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COMMERCIAL REDEVELOPMENT ZONE PROGRAM

GULFPORT, MISSISSIPPI

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The city of Gulfport, Mississippi, is in the process of planning and implementing policies and projects that aim to spur economic revitalization on several aging commercial corridors. Since Hurricane Katrina, insurance rates, concerns over flooding, and the availability of greenfield sites have led to increased commercial and residential development in the northern part of the city causing older commercial corridors to decline. Gulfport has already instituted a tax abatement program focused on beachfront housing and the downtown. The city requested technical assistance from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to analyze and assess Gulfport's existing tax abatement programs, to propose other economic tools that the city could use that would provide multiple benefits, and to develop complementary schematic design options for promoting green infrastructure and redevelopment that protects human health and the environment. EPA funded a design team to study four potential new tax abatement districts, become familiar with the previous incentive efforts, and develop design options highlighting opportunities for both economic revitalization and environmental protection.

A workshop was held November 6-7, 2017 at Gulfport City Hall with stakeholders ranging from city officials and local business owners to professionals representing regional interests, such as financial lending and land conservation. Feedback from these sessions was incorporated into the final design schematics and policy options. This report presents complementary strategies, best practices, and policy options that could maximize the success of an expanded tax abatement program and facilitate economic revitalization of the new program districts while achieving other community benefits. Certain policy and design options could be applicable to all of the districts under consideration, while other options leverage specific attributes of individual districts.

2 INTRODUCTION

Gulfport is the second largest city in Mississippi with a population of approximately 70,000 and is located on the Gulf Coast. Since Hurricane Katrina, insurance rates, concerns over flooding, and the availability of greenfield sites have led to increased commercial and residential development in the northern part of the city close to Interstate-10. These factors, along with the changing nature of retail and aging infrastructure, caused older commercial districts along Pass Road, Highway 49 south, and 30th Avenue and Broad Avenue in the Medical District to decline. Redevelopment of these areas and homes near the beach has been slow.

To spur reinvestment, Gulfport instituted two tax abatement programs: the Beach Abatement Program that incentivized residential redevelopment of the area between the railroad and the beach, and the Downtown Abatement Program, which focused on downtown commercial redevelopment. The tax abatement exempts properties from the ad valorem taxes (i.e., those based on the value of the property) that result from the increase in assessed value due to property improvements, not including the school portion of taxes. For commercial or residential properties in the designated zones, new construction valued at \$2 million or more and renovations costing more than \$250,000 are eligible for abatement of ad valorem taxes for seven years from the time of cost certification and approval. Since 2014, 21 new homes have been built along the beach that have taken advantage of the program with 8 applications pending approval from the city and four commercial redevelopment projects in downtown are planned.

Gulfport now wants to build off their existing programs to encourage economic revitalization of four other districts: Pass Road, Highway 49, the Medical District, and Dedeaux Road. The city requested technical assistance from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to analyze and assess Gulfport's existing tax abatement programs, to propose other economic tools that the city could use that would provide multiple benefits, and to develop complementary schematic design options for promoting green infrastructure and redevelopment that protects human health and

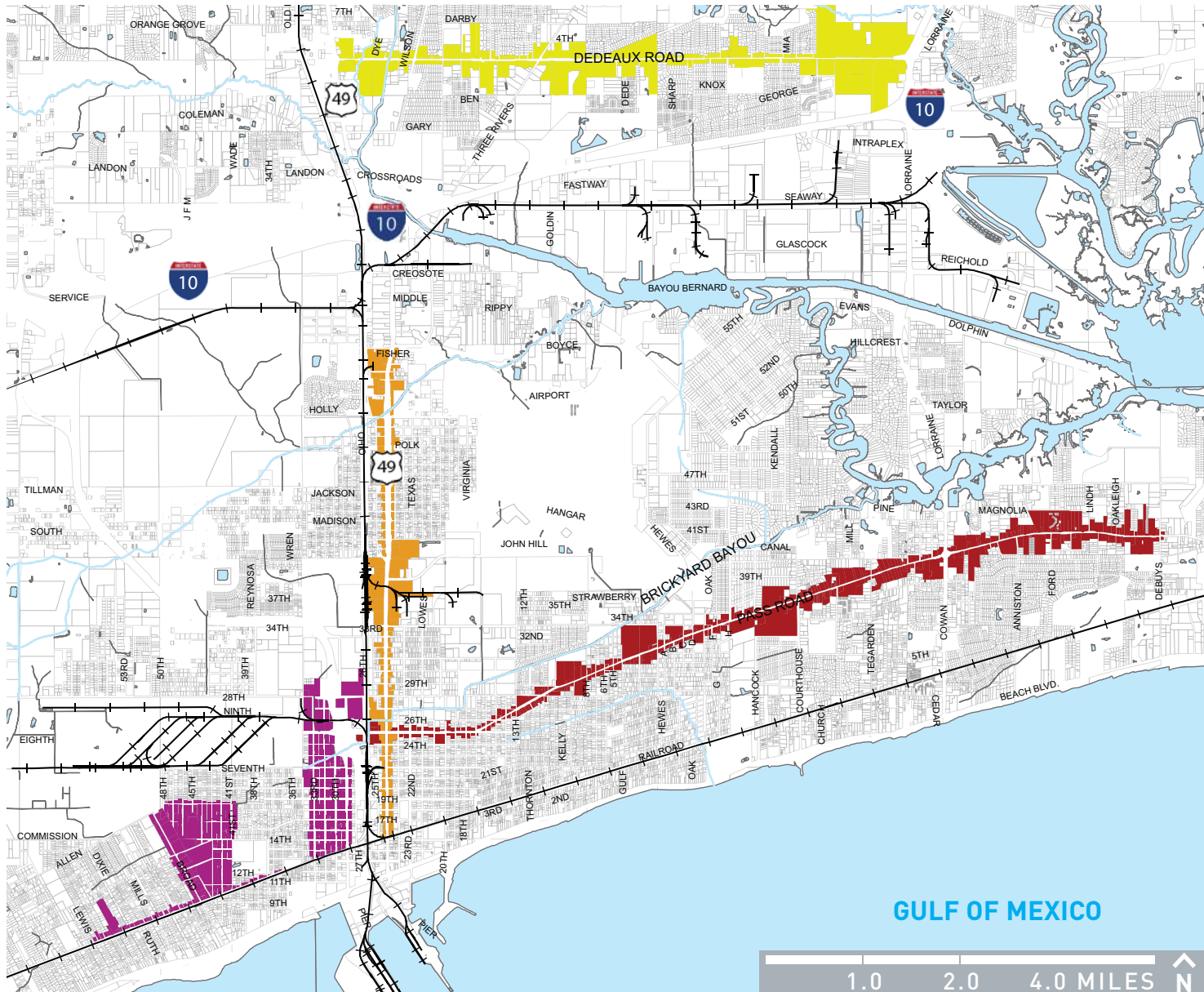
the environment. EPA funded a design team to study the four districts, become familiar with the previous incentive efforts, and develop design options highlighting opportunities for both economic revitalization and environmental protection.

The design process began with a site visit where the design team visited the four districts with city staff. Meetings with city staff and other stakeholders helped the team understand the city's overall objectives and specific goals for the four districts. Following the initial site visit, the design team produced a preliminary assessment that analyzed Gulfport's current tax abatement programs, the existing conditions in each of the project areas, and looked at examples of successful revitalization efforts from other cities. Key lessons learned from the preliminary assessment that could be applied to future tax abatement programs in Gulfport are:

- Set clearly articulated goals.
- Have a targeted geographic focus.
- Combine tax abatements with other complementary programs.
- Identify and promote desirable land uses.
- Set well-defined goals.

During a two-day workshop in November 2017, the design team met many residents, city staff, and business and community leaders to present design and policy options, get feedback on potential incentives, and learn about the community's priorities. Input from the workshop is documented in this report and was incorporated into the final policy options and schematic design proposals.

1 INTRODUCTION
POTENTIAL NEW TAX ABATEMENT DISTRICTS



LEGEND

- Pass Road District
- Highway 49 District
- The Medical District
- Dedeaux Road District

FIGURE 1 A map illustrating the four new potential tax abatement districts in Gulfport, Mississippi.

3 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION

The city convened a series of stakeholder meetings November 6-7, 2017 at Gulfport City Hall. Stakeholders included:

- Representatives from the Pass Road Merchants Association.
- Business owners from the Medical District.
- Staff from Memorial Hospital.
- Community and business leaders from North Gulfport and Turkey Creek.
- Downtown retail and business owners.
- Bank and real estate professionals.

The meetings allowed the design team the opportunity to present findings from the preliminary assessment; discuss stakeholders' concerns and visions for the proposed districts; and gauge reactions to possible design and policy options. The team presented a summary of the process, findings, and next steps at a public meeting at the end of the two days where community members had the opportunity to ask questions and comment on the work. Input from stakeholders and community members was instrumental in shaping the design and policy options presented in this report and creating a policy checklist intended to aid other communities striving to facilitate commercial corridor redevelopment.

During the workshop several overarching themes emerged:

- Stakeholders would like to see mixed-use development with improved connections to adjacent residential areas in all districts.
- Road and right-of-way improvements, including green infrastructure, landscaping, and accommodations for bicyclists and pedestrians are a priority in all areas.
- Each district has a unique character and opportunities to build on. However, more work is needed to reach a clear vision for each area.



FIGURE 2 Community members reviewed multiple policy and design options during the workshop.

TOD & PROGRAM DISTRICTS OVERALL MAP

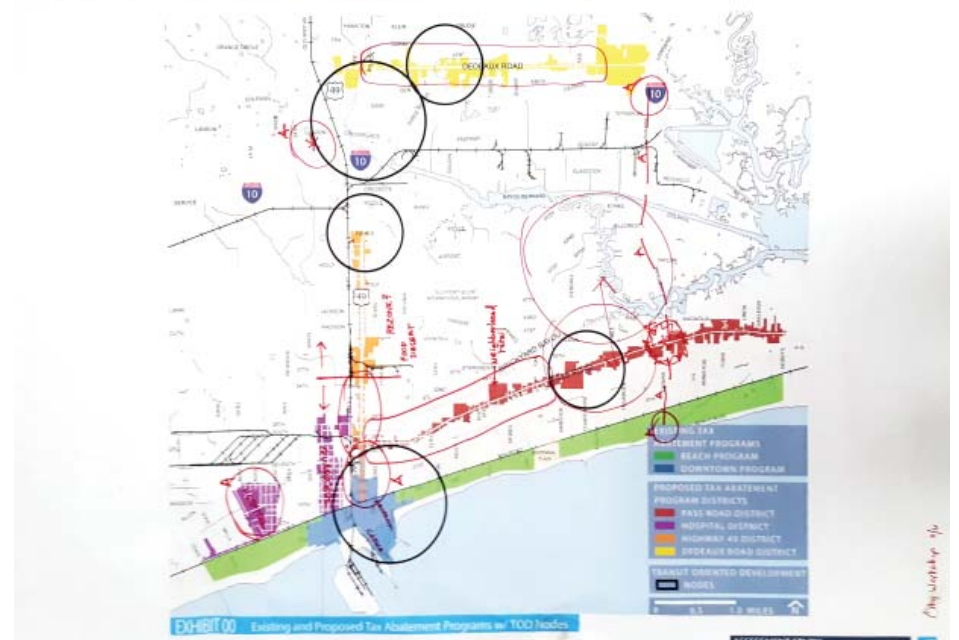


FIGURE 3 A map from the workshop highlighting potential nodes of focus within each district.

THE DESIGN PROCESS

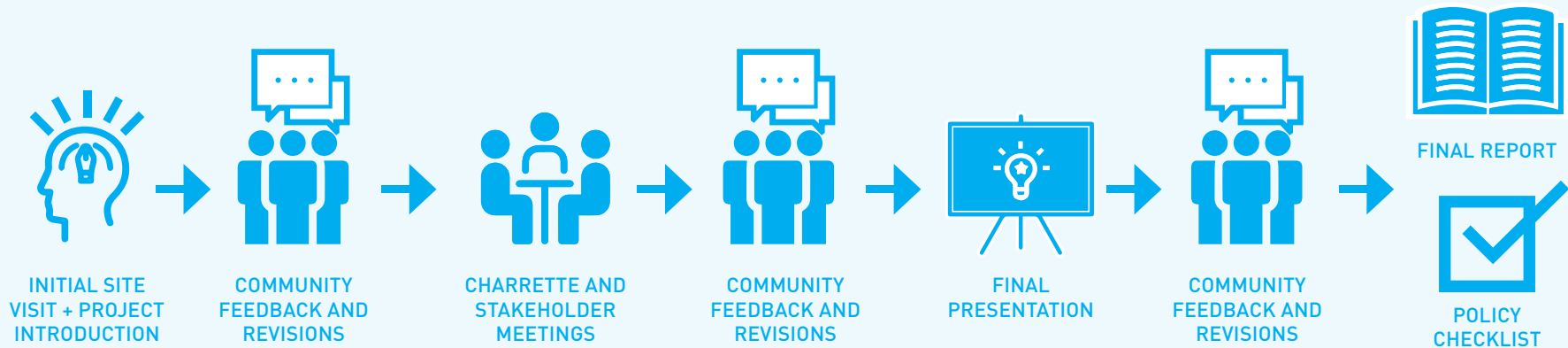


FIGURE 4 A diagram illustrating the design process from start to end.

- While all the proposed districts are important for different reasons, Highway 49 between the Gulfport-Biloxi International Airport and downtown has special significance. Stakeholders see this corridor as a critical gateway to downtown and other commercial districts that creates a first and lasting impression for visitors and potential investors.
- While all stakeholder groups viewed tax abatement programs favorably, other programs, policies, and grants that benefit small businesses and business owners who rent (as opposed to own their place of work) are needed to facilitate growth. Many stakeholders referenced the success of past façade improvement programs with enthusiasm.

Input focused on specific districts is reflected in the final policy and design options presented in sections 5 and 6 of this report.

4 PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT



FIGURE 5 An image of the existing street condition along Pass Road looking east.



FIGURE 6 An image of the existing street condition along Highway 49 looking south.

DISTRICT INTRODUCTIONS

Pass Road District

The Pass Road district is situated on high ground—a fact that became more important after Hurricane Katrina. Planning for future growth on Pass Road would increase the city’s resilience to future flooding by concentrating development on the city’s high ground. However, development potential on the north side of Pass Road is limited. For much of the length of the project area, Brickyard Bayou runs parallel to Pass Road for approximately half a mile to the north. It is the drainage waterway for stormwater runoff to the north of Pass Road and flows into the Biloxi Back Bay. Brickyard Bayou is also a floodway for a flood zone that limits development adjacent to Pass Road to the north.

Pass Road is a busy artery with many residential neighborhoods. It provides local access to retail and other businesses. Due to traffic congestion, commuters are more likely to use Highway 90 to the south which moves comparatively faster. There are four prominent connecting streets along Pass Road: Hewes Avenue, Courthouse Road, Cowan Road, and Debuys Road. These four intersections are typically commercial centers.

Approximately 34,446 people live within half a mile from Pass Road, which works out to 1,914 people per mile length of the road. Of the four districts, Pass Road has the highest average assessed value for a property with commercial buildings at \$366,000 per acre compared to \$270,000 per acre for Dedeaux Road, \$242,000 per acre for Highway 49, and \$308,000 per acre for the Medical District.

Highway 49 District

The Highway 49 district extends about 7 miles from the railroad at the northern boundary of downtown Gulfport to Airport Road. Highway 49 has the highest percentage of commercial property in terms of both the number of parcels (48 percent) and acreage (70 percent). The properties along Highway 49 vary in size, with several large commercial parcels just north of 34th Street and smaller parcels as you approach downtown Gulfport. Unlike Pass Road, this section of Highway 49 does not have prominent cross streets.



FIGURE 7 *An image of the existing street condition along Broad Avenue in the Medical District (west) looking north.*

Approximately 11,205 people live within half a mile from Highway 49, which works out to 1,601 people per mile length of the road. Highway 49 has the lowest percentage of residential acreage at 6.3 percent. Most of the residential property along this section of Highway 49 has suffered disinvestment for many years leading to vacant lots and many houses in disrepair. The railroad that parallels Highway 49 two blocks to the west limits development potential.

The Medical District

The Medical District includes three different commercial areas. The first area is the neighborhood immediately surrounding Gulfport Memorial Hospital. The second area includes 33rd Avenue to 30th Avenue and extends from 28th Street to the railroad. The third and smallest area in the Medical District is the line of parcels along Railroad Street from 33rd Street to the Gulfport city limits to the west. The types of current businesses outside the immediate surrounding neighborhood do not seem to be influenced by proximity to the hospital. The Medical District is situated within the city's floodplain, with drainage areas that feed into Brickyard Bayou. Repeated flooding has led to vacant properties and low appraised values.



FIGURE 8 *An image of the existing street condition along 30th Avenue in the Medical District (east) looking south.*

Approximately 17,141 people live within half a mile of the Medical District. Gulfport Memorial Hospital is the second largest employer in Gulfport with 3,118 employees and has many patients and visitors. The number of people regularly passing through the area could likely support more commercial activity than currently exists. Broad Avenue, which connects the Medical District to Highway 90, has several vacant lots.

Currently, the businesses in the blocks between 30th and 34th Avenue are small, local businesses, including several restaurants. This neighborhood is well suited for small-scale commercial development because it is a grid of small blocks with small lots and many residential buildings that can be converted to businesses. The average appraised value of vacant land is in the mid-range of the four commercial districts at around \$44,000 per acre.

Dedeaux Road District

Dedeaux Road runs east to west for approximately one mile north of Interstate 10. This district is bounded by Highway 49 to the west and Lorraine Road to the east. It is a newer commercial district compared to the other districts, as reflected by the amount of undeveloped property, the higher percentage of residential property, and the lower average



FIGURE 9 *An image of the existing street condition along Dedeaux Road looking east.*

assessed value for property with a commercial building. Dedeaux Road from Highway 49 to Three Rivers Road is five lanes wide and transitions to two lanes with no turn lane east of Three Rivers Road. According to the city planning officers, as both commercial and residential development has increased on Dedeaux Road, traffic has also increased, causing stop-and-go traffic on the eastern part of the road, especially when drivers need to turn left. The city of Gulfport is currently planning to widen the eastern part of Dedeaux Road to become five lanes.

EXISTING TAX ABATEMENT PROGRAMS IN THE CITY OF GULFPORT

Gulfport, like other cities, uses tax abatement programs to spur increased economic development and that could reinvigorate neighborhoods and increase population in targeted areas. The city implemented a Beach Abatement Program and a Downtown Abatement Program in 2014 to improve areas negatively affected by Hurricane Katrina. The hurricane also created a shift in economic conditions by making it less expensive and easier for new development to build on greenfield areas in the northern part of the city away from the coast. The city's investment in new infrastructure located away from the downtown core and traditional existing areas of housing and retail activity provided additional incentives for development in greenfield areas.

The Beach Abatement Program

The Beach Abatement Program runs in a strip between the city's western border to Debuys Road encompassing the area between Beach Boulevard and Railroad Street. As of January 2018, the city had received and approved 21 applications for new home construction projects with 8 applications pending approval for the program.

The tax abatement exempts properties from the ad valorem increase in assessed value resulting from improvements to property, not including the school portion of taxes. For residential properties in the designated zones, new construction or renovation valued from \$100,000 to \$400,000, depending on location, are eligible for an abatement of ad valorem taxes for seven years from the time of cost certification and approval. Multi-family properties completing improvements of at least \$1 million and commercial properties completing at least \$3 million in improvements are eligible for the abatement.

The Downtown Abatement Program

The Downtown Abatement Program encompasses an area from Pass Road to the Port running in a strip concentrated at the north end around Highway 49, then widening to include the downtown blocks on the east and west side of Highway 49. As of January 2018, the city has received and approved four downtown commercial redevelopment projects through the program.

As with the Beach Abatement Program, the tax abatement exempts properties from the ad valorem increase in assessed value resulting from improvements to property, not including the school portion of taxes. For commercial or residential properties in the designated zones, new construction valued at \$2 million or more and renovations costing more than \$250,000 are eligible for abatement of ad valorem taxes for seven years from the time of cost certification and approval.

Financial Analysis

A first step in evaluating the success of an abatement program for both the jurisdiction and the property owner would be to calculate the costs and benefits of participation. For the state of Mississippi, property tax assessment rates are 10 percent for owner-occupied, single-family residences. Multi-family, commercial, and industrial properties are

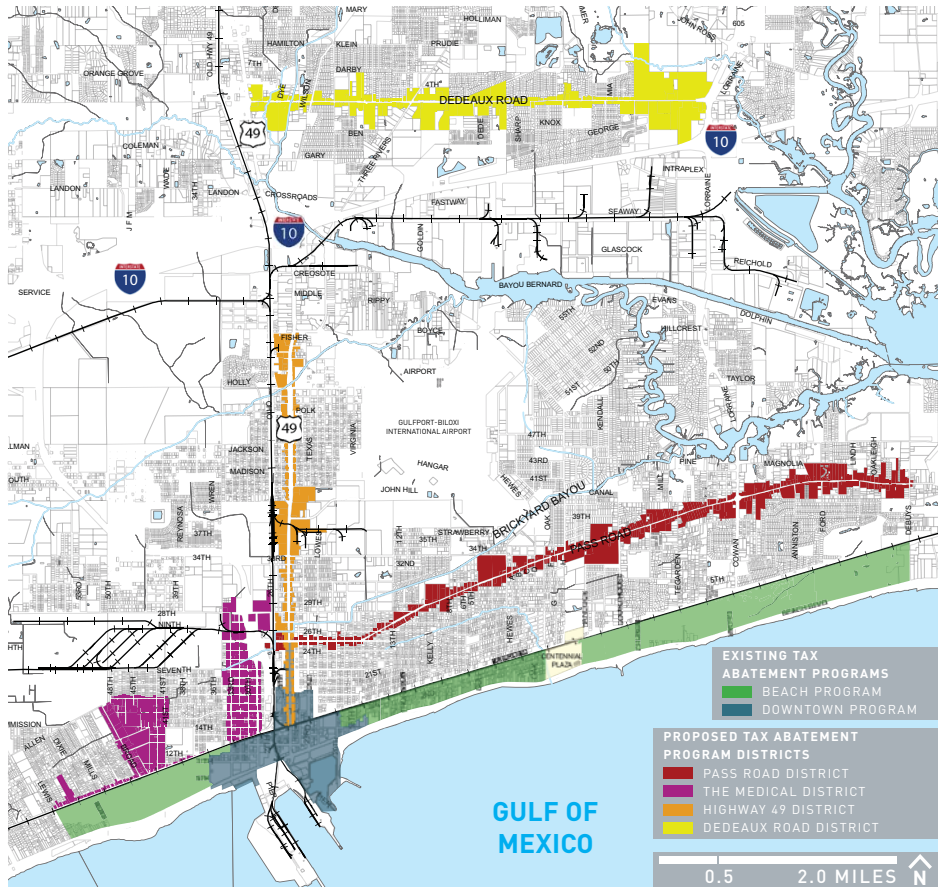


FIGURE 10 A map illustrating Gulfport's existing tax abatement programs in relation to the proposed tax abatement districts.

assessed at a 15 percent rate. By using the current millage rate for Gulfport of .034, which excludes county and school levies, the abatement value can be determined for property owners of the various types of sites in the Beach and Downtown Districts.

The use of these figures enables a calculation of the minimum benefit for a property meeting the minimum threshold for inclusion in the tax abatement program. Excluding school-directed tax levies, the minimum benefit for a property meeting the minimum threshold for inclusion in the abatement program would fall at \$340 per year for a homeowner and over \$15,000 for commercial site owners. Over the life of the seven-year

abatement, the benefit would range from \$2,380 to \$107,800 per property enrolled in the program.

Under the existing programs, the city has received and approved 4 projects in the downtown district and 21 projects in the beach district. There are currently 8 applications pending for approval in the beach district as of January 2018. These new projects would yield a minimum of \$2.8 million in new value from construction activity for a minimum of \$67,000 in forgone revenue over the abatement period. In assessing new areas for tax abatement programs, one could assume similar ratios of new construction value to forgone revenue, even if it is impossible to ascertain the number of projects in advance. A clear articulation of the city's goals and an understanding of how much new development could be attributed to the tax abatement incentives are necessary to assess the benefit of the existing program and its most effective potential expansion to other areas.

EXPANDING THE PROGRAM

In formulating an expansion of the existing tax abatement program to new areas, the city of Gulfport could tailor program policies and requirements to achieve the city's goals for each location. Information that could help the city develop targeted incentive programs for each area might include:

- Current development activity in the delineated zones and its desirability and alignment with city and/or community goals.

	Minimum Expenditure Required	Property Tax Rate	Total Millage Rate	Less School Taxes	Less County Taxes	Annual Abatement Value	7-year Value
House (On Beach)	400,000	10%	5,411	2,594	1,457	1,360	9,520
House (Off Beach)	100,000	10%	1,353	649	364	340	2,380
Multifamily	1,000,000	15%	20,291	9,728	5,463	5,100	35,700
Commercial (New)	3,000,000	15%	60,872	29,183	16,389	15,300	107,100
Downtown (Renovated)	250,000	15%	5,073	2,432	1,366	1,275	8,925
Downtown (New)	2,000,000	15%	40,581	19,455	10,926	10,200	71,400

FIGURE 11 A table explaining the current tax abatement program in Gulfport, Mississippi.

- Businesses and/or housing types not currently present but desired by city residents.
- An analysis of where these activities and typologies are locating and the factors that attract them.
- An assessment of how an abatement program would affect other parts of the city outside of the targeted areas.
- A catalogue of infrastructure and other public projects needed, planned, or underway in the targeted area(s).
- An assessment of building codes, zoning regulations, and planning guidelines in the targeted areas and the type of development they allow and encourage.

In the specific areas outlined for new abatement districts, the city wants to stem the tide of disinvestment and increase local business activity and housing production. Assessing some of the reasons these specific areas have experienced increase vacancy and a lack of building renovation or new construction could help to formulate a strategy to reverse the current trajectory.

In expanding programs to new areas of the city, lessons from other jurisdictions can be helpful in formulating policies and preparing for implementation. (See the case study for Columbus, Ohio on the following page.) Best practices from other jurisdictions have included the following:

- Assessing or reassessing property values before implementing new abatement programs could ensure maximum benefit to the city for the short and long term.
- Assessing the effect on other services besides schools, like police, fire, and sanitation that will be affected can ensure adequate funding for new developments and existing residents.
- Job targets and wage requirements can be incorporated into an abatement program. Having clear goals for the number and quality of jobs created for an abatement program can ensure successful

outcomes and impose conditions for non-compliance. The city could consider this in areas like the Medical District where an anchor institution and/or business is present.

- The phase in of taxes toward the end of the abatement period can aid owners in the transition to full taxes at the end of the abatement period.
- Claw backs are one method for ensuring compliance in meeting job creation or minimum wage standards. A claw back is a clause or provision outlined in an abatement program that creates a framework for evaluating the stated goals and provides a mechanism for retracting benefits already paid for goals not met.
- Evaluating the cost disparity to the business between expanding or locating in Gulfport and a site outside of the city can suggest how large a tax abatement must be to spur development.

CASE STUDY: COLUMBUS, OHIO

Nationwide Children's Hospital maintains a campus in Columbus, Ohio. Although the hospital is one of the region's largest employers and has experienced sustained growth, the city of Columbus and the hospital realized that the neighborhoods surrounding the campus were not thriving in conjunction with the hospital. They were, instead, experiencing abandonment and deteriorating conditions in the housing stock. The city of Columbus coordinated with local private partners and nonprofit organizations to create multiple programs that promote redevelopment in the surrounding neighborhoods. Each program has been tailored based on the following goals:

- Encourage businesses to locate in the area.
- Improve housing conditions.
- Enhance the image of the area.
- Improve public facilities for residents.
- Improve transportation and walkability.

The city of Columbus created a tax abatement program targeted to residents or businesses relocating from outside of the city limits to an area around the hospital. Businesses also had to demonstrate a minimum of 10 new employees. In addition to the abatement program, the city coordinated with local private and public partners to create complementary incentive programs in the targeted neighborhoods, including:

- A mortgage and down payment assistance program through private partnerships to encourage homeownership.
- Renovation grants to rehabilitate existing structures and improve housing coordinated by a local nonprofit organization with funding provided by the anchor institution, a bank, the city, and other local nonprofits.
- Façade improvement grants for commercial property owners to encourage redevelopment funded by the city with design services provided by a local nonprofit organization.
- Open space improvements provided by the city to improve residents' health and wellness.

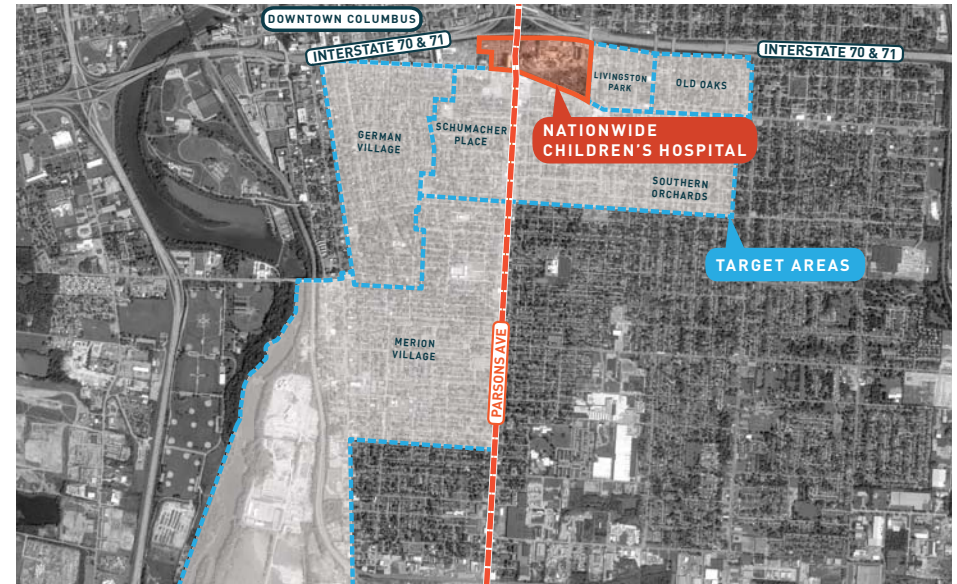
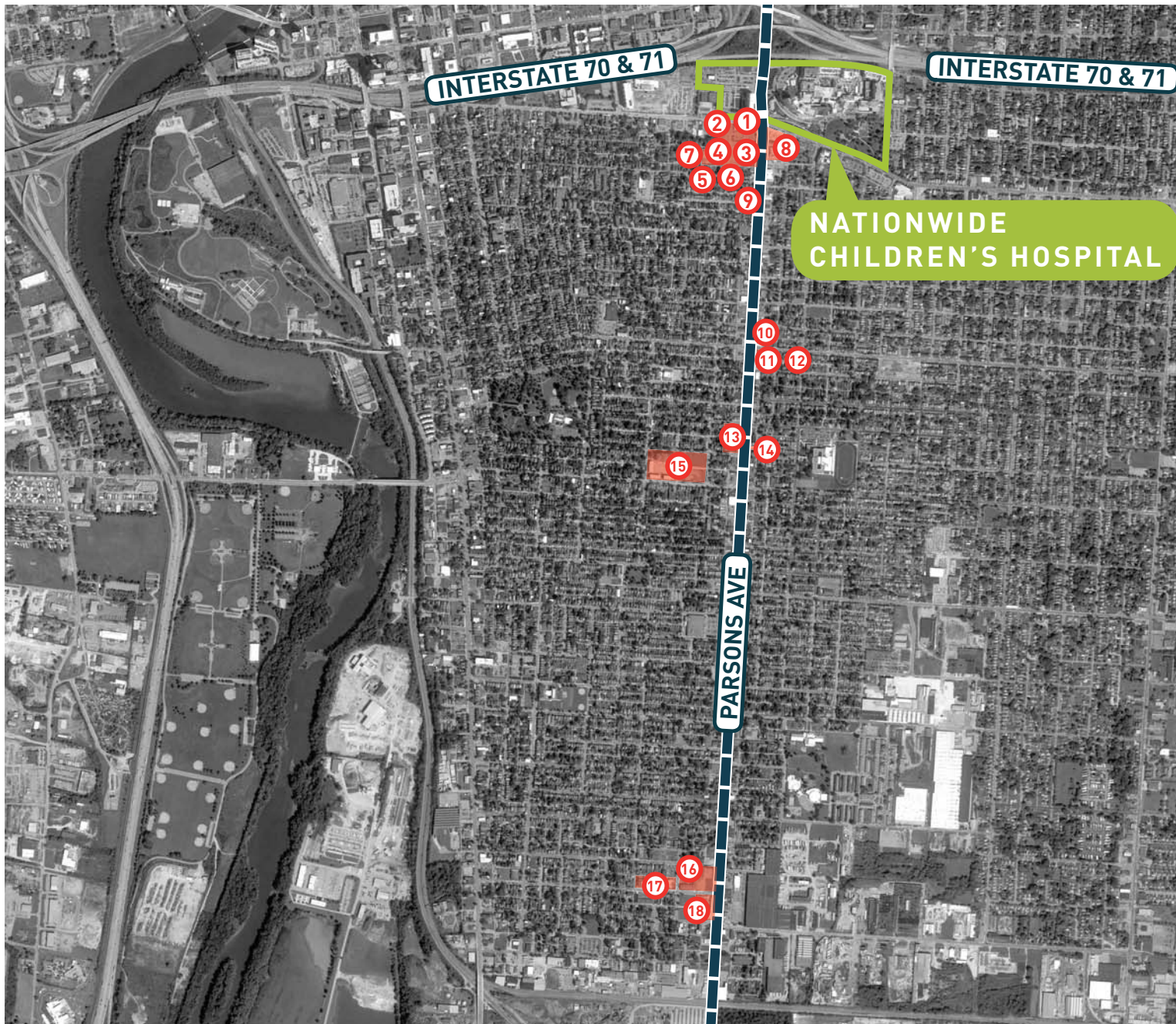


FIGURE 12 A diagram illustrating the neighborhoods around Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio, that are targeted for incentive programs.

- Streetscape improvements provided by the city to improve tree canopy and aesthetic appeal.
- Transportation improvements provided by the city to improve walking and biking.
- A land banking program organized by the city and county.

The coupling of a tax abatement program with other incentive programs helped achieve the following outcomes in the targeted neighborhoods:

- Over 71 home renovations and 15 new home constructions completed.
- 149 home improvement grants awarded.
- 37 affordable homes created by nonprofit agencies.
- Eight commercial parcels purchased for redevelopment.
- 18 new local businesses established.
- Numerous small-scale, commercial renovations completed.



LEGEND

- ① CVS Pharmacy
- ② Scrambler Marie's Restaurant
- ③ The Fitness Loft
- ④ The Crest Gastropub
- ⑤ Alchemy Juice Bar
- ⑥ Local Matters
- ⑦ The Arbor Apartments
- ⑧ Panera Bread Restaurant
- ⑨ The East Public
- ⑩ Bikes for All People
- ⑪ Sacred Hand Tattoo Society
- ⑫ Roell's Wellness Collective
- ⑬ Columbus Metro. Library
- ⑭ Two Dollar Radio Bookstore
- ⑮ The Barrett Apartments
- ⑯ Parsons Village Apartments
- ⑰ Reeb Community Center
- ⑱ J.M. Family Health and Wellness Center

FIGURE 13 A diagram illustrating new businesses open or in development along Parsons Avenue since the start of the tax abatement and other incentive programs.

5 FINAL POLICY OPTIONS

The city of Gulfport is considering expanding its two tax abatement programs to the four districts: Pass Road District, Highway 49 District, the Medical District, and Dedeaux Road District. Community feedback, consideration of best practices from other cities, and closer examination of each district's opportunities and challenges suggest policy options that could maximize the success of an expanded tax abatement program and facilitate economic revitalization of the four districts while achieving other community benefits.

Certain policy and design options could apply equally well to all the districts under consideration. Additional district-specific options leverage unique attributes to each of the districts and incorporated input from residents, business owners, and the city to better achieve community goals.

GENERAL ISSUES

The community engagement process confirmed many of the issues identified in the preliminary assessment. The following issues have contributed to the lack of sustained investment in the four districts designated for new tax abatement programs:

- The city planned new investments in road improvements along the northern parts of Highway 49, and although new investments are planned for Dedeaux Road as well, infrastructure in the other districts is aging and lacks pedestrian amenities.
- Current incentives make undeveloped ("greenfield") areas more attractive for new businesses than developed areas. The Pass Road District and the Medical District have a significant number of vacancies and businesses that are not upgrading or maintaining structures. The city has made public investments in infrastructure near greenfield sites clustered on parts of Highway 49 near the intersection of Interstate 10 and, to some extent, in targeted historic areas in the downtown core, making private investment in these areas more attractive than in the city's older commercial corridors.
- Shifting customer habits are having a profound effect on traditional retail and business owners. Two particular areas of concern for both small- and mid-sized businesses are the move to online shopping and the consolidation or collapse of large retailers that often anchor commercial districts.
- Hidden or inadvertent incentives to develop new areas and buildings, rather than rehabilitation of existing buildings in existing districts. These can include spot variances to allow for specific developments rather than revision of a holistic community-wide planning document, or annexation of new areas with more favorable development conditions.
- Currently the four districts do not have unique identities. Nationwide, commercial districts that are showing success, even in the face of the increase in on-line shopping, are areas that brand and differentiate themselves through a combination of placemaking, availability of unique products, and experiences that draw customers from a wide area.
- In an undifferentiated retail and commercial landscape, many districts depend on through-traffic for customers. Certain commercial districts might instead rely primarily on local or walk-in traffic. Understanding the nature of the customer base for specific districts can help identify marketing strategies to attract clientele and give other businesses an understanding of the benefits and opportunities of locating in a particular district.

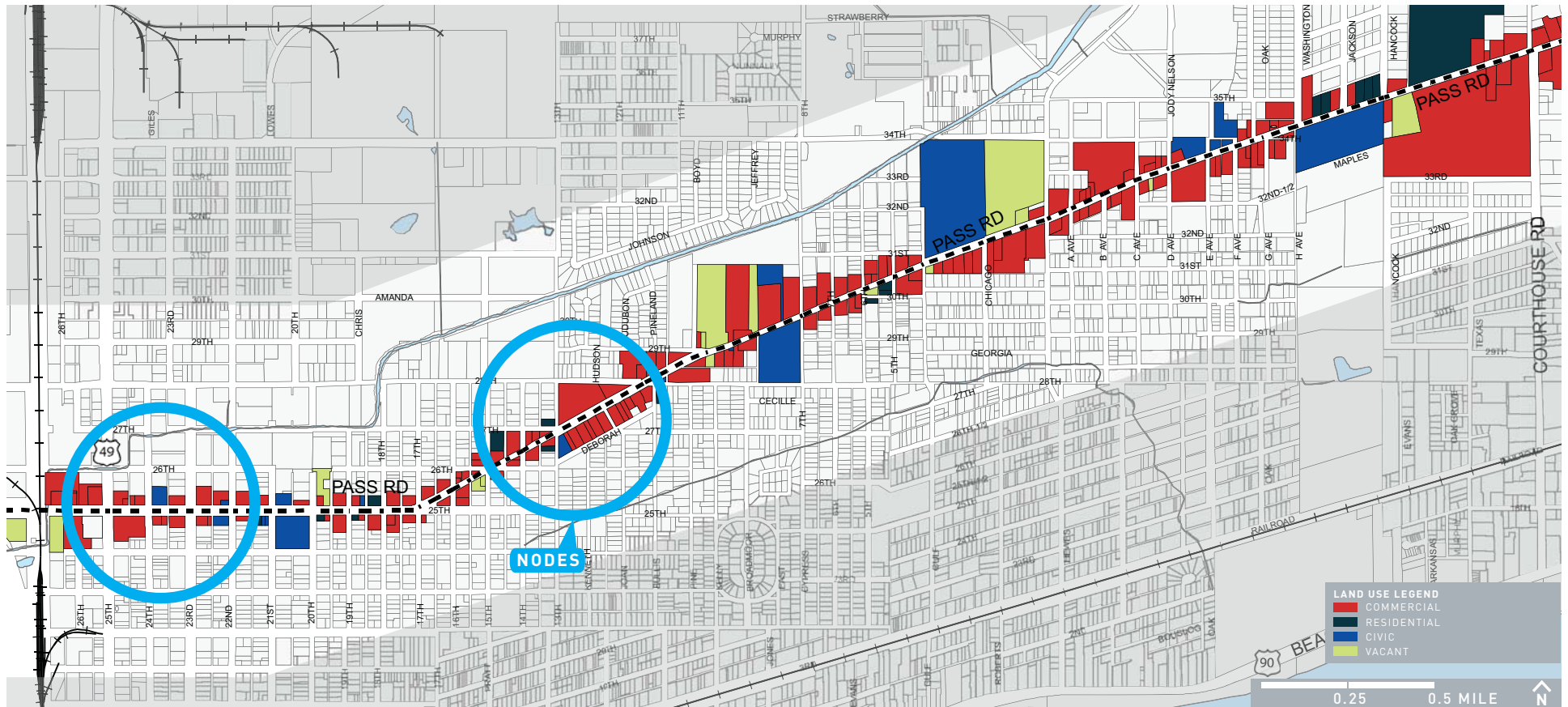


FIGURE 14 An example of defining "nodes," or areas where targeted investments in design strategies and incentive programs could have the greatest impact in Pass Road District.

GENERAL POLICY OPTIONS

Given the general issues facing all the districts under consideration, the city could undertake several initial initiatives in advance of an expanded abatement program to set the stage for successful outcomes. Some suggestions applicable to all of the city's proposed abatement areas are outlined below.

1. Nodes Versus Strips

Conversations with community residents and business owners and operators revealed that while the four districts are linear and along boulevards, many view the areas as a series of distinct nodes that encompass the surrounding blocks, including residential, commercial, and institutional uses. This realization suggests targeting improvements and

incentive programs within a given district in nodes that encompasses a main road, access points, retail strips, and residential neighborhoods.

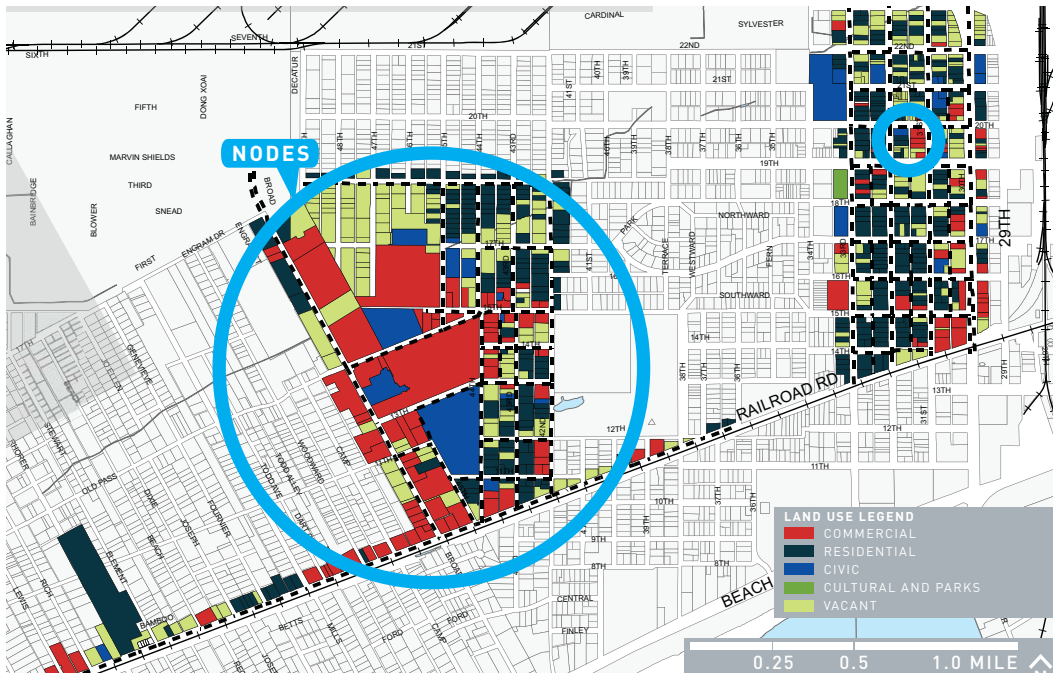


FIGURE 15 An example of defining "nodes," or areas where targeted investments in design strategies and incentive programs could have the greatest impact in the Medical District.

One way to assess and select nodes within the districts might be to address questions such as:

- Where are residents or visitors who live or pass through the designated areas shopping, working, and living now?
- What changes in business types, infrastructure, or aesthetics would entice them to frequent the areas more often?
- What are the prime attractions that could anchor a wider district?

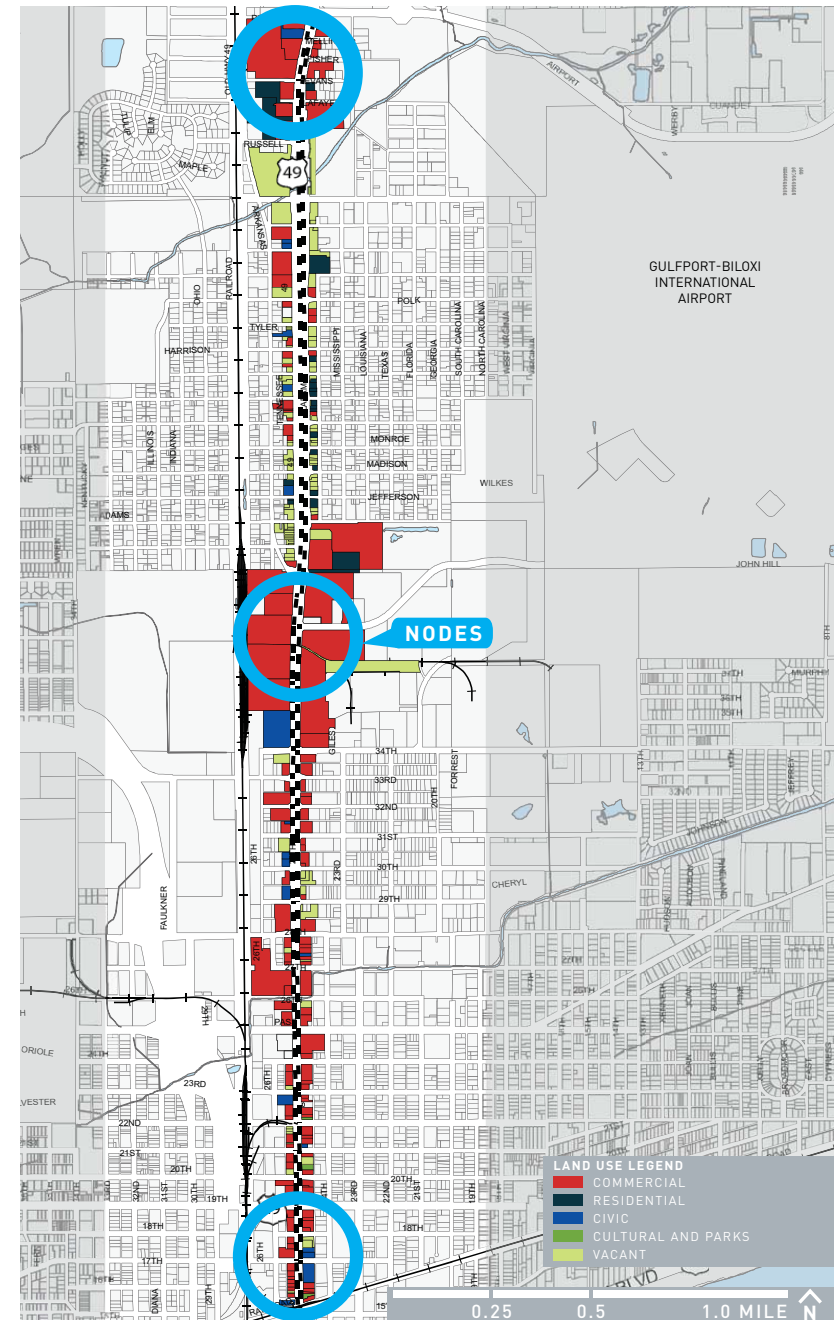


FIGURE 16 An example of defining "nodes," or areas where targeted investments in design strategies and incentive programs could have the greatest impact in Highway 49 District.

This approach might result in two or more nodes within a designated district that hold the best possibilities for success in creating vibrant streetscapes and increasing commercial activity. Once prime attractions are identified as anchors, another series of investigations could help to ensure success for the businesses using the abatement program and the existing homes and businesses in the surrounding area. The following strategies could complement a tax abatement program for maximum impact in the district nodes:

- Develop a consistent aesthetic standard to maintain quality and cohesiveness within a designated area. Uniform signage, durable materials, and an approval framework are ways to create an inviting and enticing public realm (see figure 17).
- Provide pedestrian amenities that will encourage residents and visitors to linger and patronize multiple establishments in one visit. These can include elements such as wide sidewalks with street trees; outdoor seating for business patrons and the general public; and signage to identify businesses, parking options, and other points of interests (see figure 18).
- Develop a better stormwater management system that incorporates green infrastructure to absorb and filter rainwater, reducing flood risk while beautifying the streetscape (see figure 19).
- Diversify housing types so families of various sizes and socioeconomic status can locate near each other and within proximity of a node, thereby increasing the demand for a diversity in retail types (see figure 20).
- Diversify business types, including both national chain stores that provide consistent products and locally owned, neighborhood-serving retail and other services to allow residents to spend their time and money near home (see figure 21).
- Highlight existing assets, including long-standing local businesses or amenities, to ensure that long-term business owners benefit from changes in policies, regulations, and incentives (see figure 22).



FIGURE 17 The use of a consistent aesthetic standard in creating an appealing streetscape in Bethesda, Maryland, attracts people to spend time on the street shopping and dining.
PHOTO CREDIT: Daniel Lobo, flickr.com



FIGURE 18 The use of wide sidewalks and the investment in pedestrian amenities creates an appealing pedestrian environment that attracts people to the street in Pearl Street Mall, Boulder, Colorado.
PHOTO CREDIT: Lee Coursey, flickr.com



FIGURE 19 The use of a planted grass swale used as a stormwater management system to collect stormwater runoff from roadways and parking lots in new developments of Mequon, Wisconsin.
PHOTO CREDIT: Aaron Volkening, flickr.com

DIVERSIFY HOUSING TYPES



FIGURE 20 A diversity of housing types created a mixed-income community in High Point, a neighborhood in Seattle, Washington.
PHOTO CREDIT: Jo Ming, flickr.com

DIVERSIFY BUSINESS TYPES



FIGURE 21 A diversity in business types, mixed with locally owned businesses and chain businesses can encourage residents to spend their time and resources in Pearl Street Mall, Boulder, Colorado.
PHOTO CREDIT: Kent Kanouse, flickr.com

HIGHLIGHT EXISTING ASSETS

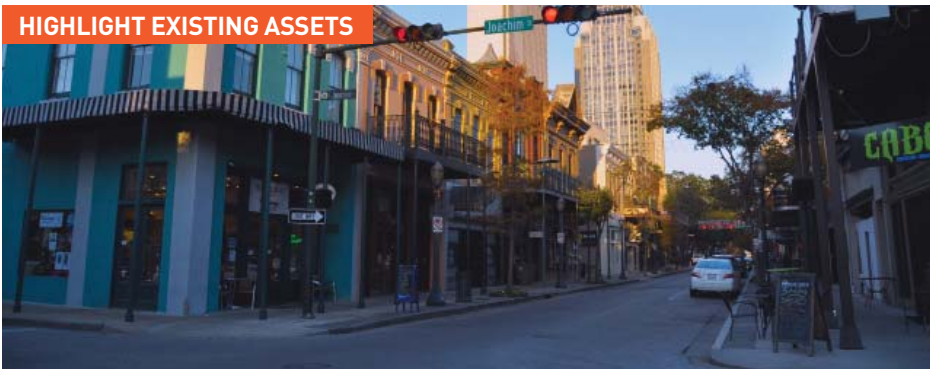


FIGURE 22 Historic buildings in Mobile, Alabama, are highlighted as part of a historic district. Creating tailored policies that aim to preserve and build upon existing assets can help revitalize a district.
PHOTO CREDIT: Fuangg's Photos, flickr.com

2. District Identity

Building a district identity could be approached in several ways. Each district is likely to have a slightly different strategy, depending on the availability of key assets, such as the presence of a merchants' organization; the historical identity of the district; the current identity of the district; and potential development opportunities. Often it can be helpful to conduct a targeted planning study focused on defining and enhancing the identity of the district. This would begin by identifying the current businesses and assets located within the district, evaluating the potential opportunities for new businesses, identifying circulation and traffic patterns for the area, and developing an opportunities and constraints matrix.

3. Branding

In parallel with an abatement policy, a district branding strategy is another approach that could maximize success by focusing development efforts. This branding might be tied to a specific retail experience or a type of commercial activity that the consumer is likely to find there. Some regionally known commercial districts include Magazine Street in New Orleans, Louisiana and Dauphin Street in Mobile, Alabama; but creating an identity at the local level is also important. In many instances, an identity already exists at the local level, but it might not always be a positive influence on the commercial success of the district. Changing or enhancing the identity of a district is an effective way to attract infill development that is economically and environmentally sustainable. Branding holds the possibility for rethinking a district and changing common perceptions that might be hindering success.

4. Wayfinding

In some cases, elements such as unique attractions, walkability, connections to a diverse set of experiences, or enticing natural features might be in place without the signage to guide customers to the destination. Wayfinding and signage is an inexpensive way to create the preconditions for increasing awareness of a district. A wayfinding strategy could be an added element to highlight the features of zones targeted for abatement and draw potential new businesses and customers to the area.

5. Marketing Districts like Realtors

Commercial real estate agents provide analytical data and financial information to potential business owners not just on specific properties, but also on the wider area to fill commercial vacancies or spur new

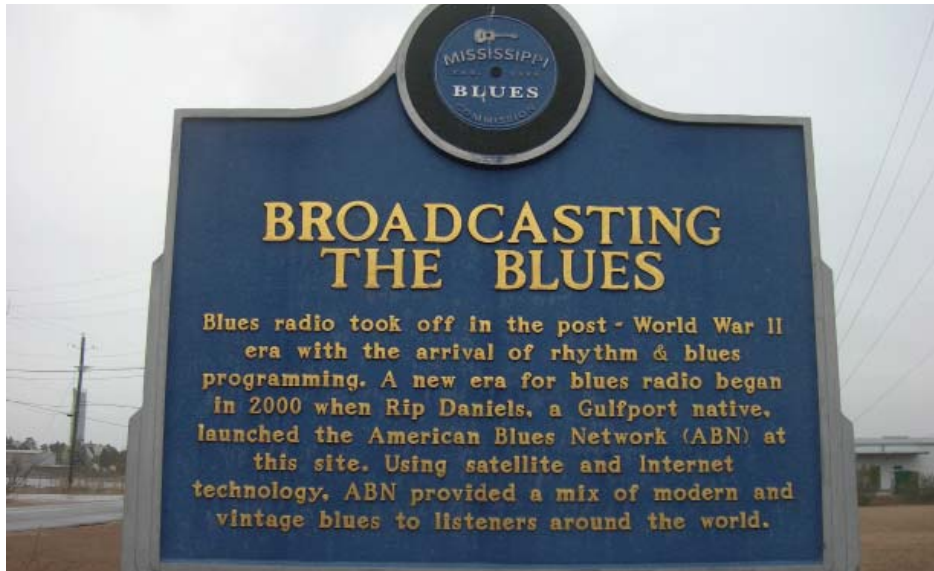
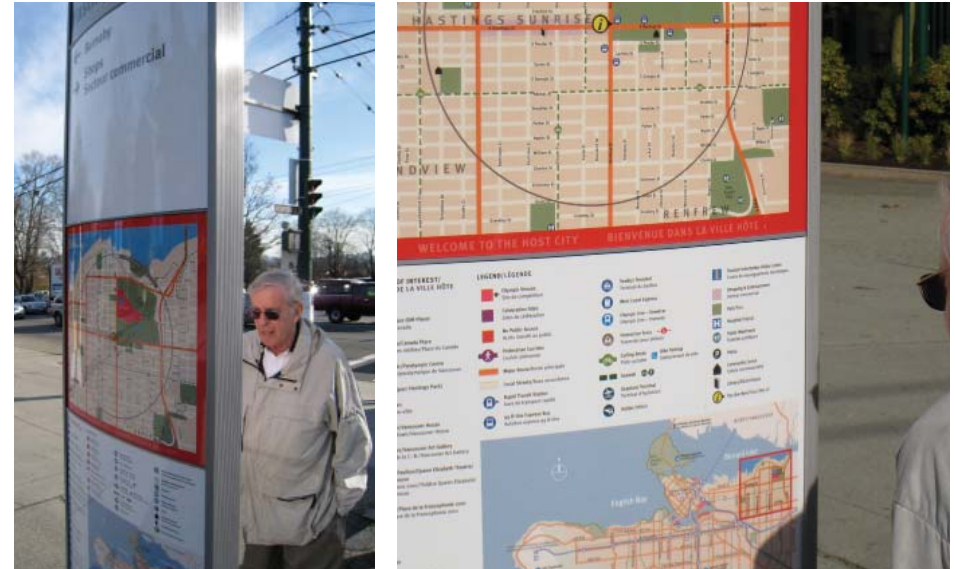


FIGURE 23 Using historic markers as a branding and wayfinding element in Gulfport, Mississippi.
PHOTO CREDIT: Jimmy Emerson, flickr.com

development. In Gulfport, the city provides this type of information for large, multi-parcel developments, such as Anchor Plaza. The city could also do this for commercial corridors with multiple owners and various conditions like those in the four districts, giving individual owners or smaller businesses opportunities to move or grow based on information that is not typically available to them.

6. Expanding Use of Tax Increment Financing

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts are currently used to fund improvements for large-scale development projects in Gulfport. TIF districts could be joint city and county agreements that direct all (or a portion of) taxes generated above a pre-established baseline to a special fund for reinvestment in the development. If the proposed additional tax revenue is sufficiently large, the city could issue bonds to provide the developers with funds up front for land acquisition, infrastructure improvements, or other costs. The city then repays the bonds from the increased tax proceeds. The city could form a TIF district in any or all of the four districts and capture sales, property, or other taxes to fund improvements. Additional construction or renovation activities could pay for infrastructure improvements and assist both existing and new property owners.



FIGURES 24 AND 25 Using maps as an example of a wayfinding element in Vancouver, Canada.
PHOTO CREDIT: Vancouver Public Space Networks Photostream, flickr.com

7. Assessing the Value of Property Tax Abatement Versus Sales Tax or other Abatements

Property tax abatements benefit property owners by abating future taxes on improvements and thus incentivizing renovation or new construction. However, for commercial properties, it might be more important to incentivize the behavior of building tenants who decide which space to lease and often decide whether to renovate it. A sales tax abatement or exemption whose benefits go directly to business owners rather than property owners might better spur economic activity in an area, as they would have an incentive to locate their businesses in the areas targeted for abatement and would have extra funds they could choose to invest in building improvements.

Certain jurisdictions provide a renter's tax credit. For example, in New York City, both low-income renters and homeowners are entitled to a property tax credit on their income taxes, recognizing that renters pay property taxes indirectly through their rent. Providing such tax relief could shift benefits to tenants while still supporting the property owner by encouraging and supporting occupancy.

8. Layering Additional State and Local Programs into Abatement Programs and Aligning Policies to Maximize Benefits

A tax abatement program is one tool for spurring revitalization and generating economic development. A host of state and federal programs could be layered onto a tax abatement program to create an enticing package of benefits for a business owner or homeowner contemplating investing in a neighborhood. For each identified priority area, a menu of programs that complement the tax abatement program could be outlined in the abatement application. Relative to the overall investment in a home or business, the abatement amount over time might seem like a small figure. However, when potential business owners or homeowners can see all available incentives together, the package could persuade them to move forward with an investment. The tax programs administered by the State of Mississippi can be found at <https://www.mississippi.org/home-page/our-advantages/incentives/tax-incentives/> and can be included with information about the tax abatement program specifically highlighting:

- The Mississippi Department of Revenue Jobs Tax Credit, which provides an income tax credit for the creation of jobs in manufacturing, processing, distribution, wholesaling, research and development, and warehousing, or businesses that are air transportation and maintenance facilities, final destination or resort hotels, recreational facilities that impact tourism, movie industry studios, telecommunication enterprises, data or information processing enterprises, computer software development enterprises, or any technology-intensive facility or enterprise.
- The Growth and Prosperity (GAP) Program, which provides income, franchise, sales, and property tax incentives to companies that locate or expand in economically challenged areas of the state.
- Mississippi's Clean Energy Initiative Incentives Program, which provides an income tax exemption and other tax incentives to companies that manufacture systems or components used to generate clean, renewable, or alternative energy.
- Sales and Franchise Tax Exemptions for a variety of businesses from aerospace to clean energy.

- The Mississippi Tourism Rebate Program, which provides a tax rebate to qualified applicants of new tourism-oriented projects in Mississippi allowing for a portion of the sales tax collected to reimburse eligible costs incurred during the construction of a project.

9. Forming Strategic Partnerships with Larger Employers

Like cities, large employers work to attract and retain employees. By working in partnership, the city of Gulfport and its large employers could offer complementary benefits to new residents and retail businesses. For example, in consultation with employers, such as the Port of Gulfport, the Seabees naval base, and Memorial Hospital at Gulfport, the city's tax abatement programs could be combined with employer incentives for employees to patronize local businesses or to buy properties in nearby neighborhoods such as low-interest loans and/or down payment assistance.

10. Linking Districts to Existing Amenities and Assets

Gulfport is in a geographically desirable location, and each of the proposed districts could be analyzed to determine existing amenities. The coast with beaches and casino hotels acts as an attractor for local and regional populations. Targeting areas to the east, west, and north of the region's biggest draw for recreational and commercial activity for new investment could help capture the markets en route to coastal destinations. On a smaller scale, the city could help connect potential customers to nearby neighborhoods with services and businesses they might patronize through signage and wayfinding, and by targeting abatement programs in sections of the district that abut neighborhoods, businesses, or districts that are showing strength.

6 DISTRICT-SPECIFIC POLICY AND DESIGN OPTIONS

PASS ROAD DISTRICT

Community input from the workshop highlighted the following opportunities and challenges for the Pass Road District, which informed the policy and design options:

- The area needs beautification and upkeep.
- There is a lot of vacant lots and buildings.
- Power lines are unsightly and should be buried.
- Streets are not functioning for cars, bikes, or pedestrians.
- There is still a lot of automobile traffic, which brings in potential customers.
- The area has the potential to create clusters of complementary businesses centered around the existing bridal shop to create a “Bridal District.”

The owner of Bridal and Formal Boutique/House of Tux on Pass Road was courted by surrounding jurisdictions but chose to locate her business along Pass Road in Gulfport. By investing in new facilities that draw customers from around the region, businesses like Bridal and Formal represent anchors for their neighborhoods that also generate significant sales tax revenue for the city.

Understanding the reasons such businesses are investing in otherwise declining districts might suggest specific policies around tax exemptions and abatements that could encourage others to invest. The city could couple policies that support retention and expansion of existing anchors with any tax abatement program and provide additional incentives to draw complementary businesses to the district.

The success of identifying an anchor business within the district and building upon its identity with other complementary businesses can be seen in Cincinnati, Ohio. In Reading, a suburb of Cincinnati, a bridal district was created that now represents the largest of its sort in the United States. The district is home to more than 44 different wedding-related businesses and services in a walkable area with a radius of two miles. The district is now a one-stop shop for all wedding-related needs for a multi-

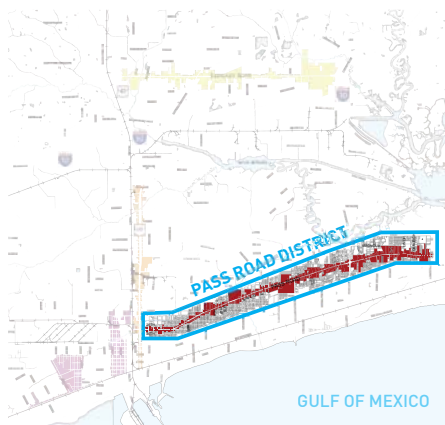


FIGURE 26 A map illustrating a potential Pass Road District.



FIGURE 27 An image of the existing street condition at the intersection of Pass Road and Cowan Road.



FIGURE 28 *An image of a vacant strip mall on Pass Road.*

state area. The district is also branded with a common web portal, calendar of events, shared advertising, and promotions. Run by the Chamber of Commerce, the branding of the district builds on itself with new businesses joining at a sustained pace.

Creating a specific niche within the district based on a local, successful anchor business will create support for other local, independently owned businesses and does not create competition with other commercial corridors in the city. The city could consider a node strategy that concentrates policies and improvements in areas with an anchor business to maximize the success of an expanded tax abatement program that is tailored around a specific industry. The strategy could include the following:

- Promote specific retail types that reinforce a neighborhood brand.
- Coordinate policies with state and federal grants and incentives to increase benefits.
- Allow flexibility on types of abatements to create incentives for business owners as well as land owners.
- Prioritize existing buildings or connected infill lots over vacant parcels.

- Lower thresholds to qualify for abatements for renovation or new construction of strategically placed buildings that would assist in the creation of a cohesive district and meet design guidelines for neighborhood character.

The design options for Pass Road center around the reorganization of spaces along the corridor and a general need for sprucing up the streetscape. Prioritizing the use of existing buildings or connecting infill lots over vacant parcels for new development will help turn around the perception of the area as declining and help spur additional investment. The design options on Pass Road includes narrowing lane widths, burying utilities, and planting street trees to improve the appearance of the street. The benefits of narrowing lane widths will slow down traffic and create a less intimidating environment for pedestrians, but the tradeoffs might include an increase travel time for vehicular traffic. Narrowing lane widths will also allow for the addition of a turn lane, sidewalks, and formal vehicular entrances to businesses. This would improve the functionality of the street for pedestrians and cars.

Existing private property owners could be incentivized through grant opportunities to enhance their facades and surface parking lots by investing in green infrastructure and planting shade trees, which would meet the community's goal to beautify the area while helping to better manage stormwater. The city could encourage new developments to put their parking lots behind the new structures to enhance the aesthetic of the overall district and make the area more inviting for pedestrians. Design guidelines written into the abatement policy or changes in planning codes and regulations in advance of instituting the abatement policy could help provide such encouragement.

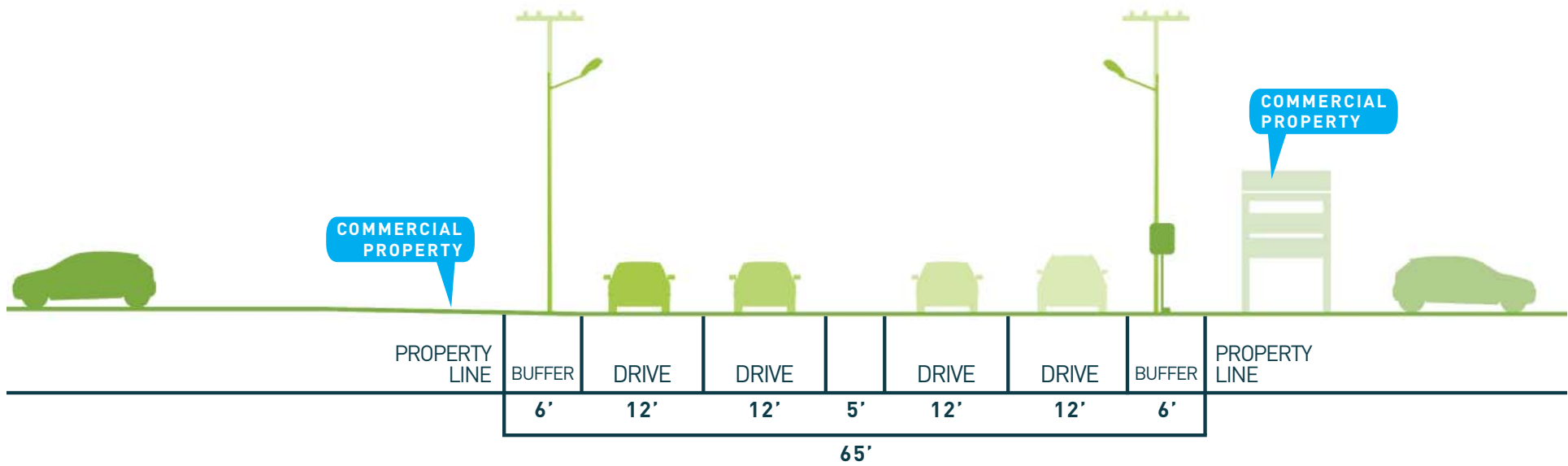


LEGEND

- ① New developments
- ② Planted buffers
- ③ Existing parking lot improvements
- ④ New parking lots
- ⑤ Formal vehicular entrances

FIGURE 29 A diagram illustrating the final policy options for Pass Road.

EXISTING - SECTION VIEW



EXISTING - PLAN VIEW

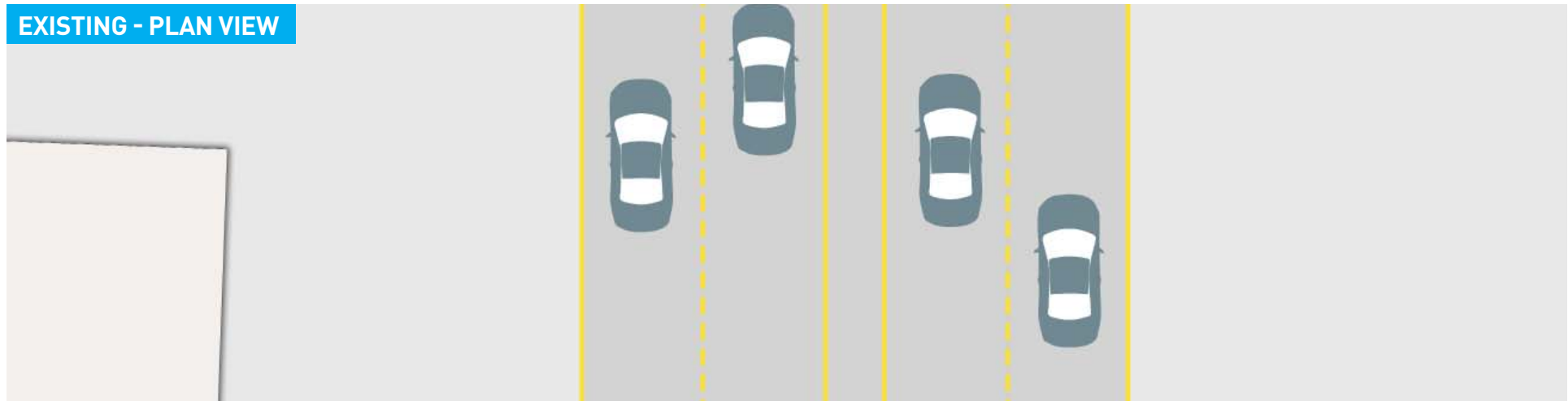
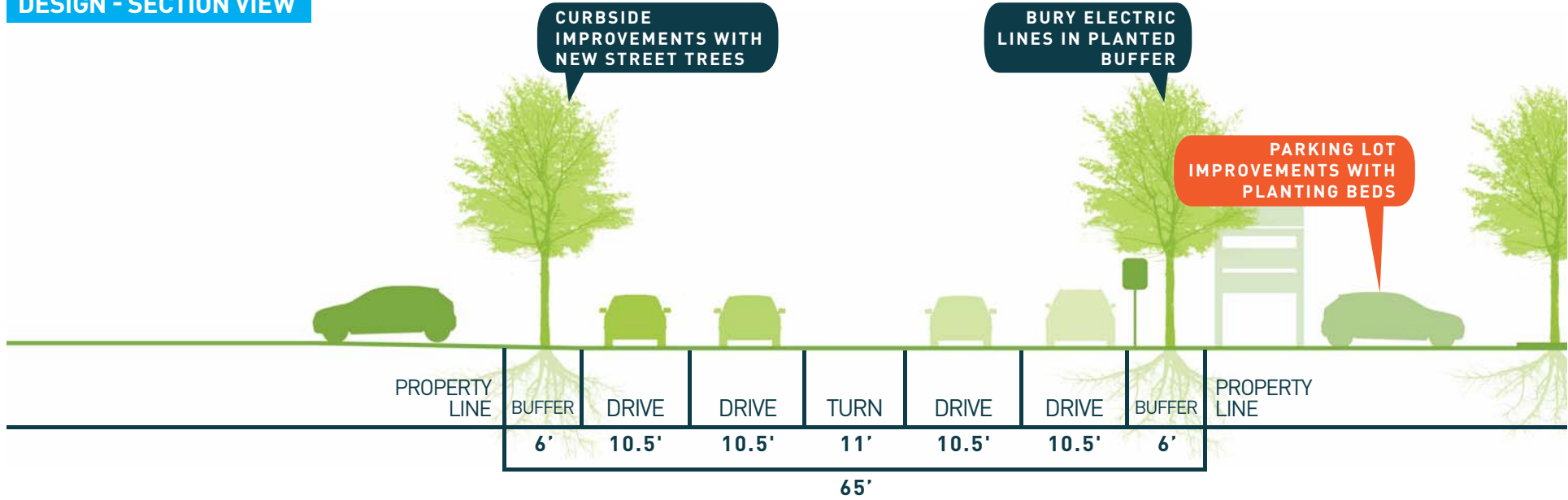


FIGURE 30 A general section and plan illustrating the existing conditions on Pass Road.

DESIGN - SECTION VIEW



DESIGN - PLAN VIEW

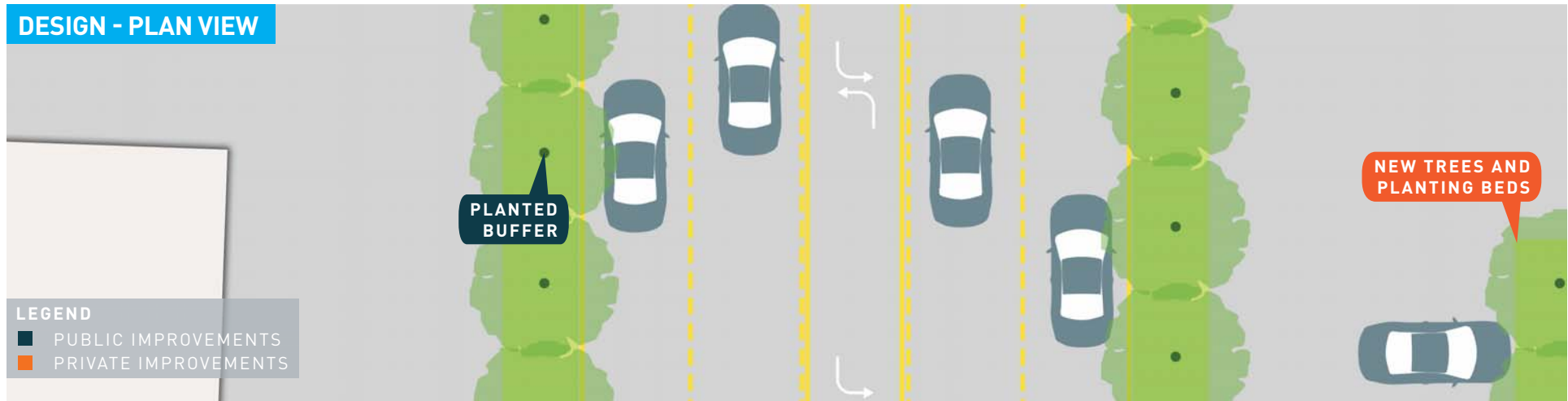


FIGURE 31 A section and plan illustrating the proposed right-of-way improvements along Pass Road.

HIGHWAY 49 DISTRICT

Community input from the workshop highlighted the following opportunities and challenges for the Highway 49 District:

- Highway 49 is a critical state road and the key entryway to the city.
- Currently, the highway is unattractive and unwelcoming.
- Residents need safer ways to cross the street due to the amount of traffic and current configuration.
- Turkey Creek and surrounding green spaces should be preserved and made visible from the street.
- Highway 49 should build upon the current atmosphere of downtown and extend it north, providing a transition between downtown and the national chain stores near the intersection with Interstate-10.

Highway 49 is the gateway to Gulfport for visitors from both Interstate-10 and the airport. It serves as the primary north-to-south connection through the city from the beach to downtown over Turkey Creek and to North Gulfport. The area between Airport Road and Polk Street along Highway 49 contains a sporadic mix of commercial, greenfield, and brownfield sites. To the north of this area are fast growing retail hubs clustered near the intersection of highway 49 and Interstate 10. To the south are downtown

businesses that have benefited from new street improvements and a revitalizing retail and restaurant scene. Turkey Creek is an asset and is the main feature for this district, but it is currently hidden from most travelers on Highway 49.

The proposed policy option for this district is to encourage and aid in creating a better transition between big-box retail in the north near the Gulfport-Biloxi International Airport and local retail in the south near downtown. Rather than concentrating improvements within nodes, this district would benefit more by spreading investment throughout the entire district. Additionally, creating a policy to preserve open space and build upon the natural spaces where Highway 49 crosses over Turkey Creek would create a “green gateway” that would give visitors a positive first impression of the city. Since Turkey Creek and its natural areas run under and on either side of the highway, this designated area could expand east and west beyond the strip of highway. A strategic use of wayfinding elements and signage could be placed as you enter the city to alert travelers to the creek and natural areas. A green gateway encompassing the creek, the highway, and the airport could capture travelers arriving by plane, car, boat, bicycle, or walking.

The lack of commercial activity present in other sections of the highway could be viewed as a positive and marketed to encourage travelers to stop and linger. In order not to compete with areas containing growing businesses and infrastructure, a tax abatement program for this district could focus on recreational infrastructure and the retail to support

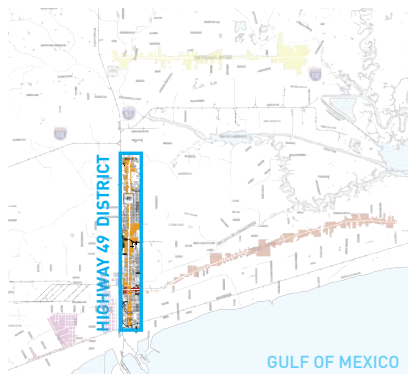


FIGURE 32 A map illustrating a potential Highway 49 District.



FIGURE 33 An image of the existing street condition along the southern part of Highway 49.



FIGURE 34 An image of the existing street condition along the northern part of Highway 49.



FIGURE 35 *An image of Turkey Creek underneath Highway 49.*

it. Public investments could turn undeveloped parcels into attractive green spaces and gateways to nature. These places could support nature tourism and host non-permanent structures, trails, and other recreational activities. Potential retailers could build on such branding by focusing their businesses on recreational activities like fishing, boating and kayaking, birding, cycling, and hiking.

The city could create a strategy to develop a gateway that is identifiable to passersby and designed to draw tourists and nature-loving visitors. The strategy could include the following:

Policy Options Targeted at Commercial Land Use

- Use incentives to activate underused and vacant spaces, e.g., through pop-up shops, food retailers, outdoor seating areas, and off-street paths from neighborhoods to commercial districts.
- Brand the area as a “green gateway” to promote existing natural amenities.
- Tailor tax abatements to promote businesses connected to nature such as birding, boating, and wildlife viewing.

Policy Options Targeted at Public Improvements

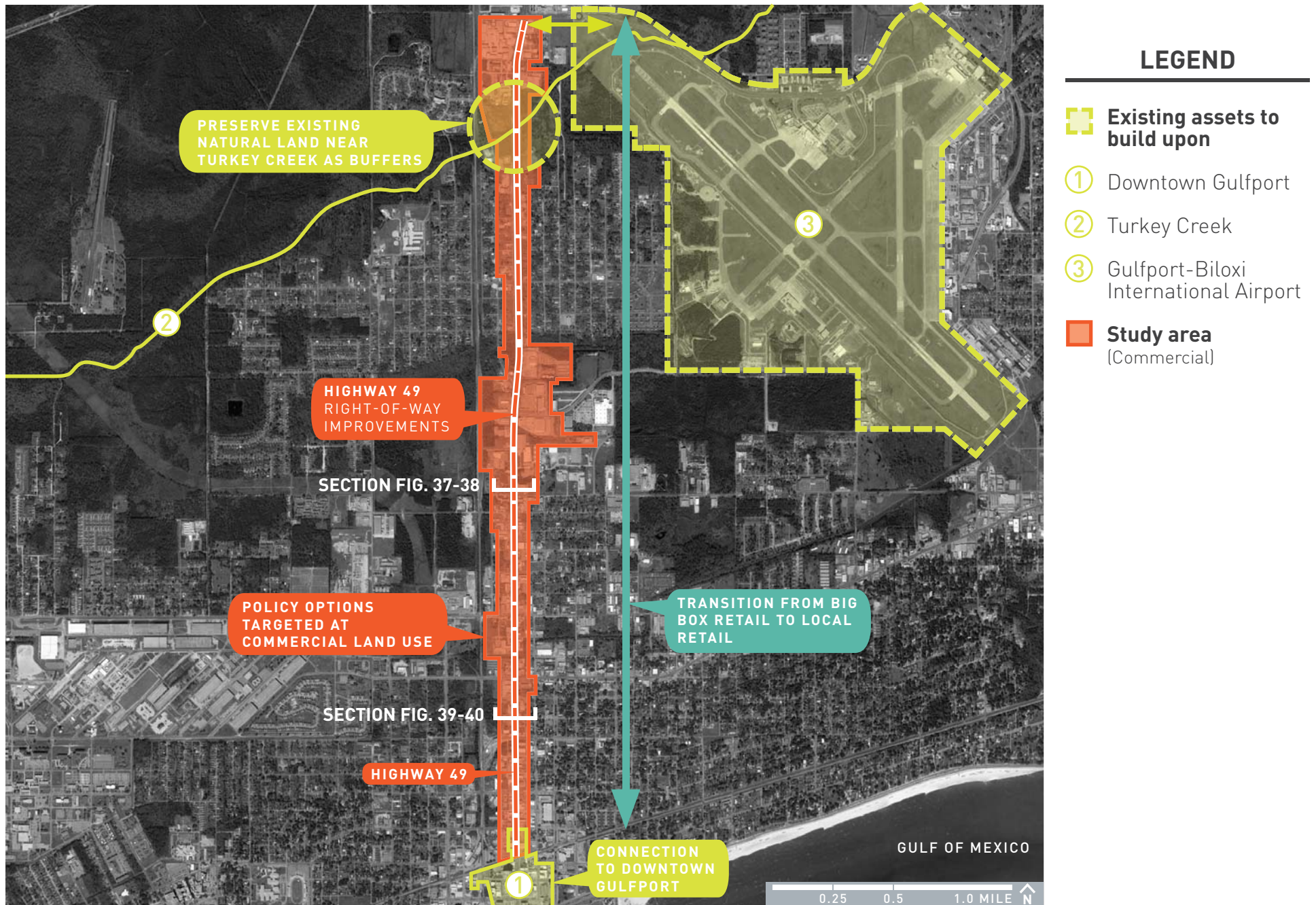
- Invest in new parks and natural areas on greenfield sites that can serve as buffers between successful nodes along Highway 49, creating distinct and separate experiences.

- Create trails between Highway 49 and the airport on the Turkey Creek Trail with wayfinding to encourage the trail as a destination.

In Norfolk, Virginia, the Norfolk International Airport installed trails from its terminals to an adjacent wilderness area and a bird sanctuary, increasing the number of visitors. The city of Gulfport could similarly use the undeveloped land along Highway 49 to create neighborhood recreational amenities and a green gateway to downtown and the beach.

The design team proposed two different options for the right-of-way improvements on Highway 49: one intended for the northern part of Highway 49 closer to Interstate-10 where there is heavier traffic, and one for the southern part of Highway 49, as it transitions into downtown. On the northern section of Highway 49, the existing buffer width varies and could be narrowed. Narrowing the buffer width in the right-of-way can provide space for a wider median with plantings, the addition of sidewalks with street trees, and the addition of a planted buffer zone with a service road. The service lanes allow for the separation of faster, thru traffic from slower, local traffic looking to turn off to a business or side street.

On the southern section of Highway 49, the design option proposes a reduction in the number of travel lanes from six to four, which would make it safer for pedestrians to cross the street. The design also proposes to change the type of on-street parking from the current angled parking to parallel parking. This change allows room for wider sidewalks, creating space for street furniture and street trees.



LEGEND






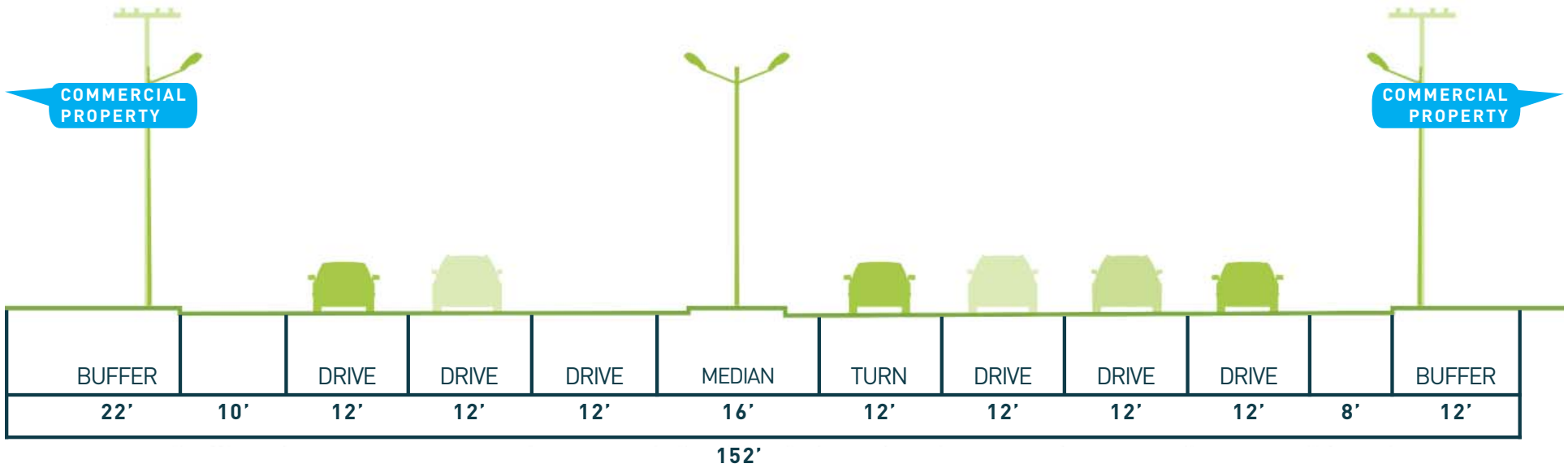
-  Existing assets to build upon
-  ① Downtown Gulfport
-  ② Turkey Creek
-  ③ Gulfport-Biloxi International Airport
-  Study area (Commercial)

FIGURE 36 A diagram illustrating the final design options to strengthen Highway 49 as the proposed "green gateway" and build upon its existing assets connecting to downtown, Turkey Creek, and the Gulfport-Biloxi International Airport.

EXISTING - SECTION VIEW



EXISTING - PLAN VIEW

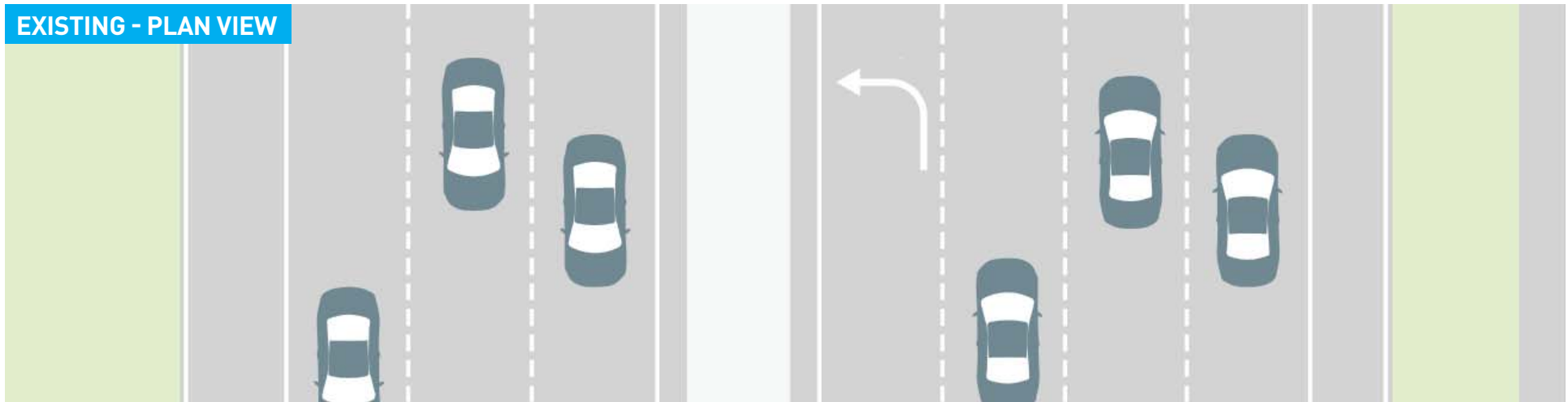


FIGURE 37 A general section and plan illustrating the existing conditions along the northern part of Highway 49.

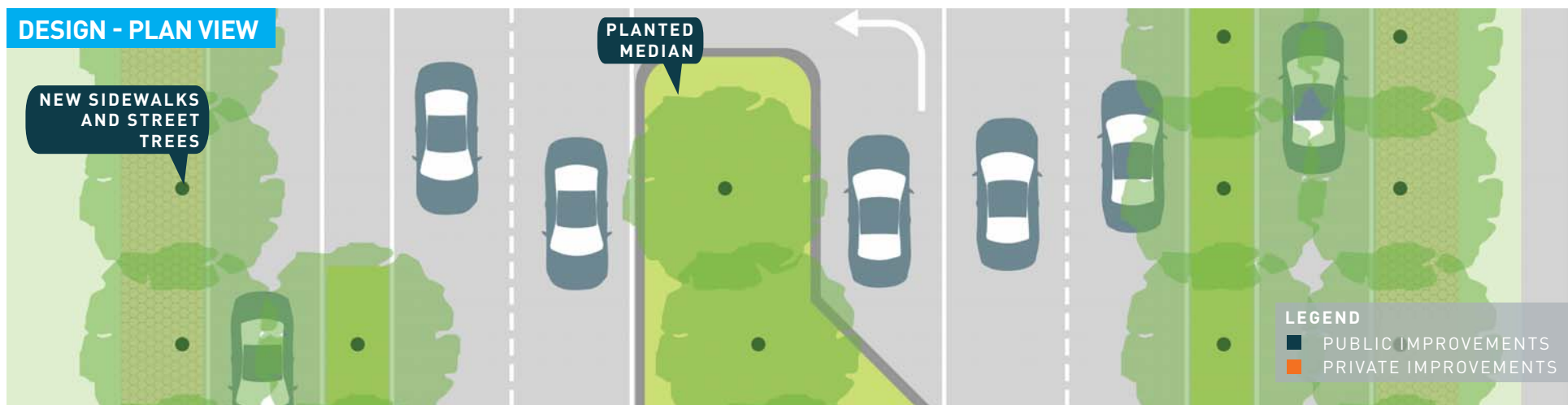
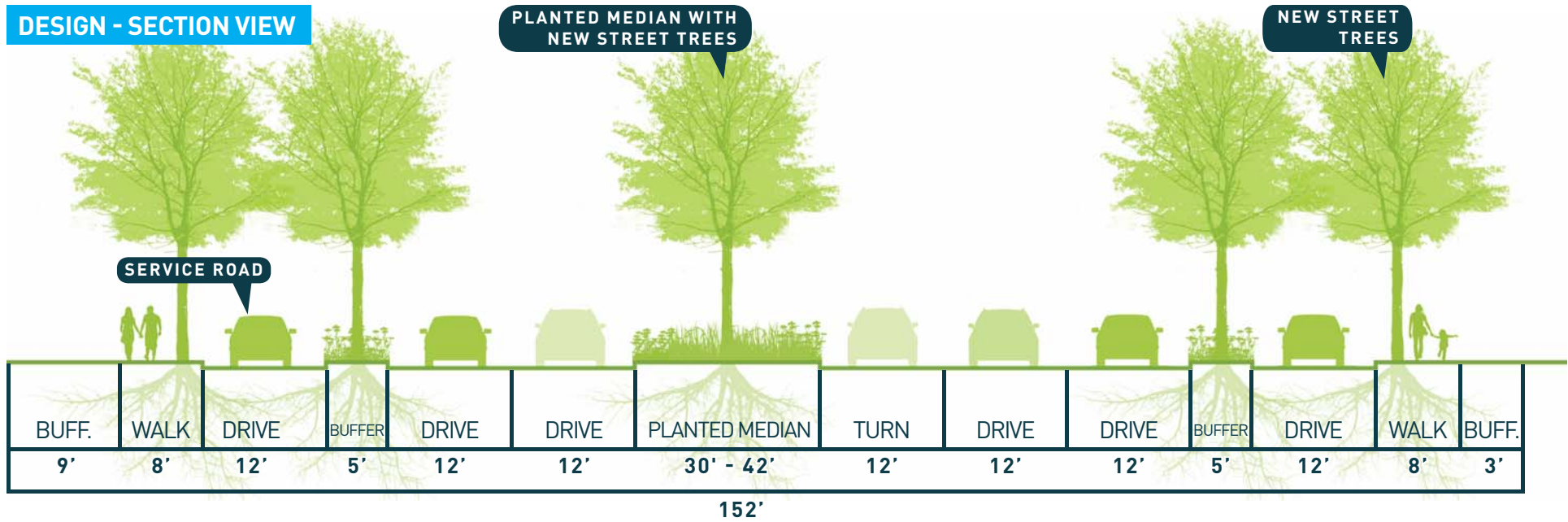
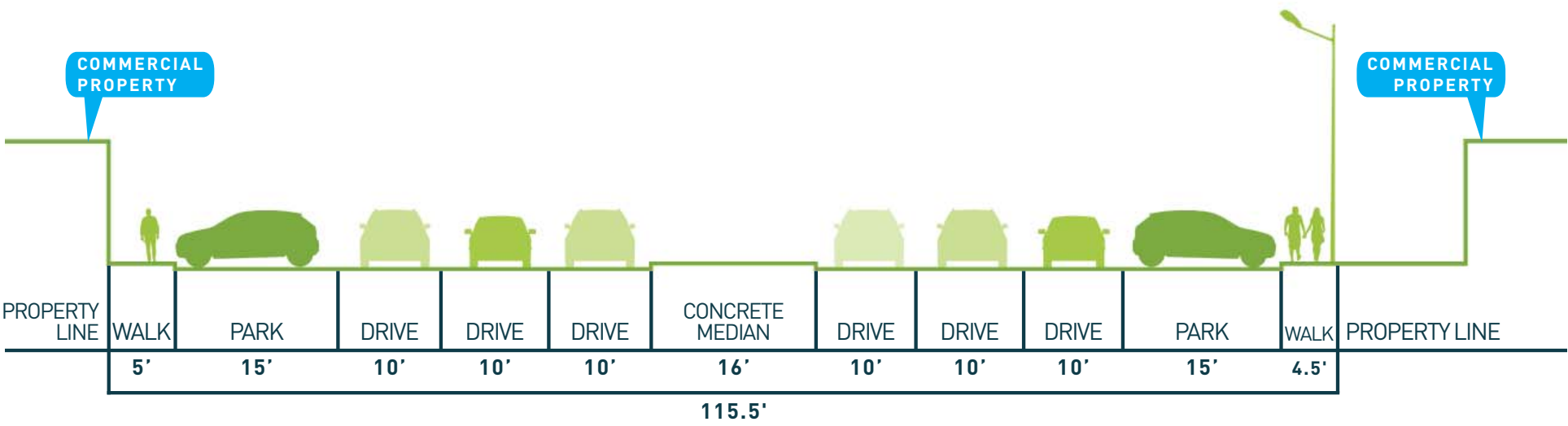


FIGURE 38 A section and plan illustrating the proposed right-of-way improvements along the northern part of Highway 49.

EXISTING - SECTION VIEW



EXISTING - PLAN VIEW

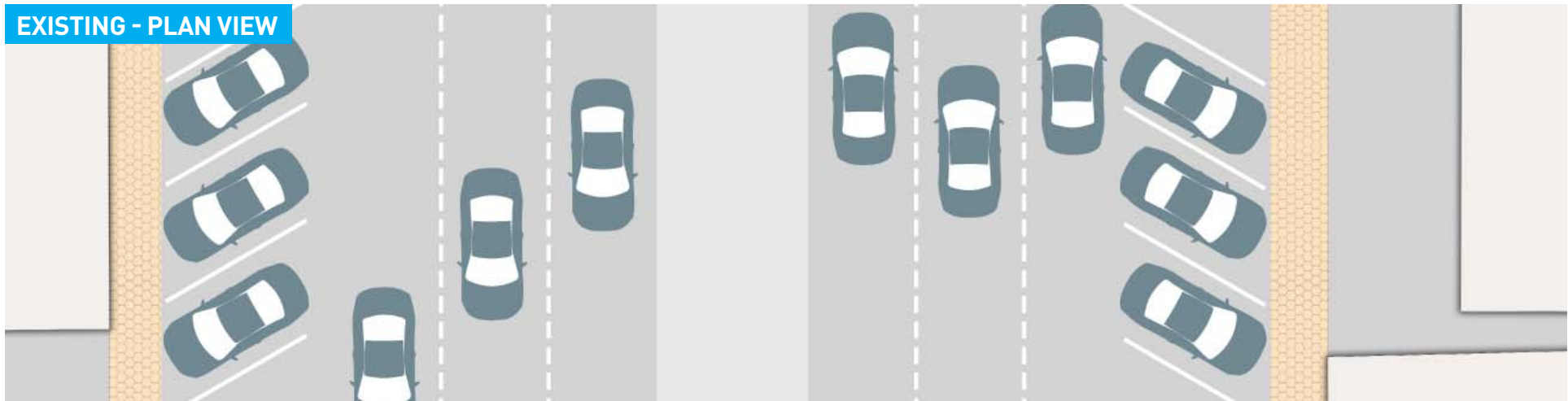
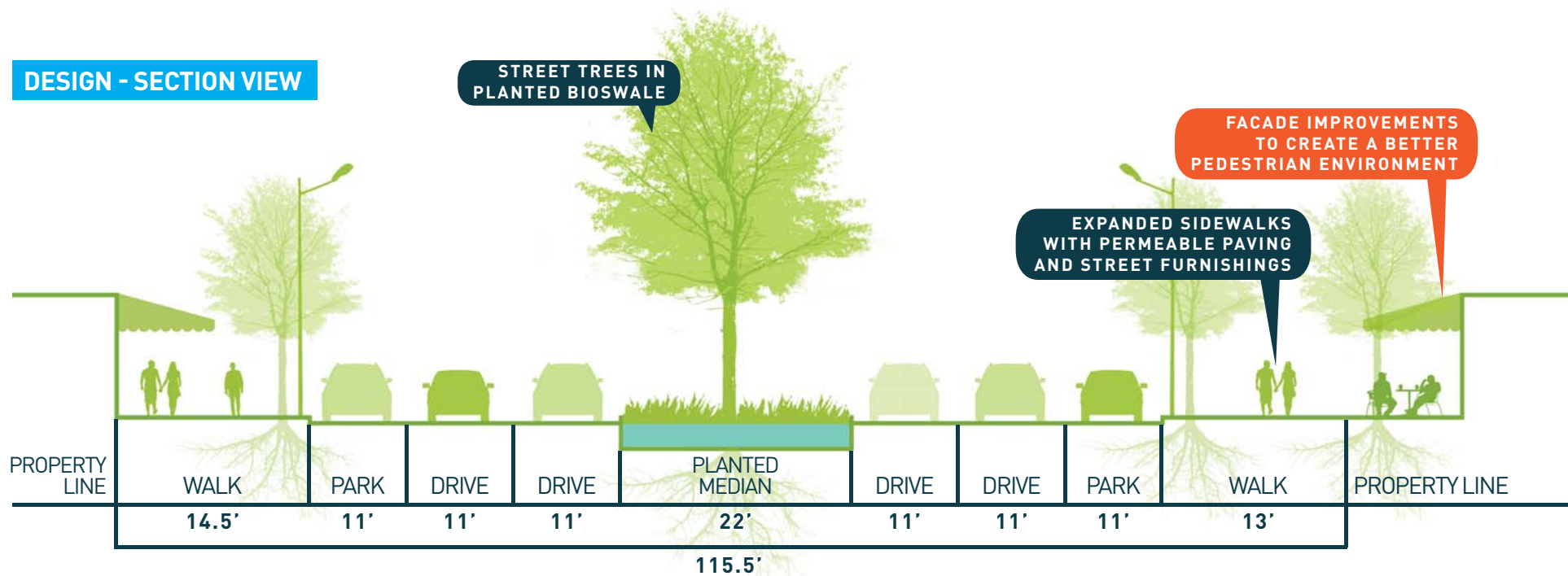


FIGURE 39 A general section and plan illustrating the existing conditions along the southern part of Highway 49.

DESIGN - SECTION VIEW



DESIGN - PLAN VIEW

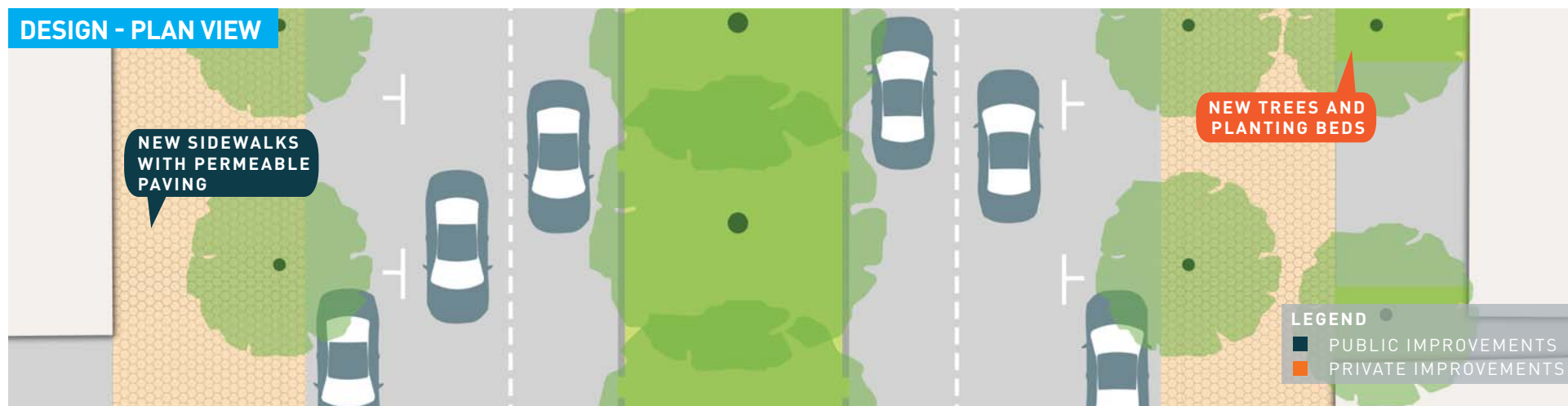


FIGURE 40 A section and plan illustrating the right-of-way improvements along the southern part of Highway 49.

STATE HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENTS

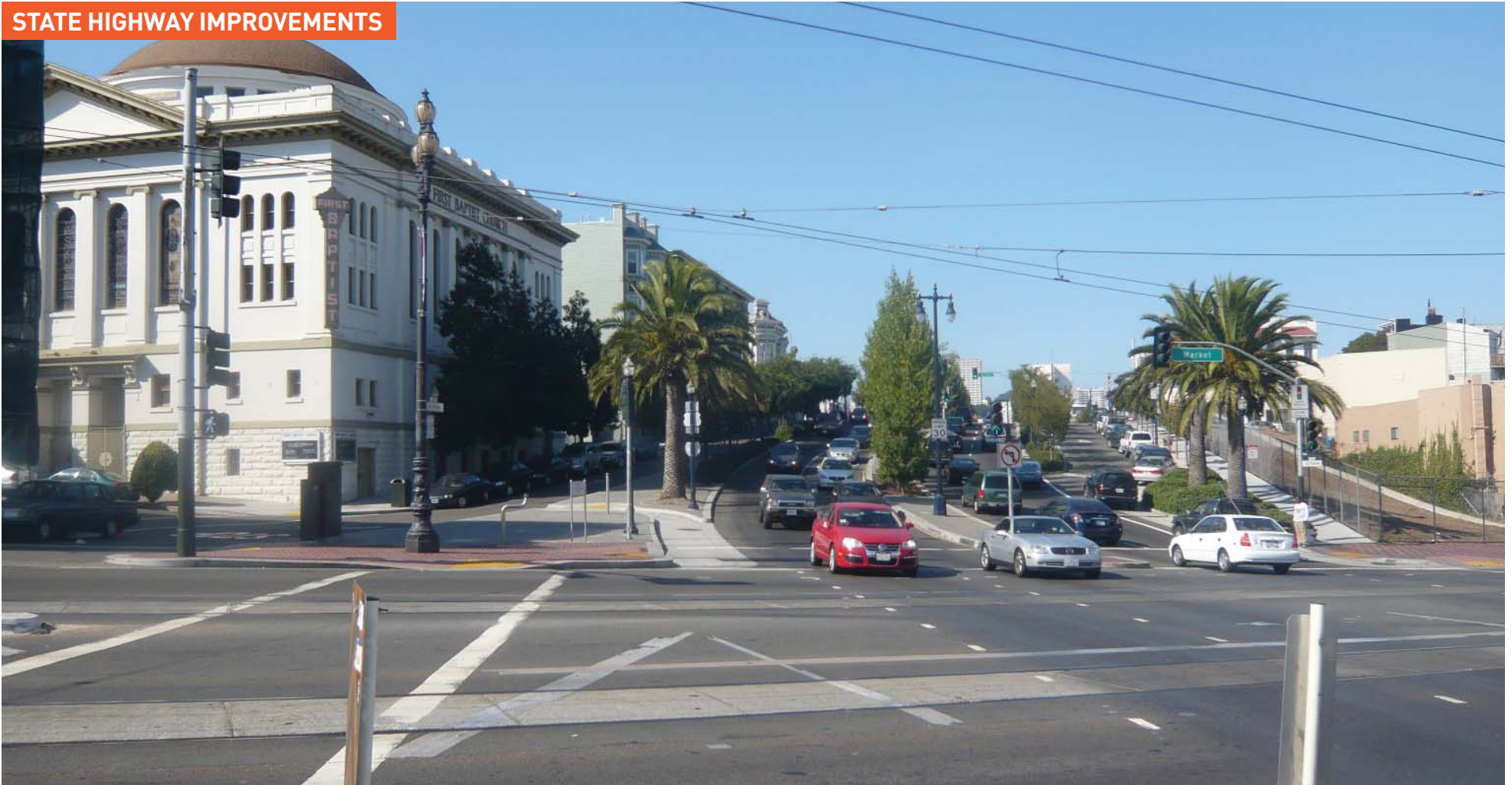


FIGURE 41 A precedent of a successful interstate highway improvement on Octavia Street, in San Francisco, California that is of similar scale to Highway 49 in Gulfport, Mississippi. The addition of a service road gives room for a greener streetscape and better pedestrian access. The improvements overall created a complete street that makes room for pedestrians, bicyclists, and cars.

PHOTO CREDIT Remundo, flickr.com

THE MEDICAL DISTRICT

With Memorial Hospital as a strong anchor and asset at the west side of this district, policy and design options are tailored to promote development that complements the hospital's programs.

Community input from the workshop highlighted the following opportunities and challenges in this area:

- There is an abundance of vacant buildings due to private physician practices merging with the hospital.
- Residents want safer ways to bike to work on Broad Avenue.
- Closing of the naval base's gate has decreased traffic on Broad Avenue.
- There are opportunities to develop neighborhood parks and senior centers.
- Currently, this district is not a regional draw for specialist care.

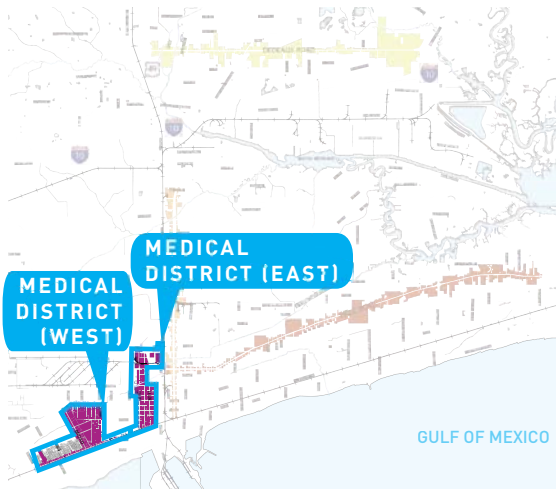


FIGURE 42 A map illustrating a potential Medical District.

- The area would be well suited for new assisted living and/or rehabilitation facilities.
- Area employees want additional restaurant options nearby.

Currently, the area experiences retail leakage, meaning that area residents and visitors travel outside to shop, dine, and get other services like dry cleaning and hair styling. At present, more than 20 businesses clustered near the hospital campus bring in workers, patients, vendors, and others accessing medical facilities. With more than 90 physicians and 3,700 total employees, Memorial Hospital, an anchor institution, represents a unique opportunity to create additional development in the area on vacant lots and underused parcels that complements the hospital's focus and serves its patients and employees. A tax abatement program in this area of the district could be formulated to draw and intensify commercial uses in and near Memorial Hospital. Parallel improvements and incentives related to housing redevelopment within this district could also play a role in revitalizing the area by bringing more people into the area who would support such businesses.



FIGURE 43 An image of the existing street condition at the intersection of Broad Avenue and Old Pass Road, outside of Memorial Hospital.



FIGURE 44 An image of the existing street condition along 15th street in the Medical District (west).

A coordinated program of housing incentives and tax abatements could attract investment in new construction or rehabilitation of housing within the district. A partnership between the city and the hospital could put together such a program to foster a live-work neighborhood for hospital employees. Such a partnership can encourage anchor institutions, like hospitals, to invest beyond the campus, helping to improve the surrounding neighborhood. Improvement of the neighborhood, which is often closely linked with the institution's identity, can in turn help improve the institution's reputation.

An example of this type of expanded tax abatement program through a partnership with a local anchor institution was discussed above in the case study of Columbus. In the city of Detroit, the Detroit Medical Center, Henry Ford Health System, Wayne State University, and a local nonprofit created a residential incentive program that promotes a live-work lifestyle and incentivizes construction of infill housing in the neighborhoods adjacent to the facilities. Employees of the Detroit Medical Center, Henry Ford Health System, and Wayne State University are eligible for a \$3,500, two-year leasing allowance for new renters, a \$1,000 allowance for lease renewals, or a \$20,000 forgivable loan toward buying a new home in the surrounding neighborhoods. Funding for this program was provided by the Detroit Medical Center, the Henry Ford Health System, Wayne State University, and the Kresge Foundation. This funding was later matched by the Hudson-Webber Foundation and the Michigan State Housing Development Authority. For the city of Detroit, this program increased the tax base and created a safer neighborhood where families can live and work. This program also reduced car trips and parking needs in the



FIGURE 45 An image of the existing street condition along Broad Avenue outside Memorial Hospital.

district by encouraging employee homeownership in the surrounding neighborhoods.

For areas with an anchor institution, like the Medical District in Gulfport, the city could tailor policies to incorporate elements of successful anchor institution partnerships in other cities like Detroit and Columbus (as discussed above). Specific policies Gulfport might explore include the following:

Policy Options Targeted at Commercial Land Use

- Target and expand tax abatement programs to benefit medical services, businesses, and employees.
- Coordinate façade improvement grants to attract new business owners to the district to help prevent retail leakage.
- Promote retail and commercial uses that serve the visitors and employees of the anchor institution within the district to combat leakage of dollars.

Policy Options Targeted at Residential Land Use

- Coordinate housing incentives for renters and homeowners with an anchor institution's employee housing assistance.
- Coordinate home renovation grants for existing buildings to increase population within the district.



LEGEND







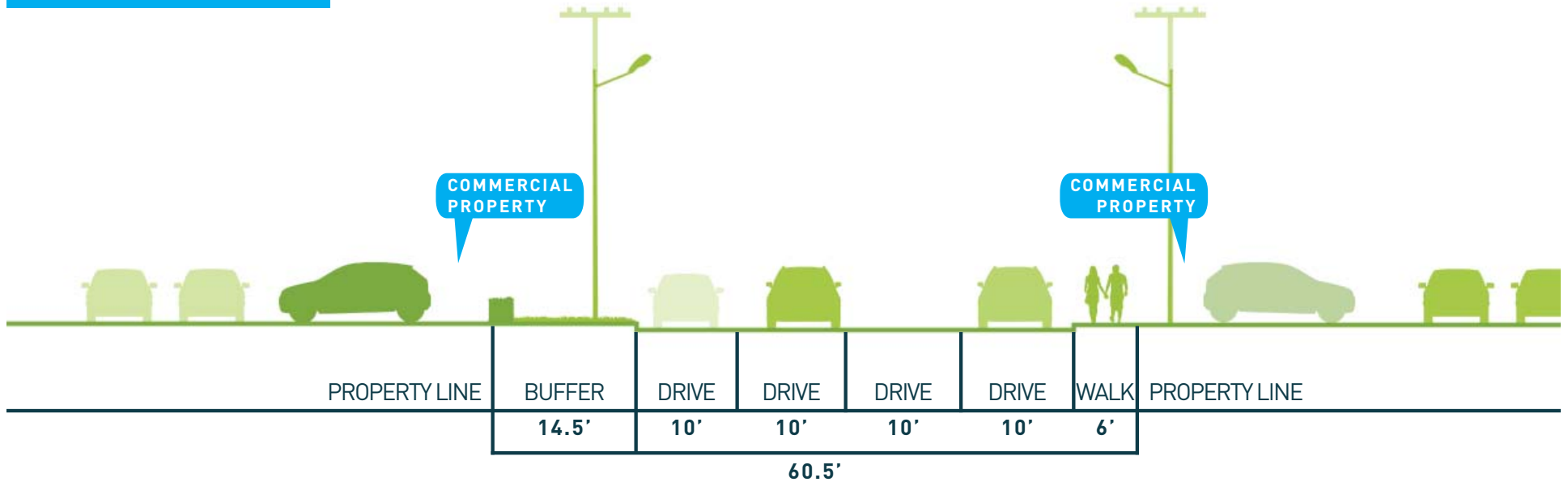
-  Existing assets to build upon
-  ① Memorial Hospital
-  ② Seabees naval base
-  Study area (Commercial)
-  Study area (Residential)
-  Connect to downtown

FIGURE 46 A diagram illustrating the final design options in the Medical District (west) to build on the existing assets of Memorial Hospital and the naval base. The policy option suggests tailoring commercial land use policies along major roadways connecting to the naval base, hospital, and downtown and tailoring residential land use policies in neighborhoods surrounding the hospital.

EXISTING - SECTION VIEW



EXISTING - PLAN VIEW

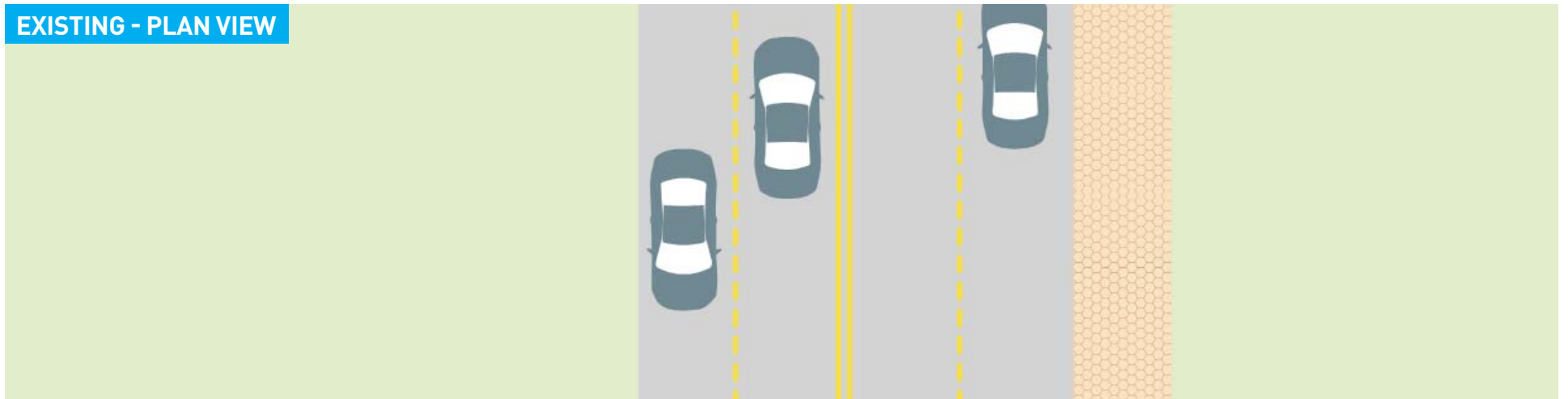
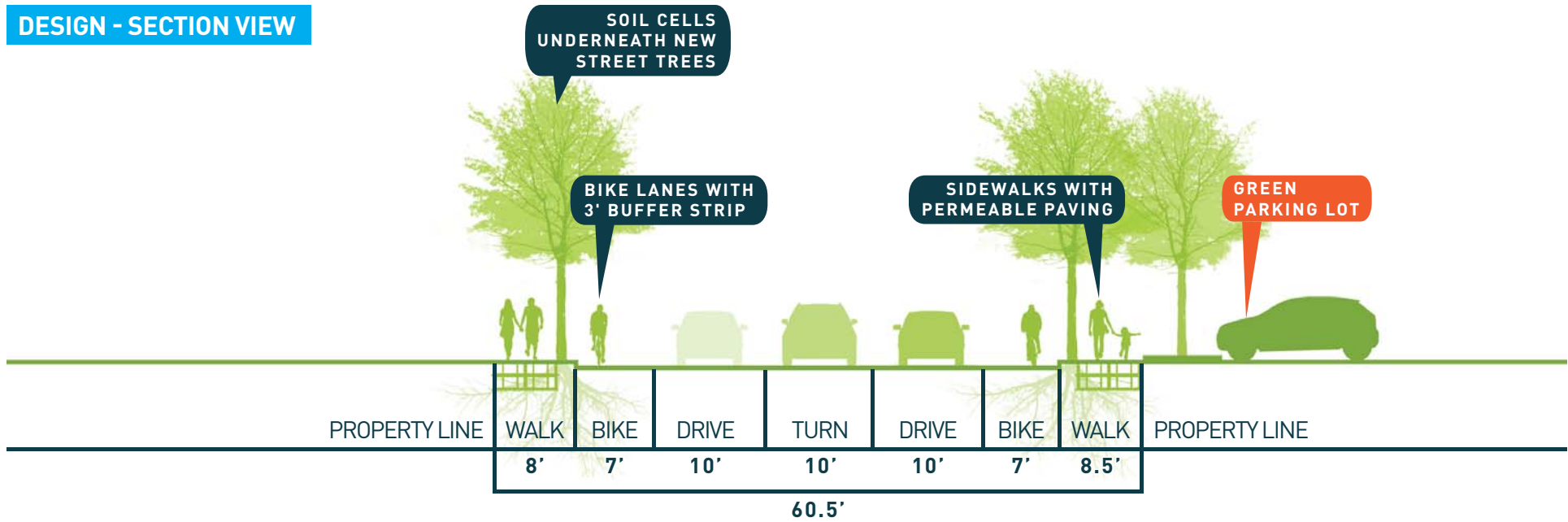


FIGURE 47 A general section and plan illustrating the existing conditions on Broad Avenue.

DESIGN - SECTION VIEW



DESIGN - PLAN VIEW

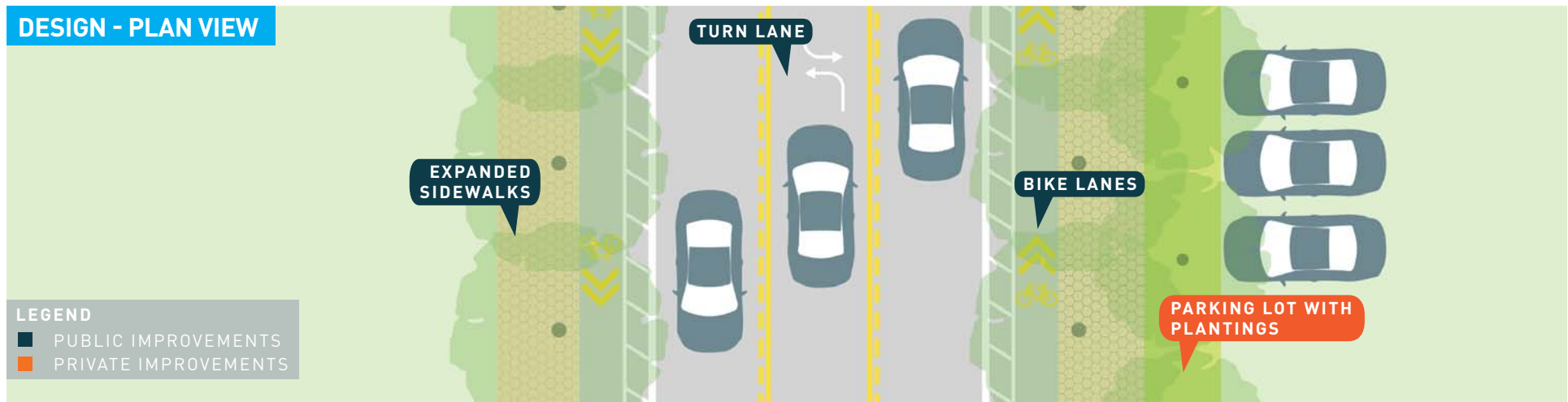


FIGURE 48 A section and plan illustrating the proposed right-of-way improvements along Broad Avenue.

The proposed right-of-way improvements on Broad Avenue include protected bike lanes, expanded sidewalks with new street trees planted within soil cells, and the addition of a turn lane. Soil cells are a subsurface, modular system that is designed to provide increased soil volume for tree roots to promote larger, healthier urban trees. They can also be effective in managing stormwater. New developments in this district can consider integrating green infrastructure elements like rain gardens, grass and bioswales, and permeable surfaces into their parking lots to manage stormwater runoff. The combination of the right-of-way improvements and new housing policy incentives in the surrounding neighborhood promotes walking and biking for hospital employees, reducing car trips and parking needs around the hospital.

In Medical District east, the Quarters Historical District is a neighborhood that contains a rich African-American history and has a unique identity that could draw visitors. Its proximity to Memorial Hospital, the naval base, and downtown are also assets for commercial developments to build upon.

Community input from the workshop highlighted the following opportunities and challenges in this area:

- The neighborhood could build on the existing African-American culture and history.
- Improved connections are needed from the Jobs Corps Center to the park, beach, downtown, etc.
- New programs should build upon existing efforts of community organizations to highlight and promote existing businesses and historic elements.
- Existing businesses are open to expanding their services and hours.
- There is an opportunity to create stronger connections to the naval base.
- There are opportunities to redevelop the Masonic Lodge.



FIGURE 49 An image of the existing street condition along 30th Avenue in the commercial area outside of the Quarters Historic District in the Medical District (east).



FIGURE 50 An image of the existing street condition in the Quarters Historic District of the Medical District (east).

Based on the community's feedback, Gulfport might consider exploring the following policy options in Medical District east:

Policy Options Targeted at Commercial Land Use

- Coordinate façade improvement grants to incentivize existing business owners, while attracting new business owners.
- Coordinate with existing federal programs for local placemaking grants to preserve and expand upon the existing Quarters Historic District.
- Provide permit and fee waivers and low interest loans along main roadways that connect the district to existing assets to attract new business owners and potentially strengthen connections to existing assets.

Policy Options Targeted at Residential Land Use

- Coordinate home renovation grants for existing buildings to increase population within the district.
- Coordinate a mortgage and down payment assistance program with local private companies to encourage homeownership.
- Coordinate public funds for open space improvements to enhance the quality of life for the community.

The proposed design option improves 30th Avenue by reducing the width of existing drive lanes to reduce traffic speed and adding protected bike lanes to improve overall safety within the neighborhood. The addition of protected bike lanes and expanded sidewalks addresses the residents' desire for creating better connections between Memorial Hospital, downtown, and its surrounding neighborhoods.

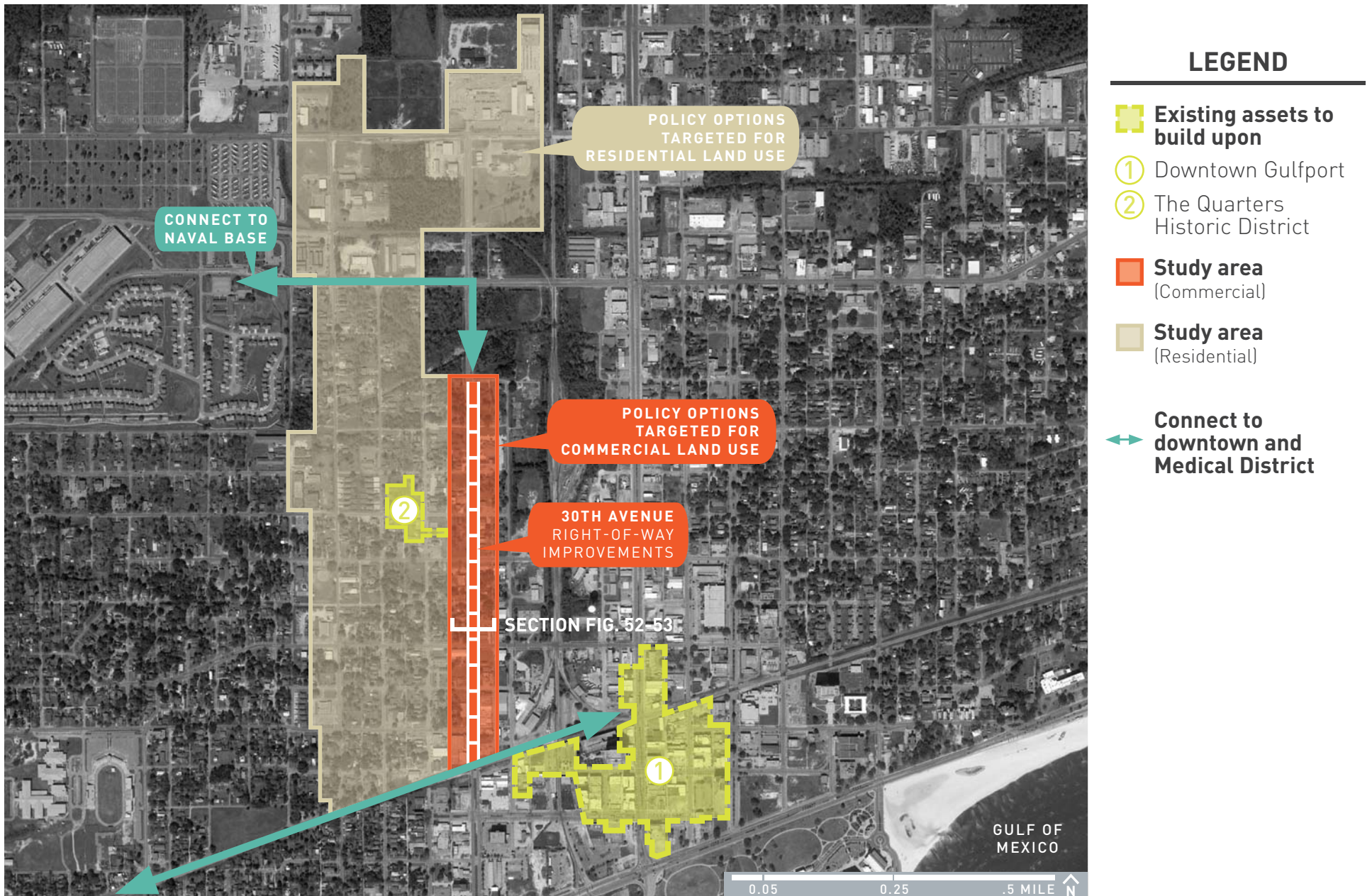
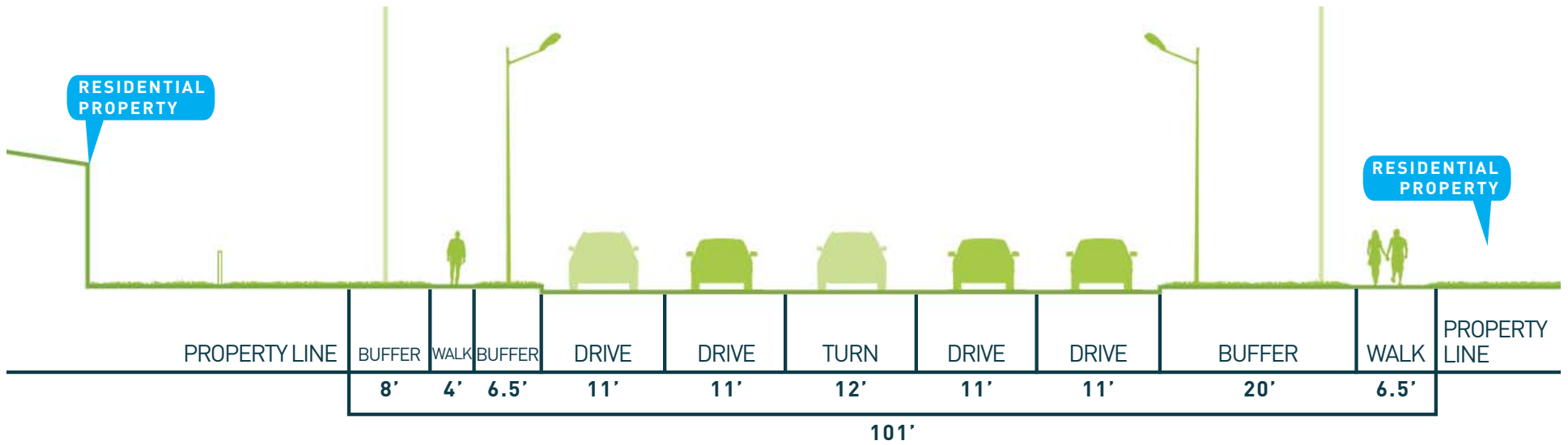


FIGURE 51 A diagram illustrating the final design options in the Medical District (east) to build on the area's existing assets of a historic district and proximity to downtown. The policy option suggests tailoring commercial land use policies along major roadway connecting from the naval base to the roadway connecting to downtown Gulfport and tailoring residential land use policies in neighborhoods surrounding the Quarters Historic District.

EXISTING - SECTION VIEW



EXISTING - PLAN VIEW

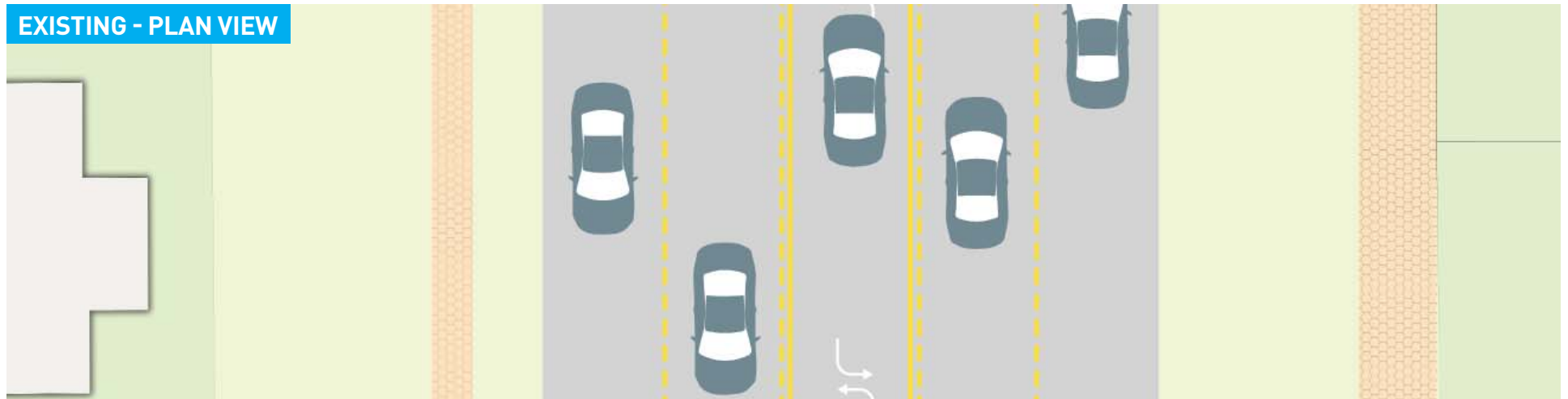


FIGURE 52 A general section and plan illustrating the existing conditions on 30th Avenue.

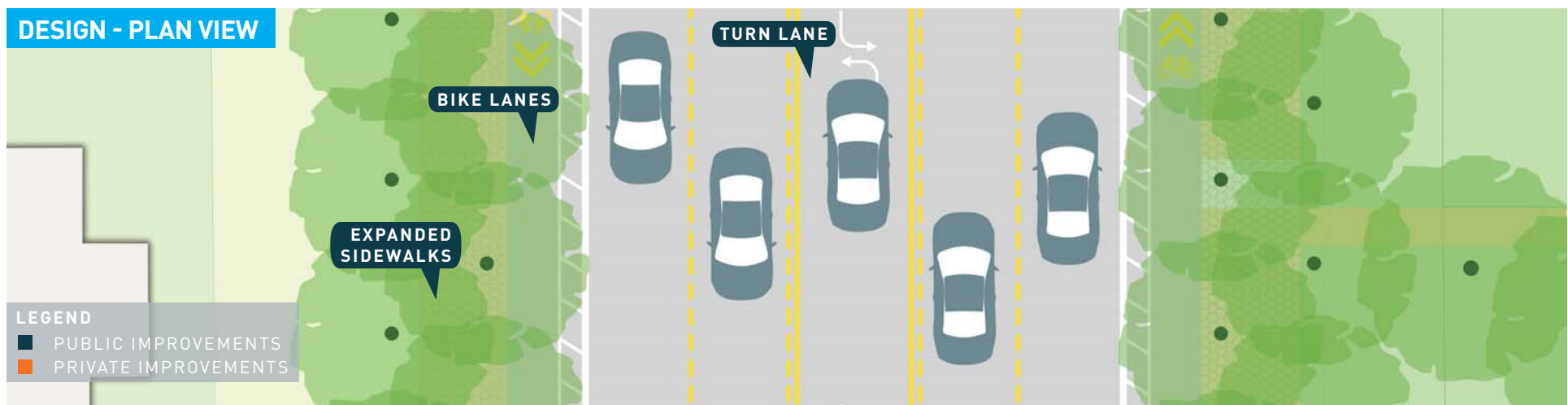
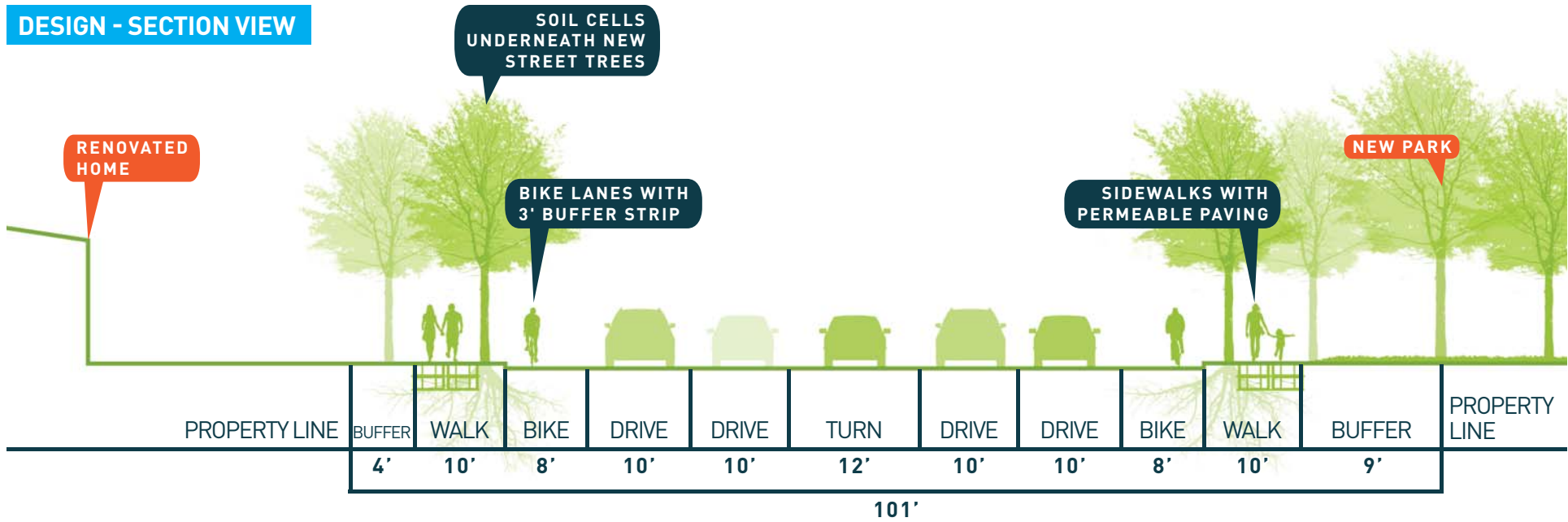


FIGURE 53 A section and plan illustrating the proposed right-of-way improvements along 30th Avenue.

DEDEAUX ROAD DISTRICT

Community input from the workshop highlighted the following opportunities and challenges for Dedeaux Road:

- There is a need for more trees and landscaping to improve the aesthetic appeal of the street.
- The street lacks sidewalks.
- Dedeaux Road needs better connections to surrounding subdivisions.

Based on the community's feedback, Gulfport might consider exploring the following policy options in the Dedeaux Road District:

Policy Options Targeted at Commercial Land Use

- Promote neighborhood-based businesses such as veterinary clinics, daycares, and specialty stores that can cater to the needs of residents.
- Promote infill development and mix locally owned businesses with chain businesses to allow residents to spend their time and resources in the neighborhood.

The city is currently in the process of expanding the existing two-lane road which will act as an incentive for development in this area. It will have two new drive lanes and one alternating turn lane in the middle for a total of five lanes of traffic. The design proposal uses the city's plans as the basis from which to build upon by adding new sidewalks with permeable paving and bioswales planted with street trees for slowing and cleaning stormwater coming from the road.

The city could encourage future developments to locate storefronts at the front edge of the property adjacent to the road and new parking lots behind the buildings to create a more appealing environment for pedestrians that can attract more customers who might visit and linger. In this district, the city might choose incentives targeted at neighborhood-based services and businesses like a veterinary clinic, drycleaner, or childcare center that will provide amenities for the surrounding residential communities.

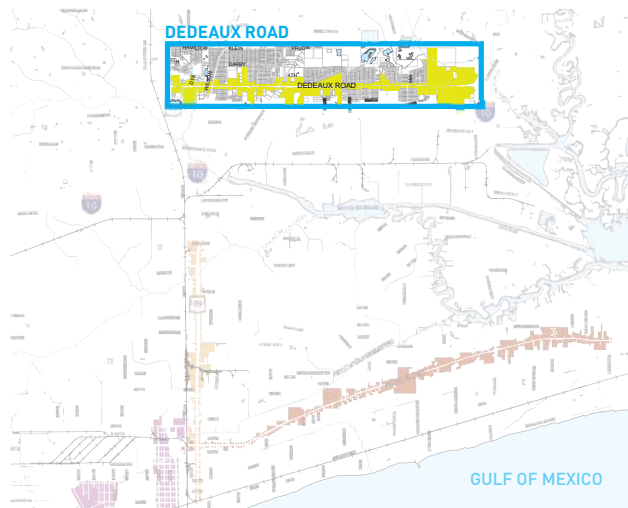


FIGURE 54 A map illustrating a potential Dedeaux Road District.



FIGURE 55 An image of the existing street condition along Dedeaux Road beyond Three Rivers Road.

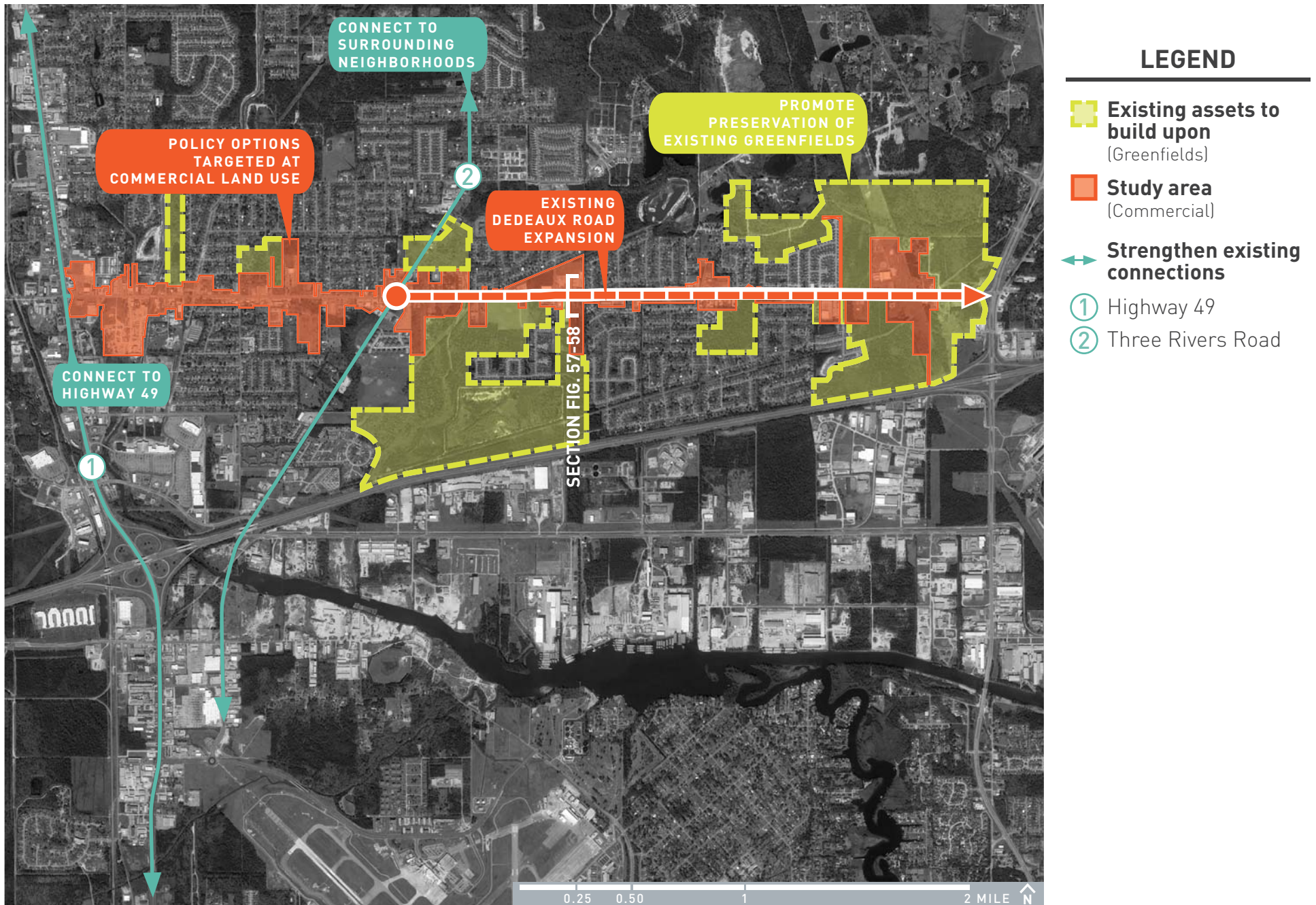


FIGURE 56 A diagram illustrating the final design options in Dedeaux Road District to build upon the existing assets of greenfields.

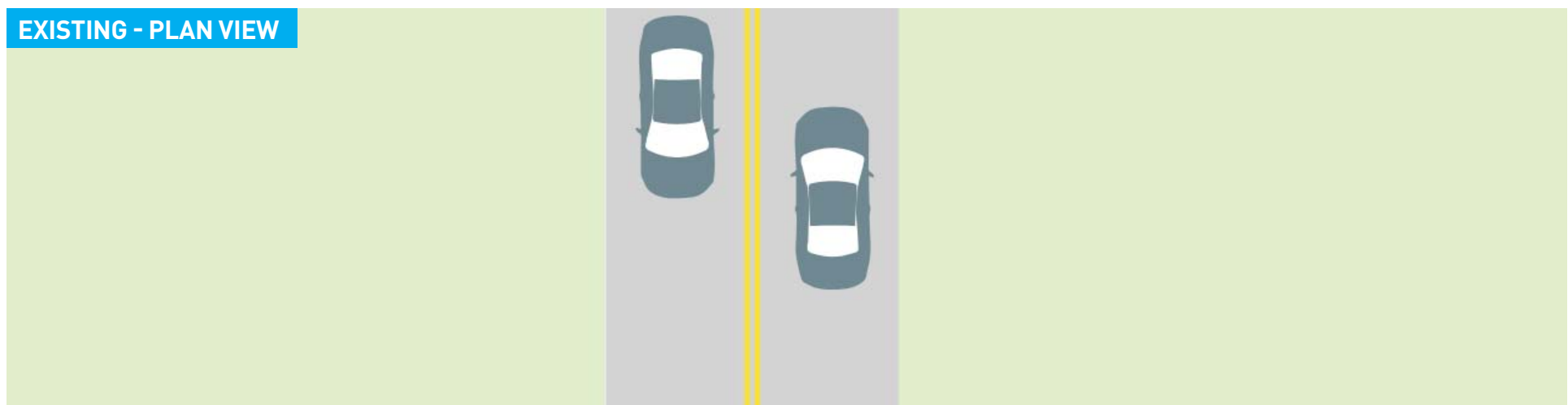
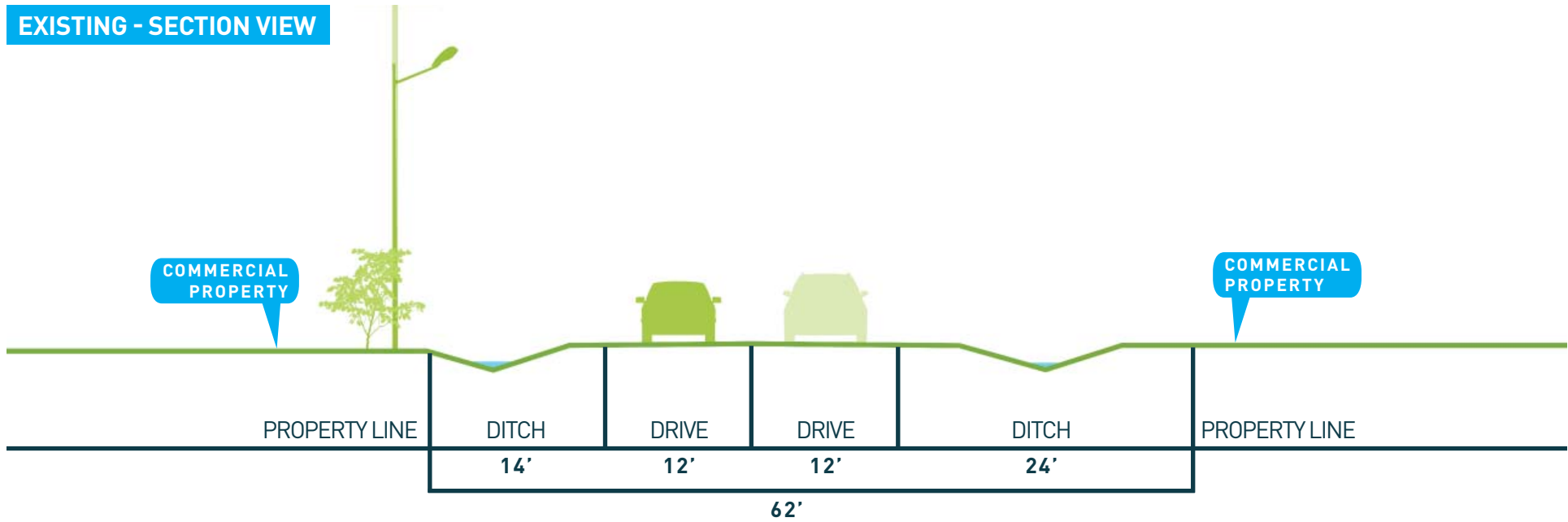


FIGURE 57 A general section and plan illustrating the existing conditions of Dedeaux Road.

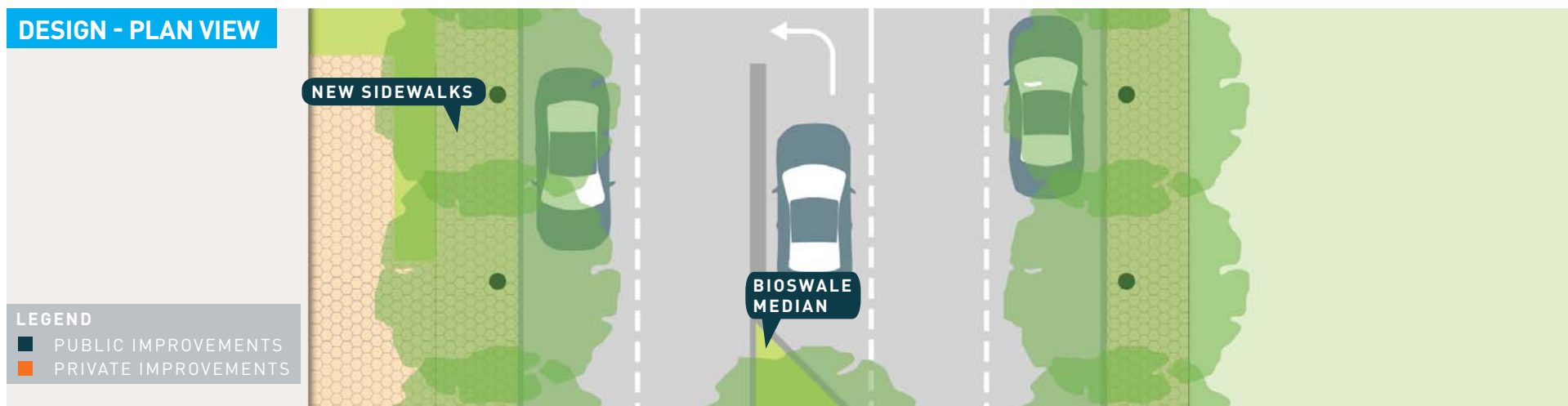
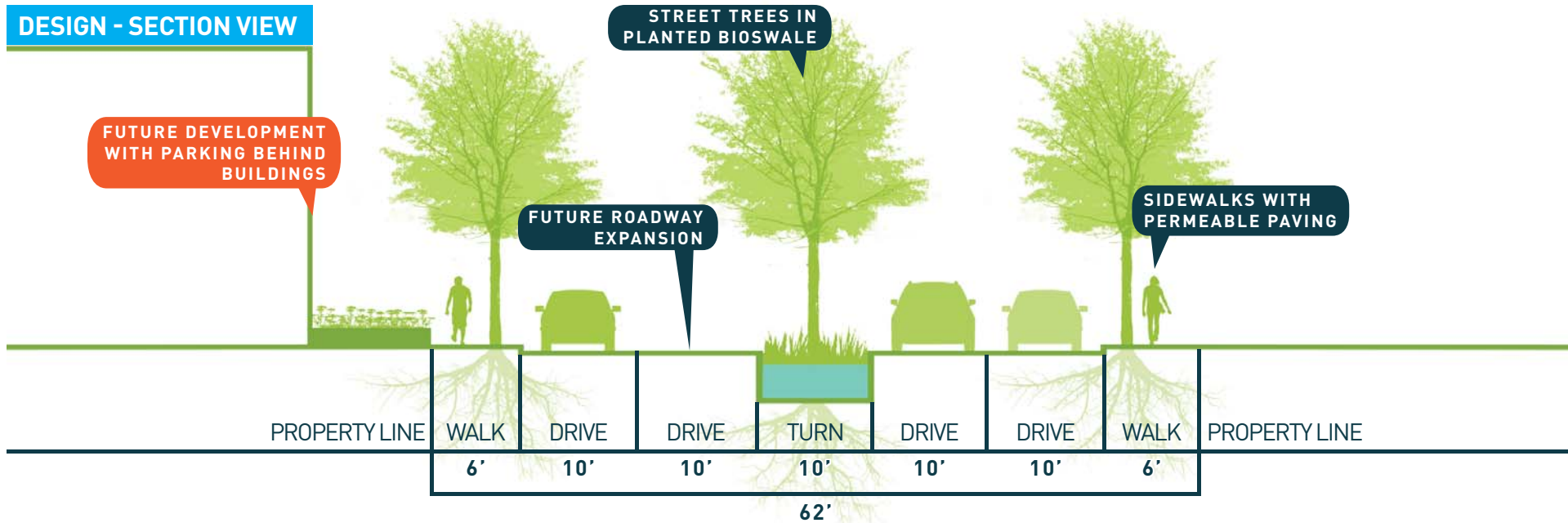
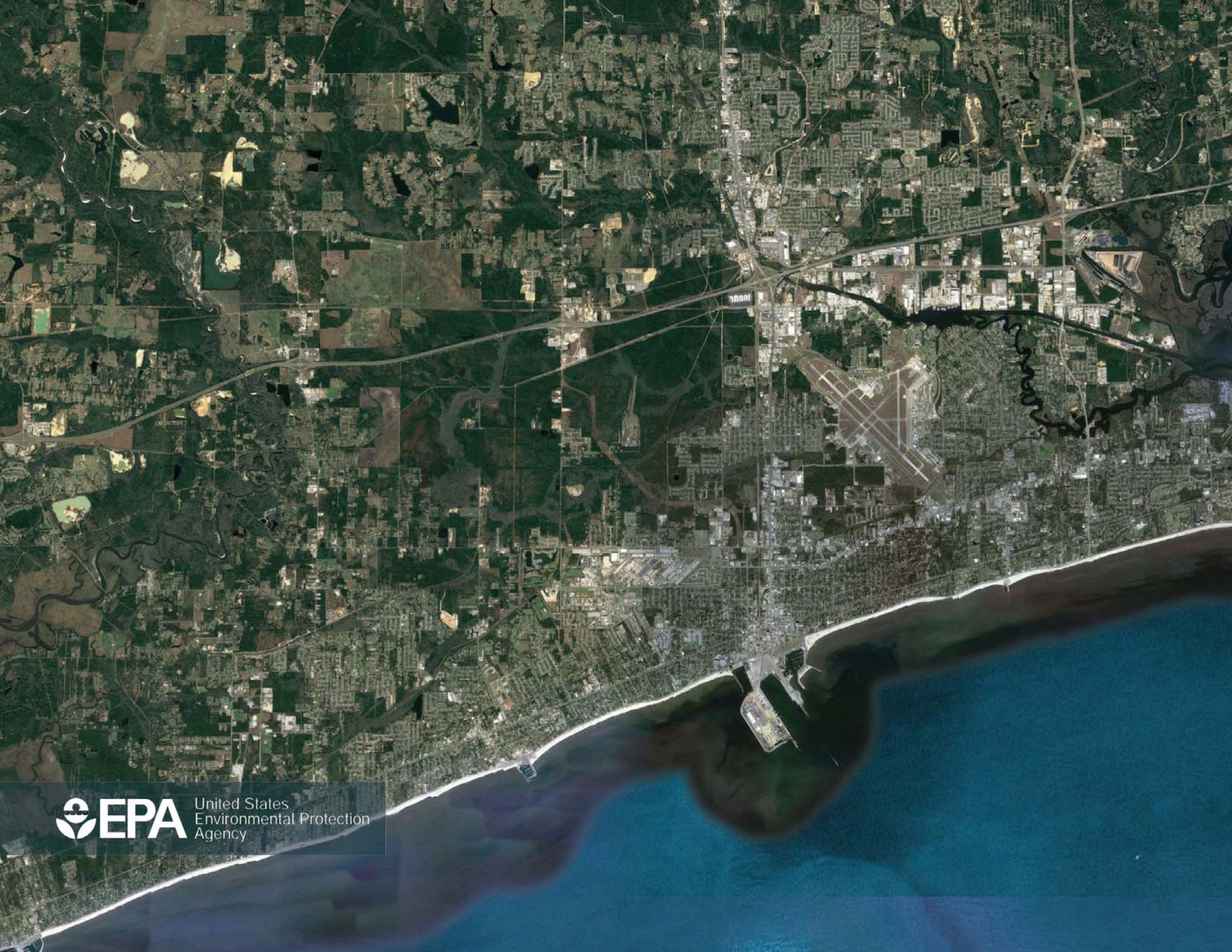


FIGURE 58 A section and plan illustrating the proposed right-of-way along Dedeaux Road.



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