

CHAPTER

1

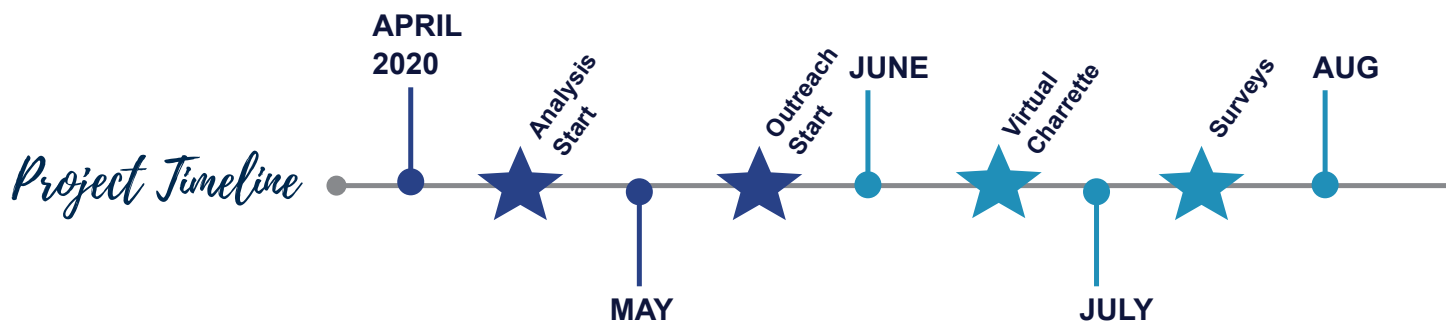
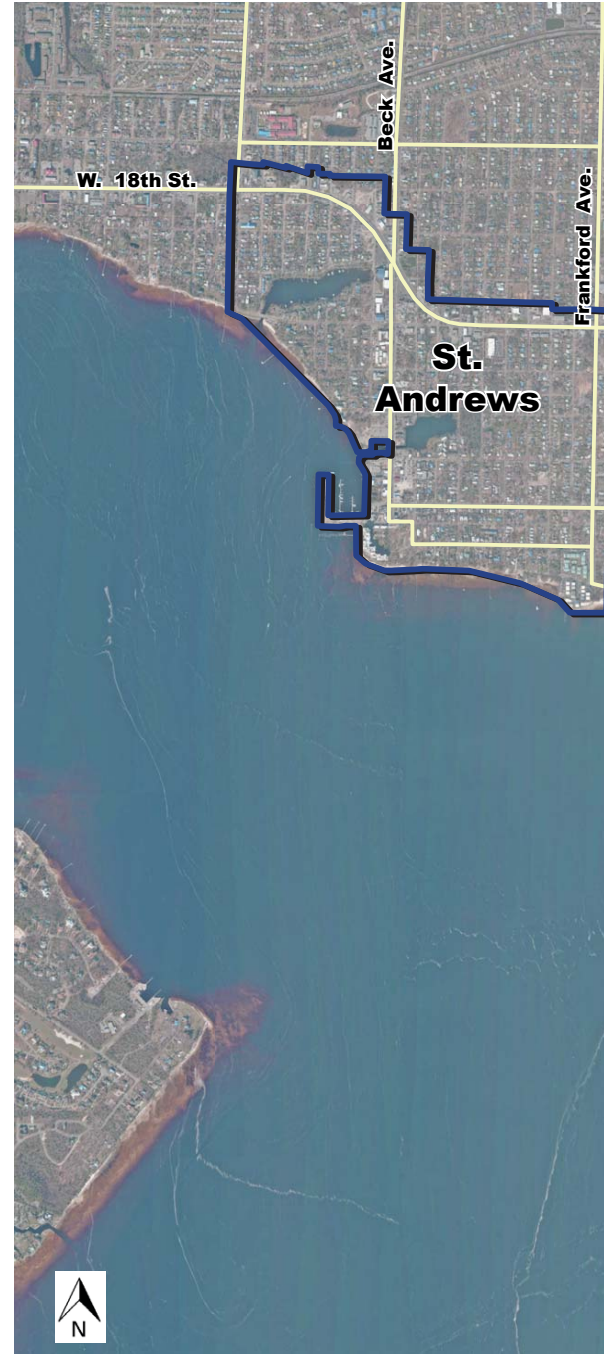
Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION

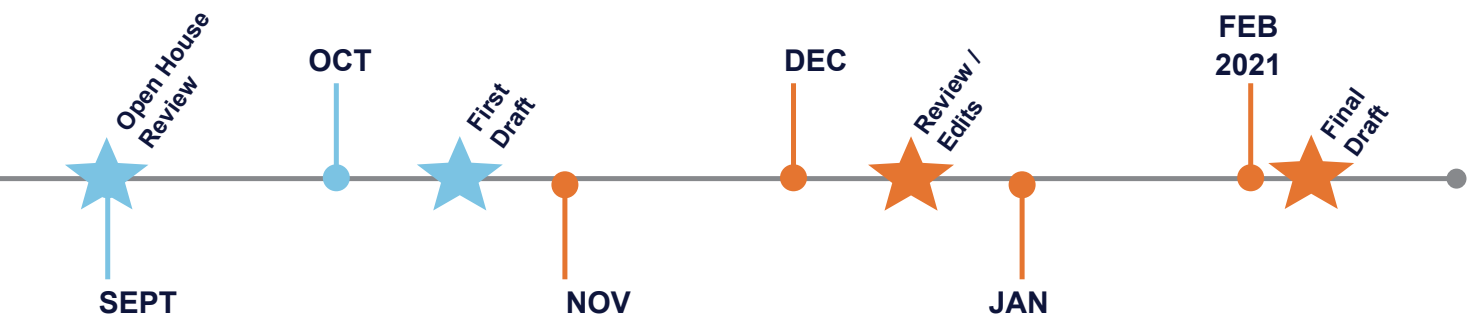
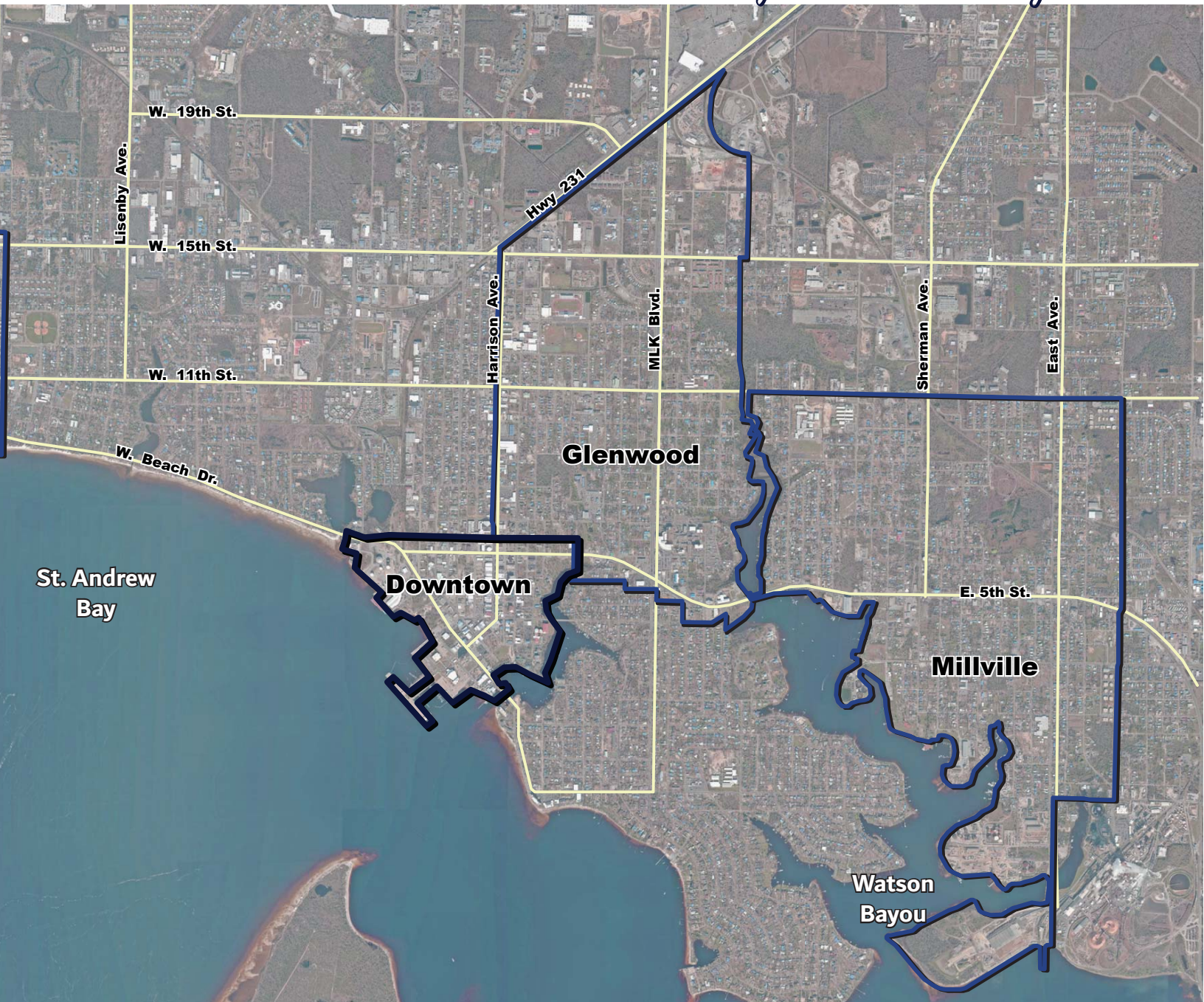
On October 10, 2018, Hurricane Michael brought devastation to the Florida Panhandle. Through the destruction and adversity an opportunity emerged: to seize this moment to rebuild stronger than before, and chart a new course for a revitalized and more resilient City. In April 2019, a city-wide Long Term Recovery Planning project was launched, which included a specific focus on planning for Downtown. This process resulted in a Strategic Vision that describes how to rebuild opportunity sites, fill empty storefronts, build new homes, plant missing trees, re-shape gathering places, and fulfill Downtown's potential as a vibrant center of community life. The Strategic Vision outlines 10 Cornerstones to guide public improvements and shape private development.

Building upon the 10 Cornerstone Ideas for Downtown, in 2020 the City expanded the visioning process to plan for the future of the Glenwood, Millville, and St. Andrews areas. These neighborhood study areas are much larger than downtown; dating to the late 1800s and early 1900s, together they encapsulate most of Panama City's original settlement areas. The unique history of each area is evident in today's neighborhood forms, with distinctive neighborhood commercial districts and public buildings, and a consistent, connected block-and-street network. Even before the storm, each area had experienced some challenges as the focus of new commerce and development shifted to the north. The study areas contain Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) districts, which have been the subject of previous revitalization studies and plans. Many of these previous plans contain good ideas that are not yet implemented; the Neighborhood Plans are an opportunity to revive those ideas, confirm priorities with community input, and to update as needed. A renewed commitment to realizing the vision, coupled with new funding resources available because of the storm, will drive implementation.

These Neighborhood Plans include ideas and illustrations that describe the community vision for future development and preservation, sustainable building, connectivity, gathering spaces, and resilient infrastructure, as well as programs and policies to support residents, small business owners and entrepreneurs. A brief summary of each chapter follows.



Neighborhood Study Areas



2 PLANNING PROCESS

Community input defined the vision for each neighborhood. The first Neighborhood Plan public meetings were held in June 2020. In response to COVID-19, many workshops were held online, allowing community members the opportunity to participate and provide input from home.

The project kickoff meeting was conducted as a Tele-town Hall, where participants could join City leadership and the planning team by phone to learn about the project and upcoming opportunities to participate, and ask questions. In June, virtual input sessions via Zoom (one for each neighborhood) provided a forum to brainstorm about what should be included in the vision. A virtual design week followed, providing opportunities to talk with the planning team as they synthesized ideas and started to illustrate the vision for each neighborhood.

The Vision Hub at rebuildpc.org was created to be a one-stop shop for project information. Participants could RSVP for future events, watch live streaming of meetings, and give input through surveys and interactive maps.

Online and printed surveys were available over the summer months to test if the draft ideas were on the right track. During the September Open House events community members could review draft exhibits on the Vision Hub and participate in open house meetings online or in-person at City Hall. Additional online and in-person meetings, such as Coffee with the Commissioner in St. Andrews and a Glenwood Review Session, provided opportunities to discuss plan updates. Each participant comment, survey and polling response, stakeholder interview, small group conversation, and community meeting throughout the process contributed to the vision that is described in the Neighborhood Plans.



Above: Participants describe their ideas at the Virtual Input Sessions in June 2020.

Engagement Schedule:

JUNE 4

PROJECT KICKOFF
Tele-town Hall

JUNE 15 - 18

VIRTUAL INPUT SESSIONS

Glenwood: 6/15
Millville: 6/16
St. Andrews: 6/18

JUNE 22 & 24

SPECIAL FOCUS MEETINGS

Housing
Workforce Development
Transportation
Environment

JUNE 23

VIRTUAL DESIGN CHECK-INS

AM & PM

JUNE 26

WORK-IN-PROGRESS PRESENTATION

AUG 31 - SEPT 3

OPEN HOUSE & COMMUNITY REVIEW

Virtual and In-Person
AM & PM

JAN 26

GLENWOOD REVIEW

Virtual and In-Person

10 Cornerstone Ideas for Downtown Panama City

1. WATERFRONT ACCESS

Panama City is first and foremost a waterfront town; water is an important part of community identity. In the future, as much of the waterfront as possible should become public, available for everyone to enjoy.

2. DOWNTOWN ACTIVITY

Public improvements can be a catalyst to creating an active, livable, mixed-use Downtown. The bright center of activity should be Harrison Avenue and the waterfront marina. Walkable urban design of these critical public spaces can support retail, restaurants, offices/ jobs, and arts and culture destinations.

3. DOWNTOWN LIVING

A larger Downtown residential population, in a mix of housing types, is needed to support area businesses and provide 24-hour activity. Planned improvements and safety/security upgrades will support downtown living.

4. SAFETY & SECURITY

Increased activity in the Downtown will naturally provide increased safety, with more eyes on the street, and lighting and activity from ground floor shopfronts or residential stoops replacing vacant buildings and empty lots.

5. SUSTAINABLE BUILDING

The rebuilding of Downtown offers an important opportunity to rebuild sustainably, using the best new techniques and green building practices. Following a “green” paradigm can improve life cycle costs, lower costs to operate, lower energy footprint, and save money.

6. RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure upgrades needed before the storm are now more urgent. Solutions include stormwater management improvements as opportunities for economic development, placemaking, and a healthier Downtown.

7. CONNECTED

Street design changes re-allocate excess width from vehicular lanes to space for bikeways, trees, and/or sidewalks; this will also reduce vehicle speeds, creating a safer and more pleasant environment for pedestrians and cyclists.

8. PLACEMAKING

A cluster of arts and cultural facilities and activities Downtown helps to define its character and broaden its appeal to wider audiences. Providing space for arts and artists throughout the Downtown, including in streets and public spaces, is part of the vision.

9. GATHERING SPACES

To support activity, Downtown will need a variety of gathering places for community gatherings and events, with destinations and facilities for all ages. Ideas include more community parks and open spaces, a waterfront amphitheater, museums, a splash pad, pool, and YMCA.

10. UPDATED STANDARDS

Updating codes and regulations to implement the vision and streamlining approvals will be key to implementation.



The Strategic Vision for Downtown and its Waterfront was created to direct future growth while also preserving the city's history, providing a foundation for Panama City to become the premier city in the Panhandle. The above cornerstones, created for downtown, can guide rebuilding and recovery for all of Panama City. The Downtown Plan is available for review at rebuildpc.org.

NEIGHBORHOOD VISION

The Neighborhood Plans express the community's vision and priorities for the future, setting a framework for how the Glenwood, Millville and St. Andrews neighborhoods could rebuild, change and grow over the coming years. Several themes are consistent for all neighborhoods:

Create Complete Neighborhoods

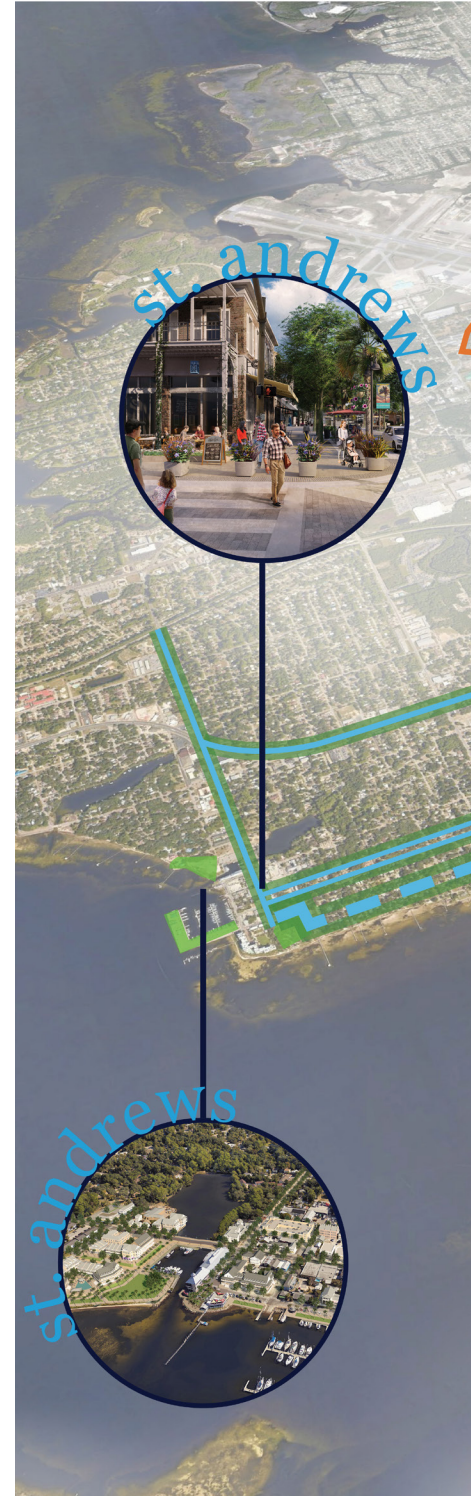
The neighborhoods themselves should become more complete with infill development in walkable centers including needed shops and services as well as homes, gathering places and recreational amenities. Commercial corridors should be retrofitted to stimulate the economy and better meet the needs of the communities that have grown around them. A variety of housing types should be provided to meet the needs of many households. Programs and policies aligned to the neighborhood vision should support small businesses, entrepreneurs, and opportunities for workforce development.

Create Great Streets

The neighborhoods should be connected by great, tree-lined streets that are designed to be safe and comfortable for people in cars, riding bikes and walking on sidewalks and trails. City policies should support the design of streets consistent with the land uses and neighborhood context that surround them. This plan recommends street design improvements to each neighborhood's mixed-use commercial corridors aimed to improve safety and walkability through widened sidewalks, street trees, pedestrian-scaled lighting, protected bike facilities, and improved crosswalks. Many of these design elements help manage high motor vehicle speeds, leading to better balance between all modes in the neighborhood centers.

Create Resilient Open Spaces & Infrastructure

The primary resiliency goal for Glenwood, Millville, and St. Andrews is to prioritize investment that will foster healthier, happier, more valuable, and stronger neighborhoods. The neighborhoods should have a robust, resilient infrastructure to support existing homes, businesses and envisioned new additions. To define and prioritize investment in pursuit of this goal, a "Green-Blue Framework" has been created for each neighborhood. Each framework plan synthesizes background analysis and community input to create a road map for resiliency. The framework plans take a big-picture view to weave nature-based solutions into infrastructure, open space, economic development, transportation, and placemaking.





glenwood

glenwood

millville

connections

downtown

downtown

millville

GLENWOOD

Glenwood is the center of Panama City's African American community, and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard was historically the local business spine. A road widening project in the early 2000s changed the boulevard's character leaving many vacant lots; years later damage from Hurricane Michael caused many residents to leave. The vision for Glenwood is to preserve neighborhood culture and heritage, to restore local commerce, to build recreational facilities, and to support existing residents while providing a mix of infill housing types. MLK Jr. Boulevard is a spine that connects all of Glenwood with neighborhood-serving commercial uses. New development creates centers of activity; a network of walkable streets, new open spaces, trails, and restored bayou natural areas connect the neighborhood.

GLENWOOD BIG IDEAS

Create a Complete Neighborhood

Placemaking: culture and heritage spaces that reflect the community

Revitalize Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd: infill vacant lots with commercial, office, and housing

Provide Opportunities for Small Businesses: incubator spaces and support for entrepreneurs

Incentivize Infill Housing: affordable and diverse housing types

Rebuild Recreational Facilities: bring back programs and amenities, community pool

Provide Desired Amenities: grocery store; splash pad, amphitheater; community broadband

Create Great Streets

Redesign Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd: reconnect the neighborhood by making a great street that is walkable, safe, shaded

Safe Streets: improve crossings, better pedestrian and bike facilities

Create Resilient Open Spaces & Infrastructure

Improve access to open space: existing and new accessible open spaces walkable to housing

Grow natural areas: bayou restoration / floodplain expansion

Upgrade infrastructure: water/sewer, harden power lines

Right: Potential future development and public space form a gateway to Glenwood at the intersection of MLK Jr. Boulevard and 15th Street.





For Illustrative Purposes Only

MILLVILLE

Millville is a community with a unique history defined by its industry and shipbuilding roots. The waterfront, historic Downtown Millville, Business 98 corridor, surrounding neighborhoods, and the industrial landscape to the south contribute to establishing Millville's character. Residents share a common interest in developing a signature park at the waterfront edge, revitalization of commercial corridors and residential streets, concentrating new mixed-use development near Downtown Millville and around key intersections, and building new infill housing on vacant lots to support a complete neighborhood. A resilient system of open spaces and restored natural areas will manage stormwater and improve water quality in the bayou.

MILLVILLE BIG IDEAS

Create a Complete Neighborhood

Open Up Waterfront: Program existing Waterfront Park; then plan for future phased expansions

Gateways: Focus development at Sherman Ave & Business 98 and at East Ave & Business 98

Neighborhood Centers: Provide access to needed amenities and services

Compatible Infill: Maintain integrity of historic Millville and incentivize new affordable and diverse housing

Create Great Streets

3rd Street as Main Street: Connect waterfront, historic Millville, Daffin Park, and residences with streetscape enhancements

East Ave Design: Redesign to balance industrial access needs with homes and school

Business 98 Revitalization: Improve safety at crossings; connect to downtown; improve overall aesthetic of development and redevelopment along corridor

Create Resilient Open Spaces & Infrastructure

Infrastructure: Harden and upgrade utilities; create a resilient system to manage stormwater and improve water quality in the bayou

Existing Open Spaces and Natural Areas: Enhance spaces including Joe Moody Harris Park, Daffin Park, and historic cemetery



Watson Bayou

Right: Potential future waterfront park in Millville.



Downtown
Millville

Maple Avenue

3rd Street

ST. ANDREWS

St. Andrews is home to the earliest settlement in Panama City; it is also most vulnerable to changing sea levels and future storms due to low-lying land within the historic core. The vision for St. Andrews preserves the character of the historic fishing village while adding new mixed-use buildings on vacant and underutilized lots to make the area more complete, memorable, and vibrant. Design standards will guide new development to be resilient to future storms, compatible with the character of historic precedents, and contributive to a walkable urban realm. A parking strategy makes the most of existing resources while planning for future needs. Enhanced public spaces such as the marina, bay and lake frontages, new and existing parks, and key streets such as Beck Avenue and 11th Street support activity.

ST. ANDREWS BIG IDEAS

Create a Complete Neighborhood

Increase Water Access: activate Lake Ware; marina as iconic space; kayaks; waterfront paths; water taxi

Incentivize Infill Housing: affordable and diverse housing types

Invest in Arts & Culture: public art; expand tourism; plan for reuse of St. Andrews school

Provide Desired Amenities: grocery store; splash pad; community broadband

Address Parking: enforcement & supply; include strategy for boat trailers

Update Standards: architecture / design standards; streamline business permitting

Create Great Streets

Redesign Beck Avenue: Main Street; improve safety; pedestrian-oriented; lighting, parking, shade

Connect Pedestrian & Bike Networks: connect to downtown via 10th/11th Street and Beach Dr.; connect Lake Ware to waterfront; remove Business 98 designation on Beck Ave

Create Resilient Open Spaces & Infrastructure

Upgrade Infrastructure: improve water quality, underground power, upgrade pipes

Improve Existing Open Spaces: including Oaks by the Bay, Truesdell Park and the marina

Include New Open Spaces & Green Infrastructure: address flood-prone areas, increase resiliency



Right: Potential future conditions in downtown St. Andrews.



For Illustrative Purposes Only

7 IMPLEMENTATION

The Implementation chapter documents a comprehensive list of next steps and follow-up activities necessary to make the recommendations of the preceding chapters a reality. The Implementation Action Plan matrix summarizes all action items by neighborhood area, and attaches potential funding sources, responsible parties, and a time frame in which the activity should occur. The plan is meant to coordinate public and private activities to implement the vision. Actions are organized by the following categories:

Invest in Priority Improvements

Upgrade Infrastructure, including water, sewer, stormwater facilities

Pursue Street Design and Intersection Improvements to promote safety and walkability

Expand Mobility Options with trails, protected bikeways, and public parking facilities

Improve Water Access, including boat launch and trailer parking improvements

Implement Resiliency through Green Infrastructure, protect existing natural systems, restore wetlands and floodplain, and use landscape to filter and absorb stormwater

Provide Quality Gathering Spaces to support neighborhood activity

Use City Property to Support Revitalization and demonstrate plan ideas

Rebuild/Reuse Community Facilities including the MLK Community Center and St. Andrews School

Remove Barriers to Investment

Revise City Codes and Ordinances to fit the vision and encourage implementation

Support Rebuilding & Revitalization through development incentives and code enforcement

Build on Existing Assets

Preserve Historic & Cultural Assets through historic preservation, placemaking, and public art

Support Workforce Development, Small Businesses and Entrepreneurs with new or enhanced City programs and partnerships

Build More Housing including workforce, affordable and mixed-income, in a variety of building types