of the 2001 Plan. This access is often used for deliveries of goods and rear parking for homes and businesses.

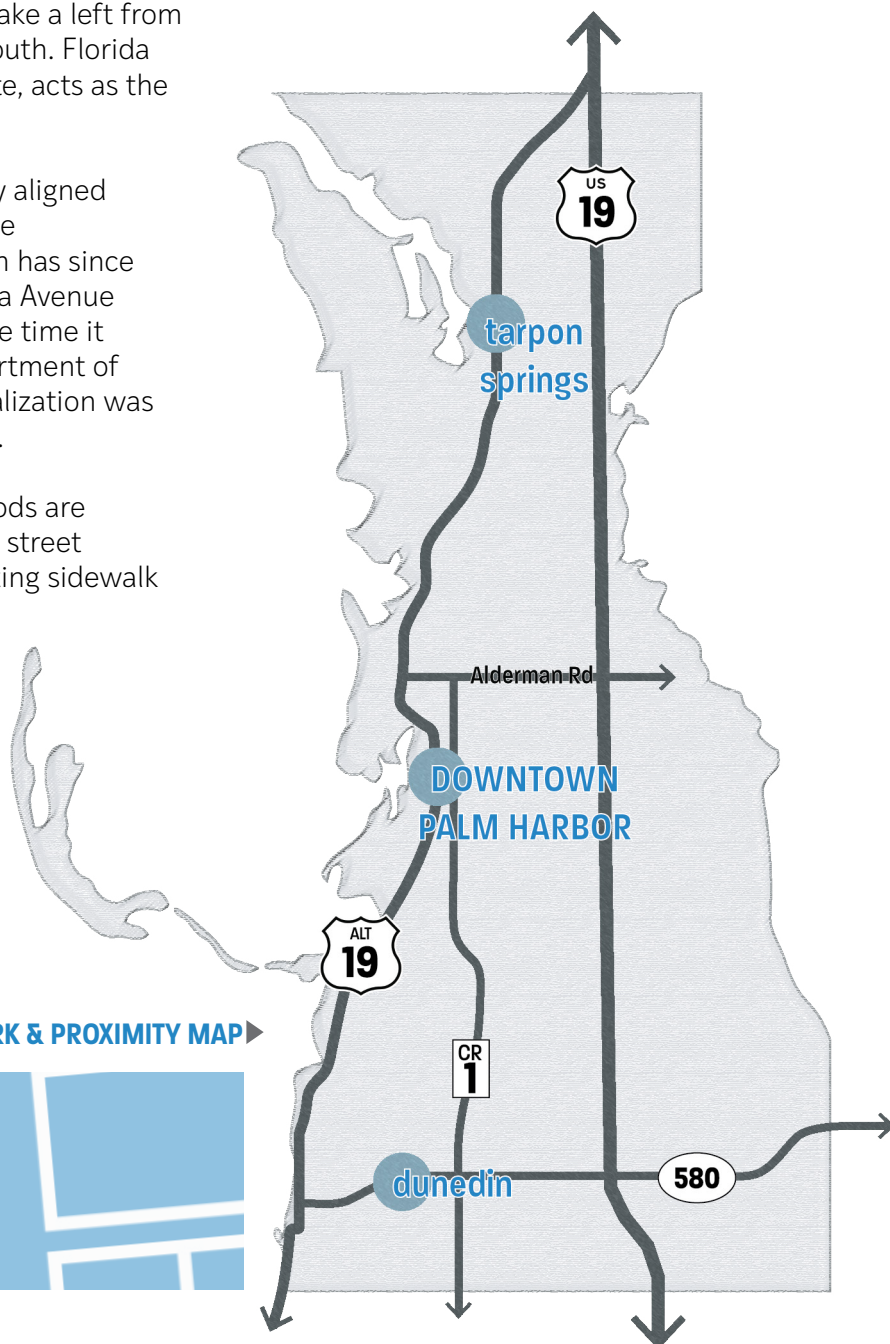


FIGURE 2: STREET NETWORK & PROXIMITY MAP





The 2001 Plan described the area streets as lacking curbing, creating a ‘speedway’ and unsafe conditions for pedestrians. Travel lanes were not delineated and the parking layout was informal; having unstriped parking spaces made up of a combination of shell, dirt, asphalt, and grass. As a result of the 2001 Plan, local streets were improved with defined travel lanes. Rights-of-way were improved, especially along Florida Avenue, with crosswalks to improve pedestrian safety; landscaping and curb cuts were added, and on-street parking spaces added parking to the downtown.

Streetscape furniture was installed along Florida Avenue. Ornamental benches, bike racks, trash receptacles and light fixtures have all been added as a result of the 2001 Plan. The drainage system was upgraded to improve stormwater management; and power and telephone utilities were placed underground along Florida Avenue to improve aesthetics and protect against natural disasters. All of these improvements have helped to enhance the downtown’s urban character. It should be noted, however, that many of the adjacent streets surrounding Florida Avenue continue to lack lighting and pedestrian amenities.



## REGULATING DISTRICTS

The core of Downtown Palm Harbor, along with two non-contiguous parcels located along Florida Avenue west of Alt 19, are subject to the Old Palm Harbor Zoning District (OPH-D), which follows the same boundary as the established Activity Center, is split into two sub districts: East and West. The East Sub District is located east of Alt 19, and makes up the core of the downtown. It translates to what is essentially nine total blocks. The West Sub District is located west of Alt 19, and is limited in size incorporating only seven parcels. The OPH-D zoned parcels have an Activity Center future land use classification.

The remaining parcels within the study area, located outside of OPH-D represent a mix of residential, commercial and employment zoning districts. These parcels have correlated future land use designations of Residential Urban, Residential/Office/Retail, Residential Office Limited, General Commercial, Employment, and Institutional. Figures 3 and 4 and Appendix 7.4 provide the complete listings of designation by parcel.

The Downtown Palm Harbor Historic District (DPHHD) covers roughly 25 acres of land or approximately eight blocks, and includes a mix of contributing and noncontributing structures. Contributing structures are recognized as having some level of historic significance. All other structures are considered noncontributing, or not possessing historical significance but are located within the historic district, thus still subject to the historic district design guidelines. The majority of the structures are non-contributing. Only nine structures are identified as contributing, and yet all are subject to adopted design guidelines.

A unique characteristic about Downtown Palm Harbor is that no single architectural style has historically taken precedence, and in fact the overall style is more eclectic in nature. When the County approved the area as a historic district in 1994, the Board of County Commissioners also passed a resolution establishing the Old Palm Harbor Design Review Manual. The design guidelines that are outlined in that document are intended to connect common architectural elements and characteristics, but often these commonalities do not exist in a single structure. This creates a challenge for Pinellas County when trying to enforce these guidelines because no specific style prevails, and is therefore open to subjective interpretation. Most design standards use language that states changes to existing structures or new construction should be similar to that on contributing structures, which again, in Downtown Palm Harbor varies widely. The historic district was created to preserve the “sense of place” through scale and the relationship of the buildings to the street and each other, the general mix of uses, and special character.

What adds confusion to these two layers of regulation is the inconsistency in which properties are subject to each district. As shown in Figure 5, some parcels within the Old Palm Harbor zoning district are subject to the historic overlay while others are not. Conversely, the majority of the historic district parcels are within the Old Palm Harbor zoning district, while a few, fronting on Alt 19, are subject to a different zoning district. These inconsistencies, combined with the challenge of implementing the Historic Design Review Manual results in confusion in the overall approval process within the downtown.







FIGURE 3: ZONING MAP (2018/2019)





**FIGURE 4: FUTURE LAND USE MAP (2018/2019)**

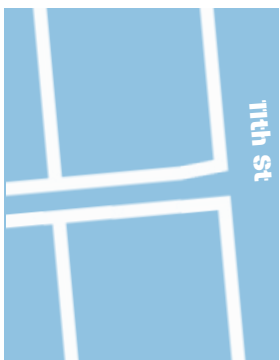




FIGURE 5: REGULATING DISTRICT MAP (2018/2019)

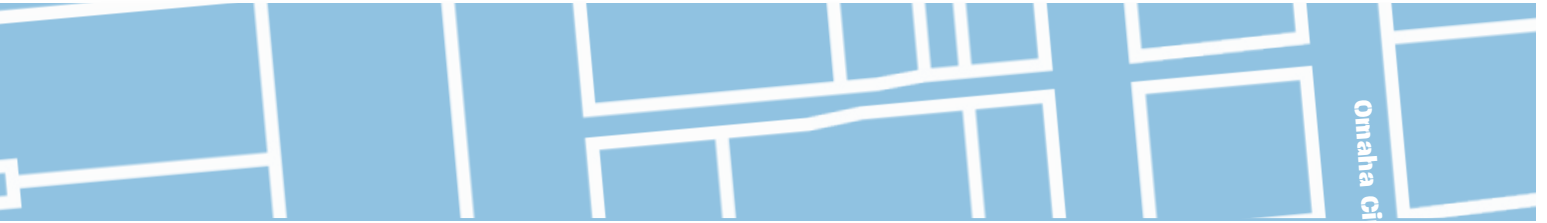




**FIGURE 6: REGIONAL DRAINAGE PLAN MAP**

A portion of the downtown is also subject to a regional drainage plan. Those properties that are located within that boundary (See **Figure 6**) are not required to provide on-site stormwater treatment or attenuation. Properties that fall outside of the boundary are required to meet the County’s drainage standards.





There are several properties west of Alt 19 that are located within the Coastal High Hazard Area (CHHA), most of which are west of 9th Street as it relates to the Downtown Palm Harbor Activity Center. (See Figure 7). The CHHA is the area defined by the Sea, Lake and Overland Surges from Hurricanes (SLOSH) model to be inundated from a category one hurricane, as reflected in the most recent Regional Evacuation Study, Storm Tide Atlas. In order to minimize storm-related impacts, existing residential densities will be maintained unless mitigation strategies are deemed appropriate and are approved. Downtown Palm Harbor and other affected areas throughout Pinellas County should continue to be considered as the County updates Comprehensive Plan policies associated with the CHHA and sea level rise.

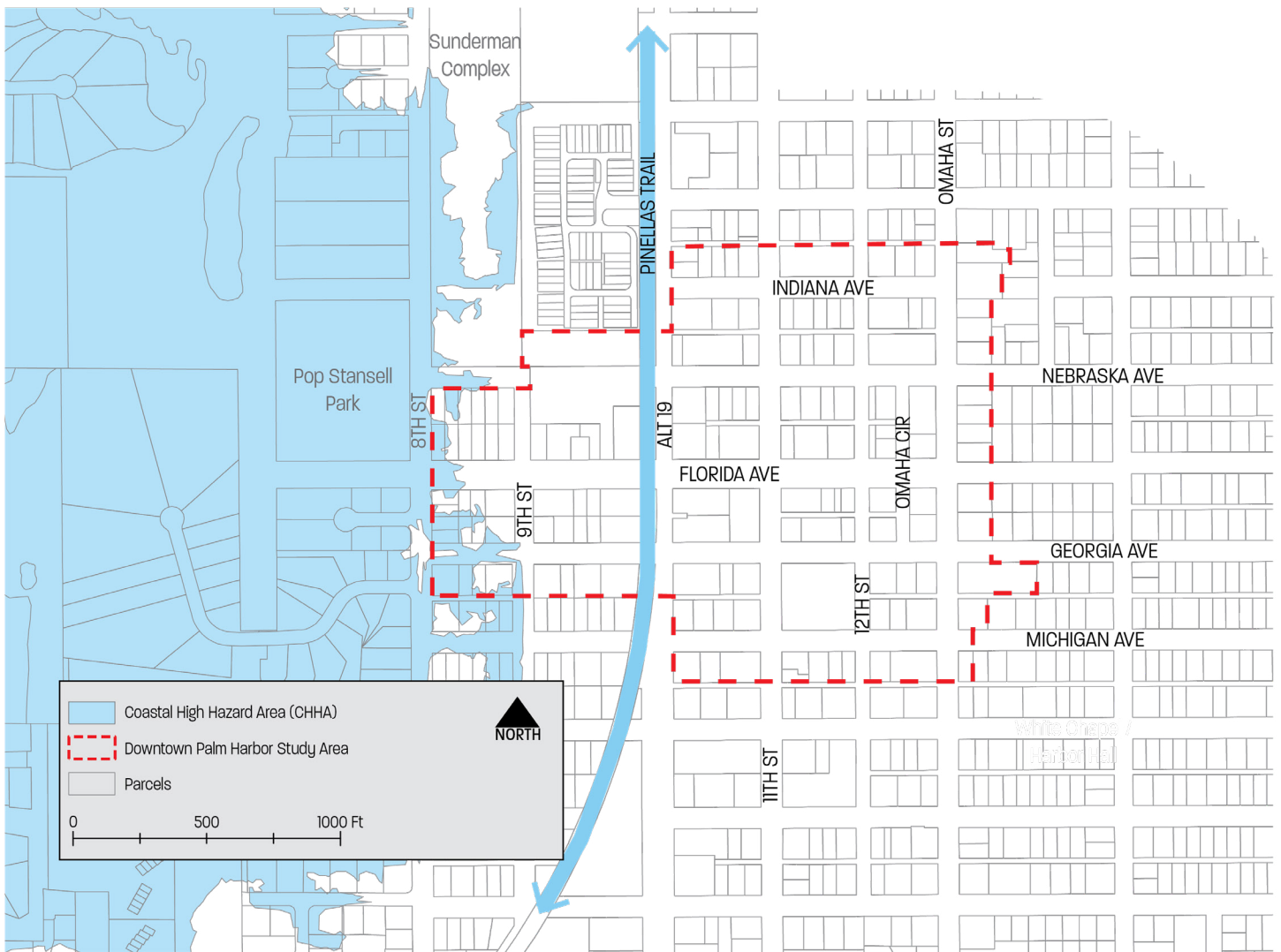


FIGURE 7: COASTAL HIGH HAZARD AREA



## EXISTING LAND USE (2018/2019)

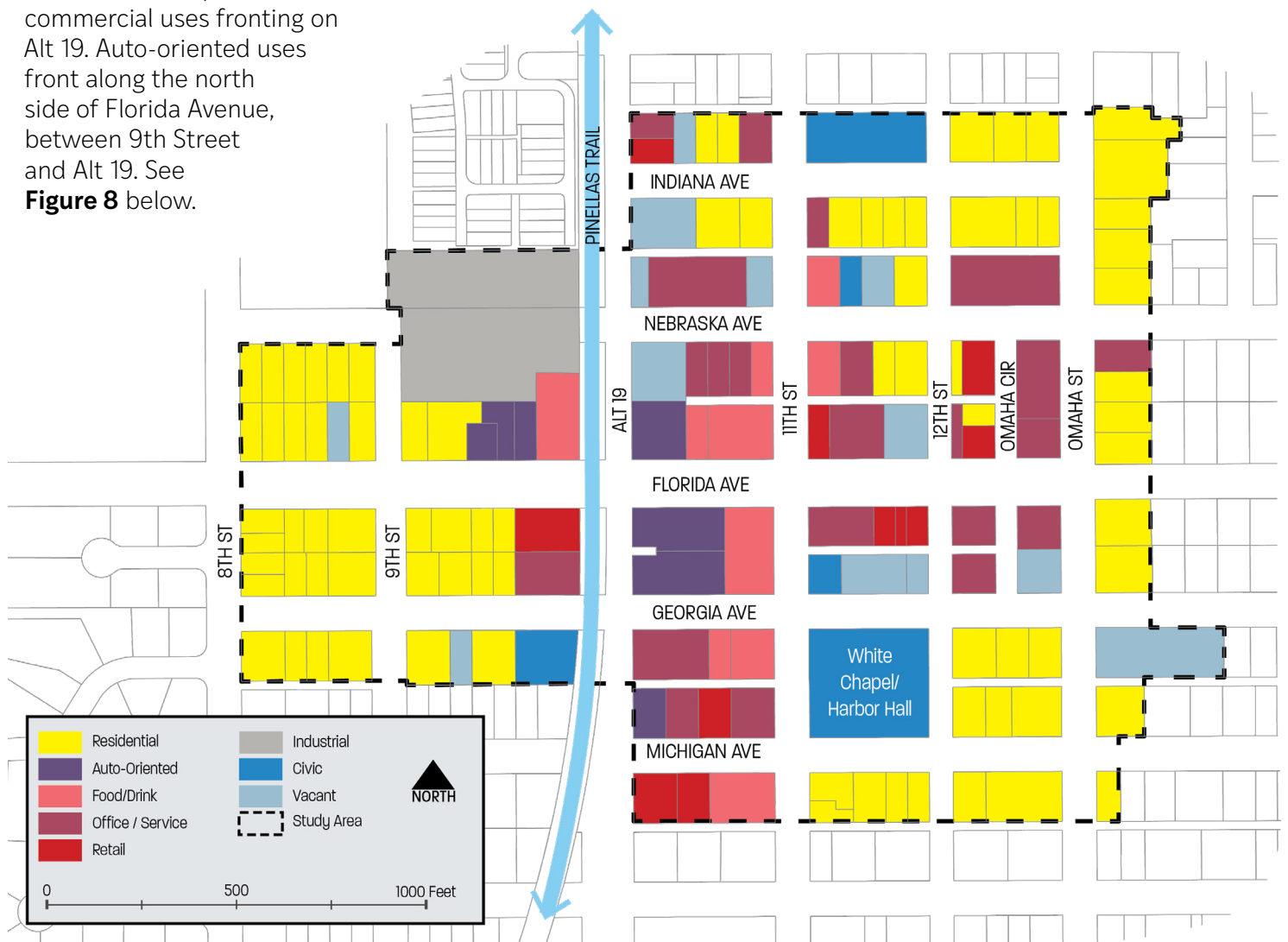
The primary distinction between the OPH-D East and West Sub Districts as it relates to permitted land uses, is that the East Sub District is encouraged to have a mix of uses, allowing for a variety of residential, commercial, and public/semi-public uses. Alternatively, the West Sub District is more residential in character, with limited non-residential uses permitted as-of-right. The following table (**Table 2**) outlines the permitted uses within the downtown OPH-D zoning district.

**TABLE 2: OLD PALM HARBOR - DOWNTOWN DISTRICT (OPH-D) PERMITTED USES\***

PERMITTED*	OPH - EAST	OPH - WEST
<b>Residential / Lodging</b>		
Single-Family		X
Duplex; Triplex	X	X
Multi-Family	X	X
Home Occupations	X	X
Accessory Dwelling Units	X	X
Bed and Breakfasts	X	X
<b>Commercial</b>		
Alcoholic Beverage Production Facility	X	
Artisan Establishment	X	
Bank Facilities (Drive-Throughs Permitted)	X	
Day Care Center	X	X
Eating / Drinking Establishment	X	
Medical Clinic	X	
Medical / Dental Offices	X	
Personal Services	X	
Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	X	X
Retail / Commercial	X	
Studios / Galleries	X	X
Theaters	X	
Veterinary Clinic	X	
<b>Public / Semi-Public</b>		
Church	X	
Government & Community Building / Uses	X	
Parks & Related Uses	X	X
Parking Lots / Structures	X	
School	X	

\* See Land Development Code for specific criteria

Currently, the core downtown does in fact have a mix of uses throughout the East Sub-District, with an existing mix of restaurants, personal services, artist studios, civic uses and professional offices. There are also residential uses that are primarily focused along Indiana Avenue at the northern boundary of the district, and at the intersection of Nebraska Avenue and 12th Street. While both sides of Indiana Avenue are primarily residential in nature, it also includes a church to the north and commercial use to the south at the east intersections. The south side of Michigan Avenue and east side of Omaha Circle are also primarily occupied with residential uses, but include small office businesses. A mix of auto-oriented and commercial uses front along the east side of Alt 19. The parcels west of Alt 19 are primarily residential with permitted industrial and commercial uses fronting on Alt 19. Auto-oriented uses front along the north side of Florida Avenue, between 9th Street and Alt 19. See **Figure 8** below.



**FIGURE 8: EXISTING LAND USE (2018/2019)**

## RECREATION FACILITIES / COMMUNITY EVENT SPACE

The Fred E. Marquis Pinellas Trail, which extends the entire length of the County and north into Pasco County, runs parallel to Alt 19. The trail's proximity to the downtown core is a significant asset to the community. Yet, as this important regional connector attracts residents and visitors from all over the area, the benefit to the downtown is somewhat minimized since there is limited opportunity to safely cross Alt 19 into the downtown. A mid-block crossing has been installed by FDOT to help alleviate this issue, but they continue to look at other opportunities to improve this connection.

Also situated west of the downtown core, across Alt 19, Pop Stansell Park and the Sunderman Complex offer great recreational opportunities. Pop Stansell Park is located at the corner of 8th Street and Florida Avenue. The park is approximately five acres in size and offers residents a picnic shelter, band shell, water launch, and fishing pier. The launch is in need of some repair after years of continued use. The Sunderman Complex offers baseball fields, an area to play soccer, batting cages and a fully-covered hockey rink.

The 2001 Plan identified a need for plazas and additional event spaces within the heart of the downtown. This desire was partially met by the construction of Harbor Hall, located adjacent to the historic White Chapel at the intersection of Georgia Avenue and 12th Street. This facility is used for public and private events and has been a useful resource for the community.

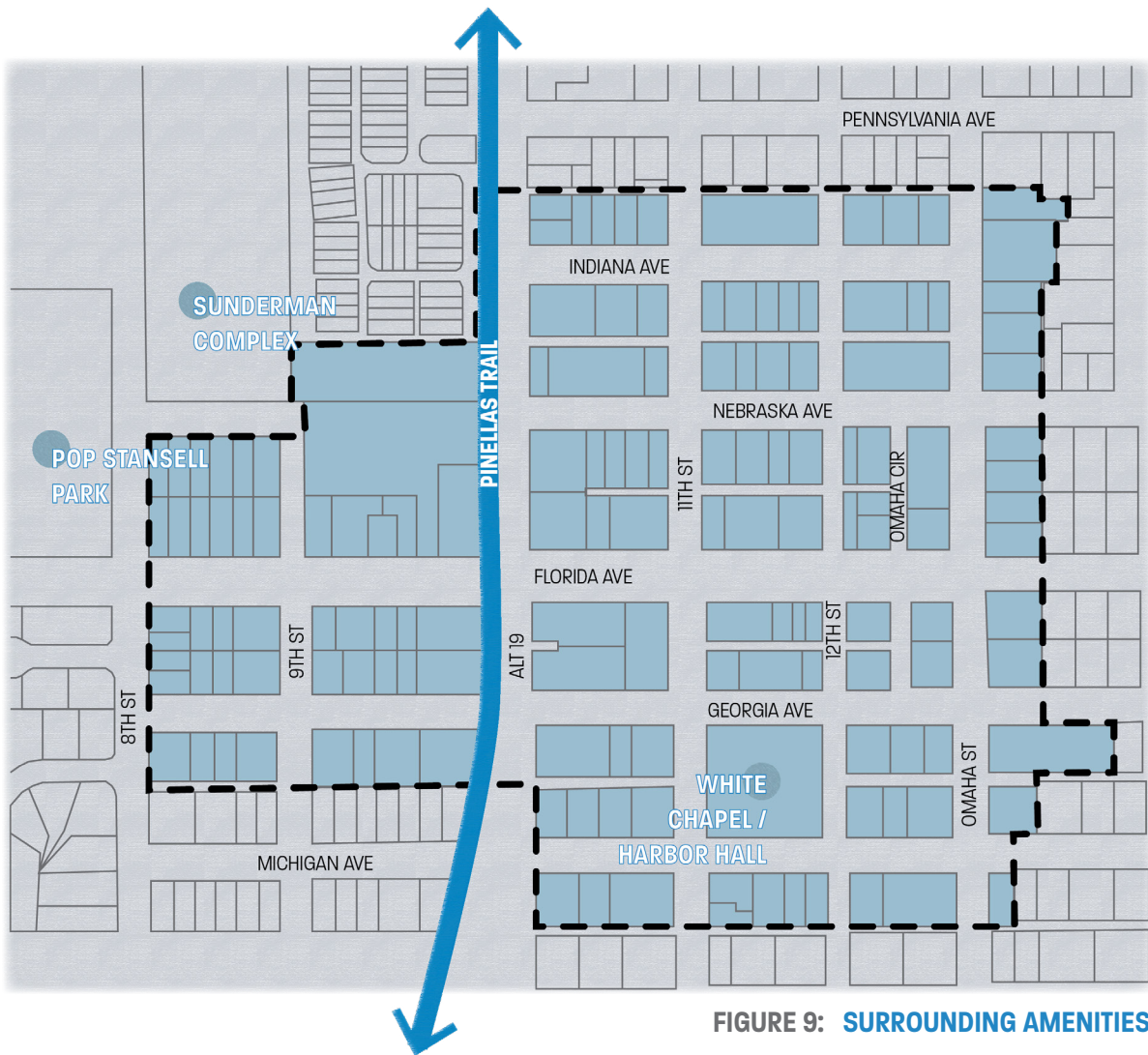
The White Chapel/Harbor Hall campus is important to the downtown, not only because it serves as an important community event facility, but its large 73-space parking lot provides free parking for visitors to the downtown, supplementing the primarily on-street public parking and private parking facilities within the downtown.

Downtown Palm Harbor has an active community that comes together through annual events and festivals, attracting visitors from outside the immediate community. Often these events occur on Florida Avenue, closing off area streets to auto traffic, transforming the corridor into an active public event space.





**Figure 9** below identifies where each of these facilities are located in relation to the overall Downtown study area.



**FIGURE 9: SURROUNDING AMENITIES**

### COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Multiple organizations serve the downtown. The Palm Harbor Merchants Association is a non-profit organization that consists of business and property owners in the downtown. They focus on the branding and marketing for the area, along with promoting economic development. The Greater Palm Harbor Area Chamber of Commerce is another organization that helps with encouraging economic development in the downtown. They play a role in local government and serve active partners throughout the area with benefits, discounts, and opportunity. Their mission is to promote an active partnership and support, educate and advocate for the community.

The Palm Harbor Community Services Agency, Inc. (PHCSA) was created by ordinance in 1985 to provide library and recreation services to the residents of the Palm Harbor Community Services District, which was established as a municipal services taxing unit (MSTU).<sup>3</sup> In Downtown Palm Harbor specifically, PHCSA operates the Harbor Hall facility, and manages the Sunderman Complex and Pop Stansell Park.

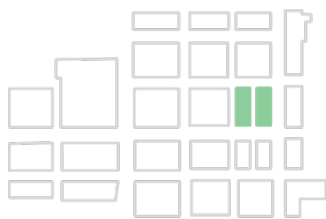
<sup>3</sup>Pinellas County Ordinance 85-28







3



# COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

The County worked with the community to identify current issues and concerns through a series of focus group meetings and open houses. The information gathered during this time provided valuable insight that aided the formation of this Plan.

## FOCUS GROUP

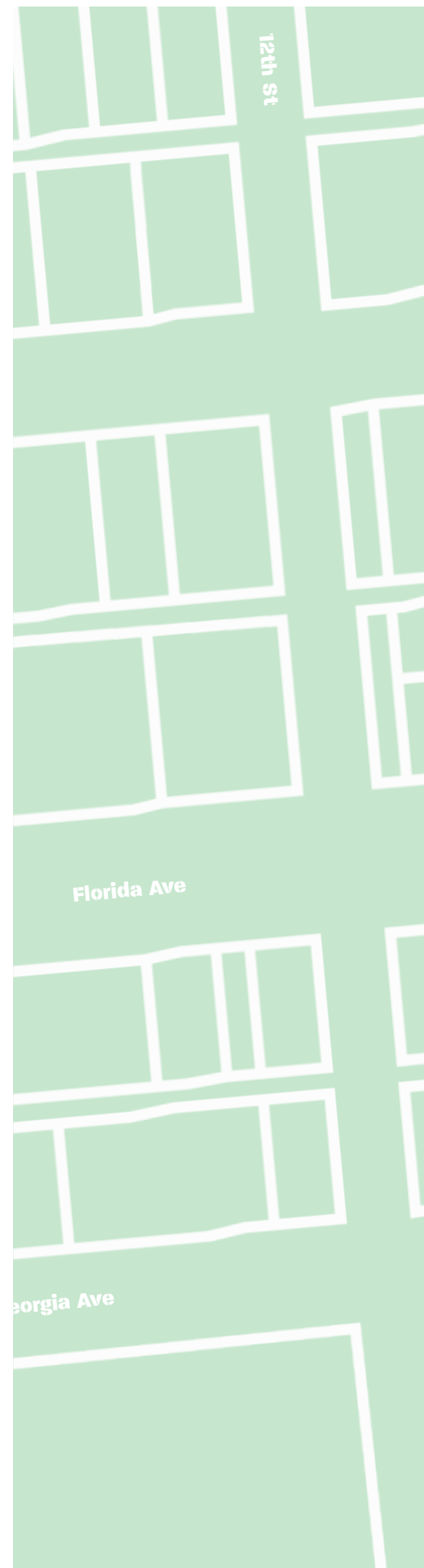
In 2016, a focus group was formed to begin discussions regarding current needs of the downtown community. The 15-member committee represented local community organizations and residents; as well as downtown property and business owners. From these initial conversations it was clear that there was a strong sense of community pride. They identified their community character as being small-scale, family-oriented, and pedestrian-friendly; noting an identifiable, eclectic 'Main Street' along Florida Avenue, with a mix of residential and neighborhood commercial uses proximate to highly utilized recreational facilities. While members were quick to point out what was great about their community, they did not hesitate to share their ideas about what could make the downtown better.

These needs focused around three main categories: character and identity; connectivity; and branding and marketing. The focus group continued to support the vision of the 2001 Plan, hoping to enhance the downtown character which supported a pedestrian-scale, mixed-use environment. However, the group identified concerns that there was not enough investment in or maintenance of the streetscape; the adopted Old Palm Harbor Design Guidelines complicated the process for obtaining approvals for new businesses, or for existing businesses that wanted to expand; and there may be a need to expand commercial uses within the downtown.

The focus group celebrated the walkability of the downtown. Building on the recommendation of the 2001 Plan, they saw great opportunity in being able to safely connect across Alt 19 to important amenities, such as the Pinellas Trail, Pop Stansell Park, the Sunderman Complex, and the harbor. Addressing previous discussions that took place a few years prior with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), the focus group suggested the County relook at a potential roundabout at Florida Avenue and Alt 19. They also suggested that golf carts may be an appropriate way of connecting the residential community to the downtown.

The need for branding and marketing strategies was also suggested by the focus group. They noted the importance of creating a gateway to the downtown, announcing to visitors that they have arrived. It was suggested that an approach for marketing available properties be considered. More traditional methods of branding and marketing, such as creating a logo and tagline for the downtown, was also discussed.

After understanding these initial concerns as defined by the focus group, it was important to bring the conversation to the larger community.










## SURVEYS & OPEN HOUSES

In December 2016, an online survey was launched to define the existing community identity, as well as target community needs. The community was asked to define Downtown Palm Harbor's identity. What are the area's unique features and which of these assets should be the area's primary identity? As these were open-ended questions, many respondents used the opportunity to share their broader opinions about the downtown and what improvements were needed. Many of the comments stated the need for safe crossing at Alt 19 with strong support for a roundabout; additional pedestrian amenities are needed in the downtown, such as better lighting and more sidewalks; and a significant desire for more community events. What was made clear from the survey responses is the appreciation for the area's small-town feel, and the pride residents have in their community.

In January and March 2017, two community-wide open houses were held. The intent of the open houses was to determine if the comments that came out of the initial focus group conversations were the same issues and concerns that the broader Downtown Palm Harbor community recognized, and provided the opportunity for new issues to emerge. Different stations were set up with focused topics of discussion as they related to the Master Plan in general; the community's character and identity; connectivity; and general branding and marketing. The free flow of discussions allowed for additional issues to be identified.




At the first open house in January 2017, it was clear that recurring comments were consistent with the concerns of the focus group, including the desire to:

-  ***Create safe connections across Alt 19 between the downtown and the Pinellas Trail and other uses to the west;***
-  ***Improve lighting in the downtown;***
-  ***Provide additional pedestrian-friendly amenities (e.g., benches, bike racks and better signage);***
-  ***Address gaps in the sidewalk network;***
-  ***Provide opportunities for more family-friendly, community events;***
-  ***Address parking needs; and***
-  ***Improve the opportunity for additional retail.***








A second set of survey questions were launched at the January open house, with the opportunity for attendees to respond at the open house or at a later time. These questions were more specific than the initial open-ended questions, asking respondents to address priority issues. When respondents were asked to prioritize those projects that had not yet been completed in the 2001 Plan, the top three chosen were:

-  ***Install pedestrian crossing near the intersection of Alt 19 and Florida Avenue;***
-  ***Complete the installation of street lights along Florida Avenue; and***
-  ***Add outdoor plazas and outdoor event spaces in the downtown.***

Understanding the community's strong desire to improve east-west pedestrian connections, another two-part survey question focused around that issue. First, to what extent were respondents comfortable with using different crossing options, (i.e., a traffic signal; a roundabout; or a pedestrian-activated mid-block crossing). Second, of these options, which was their preference.

The results regarding comfort levels seemed to reflect the respondents' experience using these options. The percentages noted for each crossing option below represent the total percentage of those respondents who felt 'comfortable' or 'somewhat comfortable' with the respective option:

-  ***A designated pedestrian crosswalk with a timed pedestrian-activated crossing signal. (90.3%)***
-  ***A traffic roundabout at the intersection of Alternate 19 and Florida Avenue that slows speeds and incorporates designated pedestrian-crossings. (48.3%)***
-  ***A full traffic signal at Alternate 19 and Nebraska Avenue that includes automobile and pedestrian signalization. (72.6%)***



Understandably, more people have had experience using crosswalks and traffic signals, while roundabouts still tend to be less familiar.

When it came to the preferred option, the results balanced out a bit. Both the traffic signal and the mid-block crossing options received 31.7% as the preferred option, while the roundabout received 28.3%. (There were a few votes that chose 'other'.) It is worth noting that when the community was asked through the first (open-ended) survey question about the primary identity of Downtown Palm Harbor, some respondents used the opportunity to support a roundabout at Alt 19 and Florida Avenue. A final survey question asked respondents to determine to what extent they agreed with a list of seven recommendations that had been drafted based on projects that had not been fully implemented from the 2001 Plan and in accordance with initial focus group discussions. The seven draft recommendations were refined and expanded to 10 in order to address the January open house comments, as well as the results of the online surveys.

A second community open house was held in March 2017 to share the revised recommendations and to further identify any additional issues. A brief presentation was given to the attendees to review some of the background and findings to-date, followed by a group question and answer session before the meeting moved into the open house format. Specific exercises were designed to gather additional feedback to better understand details about some of the concerns raised during the public input process to-date.

As originally identified during the focus group meetings, the process for getting approvals in the Downtown area can be complex. There were concerns that the existing [historic] design guidelines applicable to Downtown Palm Harbor were unclear, and that the process for approval was unnecessarily multi-layered. A presentation board was provided at the Open House illustrating the two types of historic features that are part of Downtown Palm Harbor: 1) Heritage – architecturally-relevant “contributing” structures; and 2) Character – illustrations of unifying streetscape features, such as: buildings built closer to the front property line; the relationship of the building with the public space (sidewalks, outdoor seating, street trees); the front-facing orientation of the buildings; and the relationship of the size and heights of the buildings. Open House attendees recognized this distinction in historical relevance and showed support for the associated recommendation to clarify the guidelines.





At the January 2017 Open House, attendees were asked to rank the top three images that represented the Downtown they wanted to see from a series of images on a presentation board. At the March 2017 Open House a board was provided that displayed the highest ranked images from this exercise and what they represented to the community. Sharing these image preferences with the community reaffirmed that these images represented the Downtown Palm Harbor they wanted to see, such as those that represented restaurants with outdoor seating; more shops and retail; mixed-use, walkable street life; community coming together in a relaxed atmosphere; and outdoor events and family activities.

To further understand community opinion on the issues as it related to the safe crossing of Alt 19, a crossing preference exercise was conducted. As was the case with the January 2017 Open House, discussion with the community at the March 2017 Open House indicated a preference for the roundabout, noting the ability of the roundabout to serve as a significant gateway feature for the Downtown, while providing for safe crossing. For one exercise, while the total number of votes were limited, having reviewed a Pro/Con summary and having spoken with Staff, attendees were asked to vote for their preferred crossing between a roundabout at Florida Avenue, and a traffic signal at Nebraska Avenue. The vote was 13 for the roundabout and 3 for the traffic signal.

To address expressed concerns regarding parking in the downtown, two 'dot exercises' were conducted. The first had an aerial of the downtown study area. Attendees were asked to place dots by those locations where they had consistently been challenged with finding parking. A clear location was indicated around the intersection of 11th Street and Nebraska Avenue. A second board asked participants to identify during what days and times finding parking was most challenging. Responses identifies the time periods of Monday through Saturdays, during the 5:00pm to 9:00pm timeframe.

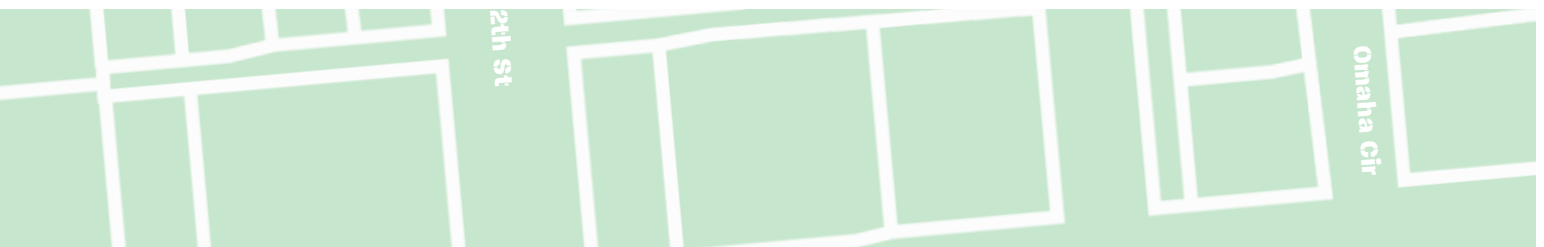






**FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS**

Throughout the engagement process it was very clear that local residents and business owners truly love their community. They were forthcoming not only with their positive experiences, but with their thoughts about where there is room for improvement in order to enhance the vibrant, walkable, family-friendly downtown they want to see. The results of the open houses and surveys were shared with the community in a summary report, (See **Appendix 7.1**) as well as with the Board of County Commissioners, as were the final recommendations for follow-up and issues to address in this revised Master Plan. County staff spent several months following up on the many issues, working with consultants, and determining options for addressing these concerns. The following summary provides this information for each of the recommendations that came out of the community engagement process.





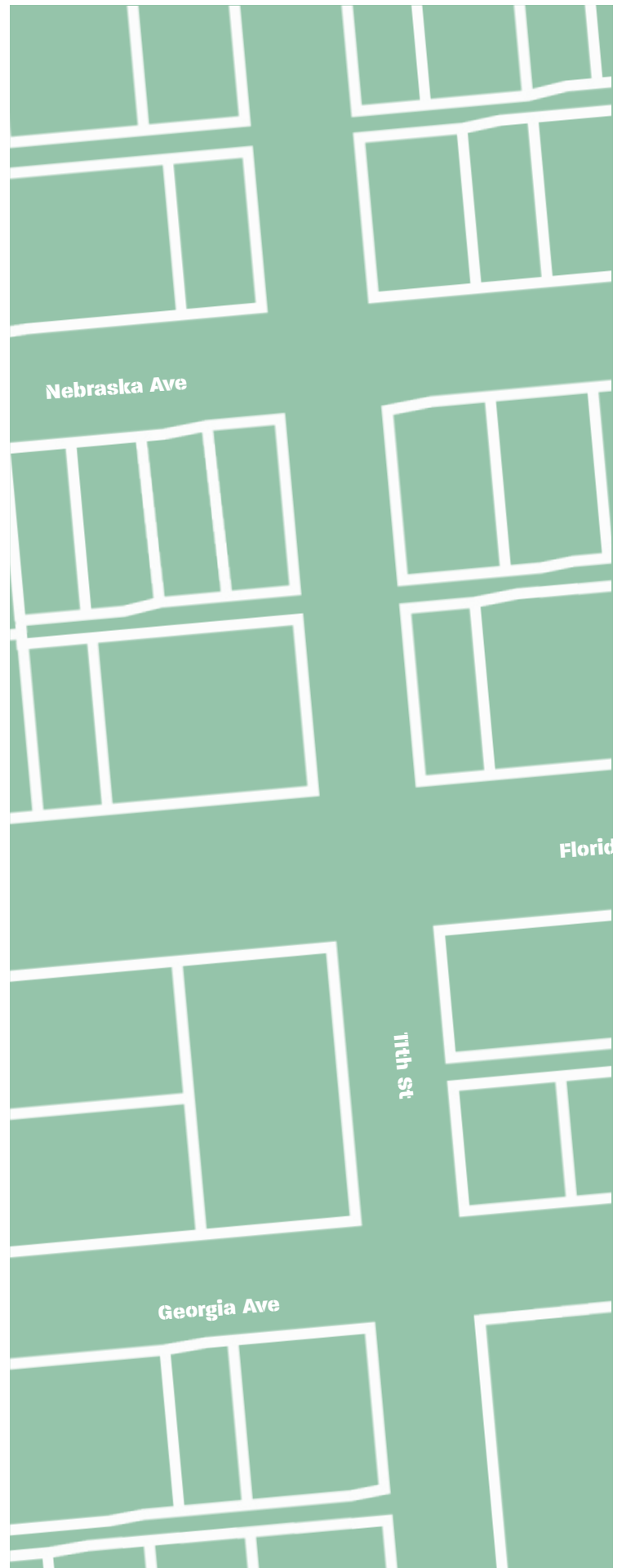


# 4 TARGETED EFFORTS

**F**ollowing up on each of the recommendations that came out of the community participation process, County staff researched the specific issues to address feasible solutions and means of implementation of those solutions. A discussion regarding each of these recommendations, or ‘targeted efforts’, are outlined below. The dedication and coordination of not only County departments but that of community organizations and residents is necessary to ensure the continued success of Downtown Palm Harbor.

These ‘Targeted Efforts’ fall within four broad categories:

- **Character & Identity**
- **Connectivity**
- **Branding & Marketing**
- **Continuing Efforts**





### CHALLENGE

Since the adoption of the 2001 Plan, street lighting fixtures and a number of benches and bike racks have been installed in the downtown, primarily focused along Florida Avenue. Additional street lighting borders the parking lot at Harbor Hall along 11th and 12th Streets, and Michigan Avenue. The community has expressed the need for additional pedestrian amenities to be provided throughout the downtown. If pedestrian improvements are made across Alt 19 safely connecting the Pinellas Trail to the downtown, there will be greater opportunity to draw pedestrians and cyclists to downtown establishments; thereby increasing the need for pedestrian amenities.



### OPPORTUNITY

In 2017, Pinellas County was awarded Economic Damage settlement funds from the BP Oil Spill for identified projects in Pinellas County. The County received \$222,000 for lighting and landscaping for Downtown Palm Harbor. The specific Interlocal Agreement that outlines the spending of that award was coordinated between the County's Public Works Department and the Downtown Palm Harbor Merchant's Association. A phased plan called for additional lighting and landscaping throughout the downtown.

If lighting remains a concern for the community, property owners would need to determine if they would like to expand their current lighting through a private contractor and electrician and obtain any necessary right-of-way permits, as is done today, or reconsider becoming a lighting district, as discussed in this Plan's Funding Tools section.

An additional pedestrian amenity that can improve the pedestrian experience within the downtown is 'wayfinding' - information that helps guide people to destinations. Traditional means of wayfinding takes the form of mapping and signage. To build on the branding of the community, it is recommended that wayfinding be coordinated through a larger marketing effort for the community.

It should be noted that if additional amenities, such as bike racks and benches, are needed, private property owners should install such amenities on their property. The unincorporated County would not typically support these types of features being located within the public right-of-way due to the need to meet American Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements, and the lack of long-term maintenance funding. If the community demonstrates the need for pedestrian amenities to be located in the right-of-way, a right-of-way permit would be required. Amenities located in the public right-of-way is required to have necessary approvals in order to address such things as property placement, ADA compliance, clear sight visibility, etc. Possible mechanisms for planning and funding such amenities are discussed in the Implementation Tools section of this Plan.

# targeted effort

**DETERMINE THE NEED FOR  
ADDITIONAL RETAIL AND  
IDENTIFY FACTORS THAT MAY  
LIMIT THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR  
RETAIL USES.**



## CHALLENGE

While retail uses are permitted by the downtown's zoning district, there seems to be a lack of retail located there. The existing uses tend to primarily be shared among restaurants, office space and personal services. While the community did suggest that the range of permissible uses were appropriate for the downtown, they made the point that there is a need for additional retail, which would not only provide shopping opportunities, but would in turn make the downtown a more walkable destination. It was stated by several people that the availability of retail space was extremely limited and that the historic guidelines complicated the process for obtaining approvals for those buildings that may need some renovation.





## OPPORTUNITY

A retail study was conducted to determine the potential to locate additional retail in Downtown Palm Harbor. The study looked at national and regional trends, as well as the growth opportunities for the defined trade area. Downtown Palm Harbor's trade area was defined as being within a 10-minute drive of the downtown. As a result of the study it was concluded that the downtown has the potential to bring in a percentage of the trade area's retail demand over the next several years, but it would be helpful for the area to improve its visibility through improvements along Alt 19, including the creation of a gateway.

The type of retail that could be supported in the downtown would be more boutique-style retail with a smaller footprint, but the permitted floor area in the downtown may be a limiting factor. It was recommended that the County look at the development regulations, not just the densities and square footage that are permitted, but the historic requirements as well, to determine if they may be limiting the amount of growth that can be accommodated. The complete Retail Market Study can be seen in Appendix 7.2.)

The County Planning Department should follow up on the results of this study by looking at the permissible densities and intensities of uses in the downtown to support the potential for additional retail. Permitted floor area ratios should reflect the types of square footage desired by boutique-style retail uses, while the buildings themselves need to remain at the appropriate scale for a walkable urban neighborhood like Downtown Palm Harbor.

To address this concern, the Planning Department sought and was awarded a Planning & Placemaking grant that would support the drafting of form-based development regulations for the downtown. Form-based regulations can promote the appropriate densities/intensities to support additional retail while focusing on the relationship of the physical form of buildings to the public realm, such as the street and sidewalk. These types of regulations tend to focus on the built environment while preserving the community character and scale. These regulations tend to be more direct (rather than being open to interpretation) and are therefore more predictable for the property owner and developer. As such, the approval process can often move more quickly than traditional zoning regulations.

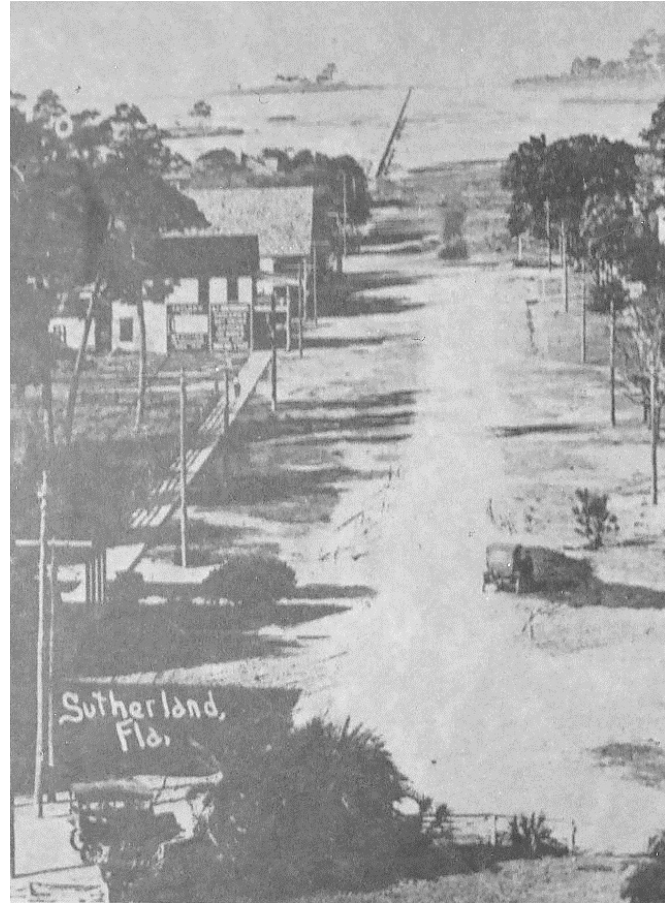
It is the intent of the form-based regulations to allow for additional square footage to support retail (and other) uses, while continuing to reflect the scale and character of the walkable downtown. Since this type of zoning emphasizes community form, it is necessary that form-based zoning consider the greater study area rather than individual parcels. Looking at it in this holistic way protects the overall development pattern of the area. To support this approach, the Activity Center future land use designation would be expanded to include the entire study area; and there would be one common Form-Based Code (FBC-D) zoning classification.

## targeted effort

*REVIEW THE [HISTORIC] GUIDELINES IN ORDER TO CONTINUE THE PROTECTION OF THE AREA'S HISTORIC HERITAGE, WHILE CLARIFYING THE GUIDELINES AND STREAMLINING THE REVIEW PROCESS.*

Florida Ave

12th St

**CHALLENGE**

Much of Downtown Palm Harbor is a locally-designated Historic District and has an associated design review manual that is applicable to new development and redevelopment of the majority of the structures within the downtown. These guidelines were created to perpetuate certain architectural elements and styles found in the district. However, given the eclectic nature of the contributing resources, and the fact that the guidelines are centered on a “catch all approach”, the approach results in no common architectural theme. Additionally, the guidelines do not distinguish between commercial and residential structures, which can be challenging when interpreting and applying these guidelines. There are other concerns that the design guidelines do not specify types of materials, which also contributes to the lack of uniformity in application of the Design Review Manual.

The concern was raised by the community that these guidelines coupled with existing zoning regulations tend to make the approval process complicated and lengthy. It was recommended that the County review these guidelines and streamline the approval process. There are a number of questions that need to be addressed when considering any changes to the Design Review Manual, such as: which properties should be subject to these guidelines; what is the primary intent of the guidelines – is it to preserve a specific architectural style or is it to protect the development pattern; and are the guidelines clear and easily implementable?





## OPPORTUNITY

To support an accurate review of the existing design guidelines, it was necessary to complete an updated historic survey of the area. The last survey was conducted nearly 20 years prior and it was important to determine if the findings continued to reflect current conditions.

The updated historic survey was completed in December 2018. The findings of this survey confirmed each of the nine properties previously recognized as contributing structures. It also found that the structure located at 1069 12th Street, an existing commercial building, should be added to the list of contributing structures as it connects to another contributing structure (1126 Florida Avenue). This addition was recommended “because of its historic significance and the role the building(s) continue to have in the commercial development of Palm Harbor.” (See Appendix 7.3)

Overall, the updated historic survey findings recognize that Downtown Palm Harbor has a unique heritage and should continue to pay respect to this history. It finds that a locally-designated historic district is appropriate, and recommends the County consider addressing the form and scale of additional properties that would provide a buffer around the historic district and further pay tribute to the area’s past. There is the opportunity for the community to use additional methods that pay homage to the history and culture of the area, such as: the use of educational tools like maps, walking tours, interactive websites, and public art; or through some combination thereof.

The survey recommends that a Design Review Manual address not only the needs of the contributing resources (i.e., materials and in-kind historic architectural elements), but address the development pattern of the overall area in terms of form and scale. Taking into account the recommendations of the updated historic survey, the County should continue to recognize and respect the downtown’s important past. As of 2018, the design guidelines document stated the following:

*Given that the buildings found in the DPHHD and the OPH-D do not provide a common architectural style, the establishment of these Districts was largely about preserving the “sense of place” created by the mix of uses, special character and history that result in the area’s original platting as a walkable town center. The Design Standards for the DPHHD and OPH-D, therefore, are based upon the connecting elements and characteristics that are present, including:*

- ***The relationship between the shape, size, and height of the buildings;***
- ***The front-facing orientation of the buildings and the lack of setbacks from the main street;***
- ***The major roof types; window door design and placement;***
- ***Minimal ornamentation and architectural detailing; and***
- ***Minor connecting elements such as shutters, porches, and fences.***

With this same understanding in mind, the County should address this targeted effort of more clearly focusing the design guidelines while protecting the downtown’s overall development pattern and protecting the architectural features of the designated contributing resources. The goal is to protect this character while streamlining the approval process.

As discussed in the previous targeted effort, form-based regulations directly address development patterns. They can also incorporate design elements. These alternative development regulations can provide opportunities for additional retail in the downtown and protect the character of the area, while simplifying the overall approval process for (re)development.

## targeted effort

*IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES FOR  
OUTDOOR ACTIVE SPACES THAT  
SUPPORT FAMILY ACTIVITIES  
AND COMMUNITY EVENTS.*

Florida Ave

12th St

*Pop Stansell Park***CHALLENGE**

One issue that was brought up in the 2001 Plan and continues to be a concern for the community is the need for additional open space opportunities in the downtown. The 2001 Plan called for the incorporation of congregation areas and event spaces as a component of streetscape design. During the 2017 open houses the community expressed the desire to have additional locations to have family-friendly events. Resulting from the 2001 Plan, wider sidewalks were installed and serve as a location for social interaction; however, it does not afford the opportunity for community event space. As discussed in the 'Existing Conditions' section, the community has benefited from the addition of Harbor Hall as a community event space, but it does not serve as an outdoor facility.



*Median on Florida Ave.*



*Sunderman Complex*

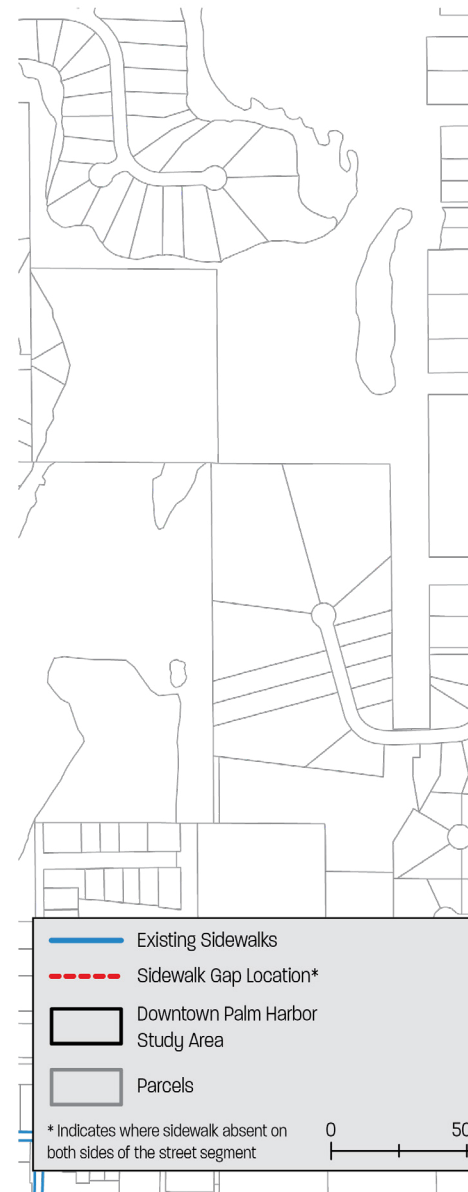


**OPPORTUNITY**

Providing additional open spaces in a highly developed area is not an easy task. There may be opportunities to provide plazas or similar areas of green space as part of redevelopment projects, but there is no guarantee as to the value it would serve to the public as it would be part of private development. As a long-term solution, the County should consider opportunities to purchase land that can serve as a gathering space for visitors to the downtown and the adjacent residential community. In the meantime, local community organizations should continue to coordinate community events not only in the downtown, but should consider new ways to take advantage of the proximity to Pop Stansell Park and the Sunderman Complex. There may be opportunities to program the use of the wide, park-like median located along Florida Avenue west of Alt 19. This space could be used as a passive green space, with benches and paths that supplement nearby Pop Stansell Park, and function as a community gathering space. Many communities have capitalized on the recreation and open space possibilities offered by wide boulevard medians (similar to Florida Avenue) as quaint public amenities.

## targeted effort

**ADDRESS GAPS IN SIDEWALK CONNECTIONS WITHIN THE GREATER DOWNTOWN PALM HARBOR AREA IN ORDER TO IMPROVE WALKABILITY AND FURTHER SUPPORT DOWNTOWN BUSINESSES AND EVENTS.**

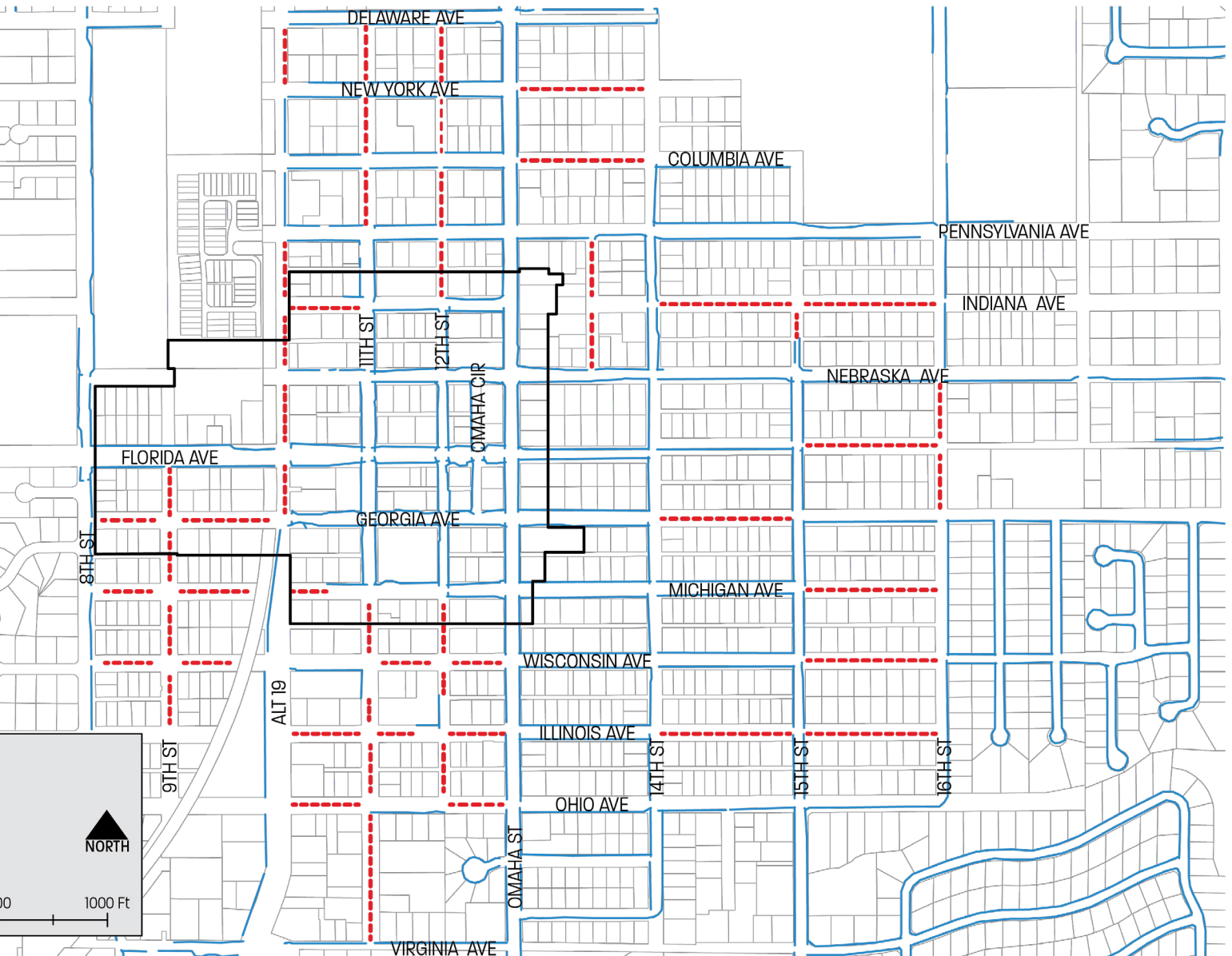


**FIGURE 10: EXISTING SIDEWALK NETWORK**



### CHALLENGE

While Downtown Palm Harbor has a well-connected sidewalk network that extends into the adjacent residential neighborhoods, there are identified gaps in that system. These gaps are shown on the following map (**Figure 10**), and illustrate that there are roadway segments that are incomplete. Some of these gaps occur on only one side of the street; while other gaps occur on both sides along individual blocks that are disconnected from sidewalks that currently exist on adjacent blocks. The following map identifies gaps in the existing sidewalk network:



## OPPORTUNITY

The County currently has a sidewalk gap program that can prioritize and address needs to fill in the gaps throughout the County. The gaps within the downtown sidewalk network, as identified in Figure 6, will be shared with the program managers. Priority fixes will be identified and added to the program schedule. The completion of these projects are subject to a number of factors, such as: the complexity of the project - is it a simple fix or is there a more complex design need; the size of the area to be addressed - can the County complete the work or is it necessary to contract out; does the County have the necessary right-of-way to address the need; is the funding immediately available? The County will coordinate this effort and prioritize locations to eliminate sidewalk gaps in the downtown and surrounding neighborhoods. While FDOT ultimately makes decisions regarding improvements along Alt 19, a complete streets approach to that corridor should be considered, including the use of sidewalks to enhance the connectivity and safety of the downtown across Alt 19.

# targeted effort

*EXPLORE THE USE OF GOLF CARTS AS AN ALTERNATIVE MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION BETWEEN DOWNTOWN PALM HARBOR AND ADJACENT RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS.*



## CHALLENGE

During the community engagement process, there were several residents who expressed the desire for Downtown Palm Harbor to become a golf cart community. While there are a number of people who do drive their golf carts in the downtown, the streets are not currently designated to allow for shared use for automobiles and golf carts, and potential safety measures have not been addressed.

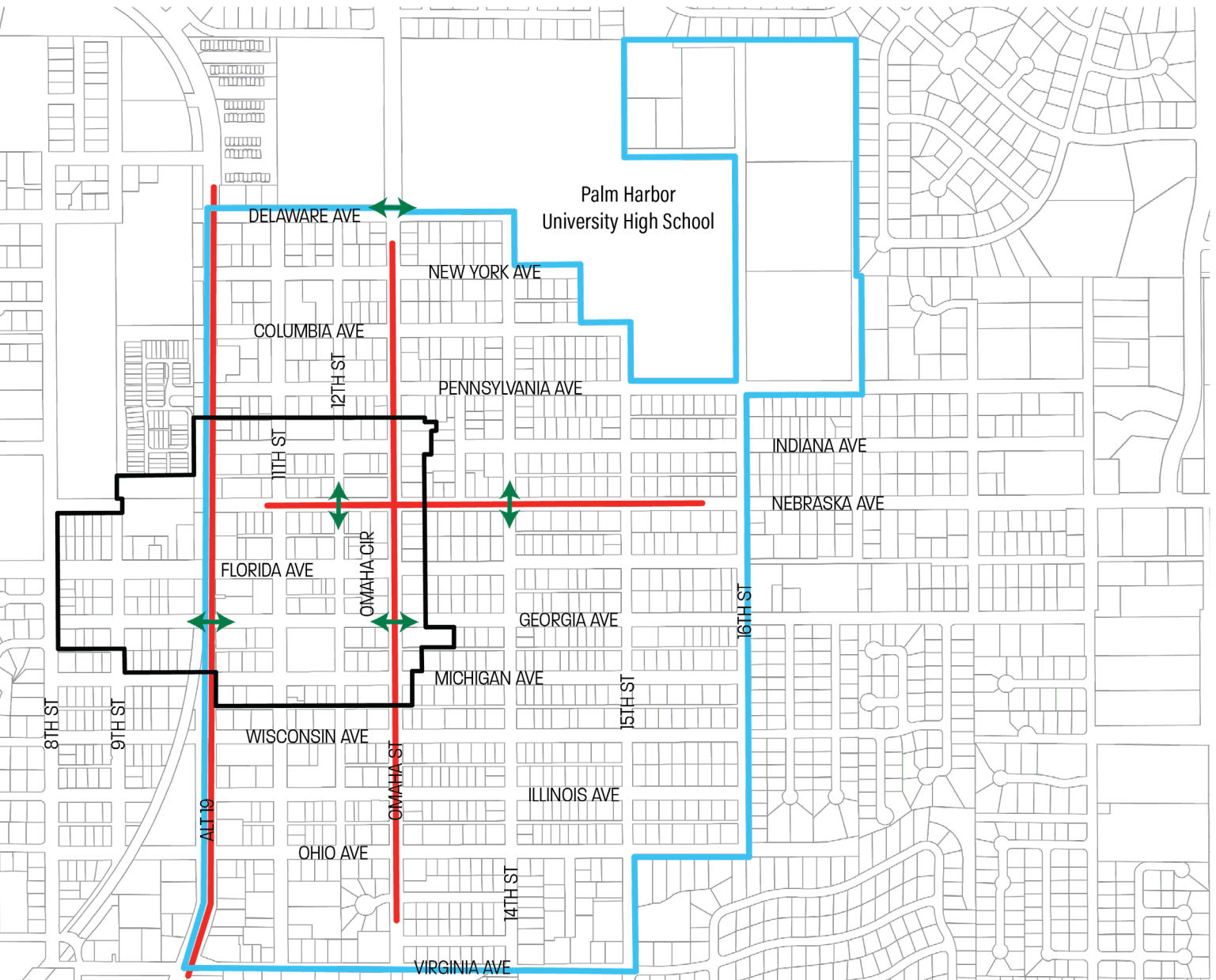


FIGURE 11: POTENTIAL GOLF CART BOUNDARY



## OPPORTUNITY

The County's Public Works Department completed an analysis for a potential golf cart neighborhood area, identifying those streets that could support golf carts sharing the road with cars. A general ½-mile boundary from the downtown core was studied; addressing field observations of traffic flow, speeds, and area crash data.

It was determined that the area could support shared golf cart use, identifying certain road segments that would be closed to golf carts, but would have acceptable locations for golf cart crossings. In order to allow for shared golf cart use, a signage plan and painted crossings would be necessary. The specific boundary of study and the allowable roadway segments for golf cart use can be seen in **Figure 11**.

To further pursue a golf cart community for this area, a petition is being distributed by Public Works to property owners, requiring at least 60% support. Final approval would then be required by the Board of County Commissioners. As a state roadway, the County would need approval from FDOT to allow golf carts to cross Alt 19.

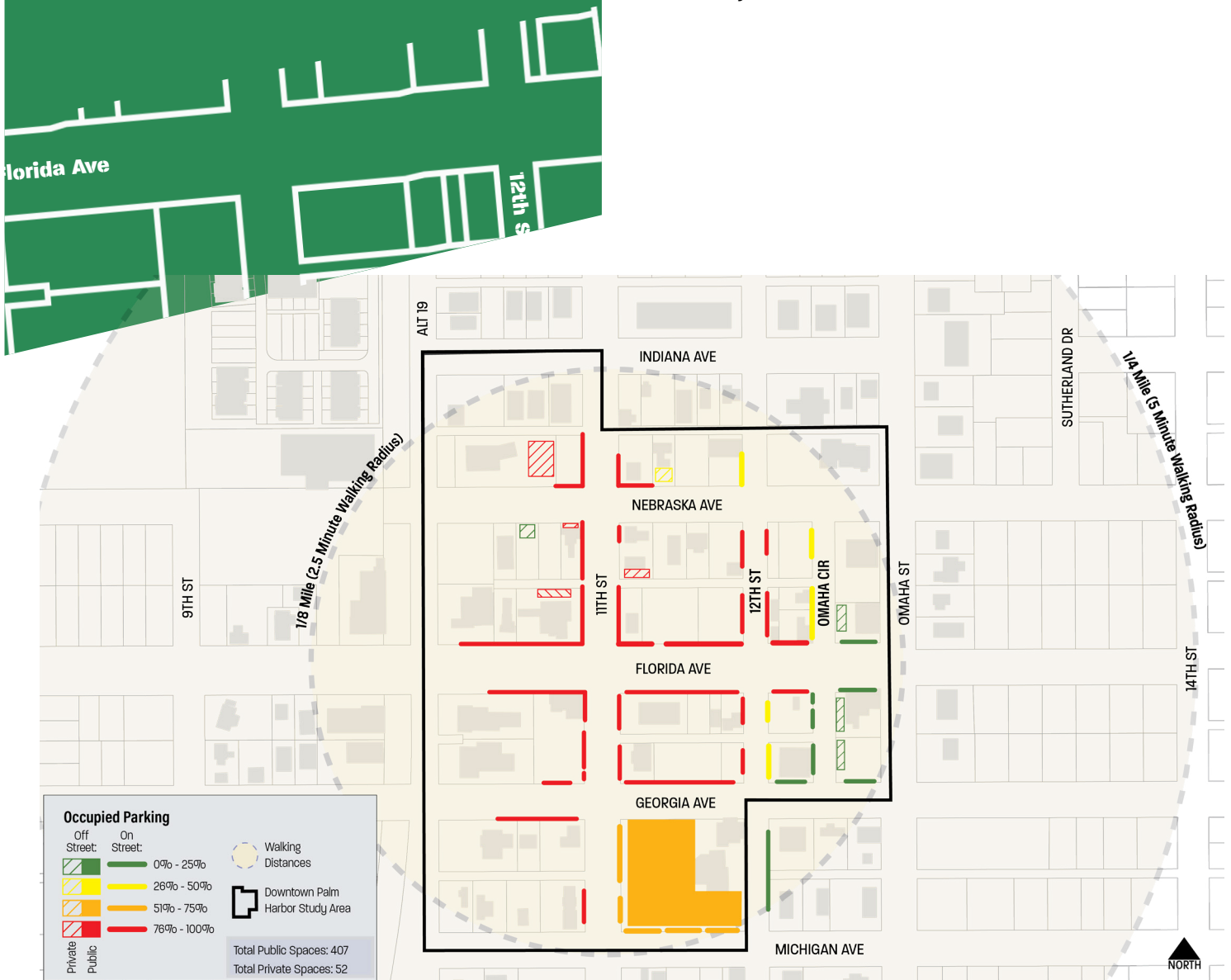
# targeted effort

**EXPLORE SOLUTIONS TO ADDRESS PARKING ISSUES, CONSIDERING BOTH DAILY PARKING NEEDS AS WELL AS NEEDS FOR LARGER COMMUNITY EVENTS.**



## CHALLENGE

During the open houses the community expressed concern over lack of parking in the downtown. The intersection of Nebraska Avenue and 11th Street was identified as the key intersection where finding parking was most challenging. They also identified the 5:00 to 9:00 pm timeframe, Monday through Saturday, as the most challenging times of day.



**FIGURE 12: Peak Conditions Heat Map [Friday April 6, 2018, 7:30-8:00pm]**





## OPPORTUNITY

As a result of this concern, the County Planning Department conducted parking observations for a total of three weeks between July and December 2017, and during a peak time slot on Friday, April 6, 2018.

Downtown Palm Harbor is an established compact, walkable neighborhood. Most businesses are located within a typical 2.5 minute walk from the center of downtown.

That means from end to end of the area's boundary it is a typical 5 minute walk. While it was found between July and November 2017 that many of the available parking spaces were occupied, there was still a significant excess of parking spaces within a 5 minute walk of any destination. At no time during any of these observed days and hours were there fewer than approximately 39 percent (or 158 spaces) of observed public parking available. During the April 2017 observations, it did show additional occupancy in the public spaces that was not seen in the earlier months. The public parking lot at Harbor Hall and the on-street parking located to the south had additional usage. However, at its peak half-hour (7:30-8:00p) public parking continued to have over 28% (or 116) of the public spaces available. The 'heat map' in **Figure 12** illustrates conditions of this peak occupancy time.



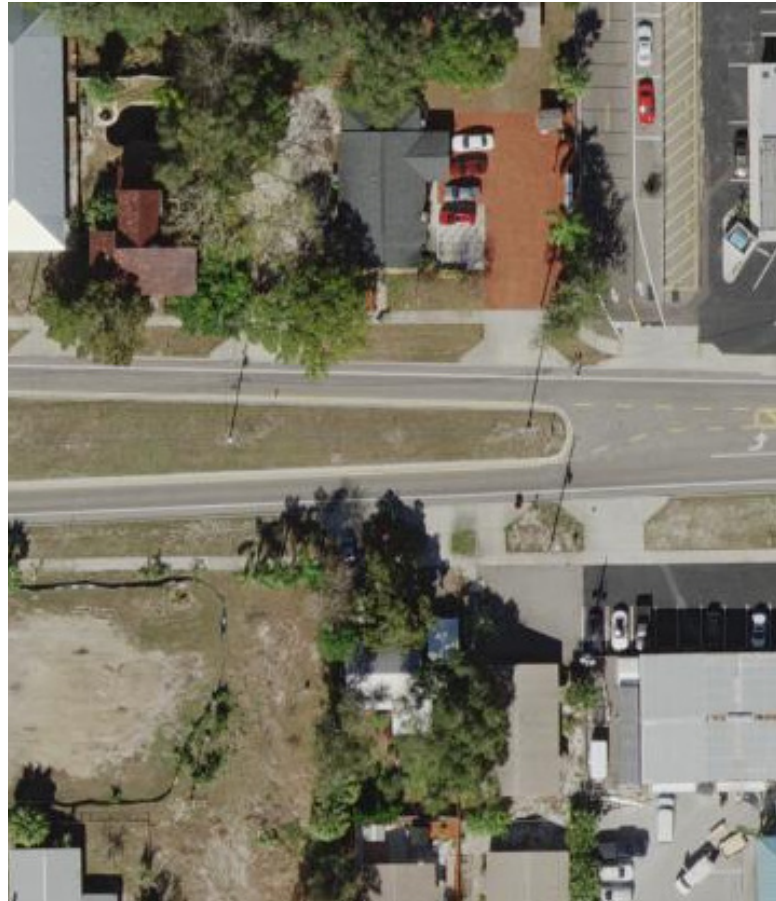
However, to address the community's concern, the Planning Department will coordinate with the downtown business owners to create an area-wide map that identifies where public parking spaces exist in the downtown, indicating general walking distances in minutes, so it is clear to customers that adequate parking is generally available within a short walk. Businesses can post these maps on their property where customers can see them, and they can have the maps available for distribution.

As branding and marketing efforts are coordinated in the downtown, wayfinding signage should be provided to direct people to public parking with identified walking distances. In the future, as use and density/intensity revisions are made to the downtown's zoning requirements, the County should continue to consider the appropriateness of the minimum required parking. When considering this issue, it is important to balance the fact that this is a connected, walkable downtown, with the assurance for businesses that there is available parking for their customers. As there is limited land area within the downtown, it becomes challenging to find additional opportunities for on- and off-street parking spaces. It may be useful for business owners to create a shared parking program as permitted by the subject zoning district, so businesses that have different peak hours of operation can offer the same parking spaces to their customers.

The County should consider redesigning Nebraska Avenue between Alt 19 and Omaha Street with on-street parking as part of a complete streets program. This would address parking as a longer term solution. The complete street concept addresses the needs of all users of the street (drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists) within the context of what uses the street serves (e.g. residential and commercial). On-street parking along Nebraska Avenue would not only provide additional spaces near the challenging intersection, but it could also serve to slow traffic, making it easier for pedestrians to cross the road when walking between the businesses.

# targeted effort

**PURSUE A ROUNDABOUT AT ALT 19 AND FLORIDA AVENUE AS THE PREFERRED CROSSING SOLUTION FOR PEDESTRIANS, CYCLISTS AND AUTOMOBILES IN ORDER TO MORE SAFELY CONNECT THE CORE AREA OF DOWNTOWN PALM HARBOR TO THE PINELLAS TRAIL, POP STANSELL PARK, AND THE HARBOR.**



Florida Ave

12th St



## CHALLENGE

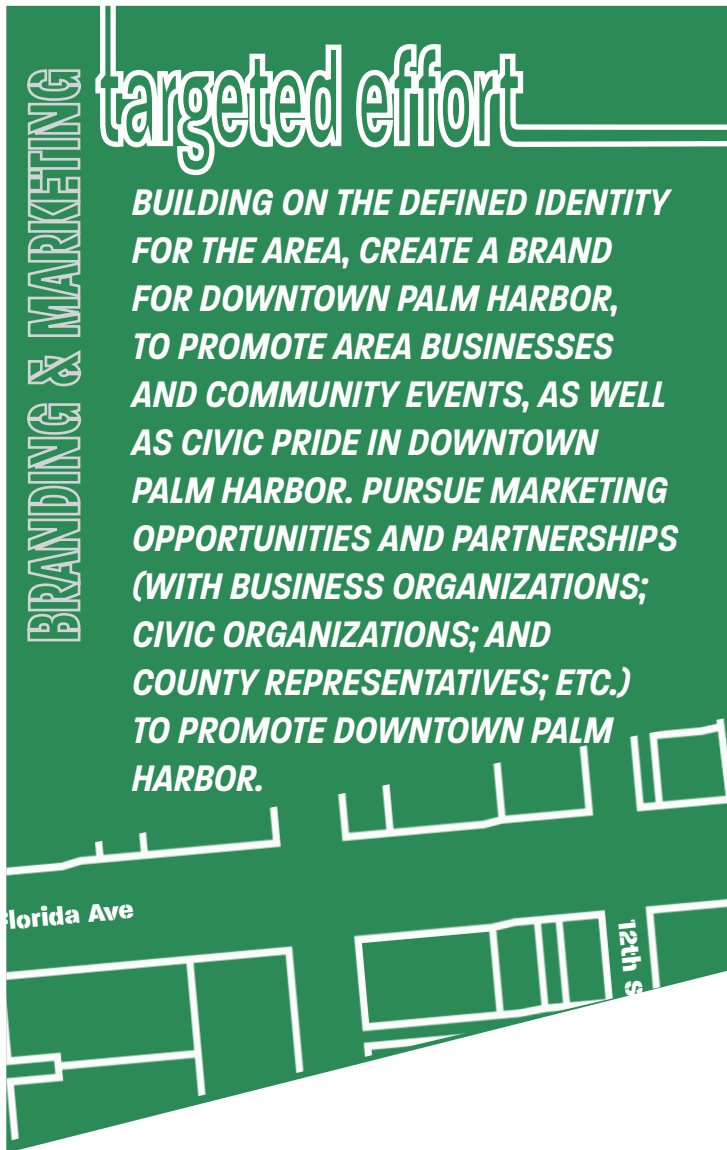
One of the primary concerns voiced at the community open houses was the need for a safe pedestrian crossing of Alternate 19 (Alt 19), connecting the downtown to the Pinellas Trail and other amenities to the west. As part of the community discussions, staff addressed the pros and cons of a traffic signal at Nebraska Avenue, a roundabout at Florida Avenue, and a mid-block crossing between the two intersections. Residents showed strong support for a roundabout at Florida Avenue, not only for the potential to address safe pedestrian crossing, but recognizing that this solution could also act as a gateway, drawing people into the downtown.

As a State-controlled roadway, the State will make the final decision as to how to address this crossing.



**OPPORTUNITY**

Alt 19 is part of a countywide corridor study being conducted by the Florida Department of Transportation. Staff continues to coordinate with FDOT, expressing the issues raised by the community and the general support for a roundabout. FDOT will make specific recommendations as part of the corridor study report, which is expected to be made available early 2019. Sidewalks and safe transit locations should be considered and coordinated with any other crossing improvements.



## CHALLENGE

As many of the challenges outlined in this Plan are addressed, there is the opportunity for more people to take advantage of experiencing daily activities in Downtown Palm Harbor. Building on the defined character of the area, and the potential successes of safely connecting the downtown to the Pinellas Trail and recreational facilities across Alt 19, the addition of new retail uses, and the improvement of the pedestrian experience in the downtown, it becomes increasingly important to brand and market your area; not only for the benefit of the business community, but to encourage civic pride which will contribute to the long-term success of the area. The key challenge is to have a defined, consistent message to attract visitors to the downtown.



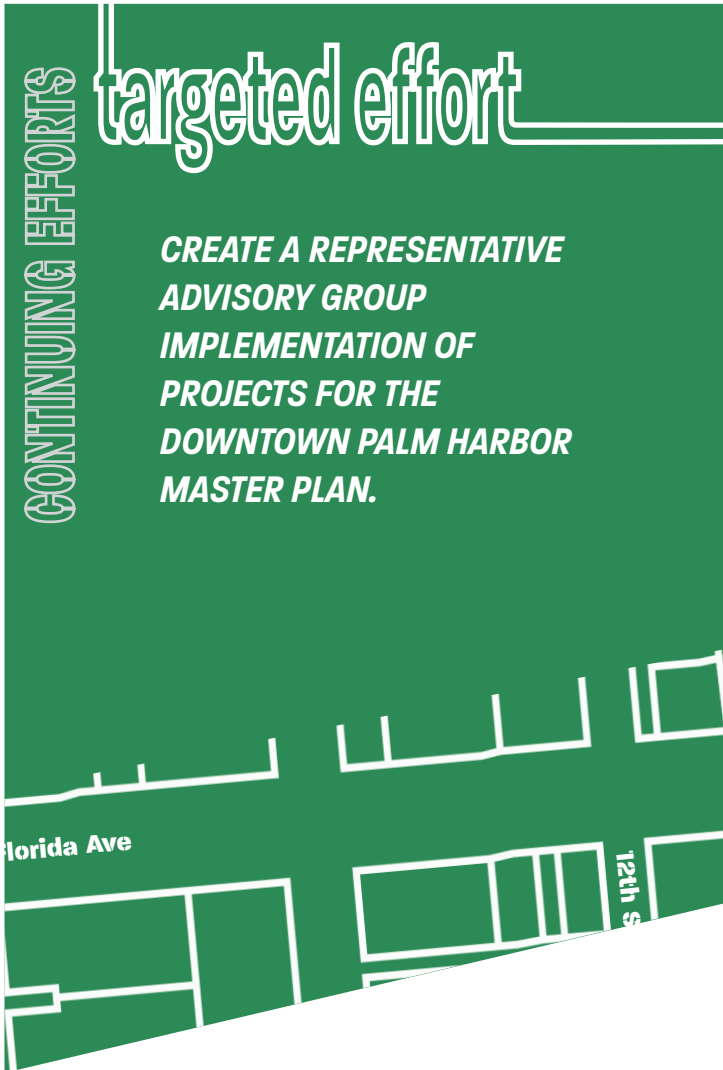
## OPPORTUNITY

Downtown Palm Harbor benefits from having a number of active organizations that are vested in the success of the downtown businesses and the community at-large. The local Merchants Association and Chamber of Commerce have traditionally worked together

to host and advertise downtown events. As the community determines how they want to move forward with an advisory committee and/or a defined implementing and funding mechanism, efforts should be focused on the continued branding and marketing of the downtown and appropriate partnerships should be identified and pursued.

As this effort is being coordinated, the community should consider the following:

- ▶ ***Enhance the online presence of the downtown with a coordinated website that promotes community businesses and events;***
- ▶ ***Enhance the downtown's social media presence;***
- ▶ ***Circulate a monthly newsletter that can reach downtown patrons and neighboring residents; and***
- ▶ ***Create a design pallet/pattern book as part of the branding effort resulting in consistent wayfinding signage, website graphics, and brochures.***



## CHALLENGE

It is important for the local residential and business community to remain active in the implementation of the efforts outlined in this Plan. While the County will continue to address issues in accordance with identified infrastructural improvements and regulatory issues, it is the local community who is most familiar with the daily activities and concerns in the downtown.



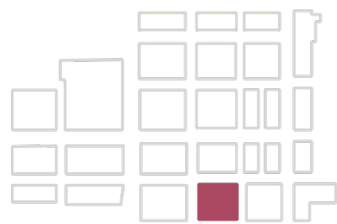
## OPPORTUNITY

Local organizations and volunteers should continue to stay active in order to ensure continued success in Downtown Palm Harbor. This Plan outlines a series of potential mechanisms that the community can consider when moving forward with projects to improve their downtown. Some of the potential solutions would involve appointed advisory groups, whether it be through a CRA advisory board or a business improvement district. The greater downtown business and residential community should determine which avenue they would like to pursue and the appropriate coordination can follow.



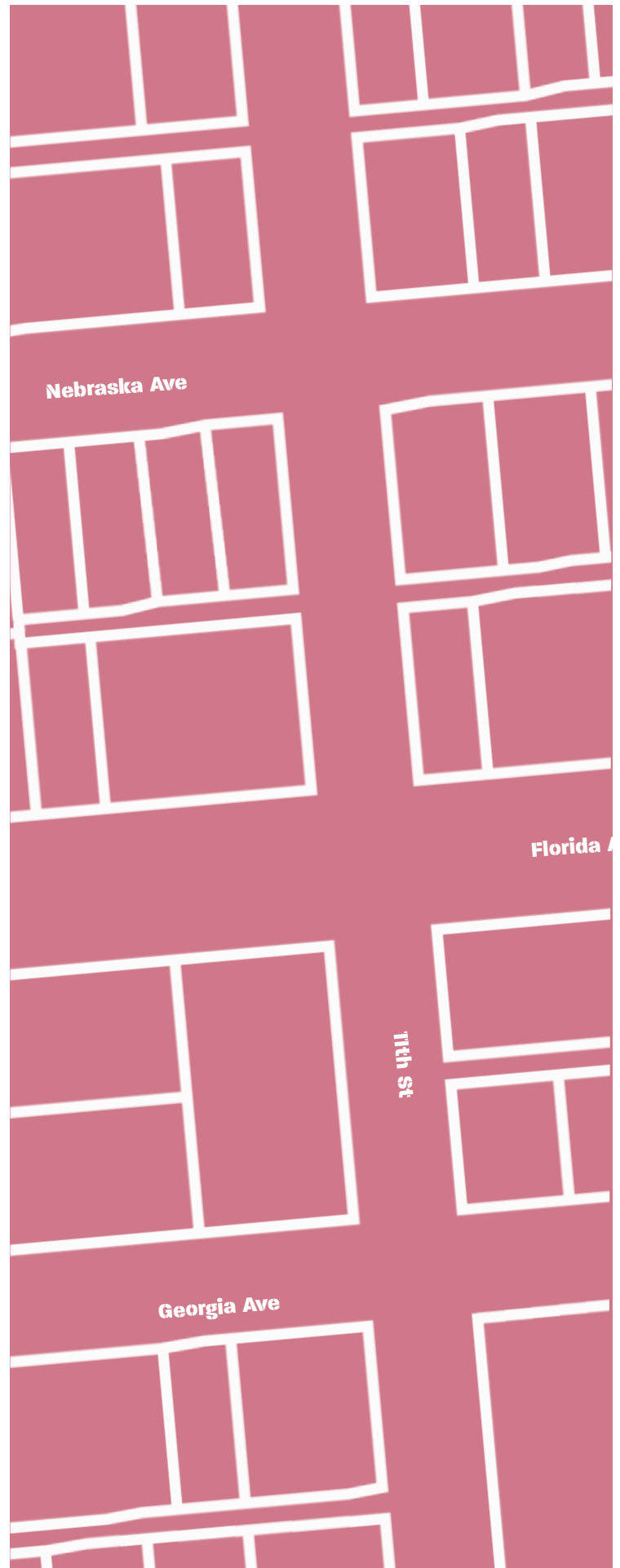


**5**



# IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS

**A**s discussed as a part of this Plan's targeted efforts, the County should address updates to the regulating districts that will help to streamline the development process and support further economic growth opportunities in the downtown. There are also a number of mechanisms that the Downtown Palm Harbor community can consider to address improvements and potential funding sources for the needs identified in this Plan. The following summary describes these different implementing tools.







# regulating tools



## FUTURE LAND USE / ZONING

The Downtown Palm Harbor Activity Center (DPH AC) is intended to comprise a mix of land use types to foster a cohesive, neighborhood activity center capable of serving the needs of a wide demographic of local residents and visitors, while encouraging a walkable, convenient neighborhood. The specific mix of land uses permitted are determined and controlled by the associated DPH regulating plan. This plan should support a range of uses, including a combination of residential, retail/commercial, recreation, lodging, industrial, and civic-oriented land uses. This Master Plan incorporates an expanded Activity Center and the creation of a single, areawide Form-Based Code zoning classification. This reflects a more comprehensive planning approach that integrates properties adjacent to the downtown core as well as contiguous blocks that provide direct connectivity to recreation amenities and the waterfront to the west. This expanded area supports a smoother transition in land uses including development patterns and intensities, and provides a simplified approval process.



## FLOOR AREA

In a true mixed land use environment, it is difficult to predict the resulting combination of residential and nonresidential facilities that will be built. As such, it is often difficult to predict and measure the associated impacts. This is why many communities across the country have moved to straight floor area ratio (FAR) measurements (or the amount of building floor area that is allowed on a lot) and policies as a means of setting the appropriate urban planning metrics to guide development regulation. The allowable FAR is applied to the gross building floor area for a parcel, addressing any combination of allowable uses.

As identified in the community outreach process, and as observed through development applications that have not been supported by the OPH-D zoning regulations, DPH has faced certain development limitations. Parcel sizes tend to be smaller in the downtown. The existing FAR allowances limit the amount of redevelopment permissible on a parcel, which reduces the profitability of (re) development. The on-site parking requirement, while already reduced, further limits the amount of square footage that a property owner can utilize.

To further support mixed-use development and economic growth within the downtown core, Downtown Palm Harbor should permit a maximum FAR of 1.5. It should be understood that while this FAR is appropriate for development within the downtown core, it would likely not be achieved on many parcels due to their limited size. Therefore a range of FARs, not to exceed the 1.5 per parcel development threshold, would be applied. The maximum FAR on properties located within the CHHA shall not exceed the existing residential densities unless acceptable mitigation strategies are approved.



## FORM-BASED REGULATIONS

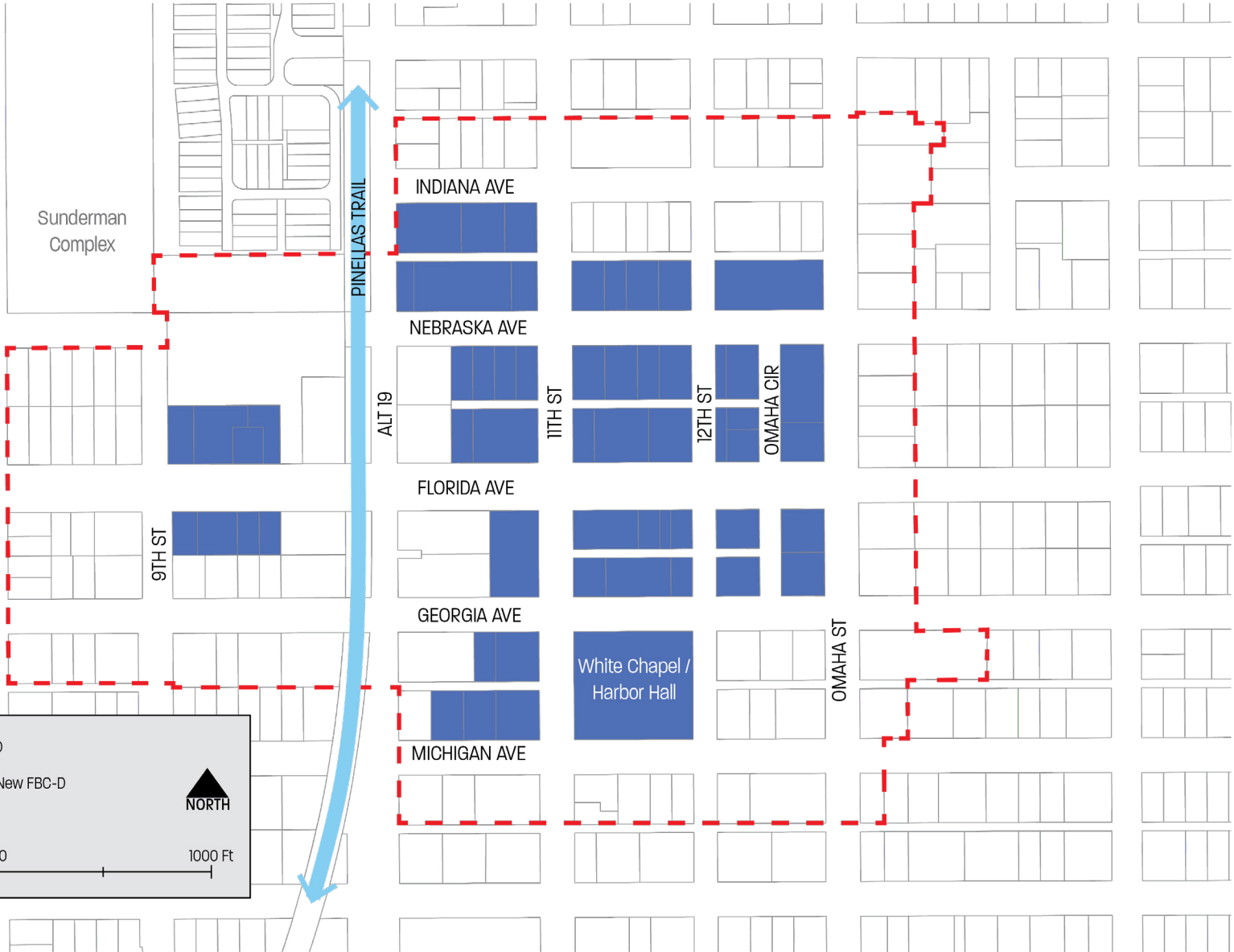
Form-based regulations provide a method of streamlining development regulations that focus on the desired form of the community rather than limiting the associated activities. Form-Based Codes (FBC) provide a predictable regulating process, which can in turn lessen the time it takes to secure development approvals. The FBC for Downtown Palm Harbor should allow for additional square footage to support retail (and other) uses, while continuing to reflect the scale and character of the walkable downtown.

One of the benefits of utilizing form-based regulations is that they offer a more holistic approach to zoning and consider the development pattern of a larger area rather than looking at individual lots. As such, this Master Plan addresses the needs of parcels for an expanded Activity Center boundary in order to allow for the form-based regulations to appropriately transition from the adjacent neighborhoods. **Figure 13** illustrates the expanded Activity Center, in order to take advantage of this holistic, form-based approach, adopted as a Form-Based Code (FBC-D) zoning district.



**FIGURE 13: ACTIVITY CENTER / FORM-BASED CODE BOUNDARY**

<sup>4</sup>Appendix 7.4 lists each parcel that is located in the expanded Activity Center boundary, yet outside of the OPH-D zoning district. This table also identifies the existing FLU and Zoning Classifications for these parcels prior to the expansion.



# funding tools



## GENERAL FUND

The General Fund is the general operating fund of the County. It is used to account for all financial resources of the County government except those that are required to be accounted for in another fund. The County identifies how these funds will be allocated per fiscal year. The General Fund could potentially be used to fund additional staff to support the area, such as a maintenance person for streets and landscaping or a Main Street program manager. While it may be possible to redirect funds for specified projects and activities in the downtown, there is no guarantee that this would be a long-term funding source. The challenge is that funding would have to be redirected from an existing General Fund program to then fund this initiative. Each year the Board of County Commissioners votes to adopt the County's budget and how the General Fund is spent based on the estimated revenues and expenditures for the year.



## TAX INCREMENT FINANCING (TIF)

Tax Increment Financing is a common funding method that directs a prescribed percentage of collected property taxes (applied to an increase in assessed value) to redevelopment and infrastructural improvements for a defined area. The intent of this funding source is to invest in community improvements that will in turn act as a catalyst for economic development. As such, the application of a TIF is established as a funding mechanism to implement projects and programs established in accordance with a redevelopment plan. In Florida, TIF districts can be created for a period up to 15 years.

TIF funding can be used to fund infrastructure projects, such as streetscape improvements; public parking facilities; mobility improvements; non-governmental public facilities; planning and engineering services for eligible capital projects; site acquisitions; commercial façade grants; etc. TIF's are most commonly used with the establishment of a Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA), as will be discussed as a potential support organization for Downtown Palm Harbor.



### **MUNICIPAL SERVICE BENEFIT UNIT (MSBU)**

A Municipal Service Benefit Unit is a non-ad valorem assessment that directs collected funds towards a specified service need; (e.g., solid waste collection; street and sidewalk improvements; etc.) for a defined geographic area. An MSBU is established as a special assessment district in accordance with State Statute. This assessment is based on the cost to provide the specified improvement, the number of participating properties, and the benefit unit allocated to each participating property.

MSBU funding can be used for such projects as recreation service and facilities; streets; sidewalks; transportation; street lighting; and other essential facilities and municipal services from funds derived from service charges, special assessments, or taxes within the designated unit, such as Downtown Palm Harbor.



### **PENNY FOR PINELLAS**

In effect since 1990, Penny for Pinellas (the ‘Penny’) is a countywide funding mechanism for capital improvement projects, covering more than 70% of the cost of long-term investments. The Penny is a 1% sales tax and is not reliant on property taxes. This 10-year revenue generator, was last renewed in 2017 for the 2020-2030 capital project period. Specific projects are identified prior to the referendum vote. As such, this funding source may not be available for the specific infrastructure issues identified in this Plan; however, attention should be paid to long-term projects in the downtown and the possibility of using the Penny as a future resource.



### **LIGHTING DISTRICT**

If area property owners opt to have the County install and maintain lighting in the downtown, they would need to formally create a lighting district. The County would install and maintain lights for the community via right-of-way permits. A non-Ad-Valorem assessment (plus administration fee) would be paid each year by the property owners. Though the downtown community did not show support for this option in the past, if the community shows future interest in becoming a lighting district, a petition would be distributed to 100% of the property owners for the defined area of coverage and require at least 60% endorsement for district formation. If this support is gained, the BCC would then need to approve an ordinance to formally create the district.



# organizational tools



## MAIN STREET PROGRAM

The Florida Main Street program is administered by the Florida Department of Historical Resources and is part of a national network of downtown revitalization programs affiliated with the National Main Street Center, a non-profit organization associated with the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The program is based on the Four-Point Approach®, a strategic framework customized for the unique needs and challenges of each participating community. This community-based revitalization initiative has been used in over 2,000 communities during the past 30+ years. Since 1986, private investment in Florida Main Street communities has totaled over \$1.5 billion in private investment creating 26,858 new jobs for 9,147 businesses and startups. Downtown Palm Harbor had previously been a participating member in this program.



## BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (BID)

Downtown Palm Harbor currently benefits from the involvement of a Merchants Association and Chamber of Commerce. Much of their efforts are focused on promotion of the downtown businesses and community events. Given the expressed desire of the community to improve the downtown brand and the associated marketing efforts, the merchants may consider forming a Business Improvement District. BIDs can be established as a special neighborhood improvement district as per Florida Statute 163.511. BIDs organize efforts on a local level through an appointed board and provide ongoing funding for both improvement and marketing efforts within a defined district. Through revenue gained by a targeted tax assessment for identified property owners, funding can go towards the creation of a marketing plan for Downtown Palm Harbor and the ongoing management and implementation of the identified strategies.



## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (CDC)

Community Development Corporations are 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations that are created to help revitalize communities. CDCs are formed by local community members who want to advance redevelopment efforts for their area. These corporations take on identified economic development projects and can provide social services for a community as well. CDCs can also assist in branding and marketing efforts. These organizations seek funding sources for projects and can draw on both public and private sources.



## COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AREA (CRA)

Florida Statute, Chapter 163, Part III, guides state regulated Community Redevelopment Areas (CRA). Per Chapter 163, Part III, F.S., local governments are able to designate areas as CRAs when certain conditions exist, and to function as a specifically focused financing tool for redevelopment that is consistent with local comprehensive plans and an adopted CRA Plan. Communities seeking to become a CRA must prove necessity as determined through State established criteria that categorize a community as either a 'slum area' or 'blighted area'. This evaluation is done through a 'Finding of Necessity' as completed by the County's Redevelopment Section.

If this process finds that a specified area meets the definition of 'slum' or 'blighted', the County can pursue the creation of a CRA while identifying funding sources to address community needs. Common options include the establishment of a designated TIF or potentially the redirection of general funds, (both of which are discussed in the previous Funding Tools section).

Through the use of TIF funds, the future value of private investment within a CRA is leveraged to finance public improvements, enhance existing public infrastructure, and maximize the benefits of other incentive tools. Having tax increment as a resource allows for concentrated public investment which can act as a catalyst for private sector investment in areas that may otherwise not attract market interest.

The County's, CRA Policy permits the County to promote reinvestment in priority geographic areas by classifying the CRA as one of three local designations. The County has established evaluation and scoring criteria to ascertain a CRA 'Local Designation' for the purpose of determining TIF funding participation by the County and eligible uses of TIF funds. Applying the CRA scoring criteria to the proposed area would result in a local designation of 'Economic Development' for Downtown Palm Harbor, which would be afforded up to 50% TIF for up to 10 years with a five-year review. This designation is defined as those areas that may experience stagnation, but where ultimately, there are opportunities due to diversity of uses, inherent local economy and location. These plans and associated TIF programs are typically structured as 30 year commitments, designed to spur growth and long-term community sustainability through the cumulative effect of incremental taxable values increases over the life of the plan. Whereas using short-term plans, such as with a 10-year plan would more likely be provided as an extension to an existing CRA seeking additional time to complete projects which will further the success in achieving the plan's goals and objectives. Consideration should be given as to the timing and predictability for sustainable growth in assessed values prior to pursuing this option.

Ultimately, if the downtown community requests to pursue CRA designation, the Finding of Necessity would have to show that it meets the state criteria of a 'blighted area'. The appropriate funding opportunities would need to be identified based on the level of need. The Board of County Commissioners (BCC) would review the conditions of the community and require a majority plus one vote to establish the CRA. Due to the limited size of Downtown Palm Harbor, it would benefit the community to think about expanding the area under consideration for the purposes of establishing a CRA. By doing so, it could increase the potential for meeting the criteria of a blighted area; expand the potential opportunities for successful mixed-use redevelopment; and provide a more holistic approach to the area's revitalization.







# 6 CONCLUSION

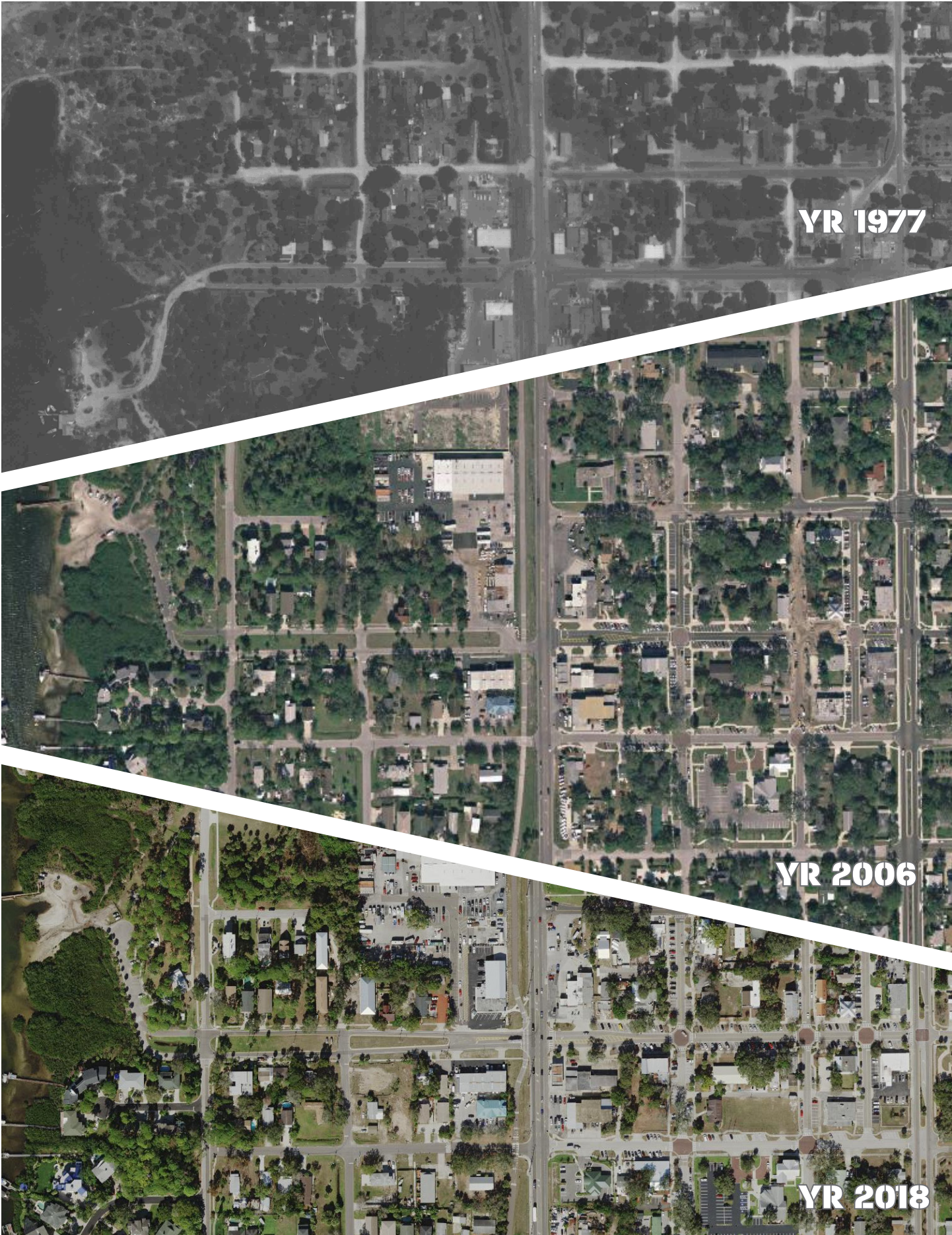


**D**owntown Palm Harbor has greatly benefited from recommended actions, and the findings and associated improvements resulting from the 2001 Master Plan. With much of the intent of that Plan being addressed, the community can build on those successes to further enhance the area's identity and vitality. Throughout the community engagement process, local residents and business owners shared their excitement for the area's future.

The Plan addresses the community's desire to enhance the pedestrian experience in the downtown; enhance the opportunity for retail and improve the associated approval process; explore the community's support for golf cart use and address opportunities for additional parking. Pursuing the appropriate implementation tools, through the appropriate mix of regulation, funding and community organization can advance the community's on-going success.

These targeted efforts, as addressed in this Master Plan, further support the area's character and identity; address connectivity for all modes of travel; and recommend branding and marketing efforts be undertaken to promote the downtown's businesses and local events, and enrich the area's sense of community. This Master Plan provides guidance and tools by which the walkable, family-friendly Downtown Palm Harbor celebrated by the community can continue to thrive.





**YR 1977**

**YR 2006**

**YR 2018**





# 7 APPENDIX

**A copy of the Appendix may be accessed by visiting the Housing and Community Development Department located at 310 Court Street, Clearwater, Florida 33756; or by contacting the Department via telephone at (727) 464-8200; or emailing [planner@pinellascounty.org](mailto:planner@pinellascounty.org).**



DOWNTOWN PALM HARBOR  
HISTORIC DISTRICT



**DOWNTOWN PALM HARBOR MASTER PLAN**