

TOWN CENTER MASTER PLAN

Designer's Notes

Winter Springs, Florida



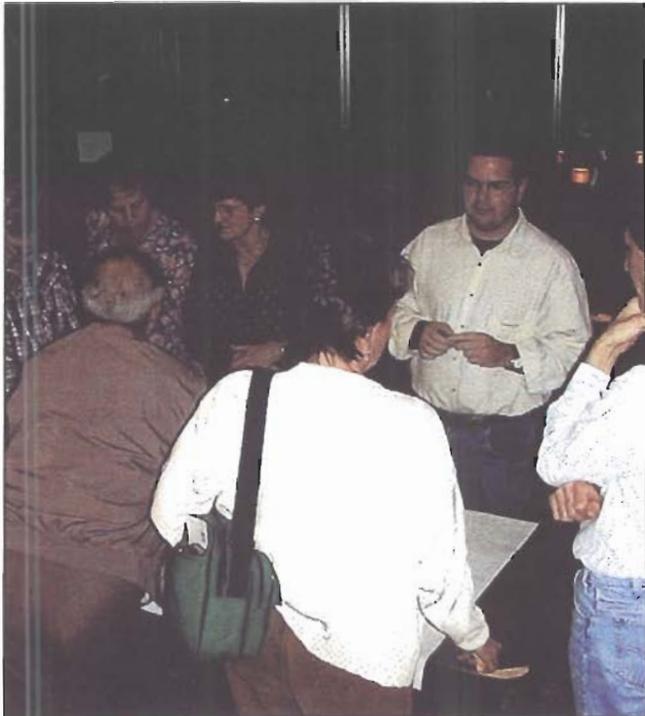
DOVER, KOHL & PARTNERS
town planning

Gibbs Planning Group, Inc.

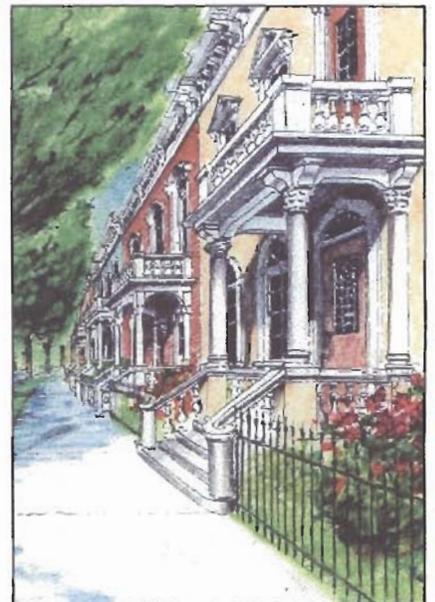
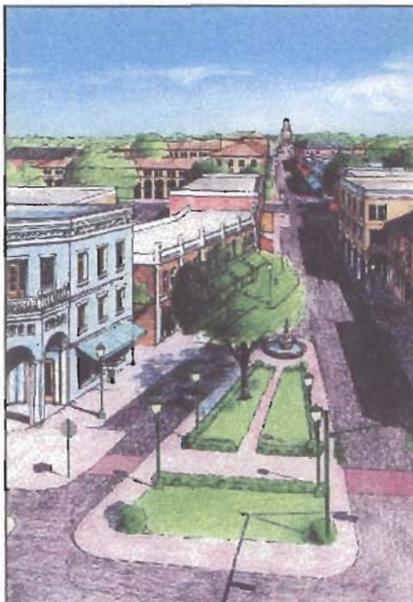
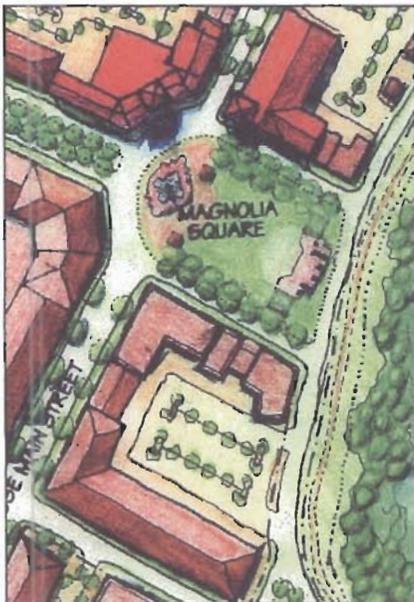
Michael Design Associates, Inc.

March 23, 1998

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The Heart of Winter Springs

A traditional Town Center is the physical place where many basic needs of citizens are conveniently and tightly focused: shopping, working, governance, being entertained, dwelling, and the arts all happen together in a town center because it is *pragmatic* to do so.

But the motivation to create a town center runs deeper (and the payoff much greater) than mere convenience. *Human settlements have centers because human society craves contact and connectedness.* A proper town center is a symbol of the community, a reflection of **its** values and aspirations. Winter Springs citizens gave clear instruction to the designers: the Town Center here is to capture the young **city's** imagination and project an image of its **bright** future.

Not surprisingly, the urge to create such places in maturing suburbs is now a nationwide phenomenon. Cities are **incomplete** (and they do not feel or function like healthy cities) without centers, and that's why the town center will make Winter Springs a better place to live. For example, today **local citizens travel far** to find many things they will find **here**, once the main shopping street is started. Likewise, the new office locations will create alternatives to the miserable commutes many professional business owners endure today. **Given** the city's maturing population, an urbane **residence** in the **town** center will also be ideal for **empty-nesters who would enjoy**, say, easy walks to a **restaurant**.

If well designed, the town center **is a place where** fond memories are born and **the** bonds of

civil society are forged, and, not coincidentally, it tends to become the most valuable real estate. Town centers are roots of the local and regional economy, and are key to a sustainable tax base.

In our time the traditional town center form has been rediscovered as smart business. The real estate industry has learned that "lifestyle" market positioning is lucrative. In retail, residential, office and entertainment, developers are now reintroducing the physical features of the livable and walkable downtown *neighborhoods* one finds in historic American towns. These include Main Streets with wide sidewalks, elegant squares, a rich mix of urban architecture, and tree-lined streets. Building these features today takes a concerted effort by both local government and developers; it almost always requires a thorough re-tooling of the official land development regulations, and tends to require some rethinking on the part of developers' consultants, too. The concerted effort has proven worth it to the bottom line on developments, such as, for example, Mizner Park in Boca Raton.

In nearby Winter Park, one can vividly see how a high-quality town center boosts property values and desirability citywide. Brokers will tell you that homebuyer prospects are driven by Park Avenue and Central Park first, *before* visiting the house for sale, because the well-designed public realm in that city's downtown adds value to all the neighborhoods, too.

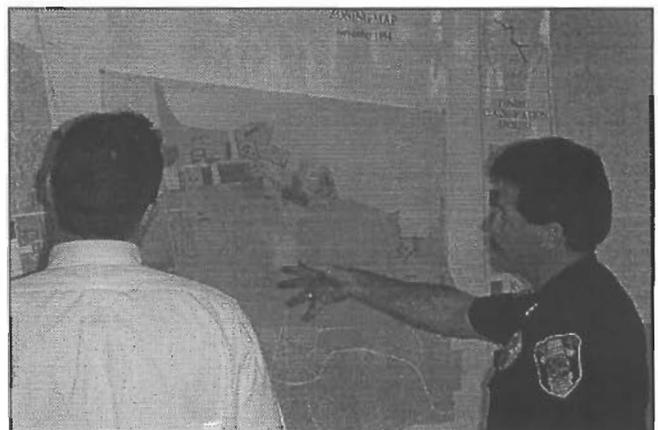
Design matters!

How This Plan Was Created

In February, 1998 the City of Winter Springs created this plan through a design session involving the community and a team of design professionals. The session lasted seven days, with the first 2 1/2 days devoted to interviews with community leaders and stakeholders concerning their visions for the Town Center. These participants included property owners, presidents of Homeowners Associations within the city, developers, the Mayor and City Commissioners, City staff, Seminole County staff, and representatives from the Tourist Development Council, the Economic Development Council and the Florida Department of Transportation.

The design session began with a presentation of comparable Town Centers and modern retail planning. The Gibbs Planning Group presented a preliminary commercial market study. Design began immediately with ongoing interviews and site analysis. A "pin-up" review of initial ideas was held midway through the process. After the pin-up the public participated in a hands-on session for more feedback and new ideas. The designers then combined all the input from the various meetings into a single plan. This plan was presented as a work-in-progress at the close of the design session.

This report presents the plan and design illustrations from the design session, incorporating certain refinements. They capture a vision of what can be created in this unique location through teamwork and vigilance.



Fundamentals

The interviews were a continuous brainstorming session which generated a large number of ideas. The ideas were synthesized into a set of drawings and fundamental principles:

Urbanity & high density are OK, but "strip malls" aren't

A walkable community

Predictability in design / flexibility in land use

Visibly different section of State Road 434

Important sites for special public places

Preserve & connect the natural environment

Design for the long term & near term

No one "deal killer" feature

Urbanity and High Density are OK, but "Strip Malls" Aren't

The Town Center is where people gather and events occur. To support this synergy, buildings must also move closer together rather than farther apart. For the Winter Springs Town Center this means higher density and mixed uses, but with high standards of design. Conventional strip shopping centers with oversized parking lots in the front will not be tolerated.

A Walkable Community

Walkability is a key feature in the design of the

Town Center and its adjacent neighborhoods. It results from mixing land uses and from using building placement to deliberately shape agreeable public spaces in the streets and between buildings. Walkability is dependent upon connected, shaded streets and trails. Truly walkable places have buildings fronting streets and sidewalks, and destinations for pedestrians like Main Street, squares, and parks.

Predictability in Design / Flexibility in Land Use

Another fundamental idea echoed throughout the interviews was to allow flexibility in the use of buildings, but to raise the standards for their design and placement. In a Town Center, building type and placement matter more than the uses inside. This means the uses inside a building can change over time naturally the way they normally do in real life. It also explains why conventional "zoning" of segregated uses will not generate a Town Center.



Visibly Different Section for State Road 434 at the Town Center

For most people SR 434 will be their way to the Town Center. This is a special place; the usual, generic highway-looking standard design is not good enough! Therefore, changing the character of the part of SR 434 adjacent to the Town Center is very important. Landscaping and building placement combined with adjacent infrastructure are basic tools for making this adjustment.

Important Sites for Special Public Places

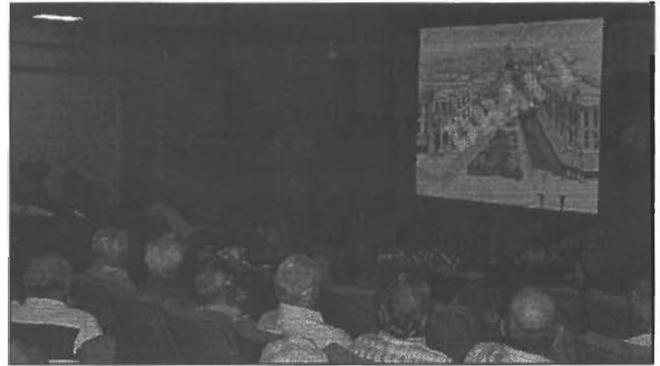
The people of Winter Springs want a variety of places to gather, shop, relax, recreate and enjoy the natural beauty of their town. Sites for public spaces have been chosen because of their unique location or existing physical features. Special sites for civic buildings and anchor tenants have also been located within the plan. Civic buildings are located on the most geometrically important sites; for example, they are situated at the end of a dramatic vista or facing a square.

Preserve & Connect the Natural Environment

The Town Center site contains wetlands, uplands, unique soils, and stands of existing trees. These are preserved in the plan as preserve areas, parks, squares, and along streets and trails. These areas are connected within the plan to promote natural drainage and maintain ecological viability.



Winter Springs Town Center



Design for the Long Term & Near Term

The Town Center plan is based on a long term perspective. The plan contains a number of stages and phases including: initial projects which can be started immediately; intermediate projects which might take a generation to complete; and long term projects which might take 50 years or more to be realized. Initial projects are important to create early visible results. Later stages will build upon this success. The key is that each project provides a more complete Town Center for the citizens of Winter Springs and should not foreclose the ability to create the full ideal in the long term.

No one "Deal Killer" Feature

A strong plan does not depend on one physical component, a "magic key" without which the plan would fail. Nor can the plan hinge upon one aspect of the development program. For instance, if the grocery store is not built on one particular site or the County does not choose this location for the Conference Center, the plan is nevertheless still viable. Since the plan contains a long term design vision, such short term setbacks should not substantially effect the final product.

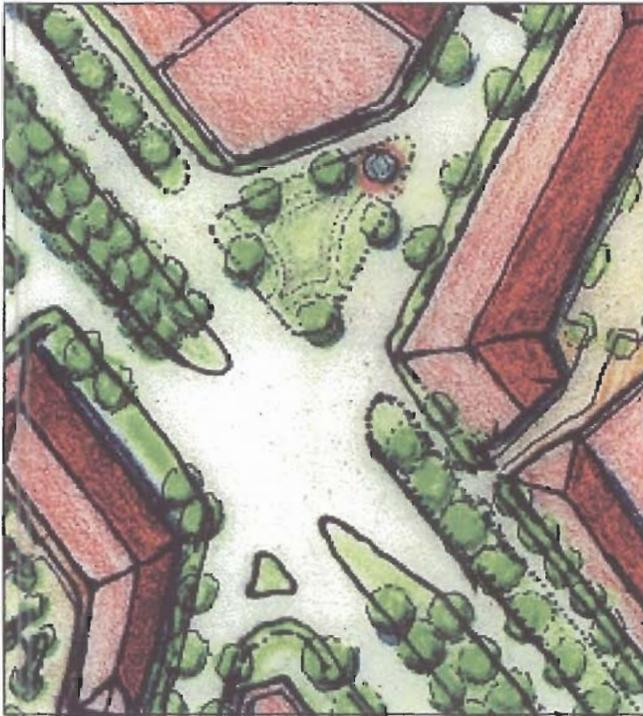
Illustrative Plan

This drawing shows a hypothetical future stage of the basic development which might be accomplished "in our generation." Building rooftops are shown with civic buildings in red. This is meant to serve as a guide to City staff,

elected officials and property owners. It shows several important urban design concepts which should be followed as the Town Center is built:

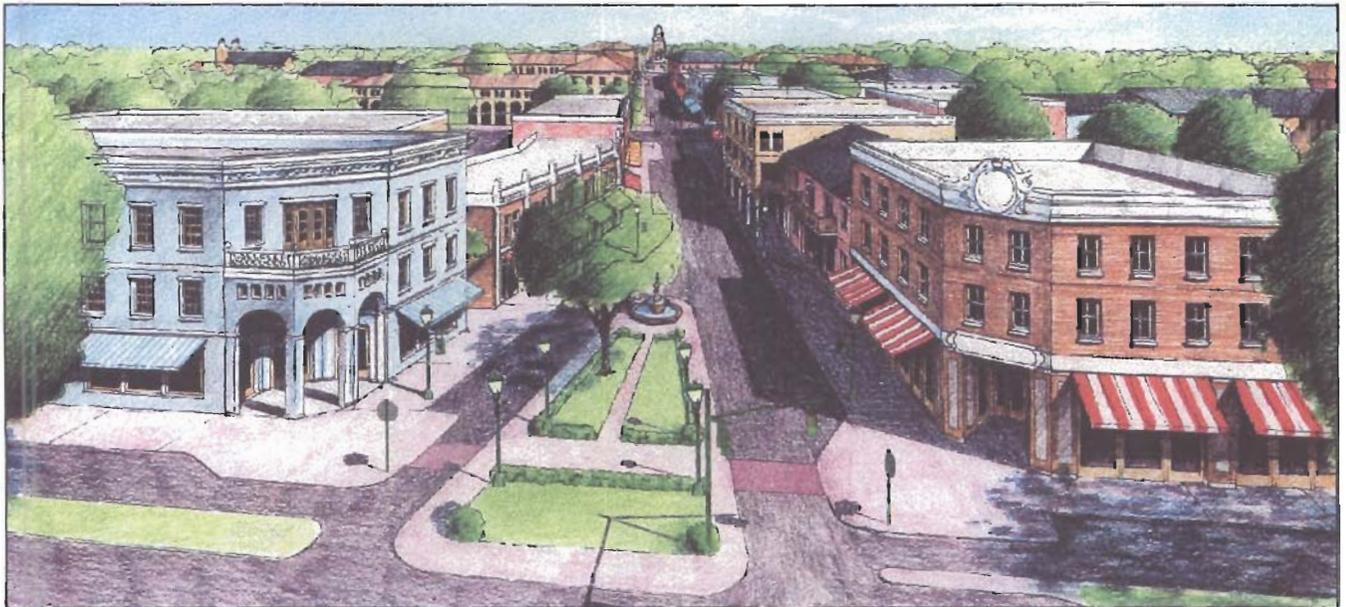


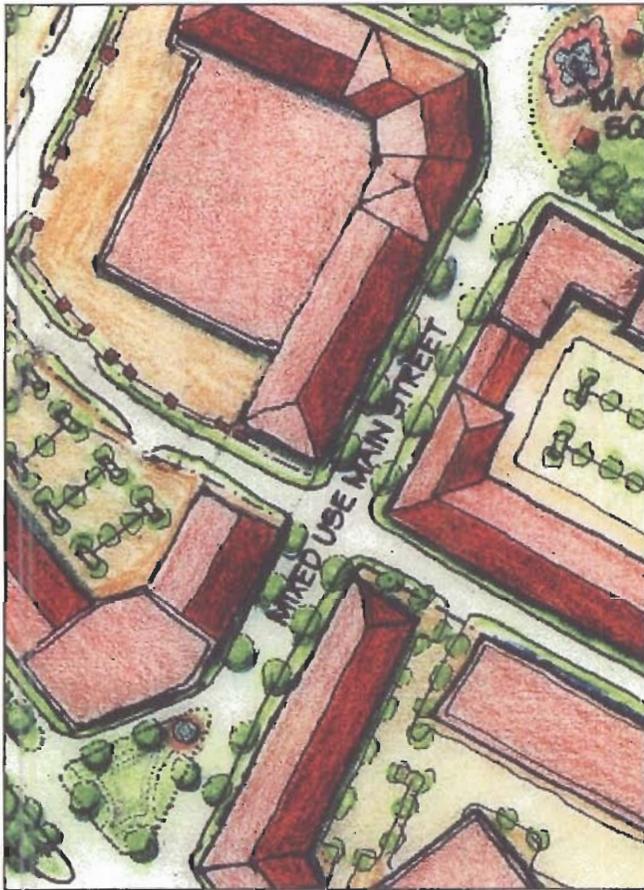
Points of Interest in the Town Center



The Market Plaza

- is the "action center" most of the time
- commercially oriented, visible and accessible from both SR 434 and Tuskawilla Road
- diagonal parking on the street, and parallel parking on one side of the plaza
- geometry opens a "window" into the heart of the Town Center
- a fountain as a focal point, terminating the vista looking south along the main street
- buildings fronting the square at least two stories tall; three stories are ideal
- retail / restaurants on the first floor
- upper stories can be occupied by any use
- awnings, arcades, colonnades and/or upper floor balconies are required





Tuskawilla Road as Main Street

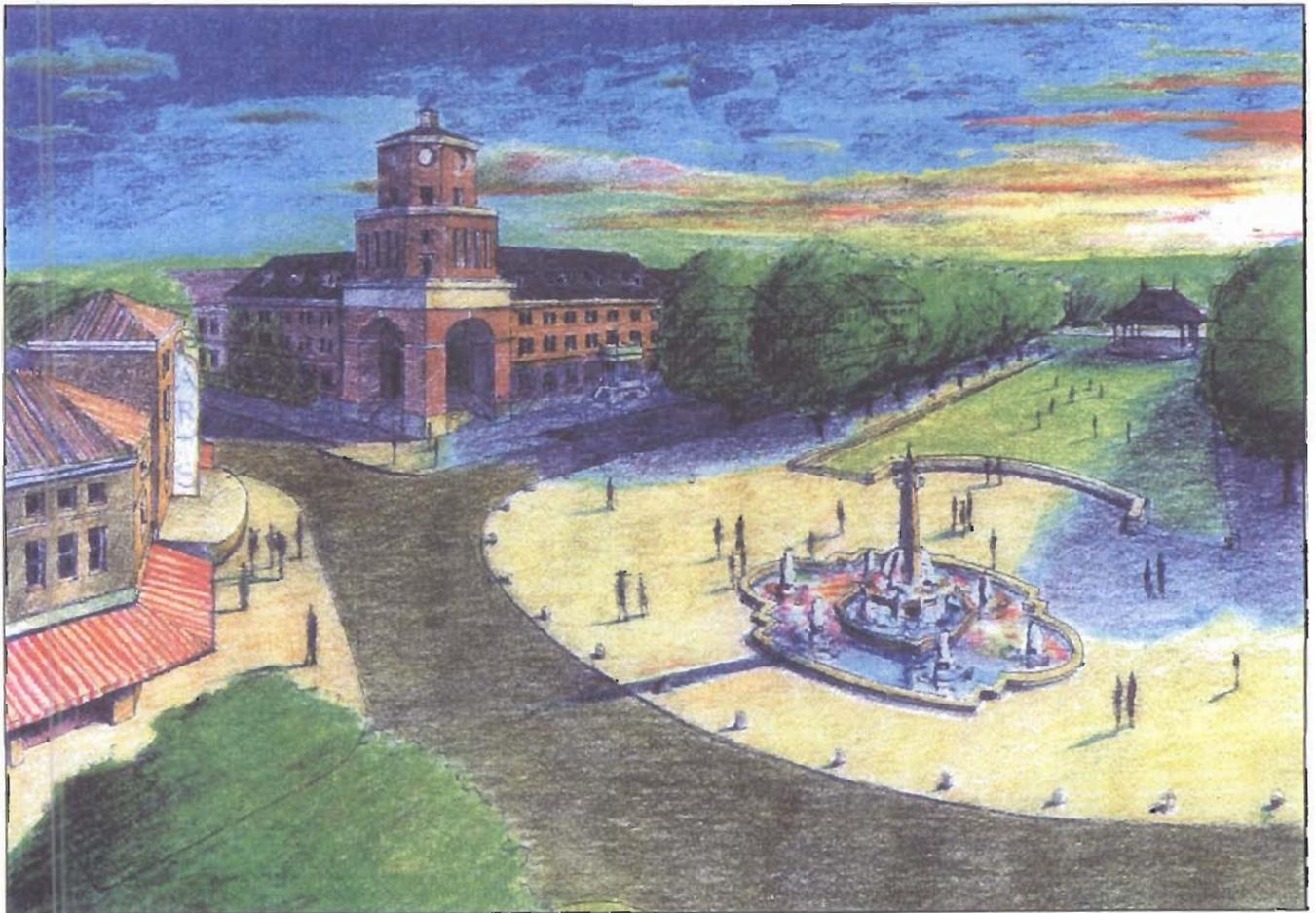
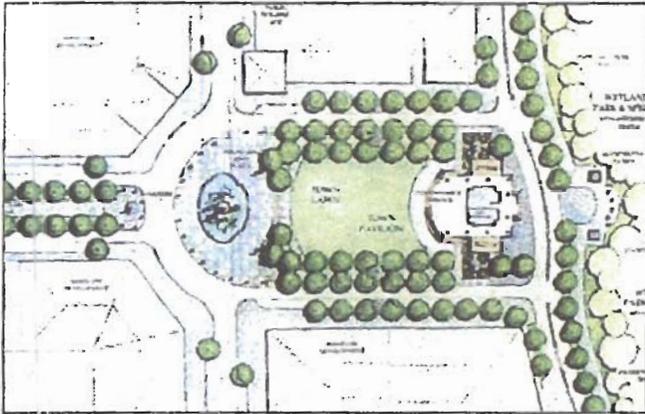
- links the Market Plaza to Magnolia Square
- two lanes with diagonal parking on the street
- easy turns to parking behind buildings
- sidewalks minimum 12 feet wide
- buildings fronting Main Street at least two stories tall; three stories is ideal
- retail / restaurants on the first floor
- upper stories can be occupied by any use
- awnings, arcades, colonnades and/or upper floor balconies are required
- block layout can support proposed Conference Center





Magnolia Square

- is the "quiet center" most of the time
- contains a large public fountain symbolizing the "springs" in Winter Springs
- eastern end connects with the picturesque natural edge of existing wetlands
- center of the square provides a large open space for public events such as holiday celebrations and outdoor festivals
- outdoor pavilion or bandshell on the southern end
- trailhead on southern end where square meets Cross Seminole Trail
- a future City Hall could anchor one corner of the square
- a future Cultural Arts Center could anchor another corner
- a future Hotel would benefit Main Street if located on the northwest corner of the square





Existing view along SR 434

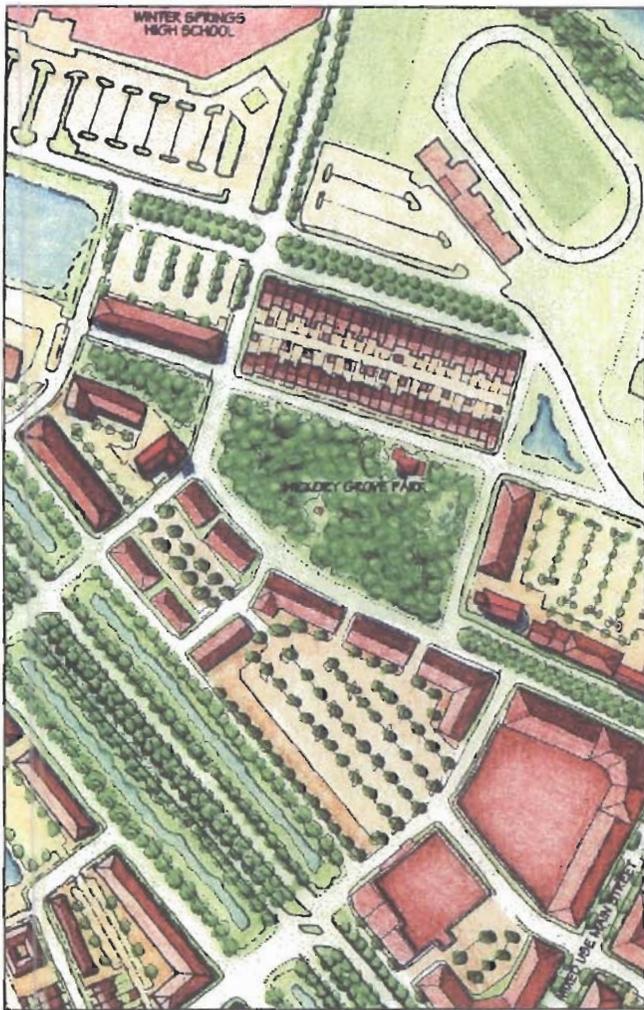
State Road 434

- features formal tree plantings identifying the Town Center District
- retention areas along SR 434 create softened edge
- frontage road set back from the highway
- frontage road allows for on-street parking and circulation of local traffic



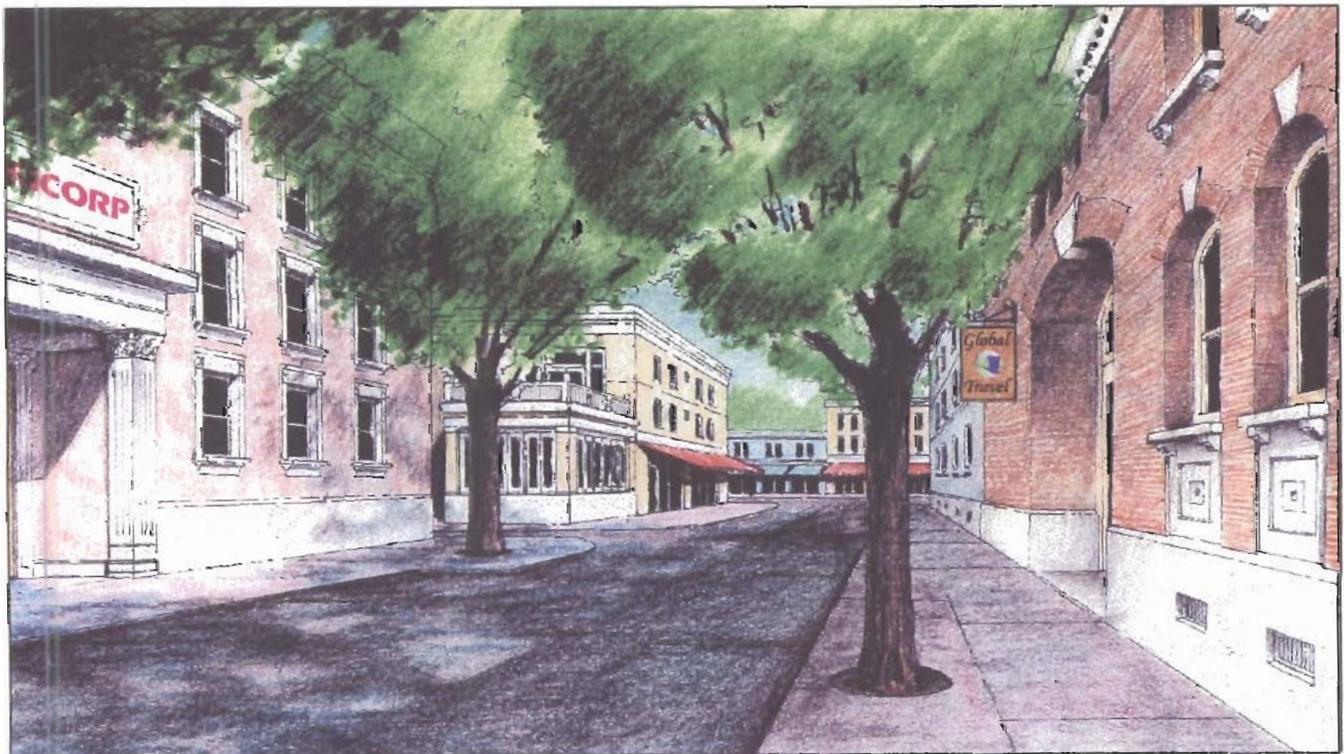
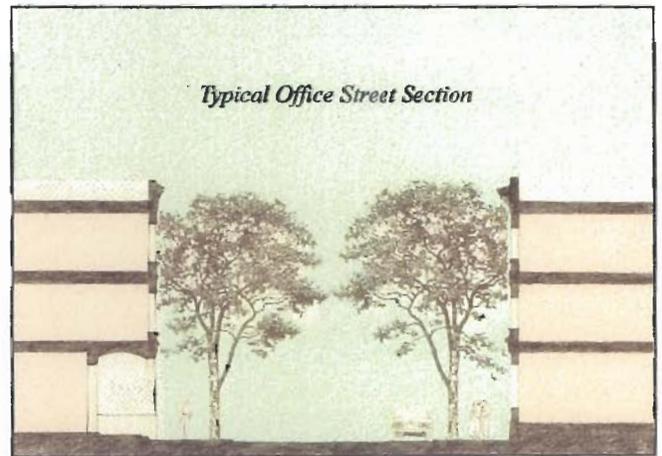
Computer simulation of trees planted at regular intervals

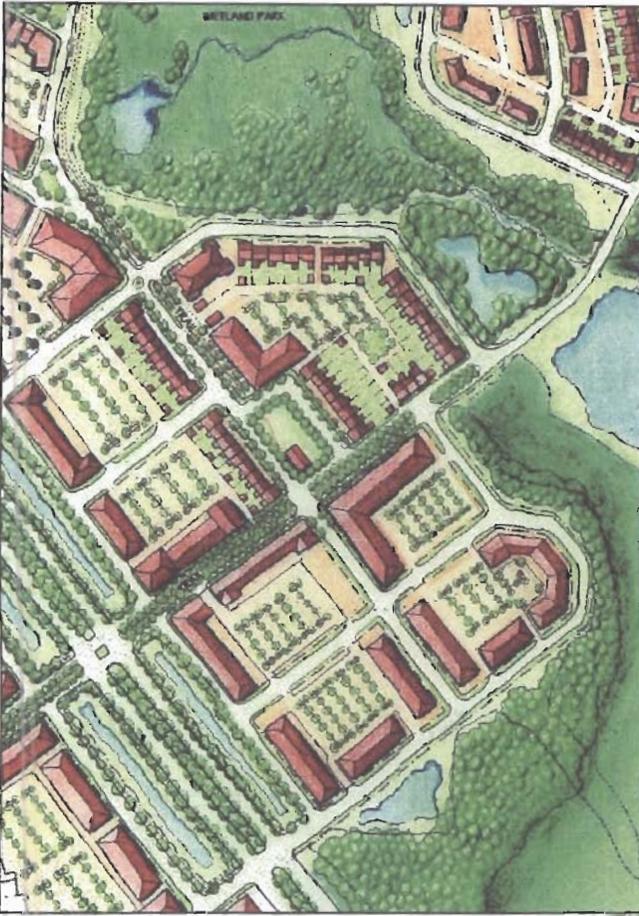




Hickory Grove Neighborhood

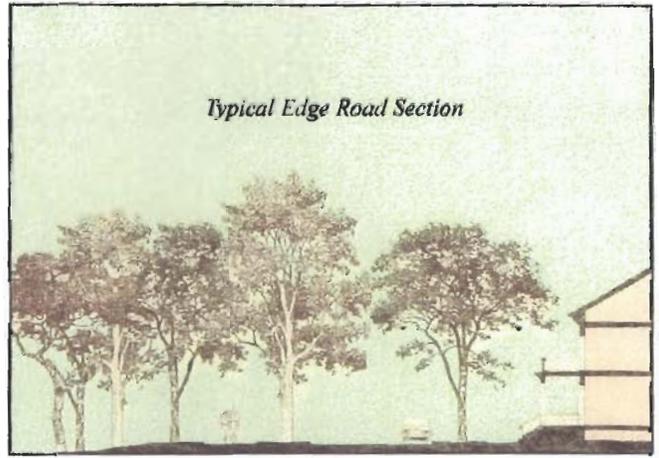
- surrounds portion of existing stand of hickory trees preserved within a public park
- a branch library or other civic use site is reserved for the southeast corner of the Hickory Grove Park
- police / fire station at west end of park, accessible to SR 434
- existing City Hall can convert to a mixed-use building or office building if and when City government moves to Magnolia Square
- Street-oriented, traditional urban buildings encourage walking to the Main Street





Blackwater Creek Neighborhood

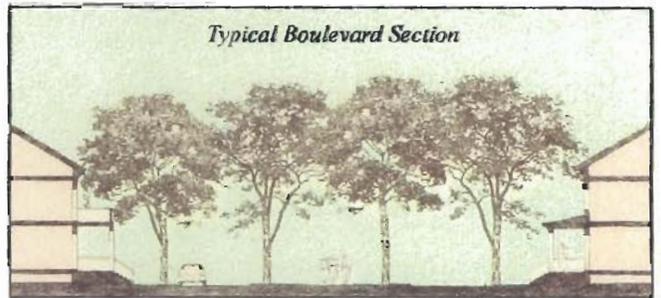
- has predominantly street-oriented, traditional buildings along Tuskawilla and SR 434
- Apartments or rowhouses along the back edges facing the wetlands
- the town branch of the Cross Seminole Trail passes through the neighborhood





Lakeside Neighborhood

- features a boulevard connecting Magnolia Square to Lake Jesup
- opportunity for public access to Lake Jesup with pier
- civic building site, which could be used for a church for example
- mixture of housing types possible: detached houses, rowhouses, courtyard apartment buildings
- scenic branch of the Cross Seminole Trail passes through the neighborhood and along its edge
- single family detached houses located on the north edge of the neighborhood could make a **transition** to the neighboring houses





Tuskawilla Trails Neighborhood

- has opportunities for connecting as an integral neighborhood
- a new street parallel to SR 434 for internal traffic circulation and to reduce demand on the regional road
- The area between Tuskawilla Trails and SR 434 redeveloped as mixed use buildings along SR 434 and residential adjacent to the existing subdivision



Tuskawilla Road & Public Lake Overlook

- includes sidewalks extending to Lake Jesup
- a small lookout pier extends into the lake at the end of Tuskawilla Road
- traffic calming design where the Cross Seminole Trail crosses Tuskawilla Road to provide extra safety to the pedestrians, equestrians and cyclists



Infill along Orange Avenue

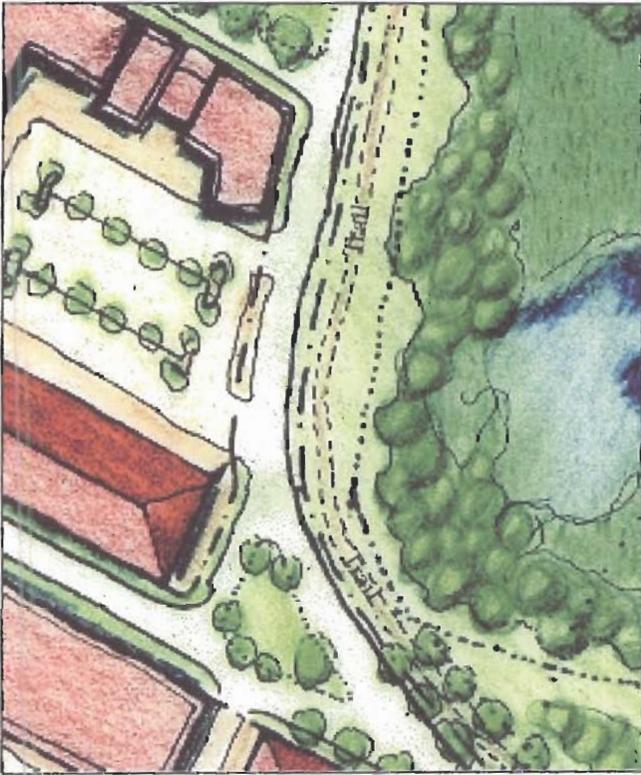
- includes retention pond on south side of Orange Avenue
- mostly single-family detached houses with a few rowhouses and apartment buildings
- a new small neighborhood green
- there is no urgent need to redevelop the county enclave area, but over time the City should support creation of a more urban residential district along the waterfront if desired by the property owners



The Green Network

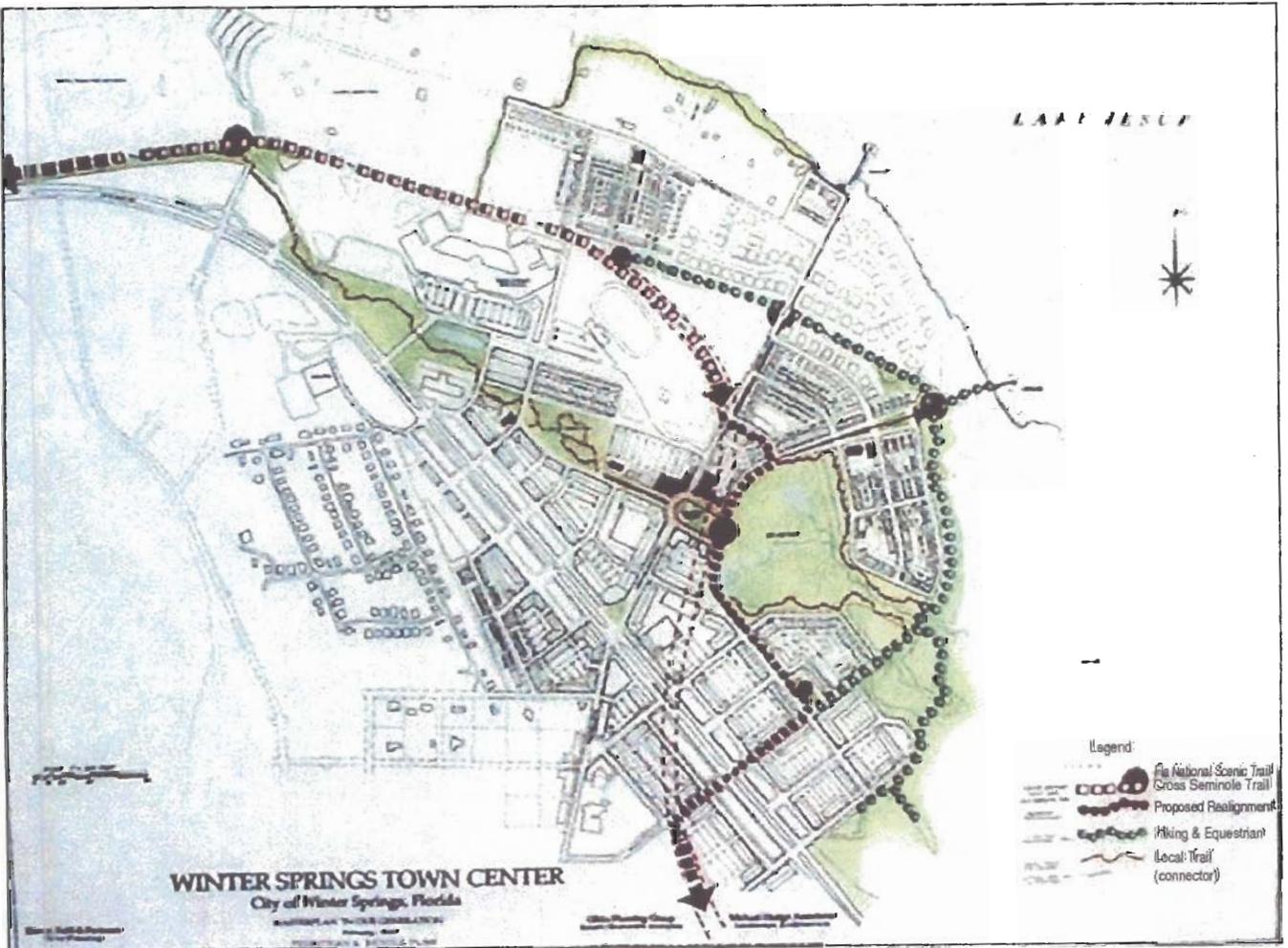
- includes parks, squares, preserves, and open space
- preserves existing natural features like wetlands, stands of old growth trees, and habitat
- preserves connectivity of natural features for habitat continuity and sustainability, scenic vistas, and trail systems
- includes passive and active parks
- includes stormwater retention areas
- helps resolve retention, drainage, and water quality issues





Trail Access & Trailheads

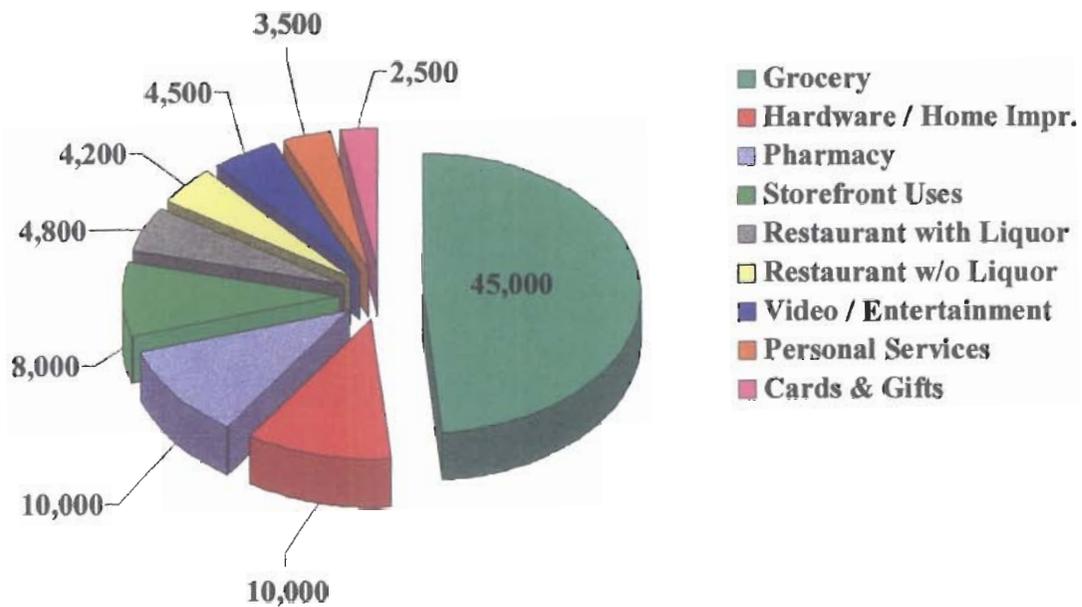
- Cross Seminole trail splits at Town Center
- edge route for equestrians and hikers
- internal route directs cyclists, rollerbladers, joggers, etc. to the **Town Center**
- Magnolia Square trailhead with amenities like restrooms, and storage lockers
- smaller trailheads offer easy access on and off trail with adjacent on-street parking
- parking would be in greater supply at the Central Winds Park trailhead



Commercial Planning Study

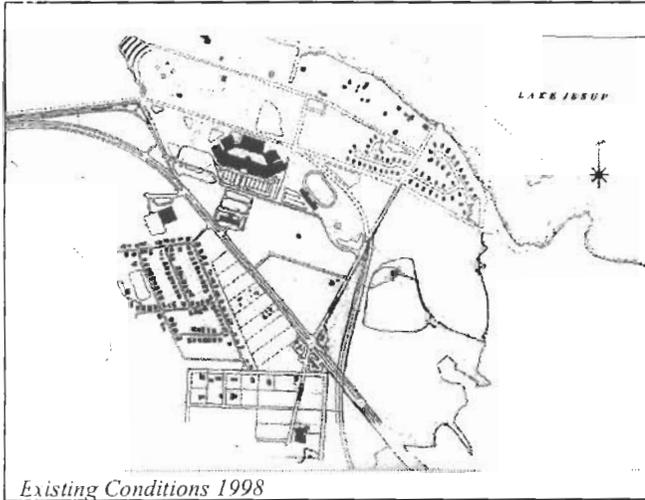
Gibbs Planning Group of Birmingham, Michigan performed a market analysis of the retail potential for the site. This included a "void analysis" and a field review of the existing shopping opportunities in the area, combined with the information gleaned from the interviews. These studies tell us that the area can support approximately 92,500 square feet of new retail right now. This includes a grocery store, a hardware store, two restaurants and other various retail establishments. For a more in-depth review, please refer to the Gibbs report published separately.

Immediate Commercial Development Program



92,500 Square Feet of Ground Level Uses

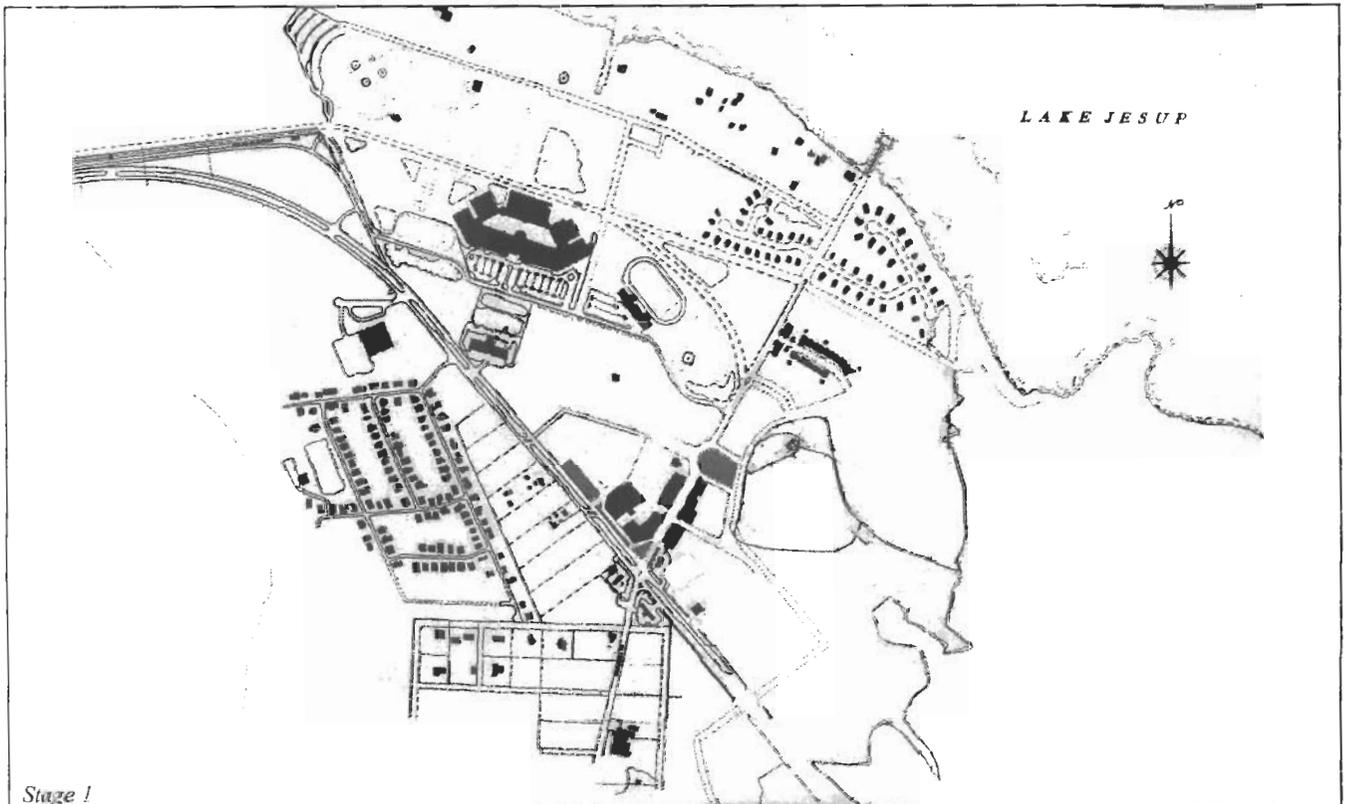
Implementation



Existing Conditions 1998

Phases of Implementation

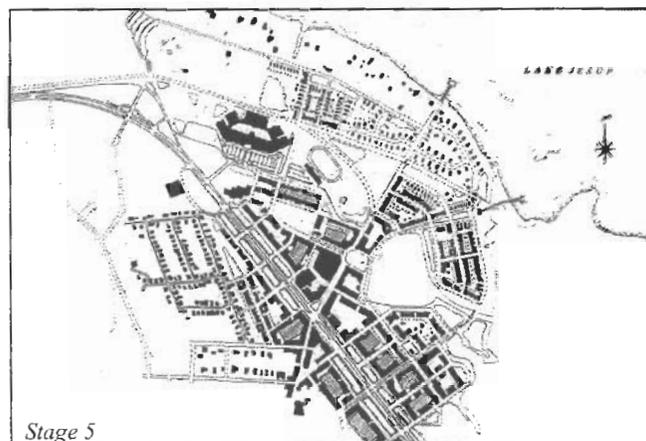
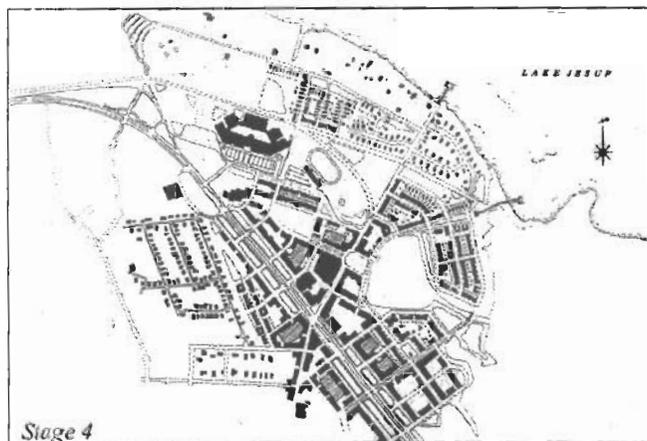
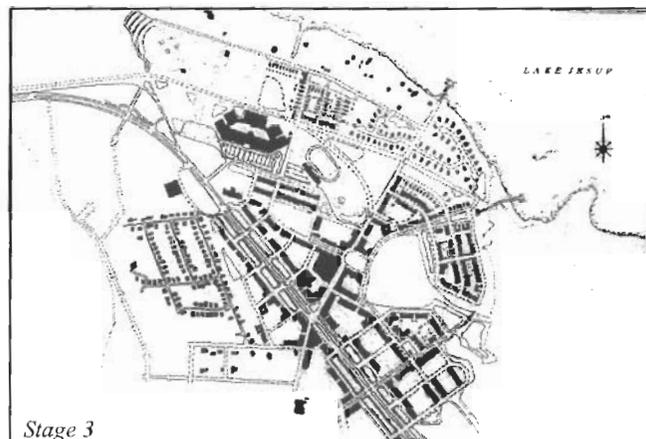
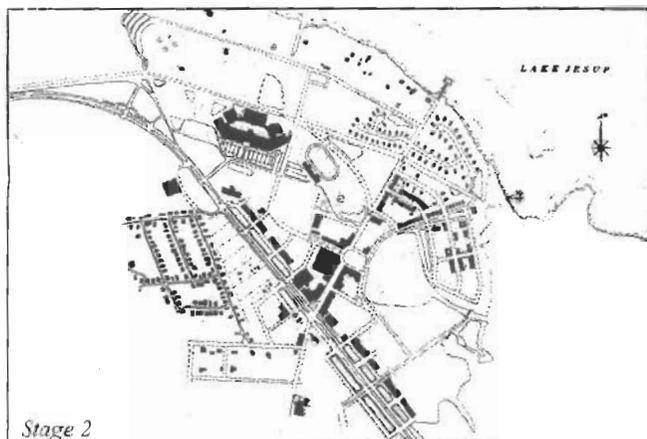
By funding this design exercise, the City of Winter Springs has taken the lead. The City should now maintain its leadership position to protect the integrity of the plan and promote its growth. But the community cannot expect government to pay for everything or to sustain it; when public money is spent on pieces of the plan it should be with an eye toward catalyzing the next private investment. The initial phase shown below depicts a combination of public and private investment to implement the Market Square, Tuskawilla as main street, and the public infrastructure for Magnolia Square.



Stage 1

The rest of the plan will not happen overnight. Some changes will occur soon while other features of the plan are expected to occur far in the future. Most of the future development shown in the plan is dependent upon the first phase of implementation, moreover, the first development will set the tone and begin establishing the "positioning" of the Town Center in the minds of consumers, investors, and tenants. If the Market Square is built first, but ends up looking like a strip shopping center, the apartments above shops and other mixed use buildings will be hard to implement. Worse, the confidence of the citizenry in the Town Center vision will be lost. Therefore, quality control should be very tight at the beginning.

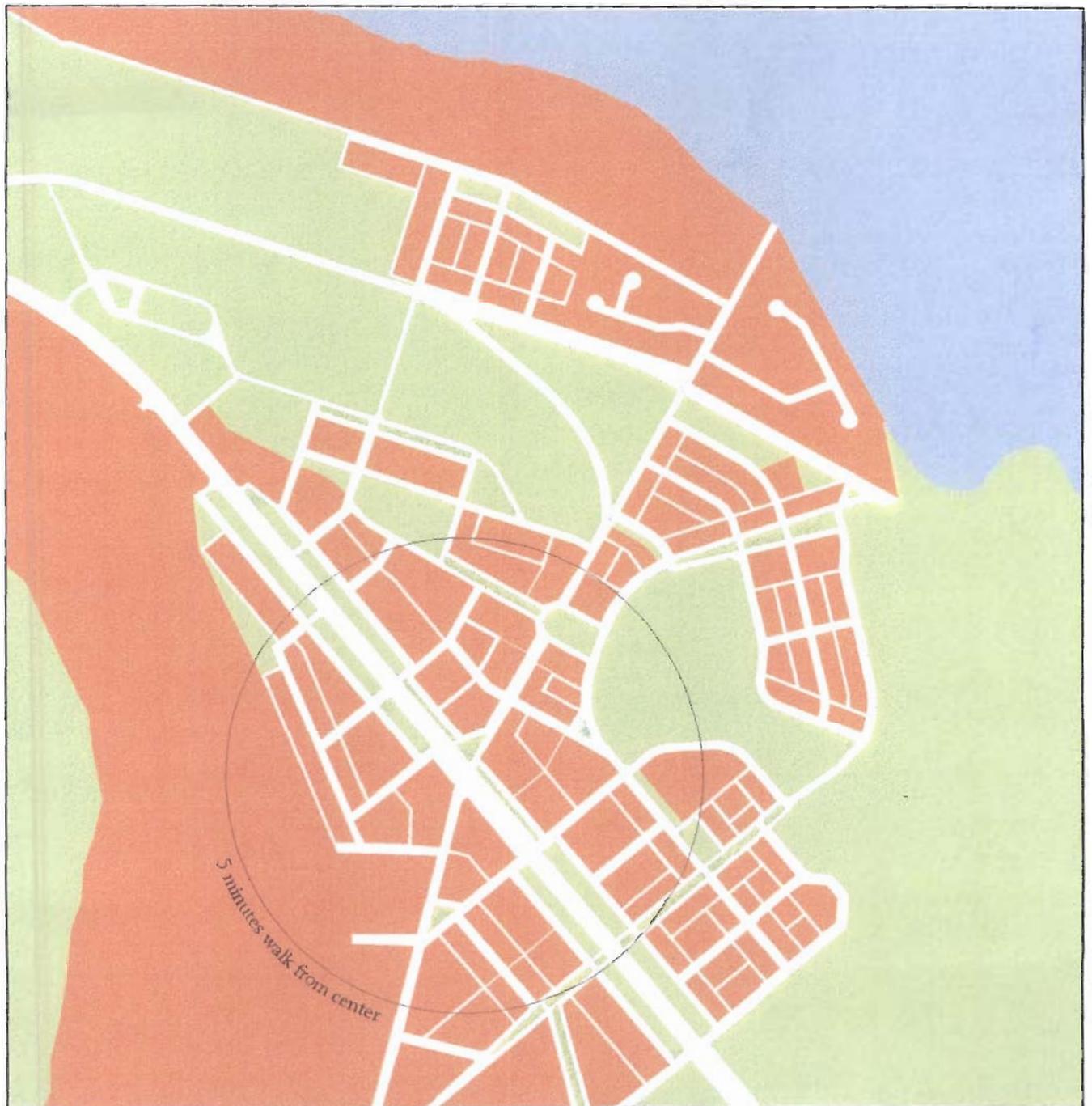
Below are possible scenarios showing the build-out of the Town Center over time.



Stormwater Retention Areas

- Area-wide retention plan frees up land in town center for development
- responds to existing runoff concerns
- shortened approval process saves developers time and money and promotes plan
- better water quality through more efficient system-wide approach
- if designed well, without fences, retention areas can enhance neighborhood edges and

Framework of Streets and Blocks

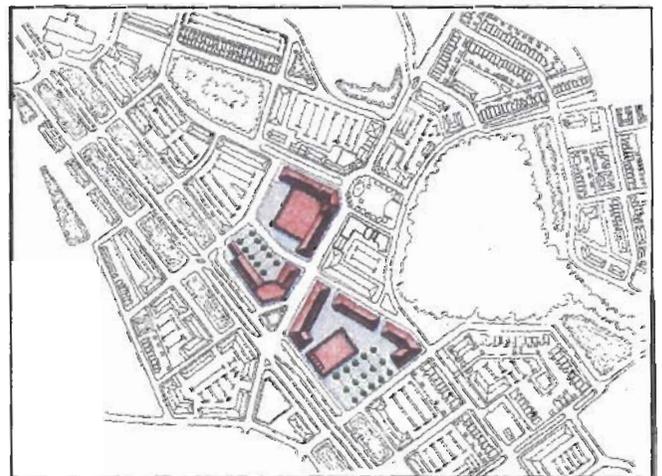
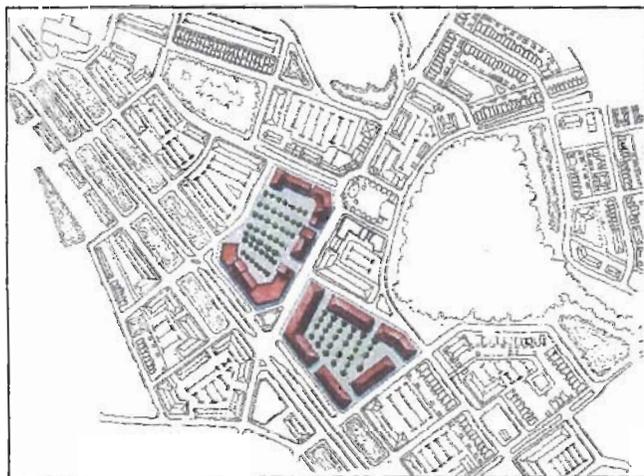
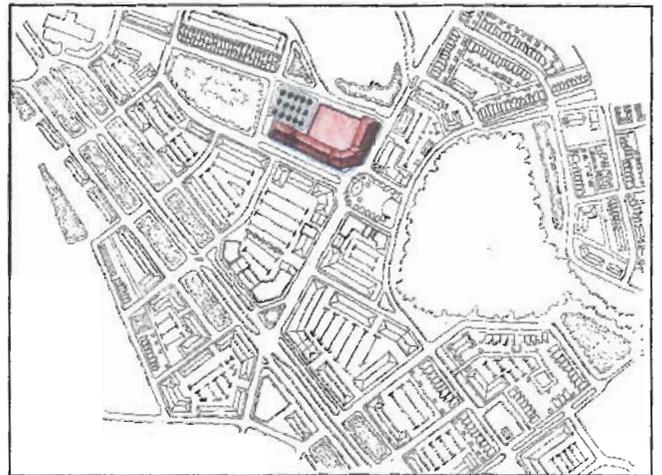
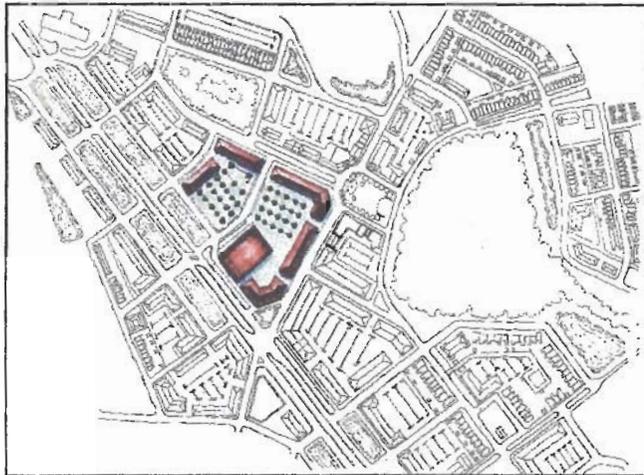
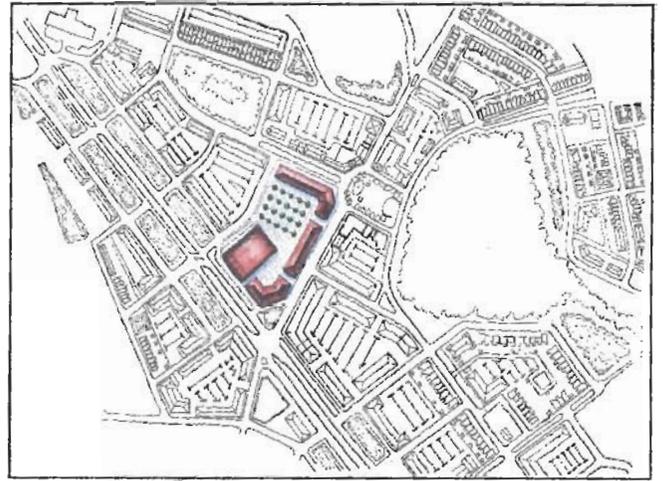


Existing & Proposed Infrastructure



Predictability in Design / Flexibility in Use

The plan is flexible in terms of both land use and development scenarios. The framework of blocks and streets can support a wide range of buildout scenarios. This flexibility is illustrated below. Building types and placement will be reasonably regulated in the code written for the plan.



Next Steps

1. *The City Commission should immediately pass an Adoption-in-Concept resolution giving the Plan official standing.*

This will not give the details of the plan the force of law at this stage, but it will send an important message to property owners and residents that the City Commission supports this plan and intends to implement its principles. The Commissioners should also authorize the drafting of a new graphic code based upon the plan.

2. *Confirm physical and regulatory conditions.*

Base information should be checked with individual surveys (existing or newly commissioned) to verify property lines and right-of-way dimensions. A district-wide solution for drainage & water quality should continue to be pursued with the St. John's River Water Management District.

3. *Consider performing a residential "target market analysis" and an absorption analysis for both residential and office development.*

These market studies must be performed by specialists in economic studies for *traditional neighborhood development*. These tools, while limited, will provide insight many investors will want; compiling this information proactively at City expense is a reasonable way of using public resources to diminish the initial risk for "pioneering" developers.

4. *Create and adopt a new graphic code following the plan.*

Create a specific, simplified, graphic code for the Town Center. This code should be a wholesale replacement of the existing zoning. This would give the regulatory ideas in the plan the force of law, and should constitute pre-approval of compliant projects. Widely

distribute the new design code, highlighting the reforms and incentives.

5. *Continue to promote the Town Center concept and the plan.*

Secure press coverage of the new vision. Parade the image of the first completed project in the press, at public meetings, at service clubs, on cable TV, in travelling exhibits, on poster & postcards! Provide realtors with handouts highlighting what's coming in Winter Springs. Encourage private investment with incentives: waive fees, subsidize loans, offer city owned land, couple public improvements in the rights-of-way with private projects, provide free and pre-approved designs. And above all cut red tape for developments that follow the plan.

6. *The City should consider participating directly in the development process as a motivator to get the Town Center started soon and started well.*

For example, the City could undertake capital improvements to public infrastructure coordinated with the developers' construction of private buildings. This effort would be channelled into a location of great importance and visibility. For example, the City could agree to construct (or pay for) the public spaces of the Market Plaza and first couple of blocks of the main street, while the developers construct the buildings that frame these spaces. Such an incentive, if practical within government resources, should naturally be offered *if and only if* the developers agree to the place envisioned in the plan and illustrations!

DOVER, KOHL & PARTNERS

t o w n p l a n n i n g

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GIBBS PLANNING GROUP, INC.

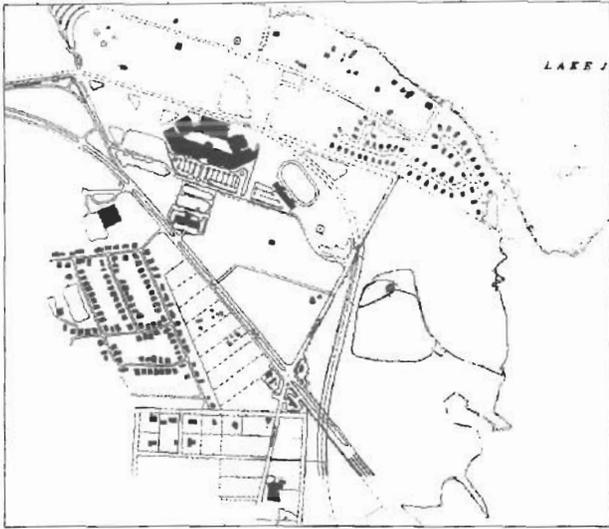
Retail Planning

101 West Brown Street
Birmingham, Michigan 48009

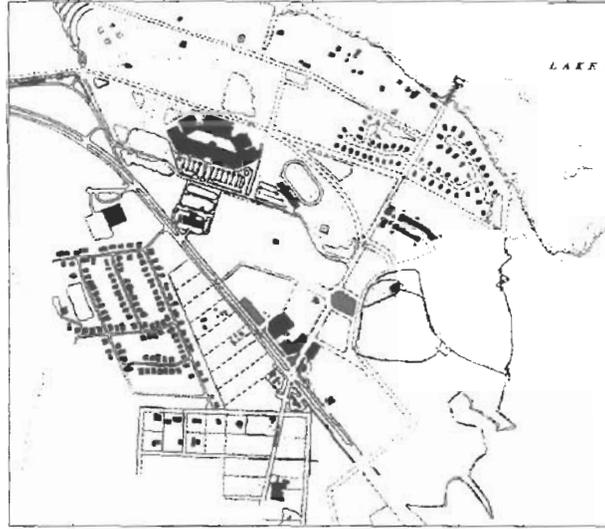
MICHAEL DESIGN ASSOCIATES, INC.

Landscape Architects

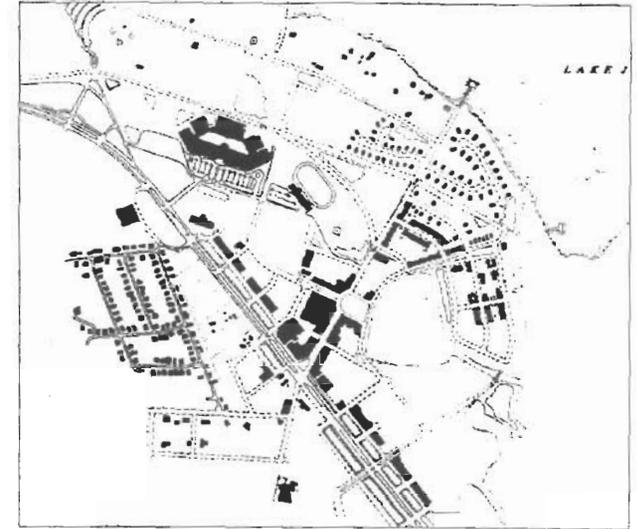
400 West New England Avenue
Suite 100
Winter Park, Florida 32789



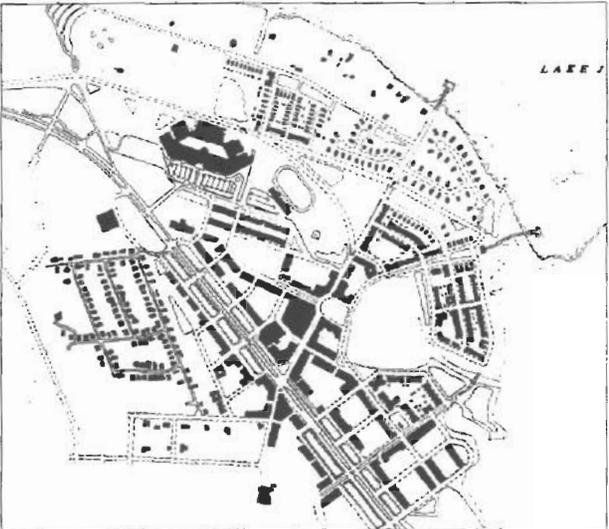
Existing Conditions



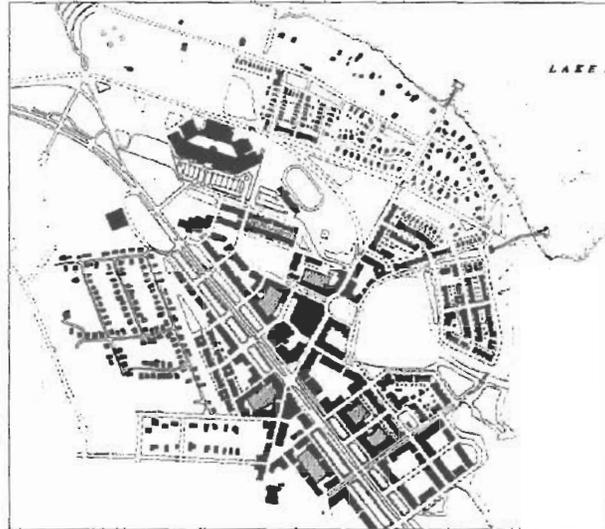
Phase I



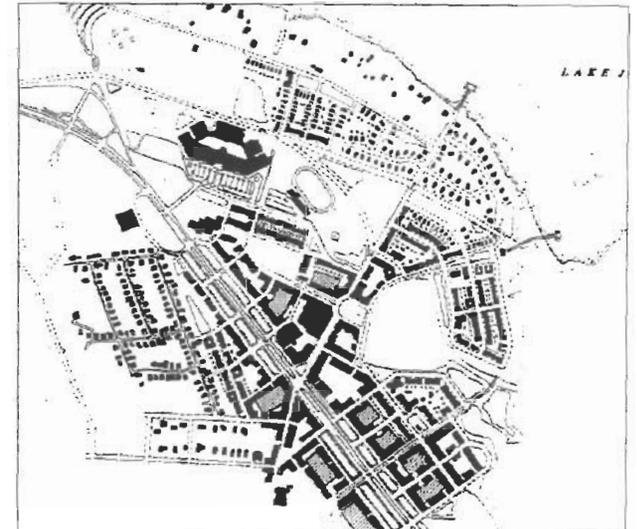
Phase II



Phase III



Phase IV

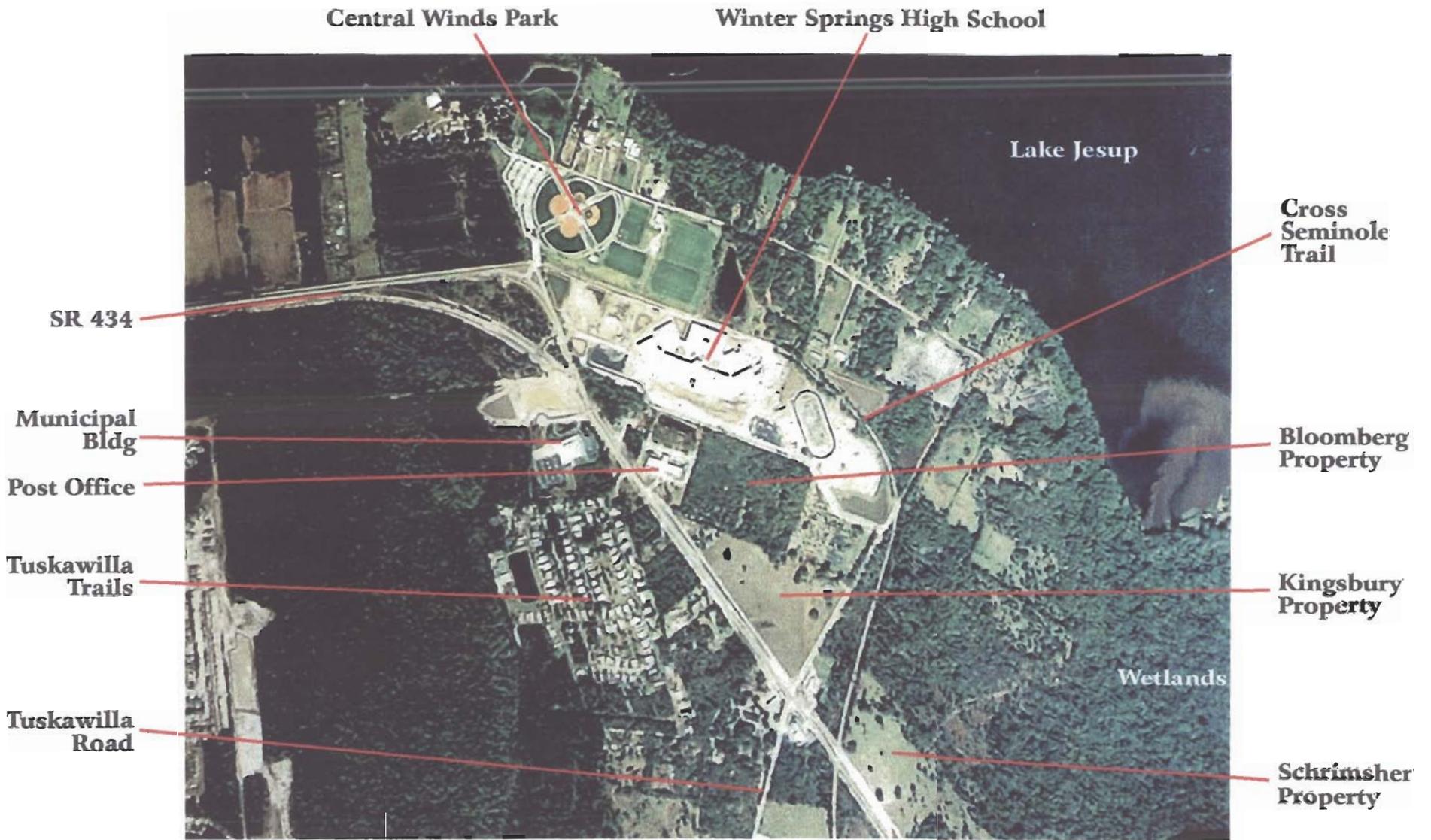


Phase V

Change Over Time

Town Center • Winter Springs, Florida

March, 1997



Existing Conditions

Town Center • Winter Springs, Florida

March, 1997



Sketch Plan "In Our Generation"

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March, 1997

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Retail/Economic Analysis



Sketch Plan "In Our Generation"

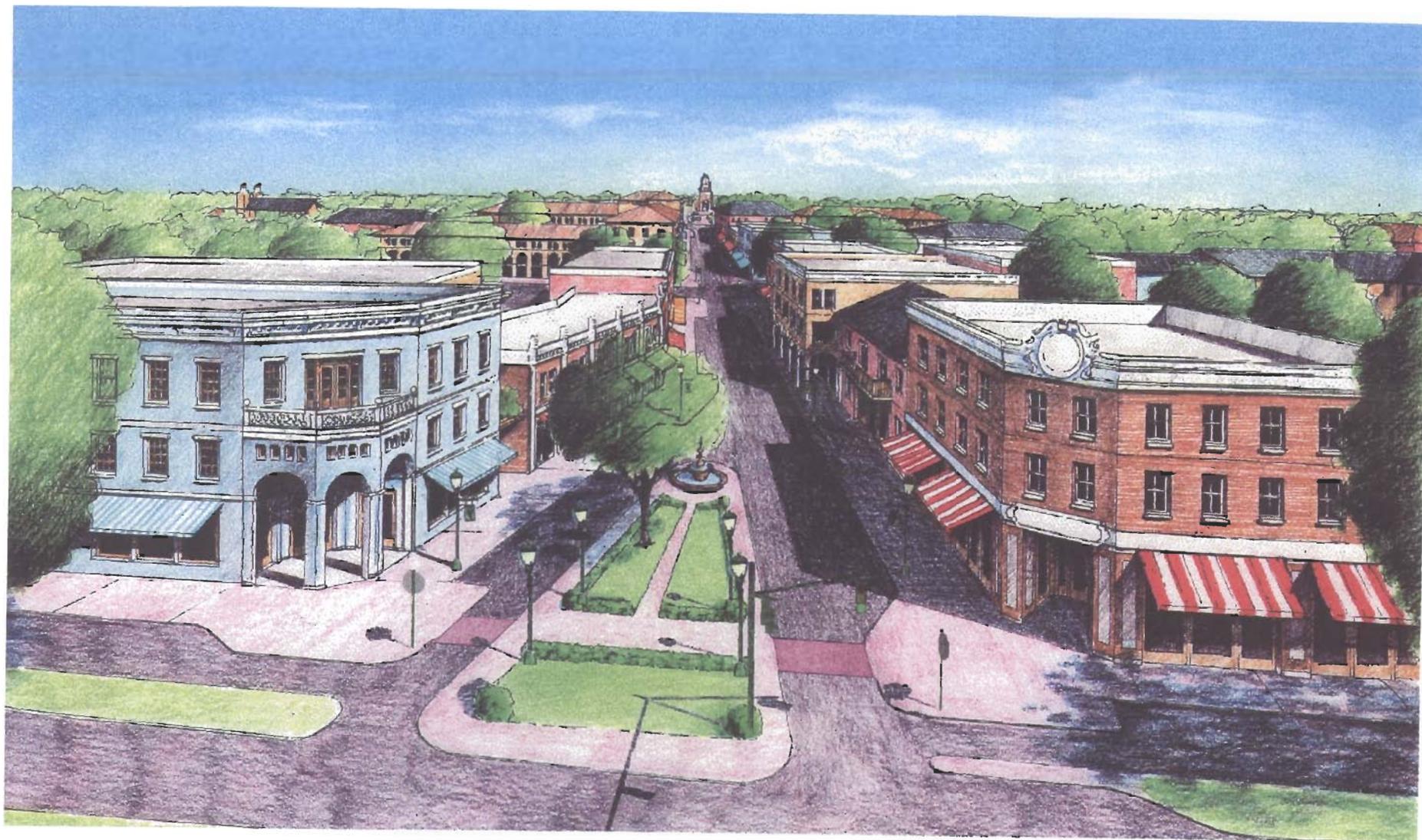
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Retail/Economic Analysis



Tuskawilla Looking North from SR 434

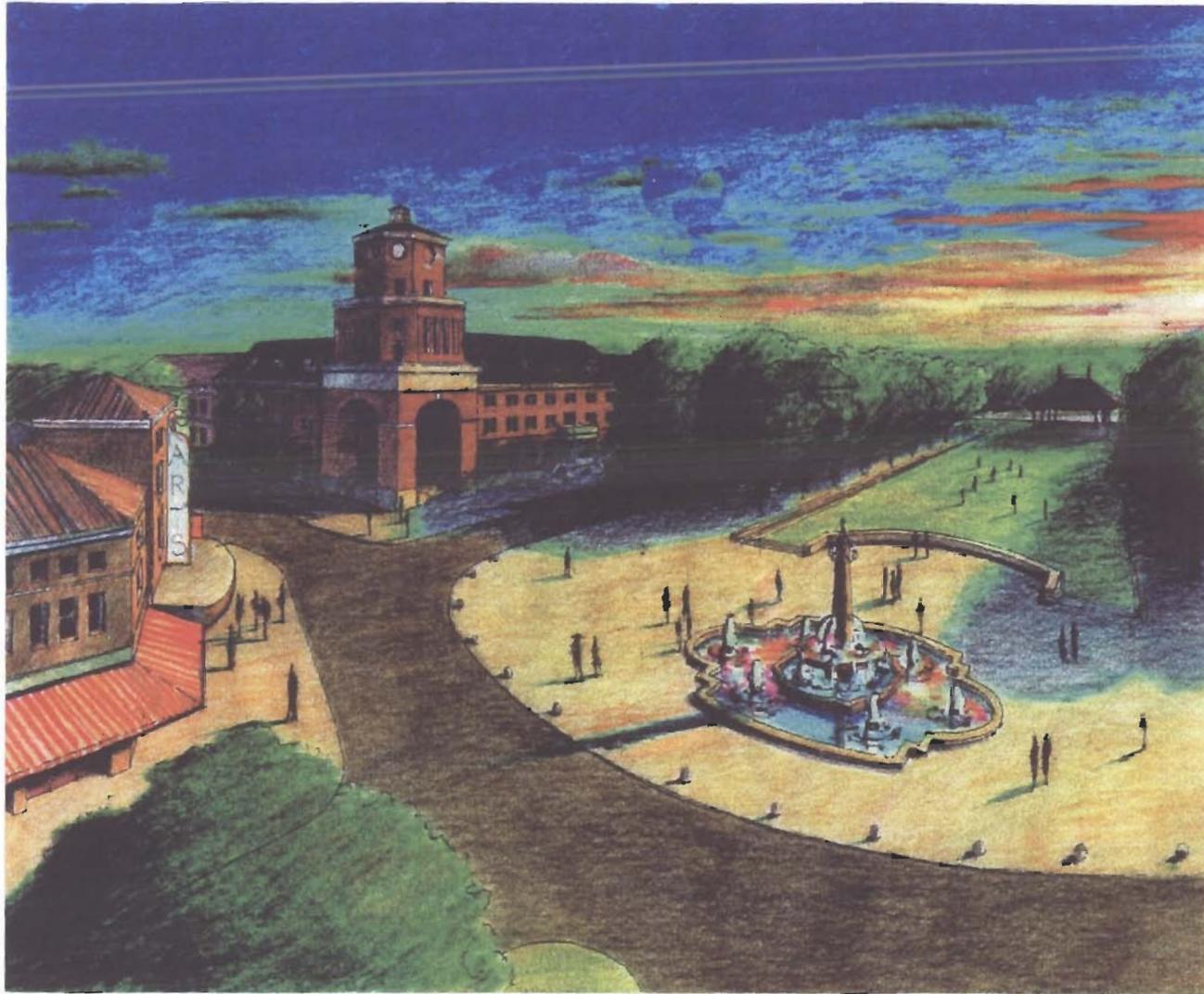
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Landscape Architecture

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Magnolia Square

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Rowhouse Street

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Lakeside Pier

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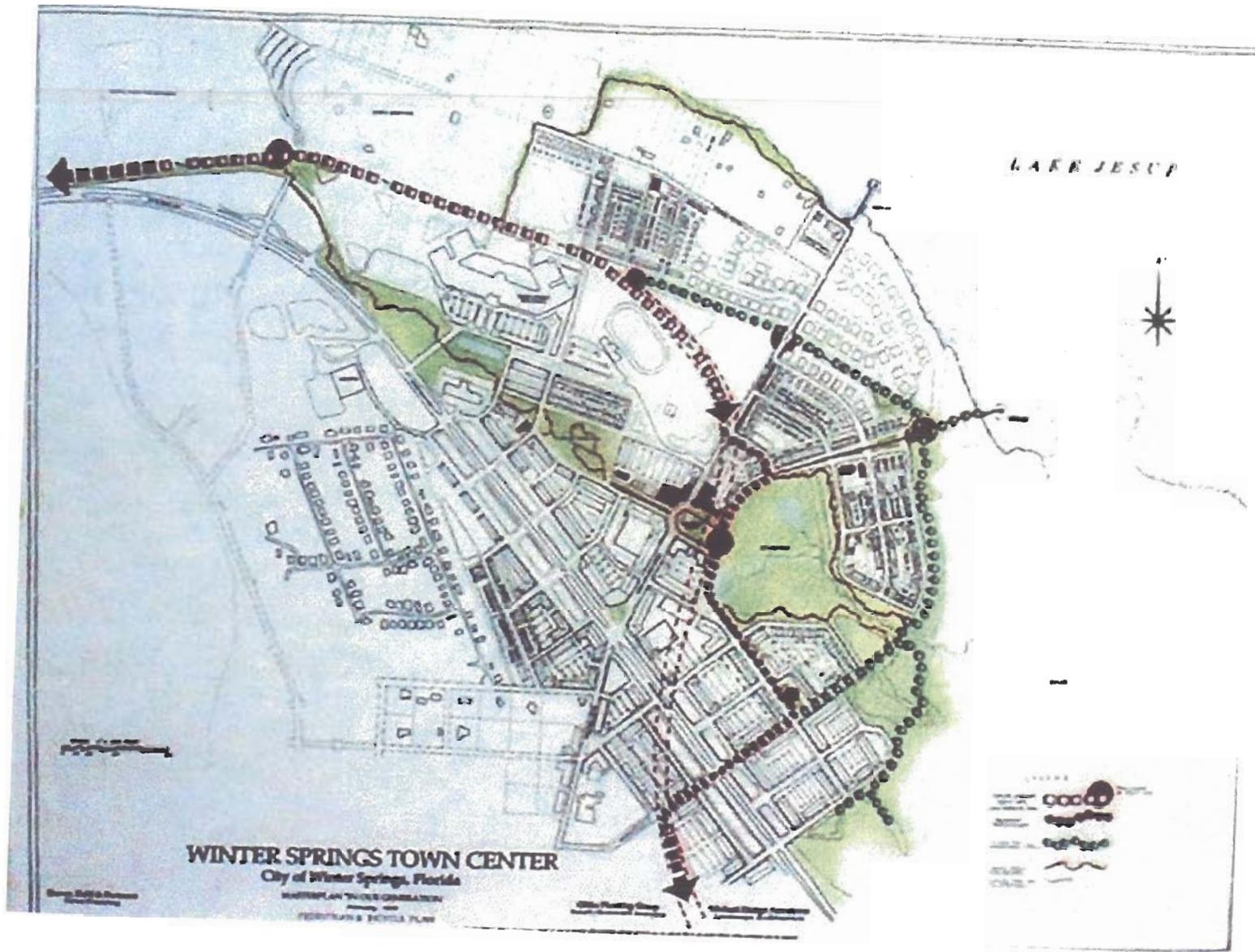
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Green Network

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Trails and Trailheads

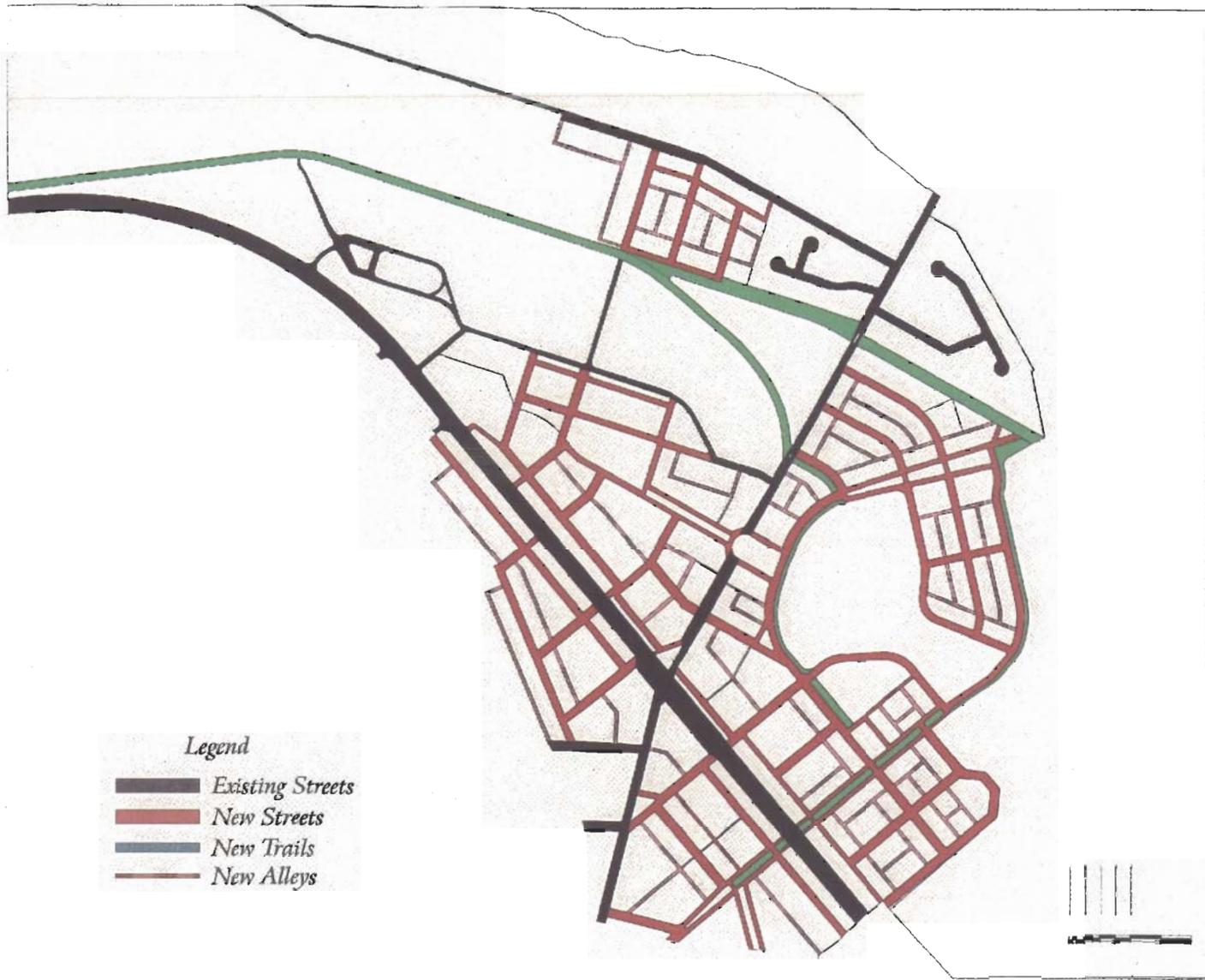
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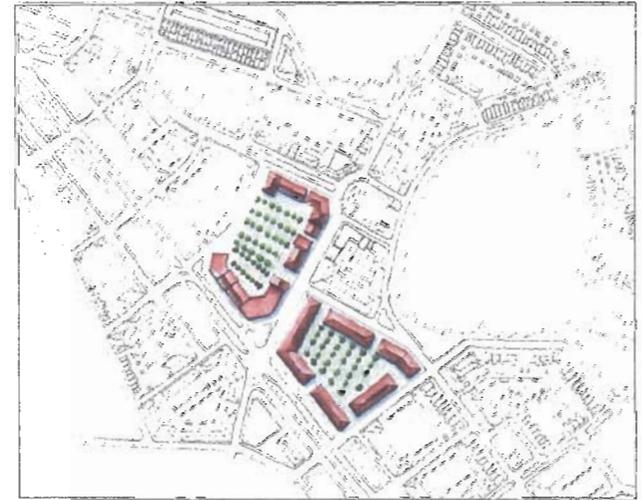
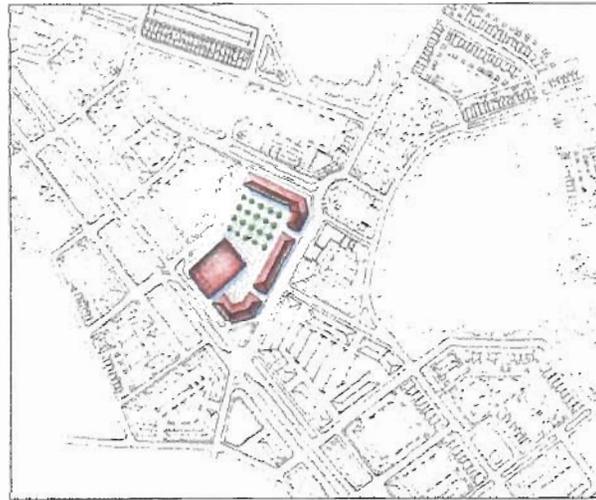
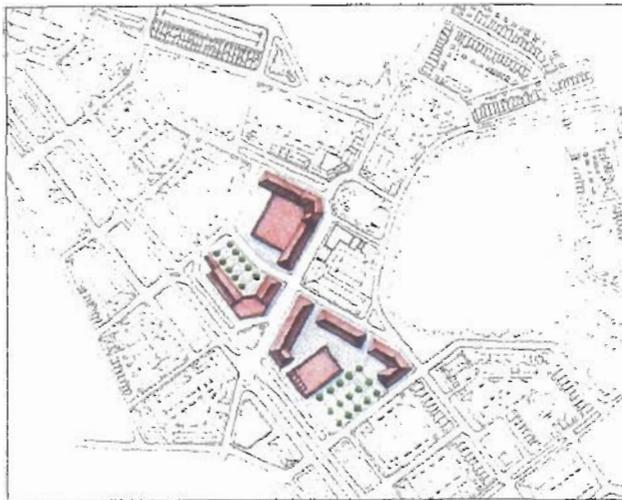
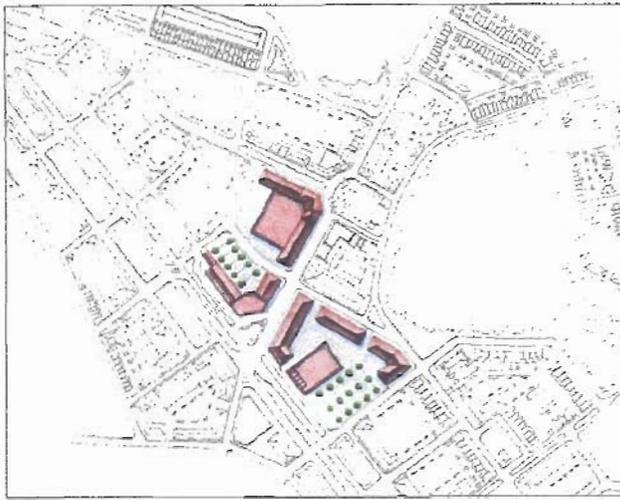
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New Streets Diagram

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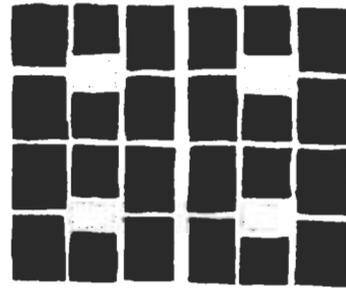
Alternative Development Scenarios for the Plan

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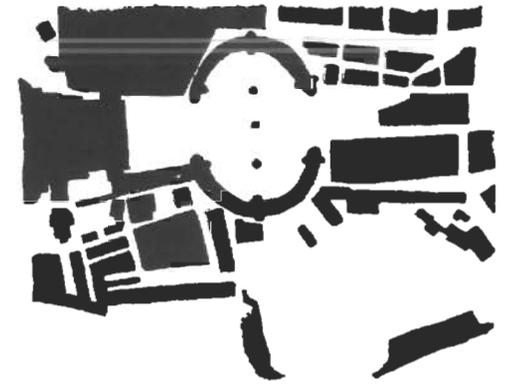
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Winter Springs vs. Savannah



Winter Springs vs. Saint Peter's Square



Winter Springs vs. Venice



Scale Comparisons

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