

# Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. & Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevards Revitalization Plan

## **A BOLD PLAN FOR A PROUD COMMUNITY**

Working together as a community to create a vision is the best way to guide future growth. This document describes the beginning of a community-driven planning process to create a Revitalization Plan for the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. & Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard corridors in Fort Myers. The following pages detail the emerging vision and ideas begun during the planning “charrette” held December 10<sup>th</sup> through the 15<sup>th</sup>, 2005; more opportunities for community input and updates to this vision will begin on February 23, 2006, at 6:30 p.m. at the Stars Complex.

The proposed **Cornerstones** for the Revitalization Plan are:

### **CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT AT EVERY STEP**

Plans that get implemented are the ones where the people who created the plan stay active. This plan is about enabling teamwork; partnerships with the City of Fort Myers, private investors, local business owners, neighborhood groups, and residents of the Dunbar community will be necessary for success.



### **COMPLETE, WALKABLE, PEOPLE-FIRST NEIGHBORHOODS**

A key to walkable communities is creating neighborhoods with a true mix of uses rather than creating isolated pods for homes, businesses, or civic uses. True neighborhoods have all of these elements integrated together in a walkable form.

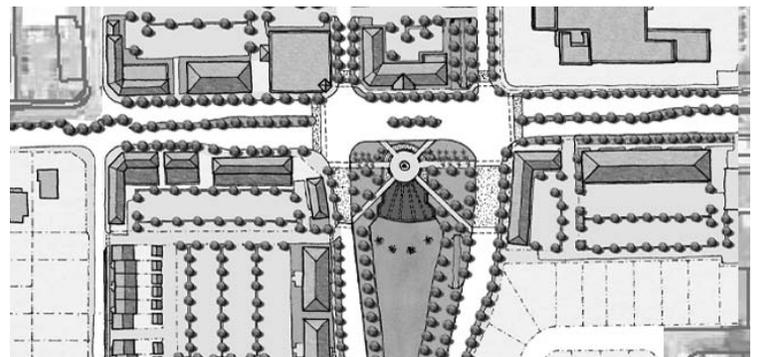


### **FACING STREETS & MAKING GREAT ADDRESSES**

Placing the front of buildings where they belong (facing the street, not the parking lot) helps to create desirable street addresses. The fronts of buildings include doors and windows, and not blank walls, which makes the street a more attractive and desirable place to be.

### **MIXED-INCOME, MIXED-USE, MIXED-DESIGN**

A complete neighborhood can be enjoyed by a diverse population. Affordable and market rate housing in the same community creates a varied neighborhood that is desirable to people of all ages and income levels. Mixing uses allows multiple destinations to be located within walking distance each other, reducing the need to drive to other areas of town for daily needs. Great towns and neighborhoods have an interesting blend of architecture, too.



### **BRING UP THE PEOPLE & BUSINESSES WITH THE PLACE**

As the value of properties along the corridors rises, the increased income to landowners is good – but provisions are needed for long time residents, so they are not driven out by revitalization and can participate in the renewed prosperity.

### **SHOWCASE & HONOR THE COMMUNITY HERITAGE**

Historic preservation of great buildings is a necessity; McCollum Hall is one example of a great building that could be restored to its former prominence and again become a community treasure. Efforts should be made to encourage the arts and culture of the Dunbar to thrive, including creating new facilities to host events.



In December 2005 the City of Fort Myers, along with a consultant team of planners, urban designers, and technical experts, conducted an open planning process to identify the ideas, needs, and concerns of the community. Participants helped to create the draft ideas contained in this bulletin through an intensive design event called a *charrette*. A variety of interested residents and stakeholders participated in the planning process, including property owners, neighbors, business people, developers, elected officials, City staff, and community leaders.

On Monday, November 28, 2005, a Community Kick-off Presentation marked the start of the planning process. Residents, City leaders, and local stakeholders gathered at the Dunbar Community School for an evening presentation. An introduction was provided by Mayor Humphrey. Victor Dover, principal of the town planning firm of Dover, Kohl & Partners, outlined the challenge for participants during the planning process, and provided background information on traditional town building, Smart Growth, and preserving community character. Victor introduced other members of the team, including Bill Spikowski of Spikowski Planning Associates, Dr. Lee Duffus of Florida Gulf Coast University, and Billy Hattaway of Hall Planning & Engineering. At the end of the presentation attendees were able to ask the consultant team questions. Approximately 80 citizens attended the Kick-off Presentation, eager to work together on the plan.

On Saturday, December 10, approximately 30 community members gathered at the Quality Life Center for the Hands-on Design Session. Working in small groups, participants gathered around tables to draw and share their varied ideas for the future of their neighborhood and the MLK / Shoemaker corridors. Participants drew on maps to illustrate how they might like to see the corridors evolve in the future by describing the uses, open spaces, building design, street design, transportation, parking, and services for the corridor. At the end of the workshop, a spokesperson from each table reported their table's ideas for the overall plan to the entire assembly.

From Sunday, December 11 through Thursday, December 15 the design team continued to work with the community in an open design studio at the Quality Life Center. Citizens and local leaders were encouraged to stop by the studio throughout the week to check the status of the plan, provide further input, and to make sure the design team was on the right track. The planners and designers created lists, diagrams, drawings, and plans, working to combine and refine the ideas. In addition to the public design studio, members of the design team met with community leaders, stakeholders and other experts in scheduled technical meetings. The meetings were used to answer design questions, discuss the draft plan, and explore details.

The charrette week ended with a "Work-in-Progress" presentation on Thursday, December 15 at City Council Chambers. Over 40 citizens attended the presentation, eager to hear and see how the planners and designers were able to synthesize the community's ideas. Victor Dover began with a summary of the week's events, then presented sketches and visualizations created during the week. At the end of the presentation, a question and answer session was held.

To learn more about Dover, Kohl & Partners Town Planning, visit [www.doverkohl.com](http://www.doverkohl.com)



The design team walked and drove along the corridors to experience the neighborhood.



Residents worked together, sharing ideas for the future of the Dunbar Neighborhood.



One representative from each table presented their work to the entire group.



Technical meetings during the week helped to shape the details of the plan.



Citizens were encouraged to stop by the studio daily to check the status of the plan.



Approximately 40 citizens attended the Work-in-Progress Presentation.

## What is a Charrette?

*Charrette* is a French word that translates as "little cart." At the leading architecture school of the 19th century, the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, students would be assigned a tough design problem to work out under pressure of time. They would continue sketching as fast as they could, even as little carts—charrettes—carried their drawing boards away to be judged and graded. Today, "charrette" has come to describe a rapid, intensive, and creative work session in which a design team focuses on a particular design problem and arrives at a collaborative solution. Charrettes are product-oriented. The public charrette is fast becoming a preferred way to face the planning challenges confronting American communities.

Here are some of the suggestions made by citizens during initial meetings:



Dunbar Main Street



Major Intersections

### Dunbar Main Street

- Gateway to Dunbar
- Infill Development
- Community-based Retail
- Entertainment
- Variety of Housing Stock
- Walkable Area

### Major Intersections

- Corner stores

### Neighborhood Retail

- Walkable Node
- Community-based Retail
- Take Advantage of Proximity to I-75: Entertainment, Hotels
- Fast food, restaurants, grocery store



Neighborhood Retail



Residential

### Residential

- Walkable Node
- Housing – Townhouse, Rowhouse, Single Family
- Rehab Existing Housing

### Industrial

- Clean Industry
- New Development Potential
- Mix of Uses: Commercial & Residential
- Affordable Housing
- Variety of Housing Types: Condo Warehouses; Buildings with Liners Utilize Street Frontage



Industrial



Parks

### Parks

- Cultural Hub
- Tourist Attraction
- Entertainment, Recreation
- Infill Development
- Mix of Uses
- Neighborhood Serving Retail

The following pages contain drawings and conceptual redevelopment options for selected areas along the Martin Luther King, Jr. and Veronica S. Shoemaker corridors. Although these may not be the exact locations or configuration of future redevelopment, the principles illustrated in these drawings can be applied to sites along the corridor as they become ready for redevelopment. The ideas contained in these drawings resulted from citizen input during the planning charrette; additional opportunities for public input and critique of these ideas will be held over the next few months, as the plan continues to move forward. Please visit [www.cityftmyers.com/mlk](http://www.cityftmyers.com/mlk) for project updates.

## McCullum Hall

The area of McCollum Hall was identified as an important community resource. This illustration depicts how this building could be restored, and how additional adjacent parcels along MLK near Cranford could be filled in with new buildings, creating a gateway to the Dunbar neighborhood. Restoring this historic treasure is just the beginning – filling in the rest of the street scene with the fronts of new buildings will create a walkable pedestrian zone that can serve as an anchor for arts and entertainment in the community.

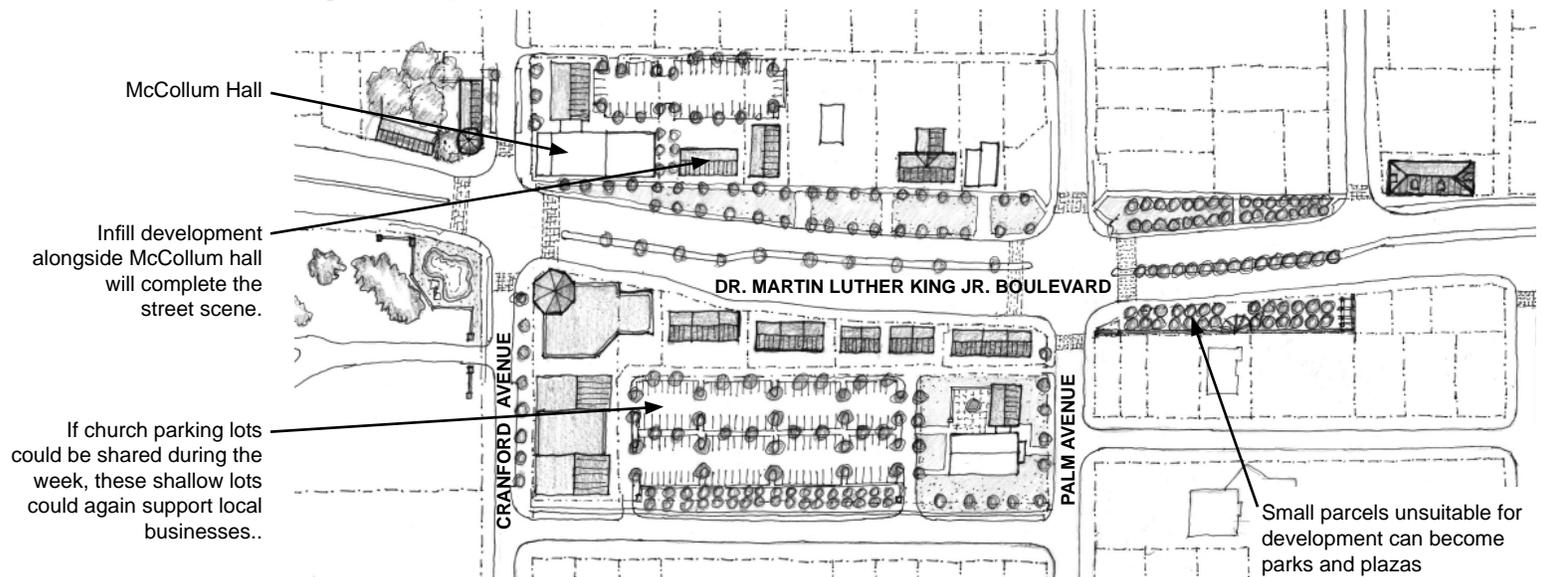


Hypothetical before-and-after view of McCollum Hall



## Western MLK Boulevard

The area immediately east of McCollum Hall is comprised of a series of shallow parcels that were affected by the recent widening of MLK Boulevard. It will be necessary for property owners to work together to make redevelopment and infill possible on these smaller lots. In addition, changes to the existing zoning could make many of these parcels usable again. Some properties are just too small, even if the zoning is adjusted. In these instances, small park spaces may be the best use for the land. Infill and redevelopment in this area will be very visible, as it is at the entrance to Downtown and in the heart of the Dunbar community. Redevelopment efforts in this area can serve as models and stimulate redevelopment along the corridor.



**Clemente Park**

Clemente Park is emerging as an important community resource; public spaces enhance adjacent properties, creating special addresses. During the charrette, two potential options for redevelopment were illustrated. The first depicts a park dedicated to open space, with a large playfield for football & soccer, and large amount of passive open space. A pond located on the property could be part of a system that cleans stormwater that now flows unfiltered down the Ford Street ditch before emptying into Billy Creek and the Caloosahatchee. The existing canal on the western edge of the site could be piped to allow for bicycle and pedestrian connections to Dunbar Park north of Indian Street and then along the cemetery to Billy Creek and Shady Oaks Park. A civic building, perhaps a Cultural Center, can be located on a formal access across the playfield, with views over the park and toward MLK Boulevard. Sculptures could honor the many football players who grew up in Dunbar and have gone on to star in the NFL.

The second option for the park reduces the amount of open space but increases the number of community buildings. These buildings would have visual prominence along MLK Boulevard, and could host a mix of uses, including cultural arts, neighborhood commercial businesses, a community pool, and perhaps even residential uses. The buildings would create a cultural oasis along MLK Boulevard; a town square located directly to the north would be defined on all edges by new buildings. A new civic building (envisioned to be a cultural center) would have a prominent location at the end of the park. On the western side of the park, passive open space and walking trails provide a relaxing environment.

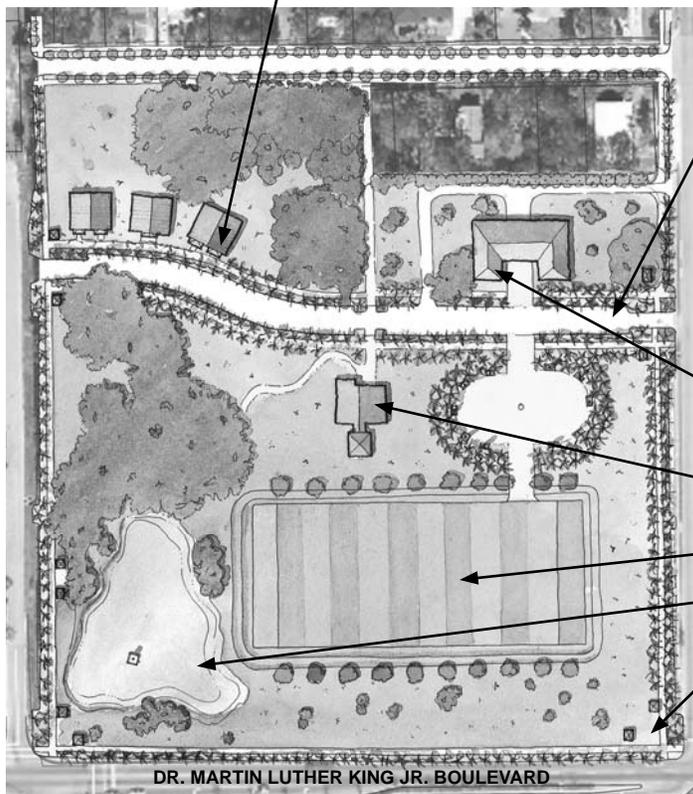


Park option #1 with a playfield



Park option #2 with more community buildings and a town square

New buildings front the park, providing a public edge to the park.

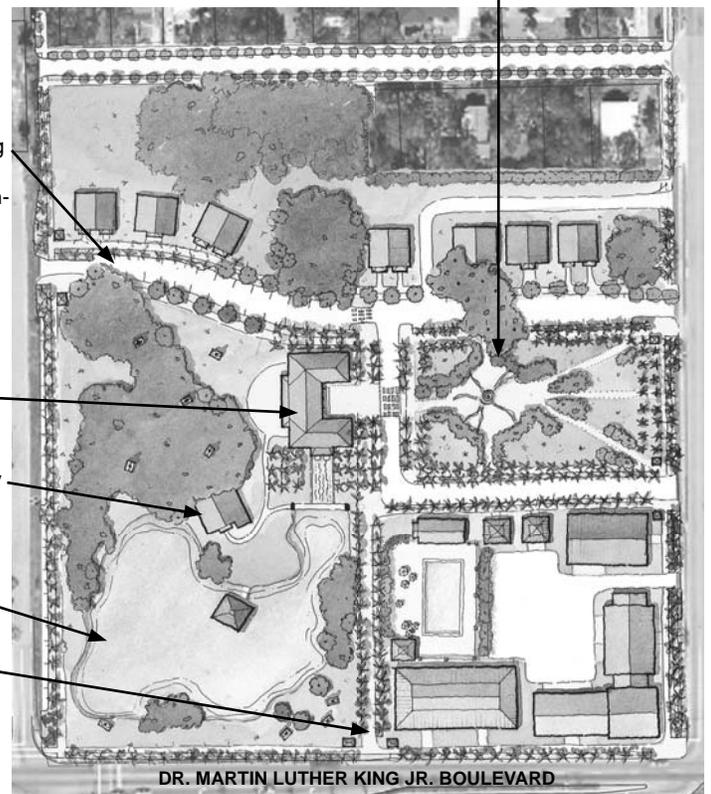


**Park Option #1**

Town Square

Through the park has on-street parking for visitors, replacing standard parking lots.

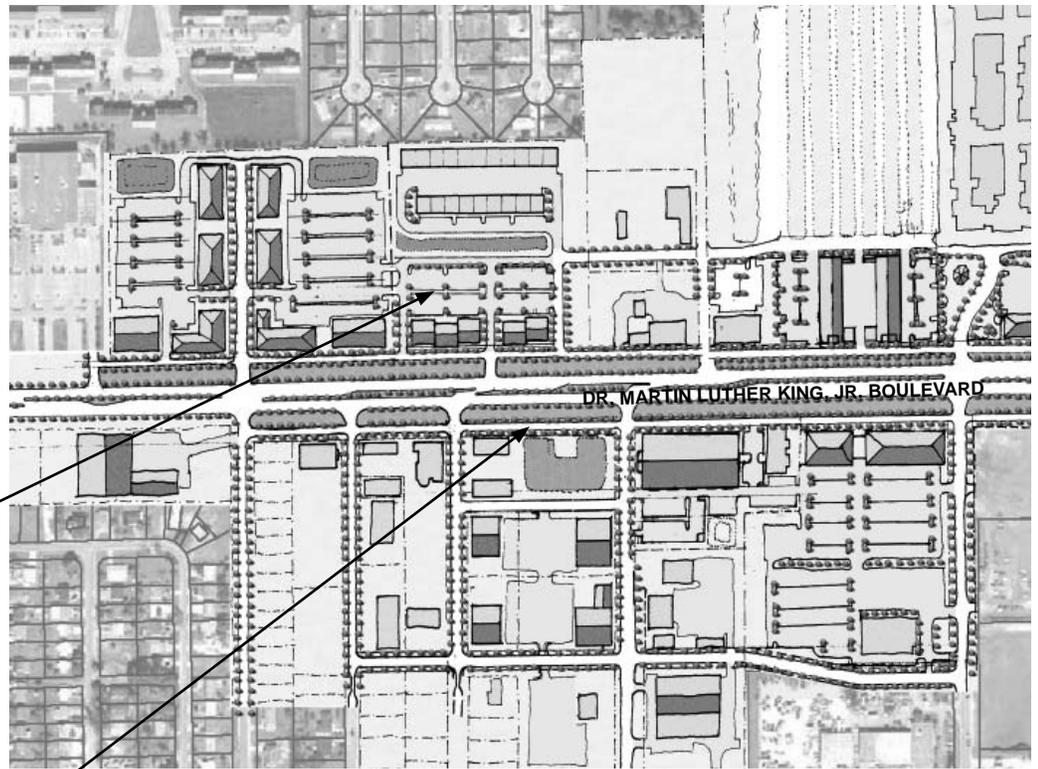
- Cultural Center
- Black History Museum
- Playfield
- Pond
- Formal Pedestrian Entrances



**Park Option #2**

## Eastern MLK Boulevard

The eastern end of MLK Boulevard (from Shoemaker to I-75) has a different character than the western side (from Evans to Shoemaker); this area has many larger parcels, and has many industrial uses. The larger-footprint industrial uses do not address the street in a pedestrian-oriented manner, in the same way that neighborhood-serving retail in smaller-footprint buildings can. Infill development should follow good urban design principles to continue to improve the streetscape. Over time, several pockets of pedestrian-oriented development should occur along this stretch of the corridor.

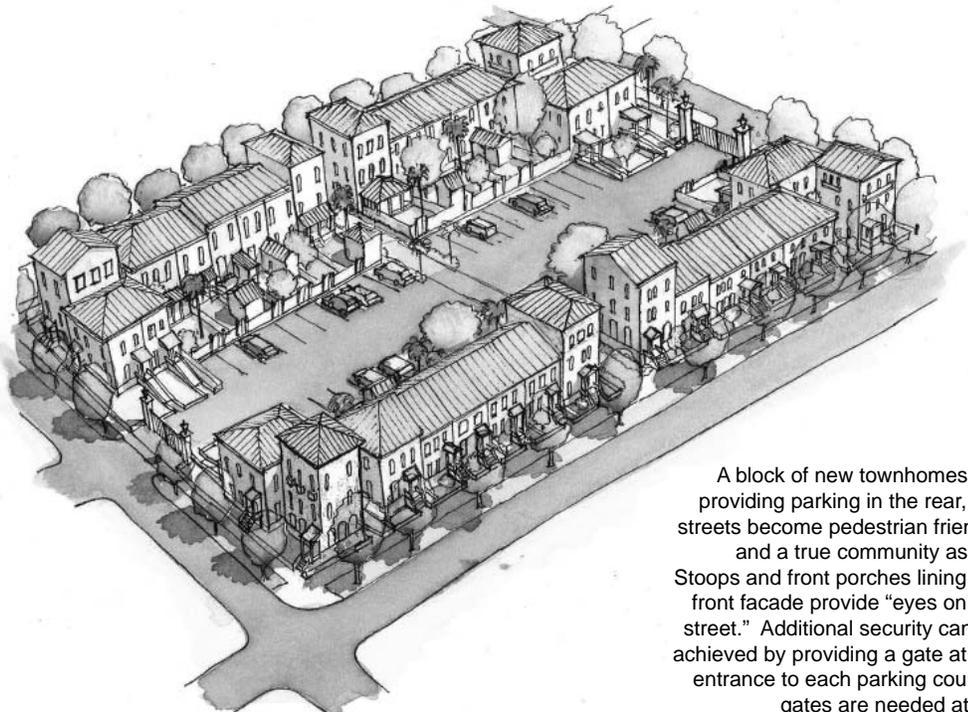


The site for the expanded Southwest Florida Enterprise Center; buildings can be located along the street, with parking behind.

A boulevard-style "slow lane" is an option to provide a pleasant pedestrian environment near new buildings.

## Michigan Court

The Michigan Court housing complex will soon be rebuilt via a HOPE VI grant received by the Fort Myers Housing Authority. The proposed program is to replace the existing public housing with a new, better model. Facing streets with the front of buildings, and locating the parking to the rear, the streets can form high-quality public spaces which can be enjoyed by pedestrians and community residents. By turning the campus-style plan into a network of normal streets and blocks, it will be possible to create true neighborhoods whose streets can be linked to the surrounding area over time. The HOPE VI effort was founded upon the belief that public housing complexes could be turned into real neighborhoods; there are several successful examples of this type of transformation found through Florida and the country.



A block of new townhomes; by providing parking in the rear, the streets become pedestrian friendly and a true community asset. Stoops and front porches lining the front facade provide "eyes on the street." Additional security can be achieved by providing a gate at the entrance to each parking court, if gates are needed at all.



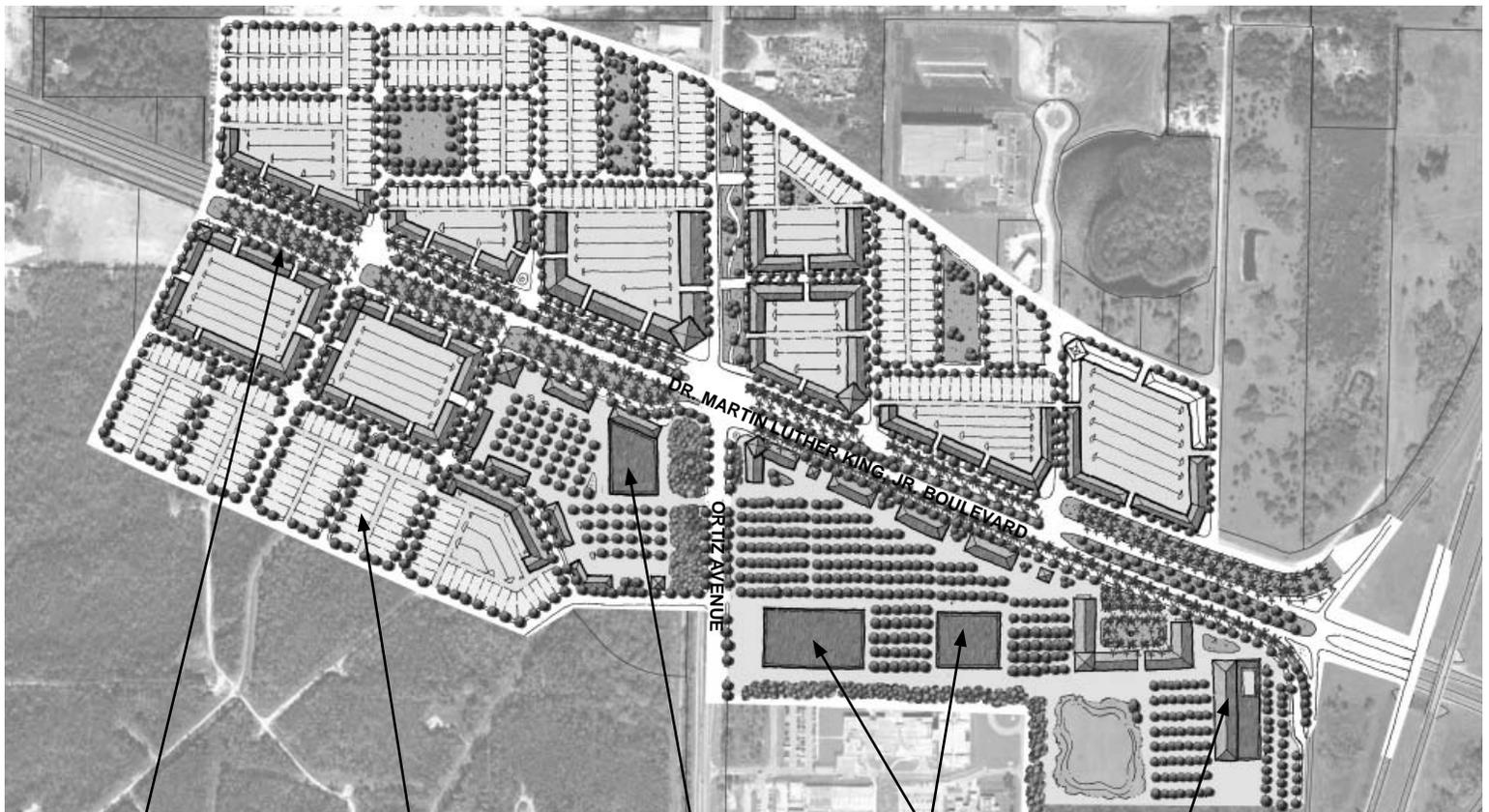
One development option, showing a network of streets and blocks with a traditional town center to the north near MLK Boulevard; Edison Avenue and Hanson Street are extended eastward to Ortiz Avenue.

## City Wellfield

The City of Fort Myers is in negotiations with the Bonita Bay Group to redevelop the City wellfield site as a series of neighborhoods. There is great potential to develop the area between the Edison extension and MLK Boulevard as a neighborhood-oriented town center, with a mixture of uses, including a new neighborhood school. A new pedestrian-friendly commercial main street could run perpendicular to MLK Boulevard; housing within the new development should include market rate and workforce housing, and a variety of housing types.

## Gateway to the City

The area of MLK Boulevard between Ortiz Avenue and I-75 is the gateway to the City of Fort Myers. Visitors to the City will pass through this area; it will be their first impression of the City. Due to this visibility, this location is ideal for commercial and entertainment destinations. If good urban design principles are followed as parcels are developed (such as facing the street with the front of buildings), the future redevelopment of these parcels will add value to the entire corridor.



Boulevard-Style  
"Slow Lane"

New neighborhoods

Grocery Store

Retailers

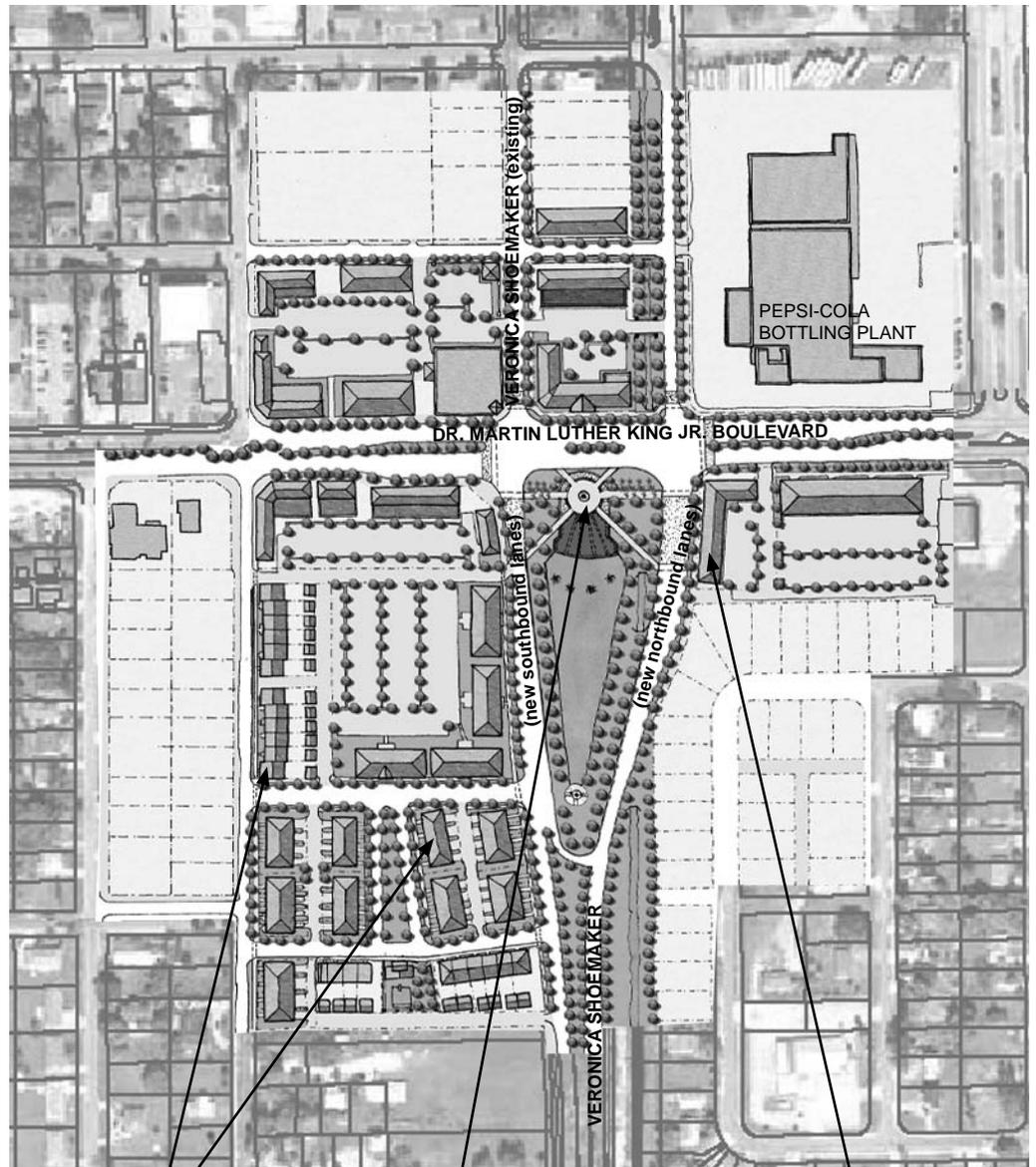
Hotel with visibility  
from I-75

## Midtown Dunbar

The intersection of MLK & Shoemaker Boulevards will be a very visible place in the community – the intersection of two main north/south and east/west corridors. Part of this area will be a good location for commercial development. Along the south side of the boulevard, the businesses parcels have been compromised by the recent road improvements. West of Shoemaker, these parcels can still be suitable for neighborhood businesses. Between the two legs of Shoemaker the parcels on the south side are virtually useless for business but have potential to be combined with the water retention lake as a park. Limited access makes these parcels a difficult site for commercial redevelopment, but the site does have potential as a community park. The visual prominence of the site calls for an important landmark to be located here; one suggestion during the charrette would be to commemorate local culture with this park, perhaps placing at the north edge a statue of poet Paul Laurence Dunbar or civil rights pioneer Rosa Parks, for example. A mixture of uses will help to create a walkable center at this important intersection; housing could be located above commercial uses, and in the blocks beyond.

## Northern Shoemaker Boulevard

The area of Shoemaker Boulevard north of Michigan is an established residential neighborhood. Community members' ideas for this area included infill housing for vacant parcels, and rehab programs for existing homeowners. There is an existing drainage canal located along the western edge of Shoemaker Boulevard, which currently is problematic due to dangerous slopes, litter accumulation, and sediment contamination as rainwater drains into Billy Creek. The planning team has begun researching the potential to pipe the water in this area, creating opportunity to remove sediment from the water. Or the water could be diverted to vacant land between Brookhill Drive and the cemetery where it could be treated in lakes before flowing into Billy Creek. Either approach would create an opportunity to clean the water before it reaches Billy Creek. This will also create an opportunity for a new linear park along the eastern edge of the roadway. Pedestrian connections could be made from this linear park northward to Shady Oaks and Terry Park and to all adjoining neighborhoods.



Affordable housing – both rental and owner-occupied – could be located along the new Shoemaker Boulevard.

A memorial statue could be placed at the intersection of these two boulevards, celebrating local culture.

If the FDOT retention ponds were relocated, new commercial or mixed-use buildings could be located on these parcels near the sidewalk, giving better access for pedestrians along the street, with parking in the rear.

## Shoemaker Boulevard & Edison Avenue

The intersection of Shoemaker Boulevard & Edison Avenue is prominently located within the community, and would make an ideal location for neighborhood-oriented, mixed-use development. Once the new roadway is complete, parcels that were previously underutilized will have new visibility. The CRA currently owns the southwest corner of this intersection and plans to develop it with affordable townhouses. This housing would enhance the surrounding areas if designed with blocks and streets that connect to the surrounding neighborhood. The city could purchase the junkyard a few blocks to the west and add housing there, improving property values for blocks around.



The existing junkyard can be redeveloped as housing and integrated into the existing residential neighborhood.

A neighborhood park will provide a formal gathering space for residents, and preserve a portion of the existing tree canopy.

A frontage road allows pedestrian-friendly access to new homes.



Potential homes on Veronica Shoemaker with stoops, balconies and porches

## Southern Shoemaker Boulevard

Shoemaker Boulevard between Canal Street and the North Colonial Waterway is designated for business and industrial uses. As with the eastern end of MLK, there is great opportunity for new infill development, and if done properly, the new development will enhance the surrounding area. New design standards for this section of roadway should regulate where buildings are placed, and prohibit blank walls from facing Shoemaker Boulevard.

## Shoemaker Boulevard & Winkler Avenue; Shoemaker Boulevard & Colonial Boulevard

The intersections of Shoemaker Boulevard and Winkler Avenue and Shoemaker Boulevard and Colonial Boulevard have similar physical characteristics. These intersections have potential for additional infill development. The width and number of travel lanes at these intersections hamper pedestrian flow across the street; however, new development at the corners should be designed with pedestrian flow in mind, to foster connections to surrounding areas.

## A Community Poised For Takeoff: The Future of Dunbar

The Dunbar community meets the following well-established criteria for economic development:

- **Community Confidence:** There is heightened confidence within the community that Dunbar is poised for economic development.
- **Access to Markets:** Because of its location as the principal corridor to the City of Fort Myers, Dunbar has excellent communications with and access to attractive markets throughout the region.
- **Safety and Security:** According to city police statistics, crime and violence has noticeably decreased in recent years. There now is renewed confidence in Dunbar, both as a safe place to invest and as a residential community.
- **Growing Population:** According to US Census statistics, between 1990 and 2000, Dunbar's population declined 5.8%, from 9,113 to 8,590. A turnaround may be underway, with estimates from the Lee Co. Economic Development Office showing the 2005 population at 9,571.
- **Availability of Capital:** Public and private capital has shown a willingness to invest in the community. Public capital includes upgrading of both major boulevards, public housing, and business support infrastructure. Private capital includes plans for expanded community housing.
- **Access to Labor Force:** At 11.1%, Dunbar's unemployment rate is almost three times that of Lee County. The community possesses the labor to drive the community wide expansion in construction and small business development which is expected to occur over the next few years.
- **Supportive Regulatory Environment:** The city has an expanded Enterprise Zone and a commitment to support administrative and regulatory changes that will enhance new business development and eliminate zoning practices that have degraded the community.

To take maximum advantage of this potential, this revitalization plan will recommend specific policy and regulatory strategies for neighborhood completion, improved governance, and business development. Some initial strategies that are being considered:

### Neighborhood Completion:

Dunbar's population loss in recent decades can be reversed by providing quality new housing on vacant lots and unused tracts of land.

- Minor changes to city regulations could ensure that a traditional 50' wide lot is eligible for one single-family home. At present, two adjoining lots in many neighborhoods are only allowed to have one home.
- The city's program of creating marketable title on vacant lots can be accelerated to provide sites for non-profit and for-profit providers of affordable housing. City standards for this program can delete some requirements that price houses built on these lots beyond the means of some families.
- New high-quality rental housing can be constructed by private developers with housing tax credit subsidies. Sites near MLK Boulevard will be treated favorably by this program due to proximity to shopping and public transit routes. Housing built under this program must retain its affordability for at least 30 years. Changes to city regulations can assist developers in seeking this funding and avoid unnecessary increases in costs.
- Townhouses and other low-rise housing types have been available only at the far south end of Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard. With minor changes to regulations, townhouses could be constructed at many other suitable locations.

- Homeowners often think that revitalization and increasing property values could force them out of their homes. In fact, the "Save Our Homes" program in Florida's constitution limits tax increases on homestead properties to 3% each year. Wider knowledge of this program will reassure homeowners and make them more willing to support revitalization efforts.
- The automotive junkyard near Franklin Park Elementary School could be relocated to a suitable industrial location. The site could then be purchased by the city, any soil contamination could be removed, and then the entire 1½ blocks could be redeveloped with townhouses or other needed forms of housing.
- The Fort Myers Housing Authority has obtained federal funds to rebuild public housing at Michigan Court. Through careful design, this housing can be placed on streets and blocks to create traditional neighborhoods rather than a new "housing project."

### Improved Governance:

Government funds alone will never be able to revitalize these corridors. However, strategic use of tax incentives and careful allocation of tax revenues can catalyze private investments that will more than cover the cost to the city over time.

- Lee County is awaiting final approval of expanded "Enterprise Zone" boundaries for Dunbar and central Fort Myers. This expansion will provide six different tax benefits to stimulate economic revitalization. The City of Fort Myers can re-authorize and expand its local business incentives for the new Enterprise Zone to supplement the state's incentives.
- In recent years, state officials have only been placing about one-fourth of the available documentary stamp tax revenues into the Local Housing Trust Fund. This shortfall starves the revenues available to local officials to address the burgeoning housing affordability crisis. City and county officials can press the governor and legislature to restore this funding to previous levels.
- The City of Fort Myers has five "community redevelopment areas" (CRAs) along the MLK corridor. Under a CRA, property tax revenue generated by rising property values is dedicated for a period of years to revitalization efforts in those same areas. However, these areas are very small; three include only the business parcels along MLK Boulevard. The city can consolidate and/or expand these CRAs northward to Michigan Avenue and southward to Edison Avenue or Canal Street to provide a recurring source of funds to pay the city's portion of the costs to carry out this revitalization plan.

### Demographics

Compared to the City of Fort Myers:

- Dunbar has larger household size (3.11 versus 2.56 persons per household).
- The Dunbar population is younger: median age is 24.3 years versus 31.9 years.
- Dunbar has lower average household income (\$22,943 versus \$42,334).
- The percentage of the Dunbar population that is black is higher than the city as a whole (77.2% versus 29.5%).
- The percent of the Dunbar population with income below the national poverty level is higher than the City of Fort Myers (48.4% versus 21.8%). The statistic for Lee County is 9.7%.
- Dunbar's unemployment rate is much higher than either the City of Fort Myers or Lee County (11.1% versus 6.3%, and 3.8% respectively).

## Business Development:

By expanding the number and variety of local businesses, more consumer choices will be available to local residents, more opportunities will be available for entrepreneurial activity, and more wealth can be retained in the community.

- The City's Southwest Florida Enterprise Center (SFEC, formerly known as the Business Development Center) and the FGCU-based Small Business Development Center are eager to expand their assistance to both startup and established businesses in the community. Currently, the SFEC has 15 small-business tenants and a waiting list of new tenants. In the near future it anticipates tripling the existing space. Continued cooperation between the SBDC and SFEC and other city programs will expand the range of businesses accommodated and the services that can be provided.
- The recent widening of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard has made many business parcels along the boulevard too small for redevelopment. Regulatory changes can ameliorate some of these problems; others can be resolved through shared parking (either on-street parallel parking spaces or parking lots shared with nearby churches).

## Transportation

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard is the primary road connecting downtown Fort Myers to Interstate 75 and has significant traffic; when Veronica S. Shoemaker Blvd. is complete, it is also expected to carry significant traffic in the north/south direction.

The primary transportation goal during the charrette was to find a way to balance the livability needs of local residents with the needs of vehicular passengers moving to and from their destinations. Several topics were discussed:

**Speed** – Many cars travel along MLK much faster than the posted speed limit. This has a very negative effect on other modes of transport; people do not feel safe when walking or bicycling alongside fast moving vehicles. In addition, research has shown the number of pedestrian fatalities is directly associated with the speed of the roadway. There is a big difference between 30 and 40 mph for pedestrian and bicycle activity. As a part of this study, our team will analyze the existing speed limits and actual speeds traveled, and make recommendations to enhance all modes of travel.

**Crossing MLK** – Some areas of MLK Boulevard are very difficult to cross on foot; to be a truly livable community, the length and number of pedestrian crossing should be evaluated. Of particular focus should be areas where high numbers of pedestrians are anticipated (such as near the redeveloped Clemente Park).

**Transit** – Transit service in the area is currently very well used; however, there is always room for improvements. The current bus system runs with a 30 minute wait; real-time updates on bus arrival times would help to increase efficiency for transit riders. In addition, the MLK corridor is currently being considered by LeeTran for Bus Rapid Transit. Increasing the efficiency of transit in the area will help to cut down on reliance on the automobile.

Example questions submitted by citizens; to see more, please visit [www.cityftmyers.com/mlk](http://www.cityftmyers.com/mlk).

### **Q: As the Dunbar community is improved and new housing is built, what would happen to those people who will be displaced? Will housing be available for those people?**

A: A mixture of housing types can provide a variety of options for community residents; the revitalization plan can recommend changes to zoning and land uses which will permit and encourage a variety housing types to accommodate a variety of income levels within Dunbar. In addition our team will meet with the Housing Authority and discuss their redevelopment plans, and how they might be a part of the revitalization of these two corridors. Working together with the City of Fort Myers, we will look for solutions that will help residents benefit from new housing rather than being displaced by it.

### **Q: How will the development help local entrepreneurs?**

A: The development of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. / Veronica Shoemaker Revitalization Plan looks beyond the immediate economic horizon, in planning for and anticipating economic changes that help energize and diversify the local and regional economies. It will create the zoning and socio-economic conditions that will spawn entrepreneurial activities and support them to success.

One vision is to create a cohesive linkage between McGregor Boulevard and MLK and new residential and commercial activities on MLK/VSS that can be engines of economic development for the entire community. Clearly, the mix of activities depends on the outcome of community consensus on the character of the desired community.

Such an environment over time would:

- Be attractive to visitors because of access to dining, shopping and entertainment – all contiguous to the historic City of Fort Myers
- Open up Dunbar – MLK corridor businesses to customers outside the immediate area
- Begin to capture a larger share of the dollar expenditures by persons passing by on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard
- Facilitate entrepreneurship opportunities by local entrepreneurs
- Provide community access to increased employment and higher paying jobs
- Provide community residents with quicker access to better paying jobs and opportunities outside of the community
- Increase property values and community tax base, and
- Increase the quality of life of residents of the Dunbar community.

### **Q: How can churches leverage their resources to facilitate development of the community?**

A: Churches are limited by their non-profit status from certain commercial activities. This of course does not preclude activities such as church schools, housing for members, etc. often involving tuition and other payments in a non-profit basis, in order the carry out their religious, social and educational missions. Subject to the above caveat, churches are integral links to the community, and many of the local pastors and church officers can and do participate in a wide assortment of local community associations and groups to promote beneficial advances in the community. Other approaches that churches can employ in leveraging their resources and power to facilitate community development include:

- Allowing use of church resources to civic and non-profit community organizations
- Participating in development, and management of non-profit community foundations to promote economic and community development. Examples could include investment clubs, micro loan programs, etc.
- Contributing direct grants and matching funds to local nonprofit community foundations to facilitate business development activities, and
- Sharing parking lots with adjoining business to the advantage of both.

# HELP SHAPE THE FUTURE OF DUNBAR



Thursday, February 23rd at 6:30 p.m.  
at the Stars Complex Rooms A & B,  
at 2890 Edison Avenue

Come work alongside your neighbors  
on the plan for the future of  
the Dunbar Community.

The City of Fort Myers  
Community Development Department  
Planning Division  
1825 Hendry Street, #101  
Fort Myers, FL 33901

*For more information please visit [www.cityftmyers.com/mlk](http://www.cityftmyers.com/mlk)  
or contact Anne Mullins, Principal Planner at the  
City of Fort Myers, 461-2696.*