

Sunset Boulevard Vision Plan

Sunset Beach, NC
Draft: March 2013





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Chapter 1: Introduction

Purpose



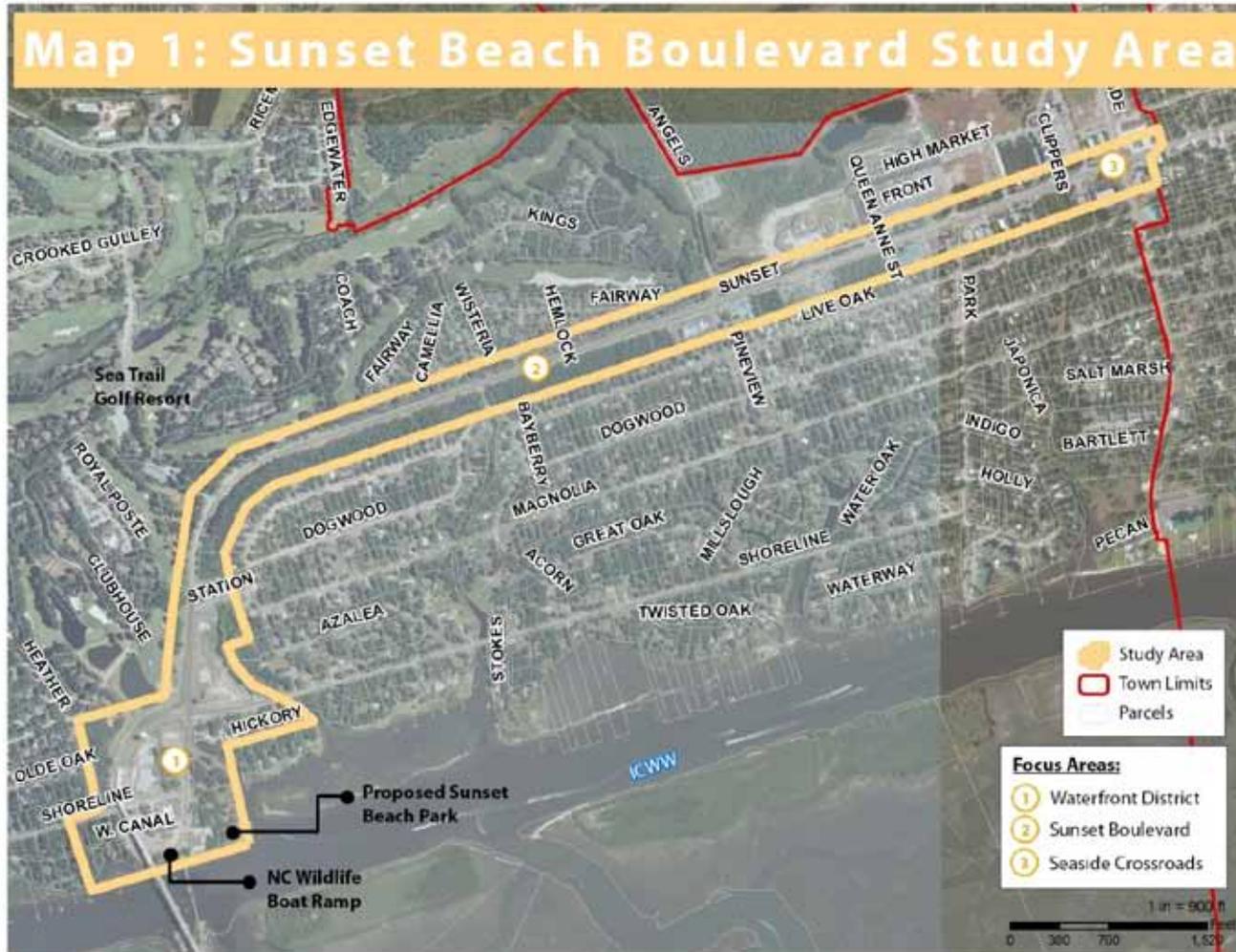
Recent construction of the Sunset Beach overpass bridge, the addition of a public boat ramp, and the newly planned waterfront park has vastly changed the conditions and framework for development along the Sunset Beach Boulevard

Corridor leading to the Intracoastal Waterway. Because of these changes, the town has established a community-based vision for growth and development in this area.

The completion of this project will result in a coordinated citizen based vision for the study area. Subsequent to adoption of the Vision Plan, the town's Unified Development Ordinance will be amended in an attempt to fulfill outcomes established through the visioning process.

Process

The visioning process relies on public participation for guidance, input, and the establishment of project goals. Two community visioning meetings took place to determine the "Assets, Issues, and Desires" for the study area. The Sunset Beach Planning Board served as the steering committee during the project process.



The project study area (see Map 1 above) consists of approximately 125 acres and extends from the NC Wildlife Boat Ramp to the intersection of Seaside Road and Sunset Boulevard. The intersection of Shoreline Drive and Sunset Boulevard is included in the study area, in addition to the area around the new high arc bridge. The study area is comprised of three

separate focus areas: 1 – Waterfront District, 2 – Sunset Boulevard, 3 – Seaside Crossroads.

The focus area receiving the greatest level of analysis and project support is the **Waterfront District** (see Map 2). Significant issues, assets, and community desires make the area the most important for establishing a vision for growth and development. Parking, transportation flow, urban form, and natural systems were all analyzed as part of the process.

The **Sunset Boulevard** focus area is intended to create a conceptual basis for aesthetic improvement, access management, and transportation flow. Visioning in this focus area will result in a gateway improvement scenario for Sunset Beach residents and visitors.

The **Seaside Crossroads** focus area includes basic concepts for urban form, transportation enhancements, and signage.



Vision Plan Components

The following items will be addressed and included in the final project document:

1. Existing Conditions and Key Issues Identification
 - o Public Input identifying key issues
 - o Land Use and Transportation Systems
 - o Natural Systems
 - o SWOT Analysis
2. Conceptual Alternatives
 - o Design Recommendations
 - o Policy Recommendations
3. Implementation
 - o Vision Plan Goals
 - o Implementation Strategy

Public Involvement

Two community visioning meetings took place to establish input for the project study area. During the meetings exercises took place to determine the most viable option for creating an active, walkable, and lively waterfront district area. Utilization of Sunset Boulevard as a gateway and non-motorized connector were explored in detail. Lastly, an image preference survey was used to gauge citizen opinion on various components of the built environment, including transportation, urban design, and public realm aesthetics.

Meetings with various advisory boards took place throughout the process.



Attention Sunset Beach Residents and Property Owners!

We want **your input** for the



Sunset Boulevard Vision Plan

Please attend two public input meetings to be held on **February 26th and March 7th @ 7 pm** in the **Sunset Beach Town Hall** at **700 Sunset Boulevard**



Chapter 2: Existing Conditions

Introduction

The following section includes discussion on the existing conditions in and in close proximity to the study area. An analysis of demographics, transportation, land use, and natural systems is provided to form a base understanding of the area. A S.W.O.T. Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) is provided as a conclusion and summary to the chapter.

Demographics

Local demographics were analyzed within a mile of the study area. Categories include total population, median age, housing unit age, and median home value. The demographic categories were also analyzed by distance from the study area to include ¼ mile, ½ mile, and 1 mile segments (see Map 3).

Table 1: Study Area Proximity Population

| Population 1980-2022 | Quarter Mile | Half Mile | One Mile | Total |
|---------------------------|--------------|-----------|----------|-------|
| 1980 Population | 273 | 317 | 295 | 885 |
| 1990 Population | 497 | 543 | 509 | 1,549 |
| 2000 Population | 763 | 878 | 828 | 2,469 |
| 2010 Population | 957 | 1,085 | 994 | 3,036 |
| 2022 Projection | 1,179 | 1,337 | 1,225 | 3,741 |
| Growth 2010 - 2022 | 222 | 252 | 232 | 705 |

Source: 2010 US Census & Applied Geographic Solutions

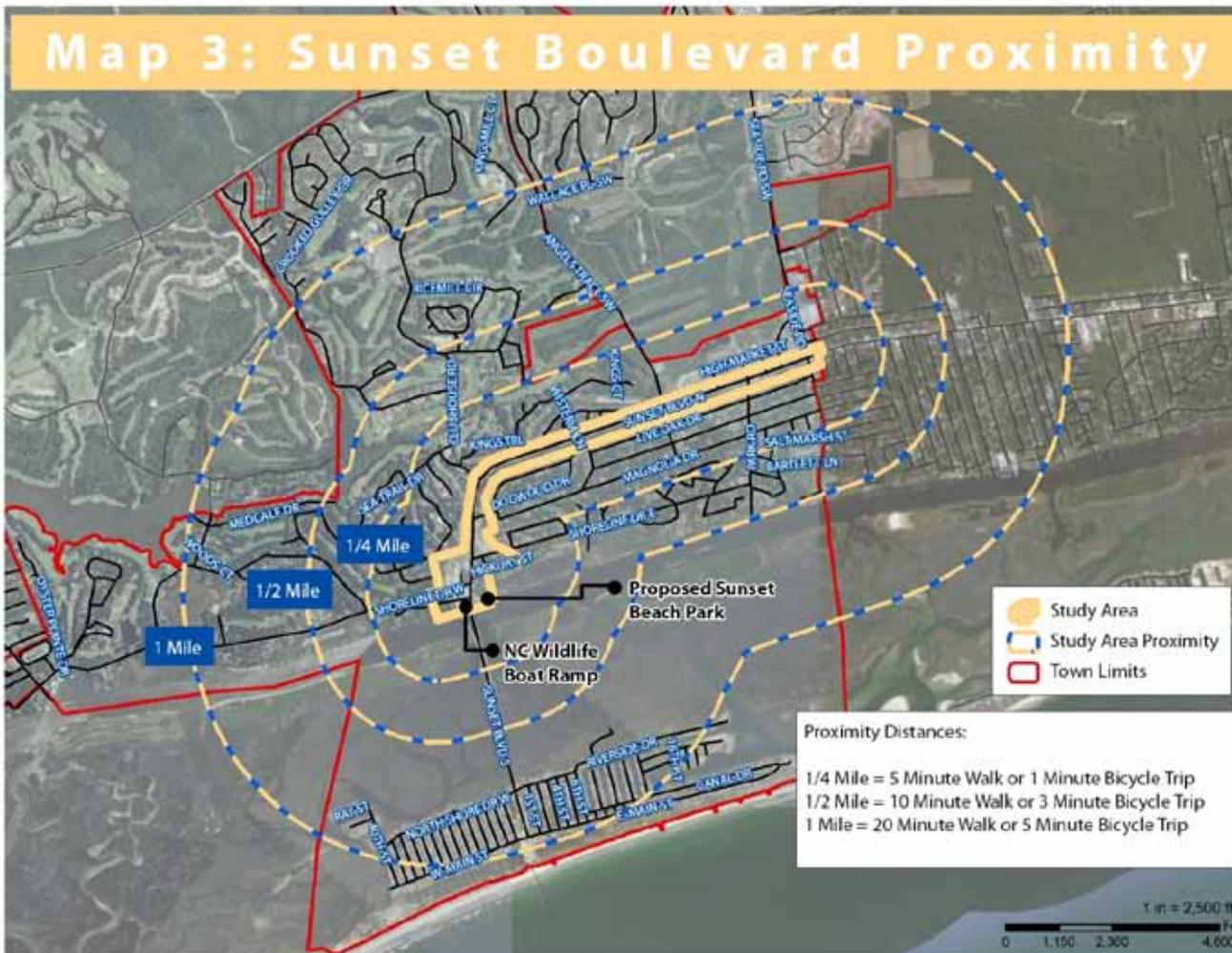
Population within a mile of the study area (see Map 3) increased significantly from 1980 to 2010, growing by over 240% during that time. The population is projected to grow by an additional 705 residents, or 23.2%, by 2022. Important to note is the number of individuals within walking and cycling distance to the study area. With just over 3,000 full time residents within a 5-minute bicycle ride, the study area is primed for land uses that cater to the non-motorized traveler. *Note – this figure does not include seasonal residents.*

Other key demographic figures for the study area and the immediate proximity include the following:

- The median age of residents in the study area proximity is 59.3; the median age in North Carolina is 37.4.
- 78% of housing units (1,186 of 1,508) within a mile of the study area were built since 1980; in Brunswick County, 74% of housing units were built since 1980.
- The median value of owner occupied housing units within a mile of the study area is \$254,412; the median value of owner occupied housing units in Brunswick County is \$190,500.
Source: 2010 US Census

In general, the population in close proximity to the study area tends to be older and more affluent than residents in Brunswick County and the state as a whole.

Lastly, land in the study area is well suited to be developed to accommodate the needs of the full time residents in close proximity. More importantly, nearly 1,000 residents are located within a 5 minute walk of the study area and over 3,000 are within a 5 minute bike ride.



Vehicular travel along Sunset Boulevard from the intersection of Seaside Road to Shoreline Drive moves at a posted speed of 45 miles per hour. South of the intersection of Sunset Boulevard and Shoreline Drive, the posted speed limit is 35 miles per hour.

Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) counts in the study area range from 4,440 vehicles per day to 7,600 vehicles per day. These figures do not account for peak volumes experienced during the summer months.



Transportation

Motorized

Sunset Boulevard is the primary corridor for visitors and residents seeking to access the Sunset Beach barrier island. A recently constructed high arc bridge carries individuals from the mainland to the island. The bridge is outfitted with five-foot paved shoulders for individuals traversing the structure by foot or bicycle.

In August of 2012, Davenport Transportation Consultants conducted a traffic count at the intersection of Shoreline Drive and Sunset Boulevard North (pictured above). Over the course of thirteen hours, 10,420 vehicles traversed that particular intersection (see Figure 1). The result shows that peak summer traffic volumes can be more than twice the Annual Average Daily Traffic volumes reported by NCDOT.



Figure 1: The intersection of Sunset Boulevard and Shoreline Drive East; Traffic Volume August 2, 2012: 10,420 (Image Source: Google Maps).

Figure 1 above shows the intersection of Sunset Boulevard North and Shoreline Drive East. NCDOT has proposed a roundabout facility for this intersection. Vehicular traffic traveling to Calabash from the study area utilizes Shoreline Drive West (see Figure 2). Delivery trucks, school buses, and fire trucks regularly traverse Shoreline Drive West. Continuing south on Sunset Boulevard leads to a dead-end at a NC Wildlife Boat Ramp and the Intracoastal Waterway (ICWW).



Figure 2: The intersection of Sunset Boulevard North and Shoreline Drive West – AADT: 5,300 (Image Source: Google Maps).

Vehicles with boats in tow will increase throughout the summer, creating a potentially precarious situation at this intersection. Currently, the intersection is not signalized and maintains a stop sign on Shoreline Drive West for vehicles traversing the intersection heading east.

Parking

The availability of parking and the parking requirement in the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) will continue to be an ongoing issue in the study area for site specific development due to lot size, depth, and stormwater requirements. The Waterfront District, in particular, experiences significant trip generation from summer tourists traveling from the island to retail and commercial establishments in the area. The addition of the proposed park will only increase the number of these trips.



Figure 3: Supply/delivery truck traveling west on Shoreline Drive West (Image Source: HCP).

Non-Motorized

Non-motorized transportation includes travel by foot or bicycle. Non-motorized travel can contribute to the local economy by supporting tourism and quality development. Pedestrian-friendly conditions improve the commercial and cultural vibrancy of communities. According to the Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets, a primary roadway design guide used by transportation engineers, accommodations for non-motorized travel are vital to lively commercial districts:

“Pedestrians are a part of every roadway environment, and attention must be paid to their presence in rural as well as urban areas...Because of the demands of vehicular traffic in congested urban areas, it is often extremely difficult to make adequate provisions for pedestrians. Yet

this must be done, because pedestrians are the lifeblood of our urban areas, especially in the downtown and other retail areas. In general, the most successful shopping sections are those that provide the most comfort and pleasure for pedestrians.”¹

Currently, facilities do exist for non-motorized travel in portions of the study area. Sidewalks and a multi-use path are present along Sunset Boulevard from the intersection of Seaside Road spanning west for approximately ½ mile (see Figure 4 and Map 4).



Figure 4: Existing 10' multi-use path running adjacent to the northern edge of Sunset Boulevard North. (Image Source: HCP).

¹ *Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets*, American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, 1994, p. 97.



The multi-use path facility that currently exists in the study area is approximately 3,643 feet long. The facility is an off-street separated facility, delineated by a green line on Map 4. There is also an off-street multi-use path on portions of the south side of Sunset Boulevard, from Park Road to Seaside Road.

Sidewalks (5') are present on the south side of Sunset Boulevard from Park Road to Pineview Drive, delineated by a blue line on Map 4. There are 1,206 feet of sidewalk facility in the study area.

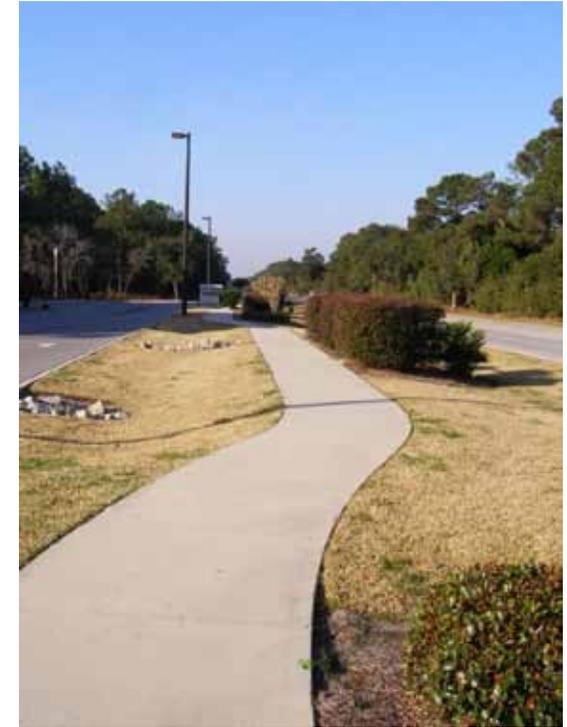


Figure 5: Existing 5' sidewalk running adjacent to the southern edge of Sunset Boulevard North. (Image Source: HCP).

No other non-motorized facilities currently exist in the study area. Additionally, there are no pedestrian safety accommodations such as crosswalks, pedestrian signals, or signage. However, the town is in the preliminary stages of completing a bicycle network. Land uses in the Waterfront District, the proposed park in particular, will create a need for non-motorized travel in the future. Further, a proposed roundabout for the intersection for Shoreline Drive East and Sunset Boulevard should be designed to accommodate potential need for non-motorized users prior to the design and construction of the facility.

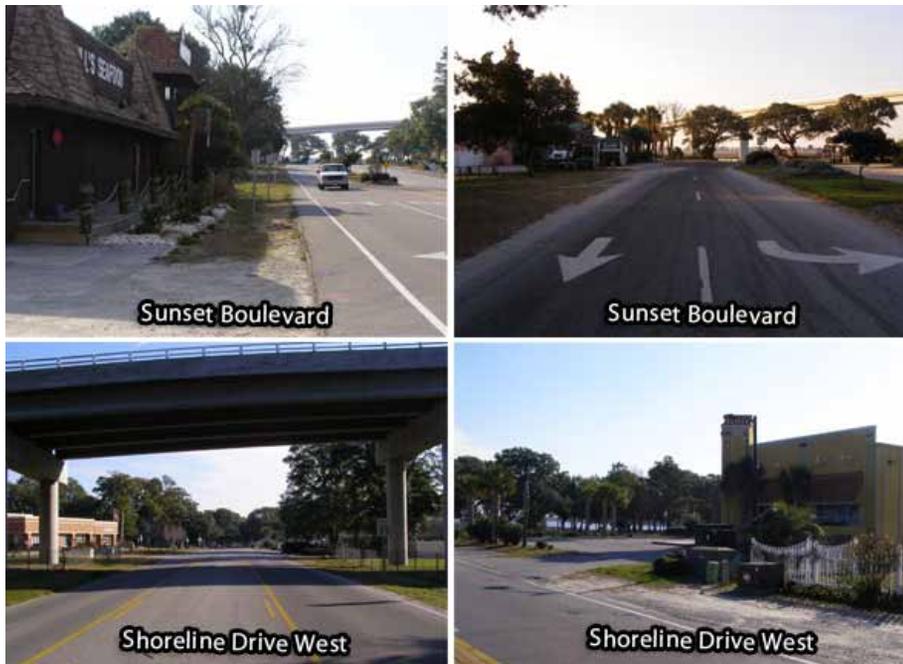


Figure 6: A lack of non-motorized facilities in the study area may deter bicyclists and pedestrians and create potential conflict between motorists (Image Source: HCP).

Land Use

All land has an inherent utilization that can be classified to better understand the existing conditions and makeup of a given jurisdiction or small area. A complete description of each existing land use category used in the Vision Plan study area is provided below. Images depicting four land use categories are provided in Figure 7.

Seven land use categories were used to create the existing land use map. They are as follows:

- Commercial – retail, service, and shopping establishments
- Office and Institutional – government, public service, and offices
- Mixed Use – Parcel(s) with two or more uses present, such as residential and commercial
- Multi-family Residential – Properties with two or more residential units
- Single-Family Residential – All single-family residential properties
- Recreation – Land dedicated to public use for recreational purposes
- Unimproved – Uninhabited properties with no significant structures; land may be cleared or simply dormant vegetation



Figure 7: Four existing land use categories are shown above (Image Source: HCP).



Map 5: Study Area Existing Land Use



| Land Use | Acres | % of Total |
|---------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Commercial | 7.85 | 6.27% |
| Office & Institutional | 12.62 | 10.09% |
| Mixed Use | 5.32 | 4.26% |
| Multi-family Residential | 2.06 | 1.65% |
| Single Family Residential | 5.44 | 4.35% |
| Recreation | 14.81 | 11.84% |
| Unimproved | 41.89 | 33.49% |
| Right-of-Way | 35.10 | 28.06% |
| Total | 125.09 | 100.00% |

Source: HCP & Brunswick County GIS

The majority of the unimproved lands are zoned MB-2 and MB-1, which are commercial districts that allow for retail uses.

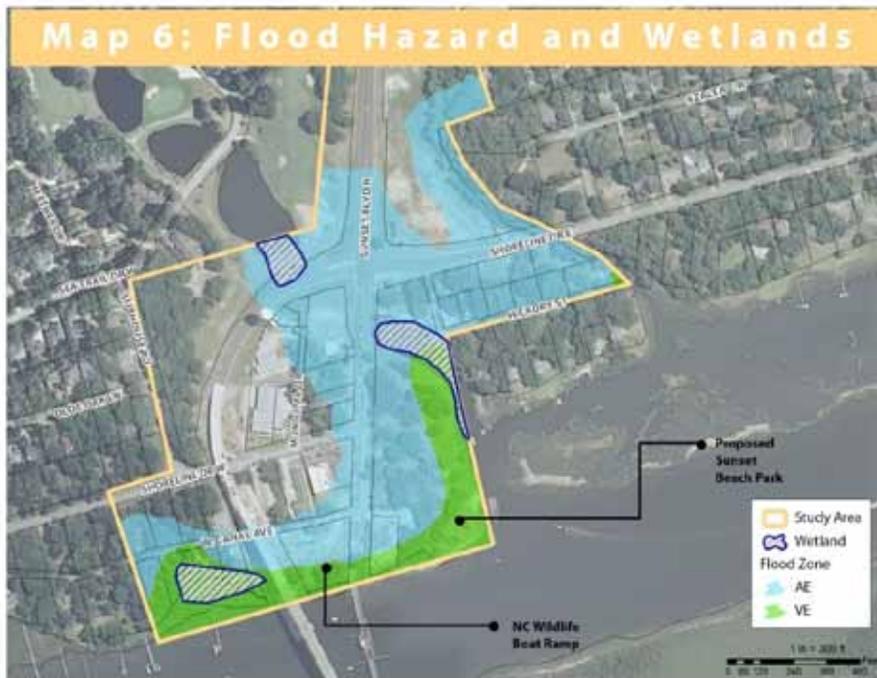
A small portion of the study area is dedicated to single-family residential uses; however, land just outside study area boundary consists primarily of single-family residential land uses.

Unimproved lands occupy the most significant amount of acreage in the study area, with just over 33% of the total acreage, or 41.89 acres. Unimproved lands are shown as white on Map 5 above. Right-of-way is not shown on the map, but is considered the acreage that occupies the roadways and immediate vicinity.



Natural Systems

For the purposes of this vision plan, natural systems refer to acreage prone to natural hazards or ecologically significant lands in the study area, more specifically, flood hazard areas and wetlands. Both environmental components were minimal in the study area. The only portion of the study area affected by either flood hazard areas or wetlands is the Waterfront District.



Flood Hazard

Floodplains are divisible into areas expected to be inundated by spillovers from stream flow levels associated with specific flood-return frequencies. The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) uses flood zone designations

to indicate the magnitude of flood hazards in specific areas. Zones AE and ZE are Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHA), which are defined as the area that will be inundated by the flood event having a 1-percent chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year. The 1-percent annual chance flood is also referred to as the base flood or 100-year flood. Floods in the Zone VE may be subject to an event with additional hazards due to storm-induced velocity wave action. There are approximately 23.4 acres in Zone AE and 6.67 acres in Zone VE within the study area.

Wetlands

Wetlands provide a multitude of ecological, economic and social benefits. They provide habitat for fish, wildlife, and a variety of plants. Wetlands are nurseries for many saltwater and freshwater fishes, and shellfish of commercial and recreational importance.

Wetlands are also important landscape features because they hold and slowly release flood water, recharge groundwater, recycle nutrients, and provide recreation and wildlife viewing opportunities for millions of people.

The federal regulations implementing Section 404 of the Clean Water Act define wetlands as:

“Those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or ground water (hydrology) at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation (hydrophytes) typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions (hydric soils). Wetlands generally include swamps, marshes, bogs, and similar areas (40 CFR 232.2(r)).”

Within the study area there are only 1.96 acres of wetlands (see Map 6).



S.W.O.T. Analysis

An analysis of Strengths (S), Weaknesses (W), Opportunities (O), and Threats (T) was conducted to obtain a thorough understanding of the study area. S.W.O.T. analysis is a tool most consistently used for corporate planning, but can be used across multiple disciplines. The goal of any S.W.O.T. analysis is to identify the key internal and external factors that are important to achieving the objective.

The S.W.O.T analysis provided represents a summary of findings in the study area.

Strengths

Sunset Beach has much to offer residents and visitors on its mainland. The Intracoastal Waterway (ICWW) is a scenic draw for tourists, residents, and aquatic recreation enthusiasts. The NC Wildlife Boat Ramp and proposed Sunset Beach Town Park will only strengthen the allure of the Waterfront District in the coming years. These resources, coupled with retail establishments, make the area one of the most unique and inviting places in Southeastern NC.

Around the study area, median home values and household income figures are generally higher than in other areas of Brunswick County. This fact highlights the availability of purchasing power and customer base for retail establishments in the study area. Additionally, 78% of the housing within a mile of the study area was constructed in the last 30 years. Further, the population within a mile of the study area is projected to increase by close to 25% over the next ten years.

In terms of transportation, the existing multi-use path facility – though not currently part of a complete network – is a superbly designed facility. The facility has adequate separation from the roadway and offers shade and visual interest to users.



Figure 8 & 9: The ICWW offers incredible view and lures visitors and residents to the area. The NC Wildlife Ramp will be a catalyst for year round visitation (Image Source: HCP).





Figure 10: The existing 10' multi-use path on Sunset Boulevard is an excellent amenity for area residents (Image Source: HCP).

Weaknesses

Transportation –motorized and non-motorized – is an overriding concern in the study area as a whole. In the Waterfront District in particular, lot size and parking requirements may limit the future businesses from locating in the area. No on-street parking currently exists in the study area.

Vehicular speeds in the study area and Waterfront District may deter non-motorized users and create safety hazards for pedestrians and cyclists. Further, no accommodations currently exist for pedestrians or cyclists in the Waterfront District.

Conflicting uses are also present in the Waterfront District. The NC Wildlife Ramp, while an amenity, will generate vehicular traffic volume that may conflict with the parking area adjacent the Twin Lakes Restaurant. During the summer months, both the restaurant and boat ramp will generate significant vehicular traffic.



Figure 11: Twin Lakes customers choosing to utilize this parking facility may conflict with vehicular traffic exiting the NC Wildlife Boat Ramp (Image Source: HCP).

Lastly, the flood hazard areas in the Waterfront District may constrain development due to additional costs of building elevation and reinforcement.



Opportunities

A significant opportunity exists to more fully utilize the Intracoastal Waterway as a draw for tourists and year-round residents. The creation of a walkable, waterfront commercial district will bolster the customer base and solidify the Sunset Beach area as a regional destination year-round. The consideration of sidewalk café seating for existing and future establishments should be explored by the town.

To embrace a walkable and bikeable commercial district, the town will have to coordinate with existing and future business owners to prioritize capital improvements for the area. Streamlining the development review process in the study area, as result of the Vision Plan findings, may catalyze long-term growth and the creation of the envisioned Waterfront District. Lessening or removing on-site parking requirements, through a shared parking strategy made possible by on-street parking or town-owned lots, may allow development interests to focus more wholly on urban form.

A complete network of trails of off-street paths will encourage pedestrians and cyclists to visit the study area. Some commercial districts find that non-motorized transport increases business activity. Non-motorized transport land requirements for roads and parking, and commercial destinations can be located in closer proximity to one another. This allows for both greater site flexibility and efficiency, and generates financial savings from reduced parking requirements. Accordingly, a study in Bern, Switzerland found that cyclists spend far more money per area of commercial land than motorists.²



Figure 12 – Sunset Boulevard: Continuation of an off-street multi-use path along Sunset Boulevard will provide non-motorized connectivity and create a complete network for bicyclists and pedestrians (Image Source: HCP).

² *Cycling The Way Ahead For Towns And Cities*, European Community, 1999.



In the Waterfront District there is adequate space in the existing right-of-way to accommodate on-street parking facilities. Reducing the lane widths and removing the vegetated median on Sunset Boulevard would allow for on-street parking and sidewalks. Business owners may consider creating an alliance to pool funds for capital improvements in the area.



Figure 13 – Sunset Boulevard: Reducing lanes, lane width, and removal of the median will allow for on-street parking and sidewalks. Currently no facilities exist for bicyclists or pedestrians in the Waterfront District (Image Source: HCP).

Threats

The Sunset Boulevard corridor and Waterfront District will have to accommodate large truck movements. The location of the Sunset Beach Fire Department along Shoreline Drive West (see Figure 2) requires that any improvements to the transportation network must accommodate the turning movements of ladder trucks. The intersection of Shoreline Drive West and Sunset Boulevard may require a turning apron to accommodate large truck radii from ladder trucks, school buses, and supply/delivery trucks.



Figure 14 – Shoreline Drive West: School bus traveling west on Shoreline Drive West. Proposed improvements to study area must accommodate large truck movements (Image Source: HCP).



Reducing on-site parking requirements for commercial establishments may cause conflict among business owners, the town, and residents. Adopting a shared parking policy will lead to inevitable disagreements if not accomplished through a coordinated approach. Future business owners may be reluctant to relinquish on-site parking due to concerns about customer satisfaction and proximity to available parking facilities.

Lastly, investments in non-motorized transportation infrastructure may be viewed as superficial line items not worthy of expenditure. Budgetary constraints faced by the town may deter investment in aesthetic or public realm improvements. In addition, shifting political will and lack of long-term vision often dismantle capital improvement projects without proper support from both the community and business owners.



Figure 15 – Parking conflicts are a threat to the creation of a coordinated and walkable Waterfront District (Image Source: HCP).



Chapter 3: Public Participation & Conceptual Designs

Introduction

Public participation is a vital component of any visioning plan. During this visioning process, Sunset Beach residents attended two public input meetings. At each meeting, residents were invited to inform the project team of concerns, aspirations, and goals for the study area. This chapter summarizes the public input process and provides the results of exercises completed during the visioning meetings.

Visual Preference Survey

A Visual Preference Survey is a public input technique used by urban designers to enable them to learn of a community's opinion of their existing and envisioned built environment. Simply put, the Visual Preference Survey informs a Vision Plan of components of the built environment – buildings, streets, landscape, etc. – that are either liked or disliked by the community.

For the Sunset Boulevard Vision Plan, the Visual Preference Survey included images primarily from the Sunset Beach area. However, some images from other places were used to determine the likability of built environment components that do not currently exist within the town. The survey was conducted during the first public input meeting. Images were shown at ten second intervals and participants were encouraged to rank each image in terms of favorability based on their "gut reaction." The results are summarized by each category. The highest and lowest rated images from each are provided.

Buildings

Highest Rated: **51**

Lowest Rated: **-41**



The highest and lowest rated "Building" images are shown above. The image on the left conveys a coastal village theme, with a tin and pitched roof, and a varied façade. The structure also has a higher level of fenestration (number of openings/windows present on building façade) than the image on the right. The building on the right lacks articulation at regular intervals as the façade remains the same for a long stretch of the structure.



Streets – Thru Zone

For the purposes of this plan, the “Thru Zone” portion of the street is the area dedicated to efficient thru movement, whether by automobile, truck, or bicycle.

Highest Rated: **65**

Lowest Rated: **-41**



The highest rated “Street – Thru Zone” image conveys the importance of a corridor framed with vegetation. Alternatively, the lowest rated image, taken at the intersection of Seaside Road and Sunset Boulevard, conveys an automobile oriented environment, offering no vegetation to soften the urban condition. Additionally, overhead utility lines can be seen as a prominent component of this image. Lastly, no facilities are provided to facilitate the movement of bicyclists or pedestrians through the intersection.

Streets – Bicyclist & Pedestrian Zone

Highest Rated: **81**

Lowest Rated: **2**



The highest rated image above conveys a walkable and pedestrian friendly environment. The image shows wide sidewalks (10'+), street trees, and options for outdoor seating. Conversely, the image on the right has no facilities for the pedestrian. The paved shoulder does provide an option for the cyclist, but the striping does not indicate it as such nor is it wide enough to comfortably accommodate a cyclist.



Parking

Highest Rated: **58**

Lowest Rated: **-12**



There is a vast difference between these two images. The image on the left shows a small parking lot, in which great care was taken to retain a specimen tree. However, the image on the right shows a vast expanse of parking. The lot is sparsely occupied and provides little vegetation to offer respite from the sun and lessen the harsh feel created by the span of asphalt.

Landscape Material

Highest Rated: **97**

Lowest Rated: **73**



The Visual Preference images showing landscape material scored the highest, on average, compared to the other categories. In fact, the image

showing seasonal color was the highest rated image overall. Both of these images scored highly as did the other images of landscape material.

Visual Preference Summary

There are several takeaway messages from the Visual Preference Survey. The first being that the prevalence of vegetation and plant material are extremely important to Sunset Beach residents. As stated previously, the Landscape Material category scored higher on average than all the other categories. As a result, the town should take all necessary steps to ensure that trees are retained when development occurs and that proper screening and parking lot landscaping are utilized to provide vegetation.

Human Scale Urban Design:

This form of neighborhood and community design creates walkable environments that do not necessarily require automobile travel to access. Architecture that violates the human dimension includes vast smooth facades, large signage, and other features that are designed to cater to individuals traveling in an automobile.

Secondly, buildings and development in general should be designed to cater to the pedestrian. The highest scoring building provides visual interest at the human scale. Parking lots should be limited in their size and expanse, and plant material should either be retained or added when building a surface lot.



Assets, Issues, and Desires Exercise

This exercise was designed to solicit input from meeting participants based on their opinion of the Assets, Issues, and Desires for the Vision Plan study area. Meeting participants were broken into groups to discuss each of these categories.

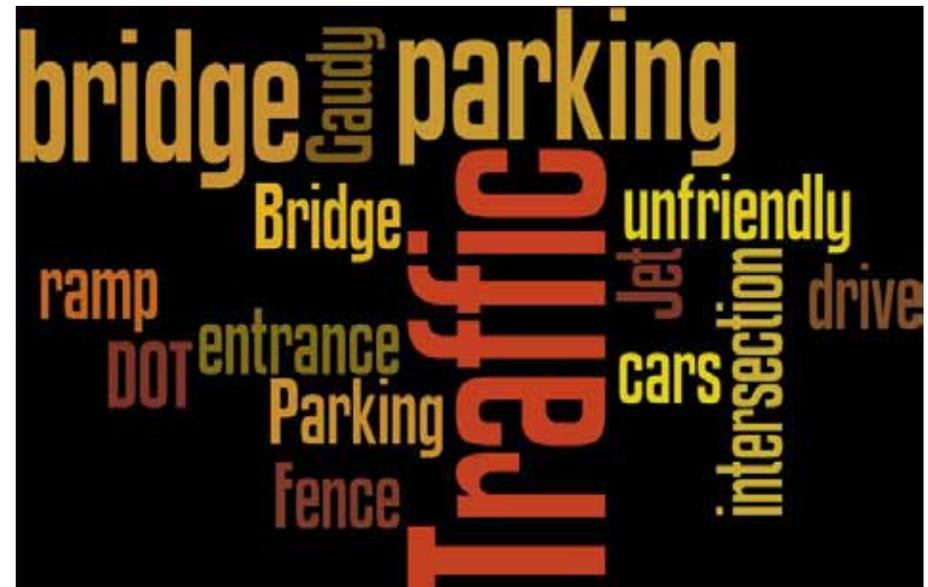


Lively discussion took place during the exercise and to conclude the meeting each group presented the results. All of the wording used to describe each group's Assets, Issues, and Desires was used to create word clouds. The more a word or phrase is repeated, the larger it is shown in the word cloud.

Assets



Issues





Desires



Similar to the results of Visual Preference Survey, participants concluded that “greenery” or vegetation was the most important aspect of the study area.

The most significant issue was “traffic.” Another issue identified by residents was parking. Residents noted that a lack of parking in the Waterfront District area would continue to be an issue.

Lastly, the overwhelming outcome of this exercise was the desire of residents to envision a “bike path” or multi-use path constructed in the study area. Other desires receiving support include consistent lighting and landscape material.



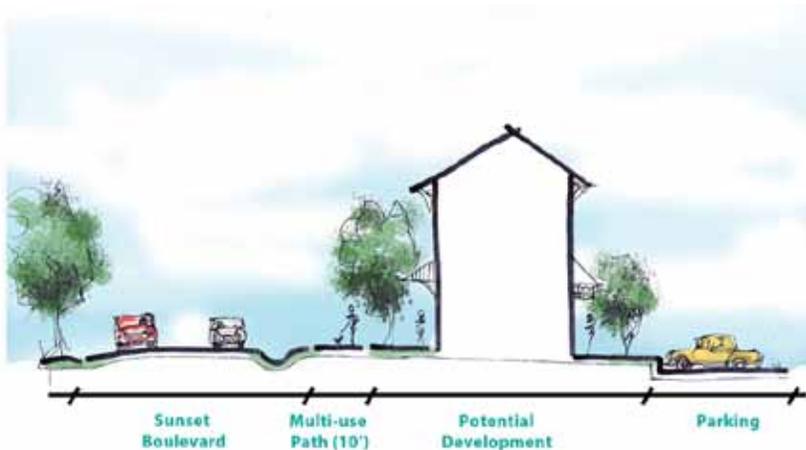
Initial Concepts & Ideas

Based on the results of the first public meeting, the project team was tasked with devising design concepts and ideas to reflect community input. The project team drafted two concepts to reflect differing future conditions for the Sunset Boulevard Vision Plan study area. It is important to note that these ideas and designs are merely conceptual, and are intended to gauge community support for each.

Locations of parking, building siting, streetscape, and non-motorized transportation options were included for each concept.

Concept A

Section A – A'



Ideas put forth as a result of Concept A include a multi-use path, the location of parking at the rear of potential development, a green roof atop the fire station, on-street parking, and a boardwalk area adjacent to Mary's Creek.





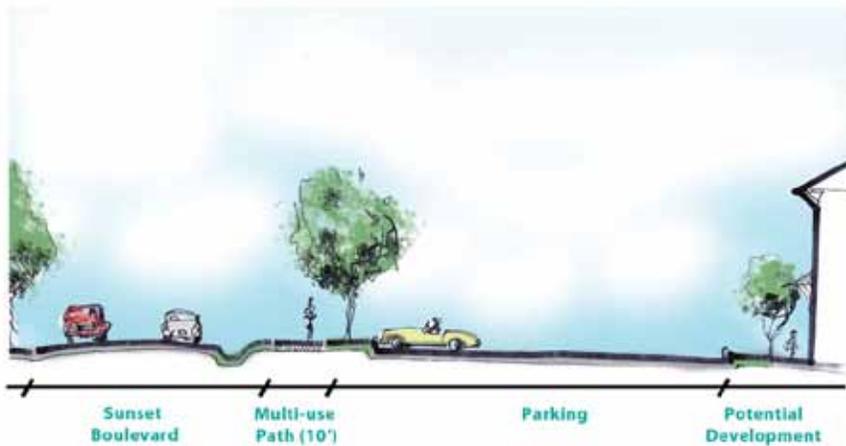
Sunset Blvd & Seaside Rd



Potential improvements at the intersection of Sunset Boulevard and Seaside Road included decorative crosswalks, mast-arm signal poles, and street trees.

Concept B

Section B – B'



A multi-use path and street trees were also included as ideas in Concept B. This concept sited the buildings with a larger front setback that would house off-street parking. This theme is more consistent with the existing conditions present along the Sunset Boulevard Corridor. Fewer options for on-street parking are provided in this scheme.

Sunset Boulevard Vision Plan: Concept B



Sunset Blvd & Seaside Rd



Possible improvements at the intersection of Seaside Road and Sunset Boulevard include street trees and continental striping (crosswalk demarcation).

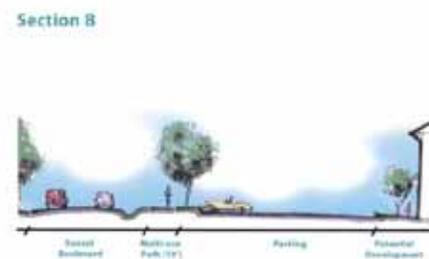


Concept Feedback

Feedback was provided for each concept at a meeting held on March 7, 2013. The concepts shown on the previous pages of the plan were presented and a group exercise was used to gauge community opinion for each. Meeting attendees were broken into groups and asked to discuss their likes, dislikes, and additional ideas for each concept. The image to the right shows an example of a completed group exercise. Attendees were asked to draw and write on the concepts to convey to the project team their various likes and dislikes of each concept.

Likes

Each group expressed support for a multi-use path ("bike path") that would run along Sunset Boulevard. Increasing both pedestrian and bicyclist infrastructure in the study area was seen as a positive



improvement by meeting attendees. Streetscape enhancements were also supported by meeting attendees as was the potential to increase



vegetation in the study area. The possibility of a green roof at the fire station was viewed favorably by at least one group.

Dislikes

The majority of meeting attendees felt that siting buildings at the front of the lot created several issues. More groups expressed their preference for parking to be located in front of buildings. Other concerns included the density of any potential development in the Waterfront District. Several groups expressed concern with the creation of a “bustling commercial area.” Generally, groups expressed more dislike for Concept A than Concept B.

Other big ideas that were disliked by meeting attendees were the creation of a boardwalk adjacent to Mary’s Creek and a foot-bridge that would cross over the creek to connect to the proposed Sunset Beach Town Park.

More Ideas

When asked for “More Ideas” for the Vision Plan study area several groups noted the need for uniform design standards that would include consistent lighting, signage, and landscape material. One group requested that any proposed commercial development should provide screening when adjacent to a residential use. Finally, one group stated that “businesses should provide their own parking.”



Chapter 4: Final Concepts & Plan Implementation

Introduction

This chapter provides implementation strategies and also revised concepts based on feedback received from the community during public input meetings. The final concepts are provided to stem discussion for the creation of a potential overlay district or other ordinance revisions that will facilitate a swift and effective implementation process.

Revised Concepts

The following conceptual designs have been drafted as a result of dialogue with town stakeholders, the community at-large, and input received during the public participation process. These concepts are in no means binding agreements of future capital improvements nor do they have a dedicated funding stream to help realize the vision presented. The concepts should be used as tool for the town to guide capital improvements in the study area for the next five, ten, or twenty years. In addition, components of the plan and conceptual ideas that relate to the private realm should be used in the creation of uniform design standards or the creation of an overlay district. No one concept can capture all the desires of a community, but it can attempt to include the most agreed upon aspects of the community thus far.

Sunset Boulevard & Seaside Road

Potential improvements at this intersection include street trees, uniform lighting, underground utilities (mast-arm signal pole), and striping to demarcate a bicycle/pedestrian crossing.

Sunset Blvd & Seaside Rd



It is important to remember that an existing image (shown above) of this intersection scored the lowest out of the “Streets – Thru Zone” category in the Visual Preference Survey, signaling the need for improvements.



Sunset Boulevard

One of the focus areas of the Vision Plan is the cross section of Sunset Boulevard. In particular, the areas zoned MB-2. Difficulties exist in developing land in this area due to the required parking, setbacks, and presence of a 20' utility easement. In addition, this stretch of the Sunset Boulevard corridor is the gateway to the island for visitors and residents alike. As a result, the community has a strong desire to see Sunset Boulevard developed in a uniform and aesthetically pleasing fashion. Efforts are under way to ensure this desire will become a realization. In fact, a recently developed parcel along the corridor houses a structure that was ranked the highest in the Visual Preference Survey (shown below).

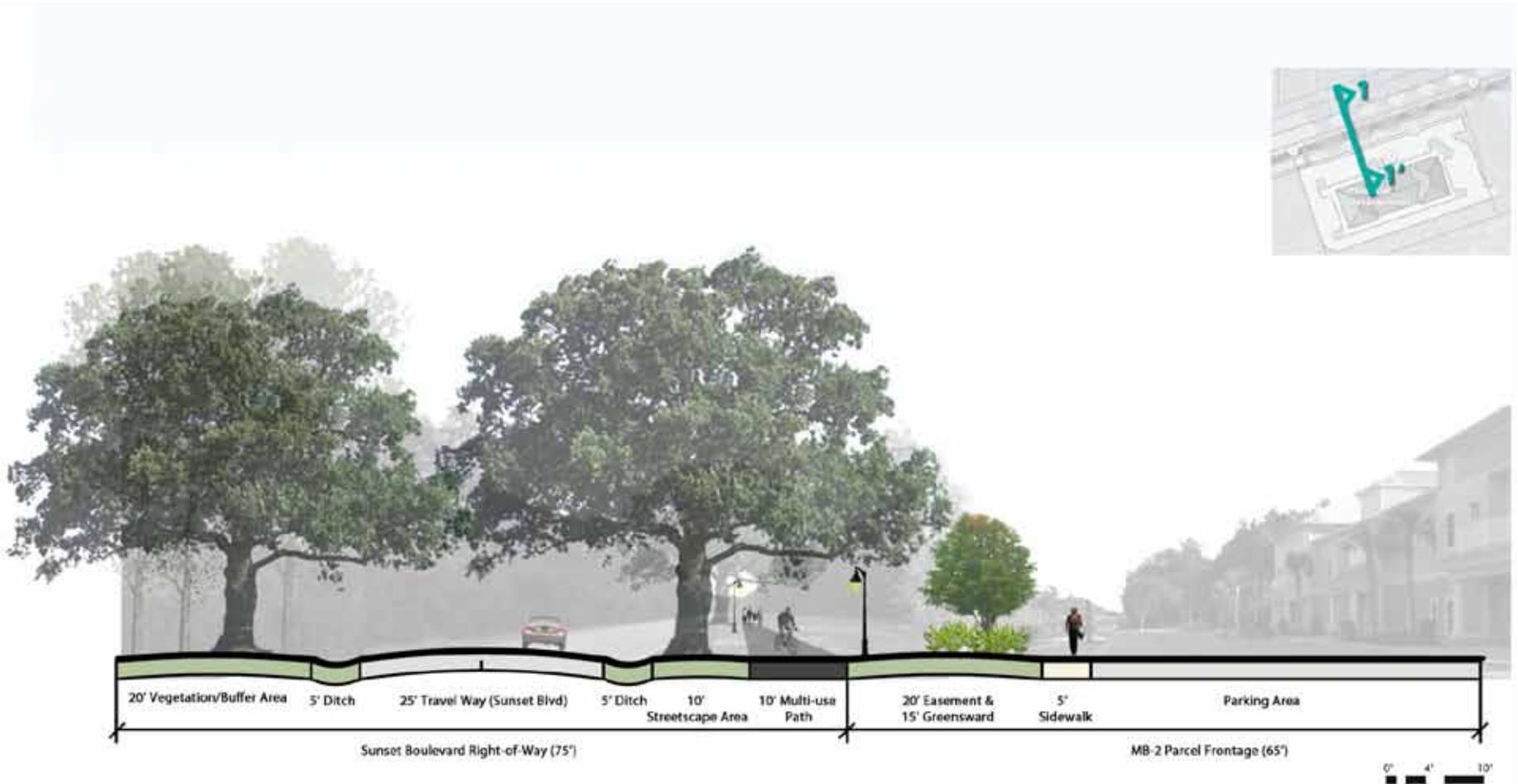


Further, language in the recently adopted Unified Development Ordinance states under “General Requirements for All Buildings” that “Adjacent building shall be compatible in regard to spacing, setbacks, proportions, materials, and scale.” In keeping with desires of the ordinance, if no further standards for structures were adopted then constructed buildings should convey, in general, the same look and feel as the highest rated visual preference image (shown to the left).

Concept



The concept above depicts a potential development along Sunset Boulevard (a larger copy is provided in the appendix). Suggested improvements within the 75' Sunset Boulevard right-of-way include a 10' multi-use path, street trees, and lighting (see the cross section provided on the next page).



Changes to the Unified Development Ordinance that would allow this potential development include reduced parking requirements, removal of the meandering sidewalk requirement (sidewalk connection still required), and the inclusion of a plant material palette to be used for required landscaping.

One of the key outcomes of the vision plan process was the overwhelming need to provide a multi-use path that runs along the corridor. In the concept above, the multi-use path is located within the Sunset Boulevard right-of-way.



Shoreline Drive West & Sunset Boulevard

The intersection of Shoreline Drive West and Sunset Boulevard was identified during the public participation process as an area in need of traffic calming and safety measures. At present, only vehicles heading east on Shoreline West are required to stop. In addition, no sidewalks or crosswalks are present to facilitate the safe flow of pedestrians.



Other considerations that need to be factored into any proposed changes to the intersection include the need to accommodate turning movements from ladder trucks leaving the fire station, the number of non-motorized trips that will be generated from the proposed park, and lastly the availability of on-street parking. Response from town officials and aerial photos show that vehicles currently choose to park within the right-of-way

(on-street) on both Shoreline Drive West and Sunset Boulevard south of the intersection.



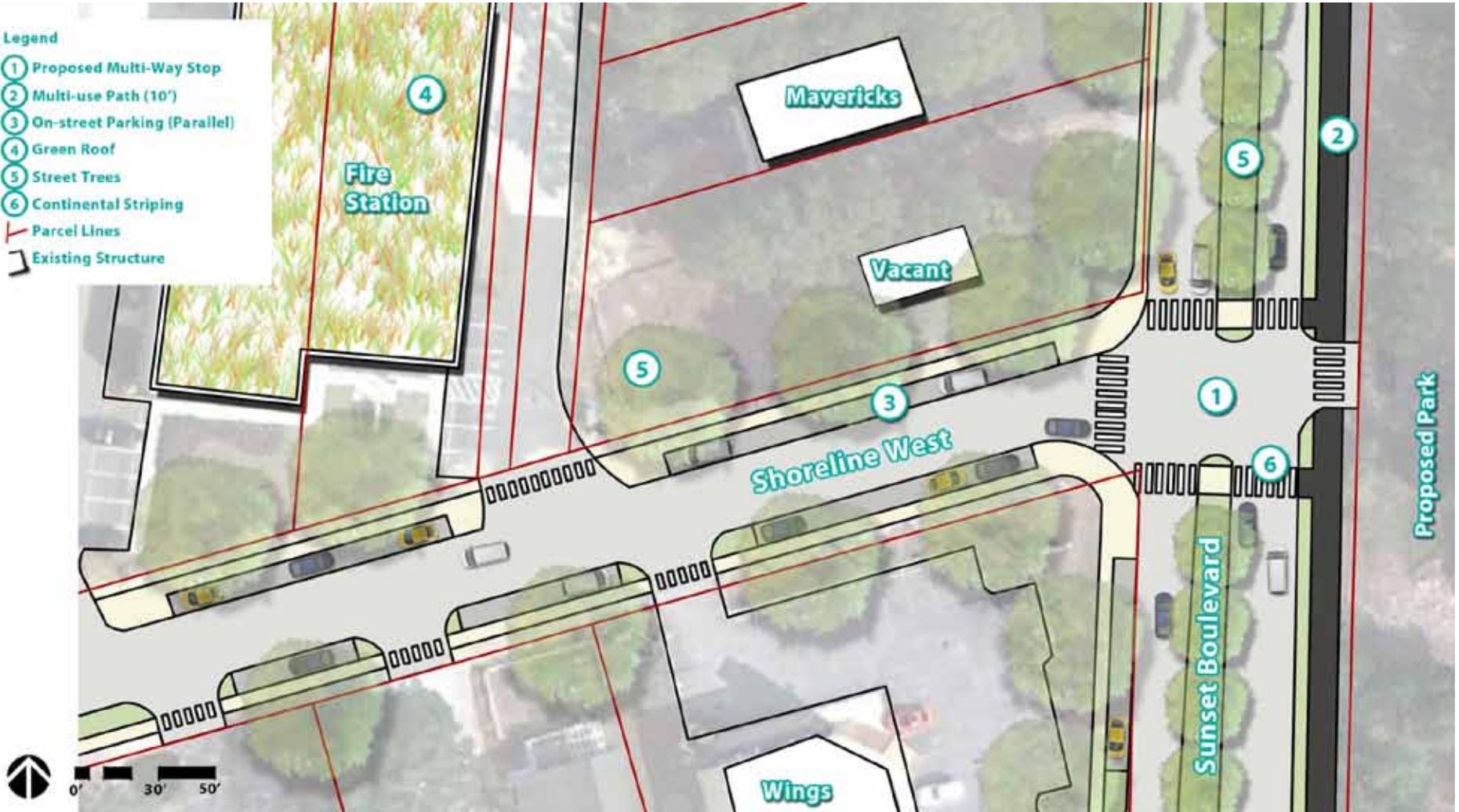
Another factor that contributes to the relative safety of any roadway or intersection is the speed limit. Currently, the speed on Sunset Boulevard and Shoreline Drive West is 45 miles per hour. Research has proven that pedestrians are much more likely to be fatally injured when struck by a vehicle travelling at speeds greater than 30 miles per hour. Based on this finding, it is suggested that the speed limit be reduced to 25 or 30 miles per hour south of the bridge intersection along Sunset Boulevard. In addition, it is suggested that for the first quarter mile of Shoreline Drive West (heading west) the speed limit be reduced to 25 miles per hour.

A concept is provided on the next page that depicts potential improvements that will serve to calm traffic, provide aesthetic appeal, and increase the availability of parking.



Legend

- ① Proposed Multi-Way Stop
- ② Multi-use Path (10')
- ③ On-street Parking (Parallel)
- ④ Green Roof
- ⑤ Street Trees
- ⑥ Continental Striping
- Parcel Lines
- Existing Structure



Concept

Ideas put forth in the concept above include a multi-use path, crosswalks, on-street parking, street trees, and a multi-way stop. Though on-street parking was viewed unfavorably by some community residents, it remains both a viable option to not only increase the availability of parking, but also to provide a traffic calming treatment. On-street parking also provides

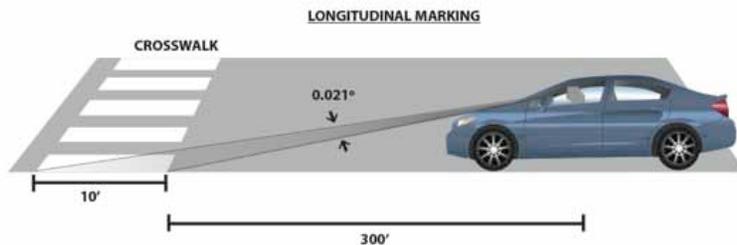
a buffer to the pedestrian from vehicular traffic. In the schematic above, it is estimated that approximately 22 on-street parallel parking spaces could be accommodated in the existing Shoreline Drive West right-of-way (60'). Four additional spaces could be provided adjacent to the Wings retail store on Sunset Boulevard. These spaces appear to be located on private property, however. Further, the possibility remains to reconfigure this



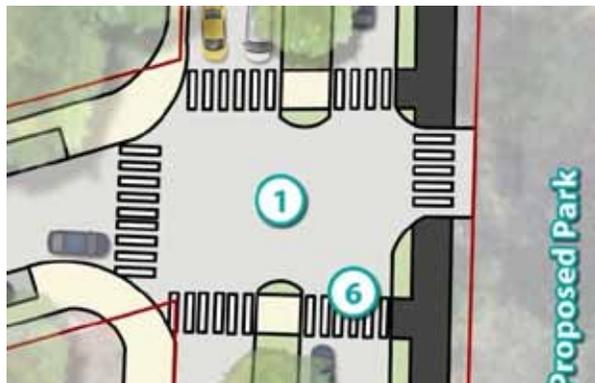
portion of Sunset Boulevard to remove the landscaped median and further increase on-street parking.

Street trees and a 10' multi-use path are also proposed in this concept. Providing street trees was viewed favorably during all public participation meetings, as was the proposed multi-use path. The multi-use path would run along Sunset Boulevard from the intersection of Seaside Road all the way to the southern terminus of the proposed Sunset Beach Town Park.

Continental Striping, a longitudinal high-visibility crosswalk marking, (shown below) is proposed as both a traffic calming measure and as a solution for increasing the safety of pedestrians.



The existing landscaped medians are also shown repurposed (see below) to function as a refuge island for crossing pedestrians or cyclists.



Benefits of Street Trees

For a planting cost of \$250-600 (includes first 3 years of maintenance), a single street tree returns over \$90,000 of direct benefits (not including aesthetic, social, and natural) in the lifetime of the tree. Additional benefits include:

1. Reduced and more appropriate urban traffic speeds.

Urban street trees create vertical walls framing streets, and a defined edge, helping motorists guide their movement and assess their speed (leading to overall speed reductions). Street safety comparisons show a reduction of run-off the-road crashes and overall crash severity when street tree sections are compared with equivalent treeless streets.

2. Create safer walking environments, by forming and framing visual walls and providing distinct edges to sidewalks so that motorists better distinguish between their environment and one shared with people. If a motorist were to significantly err in their urban driving task, street trees can deflect or fully stop a motorist from taking another human life.

3. Increased security. Trees create more pleasant walking environments, bringing about increased walking, talking, pride, care of place, association and therefore, actual ownership and surveillance of homes, blocks, neighborhoods plazas, businesses, and other civic spaces.

4. Improved business. Businesses on treescaped streets show 20% higher income streams, which is often the essential competitive edge needed for main street store success versus competition from plaza discount store prices.

5. Less drainage infrastructure. Trees absorb the first 30% of most precipitation through their leaf system, allowing evaporation back into the atmosphere. This moisture never hits the ground. Another percentage (up to 30%) of precipitation is absorbed back into the ground and taken in and held onto by the root structure, then absorbed and transpired back to the air.

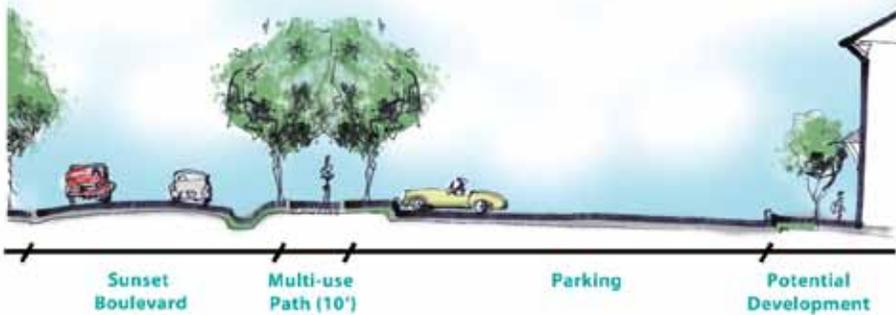
(Source: 22 Benefits of Urban Street Trees by Dan Burden)



Waterfront District

Based on the findings of the “Like, Dislike, and More Ideas” exercise, the initial concept for the Waterfront District was revised. As stated previously, the most vigorously supported component of that concept was the proposed 10’ multi-use path. Other ideas receiving support in the Waterfront concepts include the location of parking in the front of buildings and also street trees. Please note, full page copies of all concepts are provided in Appendix 1.

Section 1



In order to facilitate the movement of non-motorized traffic at the intersection of Shoreline Drive East and Sunset Boulevard (commonly referred to as the “bridge intersection”), it is proposed that the multi-use path crossing be pulled to the east by approximately 200 feet.



Sunset Boulevard Vision Plan: Revised Concept





Plan Implementation

For Sunset Beach to realize the Vision set forth through this process, the town must revise certain regulatory requirements to facilitate the capital improvement process. The responsibility for some capital improvement recommendations fall fully on the town and must be prioritized over the next five, ten, or twenty years to come to fruition. Those include providing an enhanced streetscape and the pursuit of funds to construct a multi-use path. Once this plan is adopted, it can be utilized as a tool to pursue said funding.

Suggested policy recommendations include changes to the parking standards, landscape standards, and lighting requirements. The creation of an Overlay District is another vehicle by which regulatory standards may be revised to achieve some of the desires set forth in the Vision Plan.

Please note that these recommendations should be formalized through dialogue with the town's planning board prior to undergoing the text amendment process.

Lastly, the town should work through this process to allow for development to take place in certain areas that may be constrained due to lot size or depth.

Parking Standards

It is suggested that parking standards in the MB-2 zoning district be reduced to better accommodate future businesses. The construction of a multi-use path along these properties will provide an alternative means of travel to and from establishments in this zoning district. Percent reductions or changes in the requirements for square footage may be used as solutions.

Bicycle parking should also be included for certain areas and future uses along the Sunset Boulevard corridor.

Landscape & Lighting Standards

A plant and lighting pallet should be created that can be used in the creation of a uniform look and feel for the public realm in the study area.

Below is a list of trees with qualities that would provide aesthetic qualities that are championed by the town. In addition, many of these species are salt and drought tolerant.

| BOTANICAL NAME | COMMON NAME |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|
| LARGER TREES AND SHADE TREES | |
| MAGNOLIA GRANDIFLORA | SOUTHERN MAGNNOLIA |
| PINUS PALUSTRIS | LONG LEAF PINE |
| QUERCUS PHELLOS | WILLOW OAK |
| QUERCUS VIRGINIANA | LIVE OAK |
| TAXODIUM DISTICHUM | BALD CYPRESS |
| UNDERSTORY TREES | |
| CERCIS CANADENSIS | REDBUD |
| CORNUS FLORIDA | FLOWERING DOGWOOD |
| ILEX 'NELLIE STEVENS' | NELLIE STEVENS HOLLY |
| ILEX OPACA | AMERICAN HOLLY |
| LAGERSTROEMIA HYBRIDS | GRAPE MYRTLE HYBRIDS |
| MAGNOLIA SOULANGIANA | SAUCER MAGNOLIA |
| MAGNOLIA VIRGINIANA | SWEET BAY MAGNOLIA |



Below are images of several species provided on the list in the previous page.



Live Oak & Redbud



Southern Magnolia & Longleaf Pine



Bald Cypress & Saucer Magnolia



Crape Myrtle & Willow Oak

Below are samples of Brunswick Electric's outdoor lighting products.





Next Steps

This Vision Plan should be used as a guide for the town that contains the wants, needs, and desires of residents. Details that relate to specific ordinance revisions should be finalized through dialogue with residents, stakeholders, and town leadership.

This plan was created to understand the desires of the community. These desires are now included as part of the plan and have been formally recognized through the Visual Preference Survey, public input meetings, and feedback received from the presentation of design concepts.

Town leaders and governing boards should work together to ensure that the visions and aspirations developed because of this plan are realized in the years to come.