

Fig. 4.9 Downtown North Residential Neighborhood
Source: IBI Group, July 2008



Recommendations

- A** Neighborhood Gateway Opportunity
- B** Develop as Passive Park
- C** Infill Development Opportunity: Medium-Density Multi-Family Housing and Townhomes
- D** Pocket Park
- E** Future Expansion of Tavares High
- F** Linear Park/ Pedestrian Linkage
- G** Joint Use Opportunity for recreation
- H** Streetscape Improvements: Sidewalks; Street lighting; Shade trees.

Downtown North Residential Neighborhoods

Concentrated on the northern side of the Downtown Redevelopment Area, the Downtown North neighborhoods is generally defined by US 441 on the north, Disston Avenue on the east, Texas Avenue on the west, and Lanthe Street on the south. The neighborhood is predominantly residential - characterized primarily by single-family residential units, and includes the Tavares High School. Set amidst a beautiful tree canopy along some streets, this section of the Downtown is expected to have a significant bearing on the redevelopment of Downtown. In addition to providing needed Downtown housing, the neighborhoods will also function as part of the market base for commercial and retail development being proposed in the Downtown core. Some areas in the district are being impacted by a combination of vacant properties, deteriorating housing conditions, and lack of public facilities and amenities such as missing sidewalks, unpaved roads, and neighborhood parks. The basic street grid currently defining the neighborhood's structure should remain intact, and proposed improvements to the circulation network, such as extension of Rockingham Avenue and Kentucky Street, will further promote walkability and help forge connections between existing and proposed recreation facilities.

The Plan anticipates that the Downtown North Neighborhood will undergo little change as it relates to land use composition in the short-term. Over time, new development in the neighborhood should be primarily residential with an emphasis on medium-density housing and multi-family dwellings to infill underutilized and vacant properties. New development in areas closer to US 441 should be encouraged to introduce community-oriented retail that serves the daily needs of the neighborhood. The Plan recommends that the neighborhood be redeveloped with mid-rise buildings between two and four stories in height; with emphasis on creating a diverse stock of housing units such as town homes, garden apartments, duplexes, and bungalows fitting with the appropriate architectural character, scale and density of the existing residential areas.

As the redevelopment plan matures and the neighborhood witnesses an increase in population and investment, the Plan anticipates that the Tavares High School facilities will be expanded to provide additional educational facilities and resources to future residents. The community also identified a lack of public open space within walking distance of the neighborhood, with the exception of the Fred Stover Sports Complex located just outside the CRA boundaries. This Plan identifies a combination of strategies to create public open space and provide enhanced access to existing recreational facilities such as developing vacant lands for small passive neighborhood parks to complete the system, where possible. Another alternative to ensure the provision of adequate neighborhood parks in proximity to residential neighborhoods, is to initiate discussions with the Lake County School Board to provide joint use sites and programs that address the needs of the area's youth and children.

As it relates to other public realm improvements, the Plan recommends that the CRA and the City work together to secure the preservation and enhancement of these neighborhoods through neighborhood planning efforts, and other strategies including: code revisions and infrastructure improvements including gateway treatments, sidewalk improvements, road paving, lighting, improved bus transit service and facilities, and installing directional signage to the Downtown. In conjunction with these improvements power lines should be placed under ground, stormwater systems upgraded, pedestrian scale street lighting and sidewalks installed, and a neighborhood tree planting program initiated.

Objective:

Designate areas appropriate for moderate density residential development that support a mix of housing products, maintain affordable housing stock where appropriate, provide for in-fill development opportunities at a scale that is compatible with the neighborhood, and continue streetscape improvements as incentives for private investment in housing opportunities.

Action Strategies:

- Areas should be maintained at a density of 5- 15 dwelling units per acre.
- Consider the provision of flexible development standards in future zoning code revisions for minimum lot sizes to enable development of smaller owner-occupied single family residential lots.
- Consider the inclusion of floor area ratio and maximum lot coverage ratios together to ensure that the scale of rebuilt residential properties harmonizes with surrounding residences.
- Establish residential design standards for building renovations, in-fill development and tear-downs.
- Provide for neighborhood pocket parks or urban gardens where the opportunity arises.
- Preserve the areas from encroachment by incompatible uses.
- Develop strategies to encourage the development of affordable housing, with an emphasis in developing ways in which affordable housing can be integrated within market rate housing development projects.
- Strategically target appropriate locations within the redevelopment area to facilitate new privately developed multi-family housing developments.
- Develop policies that hold absentee landowners accountable for the maintenance and upkeep of the property conditions.
- Provide pedestrian connections between the neighborhoods and the Downtown through an improved network of sidewalks, alleyways, and access roads. Improvements to the pedestrian environment should be encouraged through landscape buffering from vehicular areas with widened sidewalks, streetlights, and other design elements.
- Construct neighborhood gateways with appropriate landscaping and identity signage announcing the entrance to each of the four neighborhoods at identified primary entry points.

West Main Neighborhoods

The West Main Neighborhood comprises of residential areas located in the area generally located west of the County judicial facilities and the jail, south of Alfred Street. The area is comprised of a concentration of single-family units, industrial uses, commercial properties, and vacant lands that have experienced deteriorating physical and economic conditions over a period of time. This neighborhood has a distinguished history as a center of activity for the Downtown's African-American population. Having successfully completed streetscape improvements that have transformed the aesthetics of the commercial areas located on the east end of Main Street, the redevelopment program is anticipated to evolve to the point where improving conditions in the surrounding residential areas along the west end of Main Street should take precedence. Currently, rental units comprise a considerable proportion of properties in the West Main Neighborhood and these properties tend to have lower home values, deteriorating housing conditions, and lack of private sector investment. In addition, the proximity to the jail, lack of public realm improvements, combined with increased commercial and industrial encroachment have resulted in an overall deterioration in investment image for this section of Downtown.

The Plan does not advocate tearing down all existing buildings in the neighborhood nor anticipates that the redevelopment program will result in displacement of the existing low-income population residing in this neighborhood. As Main Street redevelops and new businesses move into vacant structures, the West Main Neighborhood is expected to experience a gradual transformation in its land use composition. In addition to ensuring that the public infrastructure is in place for this transformation to take place, the Plan recommends establishing policies and programs that protect the residential areas and stimulate private investment in housing restoration and in-fill development. Residential areas should be buffered from industrial and commercial uses while zoning strategies should discourage commercial encroachment into surrounding neighborhoods. Using tax increment revenues, the CRA should establish a residential property improvement grant program to encourage housing restoration. As demand increases residential design standards should be established to ensure new housing is consistent with the character of the Downtown core and designed to the highest quality.

Similar to the strategies discussed for the Downtown North Neighborhood, the Plan recommends the future of this area be marked by an increase in housing opportunities (town homes, bungalows, duplexes, and garden apartments), while at the same time introducing incremental low-impact changes that introduce combined mixed-use buildings that contain neighborhood retail, grocery stores, and small scale retail stores. As the redevelopment program in the Downtown core is successful in attracting private investment, it is anticipated that the neighborhood will provide opportunities to transform the area as a stable residential area serving as a new gateway into Downtown Tavares from SR 19.

The Plan envisions the expansion of Ingraham Center, located at the intersection of Ingraham Avenue and Bryan Street, as the focus of public realm improvements in the neighborhood. Integrating the Ingraham Center into the existing neighborhood fabric will transform the neighborhood into a destination and create a positive image for the West Main Neighborhood within the larger community.

The Ingraham Center programming and design studies should evaluate the redevelopment of vacant and underutilized properties surrounding the area to accommodate neighborhood oriented activities such as a local library, a day care center, or a neighborhood family center. The center's design should be flexible to accommodate a diverse range of activities that act as dynamic functional spaces, during day and night, instilling a sense of security into the neighborhood. Some of the activities that could be incorporated into the final design may include: a multi-purpose pavilion used for youth performance, community gatherings, barbecuing facilities, picnic tables; and activities for all age groups: art events, chess, dominoes, basketball courts.

While this neighborhood is physically separated from rest of the Downtown CRA district, completion of the proposed Tav-Lee trail will connect the area to citywide recreational systems. The Plan also recommends creating a linear park along SR 19 and creating a trail connection along Ruby Street (behind the County jail) that will further the goal to connect the West Main Neighborhoods with the rest of Downtown. These improvements, together with recommended street extensions and new pedestrian connections, will provide enhanced access to adjacent northern neighborhoods.

Objective:

Continue to enhance residential areas and maintain the affordable housing stock within the redevelopment district through investment in public infrastructure and by establishing or promoting programs that support investment in residential renovations, in-fill development and redevelopment, preservation of the existing housing stock.

Action Strategies:

- Ensure adequate buffering between incompatible uses.
- Designate areas appropriate for moderate density mixed-income multi-family residential development.
- Enhance and upgrade existing quality of housing.
- Create incentives to facilitate new infill construction of affordable workforce housing.
- Establish Residential Façade Improvement Program.
- Encourage adaptive reuse of vacant and underutilized properties to accommodate community facilities and activities (vocational technology training center/ business resource center/ job training center).
- Develop design strategies to minimize the visual impact of the County jail and detention facility center.
- Upgrade facilities at Ingraham Center.
- Work with area faith-based institutions to generate community support and participation in maintaining the neighborhood's aesthetic environment.
- Work with commercial property owners to institute a sidewalk maintenance and beautification program.
- Encourage neighborhood oriented retail uses in new commercial development fronting Main Street (grocery store, restaurants, deli).
- Increase home ownership working with area financial institutions.

Fig. 4.10 West Main Neighborhoods
Source: IBI Group, July 2008



Recommendations

- | | |
|---|--|
| A Neighborhood Gateway Opportunity | E Redevelopment Opportunity: Multi-Family Housing/ Townhomes |
| B Upgrade Ingraham Park and Community Center | F Linear Park/ Pedestrian Linkage |
| C Infill Development Opportunity: Townhomes | G Street Extension and Pedestrian Linkage |
| D Pocket Park | H Streetscape Improvements: Sidewalks; Streetlighting; Shade trees. |

Neighborhood Improvements

View of Ingraham Avenue looking north. The illustration (right) shows the transformation anticipated in the neighborhoods with future public and private realm investment.

- A** Burial of Utilities
- B** Traffic Calming
- C** Improved sidewalks and planting strip
- D** Private Investment: new infill development
- E** Shade Trees
- F** Street Lighting



View of Bloxham Avenue looking south. The illustration (right) shows the transformation anticipated in the neighborhoods with future public and private realm investment.

- A** Burial of Utilities
- B** Street Lighting
- C** Improved sidewalks and planting strip
- D** Private Investment: new infill development
- E** Shade Trees



Fig. 4.11 Downtown Transition Mixed-Use District
Source: IBI Group, July 2008



Recommendations: Downtown Transition Mixed-Use District

- A** Primary Gateway Opportunity
- B** Neighborhood Gateway Opportunity
- C** Infill Development Opportunity: Mixed-Use (Retail/ Office/ Residential)
- D** Redevelopment Opportunity: Neighborhood Park
- E** Future Expansion: Library/ Civic Center
- F** Secondary Gateway Opportunity
- G** Alfred and Caroline Street Realignment

Downtown Transition Mixed-Use Neighborhood

In most of the residential character areas, the Plan recommends strategies to strengthen existing development characteristics. The Downtown Transition Mixed-Use District is concentrated just north of the Downtown Core boundaries, and includes properties located along Alfred Street and Caroline Street between Disston Avenue and Sinclair Avenue on the east and west respectively. The area also includes properties located along Sinclair Avenue between Alfred Street and US 441. Several residences in the area have been well maintained and exhibit quality architectural features that should be referenced as examples for guidelines for future infill housing. While this area contains several historic structures, the Plan recommends that the City conduct a detailed assessment of its contributing historic structures for National, State and local register listings, prior to permitting rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of existing structures.

Future land use in these areas would consist of live/ work buildings, medium-density housing, specialty retail, and office uses. While this designation is applied in areas consistent with the Mixed-Use (MU) designation contained in the Land Development Regulations and Comprehensive Plan, along Alfred Street and Caroline Street, it is recommended that this land use designation be extended one half block north of Caroline Street. These new designations are consistent with the more intense, current land uses and activities at these locations and will provide a transitional buffer to the surrounding residential areas.

Currently, the uses along Alfred Street consist of a mixture of land uses with strip commercial uses, auto-service shops, public facilities, churches, and single-family residential structures. The existing streetscape conditions in this district have deteriorated and do not support an efficient pedestrian environment. Some of these conditions include high traffic volumes during peak hours, lack of pedestrian cross-access and traffic calming measures, inadequate landscaping and lack of bus transit facilities. The intent is to provide a pedestrian friendly environment that supports local commerce while ensuring minimal impact to the surrounding neighborhoods.

The proposed reconfiguration of Alfred and Caroline Streets as a one-way pair is expected to have a significant impact on future development patterns in this district. The Plan envisions the reconfiguration of Alfred Street to act as catalyst that will create a vibrant district with widened sidewalks, on-street parking, extensive landscaping, and appropriate traffic calming measures. The building and land use patterns proposed in this district will be more intense than the existing conditions. The Plan recommends vertically mixing land uses along the properties located along Alfred Street, and gradually stepping down to the neighborhoods, and mid-block between Alfred Street and Caroline Street. The ground floors should contain active uses, preferably retail, while upper floors should contain offices or residential uses.

Properties fronting Caroline Street and Sinclair Avenue are anticipated to accommodate developments that are similar to the current uses and scale of buildings in the area. The Plan anticipates that over time single family homes located along these streets will likely be redeveloped as professional offices, live/ work buildings, low-density residential structures and small apartments. New development along Caroline Street should further step down to the Downtown North neighborhoods, in order to preserve the existing character of the low-density residential areas.

The Tavares Public Library and Civic Center, the Tavares Historical Society, and Ridge Park are located within the Downtown Transition Mixed-Use District. These community facilities are the primary generators of pedestrian activity, drawing residents not only from the residential neighborhoods in the Downtown Redevelopment Area but also the entire City. Several members of the community and staff have indicated that the existing facilities have outgrown its capacity and there is an expressed desire to expand these facilities to address the needs of diverse population groups. An essential component for realizing the Downtown's vision to create a compact and walkable community is the presence of a strong framework of public facilities and amenities. The Plan recommends redeveloping the existing Civic Center, Public Library and Ridge Park facilities to create a facility that has improved physical access to the Downtown redevelopment area and provides a functional and architecturally significant activity center for community engagement and culture. The Plan suggests that the CRA consider assembling vacant properties in the vicinity of the existing Civic Center/ Library to create a new neighborhood park that will serve as a recreational facility for Downtown North neighborhoods and the Downtown at large.

Development patterns in this district should be oriented towards a more urban form with buildings placed closer to the sidewalks, with additional setbacks if the property is located on a street corner. In addition, the Plan recommends creating a continuous frontage along the primary streets with rear parking and mid-block pedestrian access points, where possible. In general, building intensity will be in the low to middle range, but significantly higher than present development patterns.

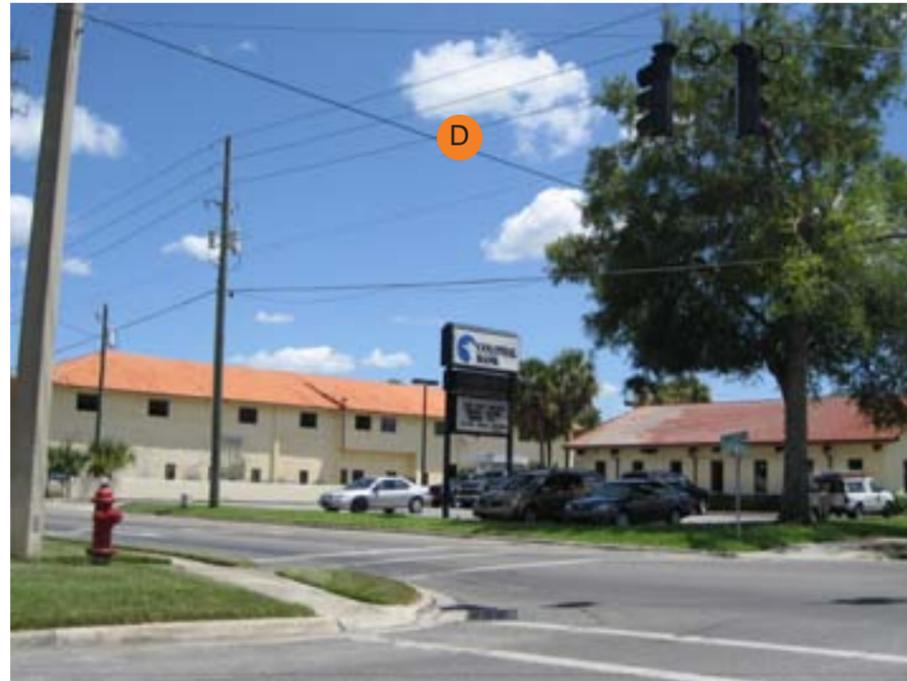
As the Downtown Transition District revitalizes as a medium-density neighborhood mixed-use transition corridor, it will need convenient off-street parking to support more frequent visitors. The Plan identifies opportunities to develop structured parking in the vicinity of the taller buildings located in the Civic core and the County facilities. The intent is to provide a transition in land use from the high density Downtown core to the residential areas within the context of an upgraded public realm setting.

Objective:

Accommodate transitions in land use through appropriate zoning regulations, investment in pedestrian improvements and incentives for private sector investment in the adaptive re-use of existing residential structures.

Action Strategies:

- Continue to work with Lake-Sumter MPO to expedite the design and construction phase of the proposed Alfred Street reconfiguration project.
- Incorporate streetscape improvements, such as decorative street lighting, wider sidewalks, street trees, brick intersections on asphalt streets and the reconstruction of brick street, to establish a pedestrian environment in support of future commercial activity.
- Encourage property owners to introduce a mix of housing types- townhomes, live/work studios, garage apartments, lofts to provide for affordable workforce housing.
- Encourage more professional office uses to support specialty retail and food service industries.
- Encourage adaptive reuse of existing residential uses to accommodate low-impact non-residential uses (professional offices, neighborhood retail, restaurants).
- Accentuate significant intersections with appropriate gateway treatment and directional signage to major activity centers.
- Conduct design and programming studies to expand the Public Library and Civic Center facilities on Caroline Street.
- Promote high intensity mixed-use development on identified vacant and underutilized properties in the neighborhood.
- Encourage development of moderate to high intensity mixed-uses on primary north-south streets in the district (retail at grade/ office/residential upper floors).
- Ensure design standards and architectural guidelines are in place prior to the approval of any new development in the area.



Existing conditions at the southeast corner of Alfred Street and Sinclair Avenue intersection (top). The illustration (top-right) depicts the transformation anticipated during the first phase of public realm improvements. The second phase shown in the image on the bottom-right depicts how private investment will help create a vibrant pedestrian environment.

Phase I

- A** Signalized intersection with mast arms
- B** Construction of County Parking Garage
- C** Improved pedestrian crosswalks

Phase II

- D** Burial of Utilities
- E** Alfred Street conversion to one-way
- F** Improved sidewalks and planting strip
- G** Private Investment: new infill mixed-use development with storefronts
- H** Shade Trees
- I** Internal Plaza
- J** New Residential development with greater heights mid-block



Revitalizing Alfred Street



Downtown Transition Mixed-Use District: Precedents



View of Alfred Street looking west. The illustrations (right) show general recommendations to the public realm and private realm in two phases.

Phase I

- A** Burial of Utilities
- B** New Infill Development: Mixed- Use
- C** Widened Sidewalks in conjunction with new private development

Phase II

- D** Alfred Street: One- Way Conversion
- E** On-Street Parking
- F** Improved sidewalks
- G** Multimodal Transportation Modes: Bus Transit/ Segways/ NEVs
- H** Shade Trees
- I** Directional Signage
- J** Improved Pedestrian crosswalks and traffic calming



Sinclair Avenue Gateway Improvements



Downtown Transition Mixed-Use District: Precedents



View of the intersection at Sinclair Avenue and US 441. The images show secondary gateway improvements and private sector investment in two phases.

Phase I (top-right)

- A** Burial of Utilities
- B** New Infill Development: Mixed-Use (Neighborhood Retail/Office)
- C** Widened Sidewalks in conjunction with new private development
- D** Median Landscaping: Signature Trees
- E** Directional Signage
- F** Street Furniture
- G** Multimodal Transportation Modes: Bus Transit/ Segways/ NEVs
- H** Shade Trees

Phase II (bottom-right)

- I** Improved pedestrian environment: alternative location for pedestrian bridge
- J** New development



Downtown Core

The Downtown Core District, located in the heart of Tavares' Redevelopment district, is comprised of the region's important government offices and ancillary uses- Lake County Administration Building, County Judicial Center, Lake County Historical Museum, Lake County Historical Courthouse, Tavares City Hall, and Wooton Park. As the primary economic base for the City, small businesses and professional organizations related to the government services employ workers who commute into the Downtown area daily. While the area is home to several institutions that also attract a regional population for government related activities, the urban form has not been able to support the desirable retail and entertainment uses typically found in thriving Downtown areas. Most of the retail and entertainment establishments closed during the 1970s with suburbanized development patterns along the US 441 corridor, which has in-effect transformed Downtown into an office-dominated district.

Although perceived as a predominantly office district, the Plan establishes three sub-districts within the Downtown Core to reinforce the Downtown's potential to develop as a center of business and civic activity for the Downtown and the region. The sub-districts include:

- Institutional Core
- Traditional Main Street District
- Waterfront Entertainment District

Each area combines to form a cohesive vision for the Downtown Core that will facilitate development of a wide range of land uses within a one-quarter to one-half mile radius or five to ten minute walking radius. This section includes specific recommendations for each of the three sub-districts of the Downtown Core.

Institutional Core

County government operations continue to remain a significant and vital economic engine for Downtown Tavares. Combining nearly eight blocks between Ruby Street and US 441, the institutional core is comprised primarily of county and church owned properties. These include the Lake County Administration Building, Judicial Center, County jail, School Board maintenance and bus storage facilities, and the First United Methodist Church. In addition, the area also contains professional offices such as attorneys, bail bond agencies, insurance agencies and other government related professional services.

Recent development and planned projects have helped to spark an interest in transforming the institutional core as a catalyst for future development in Downtown Tavares. The County is pursuing multiple facility expansion projects that are currently in different stages of development. Foremost among these projects is the expansion of the Lake County Judicial Center and the construction of a multi-story parking garage. The first is intended to increase office space for court and clerical activities, while the second is aimed to resolve a growing parking congestion problem on West Main Street. Other projects include the construction of a new Central Energy Plant and a Governmental Office Building. The Plan capitalizes on these proposed improvements, and recommends working with university extension facilities in the future that could potentially accommodate legal and nursing programs to strengthen the institutional character of the district. Opportunities to introduce these uses are identified on the surface parking lot located behind the Judicial Center on Alfred Street.

While the existing County jail facility located in the district does not serve the highest and best use for prime Downtown property, the Plan recognizes that it currently supports a large component of the businesses and that the County has no plans to relocate the jail in the near future. In order to mitigate the visual impacts of the jail facility on the surrounding facility, the Plan recommends employing streetscape beautification and landscape buffer techniques consistent with the proposed character for Main Street. In addition, the Plan identifies opportunities to create a pedestrian trail connection in the rear of the property that connects the West Main Neighborhoods to Ruby Street. If the county decides to relocate the jail, the Plan anticipates that the property will be developed in accordance with the development characteristics for Main Street, retaining an urban mixed-use configuration.

Other facilities owned by institutional entities within this district include the Lake County School Board bus storage and maintenance facility, and the First United Methodist Church. During the public workshops, the community expressed a desire to examine the feasibility of redeveloping the school board owned storage facilities as private sector or public uses that is consistent with the architectural character and urban form envisioned for Downtown. The redevelopment program anticipates that as market conditions evolve in the Downtown, the school owned properties located along Alfred Street be developed as multi-family housing. As the land use and housing recommendations contained in this Plan are implemented and Downtown's population increases, facilities for fire and police emergency services will be required. The Plan recommends that the City/ CRA work with the City fire and public safety departments to anticipate construction and expansion of fire, police and emergency facilities. The school owned bus-storage facility located at the intersection of Caroline Street and SR 19, could serve as a potential site to construct a state-of-art public safety complex providing easy access to Downtown and the rest of the City.

Fig. 4.12 Institutional Core
Source: IBI Group, July 2008



Recommendations: Institutional Core

- | | |
|--|---|
| A Existing County Jail | E Multi-Family Redevelopment Opportunity |
| B Judicial Center Expansion | F Public Safety Complex Opportunity |
| C County Public Parking Garage | G Primary Gateway Opportunity |
| D Redevelopment Opportunity: University Extension Facility (Mixed-Use- Institutional/ Office) | H Conservation Land/ Open Space |
| | I Round-about: Main Street |

The First United Methodist Church is located at a major intersection and serves as a significant gateway structure and should be enhanced with landscaping and creation of a linear park to accentuate the entry into Downtown from US 441. While the church owns a large tract of land which is underutilized, it is surrounded by wetlands that should be conserved as an open space area, adding to the Downtown's open space and recreation network. The Plan calls for embracing the institutional core as a vital activity center for Downtown while encouraging the creation of a diverse mixed-use district in an upgraded physical environment.

Objective:

Strengthen Institutional Core as a focus of government activity, and connect institutional buildings to the overall Downtown public realm framework.

Action Strategies:

- Pursue future development opportunities with the County for university extension facilities (legal/ nursing).
- Work with School Board to identify opportunities for potential relocation & reuse of vacant and underutilized school owned properties.
- Consider developing a consolidated public safety complex- Fire/ EMS/ Police as a long-term strategy.
- Explore opportunities to introduce retail/ office uses in future county facility expansion and development projects.
- Ensure design standards and buffering requirements are established for institutional uses.
- Establish a coherent directional signage system for all public facilities and parking areas.



Aerial view looking northeast above Lake Dora showing Institutional Core District



*County Projects:
(Top) Parking Garage
(Middle) Government Office Building
(Bottom) Judicial Center Expansion*



*(Top) 3-dimensional model showing the built mass relationship between existing facilities and planned developments
(Bottom) Planned Round-about at Main Street and Sinclair Avenue*

Traditional Main Street District

As the central spine of Downtown Tavares, the Traditional Main Street district has continued to serve as the historic commercial and civic activity center in Tavares. The district is the heart of commercial activity- office and retail- for the Downtown area, and connects the City's most significant institutions: Tavares City Hall and the Lake County Government Complex. Presently, the district contains a diverse range of land uses from older commercial buildings to institutional uses; from low-density residential uses to scattered offices uses; and vacant and underutilized surface parking lots. Anticipated future development patterns in this district help to illustrate the concept of allowing both vertical and horizontal mixed-use development. Vertical mixed-use refers to having several uses contained in one building with a change in uses occurring at different building levels. Horizontal mixed-use pertains to a site accommodating more than one use. For example a large-scale retailer, a bank and an office tower and townhomes could be developed on one site under this scenario. The Plan recommends discouraging stand-alone single story commercial buildings in new developments.

While the district has experienced an increase in vacancy rates, especially as it relates to retail establishments over the last decade, it continues to support a relatively healthy concentration of professional offices in historically significant structures. The historic development pattern along Main Street has been instrumental in establishing the charm and character of the community therefore the style and placement of future buildings should be consistent with this established form.

The City recently completed construction of streetscape improvements for a section of Main Street between Disston Avenue and Sinclair Avenue. While these improvements have contributed significantly in enhancing the pedestrian environment in Downtown, the City has not yet experienced the anticipated private sector investment related to the improvements. The lack of residential densities that are needed to support retail establishments combined with the decline in real estate and construction activity throughout the nation could be identified as the primary contributor for the slow growth.

Compared to other communities in the region, Downtown Tavares is witnessing transformation and construction activity despite a difficult economy, including the construction of a 7-story county public parking garage, improvements to Wooton Park, the Tavares Station mixed-use project, and the future opportunities that can be derived from the Central Florida Commuter Rail proposal. The Plan envisions building upon these synergies to create a mixed-use district, containing high-density residential uses, entertainment venues, hotels, restaurant, shopping, and destination uses. The Main Street District will be the location for retail storefronts on the ground floor of all buildings with residential and office uses on upper floors. This includes introducing ground-floor retail storefronts along the north-south streets between Alfred Street and Ruby Street. It is essential that existing tree canopies are preserved as well as new shade trees are planted in the district in order to create a walkable environment.



Fig. 4.13 Recommendations: Traditional Main Street District (SR 19 to Sinclair Avenue)

- A** Primary Gateway Opportunity
- B** Infill Redevelopment Opportunity: Mixed-Use (Residential over retail/ office)
- C** Traditional Main Street Character: New development with generous storefronts; rear parking; shared access; wide sidewalks
- D** Upgrade existing multi-family housing
- E** Landscape buffer to improve visual impact of County Jail Facility
- F** Main Street round-about
- G** Rezone from industrial to highway commercial



Fig. 4.14 Recommendations: Traditional Main Street District (Sinclair Avenue to Disston Avenue)

- A** Preserve and promote historic structures: Historic Courthouse
- B** County Public Parking Garage: Shared use as public facility
- C** Outparcel liner buildings
- D** Redevelopment Opportunity: Boutique hotel/ residential/ retail
- E** Infill Development: Traditional Main Street storefronts; mixed-use (residential over retail)
- F** Redevelopment Opportunity: Mixed-Use (residential/ museum/ retail)
- G** Proposed Urban Plaza: Tavares Square
- H** Adaptive Reuse: Encourage residential above existing retail
- I** Adaptive Reuse: Historic Lake Building (live/ work lofts)
- J** Primary Gateway Opportunity
- K** Future location for public parking garage

Growth within the Downtown Core should increase economic vitality and residential density while simultaneously improving the overall quality of the area with public realm improvements. The most significant public realm improvement in this district will be the creation of the Tavares Square urban plaza. Connecting Main Street to the waterfront, including the blocks to the east and west of Rockingham Avenue, the plaza is envisioned to be designed as a public space suitably sized to accommodate civic uses including festivals, farmer's market, outdoor vendors, possibly a heritage and cultural museum, framed with restaurants, cafes, and residential units on the upper floors. The new gathering space should be more urban and interactive by creating common spaces that encourages increased pedestrian activity. *Chapter 7: Public Facilities and Amenities* contains a detailed description of the Tavares Square urban plaza concept.

The building and land use pattern proposed in the Downtown Core, including the Traditional Main Street District will have higher intensities and densities than existing conditions. In order to maintain the historic character of the district, the Plan recommends employing a combination of generous setbacks on the ground floor to accommodate wider sidewalks and step backs at upper floors to create pedestrian scaled built form. The proposed building envelope contains low rise buildings (2 stories or 28 feet) that gradually increase to 6 stories or 84 feet in middle of the blocks along Main Street between Maud Street and Ruby Street.

In addition to urban form and architectural style, a strong combination of uses and activities established in an attractive pedestrian setting provide a foundation for economic success. Artwork, festivals and cultural activities in the Downtown strengthen commerce by providing exposure to local businesses and opportunities for increased patronage. The redevelopment plan endorses the continued support of local festivals and the location of key cultural amenities, such as museums and artist lofts, near Main Street and the proposed plaza.

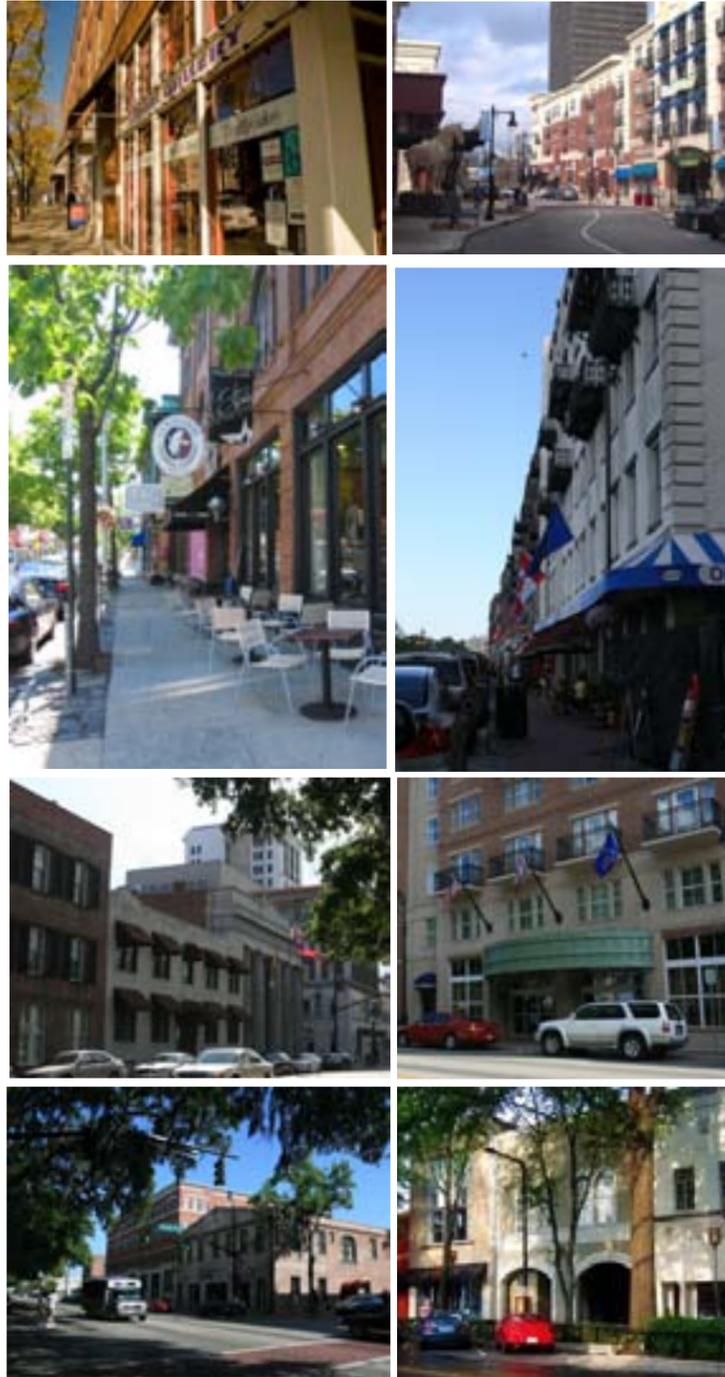
Objective:

Create a compact, mixed-use, and diverse district that celebrates the historic and cultural heritage of Tavares, while enhancing the economic vitality of Downtown businesses through a well-defined land use and regulatory framework. The intent is to maintain and expand the district as a pedestrian-oriented area focussed on promoting activity generating uses.

Action Strategies:

- Density: 20-40 du/acre.
- Tiered Building Heights: 2-6 stories from Main Street to Maud Street.
- Continue to support Downtown businesses through the expansion and diversification of uses and activities along Main Street and through additional improvements to the road designed for pedestrian safety and increased visibility.
- Pursue improvements to further enhance the quality of the pedestrian environment.
- Enhance pedestrian safety and slow speed of automobiles in the downtown through the use of reduced speed limits, better signage and the use of elevated, decorative crosswalks at all Main Street intersections.
- Employ design standards for site planning and architectural features.
- Encourage a complimentary mix of uses & activities.
- Attract more restaurants, cafes and specialty retail.
- Develop a "niche" market.
- Encourage concentration of retail activities at ground level within this district, preferably destination retail and tourist related uses such as restaurants, museums, outfitters, art galleries. Upper floors should contain offices or residential uses.
- Organize land uses in a manner that encourages and supports movement by public transit, bicycle, walking, and other alternative transportation modes.
- Allow a diverse range of uses in the district, including live/ work units, lofts, offices, neighborhood grocery stores, bank, post office, events center.
- Encourage infill development with higher density residential within the district on upper floors.
- Discourage new one-story commercial buildings and single-family residential development in the district.
- Pursue catalytic projects through public- private partnerships or land assemblage in the block fronting Main Street between St. Clair Abrams Avenue and New Hampshire Avenue.
- Initiate discussions with impacted private property owners to determine their level of support and intent for participation in the proposed redevelopment program.
- Work with the property owner to redevelop the block located west of City Hall between Rockingham and New Hampshire. The Plan envisions a moderate scale mixed-use development with hotel, office, retail, and residential uses.
- Develop a master plan for the area identified as the Tavares Square in the urban design plan illustration as a pedestrian plaza along Rockingham Avenue incorporating the Lake County Public Records building and the blocks located between St. Clair Abrams and New Hampshire Avenue. Construct a new pedestrian plaza defined by mixed-use buildings to visually and physically connect Main Street to the waterfront.
- Continue to develop incentives that will help activate the district's pedestrian environment and facilitate retail development at ground level within the district. Examples of incentives include: exempting retail uses on the ground floor from FAR calculations within the district; parking exemptions; and area-wide master stormwater permit.
- Higher density and intensity should be encouraged in conjunction with the development of commuter rail or light rail.
- Require appropriate land use transitions to ensure new development is compatible with existing areas.
- Require liner buildings or architectural treatment in the design of parking structures in all new developments.
- Develop strategies to encourage the development of affordable housing, with an emphasis on developing incentives in which affordable housing can be integrated within market rate housing development projects.

Revitalizing Main Street



Traditional Main Street District: Precedents

View of Main Street looking west. The illustration (bottom) depicts anticipated improvements to the public realm supported by higher density private sector investment.



- A** Enhance existing streetscape
- B** New Infill Development: Mixed-Use (Residential over retail)
- C** Activate Pedestrian environment: Tavares Square urban plaza concept
- D** Tiered Mixed-Use development (2-6 stories)
- E** Incorporate architectural details: canopies and awnings
- F** Improved crosswalk paving
- G** Redevelopment Opportunity: Mixed-Use Hotel (Residential/ retail/ parking garage)

Main Street: Key Projects

View of the intersection at Main Street and SR 19. The illustration (right) shows the transformation anticipated in the neighborhoods with future public and private realm investment.

- A** Burial of Utilities
- B** Traffic Calming and landscape median
- C** Improved sidewalks and landscape treatment
- D** Private Investment: new infill development
- E** Entryway Feature
- F** Street Lighting
- G** Directional Signage



View of proposed plaza at Rockingham Avenue and Main Street, looking south. The illustration (right) shows the transformation anticipated in the district with future public and private realm investment.

- A** Formalized pedestrian plaza- public art, change in paving to accentuate intersection, signature trees
- B** Redevelopment Opportunity: Mixed-Use
- C** Outdoor vendors and events
- D** Sidewalk cafes
- E** Redevelopment Opportunity: Mixed-Use (Residential over retail)





Planned Wooton Park Improvements
Source: City of Tavares/ BESH

Waterfront Entertainment District

Forming the CRA district's southern boundary, Lake Dora is expected to serve as a regional destination for residents and visitors. In April 2007, the Tavares City Council approved plans to develop a marina and seaplane basin at Wooton Park in the area of the existing boat ramp on Lake Dora. The proposed improvements envision Wooton Park as a unique event/recreation venue in Central Florida in that the facility is accessible by water, air, rail, bicycle and hiking (TAVLEE Trailhead facility), public transit and automobile. As one example, this multimodal aspect will allow someone arriving by seaplane to take a water taxi to Mount Dora and return to Wooton Park by train. The Inland Lakes Railway currently provides rail access from Tavares directly into Downtown Orlando. While this service is currently limited to special event activities, this direct rail access provides the infrastructure backbone for future scheduled commuter rail service from Tavares to Orlando and a rail tie-in to a future "freight village" in the Tavares area. The goal is to transform Wooton Park from a place primarily used by local residents into a regional destination waterfront venue with multiple uses that will continue to attract visitors and water related events to the community. In 2008, the City will host its annual Dragon Boat Festival, the Sunnyland Classic Antique Boat Festival, a Classic Race Boat event, four weekends of "Thomas the Train" Children's event, and several national fishing tournaments at Wooton Park. Confirmed and proposed events for 2008 will draw an estimated 132,000 visitors to Downtown Tavares and Wooton Park. The proposed project when completed will be a multi-use park, regional special events venue with a water orientation providing a Marina/Seaplane basin, boat and bicycle rentals, water taxis, and other water related activities including the construction of a sandy beach on Lake Dora. In addition, an Event Center will be constructed at the end of a dock/promenade area over Lake Dora. The Pavilion – Event Center will be constructed to replicate the former Woman's Club building that was built at the Park in 1912 and demolished in the early 1950s.



Waterfront Entertainment District: Existing Conditions

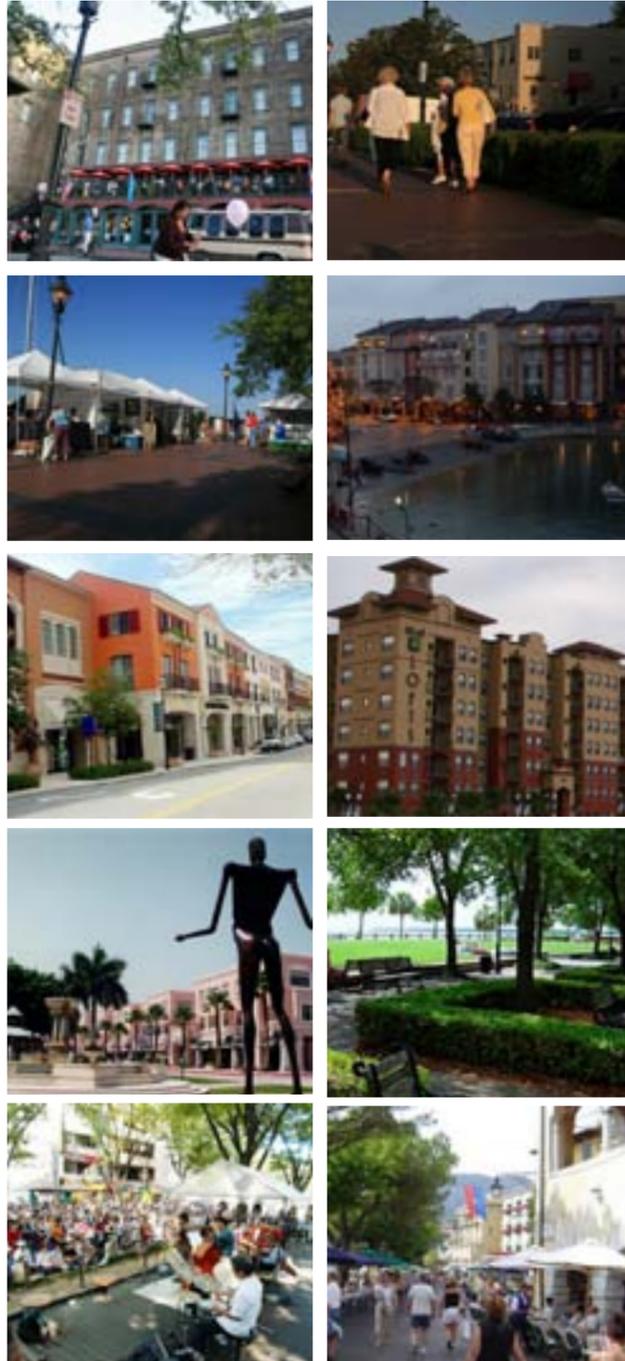


Fig. 4.15 Existing Conditions: Waterfront Entertainment District



Fig. 4.16 Recommendations: Waterfront Entertainment District

- A Ruby Street Improvements
- B Wooton Park Improvements
- C Pavilion- Event Center
- D Proposed band shell
- E Future Transit Station
- F Alternative Site Plan: Tavares Station
- G Proposed Heritage and Natural Resource Museum
- H Redevelopment Opportunity: Mixed-Use Development
- I Tavares Square: Connecting Main Street to the Waterfront
- J Splash Park/ Sandy Beach
- K Marina/ Seaplane basin



Waterfront Entertainment District: Precedents

In addition to the improvements to Wooton Park, the potential to develop a transit hub for the proposed Central Florida Commuter Rail Transit presents unparalleled opportunities for Downtown Tavares to emerge as a regional multimodal center. The Redevelopment Plan proposes that the City of Tavares should capitalize on this opportunity to redevelop the waterfront entertainment district and the Downtown Core as a Transit-Oriented Development (TOD), based on station area master planning principles. The intent of the plan is to reconfigure Ruby Street as an entertainment district that serves a regional population anticipated to constitute the critical mass needed to support a transit service. It is anticipated that similar to trends seen in cities served by transit service, the Downtown core will attract developers that are interested in creating high-density, mixed-use destinations within a 5-mile walking radius of the transit station. Perhaps the most significant new private sector project in Tavares that will serve as the catalyst for such development will be the proposed Tavares Station- a high-density, mixed use development on Lake Dora. The proposed condominium and townhouse community on 3.6 acres of presently-vacant land, once owned by Lake Region Packing, will accommodate a range of amenities, from private boat docks to a yacht club and putting greens.

During the public workshops conducted during the planning process, the community expressed concern over the height of the proposed Tavares Station condominiums, slated to be developed in the second phase of construction. In light of the current housing recession faced by communities across the country and the residents' vision of Downtown Tavares as a unique urban core with varied building types, the Plan recommends that the City and CRA initiate discussions with the developer of Tavares Station to explore opportunities to assemble and develop the waterfront entertainment district as a master planned effort. The Plan recognizes that developing a single 14-storied condominium tower may artificially suppress the market supply, and destabilize the development potential in other sections of the redevelopment area. As an alternative concept, the Plan suggests that the massing be distributed throughout the blocks fronting Ruby Street between St. Clair Abrams Avenue and Joanna Avenue. The conceptual plan illustrated on the following page includes new construction that will contain up to six-eight stories of high-density mixed-use development, including a convention center, hotel, ground floor retail, multi-purpose cultural and heritage center, multiple upper floors for condominiums, apartments, and office space. These uses combined with the proposed public improvements including the Tavares Square urban plaza, Wooton Park improvements, new transit station facilities offers a unique opportunity to create a reinvigorated waterfront entertainment district.

Objective:

Establish a waterfront entertainment district providing a venue for festivals, shops, restaurants, the arts and cultural amenities that will firmly establish Downtown Tavares as a regional destination.

Plan for the transformation of the district to evolve from the present rural configuration to a more hardened urban waterfront venue.

Action Strategies:

- Undertake a detailed design master plan of the district to fully integrate the appropriate phasing of all proposed elements of design. Including, but not limited to the following:
 - Continuation of proposed improvements to Wooton Park.
 - Appropriate phasing of future improvements to the park to provide for a hardened urban waterfront feature.
 - Commuter rail transit system and facilities design.
 - Private sector development opportunities including economic feasibility and design of future development along Ruby Street.
 - Design and integration of Tavares Square
 - Design and integration of key destination cultural facility
- Plan, design and construct Ruby Street improvements as the primary spine of the entertainment district.
- Ensure all required infrastructure is incorporated in the Ruby Street Design.
- Determine feasibility and seek funding for a destination cultural facility which might include a transportation, heritage or natural resource museum.
- Seek opportunities to control key development sites.
- Initiate discussions with all affected property owners to determine attributes of possible land acquisition and disposition program.
- Leverage County Records property as a tool to control other key development sites through negotiations with potential developers.
- Initiate discussions with Tavares Station developers to maximize development potential of their property in conjunction with development of the entertainment district.
- Consider solicitation of Master Developer for Waterfront District.
- Devise strategic development incentive package for use in negotiations.
- Pursue art in public spaces program.
- Continue with successful festival and events planning.
- Consider weekly events program such as farmers market or arts and crafts fairs.
- Work with Chamber of Commerce and other economic development organizations to devise marketing strategy for Downtown Tavares.
- Review and amend, if necessary, codes and policies that may be a deterrent to the success of the entertainment district such as noise and alcohol policies.