



CROSS SECTION - HISTORIC TOWN
BUFORD HWY. STUDY



Updated Downtown Master Plan focuses on new opportunities

With its roots well-grounded in previous downtown plans and building upon the realized achievements of previous planning efforts, the Downtown Suwanee Master Plan update, which was expected to be adopted by City Council at its August 25 meeting, sets out four big ideas for the City of Suwanee to consider and perhaps pursue in the next few years.

This renewed vision for downtown Suwanee suggests:

- focusing more intense development and extending mixed uses around Town Center
- developing the former DeLay property, near the library and PlayTown Suwanee, as a park
- extending and constructing new roads to improve access in and around downtown
- recognizing Old Town's distinct character and its capacity to support destination-type uses.

“One thing to keep in mind about this plan,” says Planning and Inspections Director Josh Campbell, “is that it builds upon prior planning efforts. After years of implementing aspects of these previous plans, it’s now time to look at opportunities that in some cases are new ideas and in others are part of the long-term vision that as of yet hasn’t been implemented.”

Big ideas often come out of planning efforts like this downtown update, notes Campbell, adding that Town Center is a product of the 2002 Old Town Master Plan.

New Town Center development, Campbell says, will focus on the context-sensitive, complete-street reconstruction of Buford Highway, which will include bike lanes, wide sidewalks, street trees, medians and turn lanes, and street furniture. This project, funded in part by a Livable Centers Initiative grant, is moving forward, but construction is likely more than a year away.

Another big idea relates to extending Town Center. The Suwanee Downtown Development Authority is in the early stages of undertaking a public-private partnership; initial plans call for a

five-story mixed-use building to include commercial/retail and residential uses on a nearly 3.5-acre tract adjacent to Chicago Avenue.

The former DeLay property in the Old Town area, suggests the plan, is prime to be developed as Suwanee’s next great park. Before undertaking this future project, the City would first create a master plan for the approximately 20-acre property.

The updated master plan also identifies several opportunities for improving the downtown street network and calls for potentially extending Suwanee Avenue to King Street, extending a road through the former DeLay property from Main Street to Suwanee Dam, and extending Stonecypher Road from Suwanee Dam to Peachtree Industrial Boulevard.

Such projects, says Campbell, could be considered as elements of potential private developments or City projects undertaken as funding becomes available.

As part of this master plan update, a market analysis was conducted. The analysis indicates that, at this time, destination-type, rather than retail uses, are more appropriate for Old Town.

“We anticipate that the Russell Street roundabout [which is part of the Buford Highway reconstruction project] may cause traffic patterns to change,” says Campbell, “and perhaps coax more people to venture into historic Old Town. Once that happens, we can re-evaluate what kinds of uses would be successful in the Old Town area. For now, we know that destination-type uses can be successful there.”

The City has worked since early this year with planning consultant TSW to develop the update. A public meeting, visioning workshop, and open house were all available to the public as part of the process. The 2015 Downtown Suwanee Master Plan update is available on the Docs & Downloads page at suwanee.com.