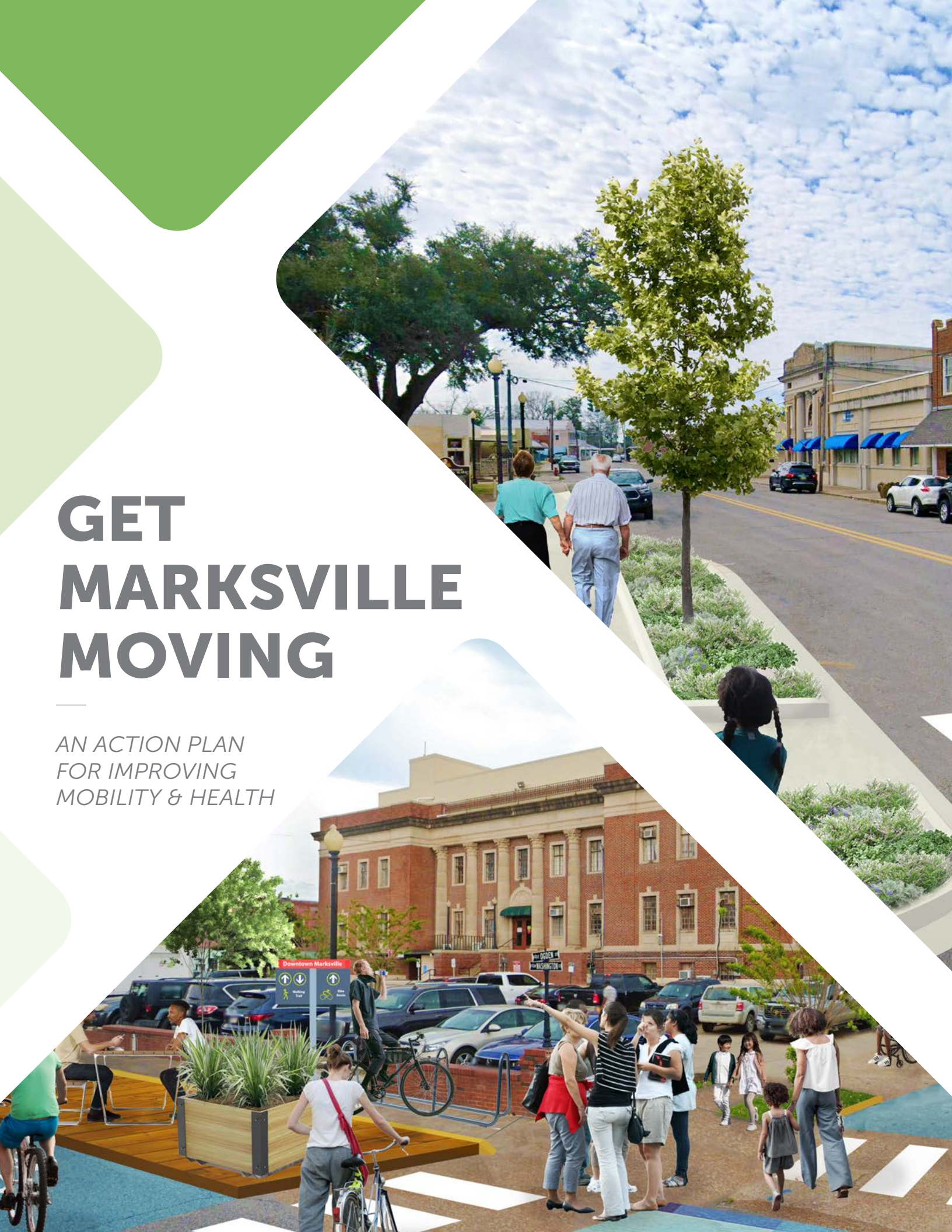


GET MARKSVILLE MOVING

AN ACTION PLAN
FOR IMPROVING
MOBILITY & HEALTH



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to the community members who contributed their time and local knowledge to this project.

Special thanks to:

Louisiana Department of Health/Well Ahead



City of Marksville, Louisiana



Marksville Main Street



Prepared by



CENTER for PLANNING EXCELLENCE

INTRODUCTION

The city of Marksville is the parish seat of Avoyelles Parish and is organized around its historic courthouse, the center of downtown. The downtown area is the heart of cultural and economic life in the city—where most of the events in the community happen. In 2020, Marksville’s population was 5,376 and its area 4.8 square miles. The city has a population density of 1,095 people per square mile, indicating that many community assets such as schools, restaurants, and other places of interest are within walking and/or biking distance of most residences. However, walking and biking around town is difficult and even dangerous in some places due to car-centric infrastructure design and a lack of pedestrian and biking facilities.

The buildings, roads, and other infrastructure around us contribute to our health in many ways—such as determining how physically active we are likely to be and influencing air and water quality, as well surface temperatures. Research has outlined negative correlations between our health and how car-dependent our communities are, as well as the negative impacts that climate change can have on our physical and mental health, including the inequitable impacts that these conditions have within different segments of the population. Additionally, how communities are arranged can also determine how socially connected we are, which research has shown actually has a greater impact on our health than high blood pressure, obesity and smoking. This wide array of contributing factors to our health points to the need for a coordinated and comprehensive response to changing the built environment to promote better health.

Increasing walkability within our communities and adding sidewalks can lower body mass index because it provides greater opportunities to get out and be active as part of our daily routine. Increasing the amount of greenspace and providing closer proximity to parks can improve our mental health and well-being. More green space also has correlations with lower rates of Alzheimer disease, diabetes, fewer incidences of high blood pressure, and lower rates of high cholesterol. Furthermore, walking and biking to daily destinations such as grocery stores and work reduces emissions of greenhouse gases by reducing fossil fuel consumption associated with driving. More green spaces can reduce greenhouse gases through photosynthesis and can reduce urban heat island effects.

This action plan presents a list of recommendations that will make Marksville a more accessible and connected environment for residents and visitors alike. This plan responds to input from residents of Marksville who want to revitalize downtown and foster economic development, increase quality of life and mobility, and better connect to community-wide and regional assets and attractions. This plan aims to improve the health outcomes for rural, minority, and elderly residents in the city of Marksville through resident engagement, capacity building, and the development of infrastructure and amenities that support and encourage safe physical activity, and access to healthy destinations. The document is organized into three focus areas:



Downtown: The historic district around the Parish Courthouse, organized along Main Street and Washington Street



Community: The areas within the city limits but outside of the downtown area, with a focus on improving infrastructure and providing spaces for the community to gather



Regional: The larger Marksville area and nearby cultural, environmental, and commercial attractions, including the nearby levee, Red River, Fort DeRussy, Indian Mounds, and Tunica-Biloxi Reservation

ASSESSMENT

Place

The community around us and how it is built influences our health in a number of ways. The layout of our community from the arrangement of land uses to the configuration of the roads influences how we choose to get around to address our daily needs. Communities that are safe and easy to walk or bike around, that have services and destinations within close proximity to where people live, and have areas where people can easily socialize are part of the solution to creating a healthier population. Understanding where Marksville excels and needs improvement in these key areas is important to help determine what types of improvements or changes might be needed to make a healthier lifestyle easier in Marksville.

Around the courthouse are dozens of historic civic, commercial, and residential buildings, many of them listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The preservation of these assets lends a strong sense of character to the downtown area, and the scale of the buildings and gridded streets give it good bones for pedestrian activity.

Marksville is like many Louisiana communities in that housing is generally separated from commercial and retail centers, and rural highways are the main connectors between destinations within the community. Community feedback noted that sidewalks are missing in many areas and are inconsistent throughout town.

Crossing highways can be difficult and there are a lack of crosswalks to provide safe passage. Bike lanes are also missing. As a result there are few opportunities to use active transportation—walking or biking— to get around, and the easiest way to navigate within the community typically is by car.

Downtown and the school complex are important nodes within the community. There are also a number of park and recreational assets that exist around town. However, residents have indicated that walking or biking to these assets can be challenging. Additionally, there are opportunities to continue to grow downtown to strengthen it as a destination for community socialization, such as building out a more formalized central gathering space for festivals, and encouraging social uses such as more cafes or coffee shops.

Marksville has a walkscore of 52 and a bikescore of 45. The scoring criteria are as follows:

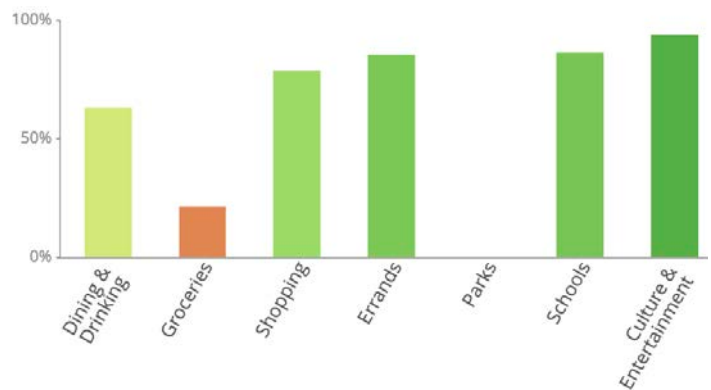
90–100: Walker’s paradise (Daily errands do not require a car)

70–89: Very walkable (Most errands can be accomplished on foot)

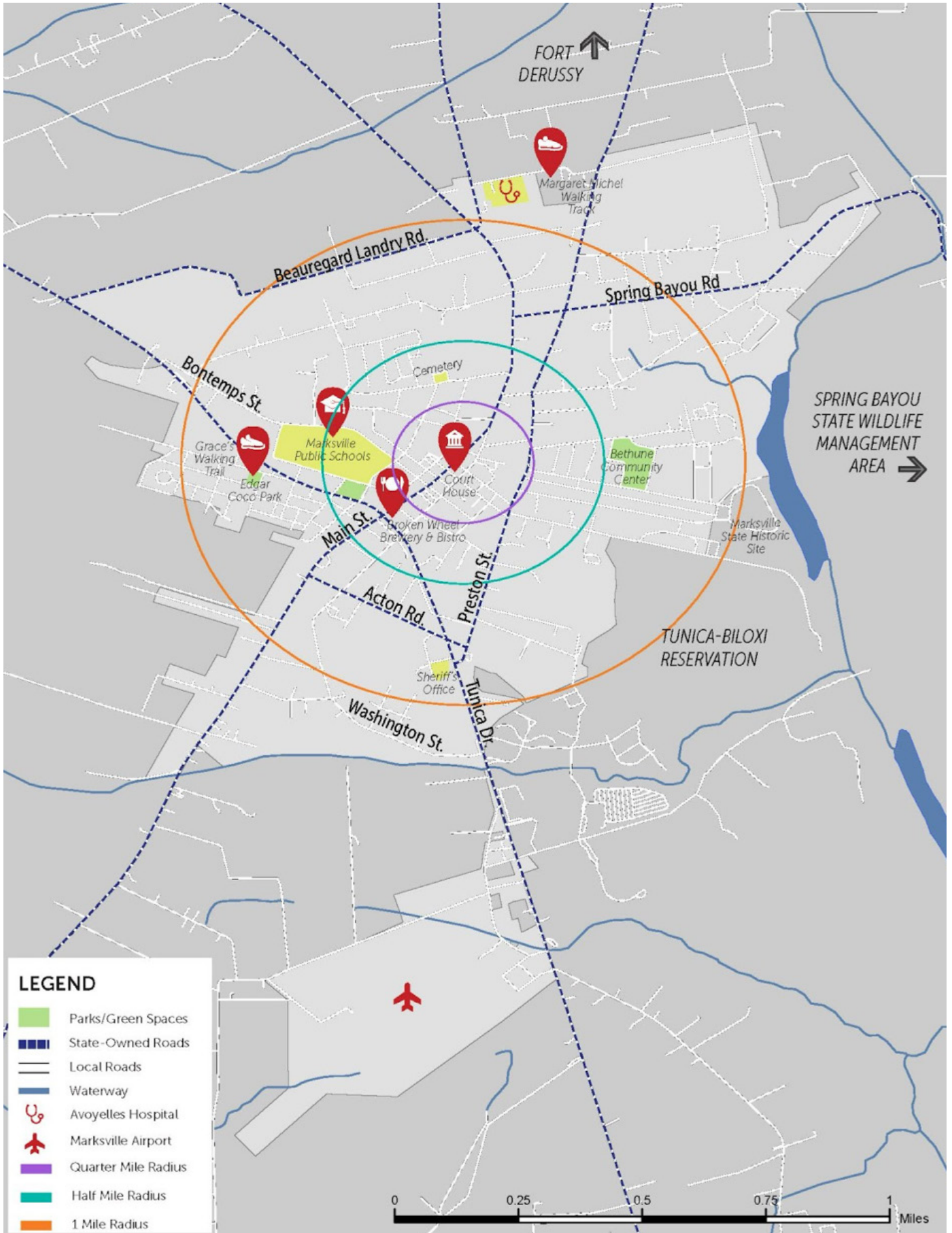
50–69: Somewhat walkable (Some errands can be accomplished on foot)

25–49: Car-dependent (Most errands require a car)

0–24: Car-dependent (Almost all errands require a car)



Marksville's walkscore by different categories



Context map

Community Health

A health profile for a community provides a summary of health characteristics common within a community's population. This not only paints a picture of overall general health of residents, but can also provide high-level direction for the types of further study necessary to determine possible contributing factors or the types of planning efforts that could be undertaken to improve these health outcomes. For instance, if a community has higher rates of respiratory disease, then issues around indoor and outdoor air quality merit a closer look. This

could lead to evaluating issues around the existing housing stock, traffic congestion, industrial pollution, and urban heat.

Looking at health data for Marksville reveals that the community has lower rates of people experiencing coronary heart disease or binge drinking compared to the state as a whole. However, residents in Marksville have a higher prevalence of obesity, physical inactivity, high blood pressure, smoking, frequent mental health distress, and lack of sleep compared to Louisiana as a whole.

Condition	Prevalence (%)		
	Marksville	Avoyelles	Louisiana
Obesity	45.9	42.7	38.1
High blood pressure	45.2	43.6	39.7
Less than 7 hours sleep	44.2	41.5	36
Physical inactivity	41.7	37.7	29
Current smoking	29.2	26.1	18.3
Frequent mental health distress	22.5	19.8	17.6
Frequent physical health distress	20.7	18.4	13.2
Lack of health insurance	20.4	18.2	8.9
Diabetes	16.5	15.2	14.1
COPD	11.9	10.7	8.4
High cholesterol	37.5	39	37.6
Binge Drinking	16.4	17.3	20.6
Coronary heart disease	9.6	9.2	10.5

Walking and biking to destinations such as work, school, and grocery stores are great ways to get the recommended amount of physical activity for adults – about 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week.

LESS THAN 1 MILE PER DAY

Walking as little as 5 ½ miles a week has been shown to reduce the risk of cardiovascular events by 31% - that's less than a mile a day!

EVERY LITTLE BIT COUNTS!

Physical activity can be performed 10 minutes at a time, throughout the day, to reach your 30-minute goal.

Plans and Policies

There are numerous policies and regulations that influence how communities are laid out. Policies and decisions relating to land use, transportation options, housing, and open space are some of the primary building blocks to determining the form of our cities and neighborhoods. Typical examples of these guiding and regulatory documents range from policy documents (such as comprehensive plans, trail and bike master plans, parks master plans, and complete streets policies) to detailed regulations such as zoning ordinances, subdivision regulations and street standards. Consequently, these regulations and policies can provide the backbone for building out a healthier community if crafted appropriately.

Development in Marksville is largely guided by a Comprehensive Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance adopted in 1971, with subsequent updates in 1972, 1974, 1990, 2000, and 2017. While certain zoning districts require a minimum amount of usable open space—which can encourage recreation and outdoor activity—there are not currently provisions that promote development patterns, a mix of uses, or pedestrian amenities that promote and encourage walkability. Amended development regulations combined with the creation of a Master Street Plan that promotes Complete Streets are critical to guide incremental changes that can create a more walkable Marksville over time as development occurs and streets are rebuilt. Additionally, more specific guidance on the development of parks and open space city-wide can ensure equitable access to recreational opportunities throughout the community.



Improving access to safe places to walk or bike around Marksville provides residents with powerful tools for boosting physical activity and enjoying significant health benefits.

GO EASY

Biking is gentle on joints, strengthens core muscles, and improves balance.

LOWER YOUR NUMBERS

Walking and biking improve heart function and help lower blood pressure and cholesterol.

DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENTS

Downtown Marksville is the heart of the city and the nexus of several local cultural, historical, and economic assets. The fabric of downtown is well-suited for pedestrian-friendly investment; the minimal setbacks, existing sidewalks, historic architecture, and grid layout are all conducive to a vibrant downtown environment. The organization and use of the right-of-way has a significant impact on pedestrian safety and the feasibility of multimodal activity. The road right-of-way in downtown ranges from 40 feet to 60 feet, with Main Street and Washington Street having the most generous right-of-ways. The following list of priority investments will build on downtown's solid foundation and encourage more pedestrian and cyclist activity by making active transportation safer and more accessible.

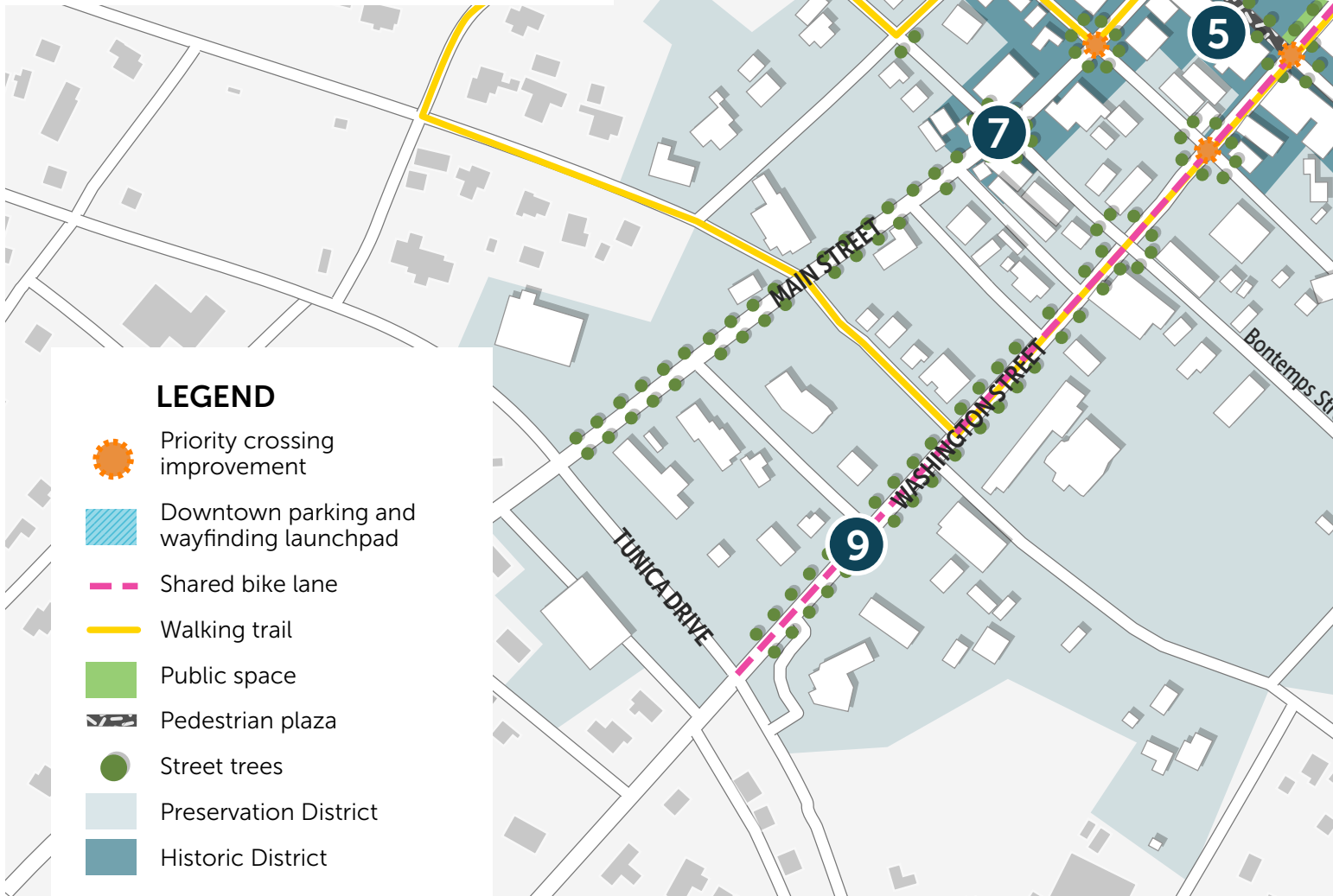
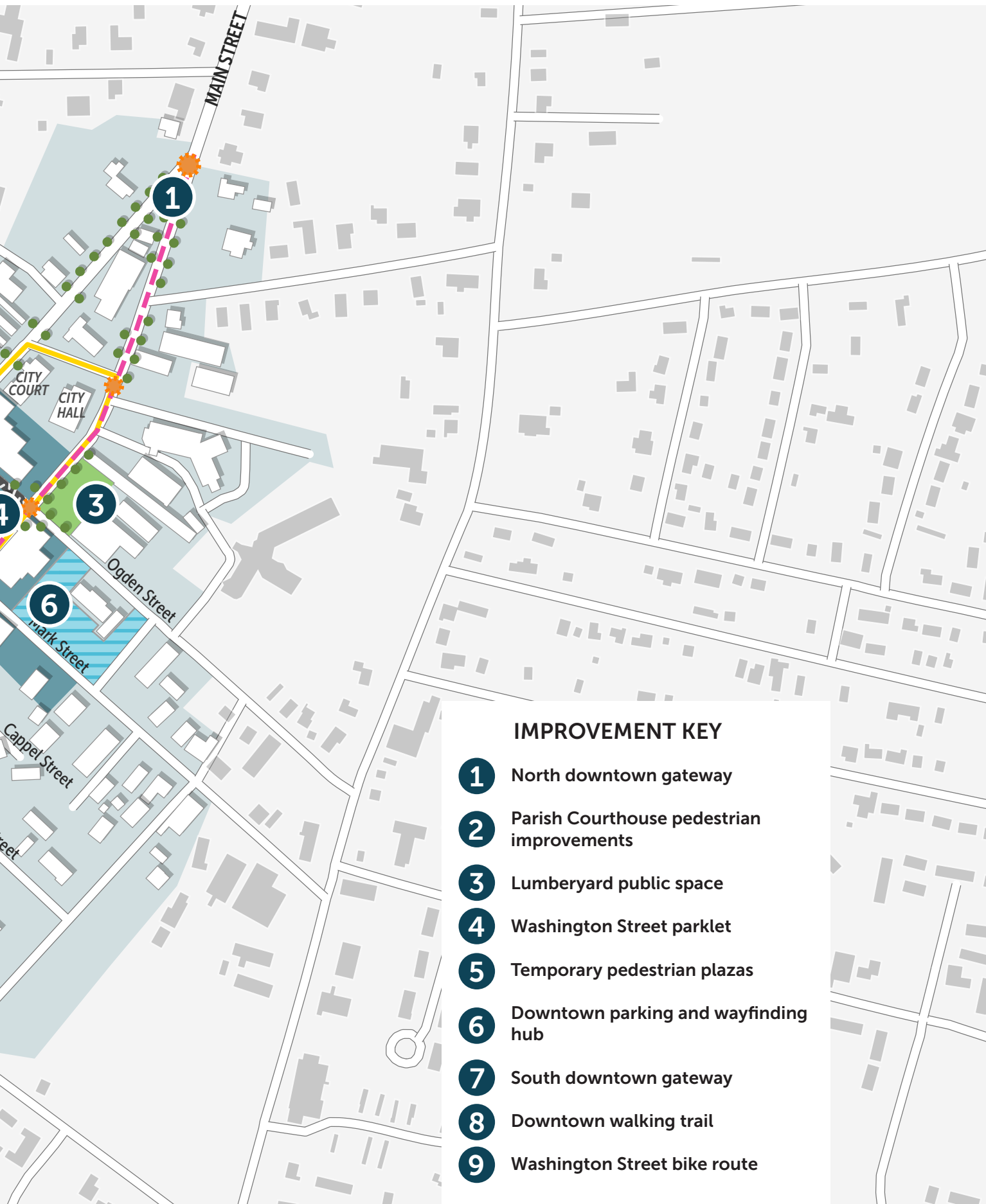
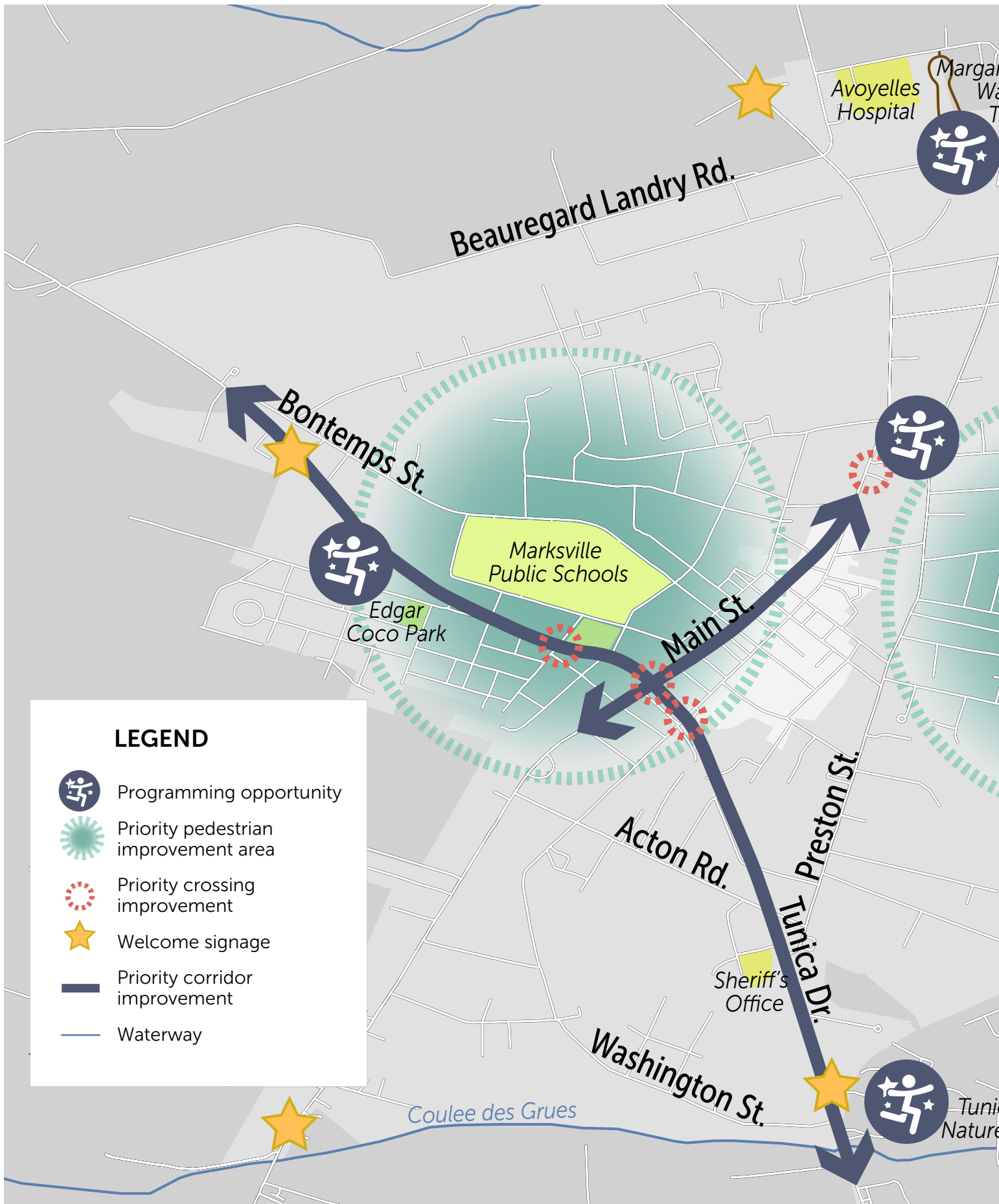


Diagram of proposed downtown improvements



IMPROVEMENT KEY

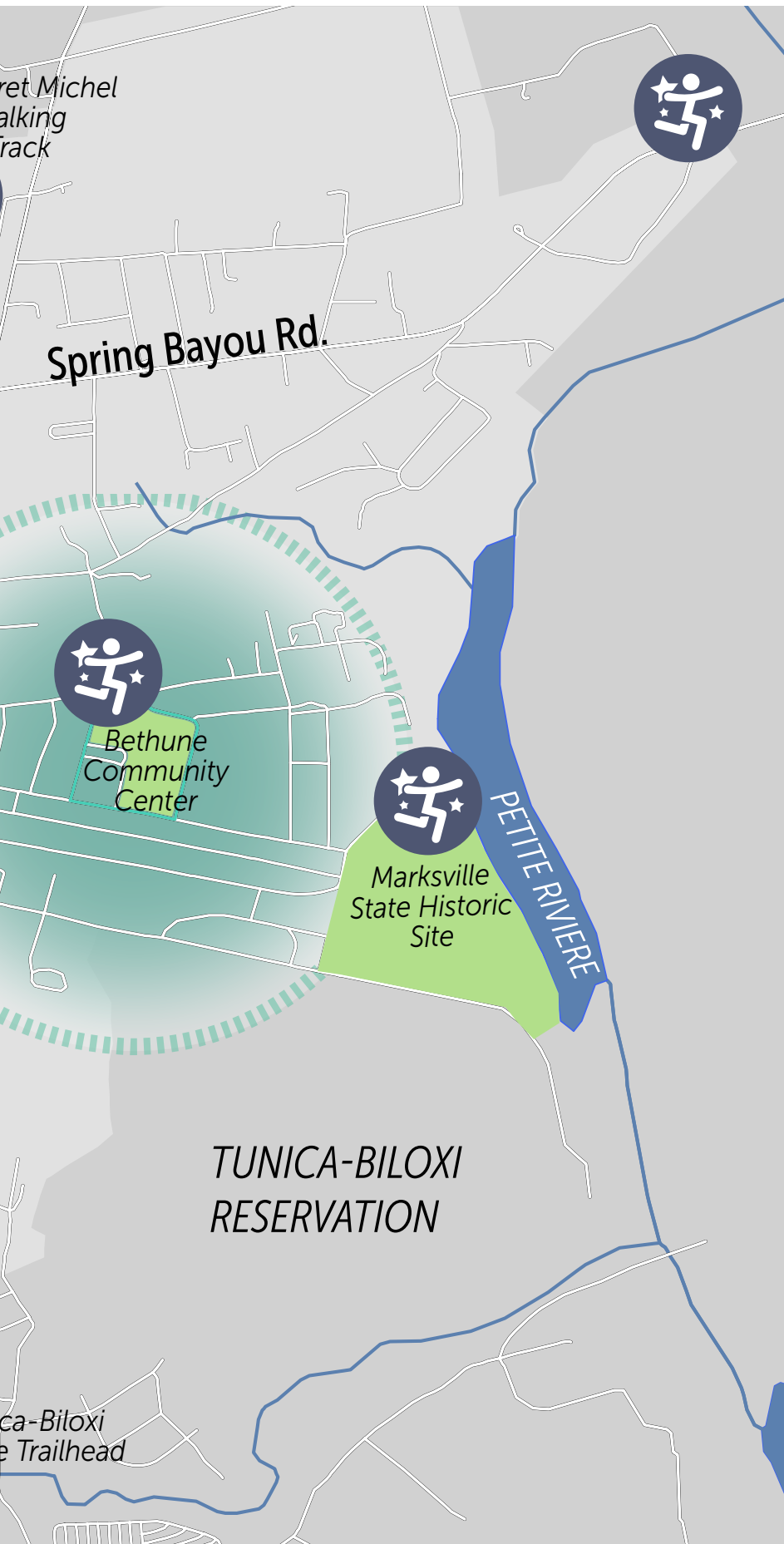
- 1 North downtown gateway
- 2 Parish Courthouse pedestrian improvements
- 3 Lumberyard public space
- 4 Washington Street parklet
- 5 Temporary pedestrian plazas
- 6 Downtown parking and wayfinding hub
- 7 South downtown gateway
- 8 Downtown walking trail
- 9 Washington Street bike route



LEGEND

-  Programming opportunity
-  Priority pedestrian improvement area
-  Priority crossing improvement
-  Welcome signage
-  Priority corridor improvement
-  Waterway

Diagram of proposed community improvements



COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENTS

Many of Marksville's schools, residential neighborhoods, stores, and other community assets are located outside of the downtown area. Improving connectivity within the community, particularly to these community anchors and to the downtown, is a primary goal of this plan.

Pedestrian improvements (like continuous sidewalks, highly visible pedestrian crossings, shade, benches, and wayfinding) should be prioritized in proximity to Marksville's schools and its community center, establishing those areas as accessible and safe for walking. Combined with the proposed downtown improvements, this will help establish a network of pedestrian-friendly mobility investments that encourage healthy activity and recreation across the city of Marksville.

Corridor improvements on the primary thoroughfares, Tunica Drive and Main Street, could include tree plantings, public art, gateway installations, and wayfinding--encouraging active transportation and helping instill a sense of place within Marksville.

GOALS & STRATEGIES

OFFERING SAFE STREETS THAT SERVE ALL USERS

- 1.1 Reduce speed limit to 25mph on all downtown streets
- 1.2 Build curb extensions on downtown blocks with on-street parking
- 1.3 Develop a continuous network of downtown sidewalks
- 1.4 Improve intersection crossings
- 1.5 Provide essential pedestrian amenities like benches, lighting, and shade
- 1.6 Mark sharrows on Washington Street
- 1.7 Provide bike racks and repair stations
- 1.8 Designate bike routes to schools and identify them with appropriate striping and signage
- 1.9 Develop corridor plans for Tunica Drive and Main Street that provide detailed streetscape improvements for these corridors

BUILDING VIBRANT PUBLIC GATHERING SPACES

- 2.1 Redevelop the lumberyard site as a premier public space in Marksville
- 2.2 Build a parklet in the existing right-of-way behind the Parish Courthouse
- 2.3 Improve public amenities on Main Street outside of the Parish Courthouse
- 2.4 Create additional public space by temporarily converting low-volume downtown streets to pedestrian plazas

ENCOURAGING EXPLORATION

- 3.1 Install signage identifying the primary public downtown parking lot behind the Voinche Building
- 3.2 Restripe all on-street parking spots
- 3.3 Actively pursue the redevelopment of underutilized surface parking lots
- 3.4 Offer diverse public community programming options
- 3.5 Install gateway markers identifying the downtown district
- 3.6 Install wayfinding markers identifying key downtown assets
- 3.7 Identify a downtown walking trail
- 3.8 Actively pursue the redevelopment of vacant and abandoned downtown properties
- 3.9 Develop and enforce downtown design guidelines
- 3.10 Develop regional multi-use trail connecting cultural, natural, and historic resources

UPDATING POLICIES AND REGULATIONS

- 4.1 Update Comprehensive Plan
- 4.2 Review and update development regulations
- 4.3 Develop city-wide transportation master plan with a focus on Complete Streets
- 4.4 Develop city-wide open space plan
- 4.5 Review and update the City's Capital Improvement Plan







OFFERING SAFE STREETS THAT SERVE ALL USERS

Marksville's streets play a large role in defining the character of the community, including downtown, and facilitating safe activity in the area. Streets work best when they meet the needs of motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians with all levels of ability.

Reduce speed limit to 25mph on all downtown streets and high-pedestrian areas



Reducing the speed limit on downtown streets to 25mph will decrease the frequency and severity of crashes. When drivers travel at a slower speed, they have a wider cone of vision and can react more quickly to pedestrians and cyclists in the roadway. Reducing the speed limit will also help signify to travelers that they are entering a special area where there is regular foot traffic. There are currently very few speed limit signs posted in the downtown area, but increasing the visibility of a lower 25mph speed limit with new signage will help raise driver awareness of lower speeds and better ensure compliance. Speed limit signage is especially important on Main Street.

Speed limits contribute to visibility on the road and affect drivers' ability to react to other motorists, cyclists and pedestrians in a timely manner diminishing the risk of serious injury if a crash does occur. Considerations for appropriate speed limits include:

- the level of traffic,
- number of bicycles likely to use the road,
- road functional classification (i.e. principal arterial, minor collector, etc.),
- lane width, types of surrounding land uses,
- number of driveways or points of ingress and egress entering the road,
- and road configuration and alignment.

In Marksville, many of the primary thoroughfares are state roads and are classified as either minor arterials or major or minor collectors. While speed limits on state roads are set according to strict engineering standards set in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), the Marksville code of ordinances states that the mayor and city council may impose maximum speed limits and implement traffic control measures so long as they are approved in writing by the state highway department (Article I, Sec. 36-1 and 36-2, 2018).

Lower speed limits and/or traffic calming elements (infrastructure improvements that improve speed limit compliance) could contribute to a safer and more bicycle and pedestrian-friendly environment on Marksville's roadways.

Install curb extensions on downtown blocks with on-street parking



Curb extensions, or bump-outs, make the neck of a street narrower at intersections. They require cars to slow down before making turns, which reduces the frequency and severity of conflicts with pedestrians and cyclists. They also give pedestrians more lead time when crossing the street, which allows cars to see them better. Since roads in downtown Marksville are already designed to accommodate on-street parking, curb extensions are a good fit and would not require any additional right-of-way or lane reconfiguration.

While curb extensions are a relatively low-cost improvement involving common materials like concrete, implementation expenses can be further reduced by painting curb extensions onto the street. This can be a practical way to pilot such improvements before permanent installation.

Develop a continuous network of sidewalks



Continuous, accessible sidewalks are the foundation of walkable environments. The existing sidewalks in downtown Marksville make it difficult for those in wheelchairs, walkers, or other assistive devices to move around. Sidewalks should be a sufficient width for two people to comfortably walk past each other (approximately 5 feet, minimum) and should allow for safe at-grade crossings at road intersections. A thorough sidewalk inventory and audit should be conducted to identify priority improvement areas.

Sidewalks increase pedestrian safety and comfort by providing a dedicated space for pedestrians that is buffered from faster moving cars and trucks. Designing and constructing these improvements on state roads



Conceptual illustration of proposed Main Street crossing improvements



that serve as major connectors through town will require coordination with LA DOTD.

Improve pedestrian crossings at street intersections



Ensuring that clearly-marked crosswalks are accessible to travelers of all abilities in and around areas where high-levels of pedestrian activity is desired or anticipated is an important step toward making walking around Marksville safer. Crosswalks not only help make walking a safe option but they also get people out and moving for shorter trips around town. Crossings can be made safer by using paint or a distinct paving material to clearly identify intersections. Intersections and crosswalks can also be raised slightly above street grade to improve safety. Additionally, pedestrian street crossings can be signalized to allow sufficient time for safe passage.

Many of the main roads in town are part of the state highway system; improvements to those facilities will need to be coordinated with LA DOTD. The Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) that includes the city of Marksville, the Rapides Area Planning Commission, will be a valuable resource for coordinating these efforts. While safe highway crossings can benefit many areas

within Marksville, these improvements should be prioritized at intersections adjacent to public services and common community destinations.

Provide essential pedestrian amenities like benches, lighting, and shade



Street trees provide many benefits to downtown environments, including shade for pedestrians and parked vehicles and contributing to a sense of place. Street trees should be spaced at least 25' apart and should be given sufficient room and soil. Additionally, tree species should be selected with hardiness, drought resistance, pest resistance, and growth patterns in mind—particularly where trees may come into contact with power lines. Sight lines should also be maintained; trees should not obscure intersection visibility.

Overhead power lines will make tree planting more challenging in the downtown area. While relocating utilities underground can be an attractive long-term solution, it may be cost prohibitive in the short-term. Some alternatives include planting small street trees in curb extensions or in tree wells within the existing right-

Painted curb extensions in Baltimore, MD

This traffic calming intervention and street art installation represents the seasonal changes and diversity of Baltimore’s Reservoir Hill neighborhood. The design was inspired by community input and meets dual goals of improving safety while also beautifying the neighborhood. It demonstrates a low-cost method of installing curb extensions.



Source: GRAHAM COREIL-ALLEN / GRAHAM PROJECTS LLC

of-way.

Lighting is an important element of pedestrian safety. Lighting should be installed or improved on major thoroughfares—notably, Main Street and Washington Street. Lighting on these critical downtown corridors currently consists of flood lights fixed to tall wooden electrical poles. Installing light poles that match the pedestrian scale of the architecture will help reinforce walkability.

Pedestrian amenities like benches, trash cans, and bicycle racks can encourage people to spend more time in downtown Marksville, potentially generating economic activity. Benches should be installed or improved on major thoroughfares—notably, Main Street and Washington Street. Funding the installation of pedestrian amenities like these can be an opportunity for partnerships with local businesses or civic groups.

Mark sharrows on Washington Street



Sharrows designate a lane that is shared by vehicles and bikes. Washington Street is a good candidate for shared lanes given its low traffic volume and sufficient right-of-way.



Bike amenities along the Downtown Greenway in Baton Rouge, LA

Provide bike racks and repair stations

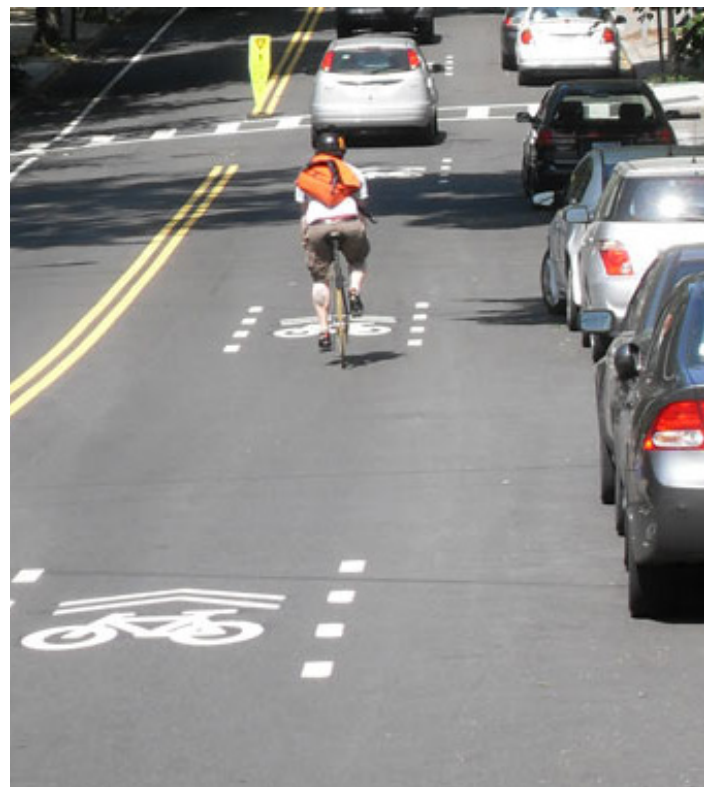


The city can support bikeability by installing bike racks and repair stations. Civic destinations are priority locations for these amenities. The downtown business community can support this effort by sponsoring bike racks in the area.

Designate bike routes to schools and identify them with appropriate striping and signage



Improving routes that connect neighborhoods to schools not only creates a safer environment for students to walk and bike to school, but also improves pedestrian and bike access to many recreational amenities that are on or near school property. Marksville’s public schools are clustered together, so money invested to improve routes will benefit multiple schools. Additionally, there are recreational amenities such as tennis courts and ball fields that could be available for community use when the schools are not using them for games or practice.



Shared lane markings

- Define the primary routes that are currently being used by students to access schools
- Ensure that intersections on routes connecting to schools have high visibility crosswalks and ADA ramping
- Provide for bike access either through clear pavement markings, or with bike lanes as space allows
- Ensure adequate bike parking at schools
- Provide for continuous sidewalks that are in good condition and of sufficient width for groups of people walking together

Develop corridor plans for Tunica Drive and Main Street that provide detailed streetscape improvements for these corridors



Tunica Drive and Main Street are the primary east-west, north-south corridors in the community, and they are the routes by which residents and visitors typically move within and through Marksville. These corridors have the potential to reinforce Marksville’s community character and increase mobility for all residents and visitors. Potential corridor improvements include the following.

- Welcome signage near city limits
- Street trees
- Consistent, accessible sidewalks
- Crosswalks and other crossing improvements at significant intersections
- Buffered, protected bike lanes



Existing conditions on Tunica Drive, with opportunities for safety improvements, better crossing conditions, and gateway/character installations



BUILDING VIBRANT PUBLIC GATHERING SPACES

Public space is an essential component of thriving communities. Currently, there is not much public space available in the city for community events or larger regional festivals. The city should seek to acquire one or more underutilized parcels in the downtown core to provide a flexible space for public events and regularly scheduled programming downtown.

Redevelop the lumberyard site as a premier public space in Marksville—a downtown living room



During the development of this plan, it was brought to the attention of the project team that a large lumber yard near the Parish Courthouse may soon be available for purchase. This parcel could be a great opportunity for developing public space and hosting community events. Due to the industrial past of the site, it may be a good candidate for the Environmental Protection Agency's Brownfields program to assist with remediation and redevelopment.

Build a parklet in the existing right-of-way behind the Parish Courthouse



The existing right-of-way along Washington Street behind the courthouse is an ideal location for a public parklet or other flexible shared space. There is not currently on-street parking on this side of the block, leaving the right-of-way empty and underutilized. This parklet could provide outdoor seating for nearby cafes or restaurants and encourage downtown visitors to spend

more time in the area. The parklet would be a great site for a downtown trailhead with wayfinding materials and bike amenities.

Improve public amenities on Main Street outside of the Parish Courthouse



The Parish Courthouse is the anchor of downtown Marksville and could offer additional amenities to downtown visitors. The lawn in front of the courthouse could be enhanced with planting areas, benches, public art, and exhibitions featuring the city's history and culture.

Create additional public space by temporarily converting low-volume downtown streets to pedestrian plazas



Many of the streets downtown have low daily traffic counts and would be good candidates for temporary pedestrian plazas. These streets could be temporarily closed for community events, creating additional public space when it is needed. Ogden Street and Mark Street are two good candidates for this treatment.

Sunset Triangle Plaza

Sunset Triangle Plaza in Los Angeles transformed one block of an underutilized public right of way from a car-centric artery into a safe, pleasant, and vibrant public space for pedestrians and cyclists. Temporary projects like this allow cities to quickly and inexpensively reclaim street space using simple materials—in this case paint and planters—and recapture streets for people.



Temporary pedestrian plaza installation at Sunset Triangle Plaza (RIOS)





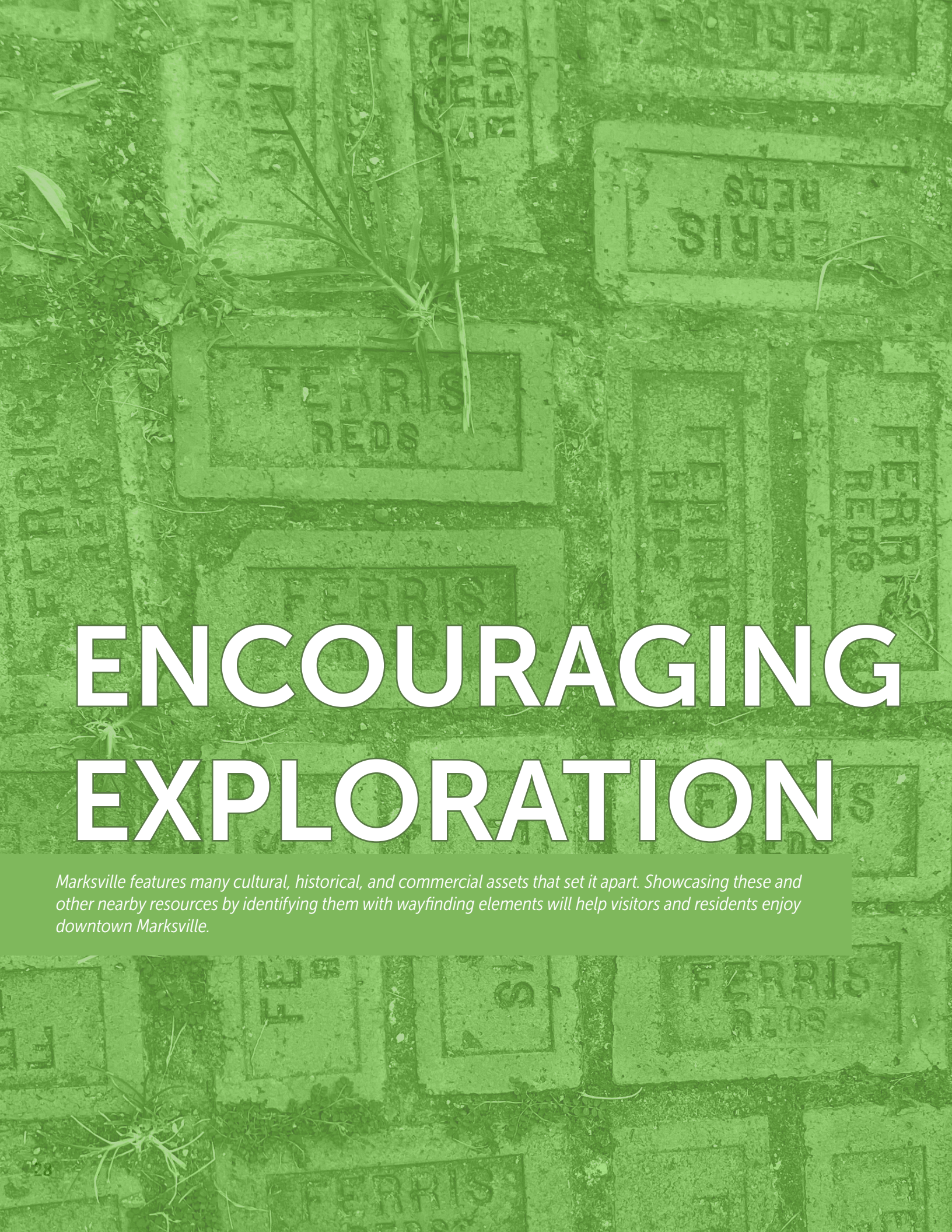
Conceptual illustration of proposed lumberyard park and public space





Conceptual illustration of proposed Washington Street parklet





ENCOURAGING EXPLORATION

Marksville features many cultural, historical, and commercial assets that set it apart. Showcasing these and other nearby resources by identifying them with wayfinding elements will help visitors and residents enjoy downtown Marksville.

Install signage identifying the primary public downtown parking lot behind the Voinche Building



The public parking lot behind the Voinche building is a well-designed lot that offers convenient parking at the center of downtown. The Voinche Atrium also offers an opportunity to showcase wayfinding materials along with local displays of art and culture. It is also in close proximity to the proposed priority downtown public spaces. This parking lot should be identified as the primary public downtown parking lot with clear, prominent signage along Main Street and Washington Street.

Restripe all on-street parking spots



On-street parking is important to businesses downtown, as they allow customers convenient parking near their destination. Nearly all of the downtown streets are used for on-street parking; however, this use is not formalized on many downtown blocks. Restriping the available on-street parking spaces is a low-cost, effective way to maximize the efficiency of on-street parking downtown.

Actively pursue redevelopment of underutilized surface parking lots



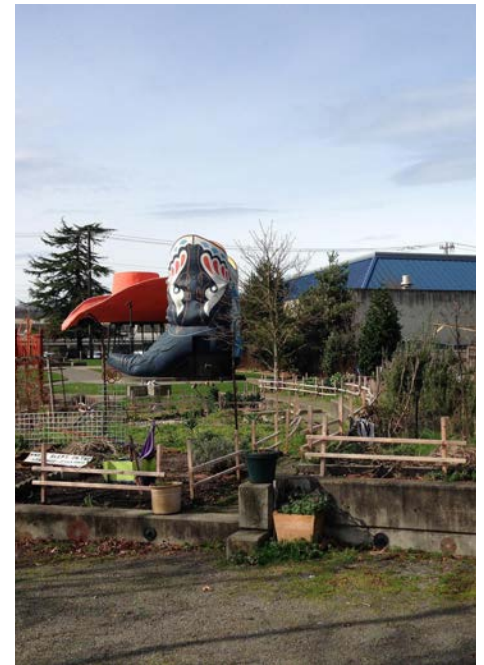
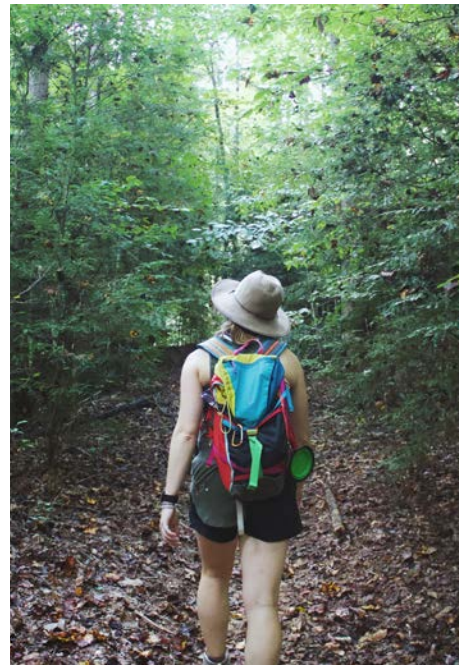
There are several empty or underutilized parking lots in the downtown area. As downtown grows and becomes more of a destination for residents and visitors, the city should prioritize these parcels for redevelopment and/or new public spaces. When infill development of this kind occurs, design guidelines should be enforced to maintain the historic character of the downtown district.

Offer diverse public programming options



Provide consistent access to events that promote physical activity, healthy living and recreation, the local economy, social interaction, and education. These venues could be housed in repurposed existing buildings and facilities to promote redevelopment.

- Access to green space and spaces for public gathering has been shown to contribute positively to community health outcomes like reduced stress, better mental health, increased physical activity, and greater social cohesion.
- Lack of social connections has a greater impact upon health than obesity, high blood pressure, or smoking. Regular programming can aid in providing these important connections.



Potential healthy programming opportunities: group exercise, hiking and birding activities, community gardening classes

Install gateway markers identifying the downtown district



Entrances into the downtown area on Main Street should be identified with character markers like monument signage, gateway structures, or other installations. Lighting fixtures and poles can also contribute to the character of a place and support banners which identify the area and/or advertise events.

The triangle-shaped parcel at the intersection of Main Street and Washington Street provides a unique opportunity to install an artistic gateway element that highlights the culture of Marksville and showcases the offerings of downtown.

Install wayfinding markers identifying key downtown assets



Wayfinding markers could be placed at downtown thresholds to welcome visitors and distinguish this historic, pedestrian-oriented area from the rest of the city. This signage should help orient users and identify notable assets downtown. It should also identify attractions that are not in downtown, but are accessible from downtown—this will encourage visitors to use downtown as a launching point for visiting nearby attractions. The Voinche Atrium is an ideal location for a downtown wayfinding hub, given its proximity to parking and downtown anchors. This space could be curated with temporary or permanent installations that tell the story of Marksville and identify various downtown destinations. The proposed parklet and park on Washington Street would also make great candidates for wayfinding markers.

Identify a downtown walking trail



Downtown Marksville is home to several historic structures and unique cultural destinations. Organizing a walking trail is a great way to encourage active lifestyles and feature these important community landmarks. This walking trail could be piloted by using temporary trail markers affixed to the sidewalks, then made more permanent as funds are available.

Actively pursue the redevelopment of vacant and abandoned downtown properties



Vacant and abandoned properties downtown discourage activity and investment. There are several of these properties in downtown Marksville. While there are many other priority investments that can be made to encourage downtown development and activity, one of the most significant long-term priorities will be to bring vacant and abandoned properties back into commerce. The city can conduct targeted outreach to owners of these properties, offer incentives for property improvements, and/or prioritize enforcement procedures for buildings that are in violation of city code.

Develop and enforce downtown design guidelines



The urban design of downtown plays a significant role in encouraging activity. Building facades have the power to communicate many messages to visitors; well-maintained, busy storefronts can be a major generator for additional pedestrian and bike activity. The city, main street association, or civic groups can partner to assist business owners in improving their building facades. Incentivizing the addition of awnings can provide shade for pedestrians and offer a more hospitable environment for people to spend time downtown.

Downtown Lafayette, LA

Downtown Lafayette has undergone a renaissance, and establishing gateway identifiers and wayfinding elements has been a critical component of redevelopment. The wayfinding system, designed by local firms SO Studio and Makemade, features vernacular Louisiana French and highlights civic destinations, public spaces, and more.



Downtown wayfinding and gateways (Credit: SO Studio, Developing Lafayette)

A walking trail in downtown Marksville could guide residents and visitors along a path featuring several civic, cultural, and historic destinations, as proposed in the map below. Local historic sites along the proposed trail are marked with blue dots. This trail is approximately one mile long. Whatever trail alignment is decided upon by the city, total length should be considered, as round distances can be encouraging to those walking for exercise or recreation.



Potential alignment of downtown Marksville walking trail

Develop regional multi-use trail connecting cultural, natural, and historic resources



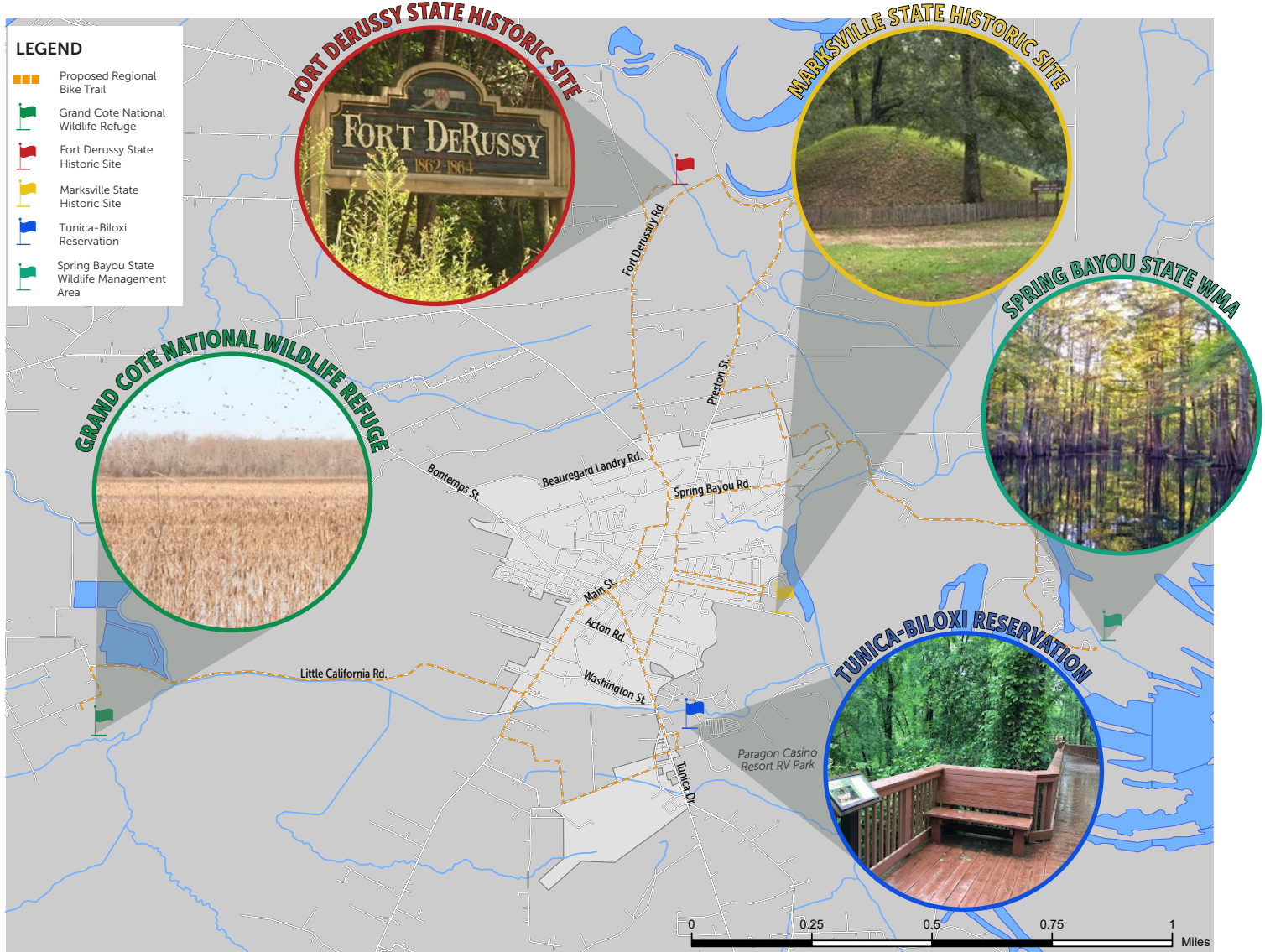
The city of Marksville is surrounded by a wealth of natural and cultural assets that demonstrate its rich and diverse history. By connecting these assets with a trail, they become accessible to residents and visitors alike. A regional trail also provides an opportunity for active recreation and encourages healthy lifestyles.

A trail for bikes and pedestrians is an important component to provide safer, easier access to destinations around town. Prior community discussions had considered a trail that would connect Fort DeRussy—a Civil War historic site located north of Marksville—through downtown and to the Tunica Biloxi land and historic site. The proposed trail also connects to nearby natural and

recreational assets, Grand Cote National Wildlife Refuge and Spring Bayou State Wildlife Management Area. The trail provides many benefits, some of which are listed below.

- Supports tourism through convenient access to natural areas or as an enjoyable recreational opportunity itself.
- Provides a clearly marked and/or dedicated facility for non-motorized travel that can improve access to the natural and recreational areas noted along the trail by individuals who may not have access to a car. This can especially help low-income people obtain access to green space and recreation.

This trail could be a main connector through town to which future bike and pedestrian improvements could



Proposed route for regional biking and walking trail

connect to create a cohesive city-wide network that connects neighborhoods to destinations around town, such as schools, parks, retail and services. Important implementation actions include:

- Coordination with DOTD regarding trail options along LA 115/Main Street. In addition to DOTD having jurisdiction over state roads where bike facilities might be desired, DOTD has also conducted initial analysis regarding the provision of bike facilities throughout Marksville. This analysis provides a starting point for development of a more detailed trail master plan.
- Input and coordination with the Tunica Biloxi tribe
- Phasing implementation of a city-wide trail system to improve connectivity throughout town. This effort should be guided by a city-wide open space and trail system master plan developed with broad community feedback.

Additional considerations for bike lanes include:

- Roads are suitable for marked, shared lanes (sharrows) when they have 2,000 or less average annual daily traffic (AADT)

- An appropriate speed limit for roads with marked, shared lanes is 25mph or less
- Roads are appropriate for on-street bike lanes with or without buffers (preferably with) when they have 2,000 to 7,000 AADT
- Roads with on-street bike lanes should have speed limits below 35mph
- Roads with AADT higher than 7,000 are best suited to separated bike lanes or shared use paths and can have higher speed limits

Several roadways along the regional trail may be in need of lower speed limits to keep bicyclists safe. Rural roads outside of city limits where LA DOTD has suggested shared bike lanes would be best served by either having reduced speeds of 25mph or be redesigned with buffered bike lanes if speeds are not lowered. No speed limit changes are needed on roads within city limits where the LA DOTD recommends buffered or separated bike lanes. On the portion of Main Street south of Tunica Drive, LA DOTD has suggested paved shoulders for bicyclists. The safe speed limit for bicyclists would be 25mph unless the roadway were redesigned with on-street buffered bike lanes, in which case a 35mph speed limit would suffice.



Shared bike lane



Dedicated bike lane



Paved shoulder



Separated bike lane



Shared use path



Gravel road



UPDATING POLICIES & REGULATIONS

Plans, policies, and regulations play an important role in shaping the built environment. Intentional, proactive planning can build community consensus on priorities for Marksville's future, while policy and regulation can provide clear paths toward realizing that vision.

Update Comprehensive Plan



Develop a comprehensive plan to guide land use, development and redevelopment, review transportation and mobility in Marksville, and support infrastructure and economic revitalization efforts. The plan should also include a health layer that provides a community health profile and makes planning recommendations to promote better health outcomes in the community

Review and update development regulations



Evaluate zoning and subdivision regulations to provide for more walkable development. Consider including regulations pertaining to required minimum sidewalk widths, streetscape requirements to provide more pedestrian oriented streetscape amenities, maximum block length and perimeter requirements, for districts where promoting walkability is desired. Consider creating a mixed use district to allow for both residential and commercial uses in a walkable setting.

Develop city-wide transportation master plan with a focus on Complete Streets



Develop a transportation master plan that includes a city-wide bike plan and a policy for developing “complete streets” that balance the needs of pedestrians, cyclists, and motor vehicle needs along with environmental conditions such as increasing tree canopy and improving stormwater runoff.

Develop city-wide open space plan



Develop a city-wide open space plan to provide a range of recreational opportunities that meet the needs of the population and increase the share of residents that are within an easy walk or bike to a park. This plan should include direction for an off-street trail system to improve connections between residents and destinations throughout Marksville.

Review and update the City's Capital Improvement Plan



Update the Capital Improvement Program to include projects that build a healthier, more walkable Marksville.

PROCESS OVERVIEW

Desktop research

To develop a baseline for the strategy development, desktop research was conducted. It focused on mapping existing community assets and infrastructure in Marksville, collected demographic data and existing land use regulations and plans of the town. This information was verified, built upon, and revised where necessary by residents and stakeholders of Marksville.

Guided walking tour

To verify and build upon the baseline understanding of the town, a walking tour was conducted at the beginning of the planning process. The tour was guided by a stakeholder of the town and included an on-site assessment of the existing transportation infrastructure and its connectivity, downtown buildings and street network, a visit to town assets such as the state park, fort, and nearby levee trail, and an overall assessment of the walkability and bikeability within the town.

Public engagement

To get input from residents, programmatic activities and infrastructure improvements were presented during Marksville’s Main Street Market, a seasonal weekly event held on the courthouse lawn. People could make notes on a map of Marksville regarding areas where they felt improvements were needed, as well as indicate preferences for various types of improvements, ranging from trails, sidewalk improvements to youth programming.

Social media and digital outreach

An online survey was conducted to augment feedback received during the initial engagement event held at the Main Street Market. Concepts and ideas discussed during the market were made available through an online survey that allowed participants that were not able to participate in the market event to share their thoughts.

Engagement Highlights

An initial round of community feedback included two avenues for input—an in-person event at the Marksville Main Street Market and a companion online survey

distributed to augment feedback received at the market. Participants were asked to indicate their preference for different types of improvements that could make it easier to walk or bike in Marksville or provide additional opportunities for recreation and exercise. Ideas that received the most positive feedback from participants included:

- Bike Lanes
- Trails
- Youth Activities
- Gathering Spaces
- Landscaping Improvements
- Fitness Equipment
- Sidewalk Improvements

Additionally, crossing Highway 1 was noted as a challenge, as well as the idea to convert Main Street into a one-way couplet with Washington to allow space to provide bike lanes through downtown.



Mapping activity at Marksville Farmers Market



Outreach event at Marksville Farmers Market

IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of the actions recommended to increase mobility and promote physical activity in Marksville can be funded through various federal, state, and philanthropic programs. The majority of programs require financial matches by the applicant. It is therefore advisable that dedicated matching funds are set aside in

Marksville’s annual budget. Additionally, it is important to consider that each of these investments will require a certain amount of routine maintenance. Planning for maintenance expenses in the city’s annual budget will help ensure the long-term success of Marksville’s healthy infrastructure investments. The chart below summarizes the Marksville mobility recommendations presented in this plan.

Priority	Goal	Strategy	Partners	Potential Funding
	Offering safe streets that serve all users	Reduce speed limit to 25mph on all downtown streets and high-pedestrian areas		
		Build curb extensions on downtown blocks with on-street parking		
		Develop a continuous network of sidewalks		
		Improve pedestrian crossings at street intersections		
		Provide essential pedestrian amenities like benches, lighting, and shade		
		Mark sharrows on Washington Street		
		Provide bike racks and repair stations		
		Designate bike routes to schools and identify them with appropriate striping and signage		
		Develop corridor plans for Tunica Drive and Main Street that provide detailed streetscape improvements for these corridors		
		Building vibrant public gathering spaces	Redevelop the lumberyard site as a premier public space in Marksville	
	Build a parklet in the existing right-of-way behind the Parish Courthouse			
	Improve public amenities on Main Street outside of the Parish Courthouse			
	Create additional public space by temporarily converting low-volume downtown streets to pedestrian plazas			

Priority	Goal	Strategy	Partners	Potential Funding
	Encouraging exploration	Install signage identifying the primary public downtown parking lot behind the Voinche Building		
		Restripe all on-street parking spots		
		Actively pursue the redevelopment of underutilized surface parking lots		
		Offer diverse public community programming options		
		Install gateway markers identifying the downtown district		
		Install wayfinding markers identifying key downtown assets		
		Identify a downtown walking trail		
		Actively pursue the redevelopment of vacant and abandoned downtown properties		
		Develop and enforce downtown design guidelines		
		Develop regional multi-use trail connecting cultural, natural, and historic resources		
		Updating policies and regulations	Update Comprehensive Plan	
	Review and update development regulations			
	Develop city-wide transportation master plan with a focus on Complete Streets			
	Develop a city-wide open space plan			
	Review and update the City's Capital Improvement Program			

Developed for the City of Marksville by



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