Visualizing Development Strategies for Highway U.S. 19 in Pasco County

November 19, 2021
About the Economic Analysis Program

Since 1999, the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council has been producing economic impact studies for a variety of public and private sector clients. Using the most powerful analytical tools, including IMPLAN and REMI PI+, the Council's Economic Analysis Program has produced hundreds of reports covering topics such as job creation, land use, natural resources and energy, as well as a variety of public policy questions.
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Executive Summary

The Highway U.S. 19 transportation corridor in Pasco County is ubiquitous among American suburban landscapes. As it has for much of the last half century, single-use, auto-oriented development is pervasive along the 19.5-mile highway. The heavily traveled arterial road is, for many, a frequent route for day-to-day trips, and is often one of the first places a visitor experiences when passing through the county. Although there are highly marketable natural amenities and unique attractions within Pasco County and its cities and towns, the negative appearance of vacant or underutilized properties along Highway U.S. 19, combined with unsafe roadway conditions and poor pedestrian infrastructure, makes an impression that is memorable for the wrong reasons.

Pasco County’s West Market Redevelopment/Infill Plan (adopted in 2013) envisions a new future for the West Market Area, rebranded as “The Harbors.” The plan lays a robust framework for future growth and modernization, providing implementation strategies that can transform the conventional corridor into a series of vibrant districts with diverse employment opportunities, affordable housing, waterfront enhancements and access, eco-tourism, and multimodal connectivity. The Harbors Plan represents a critical step towards achieving the County’s economic development goals; however, the redevelopment planning process is ongoing and additional technical assistance is needed to garner community support and continue on the path toward effective plan implementation.

With funding provided by the Federal Coronavirus, Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) of 2020, Pasco County contracted with the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council (TBRPC) to prepare a study visualizing conceptual development strategies within pedestrian-oriented activity nodes along the Highway U.S. 19 corridor and in two specific example areas: the Gulf View Square Mall and Universal Plaza.

This study aims to reflect the visions, strategies, and priorities as defined by the community through Pasco County’s prior planning efforts. While conceptual in nature, the ideas and recommendations provided respond to today’s economic and environmental challenges while setting the County on a path toward a more resilient and sustainable future. The conceptual scenarios presented in this study are illustrative and do not represent any specific plan or action under consideration by Pasco County. Any formalized decisions will be guided by extensive community discussion and feedback.


“Age, location along the coast, proximity to a heavily traveled regional transportation corridor, past planning decisions, development trends, and demographic shifts are some of the forces that have contributed to its current physical and developmental challenges.”
Recommendations

Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council (TBRPC) recommends a series of actions for Pasco County to consider that can transition the Highway U.S. 19 corridor from an underutilized commercial strip corridor to a 21st century corridor for economic activity, livability, and resilience.

Those recommendations are as follows:

**Strategic Redevelopment that Creates Mixed-Use, Walkable Environments**

Realign aging commercial strip corridors with the forces of market demand by strategically restructuring suburban development into an urban form which property owners, developers, and communities will once again invest in. Compact and walkable mixed-use development patterns, as provided by the examples for Gulf View Square Mall and Universal Plaza, model concepts that can be replicated in other locations with the Harbor area.

Work with residents, business owners, and developers to identify potential locations, partnerships, and funding opportunities for activity nodes along Highway U.S. 19. Small Area Plans should be developed to explore potential land use and other regulatory changes in key activity nodes throughout the corridor.

**Economic Development and Workforce Housing**

Prioritize an economic development approach specific to the West Market Area that attracts new, higher paying jobs while improving the existing workforce’s skills and providing employment and homeownership assistance. These actions can lessen the possibility of displacement as it relates to new growth, economic expansion, and gentrification. Evaluate the possibility of reusing vacant, under-performing, or abandoned retail strip centers into quality workforce housing.

Plan the surrounding areas with a mix of uses that complement housing. Create a compact cluster of housing, jobs, and services in designated nodes to support existing and new businesses, as well as entertainment to enhance livability for the neighborhoods along U.S. 19 and all of the Harbors West Market Area. The diversification of uses and new investment will stabilize property assets and grow the existing tax base.

**Sustainable and Resilient Development**

Ensure that the Highway U.S. 19 corridor redevelops in a greener, more sustainable and resilient manner by adding trees, a variety of landscaped spaces, and attractive stormwater facilities that bring people and nature together, as well as encouraging energy efficient and low-impact design practices throughout the corridor.

Identify green building and resilient site design strategies and other sustainable land management practices that can be incorporated into redevelopment projects and provide incentives for implementation of these principles.
1 - Background

About the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council

Established as Florida's first Regional Planning Council in 1962, the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council (TBRPC) provides a forum to foster communication, coordination, and collaboration among its member governments. Serving six counties (Citrus, Hernando, Hillsborough, Manatee, Pasco, and Pinellas) and twenty-one municipalities therein, the Council provides a wide range of services, including:

- Economic Modeling and Analysis
- Economic Development District
- Community Visioning and Planning
- Spatial Growth Modeling
- Hurricane and Hazard Preparedness Planning
- The Official Disaster Planning Guide
- GIS Mapping Services
- LEPC: Hazardous Materials
- Technical Assistance to Local Governments
- Agency on Bay Management
- Bay Soundings Quarterly Environmental Journal

As one of the first Regional Economic Models (REMI) users in Florida, TBRPC has been providing economic analysis services to government agencies, non-profits, and the private sector. Since 1999, TBRPC has conducted over 400 economic impact studies, covering topics such as transportation, environmental and natural resources management, land use decisions, business investment incentives, taxation, sports and other events and festivals. Many of these reports are available from the TBRPC website: tbrpc.org/eap.

CARES Act Technical Assistance

The US Economic Development Administration has provided a grant under the 2020 Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), to the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council (TBRPC) to provide economic recovery technical assistance to the Council's regional partners. Through 2020 and into 2021, TBRPC has called for projects from partner agencies seeking technical assistance on economic development and for COVID-19 recovery in particular.

As of September, 2021, TBRPC has completed studies for the City of New Port Richey on the Rivergate Conceptual Master Plan; an aviation cluster study for the City of Zephyrhills; an economic recovery plan for Manatee County; and a study of small business patterns for Pinellas County. TBRPC intends to complete projects throughout the Tampa Bay Area under this program through 2022.
Visualizing Development Strategies for Highway U.S. 19

At the request of Pasco County staff, Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council (TBRPC) has prepared a study that visualizes development strategies along the U.S. Highway 19 corridor that address the following issues:

1. The U.S. 19 corridor has many large, suburban shopping centers and commercial plazas that are under-performing and have outlived their intended use. Strategic investments can transition the U.S. 19 corridor from a series of underutilized suburban commercial strips to a 21st Century corridor for economic activity, livability, and resilience.

2. The U.S. 19 corridor is vulnerable to the impacts of inland and coastal flooding. Pasco County’s response to these challenges, through risk-reduction strategies, adaptive infill and redevelopment, and comprehensive resiliency planning, is vital to the success and sustainability of investments in the U.S. 19 corridor.

Objective and Process

To address these issues, TBRPC conducted a technical analysis guided by the following objective and process:

- **Objective:** create resilient redevelopment scenarios for under-performing shopping centers and commercial plazas in the Harbors West Market District of Pasco County.

- **Process:** use three-dimensional (3D) visualization and economic analysis to test ideas, compare alternatives, identify priorities, and develop consensus.

The study was conducted in two phases:

- **Phase 1. Inventory and Analysis** (July - September 2021)
- **Phase 2. Conceptual Planning and Design** (October - November 2021)
Chapter 2 - Inventory & Analysis

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Inventory & Analysis Process
TBRPC staff reviewed local plans and land development regulations; conducted site visits to establish existing conditions; analyzed plans and redevelopment proposals collected from comparable municipalities and developers facing similar challenges; and applied best practices in urban design to identify redevelopment opportunities throughout the West Market District.
The Harbors West Market Area

The West Market Area, commonly referred to as “The Harbors,” in Pasco County includes the coastal and inland areas between Pinellas and Hernando counties (Figure 1). The Harbors became highly desirable to retirees and vacationers after the federal Highway U.S. 19 was constructed in the 1930s, which led to growth in subsequent decades as the highway expanded to connect communities from Tampa Bay to Western Pennsylvania. As a north-south regional corridor, Highway U.S. 19 is the central spine of the Harbors West Market Area. The arterial road has influenced how the area has developed over time and remains an essential part of its appearance and identity.

The Harbors reached its peak growth in the 1970s-1980s and remains the most densely populated and developed portion of Pasco County today. The Harbors is home to more than 175,000 people, a ~31 percent share of the County’s total population. With a total land area of 84 square miles, the Harbors has an average density of 2,083 persons per square mile. The West Market Area Districts account for 43.2 percent of all employment in Pasco County. Approximately half of West Market Area employment falls into the broad Administrative, Support, Waste Management, and Remediation Service Industry. Since most people are employed in service sector jobs, approximately 60 to 70% of the area’s population is at low- or moderate-income levels.

The Harbors includes several unique historical and natural assets, and some of the County’s oldest communities, including Aripeka, Hudson, Port Richey, New Port Richey, Holiday, Elfers, and Anclote Key. While there are many strengths and opportunities within the Harbors area, there are also critical weaknesses and conditions that threaten and limit its current and long-term potential as an economic corridor.

Figure 1. Pasco County’s Five Market Areas
Resiliency Considerations

Pasco County experiences a variety of natural hazards, including coastal flooding and hurricanes; inland riverine overflows and tornadoes; and sinkholes and wildfires county-wide. The Harbors’ coastal geography and inland lakes and rivers makes the area particularly susceptible to the damages, expenses, and disruptions caused by flooding. Community engagement throughout the Harbor’s plan development identified coastal, inland, and tidal flooding as a primary concern, as repetitive flood impacts have serious recurring cost implications for residents, business owners, and public agencies alike.

In 2012, Tropical Storm Debby caused the Anclote River and Pithlachascotee River to overflow, flooding communities across the Harbors West Market Area. The Anclote rose from 9 feet before Debby’s approach to more than 27 feet, well above the projected 100-year flood level. Water was ankle-deep to head-high in the evacuation area (Figure 2), as emergency crews used airboats to reach stranded residents in some instances (Figure 3). In addition to flooding caused by severe weather, tidal flooding is becoming an increasingly disruptive issue in communities across Florida, as demonstrated by exceptionally high “King Tide” flooding events.
New buildings and major alterations to existing buildings within special flood hazard areas must meet specific requirements set by Federal and State Governments and enforced by the County. Areas identified on Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) as Coastal High-Hazard Areas (Zones V, V1-V30 and VE) or Coastal Zones (Zones A/AE) provide the basis for flood insurance premiums and building code flood elevation requirements (Figure 4).

Approximately 23,926 acres (44% of the total land area) of the Harbors fall within the Coastal High-Hazard Area (CHHA); the area below the elevation of the Category 1 storm surge line as established by the National Weather Service’s Sea, Lake, and Overland Surges from Hurricanes (SLOSH) computerized storm surge model (Figure 5). Comprehensive plan amendments and changes to land development regulations must impose the appropriate mitigation to ensure that construction is more resilient to storm surge and hurricane evacuation levels of service requirements are met.

Many owners would like to retrofit their properties to flood-resilient standards to reduce risk and the cost of flood insurance. Pasco County’s regulatory environment and safeguards for resiliency will affect decision making and permitting processes for new or substantial construction. Therefore, developers must consider flood risks in the planning and design of new, infill/redevelopment, and infrastructure investments. Much of the Highway U.S. 19 corridor is paved surface area, which contributes to stormwater during flood events. The incorporation of blue-green infrastructure (floodable landscapes, green roofs, green walls, rain gardens, bioswales, and native landscaping for example) during redevelopment can mitigate flood impacts.
The Harbors area is highly vulnerable to resilience-related impacts caused by climate change, including rapidly intensifying tropical storms and hurricanes, severe rainfall, extreme heat, and rising sea levels that compound the effects of flooding during storms and high tide events.

The Tampa Bay Climate Science Advisory Panel has concluded that water levels in Tampa Bay have already increased approximately 7.8 inches since 1946, and the Tampa Bay region can expect to see an additional 2 to 8.5 feet of sea level rise by 2100.

Building retrofits must be designed for increased coastal flooding, to account not only for the current impacts of sea level rise and storm surge but for future sea level rise and storm surge over the life of the structure. Figure 6 illustrates the potential for increased flooding in the year 2045 due to rising sea levels caused by climate change.

Figure 6. Sea Level Rise Projections

- **2045 Sea Level Rise**
- **2045 Sea Level Rise plus King Tide Flooding**
- **2045 Sea Level Rise plus Category 3 Storm Surge**
- **Highway U.S. 19**

NOAA Intermediate-High 2045 Sea Level Rise Projections
Development Form and Character

The Highway U.S. 19 corridor’s built environment is predominantly suburban in nature; characterized by well separated land uses, large block sizes, auto-oriented developments, strip retail centers with large front setbacks, and parking lots fronting the streets. The Harbors Plan (2013) provides a detailed summary of conditions related to the corridor’s existing development form and character that reinforce the call for a strategic redevelopment effort, including:

- Vacant, unused, or underutilized properties created as a result of continuous disinvestment;
- Aging and deteriorating building stock and infrastructure;
- Unsafe roadway conditions and poor pedestrian infrastructure;
- Lack of basic amenities and infrastructure; and
- Overall poor visual appearance marked by huge parking lots, strip malls, and other auto-oriented built form.

The Highway U.S. 19 corridor can project a positive image for Pasco County and its cities through strategic redevelopment that includes a diverse mix of uses based on the character and vision for the area. While the overall corridor will remain automobile-oriented, there is the opportunity to define activity nodes that can be enhanced with pedestrian gathering areas, improved amenities, and improved neighborhood connections.

Figure 7. Highway U.S. 19 Corridor Streetscape
Economic Development Considerations

Creating a modern economic development district requires several elements for success. Firstly, it requires the identification of a district and set goals for its future. Local and County leaders have succeeded in this aspect quite clearly with the Harbors West Market Area District designations and their respective “Vision” statements.

Secondly, there needs to be a concrete plan for development. Other than the mentioned Vision statements, the 2013 Harbors West Market Area Redevelopment/Infill Plan and the 2013-2025 Pasco County Economic Development Plan specify several initial goals and objectives for the Districts. These include branding West Market as a marine nature preserve and recreation destination, encouraging business and workforce growth, and overall improving quality of life. Key issues and strategies to overcome the issues by District are described, as well as a clear matrix of further planning responsibility for relevant organizations. These planning efforts represent a strong start to revitalizing the West Market Area, and further implementation of these plans can benefit the area.

Finally, when lacking an existing overflow of private development dollars, there is almost always some form of economic development incentives. The more specific to the area being developed the better for attracting potential investors and businesses. The Harbors West Market Area appears to lack any specific economic incentives, economic development districts benefit from consistent forms of economic development incentives. The more specific to the area being developed, the better for attracting potential investors and businesses. The Harbors appears to lack area-specific economic development incentives, other than those that the County offers more broadly (see Appendix). This is likely where the Districts are falling short in successfully implementing projects and attracting private businesses.

Corridor Redevelopment Strategies to Advance Economic Activity

TBRPC staff reviewed a report of various corridor redevelopment plans across the country and provide two case examples for reference.

1. Adams County, Colorado in which the City of Denver sits, held stakeholder meeting including university partners, private businesses, and individual citizens to agree upon development nodes. With consistent leadership from the City and County, and communication with stakeholders they were able to present strong cases for public and private investment. The County has used this mandate to develop transit stations at two of these nodes to support future commercial and retail development.

   Stakeholder meetings are not a new concept. There is novelty in having stable meetings with businesses, private citizens, important institutions, and developers all at the same table. This can ensure that incentives are set up in a manner pleasing to all those involved, instead of getting public criticism (or a lackluster response from developers) after the fact. Setting up blended meeting specific to the Harbors West Market Area could be a powerful tool to initiate and advance economic development interests.
2. Arlington County, Virginia uses Form-Based Codes (FBCs) to accelerate development of desired form in specific areas. FBCs are set into law by a city or county as an alternative to traditional separation-of-use zoning. If a developer can meet the required FBC format for their structures and street-facing properties, then they can bypass much of the usual approval process. This serves the dual focus of ensuring that developments are pleasing to residents and speeding up the building process for developers. Private developers have taken to the idea enthusiastically over several years, and have transformed the look and economic activity of the area.

A September 2021 longitudinal report on FBCs (Smart Growth America) found that four jurisdictions with FBCs experienced statistically significant benefits as compared to several without them. Construction activity in the FBC areas increased faster than that in the non-FBC areas (154 percent compared to 115 percent), while keeping rent growth lower (8.7 percent vs. 16.6 percent), and attracted residents faster. Areas which implemented and kept their FBCs in place for at least five years collectively generated $65 million more in tax revenue compared to their comparison groups. Qualitatively, stakeholders noted their increased access to services and amenities, and an overall higher quality of life living in their area. Likewise, real estate developers said that FBCs make a potential development area more competitive in their eyes, due to the flexibility and predictability of the approval process as compared to traditionally zoned areas.

Figure 8. Arlington, VA Redevelopment using Form-Based Codes

Left: Before the form-based code, strip malls and other developments catered to drivers.

Below: Parking relocated from the front to the back of developments helps create a better environment for pedestrians and cyclists.
Chapter 3 - Conceptual Planning & Design

Activity Nodes:

#1. Hudson Avenue
#2. Gulf View Square
#3. New Port Richey
#4. Universal Plaza

Conceptual Redesigns:

Gulf View Square Mall
Universal Plaza
Economic Analysis

Conceptual Planning & Design Process

TBRPC staff applied best practices in urban design and 3D modeling to identify redevelopment to create conceptual redevelopment scenarios for two example areas: the Gulf View Square Mall and Universal Plaza; and estimated the potential economic impacts of the scenarios through the use of TBRPC’s state-of-the-art economic model, REMI PI+.

The West Market Redevelopment/Infill Plan’s Overall Vision and Strategies Chapter (pp. 29-62), as well as the Implementation Chapter (pp. 99-114) provided TBRPC with a guiding framework for conceptual planning and design. The outputs of phase two include 3D visualizations that “bring to life” the communities’ redevelopment visions while examining specific, resilient development scenarios of interest to the County.
Activity Nodes

Consistent with the strategy identified in the Harbors Plan, TBRPC staff recommends that business relocation and other economic development activities be focused within specific activity nodes to preserve and enhance the existing community character in these areas.

Figure 9 diagrams four activity nodes along Highway U.S. 19 with high redevelopment potential. These activity nodes are buffered to further define a pedestrian shed; the distance people are willing to walk to access services and amenities before opting to drive (Morphocode, 2021). Based on the average walking speed, a five-minute walk is represented by a radius of 1/4 of a mile (~400 meters) and a ten-minute walk is represented by a radius of 1/2 of a mile (~800 meters). Notably, in addition to distance, the street grid, sidewalk design, environmental factors, and safety considerations heavily influence how long and/or the distance someone is willing to walk before reaching a destination.

The following section provides resilient design strategies and redevelopment recommendations that can better position these activity nodes, as well as other nodes, throughout the Highway U.S. 19 corridor to reflect the vision of the Harbors Plan.
3 - Conceptual Planning & Design

Node #1 - Hudson Avenue

Context

The intersection of Hudson Avenue and Highway U.S. 19 is a prominent intersection in Hudson. The activity node is defined by the Regional Medical Center Bayonet Point, a 290-bed acute care hospital and designated Level II Trauma Center. The Center is home to the nationally acclaimed Heart Institute and is the first hospital to deliver a comprehensive cardiac and open-heart program in Pasco County. The Center has been serving the northwest Pasco County community since 1981 and employs over 350 physicians, 1,300 staff, and coordinates 500+ volunteers on its integrated healthcare delivery team.

The Center is in the process of completing new improvements valued at over $100 million, including the expansion and renovation of the emergency room with 21,528 sq. ft of both new, major, and minor construction (+917 sq. ft., +27 employees), a comprehensive medical rehab to add a 30-bed inpatient unit with associated therapy spaces (+34,393 sq. ft., +70 employees), and an expansion to the Inpatient Tower to add 72 inpatient beds and increase connectivity between structures (+72,218 sq. ft., +101 employees). These improvements are scheduled to be completed over the next two years.

Additionally, a developer has recently proposed a 288 unit multifamily and townhouse project south of the Hudson Avenue activity node. The new construction would be adjacent to the Werner-Boyce Salt Springs State Park and Point Plaza shopping center and would include townhomes, apartments, office parks, retail, a hotel, and a dedicated park and ride area.

Development Form and Character

- Vast, highway-scale, suburban development pattern.
- Limited distinction from other intersections along Highway U.S. 19.
- East side of corridor is occupied by a large one-story strip center containing commercial retail and service uses in an automobile-oriented setting. Vacant and/or underutilized shopping centers frame Highway U.S. 19.
- Cluster of medical-related uses surrounding the Regional Medical Center Bayonet Point.
- Lack of visibility or effective signage indicating the location the Regional Medical Center Bayonet Point from the Highway U.S. 19 / Hudson Avenue intersection.
- Clear separation of uses and residential housing types, with large clusters of mobile home parks and scattered subdivisions of single family housing separated by surface parking and automobile-related uses.
Medical Industry Cluster Opportunity

An industry cluster is a combination of inter-dependent industries in related fields that take advantage of scale economies in labor and equipment to develop specialized but strong job growing economies. Silicon Valley’s software cluster and Detroit’s automobile manufacturing cluster are well-known examples, but smaller clusters in many industries may grow under the right conditions.

The Regional Medical Center Bayonet Point anchor institution, the existing cluster of medical-related uses, and high parcel vacancy present an opportunity for Pasco County to incentivize the development and expansion of health care services within this activity node, thereby diversifying its economy, creating high wage jobs by attracting major employers, revitalizing the area through new real estate investment, and increasing the availability of service and care to residents.

The Pasco County 2025 Future Land Use Map designates lands within the activity node for strictly residential (ROR 6 or 9) or retail, office, and residential (ROR). An overlay which prioritizes medical-related uses should be considered to leverage the benefits of the existing industry cluster.
Figure 11. Development Considerations, Node #1

Legend

- Corridor Attraction
- Redevelopment Site
- Buildings (Note Spacing)
- Vacant Parcels
- Water
- Parks

Auto-Oriented Development and Infrastructure:
- Strip Malls
- Auto Service, Drive-Through

~27 acres (1.2 million sq. ft.)
Just value = $6.1 million

Source: Pasco County Property Appraiser, 2021; Google Maps
Strategies and Recommendations

1. Develop partnerships with local stakeholders to encourage and co-develop a unique sense of place for the area.

2. Create a Small Area Plan to assess potential land use and other regulatory changes in the Hudson Avenue activity node, along with considerations to define a medical district with corresponding policies and objectives within the Pasco County Comprehensive Plan and Future Land Use designations.

3. The intersection of Hudson Avenue and Highway U.S. 19 should be visually distinctive from other intersections in the corridor, providing a clear identity for, and transition to, a unique medical district.

4. Pasco County should reference other communities with industry clusters as case examples, many of which offer incentives to drive local and regional economic development.

Case Study #1: Kissimmee Medical Arts District

The City of Kissimmee, Florida is home to the third largest medical industry cluster in Central Florida as well as two growing hospitals: Hospital Kissimmee and Osceola Regional Medical Center. The Kissimmee Medical Arts District lies in the heart of the City of Kissimmee and serves as a hub for healthcare-related businesses.

To encourage continued growth, the City Commission has approved an incentives package for medical businesses within the Kissimmee Medical Arts District, including:

- **Building Permit Fee Reimbursement**: 10% reimbursement in the fees eligible companies paid to the City during the planning review process.

- **Development Review Fee Reduction**: 25% reimbursement for the building permit fees eligible companies paid to the City during project construction.

- **Hire Local Grant**: $5,000 towards the hiring of individuals that reside within the Medical Arts District or within a half-mile radius of the workforce training program.

- **Medical Equipment Grants**: 25% reimbursement for costs associated with the purchasing of aerospace or operational equipment used in their office.

Additional Districts to reference when planning for medical industry expansion in the activity node:

- Largo Health and Wellness Campus
- Lake Nona Medical City
- Broward Medical Center
- Las Vegas Medical District
- Texas Medical Center
- Southwestern Medical District - Dallas, Texas
- Phoenix Healthcare Cluster
- Illinois Medical District
Node #2 - Gulf View Square

Context

The Gulf View Square activity node in Port Richey is defined by the Gulf View Square Mall (built in 1980) and adjacent properties, including the Werner Boyce Salt Springs State Park, the recently constructed Gables at Gulf View apartments, and surrounding area strip mall retail and other commercial uses. Dozens of stores within the mall, including the Sears - a primary anchor, are vacant and there are significant areas of unused parking that create site design opportunities to mitigate the area’s flood hazard, most notably at the rear of the property (Figure 13).
Development Form and Character

- Vast, highway-scale, suburban development pattern.
- Linear, strip-style development occupied by a single mall structure.
- Both sides of Highway U.S. 19 are primarily occupied by large one-story shopping malls and strip centers containing commercial retail and service uses in an automobile-oriented setting.
- Vacant and/or underutilized shopping centers frame Highway U.S. 19.
- Clear separation of uses, with large clusters of retail development and scattered subdivisions of single family housing separated by surface parking and automobile-related uses.
- The expansive impervious surface parking, site topography/flood hazard, and proximity to the coast create flooding conditions that require resilient site design and stormwater management.
- Free-standing buildings surrounded by asphalt parking lots with many driveways, pole signs, and limited landscaping.
- A vast oversupply of retail properties creates a site that lacks an activity or attraction beyond shopping.
- Minimal attention placed on the treatment of the spaces between the buildings and the street.

2025 Future Land Use Designations

- Residential - 6 du / ga *
- Residential - 9 du / ga *
- Retail / Office / Residential

* du / ga = dwelling units per gross acre
~84.5 acres (3.7 million sq. ft) Just value = $26.8 million

Source: Pasco County Property Appraiser, 2021; Google Maps
Strategies and Recommendations

- Develop partnerships with local stakeholders to encourage and co-develop a unique sense of place for the area.
- Create a Small Area Plan to assess potential land use and other regulatory changes in the Gulf View Square Mall activity node.
- Dissect the mall site into smaller parcels to create an interconnected, block-style street network. Similar to a town center, urban blocks can increase walkability, pedestrian safety, and wayfinding.
- Provide functional, comfortable, and dispersed open spaces to enhance the streetscape and integrate natural resources, and design sight lines and terminating vistas to highlight key landmarks.
- The adjacent Werner-Boyce Salt Springs State Park is an asset for livability and should be easily accessible.
- Attempt to retain key anchors on site (although potentially in a new structure given the age and condition of existing buildings) and reconfigure the rest of the structures to create a pedestrian friendly and human scale retail environment.
- Locate buildings to the front of the lot and close to internal streets to enhance building frontage and the pedestrian experience. Infill the remainder of the site with multifamily housing, neighborhood-supportive services (ex. grocery store), and hotel uses.
- New buildings should be constructed to greater heights (three to four stories) to create views of the Gulf of Mexico. New construction should include balconies and accessible roof space.
- Infill the existing mall site and excessive surface parking with dual-purpose open spaces and stormwater management infrastructure to enhance the public realm and pedestrian amenities while mitigating flooding.
- Incorporate canopy tree platings and native landscaping along streets to reinforce circulation patterns while providing shade and aesthetic value.

Case Study #2: Merchant Crossings in Fort Myers

Merchant Crossings is a 27 year old shopping plaza of more than 1.2 million sq. ft. in North Fort Myers that will soon be the site of a new $40 million mixed-use retail and residential complex. As a modern shopping center designed for the way people live and shop in the 21st century, Merchant Crossings will feature 278 residential units connected by pedestrian paths to a collection of stores aimed at modern consumer lifestyles and niches, along with a 16-screen movie theater and fitness club, a dog park, a courtyard, and a pool.

The Merchants Crossing redevelopment is seen as a catalyst for a new era of economic hope to long-decaying North Fort Myers. Lee County Commissioners approved a $1.7 million grant to incentivize economic development so that by 2045, the Merchant Crossings investment will provide a attractive mixed-use activity hub for the North Fort Myers area. Demolition has begun and new construction is expected to begin in 2022.
Node #3 - New Port Richey

Context

The New Port Richey activity node is defined by the Rivergate-Palm District which includes a recently developed public parking garage, Keiser University, and Stonehaven at Main Street apartments, public access to the Pithlachascotee “Cotee” River, the Hacienda Historic Hotel, Sims Park, as well as surrounding area residential, retail, and other commercial uses. The activity node is centered on the Main Street Gateway to Downtown New Port Richey.

Figure 16. Rivergate-Palm District, New Port Richey

Figure 17. Intersection of Main Street and Highway U.S. 19 Toward Downtown New Port Richey
Development Form and Character

- Both sides of Highway U.S. 19 are primarily occupied by one-story shopping plazas containing commercial retail and service uses in an automobile-oriented setting. Vacant and/or underutilized strip shopping centers frame Highway U.S. 19.

- Clear separation of uses, with large clusters of retail development and scattered mobile homes and single family housing separated by surface parking and automobile-related uses.

- Main Street presents an opportunity for mixed-use development and walkability as it is surrounded by residential uses and is in close proximity to Downtown New Port Richey, which contains a traditional block-style neighborhood development pattern.

- The excess of impervious surface parking, site topography/flood hazard, and proximity to the coast as well as the Cotee River create flooding conditions that require resilient site design and stormwater management.

- Recent U.S. Highway 19 improvements, signage (banner-style) installations, and views of the tall Washingtonian Palms along Main Street provide visual contrast and help to establish a unique sense of place for the District.
Figure 18. Development Considerations, Node #3

Legend
- Corridor Attraction
- Redevelopment Site
- Buildings (Note Spacing)
- Vacant Parcels
- Water
- Parks

Auto-Oriented Development and Infrastructure:
- Strip Malls
- Auto Service, Drive-Through

Source: Pasco County Property Appraiser, 2021; Google Maps
Strategies and Recommendations

The New Port Richey activity node is a prominent entry-point to Downtown New Port Richey. The node is comprised of both City and County lands with a high presence of vacant parcels. Pasco County and the City of New Port Richey must work together to offer cohesive economic development incentives that can attract investment interests and catalyze new development. The regional economic impacts of a successful Downtown destination will directly and indirectly benefit local stakeholders in Downtown New Port Richey and the broader Pasco County community throughout the Harbors West Market Area.

In 2021, TBRPC provided technical assistance to the City of New Port Richey that resulted in a series of conceptual 3D visualizations that address stormwater capacity and flooding concerns in Downtown New Port Richey. Later that year, the City of New Port Richey contracted with Arnett Muldrow & Associates and Mahan Rykiel Associates to develop a Rivertown Revival Master Plan. Both resources provide strategies and recommendations for redevelopment that should be referenced as the County collaborates with the City of New Port Richey to develop a vibrant District and gateway to Downtown New Port Richey.

Figure 19. Planning Resources for Redevelopment in the New Port Richey Activity Node
3 - Conceptual Planning & Design

Node #4 - Universal Plaza

Context

The Universal Plaza activity node in Holiday is defined by the Universal Plaza strip shopping center located on the northwest corner of Moog Road and Highway U.S. 19. The property has been a long time attractive nuisance and its vacant structures are frequently trespassed and occupied by people experiencing homelessness. The County has received multiple complaints regarding the condition of the property and loitering. The property is also affected by flooding, with multiple parcels containing unmanaged surface water runoff.

Figure 20. Universal Plaza

Figure 21. Obstructed view of Universal Plaza shopping options from Highway U.S. 19 / Main Entrance
Development Form and Character

- Both sides of Highway U.S. 19 are primarily occupied by one-story shopping plazas containing commercial retail and service uses in an automobile-oriented setting. Vacant and/or underutilized strip shopping centers frame Highway U.S. 19.

- There is limited visibility of Universal Plaza from Highway U.S. 19.

- Clear separation of uses, with large clusters of retail development and scattered mobile homes and single family housing separated by surface parking and automobile-related uses.

- Universal Plaza has a clear connection point to the adjacent neighborhood, which can be strategically integrated into a pedestrian-friendly redevelopment plan to encourage neighborhood walkability.

- The excess of impervious surface parking and site topography/flood hazard create flooding conditions that require resilient site design and stormwater management.

- Universal Plaza is an ideal location for a bus stop, with easy access to Pinellas County; however, the existing bus stop is of poor condition and often inaccessible due to unmanaged stormwater flooding.

- Traffic backs up at Moog Road and Universal Plaza, making it less convenient to enter and exit Universal Plaza.
~15.3 acres (666,468 sq. ft.)
Just value = $6.3 million

Figure 22. Development Considerations, Node #4

Legend
- Corridor Attraction
- Redevelopment Site
- Buildings (Note Spacing)
- Vacant Parcels
- Water
- Parks

Auto-Oriented Development and Infrastructure:
- Strip Malls
- Auto Service, Drive-Through

Source: Pasco County Property Appraiser, 2021; Google Maps
Strategies and Recommendations

- Develop partnerships with local stakeholders to encourage and co-develop a unique sense of place for the area.
- Create a Small Area Plan to assess potential land use and other regulatory changes in the Universal Plaza activity node.
- Dissect the site into smaller parcels to create an interconnected, block-style street network; a development pattern that can increase walkability, pedestrian safety, and wayfinding.
- Provide functional, comfortable, and dispersed open spaces to enhance the streetscape and integrate natural resources.
- Attempt to retain key anchors on site (although potentially in a new structure given the age and condition of existing buildings) and reconfigure the rest of the structures to create a pedestrian friendly and human scale retail environment. Locate buildings to the front of the lot and close to internal streets to enhance building frontage and the pedestrian experience.
- Infill excessive surface parking with dual-purpose open spaces and stormwater management infrastructure to enhance the public realm and pedestrian amenities while mitigating flooding.

Case Study #4: Capital Cascades Park

Winner of the “2016 Great Places in Florida People’s Choice Award,” Cascades Park in Tallahassee, Florida demonstrates an innovative approach to resilient development for stormwater management. In addition to providing a successful public greenspace amenity in Downtown Tallahassee, the 25-acre park is engineered to flood, offering relief to nearby areas during major storm events.

Cascades Park is an example of a recent nationwide trend toward designing urban infrastructure to serve multiple purposes. As a dual-purpose park, the detention pond reduces flooding frequency and duration for the upstream and downstream properties. Cascades Park has positively impacted property values and redevelopment of surrounding properties is actively underway.

Key design elements of the project include a major box culvert system directs damaging storm event runoff to the lower pond, where it stages up and back-floods the park before discharging downstream.
Conceptual Redesign of the Gulf View Square Mall

“Dying Malls” in the Decade of Online Shopping and COVID-19

Vacancies for 4 and 5 star office space, all retail except for malls, and industrial space have reached seven year lows, indicating a relatively tight market for commercial property, even as rents typically show modest to moderate increases, year over year. Shopping malls, on the other hand, have followed recent national trends of vastly increased vacancies and raising doubts about the long-term viability of many shopping malls, with one in four malls in the US closing by 2022. While shopping mall vacancy trends are not surprising, the relatively lax rebound in office space demand for most classes may reflect recent increases in telecommuting by workers and a loosened demand for leased space as in-person visits have declined for several industries in professional services.

The increase in retail vacancies in shopping malls is a national problem, suggesting a widespread change in consumer tastes. Pasco County may view this problem as an opportunity. Many communities have prepared plans and implemented redevelopment of shopping areas as activity areas; thriving community centers with a mix of public and private investment that draws pedestrian traffic and supports recreational activities, office uses, restaurants as well as libraries and even schools. For communities looking to rebrand, the empty shells of shopping malls may be useful sites to consider.

Some recent examples of repurposing include:

- Mountain View, CA: Mall repurposed for technology offices.
- Providence, RI: Mall repurposed into living spaces, boutiques, coffee shops, and community spaces for arts and crafts, film, and food festivals.
- Antioch, TN: Mall repurposed into a skating rink, a satellite community college campus, and a library.
- Englewood, CO: Mall repurposed into retail, government offices, residential, library, and an art museum.
- McAllen, TX: Mall was transformed into a 124,000 sq. ft. library, the largest in the state.

Figure 23. Signs of Inactivity and Economic Decline at the Gulf View Square Mall (continued on p. 35)
3 - Conceptual Planning & Design

Gulf View Square Mall, 2021
Redevelopment Concept Site Plan

LEGEND
- Activity Node
- Landmark Signage / Art
- Planning Boundary
- Pedestrian Paths
- Streets
- Parking
- Transportation Hub

- Residential
- Mixed Use R/C
- Commercial
- Recreation
- Entertainment, Civic and Public
- Water
- Existing Building

Prepared by TRB, 11/2021
3 - Conceptual Planning & Design

Before - Existing mall development, auto-oriented structures and suburban form.

After - Mixed-use redevelopment concepts with active public spaces and urban walkable blocks.
Before - Impervious surface parking and underutilized mall structures.

After - Town-style redevelopment concept with resilient stormwater management and surrounding residential infill.
Conceptual Redesign of Universal Plaza

Turning Eye Sores into Opportunities: Floodable Parks

Universal Plaza has a severe flooding problem. On-site stormwater management is insufficient and creates large areas of standing water during heavy rains. Nuisance flooding creates an environment that is hazardous as well as aesthetically unattractive. However, with resilient stormwater management and sustainable landscape and site design, it is possible to transition flooded areas from eyes sores into opportunities.

Provided is a conceptual redevelopment scenario which prioritizes green infrastructure design and floodable public landscapes. The surface parking area is limited to structures and the flooding areas are dedicated as green spaces. A walkable development pattern prioritizes the pedestrian experience as winding pathways and engaging public spaces are integrated with the floodable park system. Expanding the retention pond and creating additional floodable spaces and vegetation can create an attractive natural buffer between the surrounding single family homes and the redeveloped Universal Plaza. Community members can live, work, play, and shop within their neighborhood in this modern, mixed-use environment.

Figure 24. Signs of Inactivity and Economic Decline at Universal Plaza (continued on p. 41)
3 - Conceptual Planning & Design

Universal Plaza, 2021
Redevelopment Concept Site Plan
3 - Conceptual Planning & Design

BEFORE - Existing strip plaza development, auto-oriented structures and suburban form.

AFTER - Mixed-use redevelopment concepts with active public spaces and urban walkable blocks.
BEFORE - Impervious surface parking and underutilized strip mall structures.

AFTER - Resilient redevelopment concept with that is supports and is integrated with the surrounding neighborhood.
Economic Analysis

Floor Plan Analysis Methodology

TBRPC staff took several steps to estimate potential economic impacts and spillover effects of two conceptual redevelopment scenarios at build-out for both Gulf View Square Mall and Universal Plaza. The results contrast a retail-focused revitalization scenario with a scenario where the site is redeveloped with a higher mix of professional service uses.

In the first step, TBRPC staff took measurements of square footage for all conceived buildings within the area. These measurements were sorted by property type (i.e., residential, office, commercial, or industrial) and compared to the average required square footage per employee. By dividing the square footage of a proposed space, by this square footage per employee measure, staff created an estimate for potential supported employees.

In the second step, TBRPC staff calculated the average justified value of parcels per square footage in the study area as of 2021. This calculation used Pasco County Property Appraiser’s parcel data, separated by ZIP code for each of the two development areas. Current Median Value of these conceived buildings is their square footage multiplied by this ratio. This serves as a baseline assumption of current value of the project, from which staff produced increased valuation estimates. These included a 200%, 300%, and 1,000% increase in valuation scenarios, along with estimated tax revenue collected in each.

The Professional Services scenarios result in larger economic impacts due to the lowered space needs for employees as opposed to Retail Revitalization Scenario. With the same floorspace, but different space needs, more professional employees can be supported. This larger direct impact translates to higher indirect and induced impacts, which can be seen in the higher overall change to both employment and Gross County Product. The results of the Floor Plan Analysis are included on pp. 48-51.

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Economic Development Conclusions

Recommendations

Developing vacant or blighted zoned land into useful properties is, of course, in the general interest. Bringing a declining shopping center back into use with new facilities, commercial tenants, and close-by consumers will almost certainly stimulate economic activity. However, it is important to note that differences in how the land is developed, and how the structures are used, will directly affect the overall impact on a region's economy.

As in the above examples, a dense employee usage of space will have a larger direct impact than a sparser usage. However, this is not an absolute rule. Both industrial uses, with high output and wages, and retail uses, with lower output and wages, are more space-intensive than the middling commercial or office use. Higher output and wages, as well as a consideration of the indirect and induced effects, should be the focus for non-residential development.

Economic incentives should be offered to encourage businesses to focus expansion in the Harbors West Market Area of Pasco County, but there should still be a broad top-down mindset for development. Thorough and constant contact with stakeholders and potential developers will ensure that there is a clear and unified vision for development. Successful County development ventures have partnered their own funds, either directly or via incentives, with private dollars to achieve successful projects.
### Gulf View Square Mall

<table>
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<th>Current Property Value</th>
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<td>Zip Code Median Property Value per Sq. Ft.</td>
<td>$20.19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Effective Tax Rate</td>
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#### 200% Increase Scenario

| Property Value | $28,080,893 |
| Increase in Property Value | $14,040,446 |
| Annual Tax Revenue | $252,728 |
| **20 Year Tax Revenue** | **$5,054,561** |

#### 300% Increase Scenario

| Property Value | $42,121,339 |
| Increase in Property Value | $28,080,893 |
| Annual Tax Revenue | $379,092 |
| **20 Year Tax Revenue** | **$7,581,841** |

#### 1000% Increase Scenario

| Property Value | $140,404,464 |
| Increase in Property Value | $126,364,018 |
| Annual Tax Revenue | $1,263,640 |
| **20 Year Tax Revenue** | **$25,272,804** |

---

#### Gulf View Square Mall Property Valuation Increase Scenarios

- **200% Increase:** $28,080,893
- **300% Increase:** $42,121,339
- **1000% Increase:** $140,404,464

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*Current Median Value, 200% Increase, 300% Increase, 1000% Increase*
Scenario #1 - Retail-Focused Revitalization

Land Use Profile

- Residential: 20%
- Retail: 51%
- Other Commercial: 29%

REMI Results for Employment Scenarios

- Retail Boom
  - Direct Employment: 1,097
  - Indirect Employment: 1,010
  - Total Employment: 2,107
  - Gross County Product: $163M

Scenario #2 - Professional Service Uses

Land Use Profile

- Residential: 19%
- Retail: 26%
- Other Commercial: 55%

REMI Results for Employment Scenarios

- Professional
  - Direct Employment: 1,491
  - Indirect Employment: 1,255
  - Total Employment: 2,746
  - Gross County Product: $222M
### Universal Plaza

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#### 200% Increase Scenario

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#### 300% Increase Scenario

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#### 1000% Increase Scenario

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![Universal Plaza Property Valuation Increase Scenarios](chart.png)
**Scenario #1 - Retail-Focused Revitalization**

**Land Use Profile**

- Residential: 20%
- Retail: 51%
- Other Commercial: 29%

**REMI Results for Employment Scenarios**

- **Retail Boom**
  - Direct Employment: 457
  - Indirect Employment: 421
  - Total Employment: 878
  - Gross County Product: $68M

**Scenario #2 - Professional Service Uses**

**Land Use Profile**

- Residential: 19%
- Other Commercial: 55%
- Retail: 26%

**REMI Results for Employment Scenarios**

- **Professional**
  - Direct Employment: 625
  - Indirect Employment: 526
  - Total Employment: 1,151
  - Gross County Product: $93M
Economic Development Incentives

Pasco County offers several economic development incentive programs to encourage the retention and attraction of businesses.

Pasco County’s Job Creation Incentive Funding Program supports businesses interested to relocate or expand within the County by offering direct cash payments. To be eligible, the County requires that a business either be a Qualified Target Industry firm, or a Primary Target Industry firm, or both.

- A Qualified Target Industry encompasses businesses serving a multi-state or international market that creates jobs with wages greater than the annual average wage of Pasco County.

- A Primary Target Industry must sell at least 51 percent of its products or services outside of Pasco County, while paying its employees at least 115 percent of the Pasco County average annual wage. If the business creates jobs with wages at even higher levels, than the incentive increases per-job at certain thresholds. The 2021 average personal income per Capita for Pasco County is $40,248.1

Pasco County waives Mobility Fees that are usually charged to new development to cover off-site infrastructure and transportation costs.

Additionally, the County has entered into agreements with private developers to preemptively develop sites and structures in their Ready Sites and Shells Building Loan Program. This program exists to make land ready-to-use faster for businesses hoping to move into the area.

Combined, these two non-traditional incentive strategies serve to lower many standard capital cost hurdles to stimulate business relocation or expansion in Pasco.

Additionally, the Board of County Commissioners has recently extended the Ad Valorem Rebate period for certain qualified economic development projects.

Workforce Training Incentives

Quick Response Training (QRT)2, driven by employer needs and in partnership with a state educational facility is a grant program offered by the County to facilitate necessary training for business expansion.

Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) is a similar grant program for workforce training for Florida businesses that have been established for at least one year with a focus on providing grants to target industries and distressed areas.

In addition to the above, Pasco County offers Employed Worker Training. This local program provides grants to businesses operating in Florida for at least one year, to provide customized training. Up to half of the eligible training costs can be reimbursed through this County program.

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1 Enterprise Florida, State of Florida Incentives Average Wage Requirements
2 https://careersourceflorida.com/business-services/training-grants/
References and Resources


Flood Maps:

Sea level rise projections are based on the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s 2017 curves for the year 2045.


Geoplan digital elevation model: https://sls.geoplan.ufl.edu/ - Resolution = 5 meters.

Inventory and Analysis Background:

The documents and tools reviewed as background information in the Inventory and Analysis phase include:

- West Market District “The Harbors” Plan (2013);
- Documents and websites recommended by County staff;
- Zoning, design guidelines, and other regulatory codes;
- Pasco County Property Appraiser Geodata; and
- Maps, including adjacent districts, neighborhoods, cities, and surrounding areas, existing and future land use maps, etc.

Software:

Trimble SketchUp Pro 2021, Unreal Engine’s TwinMotion, Trimble SketchUp 3D Warehouse, Esri ArcMap 10.8, Google Earth, and REMI PI+.

Image Sources for Covers and Chapter Headings:

Front Cover – Pasco County Drone Photography
  1. Inventory and Analysis – Google Earth
  2. Conceptual Planning and Design – Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council 3D Visualization

Back Cover – Pasco County Drone Photography

Images of the Highway U.S. 19 Corridor retrieved from:

- https://www.aaroads.com/fl/019/us-019-n-at-scenic-dr.jpg