

PENSACOLA HISTORIC DISTRICT MASTER PLAN

Pensacola, Florida URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

MARCH 2004



# Pensacola Historic District Master Plan

## PREPARED FOR AND FUNDED BY

University of West Florida  
Institute of Human and Machine Cognition (IHMC)  
Community Redevelopment Agency of the City of Pensacola  
West Florida Historic Preservation, Inc.

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## Summary

THE PENSACOLA HISTORIC DISTRICT and the collection of historic buildings owned by the University of West Florida are extraordinary assets for the City of Pensacola and the Region. This Master Plan provides a means of coordinating private and public investment to capitalize on those assets to increase the Region's economic and tax base, as well as the quality of life for residents of the Historic District, the City, and the Region. The Plan was developed in an open, public process – engaging hundreds of people – to create a vision for the future that has broad consensus and support.

### Opportunities

The District is diverse in architectural character, use, and population. It includes shops, restaurants, offices, museums, archeological sites, houses, and apartments. The streets, lined with mature trees and graceful porch-front houses, have the authentic character which has become increasingly important nationally in attracting economic development, especially in “knowledge industries” which have a positive impact on tax base. The Institute of Human and Machine Cognition (IHMC) is an example of one such high-tech entity. The Historic Village and the District have great appeal for tourism, especially to the cruise industry.

### Challenges

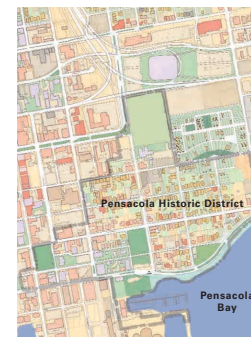
The District, however, lacks sufficient critical mass of residential development to support a full range of retail uses or long-term stability. It is also isolated from other neighborhoods, the Waterfront, and Downtown Pensacola by a series of traffic and land-use barriers. Access to it is indirect and confusing. Pollution from specific sites has a negative effect upon the area. In the aerial view, the trees identify the Historic District, while the lack of trees around it symbolize the



**PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT** The master planning process engaged citizens, property owners, business owners, and public officials in building a consensus vision for Pensacola.



(ABOVE) An aerial view of the Pensacola Historic District from the south as it exists today  
(BELOW) Existing conditions - Portrait of Pensacola Historic District



ASSETS	LIABILITIES
A Waterfront	E Bayfront Parkway
B History and Authenticity	F Highways and Ramps
C Access to Downtown	G Vacant Properties
D Character and Scale of Buildings	H Lack of a Plan



barriers which, through the planning process, came to be known as the “ring around the collar” problem.

The Vision

The Master Plan Vision calls for developing the areas around the Historic District **A** with mixed-use development in the same character and scale as the District itself. By eliminating the “ring around the collar,” the Historic District can attract significant residential population, as well as office, retail, cultural, and recreational uses. The Plan will provide for a continuous pattern of pedestrian-scale streets and development connecting to Old East Hill, to the Waterfront, and to Palafox Street. Revisions to Bayfront Park **B** will create an interconnected system of waterfront parks as an amenity for all the citizens of Pensacola. Modifications to street patterns **C** will improve both the character of the area and provide direct access to the District from I-110. Within the District, a series of guidelines for infill development will preserve and enhance the character of street spaces. The Museum and University properties **D** will provide classroom and assembly facilities for educational programs that relate to Pensacola’s history, urban revitalization, and maritime legacy. The Historic Fort



Aerial view of Pensacola Historic District with major initiatives and frameworks highlighted



PENSACOLA HISTORIC DISTRICT TOMORROW The neighborhood will be restored and connected to the Waterfront, Downtown, and Old East Hill.



E and excavations will be enhanced as a visitor and educational experience.

#### Implementing the Vision

The Master Plan calls for improvements to the framework of streets and public open space to create appropriate addresses for development. The Plan identifies a series of initiative areas in which these public improvements are coordinated with private investment.

**Alcaniz Street:** Reconfiguration of Alcaniz Street north of Garden Street will create an attractive entry to the District, lined with mixed-use development A; new streetscapes between Garden Street and Bayfront Parkway B; and improved pedestrian crossings across Bayfront Parkway C, with appropriate infill development.

**Ninth Avenue:** Traffic calming at Bayfront Parkway D, improved streetscapes along Ninth Avenue E, and improved pedestrian crossings at Chase and Gregory Streets F, will support development ranging from three-story, mixed-use buildings with residential above to larger-scale structures with retail, office, and a possible hotel at Chase and Gregory Streets; future Civic Center expansion G with parking structures; and buffer residential H north of Aragon.

**Fort Area and University Properties:** The outlines of the long-demolished forts organize the streetscapes and the museum programs; classroom and residential buildings with ground-floor retail and public uses will add life to the area between Plaza Ferdinand and Seville Square I and in the Waterfront village J.

**Historic District Infill:** Guidelines for enhancing the District's historic character also accommodate new construction and parking; improved pedestrian connections and traffic calming of Bayfront Parkway K.



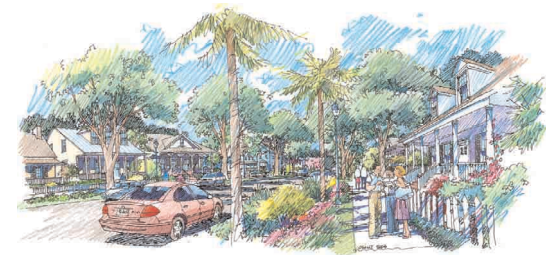
ILLUSTRATIVE MASTER PLAN The Master Plan showing all initiative areas



View along Ninth Avenue with a potential hotel development in the distance



View of improved Alcaniz Street and mixed-use development



View of infill housing along Alcaniz Street within the Historic District

## Analysis

### Master Planning Area Boundaries

The Master Plan includes recommendations for the Historic District itself (boundaries are identified on the Plan), plus those immediately adjacent areas which have a direct impact on its viability and future. This immediate impact area was identified in the course of the planning process and extends north to Gregory Street at the Civic Center, west to Palafox Street in the western Museum area, south to the edge of Main Street, and east to Twelfth Avenue.

### Process

The Master Plan was prepared in a public process between August and December 2003 in three phases – Conducting Analyses, Developing Alternative Concepts, and Preparing the Master Plan Recommendations. Citizen and interagency participation was extensive throughout all three phases of this public process. The team met with 15 focus groups, interviewed property owners, public officials, and community leaders, and conducted three public meetings, each attended by over 200 individuals.

In each phase, participants were asked three questions regarding the District – What do you like best?, What do you like least?, and What would you most like to see changed? Using green, red, and blue dots, participants registered their opinions on maps of the District. This information was then compiled and used as a basis for analysis and formulation of the Master Plan recommendations. In the first phase, the strengths and weaknesses of the District and its context were identified. In the second phase, alternative concepts were evaluated. In the final phase, priorities for implementation were established.



EXISTING CONDITIONS UDA portrait of Pensacola Historic District

Pensacola Historic District Boundary



# Strengths

## General Patterns

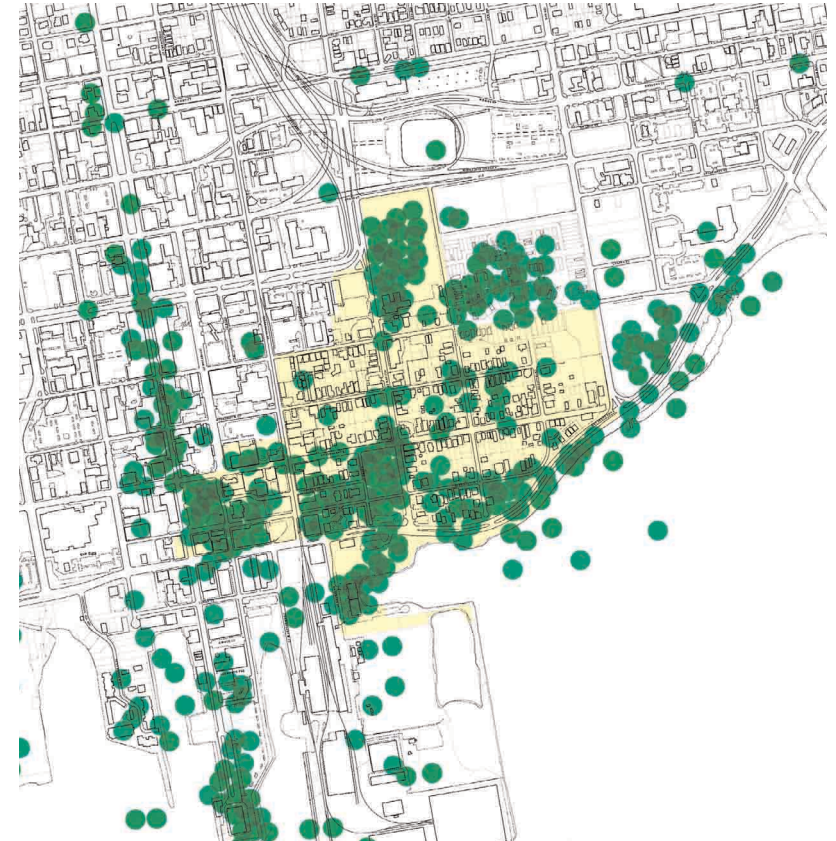
The pattern of green dots placed by participants, to mark the strengths of the area clearly identifies the core of the Historic District (especially in and around Seville Square) the Waterfront, the IHMC, and St. Michael's Cemetery as major strengths. Participants also identified strengths immediately adjacent to the District. These include the views of Pensacola Bay, waterfront parks, Pitts Slip, Plaza Ferdinand, and Palafox Street.

### QUALITIES MOST VALUED BY PARTICIPANTS

- Historic importance of the District, both in the buildings that remain and those that do not, such as the historic fortifications
- Museum properties with more potential for enhancement
- Authenticity of the District as a living neighborhood with history integrated into it, not isolated as purely a separate museum experience
- Diversity of buildings, architectural character, uses, and residents
- Strong sense of community with a cross section of "real" people
- Architectural character with elements reflecting their New Orleans, Parishes, and Gulf Coast origins as well as the cultural history of the Region
- Diversity of streetscapes in pavement types and plant materials
- The IHMC as a boost for the District and an indication of future potential
- Proximity to the Waterfront and view of the Bay and some of the traditional shipping uses of the Port
- Proximity to Downtown, especially Palafox Street



Images illustrating the assets of Pensacola to be built upon



STRENGTHS Green dots denote concentrations/groupings of 'good places' in and around the Pensacola Historic District



## Weaknesses

### General Patterns

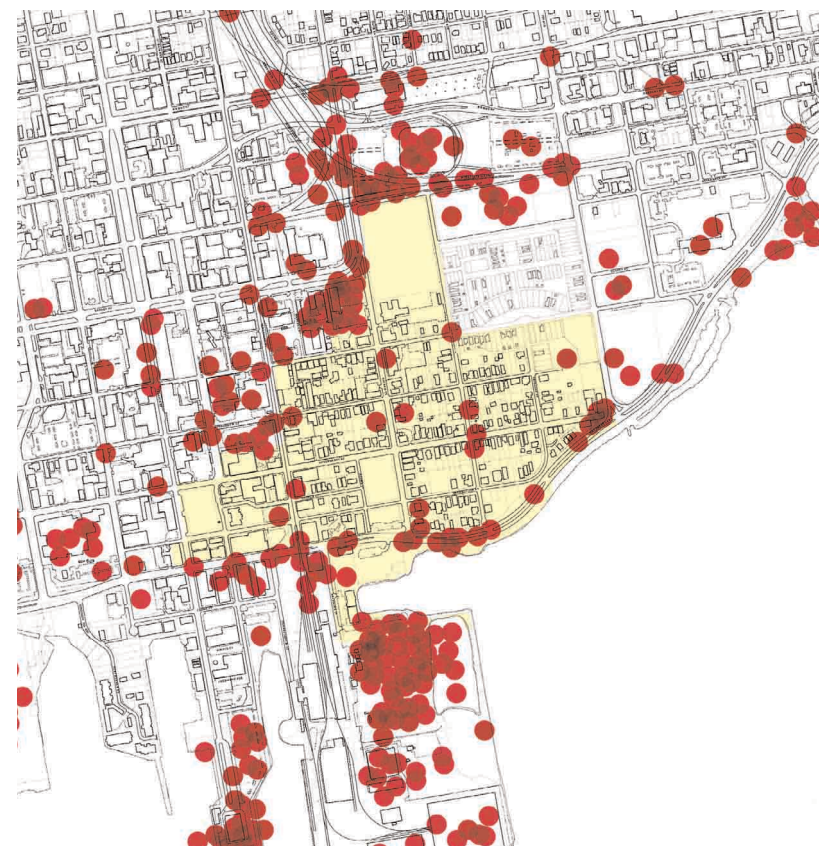
The pattern of red dots, marking the weaknesses of the area, form a circle immediately around the Historic District which came to be known as the "ring around the collar". These weaknesses include the barrier effect of Bayfront Parkway's design and speed of traffic, the pollution and noise coming from certain activities at the Port of Pensacola, traffic congestion along Main Street, the character of Tarragona Street, the nuisance uses at the edges of the District, the barrier effect of the design of Alcaniz Street north of Garden Street, and the I-110 Expressway ramps around the Civic Center. Minor problems within the District include empty, vacant, or unkempt lots or parking lots which disrupt the continuity of the historic streets.

#### WEAKNESSES OF GREATEST CONCERN TO PARTICIPANTS

- Lack of large enough residential population to provide 24 hour/7 day a week vitality and stability, or adequate support for sufficient retail uses
- Isolation of District caused by adjacent parking lots, empty land, and barriers such as Bayfront Parkway and the roads around the I-110 interchange ramps
- Nuisance uses too close to residents
- Pollution from nearby uses, such as the Asphalt Plant at the Port and the Sewage Treatment Plant
- Lack of a current Master Plan which makes it difficult to coordinate activities and obtain public services and support
- Some new structures within the District which do not follow historic patterns
- Overhead wires and utilities



Images illustrating the liabilities in and around the Historic District



WEAKNESSES Red dots denote concentrations/groupings of 'bad places' in and around the Pensacola Historic District

## Visions

### General Patterns

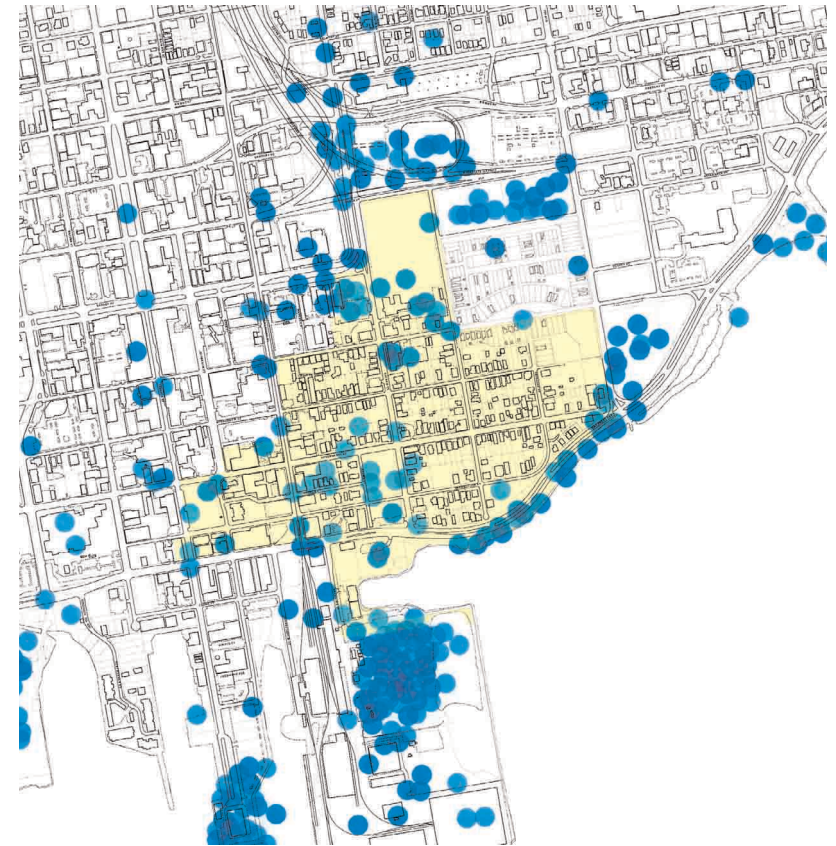
The pattern of blue dots, marking areas for improvement or opportunity, generally follows the “ring around the collar” identified by the red dots and includes improvements to Bayfront Park and its connection to the District, elimination of odors from the Asphalt Plant, mitigation of the barrier effect of the I-110 Expressway ramps and street configurations around the Civic Center, and provision of appropriate buffers between the northern edge of Aragon and the Civic Center. Within the District, blue dots identify improvements needed in the area around Seville Square and its connection to Plaza Ferdinand.

#### GOALS

- 1 Create a vibrant mixed-use District that can realize its potential as a “habitat for innovation”
- 2 Establish a University presence that improves the economic development potential of the District
- 3 Develop an urban district with evening and weekend activity
- 4 Improve the Historic District’s connections to the Waterfront, Downtown, and Old East Hill
- 5 Establish Pensacola and the Historic District as the cultural capital of the Gulf Coast

#### DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- Develop opportunities for more and diverse housing opportunities in and around the Historic District
- Encourage a mix of uses, including additional stores and restaurants
- Create pedestrian and psychological connections to the Waterfront, Downtown, and the surrounding neighborhoods
- Encourage University uses and programs that enliven the District
- Improve street connections and tame highway-like streets
- Enhance the visitor experience by improving the Historic Trail and the circulation patterns throughout the District
- Develop the Waterfront as an extension of the Historic District to Pensacola Bay
- Present Pensacola’s rich history as a key program and design element in the area
- Ensure new architecture continues the specific local traditions of Pensacola and the Historic District



VISIONS Blue dots denote possible opportunity locations of first initiative areas

## Market Potential

Zimmerman/Volk Associates was commissioned by the City of Pensacola to conduct a residential market study identifying the market potential for newly-introduced, market-rate housing within the Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) and Downtown Pensacola. The area of study encompassed the area of this Master Plan, the Pensacola Historic District.

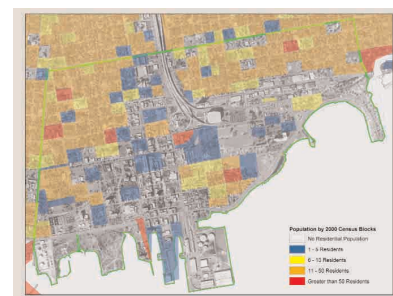
The breadth and depth of the potential market for market-rate housing units in the City of Pensacola was determined through migration, mobility, and target analysis of households currently living within the defined draw areas. The market potential, by draw area, with a preference for in-town or Downtown living is as follows: 32% from the City of Pensacola, 34% from Escambia County, 2% from Santa Rosa County, and 32% from the balance of the United States.

The analysis identified a potential market for new housing units in the Community Redevelopment Area of approximately 2,320 households, or approximately 41% of the total potential market for the entire City of Pensacola. Of the potential market of 2,320 units, there exists a market for approximately 1,000 units in the Downtown (a subset of the CRA Study Area). This market consists of new construction and or adaptive reuse of non-residential structures, excluding single family detached units.

Distribution by housing type (for the CRA area) is shown in the table opposite and clearly identifies the potential for a full range of housing types - from rental, multi-family units to for-sale, single-family detached houses. The analysis also indicates that new construction in the Downtown area should concentrate on higher densi-

ty housing types that support urban development and redevelopment most efficiently, including: rental lofts and apartments (multi-family for rent); for-sale lofts and apartments (multi-family for-sale); and townhouses, rowhouses, live-work or flex units (single-family attached for-sale).

Assuming an annual capture of approximately 10%–15%, Downtown Pensacola can add approximately 150 new units of urban housing per year. Additionally, the adjacent in-town neighborhoods in the CRA can add an additional 160 new units per year if the concepts described in the master plan are implemented.



HOUSING TYPE	NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS	% OF TOTAL
Multi-family for-rent	650	28.0%
Multi-family for-sale	210	9.1%
Single-family attached for-sale	200	8.6%
Low-range single-family detached	720	31.0%
Mid-range single-family detached	370	15.9%
High-range single-family detached	170	7.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,320</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

HOUSING TYPE	NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS	CAPTURE RATE	NUMBER OF NEW UNITS
Rental multi-family (lofts/apartments, leaseholder)	650	10%	65
For-sale multi-family (lofts/apartments, condo/co-op ownership)	210	10%	21
For-sale single-family Attached (townhouses/rowhouses, fee-simple ownership)	200	5%	10
Low-range single-family (detached houses, fee-simple ownership)	720	5%	36
Mid-range single-family (detached houses, fee-simple ownership)	370	5%	19
For-sale single-family attached (detached houses, fee-simple ownership)	170	5%	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,320</b>		<b>160</b>



## Urban Form

Analyses of the physical urban form of the District and its relationship to the City reveal some of the causes of the problems described by participants in the process and suggest a course of action.

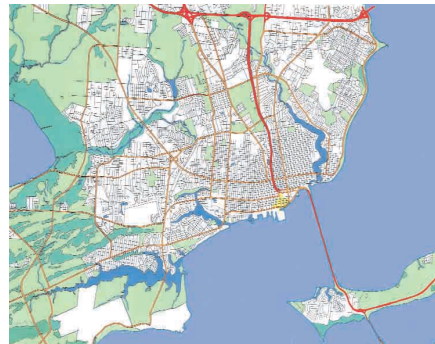
The District is beautifully located adjacent to the eastern edge of the Downtown Waterfront. Interstate 110, indicated in red, together with the Gregory-Chase Street one-way pair, limits the District's connections to other parts of the City.

In both the City-wide and Site-scale Building Footprint X-Rays, the District's isolation can be seen in the lack of building patterns around it. The small, residential scale of buildings in the District contrasts with larger-scale buildings around it, such as those on the Port, along Palafox Street, and the Civic Center.

In both the City-wide and Site-scale Residential Settlement Pattern X-Rays, the isolation of residences in the District is clear, explaining why this is the issue most frequently cited by participants.

Within the District, a number of commercial uses exist. The presence of offices in addition to the retail gives the impression that there is a greater number of retail uses in the District than actually exists.

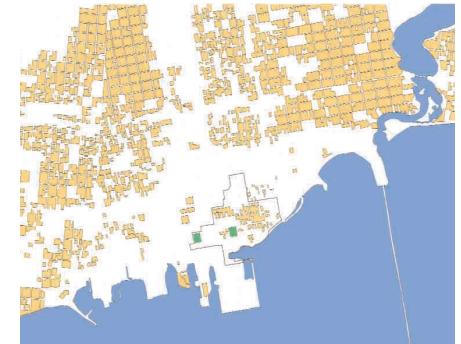
Plaza Ferdinand and Seville Square are the most recognizable open spaces in the District. The current configuration of Fountain Park, Bartram Park, Bayfront Park, and Admiral Mason Park, as well as St. Michael's Cemetery, suggests the not yet fully realized opportunity of a linked system of parks and open space.



Regional Locator Map



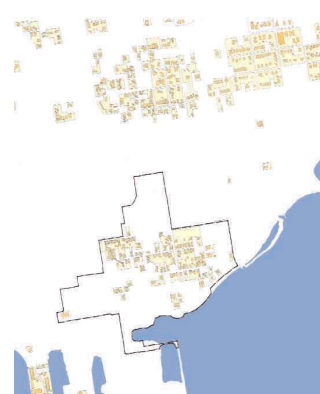
Building Footprints-City



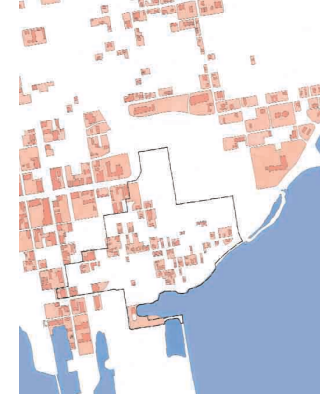
Residential Settlement Patterns-City



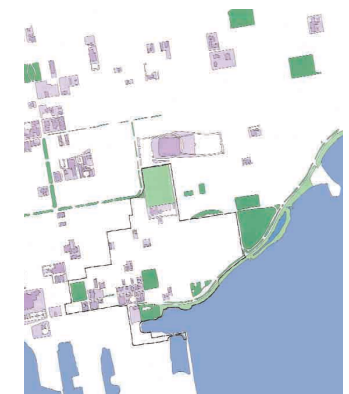
Building Footprints



Residential Settlement Patterns



Commercial Patterns



Institutions, Parks, and Open Space



## Synthesis & Strategies

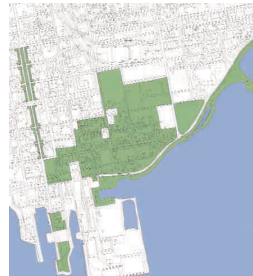
The three small diagrams (at right) summarize both the results of the analyses and the input received from participants in the public process. The Plan should build upon the strengths indicated in green, including the District, and potential areas immediately around it. The Plan should eliminate the problems indicated in red, including the negative impact of Bayfront Parkway and Main Street, barriers to the north including the character of Alcaniz Street and Ninth Avenue as they move north to Old East Hill. The Plan should provide initiatives in the blue areas to reconnect the District to the Waterfront, Downtown, and surrounding neighborhoods.

### Frameworks

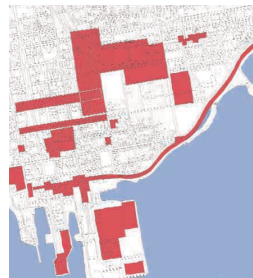
To accomplish this, the Plan should provide an overall blueprint for an improved, interconnected network of streets and public open space. This framework should include streetscape designs that ensure the sidewalks of the District and adjacent areas function as part of the open space network. Improvements to the Bayfront should connect existing parks along the Waterfront to form a continuous system of Waterfront parks. Alcaniz Street and Ninth Avenue are the most critical north/south streets to connect and transform into comfortable, pedestrian-friendly corridors.

### Initiatives

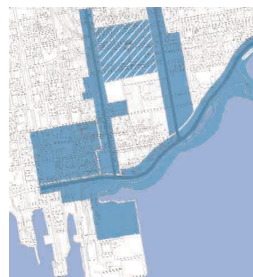
This framework can provide the structure for organizing a series of Initiatives that coordinate private development efforts along each improved public element. The Plan has identified four such initiatives – Alcaniz Street from Pitts Slip to Gregory Street, Ninth Avenue from Bayfront Parkway to Gregory Street, the Historic Fort and University Area, and an infill program for the Historic District.



Strengths



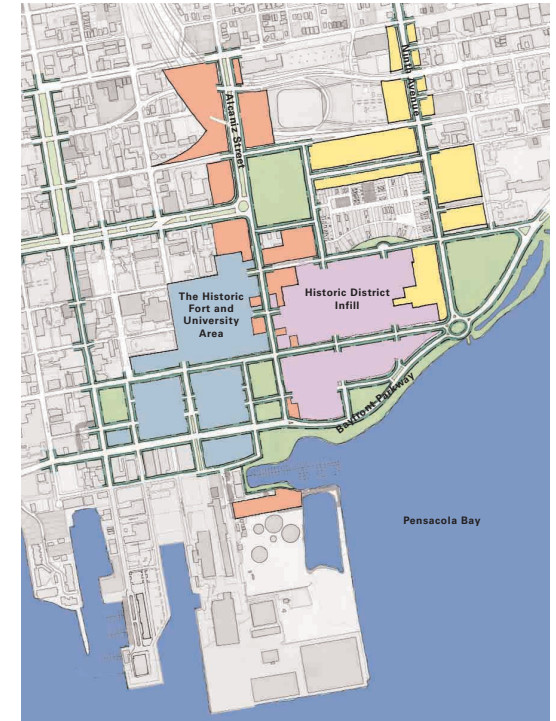
Weaknesses



Opportunity areas



**FRAMEWORKS** An interconnected system of streets and open space provide an armature for future growth and investment



**INITIATIVE AREAS** Four distinct initiative areas have been identified – Alcaniz Street, Ninth Avenue, Fort Area, and Historic District Infill.