

# CITY OF EUSTIS DOWNTOWN PLAN

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Eustis has completed a citizen-driven master planning study for the Downtown. This planning effort is intended to build upon the pre-existing community vision and provide a broad foundation for public consensus on strategic actions to implement the vision. The City of Eustis sits in a unique location on the shores of Lake Eustis, within the "Golden Triangle", along with Tavares and Mt. Dora. Eustis has seen significant decline in its Downtown commercial and retail economic vitality and this Master Plan builds on Eustis' strengths and addresses emerging redevelopment opportunities to ensure a diverse future as an urban center serving the needs of the City's residents and its visitors.

The Master Planning process provided a community forum for discussing these issues and opportunities. The process was guided by a Steering Committee made up of City Staff and representatives from local businesses, community organizations, and neighborhoods. In addition to this committee, numerous one-on-one stakeholder interviews and three public meetings provided the Eustis citizens a forum for public discourse. Based on these discussions and previous visioning efforts, a mission statement was adopted:

To create a Master Plan that correlates the desired physical vision with market opportunities, desired public realm objectives, an adequate transportation system, good urban form, and appropriate land-use and regulatory principles, including strategic actions to achieve results.

In addition to this mission statement, seven planning principles for building a better Downtown were established to help direct the Master Planning process. Those principles are:

- Capitalize on Strategic Downtown Parcels
- Connect to the Waterfront
- Leverage the Assets (Historic Downtown Lakefront)
- Balance the Pedestrian Needs and Transportation Needs
- The City Should be Walkable and Beautiful
- Reconnect the Neighborhoods
- Create a Regulatory and Economic Structure that Supports and Markets the Vision

With these principles guiding the process, the Master Plan envisioned the importance of developing livable solutions to various issues affecting the City today. Livable solutions means that residents can live, work, shop, and play in a Downtown that is walkable and convenient.

To achieve this, the Master Plan suggests new thinking about infrastructure, transportation planning, affordable housing, and residential densities.

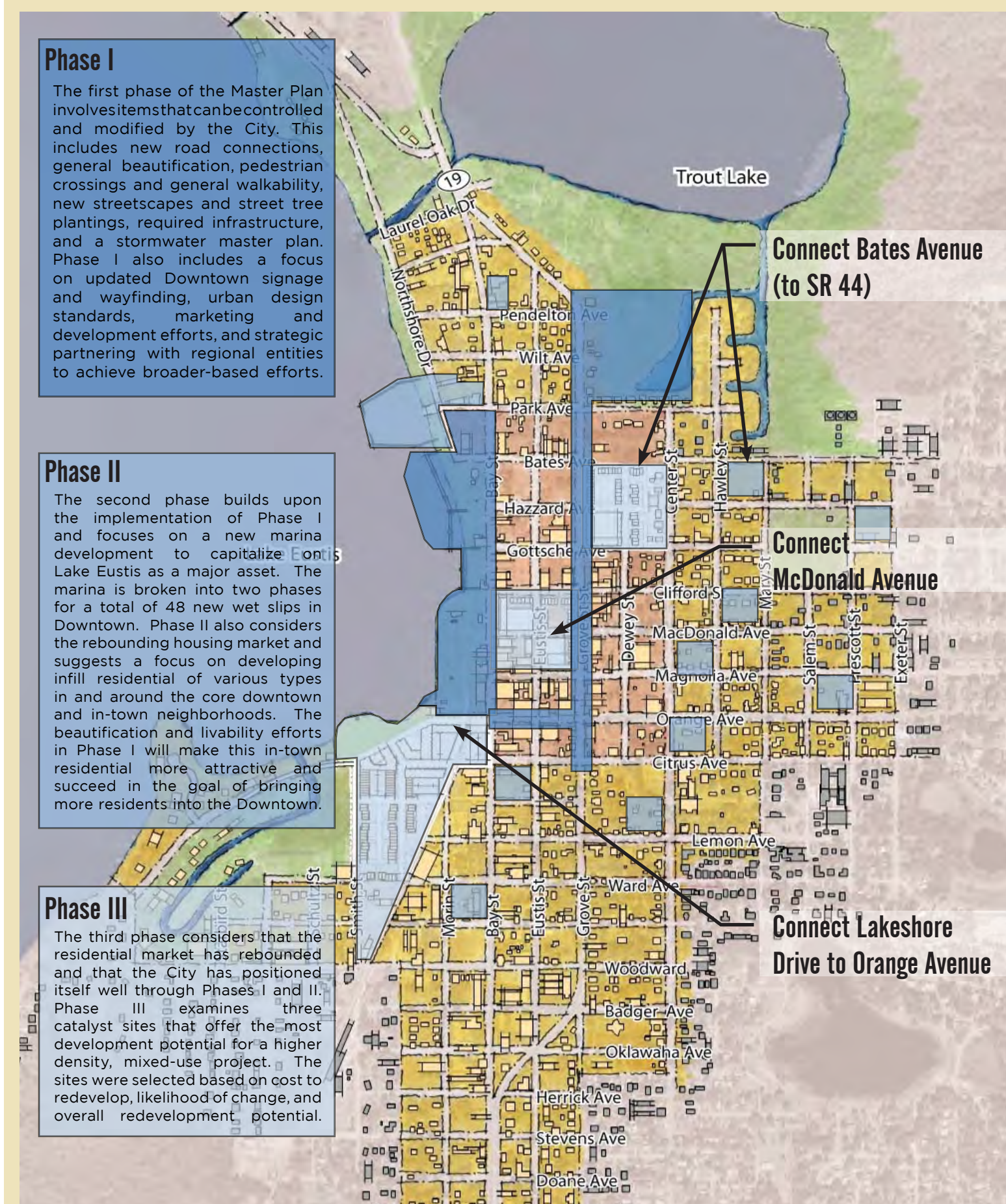
In order to accomplish this new thinking without losing the quaint, historic nature of the Downtown, a series of key recommendations were developed as "action items" that are intended to be the first and continuing steps the City can take in order to achieve the full capacity of the citizen-based vision.

- Enhance the Downtown Address
- Focus on the Neighborhoods
- Establish the Property Framework
- Establish the Social Pattern – Coming to Downtown
- Market Downtown to the Development Community
- Defend Your Position
- Neighborhood Reinvestment
- Downtown Residential Densification

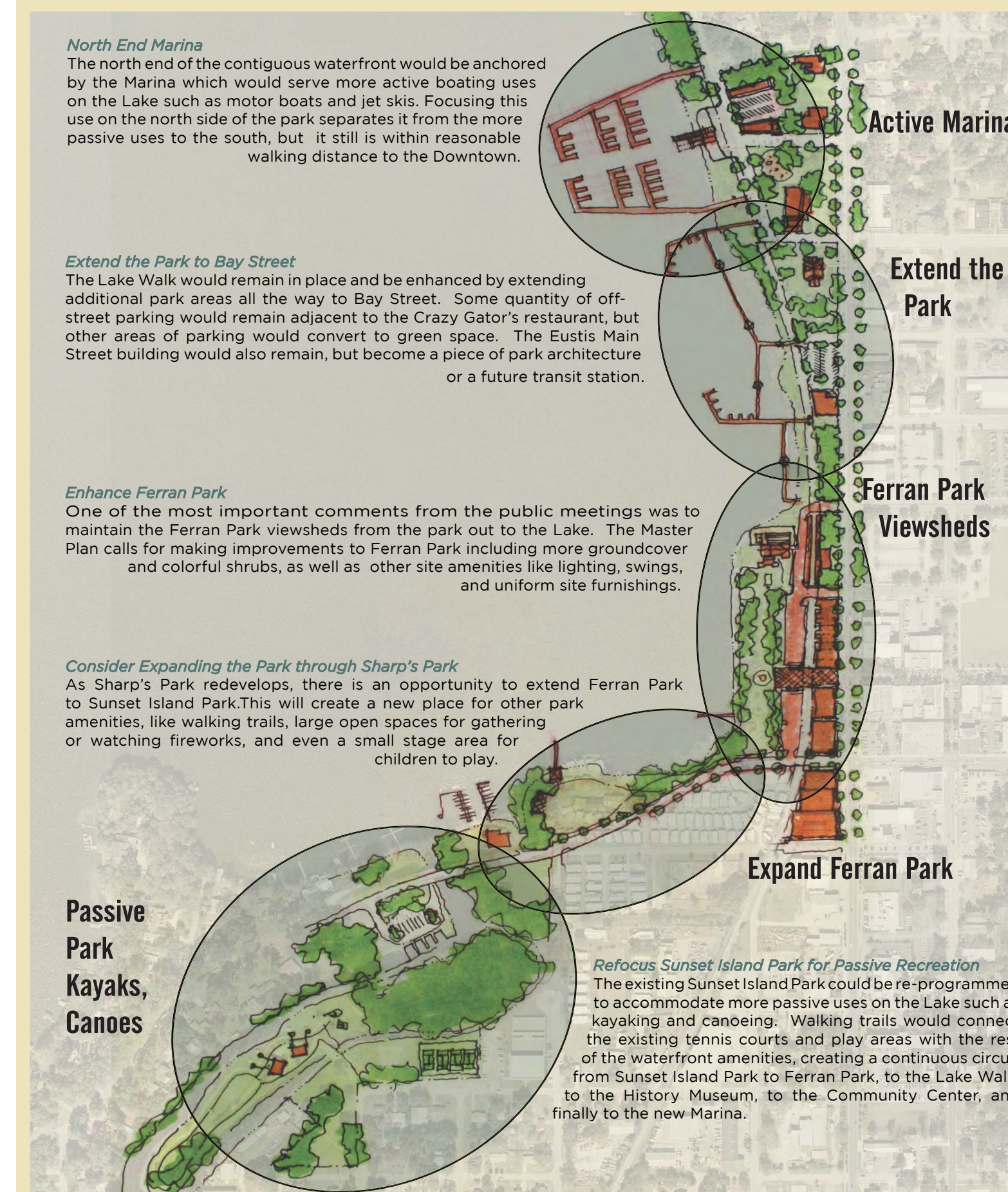
The City of Eustis is billed as "The City of Bright Tomorrows" and this has never been truer. The Master Plan builds on the strong citizen-based community vision and goes further to realize the full potential of the Downtown.

The Master Plan anticipates the changing Land Development Regulations and the potential market demands within the City. The outcome is a consensus on the importance of reinvestment into both the public realm and private property. This will require bold new initiatives to plan, incentivize, and finance many public enhancements and redevelopment activities. Partnerships between public agencies, private businesses, and the community will be necessary to ensure success. Downtown Eustis has tremendous potential as a regional center for urban living, fostered by its rich community built on the City's unique arts, culture, and environmental resources. With a coordinated plan and the right tools for success, Downtown Eustis can ensure a bright tomorrow as a livable city in which young professionals, retirees, families, and tourists will come to live, work, play, and visit.

## THE MASTER PLAN (THREE PHASES)



## PROGRAM THE WATERFRONT



## WALKABILITY AND TRAFFIC-CALMING



## INFRASTRUCTURE

### MASTER STORMWATER PLAN

In order to make the Downtown Core more appealing to potential developers and to solve some existing infrastructure problems, such as Lake Eustis water quality and flooding at Bay Street and Orange Avenue, the design team considered a stormwater master plan. In this plan, stormwater from streets and blocks would be redirected away from Lake Eustis and into a treatment pond north of Downtown and adjacent to Orchid Lake. Preliminary engineering drawings suggest this pond could have a total volume of 164,000 cubic feet.

Because of this total volume, twelve Downtown blocks would not require on-site retention. Not only does this benefit the potential for redevelopment on those blocks, it also redirects the runoff water away from Lake Eustis. The runoff water in the pond would receive primary treatment through selected plants in the pond. Eventually the water would return to Lake Eustis, but in a much cleaner state.



### STORMWATER PARK AS COMMUNITY RESOURCE

The stormwater pond serves a great need in terms of infrastructure, but it also fills a community need: parks and open space. Many valuable park elements such as walking and jogging trails, exercise stations, benches, top lots, swings, and other active-use elements can be incorporated into the Stormwater Park. Not only can this happen at the proposed Stormwater Park, but the City can also retrofit existing stormwater ponds in and around the various neighborhoods to make them more park-like. In addition to improving the quality of life in the neighborhoods, property and social values will increase.

## STREETSCAPES

### MAGNOLIA AVENUE AND EUSTIS STREET

Magnolia Avenue and Eustis Street are the historic "Main Streets" for Downtown Eustis and contain many of its unique shops and restaurants. Currently, the one-way road configuration limits the activity and retail potential of this main street. The Master Plan offers two alternatives that would need further study.

The first option removes angled parking from one side of the block and replaces it with parallel parking and an additional travel lane. This would allow for Magnolia to be two-way and also still reserve some on-street parking.

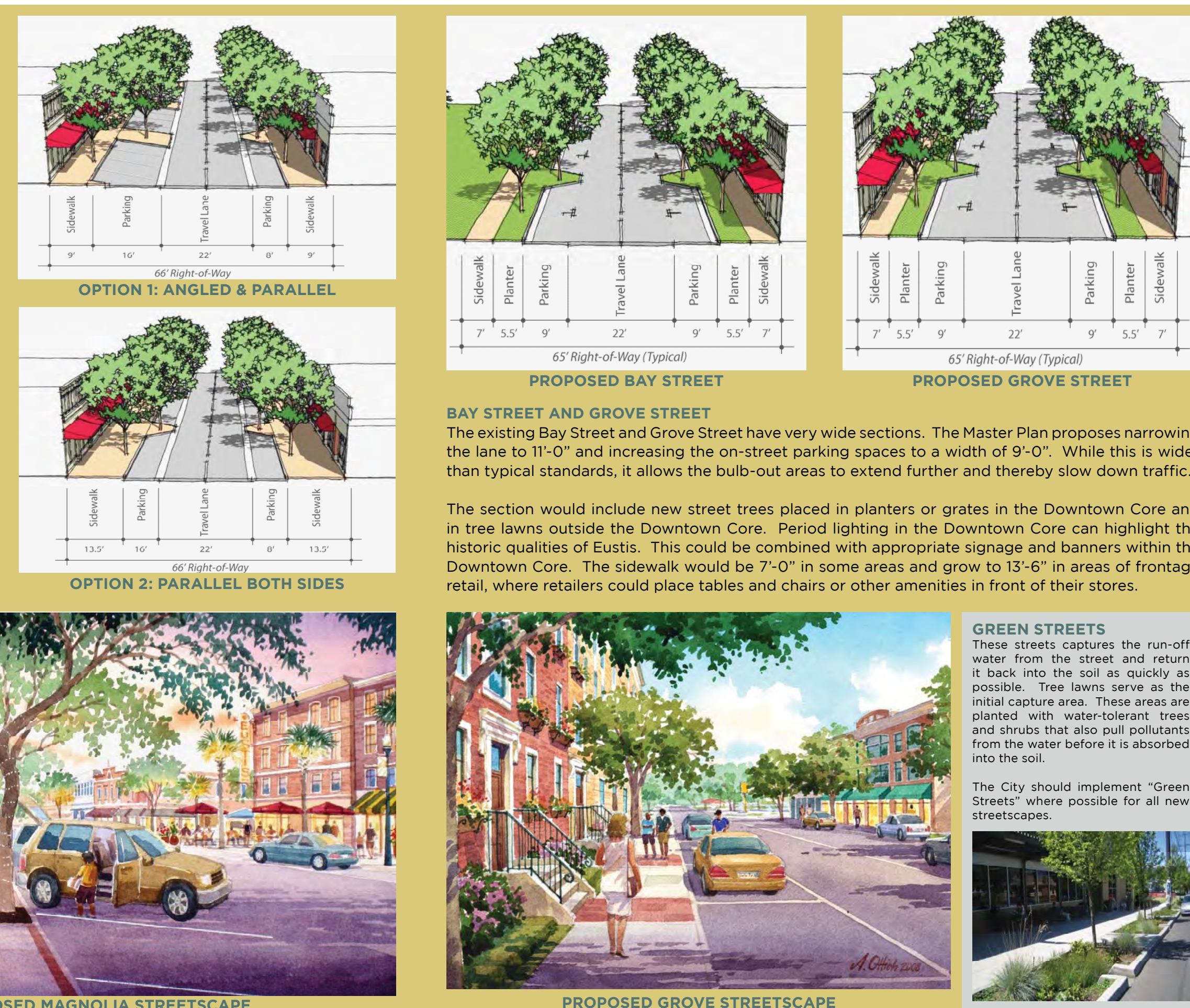
The Plan also calls for back-in angled parking to replace the current angled parking. Back-in angled parking is safer, not only for the driver, but also for pedestrians and cyclists using the road. The other benefit is that the sidewalk area would increase from 7'-0" to 9'-0" giving more space for shoppers and retailers.

The second option would remove angled parking altogether and replace it with parallel parking on both sides of the street. This would allow for a two-way

roadway while increasing the sidewalk widths from 7'-0" to 13'-6", which would provide ample room for tables and chairs, walkways, and other site furnishings.

Both options assume a loss of 18% to 30% of overall on-street parking.

However, this could be offset by better utilization of the public parking garage and improved pedestrian crossings at Orange Avenue and Eustis Street.



### BAY STREET AND GROVE STREET

The existing Bay Street and Grove Street have very wide sections. The Master Plan proposes narrowing the lane to 11'-0" and increasing the on-street parking spaces to a width of 9'-0". While this is wider than typical standards, it allows the bulb-out areas to extend further and thereby slow down traffic.

The section would include new street trees placed in planters or grates in the Downtown Core and in tree lawns outside the Downtown Core. Period lighting in the Downtown Core can highlight the historic qualities of Eustis. This could be combined with appropriate signage and banners within the Downtown Core. The sidewalk would be 7'-0" in some areas and grow to 13'-6" in areas of frontage retail, where retailers could place tables and chairs or other amenities in front of their stores.

### GREEN STREETS

These streets capture the runoff water from the street and return it back into the soil as quickly as possible. Tree lawns serve as the initial capture area. These areas are planted with water-tolerant trees and shrubs that also pull pollutants from the water before it is absorbed into the soil.

The City should implement "Green Streets" where possible for all new streetscapes.

