Hoschton Design Charrette

Midpoint Presentation

November 2021

Presented by:

University of Georgia
College of Environment and Design
Center for Community Design & Preservation
Hoschton Design Charrette

The Center for Community Design and Preservation at the UGA College of Environment and Design is leading a virtual design charrette for Hoschton.
What is a Charrette?

A design charrette is a multi-day workshop that brings designers and locals together to focus on a particular planning problem and arrive at a collaborative solution.

The goal of this charrette is to develop a conceptual master plan that preserves the character of Hoschton while capitalizing on economic opportunities in response to rapid growth.

Here’s some background about the project:
Background

As a small town on the I-85 corridor, Hoschton's population of 3,000 is projected to balloon to 10,000 in just five years. Many people are relocating to the area for the small-town lifestyle yet expect bigger-city amenities.
Background

Rural farmland is being developed into residential subdivisions at a rapid pace. In-town traffic is already on the rise, clogging smaller roads not meant for the current influx of cars.
Goals for the Charrette

Local officials want to capitalize on the town’s historic character, ensure that new growth blends in, and determine ways to accommodate residents and visitors without overwhelming the roads in the central business district.

Walkability, historic preservation, infill building designs, parking solutions, a 7-acre civic parcel, and the creative reuse of the historic water tower are all key topics of exploration.
Goals for the Charrette

After an initial meeting and tour of town with local officials on October 24, 2021, UGA students from our Landscape Architecture, Historic Preservation, and Urban Planning & Design programs developed some initial concepts that we hope to get your feedback on.

This presentation concludes with a link to an online survey.

The UGA team will use your feedback to guide the next phase of our designs.
## Exploration of Concepts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Downtown</th>
<th>History</th>
<th>7 Acre Site</th>
<th>Parks</th>
<th>Connectivity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Downtown Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="History Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image3.png" alt="7 Acre Site Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image4.png" alt="Parks Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image5.png" alt="Connectivity Image" /></td>
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Enhancing the Downtown Core

Downtown is the heart of the community. Historic buildings should be rehabbed, and new retail should be concentrated here, but in a form that matches the existing character. Let history be the guide.

There are several potential locations for infill where buildings have been lost and where incompatible structures have been built in the past 40 years.
All successful historic downtowns have a pleasant walkable environment. This is achieved through a tight concentration of buildings, plentiful sidewalks and street trees, and parking tucked along streets and behind buildings, not in large lots.

- Enhance the streetscape by installing sidewalks on both sides of road and adding speed limit signage.
- Add trees, shrubs, and other street amenities.
- Provide safer walkways and crosswalks for students to go to school, thus cutting down on traffic.
- Focus redevelopment efforts on buildings that are eyesores, or incompatible with the Downtown character, rather than building on undeveloped greenspace.
Downtown Concept

This map highlights areas that contribute to the character of Downtown (orange) and some areas where infill or redevelopment would be appropriate (red). Also:

- Attract businesses that add to the economic mix desired downtown (ex: gym, restaurants, etc).
- Civic functions can move from prime retail locations but should stay in the heart of town to anchor their importance.
- Maintain the depot as a museum/event space but foster a physical connection with the new townhomes.
- Consider changing White St. to a one-way road in order to use the additional space for sidewalks/paths.
Here are but a few examples of successful Downtown environments in Georgia that have an engaging, walkable street life.

Use lessons from these towns but stay authentic to Hoschton.
HISTORY
Hoschton was born from the implementation of the Gainesville Midland Railroad in 1878. Since then, agriculture and commerce have been an important asset to the town’s history and layout – as seen around the depot, the central business district, and the residences leading into Downtown. Hoschton has several historic structures in its city boundary, yet no designation or recognition of them.
History

Only two buildings in town have been placed on the National Register of Historic Places: The Hoschton Depot and the Hillcrest/Allen Clinic and Hospital.

Other areas of town are also worthy of preservation. The state’s database of potentially significant historic properties already identifies several in Hoschton, but this survey should be updated.
Because of its rich history, Hoschton could benefit from the preservation of the physical history on which the city is founded. Fostering a preservation ethic would aid in draw for tourists, protect quality of life, and stimulate development in town with increased revenue and tax incentives.

Create a historic preservation commission:
Citizens knowledgeable about local history could be appointed to research grants, share information, and explore opportunities.

Conduct a survey of historic places:
Knowing what you have is the first step towards preserving generations of tradition and value.

Create historic district downtown:
Allows for an expanded tourist economy and protects a unique character-defining area of town (shown left in blue). Could also create a residential historic district.

Reuse historic buildings:
Allows for sustainable development, preservation of place, and provides incentives such as tax credits and higher rents.
These are examples of how protecting a city’s historic character can help preserve the uniqueness of a small town.
7 ACRE SITE
The City of Hoschton has recently purchased an in-town, seven-acre property formerly owned by the Adams family.

The c.1900 home is in good condition, with beautiful millwork, hand-blown glass windows, and a wrap-around front porch. Set into a rolling, forested landscape with a small creek, this property is a hidden jewel! It is a peaceful, quiet refuge from the busy town center a block away.

This property has the potential to become a unique signature attraction for Hoschton if it is developed sensitively.

Given the lack of woodland parks in town, the steep topography, the historic homestead, and its central location for residents and visitors, the UGA team recommends the property be conserved and developed as a park space.
Concept 1: Nature Preserve

The following four concepts show varying levels of development and amenities to consider for the park. Concept 1 envisions the park as a nature preserve:

- Majority of lot for conservation
- Trails throughout the site and along the creek
- Multiple locations to relocate play area from Depot and expand playspace options for children
- House retained for park offices, nature center with exhibits, restrooms, and concessions
**Concept 2: Train Park**

Concept 2 builds on the history of Hoschton and envisions the park with a train theme:

- Mix of green space and natural forest
- Children's train as a novel attraction
- Bridge going over creek
- Hiking trails throughout the site
- Use buildings as train museum

Zoo Atlanta
Train Park
Concept 3: Festivals and Booths

Concept 3 adds more open space into the park with areas for festivals and vendor booths:

- Conservation + Programmed Space = more open areas, less woodlands
- Areas for events and booths along creek
- Locate any parking along Broad St end of site
- May be problematic due to topography

![Map of Mitford Riverwalk Booths and Small Vendor Shops]
Concept 4: Multi-Functional

Concept 4 exposes the site further by including city hall and an amphitheater:

- Amphitheater could take advantage of natural topography deeper in site, or be located closer to downtown end
- City Hall could be modeled after a conference retreat center rather than traditional civic architecture
- Would need more parking than the topography may accommodate
John Homestead Park in Tucker, GA is one example of a historic property that was developed into a natural and recreational resource for citizens and visitors.

By first determining what inherent qualities are worthy of conservation, amenities can then be considered that enhance the site and add value to the community.

Natural play spaces and woodland trails would offer a unique park for the Hoschton-Braselton area with minimal investment of public funds and a huge return for residents.
PARKS
Parks and Greenspaces

Hoschton has a minimal amount of parks and natural greenspace per resident now that the population has expanded so rapidly. Most existing park space is dedicated to active recreation (soccer and ballfields) while playgrounds, trails, and passive parks are minimal or nonexistent.

In addition to the aforementioned 7-acre site, there are opportunities to enhance other areas to expand access to the outdoors and nature.

Site Photos

West Jackson Park

Hoschton City Cemetery

Power line easement
This map shows existing parks as well as other areas that should be considered for greenspace conservation and passive parks. Areas under consideration for development could be required to conserve some greenspace.

- Connection of greenspaces that each serves a specific purpose (farmers market, frisbee golf, etc.)
- Potential to use green space around powerlines and other easements for micromobility (i.e., bikes, scooters, golf carts).
- Small pocket parks can visually beautify Hoschton and serve as temporary parking for golf carts, which helps alleviate traffic and parking issues.
- Cemeteries can be used for walking trails and connecting paths.
Examples of pocket parks, cemeteries and power line easement trails that other communities have utilized.

Straw Hat Park, Medfield, MA
Underutilized parcel converted to public green space

Oconee Hill Cemetery, Athens, GA
Cemetery as a significant landscape feature

Horsham Power Line Trail
Montgomery County, Pennsylvania

Case Studies
CONNECTIVITY
Connectivity Issues

As the city of Hoschton continues to grow, there are ongoing issues with vehicular traffic.

Neighborhoods and new shopping areas were designed to be car-dependent and not interconnected, funneling all traffic onto Hwy 53.

Despite the relatively small size of town, there is minimal infrastructure for walking and roads are hostile to foot and bike traffic.
Connectivity
Current Conditions

The movement of residents and town visitors depend upon Highway 53, with no designated alternative modes of circulation.

As development has occurred over time, neighborhoods and commercial areas have become more fragmented.

This map shows how adjacent neighborhoods are disconnected from each other and from Downtown. This forces residents to drive a car instead of walking to work, to school, to parks, or for errands.

Along with vehicular interaction, the lack of sidewalks and street trees provide an unpleasant experience for pedestrians.
A Multi-Purpose Trail System could address these concerns by providing residents with alternate forms of mobility.

By using secondary roads, waterway easements, and greenspaces, paths could be constructed for walking, biking, scooters and golf carts.

- Diminish in-town use of cars and alleviate traffic
- Promote physical and psychological health of residents
- Enhance access for non-drivers (i.e. children, early teens, elderly)
- Bolster local economy with unique amenity
Ridgeland, Mississippi
Alternate path for bikes, pedestrians, non-vehicular traffic

Peachtree City, GA
Not just for golf carts!

These trail system examples serve a secondary means of connecting in-town destinations with safe, non-vehicular forms of transport.
We’d like your feedback!

Please scan the QR code or follow the link below to take our survey.

Your input will help the UGA students as they explore these concepts further.

https://tinyurl.com/HoschtonSurvey-1

Want to see the Presentation slide by slide? Visit t.uga.edu/7uf