

**Regional Context**



**Area Conditions & Characterization**



**Waterfront Trail**

- ASSETS**
- Undeveloped Land.** Port Lavaca's waterfront has a number of undeveloped tracts that could potentially accommodate paths, trailheads, parking, and specialty uses (e.g. birding, fishing).
  - Public Support.** The City has developed a strong base of support for a waterfront trail system from a diversity of community interest groups.
- OPPORTUNITIES**
- Public Access.** The trail would provide citizens public access to the waterfront, which is currently limited to Bayfront Peninsula Park and Lighthouse Beach. Once acquired by way of fee simple title or easement, this land would be permanently protected for public use activity.
  - Continuous Travel.** In order for the waterfront trail to achieve its full potential, it should provide access to multiple destinations along an interconnected path. While the long-range vision is to provide passage between Lighthouse Beach and the Harbor of Refuge, a phase one segment might connect City Harbor to Bayfront Peninsula Park.
  - Multi-Use.** The path should be designed to accommodate a wide range of users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, rollerbladers, and mobility-impaired travelers. While some citizens have expressed interest in a waterfront street that is located between the bay and first tier of development, a pedestrian-oriented trail is more feasible.
  - Trailheads and Parking.** The pathway system must offer parking and designated entry/exit points at multiple locations, ensuring local and out-of-town users know where to start and stop their journey.
  - Specialty Areas.** Beyond its recreational uses, the trail can provide opportunities for outdoor interpretive education, wildlife viewing, and fishing stations. These small, designated areas along the path (or trail offshoots) should be selected for their natural beauty (i.e. less inhabited areas) and availability for public purchase.
- CONSTRAINTS**
- Funding.** The City will need to seek funding from multiple sources to acquire property or public access easements and to construct the trail system.
  - Land Availability.** The current parks and recreation plan identifies a trail that maximizes the use of right-of-ways and easements. However, some land will need to be acquired.

**Clement Cove Harbor**

- ASSETS**
- Vacant Land.** The vacant block is held under single ownership and prime for residential infill development.
  - Waterfront Views.** Located on a bluff, this land will attract higher property values due to its striking views of Lavaca Bay and Bayfront Peninsula Park.
- OPPORTUNITIES**
- Waterfront Housing.** The vacant parcels should be converted to waterfront housing, which will add to the mix of uses between City Harbor and Bayfront Peninsula Park.
  - Neighborhood Redevelopment.** In conjunction with new investment, the City should consider public infrastructure improvements (road resurfacing, sidewalks, code enforcement) and neighborhood rehabilitation programs, which could support home rehabilitation and/or replacement of existing structures.
  - Trail Connectivity.** This residential area should be linked to the community trail system, allowing Clement Cove homeowners to travel up and down the coast on public right-of-way.
- CONSTRAINTS**
- Economy.** As a result of the economic downturn, the original housing development was reduced to four homes - just a fraction of the initial vision for the area.
  - Neighborhood Deterioration.** In order to access this area, homeowners pass through the surrounding neighborhood which contains many deteriorated homes and under-maintained properties.

**Downtown Main Street**

- ASSETS**
- Location.** Downtown will benefit from waterfront redevelopment, as long as pedestrian connections and parking encourage users to travel between the two areas.
  - High-Quality Anchors.** Historic buildings function as anchors for Downtown, including (but not limited to): Seascapes Apartments at the intersection of Commerce and E. Main; the Port Lavaca Main Street Theatre, a historical movie theater relic from 1936; and Texas Traditions Café.
  - Flood Protection.** Unlike many neighboring waterfront communities, Downtown Port Lavaca is largely protected from damaging storm events. The Downtown area survived Hurricane Carla in 1961 with minimal damage from a 20-foot storm surge.
- OPPORTUNITIES**
- Retail Demand.** According to the Catalyst Retail Analysis and Merchandising Plan, the City can absorb 42,000 square feet of additional retail. Main Street is one of the City's three major corridors, offering unique building structures that can be adapted to tourism and niche retail uses. Unlike big-box development that has developed along U.S. 35 (e.g., Wal-Mart, HEB Grocery), Downtown is positioned for limited-service, sit-down restaurants and boutique clothing and accessories.
  - Available Land and Buildings.** The high volume of vacant buildings and parcels can accommodate new infill development. This includes significant opportunities at the northeast corner of Commerce and Main Streets.
  - Redevelopment Incentives.** Given the "tired" condition of Downtown, the City will be eligible for state and federal grants and tax incentives.
- CONSTRAINTS**
- Building Deterioration.** The condition of most buildings requires extensive renovation or new construction before new tenants can occupy space. This increased cost of doing business has deterred small business owners from relocating to the area.
  - Storefront Vacancies.** The amount of vacancies is a deterrent to potential lessees and/or prospective buyers, and it also increases the risk of vandalism and theft.
  - Retail Mix.** The lack of retail diversity discourages prospective business owners from relocating to the area. Downtown currently lacks a critical mass of attractions necessary to attract tourist crowds.
  - Bypass Development.** Downtown has experienced lower traffic counts after U.S. 35 bypass improvements, which has resulted in vacancy and economic decline.

**Virginia and Commerce Streets**

- ASSETS**
- Connectivity.** These major thoroughfares link Port Lavaca's waterfront tourism and industry to regional markets. Major destinations along these corridors, such as the Memorial Medical Center, Bauer Community Center, City Hall, and Lighthouse Beach, also attract significant activity.
- OPPORTUNITIES**
- Beautification.** The appearance and navigation of these thoroughfares function to introduce the waterfront. An increase in wayfinding signage, streetscape enhancements, pedestrian improvements, and views of the bay would improve Port Lavaca's waterfront experience.
- CONSTRAINTS**
- Truck Traffic.** As industrial activity has increased at the Harbor of Refuge, truck traffic along Virginia and Commerce Streets has become a major concern for residents and business owners. While trucks originating from the harbor are supposed to be routed on the outskirts of town, some residents have observed violations and expressed complaints.

**City Harbor**

- ASSETS**
- Historical Role.** City Harbor has historically functioned as the City's working waterfront. The shrimp and oyster industries that are part of the City's cultural identity contribute to the waterfront's authenticity - unlike commercially driven development.
- OPPORTUNITIES**
- Spilloff-Activity.** While business activity has declined in the recent past, the presence of a working waterfront can serve as a foundation to boost restaurant and recreation activity. This might include everything from "eat your own" oysters to kayaking trails.
  - Vacant and Underutilized Properties.** The land surrounding the City-owned harbor includes vacant property, empty buildings, and industrial warehouses. If the market is strong enough to support new businesses, these properties are primed for redevelopment.
- CONSTRAINTS**
- Competition.** Many shrimper and oyster producers have relocated to nearby waterfronts, such as Palacios. Relative to some of the larger ports, Port Lavaca has shallow water that limits the size of commercial boats.
  - Environmental Limitations.** In recent years, the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, high salinity, and red tide have shuttered seafood businesses. While these negative environmental influences are temporary, they have driven many of the smaller businesses out of the market.

**Bayfront Peninsula Park**

- ASSETS**
- Location.** The park is located on a large peninsula adjacent to Nautical Landings marina and the terminus of Downtown. Its central location and proximity to non-recreational uses make it an authentic "destination," offering opportunities for users to park for the day and visit multiple venues within walking distance.
- OPPORTUNITIES**
- Ongoing Projects.** The City has a five-year capital plan to improve the park's amenities, including designated parking spaces, bulkhead improvements, an open air pavilion, enhanced lighting, an amphitheater, and more landscaping.
  - Conservation Area.** The spoil area can be redesigned as a wetland conservation and outdoor education area that includes internal paths, viewing stations, and educational kiosks.
  - Downtown Linkages.** The park has the potential to spur Downtown redevelopment, assuming pedestrian connections and parking lots are designed to complement both areas.
- CONSTRAINTS**
- Spoil Area.** A large portion of the park's lowland has been reserved as a spoil area for nearby dredging. While the land can be enhanced for conservation purposes, its recreational programming and development potential is limited.
  - Recreational and Boating Limitations.** The water surrounding the peninsula is very shallow and has large pieces of debris that limit boat size and recreational activity. At one point, the City had a beach near the spoil area that was eventually closed for septic issues and the shallow depth.

**Nautical and Smith Harbors**

- ASSETS**
- Location.** Nautical Harbor is surrounded by Bayfront Peninsula Park, Nautical Landings building and marina, and the Smith tract. Its close proximity to the park, marina, and Downtown position it as a key redevelopment area. Smith Harbor is located to the immediate south of Nautical Harbor and shares a peninsula of the Smith tract.
  - Off-Street Parking Lot.** Nautical Landings' parking lot can accommodate approximately 65 to 75 cars, depending on how the cars are arranged. This lot, combined with spaces at the park, can help to support Downtown shopping, community festivals, and trailhead parking.
  - Nautical Landings Marina and Building.** The marina offers a variety of amenities, including floating docks, cone-tipped pilings, water and electricity, and a meeting room. The building, located at the intersection of Commerce and Main Streets, offers commercial storefronts, restroom and shower facilities, and meeting space.
- OPPORTUNITIES**
- Park Redevelopment Spinoffs.** The City plans to implement a five-year capital improvement plan to improve Bayfront Peninsula Park. This public investment could spur redevelopment and improvements to Nautical Harbor, with a secondary benefit to Smith Harbor.
  - Commercial Development.** Citizens have expressed interest in the potential for low-rise commercial development, ranging in scale from a "mini-Kemah" to small concessions and a bait shop. The scale, density, and uses would need to complement adjacent land uses, which vary from fringe Downtown retail to residential land uses.
  - Breakwater Extension.** The City plans to extend the existing breakwater in Nautical Harbor for the purpose of protecting future development. Texas City, Bolivar, and Corpus Christi were named as positive examples of cities that constructed successful breakwaters.
  - More Programming.** Until the destruction of Hurricane Carla, the City used to be the home to a yacht club, which hosted an annual Labor Day Regatta. If the harbor is redeveloped or improved, the City could attract more recreational boating activity which would draw larger crowds to the area.
- CONSTRAINTS**
- Ownership.** The Smith tract, which encloses Nautical and Smith Harbors, is for sale, but cost and ownership complexities have prevented sale to interested parties.
  - Engineering Costs.** In order to construct buildings and infrastructure on the Smith tract, significant engineering costs would have to be borne by the developer.
  - Public Access and Views.** Depending on the type of use, redevelopment of these harbors could limit public views and waterfront access.
  - Navigation Hazards.** The land is surrounded by shallow water that is known to have a number of hazards, including sunken boats and rocks. These elements limit the size of boats and the type of recreational activity. Assistance from the General Land Office or Army Corp of Engineers could help to mitigate these hazards.
  - Adjacent Housing Tracts.** The six to eight properties along Commerce Street (to the west of the Smith tract) are planned for residential development. The use of these properties could influence how the Smith tract is developed, and vice versa.
  - Land Use Conflicts.** For Smith Harbor, existing homeowners are vocally opposed to the externalities of industrial uses, including truck traffic, visible storage and barge equipment, dredging activity, industrial noises and odors, and other potential nuisances that would impact their property values.

**Existing Conditions Analysis**

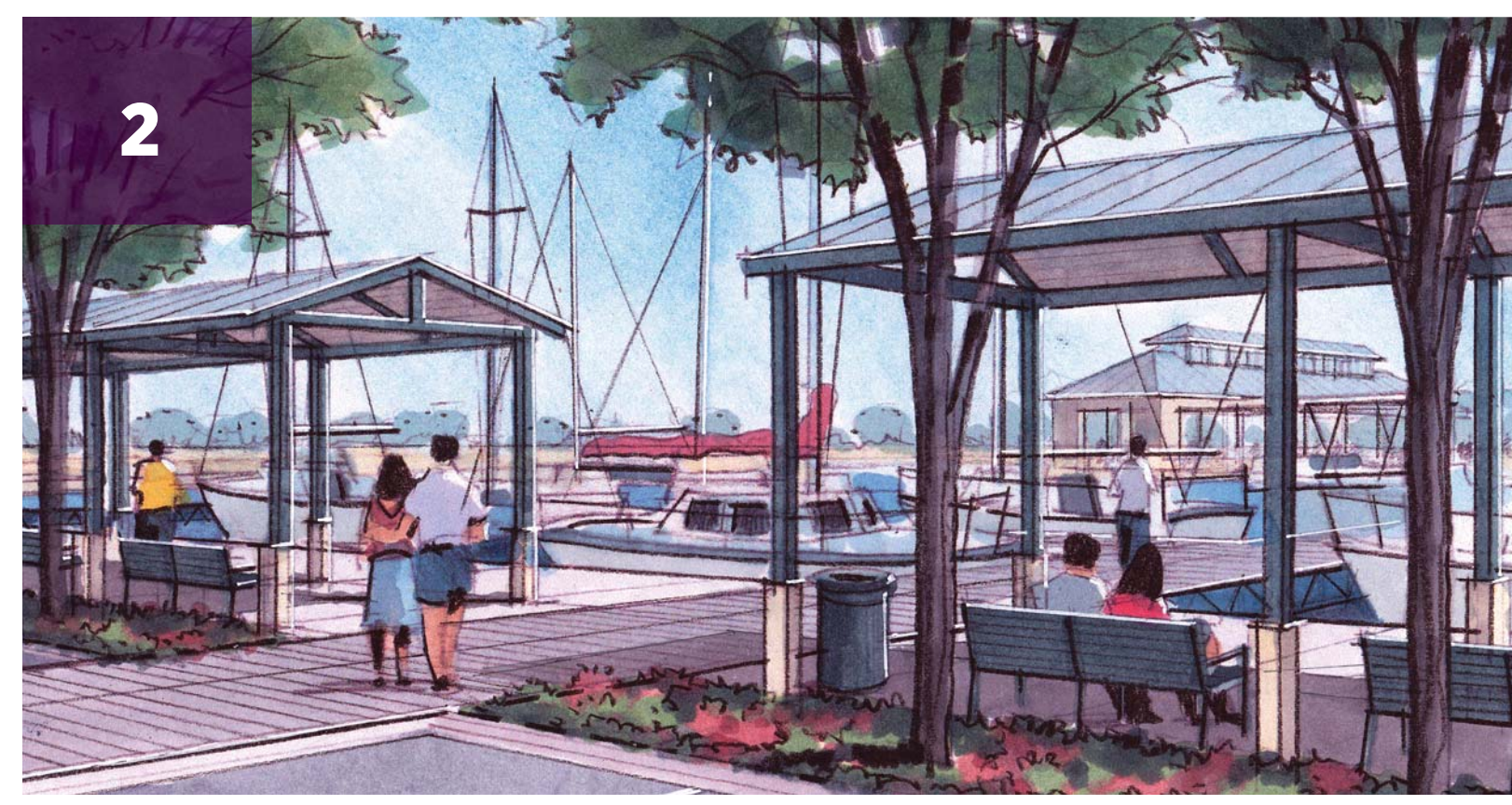
The plan development process was driven by a series of community engagement sessions with business and property owners, City Council members, Planning Board members, Port Commissioners, and City staff. The first phase involved several public input meetings to determine the assets, opportunities, and constraints of Port Lavaca's waterfront. The outcomes are reflected in the summaries above and reinforced by an evaluation of the community's regional context, characterization, and existing land use. The Opportunities Analysis and Waterfront Implementation Plan were informed by these initial assessments.



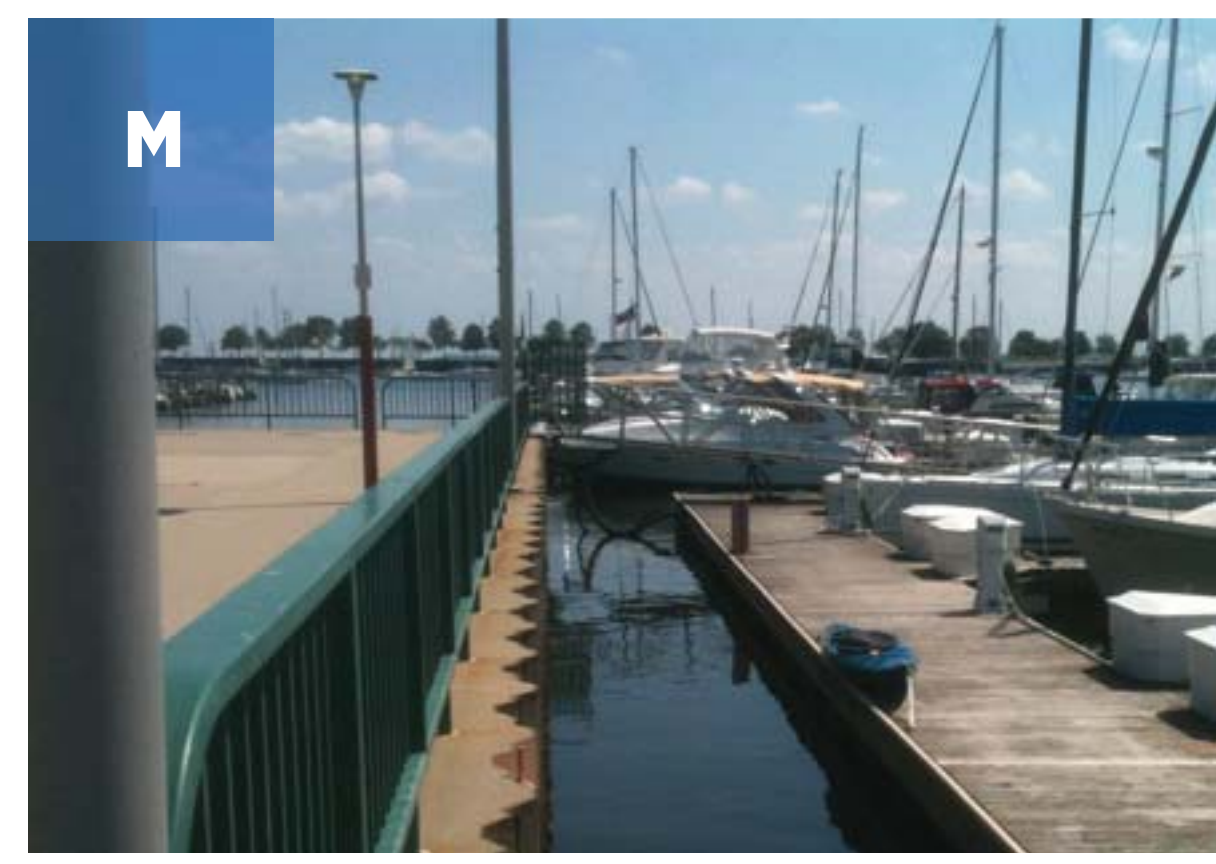
W



1



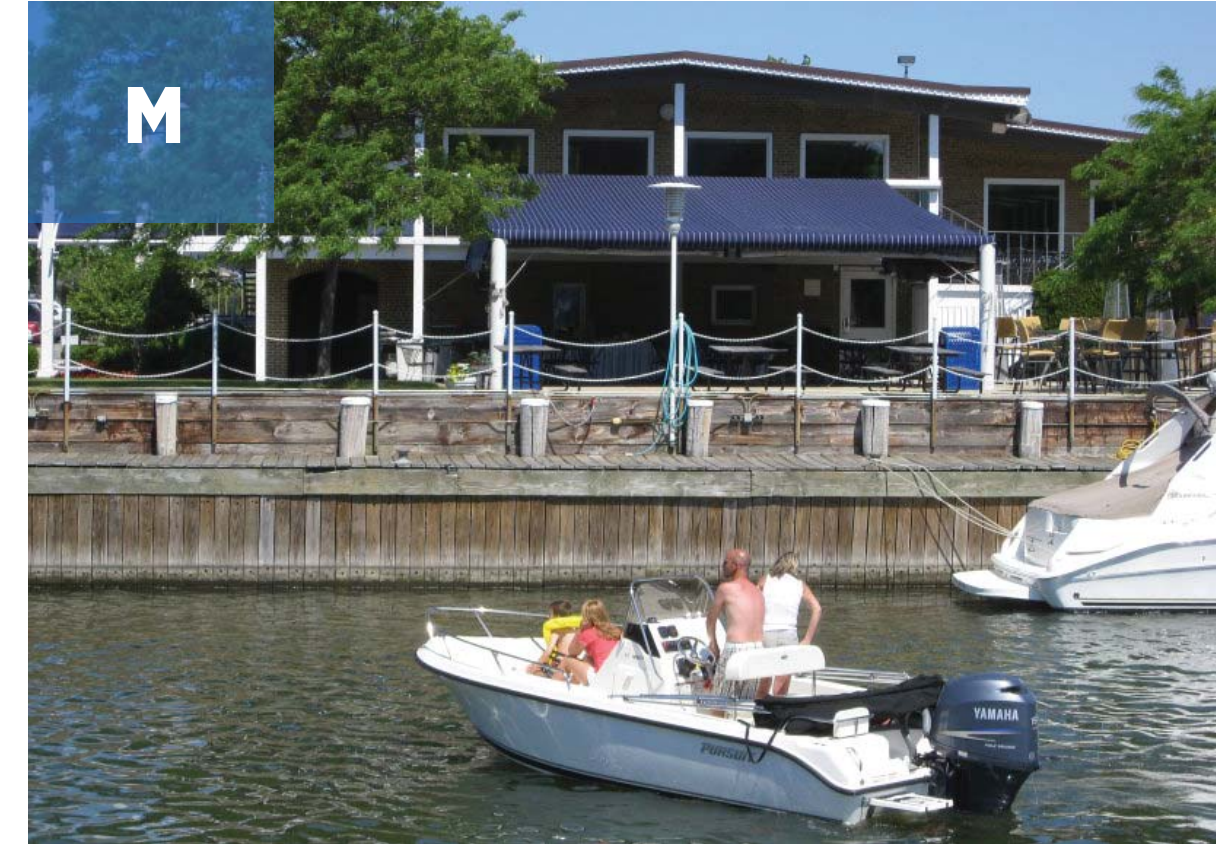
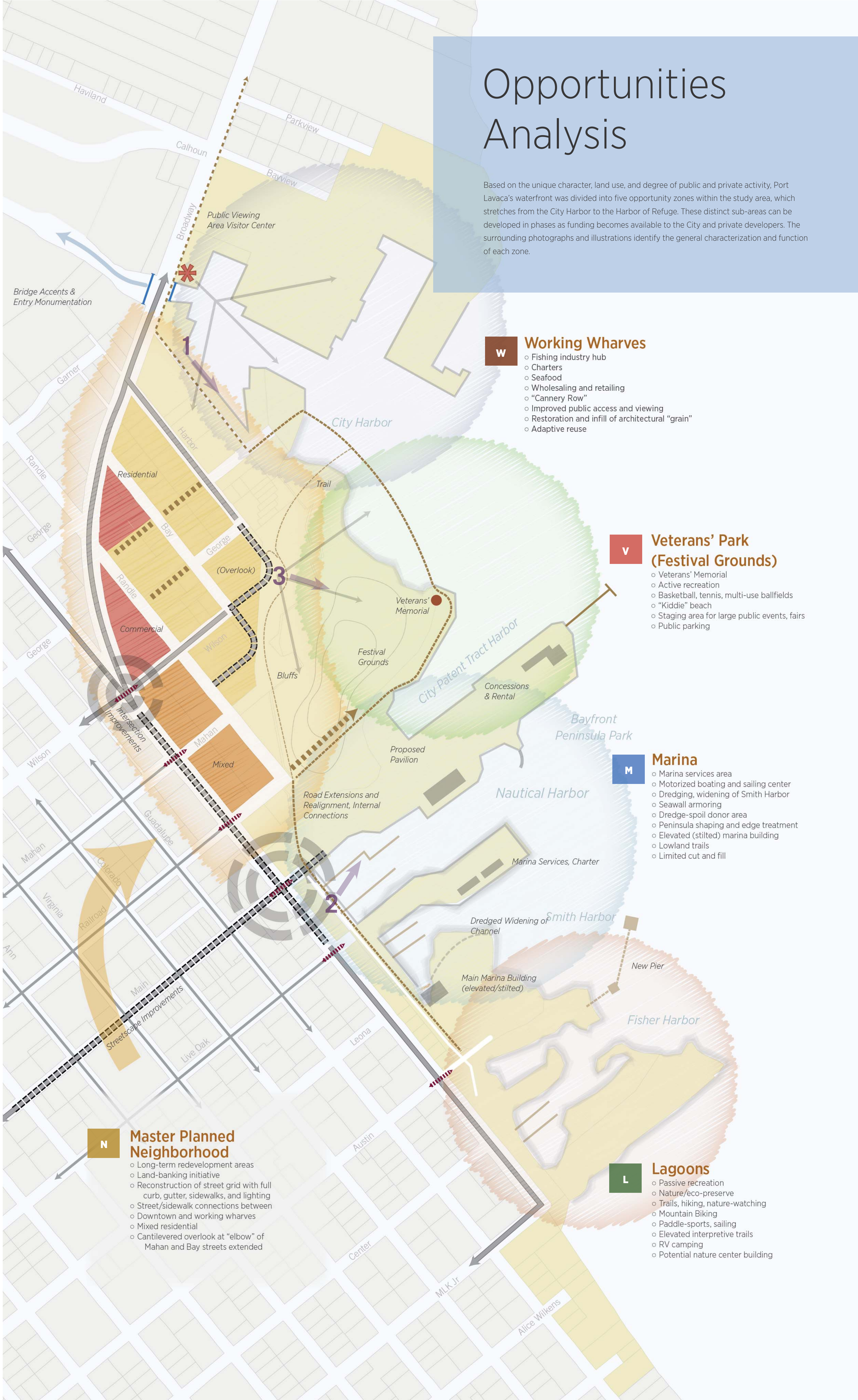
2



M



W



M



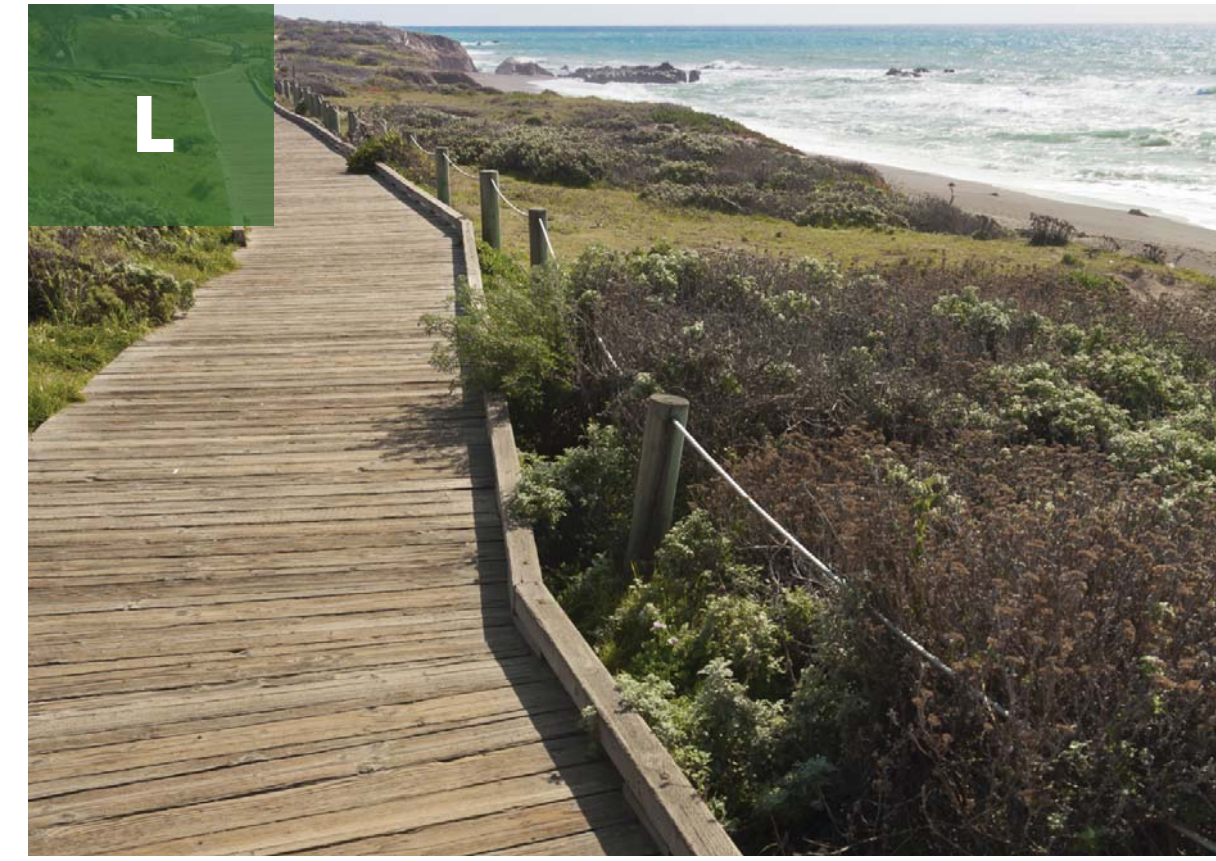
W



M



W



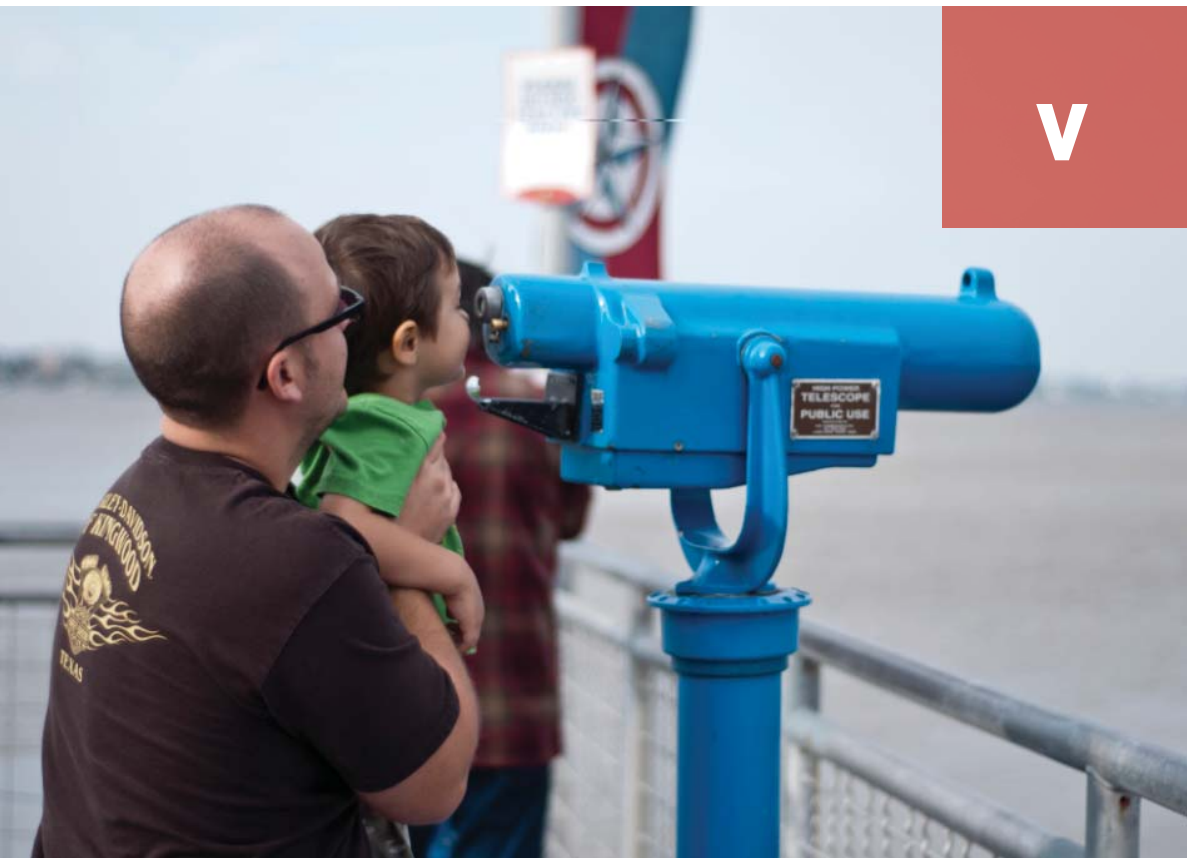
L



V



L



V



N



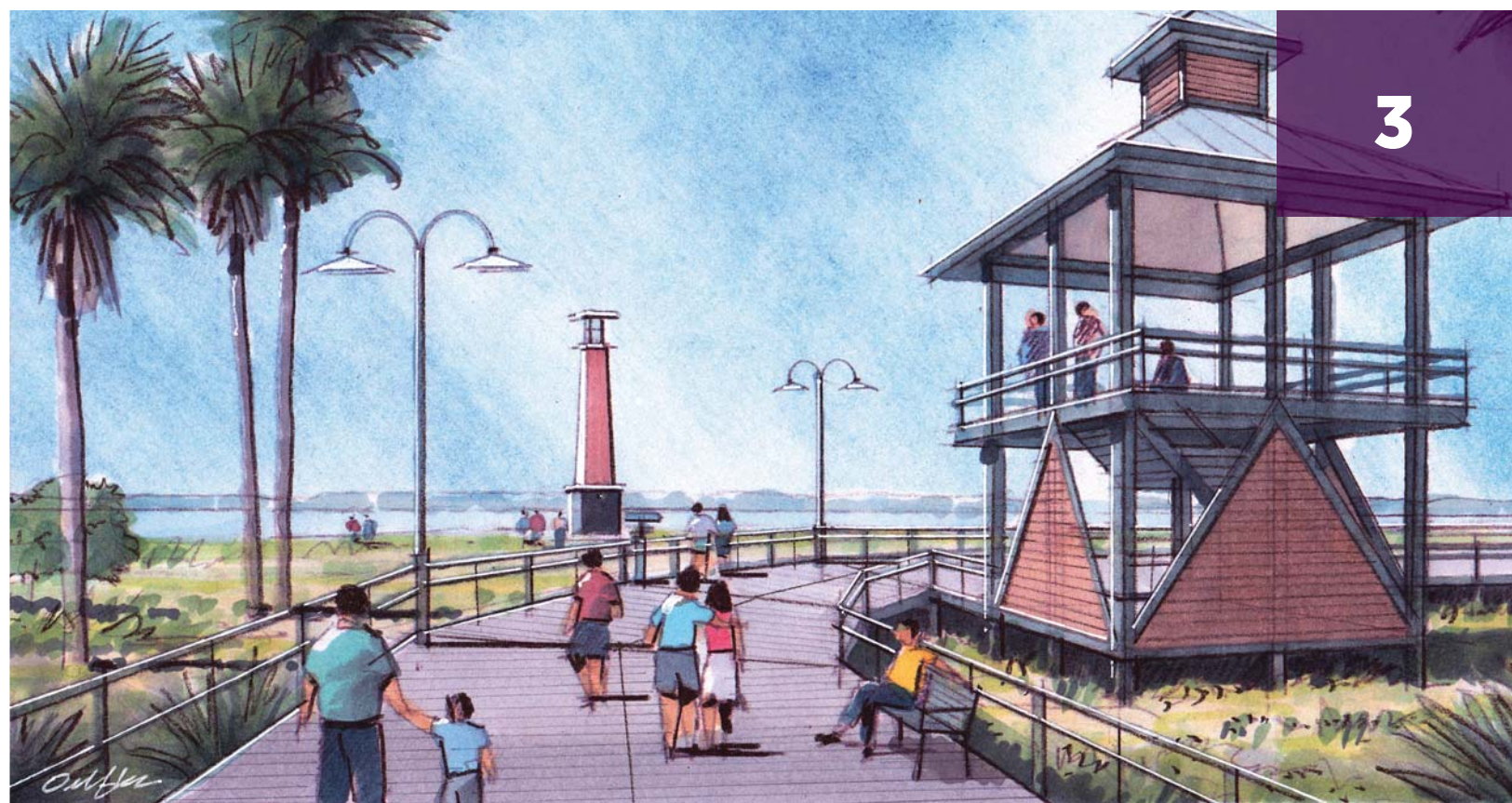
V



N



V



3



N



N

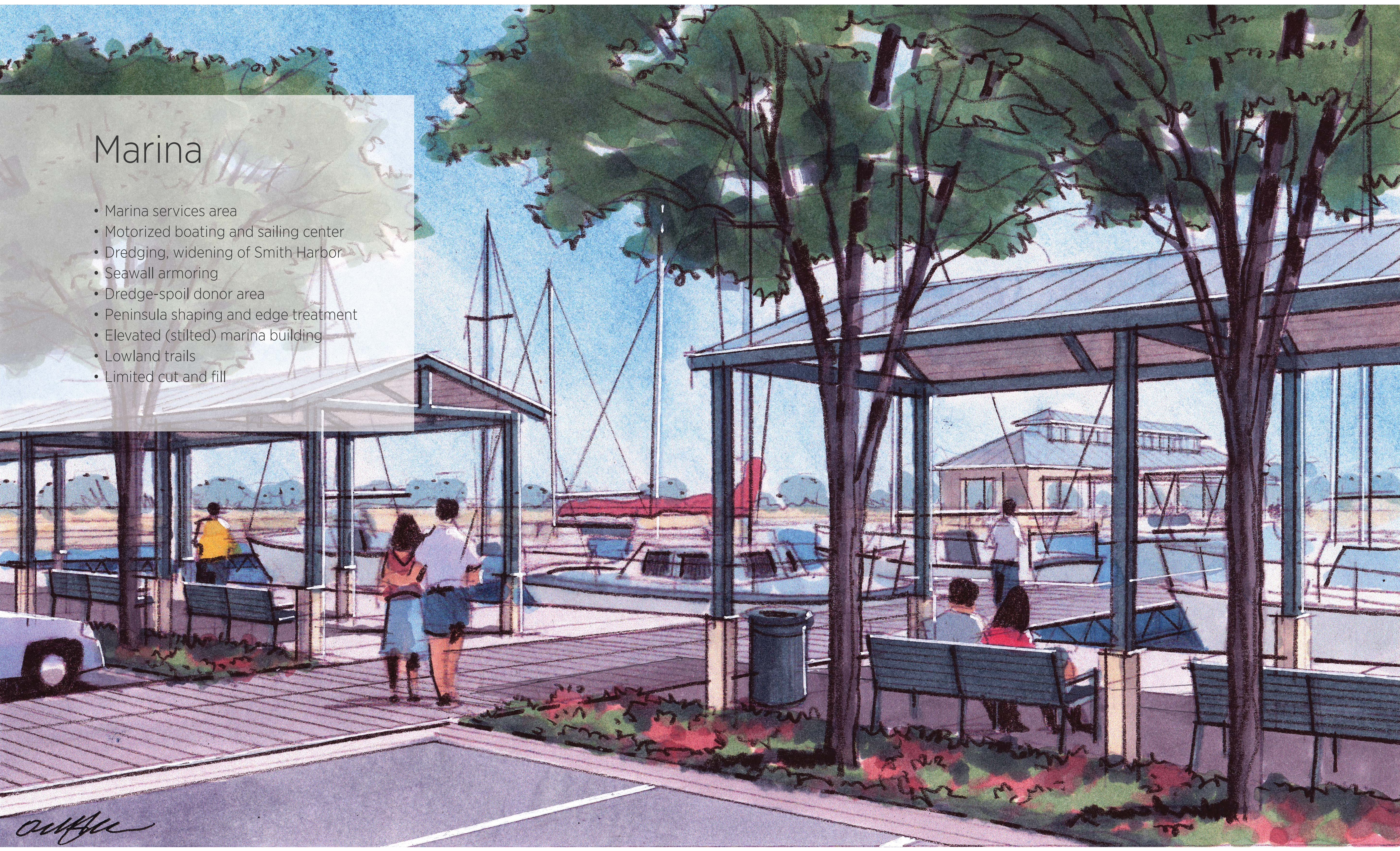
## Working Wharves

- Fishing industry hub
- Charters
- Seafood
- Wholesaling and retailing
- "Cannery Row"
- Improved public access and viewing
- Restoration and infill of architectural "grain"
- Adaptive reuse



## Marina

- Marina services area
- Motorized boating and sailing center
- Dredging, widening of Smith Harbor
- Seawall armoring
- Dredge-spoil donor area
- Peninsula shaping and edge treatment
- Elevated (stilted) marina building
- Lowland trails
- Limited cut and fill



## Waterfront Trail

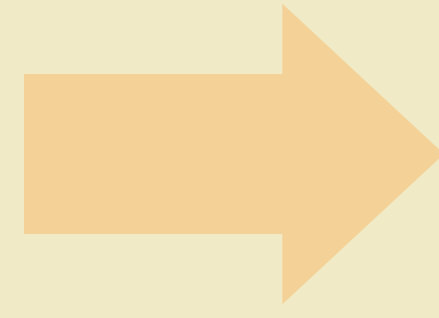
- Elevated interpretive trails
- Passive recreation
- Nature/eco-preserve
- Hiking, nature-watching
- Improved public access and viewing
- Connects Lighthouse Beach to Fisher Harbor



# Waterfront Strategy

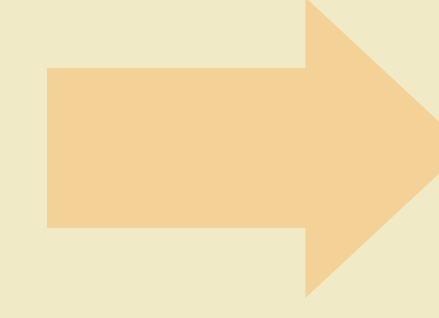
## Master Plan

Community vision and conceptual design options



## Implementation Plan

Planning, organizational development, and funding strategies



## Development Ordinance

Management strategies

# Master Plan Components

## Existing Conditions Analysis

The plan development process was driven by a series of community engagement sessions with business and property owners, City Council members, Planning Board members, Port Commissioners, and City staff. The first phase involved several public input meetings to determine the assets, opportunities, and constraints of Port Lavaca's waterfront. The outcomes were reinforced by an evaluation of the community's regional context, characterization, and existing land use. The *Opportunities Analysis* and *Waterfront Implementation Plan* were informed by these initial assessments.

### PUBLIC OUTREACH

#### March

Community Listening Sessions  
Planning Commission and Port Commission Joint Meeting

#### June

City Council and Planning Commission Briefing

#### August

Community Open House

## Opportunities Analysis

Based on the unique character, land use, and degree of public and private activity, Port Lavaca's waterfront was divided into five opportunity zones within the study area, which stretches from the City Harbor to the Harbor of Refuge. These distinct sub-areas can be developed in phases as funding becomes available to the City and private developers.

