4.0 - Neighborhoods

"Promote desirable, affordable, and vibrant neighborhoods that meet the demands of our current and future residents"

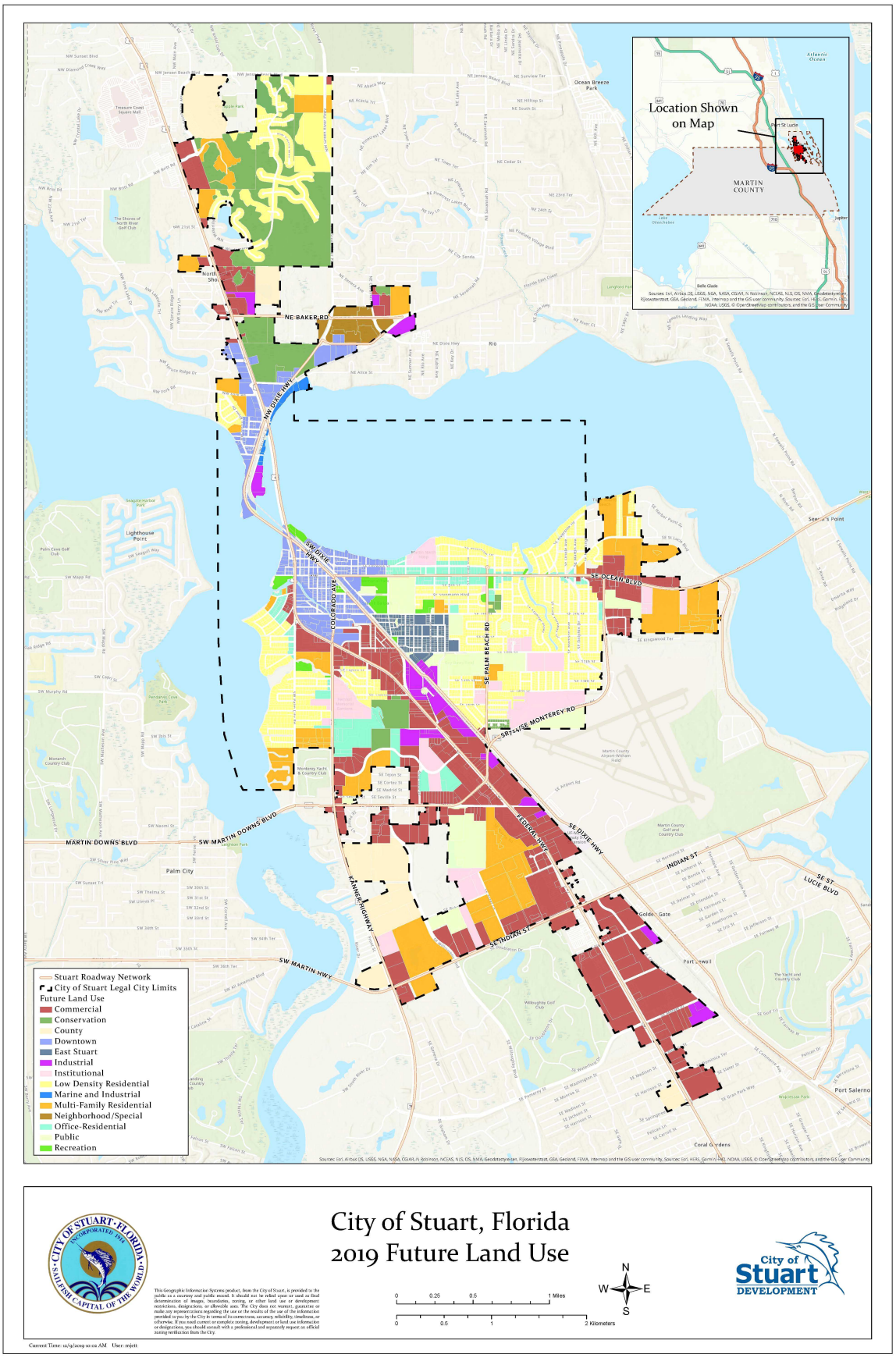
Strong neighborhoods are at the center of the City of Stuart's community identity. The City has identified areas in which the comprehensive plan should be updated to promote positive development and redevelopment patterns. The existing elements, objectives, and policies in the comprehensive plan will be evaluated on their effectiveness in promoting desirable, affordable, and vibrant neighborhoods that meet the demands of Stuart's current and future residents. Stuart strives to provide neighborhoods that provide a diverse housing stock, promote density and walkability, and preserve and enhance the area character. Overall the City must ensure that the comprehensive plan promotes neighborhood resiliency and sense of place for an improved the quality of life.

4.1 Description of the Issue

Stuart has strived to maintain its unique area character while faced with the challenges of growth and development. These planning efforts date back to 1986 with the creation of the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA). This effort spurred a series of planning initiatives to maintain and enhance neighborhood health and vitality including the Downtown Master Plan of 1988 and the 2002 Community Redevelopment Plan. In 2009, the City completed an Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR) for the comprehensive plan that provided recommendations on issues with compatibility, architectural design and neighborhood vitality. In 2017, the City received the Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) Florida Partnership Grant for technical assistance and support to improve its communities through an asset-based economic development strategy. In August 2019, the City of Stuart adopted a Community Redevelopment Plan (CRP) with the purpose of guiding the city in identifying priorities and opportunities within the Community Redevelopment Area (CRA). The CRP outlined a vision for growth and unification of Stuart while protecting the existing built and natural environments. Covering 1,168 acres, the CRA encompasses a large area within the Stuart city limits. Therefore, the CRP's goals, vision, and objectives align closely with those of the greater Stuart limits and the overall comprehensive plan objectives and policies.

As Stuart continues to grow and adapt to current development trends, new challenges arise while old challenges persist. The major issues facing neighborhoods in Stuart have been broken down into the following elements: Future Land Use; Housing; Recreation and Open Space; and Historic Preservation and Neighborhood Vibrancy. If not addressed, the issued outlined in each element below will make it difficult, if not impossible, to create neighborhoods that are both resilient and sustainable for the future of Start.

a) **Future Land Use:** Several issues have been identified related to land development patterns and future land use needs within the community, which should be explored in the comprehensive plan update. Stuart has identified a need to increase development density for the purposes of promoting more walkable neighborhoods, increased use of public transit, improved access to public amenities, and access to downtown businesses. Allowing more density in key areas throughout the community will also encourage a more diverse housing stock and affordability of housing options. Stuart should evaluate opportunities for infill development and possible revision to design criteria that are often a barrier to infill development projects. Stuart has identified a need to better define architectural and site design standards in the comprehensive plan. Clearly defining desired architectural and site design standards in the comprehensive plan that encompass the unique character of the community will better serve to influence new minimum requirements in the LDC. New development should complement existing development while allowing for a range of architectural design types.


Location Shown on Map
MARTIN COUNTY
NE BAKER RD
NW DIXIE HWY
SW DIXIE HWY
COLORADO AVE
SE OCEAN BLVD
SE PALM BEACH RD
SR 714/SE MONTEREY RD
MARTIN DOWNS BLVD
SW MARTIN DOWNS BLVD
FEDERAL HWY
SE DIXIE HWY
INDIAN ST
SE ST LUCIE BLVD
KANNER HIGHWAY
SE INDIAN ST
SW MARTIN HWY
Palm City
Rio
Golden Gate
Port Salerno
Coral Gardens
Stuart Roadway Network
City of Stuart Legal City Limits
Future Land Use
Commercial
Conservation
County
Downtown
East Stuart
Industrial
Institutional
Low Density Residential
Marine and Industrial
Multi-Family Residential
Neighborhood/Special
Office-Residential
Public
Recreation
City of Stuart, Florida
2019 Future Land Use
0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles
0 0.5 1 2 Kilometers
N
W E
S
City of Stuart
DEVELOPMENT

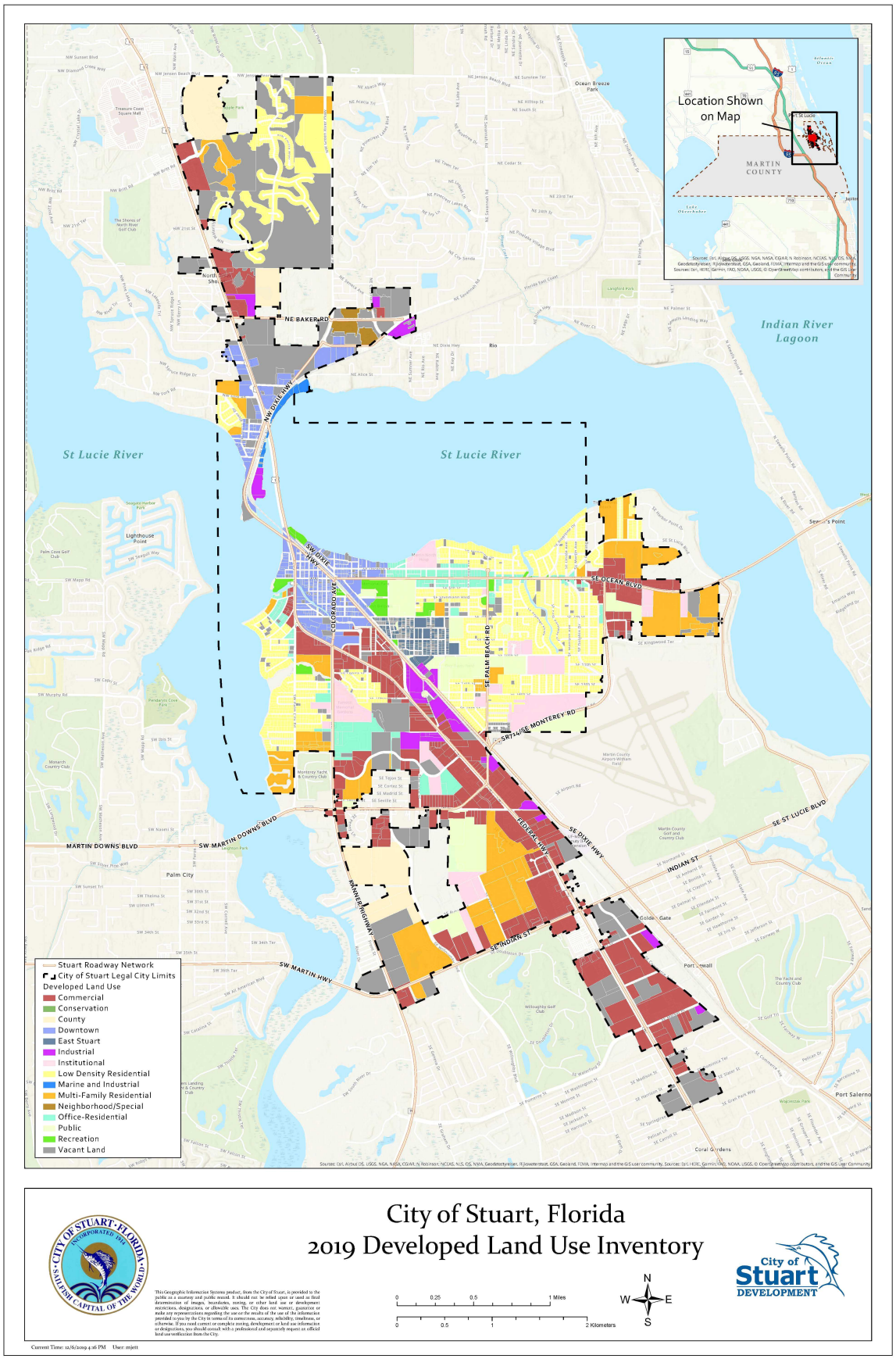
b) **Housing:** Like many areas in Martin County, the City of Stuart has a need for a more diverse and affordable housing stock that meets the demands of current residents and is attractive to future businesses and residents. Currently, Stuart has the lowest median home value within the county and struggles with an aging housing stock with most homes built between 1970 and 1989. As a result, many neighborhoods within the city limits and specifically in the CRA, suffer from vacant or dilapidated properties and widespread blight. Due to the age of existing properties, many homes do not meet current standards and building codes for hurricane and storm resiliency. Finding opportunities to incentivise rehabilitation of existing structures, infill development, and historic preservation will aid in combating blight, improving home resilience, and increasing adorable housing opportunities. Stuart also lacks diversity in available housing types. The comprehensive plan should be evaluated to allow for and promote mixed use and missing alternative housing types (i.e., cottage lots, granny flats, accessory dwelling units, etc.). As seen in the table below, there is a large multi-family and mixed-use residential housing potential within the community. Providing a greater mix of housing types will also support the need for affordable housing and promote a thriving community.

2019 Vacant Residential Land Development Potential

Land Use Designation	Land Use	
	Acres	Dwelling Units
Multi-Family Residential	66.87	668
Neighborhood/Special District	25.51	382
Office/Residential	13.41	134
Low Density Residential	37.47	326
Downtown	28.25	423
East Stuart	12.12	206
Total Acres	183.63	2139

c) **Recreation & Open Space:** The City has a need for comprehensive planning initiatives to improve existing recreation and open spaces and identify opportunities for new recreation and open space in the community. Many of the existing facilities are in need of updating to improve accessibility, pedestrian infrastructure and beautification. Current recreation and open space planning strategies within the comprehensive plan will be evaluated for their effectiveness in meeting and anticipating future needs for a growing population. The comprehensive plan should address the inventory of vacant property comparatively to the needs for future recreation and open space. The connectivity between all recreation and open space should also be evaluated to promote walkability, bike-ability, and increase overall accessibility to these neighborhood amenities. The comprehensive plan should make healthy communities a priority by marketing and promoting recreation opportunities. In addition, the need for new amenities for healthy communities, such as fitness stations and greenway trail systems, as well as fitness programming should be evaluated.

d) **Historic Preservation & Neighborhood Vibrancy**: History and historic preservation drive much of the character, aesthetic, and sense of place that exists in the community today. The process in which we updated existing and proposed building architecture should be evaluated to ensure new development does not overpower the existing character. Site design standards and the public realm must be addressed to improve connectivity and the pedestrian experience within community open space. By strengthening its historic preservation efforts, the City aims to stabilize many neighborhoods, increase property values, and support more sustainable development. The City needs evaluate existing methods for developing an inventory of and preserving historic structures. The City also should consider developing an inventory of cultural assets as they move to push more artistic installations, mural programs, and other cultural projects to promote neighborhood vibrancy.



City of Stuart, Florida
2019 Developed Land Use Inventory

City of Stuart DEVELOPMENT

4.2 Potential Social, Economic, and Environmental Impacts

a) **Future Land Use:** Providing a healthy range of land uses to drive the future growth of the Stuart is essential to the social, economic, and environmental health of the city. Incentivising greater density and infill development patterns will aid in the preservation of open space and protection of natural resources. Establishing policies that promote infill and redevelopment activity, that maintain neighborhood compatibility and minimize negative impacts on adjacent properties will contribute to neighborhood stability. It will also increase property values, occupancy rates and marketability of properties. As these neighborhood changes occur, the economic vitality and status of Stuart as a commercial hub for greater Martin County is enhanced.

b) **Housing:** Communities facing a lack of affordable and diverse housing stock face a number of economic and social issues including poverty, homelessness, foreclosures and displacement of residents. Community blight and dilapidated housing lower morale and sense of place, discourage tourism, and negatively impact the overall quality of life for all Stuart residents. In addition, as the quality of the built environment degrades, so does public perception of place, promoting lack of ownership in community spaces, encouraging illicit activity, and setting the stage for further blight to occur. Communities that fail to provide adequate affordable housing for residents lack an economically and socially diverse population that is essential to healthy cities. Increasing opportunities for quality affordable housing can increase the level of disposable income for residents and their ability to spend their money in the neighborhood and downtown. Gaining more housing diversity in the city will also serve as an economic development incentive as many employees of existing Stuart businesses commute in from outside the city. Providing opportunities for its workforce to live and work within the city is a great incentive for existing businesses as well as draw for future businesses. Securing adequate housing stock may in turn draw employees back to the city to live as well as work in.



c) **Recreation and Open Space:** Improving community amenities, recreation opportunities, public access to open space, and pedestrian level infrastructure is essential to safe, inviting, and vibrant communities. The primary issues facing the community in recreation and public space include: the need to update and improve existing parks within the city limits; the need to find additional opportunities to preserve open space and provide more parks; the need to provide Stuart residents with access to the waterfront; and, the need to develop connectivity between open space, recreation and other community amenities. Weaving recreation and public space amenities into the fabric of existing neighborhoods will ensure resilient and strong neighborhoods. Ensuring that access to the water and greenspace is maintained and enhanced will have positive economic and social impacts by promoting the protection of natural resources, improving air and water quality, providing more space for social interaction, enhancing quality of life, and retaining residents.

d) **Historic Preservation & Neighborhood Vibrancy:** Cities with vibrant neighborhoods and a strong sense of place are typically more socially diverse and stable. These communities tend to evoke more community pride and residents can be seen interacting in public spaces, attending programmed events, and enjoying life in the downtown commercial corridors. Cities with a strong neighborhood vibrancy also tend to be more environmentally conscious, preserving sensitive environmental resources, and encouraging more compact development patterns that promote community interaction. Tree canopy and improved landscape beautification efforts have also been directly linked to community identity and sense of place. Developing complete street projects, entry gateways, and beautification initiatives encourages pedestrian-friendly streetscape, improves safety, and stimulates community and economic development.

4.3 Recommendations

a) Reorganize Elements under Neighborhoods with required and optional elements of: Future Land Use, Housing, Recreation and Open Space, and Historic Preservation and Neighborhood Vibrancy.

b) Future Land Use

1. Update the comprehensive plan to reflect all recommendations proposed in the 2019 CRP.
2. Update LDC policies to alleviate cost-prohibitive requirements for small infill development including stormwater and parking requirements. Provide more flexible options to address site design criteria including shared parking, fee-in-lieu-of landscaping, and reduced open space so that infill development is affordable and feasible for interested parties.
3. Develop Master stormwater plan for downtown and urban areas to encourage new developments, small infill projects, and increased density.
4. Develop Transit Oriented Development district to support the proposed Bright Line Station.
5. Review opportunities for master parking neighborhoods and consider language for exempt targeted areas to manage neighborhood parking volumes.
6. Update the tree mitigation plan to identify areas where tree mitigation is a priority.

c) Housing

1. Allow for a wider range of multi-family housing types to address the demand a more diverse available housing stock and promote infill development.
2. Encourage accessory dwelling units in housing objectives and add policies.
3. Encourage higher density housing opportunities to improve housing demand affordability.
4. Strengthen policy to incentivize revitalization of existing homes and prioritizing revitalization of historic homes.
5. Create policy to encourage repurposing existing commercial properties to mixed-use uses with a residential component.

d) Recreation & Open Space

1. Develop a parks and public space master plan that inventories existing recreation and open space and identifies new opportunities to promote health, fitness, and social interaction.
2. Encourage accessibility to Recreation and Open space through closing sidewalk gaps where feasible and connecting bicycle lanes to recreation and open space sites.
3. Enhance existing public realm with improved pedestrian infrastructure (i.e., seating, lighting, wayfinding signage, plant material and hardscape) to promote safe and inviting open space.
4. Market Stuart Health Trail and health and fitness programing.
5. Encourage large and small pocket park opportunities where possible in new and existing development.

e) Historic Preservation & Neighborhood Vibrancy

1. Update Landscape Code to make it more user-friendly and encourage use of native and Florida-friendly plants.
2. Initiate a cultural asset mapping project to strengthen community vibrancy initiatives.
3. Update historic surveys to inventory remaining historic resources in the city.
4. Encourage the development of a historic preservation district and ordinance.
5. Support and enhance wayfinding signage program proposed through the CRP and feature historic properties.
6. Incentivise moving historic structures rather than demolition.
7. Encourage and incentivize participation in the voluntary Historic Preservation Program.
8. Establish urban design, place making and general design guidelines that reflect the historical architectural styles of Stuart as a reference for new construction.
9. Encourage existing programs that assist property owners in maintaining and rehabilitating building exteriors, including the Paint Up Program and Business Improvements Reimbursement Program, which includes commercial historic and commercial façade improvement programs.

10. Promote and support success of The Creek Arts & Entertainment District
11. Support existing programs for public art installations and community mural projects to foster community vibrancy.



5.0 – Community & Economic Development

Developing strong community and economic development strategies are fundamental to the future of Stuart. Developing a healthy economy that includes a diverse range of businesses will position the City as a hub to live, work, and play in Martin County.

5.1 Description of the Issue

Over the last ten years, the City of Stuart has grown in population and size through annexations. However, growth has been slow and the City has identified several opportunities to promote the local community and its economic development. Downtown Stuart has become a destination for dining and shopping, but like most downtowns today, it is challenged with retaining small businesses and attracting new investments to draw users from big box retail centers and online retailers. The City has opportunities to revitalize, repurpose, and redevelopment vacant commercial and retail properties to meet current market demands. The City has been successful in spurring revitalization through increasing pedestrian safety, improving community aesthetics through urban form and public art. The resurgence of the Downtown and Colorado Avenue retail hubs can act as catalysts, spurrings redevelopment further outside the Downtown core. The City has further community and economic development opportunities to support training and retention of talent for the local workforce.

"The City will develop and maintain an economic environment that will encourage the creation, expansion and retention of business within city limits while maintaining a high quality of life for its residents."

5.2 Potential Social, Economic, and Environmental Impacts

Economic development is a key factor in maintaining and elevating quality of life for all Stuart residents. By creating jobs, growing the local economy, and promoting innovation and entrepreneurship, Stuart will attract new residents to the area, which in turn will spur increased long-term investment in the community. Positive economic development trends can close the gap between middle and low income residents, lower rates of unemployment, and provide residents with the income and resources to spend time and money in the city in which they live. Job training, growth, and diversity of jobs can promote prosperity among residents, eliminating some of the social and economic barriers between residents of differing income levels.

Environmentally, healthy economic growth within the City will provide Stuart with the tax revenue necessary to invest in sustainable development measures, update and maintain sustainable infrastructure, and purchase and protect environmentally sensitive properties. Additional tax revenue spurred by positive economic development will enable to city to protect and plan for climate change and sea level rise, while implementing Low Impact Development (LID) practices and investing in green infrastructure.

5.3 Comprehensive Plan Evaluation

The Economic Development element in the existing Comprehensive Plan outlines one goal and three objectives that speak to the need to develop and maintain an economic environment that will encourage the creation, expansion, and retention of business within the City limits while maintaining a high quality of life for its residents. While this language supports the City's vision, it is important to build upon this goal to encourage the use of available economic development and community development tools, to align more closely with the Community Redevelopment Area goals and objectives, and promote a more resilient and sustainable community well into the future.

5.4 Recommendations

a) Add a policy to Objective A1 to encourage future designation of Opportunity Zones, especially as appropriate within the CRA.

b) Add a policy to Objective A1 to encourage small business incubator space to attract and foster small business initiatives in the downtown core to better promote unique and specialty consumer goods.

c) Expand on Policy A1.8 to utilize resources and planning tools available to the City of Stuart through the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council and the Business Development Board of Martin County to develop

strategies designed to meet the economic diversification needs of the community, with emphasis on job creation.

d) Add a policy to Objective A2 to seek available funding for the assessment, clean-up, and redevelopment of brownfields sites.

e) Add a policy to Objective A2 to promote and market properties included in the Opportunity Zone to potential developers and business owners.

f) Add a policy to Objective A2 to promote and market underutilized to potential developers and business owners to spur redevelopment and revitalization.

g) Expand on Policy A2.4 to include strengthening career skills training in the public schools as optional courses of study to train and maintain local talent.

h) Further encourage small business development that is unique to the area and can draw residents and tourists to the downtown.

i) Create goal to align City's economic goals with the School District and Indian River State College programs to foster expanded opportunities for our youth and businesses.

j) Encourage redevelopment of vacant and underutilized commercial spaces.

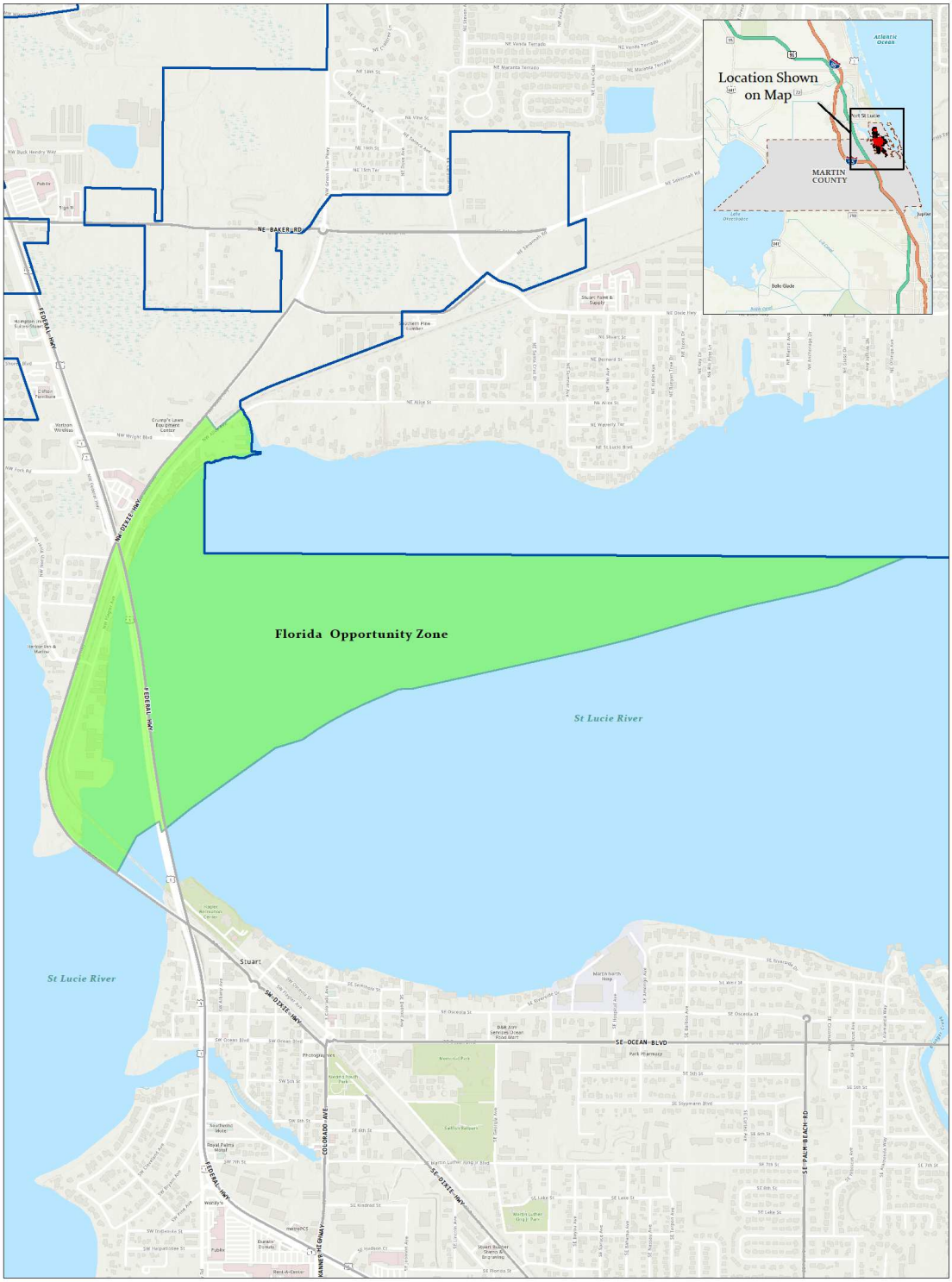
k) Add policy to increase pedestrian traffic in retail corridors through sidewalk and safety enhancements to increase local sales.

l) Add a policy to Objective A3 to promote tourism through historic and cultural arts.

m) Brand the Creek Arts & Entertainment District to create a new destination for arts and culture.

n) Create policy to capitalize on the City's character, elevate the historic architecture, and invest in cultural landmarks and art installations to create a vibrant and unique destination, unlike adjacent communities.

o) Update goals, objectives, and policies to be consistent with the City's Community Redevelopment Area Plan, adopted August of 2019, for consistency and to improve community development efforts.



City of Stuart, Florida
Opportunity Zones