Introduction

Two forms of development and design principles are found in Gainesville. Pre-WWII "traditional" design, which features connected, narrow streets and wide sidewalks; buildings relatively close to the street; a mix of housing types and household incomes; mixed and historic architectural styles; large street trees; human-scaled development patterns; a concentration of civic and cultural facilities and programs; a pleasant public realm (streets, sidewalks, parks); and a high level of pedestrian, bicycle and transit travel. Much of the work, recreation, and shopping by residents in these neighborhoods occurs in close proximity to their homes. The sense of community, unique character, and civic pride is strong in these areas.

A critically important design principle for this form of development is "access by proximity," so that driving a car to travel to day-to-day destinations is optional instead of mandatory, or that car trips and distances are reduced.

The other form of development is post-WWII suburban design, which features residential areas more spread out on larger lots. Travel for pedestrians, bicyclists and transit users is more difficult and less frequent.

The diversity of development types in Gainesville, as in most communities, indicates that there is a diversity of preferences as to design patterns. This diversity of lifestyle options should be preserved. Because the City recognizes the substantial social, financial, environmental, and transportation benefits of people-oriented, traditional design, the City seeks to protect and promote these design features in appropriate locations, and to promote housing choice – that is, availability of diverse housing types in the city.

Studies over the past three decades from around the country indicate that more recent design patterns should not be the only choice made available to future residents of the city. These studies have found that a city devoted almost exclusively to conventional, auto-oriented site design would be contrary to several community objectives embodied in the Comprehensive Plan. Such design often or typically results in:

- Increases in the percentage, number, and length of trips made by car (33 percent increase in trips by car, and 50 percent increase in miles traveled by car).[i]

- Decreases in the percentage of trips made by foot, bicycle, carpooling, and bus.

- Increases in the cost of providing public capital facilities and services (costs 40 to 400 percent more for government to serve).[ii]

- Increases in taxes.

- Reductions in the viability of smaller, locally-owned businesses, since people are more willing to drive further distances to reach large, centralized, non-local businesses.

- Decreases in the level of public service.

- Increases in air, water, and noise pollution (auto-oriented design creates 20 to 50 percent more air pollution).[iii]

- Removal of relatively large amounts of farmland, open space, and wildlife.

- Promotion of a cycle of wider roads, strip commercial, and low-density development.

- Reduction in interaction among neighbors by isolating individuals in their homes and cars.[iv]

- Increases in consumption of gasoline and other forms of energy (auto-oriented design consumes 8 to 44 percent more energy).[v]

- Reduction in residential property values along arterials and collectors.[vi]

- Degradation of public safety by significantly increasing the likelihood of traffic injuries and fatalities. Emergency services must therefore be diverted from other public safety concerns.

- Making the 25 to 50 percent of the population without a car (mostly children, the disabled, seniors, and the low income) overly dependent on others.[vii] Peter Calthorpe, the father of "pedestrian pockets" and "transit-oriented developments," cites a recent study which found that ten-year olds in a small Vermont town had three times the mobility (the ability to get to places on their own) and watched four times less TV than their counterparts in a suburb of auto-dependent Orange County, California.

This Element takes the position that the City should encourage a diversity of development patterns and housing types, including protection of its traditional development and design patterns, as well as its conventional, larger-lot single-family neighborhoods. When appropriate, the City should use traditional design principles in new development. Citizens should be afforded the choice to live in either conventional areas, or areas that feature traditional design features. Put simply, the City recognizes that one key to a livable, sustainable future with a high-quality of life and a healthy local economy is to ensure that the option remains for citizens to live in a variety of development types, including those with traditional, "people-oriented" design features.[viii]

By using design principles that promote safety, livability, civic pride, and visual appeal, the city will establish an important engine in job recruitment and a strengthened tax base. This element proposes, where appropriate, civic design efforts by the City itself, and amending the Land Development Code or otherwise modifying City development decisions to include various tools that can be used to encourage such principles at appropriate locations.

Definition of Urban Design

Urban design strives to locate and configure buildings and the overall layout of streets, parking lots, neighborhoods, and the city to achieve a pleasant, aesthetic appearance for the community, to

protect and restore natural areas and to promote desirable functions so that transportation choice, livability, sustainability, sense of place and pride, unique city and neighborhood character, and the general quality of life are protected and promoted. When done right, quality urban design can result in increased property values, incentives for compact development, and acceptable density increases.

Existing Development Patterns in Gainesville

Residential. A large percentage of Gainesville's land area consists of single-family development -- particularly areas west and north of NW 13th Street. Nearly 30 percent of the over 27,000 acres of land in the city are designated for single-family residential development. The second largest category -- public facilities -- is only 15 percent of the total. Gridded, interconnected street patterns predominate in the northeast, southeast, and central areas of the city, whereas newer subdivisions in western Gainesville toward the periphery feature more curvilinear, disconnected street patterns. Disconnected streets (found in "one-way-in, one-way-out" subdivisions) intensify traffic problems by forcing all trips onto a small number of major collector and arterial streets.

Many of these newer residential areas are more spread out on larger lots. Often, the buildings are pulled back a relatively large distance from the street, face away from the street, or both. There is a relative lack of sidewalks; land use patterns are more spread out and single-use instead of the more traditional intermingling of shops, offices, parks, civic, and schools; large parking lots are common; and streets tend to be wider and disconnected, with relatively high speeds on major streets. Appealing landscaping, and, by standards of many communities, generally controlled signage, is frequently a positive feature in these areas.

Approximately 11 percent of the city is designated for multi-family land use.

Activity Centers. Gainesville has identified 19 activity (hubs of commercial and other activities) centers, most of which are located at major intersections along a northwest-southeast axis. With the exception of the University of Florida, each center is non-residential in nature, with conventional shopping center designs oriented toward a regional attraction of motor vehicles and generally poor access by other forms of transportation -- both externally and internally. Typically, the activity centers feature a "step-down gradient" from commercial and higher intensity land uses to transitional land uses to single-family, single-use patterns.

Only approximately 4 percent of the land within the city is designated for mixed use development.

Commercial Strips. Commercial areas featuring an elongated pattern designed primarily for motor vehicle access are found along most major roadways in Gainesville, such as NW 6th Street, NW & SW 13th Street, University Avenue west of 34th Street, NW 43rd Street, Hawthorne Road, North Main Street, and Waldo Road.

"The Traditional City." Much of Gainesville's center was constructed using traditional design principles, and therefore provides relatively good access and amenities for transit users, pedestrians and bicyclists. This area still retains many remnants of traditional design features that

were predominant before WWII, such as connected streets, sidewalks, buildings pulle d up relatively close to the street, a mix of housing types and incomes, mixed architectural styles, large street trees, a concentration of civic and cultural facilities and programs, and a high level of pedestrian, bicycle and transit travel. In addition, residents of the Traditional City engage in a relatively large amount of work, recreation, and shopping in close proximity to their homes. The sense of community and unique character, as noted in the Introduction, is strong in this area and should be protected and promoted.

Transitional Central Corridors . Although development along the major street corridors that are important gateways into the "Traditional City" occurred more recently, remnants of traditional design features have been retained.

Industrial. There are five major industrial areas within city limits: the Northeast Industrial Park mostly along Waldo Road, the industrial area along the south side of the Traditional City south of Depot Avenue, the 6th Street industrial area mostly north of NW 23rd Avenue, the Airport Industrial Park north of the airport, and the large industrial area north of NW 39th Avenue and east of Highway 441. Approximately 8 percent of the land within the city is designated for industrial use.

The 3 Alternative Visions for Gainesville

A positive vision for Gainesville includes the following features:

- Traffic is calm and dispersed.
- Neighborhoods are quiet, safe and have easy access for all forms of travel to retail, entertainment, civic functions, quality parks and schools. That is, transportation choices are made available through land use patterns and other forms of urban design.
- Retail concentrations are walkable, transit-friendly town centers typically containing retail, office, residential, and civic buildings.
- The downtown is healthy, strong, and lively.
- The natural environment is protected and enhanced.
- Taxes are reasonable, well-paying jobs are plentiful and housing is affordable.

Future Alternative Design Concepts and Visions

There are three broad categories of potential future alternative growth concepts and visions for Gainesville. This Element endorses Concept A as the alternative to be pursued by Gainesville:

Concept A

Concept A features compact development, infill, and higher densities in appropriate locations. Gradually, over time, conventional shopping centers are transformed into walkable town centers. Neighborhoods are strengthened and made more livable, vibrant, and safe. A diversity of

neighborhoods is available, from conventional, low-density, single-family, to compact row house and other forms. Neighborhoods are kept stable, and are positive places in which to invest. Traffic is dispersed on interconnected streets. A trails network, connecting natural areas, neighborhoods, and town centers, form an interconnected "emerald necklace" throughout the urban area. People are less likely to flee from residences within the city core.

In Concept A, the city is designed so that people have transportation choices (they are therefore less dependent on their cars), have a stronger connection to urban natural areas, look out for the collective security of their neighborhood, and exhibit a great deal of civic pride. Higher densities and mixed uses allow for smaller, neighborhood-based corner stores and offices, and quality, frequent transit service. Retail, offices, small and neighborhood-based parks, and jobs are pleasant and convenient to walk to, bicycle to, or take transit to from nearby residences.

This concept includes attractive architecture, sidewalks, town centers and street trees. Retail, office, and residential continue to be attracted back to the city core due to the high quality of life, safety, and pedestrian vibrancy.

The rate of development within city limits stabilizes so that growth is faster or as fast as within the city as outside the city within the urban area.

Concept B

Concept B features a single town center – downtown Gainesville. Efforts continue to strengthen the walkable town center features of downtown (through the Traditional City ordinance, and various redevelopment and public improvement efforts). Higher density residential is strongly promoted in the downtown, which transitions to lower density suburban residential outside of the downtown.

In Concept B, people have transportation choices downtown, but land use and transportation patterns remain the same as now in the suburbs outside of downtown.

This concept calls for improving the "public realm" outside downtown primarily by improving the aesthetics of buildings with sign controls and generous landscaping.

Concept C

Concept C is a "status quo" or declining alternative. Downtown Gainesville loses its currently growing vitality and does not compete well with outlying commercial areas. Commercial and government buildings disperse into suburban areas, and retail does not return to downtown at any significant pace. Residential densities remain too low to support transit, and few new residences are created downtown.

In Concept C, by virtue of the way the city is designed, people have few transportation choices. They remain dependent on their cars throughout the city. Primarily, those who cannot own or drive a car are forced to walk, bicycle or use transit, even though such forms of travel are unsafe, costly, inconvenient or otherwise unpleasant. In general, it is only those who do not have a choice

that travel by foot, bicycle, or transit. It is inconvenient and unsafe to walk to, bicycle to, or take transit to large and region-serving parks, office parks, large-scale retail, and remote job centers.

Street corridors remain places to drive **through** rather than **to**, which leads to incremental conversion from single-family residential to office, retail, and rental residential. Residential flight from the city core is strong.

The rate of development is faster outside the city within the urban area than within the city.

An Urban-Suburban Gradient

As noted in the Introduction, many of Gainesville's citizens live in the more recent suburban areas which feature more recent design patterns. This lifestyle option should be preserved – along with a variety of other land development and housing options that promote diversity and choice. Increasingly, however, the option of a people-oriented, traditional design pattern should be preserved where it exists, and enhanced in certain new locations. Because the City recognizes the substantial social, financial, environmental, and transportation benefits of people-oriented, traditional design, the City seeks to protect and promote these design features to complement other portions of the city with low density residential areas. The key to creating a seamless coexistence between these lifestyle options is to develop transitional gradients in which the land development code calls for the incorporation of urban features in some locations, which transition to suburban features in other locations.

The City has already designated the Traditional City as the area which will contain the full range of people-oriented urban features. In addition, transitional corridors leading into the Traditional City have been designated and therefore contain a smaller set of these urban features -- which establishes an urban-suburban gradient. Over time, the City seeks to transition its "activity" centers or shopping and commercial centers to be more like traditional town centers that have a diverse, vibrant, and pleasant design and mix of land uses, in much the same way as the Traditional City. In addition, new town centers should incorporate a broad range of traditional features. Finally, existing residential neighborhoods, on their own initiative, may ask the City to incorporate some of these traditional design features as they are desired. The City can, when appropriate, incorporate such traditional development tools and principles into the Code to apply to these neighborhoods. Other residential neighborhoods will choose to maintain their conventional, single-use and low-density patterns. A primary emphasis should be placed on stabilizing neighborhoods.

Existing Special Areas (existing conditions and existing plans)

Traditional City
The Traditional City contains those parts of the city that feature a large percentage of structures built before WWII, or continue to feature remnants of people-oriented design.

The Traditional City provides a sense of place and sense of community, improves the environment for businesses, including smaller, locally-owned businesses; supports a healthy economy by providing a vibrant mix of commercial, office, retail and residential uses in close proximity; reduces crime by encouraging a 24-hour mix of uses and a significant number of pedestrians; strikes a balance between the needs of the car and the needs of the pedestrian by creating a pleasant ambiance and interesting people-scaled features; increases transit viability; improves the safety and independence of people without access to a car; and provides affordable housing options.

The intent of the Traditional City is to preserve and enhance a more vibrant, livable core, and to increase citizen pride in its downtown development. The Traditional City regulations require urban-style site design, with buildings and entrances close to the street, while not mandating any particular style (may be traditional or modern) or any particular materials.

Central Corridors

The Central Corridors or those corridors near the city's core that feature a large percentage of structures built before WWII, or continue to feature of people-oriented design to a relative degree. The intent of the Central Corridors is to preserve and enhance the character of these semi-urban corridors.

College Park

College Park is a student-oriented residential neighborhood adjacent and north of the main University of Florida campus. In 1992, in order to revitalize and redevelop the neighborhood, the City adopted a College Park Special Area Plan prepared by Duany/Plater-Zyberk, Architects and Town Planners, which instituted the following design features:

- More modest off-street parking requirements, and additional on-street parking.
- Mixed residential and non-residential zoning.
- Increased residential density.
- More modest building setbacks, including build-to lines.
- Building height modifications.
- Optional pedestrian-scaled signage dimensions.
- Requirements for building walls and building materials.

In 1998, the City hired the Dover/Kohl Urban Design Team to prepare amendments to the College Park plan, primarily due to concerns about insufficient setbacks for trees and sidewalks, and the need for more clarity in the Plan. These changes include:

- Adding and revising standards for the "build-to line."
- Providing ample room for sidewalks and street trees.
- Adding new standards for building additions, trash dumpsters, façade requirements, and placement of structured parking.
- Revising standards for the location of off-street surface parking.
- Revising "urban regulations" for various building types to correct and clarify standards such as garden walls, fences, building height.

University Heights

In 1998, the City hired the Dover/Kohl Urban Design Team to prepare a Special Area Plan for the University Heights neighborhood, which is adjacent to the east of the main University of Florida campus. This Plan includes:

- Requirements for buildings relatively close to the street, and allowing room for sidewalks and street trees.
- A set of new definitions describing traditional urban development features.
- Façade requirements for building details facing the street.
- Allowing outbuildings (accessory dwelling units).
- Requiring retention of existing alleys and encouraging new alleys.
- Making the turning radii, clear zone, and visibility triangle requirements more modest.
- Keeping surface parking lots away from streets, and specifying the location and nature of structured parking so that a "liner" building -- of a height at least as high as the parking -- be used.
- Encouragement of the joint use of master stormwater basins to serve multiple developments.
- Requirements for "large footprint" buildings that require design retaining pedestrian scale and interest.
- Compatibility rules for building additions.
- Regulating the location of buildings based on building type rather than building use.
- Design specifications for Main Street Shopfront Buildings, Office Buildings, Rowhouses, Garden Apartment Buildings, Large Houses and Apartment Buildings, Houses, Outbuildings, and Civic Buildings.
- Public spaces with strong design features, such as water, benches and sculptures.

It should be noted that these two special area plans require a level of design detail going beyond the simpler, basic Traditional City site design standards applied to the larger central core area.

NW 39th Avenue

In 1988, the City adopted a Special Area Plan for NW 39th Avenue. The purpose of the Plan was to accommodate redevelopment and encourage special restrictions and incentives that would ensure that redevelopment does not cause traffic hazards for cars and pedestrians along 39th Avenue. The widening of 39th to 4 lanes reduced the viability of residences along the street, and the City was concerned that the widening would therefore incrementally cause a conversion of residences to offices, which might have undesirable traffic impacts for cars and pedestrians along the street. As a result, the following requirements were adopted:

- Minimizing the number of curb cuts along 39th Avenue by encouraging joint access between new developments, and closing curb cuts when feasible.
- Encouraging the reassembly of parcels by removing the restrictions on floor areas.
- Encouraging the more generous use of buffering for residences along 39th Avenue.

Triangle

In 1989, the City adopted a Special Area Plan for the "Triangle" area located between NW 43rd Street and NW 53rd Street between Newberry Road and NW 8th Avenue. The purpose of the Plan was to create an office park as a major employment center and to restrict non-residential car traffic from the Triangle to 8th and Newberry by prohibiting the creation of new curb cuts and guiding the form of development occurring on the Triangle. As a result, the following requirements were adopted:

- Requiring existing curb cuts to be combined into joint driveways, eliminated, or both when there is redevelopment.
- Encouraging the development of large-scale office-oriented mixed use development in the Triangle.
- Encouraging the integrated development of the Triangle for auto parking, traffic circulation for cars, stormwater management, utilities, and landscaping.
- Standards that strive to protect the natural wooded appearance of an area that serves as an important "gateway" to the city.

Proposed Future Urban Design Focus Areas

Town Centers

Downtown

The downtown—generally defined by the "Central City Zoning District"—is the heart and soul of Gainesville and the location of the first developments within the city. It is therefore the signature town center for the city, and is the focal point for many community-serving functions such as government buildings, and civic activities such as festivals and markets and celebrations and music. The health of the surrounding residential, educational and commercial development is intimately tied to the health of the downtown.

Because of its many traditional development features such as gridded and connected streets, higher densities, buildings up close to the sidewalk, short blocks, vibrant first-floor uses along the sidewalk, brick streets, a mix of residential and non-residential uses, and many restaurants and entertainment activities, the downtown is an exciting, interesting, and pleasant destination throughout the day and into the night, and boasts a pleasant "park once" environment. Several years ago, the City sought to protect these desirable design features by adopting advisory design guidelines which encouraged new construction to achieve:

- Compatibility with nearby buildings.
- Building front facades that created human scale and pedestrian interest.
- Substantial detailing of building facades.
- Modest signage.

- Screening of garbage cans.
- Proper vegetative plantings.
- Screened surface parking lots.

In 1998, these guidelines were substantially strengthened with the Traditional City overlay ordinance (see above), which encompasses a broader area, and established a small number of simple site design standards in order to achieve an urbane development pattern.

The downtown still needs a number of elements to be enhanced as Gainesville's heart and soul:

- Streetscapes need to be enhanced – pedestrian lighting, better quality sidewalks, etc.
- Sidewalk gaps need to be filled in.
- Vacant surface parking lots need to be reconstructed to contain multi-story buildings or retail-lined parking structures.
- Additional residential units need to be built.
- Several building facades need to be enhanced.
- Several street crosswalks need to be improved with more clearly demarcated and prominent sidewalks
- More on-street parking spaces need to be created.
- More meeting and entertainment spaces need to be constructed.
- Additional street and sidewalk vending and entertainment needs to be created.

Most importantly, University Avenue needs to be enhanced to look and function as a premier corridor, from Waldo Road to North-South Drive or beyond, attracting first-rate development and redevelopment on a significant scale. Between West 6th Street and West 13th Street, University Avenue fails to serve its potential as a downtown-university connector and economic development magnet. East of the downtown library, it lacks a graceful streetscape and lacks any marked crosswalks for a seven-block stretch.

Generally: Converting Conventional Centers into Town Centers

Prior to WWII, most or all retail and office establishments were accessible both internally and externally because they were integrated into the neighborhood with a finely-grained connected street pattern that kept vehicle traffic speeds slow and calm. The retail and office buildings were pulled up and aligned along tree-lined streets that featured on-street parking. Sidewalks were wide enough to allow carefree strolling. Because the buildings were pulled up to the sidewalk, people out for a walk could interact with what the building held inside. The trees and pulled up buildings helped define a pleasant, comfortable public realm that people going to for not only shopping or business but to socialize and relax. The shopping experience was vibrant, lively, and rewarding.

In recent decades, however, we have built a new model for retail -- the shopping center (or shopping mall). These centers are designed to draw a large number of car trips from throughout the region. The result is that our trips to retail areas -- and the public realm surrounding those areas -- is frequently so standardized that many centers seem to be "anyplace" America. The vibrancy that comes from a pleasant, unique character – and bustling retail area – is diminished.

Today, in many communities, plans are underway to retrofit these conventional, car-oriented centers to be more like walkable villages or traditional downtowns.[ix] Typically, this involves allowing additional developments in these shopping areas – of a particular nature. It involves infilling buildings on the surface parking lots so that the buildings form more defined spaces, installing shade trees, retrofitting a connected grid of streets and sidewalks, and installing benches and pedestrian-oriented lighting fixtures. Some of the plans include construction of residences within this new village. The effort often includes surrounding these new village-type retail areas with higher density housing, which helps to enhance the vibrancy of the "village."

Robert Gibbs reports that many developers of conventional "power centers" are now creating places to mimic urban main streets due to the impressive retail sales being found in such retrofits. And when there is not a place nearby that features such urban, people-friendly amenities, a retrofitted center can outcompete other retail centers.

The City can encourage the retrofitting of conventional shopping centers to function as walkable town centers. There are a number of features of a quality town center, as shown in Figure ____.

Urban design tools for centers include:

- Commercial build-to lines close to the right-of-way line.
- More modest off-street parking, located at the rear or side of buildings.
- Rules that restrict establishment of auto-oriented uses, or uses that generate significant noise, odor, visual blight or dust.
- A sense of arrival and departure.
- A connected sidewalk and path system promoting safety, comfort and convenience by linking buildings within the Center and to adjacent properties.
- Building facades facing the street and aligned to form squares, streets, plazas or other forms of a pleasant public realm.
- A vertical mix of higher density residences above non-residential uses within the center, and a required percentage of floor area that is residential and retail.
- Limitations on the size of free-standing retail first floor area (a standard that varies from place to place).
- First floor uses promoting entertainment and retail uses, and articulation and glazing for pedestrian interest.
- Considerable landscaping, especially in "bulb-outs," on balconies, and on rooftops.
- Extensive provision for children, such as play areas.
- Community-serving public gathering facilities such as schools, libraries, recreation centers and child care.
- Public spaces with strong design features, such as water, benches, and public art.
- Design for ease of transit use.

Westgate Shopping Center/Hogtown Creek

In 1998, the Florida Department of Transportation allocated several hundred thousand dollars to the Westgate Shopping Center portion of the Hogtown Creek. The intent of the allocation is to

correct a long-standing and worsening sedimentation and flooding problem in this portion of
Hogtown Creek. The City has expressed an interest in making the sedimentation project more
multi-objective, instead of just narrowly focused on sediment control. The following are the City
objectives for incrementally transforming the Westgate Shopping Area into more of an attractive,
walkable Town Center that takes advantage of the inherent attractiveness of the Creek:

- Restoring the creek channel into more of a naturalized area that promotes aesthetics in this high-visibility location.
- Creating more visual or physical public access to the creek with such features as overlooks, walkways, seating areas, and weed control.
- Incrementally orienting retail and service shops in the shopping center so that at least one entrance faces (and interacts with) the creek. In part, this can be accomplished with creek seating areas or overlooks associated with the businesses.

NW 13th Street Activity Center

Over time, the intent of the City is to modify the old Gainesville Mall area so that it is more
inviting, appealing, and walkable – more of a traditional town center in atmosphere, instead of vast
parking fronting the retail shops. This can, in part, be achieved as follows:

- Infill retail, office and residential buildings could be constructed on certain parking lot sites. In general, the overall location of new buildings could be designed to eventually form a grid of streets with on-street parking and a modest width between facing buildings. New buildings and uses could be scaled and designed so that the intensity is compatible with nearby, mixed use residences. This redevelopment may be incremental.
- New buildings need to be set close to new and existing sidewalks along new or existing streets.
- Surface parking could shift toward multi-story structured parking with a liner building at least as high as the parking, and containing offices and retail.
- Overall, it should be pleasant, safe and interesting to walk to any shop or office or residence in the newly forming town center.
- New buildings should be encouraged to be at least 2 stories in height.
- The town center should be designed to serve as a transit hub.
- New sidewalks should be wide enough to comfortably carry large volumes of pedestrians and trees.

University of Florida

Over time, as the University of Florida campus constructs new infill buildings, the City should
work with the University to provide support in every manner feasible for:

- New buildings to be at least 3-5 stories high along University Avenue and adjacent to the Avenue sidewalk. Existing surface parking in this location to be removed.
- A substantial increase in on-campus residential housing.

- The University to slow the growth and eventually establish a cap on the number of on-campus auto parking spaces. And if new spaces must be built, to encourage multi-story structures.
- The University to expand its efforts to encourage bicycling, walking, transit, and carpooling to campus, and encourage more campus-related residential construction in the areas surrounding the campus.

Santa Fe Community College Downtown

In 1998, the City hired the Dover/Kohl Urban Design Team to prepare a Special Area Plan for the University Heights neighborhood. The Team prepared an idealized build-out map showing building footprints. The map included the Santa Fe Community College Downtown. The City should make every effort to support Santa Fe in achieving:

- New buildings at least two stories high.
- New buildings set close to streetside sidewalks.
- New buildings forming (and facing) a public square encompassing the NW 6th Street rail corridor between University Avenue and NW 3rd Avenue.
- Street trees should be formally aligned in rows within the square.

Corridors

Gateway Corridors

Gateway streets (corridors) are those streets which are the major visual entryways to the City, and are therefore critical in conveying a message to newcomers and existing residents as to the image of the City. The image for Gainesville is a "city in a forest," and a city with a healthy environment, solid economy and a high quality of life.

The view of Gainesville from these important streets conveys a visual image and overall impression of the City for residents and visitors. It is therefore important that such roadway sections be enhanced so that the City conveys a positive impression of itself.

In the 1991 Gainesville Comprehensive Plan, 13 major corridors were designated as Gateway Streets. In 1998, the City hired Buford Davis and Associates to prepare a Gateway Corridor Design Plan. The Comprehensive Plan and Design Plan called for the following:

- Gateways should convey a sense of arrival and departure.
- Gateways should be lined with majestic trees, homes, cultural and commercial buildings, and vertical objects at the point of entry that inspire dignity and pride in Gainesville.
- Gateways should be free of visually obtrusive, human-built structures.
- Gateway tree plantings should provide a tree canopy over the street.
- Gateway plantings should create a sense of order, continuity, and be aesthetically pleasing.
- Gateways should feature maintenance that is minimized, through design, plant selection, and water conservation.

- Gateways should contain landscaped medians.
- Gateways should emphasize sustainable, "smart" forms of transportation (transportation choice).
- Gateway enhancements should be coordinated so that plantings work with Gateway utilities and plantings are used to screen utilities.

University Avenue Downtown – The Signature Street

The urban design goal for University Avenue Downtown – The Signature Street is to develop a vibrant, exciting, attractive, safe, economically healthy corridor. It should be the highest quality corridor of the city. While the corridor should be consistently attractive and livable, it should also show changes in character to achieve compatibility as it passes through the unique areas of the city.

Urban design tools for University Avenue include:

- Widened sidewalks.
- Mast arms for traffic signals, where not already installed.
- Street furniture creating an ensemble. Individual pieces should complement one another and avoiding having a dated look.
- Sheltered bus stops.
- Non-glaring street lights at a modest height and designed for full cut-off.
- On-street parking. Off-street parking at the rear or side of buildings.
- Textured, colored, prominent crosswalks.
- Oak street trees that are relatively large when planted, and limbed up. Opportunistic installation – that is, installed where room exists to do so, and a clear area of at least 5 feet is maintained. Trees not aligned to the front door of a shop, but instead are aligned between 2 buildings. Trees spaced at least 30 feet apart. For live oaks, spacing at least 40 or 50 feet.
- Minimum of 2 stories for new buildings. Retail and restaurants on the ground floor, preferably with awnings, and upper floors occupied by offices, residences, or shops.
- New buildings relatively close to the streetside sidewalk.
- Large streetfront building windows.
- Outdoor cafes and street vendors encouraged.

East University Avenue

The Urban Design Goal for the East University Avenue Focus Area is to develop an eastern gateway to the Traditional City, and promote the eastward spread of desirable downtown attributes that enhance the historic, unique character of eastern neighborhoods, as well as supplement high levels of transportation choice.

Urban design tools for the East University Avenue Focus Area include:

- Widened sidewalks.

- Landscaped medians as refuges for pedestrians.
- Mast Arms for traffic signals.
- Textured, colored crosswalks.
- New buildings relatively close to the streetside sidewalk.
- Improved streetscape and installation of attractive street furniture and lighting.

SW 13th Street

The Urban Design Goal for the SW 13th Street Focus Area is to develop a pleasing southern gateway to the Traditional City and the university, and a gateway to southern destinations such as The Town of Micanopy and Paynes Prairie State Preserve.

Urban design tools for the SW 13th Street Focus Area include:

- Additional sidewalks where none exist.
- Dramatic, low-maintenance landscaped medians.
- Mast Arms for traffic signals.
- Sheltered bus stops.
- Non-glaring street lights at a modest height, and designed for full cut-off.
- On-street parking. Off-street parking at the rear or side of buildings.
- Prominent crosswalks.
- Oak street trees that are relatively large when planted, and limbed up. For live oaks, spacing at least 40 or 50 feet.
- New buildings relatively close (less close than in our most urban settings) to the streetside sidewalk.
- Reduced sign clutter.

NW 6th Street (including proposed rail trail)

The urban design goal for the NW 6th Street Focus Area is to develop a northern gateway to the Traditional City, integrates the 5th Avenue and Pleasant Street neighborhoods, transforms the linear green space just north of University Avenue into an important town square, and forms a prominent intersection with University Avenue anchored by Santa Fe Community College Downtown and the 6th Street Rail-Trail.

Urban design tools for the NW 6th Street Focus Area include:

- Widened sidewalks.
- Mast Arms for traffic signals.
- Sheltered bus stops.
- Non-glaring street lights at a modest height, and designed for full cut-off.
- On-street parking. Off-street parking at the rear or side of buildings.
- Textured, colored, prominent crosswalks at 5th Avenue and 7th Avenue.

- Street trees spaced at least 30 feet apart. For live oaks, spacing at least 40 or 50 feet.
- Minimum of 2 stories for new buildings. Retail and restaurants on the ground floor, preferably with awnings, and upper floors occupied by offices, residences, or shops.
- New buildings relatively close to the streetside sidewalk.
- Outdoor cafes and street vendors encouraged.
- A pleasant rail-trail designed for bicyclists, pedestrians, and the disabled, and a prominent linear park at 6th Street and University Avenue.

Waldo Road

The urban design goal for the Waldo Road Focus Area is to develop an eastern gateway from the airport and I-95, and the potential for catalyzing new development in East Gainesville due to its close proximity to downtown and other employment centers.

Urban design tools for the Waldo Road Focus Area include:

- Dramatic, low-maintenance landscaped medians.
- Sheltered bus stops.
- Oak trees, palms and other significant street trees and understory, as planned by the City Beautification Board.
- A pleasant rail-trail designed for bicyclists, pedestrians, and the disabled.

Depot Area

Urban Design Priorities based on the Dover-Kohl 1999 design charrette for the Depot Avenue Focus Area include:

SE 4th Avenue, SE 3rd Street, Depot Avenue
- Maintain and enhance the Traditional City character.
- Install on-street parking.
- Widen sidewalks and fill gaps, where needed.
- Plant street trees.
- Completion of trail connections from Depot to downtown.

Kelly Power Plant
- Construct a secure and appealing perimeter.
- Enhance the public plaza at the front of the headquarters building on 4th Avenue.
- Possibly incrementally shrink in some locations any underused campus over time, possibly establish new residential, and establish new GRU operations/administration buildings (as needed) on blocks to the north and west.
- Establish cross-access from 4th Avenue to Depot Avenue to enhance mobility for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users.

- Evaluate the feasibility of relocating and restoring Sweetwater Branch to the east.
- Develop new parking for GRU in multi-story parking garages with liner buildings on interior portions of lots, instead of surface parking.

RTS Transportation Center

- Construct a multi-story building facing the Depot Building, and, over time, develop an additional building for the center to the north.
- Establish on-street bus loading and unloading bays along the western and eastern perimeters of the Center.
- Establish car parking for the Center in a mid-block alley.

Depot Building

- Rehabilitate the building due to its historical significance as a "destination" use.

Stormwater Park

- Develop an attractive wetlands park south of the Depot building, to serve as a master stormwater basin for downtown.

University Context Area

Stabilize residential neighborhoods to serve both owner-occupied and rental residents in charming residential neighborhoods with proximity to campus.

- The City needs to stabilize the physical appearance of this area by adding curb, gutter and sidewalks over time.
- The neighborhood planning program should work with this area, one neighborhood at a time.

Fifth Avenue and Pleasant Street

The Fifth Avenue and Pleasant Street neighborhoods provide close-in living options in neighborhoods rich in history, with historic housing types. However, this area suffers from the following problems:
- Multiple boarded and vacant buildings
- Antiquated stormwater drainage system
- Narrow ROW and overhead utilities limit streetscape opportunities
- Poorly maintained public spaces, sidewalks and buildings
- Rental market infringing on home ownership
Opportunities in the area:

- Strong gridded street network
- Walkable streets
- Human scale associated with streets and buildings

- Rich history
- High-quality, historic architecture

The City's redevelopment efforts in the Pleasant Street historic district, and the adjacent Fifth Avenue neighborhood, should incorporate design features that will help stabilize the neighborhood, such as high-quality sidewalks and street trees.

SW 34th Street at the UF Campus

The City should coordinate with the University of Florida to facilitate the creation of a walkable SW 34th Street as it abuts the university campus in such a way as to promote quality urbanism.

Trails

Our car-based transportation system has created a number of social, economic, and environmental problems. But solutions to a number of these problems has been emerging in hundreds of communities throughout the nation.

Trail Networks -- which are ribbons of natural areas embroidered into our urban fabric -- reconnect our neighborhoods and our ecosystems. Children, seniors, and the disabled find safe places to visit friends, go shopping, or get to school. Others are attracted by the opportunity to socialize, exercise, or travel to work in a pleasant setting away from the danger and unpleasantness of high-speed roads.

Volunteer groups typically are formed to remove years of litter build-up or to restore and maintain the trails. Residences benefiting from the recreation, crime reduction, and neighborliness provided by the trail network see their property values stabilized or improved. The cost of government services such as flood control, stormwater management, and parks go down due to the efficient way in which trail networks provide these functions.

Realtors and home builders take advantage of the ability of trail networks to boost the sale of houses and businesses near trail networks. The local economy benefits from the improved tourism and business climate. The environment benefits from the substantial public acquisition of natural areas, as well as the increased public awareness of such areas by trail users -- which ultimately leads to increased public concern and support for the restoration and protection of our natural areas.

Trail networks are a cost-effective way to provide a popular transportation system for pedestrians and bicyclists. (Note that most trail networks have higher levels of bicycle use than pedestrian use.)[x] Gainesville's Comprehensive Plan has designated 26 miles of trails running through each of the four quadrants of the urban area.

The three keys to making trails useful for transportation are accessibility to the trail (including convenience of the trail to major destinations and a large number of access points along the trail), an active maintenance program, and trail safety.[xi]

The importance of trail networks as a safe alternative for bicyclists and pedestrians is shown by studies indicating that the main disincentives to bicycling, besides weather, are traffic safety and lack of bicycle routes.[xii]   Also important are travel time and travel distance, secure parking, and destination facilities such as showers and lockers.[xiii]

Of the people who have bicycled at least once in the past year, 53 percent would travel to work by bicycle if safe, separate paths were available.[xiv]

Trails that are separated from streets (such as a trail network, and in contrast to on-street bike lanes or sidewalks) act to train and recruit new commuting bicyclists. The Burke-Gilman Trail in Seattle, for example, has had increasing recreational and commuter bicycle traffic (as has the city overall) over the past decade.[xv]

A recent survey along the urban-oriented Pinellas Rail Trail (Pinellas County, Florida) found that 30 percent of the trips were for utilitarian purposes such as shopping or commuting to work. Most or all of these trips would have been vehicle trips had it not been for the trail.[xvi]

In Gainesville, gaps in the citywide trail network should be filled. These important gaps include:

- The "Downtown Connector," which will link the Gainesville-Hawthorne State Rail-Trail to downtown, the Depot Trail, the Waldo Trail, and the proposed West 6th Street Trail.
- The West 6th Street Trail.
- The connection between the Matheson-Sweetwater Trail and the Duckpond Neighborhood.
- The connection between the Depot Trail and the Waldo Trail at University Avenue and Waldo Road.
- The connection between the Depot Trail and the University of Florida campus.
- Incorporating trails around new and existing stormwater basin features.
- Encouraging the establishment of trails from southwest Gainesville to Tower Road.

Existing trails in Gainesville have the following needs:

- Better lighting, signage and landscaping.
- Better design for street crossings.
- On-going maintenance to minimize problems with sand, glass, debris, beer cans, and garbage, and vegetation needs such as tree trimming, mowing and edging.
- On-going trail surveillance with police and citizen bicycle patrols.

Parks (active and passive)

Like trail networks, conventional parks must play a key role in restoring opportunities for the face-to-face community gathering places that we have largely lost due to our car-based culture. Due to both the social isolation we have created with suburbs and roads, and the growing need for new family support systems, parks are more necessary than ever as a place for people to meet and interact.

A well-designed park is centrally located in a neighborhood or commercial area so that it is easy to walk to or bicycle to. The central location also enables people to cross paths, thereby promoting a sense of neighborliness. Ideally, these walk-to parks have good visibility from the street, and are adjacent to a library, higher density housing, retail area, civic building, or a bus.

Parks should not be "leftover" spaces, but instead should be strategically placed in central locations, and well-defined with streets, trees and buildings. They must also be highly accessible by foot, bicycle and transit, which generally entails connections by connector paths or non-major streets to surrounding residential areas. They should also be interconnected, to the extent possible, by the city trail network.

Public Art

Public art can help to establish a sense of neighborhood, a sense of place, and contribute to people-oriented outdoor spaces. Public art can also create markers that define gateways, landmarks or corridors.

The City's "one percent for art" ordinance calls for supporting the inclusion of public art along important thoroughfares and public spaces, and ensuring input from the public into the process. The ordinance dedicates at least one percent of the cost of new and renovated buildings for art. The current ordinance is scheduled for revision to better define eligible projects and costs.

Definitions

Accessible. A location which is safe and convenient to travel to by walking, bicycling, or transit. The location can be accessible by car as long as such accessibility does not degrade access by other forms of travel.

Destination. A building, use or activity that draws a relatively large number of people due to its appealing, attractive features.

High quality (or quality). Materials and designs used are commonly recognized as being the "best available" by professionals in the field.

Housing choice (or options). A range of types of housing style and price is available. Large-lot single-family homes, as well as more affordable and compact homes such as townhouses, rowhouses, or duplexes.

Interconnected. A street network in which most or all streets terminate at other streets. Cul-de-sacs and dead ends are not used.

Inviting. Features that seem safe, entertaining, and attractive.

Land use linkage. Accessible connections, not on major streets, such as sidewalks or paths, are made between neighboring uses of land, such as between shopping or schools, and residences.

Mixed use. Different land uses, such as residences and retail, placed in close, walking-distance proximity. Mixed use can occur vertically (within the same building) or horizontally (in separate buildings that are close together).

Pedestrian-oriented. Design is scaled for humans, and promotes the safety, comfort and convenience of the pedestrian.

Prominent. Features that are high-visibility due to coloring, location, elevation, or a combination of such attributes.

Quality of life (or livability). Characterized by low crime rates, an ambiance that invokes civic pride, a sustainable and healthy local economy featuring plentiful and well-paid jobs, a sustainable and healthy natural environment, abundant and quality education, safety (especially for children), a stable taxation rate and cost of living, numerous and well-maintained parks, transportation choice, cultural diversity, and freedom to enjoy clean air and water.

Sense of arrival and departure. When entering or leaving a place, there are obvious visual cues that you have entered a place or have left it. Usually, this is done with buildings forming a "street wall" or edge, landscaping, or obvious shifts in community character.

Stabilize. The neighborhood housing retains its ownership – be it owner-occupied or rental – aesthetic, noise and pricing characteristics, and is well-maintained. Usually refers to residential neighborhoods.

Street furniture (or streetscape). Features usually included on public sidewalks such as benches, trash receptacles, bicycle parking, lighting, planters, and similar elements.

Vibrant (or vital). A festive, entertaining, sociable, economically healthy environment, usually characterized by a relatively large number of pedestrians on sidewalks.

Terminated vista. The lot at the end of a street which contains a structure – usually an important civic building – which is visually prominent.

Transportation choice. Most or all trips can be made by means other than by car. It is safe, pleasant, and convenient to travel by walking, bicycling or transit. Travel by car is optional and not required.

Walkable. Design that permits safe, pleasant, and convenient walking trips.

Corporate Architecture

"Corporate" architecture (also known as "cookie cutter" architecture, "superstore" architecture, "Big Box" architecture, "franchise" architecture, or "icon" architecture) is a form of building architecture that immediately conveys to the passerby the corporate image of the business. Gas stations use a tall canopy with bright lights beneath it over the gas pumps. In all of the cases of icon architecture -- especially at night with bright building lights -- the building becomes a de facto sign because the passerby simply needs to glance at the building from a large distance in order to know what the building contains.

One of the most detrimental aspects of icon architecture is that it detracts from the unique character and community identity of the city. The city becomes "anywhere USA" when a proliferation of homogenized, banal icon architecture occurs. The streetscapes of the city look indistinguishable from the streetscapes of any other city. This can lead to an important decline in community character and civic pride. Often, corporate chain marketing strategy dictates design that is indifferent to local identity and interests.

There are a number of design standards that are used by other communities around the country to discourage the use of corporate architecture:

- **Building wall articulation.** The existing Gainesville Traditional City ordinance prohibits blank walls that extend more than 20 feet, and requires at least 30 percent of the first floor façade to consist of windows. Some ordinances require a degree of wall modulation as a way to avoid blank walls. Another variation is to require roof lines that have at least 3 vertical changes.

- **Building orientation.** The existing Gainesville Traditional City ordinance requires at least one of the building entrances to face the more primary street. This has the effect of discouraging buildings that turn their back or side to the street, and allows the building to provide some of its energy and vibrancy to the public sidewalk. When a building abuts more than one street, this requirement is sometimes applied to all building facades that face a street.

- **Stormwater Basins**. Stormwater basins are often unattractive and poorly designed for wildlife. A way to discourage such basins is to require curvilinear, instead of square, basins. A related issue is to discourage the use of chain link fencing around a basin.

- **Subdued Colors**. Icon architecture often uses bright, distracting building colors to draw attention to the building. A common approach is for the corporation to use a brightly-colored roof, which becomes the corporate trademark, thereby allowing the business to evade the sign ordinance restrictions while still allowing motorists to recognize the business from a long way away. Some communities address this by requiring colors to be consistent with the colors of the nearby area, to use subdued or earthtone or pastel colors, or both.

- **Proximity to downtown**. An important problem associated with "Big Box" retailers is that they often drain the economic energy away from town centers by locating in remote, outlying areas, which usually makes them poorly accessible except by car, and which can harm the viability of the existing town center. One approach is to require retailers above a certain size to be located in or near downtown or other activity centers/town centers.

- **Restriction or prohibition on drive-throughs**. Drive-throughs are commonly used by contemporary retailers and can drain a large number of people from public sidewalks, and from park-once errands combining car travel with pedestrian travel. As AASHTO points out, "pedestrians are the lifeblood of downtowns." Many communities either prohibit or restrict drive-throughs – especially in pedestrian-oriented areas.

- **Modest building setback**. The existing Gainesville Traditional City ordinance requires that front building facades be a modest distance from the streetside sidewalk. Modest setbacks create walkable distances, help to form pleasant spaces in the public realm, and provide interest and security for pedestrians. Large setbacks tend to create a "corporate, anywhere USA" atmosphere – an atmosphere that is car-oriented and unattractive for pedestrian or transit circulation.

- **Rear and side facades**. Icon architecture is often solely focused on drawing attention to itself from the street. Frequently, the sides and rears of such buildings are large, blank walls. Articulation standards can be applied to all sides of a building.

- **Amount and location of parking**. The existing Gainesville Traditional City ordinance requires surface parking to be at the side or rear of buildings, and that a maximum number of spaces are allowed, instead of a minimum required. This standard addresses the common problem created by larger buildings of the provision of an enormous amount of surface parking, which makes walking unsafe, uninteresting, and inconvenient; creates heat island and stormwater problems; attracts more cars than would have be generated had there been less parking provided; creates "gaptooths" in the urban fabric, and inherently creates a "corporate" atmosphere that decreases local character and identity.

- **Minimum of two stories**. Sprawling one-story buildings are inherently unwalkable and consume large amounts of land. Buildings that are 2 or more stories are better able to form pleasant public space, and provide opportunities for mixed use and healthier transit service. A related regulation used by some communities is to require mixed-use buildings.

- **Restrictions on outdoor lighting**. Many retail establishments will use excessive, glaring, tall lighting to draw attention to the building. Essentially, the building becomes the sign with such lighting. Restrictions can be placed on the height of lighting, and how much spillover lighting off the site it creates.

- **Maximum building footprint**. The existing Gainesville Traditional City ordinance sets an upper limit of 30,000 square feet for freestanding first floor retail, since large-footprint buildings are inherently disruptive of a walking environment. Larger corporate retailers tend to compete with or eliminate smaller, locally-owned businesses – particularly in town centers. In addition, a large percentage of local dollars that are used to purchase goods from larger retailers leaves the community, instead of being recycled within the community for beneficial purposes.

- **Context compatibility**. Frequently, corporations use "formula" architecture that creates the same design in all locations throughout the country. Such an approach often ruins civic pride in unique community character, and creates an icon architecture that establishes a visually obtrusive building as sign. One way to avoid this is regulations that require the architecture to be compatible with the architectural style of the area in which it is built. Often, this is achieved by requiring or encouraging adaptive reuse of existing buildings on the site.

- **Quality materials**. Buildings using poor-quality exterior materials can have a profoundly negative impact on the visual quality of the area. Some communities prohibit the use of smooth-faced concrete, tilt-up concrete panels, and pre-fabricated steel panels as exterior building materials. Instead, brick, wood, or stone materials are required.

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