



Eco-Historic Planning Study

Presented to:

Village of Estero
Village Council Meeting

Presented by:

LandDesign

Date: June 17, 2026



AGENDA

- Overview & Background
- Report Overview + Executive Summary
- Recommendations + Strategies for Village Council Consideration
- Catalyst Site Concepts
- Questions

An aerial photograph of a lush green mangrove forest with a winding waterway. The water is dark blue, and the trees are a vibrant green. In the background, a coastal town is visible on the left, and the ocean extends to the horizon under a blue sky with scattered clouds. The entire image is framed by a white topographic map pattern.

Overview & Background

Grant Funding

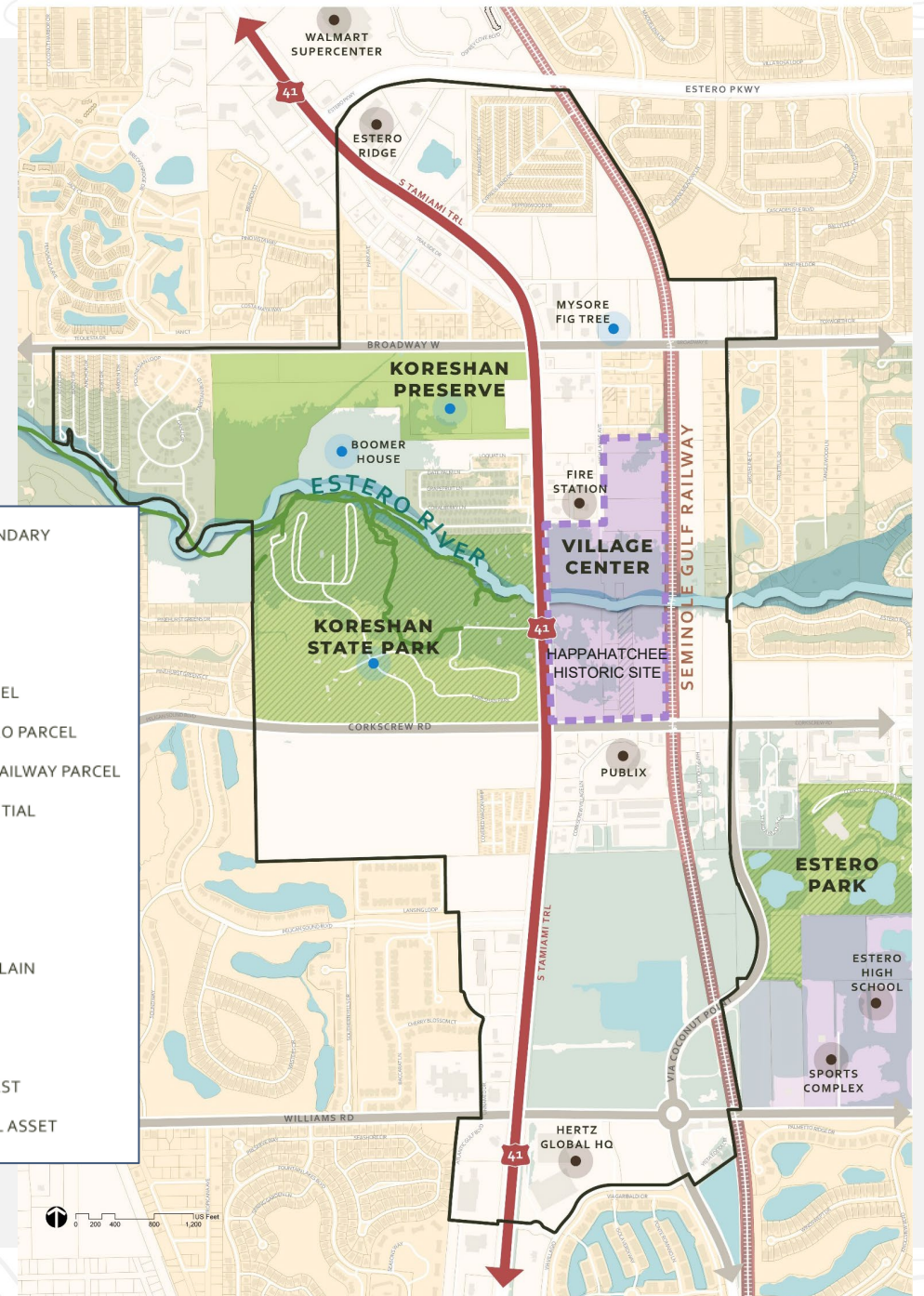


- The Village received a \$450,000 Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) for an Eco-Historic Planning Study.
- The Planning Study covered an approximately 1,000-acre area that includes properties along US 41 from Estero Parkway to south of Williams Road, including the Koreshan State Park and Village property along the Estero River.

(Left) Hurricane Ian aftermath in Fort Myers Beach

Study Area

- 1,000+ Acres
- Includes Estero River and several historic sites + conservation areas
- Publicly owned property (Village, State and County)
- Along the US-41 corridor
- Planned BERT corridor* (*pending purchase*)



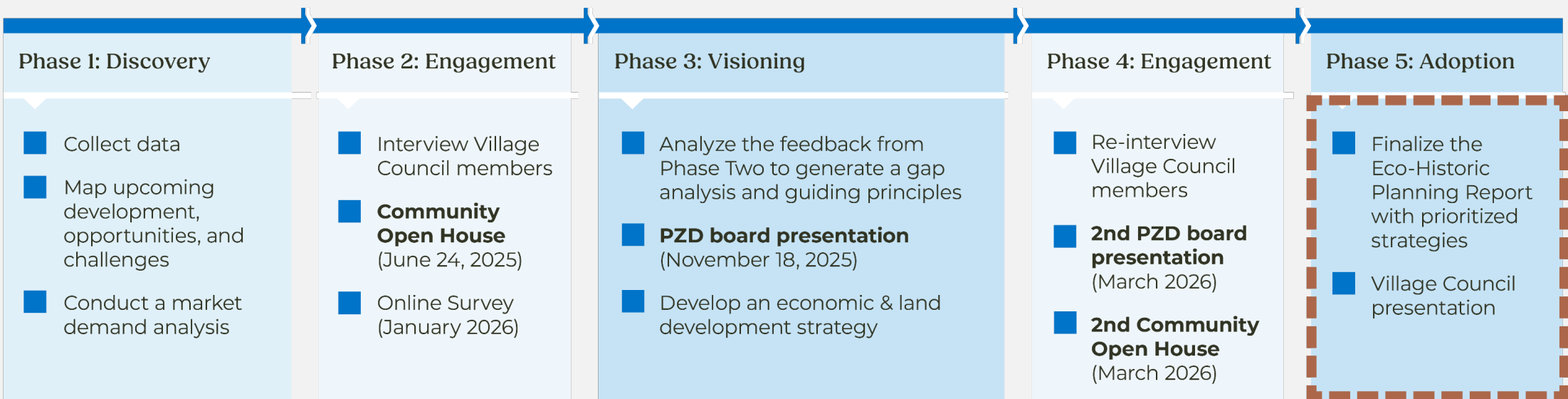
Overall Timeline: 12 Months for Completion



THE PLANNING PROCESS

MAY 2025

MAY 2026



Online Survey



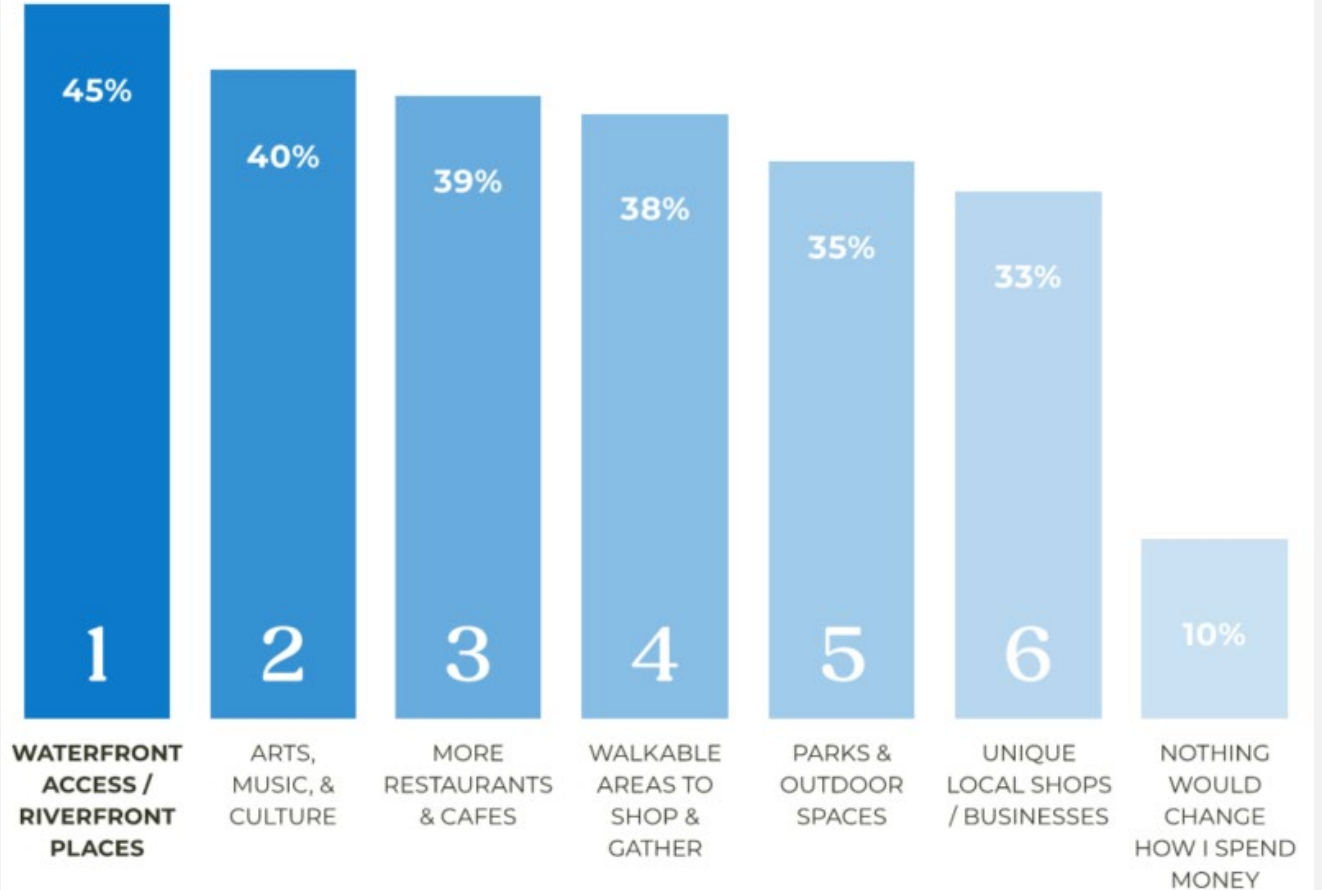
ECONOMIC RESILIENCE CONSIDERATIONS

People want local serving, walkable destinations rather than car-oriented commercial strips.

67%

OF RESPONDENTS SAID THAT DEVELOPMENT IN ESTERO IS HAPPENING TOO FAST AND/OR IN THE WRONG AREAS.

WHAT WOULD MAKE YOU SPEND MORE TIME & MONEY IN ESTERO?



Online Survey



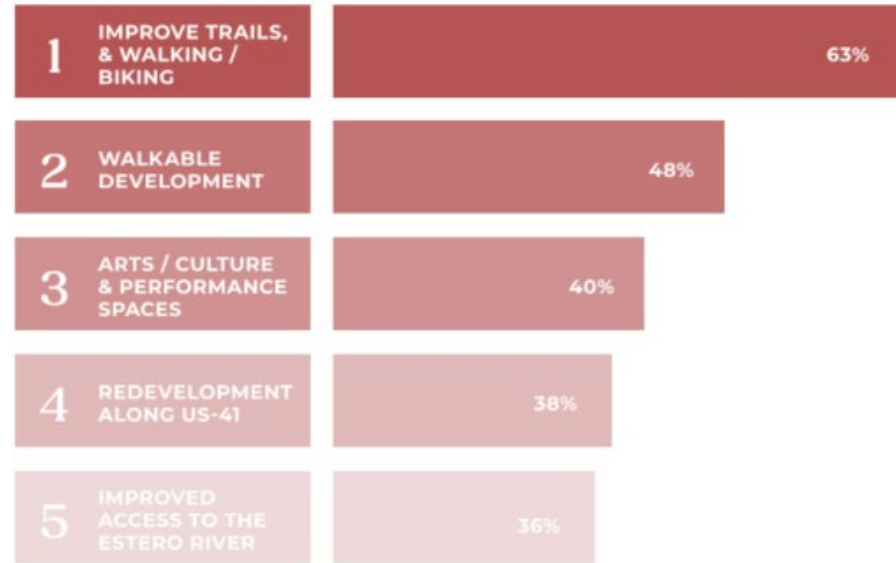
SOCIAL & GENERATIONAL RESILIENCE CONSIDERATIONS

Traffic and congestion are a dominant challenge by a wide margin, far outpacing all other concerns.

92%

OF RESPONDENTS SAID THAT TRANSPORTATION & CONGESTION IS A MAJOR CHALLENGE IN ESTERO.

WHAT DO PEOPLE THINK WILL HAVE THE GREATEST IMPACT ON IMPROVING QUALITY OF LIFE IN ESTERO?



55%

OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS THINK IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT GROWTH IN ESTERO REFLECTS ITS HISTORY & NATURAL ENVIRONMENT.

Walking and biking trails are the single most cited gap.



“

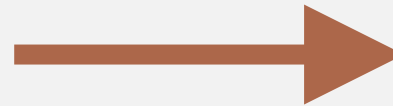
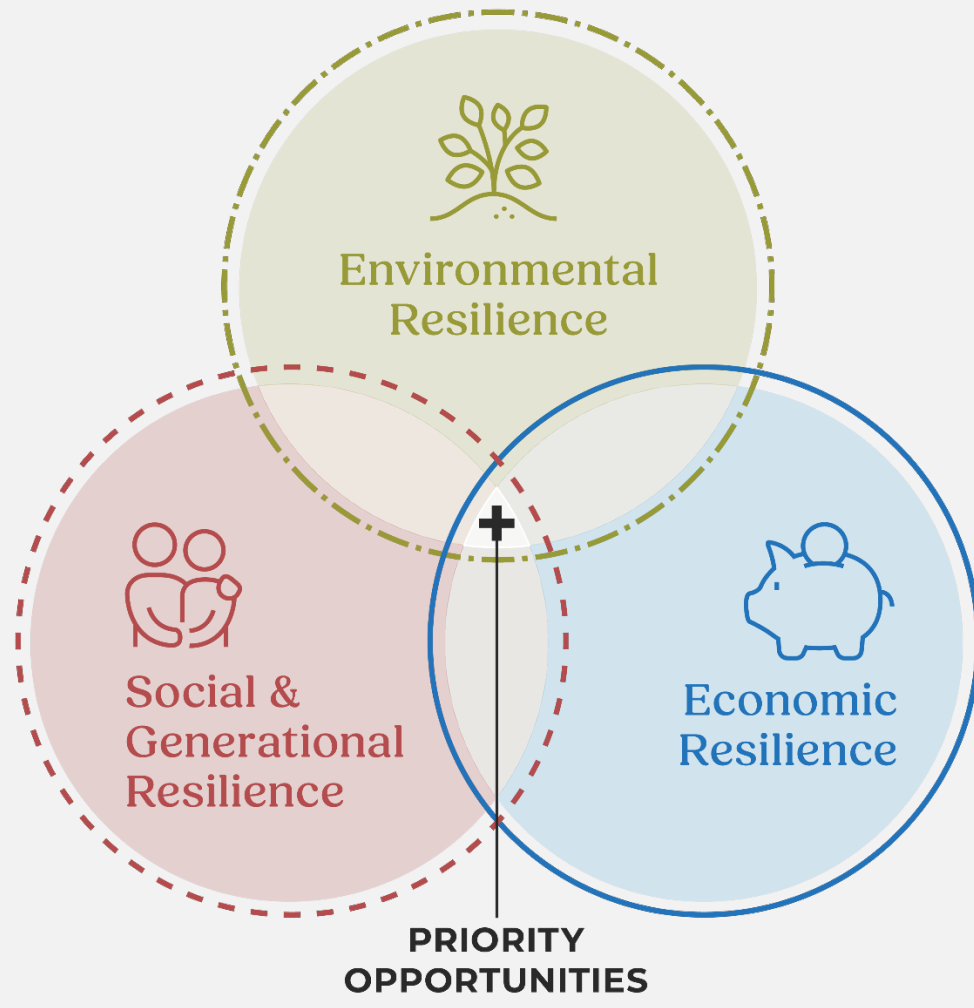
“Connected, not fragmented.”

“A place where you can walk & bike without feeling unsafe.”

“A place where people feel connected to each other.”

”

Resilience Framework = Project Goals



PROTECT IRREPLACEABLE ENVIRONMENTAL SYSTEMS

Safeguard the Estero River, wetlands, and coastal systems



STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY IDENTITY & QUALITY OF LIFE

Support walkability, gathering spaces, and aging-in-place



GUIDE RESPONSIBLE GROWTH

Align with environmental system constraints and infrastructure capacity



**Report Overview +
Executive Summary**

Executive Summary

This study establishes a 20-year framework of projects and strategic actions for the Village Council to consider in order to broaden cultural, recreational, and social opportunities and enhance residents' quality of life.

WHY NOW?

Almost four years ago, Hurricane Ian caused significant impacts to the Estero Bay and the greater Fort Myers region. These impacts continue to emphasize the need for proactive planning that protects residents, infrastructure, and the unique assets that define the community.

In 2024, the Village of Estero was awarded a grant through the *Lee County Recovery and Resiliency Planning Program* to undertake a comprehensive planning study focused on balancing development, open space, and conservation in the study area (see context map at right).

The *Village of Estero Eco-Historic Planning Study* proactively addresses storm inundation and ecological preservation while recognizing that Estero's environmental and cultural assets are foundational to long-term growth and community identity.

PROJECT GOALS

PROTECT IRREPLACEABLE ENVIRONMENTAL SYSTEMS

STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY IDENTITY & QUALITY OF LIFE

GUIDE RESPONSIBLE GROWTH

The plan is grounded in a three-pronged approach to resilience – **environmental, generational, and economic** – recognizing that long-term success depends on addressing these systems together, rather than in isolation. Every recommendation within the plan supports one or more of these interconnected goals.

CONTEXT MAP



Executive Summary

Recommendations in this plan are organized into four focus areas:



CONNECTIVITY & TRANSPORTATION



ENVIRONMENTAL SYSTEMS



PARKS, TRAILS, & OPEN SPACE



ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES & COMMUNITY

WHAT WILL IT TAKE TO ACHIEVE ESTERO'S VISION?

Recommendations in this plan are organized into four focus areas:



CONNECTIVITY & TRANSPORTATION



ENVIRONMENTAL SYSTEMS

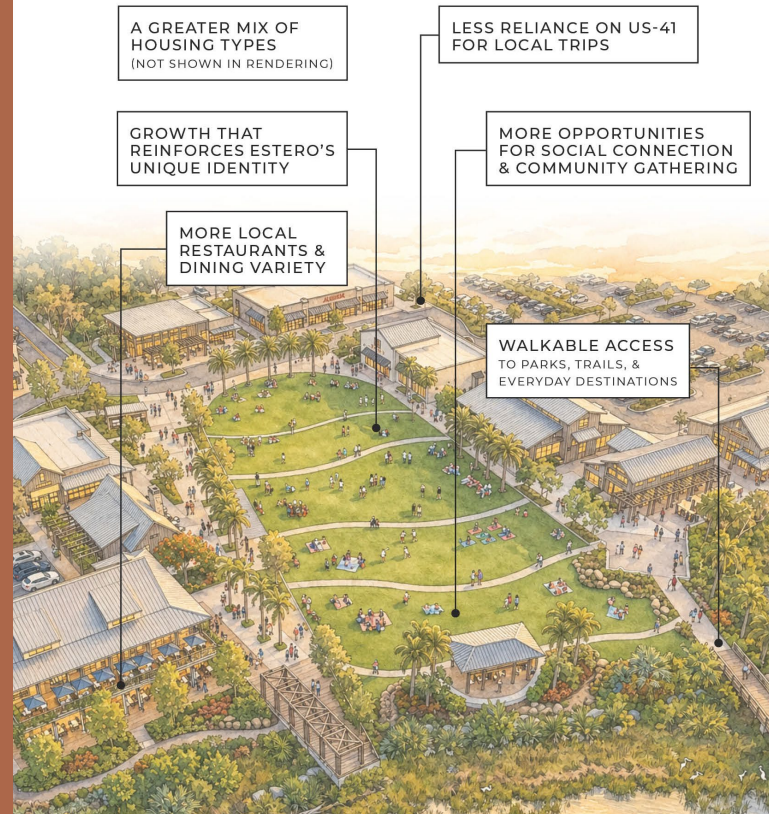


PARKS, TRAILS, & OPEN SPACE



ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES & COMMUNITY

The projects and policies recommended are intended to support...



THE ACTION PLAN

The **Action Plan** breaks down proposed projects into smaller, bite-size steps that could be implemented across a 20 years, with Village Council approval.

0-12 MONTHS

FOUNDATIONAL STEPS

Establish priorities and develop a funding strategy

0-2 YEARS

EARLY ACTIONS

Quick-win, visible projects that build momentum

2-5 YEARS

SHORT-TERM

Evaluate design standards and launch **Catalyst Projects**

5-10 YEARS

MEDIUM-TERM

Advance signature destinations

10-20 YEARS

LONG-TERM

Complete **Catalyst Projects**

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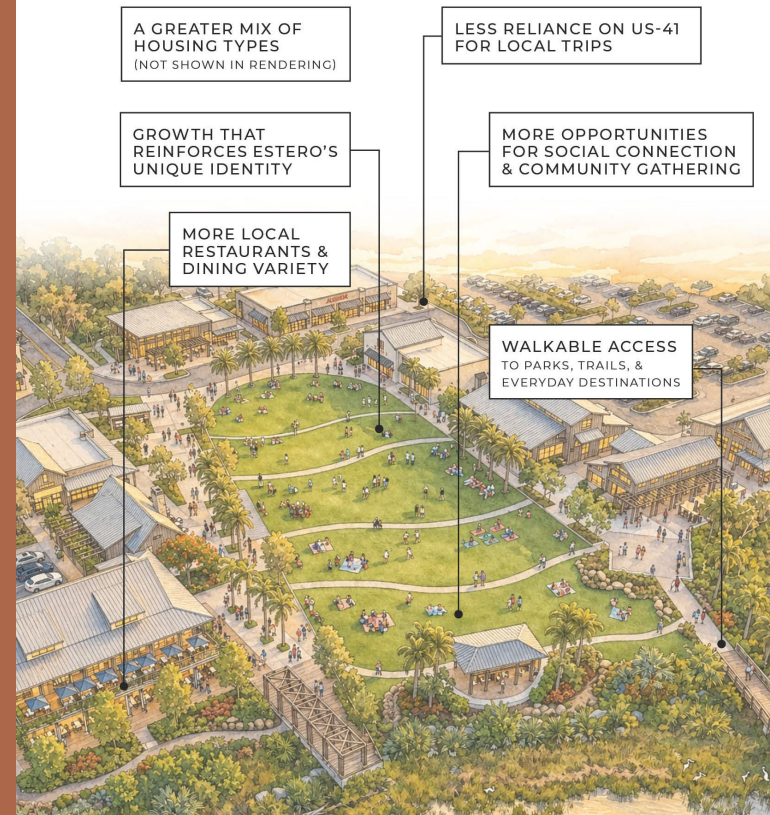


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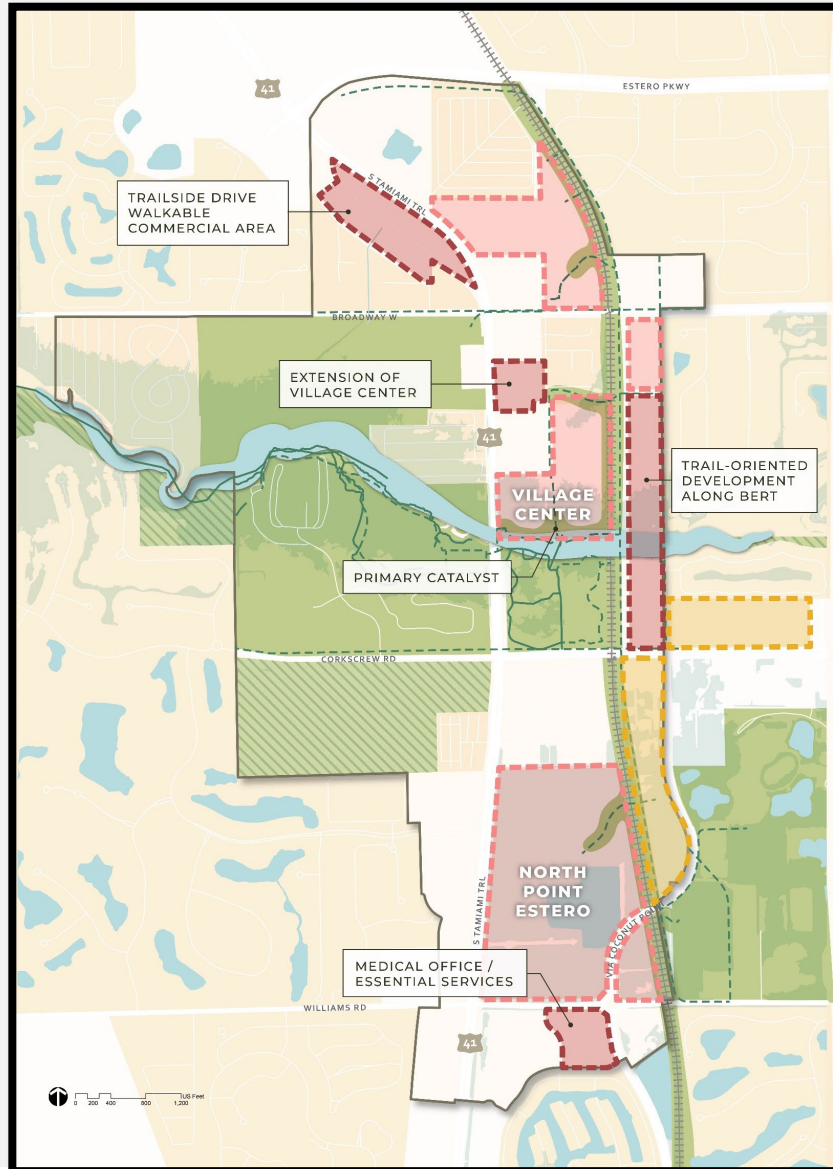
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Executive Summary



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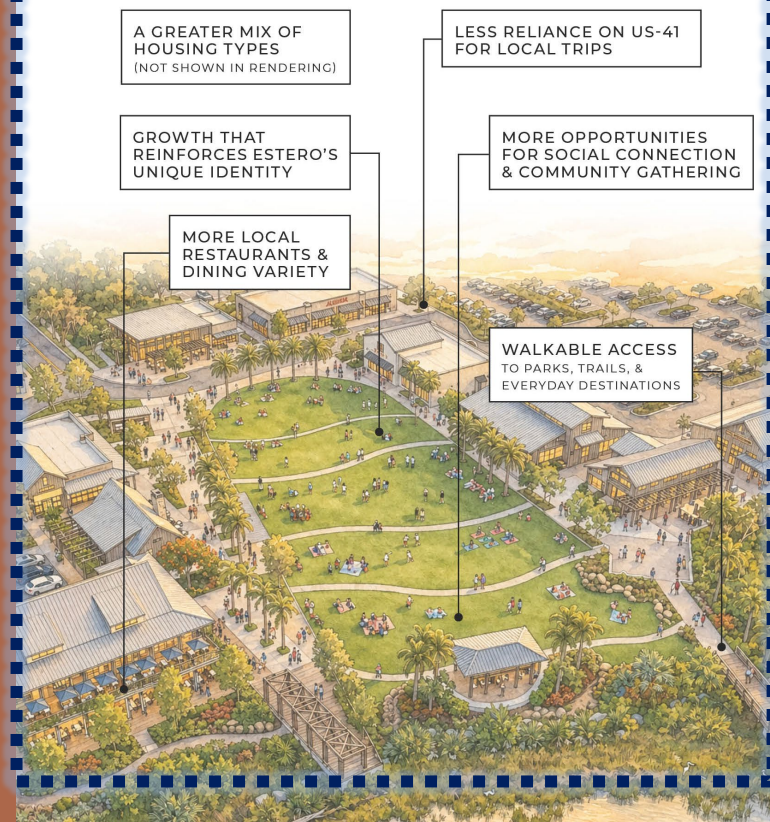


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LONG-TERM

Complete **Catalyst Projects**

Catalyst Projects

CATALYST PROJECTS

- 1 VILLAGE CENTER
- 2 BONITA-ESTERO RAIL TRAIL (BERT)
- 3 ESTERO RIVER PARK
- 4 US-41 CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS



1 VILLAGE CENTER



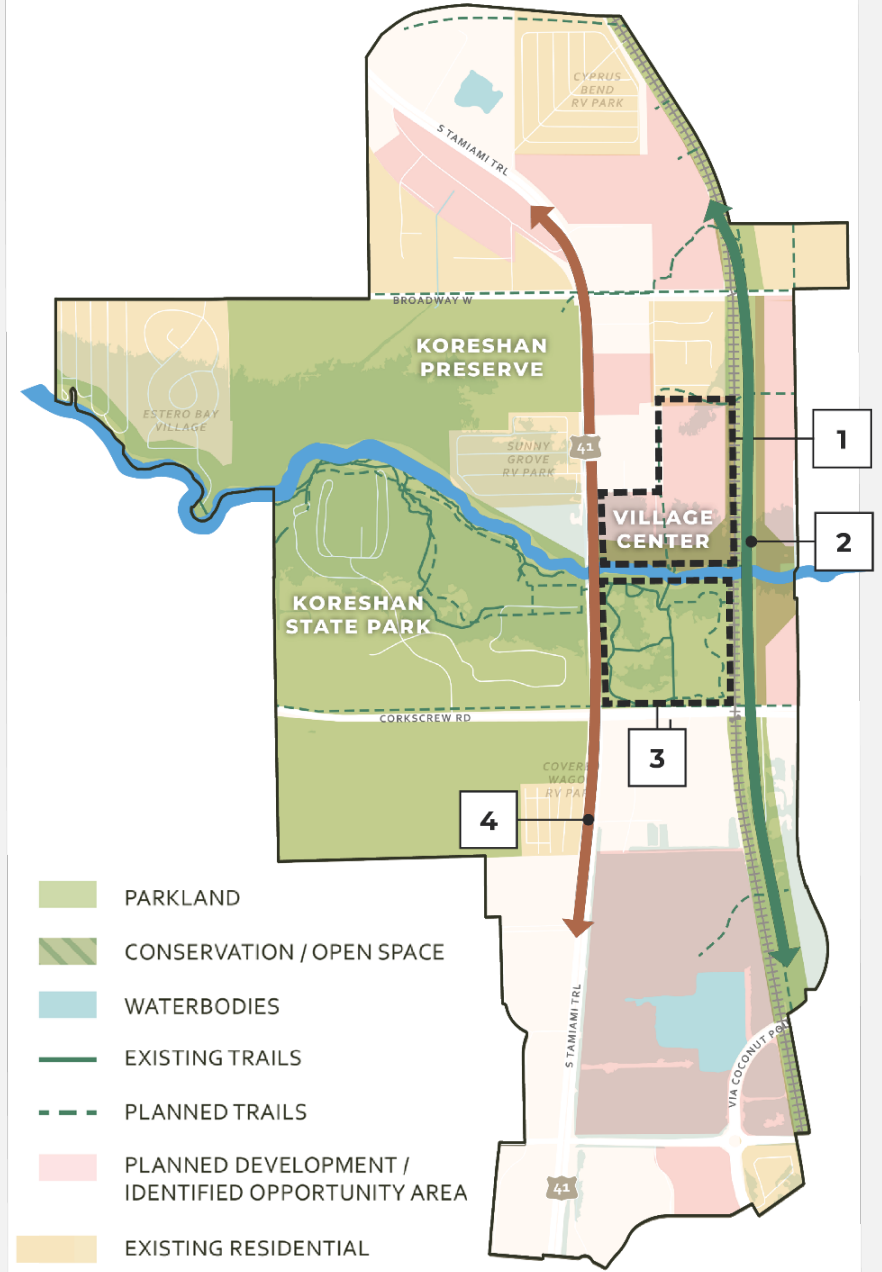
2 BONITA-ESTERO RAIL TRAIL (BERT)



3 ESTERO RIVER PARK



4 US-41 CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS



Action Plan

Foundational Steps

(0-12 MONTHS)

These steps build the capacity needed to move from planning to implementation, including organizational alignment and developing a funding strategy.

For more information see Next Steps, page 74-75.

Early Actions

(0-2 YEARS)

Early Actions are high-priority "quick-win" actions that can be initiated immediately to make tangible progress in the short-term. These efforts kick off implementation of the plan and signal a clear direction for the Village.

Short-Term Actions

(0-5 YEARS)

The short-term phase focuses on the Early Actions and other immediate improvements that respond directly to community concerns (safety, congestion, lack of walkability) while also establishing the policy structure that will guide future development.

**FIX SAFETY & CONNECTIVITY,
ESTABLISH IDENTITY**

Medium-Term Actions

(5-10 YEARS)

The medium-term phase transitions Estero from planning and early implementation into a fully functioning system of connected places. Short-term projects begin to scale, linking open space and economic development into a connected system that supports regional identity.

**BUILD SYSTEMS & DELIVER
DESTINATION PROJECTS**

Long-Term Actions

(10-20+ YEARS)

In the long-term, Estero can continue to strengthen its identity through coordinated public and private investments and improved connectivity. Earlier phases lay the foundation for long-term environmental, mobility, and community benefits.

**LONG EVOLUTION OF COMMUNITY
IDENTITY**

An aerial photograph of a lush green mangrove wetland with a winding waterway. The water is dark blue, and the surrounding land is covered in dense, vibrant green vegetation. In the background, a small town or village is visible on a peninsula. The sky is a pale, hazy blue with some light clouds. The entire image is framed by a white border with a faint topographic map pattern.

**Recommendations +
Strategies for Village
Council Consideration**

Recommendations + Strategies

-  **CONNECTIVITY & TRANSPORTATION**
-  **ENVIRONMENTAL SYSTEMS**
-  **PARKS, TRAILS, & OPEN SPACE**
-  **ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES & COMMUNITY**

Elements of the Plan





CHAPTER
①
FOUNDATIONS

Establishes the plan context and frames the need for an eco-historic planning approach in Estero

CHAPTER
②
VISION

Presents a vision for the overall study area and key sites, with short-, medium-, and long-term strategic actions

Recommendations are organized into four focus areas:

-  **CONNECTIVITY & TRANSPORTATION**
-  **ENVIRONMENTAL SYSTEMS**
-  **PARKS, TRAILS, & OPEN SPACE**
-  **ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES & COMMUNITY**

CHAPTER
③
ANALYSIS

Summarizes the research, community engagement, and technical analyses conducted in early phases of planning

CHAPTER
④
APPENDIX

Supporting documentation, technical materials, and interim deliverables that inform the plan



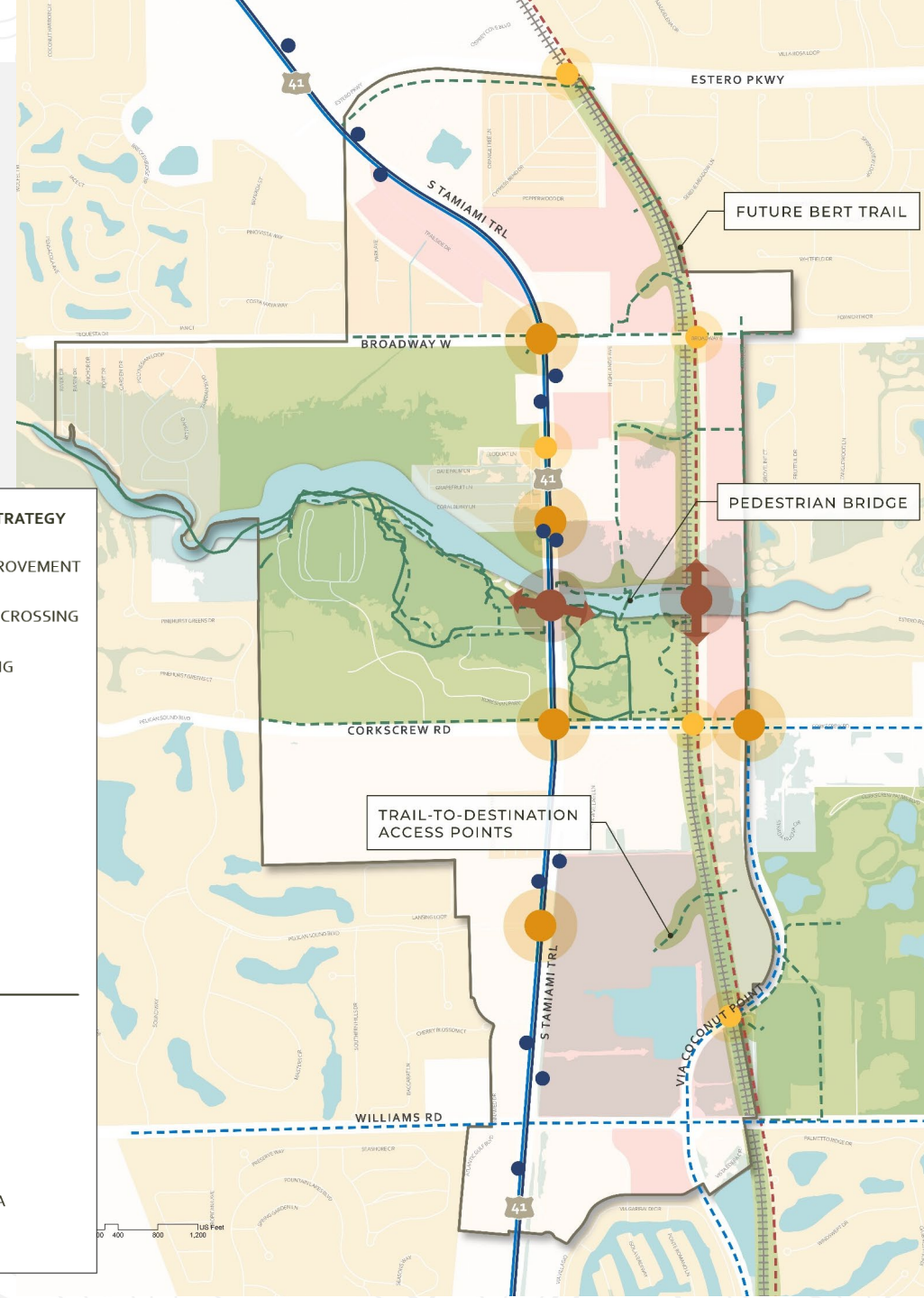
CONNECTIVITY & TRANSPORTATION

EARLY ACTIONS

- » **Adopt US-41 Landscape & Streetscape Master Plan**
 - › Explore reclassification of a segment of US-41 (see page 35)
 - › Define typical cross sections (lanes, medians, sidewalks, bike facilities)
 - › Identify priority pedestrian and bicycle crossings (top 10 locations)
 - › Evaluate grant opportunities

SHORT-TERM ACTIONS

- » **Implement priority crossings on US-41 and key intersections (2-3 locations)**
 - › Pilot protected bike lanes / shared-use paths
 - › Improve sidewalk gaps and ADA accessibility
 - › Launch “Safe Routes to Parks & Trails” program
- » **Coordinate with FDOT on:**
 - › Speed management strategies
 - › Under-bridge multi-use path at Estero River
 - › Other grade-separated crossing options to reduce US-41 as a barrier





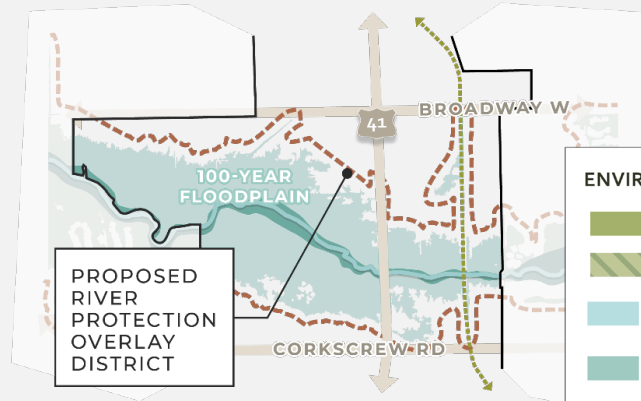
ENVIRONMENTAL SYSTEMS

EARLY ACTIONS

- » Consider adopting an Estero River Protection Overlay District
- » Develop and adopt a Village-wide Green Infrastructure Handbook to guide site and infrastructure design
- » Develop a Green Infrastructure Incentive Program

RIVER PROTECTION OVERLAY DISTRICT

A combination of floodplain regulations, wetland protections, and project-specific approvals govern development along the Estero River. While these tools provide important safeguards, they do not establish a corridor-wide approach to how the river edge is protected, experienced, or integrated into the community.



SHORT-TERM ACTIONS

- » Identify and secure 2-3 priority river access sites
- » Initiate wetland and floodplain land acquisition program
- » Secure river access sites through easements or purchase
- » Limit impervious surface coverage in sensitive areas

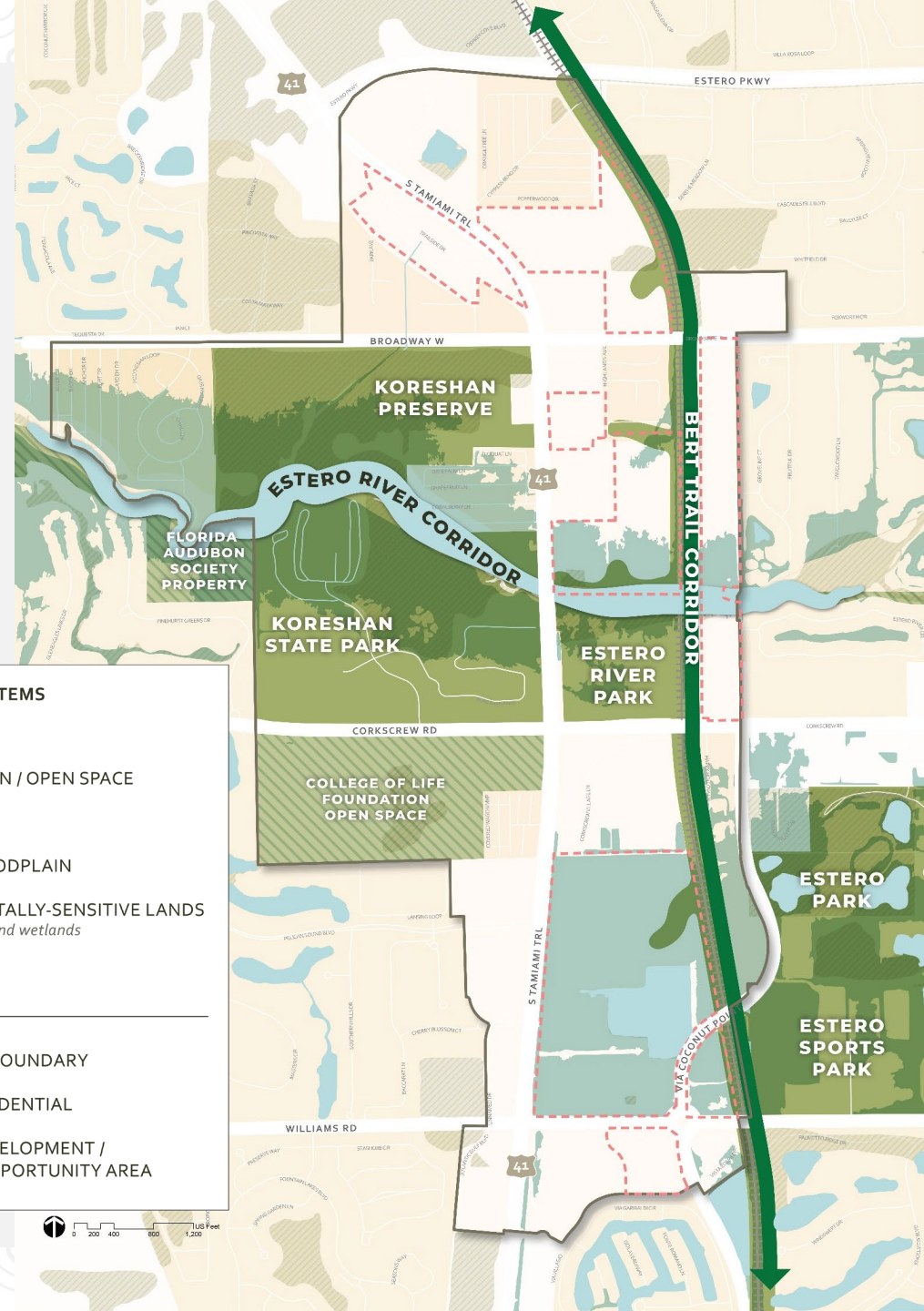
ENVIRONMENTAL SYSTEMS

- PARKLAND
- CONSERVATION / OPEN SPACE
- WATERBODIES
- 100-YEAR FLOODPLAIN
- ENVIRONMENTALLY-SENSITIVE LANDS
swamps, marsh, and wetlands
- BERT TRAIL

STUDY AREA BOUNDARY

EXISTING RESIDENTIAL

PLANNED DEVELOPMENT / IDENTIFIED OPPORTUNITY AREA





PARKS, TRAILS, & OPEN SPACE

EARLY ACTIONS

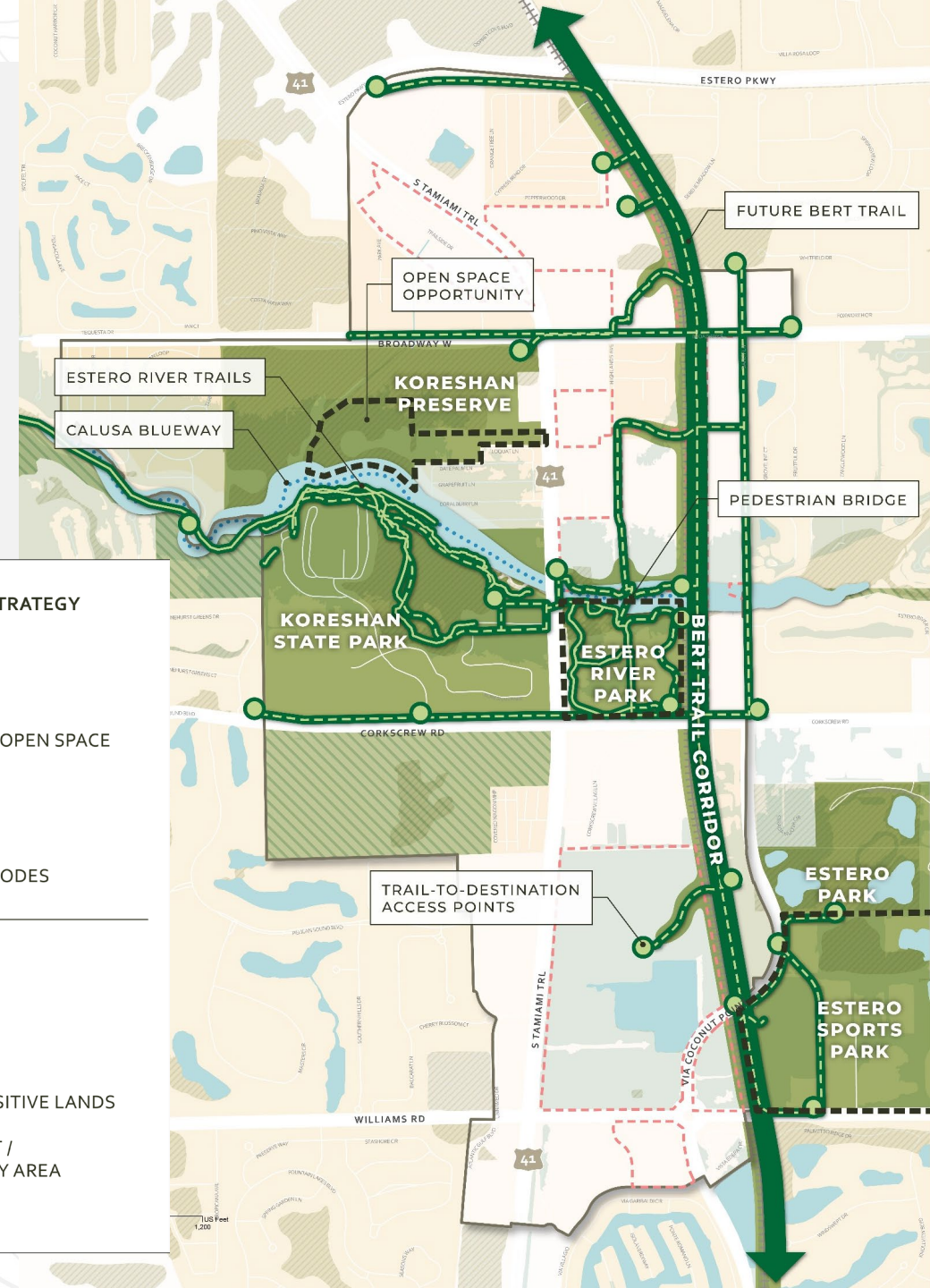
- » **BERT & Trail Design Guidelines**
 - › Establish signature trail identity (materials, lighting, signage, furnishings)
 - › Trail-to-destination interface standards
 - › Develop typical cross sections for trails and safe crossings
 - › Explore eco-tourism and heritage trail opportunities
- » **Estero Open Space Design Manual for Village-owned parks and public spaces**
 - › Define park typologies (civic greens, preserves, river access, neighborhood parks)
 - › Shade canopy standards
 - › Native planting and ecological restoration
 - › Materials, furnishings, and architectural elements

SHORT-TERM ACTIONS

- » **Establish long-term design framework for Estero River Park** (see page 55)
- » **Begin priority segments of BERT** (see page 53)
 - › Prioritize connections to Village Center, Estero River, and Koreshan State Park
- » **Develop master plan for Boomer House property** (see page 57)
- » **Install shade, seating, and wayfinding pilots** across the system

PARKS, TRAILS, & OPEN SPACE STRATEGY

- NEW PARK SPACE
 - PARKLAND
 - CONSERVATION / VISUAL OPEN SPACE
 - EXISTING TRAILS
 - PLANNED TRAILS
 - TRAIL ACCESS POINTS / NODES
-
- STUDY AREA BOUNDARY
 - WATERBODIES
 - 100-YEAR FLOODPLAIN
 - ENVIRONMENTALLY-SENSITIVE LANDS
 - PLANNED DEVELOPMENT / IDENTIFIED OPPORTUNITY AREA
 - EXISTING RESIDENTIAL





ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES & COMMUNITY

SHORT-TERM ACTIONS

- » **Evaluate a Historic District Overlay**
 - › Include the Village Center, Estero River Park and Boomer House Property
- » **Village Center Master Plan**
 - › Adopt Village Center master plan, economic strategy, and zoning
 - › Consider adopting form-based code to establish a consistent architectural and landscape language
 - › Recruit local businesses and food & beverage anchors
 - › Program temporary events (markets, festivals)
 - › Incentivize small-scale, locally serving redevelopment
 - › Coordinate with FDOT on traffic signal improvements
- » **Housing & Community**
 - › Identify priority redevelopment and infill sites
 - › Update zoning to support senior housing and missing middle housing
 - › Incentivize walkable, mixed-use housing near Village Center
- » **Consider creating a Main Street District Overlay for Trailside Drive**

OPPORTUNITY AREAS FOR TARGETED REINVESTMENT

- PLANNED MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT
- PLANNED RESIDENTIAL
- IDENTIFIED OPPORTUNITY AREA
- EXISTING RESIDENTIAL

STUDY AREA BOUNDARY

PARKLAND

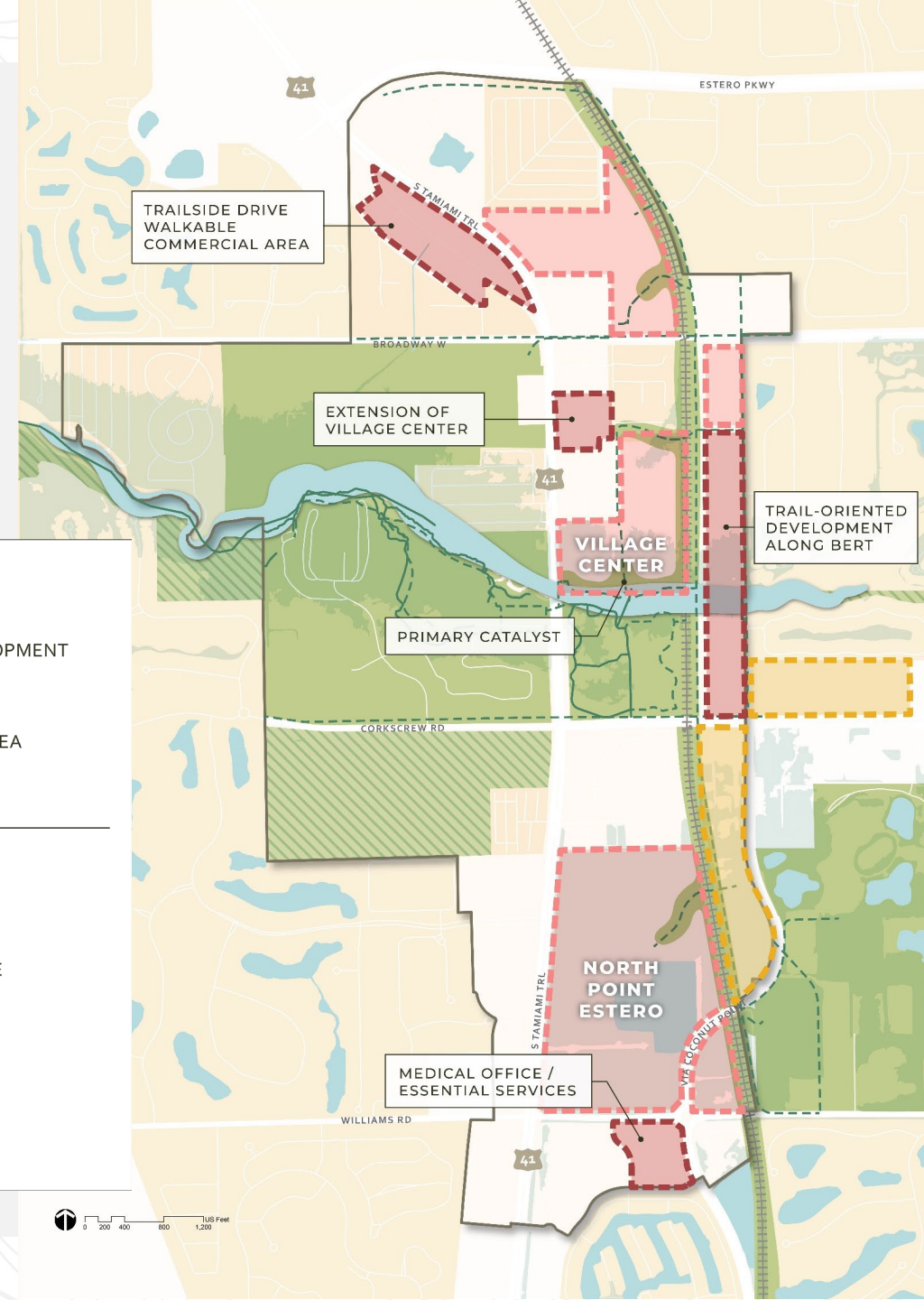
CONSERVATION / OPEN SPACE

WATERBODIES

100-YEAR FLOODPLAIN

EXISTING TRAILS

PLANNED TRAILS



An aerial photograph of a lush green mangrove wetland. A dark, winding waterway cuts through the dense forest of mangrove trees. In the background, a large body of blue water is visible, with a small town or residential area on the left side. The sky is a pale blue with some light clouds. The entire image is framed by a white border with a light gray topographic map pattern.

Catalyst Site Concepts

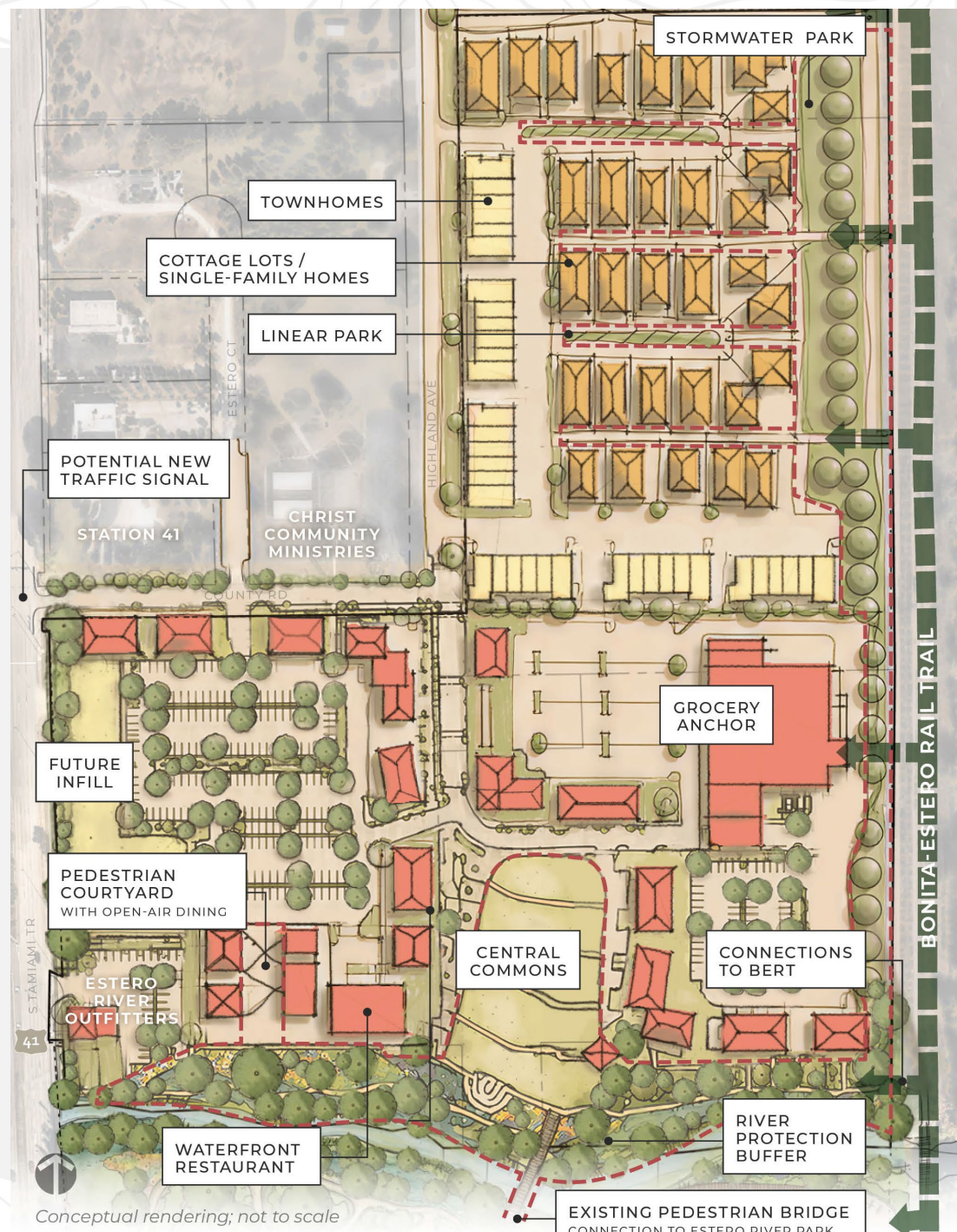
Village Center

Waterfront Dining



Central Commons

Retail Integration



Estero River Park



Riverfront Nature Play Rendering



Shaded Gathering Spaces



Existing Restroom Facility

ESTERO RIVER PARK CONCEPT

This rendering is conceptual and intended to illustrate potential site improvements. Final design will be informed by site constraints and subject to Village Council approval.



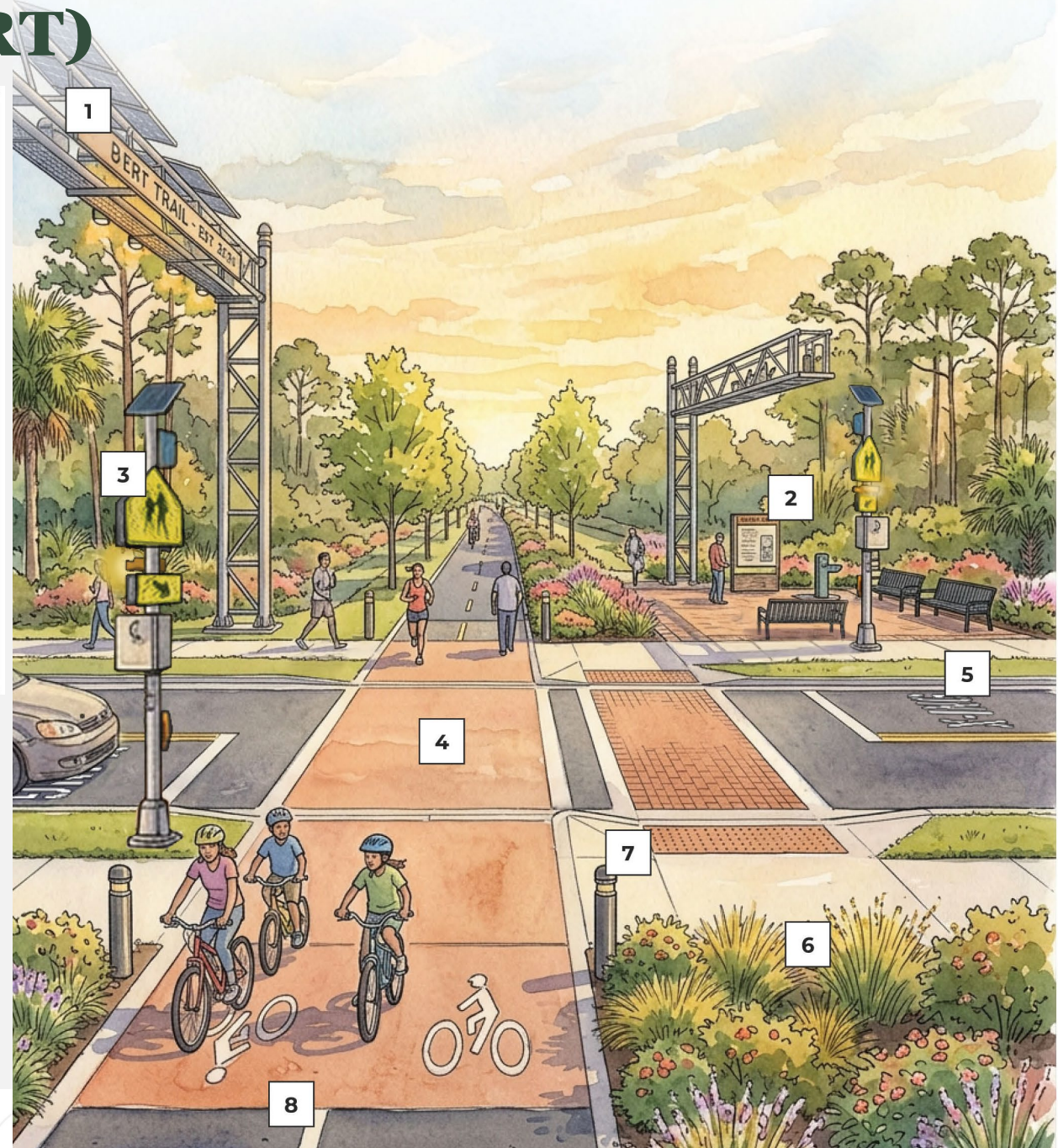
Conceptual rendering; not to scale

CORKSCREW RD

Bonita-Estero Rail Trail (BERT)



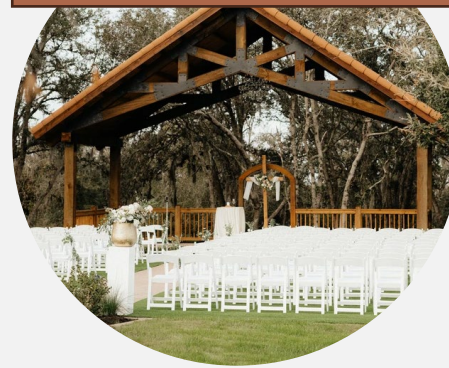
- 1** **REPURPOSED RAIL SIGNAL MASTS:** VISUAL LANDMARK & IDENTITY FEATURE
- 2** **MIDBLOCK TRAILHEAD:** DEFINE TRAIL ENTRY POINT WITH SIGNAGE & GATHERING SPACE TO MARK ACCESS
- 3** **PEDESTRIAN-ACTIVATED RRFB SIGNAL:** FLASHES LIGHTS TO PROMPT DRIVER YIELD
- 4** **BRANDED CROSSWALK:** REINFORCE TRAIL PRIORITY & AWARENESS
- 5** **ADVANCE WARNING SIGNAGE & IN-LANE MARKINGS:** ALERT DRIVERS OF MIDBLOCK CROSSING
- 6** **ENHANCED LANDSCAPING** TO SIGNAL TRANSITION FROM CORRIDOR TO CROSSING
- 7** **BOLLARD LIGHTING:** DEFINE CROSSING ZONE & IMPROVE NIGHTTIME VISIBILITY
- 8** **MODIFIED PAVEMENT** AT CROSSING APPROACHES & CONFLICT ZONES



Boomer Property



Wedding/ Event Venue



Amenity Building

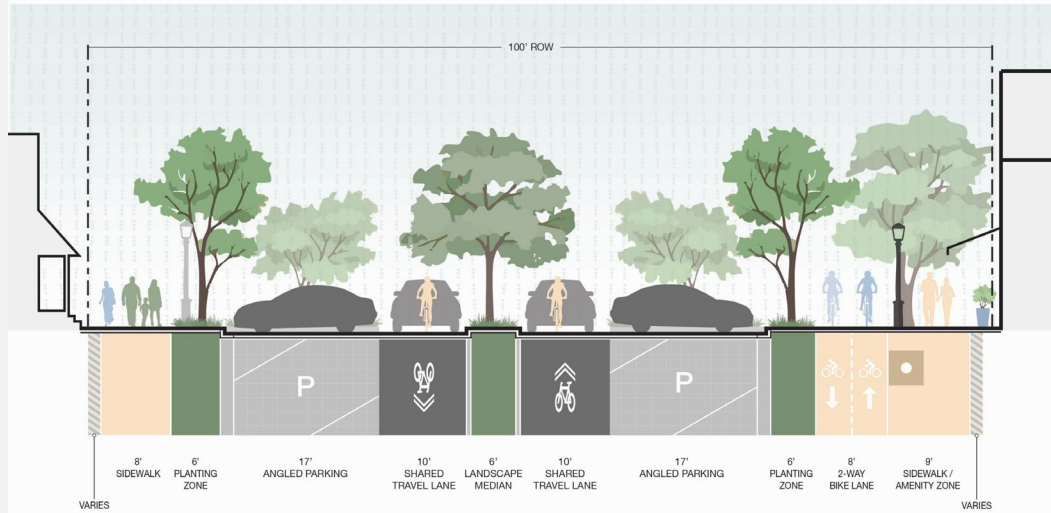
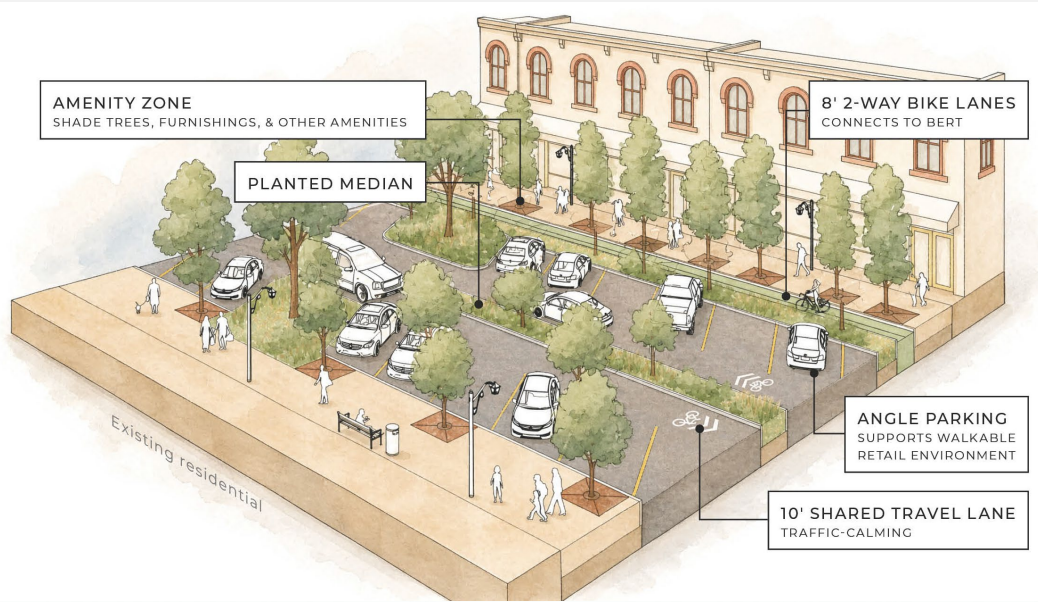


- 1** **FORMAL ENTRY DRIVE:** DEFINED ARRIVAL SEQUENCE WITH LANDSCAPE FRAMING
- 2** **"GLAMPING":** APPROX. 44 SITES INTEGRATED INTO NATURAL AREAS
- 3** **EVENT & MULTI-PURPOSE CENTER:** INCLUDES BACK-OF-HOUSE CATERING KITCHEN
- 4** **EVENT PLAZA:** FLEXIBLE OUTDOOR VENUE FOR RECEPTIONS, GROUP ACTIVITIES, ETC.
- 5** **WATERFRONT OVERLOOK:** FORMAL CEREMONY SPACE
- 6** **AMENITY BUILDING:** SHARED DINING HALL & RESTROOM FACILITIES FOR EVENTS & OVERNIGHT STAYS
- 7** **VISITOR PARKING**
- 8** **RENOVATED HISTORIC BOOMER RESIDENCE**
- 9** **VEGETATED BIO-SWALE:** STORMWATER FEATURE

Glamping Sites



Trailside Drive – Main Street District



TRAILSIDE DRIVE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Commercial <i>Medical / office / retail / food & beverage</i>	40,000- 50,000 sf
Residential <i>Townhome / duplex / single-family</i>	22-44 units



Questions?

Thank you!



LandDesign.
CREATING PLACES
THAT MATTER.