

# STRIVE TO THRIVE Pensacola 2035

A 10-year strategic plan

PENSACOLA  
FLORIDA'S FIRST & FUTURE

Gehl







**D.C. Reeves**

Mayor, City of Pensacola

**November 2024**

## Dear Members of the Pensacola Community,

In 2022, I made you a promise.

I asked you to give me the honor of being Pensacola's mayor, and if you did, I promised to do something this city has never done.

I told you that we would create a clear path forward for the first time and do it together. Today, that promise to you has been fulfilled.

The following pages contain Pensacola's first city-wide strategic plan, Strive to Thrive: Pensacola 2035. This document is a reality, one that will help chart the course of my administration, our city council, and our community.

How did we get here? Over the past year, we've come together to say exactly what we see for our great city's future. You've shared what you love so much about this wonderful place. You've shared your concerns. Your hopes. Your ideas to make this city better. And you've told us what you prioritize most. You have told us what you want from your city, what you want in housing, our government, and your parks.

This engagement process was unprecedented, thanks to you. To this degree, Pensacola has never aligned around answering these questions, and it's my honor to present this report – your report – today.

My duty in this office, and that of every mayor and city council before me, has always been making decisions daily using the best information available.

It's exciting to say that this city and this government have never been better positioned to bring your vision to life.

First, I thank our citizens for investing valuable time in this project. I want to thank Gehl, a world-renowned urban strategy firm, for leading Pensacola to the product you see today.

I want to especially thank City of Pensacola staff members Adrienne Walker, Rachel Bennett, Caitlin Cerame, and our Strive To Thrive volunteers for leading the charge for this plan. They were our fuel in every sense – we didn't just hope you found us, they found you at events and around the community to ensure that every voice, age group, and demographic was represented. Their work is what makes this the most complete visioning document in our city's history.

So what now? With this plan in hand, it is my duty as your Mayor to oversee its implementation. We know the story of plans left unexecuted. Our city, like so many, has fallen victim to many plans and little execution over the years. I expect to be held accountable to these priorities, and while the world has changed over the years, this vision you have provided for your city is the new guiding document for my administration.

So, the time is now to thrive. Thank you for your input, your vision, and for caring so much for this place we call home.

Sincerely,  
D.C. Reeves, Mayor



# Acknowledgements

Strive to Thrive: Pensacola 2035 is the result of input from over a thousand voices, setting a vision for the city’s future over the next decade and beyond. Pensacola communities shared their ideas through neighborhood pop-ups, a public open house, vision workshops, focus groups, interviews, and online surveys, offering invaluable insight and guidance. This vision came to life through the dedication and collaboration of volunteers, residents, elected officials, civic staff, community organizations, non-profits, experts, and private sector leaders. Together, they shaped the innovative strategies and initiatives in Strive to Thrive: Pensacola 2035.

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City Council Member, District 2

**Casey Jones**  
City Council Member, President District 3

**Allison Patton**  
City Council Member, District 6

## Subject Matter Experts

**Erica Grancagnolo**  
City Economic Development Director

**Meredith Reeves**  
City Housing Administrator

**Ruthie Noel**  
Achieve Escambia, Executive Director



# Strive to Thrive: Pensacola 2035 Project Team



Pensacola is a city in the Florida Panhandle, United States, and serves as the county seat and only city in Escambia County. The City of Pensacola is committed to creating opportunities and avenues to enhance the quality of life for all citizens through innovation and cooperation in harmony with its core values. Pensacola's estimated population is 53,724 as of the 2023 U.S. Census data. On November 22, 2022, D.C. Reeves was sworn in as mayor of Pensacola.

Gehl is an urban design, strategy, and research consultancy with experience working in over 300 cities around the world. We believe that by applying a people-first approach to planning, design, and research, we are able to solve some of our communities' most pressing challenges. Gehl has studios in Copenhagen, New York City, and San Francisco.

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Mayor

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Team Director

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Historic Preservation Planner

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## Table of Contents

<b>01</b>	<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>02</b>	<b>What We've Learned</b>	<b>12</b>
	Timeline	13
	Approach	14
	Key Takeaways	17
	Vision Statement	22
	Prioritization Framework	23
<b>03</b>	<b>Goals</b>	<b>24</b>
	Attainable Housing for All Income Levels	27
	Safe Streets for All Mobilities	31
	Support for Youth Experiences	35
	Resilient Waterfronts and Neighborhoods	39
	More Walkable, Mixed-use Districts	43
	Public Spaces that Connect Communities	47
	Thriving Innovation and Businesses	51
	Neighborhoods that Celebrate Culture and Honor Legacy	55
	Goals Summary	59
<b>04</b>	<b>Implementation</b>	<b>60</b>
	Recommended Implementation Action Table	65
<b>+</b>	<b>Appendix</b>	<b>71</b>



# 01

# Executive Summary







## INTRODUCTION

# Welcome to Pensacola!

Pensacola is a vibrant coastal city where rich history and culture meet a cosmopolitan future. Residents here enjoy an exceptional blend of laid-back, family-friendly coastal living with vibrant, commute-worthy events and outdoor activities — adding up to a unique culture that is driving change in this little city.

As the city grows, it's navigating uncharted waters: contending with nationwide housing challenges and working to reposition itself in the evolving economy, all while providing a desirable quality of life.

Strive to Thrive: Pensacola 2035 is the city's inaugural strategic plan — and with that, comes an opportunity to shape Pensacola's future. Rather than a reactive approach, this plan sets the City on a course to proactively chart its evolution with key goals in mind.

This plan is a foundation on which future decisions will be made. Informed by feedback and perspectives from the Pensacola community, the plan lays out an ongoing and iterative process for city growth. If the City follows the roadmap this citizen-led process has generated, then Pensacola's future will be bright.



**Community development** — Mayor Reeves, center left, at the celebration for the opening of the Blake Doyle Skatepark.



INTRODUCTION

While Pensacola shows great promise, key improvements are needed to unlock the city’s potential and create a livable, equitable, and healthy community. Throughout the strategic planning process, a number of key themes emerged that describe Pensacola’s current opportunities and challenges.

**Opportunity for All /** Pensacola is home to a diverse community, ranging from young families to older retirees. This is a point of pride: many residents are proud to have spent their life in Pensacola, or to have returned to their hometown after years away. People want Pensacola to be where they can grow and thrive at all stages of life, but gaps remain in educational and workforce opportunities, especially for youth and young families. Without stronger career and educational pathways, young people may struggle to see a prosperous future in the city.

**Geography /** Downtown Pensacola, particularly along Palafox Street, has seen strong investment and has become lively and prosperous. However, other neighborhoods in Pensacola lack the same level of investment and, particularly in western Pensacola, lack basic infrastructure and services to ensure a comfortable life. These areas require more focused investment to experience the same growth and vitality seen downtown.

**New Development /** Some recent investments in the public realm have catalyzed denser development Downtown, but Pensacola is competing with suburban sprawl that pulls energy away from the city core and exacerbates transportation challenges. To create a more livable Pensacola, the city must proactively incentivize the form of housing and commercial development it wants to see.

**Resources /** The city, county, and state offer valuable programs and resources, but many residents are unaware of these opportunities due to poor coordination among agencies. Improved communication and collaboration can help maximize the impact of these resources.

**Capacity /** Pensacola has many forward-thinking ideas in its planning documents, but lacks the capacity to execute them effectively. The City needs to select key priorities and direct its time, attention, and resources to a few big initiatives at a time. This iterative approach is both more feasible and more responsive to people’s needs, as the City can continually reassess what is needed next as Pensacola evolves over time.

**Identity /** Although Pensacola is prominent in Escambia County and Northwest Florida, the City needs a clear, distinct identity as the urban and cultural asset in the region. Defining this identity is essential for the city to position itself as a regional leader and an attractive destination for residents and businesses.

Pensacola Today: High-Profile Initiatives and Investments



**Belmont-DeVilliers** — A historic African-American neighborhood in Pensacola with ongoing efforts to preserve its rich cultural heritage while embracing its evolution.



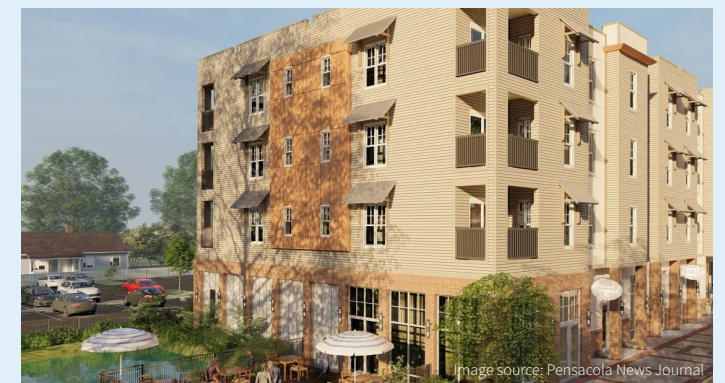
**Reimagine Palafox** — Building on Palafox Street’s success, changes aim to enhance walkability, expand outdoor dining, and boost vibrancy with more entertainment in Downtown Pensacola.



**Port of Pensacola** — The future vision positions the Port as a key maritime asset, accommodating vessels and cargo while driving innovation in the expanding regional and global blue economy.



**Bruce Beach** — Enhancements to Bruce Beach include improved stormwater management systems that boost local ecology, all while honoring the site’s rich African American heritage.



**Housing** — New infill mixed-use commercial and residential development in the Belmont-DeVilliers neighborhood has transformed previously vacant land into much-needed housing.



**Hollice T. William Greenway** — Anchored by Blake Doyle Skate Park, the greenway will become a signature green spine with stormwater features and gathering areas for all ages.



WHY A PLAN

# Why do we need a strategic plan?

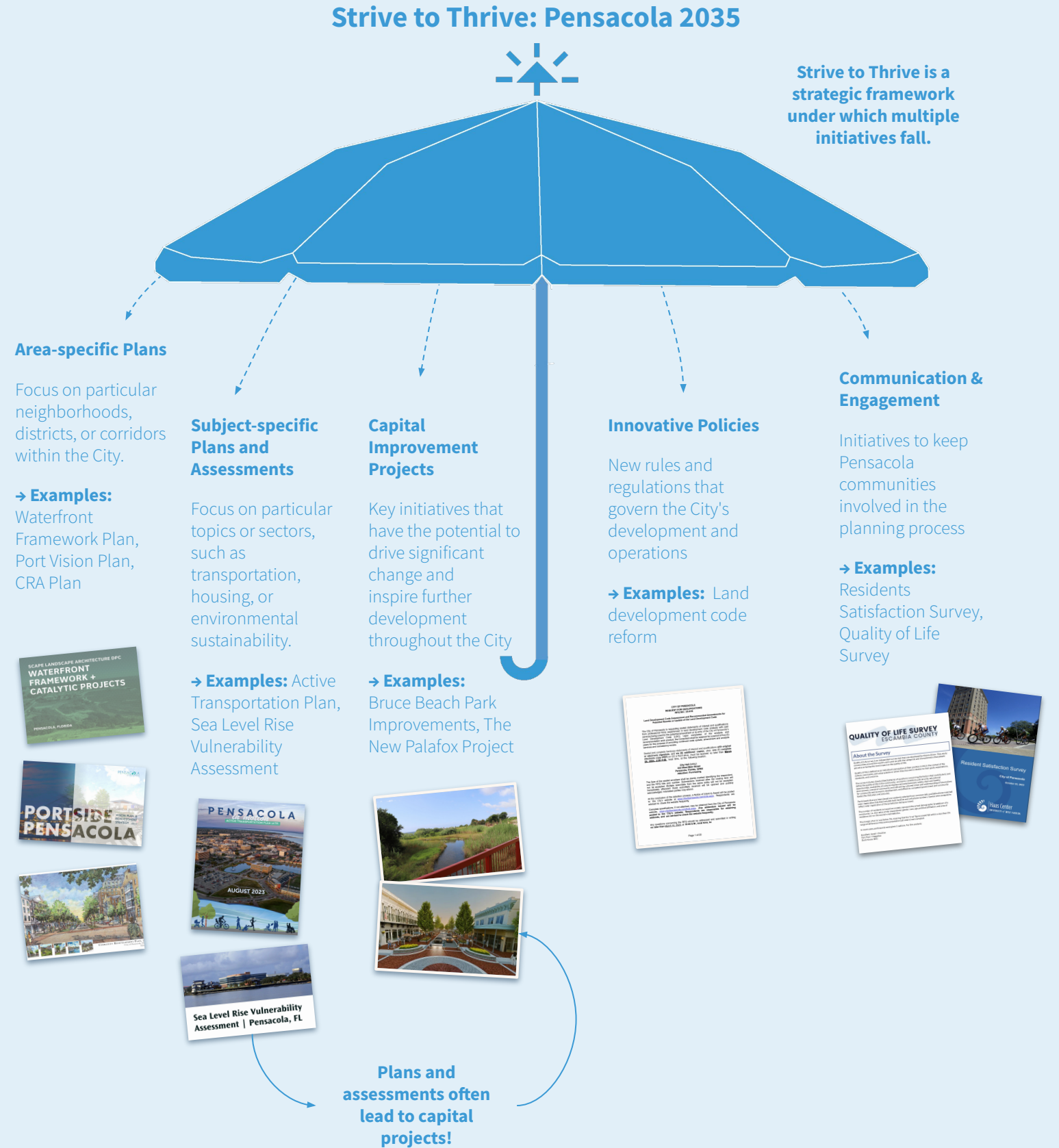
Pensacola is at a turning point: it's a city, rooted in rich history, that is growing and transforming with a renewed focus on livability and quality of life for all. Pensacola's history has been shaped by multiple private- and public-sector plans, policies, and regulations that impact people who live and work here. While many plans have focused on specific Community Redevelopment Areas, like Urban Core CRA District, or citywide assets, like Palafox Street, few have tried to address the entire city in a single document like Strive to Thrive: Pensacola 2035.

This document, informed by extensive consultation with and surveying of communities, is a tool to guide city government's decision-making and ensure that strategic initiatives add up to achieve the broader goals and values of the Pensacola community.

This document speaks to city officials, setting out prioritized goals that public sector investments will strive to achieve. This plan also speaks to private entities — nonprofits, businesses, developers, and more — signaling a clear set of actions where these groups can play a role. And, this plan speaks to Pensacola's community at large, laying out what matters most to them and holding public and private actors accountable to their concerns.

→ **STRIVE TO THRIVE: PENSACOLA 2035 IS AN "UMBRELLA" TOOL** — this plan guides the City's future annual budgets, capital projects, and policy priorities, ensuring public decision-making is focused on the needs of the entire City and all of its residents. Under this umbrella are multiple different initiatives, from subject-specific plans to innovative policies, all of which — sometimes separate efforts, other times interrelated initiatives — are organized under the same recommended goals and actions set out in this plan. As time goes by, more and more initiatives will emerge as opportunity presents itself — this plan sets the overarching framework to ensure that time, funds, and attention are funneled to projects foster this vision.

## Relationship to Other City Projects, Initiatives, and Planning Plans





## How might we create a shared vision for Pensacola's future that guides our priorities over the next 10 years?

As the City evolves, a shared vision is crucial to guide investments and decisions over the next decade. This strategic plan provides a clear roadmap for Pensacola to work collaboratively toward its future goals.

With many initiatives already underway, the City of Pensacola engaged Gehl, an urban design, research, and strategy firm, to explore what residents love and want to preserve in Pensacola today, what changes they envision in their neighborhoods, and the big ideas they have for the City's future. Gehl led an extensive, multi-method visioning process that included a review of existing city plans, global best practices in urban strategy, and a robust community engagement effort.

The visioning process involved over 1,300 survey responses from those who live, work, and play in Pensacola, a public open house, two vision workshops with representatives from public, private, and community sectors, two focus groups with Black and African American residents and youth, interviews with four city council members, expert input from housing and economic development professionals, and more.

The result is a forward-looking vision for Pensacola, along with a community-informed decision-making framework and eight key goals that the city will work toward over the next ten years. This strategic plan sets the stage for Pensacola to thrive as a leader in livability, health, and equity.

### VISION STATEMENT



**By 2035,<sup>1</sup> all residents have the<sup>2</sup> support they need to stay and thrive<sup>3</sup> in their city —<sup>4</sup> at every stage of life.<sup>5</sup>**

- 1 Equitable outcomes for everyone — no matter one's background**
- 2 Investments that promote security and opportunity**
- 3 Foundational necessities like housing, safe streets, and community resources**
- 4 A city that current and future generations want to build a life in**
- 5 A city with all the necessary and fun assets that let people lead full lives**
- 6 Services, amenities, and places that help you every step of the way**

PRIORITIZATION FRAMEWORK

# A community-informed decision-making framework ensures Pensacola's future investments address core community concerns.



## Prioritize basic needs first

→ Does this project address safety and security: attainable housing, safer streets, well-resourced community facilities, or resilience?



## Prioritize racial equity

→ Does this project further equitable outcomes for communities of color in Pensacola, especially for attainable housing and quality of infrastructure?



## Prioritize more mixed-use hubs beyond Downtown

→ Does this project advance investment in livability outside of Downtown to create more neighborhood centers with walkable amenities and services?



## Prioritize systems

→ Does this project address multiple strategic goals at once?

City leaders should prioritize projects based on these questions above, with more "yeses" indicating higher priority.



## Prioritize feasible wins

→ Does this project have a clear path to implementation, community partners and champions, and/or access to funding?

GOALS

# Eight goals to guide priorities for Pensacola over the next 10 years



**Attainable Housing for All Income Levels**



**Safe Streets for All Mobilities**



**Support for Youth Experiences**



**Resilient Waterfronts and Neighborhoods**



**More Walkable, Mixed-use Districts**



**Public Spaces that Connect Communities**



**Thriving Innovation and Businesses**

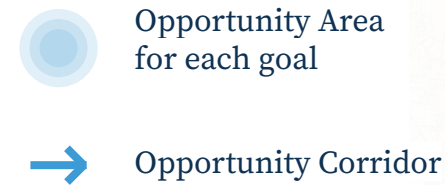
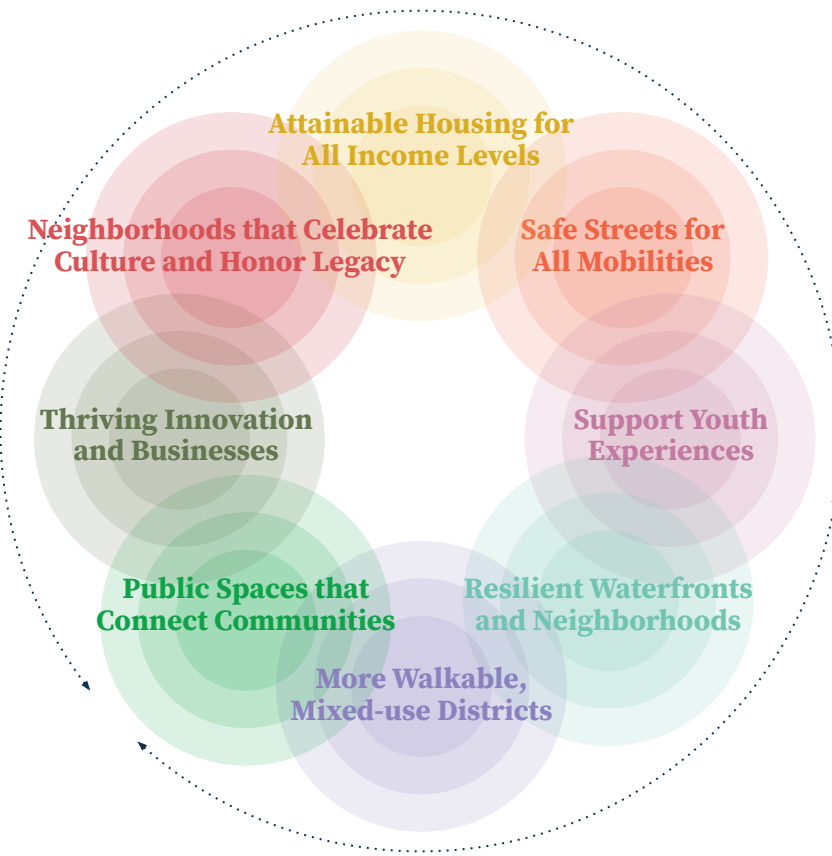


**Neighborhoods that Celebrate Culture and Honor Legacy**



BRINGING ALL GOALS TOGETHER

To anchor the Pensacola's eight key goals (see Chapter 3) over the next decade, investments in hard infrastructure—such as housing, safe streets, parks, and resilient facilities—and soft social infrastructure—like arts, unique cultural programming, and innovation development programs—must be strategically integrated into the built environment. These investments should prioritize fostering a thriving community by enhancing quality of life, directing resources to areas with the greatest need, and achieving multiple goals at once.



**Transform northern Pensacola and the Carpenter Creek area...**

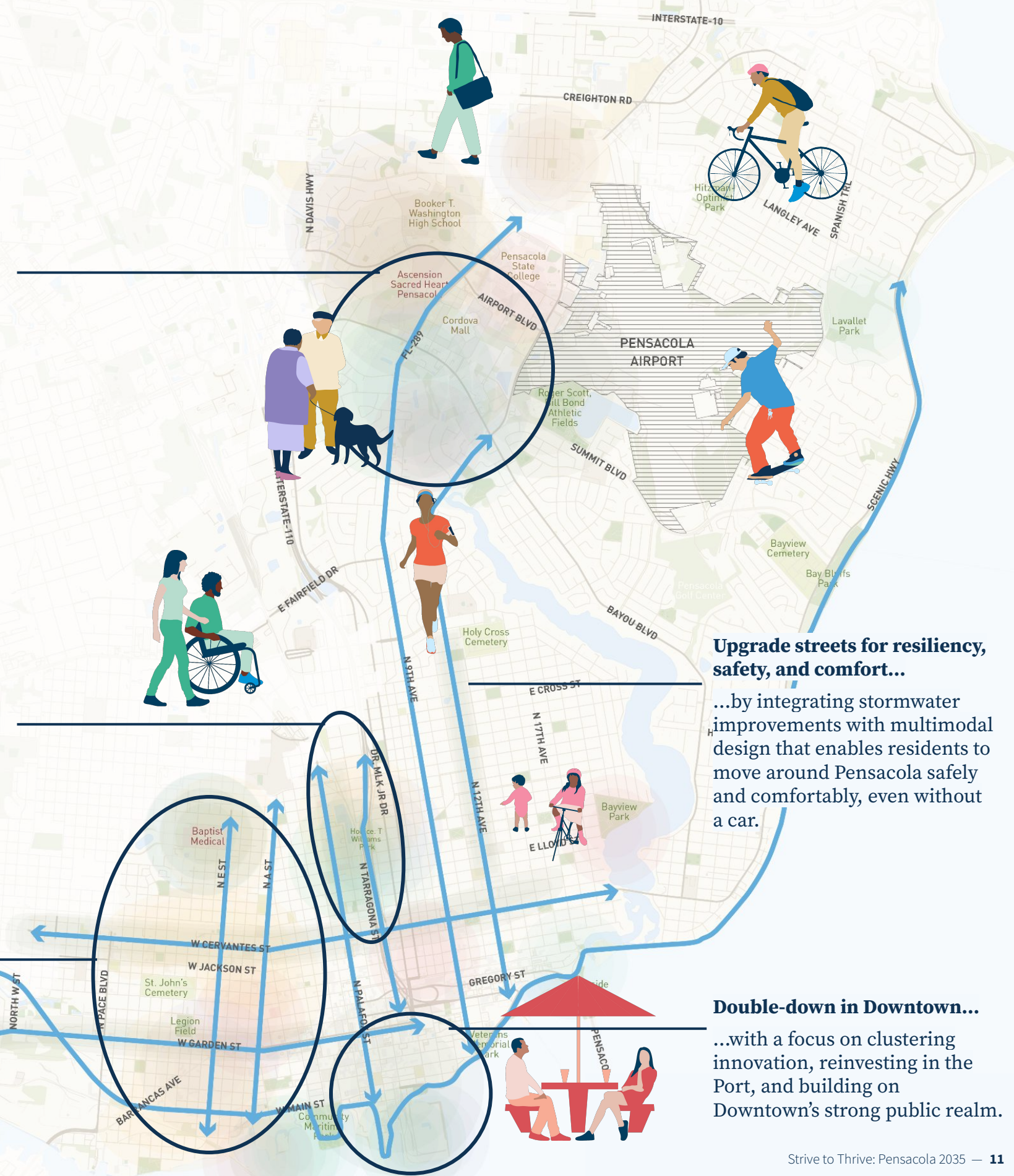
...with significant investment in resiliency and public space, coupled with denser mixed-use real estate development that catalyzes innovation economies.

**Invest in incredible public space to stitch the city back together and catalyze infill development...**

...leveraging Hollice T. Williams transformation to deliver a signature gathering place that invites equitable development at its edges.

**Prioritize investment in historically disinvested parts of Pensacola...**

...directing funds and resources towards bolstering affordable housing, supportive services for youth, and cultural expression.



**Upgrade streets for resiliency, safety, and comfort...**

...by integrating stormwater improvements with multimodal design that enables residents to move around Pensacola safely and comfortably, even without a car.

**Double-down in Downtown...**

...with a focus on clustering innovation, reinvesting in the Port, and building on Downtown's strong public realm.





# 02

## What We've Learned

Learning from the community and from best practices





TIMELINE

# Planning process for a thriving Pensacola in 2035

Over the course of a year, the Strive to Thrive team has developed the strategic plan. The approach combined multiple inputs to create a community-driven vision and decision-making framework for Pensacola’s future.

**Background Research & Learning from Communities:** the process started with deep research into Pensacola’s own planning initiatives, coupled with research into relevant best practices from around the world. At the same time, the team gathered extensive input through a variety of engagement activities with community members throughout Pensacola.

**Vision:** from these inputs, the team derived both a community-driven vision and decision-making framework. This vision is a “north star” for Pensacola, setting the direction for how the city should evolve over the next ten years. The decision-making framework channels community concerns and desires into action, ensuring future projects are in line with what matters most to residents.

**A Living Strategic Plan:** the plan itself is made up of eight Goals, each with their own description, metrics for success, and recommended actions. The implementation plan sets out an iterative process to steward this plan over time and make sure the plan can evolve along with the city.

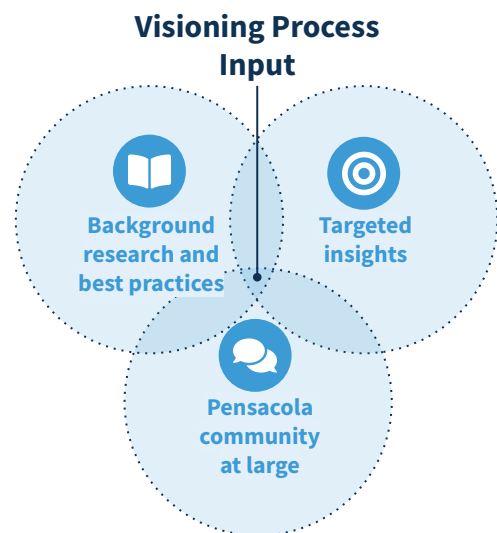




APPROACH

# Our insights are informed by a robust, multi-method visioning process.

To ensure the strategic plan is built from the best expertise and community input, the team used multiple methods to document Pensacola’s unique context today and advise its future development. This process drew lessons and inspiration from both local initiatives and global best practices. The wider Pensacola community participated through many different engagements, including a Visioning Survey, pop-up activities throughout the city, focus groups, and a public open house workshop event hosted at City Hall. Additionally, we gathered targeted insights from City Council members, subject matter experts, and select group of local cross-sector stakeholders.



**DESKTOP RESEARCH**

## Existing Plans in Pensacola

We reviewed over 30 past plans and documents, including broad strategic plans like the 2019 Strategic Plan and the Mayoral Transition Report, as well as topic-specific plans like the Active Transportation Plan, Waterfront Framework, and Affordable Housing Task Force Report. We also looked at past surveys such as the Resident Satisfaction Survey and Escambia County Quality of Life Survey. This review identified current issues, explored goals and objectives, and considered potential policies for implementation.



**DESKTOP RESEARCH**

## Best Practice Vision Plans across the U.S.

We reviewed 10-year citywide strategic vision plans from across the U.S. to draw inspiration and identify effective strategies, success metrics, and implementation frameworks. Our focus was on cities that balanced ambitious visions with practical execution, setting clear goals, timelines, and success metrics. We also paid attention to cities facing challenges similar to those in Pensacola.



**DESKTOP RESEARCH**

## Best Practice Strategic Projects across the Globe

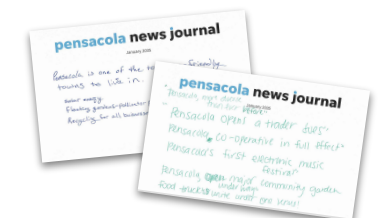
We also explored global best practices for strategic projects. These ranged from pilot initiatives like city-wide pedestrian crossing programs to district strategies, such as creating innovation clusters. Our goal was to understand how projects with similar goals have been successfully implemented in other cities around the world and bring these best-in-class learnings to Pensacola.

**PENSACOLA COMMUNITY**

## Neighborhood Pop-ups

250+ people engaged

City staff, engagement consultants, and volunteers hosted pop-ups at events like Big Brothers Big Sisters, Gallery Night, Juneteenth, and the Latin Salsa Festival to engage a diverse range of voices and broaden the reach of the digital Vision Survey.





APPROACH

**PENSACOLA COMMUNITY**

## Visioning Survey

**1,320 respondents**

We conducted an online survey to understand how people experience Pensacola today and where they want to see future investments. The survey link was shared both digitally and in person through email blasts, community pop-up events, and meetings.

To ensure key demographic representation, the Visioning Survey sought significant participation from three key groups: Black and/or African American residents, those making less than median income, and youth under the age of 25. The Visioning Survey engaged 350 people of color (27% of total), and among them 173 Black residents (13% of total). Though the median income range of survey respondents was between \$100,000-149,999, which is higher than today’s median annual household income, 273 respondents (20%) reported incomes below the median. To reach young people, the team engaged them via the online survey, as well as through pop-up events and focus groups. Combining these activities, over 100 youth engaged in the visioning process for the plan.

Each target demographic group achieved statistically significant representation with a margin of error no greater than 10%. For more information on survey questions and responses, refer to the appendix.

**PENSACOLA COMMUNITY**

## Public Open House

**100+ participants**

We hosted an open house on June 26, 2024 from 4-7pm at Pensacola City Hall to talk with community members and understand their priorities and aspirations for Pensacola’s next ten years. The open house was widely promoted across physical and digital channels.



**TARGETED INSIGHTS**

## Council Member Interviews

**4 participants**

We interviewed four city council members — Bare, Brahier, Jones, and Patton — to gain insights into their constituents' current challenges, priorities, and future aspirations. These interviews offered a deep understanding of the distinct contexts within each council district and how these communities are evolving.

**TARGETED INSIGHTS**

## Vision Group Workshops

**45 stakeholders**

We held two workshops with representatives from the City, Escambia County, nonprofits, community organizations, major employers, and other stakeholder groups. The first workshop, held in April 2024, focused on identifying big opportunities and challenges in the city, along with discussions of big ideas for Pensacola’s future. The second workshop in June 2024 explored collaboration opportunities and focused on how to achieve these goals in Pensacola’s context. Together, these workshops helped validate findings from broader engagement and zoom in on realistic ideas for implementation.

**PENSACOLA COMMUNITY**

## Focus Groups

**25+ participants**

We held two focus groups in collaboration with Equity Project Alliance and Storytelling Solutions of America to gather insights from key demographics, including Black and African American residents and youth, to better understand their vision for Pensacola's future.

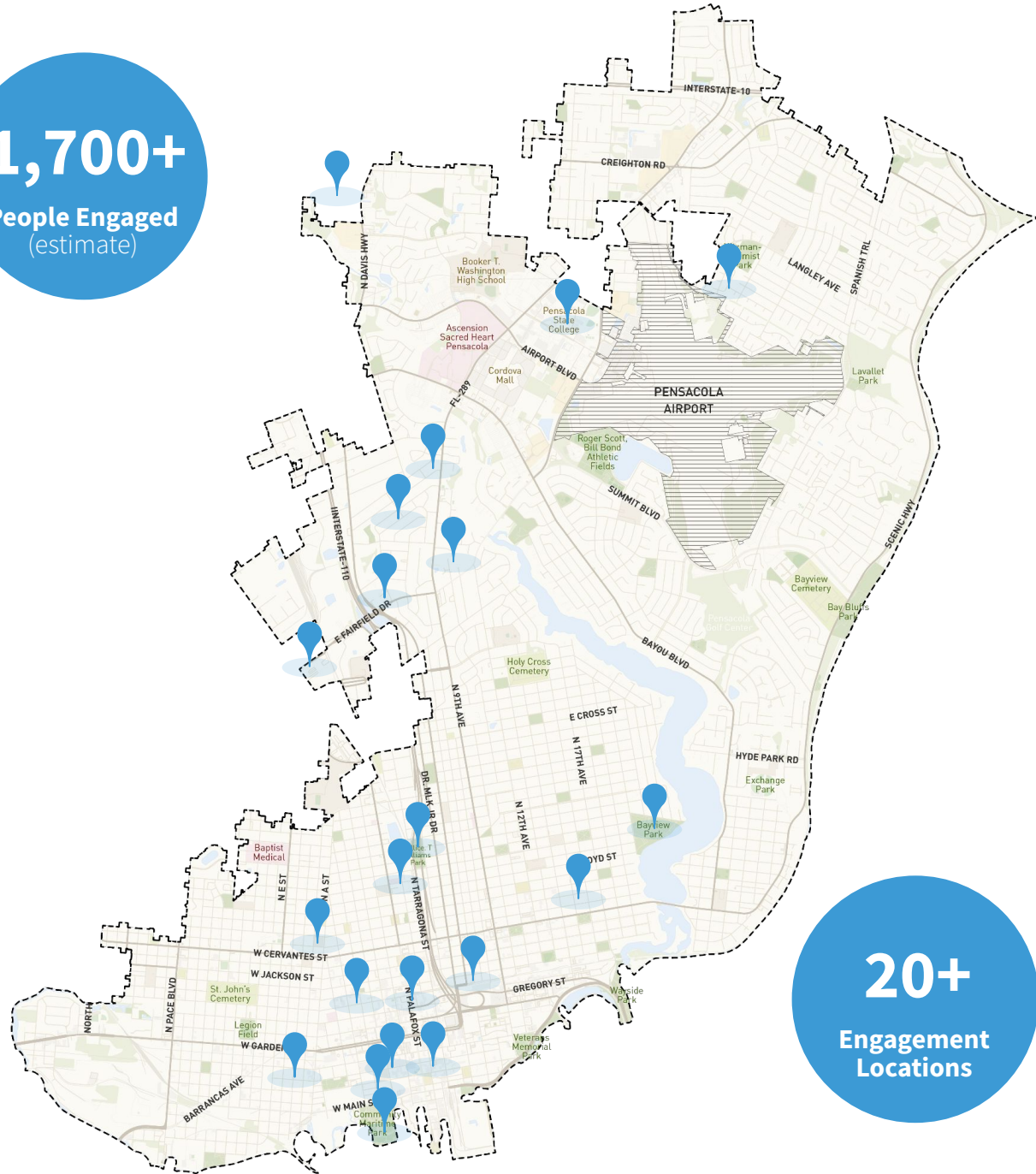




APPROACH

We engaged with the Pensacola community at a variety of locations across the city to capture insights.

1,700+ People Engaged (estimate)



20+ Engagement Locations

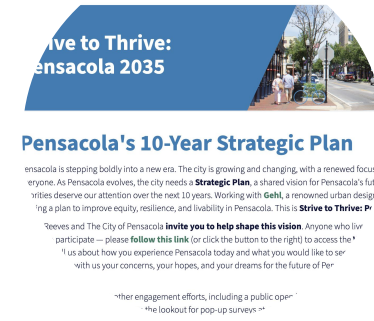
Storytelling Solutions of America Teen Summit Focus Group



Public Open House



Visioning Survey



Juneteenth UnityFest Pop-up



Vision Group Workshop



Latin Salsa Festival Pop-up



Parent University Back to School Festival Pop-up



Walking Tour with City Staff and Neighborhood Association





WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

# Pensacola is a beloved community where people value its culture and urban amenities and envision a future that improves their fundamental needs and quality of life.

A lot happens in ten years: kids grow up, people find new jobs, couples start families, folks move homes, and the city itself changes and evolves. A good, useful strategic plan — one that will successfully steer Pensacola in the right direction over the next ten years — must be informed by the needs, concerns, and desires of today's communities.

After four months of engaging with Pensacola's diverse population, one thing is clear: the city's rich culture, natural beauty, and thoughtful investments in downtown and the waterfront make its people proud.

However, the community's feelings towards change are more complex. While there is optimism about the city's growth, there is also a strong call for equitable development and a focus on foundational human needs that enhance quality of life. Recognizing the incredible assets the city already has, residents envision a future where everyone can live, work, learn, and play comfortably in this beloved city.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1 Residents most appreciate how their city balances “small town charm” and growth.
- 2 Locals’ favorite destinations reveal their love for both socializing downtown and relaxing in nature.
- 3 Residents are feeling positive about the neighborhood they live in.
- 4 People in Pensacola are cautiously optimistic about the changes happening in the City.
- 5 Core concerns focus on opportunities for all generations to stay and thrive in Pensacola — especially as the city changes.
- 6 People want to see more housing, safer streets, and better facilities in their neighborhoods.
- 7 Residents want a plan that addresses livability, health, and equity over the next ten years.



KEY TAKEAWAYS ABOUT PENSACOLA TODAY

# 1 Residents most appreciate how their city balances “small town charm” and growth.

Pensacola is a city at an important crossroads, and local residents understand this. When asked what three words would they use to describe the city today, residents gave “growing,” “beautiful,” and “historic” as the top three recurring answers. These words together convey equal measures of appreciation for the growth and change Pensacola has recently experienced and respect for the city’s past. Other respondents described this as an appreciation for “small town living” and “family-friendly” atmosphere balanced with proximity to beautiful “green spaces and natural landscapes.”

In these answers, people share a recognition that Pensacola has a unique role in the region — as both an urban amenity and natural wonder.

Survey Question: What 3 words would you use to describe Pensacola today?



Survey Question: What aspects of Pensacola are you happy with today? What do you believe should be preserved in Pensacola?

Below are a selection of quoted responses from the survey.

**BALANCING GROWTH & PRESERVATION**

“I am happy that the city has **preserved historic buildings** downtown.”

“**Pensacola is growing**...there’s more to do downtown than ever before.”

**SMALL TOWN CHARM**

“**Small town living** feel with the positive parts of big town city planning.”

**FAMILY-FRIENDLY**

“Love the **family friendly** events.”

**ACCESS TO THE WATER**

“We should preserve City ownership and **control of the waterfront**”

**GREEN SPACES**

“I am the most happy with **green spaces and natural landscapes**”

**TOURISM**

“Pensacola is finally taking advantage of its historical heritage and waterfront view to be put it as the **forefront of the "living and tourism experience."**”

**EVERYDAY AMENITIES**

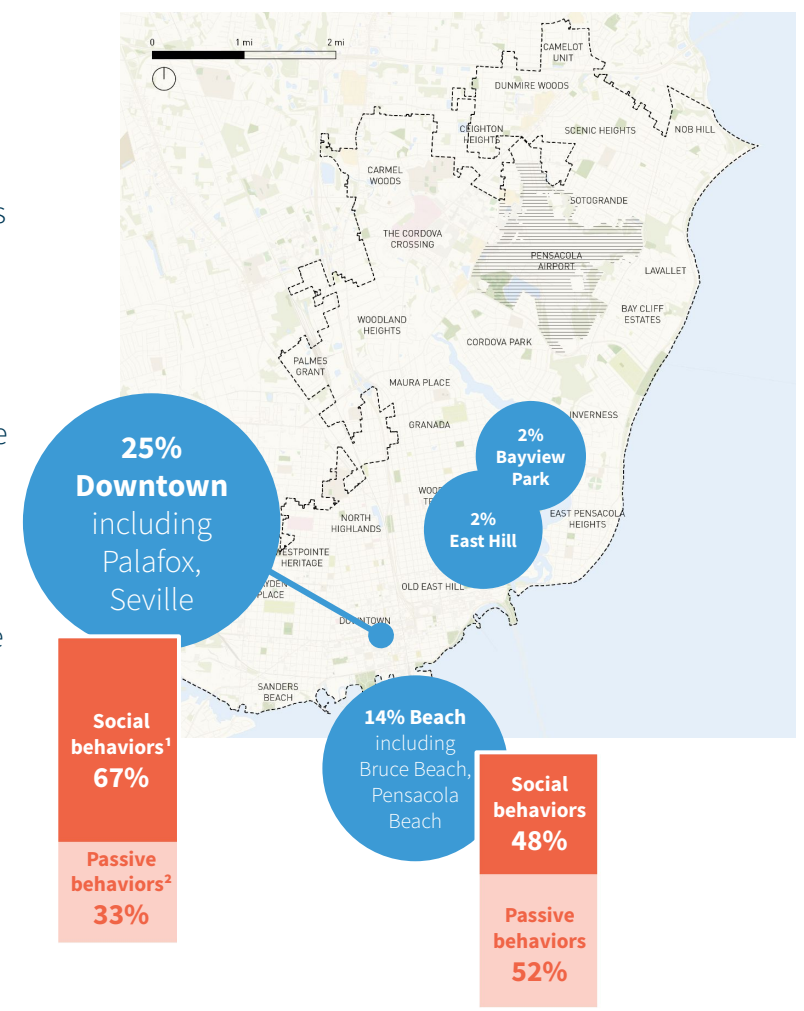
“The **simple places are what make Pensacola special** to me. Parks, the beach, local hangouts, dive bars.”

# 2 Locals’ favorite destinations reveal their love for both socializing downtown and relaxing in nature.

When asked what is their favorite place in Pensacola, **respondents’ top answer (25%) was downtown**, including destinations like Palafox, Seville Square, and Maritime Park. Following this, the next most common answer was the beach (14%) — though the beach is technically outside of city limits. (All other places received significantly lower amounts of votes, 2% or less of the total.) When asked what they like to do at their favorite places, those who answered “downtown” tended to most enjoy socializing, dining, and shopping. Whereas those who answered “beach” indicated a preference toward more passive recreation and relaxation.

As before, residents underscore a dual appreciation for the two sides of Pensacola: love for both socializing at urban destinations and relaxing in beautiful nature. Taken together, these preferences signal a key learning for the strategic plan: to expand upon these qualities while not putting them out of balance. One can imagine how Pensacola’s untapped natural settings can invite more social activities and become incredible gathering places.

Survey Question: What is your favorite place in Pensacola? What do you do when you go to your favorite place? Check all that apply.



<sup>1</sup> Social behaviors include: Eat / drink, Meet people, Play sports / physical exercise, Shop, Socialize with people I know, Something creative  
<sup>2</sup> Passive behaviors include: Just be alone, Passive recreation (like strolling / fishing), People-watch. Read / relax / listen to music

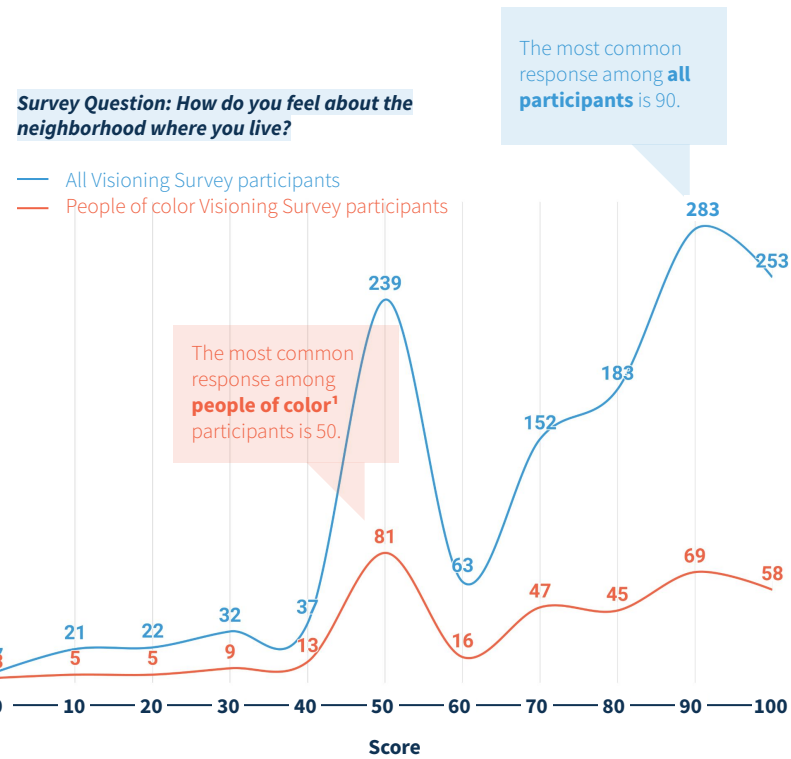


KEY TAKEAWAYS ABOUT PENSACOLA TODAY

### 3 Residents are feeling positive about the neighborhood they live in.

Overall, residents feel good about the quality of the neighborhoods they live in. When asked to score their level of satisfaction on a scale of 0-100 in intervals of 10, **Pensacola's average score was 73, indicating a generally positive sentiment.** The most common score was 90.

Those who recorded these more positive sentiments had glowing remarks about the state of Pensacola. As one respondent indicated, “[I appreciate] the beauty of the shore, the history, the sports and activities.” Though more negative sentiment scores were less common overall, these respondents expressed concerns of gentrification, lack of walkability, and cost of living.



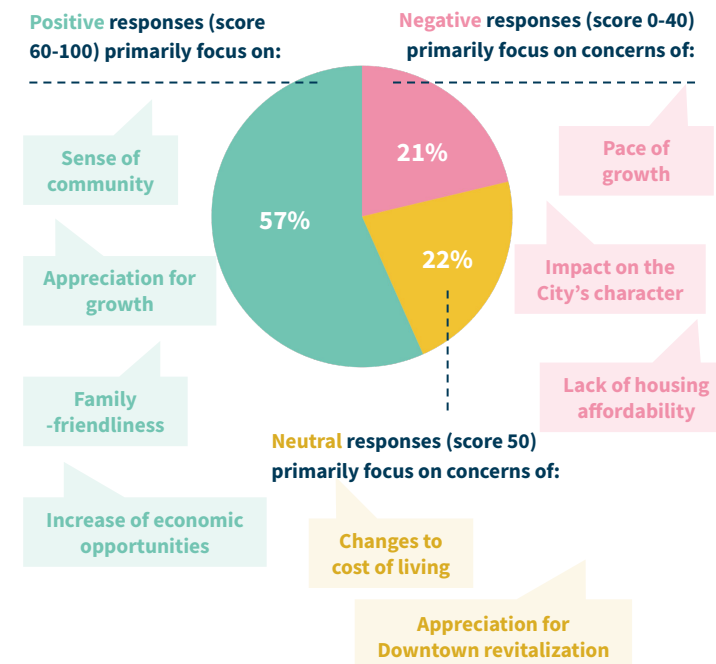
<sup>1</sup> People of color survey participants exclude those who selected "White" or "Prefer not to say" when asked "What is your race / ethnicity?"

### 4 People in Pensacola are cautiously optimistic about the changes happening in the City.

Respondents recognize that the city is changing and overall express a cautious optimism for the direction the city is moving in. When asked to indicate how strongly they disagree (score 0) or agree (score 100) with the statement, “Pensacola is changing, and I think these changes will benefit me and my family,” **Respondents registered an average score of 56, indicating a neutral, but slightly positive sentiment.**

Positive responses primarily focus on appreciation for growth and change, sense of community and family-friendliness, and increase of economic opportunities. Negative responses primarily focus on concerns of pace of growth and its impact on Pensacola's character, plus concerns about housing and lack of affordability.

**Survey Question: On a scale of 0-100, indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statement: “Pensacola is changing, and I think these changes will benefit me and my family.”**



#### Key Demographic Spotlight

When looking specifically at responses from only **people of color**, the average score is slightly lower at 71, though within the margin of error. Notably though, the most common score for this group was 50, expressing an overall less positive, more neutral sentiment about their own neighborhoods.



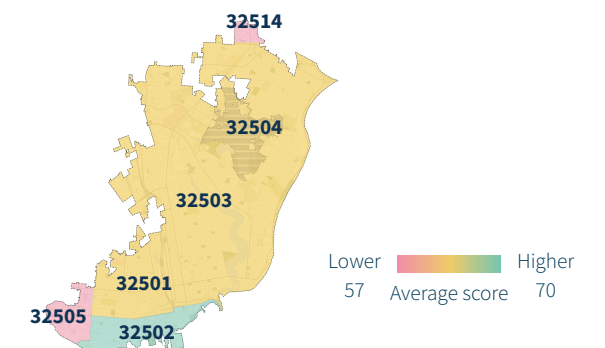
Though there have been "some" efforts, to make people feel comfortable, **not a lot is being done to deal with the racism, and unfairness of black neighborhoods or businesses.**

— Visioning Survey Respondent, person of color, age 45-54 years

#### Key Demographic Spotlight

When splitting these scores across Pensacola's zipcodes, downtown residents expressed the most positive sentiments (score 70), while residents on the west side expressed significantly more neutral sentiments (score 57). This geographic split follows economic divisions, with more affluent residents having the most positive feelings — indicating that recent urban investments can improve quality of life, but the concentration of them downtown may come at the expense of other communities that are less invested in.

#### Average score by zipcodes in Pensacola





KEY TAKEAWAYS ABOUT PENSACOLA TOMORROW

# 5 Core concerns focus on opportunities for all generations to stay and thrive in Pensacola — especially as the city changes.

When asked what is the most critical challenge for Pensacola to address, respondents express concerns over housing, cost of living, equitable investment, and development for youth and young professionals.

**Concerns about housing affordability and general cost of living are the most common** among survey respondents, with many calls for better and more even investment in infrastructure throughout the city.

*Survey Question: What is the most critical challenge that Pensacola must address in the next 10 years?*

*Below are a selection of quoted responses from the survey.*

### HOUSING & DISPLACEMENT

“Pensacola is pricing out the middle and poor working class. Gentrification is occurring in all of Pensacola’s old neighborhoods. All the new building that has been done in last 10 years are more for out of state people moving here.”

### PENSACOLA FIRST

“I think it's going to be crucial to maintain a good balance between tourism and growth and protecting the existing local population. It already feels as if local and neighborhood interests are on the back burner to flash and frivolity.”

### EQUITABLE INVESTMENT

“Pensacola is one of the oldest cities in the nation, and away from the "tourist spots", the age of the city is evident... **We need to revitalize ALL of Pensacola**, not only the places that tourists frequent.”

### EDUCATION

“Schools are critical as children are the future and if they have to leave to gain an education, the city will shrivel and die.”

### YOUTH

“Making sure that **our youth are not overlooked** in their needs... This is the future of the city.”

### THE NEXT GENERATION

“If we are going to successfully **attract and retain the next generation** we need to have the things here that other growing cities offer.”

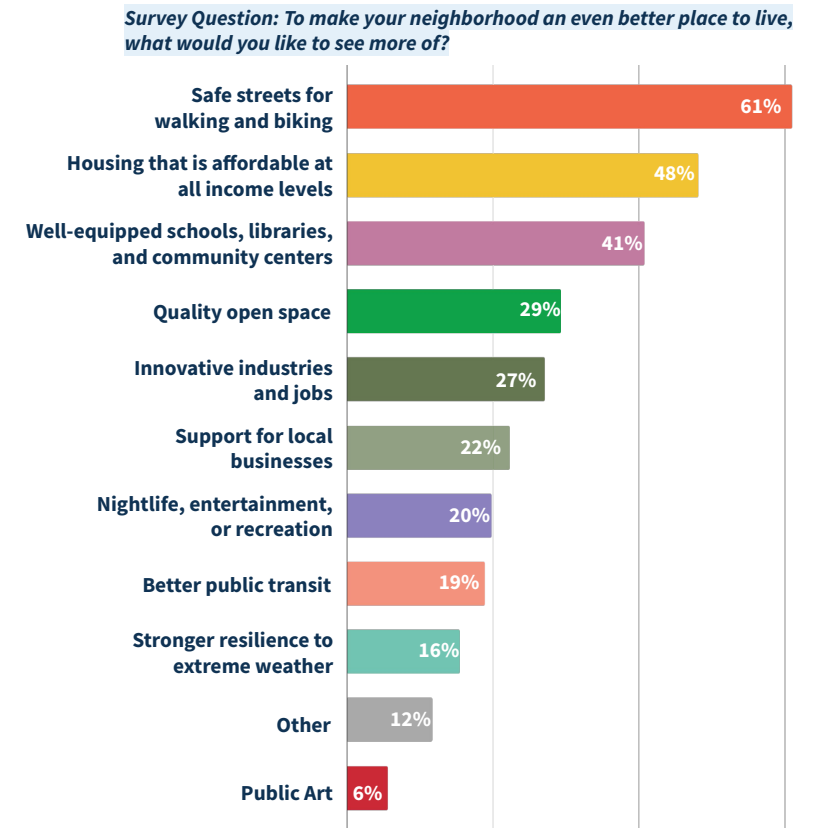
### CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

“I don’t want our city to be a place where the younger generations move away because there isn’t room for them to **grow in their career**.”

# 6 People want to see more housing, safer streets, and better facilities in their neighborhoods.

Though residents expressed an overall positive sentiment about their current neighborhoods, when prompted, respondents indicated they would like to see investment in housing, streets, and facilities to improve their quality of life. **“Safe streets for walking and biking” was the top choice (61%)**, followed by “Housing that is affordable at all income levels” (48%) and “Well-equipped schools libraries, and community centers” (41%).

These selections indicate a prioritization toward fundamental things that everyone needs: safe streets to get around, affordable housing to live in, and resourced facilities to support communities. Options that ranked lower, however, are not explicitly deprioritized by community members.



### Key Demographic Spotlight

When looking specifically at responses from only people of color, the top three selections are the same as the entire pool of respondents. Though notably, affordable housing takes the top spot above safer streets.



**Housing affordability remains a critical issue** that has not been addressed in a meaningful way. In order to create an healthy, equitable community, we need to create a variety of solutions to create more housing stock.

— Visioning Survey Respondent, person of color, age 25-34 years



KEY TAKEAWAYS ABOUT PENSACOLA TOMORROW

# 7 Residents want a plan that addresses livability, health, and equity over the next ten years.

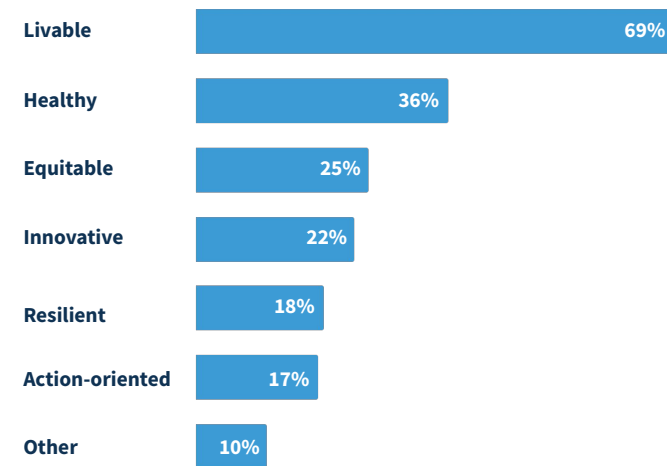
The Visioning Survey prompted respondents to select themes they would like prioritized in the strategic plan. The top three themes were: “Livable” (69%), “Healthy” (36%), and “Equitable” (25%).

**Livability** was defined as “Pensacola is a livable place where its diverse urban amenities and pristine ecosystems bring people from all walks of life together.”

**Health** was defined as “Pensacola is a healthy place that promotes wellbeing and safety for people of all ages and abilities.”

**Equity** was defined as “Pensacola is an equitable place where every person has the freedom and comfort to explore who they want to be.”

Survey Question: What themes should Pensacola consider when setting a 10-year vision?



“My big idea for Pensacola in 2035 is for **everyone to have a place to live and be in great health**”

— Visioning Survey Respondent, under 17 years

### Key Demographic Spotlight

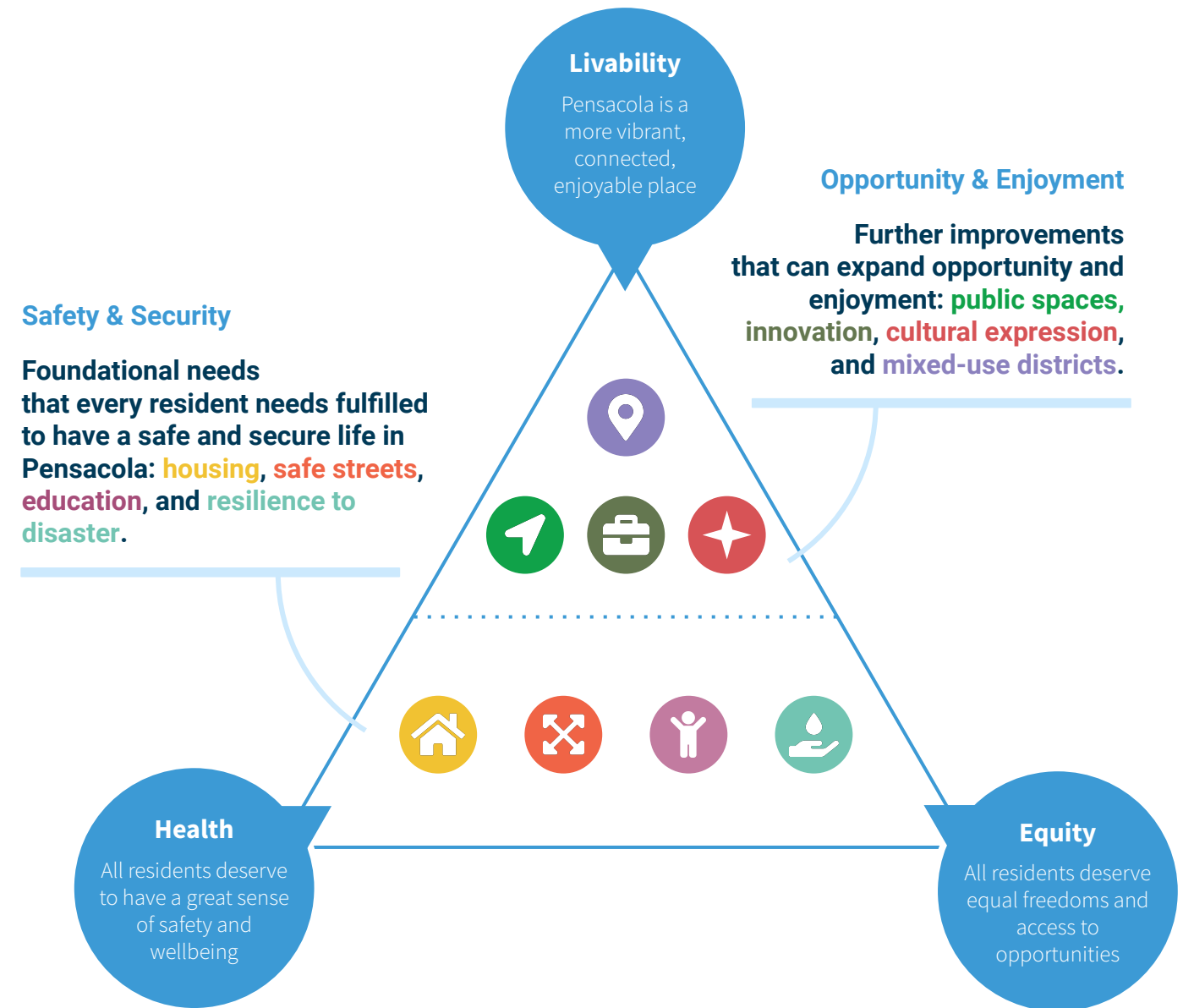
When looking specifically at responses from only people of color, the top three themes are the same, with “Livable” as the most common selection. However notably, “Equitable” was the second most common choice, with “Healthy” taking the third spot.

“Creating an **equitable community is important as our community grows** to ensure that working class families aren't left behind, and to **preserve Pensacola as a place where everyone can thrive.**”

— Visioning Survey Respondent, person of color, age 25-34 years

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

# Pensacola’s community strives toward a city where security and opportunity are both plentiful for all.

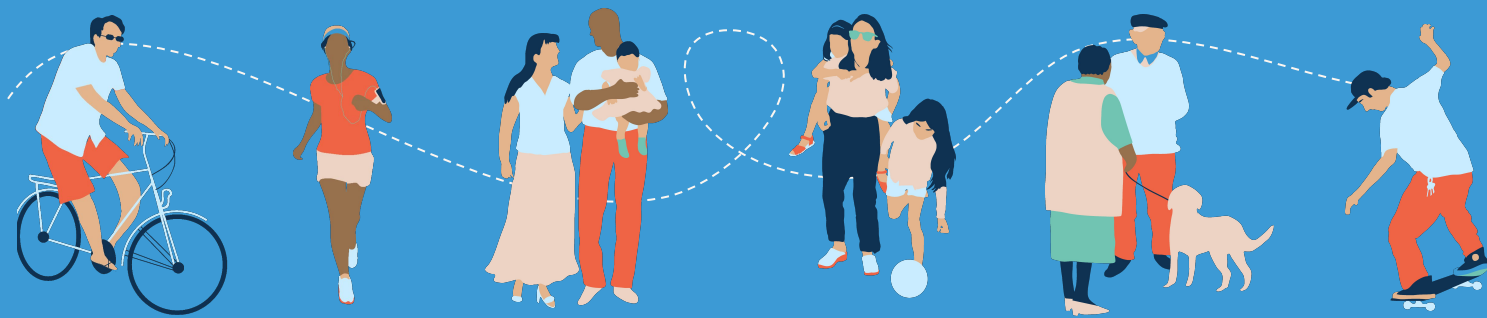


→ “Safe” was the most common answer when residents were asked to describe how they’d envision Pensacola in 2035.



VISION STATEMENT

By 2035,<sup>1</sup> **all** residents have the<sup>2</sup> **support** they<sup>3</sup> **need** to <sup>4</sup> **stay** and <sup>5</sup> **thrive** in their city — <sup>6</sup> **at every** stage of life.



## Six dimension of Pensacola's vision over the next ten years

- 1 Equitable outcomes for everyone — no matter one's background
- 2 Investments that promote security and opportunity
- 3 Foundational necessities like housing, safe streets, and community resources
- 4 A city that current and future generations want to build a life in
- 5 A city with all the necessary and fun assets that let people lead full lives
- 6 Services, amenities, and places that help you every step of the way



PRIORITIZATION FRAMEWORK

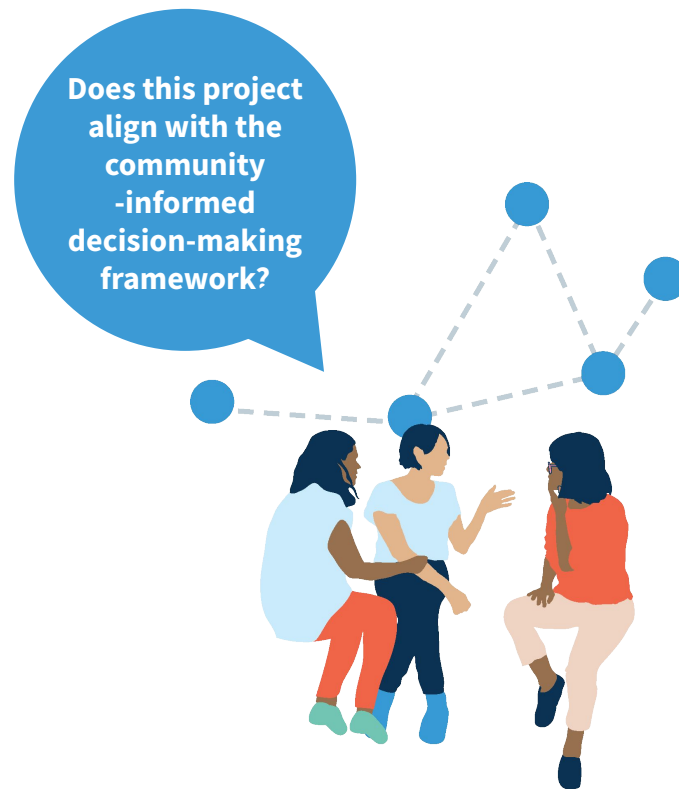
## A community-informed decision-making framework

There are many potential directions Pensacola can take over the next ten years. Community concerns — as documented in the strategic visioning process — should guide this path to ensure Pensacola evolves in a manner that meets its residents' needs.

The strategic plan should serve as a guidebook that is routinely referenced as a “north star” for Pensacola. Specific initiatives, grant funds, actors, and opportunities may come in and out over the next ten years, but the core vision and thematic goals in this plan should remain constant.

Over the next ten years, there will be many ideas for potential projects — it is important that the city evaluates these ideas through a consistent decision-making framework that speaks to local concerns. For every new project idea that comes up, city leaders should consider each of the following questions (see right). These questions are informed by core community concerns and seek to elevate their priorities in the decision-making process. The more “yeses” to each of these questions, the higher the priority for the project.

→ **IMPLEMENTATION** — For more information on how to use this decision-making framework, look ahead in Chapter 4: Implementation on page 60. There, you will see an illustrative worksheet that details the prompts one should consider when evaluating the prioritization of a potential project, initiative, or policy.



## Key prioritization questions



### Prioritize basic needs first

Does this project **address safety and security**: attainable housing, safer streets, well-resourced community facilities, or resilience?



### Prioritize racial and economic equity

Does this project **further equitable access to opportunity** and wealth-building for disenfranchised groups in Pensacola, including communities of color and poorer residents?



### Prioritize more mixed-use hubs

Does this project **advance investment in livability** beyond just Downtown to create more, denser neighborhood centers with walkable amenities and services?



### Prioritize systems

Does this project **address multiple strategic goals** at once?



### Prioritize feasible wins

Does this project **have a clear path to implementation**, community partners and champions, and/or access to funding?



# 03

# Goals

Guiding priorities for the next 10 years







Image source: Pensacola News Journal

GOALS

# This chapter defines eight goals that will guide priorities for Pensacola over the next 10 years



## Attainable Housing for All Income Levels

See page 27



## Safe Streets for All Mobilities

See page 31



## Support for Youth Experiences

See page 35



## Resilient Waterfronts and Neighborhoods

See page 39



## More Walkable, Mixed-use Districts

See page 43



## Public Spaces that Connect Communities

See page 47



## Thriving Innovation and Businesses

See page 51



## Neighborhoods that Celebrate Culture and Honor Legacy

See page 55



# How to navigate the Goals chapter

**1** This entire chapter is a framework of **proposed goals** for future City actions to improve local residents' lives.



**2** The chapter includes **eight goals**, each with its own subsection. These eight goals encapsulate major topics identified by residents and experts.



**3** Each goal subsection includes ...

An **Introduction** on why this goal

A **map** highlighting key information and opportunity areas

**Supporting data**

**Actions:** suggested initiatives to realize the goal

**Priority Action in Spotlight:** impactful initiatives highlighted

**Inspiring Case Studies**

**Evaluation Metrics**





# Attainable Housing for All Income Levels





WHY THIS GOAL

# Housing costs are a major concern — with a desire for greater affordability and attainability for all income levels.

Pensacola is an incredible place to live, but this appreciation for the city’s unique charms has led to new housing challenges. From January 2020 to July 2022, the median monthly rent in the Pensacola metro area increased by 36%,<sup>1</sup> and among the ten most common jobs in the area, today only one (registered nurses) provides a salary sufficient to afford a two-bedroom apartment at the fair market rent.<sup>2</sup> This is a nationwide problem that has become more apparent here in Pensacola — and residents have taken note: the cost of housing is *the* top concern based on the Vision Survey.

Pensacola can do more — the city can and should encourage growth, while ensuring everyone has secure housing, no matter their income. This plan defines **affordable housing as subsidized housing** that strives to ensure people spend no more than 30% of their income on housing costs. **Attainable housing is non-subsidized housing** that residents can afford without spending more than 30% of their income on housing costs. Both affordable and attainable housing is needed to ensure everyone has access to secure, quality housing.

#1

**Attainable housing was the top theme** present in answers when survey respondents were asked: “What is the most critical challenge that Pensacola must address in the next 10 years?”

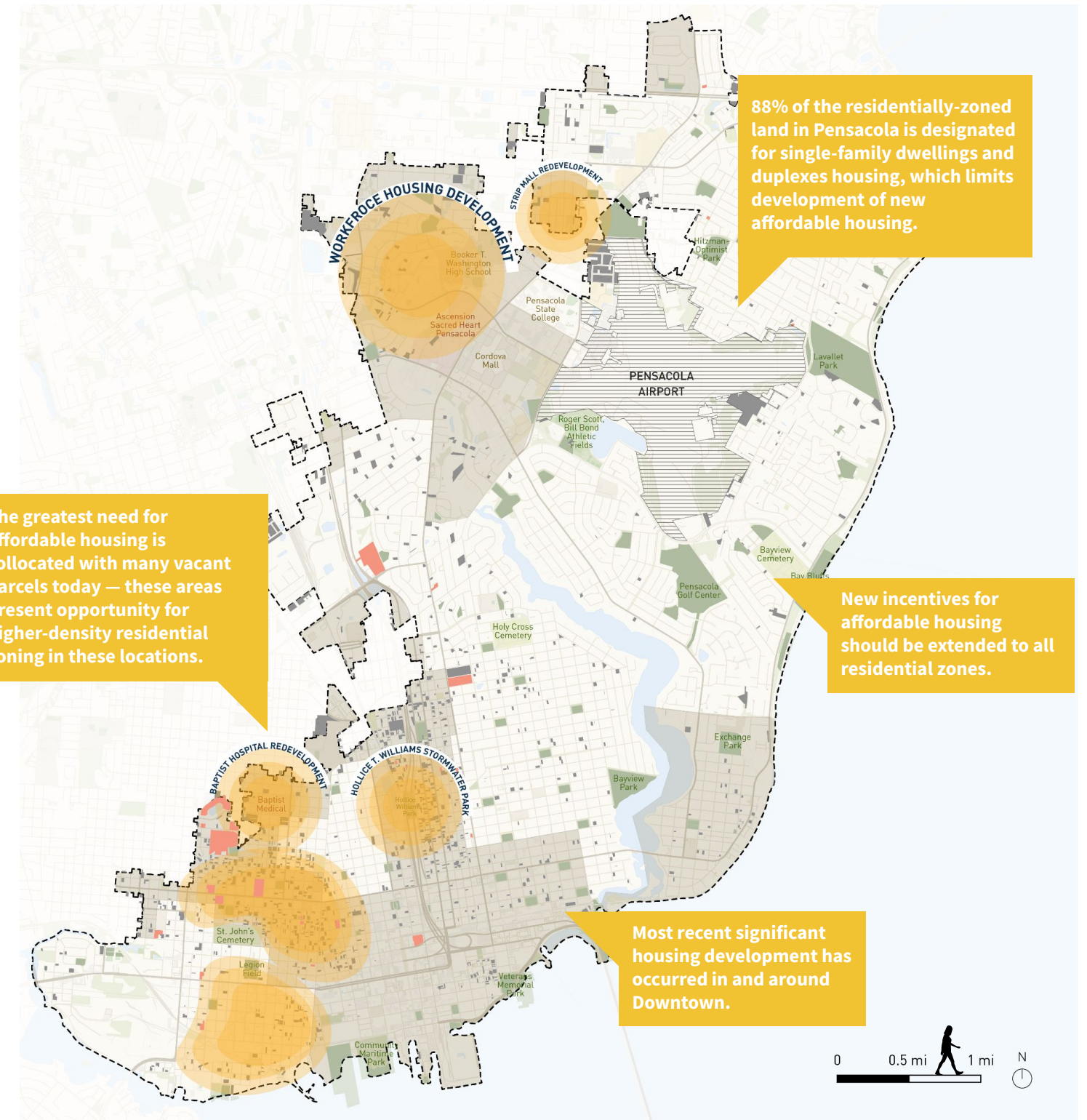
“

**Affordable housing is a critical challenge.** I grew up here and love the city, but as a single income household, I cannot afford to live in the city. There are also not a lot of affordable rental options within the city.

— *Visioning Survey Respondent, age 25-34*

→

**MOVING FORWARD** — How might Pensacola address the housing cost issue and ensure that people of all income levels can attain — and hold on to — housing? By prioritizing the creation of affordable rental units, Pensacola can most directly — and equitably — tackle the extent of housing burden in the city. By prioritizing the housing needs for the most insecure, Pensacola can stabilize its housing challenges. This approach would help the city better meet the needs of its current residents while also accommodating future growth.



**Attainable Housing Opportunity Areas**

● Future housing development opportunity areas

**Housing Burden**

■ Census Tracts with more than 33% of households experiencing housing burden (defined as spending more than 30% of their income on housing costs)

**Parcels**

■ Vacant Residential Parcels (2024)  
■ Assisted Housing (2024)



<sup>1</sup> Apartment List. 2022.  
<sup>2</sup> Florida Housing Coalition. 2020.



ACTIONS

# Actions for housing over the next ten years

Solutions must look at the creation of new, affordable and attainable housing options and preservation of what already exists — especially rental units for lower income residents. Priority actions focus on creating new incentives that promote mutually-beneficial outcomes for developers and residents. This means responsibly adding affordable dwellings where density improves livability.

→ **NEXT STEPS** — It starts with taking a hard look at Pensacola’s zoning to incentivize creating new affordable housing. Today, Pensacola’s incentive zoning does not clearly define affordable housing in exchange for more density. This is a missed opportunity. Pensacola can conduct a real estate market analysis to amend zoning and work with developers to solve this problem.

ACTIONS	RELEVANT GOALS
→ IN PROGRESS	
Identify and use surplus publicly-owned land for affordable housing development	
Invest in administration and communication for home rehabilitation programs	
→ POTENTIAL INITIATIVES	
Provide incentives for rental development at 60% AMI or below	
Create overlay districts to incentivize infill residential density near existing and planned amenities: trails, commercial corridors, walkable districts	
Work with mission-based developers and faith-based organizations to find infill development opportunities	
Work with developers and landlords to use Project Based Vouchers for low income affordability	
Seek to attract non-profit community development financial institutions that can build local developers’ capacities	

← PRIORITY ACTION

PRIORITY ACTION IN SPOTLIGHT

## → Provide incentives for rental development at 60% AMI or below

**Why priority?** Enacting zoning reforms and clear incentives aimed at increasing low-income rentals is crucial to equitably addressing the ongoing housing crisis in Pensacola. Zoning reforms can allow for more diverse and higher-density housing options which will lead to increase in housing supply and more efficient land uses.

**Recommended Implementers**

**Lead:** Mayor’s Office

**Partners:** City of Pensacola Housing Department

### Key Implementation Considerations

**1. Use interactive dashboards to help developers see the value of incentives**

An interactive dashboard can allow planners, developers, and policymakers to model how different incentives and affordable housing requirements impact the economics of housing development projects.

→ **Best Practice:** Learn more from the Inclusionary Housing Calculator. Developed by Grounded Solutions Network, the Calculator is an interactive tool designed to help cities and communities explore the relationship between various local incentives and the development of mixed-income housing.

**2. Direct gap funding to small-scale and mission-based developers**

Pensacola has a network of small-scale and mission-based housing developers, but the financing often does not pencil out without subsidy. Gap funding — in the form of tax credits, provision of publicly-owned land, or other direct contributions — will enable developers to develop.

**3. Clearly tie incentives to requirements toward new and preserved affordable housing**

Any and all public subsidy must be tied to explicit requirements for affordable housing. For instance, if incentives are given to developers or landlords to create new units or rehabilitate existing ones, then the City can require renting to Section 8 tenants. By clearly stating such expectations in amending zoning regulations and program applications, developers will better understand their own pro formas, which derisks their own decision-making processes.



INSPIRING CASE STUDIES



Land trust model to preserve and build attainable housing

In 2023, Pensacola Habitat for Humanity launched the Northwest Pensacola Community Land Trust as a method to preserve affordable housing and create homeownership opportunities at lower price points.



Image source: Pensacola Habitat for Humanity

Community Land Trust  
Pensacola, FL



Updates to land code and zoning to enable more affordable development

In 2019, Minneapolis enacted its 2040 Vision, and with it, made sweeping changes to its zoning and development code. This included encouraging apartment development along commercial corridors, setting building height minimums in high-density zones, permitting duplexes and triplexes on all residential lots, and reducing parking minimums. From 2017 to 2022—covering some years before the plan took effect but after parking requirements were eased—nearly 21,000 new housing units were permitted. According to Pew, 87% of these units were in buildings with 20 or more units, while only 1% were in buildings with two to four units.<sup>1</sup> Learn more about the Zoning Reform in Minneapolis [here](#).

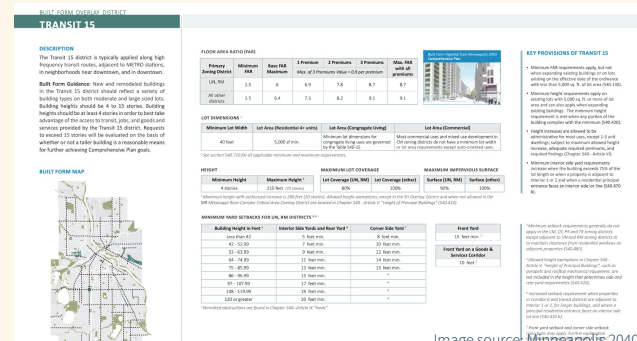


Image source: Minneapolis 2040

Zoning Reform  
Minneapolis, MN



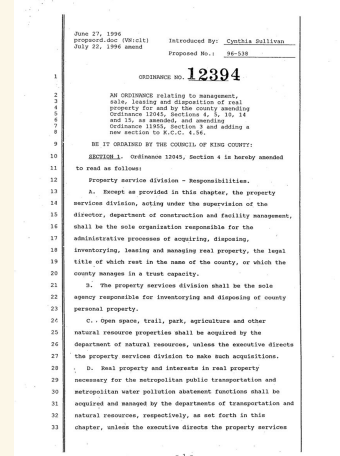
Image source: Public Domain

Affordable Home Development Program  
Houston, TX



Financing the building of new mixed-income neighborhoods

Houston finances developers to sell homes at affordable prices to residents earning up to 120% of the Area Median Income (AMI). This program increases housing stock, including affordable units and homeownership opportunities. Developers must meet specific criteria, including ENERGY STAR® certification and city construction and resilience standards. Learn more about the Affordable Home Development Program in Houston [here](#).



Surplus Land for Affordable Housing Development  
King County, WA



Local ordinance to use surplus public land for affordable housing

Ordinance 12394, passed by King County, WA in 1996, requires any surplus publicly-owned parcels determined to be appropriate for residential development be sold or leased for development of affordable housing. Learn more about the use of publicly owned property for affordable housing [here](#).

EVALUATION METRICS

How to measure success over the next ten years

Success requires increasing both the availability and attainability of housing: more supply can help drive demand down to lower costs. But simply *more* housing won't be sufficient — Pensacola needs to commit to adding and preserving permanently affordable housing.

Not all homes are made equal, either. To ensure residents have secure, safe housing, the city should strive to improve the quality of homes and measure residents' satisfaction.

Availability

Increase in rental development in city limits

Attainability

Decrease house-price-to-income ratio (In 2024, Average Home Price: \$291,163<sup>1</sup> / Median Household Income: \$67,722<sup>2</sup> = ratio 4.30)

Decrease rent-price-to-income ratio (In 2024, Median Gross Rent: \$1,150 per month<sup>3</sup> / Monthly Income: \$42,494/12 = ratio 0.32)

Decrease in % of Pensacola residents experiencing housing cost burden (spending more than 30% of income on housing costs)

Quality

Decrease in home vacancy rate (In 2020, Vacant Housing units: 3,144<sup>4</sup> / Total Housing Units: 27,892 = 11%)

Increase in retrofitting through CRA or Housing rehabilitation programs

Satisfaction

Increase in resident satisfaction with housing (In the 2023 Pensacola Resident Satisfaction Survey, 8% of respondents were "satisfied" and 13% were "very satisfied" when asked "When thinking about efforts to improve the City of Pensacola over the past year, how satisfied are you with housing market affordability?"<sup>5</sup>)

<sup>1</sup> Rocket Homes. 2024

<sup>2</sup> American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. U.S. Census Bureau. S1901. 2022.

<sup>3</sup> American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. DP 04. U.S. Census Bureau. 2022.

<sup>4</sup> Decennial Census. H1. U.S. Census Bureau. 2020.

<sup>5</sup> Resident Satisfaction Survey. City of Pensacola. 2023

<sup>1</sup> Minneapolis Land Use Reforms Offer a Blueprint for Housing Affordability. The Pew Charitable Trusts. 2024.





# Safe Streets for All Mobilities



Image source: Pensacola News Journal



WHY THIS GOAL

# Residents want **safe, enjoyable, and reliable streets** that encourage alternatives to driving — including walking, biking, and taking transit.

Great cities are made of great streets, and while Palafox is a Pensacola’s loveliest spot to stroll, many residents today don’t consider walking, biking, and taking transit to be safe or preferred mobility options. The Pensacola community is requesting safer, more comfortable streets. In fact, 3 out of 5 (61%) survey respondents indicated they want safer streets for walking and biking. A more livable Pensacola will be a more walkable and bikeable Pensacola.

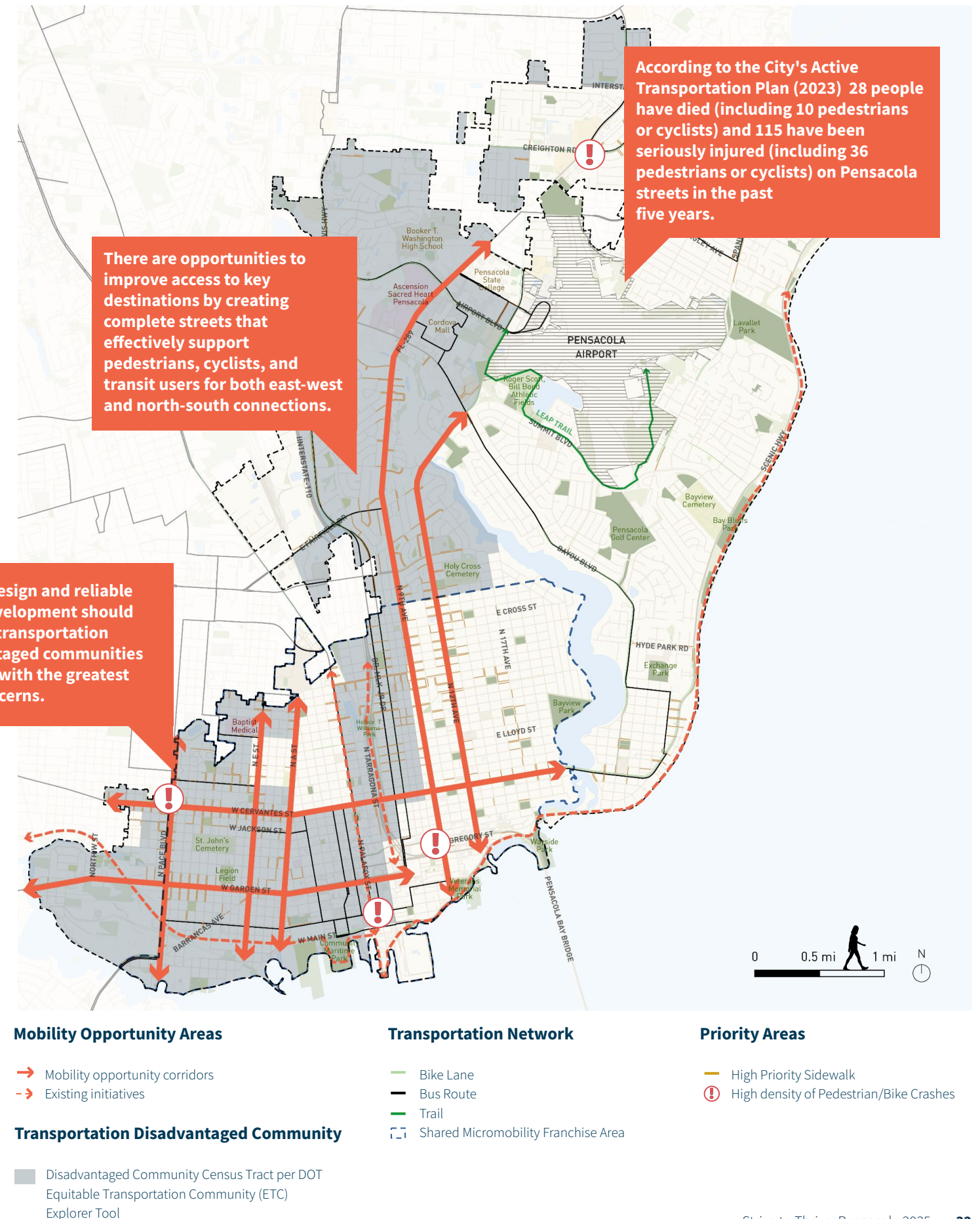
Transit is an important part of the picture, too. For some, transit is a lifeline. The lack of safe, reliable mobility options disproportionately impacts lower-income areas. To reach jobs, essential services, and even just fun destinations, most residents have to rely on personal cars, which for some, is a costly burden.

By encouraging other forms of mobility — walking, biking, transit — Pensacola can become better connected and parking less competitive. This all adds up to a safer more enjoyable city, where getting around isn’t a hassle, but a joy.

**#1** “Safer streets for walking and biking” was the top answer when survey respondents were asked “To make your neighborhood an even better place to live, what would you like to see more of?”

“We need to be able to **move about our city without having to own a car** in a way that doesn’t feel like taking our lives into our hands.”  
— Visioning Survey Respondent, age 35-44

→ **MOVING FORWARD** — How might Pensacola address the community's concerns around road safety and provide improved and dignified mobility options that encourage walking, biking, and transit use? Start with important corridors that link population centers and key destinations and transform these roads into complete streets that support all forms of mobility, from four wheels to two feet.










ACTIONS

# Actions for mobility over the next ten years

Mobility is not just about helping people move around — it’s about helping people get to where they need to be. The vision for Pensacola is to create a safe, multimodal network of streets that connect key hubs of activity together. The first focus is on safety improvements, followed by enhancing the overall quality of the experience for people of all modes and abilities.

→ **NEXT STEPS** — Safety is the first order of business. Through tactical, near-term improvements, Pensacola can ensure safety for pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers at key high-injury sites.

ACTIONS	RELEVANT GOALS
→ POTENTIAL INITIATIVES	
Upgrade pedestrian crossings, sidewalks, bike lanes, and signalization systems	
Make complete streets along key arterials and collector roads between key destinations: like Cervantes, Main, 9th Ave, 12th Ave, Pace Blvd	 
Advocate investment in safe, well-designed bus stops and stations to encourage transit use	
Bring micro-transit circulators to Pensacola to alleviate congestion for events and better connect Downtown to the east and west	

← PRIORITY ACTION

PRIORITY ACTION IN SPOTLIGHT

## → Upgrade pedestrian crossings, sidewalks, bike lanes, and signalization systems

**Why priority?** Pedestrian safety and comfort is paramount. By investing first in these upgrades, Pensacola can gradually transform its streets into more human-scaled connections that work for all modes of travel. Pilot programs for safety improvements offer an opportunity to measure, test, and refine strategies before committing to long-term investments.

**Recommended Implementers**

**Lead:** City of Pensacola Public Works & Engineering Department

**Partners:** Escambia County Transportation and Traffic Operations, FDOT, CRA

### Key Implementation Considerations

**1. Demonstrate pilot projects along streets before grant funding**

Capital investments can be costly and slow. Temporary pilots enable quick change where it’s needed urgently. Create a design manual of approved treatments and materials to deploy tactical changes.

→ **Best Practice:** The City of Austin implemented a one-year pilot program reducing one lane on Barton Springs Road after a rise in crashes. The pilot resulted in a significant 64-73% reduction in high-risk speeding, with travel times remaining nearly unchanged compared to the previous year.

**2. Collect human-centered data and communicate out**

When implementing changes to streets, it is important to collect data and communicate these findings to impacted communities. Often, these data insights lead to insights that help communicate the value of such an intervention. By sharing these findings, the public can more readily understand the value of such change. Create a digital project dashboard that shares these findings and share information through public open houses and tabling events.

A human-centered data point may sound like: “Expanding bulbouts at high injury intersections, resulted in X% fewer injuries and X% more daily pedestrian crossings on average.”

**3. Leverage stormwater projects as opportunities for total streetscape enhancements**

Stormwater projects are streets projects, presenting a synergistic (and financially efficient) opportunity to holistically redesign streets. Where pedestrians and cyclists are present, streets should feature design cues that subtly influence drivers to slow down. Bulbouts, road markings, narrower lanes, and plantings can all encourage slower car speeds.



INSPIRING CASE STUDIES



**Car-free ways to get around Pensacola and reduce traffic**

Across many cities — including places like West Palm Beach, Miami, Anaheim, and Fort Lauderdale — all-electric micro-transit services offer free or low-cost rides. Learn more about local electric shuttle services [here](#).



**All-Electric Transit Circulator**  
Multiple Cities



**City-wide Safer Crossings**  
Buenos Aires, Argentina



**Near-term, low-cost strategy for complete safe streets**

After a major car crash caused serious injuries to many people, the City of Austin resolved to test a new street layout that prioritized bike and pedestrian safety — recent data analysis of the pilot shows a significant reduction of 64-73% in high-risk speeding on the road. Learn more about the Barton Springs Road Pilot in Austin [here](#).



**Safer intersections — especially at high injury sites**

The City of Buenos Aires transformed congested, unsafe streets with safety improvements for pedestrians that shorten walking distances between sidewalks. Quick-build pilot projects could demonstrate the effectiveness of these changes and support the case for longer-term capital investments that require support from the state and federal entities. Piloting safer pedestrian crossings at documented high-injury intersections across Pensacola could help prioritize safety where it's needed most: at dangerous intersections and near schools. Learn more about best practices for urban road safety [here](#).

EVALUATION METRICS

# How to measure success over the next ten years

Safety is paramount. In most cases, people will only walk and bike where they feel comfortable and safe. This means success depends on tracking traffic fatalities and injuries, but also measuring public perception of safety.

People also vote with their feet — success will look like more people opting to travel by foot, by bike, or by bus and fewer driving.

<b>Safety</b>	<p><b>Reduction in traffic fatalities and serious injuries</b> (From 2018 to 2023, about six deaths and 23 serious injuries occur on Pensacola streets every year.<sup>1</sup>)</p> <p><b>Increase in public perception of street safety</b> (In the 2023 Pensacola Resident Satisfaction Survey, 18% of respondents "agreed" and 5% "strongly agreed" when asked "When thinking about public safety in the city, how strongly do you disagree or agree with the following statements? Over the past year, the City of Pensacola has improved traffic safety."<sup>2</sup>)</p>
<b>Modeshift</b>	<p><b>Increase in number of people who walk, bike, or take transit regularly</b> (In 2022, 0.9% of workers 16 years and over used public transportation, 1.5% walked, and 1.3% bicycled as their means of transportation to work.<sup>3</sup>)</p>
<b>Accessibility</b>	<p><b>Increase in % of population with access to frequent and reliable transit options (public transportation and/or private microtransit)</b></p>
<b>Quality of Experience</b>	<p><b>% of streets with complete sidewalk coverage</b></p> <p><b>% of sidewalks with shade coverage</b> (According to the latest Urban Tree Canopy study from 2013, Pensacola has a 29.2% urban tree canopy coverage, while American Forest recommends 40%)</p>
<b>Effectiveness</b>	<p><b>Number of quick-build, low-cost safety improvements implemented</b></p> <p><b>Linear feet of safe walking and biking routes improvements implemented</b></p>

<sup>1</sup> Active Transportation Plan. City of Pensacola. 2023.  
<sup>2</sup> Resident Satisfaction Survey. City of Pensacola. 2023.  
<sup>3</sup> American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. DS0801. U.S. Census Bureau. 2022.  
<sup>4</sup> Decennial Census. H1. U.S. Census Bureau. 2020.





# Support for Youth Experiences



Image source: Pensacola News Journal



WHY THIS GOAL

# Residents want the best opportunities for their children and care about the quality of educational programs.

Pensacola is a beautiful place to raise a family, but many residents are concerned that there are not enough opportunities for youth to grow, thrive, and ultimately choose to stay in Pensacola.

Schools play a big role in this. While Escambia County Public Schools administers public education, the City of Pensacola supports quality education and works to expand after-school programs to enrich kids' and teens' lives. However, high-quality and affordable child care is not accessible to many parents in Escambia County. As a result, only 42% of children in Escambia County were kindergarten-ready in fall 2021.<sup>1</sup> To attract talent and retain young families, the public education system and childcare services must better meet the needs of children and their families.

The solution requires collaboration between the City of Pensacola and Escambia County Public Schools. By leveraging and sharing resources together, Pensacola as a whole can build a supportive network of programs and places that help kids grow into their best selves.

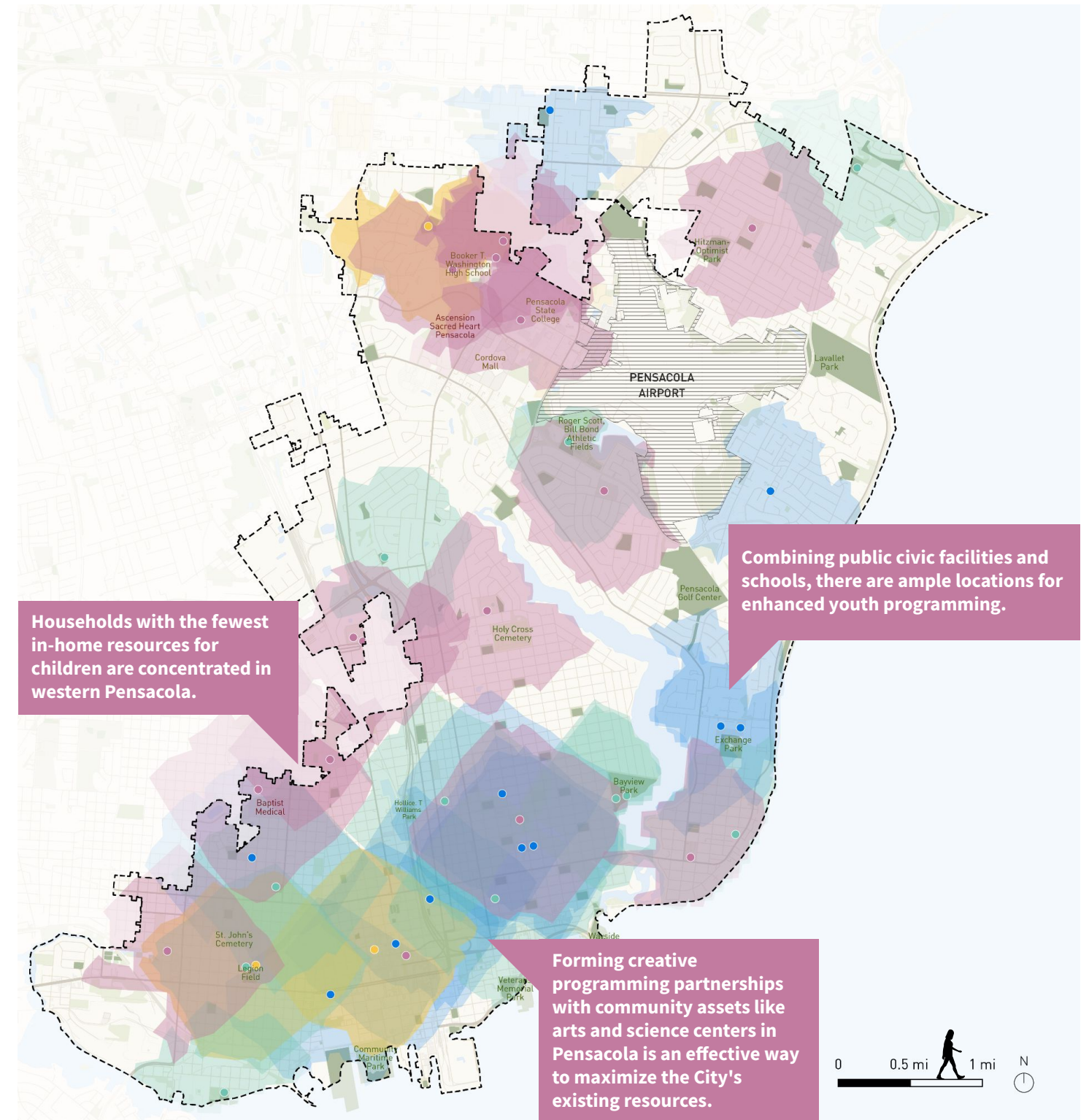
“**Schools are critical as children are the future** and if they have to leave to gain an education, the city will shrivel and die.”

— Visioning Survey Respondent, age 35-44 years

“It would also be nice to have more **programs that help high schoolers make the right choices for college.**”

— Focus group participant, teen

→ **MOVING FORWARD** — How can Pensacola collaborate with the county's school system to enhance support for families through quality childcare and before-and-after-school programs? By investing in educational initiatives, leveraging the city's assets, and developing programs that support children and parents, Pensacola can become a city where young families feel empowered and confident to build their futures and inspire the next generation to stay.



**Youth Experience**

The following locations are suggested as existing and potential venues for youth experiences. Additionally, a 15-minute walkshed analysis is included to demonstrate the accessibility of these facilities.

- Public Schools
- Private Schools
- Resource Centers
- Libraries

<sup>1</sup> Needs Assessment. A Strategic Analysis of the Greatest Issues Facing Children, Youth and Families in Escambia County. September 2022.









ACTIONS

## Actions for education over the next ten years

Pensacola needs to create better opportunities for youth both in and outside of school. While the City doesn't directly control local schools, it collaborates with and supports Escambia County Public Schools to enhance educational outcomes. The focus is on leveraging and sharing community assets to develop programs that support children at all stages, while also providing resources to assist parents. Working together, Pensacola aims to create a more comprehensive support system for its youth.

→ **NEXT STEPS** — The first step is for City and County leadership to collaborate and align on a holistic network of extracurricular care for kids. Recognizing that both the City and County have their own facilities and programs, integrating these into one system can help Pensacola families access childcare and educational activities that put kids first.

ACTIONS	RELEVANT GOALS
→ POTENTIAL INITIATIVES	
<b>Partner with Escambia County Public Schools to share facilities and resources for extracurricular educational activities</b>	 
<b>Work with Escambia County Public Schools to offer supportive services to help increase school attendance</b>	
<b>Partner with local private and civic organizations in arts, design, and technology to nurture STEAM pipelines for youth</b>	  
<b>Promote state and local resources available for childcare facilities</b>	

← PRIORITY ACTION

PRIORITY ACTION IN SPOTLIGHT

## → Partner with Escambia County Public Schools to share facilities and resources for extracurricular educational activities

**Why priority?** Partnerships between County schools and City and community assets can greatly enhance access to the region's unique recreational and educational facilities at a low cost. These collaborations strengthen community ties and provide children with a broader range of extracurricular activities that complement the academic curriculum. As extracurriculars, these programs also serve as a form of childcare, alleviating pressure on hardworking parents.

**Recommended Implementers**

**Lead:** Mayor's Office

**Partners:** Escambia County Public Schools, City of Pensacola Parks and Recreation Department

### Key Implementation Considerations

**1. Partner with local private and civic organizations in arts, design, and technology to nurture STEAM pipelines for youth**

Pensacola today works with the Parks & Recreation Department to administer after-school programs at community recreation centers, and has partnered with the local YMCA to increase access. This program can broaden its availability and programming by tapping into other local organizations like libraries and museums, along with other private enterprises like American Magic.

**2. Establish Youth Leadership Council**

Youth themselves should have a voice in shaping the city and the care they receive. This type of council brings together teens to advance children's rights and ensure youth voices are considered in the city's programs and decision-making. As one example, Pensacola can look to the [City of Houston](#), which has its own youth council called consisting of "Championing Change Youth Ambassadors."

**3. Ensure equitable access to program with transportation options**

If kids can't get to afterschool programs, then the programs themselves won't matter — it's paramount that investment in extracurricular programs is paired with investment in equitable transportation. Leverage public-private partnerships to fill in gaps in Pensacola's transportation system.



INSPIRING CASE STUDIES



Image source: New England cottontails

**Opportunity Portfolio**  
Boston, MA



**Distributed network of institutions and facilities throughout the city for educational growth**

Boston Public Schools (BPS) launched the Opportunity Portfolio in 2017 to ensure equitable access to quality learning opportunities. This initiative evaluates organizations across the city and selects top institutions, known as Portfolio Partners—such as Zoo New England, Eliot School of Fine & Applied Arts, and Science from Scientists—to offer programs in literacy, STEM, 5th Quarter Learning, and more. BPS provides Portfolio Partners with a variety of supports intended to grow their Portfolio Programs.

Investment in institutions like community centers, libraries, and botanical gardens can help provide programs for youth after school and beyond to foster a love for learning at all ages. Pensacola’s investment in educational programs leveraging city assets will help ensure youth have equitable access to career development and education, preparing them for success while relieving families of childcare concerns. Learn more about the Opportunity Portfolio in Boston [here](#).



**Supporting early childhood education by providing necessary financial resources**

Pittsburgh’s Early Childhood Education Quality Improvement Fund, known as the Child Care Quality Fund (CCQF), is designed to enhance the quality of early learning programs in the city. The fund provides grants to support facility upgrades and improvements, aiming to increase the number of high-quality early learning programs available to families in Pittsburgh. The fund was introduced by Mayor William Peduto’s administration and involves a \$2 million investment to upgrade child care facilities. Grants are awarded to child care providers to help them improve their services, with the goal of making high-quality early education more accessible. For example, in one instance, the fund awarded over \$387,250 to 11 child care centers, with individual grants reaching up to \$12,500 for improvements. Learn more about the Early Childhood Education Quality Improvement Fund in Pittsburgh [here](#).



Image source: Trying Together

**Early Childhood Education Quality Improvement Fund**  
Pittsburgh, PA

EVALUATION METRICS

## How to measure success over the next ten years

The outcomes for youth experience are complex and depend on many different jurisdictional factors. Not all of these metrics fall under the City’s direct control — however, it is important that the City measure and track the quality of youth experiences in a holistic manner.

The measures of success bridge two dimensions: quality of education outcomes for kids and access to childcare. By investing in the supports and programs outside of school hours, the City and School District together can work to improve outcomes for children in a holistic way.

**Schooling**

**Increase in reading at Level 3 (basic) or higher in 3rd grade per school year** (In the 2022-23 school year, approximately 50% of Escambia County children were reading at Level 3 or higher)

**Increase in high school graduation rates** (In the 2022-23 school year, Escambia County's high school graduation rate was 80.5%)

**Increase in college enrollment rates**

**Childcare**

**Number of childcare centers supported**

**% increase in number of families in proximity to childcare facilities**

**Increase in % of kids ready for kindergarten** (In fall 2021, 42% of the 2,692 children entering kindergarten were deemed ready)

**Partnership**

**Number of educational partnerships and programs created**

<sup>1</sup> City of Pittsburgh Press Releases.Child Care Quality Fund Grants Over \$387,250 for Improvements to Local Child Care Facilities. September 21, 2021

<sup>1</sup> Needs Assessment. A Strategic Analysis of the Greatest Issues Facing Children, Youth and Families in Escambia County. September 2022.





# Resilient Waterfronts and Neighborhoods





WHY THIS GOAL

# Investment in resilient infrastructure is a signal that you are safe in Pensacola.

As a coastal city, Pensacola is highly vulnerable to the risks posed by rising sea levels, including increased coastal flooding and erosion. The City has already undertaken several key initiatives to address the impacts of climate change. Notable efforts include conducting a sea-level vulnerability assessment to identify priority areas, committing to achieve 30% renewable energy by 2030, and establishing a Climate Mitigation and Adaptation Task Force to guide local climate policy and engage the community in building resilience.

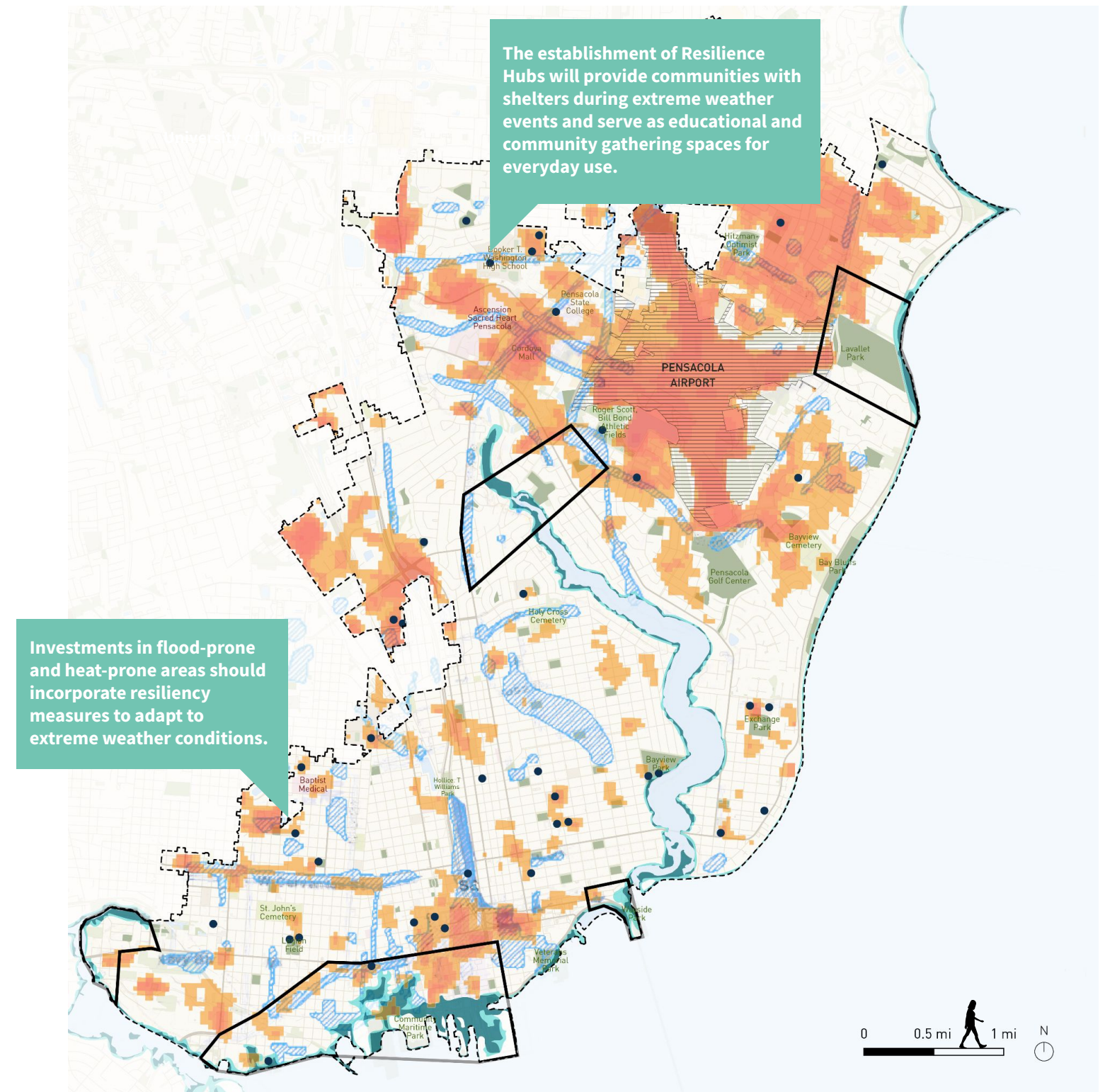
However, more concrete and proactive actions must be taken to protect Pensacola's environment, economy, and the wellbeing of future generations. Resilience will not be solved through piecemeal project-by-project or neighborhood-by-neighborhood plans. Instead, Pensacola needs a clear and comprehensive plan, not only to guide investment in resilient infrastructure that ensures the safety of its residents, but also to signal to prospective developers that their investments will be safe.

**2x** Sea level around Pensacola has risen **twice as fast as the global average**, according to NASA data. From 2010 to 2023, the sea has risen 6.5 inches, compared to 3.2 inches between 1980 and 2009.

[The most critical challenge Pensacola must address is] **[t]he impact climate change will inevitably have on our natural resources, tourism, economy, and locals.**

— Visioning Survey Respondent, age 25-34

→ **MOVING FORWARD** — How might Pensacola adapt to a changing climate, guide new urban development, and plan for unforeseen shocks and stressors? The City should develop a roadmap that leverages local knowledge and data-based assessments to identify actionable steps and prioritize investments that will strengthen Pensacola's resilience.



**Resiliency Hub Suggested Locations**

- Resiliency Hubs can serve as shelters during extreme heat or flooding and as educational and gathering spaces when no disasters are occurring. Proposed locations include existing schools, libraries, and resource centers.

**Flooding Risk**

- Stormwater Prone Area
- 6ft Sea Level Rise
- \*Based on the Pensacola Sea Level Rise Vulnerability Assessment
- Lower Water Depth ■ Higher Water Depth

- Sea Level Rise Priority Planning Areas

**Heat Risk**

- Lower Temperature ■ Higher Temperature





ACTIONS

## Actions for resiliency over the next ten years

As climate change leads to more frequent and severe weather events, Pensacola needs to adapt to these changes to protect our infrastructure, economy, and residents. A resilience plan enables cities to implement climate adaptation measures to prepare for and recover from acute shocks, whether they are natural or human-caused. A collaborative approach should engage communities in decision-making, prioritize vulnerable populations, and foster coordination among the Escambia County and the State of Florida to align efforts and resources toward common resiliency goals.

→ **NEXT STEPS** — Pensacola has already created a stormwater management plan and conducted a sea-level vulnerability assessment. However, taken separately, Pensacola needs to develop a comprehensive resilience plan that contends with stormwater flooding, sea level rise, urban heat, social vulnerability, and emergency preparedness.

ACTIONS	RELEVANT GOALS
→ IN-PROGRESS	
Invest in energy efficiency to reduce the City’s greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions	
Create ecological and recreational open spaces	
→ POTENTIAL INITIATIVES	
Create a comprehensive Pensacola Resilience Plan	← PRIORITY ACTION
Create a <u>Resilience Hubs</u> using existing public facilities, recreation centers, and libraries	

PRIORITY ACTION IN SPOTLIGHT

## → Create a comprehensive Pensacola Resilience Plan

**Why priority?** A comprehensive resilience plan starts by identifying potential hazards and vulnerabilities within Pensacola, followed by developing policies and strategies to address these risks and enhance resilience. The plan should then be executed through projects and initiatives, remaining flexible to new challenges and information.

**Recommended Implementers**

**Lead:** City of Pensacola Public Works & Engineering Department

**Partners:** City Emergency Management Coordinator, Escambia County Emergency Management

### Key Implementation Considerations

**1. Consider urban heat and its mitigation strategies**

With its hot and humid climate, Pensacola faces rising temperatures which pose serious risks to residents and infrastructure. The city needs a comprehensive strategy to help cool down Pensacola, ensure adequate emergency response to heat-related distress, and strengthen infrastructure to withstand increasing heat. Shade is core to this mitigation: tree canopy and dense building can help create important shade that cools cities.

**2. Utilize spaces and programs during both emergency and non-emergency times**

In crafting the resilience plan, develop a program to use existing public facilities, recreation centers, and libraries as resilience hubs. These hubs offer information year-round and during extreme weather events serve as safe harbors for residents.

→ **Best Practice:** Learn from the NYC Share Your Space Survey which identifies community spaces for emergency operations, like cooling centers during heat waves, and non-emergency events, such as Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training.

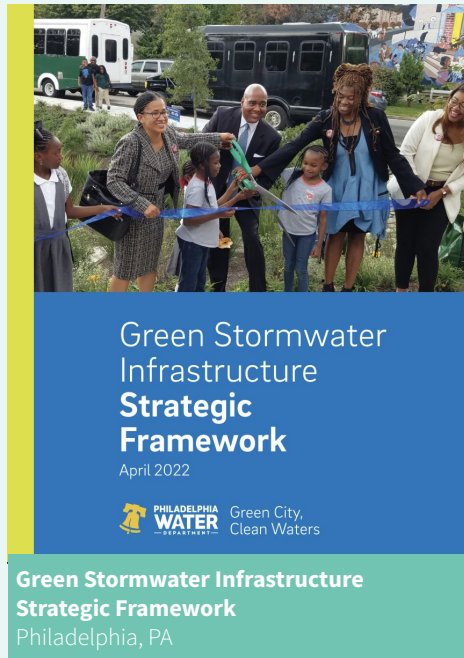


INSPIRING CASE STUDIES



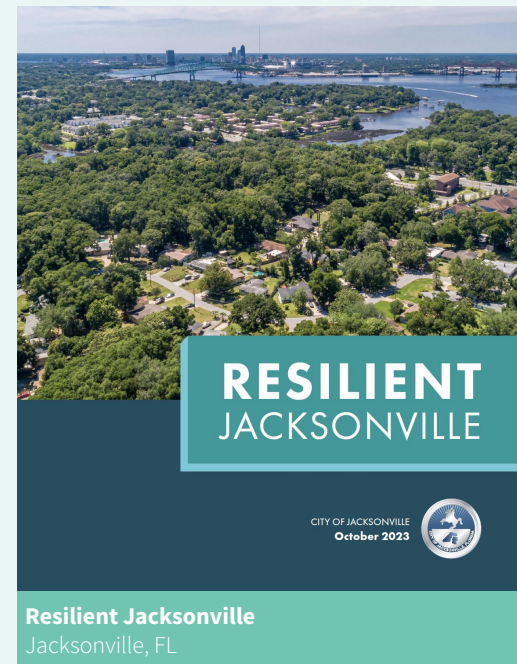
**Coordinated infrastructure to manage water**

Philadelphia created a framework that outlines an updated strategy for what stormwater runoff the city need to manage with green stormwater infrastructure, along with where and how to achieve the city's environmental targets. Learn more about the Green Stormwater Infrastructure Strategic Framework in Philadelphia [here](#).



**Clear plan for protecting and strengthening the city in the years to come**

In 2023, Jacksonville released its resiliency plan, a comprehensive report detailing the city's future policies to protect and enhance its infrastructure to better contend with our changing climate. The plan addresses various environmental and economic issues, including flooding, hurricanes, extreme heat, and wildfires, while also considering the impacts of population growth and infrastructure demands. Learn more about Resilient Jacksonville [here](#).



**Robust emergency operations and communication strategies**

New York City's Office of Emergency Management (OEM) has developed comprehensive emergency plans for various hazards, including natural disasters and public health crises. These plans are regularly updated and tested, with a strong focus on community engagement through programs like "Ready New York." The OEM ensures effective interagency coordination, clear public communication, and provisions for vulnerable populations, all aimed at maintaining a high level of preparedness across the city. Learn more about the Office of Emergency Management in New York [here](#).

EVALUATION METRICS

# How to measure success over the next ten years

There are many dimensions to assess resilience. Pensacola must first contend with reducing risks of flooding and excessive heat to ensure residents' safety. This depends on bolstering the city's infrastructure and emergency

preparedness to both limit the impacts of climate change and to reduce harm when disasters do strike.

<b>Flood Risk Reduction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>% decrease in flood-prone areas, especially in socially vulnerable neighborhoods</li> <li>Increase in number of homes and businesses protected by new flood mitigation infrastructure</li> <li>Reduction in flood insurance claims and premiums for residents</li> </ul>
<b>Heat Resilience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decrease in heat-related hospitalizations and deaths</li> <li>Number of cooling centers established in high-risk neighborhoods</li> </ul>
<b>Climate-Ready Design</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adoption rate of climate-resilient building codes and zoning regulations</li> <li>Number of new developments incorporating adaptive design features</li> <li>Percentage of existing buildings retrofitted for climate resilience</li> </ul>
<b>Infrastructure Resilience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>% of critical infrastructure (e.g., transportation, utilities) upgraded to withstand climate impacts</li> <li>Reduction in service disruptions during extreme weather events</li> <li>Number of green infrastructure projects implemented</li> </ul>
<b>Equitable Emergency Preparedness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>% of socially vulnerable populations (e.g., elderly, disabled) with personalized emergency plans (Escambia County Social Vulnerability Score in 2022 National Overall Index: 0.839 (high). Scores range from 0 (low) to 1 (high) vulnerability.<sup>1</sup>)</li> <li>Increase in multilingual emergency communication channels and resources</li> </ul>
<b>Social Resilience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decrease in suicide rates (Escambia County Age-adjusted suicide mortality rate per 100,000 population in 2022<sup>2</sup>: 19.1%)</li> <li>Decrease in number of violent crime (Escambia County number of violent crime in 2022<sup>3</sup>: 660)</li> <li>Increase in community resilience (Escambia County Community Resilience Score in 2022 National Overall Index: 45.51 (relatively moderate).<sup>4</sup>)</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> CDC/ATSDR Social Vulnerability Index (CDC/ATSDR SVI), 2022.  
<sup>2</sup> Florida Department of Health, 2022.  
<sup>3</sup> Community Health Needs Assessment, 2022.  
<sup>4</sup> FEMA National Risk Index, Community Resilience, 2022.





# More Walkable, Mixed-use Districts





WHY THIS GOAL

# Downtown Pensacola is beloved and has great amenities — people want to see investment throughout the city to make every neighborhood more livable.

Downtown Pensacola is thriving. Thanks to recent revitalization efforts and ongoing events like Gallery Nights and Palafox Market, over the past five years, the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) saw property values rise 26%, a positive indicator of a growing, vibrant downtown.<sup>1</sup> Both locals and visitors appreciate this investment, and come often to shop, dine, and socialize.

Pensacola is now positioned to extend the success of its downtown to other neighborhoods in need of essential and enjoyable amenities, such as grocery stores with fresh produce, civic gathering spaces, and open areas with quality programming and childcare facilities. Every neighborhood in Pensacola deserves to have its own “center”, where a mix of residential, commercial, and retail spaces make a local hub. This vision is supported by the Visioning Survey, where one in five respondents shared the idea of creating more mixed-use districts and neighborhood amenities by 2035.

**1 in 4** Visioning Survey respondents answered **"Downtown"** when asked about their favorite place in Pensacola.

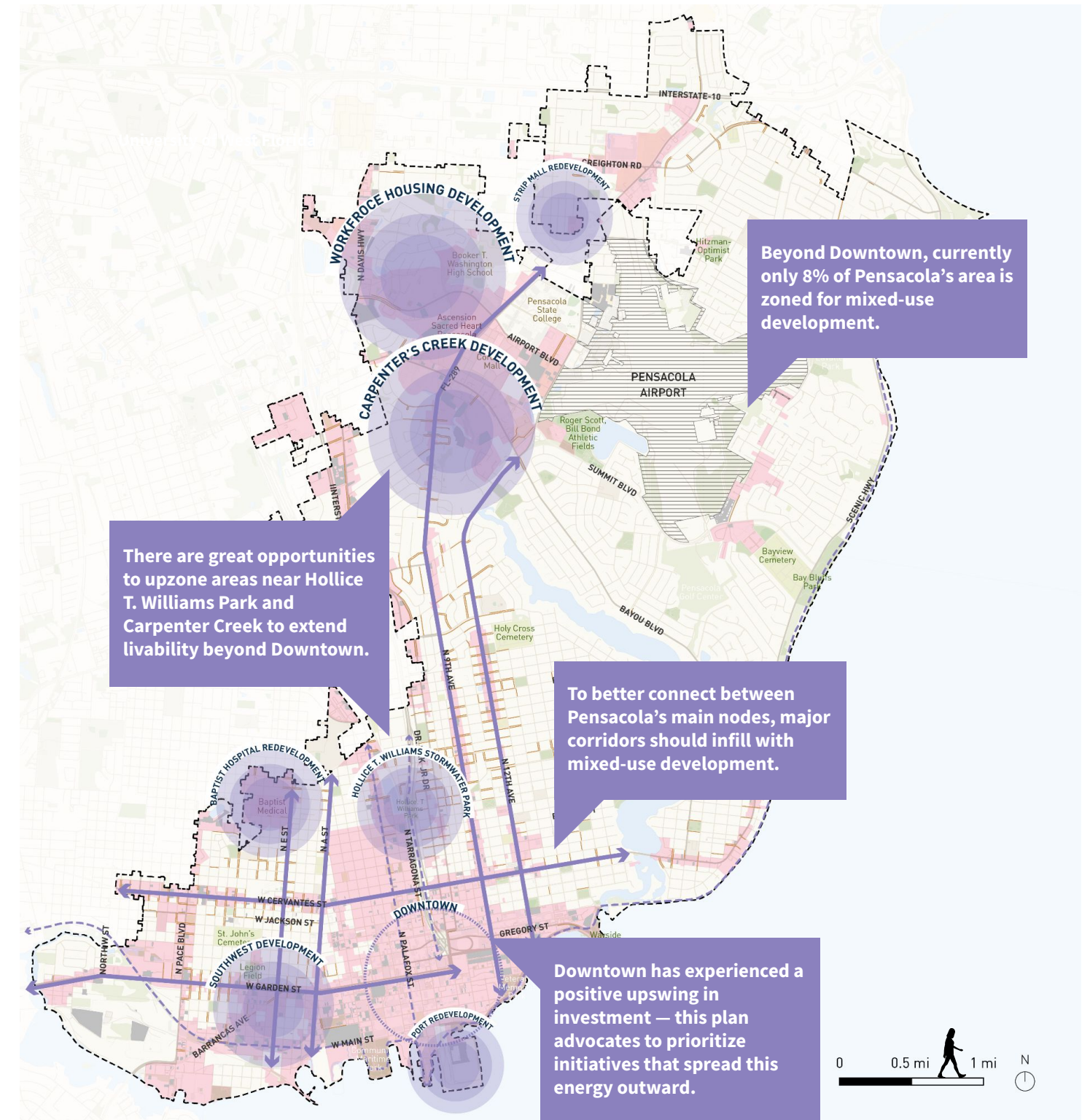
[My big idea is] **...More mixed use areas where housing, restaurants, grocery stores, etc coexist.**

— Visioning Survey Respondent, age 45-54

[My big idea is] create **a newer ‘downtown’ area in the middle or north end of Pensacola**

— Visioning Survey Respondent, age 25-34

**→ MOVING FORWARD** — How can Pensacola leverage the success of Downtown to strategically invest in and incentivize mixed-use districts in neighborhoods that need amenities, while ensuring these efforts are equitable and true to the local environment and community? Pensacola can redevelop key sites throughout the City to upgrade livability more broadly and inclusively.



**Mixed-use Opportunity Areas**

● Future mixed-use development opportunity areas

**Major Corridors**

→ Mixed-use opportunity corridors  
 - - Existing initiatives

**Parcels**

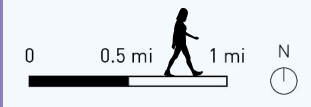
Zoning opportunity areas, including:

- Commercial
- Residential/Commercial
- Residential/Office
- Historic and Preservation Districts
- South Palafox Business District
- Redevelopment Areas

■ Vacant Commercial Parcels

**Walkability**

— High Priority Sidewalk



<sup>1</sup> Vibrant Community Partners. Pensacola Florida, a Blueprint for a Vibrant Community. 2022.



ACTIONS

# Actions for creating more walkable neighborhood centers over the next ten years

There is tremendous opportunity for redevelopment within Pensacola to enhance livability and strengthen existing hubs. To create more walkable mixed-use districts, Pensacola needs to focus on providing essential amenities and ensuring these qualities are equitably distributed in areas that need them most. Strong leadership is essential to drive this change, supported by robust civic policies that encourage this new form of development. This approach should serve as a catalyst for broader goals, including housing, connectivity, resilience, mobility, and job creation.

→ **NEXT STEPS** — Transformative urban redevelopment needs bold visionaries and strong leaders who are willing to lead the charge. While Pensacola has multiple sites that are ripe for major redevelopment, it’s important for City leadership to collaborate with private actors to pinpoint a priority site and bring stakeholders together to co-create a shared vision that everyone is excited to implement.

ACTIONS	RELEVANT GOALS
→ IN PROGRESS	
Prioritize former Baptist Hospital site for mixed-use district	
→ POTENTIAL INITIATIVES	
<b>Redevelop underutilized sites in the Carpenter Creek area into a mixed-use, trails-oriented district</b>	← PRIORITY ACTION
Create a “city design lab” to help promote a more walkable, human-scaled form factor for development	
Amend zoning and provide incentives to create corner store businesses in neighborhoods	

PRIORITY ACTION IN SPOTLIGHT

## → Redevelop underutilized sites in the Carpenter Creek area into a mixed-use, trails-oriented district

**Why priority?** Pensacola is more than its Downtown, and the Carpenter Creek area is ripe with opportunity to become a mixed-use community anchored with incredible green space, amenities, and jobs. Today, the suburban scale of the area means land uses are underutilized. This urban transformation would create a new core to Pensacola, catalyzing new enhanced markets and alleviating pressure on Downtown as the sole destination.

**Recommended Implementers**

**Lead:** City Economic Development

**Partners:** City Public Works & Engineering

### Key Implementation Considerations

**1. Develop incentive structure for form-based zoning overlay to spur targeted transformation of the area**

Pensacola needs to promote a different urban form, which starts with form-based zoning. Create an incentive-based structure that encourages developers to deliver denser, mixed-use developments that are human-scaled..

→ **Best Practice:** Learn from New Rochelle, NY’s [Downtown Overlay District](#). The form-based overlay zoning regulates the architectural shape of new buildings to create a more human-scaled and desirable district. The incentives- based structure helped catalyze 31 projects in just 3 years (2016-2019).

**2. Work with major Pensacola leaders to create a board that can steer transformation**

Create a working group (modeled after a business improvement district board) who can collaborate to make hard decisions and craft an exciting vision for the future of the site. To align many disparate stakeholders, it will require the City to be proactive in setting the agenda and negotiating solutions with property owners and developers.

**3. Coordinate resilience infrastructure on a district scale**

Currently, individual developers are responsible for stormwater mitigation on their individual sites. This creates cost to developers that could be more effectively spread out and managed across multiple sites at a district scale. The City can catalyze desired development by taking a proactive, coordinated approach to stormwater infrastructure — for instance, the City may complete a “generic environmental impact assessment” for projects within a zoned district.



INSPIRING CASE STUDIES



**Tactical retail for livelier, more walkable neighborhoods**

Downtown San Jose converted twelve parking spaces on the sidewalk level of the San Pedro Market Parking Garage into four dynamic micro-retail spaces along with a sidewalk patio to add local retails and activate the street. Learn more about the pop-up program in San Jose [here](#).



**MOMENT DTSJ**  
San Jose, CA



**Boston Design Center**  
Boston, MA



**Trails-Oriented Development**

Investment in a regional biking and strolling trail system spurred denser mixed-use development since 2001. Over the years, 20 acres of previously unused land along the trail were transformed into a vibrant mixed-use area with residential units, recreational spaces, and commercial establishments. Funding for the trail came from Gov. Eric Holcomb's Next Level Trails program, which has been the largest investment in trails in Indiana history. Learn more about the Monon Trail-oriented development in Carmel [here](#).



**Monon Trail**  
Carmel, IN



**From a military warehouse to a 24-hour mixed-use amenity hub with diverse offerings**

The Boston Design Center evolved into a creativity and amenity hub through a strategic transformation that leveraged its historical significance, prime location, and adaptive reuse. Originally a 1918 military warehouse, the building became part of the Boston Marine Industrial Park in the 1980s. In 2013, Jamestown invested \$100 million in renovations, attracting a diverse mix of tenants—including designers, architects, manufacturers, technologists, and innovators like Reebok, Elkus Manfredi Architects, and the startup accelerator MassChallenge—creating an ecosystem of creativity and innovation. The Center also offers diverse dining options, open showrooms, and interactive workshops, making it an appealing destination for the design community and the public alike. Learn more about the Boston Design Center [here](#).

EVALUATION METRICS

## How to measure success over the next ten years

Livability depends on how easy and enjoyable it is to reach and do everyday tasks — that's what mixed-use development is really all about. Much of the success in urban redevelopment is the production of new assets and amenities, that span across multiple goals: added housing, increase in access to neighborhood services, and improved walkability and bikeability.

<b>Amenities</b>	<p><b>Increase in density of neighborhood services</b>, including community centers, libraries, grocery stores, coffeeshops, etc.</p> <p><b>Increase in % of residents within 15-minute walk to neighborhood services</b></p>
<b>Density</b>	<p><b>Increase in dwelling density at mixed-use redevelopment sites</b></p>
<b>Occupancy</b>	<p><b>High, stable year-over-year occupancy rate for residential units</b></p> <p><b>High, stable year-over-year occupancy rate for commercial and retail spaces</b></p>
<b>Urban Design</b>	<p><b>% of ground floor facades that are active and provide visual interest at the eye-level:</b> diverse mix of dining, retail and other uses; short facade widths; transparency into the building interior; depth and dimension in facade design; variation in materials and colors</p> <p><b>% of ground floor that is publicly accessible</b>, including retail, cultural institutions, and other indoor public spaces,</p> <p><b>% of building edge that is publicly occupiable</b>, such as outdoor seating (commercial or public),</p>





# Public Spaces that Connect Communities





WHY THIS GOAL

# Community members cherish their parks, trails, and waterfront and they are seeking improved access to, maintenance of, and more public spaces.

Pensacola boasts an impressive total of 93 parks, many of which are cherished local destinations. Plaza Ferdinand hosts the lively Palafox Market every Saturday, while Bruce Beach is undergoing a revitalization with a new playground, scenic views, and markers honoring African American history and heritage. The City is also planning the Hollice T. Williams stormwater park, building on the success of the Blake Doyle Skatepark to create an iconic green corridor through the City. There's plenty to love and do in Pensacola.

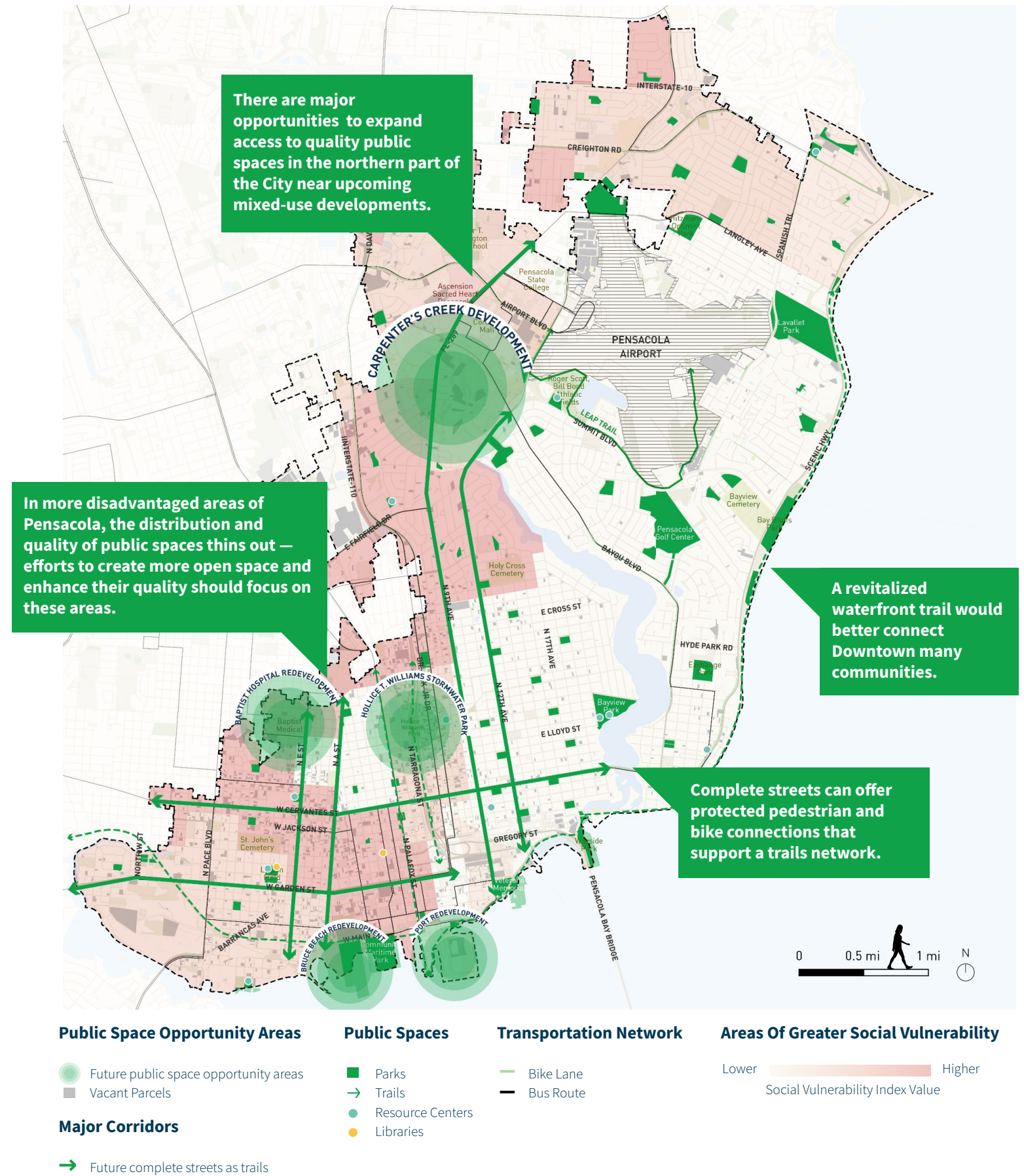
While the investment in public spaces brings exciting momentum, residents have noted that the quality, maintenance, and frequency of programming vary across the City's open spaces. Many also emphasize the importance of improving both indoor and outdoor public spaces to adapt to the changing climate. On top of that, there is plenty of opportunity to enhance pedestrian and bicycle trails that connect these public spaces.

**1 in 5** Visioning Survey respondents highlighted **parks, trails, or waterfronts as key aspects of Pensacola they are happy with** and believe should be preserved.

I love the idea of **community centers and gathering places** where there are opportunities to exercise and enjoy events such as art or music that could be free. And more libraries and access to music classes and festivals.

— Visioning Survey Respondent, age 55-64

**→ MOVING FORWARD** — How can Pensacola strengthen its public space network, improve the quality of existing spaces through consistent upkeep and community programming, and enhance accessibility by connecting them with multi-use trails? By taking a comprehensive approach to open space planning, Pensacola can better allocate its attention and resources to developing a proper hierarchy of public spaces that each serve a clear purpose for the community.





ACTIONS

## Actions for public spaces over the next ten years

Public spaces are vital hubs for community connection in Pensacola. To strengthen these connections, it's essential to not only preserve and support existing indoor and outdoor spaces but also to improve their upkeep, activation, operations, and resilience during emergencies. Furthermore, creating new signature open spaces and trails, particularly in communities with greater social vulnerability, can further catalyze community cohesion and development.

→ **NEXT STEPS** — With its parks, plazas, and waterfront Pensacola has a collection of spaces that most cities would envy. But the city needs a coordinated, holistic plan for open space and trails that emphasizes investment opportunities to improve access and quality. By setting the goals for public space, the City can join forces with private developers to collaboratively realize this vision and distribute cost.

ACTIONS	RELEVANT GOALS
→ IN PROGRESS	
Reconnect and rebuild Pensacola around an enhanced Hollice T. Williams Park	 
Complete SUN Trail network, including Scenic Highway Trail and Downtown Waterfront Connector Trail	
→ POTENTIAL INITIATIVES	
Create a comprehensive open space & trails plan to coordinate public and private public space-making efforts	  
Put resources towards maintaining Pensacola's parks and community centers, especially in communities with greater social vulnerability	
Partner with nonprofit organizations to create a conservancy to improve park maintenance and operations	 

← PRIORITY ACTION

PRIORITY ACTION IN SPOTLIGHT

## → Create a comprehensive open space & trails plan to coordinate public and private public space-making efforts

**Why priority?** A citywide open space & trails plan with emphasis on equity and connectivity can help strategically weave together and phase investments to achieve a coherent vision for the City's overall public space network. This plan will also offer direction for future private development of publicly accessible areas.

**Recommended Implementers**

**Lead:** City of Pensacola Parks & Recreation Department

**Partners:** City of Pensacola Public Works & Engineering Department

### Key Implementation Considerations

**1. Map existing trails and public space assets to identify network gaps**

Begin by documenting all public space assets as one system, considering walksheds and connecting key destinations like parks, waterfronts, and commercial centers. This map can identify gaps in this system — whether because of proximity or quality — and guide future decision-making as to where to invest.

**2. Identify opportunities to catalyze mixed-use development along trails & public spaces**

Transforming underutilized sites into public spaces can spark further private investment.

→ **Best Practice:** Learn from the Monon Trail in Carmel, IN, where the regional biking and strolling trail system transformed 20 acres of unused land along the trail into a vibrant mixed-use area.

**3. Consider forming “friends of” groups and/or conservancies to operate public spaces**

A public/private organization can help maintain, operate and program public spaces

→ **Best Practice:** Learn from The Underline Conservancy in Miami, FL— a 501(c)(3) non-profit managing the 10-mile linear park.



INSPIRING CASE STUDIES

↓ Comprehensive guide to active connections to green spaces and waterfronts

Bellevue's plan provides a long-range vision for the acquisition and development of parks and trails, as well as the preservation of open space. It sets standards for the operation and maintenance of the park, trail, and open space system. The plan is updated approximately every six years, with community input playing a significant role in shaping its direction. Learn more about the Parks and Open Space System Plan in Bellevue [here](#).



**Parks and Open Space System Plan**  
Bellevue, WA

↓ A local Conservancy to keep the city's parks network active and in good shape

The Nature Conservancy and Friends of The Underline joined forces to catalyze the development of the Underline and their collaboration continues to maintain the public space. Learn more about the Miami Underline [here](#).



**The Underline**  
Miami, FL

→ Reconnecting Communities with Signature Open Space

In downtown Birmingham, the Department of Transportation created a signature underpass park to reconnect a city once divided by the I-59/20 bridges. This project, part of a broader vision to repurpose underutilized urban spaces, revitalized 31 acres of land beneath the interstate. The design pays tribute to Birmingham's history, celebrating its steel industry and Civil Rights legacy. The area, once surrounded by vacant properties, is now attracting new lease agreements. The linear park offers diverse amenities, including walking paths, a dog park, sports fields, a skate park, and open-air classrooms, and it has become a vibrant venue for community events and recreation. Learn more about the City Walk BHAM [here](#).



**City Walk BHAM**  
Birmingham, AL

EVALUATION METRICS

# How to measure success over the next ten years

The distribution and accessibility of good quality public spaces is the key metric of success to ensure everyone can benefit from shared open spaces.

It's also important to track the physical and experiential quality of these spaces, too. By measuring who uses public spaces (and who doesn't), Pensacola can better understand who feels included and design experiences that make everyone feel they belong.

<b>Distribution and Accessibility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase % of land allocated to spaces open to public, both indoor and outdoor</li> <li>Increase % of residents living within 15-minute walkable distance to public spaces</li> <li>Increase % of residents living within 15-minute transit to public spaces</li> <li>Number of public spaces in each district</li> <li>Underserved areas rank as well or better than city average on above metrics</li> </ul>
<b>Quality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presence and quality of public features, including seating, lighting, shade, bathroom, etc.</li> <li>Presence of environmental resilience features, including green stormwater elements, endemic plant species, cooling shelters, etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Use and User Experience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Equal % of men and women present in public spaces</li> <li>Increase % of children in public spaces</li> <li>Adherence to ADA rules and universal design guidelines</li> <li>User satisfaction and perception of safety and comfort</li> </ul>
<b>Management and Maintenance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in number of planned free events and programs in public space</li> </ul>





# Thriving Innovation and Businesses





WHY THIS GOAL

# As the cost of living rises, Pensacola residents want pathways for career growth that enable them and their families to stay.

Pensacola boasts an impressive mix of industries and assets, including the Port of Pensacola, proximity to the Intercoastal Waterway, a history of manufacturing innovation, strong ties to military aviation, booming tourism, and best-in-class healthcare—all contributing to the city's economic growth. However, rising costs are stretching wages thin, and some residents feel that more competitive career pathways can be found elsewhere.

To address these challenges, Pensacola needs to nurture both innovation and entrepreneurship to create good jobs that secure a good quality of life. The foundation is already set — by building on Pensacola's assets, the city can bring bright minds together to supercharge innovative ideas. This requires collaboration across many sectors, with employers, educators, and civic actors working to align academic and career pathways.



The ratio of adults (aged 24-44) to college students in Pensacola is 2.1 (2019), which is below the national average (3.0). **Pensacola can do better to retain graduates and attract adults who are growing in their careers.**

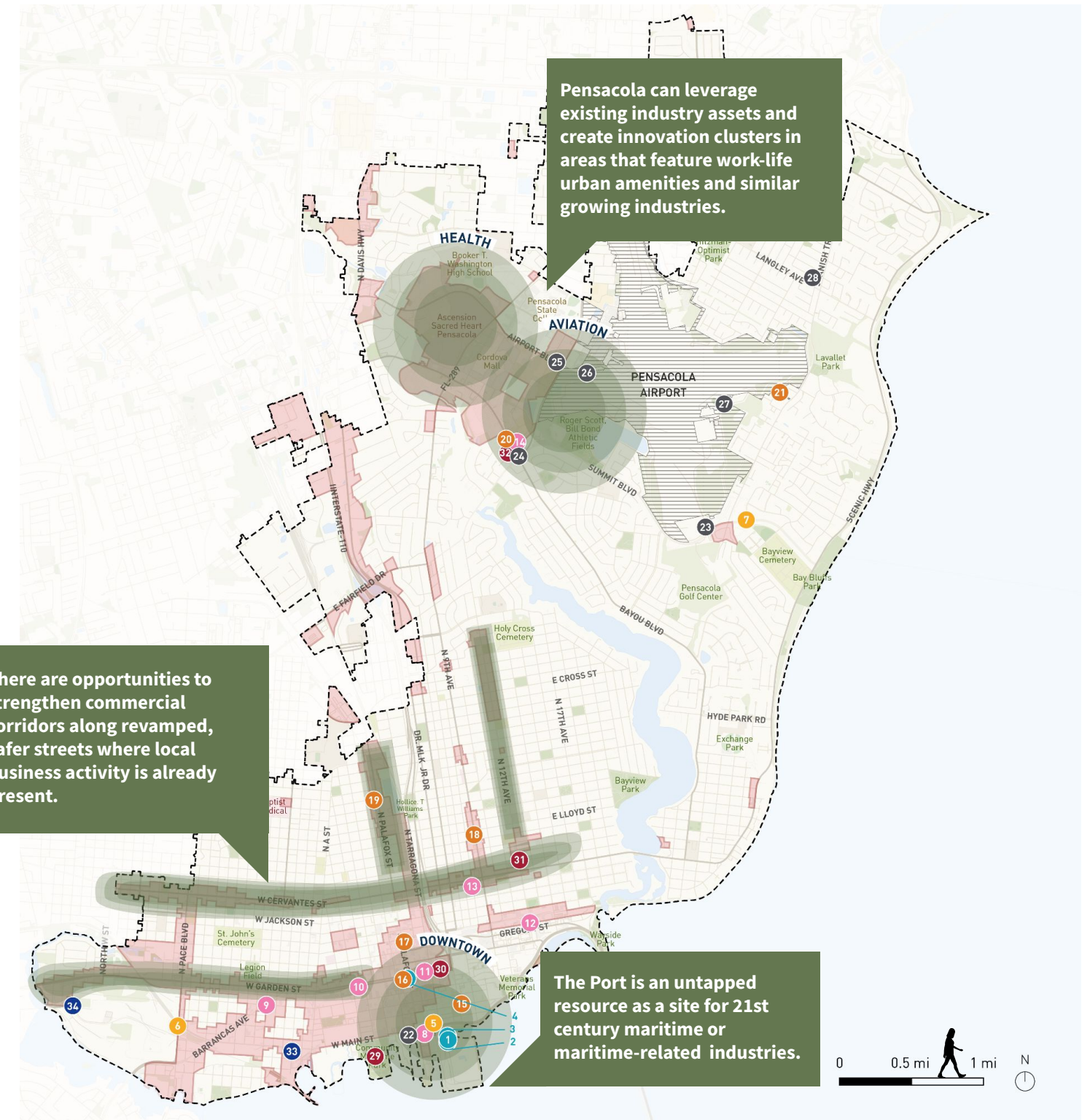


**Innovation is important** to bring new businesses, attract more people to live in the city, and bolster the economy.”

— Visioning Survey Respondent, age 35-44



**MOVING FORWARD** — How might Pensacola better support the working class, create career pathways for adults and future workers, and foster innovation by leveraging its unique assets and industries? Stellar industries grow where wild ideas flourish. By investing in vibrant districts and innovation incubators that attract like-minded, but competitive companies, Pensacola can fuel innovation that creates great jobs with upward mobility. Beyond urban development, major employers and institutions can partner to launch “innovation initiatives or incubators” to nurture an ecosystem of entrepreneurship.



**Innovation and Businesses Opportunity Areas**

Future innovation and businesses opportunity area

**Zoning**

Commercial

**Major Employer Locations**

**Water Transportation**

1. Cemex, Inc. & Port of Pensacola
2. Pete Stevedore Company
3. Offland Marine & Oilfield Services & Martin Marietta Materials
4. Great Circle Shipping Corp

**Chemical Manufacturing**

5. Agri-Source Fuels LLC
6. Kraton Corporation
7. Plasmine Technology

**Information Technology (IT)**

8. Computer Sciences Corp
9. AAdsync Joint Venture
10. Collegetrog Inc

**Cyber Security**

11. Gulf Coast Software
12. General Dynamics IT
13. Ongroup, Inc
14. Caci, Inc
15. Smartcop, Inc
16. TechSoft
17. Hixardt Technologies
18. Digital Boardwalk, Inc
19. Metova CyberCENTS
20. H2Performance Kontakt Intelligence
21. OnesourcePCS, Inc

**Aviation**

22. Reliance Aerotech Services, Inc
23. Pensacola Aviation Center
24. Lion Aerospace International Corp
25. Heliworks
26. Pensacola International Airport
27. Innisfree Jet Center
28. Kor K Industries, Inc

**Professional Services**

29. The Studer Group
30. Landrum Human Resource Companies

**Manufacturing**

31. Saltmarsh, Cleaveland & Gund PA
32. IMS Expert Services
33. Bell Stell Company
34. Armstrong World Industries

<sup>1</sup> Table S2406. American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. 2022.



ACTIONS

## Actions for innovation and businesses over the next ten years

As people seek jobs with great growth potential, Pensacola should aim to invest in large businesses in innovation economies and foster a thriving ecosystem for smaller, local businesses. By supporting regional innovation and businesses, Pensacola will create an environment that also nurtures the growth of both big and small businesses, including those in services, food and beverage, and retail. This balanced approach will strengthen Pensacola’s overall economic landscape.



**NEXT STEPS** — Bring together local industry leaders to discuss opportunities for growth and strategies for talent retention. Building on Pensacola’s areas of strength, work with a group of aligned business leaders to envision future commercial clusters that can prompt innovation and be a desirable workplace. Collaborations across companies can start as “innovation challenges” that invite bright minds to incubate new winning ideas.

ACTIONS	RELEVANT GOALS
<b>→ IN PROGRESS</b>	
Reinvest in the Port to balance clean cargo seaport trades with new 21st-century marine science and technology-focused industries	
Attract major companies in advanced manufacturing, engineering and design, and high-tech research and development sectors	
<b>→ POTENTIAL INITIATIVES</b>	
<b>Concentrate new employers in emerging mixed-use districts, leveraging sites like the Port, Tech Park, IHMC, and Sacred Heart/Baptist</b>	
Promote industry certification opportunities to support workforce development	
Support existing and new small business owners with financial resources and clear communication of processes	

← PRIORITY ACTION

PRIORITY ACTION IN SPOTLIGHT

## → Concentrate new employers in emerging mixed-use districts, leveraging sites like the Port, Tech Park, IHMC, and Sacred Heart/Baptist

**Why priority?** By leveraging sites like Tech Park, IHMC, the Port, and Sacred Heart/Baptist, Pensacola can create unique, highly attractive economic hubs that attract employers and their employees. These mixed-use, livable districts feature density and proximity between innovation companies to enable tech transfer and supercharge economic growth. This strategy depends on weaving together company recruitment with investment in the public realm and real estate.

**Recommended Implementers**

**Lead:** City of Pensacola Economic Development Department

**Partners:** City of Pensacola Development Services Department

### Key Implementation Considerations

**1. Leverage existing institutions**

→ **Best Practice:** Founded by five major local institutions, including universities and the healthcare industry. Cortex in St. Louis has proximity to major research centers that provides companies access to a skilled workforce and fosters a supportive ecosystem offering venture capital, business resources, and networking.

**2. Double down on Pensacola’s areas of strength: healthcare, cybersecurity, blue industries**

Innovation districts build on what’s already working well. For Pensacola, there are strong industries in healthcare, cybersecurity, and ocean industries. Each of these present a unique opportunity for growth.

**3. Tie this development in with other goals related to housing, connectivity, and livability**

An investment in an innovation district is also an investment in infrastructure, public space, and mixed-use development. This is an opportunity to weave together multiple goals: producing more affordable and attainable housing, creating more mixed-use districts, providing more public space, and linking to important transit and mobility connections.



INSPIRING CASE STUDIES



**Investing in anchor institutions to foster job growth**

Leveraging the area’s educational and medical institutions, developers have invested in the public realm and in collaborative workspaces to foster an exciting innovation district. By developing mixed-use innovation clusters that build on Pensacola’s strengths — with potential for clusters at both the Port/Downtown (ocean/cybersecurity) and near Cordova/Sacred Heart/Baptist (health) — Pensacola will create an active and competitive environment between major knowledge-based companies. Learn more about the Cortex Innovation District in St. Louis [here](#).



**Cortex Innovation District**  
St. Louis, MO

Image source: Landscape Architecture Foundation



**Revitalizing Neighborhood Business Districts**

In 2014, the City of Indianapolis, in collaboration with the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) and the Indy Chamber, launched the “Inclusive Economic Opportunity Districts” at North Mass, East Washington St., and Far Eastside. The primary goal of this program is to revitalize these corridors by supporting local businesses, creating accessible jobs, and building distinct identities to attract new enterprises. Through partnerships with local organizations and financial institutions, the districts provide various forms of financial support, including grants, low-interest loans, and technical assistance, with a focus on minority- and women-owned businesses (MWBEs) and those in low-to-moderate income (LMI) neighborhoods.

In addition to financial aid, the districts offer business development services such as mentorship, business planning, and marketing assistance to help entrepreneurs build sustainable ventures. The results have been significant: in 2019 alone, 232 jobs were created through new, expanding, or relocated businesses within the Inclusive Economic Opportunity Districts. The program has assisted 162 businesses and attracted 38 new businesses to these revitalized areas. Learn more about the Inclusive Economic Opportunity Districts in Indianapolis [here](#).



**Far Eastside – Inclusive Economic Opportunity Districts**  
Indianapolis, IN

Image source: Indiana Office of Community & Rural Affairs

EVALUATION METRICS

**How to measure success over the next ten years**

The primary goal is to foster upward mobility for all members of the Pensacola community. In tracking growth in wages or income relative to housing costs (the most significant burden in cost of living), Pensacola can best measure success in fostering prosperity.

It is important to track these core metrics across race, gender, and neighborhood through Pensacola to best understand who is benefiting and who needs further support.

<b>Income Growth</b>	<b>Increase in median household income (compare all employment sectors)</b> (In 2022, Median Household Income: \$67,722 <sup>1</sup> )
<b>Job Creation and Retention</b>	<b>Number of jobs created in high-tech and innovation-intensive sectors</b> <b>Increase in number of small businesses per year</b> <b>Decrease in number of small businesses closing per year</b>
<b>Retention of Talent</b>	<b>Retention rate of graduates from local universities in the city's workforce</b>
<b>Research and Development</b>	<b>Increase % of workforce employed in industries that invest heavily in R&amp;D</b> <b>Increase in number of patents from Pensacola-based companies and universities</b>
<b>Workforce Education, Skills, and Diversity</b>	<b>% of workforce with degrees in STEM.</b> <b>Increase in number of underrepresented groups in innovation sectors and leadership roles</b>
<b>Industry-Academia Collaboration</b>	<b>Increase number and value of research partnerships between local universities and businesses</b>

<sup>1</sup> American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. U.S. Census Bureau. S1901. 2022.





# Neighborhoods that Celebrate Culture and Honor Legacy





WHY THIS GOAL

# Pensacola's small-town charm and diverse cultures shine at signature events, with opportunities to expand into everyday neighborhood activations.

Known as the "Festival City of the South," Pensacola hosts over 100 days with signature events in a calendar year and holds many recurring events, such as The Great Gulfcoast Arts Festival and Mardi Gras. Most cultural institutions and events are concentrated in Downtown Pensacola, attracting locals and people from the broader region.

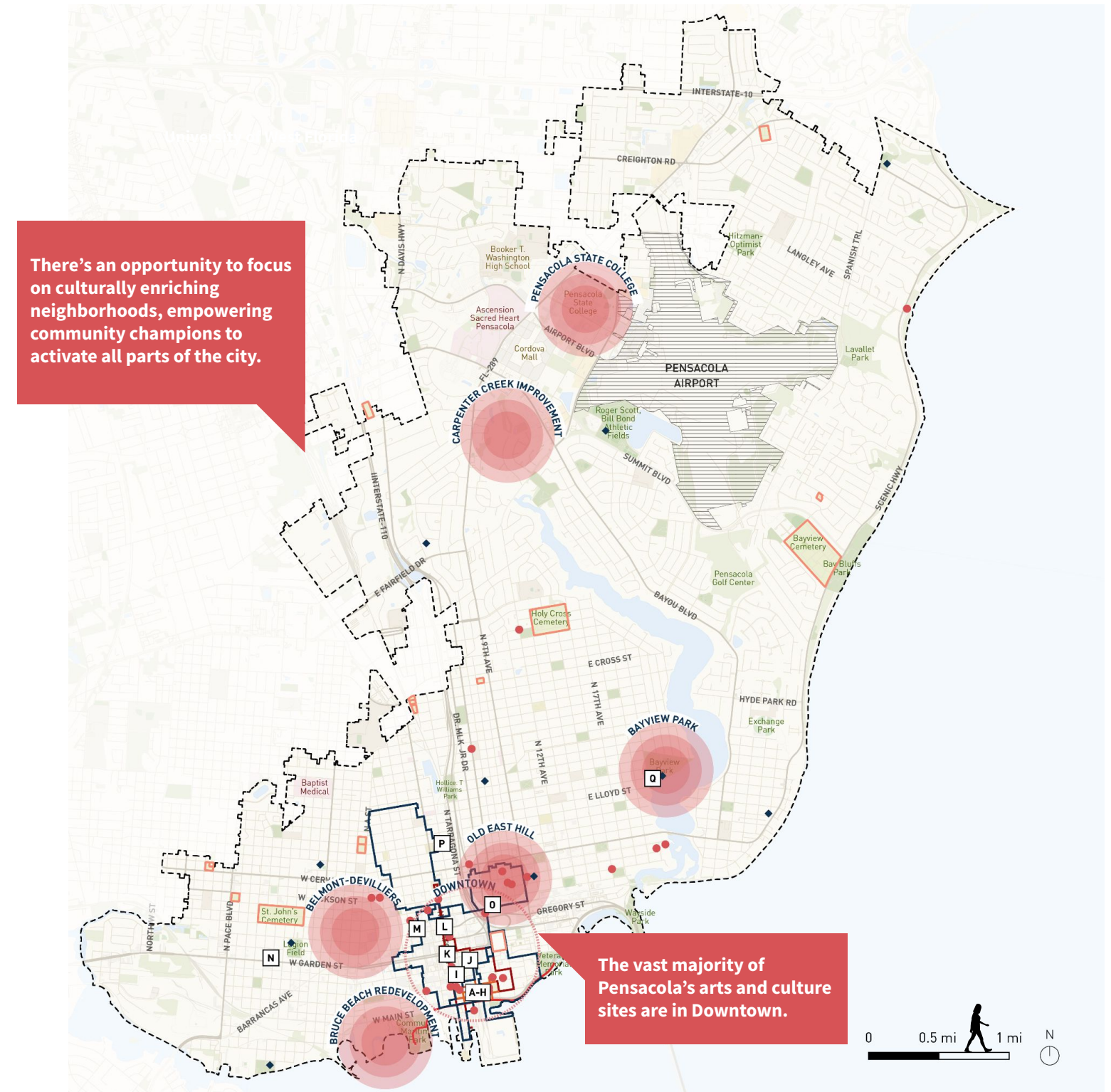
There is an opportunity to broaden Pensacola's cultural offerings — in addition to big-bang events in Downtown — by enhancing everyday programming and celebrating the rich history across its diverse neighborhoods. Supporting more inclusive, neighborhood-focused activities can help bridge the existing cultural gap and celebrate every unique culture in Pensacola.

**36%** of Visioning Survey respondents highlighted **History, local culture, community, and festivals and events** when asked, "What aspects of Pensacola are you happy with today? What do you believe should be preserved in Pensacola?"

“I love our culture here. **Our unique blend of southern, beach, and friendly makes it a very happy and warm place to be.** I like all of the historic preservation we have Downtown and in East Hill, our history is important to us and we need to preserve it.”

— Visioning Survey Respondent, age 18-24

➔ **MOVING FORWARD** — How can Pensacola elevate its unique local culture and direct its focus to the neighborhood-level to support community champions activate all corners of the city? By encouraging and empowering locals to make their own cultural expressions, Pensacola can better share its culture and history.



**Arts & Culture Cores**

- Existing core
- Future opportunity areas

**Historic Districts**

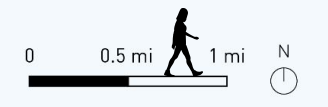


**Historically Significant Sites**

- National Register of Historic Place
- Cemetery
- Resource Center
- Pensacola Maritime Heritage Trail
- America's First Settlement Trail
- Colonial Archaeological Trail

**Museums, Galleries & Major Event Venues**

- A. Pensacola Museum of Art
- B. Pensacola Little Theater
- C. Pensacola Ballet
- D. Pensacola Museum of History at University of West Florida
- E. Pensacola Symphony Orchestra
- F. Voices of Pensacola Multicultural Center
- G. African American Heritage Society
- H. Great Gulfcoast Arts Festival
- I. Saenger Theater Pensacola
- J. Pensacola Opera
- K. Gallery Night
- L. Annual Pensacola Mardi Gras
- M. West Florida Public Library Main Branch
- N. Pensacola Greek Festival
- O. Pensacola MESS Hall
- P. First City Art Center
- Q. Bon Fest





ACTIONS

## Actions for culture over the next ten years

The goal is to infuse arts and culture more equitably across Pensacola, while highlighting the city's distinct histories and communities. This includes supporting grassroots efforts where there is already momentum and fostering new initiatives. It's about preserving Pensacola's character while allowing for thoughtful growth.



**NEXT STEPS** — To infuse arts and culture across the city, there needs to be a dedicated role in city government to coordinate initiatives. While today most of Pensacola's fantastic festivals and events are hosted downtown, it will require intentional, sustained effort to foster other events and activities that showcase Pensacola's culture in other parts of the city.

ACTIONS	RELEVANT GOALS
<b>→ IN PROGRESS</b>	
Support organizations to host arts & culture events in all of Pensacola's neighborhoods through grants and technical assistance	
<b>→ POTENTIAL INITIATIVES</b>	
Create dedicated role to manage arts & culture initiatives	
Enhance Pensacola's unique identity in its public realm	
Explore options for generating preservation and cultural affairs funding through a local revenue system	

← PRIORITY ACTION

PRIORITY ACTION IN SPOTLIGHT

## → Support organizations to host arts & culture events in all of Pensacola's neighborhoods through grants and technical assistance

**Why priority?** Pensacola excels at showcasing its culture, however these efforts are concentrated to Downtown. The City can help steer funding and support to partner organizations to catalyze more artistic and cultural expression throughout all of Pensacola.

**Recommended Implementers**

**Lead:** Mayor's Office

**Partners:** Community organizations, local cultural institutions

### Key Implementation Considerations

**1. Create application-based program to support community-based arts and culture**

Pensacola previously had Neighborhood Challenge Matching Grant Program to encourage locally-based cultural events and activities. A program like this should be actively marketed with direct outreach to raise awareness of it.

→ **Best Practice:** Learn from San Antonio, TX, where a variety of Arts & Culture grants – including Events Grants, Artist Grants, and Operational & Culturally Specific Grants – support hundreds of artists, events, and nonprofits, fueling the city's vibrant cultural community.

**2. Prioritize neighborhoods that have community knowledge and organizing capacity but lack resources**

Direct attention to bolstering arts and cultural expression for communities that have not historically been included in most planning processes. Reach out to organizations that have managed to imbue their communities with cultural expression, and start first by seeing how the City can better support their initiatives.

**3. Leverage existing events and initiatives to expand public art and cultural expression**

For example, Pensacola can intentionally broaden footprint and reach of FooFoo Fest beyond Downtown and create neighborhood-centric art activations; catalyze deeper investment in the visual arts by creating and anchoring a signature program at Pensacola State College/Anna Lamar Switzer Center; and, leverage the airport expansion as a platform for rotating art installations.



INSPIRING CASE STUDIES



**Coordinated efforts to champion local artists, showcases talent, and enriches the city's cultural landscape**

The San Antonio Department of Arts & Culture was established to advocate for the arts, recognizing their role in community life and economic development. It has showcased works by 78 artists across three exhibitions and organized over 30 events, including concerts during Fiestas Patrias and Hispanic Heritage Month, drawing over 23,000 visitors.<sup>1</sup> The department also advocates for local artists and cultural organizations, supporting their work and helping to enhance the city's cultural offering. Learn more about the efforts of the Department of Arts & Culture in San Antonio [here](#).



**Department of Arts & Culture**  
San Antonio, TX



**Love Your Block**  
Buffalo, NY



**Provide resources and support to communities for neighborhoods programming and improvements**

Buffalo's Love Your Block program provided funding to block clubs, community organizations, and local businesses for projects like activating vacant lots, revitalizing community spaces, and improving accessibility. In its first year, the program focused on four neighborhoods: Broadway-Fillmore, Lower West Side, Masten Park, and Kensington-Bailey. During its second year, it continued funding in some of these areas and expanded to new neighborhoods. Projects included community gardens, neighborhood cleanups, repurposing vacant lots, and creating murals. A 2021 Urban Institute study found that the program not only reduced blight and improved public spaces but also strengthened social cohesion, increased civic participation, and built stronger relationships with community members, fostering greater trust in local government.<sup>2</sup> Learn more about Buffalo's Love Your Block program [here](#).

<sup>1</sup> City of San Antonio Department of Arts & Culture annual report.

<sup>2</sup> Reclaiming Shared Space through City-to-Citizen Collaboration Subtitle A Formative Evaluation of the Love Your Block Progra. Leiha Edmonds, Matthew Gerken, Mary Bogle. February 25, 2021

EVALUATION METRICS

## How to measure success over the next ten years

Measuring city investment in culture, arts, and history involves evaluating several key factors. Pensacola should prioritize assessing the increase in support across all neighborhoods and whether this investment has led to higher levels of public engagement, community mobilization, and local pride.

Additionally, the economic impact should be evaluated to understand how cultural activities contribute to the growth of the creative and tourism industries.

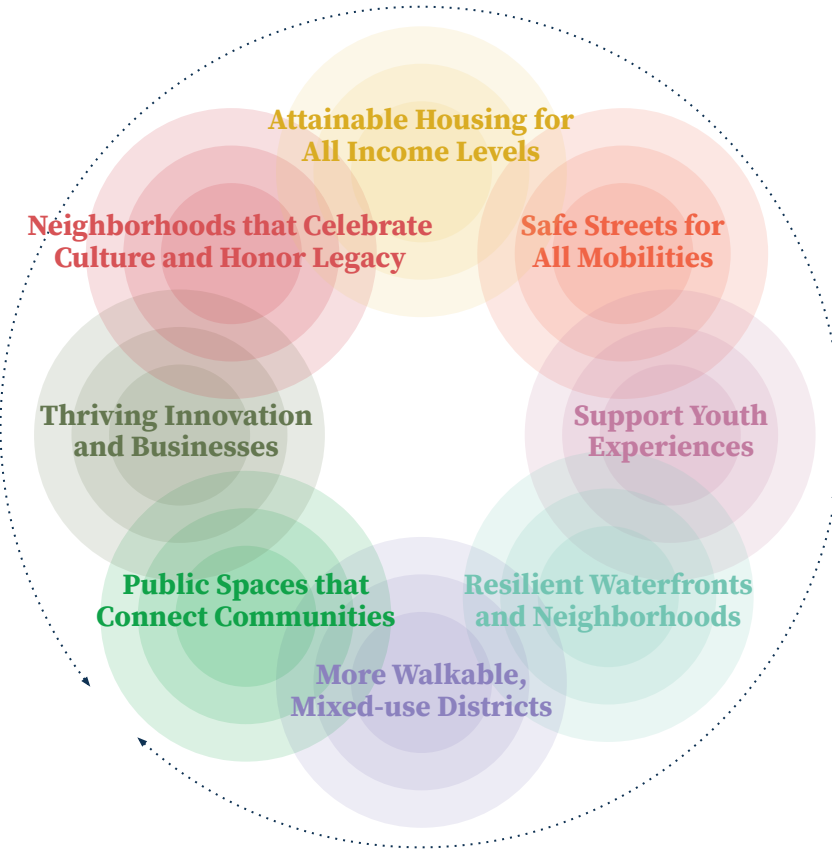
<b>Local Neighborhood History and Culture</b>	<b>Dollar amount directed to cultural initiatives</b> , including public art, events, and historic site preservation, all aimed at elevating local culture.
<b>Cultural Participation and Engagement</b>	<b>Track participation in local festivals, parades, and community arts programs</b> by measuring attendance numbers, demographic diversity (age, gender, ethnicity), and engagement levels, including both participation and organizational involvement.
<b>Perceptions of Cultural Identity And Pride</b>	<b>Increase in positive resident perception of cultural identity and pride.</b>
<b>Accessibility of Cultural Infrastructure</b>	<b>Increase in number of cultural assets</b> including museums, theaters, galleries, murals, installations, and community spaces, per neighborhood. <b>Increase in % of residents within 15-minute walk to cultural assets.</b> <b>Dollar amount directed to maintaining and restoring historical sites</b> , ensuring they are preserved and accessible to the public.
<b>Economic Impact</b>	<b>Increase in number of creative industries and businesses that leverage local culture and history</b> <b>Increase in economic impact of the cultural sector</b> , including job creation, tourism revenue, and retail sales.





**Goals Summary**

**BRINGING ALL GOALS TOGETHER**

To anchor the Pensacola's eight key goals over the next decade, investments in hard infrastructure—such as housing, safe streets, parks, and resilient facilities—and soft social infrastructure—like arts, unique cultural programming, and innovation development programs—must be strategically integrated into the built environment. These investments should prioritize fostering a thriving community by enhancing quality of life, directing resources to areas with the greatest need, and achieving multiple goals at once.



-  Opportunity Area for each goal
-  Opportunity Corridor

**Transform northern Pensacola and the Carpenter Creek area...**

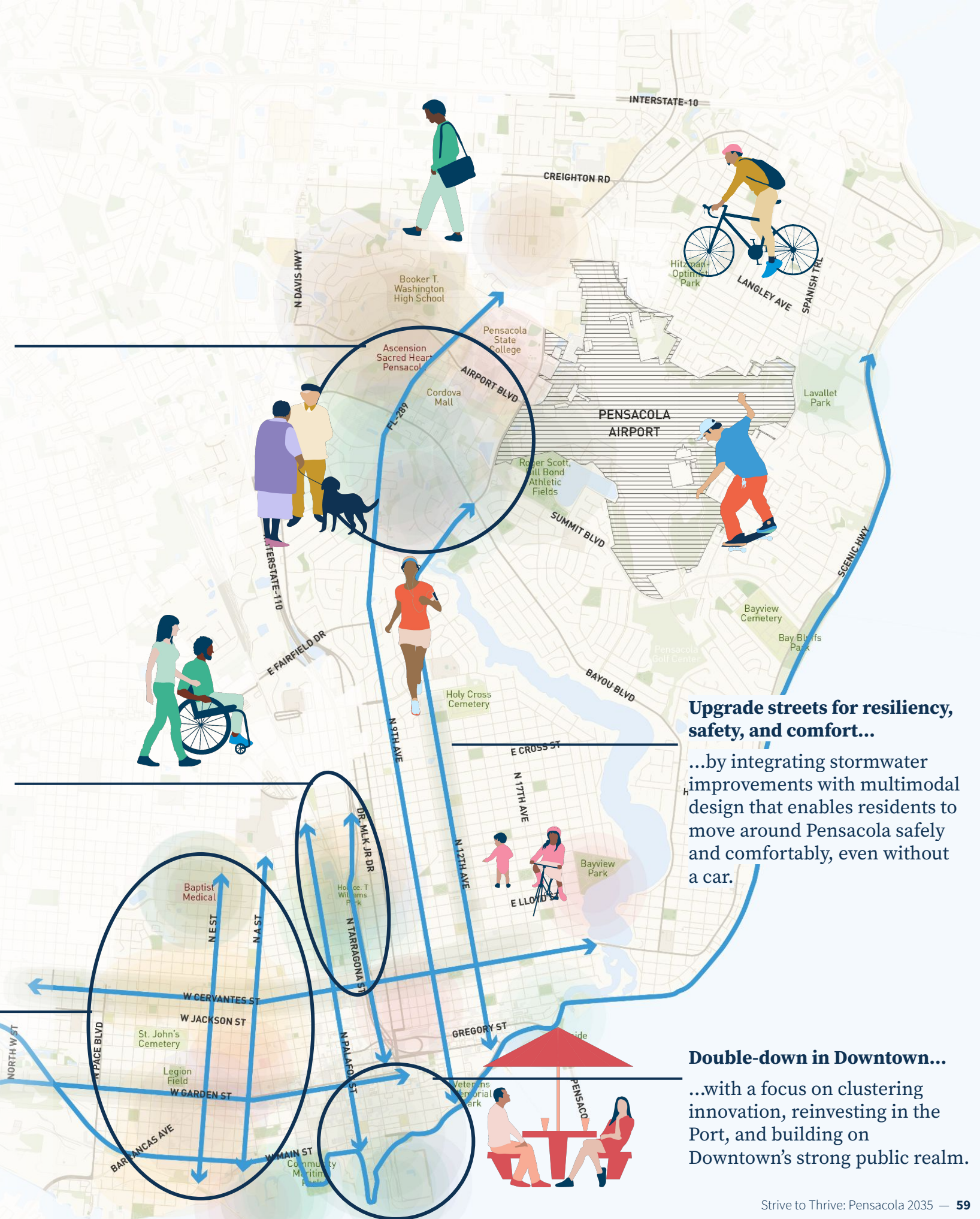
...with significant investment in resiliency and public space, coupled with denser mixed-use real estate development that catalyzes innovation economies.

**Invest in incredible public space to stitch the city back together and catalyze infill development...**

...leveraging Hollice T. Williams transformation to deliver a signature gathering place that invites equitable development at its edges.

**Prioritize investment in historically disinvested parts of Pensacola...**

...directing funds and resources towards bolstering affordable housing, supportive services for youth, and cultural expression.



**Upgrade streets for resiliency, safety, and comfort...**

...by integrating stormwater improvements with multimodal design that enables residents to move around Pensacola safely and comfortably, even without a car.

**Double-down in Downtown...**

...with a focus on clustering innovation, reinvesting in the Port, and building on Downtown's strong public realm.



# 04

# Implementation

How to enact the strategic plan



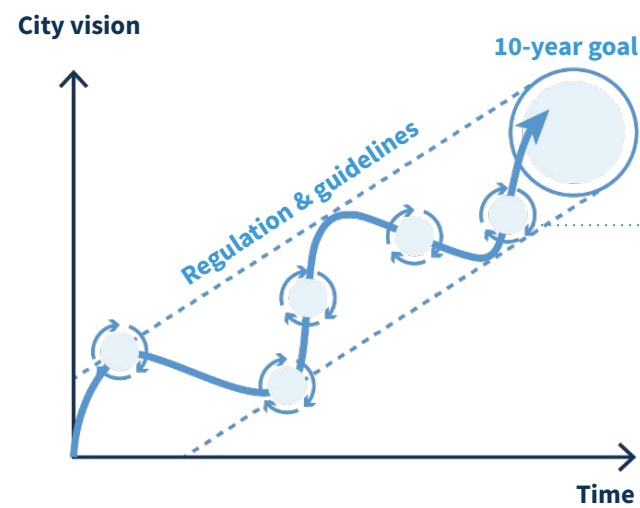


HOW TO IMPLEMENT THE VISION

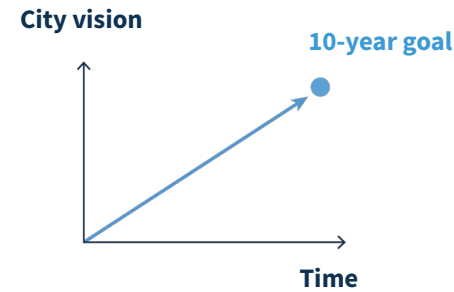
## How to iterate this plan over time

To realize this vision, implementers and practitioners need to embrace a flexible, iterative approach — rather than a linear planning process that sets one long-term goal. Over the next ten years, urban transformation relies on setting intermediate goals, continually measuring progress, testing approaches and policies, and refining as you go. This iteration demands a nimbleness and willingness to adjust course year-over-year.

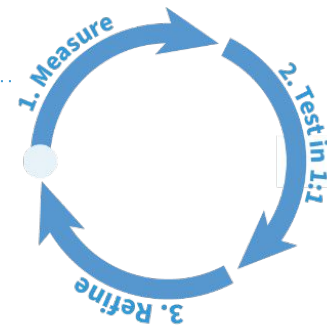
**An iterative implementation process involves recalibrating goals over time based on evolving priorities and learnings:**



Traditional linear planning processes set long-term, inflexible goals once — which often leads to disappointing results



Set intermediate goals and reach them through pilot processes:



EVALUATION GUIDANCE

## How to measure, test, and refine over the next ten years

Change happens gradually. Sometimes it comes through big decisions, but more often, it grows over time through many small transformations that add up to something greater.

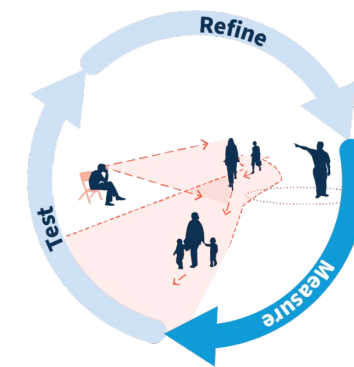
**Collect baseline data:** before implementing a project or program, assess baseline conditions, quantitatively and qualitatively. This will enable better before-and-after impact assessments.

**Implement pilots:** break down big ambitious ideas into smaller pieces by designing and implementing pilot projects and programs. These pilots can be temporary and reversible, allowing policymakers and urbanists to test ideas more quickly and cheaply.

**Tell human-centered stories:** assess impact continually year-over-year. Collect standard quantitative data, but also speak with individuals and on-the-ground organizations to hear personal experiences of change. Combine “big data” with human stories to tell a more holistic picture of impact.

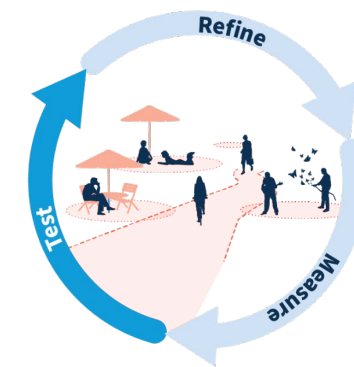
**Share progress:** continually provide progress updates to the public, detailing projects, their impacts, and next steps. Highlight data-driven stories to communicate impact and strengthen the coalition of community members who can help support—and even implement—change.

**The measure, test, and refine approach for implementation:**



**Measure**

Collect data that provides information on what can be tested and has the potential to improve



**Test**

Design a pilot project and implement. Collect data and feedback that can be analyzed and compared with the previous data.



**Refine**

Use the knowledge from the test phase in the future work, either with the specific pilot project or in other projects or processes.



## IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE

# Implementation and governance guidance

To realize this vision, the city will need to take on specific roles, processes, communication strategies, and funding approaches that organize efforts for both city officials and the general public. These recommendations recognize the ongoing, iterative nature of the work and assign responsibility to key roles to maintain the continuity of the plan over time.

## COMMUNICATION

**Strive to Thrive brand:** the general public should stay updated on the progress in realizing Pensacola’s vision. To make things simple and easier to understand, city government should use “Strive to Thrive” as an overarching brand that contains multiple projects. This brand should live on the city’s website with regular updates to share current initiatives, progress, and impact. These updates should be hosted on a digital public dashboard, where progress is continually monitored and transparently shared (see City of Austin’s example [here](#)). Civic projects that address the strategic plan’s core goals should carry the “Strive to Thrive” branding in all of their messaging and community engagement to reinforce how multiple, distinct initiatives are working together to realize the strategic vision.

## ROLES

### Dedicated role as Strategic Plan Project Manager:

this vision for Pensacola involves change across all dimensions of policy and planning. It is no simple task to organize efforts and initiatives across departments, across sectors, and across geographies. This complexity demands a dedicated role within city government to steward this plan. This role’s responsibilities may include: setting year-over-year priorities, managing cross-departmental projects and initiatives, setting data collection plans, evaluating and communicating impact, and assisting departments in grant writing.

### Dedicated role as Philanthropic Organizer:

Pensacola is home to an incredible number of motivated, creative philanthropic organizations. However, though many groups hold similar values and advance similar causes, each organization often carries its own initiative. Individually, these initiatives affect change, but if harnessed together, they could greatly amplify their impact. A dedicated role as Pensacola’s Philanthropic Organizer could better manage the alignment between city government’s and philanthropy’s goals by organizing multiple groups’ attentions and funds to common strategic plan initiatives.

## PROCESSES

### Quarterly cross-departmental Vision Steering Group meetings:

because many strategic actions address multiple domains — housing, transportation, sustainability, just to name a few — the implementation of the plan depends on regular communication between city departments. A cross-departmental Vision Steering Group should meet regularly to sync up on project updates and align initiatives through the strategic plan’s framework.

**Regular prioritization workshops:** new projects and ideas will naturally come up over time. As these opportunities present themselves, the primary implementers of the plan should hold regular prioritization workshops to evaluate project proposals through the community-informed decision-making framework (see page 64) and to assign roles and resources to achieving prioritized projects. These regular meetings are necessary to ensure that the implementation of plan can be nimble enough to take on emergent opportunities while not straying from the core vision.

## FUNDING

### Systems approach to grant applications:

grant funding is always finite and competitive. To improve grant applications for state and federal funding, highlight how projects will achieve multiple co-benefits. By bundling multiple goals into a few select projects, the demonstrated need and impact will be evident and the awarded funds will “go farther” by addressing codependent goals.

### Leveraging public and private funding:

private funds are crucial to magnify the impact of public planning processes. By aligning public and private interests, projects can be completed faster, financial risks can be shared, and bigger, more ambitious developments can be realized. The Philanthropic Organizer should identify overlapping goals between public and private interests to pool resources for catalytic projects.

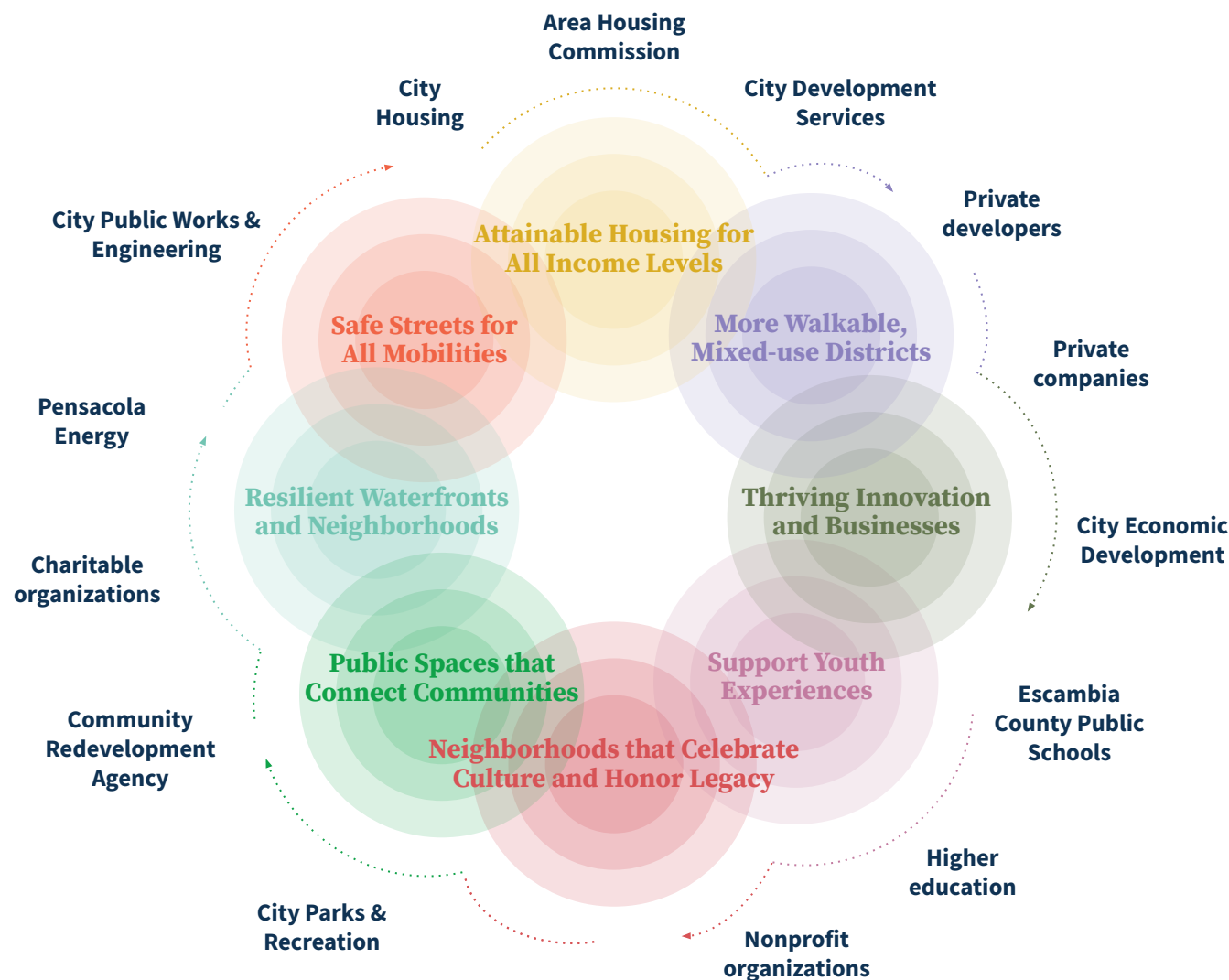


IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE

# A kaleidoscope of collaborators

The strategic plan is a tool to align Pensacola’s network of stakeholders and civic capacities around one shared vision. To realize the goals set forth, the City must act as a convener and vanguard in promoting its ambitions and working across sectors to leverage resources available.

No one goal can be achieved by just one person or one department — it will take coordination and collaboration between many different sectors.



# A note on civic capacity

The strategic plan proposes a number of goals and initiatives in-line with Pensacola’s growth. However, it should be noted that, with today’s resources and capacities, the City cannot undertake all of this work.

**The strategic plan is a tool to organize attention to prioritize initiatives over the next ten years. It is not a direct assignment of resources and responsibilities.**

With this framework for prioritization comes a rationale to nimbly redirect staff and other resources to these emerging projects. As certain initiatives take priority, certain civic departments will need additional resources to successfully tackle these projects.

Given this reality, it’s even more important that cross-sectoral collaborators work together, with elected officials giving guidance to civic staff, who can enable bottom-up action from other organizations like developers, foundations, and residents groups.

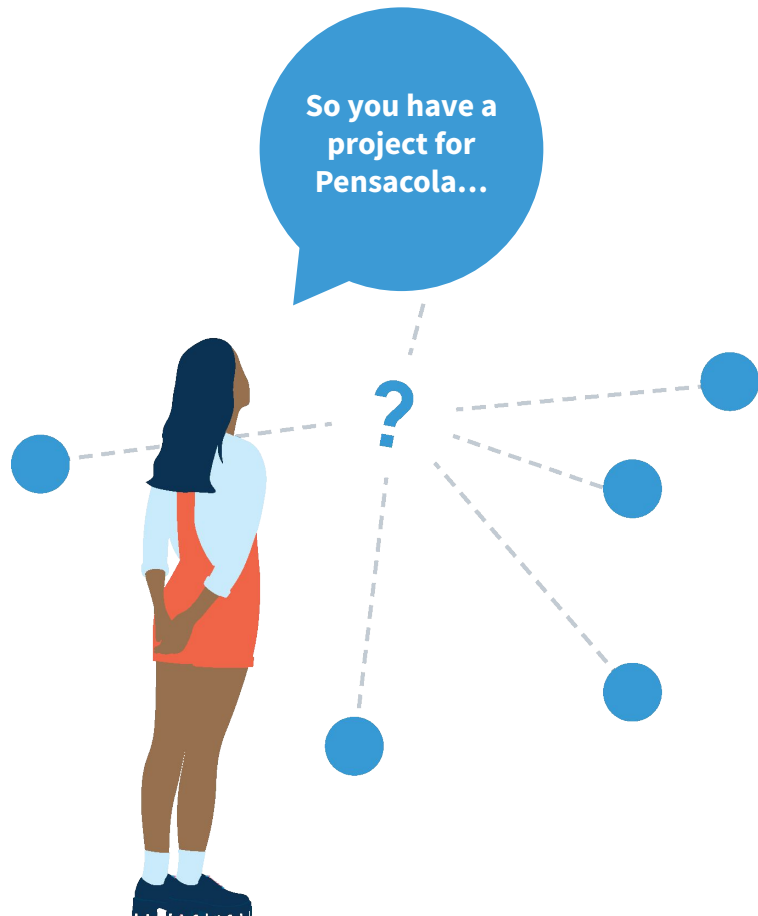




IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE

# Worksheet for Decision-Making & Implementation

To achieve its vision for 2035, Pensacola needs ensure that all current and future projects align with the goals outlined in this Plan. The checklist on the right serves as a guideline for City staff, helping to ensure that all projects work in concert to support a thriving quality of life for everyone who lives, works, and plays in Pensacola.



## Strive to Thrive: Pensacola 2035 Compliance Checklist

KEY QUESTIONS	RESPONSE
<b>OVERALL ALIGNMENT</b>	
Does this project align with the goals outlined in Strive to Thrive: Pensacola 2035? Yes or No.	
Which strategic goals does this project address at once?	
If this project doesn't align with this Plan's priorities, how might we adapt it to fit?	
<b>BASIC NEEDS</b>	
Does this project address safety and security: attainable housing, safer streets, well-resourced community facilities, or resilience? Yes or No.	
<b>RACIAL EQUITY</b>	
Does this project further equitable access to opportunity and wealth-building for disenfranchised groups in Pensacola, including communities of color and poorer residents?	
<b>MORE MIXED-USE HUBS</b>	
Does this project advance investment in livability beyond just Downtown to create more, denser neighborhood centers with walkable amenities and services?	
<b>SYSTEMS</b>	
Does this project advance more than one strategic goal? Yes or No.	
<b>FEASIBLE WINS</b>	
Does this project have a clear path to implementation? Yes or No.	
Who are the community partners and champions involved?	
Where can funding be sourced from?	
Is there adequate capacity today to implement this project? Yes or No.	















IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE

# Recommended Action Implementation Table

GOAL	ACTION	RELEVANT GOALS	NEAR-TERM TARGET	CITY LEAD IMPLEMENTER	PARTNER IMPLEMENTER(S)	
→ IN PROGRESS						
<b>Ensure Attainable Housing for All Income Levels</b>	Identify and use surplus publicly-owned land for affordable housing development		Conduct analysis of city-owned land for purpose of disposition for affordable housing	City of Pensacola Housing Department	City of Pensacola Development Services	
	Invest in administration and communication for home rehabilitation programs	 	Conduct communications campaign for low-resource residents to inform of existing rehabilitation programs	City of Pensacola Housing Department	CRA, City of Pensacola Development Services	
	→ POTENTIAL INITIATIVES					
	Provide incentives for rental development at 60% AMI or below ← PRIORITY ACTION		Hold a focus group with local mission-based affordable housing developers to discuss gap funding opportunities	Mayor's Office	City of Pensacola Housing Department	
	Create overlay districts to incentivize infill residential density near existing and planned amenities: trails, commercial corridors, walkable districts	 	Explore overlay zoning options as major infill project opportunities	City of Pensacola Development Services	City of Pensacola Housing Department	
	Work with mission-based developers and faith-based organizations to find infill development opportunities		Hold a focus group with local mission-based affordable housing developers	Mayor's Office	City of Pensacola Housing Department, CRA	
	Work with developers and landlords to use Project Based Vouchers for low income affordability		Hold a focus group with local developers and property owners to discuss gap funding opportunities	City of Pensacola Housing Department		
	Seek to attract non-profit community development financial institutions that can build local developers' capacities		Meet with regional organizations (like Jacksonville LISC) to discuss their formation	Mayor's Office	City of Pensacola Housing Department	



IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE

GOAL	ACTION	RELEVANT GOALS	NEAR-TERM TARGET	CITY LEAD IMPLEMENTER	PARTNER IMPLEMENTER(S)
→ POTENTIAL INITIATIVES					
Safe Streets for All Mobilities	Upgrade pedestrian crossings, sidewalks, bike lanes, and signalization systems ← PRIORITY ACTION		Establish a "Systemic Safety Initiatives" program to update signalization and road design at high-crash intersections and roadways. Create a "Transportation Safety Improvement Program" to identify priority locations for low-cost, high-impact safety upgrades on sidewalks and bike lanes	City of Pensacola Public Works & Engineering Department	Escambia County Transportation and Traffic Operations, FDOT, CRA
	Make complete streets along key arterials and collector roads between key destinations: Cervantes, Garden, Main, 9th Ave, 12th Ave, Pace Blvd	 	Work with County and State to implement pilot, reversible projects that transform key streets identified in the Active Transportation Plan (2023)	City of Pensacola Public Works & Engineering Department	Escambia County Transportation and Traffic Operations, FDOT
	Advocate investment in safe, well-designed bus stops and stations to encourage transit use		Conduct community engagement with local transit riders to assess perception and pain-points with transit experience	City of Pensacola Public Works & Engineering Department	Escambia County Area Transit
	Bring micro-transit circulators to Pensacola to alleviate congestion for events and better connect Downtown to the east and west		Implement shuttle operations for key major events Downtown	City of Pensacola Public Works & Engineering Department	Electric shuttle companies and services
→ POTENTIAL INITIATIVES					
Support for Youth Experiences	Partner with Escambia County Public Schools to share facilities and resources for extracurricular educational activities ← PRIORITY ACTION	 	Create a portfolio of school-community partners in Pensacola and Escambia County, and support them with funding, promotion, partnership brokering with schools, as well as technical assistance and professional development	Mayor's Office	Escambia County Public Schools, City of Pensacola Parks & Recreation Department
	Work with Escambia County Public School to offer supportive services to help increase school attendance		Coordinate with Healthy Schools Escambia program (Escambia Children's Trust)	Mayor's Office	
	Partner with local private and civic organizations in arts, design, and technology to nurture STEAM pipelines for youth	  	Hold a focus group with local institutions and develop strategies for after-school program	Mayor's Office	City of Pensacola Economic Development Department, civic organizations, major employers
	Promote state and local resources available for childcare facilities		Align strategy with Escambia Children's Trust to set goals for equitable access to childcare	Mayor's Office	






















IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE

GOAL	ACTION	RELEVANT GOALS	NEAR-TERM TARGET	CITY LEAD IMPLEMENTER	PARTNER IMPLEMENTER(S)	
→ IN PROGRESS						
Resilient Waterfronts and Neighborhoods	Invest in energy efficiency to reduce the City’s greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions		Continue to decarbonize municipal operations	Pensacola Energy		
	Create ecological and recreational open spaces		Align open space planning with stormwater mitigation strategies into a unified approach	City of Pensacola Public Works & Engineering Department	City of Pensacola Parks & Recreation Department	
	→ POTENTIAL INITIATIVES					
	Create a comprehensive Pensacola Resilience Plan ← PRIORITY ACTION		Conduct Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA)	City of Pensacola Public Works & Engineering Department	City Emergency Management Coordinator, Escambia County Emergency Management	
	Create a <u>Resilience Hubs</u> using existing public facilities, recreation centers, and libraries		Identify existing structures in high-risk areas, allocate funding through the city budget or grants to operate them as cooling centers, and develop and implement a communication strategy to raise public awareness.	City of Pensacola Sustainability & Resiliency	City Parks and Recreation Department, City Planning & Zoning, local libraries, senior centers, community center and places of worship	
→ IN PROGRESS						
More Walkable, Mixed-use Districts	Prioritize former Baptist Hospital site as mixed-use district		Secure visionary real estate development firm to follow through with the vision for the site, and direct City funds to incentivize redevelopment as mixed-use, including housing and essential neighborhood amenities	City of Pensacola Economic Development Department	City of Pensacola Development Services Department, private developers	
	→ POTENTIAL INITIATIVES					
	Redevelop underutilized sites in the Carpenter Creek area into a mixed-use, trails-oriented district ← PRIORITY ACTION		Create a Trails-Oriented Development zoning overlay along Carpenter Creek to enable mixed-use development	City of Pensacola Parks & Recreation Department	City of Pensacola Development Services	
	Create a “city design lab” to help promote a more walkable, human-scaled form factor for development		Assemble a panel of local design experts, including urban planners, architects, and community representatives, and engage with local developers on urban design goals	City of Pensacola Development Services	Local planning and design organizations	
	Amend zoning and provide incentives to create corner store businesses in neighborhoods		Explore expanding R-NC zoning areas to enable commercial uses	City of Pensacola Development Services	City of Pensacola Economic Development Department, CRA	



IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE

GOAL	ACTION	RELEVANT GOALS	NEAR-TERM TARGET	CITY LEAD IMPLEMENTER	PARTNER IMPLEMENTER(S)	
<b>→ IN PROGRESS</b>						
<b>Public Spaces that Connect Communities</b>	Reconnect and rebuild Pensacola around an enhanced Hollice T. Williams Park	 	Execute the community vision for the redevelopment of Hollice T. Williams Park into a greenway and stormwater park	CRA	City of Pensacola Parks & Recreation Department	
	Complete SUN Trail network, including Scenic Highway Trail and Downtown Waterfront Connector Trail		Secure state grant funding	City of Pensacola Parks & Recreation Department	City of Pensacola Public Works & Engineering Department, FDOT	
	<b>→ POTENTIAL INITIATIVES</b>					
	Create a comprehensive open space & trails plan to coordinate public and private public space-making efforts ← <b>PRIORITY ACTION</b>	  	Assess inventory and quality of public open spaces and trails, and set priorities to enhance this comprehensive system	City of Pensacola Parks & Recreation Department	City of Pensacola Public Works & Engineering Department	
	Put resources towards maintaining Pensacola’s parks and community centers, especially in communities with greater social vulnerability		Seek funding sources like CDBG and Environmental Justice Small Grants to support the maintenance and programming of existing public spaces, both indoor and outdoor	City of Pensacola Parks & Recreation Department		
	Partner with nonprofit organizations to create a conversancy to improve park maintenance and operations	 	Hold a focus group with local nonprofits near Pensacola’s major parks to develop collaborative strategies for park improvement	City of Pensacola Parks & Recreation Department	Nonprofit organizations	
<b>→ IN PROGRESS</b>						
<b>Thriving Innovation and Businesses</b>	Reinvest in the Port to balance clean cargo seaport trades with new 21st-century marine science and technology-focused industries	  	Complete The Center for Maritime Excellence as a catalytic investment in the Port (see Portside Pensacola 2019 plan for further visionary ideas)	City of Pensacola Economic Development Department	City of Pensacola Port of Pensacola	
	Attract major companies in advanced manufacturing, engineering and design, and high-tech research and development sectors		Continue on momentum from American Magic lease agreement to attract other maritime industries	City of Pensacola Economic Development Department		
	<b>→ POTENTIAL INITIATIVES</b>					
	Concentrate new employers in emerging mixed-use districts, leveraging sites like the Port, Tech Park, IHMC, and Sacred Heart/Baptist ← <b>PRIORITY ACTION</b>	  	Coordinate and align employer attraction initiatives with development priorities	City of Pensacola Economic Development Department	City of Pensacola Development Services Department	
	Promote industry certification opportunities to support workforce development	 	Coordinate with local universities to offer industry-specific training and awareness sessions with college and high school students	City of Pensacola Economic Development Department	Local universities, regional major employers	
Support existing and new small business owners with financial resources and clear communication of processes		Identify potential funding source for micro-grants to support existing and new businesses in Pensacola	City of Pensacola Economic Development Department	CRA		



IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE

GOAL	ACTION	RELEVANT GOALS	NEAR-TERM TARGET	CITY LEAD IMPLEMENTER	PARTNER IMPLEMENTER(S)	
<b>→ IN PROGRESS</b>						
<b>Neighborhoods that Celebrate Culture and Honor Legacy</b>	Support organizations to host arts & culture events in all of Pensacola's neighborhoods through grants and technical assistance ← <b>PRIORITY ACTION</b>		Create application-based program to support community-based arts and culture. Prioritize neighborhoods that have community knowledge and organizing capacity but lack resources	Mayor's Office	Community organizations, local cultural institutions	
	<b>→ POTENTIAL INITIATIVES</b>					
	Create dedicated role to manage arts & culture initiatives		Create a formal position, department, or commission to develop and implement arts and culture strategies. This role will establish partnerships with local cultural institutions, businesses, universities, and community organizations, coordinate event communications in Pensacola, and integrate art into citywide initiatives	Mayor's Office		
	Enhance Pensacola's unique identity in its public realm		Align with Land Development Code update to standardize visual elements such as consistent street furniture, unique public art, wayfinding signage for pedestrians and bikers, and informational displays on historically significant buildings and natural features	City of Pensacola Development Services Department	City of Pensacola Parks & Recreation Department	
Explore options for generating preservation and cultural affairs funding through a local revenue system		Explore linkage between short-term rental taxes and historic preservation and cultural affairs initiatives	Mayor's Office			



STRIVE  
TO THRIVE  
Pensacola 2035

PENSACOLA  
FLORIDA'S FIRST & FUTURE

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# Appendix

Engagement Documentation

