

CROSSROADS
TO
TOMORROW

Community
Design
Charrette

Spring 2006

Produced by
University
of Georgia,
Center for
Community
Design, and
Preservation



Walnut Grove

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Walnut Grove: Crossroads to Tomorrow

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*Continue to promote and
facilitate quality growth
education throughout the
community.*

DEVELOPMENT

*Taking an idea to
the next level...*

TOWN CENTER

TOWN CENTER

Research has shown that people feel more comfortable in town centers where buildings frame the street. As the City of Walnut Grove moves forward in creating a town center near the intersection of Highway 138 and Highway 81, new buildings must sit close to the street, framing the roadways, creating a more pleasant pedestrian environment. Sidewalks should be buffered from the business of the streets by treelined medians and wide sidewalks.

When buildings are designed using traditional town grids and human scale, neighbors, residents and other building users respond more favorably to their environs. Investment potential is raised, a unique and marketable core of buildings is created, and quality of life increases.

To build a future for Walnut Grove which meets community goals, a design review board should be created to design proposals and site planning considerations. Design review alone however cannot take the place of planning and zoning. Concurrence between the planning and zoning regulations must reflect the community's wishes, architectural character, and best management practices.

TAKE A LOOK...



Atlanta Regional Commission
www.atlantaregional.com



Georgia DCA
www.dca.state.ga.us



Placemakers LLC Smartcode
www.placemakers.com



Local Gov. Commission
in California www.lgc.org



The Center in Covington
www.thecenter-newton.org



Serenbe in Forsyth County
www.serenbecommunity.com



Clark's Grove in Covington
www.clarksgrrove.com



Sunnyside Town Center
www.sunnyside.com



Glenwood Park
www.glenwoodpark.com

INTRODUCTION

"We're not trying to reinvent the wheel, we're just trying to get a few new spokes for it."

WHAT IS A CHARRETTE?

Charrette is a French word, which means "little cart." At the leading architecture school of the 19th century, the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris, students were assigned tough design problems to solve under time pressure. They worked long hours on these projects and would continue sketching as fast as they could, even as the little carts (charrettes) carried away their drawings to be judged and graded.

Today the word charrette has come to describe a rapid, intensive and creative work session in which a design team focuses on particular design problems and arrives at a collaborative solution. Charrettes are product-oriented. The public charrette is fast becoming a preferred way to face planning challenges confronting American cities.

—Victor Dover
Dover Kohl & Partners
Congress for the New Urbanism

*... a gradient of
habitats, from
wilderness
to urban core.*

THE TRANSPECT

ENCOURAGE TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD DESIGN

Mixed-use, pedestrian friendly neighborhoods are not a new phenomenon. Prior to World War II these neighborhoods, characterized by their compact form and interconnected networks of streets were the predominant urban form.

Traditional Neighborhood Design or TND is a popularized phrase used that describes this historic pattern of building. It is clearly different from Conventional Neighborhood Development, also known suburban sprawl.

Retrofitting existing neighborhoods and creating new ones with TND principles can position Walnut Grove as a desirable community of lasting value, distinguished from the familiar monotony of typical sprawl development in suburban and exurban Atlanta.

See Randall Arendt's text: "Growing Greener, Putting Conservation into Local Plans and Ordinances."

TRADITIONAL

DEMAND CONTEXT SENSITIVE ROAD DESIGN

The communities which work best with the Georgia Department of Transportation (DOT), work early and often with DOT. Contact your district manager to discuss ways that Walnut Grove can grow but not lose community character. There are ways to sensitively design thoroughfares which move vehicles and accommodate pedestrians.

In addition to discussing the width of the roadway with DOT, address ways in which Walnut Grove can use trees along the roadways to provide shelter, shade, beauty, and separation for pedestrians from automobile traffic.

CHARACTER

CHARACTER

The DOT Pedestrian and Streetscape Toolkit is available online at:
www.walkable.org/download/Georgia_ped_streetscape_guide.pdf

TRADITIONAL

TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENTS TYPICALLY INCLUDE:

- A variety of residential units, including both rental and for-sale, follow a progression of decreasing density from the highest-density center to the lowest-density edge.
- A continuous street network has a hierarchy, from high-capacity boulevards to narrow rear lanes or alleys. Neighborhood streets should have relatively narrow roadways, small curb radii, and sidewalks, to accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists as well as motor vehicles.
- Parking lots and garage doors should not face the street. Lots narrower than 50 feet should have parking accessed from the rear by a lane, alley or automobile court.

*(Source: Mid-America Regional Council
<http://www.marc.org/Community/tnd.htm>)*

T1 THE NATURAL ZONE

Natural preserve, recreation and camping
Building types include utility infrastructure and camp buildings
Thoroughfares limited to highways and roads

T2 THE RURAL ZONE

Natural reserve, agriculture, recreation, and camping
Building types include utility infrastructure, agricultural buildings and farmhouses, and campgrounds
Thoroughfares limited to highways and roads
Open spaces serve as farms, forests, orchards, and parkland

T3 THE SUB-URBAN ZONE

Low density residential and home occupations
Building types include houses and outbuildings
Thoroughfares limited to roads, streets, rear lanes, some unpaved
Open spaces serve as orchards, parks and greens

T4 THE GENERAL URBAN ZONE

Medium density residential and home occupations; limited commercial and lodging
Building types include houses and outbuildings, sideyard houses, townhouses, live/work unity, corner stores, inns
Thoroughfares are limited to street and rear lanes
Open spaces: squares and playgrounds

T5 THE URBAN CENTER ZONE

Medium intensity residential and commercial: retail, offices, lodging, civic buildings
Building types include townhouses, apartment houses, live/work unity, shopfront buildings and office building, churches, schools.

PROTECT RURAL

You have lost so much in this community, either by your own hand or the hand of government. You need to replace what has been lost with something that is equally good, or hopefully better.

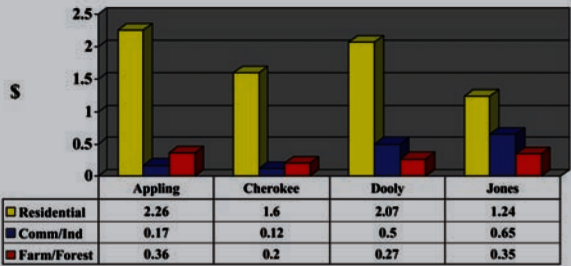
BIG BOX STORE

*... think about
scale and
design*

COST OF COMMUNITY SERVICES IN GEORGIA

Jeffrey Dorfman, Professor of Agricultural Economics at the University of Georgia has done extensive research on the cost of community services in Georgia. These graphs illustrate expenditure to revenue relationship in several Georgia counties. The fifteen-page report can be accessed online at: www.forestry.uga.edu/h/centers/cfb/files/EcCost.pdf

Expenditures per \$1 in Revenue by Land Use (including schools)



FRESH

A simple way to remember how buildings should relate to their neighbors can be found in the acronym FRESH.

- F Footprint and Foundation.** The footprint and foundation of the new structure should be similar to the ones surrounding the new structure.
- R Roof Shape.** the new roof should match existing roots in pitch.
- E Envelope.** If you shrink wrapped a building and removed everything but the shrink wrap, what’s left is the envelope. The new structure should match the existing in projections, height, bulk, relationships between height and width, etc.
- S Skin.** In what is the envelope clad? What is the surface material and its characteristics? New structures should be clad in a visually and physically similar material.
- H Holes.** Where are the doors, windows, attic vents, etc.? How are they divided and segmented? Is it an asymmetrical arrangement or is it more symmetrical?

INTRODUCTION

This report is the product of a three-day charrette sponsored by the City of Walnut Grove and conducted by the University of Georgia Center for Community Design and Preservation. The charrette took place in the City of Walnut Grove, Friday, September 22 – Sunday, September 24, 2006. The recommendations described in this report are to be used to guide the planning of the future of Walnut Grove, a city that will experience enormous growth within the next decade.

The supposition is that change is going to happen and that change can be positive, negative or a mix of the two. The purpose of this report is to help you as citizens, as elected officials, as business owners and land owners to move toward a positive vision for change rather than having mistakes repeated.

Walnut Grove is poised to make well-planned wise changes or to be a victim of accidental, leap frog urban sprawl. The city must be proactive and choose to create a town center using the planning tools described in this charrette report.

CELEBRATE YOUR RICH HISTORY, RECENT SUCCESSES AND COMMUNITY SPIRIT

The charrette team viewed the collection of historic photographs assembled for Walnut Grove’s centennial celebration. The images provide a glimpse into Walnut Grove’s history, its founding families and its early architectural examples. Honoring the city’s past is a fantastic way to celebrate any city, Walnut Grove included.

Recently, City Hall moved into one of Walnut Grove’s first log cabin houses. The City demonstrated impressive foresight in purchasing this building, one of the most important remaining links Walnut Grove’s has to its past.

The creation of an overlay district is a good foundation for re-envisioning a downtown for Walnut Grove and provides incentives for directing growth into the center of town. The overlay district compliments the underlying zoning which traditionally deals with land use. The new overlay district focuses on form, appearance and materials. In tandem, these tools are used to create attractive cities.

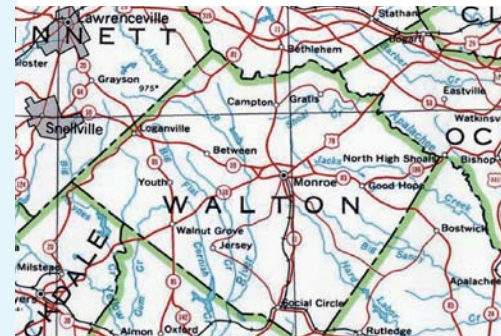


Environmental graphics in the form of flags are an important step signaling to visitors that they have arrived in Walnut Grove.

Another important statement was made by the great turnout at the charrette kick off meeting. This reflects that while Walnut Grove is a small town, its commitment to a well-planned future is huge.



This historic image of Walnut Grove shows a rural community with an informal assemblage of buildings.



Many Walnut Grove residents mentioned that the city is on the way to everywhere.



Rusticated stone corner building in Walnut Grove, now demolished.



Walnut Grove's Historic City Hall Building.

Some pictures of the UGA team in Walnut Grove during the Community Design Charrette.



Community comments from the charrette kick-off meeting called for a Walnut Grove, which is walkable, beautiful and economically viable with a strong sense of community. What the community described was a vision for quality growth, smart codes, adherence to tradition and managed change.

The charrette team recommends that the city continue to promote and facilitate quality growth education throughout the community. Elected officials, appointed leaders, and citizens who know the importance of quality growth, building scale, design and site planning can achieve more for the community and will help to build a new Walnut Grove that is vibrant, safe and beautiful.

MAKE DEVELOPMENT DECISIONS PREDICTABLE, FAIR, AND COST-EFFECTIVE

Every project approved by the City of Walnut Grove can either add value to the community or take it away. Local officials will need to grant variances, negotiate exceptions and encourage residents to see the value of particular projects, especially those that would have a positive impact on implementing the idea of a new town center. This is not easy. Local officials need to be educated on the nuances and implications of permitting decisions. Understanding the tools of smart growth and managed change is new to many areas that have a small town or rural character. Learning how to encourage quality growth takes training. But in the face of tsunami-like urban advancement from Snellville, Conyers, Covington and even Monroe, training is critical!

A number of state and regional non profits and government agencies provide training to help elected officials learn more about smart growth such as the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA), the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC), The Preservation Center in Covington, the Local Government Commission in California, Placemakers LLC Smart Code Training workshops, and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Key stakeholders and local officials should be shown actual smart growth projects in and around Atlanta. These physical success stories debunk common myths about density, design, and transportation. To get the most out of it, include someone familiar with the project who can explain the implementation process. Organizations such as the Urban Land Institute and the Congress for the New Urbanism sponsor awards for excellence in smart growth design. Look to these organizations for recommendations of worthy sites in the area.



*Serenbe in Forsyth County
www.serenbecommunity.com*



*Clark's Grove in Covington
www.clarksgrrove.com*



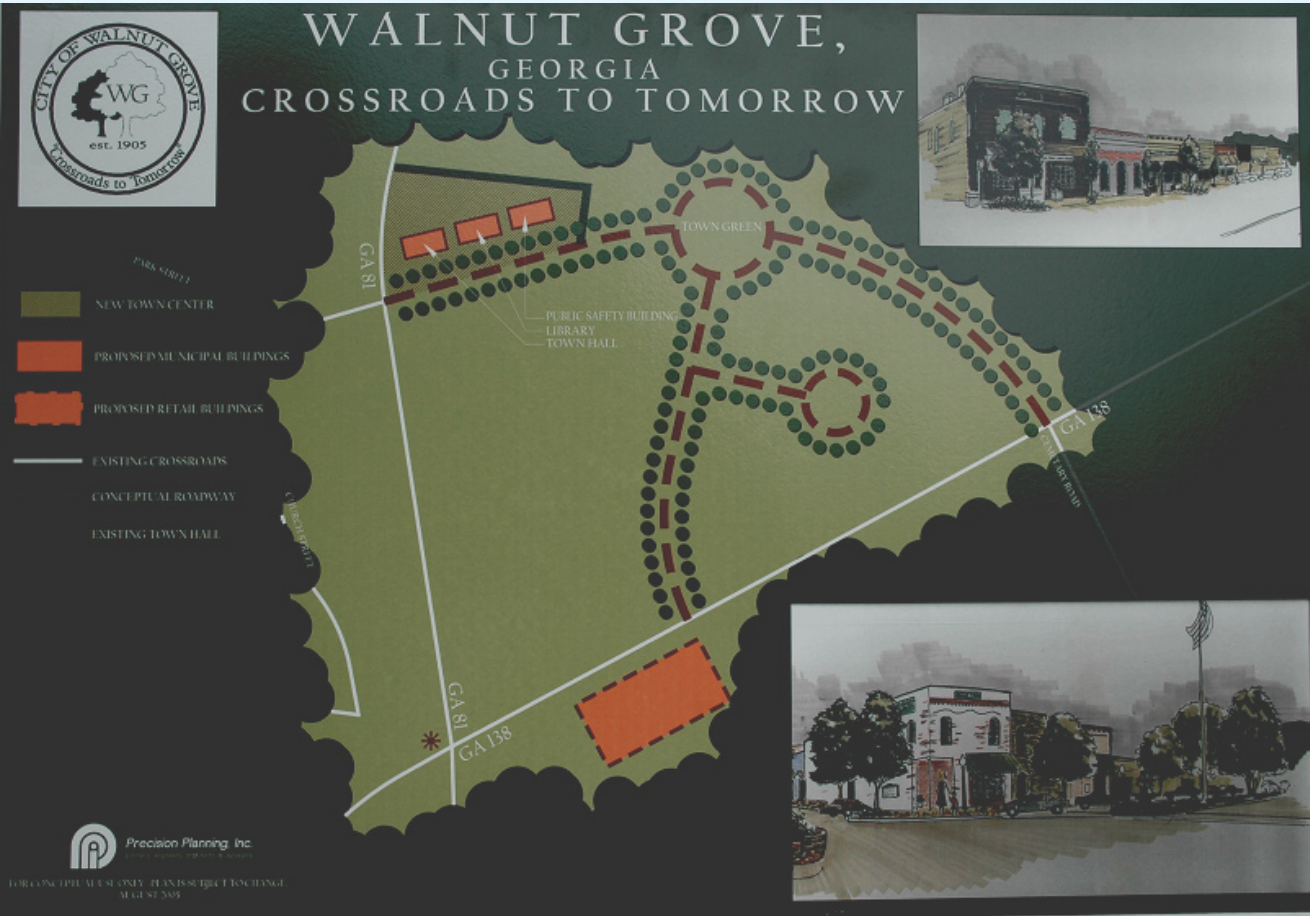
*Suwanee Town Center
www.suwanee.com*



*Glenwood Park
www.glenwoodpark.com*

EXISTING STUDY THE CITY OF WALNUT GROVE
PREPARED BY PRECISION PLANNING

The UGA Team advanced an existing study which the City of Walnut Grove prepared with the help of Precision Planning. That proposal shows that creative solutions developed through innovative partnerships can produce positive change. The City demonstrated important foresight in initiating the study which recommended the development of a town center for Walnut Grove.



Precision Planning developed a conceptual proposal for Walnut Grove Town Center. Our team took that idea “to the next level.”

While the concept of creating a new town center is solid, the charrette team expanded this vision by using the proven technique of a network of interconnected streets which disperse traffic rather than funneling traffic on to a bypass, as the foundation for the new town center.



Not This

The potential hazards of a town center with inadequate street connections are illustrated above. The unintended result could be more like sprawl. Do not let large parking lots next to streets dominate the new town center.

GROW A TOWN CENTER FOR WALNUT GROVE



Do This

The UGA Charrette Team's Proposal for an interconnected network of streets as the basis for Walnut Grove's new town center.



"Party walls" reflect traditional community design. The street trees and sidewalks reinforce pedestrian scale.



Street parking provides a buffer between moving traffic and pedestrians.



Buildings with pedestrian scale windows and doors fronting the street create a downtown feel.



Street trees provide an added amenity to a traditional streetscape.

GROW A TOWN CENTER FOR WALNUT GROVE

Seek out a context sensitive developer to produce a final Master Plan for the mixed-use new town center. Many communities have had success with this approach. It simplifies the implementation process and reduces uncertainties. The design of the town center should clearly follow and articulate the community vision as well as be economically feasible.

We looked at this end of the downtown as a more informal and contemporary space. In the final Master Plan, the city may opt to include recreational features such as a skate park as part of the new town center.

Or, the community may opt for a more bucolic community green, creating a campus-like setting.



We saw this area as a campus-like setting. Whether it is churches, a new library, a civic center, or some other use, this idea has promise. It is closer to the highway, it is easier for people to walk to and it is in the center of town rather than in the edge of the space.

The most important part of the plan is the grid, the network of streets, punctuated by vistas at the end of streets, lined with commercial buildings with residential spaces above. These elements combine to create a regular downtown.

STORMWATER CONSIDERATIONS

In urban areas, many local governments have found that stormwater management to be a barrier to compact, smart growth. Retention or detention of stormwater on site, often leads to a waste of urban space with unsightly drainage basins, deteriorating the pedestrian environment. Codes limiting the amount of impervious surface on a site also discourage compact development. The result can actually be a deterioration of water quality as inflexible regulations push new development further out, consuming more farmland.

One solution which has already has a track record of success in Georgia is the stormwater utility. This is a user-fee, much like the fee that paid for water or sanitation service. Users are charged based on the demand they place on the system. In cities with sewer systems, the stormwater that flows off a business or residence places a demand on the infrastructure, which is costly to operate and maintain. Stormwater must be channeled through a system of pipes and other devices before it can be safely discharged into local rivers, lakes, and streams.

A stormwater utility assesses a fee based on a property's contribution to the need for stormwater management. The utility uses the amount of impervious surface on a property as the primary basis for the fee. This user-fee system represents a way to raise revenue for the program by charging those who directly contribute to its need. This method presents the City with an alternative to an across the board tax hike. Because undeveloped land does not have any impervious surfaces, it is not charged a stormwater fee.

More than 400 municipalities across the country have developed utilities to fund their stormwater management programs. At least ten communities in Georgia have user-fees that fund stormwater services. These communities include Athens-Clarke County, Columbia County, City of Conyers, City of Covington, City of Decatur, DeKalb County, Douglasville-Douglas County, City of Fayetteville, Gilmer County, City of Griffin, and City of Smyrna. <http://www.accestormwater.com/billing/faq.asp>



THE TRANSECT



An illustration of the transect applied to Walnut Grove.

The transect is a tool developed to guide the built environment to resemble that of traditional neighborhoods, towns and villages.

The central notion is of a gradient of habitats, from wilderness to urban core. As one moves along the gradient, differences in design, ecology and social structure are apparent. This built form is compact, walkable, and mixed-use, and it is meant to be comfortable, safe, and ecologically sustainable.

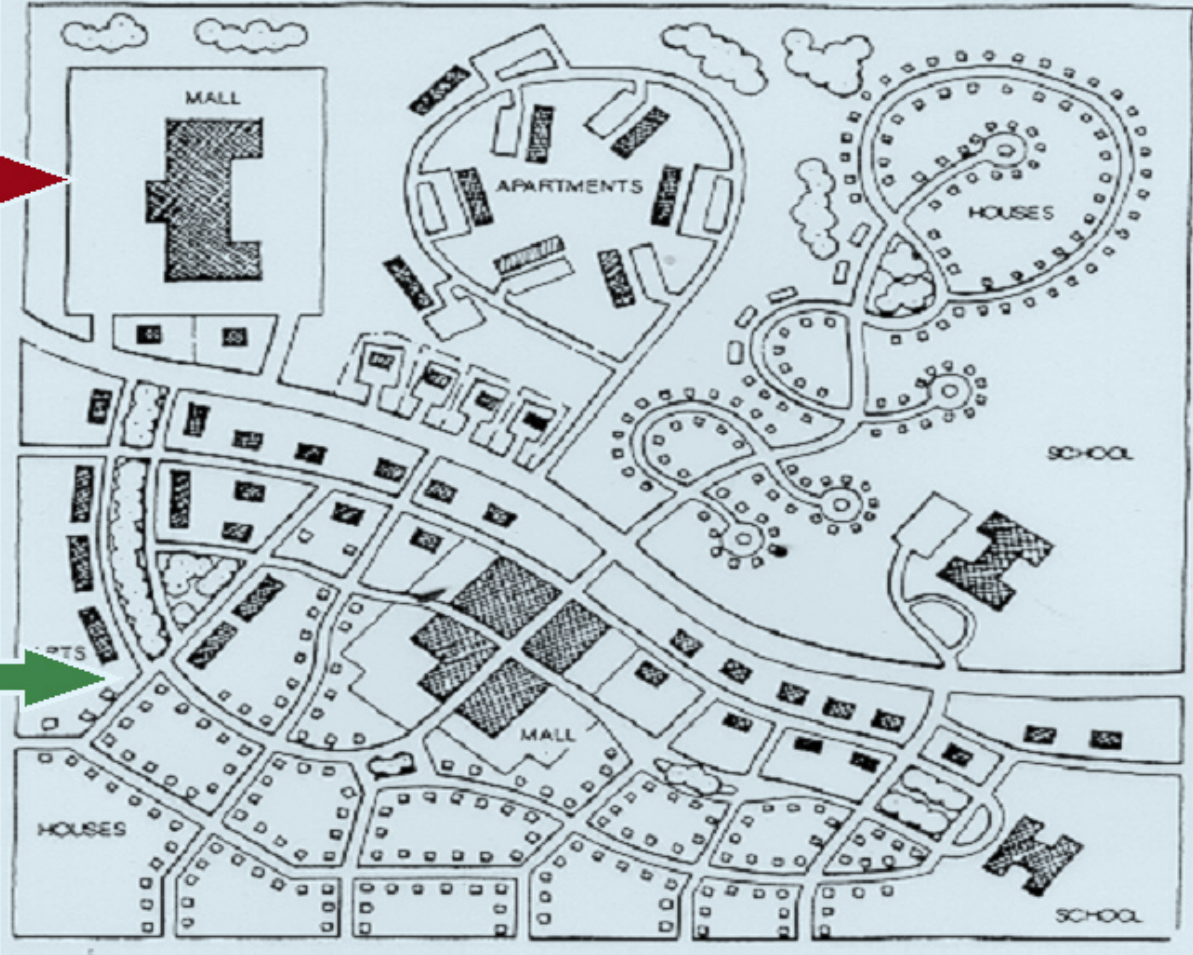
The value of the transect is that it serves to locate any given place within a context in which all of the parts fit together harmoniously. For example, a rural street typically has no curbs or sidewalks and its buildings look like farmhouses or barns. An urban street, depending on the intensity of urbanism, may have curbs and gutters, regularly placed street trees, sidewalks, and building forms that include common walls, flat roofs, and cornices.

Within a city or town, there is also a continuum; from the urban downtown core, to the moderate and then lower density residential neighborhoods, which exhibits a coherent but different set of characteristics in their streets, landscape, and building designs.

ENCOURAGE
TRADITIONAL
NEIGHBORHOOD
DESIGN

Status Quo

Smart Growth

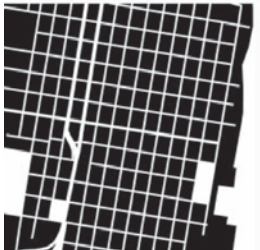


Source: *Suburban Nation: The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream* by Andres Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, and Jeff Speck

“Our most loved cities are based on smart growth principles. The framework of an interconnected series of streets, small blocks, public spaces, and mix of uses combine to form places of lasting value and significance.”



Charleston, South Carolina

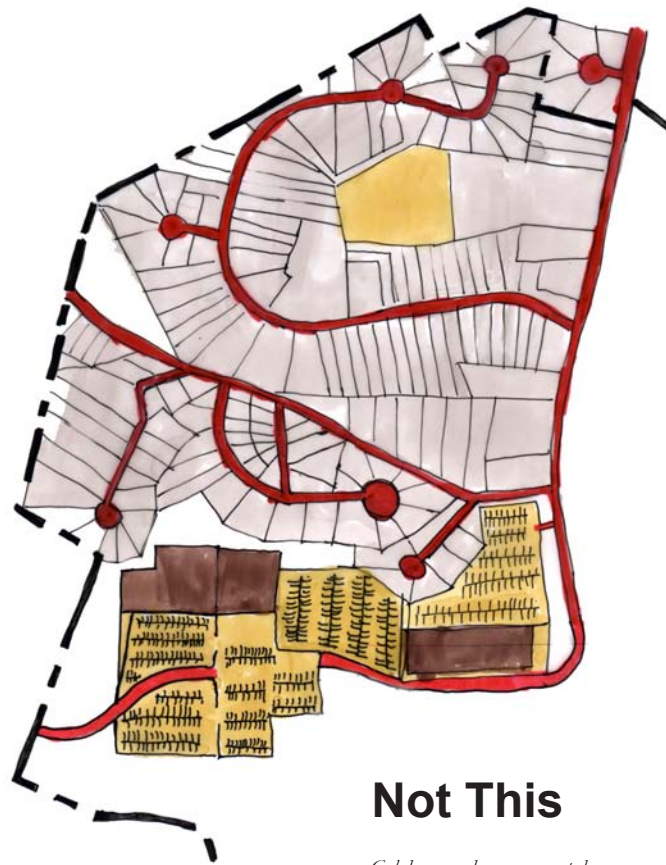


Alexandria, Virginia



Savannah, Georgia

Charleston, Alexandria and Savannah plans from the book Great Streets by Allan B. Jacobs



Not This

Cul-de-sac and an unconnected network of streets creates enclaves which are unfriendly to pedestrians and have proven to be inefficient.

ENCOURAGE TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD DESIGN



Do This

Make Walnut Grove walkable for aging populations by connecting cul-de-sac. Ensure that all new streets in the City expand the options for egress and ingress. This will allow residents to move throughout the City without having to use the Highways.

DEMAND
CONTEXT SENSITIVE
ROAD DESIGN

The four intersection designs on this page (blue area) are straight from the Georgia DOT Pedestrian and Streetscape Toolkit. These are Georgia DOT approved designs which have worked in Georgia communities.



Don't let this happen to Walnut Grove

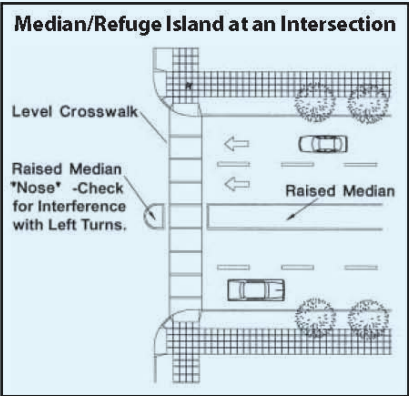


Figure 88

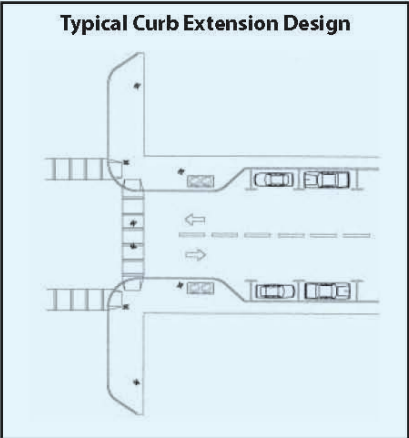


Figure 89

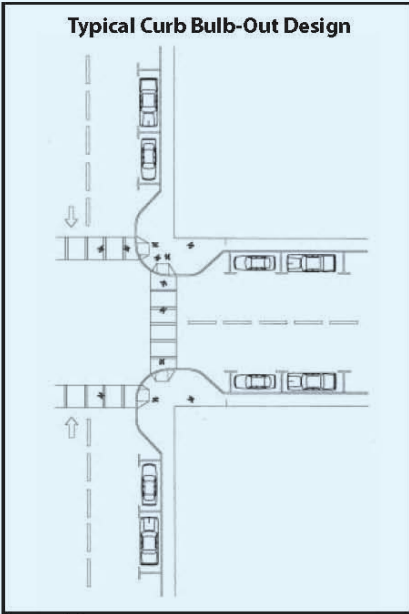


Figure 90

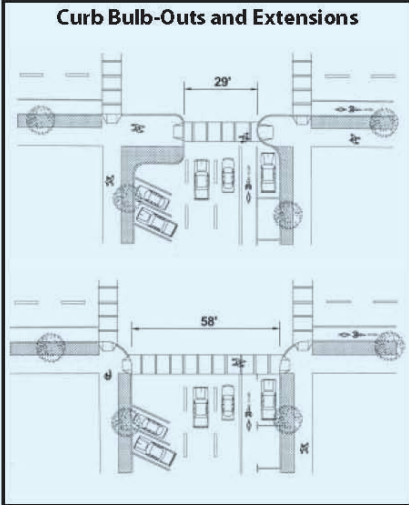
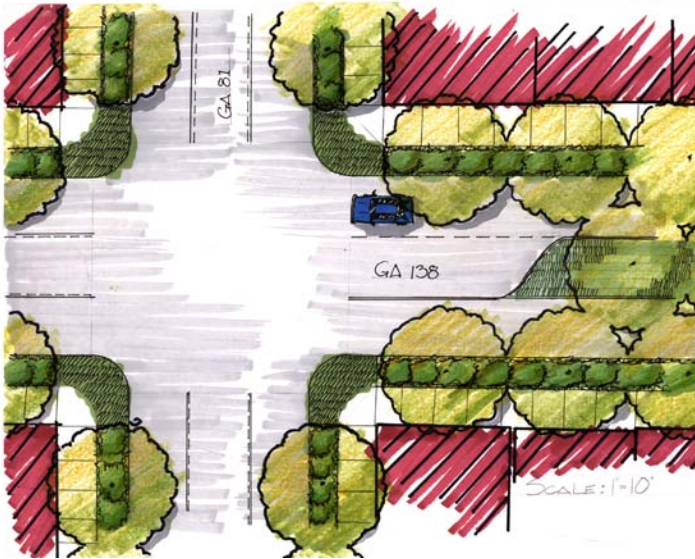


Figure 91



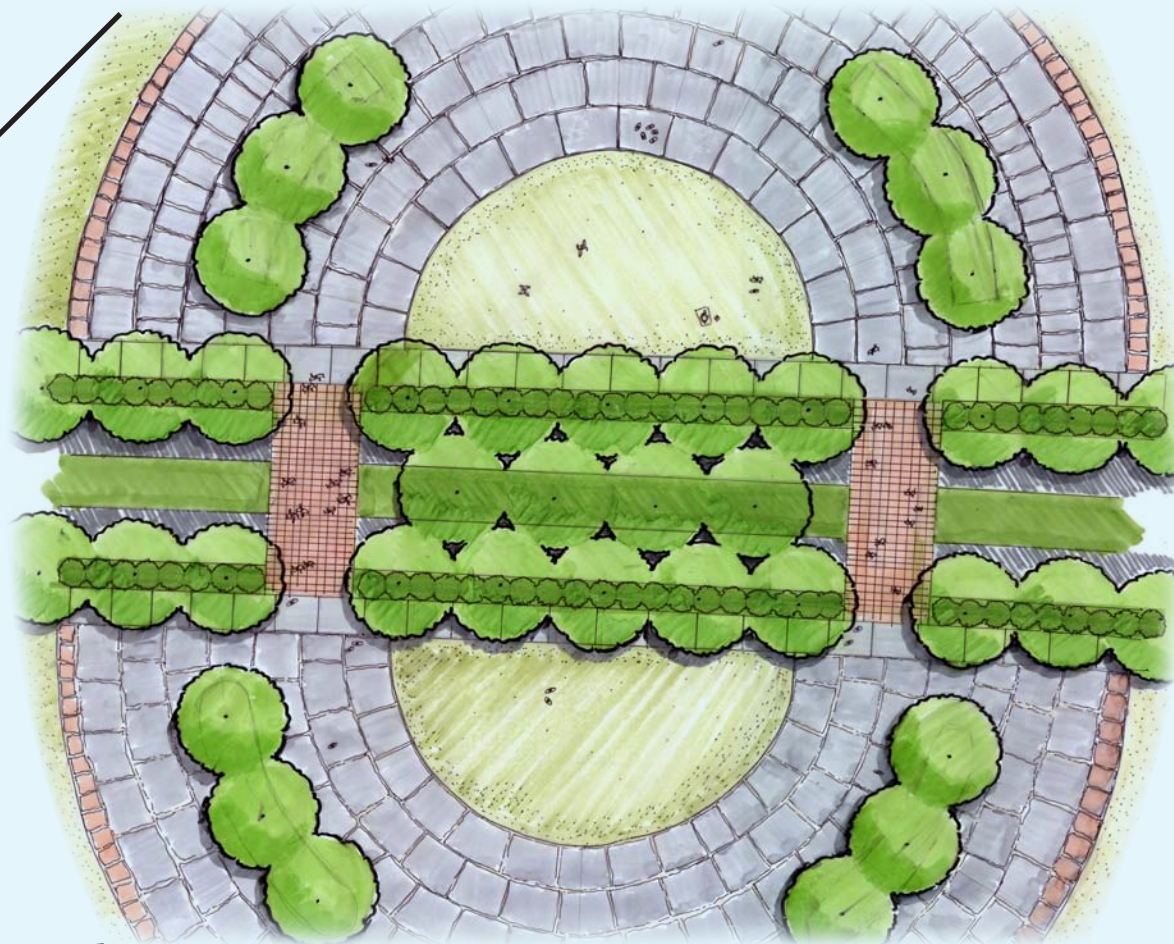
Option for redesign of Highway 138 and 81 with planted medians and street trees.



Enhance the intersection with prominent crosswalks and brick street corners.



DEMAND CONTEXT SENSITIVE ROAD DESIGN



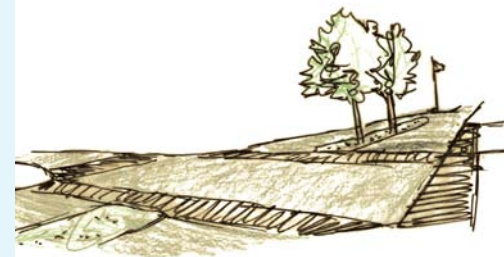
This is a concept for bridging the highways by extending a plaza across the treelined highway with prominent pedestrian crosswalks connecting the two.



Traditional town form helps define urban spaces.



Decorative paving patterns enhance visibility of crosswalks, reminding motorists to slow down.



Steps such as repainting existing crosswalks signal to pedestrians that the City is invested in pedestrian infrastructure.



Alternative paving patterns slow traffic and improve aesthetics



source: www.walmartfacts.com



source: www.walmartfacts.com



source: www.walmartfacts.com



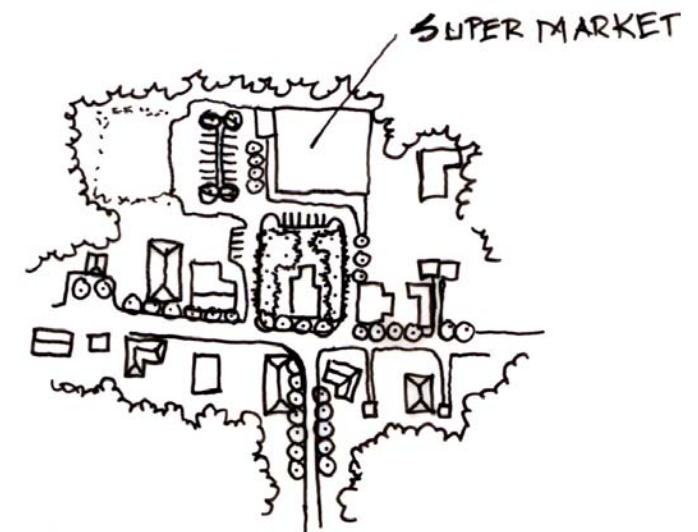
source: www.chieftain.com

ENSURE BIG BOX STORES ARE APPROPRIATELY SCALED AND DESIGNED

The ubiquitous “big box” form of retail is alive and well in the Southeast and flourishes in Georgia’s strong economic climate. While we as Southerners love low prices and convenience, we don’t always love the “big box” look. There are some new practices in trying to tame the big box without sacrificing convenience and low cost. Some design recommendations to make the big box stores more visually appealing include:

- Prohibiting blank walls. Allow no uninterrupted length of any façade in excess of 100 horizontal feet. If a façade is greater than 100 feet in length, it must incorporate recesses and projections along with at least 20 percent of length of the façade. Windows, awning and arcades must total at least 60 percent of the faced length abutting the public street.
- All facades of the building which are visible from the adjoining properties or public streets should contribute to the pleasing scale features of the building and encourage community integration by featuring characteristics similar to the front façade.
- Do not locate more than 50 percent of the off-street parking area between the front façade of the building and the primary abutting street. Instead, encourage parking at the rear of the building.
- Building features and details should be scaled in a manner that is pedestrian friendly.

(Sources: Chris Duerksen and Robert Blanchard, “Belling the Box: Planning for Large Scale Retail Stores.” Proceedings from the National Planning Conference. 1998.) www.sprawl-busters.com





Metal buildings with blank walls decrease property values in communities. Punctuating the vista of the cemetery with a building which does not respond to the cemetery or the community is bad practice, regardless of the use of the building.

RELATE BUILDINGS TO EACH OTHER



Screening the building with vegetation preserves vista across the cemetery. Make this the last metal building built in the heart of Walnut Grove.



One does not need to go far from the Walnut Grove City Park to find examples of "snout houses." These are buildings designed primarily for the car with the garage occupying a significant portion of the front facade.



The triangular shaped building at the end of this street is new. The buildings on the left side of the picture are historic. Could you have told the difference? The new building compliments the neighboring buildings through its footprint size, spacing and size of windows, doors and roof shape.



This is an excellent example of appropriate infill just down the road in Madison. These new building look like historic Madison. Similar to their historic counterparts, the buildings are not overdone with excessive ornamentation.



Example of CVS stores complying with local design guidelines are abundant throughout the country. This town required the drugstore to comply with local design guidelines and the result was a higher quality building and increased tax revenue.



Terminate important vistas with attractive landmarks and civic buildings



Residential character at rural Walnut Grove.



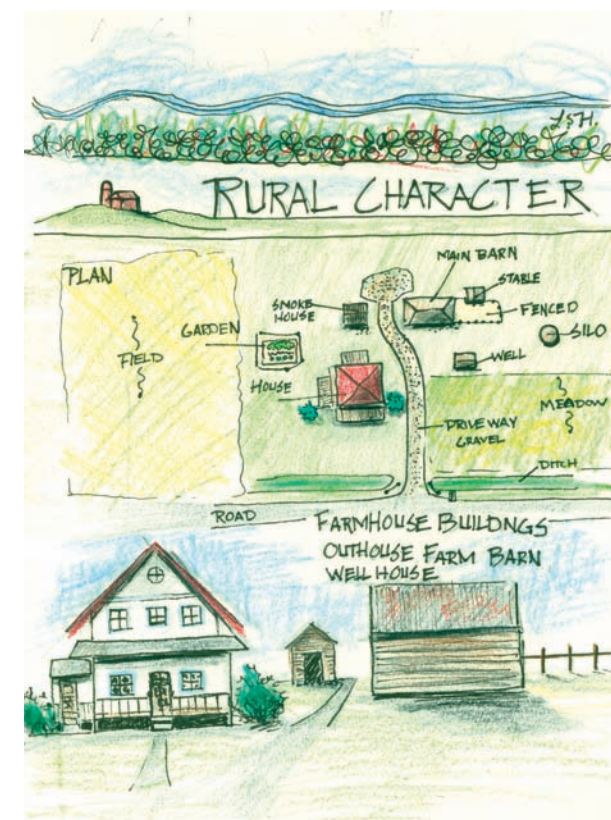
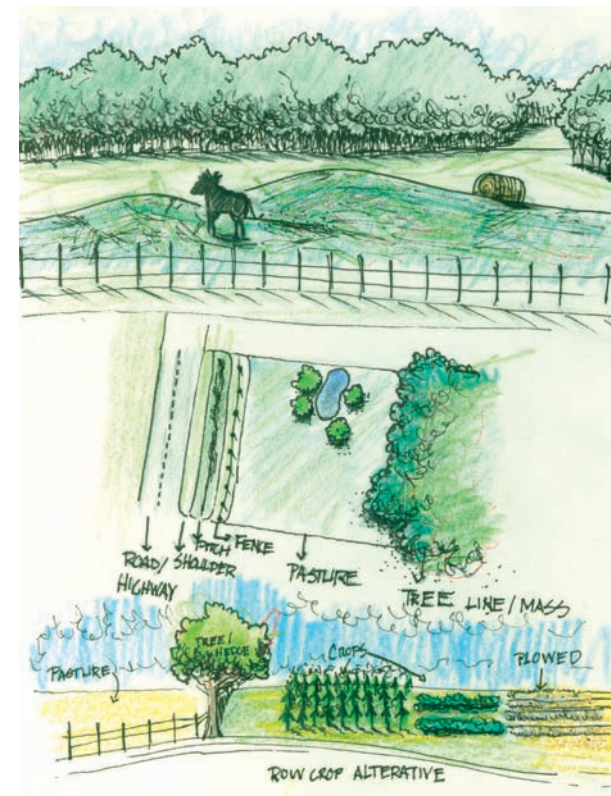
Historic homes enhance the character of the area.

PROTECT WALNUT GROVE'S RURAL CHARACTER



AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITY

Rural character is an amalgam of features which create a characteristic appearance. As each of the elements disappear rural character is destroyed.





Whippoorwill Hollow Organic Farm is an important community asset and example of profitable working farmland.

PROTECT WALNUT GROVE'S RURAL CHARACTER

The City should reduce or remove minimum lot size requirements. Many rural communities seek to fix the problems of diminishing farmland, traffic and congestion by increasing minimum lot sizes. The rationale is that larger houses:

- 1) lead to more expensive homes and thus increase tax revenue, and
- 2) spreading out the development allows for more open space and spreads out the traffic and reduces congestion.

There is a basic, common sense appeal to this argument. However, many communities have had counter intuitive results, and the large lot sizes have exacerbated the problems they were trying to avoid (see Conyers, Monroe, Snellville, Marietta etc).

While large lot sizes do increase housing costs, the extra tax revenue is offset by other factors: the larger distances between the large lot houses require the city to pay for more infrastructure. In cases where the developer pays for infrastructure within a development, the city still has to pick up the bill between developments and connecting the infrastructure to the network.

An abundance of large houses on large lots also leads to more families with school age children. Funding schools is usually the most expensive service local governments undertake. Therefore, zoning which provides for a variety of housing types, for families, singles, retirees, and young couples just starting off diversifies the economy and creates a more viable city. Larger lot sizes also consume more farmland. Unlike houses, farmland and other working lands almost always pay more in taxes than they demand in services.



The granite outcropping is a vanishing part of Georgia's Piedmont ecology. Walnut Grove has many granite outcroppings. All of them are important and destruction of this habitat should be avoided.



Rural roads are vanishing. The narrow country lanes around Walnut Grove will vanish too if they are not protected as Scenic Byways with corridor design controls.



Strategically preserve farmland so that this does not become the future for all of Walnut Grove. We are hoping that this image of rural destruction is not one that is going to continue.

Some pictures of the UGA team and Walnut Grove residents during the Community Design Charrette.



CREDITS:

The Design Charrette Team



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KEEP THE COMMUNITY INVOLVED

Continue to encourage community and stakeholder involvement in development decisions. In order for the community to fully support new initiatives, information and education about the possible alternatives is necessary. However, often only a small portion of the community is engaged in the decision-making process. Involving a wider range of public input at each stage requires active recruitment and identification of barriers to public participation.

Continue to work with the media to ensure accurate information is disseminated on a regular basis. Frequently, a good amount of public education is necessary to understand how smart growth principles can prevent some of the problems of quality of life, open space protection, economic growth, and traffic congestion. It is critical that the local media gets the story right and does not derail initiatives before they get started by playing on public anxieties surrounding change.

REPORT RESOURCES:

Getting to Smart Growth: 100 Policies for Implementation.

Smart Growth Network. 2002

Getting to Smart Growth II: 100 More Policies for Implementation. Smart Growth Network. 2003



Historic photographs of Walnut Grove community



The University of Georgia

This report was produced by the
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To download an electronic copy of this report visit us at:
<http://www.sed.uga.edu/pso/charrettes/walnutgrove2006.pdf>