



Ocala

midtown master plan

JUNE 2017





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Introduction



1. Introduction

1.1 Midtown Master Plan Background and Purpose

Downtown Ocala is enjoying a great renaissance. New projects, businesses, and programming are repositioning Downtown, not just as a central location, but as an experience that is capitalizing on being the heart of the community and a hub of activity for the region.

Construction of a new hotel and retail complex and the Downtown parking garage; remodeling and activation of the historic Marion Theatre; and implementation of projects such as the Osceola Trak and the Ocala Downtown Market relocation are all bringing renewed energy and momentum to the city center.

Located just north of the Downtown, the Midtown area of Ocala's Downtown Community Redevelopment Area is also poised for transformative revitalization (see Figure 1.1). Now is the time to plan the long-term role of Midtown; how the area will complement the larger city center; the strategic use of catalytic development sites; creation of safe and comfortable connections between these sites and other great Downtown assets; and design of public spaces that welcome residents and visitors alike.

Successful development and implementation of the Midtown Master Plan will allow Ocala to further realize the vision and direction articulated in the Downtown Master Plan (2004), Ocala Vision 2035 (2010), and the Midtown Master Plan process.

1.2 Historical and Regional Context

Ocala was developed as a result of the Seminole Wars. The name, "Ocala" derives from the Timucuan Indians who called their village Ocali, meaning, "big hammock." In 1846, Ocala was designated as the county seat in the newly formed Marion County. Its economy was initially centered on small and large agricultural production, including the citrus industry. Rail operations reached Ocala in 1881, further encouraging economic development. In 1883, downtown Ocala was destroyed by fire, but was rebuilt with brick, granite, and steel, thus becoming known as "The Brick City."

Later phases of growth included the establishment of Ocala as a government and financial center and tourist destination, in addition to its numerous agricultural functions. The greater Ocala area experienced one of the highest growth rates in the country (for a city its size) around the turn of the 21st Century. Marion County's population in 2000 was approximately 250,000 people, an increase from less than 100,000 people in 1975.

Today, the city and surrounding region are renowned for their historic residential districts, rolling green fields of horse farms, desirable climate, open space preserves, and numerous outdoor and recreational opportunities. The region's central location between both coasts and access to other Florida destinations via a strong highway system contributes to the area's attractiveness for residents and businesses.



A view down Magnolia Street in the 1940s

Figure 1.1: Midtown Study Area and Context

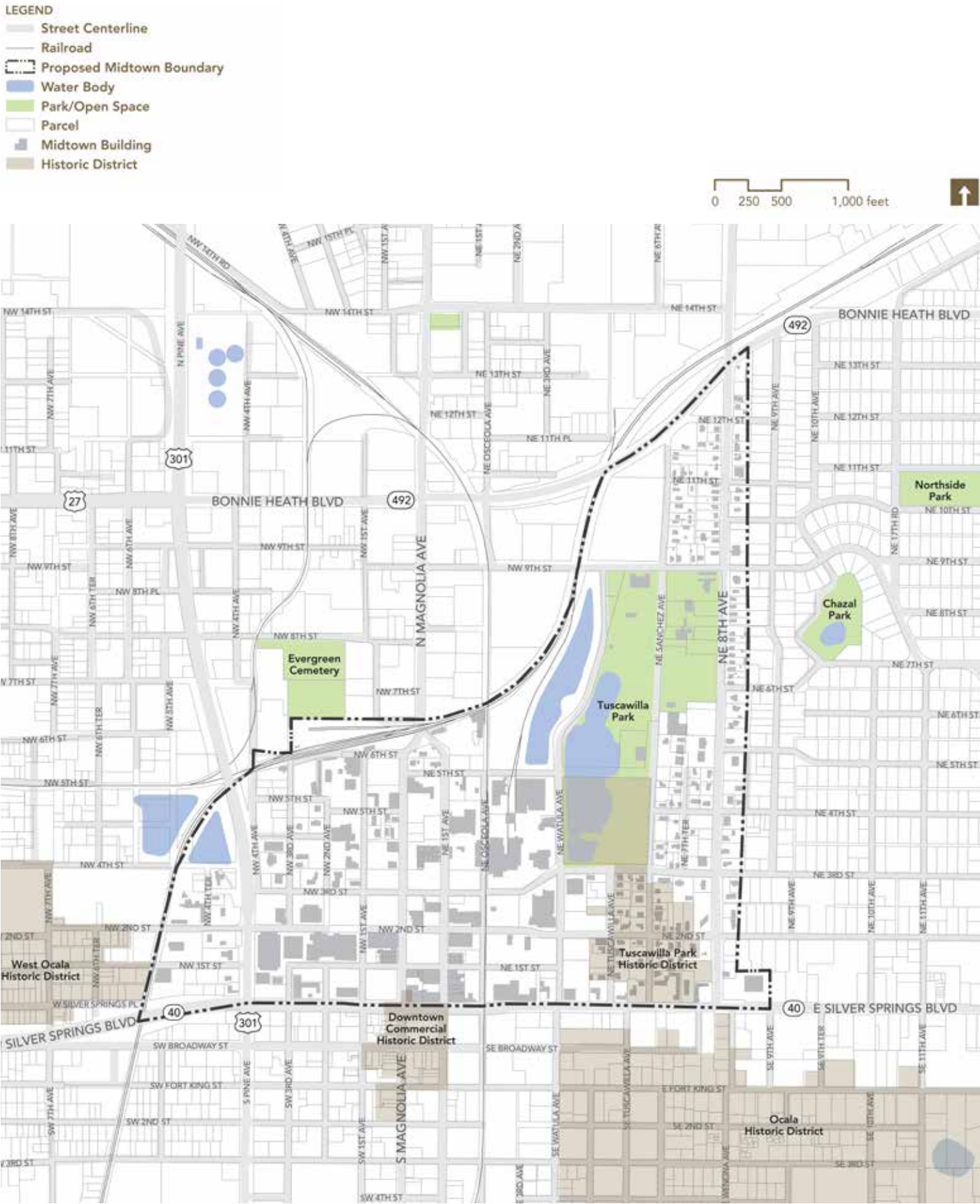
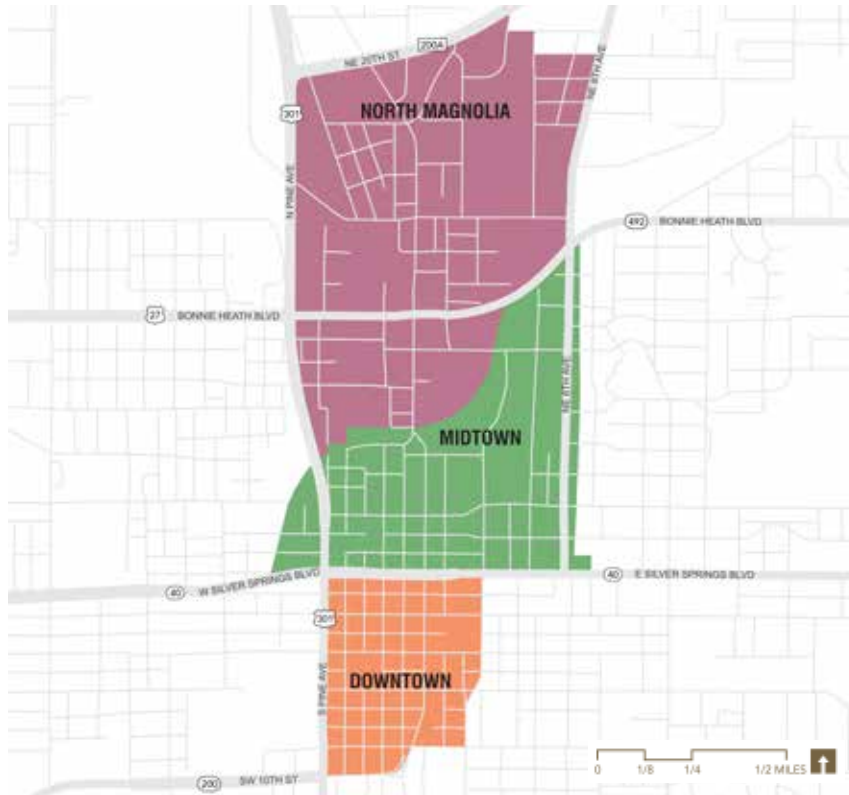


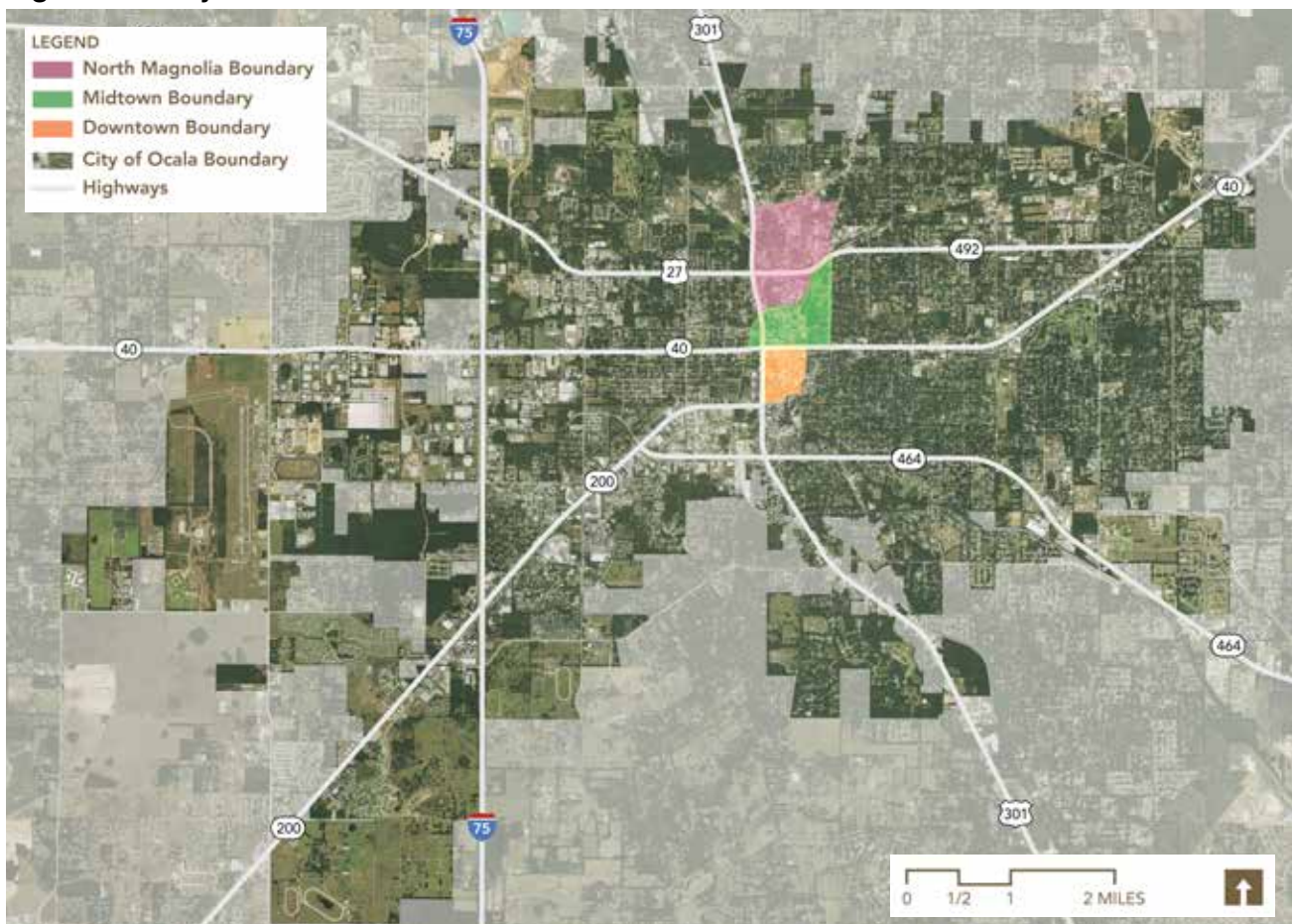
Figure 1.2: Downtown Context

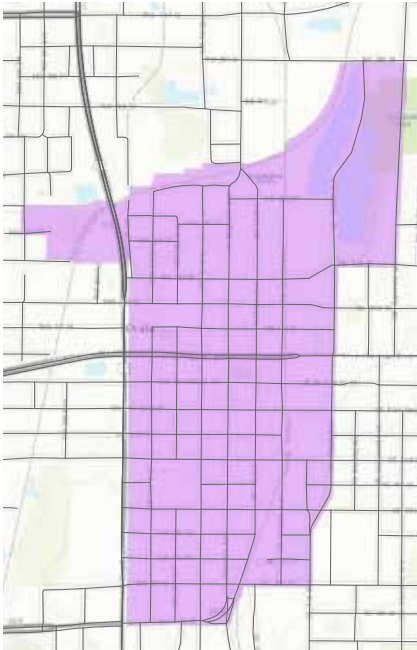


1.3 Midtown's Context

Midtown resides between Downtown and the North Magnolia District (see Figures 1.2 and 1.3). Combined, these three districts represent the city's core and demand vitality. Encompassing Downtown and much of Midtown is the Community Redevelopment Area (CRA). The CRA was established to conserve, rehabilitate, and redevelop the Downtown area in response to deteriorating physical and social conditions. See the Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) Plan (1988) in the following section for information.

Figure 1.3: City Context





The Downtown Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) boundary includes much of Midtown



The Downtown Master Plan illustrated future improvements for public and private spaces

1.4 Previous Planning Efforts

The Midtown Master Plan is based on a wide range of research, public input, and key concepts and recommendations sourced from previous planning efforts in and around Ocala. The plans summarized below are listed in chronological order, and include regional and citywide efforts as well as more focused studies of areas or topics relevant to the Midtown planning process.

COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AREA (CRA) PLAN (1988)

The Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) Plan of 1988 outlined the boundaries and purpose of the CRA, and provided recommendations for planning the redevelopment of Downtown. It defined the CRA as the 108-block area around Downtown Ocala, including Midtown, centered a few blocks east of the intersection of State Route 40 (Silver Springs Blvd.) and Highway 441 (Pine Ave.) In accordance with the state's Community Redevelopment Act, the City established the CRA in order to conserve, rehabilitate, and redevelop the Downtown area in response to deteriorating physical and social conditions. Mechanisms used for stimulating redevelopment within the CRA included tax breaks, incentives, and Tax Increment Financing.

DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN (2004)

The Downtown Master Plan provided a blueprint for achieving an economic, strategic, and planning and design framework to revitalize the downtown and implement the community's vision. The plan identified specific opportunity sites, public improvements, and programs that combined will help to guide growth and development in the city center and lead to a more diverse and dense city core. Many initiatives outlined in the Downtown Master Plan will be implemented in part through CRA financing tools.

OCALA 2035 VISION (2010)

The Ocala 2035 Vision described how the community wants the City to look and function in the future. It provided a community-supported roadmap for strategic support, long-term implementation, and established priorities for future decision-making. The visioning process evaluated and answered the following key questions regarding community building in Ocala for the year 2035 and beyond:

- ◇ How do people move around the community?
- ◇ How are the streets designed, used, and connected?
- ◇ What is the relationship of buildings to streets?
- ◇ What do the buildings, neighborhoods, commercial districts, and open spaces look like?

OTHER RELATED PLANNING EFFORTS

(Brief summaries are included in Appendix A)

- ◊ Ocala Downtown Market Study (2013)
- ◊ US 441/SR 500 (Pine Avenue) Corridor Management Plan (2013)
- ◊ West Ocala Community Redevelopment Plan (2015) and
- ◊ East Ocala Community Redevelopment Plan (2016)
- ◊ Tusawilla Park Master Plan (2014)
- ◊ 2035 Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan (2014)
- ◊ SR 40 (Silver Springs Blvd) Concept Development Planning Study (2015)

1.5 Planning Process

In August of 2016, the City of Ocala began a planning process to determine how and where to begin stimulating development and revitalization in Midtown. The City conducted a nine-month process to perform economic and planning research, engage the community, and develop a comprehensive revitalization plan for Midtown Ocala. A Project Team comprised of City staff and planning consultants met on a regular basis to develop and fine-tune strategies for Midtown.

The community engagement largely took place during four rounds of meetings held in August, November, March, and May. These meeting windows enabled multiple community groups to provide input and shape the plan. The variety of community engagement types conducted are described as follows.

FOCUS GROUPS AND STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

The community outreach process began with interviews with key influencers and stakeholders. A series of interviews and focus groups were conducted identifying challenges and opportunities, developing priorities and gaining “ownership” in the Master Plan process from a variety of constituencies. There were six stakeholder discussions organized with real estate professionals, developers/land owners, social services providers, cultural arts, home owners, and business owners. The focus group-style interview topics included vehicular and pedestrian connectivity, development opportunities/identifying catalytic sites, and the overall vision for Midtown.

POP-UP VISIONING WORKSHOP

The project team prepared and facilitated a pop-up community workshop that included the presentation of a user-friendly snapshot of existing conditions, discussion of trends and opportunities, and collection of the community’s thoughts about the vision and values for the Midtown area moving forward.



The planning process includes numerous methods of community outreach ranging from visioning exercises to targeted interviews.



STEERING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

A Steering Committee meeting was held during each round of meetings throughout the process. The Steering Committee and City staff engaged in presentations and discussions facilitated by consultants. The range of topics included identifying key issues and challenges, developing potential concepts and alternatives for the Midtown area, and refinements to strategies and plan content.

FOCUS GROUP ROUNDTABLES

The project team organized two focus groups in roundtable sessions. The first brought together area brokers and developers to discuss challenges and opportunities for redevelopment in the Midtown area. The second session brought together area social services providers, associated City departments, and impacted area residents and employees to discuss challenges and opportunities for social services provision in the Midtown area and to explore ideas for cooperation and collaboration that will improve service provision.

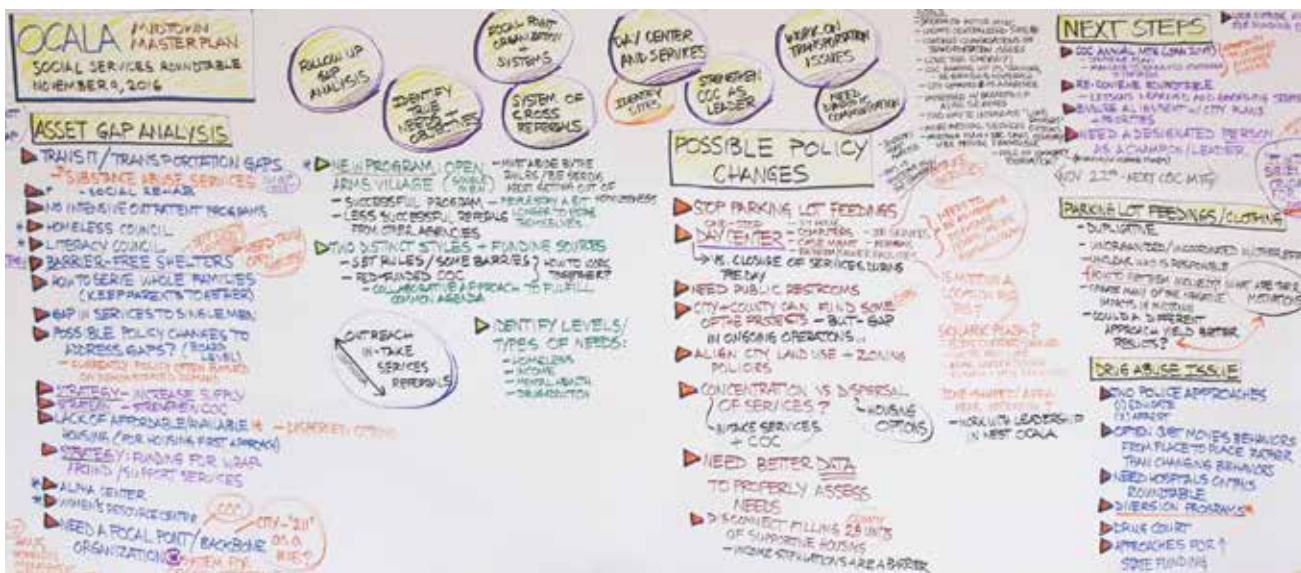


DESIGN AND PLANNING CHARRETTE

City staff and the consulting team participated in a single day charrette integrating public input and determining the preferred strategies for mobility, placemaking, social services, land use and development, and the catalytic site designs.

CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION

The project team organized and facilitated a work session with Ocala City Council, presenting and discussing the main components and concepts of the Draft Midtown Master Plan and Implementation Plan.



Two focus group roundtable sessions targeting social service providers and area brokers and developers resulted in key strategies for the Midtown Master Plan, highlighted in wall-graphic recordings, as shown above.

1.6 Document Overview

This plan presents the framework of Midtown’s past, present, and future. More specifically, it analyzes physical, social, and economic conditions; identifies catalytic development sites; presents concepts for better connections between Midtown, Downtown, and surrounding neighborhoods; and establishes a market-tested, realistic plan set for implementation.

The Midtown Master Plan is organized into the following chapters:

1 Introduction Describes the Ocala Midtown Master Plan purpose, process, and context

2 Existing Conditions Assesses current conditions in Midtown

3 Midtown Revitalization Strategy Defines Midtown’s vision and goals

4 Land Use and Development Concepts Establishes strategies for future growth

5 Catalytic Opportunity Sites Identifies places with development potential to enhance Midtown

6 Supporting Strategies Provides additional recommendations to improve Midtown

7 Implementation Organizes and prioritizes the Plan into actionable steps

Appendices Includes additional materials established throughout the planning process

2

Existing Conditions



1. Introduction

2.1 Midtown Area Overview

This chapter presents an overview of key existing conditions for the Midtown area that served as a resource and baseline during analytical and design phases of the planning and design process. A complete report highlighting existing issues, challenges and opportunities can be found in Appendix A.

2.2 Land Use and Urban Form

LAND USE

Midtown Ocala has a balanced mix of land uses when analyzed at a high level (see Figure 2.1). However, a more detailed look reveals a need to integrate a wider range of uses and better connect those uses for Midtown to really thrive as a vibrant, mixed-use area. The very disparate set of existing uses including retail, residential, office, industrial, homeless services, government services, and Tuscawilla Park create a challenging environment for strategic redevelopment in Midtown. Almost 34 percent of existing land uses are devoted to commercial uses including industrial, office, and retail. Government uses account for just over 12 percent of land in Midtown, and recreational or drainage retention areas associated mostly with Tuscawilla Park encompass 25 percent of the area. Existing residential uses compose 14 percent of Midtown. While about 90 percent of residential uses are accounted for by single family residential and duplex units, only 10 percent are currently devoted to higher density options such as triplex, quadplex, apartment units, and condominiums. Other uses occupying 5 percent of Midtown or less include, institutional, worship, rights-of-way, transportation and utilities, and undeveloped land.

Future land use in the great majority of the Midtown area is planned as High Intensity/Central Core in Ocala Vision 2035 (see Figure 2.2). This land use pattern calls for a high mixture of uses, taller buildings, smaller setbacks, wide sidewalks to improve pedestrian activity, plazas and civic areas, and parking located on-street or behind buildings.



Zoning in Downtown and Midtown supports opportunities for mixed-use development resulting in a variety of land uses and building forms.

Figure 2.1: Existing Land Use

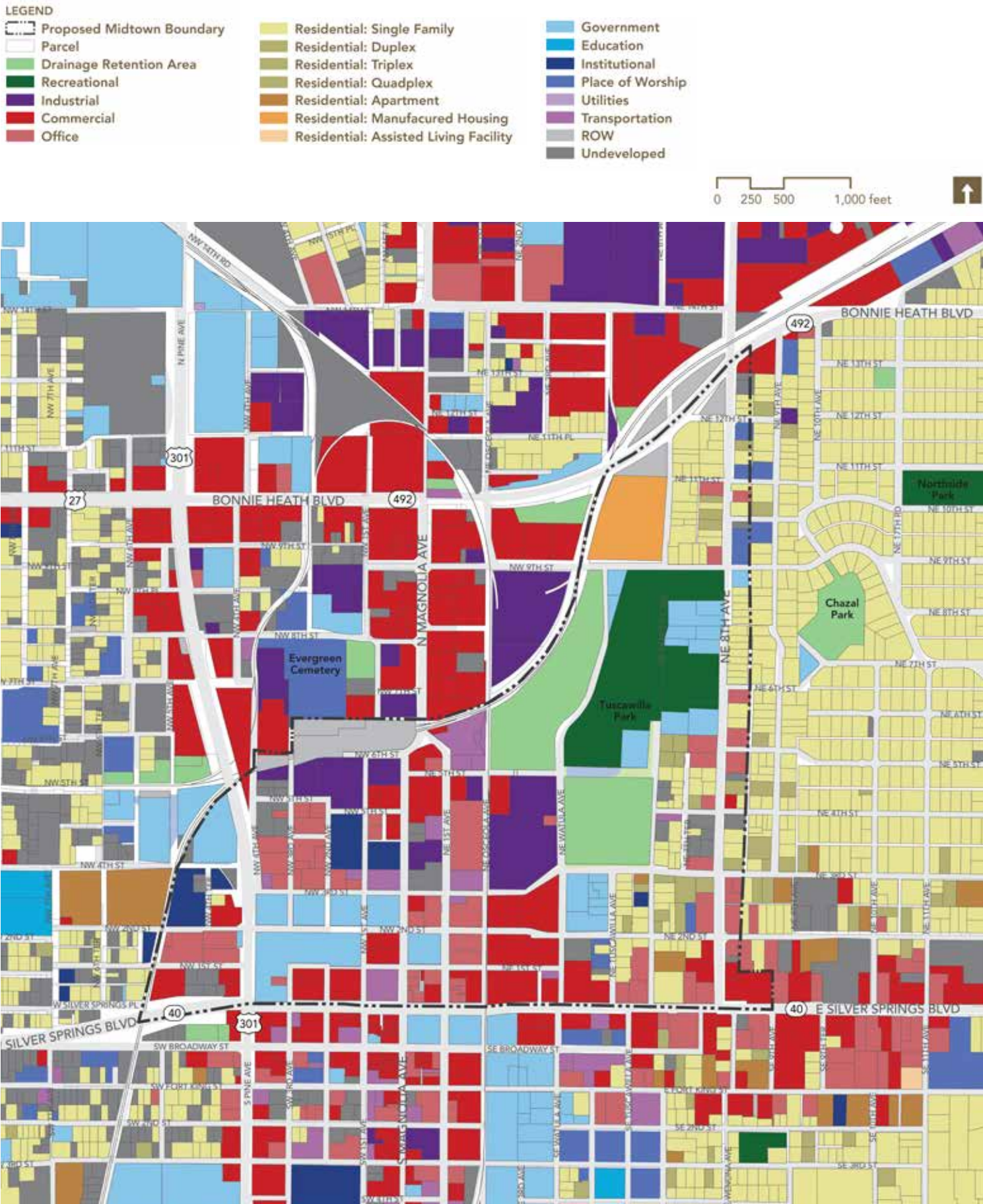
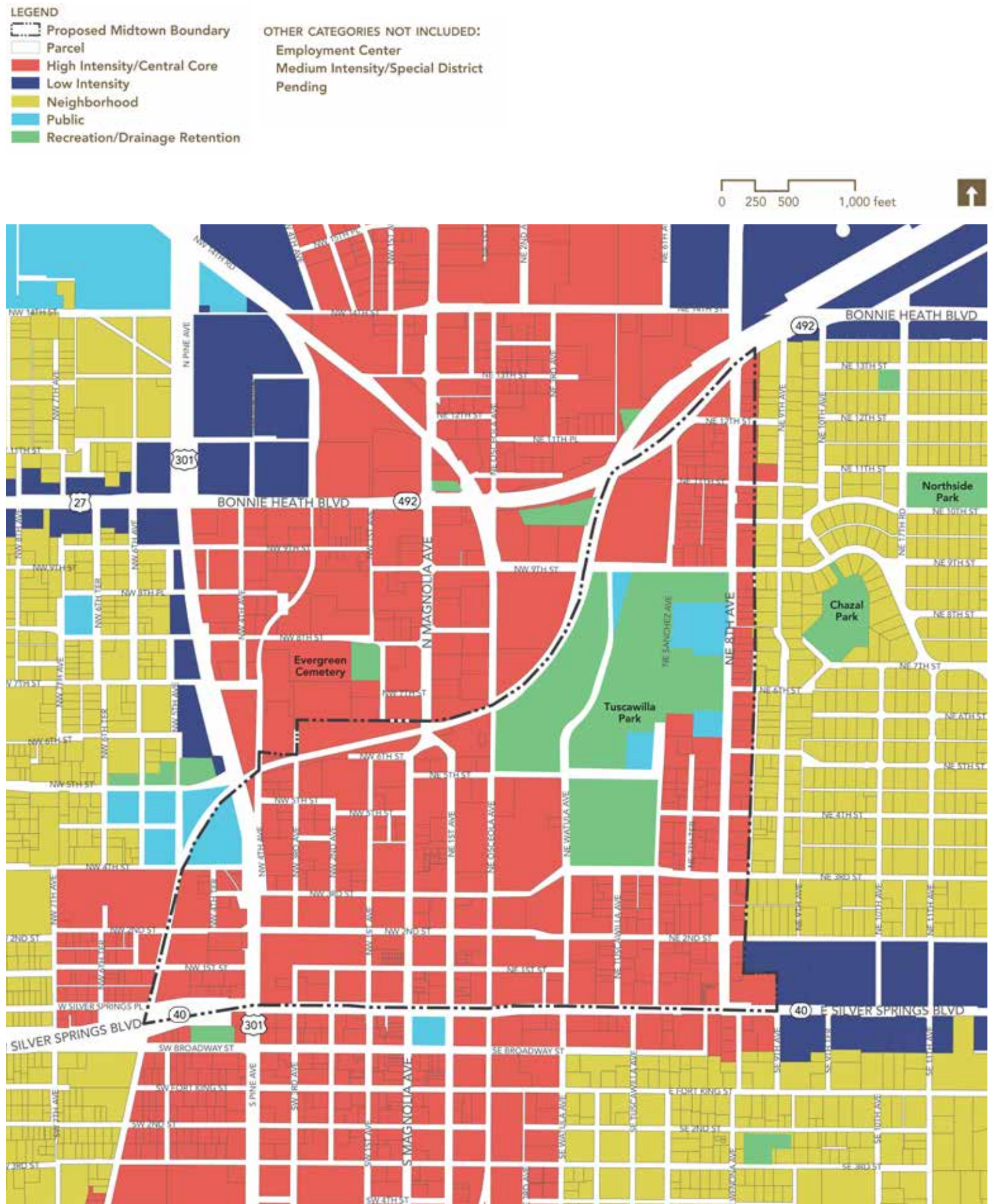


Figure 2.2: Future Land Use



ZONING

Zoning in Midtown (see Figure 2.3) generally supports the planned High Intensity/Central Core future land use for Midtown, particularly in areas west of Watula Avenue. About 28 percent of Midtown is zoned directly for high intensity and transitional mixed-use as part of the community redevelopment area. In addition, approximately 46 percent of the area allows for high density multifamily residential at up to 50 dwelling units per acre, including all four B-3 zones that comprise most private sector uses in Midtown west of Watula Avenue. Government and institutional zones cover about 25 percent of Midtown. Zoning for industrial uses is marginal and occurs primarily along rail and right-of-way peripheries. Residential zoning applies to only a small portion of Midtown, on the eastern edge along NE 8th Avenue and in the southeast portion of the study area where multifamily parcels compose about 10 percent of the land. The City's plan to implement a form-based code in the Downtown and Midtown areas will more easily allow a mix of uses and help generate a more vibrant public realm.

BUILDING COVERAGE

Midtown buildings cover 26.9 acres, or 13 percent of developable land (excluding recreation and drainage areas) in the Midtown study area. This amount is low for an urban area adjacent to a Downtown (see Figure 12). However, parks and open space uses including recreation and drainage retention areas occupy over 20 percent of the study area and contain just three primary structures. Undeveloped land and surface parking are two other reasons building coverage in Midtown remains low. City blocks in south-central midtown have the most building coverage and comprise primarily government, commercial and industrial uses. The uses with the least amount of building coverage are single family residential, located in east Midtown; and office, located in west Midtown.

PARKS AND TRAILS

Tusawilla Park, built in 1917, is the only designated recreational park in Midtown, occupying about 10 percent of the land. The park is programmed with an amphitheater, tennis courts, playground equipment, basketball courts, picnic shelters, public restrooms, basketball courts, and a baseball field. Tusawilla Park is also the home of the Reilly Arts Center and the Discovery Center, and is adjacent to Ocala Union Station, which houses the Magnolia Art Xchange (MAX), and the Plein Air Art Park. Drainage retention areas located to the south and west of the park generally function as an extension of the park, but are un-programmed.

Paved paths connect the park to adjacent lakes and ponds, creating a local trail network. No other formalized trails exist in Midtown beyond those in Tusawilla Park. Bike lanes on N Magnolia Avenue and Bonnie Heath Boulevard enter Midtown's study area, but either terminate immediately or pass through with no access.

SPACE DEVOTED TO CARS

Streets and parking are the two most common spaces devoted to cars. In Midtown, public rights-of-way (streets, sidewalks, and associated public space) accounts for about 63 acres. In addition, parcels with paved surface parking lots compose approximately 25 acres of land. Altogether, nearly 90 acres, or 50 percent of Midtown is devoted to rights-of-way and paved parking lots.

Midtown's right-of-way widths range between 28 and 125 feet, with 40-foot rights-of-way being most common. The highways have the widest rights-of-way averaging around 100 feet and include Silver Spring Boulevard, Bonnie Heath Boulevard and N Pine Avenue. Bonnie Heath Boulevard reaches 125 feet across, north of Tusawilla Park. While N Magnolia Avenue and NE 8th Avenue average above 60-foot right-of-way, NE and NW 11th Street is most often a 28-foot right-of-way.

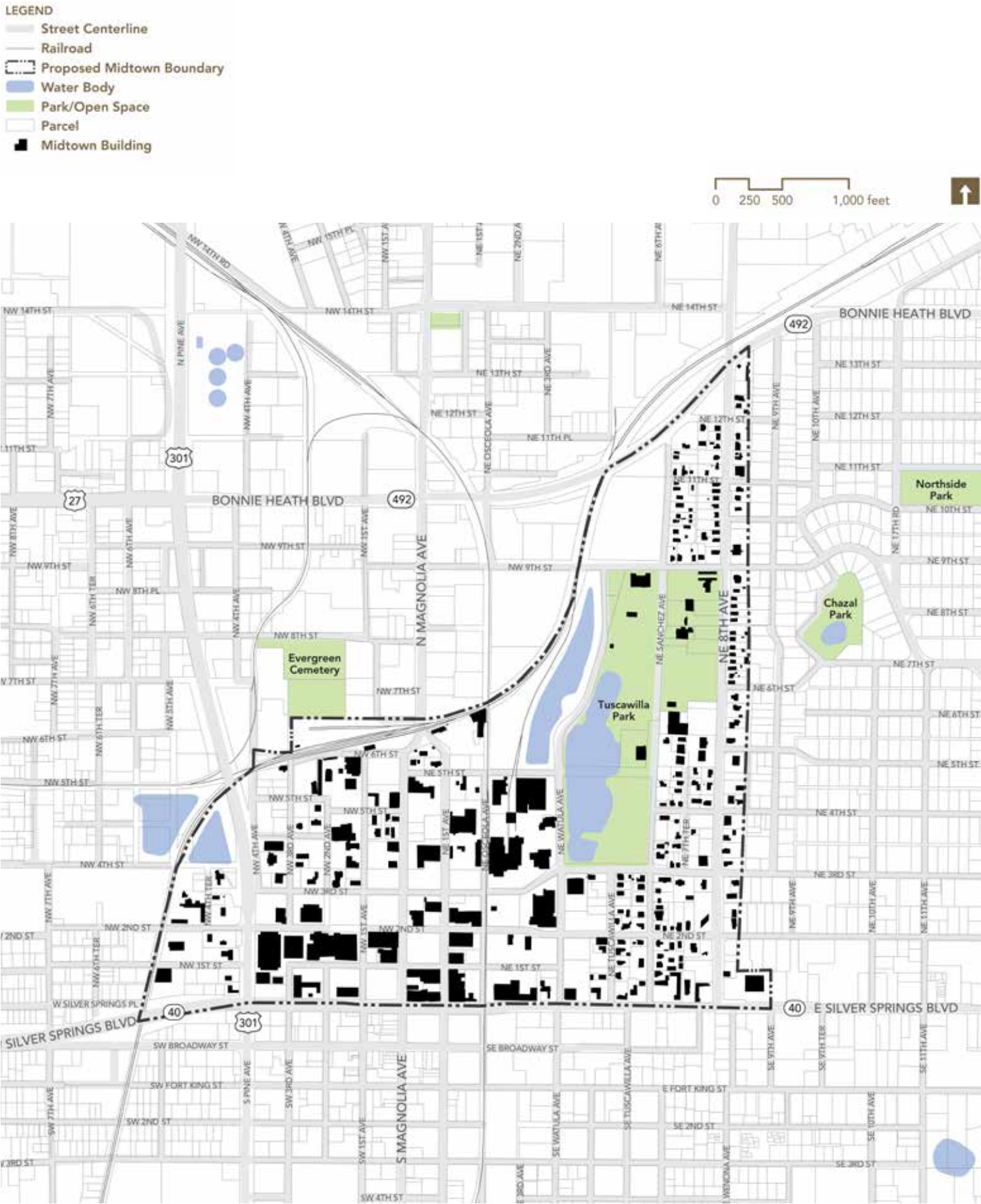
LEGEND

- Proposed Midtown Boundary
- Parcel
- Neighborhood Businesses
- Community Business
- Limited Community Business
- Central Business
- CRA Commercial Corridor
- General Business
- Office Historic
- Residential Business Historic
- Residential Office
- CRA Mixed Use 1
- CRA Mixed Use 2
- Wholesale Business
- Light Industrial
- Medium Industrial
- Governmental Use
- Institutional
- Single Family Residential
- Two-Family Residential
- Multiple-Family Residential
- Mobile Home Park

0 250 500 1,000 feet

The map displays various land use zones color-coded according to the legend. Major streets shown include Bonnie Heath Blvd, Silver Springs Blvd, N Magnolia Ave, and several numbered streets from NW 14th St to SE 11th St. Parks such as Northside Park, Chazal Park, Tusawilla Park, and Evergreen Cemetery are labeled. A dashed line indicates the proposed midtown boundary.

Figure 2.4: Figure Ground



2.3 Transportation and Mobility

Mobility and connectivity in the Midtown study area are characterized by the modes of transportation used by residents, employees, and visitors. Those modes are:

- ◇ People out for a walk;
- ◇ People riding their bikes;
- ◇ People using transit; and
- ◇ People in their vehicles.

WALKABILITY IN THE MIDTOWN AREA

Midtown is fairly walkable in the areas adjacent to Downtown, with complete crosswalks on all four legs of an intersection, and sidewalks throughout. Besides this small area of walkability, there are many areas of concern for pedestrian mobility in the Midtown study area. Major pedestrian barriers are described for the following streets:

E Silver Springs Boulevard (SR 40)

- ◇ Crossings at a few locations, but difficult to cross
- ◇ Higher speeds and the lack of crossings at certain desirable points
- ◇ Currently in the process of developing a multiuse trail along Osceola Avenue
 - Will cross SR 40 where there is currently no crossing
 - With increases in pedestrian and bicycling activity, this trail intersection requires a more detailed study managing expectations of all modes

West of NW 1st Avenue & Pine Avenue Crossings

- ◇ Less walkable blocks because of large parcel massing – Marion County Judicial Center, Marion County Clerk of the Courts, and adjoining parking garages
- ◇ Relatively unsafe to cross Pine Avenue into West Ocala
- ◇ Crossing Pine Avenue (US 301) at SR 40 and NW 2nd Street is difficult
 - Narrow crosswalks
 - Not all ADA compliant

North of NW 3rd Street

- ◇ Sidewalks on NE 1st Ave and Magnolia Ave
- ◇ Sidewalks begin to disappear to the east and west of NE 1st Avenue and Magnolia Avenue – Forces pedestrians to walk in the street or not at all



Streets and trails throughout Midtown currently carry multiple modes of transportation, but existing conditions lack adequate facilities.

East of NE Osceola Avenue

- ◇ NE Watula Avenue has broken sidewalk connections with utility impedances
- ◇ Close to a full pedestrian connection to Tuscawilla Park
- ◇ Mostly adequate sidewalks within the Tuscawilla Park Historic District

NE 8th Avenue

- ◇ Sidewalks and some crossings along NE 8th Avenue
- ◇ Higher speeds, the wide 4-lane section, and lack of consistent street trees create a harsher environment for walkability
- ◇ A possible road diet and/or increasing the pedestrian level of comfort and safety (requires further study)

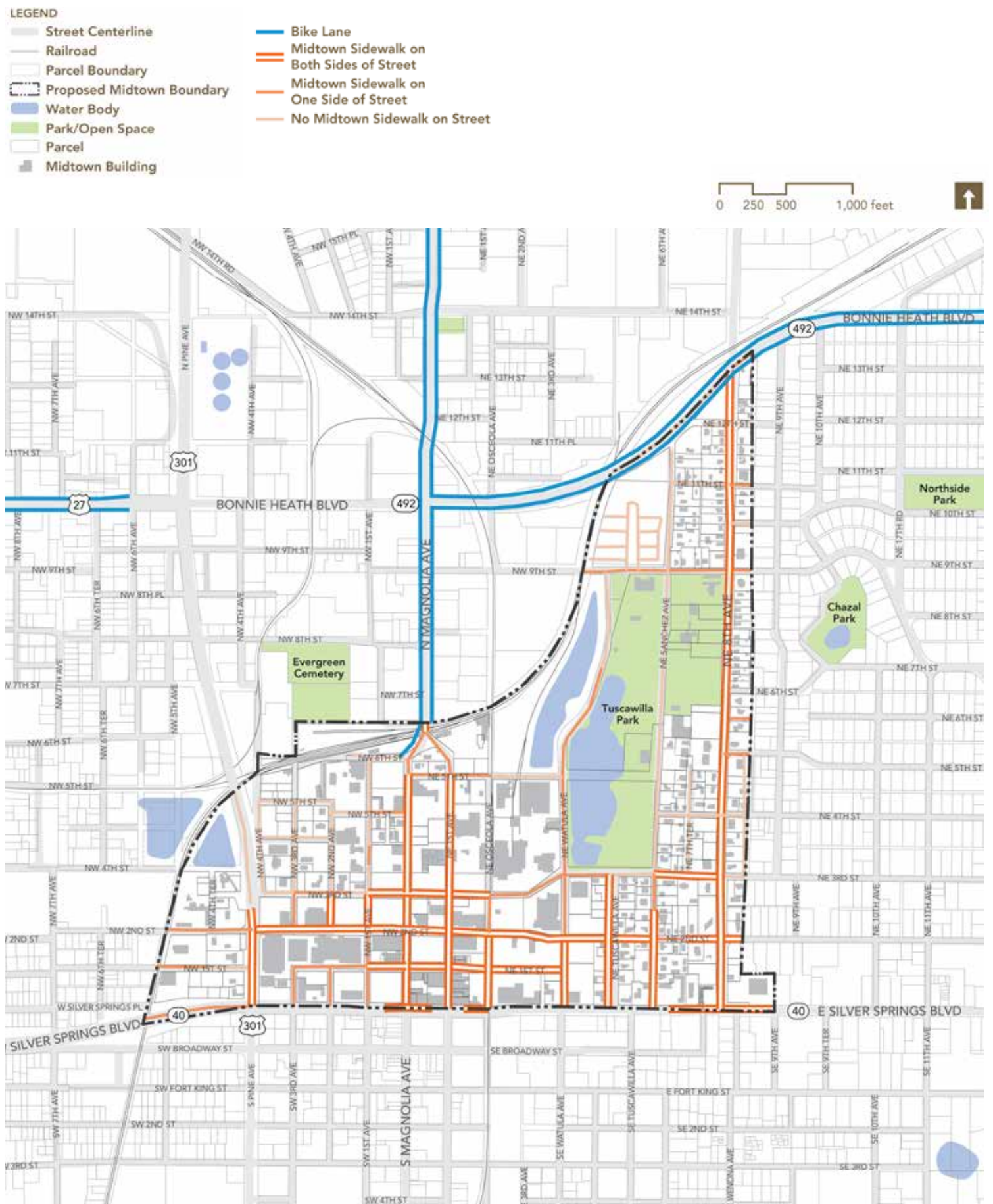
BIKING IN THE MIDTOWN AREA

Within the Midtown study area, there are no bicycle facilities (see Figure 2.5). Just north of the railroad tracks, Magnolia Ave has 5-foot bike lanes on either side of the street and the southbound lane disappears at NW 6th Street, while the northbound lane begins after the railroad crossing. With many regional trails planned (such as the Florida Northern Railroad (FNOR) Rail Trail and Silver Springs Bikeway), implementing adequate bicycle facilities in the Midtown District will be critical. Current projects like the Osceola Trak (part of the FNOR Rail Trail) is a very good start, but the most effective way to encourage safe and accessible bicycling in Midtown is to look for opportunities to add sharrows, bike lanes, and/or cycle tracks into the existing infrastructure of streets within the area. Increasing bicycle access to Midtown, as well as Downtown, will facilitate interest in the area, economic redevelopment, and allow for more modes of transportation to access the core area of Downtown Ocala.



Instances where bike lanes and trails seamlessly connect help integrate Midtown to the area's regional trail system.

Figure 2.5: Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities



TRANSIT IN THE MIDTOWN AREA

Downtown and Midtown Ocala have seen a steady increase of transit riders over the last few years. SunTran operates the bus service in Downtown and Midtown Ocala and currently runs ten vehicles on six routes (see Figure 2.6):

- ◇ Yellow Route serves SR 40 and North Magnolia;
- ◇ Purple Route serves Midtown, Downtown, and West Ocala;
- ◇ Orange Route connects Midtown and Downtown to points south of Downtown;
- ◇ Blue Route connects Midtown and Downtown to points in South Ocala; and
- ◇ Green Route connects Midtown to East Ocala.

There is a transfer station, the Ocala Union Station, located at the corner of NE 1st Avenue and NE 5th Street and bounded to the north and east by railroad lines. This is a great location for a transfer station, especially if rail-based transit would come to Ocala. However, the current bus system runs on 60 – 75 minute headways – which means if you missed the bus at your stop, you would need to wait another hour to hour and fifteen minutes before the next bus. This is a very long time to wait for a bus in an urban form City environment. Many other cities strive for 10 – 30 minute headways in their downtown areas, and others have even created trolley, circulators, or shuttles that only operate in the downtown with 5 – 15 minute headways to facilitate movement in and around the City core.



Six local bus routes serve Downtown and Midtown.

LEGEND

- Street Centerline
- Railroad
- Parcel Boundary
- Proposed Midtown Boundary
- Water Body
- Park/Open Space
- Parcel
- Midtown Building

SUNTRAN BUS LINES

- Green Route
- Blue Route
- Purple Route
- Orange Route
- Yellow Route

0 250 500 1,000 feet

Map Labels:

- BONNIE HEATH BLVD
- N MAGNOLIA AVE
- SILVER SPRINGS BLVD
- E SILVER SPRINGS BLVD
- OCALA UNION STATION (AMTRAK AND BUS TRANSFER)
- Northside Park
- Chazal Park
- Tuscowilla Park
- Evergreen Cemetery
- CONNECTING TO NORTH OCALA
- CONNECTING TO NORTHWEST OCALA
- CONNECTING TO SOUTHWEST OCALA
- CONNECTING TO SOUTHEAST OCALA
- CONNECTING TO NORTH OCALA
- CONNECTING TO NORTHEAST OCALA IN THE SILVER SPRINGS AREA

AUTOMOBILE DRIVING IN THE MIDTOWN AREA

The existing roadway system in the Midtown Area consists of arterials, collectors, and local streets (Figure 2.7 shows annual average daily traffic figures). Arterial (major and minor) roadways are intended to connect major regional areas. Collector (major and minor) roadways are intended to facilitate access from the local areas to the arterial roadways. Local roadways are meant to facilitate movement within the core local areas including downtowns, neighborhoods, and areas of commercial, industrial, and office use.

According to Signal Four Analytic data from the University of Florida, there were 940 accidents within the Midtown study area over the last 5 years, including 225 accidents with injuries, and 2 fatalities (see Appendix A for more information). The high amount of rear-end and angle crashes (nearly 78% of the known accidents in the study area) suggest there is an issue with the roadway network usage and the types of roadways designated within the study area.

Roadways often change effective functional classifications based on the land-use context. For instance, as SR 40 (Silver Springs Blvd.) enters the downtown area (at US 301 to the west and NE 8th Ave to the east), it begins to function more like a collector roadway funneling traffic from the local downtown core in and out of the downtown area. Between Osceola Avenue and NW 1st Avenue, SR 40 functions almost like a local roadway moving traffic in and around the one-way pairs and connecting the Downtown Core area with the Midtown Area. Similarly, the land-uses and built form have responded to this perceived change with buildings in the core area built closer to the street in a more walkable, pedestrian-friendly environment, while SR 40 transitions away from the Downtown Core, buildings are set further back from the roadway and there is less emphasis on the pedestrian environment.

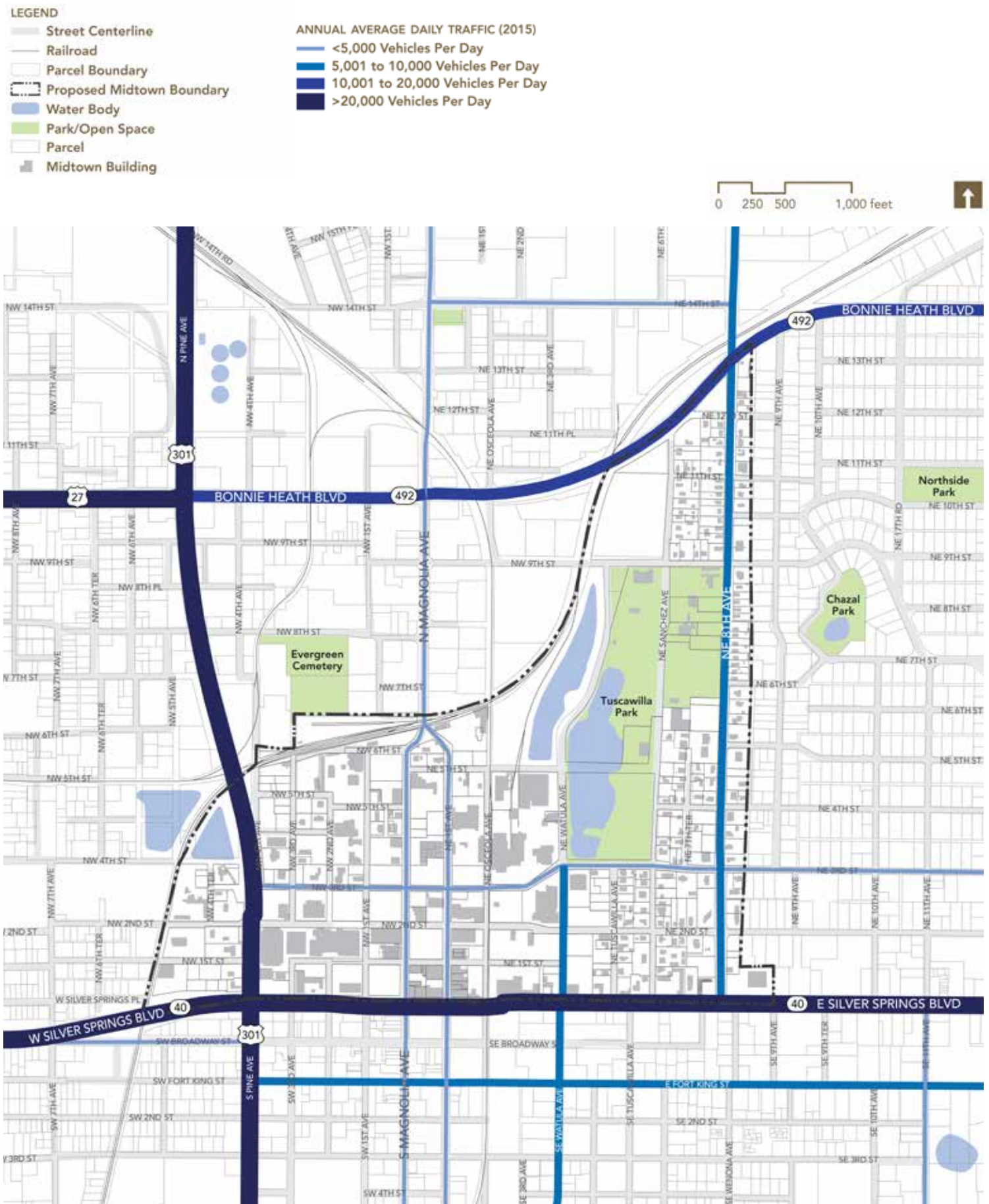


Both narrow and wide rights-of-way connect people to and through Midtown.



As Silver Springs Boulevard passes through Downtown, it favors vehicular movement more so than pedestrian activity.

Figure 2.7: Annual Average Daily Traffic





A variety of shelters and providers serve the homeless in Ocala, including Brother's Keeper, Interfaith Services, and Open Arms Village.

2.4 Social Services Provision

SOCIAL SERVICES

Midtown is home to numerous entities that compose an ecosystem of social service providers that serve the needs of the homeless in and around Downtown Ocala (see Figure 2.8). These entities include shelters and food kitchens such as the Salvation Army and Interfaith Services, Court and Probation offices, non-profit ministries, and drug treatment facilities. Collectively, these organizations provide services to populations in need of emergency shelter, housing, food, drug treatment, counseling, and job assistance. However, each typically operates independently, creating potential gaps or wasteful redundancy in service provision, and the possibility that established policies may conflict with broader goals of the service community and the City.

No centralized location currently exists for coordinating in-take of populations in need nor for referring them to appropriate organizations based on their individual needs. In addition, shelters and other non-profit organizations are often competing for constrained funding sources. A framework for coordination and collective action is needed to ensure more systematic and effective delivery of social services in Midtown and Ocala as a whole. One key strategy is to strengthen and increase coordination among agencies applying for federal funding through the Marion County Continuum of Care, especially those organizations attempting to improve and expand their Housing First / rapid re-housing capacity.

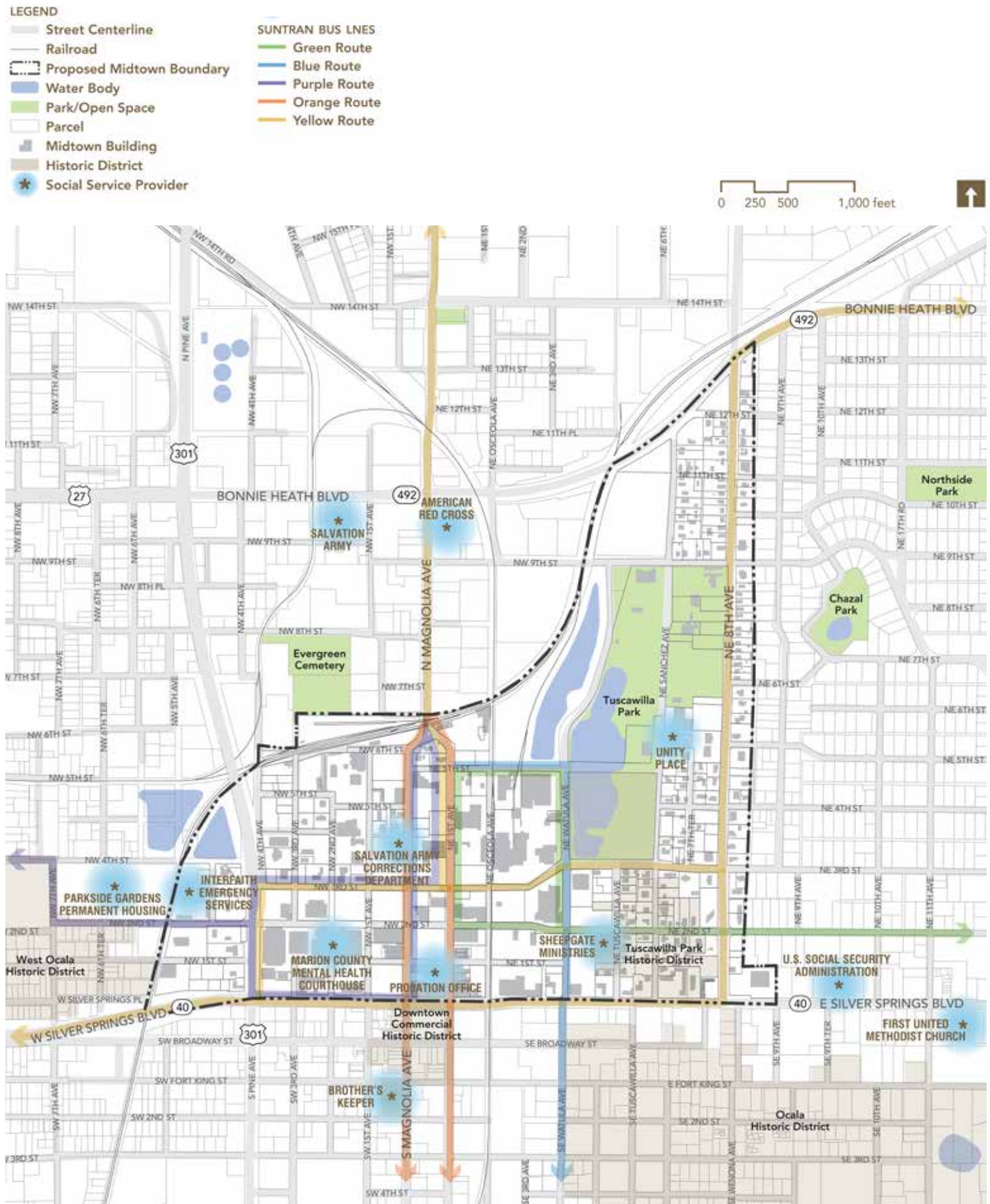
KEY CHALLENGES

Vagrancy and drug abuse among some of the homeless population in Midtown creates daily impacts for home and business owners and for emergency and healthcare service providers. Loitering, drug paraphernalia, littering, unsanitary behaviors, and drug-related crime among this population impact the safety and comfort of residents, employees, and visitors. Although Ocala Police frequently respond to calls on these issues, a more comprehensive solution must be part of any coordinated approach to social services provision in Midtown.

Other issues related to social services provision in Midtown include:

- ◇ Limited Housing First assistance, including placement and wrap-around services, for the homeless population;
- ◇ Severe shortage of available affordable housing units;
- ◇ Limited transportation options that connect people with needed services and opportunities;
- ◇ Lacking cover from the elements in a secure and managed location with access to laundry facilities, a computer lab, showers, etc.; and
- ◇ Deficient data to assess the needs of the homeless population.

Figure 2.8: Social Services Distribution Points and Public Transit Routes





Midtown's Arts and Culture District includes attractions such as the Art Stroll and the Reilly Arts Center. The emerging district is proximal to the Downtown Core which includes the Downtown Market, amongst many assets.

2.5 Arts and Culture

CURRENT ASSETS AND PROGRAMS

Ocala has a vibrant arts and culture community with numerous existing amenities both in Downtown and the emerging arts district in Midtown (Figure 2.9). The Downtown Core hosts the First Friday Art Walk and is home to Artist Alley, Citizens' Circle, the Downtown Square, and many dining and entertainment options including the refurbished historic Marion Theater. In addition, innovative organizations like the Florida Institute for Human & Machine Cognition (IHMC) call Downtown home and provide the community with unique lectures and science workshops for kids.

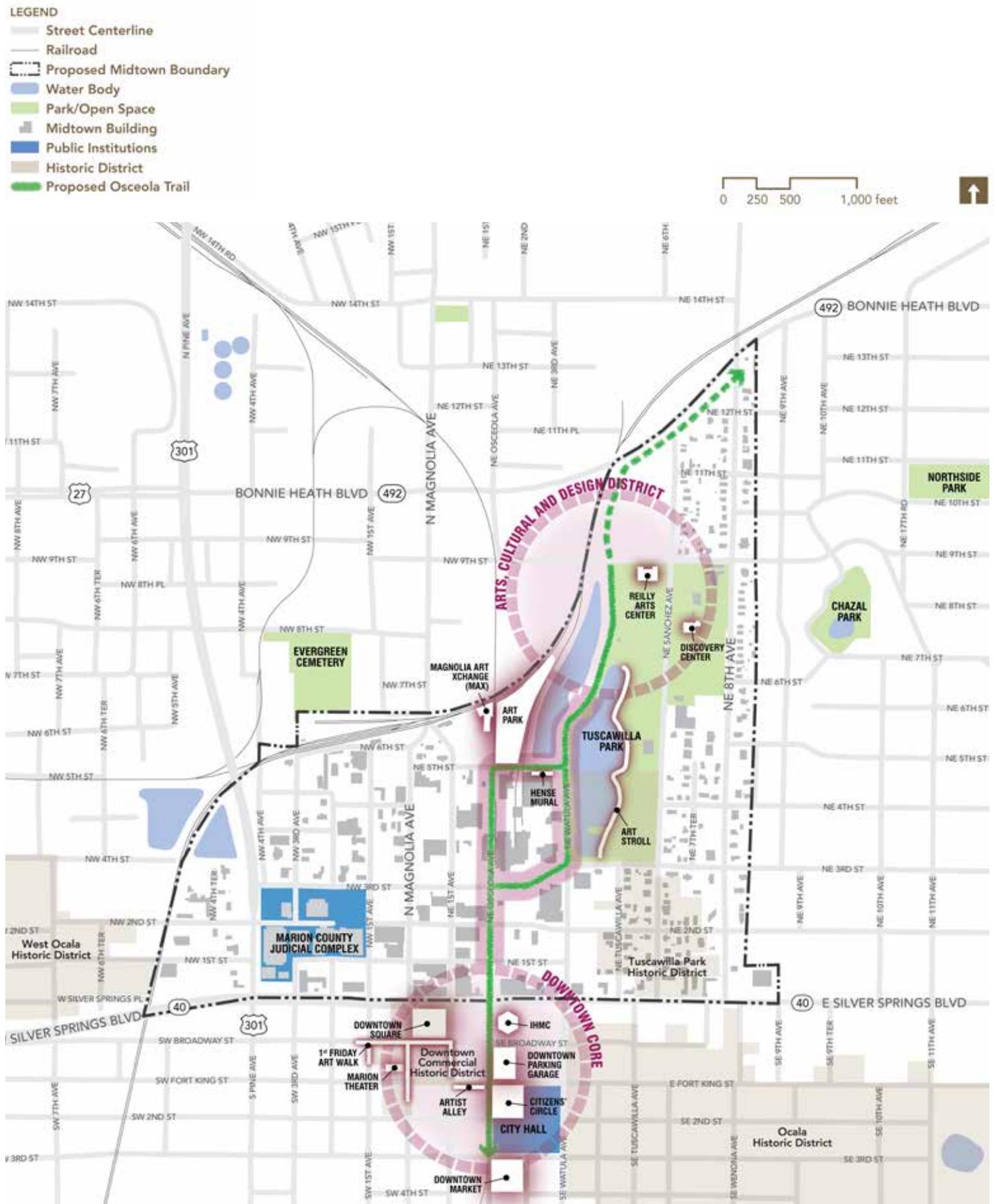
The outreach activities of IHMC are a great complement to fun, interactive learning programs offered by the Discovery Center located in Tusawilla Park. This is just one example of the many ways that science, arts, and culture activities in Midtown can link to the vibrancy and energy emerging Downtown. Other established assets in Midtown include the Reilly Arts Center, the Plein Air Art Park, and the Art Stroll in Tusawilla Park.

EMERGING ASSETS AND PROGRAMS

Midtown also has an emerging arts district centered on the developing Plein Air Art Park and the Magnolia Art Xchange (MAX), located in the old depot building at Ocala Union Station. MAX will serve as an arts incubator, provide private and open studio spaces, and may host an Artist in Residency program. MAX has also partnered with the Appleton Museum to bring a HENSE Mural to Midtown. The 200-foot exhibit will be installed on the west end of the Seminole Feed building at NE 5th Street.

The Ocala arts community is participating in the Midtown Master Plan process to ensure further integration of arts and culture into Midtown amenities, programming, and public spaces, and to better connect the area to Downtown through art. Midtown will attract and support a full range of arts and culture activities, from fine art to street art, renowned festivals to food trucks.

Figure 2.9: Arts and Cultural Assets



2.6 Economic and Market Conditions

Basic demographic and economic data and trends are presented in this section and expanded in Appendices A and B, to serve as a basis for planning in the Midtown area.

Over the past decade, the City of Ocala and specifically the Downtown and Midtown areas have undergone a number of changes both from a development and demographic perspective. First and foremost, the efforts of the City, which have been guided by the Downtown Master Plan and the Gibbs Retail Study, to invest in the health and success of the downtown area have generally been successful. Many of the businesses with a long history of operating in the downtown area have continued to experience success. In addition, City grants and infrastructure improvements in the downtown area have attracted a number of new businesses and developments in the downtown area. Most recently, the City completed the construction of a parking structure that is expected to continue to support the success of existing and future businesses and developments and is widely regarded as a great asset for downtown Ocala.

Finally, the City continues to benefit from the equestrian industry's presence throughout Marion County. A recent study commissioned by the Ocala/Marion Chamber & Economic Partnership (<http://ocalacep.com/>) cited the economic impact of the industry on the Ocala/Marion County area at approximately \$2.62 billion per year. That impact translates into spending in hotels, restaurants and bars, and other Ocala businesses and also helps employ thousands of residents.

DEMOGRAPHICS

While there have been a number of success stories in and around Downtown Ocala, the effects of the Great Recession and a changing national and global economy have created a number of challenges for businesses and residents in Ocala. Specifically, the effects of the recession led to the closure of a number of businesses throughout Ocala and have increased the challenges associated with starting a new business. In addition, a changing economy has led to a shift in the basic demographics throughout Ocala. Many of these changes can perhaps be seen most acutely in the Midtown area.

Figure 2.10: Population and Household Trends, 2000-2016

Description	2000	2010	2016	2000-2010			2010-2016		
				Total	Ann. #	Ann. %	Total	Ann. #	Ann. %
Population									
Midtown	316	338	306	22	2	0.7%	-32	-5	-1.6%
City of Ocala, FL	49,989	56,509	58,616	6,520	652	1.2%	2,107	351	0.6%
Marion County, FL	258,916	331,298	344,417	72,382	7,238	2.5%	13,119	2,187	0.6%
Households									
Midtown	81	80	63	-1	0	-0.1%	-17	-3	-3.9%
City of Ocala, FL	20,310	23,201	23,666	2,891	289	1.3%	465	78	0.3%
Marion County, FL	106,755	137,726	141,510	30,971	3,097	2.6%	3,784	631	0.5%

Source: US Census Bureau; ERSI; Economic and Planning Systems

Since 2000, the number of residents living in Midtown has decreased with the number of households moving out of the area only increasing over the past few years. Perhaps most troubling, this decrease in population has corresponded with an increase in the vacancy rate in the area. In 2016, Midtown's vacancy stood at just under 50 percent. High vacancies in Midtown not only reduce the activity, vibrancy, and character of the neighborhood, but have the potential to lead to a spiral of disinvestment as vacancy reduces the values of neighboring homes, decreases eyes on the street, and creates environments conducive for less desirable activities.

In comparison to Midtown, the population of the City of Ocala and Marion County has increased since 2000. Much of this increase occurred from 2000 to 2010, when the City grew at an average annual rate of 1.3 percent and the County grew at an average annual rate of 2.6 percent. Since 2010, the rate of growth has decreased, but both geographies are still adding residents. At a City level, vacancy rates have also increased, but at a much slower rate than in Midtown (10% vacancy in 2000 to 15% vacancy in 2016). In addition, it is important to note that citywide vacancy is also more likely to include seasonal homes, which count as vacant in the Census. However, the city did see a significant shift from owner-occupied units to renters. More specifically, from 2000 to 2016, the percentage of renters in occupied units increased from 35 percent to 44 percent. This shift from owners to renters follows a national trend in the housing market coming out of the Great Recession, and suggests increased demand for rental products.

While Midtown resident and household population has decreased, employment growth in Midtown has outpaced both the city and the county. However, employment in Midtown, the City, and the County are still below their pre-recession peaks.

Figure 2.11: Housing Trends, 2000-2016

Description	2000		2016		2000-2016		
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Total	Ann. #	Ann. %
Midtown							
Owner Occupied Housing Units	42	35%	24	20%	-18	-1	-3.4%
Renter Occupied Housing Units	39	32%	39	32%	0	0	0.0%
Vacant Housing Units	40	33%	60	49%	20	1	2.6%
Total	121	100%	123	100%	2	0	-1%
City of Ocala, FL							
Owner Occupied Housing Units	12,394	55%	11,416	41%	-977	-61	-0.5%
Renter Occupied Housing Units	7,926	35%	12,253	44%	4,328	270	2.8%
Vacant Housing Units	2,133	10%	4,243	15%	2,110	132	4.4%
Total	22,452	100%	27,912	100%	5,460	341	7%

Source: US Census Bureau; ERSI; Economic and Planning Systems



DEVELOPMENT AND REAL ESTATE

In terms of development and real estate, the following highlights trends in the Midtown area with comparisons to Downtown and the City where applicable. At a high level, the trends were broken into two categories: Residential and Commercial, each of which was explored further in accompanying appendices.

Residential

Residential prices as a whole have decreased in the City of Ocala since the recession and have not yet made any significant recovery. However, importantly, new products are priced at a significant premium, which has increased since the recession. For example, since 2010, the premium for a new single family home has average approximately \$107,000. As a result, developers have continued to build residential products, tending to focus on single family homes, which represent approximately 80 percent of new units built in 2015 and 2016. While single family homes are the dominant product in the market, there are examples of potential transformative multi-family products being built.



In 2016, through a partnership with the City, an existing office building just east of downtown Ocala was converted into an 18-unit luxury condominium development. Prices range from \$184,000 for a one-bedroom unit to \$275,000 for a two-bedroom unit. A number of the units were reserved before the project was completed and according to the developer the remaining units continue to be purchased at an expected rate. Although the project received City subsidies, it does indicate initial interest from the development community in constructing higher density residential buildings closer to downtown Ocala.



Downtown Ocala has a range of housing options; yet, single family houses dominate the stock.

Commercial

Likewise, the commercial market has also been slow to recover from the recession. The inventory of office products has increased slightly across the City and the Midtown and Downtown submarkets at an average annual rate of less than one percent. Over the past ten years, the City has added an average of approximately 30,000 square feet of office a year. At the same time, vacancy has increased, and rents have decreased across all markets. In fact, vacancies have averaged a one percent increase per year and, in 2016, ranged from 9 percent and 10 percent in the City and Downtown, respectively, to 15 percent in Midtown.

For industrial/flex products, inventory has increased in the City by approximately 80,000 square feet a year, but has decreased in Midtown and Downtown. The decrease in inventory in Midtown and Downtown could represent weak interest in the market, but also shifting land use patterns in the two submarkets. However, vacancy percentage has grown along with inventory in the City by an average of one percent a year, and, in 2016, equaled 9.5 percent. Rents have also decreased over this same time period.

Finally, retail has shown the strongest inventory growth citywide, growing at an average rate of 1.5 percent or 195,000 square feet per year since 2007. Downtown has grown at a weaker rate of 0.5 percent, and Midtown has not grown at all over the same time period. While retail rents have decreased and vacancy has increased, vacancy rates remain relatively low: ranging from 8 percent in the City to 6 percent in Downtown and 0 percent in Midtown.



The Sovereign Building in Midtown boasts leaseable office space in a historic building



Madison Commons is a successful example of an adaptive reuse project, transitioning from a millwork to innovative office and commercial space



Retailers have shown interest in opening new stores in the Midtown area



Identifying and capturing market drivers such as the arts, workforce, and equestrian communities will be a major step in transforming Midtown.

MARKET DRIVERS AND KEY USER GROUPS

Projecting market demand and corresponding capture rates for commercial and residential uses should be done with an understanding of the regional economic drivers. The goal is to incorporate competitive advantages with Midtown such that it can complete more effectively and capture a greater share of the drivers that are growing. To think that market demand will evolve based on a narrow interpretation of the relevant trade area misses the opportunity to tap the larger drivers. It is important to recognize that any capture will be a small percentage. That said, a small percentage of a larger sector can be transformative to Midtown.

For this study, the drivers identified are those elements within the economy that are thriving and/or growing, and which manifest themselves as 'demand' and which influence how the 'supply' takes shape. The most relevant, based on an overview of Marion County economic conditions, include:

- ◇ Arts
- ◇ Retiree
- ◇ Workforce
- ◇ Technology and Medicine
- ◇ Equestrian

Arts

The Arts cannot be underestimated with regard to their impact on redevelopment. Elevating the current art venues in Midtown can help brand the area as an Arts District. Ensuring that arts take form across many different venues, with a range of price points, and across the spectrum of formal-spontaneous events will be important to ingrain the arts concept into the redevelopment plan. It has been documented in many other redevelopment areas that elevating the arts introduces a compelling factor that drives demand for visitation and leads to increasing demand for real estate. Commercial tenants and residential households seek places that are authentic, vibrant, and community-focused, all of which can be conveyed with a strong arts theme.

Retirees

The retiree presents an opportunity for Midtown. While at first glance, it may appear that the retiree market is focused in the outlying county, interviews with local merchants and developers indicated that Midtown and Downtown are compelling destinations for events, festivals, and dining. Unlike some downtowns, residents throughout the region will make the trip repeatedly to experience Ocala's urban setting. Given the pace of development of more than 1,000 units per year in the County, it is likely that a small percentage (2% to 6%) would opt out of a conventional retirement setting and seek a location that is more vibrant, walkable, and community oriented.

Workforce

The need to provide housing for workforce employees is growing locally and nationally. For Midtown, this is particularly important to provide residential opportunity for a younger cohort. Firms will choose to locate where they can attract the best talent, and reach a prospective employee pool of millennials. The resulting mix of age groups is key, and an authentic urban environment will help attract both groups. The need for gap financing is not anticipated for workforce units, as they are not intended to be subsidized for below-market-rate conditions. Rather, they are geared to individuals and households earning a local wage that may otherwise be priced out of a market driven by imported capital.

Technology and Medicine

The sectors of Technology and Medicine (often found with significant overlap between them) are growing nationally. Any opportunity to cultivate the expansion locally should be a priority. The Institute for Human & Machine Cognition (IHMC) is centered on the nexus between the two, with its mission to broaden human capabilities with technology. Located in downtown, its presence can be used to attract like-minded tech firms. Ideally, Downtown and Midtown could emerge as a node with a concentration of technology oriented firms. While an elusive goal, as many communities are competing for the same thing, starting with the built environment and creating a vibrant community with a mix of uses and residents provides a platform for expansion.

Equestrian

As one of the larger economic drivers in the area, the dollars and media exposure that follow the equestrian sector are substantial, including regional, national, and international. Based on observation, it appears that Midtown currently attracts a very small share of these dollars. Expanding hospitality and food and beverage in downtown/midtown should be a high priority, as shown with the planned development of a hotel on the block immediately south of Midtown. Building on this momentum with a future hotel on the former Chamber of Commerce site and implementation of a safe and welcoming pedestrian crossing on SR 40 would help attract the visitation dollars to Midtown. Given the need to prove up this first hospitality initiative, a second hotel has not been included in the scenarios for this study; however, it should be considered once the first hotel reaches stabilized occupancy rates.

MARKET DEMAND

Midtown Ocala is poised to undergo a transformative revitalization that has the potential to add a significant number of residential units, office space, and retail space to the Downtown Ocala market. While this master plan and the efforts of City will help to support and energize future development in the area, it is important to present the amount of development that may occur in the future in the context of the greater market area. Appendix B, Midtown Ocala Market Overview, Demand Estimate, and Catalytic Site Evaluation, presents a range for the number of residential units and office space that may be supportable over the next five to 10 years.

3

Midtown Revitalization Strategy



3. Midtown Revitalization Strategy

3.1 Vision and Goals

THE MIDTOWN VISION

The vision for Midtown Ocala builds upon the successful revitalization of Downtown, and describes the community's shared ideas for how the area can evolve in the future. Community input gathered during the planning process serves as the basis for the vision statement (see Figure 3.1).



Figure 3.1

- ◇ Midtown is a complete, urban neighborhood with a full range of amenities and services that allow residents and employees to fulfill their daily needs and activities. Opportunities for employment, grocery and other shopping needs, recreation, social gathering, dining, culture and entertainment, and professional services are all located within walking or biking distance of a range of housing options. Well-designed streetscapes and public spaces like the Concord Plaza are clean, safe, and attractive.
- ◇ Midtown is regarded, along with Downtown, as the vibrant center of the City, attracting and welcoming visitors from Ocala and the wider region to enjoy a wide variety of cultural, entertainment, dining, and recreation options for all ages. The area is the premier location in the region for artists and performers, and offers a range of activities, galleries, performance spaces, and events spanning the spectrum of interests from fine art to street art.

- ◇ Tusawilla Park and the Osceola Trak are the cornerstone public spaces of Midtown, beloved by residents, employees, and visitors. Midtown supports healthy, active lifestyles, offering opportunities for daily walks, time with the pups at the off-leash dog park, organized and informal sports, and connections to Marion County’s regional trail system.
- ◇ Midtown embraces its authentic history and assets. The Sovereign Building and Seminole Feed complex are iconic sites, anchoring an array of existing buildings that add distinct character to the district and welcome a variety of uses. The area celebrates its “industrial chic” identity, creating a unique sense of place while still respecting the scale and design of surrounding neighborhoods. Creative and innovative individuals and companies are drawn to the area and its flexible open spaces, and Midtown is the epicenter of the region for makerspaces, artisan manufacturing, and locally grown and produced foods and beverages.

GOALS

The following eight goals articulate how Midtown Ocala can achieve its vision. The goals build upon the aspirations and values described by the community and provide the foundation for the strategies, concepts, and actions in the Midtown Master Plan.



GOAL 1 Strong Residential Core

Midtown provides a diverse range of housing options to suit the needs of people and families of all ages, abilities, and incomes. New residential development – including workforce and affordable housing – is built at levels of density that support a more vibrant urban environment and create more safety and awareness through “eyes on the street,” with scale and design that respects surrounding neighborhoods and businesses.



GOAL 2 Vibrant Mix of Uses

Midtown has a mix of uses that supports the daily lives of residents and employees, attracts visitors to the area, and generates activity 18 hours per day. The mix of uses includes residential; specialty and artisan retail; grocery and other daily shopping; art galleries, studios, and performance spaces; unique café, dining, and entertainment options; traditional and creative office uses; and civic buildings. Adaptive re-use, temporary, and pop-up uses activate underutilized or transitioning spaces. New development sensitively transitions from lower intensity uses near residential areas to higher intensity and more active uses in the core.



GOAL 3 Well-Connected and Walkable

Well-designed streets, trails, pathways, and alleys make Midtown the safest and most comfortable neighborhood for walking in the City, and the pedestrian network provides easy access to destinations and activities Downtown and throughout the area. Streetscapes, street crossings, public spaces, and private development are designed to support walking as the prioritized mode for moving around Midtown and connecting to adjacent neighborhoods. A network of safe bike lanes and trails allow people of all abilities to bicycle around Midtown and connect to regional trails. New turn signals and roadway configurations allow safe and efficient automobile access to Midtown for those who choose or need to drive.



GOAL 4 Rich Array of Destinations

Midtown offers a wide variety of destinations, activities, and events, making it an 18-hour activity center. The diversity of options attracts people from around the region and gives them multiple reasons to stay in Midtown longer and visit more often. Arts and cultural events, music and theater performances, events and festivals, dining and entertainment amenities, the Ocala Equestrian Museum, and Tuscowilla Park all combine to create a critical mass of activity and energy that elevate Midtown as the premier urban destination in the region.



GOAL 5 Osceola Trak as the Focus

The Osceola Trak is a beloved and cared for asset and is the connective thread that stitches together the fabric of Ocala's urban core. The trail is a source of community pride and a destination in its own right. It provides access to amenities and activities throughout Downtown and Midtown, and activates and connects catalytic development opportunity sites. The safe and well-lit trail showcases public art, interactive activities, and design references to Ocala's equestrian culture, and is replete with small seating areas, bike parking opportunities, bike repair stations, and comprehensive signage and wayfinding.



GOAL 6 Premier Arts and Cultural Destination

Midtown remains a major center for arts, culture, festivals, and events in the region. Local artists have ample options for studio and gallery spaces, and artist live-work studios are integrated into several Midtown developments. Public art continues to be a defining feature of Midtown and the Art Park, Tuscowilla Art Stroll, Hense Mural, and rotating installations along the Osceola Trak all enhance the public experience for residents and visitors alike.



GOAL 7 Differentiated Shopping, Dining, and Entertainment

Midtown differentiates itself by offering unique stores and experiences not available in other parts of the city. The curated collection of shopping, dining, and entertainment options emphasizes distinct, locally-owned businesses that celebrate the talented people and unique products of Ocala and Marion County. The exceptional concentration of venues and destinations in a compact, walkable urban environment, combined with proximity and access to Tuscowilla Park and the Osceola Trak, make Midtown an undeniable attraction for residents and visitors from around the city, Marion County, and beyond.



GOAL 8 Effective and Compassionate Social Services

Ocala collaborates with the County and a multitude of non-profit organizations to offer compassionate and effective housing and supportive social services for the less fortunate members of our community. The ecosystem of facilities and services including emergency food and shelter locations; centralized intake, case management, and day center services; rapid-re-housing; and supportive counseling, drug treatment, and job services supports the most vulnerable in our community and helps limit the negative impacts of vagrancy, loitering, and drug abuse in the city center.

3.2 Strategy Framework

The Strategy Framework illustrates how the vision and goals inform and guide the Midtown Master Plan (see Figure 3.2). The strategies reflect community input collected throughout the planning process and intend to spark big ideas for Midtown’s future. The Strategy Framework consists of three categories that build from Midtown’s vision and goals. These categories include: A Land Use and Development Strategy, Catalytic Development Sites, and Supporting Strategies. The plan’s recommendations are directly tied to the Strategy Framework and are explained in detail throughout the following chapters.

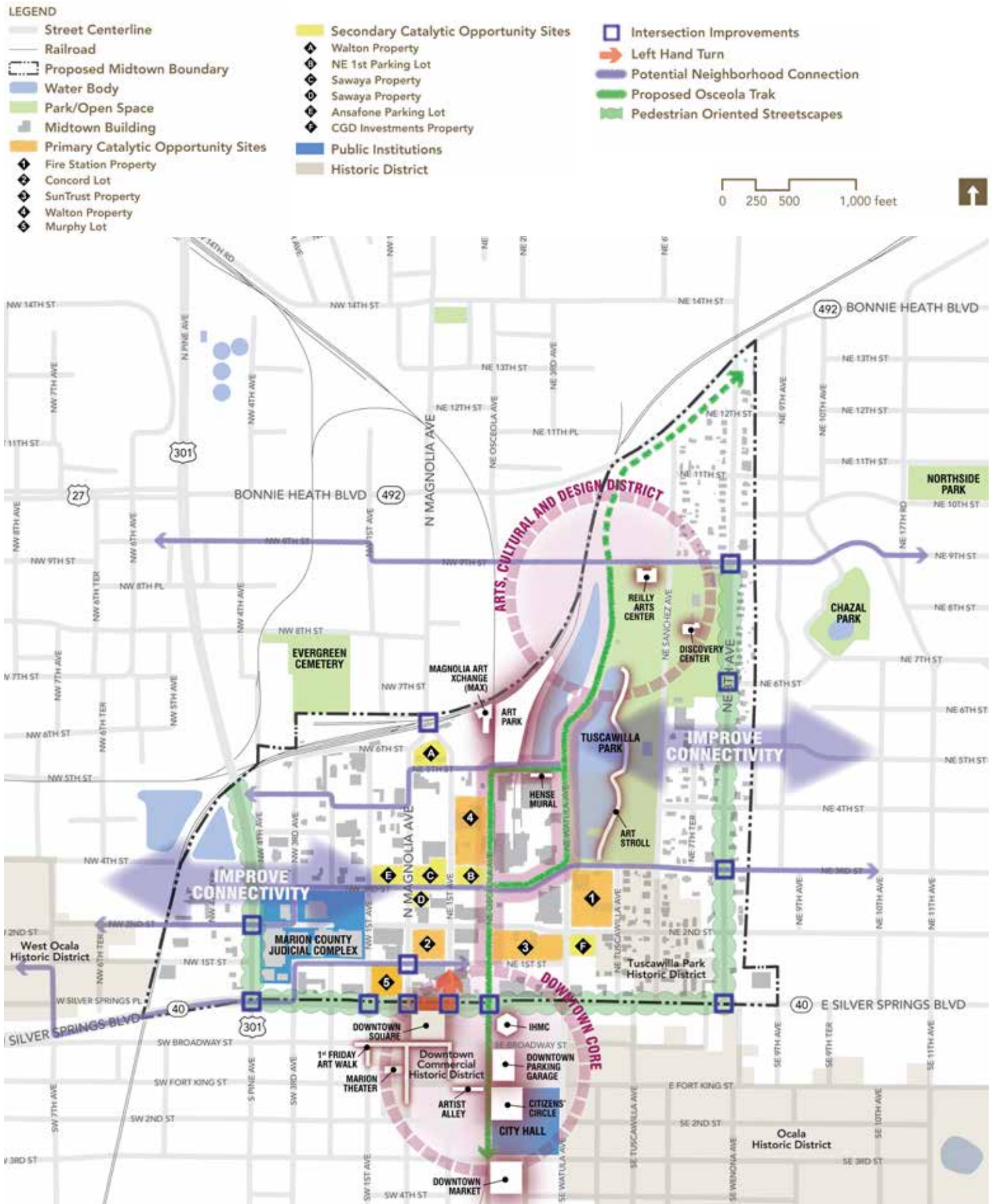
3.3 Strategy Diagram

The Strategy Diagram presents the Strategy Framework’s big moves by physically locating them in Midtown (see Figure 3.3). Some strategies include: defining neighborhood connections, prioritizing catalytic development sites, improving walkability, establishing district identities, and identifying the Osceola Trak alignment. Furthermore, these strategies and more are defined in the following chapters.

Figure 3.2: Midtown Strategy Framework



Figure 3.3: Midtown Strategy Diagram



4

Land Use and Development Concepts



4. Land Use and Development Concepts

The land use and development strategies for Midtown build from and refine the strategies recommended in the 2004 Downtown Master Plan. Ocala Vision 2035 designates future land use in the great majority of the Midtown area as “High Intensity/Central Core.” This land use pattern calls for a high mixture of uses, taller buildings, smaller setbacks, wide sidewalks to improve pedestrian activity, plazas and civic areas, and parking located on-street or behind buildings.

4.1 Strategies for Midtown

The strategies discussed below and the accompanying land use concepts map reflect this long-term vision, recommending mixed-use throughout most of the area. Specific subareas are further refined by designating a particular emphasis within the mixed-use environment (e.g. residential, commercial, or flex space). Tusawilla Park serves as a buffer and the Mixed Use: Residential area serves as a transitional zone between the residential neighborhoods and historic districts east of Midtown and the more intense Mixed Use: Commercial core.

Creating more housing options in Midtown is one of the highest priorities of the plan, and is the foundation for many other recommended strategies. Residential options of various types, sizes, and price should be integrated into development throughout Midtown, creating a critical mass of residents that will help support the range of other uses and activate public spaces.

Active ground floor uses must be encouraged in developments adjacent to Tusawilla Park and the Osceola Trak to showcase and leverage these important Midtown assets. City policies should encourage and prioritize adaptive reuse opportunities; flexible and convertible ground floor spaces; and developments that include space for arts and cultural activities. Parking and uses related to provision of social services must be minimized and carefully integrated to mitigate potential negative impacts on new and existing developments in Midtown.

The development programs described and illustrated for the four catalytic opportunity sites in this Master Plan introduce and reinforce the concepts listed below and serve as prototypes for other Midtown developments.

4.1.1. Encourage the development of more housing in Midtown.

- a. Support developments that provide a diverse range of housing options (type, size, cost, and rental/ownership). Examples of support include providing or discounting land, creating incentives, co-development, etc. for projects that provide desired housing types.
- b. Create conditions for residential developments to thrive by implementing supportive strategies that make Midtown feel safer, more inviting, and more attractive for residents.

4.1.2. Promote a mix of uses in Midtown.

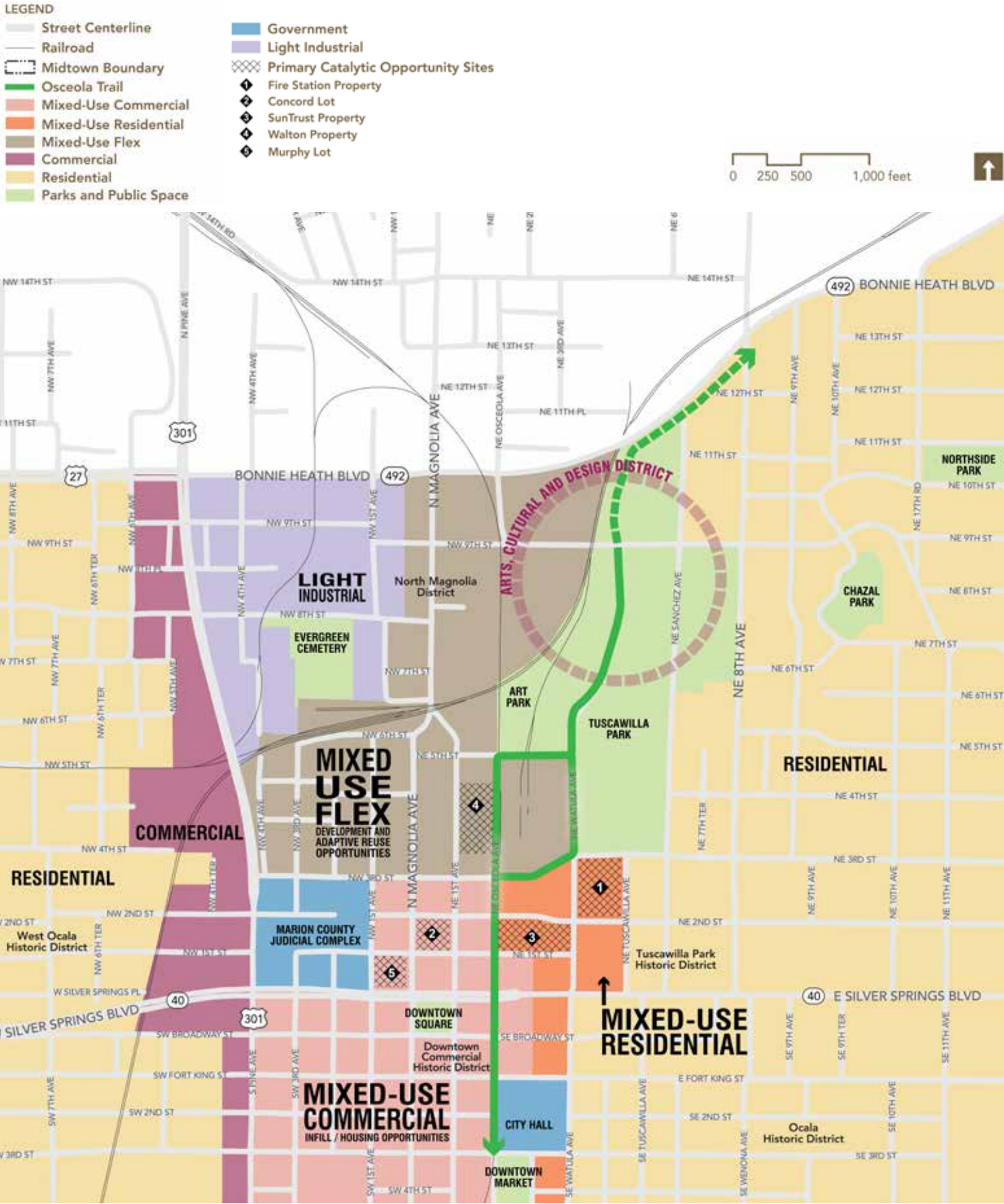
- a. Ensure new developments are not single use and devote space to two or more uses that help meet the daily needs of Midtown residents and employees (housing, employment, shopping, recreation, social gathering, dining, arts and culture, entertainment, and professional services).
- b. Cultivate a mix of uses that activate Midtown as an “18-hour place.”
- c. Focus on creating a range of Midtown destinations that appeal to a diverse spectrum of the population.
- d. Complement mixed use developments with public investment in activated and programmed public spaces.

4.1.3. Prioritize developments that are adjacent to and activate Tusawilla Park and the Osceola Trak.

- a. Require developments adjacent to Tusawilla Park or the Osceola Trak to have active ground floor uses.
- b. Encourage uses that integrate spaces for gathering, interactive activities, and events adjacent to the park or trail.

- 4.1.4. Facilitate adaptive re-use opportunities and the creation of flexible and convertible spaces in Midtown.
 - a. Ensure codes allow for adaptive reuse of existing buildings (including historic) and upper stories of structures for residential and live-work uses.
 - b. Encourage and facilitate adaptive reuse and new development projects that provide ground floor spaces that can support multiple uses and convert from one use to another as market demand changes.
- 4.1.5. Encourage new developments and adaptive reuse projects that create spaces that support the arts, cultural, and design community.
 - a. Encourage development and adaptive reuse projects that focus on or integrate gallery or studio space.
 - b. Encourage development and adaptive reuse projects that include artist live-work units.
 - c. Create incentives for projects that integrate prominent public art.
- 4.1.6. Collaborate with County and non-profit partners to locate social services providers to minimize negative impacts on Midtown residents, business owners, employees, and visitors.
 - a. Co-locate core homeless intake, case management, and social services in a centralized Navigation Center/Day Center.
 - b. Work to help locate new or relocating supportive service locations in a dispersed pattern within distances of the Navigation/Day Center that can be accessed by walking, biking, or transit.
- 4.1.7. Develop parking regulations and policies that support Midtown's mixed use environment.
 - a. Prohibit new non-accessory parking facilities unless part of a district-wide or shared parking strategy.
 - b. Explore the creation of a Parking Management District or Transportation Management Association to manage and facilitate shared parking assets and promote other transportation options.
 - c. Develop a shared parking policy and program to increase utilization of existing parking and reduce the overall need for stand alone, single purpose parking facilities.
 - d. Encourage or require unbundled parking for specific Midtown development locations where parking ratios and associated costs might inhibit desired development patterns (such as the Concord lot) whereby the sale or lease cost for a residential or office unit does not include the cost of parking. Unbundling parking from units provides more flexibility for developers and end users, and potentially reduces development costs because less parking is required/needed for a given project.

Figure 4.1: Land Use Concepts



5

Catalytic Opportunity Sites



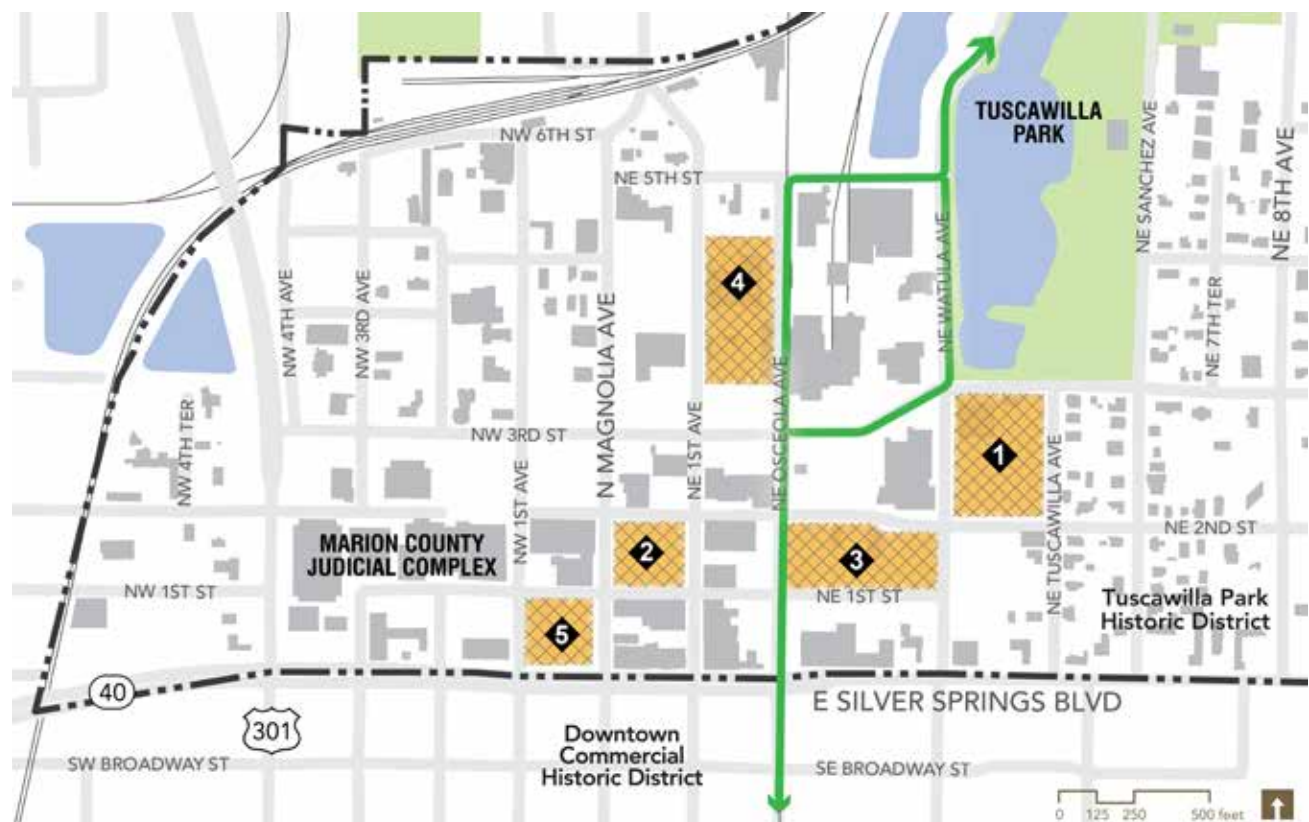
5. Catalytic Opportunity Sites

The Midtown Ocala Strategy Framework established the vision for Ocala's Midtown to become a livable, connected, and safe neighborhood; a thriving center of arts, culture, and innovation; and a hub of retail, dining, and entertainment options distinct in Marion County. The catalytic opportunity sites to follow are the executable action items that provide a first step in achieving that vision. Paired with a Land Use and Development Strategy, and Supporting Strategies, the Catalytic Opportunity Sites were selected for their ability to achieve that overall vision. A feasibility analysis, summary, and assumptions can be found for each catalytic site in appendices C and D.

Throughout the course of the planning process, the consulting team and City staff met with a wide variety of stakeholders, local businesses, and local developers. Based on these meetings and a qualitative and quantitative evaluation of the current land supply and market demand in Midtown, five catalytic sites were identified as highest priority. The five primary catalytic sites include the following:

- ❖ 1 Fire Station Site
- ❖ 2 Concord Parking Lot
- ❖ 3 SunTrust Parking Lot
- ❖ 4 Walton Property
- ❖ 5 Murphy Parking Lot

Figure 5.1: Primary Catalytic Site Locations



1 Fire Station Site



5.1 Fire Station Site

The Fire Station site is roughly a 3-acre site that is currently occupied by Ocala Rescue Fire Station 1. However, the Fire Department is in the process of relocating their facilities to two alternative sites, leaving the current site available for redevelopment. The site is located across NE 3rd Street from the southwest corner of Tuscawilla Park. Due to the sloping grade of the site, with the highest elevation on the southern edge, potential viewshed opportunities of the park itself are ideal. Both due to the proximity to and views of the park, the site is in a prime location.

The future development of the Fire Station site can be enhanced by resembling the area's existing character. The adjacent Tuscawilla Park Historic District represents a complementary architectural style for the Fire Station development to reflect. Additionally, this site has potential to adaptively reuse the Fire Station building to serve as the site's anchor. Lastly, the northwest corner of the site, at the intersection of NE 3rd Street and NE Watula Avenue, is adjacent to the proposed Osceola Trak. This proximity to a strong pedestrian and bicycle amenity should not be overlooked in the development of this site. Based on the current status and condition of the site there are a number of opportunities and challenges associated with pursuing the potential redevelopment.

OPPORTUNITIES

- ◇ Available for redevelopment in the near future
- ◇ Relatively large site with a significant portion of the site undeveloped
- ◇ City-owned
- ◇ Opportunity for the City to partner with a private developer and influence the final development
- ◇ Well-suited for medium density townhome development that can fit with the character of the existing neighborhood
- ◇ Townhome development represents a product that the market is currently somewhat familiar with and more likely to adopt
- ◇ Opportunity for rehabilitation of existing Fire Department building as community-oriented food and beverage space that will provide an amenity to the neighborhood
- ◇ Substantial in size and able to create momentum that could spill over to other sites in Midtown

CHALLENGES

- ◇ May not have the same catalytic impact as the redevelopment of other sites due to its location on the eastern edge of the Midtown area
- ◇ Adjacent to light industrial uses (UniFirst and Seminole Feed) that may negatively impact future home values

1 Fire Station Site

Insignificant buildings will need to be removed in order for the site to reach its full development potential. Given the variety of potential building programs that could be employed on site, three design alternatives were established to analyze and depict future development.

FIRE STATION ALTERNATIVE 1

Site Program

In Alternative 1, it is proposed that the Fire Station remains as an adaptive reuse project in the northwest portion of the site. The program includes both restaurant and retail, an outdoor patio and an amenity area for various games and activities. The southwest portion of the site includes two-story townhomes. The townhomes' western edge has tuck-under parking, a centralized courtyard amenity, and shared parking for the remaining townhome units. The central green amenity area acts as a natural buffer between programs. The eastern portion of the site is proposed to contain six three-story townhomes. These townhomes are accessed by shared drive aisles and tuck-under parking. Either a shared drive aisle, or a shared green space is located between each band. The residences facing Tucawilla Avenue feature an architectural edge that complements the existing homes across the street.

Figure 5.2: Fire Station Alternative 1 - Adaptive Reuse and Townhomes



The adaptive re-use of the Fire Station can retain a thematic character, as seen at the Station 26 Brewing Company in Denver, CO

Figure 5.3: Fire Station Alternative 1 - Site Plan



Program Details

- ◇ 12,350 square feet adaptive reuse retail/hospitality
- ◇ 52 townhomes that are two and three-stories
 - 1,300 square feet average
 - 45 units have two tuck-under parking spaces at 700 square feet each
- ◇ 147 total parking spaces (surplus of 12 for the site)

5.1.1. Design Considerations and Applications

- a. Maximize views of Tuscowilla Park
- b. Adaptive reuse of Fire Station building
- c. Create outdoor plaza for seating
- d. Respect character and rhythm of historic district on east edge
- e. Controlled open space as amenity for residents
- f. Use topography to create views using terraced townhomes, balconies, rooftop decks
- g. Activate corner of NE Watula and NE 3rd avenues on Osceola Trak
- h. Connection to SunTrust site

FIRE STATION ALTERNATIVE 2

Site Program

Alternative 2 proposes that the Fire Station remains as an adaptive reuse project. The site's southwest program contains two-story townhomes, just as Alternative 1. In this alternative; however, the eastern portion of the site reflects the housing style along NE Tusawilla Avenue by incorporating nine single-family detached bungalows. Detached parking garages are included and accessed through a residential alley. The lot widths are approximately 48 feet to accommodate nine 30-foot units.

Figure 5.4: Fire Station Alternative 2 - Adaptive Reuse, Townhomes, and Bungalows



The segmentation of a site can allow for multiple residential and commercial uses.

Figure 5.5: Fire Station Alternative 2 - Site Plan



Program Details

- ◇ 12,350 square feet adaptive reuse retail/hospitality
- ◇ 12 townhomes that are two and three-stories
 - 1,300 square feet average
 - 5 units have two tuck-under parking spaces at 700 square feet each
- ◇ 9 single story bungalows
 - 1,420 square feet average
 - Each has a single car detached garage
- ◇ 76 total parking spaces (surplus of 12 for the site)

5.1.2. Design Considerations and Applications

- a. Maximize views of Tusawilla Park
- b. Adaptive reuse of Fire Station building
- c. Create outdoor plaza for seating
- d. Replication of the existing residential character on the eastern edge
- e. Controlled open space as amenity for residents
- f. Compartmentalization of the site to maximize the efficiency of the site uses
- g. Activate corner of NE Watula and NE 3rd avenues on leg of the Osceola Trak

FIRE STATION ALTERNATIVE 3

Site Program:

In Alternative 3, the existing Fire Station building is removed to establish a critical architectural mass. The northwest portion of the site is programed as mixed-use development with ground floor retail and two to three-stories of residential above. The development's parking resides in the center of the site, allowing its perimeter to establish a strong built edge. The southwest portion of the site includes three-story townhomes accessed off a private drive with tuck-under parking. The townhomes are buffered from the mixed-use building and parking lot by shared open space. The eastern portion of the site is consistent with Alternative 2, containing single-family detached bungalows.

Figure 5.6: Fire Station Alternative 3 - Mixed-Use, Townhomes, and Bungalows



Mixed-use density can allow for larger areas devoted to green space amenities as shown in a Portland alley.

Figure 5.7: Fire Station Alternative 3 - Site Plan



Program Details

- ◇ 15,770 square feet retail
 - Surface parking
- ◇ 50 apartment units
 - 900 square feet average
 - Surface parking
- ◇ 8 townhomes that are two and three-stories
 - 1,300 square feet average
 - Each unit has two tuck-under parking spaces at 700 square feet each
- ◇ 9 single-story bungalows
 - 1,420 square feet average
 - Each has a single car detached garage
- ◇ 123 total parking spaces
(deficit of 4 for the site)

5.1.3. Design Considerations and Applications

- a. Maximize views of Tusawilla Park
- b. Maximize residential and mixed-use development potential
- c. Create a strong, built edge along NE Watula Avenue
- d. Replicate character of the historic district on east edge
- e. Create open space buffer; large, contiguous parking; and the southern residential units
- f. Use topography to create views using terraced townhomes, balconies, rooftop decks
- g. Activate corner of NE Watula Avenue and NE 3rd Avenue on the Osceola Trak
- h. Connection to SunTrust site
- i. Osceola Trak

2 Concord Parking Lot



5.2 Concord Parking Lot

The Concord Parking Lot is an approximately 1.15 acre site that is located to the northeast of the intersection of NE 1st Street and N Magnolia Avenue. The site is currently owned by the City and provides parking for surrounding businesses. Furthermore, this particular site benefits from the adjacency to the historic Sovereign Building. At the base of the Sovereign Building, there is already a noted amount of development energy, with a new streetscape design and the inclusion of a new coffee shop. Additionally, this site is advantageously situated within close proximity to a number of both downtown and midtown amenities and employment centers including the Downtown Square and future hotel, the Osceola Trak, and the Marion County Courts Complex. Based on the current status and condition of the site, there are a number of advantages and disadvantages associated with pursuing the potential redevelopment of this site.

OPPORTUNITIES

- ◇ City owned
- ◇ Opportunity for the City to partner with a private developer and influence the final building type and design
- ◇ Currently provides parking that could potentially be provided at an alternative location
- ◇ Centrally located in Midtown
- ◇ High catalytic impact potential

CHALLENGES

- ◇ Relatively small and will require a higher density development in order to be feasible.
- ◇ Will require structured parking, which will add to the construction costs for any development effort Two development alternatives are illustrated for the Concord Parking Lot.

2 Concord Parking Lot

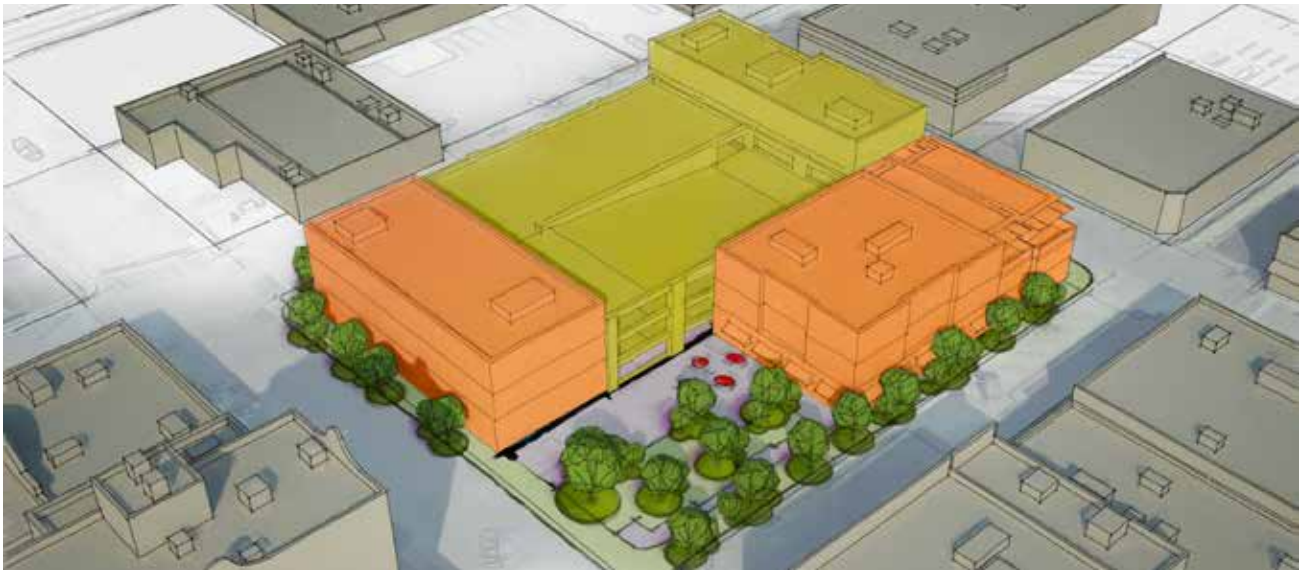
Due to the site's small scale, the ideal development program is rather similar between the two alternatives. However, their degree of intensity is notably different and shall be determined in conjunction with other development strategies in the Midtown and Downtown area.

CONCORD ALTERNATIVE 1

Site Program

In Alternative 1, the development comprises a contiguous building mass and features a hardscaped plaza. The northwestern corner of the site is occupied by a three-story mixed-use building. Three and four-story condominiums line the eastern and southern edges of the site. The southern condominiums are three-stories and only contain two levels of residential units. The ground floor of the development is reserved for retail which fronts on both the hardscape plaza and 1st Street. The largest program footprint on the site is reserved for a three-story parking garage, from which all of the other uses are physically attached. The parking garage provides direct unit access for the four-story condominiums, serves the mixed-use building, and includes a surplus of spaces that could be used to satisfy a larger district parking need.

Figure 5.8: Concord Alternative 1 - Mixed-Use, Parking Structure, and Plaza



High-density design solutions help to address parking issues while providing desired gathering places.

Figure 5.9: Concord Alternative 1 - Site Plan



Program Details

- ◊ 12,540 square feet of mixed-use commercial (2 floors)
- ◊ 7,030 square feet of retail
 - 3,500 square feet of additional retail space possible on ground floor of parking garage
- ◊ 45 condos (4 floors)
 - 900 Square feet average
- ◊ 3 story parking structure with 50 spaces per deck
- ◊ 151 total parking spaces (surplus of 47 for the site)
 - 140 total parking spaces assuming additional retail space is leased (surplus of 24 for the site)

5.2.1. Design Considerations and Applications

- a. Retain and celebrate a viewshed of the Sovereign building at the ground plane
- b. Provide multiple residential options to create dynamism within the built form
- c. Account for retail growth over time by allowing for the adaptive reuse of the ground plane
- d. Maximize the number of on-site parking spaces to incentivize adjacent development with lower parking requirements

CONCORD ALTERNATIVE 2

Site Program

In Alternative 2, the development program and layout is largely the same as Alternative 1. The most notable change is the approach to parking solutions. A partially covered surface parking lot is encouraged to employ alternative parking strategies such as lifts, to increase parking density. The parking lot resides at the center of a mixed-use building, residential condominiums with ground floor retail, and a hardscaped plaza. Although the site appears under-parked with the proposed programs, shared parking strategies are suggested to alleviate the deficit.

Figure 5.10: Concord Alternative 2 - Mixed-Use, Townhomes, and Plaza



The ground floor is a critical piece within the building mass in creating a pedestrian-scaled environment.

Figure 5.11: Concord Alternative 2 - Site Plan

Program Details

- ◇ 12,540 square feet of mixed-use commercial (2 floors)
- ◇ 7,030 square feet of retail
 - Surface parking
- ◇ 45 condos (4 floors)
 - 900 square feet average
 - Parking deck or tuck under parking
- ◇ 59 total parking spaces (deficit of 47 for the site)
 - 77 total parking spaces assuming alternative parking strategies such as unbundled parking or parking lifts (deficit of 29 for the site)

5.2.2. Design Considerations and Applications

- a. Use building height to create views of iconic downtown elements, such as the Sovereign Building
- b. Establish regulating lines to create building massing that reflects its context
- c. Provide a larger outdoor open space to allow for casual gathering
- d. Create prominent architecture on at least three of the block's corners
- e. Minimize the amount of on-site parking to encourage a shared parking strategy

3 SunTrust Parking Lot



5.3 SunTrust Parking Lot

The SunTrust Parking lot is a 2.3-acre site owned by the SunTrust Bank. While the lot provides additional parking for the bank, it is typically underutilized and represents a good opportunity for redevelopment in the Midtown area. Due to the site's size and current use, there would be minimal site preparation required for development. Furthermore, the project site is located just one block north of State Route 40, E Silver Springs Blvd. This proximity, paired with the likely ease of the initial phase of construction, makes this site a prime candidate for development. Other proximities, including the Fire Station Property catalytic opportunity site, the Tuscawilla Park Historic District, and the Osceola Trak will benefit the site as development begins in the area. Based on the current status and condition of the site, there are a number of opportunities and challenges associated with pursuing its potential redevelopment.

OPPORTUNITIES

- ◇ Large site that can accommodate a significant amount of development
- ◇ Location and size allows for the possibility of a wide range of uses on the site (including office and residential)
- ◇ Given its large size, the site is a good candidate for future development, once the market has been established on the Concord and Fire Station sites

CHALLENGES

- ◇ Owned by SunTrust Bank, which will require them to approve a sale before any redevelopment is possible
- ◇ Adjacent to light industrial uses (UniFirst) that may negatively impact future home values

3 SunTrust Parking Lot

Two development alternatives are described for the SunTrust Parking Lot. Given the prime frontage along the Osceola Trak, both alternatives take advantage of that edge of the site.

SUNTRUST ALTERNATIVE 1

Site Program

The rectangular nature of the site allows for strong internal pedestrian connectivity. A mixed-use building frames the site's western edge and contains ground floor retail, second floor office, and two floors of residential. The building is supported by a patio/amenity area immediately adjacent to and accessible by the Osceola Trak. Parking for the mixed-use building is located on its eastern edge and entered via a central drive that is accessible from both NE 2nd and NE 1st streets. The parking lot contains a walkway and a healthy number of trees creating a pleasant pedestrian environment. Additional vegetation is echoed on the site's northern edge, providing a buffer for the uses across NE 2nd Street. The eastern half of the site is divided into four two-story townhomes, including either tuck-under or dispersed lot parking. These townhomes are organized around an open space that connects to the west side of the site.

Figure 5.12: SunTrust Alternative 1 - Mixed-Use and Townhomes



Appropriately scaled building forms can create a critical mass on a site, while also activating pedestrian connections.

Figure 5.13: SunTrust Alternative 1 - Site Plan



Program Details

- ◇ 5,843 square feet of office (1st floor)
- ◇ 5,843 square feet of retail (1st floor)
- ◇ 25 residential condos (2nd and 3rd floors)
 - 900 square feet average
- ◇ 16 townhomes that are two and three-stories
 - 1,300 square feet average
 - 8 units have two tuck-under parking spaces at 700 square feet each
 - 8 units are surfaced parked
- ◇ 101 total parking spaces (surplus of 9 for the site)

5.3.1. Design Considerations and Applications

- a. Create an open space to act as both a reprieve from the built form and as an orienting device
- b. Provide a pedestrian walkway through the site on axis with the open space, establishing a linear green connection
- c. Establish a solid building edge and volume along the Osceola Trak to increase visual access to the amenity
- d. The ground floor should cater to users in motion
- e. Set back residential architecture to physically and visually buffer the use from adjacent parking lot and factory land uses

SUNTRUST ALTERNATIVE 2

Site Program

Alternative 2 utilizes the rectangular nature of the site, establishing a strong design framework. As in Alternative 1, a mixed-use building is located on site's western edge, containing ground floor retail, second floor office, and two floors of residential. The building includes a patio/amenity area and is adjacent to the Osceola Trak. Parking for the mixed-use building is positioned in a large lot to the east. The lot will be shared with some of the residential units and provides a strong buffer to the light industrial uses across NE 2nd Street. The eastern edge of the site contains two-to-three-story townhomes, arranged in a manner that mirrors the mixed-use building on the opposite side of the site. The remaining residential program is organized into two u-shaped townhome buildings that frame shared green spaces. These u-shaped townhomes are accessed via shared drive aisles and include tuck-under parking.

Figure 5.14: SunTrust Alternative 2 - Mixed-Use and Townhomes



Building forms can provide a strong built edge while allowing for strategic permeability for residents.

Figure 5.15: SunTrust Alternative 2 - Site Plan



Program Details

- ◇ 5,843 square feet of office (1st floor)
- ◇ 5,843 square feet of retail (1st floor)
- ◇ 25 residential condos (2nd and 3rd floors)
 - 900 square feet average
- ◇ 22 townhomes that are two and three-stories
 - 1,300 square feet average
 - 20 units have two tuck-under parking spaces at 700 square feet each
- ◇ 103 total parking spaces
(deficit of 1 for the site)

5.3.2. Design Considerations and Applications

- a. Visually buffer internal parking with generous vegetation
- b. Restrict parking travel to one-way traffic allowing for organized site circulation
- c. Create shared residential amenities and access to increased efficiency
- d. Balance the architectural volumes and uses on the west and east edges to appropriately respond to context
- e. Focus residential development along the southern edge, away from the light industrial land use to the north

4 Walton Property



5.4 Walton Property

The Walton Property is a 2.64-acre site occupied by a building initially intended for light industrial uses, but has recently been converted into a dance studio and includes surface parking lots. Conversations with the owner have indicated the potential for redevelopment through a partnership or City acquisition. This site is the second largest catalytic opportunity site, with the largest being the Fire Station Property.

Given its context, the Walton Property offers unique design solutions. Like the Fire Station building, the Walton Property has a building (a composite warehouse) that is primed to be adaptively reused. Additionally, this site boasts the longest frontage of the Osceola Trak when comparing it to other catalytic opportunity sites. Finally, being the northern most catalytic opportunity site, this location is a key link to both the Art Park and the Magnolia Art Xchange (MAX). Given the status and design potential of the site, there are several opportunities and challenges associated with pursuing potential redevelopment.

OPPORTUNITIES

- ◇ Adequate size and appropriate location to accommodate non-permanent uses such as food trucks, pop-up retail, along with event and art programming
- ◇ Large site that is relatively underutilized
- ◇ Opportunity to develop more creative uses that have the potential to support the artist community
- ◇ Adjacent to the future Osceola Trak
- ◇ Engaged property owner in the Midtown Master Plan and open to working on redevelopment efforts

CHALLENGES

- ◇ Privately owned
- ◇ Will likely require a public-private partnership (P3) or outright acquisition
- ◇ Not in close proximity to Downtown Ocala
- ◇ More so than the other sites, adjacent to industrial uses (Seminole Feed) that may negatively impact the feasibility of developing residential or office uses

4 Walton Property

Three design alternatives are provided to help determine Walton Site's future. With the strong potential for adaptive reuse, the following design alternatives propose the similar programs for reusing the warehouse. Given the artistic/maker atmosphere in this portion of Midtown, the site should also consider including near-term solutions, such as pop-up and temporary uses in the form of art, play, and events. Regardless, a business plan is the next logical step towards redevelopment.

WALTON ALTERNATIVE 1

Site Program

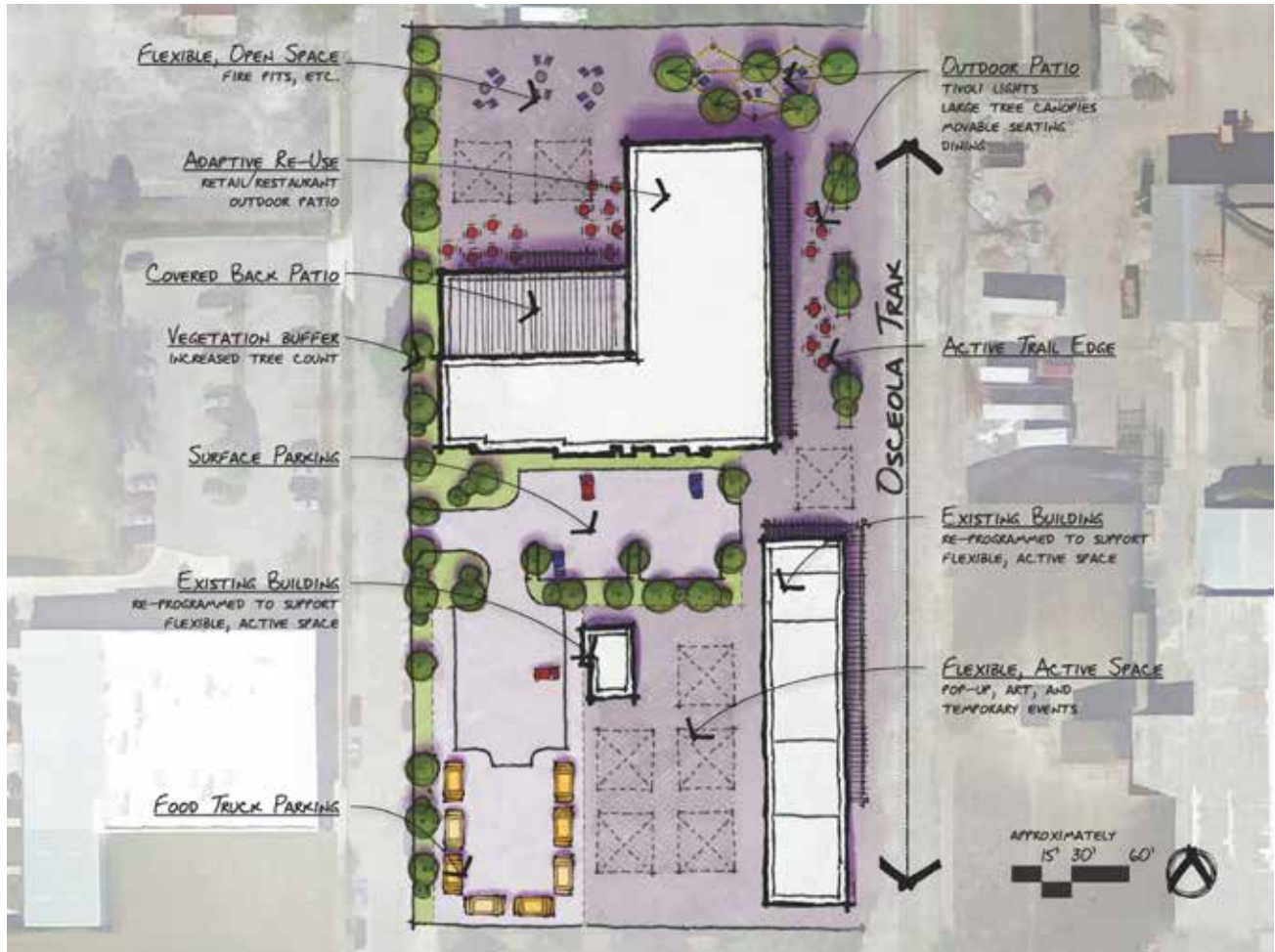
The first alternative approaches the site program by making use of the existing conditions. The recommendations are focused around the adaptive reuse of the existing warehouse to include authentic retail and restaurant spaces, in addition to flexible space that could host a number of uses including, a commissary kitchen, daycare, etc. These functions will be supported by an expansive, covered outdoor patio which will replace the decaying loading docks on the northern edge of the western half of the building. Extending from the patio, other design elements will include fire pits, large tree canopies, movable seating, and appropriate lighting. The eastern edge of the site has the opportunity of promoting an active trail edge that allows people to comfortably move between Osceola Trak and the site. The southern half of the site will retain the same physical form, allowing the programming of the space to create temporary uses. Existing buildings will be retrofitted to support the flexible use of the space. Surface parking has been inserted, creating an "L" around the flexible, open space. The southwestern corner of the site is reserved for food trucks, whether they are parked out of use, or actively programmed into the space.

Figure 5.16: Walton Alternative 1 - Adaptive Reuse and Pop-Up/Event Space



Existing site elements, with minimal improvements, can be activated through flexible programming.

Figure 5.17: Walton Alternative 1 - Site Plan



Program Details

- ◇ 18,050 square feet of retail adaptive reuse
 - Surface parking
 - Attached, covered patio
- ◇ Flexible, open space, programmed as needed
 - Enhanced paving
- ◇ 8,750 square feet of a minor retrofit
 - Flexible shell program

5.4.1. Design Considerations and Applications

- a. Reduce the initial hard-cost investment by maximizing the programmatic opportunities
- b. Create multiple pockets of outdoor gathering spaces to provide for a number of different user groups
- c. Adaptively re-use on-site architecture to establish the aesthetic tone for the site
- d. Retrofit existing minor buildings to support the flexible program of the site

WALTON ALTERNATIVE 2

Site Program

Alternative 2 approaches the northern half of the site by adaptively reusing the existing warehouse to include authentic retail and restaurant spaces. These functions will be supported by an expansive outdoor patio along the northern edge of the building that includes large tree canopies, movable seating, and appropriate lighting. The eastern edge of the site has the opportunity of promoting an active trail edge that allows people to comfortably move between Osceola Trak and the site. South of the existing warehouse, flexible pop-up event space is proposed as a temporary use. Further south, live/work art studios rising two-to-three-stories are supported by an internal courtyard. There is a strong east-west pedestrian connection through the art studios that connects the surface parking in the southwest corner of the site to the Osceola Trak. The surface parking lots in the site plan provide alternative opportunities for event spaces.

Figure 5.18: Walton Alternative 2 - Adaptive Reuse and Artist Live-Work Studios



Artist live/work spaces can provide mixed uses both in the building and in shared spaces.

Figure 5.19: Walton Alternative 2 - Site Plan



Program Details

- ◇ 18,050 square feet of retail adaptive reuse
 - Surface parking
- ◇ 14 Artist live-work studios
 - 1,300 square feet average
 - Surface parking
- ◇ 60 total parking spaces (deficit of 0 for the site)

5.4.2. Design Considerations and Applications

- a. Provide seamless access to the Osceola Trak with generous open space
- b. Create multiple pockets of outdoor gathering spaces to provide for a number of different user groups
- c. Adaptively re-use on-site architecture to establish the aesthetic tone for the site
- d. Supplement site uses with artistically oriented residential and retail to respond to the existing character of the neighborhood
- e. Provide urban 'containers' of vegetation to maximize the amount of special paving, allowing for maximum flexibility

WALTON ALTERNATIVE 3

Site Program

In Alternative 3, the warehouse in northern half of the site will be targeted for adaptive reuse. The treatment of the site's eastern edge shall promote activity stemming from Osceola Trak. The built structures approaching the trail shall be enhanced by the addition of context sensitive architectural features. South of the warehouse, live/work art studios are proposed with large anchor uses. The larger footprints will take the form of display spaces and galleries and are positioned in the corners of the southern half of the site. Parking in this iteration is largely internalized to create a strong built presence along both the Osceola Trak and NE 1st Avenue.

Figure 5.20: Walton Alternative 3 - Adaptive Reuse, Artist Live-Work Studios, and Galleries



Large anchor buildings can balance a site's program by providing complementary commercial uses.

Figure 5.21: Walton Alternative 2 - Site Plan



Program Details

- ◇ 18,050 square feet of retail adaptive reuse
 - Surface parking
- ◇ 20 artist live-work studios
 - 1,300 square feet average
 - Surface parking
- ◇ 87 total parking spaces (surplus of 17 for the site)

5.4.3. Design Considerations and Applications:

- a. Leverage frontage on the Osceola Trak creating a strong built edge with building entries oriented towards the Trak
- b. Create two architectural masses for strong visual impact on the site
- c. Internal site connectivity should be complemented with strings of vegetation
- d. Internalize parking to reduce the visual impact from the Osceola Trak and NE 1st Avenue
- e. Additional building uses should supplement proposed user groups
 - e.g., a gallery for the live/work artists

5 Murphy Parking Lot



5.5 Murphy Parking Lot

The Murphy Parking Lot is approximately 1.15-acres located to the southeast of the intersection of NE 1st Street and N Magnolia Avenue. The site is privately owned and provides parking for surrounding businesses. Similar to the Concord Parking Lot, the Murphy Parking Lot benefits from its adjacency to the historic Sovereign Building, now harnessing a new streetscape design and retail. Additionally, the site is situated within close proximity to a number of Downtown and Midtown amenities and employment centers, including the Downtown Square and future hotel and the Marion County Courts Complex. Based on the site's condition and potential, there are a number of advantages and disadvantages associated with pursuing redevelopment.

OPPORTUNITIES

- ◇ Potential to build off the catalytic success of the Concord Parking Lot site
- ◇ Centrally located in Midtown

CHALLENGES

- ◇ Privately owned
- ◇ Currently provides parking that could potentially be provided at an alternative location
- ◇ Notable slope across the site
- ◇ Requires a comparatively large development program given its proximity to SR 40 and Downtown
- ◇ Changing character/context on the edge of the site

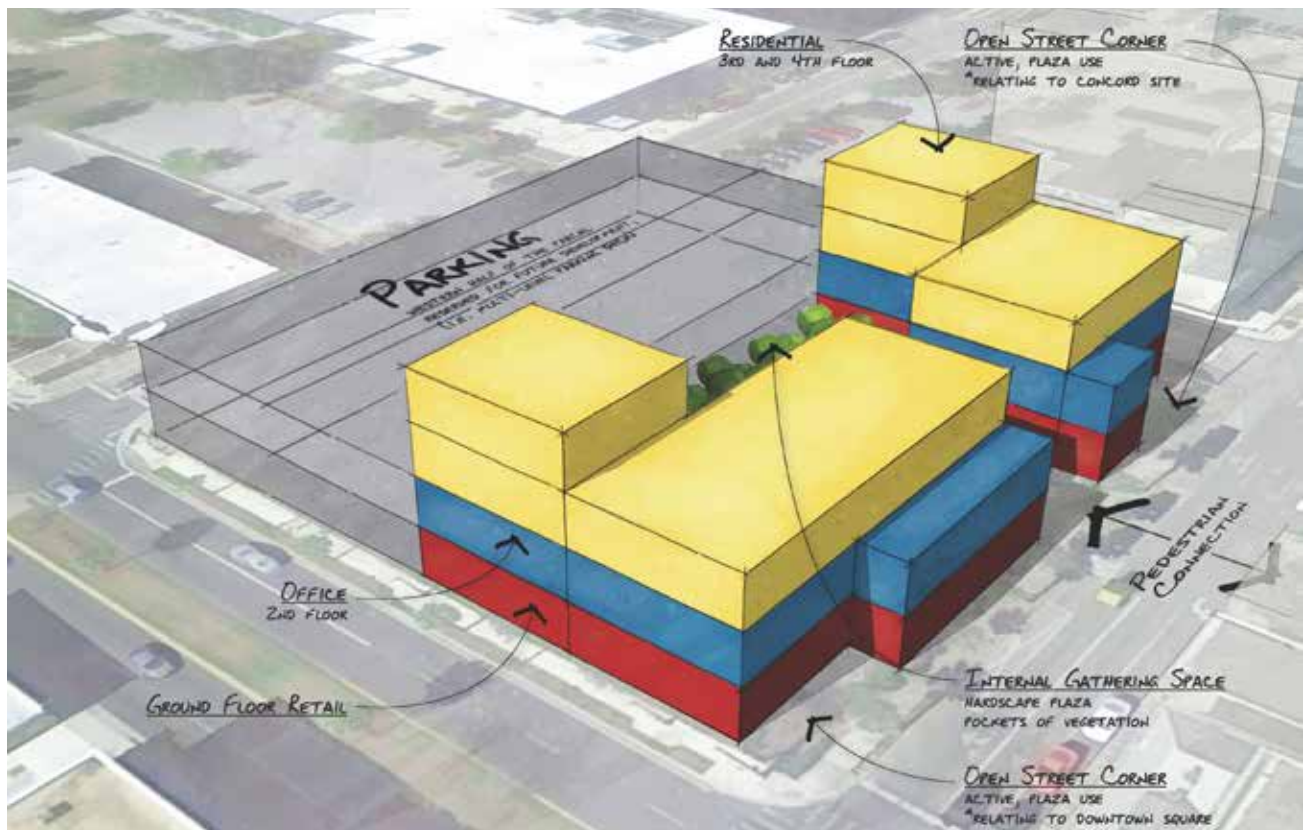
5 Murphy Parking Lot

MURPHY ALTERNATIVES 1 AND 2

Site Program

The Murphy Parking Lot alternatives are defined by their development intensity. In Alternative 1, the development is largely focused on the eastern edge of the site, featuring a large mixed-use building bisected by a hardscape plaza with pockets of vegetation. The mixed-use building is made up of ground floor retail, second floor office, and one to two additional residential floors. The building steps back from the street creating a pedestrian-scaled street wall. Furthermore, the building is setback from the northeast and southeast corners creating active plaza spaces. The southeast corner plaza establishes a relationship with the Downtown Square, while the northeast corner plaza creates one with the Concord Parking Lot site. The western edge of the site is reserved for parking, whether it be stacked or otherwise.

Figure 5.22: Murphy Alternative 1 - Mixed-Use and Parking Garage



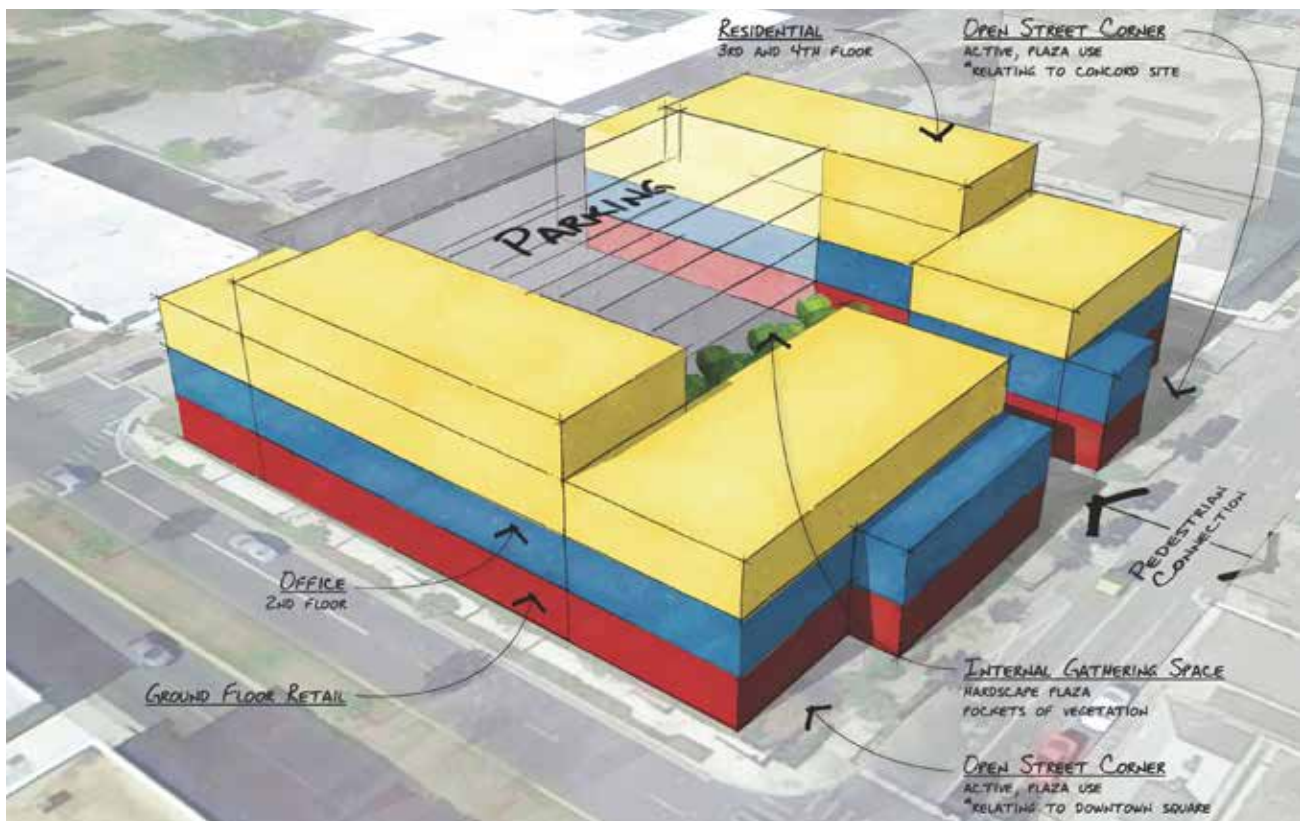
Architectural density can be placed strategically throughout a site to complement adjacent uses.

In Alternative 2, the mixed-use building program is consistent with that of Alternate 1; however, it extends further along the northern and southern edges towards NW 1st Avenue. To satisfy the parking demand associated with increased density, the remaining site is converted to a parking garage with adequate spaces to park the site. Combined, the parking structure and extended building program creates a strong built edge along NW 1st Avenue.

5.5.1. Design Considerations and Applications

- Activate northeast corner to respond to the Concord catalytic site
- Activate southeast corner to respond to the Ocala Downtown Square
- Wrap development along the northern and southern edges to complement existing development patterns
- Allow for pedestrian connectivity midblock along existing axis from adjacent eastern parcel
- Internalize green, open space amenity

Figure 5.23: Murphy Alternative 2 - Mixed-Use and Parking Garage



Urban sites are often most efficient through maximized density.

5.6 Secondary Opportunity Sites

While there are other sites in Midtown Ocala with redevelopment potential, their catalytic impact was determined to be less significant than the five primary sites listed prior in this chapter. These secondary opportunity sites are located throughout Midtown. Sites vary in scale and composition and should be pursued after the first round of catalytic opportunity sites are developed.

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| A Walton Property #2 | D Sawaya Property |
| B Northeast 1st Street Parking Lot | E Ansafone Parking Lot |
| C Sawaya Property | F CGD Investments Property |

Site A, the Walton Property, is located to the northeast of the intersection of South Magnolia Avenue and NE 5th Street. This site should build from the momentum established by the Magnolia Art Xchange, the Art Park and the primary Walton Property site. This site may feature complementary programs and development types as found in the surrounding land uses.

Opportunity sites B through E are located along NW 3rd Street, between NW 1st Avenue and NE Osceola Avenue. The Northeast 1st Street Parking Lot, the Ansafone Parking Lot, and both Sawaya Properties should be developed after NW 3rd Street is strengthened with streetscape and connectivity improvements. The Northwest 1st Street Parking Lot should harness the development and programming associated with its neighbor, the primary Walton Property catalytic opportunity site.

Opportunity site F, the CGD Investments Property, is located southeast of the NE Watula Avenue and NE 2nd Street intersection. This site is positioned between two catalytic opportunity sites; the Fire Station Site and the SunTrust Property. The CGD Investments Property's development should allow for complementary uses, providing a function perhaps not found on either of the adjacent sites.

Figure 5.24: Secondary Catalytic Site Locations



6

Supporting Strategies



6. Supporting Strategies

The supporting strategies of the Midtown Master Plan are intended to contribute to and set the context for the successful implementation of community's vision and goals for the area, the desired mix of land uses and the priority development of the catalytic sites. The supporting strategies include a combination of physical, programmatic, and policy recommendations to further enhance the urban fabric of Midtown and increase the likelihood of higher order recommendations being successful. The supporting strategies for the Midtown Master Plan include:

6.1 Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Transit Connectivity and Parking

6.2 Streetscape and Public Realm Design and Maintenance

6.3 Programming, Activation, and Placemaking

6.4 Social Services Coordination

6.5 Building Design Guidelines and Standards

6.6 Branding and Marketing



6.1 Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Transit Connectivity and Parking

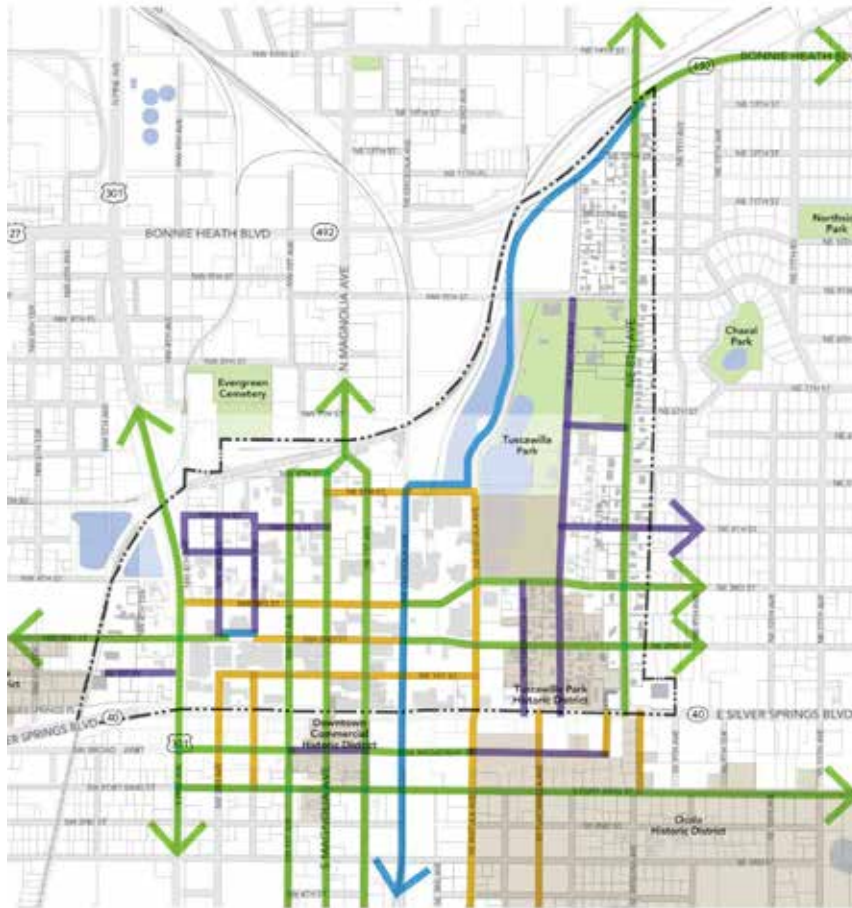
As discussed previously, a major challenge for revitalization of the Midtown area is the general lack of connectivity and the quality of those connections that do exist. Improved connectivity for all modes of transportation (pedestrians, bicyclists, transit, and motor vehicles) will be instrumental in the success of the Midtown Master Plan and development of the catalytic sites. The following provides an overview of recommended strategies for pedestrian, bicycle, and transit connectivity and parking in Midtown (see Appendix E for more detail).

STRATEGIES

- 6.1.1. Implement protected left turn from Silver Springs Boulevard onto NE 1st Avenue to improve vehicular connectivity into Midtown.
- 6.1.2. Increase connectivity and enhance the pedestrian experience in Midtown by implementing pedestrian and bicycle crossings and improving sidewalks.
 - a. Implement safe pedestrian crossings of Silver Springs Boulevard at NW 1st Avenue, Magnolia Avenue, NE 1st Avenue.
 - b. Implement a multimodal crossing of Silver Springs Boulevard at Osceola Avenue.
 - c. Implement safe crossing of Pine Avenue (US 441) at NW 2nd Street to improve access for residents of West Ocala.
 - d. Implement enhanced crossings of 8th Avenue to provide safer access to Tuscawilla Park from neighborhoods to the east. These crossing may be developed as part of a process of implementing a road diet on 8th Avenue (see strategy 4).
 - e. Ensure safe and continuous pedestrian and bicycle connectivity to Tuscawilla Park and surrounding neighborhoods, particularly on priority corridors such as 2nd/3rd Street and 5th Street.
 - f. Improve sidewalks in Downtown core blocks on NE 1st Street, NE Magnolia Avenue, NE 1st Avenue, NE 2nd Street, and NW 3rd Street.
 - g. Incorporate enhanced pedestrian environments into the redevelopment of catalytic and other sites in Midtown.

Figure 6.1: Silver Springs Boulevard and NE 1st Avenue Left Turn Diagram



Figure 6.2: Proposed Bicycle Facilities

Multi-modal paths can be implemented with unique paving patterns.

6.1.3. Improve bicycle connectivity, access, and amenities in Midtown.

- Incorporate safe bicycle crossings at the intersections identified in strategy 2a.
- Improve bicycle connectivity and safety on NW 2nd Street to facilitate access to West Ocala.
 - Crossing at the rail line.
 - Crossing at Pine Avenue (US 441).
 - Along the west side of the Marion County Courts complex.
- Develop a Bicycle Master Plan for Downtown.
- Ensure that Downtown / Midtown bicycle facilities are incorporated into the Ocala / Marion County Bicycle / Pedestrian Master Plan.
- Where appropriate, include sharrows, bicycle lanes, buffered bicycle lanes, and shared use trails to develop a safe, comfortable, and easily navigable network.
- Identify bicycle parking locations.
- Explore the potential for a bicycle share program.



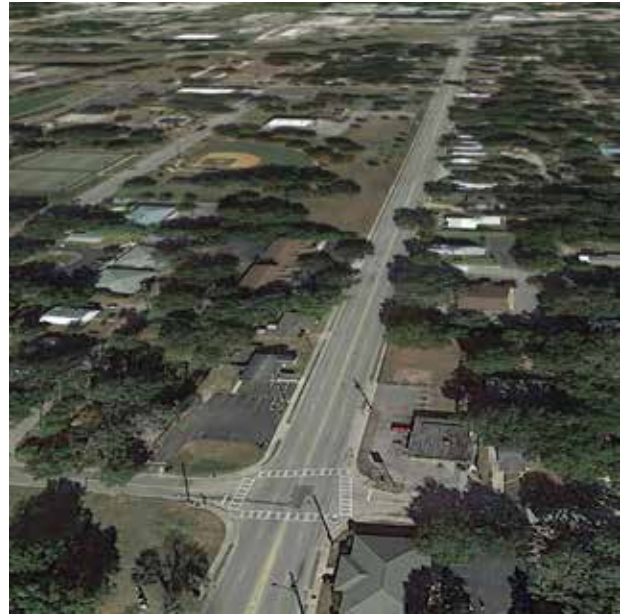
6.1.4. Utilize strategies on 8th Avenue that decrease traffic speeds and improve road safety such as lane reductions, protected bike lanes, and intersection redesign.

a. Silver Springs Boulevard to NE 9th Street.

- Evaluate potential immediate option of restriping to create a buffered bike lane and on-street parking, along with creating an easement for planting street trees.
- Evaluate potential long-term option of landscaped islands and turn lanes, creating bulb-outs at intersections, and creating a roundabout at NE 3rd Street.

b. NE 9th Street to Bonnie Heath Boulevard.

- Evaluate potential immediate option of restriping to create a buffered bike lane and on-street parking, along with creating an easement for planting street trees.
- Evaluate potential long-term option of creating bulb-outs at intersections and creating a roundabout at NE 9th Street.



Existing conditions on 8th Avenue

6.1.5. Evaluate options on Magnolia Avenue and NE 1st Avenue to create better north-south multimodal connections and create conditions more conducive to retail and commercial success.

a. Apply “road diet” concepts.

- Reduce lanes and remove right-only lanes.
- Reduce on-street parking on one side.
- Add bicycle lanes or cycle track.
- Refine signal timing to integrate new traffic flow.

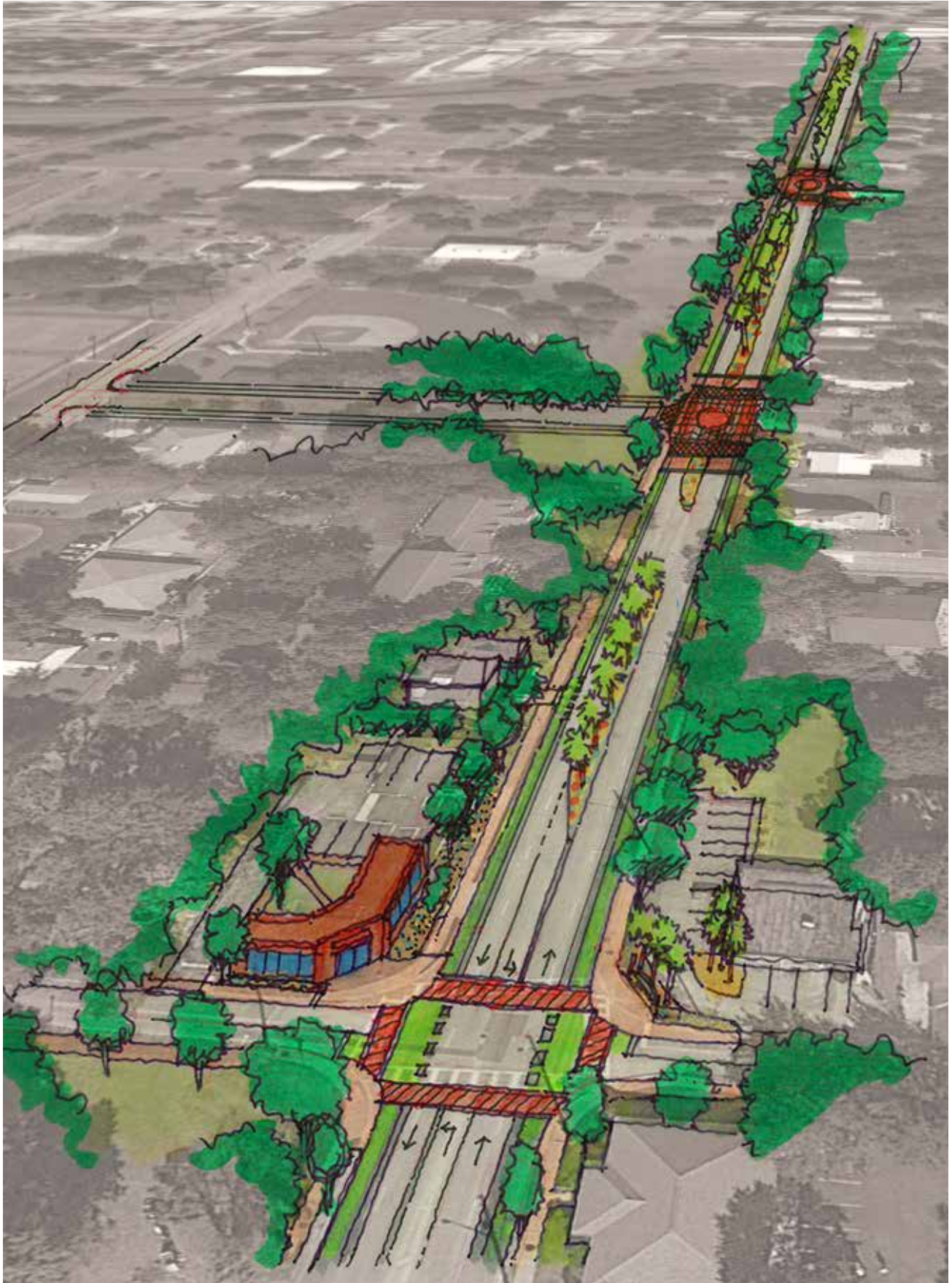
b. Two-way conversions.

- Pros: Development on full block, easier connectivity around Downtown, slower speeds, safety improvements, and long-term cost/benefit.
- Cons: Narrow right-of-way on NE 1st Avenue, fewer options for on-street parking and bicycle facilities, near-term capital costs.

6.1.6. Develop a more progressive parking provision and management strategy for Midtown.

- Establish design standards for surface parking lots and parking structures (see Section 6.5 Building Design Guidelines and Standards strategies for more detail).
- Consider unbundling parking for residential and other development types whereby the sale or lease cost for a space does not include the cost of parking.
- Develop a “cash out” program whereby employers credit employees for the reduced costs associated with not driving and parking in Midtown.
- Explore the creation of a Parking Management District or Transportation Management Association to manage and facilitate shared parking assets and promote other transportation options.
- Develop a shared parking policy and program to increase utilization of existing parking and reduce the overall need for stand alone, single purpose parking facilities.

Figure 6.3: Proposed Streetscape Improvements on 8th Avenue



- f. Disallow new non-accessory parking facilities unless part of a district-wide or shared parking strategy.
- g. Introduce dynamic parking information, signage and mobile apps technology.

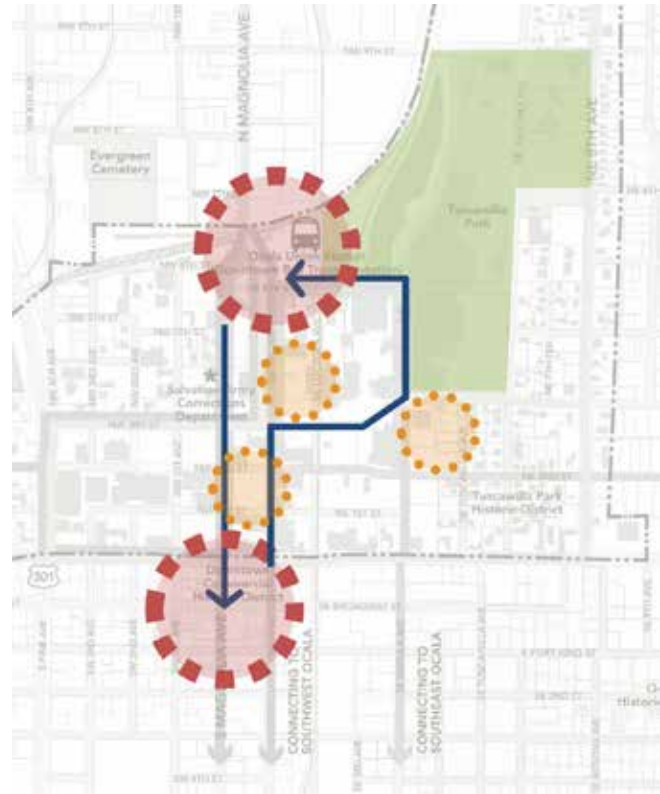
6.1.7. Proactively divert freight traffic on routes outside of Downtown and Midtown.

- a. Study potential long-term capacity on SR 301/ US 441.
- b. Encourage truck traffic passing east-west through the area to use SR 26 / Bonnie Heath Boulevard.
- c. Examine options for creating a north-south bypass from SR 200 onto Magnolia through Downtown.

6.1.8. Enhance transit options and access in Midtown.

- a. Investigate service options for special events including bike “rickshaws” and/or golf carts.
- b. Evaluate options for creating a circulator between the Art Park/Tuscawilla Park and Midtown/Downtown including a rubber tire trolley in mixed traffic or a trolley that utilizes existing rail tracks along Osceola Avenue.

Figure 6.4: Circulator Transit Strategy



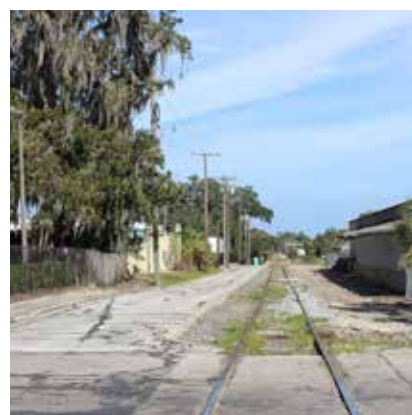
6.2 Streetscape and Public Realm Design and Maintenance

This section focuses on improving the quality of the streets and other public spaces in Midtown. It is well documented that people are more willing to stroll and walk further distances in pedestrian environments that are made safe and comfortable. Safety and comfort often come in the form of dedicated spaces for different modes of transportation (e.g., sidewalks, pathways, dedicated bike lanes, etc.), seating, lighting, landscaping, and other amenities and furnishings. A well-maintained public realm also contributes to the comfort for all users of the right-of-way and public spaces. The following set of strategies are intended to improve the streetscape and public realm design and maintenance in Midtown.

STRATEGIES

6.2.1. Prioritize implementation, expansion, and amenitization of the Osceola Trak.

- a. Add an additional leg east on 3rd Street and north on Watula Avenue.
- b. Extend the trail to 14th Street for better access to regional multi-use trail facilities.
- c. Re-route the northern leg onto NE Watula Avenue.
- d. Close the segment from NE 5th Street and NE 9th Street to automobiles to create a pedestrian promenade.
- e. Provide benches, pedestrian-scaled lighting, shade structures, picnic amenities, seating areas, play features, interpretive elements, and public art along the trail.



Proposed location for the Osceola Trak

6.2.2. Leverage and celebrate the Osceola Trak improvements with active ground floor uses, outdoor seating, patios, and dynamic public spaces associated with existing and new development.

6.2.3. Utilize catalytic site design and development to establish and create model streetscapes and open spaces.

- a. Incorporate café seating and outdoor patio spaces along or abutting the public right-of-way.
- b. Create parklets and plazas at key corners and major entries to new development.
- c. Orient front entries to public rights-of-way and publicly accessible open space.



Cafe seating and outdoor patio spaces establish desirable streetscape environments.

6.2.4. Reinforce and bolster the hierarchy of parks, plazas, and public open spaces in Midtown.

- a. Continue to maintain and program Citizen's Circle and the Downtown Market.
- b. Improve and program Tusawilla Park as the signature open space of Midtown and the larger Downtown area (see C3. Programming, Activation, and Placemaking strategies for more details).
- c. Creation of public plaza/gathering space across from the Sovereign Building.

- 6.2.5. Improve priority connections with pedestrian-oriented streetscapes, including quality materials, landscaping, seating, pedestrian-scaled lighting, safe and inviting crossings, café seating, and other amenities.
- a. Create a pedestrian promenade through Tuscawilla Park on NE Watula Avenue from NE 5th Street to NE 9th Street as part of the Osceola Trak.
 - b. Enhance pedestrian streetscapes along 2nd/3rd Street, 5th Street, and other important connectors.
- 6.2.6. Develop Public Realm Design Guidelines and Standards to complement Building Design Guidelines and Standards and to ensure high-quality streetscape and public space design and construction. They should address:
- a. Contextual streetscape design that responds to and supports adjacent land uses.
 - b. Integration of curb extensions, medians, and refuge islands as appropriate.
 - c. Effective design and management of the curb lane for right turn lanes, parking, loading and unloading, transit lanes or pullouts, bike corrals, transportation network company (Uber/Lyft) pick-up/drop-off zones and/or parklets.
 - d. Recommended planting and material palette for priority streets and/or street typologies.
 - e. Minimum pedestrian realm standards including width of pedestrian through zone, amenity and planting zone, café or frontage zone, and furnishings and amenities.
 - f. Minimum design parameters and priority elements for parklets and plazas.
- 6.2.7. Explore the creation of a Business Improvement District in Midtown.
- a. Establish a “clean and safe” program to provide supplemental sanitary and patrolling services for the Downtown Core, parks, and the Osceola Trak.
 - b. Support and promote businesses through the development of promotional programs, events, and festivals.
 - c. Assist in the recruitment and retention of public and private development interests in Midtown.
 - d. Manage or support a Parking Management District or Transportation Management Association (see C1. Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Transit Connectivity and Parking strategies for more detail).
- 6.2.8. Enhance and promote the façade improvement and/or design assistance program to assist owners of existing structures in improving the aesthetics and exterior function of their buildings and surrounding amenities.



Informal outdoor gathering spaces and seating areas may be applied in conjunction with facade improvements.



Underutilized surface parking can be actively programmed to serve a variety of uses such as food truck gatherings.

6.3 Programming, Activation, and Placemaking

Good public spaces make people feel safe, comfortable, welcome, and engaged. The strategies in this plan will help generate such spaces in the Midtown area through physical improvements to the public realm (both formal and informal) as well as programming and activation opportunities (see the Placemaking map on the following page). These placemaking concepts help create public spaces at a human scale that allow people to move safely and comfortably throughout the area, link the public and private realms, and stimulate private investment that adds density and activity to Midtown.

Many of the physical placemaking strategies correspond to and overlap with strategies recommended in the Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Transit Connectivity and Parking section. The Osceola Trak is the placemaking spine of Midtown and Downtown. It is the connective tissue between the resurgent Downtown core and the emerging arts, cultural, and design cluster as well as Tuscawilla Park and all its amenities. The trail also links and helps activate several of Midtown's catalytic opportunity sites. The Osceola Trak provides not only mobility, but also endless possibilities for creative and engaging activities, education, and gathering. Tuscawilla Park is the signature open space of the Downtown area, and will be complemented by smaller green spaces, plazas, and parklets that punctuate Midtown's urban fabric and provide easily accessed opportunities for social gathering, relaxation, and recreation.

Careful redesign of several Midtown corridors and intersections is also crucial to providing public spaces and a pedestrian experience that attract residents and visitors. Traffic calming strategies, enhanced streetscapes, and well-designed intersection crossings will convert perceived barriers between Midtown and adjacent areas into seams that welcome people to the area.

Streets designated as Priority Placemaking Connections (Figure 6.5) are priorities for streetscape and intersection improvements and together create the framework on which the majority of other physical and programmatic improvements are organized. Community gateway features and identity markers add to peoples' sense that they have arrived in a distinct part of Ocala.

Programming and activation opportunities seek to unleash the creativity and resourcefulness of Ocala's arts, cultural, and design community to achieve community building through activation of the public realm. In conjunction with the City's Recreation and Parks Department, these individuals and organizations will create and install public art and activities, attract signature festivals and destination events, and activate underutilized spaces in Midtown with temporary uses and pop-up activities.

Figure 6.5: Placemaking Design and Character Concepts



PLACEMAKING ACTIVATION OPPORTUNITIES

Corresponding to the Placemaking Concepts map, the following strategies are identified as one of the following three types:

- Physical Formal Activation
- Physical Informal Activation
- Programmatic Activation

6.3.1. Prioritize implementation, expansion, and amenitization of the Osceola Trak.

- a. Provide benches, pedestrian-scaled lighting, shade structures, picnic amenities, seating areas, play features, interpretive elements, and public art along the trail.
- b. Create a pedestrian-only waterfront promenade on the Osceola Trak between NE 5th Street and NE 9th Street.
- c. Leverage the divergence of the Osceola Trak around the south and east sides of Seminole Feed create a more inviting entrance to Tuscowilla Park and provide an alternative to the trail section on the west side of Seminole Feed that has more significant constraints.
- d. Explore the idea of a trolley that utilizes the Osceola tracks as a unique, alternative way of improving connectivity between the Downtown Core, the Arts District, and Tuscowilla Park.
- e. Implement a comprehensive signage and wayfinding program along the trail that integrates with signage and wayfinding for Midtown and Downtown.

6.3.2. Implement traffic calming on priority Midtown corridors to improve the pedestrian experience and the retail environment.

- a. Utilize tools such as lane reductions, protected bike lanes, and on street parking, wider sidewalks, landscaped islands, and intersection bulb-outs to slow automobile traffic and improve pedestrian safety and comfort.
 - NE 8th Avenue from NE 9th Street to Silver Springs Blvd (SR 40).
 - NE 1st Avenue from Silver Springs Blvd to N Magnolia Avenue.
 - N Magnolia Avenue from NE 1st Avenue to Silver Springs Blvd.
 - Silver Springs Blvd between Magnolia Avenue and Osceola Avenue.



The pedestrian experience can be enhanced through opportunities to gather and recreate.



Existing open spaces can be programmed to host a variety of uses.

6.3.3. Improve corridors designated as Priority Placemaking Connections with enhanced streetscapes.

- a. Incorporate quality materials, landscaping, seating, pedestrian-scaled lighting, safe and inviting crossings, café seating, and other amenities.
 - NE 8th Avenue from NE 9th Street to Silver Springs Blvd.
 - Silver Springs Blvd from NE 8th Avenue to Pine Avenue.
 - Pine Avenue from Silver Springs Blvd to NW 5th Street.
 - 2nd Street / 3rd Street corridor.
 - 5th Street corridor.

6.3.4. Increase connectivity and enhance the pedestrian and bicycling experience in Midtown by implementing well-designed pedestrian and bicycle crossings at the following intersections.

- a. NW 2nd Street at Pine Avenue.
- b. Silver Springs Boulevard at NW 1st Avenue, Magnolia Avenue, NE 1st Avenue, and Osceola Avenue.
- c. NE 8th Avenue at Silver Springs Boulevard, NE 3rd Street, NE 6th Street, and NE 9th Street.
- d. N Magnolia Avenue and NE 1st Avenue.

6.3.5. Create identity markers and community gateway features at key entries and transition points (see map).

- a. Place historic markers and informational placards recognizing the Tusawilla Park Historic District at gateways to the District.

6.3.6. Reinforce and bolster the hierarchy of parks, plazas, and public open spaces in Midtown.

- a. Continue to maintain and program the Downtown Square, Citizen's Circle, and the Downtown Market.
- b. Improve and program Tusawilla Park as the signature open space of Midtown and the larger Downtown area (see strategy 7 for more detail).
- c. Create public plazas and gathering spaces in the new catalytic opportunity sites and other Midtown developments and adaptive reuse projects.

6.3.7. Develop an Arts and Cultural Plan that builds upon existing momentum in the Midtown area to become an artistic hub of the region.



Seating opportunities can take a number of forms given their context.

6.3.8. Further enhance amenities in and programming of Tuscawilla Park.

- a. Continue implementation of recommendations from the Tuscawilla Park Master Plan Report, including restoration of the American Legion building and the amphitheater project.
- b. Diversify and expand the variety of play elements in the park and ensure they serve children of all ages and abilities.
- c. Expand Discovery Center programming and facilities to create an outdoor zone that blends learning with play.
- d. Increase amenities and programming at the Jenkins Open Air Theatre (frequent, diverse programming, enhanced lighting, food trucks, etc.).
- e. Explore creation of a lakeside boathouse (paddleboat and canoe rental) and café.

6.3.9. Maintain, build and leverage key arts, cultural, and events partnerships in Midtown and the surrounding area.

- a. Leverage the creativity of the city's artistic, cultural, and design community to develop and host events and festivals and to help design public art and placemaking amenities.
- b. Promote existing, and establish and attract new events, festivals, and facilities that celebrate unique aspects and cultural heritage of Midtown, such as an equestrian museum.
- c. Support and collaborate with community partners such as the Magnolia Art Exchange (MAX) and the Florida Institute of Human Machine Cognition (IHMC).

6.3.10. Activate blank walls and screen unattractive land uses (e.g., UniFirst Uniform Services and Seminole Feed) with murals (such as the planned Hense Mural), lighting displays, kinetic art, art fences, and projections.

6.3.11. Develop a program to utilize secondary catalytic sites and other vacant or underutilized locations for temporary/trial uses, pop-up events, food trucks, etc.

- a. Ensure codes allow temporary uses, pop-up events, food trucks, etc.
- b. Collaborate with the Downtown Business Alliance (DBA) to match temporary and pop-up events with suitable Midtown locations.

6.4 Social Services Coordination

Ocala residents, business owners, City agencies, and non-profit service organizations have all expressed a strong desire to continue serving those community members in need of basic services in a compassionate manner. A number of social services providers who do this important work have located in and near Midtown over the years. While these services are well intentioned and needed, there have been unintended impacts on the area, and the current situation is not working for the City, local businesses, residents, or the clients of homeless services.

- ◇ Unsanctioned food distribution programs a couple nights a week create regular sanitation and litter problems in the area around the County courts complex.
- ◇ Some existing service providers fail to engage in proactive client management, and others enforce mandatory daytime expulsions from their facilities, leaving clients without safe and productive places to spend daytime hours or receive supportive wrap-around services.
- ◇ Peripheral social services organizations such as the Church at Sheeppgate and the boarding houses on NE 9th Street attract some residents and participants whose behavior negatively impacts property values and quality of life for residents of the Tuscawilla Park and Wyomina neighborhoods.

The strategies presented here outline an approach to achieving two interrelated goals:

1. Providing more responsive and effective social services and housing options in Ocala; and
2. Mitigating the negative impacts of social service provision on one of the City's high-priority planning areas.

Neither of these goals is easy to accomplish independently, let alone pursuing both simultaneously. Homelessness, poverty, vagrancy, drug abuse, and mental illness are some of the most intractable problems that cities are coping with all over the country, and the current system in Ocala is not working. There are no easy solutions. However, there are proven models and innovative best practices that Ocala can adopt and learn from.

A collective impact strategy for social services provision is crucial for success in Ocala. No longer can each individual organization, agency, and community group operate independently. Instead, a coordinated and collaborative approach is needed to ensure that all involved work toward common goals, reduce both service gaps and duplicative services, and develop facilities and protocols that better serve the wide range of client needs. Evidence from across the country shows that cross-sector networks and collaboratives can leverage and boost both on-the-ground improvements and systemic change.



Brother's Keeper provides social services in Ocala, FL.

Creating a Navigation / Day Center for Ocala is the top priority action of the collective action group. Many cities across the country are adopting this best practice approach to one-stop, low barrier centers that provide centralized intake, case management, and a comprehensive suite of services. This approach helps clients receive the variety of needed services more effectively, reduces the amount of time they must spend traveling to different providers, and creates opportunities for clients to remain at the facility throughout the day rather than having to find places to be when other providers are closed. The final section of this memo provides a methodology and list of factors the collective impact group should consider when evaluating and choosing a site for the Navigation / Day Center.



A Housing First model that incorporates rapid re-housing and supportive wrap-around services is key to alleviating homelessness.

The City and its partners in the collective action collaborative must adopt the Rapid Re-Housing / Housing First approach to reducing homelessness. This approach emphasizes providing permanent housing options for those in need as quickly as possible and without conditions. Other supportive services are then offered to help clients maintain housing stability by addressing other personal challenges. Identifying and strategically pursuing federal and other funding sources to increase the supply and variety of permanent housing options is critical to implementing this strategy. It also suggests that resources should shift away from shelters, transitional housing, tiny homes, car camping sites, or other strategies that have proven to be ineffective solutions to homelessness. Similarly, life skills training and employment assistance programs are shown to be ineffective without housing first.

None of these priorities will come to fruition without increased funding. Although the City is not eligible to receive federal funding for these purposes directly, the Ocala/Marion CoC is the designated recipient of HUD funding for Rapid Rehousing programs. Many other funding sources must also be pursued to support local efforts to build and operate a Navigation / Day Center, increase inventory of properties suitable for Rapid Rehousing efforts, and support other wrap-around services. The full range of corporate, individual, non-profit, and religious donors must be called upon and motivated to contribute to the important goals established by the collective impact collaborative.

STRATEGIES

6.4.1. Help coordinate and promote a collective impact approach to social services planning, coordination, delivery, and evaluation.

- a. In the short-term, the City should act as the interim convener of the collective impact effort and take the lead (and commit funding, oversight, staff, and support) in establishing a higher level of and more regular coordination among social services agencies and organizations. The collective impact group should:
 - Identify (or work to create) and support a single organization such as the Ocala/Marion Continuum of Care (CoC) (or another designated lead agency) with the staff and funding resources to serve as a “backbone” organization leading the area’s collaborative effort in the long-term.
 - Collectively identify a common agenda, mission, and goals for social services coordination in Ocala and Midtown specifically.
 - Pursue cross-sector coordination of mutually reinforcing activities rather than isolated intervention by individual organizations.
 - Work with the County and other partners to identify, effectively engage and coordinate with groups involved in the current parking lot food distributions. Establish dialogue to understand these groups’ motivations and willingness to become part of a larger collaborative effort.
 - Help organize and utilize a more efficient, organized, and coordinated approach to data collection, sharing, and management; develop shared metrics for measuring success; and align data collection efforts with funding cycles.
 - Lead and organize a comprehensive social services asset gap analysis.
- b. The collective impact group will collaborate with Marion County, Ocala Police, local hospitals and schools, and non-profit partners to establish a Navigation / Day Center for Ocala.
 - The Navigation / Day Center does not replace existing services or providers; it adds a layer of service and fills gaps in existing service provision.
 - The Navigation / Day Center will be a low-barrier, one-stop, 24-hour center to serve the homeless, and the hardest to serve individuals and groups, including those with mental illness and addiction.
 - Navigation / Day Centers relax or lift barriers typical at other shelters. They are typically pet-friendly; allow couples; and provide short-term dormitory accommodations, showers and laundry facilities, and storage areas for personal items.
 - Navigation Centers typically do not have an open-door policy like typical emergency shelters; clients are referred by city and other local agencies. In larger cities, the clients referred are often entire populations/encampments that would not otherwise use a shelter. The model is effective, in part, because it allows groups or communities to stay together during the transition to the Navigation Center.
 - San Francisco, Seattle, and Philadelphia are the preeminent best practice case studies for the Navigation Center model. The Springs Rescue Mission in Colorado Springs, Colorado is currently building a day center as part of its facility, helping to alleviate homeless, vagrancy, and loitering problems in that city’s revitalizing Downtown.

Figure 6.6: Collective Impact Infographic

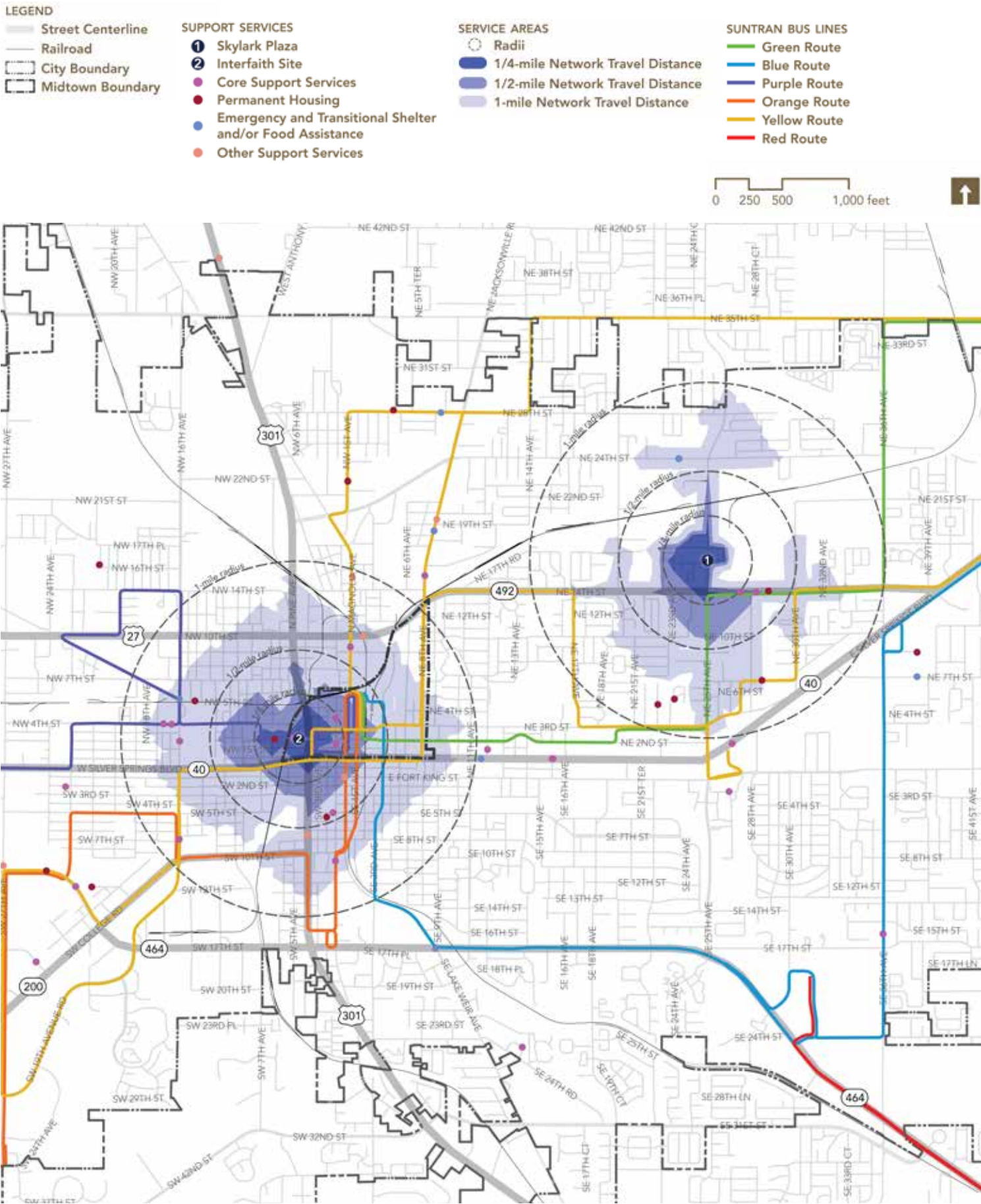
6.4.2. The collective impact group will support a Rapid Re-Housing/Housing First model as a priority initiative.

- a. The collective impact group will work collaboratively to increase the inventory and supply of affordable housing options in a variety of locations throughout Ocala and Marion County.
 - Coordinate efforts to fulfill requirements for and gain access to federal funding and support dedicated to Housing First initiatives.
 - Work with local partners and donors to purchase, build, or otherwise acquire additional units with potential for Rapid Rehousing participants.
- b. Hire a Housing Locator staff person at the Navigation / Day Center who is familiar with real estate practices and players in Ocala, to help provide a path to permanent supportive housing under a Housing First model.
- c. Establish or adopt a systematic approach to recommending Housing First referrals based on level of current vulnerability and likely risk of future housing difficulty.
- d. Shift resources away from other solutions if needed in order to focus on housing placement and supportive services.

6.4.3. The collective impact group will strategically pursue funding from all available sources to support the Navigation / Day Center and Housing first programs and inventory.

- a. The Ocala/Marion CoC must lead collaborative efforts to secure federal, state, and regional funding streams that support the strategies and priorities of the collective action group.
- b. Private, corporate, and religious donors will be called upon to support the creation and ongoing operations of the Navigation / Day Center and to help increase the supply of affordable units in Marion County available for Rapid Rehousing.

Figure 6.7: Alternative Locations for Navigation/Day Centers





Ocala residents make use of some of the existing social services.

POTENTIAL NAVIGATION CENTER SITE METHODOLOGY

Determining the site for an Ocala Navigation / Day Center will be an important early task of the collective impact group. While many factors will influence the final decision, several factors should be analyzed at an early stage of the process to provide a framework for evaluating potential sites. City staff should utilize GIS analysis to map (see Figure 6.7 for an example map):

- 6.4.4. Existing social services providers to identify clusters and gaps in service provision. The wide range of providers can be grouped by type:
 - a. Core support services including case management, childcare services, computer lab, counseling and support groups, education and ESOL services, employment and job training, financial support services, healthcare and prescription assistance, legal assistance, transportation assistance, and veteran services. Many of these services would be co-located in a future Navigation / Day Center.
 - b. Permanent housing.
 - c. Emergency and transitional shelter and/or food assistance.
 - d. Other support services.
- 6.4.5. True travel sheds (walking or biking) from proposed sites. This allows an easy visualization of how many supportive service facilities are located within an easy travel distance of potential Navigation / Day Center locations.
- 6.4.6. Public transit routes and stops. Analysis of this mapping will inform decisions based on proposed sites' proximity to transit stops as well as the number and length of transit routes within either ½-mile or 1-mile travel sheds of proposed sites.

6.5 Building Design Guidelines and Standards

Creating and adopting building design guidelines and standards are vital to further establish Midtown's identity. Midtown's underutilized physical state provides an opportunity to improve its historic integrity and define its modern use and appeal. Furthermore, future private and public sector improvements may be united through design guidelines and standards, such as sustainable construction, ground-floor activation, and parking restrictions. By encouraging certain design practices while discouraging others, the development and redevelopment of Midtown may be molded to a desired state. The City has already taken the lead in this effort by mandating a high quality of design for the development of a new fire station in Midtown. Developing and implementing a form-based code may be pursued as a result of the strategies listed.

STRATEGIES

6.5.1. Promote a wider mix of uses, more targeted density, and the creation of social gathering spaces and pedestrian-friendly façades.

- a. Update mixed use zoning designations and development standards to allow for more flexibility in terms of use and more focus on form.
- b. Require that ground floor retail or commercial spaces are adaptable enough to support changes in use over time. Features should include:
 - Higher floor to ceiling heights (e.g., minimum of 16 feet);
 - Variation in size of units; and
 - Building interiors that are modular and adaptable to changing tenant needs.

6.5.2. Promote design and form-based codes that creates visual interest and activity along the ground floor of buildings fronting public rights-of-way, public parking, and public spaces.

- a. Require ground floors of commercial development to meet minimum transparency, primary entry, and articulation requirements.
- b. Encourage the creation of visual interest and entries at the corner of blocks.
- c. Ensure that residential development on the ground floor includes design elements such as a usable porch, stoop, patio with visually permeable fencing, or primary entry with a minimal setback.
- d. Require a structural wrap, ground floor retail, or public art treatment along parking garage facades fronting public rights-of-way, public parking, and public spaces.
- e. Separation of public and private realm using elevated entries, landscaping, and street furniture.



Ground floor activation and optimal sidewalk widths create a pedestrian friendly environment



Appropriate building massing can create the necessary density to support an active retail environment.

- 6.5.3. Ensure that the height, scale, and massing of buildings help to define Midtown's streetscape experience, contribute to views and access to sunlight, contribute to a pedestrian-friendly environment and complement older and historic architecture.
 - a. Require a minimum degree of façade articulation and encourage small setbacks, recesses, or other architectural features to disrupt long, continuous walls;
 - b. Require use of a variety of high-quality building materials at the street level;
 - c. Require design response to existing architectural context;
 - d. Promote use of well-integrated art and murals;
 - e. Promote use of permeable entrances and windows that provide clear and unobstructed views into and out from ground floor units;
 - f. Promote use of lighting and other building illumination tools; and
 - g. Promote application of vertical landscaping trellises or living walls.
- 6.5.4. Limit building setbacks and discourage parking between buildings and the public rights-of-way.
 - a. Limit setbacks of buildings to 0-20' from the edge of the right-of-way and require café seating, patio amenities or park/plaza improvements within the setback.
 - b. Work with developers to orient parking to the side or rear of buildings.
 - c. Prohibit the placement of surface parking along the Osceola Trak, pedestrian-oriented streetscapes, and neighborhood connections.
- 6.5.5. Update policies and regulations to support food trucks, carts, container retail pods, and other portable modular structures that can be used to incubate small businesses and activate vacant or underutilized properties.
- 6.5.6. Encourage aesthetically pleasing surface parking with pedestrian-friendly and sustainable amenities.
 - a. Provide pedestrian walkways through and/or around surface parking lots of a minimum size (e.g., 20 parking spaces).
 - b. Require a minimum level of landscaping around all surface parking lots and within parking lots of a minimum size (e.g. 30 spaces).
 - c. Promote the inclusion of integrated stormwater planters, swales, and water quality features in all surface parking lots.

6.6 Branding and Marketing

A branding and marketing initiative should be conducted to further strengthen and tie together Midtown to the city and region. The marketing and branding strategies for Midtown are intended to provide a cohesive and recognizable experience through innovative approaches. With elements tailored to existing and potential Midtown employers, employees, residents, and visitors, the marketing strategy should tie into existing programs and events and serve as the basis for new ones.

STRATEGIES

- 6.6.1. Revisit the Midtown geography and brand to affirm or reposition the identity of the area.
 - a. Reconsider the “Midtown” designation and focus on the area as a unique extension or sub-district of downtown.
 - b. Explore the establishment of more identifiable sub-districts within the larger Midtown area over time.
- 6.6.2. Highlight the unique character of Midtown in Ocala and Marion County.
 - a. Buildings, public spaces, and amenities with “gritty,” authentic character.
 - b. Emphasis on local, artisan (non-chain) retail, restaurants, and entertainment.
 - c. Establish Downtown/Midtown as the premier destination for walkable environment.
- 6.6.3. Celebrate and promote an “Industrial Chic” brand in Midtown, particularly related to the Seminole Feed property and its relationship to both Tuscawilla Park, the Osceola Trak, and the Arts District.
 - a. Highlight the iconic sign at Seminole Feed.
- 6.6.4. Redouble efforts to brand and market Midtown and the broader Downtown Ocala area as regional destinations for arts, culture, and innovation.
 - a. Develop a broader range of art-related uses, events, and festivals to attract children, young adults, amateur artists, professional artists, and patrons of all types.
 - b. Explore the creation of a Center for Arts + Innovation in Midtown which creates opportunities for artists and arts organizations that currently exist in Midtown, such as MAX, the Discovery Center, and the Reilly Arts Center.
 - c. Collaborate to develop artist lofts, live-work spaces, and mini-galleries in Midtown.



Art and materiality can aide in establishing a unique character for Midtown.

- 6.6.5. Create identity markers and gateway features at key entries and transition points.
- 6.6.6. Develop a comprehensive pedestrian, bicycle, and automobile wayfinding system with static and dynamic signage.
- 6.6.7. Establish a brand and logo for the Osceola Trak (e.g., O-Trak) and incorporate into marketing materials for Downtown, Midtown, and the greater Ocala area, as well as pedestrian and bicycle signage and wayfinding.
- 6.6.8. Continue to work with private and non-profit partners to improve and promote a Midtown App, calendar, and interactive map that showcases landmarks, destinations, amenities, and programming.
- 6.6.9. Ensure urban design elements contribute to a sense of place and identity in Midtown.
 - a. Establish a coordinated and potentially customized streetscape furnishings palette.
 - b. Establish a crosswalk and intersection treatment that is unique to Midtown.
- 6.6.10. Explore the creation of a Business Improvement District in Midtown.
 - a. Establish a “clean and safe” program to provide supplemental sanitary and patrolling services for the Downtown Core, parks, and the Osceola Trak.
 - b. Support and promote businesses through the development of promotional programs, events, and festivals.
 - c. Assist in the recruitment and retention of public and private development interests in Midtown.
 - d. Manage or support a Parking Management District or Transportation Management Association (see C1. Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Transit Connectivity and Parking strategies for more detail).



Existing walls and streetscapes can be enhanced through paint and material.

7

Implementation



7. Implementation

The Ocala Midtown Master Plan provides targeted strategies for revitalizing the area while allowing for flexibility and input as the area grows and changes. Implementing the master plan requires stakeholders to work together and continue building public and private support for the Master Plan’s vision and strategies. Midtown Ocala is positioned to move forward with a set of strategies and projects that will make the City an even better place to live, work, play, and visit. The preceding chapters, including Land Use and Development Concepts, Catalytic Opportunity Sites, and Supporting Strategies, have established the framework with which to pursue implementation. This chapter highlights the holistic approach to engaging various steps and actions that will transform Midtown in the coming years.

7.1 Organizing for Action

Implementing Ocala’s Midtown Master Plan will require sustained participation and coordination between public and private stakeholders. The Midtown Master Plan process has activated many stakeholders who are already engaged, committed, and ready to move on key action items. The successful outcome of these initial actions will be instrumental in demonstrating early progress toward the overall vision, and will be important to maintaining momentum later in the implementation process. Several immediate action items are outlined to keep stakeholders engaged and solidify their roles as “stewards” of the plan.

Periodic review and assessment of the progress toward achievement of goals and implementation actions are needed to ensure that public and private resources are producing desired results for Midtown. New opportunities and challenges will undoubtedly arise over the next decade, which will necessitate that specific actions be reviewed, reconsidered, and augmented. The implementation plan is intended as a living document that should be updated annually with a report of progress, a snapshot of recent successes, assessment of funding opportunities, and rounds of critical review and reprioritization. A yearly stakeholder’s meeting would be a tool well suited for this purpose.



Stakeholders engaged throughout the planning process are in position to implement the Midtown Master Plan.

7.2 Overarching Priorities

This section highlights several top “Overarching Priorities” selected from the recommendations included throughout this Plan. These ten high-level recommendations are the most critical investments and improvements that should be undertaken to reinforce the current momentum and generate new development activity, economic investment, and on-the-ground vibrancy. The vision for Midtown will be attainable through the implementation of these priority recommendations.

The Overarching Priorities were selected out of the many strategic recommendations contained in the Midtown Master Plan. They represent recommendations that will shape the face of the city for generations to come. Each priority aims to achieve significant economic development opportunities and foster the creation of jobs. The recommendations listed here and throughout the document identify public and private partnerships, build upon current investments and initiatives, and facilitate the continued creation of a vibrant and inviting Midtown.

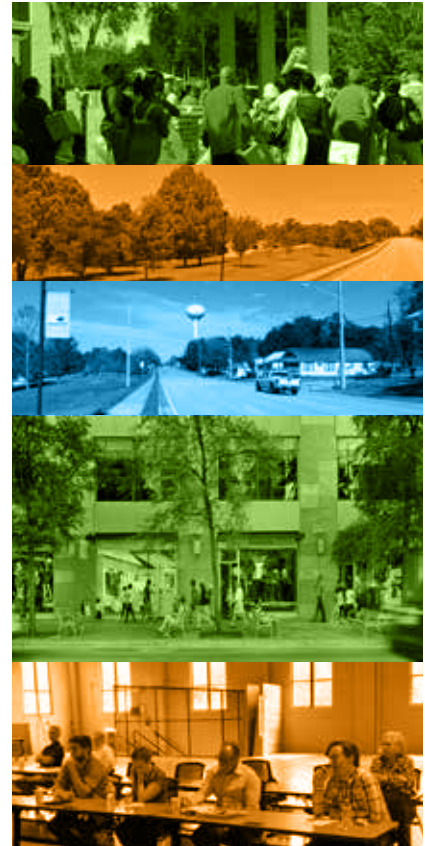
7.2.1 PRIORITY ACTIONS

The plan’s process has activated many stakeholders who are already engaged, committed, and ready to move on key action items. The successful outcome of these initial actions will be instrumental in demonstrating early progress in the implementation process. Several immediate action items are outlined to keep stakeholders engaged and solidify their roles as “stewards” of the plan. They include:

1. **Improve mobility and connectivity** between Midtown, Downtown, and adjacent neighborhoods. Particular areas of emphasis are turn movements off of and crossings at Silver Springs Blvd, US 301/Pine Avenue, and NE 8th Avenue.
2. **Develop and brand the Osceola Trak** to connect Downtown and Midtown and link many of the recommended investments in the Midtown Master Plan.
3. **Develop Invitations to Negotiate and/or a Letter of Interest** for the development of the Fire Station Site and Concord Parking Lot.
4. **Confirm a set of districtwide shared parking and parking management** strategies for Midtown to decrease the demand for standalone surface parking lots, make redevelopment of surface parking lots more attractive, and improve the overall development environment.
5. **Develop short- to medium-term programming and activation for the Walton Site** with a combination of daily, weekly, seasonal and pop-up tenants and events.



6. **Continue to facilitate the coordination of social service providers** in order to confirm strategies and interventions to address social services provision and homelessness challenges in a more systematic and holistic manner.
7. **Improve the west edge of Tuscawilla Park** as a major asset and attract increased housing options and enhanced programming.
8. **Design and improve NE 8th Avenue** to better stitch Midtown to the residential areas to the east, provide dedicated bicycle facilities and support reinvestment along the corridor.
9. **Update design standards, design guidelines, and create a form-based code** for development in Midtown to ensure a more active ground floor environment, a better integration of public and private spaces, shared parking, and new architecture that provides for flexible uses over time and complements the existing historic fabric.
10. **Develop one or more management entities** for the Midtown area including creation of a Business Improvement District (BID), a “clean and safe” program, a Parking Management District and/or Transportation Management Association (TMA).



7.3 Phasing Plan

Phasing of key projects will be essential to building a core concentration of development and securing funding. However, a non-sequential phasing model is crucial to not limiting future development. This includes projects identified for future land use and development change, as catalytic opportunity sites, and for all supporting strategies.

While certain areas can be emphasized to stimulate the best type of growth, individual parcels or specific improvements should be allowed to occur as seen fit. For example, while primary catalytic opportunity sites should precede secondary opportunity sites as a rule, an improved streetscape may promote the development of a secondary opportunity site before a primary catalytic opportunity site. This and other instances of fluctuating development demands shall not limit Midtown’s growth; yet, it too shall not impede the development of other planned projects.

The non-sequential phasing model should be solidified when partners are fully engaged and committed to action. Overall, these phases shall serve more as segments of development and will evolve from project to project. Building on the recent development successes and with proper alignment of politics, finances, and with community support in place, Midtown Ocala will mature into an authentic, thriving district.





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