

CRYSTAL RIVER COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY

# A VISIONING PLAN FOR THE DOWNTOWN

DRAFT PLAN APRIL 22, 2008



# Community Redevelopment Agency

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A special thank you to Mr. Howard Troxtell who supplied some of the aerial photographs for this project.and to the Citrus County Appraiser 's Office for creating the base aerial for our use.



## **THE VISION STATEMENT FOR THIS PLAN**

**Crystal River is a unique, small town with an old Florida feel that has a rich legacy of early 20th Century architecture and friendly, welcoming people living in a lush, natural waterfront setting.**

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# INTRODUCTION

## PURPOSE

MyTown Team Consulting Inc., is pleased to present this plan to the Crystal River Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA). This report represents our findings, recommendations, and summary of the project. The purpose of the plan was to identify constraints and opportunities for the “downtown area” that were of importance to the local business community, residents, the City, and the CRA. The plan includes a review of the area and recommendations regarding specific issues that will produce positive change. An extensive community input effort was made to allow a broad spectrum of residents, visitors, officials, and businesses to participate. The results of this input were used to identify recommended projects.

We appreciate the opportunity to work with the CRA. This project appeared to be well received by the community and we would like to thank the large number that participated as volunteers or responded to the questionnaires and interviews.

Our results confirm our initial observations. Crystal River has beautiful and plentiful natural assets, a rich history, and has benefited from previous projects that were designed to improve the appearance and vitality of the area. We are convinced that with a few additional projects, Crystal River will continue to develop as an historic waterfront community that will attract people that enjoy “Old Florida”. The availability of vacant sites, preservation of key historic buildings, and the beautiful settings of the parks and waterfront, will continue to bring people to Crystal River.



## BRIEF HISTORY OF CRYSTAL RIVER

Crystal River began over 100 years ago as a small waterfront community built by a rich cedar harvesting industry and pencil mill. By the 1920 's a small main street existed on Citrus Avenue, south of US 19 serving the needs of a number of quaint neighborhoods surrounding the immediate area and outlying rural homesteads. Prior to WWII, Crystal River was discovered as sport fishing paradise promoted by the likes of Dazzy Vance and Babe Ruth. Significant growth began in the community in the 60 's ,70 's and 80 's, with the construction of the Florida Power plant and the continued popularity of US 19 as a major north south artery. With this growth came new retail and commercial opportunities, not located within the downtown but along US 19. This growth also saw the expansion and widening of US 19. The early 20th century neighborhoods surrounding the tiny downtown also fell from favor as new suburban style neighborhoods were created in outlying regions and



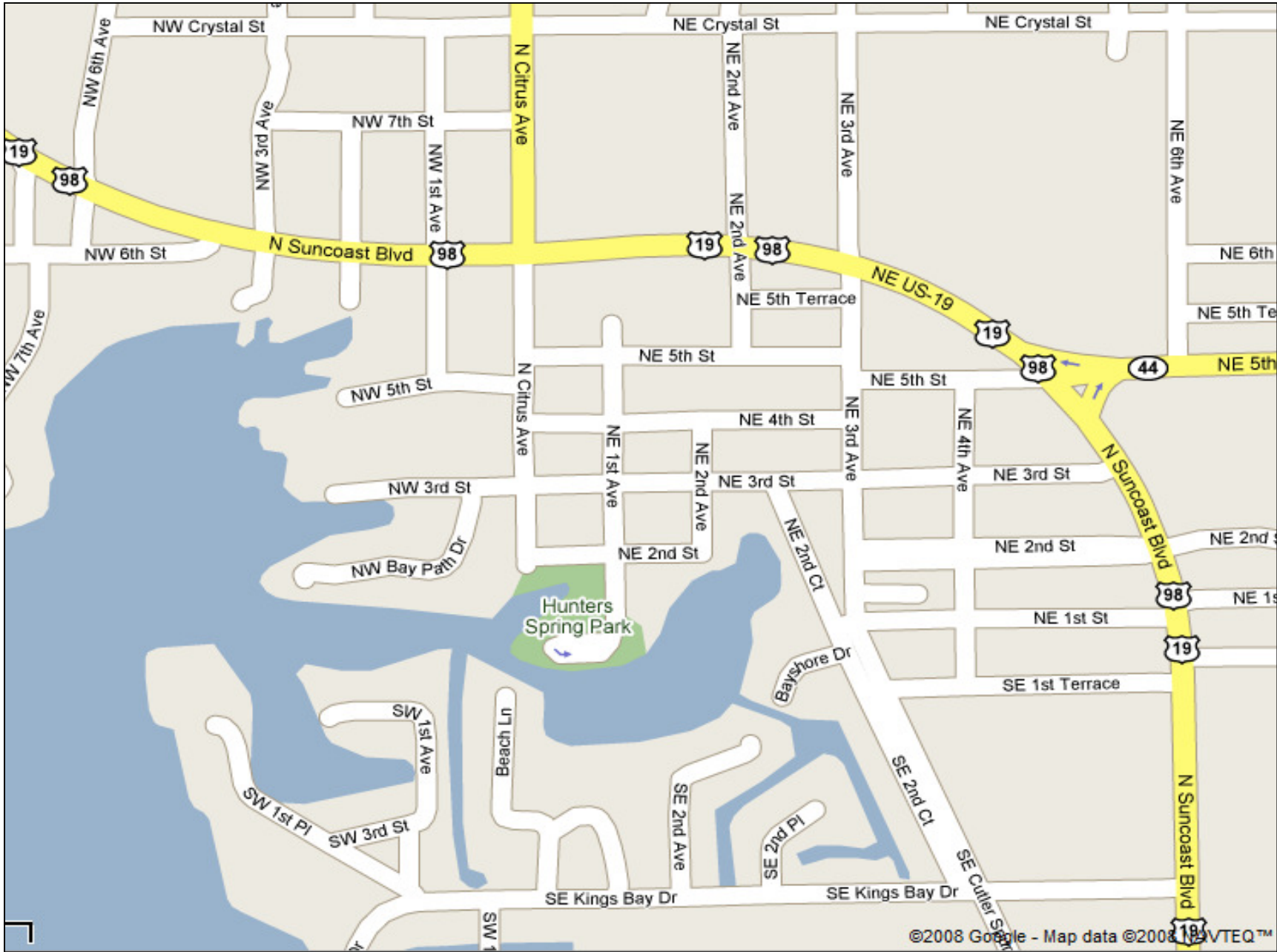
# THE STUDY AREA

The study area was not specifically identified at the beginning of the process because no “common” definition of downtown existed. As part of the community input process the questionnaires asked the public to identify the “downtown area”. This aerial covers the largest area of the suggested boundaries. The most frequently referenced downtown area was Citrus Avenue running from 3rd Street to Crystal Street. We expanded the boundaries from SE Kings Bay Drive to the Best Western Hotel to feature all the assets of downtown Crystal River.





# THE STUDY AREA



# COMMUNITY INPUT

## QUESTIONNAIRES, SURVEYS, ONLINE AND OPEN HOUSES

This project was designed to solicit as much community input as possible. The CRA concurred with our design to seek input in five ways. **First**, brainstorming with the CRA itself. This was done in several workshop style meetings early in the process and, we reviewed all the previous materials created by the CRA. **Second**, the CRA helped us identify key stakeholders in the community that we would personally interview. **Third**, the Manatee Festival provided an opportunity to get input from people living outside of Crystal River that were visiting for the festival. **Fourth**, we held four open houses where anyone could drop in and see materials related to the project, ask questions, fill out a questionnaire or provide comments. **Finally**, we used online surveys mentioned in media releases and on the City's website.

The results were very successful. The consultants, CRA volunteers, and staff made contact with over 700 people that recorded their responses and many more that simply asked questions. The consultants personally interviewed 38 stakeholders, 577 people were questioned at the Manatee Festival, 19 online surveys were gathered, and more than 70 people visited the open houses. While there was some overlap between participation in the methods of input, it was an insignificant number.

**Community Survey**  
**1. Questionnaire for Festival**  
 These questions will be asked the day of the Manatee Festival.  
 1. How often do you visit downtown Crystal River each year?  
 once  weekly  
 1-5 times  monthly  
 5-10  every day  
 10-20  only for events  
 Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_  
 2. What are the best features of downtown Crystal River?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 3. What would you like to see improved or added in downtown Crystal River?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 4. What impact does US 19 have on the downtown?  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Festival Questionnaire

**Crystal River CRA - User Survey**  
**1. Survey for Crystal River CRA**  
 The Crystal River Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) is asking for your comments on developing the downtown area. What kind of improvements would you like to see? What stores or activities would attract you to this area? What do you consider the downtown area? Your answers to these questions will help create the future plans for this area. Thank you for participating.  
 1. Where do you think the boundaries of downtown Crystal River are?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 2. Many people consider the area around Citrus Avenue to be the heart of the downtown area. How often do you shop the stores on Citrus Avenue in Crystal River?  
 Once a year  
 2-10 times a year  
 Once a month  
 Once a week  
 More than once a week  
 Never  
 Don't know where Citrus Avenue is in Crystal River  
 3. If you have not visited downtown Crystal River, why not?  
 I don't know where it is?  
 I don't like the shops that are there?  
 There is no parking?  
 I don't know what is in downtown?  
 Not too close?  
 Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Citizen Questionnaire

**Interview Questions for Stakeholders**  
**1. Survey for Crystal River CRA**  
 The Crystal River Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) is asking for your comments on developing the downtown area. What kind of improvements would you like to see? What stores or activities would attract you to this area? What do you consider the downtown area? Your answers to these questions will help create the future plans for this area. Thank you for participating.  
 1. Where do you think the boundaries of downtown Crystal River are?  
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 2. How often do you shop the stores in downtown Crystal River?  
 Once a year  
 2-10 times a year  
 Once a month  
 Once a week  
 More than once a week  
 Never  
 Don't know where Citrus Avenue is in Crystal River

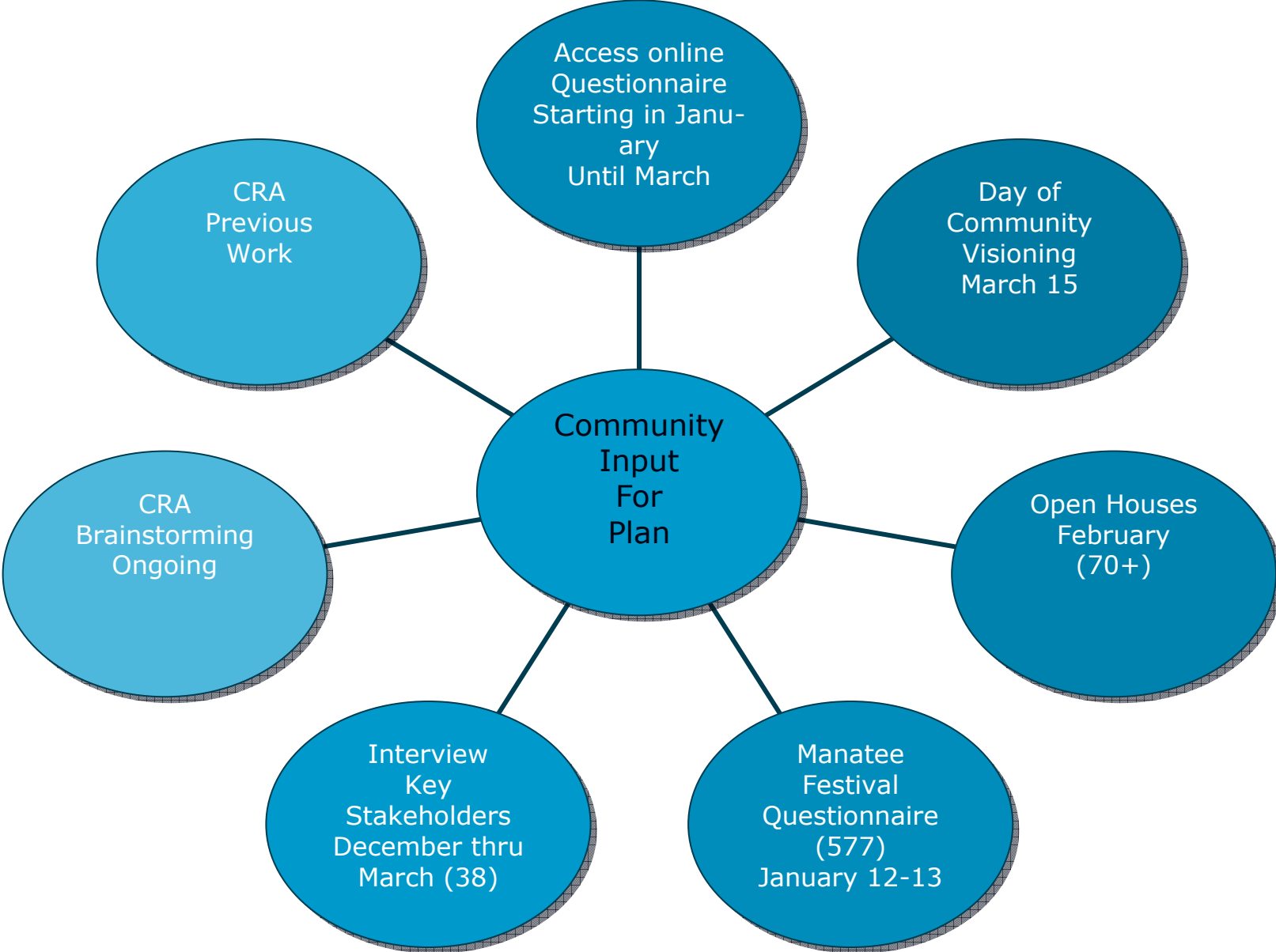
Stakeholder Questionnaire

**Crystal River Business**  
**1. Business and Property Owner Survey**  
 1. What type of business do you operate in the downtown?  
 Retail  Institutional  
 Restaurant  Public  
 Service  Residential and business  
 Professional  
 Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_  
 2. Do you own or rent property in the Crystal River CRA area?  
 Own  
 Rent  
 3. How long have you been in business at this location?  
 Less than 1 year  1 to 5 years  
 5 to 10 years  10 or more years  
 4. What is the most important way that you promote your business to attract customers?  
 Newspaper advertisement  Window displays  
 Direct mail  Outdoor advertisements  
 Radio  Television  
 Sign on the building  Internet  
 Group promotion  Word of mouth  
 Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_  
 5. Please estimate the percent of your customers that are from the following?  
 Neighboring cities (within the downtown) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Nearby counties \_\_\_\_\_  
 Local neighborhood shoppers (within Crystal River) \_\_\_\_\_  
 From the County but outside City \_\_\_\_\_  
 Tourists \_\_\_\_\_

Business Operator Questionnaire



# THE COMMUNITY INPUT PROCESS MODEL



# RESULTS OF THE COMMUNITY INPUT

## THE MANATEE FESTIVAL

The Manatee Festival was held on January 12-13, 2008. A questionnaire was specifically created for the festival. It only contained five questions because we knew people would not want to participate in a lengthy series of questions. The CRA gave out small manatee dolls as an incentive. It was a great success and 577 questionnaires were completed. Two locations were set up on opposite ends of the festival.



The tent display on the north end was located near the food area and close to parking and many other vendors, including Heritage Village.



The display on the south end was in the Yeoman house, in Kings Bay Park. This location caught people going on boat tours, listening to music and headed to the beer tent.



# RESULTS OF THE COMMUNITY INPUT

## THE MANATEE FESTIVAL RESULTS

### What would you like to see improved or added to Downtown?

The festival attracted results from 577 participants. The following tables describe the results. Five questions were asked of all participants, however not everyone answered all five questions. The priority was to ask each person, “What would you like to see improved or added to Downtown?.” The most frequently mentioned response was to complete the Riverwalk and/or improve access to the water. The Riverwalk project was seen as the best way to improve that access. The second most frequent improvement was to maintain and preserve the old buildings and/or clean them up. Participants frequently cited the attractiveness of the older building (like Heritage Village ) and how they gave the City a “quaint ” feel. More restaurants and bars was third. Better signage and marketing information was suggested to identify the parks, restaurants, and shops of the City.

How often do you visit Downtown?		
	Festival ( 489 )	Stakeholders ( 95 )
Once	13.5%	4.2%
1-5 times/year	19.6	12.6
5-10	4.5	18.9
10-20	4.3	13.7
Weekly	25.8	26.3
Monthly	14.1	18.9
Daily	11	5.3
Only for events	7.2	0

### How often do you Visit?

A large percentage of people participating came from outside of the City. Consequently, when asked how often they visited the Downtown at the Festival 40.3% said they visit less than 5 times per year. Another 8.8% only visit 5 to 20 times per year. Of the stakeholders interviewed, all of which live or have a business in Crystal River, 40% only come downtown between 1-20 times/year. That signifies that the downtown is not even frequented by people living and working in Crystal River on a regular basis.

### What are the Best features of downtown?

When asked what are the “Best ” features of downtown, —“quaint ” and “small town feel ” were the predominant phrases. Cited nearly as frequently, was “ waterfront and nature ”. Crystal River is well known for access to natural areas that allow viewing of manatees, springs, boating, and other eco-tourist activities. The references to “cute shops ”, “Heritage Village ”, and the “restaurants that are located in the older buildings ” reinforce the importance of the existing buildings in defining the character of the downtown area.

What would you like to see improved or added to Downtown? ( 994 comments )	
Riverwalk/Improve accessibility to water	15.1%
Maintain—preserve old buildings/cleanup	13.6%
More Restaurants/Bars	7.5%
Better Wayfinding Signage/ Info Marketing	7.2%
More Shopping	6.3%
Marina/Mooring Field	4.5%

What are the “Best ” features of Downtown? ( 659 )	
Quaint, small town feel	29.0%
Waterfront/Nature	25.8
Cute shops ( quaint )	15.3
Heritage Village	7.4
Restaurants	6.5
People	4.6

# RESULTS OF THE COMMUNITY INPUT

## THE MANATEE FESTIVAL

### What impact does US 19 have on Downtown?

This question received an unusual response. We generally expected negative comments from the vast majority based on our preliminary discussions with stakeholders and the Board. And, the majority of responders did say it was difficult to cross US 19 and the high volumes and speeds made it a barrier to uniting the north and south sides of the City along Citrus Avenue. However, a large number of people said that US 19 was not a problem and, in fact, made it convenient for them to get to Crystal River and the downtown area and events in particular. Of the people who mentioned the overpass, 3 to 1 said to build the pedestrian/bicycle overpass to provide a safe crossing of the highway. A small percentage of people identified the need to cleanup the appearance of US 19.

What impact does US 19 have on Downtown? ( 504 )	
Difficult to cross and high volume	38%
No problem, good access	31
Build pedestrian/bike overpass	12
Do not build overpass	4
Needs Cleanup	3

Would you like to see more Events? Overwhelmingly yes ( 517 )	
Music	30%
Arts/crafts	19
Nature Educational	17
Food ( seafood )	15
Farmers Market	11
Sports ( fishing or water oriented )	6

### Would you like to see more Events?

Nearly everyone that was asked this question said yes, they would like to see more events in Crystal River. Of course, the question was asked at an event so the people attending are supportive of events anyway. However, nearly everyone said they would attend more of them. The most frequently requested type of event suggested was music. Ideas included concerts in the parks, on the street, etc. Arts and crafts festivals and Nature and educational followed in their respective order. Food festivals ( seafood was most frequently mentioned ) and Farmers Market ( food oriented ) were also cited. Of course, all of these events could be combined in different formats. For example, food, arts and crafts, nature and educational could all be combined into one.

## STAKEHOLDERS QUESTIONNAIRES

Stakeholders were defined by the CRA Board as people who have businesses, elected officials, City officials, or people who have been in the community for a long time. Stakeholders were to be interviewed personally one on one. We added the participants of the open houses to this category because they were predominantly residents or seasonal visitors that have lived or visited Crystal River for many years. In addition, many business owners and long term residents came to the open houses. Thirty eight personal interviews were conducted and over 70 people attended the open houses and filled out questionnaires or answered questions.

# RESULTS OF THE COMMUNITY INPUT

## THE STAKEHOLDER RESULTS

### Where do you think Downtown is located?

One of the original tasks of this study was to help define the boundaries of the downtown area. The survey responses from the stakeholders make it clear there is not a consensus of where that is. Over 28% were not sure or did not provide a response. Citrus Avenue from 3rd St to Crystal Street was the most frequently cited but only by 20%. Almost 17% said the entire CRA area and almost 14% included the area from the intersection of 44 and US 19 to the Best Western. Citrus Avenue is the obvious center of the downtown area and the most frequent reference point. It is clear that whatever boundaries the CRA chooses to affirm as downtown a consistent marketing, signage, and information program will be necessary, to overcome the lack of a defined “downtown”.

Where do you think Downtown is located?	
Not sure/no response	28.1%
Citrus only—3rd to Crystal	19.8
CRA area	16.7
Citrus/US 19 from 44 to Best Western	13.5
US 19—Mall to Fort Island	9.4
Other	12.5

Rate the Following Characteristics of the Downtown				
Item	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Parking	4.8%	35.7%	35.7%	23.8%
Safety	20.0	51.3	27.5	1.3
Lighting	20.2	61.8	13.5	4.5
Store Type	2.4	32.1	47.6	17.9
Number of stores	3.8	26.6	51.9	17.7
Waterfront connection	8.6	32.1	27.2	32.1
Type of offices	1.4	45.9	43.2	9.5
Park connections	7.7	38.5	32.1	21.8
Sidewalks	12.2	41.5	35.4	11.0
Appearance of stores	8.6	42.0	35.8	13.6
Appearance of streets	7.3	51.2	31.7	9.8
Appearance of landscaping	4.8	37.3	37.3	20.5

### Rate the following Characteristics.

The interviews and surveys asked people to rate the most visible characteristics of the CRA area on a scale of excellent to poor. Several items stood out in the rankings. Parking was cited as fair to poor by 59.5% of the responders. Most simply stated more was needed. (This discussion will continue in a later section.) Safety, lighting, sidewalks, and the appearance of stores and streets received over 50% rating them excellent to good. Negative perceptions (defined as over 50% classifying the item as fair to poor) included store type, number of stores, connection to the waterfront, types of offices, connections to parks and the appearance of the landscaping. These are items that can be immediately worked on.

The landscaping in particular is a quick item to repair. Most people mentioned they like the landscaping and would like to see more. However, many of the plants are stressed and in poor condition because they were not adequately maintained. Many of the trees should simply be replaced with better material. It is more difficult to improve the number and types of stores but a successful program to recruit and retain new businesses with a merchants association will help.

# RESULTS OF THE COMMUNITY INPUT

## What Identity or Image would you like Crystal River to have?

This question was designed to elicit ideas about growth and development. What image should the City plan for as development occurs. Although the table shows a spread of responses many can be combined because of their similarity. For example, we repeatedly heard “waterfront and historic”. But that is also how the “Old Florida” theme was described, as well as, the “Boat/Fishing Village”. Cracker Style describes the architecture of the historic, old buildings. The commonality of these descriptions is an historic, waterfront community that will maintain its heritage. New development should feed off that theme. The nuances of the differences were more related to the person answering the question and how familiar they were with architecture and their travel to other cities in Florida or along the coast.

What Identity or Image would you Like Crystal River to have?	
Not sure/no response	17.9%
Waterfront	13.2
Historic	13.2
Old Florida	10.4
Boat/Fishing Village	10.4
Cracker Style	6.6
Other	28.3

What other kinds of Stores would you like to see?	
Waterfront, adventure, outdoor	16.2%
Restaurants/Specialty foods	15.0
Coffee shops	8.3
Bookstore	8.0
Clothing	6.5
Antiques	5.1
Music	5.1
Art	5.1
Bars	3.6

## If you brought a friend to Crystal River where is the one place you would take them?

This question was designed to get at how the stakeholders define Crystal River. That is, what is the first thing you think of to entertain guests. Clearly the association of the water to the identity of the City was reinforced and strengthens the importance of the waterfront connection to the image and marketing of Crystal River. The percentage mentioning waterfront restaurants (as opposed to the other restaurants) also confirms that. The number mentioning Heritage Village strengthens the historic, old building image that was frequently mentioned above.

If you brought a friend where is the one place you would take them?	
Water (Kings Bay, Hunters Spring, Kayak, or boat)	49.4%
Heritage Village	15.7
Waterfront Restaurants	12.4
Other	10.1

## What other kinds of Stores?

The waterfront village theme and the predominance of where people would take a first time visitor supports the answers to what kind of stores would you like to see. Waterfront, adventure, and outdoor stores were combined because they are so similar and can support the same merchandise. Restaurants were frequently mentioned because they attract more people to the area.

# RESULTS OF THE COMMUNITY INPUT

**What other type of activities would you like to see in downtown?**

The most frequently mentioned activity in response to this question was concerts. This is generally consistent with personal interviews and questionnaire results from all categories. The type of music was mixed but many made reference to local talent and simply providing a venue for people to enjoy the outdoors for a reason. The parks were cited as well as the idea of using a downtown street. This is an opportunity to pull people to the downtown for one reason (music or festivals) and keep the businesses open past 5 o'clock on evenings and weekends. The second most frequent activity was to have more festivals. The success of the Manatee Festival in drawing people could be replicated with other types of festival, especially if they became consistent. A Farmers Market was mentioned third and is an activity that many small communities are staging on a regular basis (combined frequently with some arts and crafts and entertainment). It can be provided on a weekly or monthly basis but should be in a convenient and consistent location.

**What kind of improvements would you like to see?**

When asked this question, most respondents referred to the existing projects of the sidewalks, landscaping etc. so these responses were combined. They all fall under the heading of streetscape improvements and they should not be isolated but considered as a package. Utilities refers to the desire to remove the "utility blight" of overhead lines on Citrus Ave. While it is expensive to bury the lines, it is not as expensive to move them a block away from the featured street. The most common caveat to these improvements was that they "must be maintained". We concur the current projects are in need of renewal with plant material, maintenance, and consistency.

**The CRA projects currently being considered?**

The CRA Board asked us to get feedback on two projects that have been discussed previously: the parking changes to Citrus and the Riverwalk project. There was overwhelming support for both projects however we used photographs to explain what they were since not everyone was familiar with them. This is important for future projects. In the future such projects should begin with a visual concept that is widely distributed and announced to garner support. Most of the businesses along Citrus Avenue had not seen the concept plan, but were supportive when shown. However, many of the details of the impacts on specific businesses would have to be worked out i.e., deliveries. The Riverwalk was the most popular project for awareness and support. It is clearly well known and liked, however, few knew the status of the project and what was next. Given the popularity of this project we would suggest immediately pursuing solutions to continuing the project and creating a quarterly status report on the progress. This kind of reporting on the website would be useful for all the activities of the CRA.

What type of activities?	
Concerts	29.3%
Festivals	25.6
Farmers Market	12.2
Other	32.9

What kind of improvements?	
Brick sidewalk, landscaping, lighting, consistency, utilities, trees.	27%
Pedestrian overpass	15.5
Parking	11.3
Signage	9.9
Boat/Water access	5.5

Support for CRA Projects?		
	Yes	No
Do you support the proposed parking/streetscape project for Citrus Ave? ( 83 )	93%	7%
Do you support the Riverwalk Project? ( 86 )	94%	6%



# RESULTS OF THE COMMUNITY INPUT

## THE DAY OF VISIONING

On March 15, 2008, a full day of visioning occurred at the Crystal River City hall. Forty-five people participated in the 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM work day. A full presentation was made on the results of the citizen input and the consultant's findings completed up to that time. The consultant team identified four subject areas for the attendees to work on. These areas included: image and marketing, enhancing the downtown 's appearance, transportation and walkability, and connections to the waterfront and parks.

One of the first activities of the day was to develop a 'VISION" statement for the downtown. A VISION STATEMENT provides a unified clear vision for all members of the community. It is a simple to memorize series of phrases that allows members of the community to clearly and consistently articulate what the future will bring.

The Vision statement also should be utilized to evaluate all proposed projects or decisions to make sure that a project "measures up" and is appropriate for the downtown area.





## RESULTS OF THE COMMUNITY INPUT



### THE VISION STATEMENT FOR THIS PLAN

**Crystal River is a unique, small town with an old Florida feel that has a rich legacy of early 20th Century architecture and friendly, welcoming people living in a lush, natural waterfront setting.**





# CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

## ASSESSING THE CURRENT CONDITIONS OF THE DOWNTOWN AREA OF CRYSTAL RIVER

The process of creating a vision for any community starts with a critical look at the existing constraints and opportunities within the community. While this process is difficult it is important to identify the items which detract from the quality of a community. Opportunities are assets that may not be fully developed but can strengthen the character of the community. This process of self evaluation is always difficult and is not meant to be disrespectful an any way.

By taking a fresh look at the community, you can see those things needing to be addressed and may find unique assets waiting to be capitalized upon.



# CONSTRAINTS

## MARKETING, IMAGE AND BRANDING LACKS A CONSISTENT THEME

Crystal River has a number of logos and tag lines relating to nature and the manatee. However these images and tag lines are not consistently used nor are they used often enough to “brand” the identity of Crystal River.





# CONSTRAINTS

## LOSS OF DOWNTOWN IDENTITY

The original Downtown Crystal River retail node occurred along Citrus Avenue, South of US 19. The retail node has now shifted to US 19 as retail uses expanded and changed to a vehicle based system requiring abundant parking.

The traditional downtown block has seen a high number of vacancies and the current business mix does not have a critical mass of similar businesses that attract people specifically to this downtown node.

The demolition of the old theatre left a large gap in the perceived main street node. Often single sided retail corridors do not maintain the critical mass to sustain quality businesses.



## LACK OF ENTRYWAY DOWNTOWN

The expansion of businesses along US 19 has created a continuous string of lackluster suburban style strip centers that does not provide a clearly defined downtown district.

Streetscape elements such as street trees, specialized lighting fixtures, banners, crosswalks and other identifying elements are missing. Also missing are any form of entry or identifying signage, wayfinding signage or other elements which attracts the attention of the driver on US 19.





# CONSTRAINTS

## LACK OF VISUAL CONNECTION BETWEEN THE WATERFRONT AND DOWNTOWN

Many portions of the waterfront are blocked by overgrown landscaping material, signage, and poorly placed buildings, such as the restrooms located in Kings Bay Park.

## LACK OF A COMPLETE SIDEWALK NETWORK

Sidewalks do not completely connect all areas of the downtown and to the waterfront. Some sidewalks stop short at entryways to parks and other public assets.





# CONSTRAINTS

## LACK OF IDENTIFYING SIGNAGE

The City of Crystal River has a number of very unique amenities located within or adjacent to the downtown. These amenities are typically not clearly identified with signage. Or even lets the public know these assets are for public use. The signage that does exist is often a variety of utilitarian signs that create visual clutter.

## LACK OF IMAGE

The landscaping at the recently acquired 3rd Street Park has never been upgraded or changed to indicate that this is a public park. The landscaping needs to be designed to clearly articulate public assets from private. Views need to be opened up into the park area and to the Yeoman's house.





# CONSTRAINTS

## LACK OF VISUAL CONSISTENCY

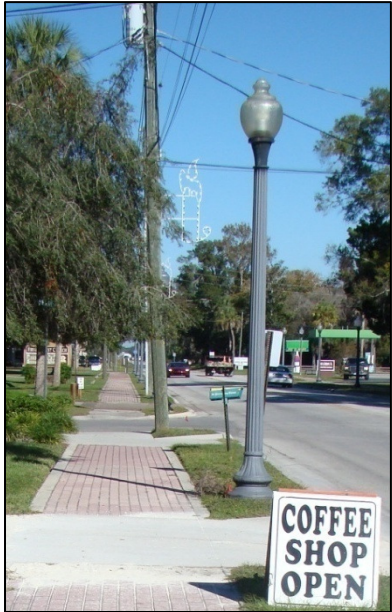
A number of streetscape projects have been developed over the history of the CRA. Each project has been successful. However, the projects have not provided a consistent theme in their design approach.

One of the most noticeable departures from consistent design is the variety of decorative street lighting. No less than 4 variations of light fixtures have been utilized. Inconsistency creates confusion. It limits the ability for the casual observer to realize that the district boundaries are being defined by these decorative fixtures.

Sidewalk materials are also unrelated. In some areas of the downtown a brick pattern is used. In others it is a concrete with a brick edging strip while other areas utilize only concrete.

## MISSING SECTIONS OF THE STREETScape

The most important intersection within the downtown, Citrus and US 19 is completely lacking any streetscape elements.





# CONSTRAINTS

## BUILDING APPEARANCE, OVERGROWTH AND OUTDOOR STORAGE

There are buildings within the district that are not well maintained. Peeling paint, rotting wood and unkempt yards send the wrong message for attracting customers and visitors to an area.

A number of lots are vacant and show signs of overgrowth. And trash dumping. Some lots are use for outdoor storage. This detracts from the overall charm of the district.

A careful code enforcement survey of the area would identify these properties and could be used to develop a phased approach to improving the appearance of the district in a consistent manner.





# CONSTRAINTS

## NO SINGLE ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER DEFINES THE DOWNTOWN

The downtown area of Crystal River has expanded over time. The growth that occurred has provided several distinct types of architectural layouts, such as, early 20th century main street buildings with on street parking and buildings located on the property lines, Older residential type of buildings that have been converted to retail and office uses, 1950's era motels, and suburban style stand alone buildings surrounded by parking.

Different building designs and styles are not a negative. There needs to be a unifying element such as a streetscape plan which ties all these unique building types together.





# CONSTRAINTS

## BUILDINGS HAVE BEEN INAPPROPRIATELY ALTERED OR ARE IN NEED OF RENOVATION

A number of buildings show signs of deferred maintenance. Other buildings have been altered over time either removing character defining architectural elements or reducing the traditional store front display area (creating smaller windows). This has made the area along Citrus Avenue appear unwelcoming.

## ZONING REGULATIONS NEED MODIFIED

From our review, the Zoning code for Crystal River does not adequately recognize the development pattern of the different sub districts of the downtown nor provide specific design guidelines to achieve quality redevelopment and new infill development. The code does not appear to provide for mixed use development as mentioned by a number of the stakeholders.

## STREETSCAPES AND STOREFRONTS ARE NOT WELCOMING

The streetscape most notably along Citrus Avenue South is plain. Utility poles, utilitarian signage and other features along the sidewalk area are unappealing.

The store fronts are minimal in size and do not offer an attractive inviting display area that encourages window browsing and walk by shopping.





# OPPORTUNITIES

## REMOVE VISUAL CLUTTER

While some projects can take years to implement, a number of projects are relatively quick and can be inexpensive.

One of the easiest things to do is to take a critical look at the visual clutter around the downtown and determine what can be cleaned up or organized.

## CLEAN UP PROBLEMATIC PROPERTIES

Cleaning up property conditions within the district would go a long way to enhancing the overall appearance of the district.

## UNDER PLANT EXISTING TREE CANOPY

The oak tree canopy in Crystal River is very unique. Under planting simply means planting smaller trees under the existing canopy to allow for gradual transition as older trees are removed to maintain a continuous tree canopy. This needs to be done throughout the community, most notably on Crystal Street.





# OPPORTUNITIES

## MARKETING/BRANDING

Creating a consistent LOGO, deciding on tag slogans and determining where these items are placed can be accomplished quickly and will build public excitement.

## FORM A MERCHANTS ASSOCIATION

The CRA is an important entity for improving the CRA area. This group is often tasked with the more physical improvements within the district. However, when it comes to developing a customer base and working on promotional strategies, these types of activities require a more participation by the merchants within the district.





# OPPORTUNITIES

## CREATE CONNECTIONS AND VIEWS TO THE WATERFRONT

The City of Crystal River is located adjacent to Kings Bay. A number of vacant parcels exist that can be visually connected back to US 19 and the downtown. A number of existing downtown parks also provide access to the waterfront that can be enhanced to provide better visual and public access. However, the waterfront and the downtown are disconnected through blocked views and a partial sidewalk network

## ENCOURAGE IN-FILL DEVELOPMENT OF VACANT LAND

A number of vacant or underutilized lots exist within the City of Crystal River. Infill construction which recognizes and reinforces the existing pattern of development can work toward creating a stronger more cohesive downtown district.





# OPPORTUNITIES

## EXPLOIT THE UNIQUE CHARACTER OF EACH ARCHITECTURAL PATTERN

Downtown Crystal River has a variety of architectural styles and periods which are unique and can provide a charm and character that most Florida Cities do not have or have lost over time.

Enhancing the original character of each of these styles instead of trying to renovate them into something different can create a unique look to the downtown

Developing a streetscape that ties each of these unique styles together can create a stronger downtown district that is cohesive and charming.



## RECOMMENDED PROJECTS SECTION

1. Image and Marketing
2. Appearance of the Downtown
3. Transportation
4. Parks





# IMAGE AND MARKETING

- 1. Based on the survey results and what we have seen what will be the Vision statement that guides all future projects.
- 2. Define what creates the image that will be consistently used to identify and market downtown Crystal River.
- 3. Where should the gateway signs be located?



# RECOMMENDED PROJECTS: CREATE A CLEAR IMAGE

The image utilized for branding and marketing purposes should be utilized constantly and consistently.

All activities sponsored within the CRA and merchant association should utilize the logo. This includes all flyers, advertising and promotional materials.





# RECOMMENDED PROJECTS: INSTALL SIGNAGE

## PLACE DECORATIVE AND CONSISTENT SIGNAGE AT ALL AREAS OF THE CITY

Decorative signage that includes the downtown’s logo should be installed at all locations including parks, parking lots, CRA (city) owned assets, entryways to the district etc.

All CRA sponsored projects should clearly be identified with the logo and proper signage indicating the project is occurring and expending CRA funds.

Wayfinding signage should be developed to clearly identify all amenities and opportunities within the CRA boundaries and the Downtown.

Signage should clearly delineate travel opportunities directing motorists off US 19.







## ENHANCING THE APPEARANCE OF THE DOWNTOWN

1. How do we make US 19 downtown more visually pleasing
2. Define how to continue the improvements to Citrus to make it more appealing. What should the streetscape look like?  
Streetscape includes: building façades, storefronts, sidewalk, lighting, landscaping, signage, etc.





# RECOMMENDED PROJECTS: ENHANCE ENTRYWAYS ON US 19

The Downtown needs to clearly be defined and differentiated from the remaining portions of US 19 as it traverses Crystal River. This process lets travelers know that they have arrived and that there is something special within the Downtown. While the traveler may not stop that very day, they will at minimum be informed that Crystal River's downtown is a special place to return to.

This entryway is best created through entry signage, a unified streetscape landscaping package, consistent utilization of street lights, crosswalks, street furniture, banners, and other decorative elements that promote the image of downtown Crystal River.

The streetscape plan should be designed to be visible to those traveling through the district at a higher rate of speed (typically in the automobile)





# RECOMMENDED PROJECTS: ENHANCE ENTRYWAYS ON US 19



Medjool Date Palms create a strong entry feature along US 19



Decorative Lighting with banner arms add decoration and color along US 19



# RECOMMENDED PROJECTS: ENHANCE STREETScape ON CITRUS AVE.

- Streetscapes should be inviting, clean and well maintained.
- Landscaping should be utilized to create interest, beauty and shade. The landscaping should be scaled to allow visible connection with the store fronts and high enough to create a shade canopy
- Utility lines should be relocated to the rear of the property or buried underground. Light poles should be decorative and offer the opportunity to add colored banners.
- Crosswalks should indicate the priority of the pedestrian and offer traffic calming to the vehicle.
- Benches and street furniture should be uniform in style and properly scaled to the street. Utilitarian objects such as newspaper stands should be decorative.
- Decorative planters add interest and color to the streetscape
- Directional signage can be utilized to promote all shops within a block



# RECOMMENDED PROJECTS: ENHANCE STREETScape ON CITRUS AVE.



Planters are decorative, add color and interest to the streetscape and can be relocated if needed



Decorative street furniture such as newspaper racks, and garbage receptacles can organize and beautify a streetscape



Street signage for pedestrians lets the shopper know what is coming up on the next block. This encourages additional shopping and eases confusion



Decorative signage, benches and other street furniture should be consistent in style and scale



# RECOMMENDED PROJECTS: CREATE INVITING SIDEWALKS & STOREFRONTS

Attractive store fronts with large display windows, creative clean displays and inviting signage add to the enhancement of the streetscape to make for a pleasant browsing experience.

Awnings create shade and add color and interest to store fronts.

Creative signage can say as much about a store as the words itself. Signage that is pedestrian scaled and projects from the building creates the most visibility. Signage should rarely be hand painted.

Window boxes with flowers, potted plants and other decorative features add color. Sidewalk displays should be clean, tidy and uncluttered.

Shop owners should always make sure that the sidewalk in front of their shop is swept, windows are washed and that the entire area is clean and well maintained.

Store fronts should be well lit at night showing off what is sold during the day. This brings customers back and also provides an additional feeling of safety during the evening hours.





# RECOMMENDED PROJECTS: CREATE INVITING SIDEWALKS & STOREFRONTS



Large storefront areas that are visually pleasing and well lit at night invite people to remain on the street in the evenings.



# RECOMMENDED PROJECTS: IMPROVE BUILDING FACADES

Buildings should be rehabilitated in a way that recognizes their original design. Storefronts that have had part of their original window systems closed in should reopen the original store front display windows, Paint schemes should recognize the existing details instead of concealing them through monotone paint schemes.

Signage should be properly placed on the building and should enhance the overall design of the building not cover it up or work in opposition to the design. Awnings that are appropriate to the building design should be utilized to provide shade for the pedestrian and can also be used to conceal improper alterations. Overall buildings should be cleaned, freshly painted and maintained.





# RECOMMENDED PROJECTS SCREEN SITES

Within the CRA area there are several existing uses such as the Ferrell Gas site, vehicle storage sites and others that detract from the aesthetics of the district.

While these are legal uses defined by the Land Development regulations, they too can be made more attractive and their utilitarian functions concealed through fencing, landscaping or a combination.





# RECOMMENDED PROJECTS: VACANT SITE AT US 19 AND CITRUS AVE.

Vacant land within the Downtown is both a constraint and an opportunity. Often these sites show development is not occurring and also can become unsightly or sites for dumping which further detracts from the aesthetics of the district. However, if vacant land is well maintained and kept free of debris and out door storage, they can become assets.

There are a number of vacant sites within the downtown that could benefit from infill development. Infill development is the type that works with the existing context of an area instead of introducing a different style. To maintain the unique architectural legacy of the distinct areas of Crystal River, it is recommended that all new development be compatible with the existing established patterns.

Furthermore, vacant lots can and should be utilized to assist with temporary needs within the community. This can be as simple as using the vacant lot to the east of the Women's club as temporary parking during events, to more elaborate uses.

For example, the large vacant lot on the southeast corner of Citrus and US 19 is a critical lot within the redevelopment of Crystal River's Downtown. Not only is it highly visible, but the site is pivotal in completing the needed critical mass of shops within the southern portion of citrus. In the interim, a short term use as a park like setting with decorative landscaping, perhaps a gazebo, some parking, etc., would transform the "front door" of the downtown into something the passing motorist would notice. It could also serve as a location for music events or a Farmers Market. This is a critical project that could begin the transformation of the downtown and how the community views it.



# RECOMMENDED PROJECTS VACANT LAND IN MICHIGAN TOWN & N. CITRUS

Infill construction within Michigan Town, and the area around Heritage Village have a residential character that should be recognized when redevelopment occurs. While the uses of the buildings may not be residential, their outward appearance should be of a residential scale, compatible with the surrounding context.





# RECOMMENDED PROJECTS: REVISE THE LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS

Infill construction must enhance, not detract from, the pattern of the downtown. Often this does not occur not because the property owner is unwilling to develop the appropriate style of building, but because the local Land Development Regulations do not require the correct type of development.

A cursory review of Crystal River’s Land Development Regulations indicate that There are a number of discrepancies in the regulations and the overall desired look of each of the areas within the downtown.

The best time to adjust these regulations would be prior to a renewed redevelopment boom.

Several distinct districts occur within the downtown with different development patterns that need to be respected as infill or redevelopment occurs. They are as follows :

**SOUTH CITRUS AVENUE:** between US 19 and NW 3rd Street should require that buildings be of a mixed use, should be built to the front of the site with a zero lot line setback. Parking, retention and any secondary functions should be located behind the building. Design guidelines should require appropriate scaled store front display areas and properly proportioned upper windows typical of pre WWII building patterns.

The community may desire to take the design of these buildings further to create a specific stylistic aesthetic.

**NORTH CITRUS AND MICHIGAN TOWN AREA:** These areas were developed originally as residential. However over time they have converted to a mix of residential, office and in some cases these homes have been converted to shops.

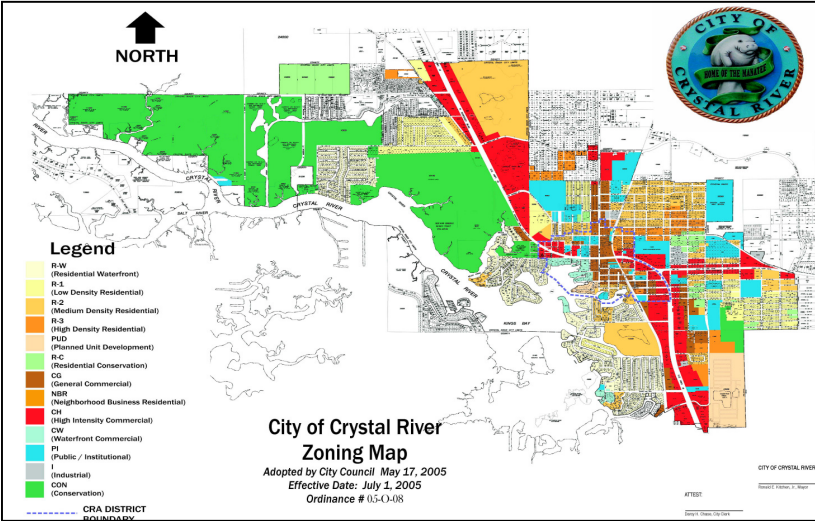
The land development regulations should be reviewed to assure the proper mix of residential, office and artist space.

Building setbacks should reflect the narrow deep lots . Design standards should require the proper placement of porches, and parking areas that reinforce the existing pedestrian oriented pattern of development.

Stylistic requirements, correct roof slopes, window proportions should be addressed to assure that the infill construction is compatible to the existing pattern of development.

Proper signage requirements that respect the residential feel of the area must be addressed.

US-19: While US 19 will always have a more suburban strip center look, The CRA could choose to add stylistic requirements to the immediate area flanking the cross Avenue of Citrus. This would assist in defining the approach to the downtown area and can work in conjunction with the street-scape enhancements that will help identify the downtown.



## THE WATERFRONT

### MAKING CONNECTIONS

1. How do we make the physical connection between the waterfront and the downtown?
2. How do we help the passing motorist find the waterfront?
3. What amenities are needed on the waterfront?
4. What kind of events and physical changes are needed to encourage more use of the parks and connect them to the downtown?





# RECOMMENDED PROJECT: CONNECT THE WATERFRONT

One of the areas of opportunity for connections between the downtown and the waterfront, is the area to the west of Citrus behind the shops and south of US 19. This area contains vacant properties heavily wooded with vegetation blocking the waterfront view. This is also the one area where parking seems to be absent or in bad condition. A parking lot in this location would provide for the employees and patrons of the stores fronting on Citrus Avenue. In addition this area provides an opportunity to make a direct connection to the Riverwalk or a pier, especially, if an easement exists to access Citrus Avenue. This area is also a key link in the Riverwalk for people to access between the waterfront restaurants, Citrus Avenue, and Kings Bay Park.



The conditions in this area need to be improved but it has the potential to be a key connection between Citrus, the waterfront restaurants and Kings Bay Park.



# RECOMMENDED PROJECT: CONTINUE THE RIVERWALK

The most popular and well known project that the CRA has started, or is working on, is the Riverwalk. There was near unanimous support for it and the only questions were, “What is the status and what is the next step?” Given this interest we recommend that the CRA immediately pursue a detailed plan for completing the next phases by outlining alternative routes, visiting and negotiating with property owners and working with the businesses and residents to develop an acceptable phased approach to completing the walk. Due to the needs of the current property owners, the Riverwalk may not be a continuous walkway on the water. However, any opportunity to provide some form of access to the water and to provide destination points along a walkway encourages people to use it. That may require short term connections that are not on the water but that may be able to be connected when redevelopment occurs along some of the parcels on the waterfront. Specifically, alternatives along the vacant parcels should be developed to show proposed developers what it could look like. One area of immediate connection potential is to make a shorter route to the water from Citrus Avenue near the businesses. There is currently an easement that may be the beginning of a direct connection to the waterfront.



Scenes of the Riverwalk

We have mentioned the importance of signage in other sections of this report. However, given the profile of this project it was interesting that the general public and some of the people we interviewed did not know that the Riverwalk was open to the public. There is no signage from US 19 and no maps to indicate it exists. The Riverwalk is in many ways a waterfront park and should be identified, maintained, and promoted as such.

The boat ramp is similarly unknown. Although parking is limited, it still provides a waterfront amenity that should be fully used.

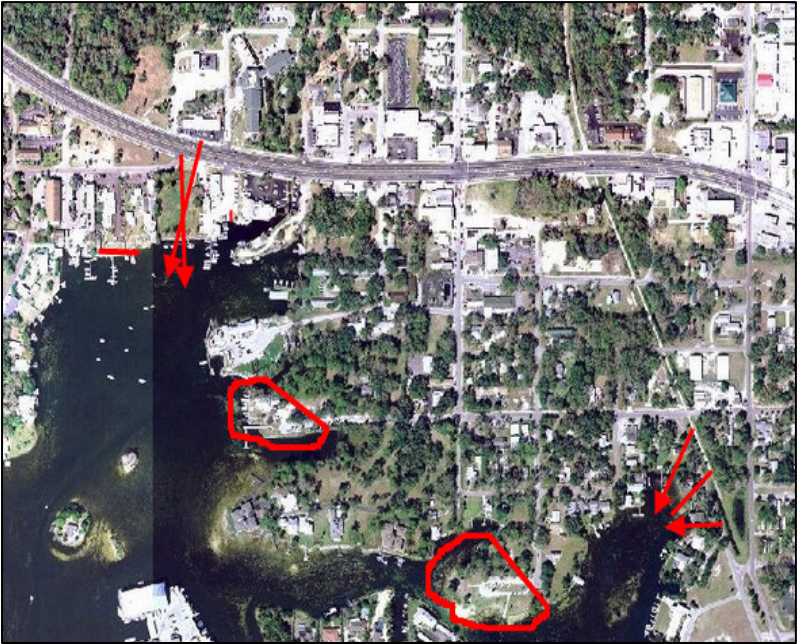


# ACCESSING THE WATER AND WATERVIEWS

This map shows the only locations where visitors can actually see that they are close to the water. The red arrows represent where a passing motorist can see water. There is only one location where you can easily see the water from US 19 and that is because there is a vacant lot there. The other location is from 2nd Ave SE viewing in between homes as you pass by.

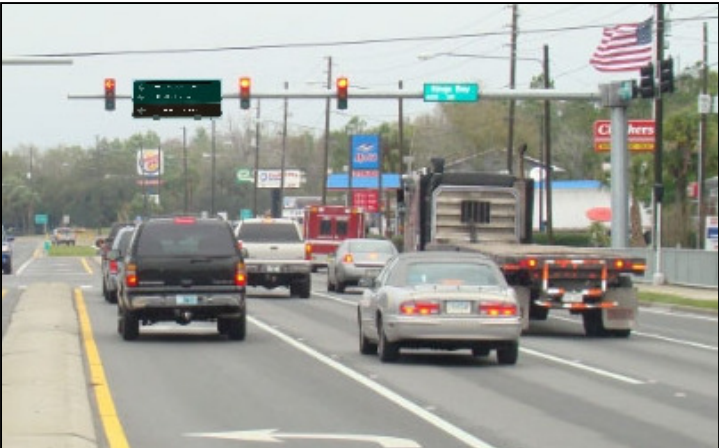
Both waterfront parks provide excellent views and the Riverwalk and the public boat access are available but the passing motorist would not be able to locate them due to the lack of signage. There are no signs on US 19 that locate the parks, the Riverwalk, or the public boat ramp. This should be immediately corrected, working with FDOT to put up appropriate uniform and themed signage ( see previous section ).

In order to capture the visitors that would like to know these views exist, we recommend the creation of a scenic route as outlined on the map. The visitor traveling from the south to north would see signs at the Kings Bay/US 19 intersection that identify an alternate route to the waterfront parks, historic district, shopping, and downtown. Kings Bay is recommended because it has a protected left turn signal. This route would be signed to take them to SE 2nd Court and then to 3rd Street. Left on 3rd would direct them past Hunters Spring Park and Kings Bay, connect to the Michigan Town Historic District, pass by the restored Seminole Club, and lead them directly to Citrus Ave. Signs along Citrus would lead them along the main street to shops and restaurants and direct them to cross US 19 for more shops and Heritage Village. In addition the restored Rail Depot and the Creative Playground could be identified along the route. This route would appeal to drivers desiring a more scenic route.





# RECOMMENDED PROJECT: CREATING A SCENIC ROUTE



The creation of the scenic route would require approval from FDOT to locate appropriate signage at the Kings Bay Intersection, at Citrus Avenue and points prior to those intersections. In addition, the Ferrell Gas site would benefit from an extensive landscaping plan to reduce the visual impact of such an industrial use. An example landscaping plan is shown in the photo to the right. The remainder of the route is in good condition.



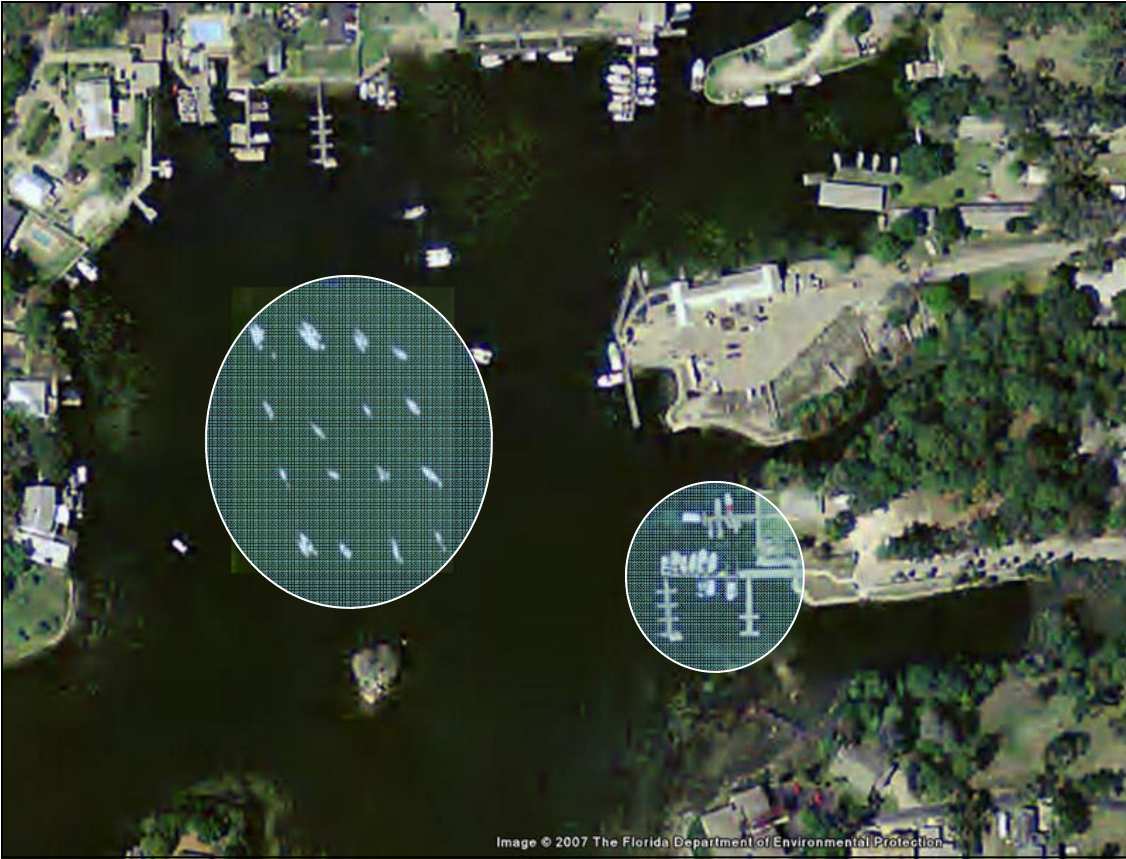


# THE WATERFRONT

## BOAT FACILITIES, THE MARINA AND MOORING FIELD

The waterfront was a predominant theme throughout this project. It was identified as part of the image, or theme, for Crystal River and it was the place people identified to take visitors to. Therefore, more activities on the water make sense, especially since it is so close to the downtown area. That is why the waterfront parks, the Riverwalk, and water activities were frequently mentioned. The idea of providing facilities that could accommodate more boaters came up during the course of this project. The marina and the mooring field in particular were projects not originally identified but many people mentioned them as logical and complementary to the theme of accommodating more waterfront use and activity. These projects were not part of the scope of this project but during the interviews and open houses more people became aware of them and support was growing. The idea of allowing boaters more slips or locations to moor so that they could dock and enjoy the restaurants and shopping of the downtown is a logical extension of the connection to the waterfront.

The photo to the right shows a concept of a mooring field in the middle and additional slips at the 3rd Ave pier as a concept.



# THE PARKS

## MAKING CONNECTIONS, IDENTIFICATION, AND EVENTS

1. What kind of events and physical changes are needed to encourage more use of the parks and connect them to the downtown?





# THE PARKS

## CONNECTING THE PARKS

Fifty four percent of the stakeholders said that connections to the parks were only fair or poor. The conversations typically revolved around the lack of signage, how few people know about them and that there are few activities that attract people. Nearly all the stakeholders and most of the people who support events mentioned the idea of having more events in the parks specifically to attract people to them. They felt the events would help establish the park 's identities and locations.

We concur the parks are inadequately signed. You cannot find them on US 19, they are not identified on online mapping sources, and the City map does not show them. Every public park, public parking lot, the Riverwalk, and boat access point that is open to the public should be clearly identified to help establish the public image of Crystal River as a place of parks, access to the water, and connections to the community.

A consistent theme of signage and image at all public locations is essential and should be done in a well coordinated and designed package. When we talked about parks not everyone identified the Riverwalk or the Trail. These are as important as any of the larger parks and should be treated and maintained to an equally high level. The parks represent the public face of the City, sort of the front door. Residents and visitors don 't associate the appearance of a commercial use with local government but everyone associates the conditions of the parks with government. Therefore, they should be maintained at a higher level. This would also apply to the public parking areas, public buildings and the streetscape areas.



The parks include: Kings Bay, Hunters Spring, Little Springs Park, Creative Playground, the Rail Depot, the Trail, the Riverwalk, the Gazebo at City Hall, and the boat launch. These public places should receive the highest level of maintenance.



# THE PARKS



One of our early comments was that the Yeoman House at Kings Bay Park would be better served to have a use that draws the public more than the CRA offices. The CRA may want to actively seek a user that will attract people to the park. Possible users could include educational institutions that are open to the public and have resources to maintain the building. The boat access may appeal to a university or marine themed government organization.

The dive/boating operation in Kings Bay Park could provide a unique opportunity in the future to connect and draw people to the



# THE PARKS

## MAINTAINING AND BUILDING ON THE PARKS

The parks and public spaces ( streetscape, parking lots, City Hall, boat ramp ) are clearly a tremendous asset to Crystal River and the CRA area in particular. Each of these should be treated accordingly. We have previously mentioned the consistent comment we received about maintaining what is there and building on it. In the case of the parks, there are maintenance issues that were readily apparent and some long term design issues that should be considered in the future. We will illustrate with Hunters Spring Park. Several simple considerations are illustrated below.



Vistas should be well maintained.



The entrance of the park is a dumpster, frequently open.



At one point we counted 11 signs clearly blocking the view of the water as these two photos show.



Waterviews should be carefully maintained and kept appropriately trimmed and free of exotic vegetation.



The restrooms block one of the best water-views in the park. Future improvements should remove this.



## TRANSPORTATION

### TRAFFIC CALMING, PARKING, BIKING, AND WALKABILITY

1. What should be done to make US 19 safer to cross and travel?
2. What will make Crystal River more walkable and bicycle friendly?
3. What is the parking problem?
4. What other transportation connections should be considered?



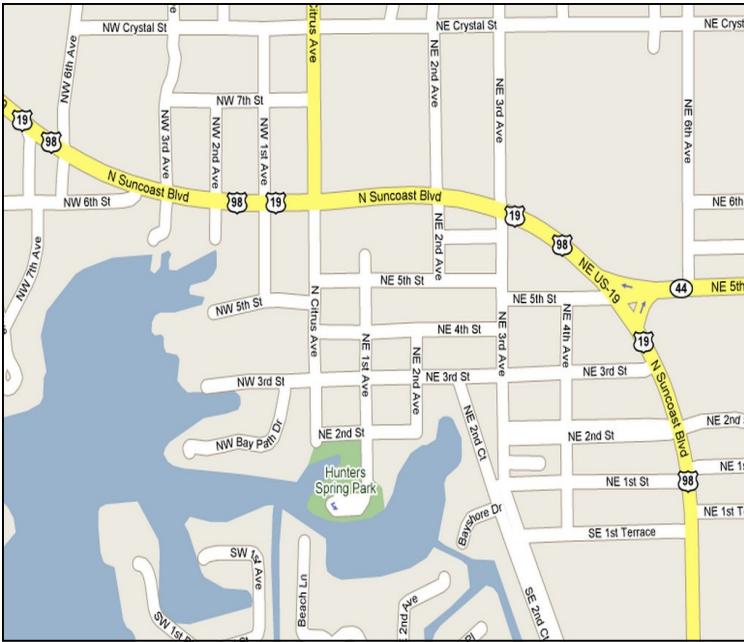


# US 19

## A BARRIER TO THE BUSINESS DISTRICT

US 19 represents a barrier to pedestrians and to the connection between the businesses on the north side of the highway. It is a primary issue for the perception of safety for pedestrians and bicyclists. However, for many people that responded to the questionnaire at the Manatee Festival, US 19 was their primary way to get to Crystal River and they did not see it as a barrier. The highway serves to bring people easily to the business district.

The intersection of US 19 and Citrus Avenue is the most important location for identifying a “downtown” district and establishing to the passing motorist whether it is worth their time to enter. All four corners are important for this purpose. The intersection of US 19 and Citrus Avenue should have pedestrian and street improvements that clearly mark the crosswalks and identify this area as distinct from the other intersections along the Highway. The pedestrian signal works but may need to be adjusted to provide adequate crossing time. Nearly everyone interviewed suggested lowering the speed limit on this section of US 19 through the City. Given the importance of Citrus Ave to the downtown, the nearness of the trail crossing, and the school so close this seems like a logical and prudent request.





# RECOMMENDED PROJECT: PEDESTRIAN SAFETY AND CROSSWALKS

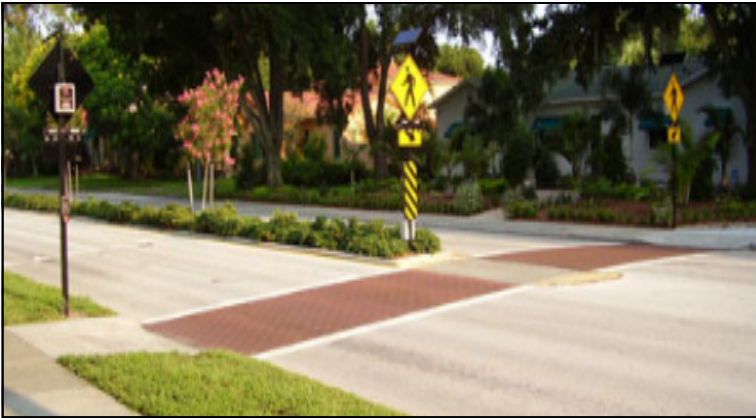
Pedestrian safety is the highest priority for creating a walkable community. The intersections with US 19 were frequently cited as unsafe or difficult to cross. Each crossing location (identified below where signals exist) should have enhance crossing treatments. These include decorative coloration, appropriate ramping and physical signage and improvements to make the motorist aware that pedestrians cross at these locations. An example of coloration is shown for Citrus Avenue in the photo below.

The other location that is currently difficult to cross is N Citrus Ave near Heritage Village. Pedestrians were observed trying to cross many times. At certain times of the day the traffic is constant. There is a fairly consistent volume of traffic using that route to and from US 19. We recommend a pedestrian crosswalk similar to that shown on the right. One recommended location is the southern edge of NW 7th St and Citrus. This location would serve Heritage Village and the Church and if joint parking is developed there are several lots to the west of that intersection.

Other crosswalk locations that should be priorities are anywhere a park entrance exists or public parking lots. Locations on Citrus Ave would be in conjunction with any streetscape bulb outs.



The intersection of NW 7th St. and Citrus showing a decorative crossing concept.



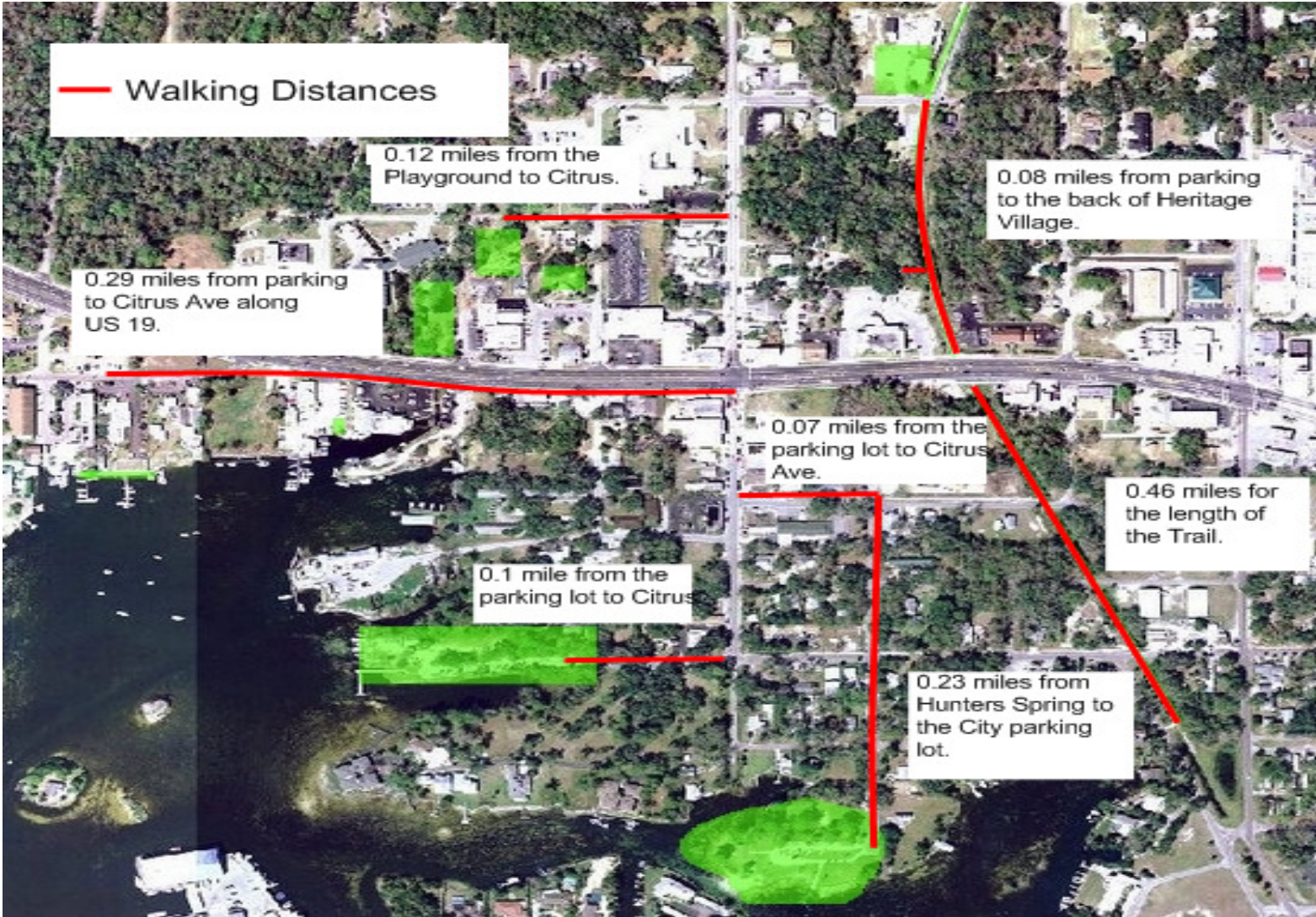
Locations where colorized pedestrian crosswalks should be located.





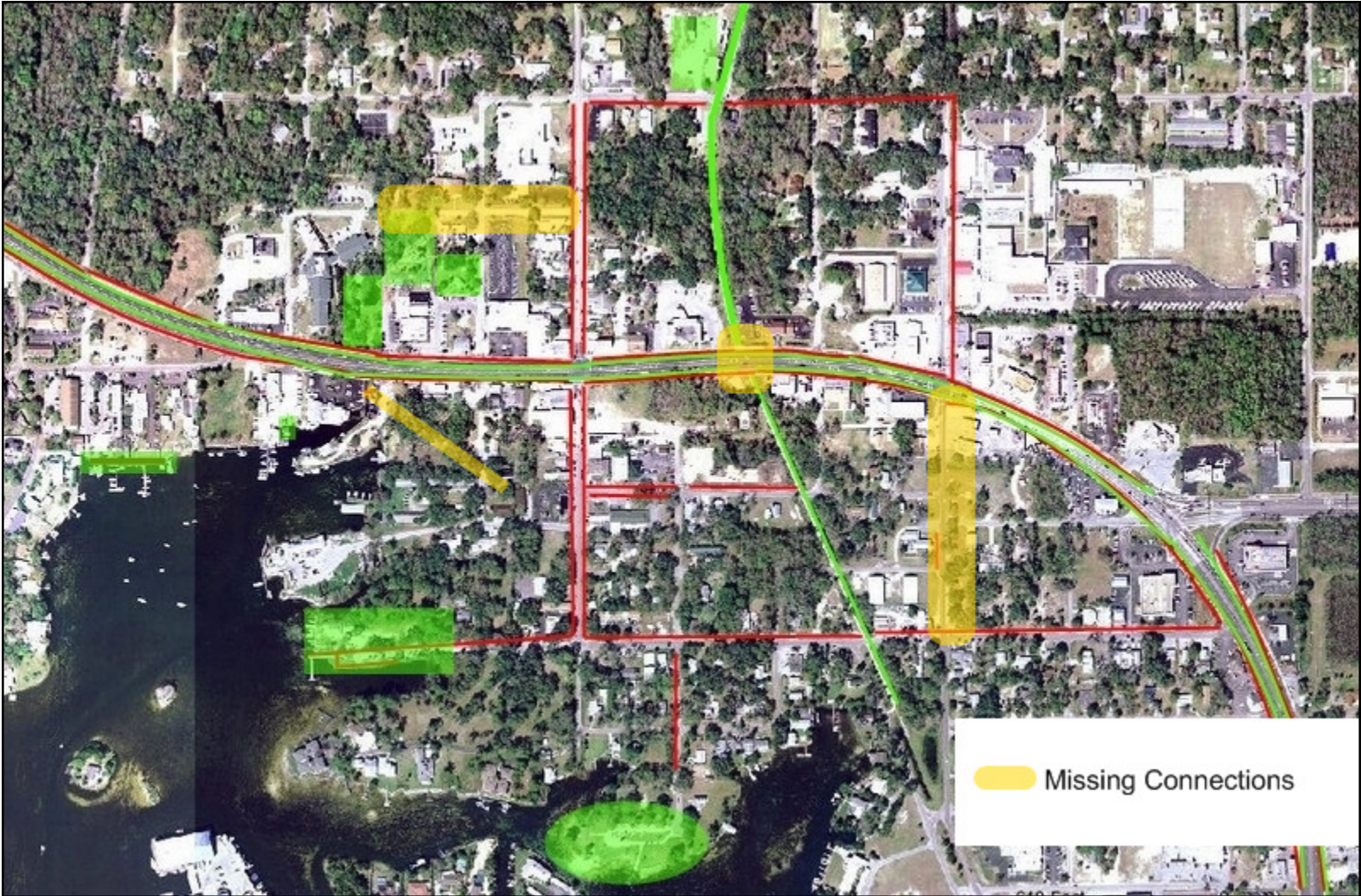
## CONNECTIONS FOR WALKABILITY, BIKING AND SAFETY

Walkability was identified as a key characteristic that people wanted Crystal River to be known for. The parks, shops, waterfront, parking, and City Hall are within walkable distances. For point of reference some distances are shown on the map below. The “downtown area” has a good mix of offices, shops, restaurants, parks, etc. There is no grocery store, but the ingredients for good public spaces that will attract people are all within about a quarter mile of each other orienting out from the intersection of Citrus and US 19. The key is to make the public places dynamic, attractive, and entertaining. Those opportunities are covered in other sections of this report. All of the unique features of the downtown area are within a one quarter mile radius of US 19 and Citrus Avenue.





### RECOMMENDED PROJECT: CONNECTIONS FOR WALKABILITY, BIKING AND SAFETY



This map shows the locations of the featured parks, public access to the waterfront, sidewalks, and bicycling lanes and the trail. The connection for the bike trail to cross US 19 is essential for long term growth in use of this facility. The extension of the trail along the Cutler Spur Road improvements will expand it to the Fort Island road providing access to the park. A connection to the north will make this a featured trail.

Sidewalks exist in the prime locations for foot traffic except for those shown. However, there currently is no connection for NE 3rd Ave south of US 19 after crossing the highway. Since this is used by students from the school this improvement should be given high priority. Our understanding is the City plans to complete this section. Because many areas flood or are vacant lots, ultimately all the residential areas should be connected with sidewalks to allow convenient access.



# RECOMMENDED PROJECT: THE PEDESTRIAN/BIKE OVERPASS

## THE OVERPASS

The overpass was frequently mentioned during interviews and at the open houses. While some oppose it because of the expense and not knowing how many people will use it, the majority of those that commented on the overpass support it. An overpass would be costly but is the only effective way to guarantee a safe crossing for pedestrian and bicycle users. The improvements to Cutler Spur Road will include bicycle facilities that would allow a rider to go from north of the Railroad Depot to Fort Island Road and the recreational opportunities that are located along it. This project will cost somewhere between \$2.5 to \$3.0 million dollars but a combination of federal, state, county, and local dollars are eligible. It will take several years to move this forward so the sooner financing is sought the better.

Several suggestions were made for the appearance of the overpass with the consensus being that it should make a visual statement for the City of Crystal River. The most frequently referenced style was something that incorporated a railroad look. One such overpass showing a wooden covered bridge is shown on this page. The photo in the lower right approximates the size of the overpass on the existing highway.



This photo received the most support as opposed to



The overpass will dominate the roadway when it is



Currently there is no way to cross US 19 safely at the



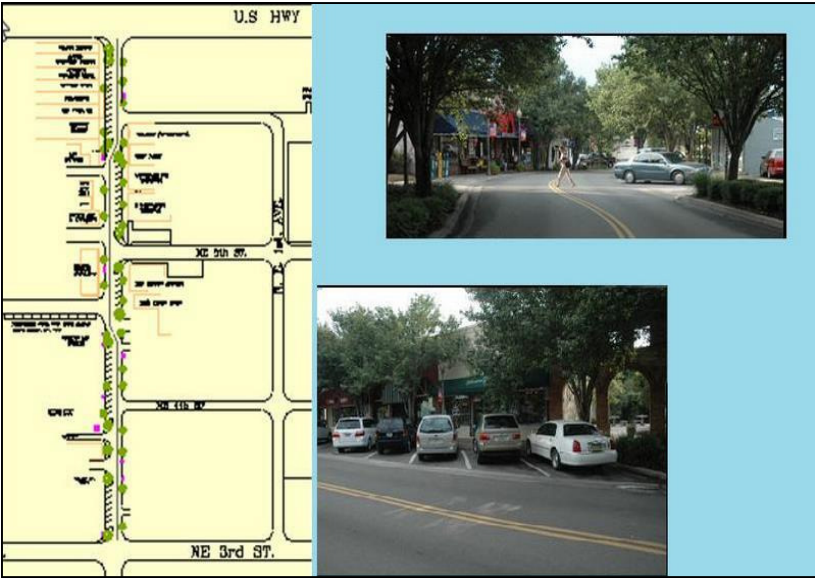
# RECOMMENDED PROJECT: PARKING DESIGN ON CITRUS AVE

## THE CITRUS AVE PARKING PLAN

The Citrus Ave parking project was identified as a potential project. During the community input process this project (and illustrations) were discussed and there was wide support, even from businesses that would be most affected. However, the road width along Citrus is only 38 feet and may not be sufficient. We recommend an engineering firm be hired to verify the safety of such a narrow design.

## THE ALTERNATIVE PARKING PLAN

An alternative that can accomplish the same goals is to keep the existing parking design and incorporate bulbouts at key locations. Bulb-outs have many of the same benefits. They shorten the distance pedestrians travel to cross the street. They allow a larger area for plantings and street furniture, can be easily constructed, and protect vehicles parked behind them.

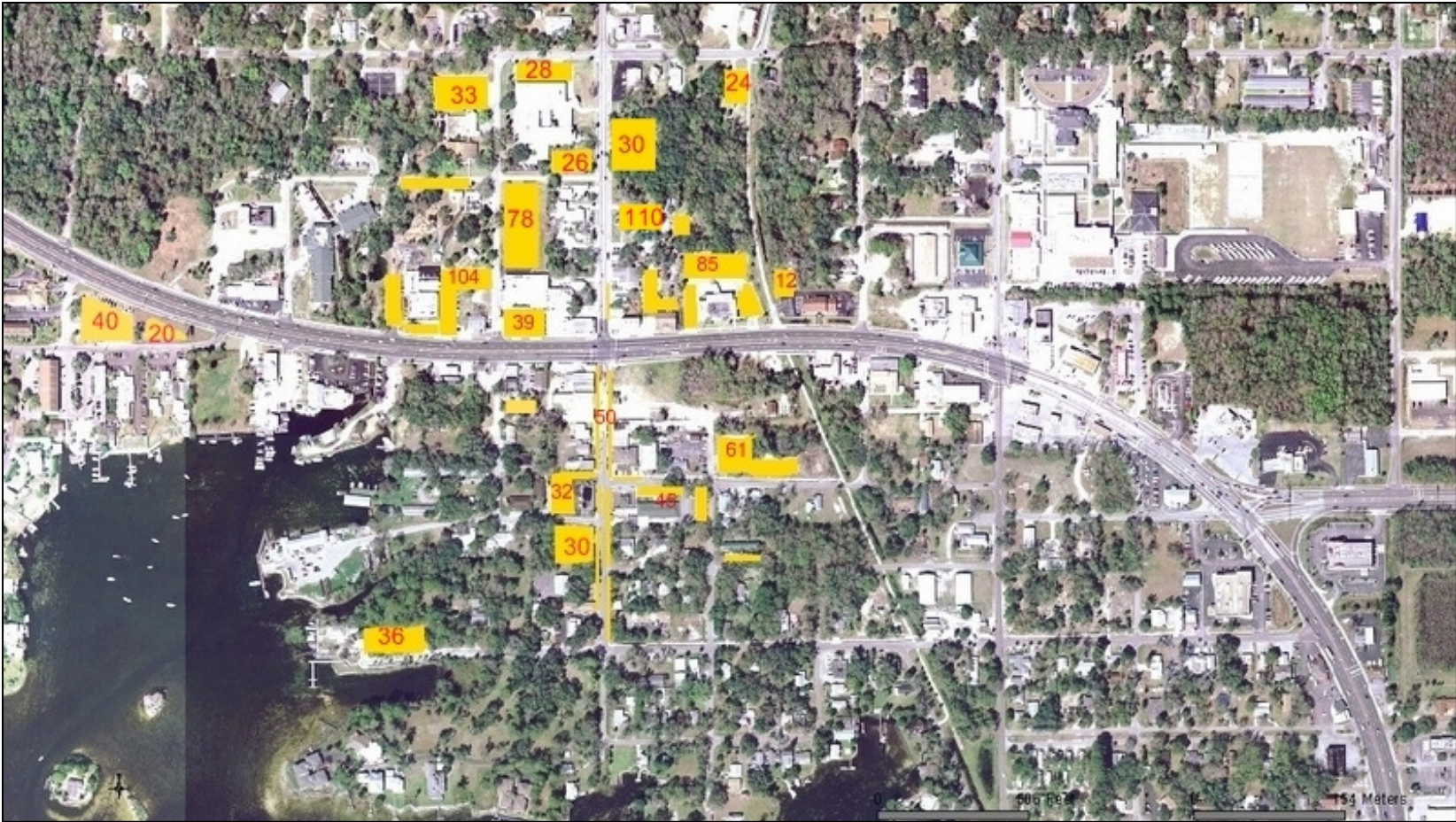


The Original Parking Plan





# RECOMMENDED PROJECT: JOINT PARKING FOR THE DOWNTOWN AREA



One of the most frequent issues identified was lack of parking. This subject was mentioned in the CRA brainstorming, review of old documents, interviews, and during the survey. However, the Manatee Festival results were skewed toward festival parking needs versus day to day. This aerial shows conservatively how many parking spaces are available within the study area that are “easy walking distance.” The survey did not distinguish public from private but it was clear that there was never a lack of parking if a partnership could be created to facilitate joint use parking. At all times of day and on weekends, there was never more than about 25% of the parking in use. Although everyone wants to park in front of their store or place of employment, providing parking that could accommodate that would create many more surface parking lots that are underused. We recommend that the CRA and merchants facilitate joint use parking arrangements with many of the existing lots currently not used during the day and evening—specifically, the Church, Bingo Hall, Bank, Women’s Club, etc. The one area where parking presented a problem is to the west of Citrus Avenue south of US19, behind the stores. This is an area where employees and deliveries could be removed from the front of the stores and park in the rear. The City of Crystal River was pursuing a parcel for parking at the time of this study. That is also an area of great opportunity for connecting the waterfront to Citrus Avenue.



# ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION

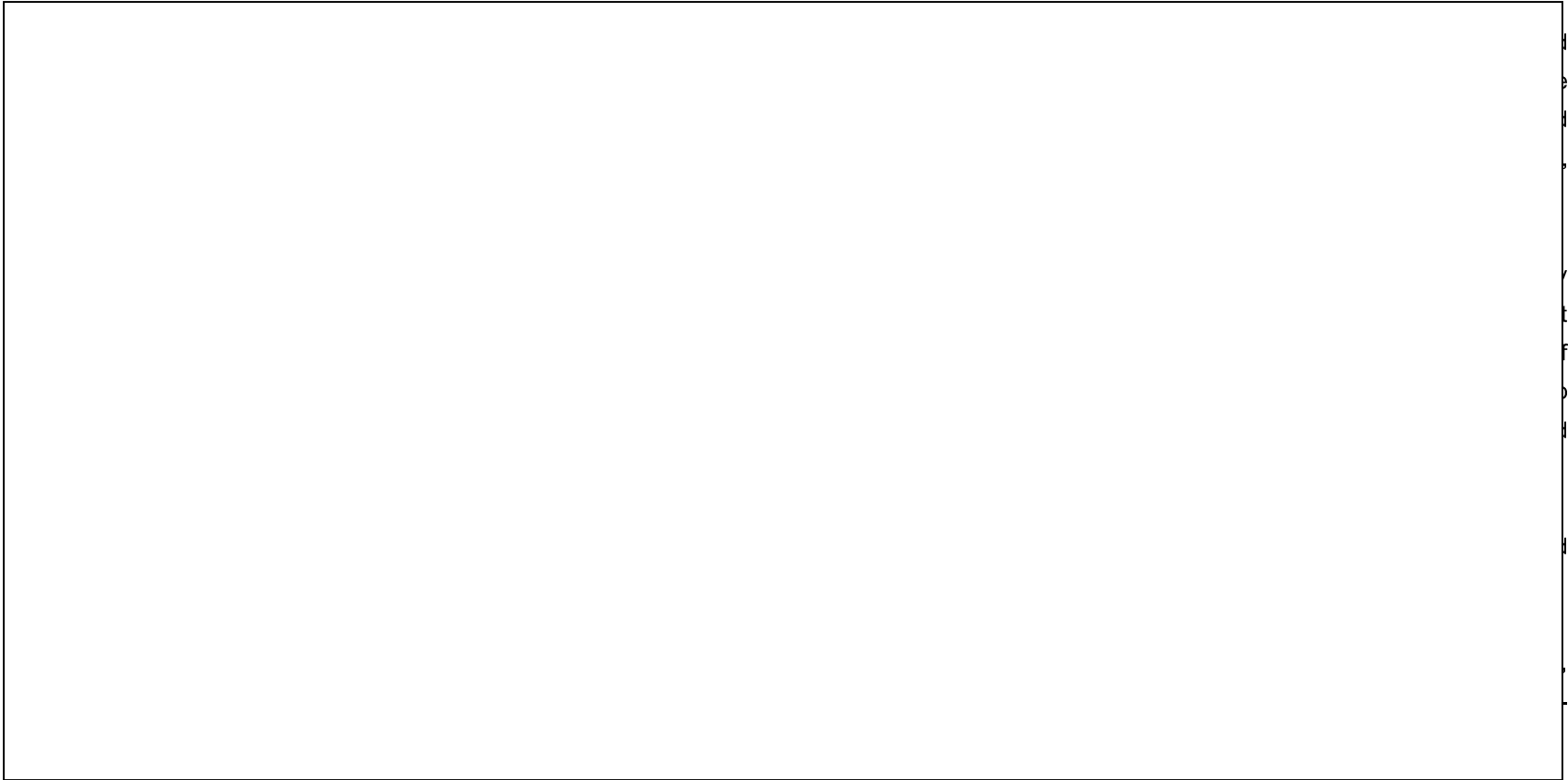
## TROLLEYS, WATER TAXIS, AND CARRIAGES

Several stakeholders and some citizens mentioned the option of alternative transportation modes to attract visitors and tourists. Trolleys, water taxis, and horse carriages were mentioned. Although these can be attractive and unique experiences for visitors they are expensive to maintain and operate. There is no current plan or source of revenue to pursue these modes. However, a Merchants Association can discuss the pros and cons of these alternatives and the benefits of a cooperative plan for all the businesses to participate. In addition, an organization may be able to attract even more participants.





## CONCLUSIONS



**PROJECT SUMMARY**



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### 1. Short term projects (less than one year)

- Create a marketing image
- Install signage
- Form a merchant's association
- Under-plant existing tree canopy
- Clean up problematic properties
- Remove visual clutter
- Explore temporary uses on the vacant lot adjacent to Citrus Ave and US 19
- Examine Land Development Regulations and begin process to amend.
- Complete a detailed proposal for the Riverwalk
- Clean up vistas to the waterfront
- Clean up park entries
- Work with property owners to screen utilitarian sites

## PROJECT SUMMARY

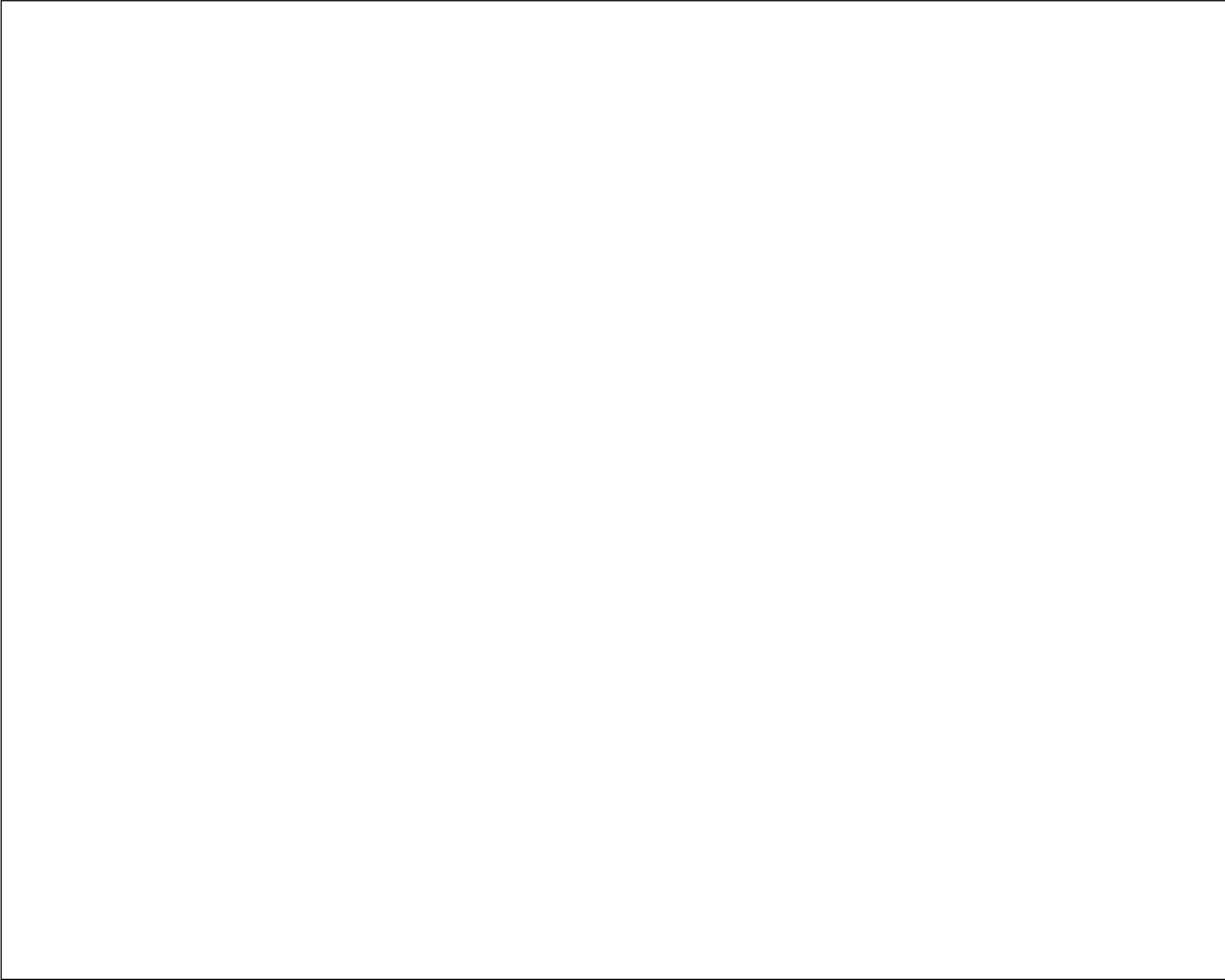
### 2. Medium term projects (one to five years)

- Design and construct pedestrian overpass
- Enhance entryways along US 19
- Create an inviting streetscape and parking plan along Citrus Avenue
- Develop a joint parking program
- Create a scenic route
- Visually and physically connect the parks to each other and downtown
- Complete missing connections of sidewalks and bike paths
- Enhance safety of pedestrian crossings at key intersections along US 19
- Construct pedestrian crosswalk at Citrus and Heritage Village

### 3. Long range projects (five to ten year)

- Boat facilities, the marina and mooring fields





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