This Master Plan document represents the efforts, ideas, and vision for the future of the Becker Road corridor within the jurisdiction of the City of Port St. Lucie. The designs, illustrations, and graphics included within this report are meant to convey that vision and are conceptual by nature.
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**Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council**

**Indian River - St. Lucie - Martin - Palm Beach**
THE BECKER ROAD CHARRETTE

The Process

The Becker Road Master Plan grew out of a public five-day charrette held from November 7-11, 2005. The Master Plan developed during the charrette process represents the community’s vision for the future of Becker Road within the City of Port St. Lucie.

Due to the degree of public interest, the charrette was conducted in two well-attended sessions at the Parks Edge Club. More than 250 people participated in the charrette representing a diverse cross-section of the community including residents, property owners, and local business interests. The charrette focused on the Becker Road corridor between I-95 and the Florida Turnpike including surrounding neighborhoods. Key issues included the design of Becker Road; the scale, intensity, and types of development that should occur along Becker Road; provision for a neighborhood town center; and issues concerning drainage.

The Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council’s Design Studio (Michael Busha, Marcela Camblor, Wynsum Hatton, and Dana Little) and a team of professionals including: A + S Architects and Planners (Derrick Smith); Hall Planning and Engineering (Billy Hattaway); ArX Solutions Inc. (Diego Seferceoglou, Adrian Ferrari, and Sebastian Cicioli); Gibbs Planning Group (Robert Gibbs); and urban designers Dan Cary, Ramon Trías, and Barry Mahaffey assisted participants in studying the many challenges faced by the community and proposed specific solutions.

During the week of the charrette, the design team set up its studio at the Port St. Lucie City Hall where the doors remained open to the public all week. A presentation of work in progress was held on Thursday, November 17. Residents, property and business owners, city staff, and elected officials were present.

Work continued following the initial public workshop. On January 5, 2006, Port St. Lucie City Council unanimously voted to conceptually support the Community’s Master Plan and directed its staff to alter roadway designs to comply with the Master Plan. A final presentation by TCRPC staff will be held early in 2006. This will be a time to collect further community and professional input before adoption of the Community’s Master Plan.

The Meaning of "Charrette"

Charrette means "cart" in French. Various architectural school legends hold that at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in 19th Century Paris work was so intense that students frequently continued to sketch even as carts carried their boards away to be juried.

Today charrette refers to a high speed, intense, and very focused creative session in which a team concentrates on specific design problems with participants and presents solutions.
The charrette focused on the rapidly growing Becker Road area between I-95 and the Florida Turnpike and included the adjacent neighborhoods.
Planned improvements to Becker Road present a great opportunity for the surrounding neighborhoods.

Today, Becker Road exists as a two-lane road fronted predominantly by undeveloped residential lots. The neighborhoods surrounding Becker Road are rapidly infilling with single-family homes, and new developments are being constructed both to the east and to the west of the study area. Growth within the area and plans to build new interchanges at both I-95 and the Florida Turnpike will require the expansion of Becker Road to four-lanes. Opportunities exist to address existing drainage and traffic problems and to encourage development types that will improve the quality of life within the surrounding neighborhoods. The Becker Road neighborhoods have the opportunity to become the best in St. Lucie County.
The primary goal of the Becker Road Charrette was to develop a conceptual Master Plan for Becker Road and the adjacent neighborhoods that would guide future development and ensure that the area developed in a manner that reflected the vision and desires of the residents and property owners of the area while accommodating traffic demands of existing and future developments. The plan was developed based on four primary sources of information:
1) the vision and desires of residents and property owners of the area that participated in and shared their ideas during the charrette process; 2) a consideration of planning principles that produce good places for people to live; 3) transportation system based upon projected growth within the area through the year 2025; 4) an analysis of how much commercial and retail activity could be supported within the study area at build-out.

Categorized below are the desires and requests of the residents regarding the study area.

**Becker Road Design**
- No six-laning of Becker Road
- Traffic calming (roundabouts)
- Landscaped median with turn lanes
- Should look like Gatlin Boulevard (the current atmosphere, not the look at build-out)
- Safe intersections and safe pedestrian crossings
- Public transportation
- Nice street furniture (street lights, bus stops, benches)
- Wide sidewalks, lighted streets, lush landscaping
- Bike paths and bike racks
- Safe, lighted, covered bus stops for children
- Pull-outs for buses and parents transporting children at bus stops
- Bike racks
- Underground utilities

**Land Uses Along Becker Road**
- Town center at the intersection of Port St. Lucie Boulevard and Becker Road
- Smaller commercial/civic nodes at Savona Boulevard and Darwin Boulevard
- Pedestrian-oriented mixed-use centers
- Higher-end, “mom & pop”, unique retail, and places for neighbors to gather
- No big box retail, strip retail, strip office centers, and warehouses
- No single family homes converted to commercial uses (Port St. Lucie Boulevard scenario)
- No continuous commercial uses throughout Becker Road
- No gas stations or hotels except along interstates
- Green areas and residential between mixed-use centers
- Mixed use, town homes, and/or live work between commercial centers
- Parallel parking in front with parking in the rear

**Requests**

**Housing**
- Workforce/affordable housing
- No unnecessary taking of existing houses
- Minimize impacts on residential

**Civic**
- Need post office, police station, schools
- Announce entrances over bridges, civic spaces, neighborhoods, entranceway into city
- Keep the park near I-95
- More parks in neighborhoods
- Parkway or parks along the canal and along Becker Road
- Dog park, ATV park, boat ramp

**Drainage**
- Use existing drainage facilities and upgrade and maintain them
- Use drainage as park or neighborhood amenity and make it attractive
- Bridges over drainage areas
- Beautify and increase drainage of C-23 canal

**Miscellaneous Issues**
- Quality architecture
- Name neighborhoods to create identities
- Walkable community
- No more than three stories in height.
The best towns have a strong sense of place. You know when you have arrived, and you know when you leave. They do not sprawl and merge into one another, for they have a recognizable center and heart. The center is the place people go to shop, do business, get news, and see their neighbors. The center usually occurs at an important intersection (main and main) where shops have maximum access and exposure. The town center is typically anchored by an important community civic building such as a town hall, library, or community church. The civic building is typically situated on a public green or plaza that serves as a recognized gathering place for residents.

A hierarchy of interconnected streets. Great towns have a diversity of street types serving all of the different purposes the community requires and providing strong interconnection between a diversity of land uses. Streets terminate at intersections with other streets forming a fine network of alternative transportation routes. The best places to live never undermine the value of the grid by closing streets to public use or gating off neighborhoods.

Beautiful streets designed for both cars and pedestrians. Streets are designed and viewed as part of the public realm to be used equally by both cars and people. Equal attention is given to the functionality of the street to pedestrians and children, and its attractiveness as an address as is given to its use by automobiles. Great towns recognize that large portions of the community do not have independent access to an automobile, but still need to move around. The ability to own and operate an automobile should not be the prerequisite to enjoying a good quality of life. However, in much of Florida this is the case. Significant portions of the population are either too young or too old to drive, and others cannot easily afford a car. In the best communities, children can walk to a playground, and the elderly are not forced to abandon their homes of many years because they can no longer drive a car.

A diversity of housing types and affordabilities. All members of the community must be able to find a suitable place to live within the community. Communities need a great variety of people to function well including physicians, bankers, carpenters, shopkeepers, teachers, and baby sitters. If the community is not attractive to a few wealthy individuals, there may be no one to donate money to build a library. Without skilled and unskilled labor, there would be no one to repair a car or maintain landscaping.

Places for work and shopping in proximity to housing. Quality of life is improved when people are able to live in close proximity to workplaces and frequently used shopping destinations. Ideally, many residents should be able to reach centrally located work place and shopping destinations by walking or by very short vehicle trips.

 Appropriately located sites for civic buildings. Well-designed communities have specially created and prominent locations for placement of their important civic buildings such as churches, libraries, schools, theatres, and community meeting halls.

Provision of a variety of parks and open spaces. Communities have a variety of open space needs including recreation fields, quiet places for meditation, and small open spaces where young children can safely play within shouting distance of their homes.

Districts. Larger towns and cities often include specialized districts. Districts include industrial and research parks, universities, and entertainment areas or attractions. The best districts include a variety of uses that complement and support the primary function of the district.

The "Community's Requests," categorized on the preceding page and developed during the Becker Road Charrette, reflect these principles and support achieving these characteristics along the Becker Road corridor between I-95 and the Florida Turnpike.
Transportation System Issues
TRANSPORTATION ISSUES - THE BUILD-OUT GEOMETRY OF BECKER ROAD

Key Issues

The key transportation issues discussed and studied during the charrette included the following:

1. The number of lanes that Becker Road should be to accommodate traffic between I-95 and the Florida Turnpike

2. The design of the I-95 interchange at Becker Road and its impact on surrounding properties

3. The reconnection of Rosser Boulevard to Becker Road after construction of the I-95 interchange

4. The design of Port St. Lucie Boulevard, Darwin Boulevard, and Savona Boulevard intersections with Becker Road

5. The appropriate distribution and mix of land uses along Becker Road

6. The aesthetics of Becker Road in its final configuration

Roadway Geometry

The 4.1-mile section of Becker Road between I-95 and the Florida Turnpike is in the process of change. New interchanges are proposed at both I-95 and the Florida Turnpike, and a new roadway connection is proposed extending Port St. Lucie Boulevard south into Martin County. The ongoing development of Tesoro to the east and extensive proposed development within the western annexation area will require improvements to the roadway system serving the area.

During the Becker Road Charrette, one of the greatest concerns voiced by residents of the area had to do with the proposed expansion of Becker Road. Becker Road is proposed to be expanded to four lanes in the near future, but land is being acquired to provide drainage for ultimate expansion to six lanes. Residents supported expansion of the road to four lanes providing the roadway is designed as an attractive, traffic calmed facility that adds value to the area. Residents strongly opposed the idea of expanding Becker Road to six lanes.

To evaluate objectively the required geometry of Becker Road within the study area, the charrette team reviewed various transportation system models that have been done for the area. The most recent, reported to the TCRPC on January 20, 2003, is a regional traffic analysis conducted by the MTP Group, Inc. that looks at the impacts of growth on the roadway network within western Port St. Lucie through the year 2025. Based on this study, Becker Road between I-95 and the Turnpike would not need to be expanded beyond four lanes through the year 2025.

Based on analysis of transportation system impacts generated by growth through 2025, Becker Road should be designed as a four-lane roadway.
Creating a Sense of Arrival and a Sense of Place

The Communitys Master Plan calls for Becker Road to be designed as a four-lane green parkway that is punctuated by urban places. Approaching Becker Road from I-95 or the Florida Turnpike, a visitor would experience the roadway as a park-like road that includes a median planted with canopy trees and canopy trees on each side of the road. Beautiful canopied streets help to slow traffic and define the public street space. Portions of the parkway sections would be fronted by linear parks and beautifully designed storm water retention areas detailed as parks. Other portions of the parkway would be lined with multi-family housing types such as townhouses and courtyard apartment buildings. The canopy street trees calm traffic along the corridor.

The parkway feel would be interrupted at key intersections: Savona Boulevard, Darwin Boulevard, and Port St. Lucie Boulevard. The sharp contrast between parkway and urban sections of the road provide a sense of arrival at a place defined by its tight urbanism and beautiful architecture.

The roundabouts at the intersections of Darwin and Savona boulevards would interrupt the parkway and act as neighborhood centers. The two roundabouts are specially designed to slow the traffic speed and improve the efficiency of traffic flow at these two busy intersections.

The other intersection is at Port St. Lucie Boulevard. Becker Road divides into two, two-lane roadways to form the central civic green of the village center. The new civic space creates a memorable and special gathering place at the center of the area. Additionally, the central green makes it easy for pedestrians to cross traffic from north to south since only two lanes of one-way traffic need to be crossed instead of four lanes of two-way traffic. Beautifully designed urban sections also calm traffic as drivers tend to slow down when they arrive at well-defined places. The strong sense of place and connectivity provided by the civic space strengthen the viability of retail provided within the village center.

Darwin Boulevard and Savona Boulevard roundabouts and the Village Center are tightly delimited mixed-use areas that include retail, office, and residential uses. Retail at the roundabouts is limited and will likely take the form of a corner store and restaurant. Retail is located on the northern side of Becker Road since most of the households utilizing the retail would be from the north. This location minimizes the need for pedestrians to cross Becker Road and along a main street proposed on Port St. Lucie Boulevard. Most of the retail is located at the Port St. Lucie Boulevard Village Center faces the central civic green that separates east and westbound lanes of Becker Road. Retail at the village center will focus on the regular shopping needs of the surrounding neighborhoods and would include office and higher density residential uses.
Opportunities for Retail and Commercial Development

During the Becker Road Charrette, Gibbs Planning Group, one of the top retail consulting firms in the United States, conducted an analysis of the market potential for retail and commercial within the study area. Based on the distribution of existing and proposed retail in the surrounding area, traffic patterns, and other criteria, the consultant concluded that the Becker Road area could support a mixed-use village center at the intersection of Port St. Lucie Boulevard and Becker Road and small amounts of "cross roads" retail at the intersections of Darwin and Savona boulevards and Becker Road. The land use plan illustrated below summarizes the consultant's recommendations for the distribution of land uses along the Becker Road corridor.

The consultant recommended that the retail at the village center should follow a "main street" format - the retail should focus on Port St. Lucie Boulevard and face the new civic space. Retail within the village center would serve the needs of the surrounding neighborhoods and could include uses such as a market, pharmacy, dry cleaners, restaurants, and cafes. Office and residential uses would also occur within the village center.

The proposed distribution of land uses is consistent with the recommendations made by residents of the area during the charrette. Details of the village center and cross roads retail are discussed elsewhere in this report.
TRANSPORTATION ISSUES - THE BUILD-OUT GEOMETRY OF BECKER ROAD - STREET SECTIONS

Although generally designed as a four-lane divided parkway, the street sections of Becker Road vary at different locations in response to the proposed adjacent land uses.

**Parkway Section**

- Much of Becker Road is proposed as a green parkway with buildings fronting the street in some areas and other areas fronted by linear parks and groves of trees.

**Suburban Section**

- Higher densities of residential and office uses can occur close to the proposed village center. These areas have on-street parking and wider sidewalks.

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TREASURE COAST REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL

INDIAN RIVER - ST. LUCIE - MARTIN - PALM BEACH
TRANSPORTATION ISSUES - THE BUILD-OUT GEOMETRY OF BECKER ROAD - STREET SECTIONS

The Village Center Section

The village center section is unique and the most urban section proposed for Becker Road. The median within the parkway and suburban sections of the road is significantly widened to form a large park and civic space at the village center. As proposed, the width of civic space is approximately 120 feet from curb to curb and is large enough to accommodate one or more civic buildings and significant open space.

Located at the center of the study area, between I-95 and the Florida Turnpike, the village center would create a great location for retail and office uses and provide a beautiful entry into the City of Port St. Lucie and St. Lucie County from Martin County to the south.

The village center section includes provision for on-street parking and wide sidewalks.

The Village Center Section

At the village center, east and west bound lanes of Becker Road separate to form a civic plaza or green large enough to accommodate a civic building.
Port St. Lucie Boulevard Designed as a Main Street at Becker Road

The Community’s Master Plan calls for Port St. Lucie Boulevard to be designed as a main street section. On its approach to Becker Road, traffic modeling through 2025 suggests that Port St. Lucie Boulevard can be retained at two lanes with a median turn lane.

As a main street, sidewalks are recommended to be very wide in order to accommodate outdoor dining, street furniture, pedestrian activity and protected bike lanes.

On-street parking is provided at the front of the shops with the bulk of parking hidden at the rear of buildings.
Every effort should be made to make the ramp and managed approach to the I-95 interchange as tight and short as possible. Minimizing the approach length will diminish the number of private properties adversely impacted by the interchange and will reduce the number of street connections that might need to be closed if the ramp and approach were excessively large. Ideally, the approach should be configured to allow turning movements at SW Eagle Street onto Becker Road. Based on configurations of crossings in other areas this should be possible.

The construction of the new interchange with I-95 will require the re-routing of Rosser Boulevard traffic. Rosser Boulevard can be re-connected to Becker Road by a number of different routes as illustrated in the drawing above. Traffic wishing to travel west on Becker Road can approach via a connection to SW Calmar Avenue. Traffic wishing to travel east can access Becker via SW Edinburgh Drive. A new realigned segment of Rosser would need to be constructed connecting Rosser to SW Calmar. Both of these streets pass by the proposed new park facility providing easy access.
Minimizing Future Traffic Congestion

One of the best ways to maintain good levels of service on Becker Road and minimize future traffic congestion would be to eliminate new curb cuts onto Becker Road, to provide alley access to lots fronting street, and to require parking to be accessed from the rear. Excessive numbers of curb cuts reduce the level of service on roadways and contribute to congestion. Excessive curb cuts also create a cluttered look and undermine the formation of a beautiful street frontage.

Currently, very few curb cuts exist on Becker Road within the study area. At the time of the charrette, only nine built homes existed facing Becker Road. The majority of the lots are vacant.

Properties fronting Becker Road should be accessed from a rear alley. Allowing curb-cuts would reduce levels of service and create congestion on the road.

The Community’s Master Plan illustrates how properties along Becker Road should be accessed from the rear by an alley. Rear alleys also create a secondary street network that removes traffic from Becker Road.

Example of Garage Apartment accessed from an alley. The main residence faces the street.

Providing rear alley access to these lots along Becker Road assures that the frontage along the street will not include mostly garage doors and allows utility lines and services such as garbage collection to occur at the rear of buildings rather in what should be viewed as beautiful public space.

Ideally, utility lines can be buried. However, where costs are prohibitive, relocating utility lines to the rear alley represents a less expensive alternative.
TRANSPORTATION ISSUES - MAINTAINING TRAFFIC FLOWS ON BECKER ROAD - MINIMIZE CURB CUTS

The street face is attractive when garages and services are kept to the rear.

Plan for the townhouses illustrated above. Garage access and services are provided off the alley.

Plan for the mixed-use retail illustrated above. Parking and services are provided off the alley.
opportunities exist to improve the connectivity of the existing grid system.

Increasing Connectivity and Provision of Alternative Travel Routes

Within the study area, Port St. Lucie has a fairly complete but irregular grid system of streets. The grid is much too complex to be attractive for use by people unfamiliar with the neighborhoods, but it provides alternatives to travel on Becker Road for local residents. A few alternative routes that might be used by residents wanting to avoid Becker Road are illustrated on the Community’s Master Plan.

Minor enhancements to the grid could however improve the utility of these alternative routes. In many cases right-of-way exists to accommodate small “secret streets” that would allow residents short cuts through the complex grid of streets that make up the neighborhoods. Examples of three of these that occur south of Becker Road are illustrated above.

Streets no larger than alleyways could be incorporated into these rights of way to improve the connectivity of the grid system to local residents. Provision of such improvements would not attract use by non-residents, but would remove some local trips from Becker Road, thus improving its capacity and level of service.
Design Guidelines for Streets
STREETS DESIGNED AS BEAUTIFUL PUBLIC SPACE USED BY BOTH CARS AND PEOPLE

Streets and Highways as Beautiful Public Spaces

Essential to creating a beautiful town or city is an understanding that highways, streets, and avenues should be viewed as an important part of the civic realm of public spaces that can and should be attractive regardless of the scale of street involved. Streets and avenues should be viewed as important public spaces and to be fully functional must be comfortable for pedestrians and bicyclist as well as cars.

In order for a street to feel comfortable and have a sense of place, the space occupied by the street and associated sidewalks must be delineated and defined by a continuous line of buildings. The buildings that line the street must pull up to the street and be of appropriate scale. Wide streets should be lined with taller buildings, narrow streets with buildings of one or two stories. Where buildings are pulled up to the street to form a continuous frontage of appropriate height, the space occupied by the street is defined, and begins to feel like an outdoor room or place.

Equally important to the walls formed by buildings pulled up to the street is the provision of a continuous system of wide sidewalks for pedestrians. Within residential areas, sidewalks should be wide enough for two people to walk comfortably side by side (five to six feet), and within denser areas or commercial districts, sidewalks should be very wide (fifteen to twenty feet) and sufficient to provide outdoor seating at tables in front of cafes and restaurants.

Street trees that provide further definition of space and shade for pedestrians are also critical. Within urban areas, the street trees should be planted with some formality along a line and with regular spacing along the edge of the street between pedestrians and traffic.

Attention should also be paid to how the outdoor room and public space of the street are furnished. Excessive signage should be avoided, and attention should be paid to the aesthetics and design of street lighting, benches, shelters, and other objects that may occur within the public space.

When traffic enters a space designed as a "place," it instinctively slows down. With cars moving at slower speeds and with buildings pulled closer to the street, it is easier for drivers to see what stores and businesses are located there, and the economic energy provided by the street and its traffic can be more efficiently utilized. With buildings of the right scale pulled up to the street, proper street trees, wide sidewalks, and the right mix of uses, Becker Road could become an area of pedestrian congregation serving as a beautiful main street full of energy and activity. Traffic will slow because there is something to draw interest and make a driver take note that they have arrived in a place.

Many of the smaller residential and industrial streets within the study area are also in need of attention. Many lack street trees and sidewalks and proper detailing.
Height to Width Ratios for Streets

The height to width ratio of any space generates spatial enclosure, which is related to the physiology of the human eye. If the width of a public space is such that the cone of vision encompasses less street wall than sky opening, the degree of spatial enclosure is slight. The ratio of one increment of height to six of width (1:6) is the absolute minimum to create a sense of spatial enclosure. As a general rule, the smaller the ratio, the stronger the sense of place and oftentimes the higher the real estate value. Spatial enclosure is important on all streets, but is particularly important for shopping streets that must compete with shopping malls that provide very effective spatial definition.

In the absence of opportunities to provide spatial definition by building facades, disciplined tree planting is an alternative. Trees aligned for spatial enclosure are necessary on thoroughfares that have substantial front yards and setbacks.

Examples of ideal street sections showing height to width ratios.

A continuous facade of buildings with minimum heights of two to three stories and street trees along the sidewalks will provide the enclosure needed to make Becker Road a beautiful street.

A good height to width ratio enhanced further by street trees.
Design Guidelines for Beautiful Commercial Streets

Street development should be undertaken with the same care that is given to creation of any other important public or civic space. Streets should be viewed as centers of human activity and designed to be inviting and comfortable places for people to be whether they are in a car or walking.

The most critical issues in designing beautiful and active commercial streets include the height of buildings relative to the width of the street space, the placement and alignment of buildings along the street, sidewalk widths, street trees, landscaping, adequate parking, street furnishings, and lighting.

Height to width ratios. The importance of adequate building height has been illustrated and discussed earlier in this report. Minimum and recommended heights will vary with the width of the street and sidewalks. For six-lane boulevards such as SR 7, building heights should range between three to five stories.

Building placement and alignment. A fairly continuous facade of appropriately scaled buildings set close to the street is essential to transforming the feel of SR 7 from that of a highway that divides the community into a beautiful public space that serves as a unifying central "Main Street" and front door to the area. The consistent alignment of building facades forms the walls of the great outdoor room that the street occupies.

Sidewalk widths. Sidewalks should be very wide on commercial streets. Minimum sidewalk width for a commercial streets should be fifteen to twenty feet, but in important commercial areas anticipated to have a great deal of pedestrian traffic, sidewalks might be even wider. Wide sidewalks provide space for pedestrians, bicycles, and ample room for tables, chairs, lighting and street trees.

Street trees and landscaping. The most beautiful streets include strong alignments of regularly placed street trees. Trunks should be clear to at least 12 feet so that retail is easily visible from the street. Palm trees can be used in combination with arcades, but where arcades are not provided, it is much preferable to use shade trees such as oaks, sycamores, or other native shade trees.

Parking. Parking lots and garages should be provided at the rear of buildings and hidden from street view. Parking lots should never ever front the street in a commercial retail district.

Street furnishings and lighting. Benches, shelters, fountains, and signage should be detailed and designed as furniture to be placed within the living room of the city. Lighting should be pedestrian in scale and full spectrum.
Wide sidewalks provide space for pedestrians, children on bicycles, strollers, and a variety of street activities including dining. Sidewalks in commercial areas should never be narrower than fifteen feet, and in busy areas may be wider than 40 feet.
The greatest and most beautiful commercial streets include a combination of wide sidewalks and formal alignments of shade trees. Random planting of different species have no place in formal urban commercial landscapes. Trees should be of a single species and size and planted in straight lines.
Wherever possible, on-street parallel parking should be provided at the front of retail shops and businesses. On-street parking provides short term parking for shoppers and patrons, buffers the sidewalk from street noise and traffic, defines the space of the sidewalk just as buildings define the space of the street. On street parking calms and slows traffic on the street. When traffic slows as a result of on-street parking, it is easier for motorists to see storefronts, and it is easier for pedestrians to cross the street.

Parking lots and parking garages should always be placed at the rear of buildings; they should never front on a commercial street. It is impossible to create a beautiful and comfortable street environment when parking lots are allowed to front the street. Gaps formed by surface parking lots undermine the critical objective of providing enclosure to the street space. Gaps in the continuous facade of retail storefronts and businesses also discourage pedestrian shoppers since pedestrians do not feel comfortable crossing a large expanse of parking. As a result, parking lots on the street hurt the value of the retailing environment.
The main street should be viewed as the living room of the city. In great commercial spaces, as much care is taken in the furnishing and detailing important commercial street space as would be taken in furnishing one’s living room.
Great residential streets include the same components as beautiful commercial streets: building alignment, wide sidewalks, street trees, lighting, and on-street parking. The best residential streets are narrow with on-street parking on both sides and large street trees planted close to the curbs. All these elements combine to dramatically slow and constrain traffic flow. They differ from commercial streets in having greater (but still uniform) building setbacks, narrower sidewalks (five to six feet), subdued lighting, and more landscaping.
The Design Concept for Becker Road
Crossing over I-95 or the Florida Turnpike, the first impression of Becker Road would be that of a lush green parkway. The Community’s Master Plan calls for Becker Road to be a parkway, interrupted at distinct points with more urban elements.
Entry markers announce arrival to an important place and can be located within the linear parks proposed to front portions of Becker Road.
A large percentage of Becker Road is designed as a beautiful green parkway. Portions of the road are fronted by wide linear parks that include beautifully landscaped drainage features (drawing above left). Other sections are proposed to be fronted by buildings (above right). Typical building types along Becker Road would be two and three-story residential and office buildings that front on the street and hold their parking at the rear.

Linear park sections and the sections fronted by residential should be fronted by a strong linear planting of canopy trees such as oaks that will help to enclose the street and calm traffic. The wide median should also be planted with canopy trees. Trees should be planted in formal alignment reasonably close together and of a single species. The symmetry and alignment of the trees is what makes the parkway feel like a special place.
A consistent, closely planted alignment of large shade trees has the power to enclose the space of streets and calms traffic. Plantings of live oaks or other canopy species could transform residential and parkway sections of Becker Road into a very beautiful and memorable place.
 Portions of Becker Road are proposed to be fronted by wide linear parks that include beautifully landscaped drainage features and paths for walking and biking.
The intersection of Becker Road and Darwin Boulevard is proposed to be designed as a roundabout fronted by mixed-use buildings.

**Darwin Boulevard and Savona Roundabouts**

Roundabouts are proposed at both Darwin and Savona boulevard intersections with Becker Road for several reasons. Roundabouts calm traffic without adversely affecting the ability of the roadway to move traffic. Traffic from the smaller street merges with the general traffic flow, and traffic continues through the intersection. Roundabouts will reduce speeds to approximately fifteen miles per hour, but the efficiency of the roundabout intersections will be better than a signalized intersection since traffic never is forced to wait for a light to turn. Because of the efficiency of modern roundabouts, the Florida Department of Transportation has increasingly supported their use in situations similar to that of Becker Road.

Roundabouts also signal arrival to a place and add to the aesthetics of the street. The interior space of the roundabout is an opportune location for public art such as sculptures and fountains. The roundabouts on Becker Road should be enclosed by a neighborhood center in the form of mixed-use buildings and wide sidewalks that further signal arrival at an important location. Both the Savona and Darwin boulevard intersections have been identified as good locations for small amounts of “cross roads” retail. Examples of cross roads retail would include a corner store. The visual impact of the roundabouts at Darwin and Savona boulevards can be further accentuated by the contrast between the green of the parkway approaching the intersection and the urbanism of the roundabout and its fronting uses.

The design concept that came out of the charrette is exciting and will make the neighborhoods that surround Becker Road attractive places to live. Becker Road represents the front door to neighborhoods, the City of Port St. Lucie, and St. Lucie County. Becker Road should be designed as a unique and attractive street. Becker Road will have a very positive impact on the surrounding lands.
An Illustration of the Darwin Boulevard Roundabout at Build-Out

The intersection of Becker Road and Darwin Boulevard is proposed to be designed as a roundabout fronted by a mix of building types and uses. The spaces around the circle are urban in character and represent a strong contrast to the parkway approaching the circle. The mix of buildings is envisioned to include a limited amount of retail, office, residential, and civic uses such as a church.
Retail with residential above fronting the Darwin Boulevard roundabout.

Detail of Becker Road: the Darwin Boulevard Roundabout.

The Darwin Boulevard roundabout is a good location for an office.

The Darwin Boulevard Roundabout viewed from the air.
Savona Boulevard Roundabout

The intersection of Becker Road and Savona Boulevard has been designed as an oval roundabout. The roundabout is designed to slow traffic moving along Becker Road. The design will also make the intersection work efficiently and maintain good traffic flow on Becker Road.

As previously discussed, the intersection should include a mix of uses including retail, office, civic and residential building types.

The illustration at the right shows the Savona Road roundabout with a church and a mixed use building with retail on the ground floor and office or residential uses above the retail. The roundabout is marked by two columns or obelisks as decorative entry features to the area.

Retail uses should be limited to the north side of Becker Road where they are most accessible to both pedestrian and vehicle traffic. The amount of access south of Becker Road will be limited until the road network extends across the C-23 Canal into Martin County.
Perspective of the Becker Road/Savona Boulevard Roundabout.
The Community’s Master Plan calls for a mixed-use village center to be located at the intersection of Port St. Lucie Boulevard and Becker Road. Retail storefronts would focus on Port St. Lucie Boulevard and would occur in a main street format. Retail could also face the proposed civic green located at the center of Becker Road between the north and southbound lanes.

Splitting east and west bound lanes of Becker Road to form the town green and civic axis of the village center helps to provide a good location for businesses, creates an easier crossing for pedestrians to cross Becker Road, and provides a gathering place and civic site for public buildings such as libraries, meeting halls, theatres, and churches. Splitting the road creates special value for the properties facing the civic space. The creation of the public green should be encouraged and facilitated.

Based upon an evaluation of the market potential for retail within the study area, the village center is likely to focus on meeting the regular shopping and service needs of the surrounding neighborhoods. Typical services would include a market, pharmacy, dry cleaners, restaurants, coffee shops, movie rentals, and similar uses.

The attractive format proposed would also make it a great location for a variety of office uses and residential apartments and townhouses.

The core of the property needed to construct the village center is vacant and in large parcels, making implementation of the plan easy.

Example of main street retail.

The Village Center at Port St. Lucie Boulevard and Becker Road

The Communities’ Master Plan for the village center at Becker Road and Port St. Lucie Boulevard. Main street shopping along Port St. Lucie Boulevard and the civic axis along Becker Road.
Illustrations showing the different building types that are located at the village center.
1. Multifamily homes just before the village center - approaching from the east.

2. Approaching from the east closer to the village center, higher density residential uses close to the village center.

3. Continuing east on Becker Road, the street begins to separate forming the central civic space.

4. Moving into the civic space, the green is large enough to accommodate a beautiful civic building.
The civic space created provides a premier address for business and a strong sense of place. It would be possible to develop the village center without the additional responsibility of changing the configuration of the street to form the civic space called for in the Community's Master Plan. The plan without the space would work, but it would not create the special place that will differentiate the village center at Becker Road from other commercial properties, increase real estate values, and attract tenants, businesses, and residents to the location.

The extra effort for proper design, proportions, and the detailing of all streets, civic spaces, and buildings is an important priority that will have a lasting consequence in the community - to both residents and businesses. Where care has been taken to assure that design and aesthetics are given a high level of consideration, the result has been pride in community, strong economic development potential, and high property values.

The primary reasons that communities do not get beautiful buildings, roads, and public works projects are twofold. First, the design focuses on the functional aspects of the project such as space requirements or capacity. The plan often fails to consider the impact that poor aesthetic design will have on the civic realm and public spaces of the city. A poorly conceived building scars the street and neighborhood for years and scares away potential investors inhibiting investment in nearby properties.

Secondly, the plan oftentimes has a narrow view of the project or fails to define it properly thereby limiting its potential. If the design portrays Becker Road as simply a structure designed to move a certain number of automobiles, an unsightly highway will likely result. If on the other hand, the plan goes further to see streets as public spaces and as part of the public realm that must function to move cars but should also be a beautiful place for people, the design is more aesthetically pleasing and can act as a destination rather than a thoroughfare.

When a plan neglects good design, an opportunity to improve the city is lost. Good design does not have to cost a lot more if it costs more at all. In the case of the large civic space on Becker Road the realignment costs could be minimized if the civic space is counted as meeting open space requirements within the village center, development rights are transferred to the adjacent buildable property, and if the City participates with the adjacent property owners in building the civic space. Location of a civic building such as a library annex on the green would also benefit adjacent retail since the library would act as an anchor to the village center. Alternatively, building rights could be sold to civic uses such as a church or theatre providing the building to occupy the central space was largely public in nature, met appropriate architectural standards, and generated sufficient pedestrian traffic to activate the public space.

Care should be taken with each expenditure that a jurisdiction makes to assure that it furthers to the maximum extent possible the goal of making the community a beautiful and special place. When this happens, property values rise, business re-locates into the area, and tax revenues increase.
Aerial perspective of the village center civic space on Becker Road.
The future connection of Port St. Lucie Boulevard to SR 714 in Martin County provides a unique opportunity to create a beautiful entrance into the City of Port St. Lucie and St. Lucie County. The proposed design in the Communities’ Master Plan assures that the village center becomes an attractive location for businesses and quality residential development.

The City of Port St. Lucie should work with Martin County, to make the proposed new bridge over the C-23 Canal a beautiful structure that adds to the attractiveness of the public realm. Consideration should also be given to beautification of the C-23 right-of-way to make it an attractive linear park and trail system that could be used by residents of the area.
Becker Road Residential Building Types
**BECKER ROAD RESIDENTIAL BUILDING TYPES - MIXED-USE BUILDINGS WITH APARTMENTS ABOVE STORES**

Note: All building types depicted in these plans (except for main intersections of Savona, Darwin and PSL Bvds) have been designed and tested to fit in one single lot. This means the entire plan is feasible by simply impacting the layer of lots that front Becker Road. At the time of adoption, the City, working with the community, can decide to expand these concepts into the neighborhoods as they see fit. The fact that these buildings fit in one lot also means that, with the exception of the three main intersections of Savona, Darwin and PSL Boulevards, it is not necessary to require lot consolidation to build any part of this plan.

**Mixed-Use Building Types**

The village center and cross roads retail areas at the Darwin and Savona boulevards roundabouts are envisioned as being fronted by two to three-story mixed-use buildings. These buildings would house retail on the ground floor and office or residential uses above. The village center at Port St. Lucie Boulevard could call for four-story buildings fronting the large civic space on Becker Road. The extra height may be needed to ensure the proper street to building height ratio to enclose the street space. Furthermore, more activity is projected at the village center. The Community's Master Plan recommends that retail be limited to the north sides of the Darwin and Savona boulevards roundabouts. The majority of residences within the study area lie north of Becker Road, and the roads south of Becker Road do not connect to other areas. Limiting retail on the north sides of the roundabouts will discourage pedestrian crossings across Becker Road. Less pedestrian-intensive uses could be located on the southern sides such as office or medical uses. At the village center, there is no need limit where retail is located since Port St. Lucie Boulevard is a major connector to the city and a western connection into Martin County will be constructed.

Life in a more urban area close to cafes and shopping is attractive to many young professionals, recent retirees, and other growing portions of the residential market. Small condominium townhouse units above retail at CityPlace in downtown West Palm Beach intended to sell for less than $200,000 when first constructed, Units quickly resold for more than $350,000 due to the strong demand for this type of housing. Similarily, apartments and condominiums above retail at Mizner Park in Boca Raton sold before retail space was leased. Office uses could be provided above ground floor retail in the locations noted. The location between I-95 and the Florida Turnpike on Port St. Lucie Boulevard is an ideal place for a mixed-use village center. If the village center is designed well, it will attract an even greater amount of interest as a great location for business, office, and professional uses.
**Key Features**

The building is pulled up to the sidewalk, with its main entrance off the sidewalk. Residential occurs on the upper levels with retail on the ground floor and activating the street.

On-street parking should be provided at the curb to support the retail, but remaining parking demand occurs at the rear of the building hidden from the street. In the site plan to the left, parking lots of adjoining buildings are linked allowing for some sharing.

Typically such buildings are provided with awnings to protect shoppers, or may be arcaded.
The Community’s Master Plan recommends retaining residential uses fronting Becker Road in many locations. However, residential uses should be of a type and design that is compatible with Becker Road as a four-lane parkway. Several residential multi-family building types have the resilience to front Becker Road including courtyard buildings and various types of townhouses.

Multi-family buildings typically have sturdier construction than single-family residential units and are usually are at least two or three stories. Their construction insulates them better from street noise, and the height allows them to act as a buffer between single-family residential uses and the busy street. The additional height holds the space of the street better than a single-story building.

All of the examples in the following pages face Becker Road, have a sidewalk, and place their parking at the rear. An alley parallel to Becker Road offers access to the rear parking lots.

**Courtyard Building**

The courtyard building (illustrated at the right) is a beautiful building type that may be used for both residential and office purposes. Courtyard buildings include a small central courtyard, and the building wraps around the courtyard. The main entrance to the building is typically from the courtyard. The courtyard may include a small garden or landscaped plaza area with a fountain, sculpture, and/or seating.

The building illustrated includes nine residential apartments or condominium units with parking in the rear.

Given the cross-section of Becker Road, courtyard types of three or four stories could be constructed without adverse impact on the single-family residential areas to the rear.
Elevation of a courtyard building.

Site plan showing two courtyard buildings. Parking is provided at the rear hidden from the street.

Layout for the courtyard buildings. The plan offers nine units of varying sizes.
A perspective showing townhouses facing a suburban section of Becker Road.
Townhouse Buildings

Townhouses come in a variety of formats including those with small courtyards illustrated here. Typically, they are two or three stories in height with individual units arranged side by side facing the street. The height depends on the depth of the lot upon which they are constructed. Sometimes parking is provided on the ground floor of the building, with residential living areas located above, producing a thin three-story building. In other cases, parking occurs behind a two-story building with additional living space located above the garage, as in the example of the courtyard townhouse illustrated here. In both cases, parking is at the rear and accessed by an alley. The number of units located next to one another varies. End units have the advantage of being able to have windows and light from three sides.
A traditional three-story townhouse building faces a linear park along a parkway section of Becker Road. Parking is provided behind and under the units allowing for construction on a lot with very shallow depth. Townhouses make great liner buildings along larger streets and shield single-family homes from noise and traffic.
Site Plan for series of townhouses. Parking is provided in a garage under the unit allowing for construction on shallow lots.

Elevation for a single townhouse unit.

Layout for a single townhouse unit.
PROPOSED MIXED-USE RESIDENTIAL TOWNHOUSE DEVELOPMENT ON BECKER ROAD

Proposal for the development of an existing vacant commercial property on Becker Road

East of the Florida Turnpike and south of Becker Road between Lassiter and Junietta terraces is a moderately sized parcel currently zoned commercial. Based upon the market assessment for retail in the area, this property seemed a better location for multi-family residential than for commercial development. The plan to the right shows how the property might be developed with townhouses. The proposed plan follows the model of Magnolia Court in West Palm Beach between Olive and Dixie avenues just south of Okeechobee Boulevard.

As proposed, the majority of the property is developed as residential with the potential for commercial uses on the ground floor of buildings facing Becker Road. Parking is accessed from an alley that occurs between the backs of townhouses. Some townhouses face Lassiter Terrace, others face Junietta Terrace, and others townhouses face a central green or courtyard. As designed, the project could accommodate approximately sixty residential units and a modest amount of commercial uses facing Becker Road.

A multi-family residential project at this location would be more viable than a commercial use and would be much more compatible with surrounding residential uses.

Photographs of the Magnolia Court development in West Palm Beach are provided on the next page.
Proposed townhouse design for existing commercial property on Becker Road.
Special Projects
View of the proposed new elementary school auditorium from Becker Road. Located at the end of a formal civic space, the school holds a special and prominent site within the community.
The Proposed Neighborhood Elementary School

Whenever possible, neighborhood elementary and middle schools should be provided close to where children live. Traditionally, schools were located close to the center of the community they served allowing many children to be able to walk or bike to school.

During the charrette, it was noted that there is a need for more schools to serve this growing area of Port St. Lucie. The seventeen-acre site, highlighted above, would meet the space requirements for an elementary school, and its location is conveniently close to the village center.

As proposed, the campus includes an auditorium anchoring the west end of a civic green that leads to Becker Road. As located, the building could serve the needs of both the school and various community functions. Play fields are located to the north of the school and designed to serve as a neighborhood park after school hours and on weekends.

As an important civic institution in a prominent civic location, the school should have a beautiful character and architecture that can be an important focal point of the village center and source of community pride.
Special Projects - A New Neighborhood Elementary School

Site plan for the new elementary school and auditorium.

Diagram of the proposed new neighborhood elementary school.
A New Neighborhood Park

During the charrette, participants strongly supported use of the existing city-owned property between Edinburgh Drive and Calmar Avenue for use as a recreational facility including ball fields and other amenities.

Draft plans prepared by the City indicate the possible use of this property for a large retention area. However, that plan was based upon an assumption that Becker Road would ultimately be expanded to six lanes and that there would be much more commercial development within the corridor than the residents want, the charrette team feels is likely, or that could be supported in the market place. Based upon the recommendations of the Community’s Master Plan that Becker Road not be expanded beyond four lanes and that commercial development be limited largely to the intersection of Port St. Lucie Boulevard and Becker Road, significantly less land is required to meet drainage requirements.

Since there are no existing recreational facilities within the study area, any opportunity to provide such facilities at other locations within the study area should be utilized. The Communities’ Master Plan recommends that this property be developed as a City recreational facility serving the Becker Road neighborhoods.

The proposed location is easily accessible to surrounding residential neighborhoods from both Becker Road and the likely reconnection of Rosser Boulevard via Edinburgh Drive or Calmar Avenue.
Currently there are no bus shelters, sidewalks, or waiting places along Becker Road.

Views of a simple and attractive bus shelters that could be used for the Becker Road area.

A Dignified Place to Wait

Currently, there are no bus shelters, sidewalks, or waiting places along Becker Road or in the study area. Children have to gather along the highway or at intersections to wait for busses and walk to and from bus pick up points located in the grass or at the road edge. This is at best a rural condition, it is not safe, and not a situation that should ideally remain for very long.

When Becker Road expands to four lanes, sidewalks wide enough to accommodate both pedestrians and children on bicycles should be provided. Consideration should be given to providing sidewalks on at least all of the busier streets. Attractive bus shelters where children and pedestrians can take shelter from the rain would be a further improvement. If these shelters are designed well, they can add to the beauty of the road and mark the entrances to neighborhoods.
Formal waiting place and architectural feature proposed within the linear park along Becker Road at Hallmark Street.
Neighborhood entrance and bus waiting place. Neighborhoods can identify themselves as special places with entrance features that can also serve as convenient places to wait for a school bus.

Neighborhood pride. As the Becker Road neighborhoods mature and fill out, entrance features can be added to help provide a sense of place for residential areas.
Two new bridges are proposed within the study area during the next few years. One will be located on Becker Road crossing I-95, and the other will be where Port St. Lucie Boulevard will cross the C-23 Canal into Martin County. A third new bridge may be proposed allowing Paar Drive to cross I-95 in the future. All of these public works projects represents opportunities to provide beautiful entrance features to the study area and provide the area with a strong sense of place.

Because bridges often occur at the edges of neighborhoods or districts, they represent a natural place to signal arrival to a special place. Where care has been taken in the design of the bridge to make it a beautiful part of the landscape and an important piece of architecture, a bridge has become a landmark that contributes to an area’s character, and the subject of post cards.

In recent times, bridges have been built largely without adornment following a simple utilitarian form that does nothing to improve the aesthetics of a neighborhood. When this approach is taken, an opportunity is lost to define an area as an important place that will not return for decades, if ever.

Most Florida cities were not built this way. The developers and founders of modern St. Augustine and Coral Gables recognized the value that good architecture adds to surrounding real estate values and considered the investment in beautiful public works projects essential and worthwhile. In large part, because of this progressive mentality, Coral Gable and St. Augustine remain today two of the most beautiful cities in Florida and have some of the highest property values.

The City of Port St. Lucie should work with developers within the area, the Florida Department of Transportation, and Martin County to add architectural value to all of the bridges proposed within the study area and throughout the city.
Drainage Issues

Providing adequate flood protection for the Becker Road area is difficult. The study area is poorly drained, and portions experience flooding during moderately heavy rainfall events. Water tables are very close to the land surface, and the soils have little capacity of absorb water.

Options for addressing the existing problems are limited. The current approach to providing flood protection to the area includes requiring homes to have first floor elevations well above flood levels. This requirement is accomplished most frequently by mounding fill to raise the building pad to the required level and then pouring the building foundation on top of the mound.

The result of this approach is that yards are often steeply sloped. Steep yard slopes make yards difficult to use, and during rainfall events, the sloped yards rapidly move water and pollutants onto the roadside swale system onto adjacent lands that are at lower elevations. During heavy rainfall, the swale systems can easily reach capacity and flood streets as they slowly convey water to storm water retention areas scattered throughout the study area.

Because the water table is high, storm water retention areas have a limited capacity to store water and represent a necessary but inefficient method of dealing with existing problems and future growth within the Becker Road corridor.

Master Plan Recommendations

The Community’s Master Plan addresses the drainage issue in three ways. The first way to alleviate flooding is by reducing the need for a very large number of storm water retention areas. By reducing the ultimate configuration of Becker Road from six lanes to four lanes and by reducing the proposed amount of commercial land within the corridor to levels that can be justified based on market analysis, the need for storm water retention is significantly reduced. Reducing road lanes and the amount of commercial reduces the amount of impervious area within the corridor and therefore reduce the need for retention capacity.

Second, the plan recommends that new single-family housing not be allowed to use fill mounds as a method of achieving required minimum floor elevations. Instead, the requirement should be to require houses to be built on short columns or with stem walls sufficiently high to meet elevation requirements. Under this model, some storage can occur on lots reducing the load on the swale system and the requirement for a large number of storm water retention ponds. Housing built in this method has little impact on surrounding properties. The yards are nearly level and much more functional. The land retains its natural ability to absorb rainfall. Since steeply sloped land has little ability to absorb runoff, and significantly increases the percentage of the property that is exporting storm water rather than

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*Example of house built on short columns to meet required first floor elevation. When constructed with a crawl space below the floor, the house has no adverse impact on the natural drainage of the site.*

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Indian River - St. Lucie - Martin - Palm Beach*
new家伙 is the requirement to purchase land to provide retention capacity.

Having reduced the demand for retention facilities to the maximum extent possible, there will still be a demand for new facilities and the associated drainage, most specifically with the expansion of Becker Road to four lanes. The third recommendation for drainage is that the majority of the drainage requirement for the construction of four lanes be met by building a series of retention facilities along the edges of Becker Road. The retention areas could create a linear park system and give the road the feel of a parkway. Locating retention in this manner will help buffer residential uses from the impacts of Becker Road. In addition, if the retention areas are beautifully landscaped, they can create a park system that can be enjoyed by pedestrians and bicyclists.

During the charrette process, it was noted that many of the existing storm water retention areas were poorly maintained in terms of adding aesthetic value to the neighborhoods in which they occurred. Where storm water facilities are beautifully designed and maintained, they can have a positive effect on surrounding property values. Every effort should be made to consider the full opportunity associated with every public works endeavor. A bridge represents a needed transportation system improvement, but also an opportunity to make an architectural statement and announce arrival to a place. Retention ponds serve a very practical water quality need, but also represent an opportunity to beautify a neighborhood and create small park areas, when done well.
The Importance of the Master Plan

The Becker Road corridor between I-95 and the Florida Turnpike will likely be an attractive location for new residential and commercial development. There is no doubt that this corridor will develop. However, in order to assure that development improves the quality of life within the community and enhances property values in surrounding neighborhoods, it is important that the development conform to a Master Plan for the area adopted by the City of Port St. Lucie.

Development within the corridor will be successful to the extent that there is a clear and well-thought understanding of how the area should develop and how properties should interact to create the best value and environment within which people will live and work. This vision must be articulated in the form of a detailed Master Plan that forms the primary basis for reviewing development proposals within the area. The objective of the Master Plan is first to maximize the value of the area in terms of property values and its contribution to the quality of life of residents. The Master Plan also provides assurance to developers and potential investors in the area that their property will increase in value as neighboring properties are developed. Developers and homeowners need to understand what specific objectives the city is working to achieve and what is likely to happen on adjacent parcels of land in the future. They need assurance that what happens on neighboring parcels will not adversely affect the value of their own investment.

Keys to Success

There are two important keys to the successful redevelopment of the Becker Road corridor. The first key is a recognition that the general principles outlined on page vii of this report represent a fundamental paradigm for neighborhood, town, and city building that should form the basis for most, if not all, city planning decisions. The Community’s Requests (page v) and the Community’s Master Plan itself (page 2) were developed based on these general principles, and individual development approvals should be judged based on consistency with them.

The second key is to assure that projects proposed within the study area are designed to interact and support one another and the area as a whole. The best way to assure this is by requiring a high degree of consistency with the adopted Master Plan.
Priorities and Project Management

The Community’s Master Plan represents a vision intended to guide governmental actions and investment toward a well-defined objective. The plan is comprehensive and includes a large number of proposed improvements and development opportunities. Not all of these opportunities should be pursued immediately. Attention and resources should be focused on those opportunities that are strategically most important to achieving the long-term objectives of the plan.

Items requiring Immediate Attention

The City of Port St. Lucie should adopt the Community’s Master Plan, by resolution as the vision of these jurisdictions for the ultimate build-out of the study area. This is a critical first step toward moving forward with the revitalization of the corridor.

The City of Port St. Lucie should assign an individual or team with responsibility to shepherd the Community’s Master Plan through the review, approval, and adoption process. It is important that someone be designated as the person responsible for ensuring that the Becker Road Community’s Master Plan is expeditiously adopted, and that all comprehensive plan, zoning, and land use changes necessary to assure implementation of the plan are processed. The study area is anticipated to experience rapid growth and development pressure, and achieving the objectives of the plan requires that land use and zoning policies be put in place to assure that new development proceeds as envisioned. It is recommended that a team representing planning, design, and law be assigned the responsibility.

The proposed design for the I-95 interchange should be reviewed to assure that impacts on existing Becker Road intersections have been minimized. During the charrette process, confusion existed regarding the design of the I-95 interchange and the length of the approach and ramps needed to accommodate the crossing of I-95. These distances should be minimized to prevent negative impacts to property and reduce the number of intersections with Becker Road that will need to be closed or restricted. The bridge across I-95 should not be designed to accommodate fast travel speeds.

The City of Port St. Lucie should establish an experienced senior level redevelopment team that is charged with shepherding all existing and proposed development within the study area to consistency with the Community’s Master Plan. Once established, the team should work together and regularly communicate. It will take months to develop and adopt into law all the zoning code and comprehensive plan changes that may be needed to assure that development proceeds in the manner proposed in the Community’s Master Plan.

High Priority Items

Land Use and Comprehensive Plan Changes: Implementation of the Community’s Master Plan requires changes to the City’s Future Land Use Map (FLUM) and Comprehensive Plan. This is a very extensive and time consuming process. The City can make these changes in-house, or work with an outside consultant to expedite the necessary changes that will allow development in the form suggested by the Community’s Master Plan. It is important to build incentives into the comprehensive plan that will encourage many of the public components of the plan to be built by the private sector.

New Land Development Regulations (LDR): The City’s current Land Development Regulations do not have instructions to guide the type of development proposed in the Becker Road area. A new form-based code needs to be drafted to ensure appropriate building types, building placement, building
height, appropriate mix of uses and building types, proper parking placement and quantity, as well as proper location for civic buildings and public open spaces. The new form-based code created for the Becker Road area will serve as a tool to guide other proposed traditional developments in the city as well as in the western annexation area.

**Architectural Design Guidelines:** Great architecture is not about expensive materials, it is about correct proportions and the use of appropriate building elements. The community expressed desire to create a place with authentic architecture. The city’s current guidelines are too vague to guarantee the community’s desired outcome. Since the community was not adamant about limiting certain architectural styles, Architectural Design Guidelines created for the Becker Road could be applied on a city-wide basis.

Land required to meet storm water retention requirements within the study should be calculated based on the proposed land uses included within the Master Plan and the proposed design of Becker Road included within the Master Plan. Existing plans for retention were calculated on an excessive amount of commercial uses within the study area, and an assumption that ultimately Becker Road would need to be expanded to six lanes. Reducing the amount of commercial and the ultimate cross section of Becker Road will result in a reduction in the requirements for storm water retention and a requirement to acquire fewer properties.

Land, right-of-way, and easements necessary to implement the plan should be acquired. The land necessary to implement the plan should be acquired as soon as possible. Most of the land needed to implement the plan is currently vacant, however, given the large amount of construction that is occurring in the study area this situation may not remain the case for long.

The St. Lucie County School Board should evaluate the proposed site for a new elementary school and consider its acquisition. If acquired, the school district is encouraged to implement the plan as it has been conceptually designed. The school district should interconnect the school with the village center and surrounding neighborhoods.

The City should consider working with the property owners surrounding the intersection of Becker Road and Port St. Lucie Boulevard to release a Request for Proposals for the development of these lands consistent with the village center concept presented in the Community’s Master Plan. If done well, the village center has the potential to become the centerpiece of Becker Road. Implementing the plan will take cooperation between the City and the landowners. Although the project is not complex, it could be facilitated by the City working closely with the existing owners to market the development opportunity to quality developers that are capable of implementing the vision.

The City should work with the Florida Department of Transportation and Martin County to provide architecturally beautiful bridge designs at the Port St. Lucie Boulevard crossing of the C-23 and at the crossing of I-95 by Becker Road. Beautiful bridges will add to surrounding prop-

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**Diagram of the proposed school near the village center.**

**Examples of project tear sheets.**
IMPLEMENTATION

Residents plan their neighborhood.

Moderate Priority Items

The City should develop the city-owned parcel north of Becker Road between Edinburgh and Calmar Avenue as a recreational facility. No recreational facilities exist within the study area, and this parcel is large enough to accommodate baseball and soccer fields, tennis courts, and other facilities.

The City of Port St. Lucie should develop a series of "Project Tear Sheets" that describe in detail each of the projects proposed within the Master Plan and use these during the budget process to prioritize projects for funding. Illustrated above are examples of project tear sheets. Sheets may be simple and short or several pages for complex projects like the provision of street infrastructure. The tear sheets summarize all essential information regarding the project including its goals and objectives, estimates of cost, and information of management responsibility, and funding sources. These concise documents are extremely helpful in prioritizing projects for funding and promoting projects with others. The development of tear sheets takes the implementation of the plan a step forward beyond the conceptual level in the direction of construction.

Longer Term Priorities

The City should consider holding design competitions for bridges, bus stops, and entry features proposed within the study area. Design competitions are good ways to merge aesthetic and functional considerations, to encourage community spirit, and to draw attention to the area.

Funding Sources

Once the city develops the necessary implementation tools (new FLUM, Comp. Plan, LDR’s, and Architectural Design Guidelines) the majority of the improvements proposed in the Becker Road Community Master Plan will be funded by the private sector. Funding for the widening of Becker Road to four lanes and provide drainage for six lanes is a condition for development of the western annexation area. The fact that the Community’s Master Plan limits the with of Becker Road to four lanes frees up funding that would otherwise been dedicated to future drainage to fund other public R.O. improvements like the roundabouts, wider sidewalks, or additional street furniture. Funding dedicated to the many signaled intersections proposed in the first plan for Becker can be diverted to fund the proposed roundabouts at Savona and Darwin Boulevards. Drainage for the proposed mixed use and more intense commercial development along Becker Road should be paid for, through a fair-share system, by those developers benefiting from not having to provide such drainage on site.

Tax Increment Revenues: Tax Increment Revenue is typically the major source of funding for redevelopment projects under the State of Florida Community Redevelopment Act.

Redevelopment Revenue Bonds: Section 163.385 of the Florida Statutes empowers the City to issue Revenue Bonds to finance redevelopment projects with the security of the bonds based on the anticipated assessed valuations of the completed community redevelopment. In this way, "tax increment" is used to finance the long-term bond debt.

Interest on Redevelopment Trust Fund: Any interest that may be earned from deposit of Trust Fund monies may become a part of the funds used for redevelopment activities.

Industrial Revenue Bonds: Chapter 159, Florida Statutes, cites the Florida Industrial Development Act, which authorizes the use of Industrial Development Revenue Bonds to finance certain types of capital projects for private development.
General Obligation Bonds: Some jurisdictions have also issued General Obligation Bonds for projects within the CRA area. These bonds are secured by debt service millage on the real property within the City and typically must receive voter approval. For example, sports stadiums are often partially funded by such bonds.

Special Improvement District: A Special Improvement District is a true public/private partnership used to develop or revitalize communities. In it, special units of developments can be assessed a fair-share of the necessary public improvements. It also enables taxation, as well as allows downtown property owners and merchants to form a local management association with the authority to collect assessments.

Special Assessment Districts: This is a tax system whereby property owners within the district agree to pay an additional fee or an ad valorem tax to raise funds for specific projects, which will benefit them.

Land Sales and Leases: Cities may acquire and sell land or property.

Contributions and Donations: Voluntary contributions by private companies, service organizations, individuals or foundations are a potential source of income for special or popular projects, particularly those of a civic nature, such as building parks, or perhaps a beautiful bridge or public building.

Foundations: Several communities have researched the purpose and intent of foundations and designed portions of their Plan to attract grants from a particular foundation. Foundation money is often a good source for training and education programs.

Public/Private Ventures and Partnerships: Some redevelopment projects have been designed to stimulate additional private investment and were accomplished through public/private ventures or partnerships. The City can give assistance to a developer in the assembly of land for a private development. In return, the developer may be obligated for building renovations, street, landscaping, sidewalk and other redevelopment improvements. The private contribution may also be through direct contributions, or payment to assessment districts.

Community Contribution Tax Incentive Program: This program was created by the Florida legislature to encourage corporate involvement in community revitalization. This program allows businesses a fifty-percent tax credit on Florida corporate income tax or insurance premium tax for donations to local community development projects. Donations must be made through an eligible non-profit corporation conducting a City approved community development project such as affordable housing.

Direct Borrowing: The City is empowered to fund redevelopment projects and programs through direct borrowing of funds. Depending on the particular projects, the City may utilize both short and long-term borrowing.

Enterprise Zone Investment: This program is designed to encourage increased business in distressed areas. The State provides property tax credits, jobs tax credits, partial building sales tax refunds, and partial sales tax refund for business equipment purchased.

Utility Enterprise Funds: Several communities in Florida have used "enterprise funds" to fund infrastructure improvements in their redevelopment areas.

Private Business Development Program with Banks: Banks may incorporate a subsidiary to provide loan assistance not normally permitted for commercial banks. The loans are used to help start or expand business operations, as long as the purpose is related to community development and not to simply provide a conventional commercial loan.

Bank Reinvestment Pools: Many cities have developed a cooperative approach with local lending institutions to supplement the funding for their community redevelopment program. The Community Reinvestment Act of 1977 requires banks to define a service area, assess local credit needs and make efforts to meet the community's needs. The Community's Master Plan may serve as the basis for goal establishment and planning by local lending institutions.

Property Improvement Grant Programs: Several communities have established grant programs that are used for facade improvements and building renovation. These programs are usually directed towards improvements that have a high potential for stimulating additional private development in the area. Several communities have used State Programs and private investments to initiate a revolving grant program. For example, Chapter 80-249 of the Laws of Florida offers a 50% credit against state corporate income taxes for contributions of up to $200,000, for community development with the contributions used as a direct grant or to start a revolving loan fund.

County, State and Federal Grant Programs: Funding may be available from several Federal and State agencies, such as the Department of Community Affairs and the Florida Department of Transportation.

Economic Development Administration Grants: This federal agency provides grants to fund public works projects. This grant/loan program assists distressed communities to attract industries, encourages business expansions and primarily focuses on generating long-term, private sector employment opportunities.

Small Business Administration (SBA): The Small Business Administration is a federal agency that provides low-interest loans to business people who cannot qualify for standard commercial loans. This loan program has been used to encourage economic development by assisting small business start up and expansion within the CRA districts.
The Charrette Process
Views of the residents drawing and sharing their ideas.
Views of the residents drawing and sharing their ideas.
PUBLIC PLANNING PROCESS - THE COMMUNITY'S PLANS
Participants presenting their ideas for Becker Road.
Participants discussing and presenting their ideas for Becker Road.
THE DESIGN TEAM

Bill Hay, Billy Harraway, Ramon Trias, Adrien Ferrari, Kim Delaney

Working away at City Hall.
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Images from the November 2005 Becker Road Charrette held in Port St. Lucie, Florida.