

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The development of these guidelines has involved input from innumerable sources. The author wishes to specifically thank, however, the following individuals. My colleagues at the Florida Community Design Center, particularly Martin Gold, the Executive Director, encouraged pursuing the project under the auspices of the Center. Students in my seminar “The Cultural Impact of Design Codes: The Case of Florida 1811-2003” raised significant questions about the potentials and limits of design codes and I appreciate their interest and patience in wading through some of the more arcane aspects of design codes. My assistants on this project, Levent Kara, Amber Wangle, Hernan Rivera and Paul Valembos, conducted field surveys, prepared drawings, photomontages, and images used in this document. Tom Ankersen, Director of the University of Florida Conservation Clinic, provided sound advice concerning the balance between public and private interests along Florida’s waterfronts.

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Particular thanks go to the City of Fernandina Community Development Department Staff for their assistance in gathering background materials, preparing maps and answering my numerous questions, particularly Marshall McCrary and Kevin Sullivan.

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(fig. 1.1) Greeting the first seaplane at the new city docks circa 1963.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In March 2007, the city of Fernandina Beach retained the Florida Community Design Center (FLCDC) and the Research and Education Center for Architectural Preservation (RECAP) at the University of Florida to assist the Planning Department in the preparation of a draft set of guidelines that would give form to the community's vision for the Waterfront Community Redevelopment Area known generally as the CRA. The Florida Community Design Center is known for its effective collaborations with the communities of Gainesville, Chipley, Dunnellon, and Flagler County on design-related issues. RECAP has worked with the City of Fernandina Beach on two previous preservation projects: the Oldtown Design Guidelines for the Oldtown Historic District, which were adopted by the City in 1999, and a revision of the Design Guidelines for the Historic District of the City of Fernandina Beach submitted in draft form and subsequently approved with modifications in 2005. The collaboration between RECAP and the FLCDC is a demonstration of the importance both of these organizations place on helping communities maintain their unique identity through good design practices.

The Community Redevelopment Area Design Guidelines ("CRADG") are the result of a public process to affirm the importance of the Fernandina waterfront in the historical, cultural, and economic life of the city. This process, which has evolved over the last two decades, resulted in the definition of the Waterfront Community Redevelopment Area in 2003, as well as a Development Plan for the CRA prepared by Ivey Planning Group, Real Estate Research Consultants and Zev Cohen & Associates in February 2004, and amended by the Planning and Zoning Department in May 2005. In 2005, Fernandina was one of five new communities designated as a Waterfronts Florida Partnership City by the state for the 2005-2007 cycle along with Bradenton Beach, the Village of Bagdad in Santa Rosa County, Fort Walton Beach, and Port St. Joe.

These guidelines did not start from scratch. Numerous public workshops and charrettes have been conducted during this process to gather and organize ideas of the community into a coherent vision for the city waterfront. These collective efforts and formal reports all recognized the importance of establishing design standards that coordinate development projects in the CRA, hence the involvement of the FLCDC and RECAP.

The three most important principles to emerge from these reports and meetings are:

1. Maintain views and public access to the water,
2. Establish a sense of place along the water's edge, and
3. Maintain the character of Fernandina Beach as reflected in its working waterfront and historic district.

These goals express not only important community values, but support federal and state efforts to provide greater public access to waterways and encourage the maintenance and growth of water-dependent and water-related uses. The Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 states that:

"There is a national interest in the effective management, beneficial use, protection, and development of the coastal zone. . . . increasing and competing demands upon the lands and waters of our coastal zone occasioned by population growth and economic development, [have resulted in] the loss of living marine resources, wildlife, nutrient rich areas, permanent and adverse changes to ecological systems, decreasing open space for public use, and shoreline erosion. Congress recognized that "important ecological, cultural, historic, and esthetic values in the coastal zone which are essential to the well-being of all citizens are being irretrievably damaged or lost." (16 U.S.C. 1451, Congressional findings Section 302, Page 117).

With almost 1,200 miles of coastline, Florida has dozens of historic water-dependent communities which provide over \$15 billion dollars of revenue and more than 200,000 jobs annually. These

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communities are diverse in terms of their geography, history, demographics, and development patterns, but they share similar challenges such as: “storm water impacts on water quality and displacement of historical uses for up-scale residential uses, and the concomitant rise in local property values” (UF Law Conservation Clinic: <http://www.law.ufl.edu/conservation/waterways/waterfronts/index.shtml>).

In reality, the socio-economic complexity of the Fernandina CRA makes achieving the three principle goals of maintaining views and public access to the water, establishing a sense of place along the water's edge, and retaining the character of Fernandina Beach as reflected in its working waterfront and historic district a significant challenge. The district includes working waterfront businesses, vacant and underutilized land, the City marina, and transitional commercial uses. The economics of water-dependent business has caused a shift in processing techniques, delivery systems, and markets that are forcing many alterations to historic use patterns of the CRA. In addition, changing demographics have created a desire to convert traditional waterfront property to market-price housing, further altering the composition of the area. Property values state-wide in historic districts, for example, have increased over 256% in the period 1996-2005 (<http://www.law.ufl.edu/cgr/pdf/2006HistoricTech-Two.pdf>) (fig. 1.2).



(fig. 1.2) *Straining for a view: Ever expanding development density along Florida's coastline.*

1.1 GUIDELINE GOALS

The CRA Design Guidelines are an important planning tool that helps to ameliorate problems and achieve the desires of the community through good urban design practices. However, design guidelines alone cannot solve all urban and social problems, such as the lack of affordable housing in Fernandina or the guarantee of top quality architecture and construction. Proper design and growth management of the CRA will require an ongoing and collaborative effort by the City, developers, private designers and planners, property owners, and the general public. It is strongly recommended that, in addition to the normal process of public review of projects, the design guidelines and the process of implementation be publicly reviewed every five years to determine their effectiveness in meeting the principle community goals.

The primary objective of the CRADG is to provide advice to property owners, architects, developers, City agencies, and the general public in achieving these goals. The guidelines are structured to explain general design criteria, reinforce the character of the city, and protect its visual and cultural and environmental aspects. Guidelines are an important planning instrument that can help to protect the value of public and private investment, which might otherwise be threatened by the undesirable consequences of poorly managed growth. The CRADG serve as a tool for designers and their clients to use in making preliminary design decisions. They are both a practical instrument and an educational tool to foster increased public awareness of how best design practices can manage the form and character of the city as it grows and develops.

Precedence

In matters of urban structure and aesthetics, the provisions of these Guidelines shall take precedence over local zoning codes, regulations, and ordinances. In matters of health and safety, the local zoning codes and ordinances shall take precedence over the provisions of these Guidelines. Specific references are often made to relevant passages in the City of Fernandina Land Development Code (version October 01, 2006) for emphasis on important issues and ease of use. These references are listed by number preceded by the initials "LDC" (ex.: LDC sec. 2.01.00). Property owners, developers, and designers must realize that the CRADG does NOT replace these documents and they must consult the LDC and all relevant support documents during the initial phases of project planning.

Language

The CRADG are a series of prescriptions, some of which are mandatory and others which are only recommended. The mandatory prescriptions are indicated by the verb "shall". The recommended ones are indicated by the verb "should". Options that are allowed but neither recommended nor discouraged are indicated by the verb "may".

Illustrations

The text is illustrated by diagrams, line drawings, and images that perform different roles. Diagrams and line drawings illustrate most directly the form requirements set forth in the written guidelines such as set backs, building heights, and view corridors. Photographs of built work by various architects and photomontages of hypothetical designs are also included. These images serve as "idea generators" that fit the spirit of the guidelines, but are not be construed as proposals for actual projects in the CRA.

1.2 DEFINITIONS AND BOUNDARIES OF THE CRA

The Community Redevelopment Act (“ACT”), adopted by the Florida Legislature in 1969, is intended to help communities revitalize downtowns, preserve historic structures, and otherwise enhance the designated CRA district. In order to establish a CRA, the local government legislative body must adopt a resolution finding that the designated area is a “slum” or “blighted,” contains a shortage of affordable housing, and that the rehabilitation or redevelopment of the area is “necessary” in the interest of the public’s “health, safety, morals or welfare” (Ankersen et al, 2005). Next, upon the finding of necessity and a further official finding that there is a need for a community redevelopment agency, the local government may create a CRA to exercise the powers of the local government in accordance with the ACT. Background documents outlining these assumptions in detail are available from the City of Fernandina website at the Fernandina Document Center located at: <http://www.fbl.us/documentcenterii.asp> and from the Conservation Clinic website located at: <http://conservation.law.ufl.edu/> sponsored by the University of Florida's Fredric G. Levin College of Law.

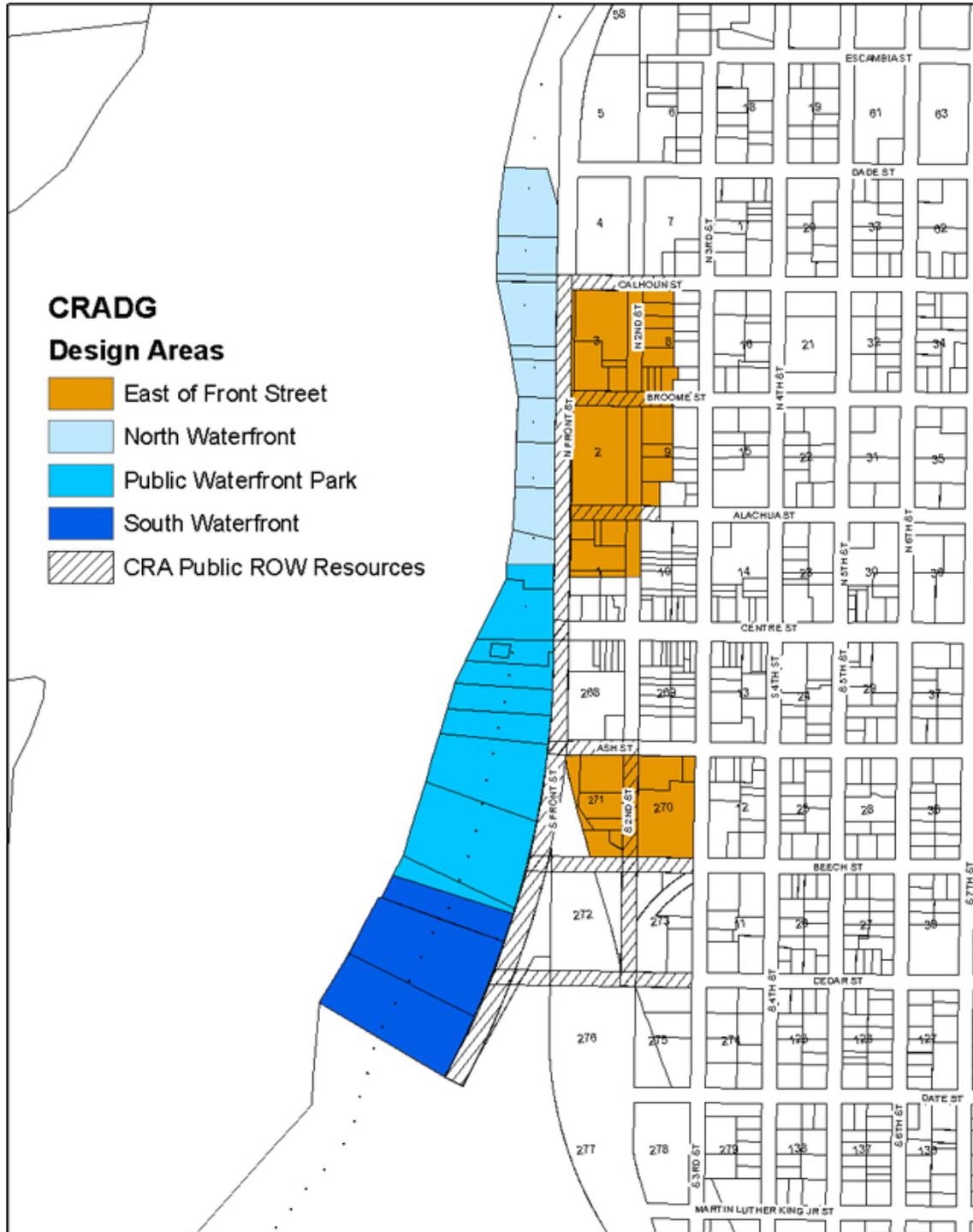
The physical boundaries of the CRA are shown in figure 1.3 followed by figure 1.4 outlining the CRA Design Areas and Public Right of Way (ROW) resources (The Design Areas are discussed in detail in Section 4.0).

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(fig. 1.3) Boundaries of the CRA outlined in yellow shown on an aerial photograph.

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(fig. 1.4) Map of the CRA showing Design Areas and Public Right of Way (ROW) Resources.

Purpose of the CRA

It is the purpose of the CRA overlay to provide a broader mix of uses and compatible design with the downtown area in order to promote revitalization of the working waterfront and adjacent areas. This emphasis on mixed use development is aimed at creating a lively urban street life and to avoid total privatization of waterfront properties into “dockominiums”.

The Finding of Necessity Study, which was prepared by the Center for Building Better Communities at the University of Florida (May 2005), determined that four out of fourteen conditions that define a “blighted area” exist within the study area. These conditions, selected from the Finding of Necessity, are outlined below:

1. Inadequate street layout, parking facilities (fig. 1.5)

- The railroad divides the waterfront district from the Centre Street area, limiting access to the waterfront (fig. 1.6).
- Lack of pedestrian facilities along Front Street (fig. 1.7).
- Parking facilities at the south end of Front Street are unpaved (fig. 1.8).

2. Unsanitary or unsafe conditions (fig. 1.9)

- Economically obsolete industrial buildings adjacent to Front Street.
- Industrial debris and deteriorating pier structures (fig. 1.10).
- Sense of safety for pedestrians arriving from ships due to lack of pedestrian facilities along Front Street (fig. 1.11).

3. Deterioration of site or other improvements (fig. 1.12)

- Deterioration of structures on industrial, commercial, and public properties (fig. 1.13).

4. Inadequate and outdated building density patterns (fig. 1.14)

- Lack of buffers between industrial and residential uses (fig. 1.15).
- Lack of usability by pedestrians and bicyclists (fig. 1.16).
- Traffic flow for industrial uses (fig. 1.17).

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Inadequate street layout, parking facilities



(fig. 1.5) View towards northwest across Front Street between Centre and Alachua.



(fig. 1.6) View north along Front Street between Ash and Beech.

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(fig. 1.7) View towards southwest between Centre and Alachua.



(fig. 1.8) View towards west-the south end of the city waterfront property.

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Unsanitary or unsafe conditions



(fig. 1.9) View south along Front Street between Alachua and Centre.



(fig. 1.10) View north between Alachua and Broome.



(fig. 1.11) View west along Front Street between Centre and Alachua.

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Deterioration of site or other improvements



(fig. 1.12) View of docks south- Brett's restaurant in upper right.



(fig. 1.13) View of old water access ramp looking towards northwest between Alachua and Broome.

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Inadequate and outdated building density patterns



(fig. 1.14) View west along Front Street between Broome and Calhoun.



(fig. 1.15) View east-intersection of Calhoun and Second.

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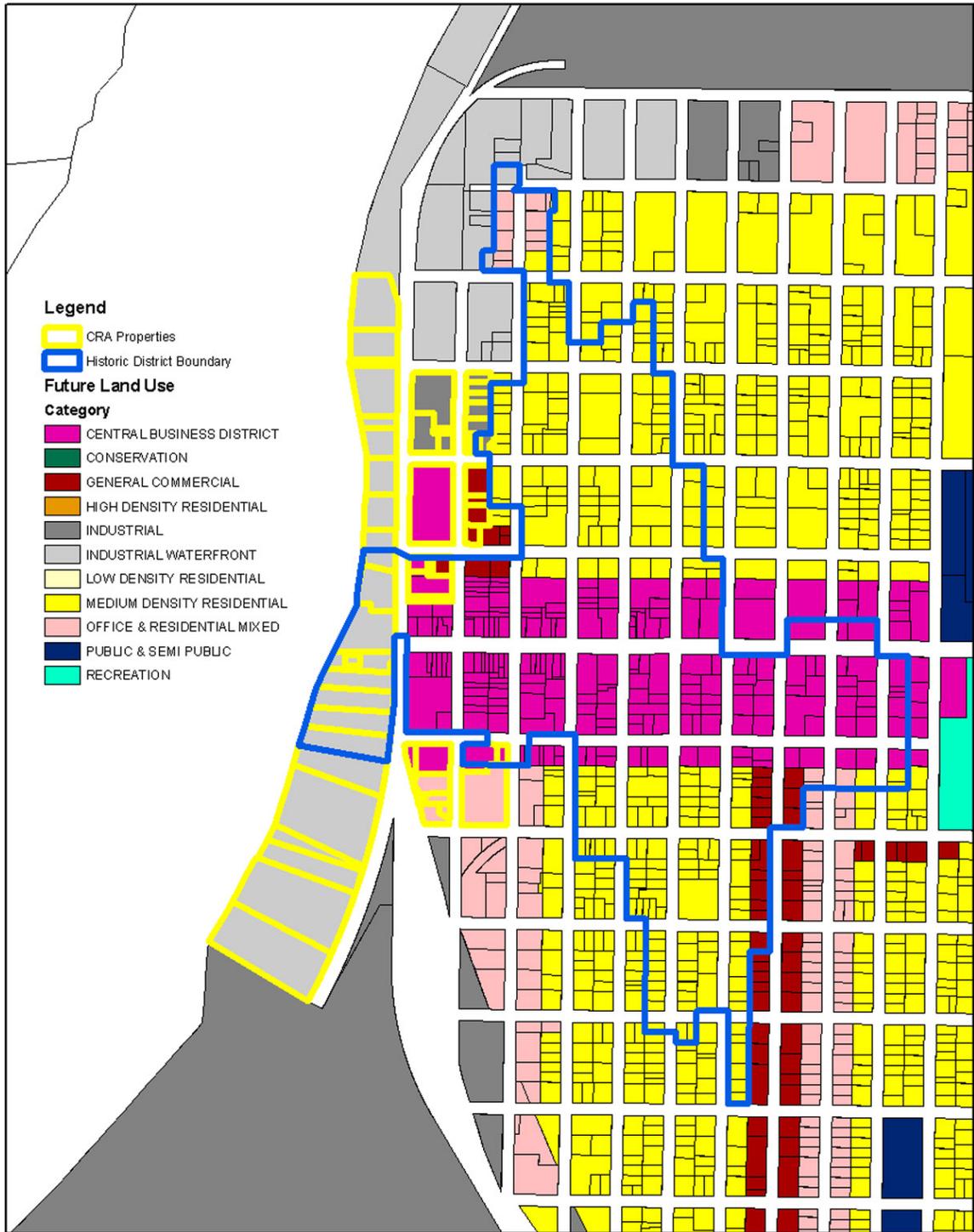
(fig. 1.16) View west along Front Street at Ash.

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(fig. 1.17) Intersection of Front Street and Broome.

1.3 SUMMARY OF LAND USE AND ZONING DISTRICTS



(fig. 1.18) Land uses within and adjacent to the CRA.

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General Information

Site design standards specified in these guidelines supersede the requirements for the underlying zoning district. Specific site design requirements that are not covered by the guidelines shall follow the standards of the underlying zoning district.

Future land use designations within the CRA include the following as identified on the City's Future Land Use Map:

- General Commercial District (C-2)
- Central Business District (C-3)
- Industrial District (I-1)
- Waterfront Industrial District (I-W)
- Waterfront Mixed Use District (W-1)

The City's Marina facility is assigned the Industrial Waterfront land use designation on the Future Land Use Map, but functions much like a Public and Institutional Land use with its open public spaces and structures. The following zoning districts occur within the CRA boundary (see complete descriptions in the LDC sec 2.01.00):

General Commercial District (C-2, LDC sec. 2.01.11)

The C-2 District is intended for the development of land uses to accommodate offices; commercial retail; personal services establishments; restaurants; transient accommodations; uses that provide sales and services for several neighborhoods; repair shops; retail sales and services; and other similar commercial uses. The General Commercial District recognizes existing development with locations that have access to arterial roads.

The maximum building floor area is 0.5 Floor Area Ratio (FAR). The C-2 district does not have associated setback or building coverage requirements. The maximum building height within the C-2 district is 45 feet.

Central Business District (C-3, LDC sec.2.01.12)

The C-3 District is intended for the development of land uses within the central business district as the City's center for residential, financial, commercial, governmental, professional, and cultural activities. The Central Business District category is designed to accommodate single-family or duplex residential uses, either freestanding or in mixed residential and business use structures; offices; commercial retail; personal services establishments; restaurants; transient accommodations; commercial parking facilities; civic uses; and cultural uses.. The maximum building area is 2.0 FAR with 8 dwelling units/acre. No setback or building coverage requirements apply to this district. The maximum building height is 45 feet.

Industrial District (I-1, LDC sec. 2.01.13)

The I-1 District is intended for the development of warehousing, fabrication, storage, and commercial services. The Industrial District recognizes existing development with locations that have access to major highways. The designation of land for the I-1 District shall be based on compatibility with surrounding land uses, considering environmental sensitivity, intensity of use, hours of operation, heat, glare, fumes, noise, and visual impacts.

The I-1 district does not have yard requirements except when adjacent to residential or commercial uses (75 foot setback, 15 foot vegetative buffer). The height limitation for this district is 45 feet.

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Waterfront Industrial District (I-W, LDC sec. 2.01.15)

The I-W District is intended for the development of water-dependent and water-related manufacturing, assembling, storage, distribution, sales, and port operations that are generally high intensity. The Waterfront Industrial District recognizes existing industrial development with locations that have access to transportation facilities by air, rail, ship, or highway. The designation of land for the I-W District shall be based on compatibility with surrounding land uses, considering environmental sensitivity, intensity of use, hours of operation, heat, glare, fumes, noise, and visual impacts.

No yard regulations apply in the I-W district unless adjacent to a residential or commercial district, in which case a 30 foot setback applies. A 20-foot wide vegetative and constructed buffer is also required between residential or commercial districts and the IW district. The height limitation for this district is 35 feet.

Waterfront Mixed Use District (W-1, LDC sec. 2.01.16)

The W-1 District is intended for the development and/or re-development of waterfront land fronting the Amelia River within the CRA only. The Waterfront Mixed Use District recognizes the desire to maintain existing water-related uses while providing a wider-range of uses to encourage developments which enhance the public's use of and access to the waterfront.

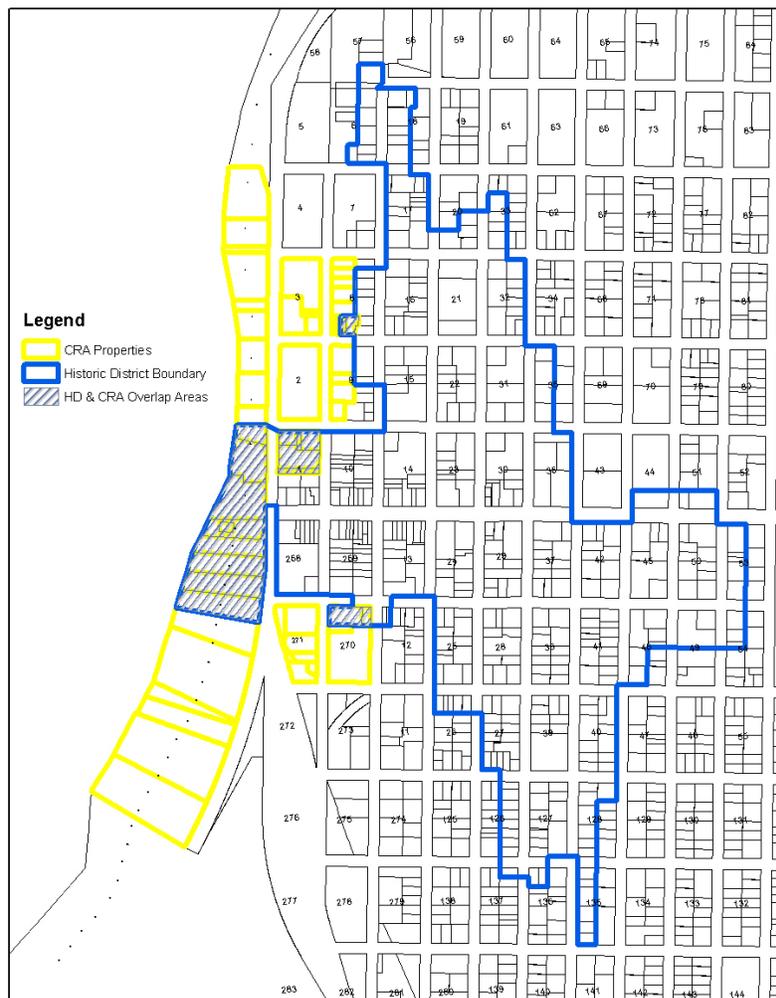
Net density is limited to 2 dwelling units per acre and is required to be above a commercial or office use. Intensity is limited to 0.75 FAR which is calculated on the entire lot including submerged lands.

Amendments to the FLUM that change the land to W-1 within the CRA along the waterfront may be awarded a 100% density credit bonus based on dedication and acceptance of an easement to the city in order to build a public waterfront boardwalk along the river and accessways from Front Street to the waterfront. Building heights on waterfront lots are limited to 30 feet above the Base Mean Flood Elevation. 15 foot sideyard setbacks are required to maintain views to the water. Heights within landside areas of the CRA can be up to 45 feet with restrictions.

1.4 HISTORIC DISTRICT OVERLAY

A section of the Community Redevelopment Area overlaps the Historic District boundaries (see fig. 1.19). Consequently, additional development guidelines and architectural restrictions are applied to all projects within this area. Proposed projects that lie within this overlap shall also be reviewed for compliance with the Historic Preservation Design Guidelines, dated December 1999, and approved 2005. All projects within the Historic District must undergo design review through the Historic District Council (HDC) to ensure design is consistent with the City's historic character.

The CRADG maintain and support the Historic District Council's role in guiding redevelopment within its boundaries in the CRA. Along the waterfront area of this overlap, which lies within city property, no historic or contributing structures remain. Therefore, in practice, the CRADG provide the best guidance since they support the "compatibility" language of the Historic District Guidelines. In the areas east of Front Street that abut the Historic District and a fabric of historic and contributing buildings, the Historic District Guidelines provide the clearest advice. In either case, **it cannot be overemphasized that the two documents are complementary and shall be consulted simultaneously.** The review of proposed development within any part of the CRA Overlay shall be based upon compliance with the CRADG. All plans for development within the CRA Overlay shall be reviewed by the Historic District Council.



1.5 USING THE GUIDELINES FOR PROJECT PLANNING

The permitting and approval process within the city can be complex and time consuming due to the number of local, state, and federal codes and ordinances affecting the CRA. One major purpose of the CRADG is to make the design and approval process as efficient as possible. Therefore, it is imperative that an architect, planner, landscape architect, engineer or other professional who is familiar with the guidelines and local approval process, be engaged early in the planning stage of a project. **Project coordinators are required to schedule a pre-application conference (LDC Sec. 11.01.02).** A pre-application conference is a meeting between an applicant and the City Manager for the purposes of:

1. Exchanging information on the potential development of a site.
2. Providing information on permissible uses of the site proposed for development.
3. Providing information to an applicant regarding the design standards set forth in the LDC that are applicable to a potential application.
4. Providing information to an applicant regarding standards of regional, state, or federal agencies that may be applicable to a potential application.
5. Determining the need and requirements for supporting plans, documents, and studies.
6. Providing information to an applicant regarding infrastructure requirements and the construction of required improvements.
7. Providing information to an applicant regarding the appropriate procedures and schedules for receiving and reviewing applications and rendering decisions regarding a potential application.

It is the City's intent that all requirements be identified during the pre-application conference. However, no person may rely upon any comment concerning a proposed development, or any expression of any nature through representation or implication, that the proposal will be ultimately approved or rejected in any form.

Prior to the submission of an application for a local development order, an applicant shall submit a written request for a pre-application conference. A pre-application conference shall be held not more than two (2) weeks following the date of the request submission. The pre-application conference shall be held not more than six (6) months prior to submission of an application.

The pre-application conference shall include representatives of City departments responsible for reviewing applications and independent reviewers hired by the City, and may include representatives of regional, state, or federal agencies with authority over specific aspects of the proposed development.

The 3 flow charts shown on the following pages summarize the key steps in the process of using the CRADG to develop a project.

Historic District Review Process

(fig. 1.20)

The Preliminary / Final Platting Process

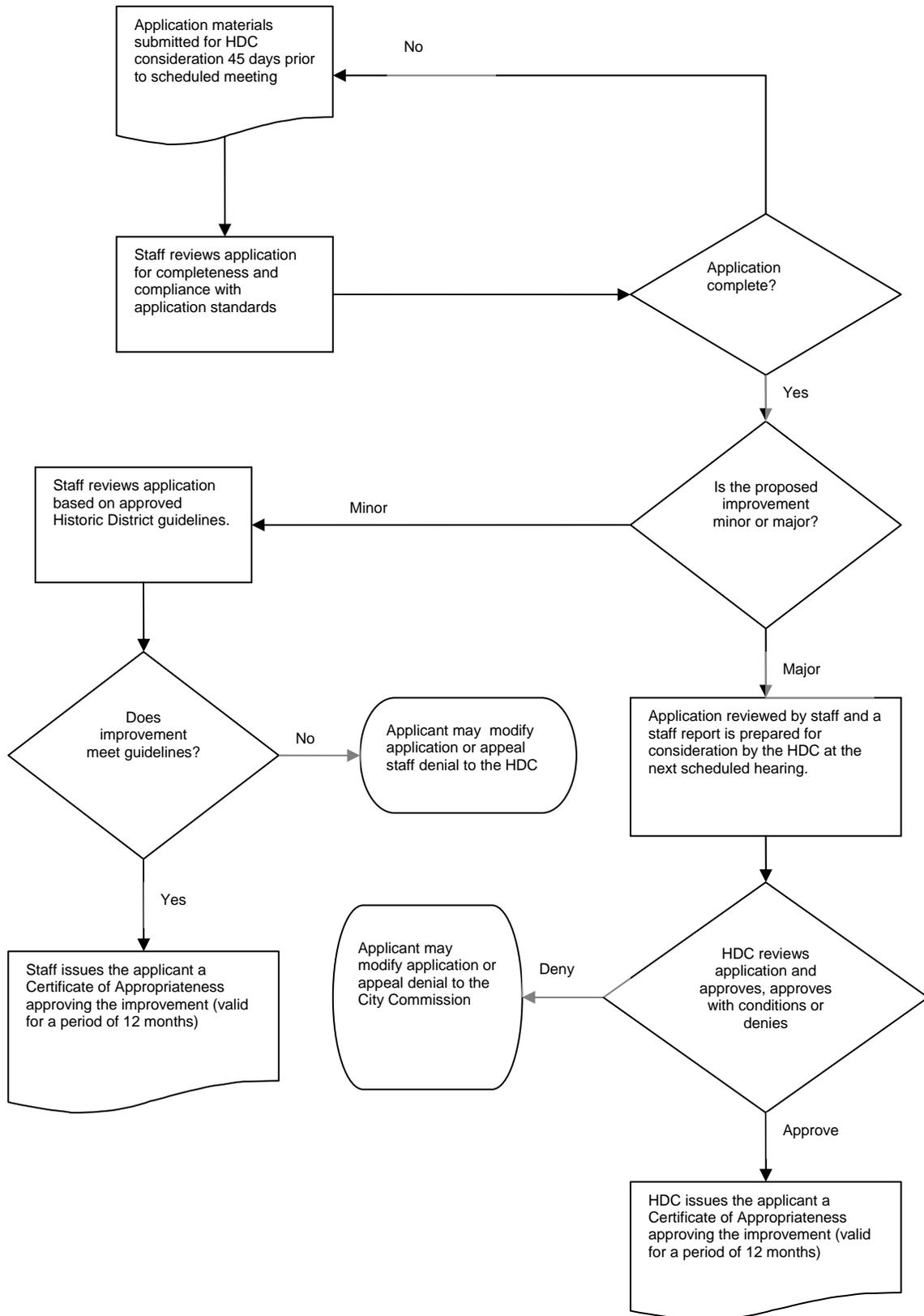
(fig. 1.21)

The Site Plan Review Process

(fig. 1.22)

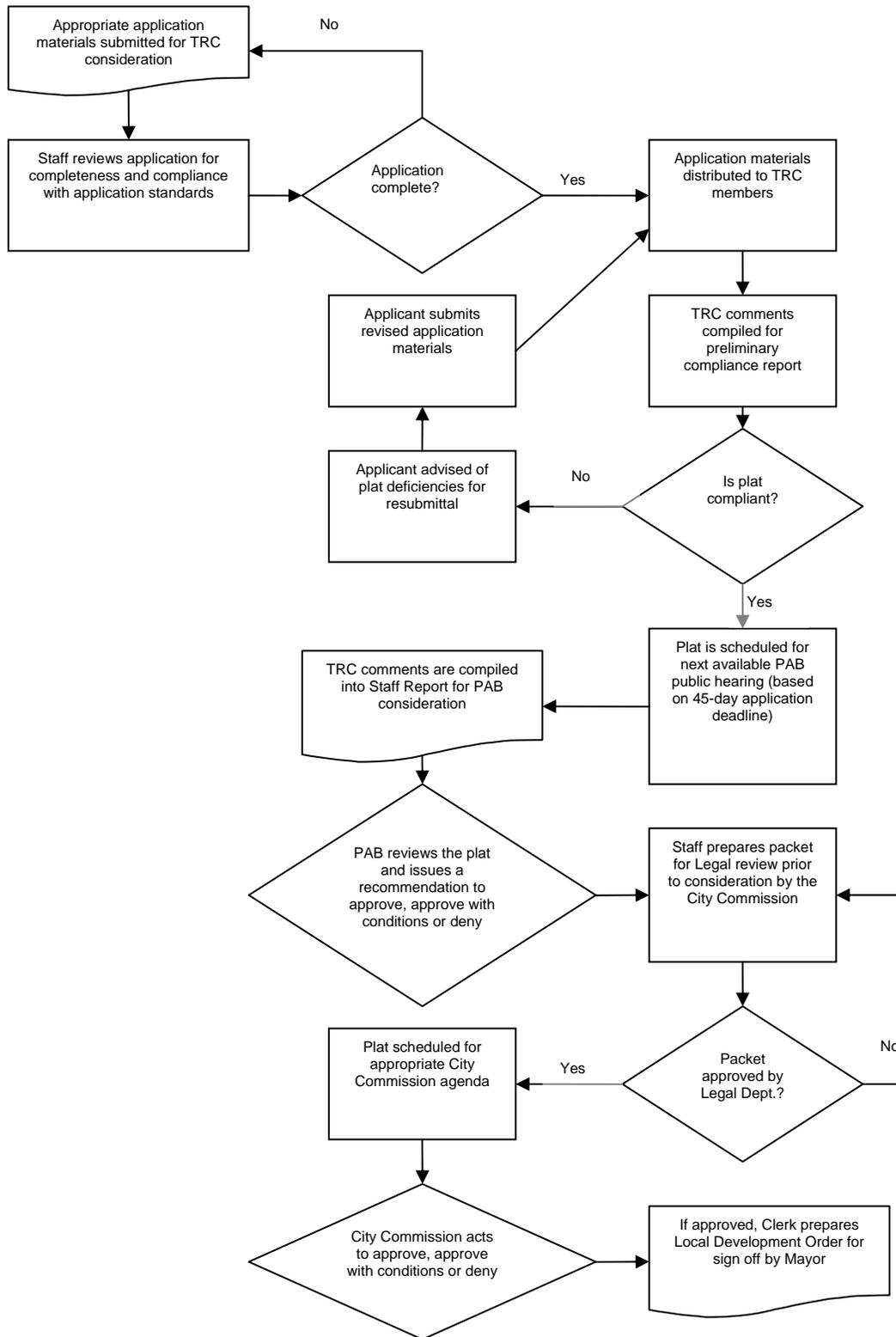
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Historic District Review Process
(fig. 1.20)



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The Preliminary / Final Platting Process
(fig. 1.21)



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The Site Plan Review Process
(fig. 1.22)

