



HARLEM COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Community Assessment (DRAFT)

Prepared by the CSRA Regional Development Center

For the City of Harlem, Georgia

August, 2006

RECOMMENDED CHARACTER AREAS

Knowledge gained from data and information displayed throughout all sections of the *Community Assessment* document can be translated into a preliminary future development scenario for Harlem. This preliminary scenario is presented in the form of “character areas” as recommended by the “Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning.” Character areas not only identify existing and future land uses that may be appropriate for a particular area, they can highlight a variety of other factors such as: the form, function and style of new development; existing features that should be incorporated into future development scenarios; and, relationships to adjacent development. In short, a character area addresses not only *WHAT* a piece of land should be used for; but, also *HOW* that land should be used.

Preliminary character areas that are referenced in this section can be found on **Map 9.2**. The recommended preliminary character areas in the *Community Assessment* will not necessarily retain their current composition following the completion of the *Community Agenda* document. By incorporating additional public input, character area boundaries and descriptive elements may be revised. In addition, other character areas may be identified or, some areas contained in this chapter may be eliminated.

CHARACTER AREA INTERPRETATION

While the preliminary character area recommendations in this chapter are subject to change, please make note of the following character area features:

Boundaries

General Characteristics

Unlike a parcel-specific future land use map, boundaries on a character area map are conceptual and may cross parcel lines. The character area boundaries in this document are intended to represent an approximation of character area location. This flexibility allows the governing body charged with implementing the plan to make decisions based on changing conditions while reducing the need to continually update the future development map. As a result, it is possible to assume that small parcels located directly adjacent to 1 or more character areas may be permitted by the local government to develop according to the parameters of the adjacent area rather than the area in which it is located. Such an action should be taken sparingly and the decision should only be made if the local government can show that it is consistent with the recommendations provided in all other sections of the *Harlem Comprehensive Plan*. For the most part however, tracts should develop according to the parameters established in the specific character area in which it is located. Harlem is strongly encouraged to initiate amendments to their future development map whenever they intend to promote a development pattern in an area that is contrary to the adopted map.

Annexations

In recognition of Harlem’s recent annexation activities, one should assume that in most instances character areas represented on **Map 9.2** would merely be extended to adjacent

parcels as they are annexed. Harlem may also opt to create new character areas that are more appropriate for annexed land. Regardless, Harlem should amend their future development map as they annex adjacent parcels.

Boundary Revisions

The character area boundaries illustrated in **Map 9.2** are preliminary and will be adjusted as a result of public input during the preparation of the *Community Agenda* document.

Industrial Land

Of all of the preliminary character areas recommended in this chapter, industrial land uses should be limited to small areas in the “Downtown Center” and “Milledgeville Road Business District” character areas. Within the “Downtown Center” character area, industrial uses should be limited to only those existing historic structures that were originally constructed and used for industrial purposes, and have not already been converted to retail, office or residential uses. New industrial structures should not be constructed in the “Downtown Center” character area – nor should significant expansion to existing industrial uses take place. Such industrial activities should be limited to only include “light industrial” uses as defined by the *Harlem Zoning Ordinance*.

In the “Milledgeville Road Business District,” industrial land uses should be limited to areas in close proximity to where U.S. 278 intersects city boundary lines. Such industrial activities should be limited to only include “light industrial” uses as defined by the *Harlem Zoning Ordinance*. Should Harlem choose to annex land on the eastern or western edges of town for targeted industrial development (such as an industrial park) in the future, additional industrial uses in the Milledgeville Road Business District should then be limited to that section of the corridor that is in close proximity to the targeted industrial development.

With a lack of significant industrial land within the current city limits, it is reasonable to anticipate that potential future annexations on the edge of Harlem to the east and/or west could result in new targeted industrial development. Should this scenario occur, Harlem should amend their comprehensive plan document in order to develop a character area that is suited specifically for this distinct land use. In contemplating potential future industrial growth, Harlem should focus on a planned approach through the development of an industrial park. If the city chooses to promote industrial park development, it should focus on areas that have direct access to more than 1 arterial street, have direct access to rail lines, are not in close proximity to perennial streams or other environmentally sensitive areas, and will not result in a development pattern that increases truck traffic through the central business district. In this scenario, the city should also amend land development regulations in order to develop industrial street standards that can accommodate large vehicles.

Relation to Columbia County

A review of the *Columbia County Growth Management Plan* reveals that the preliminary recommended character areas in this *Community Assessment* document are consistent with the recommendations for adjacent areas of unincorporated Columbia

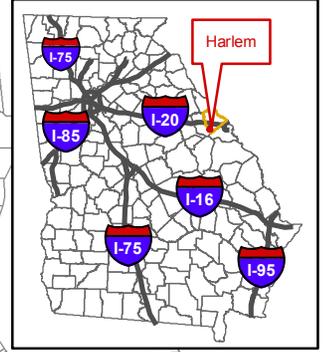
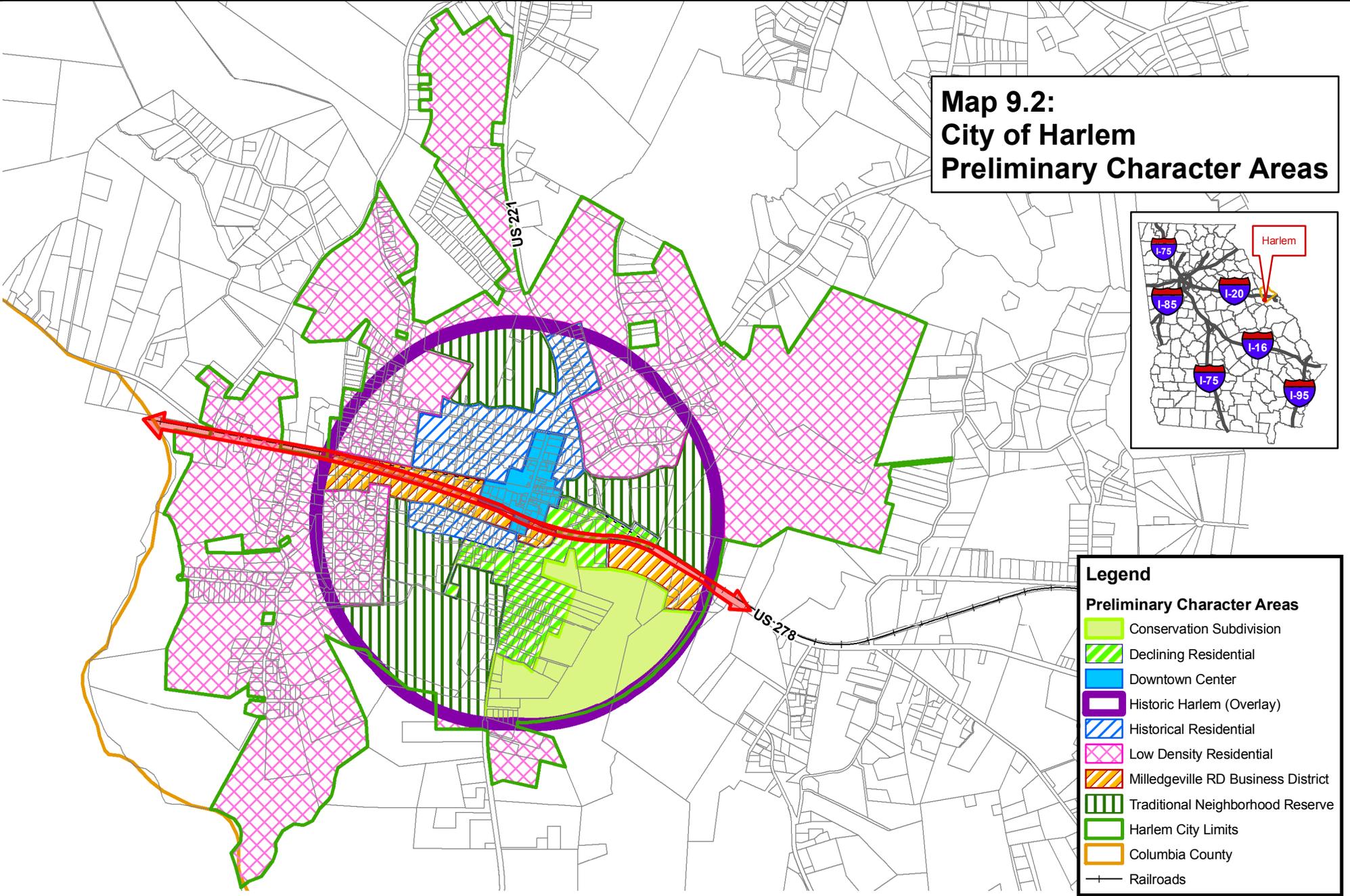
County. When proposing character areas for parcels subject to future annexations, Harlem should consider the recommendations of the *Columbia County Growth Management Plan* regarding the “Harlem Area” character area.

Implementation

Recommended techniques for the implementation of character areas will be formulated during preparation of the *Community Agenda*.

Working Draft

Map 9.2: City of Harlem Preliminary Character Areas

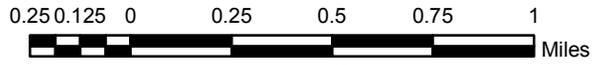


Legend

Preliminary Character Areas

- Conservation Subdivision
- Declining Residential
- Downtown Center
- Historic Harlem (Overlay)
- Historical Residential
- Low Density Residential
- Milledgeville RD Business District
- Traditional Neighborhood Reserve
- Harlem City Limits
- Columbia County
- Railroads

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(Preliminary) Character Area: Historic Harlem (Overlay Area)

General Description:

Circular area comprising the original Harlem city limits and containing a wide variety of land uses and development patterns that span the all periods of the city’s history. Intended to promote development of private parcels and public spaces in a manner that is largely complementary to the city’s New South development period between 1880 and 1919; but to also allow private properties in other sub-areas to develop according other historic patterns where applicable.

Existing Character:

- Comprised of the entire original city limits.
- Multiple land uses present.
- Multiple neighborhood, street, block, lot and building types present.
- Wide range of property conditions.

Development Pattern Recommendations (Preliminary):

- Incorporate all applicable components of the *Downtown Harlem Historic Design Guidelines* and *Historic District Residential Design Guidelines* to existing and new structures in the Downtown Center, Historic Residential, Milledgeville Road Business District character areas, and any area of a local historic district as adopted by the city of Harlem.
- Incorporate all applicable components of the *Downtown Harlem Historic Design Guidelines* and *Historic District Residential Design Guidelines* - except sections on materials and details - to new structures in portions of the Declining Residential, Low-Density Residential and Traditional Neighborhood reserve character areas that are not located in a local historic district as adopted by the city of Harlem.
- Adopt traditional neighborhood site design features, dimensions and layouts for new lots, blocks and streets.



Harlem’s existing historic character...



...compared to Harlem’s preferred future development pattern.

(Preliminary) Character Area: Downtown Center

General Description:

Mixed-use activity center promoting building and site design features complimentary to the historic development patterns found in the city's central business district.

Existing Character:

- Historic commercial and industrial buildings close to the street.
- Occupancy of the district is fair – upper floors have a very high vacancy rate.
- Concentration of government uses.
- Some residential on periphery.
- Narrow pedestrian friendly streets.
- High volume of large vehicle traffic through district.
- Neighborhood commercial uses.

Development Pattern Recommendations (Preliminary):

- Promote pedestrian activity and accessibility.
- Incorporate *Downtown Harlem Design Guidelines*.
- Create community focus as an “event” district.
- Multiple uses on sites and within structures including: office, neighborhood retail, restaurants.
- Create cluster of government buildings and services.
- Promote museums and other institutional uses.
- Complementary infill with traditional architectural style, and orienting buildings to the street (build-to lines versus setbacks) – particular focus on street-facing building facades.
- Parking to the sides and rear of structures.
- Façade design requirements.
- Develop town center features in business district.
- Tree preservation.
- Uniform sign standards (private & public).
- Uniform style for street lights, sidewalks, street signs, etc.).



Downtown Harlem promotes pedestrian amenities and traditional commercial construction.



Small downtowns can be extended along high volume highways to promote community-wide urban form.

(Preliminary) Character Area: Milledgeville Road Business District

General Description:

Principal east-west arterial corridor to develop with a mixture of retail and office uses while preserving historic residential structures and promoting site design features that are complimentary to adjacent historic districts.

Existing Character:

- Commercial uses are mainly vehicle oriented.
- Institutional uses along Milledgeville Road – mainly churches.
- Declining residential.
- Vacant/abandoned properties dot the district.
- High volume traffic.
- Sidewalks in fair condition.
- Above ground utilities.

Development Pattern Recommendations (Preliminary):

- Continuation of commercial development.
- Incorporate building and site design guidelines.
- Continuation of pedestrian features from “downtown center” character area.
- Location of large retail development.
- Location of businesses promoting motor vehicle use (i.e. drive-thrus).
- Limited light industrial uses at western and eastern edge of city limits.
- Preserve existing historic residential structures for office and neighborhood retail uses.
- Widen to a landscaped boulevard with landscaped median and street trees.
- Manage vehicular access via traffic control median, spacing of driveways and cross-access easements.
- On and off-street pedestrian and bicycle features.
- Pedestrian scale street lights and buried utilities.
- Uniform signage – no off-premise signs.
- Uniform street numbering system for easy recognition by emergency responders.
- Street trees and on-site tree planting requirements.



Existing commercial buildings on U.S. Highway 278 do not match the community’s design preferences. Commercial sites are dominated by paved space and lack



Design features and mixed materials can result in uniform commercial development

(Preliminary) Character Area: Traditional Neighborhood Reserve

General Description:

Large tracts located within the “Historic Harlem” overlay character area that have previously been left largely undeveloped and extend from both pre-existing contemporary and historic neighborhoods. Promotes traditional neighborhood site development geared toward pedestrian comfort and accessibility, and promotes building design that respects the scale, orientation and principal features of older housing stock.

Existing Character:

- Large number of vacant parcels available for development.
- Some low-density residential.
- Adjacent to other residential uses.
- Street connectivity opportunities to other districts.

Development Pattern Recommendations (Preliminary):

- Neighborhoods promoting primarily single-family detached and attached housing types.
- Limited townhouse or single-family attached development – clustered on specific blocks.
- Design guidelines promoting some components of traditional architecture (front porches, rear garages, front door orientation, etc.) but allowing variations in building materials.
- Site design guidelines promoting traditional lot, block and street layout (extension of street grid to property lines, interconnectivity, on-street parking, smaller lots, sidewalks, tree planting strips, alleys, pedestrian scale street lights, etc.)
- Additional neighborhood parks (small tot lots, playgrounds, community greens, etc.)
- Smaller building lots for higher single-family densities than Harlem’s historic neighborhoods.



Traditional neighborhood reserve areas are interspersed with a variety of housing stock and large undeveloped tracts.



Form-based design guidelines promote a preferred development pattern by focusing on basic building dimensions and site layout rather than decorative features and materials that can increase costs.

(Preliminary) Character Area: Low-Density Residential

General Description:

Developed and undeveloped areas of the city intended for low to moderate density residential land uses including single-family dwellings, duplexes and townhouses; and small-scale non-residential uses that are directly associated with and support residents. The area allows for flexibility in residential building design, but encourages street block and lot arrangements that promote interconnectivity between tracts.

Existing Character:

- Mix of low-density, contemporary residential and vacant parcels.
- Largely in good to fair condition.

Development Pattern Recommendations (Preliminary):

- Low to moderate density housing options (single-family, duplex, townhouses).
- Varying housing types contained within separate development tracts or streets.
- Promote variety of architectural styles.
- Street linkages between arterials and adjacent development tracts.
- Collector street standards for large developments and in targeted areas.
- Bicycle and pedestrian features with direct linkages to community facilities.
- Self-contained neighborhood parks or recreation space.
- Measures to promote upkeep of existing residences.
- Promote percentage of affordable housing as part of new development.
- Higher density development should have direct access to high volume thoroughfares and should not be accessed via local residential streets.



Many of the areas recommended for low-density residential development are located outside of the original city limits.



New low-density residential development can take many forms.

(Preliminary) Character Area: Declining Residential

General Description:

Low-density residential areas of the city that are interspersed with undeveloped tracts that show signs of significant building deterioration, deteriorating infrastructure and general lack of upkeep. Low-density infill residential opportunities are apparent as well as opportunities for multi-family development in close proximity to existing arterial streets.

Existing Character:

- Large number of residential structures in fair to poor condition.
- Overgrown vegetation
- Street system in poor repair – lack of paving in some cases.

Development Pattern Recommendations (Preliminary):

- Promote rehabilitation of sub-standard housing.
- Property owner education.
- Encourage homeownership.
- Design guidelines for infill structures promoting traditional building form and placement (front porches, rear garages, front door orientation, etc.)
- Site design guidelines promoting traditional lot, block and street layout (extension of street grid to property lines, interconnectivity, on-street parking, smaller lots, sidewalks, tree planting strips, alleys, pedestrian scale street lights, etc.)
- Mixture of housing types and densities permitted but contained within separate development tracts or sites.
- Higher density development should have direct access to high volume thoroughfares and should not be accessed via local residential streets.



The declining residential area includes a mix of housing types and conditions.



Areas within the center city transitional character area can be targeted for a variety of well-designed housing types.

(Preliminary) Character Area: Historic Residential

General Description:

Residential neighborhoods containing the largest concentration of National Register eligible properties within the city of Harlem and exhibiting the best examples of New South and/or post-WWII development patterns. Intended for infill development that incorporates the development features that result in seamless transitions between historic homes and contemporary construction.

Existing Character:

- Large grand homes on sizeable parcels.
- Most homes built before 1930.
- Streets laid out in grid pattern.
- Tree canopy.
- Well maintained pedestrian sidewalks.

Development Pattern Recommendations (Preliminary):

- Promote low-density infill – primarily single-family detached.
- Design guidelines promoting traditional architecture (front porches, rear garages, front door orientation, etc.)
- Promote housing maintenance – primarily of original exterior design features.
- Extension of sidewalk system.
- Tree preservation.
- Incorporate traffic calming features into residential streets.



Grand old homes from the era of the New South provide a tranquil presence to historic Harlem neighborhoods.



Infill development should incorporate elements of Harlem’s historic housing stock.

(Preliminary) Character Area: Conservation Subdivision

General Description:

Residential development with limited commercial supporting commercial or recreational uses that clusters small building lots on confined portions of the site in order to preserve larger amounts of open space.

Existing Character:

- Large number of vacant parcels available for development.
- Some low-density residential.
- Adjacent to other residential uses.
- Street connectivity opportunities to other districts.
- Wetlands and floodplains.

Development Pattern Recommendations (Preliminary):

- Small clustered building lots – allowing lots that are less than typical lot size in the zoning ordinance, but maintaining overall site density.
- Large percent of the site in common open space.
- Focus development on previously cleared portions of the site – leaving woodlands largely intact.
- Low-impact development techniques allowing natural drainage.
- Preserve wetlands, floodplains and other sensitive environmental areas.



Lacking drainage channels and ponds that incorporate native vegetation to assist in storm water filtration; many existing Harlem neighborhoods experience problems with flooding along flat sections of street during heavy rain.



Trails throughout common areas can be connected clustered lots in conservation subdivisions.