Chapter 4: SOUTH OF DOWNTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING AREA ANALYSIS

The South of Downtown Historic District Neighborhood Planning Area is roughly bounded by the railroad tracks at the west, Downtown Historic District at the north, 7th Street at the east, and Lime Street at the south, as illustrated on Figure 35. Included below is a summary of the Neighborhood Planning Area's predominant character defining features, and an entire list of character defining features is included later in this section of the report.

- *Porch Enclosures* – Porches are a common element to many of the residences within the Neighborhood Planning Area. Their forms and detailing are highly varied from small covered entries to full width front porches, and while some remain open others have been enclosed.

- *Sidewalks and Landscaping* – The Neighborhood Planning Area has a high level of natural landscaping. This is created by vacant lots which are covered in trees and plants, and built lots which are heavily wooded and greened with natural landscape. Sidewalks are located throughout the Downtown Historic District and typically end at the edge of the Neighborhood Planning Area, clearly differentiating the streetscape in the two areas.

- *Architectural Styles* – Similar to the North of Downtown Historic District Neighborhood Planning Area, this area contains primarily modest residences constructed in vernacular styles. It contrasts with the larger residences designed in high styles throughout the Downtown Historic District, and gives the area a unique sense of place.

History and Development Patterns

The development patterns of the historic resources in the South of Downtown Historic District area are illustrated in Table 3. The six historic periods established during the survey reflect the developmental history of the area. These patterns of development also provide the contexts necessary for determining the significance of the various historic resources.

Table 3: Development Patterns of Resources within the South of the Downtown Historic District Neighborhood Planning Area

Periods of Development	Number of Parcels
Spanish-American War Period/Turn-of-the-Century (1898-1916)	16
World War I and Aftermath Period (1917-1919)	1
Florida Land Boom Period (1920-1929)	21
Depression and New Deal Period (1930-1940)	29
World War II and Post-War Period (1941-1949)	39
Modern Period (1950-1961)	23
Non-Historic (Post 1961)	60

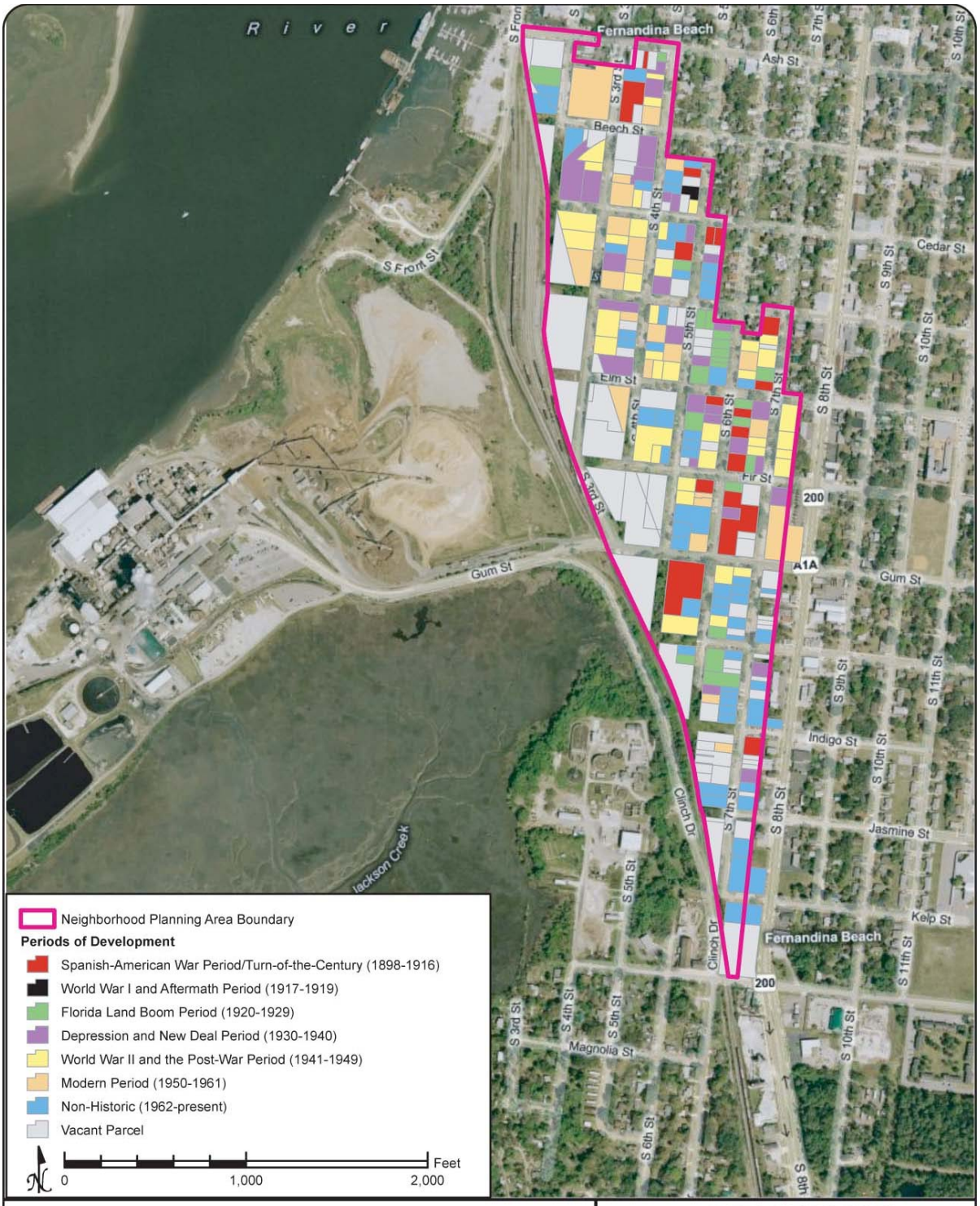

Figure 35: Development Patterns in the South of the Downtown Historic District Neighborhood Planning Area

As illustrated on Table 3 and Figure 35, the South of the Downtown Historic District Neighborhood Planning Area saw relatively consistent development throughout its historical periods, with the exception of the World War I and Aftermath Period (1917-1919). Similar to the North of the Downtown Historic District Neighborhood Planning Area, the earliest development began during the Spanish-American War Period/Turn of the Century (1898-1916) when the area was booming from tourism, lumber, and phosphate stores. The residences constructed within the planning area during this period were more modest in size than those in the historic district. They were typically Frame Vernacular structures and were concentrated at the south end of the current historic district, as well as along S 6th and S 7th Streets. Little information is available about the residents' occupations from early City Directories. This may indicate that the area was considered to be on the outskirts of town, and remained relatively undocumented.

Growth in the 1920s continued to follow the patterns and characteristics of the earliest development, and was concentrated along S 6th and S 7th Streets, as well as the area currently the southern boundary of the historic district. Unlike other communities in Florida, Fernandina did not experience a large development boom during the 1920s. The development the neighborhood witnessed during this period was likely the residual effect of the growth of the area's shrimping industry, from 1913 through the early 1920s. Later in the 1920s, the industry would move further south to St. Augustine.

The construction of the Container Corporation of America and Rayonier Corporation mills in the 1930s significantly changed the Fernandina community, boosted its economy, and prompted building booms throughout the following decades. Fernandina was chosen as the site of the plants due to its harbor, network of waterways, and 10 million acres of the, "most rapidly growing timber in the world" (Fernandina News Publishing Company and City Commission Fernandina 1940: 41). The Rayonier Corporation mill was constructed just west of the South of the Downtown Historic District Neighborhood Planning Area, on Gum Street. Thus, the area was a logical site of development of additional housing for mill workers, and steady development occurred from 1930 through the early 1960s. Houses constructed throughout these periods were similar in character to those from the earlier periods, with modest Frame Vernacular and Masonry Vernacular designs. Construction during these periods was concentrated at the northeastern portion of the planning area. Still, by the early 1960s, many vacant lots remained and the area remained less densely developed than the Downtown Historic District, as illustrated on the 1960 aerial photograph (Figure 36).

While the construction of the mills prompted the need for additional housing and resulted in a boom from the late 1930s through early 1960s, the Neighborhood Planning Area's close proximity to the mill also likely made it less desirable due to the truck traffic to and from the mill and its towering smokestacks. While there are some teachers, salesmen, and engineers noted as residents in available City Directories from the late 1950s, the majority of the area's residents were working class. Professions are listed as primarily employees of Rayonier or the Container Corporation (including plugger, guard, loader, millwright, machine operator, and laborer), as well as driver, commercial fisherman, machine operator, janitor, laborer, maid, shrimper, electrician helper, and meter reader for other businesses.

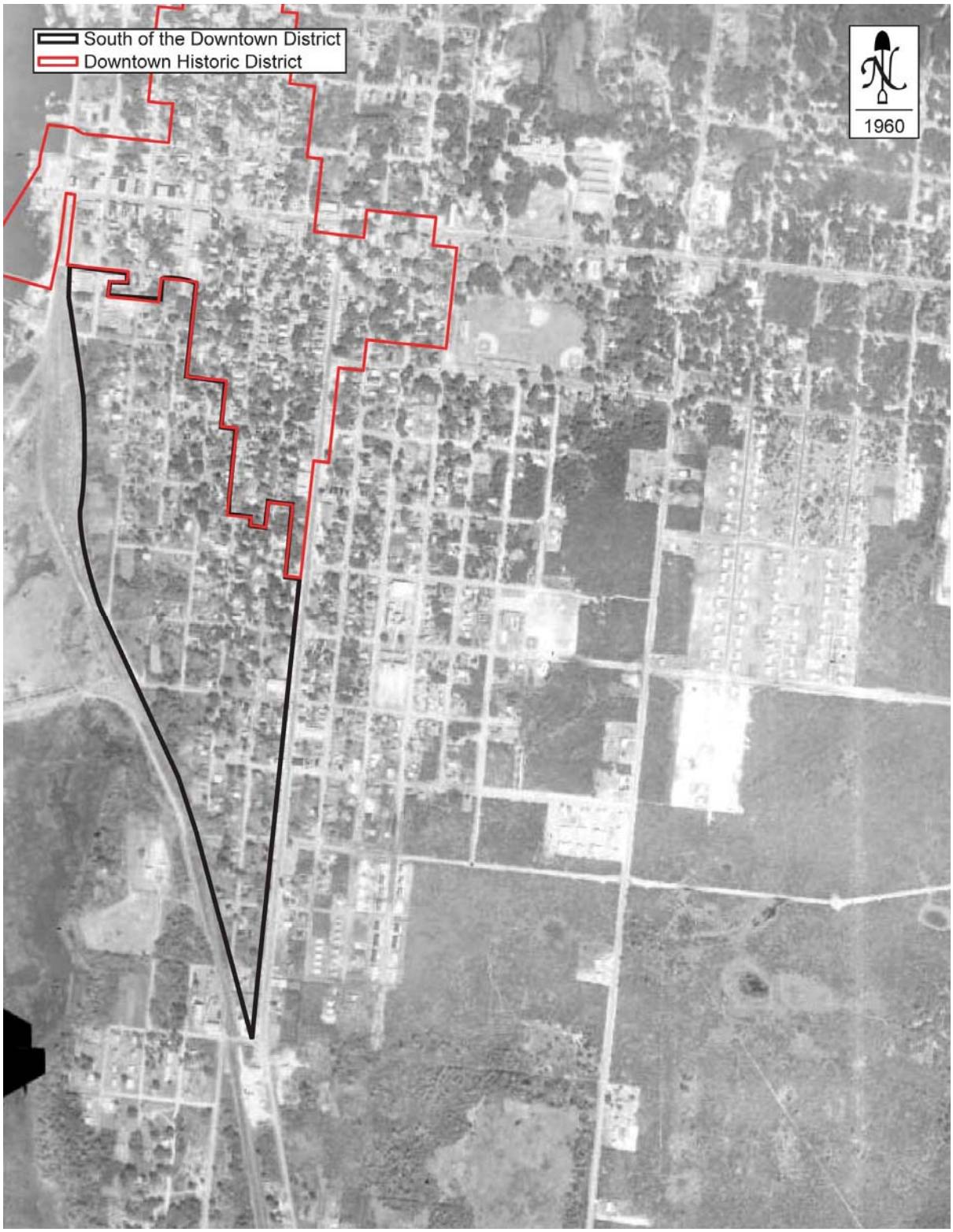

Figure 36: 1960 Aerial Photograph showing the layout and density of development within the South of the Downtown Historic District Neighborhood Planning Area
Aerial Photograph Courtesy of Aerial Photography: Florida, State University System of Florida, http://www.digital.uflib.ufl.edu/collections/FLAP/Index.htm

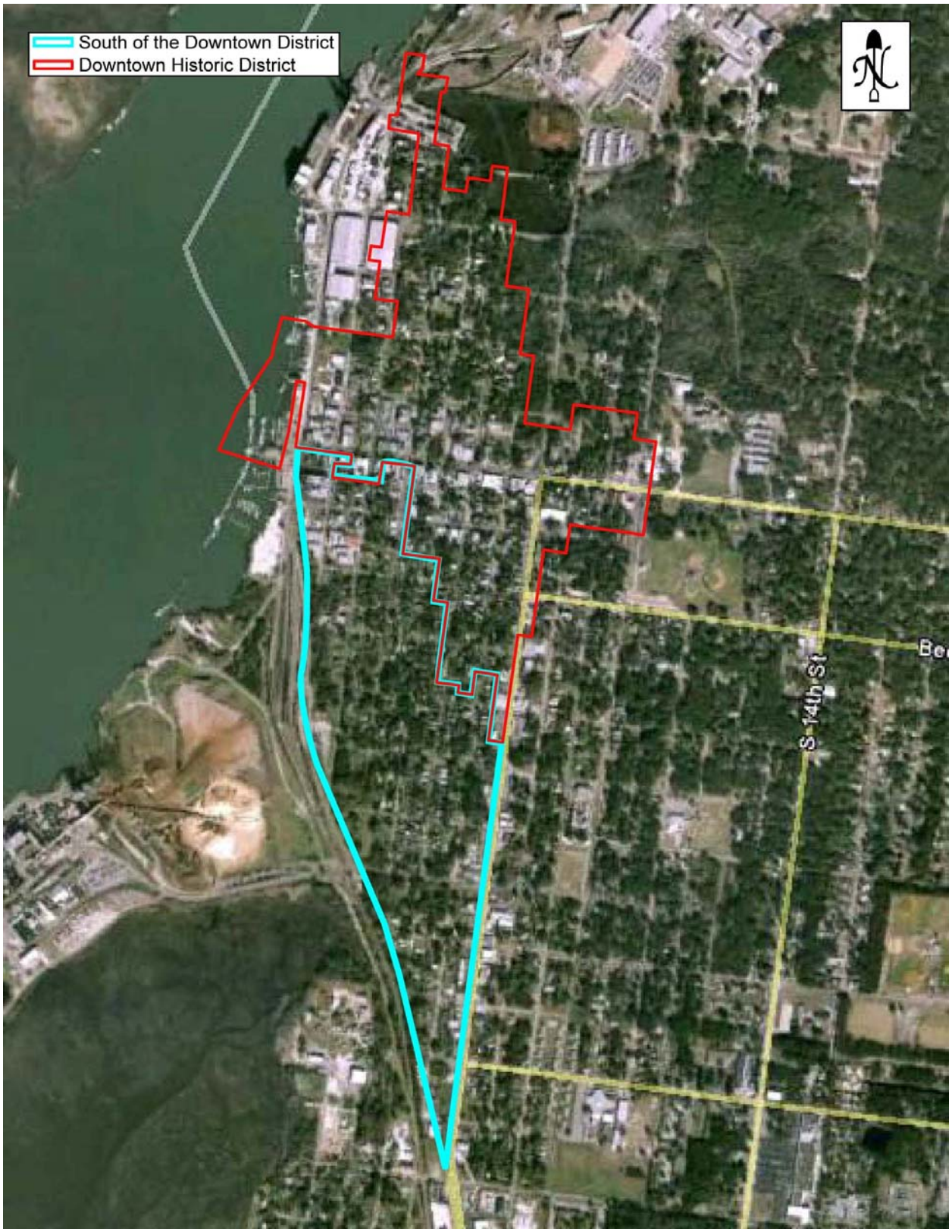

Figure 37: Current Aerial Photograph for Comparison with Figure 36

Character Defining Features

Land use

The Neighborhood Planning Area consists primarily of single family residences and the Greater Fernandina Beach Church of God (Figure 38-Figure 41).

Figure 38: View of Typical Single Family Residences in the South of the Downtown Historic District Neighborhood Planning Area, Date Street, facing southeast at 5th Street

Figure 39: View of Typical Single Family Residences in the South of the Downtown Historic District Neighborhood Planning Area, 419-423 6th Street (8NA418-420), facing southwest

Figure 40: View of Typical Single Family Residences in the South of the Downtown Historic District Neighborhood Planning Area, 5th Street facing southeast at 317 5th Street

Figure 41: View of the Greater Fernandina Beach Church of God and Typical Streetscape in the South of the Downtown Historic District Neighborhood Planning Area, Cedar Street facing southwest at 4th Street

Height/stories
The structures are primarily one-story throughout the Neighborhood Planning Area. However, there are some two-story structures.

Setbacks
Setbacks are varied throughout the Neighborhood Planning Area. The majority of the residences are set close to the street (Figure 38-Figure 41, pages 53-54), and some residences throughout the neighborhood have larger street setbacks (Figure 42).

Figure 42: View of Slightly Larger Setbacks of some Residences in the South of the Downtown Historic District Neighborhood Planning Area, 307 Date Street, facing southeast

Density
The overall density of structures throughout the Neighborhood Planning Area is low, as vacant lots are scattered throughout the area. Figure 35 illustrates the amount of vacant parcels within the area.

Building materials
Brick, concrete block, and wood frame are the most common building materials within the Neighborhood Planning Area. Weatherboard, stucco, asbestos shingles, and vinyl or metal siding are commonly used as the exterior fabric.

Garage entrances

The majority of the structures throughout the Neighborhood Planning Area do not have garages. Of those that do, a detached one-car garage similar in character to the main residence is the most common (Figure 43). Some of the later residences have integral garages, as illustrated in Figure 42 on page 55.

Figure 43: View of Typical Detached Garage in the South of the Downtown Historic District Neighborhood Planning Area, 312 S 3rd Street (8NA288), facing southeast

Porch enclosures

Porches are common within the neighborhood and their designs vary. Some are fully enclosed and feature Jalousie or single hung sash windows (Figure 43, page 56). Others are open with closed railings or simple wooden railings (Figure 44, Figure 45).

Figure 44: View of Typical Open Porch with a Closed Rail in the South of the Downtown Historic District Neighborhood Planning Area, 422 S 5th Street (8NA351), facing east

Figure 45: View of Typical Open Porch with a Simple Wooden Rail in the South of the Downtown Historic District Neighborhood Planning Area, 506 S 6th Street (8NA424), facing east

Fences and walls

Various types of fencing are found throughout the Neighborhood Planning Area, including primarily chain link (Figure 46), and wooden picket fences (Figure 47).

Figure 46: View of Typical Chain Link Fence in the South of the Downtown Historic District Neighborhood Planning Area, 429 S 5th Street, facing west

Figure 47: View of Typical Wooden Picket Fence in the South of the Downtown Historic District Neighborhood Planning Area, S 5th Street, facing southeast at Elm Street

Scale
Most of the residences in the neighborhood are moderately sized. A random sampling of 20 structures was selected to determine an approximate average square footage for the Neighborhood Planning Area. The approximate average is 1209 square feet.

Floor area ratio
The floor area ratio of the structures is typically low, as they are primarily one story structures which do not cover the entire lot.

Lot coverage
Lot coverage within the neighborhood is moderate. Residences appear to occupy between 25% and 50% of the lot area.

Street patterns and widths
The streets are on a grid pattern and generally are uniform in width. The grid pattern of the streets is evident on Figure 35 on page 49, and typical views of the streetscape are included in Figure 48 and Figure 49.

Figure 48: Representative View of Street within the South of the Downtown Historic District Neighborhood Planning Area, S 5th Street, facing north from Date Street

Figure 49: Representative View of Street within the South of the Downtown Historic District Neighborhood Planning Area, S 4th Street, facing south from Beech Street

Accessory structures

There are few accessory structures throughout the Neighborhood Planning Area. However, there are some one-car garages as shown in Figure 43 on page 56.

Architectural styles

The architectural styles within the neighborhood include primarily Masonry Vernacular (Figure 50 and Figure 51) and Frame Vernacular (Figure 52) structures. Many of the structures have been altered and there are fewer high style residences than in the Downtown Historic District.

Figure 50: Representative Photo of Masonry Vernacular Residence within the South of the Downtown Historic District Neighborhood Planning Area, 306 Cedar Street (8NA1201), facing east

Figure 51: Representative Photo of Masonry Vernacular Residence within the South of the Downtown Historic District Neighborhood Planning Area, 604 Gum Street, facing southeast

Figure 52: Representative Photo of Frame Vernacular Residences within the South of the Downtown Historic District Neighborhood Planning Area, facing southeast at 510 S 6th Street

Spatial relationships

The neighborhood was not cohesively developed. The residences are oriented facing the streets and are interspersed with vacant lots. Gum Street provides access to the Rayonier mill, and serves as a major east-west thoroughfare with heavier traffic.

Sidewalks and landscaping

There are some sidewalks in this neighborhood but they have limited connectivity and are not cohesively located throughout. They exist primarily at the edge of the Downtown Historic District and along S 7th Street. The Neighborhood Planning Area has a higher level of landscaping than within the Downtown Historic District. Landscaping throughout the Neighborhood Planning Area is natural rather than manicured. The high level of natural landscaping is created through many trees and plantings on the vacant lots, and heavily wooded and greened built lots. Typical landscaping is shown in the figures throughout this section. As with the North of the Downtown Historic District Neighborhood Planning Area, there is a clear differentiation of this area from the Downtown Historic District, created by the lack of curbs and sidewalks, and additional landscaping.

Massing

Residences in the Neighborhood Planning Area are most commonly rectangular in form, sometimes with a slightly smaller projecting front porch. There are also fewer examples of L-shaped and irregularly shaped structures.

Roof line and pitch

The majority of the residences feature gable or hip roofs (Figure 50-Figure 52, pages 61-62, and Figure 53-Figure 54), but there are some residences with flat roofs. Many of the structures have a front facing gable with a projecting gable or shed roof front porch. The pitch of the gable and hip roofs varies with the older residences typically having a higher pitch and the later resources having a gentler slope.

Figure 53: Representative Photo of Hip Roof Residence within the South of the Downtown Historic District Neighborhood Planning Area, 426 S 6th Street (8NA421), facing east

Figure 54: Representative Photo of Hip Roof Residence within the South of the Downtown Historic District Neighborhood Planning Area, 229 S 5th Street (8NA11797), facing northwest

Lot size and width

The lot size and width varies throughout the neighborhood as illustrated on Figure 35 on page 49. The average lot size is .229 acres according to the records of the Nassau County Property Appraiser.

Elevation features

The homes in the Neighborhood Planning Area feature little architectural ornament on the elevations. They typically have prominent front porches which range from small open covered entrances to full width enclosed porches. They have both asymmetrical and symmetrical façade arrangements.

Parking and driveways

The majority of the residences in the Neighborhood Planning Area utilize the swale for parking or have unpaved driveways (Figure 55). However, some structures do have paved driveways (Figure 56).

Figure 55: Representative Photo of Unpaved Driveways within the South of the Downtown Historic District Neighborhood Planning Area, facing northeast at 428 S 5th Street

Figure 56: Representative Photo of Paved Driveways within the South of the Downtown Historic District Neighborhood Planning Area, 411 S 5th Street, facing northwest

Doors and windows

The majority of the structures throughout the Neighborhood Planning Area feature replacement windows and doors; however, some do retain their original features. The primary window types are wooden double hung sash and metal single hung sash with a variety of light configurations. There are also some jalousie windows throughout the neighborhood.

Building orientation

Residences are typically set parallel to the roadway.

Trees and shrubbery

Many of the streets throughout the Neighborhood Planning Area are lined with trees providing shade, and the tree canopy is varied throughout the area as illustrated on Figure 47-Figure 49 on pages 58-60. Shrubs in the neighborhood often delineate the property line. As previously discussed, there is a greater degree of natural landscaping in this neighborhood than in the Downtown Historic District.

Topography

The topography of the Neighborhood Planning Area is consistently flat and even.

Recommendations

The South of Downtown Historic District Neighborhood Planning Area is similar in character to the North of Downtown Historic District Neighborhood Planning Area, and it is the evaluation of Janus Research it is also ineligible for designation as a local or National Register historic district. As previously discussed, the existing Downtown Historic District, immediately north, contains a much better concentration of historic resources which represent both the area's high styles and vernacular architecture, and retain a high level of historic integrity. During the 2007, *The Historic Properties Resurvey, City of Fernandina Beach, Nassau County, Florida* by Bland and Associates, Inc., the possibility of expanding the boundaries of the Downtown Historic District were explored. That report recommended that no expansion occur and the existing boundaries remain. A field survey of much of the Neighborhood Planning Area was also conducted as part of the 2007 study, which also found that there was not potential to create a new historic district in the area.

As illustrated in the History and Development Patterns discussion, there are a large amount of vacant lots within the Neighborhood Planning Area which result in a lack of cohesion. Based on the proportion of historic structures to non-historic structures and vacant lots within the Neighborhood Planning Area, only 50% of the existing resources are historic. If the vacant lots are not included, and one evaluates the planning area based just on historic and non-historic structures, approximately 68% of the existing structures are historic. Many of the existing historic structures have been altered and lack sufficient historic integrity to be considered contributing to a historic district, reducing the percentage of potentially contributing resources to much less than the 68% or 50% which are historic. Thus, there would not be a sufficient concentration of historic resources from which to compose a historic district.

What is unique about this area, similar to the North of Downtown Historic District Neighborhood Planning Area, is its low scale of development and heavy level of landscaping. There is a clear differentiation between the streetscape in the Downtown Historic District and the South of Downtown Historic District Neighborhood Planning Area. Its vacant lots and heavier landscaping continue to recall a time when these structures were on the outskirts of town, outside of the concentrated development of downtown, as illustrated on a historic aerial from 1960 (Figure 36, page 51). This area and the North of Downtown Historic District Neighborhood Planning Area function as a buffer, surrounding the historic district. It is recommended that the character of the South of Downtown Historic District Neighborhood Planning Area be protected by the creation of a conservation district.

Additional background on conservation districts, their purposes and types of regulations is included on pages 43-45. The three potential boundaries for a conservation district within the South of Downtown Historic District Neighborhood Planning Area are illustrated on Figure 57. Option one is based on the locations of historic resources, excluding vacant lots and non-historic resources at the periphery. Option two is based on geographic, regular boundaries of major roads, ending at Gum Street to the south. Gum Street is a major east-west thoroughfare providing access to the Rayonier mill. While there are some historic resources to the south which would be excluded, there are also multiple non-historic and altered resources. Option three is also based on

geographic, regular boundaries of major roads, ending at Lime Street to include the entirety of the City boundaries in this area. This would be the most inclusive alternative.

A large portion of this Neighborhood Planning Area was surveyed as part of *The Historic Properties Resurvey, City of Fernandina Beach, Nassau County, Florida* by Bland and Associates, Inc., in 2007. The 2007 report and FMSF forms should be referenced, and the recommendations for local or National Register individual historic designation of any eligible structures should be pursued to protect the area's individually significant resources. The southern portion of the Neighborhood Planning Area has not been recently surveyed. While this area is not recommended as a high priority for future survey, the documentation of its individual resources would add to the broader understanding of the City of Fernandina Beach's history. The table within Appendix C notes any historic structures within the Neighborhood Planning Area which have not been previously recorded, and should be the focus of future survey work. Priorities for future survey efforts are discussed further in the Conclusions section of this report.

Figure 57: Potential Conservation District Boundaries within the South of the Downtown Historic District Neighborhood Planning Area