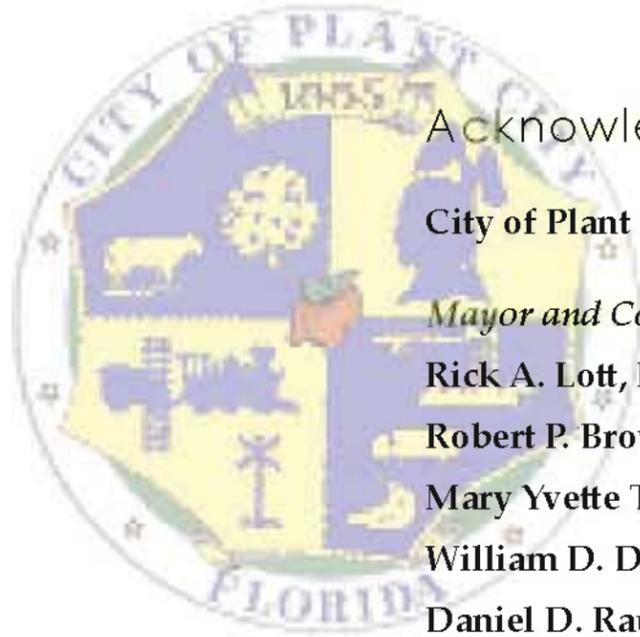


Plant City

# Midtown Redevelopment Vision Plan

Prepared for:  
City of Plant City  
June 2007



## Acknowledgements

### **City of Plant City**

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**Rick A. Lott, Mayor**

**Robert P. Brown, Vice-Mayor**

**Mary Yvette Thomas Mathis, Commissioner**

**William D. Dodson, Commissioner**

**Daniel D. Raulerson, Commissioner**

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# Executive Summary

Plant City, Florida has experienced significant growth from 1997 until recently, the spring of 2007. Most of this growth has occurred in a typical residential subdivision pattern. City leaders have recognized that an opportunity now exists to encourage some of the City's future development to take place within an area near downtown known as Midtown.

Midtown today is a collection of under-utilized assets. The streets are poorly laid out in some cases, and some of the existing buildings are worn and deteriorated. Furthermore, many of the uses currently in Midtown are oriented toward heavy commercial or industrial activity, which do not complement the City's adjacent downtown. Finally, the owner of at least one large heavy commercial use actively seeks to relocate their business out of Midtown. That owner cites concerns about transportation constraints and the need for more space as the primary reasons for relocating in the near future.

City leaders believe Midtown of the future holds genuine promise as a mixed-used, pedestrian-friendly area with multiple options for residential, business, and entertainment. A revitalized Midtown will boast a village green and businesses that offer neighborhood-oriented goods and services. Also part of the Midtown experience will be businesses that offer support services for downtown and beyond. Residential units also are expected to attract those who want or need to be near downtown offices and retail shops.

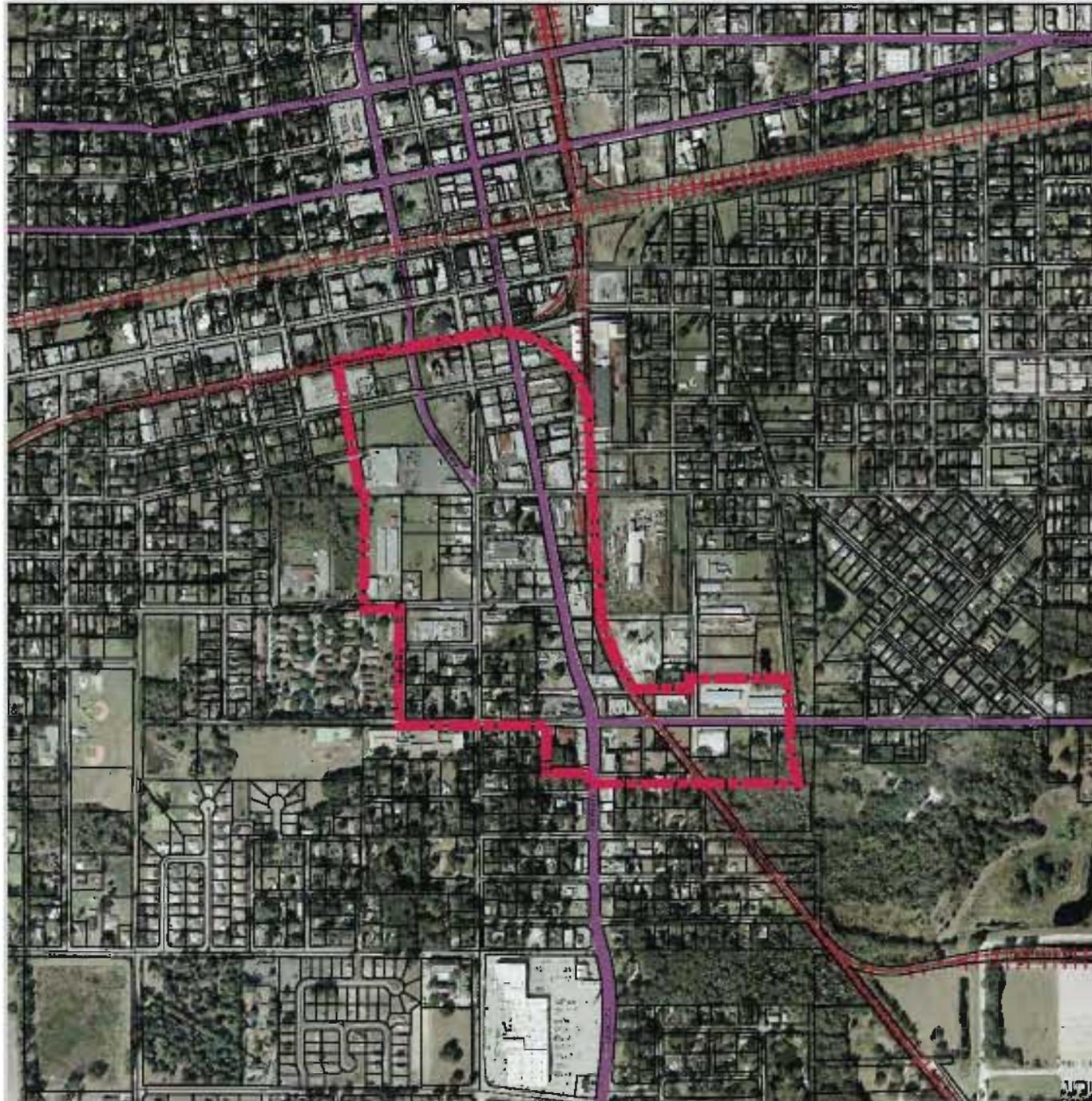
Achieving such significant progress toward Midtown's redevelopment takes more than a wish and a prayer, however. The City's efforts begin – but certainly will not end – with the vision plan outlined in the following pages. The plan is presented along with an analysis of the pre-existing conditions, definition of desired outcomes, and a list of necessary implementation steps. Both literally and figuratively, over the next several years the plan will help shape the vision into reality.





## Table of Contents

<b>1.0</b>	Introduction	01
1.1	Opportunity and Vision	01
1.2	Scope and Process	01
1.3	Guiding Principles	02
<b>2.0</b>	Analysis	03
2.1	Site Visit	03
2.2	Context Analysis	03
2.3	Strengths, Opportunities, Constraints	09
2.4	Stakeholder Input	09
<b>3.0</b>	Development Scenarios	10
3.1	Scenario A	11
3.2	Scenario B	12
3.3	Scenario C	13
<b>4.0</b>	Midtown Charrette	14
4.1	Charrette Program	14
4.2	Public Input	14
<b>5.0</b>	Midtown Redevelopment Vision Plan	15
5.1	Key Elements	17
5.2	Wheeler Street Area Interim Plan	20
5.3	Three dimensional views	21
<b>6.0</b>	Implementation	22
6.1	Regulations and Policy	22
6.2	Incentives	24
6.3	Capital improvements	24
6.4	Marketing and Programming	24
6.5	Next steps	24



Midtown Redevelopment District

## 1.1 Opportunity

Plant City continues to experience strong residential growth in 2007. Much of this growth has taken the form of suburban subdivisions, complete with winding roads and landscaped cul-de-sacs. In contrast, Plant City's historic downtown (including the 85 acres south of downtown known as Midtown) has not seen significant residential construction. Downtown is primarily composed of offices, antique shops, churches, and a few home-town restaurants. Midtown is home mostly to commercial businesses with a scattering of single-family homes.

City leaders believe Midtown could be – and should be – a more dynamic, mixed-use area that complements downtown. Redevelopment of Midtown presents a major opportunity to encourage some of the City's future growth to occur in an urban shape and form. With the right policies, projects, and programming, Midtown has the potential to become a pedestrian-oriented place offering a variety of residential, retail, office, and recreation spaces.

A key element in Midtown's redevelopment is articulating a consensus vision about what those 85 acres near downtown should look like in the future. That vision will guide – and provide a foundation for – the journey toward successful redevelopment.

## 1.2 Scope and Process

The City initially considered commissioning a market study to determine the economic viability of Midtown's redevelopment. City leaders ultimately decided that the first step toward redevelopment should be to identify options and community preferences for Midtown's physical environment. The result would be a "vision" for the community's future illustrated through text and graphics. This document represents the vision for Midtown.

To help define this vision the City selected EDAW, a private firm specializing in planning, landscape architecture, and urban design.



EDAW's scope of work for the Midtown Redevelopment Vision Plan included:

- Review and analyze available information
- Document existing conditions
- Meet with key stakeholders
- Identify redevelopment concepts
- Hold a visioning session to obtain community input
- Develop and present Redevelopment Vision Plan to the City Commission
- Finalize and document the Plan

### 1.3 Guiding Principles

EDAW identified a number of planning principles that were critically important in developing the vision for Midtown. These "guiding principles" include the following:

#### *Walkable design*

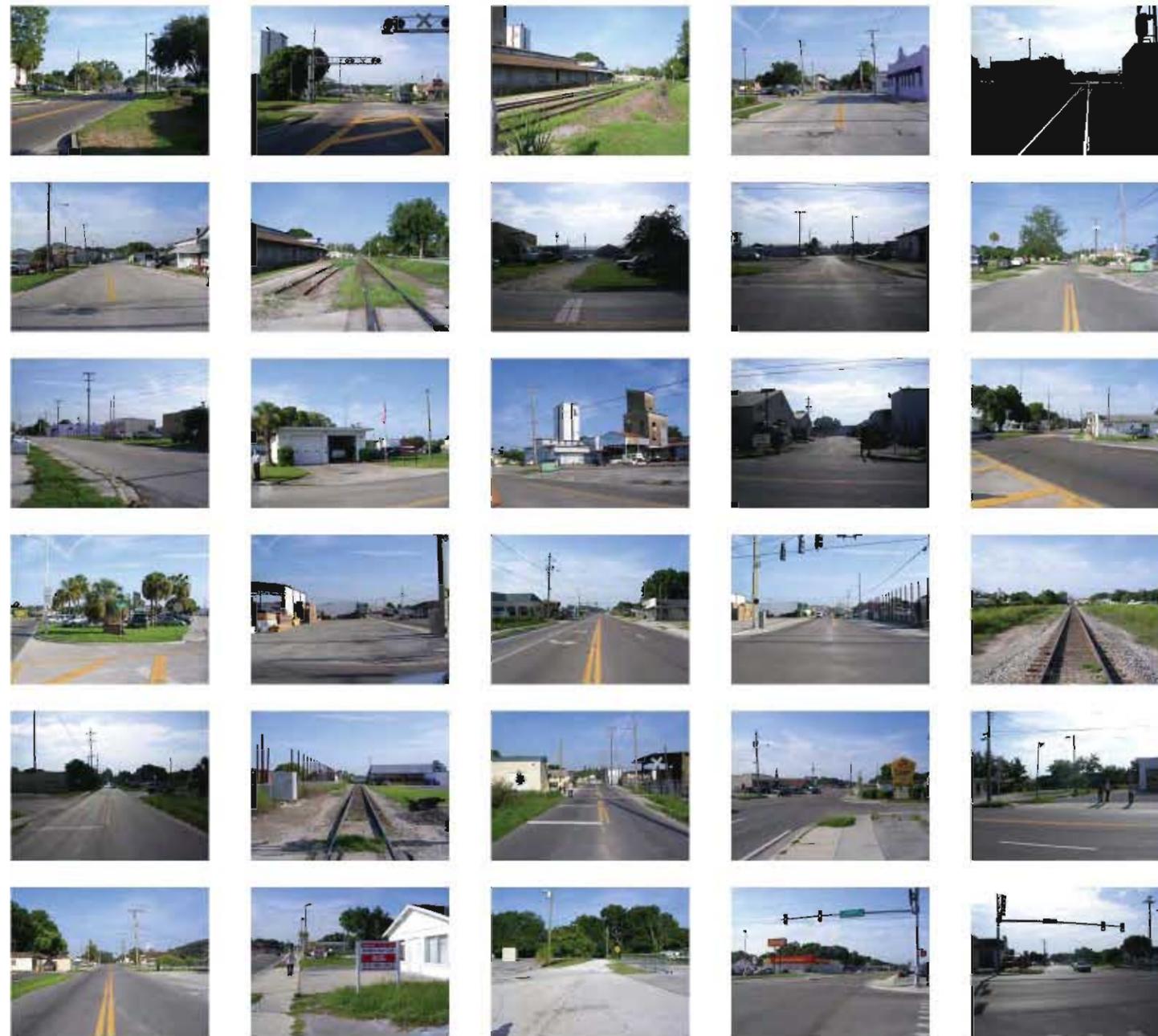
- Studies show people generally willing to walk about 1500 feet
- Need to provide housing, work, commercial, and entertainment options within this distance
- Need to bring uses close to sidewalk with different architectural styles meant to be experienced up close

#### *Sense of place*

- A feeling that a neighborhood has boundaries, a center and distinctive characteristics – key element is buildings built to the front property line
- Successful placemaking design should celebrate local history, climate, ecology, and building practice

#### *Mixed-use development*

- Mixed retail, office, residential, civic, educational, office uses in neighborhood or same building to create synergy, walkability.
- Mix of housing types creates economic balance
- An inviting mix of restaurants and retail are required to achieve economic vibrancy



### *Incorporation of Civic/Green Space*

- Serve as traditional centerpieces for neighborhoods
- Proven generators of economic value and redevelopment

### *Sustainability*

- Walkable/bikeable communities reduce fuel consumption, pollution
- Green space and trees are required - rather than discretionary - elements

### 2.1 Site Visit

Creating this vision plan began with the EDAW team and City staff touring the Midtown area by foot and by car. A photographic site inventory of existing conditions was developed for use as a resource during the analysis phase of this effort.

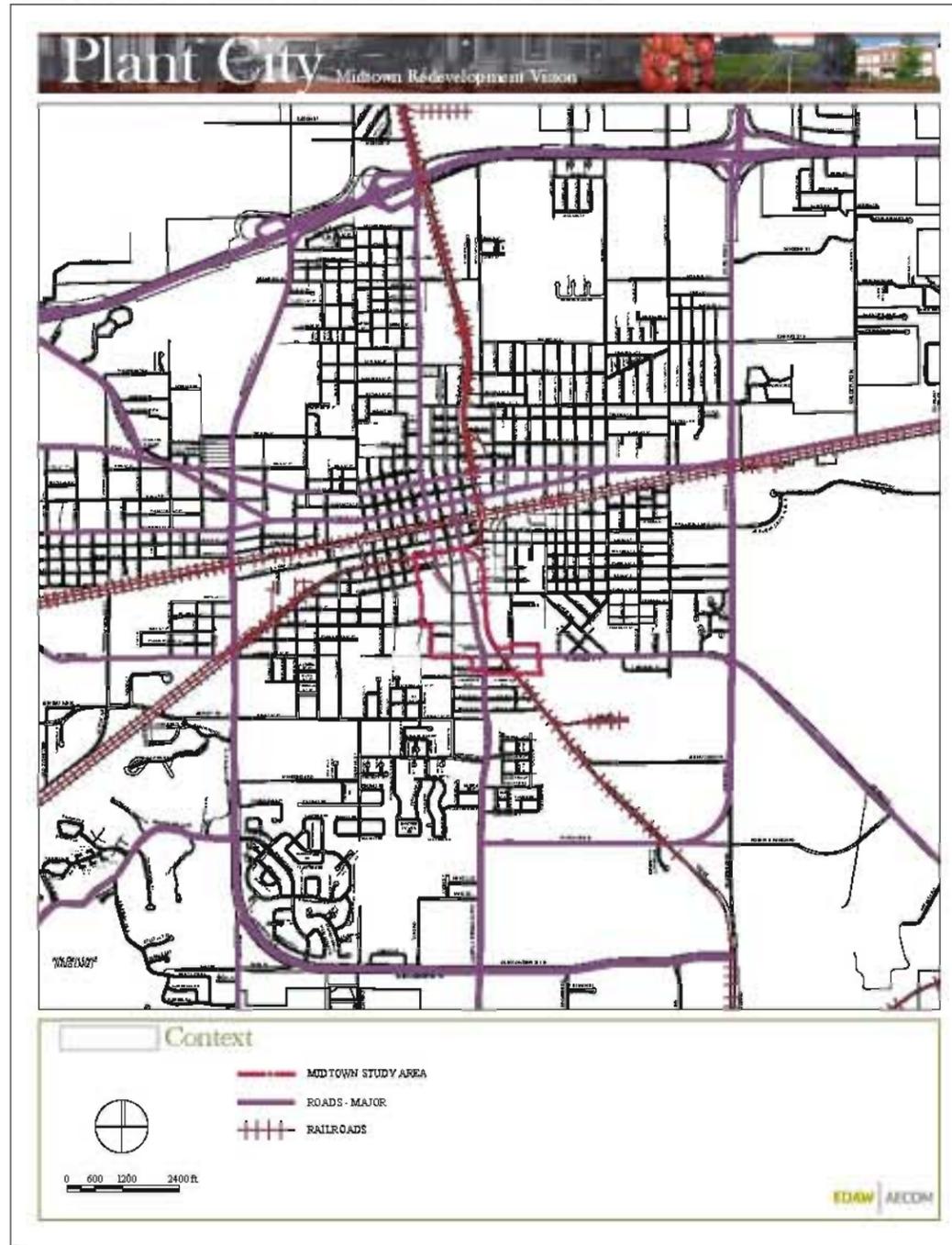
As shown in selected photographs at left, existing conditions in Midtown generally consist of substantially under-utilized commercial areas. Tree cover is largely absent or inadequate. The architectural character of the area is limited; some buildings are deteriorated and worn. Together these characteristics give the impression of an unappealing and uninviting pedestrian environment.

### 2.2 Context Analysis

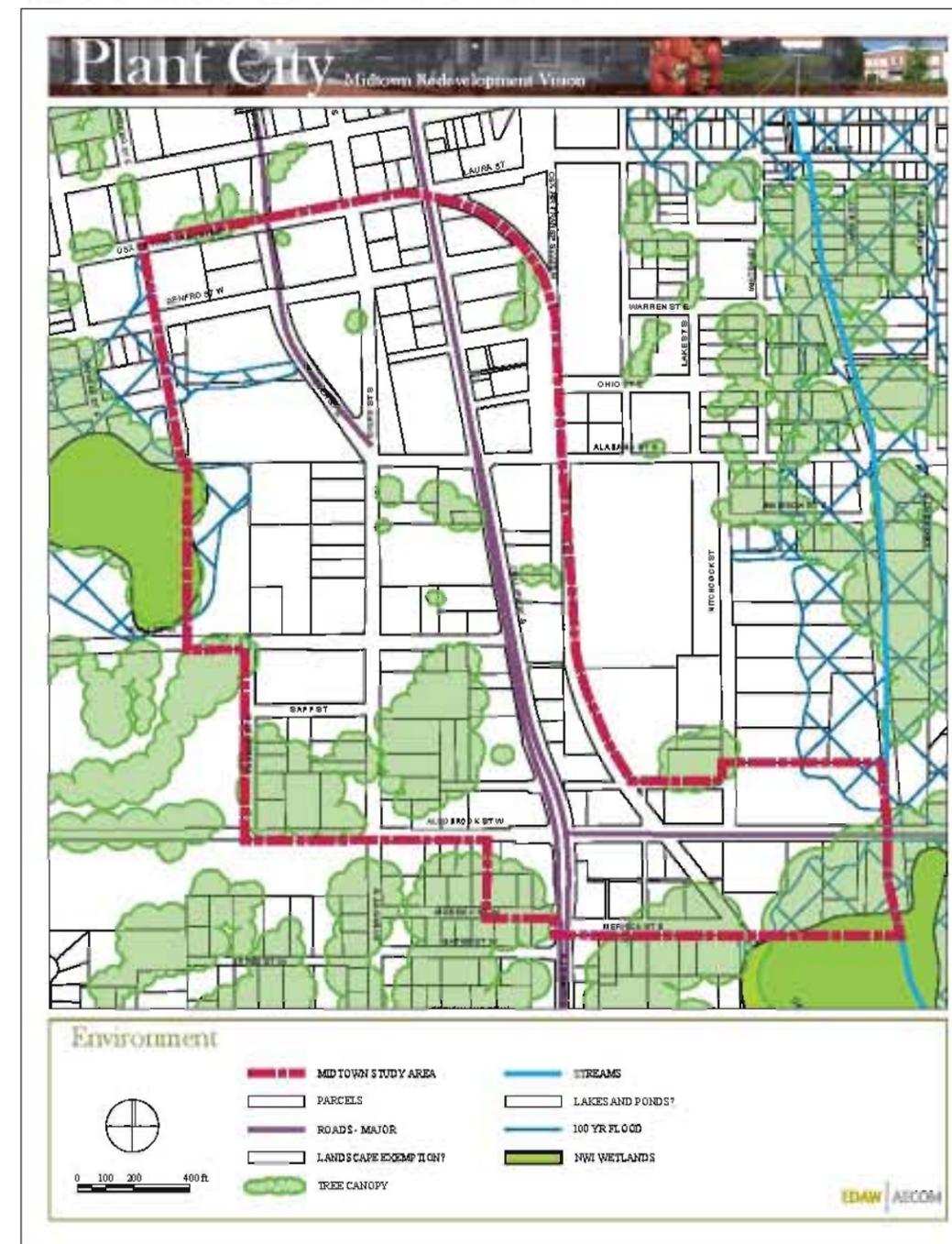
The next step was to obtain comprehensive information from geographic information systems (GIS) maintained by the City and the Hillsborough County City/County Planning Commission. Maps of the Midtown area were drawn to show the relationship of existing and future land uses, zoning, and City-owned properties, among other things. These maps were enlarged and mounted on foam boards to use during stakeholder meetings and a planned visioning charrette. As shown on the pages immediately following, Midtown maps include:

- Area Context
- Environment
- Infrastructure
- Property parcels
- Zoning
- Existing Land Use

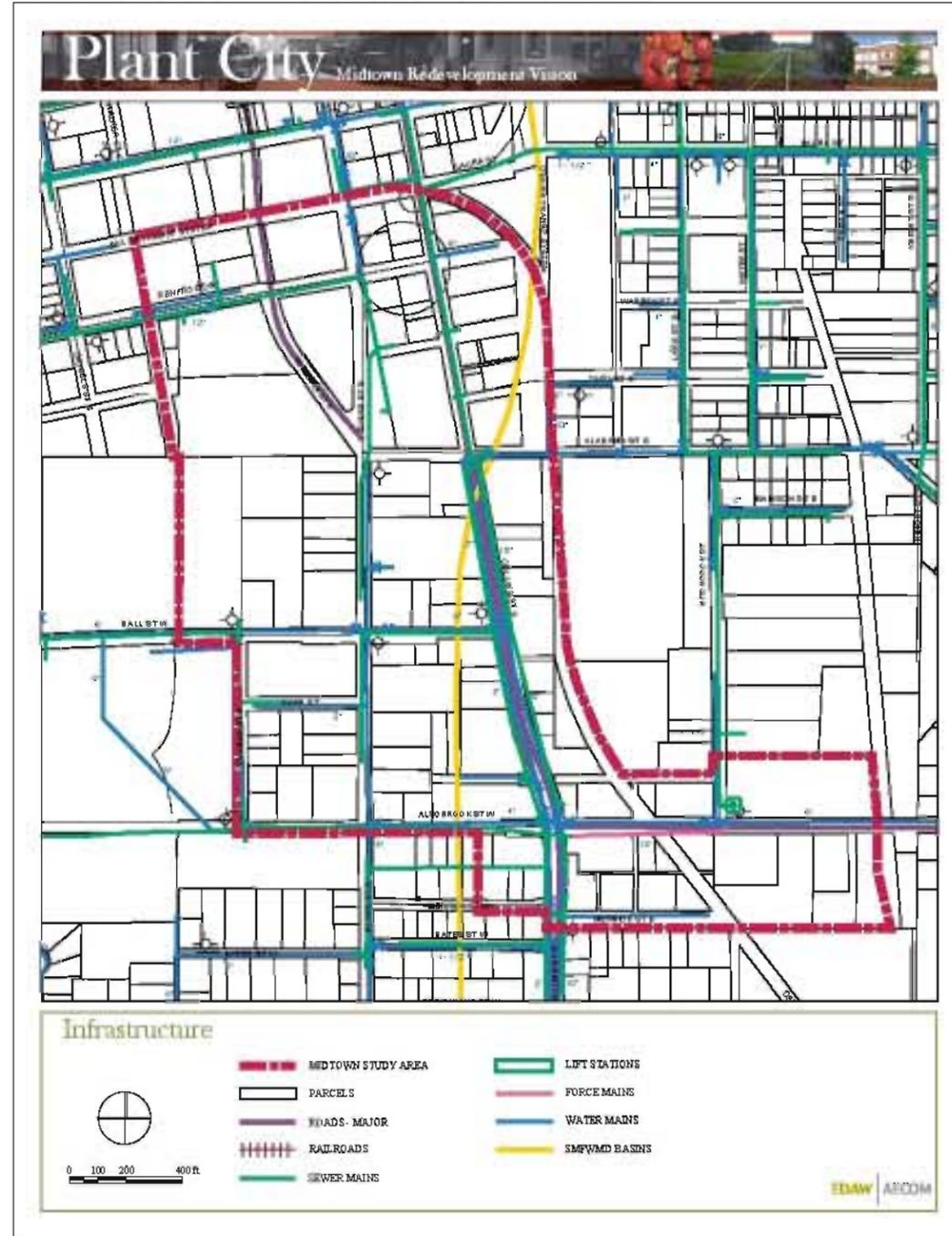
## Area Context



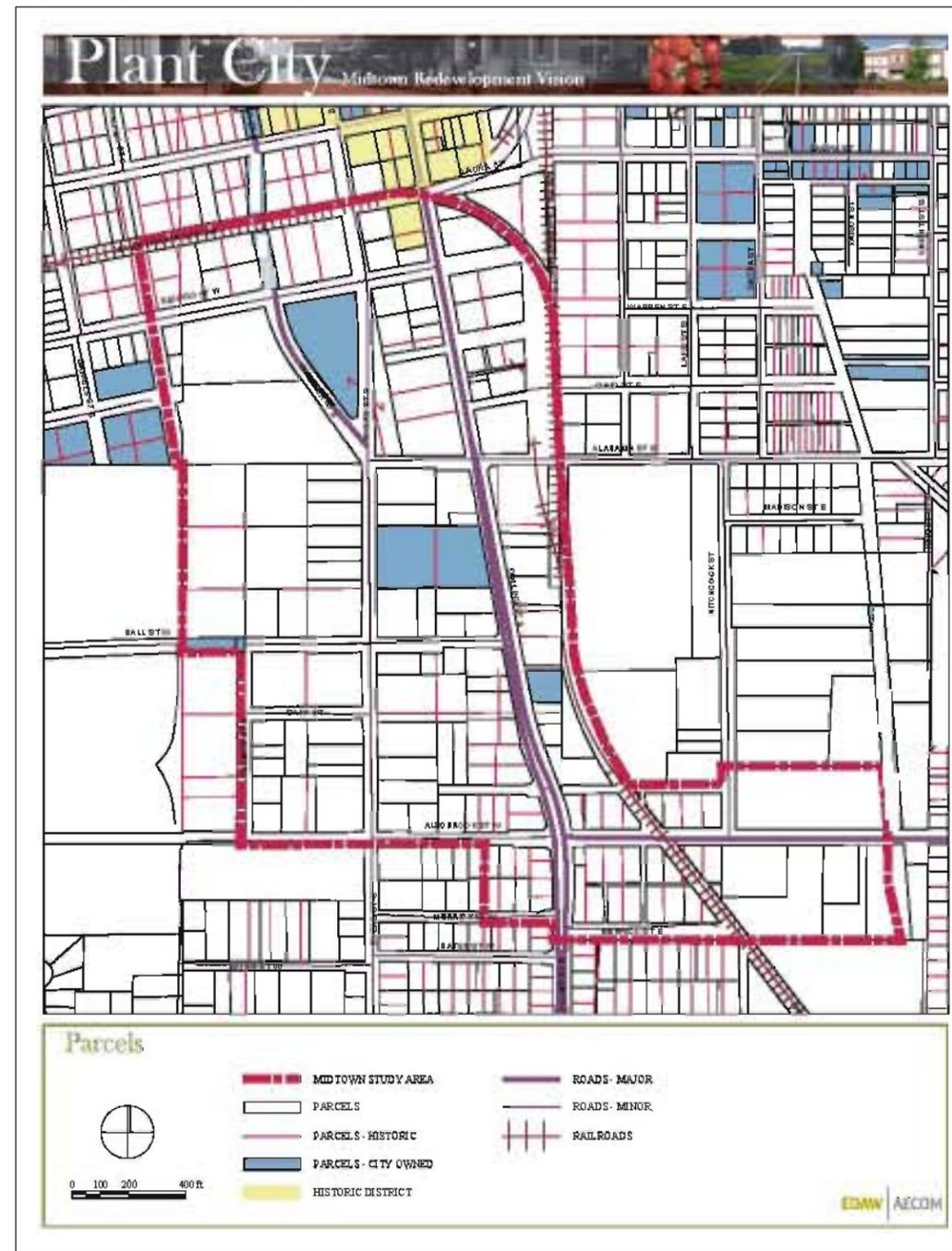
## Environment



# Infrastructure



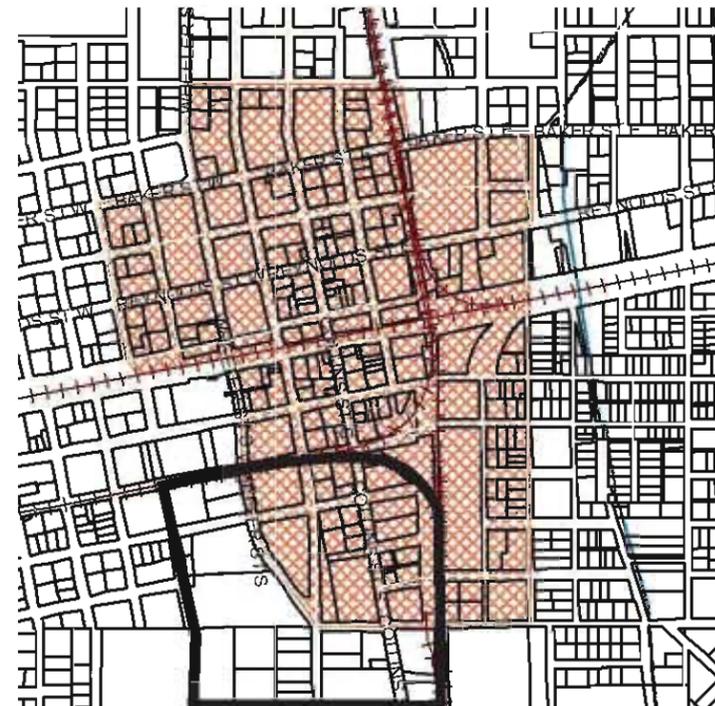
# Parcels







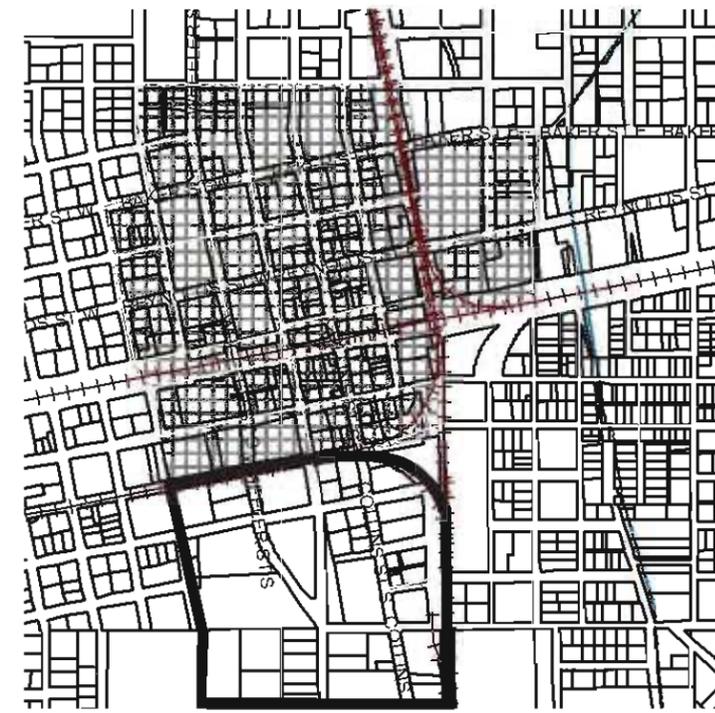
Future Land Use



Parking Exempt Area



Landscape Exempt Area



Historic Downtown

2.2 Context Analysis contd.

Additional background information about the Midtown area was drawn from other sources and is summarized below. The maps to the left illustrate the most important elements drawn from these background sources.

Future Land Use

Most of Midtown is designated for commercial use on the City's current future land use map. This type of land use classification allows a mix of uses, including residential, office, and commercial uses. The number of dwelling units in this classification is limited to 20 per acre. A floor-area ratio (FAR) is established at 0.35, which means that the total square feet of building space cannot be greater than 35% of the total square footage of the lot upon which the building sits. A small area of the southwest corner of Midtown is classified for residential use. The residential density allowed (20 DU/acre) is the same as for most commercial areas of Midtown. Office and light commercial uses are designated for the southern end of the area, near Alsobrook and Collins Streets. This classification allows 16 dwelling units per acre with a 0.35 FAR. Lastly, the current future land use map designates the southeastern corner of Midtown as industrial. A 0.50 FAR is allowed under this classification.

Parking Exempt Area

The City currently exempts some of northern Midtown from the general parking regulations in the City's zoning code. The rationale for this exemption area is that it is very difficult to renovate historic buildings or to construct new buildings within the existing urban street grid, while still meeting "modern" parking standards intended for suburban development. The exemption area is designed to ease redevelopment in the downtown area. Even so, a minimum number of parking spaces must be supplied within the exemption area, depending upon specific land uses.

Landscape Exempt Area

The northern portion of Midtown is also exempt from the City's general landscaping regulations. Landscaping required in the City's zoning code is geared more toward suburban development, which has larger open areas to work with. The exempt area reduces landscaping requirements because space is limited by both the downtown street grid and the placement of downtown buildings in relation to property lines.

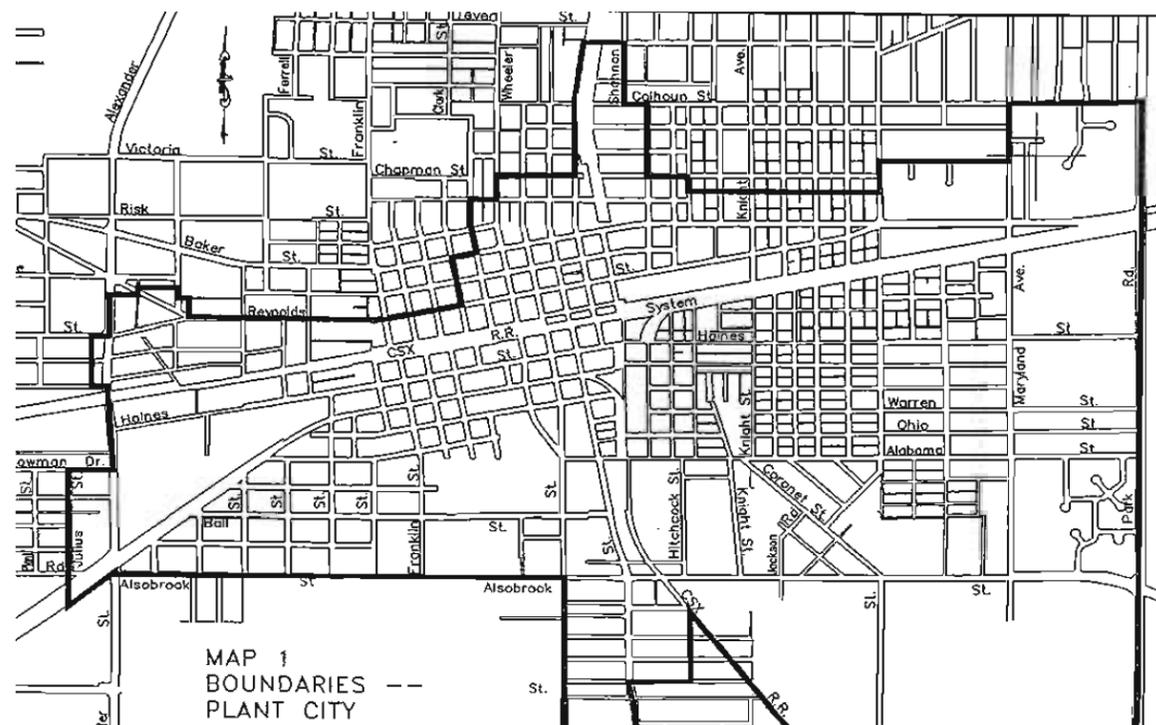
Historic Downtown

Special land use and zoning regulations apply to new developments in the historic downtown which includes the northern section of Midtown. One key feature is the building height limitation of 70 feet, provided the building is mixed use and meets architectural appropriateness standards (special parking requirements also must be met).



Laura Street Study Area

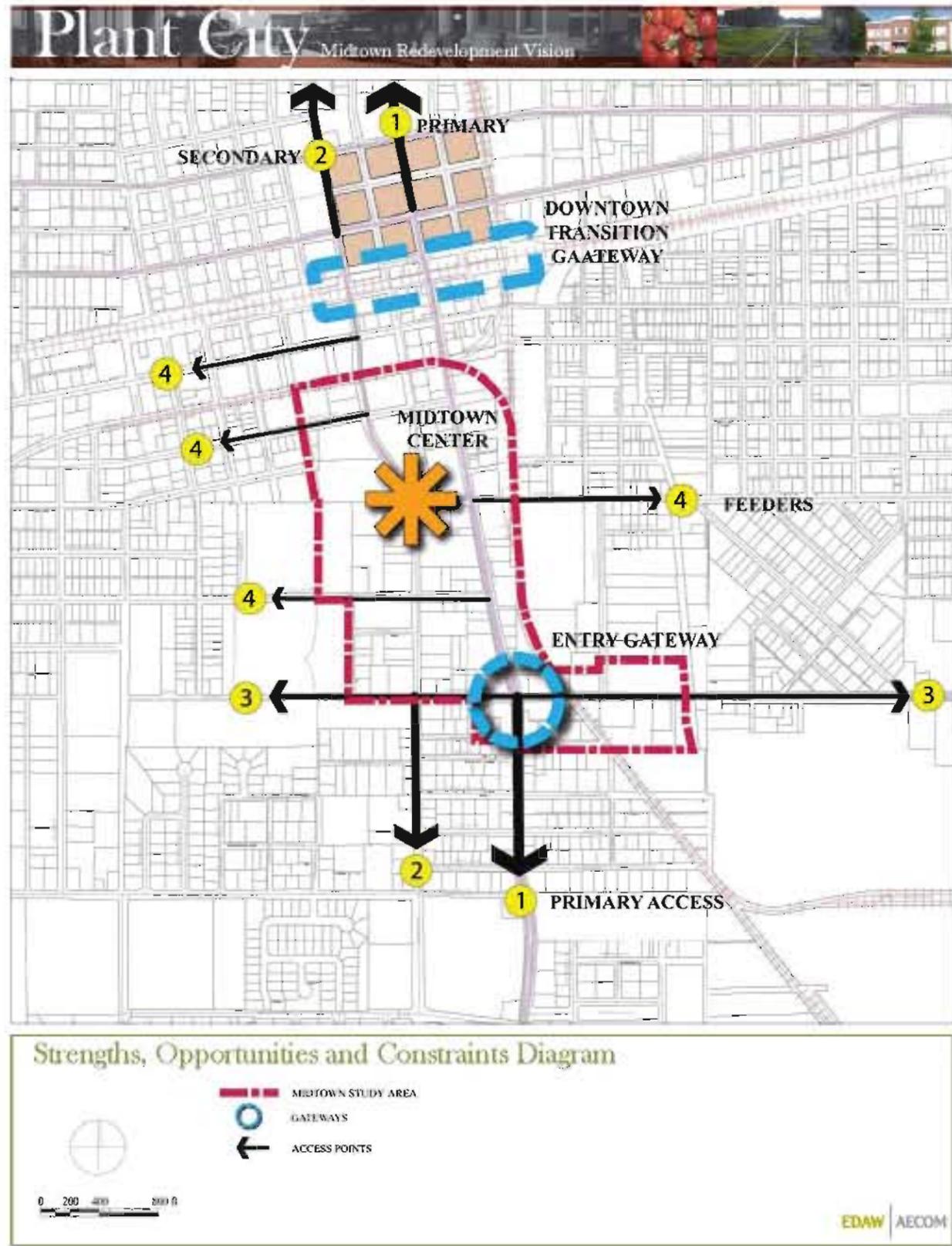
Decades ago Laura Street was the central spine of the African-American community. Like many other such communities throughout Florida, the neighborhood declined as local retailers left and homes deteriorated. To reverse the decline the City hired a private consultant to create a revitalization plan that outlined steps for improving the community. The Laura Street corridor has seen significant progress, but more work remains to be done. Because Laura Street is located northeast of Midtown, a unique opportunity exists to link revitalization efforts for the cumulative benefit of both areas and the City as a whole.



Community Redevelopment Area

The Plant City Community Redevelopment Area includes most of the Midtown study area and may provide a funding mechanism over time as property values increase.

The City established a Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) in 1981 to address slum and blight conditions in the downtown core. Adjacent residential areas were included in the CRA as was the rest of Midtown. The objectives of the CRA plan are consistent with the "guiding principles" of this Midtown Vision Plan. The CRA plan calls for mixed-use development, parks and green space, and walkable design. Thus, CRA funds may be expended in effort to revitalize Midtown.



### 2.3 Strengths - Opportunities - Constraints

Developing a viable redevelopment vision cannot be done effectively without understanding a study area's strengths, weaknesses, and constraints. To this end, EDAW reviewed data collected during site visits; information from the sources described earlier also was used to define a context for preparing the redevelopment vision.

Midtown's current physical environment reveals strong ties to industrial and commercial uses. Some of the challenges are readily apparent: Railroad tracks bound the north and east sides of the district; wetlands lie to the southeast and northwest; the existing street grid is poorly designed; sidewalks are narrow or non-existent in some key areas.

On the plus side: The City owns significantly-sized parcels in the district that could be made available for redevelopment; the district has good access links to other parts of the City; a large quasi-industrial business has outgrown its current location and wants to relocate; and multiple Midtown property owners have expressed interest in improving their properties.

The collation of all this information is a graphic depiction (see illustration at left) of the opportunities to be mindful of when redevelopment occurs.

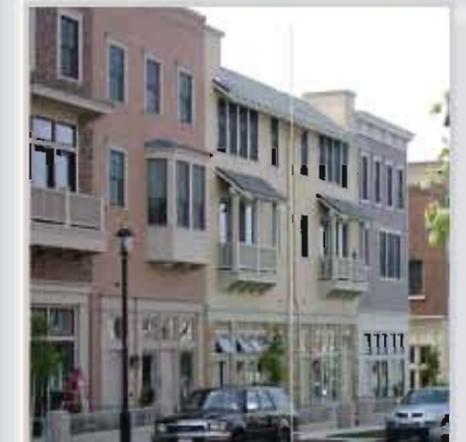
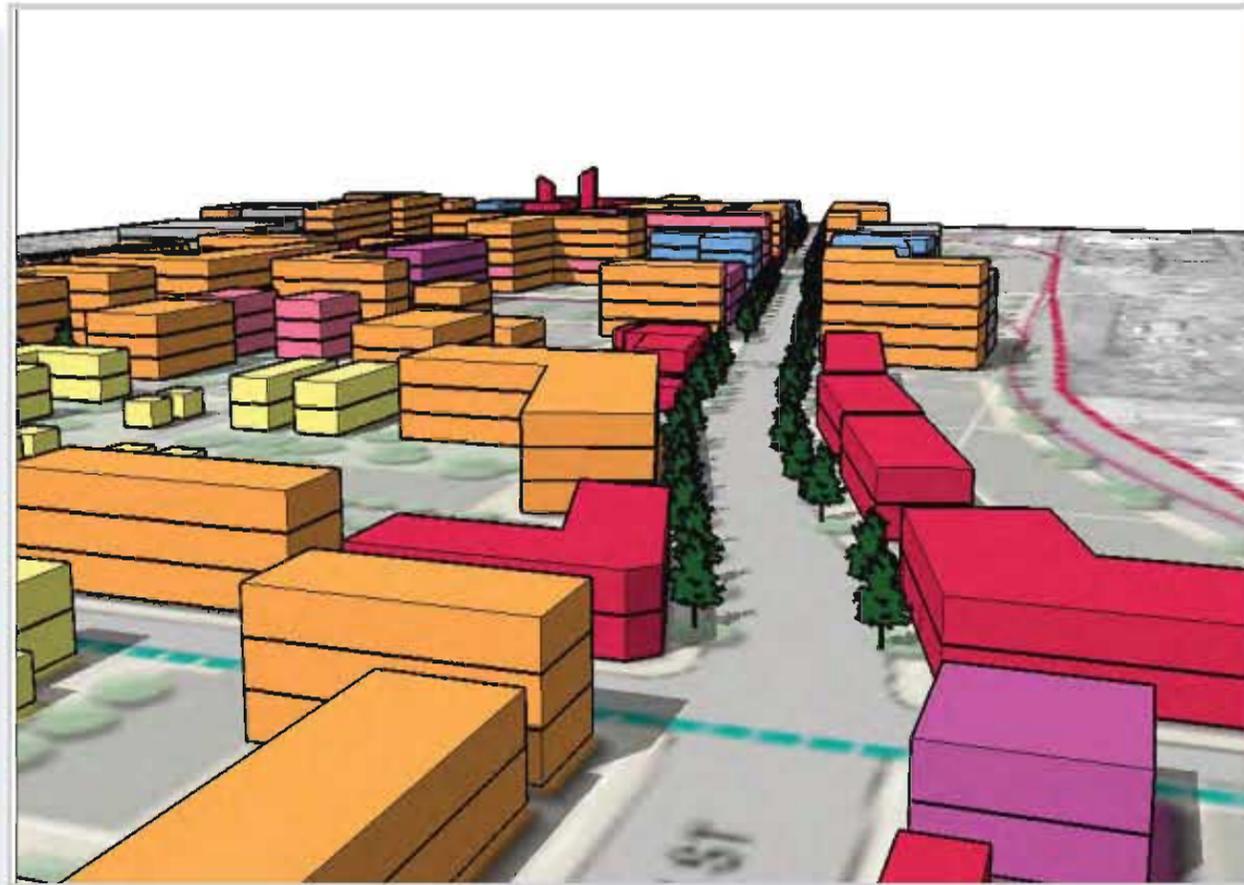
### 2.4 Preliminary Stakeholder Input

As a final step of the analysis phase of the study, preliminary interviews with key stakeholders were held to identify their concerns and desires regarding the redevelopment of Midtown. The following shared primary input emerged from the interviews:

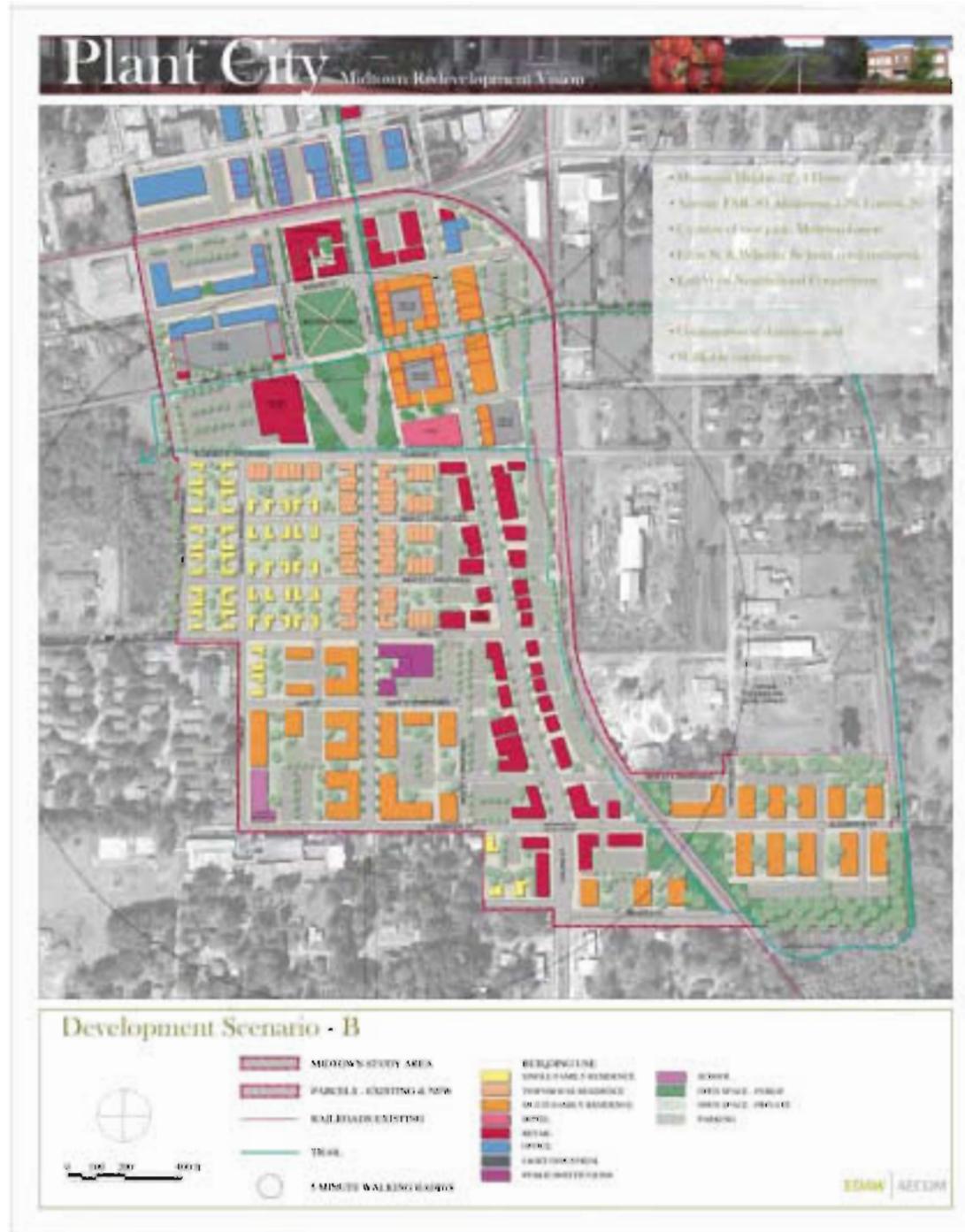
- Attract economic and residential development
- Increase maximum density and height
- Develop mixed uses
- Need anchor attractions, entertainment, and retail
- Create civic/green spaces
- Do not harm existing downtown
- Protect and enhance Plant City historic character

## development scenarios

Based on the information obtained in the analysis phase, three redevelopment scenarios were drafted to illustrate varying degrees of density, green space, mixed use, and City investment. A plan view was developed for each scenario, followed by an interactive three-dimensional imaging model that allows a user to virtually explore the scenarios and become familiar with the effect of different density, height, and use criteria. Uses were proposed with the goal of obtaining a favorable balance of types of use.

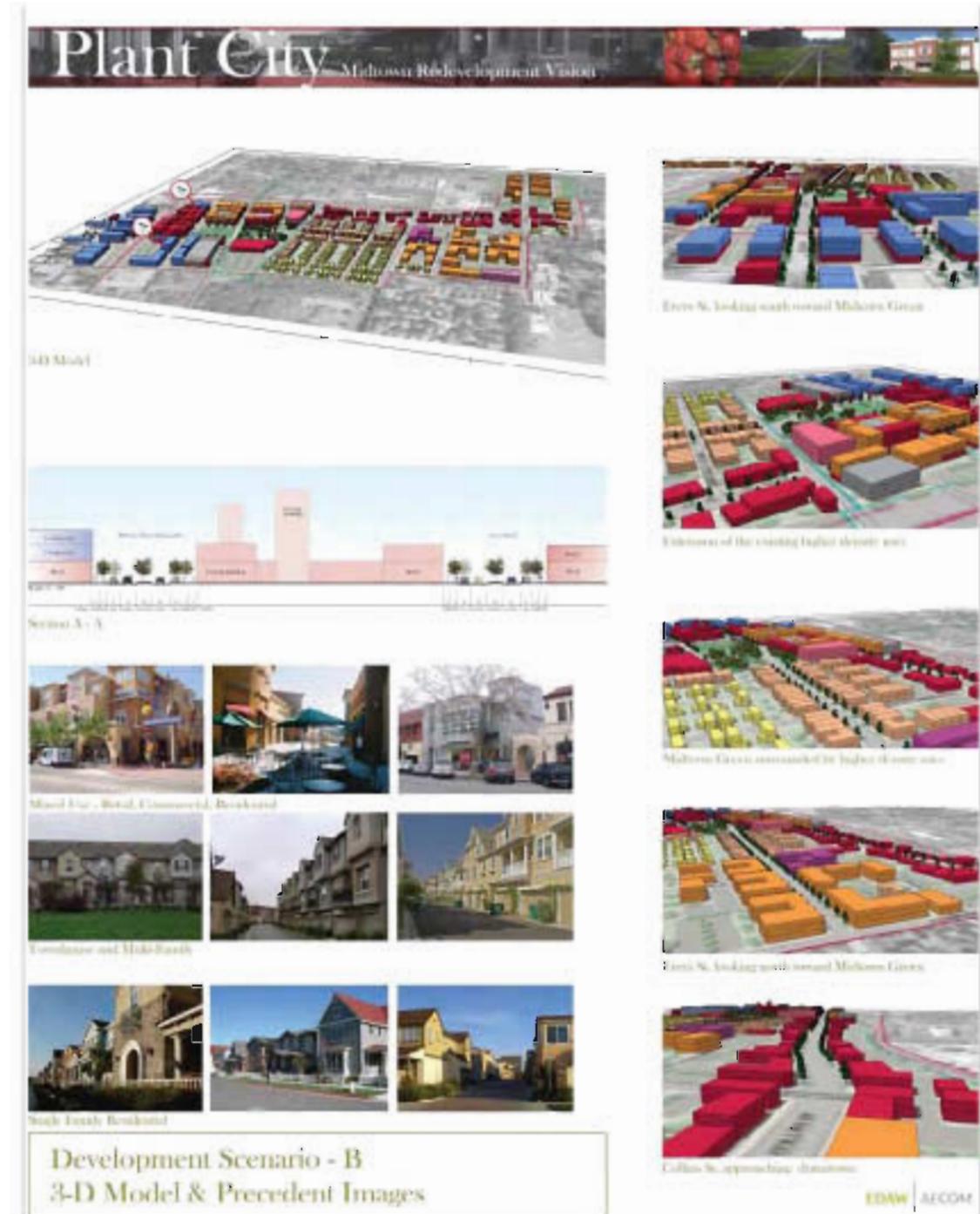






## 3.2 scenario b

- Maximum Height: 52', 4 Floors
- Average FAR .8, range 2.59 - .26
- New park: Midtown Green
- Evers Street & Wheeler Street connectors
- East-West Connections
- Continuation of downtown grid
- Walkable community



Scenario B was developed based on a maximum height of 4 stories and an average FAR of 0.8. North-south and east-west connections have been established or enhanced and the downtown grid has been extended. A new city park - Midtown Green - has been created to provide civic and green space and an organizational center for the new community. A balance of uses in keeping with a larger vision for Midtown are reflected, and the proposed densities and uses create the foundation of a walkable community.



## Midtown Visioning Charrette



### MIDTOWN PUBLIC-PARTICIPATION VISIONING CHARRETTE

**DATE:** TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 14<sup>TH</sup>  
**TIME:** 6:00 PM to 9:00 PM  
**WHERE:** CITY OF PLANT CITY - CITY HALL AUDITORIUM  
**ADDRESS:** 302 W. REYNOLDS STREET  
**PURPOSE:** PUBLIC PARTICIPATION DESIGN EXERCISE

On the evening of November 14<sup>th</sup>, the City of Plant City will hold a public visioning charrette to obtain public input as part of the process to build community consensus on a redevelopment vision and guiding plan for the Midtown redevelopment area. The Midtown area is an area located directly south of the City's central business district, and is that area generally bounded by the east/west CSX railroad tracks located between Dr. MLK and Ranfro Street on the north; by the north/south CSX railroad tracks running parallel and east of Collins Street on the east; by Alsobrook & Merrick streets on the south; and by Thomas & Walker streets on the west. Please see the map on the reverse side.

The City has hired the international planning and urban design firm EDAW to study the options for redeveloping Midtown into a vibrant, walkable, mixed-use neighborhood. EDAW is tasked with completing a Midtown Redevelopment Vision Plan that identifies a consensus-based physical-redevelopment plan and a strategy for implementing the plan. At the Charrette EDAW will provide information on various redevelopment options and obtain community input on issues, including land use, building heights and residential densities, civic and green-space opportunities, and architecture and urban design considerations.

You are cordially invited and strongly encouraged to attend this visioning design charrette for an opportunity to have input into this process which is sure to have an influence on the city's future. If you have any questions concerning this charrette, please contact the city by e-mailing [randers@plantcitygov.com](mailto:randers@plantcitygov.com) or telephoning 813-859-4231.

**char-rette** [shuh-ret]  
 -noun - An intense period of design activity

Any collaborative session in which a group of individuals draft a solution to a design problem.

Charrettes typically involve an intense meeting or meetings, involving municipal officials, developers, and local property owners and residents. A charrette promotes joint ownership of solutions and attempts to develop a consensus solution to planning needs.

### Residents, Business Owners Discuss Midtown Visions

Tampa Tribune, Nov 18, 2006

"More than 40 residents, including business owners from the area south of historical downtown, attended."

"One of the most well-received concepts: ensure the architecture of historical downtown buildings influenced the architecture of midtown."

"Business owners seemed receptive of the idea and were relieved when Mayor John Dicks told them that the city would not use eminent domain."

### Charrette Program

A "visioning charrette" was held on November 14, 2006, to obtain public input on the three redevelopment scenarios created by EDAW. Visioning charrettes typically are defined as highly-interactive public meetings to discuss and explore development options for a defined area. The charrette began with City leaders welcoming the crowd and EDAW explaining the purpose and scope of the visioning initiative. EDAW staff discussed the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities in redeveloping Midtown; guiding principles for good urban planning and design also were outlined.

Charrette attendees were then invited to review the three different redevelopment scenarios (Scenarios A, B, and C, presented on previous pages), which were mounted on large foam presentation boards. Laptop computers also were positioned near Scenarios B and C so that attendees could view 3-D "fly over" perspectives for each of those two redevelopment options.

### Charrette Public Input

Attendees spent considerable time reviewing each redevelopment scenario. EDAW staff and City staff were available to answer questions and explain the different scenarios. As part of the visioning exercise, attendees were asked to jot comments on cards or Post-It® notes. Attendees were asked to place Post-It® notes directly on the scenario foam board that it related to; comment cards could be dropped off in a box by the exit.

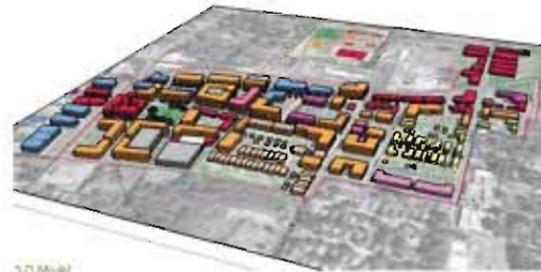
A review of the comments showed strong general support for the building heights and residential densities depicted in Scenario C. Other input is highlighted below:

- Desire for mixed-use, higher density, and the addition of civic greenspace
- Concerns about eminent domain
- Concerns about parking and the ability of the market to support the new space
- Discussion of possibility of building a new library facility in the Midtown area
- Concern about stormwater impact

The charrette closed with an assurance that the input obtained would be used to develop a final redevelopment vision. In response to a question about the use of eminent domain to acquire property for redevelopment, City officials assured the attendees that such action was not contemplated as a way to implement the vision plan.



# Plant City Midtown Redevelopment Vision



3-D Model



Street view looking north toward Midtown Green



View south of the existing higher density uses



Midtown Green surrounded by higher density uses



Street view looking north toward Midtown Green



Street view looking south toward Midtown Green

EDAW | AECOM



Midtown Green



Mixed Use - Retail, Commercial, Residential



Townhouse and Multi-Family



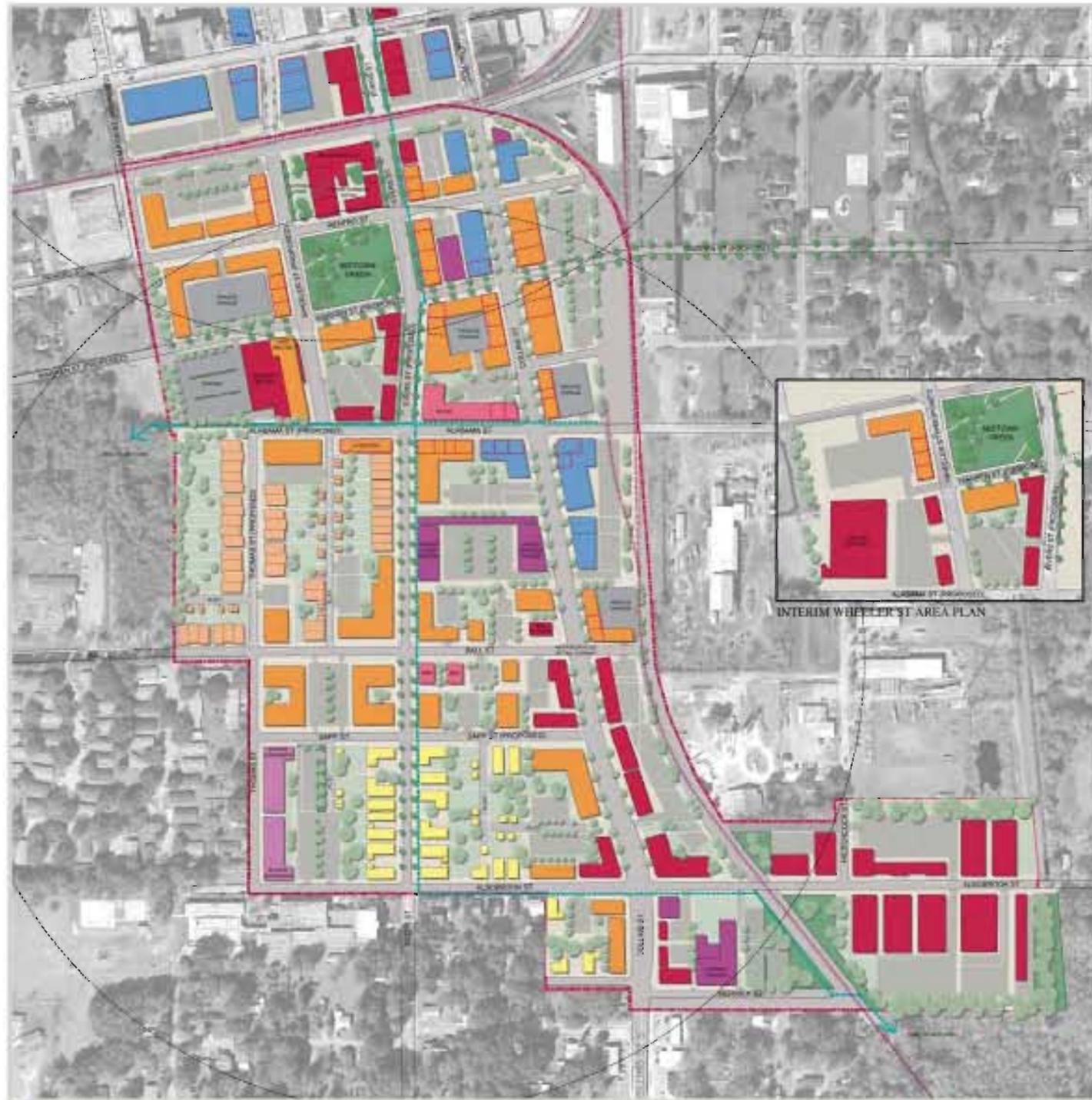
Single Family Detached

FD Development Scenario - D  
3-D Model & Precedent Images



# midtown redevelopment vision plan

vision plan



### Midtown Redevelopment Vision Plan

The Midtown Redevelopment Vision Plan documented on the following pages was created as a result of extensive data collection, significant public input, and the application of sound urban planning and design principles. The recommended vision plan actually is a fourth redevelopment option – “Scenario D” – and is based loosely upon Scenario C shown in previous pages. This final vision plan took rough form after incorporating comments from the public and from City staff following the charrette. Additional shaping of the plan occurred after EDAW presented a draft of Scenario D to the City Commission on March 12, 2007.

As shown in an overview to the left and in more detail on subsequent pages, the recommended vision plan champions a pedestrian-friendly and mixed-use neighborhood that creates a definite “sense of place” in the City. The City can use this the plan to stimulate new development in a desired location and in a desired form.

The plan calls for residential townhouses and multi-family buildings to help support a recommended increase in retail, commercial, and office space. A village green is recommended for passive recreation and to anchor neighborhood coffee shops, bookstores, and other neighborhood-oriented businesses. Offices that draw customers from a larger City-wide or regional service area also are part of the mix, right alongside businesses that provide essential services to other businesses both in Midtown and in historic downtown.

Midtown can be successfully revitalized by leveraging its proximity to Plant City’s traditional downtown and by capitalizing on the redevelopment of vacant or underutilized properties. Indeed, by building upon the urban fabric already existing around it, Midtown offers a sense of place more authentic than is evident in suburban communities using faux architecture to create “instant history.” A redeveloped Midtown is the real deal.



### 5.1 Key Elements

The Midtown Redevelopment Vision Plan includes the following key elements:

#### *Increase Density and Height*

The plan advocates a substantial increase in height and density for future development. Current development patterns are not sufficient for Midtown to realize the goal of creating a pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use neighborhood.

According to comments gathered at the charrette and via discussions with City Commissioners and staff, general support exists for a maximum building height of four to five stories in a redeveloped Midtown. The most significant increase in height and density should occur at the northern end of Midtown. This area reaches southward from downtown to Alabama Street; also included is the section from Alabama Street south to Ball Street, between Evers Street on the west and Collins Street on the east.

Height and density should taper down from the area described above as a transition to lower-density residential areas outside Midtown to the west, south, and east.

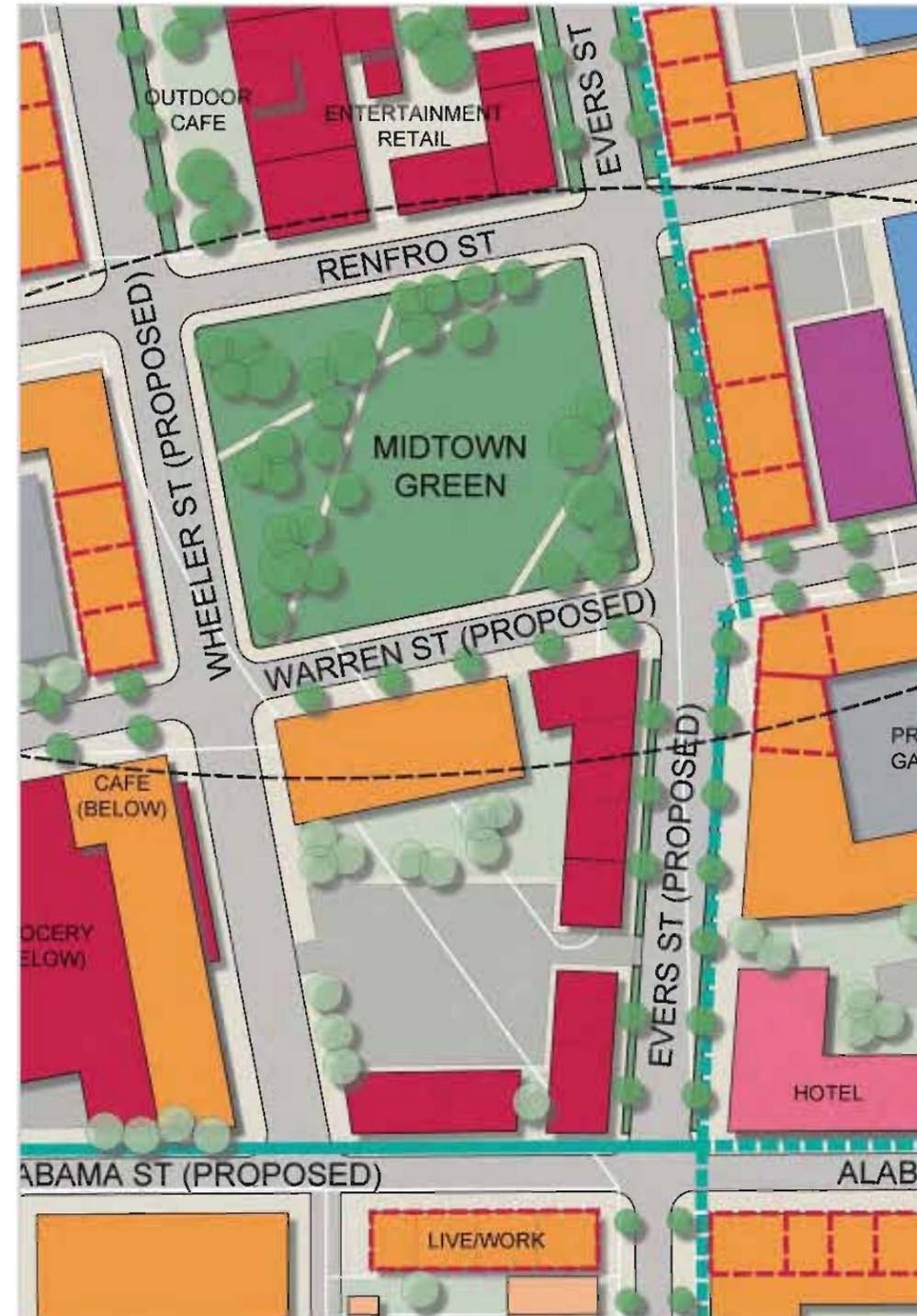
Three-dimensional renderings are shown at left to present views of buildings constructed as recommended in the plan.

#### *Eliminate Required Building Setback Lines*

New buildings should be constructed at the front property line and adjacent to a sidewalk. The urban areas in today's great cities were originally planned that way years ago; such an archetype represents a true urban form essential for creating a sense of place and an appealing street environment for pedestrians.

This type of building placement now exists in the downtown and northern Midtown. It should be replicated throughout Midtown to help knit Midtown together with downtown.





## 5.1 Key Elements (cont'd.)

### *Create Central Green Civic Space & Parking Area*

Just as building to the property line is a traditional urban feature, so too is a civic-oriented village green. Many communities throughout Florida again are incorporating this important “place maker” into their redevelopment plans. Midtown also should create a defined green area. The green will serve not only as a refreshing and inviting people place, but also as a magnet to attract and anchor neighborhood businesses and residences. Trees and vegetation native to Florida can be used to make the green more attractive and to help meet sustainability needs.

The proposed village green is rectangular in shape and is located in the northern end of Midtown (just south of Renfro Street and west of Evers Street). This location was chosen because of several important planning considerations in the visioning process. First, the proposed location is near the geographic midpoint of the entire downtown/Midtown area, which makes it accessible by pedestrian from both areas. Second, the true form of urban green space requires well-designed buildings arrayed around it. The advantage of the proposed village green location is that three of its four sides are either vacant land or will be available for redevelopment within the next few years. Finally, the City currently owns the parcel recommended for the village green, which is a key factor in selecting that location.

Creating an optimal green space, however, will require some streets to be realigned. These include straightening Evers Street southward from Renfro Street; straightening Wheeler Street southward from Renfro Street; and extending Warren Street westward from Collins Street. Once these are completed, another parcel is created south of the proposed village green. This parcel can be configured to include new commercial buildings and public surface parking.

### *Encourage Diverse Uses & Housing Types*

A fourth primary element in the plan emphasizes mixed-use development. This type of development also is a traditional urban form. It promotes a walkable, pedestrian-friendly atmosphere by locating residential uses alongside neighborhood service businesses and attractions. Co-location of uses reduces the need for neighborhood residents to access necessary goods and services via automobile.

The plan thus calls for a broad mix of residential, office, commercial, retail, entertainment, and other uses. Outdoor dining also is included as a recommendation. Outdoor cafés shaded with canopies or trees invite people out “on the street” and helps create a more vibrant pedestrian



Single Family Residential

5.1 Key Elements (cont'd.)

environment. However, successfully attracting more pedestrian activity also means emphasizing both public safety and a clean, well-maintained streetscape (no trash, litter, or debris).

As for housing, the plan calls for different residential types and price ranges. These include townhouses, apartments, artist lofts, and zero-lot line single-family homes. The townhouses are expected to be either condominiums or rental properties; the apartments and lofts likely will be geared toward the rental market; and the single-family homes are expected to be resident-owned, which vests residents' interest in the neighborhood's long-term viability.

*Improve Streets & Sidewalks*

Well designed streets are an essential part of any successful redevelopment plan. As previously discussed, some Midtown street layouts will need to be reconfigured to take full advantage of the other steps recommended in this vision plan. The following street projects will strengthen Midtown's connection to other City areas and will create a more typical urban pattern in the district:

- Straighten Wheeler Street to remove the existing awkward and unsafe intersection at Alabama Street
- Extend Warren Street to the east and west
- Extend Alabama Street to the east
- Extend Thomas Street north to Alabama Street
- Extend Sapp Street east to Collins Street
- Realign Evers Street to create eastern edge of Midtown Green



Townhouse and Multi-Family

In addition to street changes, the plan recommends widening sidewalks and installing trees along some key, high-visibility stretches of roadway. Roads identified for such streetscaping are Wheeler, Evers, and Collins Streets; the block surrounding the village green also should be streetscaped. This will set the tone for creating a pedestrian-friendly environment. It also will strongly signal the City's intent to invest in this revitalization initiative, which in turn is expected to draw private investment into Midtown.



Mixed Use - Retail, Commercial, Residential



5.2 Wheeler Street Interim Plan

The vision plan includes a recommendation for future construction of a grocery store on Wheeler Street. Specifically, the plan calls for the new store to be located at the east property line along the street.

The grocery store currently located on that parcel does not fulfill that recommendation. It is instead located near the parcel's west property line, with parking in front of the building. That existing parking lot extends to the eastern property line on Wheeler Street. The vision plan also recommends extending Warren Street westward, which would extend a roadway through the northwest corner of the existing grocery. Considering that the grocery store recently signed a new lease and was remodeled, it appears unlikely that such a significant change in site location will occur soon.

Therefore, an interim plan is included here to guide redevelopment activity in this specific area of Midtown. Wheeler Street still should be straightened as recommended earlier. Alabama Street should extend westward until it reaches the rear of the Sweetbay grocery. The Sweetbay parcel should be allowed to have additional out-buildings located on its parcel, without penalty for any loss of parking. Finally – perhaps in exchange for land necessary to straighten Wheeler Street – the City may consider granting additional development rights to the Sweetbay property owner on the new parcel to be created east of the grocery. This new parcel will be created by extending Warren Street across City-owned land (which also creates the village green directly north of the new parcel).



5.2 Interim wheeler street area plan



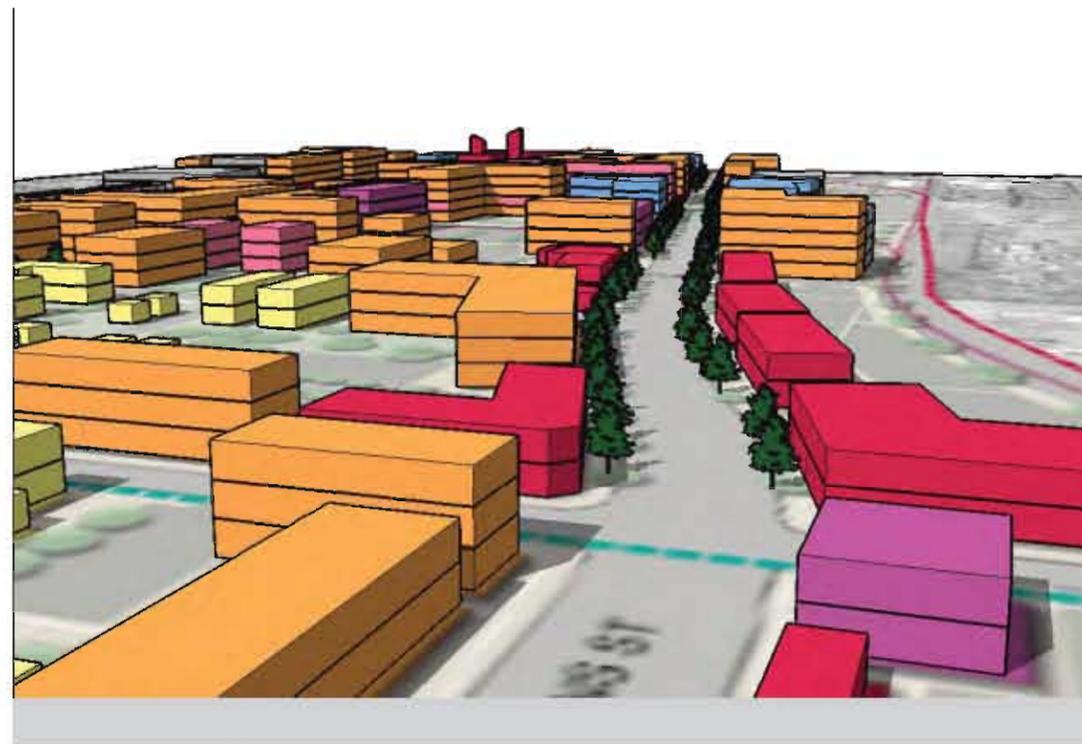
West view on Alabama Street



South view on Evers Street



South view on Collins Street



North view on Collins Street at Alsobrook Street

### 5.3 three dimensional views

## 6.1 Implementation

A redevelopment initiative like the one contemplated in the Midtown vision plan must have a forward-thinking implementation strategy in order to be successful. Such a strategy relies on four key actions – regulations, incentives, capital improvements, and marketing. These are outlined below.

### 6.1 Regulations and Policy

Regulations will help translate Midtown's vision into reality. The City should revise its land development regulations (LDRs) to require specific performance for mix of uses, parking, building height, building placement, landscaping, etc. These regulations would apply to all new development and redevelopment projects in Midtown.

Modifications to the City's current LDRs relating to Midtown should include:

1) *Mix of Uses* – Buildings of three or more stories should include multiple uses. For example, a three-story building might include office or retail on the ground floor with residential uses on the second and third floor. Multi-family residential structures should be required to have some portion of the ground floor allocated for supportable neighborhood retail uses. The City also should consider requiring that new single-story buildings proposed in higher-density areas must be constructed to support additional future floors, which then might be added later to meet plan goals.

2) *Parking* – A combination of parking on streets, in public and private surface lots, and (eventually) multi-deck parking garages will be needed to ensure adequate parking exists in a redeveloped Midtown. The plan shows locations for some of those parking features. To a large extent, the parking areas and building locations, sizes, and uses are only a graphic representation of the desired development pattern. Please note that the development pattern shown does not constitute a guarantee that adequate parking exists for any specific project. More detailed parking requirements should be included in the City's Midtown LDRs; actual parking needs will be evaluated as projects are submitted for review. The City also should consider extending the parking exemption area southward to cover portions of Midtown with high commercial densities.



### 6.1 Regulations and Incentives contd.

3) *Building Height* – Portions of Midtown are recommended to have higher densities of residential and commercial uses. Accommodating those higher densities will mean allowing higher finished building heights. The allowable building height north of Alabama Street should be no lower than 55 feet by right (height incentives for mixed-use buildings also should be established). South of Alabama Street the building height should be limited to 45 feet (mixed-use incentives should be considered). Single-family structures would remain limited to 35 feet as currently allowed under the City's zoning code.

4) *Building Placement* – All new construction – except for single-family houses – should be oriented so that the building front is built up to the property line (which typically is the right-of-way). A sidewalk should be located between the building front and the street itself; a narrow strip of grass or other vegetation also can be used between the sidewalk and the street. This traditional urban pattern creates a more pedestrian-friendly environment. Other regulations should be established for proportionate building mass and scale which are compatible with the rest of downtown. Those regulations would change in proximity to residential neighborhoods to the west, south, and east.

5) *Landscaping* – The landscaping exemption area currently present in much of the downtown should be extended southward to Alabama Street. The exemption area does not mean that no landscaping would be allowed or permitted, but that the landscaping within the exemption area should be suitable for an urban environment. Grass and ornamental trees or shrubs should be used where appropriate to soften the appearance of the built environment.



## 6.2 Incentives

The City may want to consider using incentives to encourage or induce development according to the vision plan. Some methods successfully used by other jurisdictions include density bonuses, tax credits, fee waivers, establishment of concurrency exception areas, expedited plan and permit reviews, etc. Without discussing each of these in great detail, the intent is to obtain desired development by reducing the cost of that development incurred by property owners and developers. There may be a short-term cost to the City, but the long-term gain in property values should more than offset those short-term costs.

## 6.3 Capital Improvements

Several key capital projects will demonstrate the City's commitment to revitalizing Midtown. As shown by the redevelopment experiences of other Florida cities in the past two decades, these capital projects also will help attract private investment in new buildings, attractions, and parking. These projects should be included in the City's capital improvement program and pursued with all due speed. Several of these have been discussed previously and are included in the list below:

- Create Midtown Green, reconfigure Wheeler and Evers Streets, and Warren and Renfro Streets around the park, adding sidewalk cafe space and street trees
- Create surface parking on reconfigured rectangle between Warren, Wheeler, Evers, and Alabama Streets
- Complete streetscape improvements on Evers and Collins Streets
- Extend Alabama, Warren, Sapp, Thomas, and Walker Streets
- Complete streetscape improvements on remaining streets to add street trees and crosswalks

## 6.4 Marketing and Programming

A vision plan that is kept on a shelf and not widely disseminated would be a waste of the City's time, energy, and money. Attracting the interest of property owners and developers is critically important in soliciting project proposals and – ultimately – seeing the plan come to life. The following items should be

prepared for use as marketing materials to the development community and property owners:

- Midtown Redevelopment Vision Plan
- Midtown Brochure/CD
- City Project Sheet and Map
- Private Sector Projects Sheet and Map
- Cooperative Property Advertising
- Summary of Development Incentives
- Midtown Website

As the initial infrastructure and building projects begin and are completed, the City should consider creating special events or festivals to focus even more attention on the revitalization efforts occurring in Midtown. These efforts can help define the identity of Midtown.

## 6.5 Next Steps

Although the vision plan will not be implemented overnight, several key actions should be taken to initiate the redevelopment process. Some of these actions are simple; some are complex or expensive. Nonetheless, successfully revitalizing Midtown requires measured progress toward implementing the vision plan. Specific timelines are not included because the City must determine available funding sources and project costs.

(At the time this document went to press, the Florida legislature was crafting a property tax plan that may impact the City's ability to fund this type of redevelopment project. The City will need to evaluate the implications of the legislature's plan in order to prioritize the steps listed below.)

The following steps are critical for implementing this vision plan:

- Adopt policy and regulatory changes
- Begin marketing efforts
- Reconfigure Wheeler Street to enable the construction of Midtown Green and adjacent improvements

With the completion of these steps, Midtown will be well on its way toward attaining its unique redevelopment potential.

