

CITY OF FLORENCE

2014

Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy

FINAL



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Executive Summary

The City of Florence has concluded that it is in the best interest of its citizens and the long-term economic health of the municipality to outwardly extend the recent positive transformation of its downtown to the immediately surrounding neighborhoods. This decision is supported by two main compelling reasons. The first reason is to ensure that all residents of the city have an opportunity to share in the growing prosperity of the Pee Dee region. The second reason is to create a strong and vibrant quality of life in all neighborhoods that would potentially attract new and expanding industries to locate in Florence. The Florence Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy was born as a result of the City's desire to lead the revitalization efforts in the neighborhoods surrounding downtown. This strategy seeks to leverage the planning work produced during the Neighborhood Action Plan, and follow through with recommendations found in the 2010 Comprehensive Plan. It is also aimed at guiding and leveraging the initial investment of \$3 million in the neighborhoods by the city.

The Florence Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy presents next steps toward the stabilization and redevelopment of the three residential neighborhoods surrounding the downtown area – East Florence, North Florence, and Northwest Florence (referred to herein as the “Project Area”). In an effort to capture the concerns and vision of key civic and community leaders, the project team held meetings with city staff and stakeholders to prepare for the intensive due diligence review needed to design a holistic redevelopment strategy. Inherent to the design of the redevelopment strategy was the selection of real estate projects to recommend for immediate action based on the use of social metrics, architectural assessments, real estate market analysis, and a review of infrastructure systems and the pedestrian network. After receiving public input and compiling and analyzing relevant data, a course of action was chosen that connects the “core” of each of the three neighborhoods to the downtown area. The most direct route that connects

downtown to each of the neighborhoods should reflect strong architectural character, good traffic flow, opportunity to make an impact, current and pending investments, and the potential for subsequent development. The final analysis led to the selection of three areas for Catalytic Projects: Pine Street in East Florence, Vista Street in North Florence, and Sumter/Alexander Streets in Northwest Florence. While each of these street segments had unique characteristics, they all shared the trait of having multiple advantages and the ability to connect to the “heart” of each neighborhood, namely the parks and community centers.

The key process for the selection of the Catalytic Projects was the use of the Decision-Making Matrix tool. Essentially, the tool was composed of key criteria that were weighted by their perceived impact in order to arrive at a scoring system. Ten (10) potential areas were thoughtfully selected and then scored to narrow the list to the three (3) recommended Catalytic Projects. As stated previously, these three Catalytic Projects are believed to have the fundamentals to be successful early in the redevelopment process while also serving as an effective example of what the future redevelopment could hold for the larger Project Area.

A review of the market data suggested that each of the initial proposed real estate developments has the potential to achieve market stability and financial viability as a standalone effort. Perhaps more importantly, each of these initial projects also has the potential to catalyze similar improvements to the larger Project Area and to set the stage for long-term, sustainable redevelopment. The successful redevelopment of these initial areas will serve as a model for how other Florence neighborhoods can be transformed as attractive places to live. The goal is to use this document as a guide to target areas that are now blighted, or have the potential to become blighted, with strategies for neighborhood stabilization and revitalization to reinforce a mixture of downtown culture, new

homes, and restored historic homes all connected as one greater mixed-income, mixed-use, amenity-rich urban community.

Achieving the objectives of this effort will involve conventional brick-and-mortar developments, policy recommendations, strong civic leadership, and coordinated marketing and branding efforts. The project also needs to address the human capital development component. This report seeks to plainly list the steps needed for success of the outlined objectives for the identified Project Area.



Introduction

The goal for these neighborhoods is comprehensive revitalization that enhances the overall desirability of Florence as a place to live, increases the city's regional competitiveness, sets the stage for catalytic development, and continues the progress of recent successes.

The City of Florence, SC selected APD Urban Planning & Management and its sub-consultants to complete the Florence Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy. The sub-consultants are Planners for Environmental Quality (PEQ), RKG Associates, Toole Design Group, and URS (the consulting team). The strategy outlined in this report for the North Florence, Northwest Florence, and East Florence neighborhoods will result in implementation activity based on actionable steps outlined in the Neighborhood Action Plan (NAP) that was adopted in January 2013. This report builds upon the NAP and provides an implementable redevelopment guide for Florence's historically disinvested neighbor-

hoods. While the NAP includes the Project Area) as well as downtown, the Florence Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy focuses solely on the three neighborhoods that compose the project Area. The intent is to develop strategies for holistic urban infill redevelopment with continued input from the community while capitalizing on the connections from the Project Area to downtown.

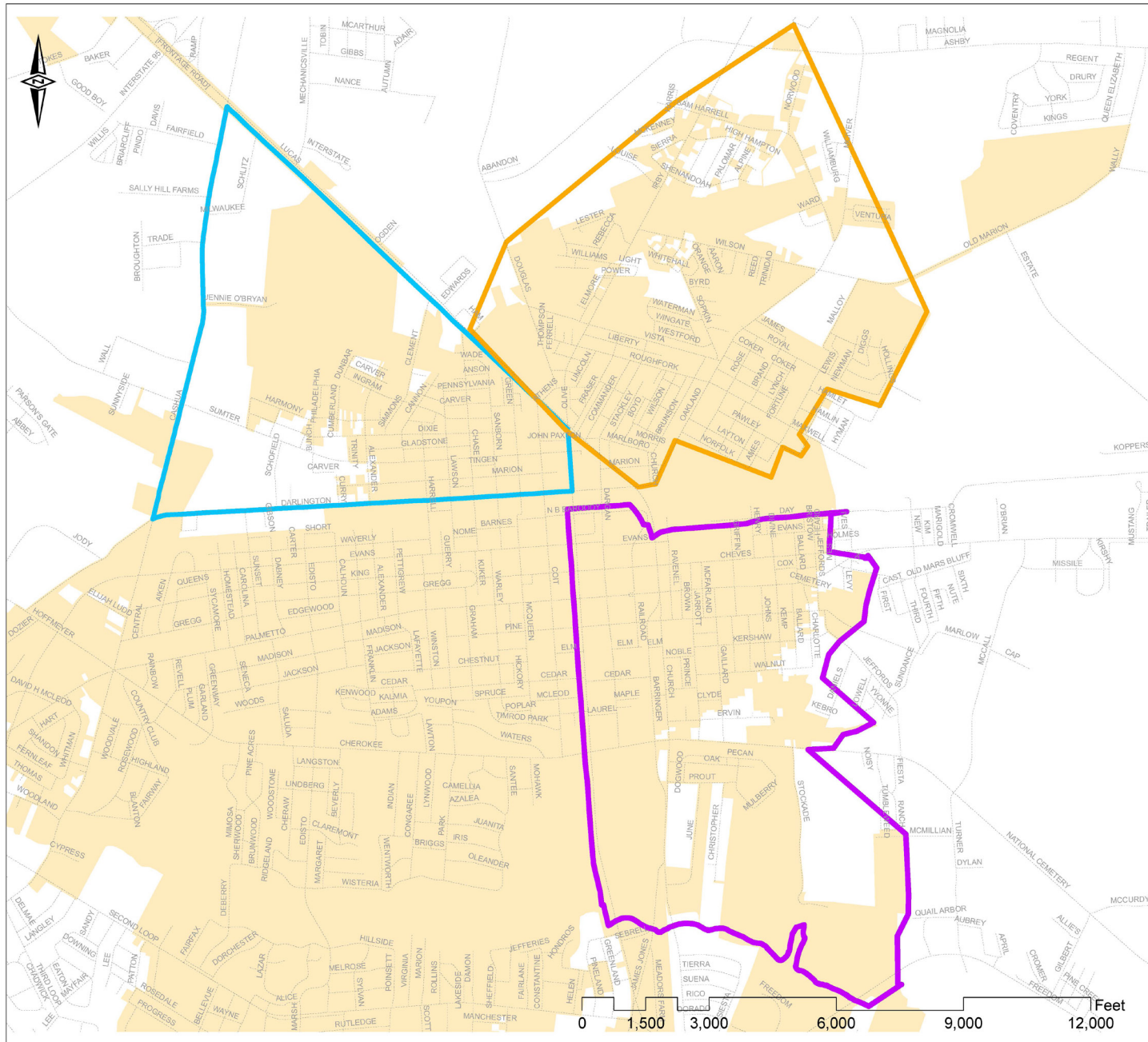
This report proposes a comprehensive revitalization strategy that enhances the overall desirability of Florence as a place to live, increases the city's regional competitiveness, sets the stage for catalytic development, and builds off of recent successes

within and around the downtown area. The proposal includes guiding the initial \$3 million investment from the city.

Project Area

The Florence Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy focuses on three (3) downtown neighborhoods: North Florence, Northwest Florence and East Florence (Figure 1), herein referred to as "the Project Area". The total size of the Project Area is approximately 3,622 acres with an estimated population of 14,580 residents (2013). As shown in Figure 1, the Project Area includes parcels that are both within and outside the city limits.

Figure 1: Project Area



Project Area Boundaries

Legend

-  Streets
- Neighborhoods**
-  East
-  North
-  Northwest
-  CityLimits

Vision and Goals

Since the completion of its 2010 Comprehensive Plan, the City of Florence has promoted the revitalization, stabilization and maintenance of its urban core neighborhoods. The first steps of this effort were the development of the Neighborhood Action Plan (NAP) in 2013, the introduction of the Code Enforcement and Community Action Team (CAT) officers, the creation of the Livability Court in January of 2014, and the establishment of specific City of Florence Planning staff to be directly involved in each of the neighborhoods and serve as the primary points of contact to the city. The Florence Neighborhood Revitalization Plan builds on these efforts to ultimately transform the city's blighted communities into first class, mixed-income urban neighborhoods. The following goals and objectives have been developed to guide the planning process based on specific input received during the development of the NAP.

Goal 1: To refine a mechanism to stabilize each of the neighborhoods and establish a process for ongoing maintenance.

Objectives:

1. Create programs that aid in increasing the number of homes and buildings that are compliant with the housing and building codes.
2. Continue work with Code Enforcement to decrease the number of abandoned properties.
3. Devise a Vacant Property and Property Maintenance Ordinance.
4. Encourage and fund infrastructure improvements.
5. Implement a Land Banking program.

Goal 2: Establish a process to build the capacity of existing residents as a means of building long-term sustainability in the neighborhood revitalization initiative.

Objectives:

1. Conduct capacity building workshops for existing residents and businesses.

2. Tap additional resources for Community Capacity Building (e.g., national service providers like Neighborworks and Enterprise.)

Goal 3: Expand and increase opportunities for affordable housing, homeownership, and rentals.

Objective:

1. Assess existing conditions of the homeownership and rental markets.
2. Increase the number of affordable housing options within the Project Area based on what the market can support.

Goal 4: Develop a marketing and rebranding strategy that builds on neighborhood strengths and attracts new families.

Objectives:

1. Establish gateways in the neighborhoods into and from downtown Florence, with a separate identity for each of the three neighborhoods.
2. Develop common themes that link the neighborhoods and the downtown area.

Goal 5: Leverage the resources of the city through partnerships with the county, federal, state, philanthropic, and private sector agencies.

Objectives:

1. Encourage city and county capacity building and collaboration.
2. Establish a working relationship with McLeod Health that is beneficial to the neighboring communities and to the medical complex.
3. Identify other potential partners to leverage current funding.

Goal 6: Design a governance structure to guide the implementation of a comprehensive neighborhood revitalization project.

Objectives:

1. Assess the capacity of government staff to act as a full-time Program Manager.
2. Propose roles and responsibilities of project management agent or agency.

Goal 7: Select areas for redevelopment that will effectively demonstrate the potential for a fully redeveloped neighborhood. Outline the process to expand neighborhood revitalization into other parts of the neighborhoods and into the City of Florence.

Objectives:

1. Use vacant property as a development resource.
2. Link infrastructure improvements to neighborhood revitalization.
3. Increase opportunities for green space as part of a neighborhood redevelopment strategy.
4. Use design guidelines and the zoning ordinance to establish a framework for new construction and rehabilitation of existing property.
5. Improve existing infrastructure in a manner that expands options for a more walkable neighborhood.

The recommendations in this report outline a comprehensive Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy as an approach to achieving the goals laid out by the city, community members, and community stakeholders during the NAP.

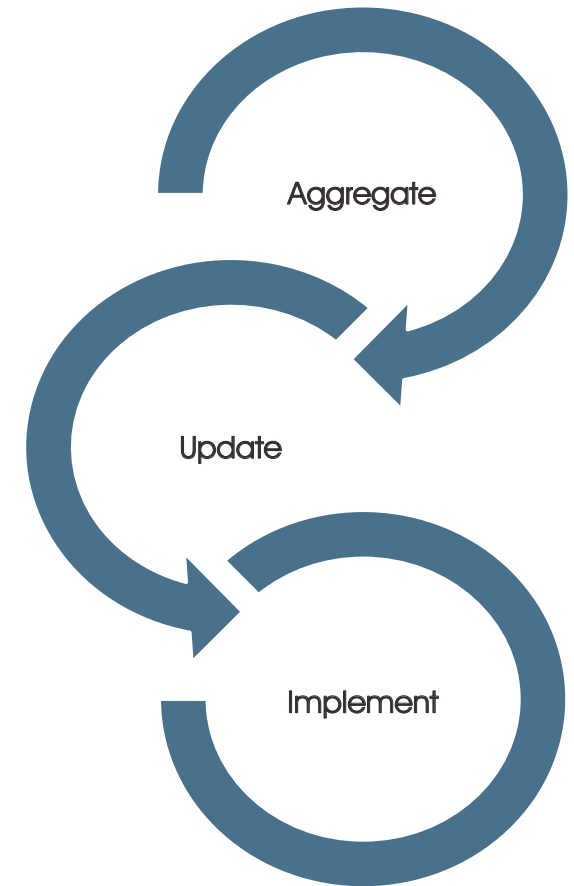
Approach

The revitalization strategy expands on existing initiatives by offering a multi-faceted approach that addresses the physical and social aspects of redevelopment by:

- Carrying on the diverse public engagement process that originated while crafting the NAP. The public process engaged citizens through updates in the form of public meetings and one-on-one interviews and interaction;
- Identifying short-term projects that are catalytic and leverage existing, proposed, and recently completed projects in the area;
- Utilizing the “model block” concept as a catalyst for development to achieve greater neighborhood impact; and
- Providing policy assistance that establishes a regulatory framework for reinvestment and attracts private sector capital through strategies that help manage initial development risks.

Public engagement occurred throughout the three (3) steps of the planning process through community meetings and stakeholder engagements.

Figure 2: Approach Steps



A three step approach was used to develop the revitalization strategy: Aggregate, Update, and Implement (Figure 2). This report is divided into these three steps, which are defined below.

Aggregate

The Aggregate step included collecting and reviewing existing conditions information for the Project Area including previous plans; demographics, zoning, traffic, and engineering data, and market data. Information was gathered from a variety of sources including the U.S. Census, the City of Florence, and Florence County. Information collected was reviewed and then organized as it pertained to future development opportunities and aligned with the overall project goals.

Update

In the Update step, the information gathered through the Aggregate step was verified, updated, and used to develop infrastructure and site planning recommendations, market analysis, and policy recommendations. Market assumptions were also developed to guide the type of projects that could be proposed for development during the initial phases. As part of the Update step a decision-making process was used to select specific areas to be redeveloped as Catalytic Projects. This process took into consideration a variety of criteria including predevelopment steps, market conditions, and proposed and recently completed projects.

Implement

As part of this report, the Implement section outlines recommendations for the City of Florence, and its partners, to achieve the established goal of revitalizing the downtown neighborhoods. The recommendations included the development of financial strategies, long-term management structures, policy recommendations to support existing residents and businesses, and predevelopment steps, among others. The Implement step also included the creation of design and financial strategies for the initial Catalytic Projects to help kick start the revitalization of the three neighborhoods.



Community Engagement

Overview

The Community Engagement element of the Florence Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy was designed to build on the recommendations outlined during the creation of the NAP, as the process was heavily steeped in public participation. Engagement efforts were focused on keeping residents informed of the proposed implementation steps and development progress on applicable Catalytic Projects. Three public meetings were held as well as a number of one-on-one meetings with key stakeholders, a City Council subcommittee, and a Neighborhood Advisory Committee that was established to help guide and champion the revitalization strategy. This section summarizes what was discussed in these meetings. It also includes recommendations for the City of Florence on how to continue to engage its residents and stakeholders.

All aspects of the public engagement process were documented including stakeholder meetings, meeting notifications, community meeting summaries and sign-in sheets. These documents can be found in Appendix A.

Neighborhood Advisory Council

The Neighborhood Advisory Council is a group of both public and private sector representatives established to provide feedback on proposed planning and development initiatives. The Neighborhood Advisory Council was also established to help identify opportunities for potential private sector involvement and partnerships. Two (2) presentations were made to this group to updated them on the planning process. Ideally this committee will help the city administration to champion private sector support for the neighborhood revitalization.

City Council

One (1) presentation was made to the City of Florence City Council during the planning process. Group meetings with the city council representatives for the Project Area were also held on several occasions to keep them apprised of the work. These meetings were also opportunities to obtain additional feedback that the representatives may have received from their constituents during the planning process to ask for clarification of the proposed implementation strategies.



Public Meetings

Findings and recommendations for the Project Area were shared in three (3) community meetings conducted during the planning process. Stakeholders and residents were able to provide their input, share their concerns about their neighborhoods, and react to specific concepts and ideas.

Notification Methods

The City of Florence was responsible for publicizing all three (3) public meetings. The following notification methods were used to communicate to community members and stakeholders about upcoming meetings:

- Phone blasts;
- Emails;
- Flyers distributed in popular locations throughout the neighborhoods (e.g., laundromats, convenience/corner stores, health care facilities, fast food restaurants, community centers, churches);
- Neighborhood association meetings;
- Door-to-door announcements by the Community Action Team (CAT) patrol;
- The city website;
- Public Service Announcements (PSAs) on the radio;
- Public access channel announcements;
- The Florence Morning News; and
- Press releases sent to media outlets.

Meeting Formats

Each meeting began with a brief introduction of the consulting team, the City of Florence staff, and any elected officials in attendance. Previous meetings were reviewed to ensure that stakeholders understood that the issues and questions from the prior meetings were addressed and transferred to the planning process. PowerPoint presentations were the primary tool to convey information during the meetings, with large format printed maps placed around the room for additional input and discussions before and after the presentation. After each presentation, questions and comments were allowed so participants could discuss issues and gain clarity on topics discussed during the meetings.

Meeting Documentation

After each meeting, a written summary was produced that captured meeting topics, discussions, questions, and comments. Comment forms were provided for written feedback. A copy of these documents can be found in Appendix A.

First Community Meeting

All three public meetings for the Florence Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy were held at the Art Trail Gallery in downtown Florence. The first public meeting occurred on May 6th, 2014. There were seventy (70) people in attendance with a mixture of

elected officials, business owners, community leaders, residents, and city staff. The meeting was conducted in three parts that included the following agenda items:

1. PowerPoint Presentation:
 - Review of project goals and objectives
 - Review of previous studies/status of implementation, and
 - Overview of public involvement
2. Breakout Tables: attendees were divided into five (5) groups for a discussion of previously identified issues that also included study area maps for noting the location of specific issues.
3. Table Reports: each table identified a spokesperson to take notes and provide an overview of discussions.

The discussion at all five tables was categorized into three (3) general topics:

1. Vacant and abandoned properties,
2. Protection of historic locations, and
3. Infrastructure issues including lighting, sidewalk, and streetscape.

The discussions validated the initial goals brought forward by the NAP: specifically concerns about infrastructure, vacant and abandoned buildings, and code enforcement. The discussions also brought to light historic locations considered to be important to the neighborhood residents that should be taken into consideration in any redevelopment efforts.



Second Public Meeting

The second public meeting for the Florence Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy was held on July 7th, 2014 with eighty-one (81) people in attendance. Attendees were provided a comment form to provide written feedback in addition to the verbal comments and questions received during the meeting.

The meeting was conducted in two (2) parts that included the following agenda items:

1. PowerPoint Presentation:
 - Feedback from first meeting,
 - Catalytic Projects,
 - Decision-making criteria,
 - Preliminary market analysis findings, and
 - Initial proposed programs.
2. Comment Session: Following the presentation, attendees were invited to provide feedback on the presentation through verbal exchange. Attendees offered the following input during the comment session:
 - “Ensure local contractors are given an opportunity for construction and other physical projects in the neighborhoods.”
 - “Speeding should be controlled on Sopkin Avenue, such as speed bumps. The street also needs sidewalks and lighting.”
 - “The public transit system in Florence (PDRTA) has experienced significant growth in ridership over recent years. Keep this city service in mind for any eventual recommendations with revitalization through infrastructure investment (bus stops, curb cuts, signage and/or through operational investment) to meet a growing demand.”
 - “Money needs to be available for loans. Provide legal assistance/advice for prospective homeowners. Existing houses need rehab. Improve sidewalks and street infrastructure.”
 - “If the streets cannot be repaved or widened, then they should be swept.”
 - “Great information and I am excited to see the construction of projects.”

Third Public Meeting

The third public meeting for the Florence Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy was held on September 11th, 2014. There were seventy-one (71) people in attendance.

The meeting was conducted primarily in an information dissemination format.

1. Powerpoint Presentation:
 - Review of catalytic projects,
 - Assessment of streetscape alternatives,
 - Discussion of redevelopment and revitalization programs, and
 - Discussion of next steps for the project.
2. Comment Session: After the presentation, attendees shared their feedback and questions on the topics discussed during the presentation. Some of the comments heard during this discussion included:
 - Questions on the economic factors and the current state of the community.
 - Discussion on traffic issues on Vista

and Roughfork and the possibility of making these streets one-way.

- “Does Vista need another sidewalk?”
- The Florence County Black History Initiative was introduced. There was also interest in the 45 African-American businesses that used to exist in the 100-200 blocks of North Dargan Street.
- “How do you retain and attract business?”
- “The intent is to create funding to support elderly programs.”



One-On-One Meetings

One-on-one stakeholder engagement was valuable to the planning effort since it was a way to learn about a variety of issues that are important to the community. The planning process sought to expand beyond the vital public meetings by conducting over a dozen one-on-one meetings with private individuals, smaller groups (approximately 3-5 people), and city staff. The venues for these meetings ranged from municipal office space, to institutions (e.g., churches, libraries), to private homes.

The meetings with city staff provided greater insight into current policy, potential future policy changes, municipal structure, and public engineering/facility processes. The meetings with residents and other stakeholders produced a greater understanding of the people, places, and changes that have occurred and contributed to the makeup of the communities. All institutional knowledge gained through these meetings was used to influence the decision-making process regarding the Catalytic Projects and policy recommendations.

Conclusion

Comments received during the public meetings, stakeholder engagements, and council and neighborhood advisory meetings were taken into consideration in the development of neighborhood revitalization strategies through all phases of the planning efforts. The incorporation of this input is primarily evident in the Recom-

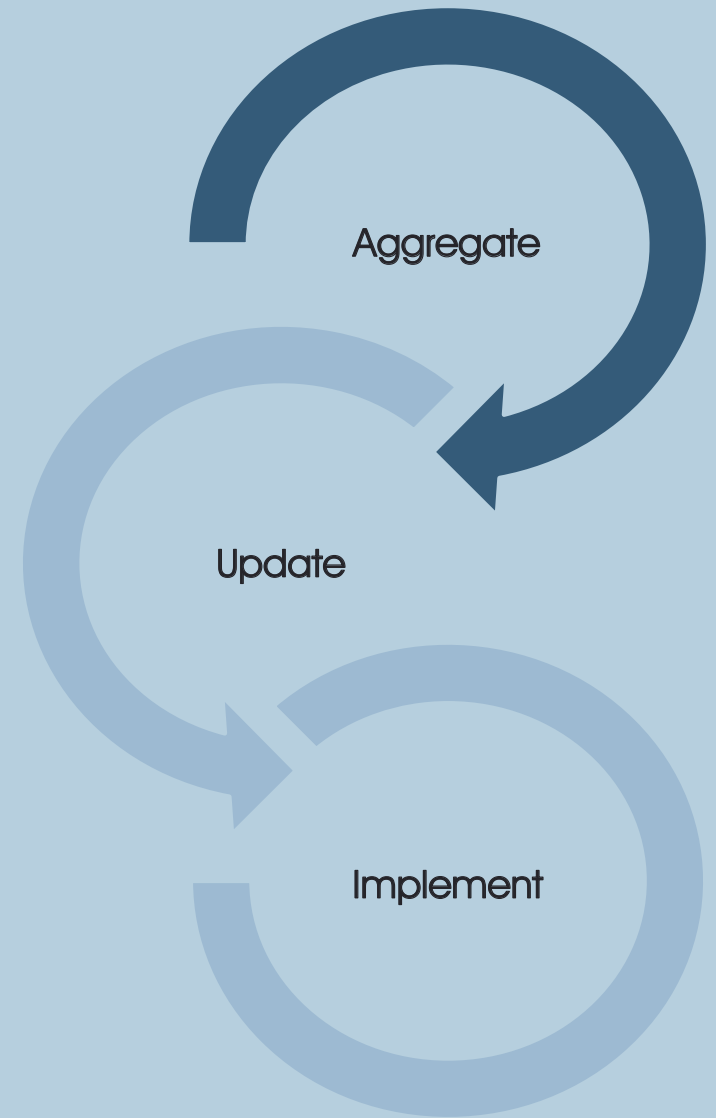
mendations section of this report, where policy and implementation recommendations are outlined that directly affect existing residents.

Next Steps

The City of Florence is encouraged to communicate with residents, stakeholders, and elected officials concerning the revitalization of these neighborhoods. It is highly recommended that the city continue to hold quarterly meetings to keep residents engaged while continuing to work with city staff to identify neighborhood leaders and examine capacity-building opportunities that tie into the redevelopment efforts. Further recommendations on capacity building can be found in the Implement section of this report.

Aggregate

This section of this report outlines the first step of the work that was completed: the aggregation of existing conditions information from the U.S. Census, the City of Florence, and Florence County that helped inform the subsequent stages of work (Update and Implement) to develop the Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy for the Project Area. The Plan Review section outlines the different plans that were reviewed to obtain important information about the neighborhoods, including past proposed projects, previous public engagements, and how the Project Area fits within the context of the city and its future plans for growth. The Neighborhood Profile is an analysis of the existing conditions of the Project Area, which includes data on housing, education, population, household size, and other key data points. The summary included in this section is a snapshot of the existing conditions of the neighborhoods that served as the basis for the analysis that was completed in the Update stage of this work.



Previous Plans

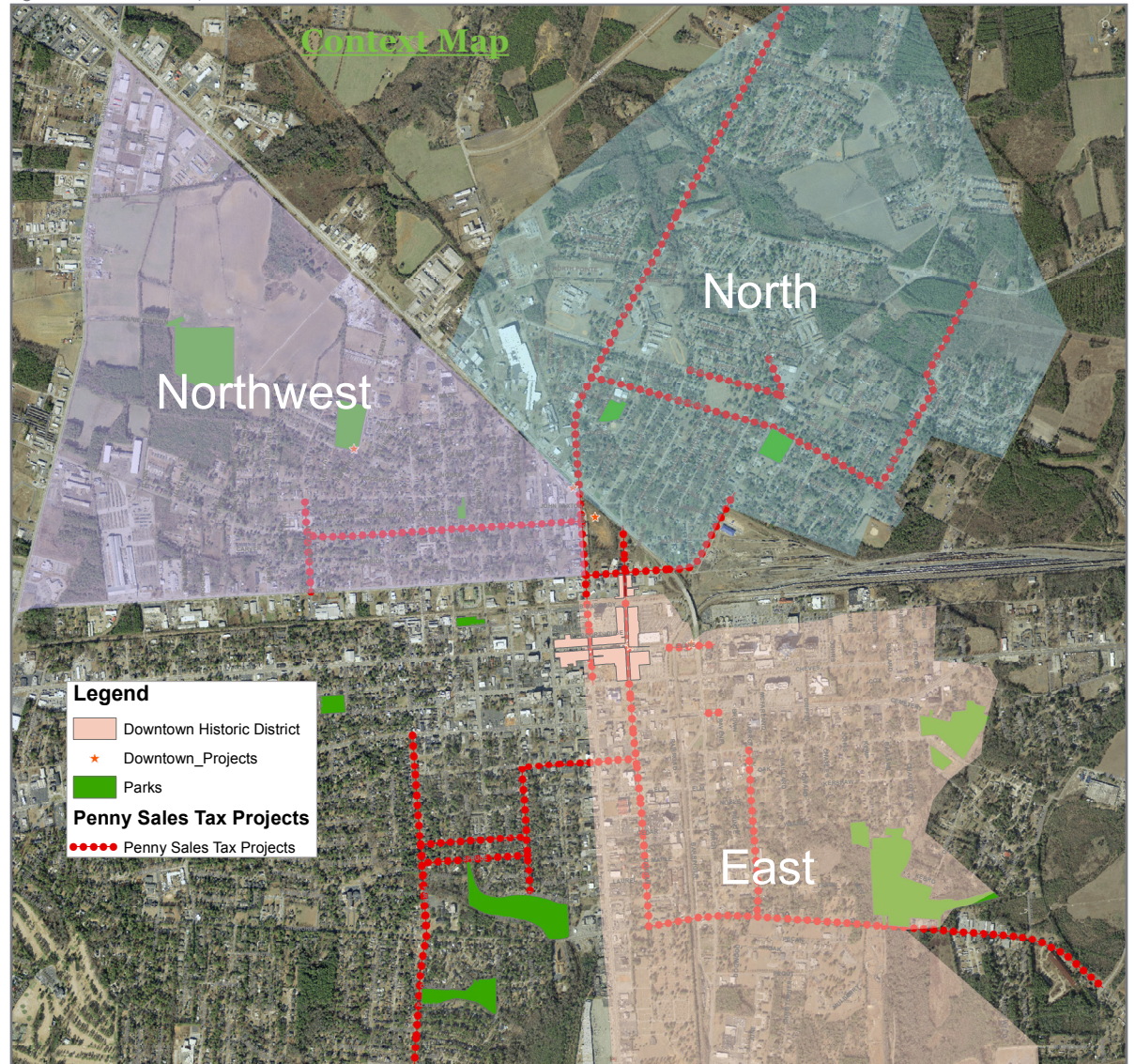
Several plans were reviewed in order to gain an understanding of the Project Area and the City of Florence. A summary of the review can be found in Appendix B. The plans reviewed included:

- Florence Neighborhood Action Plan (NAP)
- Downtown Masterplan Update
- City of Florence Comprehensive Plan

A short summary of how these three plans relate to the Project Area is included on the next page.

Review of these plans was important in developing a framework of the existing conditions of the Project Area, especially with respect to opportunities and strengths of the neighborhoods. Community assets and recently completed projects were mapped. City of Florence staff were interviewed to obtain a list of planned and upcoming projects, especially in the downtown area and within close proximity of the Project Area. All of these projects were mapped, as shown in Figure 3, and used in subsequent analysis for identifying catalytic areas for future work.

Figure 3: Context Map





Florence Neighborhood Action Plan

Completed 01/21/2013 for East Florence, North Florence, Northwest Florence neighborhoods, and Downtown Florence

The goal of this document was to identify residents' greatest concerns and to develop action plans that directly addressed those concerns. The NAP serves as the precursor to this document, as it identified strengths and weaknesses within the neighborhoods; areas of need and priorities; and the issues that residents felt were the most important within their neighborhoods. The NAP developed strategies that could be realistically implemented in an efficient and cost-effective manner in areas identified by the community including code enforcement, property maintenance, capacity building, infrastructure, and safety.



Downtown Masterplan Update

Adopted 02/14/2011 for the Downtown Florence Area

The Downtown Masterplan Update reviewed and updated the first downtown Masterplan completed in 2010. It highlighted the importance of the McLeod campus, a major player within the Project Area. The plan also outlined the role of the city in managing redevelopment risks, a role that the city will have to consider when redeveloping the downtown neighborhoods. Several of other recommendations should also be applied to the downtown neighborhoods including strengthening pedestrian connections and design guidelines for thoughtful redevelopment with special consideration to walkability. Several of the Catalytic Projects mentioned in this plan may no longer apply since other developments have occurred since the plan was completed.



City of Florence Comprehensive Plan

Adopted 02/14/11 for the City of Florence

A review of the Comprehensive Plan revealed specific elements that the city considers to be important about the Project Area including the tree-lined canopy and how it is essential to preserve this within the downtown area. The Comprehensive Plan describes conditions that need to be considered, especially when proposing new projects like existing infrastructure. In this plan, residents also expressed a concern with the conditions of existing parks. The Comprehensive Plan also recommends changes to the zoning code to aid with design standards, especially to prevent high-intensity uses from being developed in the neighborhoods. The Comprehensive Plan also pointed to several historic locations within the neighborhoods and the importance of preserving them.

Neighborhood Profile

The following section summarizes the Neighborhood Profile report, which can be found in Appendix C. The report collected data from the U.S. Census for the years 2000 and 2010, 2013 estimates, 2018 projections, and examined the differences between the Project Area, the City of Florence, and Florence County. This data was gathered in order to gain an understanding of the Project Area in terms of population, employment, household income, and other demographic data points. The Project Area data was compared to the larger city and county data from 2000 to 2018 to understand the area’s demographic trends. Land use and existing conditions were reviewed and data from all three neighborhoods was compared in the report.

Demographic information was collected from the U.S. Census at the census tract and block group levels. The list of census tracts and block groups is depicted in Figure 4. Most of the boundaries for these areas do not directly correlate to the boundaries of existing neighborhoods; therefore, data was collected for those areas that most accurately reflected the neighborhood boundaries. Figure 4 shows a comparison of the boundaries.

Demographic Trends

- The 2013 population estimate for the Project Area was 14,577, which is approximately 39% of the total population of the City of Florence and 11% of the population in the county.

- The data collected for Florence County and the City of Florence shows the population increasing during the period between 2000 to 2018. Compared to the city and county, the Project Area’s population has consistently decreased since 2000. The 2018 projections show the Project Area population decreasing by 124 people within the next five years.

***The Project Area
makes up 39% of the
population of the City
of Florence***

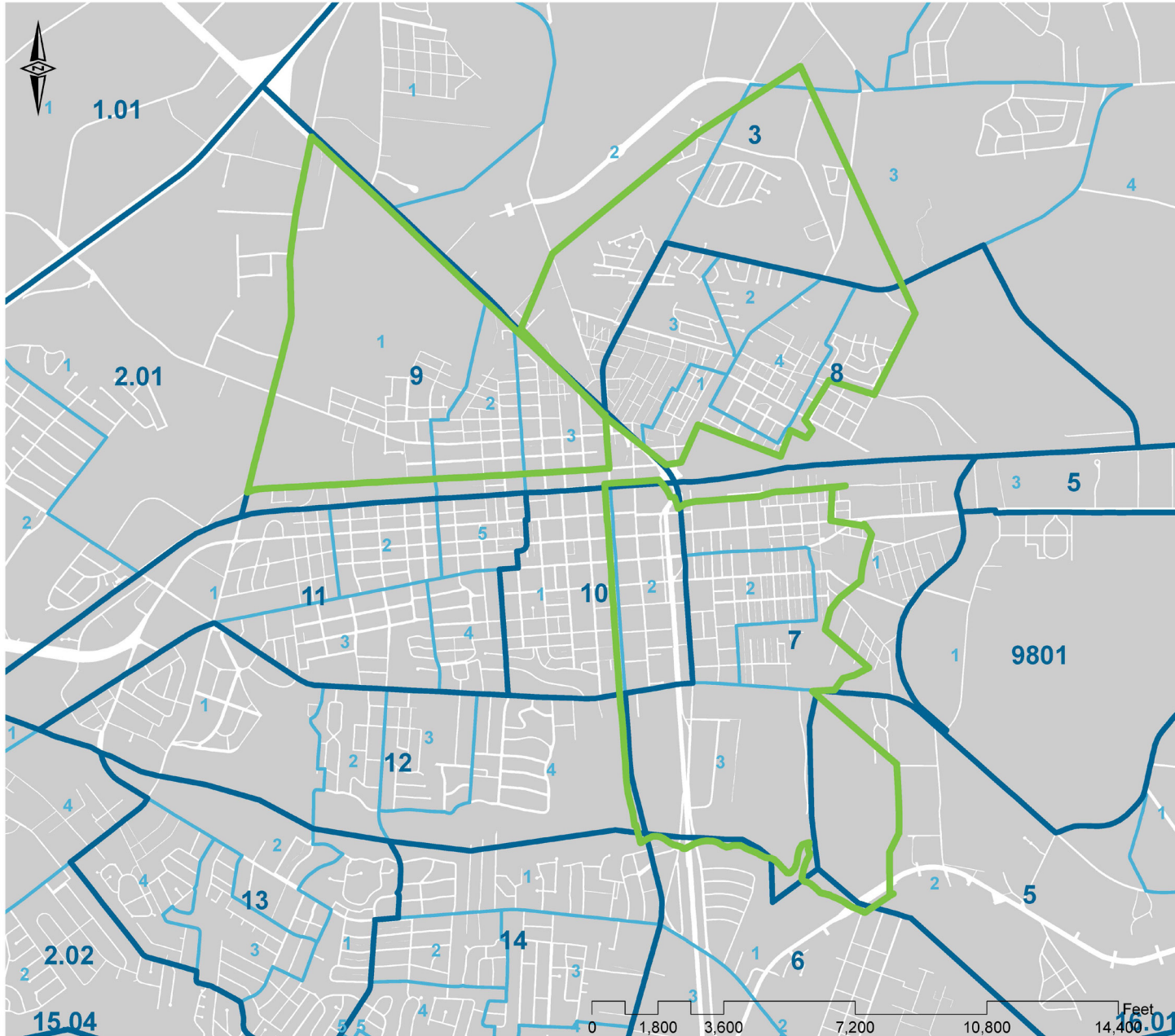
- The Project Area population shows increases in the 0-5 and 55-64 age groups, in other words the very young and the elderly. Since 2000 the population has decreased in all other age groups.
- Since 2000, more than 85% of the Project Area’s population has been African American. The city’s population, in contrast, has had an even distribution between the White and African American populations.
- In 2010, only 5.8% of the population in the Project Area had received a bachelor’s degree. The city and county had

Table 1: Population

	Total Population			
	2000 Census	2010 US Census	2013 Estimates	2018 Projections
Project Area	15813	14436	14577	14453
Florence City	33308	36782	37055	38632
Florence County	125760	136886	138736	143413
	2000-2013 % Change	2013-2018 % Change	Total % Estimates	2013 to 2018 Difference
Project Area	-7.7%	-0.9%	-8.6%	-124
Florence City	11.2%	4.3%	15.4%	1577
Florence County	10.2%	3.4%	13.6%	4677

Source: DemographicsNow.com

Figure 4: Project Area Boundaries



Project Area Boundaries

Legend

- Project Areas
- Census Tracts
- Block Group

Census Tracts	Block Groups
3	2,3
5	2
7	1,2,3
8	1,2,3,4
9	1,2,3
10	2

more than twice that percentage of people who had received a higher degree.

- Since 2010 the city and county showed an increase in percentage of associates, bachelor’s and graduate degrees, while the Project Area shows a substantial decrease.
- In 2013, the unemployment rate in the Project Area was twice as high as the city’s unemployment rate (7.2%). That same year within the Project Area, only 43.5% of the population 16 and over was employed, compared to the city’s 54.4%.
- It was estimated that in 2013, 5,448 households were in the Project Area.
- In 2013, the median household income and the per capita income in the Project Area were nearly half that of the city and county, at \$24,750 and \$13,192.

Existing Conditions

The Neighborhood Profile report also reviewed existing conditions within the three neighborhoods including land use, building conditions, and occupancy.

- The two (2) major existing land uses as defined by the Comprehensive Plan are auto-urban single family (reflects the more densely developed single- and multiple-family neighborhoods as well as the commercial uses along each of the main corridors, shopping centers, and the two large medical centers), and auto-urban multifamily.
- The three (3) top proposed land uses

for the Project Area are neighborhood conservation, downtown, and commercial auto-urban in number of parcels and neighborhood conservation, residential suburban, and industrial in acreage.

- Vacant properties comprise 13.5% of the Project Area.
- The Project Area has a myriad of zoning districts within its boundaries including residential, business, office, industrial, and rural, which is primarily due to the Project Area being in both the city and county.
- Based on data gathered by the City of Florence, of the 5,930 parcels in the Project Area, 503 (8.48%) are abandoned structures and 298 (5.02%) are vacant lots. In other words, 13.5% of the parcels are vacant houses or lots.
- The City of Florence conducted a

windshield survey within the Project Area showing that 56% of structures are in good and fair condition and 16% are in poor, deteriorated, and dilapidated condition.

- Sidewalks and gutters on structures were also surveyed. A review of the properties surveyed showed that only 18% of streets had sidewalks and only 22% had gutters.

Neighborhood Comparison

A comparison of the demographic information among all three neighborhoods in the Project Area was also included in the Neighborhood Profile. This comparison revealed that:

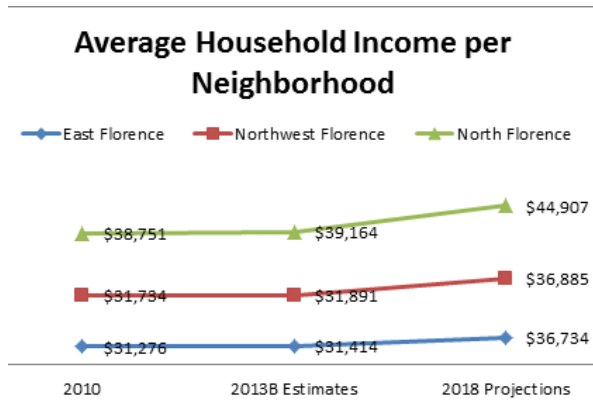
- North Florence has the largest population of all three neighborhoods followed by East Florence.
- The 2013 estimates show the population of North Florence begins to increase slightly through the 2018 projections, while the population of East Florence continues to decrease significantly through the 2018 projections. The Northwest Florence data shows a constant increase in the population of the neighborhood.
- The 2013 estimates show that North Florence has the highest percentage of African American population (97%), Northwest Florence follows with 94% and East Florence has the lowest with 82%. East Florence data shows the highest increase (10%) in African American population from 2000 (71%) to 2010 (81%).

Table 2: Existing Conditions

Existing Conditions	Total Parcels	Total %
Good	1843	31%
Fair	1471	25%
Poor	449	8%
Deteriorated	343	6%
Dilapidated	135	2%
Lot Under Construction	1008	17%
Construction	15	0%
Not Rated	666	11%
TOTAL	5930	100%

Source: City of Florence

Figure 5: Income by Neighborhood



- Employment data for 2013 estimates that East Florence has the highest percentage of unemployed population (10%) and population over 16 that is not in the labor force (52%). Comparatively North Florence and Northwest Florence have the same unemployment rate (7%).
- Educational attainment data for the 2013 estimates show that North Florence has the highest percentage of the population that had received a higher education degree (20%), followed by East Florence (14%), and then Northwest Florence with the lowest percentage (7%).
- The average household income for all three neighborhoods is shown in Figure 5. North Florence has the highest median household income in the 2010, 2013, and 2018 data. East Florence exhibits the lowest average household income for all three neighborhoods.
- Among the three neighborhoods, the North Florence neighborhood has the

highest percentage of structures in good condition (39%) and East Florence has the lowest percentage (23%). It is also important to note that East Florence has the highest percentage of vacant lots (26%).

Next Steps

The demographic trends depicted in this summary for the Project Area are similar to trends that many cities have experienced in their disinvested neighborhoods. It is evident that future revitalization work must target the direct causes of these trends, and understand why these areas are not growing. The demographic information and existing conditions data can serve as a baseline to set goals and objectives for the revitalization of these neighborhoods. The following next steps are recommended:

- Utilize the existing demographic data to inform strategies on new housing, resident capacity building, and job creation. As an example, based on the current age distribution data, programs should be created to serve the elderly population, because it makes up a large percentage of the existing population in the Project Area. Some of these strategies can be found in subsequent sections of this report.
- Continue to conduct windshield surveys every two years at minimum. This information is important both in understanding how the neighborhoods are changing, and to inform specific strat-

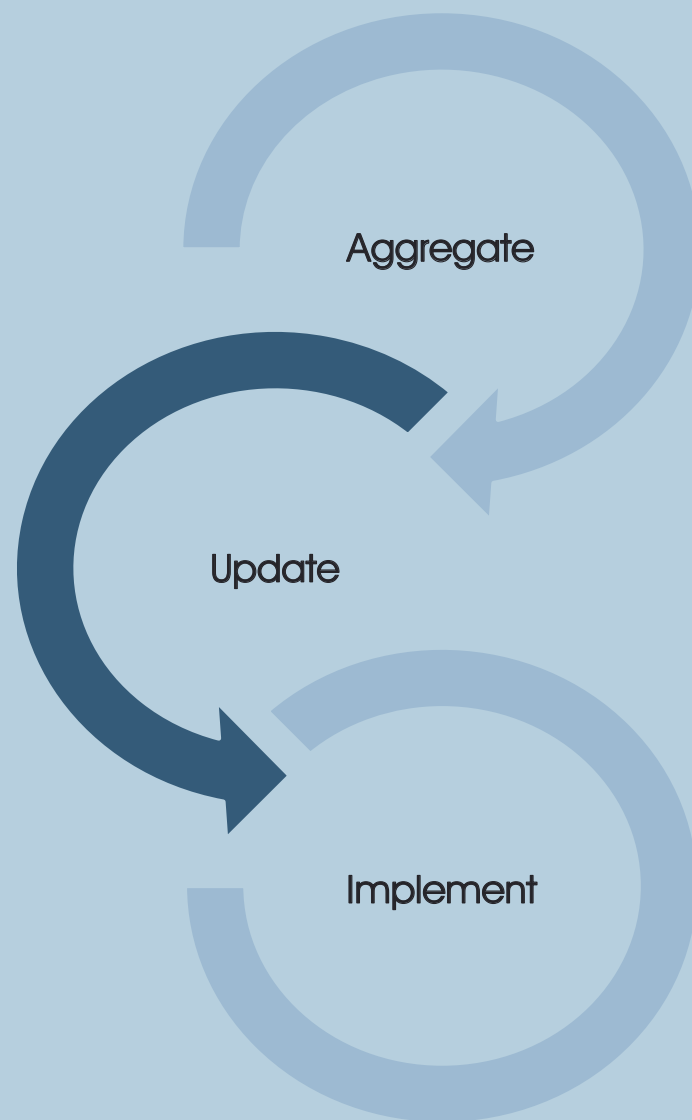
egies such as code enforcement, restoration of existing structures, and identification of areas of concentration of vacant parcels, or specific types of structures.

Update

This section outlines the second step of the work completed: the update and analysis of the existing conditions information that was gathered in the Aggregate step. This section includes information on two elements: the Market Analysis and the Decision-Making Matrix.

The Market Analysis outlined market trends, absorption rates, and suggested retail demand for the Project Area. It also analysed the supply and demand of housing within the Project Area. This analysis is important to understanding specific housing demand for the Project Area, and how that informs the phasing and types of projects being proposed.

The Decision-Making Matrix (DMM) is an objective process used to select the Catalytic Projects based on existing conditions, opportunities, market conditions, and predevelopment steps. The DMM aided the City of Florence in understanding the status of each project within the predevelopment stage, and helped create steps to move each project forward into implementation.



Market Analysis

In an effort to design Catalytic Projects that were reflective of current market conditions a detailed Market Analysis was conducted for the Project Area and can be found in Appendix E. This section includes a summary of the document. The goal of the market analysis was to analyze the current supply and demand of prospective new homebuyers and renters in order to recommend the type of retail and residential development that could be supported within the three target neighborhoods. The residential analysis tracked trends from 2003 to 2013 in order to establish baseline metrics. Data was collected from the Florence County tax assessment database, the U.S. Census, and other recognized proprietary sources.

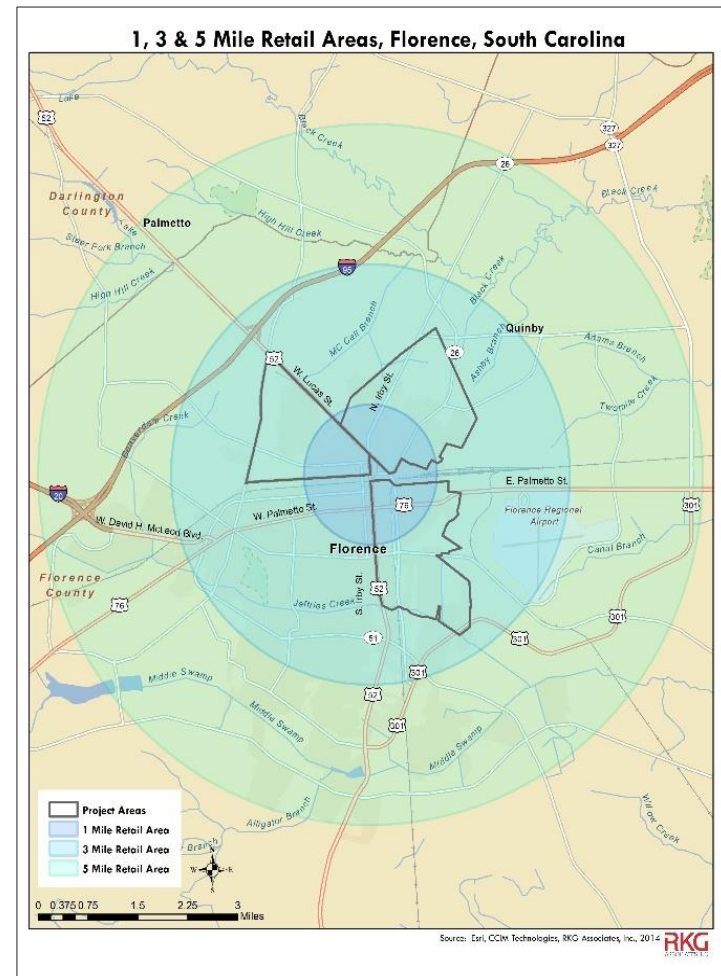
Residential Analysis

The analysis of existing housing supply and demand within the Project Area indicates that while housing is generally affordable, there is an insufficient supply of for-sale properties to meet the demand from existing moderate-to middle-income households (80% of average median income and above). Therefore, revitalization efforts will have the greatest success if a specific percentage of units are developed at price points between \$140,000 and \$176,000.

A number of competitive markets for units in this price range already exist in desirable locations throughout the county. Therefore, new and rehabilitated housing units within the Project Area will need to capitalize on the proximity to downtown employment and amenities in order to compete with the existing supply of for-sale properties in other areas of the county.

At the lower end of the affordability range, there is a surplus of housing units, but many of these units are in poor condition and do not meet contemporary living needs. This speaks to the need for a comprehensive housing rehabilitation program for both owner-occupied and renter-occupied housing. The Recommendations section of this report speaks to the creation and structure of these

Figure 6: Retail Analysis Area



rehabilitation programs.

The analysis of the conversion within the Project Area of owner-occupied units to rentals emphasizes the need for additional rental

options, especially if the additional rental options enable single-family rental units to be converted back to owner-occupied units. As more owners-occupied units become available to moderate income households, some households renting single-family units may be able to become first-time homeowners. However, after an extended period as renters, homeowner education will be critical for the first-time homeowners. There is also a shortage of rental units with a gross rent from \$510 to \$814 per month serving a population with an Area Median Income (AMI) threshold of 51% to 80%. Given that a large number of renters are low-income or below, rental subsidies may be necessary to increase affordable rental options within the Project Area.

Retail Analysis

The retail recommendations are based on a demand analysis that measured demand across a one mile, three mile, and a five mile retail areas (Figure 6).

The analysis revealed that the demand gap for commercial uses includes support for approximately 6,500 square feet of full-service restaurant space within the one mile retail area. The analysis of retail demand and current retail sales suggests sufficient demand for additional pharmacies, dry cleaners, a grocery store, and other general merchandise, electronic, lawn and garden, hobby, and office supply stores within one mile of the center of Florence. From the perspective of the Project Area, however, future retail development will likely occur along the major traffic corridors of W. Palmetto Street, Irby Street (North and South), and possibly West Lucas Street, but outside the Project Area in locations with existing retail concentrations.

Subsequent sections of this report outline how the market analysis informed the decision-making process as well as the development, phasing, and timeline of the selected Catalytic Projects selected including the amount of product to be built and its size, characteristics, and price points.

Next Steps

As the Catalytic Projects are implemented and future projects come in line, it will be very important to consider their effects on the market, both retail and residential. Each area within a city has a threshold for how much product can be absorbed within a specific amount of time. Any future project must be measured against the absorption rate to ensure that it does not compete with redevelopment efforts. Future work within the neighborhood stabilization efforts may require a specific market analysis for that particular use and area.

Decision-Making Matrix

Methodology

The Decision Making Matrix (DMM) is an organized method to analyze development criteria that are important to moving forward potential Catalytic Projects. It is intended to aid the City of Florence, stakeholders, community members, and development leaders in making objective decisions for prioritizing development initiatives. The DMM uses maps prepared with Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology and market analysis to demonstrate how various criteria factor into prioritizing initiatives (see Figure 7 for an example and Appendix D for the complete set of maps).

During the initial months of the project, available demographic and GIS information was gathered for the East Florence, Northwest Florence, and North Florence neighborhoods, as described in the Aggregate section. In addition to this information, several visits to the project site were conducted, as well as meetings held with stakeholders, community members and City of Florence staff. Using the available information, ten (10) potential Catalytic Projects were selected based on several criteria:

- Knowledge of the potential Catalytic Project areas;
- Early market analysis findings;
- Location of recently completed and proposed projects that can serve to jumpstart a specific area within the

neighborhoods; and

- Knowledge gained through site visits, stakeholder meetings, and public meetings held during the initial planning stages.

All ten of the Catalytic Areas are outlined in Figure 7.

As part of the process a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis was developed for each of the potential Catalytic Projects. Each SWOT analysis explained how that particular site was selected and identified specific opportunities, strengths, weaknesses and threats within each one. An example SWOT analysis is shown in Figure 8 and all ten analyses are in Appendix D.

The objective of the DMM was to help narrow down the ten potential Catalytic Projects to three (3) Catalytic Projects that would receive initial investment in the neighborhood to maximize development impact and leverage available funds. The selection was based on criteria developed for the DMM, along with stakeholder and community interviews. A variety of maps were developed to analyze the level of readiness of various initiatives within a structured development process.

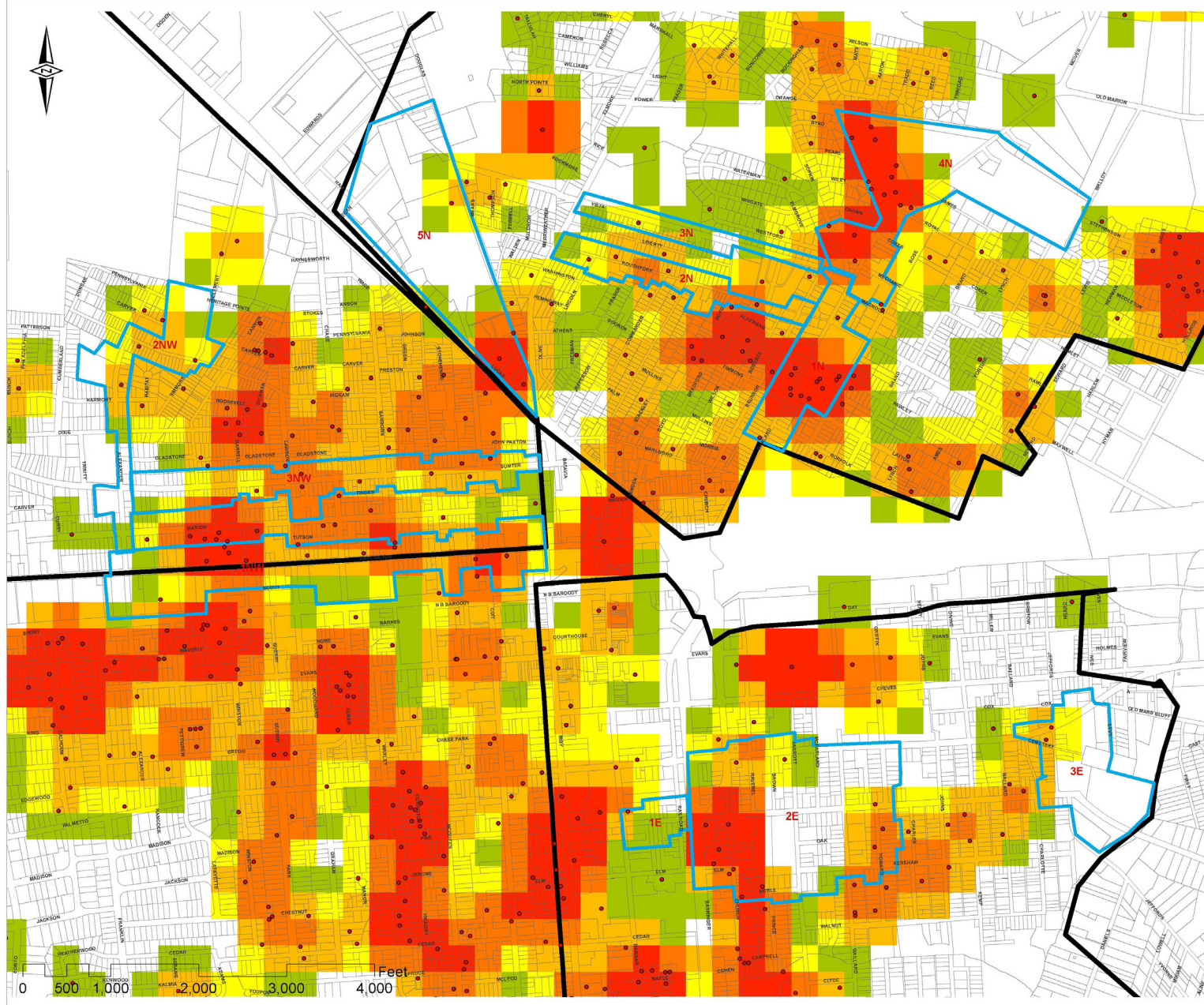
In reviewing existing conditions and initial visits to the Project Area two distinct strategies were considered for the neighborhoods: stabilization and revitalization.

Stabilization Projects: Catalytic Projects that are somewhat stable given the existing conditions on the ground including:

- Number/percent of structures in:
 - Fair and Good Condition(High): Should be built upon.
 - Dilapidated and Deteriorated(Low):. Those that exist can be examined for demolition if vacant.
- A small number/percentage of vacant lots in an area that can be used for infill development.
- Similar to vacant lots, a small number of vacant and abandoned properties that can be stabilized through restoration or demolished for future infill.
- A small number of foreclosures for purchase and redevelopment.
- A small number of environmental constraints.
- A high homeownership rate: Sign of stability.
- Stabilization strategies in these areas help to continue improving an existing stable framework with the introduction of new homes, restoration of existing homes, and reduction of blight.

Revitalization Projects: Catalytic Projects that require a large number of demolitions and new construction to change the existing conditions of an area. These types of projects are meant to act as catalysts to their specific locations and spur additional investment. The specific criteria that make these projects excellent candidates for this type of redevelopment include:

Figure 7: Sample Decision Making Matrix Map



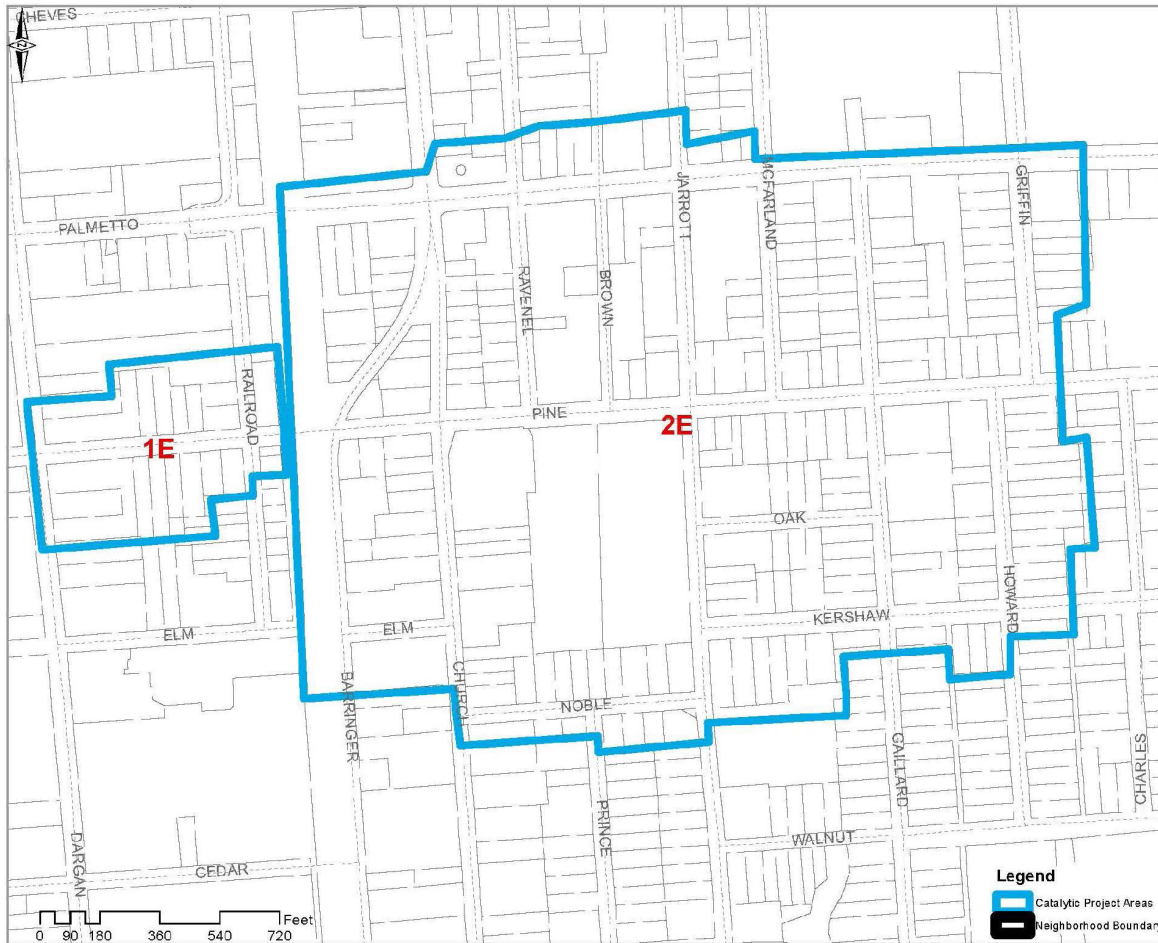
Crime Density Map

Legend

- Reported Crimes 09/13- 02/14
 - Catalytic Project Areas
 - ▭ Neighborhood Boundary
- Concentration Crime**
-
- High
Low

Figure 8: Sample SWOT Analysis

FLORENCE NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION
Decision Making Matrix - Catalytic Project Areas



CATALYTIC PROJECT AREA: PINE STREET

Strengths

These two nodes connect Pine Street directly from Dargan Street and the cultural district to the west. Further west sits the vital commercial corridor of Irby Street. Heading to the east along Pine Street (outside of this node) terminates at Levy Park, a noted asset to the community. One block to the north sits the McLeod Health campus, a major regional employer and service provider.

Weaknesses

The length of Pine Street from Dargan Street to Levy Park, plus the north-south railroad line, makes any effort to create a cohesive streetscape challenging.

Opportunities

There are multiple houses that are available that are candidates for thoughtful restoration. The existing architectural vernacular has a vibrant southern appeal which could be complemented with new infill housing on the numerous vacant lots throughout the node. The multiple churches and the Housing Authority can be counted as potential partners in both physical and social development efforts. Working with McLeod to design an Employer Assisted Housing Program presents a marketing opportunity.

Threats

It is imperative that some goodwill and coordination be established with McLeod Health, regarding any plans for expansion. It is also recommended that any infill development be planned such that it has enough scale and recognized continuity to provide impact.

Other Comments

A well-thought-out and executed acquisition effort could make this node a prime candidate for a short-term infill revitalization initiative. Longer-term considerations include partnering with McLeod on acquisition efforts to support employer housing options and commercial service needs.

Project Area	Structures in Poor and Deteriorated Condition	Structures in Fair and Good Condition	Vacant Lots	Vacant and Abandoned Properties	Homeownership	Total Parcels
Pine Street	42/17%	76/31%	42/17%	36/15%	41/17%	244

- Consolidated property ownership: Reduces the time for land assembly versus more diverse ownership of a proposed area, which would require a longer timeline to acquire properties needed for development.
- Quality of life amenities including proximity to:
 - Transit – Walkability
 - Grocery Stores – Access to Food
 - Parks – Amenities
 - Schools – Access to Education
- Proximity to funded or recent projects to leverage funding from other sources and attract developer interest.
- Proximity to major corridors: Increases a project’s marketability.
- Market conditions that can support the proposed new development.
- Local partner involvement: Increases the likelihood of a project’s ability to leverage private sector investment.

The criteria was divided into two categories: those that indicate a stabilization strategy and those that indicate a revitalization strategy. For a complete set of criteria and their definitions, see Table 3 and Table 4.

Process

During the decision-making process each criterion and its associated map (if available) were reviewed. Each criterion was rated 1 through 10, with 1 being the most desired characteristic and 10 being the least desired characteristic for development. For example, in the revitalization criteria, many vacant lots is a desired characteristic because it would allow for easier redevelopment (as outlined in the definition). In this example, the project could receive a rating below 5 depending on the number of vacant lots and how it compares

Table 3: DMM Criteria Stabilization

Florence Neighborhood Revitalization Plan: Decision Making Criteria	
Criteria	Definition
Stabilization	
Housing conditions	A concentration of structures in dilapidated condition indicates an opportunity for infill. Areas with a concentration of structures in good to fair condition indicate a more stable location.
Vacant land	Vacant land is considered an opportunity since vacant lots are typically easier to assemble and require less pre-development activities, such as demolition, and relocation to prepare the site for new construction.
Abandoned Properties	Abandoned Properties are also seen as a development opportunity since relocation would not need to occur, decreasing the timeline for purchases
Adequate zoning and approvals of other entitlements	If the project requires a use that differs from the current zoning or land use classification, a variance or rezoning would be required. These processes add time and additional actions before construction activity can occur.
High number of foreclosures	High number of foreclosures also means an opportunity since these properties can be more easily acquired from the banks than from absentee homeowners.
Proximity to existing homeowners	Proximity to homeowners is important because they usually act as stabilizing agents within the neighborhoods
Condition of existing infrastructure	Existing infrastructure that is in fair to excellent condition is a great asset for a project since it would require the development to make less investment on those aspects of the site.
Free of environmental constraints	It is important for development projects to consider areas of environmental protections since these are usually considered development constraints.
Crime	Understanding the types and concentration of crime in and within close proximity of proposed Catalytic Projects is important to the success of a project. The project can serve to eradicate the crime or can be negatively affected by it.

Table 4: DMM Criteria Revitalization

Florence Neighborhood Revitalization Plan: Decision Making Criteria	
Criteria	Definition
Revitalization	
Property Ownership (site control)	The ability to assemble multiple parcels of property that are adjacent to each other the first step in the predevelopment process.
Access to transit, food, open space and schools(within ¼ mile)	Proximity to these amenities are elements of a sustainable, walkable community with more than one mode of transportation and access to healthy foods and outdoor spaces. Locating close to these amenities is not only good for the future residents of the development but it also makes the project more marketable.
Proximity to funded projects (or recently completed projects)	The ability to leverage investments in other parts of the community is very important considering the limited amount of resources that can be injected in a specific location.
On or close to major thoroughfares	Visibility and easy access are very important to any new project. By locating in close proximity or on a major corridor a project's marketability increases.
Feasible market conditions	Market potential takes into account economic development and job opportunities, as well as visibility and accessibility.
Encourages new development	A project that acts as a catalyst is important to the redevelopment of the neighborhoods and should invite other investments to the area
Attracts private investment and encourages partnerships	A project should leverage the public capital it is receiving with private capital and partnerships in order for it to be financially viable. A project cannot be completed funded through public funds.
Utilizes transit network improvements	A project's viability is increased if it works off existing capital improvements projects rather than proposing to finance its own infrastructure improvements
Financing or redevelopment area designations	Areas that have been designated as TIF's, TAD's, etcetera, are desirable places to develop since it make mean additional sources of revenue or reduced taxes for projects.
Current level of investment	It is important to understand the current level of investment in the area where the project is being proposed? If investment has occurred has it been successful?

to the other candidate projects. In those instances when the criterion response was subjective, a “yes” or “no” rating was used with a “yes” receiving a rating of 0, and a “no” rating receiving a rating greater than 0 unless otherwise noted. In the proximity analysis where specific criteria were analyzed in terms of how close a project was to specific amenities three scores were used: 10 if the project was not close to any amenities, 5 if it the amenity was 0.5 miles to one mile away, and 0 if the amenity was within a 0.25 mile walk.

During the DMM exercise, specific criterion were discussed and sometimes eliminated based on consensus from the Florence City staff and the consulting team. Once all ten (10) Catalytic Projects were rated, the projects were ranked in priority from greatest development potential to least development potential, based on total score.

Decision-Making Matrix Results

The results for the stabilization criteria can be found in Table 5. Catalytic Projects 2N, 3N, and 2NW have the lowest scores, meaning they are the three (3) projects that are better candidates for a stabilization strategy.

The results of the DMM in the revitalization criteria can also be found in Table 5. As shown, projects 1E+2E, 1N, and 1NW are the best candidates for a revitalization strategy.

Final Prioritization

The ranking of the ten Catalytic Projects involved balancing the criteria derived from the DMM process with the actual available resources. Generally, projects are designed to leverage

other public and private investments based on the anticipated timing in which they are started and substantially completed. Ideally, each project would leverage adjacent projects or projects in close proximity. The recommended Catalytic Projects are delineated into short-term, mid-term, and long-term projects.

Short-term (activity to begin within 12 months):

- 1E + 2E – Top-three revitalization score and a good stabilization score.
- 3N – Top-three stabilization score and a strong revitalization score.
- 2NW – Top-three stabilization score and a good revitalization score.
- 3NW – Good stabilization and revitalization scores, plus provides direct connectivity between 2NW and the proposed development along Irby Street.

Mid-term (activity to begin between 12-60 months):

- 3E – Good revitalization potential, but requires time-sensitive legislative steps to address blight. Improving this area would also be the next logical step to support the market momentum created if 1E + 2E was improved.
- 2N – Strong stabilization candidate and a good revitalization candidate, but should build off the market momentum that would be created if 3N were improved.
- 1N – Very strong revitalization candidate, but title negotiations and capital attraction would push this activity into the second phase of work.

- 1NW – Strong revitalization candidate, but the commercial nature and location of this project suggest that the tools and resources from the downtown effort would need to be scheduled and coordinated to address this node.

Long-term (activity to begin after 60 months):

- 4N – Financial and title negotiations surrounding the Real Estate Owned (REO) multi-family property, plus the need to first establish market momentum in the 1N project, push this node it into the third phase of work.
- 5N – While the purchase and wholesale redevelopment of this project could potentially produce tremendous transformative impact to a major corridor into downtown, the acquisition and remediation necessary make it the most challenging of all the projects. The marketing and capital attraction required to support this effort must also be considered.

The Implement section outlines how the redevelopment of the short-term Catalytic Projects is envisioned including financial proformas, uses, and timelines. It also outlines the policy recommendations for stabilization of the neighborhoods. The goal is to ensure that both the revitalization and stabilization strategies are used within each Catalytic Project; the extent of each strategy will depend on the existing conditions within each area.

Table 5: DMM Results

DMM Stabilization Criteria Results													
Catalytic Project	Number/ Percent of Houses in Poor and Dilapidated Condition	Number/ Percent of Structures in Fair and Good Condition	Homeowner- ship Rate	Number/ Percent of Vacant Lots	Number/ Percent of Vacant and Abandoned Properties	Foreclosures	Incompatible land uses/ zoning	Existing Conditions Infrastructure	Environment- al Constraints	Crime	Total		
1E+2E	7	4	7	7	3	0	0	5	0	0	33		
3E	9	7	10	10	8	0	0	0	0	5	49		
1N	4	6	5	3	5	0	0	5	0	5	33		
2N	1	2	4	8	7	0	0	5	0	0	27		
3N	2	3	6	1	1	0	0	5	0	0	18		
4N	8	9	1	2	10	0	0	0	0	5	35		
5N	10	10	9	5	9	0	0	0	5	5	53		
1NW	5	5	8	6	2	0	0	5	0	5	36		
2NW	3	1	2	9	6	0	0	0	0	0	21		
3NW	6	8	3	4	4	0	0	5	0	0	30		

DMM Revitalization Criteria Results													
Catalytic Project	Property Ownership	Proximity to Transit Stops	Proximity to Food	Proximity to Open Space	Access to Education	Proximity to Corridors	Ability to Market	Involve- ment of Local Partners	Proximity to Funded Projects	Future Infra- structure Investment	Total		
1E+2E	0	0	0	10	0	0	1	0	0	0	11		
3E	5	0	0	0	5	0	9	0	0	7	26		
1N	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	8		
2N	5	0	0	5	0	5	10	5	6	0	36		
3N	5	0	0	10	0	5	2	5	0	0	27		
4N	0	5	0	10	10	0	3	5	0	7	40		
5N	0	5	0	10	5	0	7	5	6	7	45		
1NW	5	0	0	5	0	0	5	5	0	0	20		
2NW	5	5	0	0	0	10	4	5	0	7	36		
3NW	5	0	0	5	5	10	6	5	0	0	36		

Implement

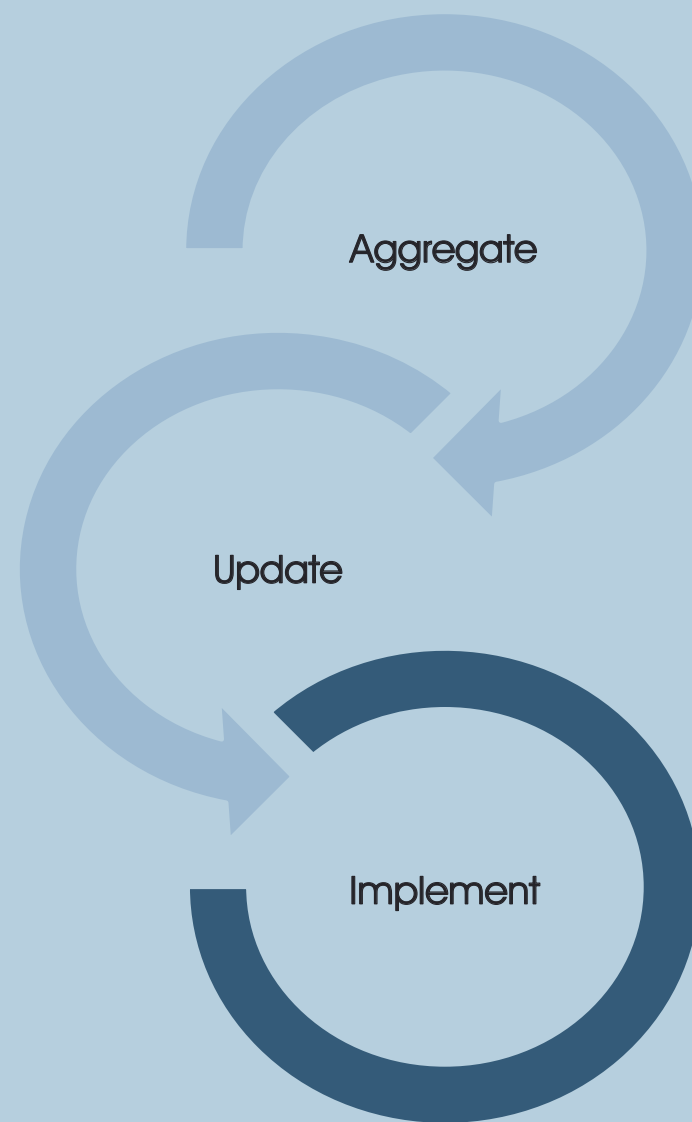
At this point in the process the Project Area has undergone a review of existing inventory, its attributes, and an analysis of its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The next phase of work establishes a framework for implementing the revitalization recommendations within the Project Area. This section of the report addresses the following topics:

- Stabilization Strategies
- Revitalization Strategies
- Predevelopment Action
- Execution

Stabilization Strategies are designed to provide a series of initiatives that intentionally address issues related to blight, safety, and the needs of existing residents within the community. Revitalization Strategies are designed to provide a series of initiatives that address removal of blight, repurposing of large sections of existing neighborhoods, and redevelopment of these sites to attract new residents while at the same time providing opportunities for existing residents to improve their quality of life without leaving their neighborhood.

The Predevelopment section outlines the steps that need to take place before redevelopment begins and includes defining a Project Management structure and establishing a responsible entity for the execution of the strategy. Revitalization and stabilization strategies should be implemented within established regulatory and policy frameworks that align with the vision and established guidelines necessary to protect the historic character and fabric of the community.

Finally, the Execution section outlines recommendations for each Catalytic Project including design, transportation, infrastructure, market analysis, feasibility studies, and next steps. In summary, the Implement section articulates the first steps towards the revitalization of the East Florence, North Florence, and Northwest Florence neighborhoods. It is important to understand that this process will require ongoing professional management for years to come in order for the three neighborhoods to be fully revitalized. Partnerships with specific entities throughout the city will be important to continue to leverage the limited public capital that is available.





Stabilization Strategy

The Neighborhood Profile of existing conditions for the East Florence, North Florence, and Northwest Florence neighborhoods indicates approximately 40% of existing structures are in fair-to-poor, deteriorated, or dilapidated conditions. Over 15% of the parcels in these three neighborhoods are vacant. Because a significant portion of the blighting conditions described in the Neighborhood Profile are concentrated in each of the three neighborhoods, the perceived impact is especially threatening. Combined with pockets of higher crime rates, this blight has resulted in very little private sector investment in any of the three neighborhoods.

The existing conditions offer little hope to residents and generate negative implications surrounding these neighborhoods. Prior to implementing any plans, a strategy for stabilization must be developed. Stabilizing the neighborhood will be fundamental to ensuring that redevelopment efforts are successful by minimizing any barriers that would impede future investments.

The stabilization strategy outlines a multi-pronged approach that addresses safety, code enforcement, existing residents, and business programs. The strategy identifies tools that capitalize on existing programs offered through local and regional governments. It also considers successful best practices recently utilized by other cities with similar challenges, methods that offer a greater impact for concentrating resources, and proposals for leveraging funds in a way that creates sustainable, vibrant communities.

It is also important to note that the recommendations in some of the tables for each strategy include job creation opportunities that should be taken into consideration, especially since these types of jobs may arise from members of the community. Opportunities may arise for new small businesses or entrepreneurship from small groups within the neighborhoods. New job opportunities could also play a role in capacity building for existing residents.

Safety as a Stabilization Strategy

Three programs have been identified as key components to addressing safety: Code Enforcement and Property Maintenance, Housing Incentive Programs for existing property owners, and Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED). The programs assume that all proposed programs fall, or could fall, under various departments within the City of Florence’s purview. Each program under the safety strategy identifies tangible means by which properties can be stabilized. Code enforcement would offer the greatest visual impact through vacant lot maintenance and demolition and deconstruction of unsafe buildings. The following page includes several best practices regarding the use of Code Enforcement as a tool for neighborhood stabilization and revitalization.

The Incentive Program for existing property owners would act as a deterrent to many of the factors contributing to decline and blight in the neighborhoods by creating an incentive to reinvest in currently occupied homes. In addition, incentives will be needed to attract developers, builders, and new homeowners to the Project Area neighborhoods (see Page 41). Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design can be implemented within the city in the design of projects that discourage criminal activity. The recommendation is to use these guidelines throughout any new development that occurs within the Project Area.

Stabilization Strategy	Applicable Programs	Application of Programs to Project Area	Job Creation	Recommendations/Plan of Action
	Code Enforcement & Property Maintenance Code	Strict adherence to existing code enforcement ordinances is an important stabilization tool because of the large number of vacant and abandoned houses, overgrown lots, and occupied properties in need of repair.	Demolition/ Deconstruction Grass cutting Lawn/garden equipment repair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase funding to support an increase in code enforcement action and demolition/ deconstruction of vacant buildings. • Support existing homeowner and rental rehab repair programs. • Establish three year goal to reduce non-compliant parcels by a certain percentage based on funding. • Enhance existing Property Maintenance Code to tie into stabilization efforts.
Safety	Housing Incentive Programs for Existing Property Owners	Would provide incentives for existing owner occupants and small investor owners to reinvest in their properties.	Local builders, sub-contractors, realtors, mortgage lenders	Design program policies and procedures that provide loans for small investor owners of rental properties and deferred loan/grants to qualified existing homeowners.
	Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design	Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) includes recommendations on how to design spaces that are safe, visible, and discourage criminal activity.	Local designers, builders, subcontractors, realtors, mortgage lenders, designers.	Propose Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) techniques within all new redevelopment projects.

Code Enforcement as a Stabilization Strategy

Building and housing codes have enormous potential to serve as the front line of defense in communities’ efforts to battle blight. Coordination with the county will be of utmost importance since these processes are enforced by the county. To properly address the potential spread of blight, loss of population, and declining property values, the City of Florence should put legal muscle behind the effort to ensure that properties are maintained to a minimum standard that supports community safety, health, and the sustainability of these neighborhoods. The standard approach to enforcement of housing and building codes has been a complaint-driven administrative or judicial enforcement proceeding against a property owner that seeks to force the owner to remedy violations. In an effort to stabilize the Project Area, the city will need to develop new strategies and tactics that strengthen and streamline their code enforcement structures. This includes the use of different procedures including code enforcement strategies that can be both self-financed or publicly financed. The table below describes how different municipalities are already using these types of code enforcement strategies.

Stabilization Strategy	Best Practice Link	Best Practice Summary
	Strategies to Strengthen Code Enforcement in Memphis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proactive strategies to counter the shortcomings of complaint-based code enforcement. Proactive strategies designate particular properties or types of properties and/or neighborhoods for intensified monitoring and enforcement. • Systematic inspection of rental housing and/or multi-family housing has become increasingly common in small and medium-sized cities and larger cities with low to moderate shares of such housing. • A somewhat less regulated intervention with rental property might involve a mandatory certificate of occupancy inspection when the property is sold or otherwise transferred.
Code Enforcement	Shoreview SHINE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designed by the City of Shoreview to educate and raise awareness for residents on the importance of maintaining properties in order to protect property values and the quality of a neighborhood. • The city will encourage property owners to voluntarily cleanup their properties within a reasonable timeframe, but in some cases, the city may initiate legal actions against nuisance properties that do not comply with local regulations.
	St. Louis Park Minnesota	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Property Maintenance / Point of Sale inspections are required whenever an owner or the owner's agent intends to sell or transfer ownership of a residential, commercial or industrial property. The inspection must be done prior to listing the property. • During the inspection, a city inspector will check that the property complies with the minimum standards of the City's Property Maintenance Code. This includes the homes interior and exterior, including plumbing, mechanical and electrical systems, yards, garage, roof, and siding. • Certificates are good for one year from the date issued.

Rental Property Registration as a Stabilization Strategy

The use of a Florence Rental Property Registration program would be an important tool for reinforcing a more robust code enforcement system that systematically identifies problem properties and, through random or routine inspections, encourages landlords to address deferred maintenance and implement good property maintenance practices. An operational rental registration program puts the participating property owner on notice that he/she is known and will be held accountable. Rental registration programs give the City Code Enforcement Inspector the authority to inspect the exterior and interior of rental properties on a rotating basis. A database could also be created that allows the city to identify, track, and prioritize the most dangerous problem properties and the most problematic landlords.

Rental registration programs could give Florence a tool to identify code problems and intervene earlier in the process before a property deteriorates to the point that it becomes cost prohibitive to repair and a blighting influence on the neighborhood. A study of North Carolina cities with mandatory, proactive rental registration ordinances found that the ordinances resulted in landlords bringing their properties into code compliance more rapidly, as well as a decrease in residential fires and a reduction in the number of code complaints.

There are three general categories of rental registration programs that cities have utilized with varying requirements for registration and inspections:

- Registration and inspection of all properties regardless of whether the property has a history of code citations,
- Registration of all properties, with inspections only of properties with a history of code violations, and
- Registration and inspections of properties only with a history of code citations.

It is recommended that the City of Florence use as a tool registration and inspection of rental properties regardless of whether the property has a history of code citations. Some best practice examples are outlined in the following table.



Stabilization Strategy	Best Practice Link	Best Practice Summary
	<p>Austin City Council Agenda Item 100, Resolution Relating to the Development of a Residential Rental Registration Program</p> <p>Austin City Council Res. 20130606-050 Austin City Council Res. 30130606-049</p>	<p>The City Council approved two resolutions to set up a Rental Registration Program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A one-year pilot program for all residential rental properties in a group of Central Austin neighborhoods. • A code amendment to create a repeat offenders program required after the second health and safety code citation within one year; such rental property owners will have to register with the city and will be subject to appropriate fees for registration. • A system for identifying single-family rental properties that included coordinating with the Water Department to collect ownership data.
<p>Rental Registration</p>	<p>Managing Single-Family Rental Homes</p> <p>Crime Free Rental Housing</p> <p>Covering and Recovering Costs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide education tools to small-scale owners to help them improve management and maintenance. • Use on-the-ground inspection and input from community residents to identify landlords who are failing to maintain homes. • Implement code enforcement strategies through liens, fines, or receivership. • Design an effective fee structure to cover some of the municipality's inspection costs without overburdening landlords.
	<p>Analysis of Rental Property Registration in Austin</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Austin, Texas administers a point system to code violators. A landlord who accrues six points over three licensing years for violation of noise, solid waste, over occupancy, or housing ordinance will have his rental license revoked. • The information collected should facilitate the ability of cities to identify landlords with multiple problem properties, keeping in mind that owners often set up a unique holding company to own each property. • One pattern is to require an initial inspection upon registration, then require subsequent inspections either at changes in tenancy, if the property failed the initial inspection, or in response to tenant complaints.

Existing Residents/Business Programs

The stabilization strategies outlined below address the needs and challenges of current residents and businesses. These programs aid property owners with homeowner and rental rehab assistance through emergency repairs, financial assistance to address code violations, minor home repairs, and numerous other policies geared toward keeping residents in their homes and in the neighborhoods. Funding opportunities for new housing, including Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC), should be identified as a means to invest in affordable housing. Throughout the Project Area existing owner-occupied and investor-owned rental properties have been identified as being in fair, poor, deteriorated, or dilapidated conditions. A successful stabilization strategy would use code enforcement to identify existing code violations, prepare construction/repair specifications that correct existing code violations, repair anticipated code violations, and improve the exterior conditions of impacted property to meet preapproved design standards. All of these existing programs support the stabilization strategy by keeping neighborhood residents in place, addressing affordable housing, and supporting business owners.

Stabilization Strategy	Applicable Programs	Application of Programs to Project Area	Job Creation	Recommendations/Plan of Action
Existing Resident/ Business Programs	Homeowner Rehab Program	Every effort should be made to retain existing homeowners, especially the elderly. Program should provide financial assistance for emergency repairs, code violations, and anticipated code violations, and exterior repairs guided by design standards.	Home repair contractors: work with technical colleges to provide job training and apprenticeship opportunities.	Target homeowners located in the Project Area and work closely with Code Enforcement to provide financial incentives in the form of grants and deferred loans for homeowners to repair code violations.
	Rental Rehab Program	A large number of rental properties in the Project Area (four units or fewer) have numerous housing code violations and deferred maintenance. These properties house a significant portion of the current population in the Project Area.	Repair contractors: work with technical colleges to provide job training and apprenticeship opportunities.	Target owners of rental properties (four units or fewer per building) located in the Project Area; work with City of Florence to provide financial incentives for small investors to repair code violations. Condition on renting to families with incomes of 80% or less of AML.
	Business Facade Program	Portions of commercial corridors such as Darlington, Irby, and Lucas, are "view streets" to the Project Area. Efforts should be made to create attractive building facades as part of a comprehensive commercial corridor redevelopment.	Architects, landscape architects, general contractors, subcontractors, etcetera.	Implement a Facade Improvement Program for commercial properties located along key corridors. Provide technical assistance from designers to help in the design of facades and create design guidelines.
	Tax Abatement	Minimize risk of displacing low-to-moderate income existing homeowners and residential investors who rent to low-to-moderate-income families by freezing the real estate taxes at predevelopment levels. Coordination among all taxing entities will be required.	N/A	As an incentive for owner-occupants and small investors to reinvest in existing property, commit to not increasing property tax until property is sold or transferred to a new owner.

Protection of Historical Assets Programs

The public outreach component of this project provided the opportunity to hear firsthand about the people and events that helped shape the Project Area and the city at-large. The African American contribution to the history of this area of Florence should be incorporated into the neighborhood redevelopment process.

There are several ways to incorporate this information into a neighborhood redevelopment strategy including:

- Create a detailed catalog of historical assets before redevelopment plans are finalized.
- Design and implement a cultural heritage trail that could physically and symbolically link important African American sites.
- Incorporate the target neighborhoods’

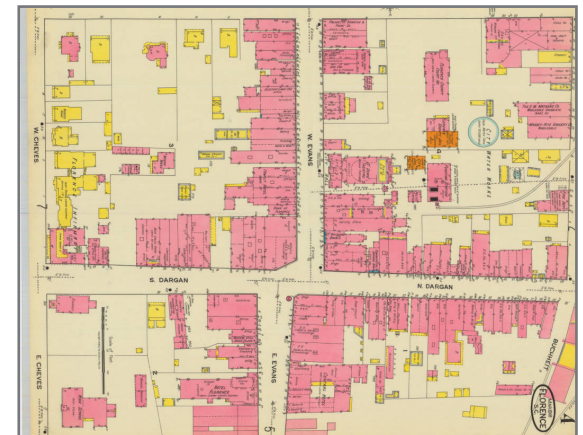
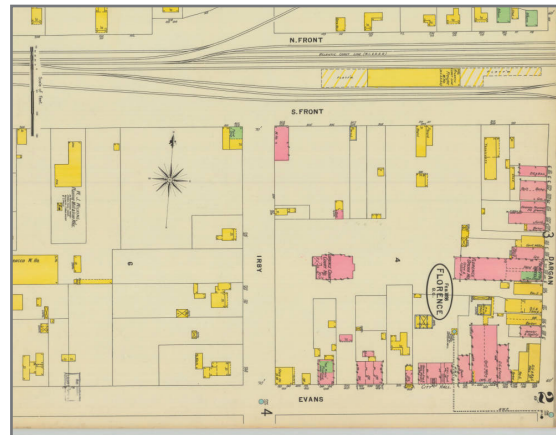
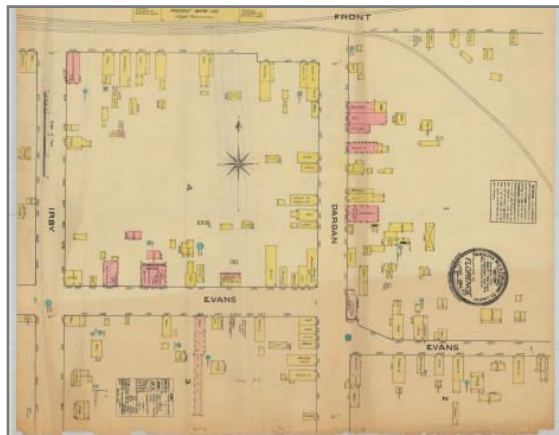
histories and cultures into a redevelopment marketing and branding strategy that promotes marketing and selling the neighborhoods.

- Evaluate the potential for historic designation for the district, key structures, or key parcels.
- Coordinate with local historians on the compilation of existing information, perhaps even augmenting that with organized recording sessions.

The overall goal is to prevent the loss of this valuable history by allowing it to influence and/or be integrated into the programmatic aspects of the revitalization. As mentioned, one possible method of achieving this is through a historical trail, the path of which would be guided by the markers identified during any historic research cataloging process.

Another approach would be to utilize the names of memorable people as monumental titles or to use architectural details that evoke iconic buildings. Essentially, the goal would be to find creative ways to commemorate those people and places worth remembering by honoring their memories with design gestures and the written word.

Figure 9: Sanborn Maps Florence 1884, 1898,1918





Revitalization Strategy

As mentioned in the stabilization strategy section, the existing conditions of the Project Area include concentrated tracts of vacant and abandoned properties that have the potential to be acquired and redeveloped. In some cases the redevelopment may involve re-plating, rezoning, and even repurposing land for a different type of use. When these types of opportunities are available, a revitalization strategy would be more appropriate and would require programs, policies, and procedures that are different than those outlined for stabilization.

Revitalization strategies are designed to attract new residents to the Project Area and provide opportunities for existing residents with potential for upward mobility to exercise this mobility without leaving

the Project Area. Therefore, a revitalization strategy should be implemented after a stabilization strategy is fully engaged. Phasing the implementation strategies in this manner reduces opportunities for unintentionally displacing existing longtime residents and at the same time minimizes any barriers that would impede future investments and interest in these communities.

The revitalization strategy includes several approaches that address how to best repurpose properties targeted for redevelopment that are located within the Project Area. The strategies identify best practice tools that may capitalize on existing programs and introduce new programs utilized by other cities with similar challenges that can guide the development of new programs.

Revitalization Strategy	Project Development Approach	Application of Programs to Project Area	Job Creation	Recommendations/Plan of Action
Single Family Residential Development	Development Lead	The City of Florence will serve as the Master Developer along with a Project Management Team that consist of firms with experience in the areas of urban planning; construction and project management; building and landscape architecture; marketing analysis; marketing and branding; and economic development.	Local professional service providers	Select a pool of qualified professionals that can provide services as requested to implement a single-family residential redevelopment project.
	Infrastructure Projects	The importance of creating a pedestrian-oriented community conducive to walking as a primary means of moving through the neighborhoods was emphasized as a core value throughout the public meeting discussions.	Local professional service provides	Through the use of design guidelines, establish parameters for streetscape improvements including sidewalks, planting strips, street lighting, and storm water runoff.
	Homeownership Incentives for New In-fill Homes and Restoration of Vacant Houses	Over the past 20 years the homeownership rate, within the Project Area has fallen. A critical objective within the overall redevelopment strategy is to stabilize these neighborhoods by significantly increasing homeownership.	Local professional service providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Down payment and closing cost assistance • Use of Design Guidelines to guide builders and developers • Homeownership training that prepares families for homeownership
	Incentives for Developer	There is a perceived risk in the early stages of redeveloping in neighborhoods where little or no significant development has occurred recently.	Local professional service providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding some portion of construction interest • Land write-down • Funding some portion of construction costs

Economic Development Strategy

The renaissance that is occurring in downtown Florence could significantly impact the East Florence, North Florence, and Northwest Florence neighborhoods that surround downtown. City officials recognize this connection and have begun assessing neighborhood conditions and designing strategies that will improve existing infrastructure, housing conditions, and overall quality of life. While each of the neighborhood revitalization components are important, achieving economic development gains within the Project Area is equally as important. Because of the reinvestments occurring in downtown Florence, the city is positioning itself to benefit from a national movement that is occurring where more people are choosing to live in or in very close proximity to downtown. Even though Florence is smaller than many of the cities where this movement is being documented, the close proximity of the Project Area to downtown offers less dependency on the use of automobiles, and more opportunities for pedestrian-orientated shopping with immediate access to cultural events and healthier lifestyle options such as walking or bicycling.

A neighborhood economic development strategy for Florence should work to fill gaps in the delivery of products and services identified in the prepared market research study (see Market Analysis section). As noted in the report, there is a wide range of opportunities that could be used to jumpstart economic development initiatives. Each initiative, however, should feature the following characteristics:

- A market-driven plan of action;
- A strategy designed to foster a proactive business community;
- Efficient use of tools, resources, and incentives; and
- A method of communicating market opportunities to existing and new businesses.

For these reasons the Florence Neighborhood Economic Development Program should include four primary components: Land Use, Planning and Design, Business Community Engagement and Support, Neighborhood Business District Development, and Business Retention and Attraction. See an outline of these components on the following page.

Revitalization Strategy	Project Development Approach	Application of Programs to Project Area	Job Creation	Recommendations/Plan of Action
Economic Development	Land Use Planning & Design	Planning Department, or private consultant working under the direction of the Planning Department, would create business district vision/plan to guide development opportunity areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Architects • Engineers • Planners 	Establish criteria for business district zoning, development, and building design criteria to use in Project Area business districts and commercial nodes. Community feedback will be needed.
	Business Community Engagement and Support	Provide consistent vision and marketing theme for neighborhood businesses.	N/A	Provide City of Florence assistance to organize businesses along key retail and commercial corridors and to organize Business Improvement Districts or Neighborhood Business Districts.
	Business District Development	Many small retail and commercial business owners are busy operating their businesses. On occasions they do not have time/resources to access plans and funding for development of their business district. Create business development technical assistance programs.	N/A	Retain a neighborhood business development consultant to organize business owners, determine their business improvement interest, and identify funding opportunities to fund development plans, market studies, and business improvements.
	Business Retention and Attraction	As neighborhood revitalization initiatives begin in the Project Area it is anticipated that existing residents and new residents will have different expectations regarding their preferred types of goods and services. Aid existing businesses to understand market through technical assistance programs.	N/A	Retain professional services with expertise in working with property owners and business owners to promote commercial space and market opportunities consistent with the growth and development of the target neighborhoods.

Predevelopment Process

Specific projects that are selected as candidates for a revitalization strategy will need to undergo a predevelopment process. The predevelopment process outlines steps that need to occur before a project is ready to be executed and start the construction phase. This section outlines the strategies recommended for the implementation of the Florence Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy projects, inclusive of the Catalytic Projects as identified in the execution phase. These are divided into three strategies:

- Project Management Team
- Rezoning and Design Guidelines
- Human Capital Development

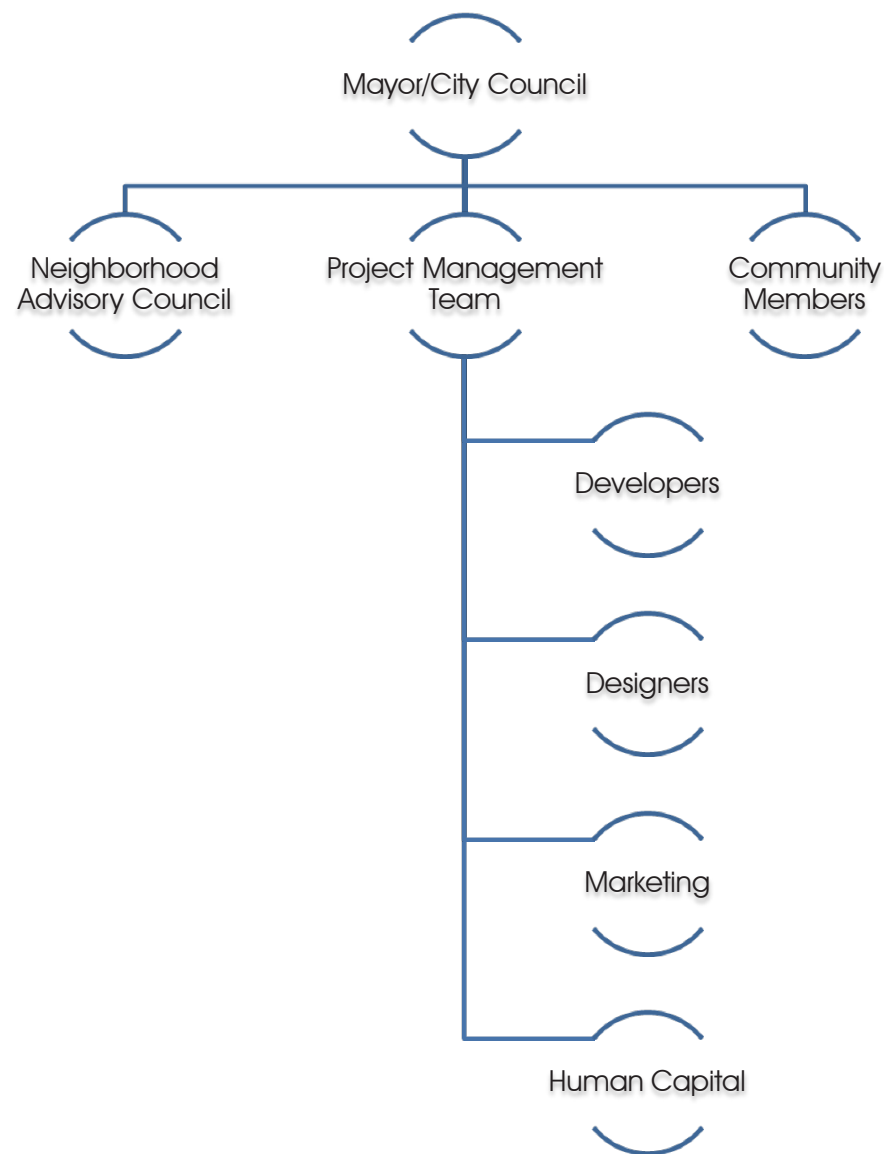
This section also includes the activities, schedule, and responsible parties for implementing next steps.

Project Management Team

A professionally managed Project Management Team (PMT) is recommended and will be necessary to assist the implementation of the Florence Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy either within the Planning Department or through a consultant. In order for a revitalization project to be successful, a PMT should be established for the sole purpose of providing overall management of the project and to oversee its day-to-day operations. Additionally, the PMT would be responsible for documenting and ensuring that all processes adhere to the goals and objectives for the Florence Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy (see Goals and Objectives section).

The PMT would also be responsible for coordinating with existing city programs and agencies to ensure that all projects can be implemented within the given timeline, as most of these types of projects require the coordination of a variety of moving parts and agencies. It would work with specific agencies to implement specific policies. This group would also work with marketing and branding professionals to develop a marketing strategy that would aid in attracting to the area new business, investment partners, and new homeowners. The governance structure for the PMT is outlined in Figure 10.

Figure 10: Governance Structure Diagram



Predevelopment Strategy	Programs	Application of Programs to Project Area	Job Creation	Recommendations/Plan of Action
	Department of Planning and Community Development	In some cases the Department of Planning and Community Development may provide neighborhood planning services, but these services are not offered at the level of detail required by private sector developers to assess the feasibility of a real estate development project.	Urban Planning Firms Market Research Firms and Project Feasibility Analysis	PMT should work with city’s procurement office to solicit the services of qualified urban planning/ architecture/engineering firms with experience in site planning for in-town neighborhood redevelopment.
Predevelopment Services	Marketing & Branding	Many neighborhood redevelopment projects assume that if projects are developed, people will be attracted to the site solely through the efforts of real estate agents. Often overlooked is the fact that the Project Area is challenged by a history of negative public perception and often little or no track record of successful real estate development.	Marketing Firms Homeownership Counseling Agencies Printing and Signage Companies Website Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain marketing and branding services to establish credibility in the eyes of the local civic leaders, general public, and the media. • Establish a core story/brand that can be elaborated for the full Florence Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy
	Solicitation of Developers	Ongoing solicitation of developers by City of Florence.	For-profit developers Non-profit developer Construction Managers Architects	Prepare solicitation of a wide range of developer and development teams with expertise in residential development, mixed-use projects, neighborhood retail districts, and multifamily and single-family development.

Land Assembly, Property Acquisition, and Property Management

Land assembly and land banking efforts work in tandem as a strategy to acquire vacant and abandoned properties and properties with various types of liens caused by unpaid taxes, demolition, inability to locate the property owner, and other causes. These properties usually belong to absentee landowners who hold parcels for redevelopment, and in many cases the property is a blighting influence on the neighborhood. Land banking offers a short-term strategy for stabilizing and revitalizing neighborhoods because it allows a municipality to acquire a blighted property, clear the title of any liens, and bank the property until it is needed by a development entity. Land banks are most effective when supported by state-government-enabling legislation. Without the benefit of such legislation, which is the case for municipalities in South Carolina, local land banks lack the power needed to accelerate removal of liens that impede redevelopment because marketable ownership titles cannot be obtained.

In the short-term, a land assembly strategy may be a better alternative for the City of Florence to use in the Project Area. Land assembly, through a designated organization controlled by the City of Florence, could acquire property and convey the disposition of the property to a development entity with provisions to ensure that the redevelopment/repurposing of the property is consistent with the implementation strategies established for the Project Area. Ultimately state-enabling-legislation will be needed to clear various forms of liens on

problem properties; however, a short-term strategy could enable the city to - 1) acquire property from willing sellers; 2) package the property so that the assembled parcels facilitate development that significantly impacts the surrounding neighborhood; and 3) convey the property to new owners who agree to develop the property in a manner that is consistent with policies and procedures created to meet short-and long-range stabilization and redevelopment objectives.

Property acquisition and land assembly initiatives must be driven by the City of Florence and should be vetted with the Project Area residents to ensure that they understand the intent of the land assembly. Land assembly initiatives led by the city should:

- Assist with assemblage of properties as part of a comprehensive neighborhood stabilization and redevelopment plan;
- Expand the ability of developers to attack a broader footprint within the community by phasing the development efforts over an extended period and relying on the ability of the Land Assembly entity to inventory property; and
- Aid developers/nonprofits in acquiring and demolishing blighted structures that are cost-prohibitive to repair, bank, and manage. This activity can help improve the visual presentation of the neighborhood to current and potential residents.

Stabilization Strategy	Application of Programs to Project Area	Job Creation	Recommendations/Plan of Action
Land Assembly/ Banking and Property Acquisition/ Property Management	Because of the development risk associated with redeveloping the Project Area, key parcels critical to the early phases of the redevelopment strategy must be assembled and packaged. Land assembly is one of the most important components to minimizing development risk.	Attorney, title research, property maintenance, real estate brokers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create partnership with developers to acquire vacant and abandoned properties located within the designated Catalytic Projects. • Create a land/building conveyance policy that conditions the conveyance of assembled property on the basis of the property being used in a manner that is consistent with the development framework established through the Florence Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy.

Rezoning and Design Guidelines

This section outlines recommendations that need to be considered before revitalization. Unfortunately, zoning is often one of the barriers to the redevelopment of older neighborhoods since many have an underlying zoning that is better fit for suburban development. Existing residential zoning usually does not permit smaller lots, shorter setbacks and smaller houses. As an example, all residential zoning categories (R-1, R-2, R-3, R-4, R-5) require a minimum front-yard setback of 25 feet, while many of the single-family homes in the Project Area have 10-to-15 foot setbacks.

Short-term solutions such as variances and rezoning processes can add months to the predevelopment stage of a project because these processes usually need to be reviewed by zoning boards. This consideration presents an added risk and cost to the developer. Additionally, some zoning categories, particularly in urban neighborhoods, do not promote redevelopment in a manner that reinforces the existing character of the neighborhood.

Fortunately, as part of the City of Florence Planning Department's recent work, a new Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) is being developed that takes into consideration the existing fabric of the city's urban core neighborhoods, as well as other quality-of-life issues such as walkability, open space requirements, and shared parking ratios. The ordinance should take into consideration the following special recommendations for the Project Area:

- Single family Infill should follow the existing fabric of the neighborhood inclusive of 15-to-20 foot setbacks, five foot side-lot setbacks, and 5000-square-foot lots. These sizes are typical within the Project Area and can serve as a minimum requirement for infill construction. The Neighborhood Conservation zone is designed to accommodate this type of use.
- Permit the construction of duplexes with specific limits and conditions within residential zoning in the Project Area. Duplexes are a great opportunity to introduce affordable housing within the Project Area. The City of Florence already has design guidelines for duplexes that could be used to ensure they are built in a manner that is consistent with the vision of the community.

- Multifamily uses, especially townhouses and multiplexes, can also help meet the need for adequate affordable housing within the Project Area. These types of land uses can also serve as transitions from busy commercial corridors into the single-family neighborhoods.
- Live/work units and small neighborhood retail uses are a possible alternative to allow economic development opportunities within the neighborhoods. Most historic neighborhoods have a history of having small "Mom & Pop" shops that have served the needs of the neighborhood residents and given these places identity. Certain activity nodes with higher traffic could be targeted for this type of development within the neighborhoods.

Design guidelines are tools to ensure that new redevelopments abide by the neighborhood's vision. Historic district designations, like the Downtown Florence Historic District, are a great example. Although none of the Project Area neighborhoods have this designation, further analysis (recommended in the Historic Assets section) could lead to the designation of specific places within the neighborhoods. Additionally, some consideration should be given to historic/conservation designations within the Project Area neighborhoods, especially the East Neighborhood, which still contains an array of structures with architecturally historical significance. Overall, the city should encourage as part of an implementation strategy a heightened degree of set guidelines for development including locations for parking, requirements for street trees, and sidewalks.

Both of these predevelopment strategies are important for the protection of the historic and cultural character of the East Florence, North Florence, and Northwest Florence neighborhoods and should be in place prior to redeveloping the area. These processes would support the stakeholder feedback that documented a strong affinity to celebrating the African American culture and contribution to the City of Florence. These strategies would also ensure that the vision created for the area is followed in every new redevelopment project.

Marketing and Branding

This section outlines the importance of developing a marketing and branding strategy to effectively market the Project Area, with the aim of changing its perception into one that aligns with the vision of revitalized neighborhoods. A crucial element in marketing is the repositioning and restaging of the neighborhood's image, with a focus on the vision of what each neighborhood could become without losing sight of where it has been.

Recommended key tasks in developing the marketing strategy:

- Create a positive identity via narratives that embody the Project Area's vision and initiatives in a way that resonates with residents, potential targets, and stakeholders.
- Develop a brand image and an iconic look for the revitalization vision.
- Create project programs that can be defended incrementally with "reason to believe" milestones that resonate with key target audiences.

Why Branding for the Neighborhoods?

Studies show a significant correlation between people's connection and loyalty to a community and its local economic growth. The Project Area's marketing and branding initiatives can be viewed as an important facilitator that provides resources and tools and serves as the connective tissue that helps focus the efforts in the

individual targeted neighborhoods for sustainable redevelopment.

Setting Marketing Objectives/Goals: It is important to first identify a marketing/branding leader or someone to help focus the group's task. The first step would be to complete a situation assessment and analysis, which measures the marketing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the Project Area. Once this analysis is complete, the heart of the marketing planning process takes place: setting marketing objectives. Specific objectives are critical to this process because they:

- Articulate the importance of marketing and branding by showing how the Project Area will benefit.
- Galvanize staff, partners, and stakeholders commitment by highlighting goals that encourage teamwork.
- Offer benchmarks to measure progress, helping to determine future marketing efforts.

Marketing Program Evaluation: It is important to benchmark and evaluate key efforts with quantifiable data and qualitative input that measures progress. Activities can be quantified: for example, number of targeted neighborhood homeowner visits or, number of local businesses and corporate contacts. For public relations efforts, media coverage can be tracked by logging the number of articles and news mentions for the Florence Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy.

Website and social media traffic can be measured by tracking page visits and number of "fans". It is extremely important that the marketing/branding leader track comments and conversations about the project. To measure brand strength, the marketing team should use questionnaires and interviews of key audiences to determine perceived knowledge, esteem, relevance, and differentiations of the Florence Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy.

Examples of where marketing and branding efforts have helped change the dynamics of redevelopment projects include:

- [The Laney/Walker Bethlehem Revitalization Project](#) in Augusta, GA has won multiple local and national recognitions for its role in changing two of Augusta's urban core neighborhoods. The marketing and branding team is responsible for a variety of tasks including web design, messaging to public leaders and the media, production of brochures and marketing packages, and bringing attention to the project within the City of Augusta and nationally.
- [Neighborworks America](#) acknowledged that neighborhood marketing and branding play an intrinsic role in the redevelopment of neighborhoods. Through its Marketing Technical Assistance Program, it has helped a variety of communities to create strong neighborhood brands.

Roles and Responsibilities

This section outlines the steps needed within the next few months in order to begin the implementation of all Catalytic Projects. The responsible parties are inclusive of City of Florence staff along with a designated Project Management Team that would be responsible for the day-to-day implementation of the entire Florence Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy.

Activities (deliverables)	Description & Responsible Parties	Schedule	Catalytic Area(s)
Project Orientation and Administration	Project Manager and/or City of Florence staff will be selected to direct scheduling of predevelopment activities including projects and developers/project sponsors.	Months 1-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> E. Pine Street W. Vista Street N. Alexander Street W. Sumter Street
Document Review & Information Gathering	Project Manager or City of Florence staff will share documents with third-party consultants as necessary. Develop Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with non-profit and for-profit organizations working in Project Area.	Months 1-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> E. Pine Street W. Vista Street N. Alexander Street W. Sumter Street
Land Transfer	Property acquisition agent, local realtor(s), Land Assembly/Land Bank, Real Estate Attorney will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review existing title work, legal descriptions, boundary surveys Prepare/update property acquisition matrix, including ownership, parcel size, and value. 	Months 1-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> E. Pine Street W. Vista Street N. Alexander Street W. Sumter Street
Finalize site plans & designs with phasing	Developers and designers will finalize development programs including target unit sizes, mix, density, and amenities for each Catalytic Area.	Months 1-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> E. Pine Street W. Vista Street N. Alexander Street W. Sumter Street
Financing options and strategies plan	Negotiate terms and conditions regarding development subsidies.	Months 1-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> E. Pine Street W. Vista Street N. Alexander Street W. Sumter Street
Community involvement process	Project Manager and/or City of Florence staff will conduct meetings to provide project updates, business development opportunities, job training, employment opportunities, and technical assistance opportunities for place-based training.	Ongoing	All Catalytic Projects



Execution

This section discusses an analysis of each of the Catalytic Projects. As mentioned in the Update section, the Catalytic Projects were selected with the Decision-Making Matrix (DMM) based on specific stabilization and revitalization criteria including predevelopment steps, market conditions, and proximity to planned or recently completed projects. For further clarity, once the Catalytic Projects were selected they were labeled in the following manner:

1E+2E: Pine Street
3N: Vista Street
3NW+ 2NW: Sumter and Alexander Street

The execution phase outlines the following for each of the Catalytic Projects:

- Selection rationale
- Analysis of Strengths, weakness, opportunities, and threats (SWOT)
- Program and market recommendations
- Infrastructure Assessment is included in Appendix F that includes a detailed assessment for the Catalytic Project because the availability and current condition of this infrastructure will have a significant impact on the redevelopment. A short-summary is included in the description of each project in this section.

- Urban design, streetscape design and infrastructure recommendations that should be considered as the projects are designed in further detail and incorporated into construction documents. This section also includes complete street recommendations for each street proposed to be redeveloped (Appendix F).

Additionally, this section includes a detailed description of the phasing, financial modeling assumptions, programs and timelines associated with the Catalytic Projects along with next steps.

Pine Street

The Pine Street Catalytic Project is bound to the west by Dargan Street, Palmetto to the north, Griffin to the east, and Noble and Kershaw Streets to the south. The first section of the Catalytic Project at the intersection of Pine and Dargan Streets is envisioned as a mixed-income residential infill project that builds off of the close proximity to the amenities along the cultural district of Dargan Street. As a whole, the Pine Street Catalytic Project would be primarily residential, but would include a prominent retail corridor along the border shared with McLeod Health along Palmetto Street. Development to the east of the railroad tracks on Barringer Street is envisioned as market-rate/workforce infill. The “triangles” at Church Street & Pine Street have the potential to form the southern commercial-style “bookend” of the street segment that starts at Dargan Street. The corner of Brown and Palmetto Streets is expected to be built out by New Ebenezer Baptist Church. To maximize its impact and redevelopment potential, this redevelopment may need some form of technical assistance. McLeod Health, as a potential development partner, should be encouraged to initiate development along Palmetto Street. Johns Street should also be considered for development as a residential-style gateway to the south.

Strengths: The Pine Street Catalytic Project connects Pine Street directly from Dargan Street and the cultural district to the west. Further west sits the vital commercial corridor of Irby Street. Heading to the east, Pine

Street terminates at Levy Park (outside of the Catalytic Project boundaries), a noted asset to the community. One block to the north sits the McLeod Health campus, a major regional employer and service provider.

Weaknesses: The length of the Pine Street segment that goes from Dargan Street to Levy Park may make it difficult to thematically tie both ends of the street. Plus the north-south railroad line on Barringer Street will challenge efforts to create a unified corridor presence.

Opportunities: Multiple houses in this area are candidates for thoughtful restoration because of their great architectural character. The existing architectural vernacular has a vibrant southern appeal that could be complemented with new infill housing on the numerous vacant lots throughout the Project Area. Multiple churches and the Housing Authority can be counted as potential partners in both physical and social development efforts. Pine Street is one of the few streets within the entire Project Area with landscape strips and ample sidewalks on both sides of the street, which is seen as an asset for redevelopment since it allows the creation of a more walkable and connected Catalytic Project.

Threats: Goodwill and coordination with McLeod Health is imperative and must be established. Any infill development plan is

recommended to have enough scale and continuity to provide impact.

Longer-term considerations include partnering with McLeod on acquisition efforts to support housing options and commercial service needs.

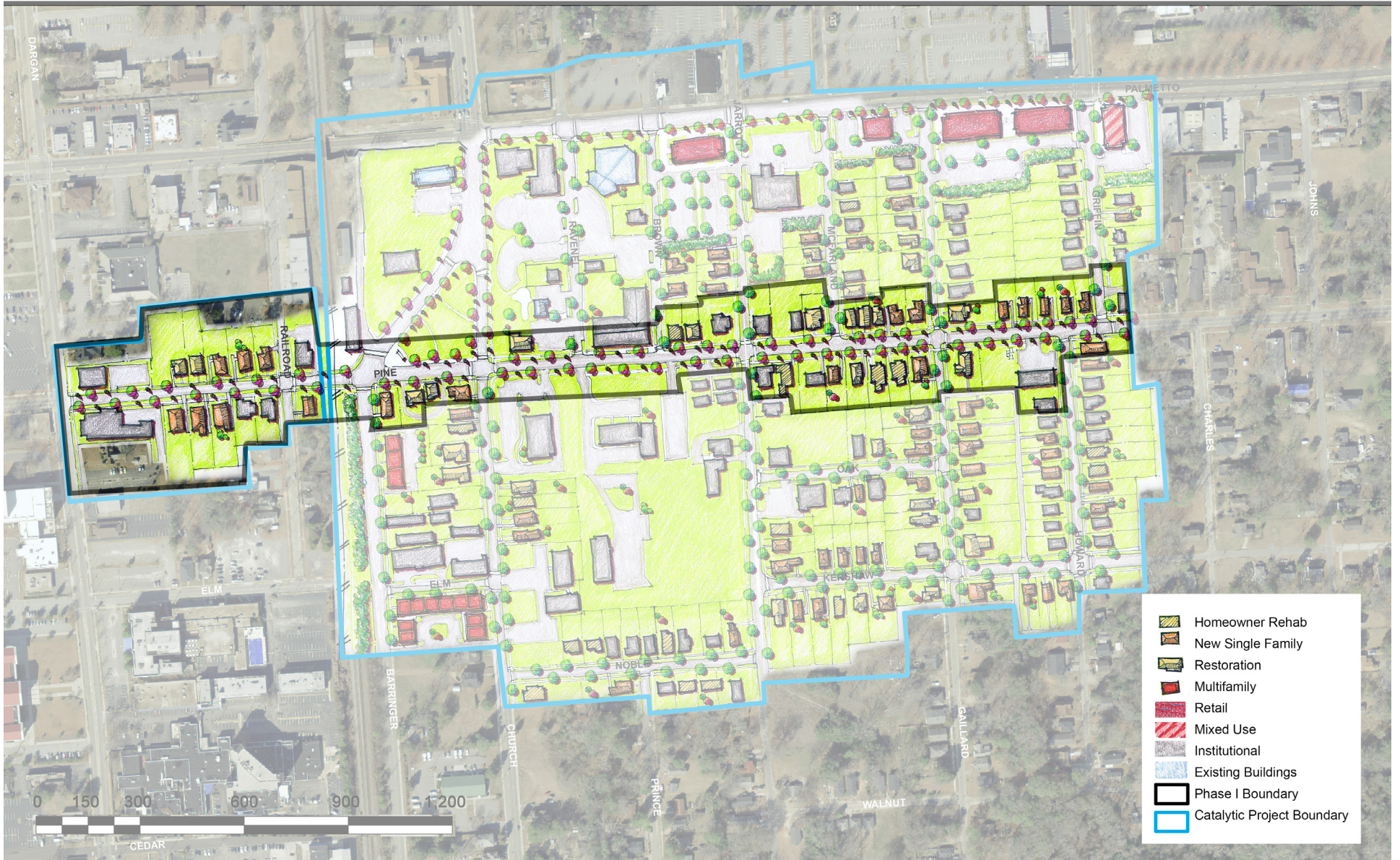
Program and Market: Figure 11 shows the vision for the Pine Street Catalytic Project redevelopment. Phase I focuses primarily on those parcels facing Pine Street, with subsequent phases extending to Palmetto Street to the north and Noble Street to the south. The program for the redevelopment of this site can be seen in Table 6, which includes both stabilization efforts in the restoration of existing structures and the introduction of new single-family residential

Table 6: Pine Street Program

Program	Phase I	Catalytic Project
Owner Occupied Rehab	2	62
Restorations	13	45
Single Family	7	29
Multifamily	0	19
Retail	0	39,500 sq.ft.

Figure 11: Pine Street Phase I

Catalytic Project: Pine Street



houses wherever possible. The market analysis helped inform the following recommendations for the Pine Street Catalytic Project:

- For sales homes should be priced in the mid-\$100,000s to the low \$200,000s.
- The intersection of Pine Street with Dargan Street is close to the cultural district and provides a marketing opportunity to draw units to the location.
- With an absorption rate between 8-10 units per year, this Catalytic Project would be expected to take approximately two years to reach final stabilization.
- The proposed restorations may take longer, but they can be built based on the success of the initial for-sale units.

Urban Design Recommendations: The entire Pine Street Catalytic Project is proposed to be redeveloped in the following manner:

- Repurpose and redesign the commercial uses along Palmetto Street to better serve the McLeod Health campus and the neighborhoods. These services are currently lacking and the buildings are in poor condition. The redevelopment of these

sites must pay special attention to creating a safe pedestrian environment along Palmetto Street by locating parking to the rear of the lots, introducing larger sidewalks and planter strips, and creating buffers between parking and sidewalks with landscaping. These buildings should be sited at the edge of the right-of-way facing Palmetto Street with main entrances facing the street. This effort would further strengthen this corridor as the city's gateway from the east.

- Create a buffer between the commercial uses and the residential lots behind them. The site plan in Figure 11 shows a 30-to-40-foot landscaped buffer wherever possible.
- Consider the existing fabric of the neighborhood for new infill single-family projects with 50-to-60-foot-wide lots, and 15-to-20 foot setbacks. It is suggested that these new single-family structures follow the same architectural character of some of the existing homes as seen in Figure 12.
- Introduce new sidewalks where houses are proposed to be built or restored to improve the pedestrian environment and increase connectivity within the neighborhood.
- Introduce a gateway to the East Florence Neighborhood at the corner of Barringer Street and Pine Street.

Figure 12: Architecturally Significant Homes



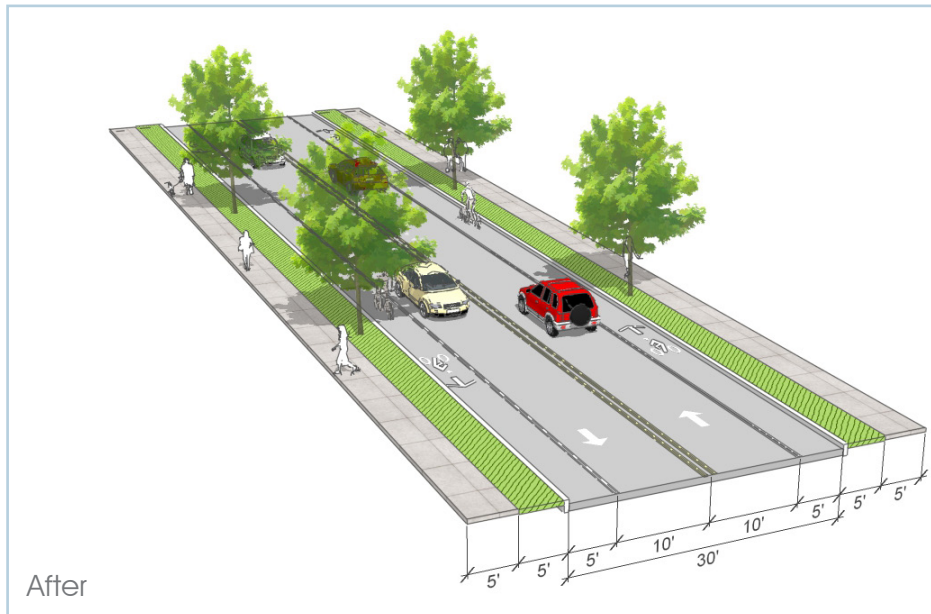
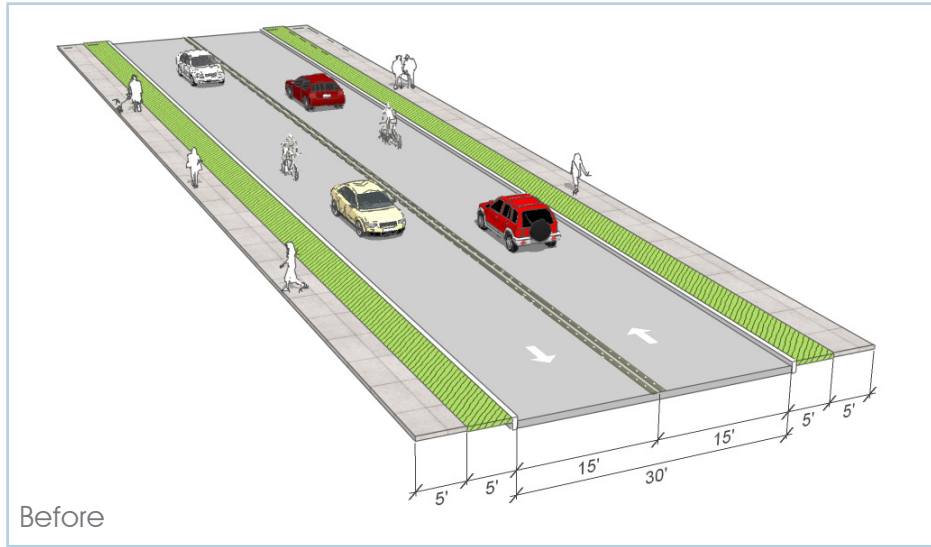
Infrastructure Assessment: The stormwater collection system within the Pine Street Catalytic Project is relatively robust, due to the grid-like layout of the existing roadway system. Curb and drop inlets are located in nearly all of the major and minor roadway intersections.

Streetscape Recommendations: Through the strong existing system of sidewalks, Pine Street facilitates connections to downtown via Dargan Street and to shopping, dining, and medical destinations by using perpendicular neighborhood streets to connect to Palmetto Street and beyond. The street experiences a relatively low volume of 2,900 vehicles each day and has a posted speed limit of 35 mph. While one bus route does traverse a portion of Pine Street, there are no bus stops.

The street cross-section is composed of two 15-foot travel lanes (one in each direction; 30 total feet of pavement), a 6-inch concrete curb, landscaped verge areas behind the curb on both sides of the road (11 feet wide on the north side; 15 wide on the south side), and five-foot sidewalk on both sides of the street (Figure 13). Based on surrounding land uses and activity observed in the corridor, there is high potential for pedestrian and bicycle crossings at Pine Street's intersections with Barringer Street, Church Street, Jarrott Street, and Gaillard Street. This corridor currently provides an excellent walking environment, but could be improved in the following ways:

- Evaluate reducing the speed limit to 30 mph to slow vehicular speeds, reduce cut-through traffic, and be in concert with surrounding neighborhood streets.
- Consider implementing high-visibility crosswalks and other pedestrian enhancements at intersections that have been identified as having a high crossing potential.
- Consider reallocating the pavement width to include two 10-foot travel lanes (one in each direction) and two five-foot bike lanes (one in each direction, Figure 13).
- Evaluate the targeted replacement of damaged sidewalk sections and unhealthy street trees.

Figure 13: Pine Street Before and After



Vista Street

The Vista Street Catalytic Project is bound by Irby Street to the west and Oakland Avenue to the east, running along the total length of Vista Street. Within the North Florence neighborhood the Vista Street Catalytic Project provides an opportunity to stimulate development by stabilizing and redeveloping this street segment with new moderately priced infill housing. In addition to its immediate adjacency to the new North Vista Elementary School, this Catalytic Project will also build on the new Hope Health facility on Irby Street, possible future development at the Oakland Plaza (Big T) retail center, and other potential development opportunities. The new school serves as the real catalyst for development within this area of the North Florence neighborhood. The Vista Street Catalytic Project would occur directly across the street from the school and would be designed to be attractive to families with school-aged children as well as school teachers and administrators who work at the school.

Strengths: Vista Street connects with Irby Street and terminates directly adjacent to the retail center on Oakland Avenue, both corridors carrying a substantial amount of traffic. There are currently Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (TSPLOST) dollars dedicated toward improving this corridor which can be leveraged with redevelopment funding. This street is directly adjacent to the newly built North Vista Elementary School. Additionally, a Safe Routes to School project is proposed on Fraser Street.

Weaknesses: More development density along this portion of Vista may be needed for the project to be strong enough to stabilize the area and change the direction of disinvestment.

Opportunities: Appropriate infill along this corridor could leverage the TSPLOST improvements and thus make this corridor a vital connection through the North Florence neighborhood. The proximity to the school should also enhance its market appeal.

Threats: Any efforts must coordinate with the North Vista Elementary School, especially considering traffic and congestion around the school.

Program and Market: The Vista Street Catalytic Project is proposed to be completed in one phase as shown in Table 7 and Figure 14 with a combination of infill single-family houses, restorations, and new multi-family housing. Based on the market assessment there is a demand for a market rate product starting at the low \$100,000. The proximity to the new school is seen as a key indicator of stability. This node would take approximately two years to reach final stabilization. The area is expected to absorb ten (10) proposed multi-family units in one year.

Urban Design Recommendations: Urban design recommendations for the Vista Street Catalytic Project include:

- Lots facing Vista Street are relatively

Table 7: Vista Street Program

Program	Catalytic Project
Owner Occupied Rehab	2
Restorations	0
Single Family	7
Multifamily	10
Retail	0

narrow, so new single-family infill lots are proposed to be 80-to-100 feet wide to allow for driveways and lawn space for each parcel.

- Multi-family units in the form of two-story townhouses are proposed in the first block closest to Irby Street, west of Fraser Street. These townhouses are proposed to be 30-to-35 feet deep to accommodate rear parking.
- Sidewalks should be introduced throughout the entire project whenever possible.
- A short, decorative wall is proposed along the existing cemetery to enhance the appeal of the site and also protect the integrity of the tombs that are relatively close to the street.
- A rather large portion of Vista Street is along the back of the property line of the homes facing E Westford Rd. The

Figure 14: Vista Street Phase I

Catalytic Project: Vista Street



fences on these homes should be maintained to improve the curb appeal and safety along the Vista Street corridor.

Infrastructure Assessment: The Vista Street Catalytic Project has too few stormwater collection devices to effectively convey runoff from the roadway or its adjacent parcels. In fact, aside from drop inlets at the intersection of Vista Street and Dargan Street, there are no other stormwater structures along the length of the corridor. The typical drainage pattern through the corridor appears to be ineffective roadside runoff, and will require improvements when significant infill development or redevelopment projects are implemented.

Streetscape Recommendations: Vista Street connects residents to Irby Street, North Vista Elementary School, Williams Middle School, Oakland Plaza (“Big T”), and Oakland Avenue. Additionally, side streets like Fraser Street, Dargan Street, and Sopkin Avenue provide connections to the greater neighborhood area.

The street experiences traffic volumes between 1,000 and 1,200 cars each day and has a posted speed limit of 35 mph. While no bus routes are directly on Vista Street, there are routes along Irby Street and Oakland Avenue at either end of Vista Street. While the land uses along Vista Street are residential, the existing character of the corridor is more of a vehicular thoroughfare, with the street acting as a “straight-shot” cut-through for travel between Irby Street and Oakland Avenue. The street cross-section is composed of two 12-foot travel

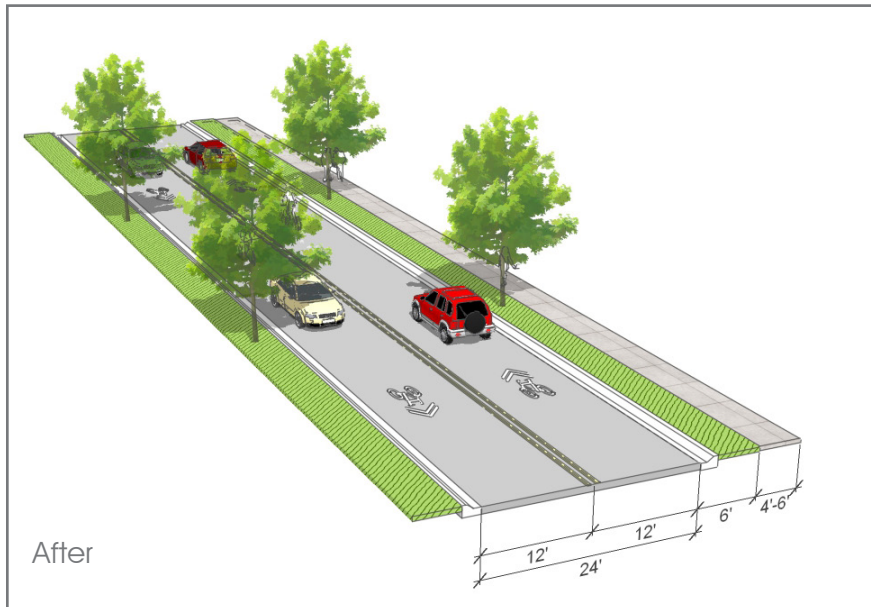
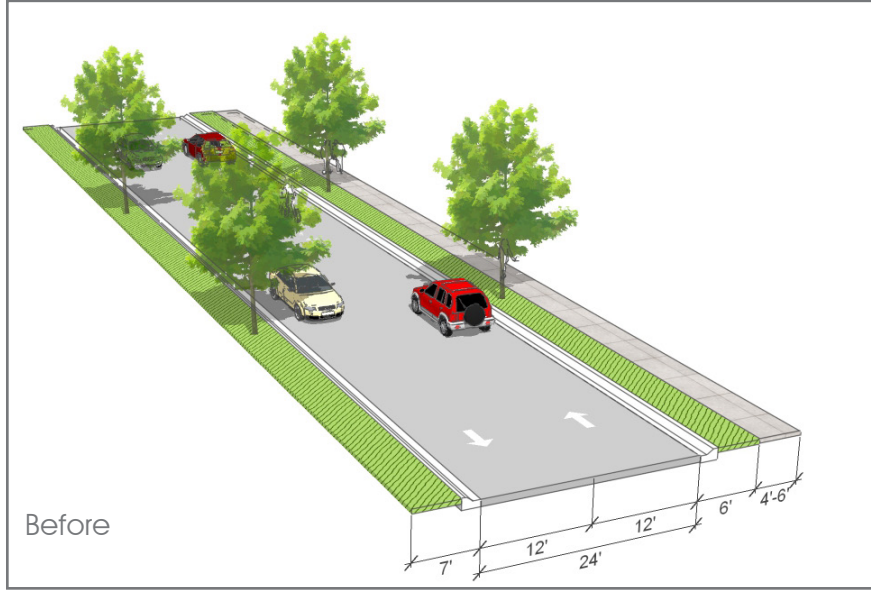
lanes (one in each direction) and a 24-inch roll curb and gutter (Figure 15).

There appears to be drainage issues along the corridor, as the gutter is filled with silt, grass, and debris along much of its length. The north side of the street has a four-foot landscaped verge and a four-foot six-inch sidewalk. Near the newly reconstructed North Vista Elementary School, the landscaped verge expands to nine feet in width with a five-foot sidewalk behind. There is a high potential for pedestrian and bicycle crossings at Vista Street’s intersections with Irby Street, Fraser Street, Dargan Street, and Oakland Avenue. While Vista Street does presently provide some multi-modal facilities, it could be improved in the following ways:

- Evaluate reducing the speed limit to 30 mph to slow vehicular speeds, reduce cut-through traffic, and be in concert with surrounding neighborhood streets.
- Consider implementing high-visibility crosswalks and other pedestrian enhancements at intersections identified as having a high crossing potential. Strategic placement of raised crosswalks would provide connections to the sidewalk on the north side of the street and could act as a traffic-calming device. Additionally, at the intersection of Vista and Fraser Streets a raised intersection might be appropriate, as this is a critical crossing for access to/from North Vista Elementary (Figure 15).
- Consider adding yellow center line striping and bicycle shared lane pavement markings (i.e., sharrows) to



Figure 15: Vista Street Before and After



Sumter & Alexander Streets

The Sumter Street Catalytic Project includes the parcels facing Sumter Street from Irby Street to the east and Alexander Street to the west. The Alexander Street Catalytic Project includes the parcels facing Alexander Street from Darlington Street as a southern boundary to Ingram Street to the north. It also includes the parcels facing Ingram Street from Alexander to Clement Street and the parcel where the Northwest Community Center is located.

The Northwest Florence Catalytic Projects provide an opportunity to create a sense of place and provide amenities for low-to-moderate income households. The Sumter Street Catalytic Project will carry more traffic from downtown to the new Hope Health site on Irby Street as these destinations become more active. The Complete Street improvements would add traffic-calming features to Sumter Street and stimulate reinvestment in housing and retail services.

Along Alexander Street, beginning at the intersection of Alexander and Sumter, there is an opportunity for a sizeable infill project. Important to consider in infill projects is that the smaller lots and house sizes within the fabric of this neighborhood set a pattern that discourages the introduction of oversized infill housing, thus preserving affordability for existing residents. Working with existing residential and retail property owners along Sumter will be important to the overall success of these Catalytic Projects. New programs that would increase the effectiveness of code enforcement

and provide financial incentives for reinvestment will be very important.

Strengths: Sumter Street is potentially the most direct route into the Northwest neighborhood, and it intersects directly into the pending Hope Health development on Irby Street and the planned car dealership improvements that face Irby Street. Also TSPLOST funds are available to enhance Sumter Street. The redevelopment of Alexander Street could provide an alternate gateway/entryway into the Northwest neighborhood, in lieu of the industrial entrances off of Lucas Street. This development could start a total rebranding of the neighborhood's image.

Weaknesses: The lack of enough vacant parcels, plus the existing fabric of smaller lots and houses, makes the revitalization of Sumter Street problematic. Also, the lack of site control at the intersection of Sumter and Irby Street prevents the creation of a more architecturally significant gateway. Vacant and abandoned parcels, reported gang activity, and the distance from downtown weaken the option for redevelopment of Alexander Street as a first phase.

Opportunities: A route from downtown that follows Sumter, to Alexander, to the community center could create a new introduction to this community. The potential to gain site control at the corner of Alexander and Sumter Streets provides an opportunity for a significant gateway adjacent to R.N. Beck Learning Center.

Threats: The revitalization of the corridor may be hindered by the inability to find the right mix of residential and commercial uses that would be both market-viable and impactful to the communities. Crime (real/perceived), image, and distance from downtown amenities are also seen as threats for the Alexander Street Catalytic Project.

The status of this node as a mid- or long-term prospect depends on what additional funds can be leveraged to support this effort.

Program and Market: Phase I of the Sumter and Alexander Streets Catalytic Projects (Table 8) includes the development of gateways at the intersections of Irby Street and Sumter Street and of Alexander Street and Sumter Street. Subsequent phases will

Table 8: Sumter & Alexander Street Program

Program	Phase I	Catalytic Project
Owner Occupied Rehab	0	14
Restorations	0	19
Single Family	0	55
Multifamily	4	9
Retail	7,000 sq.ft.	7,000 sq.ft.

Catalytic Project: Sumter & Alexander Streets



include the stabilization of the corridors via restorations and the introduction of new single-family homes and some neighborhood retail. Initial development is expected to be absorbed within the first 12 months. The 7,000 square feet of retail can be absorbed within the short term.

Infrastructure Assessment: Stormwater collection devices appear to be ineffective in draining the roadway and adjacent parcels along Alexander Street. Field observation noted sediment accumulation along the edge of the roadway, indicative of the ponding of runoff. Stormwater collection and conveyance improvements will likely need to be packaged with any significant infill development or redevelopment projects along Alexander Street. Within Sumter Street, there appears to be drop inlets located at all major and minor roadway intersections, as well as relatively constant intervals between intersections. The existing stormwater collection and conveyance system appears substantial enough to support adjacent infill development and redevelopment scenarios. Any significant corridor enhancements to the roadway itself, however, will likely require stormwater treatment in accordance with the city's permitting.

Urban Design Recommendations: Phase I of the Sumter Street Catalytic Project includes the introduction of some neighborhood retail and a gateway at the corner of Irby Street and Sumter Street. The neighborhood retail would allow for a more seamless transition from the business uses in Irby Street to the residential uses within

the Northwest Florence neighborhood. The same type of transition is recommended for the corner of Alexander Street and Sumter Street with the introduction of townhouses facing the R.N. Beck Learning Center. Subsequent phases of work involve a stabilization strategy that includes the restoration of existing homes and the introduction of new single-family infill. Design considerations for the redevelopment strategy include:

- New infill single-family homes following the existing fabric in small lots: 50-60 feet wide, setback 15-20 feet.
- Commercial uses should employ rear or side parking when possible, while protecting the pedestrian realm with buffers.

Streetscape Recommendations: Alexander Street connects residential uses to R.N. Beck Learning Center, the Sumter Street corridor, and the Northwest Park and Community Center. While exact traffic counts are not available for Alexander Street, based on its residential character traffic volumes are estimated at fewer than 1,000 vehicles per day. It has a posted speed limit of 30 mph. No bus routes travel along Alexander Street and its only connection to bus service is at its intersection with Sumter Street.

The existing character of Alexander Street is residential. The street cross-section is composed of two 10-foot travel lanes (one in each direction), a four-foot grass verge area along the west side of the road, and four-foot sidewalk behind the verge on the west side of the road. The sidewalk is in

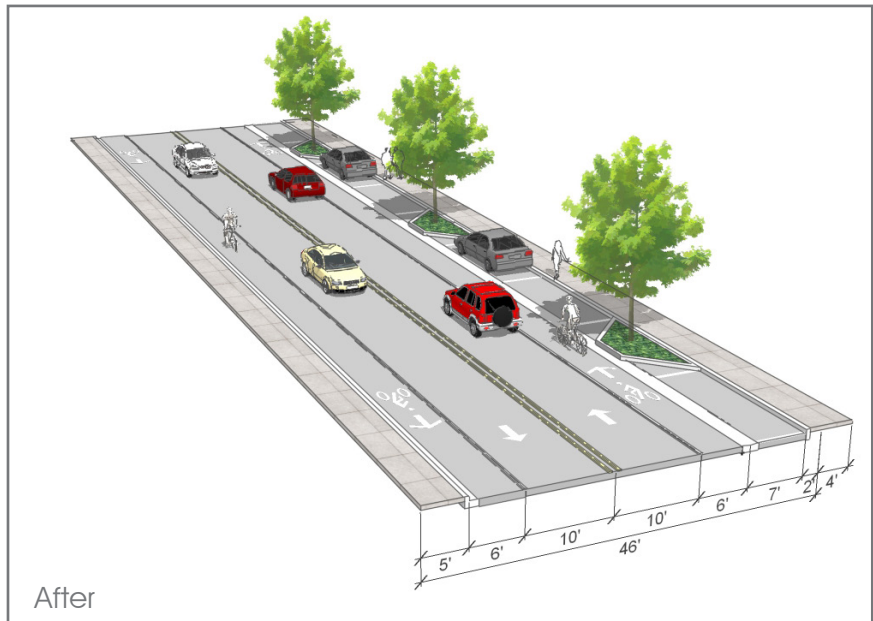
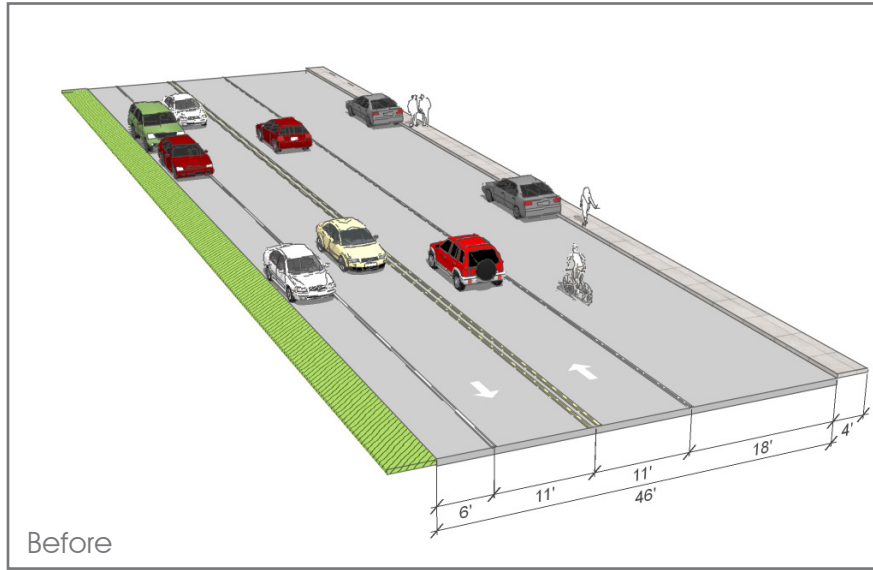
varying degrees of disrepair and overgrowth. No curb or gutter exists and drainage is open; some drainage issues appear to exist as the edges of the road and sidewalk retain silt and debris. Surrounding land uses and activity observed in the corridor indicate a high potential for pedestrian and bicycle crossings at Alexander Street's intersections with Sumter Street and Ingram Street. Additionally, high pedestrian and bicycle traffic areas would be along Clement Street in proximity to the Northwest Park and Community Center.

Alexander Street serves as a principle connection for the neighborhood and could be improved in the following ways:

- Consider replacing the existing deteriorated sidewalk with a new, wider facility. In addition, look at connecting this sidewalk to a new sidewalk along the perimeter of the Northwest Park and Community Center.
- Consider implementing high-visibility crosswalks and other pedestrian enhancements at intersections identified as having a high crossing potential.
- Evaluate drainage issues along the corridor to determine how best to eliminate/mitigate silt, debris, and runoff. Additionally, consider repaving Alexander Street as part of any drainage improvements.

Sumter Street is a critical connection for pedestrian and bicycle travel in the Northwest Florence neighborhood. R.N. Beck Learning Center, Sumter Street Grocery, Palmetto Faith Healthcare Center, and

Figure 16: Sumter Street Before and After



Hope Health (building new facility) are all key destinations. The street experiences a relatively low volume of 2,400 vehicles each day and has a posted speed limit of 35 mph. The area has ample bus service with a route running along Sumter Street, Irby Street, Chase Street, and Darlington Street.

Sumter Street has four bus stops in close proximity to key destinations. While the predominant land use type along the corridor is residential, the wide expanse of pavement (46 total feet of pavement) gives the corridor an existing highway commercial character. The street cross-section is composed of two 11-foot travel lanes (one in each direction), a six-foot parallel parking lane on the south side of the street, an 18-foot parallel parking lane on the north side of the street, and a four-foot sidewalk on the north side of the street (Figure 16). The sidewalk is in varying degrees of disrepair and overgrowth. No curb or gutter exists and drainage is open. Drop inlets are positioned approximately 10 feet off the north side of the pavement edge and some drainage issues appear to exist as the valley at the drop inlets and south edge of the road retain silt and debris.

Based on surrounding land uses and activity observed in the corridor, a high potential for pedestrian and bicycle crossings exists at Sumter Street's intersections with Alexander Street, Harrell Street, Lawson Street, Chase Street, and Irby Street. This corridor currently has a high level of bicycling and walking and could be improved in the following ways:

- Evaluate reducing the speed limit to 30 mph to slow vehicular speeds, reduce cut-through traffic, and be in concert with surrounding neighborhood streets.
- Implement high-visibility crosswalks and other pedestrian enhancements at intersections identified as having a high crossing potential.
- Replace the existing four-foot sidewalk along the north side of the street with a new, six-foot wide sidewalk. Also, utilize a portion of the existing 46 feet of pavement to install a new five-to-six-foot wide sidewalk on the south side of the street.
- Enhance transit amenities such as shelters and bus pullouts.
- Reallocate the pavement width to include two 10-foot travel lanes (one in each direction), two six-foot bike lanes (one in each direction), and a seven-foot parallel parking lane on the north side of the street (or alternate it between the north and south sides of the street based on land use need).
- Evaluate drainage issues along the corridor. Silt, debris, runoff; these improvements should be considered in conjunction with the recommended cross-section above and the repaving of Sumter Street.

Project Phasing

The City of Florence has set aside approximately \$3 million for the implementation of short-term Catalytic Projects within the Project Area. The primary purpose of the Catalytic Projects is to initiate revitalization that encourages private sector investment and sends a clear message that the city is committed to reinvesting in its neighborhoods. The financial models in Appendix G provide a summary overview of potential financing structures of Catalytic Projects, with a total expected cost for the first phase of work of \$3,800,000. This first phase includes:

- East Florence – Seven new single-family houses and two owner-occupied restorations on Pine Street.
- North Florence - Seven new single-family houses, two owner-occupied restorations, and 10 new rental units on Vista Street.
- Northwest Florence – One restoration, nine new rental units, and 7,000 square feet of new retail on Sumter Street. Development within the Northwest neighborhood would occur at the Irby and Alexander intersections, as a means of enhancing two important gateways.

Infrastructure improvements and Complete Streets upgrades are also recommended for each street segment. The recommended infrastructure improvements will be funded from the Option Sales Tax revenue and are designed to leverage the \$3 million set aside for neighborhood

redevelopment initiatives.

Market Conditions and Financial Modeling

The key finding from the Market Analysis commissioned for the Project Area (see Appendix E) is that there is a lack of sufficient product for sale and for rent in the lower and the higher end of the spectrum. Appendix F outlines a financial model for the first phase of development within each Catalytic Project. The following information provides a summary of the redevelopment characteristics based on the market research findings:

- Average size of a single-family house for sale would be approximately 1,700 to 2,000 square feet.
- New and revitalized units should be competitively priced between approximately \$140,000 to the low \$200,000s.
- The absorption rate for new houses is expected to be between 8-10 units per year.
- Rental units would be competitive in a range of \$510 to \$814 monthly gross rent.
- Additional commercial uses are supportable within the target areas. It is expected that approximately 6,500 square feet of full-service restaurant space is supportable within the one one-mile retail area. Additional retail opportunities included limited potential for Electronic & Appliance stores, Lawn & Garden Equipment stores, General Merchandise stores, Sporting Goods, Hobby stores, Office Supplies stores, and Stationary & Gift stores.

Recommended Programs and Policies

The City of Florence has several programs and policies already in place, plus ordinances that have been considered in recent years. The city has made steps in the right direction such as the new Livability Court, the appointment of a key staff person to lead code enforcement inside of the Police Department, and skilled staff assigned to work closely with community and business leaders. These initiatives serve as key components to implementing successful, staff-driven programs and policies that will support neighborhood stabilization and redevelopment.

The Implement section of this report provides several tables of information on case studies, current programs, recommended programs, and policy initiatives, and their applications to each of the key elements of successful project implementation. Generally the programs and policies needed to support an implementation strategy include:

Code Enforcement

- Continue the demolition of buildings determined to be unsafe/unhealthy for human habitation.
- Implement proactive code enforcement rather than complaint-based code enforcement.
- Create point-of-sale and point-rental inspections that guard against occupying units until all code violations are corrected.

Rental Registration

- Initiate pilot program for all residential rental properties in the Project Area.
- Support programs for small-scale owners to improve management and maintenance.
- Create program for repeat offenders that penalizes bad property maintenance practices.

Homeowner/Rental Rehab Programs

- Create deferred loan program to assist homeowners in funding the repair of code violations and property maintenance.
- Create low-interest-rate loan program to assist small-scale property owners with the repair of code violations and property maintenance.
- Provide incentives and technical assistance to property owners that adhere to design standards when new additions or exterior renovations are permitted.

Land Assembly

- Create a local land assembly program and conveyance policies to acquire and dispose of land for the purpose of redevelopment in the Project Area.
- Create a land conveyance policy that conveys local, government-held property in a manner that supports neighborhood redevelopment initiatives.

Neighborhood Redevelopment

- Provide incentives to increase the rate of owner-occupied dwellings in targeted neighborhoods.
- Create incentives to reduce the risk associated with developing in the Project Area.
- Require adherence to design standards for builders and developers using public funding to finance development in the Project Area.

Predevelopment Services

- Develop policies and programs to convey assembled property.
- Provide preliminary design services. Also provide marketing and branding services designed to guide the type of redevelopment

desired for targeted Catalytic Projects.

Rezoning and Design Guidelines

- Enact land use and zoning ordinances that establish development standards to reinforce historic development patterns and encourage the development of pedestrian-orientated neighborhoods.
- Design/use Pattern Book and Design Guidelines.

Human Capital Development

- Focus on employment and job preparation.
- Create programs to promote the use of minority-and-woman-owned businesses.
- Provide homeownership counseling and services for senior citizens.

Governance Structure

- Outline roles and responsibilities of key personnel designated to deliver activities for the initiative.
- Create tracking and reporting systems.
- Establish overall project objectives and metrics to track progress and ensure accountability.

Proposed Timeline

When constructing a timeline for a neighborhood redevelopment strategy, the following elements need to be considered:

- A land assembly program that acquires enough vacant and abandoned property to develop a Catalytic Project.
- A regulatory framework through land use and zoning that ensures short-term and long-term projects reinforce the overall redevelopment goals and objectives.
- Programs and policies that consider market research findings, manage developers' risks (to attract them to the redevelopment initiative), and leverage public resources in a manner that attracts long-term private sector capital to the project.

The work occurring in downtown Florence is a good example of how the above considerations have been successfully executed. However neighborhood development can be more protracted and include significantly more variables than downtown development. Nevertheless, the success of the downtown redevelopment is an important factor in establishing a general timeline for the neighborhood development if it can be marketed as an extension of the downtown development success. The proposed timeline includes:

- First six months: Initiate/continue "low-hanging fruit" efforts as identified during the Neighborhood Action Plan projects (e.g. safety lighting, flood mitigation, refuse clean-up). Also, continue implementing public policy that is supportive of longer-term economic development and revitalization (e.g. establishment/identification of a land bank type entity, creation of an online property registry, lien reform, job training, and municipal capacity building).
- Six months to two years: conclude predevelopment activity for the Catalytic Projects, start code enforcement and existing property owner rehab, and initiate various infrastructure improvements throughout the area.
- Eighteen to thirty-six months: Implement infill redevelopment.

Next Steps

The next steps to begin the implementation of the strategies include the formation of a governing structure to manage the day-to-day work of neighborhood redevelopment, the preparation needed to implement policy recommendations, and the predevelopment work required to initiate neighborhood improvements.

The case studies found on pages 35 and 37 reference best practices for Code Enforcement and Rental Registration Programs. A Governance Structure is diagramed in Figure 10 on page 44, which presents an administrative model in which the municipality assumes a role similar to a Master Developer and implements neighborhood redevelopment initiatives through a Project Management Team. Although this structure can be modified, it is critical that a committed party be responsible to push and manage the implementation process on a consistent, daily basis. If the objective is transforming blighted communities without adversely impacting existing residents, local government leadership is required to manage the initial start-up and predevelopment phases of the project.

Creating an environment in which the revitalization efforts can take root requires a comprehensive policy response. It is not enough to build new structures. It is also necessary to ensure that existing structures are maintained, blight is eliminated, and human capital is developed. The Implement section of this report outlines steps to create this environment, specifically the table found on page 49 that lists important roles and responsibilities required to implement a neighborhood redevelopment strategy.

The Implement section also details those critical activities that must be started or completed in any real estate development project to prepare for construction. The chosen administrative body would have to perform vital activities: coordinate municipal agencies, secure private sector funding, and solicit potential development partners. Following is a summary of five key next steps:

- Site control: Need to catalog the land needed, the owners, and the acquisition costs.

- Land Assembly: Need approval of the acquisition process, policy, and documents to use.
- Governance Structure: Need general approval process to implement policy steps, and a decision-making process going forward.
- Regulatory Framework: Need to work with Planning Department to ensure that pending work of the zoning ordinance allows the Catalytic Projects to move forward.
- Infrastructure Improvements: Need to coordinate delivery of capital improvements projects to complement neighborhood redevelopment initiatives.



Conclusion

The Florence Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy addresses an ambitious goal of redeveloping three (3) neighborhoods that have experienced years of very little investment. Initial steps have been taken to begin to transform the neighborhoods including the city's investment in the Parks and Programming Initiative, and most importantly the \$3 million set aside to kick start the Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy. The goals will be difficult to achieve, but the city has the benefit of learning from other cities with neighborhoods that were experiencing similar conditions and successfully turned blighted, tipping-point neighborhoods into great neighborhoods for people to live: neighborhoods that now attract residents, employment opportunities, and opportunities for leisure.

The goal of this report was to:

- Document existing conditions;
- Provide information to resident stakeholders who will be impacted by the redevelopment in their neighborhood;
- Listen to resident concerns and address these issues through neighborhood redevelopment strategies;
- Design and manage a decision-making process that considers market data as a means to selecting short-term Catalytic Project opportunities;
- Recommend an implementation strategy that will guide the City of Florence through a process of stabilizing the Project Area and, launching major neighborhood redevelopment programs and policies; and
- Establish a governance structure that allows the city to execute an important role in managing the initial stages of development.

This report sets the stage for the City of Florence to capitalize on a unique opportunity to provide a leadership role in executing a neighborhood redevelopment strategy. It is a difficult task and there will be speed bumps along the way, but if nothing is done these very important neighborhoods will continue to decline and adversely

affect the quality of life of residents living in the Project Area and the City of Florence as a whole.

Unlike traditional development projects, redeveloping the East Florence, North Florence, and Northwest Florence neighborhoods will not have the luxury of clearly defined and distinct development phases. The development phases will not only overlap (stabilizing and revitalization strategies occurring at the same time), but they are also integrated (e.g. ensuring that existing residents have an opportunity to improve their quality of life and stay in the Project Area, while at the same time attracting new upwardly mobile families). The Implement section included in this report provides a process to can incorporate overlapping development phases and tension that will result as the plan builds capacity of existing residents, while new residents are moving into the target communities. The city is being asked to play an unconventional role, but it is a role that only it can play in the short-term.

This document and its recommendations provide a framework for redevelopment: how the process can be managed and how this change can be measured and evaluated. The report sets out a path that will improve the quality of life for existing residents and lead to the development of Catalytic Projects that serve as the foundation for long-term reinvestment. Even though it is much too early to measure results, it is not too early to get started on a plan of action. That is the first step in creating measurable results.



Produced for the City of Florence
2014