

**Town of Fort Myers Beach**  
Coastal Florida Recovery and  
Resiliency Partnership Project (R2P2)

COASTAL FLORIDA RECOVERY AND RESILIENCY PARTNERSHIP PROJECT (R2P2)



Fort Myers

Fort Myers Beach

Sanibel

Prepared For



**THE TOWN OF FORT MYERS BEACH**

Managed By



**U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY**

Prepared By



**HORSLEY WITTEN GROUP**  
SUSTAINABLE DESIGN & RESILIENCY

DOVER, KOHL & PARTNERS  
town planning

**DOVER, KOHL & PARTNERS**  
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## What is the Coastal Florida Recovery and Resiliency Partnership Project (R2P2)?

The Recovery and Resiliency Partnership Project (R2P2) is a community-focused U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Disaster Recovery program that provides free technical assistance to communities impacted by a major disaster declaration. The R2P2 Technical Assistance aims to improve a community's resilience to future flooding events, improve protection of natural resources, and increase long-term sustainability.

The program's goal is to develop a set of community-driven conceptual designs that reflects a participating community's vision for long-term recovery and can be used to leverage federal, state, nonprofit, or other funding resources for implementation.

The Coastal Florida R2P2 supports three communities: The City of Fort Myers, the Town of Fort Myers Beach, and the City of Sanibel. These communities were severely impacted by Hurricane Ian in September 2022 and are closely connected spatially across the impact area. Each community maintains a strong independence in setting local resilience goals but recognizes the value in partnering with county, state, federal, and non-governmental organizations in their long-term recovery planning.



### FEDERAL AND STATE PARTNERS



# Hurricane Ian in Southwest Florida

## Arrival of Hurricane Ian

Hurricane Ian made its first Florida landfall over the barrier island of Cayo Costa during the afternoon of September 28, 2022 (Figure 1). Ian weakened slightly before it struck land at an estimated wind speed of 130 knots (about 150 miles per hour), making it a Category 4 hurricane at landfall.

Due to a southward shift in the track of Ian as it approached southwest Florida, the actual landfall was near the southern end of the forecast cone of uncertainty, surprising those residents who assumed Ian would land closer to the center of the cone. The ultimate track of Ian is shown on Figure 2.

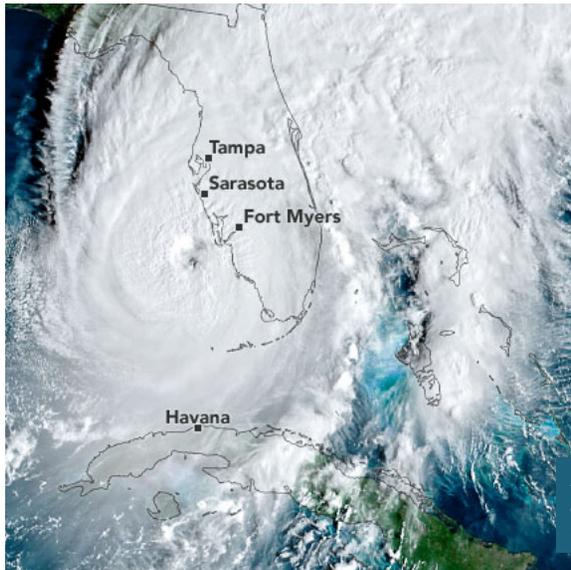


Figure 1. Satellite image of Hurricane Ian, September 28, 2022 (source: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration)

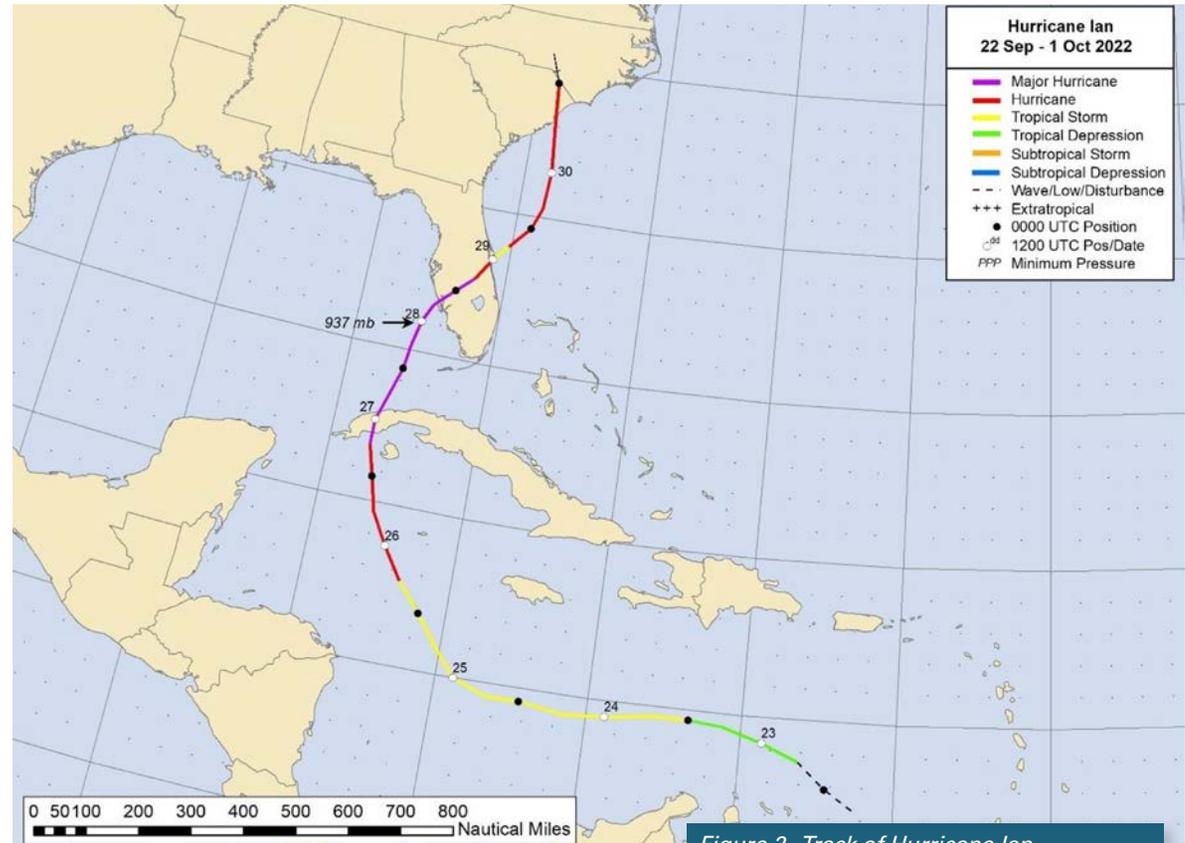


Figure 2. Track of Hurricane Ian (source: National Hurricane Center Tropical Cyclone Report-- Hurricane Ian (AL092022), April 3, 2023)

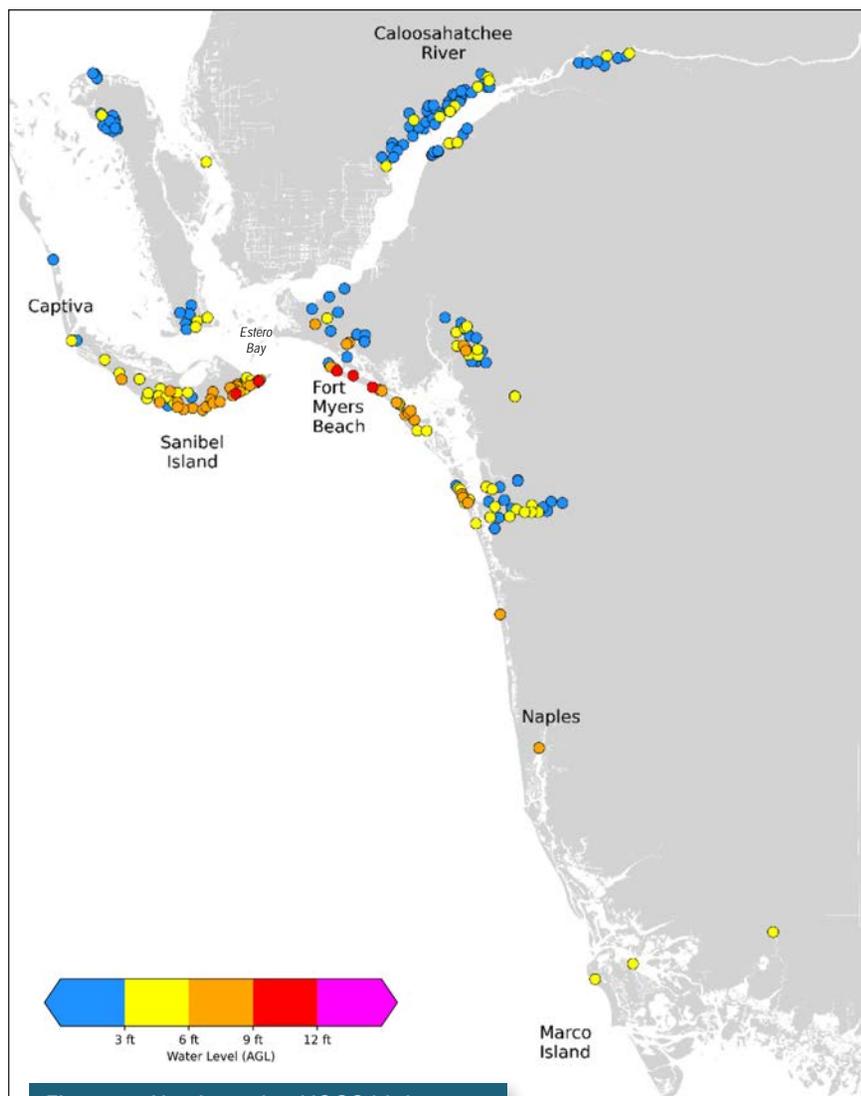


Figure 3. Hurricane Ian USGS high water marks (source: National Hurricane Center Tropical Cyclone Report-- Hurricane Ian (AL092022), April 3, 2023)

## Storm Surge and Rainfall

Southwest Florida is extremely vulnerable to storm surge. The Gulf of Mexico is shallow and the land in Southwest Florida is very low lying and includes a number of barrier islands, which are comprised of naturally shifting sands. Coastal storms with significant storm surge can push waters up and over the coastal barrier islands, resulting in extensive property loss, erosion of beaches, damage to coastal habitats, and infrastructure.

The exact track of Hurricane Ian, its strong winds, and its large size all contributed to its devastating impacts. Ian produced a catastrophic storm surge along the southwest coast of Florida, most heavily affecting areas just south of landfall, especially Sanibel and Estero Islands, but also rivers and bays such as the Caloosahatchee and Estero Bay.

High water marks reported by the United States Geological Survey (USGS) are shown in Figure 3. Storm surge watches and warnings were in effect well in advance of tropical-storm-force winds.

The first evacuation orders for coastal Lee County were issued on September 27 at 7:00am, with additional orders issued at 8:45am and 1:45pm. Only a small number of people traveled to public shelters during that day. At 6:30pm, with landfall expected around 3:00pm the next day, residents were formally requested to arrive at shelters by 8:00pm that evening or to "shelter in place."

The heaviest rainfall from Ian occurred just north of Ian's track, sparing the areas subject to the highest storm surge from also experiencing torrential rains as Ian passed.

Two years later, Hurricane Helene's storm surge flooded Fort Myers Beach again, despite Helene's eye never being closer than 200 miles offshore. Two weeks after Helene, Hurricane Milton struck Florida's west coast and flooded Fort Myers Beach yet again. These events were yet another severe blow to a community still struggling to recover from the devastation caused by Hurricane Ian. Both surges were much lower than what Fort Myers Beach experienced during Hurricane Ian, but provide a clear warning about the severity that Fort Myers Beach should expect from future hurricanes.

## Hurricane Ian and Hurricane Charley

Many residents of southwest Florida had experienced the landfall of Hurricane Charley in 2004. Charley made landfall in almost the same location as Ian, with a similar intensity of 130 knots (150 miles per hour). However, the impacts of these two hurricanes on southwest Florida were very different.

The eye of Hurricane Charley was very small, limiting its most severe wind damage to a much smaller path across northern Pine Island, Charlotte Harbor, Punta Gorda, and Port Charlotte. Charley's storm surge was considerably less severe; maximum surge heights were reported to be 6 to 7 feet on Sanibel and Estero Islands, 4.2 feet in Estero Bay, and 3.5 feet along the Caloosahatchee in Fort Myers. Experience with Hurricane Charley was deceptive for people who were expecting comparable impacts from Hurricane Ian (Figure 4).



*Figure 4. A timeline of images taken from video footage of a single location along Estero Boulevard as Hurricane Ian passed over Fort Myers Beach on September 28, 2022. (source: National Hurricane Center Tropical Cyclone Report-- Hurricane Ian (AL092022), April 3, 2023, image credit Matt Olson)*



# Overview of Fort Myers Beach

## Government

The Town of Fort Myers Beach was formed in late 1995. Before then, Estero Island was governed as part of unincorporated Lee County. The town's municipal boundary includes all of Estero Island but not San Carlos Island or other adjoining islands (Figure 5). The town is governed by five council members who are elected at-large. Council members choose a mayor from among their ranks. A town manager runs the day-to-day affairs of the town and answers directly to the council and mayor.

## Population

The town's permanent population in 2020 was 5,582, living in 3,497 households. Since the town had a total of 9,460 housing units, that leaves 5,963 housing units (about 63%) that were not occupied by permanent residents. Most of those units are occupied by seasonal residents or visitors; some were vacant during the 2020 census. Even before Hurricane Ian, the town's permanent population had been decreasing, down from 6,277 permanent residents in 2010 and 6,561 in 2000.

The town is a long-time tourist destination, largely based on its seven miles of sandy beach and its vibrant, welcoming atmosphere. Tourism in the town was accommodated by about 4,123 hotel/motel rooms and vacation rentals prior to the storm. The sandy beach remains today, but due to Hurricane Ian, many businesses supporting tourism have not yet been able to rebuild and reopen.



Figure 5. The Town of Fort Myers Beach located on Estero Island

## Land Area, Topography, and Floodplain

The land area of the Town of Fort Myers Beach, measured above Mean Sea Level, is about 2.8 square miles, located entirely on the coastal barrier island known as Estero Island. The elevation of land on the island is very low. Not surprisingly, the entire island sits within the floodplain delineated by FEMA as having a 1% chance of flooding in any given year, also known as the 100-year floodplain. In addition, much of the island, particularly on the Gulf of Mexico shoreline, is within the velocity zone (VE Zone) where waves during a flood are anticipated to be higher than 3 feet. With the more frequent and powerful storms that are occurring in this area and across the southeastern US, it is evident that this area has a significant flood and wind risk that challenges the community's recovery and resilience process.

## Demographic Summary

The following table compares basic demographic data about permanent residents of the town with the same data for Lee County and for the state of Florida as a whole. Fort Myers Beach permanent residents have a higher median income, are far less likely to be employed, and are much older than county or state residents generally.



Figure 6: View looking south along Estero Boulevard, 6 months after Hurricane Ian (source: USA Today, Ricardo Rolon, March 23, 2023)

	Fort Myers Beach	Lee County	State of Florida
<b>Median household income (2022)</b>	\$87,204	\$71,072	\$69,303
<b>Employment rate (2022)</b>	32.8 %	51.3 %	56.8 %
<b>Median age (2022)</b>	66.6	49.5	42.7

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

# Physical Effects from Hurricane Ian

## Damage and Casualties

The Town of Fort Myers Beach suffered a direct hit from Hurricane Ian and was one of the hardest hit areas anywhere along its path. Sixteen people died and about 540 residents were rescued from the storm.

## Buildings and Housing

All structures in the town were affected to some extent, with 1,046 homes and businesses deemed by the town to be “substantially damaged” and another 2,100 deemed to be “partially damaged.” The town has long been known for its older wood-frame cottages, hundreds of which were destroyed by Ian. Structures in the blocks closest to the Gulf of Mexico and facing Matanzas Pass were damaged most severely by a combination of storm surge, wave action, and high winds (Figures 6 and 7).

Eighty percent of homes in the town were built before 1990; older homes rarely meet current building codes and most are less resilient to natural disasters than newer homes. Many homes of all ages were completely inaccessible through October 2022 as FEMA and fire district representatives conducted search, rescue, and recovery efforts. Many taller condominium buildings that appeared to withstand the storm still required extensive repairs, especially to elevators, wiring, and rooms on lower floors. Many of these buildings cannot be occupied even two years after Hurricane Ian.



Figure 7. Aerial view of damage after Hurricane Ian (source: Wilfredo Lee, Associated Press, September 29, 2022)



### Cost of Damage

NOAA estimates that Hurricane Ian was the third-costliest hurricane on record in the United States and the most expensive to ever strike the State of Florida, causing \$112 billion in overall damages, with more than \$109 billion of that amount occurring in Florida.

## Utilities, Water, and Wastewater

Hurricane Ian caused a complete loss of electric service in the town, since poles and overhead powerlines were destroyed by high winds and the storm surge. By mid-November 2022, 1,179 properties had their power restored.

The Town of Fort Myers Beach is served by public water and sewer. The storm surge inundated the public water supply system, particularly equipment and piping near ground level, which are maintained by the town and supplied with water from the mainland by Lee County Utilities. Running water began to be available to some streets in late October 2022.

## Flooding and Debris

As Hurricane Ian's storm surge engulfed the island, the stormwater system was overloaded. Drain outlets, swales, and channels were filled with water, sand, and/or debris, thereby limiting the conveyance of flood water even after the surge had ebbed. Manmade and natural debris kept beaches, homes, and commercial buildings from being accessible for weeks and even months. Sediment and debris washed into the island's many navigable canals; town officials have estimated that over 255,000 cubic yards of sediment will need to be dredged from the canals.

## Damage to Businesses

The destruction caused by Hurricane Ian initially closed all businesses (Figure 8). Prior to Ian, there had been 82 restaurants and bars operating on the island; some have managed to reopen. Before Ian, there had been about 1,916 hotel/motel rooms and 2,207 vacation rentals within the town; as of late summer 2024, 2,478 of those (60%) had reopened. The Margaritaville Resort near Times Square, which was elevated significantly above ground surface and which was under construction when Ian hit, suffered only minor damage; it was able to open in late 2023. The main grocery store (Publix) and pharmacy (CVS) reopened in

2023. Marinas have reopened. There are still no banks or medical facilities (for example, urgent care) on the island. Some stores at Santini Plaza, a shopping center at the south end of the island, began reopening in late 2024 despite additional flooding from Hurricanes Helene and Milton.

## Public, Natural, & Cultural Sites

Many of the town's key community and tourist sites experienced significant damage:

- Approximately 2 to 2.5 feet (in elevation) of sand eroded from the surface of the beaches.



*Figure 8. Extensive destruction and debris after Hurricane Ian (source: Bobby Pratt, September 29, 2022)*

- The Fort Myers Beach Pier at Times Square was destroyed; only concrete pilings remain.
- Town Hall was damaged beyond repair; the building has since been demolished.
- The Fort Myers Beach mooring field on the bay side of the island experienced debris deposition, sunken vessels, the loss of mooring systems, and the loss of the dingy dock.
- Bayside Park was mostly destroyed (but has since been rebuilt and renamed Bayside Veterans Park).
- The Bay Oaks gymnasium, part of the

town's recreation complex, took on 8 to 10 feet of water but was not destroyed. This recreation complex was used as an island-wide debris staging site for several months after Ian and continued to have debris and materials on-site for over 18 months post-Ian; it is currently the site of an interim Town Hall in modular buildings.

- Mound House, a museum that sits atop a 2,000-year-old Calusa Indian mound on the highest point on the island, suffered flood damage but is now operational.
- Newton Beach Park and its historic cottage were completely washed away.

The site was used for material storage and staging for the emergency berm and beach renourishment projects. A new beachfront park will be built on this site.

- Fort Myers Beach Elementary School has remained a focal point for the community even as enrollment has decreased as the Town's population has shifted toward more part-time residents and vacation properties. The school reopened in November 2023 after it was closed by Hurricane Ian, but had to close again after flooding from Hurricane Milton in late 2024.



Figure 9. Shortly after the storm, residents created hand-painted street signs to replace those lost in the storm.



Figure 10. Bayside Veterans Park was dedicated on the one year anniversary of the storm.

## Beach Recovery Efforts

A key priority for the Town of Fort Myers Beach has been to “restore and maintain critically eroding shorelines” through “engineered beach design” in an effort to mitigate storm damage, enhance recreational space, and improve critical coastal habitats for threatened and endangered species.

The Town has completed or was in the process of completing several projects in the years since Hurricane Ian, bringing in mined or dredged sand to install, repair, or construct berms at various stretches along the island. Projects were funded from various federal, state, and local sources, including

FEMA, the Florida Department of Emergency Management, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Lee County Tourism Development Council, and the Town of Fort Myers Beach.

As efforts progressed, Hurricane Helene brought significant storm surge and high winds destroying much of the constructed berms, depositing large amounts of sand onto Estero Boulevard (Figure 11). Town Staff noted that the berm did help to dissipate wave energy brought by the storm but that the storm surge height exceeded that of the berm, causing much of it to be washed away.

## Spirit of Community

While the damage caused by Hurricane Ian was extensive, the community spirit to come together, to help one another, and to rebuild beloved island homes and businesses has been evident throughout recovery efforts. Countless stories of neighbors helping neighbors and community efforts to build back a stronger, more resilient Fort Myers Beach are reflective of the town’s long legacy of town-building and local pride. Continued efforts to respect the character of the place while building back is essential to maintaining the beach community that so many treasure.



*Figure 11. Storm surge from Hurricane Helene caused much of the sand from engineered berms to be washed on to Estero Boulevard (source: Andrew West, The News-Press/USA Today Network, September 2024)*



*Figure 12 The clock was unveiled one year after the storm. (source: Andrew West, The News-Press, September 28, 2023)*

## R2P2 Planning Process

Initial discussions and communications between EPA, FEMA, and Fort Myers Beach staff and leadership began immediately following Hurricane Ian. A consultant team was brought on board by EPA, with funding from FEMA, to support Fort Myers Beach with technical assistance. This team helped the town and Federal Agencies to refocus the initial list of project ideas and needs, and quickly visited the town and the potential project sites in March 2024. The team then developed some 'food for thought' based on the site visits and discussions, and brought that material back to the community of Fort Myers Beach during several days of open design meetings hosted at the interim Town Hall in June 2024. The Town and consultant team hosted a Community Input Session on the evening of June 12, 2024, with a full house of over 50 people in attendance. This was followed by a two-day open studio at Town Hall during which residents were invited to drop in or attend project-specific meetings to discuss their questions and bring forward ideas. A public survey was published online for 3 weeks following the June open studio, garnering responses from 75 people.

For more information on the **Community Engagement Process**, please see the **Appendix**.



*Figure 13. From bay to beach, the R2P2 planning team worked with town leaders to identify project goals, constraints, and potential solutions.*

# Community Goals

The premise of the Recovery and Resiliency Partnership is that outside technical assistance can help the Town of Fort Myers Beach meet its post Hurricane Ian recovery and/or resilience goals, particularly those that aren't being addressed through existing activities and available funding.

Initially, the town was asked to identify potential projects that might help meet these goals. The federal partners and consulting team worked with town officials and other stakeholders to narrow the list to those where technical assistance could be most valuable to the town and most responsive to immediate or longer-term needs.

Prior to embarking on technical analyses, public engagement, identification of options, and preparation of conceptual designs, the focus areas in Figure 14 below and further described on the following page, were selected with the Town of Fort Myers Beach as the most promising places to benefit from the R2P2 technical assistance.



Figure 14. Project focus areas selected to advance community goals

## 1

## Could We Move Around Town Without Our Cars?

For many decades, traffic on Fort Myers Beach has come to a standstill during peak travel periods, seemingly defying every solution that could be imagined to eliminate this congestion. A number of minor improvements have been made over the years; however, useful improvements seem to encourage more driving, since the congestion never goes away.

Thriving cities often face their own version of the same basic problem — too many cars, not enough space. Since solutions that encourage more driving can be futile, successful solutions tend to involve other ways for people to move around, such as public transit, encouraging people to walk or bike when they can do so instead of driving. One potential solution is to keep popular or essential destinations close to residential areas, such as grocery stores and health care services.

Finding ways to better connect at a personal scale, between and across neighborhoods, making it easier to participate in local patterns of life on Fort Myers Beach, is also a mechanism for improving the community bonds that improve local resilience.

How might these solutions, or others, work under Fort Myers Beach's unique conditions? How might alternative transportation connections and nodes be incorporated into the redevelopment of private and public lands following Hurricane Ian. **This report presents a connectivity map that identifies promising mobility ideas for the town's future.**

## 2

## When Can We Enjoy the Beach Again?

Estero Island is blessed with abundant waterfront, much of it easily accessible to the public via dedicated beach and water access points, a fishing pier into the Gulf, a waterfront nature preserve, and numerous public parks.

Public access to the beach and coastal resources has been greatly impaired due to severe damage from Hurricane Ian. Restoration work is ongoing by Lee County for its pier, nature preserve, and county parks. The beach itself is being rebuilt to replace lost sand. Due to its multitude of other critical storm-related priorities, the Town of Fort Myers Beach is much less able to focus on rebuilding its parks.

Newton Beach Park and its historic cottage were completely washed away. This is a beloved and well used town park that supports Fort Myers Beach residents and visitors alike. It needs to be completely rebuilt, standing as a vacant sandy parcel almost 2 years following Hurricane Ian. **This report offers design ideas for a post-Ian Newton Beach Park.**

## 3

## Is There a More Resilient Future for Fort Myers Beach?

The Town of Fort Myers Beach was approaching full build-out under its Comprehensive Plan decades before Hurricane Ian. The town's plans and codes encourage redevelopment in a few central areas, such as Old San Carlos Boulevard, but otherwise limit development to fairly low levels due to the town's risky coastal location and its perennially congested streets.

Hurricane Ian resulted in the destruction of so many buildings in the town that it can feel like there is a clean slate and that anything is possible for the future. However, other than the short-term reduction in traffic on Estero Boulevard, the underlying conditions that led to previous limitations are just as relevant — and undoubtedly more urgent now that early stages of the long-term trends of increasingly strong storms have become so apparent.

Most buildings facing the popular pedestrian plaza at Times Square were completely demolished by Ian. Services offered in those buildings, plus the pier and the public facilities in adjoining Lynn Hall Park, combined to create the vibrancy and popularity of Times Square, enjoyed equally by residents and visitors. **This report explores alternative futures for the next iteration of Times Square, in an effort to assist Fort Myers Beach in bouncing back from the damage of Hurricane Ian while also adapting to change and reducing risk from future hazards. This is the very definition of a more resilient future.**

# Island-Wide Mobility and Connections

## Existing, Planned, and Possible

Fort Myers Beach is dependent on Estero Boulevard as the single continuous street connection running the length of the island. From 2015-2022, Lee County rebuilt Estero Boulevard from Margaritaville to Big Carlos Pass, and the Town rebuilt it from Old San Carlos to Bowditch Point. The reconstruction added separated bicycle lanes for a long section with a notable exception for the stretch between Times Square and the Red Coconut site (a previous RV park along Estero Boulevard). Within this key stretch large sidewalks were incorporated on both sides of the road, but a limited public right-of-way width precluded the addition of bike lanes separate from the road and sidewalk.

The Town continues to work toward improvements that help reduce vehicle trips on Estero Boulevard, encouraging walking, bicycling, trolley use, and parking improvements to reduce vehicular congestion. This includes the adoption of the Town of Fort Myers Beach Bicycle + Pedestrian Master Plan. The graphics labeled as 'planned' on the map are proposed in the Master Plan.

The following strategies emerged from the R2P2 process to build on the City's connectivity momentum:

### 1 Mobility Improvements

Opportunities for comfortable pedestrian/ bike path networks parallel to Estero Boulevard are shown, especially connecting the gap between Times Square, the Mound House, and Red Coconut where Estero Boulevard lacks separated bicycle lanes.

### 2 Water Taxi / Ferry

A water taxi would provide another means of transportation within Fort Myers Beach, also connecting to San Carlos Island and potentially Sanibel. Water taxi stops must be aligned with pedestrian/bicycle networks on the island to enable safe and comfortable travel to-from and along the northern inland side of Fort Myers Beach without a car.



### 3 Future Estero Blvd. Improvements

Southeast of the Red Coconut site, retrofit of Estero Boulevard to provide a separated trail with a buffer between the trail and moving vehicles would greatly improve pedestrian/ bicycle safety and comfort, and could dramatically boost walking and biking as viable alternatives to vehicular travel.

### 4 Mobility Improvements

Crescent, Third and Fifth Streets are marked as planned bike boulevards, (as shown in the Master Plan), but street retrofits providing one-way vehicular circulation could unlock space for additional pedestrian / bicycle space including bike lanes or multi-use trails. (See next page.)

Figure 15. Island-wide Mobility Map

Legend	Existing	Planned	Possible	Existing
<b>Pedestrian &amp; Bike Access</b>				
Nature Trail				
Multi-Use Trail				
Shared Lane Marking				
Bicycle Boulevard				
Separated Bike Lane				
<b>Water Access</b>				
Ferry / Water Trail Routes				
Ferry / Water Taxi Stop				
Kayak Launch				
Marina				
Beach Access				
<b>Public Transportation</b>				
Bus Route 490/410				
Seasonal Tram Route				
<b>Public Lands</b>				
Public Parks				
Conservation Area				



1a Florida Gulf Coast Trail  
Coastal loop continues to Summerlin Rd.

1b Florida Gulf Coast Trail  
Coastal loop continues to Hickory Blvd. and Bonita Beach Rd.

Potential Ferry Extension to Mound Key / Coconut Rd / Bonita Beach Rd



**A Estero Boulevard Near Primo Drive**

A major pinch point on Estero Boulevard is just past the Margaritaville elevated pedestrian crossing and beach access point 36/Primo Drive. This location has a limited right-of-way (ROW) without an alternative beach route. Any additional traffic calming that can be incorporated into this location should be utilized such as street trees and vehicular lane narrowing. Additionally, the Town should explore possible opportunities with adjacent property owners to obtain additional right-of-way width that could be used to further improve the streetscape.

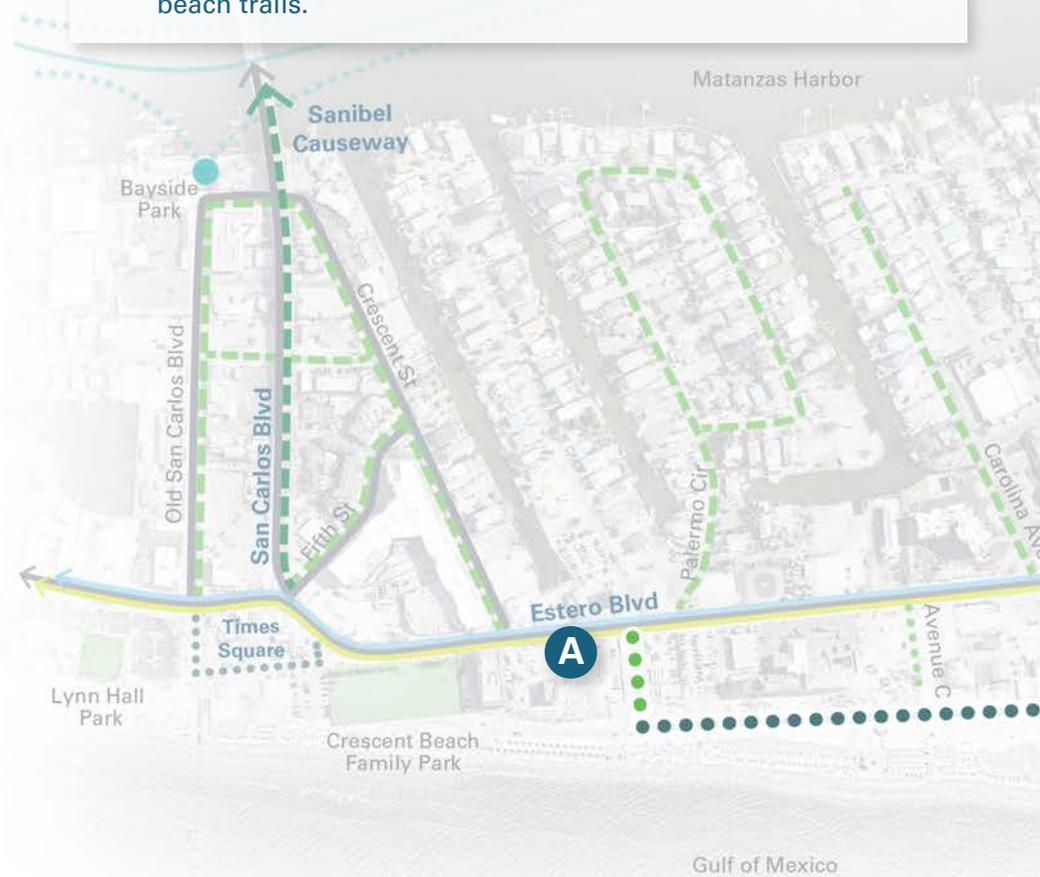


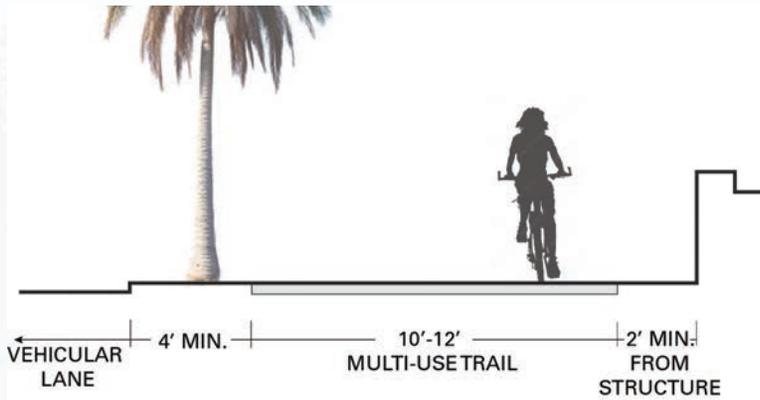
**B Beach Trail**

If a paved path is not possible, then mats can be used for beach trails.

**Legend**

	Existing	Planned	Possible
<b>Pedestrian &amp; Bike Access</b>			
Nature Trail	—		•••••
Multi-Use Trail			•••••
Shared Lane Marking	—		
Bicycle Boulevard		—	•••••
Separated Bike Lane	—	—	
<b>Water Access</b>			
Kayak Launch	Ⓚ		
<b>Public Transportation</b>			
Bus Route 490/410	—		
Seasonal Tram Route	—		
<b>Public Lands</b>			
Public Parks	■		
Conservation Area	■		



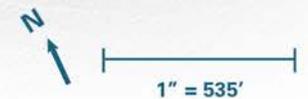


### C Multi-use Trail

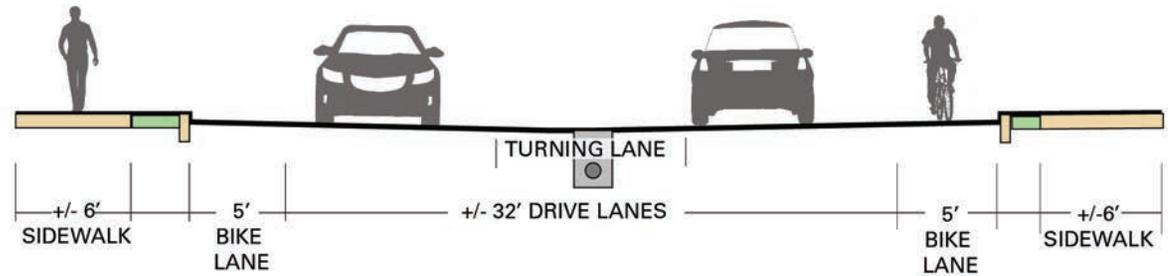
The multi-use trail should be a minimum of 10 feet wide, ideally 12 feet wide with at least a 4 foot buffer between the trail and any vehicular lanes. There should be a minimum of 2 feet between the edge of the path and any structure such as a wall.



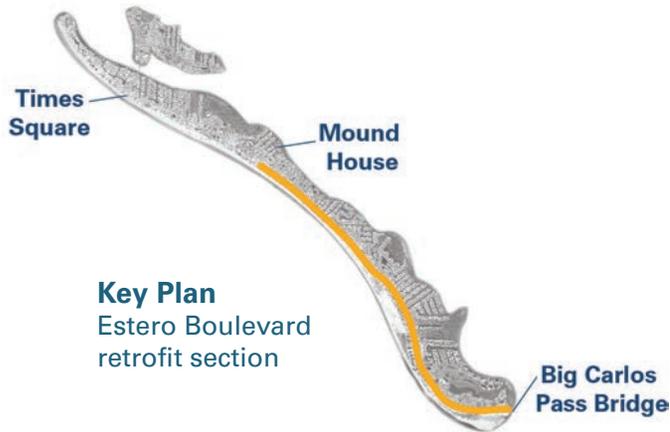
Figure 16. The “Times Square to Red Coconut” is a critical missing mobility link because existing conditions on Estrero Boulevard are too narrow to accommodate bicycle infrastructure or wider sidewalks. Parallel connections within the network can provide for additional ways to safely and comfortably travel without a car.



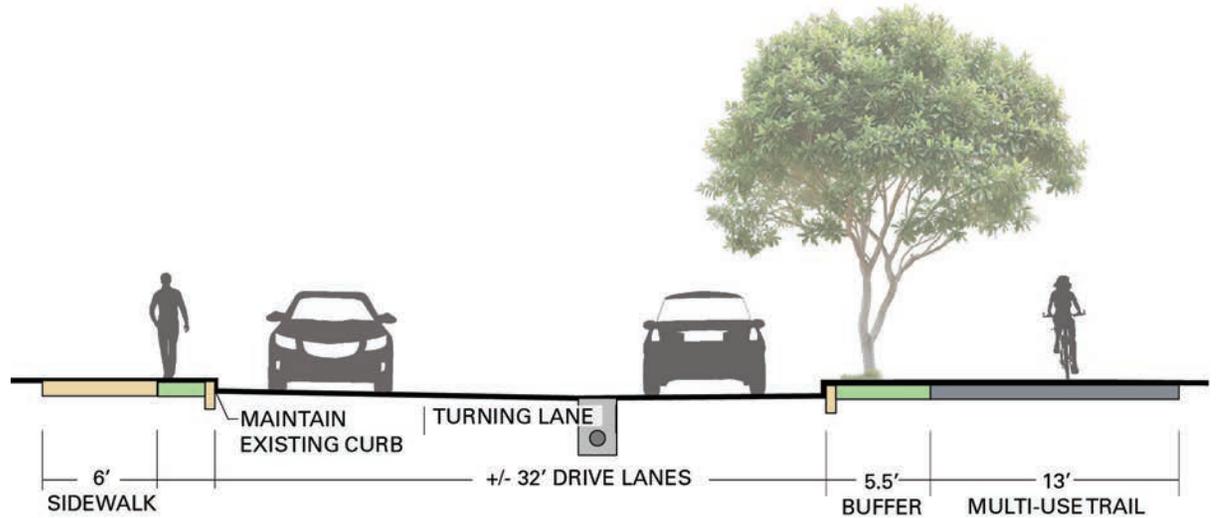
## Options for Future Estero Boulevard Improvements



**Figure 17. Existing Conditions:** Estero Boulevard east of Red Coconut site includes one vehicular and bike lane in each direction, and sidewalks on both sides. The ROW width is generally 60', widening to 70' in some areas.



**Key Plan**  
Estero Boulevard retrofit section



**Figure 18. Option 1:** Combining both bike lanes into a single buffered multi-use path provides for more comfortable pedestrian/bike space with limited impact to existing pavement and curbs. Driveway entrances can be constructed sloping up to the path to prevent an uncomfortable undulating surface. Additionally, street trees planted in the landscape buffer could provide shade further improving the pedestrian/bike experience.

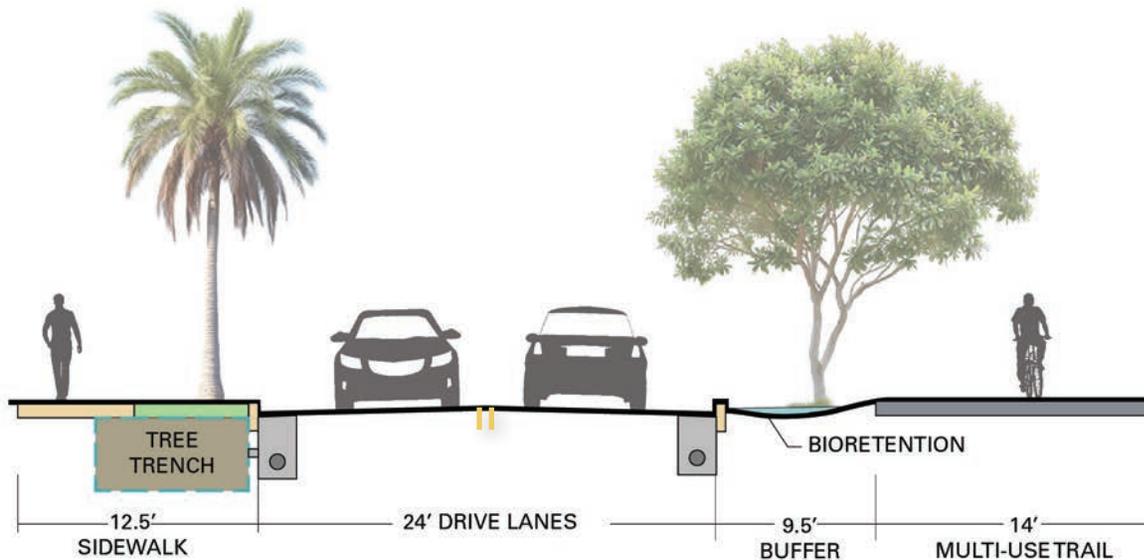


Figure 19. **Option 2:** Eliminating the center vehicular turn lane where possible provides additional room to add landscape and green stormwater infrastructure elements such as tree trenches and bioretention into the buffer spaces. This option shifts the curb on both sides of Estero Blvd to repurpose existing pavement.

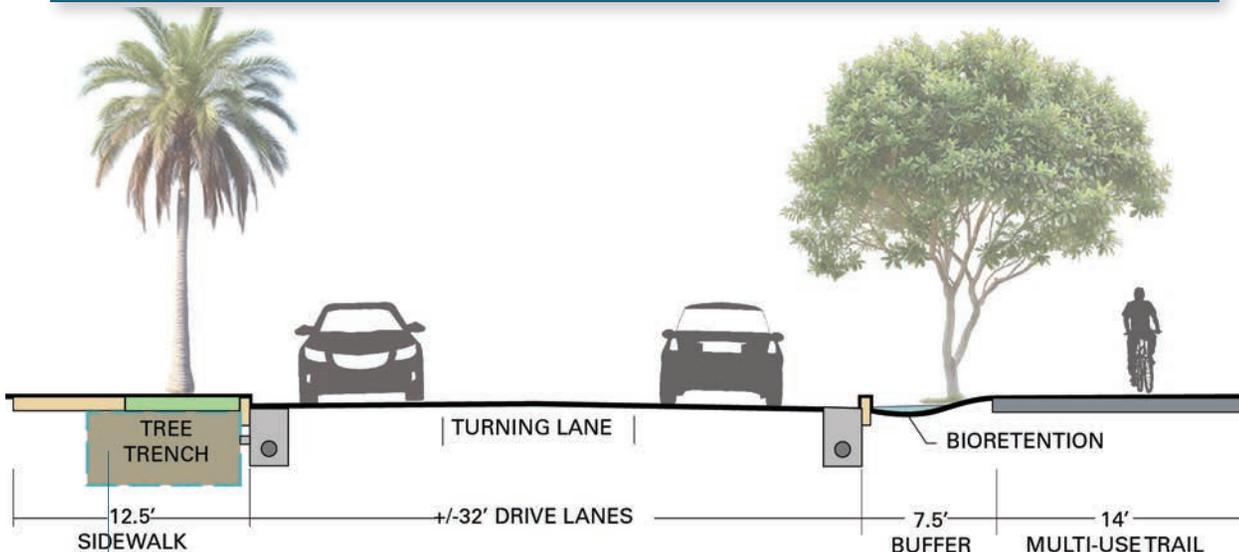


Figure 20. **Option 3:** In areas with a wider ROW the road could incorporate a center turning lane, a multi-use path with better green buffer, and a wider sidewalk. This option may introduce conflicts with existing features (signs, utilities, etc) requiring relocation as well as additional property owner coordination if the ROW extends past the existing back of sidewalk.

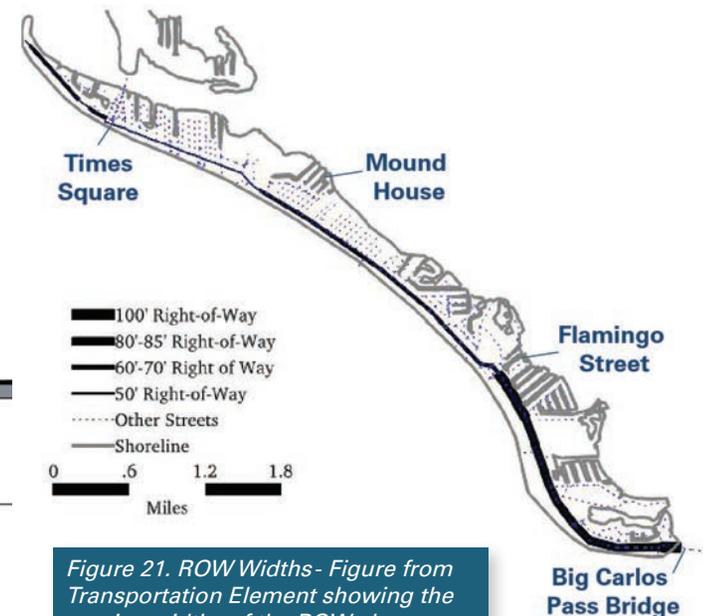


Figure 21. ROW Widths- Figure from Transportation Element showing the varying widths of the ROW along Estero Boulevard.

## Possible Water Taxi Stop and Water Access: Southeast End of Estero Blvd

### Key Plan

Launch & ferry stop locations



This location provides opportunity for access to the water from Amberjack Drive. A kayak launch could allow for exploration of Buccaneer Lagoon and a water taxi dock would connect the east end of the island with the rest of Fort Myers Beach.



Figure 23. Existing conditions mangrove area



Figure 22. Existing conditions (source: Daniel Spikowski)



Figure 24. Existing conditions Amberjack Drive



Figure 25. Sample image of a boardwalk in mangrove

Legend

-  **Approx. Mangrove Area**
-  **Existing Pavement Edge**
-  **Proposed Pavement Edge**
-  **Traffic Flow**
-  **Sidewalk**
-  **Boardwalk**
-  **Fence**
-  **Bike Boulevard**
-  **Bike Rack**
-  **Signage**
-  **Planting Island**
-  **Bioretention**

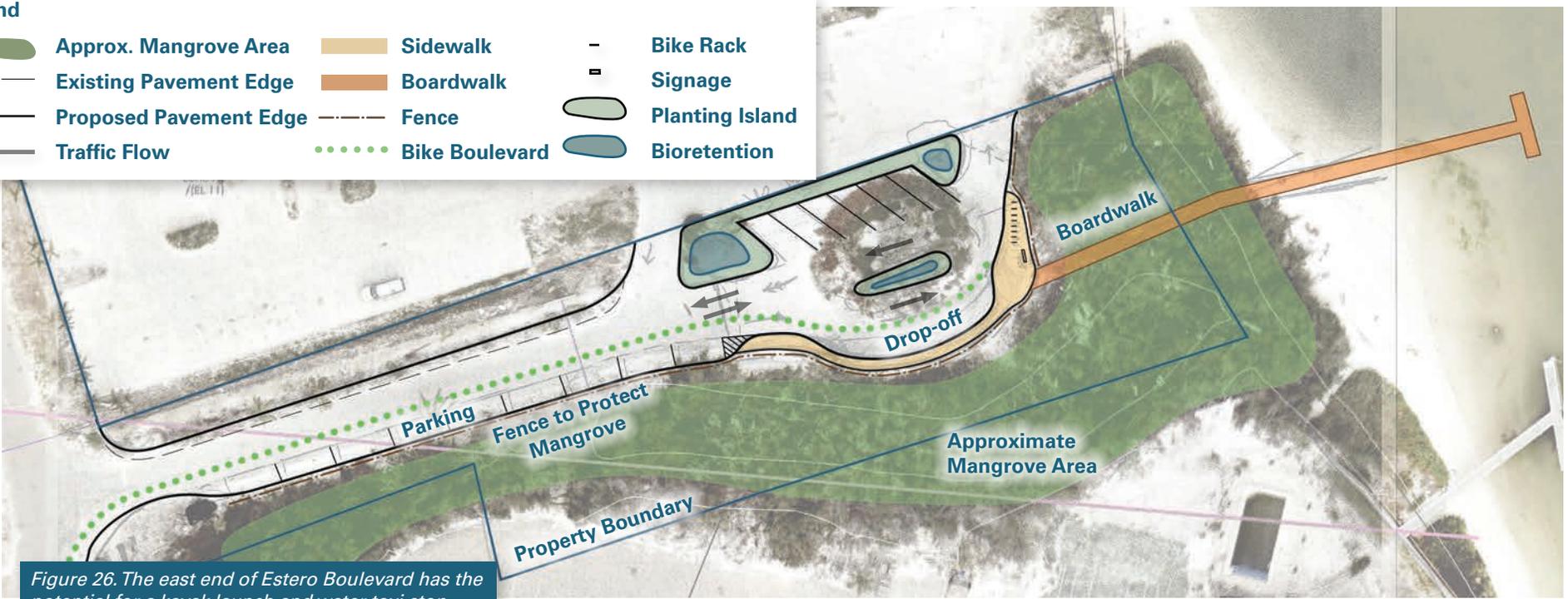


Figure 26. The east end of Estero Boulevard has the potential for a kayak launch and water taxi stop

# Newton Beach Park

## Challenge

Newton Beach Park was a beloved community gathering space in the center of Fort Myers Beach. During Hurricane Ian the park was leveled, losing the historic structure, gathering pavilions, and vegetation. Following the storm the park was a vital asset, acting as a staging area for sand to continue with ongoing beach renourishment and to construct an emergency berm along the beach. The berm was made with beach sand placed to a height of about six feet above the high water line to mitigate higher waters during smaller storms. However, as Fort Myers Beach starts to move past the initial recovery stages the community is ready to have their community park back.

## What We Heard

As beach nourishment has been wrapping up, town staff and the town's Cultural & Environmental Learning Center Advisory Board (CELCAB) have been envisioning how the park should be recreated. Passive recreational and educational components are desired; both are required by grant conditions applied by the Florida Communities Trust when it provided major funding to acquire the property in 2003. The site also has a historic component as the residence of Jim and Ellie Newton, also known as Seven Seas cottage. The town is interested in honoring this history but does not want to recreate the historic structure that was destroyed during the storm. Additionally, many of the amenities that were previously present are desired with room for improvements. This

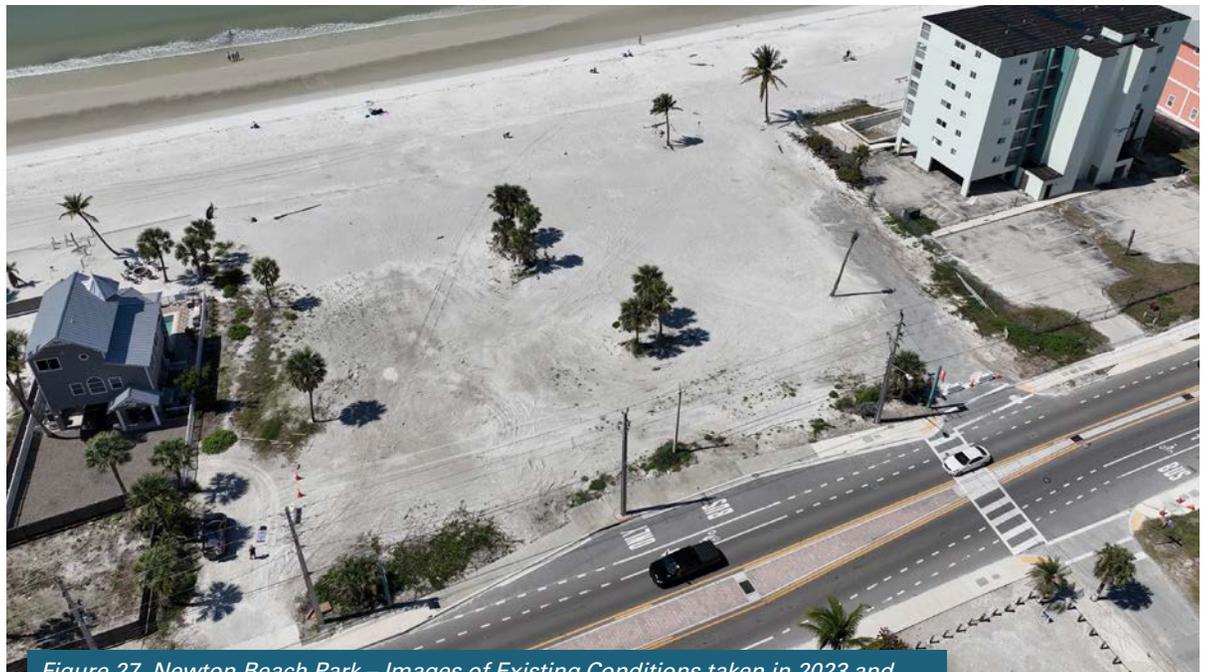


Figure 27. Newton Beach Park – Images of Existing Conditions taken in 2023 and 2024 following damage and cleanup from Hurricane Ian (source: Daniel Spikowski)

includes restroom facilities, ADA access to the beach, shade structures, opportunities for events and improved stormwater management.

During the Design Workshop two diagrammatic concepts were developed to help explore how spaces could be used in the park and initiate discussion. Using these two concepts, and a fresh basemap, a breakout meeting was held to discuss the park design.

Stakeholders expressed desire for the ability to hold large events, to allow for revenue generation was highlighted as an important

feature for the park. The importance of ADA accessibility to the beach is a priority, especially since Newton Beach Park was one of the few places on island someone with limited mobility could more easily get to the beach. The need for restrooms was stressed but the constraint that the entire park is within the VE Zone means any closed structure would need to be raised over elevation 15. Additionally, the group expressed interest in native plants and bringing back the small circular huts, but was not interested in re-fabricating the historic residence that was destroyed during the storm.



Figure 28. Newton Beach Park in January 2021, prior to Hurricane Ian

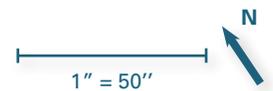


Figure 29. "Food for thought" concept designs developed for discussion during the Design Workshops



- ### Legend
- Canopy Trees
  - Palm Trees
  - Bioretention
  - Water Flow
  - Boardwalk
  - ADA Accessible Boardwalk
  - Pedestrian Path
  - Secondary Pedestrian Path
  - Parking: Special Pavement for Events
  - Pavilion
  - Beach Huts
  - Portable ADA Compliant Restroom
  - Outdoor Rinse Station
  - Parking Entrance Sign
  - Park Signage
  - Contour Lines
  - 100 Person Tent
  - Parking Spaces
  - Zone VE Line

Figure 30. Newton Beach Park was destroyed by Hurricane Ian in September 2022. Depicted is the new possible park design focused on ADA accessibility, community gathering space, and regrading of the site to include stormwater amenities that will filter and infiltrate stormwater runoff on-site during more frequent, smaller storms.



## Recovery & Resilience Options

This site provides a wonderful opportunity to connect the public to the beach, while providing amenities to support the enjoyment of the outdoors, make the shore more accessible to all people, and support community connections and small gatherings. Current flood maps and recent storm impacts from Hurricane Milton and Helene highlight just how prone the property is to coastal flooding coastal and how unsuitable it is for the construction of enclosed structures or buildings. The

proposed park design at this location respects these limitations and aims to limit the risk to property damage costs by maintaining open spaces, incorporating stormwater management for frequent, smaller rainfall events, and including temporary portable restroom facilities.

## Implementation

Design of the park should receive additional community input and will need to be further refined. Planning level costs for the park were completed in the fall of 2024 and estimate

approximately 2 million dollars to build the design shown. This includes assumptions about what types of materials will be used and details need for construction. A contingency was also built into the cost to act as a safety factor for unknowns for this level of design. The costs will need to be updated at the design advances and if needed, a strategy for phasing can be implanted.



Figure 31. Potential future Newton Beach Park - view from entrance on Estero Boulevard towards the beach

# Times Square

## Challenges

Until 1996, the pedestrian plaza known as Times Square was a public street, at one time the main entrance to Fort Myers Beach. An L-shaped plaza was created by one of Lee County's community redevelopment agencies shortly after the town incorporated. Cars were prohibited; the asphalt street and parking spaces were replaced with colorful pavers, coconut trees, and an iconic clock. The town allowed adjoining businesses to use part of the public plaza for outdoor seating and to display merchandise. Along with the pier and other public facilities in adjoining Lynn Hall Park, the "new" Times Square became even more vibrant and popular, enjoyed equally by residents and visitors.

After the plaza was built, most of the commercial buildings remained in place despite their serious physical decline. The town has always allowed those buildings to be rebuilt with their same floor space but elevated, without any on-site parking required. However, most lots were so small that the space needed for stairways and elevators would erode the already small floor area. Hurricane Ian completely demolished every building facing the main pedestrian walkway in Times Square. Since then, many of the trees and the clock have been replaced, and temporary food and beverage service has been available. But there are no new buildings, even in the permitting stage; reconstruction of an enlarged pier remains many years away. An active weekly farmers market has been the main reminder of the former character of Times Square but will potentially be relocated due to further damage to Times Square from Hurricane Milton.



Figure 32. Images of Times Square prior to Hurricane Ian (top left image circa 1960).

The essential question remains:

Can the popular appeal of the former Times Square be recreated at this prime location?



Figure 33. Meeting to discuss the future of Times Square at the Design Workshop.

## What We Heard

The rebirth of Times Square was the most-discussed subject during the R2P2 public meetings held at Fort Myers Beach in June 2024. Most participants would like to see Times Square recreated as the people-place it had been; however, there was very little discussion about the risks of rebuilding at this location and no consensus as to how rebuilding might be facilitated or regulated or how new buildings at Times Square might look and how much larger they might be than the previous buildings.

A group of Times Square landowners had begun preparing their own rebuilding concept not long after Ian struck. This group made an initial public presentation of their latest concept the same week as the June R2P2 public meetings.

The R2P2 planning team presented a preliminary series of six options for the future of Times Square at its first public presentation. Refined versions of those options are presented in the next section of this report.

Shortly after both presentations, the consulting team and town staff invited the Times Square landowners and other interested parties to discuss similarities and difference among the options and explore the opportunities and many obstacles that each possible scenario for Times Square's future would face.

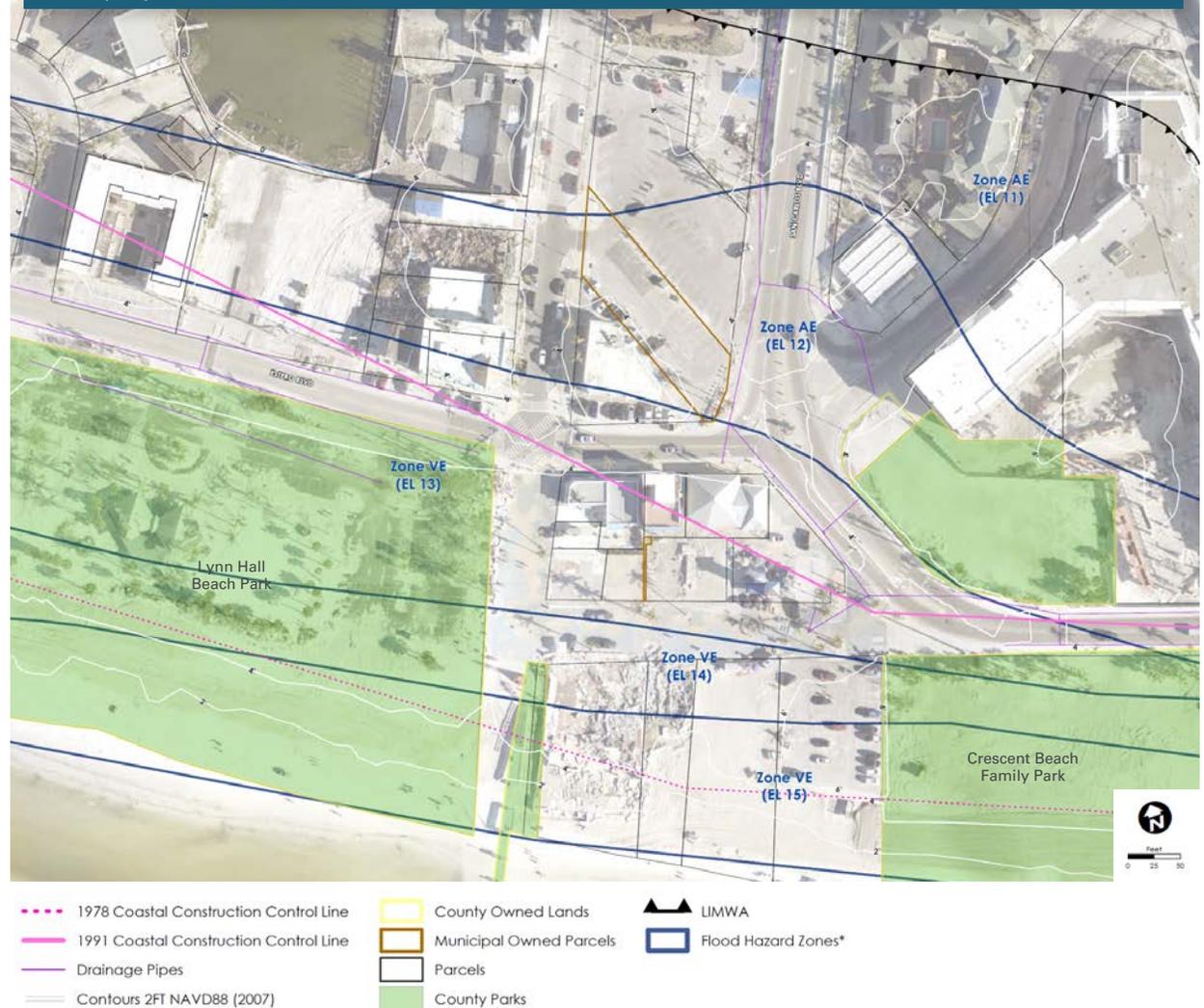
## Recovery and Resilience Options: Times Square

There are many challenges to rebuilding Times Square. First, lots are small and ownership is fragmented. Before Ian, that was a benefit, allowing multiple small businesses to serve the public; now, the small lots are an impediment to rebuilding. Second, new buildings are heavily regulated. Although the town's zoning allows owners to rebuild if elevated, there are several inherent challenges, including:

- Federal floodplain regulations greatly restrict what a business can do with enclosed space at ground level under an elevated building especially when located in the highest risk flood zones.
- The high cost of redevelopment under these restrictions is even more difficult to justify in Times Square where the town does not allow the ground level to be used for parking.
- State officials have a second level of building regulations because Times Square lots are seaward of the state's 1991 coastal construction control line. This is manageable for larger-scale redevelopment, but is a hurdle of unknown magnitude to small businesses like those that had made Times Square so vibrant.

If rebuilding turns out to be impractical, either for regulatory or economic reasons, what other future could there be for Times Square? Part or all of the land could

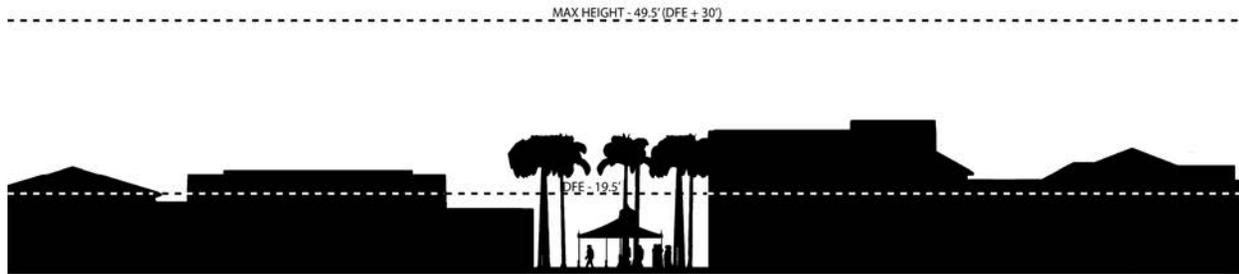
Figure 34. Base map illustrating key features of the existing conditions in Times Square, including topography, municipally-owned land, coastal construction line, and Limit of Moderate Wave Action (LiMWA).



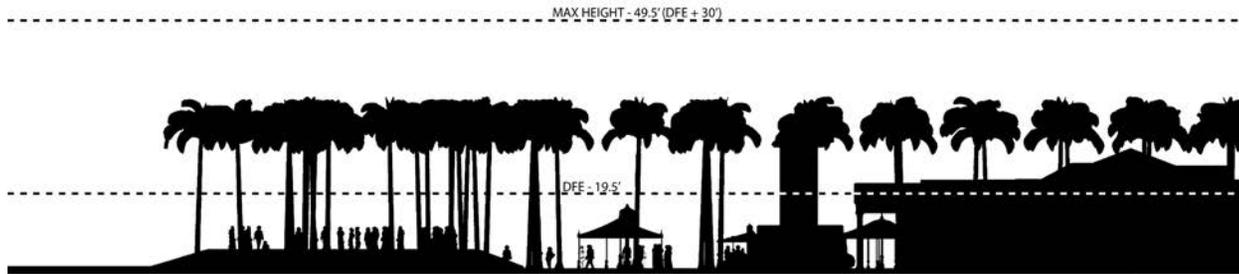
\*Note: The entire map area is within 1% annual chance flood hazard. Flood Zone base flood elevations are referenced to NAVD88.

**Additional Note:**

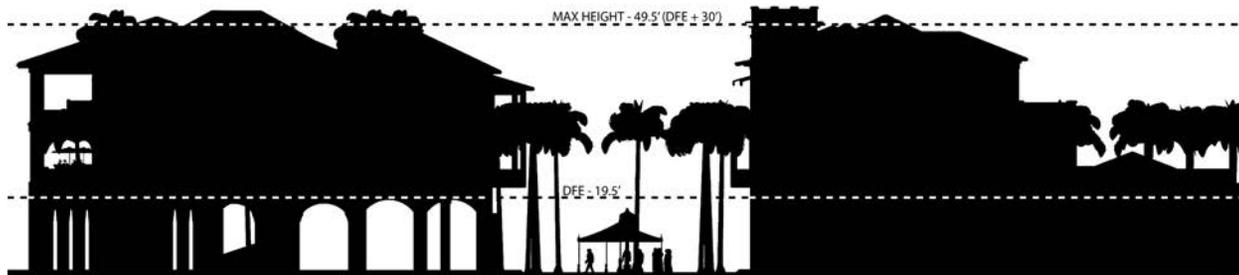
The entire map area is within the Coastal High Hazard Area as defined by the State of Florida as the area below the elevation of the category 1 storm surge line as established by a Sea, Lake, and Overland Surges from Hurricanes (SLOSH) computerized storm surge model. This is different than the Coastal High Hazard Area as defined by FEMA, which is the VE Zone in this area.



*Before Hurricane Ian*



*See Option 1 (pg 34)*



*See Option 4 (pg 40)*

*Figure 35. Series of cross sectional silhouettes based on selected options presented on the following pages that help to illustrate the relative scale of the Times Square public walkway to surrounding buildings. DFE means 'design flood elevation,' which often is slightly higher than the 'base flood elevation' shown on floodplain maps.*

be acquired and left unbuilt, becoming expansions to Lynn Hall Park and Crescent Beach Family Park or being restored to natural dune conditions. Or regulations could be modified slightly to allow private business uses similar to those that existed before Hurricane Ian to operate without expensive elevated buildings, for instance combining permanent shade sails like those at Bayside Veterans Park with temporary/movable kitchens and shops on private lots. These approaches are illustrated in Option 1 on the following pages.

In addition to the no-build alternative, the planning team explored a range of rebuilding options for Times Square. Options 2 and 3 show buildings on one side of the public walkway but no buildings on the other side. Option 4 shows buildings on both sides. These options are reasonably consistent with current town regulations and they maintain the key components that have been central to the character of Times Square: the existing public walkway, the clock, and easy access to the pier and both county parks. Option 5 also has buildings on both sides, but it would relocate and elevate the public walkway so it would be closer to the beach, and it would allow parking under the new buildings.

These options illustrate a wide range of futures for Times Square. Each option on the following pages includes a site plan and general 3D model to demonstrate building massing and form along with explanatory notes. The model is sufficiently realistic so the public can understand how that option might actually look, without suggesting a specific architectural character.

## Option 1: Park on Beachfront; Temporary/Movable Businesses Landward

Option 1 envisions the beachfront side of the walkway being acquired for public park space. The public walkway could have shade sails like those at Bayside Veterans Park. The landward side could be activated with temporary/movable businesses and might also include some public park space. Town regulations would need to be modified slightly to allow merchants to use vehicles that can be easily moved during storm warnings but which are no longer classified by the town as “transient merchants” or “mobile vendors” and, for floodplain purposes, would not be considered “structures” like buildings or shipping containers that, by law, must be elevated.

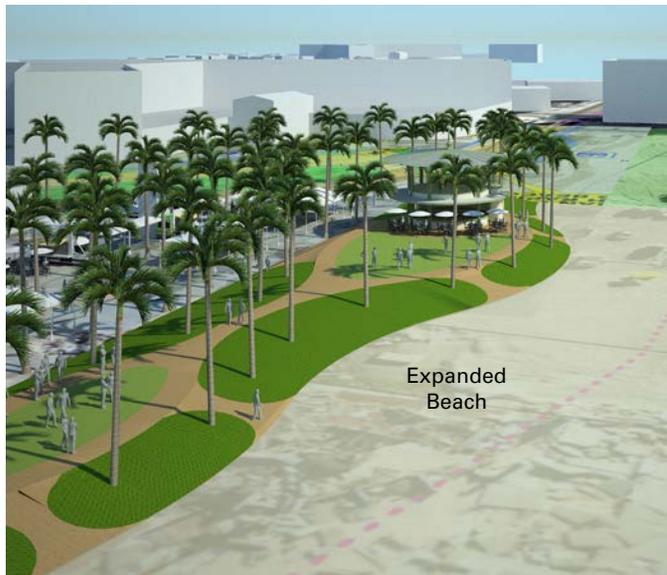


Figure 36. Option 1, Illustrative Concept (left) and Plan View (above)



- A** existing walkway maintained
- B** shade sails / temporary retail
- C** temporary dining/ seating
- D** waterfront park with natural beachfront vegetation
- E** access to pier

Figure 37. Option 1, Conceptual 3D Building Forms

Note: Detailed architectural design will be part of future applicant proposals

## Option 2: Park on Beachfront; Buildings Landward

Option 2 also envisions the beachfront side of the walkway being acquired for public park space; but the landward side would have new buildings that meet current regulations. The historic Times Square walkway would remain. In this scenario, property owners could work together to coordinate access to upper floors (i.e., have shared stairs and elevators). Possible uses for the shaded ground level space include temporary retail and open restaurant seating. On the upper level, outdoor open space can be provided in addition to habitable indoor space; this open space could accommodate patio seating and provide scenic views of the gulf without exceeding floor area ratio (FAR) zoning requirements.



Figure 38. Option 2, Illustrative Concept (left) and Plan View (above)



Figure 39. Option 2, Conceptual 3D Building Forms

**A** existing walkway maintained

**B** shade sails / temporary retail

**C** temporary dining/ seating

**D** waterfront park with natural beachfront vegetation

**E** access to pier

**F** new buildings: 1 or 2 stories above flood elevation; coordinated stair and elevator access

**G** ground floor base could be used for shaded temporary retail or open restaurant seating

### Option 3: Buildings on Beachfront; Park Landward

Option 3 envisions the beachfront side of the walkway having new buildings that meet current regulations; the landward side would be acquired for public park space, potentially still allowing some temporary/movable businesses. The historic Times Square walkway would remain.

Similar to Option 2, this scenario would require coordination amongst property owners to accommodate access to upper floors and plan for use of open, shaded ground floor space under the elevated structures. As illustrated in the renderings, uninterrupted coastal views from patio seating or open walkways could be a prominent feature of the seaward coordinated development.



Figure 40. Option 3, Illustrative Concept (left) and Plan View (above)



Figure 41. Option 3, Conceptual 3D Building Forms

**A** existing walkway maintained

**B** shade sails / temporary retail

**C** food trucks/ seating

**D** opportunities for new waterfront views

**E** access to pier

**F** new buildings: 1 or 2 stories above flood elevation; coordinated stair and elevator access

**G** ground floor base could be used for shaded temporary retail or open restaurant seating

## Option 4: Buildings on Beachfront and Landward Sides

Options 4 envisions new buildings that meet current regulations on both sides of the existing walkway. The historic Times Square walkway would remain, the buildings on both sides would visually define the public space. It would be important that the ground floor level is creatively activated to retain the iconic legacy of Times Square.



Figure 42. Option 4, Illustrative Concept (left) and Plan View (above)



Figure 43. Option 4, Conceptual 3D Building Forms

**A** existing walkway maintained

**B** opportunities for new waterfront views

**C** access to pier

**D** new buildings: 1 or 2 stories above flood elevation; coordinated stair and elevator access

**E** ground floor base could be used for shaded temporary retail or open restaurant seating

**F** new buildings front both sides of walkway

## Option 5: Buildings on Beachfront, Landward, and Walkway

Options 5 envisions all property owners on both sides of the walkway working together on a coordinated plan in a manner not allowed under current regulations. This could provide a large area for concealed ground floor parking, and could provide a new waterfront public space. This option would require the town to agree to a dramatic change in how pedestrian circulation has historically worked at Times Square and to agree to allow parking there.

Creatively setting some upper floor habitable areas back more than others could shape new dining areas and public spaces to create a unique sense of place for a new elevated Times Square.



Figure 44. Option 5, Illustrative Concept (left) and Plan View (above)



Figure 45. Option 5, Conceptual 3D Building Forms

**A** elevated public waterfront walkway replaces existing ground-level walkway

**B** buildings 1 to 2 stories above flood elevation; consolidated development area over existing walkway

**C** access to pier

**D** entrance to concealed parking at ground level

**E** ground floor base could be used for shaded temporary retail or open restaurant seating

**F** potential waterfront park and elevated walkway (which could be in exchange for allowing development over existing walkway)

## Comparing Options

The analysis and review of design options for the redevelopment and rebuilding of Times Square is important for this very unique collection of parcels. But this area is just one of many where redevelopment projects will be seeking approval from the town in the near future. The difficult underlying question will be repeated: how much is too much? While the energy to rebuild is paramount to recovery, it is the town’s duty to ensure that new buildings will comply within FEMA flood standards that dictate how high a new building must be elevated and how the space below that building can be used. On other critical questions, only the town has the authority to decide – such as how tall and large a new building can be, and how that building might affect its neighbors and the larger community.

Times Square’s location in Flood Hazard Zone VE (a “velocity” zone) means that wave action and fast-moving water can cause extensive damage during storm surges, as demonstrated so vividly during Hurricane Ian. Times Square and the private lots around it are as highly susceptible to damage as anywhere at Fort Myers Beach. Parts of some lots at Times Square are seaward of the 1978 Coastal Construction Line and cannot be rebuilt at all. Lots on the landward side of that line are hardly any safer; the most resilient option is to leave as much as possible unbuilt and make it available for public use. Without funding to acquire enough sensitive land, town leaders are charged with responding as best they can to development proposals without making an already risky situation even more so.

Figure 46. Existing Conditions



Figure 47. Option 1: Park on Beachfront; Temporary/Movable Businesses Landward



SIMILAR TO HISTORIC TIMES SQUARE

★★★★★

RESILIENCE

★★★★★

PUBLIC ACCESSIBILITY

★★★★★

FOOD/DRINK/RETAIL DESTINATIONS

★★★★★

Figure 48. Option 2: Park on Beachfront; Buildings Landward



SIMILAR TO HISTORIC TIMES SQUARE

★★★★★

RESILIENCE

★★★★★

PUBLIC ACCESSIBILITY

★★★★★

FOOD/DRINK/RETAIL DESTINATIONS

★★★★★

Figure 49. Option 3: Buildings on Beachfront; Park Landward



SIMILAR TO HISTORIC TIMES SQUARE  
 ★★★★★  
 RESILIENCE  
 ★★★★★  
 PUBLIC ACCESSIBILITY  
 ★★★★★  
 FOOD/DRINK/RETAIL DESTINATIONS  
 ★★★★★

Figure 50. Option 4: Buildings on Beachfront and Landward Sides



SIMILAR TO HISTORIC TIMES SQUARE  
 ★★★★★  
 RESILIENCE  
 ★★★★★  
 PUBLIC ACCESSIBILITY  
 ★★★★★  
 FOOD/DRINK/RETAIL DESTINATIONS  
 ★★★★★

Figure 51. Option 5: Buildings on Beachfront, Landward, and Walkway



SIMILAR TO HISTORIC TIMES SQUARE  
 ★★★★★  
 RESILIENCE  
 ★★★★★  
 PUBLIC ACCESSIBILITY  
 ★★★★★  
 FOOD/DRINK/RETAIL DESTINATIONS  
 ★★★★★

In the late 1990s, residents and town officials worked together to shape a Comprehensive Plan for the recently founded Town of Fort Myers Beach. While adjustments have been made over the years and others are pending, over-arching principles have remained constant: to establish clear and consistent rules governing both public and private sector development to integrate community design and livability and to avoid even further overdevelopment of a sensitive barrier island served by a single through street.

As redevelopment options are explored further by the town, individual property owners will continue to assess their own development objectives and their tolerance for risk before investing in this vulnerable area. Opportunities for building back Times Square are possible, but the costs will be high and the uncertainty is great, both for property owners and for the town at large.

# Old San Carlos Boulevard

## Challenge

Located immediately north of Times Square, along the base of the Matanzas Pass Bridge, Old San Carlos Boulevard has the potential to become the downtown heart of the island. The street had been the main entry for cars onto Estero Island until it was bypassed by the Sky Bridge in 1978. After incorporation, the Town of Fort Myers Beach decided to make the street a signature public space, in effect an extension of Times Square, by reconfiguring the street to provide wide sidewalks, street trees, and parallel parking. The Town also changed development regulations to allow buildings right up to the sidewalk. Twenty years later, this area has become a center of community and visitor activity. As recovery and rebuilding efforts continue, there is a unique opportunity to further improve this central street as an even more vibrant beach-to-bay connection.

## What We Heard

With most buildings at Times Square destroyed, retail and commercial activity has begun shifting toward Old San Carlos Boulevard. Lively, open-air restaurants line the street and shopfronts are starting to re-open as recovery and reinvestment returns to the area. From potential infill development on vacant parcels to streetscape improvements (replace lights, street trees, street furniture, etc.), there are numerous opportunities to build back an even more complete Old San Carlos Boulevard.

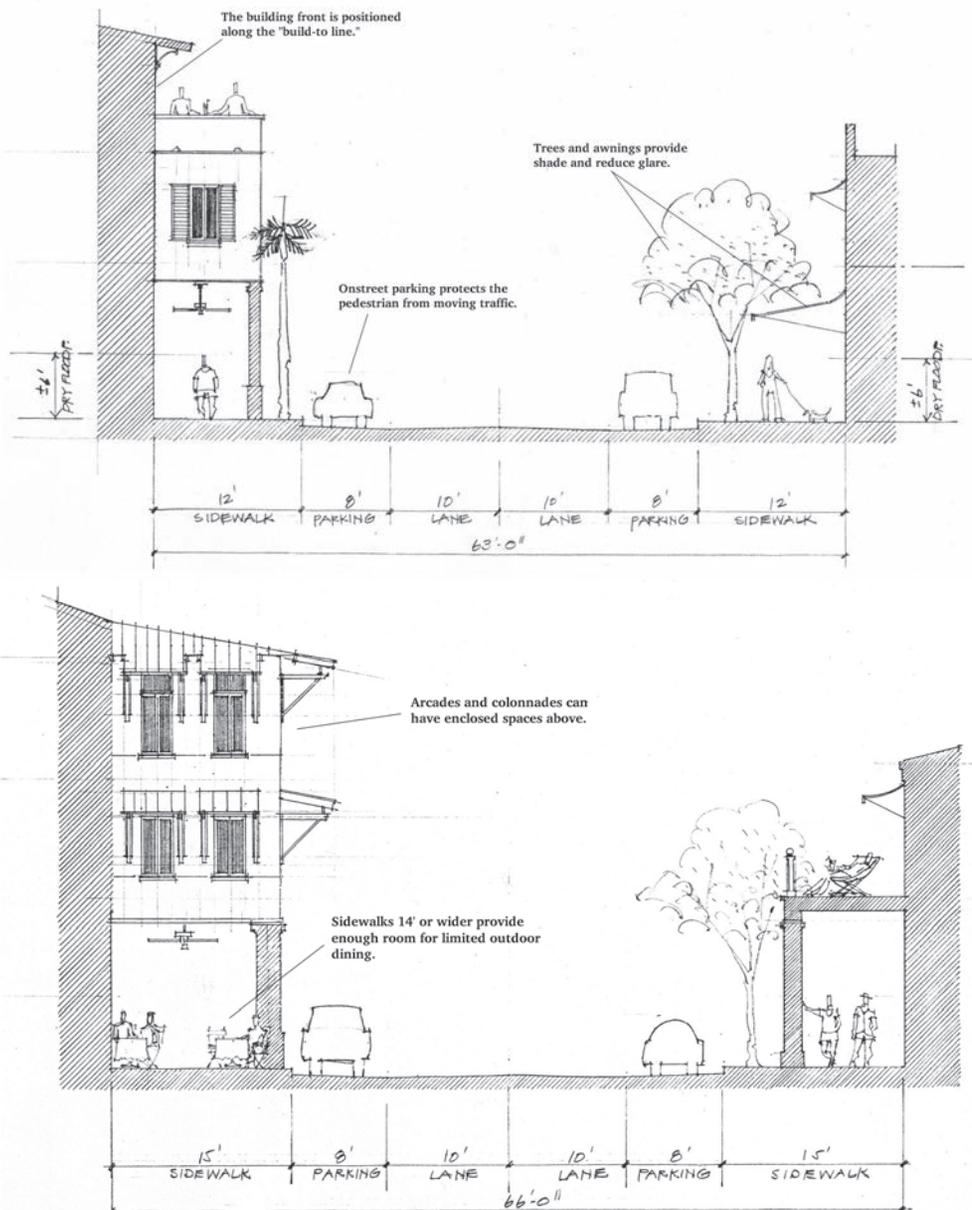
Figure 52. Base map illustrating key features of the existing conditions along Old San Carlos Boulevard, including topography, municipally-owned land, coastal construction line, and Limit of Moderate Wave Action (LiMWA).



\*Note: The entire map area is within 1% annual chance flood hazard. Flood Zone base flood elevations are referenced to NAVD88.

#### Additional Note:

The entire map area is within the Coastal High Hazard Area as defined by the State of Florida as the area below the elevation of the category 1 storm surge line as established by a Sea, Lake, and Overland Surges from Hurricanes (SLOSH) computerized storm surge model. This is different than the Coastal High Hazard Area as defined by FEMA, which is the VE Zone in this area.



## Bayside Veterans Park

Bayside Park was a parking lot only 25 years ago before being converted into a park by the Town of Fort Myers Beach. Extensive Bayside Park improvements were completed a few weeks before Hurricane Ian hit Fort Myers Beach on September 28, 2022. The storm destroyed much of the park, but Bayside Park was one of the first community spaces to be restored and rebuilt and then renamed Bayside Veterans Park. Located at the north end of Old San Carlos Boulevard overlooking Matanzas Pass, Bayside Veterans Park is home to weekly concerts, community events, and daily enjoyment for residents and visitors alike. The park was re-dedicated on the one-year anniversary of the storm and has become a notable public space that represents the resilient spirit of Fort Myers Beach.



Figure 53. Design standards in the town's land development code provide for street-oriented buildings that provide shade and protect pedestrians from the elements, as shown in this diagram from the 1999 "Old San Carlos- Crescent Street Master Plan"

## Recovery and Resilience Options: Old San Carlos Boulevard

Old San Carlos Boulevard is located just outside of the most restrictive FEMA zone (VE), thus allowing expanded redevelopment options. The street and adjoining parcels are located in the FEMA AE zone; even though about 45% of the parcels are within the Limit of Moderate Wave Action (LiMWA) line, the Florida Building Code allows ground-level commercial space along Old San Carlos if that space is “dry floodproofed” (an allowance that does not apply to Times Square itself). The benefit of dry floodproofing in this area is that buildings do not have to be elevated; the ground floor of non-residential and commercial buildings can be modified to be watertight so as to protect against flood waters entering the structure, with their interiors remaining open to the sidewalk and visible to pedestrians during non-storm periods.

Land development codes and commercial design standards are already in place to define building placement and to shape the street as a signature public space. Presently, Old San Carlos Boulevard offers a pedestrian-friendly streetscape with several buildings fronting the street, wide sidewalks, crosswalks, and narrow lanes resulting in slower moving vehicles. Additional enhancements to the streetscape would help to encourage further use by residents and visitors alike. Several recommendations are depicted on the next page and could include

improved street and pedestrian lighting, improved tree canopy through shade trees, opportunities for art installations, among others.

Due to its location outside of the VE zone, town regulations had allowed for buildings to be one story taller than at Times Square (although due to recent changes to town codes, Times Square buildings are now allowed that same extra story).

By combining dry floodproofing, modest building expansions, additional streetscape enhancements, more of the original Times Square atmosphere can be recreated along Old San Carlos Boulevard.



*Figure 54. Existing Conditions on Old San Carlos Boulevard at 3rd Street.*



**A** high-visibility crosswalk

**B** improved street and pedestrian-scale lighting

**C** shade canopies and cafe seating create pedestrian-friendly atmosphere

**D** new street-oriented buildings

**E** improved tree canopy through additional shade trees on intersecting streets

**F** opportunities for local art installations and other cultural expression

*Figure 55. What if? The concept sketch for Old San Carlos Boulevard at 3rd Street demonstrates the possibility of filling in vacant land with new street-oriented buildings while properly scaled streetscape improvements shape this important public space.*



# Appendix



# Community Engagement Process

## Engagement Opportunities

Community engagement was a central component of the R2P2 planning process. In Fort Myers Beach, a multi-day workshop was held in June 2024 to gather input about draft concepts for enhanced resiliency and connectivity throughout the island. The Town and planning team worked together to make the community aware of the opportunities to participate and share their ideas.

At the onset of the project, a dedicated website was created to share information ([www.coastalflr2p2.com](http://www.coastalflr2p2.com)). Here, residents and other stakeholders could learn about the larger initiative, stay updated on upcoming events, and participate in an online survey to help the planning team better understand the thoughts and considerations of the community.

In-person community events included a Community Input Session and an Open Design Studio. These events, along with the online survey were promoted through printed flyers and posts on the town’s website and social media platforms.

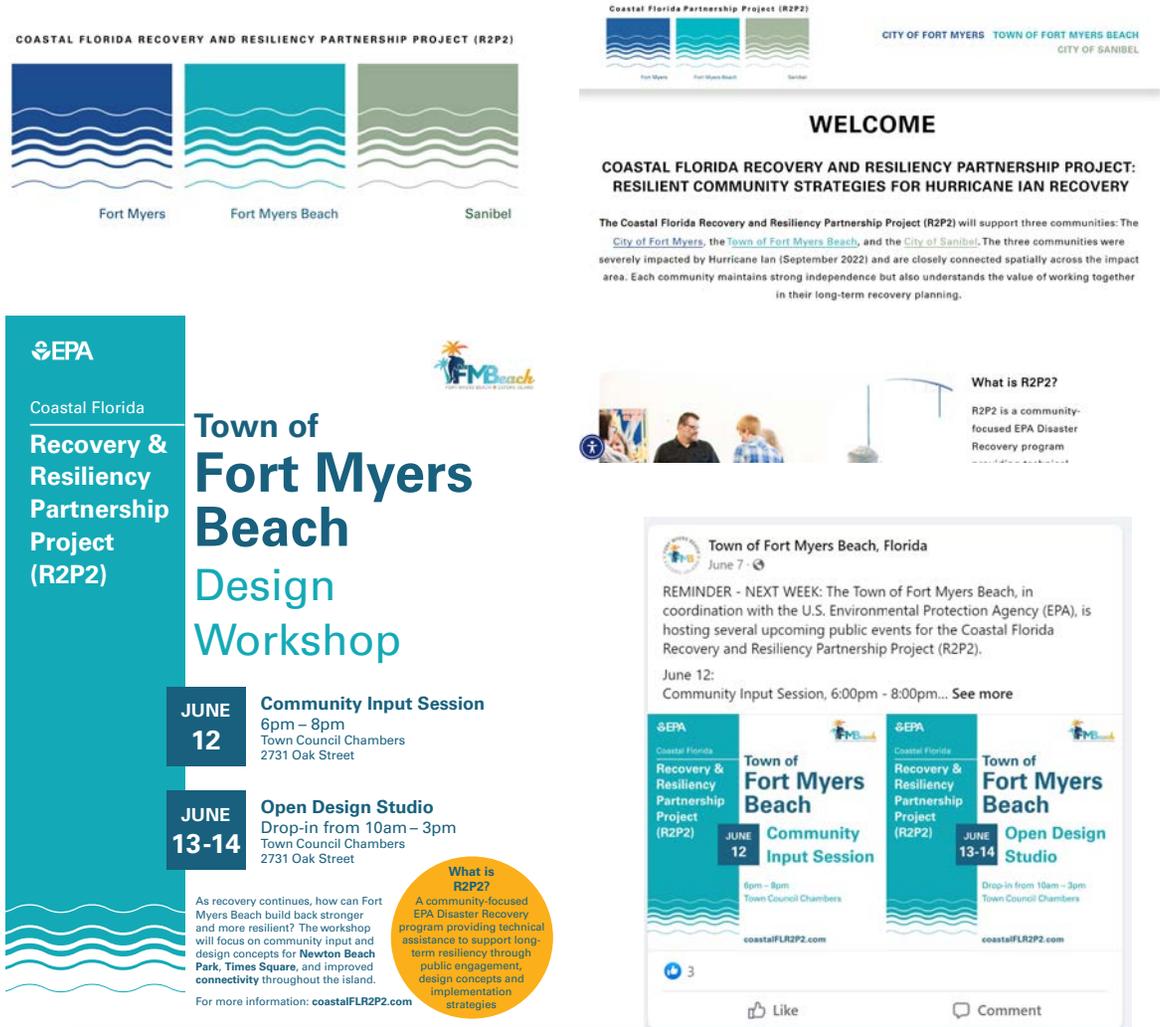


Figure 56 (Clockwise). Project logo, website, social media post example, and events flyer. A common logo was created to identify R2P2 work for the three coastal Florida municipalities, with a unique color scheme dedicated to Fort Myers Beach.

## Community Input Session

The project team hosted an in-person Community Input Session on June 12, 2024. This event was live streamed and recorded by the town officials.

Held in the Town Hall Council Chambers, the event welcomed over 50 attendees for a presentation about the R2P2 technical assistance program, a summary of the island's project focus areas, and initial ideas for these areas. Following the presentation, attendees had an opportunity to ask questions and then view exhibits of initial ideas, with planning team members stationed to answer questions and take initial feedback.

This session provided information and an open forum to begin gathering feedback to assist the planning team in the conceptual design process, and ultimately shape the recommendations presented in this report.

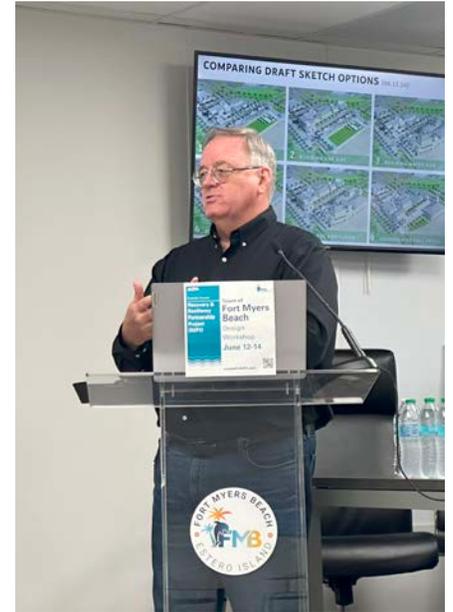


Figure 57. Photos from the Community Input Session, including presentations by the project team and open house.

## Open Design Studio

For the two days following the Community Input Session, the planning team held an Open Design Studio. Continuing to operate in the Town Hall Council Chambers, doors were open to the public for anyone to stop by and see what the team was working on, ask questions, and offer suggestions.

Additionally, the planning team coordinated and met with several stakeholder groups to gather insights from particular interest groups or special topics. Meeting topics included Newton Beach Park, Times Square, the Red Coconut site, and Town-wide Connectivity with participants including property owners, developers, business owners, Chamber of Commerce representatives, individual members of the Town Council and Local Planning Agency, and Town staff.

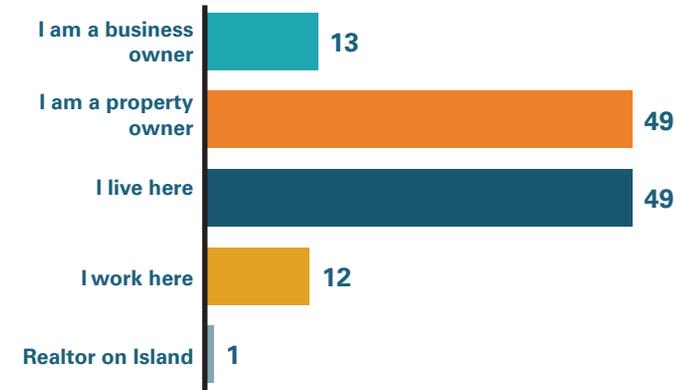


Figure 58. Photos from the Design Studio, including meetings with Town Planning staff, local property owners, and other community stakeholders

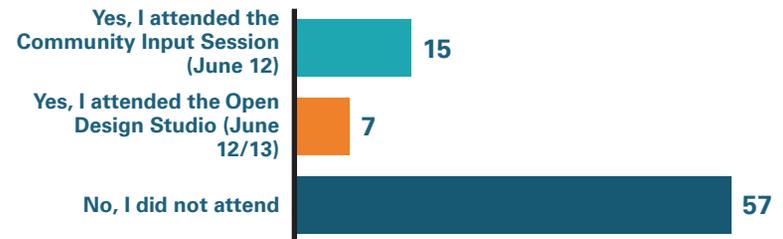
## Online Survey

Following the Community Input Session, an online survey was shared with the community to further capture thoughts and feedback. Over the course of 21 days from June 12th - July 1st, a total of 75 respondents completed the survey providing a broader range of sentiments than were offered at the input session. Graphic summaries of the results of the survey are provided on the following pages, along with key takeaways.

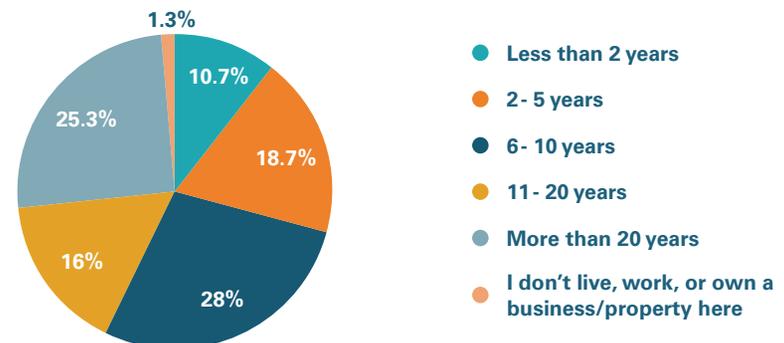
### What best describes your interest in Fort Myers Beach? (check all that apply) [N = 75]



### Did you attend the Design Workshop? (check all that apply) [N = 75]



### If you live, work, or own a business/property here, for how long have you done so? [N = 75]

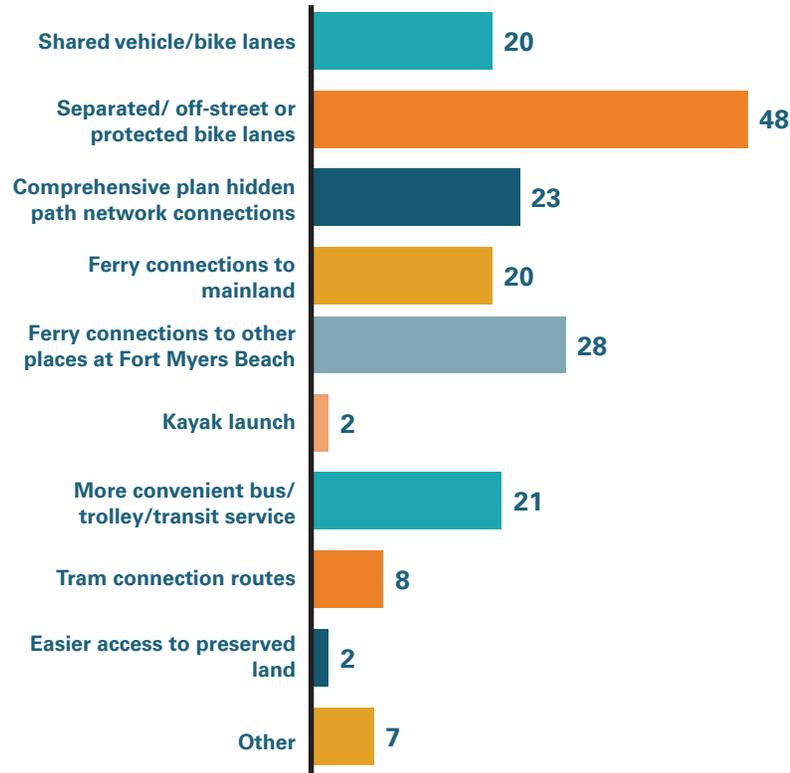


### Island-wide Connectivity

There was strong support for separated/off-street or protected bike lanes (48 selections), a common consideration that was expressed during the Design Workshop as well. Other priorities included ferry connections both throughout Fort Myers Beach (28) and to the mainland (20) as well as hidden path network connections as detailed in the comprehensive plan (23) and a more convenient bus/trolley/transit service (20).

When asked about locations that are difficult to navigate and why, respondents identified biking challenges, particularly between the Red Coconut and Times Square area as well as traffic congestion as the two main issues. More specifically, biking is unsafe along Estero Boulevard where the lane is shared with vehicles but also in sections with a narrow bike lane. Traffic congestion makes travel by car very difficult for everyone, particularly reaching one end of the island from the other during peak season. Others also noted Estero Boulevard as being dangerous for pedestrians most notably at the base of the bridge but everywhere due to poor visibility at night and a shortage of walkovers or other/safer crossings.

### Which connections are a top priority for you? (Pick up to 3) [N = 74]



### Are there any connections missing that you suggest should be added to the map? What/where? [N = 11]

park & ride  
 safer route through times square  
 path from lovers key to summerlin  
 bike lane along first mile of fort myers beach  
 new bonita springs to fort myers beach trail  
 shared path over bridge  
 publix  
**ferry stops**  
 public restrooms

Are there specific locations in town that are challenging to navigate, or destinations that are challenging to get to? Tell us what is challenging about them (walking, biking, driving, taking transit or other). [N = 44]

**22 MENTIONS**  
**BIKING CHALLENGES**

- Biking from Red Coconut to Times Square is dangerous due to the lack of bike lanes
- Biking north of the bend at the library and south near the Catholic Church is risky due to aggressive drivers
- The bike lane on Estero Blvd is too narrow, especially near the Red Coconut and Times Square area

**17 MENTIONS**  
**TRAFFIC CONGESTION**

- It's difficult to get to the north end from the south end by car and vice-versa, especially during the season
- The light at Margaritaville and the crosswalk at Estero and Old San Carlos Rd. create significant congestion
- Public transit does not shorten the trip from south to north end as it runs with traffic

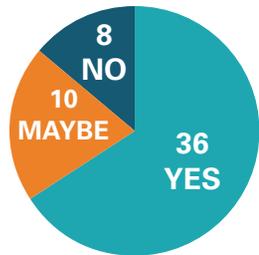
**9 MENTIONS**  
**PEDESTRIAN SAFETY & ACCESSIBILITY**

- Crossing the street at the base of the bridge to go to Cold Stone is dangerous due to poor lighting and jaywalking
- Pedestrian walkovers and safer crossings, particularly at Newton Beach and beach access points, are needed
- People often ignore the overhead walkway at Crescent Street, leading to long traffic delays

**7 SUGGESTIONS**  
**SAFETY, MOBILITY, & ACCESSIBILITY**

- Create off-road bike paths between Red Coconut and Times Square
- Improve beach access to be more handicap-friendly
- Consider adding a ferry option to alleviate traffic from the south end to the north end

Would you use a ferry?  
 What would be the most important stops? What would make you more or less likely to use it? [N = 60]



More than half of respondents answered that they would use a ferry if one existed, with the frequency/timing of stops being the biggest factor for why they would or would not use the ferry followed by parking and access convenience. The most popular stops mentioned were the Mainland and Bayside Park/Times Square followed by Santini Plaza, marinas, as well as other restaurants, bars, and shops.

**MOST MENTIONED STOPS**

**Mainland to Times Square/Bayside Park**  
**Santini Plaza**  
 Marinas | Restaurant, Bars, and Shops  
 Publix Area | Moss Marina  
 Doc Ford's Area | FishTale Marina | Mound House

**MOST MENTIONED REASONS**

**Frequency of Stops/Timing**  
**Access and Parking Convenience**  
 Ability to Bring Bikes Onboard  
 Connections/Destinations | Cost | Special Pass or Pricing for Residents  
 Cleanliness

## In a few short sentences, describe your vision for the return of Newton Beach Park [N = 50]

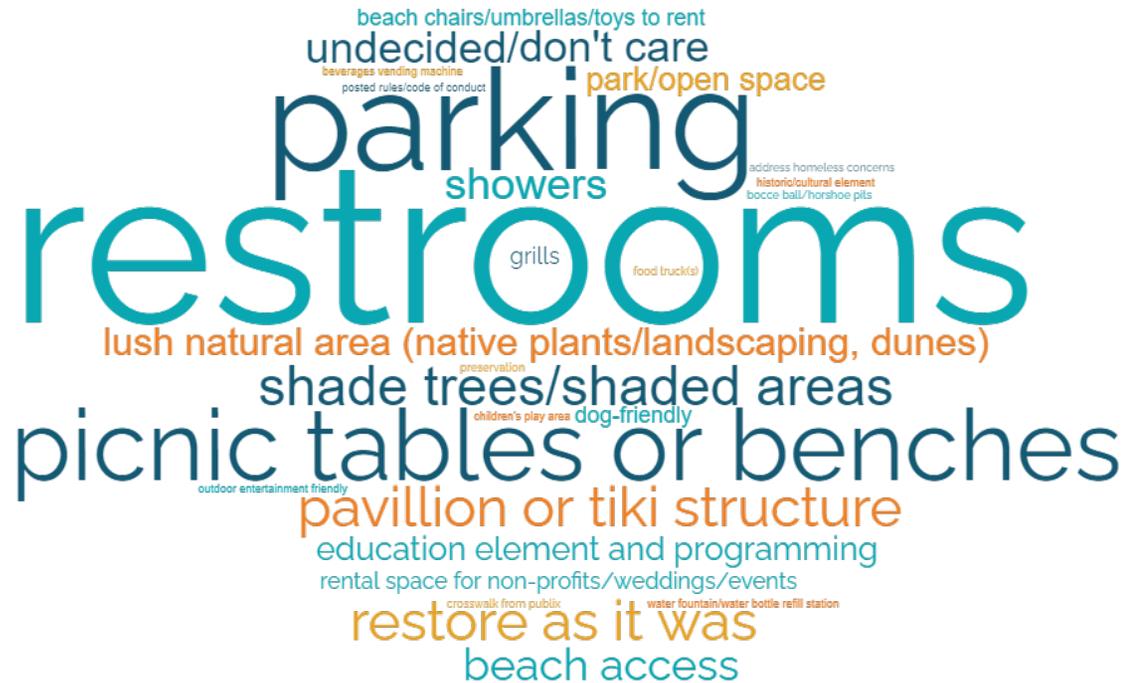
### *Newton Beach Park*

As residents look forward to the return of Newton Beach Park, several elements were described as important to see, including public restrooms, ample parking, and picnic tables or benches. Other mentions included lush natural areas, a pavilion or tiki hut, showers, and educational space/programming. Several respondents also wished to see Newton Beach restored to its original form.

### *Future Rebuilding*

Features that are important to respondents as part of future rebuilding and improvements included a wide variety of responses. Of the options available, most important was to “include architectural design consistent with traditional beach character” which could include shaded porches/terraces, pitched rooflines, and other pedestrian scale elements. Next was to “prioritize view of the water” followed by “ensuring buildings are designed to minimize the risk of damage from coastal flooding and storm surge.”

When asked what elements would best enhance the connection between Bayside Park and Times Square along Old San Carlos Boulevard, the top three responses included shade trees (56) followed by pedestrian lighting (46) and then benches and streetscape furniture (45).

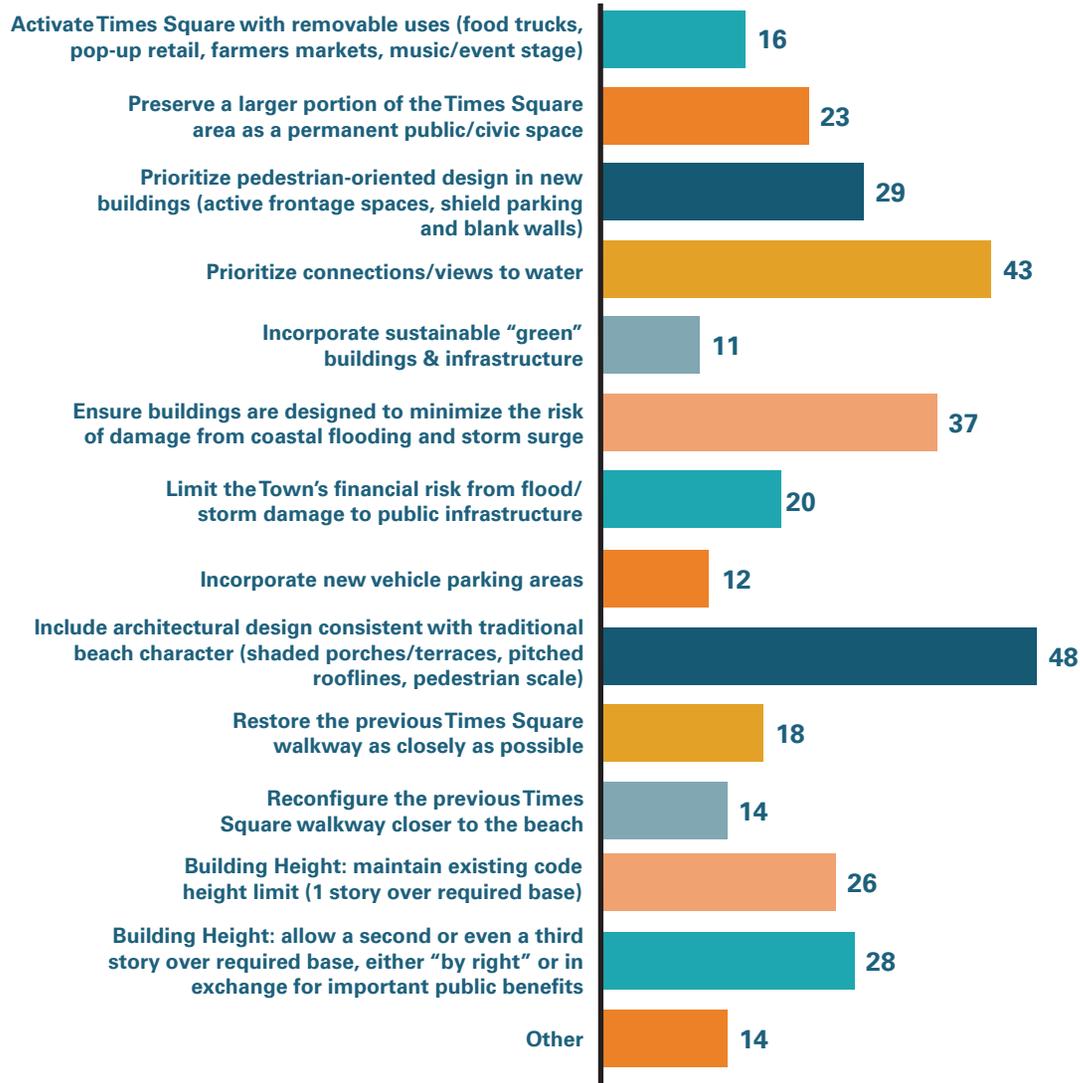


### *Recovery*

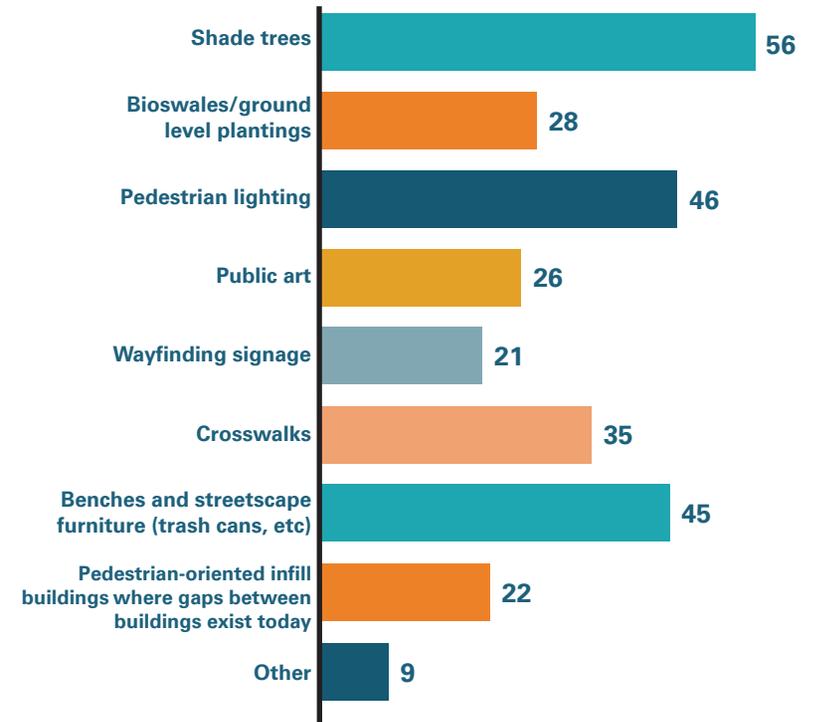
With regards to respondent concerns as recovery continues, the most noted topics included traffic and parking, speed of recovery, and over-development/density. More specifically traffic concerns involved congestion, particularly during peak season and traffic flow near Times Square. Respondents were also concerned that slow and inflexible approval processes were delaying recovery progress, which could also negatively impact the return of commercial businesses. Last, respondents saw over-development as not aligning with the historic charm of Fort Myers Beach and putting further strain on existing infrastructure.

Finally, respondents were asked what they were most looking forward to as recovery continues, which revealed a strong sense of positivity amongst the community. Most notably, respondents looked forward to the return of residents and visitors, a stronger sense of community, infrastructure upgrades, improved resiliency, a renewed Times Square, and safer conditions for cyclists and pedestrians.

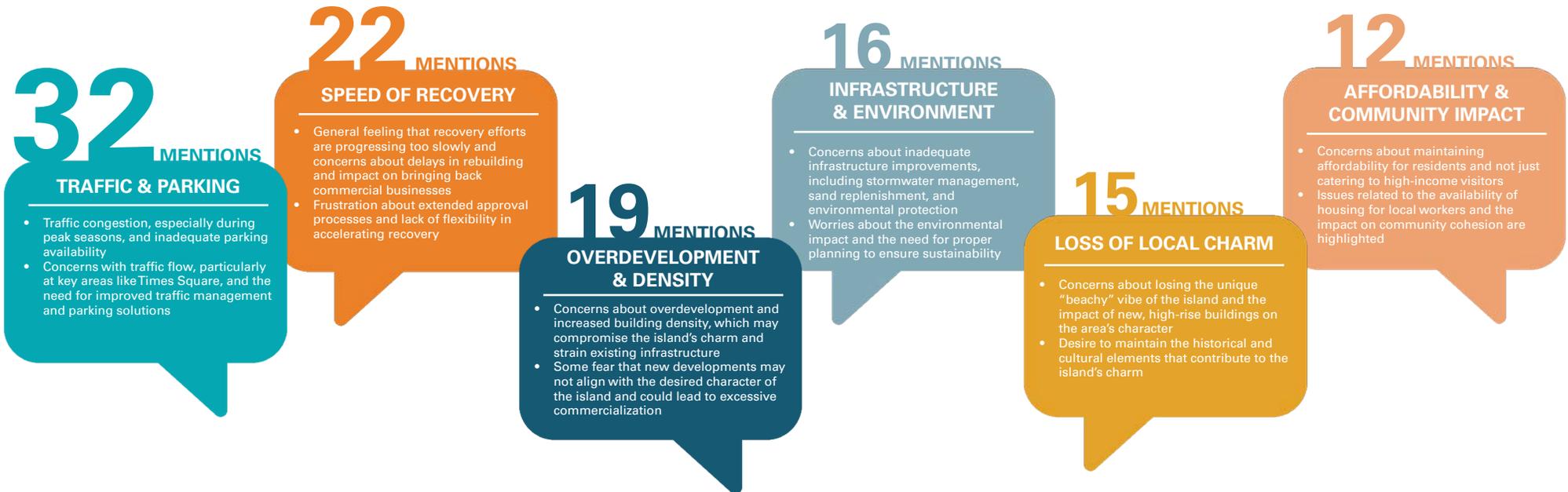
**With anticipated future rebuilding and improvements to this area, what features are important to you? (check all that apply) [N = 75]**



**To enhance the connection between Times Square and Bayside Park, what should be included along Old San Carlos Boulevard and surrounding area? (check all that apply) [N = 74]**



## What concerns do you have as recovery continues? [N = 56]



## What are you most looking forward to as recovery continues? [N = 52]

"A fresh, new Times Square...Final recovery of properties and businesses. FMB can become one of the most desirable areas to live and visit in SWFL...More shops and restaurants...Smart growth with infrastructure first with traffic concerns at the heart of any need development. A mixed use path must be incorporated to reduce traffic... Just moving forward. We can't get it back so let's make it better! Onward....Attracting visitors who respect the environment and will support the residents vibe...Something in the south end...Building back more resiliently so we can recover faster...more opportunity for social gatherings at Time Square and down Old San Carlos...A community with open space on beach side ...Bike paths off Estero...Improved resiliency and upgrade development...Sand and dunes to protect city...Local, specialized businesses...Residents coming back and community rebuilding for the residents...A new FMB with all of the Vibe that the LPA and Town Counsel demand!...Bringing back FMB better and stronger than ever before...A beachy vibe with enhanced construction methods to ward off/mitigate future disasters...Rebuilding the pier...Return of Santini Plaza...Not so many condos or high buildings on beach...A solution to some of our traffic problems"

# Implementation Framework

Fort Myers Beach Implementation Framework	Lead	Potential Funders & Partners	Timeframe
<b>Island-Wide Mobility and Connections</b>			
Identify highest-priority projects (e.g. new parallel bike/pedestrian paths; improved biking facilities; new kayak launches; etc.)	Town Council	Lee County DOT; Lee County MPO; Florida DOT; "Safe Streets and Roads for All" grant from U.S. DOT	Immediate (1-2 years)
Assemble funding for highest priority projects	Town Manager	[project-dependent]	Immediate (1-2 years)
Initiate detailed design process and create construction drawings	Town Manager	[project-dependent]	Mid-Term (3-4 years)
Select contractor and authorize construction	Town Manager	[project-dependent]	Mid-Term (3-4 years)
Identify next tier of priority projects	Town Council		Mid-Term (3-4 years)
<b>Newton Beach Park</b>			
Locate funding to design and rebuild Newton Beach Park	Town Manager	CDBG-DR (Lee County); Tourist Development Council (Lee County)	Immediate (1-2 years)
Initiate detailed design process and create construction drawings	Culture, Parks & Recreation Dept. (Town)	CELCAB	Immediate (1-2 years)
Select contractor and authorize park construction	Culture, Parks & Recreation Dept. (Town)		Mid-Term (3-4 years)

Fort Myers Beach Implementation Framework	Lead	Potential Funders & Partners	Timeframe
<b>Times Square</b>			
Locate funding to restore & improve Times Square pedestrian plaza including paving, drainage, lighting, and ADA compliance	Town Manager	CDBG-DR (Lee County); Tourist Development Council (Lee County); Florida DOT	Immediate (1-2 years)
Direct preparation of Town Land Development Controls (LDC) amendments that would allow temporary/movable businesses on private lots at Times Square	Town Council	[none]	Immediate (1-2 years)
Draft LDC amendments for temporary/movable businesses and advertise LPA and Town Council public hearings	Community Development (Town)	Chamber of Commerce	Immediate (1-2 years)
Seek funding for flood mitigation buyouts (willing sellers only)	Town Manager	FEMA hazard mitigation grant; FEMA BRIC grant (Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities); FEMA flood mitigation assistance grant; Trust for Public Lands; Chamber of Commerce	Immediate (1-2 years) Mid-Term (3-4 years)
If future development is pursued at Times Square, encourage communication between property owners, the Town and the community to create an open dialogue and understanding about existing Town development standards, sustainability goals and best practices, desired form and scale, and public space / public access	Town Manager	Property Owners	Immediate (1-2 years) / Ongoing
Prioritize sustainability, walkability, and public space / accessibility when evaluating future development proposals; the options illustrated in this report can be used to inform potentially desired design features and considerations	Community Development Town Council	[none]	Immediate (1-2 years) / Ongoing

Fort Myers Beach Implementation Framework	Lead	Potential Funders & Partners	Timeframe
<b>Old San Carlos Boulevard</b>			
Locate funding to replace lighting along Old San Carlos	Town Manager	CDBG-DR (Lee County)	Immediate (1-2 years)
Select vendor and authorize installation of new lighting	Town Manager	CDBG-DR (Lee County)	Immediate (1-2 years)
Increase shade by exploring opportunities to include shade trees along Old San Carlos and extend public improvements to intersecting streets	Public Works (Town), Community Development	CDBG-DR (Lee County); Chamber of Commerce	Immediate (1-2 years)
Incorporate public art that reflects the Town’s beach character as part of streetscape improvements; ideas include murals at street crosswalks / intersections, or creatively-designed street furnishings.	Public Works (Town)	CDBG-DR (Lee County); Chamber of Commerce	Immediate (1-2 years)



**For questions or comments,  
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COASTAL FLORIDA RECOVERY AND RESILIENCY PARTNERSHIP PROJECT (R2P2)

