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Mississippi Renewal Forum

GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION
RECOVERY. REBUILDING. RENEWAL

CNU CONGRESS FOR THE NEW URBANISM

Ocean Springs

2005

Ocean Springs was a leading community in the Gulf Coast of the pre-Katrina world.

With its architectural heritage, its artists and art lovers, its street trees, its excellent schools, and small-town scale (and celebrated slower pace of life), Ocean Springs gradually became a most sought-after spot for up-market householders and, with its resulting high property values, to some extent a standard setter the other municipalities in the region could follow. Before the storm, Ocean Springs was already identified as a highly desirable area and was experiencing strong demand for housing and business locations.

With the winds of Hurricane Katrina came tragedy, opportunity and challenge. Ocean Springs, while the victim of heartbreaking damage in certain places, emerged from the storm with light injury overall compared to its neighboring towns. (This should come as no surprise, because the founders of the town and its leaders from 300 years ago wisely chose relatively high ground for much of the settlement.) This means Ocean Springs has begun to bounce back quickly, much more so than some of the peer communities along the Coast.

The Guiding Principle:

Grow more, but grow more of the real Ocean Springs.

Extend the best of the historic patterns of architecture, urbanism and green networks found in Old Ocean Springs into

1) new growth areas,
2) infill development in the city's traditional neighborhoods,
3) strategic redevelopment of Bienville Boulevard.

Design Team:

Victor Dover   Henry Furr
Joseph Kohl   Dennis Cowart
Maricé Chael   David Perkes
Milt Rhodes   Don Broussard
James Dougherty   Jim Eley
                       Ed Blake

Those same peer communities are, in many cases, going to be tied up in the recovery phase for longer, yet their companies and citizens need addresses now, and they're looking for options in Ocean Springs.

Coupled with the demand from so many who consider the Springs a first-choice place to live or work storm or no storm, this adds up to serious growth pressure for the town on the immediate horizon. In the mix might lie a solution to the city's tax base test. The challenge, then, is in two parts:

Will Ocean Springs seize the moment, directing the new wave of demand to create an even more livable city, while protecting its image and character?

Will Ocean Springs reassert its leadership position in the region, proving to the watching neighbors how smartly managed growth can make things better rather than worse?

These are the questions that when answered accompanied by the recommendations in this report will propel Ocean Springs to its leadership position in the post-Katrina world.

- Site of Ft. Maurepas founded by France in 1699
- Colonial fishing village grew into a resort in the 1800's
- Washington Ave. commercial district dates from early 1900's
- Pop. 17,225

The old town reflects traditional town-making principles:
   main street,
   tree-lined residential streets,
   mixed land uses,
   natural areas respected
   town center on the high ground,
   clustered near rail depot

The principles inherent in Old Town Ocean Springs are important for all new development in the town to follow.

A set of strategic recommendations follows the visuals and explanatory illustrations contained in this report.

Great Beginnings

Charrette team gets to know Ocean Springs environment

Meeting the community at City Hall

Team surveys damage on Front Beach Drive

Residents offer ideas for consideration

Ocean Springs

Members of the Ocean Springs team initially examined the area from above, in Blackhawk helicopters. The visiting designers, local officials and Mississippi professionals gathered next in Biloxi for an all-day briefing by Governor Barbour, the Commission's various committees, and state officials.

The following day, the team used vans to tour Ocean Springs. Mayor Moran led the group to examples of the full the range of post-Katrina conditions, from heavily damaged areas to lightly affected ones, visiting historic neighborhoods, newly developed areas, anticipated growth sites, and the city's natural backdrop.

Midway on this tour, the group stopped at City Hall and held a community meeting. Citizens, business leaders and elected officials made suggestions for the master plan, discussed alternative approaches, asked questions, and debated growth strategies for the town. The visiting designers used photos and drawings to help the group visualize options and probe for consensus on priority items.

How These Recommendations Were Created

Mayor Moran and Ocean Springs residents join team for Saturday "Open House"

Charrette participants work with residents of Ocean Springs.

Mayor Moran identifies opportunities for charrette team to explore.

Victor Dover & Joe Kohl refine City of Neighborhoods map

In the temporary design studio at the Isle of Capri Hotel, the team set to work converting the ideas discussed at the community meeting into concrete proposals.

Working interactively with computerized maps, freehand sketches, and a nine-foot-long map of the entire city, the team continuously updated the proposals as new information became available.

During the weekend, an informal "open house" session was held to review the work in progress and make adjustments. Work continued around the clock until the presentation of the plan on October 17, 2005.

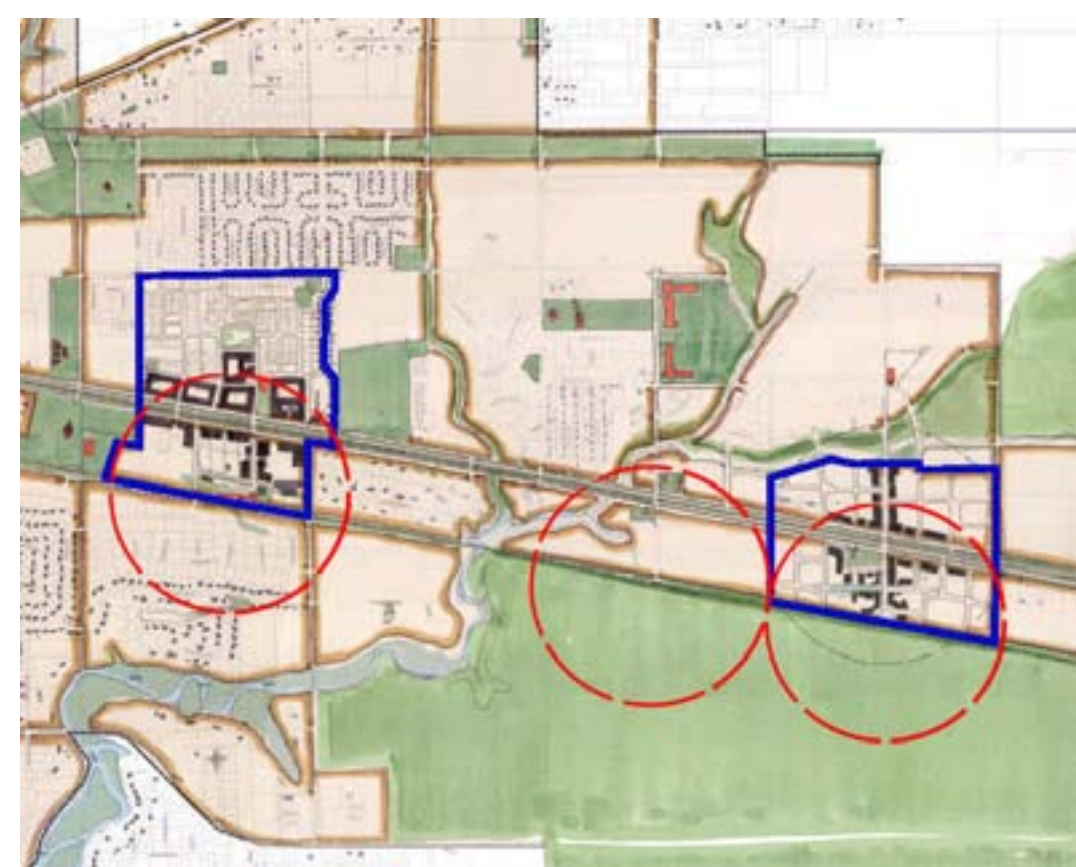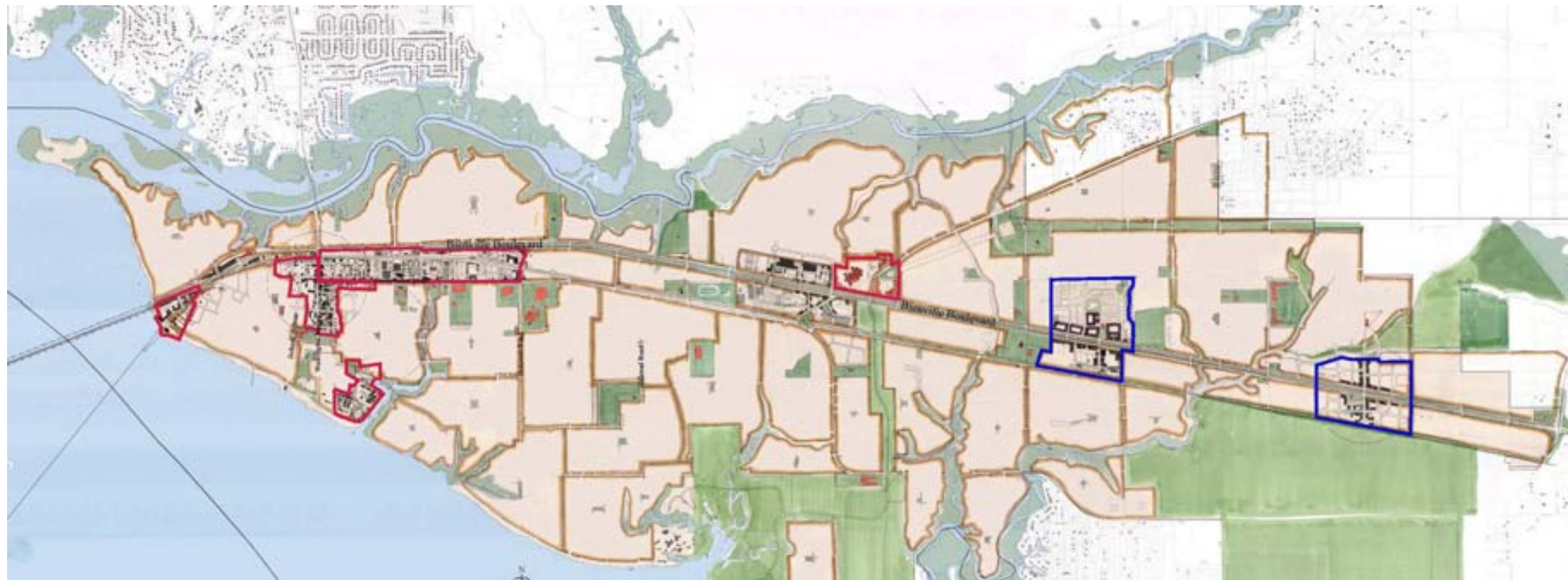# How These Recommendations Were Created

Ocean Springs

The framework for the plan for Ocean comes from the existing well defined neighborhoods, districts and corridors identified during the charrette.

A system of greenways and blueways is already underway and would benefit from improved connections in key locations. Highway 90 (Bienville Boulevard) provides the major east/west transportation route, and would benefit from improved north/south access. Identifying opportunity sites in the city of neighborhoods was not difficult as many are already under study for development and redevelopment.

The classic neighborhoods of the traditional town are sized at approximately 5 minutes' walk from center to edge.
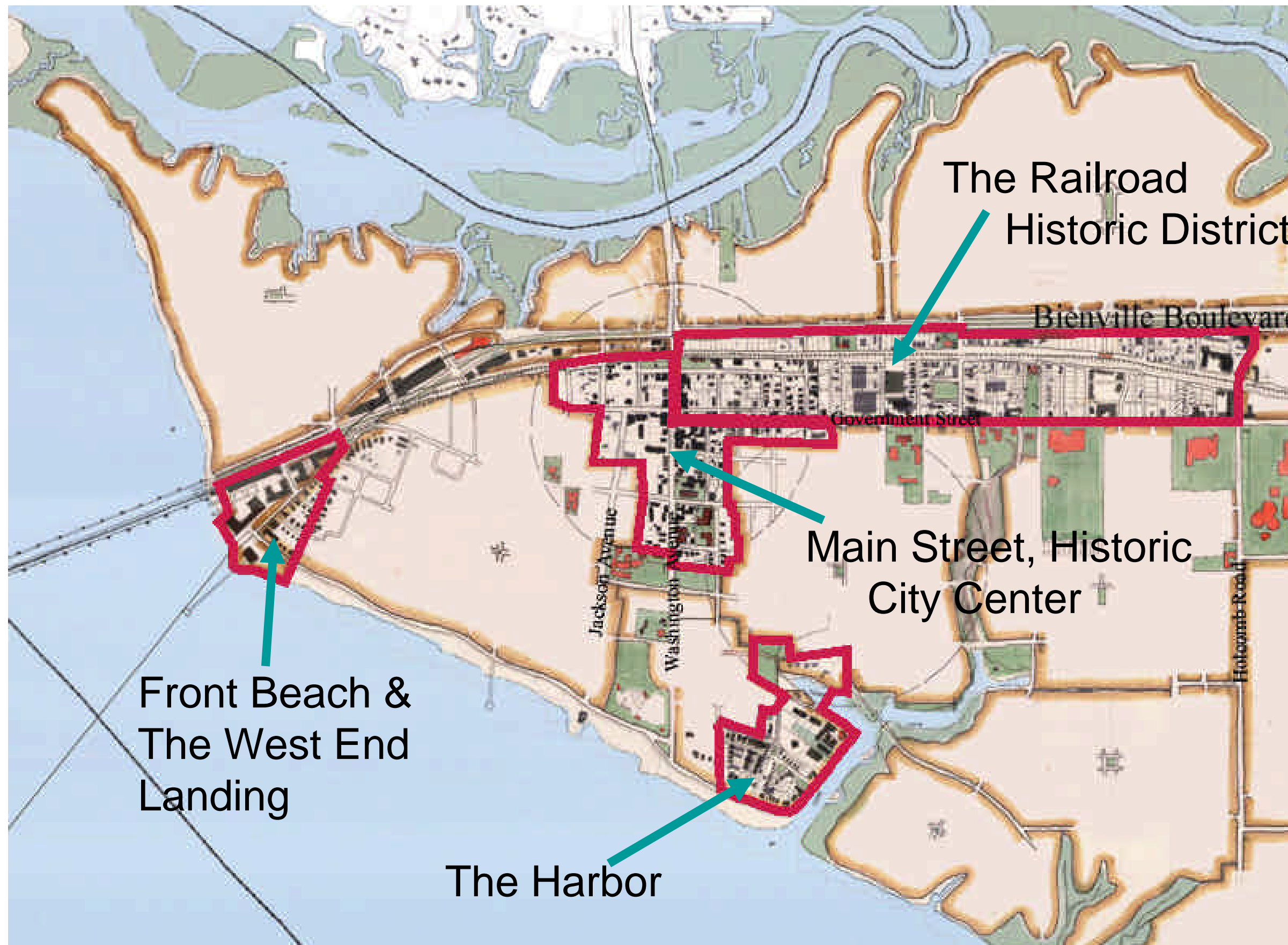
The Town of Ocean Springs is a city of neighborhoods as represented by the top illustration. The red circles indicate a ¼ mile, 5-minute walking distance and is the principle building block for neighborhood development.

A bird's eye perspective illustrates that the eastern end of town has significant opportunity for growth when similar principles are incorporated. The remainder of this report identifies specific suggestions for the opportunity sites identified during the charrette.

Ocean Springs is a City of Neighborhoods

The Railroad
Historic District

Bienville Boulevard

Main Street, Historic
City Center

Front Beach &
The West End
Landing

The Harbor

Ocean Springs

On the west end of Ocean Springs, several special revitalization opportunity areas were identified during the charrette. These are all in close orbit around Washington Avenue, the Town of Ocean Springs' Main Street.

The existing neighborhood fabric provides a complimentary palette of options for these new opportunity sites.
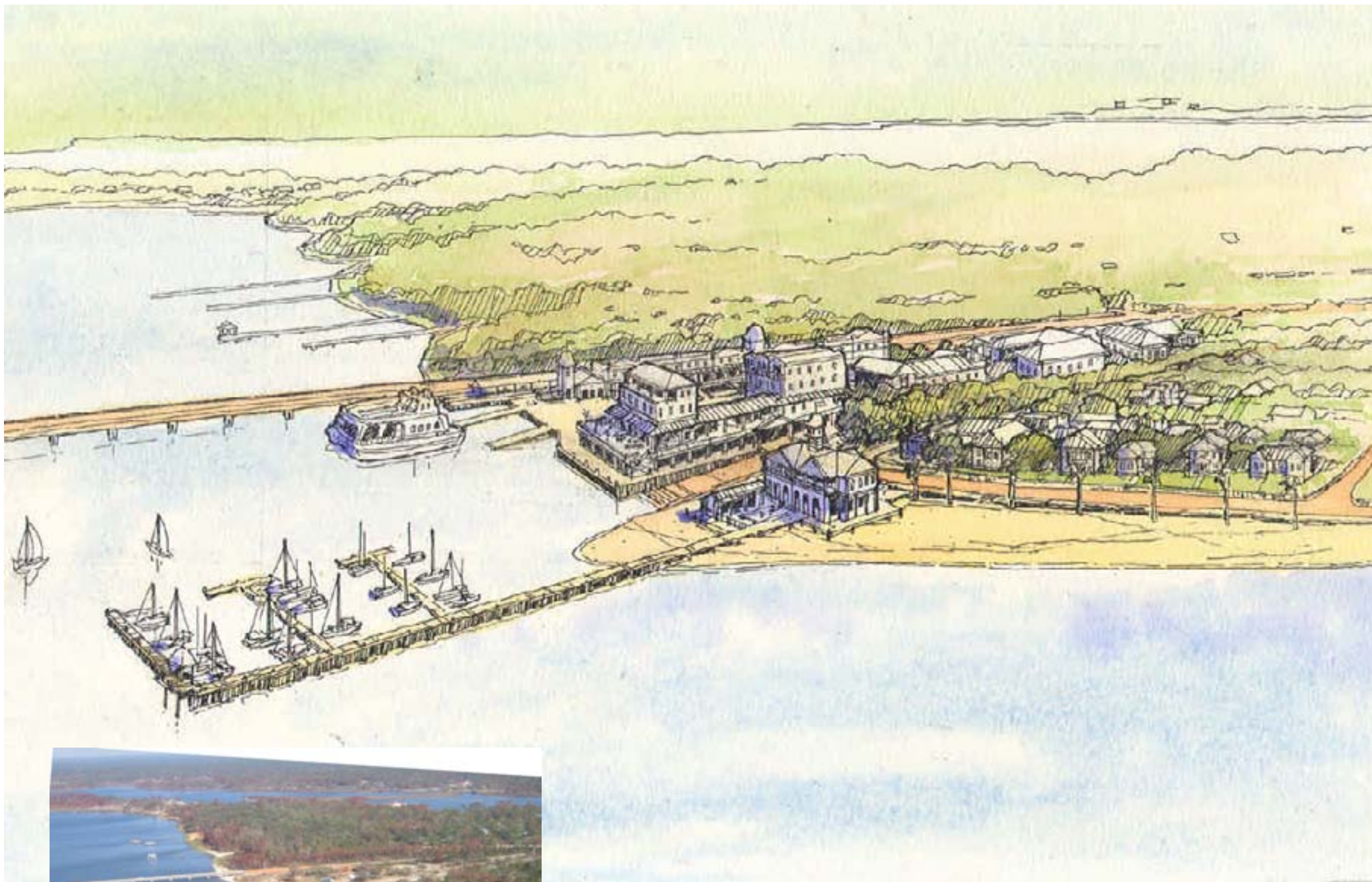
Sites include:
•The West End Landing
•The Ocean Springs Harbor
•The Historic City Center
•The Railroad District
•Bienville Boulevard and points east.

# Near-term Possibilities   Opportunity Sites

The West End Landing, which combines the proposed ferry dock, future passenger rail or trolley stop, the renewed Ocean Springs Yacht Club, and the new Highway 90 bridge. This area should be a landmark collection of mixed use buildings and spaces that form the visible gateway to the City. The concept illustrated assumes that a permanent ferry (or water taxi) will be operated even after the new bridge opens, perhaps connecting to a different point in Biloxi than the bridge. If there is to be no permanent ferry, this dock could be repositioned so as to provide additional access to the public waterfront.

Front Beach & the Ferry   Near-term Possibilities

SECTION @ PERRY LANDING
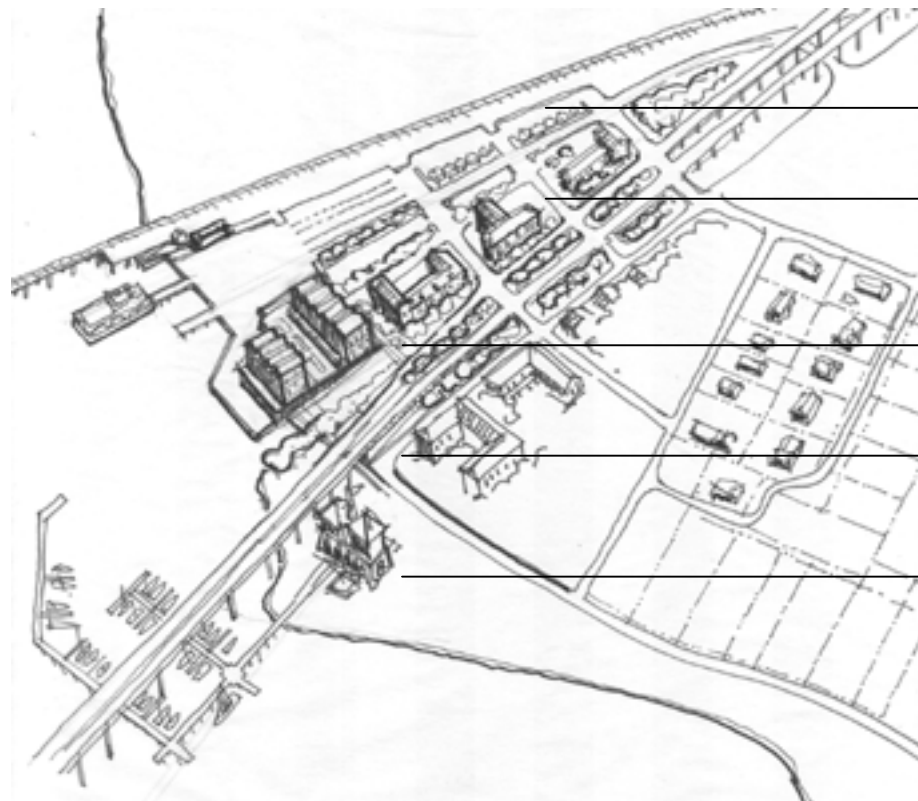
OCEAN SPRINGS
1/16" = 1'-0"
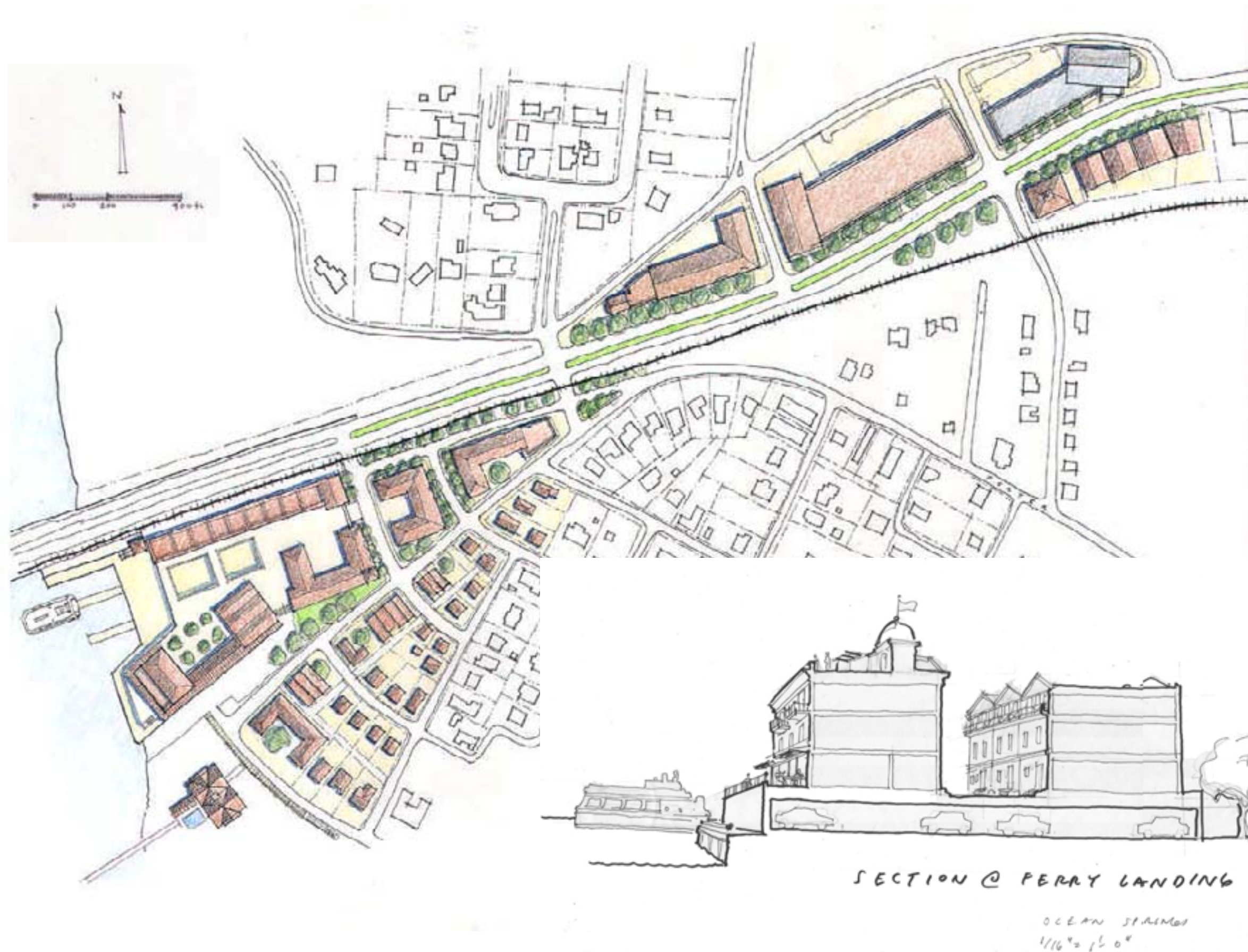
This scenario illustrates the realignment of Hwy 90 to a new bridge that is coupled with the railroad, eliminating the overpass "braid" and resulting in consolidated redevelopment site adjacent to the Ocean Springs Yacht Club and boat basin.

(inset) An early section drawing of Ferry District buildings showing how the parking structure helps to elevate the public buildings putting them out of flood levels.

Front Beach & the Ferry

Near-term Possibilities
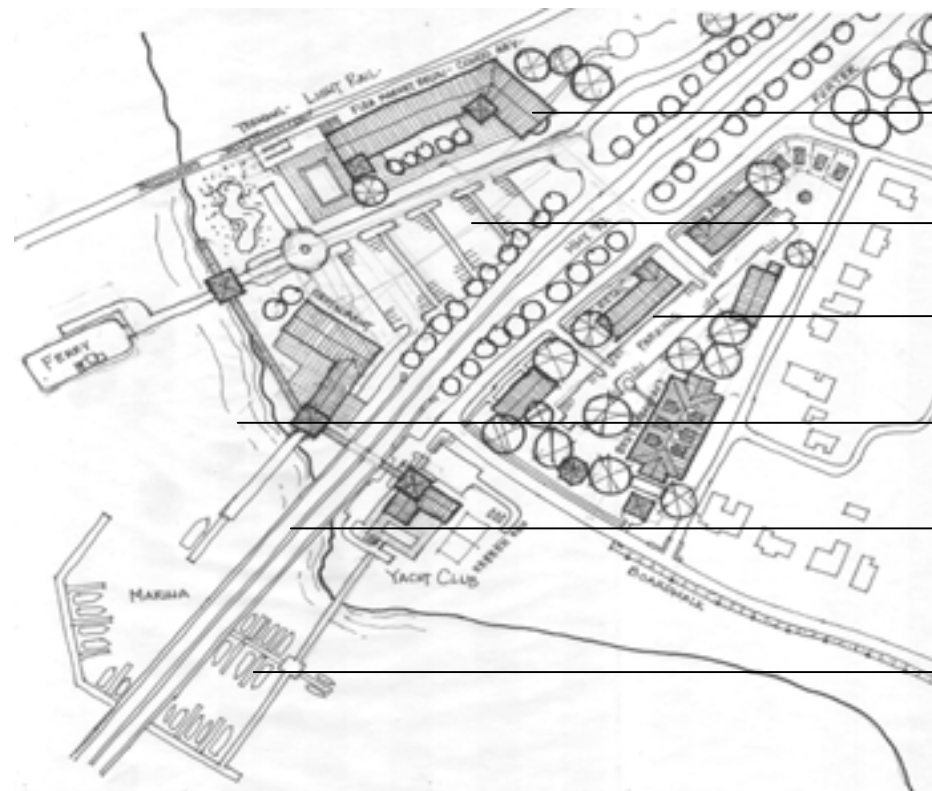
Current CSX Railroad Alignment

A network of small blocks with varied lot sizes and block configurations

West End Landing and Ferry Terminal

Biloxi Bay Bridge (Highway 90)

Ocean Springs Yacht Club

Front Beach Drive

Inter-modal Transit Facility

Commuter Parking Facility

Connected street network supporting a variety of uses and building types

West End Landing and Ferry Terminal

Biloxi Bay Bridge (Highway 90)

Ocean Springs Boat Basin

Two additional alternatives for the West End Landing and ferry terminal. The alternatives show the Biloxi Bay Bridge identified in its current alignment.

The current alignment or the bridge approach creates two triangular wedge shaped parcels. A system of small blocks with varied lot sizes lends itself to many uses and building forms over time. These recyclable address secure that a healthy future for the West End Landing.

Front Beach & the Ferry

Near-term Possibilities

The Ocean Springs Yacht Club, a landmark building features a redesigned facility that is both elevated and expanded so as to provide a suitable entrance feature into town. The yacht club cupola is a major visual element in the landscape when crossing from Biloxi and should be represented well by any new building.

The club as a civic building also anchors the northern end of Front Beach Drive and could offer expanded dining and retail opportunities as well. The physical connection with the West End Landing and ferry terminal also provides a natural connection with civic amenities residents of Ocean Springs are accustomed to.
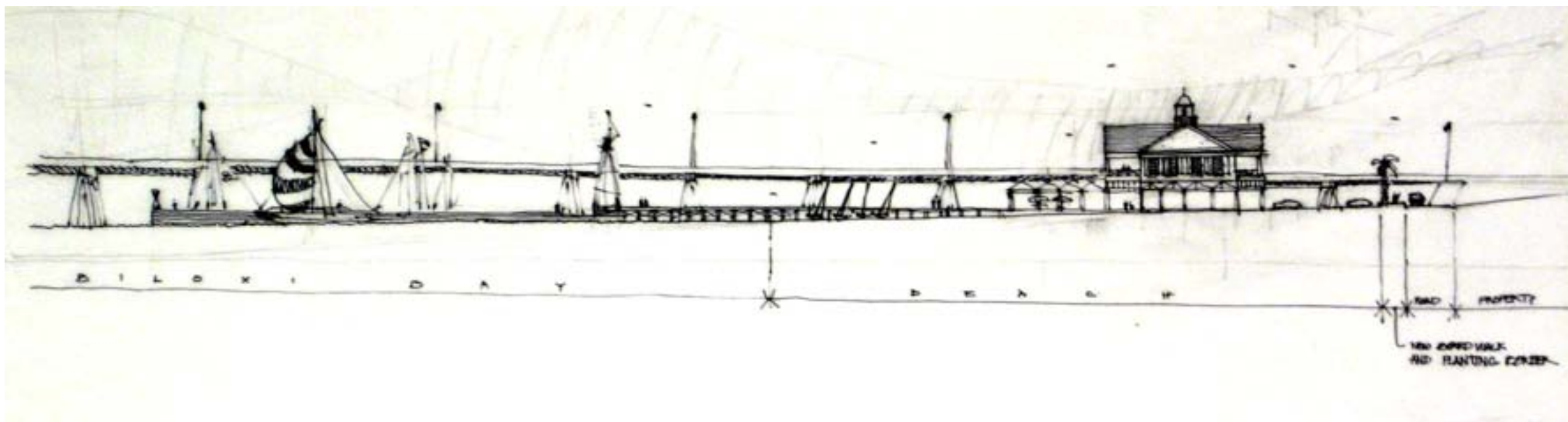
The two diagrams on this page offer alternative approaches to the design. The top drawing illustrates the yacht club as a more subdued facility that would blend into the natural surroundings. Note that the Biloxi Bay Bridge approaches are turned into fishing piers in the drawing/

The lower drawing shows the Yacht Club facility as an expanded and elevated building with a larger yacht basin. The cupola on the roof top will become the basis for the future postcard views of the town.
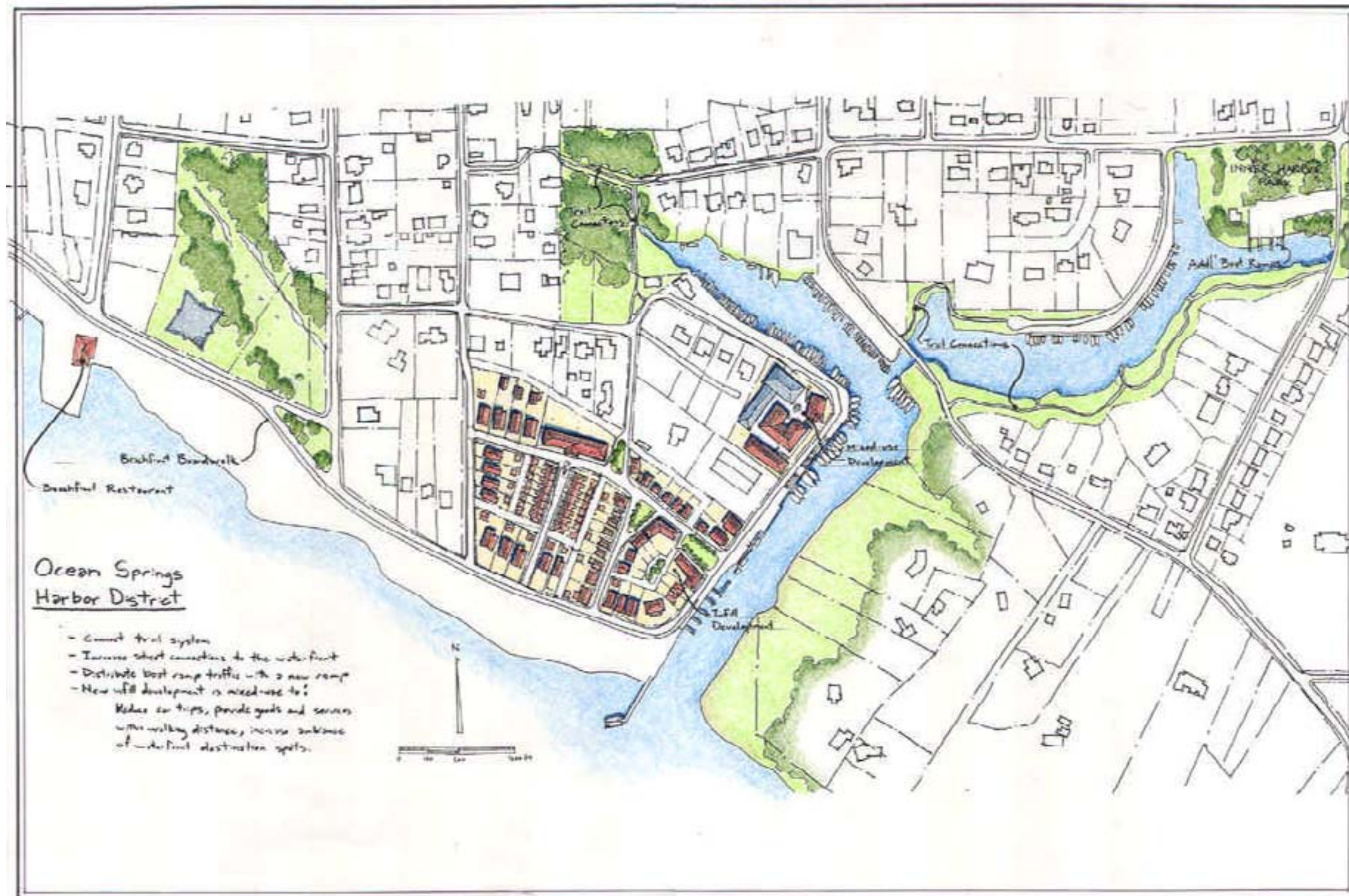
Ocean Springs Yacht Club   Near-term Possibilities

The Harbor

Near-term Possibilities

Ocean Springs
Harbor District

– Connect trail system
– Increase street connections to the waterfront
– Distribute boat ramp traffic with a new ramp
– New infill development is needed now to:
    Reduce car trips, provide goods and services
    within walking distance, increase ambiance
    of waterfront destination spots.

The large blocks in the Harbor area were further subdivided to make room for new infill development designed to open and connect interior lots with the waterfront and views to the Gulf

The Harbor

Near-term Possibilities

New mixed use waterfront buildings above parking

New Waterfront Dining

Shrimp/Fish Market Stands

Improved pedestrian waterfront esplanade

Street oriented pedestrian friendly development with new public open spaces

Providing additional connections to waterfront drive

The Harbor is currently home to a local fishing and shrimping fleet that would benefit from improvements along the waterfront. These improvements include market stands and boating facilities that would strengthen connections to the town.

Detail plan featuring Harbor ward infill development along waterfront

The Harbor

Near-term Possibilities

The Harbor's shrimp market, range of boating facilities and restaurants becomes an integral part of establishing a neighborhood center.

The Harbor

Near-term Possibilities

The Railroad Historic District, just south of the CSX railway should be a model for mixed-income neighborhood regeneration, by encouraging adaptive reuse of historic structures,

infill development of compatible housing on the vacant lots, and insertion of a pattern of new streets & blocks to complete the neighborhood structure. This area should be the subject of intensive, ongoing citizen involvement in the planning decisions.

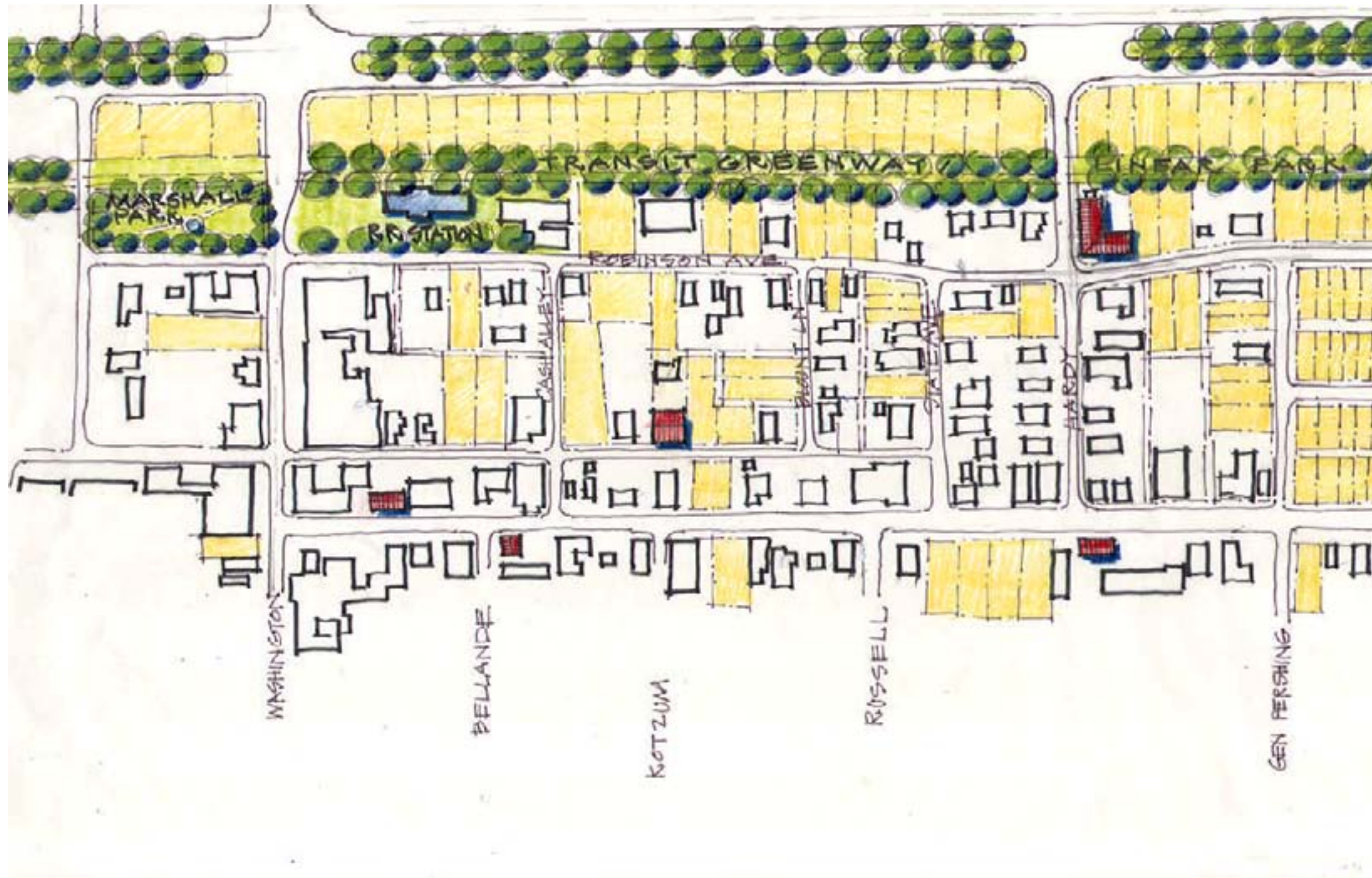# The Railroad District   Near-term Possibilities

Current

Proposed

The illustration at the top of the page represents the current situation in the Railroad District. The illustration below explores how with reconfiguration of certain several streets and large lots, the district could be refit with a neighborhood fabric that supported continued growth and development in the town.

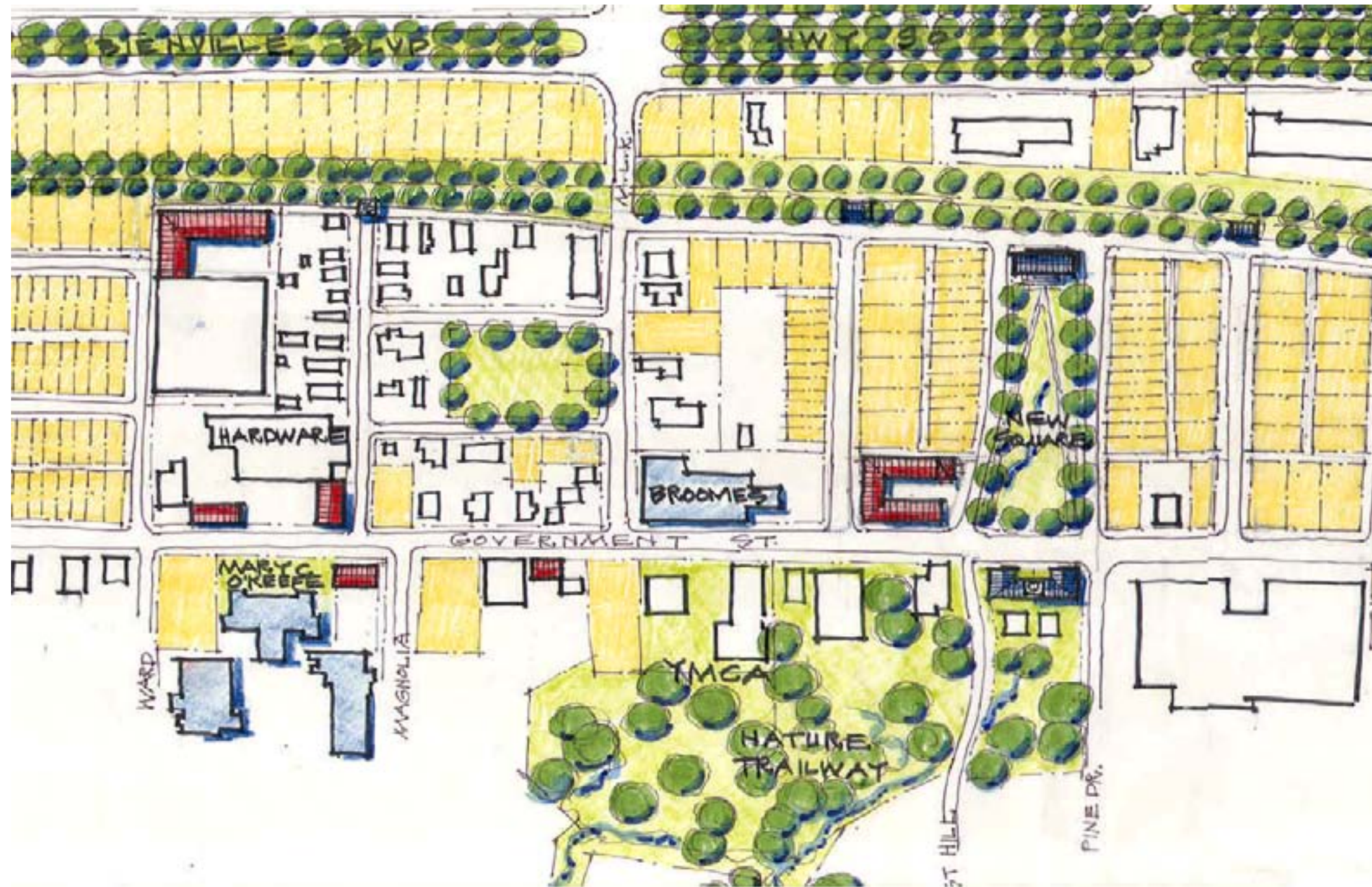# The Railroad District

Near-term Possibilities

The western end of the Railroad Historic District, adjacent to the train depot and to Washington Avenue provides a unique opportunity for incremental infill, in strategic locations.
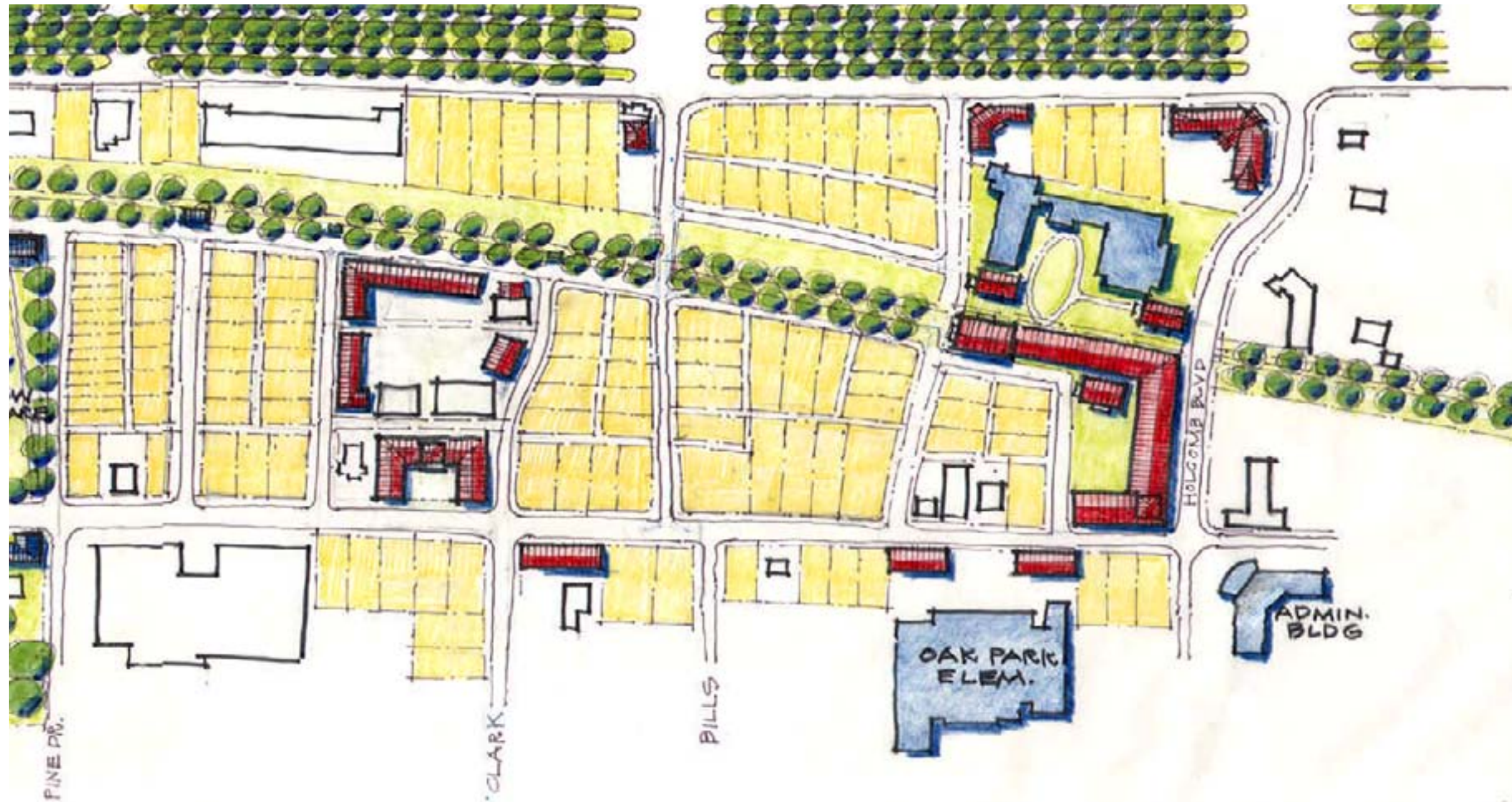
The Railroad District

Near-term Possibilities

The central portion of the Railroad Historic District, around MLK Jr. Avenue and Broomes Grocery provide opportunities for large scale infill and connections to already established parks and a pedestrian network.

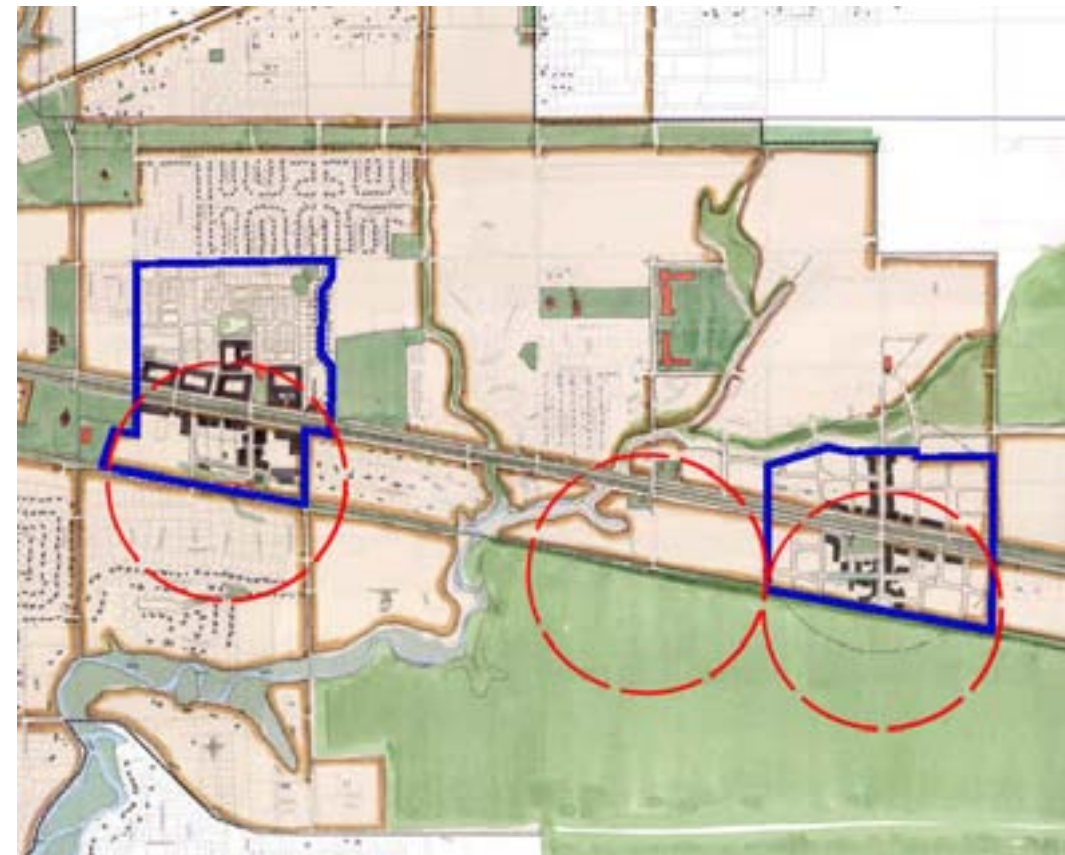# The Railroad District

Near-term Possibilities

The eastern end of the Railroad Historic District, integrates the historic fabric with mixed-income, mixed-use, mixed-density infill development.

The Railroad District

Near-term Possibilities

Bienville Boulevard is the east west spine in Ocean Springs and parallels the CSX rail line. The potential conversion of the rail line into a transit corridor offers an opportunity to look at developing transit ready communities at regular intervals along Bienville Boulevard.

The locations identified within the red ¼ mile circles should serve as centers of neighborhoods and provide a logical location for transit stops, job centers or other community draws.

Bienville Boulevard – Future Transit Oriented Infill
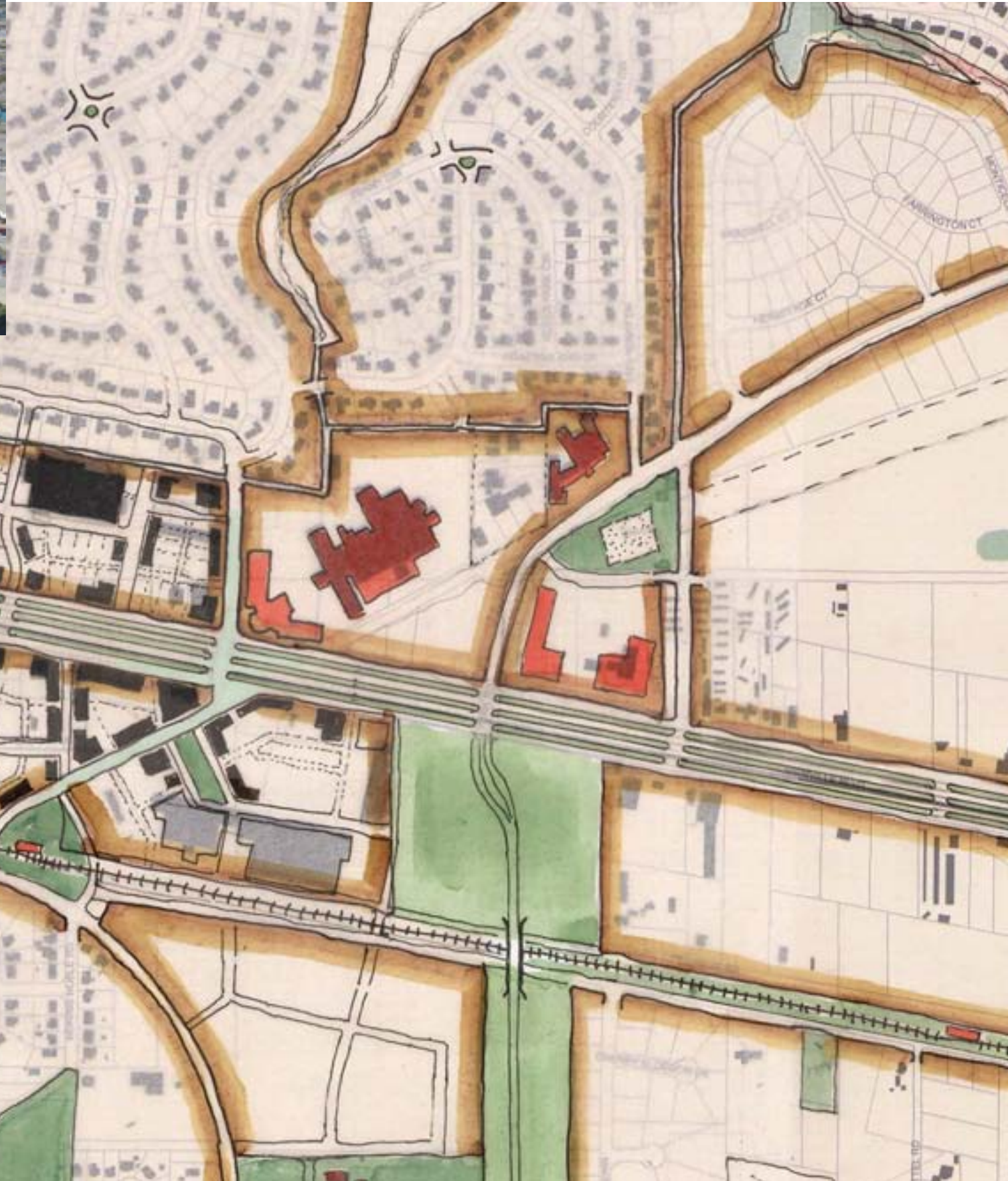
Facilities such as hospitals, educational institutions, or other uses with similar functions and requirements serve as specialized districts often with specific spatial needs. In this illustration the Singing River Hospital is located at a principle intersection on Bienville Boulevard.

The future development around this major employment and service center should be supportive of the facility and the surrounding neighborhoods.

Bienville Boulevard – Singing River Hospital District

Current conditions at the Walmart site.

An early intervention

A mid-cycle intervention.

The Walmart site as a transit oriented development.

The Walmart site on Bienville Boulevard presents the town with an opportunity to explore how a large site can change over time into a transit ready, mixed-use, community.

Bienville Boulevard – Walmart Site
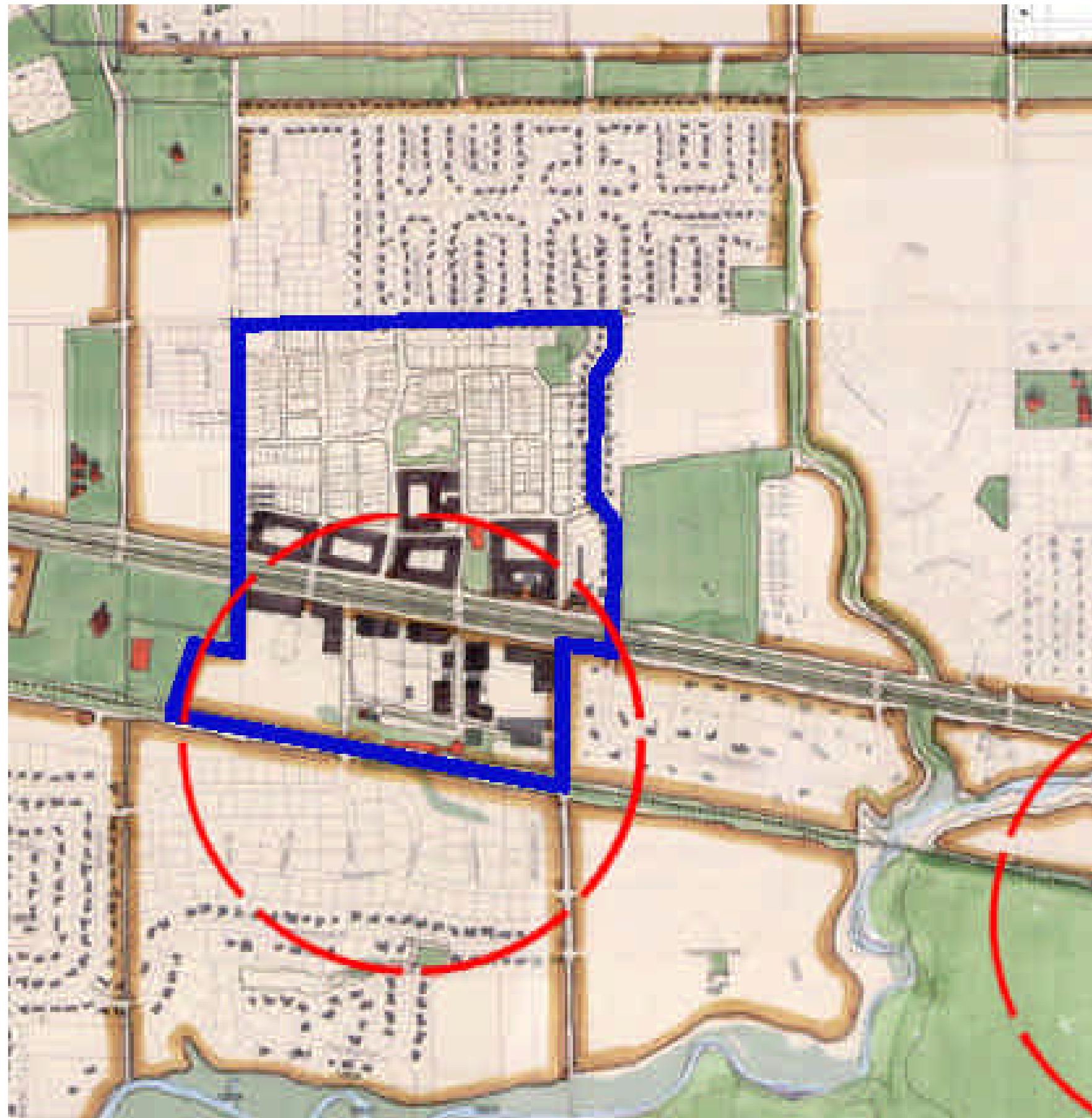
Sites positioned along Bienville Boulevard should be transit ready so that as new infill occurs, new neighborhood and town centers can form without detracting from existing neighborhood and town centers

Bienville Boulevard – Transit Oriented Development

![Mississippi Renewal Forum logo] GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION RECOVERY, REBUILDING, RENEWAL — CNU Congress for the New Urbanism

Ocean Springs

HWY 90 T.O.D.

Large-format anchor stores can still be accommodated, within the structure of blocks and streets

New growth takes the form of traditional neighborhood developments, with conscious protection of wetlands and other special environments, plus transit-oriented development. This sketch was based directly on a block study of Old Ocean Springs.

Bienville Boulevard – Transit Oriented Development
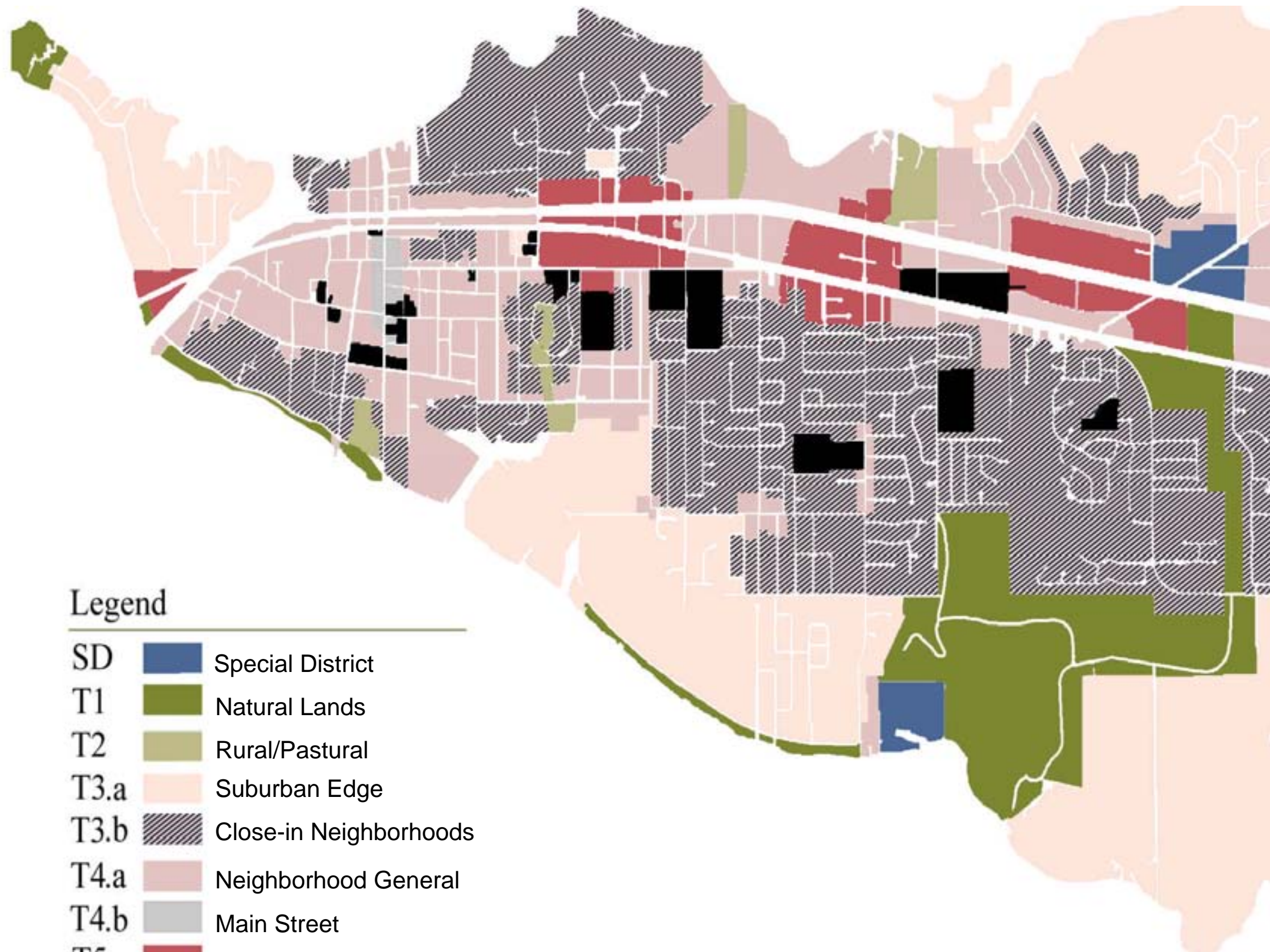
Two new neighborhoods anchor the eastern edge of town. Separated by a large wetland feature, the neighborhoods serve a transit oriented community and a traditional neighborhood.

Bienville Boulevard – East End New Neighborhoods

Legend

SD	▮ (blue)	Special District
T1	▮ (olive)	Natural Lands
T2	▮ (light olive)	Rural/Pastural
T3.a	▮ (light pink)	Suburban Edge
T3.b	▨ (hatched)	Close-in Neighborhoods
T4.a	▮ (pink)	Neighborhood General
T4.b	▮ (gray)	Main Street
T5	▮ (red)	Transit Centers
CS	▮ (black)	Civic Spaces

The Transect provides a tool for both neighborhood design and town building. The transect map serves as a regulating plan for the town indicating the character of growth and development that will occur within the town's boundaries.

Transect Based Regulating Plan
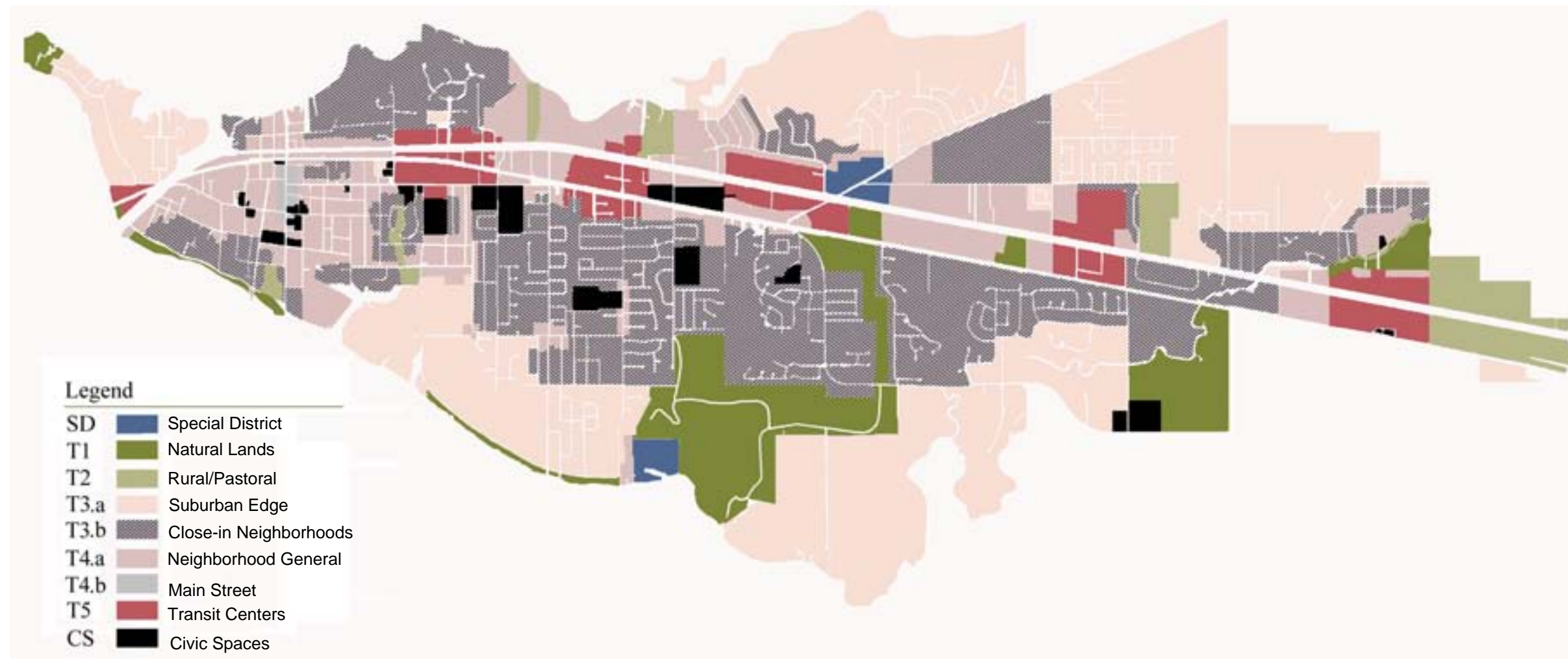
Legend

SD		Special District
T1		Natural Lands
T2		Rural/Pastoral
T3.a		Suburban Edge
T3.b		Close-in Neighborhoods
T4.a		Neighborhood General
T4.b		Main Street
T5		Transit Centers
CS		Civic Spaces

T1 NATURAL
The T1 zone consists of the natural and permanent open space areas within Ocean Springs that are intended for preservation. These include the sand beach along the Gulf, and Old Fort Bayou, Davis Creek, and other wetland or forested areas, including the Gulf Isles National Seashore, parts of the Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge, and Homestead Bayou.

T2 RURAL
The T2 zone consists of areas of Ocean Springs that are of open "country road" character and sparsely settled. These include the eastern portions of the town including that area adjacent to the Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge, and some individual large estate sites.

T3 SUB-URBAN
The T3 zone consists of lower density suburban residential areas north and south of Highway 90. The Sub-Urban Zone is further divided into T3.a and T3.b categories. Blocks are typically large, and some roads are of irregular alignment to accommodate natural conditions.

T3.a Those areas at the edge of natural lands or those locations furthest away from town or neighborhood centers.

T3.b Areas are those neighborhoods that are closer to neighborhood centers, but lack the connectivity to support growth of non-residential components.

T4 GENERAL URBAN
The T4 zone includes both the older, predominantly established residential areas of the Town between the Gulf and Highway 90 and the older neighborhood developed areas north of Highway 90. These areas consist of a primarily residential fabric with a mixture of uses and a good network of streets promoting connectivity. Although the intensity of development is similar in all T4 areas, differences in neighborhood form and character require that the T4 zone be further subdivided into two sub-zones:

T4.a Neighborhood centers are located throughout the Town of Ocean Springs. Neighborhood centers are places that could support restaurants or small scale retail and a broader range of residential dwelling types such as rowhouses, mansion apartments and live/work units. Notable neighborhood centers include the Harbor area, much of the historic district, the Railroad District and some locations along Bienville Boulevard. T4.a reflects traditional neighborhoods with wide variety in lot sizes, ownership patterns, and house sizes, where most buildings are multi-story, and where blocks are of relatively small size.

T4.b Downtown Ocean Springs on Washington Street is categorized as T4.b and limited to the area identified as downtown. Existing walkability can be enhanced, by adding more residential uses along main street above required retail frontages. Height limits support increasing the density in this location and mixed use development is an opportunity that will support growth in the town without compromising historic character.

T5 URBAN CENTER
The T5 zone consists of higher density, mixed-use building types that accommodate retail, offices, rowhouses, and apartments. The T5 zone is applied to two types of areas within the Town with similar intensities of development, but with specific differences in development standards. The T5 zone is intended to have building heights of up to 6 stories, a tight network of streets with wide sidewalks, steady street tree planting, and buildings set close to the street frontages. Urban centers should be transit ready and providing a density that will support growth at the designated urban centers.

T6 URBAN CORE
There is no T6 transect zone in Ocean Springs.

SD SPECIAL DISTRICTS
The SD zone identifies areas of the City where sites with existing specialized uses or unique community character require individualized development standards. The SD zone is applied to the following areas, each of which are intended to have development standards specific to the community's objectives for each.

The Singing River Hospital Facility

The Gulf Isles National Seashore Headquarters Facility Area

Regulating Plan

Strategic Actions: Design, Policy & Management

Adopt a <u>City of Neighborhoods</u> framework:

1. Use the historic Old Ocean Springs development patterns for new growth areas in eastern and northern corridors.
2. Build & maintain walkable, bike-able, interconnected streets citywide.
3. Reserve special sites for civic buildings and community landmarks in each neighborhood.
4. Reinforce a community-wide pattern of human-scaled neighborhood schools, located within short (preferably walkable) travel distances of each neighborhood.
5. Continue to protect and enhance historic Old Ocean Springs and its environs

Adopt <u>specific design plans</u> for new development in special places, including:

1. Ocean Springs Harbor;
2. West End Landing and Front Beach;
3. Railroad Historic District;
4. Singing River Hospital;
5. Transit-Oriented Developments:
   • East End main street area;
   • along Bienville Boulevard;
6. Berlin property ("100 Acre Wood").

Promote <u>incremental infill</u> in existing neighborhoods, particularly the close-in neighborhoods near Old Ocean Springs:

1. Identify vacant and underutilized land within town growth areas; promote these development opportunities to developers who specialize in traditional neighborhood development.
2. Pre-approve building designs that support the community character—make it easy to develop the right thing.
3. Support mixed-use development with public parking, shared parking, and all available incentives.

Evolve the Highway 90 "strip" into a mature <u>urban boulevard</u>:

1. Require street-oriented buildings, with no blank walls facing the boulevard.
2. Focus mixed-use development around future transit stops. Form transit-ready locations by coupling employment centers (such as the hospital) with new housing, supportive retail, and entertainment.
3. Establish a pattern of parallel local roads and multiple points of interconnection, to conserve capacity on Highway 90.
4. Convert the highway-and-frontage road pattern to a classic urban multi-way boulevard, with tree lines, slow lanes, and parking. Alternatively, reconfigure Highway 90 with fewer lanes, more trees, and restored onstreet parking.

Adopt a <u>Green City</u> framework:

1. Preserve, extend and connect green edges, bayou & marsh fingers, and parklands.
2. Establish small, carefully located, highly-maintained squares as neighborhood centers.

Strategic Actions: Design

Overhaul the land development <u>regulations</u>:

1. Employ a "form-based code" approach (see www.formbasedcodes.org).
2. Alter policies that do not support design goals in the community vision (e.g. lot sizes, building heights, density, prohibitions on mixed uses, setbacks, parking requirements, etc.).
3. Establish standard practices for development in key growth areas and pre-approve projects following the standards.

Ensure <u>affordable housing</u> & affordable commerce:

1. Small businesses following standards and guidelines established by the City should be pre-approved.
2. Encourage compact development (higher density), live/work combinations, and residential above retail.
3. Permit accessory dwelling units and accessory offices citywide.
4. Introduce classic rowhouses to the housing mix, enabling single-family attached homes to complement the predominant detached homes.

Create a "<u>park-once</u> environment":

1. Cluster complementary uses on pedestrian friendly streets to support walkable commerce and reduce demand for motoring.

Cultivate continuous, design-focused <u>public participation</u>:

1. Develop detailed plans for special places using the "charrette" method.
2. Require planning consultants to conduct events according to standards set forth by the National Charrette Institute (see www.charretteinstitute.org)

Strategic Actions: Policy

Provide leadership <u>training</u>:

1. Send elected officials, planning commissioners, local developers, designers and city staff to educational events on the subjects of:
   - Public Participation (www.charretteinstitute.org);
   - New Urbanism (www.cnu.org);
   - Form-Based Codes (FBCI, www.formbasedcodes.org);
   - Green Building (www.usgbc.org) and
   - Livable Streets (Seaside Institute, www.seasideinstitute.org).

Provide <u>staffing</u> to implement the plan:

1. Create a Town Architect or Supervising Designer position within the City, to work with applicants on refining designs to comply with the form-based code and the plan vision.
2. Create a City Arborist position, responsible for the city's historic and new tree canopy, and empower this person to supervise the ongoing design and maintenance of the street tree network.

Strategic Actions: Management