

# CLAY COUNTY COLLEGE DRIVE INITIATIVE



TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PANEL | MARCH 29 & 30, 2023  
MIDDLEBURG, FLORIDA



## About the Urban Land Institute (ULI)

The Urban Land Institute (ULI) is a nonprofit education and research institute supported by its members. Its mission is to shape the future of the built environment for transformative impact in communities worldwide. Established in 1936, ULI has more than 48,000 members worldwide representing all aspects of land use and development disciplines. The North Florida District Council was formed in 2005 and has nearly 600 members serving 34 counties, including the cities of Jacksonville, St. Augustine, Gainesville, Tallahassee, Panama City and Pensacola.

## What are Technical Assistance Panels (TAPs)?

The Technical Assistance Panel program is an advisory service available to a community, nonprofit, public entity or private enterprise that is facing real estate or land-use issues. Typically, a two-day session, the TAP program brings together a cross-section of experts who do not have a vested interest in the project to examine the issues from multiple angles and produce recommendations and implementation strategies based on market conditions, sound information, community realities and best practices.

The District Council assembles a panel of ULI members chosen for their knowledge of the issues facing the client. The interdisciplinary team may include land planners, architects, market and financial analysts, developers, engineers, appraisers, attorneys and/or brokers who are well qualified to provide unbiased, pragmatic advice on complex real estate and land-use issues.

To ensure objectivity, panel members cannot be involved in matters pending before the client, currently work for the client or solicit work from the client during the six months following the TAP program. In addition, they are not compensated for their time, but they are reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses, such as overnight lodging and transportation to attend the TAP.

## How Does the Program Work?

TAP members are briefed on the issues facing the client and receive detailed information relevant to the assignment including project history, detailed maps of the study area, relevant demographics and other relevant data necessary for an understanding of the task at hand. During the two-day program, TAP members tour the study area, interview stakeholders (business owners, city council members, etc.), and work collaboratively to produce preliminary findings and recommendations which are presented at the end of Day 2 to the client. A complete report follows within about six to eight weeks with detailed recommendations.

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ULI Advisory Services identify creative, practical solutions for complex land use and development challenges.

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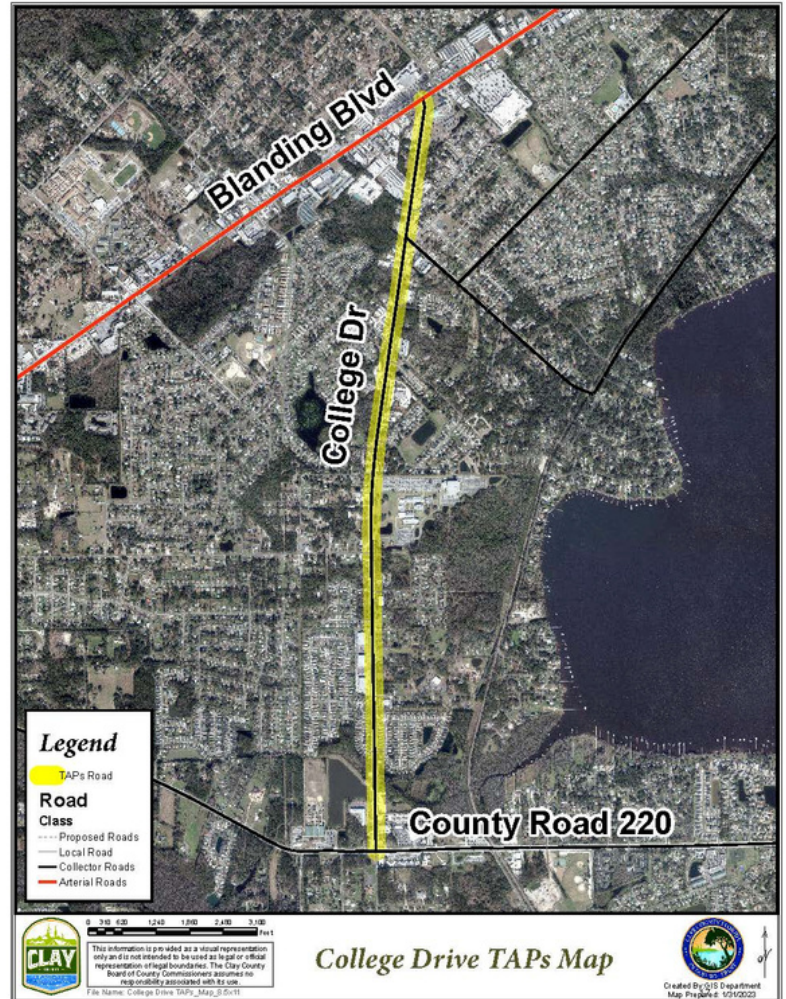
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# TAP SCOPE OF WORK

The College Drive Initiative (CDI) of Clay County engaged the ULI North Florida District Council to convene a Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) to study county-owned property between County Road 220 and Blanding Boulevard on College Drive. This study area currently houses the Thrasher-Horne Center, St. Johns River State College, PACE Center for Girls, Mercy Support Services, Cassie Gardens and VA Clinic, with many parking lots, small businesses and neighborhoods.

The TAP has been asked to recommend:

1. A long-term vision and development program for the study area that would promote economic growth, sound development practices, livability and access to entertainment venues.
2. Highest and best uses for the study area, including identifying a range of uses that would be compatible with existing, committed, and planned uses and public facilities within the College Drive area.
3. Strategies for public facilities to promote mobility to, from, and within the study area as well as any resulting adjustments to current land use, transportation, recreation and open-space plans.



# PANEL PROCESS

The ULI North Florida District Council assembled a group of accomplished ULI members who have expertise in real estate development, growth management, land planning and zoning, site development, transportation planning, and safety and traffic engineering, making for an intensive two-day workshop to address the challenges facing College Drive.

Prior to convening, TAP members received information on Clay County, including its 2040 Comprehensive Plan, the College Drive Initiative, Economic Development Corporation, demographics and market profile, land use and zoning maps, and other pertinent information.

Orientation on Day 1 included an introductory presentation by Clay County representatives, including County Commissioner Michael Cella; County Manager Howard Wannamaker; Troy Nagle, Assistant County Manager; Chereese Stewart, Assistant County Manager; and Connie Thomas, President and CEO, Impact Clay.

A tour of the study area was followed by interviews with Joelle Marquis, Legacy in Action; County Commissioner Michael Cella; County Manager Howard Wannamaker; Joseph Pickens, President, St. Johns River State College; and Chereese Stewart, Assistant County Manager.

During these interviews, the panelists learned about the interviewees' affiliations with Clay County, heard their viewpoints on the neighborhood, and discussed possible solutions to the issues presented.

By the end of Day 2, the ULI panel shared their observations and recommendations with Clay County representatives and stakeholders.



PHOTOS: TAP participants reviewing zoning maps



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Clay County and the College Drive Initiative seek to redevelop the 2.5 mile, four-lane stretch of county road that connects Blanding Boulevard (SR 21) and County Road 220 into a destination. Nearly 20,000 vehicles use College Drive to travel between Orange Park and southern communities. In addition, the road is served by three Jacksonville Transportation Authority (JTA) Clay County transit routes.

Currently, a population of some 16,700 reside in the 8-square-mile area east and west of College Drive. The corridor is home to numerous nonprofits, a senior living apartment community (Cassie Gardens), various commercial businesses and professional services, St. Johns River State College (SJRSC) and its Thrasher-Horne Center.

Zoning is highly fractured with nine different business/commercial categories. In addition, the constraints of stormwater on College Drive are significant. The east side of the road has some flooding issues, and drainage improvements are planned to begin in June 2023. Water and sewer are generally available on the corridor, but there are some gaps in the system.

A concerted effort is underway to increase Clay County tourism, which is funded through a 5 percent resort tax. Clay County expects a new regional park being built on SR 21 will be able to host major events and tournaments, drawing people not only from Florida but neighboring states like Georgia.

Phase one will open to the public in spring of 2024. Also, the county is working with the Van Zant family of Lynyrd Skynyrd fame to establish a Southern Rock Hall of Fame.

To create a destination where people wish to gather will require a critical mass of rooftops to attract retail and dining establishments, a determination of what differentiates the corridor to draw people to it, and strategies to calm traffic.

There are a number of vacant and underdeveloped properties along College Drive with several for sale, including a five-acre site zoned for mixed use that is owned by the Clay County Development Authority (CCDA). Lack of water/sewer on the site is an issue. Some properties lend themselves to higher density housing such as townhomes, small multifamily and garden apartment complexes—ideally 20 units per acre. Nevertheless, given the current fractured parcelization, cobbling together sufficient land could present a challenge.

Currently, St. Johns River State College (SJRSC) and its Thrasher-Horne Center are the corridor's greatest assets. TAP members recommend initially redeveloping a core area between Old Jennings Road and Mosley Road. The right mix of businesses, restaurants, cafés, arts studios and housing could serve as a catalyst to spur further development.

The location across from the college provides an opportunity to create container flex space, a low-cost development option that can be converted as needs change. Highest and best uses require extensive financial analysis to ensure uses are suitable, appropriate and/or complementary.

Panelists also recommend creating a center green mid-block in front of the college and across the street. Other green space can be incorporated with pocket parks along College Drive and using the area behind the college as a walking, biking and/or multiuse trail.

To attract developers to the area, infrastructure and zoning should be in place to create a conducive environment for investment. Panelists recommend consolidating the business zoning code into a few broad categories to offer greater flexibility, while being very specific about the kinds of businesses excluded.

College Drive's current design is not conducive to either pedestrian or bike traffic. The four-lane, divided road has a 45-mph speed limit. To calm traffic and create a quarter-mile walking district, panelists recommend a road diet through the core, dropping from four to two 11-foot travel lanes, creating roundabouts at Old Jennings and Mosley to transition traffic from high speed to lower speed, and adding on-street parking. A 10-foot multipurpose shared path on the college side of the road would provide a safe space for walking and biking, with an 8-foot sidewalk and 6 feet for dining on the opposite side.

To test the road diet, the panelists suggest implementing a "tactical urbanism" demonstration project using low-cost materials such as temporary bollards, planter boxes and painted bulb-outs to slow and guide traffic through the core area. Consideration would need to be given to postponing any drainage and road projects until a corridor redevelopment plan and/or a road diet is approved. Federal funding is available through various programs for improving road safety and Complete Streets projects.

Sources for financing capital improvements can include establishment of a Neighborhood Improvement District or a Community Redevelopment Agency which is funded by tax increment financing.

Corridor redevelopment is a long-term endeavor. It will require commitment, regular monitoring and re-evaluation based on market conditions and unexpected barriers that might develop along with fine-tuning redevelopment approaches to better achieve success.

## Summary of Recommendations

1. Create a brand or theme for the College Drive corridor, such as The Brickyard District.
2. Engage a design professional and initiate a design charette.
3. Combine zoning of business/commercial categories and specifically exclude unwanted types of businesses.
4. Create a core area between Old Jennings Road and Mosley Road and cluster initial development there. Make the investment turnkey for developers.
5. Highest and best uses include restaurants, retail, professional services, higher-density housing, childcare, flex/start-up space, and recreation.
6. Initiate a road diet through the core area, add roundabouts at Old Jennings and Mosley roads, add parallel parking and widen sidewalks. Create a tactical urbanism demonstration project to test the road diet.
7. Incorporate green space/recreational opportunity mid-block in the core, a linear park behind the college, pocket parks where possible.
8. Determine funding sources, such as a Neighborhood Improvement District or Community Redevelopment Agency, and federal and state funding for Complete Streets and other road safety activities.

# BACKGROUND

College Drive is a 2.5 mile, four-lane stretch of county road centrally located in the more heavily populated northern portion of Clay County. With a speed limit of 45 miles per hour, the road connects two commercial arteries, Blanding Boulevard (SR 21) to the north and County Road 220 to the south. Nearly 20,000 vehicles use College Drive to travel between Orange Park and southern communities.

Referred to as the “helping hands highway,” College Drive is home to numerous nonprofits, including Pace Center for Girls, Mercy Support Services, Middleburg VA Clinic, First Coast Women’s Group, and Clay County Community and Social Services. It is also home to Cassie Gardens, a senior living apartment community, St. Johns River State College (SJRSC) and the Thrasher-Horne Center. A population of some 16,700 reside in the 8-square-mile area on the east and west sides of College Drive.



PHOTO: Cassie Gardens



PHOTO: Middleburg VA Clinic



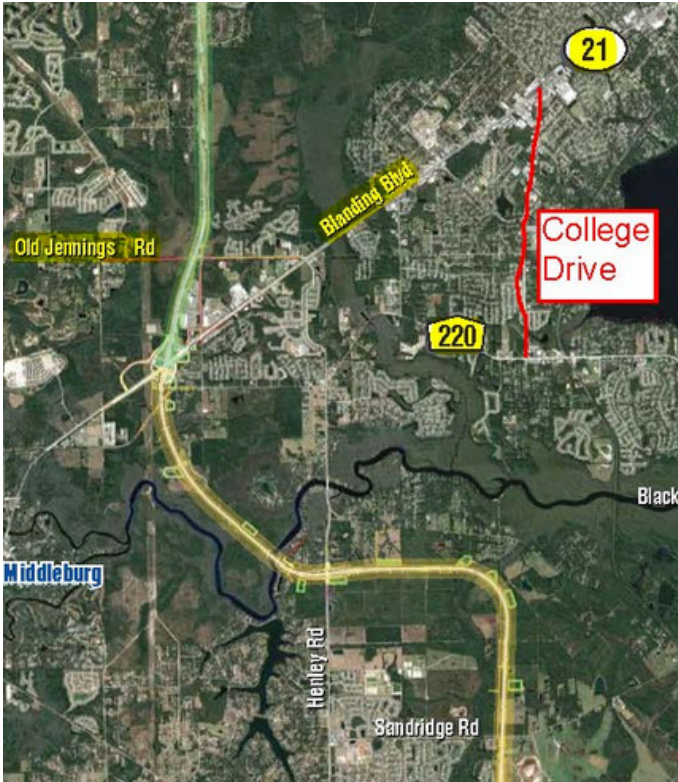


IMAGE: A portion of the segment of First Coast Expressway currently under construction is shown in yellow.

Public transportation is served by three Jacksonville Transportation Authority (JTA) Clay County Community Transportation bus lines. The Blue Line travels from Orange Park to Green Cove Springs, with stops on College Drive at the VA Clinic and SJRSC. The VA Clinic is also a stop for both the Red and Green Lines that run between Middleburg and Orange Park Mall and the VA Clinic and Keystone Heights, respectively. A study presented to the Clay County Board in March 2023 reported low ridership and productivity for the Green Line.

College Drive is about five miles from Camp Blanding, a joint training camp for the Florida National Guard and Florida Army National Guard. The training camp covers approximately 73,000 acres with a buffer around it. Soldiers are stationed there four to six weeks.

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“We have a blank canvas in terms of what we can do on College Drive. I see something that could be viable for everyday use but also tourists.”

— Michael Cella  
Clay County Commissioner

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Clay County is considered a bedroom community, with about 70 to 80 percent of workers traveling outside the county to jobs, mainly to Jacksonville.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the county’s population is estimated at 226,589 as of July 1, 2022, with a growth rate of 1.22 percent over the prior year. The central part of the county around Sandridge and Russell roads is a key growth corridor. It is expected that the completion of the First Coast Expressway (SR 23) will bring further growth to central Clay.

Known as the outer beltway, the First Coast Expressway currently runs from I-10 to Blanding Boulevard. The segment was completed in 2019. Situated about five miles from College Drive, the second segment is expected to be completed in 2025. It will cut through the western part of Clay County before turning south and east. The beltway will include seven interchanges in Clay County with expected mixed-use development around them, including industrial.



PHOTO: St. Johns River State College

St. Johns River State College and its Thrasher-Horne Center are major draws to the College Drive corridor. There are plans to realign the main entry to the campus to Old Jennings Road.

SJRSC’s Orange Park campus is the largest of the school’s three, the others being located in St. Augustine and Palatka. Formerly a community college, SJRSC is accredited to award both associate and baccalaureate degrees. However, it continues to focus in large part on the associate in arts (transfer) degree and more than 30 associate in science degrees and certificates to meet the educational and workforce training needs in Northeast Florida.

SJRSC enrollment has declined by 1.5 percent each year, even before the Covid pandemic. A large portion of instruction is online, and distance learning continues to grow. SJRSC is a commuter school. While student housing is being built in Palatka for their athletic program, there is not enough current need to warrant student housing on either the Orange Park or St. Augustine campuses. However, SJRSC President Pickens would like to see affordable housing for students near the school. He also sees a greater need for daycare to support students with young children. Mr. Pickens does not see the College Drive campus expanding and suggests that any future school expansion might include a new campus near the beltway under construction.

The Thrasher-Horne Center is an 84,666 sq. ft. cultural arts and event venue owned and operated by the college. The Center plays host to hundreds of events annually, including nationally touring musicians and performers, Broadway musicals, and other cultural offerings. The main stage theater seats up to 1,728. The Center also includes a 6,260 sq. ft. conference center that hosts business meetings and expos. In January the college solicited bids for an interior refurbishment of the Thrasher Horne Conference Center and both levels of the Grand Lobby.

The SJRSC site is home to the College Drive Initiative’s Food Truck Friday event held once a month in the parking lot. The event includes games, vendors and music as a means to attract people to the area and bring awareness to the initiative.

**Fundable FTE by Instructional Campus\***

| Campus              | 2017-18        | 2018-19        | 2019-20        |
|---------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Orange Park         | 1,047.1        | 985.1          | 1,049.7        |
| Palatka             | 508.0          | 453.5          | 421.9          |
| St. Augustine       | 957.7          | 967.6          | 943.5          |
| Distance Learning** | 1,453.3        | 1,573.8        | 1,709.0        |
| Other               | 556.3          | 608.7          | 544.9          |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>4,522.4</b> | <b>4,588.7</b> | <b>4,669.0</b> |

\*Does not include Adult Education \*\* Hybrid courses are assigned to a physical campus  
 Source: Internal SJR State Database



Clay County has a concerted effort underway to increase area tourism, which is funded through a 5 percent resort tax. Under consideration is the establishment of a Southern Rock Hall of Fame in conjunction with the Van Zant family of Lynyrd Skynyrd fame. Ronnie Van Zant, Lynyrd Skynyrd's original lead singer, lived off College Drive on Brickyard Road when he died in a plane crash in 1977. The song, "Brickyard Road," written by Johnny Van Zant, is a tribute to his brother. The scope of work related to the Southern Rock Hall of Fame was expected to be completed in April, according to County Commissioner Mike Cella, who chairs the Tourist Development Council.



In line with Clay County's outdoor recreational brand, the Northeast Florida Sports Complex (aka Clay County Regional Park) is being built on SR 21, a mile north of SR 16.

A groundbreaking ceremony was held March 28 on the 250-acre parcel. Phase one of the sports complex will include sidewalks, walking trails,



January 31, 2023

Clay County Regional Park | Park Master Plan

**PROSSER**  
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fishing ponds, a monument sign, 350 parking spaces and eight multi-use fields. It is expected that the 15 acres of field space will draw major events and be able to host large-scale tournaments, drawing people not only from Florida but neighboring states like Georgia. Construction of phase one is scheduled for completion in November, with an opening to the public in spring of 2024. Once funding is secured, future development includes a potential indoor facility, playground, skate park, pickleball courts and tennis courts.

As part of an effort to expand park space on College Drive, Clay County, the College Drive Initiative and Lowe’s of Orange Park partnered to turn the stormwater pond next to Cassie Gardens into the first phase of a recreational nature site. The Pond to Park project backs up to a school, which would be able to use the park in the future for some outdoor activities.

The constraints of stormwater on College Drive are significant. The east side of the road has some flooding issues, and drainage improvements are planned to begin in June. A countywide drainage study is underway to determine needs and capacity, which is expected to be completed in 2024.



PHOTO: College Drive Pond to Park Project

Soon to be underway is the replacement of deteriorated stormwater pipes. In addition, future roadwork planned for College Drive includes patch work, milling and modifying the intersection by SJRSC.

College Drive includes a number of vacant and underdeveloped properties with several for sale, including a five-acre site zoned for mixed use adjacent to PACE that is owned by the Clay County Development Authority (CCDA). Lack of water/sewer is an issue. A storage facility expressed interest in purchasing the property, but it is not the type of business that fits into the county’s vision for the area.

Currently, there are nine business zoning categories for College Drive. A Zoning Code Update Project was launched in March of 2022 and is expected to be completed around July 2023. Due to the sizable scope of the project, it has been broken into parts that has been presented for public review at multiple open houses and meetings.



PHOTO: CCDA Property



# PROJECT TIMELINE

- ARTICLE III
- ARTICLE VII
- PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

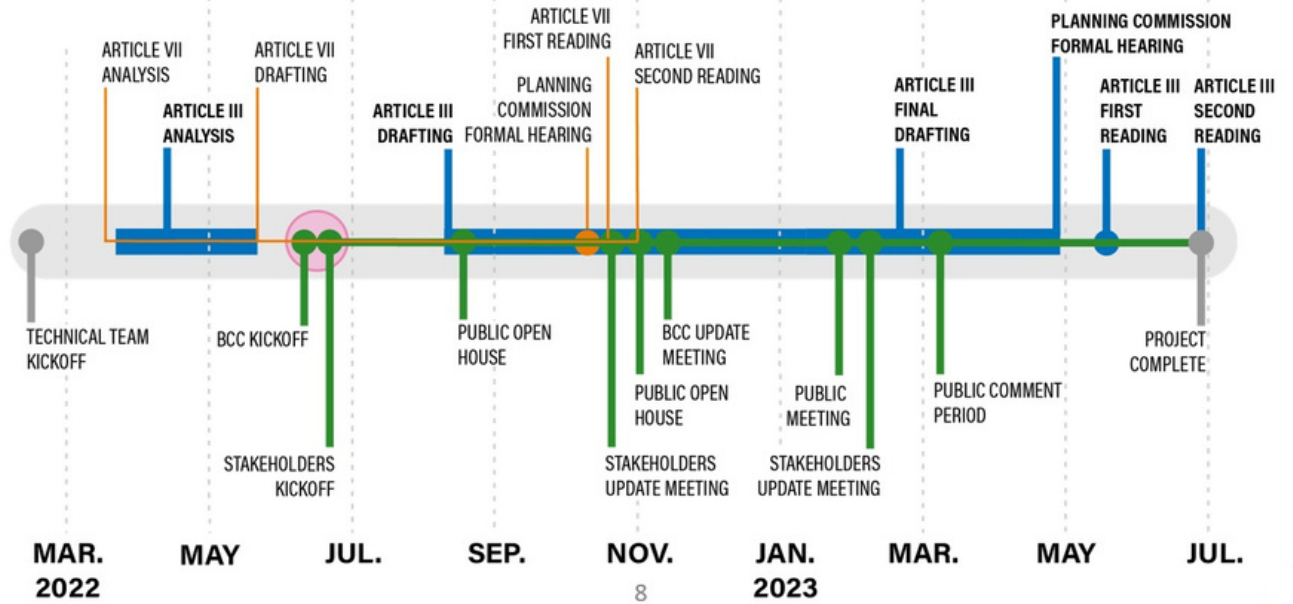


PHOTO: Street view of College Drive

# ANALYSIS

## WHAT WE HEARD



Clay County has a unique opportunity to develop College Drive. Couched between heavily trafficked Blanding Boulevard and County Road 220, College Drive has the markings to grow into a “come to” rather than a “come through” space in line with ULI’s 10 principles of development. The corridor is recognized for its champions for health and social services, relatively easy access and potential economic value. There are many advocates among local representatives, businesses, nonprofits and residents who are interested in seeing the corridor grow into a destination. However, College Drive development is not without some challenges.

College Drive’s current design is not conducive to either pedestrian or bike traffic. Like most automobile-centric corridors, it is characterized by a wide road with multiple lanes; high-speed traffic; buildings separated from the street by large parking lots; a median lacking trees and vegetation; and narrow sidewalks that are unbuffered from the travel lanes.

## ULI's Ten Principles for Building Healthy Places

1. Put People First
2. Recognize the Economic Value
3. Empower Champions for Health
4. Energize Shared Spaces
5. Make Healthy Choices Easy
6. Ensure Equitable Access
7. Mix It Up
8. Embrace Unique Character
9. Promote Access to Healthy Food
10. Make It Active



## OPPORTUNITIES

|                                  |                                     |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| SJRSC and Thrasher-Horne         | Established transportation route    |
| Corridor has many advocates      | Multifamily housing/student housing |
| Vacant/underdeveloped properties | Well suited to placemaking          |
| Potential for special financing  | Potential for open/green space      |
| Centrally located                |                                     |

## CONSTRAINTS

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| Road speed & design     | Some areas not suitable for development |
| Parcelization           | Too many business zoning districts      |
| Utility availability    | Lack of theme or brand                  |
| Lack of master planning |   |
| Limited funding sources |   |

The four-lane, divided road has a 45-mph speed limit, which is designed to accommodate many more cars than the 20,000 vehicles using it daily. A North Florida Transportation Planning Organization study released in 2018 cited College Drive as an area of concern due to numerous traffic crashes. The highest number occurred at the intersection with Old Jennings Road, followed by College Drive and Peoria.

The average risk of death for pedestrians increases exponentially from 10 percent at 23 mph to 90 percent at 58 mph, according to 2020 data from NHTSA's Fatality Analysis Reporting System. Speed is also an issue for bicyclists. The League of American Bicyclists reported that 58.2 percent of bicyclist fatalities between 2015 and 2019 occurred on roadways with a posted speed of 40 mph or more.

To create a destination where people wish to gather will require a critical mass of rooftops to attract retail and dining establishments, a determination of what differentiates the corridor to draw people to it, and strategies to calm traffic.

Several College Drive properties are for sale, including the five-acre lot owned by the Clay County Development Authority (CCDA). Other vacant and underdeveloped parcels could be purchased and developed as well. Some properties lend themselves to higher density housing such as townhomes, small multifamily and garden apartment complexes—ideally 20 units per acre. Nevertheless, given current fractured parcelization, cobbling together sufficient land could present a challenge.

There is an effort underway to create a Southern Rock Hall of Fame. County representatives are working with the Van Zant family in this endeavor to capitalize on the corridor’s connection to Lynyrd Skynyrd. Such a venue could be a tremendous draw for music fans and tourism in general. It would provide a unique opportunity to differentiate the corridor. Possible funding could come from the 5 percent resort tax.

Currently, St. Johns River State College (SJRSC) and its Thrasher-Horne Center are the corridor’s greatest assets. Centrally located on College Drive, the school, theater and conference center already draw thousands of people annually. The space around the college possesses a natural propensity for activation. Specifically, synergy already exists between Old Jennings Road and Mosley Road with Valentina’s Italian Bistro near SJRSC and the monthly Food Truck Friday event held on the college grounds. That portion of College Drive provides a prime starting point to cluster mixed-use development and serve as a catalyst to spur further development north and south over time.

## Highest & Best Uses

- Restaurants
- Retail
- Professional services
- Higher density housing
- Childcare
- Flex/start-up space
- Recreation

The right mix of businesses, restaurants, cafés, art studios and housing could keep students, local residents and visitors alike on College Drive for neighborhood retail, dining and entertainment. Highest and best uses require extensive financial analysis to ensure uses are suitable, appropriate and/or complementary.



PHOTO: TAP sketch of potential parcels



PHOTOS: Downtown Container Park, Las Vegas, Nevada

Mixed-use developments yield higher return on investment and net operating income over the long term than strip commercial developments, making them more stable and attractive options for investors and developers (APA Planning Advisory Services Report 598). Furthermore, phasing mixed-use projects beginning with highest demand uses helps developers recoup costs faster, which could speed further redevelopment.

The location across from the college provides an opportunity to create container flex space, a low-cost development option that can be converted as needs change. Flex space is ideal for start-ups, small businesses, offices and arts, as well as a retail and dining center. As an example, the Las Vegas Downtown Container Park offers retail, restaurants, bars, and office space with a preference for owner-operated businesses rather than chains or franchises. While this is on a large scale, it can work on a small scale, offering the flexibility needed to kick off investment.

College Drive Initiative advocates seek open and green space as part of the effort to turn the corridor into a destination. The Pond to Park space that has been created has limited expansion opportunities. A center green could be created mid-block in front of the college and across the street.

Green space can be added with pocket parks along College Drive and using the area behind the college as a walking, biking or multi-use trail.

To attract developers to the area, infrastructure and zoning should be in place to create a conducive environment for investment. Water and sewer utilities are available around the college. Gaps in other areas of College Drive should be addressed. In addition, current zoning with nine business categories hampers development. Consolidating the business zoning code into a few broad categories offers greater flexibility. At the same time, the code can be very specific about the kinds of businesses excluded.



IMAGE: Example of mid-block crosswalk (National Association of City Transportation Officials)



Calming traffic and creating a quarter-mile walking district can be achieved by redesigning a portion of College Drive in and around the core development area. A road diet through the core could include dropping from four to two 11-foot travel lanes, creating roundabouts at Old Jennings and Mosley to transition traffic from high speed to lower speed, and adding on-street parking. This would help to create a sense of place, signaling to drivers that they are entering a special location. A 10-foot multipurpose shared path on the college side of the road would provide a safe space for walking and biking, with an 8-foot sidewalk and 6 feet for dining on the opposite side.

To test the road diet before entering into a major financial expenditure, the county could create a tactical urbanism demonstration project using low-cost materials such as temporary bollards, planter boxes and painting bulb-outs to slow and guide traffic through the core area. Since SJRSC seeks to realign their entry to Old Jennings Road and drainage, patch work and milling for College Drive are already planned, this work could be incorporated into a road diet should the concept move forward. Consideration would need to be given to postponing these projects, however, until a corridor redevelopment plan and/or a road diet is approved.

## Roundabouts Improve Safety

Roundabouts improve traffic flow efficiency and overall safety, providing substantial safety and operational benefits compared to other intersection types, notably reducing severe crashes.

Roundabouts have contributed to a 78 to 82 percent reduction in severe crashes; in Florida specifically, early results have shown that implementing roundabouts has resulted in a 15 to 47 percent reduction in all crashes and an 80 percent reduction in serious injuries and fatalities.

*Source: Florida Department of Transportation*



PHOTO: Example of painted bulb-outs, Austin, TX



Surface Treatment

Barrier Elements

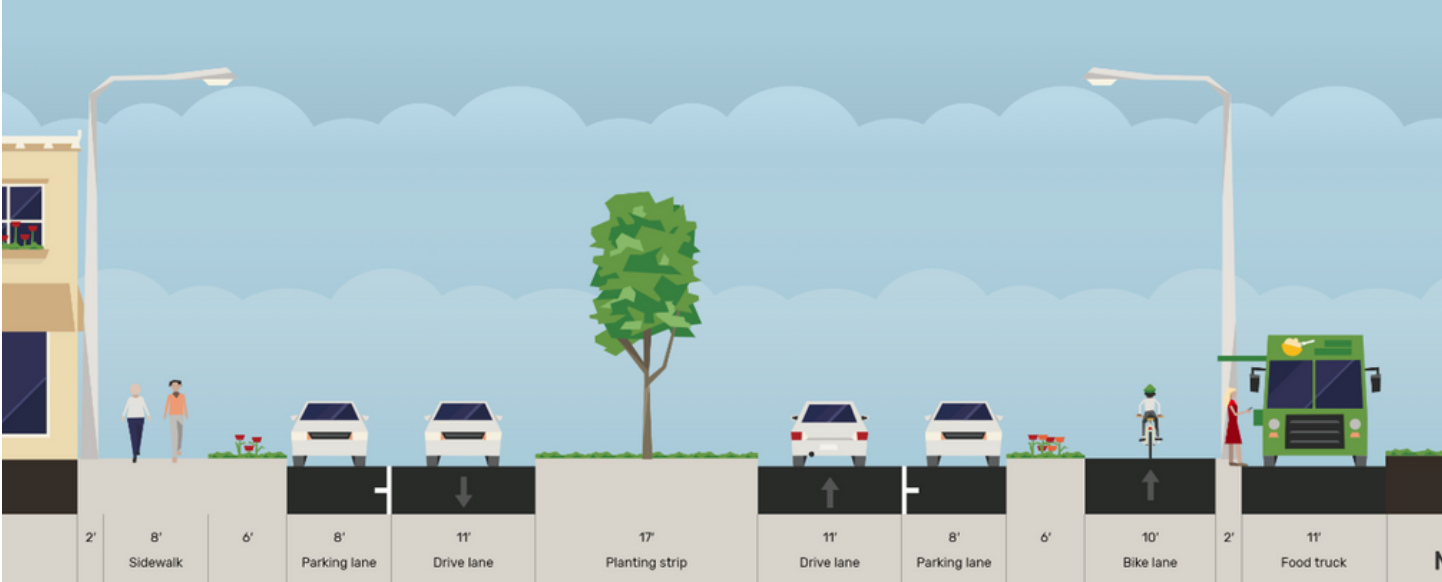
Demonstration roundabout in Livingston, CA (Congress for the New Urbanism: California Chapter).

# College Drive Existing Typical



Made w

# College Drive "Core" Road Diet Option



Federal funding is available for counties and municipalities implementing road safety programs, such as a Vision Zero Action Plan, and Complete Streets projects. Palatka recently received a Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) award of \$960,000 from the Department of Transportation for its Safe Streets Action Plan Initiative. St. Augustine was awarded \$12 million in RAISE (Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity) funds, some of which covers improved pedestrian safety measures.

It is recommended that Clay County also partner with JTA in applying for grants that cover Complete Streets First/Last Mile transportation-oriented development.

Other federal programs that may provide funds for Complete Streets projects and activities include:

- Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation (PROTECT)
- Federal-aid Programs and Special Funding
- Complete Streets Waiver
- Highway Safety Improvement Program
- Surface Transportation Block Grant Program
- Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside
- Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Flex Funding

A design charrette should be considered to help create a master placemaking plan with public engagement. As a forum to introduce, refine, and discuss design concepts with stakeholders, it can serve as the basis for a master plan that guides future development of the corridor's commercial and mixed-use centers.

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“Corridor interventions require short-term momentum and long-term patience.”

— American Planning Association, PAS Report 598

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Funding will be needed to finance capital improvements, such as lighting, streetscapes, median beautification and maintenance, economic development and district marketing. Sources can include the establishment of a Neighborhood Improvement District or a Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA), which is funded by tax increment financing.

Corridor redevelopment is a long-term endeavor. It will require commitment, regular monitoring and re-evaluation based on market conditions and unexpected barriers that might develop, along with fine-tuning redevelopment approaches to better achieve success.





PHOTOS: Examples of a community design charrette

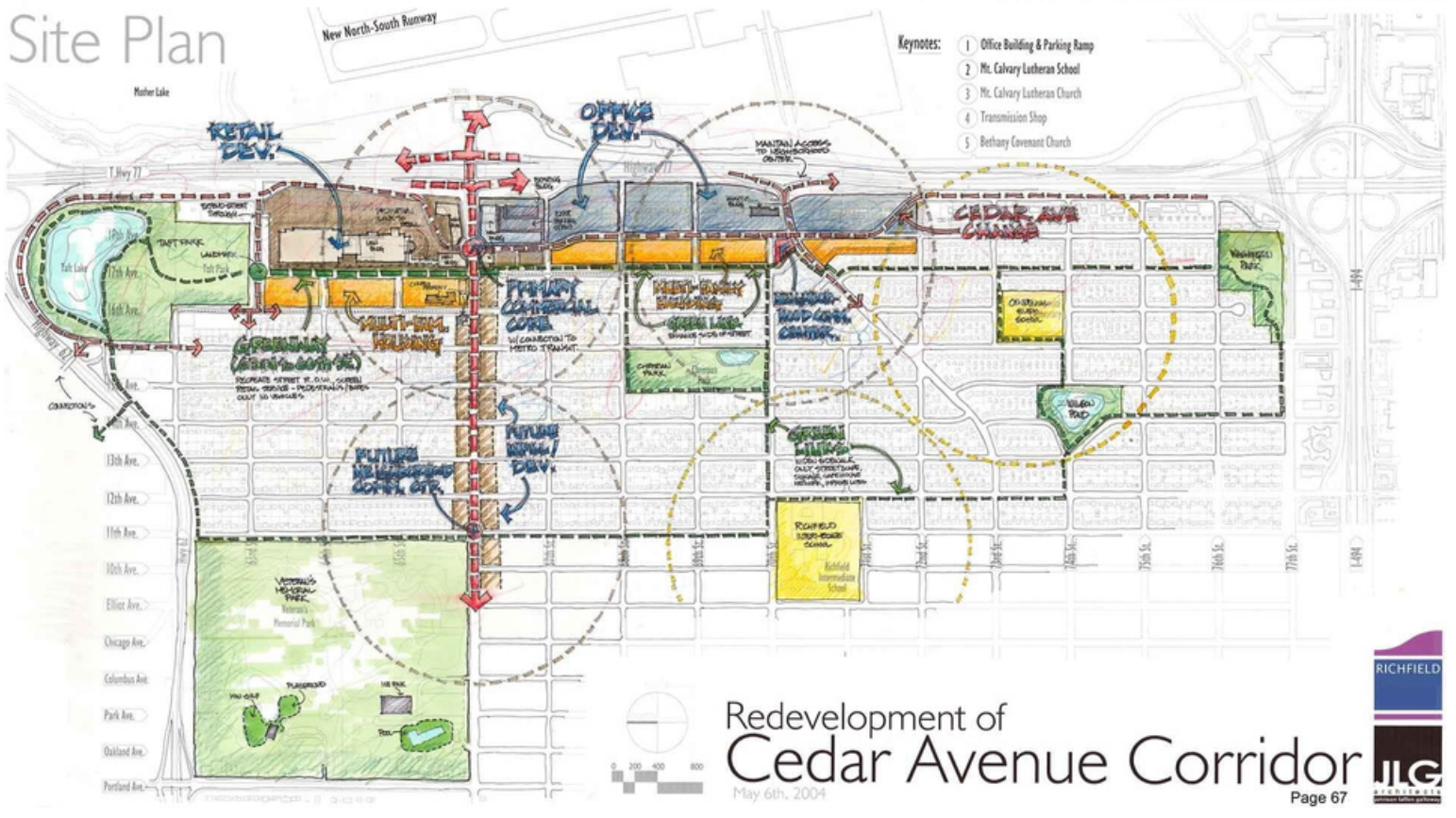


IMAGE: Example of a master design plan

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## **Create a brand or theme for the College Drive corridor.**

TAP members suggest naming the corridor The Brickyard District. As a brand it leverages the area's unique connection to Ronnie Van Zant and Lynyrd Skynyrd and dovetails with any eventual Southern Rock Hall of Fame that would be established. The musical connection also correlates with the Thrasher-Horne entertainment venue.

## **Develop a placemaking plan and initiate a design charrette.**

Establish a working group to engage a design professional to develop a placemaking plan. Initiate a design charrette to create a master plan that will guide all future development.

## **Combine business zones.**

Condense the current nine business zones to create fewer, broader categories of mixed-use, including retail, restaurants, professional offices and high-density residential. Specifically exclude the types of businesses that do not fit with the district's vision.

## **Create a core area between Old Jennings Road and Mosley Road and cluster initial development there.**

Ensure zoning and utilities are in place to make the investment turnkey for developers.

## **Develop highest and best uses.**

These include restaurants, retail, professional services, higher-density housing, childcare, flex/start-up space, recreation.

## **Reconfigure the roadway with a road diet through the core area.**

Create roundabouts at both Old Jennings and Mosley, reduce traffic lanes from four to two between those intersections, add parallel parking and widen sidewalks. Implement a tactical urban demonstration to test the project. Postpone/re-examine road and utility work already planned so that they can be coordinated with a road diet should it occur, which will require reconfiguring sidewalks and moving curbs.

## **Incorporate green space/recreational opportunity.**

Add green space midblock in the core and a linear park/multiuse trail/boardwalk behind the college for walking and biking in keeping with the Clay County outdoor family brand. Look for opportunities to create both passive and active recreation where possible in other sections of College Drive, such as pocket parks.

## **Determine funding sources.**

Establish a Neighborhood Improvement District or Community Redevelopment Agency to finance beautification and maintenance, economic development and district marketing. Explore federal and state funding for Complete Streets and other road safety activities.

# Next Steps

## Short Term (1-3 years)

### Create a Placemaking Plan

- Engage a design professional
- Establish a working group of 8-10 people
- Kick off a week-long design charrette with a “Core” College Drive demonstration

### Develop Formal Action Plan

- Present to County Commission
- Assign responsibilities to stakeholders and set regular check-ins
- Add Action Plan infrastructure changes to the adopted TIP

### Consolidate Business Zoning

### Delay/Re-Examine Resurfacing and Other Road Plans

- Incorporate with road diet and charrette results

### Determine Funding Options

### Look for Active/Passive Recreation Opportunities

### Consolidate Parcels

## Medium Term (3-5 years)

### Implement “Core” Road Diet

### Submit Funding Applications

### Establish Neighborhood Improvement District (if approved)

### Develop Branding and Signage

### Potential Development

- Flex space

## Long Term (5+ years)

### Water, Sewer and Stormwater

- Ensure supports desired level of redevelopment on entire College Drive corridor

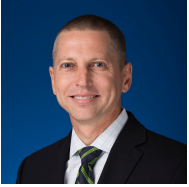
### Redevelop around St. Johns River State College

- Include linear park and mid-block crossing

### Complete Corridor Redesign to Support Mobility



# ABOUT THE PANEL



**Barry Wilcox, AICP, LEED ND**  
**TAP Chair**  
**Leon County**  
**Tallahassee, Florida**

Barry Wilcox has more than 20 years of experience as a professional planner in both the public and private sectors. He is currently the director of Development Support and Environmental Management at Leon County, where he oversees a department comprised of more than 70 professionals working in the fields of urban planning, environmental planning and design, construction permitting and inspection, and code enforcement.

Wilcox has served in multiple leadership roles with APA Florida and as an adjunct professor at Florida State University, his graduate school alma mater.



**Michael Antonopoulos**  
**Michael Antonopoulos, LLC**  
**Ponte Vedra, Florida**

Michael Antonopoulos is a highly accomplished professional with extensive experience in the fields of consulting engineering, planning, and land development management. As the president of Michael Antonopoulos, LLC, formerly known as Michael Antonopoulos & Associates, Inc., he has been providing exceptional services since 1985.

Antonopoulos is also president of MCS Development Corporation. Since its establishment in 1983, he has been a driving force behind numerous successful developments in the First Coast Florida area. His expertise encompasses a wide range of projects, including stand-alone, single and multi-family residential neighborhoods, as well as commercial and mixed-use developments.

Antonopoulos holds a bachelor of science in civil engineering from the University of Florida.



**Owen Beitsch, PhD, FAICP, CRE**  
**GAI, Consultants, Inc.**  
**Orlando, Florida**

Owen Beitsch is the senior director of Economic and Real Estate Advisory Services for the Community Solutions Group of GAI Consultants.

Beitsch is a founding member of the Orlando Neighborhood Improvement Corporation for which he served as chairman for four years, followed by eight years of service as a member of the Orlando Housing Authority Board of Commissioners. He currently serves on Winter Park's Planning and Zoning Board and is the elected chair of the Xentury City Community Development District. In 2010, Beitsch was named a fellow in the American Institute of Certified Planners (FAICP), the highest honor bestowed in the urban planning profession. He was named as the outstanding alumni of University of Central Florida's College of Health and Public Affairs (COHPA) in 2011.

Beitsch attended Vanderbilt University, the University of Florida, and Florida State University before receiving his Ph.D. from the University of Central Florida.



**Cherie Bryant, AICP  
City of Tallahassee  
Tallahassee, Florida**

Cherie Bryant graduated from Florida State with a master's in urban and regional planning and has worked in urban planning for 25 years in both the public and private sector. She has experience in comprehensive land use planning, transportation planning and zoning. From 2013 to 2021, Bryant served as the director of the Tallahassee-Leon County Planning Department. In 2020, she decided to concentrate on the more technical side of urban planning.

Her focus is now on creating tools that help both citizens and elected officials better understand complex interrelationships related to population growth with a goal of fostering collaboration on environmentally and fiscally sustainable solutions. To that end, Bryant began working in the City of Tallahassee Growth Management Department in 2021 and recently received a master's degree in cartography and geographic information systems with a focus in GIS development from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.



**Fred Jones, AICP, RSP1  
The Haskell Company  
Jacksonville, Florida**

Fred Jones is director of The Haskell Company's Planning and Design Collaborative. He has more than 20 years' experience in transportation planning, complete streets, urban design, placemaking, transit accessibility and public engagement.

Jones has served as vice mayor of Neptune Beach, where he initiated several strategic planning initiatives, including a citywide visioning plan, the implementation of an active transportation network and a form-based zoning code update. He was recognized as having one of the best Complete Streets Policies of 2018.

Previously, Jones worked as senior project manager with Michael Baker International and senior transit planner with the Jacksonville Transportation Authority (JTA). He is a member of the National Complete Streets Coalition Steering Committee and Jacksonville's Downtown Development Review Board, where he was a former chairman.

Jones holds a bachelor of arts in anthropology from the University of South Florida and a master of science in urban and regional planning from Florida State University.



**Martha Moore, PE, PTOE, RSP1  
Alfred Benesch & Company  
Jacksonville, Florida**

Martha Moore is senior project and planning group manager for Alfred Benesch & Company. Over her 33-year career, she has combined big-picture thinking with a solid engineering foundation.

Moore focuses on multimodal transportation planning and traffic engineering, including corridor analysis and concept design, safety and traffic operations studies, and traffic impact analysis. With the understanding that great communities are built around great corridors, she has led corridor planning and implementation studies that utilize a Complete Streets approach to provide a safe, comfortable and equitable travel experience for users of all ages and abilities. Moore has successfully conducted numerous public meetings for DOTs, local governments and agencies in support of these projects and has provided expert testimony services for both municipal and private clients.

Moore holds a bachelor of civil engineering degree from Georgia Institute of Technology and a bachelor of science degree from Jacksonville University.



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