



Fairhope Walkability & Wayfinding

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CHRISTIANPREUS
Landscape Architecture



ABOUT THE PLAN

This report reflects a comprehensive study undertaken by Christian Preus Landscape Architecture and Hall Planning & Engineering to further improve pedestrian safety in Fairhope’s charming downtown while instructing citizens and tourists on where various uses are found through wayfinding signage.

All recommendations are based on the current and proposed Transect.



PLAN PARTICIPANTS

Steering Committee

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------|
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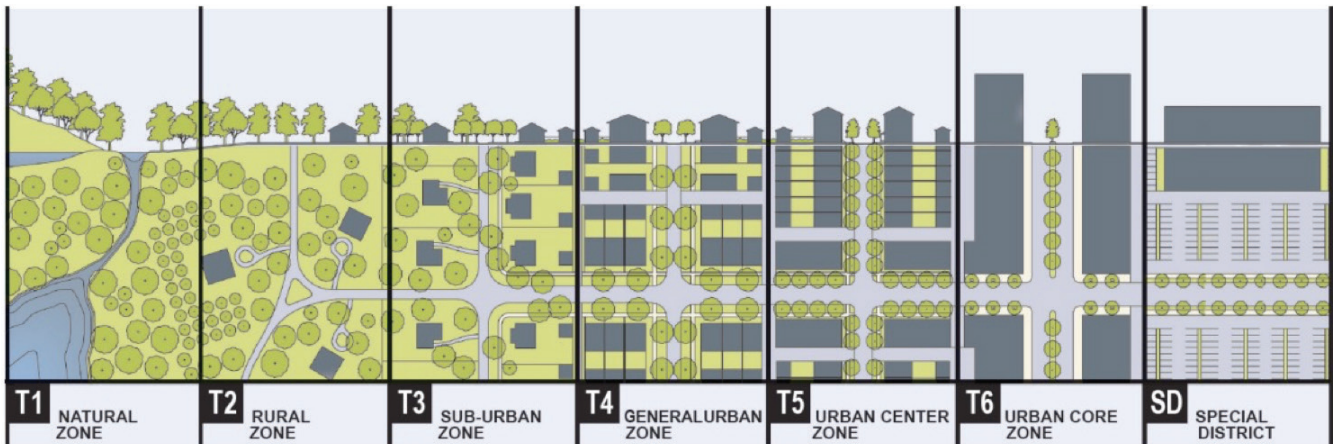
FAIRHOPE
WALKABILITY GOALS

To create a walkable framework for Downtown Fairhope that is driven by the prioritizing of the pedestrian over the automobile.

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The Scale of Walkability



A TYPICAL RURAL-URBAN TRANSECT, WITH TRANSECT ZONES

TRANSECT PLANNING

The transect is a spectrum of development patterns from the most rural (woods or fields; T1) to the most urban (large city center; T6). These development patterns translate vertically to building height. It would be highly unlikely to find a five-story building on a farm, and likewise, a barn on Main Street in a metropolitan area. In addition, the transect begins to dictate horizontal patterns such as walkways, street widths, and parking. In looking at town or city, to study the walkability, it is imperative to understand the current transect, and how these current patterns effect and are effected by the walkable framework.

PEDESTRIAN SHEDS

A pedestrian shed is a circular scale of distance from a particular location. We typically look at pedestrian sheds in 1/4 mile (5 min. walk) and 1/2 mile (10 min.) radii from a specific point. Typically, these nodes reflect the spectrum of the transect fairly accurately, and Fairhope is not an exception. In the center of the pedestrian shed, you will find more dense development patterns that taper to less density as you get further from the center.

CONTEXT

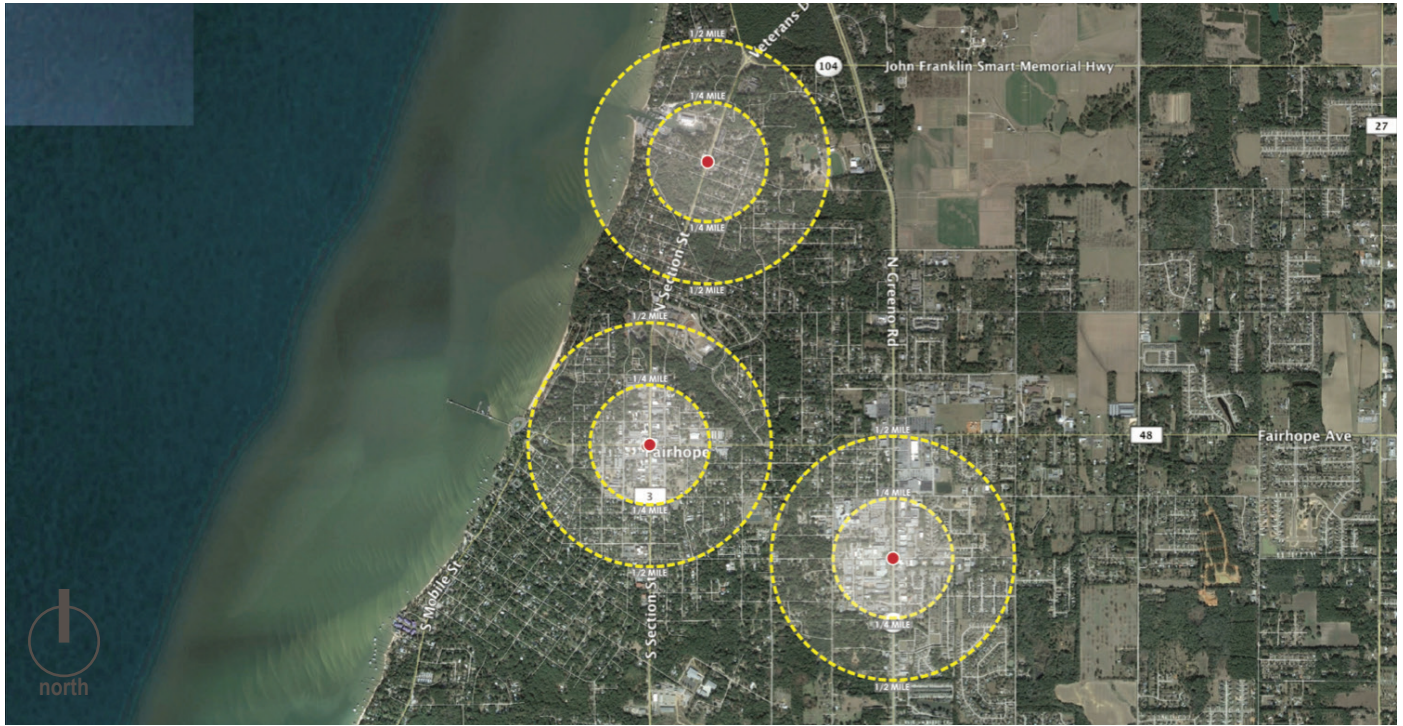
Applying these pedestrian scaled nodes to the areas of town west of Greeno Road helps to depict the distance between current and potential walkable areas. This illustrates that each node is approximately a mile from the other which makes walking, or biking, between nodes a possibility.

DOWNTOWN

The team's primary study area was the downtown of Fairhope, based primarily within the Central Business District (CBD). Overlaying the pedestrian radii of a 1/4 mile and a 1/2 mile, it is evident that the transect area is true to form with a few exceptions. The CBD is almost exactly within the 1/4 mile circle.

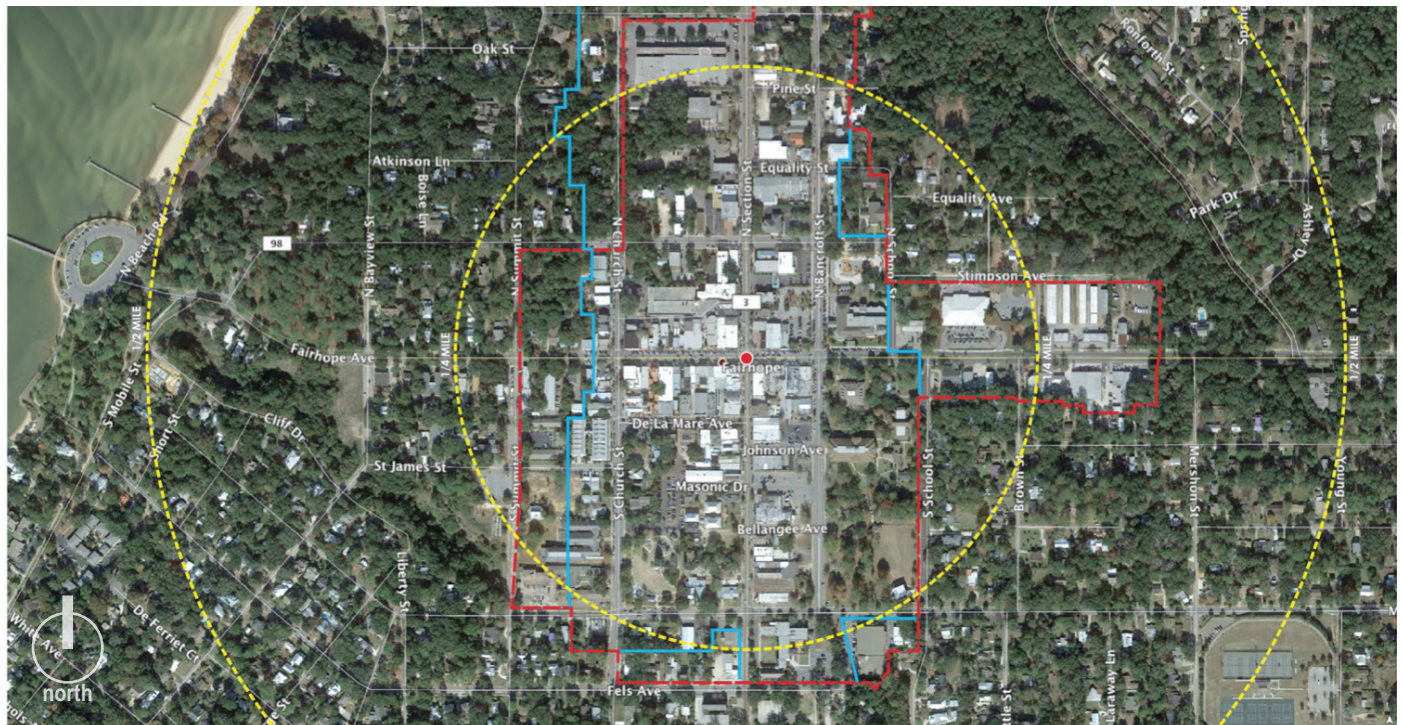
Interestingly, one could walk from the very center of town, at the intersection of Fairhope Avenue and Section Street, and be at the Mobile Bay in 10 minutes. Promoting the idea of walking to town in lieu of driving for the residents within that 1/2 mile pedestrian shed would help with the parking struggles that currently exist in the downtown.

Fairhope Pedestrian Sheds



WALKABLE DISTRICTS

Fairhope has the potential to have three walkable districts. Downtown being one with a strong existing walkable framework. The Warehouse District has potential to develop as a vibrant walkable area, with a mix of uses. The Volanta District also shows promise with a vibrant intersection nearby restaurants, recreation, and residential.



THE DOWNTOWN DISTRICT

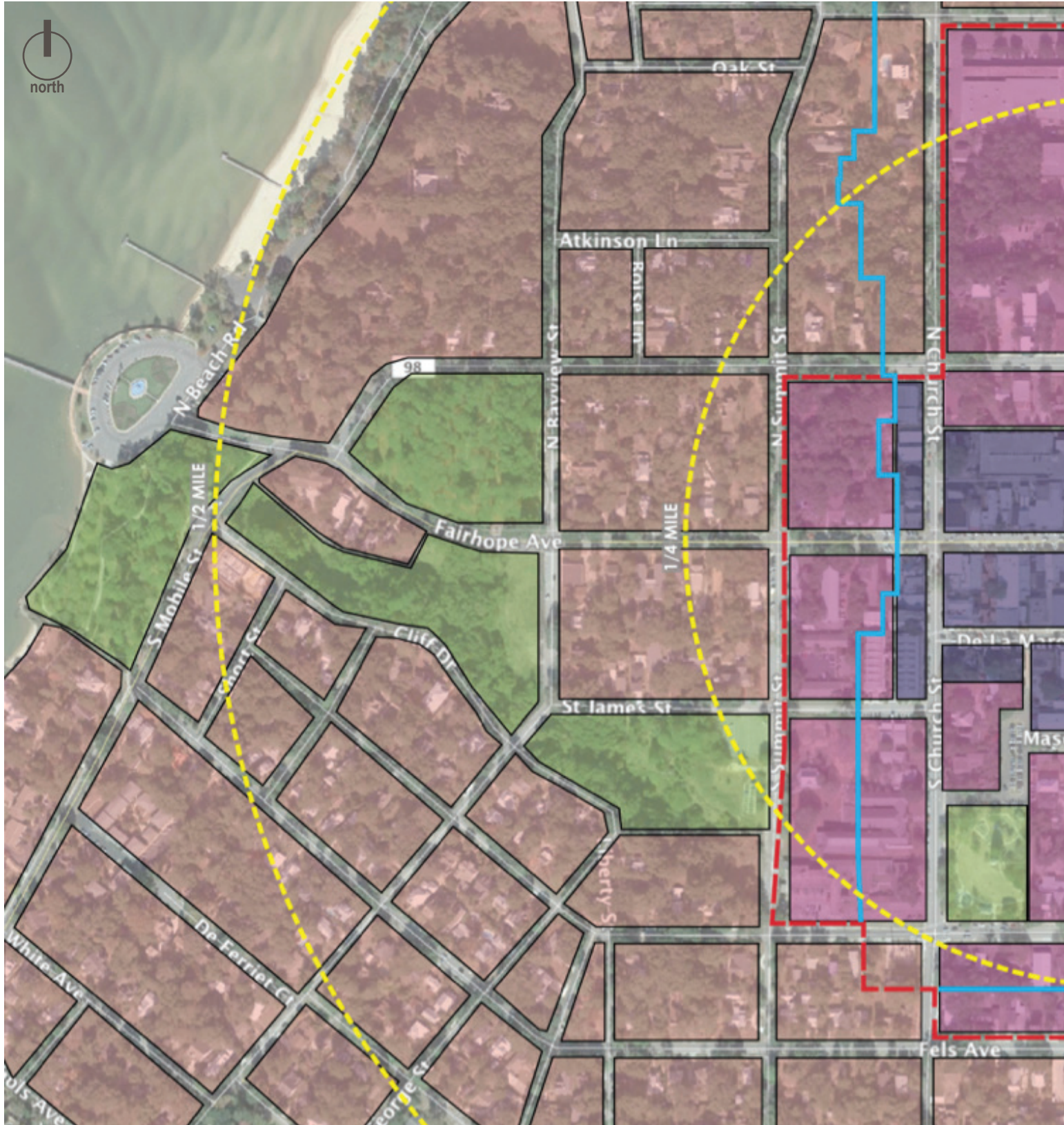
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LEGEND

- Pedestrian Shed
- Existing CBD
- Proposed CBD

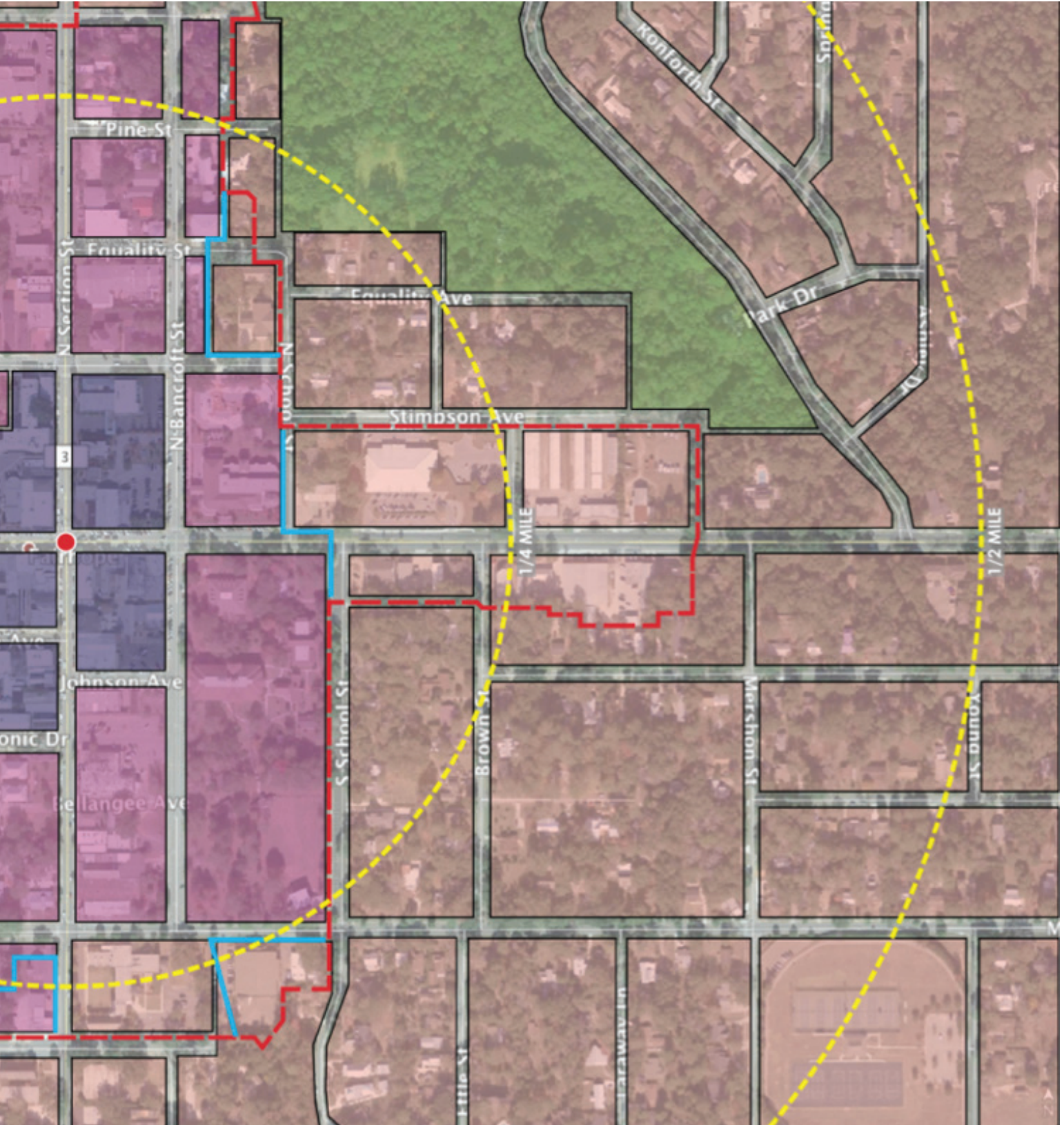
Existing Downtown Transect Map

Below is a map of the current transect or development patterns in the downtown. This is determined by building height and density of development. There is a strong urban core at the intersection of Fairhope Avenue and Section Street. As you get further away from the center, the density decreases to General Urban and ultimately Walkable Suburban. For reference, the current Central Business District is outlined in cyan and the proposed updated CBD is outlined in red.



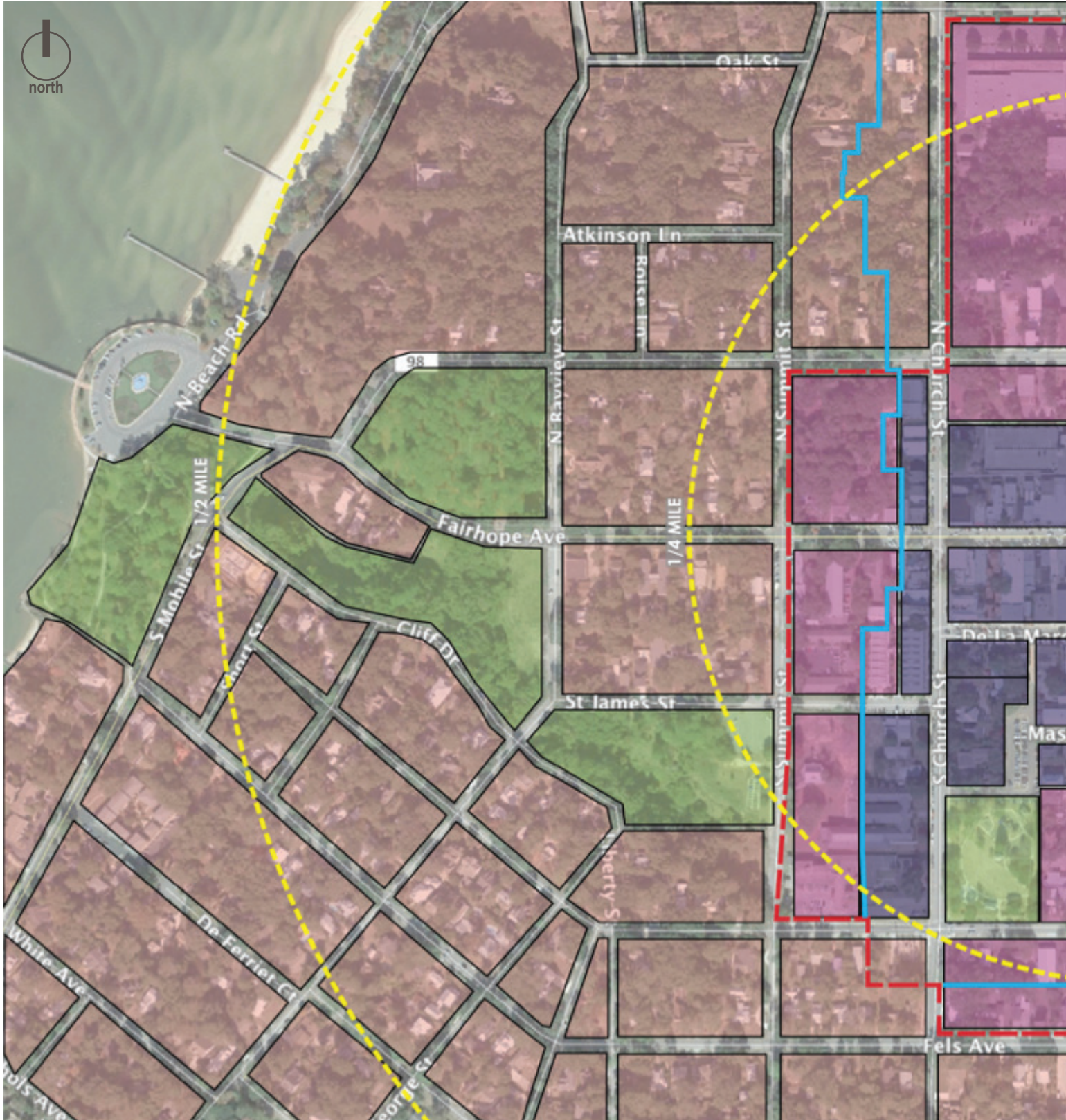
LEGEND

- Urban Core
- General Urban
- Walkable Suburban
- Greenspace
- Existing Central Business District
- Proposed Central Business District
- Pedestrian Shed



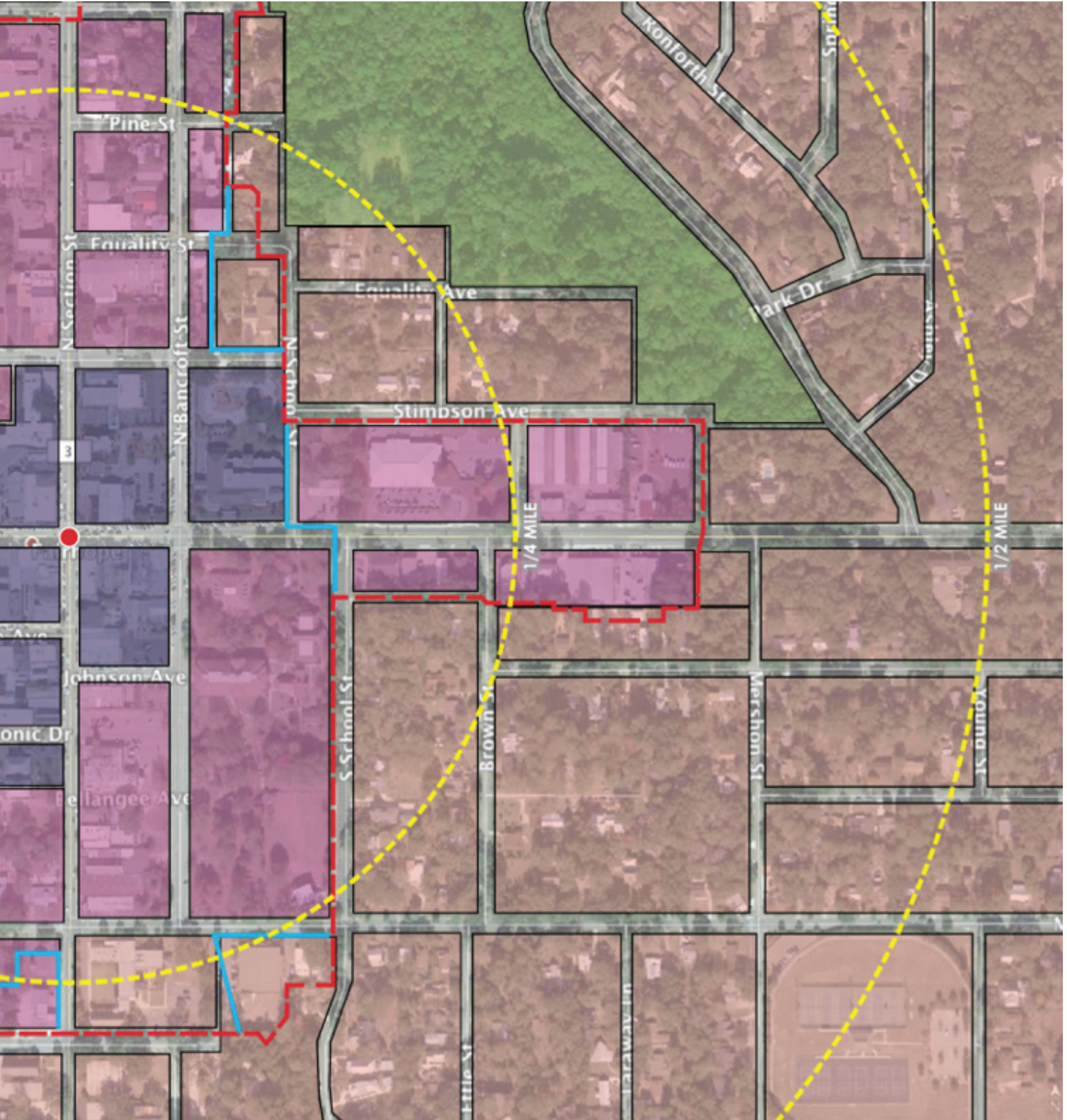
Proposed Downtown Transect Map

The proposed transect plan below is an approximation of how the makeup of the downtown could change based on several variables including the potential development opportunities of underutilized sites, and the potential of an expansion of the Central Business District. These transect revisions not only help define the potential for development but also for the modification of existing roadway and sidewalk infrastructure to follow a coded model for lane widths and on street parking.



LEGEND

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
|  Urban Core |  Greenspace |  Pedestrian Shed |
|  General Urban |  Existing Central Business District | |
|  Walkable Suburban |  Proposed Central Business District | |



Downtown Analysis

WALKING ANALYSIS

To kickoff the planning process, the planning team and steering committee took a walk around downtown. We made notes and observations with respect to things that were working, and what needed to be improved to make the downtown function better from both a wayfinding and safety standpoint.



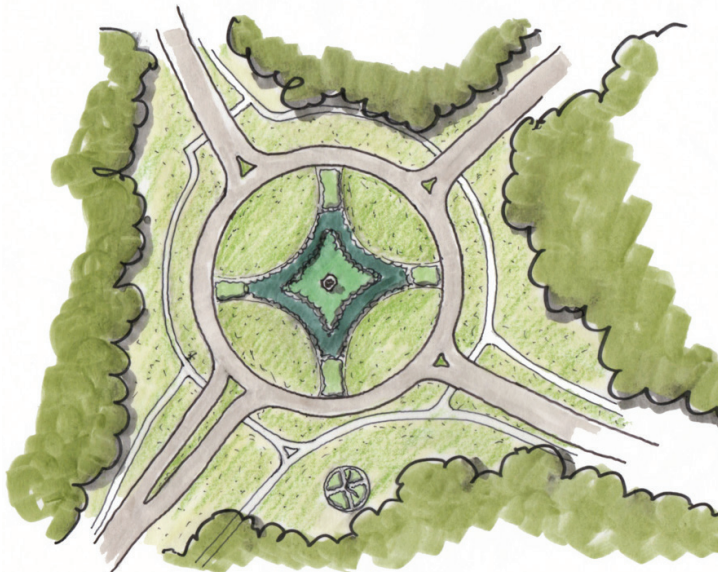
ISSUES

During that walk, the steering committee pointed out the various concerns that needed to be addressed in the downtown. The following issues were pointed out several times by the committee:

1. Not enough parking
2. More loading zones for Delivery
3. Need for Family Loading Zones
4. Short-term Parking
5. Wayfinding & direction for tourists
6. Disconnect with the College
7. Unsafe crosswalk conditions
8. Unorganized streets (Bancroft & Johnson)
9. Lack of street furnishings
10. Undesirable Street Lighting
11. Alley Aesthetics



Form & Function

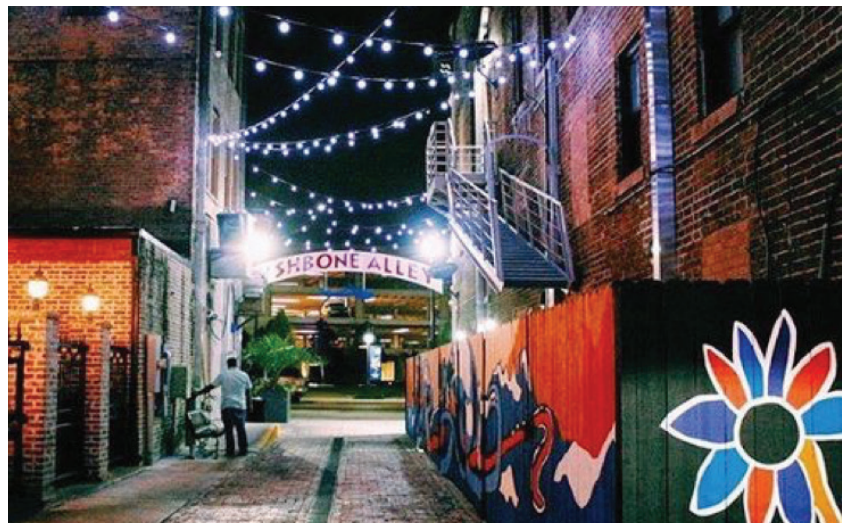


STARTING AT THE GATE

The main entrance into Fairhope is down Veteran’s Boulevard, which transitions to Section Street as it intersects Main Street and Highway 104. This intersection has caused 17 serious wrecks in the last twelve months. Cars coming off of the highway at 55 or 60 mph are expected to quickly transition to 35 mph, but they do not. The design team proposed a concept that has been previously discussed. A round-a-bout with a focal point flag pole or sculpture shall serve as a traffic calming mechanism to set a more walkable tone at the gateway into town, as opposed to two miles in.

MAKING LEMONADE

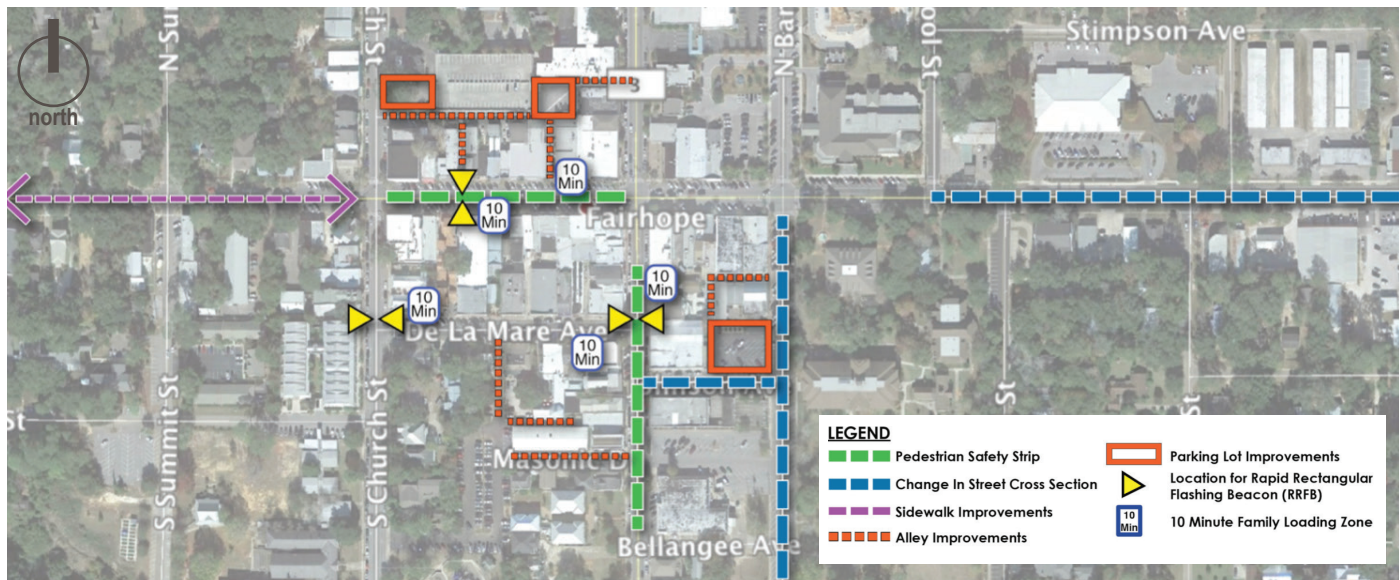
One of the ideas proposed by the design team was to enhance alleys in the downtown. The alleys are currently being utilized by pedestrians for access from parking areas, and they are currently unsightly. A major trend in U.S. cities is to create funky spaces in these previously undesirable, utilitarian corridors. Value, enhanced experience, and identity may be found in these improvements.



TOWN & GOWN

Coastal Community College currently inhabits a large portion of the downtown. However, with most downtown retailers and stakeholders, the college poses a negative threat, rather than a positive. The design team suggested improved relations by establishing a “Town & Gown” committee to work through these issues, as well as improve connecting streets like Johnson Avenue (left) to promote that link. This concept shoes reverse angled parking, and improvements made to the facade of PNC Bank.

Safety Solutions



IMPROVING SAFETY

The plan above identifies proposed improvements to streets in the downtown area of Fairhope. The photo to the right illustrates a “**Safety Strip.**” A safety strip is a flush but significant texture change from the drivable surface that slows vehicular travel while allowing a midway safe zone for pedestrians to rest while waiting for a car to pass. This strip can also be used as a delivery loading and unloading zone.



MID-BLOCK CROSSINGS

The image to the left showcases a mid-block crossing with a bulb out planter. This condition allows a pedestrian to get out to the edge of a parked car so they can be seen and in turn, see oncoming traffic. These bulb outs can be landscaped, as shown or they can be paved with a hardscape surface that increases the usable sidewalk area.

R.R.F.B.

The photograph shown to the right depicts a Rapid Rectangular Flashing Beacon (R.R.F.B.). These devices can be placed in mid-block crossings to call attention to the fact that there is a crossing. There is a button that a pedestrian can push when at a crosswalk, which causes the beacon to begin flashing. This highly visible flashing alerts oncoming traffic of the pedestrian.

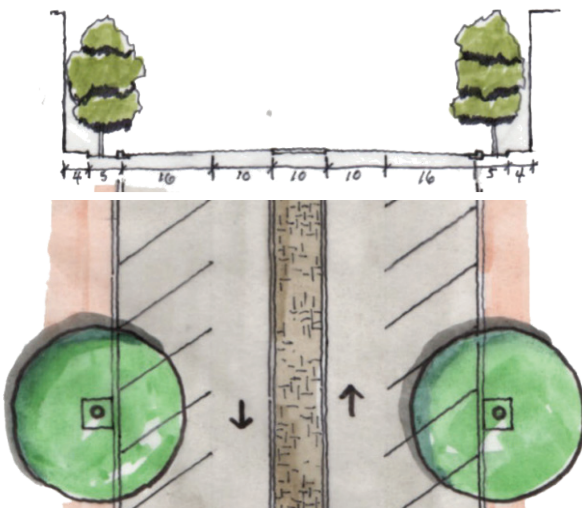


WALKABLE STREETS

Fairhope has a very walkable downtown currently. After the analysis walks and interviewing the steering committee, the design team proposed the following cross section improvements that incorporate the safety solutions described earlier into the current major streets in the downtown. These improvements will provide safer means of pedestrians the street, slower vehicular speeds, and improved aesthetics.

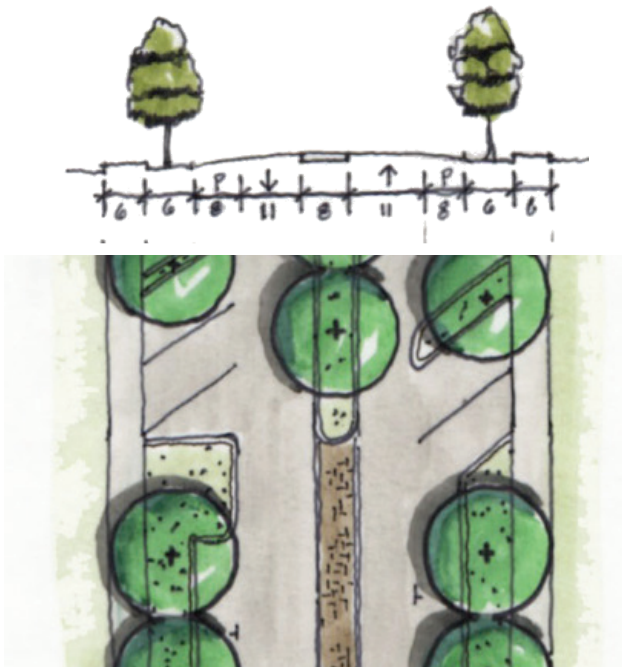
FAIRHOPE AVENUE

(BETWEEN SECTION & CHURCH)



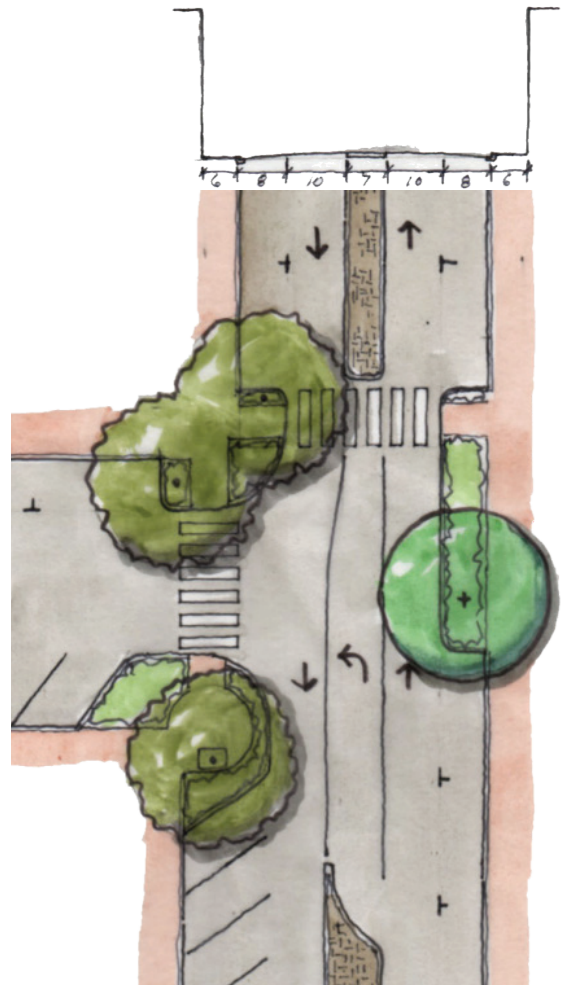
FAIRHOPE AVENUE

(EAST OF BANCROFT STREET)

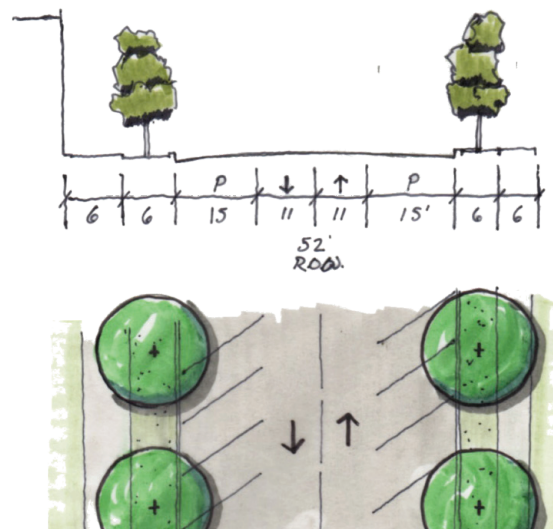


SECTION STREET

(AT DE LA MARE INTERSECTION)



BANCROFT STREET



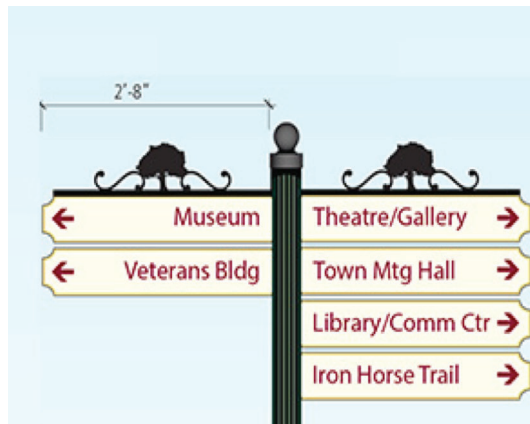
Wayfinding

WAYFINDING

Wayfinding refers to information systems that guide people through a physical environment and enhance their understanding and experience of the space. There are three general types of Wayfinding: Vehicular, Pedestrian and Informational.

VEHICULAR

Vehicular Wayfinding signs represent general information with graphics legible for people passing in an automobile or transit. These types of signs are found along roadways, and near major landmarks.



PEDESTRIAN

Pedestrian Wayfinding signs provide more specific detailed information regarding destinations, and can provide time and / or distance associated with walking to that place from the location of that sign.

INFORMATIONAL

Informational wayfinding is more appropriate for pedestrians and cyclists. These signs are typical detailed maps orienting users to their proximity and surroundings.

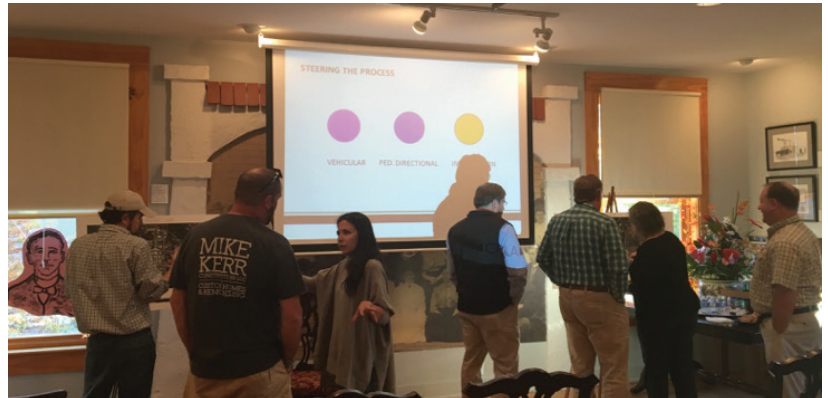


FINDING A WAYFINDING PLAN

The design team engaged the steering committee to help in the planning process for developing a wayfinding plan for the town of Fairhope as well as the downtown central business district.

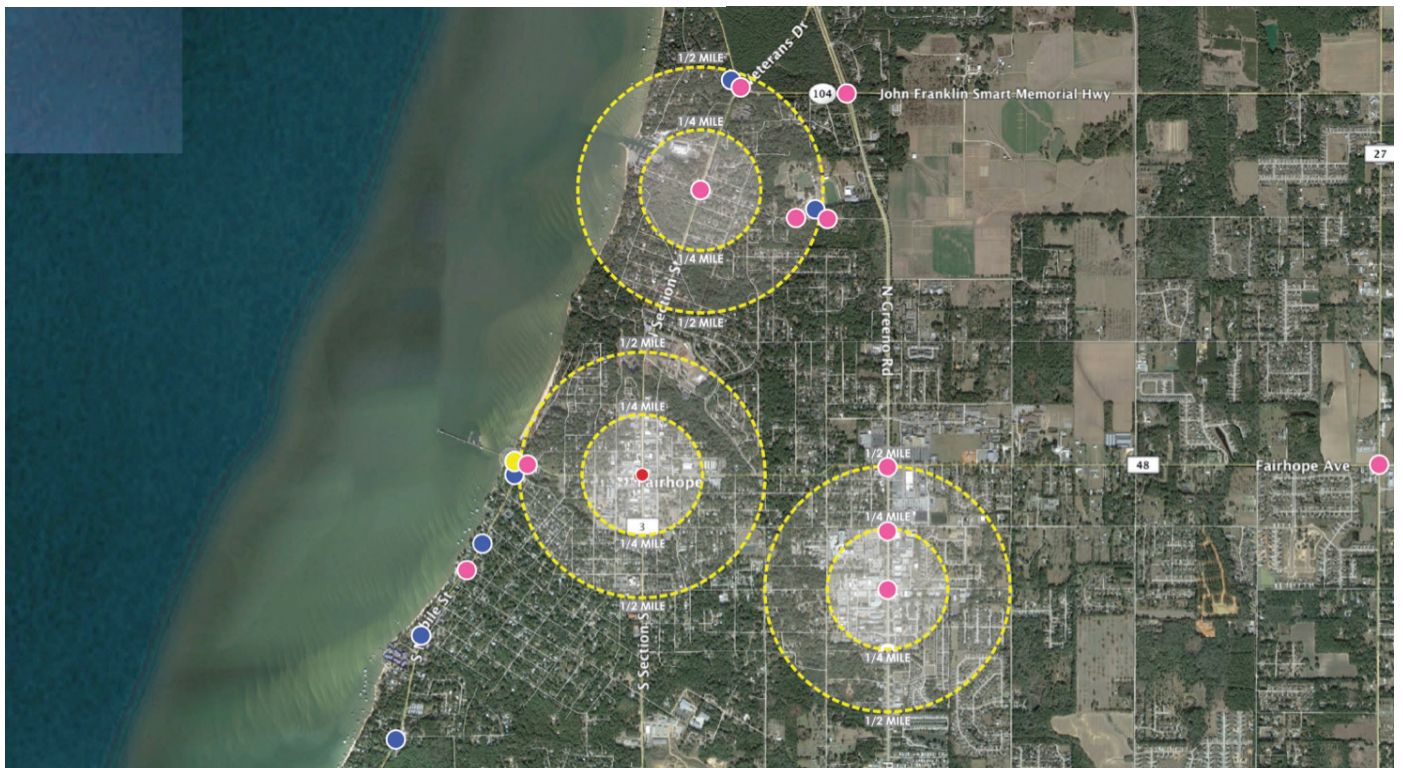
Taking a pin color coated to match the wayfinding sign types: Vehicular, Pedestrian, and Informational, the steering committee placed the appropriate signs in specific locations on two aerial maps.

From there, plans were developed for the greater Fairhope area, as well as the downtown. The map below depicts the entire town with the primary focus being on Vehicular wayfinding at critical intersections to direct traffic to various destinations.



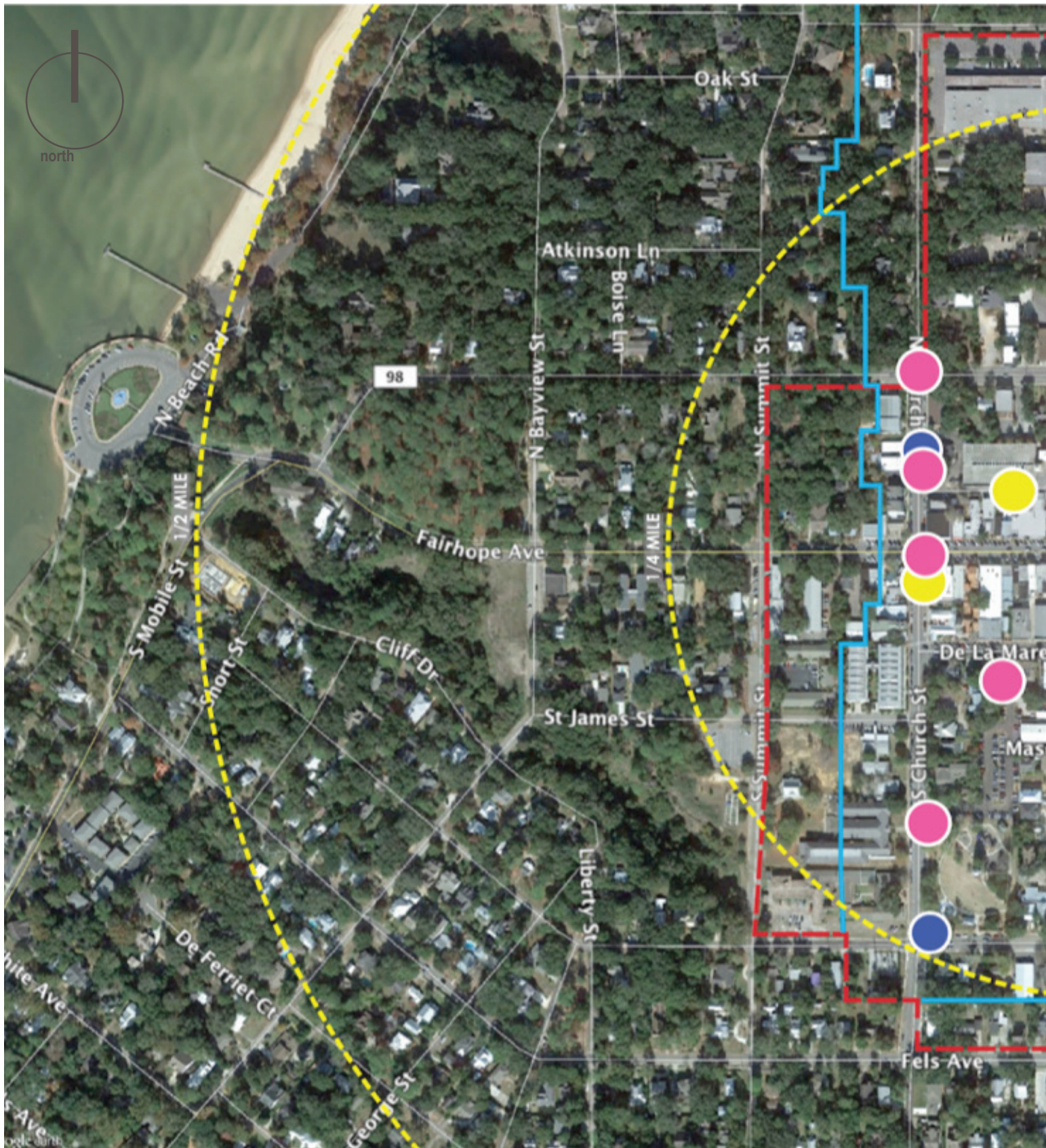
LEGEND

-  VEHICULAR WAYFINDING
-  PEDESTRIAN WAYFINDING
-  INFORMATION MAPS



Downtown Wayfinding Plan

Below is a the Wayfinding Plan for Downtown Fairhope. The dots represent the various Wayfinding signage types as reference in the Legend.



LEGEND



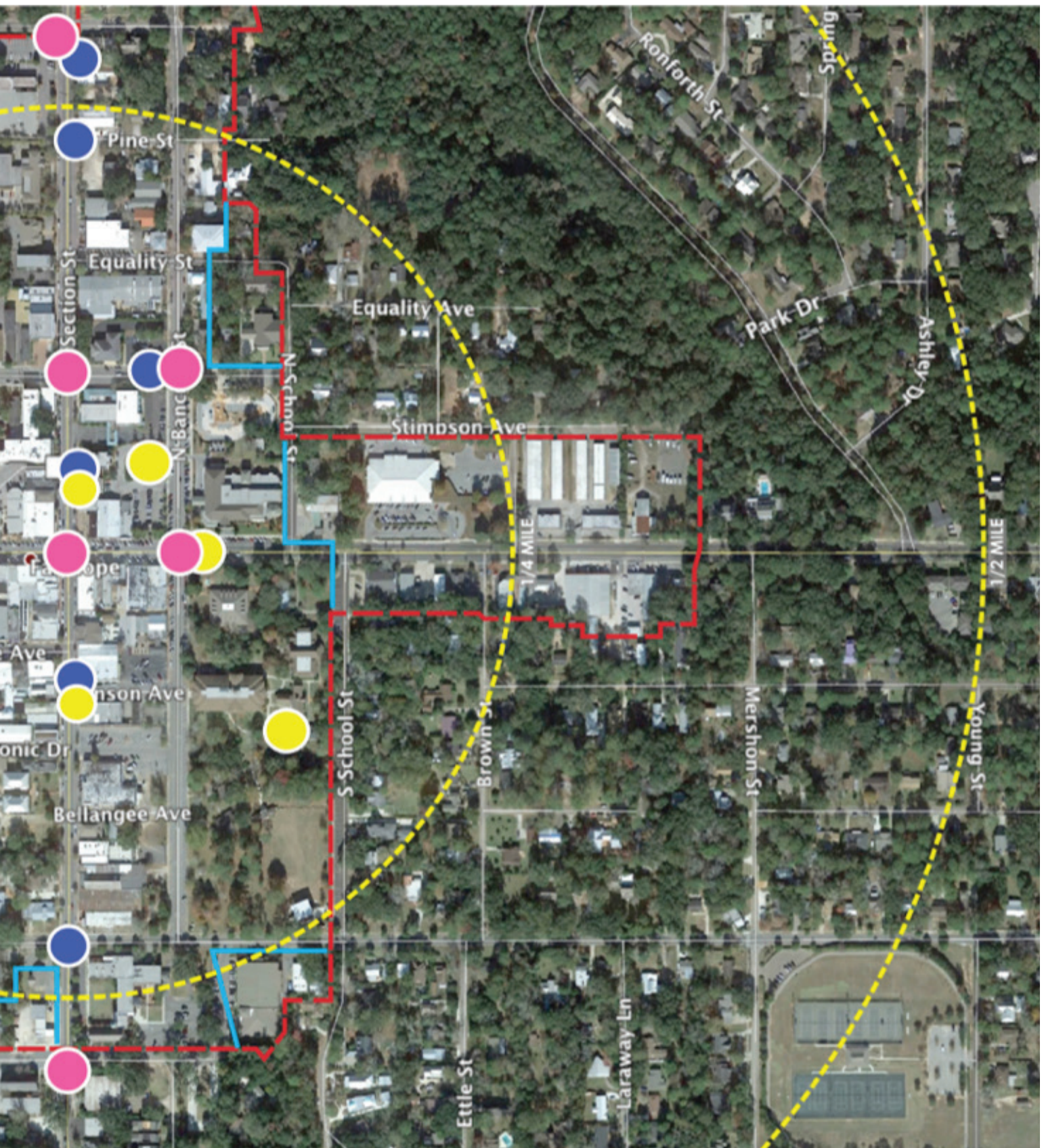
VEHICULAR WAYFINDING



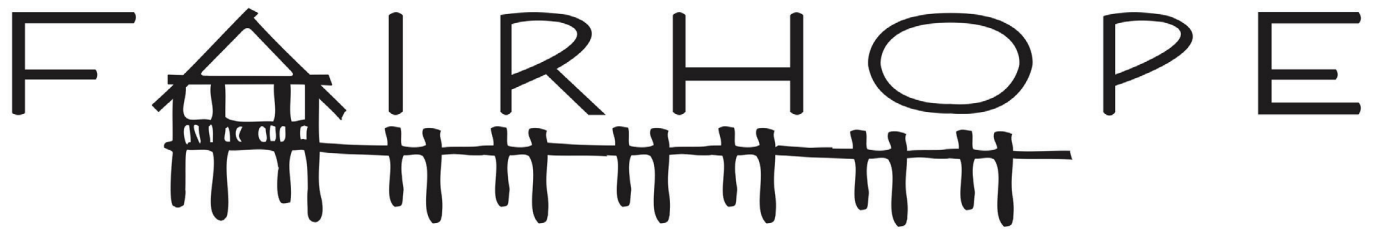
PEDESTRIAN WAYFINDING



INFORMATION MAPS



Branding & Signage



FINDING THE BRAND

Most businesses and cities spend a lot of time and money on figuring out a brand for themselves. Fairhope has the good fortune of inheriting an established brand created by the Fairhope Store. The word Fairhope, spelled out with a pier silhouette simply tells you what Fairhope is all about. The design team's recommendation during this planning effort was to not reinvent the wheel, but to embrace this established insignia and utilize it.

WAYFINDING SIGNAGE

During planning workshop, the design team showed wayfinding signage types to the steering committee and various stakeholders for input. The Fairhope branding was incorporated into the sign designs, and even into the vehicular sign itself.

The steering committee felt that the color coding of the different uses made the signage easier to read and more user friendly. The branding was also incorporated in a bike rack design to help illustrate how that would look.



VEHICULAR WAYFINDING



PEDESTRIAN WAYFINDING

Defining the Priorities

PROJECT PRIORITIES

As the City of Fairhope looks ahead to making the downtown a safer, more walkable place, the design team has identified the projects mentioned in this report in a time line format. This list begins with the least involved and ends with the most involved due to funding, engineering, etc. However, the time line can vary depending on any priorities that the City has.

PROJECT TIMELINE

Short-range Projects (1-2 years)

- Mid block neck downs
- Wayfinding
- Street furniture

Mid-range Projects (2-4 years)

- Alleys
- Safety strips
- Rapid Rectangular Flashing Beacons (RRFB)

Long-range Projects (4-8 years)

- Cross Section Retrofits
- Round-a-bout at Veterans & 104

