

Lookout Mountain, Georgia

Town Center Plan

DRAFT



DRAFT

Draft: May 29, 2008

Acknowledgements

TO BE PROVIDED BY THE CLIENT

Consultant Team

The Walker Collaborative

Philip L. Walker, AICP - Project Manager

Tunnell-Spangler-Walsh & Associates

Tom Walsh

Adam Williamson

Cindy Cox

Contents

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Page</u>
BACKGROUND	
Purpose & Study Area	1
Planning Process	2
Ideas Behind the Planning	3
THE PLAN: OVERVIEW	
Plan Scenarios	4
Scenario A	5
Scenario B	6
Bird's Eye Perspective	7
THE PLAN: COMPONENTS	
Public Spaces	8
Transportation	9-10
Gateways & Greenway	11
Buildings	12-15
THE PLAN: IMPLEMENTATION	
Economic Strategy	16
Public Policy Strategy	17

PURPOSE & STUDY AREA

Purpose

On August 17, 2007, the grocery store anchoring Lookout Mountain's small commercial center burned to the ground. This unfortunate event prompted citizens to step back and take a broader view of the entire area and its future. Choosing to turn a negative into a positive, the community decided it wanted to transform the faceless commercial center dominated by a "strip commercial" character into a distinctive and walkable Town Center. Consequently, this plan outlines the community's vision for a new Town Center.



The first impression of the existing commercial center that currently greets visitors reflects poorly on what is otherwise a beautiful and livable community.

Study Area

The "primary study area" includes 16.5 acres outlined in red at right. The boundaries are irregular in shape, as they follow property lines. It includes the existing mixed use area, and it is

anchored by the intersection of Lula Lake Road and McFarland Road. The area includes a diverse mix of uses, including institutional, retail, services, housing and lodging. A "secondary

study area" encompassing the existing soccer field area on McFarland was also considered to the extent that it might relate to the primary area.



PLANNING PROCESS

Planning Approach

The following four-step approach was used to create this plan:

Task 1.0: Research & Analysis

Task 2.0: Charrette & Concept Plan Development

Task 3.0: Preparation of the Draft Plan

Task 4.0: Plan Presentation & Revisions

Public Input

Public input for this plan was solicited through three primary means: a set of stakeholder group meetings, a public “kick-off” meeting, and a public charrette. These events are described below:

Stakeholder Group & “Kick-Off” Meetings

On May 1, 2008, a series of stakeholder group meetings were held to initiate the planning project. The consultants met for approximately one hour with the following groups:

- City Officials - elected and staff
- Planning Commission
- Business Owners / Operators
- Real Estate Professionals
- Residents

Additionally, a public “kick-off” meeting was held the evening of the same day. During all of these meetings, not only did participants describe the types of land uses and business they would like in the Town Center, but they also evaluated a

series of photographs representing a broad range of architectural styles and character.

“I think this is a phenomenal opportunity for Lookout Mountain. It’s sad that we have to leave the mountain for everything.”

- Citizen in stakeholder meeting

Images Rated Highest by the Public



Public Charrette Workshop

On May 13, 2008, approximately 60 stakeholders participated in a public charrette (an intensive brainstorming session) workshop. The participants were split up into six teams, each of which crafted their own plan for the Town Center. After approximately two hours of planning, each team presented their ideas to the entire group. Those ideas were, in part, used as a basis for the consultants’ plan.

Public Charrette Workshop



IDEAS BEHIND THE PLANNING

What is a Town Center?

A town center is, as the name implies, the center of the community – socially, economically, functionally, and culturally. It is the symbolic “heart and soul” of the community. It is the post card location where public officials give speeches, special events are held, and residents bring out-of-town visitors. Typical land uses found in a town center include the following:

- Civic / Institutional
- Retail & Services
- Dining / Entertainment
- Offices
- Housing
- Lodging



Planning Principles

To provide guidance and direction in creating the substantive planning ideas for the Lookout Mountain Town Center, a set of planning principles was created at the very outset of the process. These principles are listed at right.

- 1) **Land uses should be diverse and physically integrated**, both horizontally and vertically - mixed use, not multi-use
- 2) **Buildings should have a human scale** with respect to their height, width, façade massing, and detailing
- 3) **Architectural styles should create a cohesive appearance** and reflect a unique character appropriate to Lookout Mountain
- 4) **Design for pedestrians, but accommodate vehicles** - parking should be limited to on-street and behind buildings, and streetscapes should be well-designed
- 5) **Provide generous public space** - parks, plazas, adaptability for events

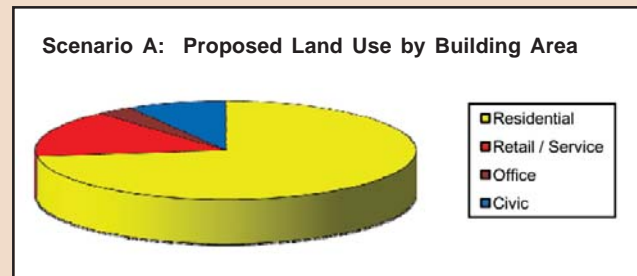
PLAN SCENARIOS

When preparing a town center plan such as this, it is important to keep in mind that there are essentially two realms of planning - the public realm and the private realm. The public realm includes streets, alleys, public spaces (parks, plazas, greenways, etc.), and public buildings (municipal facilities, etc.). Because this plan has been prepared under the direction of Lookout Mountain's municipal government, it is quite likely that the facets of this plan addressing the public realm will be closely adhered to as implementation occurs in the future.

On the other hand, the vast majority of the proposed Town Center is comprised of the private realm (privately owned property). As long as this plan establishes a physical framework for the public realm, as well as land use and development guidance, it allows flexibility for private realm implementation. This plan suggests a broad range of land uses that are physically intergrated, but provides specific requirements with respect to building heights, setbacks, roof forms, facade design, materials and similar design considerations. Site planning issues such as access, parking and landscaping are also addressed. However, within the private realm, it is up to the private sector real estate market to determine the specific land uses and design for any particular property so long as the general land use and design principles of this plan are followed.

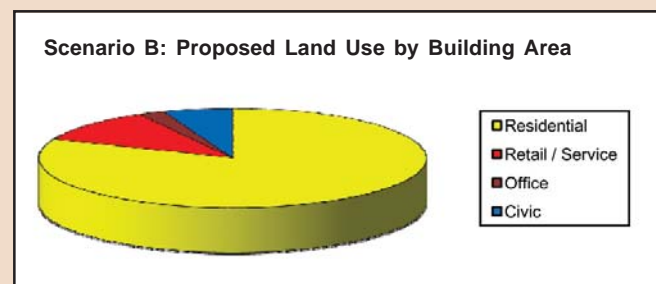
Scenario A

In this scenario, the only properties to remain in their current form or with cosmetic improvements are the church, the bank, the apartments, and the bed-and-breakfast / motor court motel. The balance of the Town Center would feature new municipal buildings, commercial development, and housing. Some of these uses would occur within mixed use buildings. A detailed breakdown of building types, uses, and square footage is provided on the following page, along with the associated physical plan. These figures are summarized in the pie chart below, and two qualifiers should be considered: 1) An average of 1,000 square feet per housing unit (apartment, condominium, townhouse) was assumed; and 2) the existing buildings described above to be retained have not been included in the calculations.



Scenario B

In this scenario, the only properties to remain in their current form or with cosmetic improvements are the church and the bank. The apartments and the bed-and-breakfast / motor court motel would both be redeveloped as single-family homes (the latter property would require the addition of land to the north). As with Scenario A, the balance of the Town Center would feature new municipal buildings, commercial development, and housing. Some of these uses would occur within mixed use buildings. A detailed breakdown of building types, uses, and square footage are provided on page 6, along with the associated physical plan. These figures are summarized in the pie chart below, and three qualifiers should be considered: 1) An average of 1,000 square feet per attached/multi-family unit was assumed; 2) An average of 2,000 square feet per single-family unit was assumed; and 3) the existing buildings described as being retained have not been included in the calculations.



SCENARIO A



LEGEND

- Residential Units
- Mixed-use
- Retail
- Civic

SUMMARY

Group A

- A-1: 2 level Fire Station: 4,500 sf
- A-2: 1 level Police Station: 2,250 sf
- A-3: 1 level City Hall: 4,200 sf
- 1 level Office: 4,200 sf
- A-4: 1 level Civic: 450 sf
- A-5: 1 level Retail: 4,275 sf
- 1 level Condo/Apt: 4,275 sf, 4 units
- A-6: 1 level Grocery Store: 5,000 sf
- A-7: 1 level Retail: 3,750 sf
- A-8: 1 level Retail: 700 sf

Group B

- B-1: 3 level Condo/Apt: 30,600 sf, 25 units
- B-2: 1 level Retail: 5,000 sf
- 2 level Condo/Apt: 10,000 sf, 8 units

Group C

- C-1: 3 level Condo/Apt: 21,600 sf, 18 units
- C-2: 3 level Condo/Apt: 25,200 sf, 21 units

Group D

- D-1: 1 level Retail: 7,200 sf
- 1 level Condo/Apt: 7,200 sf, 6 units

Group E

- E-1: 3 units
- E-2: 3 units
- E-3: 4 units
- E-4: 7 units

TOTAL:

- Condo/Apt: 99 units
- Retail: 20,925 sf
- Civic: 11,400 sf
- Office: 4,200 sf

PARKING SUMMARY

- Group A: 104 spaces @ 3.5/1,000 sf
 - Residential: 6 spaces @ 1.5/unit
- Group B: 18 spaces @ 3.5/1,000 sf
 - Residential: 50 spaces @ 1.5/unit
- Group C: self parked @ 1.5/unit
- Group D: 25 spaces @ 3.5/1,000 sf
 - Residential: 9 spaces @ 1.5/unit
- Group E: self parked @ 2/unit
- Existing Church: 24 spaces

Concept Plan for:

Lookout Mountain

for: City of Lookout Mountain, Georgia
 by: The Walker Collaborative with
 Tunnell-Spangler-Walsh & Associates



BIRD'S EYE PERSPECTIVE



A. "Iconic" Building

B. Town Green

C. Grocery Store

D. Mixed Use Buildings

E. Plaza

F. City Hall

G. Police Station

H. Fire House

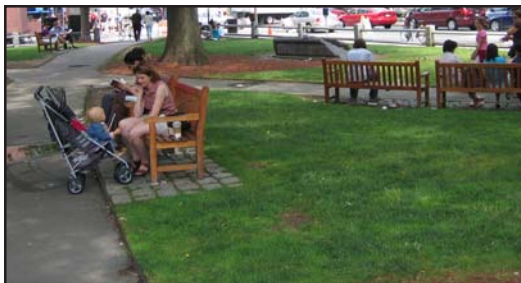
I. Lula Lake Road

PUBLIC SPACES

The City is fortunate to have a recently completed greenway system, which is addressed on page 11 of this plan. In addition to ideas for extending that greenway, the two key proposed public spaces for the Town Center are the Town Green and the Plaza. Each is summarized below.

Town Green

This green space would be bound by Lula Lake Road and the proposed new street, and would serve as the focal point for the core of the Town Center. It is proposed as an open lawn area framed by a peripheral sidewalk and shade trees.



Plaza

This hardscaped area might feature a permanent fountain, as well as furniture for outdoor dining that could be removed for special events.



Two important ingredients for successful public spaces that are actually used by people are: 1) high visibility and access; and 2) active surrounding uses. The proposed park and plaza will both benefit from these vital characteristics. Both spaces are visible from Lula Lake Road and are accessed by public streets. Likewise, these spaces are directly adjacent to proposed retail, services, offices, housing and municipal offices. Such neighboring land uses will help activate the green and plaza on a regular basis. In fact, the plaza can double as both an outdoor dining space and a formal open space. Hedges have been avoided for the green to better accommodate special events by minimizing physical obstructions.



TRANSPORTATION

Streets

Of the three key streets within the Town Center, two already exist (Lula Lake and McFarland) and one new street is proposed.

Street Profiles & Streetscapes

Lula Lake & McFarland

Although the east side of Lula Lake is not proposed for development where the new greenway exists, the proposed street cross-sections for it and McFarland are otherwise essentially the same, as follows (and illustrated at right):

- Angled parking on both sides
- One twelve (12) foot wide driving lane in either direction
- Twenty (20) foot wide sidewalks
- Street trees within grates
- Street lights not exceeding a sixteen (16) foot height

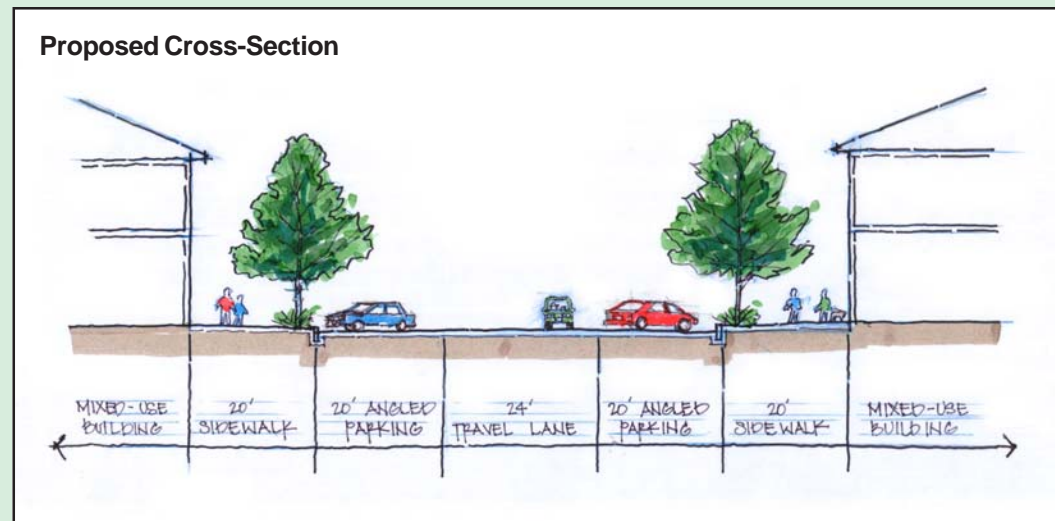
It is recommended that sidewalk surfaces consist of concrete, brick, or a combination of the two.

New Street

As illustrated on the following page, the proposed design for the new street within the Town Center's core would be much like that described above, except that on-street parking would occur on only one side of the street, and the sidewalks would be slightly more narrow (15 ft. and 10 ft.).

MCFARLAND ROAD

The segment of McFarland Road traversing the Town Center currently has a strip commercial character, including parking lots that separate buildings from the street, as well as a lack of sidewalks, street trees and on-street parking. The proposed cross-section is more urban in form, including buildings with shallow front setbacks and rear parking lots, urban streetscapes featuring generous sidewalks, and on-street angled parking.



TRANSPORTATION

Intersection

The intersection of Lula Lake and McFarland is a positive element for the Town Center because it serves as a traffic calming tool and provides an identifiable landmark. Regardless of its merits, it can be enhanced, and there are three proposed options. Each is explained and two are illustrated at bottom right. All three options are viable and the City's ultimate choice should be based upon discussions with the state's Department of Transportation. It should be noted that, while a traffic roundabout was considered for this plan, it was rejected because the continuous traffic flow that results is not pedestrian friendly.

Alleys & Cross-Access

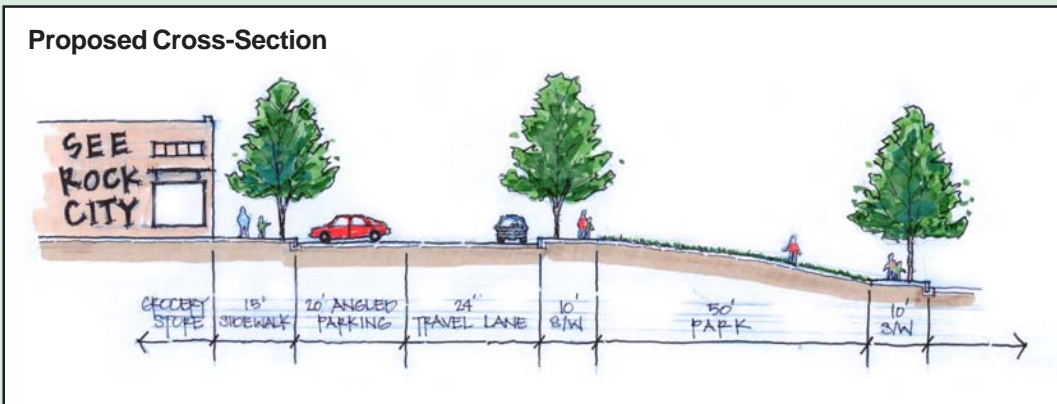
While alleys and cross-access between adjacent parking lots may not graphically "jump out" on the physical master plan for the Town Center, they are still an important component. As an alternative to driveways that interrupt attractive streetscapes and infringe upon pedestrian safety, rear parking areas should use alleys as a means of access. Where alleys are not an available alternative, cross-access connections should be made between parking lots.

Parking

Parking within the Town Center should consist of angled on-street parking and parking lots located behind buildings. Where visible from streets, parking lots should be screened with peripheral landscaping and/or fencing.

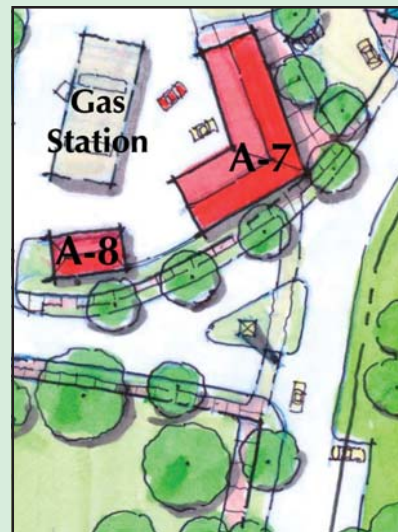
NEW STREET

This street does not currently exist, but it would become a critical street for the core of the Town Center. The cross-section below, looking north, features the proposed new grocery store on the west (left) and the sloping town green on the east (right). It includes angled parking on the building side of the street, sidewalks on both sides, and two driving lanes.



INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENT: McFarland & Lula Lake Roads

Two of the three improvement options are illustrated at right. Alternative A maintains the basic existing configuration, but enhances the triangular island with a sidewalk, better landscaping, and perhaps some type of statuary. Alternative B does the same, but converts the northerly segment of lanes to a single west-bound lane onto McFarland. Alternative C, not illustrated, is to eliminate the northerly segment completely and create a "T" intersection.



Alternative A



Alternative B

GATEWAYS & GREENWAY

Gateways

In order for an area to really feel like a distinctive "place," it is important that a genuine sense of arrival occur upon entering. Key gateways into a district offer the critical first and last impression that might dictate whether first-time visitors return. There are two primary issues related to planning gateways: location and design.

Location

There are three entry points into the proposed Town Center. Although many districts do not have a clear point of arrival, in the case of this particular Town Center, all three are obvious and not likely to be "moving targets" as future development occurs. They are illustrated at right.

Design

Three important principles should be followed in determining the design treatments for the Town Center gateways: 1) high quality; 2) low maintenance; and 3) consistency with the community's unique character. The sample design at far right

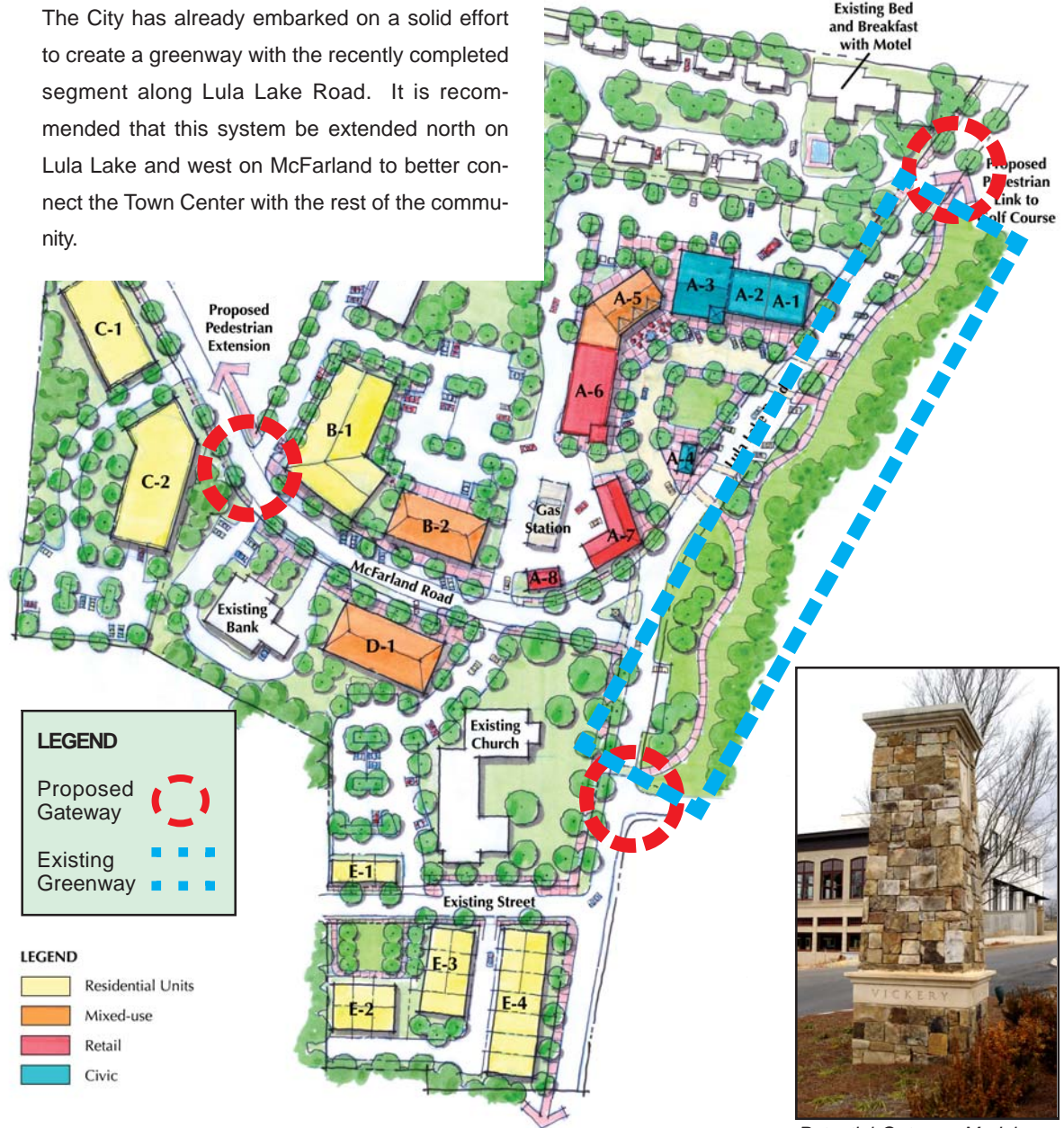


Existing Greenway along Lula Lake Road

is just one example of what might work.

Greenway

The City has already embarked on a solid effort to create a greenway with the recently completed segment along Lula Lake Road. It is recommended that this system be extended north on Lula Lake and west on McFarland to better connect the Town Center with the rest of the community.



Potential Gateway Model

THE PLAN: COMPONENTS

BUILDINGS: GENERAL DESIGN PRINCIPLES

NO: Inappropriate



Building heights in the Town Center should not exceed two-and-a-half stories. The front setback above is too deep, and parking should not be in the front.



The Town Center may have pitched roofs, but they should feature overhangs rather than the roof edge being encased in a large cornice, as occurs above.



This building facade's uninterrupted plane fails to achieve the massing that is appropriate for a human-scaled and pedestrian-friendly environment. It also has a horizontal orientation rather than vertical bays.

YES: Appropriate

Height & Setback



Town Center buildings should not exceed two-and-a-half stories in height, and they should be located close to the street unless outdoor dining is provided.



Civic buildings may deviate from the building setback and height restrictions placed on other buildings in order to reinforce their visual prominence.

Roof Forms



Buildings in Lookout Mountain's new Town Center should have either pitched or flat roofs. Pitched roofs should have a moderate to steep slope.



Flat roofs should be screened with a parapet facade along their street frontage. Dormer windows are also encouraged if appropriately proportioned.

Massing & Facade Design



Groundfloor stone pilasters (attached pillars), store-front bays, and canvas awnings are used on these new buildings to break up the facade into a series of vertically oriented bays.



Exterior building materials should convey a natural and somewhat rustic feel with the use of stone, wood shingles, and similar materials. Lighter materials should always be located above heavier materials.

BUILDINGS: CIVIC

At the outset of this planning process, it was not assumed that Lookout Mountain's city hall and related municipal facilities should be located within the new Town Center. Alternative sites were considered. However, once the pros and cons of locating the municipal facilities elsewhere were evaluated, it became clear that they should serve as anchors for the new Town Center. Below are some of the key conclusions:

- With the one exception of public works, all municipal departments and functions should occur within close proximity to one another.
- Public works is the exception to the principle above. Even though equipment and material storage, as well as some administrative functions, should occur elsewhere, limited office space for this department is still needed at City Hall.
- The police and fire departments should be located so that their vehicles have direct street access for speedy and safe ingress and egress.

“Community facilities scattered individually through the city do nothing for the life of the city.”

Christopher Alexander
“A Pattern Language: Towns,
Buildings, Construction”



City Hall

Police Department

Fire House

Among the numerous photographs of various architectural styles shown to Lookout Mountain's citizens during meetings for this project, the image at right rated by far the highest among institutional buildings. Regardless, it is not proposed that this new fire house be replicated for the Lookout Mountain Town Center. Likewise, the rendering above is intended to merely convey the proposed placement, scale and character of future municipal buildings, rather than their specific design. This plan only proposes that the general placement, scale and character of buildings included on this page be achieved.



BUILDINGS: COMMERCIAL



Proposed Grocery Store

Redeveloped Gas Station

While the existing gas station serves an important function, its physical form is incompatible with a pedestrian-oriented town center. It may not occur for years, but it is proposed that this use redevelop based upon positive models across the country in which the pumps are screened by the associated building.



Existing Gas Station



Model Gas Station

Existing Bank Facade



Proposed Bank Facade



BUILDINGS: HOUSING

To meet the housing needs of all Lookout Mountain citizens during each stage of life, a variety of housing types are proposed, including apartments above commercial, existing apartment buildings (if retained), townhouses, condominiums, and detached single-family houses. Scenario B at right depicts proposed residential uses in yellow. The following recommendations apply:

- Residential buildings may employ a broader range of architectural styles and character relative to commercial and mixed use buildings in the Town Center core.
- Residential structures should feature raised foundations and front porches.
- Where alleys are available, driveways accessing streets shall not be allowed.
- Garages may not be attached to the front of houses, and parking lots shall not occur between a street and a residential structure.



ECONOMIC STRATEGY

Market Position & Branding

Market Position

Achieving successful market positioning for the Town Center within the local and regional market involves two key tasks: defining the target markets and developing a distinct image for the area. These two issues are interdependent and each builds upon the other. It is difficult to prescribe the optimal image for an area if the target market is not already known. Likewise, it is not easy to identify the appropriate targeted market without an understanding of the place's current or potential image. Regardless of these challenges, based upon the study area's location and future potential, its targeted market segments include the following:

- Lookout Mountain, GA, residents
- Lookout Mountain, TN, residents
- Rock City visitors
- Heritage tourists (national park visitors)
- Covenant College community

While the broader market of Chattanooga area residents and visitors will be more difficult to draw than some of the more "captive audiences" listed above, they should also be considered.

Branding

The image that needs to be crafted for the Town Center must strongly consider the various targeted markets just listed. To be a success, it is critical that the area achieve an image that is

distinct from the balance of the Chattanooga region. In light of the area's existing and potential strengths relative to competing areas, that image should include the following traits:

- Unique rustic architecture
- High quality - physical environment and businesses
- Interesting shops and dining
- High level of public safety
- Beautiful scenery - coming and going

Optimal Land Uses

The optimal land uses and tenant mix for the Town Center will be heavily dependent upon the needs of the area's targeted market segments. A detailed market analysis would be needed to pinpoint this issue. However, short of conducting such an analysis (or until it can be conducted), the optimal use and tenant mix listed at right was determined based upon the following three factors: 1) Public input expressed during meetings related to this project; 2) Identified gaps in current offerings; and 3) Past experiences of similar districts in other communities.

Organization

Despite the critical role that the city government will play in the Town Center's planning and development, there will still be a need for an entity with a singular focus on the promotion and management of the Town Center. Consequently, it is proposed that a new entity be formed for this purpose.

Fortunately, there is no need to reinvent the

Proposed Uses / Tenants

Ground Floor

- Service businesses (professional and personal services)
- Restaurants (various price ranges)
- Bookstore
- Newspaper and magazine shop
- Clothing stores
- Ice cream parlor
- Bicycle shop
- Outfitters
- Antiques / crafts / hobby stores
- Arts (especially locally/regionally made)

Upper Floor

- Residential apartments and condos
- Offices
- Service businesses (professional and personal services)

Other (single-use buildings)

- Housing – townhouses, attached housing, and single-family houses
- Grocery store
- City hall / police / fire

wheel. The National Main Street program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation has built a strong track record over the past several decades in commercial district revitalization. It focuses on the following four areas: organization, design, economic restructuring, and marketing and promotion. Unlike a typical Main Street program, Lookout Mountain's Town Center entity would not be based on historic preservation or utilize paid staff. Instead, it would be a volunteer effort, supported in part by the City, to engage in the following activities: business recruitment, sales promotions, special events, joint advertising, and logo development.

PUBLIC POLICY STRATEGY

Zoning & Development Regulations

For this plan to be successfully implemented, it is critical that the City's zoning and development regulations for the study area be rewritten. They should be specifically tailored to this plan. They should address not only permitted and prohibited land uses, but urban and architectural design issues as well. To effectively convey this plan's design concepts, these new regulations should feature illustrations such as dimensioned street cross-sections and diagrammatic facade elevations.

Public Improvements

While much of this plan addresses privately-owned land and will rely on the private sector to implement, key public improvements will include:

- Streets and streetscapes
- Infrastructure and utilities
- Park and plaza development
- Municipal buildings

It is important to note that the City may look to developers to shoulder some of these costs to the extent that their properties are involved.

Development Partnership

Because the core of the proposed Town Center is owned by only two entities - the City and a single property owner - this plan has made a deliberate effort to consider the existing property lines within the plan layout to allow for an ex-



pedited and clean approach to development. The red lines on the Scenario A plan above outline this core area that will likely constitute the first phase of plan implementation.