



*Prepared for:*  
City of Delray Beach Downtown Development Authority

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## INTRODUCTION



*Figure 1: The Delray Beach Central Business District stretches nearly two miles from I-95 to the coastline and has become one of the most desirable downtowns in the state and region.*

### Executive Summary

This study finds there are several short- to long-term strategies to improve the commercial health and urban experience of downtown Delray Beach. Over the past 20 years, the study area has evolved into a leading downtown with vibrant dining and entertainment, sought-after shops and an increasing supply of opportunities to live and work in the district. However, the evolution has not been without growing pains and the city and supporting organizations are constantly refining the design and regulations necessary to maintain the downtown's desirability to residents and visitors. By understanding and implementing best practices of the retail and real estate development industries while enforcing many reasonable existing regulations, Delray Beach can continue its growth and refinement in a measured and market-driven approach.

The task of managing and maintaining an outstanding downtown is complex. The ability to centralize design, tenant mix and leasing, maintenance, marketing and pedestrian and traffic flow brought about the proliferation of indoor shopping malls and lifestyle centers for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, often at the expense of nearby downtowns. While shopping centers are still a viable land use, a renewed interest in urban living, working, shopping and dining, has positioned downtowns like Delray Beach to reclaim market share and attract the amenities and development to improve the quality of life for the community. Yet, the cohesive management of the shopping center is now expected by the downtown shopper and it is the duty of the downtown and the city to determine how best to deliver this level of service.

The following analysis provides best practices for current issues facing the downtown, a comprehensive study of the existing conditions and a review of adopted plans and regulations, each with recommendations and strategies to achieve sustainable downtown commerce and vibrant community life. Additionally, an overall merchandising strategy for the study area and a schedule of short- to long-term recommendations will summarize the findings. Coordinating implementation and assigning duties to the responsible parties will be essential for any recommendations to successfully impact downtown commerce. Similarly, educating and soliciting



cooperation from the business owners and workers and the development community can ensure the public and private sectors are in stride and invested in the collective success of Delray Beach.

## CURRENT ISSUES



*Figure 2: Parking management and the implementation of metered parking are controversial topics in Delray Beach.*

### Downtown Parking

Parking is one of the most critical issues facing any retailer or shopping district today. People do not have to shop and will often avoid downtown commercial districts if parking is difficult to find or challenging. Easy-to-use, clean, well-lit parking is essential to the sustainability of shopping districts and their individual stores. It should be logically organized, hassle-free, and nonthreatening to the consumer. There is an inverse correlation between the time it takes for consumers to find a place to park and then walk to stores or restaurants and the amount of time they are willing to spend shopping or dining.

The primary goal of parking management is to ensure the shopper is able to find convenient parking near their destination. A well-calibrated parking plan will leave approximately 10 percent of on-street stalls available with turnover of 15 to 20 times per day, while off-street or garage parking should always be readily available with turnover of three to five times per day. Often, municipalities will primarily consider the revenues or return-on-investment generated by a parking plan, however a revenue-focused system is likely to trade profits at the expense of customer experience, be perceived as a greedy money grab and can create animosity with business owners and shoppers. A consumer-focused system is most likely to have the greatest impact through increased retail sales, increased property values and effective turnover. Many consumer-focused systems are profitable, but the profits are directly reinvested into the downtown community through additional parking garage construction or increased maintenance, landscaping, events or administrative support.

To ensure Delray Beach implements a consumer-driven parking management plan, this study recommends:

- Phased implementation of metered parking throughout the downtown district. Ideally, meters would first be installed for a trial period in the busiest area of downtown - presumably Atlantic Avenue between Swinton and Fifth Avenue. The trial period is intended to refine the quality of the customer experience, pricing, hours of operation, outreach, enforcement and maintenance. The phasing would continue to the areas with the next highest demand for on-street parking and then throughout the downtown. Time is the new luxury. Most shoppers in downtowns will gladly pay a reasonable fee for

convenient metered parking. Parking meters are the only proven method for deterring business owners and their employees from parking directly in front of their stores.



**Figure 3:** Old-fashioned meters are preferred by downtown shoppers and are now able to accept credit card or mobile payments. Kiosk or pay stations are difficult to use and add unnecessary time to the shopping experience.

- Install individual, old-fashioned coin-operated parking meters that may also accept credit cards or payment through any number of mobile phone applications. The old-fashioned meter is underrated in importance and is crucial to the success of a vibrant downtown. Meters are familiar and easy to use, require little reading to understand, and tend to work in even the most severe weather. Coins are easily carried in pockets or stored in cars and can be exchanged for paper currency from sympathetic business owners and fellow shoppers.
- Clustered parking pay stations should be avoided. These stations are reported to offer shoppers greater convenience because they can be programmed to accept credit cards and paper currency. City managers and urban designers prefer clustered meters because they eliminate individual meters, shortening the time needed for collections and enforcement. Unfortunately, clustered parking meters are nearly impossible for some shoppers to use.

Even well-designed pay stations require multiple steps and careful reading of detailed instructions. Elderly, visually impaired, or non-English-reading users may find the machines difficult to use. These machines also lengthen the duration of the parking event considerably: users must find their stall numbers, locate the pay station, walk from their cars and then deal with the machine. In some cases, a pay receipt must be placed inside the vehicle, requiring users to return to their cars. If the station is located in the opposite direction from the desired retail store, the shopper may have to walk a considerable distance out of his or her way to pay for parking. Although the time and distances required to pay at a remote station may be only minutes, the whole experience can be frustrating to many shoppers, exaggerating their perception of difficult-to-use or inconvenient parking. It cannot be overemphasized that time is the new luxury and asking shoppers to pay for inconvenient parking is counterproductive and shortsighted.

- More frugal or long-term shoppers should be given an opportunity to park in more remote spaces. Ideally, garages should be free for the first two hours or at least be very inexpensive. Surface lots should be metered at an inexpensive rate.

- Business owners and workers should be offered monthly permit parking in garages or surface lots. The monthly cost should be reasonable and affordable ranging from \$20-\$50 per month. Many downtown workers earn modest wages and burdensome parking cost may force them to find employment elsewhere, shrinking the labor pool for business owners. Downtown on-street parking permits for Delray Beach residents are not recommended.
- Continually monitor and calibrate the pricing and hours of operation for parking. The most desirable or often filled spaces should charge at least double the cost of less convenient spaces. A proven metric is to determine the price that yields 10 percent availability of spaces per block. Parking enforcement should start at 10 AM and extend to midnight. A two- to three-hour time limit should be in effect for all on-street and surface parking except for surface lot stalls required for employee parking.
- Valet parking services should be centrally procured by the city for the benefit of all retailers and restaurants. Valet stands should be located on secondary streets intersecting Atlantic Avenue and should be prohibited on Atlantic. Reserved valet spaces in parking garages and surface lots should be the least convenient shopper spaces.
- Commission a parking capacity and utilization study to assist in pricing and to determine if additional garage parking is necessary. A parking study should determine the number of parking spaces per 1,000 square feet of ground floor commercial; the target for a vibrant downtown is 4 spaces per 1,000 sf. The last comprehensive look at downtown parking was completed during the 2002 Downtown Master Plan. The parking ratio at that time was 11 per 1,000 sf and there were two proposed locations for a parking garage that have since been developed to a higher and better use. The parking study should also determine the number and location of surface parking stalls that should be used for monthly employee parking. Ideally, the majority of employee parking would be concentrated in the garages, but this may not be practical without a city owned garage east of the rail road.

#### National Chains



**Figure 4:** Delray Beach has a complementary mixture of national and local retailers.

Prior to World War II, national retailers existed only in towns and central business districts, not in the suburbs. Brooks Brothers, Sears Roebuck, and Woolworth were among the hundreds of national retail chains that were located across the United States in both historic downtowns and central business districts. Today many city planners and policymakers discourage regional or



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national retailers from opening in their historic centers. They prefer instead to focus on unique stores that cannot be found at shopping malls. Often the premise of this logic is that chain retailers will spoil their town's unique character and charm, and/or national retailers will result in a zero-sum game that will cause a locally-owned business to close. However, most shoppers patronize national retailers who offer merchandise, quality, and prices they have grown accustomed to. Often, residents will need to leave their community and drive a considerable distance to shop at these stores.

There are several strategies to successfully integrate national retailers into the unique character of Delray Beach and to create complementary relationships with regional and local retailers. National retailers and franchises downtown allow residents and visitors to more fully complete their shopping within the Delray Beach community, instead of leaving for suburban shopping centers. As such, national retailers with their highly focused research, planning, management and marketing strategies can serve as anchors or draws for the downtown and expose more consumers to local shops. These standards and strategies may also "raise-the-bar" in terms of shopper expectations and promote healthy competition and cross-shopping within the district. Increasingly, national chains embrace local character and will modify their standard store formats and signage to adapt to a town's distinctive characteristics.

Many national retailers already exist in downtown Delray Beach including: Tommy Bahama, Fresh Produce, Urban Outfitters, J. McLaughlin, Chicco's, Patchington, Sunglass Hut, Publix, Burger Fi, Subway, Dunkin' Donuts, Starbucks, Ben & Jerry's and Domino's Pizza. Similarly, there are several smaller national or regional chains or franchises in downtown Delray Beach. In order to maintain a complementary relationship between national and local retailers, this study recommends:

- National retailers must conform to the highest standards of the land development regulations, architectural design guidelines and downtown master plan.
- National retailers deploying in traditional or historic Delray Beach storefronts must maintain the general design of the original building and may not cover original facades or historic signage.
- The optimal proportion of national, regional and local retailers and restaurants is evenly split into thirds. Should the proportion of national and regional chains exceed two-thirds, a temporary moratorium should be in effect to determine if the standard is still appropriate and if there have been any negative consequences to the downtown district. Regional and national retail experts should be consulted to determine if the market is resulting in unintended inefficiencies.
- Realized increases in property values, sales tax or permit fees from national retailers should be used towards short-term rental assistance, technical assistance, education, façade improvement grants and pop-up or incubator space for local retailers.
- New development projects should be encouraged to include a variety of retail store sizes, particularly small stores (500 sf to 1,000 sf), which may specifically be suitable for local retailers.
- National retailers should be encouraged to join the DDA and/or other downtown committees and remain active in the local community.

## EXISTING CONDITIONS DISCUSSION



**Figure 5:** Delray Beach is comprised of several districts with unique retailers contributing to a well-rounded urban experience.

To more fully understand the current dynamics of the Delray Beach study area, Gibbs Planning Group (GPG) completed a week-long site visit in August of 2017. More than a dozen focus groups with various stakeholders, residents and shoppers were held to gather various perspectives on how the study area is currently operating and how it could better meet the community's broad needs. Additionally, one-on-one interviews with many retailers and elected and appointed officials were completed to ascertain the overall health of the district and efficacy of the policies in place to ensure competitive retail sales. Lastly, every block of the study area was walked and driven at various times throughout the week to observe shopper and retailer behavior, existing physical conditions of the streetscape and storefronts, walkability, vehicular circulation and open space use. The following sections summarize the findings of this site visit with follow-up discussion to facilitate improved retail appeal and consumer experience.

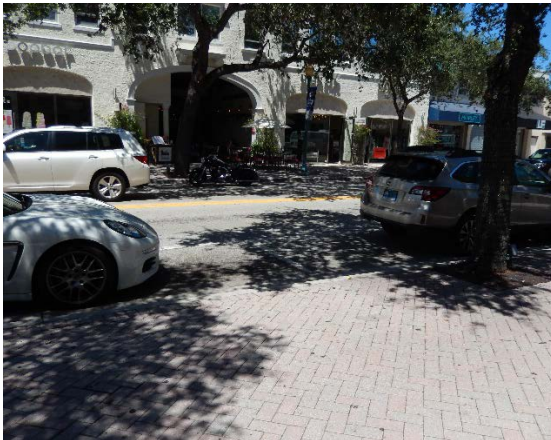
### Parking



**Observation:** The Robert Federspiel Public Parking Garage lacks adequate signage or other indicators visible from the street level to guide shoppers and visitors to convenient parking.

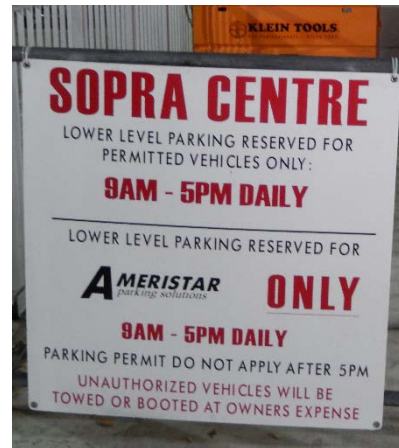
**Discussion:** Public parking should be visible and easy to locate. Parking garages offer convenient parking for shoppers and visitors who have planned for an extended trip to the downtown district,

however, patrons should not have to spend undue time searching for readily available parking. Often, the perception of a lack of parking can frustrate visitors and negatively impact their likelihood of returning. The Federspiel Parking Garage should be denoted by a non-ambiguous wayfinding sign at the corner of Atlantic Avenue and First Avenue and a projecting blade or marquee sign should be attached to the parking garage, so drivers can easily see and enter the garage after turning from Atlantic.



**Observation:** On-street striping is inefficient and leaves significantly underutilized space.

**Discussion:** On-street parking is essential for downtown retailers and should be maximized. There are several strategies for efficient on-street striping that should be studied by city staff and implemented if found to result in additional spaces.



**Observation:** Too much valuable parking has been reserved for valet and other private uses in disparate parts of the parking garage and the variety of signage lacks cohesion leaving the customer wondering if there is any appropriate place to park.

**Discussion:** The most convenient parking should be reserved for shoppers and visitors. Relegating visitors to the second and third floors is inconvenient, especially when the elevator appears to have been more than temporarily in disrepair. Furthermore, the number, variability and legibility of signs designating valet or private parking are confusing and are cause for another

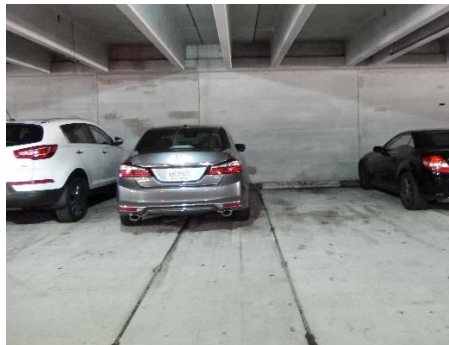


inconvenience to locate parking in the downtown district. Last, valet parking should not utilize prime parking locations within the downtown district.



**Observation:** The elevator was closed with no active signs of repairs underway and the stairwell was dirty, penalizing patrons who had to park on the upper floors.

**Discussion:** Elevator repairs should be expeditious, especially when visitors are required to park on the upper levels of a garage. Long-term repairs should be denoted at the entry of the garage to warn patrons who may require elevator use. Stairwells, especially when an elevator is under repair, should be routinely cleaned.



**Observation:** The parking garage is dirty and there are several signs of deferred maintenance that are affecting the comfort and efficiency of parking in the Federspiel Parking Garage.

**Discussion:** Parking, whether on-street or in a garage, is often the first impression a visitor is given of a downtown or shopping destination. If the garage is dirty, poorly signed, vandalized or dimly lit, a visitor is likely to believe the shopping area is as well, and will be less likely to return. Surfaces within the parking garage should be routinely cleaned or washed. Parking spaces should be restriped before fading causes motorists to guess about the location of a space. Painted surfaces should be routinely washed and repainted as necessary. Vandalized surfaces should be repainted entirely - spot coverage is nearly as unappealing as the vandalism.



**Observation:** The floor signs are spray painted stencil suggesting the markings were an after-thought and projecting a cheap image of the city.

**Discussion:** Floor and location signs can be helpful for visitors wishing to remember where they parked. However, the spray-painted markings are cheap and reflect poorly on the city. Temporary signs should be utilized until a more visually appealing, well-crafted replacement is found.



**Observation:** There are a variety of public and private on-street parking options with a variety of signage which can be confusing to shoppers and visitors.

**Discussion:** Parking signage should be consolidated into a singular, straightforward design that allows visitors to easily find available parking. The parking signage could be a part of an overall branding and wayfinding strategy. Coordination between public and private lots should aim to limit confusion and ensure an efficient system in place. Alternatively, the city could purchase the private lots and comprehensively manage on-street and off-street parking.





**Observation:** The variety of parking time limits are inefficient, unproductive and seldom enforced.

**Discussion:** Time limits are difficult to enforce, and the amount and variety of signage required for this type of parking management is confusing for visitors and unnecessarily clutters the streetscape. Parking meters are the most straightforward method for managing downtown parking and should charge a premium for the most desirable and convenient parking spaces. Metered parking should include a uniform two- to three-hour time limit with the option to add additional time. A comprehensive plan for employee parking should be implemented parallel to metered parking.



**Observation:** The library parking lot and the county court parking garage are underutilized parking that could be used on evenings and weekends.

**Discussion:** The library surface parking lot and county court parking garage are within a five-minute walk of many downtown restaurants and retailers. As such, these parking spaces should be signed as downtown parking and used during busy nights and weekends. Additionally, these lots should be used by valet companies to free up valuable parking spaces in the other downtown garages.



**Observation:** Several private, off-street parking lots lack coherence and confuse shoppers.

**Discussion:** Navigating the myriad of parking options in Delray Beach can be particularly challenging even for the familiar visitor. Ideally, parking available to the public would be consolidated or managed by the same entity with cohesive signage, operations and standards. If not, parking signage standards and regulations for enforcement would present a more friendly and navigable system. Similarly, parking information and location maps should be easy to find in the downtown, at information kiosks, online and on mobile apps or enabled websites.

### Signage & Wayfinding



**Observation:** The downtown wayfinding map is dated, cluttered, difficult to read and unimaginative.

**Discussion:** Downtown wayfinding signage is an integral part of district branding and is essential for attracting and retaining visitors. The existing signage is visually unappealing, hard to understand and likely to be overlooked. The image on the right is taken from Santa Monica's Third Street Promenade. The sculptural nature of the wayfinding map is meant to signal the maps significance to visitors, while the map is prominent and visually appealing, with the directory to the right and other pertinent information below. Wayfinding maps should be updated annually or more frequently if necessary. Visually appealing and effective wayfinding signage and maps are



required if Delray Beach is to maintain its position as a desirable, nationally recognized shopping and dining destination.



**Observation:** There are a variety of wayfinding themes that add to visitor confusion and fall short of an effective branding opportunity.

**Discussion:** Wayfinding is best implemented as a comprehensive district, if not city-wide, system. The variety of designs currently in the downtown district are confusing and lacking the caliber of design seen elsewhere in the district; the Arts Garage monument sign, in particular and ironically, would make most design professionals cringe. The traditional and most widely implemented “Welcome to Delray Beach: Village by the Sea” wayfinding and branding is dated and in need of reinvigoration, creating an opportune time for Delray Beach and the downtown district to devise a comprehensive, effective and visually appealing wayfinding systems reflective of the image the community and merchants want to reflect.



**Observation:** The Downtown Roundabout signage lacks excitement and is an underutilized resource. There are no benches at the Downtown Roundabout stops despite 20- to 30-minute headway times. Conversely, the Downtowner shuttle service is poorly advertised despite its success.

**Discussion:** The Downtown Roundabout is an effective form of transportation along Atlantic Avenue, but the name of the service and the informational signage fails to make an emotional or nostalgic connection with potential riders. The use of the Roundabout should be integrated into

the overall parking strategy to incentivize use of underutilized parking lots for long-term visitors. The individual stops along the route should be well-maintained and include seating for patrons who are waiting for the service. Additionally, there is little to no information about the Downtowner service; a common queue area along Atlantic and an informational kiosk would be helpful for visitors unfamiliar with the program.



**Observation:** A number of street signs have been vandalized and are in need of repair and cleaning.

**Discussion:** Vandalized signage should be repaired immediately or replaced. The perception of frequent vandalism can impact visitor's sense of safety and ultimately call into question the quality and value of the goods and services sold by downtown businesses. Surfaces that patrons frequently contact, such as the crosswalk sign and button, should be cleaned daily.



**Observation:** Wayfinding signage, light poles and banners are worn and ineffective.

**Discussion:** Hardware, such as light and signage poles, should be repainted annually due to the fading effect of the Florida sun. Similarly, wayfinding signage and banners should be replaced every 3 to 5 years or when signs of fading or cracking appear. Mounting hardware should be used instead of “zip-ties” and preferably painted to match the poles. There are mounting products and banners that are designed for high-wind areas.



## Site Furnishings



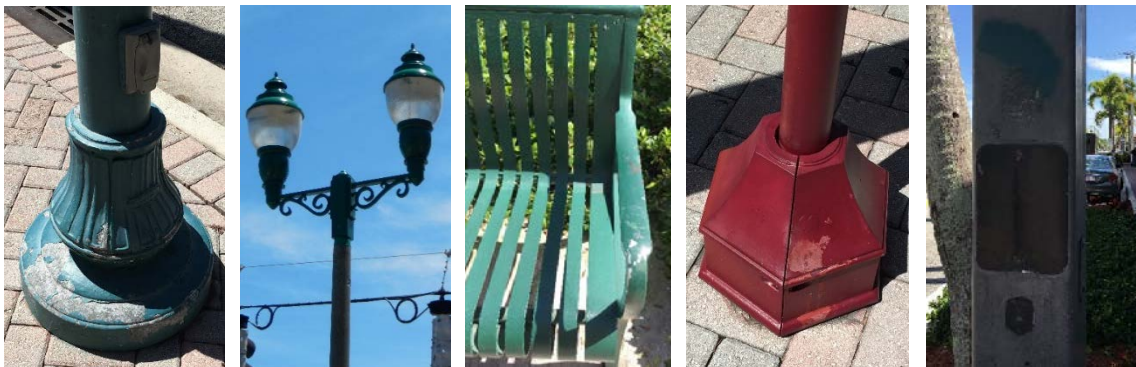
**Observation:** There are many creative installations of street furnishings, however old furnishings and a lack of consistency make for a confusing environment.

**Discussion:** The sculptural site furnishings appeal to the artistic nature of the downtown district; however, there may be some confusion that they are intended to be used. For seldom used furniture, a creative installation could be used to illustrate the use, such as a brightly painted used bicycle appropriately attached to a bike rack. Over time, the old site furnishings should be phased out in favor of the new sculptural elements.



**Observation:** The city uses a variety of trash receptacles with no clear theme.

**Discussion:** Consistency with site furnishings is important for the perceived cohesiveness of the downtown district. Multiple models and multiple colors are unnecessary and should be consolidated to one design that can be re-ordered as necessary.



**Observation:** Street furnishings are painted a variety of colors and many need to be repainted.



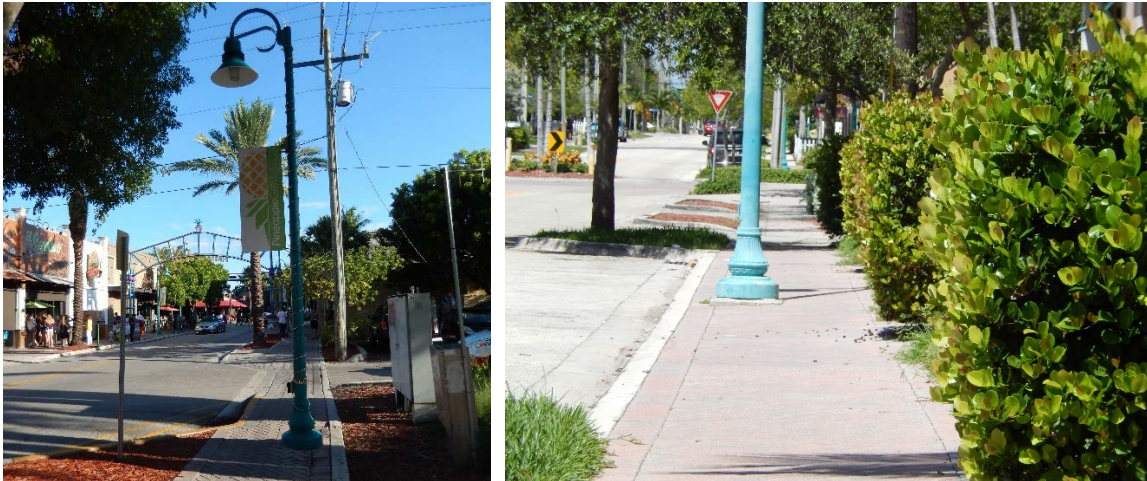
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**Discussion:** Delray Beach should consolidate the variety of colored furnishings to one standard color and maintain the furnishings with annual repainting or more frequently if necessary.



**Observation:** The trash receptacle liners are a poorly functioning after-thought.

**Discussion:** There are several models of trash liners designed for the receptacles in the downtown district. Those in current use are cheap, poorly functioning and in need of replacement. A serviceable trash liner should be durable, shield from the elements, mask unpleasant odors, be easily cleaned and emptied and limit unsightly piling of trash when near capacity.



**Observation:** Light-pole placement creates narrow walkways that can particularly problematic for strollers and wheelchairs.

**Discussion:** Light pole, wayfinding signage, street furniture and landscaping placement should be analyzed to ensure there is, at a minimum, 32 inches of clear width to accommodate wheelchairs and strollers. Along more densely traveled routes the minimum clear width should be 60 inches.

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## Opportunity Sites



**Observation:** Old School Square is bordered by the Arts Garage and a surface parking lot behind buildings and is an underutilized public space.

**Discussion:** Atlantic Avenue is lacking in well used public spaces despite the large Old School Square being located just one block south. Detracting from Old School Square's appeal is its size, lack of activity and surrounding land uses - a surface parking lot and the blank wall of a parking garage. This space would be more actively used if lined with shops that shield from the unsightly parking uses and attract people throughout the day. Many of the best public squares include restaurants, coffee shops and a variety of small retailers.



**Observation:** Large parcels with buildings set back from the street could be enhanced with liner shops.

**Discussion:** Large setbacks and parking lots are a detriment to the walkability of the study area and represent advantageous locations for infill development. Liner buildings as narrow as 15 to 25 feet can deploy ground-floor uses to the street frontage and un-tap previously unrealized real estate value. Small liner buildings allow the existing uses to maintain their operation and visibility



while supplying desirable locations for local and small national retailers and increasing the vibrancy of the street life. Furthermore, the zoning code and master plan “call(s) for redevelopment of existing buildings in a manner that places storefronts close to the street and parking in the rear. Where existing buildings are separated from the pedestrian ways by wide landscaped areas, the addition of arcades and new building square footage to bring the storefronts closer to the street is encouraged.”



**Observation:** Atlantic Avenue, west of Swinton, has several advantageous development sites that are currently vacant.

**Discussion:** Several large and contiguous parcels along Atlantic Avenue represent some of the most desirable and development ready property in the region. The City should host a developer’s workshop to determine the existing hurdles to realizing development on these sites and the highest and best use for the properties. There is likely to be several uses and prospective tenants that are looking to enter the market and may not be able to do so east of Winton due to property values and available parcels.



**Observation:** The city-owned visitor information center is a valuable and presently underutilized piece of real estate.



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**Discussion:** The intersection of A1A and Atlantic Avenue is an important entry to the study area and should encourage visitors to shop and dine in Delray Beach. While an information center and public restrooms are worthwhile uses, the physical space required to provide these amenities does not require the entirety of the site, freeing up valuable and visible real estate. Pop-up shops, a café and flex space that can adjust to seasonal needs are a few uses that could enliven this intersection and increase the quality of experience for beachgoers. This building should be designed to a high-standard, meeting if not exceeding the regulations set for other storefronts in the study area.

### **Walkability & Bikeability**



**Observation:** “Desire paths” illustrate inefficient streetscape design and the more efficient paths pedestrians chose to take.

**Discussion:** Desire paths are areas where plantings or grass no longer grow because they have been trampled by frequent foot traffic. This is an indication that a streetscape design failed to account for how pedestrians would realistically travel through the area. The photo on the left shows the need for a mid-block crossing on Atlantic in between Swinton and First, while the photo on the right demonstrates that traffic circles can be confusing for pedestrians and the current paving exacerbates the confusion. All desire paths should be audited throughout the study area and assessed for permanent paving or corrections to the streetscape.



**Observation:** The street detailing in Pineapple Grove more clearly delineates the pedestrian crosswalk than along Atlantic Avenue.

**Discussion:** The Atlantic crosswalk directs pedestrians towards the middle of the intersection and, combined with the crown of the street, can be particularly hard to navigate for patrons with disabilities or in a wheelchair. The intersection of First Street and Second Avenue more clearly delineates the pedestrian crosswalk, although the concrete detail should be reinforced with reflective paint to be more visible to motorists.



**Observation:** Dedicated right-turn lanes or “deceleration lanes” unnecessarily remove on-street parking, widen the distance required for a pedestrian to cross the street and encourage excessive vehicular speeds.

**Discussion:** Deceleration lanes are not appropriate in an urban, walkable context and often cause erratic driving as motorists swerve around queued cars at a stop light. Moreover, the additional lane extends the distance to cross a street by 10- to 12-feet and pedestrians must contend with cars attempting to turn right during a red light. Last, deceleration lanes generally extend a full block, removing the potential on-street parking that could be in its place. Deceleration lanes along Atlantic should be studied for their traffic impacts if removed and weighed against the benefits to on-street parking and walkability.



**Observation:** The Second Avenue bike lanes abruptly end at the entrance to Pineapple Grove.

**Discussion:** Encouraging nearby residents to walk or bike is important for preserving valuable parking spaces for visitors. While it is not always feasible to extend a bike lane into and through a



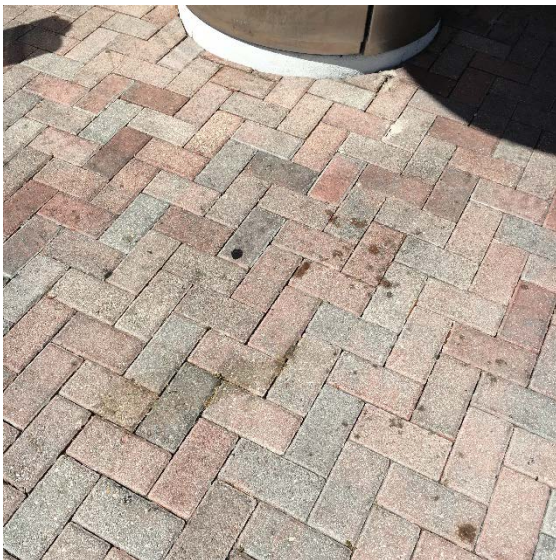
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downtown, signage and other pavement markings (“sharrows”) can clearly designate a bike route, encouraging cyclists and cautioning motorists of the multiple uses permitted on the street.



**Observation:** Brick pavers are buckling in and causing tripping hazards.

**Discussion:** Pavers add character to streetscape design, but poor design or installation can quickly result in loose bricks, serious tripping hazards and unsightly buckling. Buckling pavers should be fixed immediately or removed in favor of a safer alternative.



**Observation:** Public sidewalks are dirty and stained.

**Discussion:** Top retail destinations, public and private, power wash sidewalks and other public surfaces on a weekly basis or more if necessary. Whether it is the responsibility of the individual business owners or a central management authority, pedestrian spaces should be clean and regularly maintained. A shopper associates a dirty public realm with crime, homelessness, poor fiscal stewardship, lackadaisical management and place that is past its prime; the least of which is counterproductive for a successful downtown.





**Observation:** Overgrown plants are encroaching on valuable sidewalk space.

**Discussion:** Lush landscaping is essential to the character and feel of Delray Beach. Conversely, overgrown or unmaintained landscaping can detract from the image of the study area. Public and private landscaping should be routinely maintained especially when it encroaches upon public sidewalks.

### Outdoor Dining



**Observation:** Temporary umbrellas and canopies protruding into the sidewalk squeeze passing pedestrians into limited sidewalk space.

**Discussion:** Outdoor dining is a desirable activity in vibrant downtowns, however should not be arranged at the expense of a comfortable walk for other pedestrians. The image on the left shows a narrow sidewalk that would require two pedestrians to walk single-file. Similarly, the image on the right demonstrates an uncomfortable “tunnel” caused by umbrellas. Generally, sidewalks should maintain a width that would allow two parents with strollers to walk side-by-side. Temporary umbrellas should be replaced by more thoughtful and well-designed shade solutions.



**Observation:** Outdoor dining arrangements seem unregulated, creating “pinch-points” in the public right-of-way, while making little contribution to the public realm.

**Discussion:** Outdoor dining standards should more strictly regulate the design and dimension of dining corrals. As previously stated, outdoor dining should still allow for free and easy travel for passersby and should contribute to the public realm. The example on the left is overgrown and is designed for a back-patio rather than sidewalk. In fact, it is difficult for the visitor to ascertain that the installation is designed for dining and blocks the view of the storefront. The example on the right is well-designed, however it protrudes in to the sidewalk which combined with the adjacent tree and buckling pavement, creates and pinch-point that could be uncomfortable for passing pedestrians - especially strollers and wheelchairs.

### Storefronts



**Observation:** Strip commercial buildings detract from the overall aesthetics of a vibrant shopping street with plain storefronts and unimaginative signs.

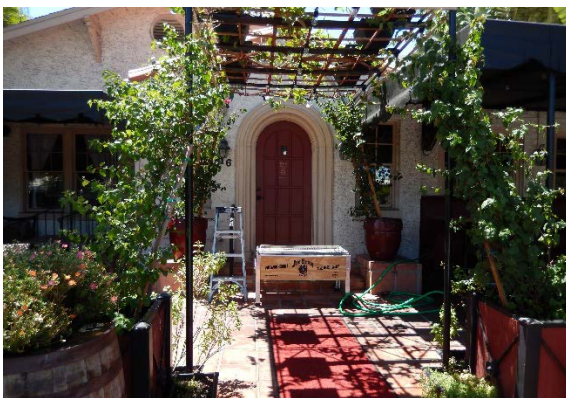
**Discussion:** Many downtowns are essentially collections of strip retail centers organized along a Main Street. However, downtowns should differentiate from the more conventional or suburban strip centers with individual and unique storefronts, architectural variety and non-uniform signage. Uniformity causes individual retailers to blend together and fails to highlight the unique goods and services offered by each merchant. Shoppers likely glaze over these buildings or walk past without giving them the same attention as other collections of shops in the study area. Signage and storefront standards for these buildings could be tied to planned development agreements, and may need revision to enable more imaginative storefronts.





**Observation:** Internally lit plastic signs fall short of the high sign aesthetic found elsewhere in the study area.

**Discussion:** Well-designed and properly scaled signage contributes to strong retail sales and an attractive downtown. As shown on the right and exemplified by many downtown storefronts, excellent commercial signage reinforces the unique nature of Delray Beach and forms the impression that its businesses offer true value, specialized goods and quality services. Internally illuminated box signs are bulky, often have a tacked-on appearance and can produce glare that causes the eye to squint, narrowing its view of the storefront. Similarly, signs painted directly on buildings lack visual depth and tend to fade or peel creating an eyesore. The sign code and building standards should be reviewed and optimized to achieve effect signage and a design review board should be formed to encourage creativity and recognize unique business circumstances of building conditions that require variances.



**Observation:** Some businesses close or block off their front doors, detracting from the level of street activity.

**Discussion:** The front door of a business is an important threshold between the private and public realms and is a significant contributor to vibrant street-life. A closed front door suggests the pedestrian is not welcome and may even signal that a business is closed - at best it makes for an awkward first entry attempt for the ambitious visitor. Ground-floor businesses should be required to have an operable primary entry along the prominent streets in the study area and store layout and display should reinforce the use of this primary entrance. Secondary entries on the side or rear of a business should be allowed, but not at the expense of desirable street activity.



**Observation:** Dark-tinted windows prevent would-be customers from seeing the interior of a business and detract from the street experience by effectively creating a blank wall.

**Discussion:** Shoppers feel unsafe entering a business they cannot see inside, and the zoning regulations require transparent glass defined as “non-solar, non-mirrored, glass with a light transmission reduction of no more than 20 percent.” Dark-tinted windows limit the opportunity for window shopping and pedestrians are known to walk faster along tinted storefronts. As a result, businesses are compelled to use tacky signage or other gimmicks to alert shoppers that there is an operable business behind the dark façade. While glare from the sun and greenhouse heat gain are valid concerns, modern glass can avoid these adverse conditions while maintaining a clear appearance. Furthermore, shades, blinds, sails, louvers and working shutters are a few design solutions which can increase architectural variety and provide relief from the sun. Lastly, limited air conditioning cost savings from tinted windows would likely be offset by the 12 to 20 percent increase in sales experienced by stores with natural lighting.



**Observation:** Non-traditional storefronts in The Set could benefit from façade improvements that bring them up to a traditional Main Street standard.

**Discussion:** Fifth Avenue is the historic commercial core of The Set, but many of the buildings lack the architectural integrity of a traditional Main Street. The Set need not imitate Atlantic Avenue, but should incorporate standards for ground-floor storefronts that encourage traditional window and door proportions, signage, lighting and awnings. To promote the reuse of these buildings, the City should hire an architecture firm to prepare potential façade improvements for



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key buildings within The Set and offer grants for businesses wishing to deploy in the area and incorporate the improvements.



**Observation:** Standard aluminum storefronts are more appropriate for suburban shopping centers than a desirable urban downtown.

**Discussion:** Storefronts are often the first impression a visitor retains of a shopping district and its individual stores. A cheap storefront suggests to the customer the business offers lesser quality and generic goods and services. Storefronts should appear custom or handmade and accentuate the uniqueness of the study area. Storefronts should change with new tenants and longstanding businesses should update their stores every six to eight years. At a minimum, aluminum storefronts should be powder coated with a dark color that accentuates the window merchandising.



**Observation:** Worn and tattered storefronts detract from the shopping environment.

**Discussion:** Visible signs of weathered and worn storefronts should be identified once per quarter and promptly fixed. The example on the left shows an awning well-beyond its useful life with torn edges and peeled detailing, while the example on the right shows bulging stucco and obvious signs of a previous storefront design; both instances undervalue otherwise wonderful products sold inside and could have been repaired easily.



**Observation:** Windows filled with signage and blank walls create an unfriendly sidewalk environment.

**Discussion:** Well-designed storefronts allow shoppers to look into a store and allow storeowners and workers to monitor the street. Cluttering storefronts with signs and merchandise is tacky and effectively creates a wall between the store and the shopper. There are several more engaging solutions for attracting customers into a store including limited sidewalk displays, curated window displays, handmade sandwich boards, a front-and-center table, a contrasting color along the interior back wall, well-lit interiors, an open door and appropriate music to name a few. Similarly, blank walls are intimidating and perceived to be less-safe without the surveillance of store operators. The zoning regulations state “blank walls shall not exceed a length of 50 feet, or 20 percent of the length of the building facing the street, whichever is less.” If possible, windows should be installed on blank walls, otherwise murals, displays, lighting and a number of other treatments listed in the zoning code can soften the space and improve walkability.

## ADOPTED PLAN & CODE REVIEW



**Figure 6:** There are several plans with implications for downtown Delray Beach.

To ensure the adopted plans, codes, regulations and proposed plans concerning the study area are working and promoting vibrant and sustainable commerce, GPG reviewed the Land Development Regulations, the Central Business District Architectural Design Guidelines, The Downtown Master Plan, The Set Transformation Plan, Old School Square Master Plan and the most recent market study and merchandising plan. Under the lens of commercial vitality, the following discussion offers innovative and contemporary strategies for improving long-establish

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plans and regulations in a manner that encourages sustainable development and vibrant community life.

### **Land Development Regulations**

The Delray Beach LDR's are the guiding principles for development in the study area. Presented as standard Euclidean zoning, there are many regulations which are out-of-date or working at cross-purposes of a vibrant downtown district. Moreover, there are redundancies and overlays which can be confusing and vagueness which can be discouraging for the development community. It is recommended that all of the standards be consolidated and illustrated for the central business district in a format that is direct and easy to understand. Should a more piecemeal approach be favored, the following detail individual sections should be considered for revision:

**Section 4.3.3. Live/work units:** The occupant of the residential unit must be the proprietor or owner of the business that occupies the nonresidential portion of the building.

**Discussion:** Consider allowing live/work residents the option to rent the storefront space to an outside proprietor or owner. Doing so may improve the supportability of this building type and diversify the residential and commercial market.

**Section 4.3.3. Hotels and Motels:** Minimum floor area. Each sleeping room shall contain a minimum floor area of 325 square feet including closets and baths.

**Discussion:** Consider removing sleeping room minimum floor area requirement. The market is adept at determining the marketable size of hotel rooms and the present requirement is dated if not arbitrary.

### **Section 4.3.4. Development Standards Matrix**

**Discussion:** Consider removing minimum floor area for duplexes and multi-family dwelling units. The market is adept at determining the marketable size of residential units and the present requirement is dated if not arbitrary.

**Section 4.4.13-5 Central Core and Beach Sub-Districts Regulating Plan:** On Primary Streets, Secondary Street uses (including parking garage levels) shall be lined along the street for a depth of at least 20 feet on all stories by a use permitted on all streets.

**Discussion:** The Robert Federspiel Garage should have been lined with an acceptable use along the ground floor given the primary street designation for 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue.

### **Section 4.4.13-6. West Atlantic Neighborhood Sub-District Regulating Plan & 4.4.13. (C) (3) (c)**

**Discussion:** Consider adding required retail frontage along Fifth Avenue. The current regulation requires 50 percent of building frontages of the sidewalk level story be for retail, services and hotel, however all buildings should be designed to accommodate retail and three out of the four corners of every intersection along Fifth Avenue in the sub-district should have retail frontage along Fifth Avenue

**Section 4.4.13-8 Primary and Secondary Street Uses:** Residential units, including multi-family and live-work, are not permitted in the sidewalk-level story on streets with Required Retail Frontage.



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**Discussion:** Live-work units should fulfill the required retail frontage requirement in all areas except along Atlantic Avenue in the central core. Furthermore, on all streets except Atlantic Avenue in the central core, multi-family should be allowed as long as the sidewalk level story is designed to be able to accommodate retail use in the future. Waiting for retail uses outside of the central core may be suppressing other beneficial types of development that may eventually make retail supportable.

**Section 4.4.13 (4) (a) Sporting goods/equipment rentals.** The rental of sporting goods and equipment shall be limited to no more than one business renting a specific category of item (i.e. bicycles, skates, etc.) every 300 feet measured in a straight line from door to door.

**Discussion:** Consider removing separation requirement for sporting goods rentals. The market is adept at determining the number of sporting goods stores supportable in the study area and the present requirement is burdensome.

**Section 4.4.13 (4) (c) West Atlantic Neighborhood Commercial Area.** Commercial structures are allowed on NW 5th Avenue, SW 5th Avenue, and may extend up to 150 feet from Atlantic Avenue.

**Discussion:** Commercial structures presently exist more than 1,200 feet from Atlantic Avenue on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue and should be encouraged. The supplemental standard should be removed or re-written to promote neighborhood commercial uses in this historic commercial area.

**Section 4.4.13 (D) Building height.**

**Discussion:** All building height standards should be listed as number of stories and the height in feet should be eliminated. Using a specific height artificially limits developers from building exceptional buildings; the minimum floor heights are reasonable. Except within the Atlantic Avenue Limited Height Area, the maximum number of stories should be increased to five, as this is the generally accepted limitation of wood construction and offers beneficial economies of scale as an incentive for developers.

**Section 4.4.13 (D) Dwelling unit standards.**

**Discussion:** Consider removing maximum proportions for studio and one-bedroom units within projects consisting of 12 or more units and minimum floor area standards. The market is adept at determining the marketable number and size of residential units and these standards may artificially skew the affordability of housing in Delray Beach. Furthermore, changing demographics will see continued increases in the number of single households who favor studio and one-bedroom units.

**Table 4.4.13 (C)**

**Discussion:** Consider eliminating minimum lot width and lot area regulations. Interesting and architecturally significant development can occur on lots as narrow as eight feet. Second, assuming the public ROW includes adequate sidewalk space, there should be no minimum front yard setback in the CBD. Last, density calculations should be eliminated as the market will determine based on marketable unit sizes and parking.

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#### **Section 4.4.13 (I) Dimensional Requirements for Storefronts**

**Discussion:** Consider removing minimum building setback, assuming the public ROW includes adequate sidewalk space. Additionally, the awning requirements should include a minimum clear height.

#### **Section 4.4.13 (L) Minimum Number of Off-Street Parking Spaces Required in the CBD**

**Discussion:** Consider eliminating parking minimums in the CBD in favor of an effectively managed in-lieu fee that is solely used to maintain, purchase and construct a robust public parking system. A seldom enforced in-lieu fee or one that is simply placed into a general fund is negligent and exacerbates the challenges of running an effective and solvent parking system in a downtown.

#### **Section 4.6.7 (E) Sign Design Standards**

**Discussion:** The standards set forth in the zoning code are far too general and broad to produce unique and attractive signs throughout the study area. The study area should have a separate and more detailed sign code with illustrations as shown above. As a rule of thumb, each business should be limited to 1 square foot of signage for each linear foot of storefront and the maximum height for letters should be 10 inches. The base of signs should be at least 8 feet above the sidewalk and should be limited in the length it can project from the building façade. Color, lighting, materials and fabrication are integral and should reflect the region and identity of the business. Standards should be concise but not onerous – a variance process for exceptionally creative, sculptural and well-designed signs is encouraged.

**Section 4.6.7. (F) Valet Parking signs** shall be manufactured and installed by the City. The sign area shall not exceed six square feet in area. Such signs shall be pole mounted and inserted in a ground sleeve. The location of such signs shall be determined by the City. The signs must be removed and stored inside the business daily during business hours when the approved valet queue is not in use.

**Discussion:** The city seems to have relinquished the valet signage duties and this regulation is seldom enforced. Valet signs are most often poorly designed, plastic sandwich boards that can be moved. Valet stations should be well-defined, located off of Atlantic Avenue or in areas of lessened activity and the signage should be more formal.

#### **Section 4.6.8 Lighting & Regulation 6.1.5 Street Lighting**

**Discussion:** The lighting section should be amended with specific standards for the downtown commercial district. The maximum height for luminaries should be 10 to 12 feet to promote a pedestrian scale and to reduce the intensity of light required to illuminate the study area. Externally lit storefronts should contribute to lighting the pedestrian realm and stores should be encouraged to keep window displays lit in the evening to promote after hours window shopping and a more interesting walk.

#### **Section 4.6.16. (H) (5) Special landscape regulation for properties within the Central Business District.**

**Discussion:** Street trees and lush landscaping are an integral part of a vibrant, pedestrian scaled urban shopping district. However, the intersection, driveway and parallel parking island lengths may be limiting valuable pedestrian space without increasing the overall number of street trees. A standard street tree well is 4 feet square and can include understory plantings. Requiring islands

of 8 to 22 feet uniformly is excessive and could better be used for expanded sidewalks and outdoor dining.

### Section 6.1.2 (C) (3) Paving Widths

**Discussion:** Minimum paving widths as presented are ineffective. The standard should detail the minimum and maximum widths for driving lanes (9' minimum and 14' maximum is recommended) and on-street parking dimensions (7' x 18' minimum and 8' x 24' maximum is recommended). Ideally, each category would be illustrated with the range of acceptable design dimensions.

### Section 6.1.3. (B) Sidewalk Design Requirements

**Discussion:** The sidewalk widths should be described as minimums and maximums and should also include a clear width that should be maintained in the central business district.

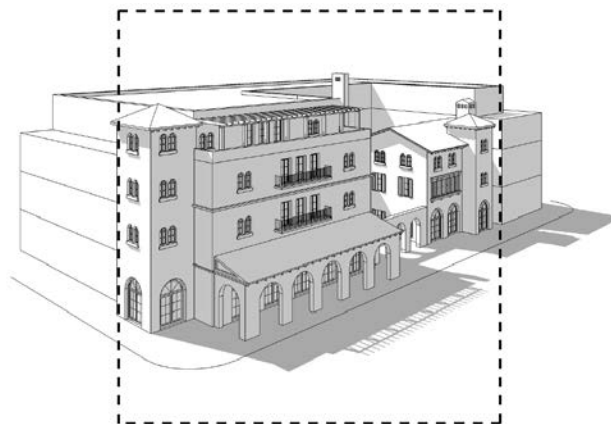
### Regulation 6.3.3. Sidewalk Café

**Discussion:** The existing regulations could be enhanced to encourage improved outdoor dining layouts and overall design of furnishings. The design standards are adequate, but poorly enforced. The most frequently violated standards include: a 7-foot minimum for canopies and umbrellas, a 6-foot clear pedestrian pathway, weekly pressure cleaning of the sidewalk surface, and “quality design, materials and workmanship. . . to enhance the visual and aesthetic quality of the urban environment.”

### Central Business District Architectural Design Guidelines



244 WORTH AVENUE PALM BEACH, FL. This storefront is a modern, sleek design. The clean lines, colors, and materials result in a minimalistic facade that supports the main street environment.



**Figure 7:** The Architectural Design Guidelines offer diagrams and built examples to promote contextually appropriate development in downtown Delray Beach.

The CBD Architectural Guidelines is an excellent document illustrating a variety of contextual building styles appropriate for Delray Beach. Its weakness seems to be its limited enforcement, which may be more an issue of policy than content. Each of the seven architectural styles identified as appropriate for downtown would enrich the overall appearance of the study area and reflect well on the goods and services provided by its businesses.

Within the document, there are a few examples which should be replaced with better quality buildings; namely, the Office Building (Miami, Florida) on page 52, the Mixed-Use Building (West Palm Beach, Florida) and 49 SW Flagler Avenue (Stuart, Florida). Similarly, as a CBD focused



document, the storefront section should be expanded to survey a variety of examples and treatments or further discussion of the storefronts included in each architectural style.

### **Downtown Delray Beach Master Plan**



**Figure 8:** *The Downtown Delray Beach Master Plan is a visionary document for unity and continuity throughout the study area.*

The 2002 Downtown Master Plan is a visionary document which covers several aspects required of a leading downtown district. The goals and objectives identified set forth ambitious, long-term aspirations, many of which are still applicable today. However, many of the specific sites studied during the master plan have since been developed and some of the strategies are dated. It is recommended that the city update that plan or undertake a new plan by 2020. There are several strategies that should continue to be the objective of the city and downtown district. They include:

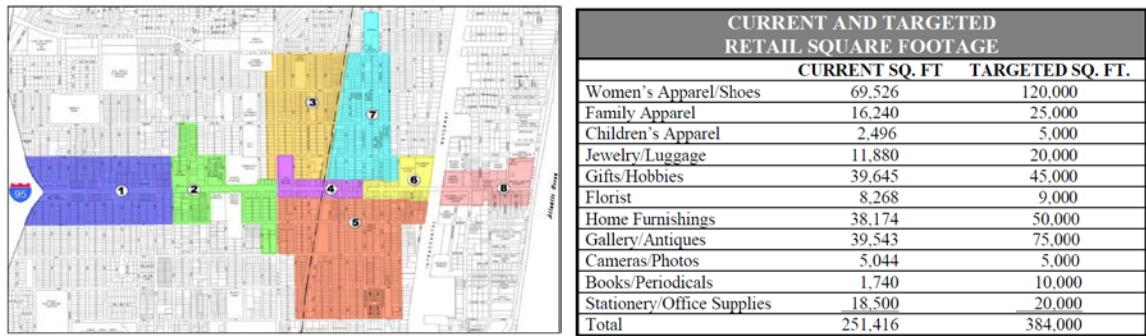
- Consider reopening NE 1st Avenue, between Atlantic Avenue and NE 1st Street. If reopened, the street's redesign should allow it to be closed off during special public events.
- Gradual redevelopment of West Atlantic Avenue with an emphasis on the preservation and enhancement of existing neighborhoods, while promoting a pedestrian friendly corridor that has a mix of residential, commercial, and civic functions. Development of the commercial area would take place with a minimum of displacement of residents.
- Maintain four 11' travel lanes, and a widened 26' median throughout the entire length of Atlantic Avenue from 1-95 to Swinton. Parking lanes should be narrowed to 8'. Plant a double allée of large, native shade trees in the widened median.
- The Master Plan proposes the construction of liner buildings on the Tennis Center parking lot fronting the Avenue, and the creation of a plaza in front of the existing building. These proposed two-story buildings with arcades over the sidewalk and balconies overlooking the tennis center will be a positive use of this valuable land and will make the pedestrian transition between the two districts more inviting, and uninterrupted. The existing parking is relocated behind the liner buildings, as on-street parallel parking along the Avenue and NW 1st Avenue, and angled parking along NW 3rd Avenue.

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- It is this Master Plan's recommendation to establish either a city-wide or a district-wide shared parking program as a first step to solve the perceived parking problems within the Beach and Central Core Districts. It is also important to secure land for future parking needs within the West Atlantic neighborhood.
  - Create a parking pool with incentives that will encourage property owners to put their excess parking stalls in this pool. The City should enter into agreements with the owners of private parking lots so that their lots can be made available for parking for the general public when they are not using them.
  - To control the provision of excessive parking spaces in the downtown area, the code should be changed to include a maximum parking requirement.
  - Establish a valet parking program that uses out-of-the-way parking areas during peak hours. Some restaurants are already doing this on a single basis. A City-wide valet parking program is common in successful downtowns.
  - Analyze the reasons for success or failure of the existing parking programs in place today. The parking situation in Delray makes evident the fact that even though parking programs and incentives exist, they are not being used to their best capacity. Identify the reasons for failure, correct mistakes, if any, and aggressively implement all the necessary programs simultaneously.
  - The City should consider taking over the entire Atlantic Avenue from the FDOT. That would leave the decision-making process of any change to the Avenue, solely to the discretion of the City and its residents.
  - Determine the feasibility of eliminating one of the two turning lanes between NE/SE 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue and sharing a turning lane between northbound and southbound traffic. If this is feasible, increase the width of the sidewalks on both sides of the street.
  - The Master Plan proposes a reconfiguration of the section of Swinton Avenue between Atlantic Avenue and NE 1<sup>st</sup> Street, that will result in a narrower, more effective street. It is important to understand at this point, that capacity is not a direct relation to width. It is not true that the wider a street, the larger the capacity, and this is especially not true at conflictive intersections. Proposed Changes: One 11' travel lane combining left turns and Southbound traffic; One 11' right turn lane; One 11' Northbound lane; 3' curb and gutter; Two 8' on-street parking lanes; Two 14' sidewalks.
  - Allow infill development to occur within the existing private parking lots fronting on Pineapple Grove Way (NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue). This would provide for continuous storefronts along the street, which would encourage greater pedestrian movements. While it may not always be feasible to accommodate this type of infill, the possibility should be explored with every proposal for development or redevelopment on properties which have surface parking adjacent to the street.
  - A 26' median is suggested along Atlantic Avenue for the section between A1A and Gleason Street. This is a gesture that will act as an effective traffic-calming device and at the same time contribute to one's sense of orientation within the City. The result is a townscape that is active without being overly complex. It is a powerful tool that forces people to slow down at one of the most critical intersections of the Avenue. It cuts the pedestrian crossing distance and forces cars to slow down both entering and exiting this

section of town. Proposed Changes: Two 8' on street parking lanes including curb and gutter; Two 11' travel lanes; One 26' median; Two 8' sidewalks.

- In the Beach District, a liner building should be added along the Avenue in front of buildings pushed back from the street line.
- Add an arcade to excessively setback retail buildings in the Beach District. Some retail, like the shopping strip on the 900 block, is setback and separated from the pedestrian by a wide and dense landscaping strip. This creates a break between the retail and the pedestrian that is hard to overcome and is detrimental for business. By adding an arcade along the buildings' front, it is brought closer to the sidewalk and consumers, and a special, shaded walkway is created. This also opens up opportunities for cafes and restaurants. By adding a vertical element, tower or break at the corner, the overall appearance of this monotonous building is improved.

### Blount Hunter Cluster Analysis



**Figure 9:** The Cluster Analysis was the most recent market study and merchandising plan for the study area.

The Downtown Delray Beach Cluster Analysis and Retail Development Strategy was completed in 2005 and provided market research and development strategies to bolster retail commerce in downtown Delray Beach. GPG has provided updated market research in a 2017 study and updated merchandising is included in this analysis, both of which should replace similar findings in the Cluster Analysis. However, the scope of this study and the 2005 study are not identical, and some recommendations should continue to be considered. They include:

- The Downtown Development Authority and other public agencies should concentrate their efforts on retail recruitment.
- Adequacy and location of public parking are critical determinants of continued success of Downtown and its ability to attract interest from experienced retailers. Parking should be viewed as a powerful economic development tool that can be used to influence private investment activity.
- Downtown's marketing activities must be comprehensive and coordinated. The public and private sectors must address the need for a steady stream of marketing funds.
- The City should implement a retail recruitment strategy and hire staff to accomplish the following tasks: 1) Establish a Profile of Target Merchant Types and Merchandise Categories; 2) Create a Business Fact Base; 3) Prepare an Inventory of Economic Development Tools; 4) Assemble a Database of Downtown Space Inventory and Lease/Purchase Terms; 5) Establish a Merchant Retail Development Committee; 6) Hold



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Broker Roundtables and Periodic Update Meetings; 7) Initiate a Series of Local/Regional Prospecting Trips; 8) Make Sales Calls on Qualified Prospects; 9) Establish a Follow-Up Contact/Reminder Program.

### Old School Square Master Plan



*Figure 10: The Old School Square Master Plan encourages the programming of a much-needed civic space in downtown.*

A major limitation for the study area is the lack of public spaces, such as squares, parks and plazas. Old School Square is one of the few public spaces and is in an ideal location to positively impact downtown retail. At present, the square is underutilized and in need of a strategy as laid out in the Old School Square Master Plan of 2017. However, there are several recommendations to derive added value for the community and the surrounding retailers:

- **Open First Avenue to traffic when there are no events in Old School Square:** One reason for Old School Square's underutilization is the lack of movement through the area. By allowing cars through First Avenue, Old School Square be more visible to visitors and increased movement will generate additional "eyes" on the open space making it more comfortable and reassuring to be there. Furthermore, the entrance to the Art's Garage is difficult to find and First Avenue would allow for more direct access to the Garage and increased use of the available parking. The street should be designed as a narrow urban street with a design speed of 15 MPH and on-street parking. The paving could retain the differentiated look and removable bollards could be used for a curb-less barrier and to close the street during events.
- **Add an east-west lane between First Avenue and Second Avenue:** The plan calls for retail, flex and other commercial spaces along the perimeter of Old School Square, but in order for these spaces to be economically viable, they will require the visibility of a lane and the convenience of on-street parking. A lane further enhances Old School Square by making it more accessible and visible to visitors in the same manner as an open First Avenue. Similarly, the lane should be narrow with a design speed of 15 MPH and could have the same paving and bollard treatment as proposed for First Avenue.
- **Reduce the size and complexity of the amphitheater design:** Amphitheaters are a desirable community amenity but are routinely over-sized and over-designed. Most cities lack the capacity to program and manage a well-used amphitheater that generates as much activity as other public amenities. As a result, most community amphitheaters are seldom used, and their design discourages passive use on non-program days; there is something inherently unnatural and uncomfortable about sitting in front of an empty

stage. Alternative arrangements should be explored including removing the tiered seating or combining the theater with another use such as the splash pad. Similarly, the overall size should be reconsidered to preserve passive open space.

- **Design parking garage with individual storefronts:** To properly enliven the street-level experience along the Arts Garage, individual storefronts should be designed along the façade as opposed to overhead doors. Architecturally, the first floor should be visibly differentiated from the upper floors of the garage and should extend five to ten feet out from the base of the existing wall. Retail space as an after-thought for a parking garage is seldom effective because the space is still perceived as a parking garage and therefore less welcoming to shoppers.
- **Consider liner shops along southern edge of Old School Square:** The existing plan calls for rear storefront additions to the retail along Atlantic. This is the ideal arrangement, although should extend for the whole block and include a lane between the square and the retail to make up for lost parking. However, this arrangement relies on the endorsement of the individual property owners on Atlantic, which may limit the chances of being realized. As an alternative, the row of parking used for valet and the hardscaped tree area are of sufficient size to accommodate a liner retail building (20 to 30 feet in depth) and a narrow lane with on-street parking.

#### The Set Transformation Plan



**Figure 11:** The Set Transformation Plan is a robust, illustrated plan for the revitalization of the study area west of Swinton.

**Strategy:** Projects with a public/partnership component should require that a percentage of retail/commercial space be leased at a 25% discount to encourage local residents or businesses to locate in the project.

**Discussion:** Discounting leasable space can be an effective incentive to encourage local entrepreneurs; however, it may incentivize businesses that do not need incentives or create an artificial or unsustainable market. This strategy should be more specific in the types or categories of businesses that are able to receive incentives and introduce a sunset to the discount to ensure unsustainable business are not perpetually subsidized.

**Strategy:** Amend City Code 4.4.13. requiring 20 feet minimum depth of first floor retail to 50 feet minimum depth to create sustainable commercial space. Twenty-foot depth for commercial/retail use is not marketable.

**Discussion:** The proposed amendment is well-intentioned, but is misunderstood, misapplied, and would likely limit the creation of small retail spaces that are favored by local businesses and



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entrepreneurs. The market is adept in determining the marketable depth of retail spaces and should not be constrained in the manner proposed. While 50- to 60-foot depths are preferred by national retailers, depths as shallow as 12-feet have appropriate applications in urban environments and are often sought after by local businesses desiring to locate within a particular market, but unable to afford larger spaces. Furthermore, the 50-foot depth would likely limit development opportunities to the most capable and well-funded developers, instead of creating opportunities for small, neighborhood based, incremental developers, who may not have the capacity or expertise to build and lease such a project. Last, it is worth considering how many existing commercial buildings within The Set, and the Delray Beach CBD, would not have been constructed if a 50-foot minimum were in place.

**Strategy:** Shade trees with 50-foot spacing (note font size)

**Discussion:** This streetscape improvement characteristic should be clarified as to whether it is a minimum or maximum spacing. The best urban streets have tree space approximating 25- to 30-feet.

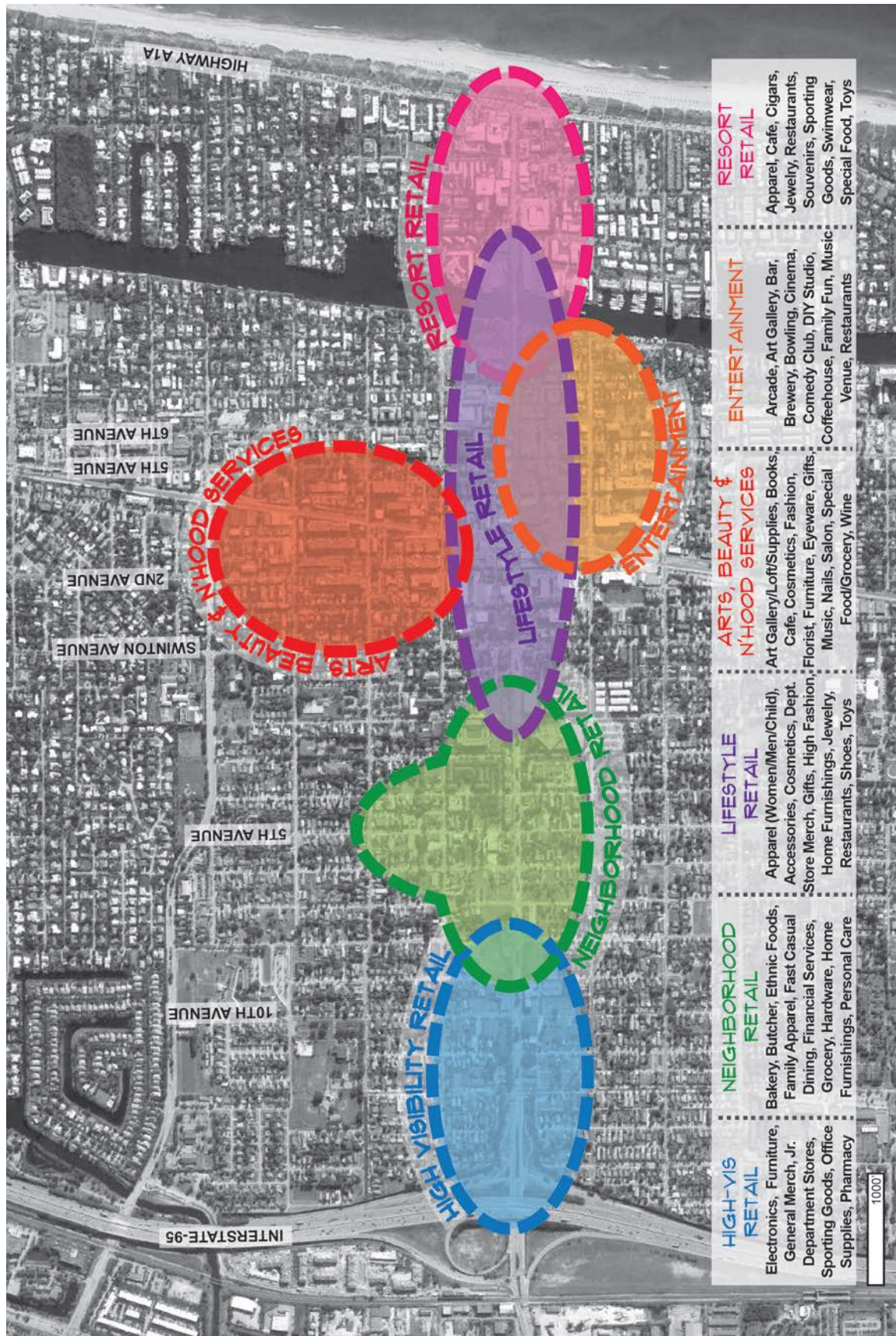
**Strategy:** Redevelopment of City-Owned Large Blocks Fronting West Atlantic Avenue.

**Discussion:** The available parcels along Atlantic Avenue represent among the most desirable development opportunities in the Delray Beach trade area. It could be that a lack of residential density in the immediate neighborhood is a limiting factor and allowing 4- to 5-stories and removing the 12 units per acre density maximum could be the necessary threshold to incentivize developers. Next, given the proximity to I-95 and current traffic levels on this portion of Atlantic, it may be unrealistic to avoid regionally serving businesses, and a misconception that regionally serving business don't also serve the local community. As a follow-up, focus groups to determine the businesses that current residents are leaving the community to patronize could help identify regionally-oriented users that may be most compatible in The Set. Last, West Atlantic should be as walkable as East Atlantic and surface parking lots fronting Atlantic should be strongly discouraged.

## **MERCHANDISING PLAN**

A recent retail market study completed by GPG found that downtown Delray Beach could support an additional 434,100 sf of retail and restaurant development across an array of categories including grocery, restaurants, department store merchandise, hardware, furniture and home furnishings, apparel, pharmacy, cosmetics and gifts. The market study was completed to understand the commercial development potential, aid in attracting new retail tenants and provide guidance as to the types of retail that are supportable and could complement the existing critical mass in downtown. Business recruitment is an essential task if Delray Beach is going to continue to evolve and improve its tenant mix, and an understanding of where particular tenants should locate is necessary to leverage new store deployments for the greatest community impact.

The following merchandising plan creates six thematic zones each with prevailing retail categories. These zones were created with regard to the existing retailers, shopper traffic patterns, industry standards and preferred retailer locations, together organized to generate and sustain increased downtown commerce. It is important to note that each zone should overlap with the adjacent zones and a particular zone is not exclusive of a particular retail category. A common goal throughout several Delray Beach planning efforts has been to eliminate artificial boundaries between districts - overlapping retail themes is an important aspect in achieving more seamless transitions between the West Atlantic, Downtown Core and Beach Districts.



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The six merchandising zones proposed are: high visibility retail, neighborhood retail, lifestyle retail, arts, beauty and neighborhood services, entertainment and resort retail. The following is a brief rationale and description of each of the six thematic zones:

- **High Visibility Retail**

As the retail market study demonstrated, Delray Beach has a strong demand for additional retail, which alternatively suggests many Delray Beach residents are leaving the community to shop at centers and retailers found outside of the trade area. The high visibility retail zone is intended to provide locations for those retailers popular with Delray Beach shoppers that require exceptional visibility and steady traffic. The traffic generated along I-95 and Atlantic Avenue as the primary arrival to Delray Beach means many residents, workers and visitors pass by the large and contiguous parcels available in this zone. These infill parcels provide an excellent opportunity to provide highly marketable store footprints, ranging from 1,200 sf to 50,000 sf, that are desirable for a wide variety of retailers. Importantly, all retail in this zone should front Atlantic Avenue with parking in the rear of the building, and where possible, include residential or office uses above the retail space. The suggested retail categories for the high visibility retail zone are: electronics, furniture, general merchandise, junior department stores, sporting goods, office supplies and pharmacy.

- **Neighborhood Retail**

The intersection of Atlantic Avenue and Fifth Avenue represents the core of The Set (West Atlantic) and serves as a central meeting place for the community. The neighborhood retail zone is intended to provide locations for daily consumer needs in a walkable setting similar to Atlantic Avenue east of Swinton. With a combination of large infill sites, existing neighborhood retailers and small infill or redevelopment sites, the neighborhood retail zone can accommodate a wide variety of retailers desired by The Set residents and greater Delray Beach. Store footprints should range from small pop-up shops of 100 sf to a grocery store of 30,000 sf to 50,000 sf; small retail shops will ensure there are affordable retail spaces to rent for local entrepreneurs. Where possible, residential or office uses should be included above ground floor retail space. The suggested retail categories for the neighborhood retail zone include: bakery, butcher, ethnic foods, family apparel, fast casual dining, financial services, grocery, hardware, home furnishings and personal care.

- **Lifestyle Retail**

The central core of Delray Beach contains the most compelling critical mass of sought-after retail and restaurants in the study area and has established Delray Beach as a destination. The lifestyle retail zone should accommodate quick, purpose driven trips, but is primarily engaged in attracting shoppers who will spend more than an hour in the area visiting multiple businesses - walkability and convenient parking are essential. There are few large scale developable site available, so the majority of recruitment will focus on filling existing vacancies or redevelopment of existing properties and development along the secondary streets intersecting Atlantic. Activity on Atlantic should be concerned with modernizing storefronts and bolstering the diversity of goods available, while development on secondary streets is integral to ensuring affordable spaces are available for local entrepreneurs. Store footprints could range from small pop-up shops of 100 sf to larger 20,000 sf to 30,000 sf spaces for national tenants. The attraction of an anchor or signature tenant would have broad benefits to the zone. The suggested retail categories for the lifestyle zone include: apparel, accessories, cosmetics, department store merchandise, gifts, high fashion, home furnishings, jewelry, restaurants shoes and toys.



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- **Arts, Beauty & Neighborhood Services**

The Pineapple Grove Arts District has added a unique dimension to the experiences available to Delray Beach shoppers. Except for highly-visible properties along Federal Highway, the majority of businesses in this zone will need to drive their own traffic due to limited visibility and traffic on secondary streets. Exceptional arts and beauty businesses with established client pools have and will continue to fare best and may prefer the more intimate setting in this zone. The visibility of Federal Highway may be suitable for a wide variety of neighborhood goods and services, but challenging parking may be more suitable for live-work units or other alternative, yet active ground floor uses. The suggested retail categories for the arts, beauty and neighborhood services zone include: art galleries, artist lofts, art supplies, books, cafes, cosmetics, fashion, florists, furniture (custom), eyewear, gifts, music, nails, salons, specialty foods and wine or specialty beverage stores.

- **Entertainment**

A cinema is currently under construction in the entertainment zone and will create an additional draw to the study area. Other entertainment uses should be encouraged and dovetailed into the lifestyle zone to promote activity throughout the day and evening. Expanded parking may be necessary, but most entertainment users are planning two or more hours for their activity and may take advantage of garage parking elsewhere in the study area. It is essential that larger entertainment users design active ground floors to promote walkability. Furthermore, a variety of entertainment options, especially family fun, are encouraged to maintain appeal to the entire Delray Beach community. Suggested retail and entertainment users for this zone are: arcades, art galleries, bars and breweries, bowling, cinema, comedy club, DIY studios, coffeehouse, family fun, a small to medium music venue and restaurants.

- **Resort Retail**

Proximity to the Atlantic Ocean and excellent public access has long been the driving attraction for Delray Beach visitors. As a result, the activity east of the Intracoastal Waterway is categorically different than elsewhere in the study area and the retail should reflect that. A notable portion of the supportable retail in the study area could be achieved through increased sales capture from a deep tourist market. To reinforce the natural amenities, hospitality and existing retail offerings in the Beach District, the resort retail zone should diversify the product and dining offerings, primarily through infill or redevelopment. Store footprints should remain small to foster the quaint “beach-town” feel, with sizes ranging from pop-up shops to 4,000 sf to 5,000 sf stores and restaurants; an appropriate anchor or signature tenant max exceed this store size. Suggested retail categories for the resort retail zone include: apparel, cafes, cigars, jewelry, restaurants, souvenirs, sporting goods, swimwear, specialty foods and toys.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

As a result of an existing conditions analysis, code and plan review and merchandising recommendations, this study includes numerous strategies for building infill, lighting, open space, parking, storefronts, streetscape, tenant mix, vehicular circulation and walkability. To ensure sustainable commerce, maximum shopper appeal and strong sales, the following chart organizes the recommendations of this study by their short-, medium-, and long-term implementation targets.

### Shopability Analysis Implementation Strategies

Short-Term	Medium-Term	Long-Term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Install a pilot parking meter system on Atlantic Avenue</li> <li>• Study parking capacity and utilization in the entire study area</li> <li>• Establish parking management fund to receive PILOP and meter revenues and fund parking improvements</li> <li>• Install uniform signage for parking garages surface lots and parking wayfinding</li> <li>• Clean and maintain parking garages, fix elevators</li> <li>• Relocate valet parking drop-off and reserved garage parking to underutilized areas</li> <li>• Remove ineffective parking time limits</li> <li>• Utilize library and courthouse parking structures during periods of high demand</li> <li>• Implement private off-street parking standards</li> <li>• Clean, repair or replace vandalized or worn signage, furnishings, light poles etc.</li> <li>• Improve crosswalk design and striping</li> <li>• Remove buckling brick pavers</li> <li>• Clean sidewalks and other public surfaces on weekly schedule</li> <li>• Trim overgrown landscaping</li> <li>• Enforce existing outdoor dining regulations for placements, umbrella, clear widths etc.</li> <li>• Enforce existing storefront and architectural guidelines</li> <li>• Coordinate with business/property owners to update worn storefronts</li> <li>• Review existing LDRs and consider recommendations</li> <li>• Consider proposed revisions to Old School Square Master Plan and The Set Transformation Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement a comprehensive parking management plan with provisions for on-street parking meters, garage and surface lots, employee parking and valet services</li> <li>• Adopt national chain store policy</li> <li>• Study on-street parking striping</li> <li>• Explore rebranding as a means to unify wayfinding and signage throughout study area</li> <li>• Improve Downtown Roundabout signage, marketing, and stop location furnishings</li> <li>• Install consistent site furnishing theme for benches, bike racks, receptacles</li> <li>• Infill city-owned information center on A1A with shops, café and/or flex space at</li> <li>• Evaluate “desire paths” for permanent paving</li> <li>• Evaluate removal of deceleration lanes</li> <li>• Extend bike routes through study area</li> <li>• Review existing storefront standards and revise to promote exceptional storefront design</li> <li>• Create graphic driven sign standards that promote the study area’s authenticity</li> <li>• Create façade improvement grant program, offer technical assistance</li> <li>• Consolidate study area zoning into comprehensive form-based and architectural standards that honor historic character of Delray Beach</li> <li>• Create parking pool among private property owners</li> <li>• Procure city-wide valet program</li> <li>• Hire business recruitment coordinator and implement Cluster Analysis recruitment program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop liner shop on both sides of Old School Square</li> <li>• Reopen NE 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue, install lane along Old School Square liner shops</li> <li>• Promote development of liner shops in front of Marriot and the Tennis Center</li> <li>• Redevelop large parcels fronting Atlantic in The Set</li> <li>• Revisit Downtown Master Plan and engage in new planning process if necessary</li> <li>• Implement road diet strategies for Atlantic Avenue in The Set and Beach District</li> </ul>

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## APPENDIX A: Historic Districts and Retail Success

As a relatively young nation, many cities in the US are now reaching a phase of development where historic preservation is of great concern. Impetus was given to this movement fifty years ago when Jane Jacobs wrote in her seminal book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* that “cities need old buildings so badly it is probably impossible for vigorous streets and districts to grow without them.” There has been a gradual recognition of the many benefits of historical preservation, including its positive impact on retail. The most in-depth analysis of these benefits is found in a recent study conducted by the National Trust for Historic Preservation titled “Older, Smaller, Better; Measuring How the Character of Buildings and Blocks Influences Urban Vitality.”

Older buildings help create areas that are vibrant, walkable, and commercially successful. In the urban areas studied, it was found that streets with older buildings have a higher concentration of businesses, jobs, and minority-owned businesses. These streets also have a significantly higher proportion of non-chain retailers and restaurants. Non-chain businesses signal regular economic activity and are frequently locally owned, and money spent in non-chain, local businesses is often recycled in the local economy through local sources of labor.

In terms of walkability, neighborhoods with a mixture of old and new buildings have considerably higher walk scores and transit score ratings than neighborhoods with mostly newer buildings. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that in all three cities areas with a greater concentration of older buildings had more cafes with outdoor seating. In their analysis of San Francisco neighborhoods, Jeff Risom and Kasey Klimes show that there is more foot traffic in areas with a diversity of building ages. They even go as far as to assert that this correlation is a result of a “psychological preference” for older buildings. These areas are also more vibrant because it appears that young people have a preference for old buildings. The median age of residents in areas with a higher concentration of older buildings is lower than in areas with predominantly newer buildings. This has resulted in nightlife being more vibrant on streets with older buildings. Indeed, city blocks composed of more older buildings have markedly greater cell phone activity on Friday and Saturday nights, when visiting bars and restaurants might be expected.

Historic preservation research too often focuses on buildings that are either protected through local landmark ordinances or listed on the National Register of Historic Places, rather than the collective effects of unique or vernacular characteristics of the urban form on the visitor’s experience. Certainly, some of the most desirable shopping destinations in the US can be found in the historic neighborhoods of Miami, Charleston, Alexandria, Philadelphia, New York City and Boston. The importance of codes and regulations that ensure the historic qualities of these districts are preserved cannot be overstated. However, restrictive regulations that inhibit the enhancement of historic districts can work to the detriment of their success. Careful calibration of historic standards is integral to the efficacy of preserving the desirable qualities of sought-after shopping areas. Additionally, existing downtowns without historic designations, should strive to implement regulations that will cultivate the urban environment worthy of preservation by future generations.