

# U.S. 90 (WASHINGTON STREET) STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENT CONCEPT PLAN

Approved Concept for Engineering Design

Approved by the  
**CITY OF CHATTAHOOCHEE**



Prepared in partnership with the  
**APALACHEE REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL**



Prepared for the  
**FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY**



**COMMUNITY PLANNING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE GRANT – 2019/2020  
AGREEMENT #P0352**

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## Introduction and Project Background

Developing a plan for an improved streetscape design has been a standing goal of the City of Chattahoochee to improve the aesthetics of downtown and to promote economic vitality. In the wake of Hurricane Michael's 2018 devastation in western Gadsden County, and now the unforeseen economic downturn due to the current impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the City of Chattahoochee appreciates the support of the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity awarding a 2019/2020 Community Planning Technical Assistance Grant to further our community's vision and take it another step toward reality.

Recognizing the recreational and nature-based tourism opportunities, along with the historic Apalachicola River, taking steps to improvement and invest in the streetscape and appearance of the City's downtown is an important part of the City's revitalization.

The City of Chattahoochee, located in northwest Gadsden County, is on the east bank of the Apalachicola River adjacent to Georgia's southern border. U.S. 90 (Washington Street) serves the City as its major east-west transportation corridor and represents the heart of the City's designated Main Street local program area. The City has an estimated population of 3,090 (State of Florida Bureau of Economic & Demographic Research, 2019), which includes an inmate population of 976. Gadsden County and its municipalities have been designated as part of a Rural Area of Opportunity and are served by Opportunity Florida.

In September 2013, the City of Chattahoochee was awarded the designation as a Florida Main Street Community by the Florida Department of State, Division of Historical Resources. During its first year, Chattahoochee Main Street was awarded a 2014/15 DEO Community Planning Technical Assistance Grant (#P0097) to produce a Strategic Community Vision Plan for the City of Chattahoochee.

Goal 1.2 of the Strategic Community Vision Plan identifies the desire to "develop a vibrant and enhanced streetscape plan." To achieve this goal, the objectives include "design(ing) a streetscape plan for Washington Street that promotes walkability..." [Objective 1.2.1] and "increase(s) and optimize(s) parking availability in the downtown area" while addressing "efficient driveway and access standards" [Objective 1.2.2]. A new and enhanced streetscape plan is a cornerstone of the revitalization of Chattahoochee's downtown.

In 2014, the Florida Main Street Resource Team identified the need and, separately, the citizens of Chattahoochee have expressed the desire to modify and improve the streetscape of downtown Chattahoochee's Main Street District. The existing cross-section consists of two travel lanes, a continuous center two-way turn lane, and limited parallel parking on both sides. There are multiple access points from businesses and side streets along the corridor.



*Existing Condition: U.S. 90/Washington Street looking west from Madison Street.*

Based on input provided by the community, there is a desire to return to a cross-section similar to the way it was back in the 1950's. At that time, there were two travel lanes, no center lane, with angled and parallel parking on opposite sides of the road.



*1954 – U.S. 90/Washington Street looking west from Madison Street (Source: Florida Archives).*

Below are additional historical photos of downtown Chattahoochee (courtesy of the Florida Archives) that include a two-lane section built around a natural tree cover along the corridor:



1941 – U.S. 90/Washington Street looking east from Bolivar Street (Source: Florida Archives).



1947 – U.S. 90/Washington Street looking east from Decatur Street on Dedication Day of the Jim Woodruff Dam (Source: Florida Archives).



1951 – U.S. 90/Washington Street looking west from Jefferson Street (Source: Florida Archives).

## Streetscape Plan Development

A reimagined streetscape will create a more inviting place for the citizens of Chattahoochee to congregate. It would encourage more activity in the downtown for longer periods of the day. It will provide an environment that is conducive for businesses to stay open longer and enhance economic development in the community. The context of the streetscape plan has been designed within the existing right-of-way.

The project limits of the corridor extend from River Landing Road on the west to Cemetery Street on the east (approximately 3,300 ft.) **Exhibit 1** provides a map in plan-view format delineating the project area limits with the analysis segments.

To initiate the project for the U.S. 90 Streetscape Improvement Concept Plan in Chattahoochee, a kick-off meeting with state, regional and local agencies was held to introduce the project and to identify any issues and concerns related to potential streetscape improvements in the project area of the U.S. 90 corridor.

Agencies represented in the meeting included the City of Chattahoochee, Gadsden County, the Florida Department of Transportation (both District III and Central Office), the Capital Region Transportation Planning Agency (CRTPA), Florida Main Street, and the Apalachee Regional Planning Council. Representatives from Chattahoochee Main Street, the Florida Division of Historical Resources and the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Interagency Recovery Coordination team were also in attendance.



The final concept plan is based upon input received from meetings with state, regional and local agencies, and a series of three (3) public participation opportunities with the citizens of Chattahoochee and the Chattahoochee City Council:

State, Regional and Local Agency Meetings:

- November 8, 2019: Project Kick-off Meeting
  - Representatives from all agencies listed in the last paragraph on Page 5.
- December 11, 2019: Meeting with the Department of State
  - Division of Historical Resources
  - Florida Main Street Coordinator
  - Preservation Architect, Bureau of Historic Preservation
- January 10, 2020: Meeting with the Florida Department of Transportation
  - State Complete Streets Program Manager (Central Office)
  - Complete Streets Coordinator, District III (Chipley)
  - Transportation Planning Manager, District III (Chipley)
- March 23, 2020: Conference call with the Florida Department of Transportation
  - Complete Streets Coordinators (Central Office & District III)
  - Landscape Design staff and consultant (District III)

Public Workshops / City Council Meetings:

- November 19, 2019: Public Workshop #1
- February 18, 2020: Public Workshop #2
- April 7, 2020: City Council Presentation with online public comment
- May 5, 2020: City Council Approval

To develop a concept plan suitable for engineering design, continued discussion and meetings were held with the state, regional and local agencies throughout the project to obtain technical guidance and feedback on the incorporation of the desired elements into plan.

## **Approved Streetscape Concept Plan**

On May 5, 2020, the Chattahoochee City Council voted unanimously to approve the preferred streetscape concept plan for U.S. 90 (Washington Street). The following series of graphics (**Exhibits 2 – 5**) depict the plan-view for each segment of the corridor with both the Existing Conditions and the Approved/Preferred Streetscape Concept Plan:

- **Exhibit 2:** Segment 1 – River Landing Road to Jackson Street (Page 8)
- **Exhibit 3:** Segment 2 – Jackson Street to Jefferson Street (Page 9)
- **Exhibit 4:** Segment 3 – Jefferson Street to east of Madison Street (Page 10)
- **Exhibit 5:** Segment 4 – East of Madison Street to Cemetery Street (Page 11)



**Exhibit 2: Segment 1 – River Landing Road to Jackson Street**

*Existing Conditions*



*Approved Streetscape Concept Plan*

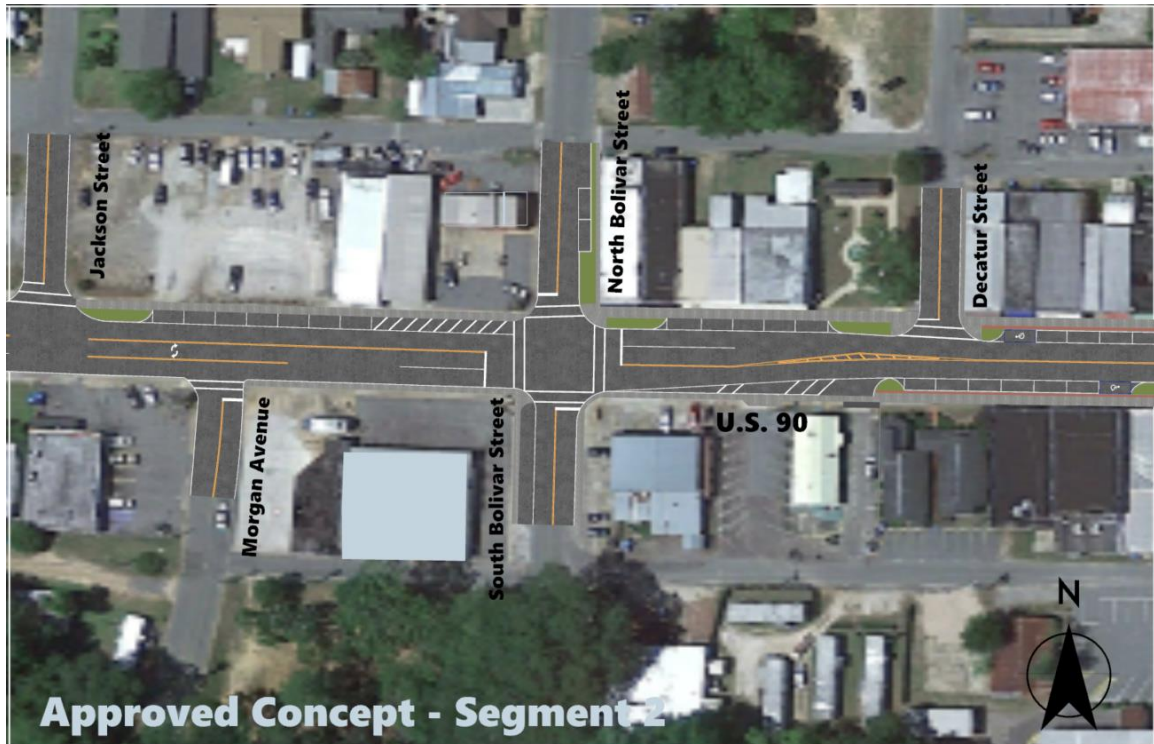


### Exhibit 3: Segment 2 – Jackson Street to Jefferson Street

*Existing Conditions*

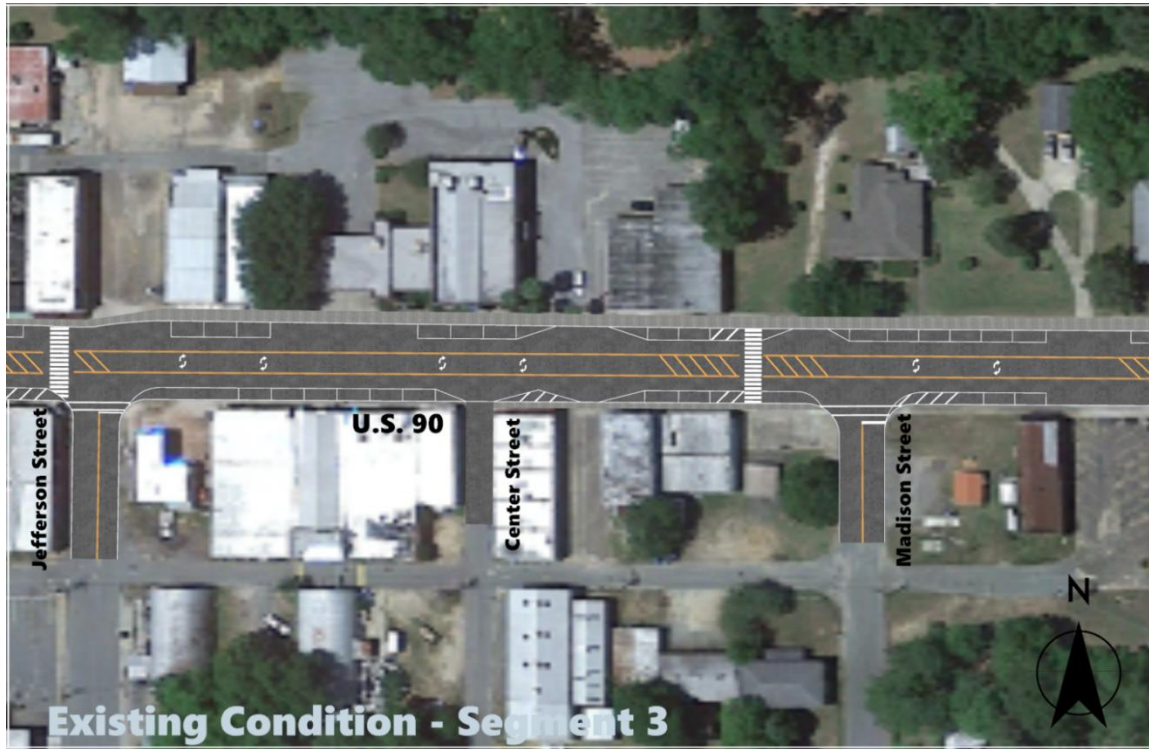


*Approved Streetscape Concept Plan*

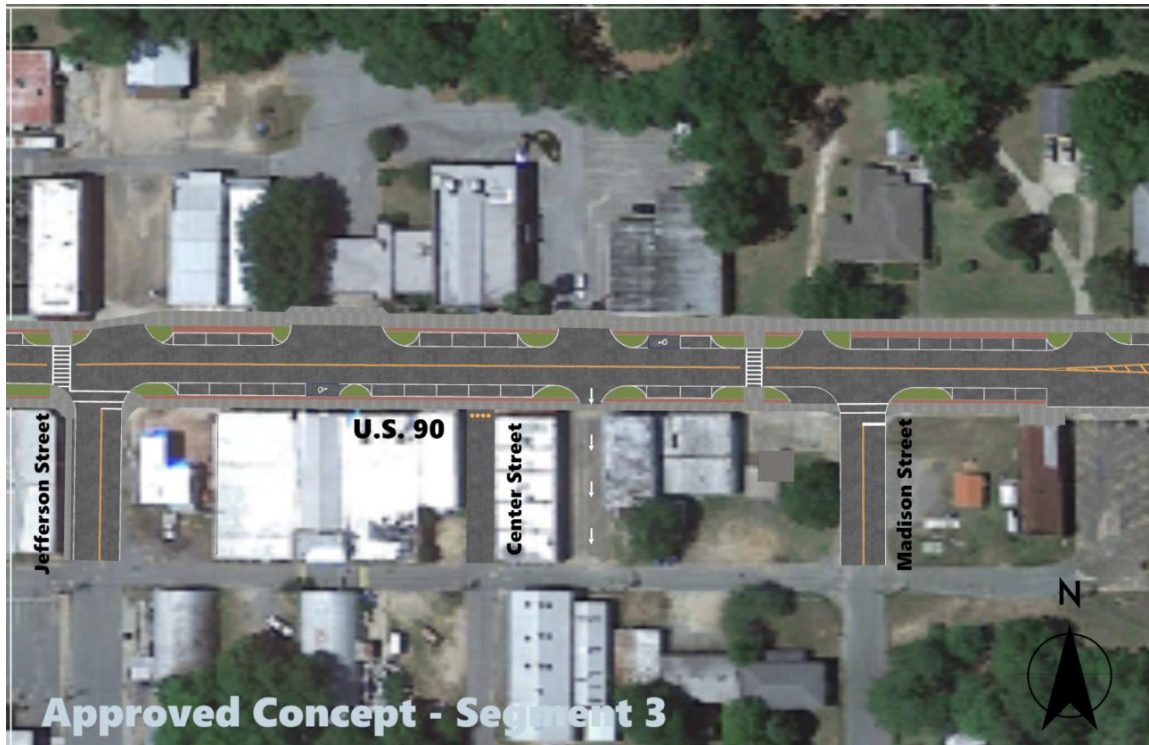


## Exhibit 4: Segment 3 – Jefferson Street to east of Madison Street

### Existing Conditions



### Approved Streetscape Concept Plan

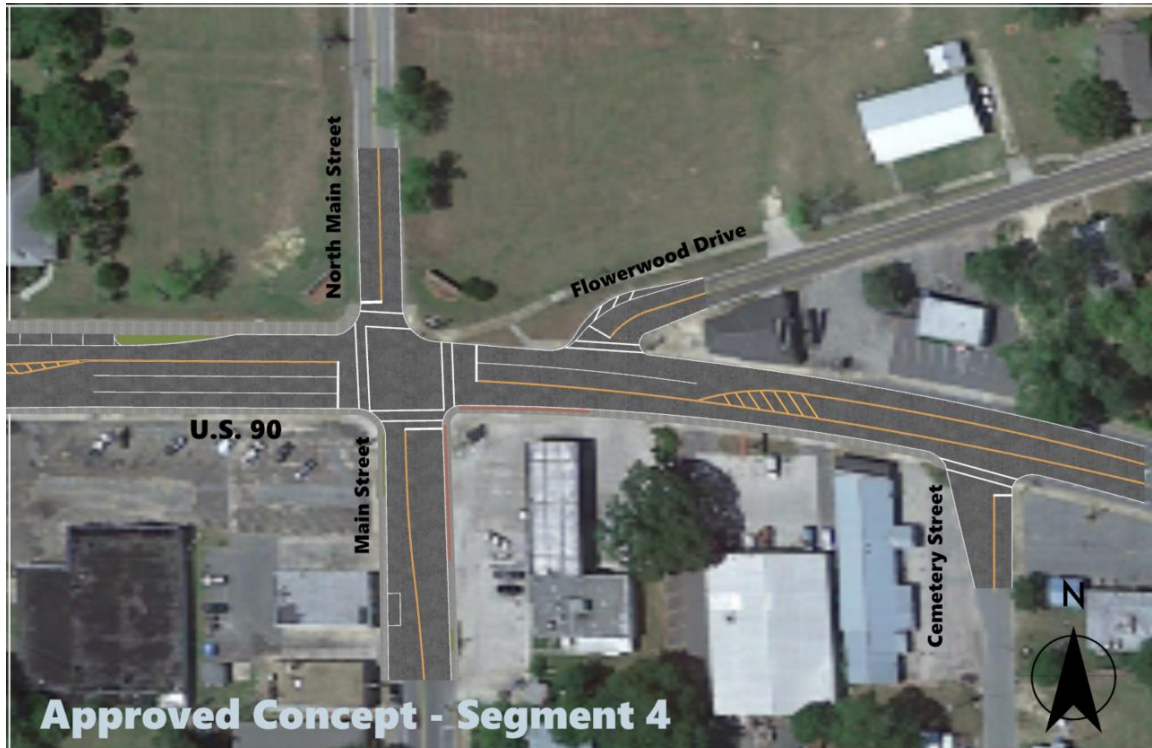


## Exhibit 5: Segment 4 – East of Madison Street to Cemetery Street

### Existing Conditions



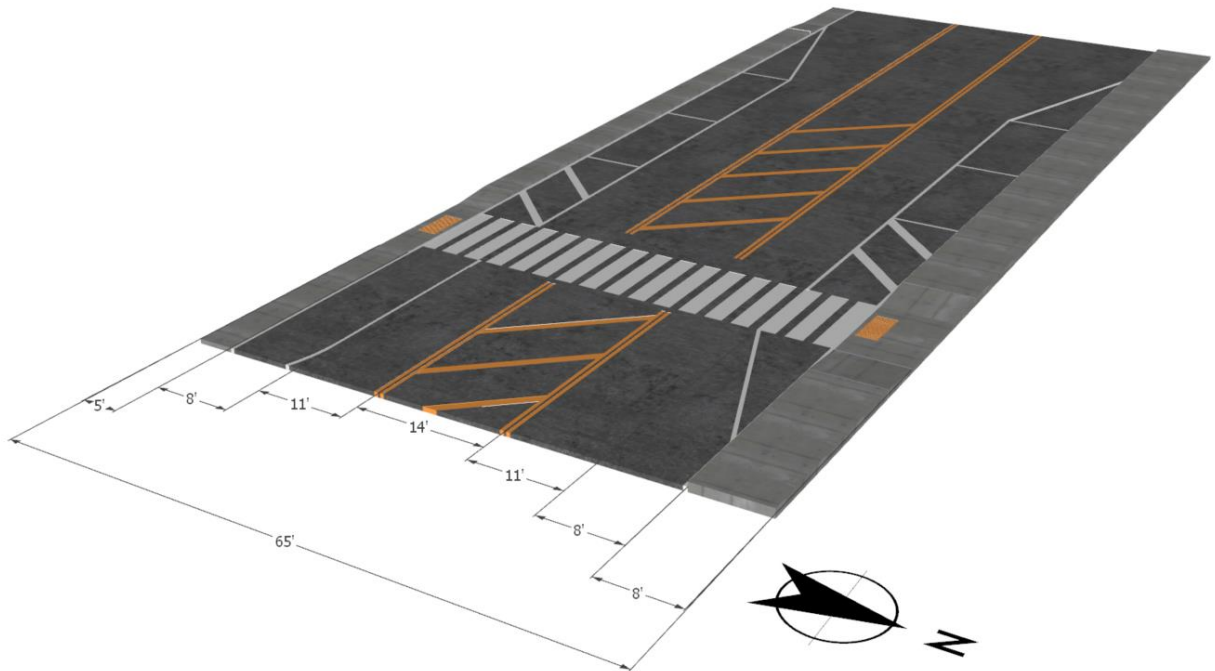
### Approved Streetscape Concept Plan



The westernmost segment (Segment 1) from River Landing Road to Jackson Street and the easternmost segment (Segment 4) east of Madison Street to Cemetery Street both generally serve as transition zones within the project limits as motorists enter the commercial downtown from higher speed zones outside of the Chattahoochee city limits on either end of town. As a result, these areas are not shown to be materially different in the approved streetscape concept plan than is presented in the existing conditions (see Exhibits 2 and 5).

The primary area for the proposed streetscape improvements lies within Segments 2 and 3 between Jackson Street (on the west) and Madison Street (on the east). Much of this area is characterized by an FDOT Right-of-Way (ROW) cross section of 65 feet from building front-to-building front with a posted speed limit of 25mph. **Exhibit 6** provides a detailed depiction of the typical cross section for the existing condition on U.S 90 (Washington Street) and **Exhibit 7** provides a comparison graphic the proposed typical cross section of the approved streetscape concept. All streetscape improvements would be constructed within the existing ROW.

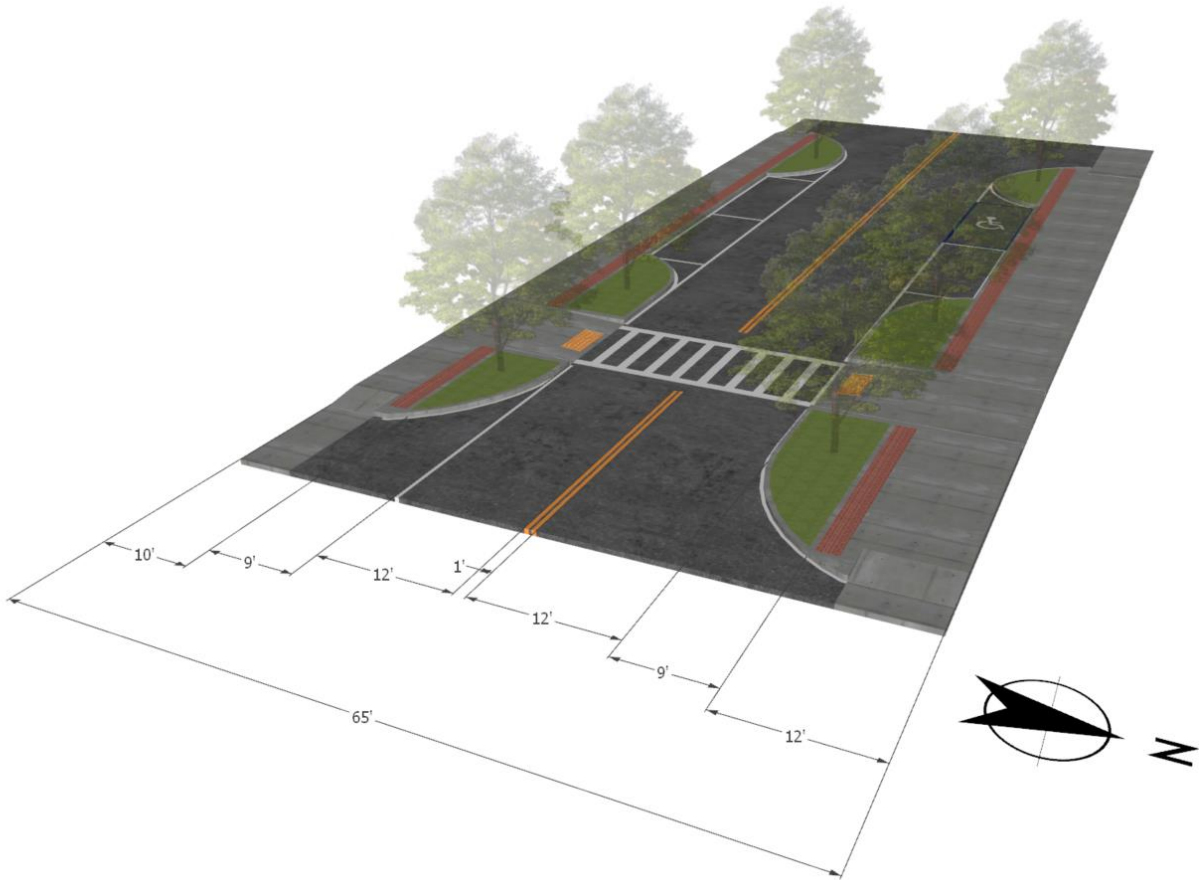
## Exhibit 6: Typical Cross Section of the Existing Condition



Currently, the existing cross section of U.S. 90 (Washington Street) is typified by the following dimensions:

5'	Sidewalk (southside)
8'	Parallel parking/landscaped area
11'	Eastbound travel lane
14'	Continuous two-way turn lane
11'	Westbound travel lane
8'	Parallel parking/landscaped area
8'	Sidewalk (northside)
<b>65'</b>	<b>Total Right-of-Way</b>

**Exhibit 7: Typical Cross Section of the Approved Streetscape Concept**



Under the approved streetscape concept plan, the typical cross section would generally consist of the following dimensions within the existing 65' Right-of-Way:

- 10' Sidewalk (southside)
- 9' Parallel parking/landscaped area
- 12' Eastbound travel lane
- 1' Centerline (double yellow) striping
- 12' Westbound travel lane
- 9' Parallel parking/landscaped area
- 12' Sidewalk (northside)
- 65' Total Right-of-Way**

## Proposed Streetscape Elements

Using information gathered from input from state, regional and local organizations, in addition to local public involvement, and direct comments from the City Council, the desired streetscape elements have been incorporated into the approved streetscape concept plan. The identified elements from community input are as follows:

- Enhanced pedestrian walkability
- Increased parking supply directly on U.S. 90, while allowing for future consideration for additional parking on the side streets, especially in proximity to the north and south alleys
- Areas for shade trees and landscaping in the right-of-way
- Pedestrian-scale street lighting with appropriate spacing
- Improved sight-distance conditions for vehicles turning from the side streets
- Intersection design improvements, particularly at existing signalized intersections
- Sidewalk treatments to blend with structures and enhance vehicle and pedestrian safety
- Traffic calming
- Better pedestrian crosswalks

The approved concept for the streetscape improvement plan addresses these elements and are described as follows:

### **Walkability | Sidewalk Treatments | Pedestrian Crosswalks | Traffic Calming**

- Removal of the continuous two-way turn lane in the middle of downtown.
  - Left turn lane bays at intersections remain intact, but the approved concept eliminates the continuous two-way turn lane conditions in midblock areas primarily between Decatur Street and Madison Street.
  - Removing the continuous two-way turn lane will help enforce the posted speed limit (25mph) and calm traffic. In addition, it will allow room to widen the sidewalks and enhance opportunities for landscaped areas.
- The additional width added to the sidewalks also allows room for a brick-texture sidewalk treatment to be added. This provides for an attractive aesthetic that gives the downtown area more character.
- Side-street intersections create the opportunity for the use of “bulb-outs.” This is a commonly implemented feature in downtown areas to create a strong traffic calming effect giving motorists the visual sensation that the road is narrower. This results in slower speeds, which would naturally enforce the locally posted 25mph speed limit.



- Including the bulb-outs in the streetscape creates shorter crossing distances for pedestrians at each of the crosswalks. Shorter crossing distances reduces the amount of time pedestrians are in the vehicle right-of-way, which increases pedestrian safety at those intersections.

**Exhibit 8** shows a detailed 3-dimensional future rendering of U.S. 90 in downtown Chattahoochee at the intersection of Jefferson Street showing improvements to walkability, sidewalks, crosswalks, and traffic calming.

**Exhibit 8: Future Walkability and Traffic Calming: U.S 90 at Jefferson Street**



### **Additional/Increased Parking**

- During public workshops community members identified locations where additional parking spaces could be added if current drop curb conditions were removed.
- Based on public comments, the reconfiguration and adjustment of the downtown streetscape allowed for an increase of fourteen (14) additional parking spaces, bringing the current total from 43 spaces to 57 (a 33% increase in on-street parking).
- Public comments also proposed that Center Street be blocked off by bollards to help increase the number of on-street parking spaces and improve downtown traffic circulations and access.

**Exhibit 9** shows Center Street blocked off by bollards, providing additional parking on U.S. 90 under the Approved Streetscape Concept Plan.

### **Exhibit 9: Closure of Center Street for Added On-Street Parking**



### Areas for Shade Trees and Landscaping

- The location of shade trees and landscaping through the downtown corridor are to be within the proposed bulb-out sites. Utilizing the bulb-outs provides ample amount of shade trees to the project area. The recommended trees for the streetscape improvement are Red Maples trees as they grow well in the North Florida Panhandle. Red Maples have a low-spread root base, and they are aesthetically pleasing as the seasons change.

**Exhibit 10** shows the downtown corridor with the proposed recommended Red Maple shade trees and depicts the potential view in the context of the change of season between Spring and Fall foliage and as the trees mature.

### Exhibit 10 – Western View of the U.S. 90 Corridor with Red Maple Trees



### Intersection Design Improvements | Improved Sight Distance Conditions

- Through the implementation of bulb-outs at intersections, the turning radius for the travel lanes have changed. Augmenting the turning radius at side-street intersections, addresses issues residents have reported about larger vehicles (i.e. log trucks and recreational vehicles) clipping the awnings of buildings at the corner of Decatur Street and Bolivar Street.
- By removing the continuous center turn lane and moving the travel lanes toward the center of the street, it creates the ability to move stop bars forward on the side street approaches. Moving the stop bar forward and enhancing side street sight distance for egress and safety while providing new opportunities to increase the number of on-street parking spaces near the side street intersections.

**Exhibit 11** provides a visual of the proposed bulb-out concept at Decatur Street and U.S. 90 at Heritage Park that results in enhanced sight distance situation for motorists existing Decatur Street.

### Exhibit 11 – Bulb-Out at the Corner of Decatur Street and Washington Street



**Exhibit 12** shows two (2) additional parking spaces created by moving the stop forward at Decatur Street.

**Exhibit 12: Stop Bar Moved Forward at Decatur Street**



## Street Lighting

- Improvements to the downtown corridor would include streetlighting at the pedestrian scale. It is recommended that the streetlights be placed about every sixty (60) feet apart to provide ample lighting to pedestrians. Also, it is recommended to have streetlights on either side of the crosswalks to improve pedestrian safety when crossing the street at night.

**Exhibit 13** shows a section of the downtown corridor with the proposed pedestrian streetlamps. The actual style can be established as part of the formal engineering design process.

### Exhibit 13 – Proposed Pedestrian Scale Street Lighting



## Next Step

Following the Chattahoochee City Council's unanimous approval of the preferred concept plan, the next step is to identify a funding source to take the concept plan forward to engineering design. The key component to take the project to the next step is to maintain community support. The current plan is in concept form. Once the engineering design begins, each proposed element will need to be evaluated for scale and placement.