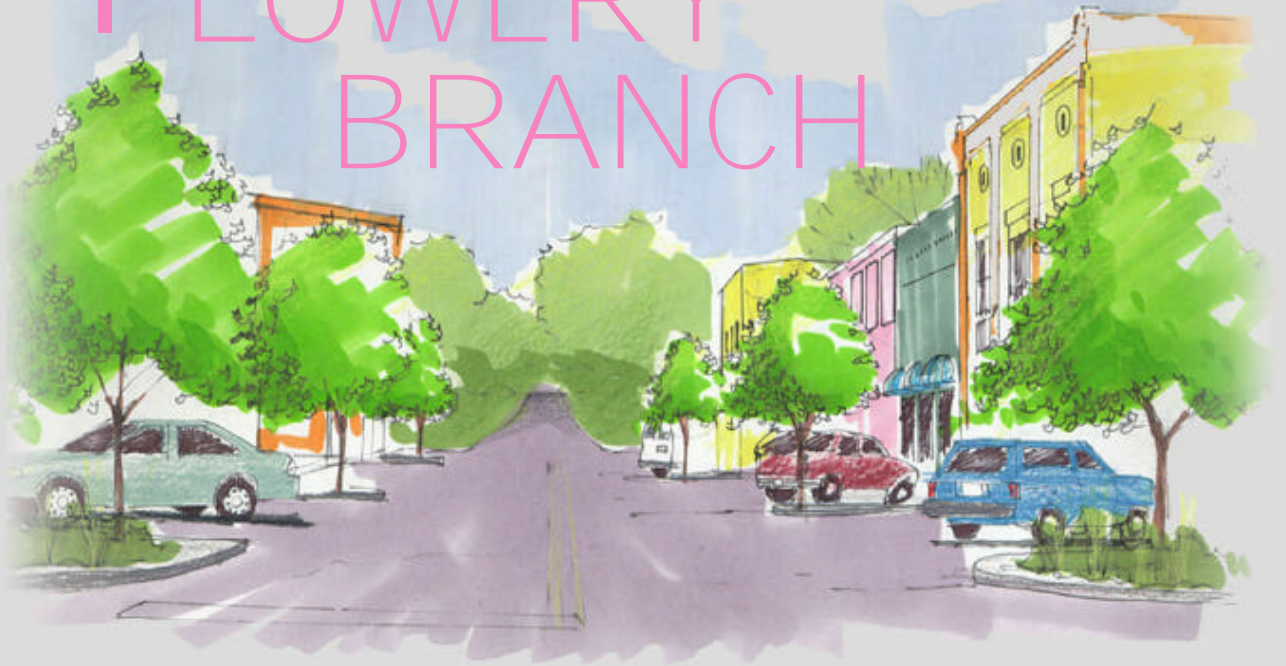


FLOWERY BRANCH



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The School of Environmental Design (SED) Public Service and Outreach Program is a partner with the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) to administer the Better Hometown Program. UGA's role in the program is to provide design assistance and preservation planning input to the 40 towns which have been selected to participate in the program. This charrette is one of the services provided for Better Hometowns. The staff at DCA and the faculty and students at UGA are proud to offer our assistance and support of the City of Flowery Branch.

We want to encourage you to use our recommendations as a stepping stone for community improvements. Community development is an incremental process and this should serve as an excellent beginning. We hope we have given you vision and hope for a better town.

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The guiding philosophy of the Better Hometown Program is the belief that the most important member of the partnership is the local community. Likewise, the designs for community enhancement reflect the priorities of the citizens. Members of the BHT program can receive design assistance from the School of Environmental Design (SED) in the form of weeklong community planning “charrettes.” This community “charrette” format brings the diverse talents and resources of the University to small towns to help them articulate their vision into focused plans for action.


The charrette was the beginning of an opportunity for residents and professionals to provide input as a first step in developing a plan that addresses issues affecting the town in growing South Hall County. Flowery Branch was divided into four major areas to be studied for enhancement, each with specific design recommendations: (1) Atlanta Highway, (2) the proposed Parkway, (3) downtown, and (4) a possible commuter station. Also included are suggestions for marketing Flowery Branch as the unique and colorful town that it is.

The word “charrette” has been traced to the nineteenth century at the famous School of Architecture—the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. A charrette refers to a design competition whereby different teams participate on the same design problem within a limited period of time. At the close of the time period, the design proposals - in their various states of completion - were collected on a rolling cart known as a “charrette.”

c h a r r e t t e



Marketing



Flowery Branch is one stop on the The Hall County Heritage Trails tour. In its description of the town, the brochure states that Flowery Branch was "...a shipping center until the decline of cotton in the 1920s." However, we feel that there is so much more heritage to promote in Flowery Branch than the decline of a single crop. In the short time we have been here we have been astounded by the richness of local history. There are many things which, if promoted, would bring a renewed interest in the town from visitors and residents alike.



A sampling of **local** items of **interest** we felt were under-promoted: • Porter House hotel and its connection to the **famous steak** • downtown Flowery Branch is a **family** adventure • Flowery Branch is not and was never a "fancy" town. The working class and **vernacular past** of Flowery Branch should be highlighted. It is slipping away faster than you think and there will be little remaining of the **"real"** Flowery Branch **history** if it is not promoted and protected • the **eclectic art** world of North Georgia is under-represented. Businesses like the Lake Arts Center are the tip of the artistic iceberg. This **spirit** of energy should be replicated so that Flowery Branch will become an artists' enclave that is an **easy trip** from Atlanta. The "Narda" approach to the arts should set the standard • Flowery Branch's **furniture** manufacturing past is still physically dominant in town but not in retail format. The manufacturing companies should be encouraged to produce a **signature** Flowery Branch stool, chair, spice cabinet, or table • We were one of the few public groups to see the "Fabulous Jones' **Border Collie** Show." This should be the exception rather than the rule • re-institute the renowned **revivals** and community-wide religious meetings of the past. • an easy **walking** tour of the downtown **historic district** should be created with a well-designed brochure to attract a younger crowd • Flowery Branch must recognize and promote its **transportation history**. Four major transportation influences provide a firm and tangible link to America's "Past on the Move": The Chattahoochee River corridor, and now Lake Lanier, The Atlanta Highway, **The Railroad** (and perhaps a new commuter rail-line), the I-985 ribbon (and soon) the Tanner's Creek and Hall Creek eco-parkway



Parkway

Flowery Branch has the rare opportunity to control and manage growth along a proposed parkway, preserving the natural character of the land.

A parkway is proposed to run from the intersection of Spout Springs Road and Atlanta Highway in Flowery Branch all the way to Oakwood, a nearby town, to handle growing traffic demands. This “parkway” will certainly become a typical bypass, an eyesore, as no design controls are currently in place. A Thurmond Tanner Corridor Overlay Zone is needed to ensure that the commercial and industrial development along the parkway is visually consistent and environmentally sensitive. The purpose of an overlay zone is to provide special design requirements for properties within the zone no matter what their land use classification. An overlay creates an identity for the area that enhances economic vitality.

If new development bordering I-985 has a strong ecological component and distinctive architectural vocabulary rather than just being another large development at an interstate exit, then this town will be different from Oakwood, Duluth, or Suwanee. A differentiated product is the basis for successful economical development. *Sameness does not sell.* Clustered development that does not exploit natural resources will be the premium commodity in a global economy. This sort of smart development: reduces overall amount of land used by businesses but does not limit the overall amount of development, presents more of an open space character, and presents a more visually pleasing experience from every angle.

The following issues are not thoroughly addressed in the current zoning ordinance and could be more effectively handled in overlay zones:

- **materials:** require brick, stone or wood and do not allow corrugated metal walls or mirrored glass with high reflectance
- **placement:** avoid domination of the landscape by structures
- **parking areas:** minimize parking lot size and reduce visibility of lots from roadway; enhance lots with landscaping; utilize permeable paving materials
- **service areas:** should be screened from view from adjoining property and public streets; screening options can include shrubs, trees, masonry or stone; should be architecturally consistent with building structure
- **walls and hedges:** limit heights on walls and hedges; standardize materials for wall construction; should be consistent with building material
- **landscape improvements:** retain existing trees where possible; plant cut and fill slopes of designated height or depth with trees; utilize landscaping to blend cut and fills into natural terrain
- **open space:** limit amount of impervious surface coverage of lot
- **hillside development:** work to retain overall natural terrain appearance; minimize grading, encourage innovative site design; roads should follow natural topography



proposed parkway site



potential parkway development



creative parkway development

“Although the linear pattern of roadside business usage is virtually impossible to eradicate once it is firmly established, with sufficient political will its continued spread can be halted, its outward appearances can be much improved, and its functions can be broadened.”

--Rural by Design

Parkway Alternative

“Open space preservation produces multiple economic benefits: those to the community as a whole, those to individual landowners, and those to developers.”

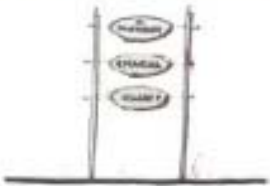
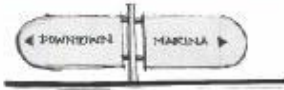
-[Rural by Design](#)

Current (limited) zoning controls:

- **height:** current zoning allows 50 feet for commercial development and 100 feet for light industrial
- **floor area:** maximum lot coverage is 60% for commercial and light industrial (i.e. only 60% of the lot can be covered by building, but does not include parking lot coverage)
- **set-backs:** current setbacks are 35 feet (frontage on arterial or collector streets) for both commercial and light industrial with 15 foot and 20 foot setbacks on the sides and rear of structures

These controls may be insufficient to control typical over-scale development that occurs at many other interchanges and any rapidly urbanizing rural areas.





Uniform Signage

Coherent signs that are of similar design begin to tell a story to the visitor of Flowery Branch. You have arrived! You are somewhere special! The signs are a powerful marketing idea that cuts down on visual clutter but still guides the driver to his destination. Uniform signs are another detail that adds to the overall feel of the town. Adopting a sign ordinance will help eliminate the clutter of competing signage.



Atlanta Highway

The character of the Atlanta Highway is defined by single detached structures that are residential in design. Any new construction should be made compatible by locating structures in the center of the lots with setbacks to the front and sides. This pattern is consistent with the character of the highway. This historic character is also defined by building with pitched roofs, front entrances, front and side gables, porches and canopies, and a continuous sidewalk. Large single expanses of roof surfaces should be avoided by breaking them with gables and hips. Standing-seam tin roofs will unify and define new construction. Also, the existing setback of historic properties (pre-1960s) should be maintained by 1) keeping parking to the rear and sides of buildings. If there is no alternative to parking in the front, low shrubs should screen parking spaces; 2) keeping street signage low to the ground and lit externally. Avoid plastic interior-lit signage as it contributes to light pollution; and 3) avoid bright over-illuminated gas pump canopies--always!

“Public perception of a community is based largely on what can be seen from an automobile.”

--[Rural by Design](#)

The Atlanta Highway has a different character outside of downtown. This corridor is recognized for curving, heavily tree-lined roads. Any new developments in these areas should be set back from the road with a 100 foot tree buffer at the road right of way to screen buildings.

The Atlanta Highway corridor has many unique North Georgia experiences:

The **flea market** should be widely promoted and held more often • Mountain Man **BBQ** (and boiled peanuts!), a vanishing north Georgia resource, should clean up debris and receive assistance to upgrade this landmark facility • the old Murphy's **Billiards Hall** is a typical 1950s commercial highway architecture and should be saved as a great rehabilitation project • your two (!) early 20th century gas stations are **highly prized** and often rehabilitated historic resources...do it! • the **1920s** route to Atlanta was infamous and is a historic resource in itself; it should be identified and **promoted** as the way that "America saw the USA from their **Chevrolet**" • maintain green right-of-way (area between sidewalk and street) and initiate a tree **planting program** there





Atlanta Highway



Commuter Rail Sites

Radford Road

advantages:

- room for large parking lot
- no at grade crossings nearby
- on road from Oakwood and likely to attract commuters from both cities

disadvantages:

- zoned industrial
- next to cement plant
- not within walking distance to town

Old Depot

advantages:

- could let people off downtown-increased business
- historical significance of old station placement

disadvantages:

- no parking
- at grade crossings issue

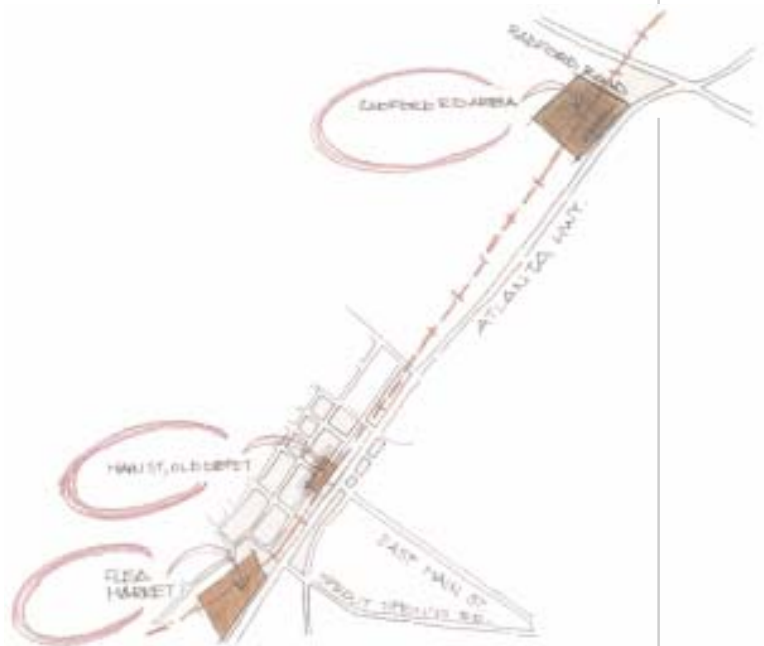
Flea Market

advantages:

- parking only used once per month
- within walking distance to town and residential areas

disadvantages:

- don't have to worry about at grade crossing issue (if underpass at Spout Springs is completed)
- not much room for expansion





Downtown Flowery Branch

Historic Downtown Flowery Branch serves as a focal point and showplace for the greater community. It has several varied styles of traditional 19th century commercial architecture just in a one-block area. Great care and attention should be given to these historic resources as they are representative of “the real Georgia” that is a large tourism draw. There is opportunity to expand the Downtown building infrastructure should the need arise. Any new construction should reflect the historic buildings in size, scale, materials, window fenestration and roofline yet should be distinguishable from the old.





Flowery Branch Town Center

- relocate power lines to the rear of buildings
- add awnings for shade (use historic precedents)
- recruit new businesses such as: galleries, cafes, and bookstores
- expand hours of operation
- unify street lighting using a contemporary version of old railroad enameled metal lights on simple wooden standards
- recommend bench seating-simple folksy benches like those already present should be replicated
- simple, unified, movable planters made of natural materials should be used for seasonal plantings
- sidewalks should be hexagonal pavers with curbs and gutters along Main Street
- place lights at base of trees
- street trees should be placed in "bumpouts" that are irrigated. Plant low growing shrubs and ground cover beneath the trees.



Rural Preservation

“Another favored aspect of traditional small towns, especially those located in rural areas, is the open space that often exists around the edges, and occasionally occurs also as scattered pieces of undeveloped land throughout the community. Although most people take these spaces for granted, hardly noticing them in any conscious way as they go about their daily business, they are strongly affected when such land begins to sprout buildings and parking lots. Few things change the character of small towns and rural communities more than the conversion of these natural areas to development.

Parkway strip prior to development...

Within the American economy, open land is commonly seen as an unused and wasted resource, one that will reach its full potential only if it is developed and put to a “productive” use. This attitude is often accompanied by strong opposition to open space preservation and clustering efforts. But, as communities become increasingly developed, as traffic grows heavier, and as open lands steadily dwindle away, the intrinsic values of such natural areas become more apparent to larger numbers of people.



Conclusions

Flowery Branch has the opportunity to control and manage new growth along the projected parkway, an opportunity many other communities have ignored. Controlling sprawl along this area will give Flowery Branch a look no other town in the area has, and in doing so, provides additional opportunity for beauty and economic revenue. Once this land has been developed, it can never be replaced, so concern and care for this unique resource should be paramount. Growth plus protection means the best possible outcome for developers and residents alike.

Preserving and restoring the buildings downtown, relying on the historic architecture, can be a foundation for a beautiful town center unique to the area and its particular history. Again, this will set you apart from looking like any other town.

For a guide for the town, we recommend Randall Arendt's book, "Rural by Design." This gives a comprehensive and readable overview for anyone of the new thinking on town planning and preservation.