A ULI ADVISORY SERVICES PANEL REPORT

CAPE CORAL, FLORIDA

Planning for the Future

May 15–20, 2022

Urban Land Institute

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Cover: An aerial view of Cape Coral vividly shows the city's abundance of canals. *(David Wilson)*

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Urban Land Institute

About the Urban Land Institute

THE URBAN LAND INSTITUTE is a global, member-driven organization comprising more than 45,000 real estate and urban development professionals dedicated to advancing the Institute's mission of shaping the future of the built environment for transformative impact in communities worldwide.

ULI's interdisciplinary membership represents all aspects of the industry, including developers, property owners, investors, architects, urban planners, public officials, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, and academics. Established in 1936, the Institute has a presence in the Americas, Europe, and Asia Pacific regions, with members in 80 countries.

The extraordinary impact that ULI makes on land use decision-making is based on its members sharing expertise on a variety of factors affecting the built environment, including urbanization, demographic and population changes, new economic drivers, technology advancements, and environmental concerns.

Peer-to-peer learning is achieved through the knowledge shared by members at thousands of convenings each year that reinforce ULI's position as a global authority on land use and real estate. In 2021 alone, more than 2,700 events, both virtual and in person, were held in cities around the world.

Drawing on the work of its members, the Institute recognizes and shares best practices in urban design and development for the benefit of communities around the globe.

More information is available at uli.org. Follow ULI on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram.

About ULI Advisory Services

The goal of the **ULI ADVISORY SERVICES** program is to bring the finest expertise in the real estate field to bear on complex land use planning and development projects, programs, and policies. Since 1947, this program has assembled well over 700 ULI-member teams to help sponsors find creative, practical solutions for issues such as downtown redevelopment, land management strategies, evaluation of development potential, growth management, community revitalization, brownfield redevelopment, military base reuse, provision of low-cost and affordable housing, and asset management strategies, among other matters. A wide variety of public, private, and nonprofit organizations have contracted for ULI's advisory services.

Each panel team is composed of highly qualified professionals who volunteer their time to ULI. They are chosen for their knowledge of the panel topic and are screened to ensure their objectivity. ULI's interdisciplinary panel teams provide a holistic look at development problems. A respected ULI member who has previous panel experience chairs each panel.

The agenda for the week-long Advisory Services panel (ASP) is tailored to meet a sponsor's needs. ULI members are briefed by the sponsor, engage with stakeholders through in-depth interviews, deliberate on their recommendations, and make a final presentation of those recommendations. A report is prepared as a final deliverable.

Because the sponsoring entities are responsible for significant preparation before the panel's visit, including sending extensive briefing materials to each member and arranging for the panel to meet with key local community members and stakeholders in the project under consideration, participants in ULI's ASP assignments are able to make accurate assessments of a sponsor's issues and to provide recommendations in a compressed amount of time.

A major strength of the program is ULI's unique ability to draw on the knowledge and expertise of its members, including land developers and owners, public officials, academics, representatives of financial institutions, and others. In fulfillment of the mission of the Urban Land Institute, this ASP report is intended to provide objective advice that will promote the responsible use of land to enhance the environment.

Acknowledgments

This panel is a result of multiple individuals and organizations participating collectively toward achieving transformational change for Cape Coral. The Advisory Services program acknowledges, with gratitude, the city of Cape Coral, with special attention given the outstanding effort of the Office of Economic and Business Development.

A special thanks is extended to Nita Whaley and Rob Hernandez with the city. Thanks also to the elected officials of Cape Coral for their participation, including Mayor John Gunter and the City Council members. Also, thank you to Kimberly Bruns, Scott Craig, Jackie Davis, Marvin Negron, Adrianna Spindle-Jackson, and Patrick White. Thank you also to August Williams-Eynon, author of the ULI publication *Resilient Retrofits,* for lending material in service of this report. ULI also thanks the more than 100 stakeholders who shared their experiences, perspectives, and insights with the panel.

PANEL SPONSOR

Contents

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Introduction

Cape Coral, Florida, is a relatively young city that has seen consistent population growth in the past several years, including a marked increase since COVID-19. Its proximity to the Gulf of Mexico and unique canal system throughout the city are a draw for vacationing and retiring populations, along with an increasing number of younger age cohorts. Because of population expansion and the desire to continue to attract new residents and foster sustainable economic growth, the city has the opportunity to focus on community, access, and infrastructure to enhance its overall cohesion.

Cape Coral boasts an idyllic, sprawling landscape and a canal system that lives up to its reputation as an ideal home and get-away destination. The city has seen increased population growth over the past 10 years, prompting consideration of how it can economically and geographically change with the observed growth. Although a rightful draw for residents and visitors alike, the city's proximity to the Gulf requires ongoing thoughtful consideration to minimize and mitigate negative climate effects.

The scope of the panel and this report is to make a holistic review of current opportunities and challenges related to the economic development of Cape Coral. This includes understanding market and economic opportunities unique to the area, further solidifying Cape Coral's community cohesiveness through strategic design, and leveraging partnerships to achieve sustainable change. The goal is to assist the city in finding what actionable steps can help foster sustainable infrastructural and economic development given projected continued population growth in the next several decades, with special focus on the upcoming years.

The panel hopes these recommendations are useful in charting a course for the future of Cape Coral as the great city it will become.

Market Conditions and Potential

The panel's market analysis quantifies and identifies the development opportunities in Cape Coral and the potential for the city to capitalize on those opportunities. The city needs to prepare an action plan with an economic foundation based on market realities and future projected growth. Cape Coral is a complex city, but dividing the city's opportunities and challenges into standard land use categories can best prepare Cape Coral to seize its future.

Overview of Households and Residential Development

As reported by the U.S. Census Bureau, Cape Coral is the largest community in the Lee County standard metropolitan statistical area (SMSA), which has 407,500 people employed, of whom about 60,000 are in Cape Coral. Today about 200,000 permanent residents in 71,000 households call Cape Coral home. This is 26 percent of the SMSA population. Since 1990, Cape Coral's permanent population has grown annually by more than 3,800 people in 1,300 households; it is projected to grow annually by almost 4,300 people in 1,950 households during the next 10 years.

In addition to these permanent residents, Cape Coral has a substantial number of seasonal and second homes, including about 30,000 units, or 32 percent of the SMSA total. This seasonal and second-home market is projected to grow by 500 units annually, and as a result, the total Cape Coral housing market is projected to grow by 2,520 units per year, including 1,450 detached single family, 440 townhouse and condominium units, and 630 rental apartments.

Since 1980, Cape Coral has seen the construction of 2,006 units per year, but during 2020 and 2021, this has accelerated to almost 4,000 units per year with 23 percent of these being multifamily.

In addition to the residential development, Cape Coral has had and will continue to experience industrial, office, retail, and hotel development activity.

Industrial Development

Cape Coral's existing industrial space encompasses 2.6 million square feet, or 8.3 percent of the Lee County industrial total. Historically, the Cape Coral industrial market has grown annually by 28,000 square feet, and it is projected to grow annually by 40,000 square feet.

Office Development

Cape Coral has 2.6 million square feet of office space, which is 12 percent of the SMSA total. Historically it has grown by 46,000 square feet per year and is projected to grow by 60,000 square feet annually. Of Cape Coral's office market, almost 40 percent is medical-related office space, and annually, the medical office market should grow by 23,000 square feet.

Hotel Development

Cape Coral's hotel market includes 830 rooms, only 6 percent of the hotel room count in the Lee County SMSA, which has 13,200 rooms. The Lee County SMSA is projected to grow by almost 350 rooms per year, and Cape Coral should experience an annual demand for 100 rooms.

Retail Development

The final commercial real estate sector is the retail market. Today, Cape Coral has 8 million square feet of retail space, which is 16.5 percent of the SMSA total. Historically, Cape Coral's retail market has grown annually by 140,000 square feet of space per year, and it is projected to grow annually by 171,000 square feet of space.

Land Absorption and Implications

Understanding the dynamics of socio-economic forces projected to impact Cape Coral can help shape the vision for its future. The panel has been asked to help create Cape Coral's vision for the next 50 years, but growth is coming at a much faster rate and the city needs to be prepared. Given the residential and commercial land use demands described, Cape Coral should anticipate the absorption of about 500 acres of real estate annually.

According to information provided by the city, Cape Coral has more than 44,400 vacant platted single-family lots, and given the projected growth of more than 2,500 residential units per year, that could increase to 4,000 units per year.

In theory these lots could be built out in 11 to 18 years. In addition, with 4,300 new permanent residents each year along with almost 1,500 new seasonal and second-home residents, Cape Coral needs to adjust its vision for the future to prepare for those wanting to call Cape Coral home. Given this anticipated growth, the city needs to address some of the following implications:

- Cape Coral needs to offer a continuum of housing opportunities, including attainable housing for all residents.
- Cape Coral needs to provide improved medical care, including specialized health care in the community.
- The city should broaden the opportunities for postsecondary education, including technical, academic, and professional studies.
- It will need to develop a state-of-the-art industrial and business park to serve the growing needs of current businesses needing expansion space as well as attracting new businesses wanting to come to Cape Coral.
- It will need to increase the supply of resort facilities and hotel rooms to attract a growing tourist market and to capitalize on the leisure and travel markets that will find Cape Coral attractive.
- It will need to enhance the city's cultural and art offerings so that residents of all ages and demographics can participate.

Finally, the city needs to take into consideration the unique environment that is Cape Coral and embrace all it has to offer.

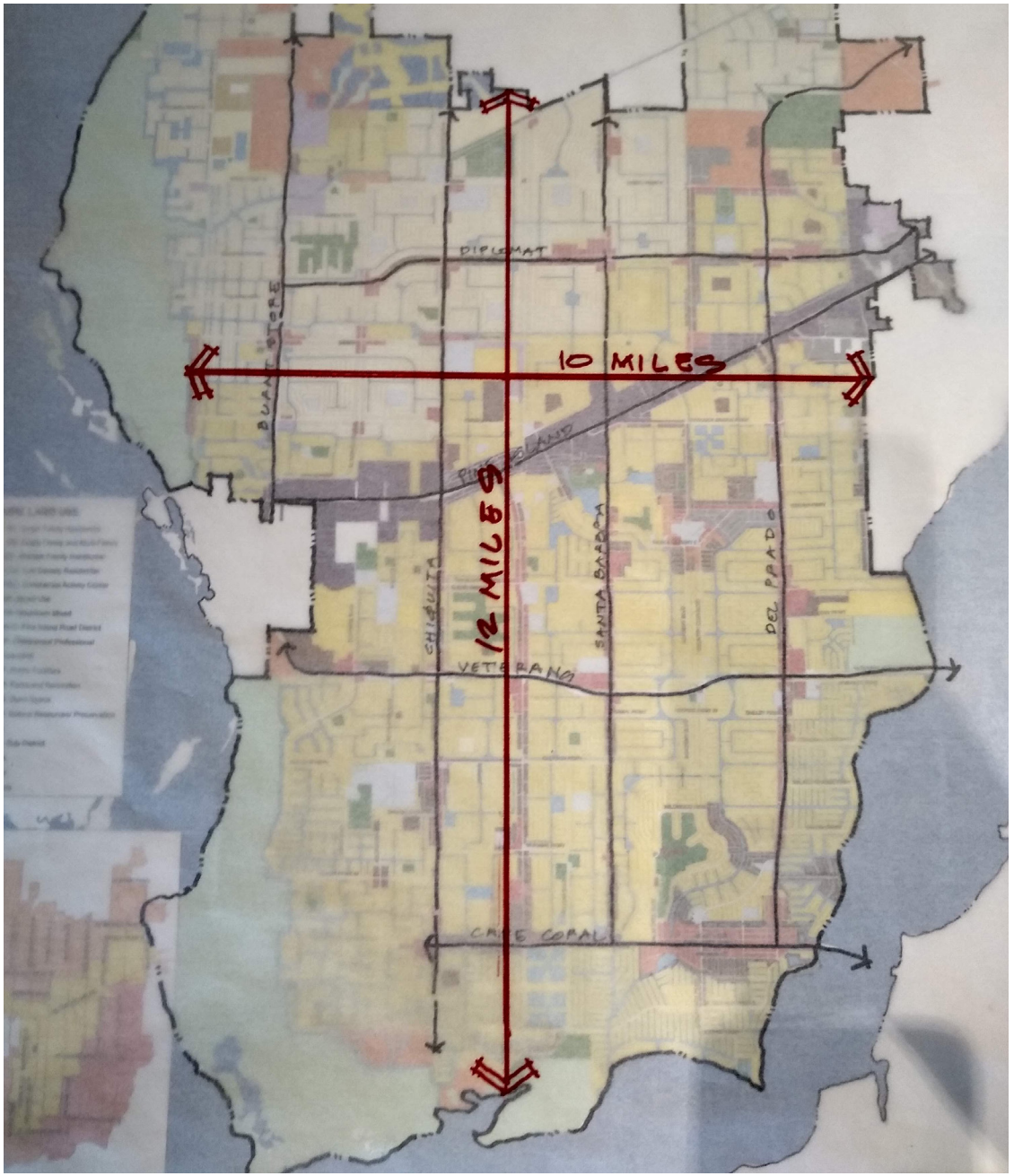
Planning Context and Why It Needs to Evolve

All Cape Coral residents are by now familiar with the legacy established by the Rosen brothers in 1957 to establish a new community for those seeking the Florida dream. The actions taken by the brothers can be viewed as a land scam of epic proportions, or conversely, as creating a place to have a home, a boat, and access to the Gulf of Mexico. While the former interpretation probably holds some truth, what was platted and largely built is a city like no other with a very strong boating culture and more canals than Venice, Italy. It is also a city that was pre-determined for largely a single-family, relatively low density environment, with few civic and cultural amenities, and little thought given to what elements are needed to build community. This makes the city feel very geographically large and disorienting—but with room to grow and refine.

Another legacy from the initial planning and incorporation as a city is the sheer size of the land area within Cape Coral's boundaries. At more than 120 square miles, comprehending where one is can be daunting, particularly because of the endless maze of canals that thwart typical urban grid connectivity.

Furthermore, the size of the city leads to a lack of connectivity. A direct result of over 400 miles of canals is the effect on local traffic patterns. Numerous dead-end and looped streets force traffic back onto arterial streets. The effect can be disorienting and confusing and promotes extra vehicle miles traveled. This causes and exacerbates vehicular congestion on the roads, further strained by Cape Coral residents' reliance on cars as their only means of transportation.

A positive aspect of the large land area, however, is the room to grow in areas such as the northern quadrants, and the ability to modify land use, transportation, and open-space creation while increasing connectivity. Room to grow and opportunity to plan for and create neighborhoods with a mix of uses and densities that are connected on many levels, is one of Cape Coral's biggest assets as it charts its future.



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Cape Coral's large geographic size is a challenge to easy placemaking and connectivity.

A City of Quadrants and Separate Identities

The panel heard from many interviewees that the way they reference the city both geographically and mentally is through the four quadrants of the compass: NW, NE, SW, and SE. In fact, many interviewees could mention certain inherent qualities about who lives where—the oldest, the newest, more foreign groups, those with less income, and so on. Those statements speak to the sheer size of the community and the need to understand it in a finer grain.

It is a city that is hard to comprehend and lacks legibility, especially for those coming from outside. While those demographic and socioeconomic mental images may seem to be a problem, they might also be an opportunity to build on character-defining strengths and find mechanisms to supply the appropriate civic amenities to meet quadrant or district needs and provide greater identification. In essence, not all quadrants have to be alike in a city of this size.

ALLEN FOLKS/ULI

Understanding Cape Coral begins with its four quadrants.

A Downtown That Is Not Central and Still Undefined, but with Potential

The panel toured the downtown in the vicinity of Cape Coral Parkway, 47th Terrace, and Coronado Parkway in the SE quadrant of the city. Because of the platted nature of the city for mostly residential uses, there was no dedication of traditional or familiar public space (e.g., a square) surrounded by retail, housing, civic, commercial, and religious buildings. The downtown is being created out of a linear parcelization pattern that currently exhibits uses focused on entertainment, food, and some shopping. There are, however, proposals being put forth to help add more residential units in vertical mixed-use formats, which will add more people to support the uses.

The panel supports increasing density in that location and adding more culturally appropriate arts and music venues with the hope it becomes more of a citywide resource. The area will need the arts, music, and cultural places and events to attract a citywide audience, further reinforcing existing retail, dining, and entertainment destinations. That said, the panel also envisions that other quadrants of the city would benefit from similar urban mixed-use environments and land development. In this regard, and if done correctly, the evolution of Cape Coral's downtown may function as a model to seed other quadrants of Cape Coral.

Little Public Waterfront Access, but Existing Places Are Well Loved

For a city that is surrounded by water on three sides, there is astonishingly little public access to the water. The panel visited places like the Yacht Club and Jaycee Park that were very heavily used on a weekday in the off-season. The panel can only imagine the increased use that occurs in those places during weekends and the tourist high season. It will be imperative for the city to seek out opportunities to acquire more places for public access and public views. As a "waterfront city," Cape Coral must find additional places for its citizens to enjoy the water edge.

Numerous Parks, but No Regional Park

Many of the interviewees mentioned the number of parks in Cape Coral as an asset for the community. The panel concurs with that statement and certainly supports the continued buildout of parks as the newer areas develop. One aspect of parks programming that interviewees stated was missing is one or more teen centers for the city's youth to congregate in.

Also lacking is one large, regional park that supports citywide events, which will be particularly needed as the city adds population. Regional parks are often referred to as the community "soul" because of their ability to attract people from all of the various neighborhoods to share in civic pride. The panel notes the construction of a Festival Park with general obligation (GO) bond funding as intended to meet this stated need.

A Cultural Void

Great cities celebrate the arts, music, sports, and cultural events. Cultural institutions elevate the desirability of cities to both retain their citizens and attract visitors. Cape Coral has little arts, music, and diversification of sporting options. The city needs to actively support residents and community members who are "creatives" to tap into the latent talent to harness civic awareness and pride of place.

To remediate this problem, some of these places can be co-located within the regional park, as well as being distributed throughout the quadrants to help serve as anchor institutions. For instance, one quadrant could be home to an aquatic center, another home to a performing arts center, another to

a local playhouse, and another to an artist collaborative. Furthermore, the opportunity to expand the sports offerings with facilities that can manage large tournaments is a cultural, recreational, and economic boon.

Tourist Lodging

The panel noted the beauty of the Westin resort and its immediate surroundings, as well as the lack of other similar establishments in the city. Tourist lodging infrastructure is inadequate to accommodate the future expected demands as outlined in this section of the report. The city should be seeking private-sector partners who want to expand on the Westin quality, bringing in tourists who will eat in the restaurants and shop in the community's stores. Additional opportunities would benefit the many businesses that support short-term travel, particularly in off-season months.

Predominance of One Housing Type

As noted previously, most of Cape Coral was platted for single-family low-density uses with limited parcels designated for multifamily uses including duplex and apartment configurations. This layout has contributed to the sprawling pattern seen today. The need for housing diversity in a city of over 400,000 people cannot be understated. Vast potential to capture varying housing typologies and meet all levels of socioeconomic standing exists beyond the dominant paradigm. While new apartments are now emerging, the city needs to diversify its housing base.

Strip Retail Centers

Many interviewees noted that they shop for higher-end goods in Fort Myers and other locations. Similar to the sprawling residential patterns, the major arterials in Cape Coral are filled with automobile-centric uses. Typical of many arterial streets in the United States, too much retail is in automobile-centric strip centers in Cape Coral and not enough places that offer destination shopping in a walkable environment. More shopping experiences, focused on more inviting and better designed real estate offerings, are needed in walkable mixed-use environments and places that may serve as anchors. This reality hinders the catalytic ability of retail to activate other amenities nearby, as well as the ability for it to create a sense of place.

Health Care and Education

Cape Coral has one hospital to serve the entire city, with a few smaller and newer facilities entering the market. The panel noted the comments from many interviewees that health care is reaching a critical tipping point soon requiring a second more full-service facility. A single hospital for a city of Cape Coral's size that is still growing will soon be struggling to meet the demands put upon it.

Besides limited health care, post–high school education opportunities are largely nonexistent except for one vocational training facility. Additional vocational, professional, and academic institutions will be necessary to support the local population. Collaborating with technical schools and businesses in the community to identify and understand the gaps employers are experiencing is essential. Creating programs in the technical schools to prepare locally grown talent for employment opportunities will help meet this gap. In the future, demand will be high for multiple health and educational institutions, and the city should work with the private sector to plan for that eventuality.

Image as a City Incomplete

How does Cape Coral evolve going forward? What is needed to build community? How does the city see itself and what are its priorities? In the next section the panel offers planning principles to help underpin ongoing and future efforts to update the city's Comprehensive Plan and be a blueprint for current and future city councils.

Planning Principles

All good city plans are guided by identifiable principles. These function as lights in the dark during murkier discussions on specifics and implementation. The panel offers the following 10 principles crafted specifically for the context of Cape Coral as beacons as the city embarks on crafting a long-term plan.

10 Principles to Guide Cape Coral in Crafting City Plan

Principle 1: Create identifiable districts

Principle 2: Identify neighborhoods and community gathering places

Principle 3: Create and program a regional park for citywide events

Principle 4: Identify additional places for public access to the waterfront

Principle 5: Develop a "pedestrian first" mentality on transportation planning

Principle 6: Create the infrastructure necessary for nonpersonal automobile use

Principle 7: Add cultural amenities to reflect a more diverse population and attract visitors

Principle 8: Review zoning and development for creativity and quality

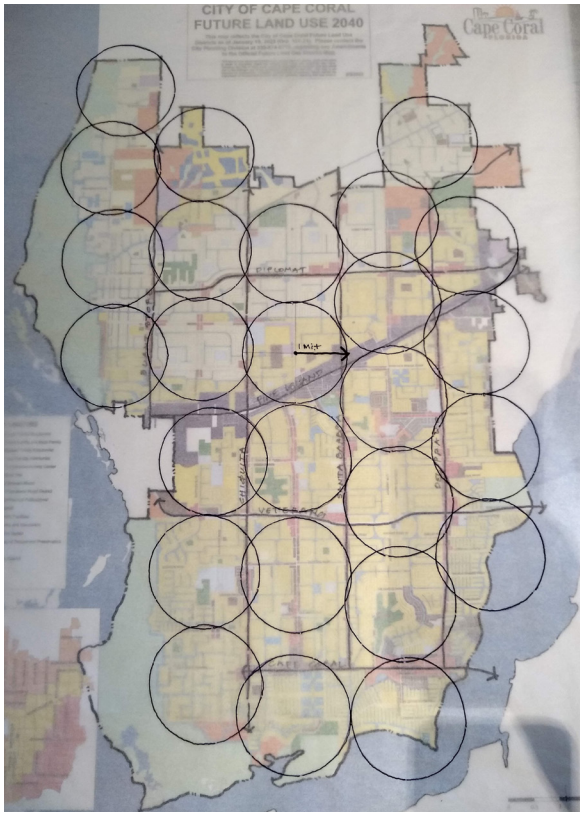
Principle 9: Celebrate the natural environment through restoration and education

Principle 10: Underpin all land use decisions with resilience policies and guidelines

Principle 1: Create Identifiable Districts

Santa Barbara Boulevard and Pine Island Road are ground zero as the center of Cape Coral and form the nexus point from which the four quadrants emanate. Although the public has some understanding of the quadrants, which could be marked for identification through sculpture and signage at this intersection, the next level is the district, which typically includes key community spaces that may be civic in origin (e.g., City Hall or Victory Park). These could be a semi-public use anchored by a health care or academic institution, include a larger shopping area, and/or mixed-use environment. They would be promoted with wayfinding for visitors and residents alike as part of a larger branding and identity strategy.

Typically, a district may have a radius of several miles and can be promoted through signage and landscape improvements. The Seven Islands project in the NW quadrant when completed will likely become an example of a district center. The panel recommends defining these important districts of the city, their mix of uses, and what supporting amenities are necessary to serve the surrounding neighborhoods.



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Districts, such as those centered around schools, parks, and landmarks, focus a neighborhood's identity.

While some of this analysis can be driven by socioeconomic and demographic data, it should also be driven by community desires and opportunities as they arise, with robust community engagement. Being creative and linking to organic branding strategies that emerge through community engagement often works well.

Principle 2: Identify Neighborhoods and Community Gathering Places

The city must define the Cape Coral neighborhoods and community gathering places within the districts. The next level down within the districts is the neighborhood. This neighborhood may have up to a one-mile radius and may be anchored by an elementary school, park, higher-density housing, and/or a community shopping center. Neighborhoods in mature cities are defined on their edges by major transportation arteries, natural features, and sometimes a change in use. Similar to districts, defining the neighborhood is helpful in wayfinding and orientation, and leads to civic engagement and community building through shared goals and aspirations.

The panel recommends developing a neighborhood map to identify and understand where program, landscape, or other deficiencies occur at the granular level. Although much of Cape Coral is built out, and some neighborhoods may have little room for change, an understanding of neighborhood boundaries and legibility of the patterns that make up the city remain vital. This includes building greater housing diversity, cultural offerings, and public open space in the neighborhoods yet to emerge.

This effort should continue in the community engagement and branding work at the district level. The city needs to identify neighborhood champions and stay connected with community organizations throughout the process—and after.

Principle 3: Create and Program a Regional Park for Citywide Events

In many cities that exceed a population of 200,000, the regional park can be anywhere from 50 to 100 acres in size—and much larger for cities that exceed 400,000 inhabitants. While much of Cape Coral is tied up in canal acreage and used for boating, similar standards may not be feasible. However, it will be prudent to identify a site now that the city can pursue.

One option is the former golf course site in the SE quadrant. The panel is aware of the issue concerning soil remediation, but given the scarcity of large contiguous acreage, the panel suggests that the city consider purchasing the property. A potential program of uses could include a modified and shortened golf course, community event space, botanic gardens, sports fields, playgrounds, open lawn areas, and similar facilities that could be developed. Given that this site is surrounded by existing homes, an extensive community outreach process is necessary to achieve planning consensus.

ALLEN FOLKS/ULI

Parcels identified by the panel as candidates for the city to study the feasibility of a citywide park location.

Another potentially viable option could be on city-owned land in the NW quadrant adjacent to Burnt Store Road. Furthermore, the panel applauds the imminent creation of 212-acre Festival Park that begins to meet some of these needs. When completed, the park should be programmed for both active and passive uses. This includes the ability to accommodate large crowds for community celebrations, gatherings, and events.

Principle 4: Identify Additional Places for Public Access to the Waterfront

The citizens of Cape Coral love the water. For similar reasons to Principle 3, identifying additional land for public access to the waterfront is crucial. While this will not be an easy task because of the private ownership patterns along the Caloosahatchee River and extensive mangrove forests to the west and south of the city, potential sites may be found north of the Veterans Memorial Parkway. Creative solutions for this need may also arise as the city acquires land for other purposes or becomes aware of waterfront lots for sale.

Principle 5: Develop a "Pedestrian First" Mentality on Transportation Planning

The panel heard of many instances in which pedestrian walking and cycling were unsafe and even dangerous. At a simple pedestrian level, this is abundantly evident in the long wait time and distance required to cross major streets. As the city expands, increased

traffic will only exacerbate the lack of connectivity and accessibility. While the automobile is necessary for a city with very little to no mass transit options, the safety and comfort of the pedestrian does not have to be compromised. The panel recommends analyzing street rights-of-way and intersections for improvements that slow traffic where appropriate and provide adequate buffers and shade canopy.

Transportation improvements need to make it easier for walking and cycling throughout the city, both for current and future residents. Particular attention needs to occur along Cape Coral's key north–south and east–west arterials. Potential bicycle improvements include a robust network that would have protected bike lanes connecting key destinations (e.g., parks, schools, and other civic uses). There are many methods to achieve safety for pedestrians and cyclists, such as bulb-outs at intersections, raised roadbeds through neighborhood streets, pedestrian-activated lights, speed modifications for vehicles, well-defined crosswalks, and separated bike lanes and sidewalks.

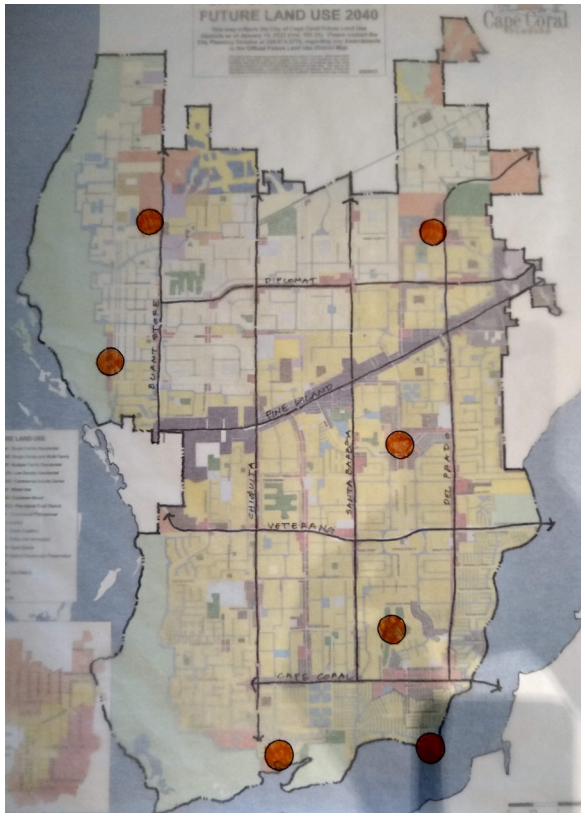
Principle 6: Create the Infrastructure Necessary for Nonpersonal Automobile Use

As the population of Cape Coral rapidly expands, other forms of transportation become critical. Demand will exist for limited bus service or shuttles on demand, e-bike and scooter mobility, and ride-sharing services drop-off and pick-up locations. This could also include using Cape Coral's unique land use patterns by employing the extensive canal system to provide water taxi service. Related to Principle 5's articulated pedestrian safety-first ideal, all major collector and arterial roadways need to be examined for how they respond to this increased demand with access, equity, and affordability at the center.

Principle 7: Add Cultural Amenities to Reflect a More Diverse Population and Attract Visitors

The panel recommends adding a performing arts center, a museum, or both in the area where the new City Hall complex will be built. This area is close to the geographic center of Cape Coral, and major cultural uses are ideal and logical when paired with other civic institutions. The panel also supports the proposed plans to revitalize and expand the cultural offerings at the Yacht Club with sensitive care and respect given to the older community building and public spaces long cherished by many in the community who honor the city's beginnings.

In addition, several teen centers need to be developed, with possible locations being both north and south of Pine Island Road.



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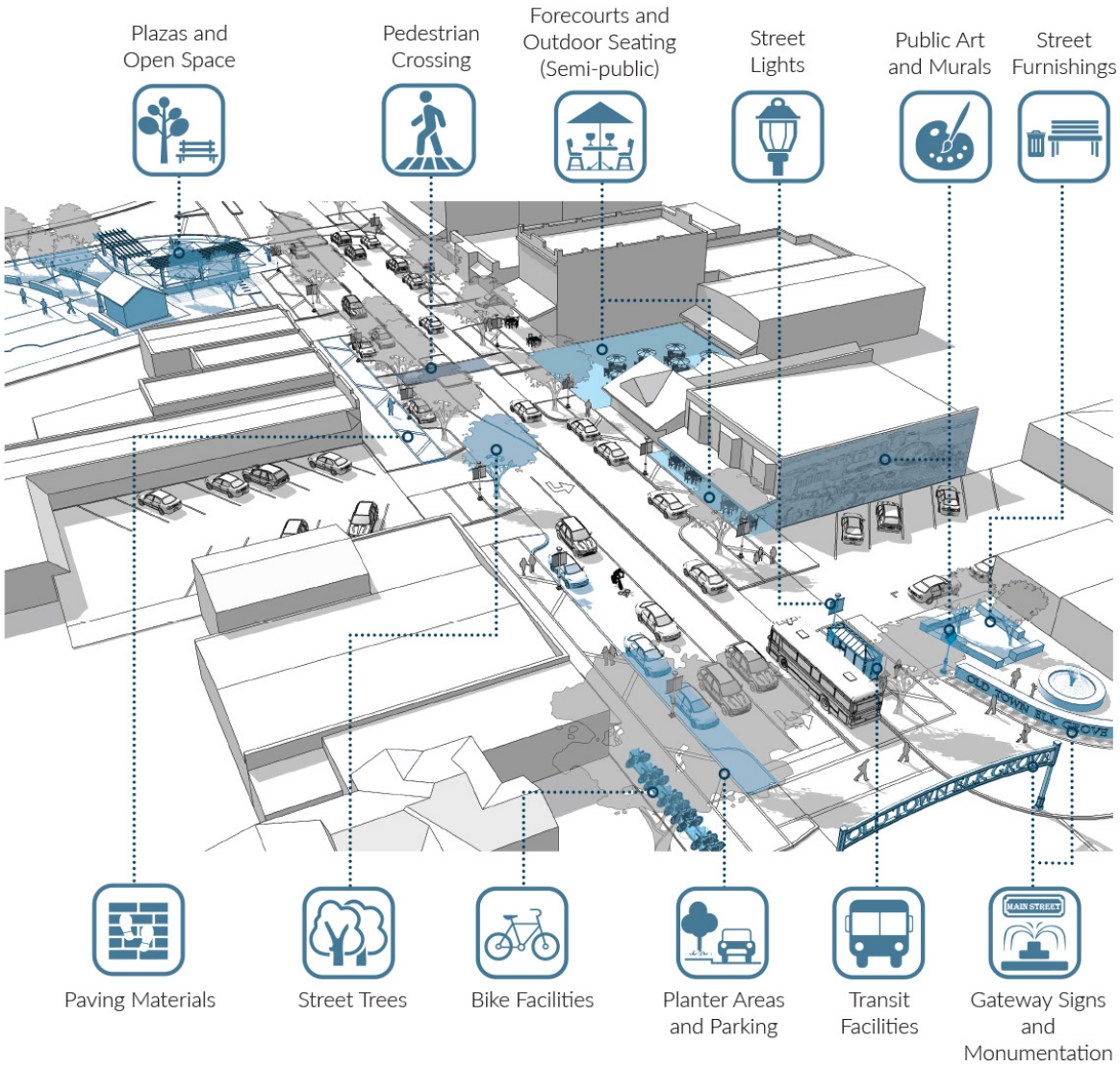
Parcels identified by the panel as candidates for the city to study the feasibility for such uses as performing arts centers, museums, teen centers, and indoor sports venues.

These centers would support Principle 2 of creating neighborhood and community gathering places, reinforcing a sense of place and civic connection.

The panel recommends building an indoor sports venue to expand on the city's recreational offerings and to boost tourism by providing places for local, regional, and national tournaments. This venue could be added within the regional park, in the City Hall complex area, or at another location. In addition, the panel recommends infusing newer mixed-use developments such as Seven Islands and the downtown with cultural amenities, as well as addressing this need when crafting relevant requests for proposals for city-owned land and reviewing submissions.

Principle 8: Review Zoning and Development for Creativity and Quality

The city should examine the Zoning and Development Code and institute objective design standards to expand and encourage the range of permitted development prototypes. Central to this effort is to dictate higher quality in the built environment and incentivize creativity.



A city-block view of best practices in design standards.

Many cities across the United States have embraced diversity in their housing stock looking at prototypes sometimes called the "missing middle" or forms that range from the single-family detached house to walk-up garden apartments. What is evident today in Cape Coral are detached houses, duplexes, and apartments.

The panel recommends promoting attached homes in two- and three-story configurations, stacked flats, live/work units, fourplexes, and other types of housing to encourage diversity and affordability. In the unique divided and platted context of Cape Coral's land use, this will help demonstrate how the "missing middle" types such as townhomes, stacked flats, fourplexes, live/work, and other forms can work on Cape Coral parcels. The panel also supports the creation of objective design standards to codify what is expected from the development community in the form of setbacks, building massing, material selection, and character. Although the state of Florida may limit what the planning department can legislate at any point in time, it behooves the city to seek the highest standards possible to achieve high-quality design.

Principle 9: Celebrate the Natural Environment through Restoration and Education

The ecological significance of Cape Coral should matter greatly to all its residents, both present and future. The city was founded at an important nexus of the Caloosahatchee River and the Gulf of Mexico. While the initial response of degradation of the natural environment was ill conceived, the arc of human actions and environmental awareness over 60 years is a story worth examining. The panel recommends that the city seek all opportunities to find ways to reclaim available land for creation of natural habitats, including seeking to acquire parcels adjacent to natural habitat. This effort includes examining ways to promote local education in conjunction with local schools and public parks, and on a grander scale, eco-tourism to and within the area.

Principle 10: Underpin All Land Use Decisions with Resilience Policies and Guidelines

Just as the ecological significance of Cape Coral must be celebrated and restored, the health, safety, and well-being of the community must be protected from the wrath of Mother Nature's darkest days. The panel recommends that the city intentionally integrate resilience measures into all design and development decisions and processes, including zoning, design guidelines, and environmental assessments. This effort will ensure the people and property of Cape Coral can thrive for years to come.

The Public Realm

To achieve and supplement the preceding high-level planning principles, the panel identified a number of recommendations at the site-design level in terms of goals for the design of each open space and recommendations for open-space types and qualities across the city and its neighborhoods. The panel understands and applauds that the city's Parks and Recreation Department is using the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Metrics System to conduct a performance review comparing itself to peer cities, in terms of park offerings, and expects that the panel's recommendations will align with those suggested by NRPA Metrics.

Guidelines for the Public Realm

The public realm of Cape Coral consisting of streets, sidewalks, parks, and waterfronts can help shape the identity of the city. The panel suggests that proposed designs for these elements should follow a few key principles:

- **Be unique to Cape Coral.** Newcomers and longtime residents of Cape Coral alike are proud of the city's unique history and identity, based on its unprecedented network of canals, its laid-back lifestyle, and its warm, friendly, and internationally diverse residents. Public spaces should celebrate the history, beauty, and culture of Cape Coral in unexpected and innovative ways.
- **Create safe, connected, and accessible spaces.** In a community that is dominated by the automobile, it is critical the city provides spaces for pedestrians, cyclists, and people of all abilities that are safe and well connected.
- **Provide climate comfort.** The warm, sunny climate Florida is loved for can also provide harsh conditions of extreme heat and humidity, and tropical downpours and hurricanes. The city, in concert with the private sector, should design public spaces to provide shade, shelter from rain, and resilience both to heavy public use and the effects of the elements.
- **Appeal to multiple generations.** Although Cape Coral may have been conceived as a place for retirees to enjoy a reasonably priced waterfront location, the demographic statistics and stories told during interviews make it clear this is now a diverse community of all ages. It includes not only retirees, but also young families, young professionals, and youths seeking places to recreate and gather. The panel recommends that the city equitably consider its open spaces from the perspectives of all of its residents—not just the most vocal or engaged.

Opportunities for the Public Realm

It is clear from the panel's discussions that the outdoor lifestyle is what draws most people to Cape Coral. The city is rich in an environment overflowing with canals, natural shorelines, wildlife, and mangroves. Residential properties are plentiful and provide space for personal enjoyment of the outdoors. However, the panel recommends that to truly achieve status as a great city and to foster and improve the sense of community of which Cape Coral is so proud, the city needs to focus on supplementing and improving the types of spaces it offers in the public realm. The passage of the GO bond is an indicator that residents support investment in new and improved public open spaces. The projects identified in the GO bond should be implemented in order to achieve an even richer system of parks and recreation. The panel's interviews with many different residents and leaders from Cape Coral suggest that there is a hunger for places to gather as a community, making it an even greater place to live for all residents of Cape Coral.

Public Waterfront Access

For a city that prides itself on waterfront connections and access, the amount of space dedicated to public access to the waterfront feels insignificant and prevents the community from experiencing this great asset in a meaningful, collective way. Plans described to the panel for new and improved waterfront access at the Yacht Club, Four Freedoms Park, and Jaycee Park are encouraging. The panel recommends the city consider layering a number of dimensions into these spaces as those plans begin to take shape.

Gathering Spaces of Various Sizes

An iconic waterfront park should offer a series of spaces allowing for smaller intimate family gatherings up to large community-wide events. Spaces should offer plentiful shade and may be paved for large crowds or soft and green for smaller groups looking to spread out on the grass.

JEFF HITCHCOCK

Toronto's Sugar Beach is a constructed, urban beach that opened in 2010.

Boardwalk and Waterfront Circulation

The joy of meandering along the water's edge is currently experienced largely from boats and other watercraft, but a continuous boardwalk or waterfront trail would provide that experience for those without access to boats or kayaks. A small example of this model exists currently near the Westin hotel and adjacent restaurants. As new and renovated seawalls are installed, it would be worth considering how to layer in continuous pedestrian access along them, achieving the multiple benefits of flood protection and waterfront circulation.

Boat Launch and Docks

The five city boat ramps are extremely popular, as are the few locations where boaters can dock to go ashore for dining, shopping, picnicking, and other events. The panel lauds plans for more of these elements at Four Freedoms Park and the Yacht Club. As the population grows, the city should consider even more locations to give convenient public water access from each of the four major quadrants.

Celebrate Views

A sprawling public waterfront park will give the community the opportunity to experience its greatest assets: its views. Seeing the Caloosahatchee River, to the Gulf of Mexico, to Fort Myers, to the sunset, and to the boating life of the city, together, provides an exponentially greater benefit to residents and visitors alike than any of these things alone. Views will draw people together on their own, or as backdrops for concerts, holiday celebrations, dining, and festivals.

Beach

While small and at the edge of the river rather than seaside, the city's only beach, at the Yacht Club, is clearly popular and a sign that visitors and residents crave this quintessential Florida experience. Other opportunities to invest in expanding the beach experience—whether contiguous to the water or set back where flood protection and shorelines do not allow—will be magnets and relieve the pressure on this one existing space. In short, the city's beaches do not need to be right on the natural water. Creativity will be key to relieving pressure on the one existing beach.

Water Taxis and Transportation

Canals can be an obstacle to vehicular circulation. A unique opportunity presents itself in Cape Coral through the extensive canal system. The surging popularity of water taxis to and from Fort Myers and elsewhere suggests the city should consider expanding this system. It will relieve pressure on roads and enrich the experience of moving around Cape Coral over water, furthering its vision as a "waterfront city."

Existing

CITY OF CAPE CORAL

Four Freedoms Park in Cape Coral.

Aspirational

SUSANNAH ROSS/ULI

A conceptual rendering of a new Jacksonville Landing.

Community Identity and Placemaking

As noted in the "Planning Context" section of this report, the 120 square miles of Cape Coral have sorted themselves over time into distinct quadrants that residents should celebrate for their uniqueness and character. While the identity of the city as a whole should be praised and maintained, an opportunity exists to develop a palette of materials, furnishings, and signage for the city. These would signal the different zones of the city while conveying, creating, and reinforcing identity. This experience should begin from the moment one crosses the bridge into Cape Coral with a bold statement that serves as a gateway and announcement that one has arrived. Gateway pieces of art or light can also be used to delineate areas where one is crossing from one quadrant to another. Cape Coral is making strides in these areas.

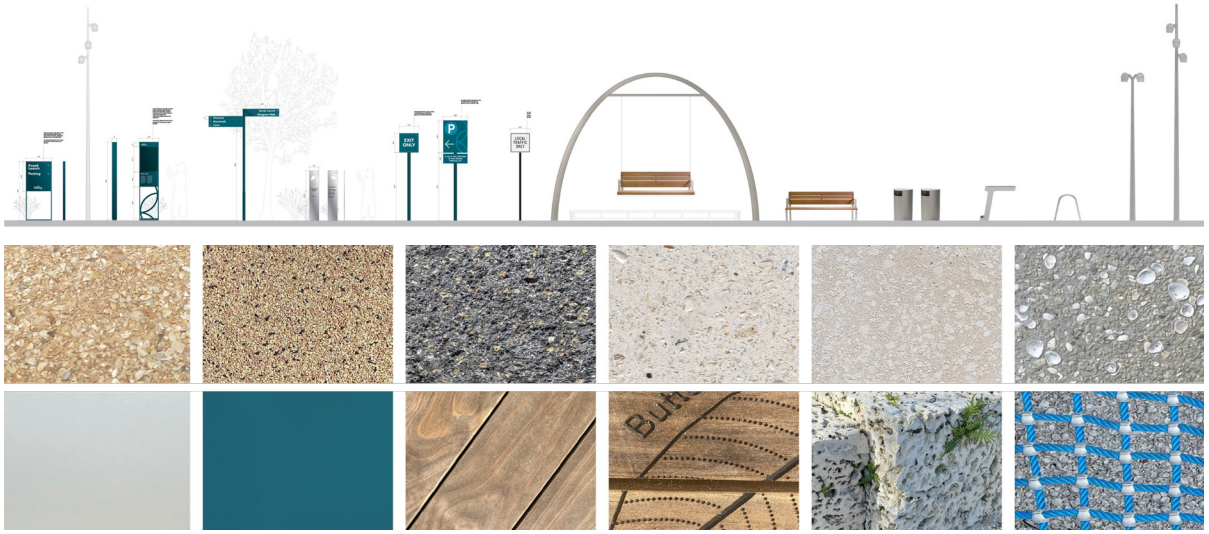
After years of being considered and put off, the recent competition to design decorative graphic wraps for utilities in downtown has been extremely successful and was lauded by a number of interviewees. It suggests a pent-up desire for creative expression by the community's artists as well as an interest in giving color and character to otherwise utilitarian pieces of infrastructure, helping improve the overall experience of the streets of Cape Coral. The city should build on this momentum and consider an expanded public art program. Similarly, the Adopt-a-Median program is helping enhance the overall character of the city through both reinforcing landscape guidelines that improve the quality and consistency of the streetscape and encouraging and demonstrating community pride.

Existing

PANEL SPONSOR

Cape Coral's painted utility boxes illustrate the city's creative spirit.

Aspirational



SUSANNAH ROSS/ULI

Palette of furnishings and materials for Sarasota Bay Park.

Connectivity

Well-lit, protected, and continuous sidewalks, trails, and paths should connect residents to parks and other public spaces within walking distance of their neighborhoods. The panel recommends the city follow the goals and strategies laid out in the 2017 Cape Coral Bicycle + Pedestrian Master Plan to achieve the vision for Cape Coral as a place where walking and cycling "is a comfortable and integral part of daily life for people of all ages and abilities." The city should prioritize gaps in the existing networks of sidewalks, multi-use paths, and protected bike lanes identified in the Master Plan as one of the highest priorities for city transportation investment.

Existing

ULI

A representative existing sidewalk gap in Cape Coral as observed by the panel.

Aspirational

AIMEE CUSTIS PHOTOGRAPHY

Washington, D.C.'s Georgetown protected bike lane, adjacent to a riverfront park, encourages residents of all ages to enjoy a less car-dependent existence.

Environmental Education

Acres of mangroves and a wealth of wildlife and endangered species make Cape Coral a perfect setting for environmental education and outdoor experiences that celebrate the city's ecological resources. Cape Coral has taken great strides in improving water quality in recent years, and the city should tell that story. Moreover, the city has a world-class reclaimed water processing and distribution system. While it may not sound flashy, it too is an important story for the city to tell to citizens, visitors, and potential investors and businesses.

The existing walking trails of Four Mile Cove Ecological Preserve and the planned outdoor classroom at Yellow Fever Creek Preserve can be enhanced by design that allows people to meaningfully experience the peace, beauty, and ecological benefit of the environment. Education might come not only through traditional signage, but also through subtle but beautiful interpretive graphics that heighten the experience of the environment and generate an understanding of how the natural and human-made landscape serve to protect Cape Coral from an evolving climate.

Existing

DAN O'MALLEY

Burrowing owls are a unique fauna native to the area.

Aspirational

SUSANNAH ROSS/ULI

Mangrove walk at Sarasota Bay Park offers connection, interaction, and healthy exercise in nature.

Events and Gathering

Large-scale public events like Red, White, and Boom and the Taste of the Cape are currently held in spaces that are either informal and lacking infrastructure and design for that purpose, or in settings owned by private entities. Many interviewees noted that Cape Coral lacks an anchor, or physical community core, which welcomes all people to come together for events and celebrations.

The panel recommends a large-scale regional park that fills this need, and it is apparent from the plans for Cultural and Meade parks that Cape Coral is headed in that direction. Furthermore, the soon-to-be-started Festival Park makes great strides in this direction. Gathering spaces there and elsewhere in the Cape Coral park system will benefit from physical flexibility—that is, open and changeable spaces rather than fixed stages and seating—as well as cultural flexibility from an entity dedicated to programming the spaces with art, performances, and food.

Existing

PANEL SPONSOR

The popularity of Cape Coral's Red, White, and Boom! event demonstrates the pent-up demand for more public programming and spaces.

Aspirational

ZUZA GAŁCZYŃSKA

Spectators view fireworks from a public park.

Indoor Recreation

Virtually every interviewee relayed the community's love of sports and competition and bemoaned the lack of facilities to accommodate the growing population. There are existing outdoor spaces for recreation (the Cape Coral Sports Complex and the Northwest Softball Complex) and many new ones planned (including the GO bond–funded Festival Park and Lake Kennedy Racquet Center). However, gaps remain in Cape Coral's offerings.

In a climate where heat and sunlight or tropical downpours and wind make outdoor recreation uncomfortable or unsafe at certain times of day and year, the people of Cape Coral need spaces where they can play, compete, and exercise safely indoors. Moreover, a serious investment in an indoor complex—including tournament-scaled amenities for softball, soccer, and volleyball—might provide not only resources for Cape Coral residents but also an economic driver. This would allow the city to invite athletes from around the region and beyond to come to Cape Coral rather than other Southwest Florida sports complex, for tournaments. Many parents and youths already spend their weekends attending these activities elsewhere, and viable context exists for concerted city investment and efforts to reap dividends down the road. Flexible indoor spaces available to the public for physical activity can also double as spaces for practicing and celebrating performance and visual arts and for gathering of youth groups who lack places to meet.

Existing

PANEL SPONSOR

Cape Coral's outdoor sports complex.

Aspirational

LUDO POIRÉ

Indoor sports facilities can help meet Cape Coral's growing demand for year-round recreation.

A Resilient Vision

As stated in Principle 10, resilience policies and guidelines need to underpin all land use decisions. The panel sees this reality as being critical to how the vision of a growing, thriving, and resilient Cape Coral can be implemented.

Climate Context

Cape Coral is a beautiful city with ample waterways, warm breezes, and abundant sunshine. This unique environment is one of the many reasons Cape Coral's population is booming. This unique environment is also what makes the city vulnerable. The panel heard that residents are already experiencing standing water after heavy rainstorms, rising flood insurance costs, and a dry season that requires controlled irrigation. Not to mention other impacts captured in the 2016 Cape Coral Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment, such as high heat days that threaten the health and safety of elderly residents, toxic algae blooms, and increased hurricane intensity. Climate scientists acknowledge that such impacts will increase, even if greenhouse gas emissions are curbed. (Learn more at **www.swfrpc.org/cape-coral-climate-change/**.)

ULI

Cape Coral must take action, not only to protect the well-being of residents and property, but also to safeguard the economic future of the city. Rating companies such as Moody's have said they will factor climate change into their sovereign ratings, which investors use to assess a bond's risk level, and investors such as Heitman and LaSalle are already integrating climate-risk assessment into their business decisions. (Learn more at **knowledge.uli.org/en/reports/research-reports/2019/climate-risk-and-real-estate-investment-decisionmaking**.)

Furthermore, the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission has proposed a new rule requiring public companies to disclose their climate risk, which could have major impacts on the real estate sector. By understanding its risks and taking action to reduce its vulnerabilities, Cape Coral can signal to rating agencies, investors, and business leaders across the globe that it is a city that will prosper for years to come.

Resilience Opportunities

These climate challenges do not have to require sacrifice. In fact, resilience presents an opportunity to foster the economic development of Cape Coral. A recent ULI study evaluated the business case for resilience in Southeast Florida. Although Cape Coral is markedly different from Southeast Florida, the study offers a glimpse at the economic benefits that could unfold. For example, for every $1 invested in community-wide adaptations, Southeast Florida will see about $2 in benefits. These adaptations can offer $37.9 billion in economic benefits for the region and support 85,000 job-years (a job-year is defined as one year of work for one person). The benefit is even higher (4:1) for building-level adaptations. (Learn more at **knowledge.uli.org/en/reports/research-reports/2020/the-business-case-for-resilience-in-southeast-florida**.)

Actions to enhance the resilience of Cape Coral will also safeguard the city's tax dollars. For example, research indicates that efforts to mitigate hurricane storm surge in Southwest Florida can save $8.40 in recovery for every $1 invested in mitigation. When mitigating high wind risk in Southwest Florida, research shows that the benefits are even greater—as high as 16:1. (Learn more at **nibs.org/projects/natural-hazard-mitigation-saves-2019-report**.)

Layer in Resilience to Safeguard or Add Value to Planned and Future Investments

As Cape Coral grows, so will public and private investment. To protect and enhance this capital, it is critical that resilience strategies be intentionally integrated into the land use and design of each project. Such efforts can align with the design and planning recommendations of this panel, creating an opportunity for vibrant places and spaces that can withstand the impacts of climate change.

For example, the Wharf, located along Washington, D.C.'s Washington Channel, provides public waterfront access, offers events and gathering spaces, and is a successful example of placemaking. It is also a development that mitigates its flood risk. Buildings are elevated an additional 1.5 feet above Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) requirements, and the property line is set back to increase resilience to flooding. The setback offers a dual benefit of creating a 60-foot-wide promenade rich with placemaking opportunities. The public space of the development constitutes half the site and provides systems to recycle stormwater, capturing 3.2 inches of rainwater on site. (Learn more at **developingresilience.uli.org/case/the-wharf/**.) Although much larger than development that might occur in Cape Coral, the Wharf demonstrates the successful integration of urban planning principles and resilient design strategies that together create vibrant, thriving places.

NYCHA

New York City's cloudburst infrastructure.

Additional opportunities lie in Cape Coral's rich landscape of public parks and desire for recreation. As the GO bond and future park and open-space development occurs, such investment can be leveraged to achieve resilience goals. For example, cloudburst infrastructure, such as sunken basketball courts, can accommodate heavy rainfall while also recharging groundwater and providing valuable community gathering spaces. (Learn more at **knowledge.uli.org/en/reports/tap/2022/uli-new-york-nycha-cloudburst-infrastructure-workshop**.)

Leverage Resilience-Specific Funding to Reduce Risk and Advance Cape Coral Planning Priorities

As the awareness of climate consequences increases across the globe, funding opportunities to address the growing risk also increase. The federal government has numerous programs, including FEMA's Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities grant program and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)'s Community Development Block Grants, among others, available to fund hazard mitigation and resilience.

At the state level, Florida has created the Resilient Florida Program, which will provide $1 billion over four years to fund community resilience projects and planning efforts. (Learn more at **floridadep.gov/ResilientFlorida**.) The panel applauds Cape Coral's successful grant award to conduct a Flood Vulnerability Assessment and recommends applying for additional Resilient Florida funds when the assessment is complete. In particular, there may be opportunities to enhance the flood resilience of the city while also creating co-benefits that foster strategic growth, such as widening roads for hurricane evacuation that can also accommodate an expanding population.

Leverage and Lobby for Programs That Reduce Insurance Costs

The panel heard a great deal of concern from interviewees regarding the sharp increase in National Flood Insurance Program premiums and notes this as a particular challenge for the development and sustainability of workforce and attainable housing. Nearly $24 million in premiums were paid to the 33,429 active flood insurance policies in Cape Coral during 2020. To minimize this cost burden, the panel recommends Cape Coral continue to participate in FEMA's Community Rating System and work to increase the number of points the city is eligible for. The city currently holds a class 5 status in the Community Resilience System program, affording residents a 25 percent insurance rate discount, and has already made strides toward class 4. By prioritizing the development of a watershed management plan, the city will be well on its way to class 4 status and a 30 percent insurance discount.

To further address the availability and cost of insurance, the panel recommends the city of Cape Coral collaborate with regional partners, such as the Southwest Florida Regional Resiliency Compact, to lobby for legislation that would provide insurance incentives or discounts for residential, commercial, or multifamily properties that meet above-code standards, such as those catalogued in the Fortified program. (Learn more at **fortifiedhome.org**.) Developed by the Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety (IBHS), the research-backed Fortified program has been embraced by insurers and state governments, including those of Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina, as a means to promote resilient design and reduce insurance costs. Elements of the Fortified Home Gold designation, such as opening protection, a sealed roof deck, and a continuous load path, are already included in the Florida Building Code, giving homebuilders a leg up in meeting full designation requirements.

Implement Resilient Design Guidelines to Reduce Recovery Costs, Increase Business Continuity, and Protect Taxpayer Dollars

Above-code design can not only reduce insurance premiums, but it can also reduce recovery costs, increase business continuity, and protect city investments. The panel recommends the city develop a set of resilient design guidelines to address the specific vulnerabilities of Cape Coral beyond what is addressed in the Florida Building Code. Such strategies might include the following:

- Elevation minimums, wet/dry flood-proofing, seawall requirements, and green infrastructure to reduce flood risk (learn more at **knowledge.uli.org/en/reports/research-reports/2017/harvesting-the-value-of-water**);

- Drought-tolerant plantings, low-flow plumbing fixtures, and the use of smart irrigation systems to address water scarcity in the dry season (learn more at **knowledge.uli.org/reports/research-reports/2022/water-wise**); and
- Shade trees, cool pavement and roof treatments, vegetated medians, and green space to reduce the urban heat island effect (learn more at **knowledge.uli.org/en/Reports/Research%20Reports/2019/Scorched**).

Furthermore, to safeguard taxpayer dollars, the panel recommends Cape Coral require any development using public funds to adhere to the Resilient Design Guidelines. An example of this is found in the city of Boston's guidelines. (Learn more at **boston.gov/environment-and-energy/climate-resilient-design-guidelines**).

Although such guidelines are critical to creating new developments that are prepared for the effects of extreme weather, existing buildings also need to be addressed. The panel recommends developing a public education campaign to encourage residents to take advantage of retrofit programs such as Florida's Hurricane Loss Mitigation Retrofit Grant program, which provides funding for resilient retrofits targeting residential high-wind upgrades. (Learn more at **floridadisaster.org/dem/mitigation/hurricane-loss-mitigation-program/**.)

Similarly, this effort could involve the Florida Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) program, which can provide long-term funding to address hurricane risk, as well as reduce energy and water use. (Learn more at **floridapace.gov/?page_id=8406**.) In-depth resilient retrofit solutions for both flooding and hurricanes are found in the appendix to this report. (Learn more at **knowledge.uli.org/en/reports/research-reports/2022/resilient-retrofits**.)

Enhance City Staff Capacity to Address Resilience

Resilience is a relatively new field that requires specific expertise to successfully implement and fund. The panel recommends creating a position dedicated to the creation and execution of Cape Coral's resilience plan, such as a chief resilience officer. In addition to overseeing the development of Cape Coral's vulnerability assessment and subsequent resilience plan, the individual would spearhead grant applications, oversee the development of resilient design guidelines, and coordinate across city departments with community stakeholders and with regional partners on the resilience needs and opportunities of Cape Coral.

For nearly a decade, chief resilience officer–type roles have been established across the globe. In Florida, the role already exists at every level of government: state, county (e.g., Broward County), and city. No city is too large or too small to benefit from such a role. Cities like Jacksonville, Miami, and Tampa are just as likely as cities like Orlando and Miami Beach to have city staff dedicated to the issue of resilience (see table).

Examples of Resilience Positions in Florida

City	Population	Role
Jacksonville	902,488	Chief resilience officer
Miami	461,080	Chief resilience officer, also chief heat officer
Tampa	395,912	Sustainability and resilience officer
St. Petersburg	264,001	Sustainability & Resilience Office
Orlando	248,817	Director of sustainability and resilience
Miami Beach	89,439	Chief resilience officer
Palm Beach	8,776	Director, Office of Resilience

Implementation

A vision without a plan is just a hallucination. To achieve the ambitious goals that the city has at hand requires several interconnected strategies for implementation. On the basis of conditions identified by the panel and the collective visions shared by the interviewed stakeholders, the panel recommends the following steps be taken.

Effective Communication and Consensus Building

Achieving the city's goals will never occur without sufficient community buy-in. Under the leadership of the city's director of communications, the panel recommends using all the communication resources at the city's disposal to get the word out. These means include newsletters, neighborhood outreach, and social media, among others.

Consensus building is a two-way street. Paired with communication efforts, the city must engage effectively with its citizens, neighborhood groups, and concerned actors. This work requires astute listening, effective facilitation, and being responsive when concerns are raised.

In addition to citizen engagement, the panel thinks it prudent to continue engaging with leadership from both the business and the philanthropic communities. Incorporating their input and feedback on the growth of the city will be vital for the success of major initiatives.

Major change never comes easy. To satisfactorily overcome the headwinds the city of Cape Coral will face and champion much needed economic development projects, the panel recommends assembling a board of advisers. This representative group should involve the medical industry, the business industry, the homeless community, labor, nonprofits, and the banking community, among others.

Revenue Authority Establishment and Structure

Achieving the city's ambitious goals requires the staff capacity and organizational structure to do so. The panel heard how limited bandwidth of city staff currently impedes the ability to achieve ambitious projects, and clear direction will be needed to further focus efforts. To this end, it is critical to create a self-sufficient quasi-governmental revenue authority agency to take the lead in developing areas where the private market is currently refraining from investing.

In form, this could consist of a nonprofit 501(c)(3) with a board of directors providing oversight and guidance. This entity should have an odd number of board members (7, 11, or 21 members) who are appointed. The mayor could select several members of the board and the City Council could also select members of the board. Other board members could be representatives from private business, nonprofit organizations, philanthropies, and educational institutions. The board of directors would also have municipal employees serve in an ex officio capacity to the board of directors. They could include the budget director, the finance director, the office of law, and the head of economic development for the city of Cape Coral.

Business Plan

This organization would need startup funding from the city of Cape Coral yet would eventually become 100 percent self-sufficient. Net positive operating finances could come, for example, from managing the city-owned paid parking lots and garages or having parking enforcement officers manage parking violations throughout the city, including unpaid and expired meters. The panel notes that as Cape Coral's population continues to grow, demand will grow for additional parking spaces and parking control. This provides a perfect opportunity for the long-term financial viability of the organization.

Another viable model successfully implemented elsewhere is to delegate to the agency the ability to issue tax-exempt bonds. The repayment of the debt on these bonds would be supported by the revenue generated from income produced from parking fees and parking violations.

Example Agency Structures

Different models of structuring these agencies exist. The panel is of one mind that this agency should be established, and it provides here different representative examples of how Cape Coral may think through form and appointments. It is essential to organize this entity correctly to reap the benefits of attracting significant private capital and to support the city's ability to collect the resulting increased tax revenue.

River City Company

River City Company is an economic development engine for downtown Chattanooga, Tennessee. It is a private 501(c)(3) nonprofit that works in partnership with local government, the private sector, and the philanthropic sector to enliven downtown Chattanooga. The River City Company was started in 1986 with $12 million from eight local foundations and seven financial institutions, which was used as a revolving fund to initiate and complete development projects.

Since 1992, Chattanooga has seen more than $5 billion in private investment, including construction of Volkswagen's largest U.S. manufacturing plant, which employs about 3,000 people.

River City Company's board of directors represents the community at large with city and county mayors, representatives from Chattanooga City Council and Hamilton County Commission, and numerous community leaders, including significant business leadership. (Learn more at **rivercitycompany.com/**.)

3CDC

Based in Cincinnati, Ohio, 3CDC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit real estate development company. 3CDC was launched on the premise that both outcomes and impacts of reinvestment depend on having the right mix of public and civic institutions involved and that those institutions have sufficient resources, effective management, and cooperation with public entities to facilitate securing the needed capital. 3CDC does this by creating a capital stack that structures financing from multiple sources, with the majority coming from private sources, as well as by obtaining loans from the equity funds 3CDC manages. The driving force behind the organization's launch came from the local business community, whose members remain significantly involved as board members.

Since 2003, the corporation has transformed its targeted neighborhood, including streetscape improvements and enhanced public spaces, plus rehabilitating and developing new residential and commercial properties. These efforts have energized the entire area and are now generating substantially higher annual tax revenues for the city than before. (Learn more at **3cdc.org/**.)

Other financial tools in the city of Cape Coral's toolbox that can be used as development incentives and for business attraction and retention are tax increment finance districts as well as tax abatement programs and utility waivers. In addition, this agency can partner with developers to initiate development activities in sections of city the private market is slow to enter, as well as areas that are underserved by other community-enhancing and sustaining functions, such as grocery, commercial, and medical uses.

Land Exchange Agency

The panel heard from interviewees about the problem of the many unconnected vacant lots throughout the city. The panel recommends creating a land exchange agency as part of the solution to this vexing problem.

During the original platting of Cape Coral in the 1950s, the current land use and community needs were not contemplated. As a result, a considerable number of undeveloped parcels today are noncontiguous and single-family parcels. Significant absorption and construction currently appear to be underway on these parcels. However, the city should facilitate land assemblage for the special development needs of the community. This goal could be facilitated by the existence of a reasonably capitalized and professionally managed property exchange.

Similar to the creation of the revenue authority, the land exchange agency would require some startup capital from the city. It is anticipated this organization would serve under a board of civic, municipal, and private-sector leaders dedicated to the future of Cape Coral. The agency would have a lean and nimble staffing structure, with an executive director, real estate agent, real estate attorney, and real estate processor. The exchange could serve as a purchaser, or recipient of tax-deducible donations, of property. These donations could come from estates as well as from owners who no longer have a desire to own their property. For donors to be eligible for a tax-deductible donation, it is important that this agency is set up as a private, charitable nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization.

The agency could also function as an intermediary or even a market maker for property owners who wish to trade an undeveloped parcel in one location for one in another location. In this example, a property owner could own property in the SW quadrant where the property owner initially had plans to build a second or retirement home. However, over the years the owner has become close friends with individuals that live in the NE quadrant and now prefers to relocate there. The ability to easily swap undeveloped parcels, with the agency as an intermediary, creates unique opportunities for land assemblage.

Another example could be when the assemblage of parcels for a special public or private use is needed. Knowledge of vacant parcels, as well as expertise with negotiating exchanges and purchases would make the proposal to exchange like-valued properties more likely and effective. The agency's facility could expedite the ability to provide orderly buildout of the 44,400 vacant parcels in Cape Coral while allowing for the aggregation of parcels for needed uses not considered in the original planning and platting.

Conclusion

Cape Coral is a unique city facing multifaceted challenges and has multiple, exciting opportunities in front of it. The panel strongly believes the contents of this report can assist the city in becoming the best that it can be. To act upon the suggestions given here, the panel highlights the following four action items as what the city should embark on immediately to achieve its goals:

- Gather neighborhood organizations and work to create neighborhood identities.
- Have the city planning department begin studying creation of a regional park as well as instituting a pedestrian-first environment.
- Identify community members to serve on an advisory board and a board of directors for both the revenue authority and the land exchange agency.
- Organize and capitalize these entities to have them begin work.

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Countless hours already have gone into studying and supporting Cape Coral from the city, the council, and its residents. The panel submits that integrating their recommendations in a cohesive, collaborative manner will support efforts already in place that honor the special environment of Cape Coral while also challenging the city to reach its full potential. Doing all this while also ushering in new, complementary ideas that will advance the goals of strengthening economic development, prosperity, and strategic buildout of the city is no small task. However, the panel believes the city, its residents, and its elected officials are up to the challenge.

Appendix: Resilient Retrofit Solutions

Retrofit Strategies for Storms and High Winds	
Impact-rated windows and doors, including skylights; wind-rated garage door	Replacing windows and doors, especially roll-up or garage doors, with models rated for impact ensures that they can resist damage from windborne debris. Installing wind-rated garage doors can provide additional protection to withstand wind pressure. Though an operational solution, all external and internal doors should be closed before a storm arrives—closing internal doors can single-handedly reduce wind loads on roofs by up to 30 percent, according to the IBHS. **Co-benefits and tradeoffs: Higher-performance windows help reduce energy use and costs, and depending on their make, may include tempered glass that reduces vulnerability to wildfire.**
Storm shutters	Storm shutters for windows provide additional protection or an alternative to impact-rated windows. A variety of designs exists. Plywood should only be used as a last resort before a storm if no other options are available and should be at least 3/4-inch thick. **Co-benefits and tradeoffs: Storm shutters can also be used as an external shade device to reduce solar heat gain, improving resilience to extreme heat while lowering energy costs.**
Sealed windows and exterior walls/roofs	Ensuring that windows are tightly sealed helps prevent intrusion from wind-driven rain, which can cause extensive damage. Sealing any other cracks or gaps in the building will also be helpful. **Co-benefits and tradeoffs: A more tightly sealed building envelope will also improve resilience to extreme temperatures and reduce energy costs.**
Roof-to-wall, wall-to-wall, and wall-to-foundation connections	Connecting all structural elements with hurricane ties, clips, straps, and additional connectors/fasteners creates a continuous load path that transfers force safely into the building's foundation. **Co-benefits and tradeoffs: This technique is also essential in seismic zones.**

Retrofit Strategies for Storms and High Winds (cont.)	
Strengthened/sealed roof deck	Strengthen connections between the roof deck and trusses/rafters with additional fasteners. **Co-benefits and tradeoffs: The roof deck can also be sealed with flashing tape over joints, covering the roof with a water-resistant membrane or wind-resistant underlay to resist water intrusion.**
Wind-rated roof material	Ensure that roofing materials are rated for wind and impact resistance, whether asphalt shingle, metal, or an alternative. **Co-benefits and tradeoffs: Impact-resistant roofs also protect against hail, and Class A roof materials will also help protect against wildfire damage. Although an important strategy for extreme heat and stormwater management, green roofs may not be suitable for wind-prone regions without special design approaches, as in the green roof developed for the University of Miami.**
Secure rooftop equipment	Building mechanical systems, such as HVAC or solar panel equipment, should be securely attached to the roof with straps or other fasteners.
Backup on-site power (e.g., solar plus battery storage)	Backup power ensures that the building remains comfortable in the event of a larger power outage. On-site renewable energy, such as solar panels and battery storage, ensures that this power source is low carbon and protective of local air quality—unlike common alternatives, such as diesel generators.

Learn more at **knowledge.uli.org/en/reports/research-reports/2022/resilient-retrofits**.

Retrofit Strategies for Floods	
Dry floodproofing (prevent water from entering the building)	Install watertight/floodproof barriers for doors, windows, or other openings, seal anycracks or gaps in walls and entrances with sealants or waterproof membranes, adda sump pump with backup power to drain any water that enters the area, and add abackflow valve to prevent sewer and drain backups. This method places significant pressure on the building structure (hydrostaticpressure) and is unsuitable for residential buildings unless they have concrete ormasonry walls and a slab-on-grade foundation; commercial buildings are moresuitable for this strategy. Dry floodproofing is most suitable when flood depths are below 3 feet, floodwater isslow moving, and flooding lasts less than three days. As dry floodproofing is not guaranteed to fully prevent water entry, it will usually not result in flood insurance premium reductions under the U.S. National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).
Wet floodproofing (allow water to enter the building safely)	In areas below flood levels that are not used as living space, install flood vents in the foundation and enclosure walls to allow water in and out automatically, preventing structural damage from hydrostatic pressure. Install water-resistant materials like concrete or tile finishes in areas intended to receive floodwater, and backflow valves to prevent sewer and drain backups. Relocate/elevate utility equipment (see below) and any high-value contents stored in areas below flood levels. Wet floodproofing may help qualify buildings for reduced insurance premiums under the NFIP.
Elevation of entire building	Completely raise the building above current and future flood levels on piles or columns, allowing water to pass underneath. This strategy is likely suitable primarily for smaller, detached buildings; it is difficult or impossible in dense urban areas. Elevation may help qualify buildings for reduced insurance premiums under the NFIP. **Co-benefits and tradeoffs: Remember to provide underfloor insulation on the lowest level to prevent heat loss.**
Elevation/relocation or hardening of utility systems	Relocate utilities (e.g., HVAC and mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems) to roof, upper floor, raised platform in basement, or floodproofed/elevated annex building (if space and systems allow). If not feasible to relocate/elevate systems, add dry floodproof solutions, such as flood doors or barriers, around them. **Co-benefits and tradeoffs: Making changes to HVAC systems may be a good opportunity to invest in a more efficient option, such as heat pumps.**

Retrofit Strategies for Floods (cont.)	
Repurpose or relocation of ground-floor or first-floor uses above flood levels, or fill in of basements	Floors located below current or future flood levels should not be habitable and should be converted to a safer use, such as parking, building access, storage, or if allowed by zoning, commercial use. Consider filling in basements to the nearest adjacent grade and installing passive flood vents to minimize basement flooding. If allowed by zoning, rooftop or lateral building additions can compensate for space lost from lower floors.
Flood-resistant elevators	Elevator pits often extend below the lowest floor and are highly vulnerable to flooding and access issues. Install elevators with motors and controllers above flood levels. Reinforce the elevator shaft portions below flood levels. Install a sump pump for any water seepage into the elevator pit. Set controls to prevent elevator cab from lowering into floodwater and install flood alarms in the elevator pit. Dry floodproof any components that cannot be elevated.
Elevation of first floor and addition of external or internal access features	If internal ceiling heights allow, the first floors of buildings can be raised above flood elevations. To preserve accessibility, interior or exterior stairs or ramps should be added. To create attractive entrances, consider adding landscaping or other enhancements to exterior access features, or use flood protection features as an onsite open-space amenity or gathering area.
Water-resistant materials	In building areas below flood levels, replace water-sensitive materials, such as drywall, with water-resistant materials, such as concrete or tile, to reduce cleanup and risks of mold. **Co-benefits and tradeoffs: Note that use of concrete may increase a building's embodied carbon.**
Green roof, blue roof, or other rainwater catchment system	A green roof (roof covering using living plants), blue roof (roof designed to detain and slowly release rainwater), or other system to catch and hold rainwater can reduce stormwater runoff, decreasing flood levels. See ULI's Harvesting the Value of Water report for more on these strategies. **Co-benefits and tradeoffs: Green roofs and blue roofs can reduce solar heat entering the building, helping keep buildings cool and lowering energy usage and carbon emissions from HVAC systems. Green roofs benefit areas affected by drought by providing an opportunity to use rainwater for nonpotable uses.**
Backup on-site power (e.g., solar plus battery storage)	Backup power ensures that the building remains comfortable in the event of a larger power outage. On-site renewable energy, like solar panels and battery storage, ensures that this power source is low carbon and protective of local air quality—unlike common alternatives, such as diesel generators.

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About the Panel

Leigh Ferguson

Panel Chair
Chattanooga, Tennessee

A developer with over 40 years of experience in the real estate profession, Ferguson retired in 2021. He is an expert on downtown revitalization, affordable housing, mixed-use development, and partnerships with public and nonprofit entities. Most recently the director of economic development for the city of New Orleans, he was responsible for facilitating downtown real estate development and investment, assisting the downtown community with issues affecting the business environment, advancing downtown planning, and attracting new business and development projects that will result in the expansion of employment, tax base, and wealth creation in downtown New Orleans.

Before his time in New Orleans, he was a senior developer at Bayer Properties where he was involved with a variety of commercial, mixed-use, and residential products in various locations around the United States. His primary duties included operating the residential and mixed-use real estate development and management division that focused on urban mixed-use community development projects in Birmingham's revitalizing Center City. Ferguson also managed the Sloss Real Estate Group's participation as a joint venture partner in a $100 million HOPE VI, mixed-income residential development. Before joining Sloss, Ferguson was the president of Corker Group Inc., where he managed about 2 million square feet of office, commercial, and industrial properties; supervised all leasing, administrative, maintenance, and financial operations; and prepared monthly and annual business plans, budgets, and reports to ownership.

From 1991 to 1999, Ferguson was president of Chattanooga Neighborhood Enterprise Inc. (CNE). At CNE, Ferguson managed lending, development, financing, and property management functions of about $30 million per year. Previously, Ferguson was president and chairman of John Laing Homes Inc. and vice president of development for both the Van Metre Company and the Winkler Companies, all in the Washington, D.C., area.

Ferguson is a full member of ULI, having received the O'Donnell Award in 2007, a member of the Urban Revitalization Council, chair for mission advancement of ULI Louisiana, and state P3 chair for ICSC. Ferguson has served on 15 ULI Advisory Services panels and chaired 14 of those panels. He has served on numerous civic and nonprofit advisory boards, including the Federal Home Loan Bank of Cincinnati and the Tennessee Housing Development Agency.

Lindsay Brugger

Washington, D.C.

As vice president of urban resilience, Brugger leads ULI's Urban Resilience program. Through research, technical assistance, convenings, and outreach, the Urban Resilience program helps ULI members, the public, and communities across the globe make buildings and cities more resilient to the impacts of climate change.

Before joining ULI, she championed resilience, climate adaptation, and disaster assistance at the American Institute of Architects, co-creating tools and resources such as the Resilience and Adaptation Education Series, the "Architect's Guide to Business Continuity," and the *Disaster Assistance Handbook* to help architects build new skill sets, integrate resilience into practice, and support their communities pre- and post-disaster.

A licensed architect and certified passive house consultant, Brugger began her resilience journey while volunteering with Architecture for Humanity DC where she cofounded and directed the Resilience by Design program to provide technical assistance, organize educational offerings, host convenings, and promote the value of a resilient built environment. She received a master of architecture and BS in architecture from Roger Williams University.

Daniel M. Conway

Aurora, Colorado

Conway is a real estate marketing and research authority specializing in residential, commercial/industrial, and golf course developments. He has had over 40 years' experience as an urban land economist. He is a frequent guest speaker for economic associations and trade organizations and is a member and frequent speaker for the Urban Land Institute.

He has been a real estate and urban land economic honorarium instructor at the University of Colorado and at the University of Denver. He has published many articles including the *CCIM Magazine* piece "Market Analysis, the Road to Profit, Prosperity and Peace of Mind." His other professional and community activities have included membership on the board of directors of a federally chartered national bank and of the Mile High Transplant Bank. He also participated on the Archbishop's Inner City Sun School Committee to assess the future needs of elementary education in the inner city of Denver.

For the past 25 years, as president of THK Associates, Conway has conducted numerous residential, commercial, industrial, and golf course economic feasibility and market studies, socioeconomic impact assessments, and financial planning studies in all 50 of the United States, as well as a number of foreign countries.

Allen K. Folks

Sacramento, California

Folks is a registered landscape architect and urban designer with experience in urban revitalization and community planning assignments. In 38 years of practice, he has been responsible for a variety of assignments, including the preparation of plans for new towns and existing communities, transit-oriented development areas, reuse of military bases, design of corporate and civic campuses, and public open-space planning. Folks usually directs teams of engineers, environmental scientists, and economists to solve urban problems that have a creative vision and are economically feasible. He is a full member of ULI and has served as chair of ULI Sacramento and has been a member on several national product councils, including most recently the Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Council. He is a graduate of Temple University and the University of Pennsylvania.

Before joining Ascent, a multidisciplinary practice based in Sacramento, in 2016, Folks spent over 28 years working at EDAW and AECOM in the San Francisco, Sacramento, and Singapore offices. From 2012 to 2015, he led the AECOM Southeast Asia business line for buildings and places, with management responsibility for over 110 staff in Singapore, Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, and Manila.

Folks has been involved with the revitalization of urban and suburban environments in many cities in the western United States and in Southeast Asia. He has prepared urban design plans for specific areas or neighborhoods of Portland, Sacramento, San Francisco, and Salt Lake City, as well as Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Ho Chi Minh City, and Manila. In many of those assignments, the focus was on developing a meaningful and impactful public realm as the organizing armature for private-sector investment. Folks has led community visioning exercises for public-sector agencies and developer-led consortiums. He has lectured in the United

States and Asia on the benefits of transit-oriented development and livable cities. Folks has been an instructor at the University of California, Davis, in the Land Use and Natural Resources Program.

His current assignments include developing a Master Plan for the reuse of a decommissioned nuclear power plant facility; development of strategies for neighborhood revitalization in Sacramento; and riverfront planning in the city of West Sacramento. At ULI, Folks has participated in 17 Advisory Services panels to assist in solving downtown and neighborhood redevelopment issues.

Donny James

Largo, Maryland

James is chief real estate officer for the Revenue Authority of Prince George's County, Maryland. In this capacity, he works with the executive director to strategically identify real estate development opportunities that would spur economic growth, create "destination points," and produce positive impacts for Prince George's County. He also works in tandem with the executive director to provide project status updates to the Revenue Authority's board of directors and county officials.

James has over 25 years of real estate development experience. He previously worked with a nonprofit in Washington, D.C., where he was responsible for all of the organization's real estate transactions. In this role, he managed the design and construction of a new $28 million, 50,000-square-foot health care facility in Southeast Washington, D.C., and expanded the organization's birthing center in Northwest Washington.

Previously he served as the real estate director for the Anacostia Waterfront Corporation, where he led the planning efforts for the redevelopment of Poplar Point, a 110-acre development in Southeast Washington, D.C. As real estate director, he led the development efforts to relocate the Washington Metropolitan Area Transportation Authority to a new $71 million headquarters.

James served as a guest lecturer at Columbia University and has served on multiple panels surrounding redevelopment in urban areas. He received his bachelor's degree in economics and mathematics from Morehouse College in Atlanta, his MS in real estate development and finance from Columbia University in New York City, and his master of public policy from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University in Cambridge.

Susannah Ross

Cambridge, Massachusetts

Ross is a licensed landscape architect who has extensive experience managing complex urban landscape design and construction. She is passionate about the design of public open spaces in urban settings. She enjoys exploring the potential of landscape design to enrich the daily life, health, and well-being of city dwellers and urban ecology, and to shape the core identity of a city. She welcomes the challenge of designing to meet a diverse set of interests in a complex physical context. She is thrilled to be tackling and realizing all of these elements in the ongoing implementation of the award-winning 53-acre Bay Park Master Plan in Sarasota, Florida.

Before joining Agency Landscape + Planning, Ross was a senior associate with Sasaki, where she worked for 16 years. Before that she was a software user interface designer. She holds a master's degree in landscape architecture and a bachelor of arts cum laude from Harvard University. She also serves on the board of directors for the Cultural Landscape Foundation.

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