



Grovelway Community Charrette Report *City of Roswell*

*Prepared by
Atlanta Regional Commission Staff
November 2009*

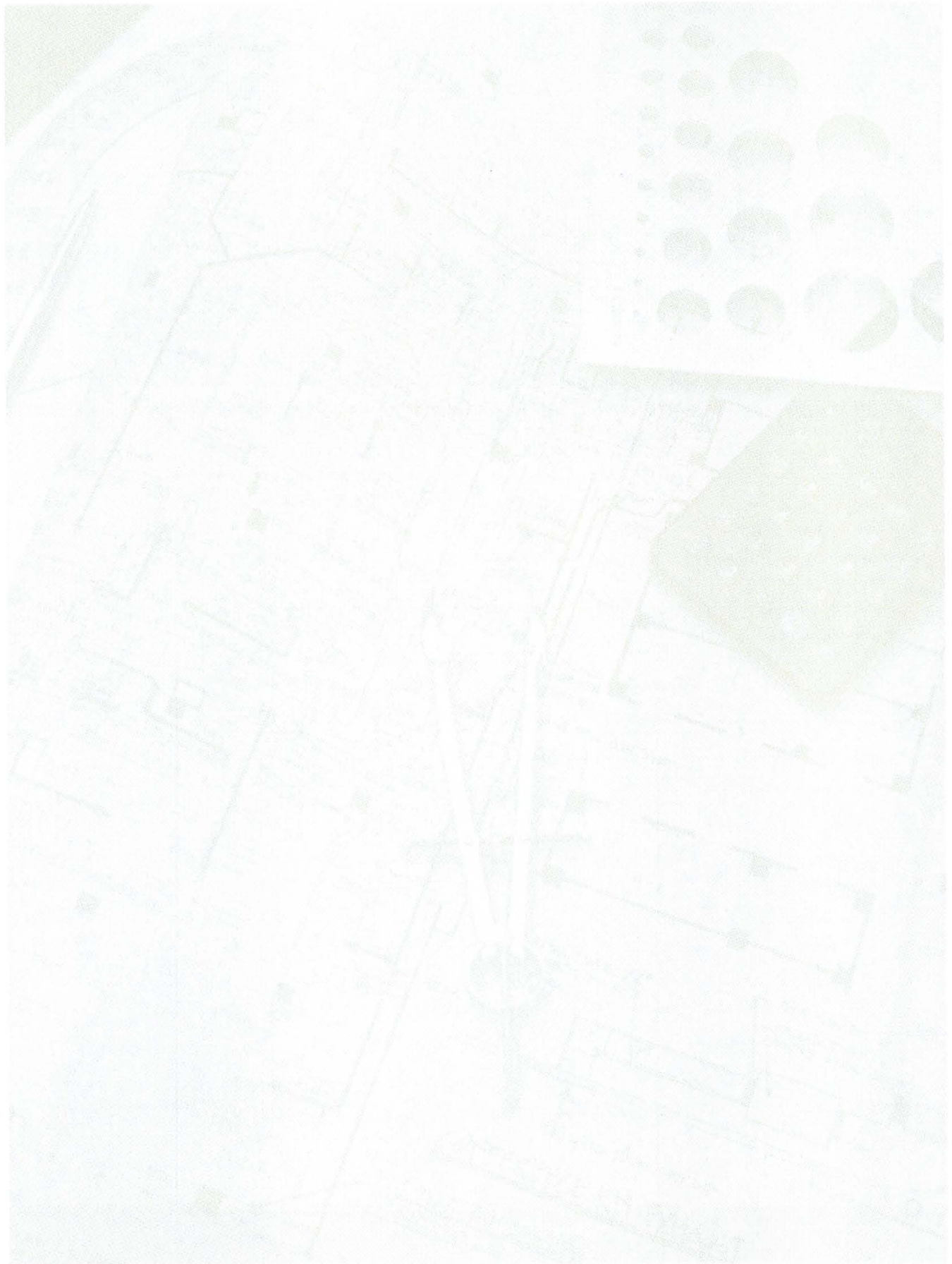


ATLANTA REGIONAL COMMISSION



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Background

The City of Roswell was awarded funding through the Atlanta Regional Commission's (ARC) Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) program in late 2007 to study an area along Atlanta Street (Highway 9) and the Roswell Town Center. The study included extensive public involvement and took a look at current conditions and made a series of short- and long-term recommendations related to land use, urban design and transportation. All of the recommendations were supported by a complete market study of the area performed by Robert Charles Lesser and Company.

In February 2009, the City of Roswell applied for assistance through the ARC Community Choices Program to carry out a design charrette that would result in a more fine-grained vision for the LCI study area. Community Choices exists to provide communities throughout the Atlanta region with the tools, resources and technical assistance to grow in ways they have chosen. The Community Choices team then began working with the City and a group of stakeholders representing various parts of the community to plan for the charrette. Factors leading to the timing for a charrette included the Roswell Housing Authority's consideration of redevelopment opportunities, recent streetscape improvements along Oak Street and a desire to see the LCI study implemented in ways that brought new life to this historic community.

Stakeholders that were involved in the charrette planning process include many members of the community as well as representatives from the following organizations: Roswell Mayor and Council, the Roswell Library, City of Roswell Planning, Transportation and Community Development Departments, Solheim Management, Roberts Commercial, YMCA, Whole Town Solutions, Zion Missionary Baptist Church, Pleasant Hill Missionary Baptist Church, Lauck Motors, the Groveway Community Group, SOCA Shops, Roswell Housing Authority, and the Roswell Police Department. Councilman Rich Dippolito served as the leader of the stakeholder committee and the project.

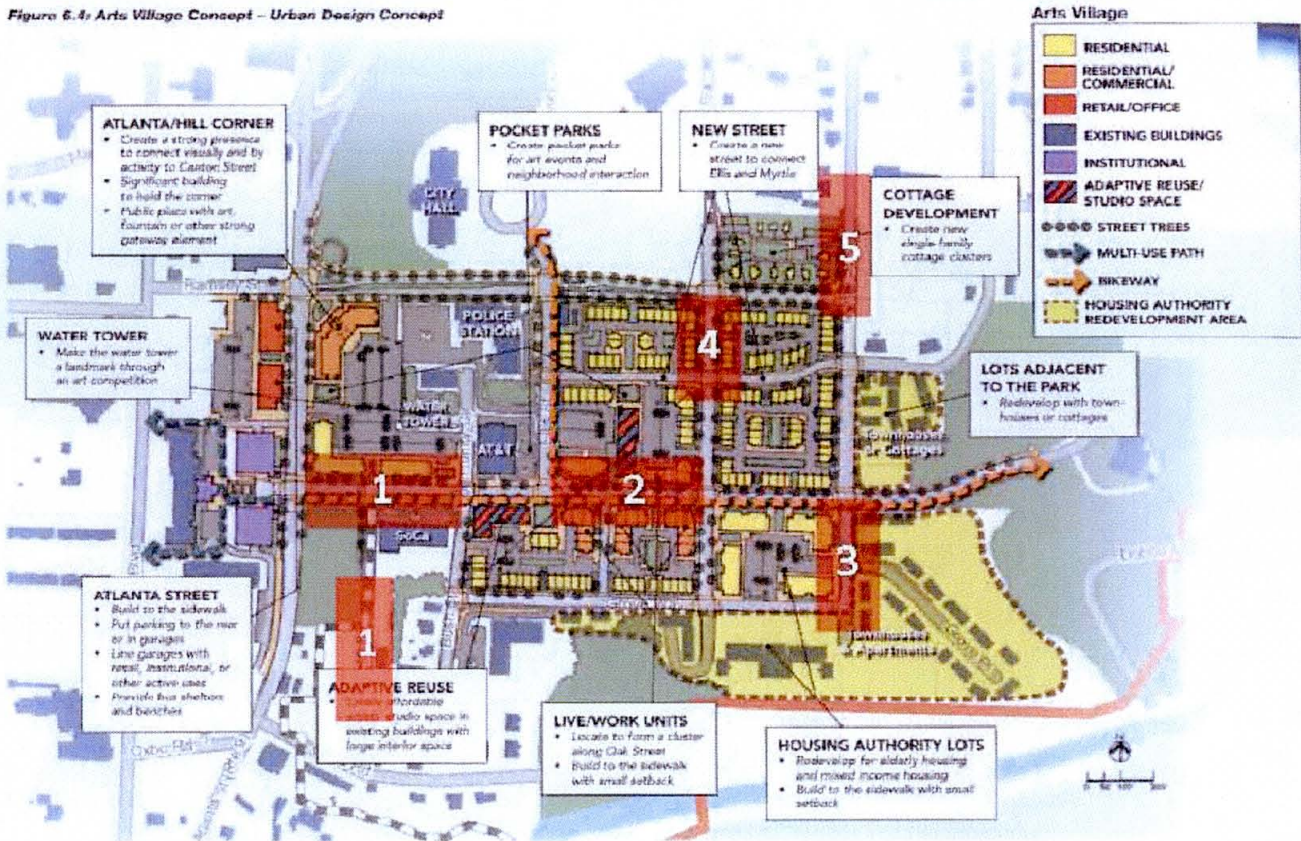
Process

Starting in April 2009, a stakeholder steering committee was formed and tasked with planning the charrette. The Stakeholder committee spent more than two months discussing issues including challenges and opportunities for the area and strategies for meeting the needs of all current and future residents. The ARC Lifelong Communities program was introduced, along with principles that could be incorporated into the potential design of the Groveway Community. The stakeholder team also participated in a comprehensive rolling tour of the Groveway Community.

Ultimately, the Community Choices team along with the stakeholders developed a detailed plan and agenda for the charrette. The design and facilitation team for the charrette included architects, landscape architects, planners, transportation planning professionals, public works staff and others. The City of Roswell, private design firms and ARC provided staff members to assist with group work throughout the two day process.

The charrette design team was recruited by the City and assisted by providing sketches and drawings to represent ideas suggested by stakeholders during the charrette. The designers helped compile all thoughts and design ideas into a comprehensive list and set of drawings that was presented on the final day of the charrette. The design team included chief designers Cindy Cox of Open Air Architecture and Gary Justice, as well as Bill Bruce and Mickey O'Brien of Community Concepts, Roberto Paredes of ASD, Richard Aiken of HADP Architecture Inc., Edward Bernard of EABernard, David M. Standard of d.standard, Michael Keller of Studio & Design, John and Leslie Carruth and Marcus Mello of Randall Paulson Architects, and Chris Rogers of Rogers Architects in Birmingham.

Figure 6.4: Arts Village Concept – Urban Design Concept



Five charrette groups

Charrette

The charrette was held on Thursday, September 24 and Friday, September 25 at the Child Development Association located in the center of the Groveway Community. Approximately eighty residents, elected officials, community representatives and other stakeholders attended. Designers, architects, landscape architects and planners from the Atlanta region and other areas of the country helped facilitate group discussion and recording of images and ideas.

The charrette area was divided into five groups (see graphic above), based on the concept map provided in the Roswell Town Center/Atlanta Street LCI Study. Each group was tasked with producing sketches for their respective areas, along with a text description of desired elements. These elements included transportation, land use, design, environmental and social components. A detailed account of each group's work follows.

Group One

Study area

Group one's study area included part of the Oak Street corridor as well as the Pleasant Hill Missionary Baptist Church and surrounding residential area. Currently, this area is home to various retail shops, a church, cemetery and some single family residential. The vision for this area, as described in the LCI Study, includes multi-family residential, commercial and light industrial uses

Pleasant Hill Missionary Baptist Church



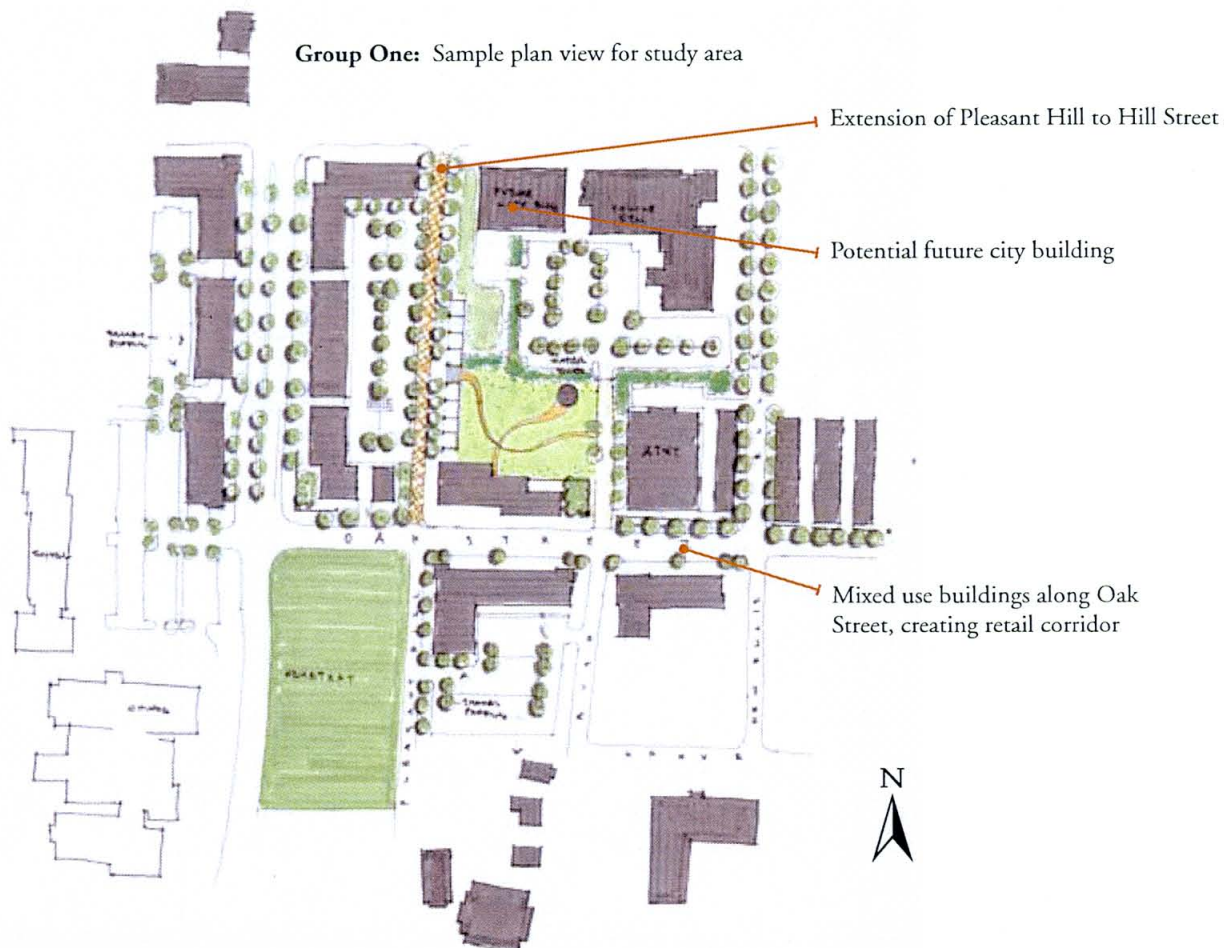
including adaptive reuse projects, and pocket parks in addition to existing community uses. Items to be considered were common to all groups and included: setbacks, street trees, streetscapes, building height (2-3 stories), relationship of uses, gateways, the pedestrian environment (outdoor dining, sidewalk width, trees, parking screening), connections to Civic/City center, building access, how buildings address corners, landscaping and parking.

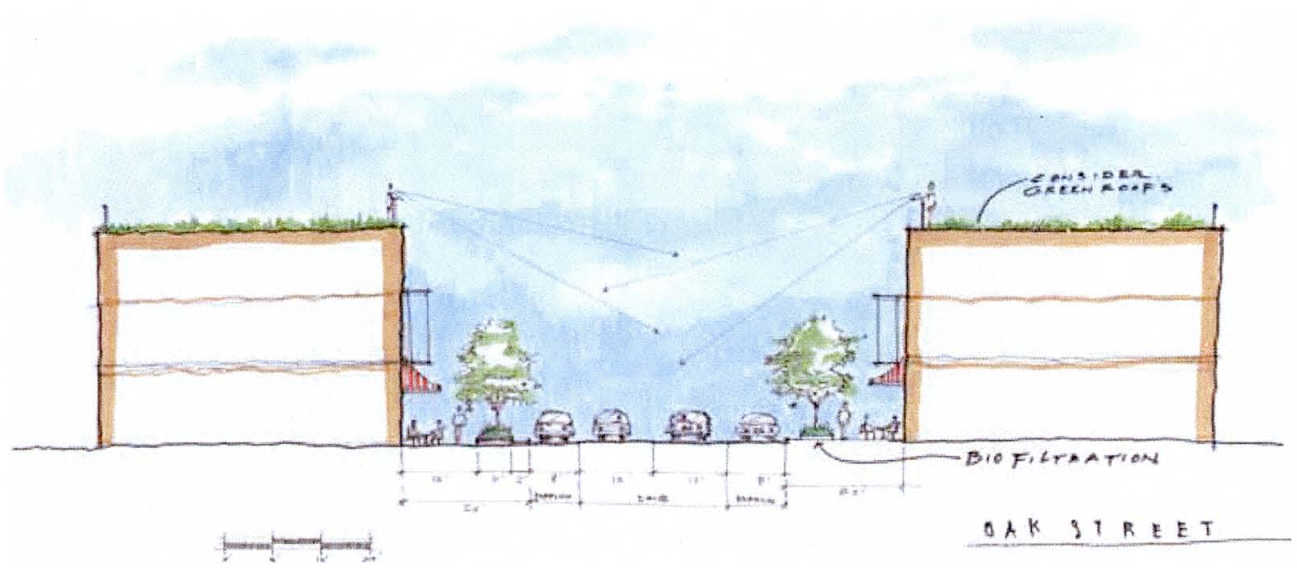
Results of charrette

Group one envisions an area that is more connected through an enhanced street grid, with a main street atmosphere along parts of Oak Street. A potential connection could be the extension of Pleasant Hill from Oak to Hill Street as a pedestrian and vehicle corridor. Suggested building types include three story brick and glass mixed use structures with parking underneath. The group sees Oak Street as a potential retail corridor, blending existing and new buildings, and adding in an upper story residential component.

The following elements were also mentioned:

1. Green infrastructure
2. Shared parking behind SOCA shops for retail and church
3. Church to pursue properties on their block
4. Additional “future” city building to complete the street edge at Hill Street – could include parking area for municipal vehicles
5. Public Art on third Thursday - “Alive after Five”





Group One: Sample street section for Oak Street – includes green water management and building techniques and enhanced pedestrian environment



Group One: Rendering of the Atlanta Street/Oak Street intersection includes three-story mixed use buildings and a more pedestrian friendly environment

Group Two

Study area

Group two examined the portion of Oak Street from Ellis to Forrest Street. This stretch of Oak is occupied by single story light industrial and auto-related uses, along with some residential. The vision for this area includes mixed income and multi-family housing, commercial and light industrial uses and mixed use areas.



Group Two: existing conditions - light industrial and residential

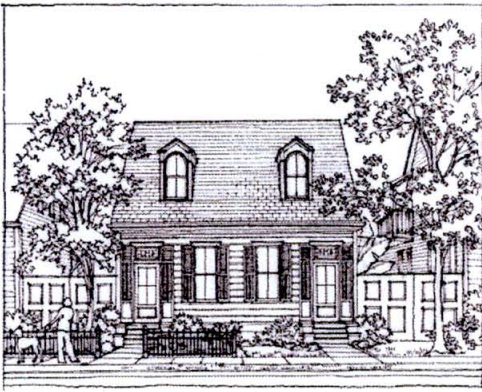
Results of charrette

Group two envisions a neighborhood gathering place/community green with public art along Oak Street, incorporating commercial and residential spaces. Enhanced pedestrian connections, including a multi-use trail and golf cart paths, would enable residents of all ages to safely access points of interest through the community.

Simple but high-quality materials could be employed on residential dwellings (wood siding, metal roofs, substantial front porches) and commercial spaces (brick facades, metal roofs) to tie together styles throughout the area. Building heights could taper off as they reach the park to help make the transition from neighborhood uses to park uses and greenspace more seamless.

An interesting program was mentioned in this discussion – that of “community leader housing”. Such a program could offer ownership housing units to police or fire personnel, pastors or coaches at reduced rates to encourage pillars of the community to locate in the area, and provide a stabilizing force to combat crime.



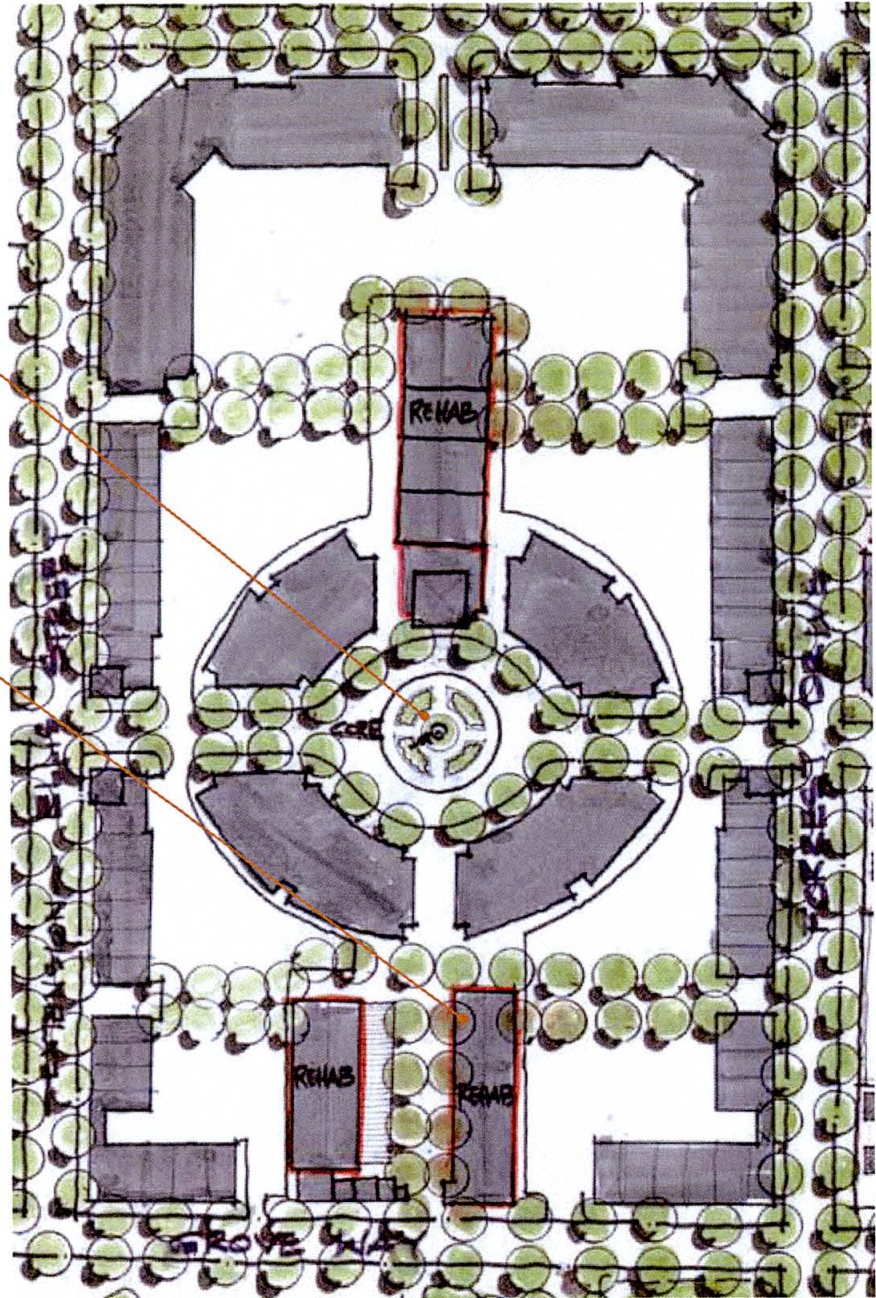


Group Two: Townhomes or cottage style dwellings could bridge architectural styles currently in the area

Group Two: Sample plan view of potential Oak Street gather space/ community green

Neighborhood gathering place/ community green along Oak Street with surrounding commercial and residential buildings

Rehabilitation of existing structures adds to character of the area





Group Two: Rendering of a potential community gathering spot along Oak Street including a central garden or water feature

Oak St. between
Ellis & Forrest

Group Three

Study area

Group three's study area included the Roswell Housing Authority property at the south end of Myrtle Street. One- and two-story brick buildings are placed throughout the area. Potential future development could include higher density residential and/or older adult housing.

Results of charrette

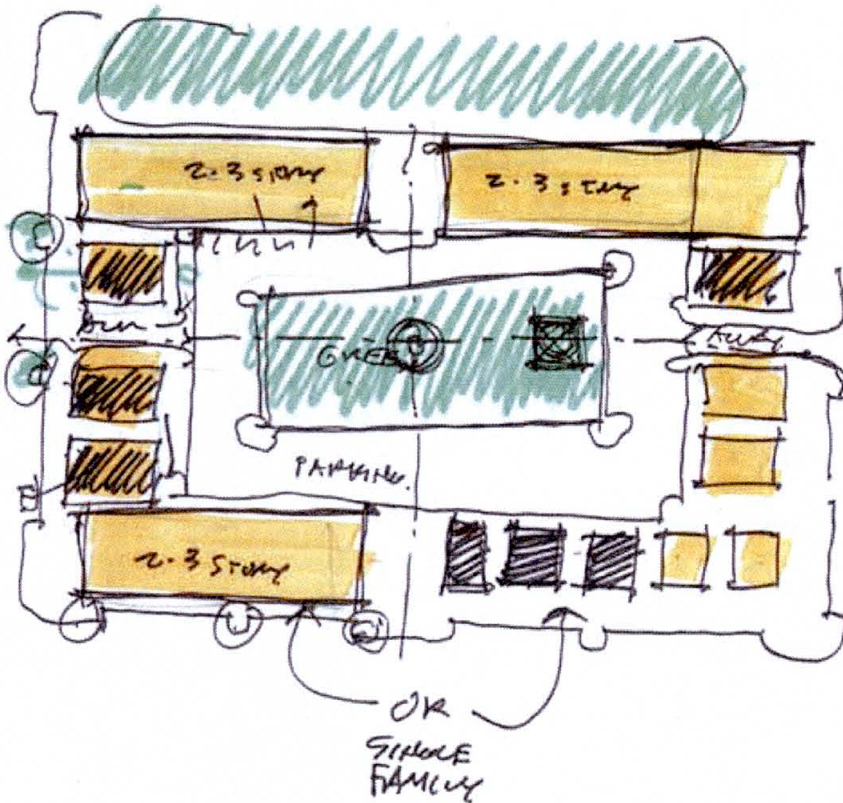
A pedestrian friendly environment was envisioned for this area. Two- to three-story multi-family housing and live-work units were proposed, bringing the buildings closer to the street. Space on the interior of the block could be reserved for parking. Market rate units (townhomes, condominiums, cottages) could be incorporated into the design of the community to provide a range of housing options and types for community members. A mix of architectural styles is preferred.



Group Three: On street parallel parking can be accommodated alongside wide sidewalks and street trees

Wider sidewalks, street tree areas, bike lanes, better street lighting and on street parking were also mentioned (see photos above). Landscaping and trees could increase in height and density, creating the feel of a linear park, closer to Waller Park to help connect the park to the surrounding area. Such an amenity would soften the street edge and provide more sensitive access to the park.

Several roundabouts (at Myrtle & Oak and Oak & Forest) were proposed by the group, as was a great street grid through the area to provide increased access, especially to Oxbo Road and the creek.



Group Three: This image shows how when buildings area moved closer to the street, space for parking and greenspace is available on the interior of the block



Group Three: Rendering of Forrest and Oak Street intersection, showing an enhanced pedestrian environment and homes that match the current scale of the neighborhood

Group Four

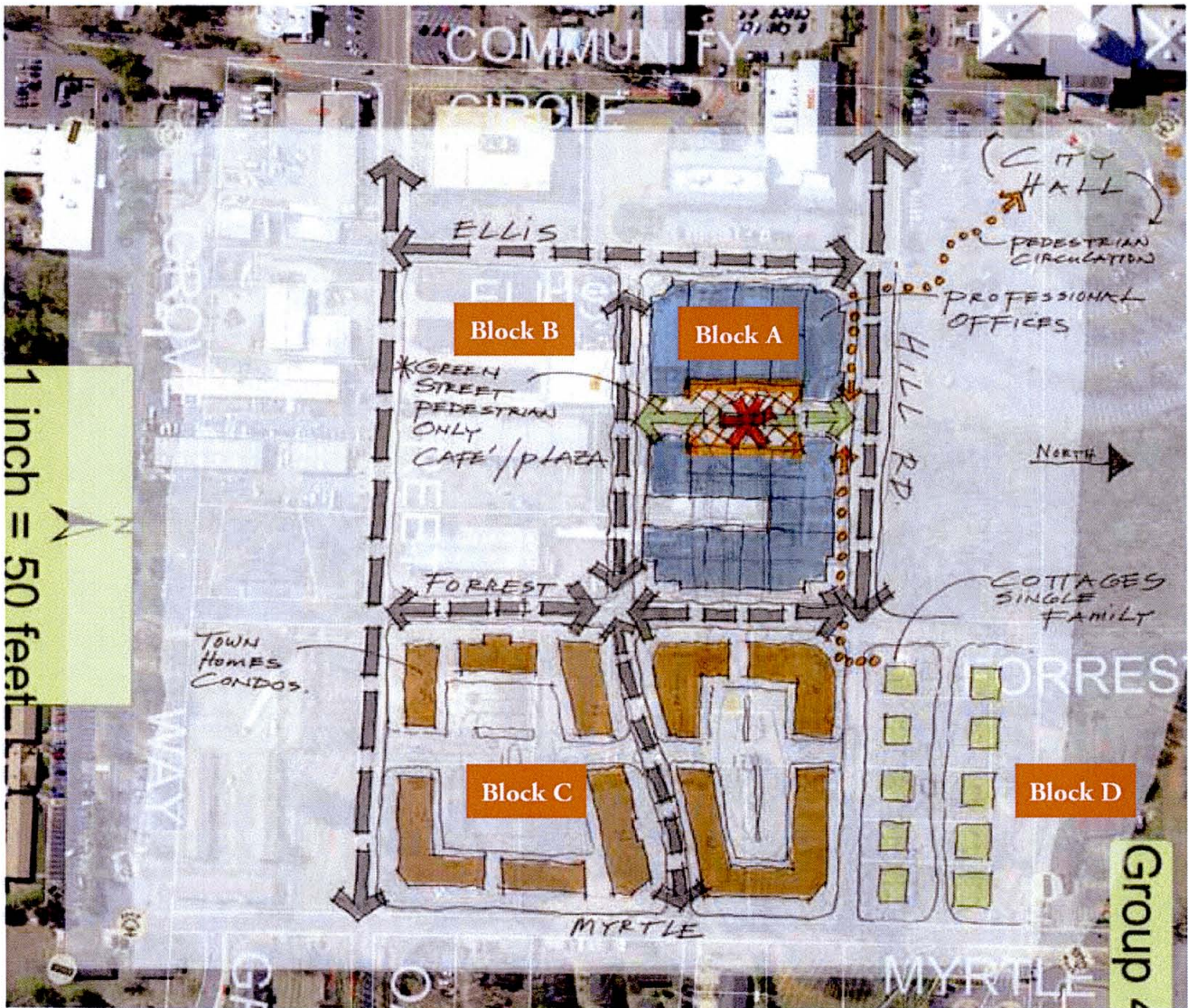
Study area

Group four looked at the stretch of Forrest Street just south of its intersection with Hill Street. The area is now home to some single family residential and light industrial uses. The vision for this area includes lower density residential development (flats, townhomes), light industrial and adaptive reuse of historic structures.

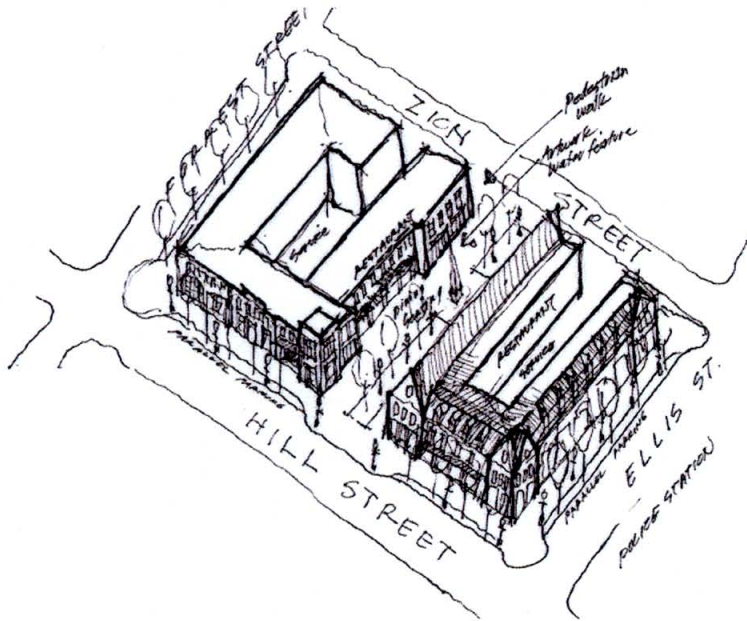
Results of charrette

Two-way traffic with parallel parking and street trees was proposed for streets in this area. Materials covering residential or commercial buildings could include brick, stone, stucco and painted siding. Colorful blade signs or kiosks, public art and large windows could enhance and attract shoppers to neighborhood retail spaces.

The group approved of the idea proposed in the LCI study of extending Zion Circle through to Ellis Street. This could provide greater connectivity to the area around municipal buildings including City Hall.



Group four divided their study area into smaller blocks to specify design and use standards. Block A was envisioned primarily as a commercial block with a pedestrian green street providing access to the interior of the block (see sketch on following page). Blocks B and C could be residential in nature, with C holding townhomes or condominiums. Block D could hold cottage style homes, thus transitioning to the existing single family character of the area as it is today.



Group Four: A pedestrian walk could be constructed to provide access to a quaint neighborhood retail area



Group Four: Rendering depicting such a pedestrian street

*Pedestrian Street
Bounded by Ellis, Zion
Hill & Forrest.*

Group Five

Study area

Group five studied a portion of Myrtle Street north of its intersection with Hill Street. The area includes single family residential currently and could accommodate additional cottage housing in the future, along with potential development of the Zion Missionary Baptist Church campus.

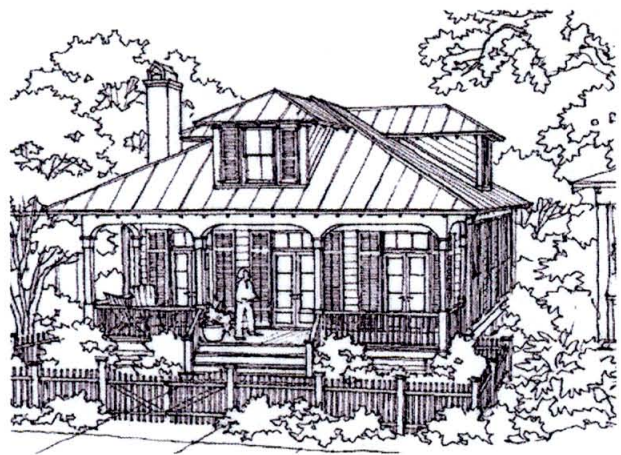
Results of charrette

This group came up with some interesting ideas for connecting parts of their assigned study area with other areas of the community. It was proposed that the creek trail from Norcross Street that runs behind Millbrook and St. Charles be continued on the east side of the creek where it runs alongside property owned by Zion Missionary Baptist Church. This would complete a key segment of the trail and provide recreational opportunities, connecting residents to area parks and the forest.

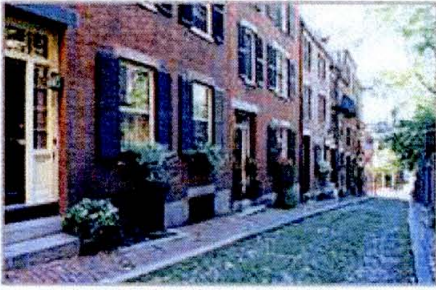
The study area would be home to mostly single family cottage style homes, at most two stories in height. Streets could accommodate parallel parking and streetscapes could be improved to add in more sidewalks. Parking for Zion Missionary Baptist is a concern in the area, so solutions were discussed. They include:

- Shared parking with surrounding businesses
- On-street parking on adjacent streets
- Shuttles to city parking lots
- Golf cart parking for those who live in the community

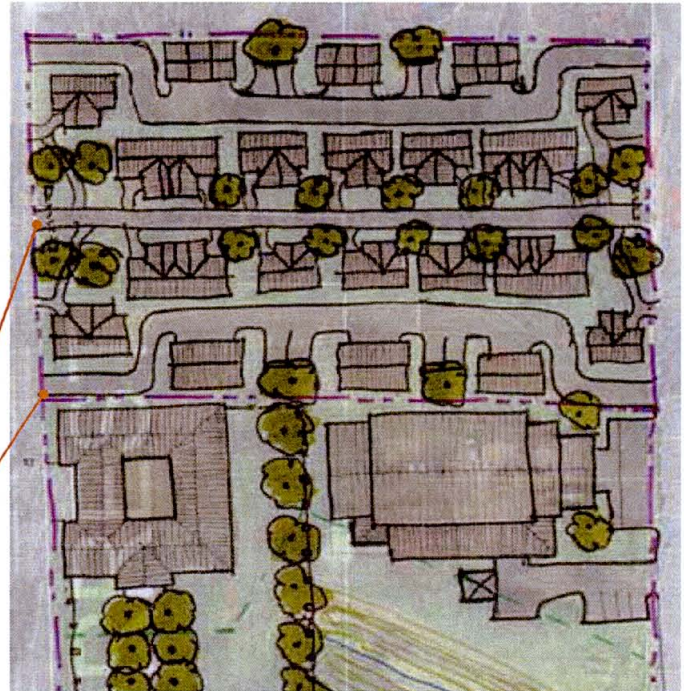
Small green streets could be constructed within the residential area to provide greater access. This concept has seen success in implementation in Virginia Beach, VA. See the graphic on the following page for the context of this principle.



Sample cottage style homes that match the architectural character of area five



Group Five: An historic green street (above) along a residential throughway



Group Five: A plan view (right) of cottage housing between Myrtle and Forest Streets

Green streets connecting Forrest and Myrtle



Group Five: Rendering of a potential green street between Forrest and Myrtle

Greenstreet between Forrest & Myrtle

Summary of Charrette Input

All groups that participated in the charrette gave thoughtful attention to the existing conditions and specific needs of their study areas. Several groups proposed innovative solutions for problems of limited access, parking, building alignment and connectivity to the area's vast supply of parks, greenspace and forested land.

The overall vision that came about as a result of this exercise is one of an interconnected community – residential, office, retail and community uses occurring naturally together, connected by beautiful streetscapes and safe roadways. The work started with the Oak Street streetscape improvements could serve as a foundation to these future projects. The architectural character of the area was not changed much in that modest, one- to two- story residential and possibly three-story commercial buildings could be integrated into the existing fabric of the area.

Group two's concept of a community gathering spot along Oak Street met with excitement from residents and business owners alike. The potential for a geographical center for the community may be a positive and worthwhile project to pursue.

Implementation

The next step in fulfilling the vision for the Groveway Community is putting into place tools for implementing the strategies and designs that were a result of the charrette. Following are a number of alternatives that the City of Roswell might consider as they pursue implementation.

Overlay District

Overlay zoning facilitates an array of development options and goals, including cluster developments, traditional neighborhood development, watershed protection and historic preservation, to name a few. Overlay zoning creates a second, mapped zone superimposed over existing, conventional zoning districts. As such, overlay zoning may permit special regulations to exist within parts or all of a zoning district. Conversely, regulations may also be less restrictive, such as fewer parking spaces in a neighborhood retail area.

The overlay district, like a conventional zoning district, consists of districts with mapped boundaries and written text. The mapped boundaries of the overlay district do not necessarily coincide with other zoning district boundaries, and may not follow parcel boundaries. Often, natural features define the spatial limits of the overlay district.

The overlay district provides a popular and flexible vehicle to applying quality growth principles in local governments that use zoning. The overlay district is popular because it allows a higher level of protection or quality within a specific, defined district. It also allows flexibility in the application of standards that are spatially limited. It provides more discretion than outright rezoning in situations that are politically sensitive.

An overlay in the Groveway Community could be effective in regulating design elements, public improvements such as streetscapes and sidewalks, and greenspace preservation and connections. In implementation, an overlay can be written as mandatory or optional for a new development within the area. Customarily, the Planning or Community Development Department is responsible for reviewing applications for construction for compliance with overlay standards.

Architectural Design Guidelines

The City of Roswell is very familiar with architectural design guidelines, as this tool has been employed in other parts of the City.

Such guidelines can provide specific direction on architectural elements such as:

- Façade treatments
- Window placement
- Acceptable color palette
- Materials for commercial and residential structures
- Styles customarily employed in communities of this age

Architectural design guidelines are intended to provide an environment for a combination of uses that is compatible with the essential character of an area, supportive of efficient development of the permitted uses, and architecturally and visually appealing.

Standards are intended to clearly identify desired elements that promote the health, safety, and welfare of the general community. These include the appropriate location, arrangement, and design of buildings, parking areas, open space and site amenities. In general, building design elements include building facade, including color, and other significant design features, such as exterior materials and treatments, roof structure, exposed mechanical equipment and service and storage areas.

A set of architectural design guidelines should be codified along with illustrations that clearly communicate the intended elements. A design review board is usually charged with ensuring standards are satisfied and uniformly applied throughout an area.

Form-Based Code

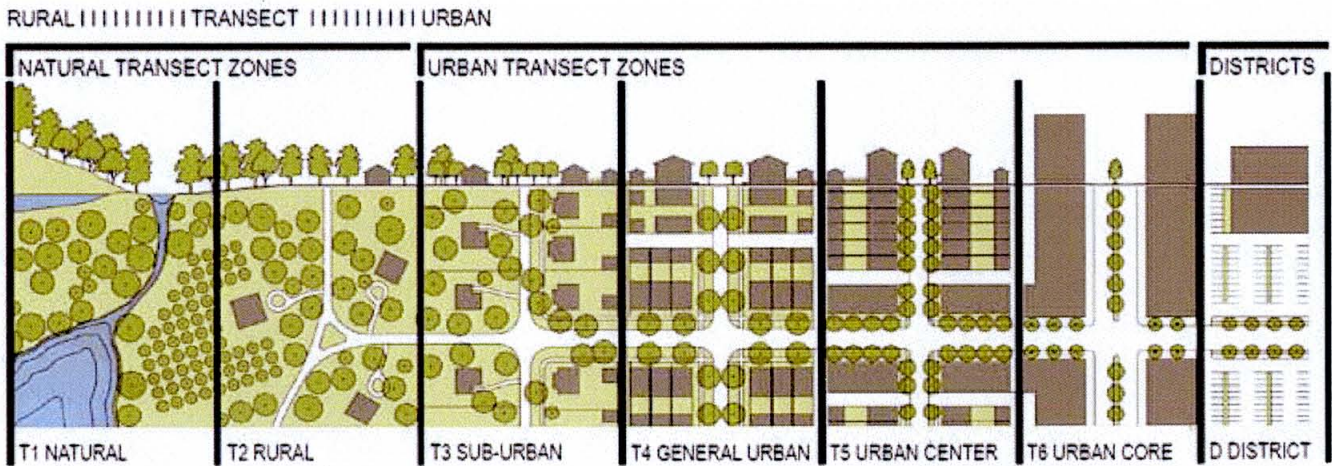
Form-based codes are an alternative to traditional Euclidean zoning, in that they use physical form, rather than separation of uses, as the organizing principle for the code. These codes are adopted into city law as regulations, not mere guidelines.

Form-based codes address the relationship between building facades and the public realm, the form and mass of buildings in relation to one another, and the scale and types of streets and blocks. The regulations and standards in Form-based codes, presented in both diagrams and words, are keyed to a regulating plan that designates the appropriate form and scale (and therefore, character) of development rather than only distinctions in land-use types. This is in contrast to conventional zoning's focus on the segregation of land uses and the control of development intensity through multiple parameters (e.g., floor area ratio, dwellings per acre, setbacks, parking ratios, traffic level of service). Not to be confused with design guidelines or general statements of policy, Form-based codes are regulatory, not advisory.

Form-based codes commonly include the following elements:

- Regulating Plan. A plan or map of the regulated area designating the locations where different building form standards apply, based on clear community intentions regarding the physical character of the area being code.
- Public Space Standards. Specifications for the elements within the public realm (e.g., sidewalks, travel lanes, on-street parking, street trees, street furniture, etc.).
- Building Form Standards. Regulations controlling the configuration, features, and functions of buildings that define and shape the public realm.
- Administration. A clearly defined application and project review process.
- Definitions. A glossary to ensure the precise use of technical terms.

Form-based codes are often adopted with visual aids, such as the transect guide below, showing development patterns from rural to urban districts.



Advantages and disadvantages of each option are provided below:

Overlay District

Advantages

- Can be written by staff and incorporated into City's Zoning Ordinance
- Administered by Planning/Community Development Department
- Can be a good first step of implementation, if pursuing a form-based code or more intensive option in the future

Disadvantages

- Administration of overlay can be confusing as it is applied on top of existing zoning designation
- Not the most permanent solution, as conditions around the overlay district may change and not be addressed

Architectural Design Guidelines

Advantages

- Communicates clear design standards for an area
- Standards can be tailored to match or build off other sets of guidelines currently in place in Roswell
- Application overseen by Design Review Board

Disadvantages

- Standards must be crafted carefully, so as not to alienate property owners with burdensome requirements
- Success of guidelines rests on a consistent, committed and experienced design review board

Form-Based Code

Advantages

- Perceived as the most permanent and comprehensive option
- Addresses areas of varying density and development through the transect concept
- A few examples from the Atlanta region to inform the creation of such a document

Disadvantages

- Can be costly to create
- A definite departure from Euclidean zoning (traditional zoning ordinance), and thus can be confusing for citizens and property owners in the transition phase
- May require a transitional period during which the traditional zoning ordinance and a new form-based code is in place

Conclusion

The Groveway Community Charrette brought together residents and business owners, elected officials and community organizations to think about the future of an area. While many options lie ahead as to the implementation of specific tools, a vision has been cast. Participants in the charrette clearly made the case for a unique but interconnected community plan, one that acknowledges the history of the area but also look to the future and its possibilities. Many possibilities exist to bring together the strengths of this community – strong community organizations and churches, dedicated residents, thriving businesses, parks and cultural venues and a national forest.



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