

## 2 | Vision Framework: A Sustainable Planning Approach

*Through the New Horizon 2035 process Lee County learned that a more sustainable planning approach to development is needed to address the county's four critical community issues—livability, strong connections, community character, and sustainability—and to help achieve the community's vision. This chapter establishes the county's vision, discusses the relationship of the Vision Framework to the Critical Community Issues, and describes how the Vision Framework will guide the implementation of the community's vision. The Vision Framework is based upon a sustainable planning approach, which is characterized by a clearer distinction between urban, suburban, and rural areas; a more compact and efficient pattern of development; the creation of a range of mixed-use places to serve the community; increased opportunities for walking, biking, and transit ridership.*

### New Horizon 2035 Vision Components

Building upon the ideas and critical community issues identified as part of the New Horizon 2035 process, a proposed vision—comprised of a Vision Statement, a set of Vision Principles, and a Vision Framework—has been drafted for Lee County. Each of these vision components are outlined below.

#### VISION STATEMENT

The proposed vision statement articulates the ideal attributes of Lee County in the year 2035:

*Lee County will be a highly desirable place to live, work, and visit—recognized for its commitment to a sustainable future characterized by a healthy economy, environment, and community. Because of its commitment, Lee County will be a community of choice—valued for its quality of life; varied natural environment; unique sense of history and place;*

*distinct urban, suburban, and rural communities; diverse economy and workforce; and varied travel options.*

#### VISION PRINCIPLES

Lee County will build upon its history and unique sense of place to provide future generations with more sustainable communities that feature:

- A high quality of life for residents and visitors.
- Clear distinctions between urban, suburban, and rural communities.
- Better connections between destinations for all modes of travel.
- Distinct and diverse community character that balances community planning and county operations.
- A high level of public services and facilities.
- A stable and diverse economy and workforce.

## 2 | Vision Framework: A Sustainable Planning Approach

- Protection and conservation of Lee County’s natural resources, wildlife, and natural habitats.
- Balance between social well-being, environmental resources, and economic vitality.

### VISION FRAMEWORK

A Vision Framework accompanies the vision statement and principles helping to illustrate key aspects of the proposed vision and guide the evaluation of the Lee Plan as part of this EAR. The Vision Framework builds on ideas and issues identified by the community during the visioning workshops and subsequent staff workshops.

The Vision Framework consists of three components:

1. **Land Use Framework** that defines the general land use pattern for the county.
2. **Mixed-Use** form principles and concepts that illustrate future desired patterns of redevelopment / infill and new development in the county.
3. **Sustainability Policies** that describe the type of new policy initiatives the county will undertake to become a more sustainable community in the future.

These components were used to evaluate the current Lee Plan and to identify the Recommended EAR-Based Amendments needed to achieve the county’s vision. Each of these components is described in detail in this chapter.

## Land Use Framework

### PURPOSE

The Lee Plan is the current document that describes the county’s land use and is a living document that has been evolving since its

original adoption in 1984. The Board of County Commission, Local Planning Agency, county staff, and the community have invested time, energy, and money into a variety of planning initiatives over the past several years which have focused on a specific issue or set of issues. The initiatives have helped to shape the Lee Plan and in turn have shaped the future vision of the county as expressed in the plan and the Future Land Use Map Series.

The current Land Use Framework of the county is described through an extensive series of maps and policies in the plan. As the vision for Lee County evolves to include enhanced elements of sustainability, new tools and techniques will be needed to achieve and implement this vision.

The Land Use Framework will be used to update the Lee Plan by introducing policies that include new principles that guide preferred urban, suburban, and rural development forms. The development forms are the keystones for the county’s vision framework and as they support the development context for the county’s mixed-use form principles and complete streets practices. Together, the development forms, mixed-use principles, and complete street practices comprise the county’s sustainable planning vision framework approach. This policy framework will serve to direct the character and form of new development and redevelopment county-wide.

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Land Use Framework process began with the identification of a set of “Guiding Principles” for future growth and development that reflected the community discussions to date. A series of land use types were identified to recognize that different communities within the county have different development characteristics and more clearly distinguish between urban, suburban, or rural areas based on the new vision for energy efficient, compact growth that improves

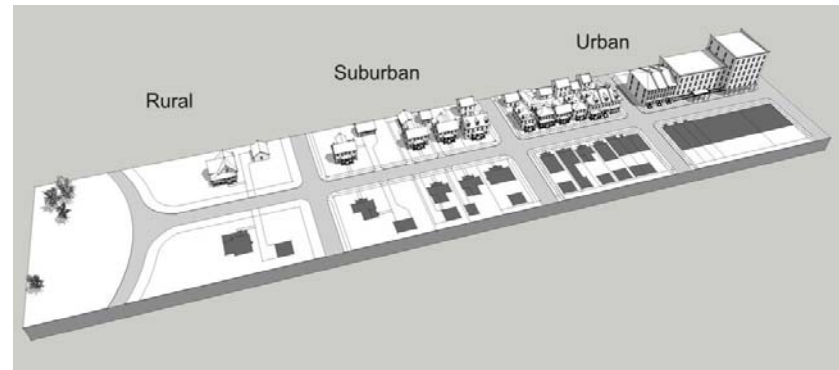
livability. These principles, outlined below, supported the decision-making process in creating the Land Use Framework.

### New Horizon 2035: Guiding Principles

The Guiding Principles below supported the decision-making process in creating the Land Use Framework.

- Establish specific form and transportation standards to guide desired community character for urban areas, suburban areas, and rural areas.
- Promote a more compact pattern of development that supports efficient and cost effective infrastructure and service delivery.
- Ensure adequate services and facilities to serve new and existing development.
- Promote economic development.
- Promote an urban form and community character in core areas.
- Preserve and protect natural resources.
- Support commercial agricultural.

One of the key issues that will be addressed in the New Horizon 2035 Plan is providing better distinctions between different community environments in the county. The Land Use Framework recognizes existing development characteristics while supporting the new vision for a more energy efficient and compact growth pattern.



*The transect diagram above illustrates distinctions in the density and intensity of development between rural, suburban, and urban areas. Although a clear distinction between different types of places is desirable in Lee County, a more gradual transition may be more typical, especially where development patterns are well established.*

On the pages that follow, each of the four Land Use Framework Elements (urban, suburban, rural, and environmental resource areas) is articulated through a general description of the land use type, graphics that show conceptually how these land use patterns should be designed, and principles for form, use, and transportation in these areas. These examples are not necessarily representative of existing development patterns in the county; rather, they are intended to convey the community’s vision for these areas in the future.

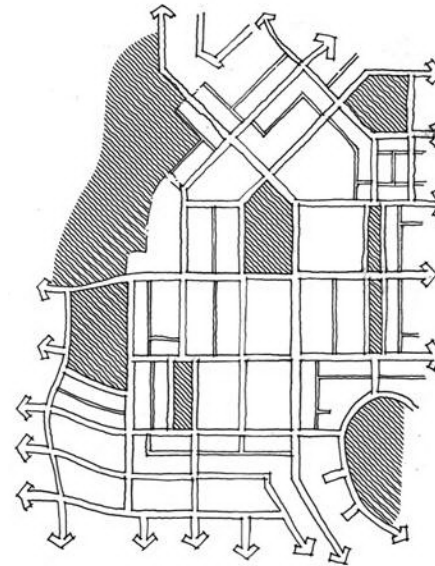
## URBAN AREAS



Urban areas include an integrated mix of housing types and uses in a compact, pedestrian and transit-friendly pattern, often focused around a defined center, such as a park, civic space, or neighborhood center.

Urban development patterns rely primarily on an interconnected development pattern. This pattern integrates the county's land uses (civic buildings, squares, parks, commercial and office space, and neighborhoods) and prioritizes multi-modal connections. Usable public open space organizes development to make places that attract people and are desirable as gathering places for civic and public uses. This pattern is characterized by a mix of building types with a defined center which can be a park, civic space, or neighborhood commercial/retail feature.

Existing urban areas in unincorporated Lee County have intense development and are in close proximity with the cities of Fort Myers and Cape Coral. The largest is south of Fort Myers, incorporating several contiguous Census Designated Places (CDP) such as Pine Manor and the Villas. The second largest, though only slightly smaller than the first, is across the Caloosahatchee River around North Fort Myers and Cape Coral. The third is located northeast of Fort Myers between the city boundary and Interstate 75.



### Urban Form and Use:

- ✓ Moderate to high density
- ✓ Mixture of residential and non residential uses
- ✓ Public spaces link community

### Urban Transportation:

- ✓ Highly Connected transportation network, internal and external connections
- ✓ Short block lengths and street widths
- ✓ Prominent pedestrian connections and access





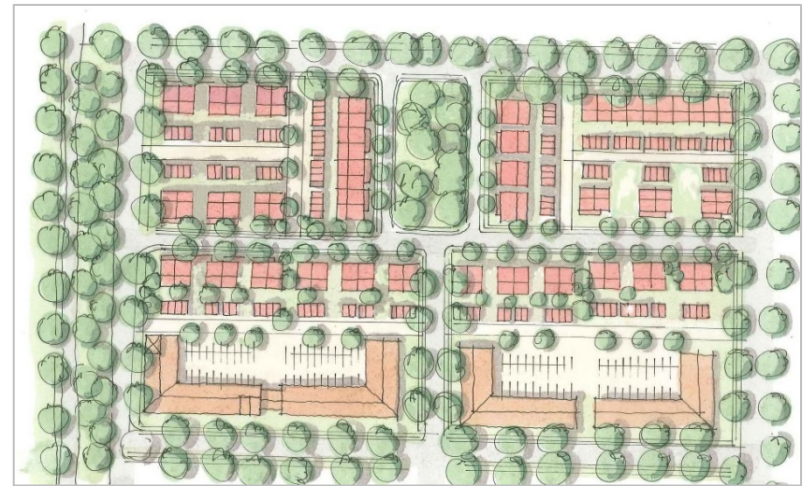
*This perspective illustrates the pedestrian-friendly character and more diverse mix of housing types characteristic of an urban area.*

### Urban Area Principles of Form and Use:

- Provide a mix of residential, commercial and recreational uses.
- Align public investments, incentives, and policies to encourage and protect redevelopment and revitalization opportunities that leverage existing economic assets.
- Promote revitalization in developed neighborhoods that are aging.

### Urban Area Principles of Transportation:

- Enhance or create an interconnected street grid system that links civic buildings, squares, parks and other neighborhood uses.
- Prioritize a transportation network and pattern of complete streets that encourages walking and bicycling.
- Encourage and support transit.
- Reduce the number and length of automobile trips and vehicle miles traveled.



*Development in Urban Areas is characterized by a mix of building types with a defined center which can be a park, civic space or neighborhood commercial/retail feature.*

## SUBURBAN AREAS

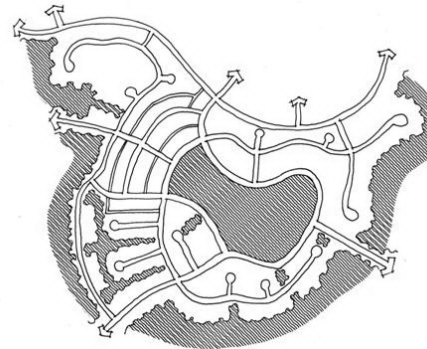


*Suburban areas are typically characterized by their lower intensity development patterns and a clear separation between uses; however, a more diverse and integrated mix of uses is desired in suburban areas in the future.*

Suburban patterns reflect a high desire for support of residential neighborhoods and privacy. Suburban residential street and park/green space layouts are designed to reduce cut-through traffic, establish distinct boundaries for residential communities. The automobile is the primary means of transportation in a suburban area. Public spaces including parks, playgrounds, green spaces, and trails are also designed to meet the needs and interests of residential users. Similar to urban areas, there are multiple linkages within a traditional suburban development area (including sidewalks,

parks, and adjoining land uses) however they are done at scale compatible with area's neighborhood context.

Suburban areas in the county include large contiguous areas of low-density residential uses surrounding the urban areas and incorporated cities. Lehigh Acres, lying east of the City of Fort Myers, represents the largest area of suburban development in unincorporated Lee County, containing thousands of acres and tens of thousands of residential lots. The second largest suburban area follows the US 41 and Interstate 75 corridors south of Fort Myers to the boundary of Bonita Springs. This area includes San Carlos Park, Estero, and Miramar. Another suburban area incorporates residential development southwest of Fort Myers along the Caloosahatchee River. This area includes McGregor, Cypress Lake, Harlem Heights, Ft Myers Shores, the Veranda, and Iona CDP. The fourth area lies between the urban area of North Fort Myers and Interstate 75.



### Suburban Form and Use:

- ✓ Low to moderate density
- ✓ More defined separation of uses
- ✓ Public spaces are amenities for internal development

### Suburban Transportation:

- ✓ Extensive street pattern, limited connectivity within regional street network
- ✓ Large block lengths and street widths
- ✓ Moderate pedestrian connection and access



### Suburban Area Principles of Form and Use:

- Support and protect existing viable neighborhoods.
- Promote revitalization in developed neighborhoods that are aging.
- Maintain and plan mixed use centers to link together multiple neighborhoods and provide for the needs of the residential user.
- Design and construct new roadways and roadway improvements consistent and compatible with the land use context of the area.
- Plan and develop an integrated park ways system to link together new and established neighborhoods.
- Program and construct future utility projects consistent and compatible with the land use and transportation context of the area.
- Introduce landscaping to soften the built environment.



### Suburban Area Principles of Transportation:

- Provide a connected network of neighborhood, collector, and arterial streets to link multiple neighborhoods and neighborhood centers.
- Create transit connections between activity centers.
- Design mixed-use centers to support a higher level of connectivity through building form/site layout and a complete street network.
- Introduce trails and greenways to provide larger scale connections between neighborhoods and natural areas and parks.
- Provide services in proximity to work and home in order to reduce vehicular miles traveled.



Suburban areas are typically characterized by their lower intensity development patterns and a clear separation between uses. While many existing suburban areas in the county provide limited connections to surrounding uses (bottom image), new suburban areas can provide a connected network of collector and arterial streets as well as access to transit, trails, and bikeways.

## 2 | Vision Framework: A Sustainable Planning Approach



*Although suburban neighborhoods are typically comprised of predominantly single-family residential homes and complementary low-intensity uses such as parks and schools; linkages to adjacent mixed-use centers provide a range of shopping, dining, entertainment, and employment options for residents.*



## RURAL AREAS

Rural development relies primarily on a pattern of large expanses of agricultural and conservation lands with occasional clustered residential development. Rural areas may be viewed as agricultural industrial lands as the areas function as working areas -- with the

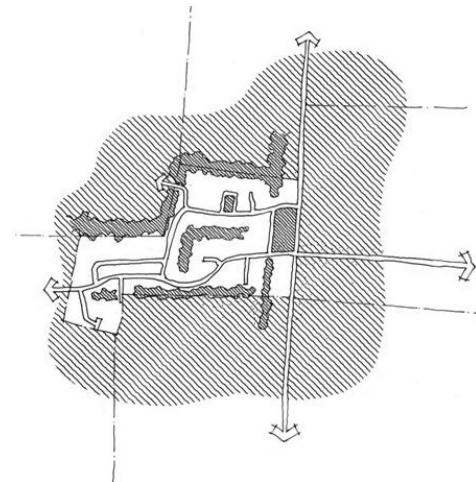


*Rural areas are working landscapes, comprised primarily of large expanses of agricultural and conservation lands. In some areas, occasional clustered residential development or rural centers may also be present.*

sights, sounds, and smells associated with active commercial agricultural uses. Rural lands are essential to the county as they provide for the area’s agricultural food production needs and character. They are largely devoid of active residential, commercial, industrial, or office uses as such uses are in conflict with agricultural farming activities and native environmental habitats located within rural areas.

The county’s two largest rural areas are located in the northeast corner of the county around the Caloosahatchee River, including Alva, Bayshore, and North Olga, and in the southeast corner of the county around the Corkscrew and DRGR areas. A third rural area covers the majority of Pine Island. Large portions of these rural areas are dedicated to pasture and farms that grow citrus, landscape plants, and livestock though there are also numerous large-lot residential subdivisions scattered throughout.

In the future, the county will seek to minimize the development of residential neighborhoods in rural areas by developing a set of tools which maintain the economic viability of commercial agricultural lands and promoting compact rural places. Additionally, the county will identify policies and processes for the evaluation of future land use map changes, especially for changes to rural lands. Through the comprehensive plan update, the Lee Plan will be amended to include specific policies and procedures that consider the surrounding context and regional impacts of proposals for higher density and intensity projects in rural areas.



### Rural Form and Use:

- ✓ Low density
- ✓ Separation of uses
- ✓ Natural environment is the predominate park areas
- ✓ Commercial agriculture and farm lands

### Rural Transportation:

- ✓ Sparse street pattern, limited connectivity within regional street network
- ✓ Rural street design
- ✓ Minimal pedestrian connection and access

### Rural Area Principles of Form and Use:

- Protect the existing rural character and economic viability of the area and thereby ensure that rural way of life is maintained for existing residents and future residents.
- Promote and support agricultural communities.
- Create incentives for clustering that reduce the opportunities for large lot development (1 acre lot sprawl) and preserve additional agricultural and conservation land.
- Reflect a rural level of service for infrastructure—including water and sewer utilities and stormwater facilities—within the rural area by not modifying the provision of these services for additional urban or suburban-scale development.
- Develop and implement complete street standards that meet the unique needs of a rural community.
- Support continued economic viability of agricultural and rural lands through coordination with the agricultural community to insure that policy and regulations reflect agricultural best management practices, technologies, and desired uses.
- Support agricultural production through the promotion of agricultural uses.
- Identify rural areas lands within the county where commercial agricultural use are the most appropriate use and develop a set of planning tools which support the continued viability of such areas.
- Promote local food production through community gardens and farm-to-table programs.



*Rural areas are characterized by large expanses of agricultural and conservation lands with occasional clustered residential development that incorporates significant open space and reinforces the rural character of the area.*



*The character of rural areas is reinforced by large tracts of open lands and agricultural areas and limited residential development.*

### Rural Area Principles of Transportation:

- Roadway design within the rural area will be consistent with the principles of and context-sensitive design that considers the relationship of land uses and all aspects of roadway design. These might include speed, travel lane width, access management, appropriate road buffers, and landscaping.
- Consider farm to market transportation needs of commercial agricultural



### ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCE AREAS

Environmental Resource Areas include those undeveloped lands containing wetlands, natural water bodies and water courses, native uplands, coastal and estuarine ecosystems, wildlife corridors, significant species habitat, high aquifer recharge potential, and conservation. These lands are very sparsely developed, if at all, and are crossed by few roads. They may or may not already be in public ownership, but have significant natural and ecological value. Environmental Resource Areas are integral to Lee County's long term sustainability as they provide for the necessary native habitats and environmental protection zones necessary for all living life.

Lee County is fortunate to have many areas of significant environmental resources. They range from coastal resources such as the Estero Bay State Park, Cayo Costa State Park, Pine Island National Wildlife Refuge, and Charlotte Harbor and Estero Bay Buffers. Inland wetland resources include the Six Mile Cypress Slough, Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed, Imperial Marsh, Caloosahatchee Creeks, and many others. Upland resources include the Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods, Bob Janes Preserve, and Prairie Pines.

### Principles to Guide Natural Resource Protection and Restoration:

---

- Protect and restore native biological diversity.
- Protect viable portions of native communities.
- Link conservation and open lands.
- Provide appropriately limited public access opportunities to the Caloosahatchee River and public conservation lands.



*Lee County is fortunate to have many areas of significant environmental resources—ranging from coastal resources to inland wetland resources to upland resources.*



## Mixed-Use



*Mixed-use places incorporate a complementary mix of non-residential and residential uses in a compact, walkable environment.*

### PURPOSE

Participants in the New Horizon 2035 process expressed a desire for uniquely identifiable places in Lee County. Places that feature a complementary mix of uses, promote livability and walkability, and include a variety of residential housing opportunities. They envision these places focused within compact centers of activity linked by a multi-modal transportation system that provides a more varied set of travel choices. They believe these places should promote more ecologically, economically, and socially sustainable development patterns without necessitating daily use of cars. Most importantly,

the participants wanted such places to fit within the context and character of their local neighborhoods and communities.

In response to these desires, Lee County staff worked with participants during the process to explore prototypical types of mixed-use places to help illustrate the county's new vision. This section reflects community preferences for different types and intensities of development—establishing mixed-use form principles and concepts to guide the character and form of future centers and corridors within Lee County. These mixed-use form principles and concepts are intended to encourage features the community identified at a county-wide level as favorable and to discourage those features viewed as undesirable.

Five types of mixed-use were identified to address variations in the built environments of urban, suburban, and rural areas. They include:

- Regional Centers
- Community Centers
- Neighborhood Centers
- Rural Centers
- Mixed-Use Infill/Redevelopment Corridors

The different types of mixed-use places identified are not intended as a one size fits all approach for development in Lee County, but describe a range of placemaking concepts to be adapted to specific centers and corridors, based upon their location, size, surrounding context, and other development considerations. Though this section, each mixed-use place listed above is described in further detail. Descriptions are accompanied by a series of illustrative concept diagrams intended to convey how existing development patterns may be transformed to mixed-use centers and corridors over time—either through new development or through the revitalization and/or

## 2 | Vision Framework: A Sustainable Planning Approach

redevelopment of existing strip-commercial centers and other auto-oriented land uses.

### GENERAL MIXED-USE FORM PRINCIPLES

The five types of mixed-use discussed and illustrated in this section vary in their characteristics, size, location, mix of uses, and intensity. The general mixed-use form principles below are intended to promote a more traditional compact center form of development, which achieves greater integration with neighborhoods, enhanced pedestrian and transit-alternatives, enhanced community character, and a greater sense of community in all five types of mixed-use places. The principles identify site layout and building design, circulation and access, sustainability, and use mix characteristics common to all types of mixed-use. These principles reinforce the following themes that embody mixed-use development:

- **Integration**—rather than being addressed as separate and unrelated elements, land uses, transportation facilities, parks and public spaces, and services are integrated together as part of an integrated development. This integrated approach results in a more compact building footprint and more unified character.
- **Options**—in contrast to single-use, suburban developments, mixed-use developments provide a range of options for residents and the surrounding community with regard to housing types, shopping and dining, employment opportunities, transportation alternatives, and recreation/social venues. This range of options attracts people and activity, creating lively destination-oriented places within the community.
- **Connections**—although they tend to be active places in of themselves, mixed-use developments provide connections to people and places throughout the community. Residents value the ability to live/work/play in one location, while transportation and park linkages to surrounding neighborhoods and other

destinations via transit, bicycle networks, pedestrian connections, and integrated parks and public spaces expand their reach further.



*A mix of retail, residential, and employment uses should be provided—with active uses, such as shops and restaurants concentrated at the street level to promote pedestrian activity.*

### Mix of Uses

- Include a mix of retail/commercial services, residential, and employment uses provided at a scale that complements the surrounding neighborhood.
- Incorporate a mix of housing types, price points, and live/work options to provide opportunities for residents to walk, bicycle, or take transit to shopping, services, and employment.

- Concentrate active uses such as small markets, retail shops and, cafes at the street level and near transit stops to generate pedestrian activity.
- Include public gathering spaces and community facilities such as urban-scale parks and plazas, schools, libraries, and other uses that serve the needs of residents, businesses, employees, and visitors.

### Site Layout and Building Design

- Emphasize the character and safety of the pedestrian and public realm, with buildings oriented to the street, rear or on-street parking, clear pedestrian connections, wide sidewalks, shade, low-level lighting, and comfortable public outdoor gathering places.
- Establish a unique identity through the use of materials, visual landmarks, architectural detailing, façade articulation, varied building heights, scale, graphics, landscaping, and other elements that distinguish the center or corridor from others in Lee County.
- Concentrate highest densities along major travel corridors where they may be more readily served by transit.
- Taper or “step down” building heights along edges shared with established residential neighborhoods, or incorporate lower-intensity uses, such as duplexes or townhomes along the shared property line or street frontage.
- Visually integrate parking structures with the building(s) they are intended to serve and line them with a mix of uses in high activity pedestrian areas.
- Incorporate a hierarchy of informational graphics and wayfinding signage to orient visitors and pedestrians.

- Address the possibility of transitioning to higher-intensity, more integrated development through the site planning process where



*Building heights should step down along edges shared with established residential neighborhoods. In this example, townhomes are used to provide a more gradual transition in height between a mixed-use center and an adjacent single-family neighborhood.*

an integrated mix of uses is not currently achievable.

- Support the development context and community character of the surrounding areas
- Establish a gradual and seamless transition to and between the surrounding land uses, rather than buffer or separate uses from adjacent areas.



## Circulation and Access

- Establish a pattern of walkable blocks and complete streets with frequent and clear pedestrian connections to transit corridors and stops, surrounding neighborhoods, parks, trails, and public open space.



*Complete streets consider the needs of all travel modes—walking, biking, transit, and automobiles.*

- Minimize the impacts of vehicular traffic—both internally and on adjacent residential neighborhoods—by emphasizing multi-modal transportation options.
- Incorporate context sensitive design features that reflect the character of the surrounding community and the urban, suburban, or rural context. Design streets to unify, rather than fragment the places that they are intended serve.

## Sustainability

- Establish direct connections to the multi-modal transportation system where it exists today and anticipate the need for future connections.
- Encourage the use of energy-efficient construction techniques, materials, designs, and other strategies that are consistent with sustainability policies.
- Ensure the environmental context is suitable for higher-intensity development.
- Support the integration of greenways and open spaces.
- Support local public community gardens.



*Supporting local food production—through designated agricultural production or through the integration of shared community gardens as part of new mixed-use centers and neighborhoods— is just one of the many topics addressed as part of the sustainability policies contained in the county's Vision Framework.*





## What are Complete Streets?

Complete streets are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users. Pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities must be able to safely move along and across a complete street. Complete streets also provide safe conditions for older people, children and people with disabilities.

## What are the Benefits of Complete Streets?

Complete streets improve safety. A Federal Highway Administration safety review found that streets designed with sidewalks, raised medians, better bus stop placement, traffic-calming measures, and treatments for disabled travelers improve pedestrian safety. Some features, such as medians, improve safety for all users as they enable pedestrians to cross busy roads in two stages, reduce left-turning motorist crashes to zero, and improve bicycle safety.

Complete streets address climate change and oil dependence. Complete streets would help convert many short automobile trips to multi-modal travel. Simply increasing bicycling from 1% to 1.5% of all trips in the U.S. would save 462 million gallons of gasoline each year. Using transit has already helped the United States save 1.4 billion gallons of fuel each year, which is a savings of 3.9 million gallons of gasoline every day.

Complete Streets foster strong communities. Complete streets play an important role in livable communities, where all people – regardless of age, ability or mode of transportation – feel safe and welcome on the roadways.

## How can Lee County Implement Complete Streets?

In 2009, the county adopted a Complete Streets resolution, addressing the need for improved safety, decreased emissions and more active lifestyles for residents. Implementing complete streets in Lee County means that transportation agencies and community service providers plan and design roadways that are safe for all users. Safer roadway conditions are typically achieved through a variety of design elements, such as slower vehicle speeds, a buffer between pedestrians and moving traffic, and safe waiting accommodations for transit customers. There is not a “one size fits all” approach to implementing complete streets, so they can be incorporated into urban, suburban, and rural communities in a way that enhances the overall community character

*Source:* National Complete Streets Coalition, [www.completestreets.org](http://www.completestreets.org)

## REGIONAL MIXED-USE CENTERS



*Regional Mixed-Use Centers are major destinations in the community and region—and serve as hubs of the transit system.*

Regional mixed-use centers serve Lee County residents, residents of the surrounding region, businesses, institutions, and visitors. Each regional mixed-use center is unique in terms of its mix of uses, development intensity, design, and surrounding development context. These centers are larger than community or neighborhood mixed-use centers and feature a significantly more intense pattern of development. Regional mixed-use centers are major destinations in the community and region—and serve as “hubs” of the transit system.

There are two types of regional mixed-use centers typically found in Lee County—those with a predominance of shopping and entertainment uses and those with a predominance of office/employment uses:

- **Shopping/Entertainment:** Shopping/entertainment regional mixed-use centers have a broader mix of uses to help transform

them into more vibrant places to live, work, shop, and recreate with compact residential development, and employment. Although the actual mix of uses will vary depending upon the center’s location and surrounding development context, the incorporation of employment uses and compact residential uses to complement existing shopping/entertainment uses will improve community character and support livability.

- **Office/employment:** Office/employment-focused regional mixed-use centers provide Lee County citizens and the greater region with opportunities for employment supporting commercial, light industrial, warehousing, and business uses, hotels, services, and a variety of residential options. These centers capitalize on their proximity to major employers such as the Southwest Florida International Airport, Florida Gulf Coast University, Edison College, and other areas of economic innovation throughout Lee County. The mix of uses focuses on office/employment, but also includes supporting retail and residential uses. Existing concentrations of employment found in these centers are a critical component of Lee County’s economy. Although the incorporation of a broader mix of uses in existing centers is desirable over time, retention of each center’s employment base is a priority.

### Transforming Existing Regional Centers

The sequence of images on the pages that follow illustrate the incremental transformation of four major suburban shopping centers situated at a typical major arterial intersection, into a single, cohesive regional mixed-use center.

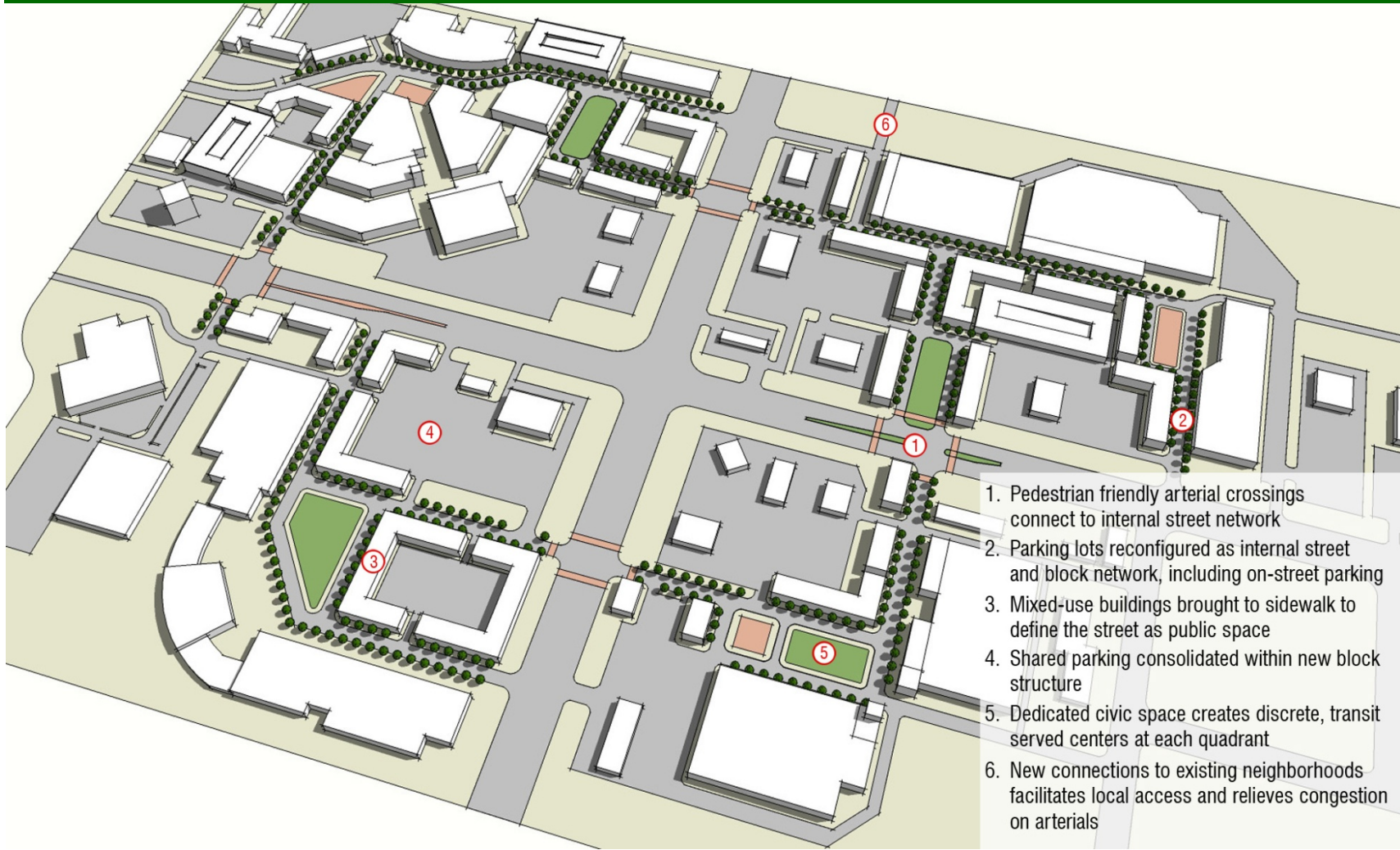
### Existing Regional Shopping/Entertainment Centers



*Existing, auto-oriented regional shopping centers are characterized by a prevalence of surface parking lots, large buildings set back from the street, limited land use diversity (typically no residential) and a lack of clear pedestrian connections between uses. Overall density is low and buildings are generally one-story in height. Transit service is typically limited.*



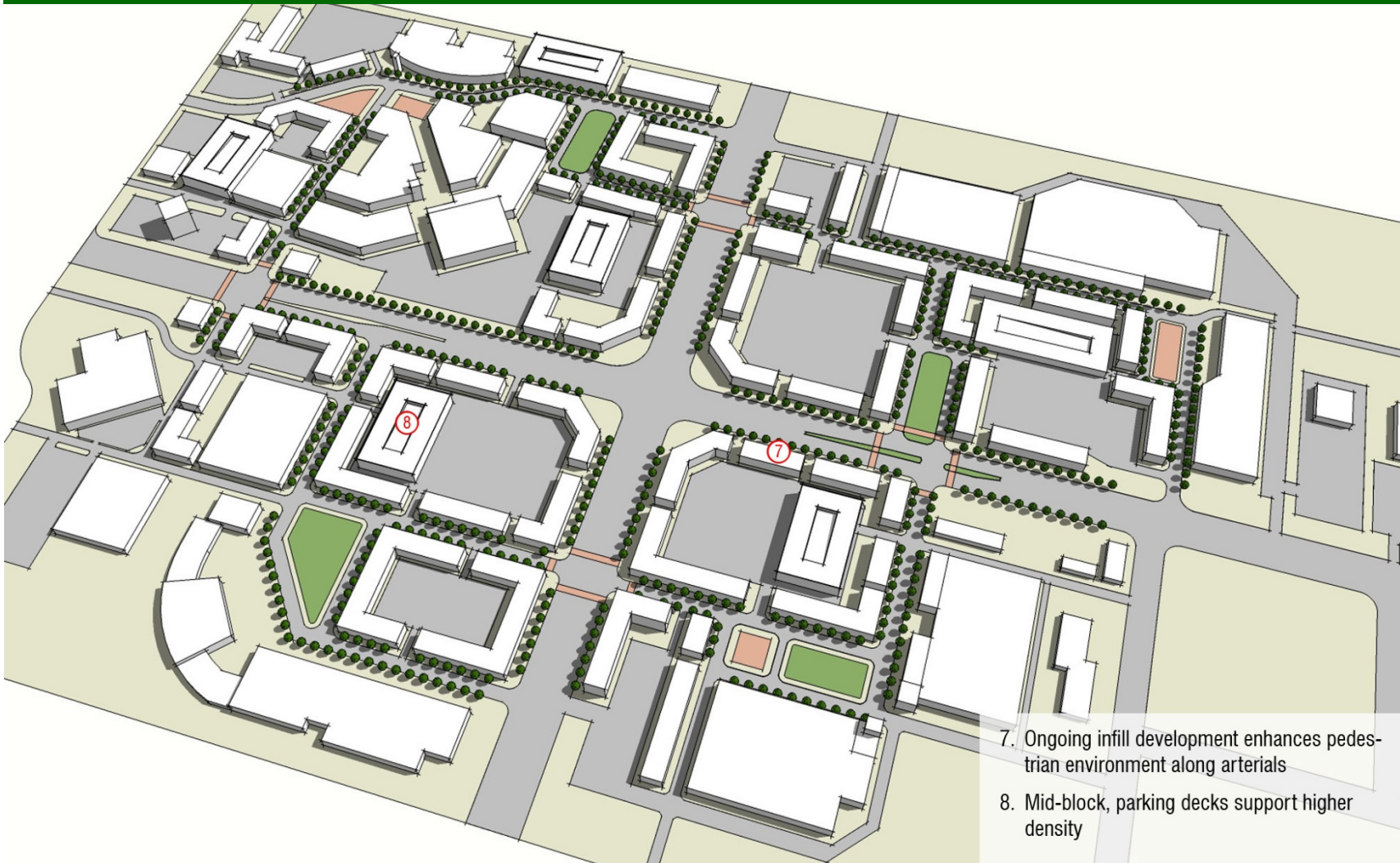
Regional Mixed-Use Center: Phase 1 Redevelopment



Phase 1 begins by defining a new, internal street network which will allow local traffic to connect directly between the centers of the four commercial quadrants by circulating around the existing intersection at new, pedestrian-friendly signalized intersections. In addition, new residential uses are added to existing buildings.

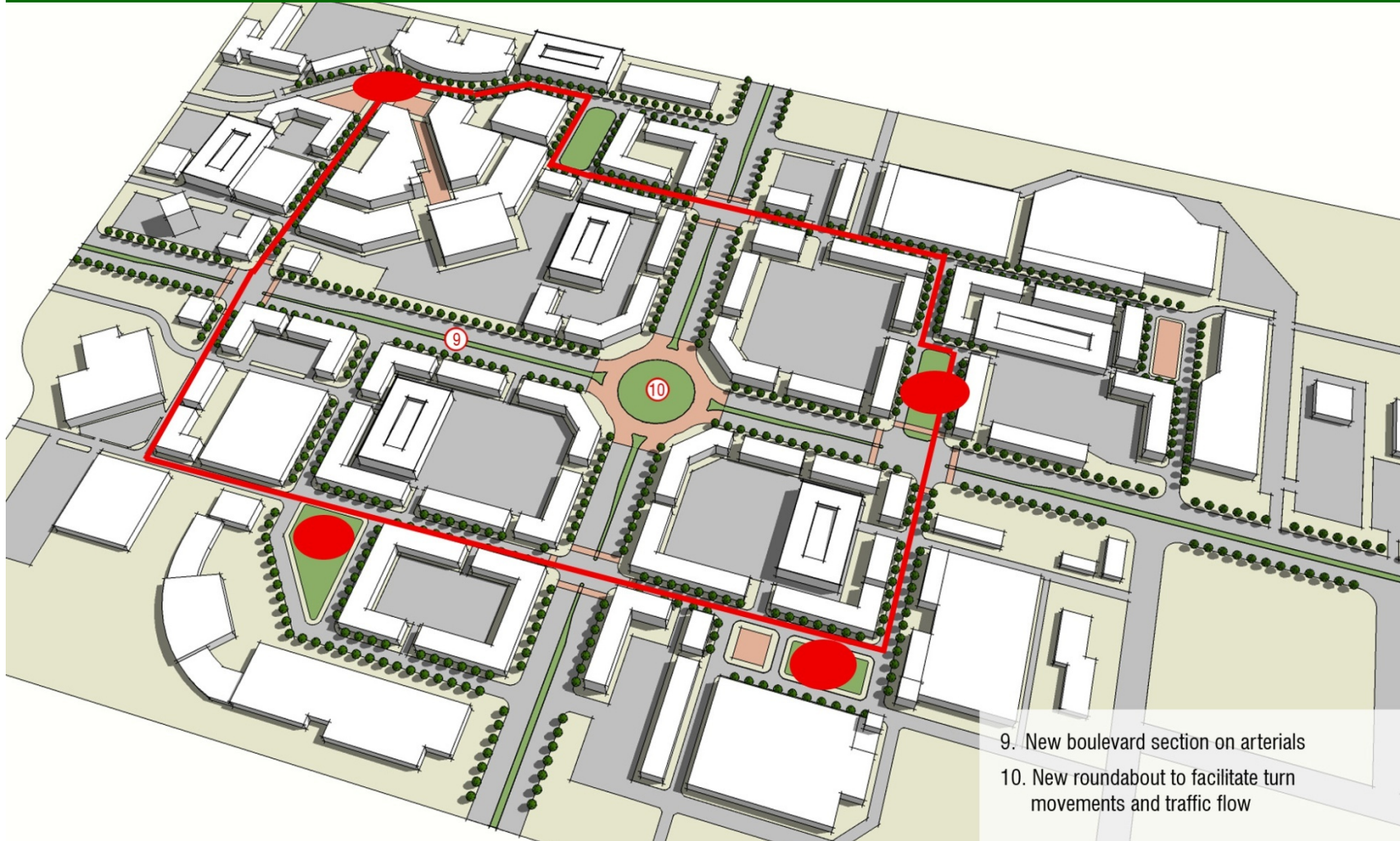


Regional Mixed-Use Center: Phase 2 Redevelopment



Phase 2 continues this process, while introducing additional buildings in a more compact and defined urban form, which may include structured parking as development intensity increases.

Regional Mixed-Use Center: Phase 3 Redevelopment



- 9. New boulevard section on arterials
- 10. New roundabout to facilitate turn movements and traffic flow

Phase 3 completes the transformation by creating a more walkable environment along the arterial roads themselves and within the boundaries of this newly articulated regional mixed-use center. This alternative includes a roundabout to facilitate turn movements aided by enhanced pacing of traffic flow created by the signal timing of the new secondary road network. New pedestrian connections (red lines) are provided between the four centers (red circles).



## COMMUNITY MIXED-USE CENTERS



*Most existing Community Activity Centers include primarily retail and office uses. Over time, these centers should evolve to include a more varied and compact mix of uses, including residential.*

Community mixed-use centers are dynamic, integrated development areas that serve the needs of a group of proximate neighborhoods or an entire community. Each community mixed-use center is a destination that may include a grocery store or other commercial anchors and a mix of compact residential opportunities, offices, and services.

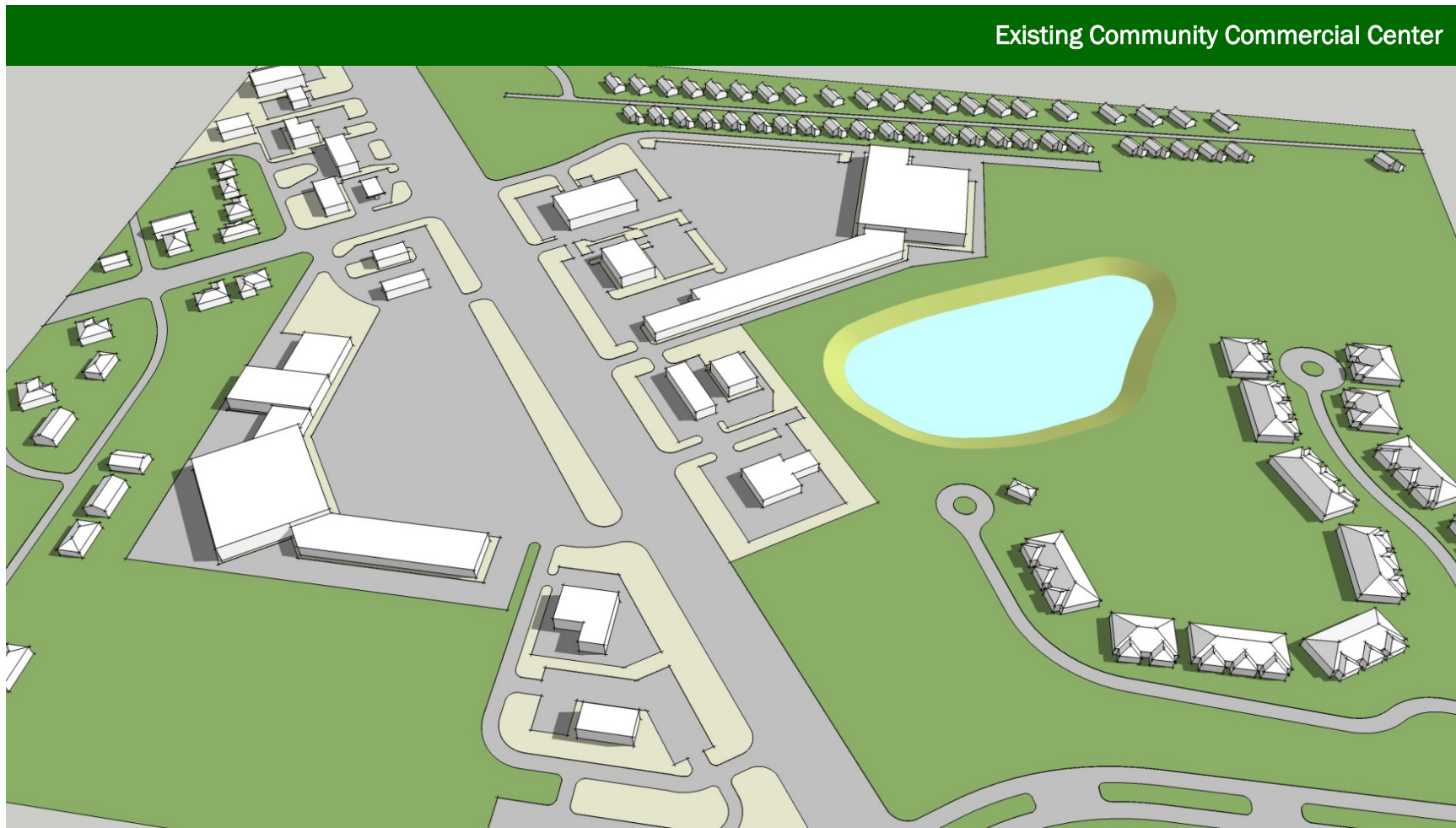
Community Mixed-Use Centers are most appropriately located where they may be served by existing and planned multi-modal transportation. While the mix of uses in most of Lee County's community activity centers today is typically limited to retail and office uses, they should evolve to a more varied mix of uses that

include a wide variety of residential units as they redevelop over time.

### Reinventing Community Commercial Centers

The images on the following pages illustrate ways in which existing community commercial centers can be revitalized over time through a series of strategic improvements. Pedestrian-friendly, signalized crossings, new infill mixed-use development, and enhanced connections to the local street network help create a transit-ready, mixed-use node that can support a broad range of local services and civic functions in a “park once and walk” environment.





Existing Community Commercial Center

*The example above illustrates two existing centers located on opposite sides of a busy arterial roadway define a Community Center type. Anchored by a grocery and junior department store, this typical Community Center bridges the gap between the smaller, neighborhood specific centers and regional centers.*



The above example illustrates how the two centers can be tied together with a pedestrian-friendly, signalized crossing, new infill mixed-use development, and enhanced connections to the local street network help create a transit-ready, mixed-use node that can support a broad range of local services and civic functions in a “park once and walk” environment.

## NEIGHBORHOOD MIXED-USE CENTERS



*Neighborhood mixed-use centers are characterized by their compact scale and pedestrian-friendly form that encourages pedestrian access from adjacent neighborhoods. This example demonstrates how the adaptive reuse of historic homes and structures can be successfully incorporated as part of a center.*

Neighborhood mixed-use centers are intended to serve one or more neighborhoods and are characterized by small-scale retail and services as well as a variety of housing opportunities. These mixed-use centers are characterized by a compact scale and pedestrian-friendly form that encourages pedestrian access from adjacent neighborhoods.

Neighborhood mixed-use centers may be located at the edge of a neighborhood or integrated within it. The actual mix of uses is varied and may include restaurants, coffee shops, offices, small-scale retail shops, and a range of residential uses. Residential options may include attached, single-family units, garden apartments, and patio homes, apartments or condominium units that are above ground-

floor retail uses, and live-work units. The mix of primary and secondary uses will vary in each center based on adjacent uses, location, and access. The adaptive reuse of existing residences or historic structures within the center can be an effective way to incorporate new offices, shops, or restaurants while preserving the unique character and scale of the neighborhood.

### Transforming Neighborhood Centers

The images on the following pages demonstrate how underutilized strip commercial development can be transformed into place-based neighborhood centers embedded in a neighborhood fabric. Revitalized centers incorporate enhanced pedestrian connections and a broader mix of uses along with local civic functions such as schools, libraries, and other facilities.

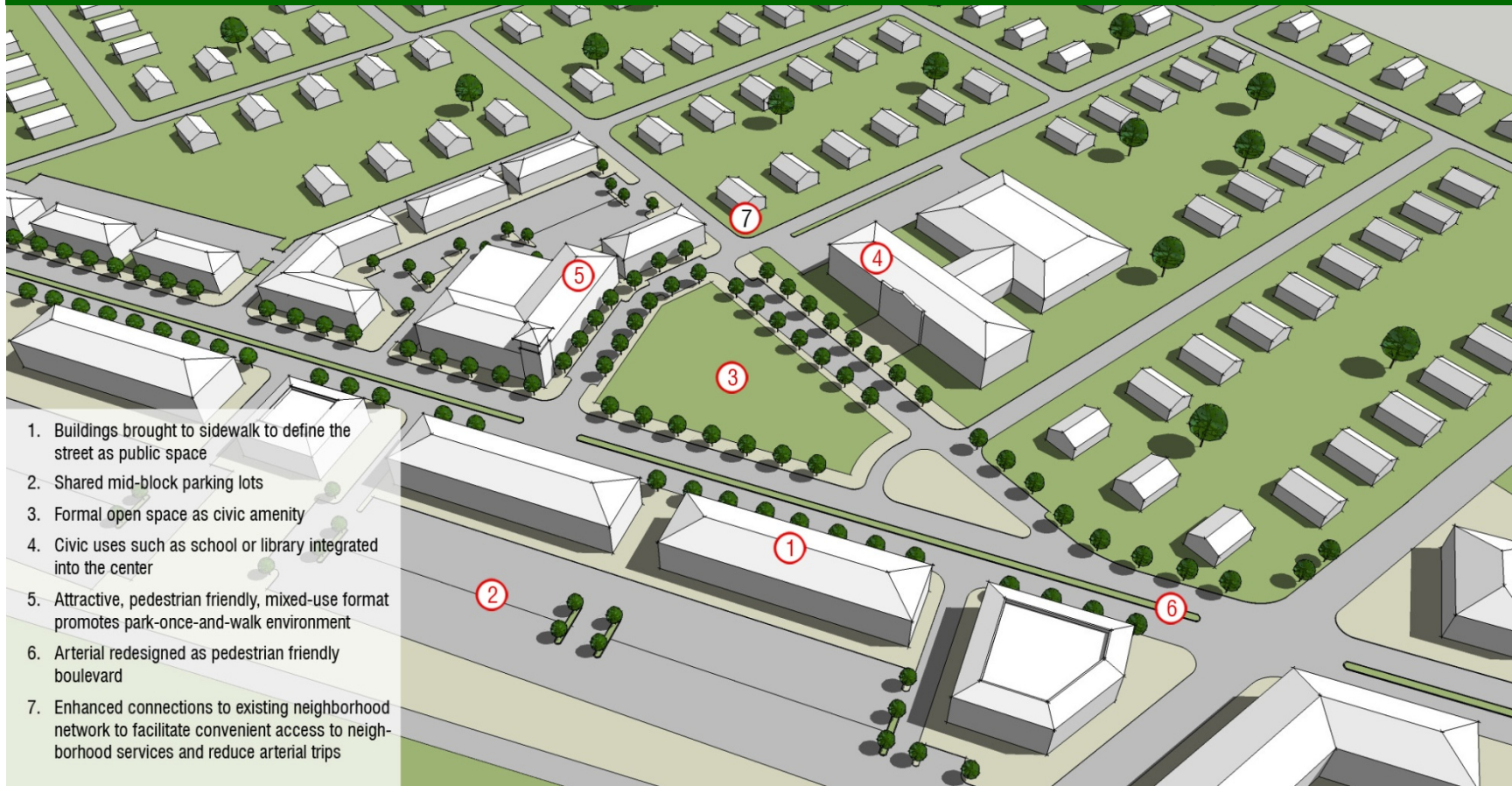


Existing Neighborhood Strip Commercial Centers



*The example above illustrates existing, underutilized neighborhood centers characterized by the predominance of surface parking, limited pedestrian connectivity with the adjacent neighborhood, lack of landscaping, buildings set back from the street, and overall auto-oriented appearance.*

Neighborhood Centers Transformed



The example above illustrates how strip centers located along a major roadway in a neighborhood context can be redesigned to better integrate with the adjacent residential areas and create a park once and shop environment that better facilitates access within the center. The original awkward street alignment provides the basis for an attractive park facing the commercial frontage. Moving the bulk of the parking to the rear of buildings creates an enhanced pedestrian environment to encourage walking and bicycling and to support transit.



## RURAL MIXED-USE CENTERS



*Rural mixed-use centers are characterized by their compact scale and pedestrian-friendly form. This example illustrates a small-scale main street and a central green that serves as a gathering place for community events.*

Rural mixed-use centers are intended to provide the services and residential resources needed to serve needs of the rural areas and environmental resources areas. These mixed-use centers are characterized by a compact rural scale and pedestrian-friendly form that provides an energy-efficient land use pattern. The actual mix of uses in rural mixed-use centers will vary in response to the needs of the surrounding rural area, its residents, businesses, visitors, and tourists. These centers may include small-scale grocers, restaurants, coffee shops, offices, retail shops, and personal services that address the needs of the rural community, as well as a

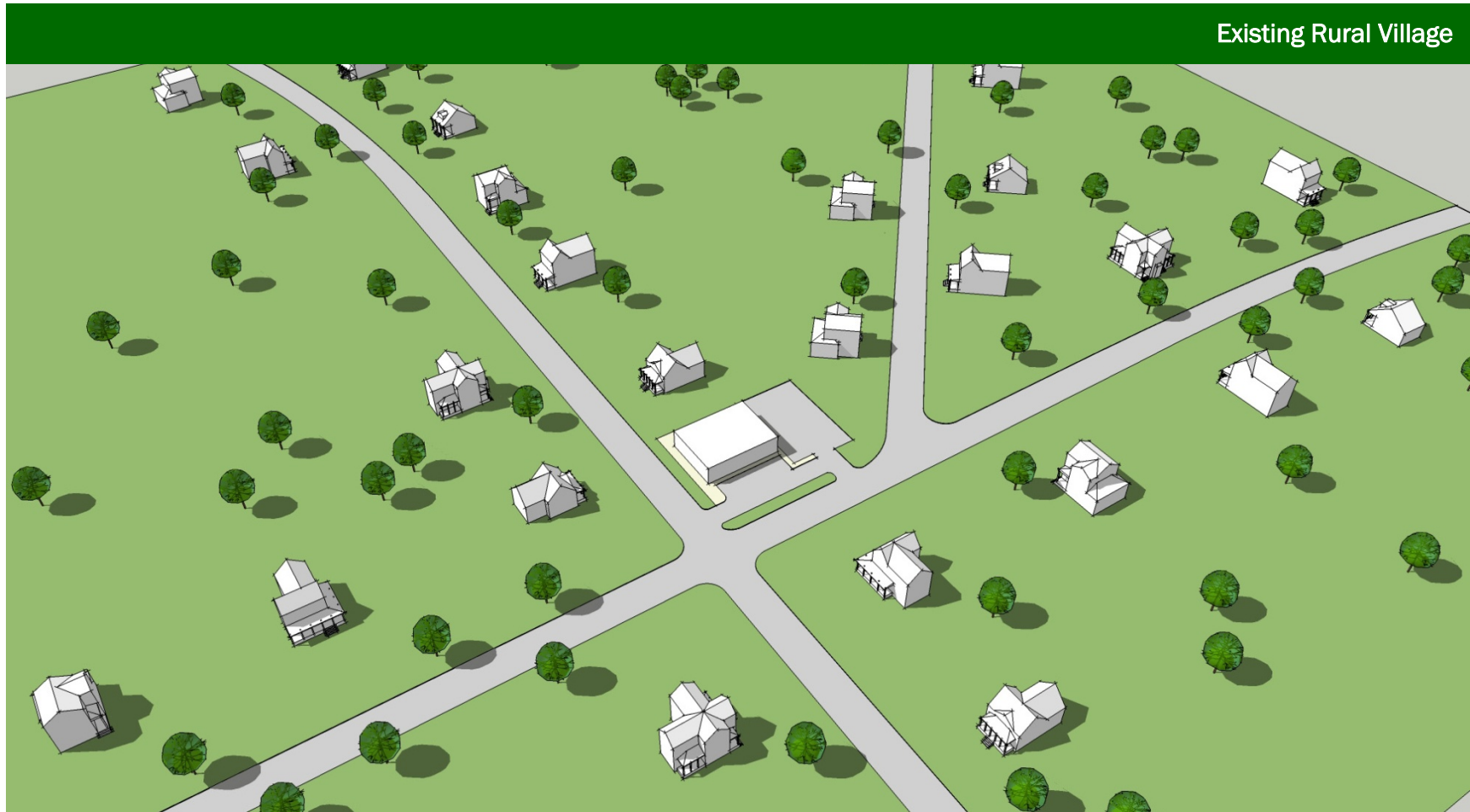
range of appropriately scaled residential uses. The adaptive reuse of existing residences or historic structures within the center can be an effective way to incorporate new offices, shops, or restaurants while preserving the unique character and scale of the neighborhood.

The presence of rural mixed-use centers will reduce the need for rural residents to travel longer distances to meet their daily needs, thereby reducing per capita energy use for transportation, housing, and infrastructure.

### Alternatives Approaches to Commercial Development

- In an effort to provide enhanced locally-serving retail in remote, low-density parts of the county, the rural mixed-use center is intended to provide an alternative to strip commercial models and provide opportunities for the integration of limited commercial services that meet the daily needs of local residents and serve as a community gathering space.
- The images on the following pages illustrate a strip commercial development in a rural area and an alternative approach—the rural mixed-use center. The rural mixed-use center incorporates traditional single- and mixed-use rural building types that support commercial enterprises in a more compact and cohesive pattern. A small park provides an appropriate setting for a neighborhood meeting house or other community serving civic amenity.





*Existing rural village served by limited, auto-oriented strip commercial services. Layout and design lacks a visual or physical connection to the character of the surrounding village.*

Alternative: Rural Mixed-Use Center



1. Small scale neighborhood serving commercial uses in village center
2. Civic space at the center of the village defines community
3. Buildings line street to create pleasant pedestrian environment
4. Walkable blocks integrated into existing street network
5. Roads retain rural character outside village center

*As an alternative to the conventional suburban convenience store, the rural mixed-use village combines traditional-looking single- and mixed-use rural building types in a compact, pedestrian-friendly environment. A small park provides an appropriate setting for a neighborhood meeting house or other community serving civic amenity.*

## MIXED-USE INFILL/REDEVELOPMENT CORRIDOR



*Through infill and redevelopment, existing automobile-oriented commercial corridors in the county can be transformed over time into walkable, mixed-use places.*

The mixed-use infill/redevelopment corridor designation and corridor form principles are intended to promote the revitalization of existing strip commercial centers in Lee County over time. Through infill and redevelopment, a more compact, pedestrian and transit-oriented pattern of development will be established along the county’s major transportation corridors. Mixed-use infill / redevelopment corridors provide enhanced pedestrian, bicycle, transit, and automobile connections between mixed-use centers, neighborhoods, and environmental resource areas. In addition to the general mixed-use form principles, the following principles unique to corridor locations apply:

## Corridor Form Principles

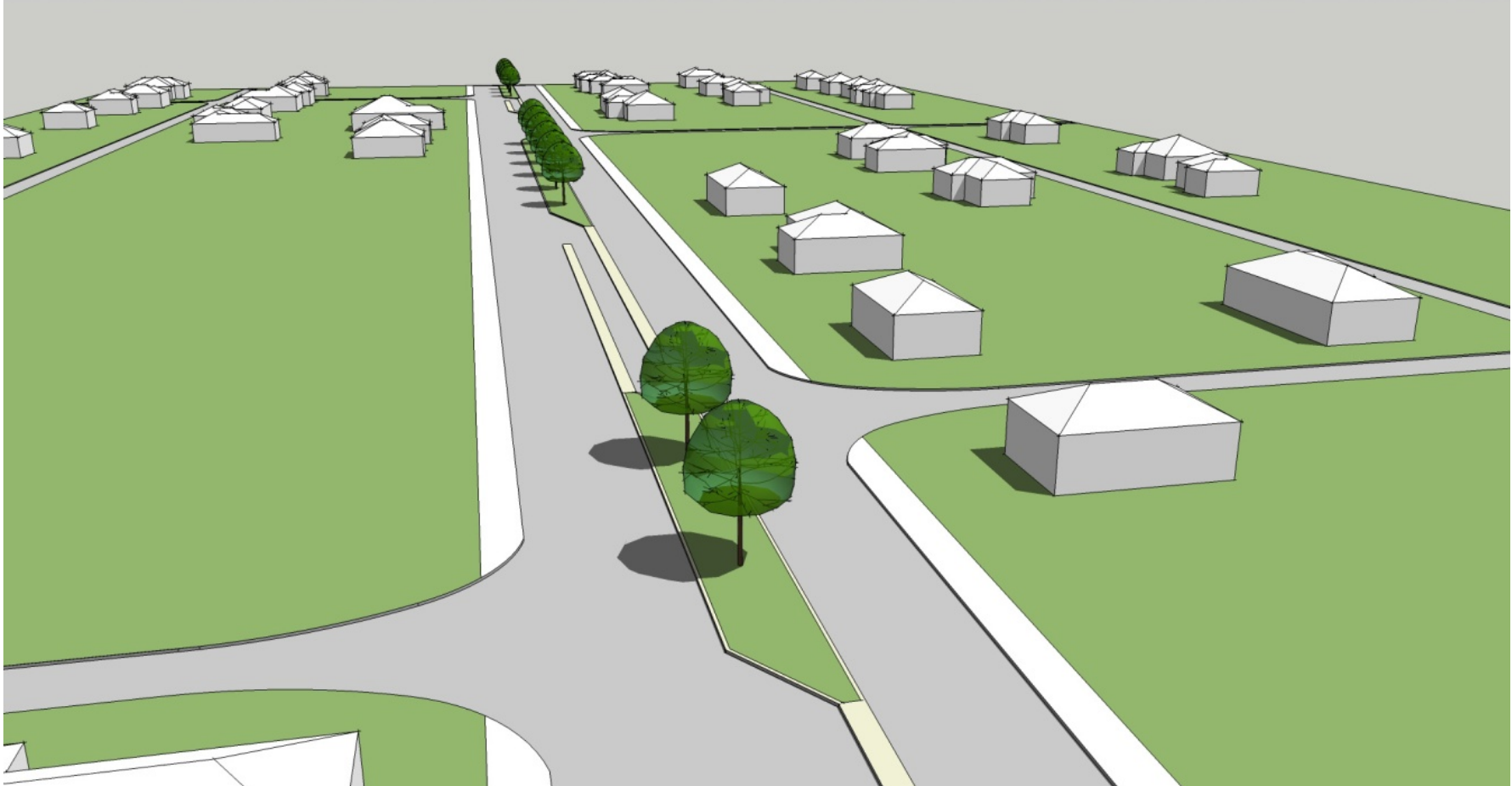
- Support the adaptive reuse of existing buildings to add upper floors of housing and offices where structurally feasible.
- Infill large surface parking lots with new buildings at the street edge to accommodate new uses and development intensity and to frame the corridor and site entrances.
- Screen existing surface parking from the corridor using landscaping and buildings.
- Enhance and redevelop gateway street frontages as “complete streets.”
- Establish new pedestrian connections between mid-block corridor development and adjacent neighborhoods to enhance access to multi-modal transportation opportunities and mixed-use centers.
- Concentrate vehicular access points to reduce curb cuts, driveways, and other potential conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles.
- Renovate existing strip commercial development when infill and redevelopment are not practical to enhance the appearance of the corridor and engage the streets.

### Redeveloping Corridors

Strip commercial corridors are a ubiquitous aspect of Lee County. The revitalization and/or redevelopment of these corridors will occur incrementally over time. The images on the following pages illustrate how targeted public and private investment can help jump start revitalization efforts and result in a more compact and sustainable pattern of development over time.

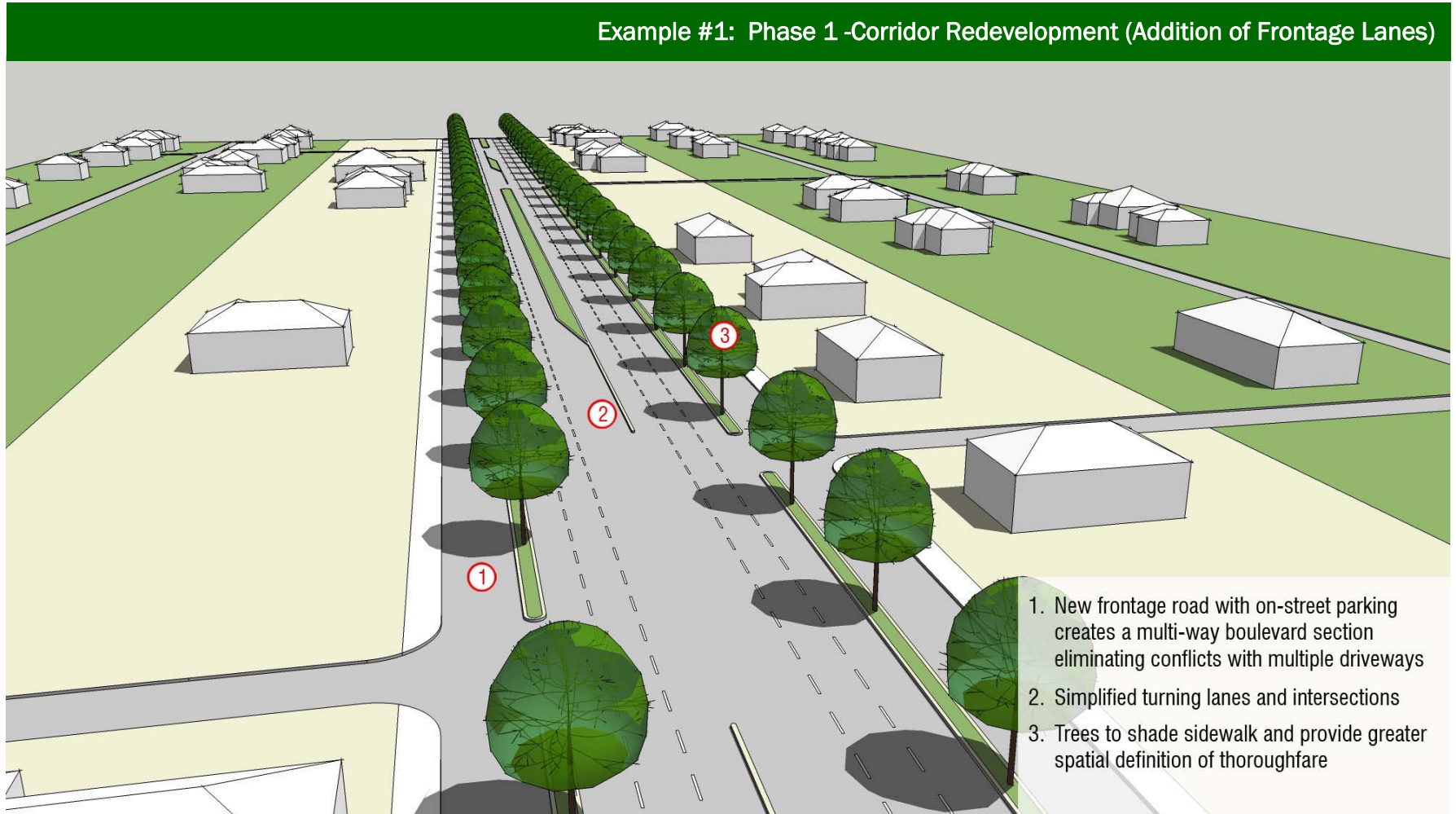


Example #1: Corridor Redevelopment (Existing)



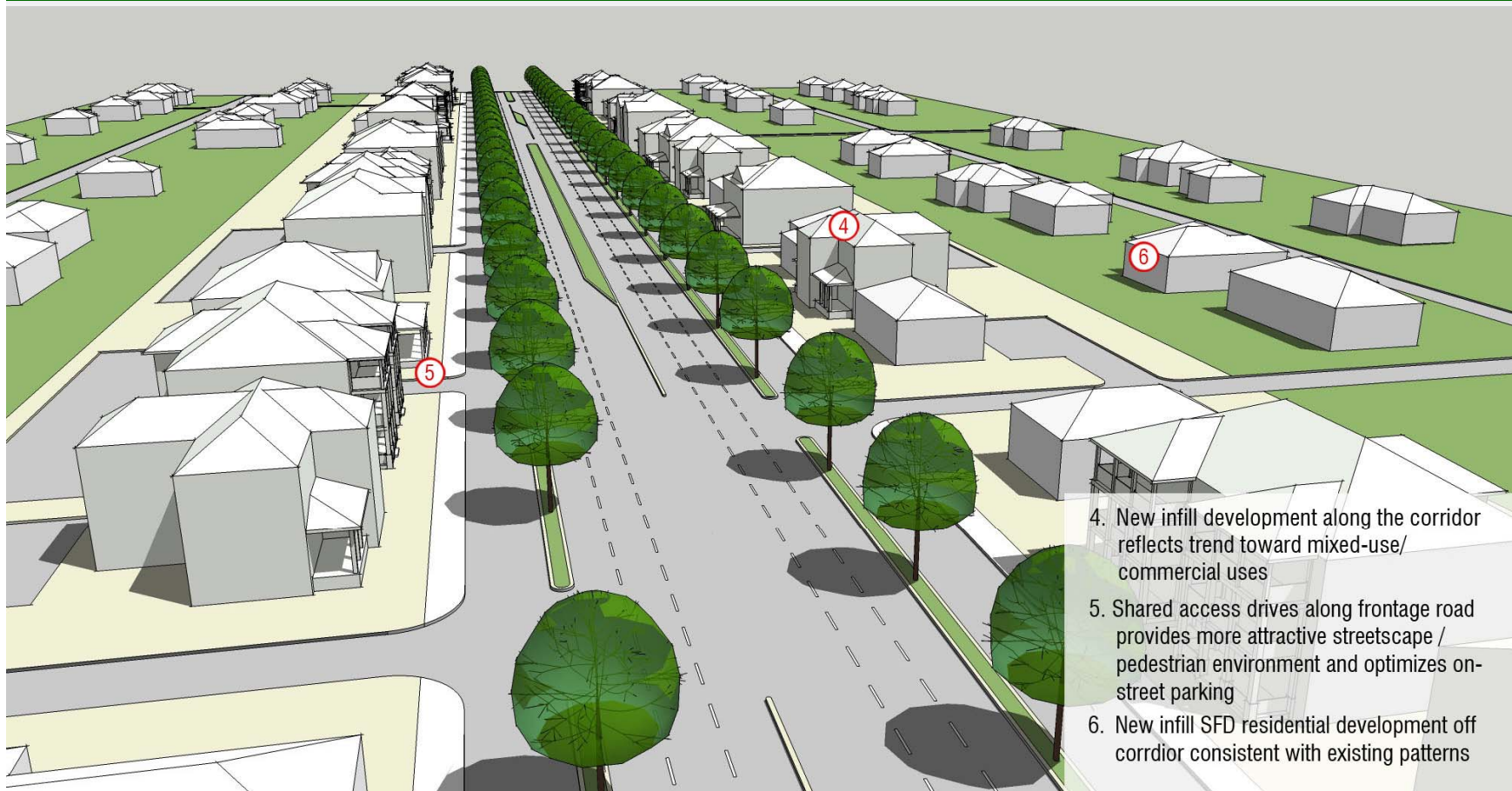
*Example #1: Corridor Redevelopment: This example is intended to address an emergent trend whereby heavy traffic flows have marginalized the original residential function of this roadway, encouraging its transformation into a commercial corridor.*

Example #1: Phase 1 -Corridor Redevelopment (Addition of Frontage Lanes)



*Example #1: Phase 1 - the addition of frontage lanes help address local access control issues, while providing a more accommodating setting for infill flex-development with on-street parking and safe bike and pedestrian-friendly facilities.*

Example #1: Phase 2 Corridor Redevelopment (Building Infill)

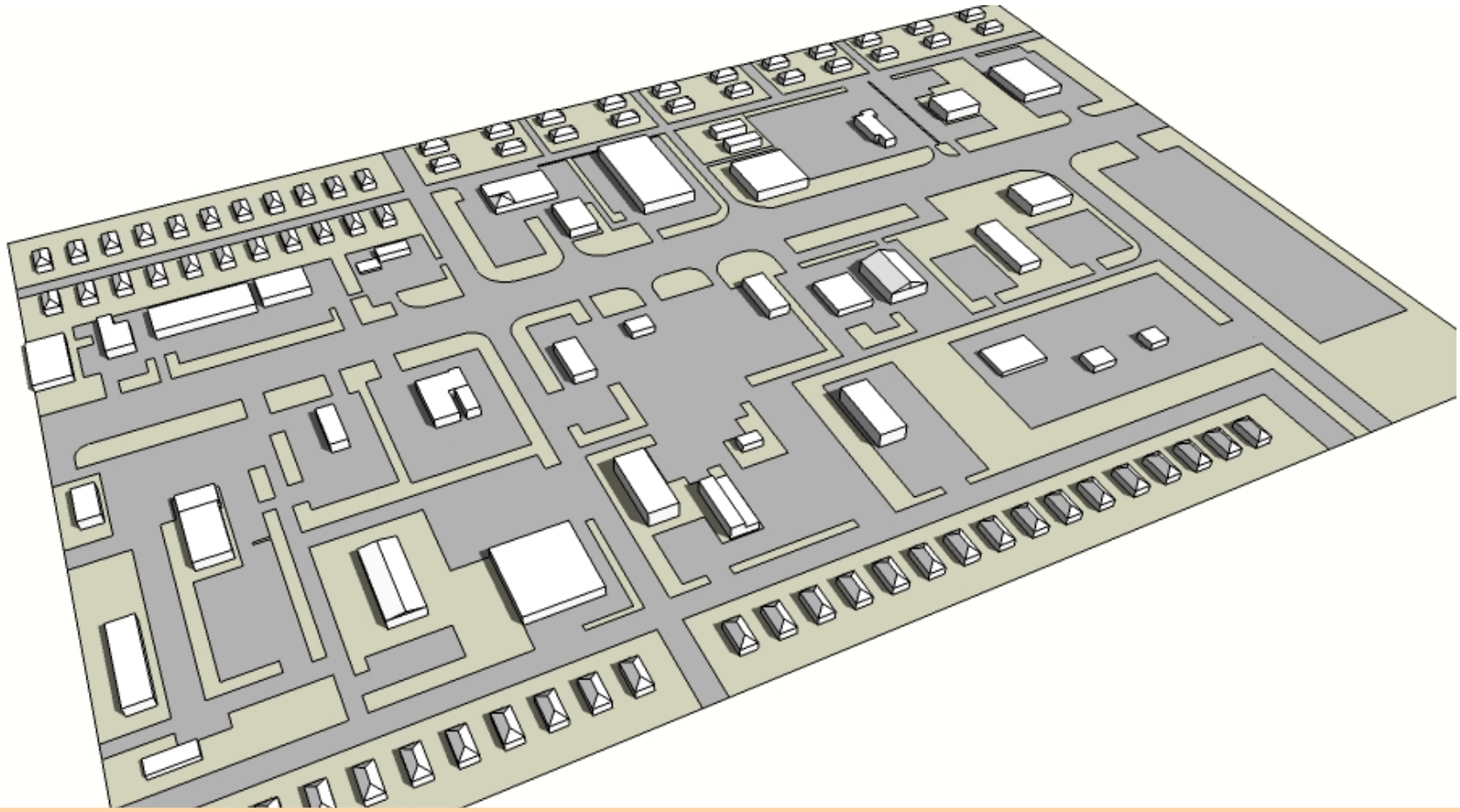


- 4. New infill development along the corridor reflects trend toward mixed-use/commercial uses
- 5. Shared access drives along frontage road provides more attractive streetscape / pedestrian environment and optimizes on-street parking
- 6. New infill SFD residential development off corridor consistent with existing patterns

*Example #1: Phase 2 –In response to enhanced access and mobility along the corridor and streetscape enhancements, infill and redevelopment begin to occur. As the corridor evolves into a more unified and desirable destination for the community, infill residential begins to occur in the adjacent neighborhoods to increase housing choices within walking distance of restaurants, shops, and other services.*



Example #2: Strip Commercial Center (Existing)



*Example #2: Existing*—This example looks at conceptual redevelopment of a traditional strip commercial corridor. The existing corridor is shown at right. The graphics on the following pages illustrate how the corridor could be redeveloped incrementally over time.

Example #2: Strip Commercial Center (Phase 1 Corridor Redevelopment—Market-Driven Infill)



1. Piecemeal infill development enables market-driven implementation

Example #2: Phase 1- During Phase 1 Corridor Redevelopment, market-driven infill could begin to fill in the physical gaps between existing businesses.



Example #2: Strip Commercial Center (Phase 2 Corridor Redevelopment: Mixed-Use, Pedestrian-Friendly Design)



- 2. Buildings brought to sidewalk to define the street as public space
- 3. Access to parking from side streets to minimize arterial curbs cuts
- 4. Shared mid-block parking lots
- 5. Mix of uses including a variety of residential types, new infill residential provides transition to existing SFD neighborhoods
- 6. Formal open space as civic amenity
- 7. Pedestrian friendly crossings at major intersections and transit stops
- 8. Interconnected street network with a hierarchy of streets facilitates internal trip capture, reducing congestion on arterial

*Example #2: Phase 2- This example illustrates long- term redevelopment goals to create a series of commercial blocks that provide for better pedestrian access, open up opportunities for mixed-use development, and provide a green space civic amenity. The corridor is redesigned to better handle traffic through fewer curb cuts and internal access and parking areas. The first tier collector street, located at the bottom of the graphic, is redeveloped as a transitional element to better harmonize with existing residential neighborhoods abutting the corridor. This road captures local trips within the neighborhood structure.*



## Sustainable Policy Directions for Lee Plan

Like many communities in Florida and across the country, Lee County is embracing sustainability as a framework for creating more efficient government operations and transforming the county’s approach to all aspects of planning. In the context of New Horizon 2035 process, the term “sustainability” means the ability of the county and its residents to meet the needs of the present population while ensuring that future generations have the same or better opportunities. This entails many traditional aspects of planning such as development patterns, environmental resources, housing, and transportation, as well as a wide variety of other topics such as community health and well-being, social equity, energy use and efficiency, and economic resilience and vitality. It is characterized by strategies to promote living within the county’s inherent limits, and an understanding of the interconnections among economy, society, and environmental conditions.

This subsection provides an overview of current sustainability policies that can be continued and enhanced as well as new ways that Lee County can become more sustainable through new initiatives. These new directions emerged from input received from members of the community, intergovernmental partners, county staff, and others during the visioning phase of the New Horizon 2035 process:

Sustainability policies and programs are organized under five topics:

- Resource Conservation
- Development Patterns/Transportation
- Economic Diversity
- Community Health, Safety, and Welfare
- Coastal Resilience

Many of the topics identified in this section are addressed as potential revisions to the Lee Plan as part of the *Recommendations for EAR-Based Amendments* contained in Chapter 4 of this document.

## RESOURCE CONSERVATION



Lee County has been very successful in its efforts to establish and implement programs and policies to protect and conserve its natural resources.

### Overview

Lee County has had strong programs and policies in place to protect and conserve natural resources for many years. The Lee Plan has policies that focus on conservation and coastal management, as well as water resources. Topics that are addressed in this EAR as part of the county’s focus on sustainability and natural resources include

## 2 | Vision Framework: A Sustainable Planning Approach

land conservation, water resources, energy conservation, land conservation, and waste reduction/recycling.



Lee County has established numerous programs to help protect and conserve lands with natural resource value, through density transfers and/or other measures.

### Land Conservation

#### CURRENT DIRECTIONS

The county has a number of programs in place to help protect and conserve lands with natural resource value. These include the Conservation 20/20 public land acquisition program; the Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed (CREW); the county's Transfer of Development Rights program that provides for the private purchase of density rights from coastal and other environmentally sensitive areas to areas more appropriate for developments, and through regulations that protect natural resources, such as wetlands,

uplands, floodplains, endangered and listed species habitat, and coastal areas.

#### NEW DIRECTIONS

New approaches to land conservation that the county may consider during the Lee Plan update process to achieve a more sustainable future include the following:

- Policies that recognize the linkage between land conservation and greenhouse gas reduction and encourage project siting and design to minimize environmental impacts.
- Strengthen policies and regulations that protect mangroves and other important natural features.
- Address the restoration of county-owned and managed conservation and mitigation lands to their most sustainable and beneficial condition.

### Water Resources

#### CURRENT DIRECTIONS

Management of the county's water supplies is a critical goal for the county. The Lee Plan recognizes the importance of both surface and groundwater resources, and the county is in the process of adopting a new Integrated Water Resources Master Plan that will include new water conservation measures, such as water supply alternatives and establishment of water reuse districts. The county also uses water management controls, such as year-round water restrictions, to limit irrigation with potable water and provide exemptions for alternative irrigation measures to better use potable water supplies.

Lee County Extension promotes the Florida Friendly Landscapes for new construction and Florida Yards and Neighborhoods programs to encourage native planting practices, water-saving irrigation methods, and reductions in stormwater runoff on privately-owned lands.



Lee County is taking many steps to manage its water supplies, ranging from the application of water management controls and conservation measures, and the adoption of a new Integrated Water Resources Master Plan.

### NEW DIRECTIONS

New approaches to water resources that the county may consider during the Lee Plan update process to achieve a more sustainable future include the following:

- Using Low Impact Development (LID) stormwater management techniques when developing public and private developments.
- Water reuse infrastructure in county facilities and private development.
- Water conserving features in private development and public facilities.

## Energy Conservation

### CURRENT DIRECTIONS

Focusing on energy conservation through public sector initiatives, Lee County is reducing energy consumption and promoting the use of alternative forms of energy to better use local resources.

The Facilities Management and Fleet Management departments conduct energy audits and conduct ongoing review of energy efficiency technologies for public facilities and fleets. In order to promote this new approach, Fleet Management has established a goal that 10% of county's fleet will use alternative fuels.

The county's Energy/Resource Management Plan for county-owned or leased properties serves to lower costs and improve energy/resource management through development of plans that set objectives and targets for managing energy and other resources. When practicable, green building techniques and standards such as the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED development standards are to be used when developing new public facilities.

The county is also working with private sector organizations to promote the use and generation of alternative forms of energy. Lee County Extension developed an Alternative Energy Study that includes specific recommendations to advance alternative energy production and use in the county. The agency also works with local farmers to convert from traditional crops to renewable energy crops and provides technical assistance to improve energy efficiency for farming and aquaculture practices.

The county has entered into a public-private partnership to develop local biodiesel fuel production plant. Federal Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant funding has been awarded to the county to support the biodiesel plant initiative and develop other sustainable infrastructure at county facilities.



## 2 | Vision Framework: A Sustainable Planning Approach

The county continues to support renewable energy research and development as a target industry through the county's economic incentives programs that provide financial support to various pilot projects.

### NEW DIRECTIONS



Lee County is working to reduce energy consumption in its facilities and day-to-day operations and to promote energy conservation in the community as a whole through its policies and regulations.

New approaches to energy conservation that the county may consider during the Lee Plan update process to achieve a more sustainable future include the following:

- Evaluate county ordinances to require and encourage green building practices that promote energy conservation and efficiency for public and private development.
- Evaluate and develop county fleet infrastructure to support alternative fuel vehicles.

- Identify and remove barriers to the reduction of net energy use in new construction, and support the adoption of energy efficiency updates to the Florida Building Code.

## Waste Reduction / Recycling

### CURRENT DIRECTIONS

Lee County has been the state's top county for recycling success, recycling 35-42% of its solid waste for over 12 years. The county provides a variety of waste reduction programs: a voluntary residential recycling program, a mandatory commercial recycling program for operational and construction waste, a chemical waste turn in program, electronics item collection, a vegetative debris program (mulch), OrganicLee Compost which processes and sells compost at the Hendry/Lee Landfill, and a waste to energy plant that converts solid waste to a local energy source.

Waste reduction extends beyond recycling. The county's Fleet Management division achieves 100% non-generating status for hazardous waste and leads an ongoing program to evaluate the cost of maintenance versus replacement cost of vehicles.

The county has also established an Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Policy that encourages the procurement of recycled and other environmentally preferred products when new products are necessary.

### NEW DIRECTIONS

New approaches to waste management and reduction that the county may consider during the Lee Plan update process to achieve a more sustainable future include the following:



*In addition to its highly successful recycling program, Lee County provides a variety of other waste reduction programs.*

- Evaluate policies and land development regulation standards to ensure the right to allow composting on private lots.
- Continue to enhance programs and educational materials to promote waste reduction and recycling practices.
- Evaluate the establishment of county-wide renewable energy standards and benchmarks to support the use of alternative fuels.

## DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS/TRANSPORTATION

### Overview

The last several decades have seen the emergence of approaches to development that emphasize different approaches to land use and development patterns. Some of these, such as traditional neighborhood development, transit-oriented development, complete

streets, and conservation subdivisions, have been applied in Lee County or elsewhere in southwest Florida. Sustainable development represents a convergence of these ideas – compact, walkable development patterns, with conservation of high-value natural resources – but takes these concepts a step further by integrating green principles into every aspect of planning for development.

The pattern and form of land uses and related transportation networks in Lee County play a large role in the county's ability to meet its sustainability goals. While Lee County has many established initiatives aimed at creating a more livable environment through sustainable land use and transportation approaches, there are many new opportunities identified in this EAR that will help shape a new future direction for the county. The vision contained earlier in this chapter describes a new land use framework that fosters and promotes a more efficient and compact development form that provides a high quality of life for its residents; improves connections between destinations for all modes of travel and reduces congestion; protects and enhances important natural resources; reduces greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants, conserves energy; and maintains and enhances a distinct community character for the many communities throughout the county. This aspect of sustainability for Lee County focuses on the two primary aspects of its built environment; development patterns and transportation. Other topics, such as resource protection and energy conservation, are discussed elsewhere in this section.

### Development Patterns

#### CURRENT DIRECTIONS

As discussed in Chapter 3 of this EAR, the Lee Plan includes several policy directions that help to promote sustainable development patterns through encouraging mixed use development that encourages integrated site and building design. However, this EAR

## 2 | Vision Framework: A Sustainable Planning Approach

identifies a number of significant changes in policy directions that could lead to a more sustainable pattern of development in the future. These are summarized briefly below and discussed more fully in Chapter 4 of this EAR, Recommended Amendments.

### NEW DIRECTIONS

New approaches to land use and development patterns that the county may consider during the Lee Plan update process to achieve a more sustainable future include the following:

- Encourage compact development patterns to support cost-effective services and improve the resiliency of communities to climate change impacts.
- Promote mixed-use centers that promote livability, walkability and transit, and housing choices.
- Clarify development form standards to guide community character to reflect different needs and characteristics of urban, suburban, and rural areas.



*Encouraging the creation of more compact and walkable mixed-use centers is one of the ways in which the county plans to pursue the implementation of its sustainability goals.*

## Transportation

### CURRENT DIRECTIONS

LeeTran provides transit service and complementary amenities, such as park-and-ride lots and trolley service to beaches to reduce vehicle miles traveled and offer alternatives to private automobile travel. LeeTran’s commuter assistance program connects commuters interested in carpools and vanpools. The county also has plans to develop linear networks of greenways, blueways, bikeways, trails and sidewalks that provide connections between and internal to neighborhoods, commercial areas, employment centers, and public facilities. However, this EAR identifies a number of significant changes in policy directions that could lead to a more sustainable transportation system in the future. These are summarized briefly below and discussed more fully in Chapter 4 of this EAR, Recommended Amendments.

### NEW DIRECTIONS

New transportation approaches that the county may consider during the Lee Plan update process include the following:

- Increase the county’s focus on multi-modal systems that will support a more compact and sustainable development pattern.
- Strengthen linkages between land use and transportation decision-making and investments.
- Establish “complete street” policies that address retrofitting existing roads and development of new roads to include mobility features for transit, bicycles, pedestrians, and automobiles.
- Strengthen connections within and between neighborhoods and activity centers.
- Revise roadway infrastructure standards (i.e., landscaping, lighting, materials) to reduce energy use, reduce costs, reduce



heat island effects, and “green” the county’s transportation corridors.



Complete streets include mobility features for transit, bicycles, pedestrians, and automobiles.

## ECONOMIC DIVERSITY

### Overview

The recent economic downturn underscores the importance of economic health in overall community viability and success, and draws attention to the county’s role in job creation efforts and providing fiscal stability. The county has established policies to support expansion of its historically important tourism industry but also recognizes that more needs to be done to encourage a diverse economy that provides job opportunities, is based on partnerships and innovation, and seeks fiscal responsibility and transparency.

### Current Directions

The county will continue to collaborate with the Fort Myers Regional Partnership and Horizon Council to encourage expansion and retention of county’s existing economic base and recruitment of new industries.



Lee County has taken numerous steps to taken a sustainable approach to economic development through the protection of natural and cultural resources that are the foundation of the county’s competitive position.

### New Directions

New economic diversity approaches that the county may consider during the Lee Plan update process include the following:

## 2 | Vision Framework: A Sustainable Planning Approach

- Support implementation of the Climate Prosperity economic development strategy to promote energy efficiency, support green businesses, and develop a green industry workforce.
- Strengthen economic development partnerships with area educational institutions, area and regional economic development organizations, and private sector partners to better coordinate and support economic development efforts.
- Develop supporting policies and regulations to protect the county's fishing industry and to protect working waterfronts.
- Develop supporting policies and regulations to protect the county's agricultural industry and foster protection of working lands.
- Protect areas designated for economic development on the Future Land Use map (particularly primary industry and office jobs) from encroachment by incompatible land uses through strong policies that discourage plan amendments and rezonings for other uses; coordinate with utility service areas to plan for service to these areas.
- Explore strategies to assemble platted lots for future employment and business centers in strategic locations that are underserved, such as Lehigh Acres.
- Support the creation of businesses that are consistent with the county's sustainability policies and provide sustainable services and/or products.

## COMMUNITY HEALTH, SAFETY, AND WELFARE

### Overview

This topic focuses on Lee County being a safe and healthy place to live, work, learn, and play. Most comprehensive plans include some aspects of this topic related to community sustainability and well-

being, yet they are woven in as pieces of the plan elements and not directly addressed. The Lee Plan includes a housing element, but there are opportunities to broaden its scope to focus on sustainability issues as well as providing for a wider variety of housing choices to meet changing needs of the county's population. Other topics that are addressed in this EAR as part of the county's focus on sustainability and community health, safety, and welfare include local food production and access to government.

### Housing



*Lee County has established policies to promote the development of an affordable and diverse housing market that meets the needs of a range of households, from young families to seniors.*

### CURRENT DIRECTIONS

Sustainability in planning supports a vision for the county that provides opportunities for residents to live in safe, habitable, and accessible housing. Lee County has established policies to promote the development of an affordable and diverse housing market that meets the needs of a range of households, from young families to seniors. Promoting the conservation of existing housing is also an important part of this policy approach. Another important consideration is the ability of residents to afford to remain in their housing, which is a growing challenge as maintenance and energy costs increase. The county provides a Weather Assistance Program to low to moderate income households that helps these households make energy improvements to reduce household costs and modernize home energy systems.

### NEW DIRECTIONS

New housing approaches that the county may consider during the Lee Plan update process include the following:

- Amendments to land development ordinances to incorporate universal design strategies that allow residents to age in place.
- Policies that encourage a wide variety of housing types in new housing and mixed-use developments to meet the needs of a changing population.
- Policies to encourage the development of compact and walkable communities to promote physical activity.

### Local Food Production

#### CURRENT DIRECTIONS

Enhancing local food production not only helps to support the local agricultural economy, but provides many other benefits, such as providing a more direct path for residents to purchase healthy foods at local markets and vendors, reducing transportation and other food

production costs, and creating a sense of stewardship in the community as residents gain an understanding of the link between land and water resources and their impact on food production.

Through the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences and Marine Extension Service, the county is providing technical assistance and educational programs for local food production and improving local yields. In addition, the Lee County Extension service offers urban farming courses to promote local gardening efforts. The county has also recently adopted Land Development Code provisions that support community gardens.



*Through the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences and Marine Extension Service, Lee County is providing technical assistance and educational programs for local food production and improving local yields.*



## 2 | Vision Framework: A Sustainable Planning Approach

### NEW DIRECTIONS

New approaches to support local food production that the county may consider during the Lee Plan update process include the following:

- Additional supporting policies to promote access to locally grown food through development of community gardens within existing and newly developed neighborhoods, and support for small scale urban agriculture, such as local produce stands.
- Policies and land development regulations to strengthen the local food system to promote sale of local foods directly to customers through farmers markets and other farm-to-table opportunities, decrease food deserts, and promote economic growth.

### Government

#### CURRENT DIRECTIONS

Lee County is committed to providing its citizens with easy access to government facilities and services. Many county services are provided online to enhance public access, promote transparency, and to reduce the need for travel to public offices. The county also offers regional service locations for libraries, parks, schools, and tax collection.

#### NEW DIRECTIONS

New approaches to support better access to government services that the county may consider during the Lee Plan update process include the following:

- Increase online access to county services for a larger number of county operations, including electronic submittal processes to improve service delivery and reduce resource use.



*In accordance with state mandates, Lee County has worked to protect its critical coastal resources, such as Estero Bay.*

- Create an online county information portal for easy access to current data, reports, and county updates.
- Establish a sustainability website to serve as a resource to the community.

### COASTAL RESILIENCE

#### CURRENT DIRECTIONS

In accordance with state directives, Lee County has worked to protect its critical coastal resources, such as limiting development of public infrastructure on the outer islands. The county, in partnership with the Southwest Regional Planning Council has developed a Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment to address climate change

impacts and provide recommendations to address future impacts before they occur.

### **NEW DIRECTIONS**

Efforts to protect coastal resources can be further enhanced through sustainability policies that:

- Evaluate current coastal high hazard area regulations to determine if stronger standards are needed.
- Evaluate land development regulations to ensure that development standards applied in coastal areas are appropriate for application within the coastal context, including outer islands, mangrove stands, and marshes.
- Consider a vulnerability assessment and action plan to prepare for and adapt to projected impacts of climate change such as more intense coastal storms; sea level rise; and associated flooding and coastal erosion.

### **Summary**

The Vision Framework emerged from extensive discussions with the community, county stakeholders and staff, and others about the four Critical Community Issues: Livability, Strong Connections, Community Character, and Sustainability. The Vision Framework provides the policy direction necessary to achieve Lee County's vision for the future. A detailed discussion of the relationship between the Vision Framework and each of the Critical Community Issues is provided in Chapter 3.