

### 3.0 DESCRIPTION OF BUILDING AND SITE RESOURCES

The following description of the existing conditions of the CRA begins with an assessment of the quality and character of the principle streets and related public spaces. This approach envisions public spaces connected to other elements within the city, including the river, but also streets and roadways. At present, streets constitute the primary form of public space within Fernandina, but frequently they need to be redesigned to serve a broader recreational and social role in addition to their traffic functions. In the case of the CRA, many of the streets need to be improved, made more amenable, and perceived as part of the public space within the city instead of functional corridors that serve vehicular movement at the expense of other modes of travel. This is particularly true on Front Street. The guidelines require all current and future projects to define public space on the street which strengthens the historic city grid and supports pedestrian access to the waterfront.



*(fig. 3.1) CRA Boundaries shown in yellow.*

## FINAL CRA SUBMITTAL

The Amelia River is arguably the city's greatest open public space (figs. 3.2, 3.3). Therefore, many of the recommendations throughout the guidelines require specific view corridors to remain open and encourage creative means to increase public accessibility to the water. A brief assessment of the conditions of the public space of the CRA is provided, followed by design recommendations that correct impediments to the stated objectives of the CRA listed in Section 1.0.



*(fig. 3.2) Aerial view of Fernandina showing waterfront development before the advent of the port.*



*(fig. 3.3) Aerial view looking northeast towards Oldtown.*

### 3.1 FRONT STREET

Historically, Front Street (or First Street as it appeared on Sanborn maps until 1909) was the major commercial access road along the port facilities of Fernandina which stretched from Old Town to Gum Street. In an 1884 aerial panorama of the city, Front Street appears as a work-oriented corridor, filled with vehicles, men and material, and train tracks. Currently, the street is still dominated by the CSX railway (fig. 3.4). On the positive side, the train has played a central role in the economic and cultural history of the city. Train access to the Port of Fernandina is essential to help maintain Fernandina's working waterfront status. In addition, trains are a source of interest to many tourists and underscore the authentic character of the city's history.

The negative aspects of the tracks- interruption of pedestrian and vehicular flow, confusing sense of direction, and unsafe surfaces- will be mitigated with good design details. Front Street has no pedestrian walkways running north and south and portions of the road are in need of structural repair. Improvements to the Front Street right-of-way are limited by the CSX easement that encompasses a significant portion of the right-of-way (fig. 3.5). Currently, Front Street is accessed only from Centre and Ash, which impedes the improvement of pedestrian access to and from the waterfront.



*(fig. 3.4) Vegetation buffer between parking lot and railroad.*



*(fig. 3.5) Railroad as barrier.*

## FINAL CRA SUBMITTAL

### **General Recommendations**

Support the recommendation in the CRA Redevelopment Plan that the rail lines from Ash to Calhoun:

1. "...be reduced to a single track to allow wider vehicular and pedestrian corridors. However, this will require approval and coordination with CSX and others. The extent of improvements to the existing Front Street pavement depends on the design of the horizontal alignment. Some portions of Front Street may need to be reconstructed and some may be addressed by overlaying pavement. A detailed master plan of this area, inclusive of preliminary engineering analysis, would be a desirable implementation strategy for this plan." (Ivey, 2005: 16).
2. Pedestrian access can be modestly improved along the Front Street Corridor, but no serious progress can be made without removing one of these lines (fig. 3.6). The positive benefits of additional pedestrian and vehicular connections from Alachua and Beech will be addressed in following discussions of these two streets.



(fig. 3.6) Lot lines superimposed over aerial showing one rail line removed.

(Prepared by Zev Cohen Associates, Inc.)

### 3.2 SECOND STREET

Second Street was the major north-south retail and commercial corridor within the city up until the fire of 1876. The Second Street streetscape improvement program initiated by the city, designed by Waitz and Moyer, Inc. (submitted July 1997), and implemented between Ash and Alachua has dramatically improved the appearance and walkability of this public corridor. The addition of planting islands and regularly spaced palms flanking the street establishes a buffer to parking, creates visual interest, and provides areas of shade. The current sidewalk surfaces follow recommendations of earlier reports, but patterned concrete has been substituted for the traditional laid brick and diamond-shaped blocks due to issues of economy (fig. 3.7).



*(fig. 3.7) View north along Second Street showing existing streetscape design.*

## FINAL CRA SUBMITTAL

At the intersection of Second and Calhoun, heavy truck traffic entering the warehouses conflicts with developing pedestrian activity. A private owner has renovated a dilapidated house on the corner of Second and Calhoun into a mixed use facility (currently, a restaurant-bar and office space) (fig. 3.8).



(fig. 3.8) View north along Second at Calhoun (before and after renovation).

The streetscape program currently ends abruptly north at Alachua and south at Beech. The Beech Street right of way extends to the CSX property and is currently used *ad hoc* as temporary parking for surrounding businesses and overflow during seasonal events (fig. 3.9).



(fig. 3.9) View west down Beech at Second.

# FINAL CRA SUBMITTAL

## **General Recommendations**

### *North of Alachua*

1. Extend the current streetscape program north to Calhoun and south to Cedar.
2. Planting in front of the port warehouse on the west side of Second. A private owner has begun this pattern in front of his property on the east side of Second and Calhoun.

### *South of Ash*

1. The feasibility of opening the Second Street right of way from Beech to Cedar should be studied at least as a pedestrian corridor that terminates in a small public space near the Amelia Island Museum of History and Community Theater.
2. The small park at the corner of Second and Ash should be retained as a public green “oasis” space. The balance of this area is a prime location for city controlled parking areas, but the parking surfaces should be designed as pervious and to function as a public space during events (see Parking Guidelines section 5).
3. Electrical equipment at this park needs more effective screening as per guidelines (fig. 3.10).



*(fig. 3.10) Electrical equipment in need of additional screening.*

### 3.3 CALHOUN STREET

For all practical purposes, Calhoun forms the northern most walkable boundary of the CRA (approximately a 5 minute walk from Centre Street). The street is bound on the south edge by a private mixed use development and on the north by a warehouse building. Creating a clearly defined and safe pedestrian access along this street is difficult due to the truck access area into the existing warehouse. The current off-set road pattern and street bollards restrict vehicular entry to automobiles and a minimal sidewalk along the south edge of the street is provided by the mixed use project.

#### ***General Recommendations***

1. Additional landscape buffers should be established on the north side of “Wicked Davie’s” and on the metal screen wall on the south side of the warehouse (fig. 3.11).
2. All power lines should be buried.
3. Signs relocated and redesigned as required (see Section 4 for signage guidelines).



*(fig. 3.11) View south along Second at Calhoun. Renovated private project at left corner.*

### 3.4 BROOME STREET

Broome Street, which visually connects the residential areas to the waterfront, offers another opportunity to connect pedestrian and vehicular circulation to Front Street.

#### ***General Recommendations***

1. Opening Broome to Front.
2. Provide appropriate pervious paving surfaces, lighting, and landscaping as per guidelines shown in Section 4.0 and 5.0 (fig. 3.12).



*(fig. 3.12) Fuel tankers frequently use this area at Broome and Front as temporary parking.*

### 3.5 ALACHUA STREET

Alachua Street creates an axis from North 8<sup>th</sup> Street, through the Northeast residential areas, past the public library and retail areas on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> to the Amelia River (fig. 3.13). It functions as a major east-west vehicular connection to 8<sup>th</sup> street, particularly during seasonal events. The road now ends abruptly at the railroad easement at Front and is often occupied with parked transport vehicles. Two water-dependent buildings on Water Lots 2 and 3 partially block the Alachua Street View Corridor (fig. 3.14).



*(fig. 3.13) View east from Front Street along Alachua.*



*(fig. 3.14) Intersection of Alachua and Front circa 1986.*

## FINAL CRA SUBMITTAL

### **General Recommendations**

1. Open Alachua from Second to Front Street to allow pedestrian and vehicular traffic as recommended by the CRA Redevelopment Plan (Ivey, 2005: 16).
2. Provide ADA-approved pervious paving surfaces, lighting, and landscaping for traversing the railroad track bed by pedestrians (figs. 3.15 and 3.16).



*(fig. 3.15) Brick paving system providing smooth transition between railroad tracks, street and pedestrian surfaces.*



*(fig. 3.16) Porous concrete-brick system providing transition between pedestrian surface and railroad (photo by Kevin Sullivan).*

### 3.6 CENTRE STREET

The waterfront termination of arguably the most important street in Fernandina is inadequate from a spatial, visual, and functional perspective. The existence of the railroad tracks cannot be blamed completely for this disjunction, as historically there was no public space at this location (See Sanborn Insurance Maps 1884-1929). Although the tracks and periodic train passages create a barrier to fluid pedestrian circulation, a lack of clear physical boundaries, poorly maintained ground surfaces, poor signage, confusing vehicular circulation, and visual clutter discourage pedestrians from using the waterfront to its fullest potential (fig. 3.17).

Solving this access problem and successfully connecting the city grid with the waterfront is critical to the cultural and economic success of the CRA.



*(fig. 3.17) Crossing at Centre and Front in need of redesign following guidelines.*

## FINAL CRA SUBMITTAL

### **General Recommendations**

1. Terminate the axis of Centre Street in an important public space north of the visual corridor of Centre Street.
2. A drop-off is proposed that also functions as a gathering space during seasonal events.
3. Landscape, lighting, and surface treatments will establish this area as a pedestrian-oriented space.
4. Replace current visually inadequate and unsafe pedestrian railroad crossing with a design that complements the existing brick and modular concrete materials currently used along Centre Street and the proposed waterfront park.
5. Technical solutions provided by various manufacturers can ensure that this crossing is safe and ADA compliant (fig. 3.18).
6. Lighting and landscape elements will mitigate the disruption of pedestrian traffic created by the rail lines.



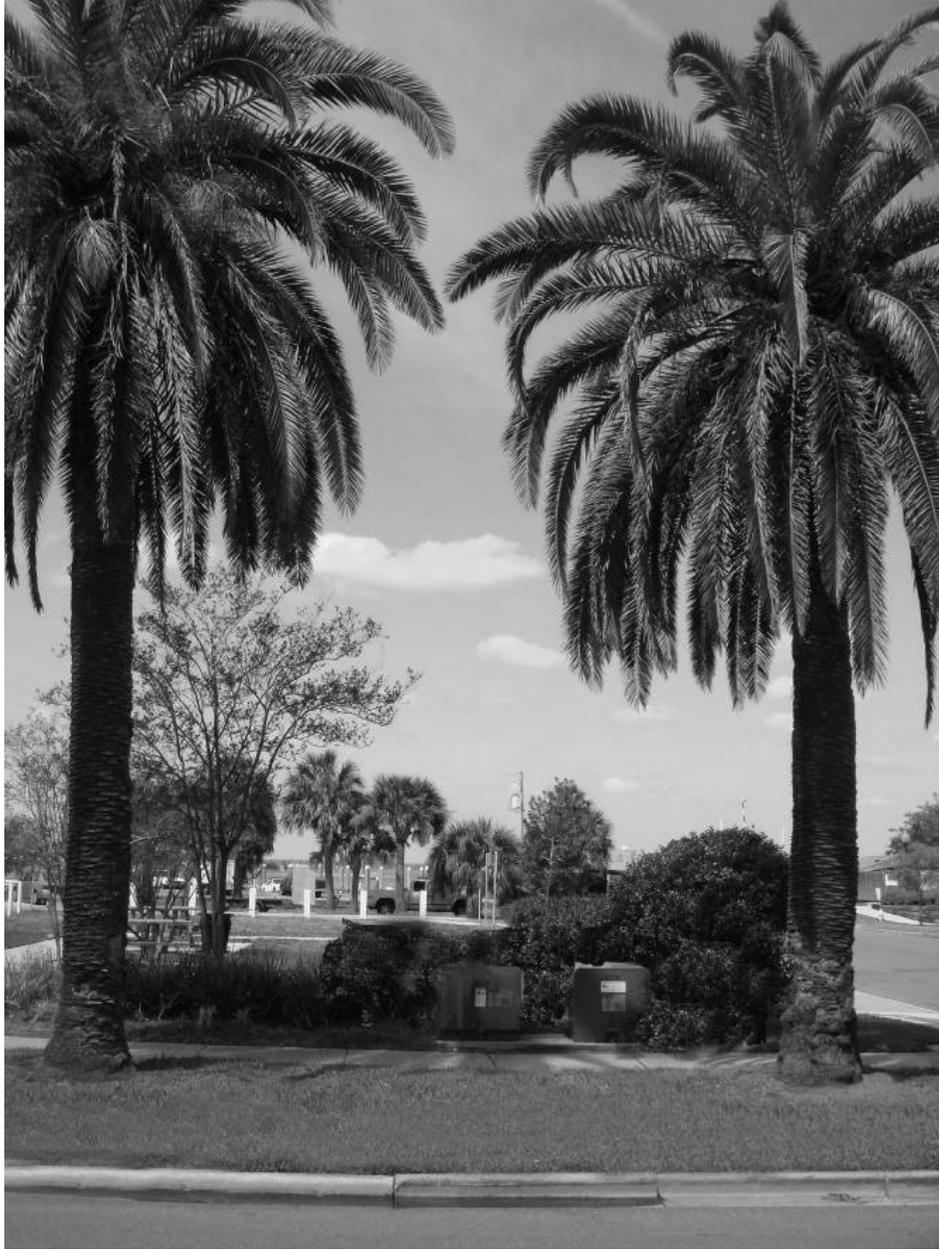
*(fig. 3.18) Pedestrian friendly rail line crossing along Canal Street, New Orleans.*

### 3.7 ASH STREET

Ash is second only to Centre Street as a major east-west connection and terminates in the center of the Public Waterfront Park. Direct views of the water along Ash are blocked by the Atlantic Seafood Market facilities. (fig. 3.19). The intersection of Ash and Front is dominated by vehicle traffic turning onto Front Street to access the boat ramp or the Seafood Market. Ash provides good vehicular access from 8<sup>th</sup> and is used occasionally by pedestrians patronizing businesses along Ash, Second, Third, and Fourth Streets. City Hall is also in a prominent location along this street. A small pocket park and city parking lot is located west of City Hall bound by Ash, Second, existing warehouses to the south, and the CSX right-of-way to the west (fig. 3.20).



*(fig. 3.19) Direct views of the water along Ash are blocked by existing structure.*

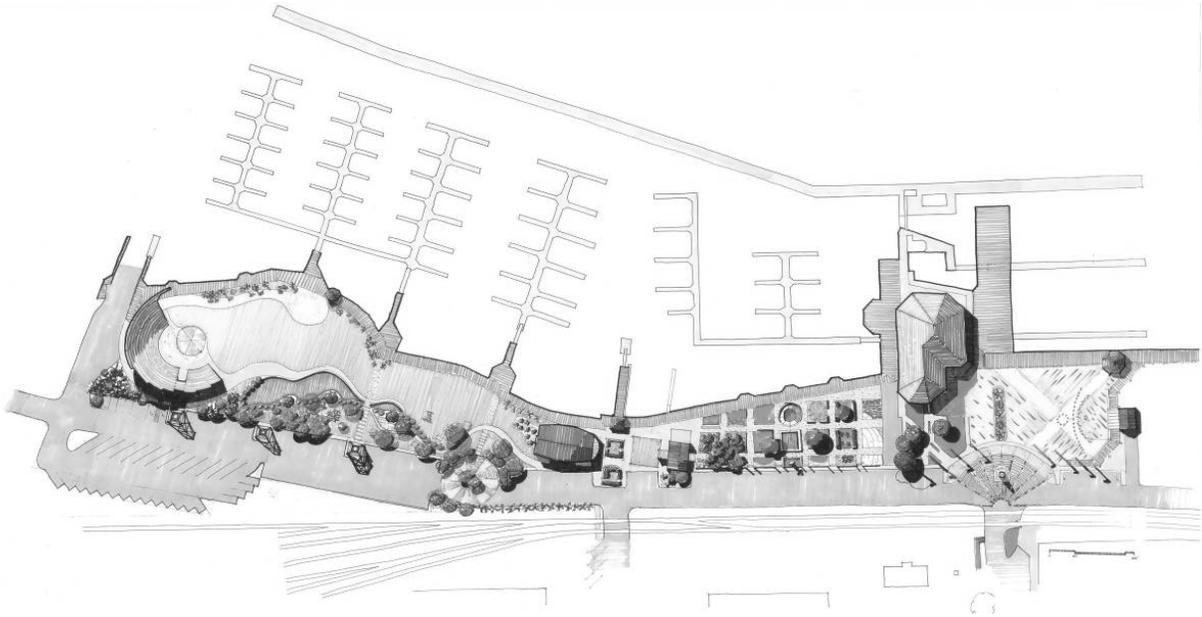


*(fig. 3.20) Pocket park along Second and Ash adds to the variety of public space along Second and Ash.*

## FINAL CRA SUBMITTAL

### General Recommendations

1. The small park at the corner of Second and Ash should be retained as a public green “oasis” that also preserves views of the water from City Hall. The balance of this area is a prime location for city controlled parking areas, but the parking surfaces should be designed as pervious and to function as a public space during events.
2. The proposed Plan for the Waterfront City Park resolves the larger problems of visual and pedestrian access and circulation efficiency along Ash and should be developed with the assistance of a landscape architect (fig. 3.21).



*(fig. 3.21) Conceptual Waterfront Park developed by the Waterfronts Florida and Parks and Recreation Committees.*

### 3.8 BEECH STREET

Beech Street establishes the southern edge of the CRA. Establishing a crossing to Front Street is difficult due to the width of tracks in this area, but a crossing did exist in the 1930's (fig. 3.22). Surface parking is located along the northern edge of Beech between Second and Front. Beech now terminates in a grassy area flanked by trees and vegetation (fig. 3.23). The street and parking area on the north side between Second and Third is not centered in the right of way.



*(fig. 3.22) Historically Beech Street was connected to the waterfront.*



*(fig. 3.23) Beech Street termination looking east from Front.*

## FINAL CRA SUBMITTAL

### **General Recommendations**

1. Center the view corridor within the right-of-way to conform to other principal grid streets.
2. Design the western termination of Beech as a public “pocket park” with a view corridor across the railroad tracks towards the Amelia River (fig. 3.24).
3. Pervious parking surfaces may be employed to maintain the appearance of the area and allow for temporary event parking.
4. A vehicular connection to Front Street is recommended as a long-term planning goal.



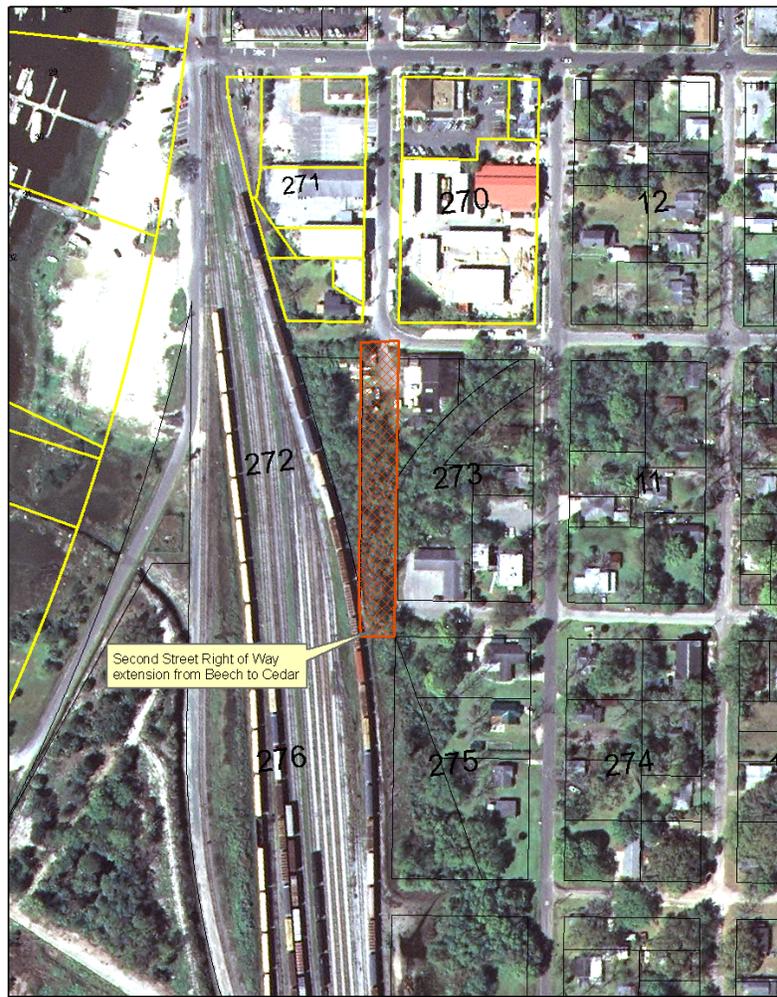
*(fig. 3.24) Beech Street parking strip and sidewalk looking west from Third.*

### 3.9 CEDAR STREET

Although technically outside of the CRA, a stronger pedestrian connection from the Amelia Island Museum of History and the Community Theater will assist the CRA in its long range development goals. Currently, Cedar terminates in the parking lot of these two important institutions and visual access to the waterfront is blocked by vegetation and the rail yards to the west.

#### **General Recommendations**

1. The creation of a pedestrian or vehicular connection to Front Street is impractical due to the depth of the rail yards, but a visual corridor can be established by careful pruning of vegetation.
2. The area west of the parking area in front of the museum and theater may be redesigned as a “pocket park”. This space can be connected through to Second Street at Beech with the opening of the right of way as a pedestrian greenway (fig. 3.25).
3. The parking surfaces may also be re-engineered to function as a public space that also allows parking. Properly redesigned, this area creates a point of orientation towards the waterfront and the city.



(fig. 3.25) Right of way extension of Second Street to Cedar.