

Garapan and Beach Road Revitalization Plan

September 6, 2007



Prepared for:

The Commonwealth Zoning Board

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Introduction

Background

Garapan and Beach Road are critical to the future of Saipan's tourism economy but they need urgent attention. Infrastructure is in poor condition, businesses in some areas are not family-friendly, and the general appearance is rundown. In 2006, Governor Fitial urged the Zoning Board to find ways to renew Garapan and Beach Road for the sake of our economy and for our own quality of life.

Purpose

This plan is proposed to become part of the land use plan for Saipan. The plan is intended as a *guide* for use by CNMI agencies, landowners and developers to revitalize Garapan and Beach Road so these areas are more attractive for visitors and residents. The plan provides a vision of what visitors and residents should see in 10 years.

This plan calls for public and private actions to achieve the vision. The actions go far beyond just zoning. There are short, medium, and long-term actions related to regulations, circulation and capital improvements, property development, and management oversight. By presenting actions in a coherent framework, this plan will facilitate discussion and development of consensus on the highest priority actions.

Portions of this plan recommend zoning actions that will be integrated into the Saipan Zoning Law.

Process

This plan was developed for the CNMI by MAKERS Architecture and Urban Design. Development of this plan began with a workshop facilitated by John Owen of MAKERS on May 8 and 9, 2007. Mr. Owen blended ideas from the workshop with his own professional perspective and produced a draft for the Zoning Board to consider. The Zoning Board then reviewed and revised the draft and circulated the plan for public comment from July 27 to August 27, 2007. During the public comment period, the Zoning Administrator convened a workshop with CNMI agencies and held a public hearing. After the public comment period, the Board reviewed public comments and finalized the plan on September 6, 2007. The plan will be forwarded to the Governor and to the Saipan and Northern Islands Legislative Delegation for their endorsement.

Vision and Strategic Concepts

Vision - 2017

According to this vision, visitors returning to Garapan after a ten-year absence would see many improvements.

By 2017, Garapan and Beach Road will be a premier family-oriented destination for visitors and island residents, featuring a wide range of shopping, entertainment, civic, and commercial uses within a pristine ocean and island setting.

According to this vision, visitors returning to Garapan after a ten-year absence would see many improvements.



Figure 1. Beach Road in 2015.

Suppose our visitors—let’s make them a couple—arrive at the airport in 2017 and drive to Garapan along Beach Road from the south. They will be struck immediately by the transformation of this corridor from a somewhat ramshackle collection of repair shops and miscellaneous buildings they remember from the early 2000’s. The view of the beach is

largely the same as when they left in 2007, but the east side is now a line of attractive office, residential and commercial buildings. Some are one and two story buildings with tasteful signage and inviting entries while others are tall and set apart from their neighbors so that the view of the mountain ridge to the east can still be seen. All of the new development features continuous landscaping along the street so that even the car sales businesses fit in with the corridor. Our visitors have read that the new apartments, condominiums and time share condos are currently hot properties because of their views of the water, convenient access and the cool ocean breezes on the upper stories.



Figure 2. The vision for Garapan calls for pleasant pedestrian areas and retail businesses with weather protection, landscaping, inviting buildings, and tasteful signage.

Arriving at the lobby of one of Garapan's beach hotels, they note that it is a bustling place and are pleased to see that the hotels are busy, with plenty of visitors enjoying the beachfront amenities around the pristine lagoon. The Paseo de Marianas, with new shops, shaded outdoor cafes, and other attractions, would certainly invite them for a stroll. On an information kiosk there are a number of events planned for the upcoming week, some on the Paseo and others at American Memorial Park and the new Cultural Center. Glancing down the other streets, it is clear to them that there has been a lot of work accomplished. Old buildings have been repaired, and new ones are especially attractive, with sun protection, attractive entries, and inviting

window displays. While there are still many signs advertising a wide range of businesses, they are less garish and better integrated into the architecture. In place of poker rooms and adult businesses, there is a greater diversity of shops, restaurants, cafes, and services. Where there once were garbage dumpsters, unsightly walls and helter-skelter parking, there are now screened utility areas, trellises with vines, and roof planters.

Our couple decides to stroll south toward the new hotel complex that they remember was once the old “Samoan housing” site. As they walk down Coffee Tree Mall, they note that walking is much more pleasant than in the old days. The streets are shaded by trees. At night, street lights make the street feel safer. Most importantly, most streets now have sidewalks, better organized parking, and no overhead wires. Traffic circulation and parking have improved during the past five years, too. Some of the streets are one-way, simplifying turning at intersections. On-street parking has been provided and controlled and there are a few new public parking lots, strategically placed for convenient access.



Figure 3. Coffee Tree Mall looking toward the wetland, hotel, and Cultural Center in 2017.

Our visitors reach Orchid Street and notice that the lagoon is a beautiful blue-green color and that people are swimming in the water. This is a big change from 2007 when the lagoon water was often brown and the beach was red-flagged due to poor water quality. This change came as a result of installation of a

new system to treat stormwater running off the streets of the Garapan core area.

Strolling on Orchid Street toward Beach Road is much more pleasant than before. The old ditch has been covered and shade trees and awnings keep them cool. The distance between the hotels and DFS does not seem so far. Crossing Beach Road, they see that the NMHC site has been redeveloped. The school has either been relocated or upgraded and integrated into the new complex. And what a new complex it is! The buildings are slightly taller than western Garapan's two- to three-story profile and are linked by an attractive system of courtyards, open spaces, and atriums with direct access to the Paseo across Beach Road. This new commercial area includes attractions for the whole island, including specialty and comparison shopping, professional services, medical and dental offices, and a theater and other family entertainment. Housing units on upper stories add more activity to the area. All in all, the East Garapan development and new hotel and other uses on the Samoan housing site add a significant new dimension to Garapan's core, melding the amenities and visitors' services of a destination resort with a mixed-use activity focus for the island community.

Achieving the Vision—Key Concepts

This vision is ambitious, especially given the number of obstacles currently facing the district. Besides the general slowing of the island's economy from the loss of manufacturing and destination tourism, Garapan and Beach Road have several conditions holding them back, including:

- Inefficient vehicle circulation and parking
- Substandard utilities
- Many unattractive buildings
- Right-of-way encroachment and lack of sidewalks, lighting, and street trees
- A large number of family-unfriendly businesses

On the other hand, Garapan and the Beach Road corridor have many assets

- Beautiful lagoon setting
- American Memorial Park
- Opportunities provided by Paseo de Marianas, major hotels, DFS, and other attractive developments

- Fundamentally sound size, configuration, and road layout

In fact, in strictly physical terms, Garapan has a uniquely strong foundation on which to build. There is no fundamental reason that Beach Road could not rival some of the world's great shoreline roadways. Because the local economy is currently in a downturn, Garapan/Beach Road improvement efforts must: 1) start with several small, relatively inexpensive measures; 2) leverage existing public funds to achieve private investment; and 3) use this plan to secure additional funds. At the same time, the community (public and private organizations) must begin planning soon to address long-term concerns such as utility capacity, water quality, coordinated business development, and development of large sites.



Figure 4. Garapan.

The critical element in such an approach is collaboration among all parties. Efforts in one area—for example, parking or street improvements—will be much less effective unless coupled with sound development regulations and effective management of public spaces. Other communities have achieved the kind of success envisioned in this plan through a combination of:

- Strong zoning controls and enforcement
- Active public-private partnerships
- Effective public land management
- Cooperation among businesses for mutual benefit
- Strategies for public and private investment
- Sustained maintenance and management efforts

So, this plan employs building organizational and managerial infrastructure as well as simply improving the physical setting.

Garapan Improvement Plan

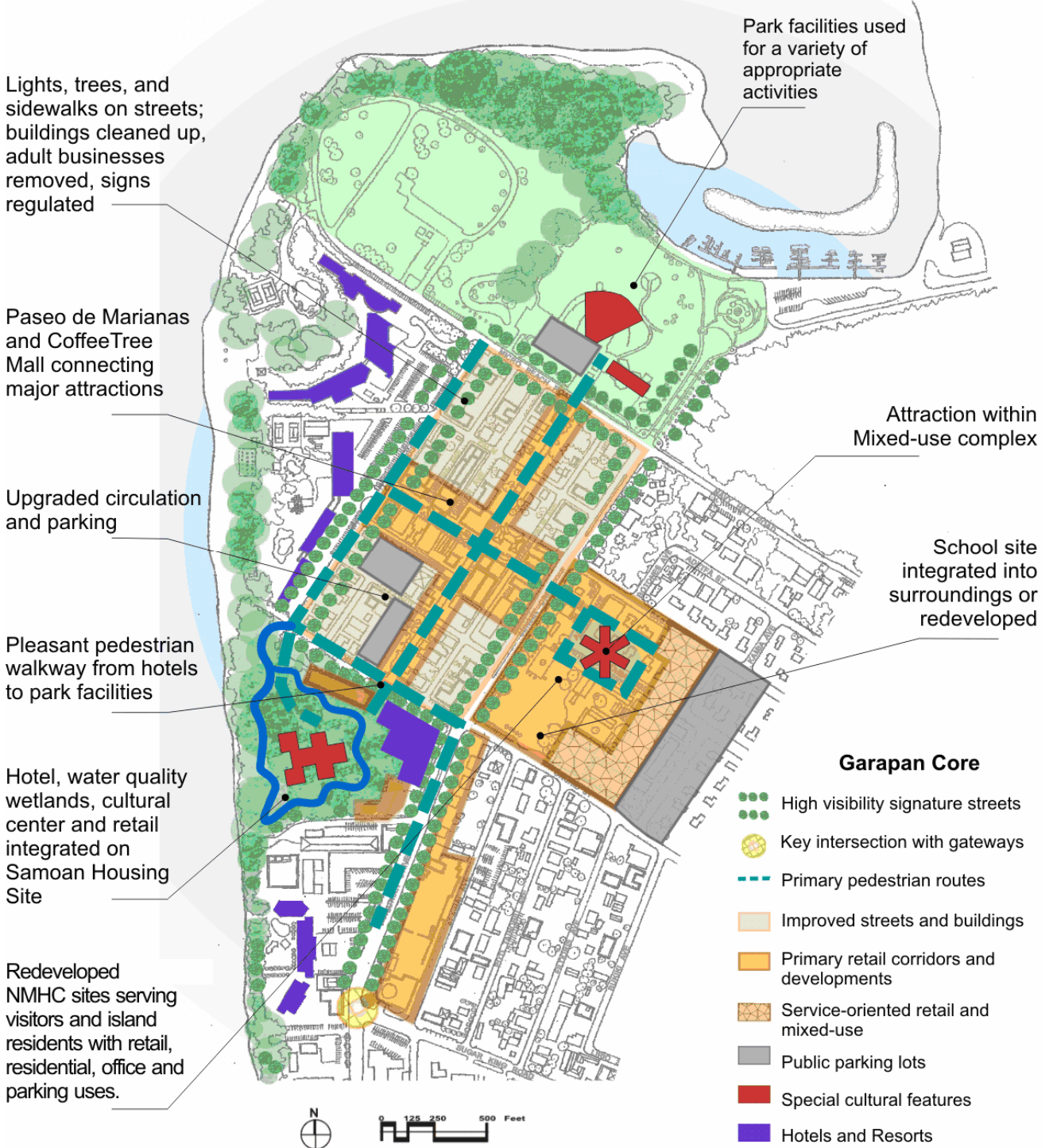


Figure 5. Plan improvements for the Garapan Core District

Figure 5 illustrates how the plan's basic elements fit into a larger strategy. As the diagram indicates, improvements build on the existing strengths of the beachfront hotels and the Paseo improvements. Upgrading the circulation and incremental improvements to buildings, roads, and businesses are important first steps, as are adding activities to American Memorial Park and the Paseo to draw people into the center. Adding trees, lights, and new businesses to Coffee Tree Mall and Orchid Street, in particular, will better connect hotels to DFS and American Memorial Park.

Near-Term Actions, Within One Year

This strategy starts with strengthening and enhancing Garapan and Beach Road's core assets. Near-term actions to do this include:

- Better managing the events in, and use of, the Paseo de Marianas by allowing some awnings and seating to extend into the plaza, reducing adult businesses, programming events, and coordinating businesses
- Working with the National Park Service for better utilization of American Memorial Park
- Continuing the enhancement and marketing of Saipan and Garapan as a premier visitor destination
- Planning for the eventual development of key sites

A second set of immediate actions includes modest but effective circulation and capital improvements:

- Connecting the Hyatt and Fiesta hotels' parking lots to facilitate bus circulation between the two lots
- Considering reconfiguration of traffic circulation in downtown by establishing a more efficient network of one- and two-way streets
- Taking steps to better manage existing on-street and public parking
- Beginning design of facilities to treat stormwater from the Garapan core area

A third set of near-term actions is directed at upgrading the business and development qualities in Garapan's core and the properties east of Beach Road. These actions include:

- Establishing zoning and development standards to ensure that new development meets the quality and attractiveness envisioned by the community

- Establishing a sign ordinance to produce clear, attractive, and effective business signs that reflect well on Garapan as a premier destination resort
- Prohibiting new poker parlors and adult businesses and gradually phasing out such existing businesses in western Garapan
- Undertaking a comprehensive program to reduce the number of derelict structures, encroachments on streets, unsafe parking conditions, and unsightly buildings

Mid-Term Actions, One to Three Years

The above actions can be taken in the next year or so at minimal capital cost. In addition, there are a number of mid-term improvements that should be initiated within the next one to three years. These improvements will primarily serve to better connect areas within the downtown and address the most pressing infrastructure needs. These mid-term actions include:

- Rebuilding Orchid Street: covering the drainage ditch; adding sidewalks, street trees, and lighting; and improving the intersection of Orchid Street and Beach Road with a traffic signal and improved sidewalks
- Improving cross streets in west Garapan, with the highest priority given to Coffee Tree Mall. Moving utilities underground and installing sidewalks, parking areas, lighting, and street trees
- Upgrading Beach Road in Garapan by planting street trees on the shoulder and gradually removing parking in the right-of-way as properties redevelop
- Upgrading Beach Road south of Garapan by rewiring the street lights, planting street trees on the shoulder and gradually removing parking in the right-of-way as properties redevelop
- Implementing the planned storm water management improvements for the drainages flowing into the lagoon
- Building public restrooms near the Paseo
- Acquiring or leasing vacant lots and establishing public parking lots
- Continuing phased improvements to Garapan Central Park and the museum site

In addition, the government should complete the master plan for the Samoan housing site and begin construction of the water quality improvements.

Long-Term Actions, Three to Seven Years

By this time, initial steps to improve circulation and to manage activities, and visual appearance in Garapan's core west of Beach Road should be having a positive effect on the businesses and the district's general image. Additionally, a more active Paseo and attractive Coffee Tree Mall and Orchid Street will provide better access to attractions surrounding the core. So the stage should be set for impressive new development in NMHC housing site and better integration of Garapan Elementary School at the existing site or moving the school and redeveloping the site. These developments will likely be timed to a general upturn in economic conditions, but it is important for the community to be ready with a plan and development standards to ensure that the development takes maximum advantage of the opportunities presented on these sites for both public and private benefit.

So the improvements outlined above and described in the next section are strategically framed to take advantage of current opportunities and existing resources in building a foundation for substantial development in the future.



Figure 6. Large sites allow the opportunity for a mix of uses with substantial attractions.

Priority Actions

The following actions are recommended as part of the development strategy described above. They are organized by the type of measure (such as planning, regulation, capital improvement, etc.) and by the general period of implementation.

Short-Term Actions, by July 2008

■ Regulations and Enforcement

ST-1. Amend the Saipan Zoning Law with development standards for Garapan and properties on the east side of Beach Road south of Garapan. The standards should address:

- Allowable and conditional uses (including regulations controlling new adult businesses and poker parlors)
- Height, bulk, and density
- Parking, circulation, and street improvements
- Landscaping and screening
- Relation to the street and pedestrian orientation.
- Design character
- Signage

These standards will be submitted to the Saipan and Northern Islands Legislative Delegation for their consideration. If the standards are approved, the Zoning Board will be responsible for implementation.

Three new zoning districts are recommended, as well as changes in the existing zoning boundaries – see Figures 7 and 8):

- New zoning districts would be created for the Garapan Core, East Garapan, and Beach Road
- The area between Beach Road and the beach, except the Garapan Core, would be rezoned to Tourist Resort
- Lots fronting the east side of Beach Road between Garapan St. and the new Beach Road zone would be rezoned to Tourist Resort

A Note on Action Numbering:

ST = Short-term activity
(begin within a year)

MT = Mid-term activity
(begin within 3 years)

LT = Long-term activity
(begin within 7 years)

The 1993 Saipan Zoning Law is in effect. Therefore, zoning for Garapan and Beach Road will be enacted by amending the 1993 law.

- All the remaining area west of Chalan Pale Arnold would be zoned Auto Urban
- The use standards for the Tourist Resort zone would be changed to prohibit Heavy Retail and Service businesses

Each of the proposed new zoning districts has individual objectives and standards summarized on pages 16 and 17.

Garapan Core Zoning District

The primary purpose of the Garapan Core District (**GC**) is to combine business, cultural and civic activities into a cohesive community focal point that promotes pedestrian usage. The district encourages pedestrian-oriented uses such as retail trade uses (excluding auto-oriented uses), eating and drinking places, hotels and motels, civic and educational uses, and special events (including a night market).

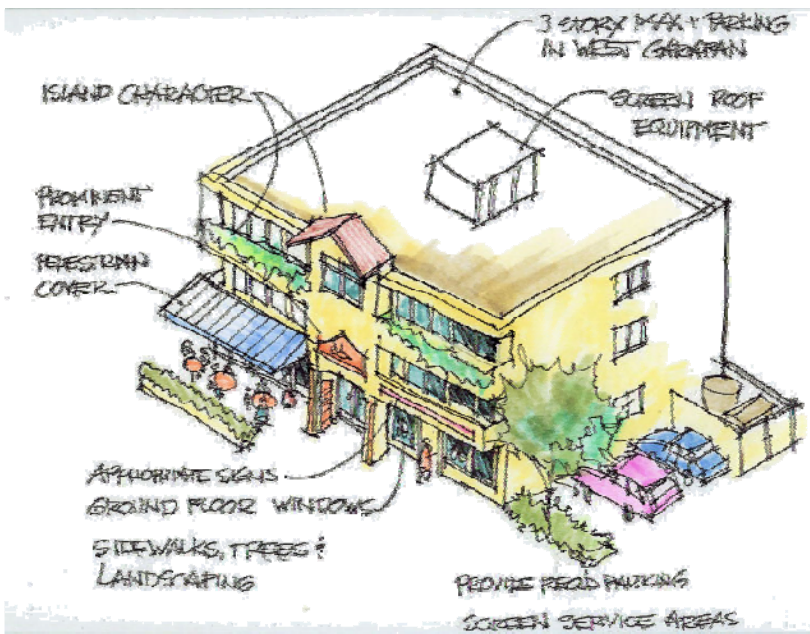


Figure 7. Key objectives for the Garapan Core District.

Professional offices and residential uses are permitted on upper floors to add vitality to the area and support businesses. Building heights are limited to three stories, but can go up to four stories in the downtown area if the development provides substantial pedestrian-oriented space. Overall commercial and residential densities are limited by height limits, parking requirements, site constraints, market conditions, and design guidelines.

Design guidelines encourage pedestrian-oriented site and building design, good pedestrian and vehicular access, pedestrian amenities and open space, parking lot landscaping, and the integration of developments with the natural environment. Outdoor spaces within these areas should function as social settings for a variety of experiences, adding to the comfort and complexity of life in a village center environment, while maintaining a human scale and the ability for easy pedestrian circulation.

East Garapan Zoning District

The primary purpose of the East Garapan District (**EG**) is to provide for a broad mix of retail, office, professional service and residential activities that enhance the lives of island residents and support tourist based activities in Garapan's core. East Garapan includes some large properties and unique development opportunities. The zoning and development standards encourage the redevelopment of these sites into complexes that combine a mix of uses, amenities and attractions in a pleasant landscaped setting. Standards for East Garapan also emphasize the location and treatment of parking facilities because it is likely that the larger developments will require ample parking.

Connections to Garapan's core should be strengthened and the Paseo de Marianas extended, either with a pedestrian oriented street or a mall like the Paseo west of Beach Road. The north side of Orchid Street, the east side of Beach Road and any new road extending eastward from Beach Road into the district are designated pedestrian oriented streets in order to improve pedestrian connections. Design standards emphasize the articulation and modulation of buildings to retain a human scale and to provide amenities that create an attraction.

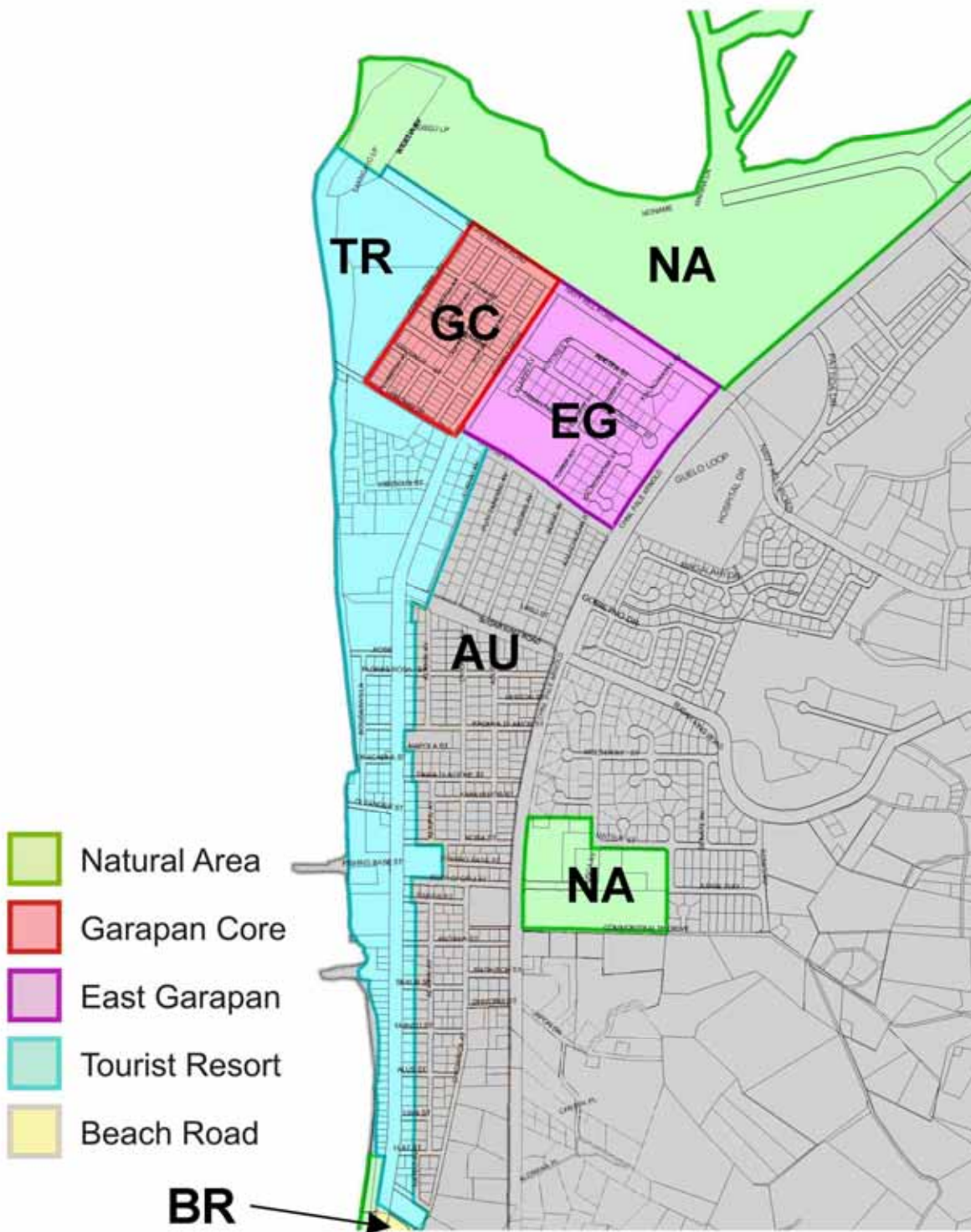


Figure 8. Garapan area zoning districts recommended as part of this plan.

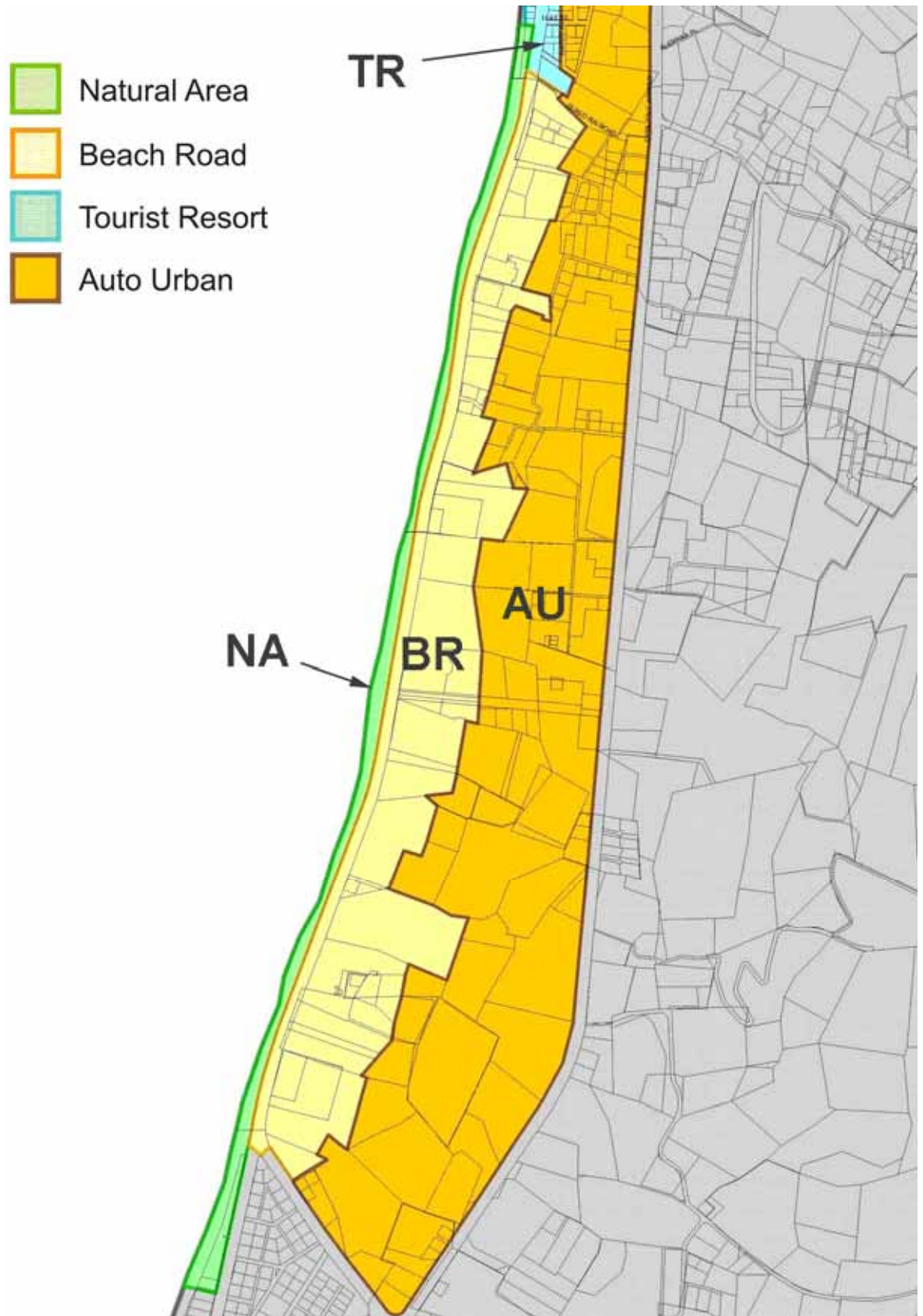


Figure 9. Beach Road zoning districts recommended as part of this plan.

Beach Road Zoning District

The purpose of the Beach Road District (**BR**) is to provide for high-quality commercial and residential uses that benefit from a location across the street from a beach. Projects in the Beach Road District are generally located on the eastern side of Beach Road and enjoy easy access to the public beach trail, ocean breezes, and excellent views of the lagoon to the west. Therefore, this district offers an excellent opportunity to develop quality residential and office buildings with some retail services and other businesses serving the local population and visitors to the beach.



Figure 10. Proposed Beach Road Development Standards.

A second, equally important, objective is to enhance the public's enjoyment of the beach and the island's image by creating an attractive streetscape along Beach Road composed of attractive buildings set within complementary landscaping.

Safe and convenient pedestrian access should be provided between buildings and the sidewalk and the beach walk on the west side of the street. New development should improve water quality in the lagoon if the site has been previously disturbed. Views of the mountain ridgeline from the beach walk should be



Figure 11. Saipan's western beach is a substantial resource that should be complemented by attractive development on the east side of Beach Road.

preserved by limiting either the height or width of the new buildings so that the ridgeline is visible either over short buildings or to the side of tall building. Generally, the standards will guide new construction to be low-key but distinctive and refined.

Improved signage that is appropriate to the scale of the building and provides a clear message and attractive appearance is especially important and relatively less costly to implement. The Zoning Law should also set an amortization period after which all existing signs must conform to the sign standards.

ST-2. Undertake an abatement program of derelict structures. This effort should be initiated by a coalition of business and property owners, which would identify the most derelict buildings and contact the owners in an attempt to have the structures either removed or improved. The 12 worst properties or “Dirty Dozen” could be targeted for action and awards could be given to the 12 most improved “Best Dressed” properties. If the property owners of derelict properties do not take action within an allotted time, then the Zoning Board, under its authority to abate nuisances, should have structures present a health and safety hazard removed.



Figure 12. Derelict buildings in prominent tourist-oriented areas detract from Garapan’s identity.

As part of this effort, undesirable vegetation on vacant lots should be removed. However, it will be important to ensure that the vegetation is undesirable. Some of the vegetation may serve a function such as covering up unsightly features, providing bird habitat, or reducing water runoff.

ST-3. Institute a program to phase out adult businesses and poker parlors in west Garapan. The Zoning Board should undertake the following phased actions:

- Prohibit new adult businesses and poker parlors west of Beach Road and identify a location where adult businesses may be allowed.
- Enforce signage and solicitation regulations prohibiting explicit displays, hawking, and signs.
- Remove existing adult businesses from a specified area after a specified period of amortization. The Zoning Board should identify an area (all or a portion of Garapan west of Beach Road) where all adult businesses must be vacated after a prescribed time.

ST-4. Establish a committee to review the enforcement of current regulations in Garapan. There are numerous laws

and regulations that are not strong enough or not being adequately enforced. In many cases, this appears to be due to the fact of multiple or unclear departmental responsibility for a specific condition. Issues of current concern include:

- Encroachment of private development onto public property
- Lack of sufficient parking to serve development
- Unsafe or unsanitary conditions on private property

■ Circulation and Capital Improvements

ST-5. Reconfigure vehicle circulation in Garapan. The following should be considered in the short term:

1. Connect the Hyatt and Fiesta parking lots with an internal roadway. This will allow tour busses to access both hotels conveniently and to better utilize parking to accommodate special events.
2. Consider changing direction of Coral Tree Avenue from one-way northbound to one-way southbound. This has the advantage of directing visitors to enter Garapan by the American Memorial Park. This is a more attractive entry than along Orchid Street.
3. Make Orchid Street one way to reduce congestion at the Orchid/Beach Road intersection and to allow for a wide sidewalk and street trees. Orchid Street would be one-way westbound if Coral Tree remains one-way northbound but would be one-way eastbound if Coral Tree switches to one-way southbound.
4. Considering making other internal streets one-way. For example, Palm Street and Coconut Street might be designated one-way and parking added.

In all the above cases, changing the street configuration would require only minor improvements to pavement and structures so the changes could be done as a test. If it turns out that circulation is less efficient, then the roadways can be changed back to their original configurations.

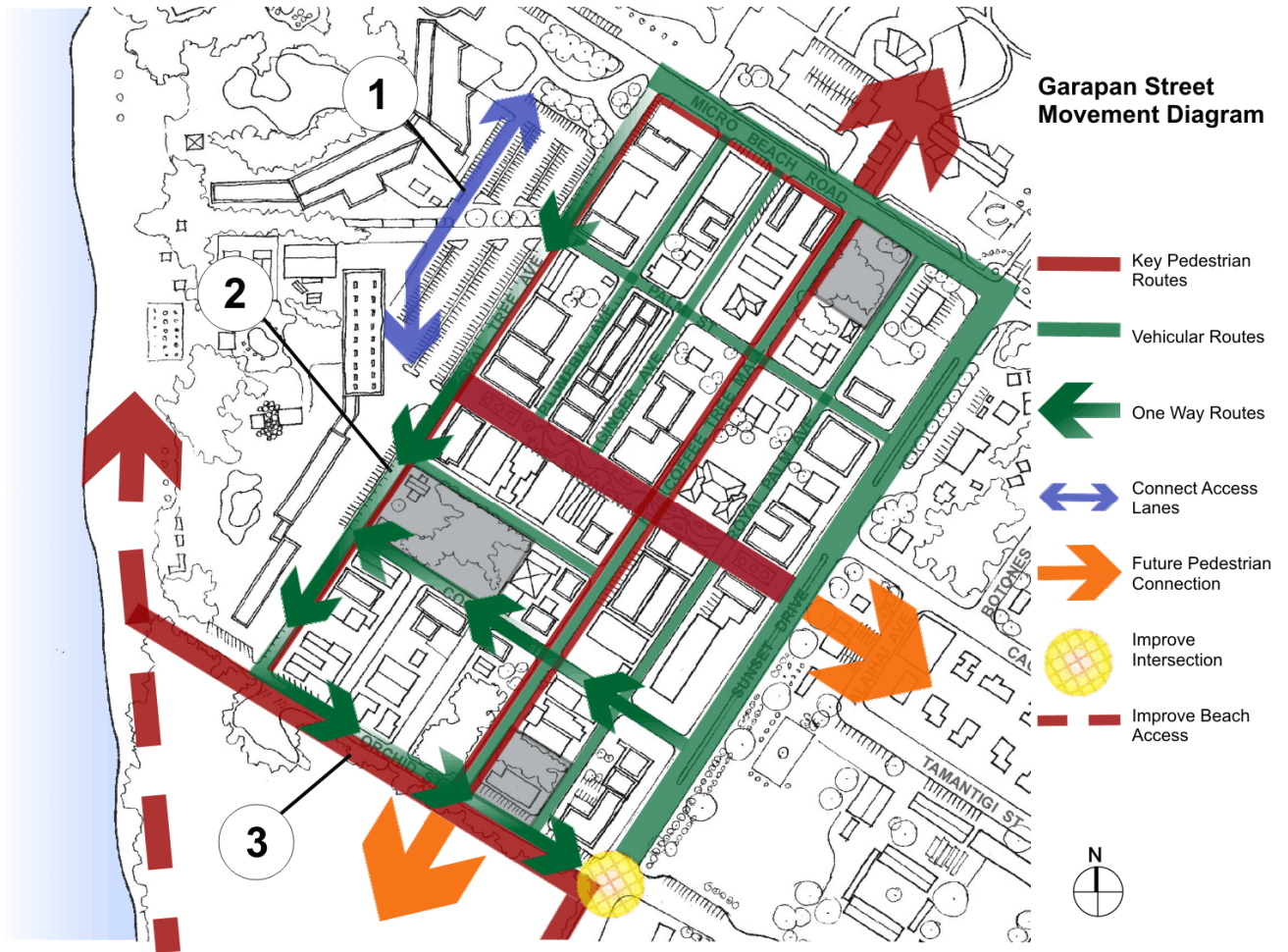


Figure 13. Potential circulation changes and key pedestrian connections.

ST-6. Install, maintain, and operate portable toilets near the Paseo. This is a temporary measure to provide needed restroom facilities for visitors in central Garapan, especially during Market Thursdays and special events.

ST-7. Install, maintain, and operate a system of visitor information, especially on the Paseo. The kiosks will help visitors find their way to other attractions and provide opportunity to advertise upcoming events.

ST-8. Develop a comprehensive parking plan for Garapan. Parking should be examined comprehensively to identify specific issues and initiate a phased strategy of actions to ensure that adequate and well-located parking is provided in Garapan. In addition, it is recommended that responsibility for enforcing parking meters be assigned to an agency and meter revenue should go along with the responsibility.

Business owners and residents in retail districts like Garapan frequently complain of the lack of parking. Upon inspection, problems turn out to be most effectively addressed through a multifaceted parking strategy that includes actions such as:

- Enforcement of on-street time limits
- Ensuring that employees do not park in spaces frequented by patrons
- Providing comfortable pedestrian access between parking lots and businesses
- Signing public parking areas and ensuring they are safe and convenient
- Striping on-street parking spaces to ensure effective use of curb space
- Joint use of parking lots by businesses or facilities with different operating hours

Often such a program of relatively inexpensive measures can greatly reduce parking concerns.

Once the actions above have been explored, then development of public parking lots and garages is appropriate. The key in any parking strategy is cooperation between businesses to ensure that parking resources are managed fairly and effectively.

ST-9. Clean up the beachfront walk between Fiesta Resort and Fishing Base to the south. A direct connection between the Fiesta's beach area and the Beach Road pathway would provide an important connection for walkers and, if a paved path is provided, bicyclists. Besides providing the opportunity for evening exercise, the area offers excellent bird watching and would prove an attraction for visiting birders.

ST-10. Regulate the beach concession huts and require construction of a standard hut design. The current makeshift tents and canopies detract from the beach experience and should be replaced. A traditional thatched roof design mounted on a typhoon-resistant concrete and steel frame would be appropriate. Of course, these would be permanently located for optimum efficiency.

ST-11. Rewire street lights on Beach Road. The copper wire connecting the street lights on Beach Road has been stolen, so the lights currently do not operate. The wiring should be reinstalled to provide security for those walking along the popular beach trail after dark.



Figure 14. Beach south of Fiesta Resort.



Figure 15. Example of a thatched roof shelter more appropriate for the beach area than the existing canopies.

■ Planning for Future Development and Capital Improvements

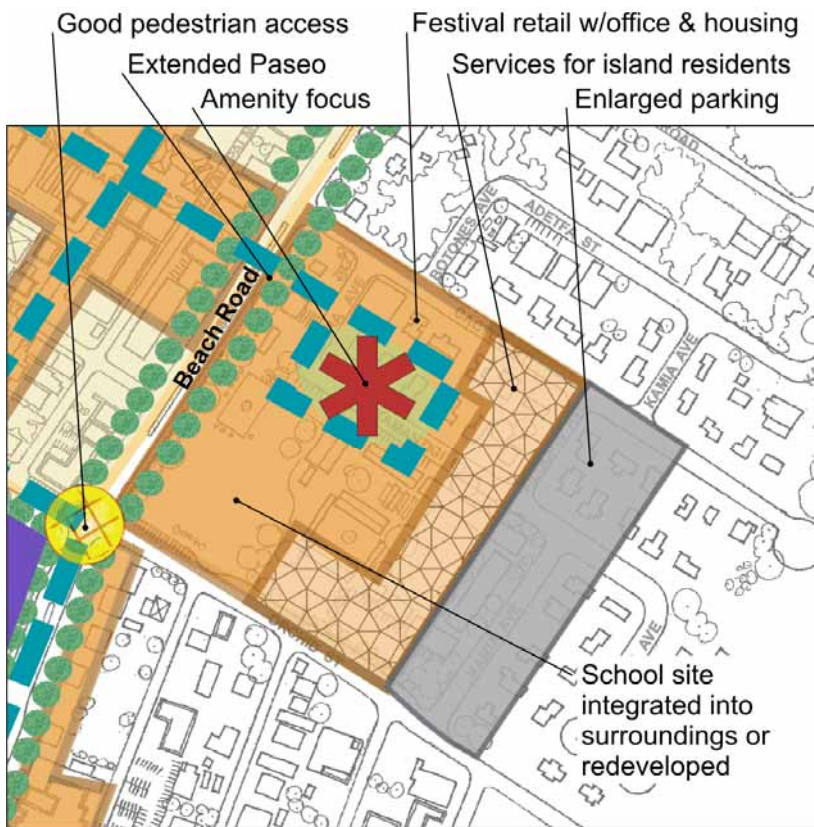
The Garapan Elementary School site, the /NMHC housing site, and the Central Park/museum complex are three significant development opportunities. Since they may take several years to complete, plans for these sites should be developed in the next year or so. In each case, there is a special urgency for planning as well as the opportunity for development that would not only transform the site, but also contribute significantly to Garapan's and the whole island's vitality.

Also, Garapan's long-term viability—not to mention the services needed for new development—requires that supporting infrastructure be upgraded. Two recommendations deal specifically with this need.

ST-12. Restart planning of the Samoan housing site to accommodate reconstructed wetlands, cultural center, hotel, and retail businesses. The Commonwealth has been planning a constructed wetland project on this site for several years. As currently envisioned, storm water from central Garapan would be treated through a series of ponds and wetlands before being discharged into the lagoon. This water treatment is necessary—along with other water quality treatments in the western island watershed—to maintain the water quality and ecological health of the lagoon, certainly an irreplaceable economic asset as well as an environmental resource. This need has been documented in DEQ's "305(b)" reports to Congress. The property is currently owned by the Department of Public Lands. It would appear that wetland construction should be a high priority for that department because it is critical to protecting the quality of other public holdings, namely, the beach and submerged lands of the lagoon. There are other obstacles to implementing this project, but efforts should be initiated immediately. At the same time, the site, along with adjacent properties, also offers the potential for the construction of a cultural center, hotel, and retail shops.

ST-13. Plan for the redevelopment of the NMHC housing site and possibly the school site. The immediate question to resolve is whether or not Garapan Elementary School is to remain in its current location. If there is a more appropriate site, then both the Commonwealth and the Public School System can plan for that eventuality. If the

school is not to be relocated, then PSS can plan for long-term improvements. Even if the school site is not available for redevelopment, the NMHC site—perhaps along with adjacent sites—provides ample opportunity for large-scale mixed-use development. Such development might be up to five stories high with a mix of uses, including residential, retail, institutional, and office. The development should be integrated into a unified complex and feature a substantial amenity, such as a courtyard, atrium, water feature, and/or recreational attraction. Businesses serving island residents as well as visitors should be encouraged along with larger facilities, such as a movie theater, performance arts center, and/or health club. Parking should be centralized with convenient access. A parking garage might be feasible for such a facility.



Note: Development may have a very different layout.
This graphic is for illustrative purposes only

Figure 16. Sample plan for PSS and NMHC sites.

The recommended redevelopment strategy is for the Commonwealth to conduct a master plan and feasibility analysis through a public process. Once the project's preferred mix of uses and character are determined and

market conditions are favorable, the Commonwealth (or a development authority created by the Commonwealth) should advertise a request for development proposals (RFP), which would invite developers to propose projects for the site. The Commonwealth would then enter into an agreement with the selected developer. The developer would lease or purchase the property and commence development as directed by the terms of the agreement, design guidelines, and zoning law.

ST-14. Plan for and coordinate new uses at the Garapan Central Park and museum property. Central Park, located south of Garapan’s core, is an important local facility that has the potential to be a much more significant resource for both local and tourist-based activities, especially when coupled with the museum across the street. There are currently a number of proposals for new and expanded uses in the park, including:

- A skateboard park
- A station for the planned Tapochao tramway
- A Japanese garden with pond (perhaps part of water quality improvements)
- Additional parking



Figure 17. Preliminary conceptual sketch for Central Park and the museum site.

In addition, the grounds of the NMI Museum of History and Culture have been suggested as a site for a Micronesian legend garden and a latte stone traditional village exhibit.

Some of the proposals are long-term, while others, especially the skateboard park, must be implemented soon to take advantage of funding or other resources. The key is to plan a suitable space for each activity, along with parking, circulation, and other improvements, to ensure the various activities are compatible. Therefore, this plan recommends that a coordinating committee be appointed to prepare a conceptual site plan for the park. This effort will require a small fund to hire a consultant to prepare a conceptual layout to ensure all the various activities are adequately sited and serviced.

ST-15. Review utility infrastructure plans to ensure their adequacy. The current plans for water, sewer, and power do not take into account major new development, so they should be updated to accommodate new demands. Additionally, the cost to the hotels of providing their own power and water is becoming increasingly prohibitive. The planning should explore any potential efficiency in coordinating or combining services. Finally, conservation programs, such as incentives for insulation, solar generation, and “green building” regulations, should be identified.

ST-16. Begin implementation of storm water management improvements in the watershed. There have been several studies showing how to improve the quality of storm water entering the lagoon. Improvements call for various types of, retention ponds, wetland, and other features to be added to existing drainage to help filter the water and modulate runoff during storm events. These improvements are necessary for the lagoon’s environmental health, so implementation of these plans should commence during the next year.

■ Short-Term Management Issues

In addition to the recommended regulatory, infrastructure, and planning actions, several management issues should be addressed in the short term. Resolving these issues will yield substantial benefits, even though they may not change Garapan’s outward physical appearance. This is because addressing management issues helps to unify business and property owners. Successful business districts are those in which property owners, business owners, and government entities work together in a collaborative, coordinated way. Indeed, the other recommended actions are largely dependent upon the



Figure 18. Young tourists enjoying a break dancing exhibition on the Paseo.

teamwork that management and organization efforts hope to build. Therefore, these actions are as important as the more visible projects described earlier.

ST-17. Assign a single management entity for the Paseo.

The Paseo de Marianas is a key resource for the business district but it is currently underutilized. The vacant appearance can, by itself, discourage visitors. One key to better utilization of the Paseo, in addition to encouraging shaded outdoor seating and sales areas, is to program more events in the space and to allow more informal activities, such as sales kiosks. Such events and activities must be well regulated so that they increase the trade of adjacent businesses and do not detract from normal business activities. A single entity responsible for scheduling events, managing activities, and ensuring maintenance would greatly facilitate effective Paseo use and quality. Such an entity would be responsive to the needs of local businesses and work within prescribed rules and responsibilities. But, the benefits would be great, especially if such an organization can foster business and property owner cooperation.



Figure 19. Groups have been envisioning more extensive Paseo de Marianas improvements.

ST-18. Work with the National Park Service (NPS) to optimize use of American Memorial Park.

American Memorial Park grounds, museum, and amphitheater are unique and valuable assets. Expanded use of these facilities could benefit both local and NPS objectives. Local government and business representatives should continue to work with NPS officials to arrange for additional

programmed activities in the park. Arranging more cultural events such as concerts, presentations, and films in the amphitheater would be a logical next step. Weather protection over the amphitheater seating should be pursued.

Acknowledging that the NPS has its own mission and procedures, it seems that all parties could gain much from cooperative efforts. At other national parks, both the NPS and local committees have benefited from collaborative efforts such as the Gateway Communities and the Alternative Transportation Programs. There are a number of activities that CNMI, the Garapan community, and business leaders could take to address park objectives. For example, enhanced tour bus transportation to the park, contributions to special facilities such as the amphitheater weather protection, advertising of park attractions in resorts and on public kiosks, or enhancing areas around the park might be initiated in exchange for greater access and event programming.

ST-19. Enhance Saipan and Garapan's island character and visual identity. Efforts should be made to enhance the area's identity, not only in terms of its physical characteristics, but also its more fundamental cultural (or multi-cultural), historical, and national identity. A group of interested citizens should initiate a discussion of this topic to see what can be done to identify, enhance, and advertise the island's character. This plan recommends several actions, such as development standards, park and infrastructure improvements, and new development and economic revitalization activities that would greatly benefit from defined objectives and guidelines to enhance the island's special identity. Appendix B has some suggestions that might serve as starting points in this discussion.

ST-20. Identify a permanent location and management entity for the Thursday Night Market. The Thursday Night Market adds vitality to the district and is much appreciated by visitors. However, some permanent merchants feel that the weekly event detracts from their businesses. Other business districts have successfully established markets, festivals, and outdoor sales that have greatly enhanced business activity for permanent merchants as well. A task force of local business owners, market representatives, and appropriate public officials should resolve these



Figure 20. The American Memorial Park amphitheater could house numerous performances and events, especially with a weather covering.



Figure 21. The Thursday Night Market brings out both locals and tourists.

issues. Again, the management is key, so the district can try different approaches, collectively evaluate their effectiveness, and find the best solution over time.

ST-21. Appoint a high-level government overseer for plan implementation. The recommendations in this plan are ambitious and will require coordination between numerous governmental departments, business groups, property owners, and special interest groups. Responsibility for critical efforts has too often spread between too many different entities or else not been clearly defined. So, an overarching objective of this plan is to stimulate more efficient coordination and clearer assignment of responsibilities for management and improvement actions.

The most effective way to initiate this is to assign a high-level government official the responsibility of monitoring implementation progress and removing roadblocks where necessary. This person should answer to the Governor and serve as a communication conduit between agencies, groups, and individuals. Such overseers have proven very effective on numerous revitalization efforts. For example, the U.S. National Main Street Program (www.mainstreet.org) recommends a coordinator to fulfill the tasks described above.

The overseer should also ensure that preventive maintenance plans are prepared and implemented for public facilities. Public infrastructure needs to be maintained to preserve attractiveness and avoid major rebuilding cost later.

Mid-Term Actions, One to Three Years

Near-term actions begin with organizational planning and management necessary to move forward as well as some modest circulation improvements. Mid-term actions focus on more substantive capital improvements that will provide the framework for increased private investment. A three-year window provides enough time to initiate substantive projects, although complete of construction may require additional time.

Included in mid-term actions are several downtown street improvements and parking strategies. Uncompleted short-term efforts described in the previous section should also continue. It is anticipated that private investment will also increase during this period, encouraged by a sense of forward momentum and the first physical evidence of improvement in downtown Garapan.

MT-1. Improve Orchid Street and the Orchid Street/Beach Road intersection. The open ditch and weedy vegetation along Orchid Street detract from downtown Garapan's image, and discourage redevelopment along the street. At the same time, Orchid Street is potentially a key pedestrian connection and the frontage for the Samoan housing site redevelopment. Therefore, the street merits high priority for improvements. Additionally, the intersection of Orchid Street and Beach Road is an important pedestrian link between downtown and the DFS complex, so a traffic signal and sidewalk bulb extensions are recommended there. The Orchid Street channel should be enclosed in a 2- or 3-cell "box" culvert as illustrated in Figure 22.

A 12-foot-wide sidewalk with landscaping, street lighting, and parking on the south side is recommended for this key pedestrian link. Existing development on the street's north side precludes new sidewalks there, but when those properties redevelop, a curb, gutter and sidewalk should be installed.

It is also recommended that the street be designated one-way to reduce congestion at the Beach Road intersection. As noted in Action SC-1, one-way westbound is recommended, at least as a test.

Orchard Street Section Diagram

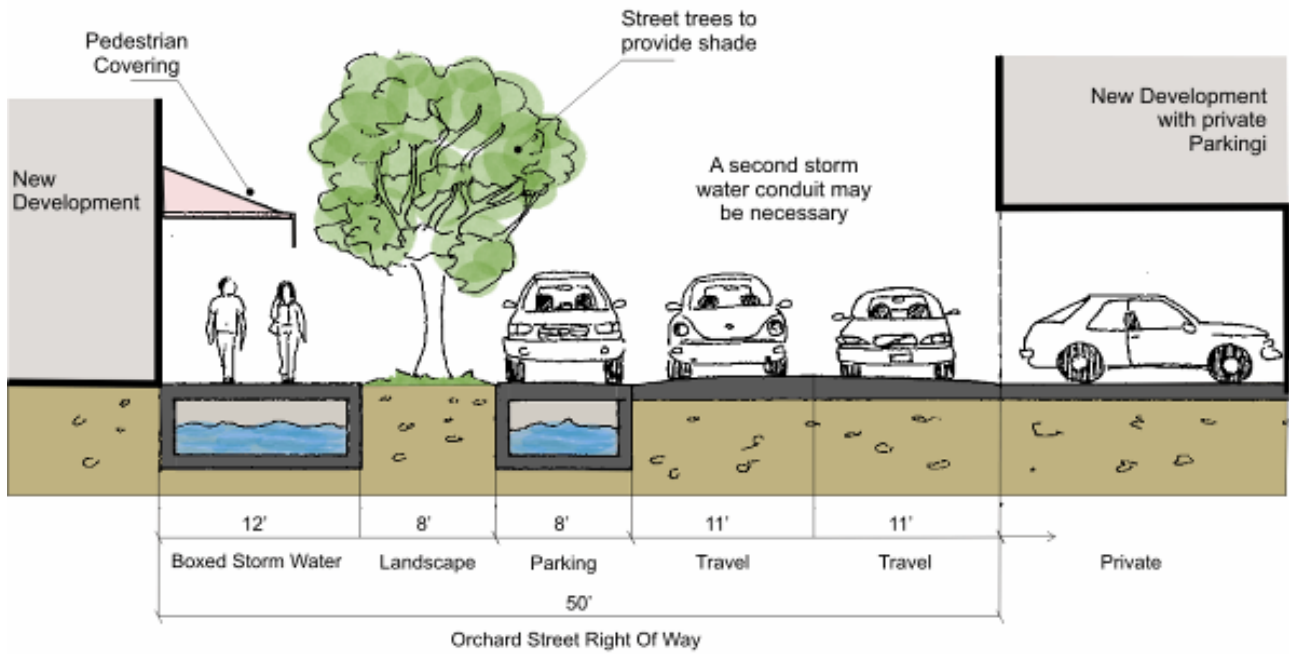


Figure 22. Proposed Orchard Street section.

The Orchard Street improvements have already been preliminarily engineered. The cost of improving the street is estimated at around \$2,500,000. The cost of the intersection improvements is around \$800,000. (from Winsler & Kelly, May 2007)



Figure 23. Proposed improvements at the Orchard Street/Beach Road intersection.

MT-2. Improve selected downtown Garapan streets. Poor pavement and lack of landscaping and lighting detract substantially from Garapan's identity so street improvements should receive high priority. Priority should go to organizing on-street parking and providing pedestrian access with landscaping and sidewalks. Street improvements, especially to underdeveloped streets such as those in Garapan, have proven to be effective stimuli for private redevelopment and business enhancements. It is typical for merchants to realize a 10% to 15% increase in retail sales after a well-orchestrated street improvement project.



Figure 24. Typical street conditions before (upper right) and after improvement.

Figure 25 illustrates a typical roadway section for one of Garapan's 40-foot-wide rights-of-way. The goal for Garapan's cross streets is to provide two travel lanes plus on-street parking, two sidewalks, street trees, and lighting. This can be achieved by establishing two narrow, low-speed travel lanes and alternating parking and street trees. Different streets may have different configurations because of existing development

patterns and objectives. For example, some streets may be one-way and others might preclude on-street parking in favor of a public parking lot.

The cost of the proposed street improvements would be roughly between \$1,000 and \$1,500 a linear foot, although costs can vary much more, depending on pavement condition, utilities, and other factors. Utilities should be upgraded and power lines placed underground when the streets are improved. Also, local property owners should be required to screen existing garbage and service facilities and make property improvements that would be cost-effective when the streets are repaired.

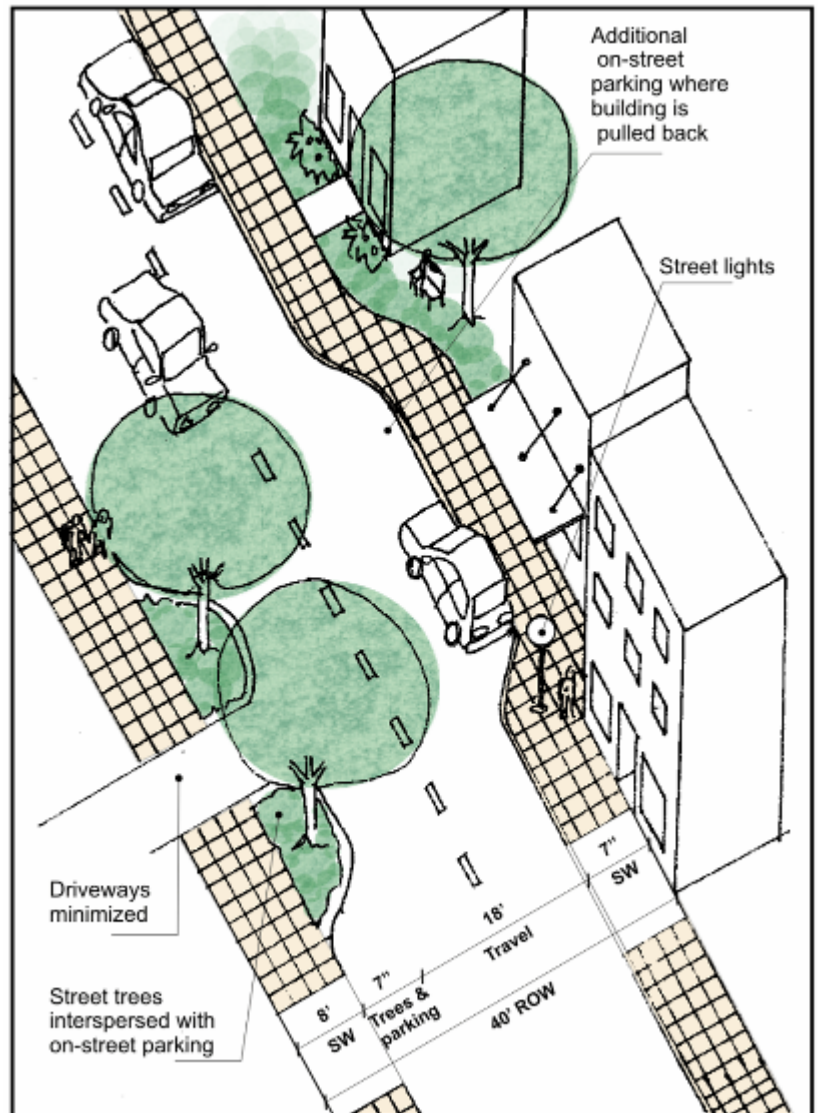


Figure 25. Typical street section proposed for internal Garapan streets.

Of all the unimproved internal downtown streets, Coffee Tree Mall merits the highest priority, as it provides direct access to American Memorial Park and the future developments on the Samoan Housing site.

MT-3. Install curb, gutters, sidewalks, lights, and street trees on the east side of Beach Road. Providing a clean edge to the roadway that defines driveways, limits parking along the roadway, cleans up the roadway edge, and directs stormwater will greatly upgrade this corridor and encourage quality development. Street trees and lights are also recommended to frame and enhance new buildings and screen parking lots. As noted earlier, Beach Road has the potential to be a highly desirable residential and office district. Improving the roadway is an important step in that direction.



Figure 26. Conditions on Beach Road before (upper right) and after improvements.

MT-4. Improve the west side of Beach Road with tree replacement, a curb edge, historical markers, and additional pala palas. The beach side of Beach Road is in generally good condition except for the currently missing street light wiring. Modest improvements could further enhance this important resource. The first step would be an improvement plan to identify the conditions most in need of maintenance and priority locations for improvements. Individual improvements could be accomplished all at once, perhaps with the improvements on the east side of Beach Road, or incrementally.

MT-5. Develop parking facilities for downtown Garapan. There is a lack of parking in downtown Garapan. While this plan recommends a phased, step-by-step approach to better managing on- and off-street parking in ST-8, at some point it will become necessary to develop parking lots and/or garages for general use. The proposed zoning code would allow property developers to pay a fee in lieu of providing on-site required parking if there is a CNMI program that can use that fee to create an equal amount of parking.

There are at least three vacant sites in the downtown that could support a lot or garage. This plan recommends that the committee or organization addressing parking in Garapan explore options for purchase or lease of these properties and then undertake a financial study to see if such a program is feasible.

MT-6. Install, maintain and operate permanent restrooms in downtown Garapan. Restrooms are an important facility, promoting greater use of the downtown. They should be installed near the Paseo for convenience.

Long-Term Actions, Three to Seven Years

By the end of 2010, the first wave of street improvements should be underway and physical conditions noticeably improved. Once conditions start to improve, it will be necessary to take advantage of earlier efforts and energetically pursue the economic development, advertising, and land development activities for maximum benefit.

At this point, community and business leaders can advertise Garapan's new direction toward high-quality, family-friendly tourism in a "home town" atmosphere to potential visitors and airlines. Likewise, economic market conditions may be ripe to actively seek developers for the major redevelopment sites. Finally, Garapan's economic and community-based relationship to the rest of the island might be re-examined to explore ways that the district fits within an island-wide redevelopment strategy.

There will be many actions from the first three years to complete. Three years is a short time to plan, design, fund, and construct major physical projects. However, the district will be poised for more ambitious joint public/private efforts addressing broader economic development objectives. Because they are further in the future, the details of the actions below are less well defined.

■ Economic Development Activities

LT-1. Market Garapan's new identity and community direction. Develop a proactive marketing program to advertise the new Garapan to the tourist industry and investors.

LT-2. Re-evaluate Garapan's role with respect to Saipan's economy and changing conditions. It is not easy to foresee what changes time may bring in this regard. The impact of military re-deployment, U.S. baby boomers' search for tropical time-share condominiums, the rise of low-cost airlines, changing Asian markets, and the rise of eco-tourism, among numerous other trends, might provide opportunities for Saipan. As the island's most attractive center, Garapan will undoubtedly play a role.

■ Site Development Efforts**LT-3. Partner with developers to develop key sites.**

Hopefully by this time, the stormwater treatment system for Garapan will be constructed and Orchid Street redevelopment will be completed. Similarly, the NMHC housing site and possibly the Garapan Elementary School site will be available. It is too early to tell exactly how the land will be redeveloped, but it will be important for CNMI and the community to retain control over the type of uses, the site organization, and the quality of construction to ensure that public objectives are met.

LT-4. Integrate facilities at Central Park and the museum to create a cohesive, multifunctional attraction. By 2010, several of the individual improvements, such as the skateboard park, will be constructed. As this area grows, it will be important to make sure that there is good circulation between the individual pieces and easy transportation to the downtown. With the tram, museum, cultural elements, community activities, and attractive setting, this will be an attraction at which a visiting family could spend a fun-filled day or two.

Implementation

Figure 27 lists the projects recommended in this plan and suggests the participants, where appropriate. The entries in this table are preliminary. They will be discussed during the public review period and revised for the final draft plan. In this format, the recommended actions appear to be an unrelated list of tasks; however, as noted earlier, they comprise a strategy that emphasizes:

- First, building an organizational foundation, planning future efforts, and completing a few early projects
- Second, undertaking more ambitious infrastructure projects
- Third, leveraging earlier work to achieve broader economic and redevelopment objectives

As is so often the case with ambitious efforts, the first steps are likely the hardest. For this reason, it is important to re-emphasize the need for a central coordinating person (or group) that can represent CNMI interests in initiating and coordinating efforts, securing funding, communicating with stakeholders, monitoring progress, removing roadblocks, and assisting individual projects where necessary.

There is also plenty of room for individual or small group initiative as well. Anyone or any organization can take one or more recommendations and begin implementation, provided that they do so in a way that does not conflict with the plan's or other stakeholders' objectives. Successful communities are those that can work together to frame a consensus and take collective action. If such collective action can be achieved, Garapan's future is bright.

Figure 27 Implementation Strategy

Abbreviations

AMP	American Memorial Park	DPW	Department of Public Works
BEH	Bureau of Environmental Health	HPO	Historic Preservation Office
CRM	Coastal Resources Management Office	MVA	Marianas Visitors Authority
CUC	Commonwealth Utilities Corporation	Parks	DLNR, Parks and Recreation
DCCA	Dept. of Community and Cultural Affairs	PSS	Public School System
DEQ	Division of Environmental Quality	SNILD	Saipan and Northern Islands Legislative Delegation
DPL	Department of Public Lands	Zoning	Zoning Board/Zoning Office
DPS	Department of Public Safety		

		Participants	Comments
Short-Term Actions, by July 2008			
Regulations and Enforcement			
ST-1	Amend the Saipan Zoning Law with new zones and development standards	Zoning, SNILD, Governor	
ST-2	Undertake a program to abate derelict structures	DPW, BEH, CRM, Zoning	
ST-3	Phase out adult businesses and poker parlors in west Garapan	Zoning	
ST-4	Review enforcement of current regulations	DPW, CRM, DEQ, BEH, Zoning, DPS, DPL	
Circulation and Capital Improvements			
ST-5	Reconfigure vehicle circulation in Garapan	DPW, DPS	
ST-6	Install, maintain & operate portable toilets near the Paseo	DPW	
ST-7	Install, maintain, and operate a system of visitor information	DPW	
ST-8	Develop a parking plan	DPW	
ST-9	Clean up the Beach Walk	Parks, Beautify CNMI	
ST-10	Regulate the beach concession huts	CRM, Zoning, DPL	
ST-11	Rewire street lights on Beach Road	DPW	
Planning for Future Development and Capital Improvements			
ST-12	Restart planning of the Samoan housing site	DPL, CRM, DPW, DEQ, Zoning	
ST-13	Plan for the redevelopment of the NMHC housing site and, if possible, the school site	NMHC, PSS	
ST-14	Plan Central Park and museum property	Mayor, DLNR, DPL, HPO, private organizations	Governor and Mayor to appoint a planning and management committee

IMPLEMENTATION

		Participants	Comments
Management Issues			
ST-15	Plan for development of the fishing base site	DPL, DPW, HPO, CRM, other stakeholders	
ST-16	Review utility infrastructure plans	CUC	
ST-17	Implement stormwater management improvements	DPW	
ST-18	Assign Paseo management responsibility	Governor	
ST-19	Optimize use of American Memorial Park	AMP, Paseo Manager	
ST-20	Enhance Island character	All	
ST-21	Identify location for Thursday Night Market	DCCA, Parks, DPL	
ST-22	Appoint a high-level government overseer for plan implementation	Governor	
Mid-Term Actions, One to Three Years			
MT-1	Improve Orchid Street and the Orchid Street/Sunset Drive intersection	DPW	
MT-2	Improve selected downtown Garapan streets	DPW	
MT-3	Improve east side of Beach Road	DPW	
MT-4	Improve the west side of Beach Road	DPW	
MT-5	Develop parking facilities for downtown Garapan	DPW	
MT-6	Install, maintain and operate permanent restrooms in downtown Garapan	DPW, Parks	
Long-Term Actions, Three to Seven Years			
Economic Development Activities			
LT-1	Market Garapan's new identity and community direction	MVA	
LT-2	Re-evaluate Garapan's role regarding Saipan's economy and changing conditions	All	
Site Development Efforts			
LT-3	Partner with developers to develop key sites	NMHC, PSS, DPL	
LT-4	Integrate facilities at Central Park and the museum to create a cohesive, multi-functional attraction	Mayor, DLNR, DPL, HPO, private organizations	Governor and Mayor to appoint committee

Appendix A: Participants in the Garapan and Beach Road Planning Workshop *May 8 and 9, 2007*

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Alex Youn, *Ace Investment Group*
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Anicia Q. Tomokane, *community member*
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David Loan, *Public School System*
Diego Songsong, *Department of Public Works*
Elizabeth Rechebei, Ph.D., *Commonwealth Zoning Board*
Ed Calvo, *Oceans*
Ed Arriola, Jr., *Tan Holdings*
Edith Fejeron, *Northern Marianas Housing Authority*
Edmund S. Villagomez, *Department of Commerce*
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Representative Arnold I. Palacios *Saipan and Northern Islands Legislation Delegation*
Representative Jacinta M. Kaipat, *Saipan and Northern Islands Legislation Delegation*
Representative Ramon A. Tebuteb, *Saipan and Northern Islands Legislation Delegation*
Roy Sablan, *Historic Preservation Office*
Seiji Sato, Tasi Tours, PMT, *Japan-Saipan Travel Association*
Sonya Dancoe, *Department of Public Works – Technical Services Division*
Steve Tilley, *Zoning Office*
Ta Bun Kuy, *land owner*
Thomas Cabrera Camacho, *Summer Holiday Hotel*
Tim Lang, *N15 Architects*
Yosh Gabaldon, *Hyatt Regency Saipan*

Appendix B: Suggestions for Enhancing Island Character and Physical Identity

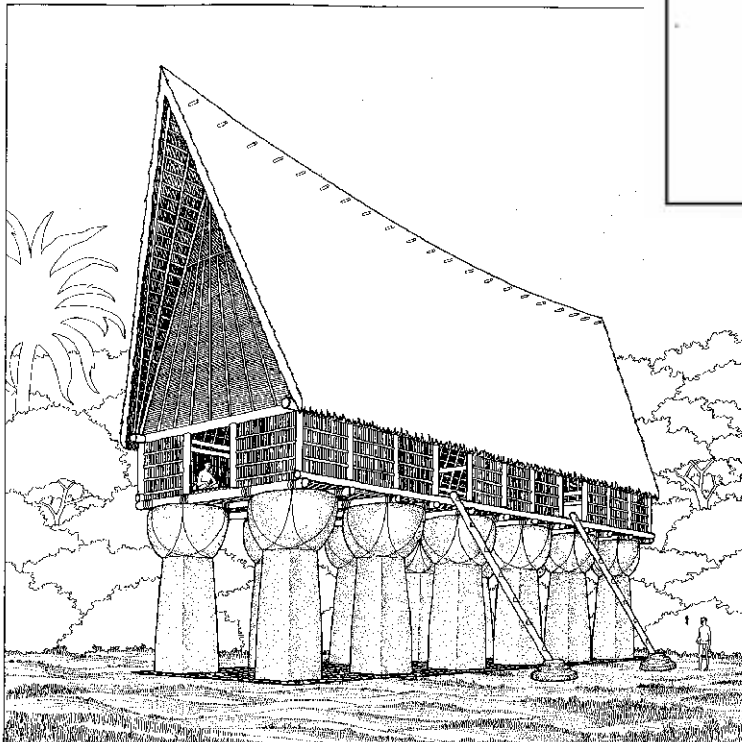
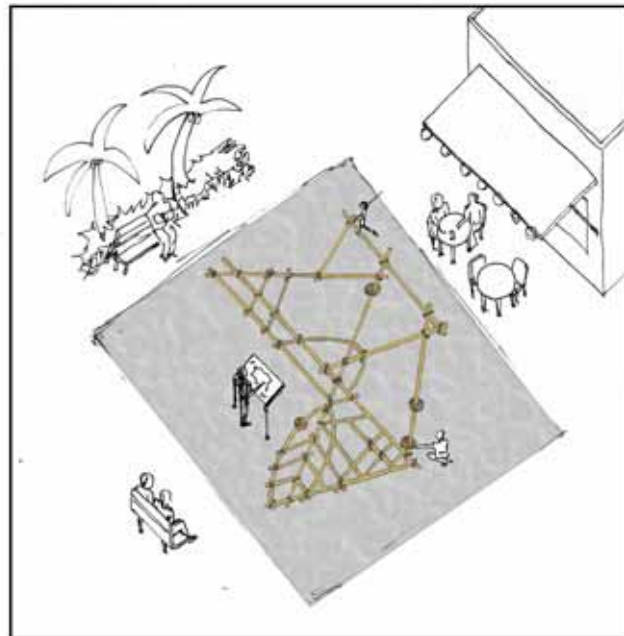
Suggestions for Enhancing Island Character

General Assets and Suggestions

Saipan has several positive assets and characteristics that can be drawn on to enhance the Island's identity as a travel destination and as a place to live and do business. Because this is a physical plan, the emphasis is on physical elements and character. However there may be a number of other community-based and business marketing activities that could be initiated to increase the Island's and Garapan's local pride and sense of place. The following are some very preliminary suggestions to initiate discussions.

Pan Asian Multi-Cultural Identity

The number of ethnic traditions and peoples living on Saipan gives it a strong sense of being central and connected to the Pacific Rim. This also adds interest for visitors, and presents the opportunity to celebrate these cultures in a number of ways. For example, models of Carolinian sail canoes could be used as wind vanes and a giant stick navigation map installed as a focal art feature on the Paseo. Some people have suggested the development of a Micronesian legend garden and a latte stone village, which could certainly be important attractions. A cultural center in Garapan might also be a place for exhibitions and celebrations, not only Native Islanders, but also for other cultures as well. A prominent outlet for local crafts and products would be another option.



Source: *Prehistoric Architecture in Micronesia*, William N. Morgan

and Physical Identity



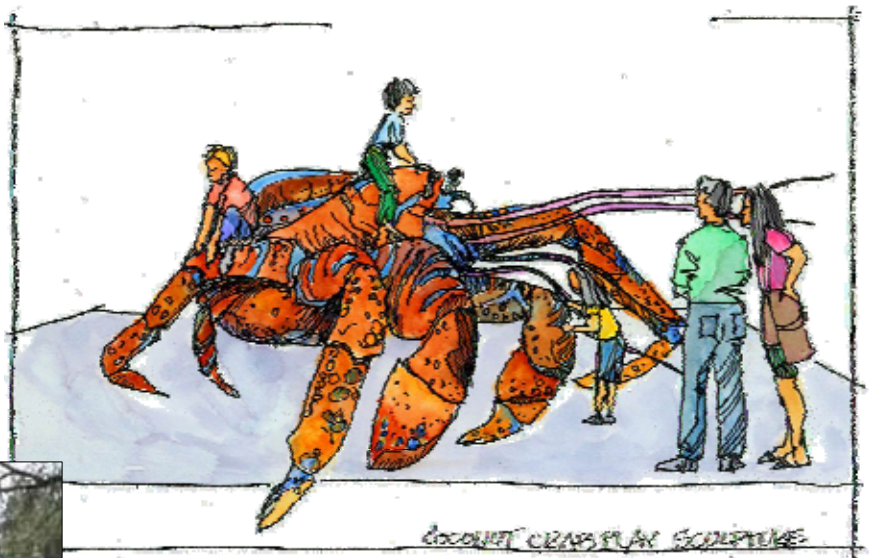
History

Saipan has an unusually rich history. There are already numerous historic assets in Garapan, such as the American Memorial Park and the Museum. Currently, various groups are working to celebrate different historical periods and events, such as new development in Sugar King Park, and there are plans to construct a Japanese Garden. Beach Road also has historical features and interpretation from the war as well as the thirteen Fishermen Monument.



Landscape Setting and Natural Ecology

As one of the more unspoiled, yet accessible, of the Micronesian Islands, Saipan is potentially a destination for ecotourists and those just wishing to avoid the hubbub of more urbanized centers. The north end of the island, in particular, provides this opportunity. Environmental enhancement efforts should be well advertised and interpreted with displays to establish the island as a leader in protecting Pacific Island resources.



The island's unique flora and fauna might also be celebrated, perhaps in a whimsical manner such as using images as sculptures or identity elements. Landscaping, particularly in Garapan, should be used to enhance buildings, shade streets, and add interest. An arboretum might be an interesting park addition.

Architectural and Design Characteristics

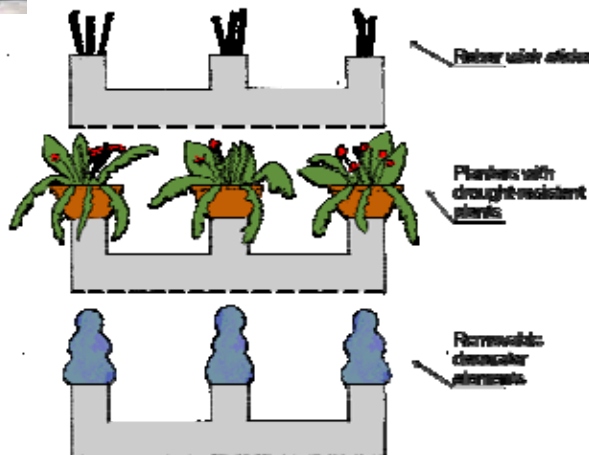
While special features and park elements can add a lot to the island's identity, new development, if it includes characteristics to reinforce the desired community character, can be even more important to establishing a unique "sense of place." The following are some ideas to consider in the design of buildings and other facilities on the island.

Climate

Traditional tropical architecture has typically adapted to the hot climate by featuring sheltering overhangs, shaded porches, open air circulation, and other measures. Given that energy will likely become more expensive, it might be useful to experiment with architectural elements that account for the climate, such as vertical shutters that shade windows during the heat of the day and that can be closed during typhoons. White or very light colored buildings that reflect light and heat also make for a pleasing contrast and composition with the green vegetation and blue water.



Treatment Suggestions for Rebar "Wish Sticks"



Functional Elements

New ideas for addressing functional requirements and local conditions merit some exploration. For example, the rebar "wish sticks" on unfinished buildings convey a lack of pride. Measures to conceal or actually enhance these elements would turn eyesores into unique features. Similarly, if signs in Garapan were typically integrated with the buildings' architecture instead of appearing as an afterthought, that characteristic would itself be unique and add to the district's identity.

Landscaping

As noted above, landscaping is an especially appropriate and cost-effective way to enhance a development's visual qualities. Site plans and building designs should take advantage of landscape opportunities.



Architectural style

Because of its several cultures and long history, Saipan has a number of stylistic traditions to draw on. However, most new development must account for contemporary building construction and early 21st century context. Therefore, it may be best to strive for understated but refined contemporary buildings with, if desired, some features or characteristics that subtly allude to cultural associations. For most buildings, high quality and refinement are generally preferable to ostentatious display. Special buildings, such as the American Memorial Park museum, of course, merit a distinctive approach.

Quality

When discussing the built environment, the over-arching consideration is quality, as reflected in the development's design, construction, and relationship to its surroundings. Roads, sidewalks, and other public facilities as well as buildings reflect on a community's sense of pride. High-quality construction and maintenance are important to support successful marketing of the island experience. The recommendations of this plan, especially the public improvements and draft zoning standards, will help to elevate the level of quality in Garapan and the larger island as a whole.

