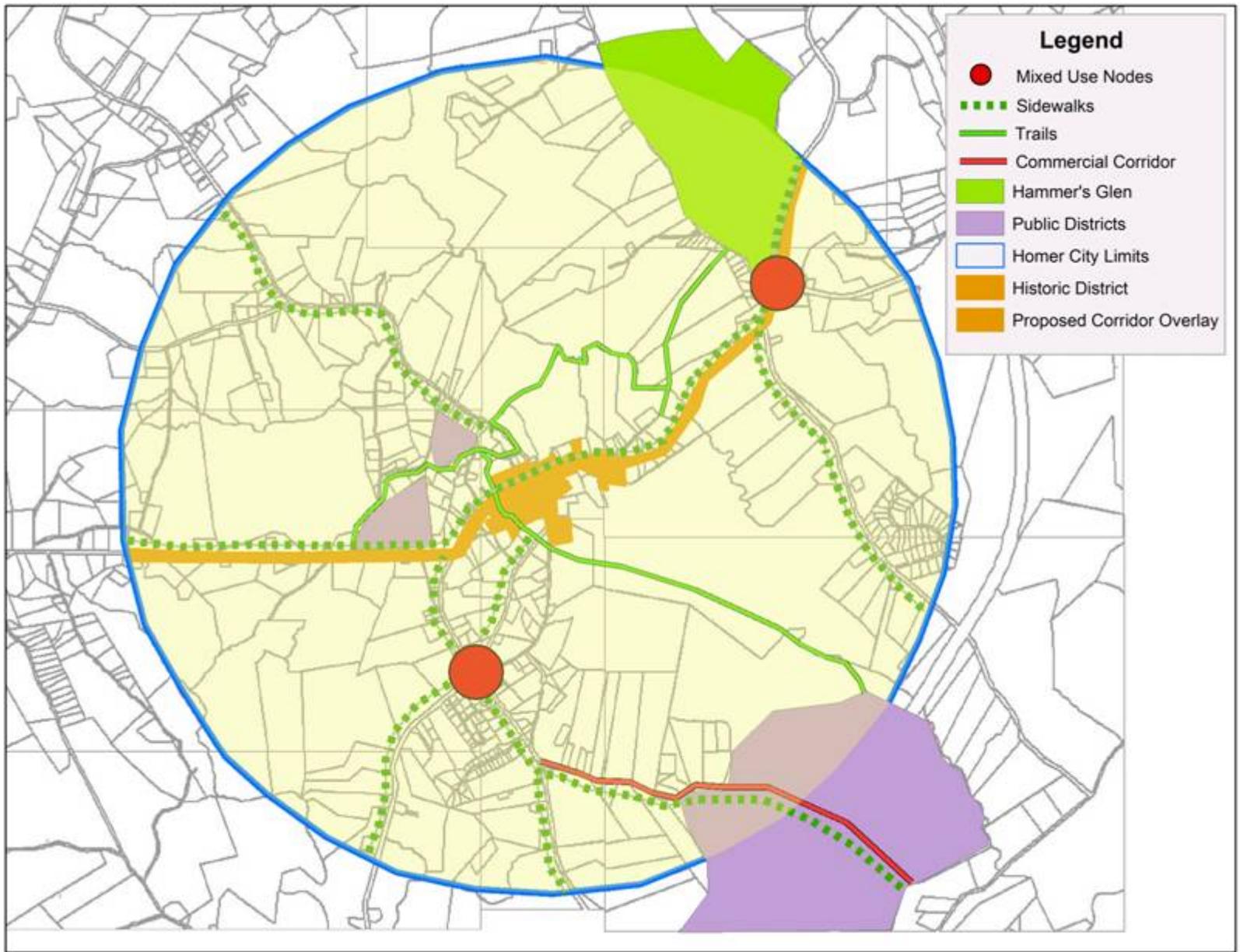


Town of Homer Hands-On Workshop

October 17 – 18, 2005





Overall Development Concept

Sense of Place



Sense of Place

- Homer has tremendous historic resources, including these and many others:
- Courthouse/chamber building
- Churches and cemeteries
- Residences
- Commercial buildings
- Jail
- Hotels
- Gas/service stations
- Planing Mill
- Historical Society and genealogy
- Cotton gin
- These assets should be protected and promoted as a way to create a strong sense of place and strengthen the local economy.

Sense of Place

- The **new county administration building** proposal maintains activity in downtown Homer. The team recommends follow through with the proposed plan of keeping the county administration building downtown. We applaud the decision by the city and county to enforce the history of Homer as the heart of Banks County.
- **Improve highway signage** directing travelers from new 441 to historic downtown Homer.
- Having properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places may qualify downtown Homer to get the **DOT's brown historic/cultural signs** placed on 441 to direct travelers into Homer. Contact the DOT district office in Gainesville:
<http://www.dot.state.ga.us/dot/fielddistricts/d1/index.shtml>
- We recommend that **design guidelines** for new construction complement the existing historic architecture but not completely duplicate it.
- **Relocate overhead utility lines** to help beautify downtown Homer.
 - We recommend working with Ga. Power, Jackson EMC, and telephone companies to bury overhead cables (could be coordinated with sewer line construction). Funding options could include SPLOST, TE grants, and negotiation of fees with the utility companies, possibly in exchange for adjustment in franchise fees paid to the city.
- **Develop a local heritage education program in cooperation with the Banks County Historical Society.**
 - Helps to encourage awareness and appreciation for local history and culture. Helps encourage protection of the local history and culture.
- **Continue to install Georgia Historical Markers** at significant historic sites in Homer. Provide available space next to marker so that visitors and residents can pull off of road and read the marker.
- **Incorporate awning design guidelines and consistent signage** in front of shops located on Homer main street.
 - Will achieve consistency in façade design and reinforce traditional appearance of storefronts on Historic Homer Highway

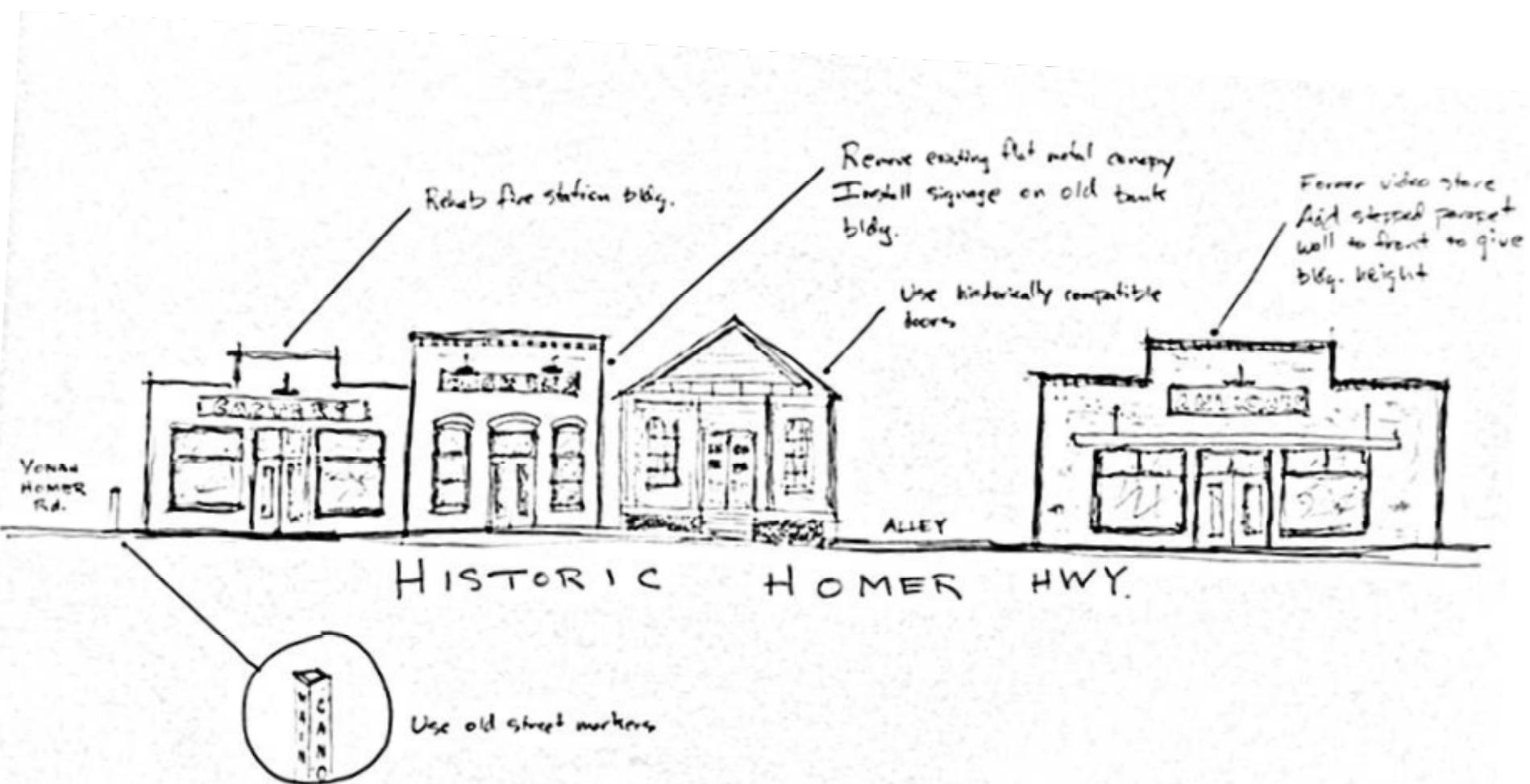
Sense of Place



Sense of Place



Sense of Place



Environmental Protection & Open Space

- **Environmental Protection:** Contact Georgia EPD for assistance with underground storage tanks, auto salvage businesses and other problems
- **Greenspace:** Set up land trust or budget for land acquisition or donations
- **Water Quality and Erosion Control:** Consider Tree Protection and Replanting Ordinance. The City and County have a wealth of mature trees that contribute significantly to the tranquil setting of Banks County, as well as providing natural erosion control and water protection. DCA's Model Code may provide assistance:
http://www.dca.state.ga.us/development/PlanningQualityGrowth/programs/modelcode_acrobat.asp
- **Water Quality and Septic Tanks:** Increase septic tank monitoring programs and enforcement
- **Water Quality and Drinking Water Protection:** Protect stream buffers by enforcing DNR's Part V criteria for stream protection
- **Mobility:** Expand Dial-a-Ride services for Seniors to get to Senior Center, doctor's appointments, shopping, etc. (Explore partnerships with businesses such as Wal-Mart)
- **Mobility:** Expand bike lanes and sidewalks along Highway 51 and Thompson Road to link recreation areas, schools and downtown
- **Mobility:** Require sidewalks with new construction especially on road frontages. Adopt sidewalks as part of street design standards.
- **Energy Efficiency:** Incorporate energy efficiency and green standards into new building construction for commercial, administrative and residential (Work with Southface Energy Institute, follow U.S. Green Building Council standards)
- **Funding:** Work with technical assistance agencies to identify sources of funding (e.g. EPA Environmental Finance Centers, USDA)

Housing Choices

Maintain scenic rural character by strictly limiting new development and protecting farmland and open space. These areas can be protected by maintaining large lot sizes (25 or more acres) in agricultural districts and promoting use of conservation easements by land owners. Residential subdivisions should be severely limited in agriculturally profitable areas, but if minor exceptions are made, residential development should be required to follow conservation subdivision design requirements. This does not mean that no development would occur in these areas – but any new development should be designed to blend with the rural landscape that makes the City of Homer and Banks County a desirable place to live.



Housing Choices

- Existing neighborhoods should **remain primarily single-family residential**
- The city should offer assistance where needed to ensure that the more economically distressed neighborhoods become more **stable, mixed-income communities with a larger percentage of owner-occupied housing**.
- Develop a **customized revitalization strategy** for each of the neighborhoods surrounding the city center.
 - Residents should participate in developing the strategy
- Vacant properties throughout the city in each neighborhood offer an opportunity for **infill development**.
 - These infill sites should be redeveloped for new, architecturally compatible, owner occupied housing.
- **Innovative subdivision regulations:**
 - Appropriate subdivision regulations will be needed to ensure that new developments follow the principles of conservation subdivisions and traditional neighborhood developments.
- **Architectural design standards** within the existing neighborhoods:
- **Standards should be based on analysis of historic structures** throughout the city to identify patterns that define the “vernacular” architecture.
 - Professional assistance from an architecture/planning firm will probably be necessary to develop a good set of standards.
 - Design codes for intown neighborhoods and historic districts to ensure that new development is compatible with traditional neighborhood character.



Housing Choices

- **Large land tracts of agricultural land should be protected.**
 - Development Regulations should protect the rural feel of the community
- **Large lot zoning:**
 - Protect farmland, undeveloped forested areas, and critical riparian areas from development pressures, provided the minimum lot size is set high enough.
- **Required site plan review:**
 - Require each new development or subdivision to undergo detailed site plan review to ensure that it meets all local regulations,
 - Is pedestrian friendly,
 - Protects environmentally sensitive area



Effective Development Process

- Develop **design guidelines for historic district** (see Alternatives to Conventional Zoning 5-3);
- Identify historic structures and group into **walking tour** (Sense of Place and Economic Development);
- Develop plan to **restore publicly owned buildings** (Sense of Place);
- Work towards **additional National Register designations** of historic properties not previously listed (Sense of Place and Economic Development);
- Encourage private rehab of structures in historic district using **tax incentives** and property tax abatement program (Sense of Place and Economic Development);
- **Expand the historic overlay district** down Historic Homer Highway to create a more inclusive corridor overlay rather than a new corridor overlay since your existing overlay district is working well for the community. (see Alternatives to Conventional Zoning 6-7);
- Use intersections and crossroads as **nodes for potential commercial development**, for example Scales Creek Rd. to golf course, and near schools;
- Development in city should follow **traditional community development** patterns;
- **Trails to connect** neighborhoods, public, commercial and educational facilities (Walkability and Mixed Uses);
- Need to have **development design standards** to preserve the unique qualities of the Homer you know and love;

Effective Development Process

- Need to have **design standards and more compact development in new subdivisions within the city** to put development where the services are and therefore protect the agricultural areas of the County;
- Once sewer is provided, **nodes for potential mixed use developments** can be established, then the rest of city can be opened for more residential development. This new development can be more compact in town than 1-acre or larger lots. This will require changing code to allow for small lot sizes. This is predicated on sanitary sewer and until you have that, you won't be able to support or encourage a high level of development. Provision of sanitary sewer is critical to creating desirable future development patterns. You won't be able to maintain your rural character with 1-acre or greater lots throughout the city.
- Establish **Downtown Council or other type organization** composed of property owners and business owners in downtown area;
- Create **downtown specific plan** to guide development (see Alternatives to Conventional Zoning 5-2);
- Identify **opportunities for infill commercial development** and encourage construction of compatible buildings for new commercial and retail development (see Alternatives to Conventional Zoning 5-3);
- **Adopt and enforce tree protection ordinance** (see Alternatives to Conventional Zoning 3-4);

Economic Development

- The fundamental issue for economic development in downtown Homer is the need for sewer service in that area.
- **Construction of a wastewater treatment facility to serve downtown economic development is a must.**
- **Consider adjusting zoning along the Historic Homer Highway** for compact residential (i.e. condominiums for active senior adults), or “gateway commercial” providing for landscaped setbacks, buffers, and site development that fits in with and complements the surrounding agricultural land.
- Sample of public-private sewer developments include:
 - Lumpkin County Development Authority, Bruce Abraham in cooperation with WRF Company,
 - Lumpkin County Development Auth. Dir. Bruce Abraham (706) 864-0423
development@lumpkincounty.gov
 - WRF Company John Kieffer 404-216-2124
 - Haralson County Development Authority, Director Joan Young 770-537-5594
 - Peachtree City
 - Senoia
- The city can compare the costs and benefits of partnering for sewer construction with the private developer at Hammers Glen against the costs financing and construction by the city alone.

Economic Development

RESOURCES FOR SEWER FUNDING

- Georgia Rural Community Assistance Program – Tim Grogg (contact him for technical assistance), cybergov@charter.net 770-587-0559
- Georgia Environmental Facilities Authority – Dan Clarke, dan@gefa.ga.gov 404-656-0940
- Community Development Block Grants, Ga. Dept. of Community Affairs – Brent Allen, ballen@dca.state.ga.us 404-679-4940
- USDA Rural Development – Doug Canup, Doug.canup@ga.usda.gov 706-546-2171
- Appalachian Regional Commission – James Thompson, jthomps@dca.state.ga.us 404-679-3165