

KASS CIRCLE REVITALIZATION PROJECT

A VISION FOR COMMUNITY GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT



PLANNING DEPARTMENT



FLORIDA CENTER
FOR COMMUNITY
DESIGN & RESEARCH

CONTENTS

1.	PROJECT OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES _____	4
2.	PROJECT AREAS _____	9
3.	INITIAL IMPRESSIONS AND NEIGHBORHOOD ANALYSIS _____	15
4.	COMMUNITY DESIGN PROCESS _____	24
5.	COMMUNITY DESIGN CONCEPT AND STRATEGIES _____	29
6.	MASTER PLAN AND VISIONS _____	32
7.	TOWN CENTER COMMERCIAL AREA _____	36
8.	SPRING HILL DRIVE _____	44
9.	RESIDENTIAL INFILL _____	48
10.	PUBLIC REALM CONDITIONS, INFRASTRUCTURE AND SPECIAL FEAT _____	53
11.	NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER _____	60
12.	PHASING _____	65

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

HERNANDO COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

WAYNE DUKES - CHAIRMAN
NICK NICHOLSON
DIANE ROWDEN
DAVE RUSSELL
JIM ADKINS

HERNANDO COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT

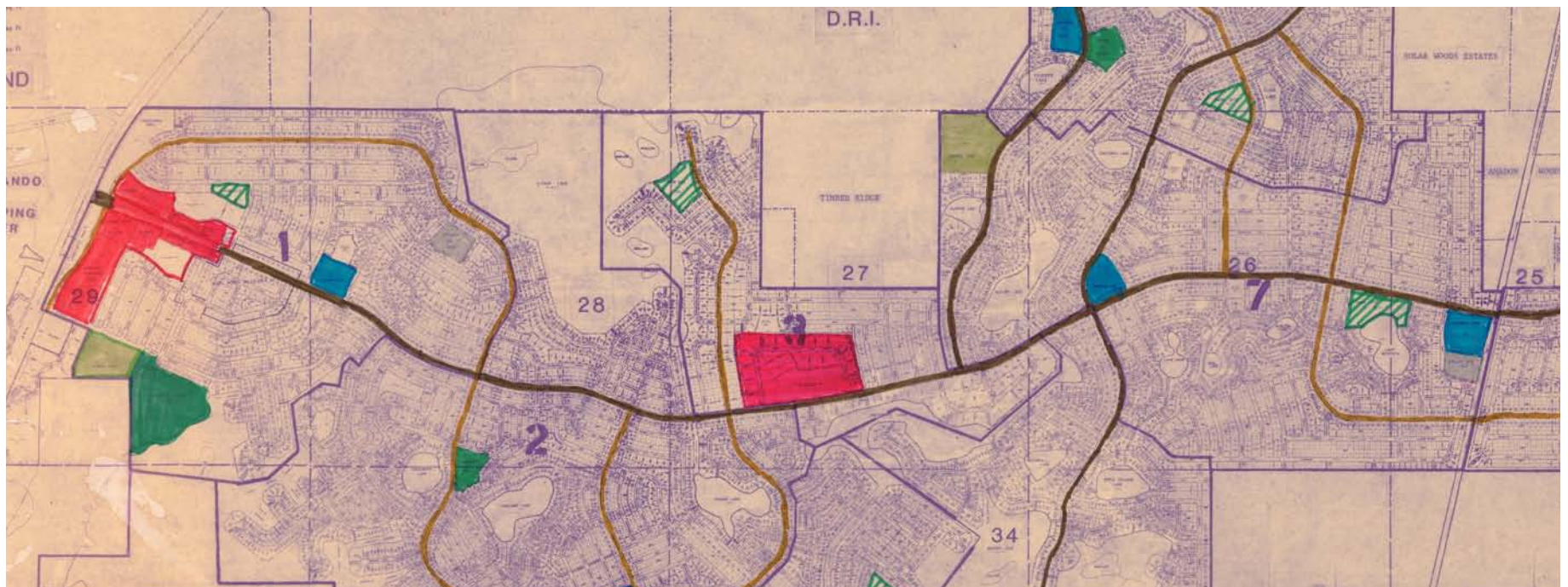
RONALD PIANTA - AICP, ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR
PAUL WIECZOREK - AICP, SENIOR PLANNER
DAVID MILES - PLANNER
OMAR DEPABLO - PLANNER
PATRICIA MCNEESE - AICP, PLANNER

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA - FLORIDA CENTER FOR COMMUNITY DESIGN + RESEARCH

THEODORE TRENT GREEN - PROJECT MANAGER/URBAN DESIGNER
ERIC POHLMAN - URBAN DESIGNER
KENDALL AHLBERG - URBAN DESIGNER
OMAR MAACH - ARCHITECTURAL DESIGNER
JESSICA DAHA-MATA - URBAN DESIGNER
ABBEY SHARABYANI - ASSISTANT

CHAPTER 1
PROJECT OVERVIEW
& OBJECTIVES



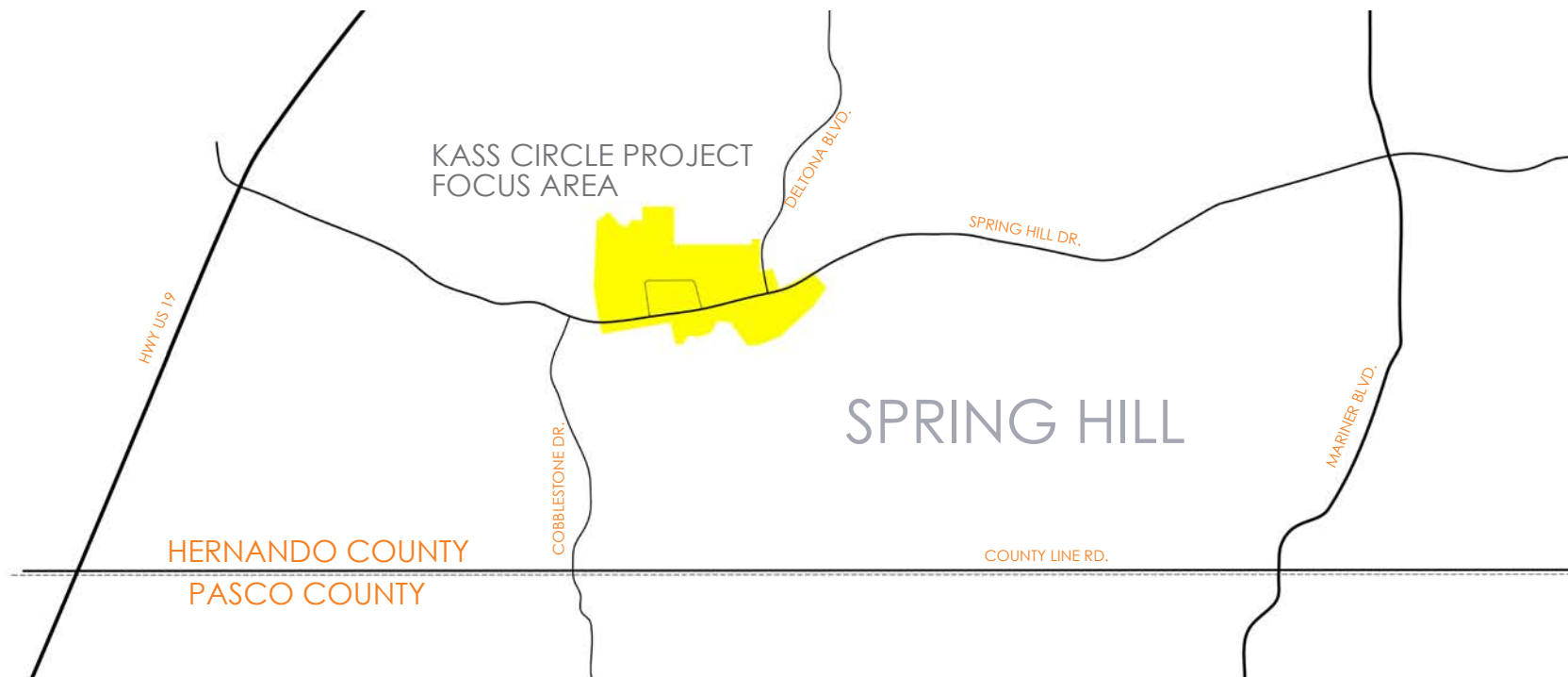


SPRING HILL DRIVE WITH PROJECT FOCUS AREA

Planned in the early 1960's, Spring Hill encompasses⁵ a number of communities dispersed over a large portion of southwestern Hernando County. Resulting from the original plan for Spring Hill, the Kass Circle commercial district and adjacent residential areas were developed simultaneously. Today this area exists as a series of contiguous low-density development patterns that are primarily dependent on vehicular mobility. The Spring Hill Shopping Plaza, which is at the heart of the project focus area, is the area's most prominent feature. Like most suburban commercial developments of this time, it was planned as a neighborhood business center and configured as a commercial strip development along a major arterial roadway. As residential development continued in the area, the volume of traffic along Spring Hill Drive spurred additional commercial development in the area. A small number of commercial structures were realized during then early 1970's along Kass Circle – a loop road that encircles the shopping plaza on three sides. Relative to other conventional commercial

development patterns, this street is an anomaly due to its somewhat obscure visibility along Spring Hill Drive. As this part of Spring Hill thrived through the ensuing decades, there was no land set aside for public open spaces or parks in the vicinity of the shopping plaza.

Over the years, the commercial area has been a defining feature in this part of Spring Hill and has functioned as a de facto neighborhood center. The commercial area is surrounded by a number of residential streets that are lined with duplex apartments. These streets have a different character than those that are further afield with single-family houses. Both the commercial and residential areas reflect the type of suburban development patterns that define communities around the state of Florida that were started during the mid to late 20th century.



PROJECT LOCATOR MAP

The Spring Hill Shopping Plaza was initially intended to serve the expanding residential neighborhoods adjacent to it and benefit from the anticipated large volumes of traffic along Spring Hill Drive. Over the years, the shopping plaza has lost much of its market share and appeal due to a lack of investment and competition from large-format regional developments to the west along U.S. 19 and the commercial cluster development to the east at the intersection of Spring Hill Drive and Mariner Boulevard. In addition to these, the area also suffers from a dated image, a declining customer base and changes in the demographic makeup of the local community. For some local residents, the commercial area carries a negative image and is considered an unsafe environment. Altogether, these conditions present a number of challenges for the commercial area's survival as a viable neighborhood center and a place that can sustain local business activity.

Neighborhoods adjacent to the Spring Hill Shopping Plaza are largely built out, albeit with a few scattered vacant parcels. These neighborhoods also reflect familiar suburban development patterns, with long streets and relatively fewer intersections. Although these residential areas appear to be stable and physically intact, some structures reflect signs of aging, a lack of maintenance and some code enforcement violations. In addition to this, many of the streets in the project focus area are lacking certain infrastructure and public realm features such as sidewalks and street lighting.

The primary purpose of this master plan is to identify a long-term vision for revitalizing the Kass Circle area – its commercial district, Spring Hill Drive and adjacent neighborhoods. This plan is intended to address a range of issues related to physical conditions in the area, opportunities to bolster economic development and enhancing the “livability” of the area for local residents. The plan proposes a comprehensive urban and community design strategy that identifies a coordinated framework for redevelopment initiatives that will involve both private and public sector entities, as well as the community at large. The proposed framework defines an agenda that addresses the following issues:

- Reducing the adverse impacts of dis-investment and a declining commercial area
- Repositioning the shopping plaza and enhancing the adjacent commercial areas to create a more stable commercial environment
- Enhancing the public realm and introducing additional housing to improve market conditions and attract private-sector investment
- Addressing the area's deteriorating physical conditions
- Improving the area's visual character and reversing its negative image
- Identifying opportunities to form public-private partnerships
- Addressing the community's desire for a creating a true community center that rebrands this part of Spring Hill



AERIAL OF TOWN COMMONS AND COMMERCIAL CENTER

In addition to this, another core objective of this plan is to ensure that it reflects the desires and aspirations of local residents.

By addressing all of these issues simultaneously and in an integrated manner, this plan is further intended to function as a “living document” – one that is flexible and has ongoing relevance well into the future. It is hoped that is embraced as a shared vision by the local community and adopted by the County as a planning tool for guiding future revitalization initiatives. In order for this plan to move from vision to action, it includes a number of recommendations for implementing proposed conditions in a phased manner over a fifteen to twenty year timeframe.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVES FOR THE MASTER PLAN VISION:

Engage community residents, business and property owners and local officials to develop a long-term vision revitalizing the Kass Circle area and transforming it into a vibrant community center

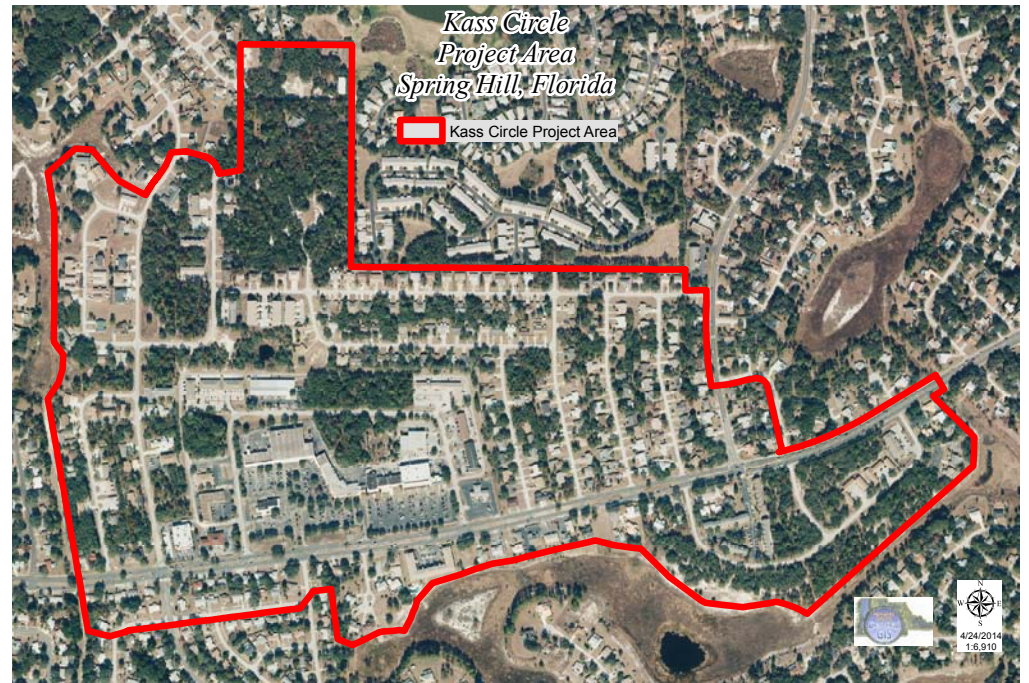
This vision plan is intended to:

- Identify opportunities that will enhance local economic development
- Help create a “sense of place”
- Address ways to improve public safety, access and walkability
- Identify ways of enhancing the area's visual character and identity
- Explore the prospects for creating a more vibrant public realm
- Demonstrate the benefits of enhancing community livability standards



EXAMPLE OF REVITALIZED SHOPPING CENTER

CHAPTER 2
PROJECT AREA



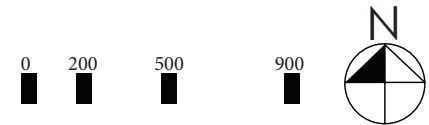
Source: Hernando County Property Appraiser
GIS.V.PARCELS; GIS.STREETSCENTERLINE;

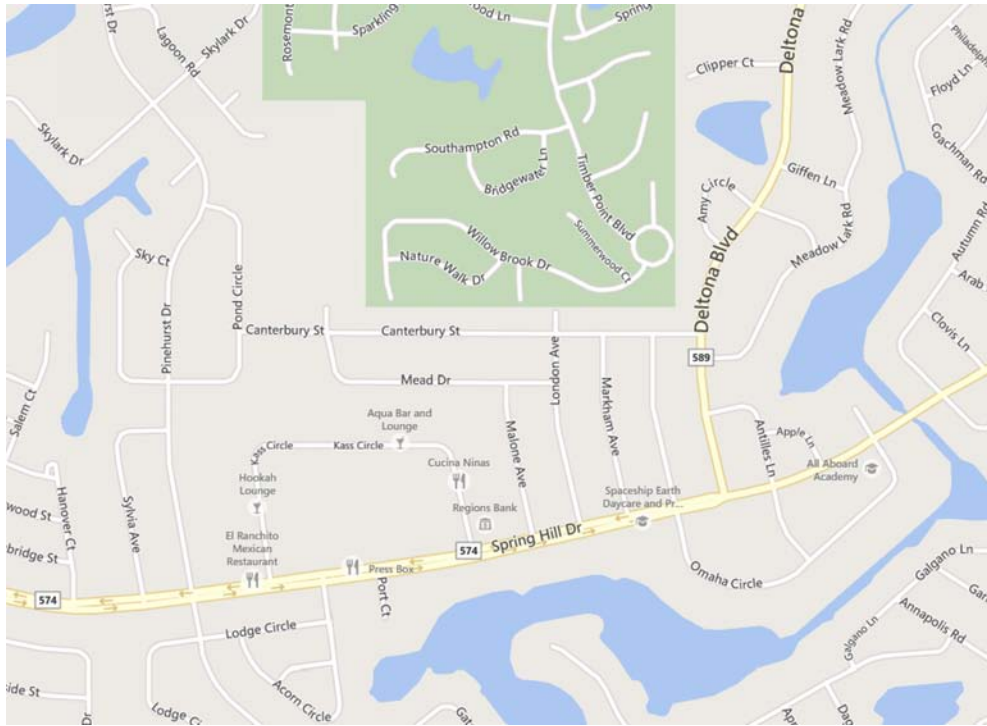
0 0.25 0.5 Miles

s:\share\planning\ddm\kass\kass_outline_aerial.mxd
s:\share\planning\ddm\kass\kass_outline_aerial.pdf



- | | | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Save-A-Lot | 5. St. Vincent De Paul Society | 8. Greenbrier Lake Condos | 11. Timber Pines |
| 2. Family Dollar | 6. Book Fair | 9. Hog Pond | |
| 3. Doctor Jimmy Edmond | 7. Wallgreens | 10. Blue Sink Pond | |
| 4. Aqua Bar | | | |





PROJECT FOCUS AREA

The focus area for this project includes over 239 acres of the larger Spring Hill the community centered on the Kass Circle commercial district. The main portion of the project focus area includes the existing Spring Hill Shopping Plaza, adjacent commercial area along Kass Circle and several adjacent residential neighborhoods. The focus area straddles Spring Hill Drive and extends a half mile east and west of the shopping plaza. The boundaries of the focus area are loosely defined by Sylvia Avenue on the west, Lagoon Road to the north, Antilles Lane to the east and Omaha Circle to the south.

The project focus area is part of the original Spring Hill development platted in the early 1960's by the Deltona Corporation. The Spring Hill Shopping Plaza was planned on a conventional commercial strip development model, while other commercial areas were realized as proximity-based collateral development. The surrounding residential neighborhoods are within walking distance of the commercial area and are primarily comprised of owner-occupied single-family dwellings and rental duplex dwellings.

SPRING HILL DRIVE

The project focus area is bifurcated by Spring Hill Drive (Hernando County Road 574). As a regional arterial, this roadway is one of two major east-west thoroughfares across Hernando County. It currently carries approximately 20,300 vehicles per day - including local and through traffic. Spring Hill Drive is intersected by a number of neighborhood streets within the project focus area. Many of these are “T” intersections resulting from discontinuous streets terminating at Spring Hill Drive. This roadway connects to U.S. 19 farther to the west and to the Sun Coast Parkway towards the east. Spring Hill Drive is a four lane, (median) divided, rural roadway section with one-hundred feet of right-of-way width. Although it has a posted speed limit of 40 miles per hour, most traffic moving through this area travels at a higher rate of speed. According to the County’s Comprehensive Plan, this portion of the roadway has a level of service designation of “D – urban”. Aside from some planned sidewalk installations in front of the shopping plaza, the Hernando County Long-Range Transportation Plan does not indicate any future roadway enhancements or modifications. It cannot be widened because it is classified as a “constrained roadway” (Comprehensive Plan Transportation Element, Policy 2.04A(3)). With only two marked crosswalks in the project focus area, Spring Hill Drive currently presents some challenges for pedestrians and people with disabilities. Many local residents who walk in the area consider this situation a major public safety hazard.



The south side of Spring Hill Drive is mostly lined with single-family houses and a few small stand-alone commercial service uses – all of which are situated at least 30 feet from the right of way. Many of the residential properties facing Spring Hill Drive have been rezoned to commercial land-use designations and starting to be converted to various types of small service-related businesses. Aside from a few street trees in the median, there are no other discernible streetscape characteristics along Spring Hill Drive. In the future, this one-mile portion of roadway will be a critical component in ongoing revitalization efforts for this area. Reinforcing connections to Spring Hill Drive, redefining it with “context-sensitive” conditions and identifying ways to make it more pedestrian-friendly are major objectives of the master plan vision.

KASS CIRCLE COMMERCIAL AREA

The Kass Circle commercial area is comprised of the Spring Hill Shopping Plaza and a number of adjacent commercial uses along Spring Hill Drive and Kass Circle. Although not planned as such, a number of local residents consider the commercial area as a type of “de facto” community center. The area currently provides convenience shopping, general retail and other service-related uses for area residents. The Hernando County Comprehensive Plan’s Future Land Use Element assigns a “Commercial Center” land use designation for the area bounded by Kass Circle.

The Spring Hill Shopping Plaza, which was developed in the late 1960’s as a “first generation” strip shopping center and is bounded by Kass Circle on three sides. It has approximately 93,327 gross square feet of space and configured with a number of small to mid-format commercial tenant spaces. Although the shopping center has lost a number of its smaller tenants in the recent past, it’s still viewed by many local residents as a destination in the larger Kass Circle community. This shopping center is anchored by a discount grocery store and retail store – Save-A-Lot Market and Family Dollar respectively. The shopping center has not been renovated in recent years and currently suffers from an outdated image, a loss of market share, a declining patronage base and limited pedestrian accessibility. Although the surrounding community includes a demographic mix of long-term residents, renters, senior citizens and families with children, the retail trade area for the district could benefit from an enhanced market presence along Spring Hill Drive and more patrons who can contribute to the level of foot traffic needed to support a broader mix of commercial uses.



Currently the Kass Circle commercial area as a whole is lacking in cohesiveness and a critical mass of desired uses. A major objective of this master plan is to identify ways of strengthening this area through repositioning it in the market. The intent is to harness the area’s existing assets and integrate them with new development as a way to transform this area into a mixed-use neighborhood center.

RESIDENTIAL AREAS

The project focus area includes a number of residential neighborhoods immediately adjacent to the commercial area. These areas have a combination of straight and winding roads and long irregular-shaped blocks. A majority of these areas are built-out with single-family houses. Most the houses in these areas appear to be structurally sound, well-maintained and contribute to character of the streets and neighborhoods. These areas achieve a density of roughly six to eight dwelling units per acre. Typical of most suburban communities, a much smaller number of multi-family dwellings are relegated to separate areas. The Kass Circle area has a large number of these in the form of multi-family duplexes. Most of these dwellings are in close proximity to the commercial district and are situated between the single-family neighborhoods and the commercial area. A clearly discernible condition along these streets is the absence of some basic public realm features such as sidewalks and street lights, as well as street trees and front yard landscaping. Altogether, these conditions reflect the development patterns and conditions prescribed by the original Deltona Corporation master plan for most of Spring Hill. In addition to these conditions, the project area has a number of vacant lots – most of these lots are situated in areas where the multi-family housing currently exists. These parcels range in size and in many instances have mature vegetation on them. The number and location of these lots suggest a unique opportunity for implementing an infill housing program throughout the project focus area.



Another noticeable condition in the area is the manner in which stormwater runoff is managed. The area was initially planned with a number of drainage easements and (dry) retention ponds that course through the area. These features were built to channel and hold runoff until it could percolate into the ground. As a more economical way to manage stormwater, this was done to eliminate the need for curbs, gutters and drainage inlets on area streets. Although there are some drains along Spring Hill Drive, most residential streets do not have these familiar infrastructure elements. As the water table in this area has dropped over the years, these ponds are dry most of time and are viewed as undesirable areas by local residents. However, the way these features are integrated into the larger community suggests they can also serve another purpose as public realm assets.

CHAPTER 3

INITIAL IMPRESSIONS AND NEIGHBORHOOD ANALYSIS



INITIAL IMPRESSIONS AND NEIGHBORHOOD ANALYSIS

The initial impression one gets when first encountering any neighborhood or community is largely based visual perceptions and personal assessments. Driving through the Kass Circle area of Spring Hill, one is presented with a range of physical conditions that defines the visual image and identity of the area. These include the character of physical conditions along the one mile segment of Spring Hill Drive that extends through the project focus, character of the Spring Hill Shopping Plaza and nearby commercial properties, and the character of the residential streets in the project focus area. While each of these areas reflect a different set of visual conditions, collectively they define the image and identity of the Kass Circle community. At present, this community image appears to have three discernible visual gradients. Streets with single-family houses appear to be stable and attractive, streets with duplex apartments seem stable but lacking in character and definition, while the commercial area is clearly showing signs of age and outdated commercial image. On closer analysis, each of these areas reveal other conditions that are relevant to this master plan and future revitalization efforts.



VIEW OF SPRING HILL DRIVE LOOKING WEST



VIEW OF SPRING HILL DRIVE LOOKING EAST

AREA ANALYSIS

Spring Hill Drive functions as a regional arterial. It is a vehicular thoroughfare for motorists heading east and west through this portion of Spring Hill - connecting to U.S. 19 approximately 2.5 miles to the west and the Sun Coast Parkway approximately 4.5 to the east. Within the project area, this roadway has an average weekday traffic volume of over 26,000 vehicles. Hernando County classifies the portion of this roadway as a “Constrained Corridor” – which means it can’t be widened due to existing development-related impediments. Within its one hundred- foot right of way, this roadway includes two twelve-foot travel lanes in both directions, a twenty four foot median with left turn lanes, a grass shoulder and sidewalks along the south side of the street. With a few exceptions, building setbacks along the street vary from twenty-five to seventy feet.

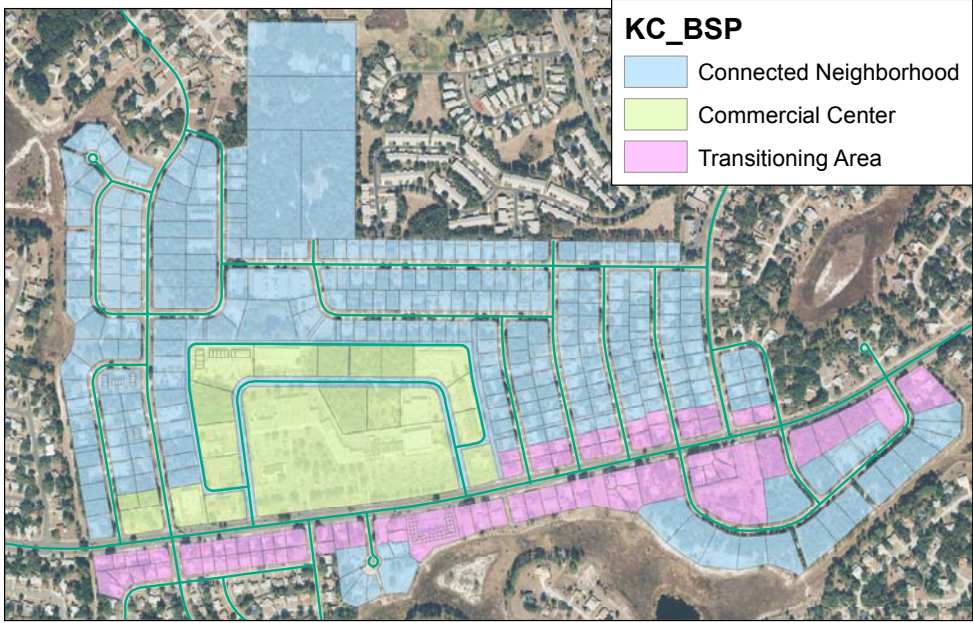
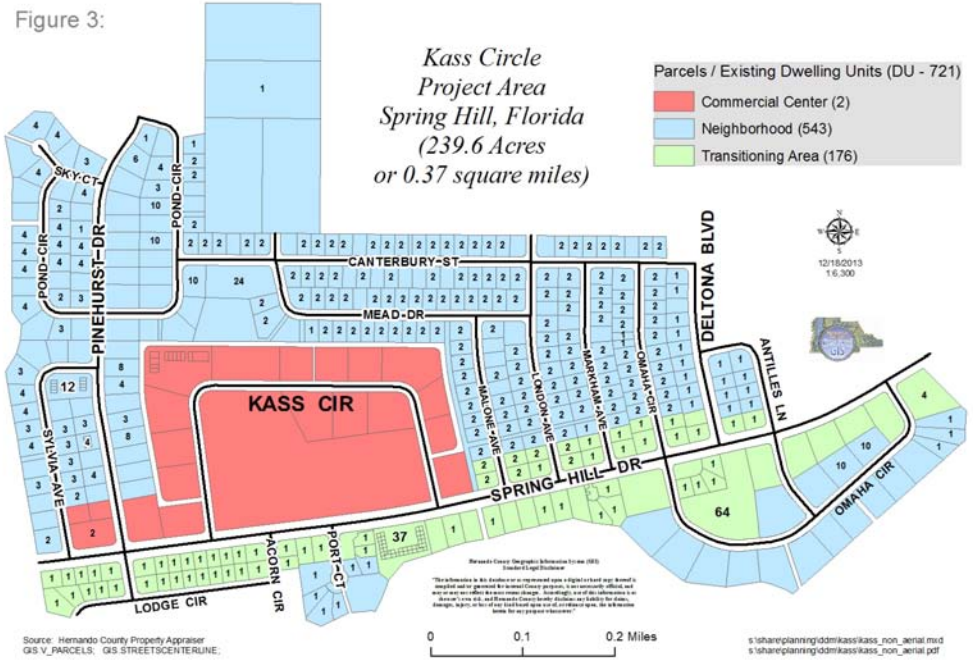
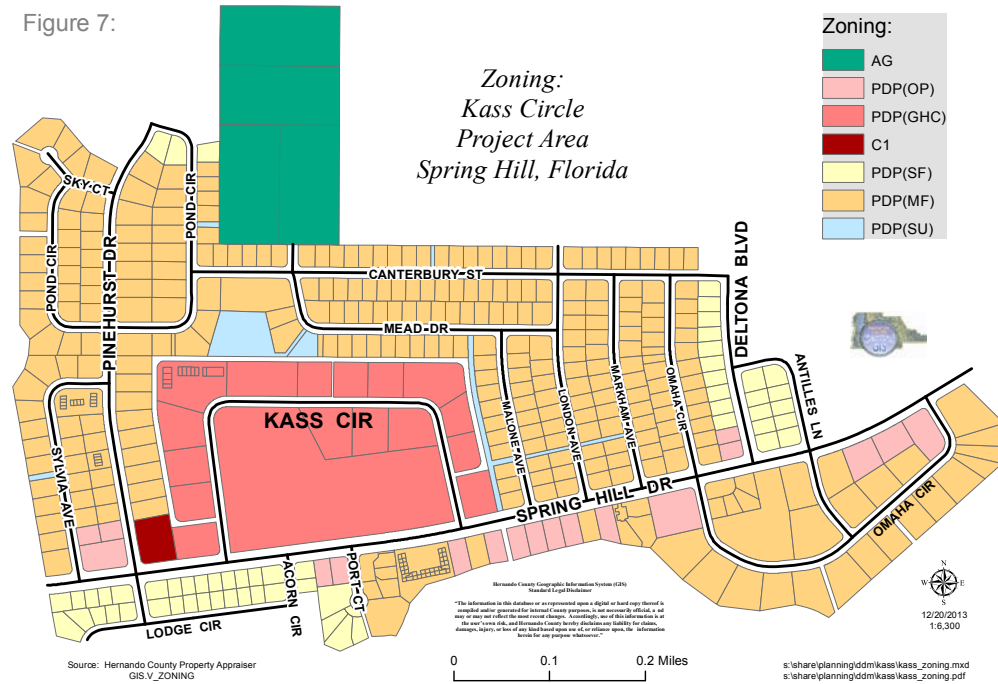


Figure 3:



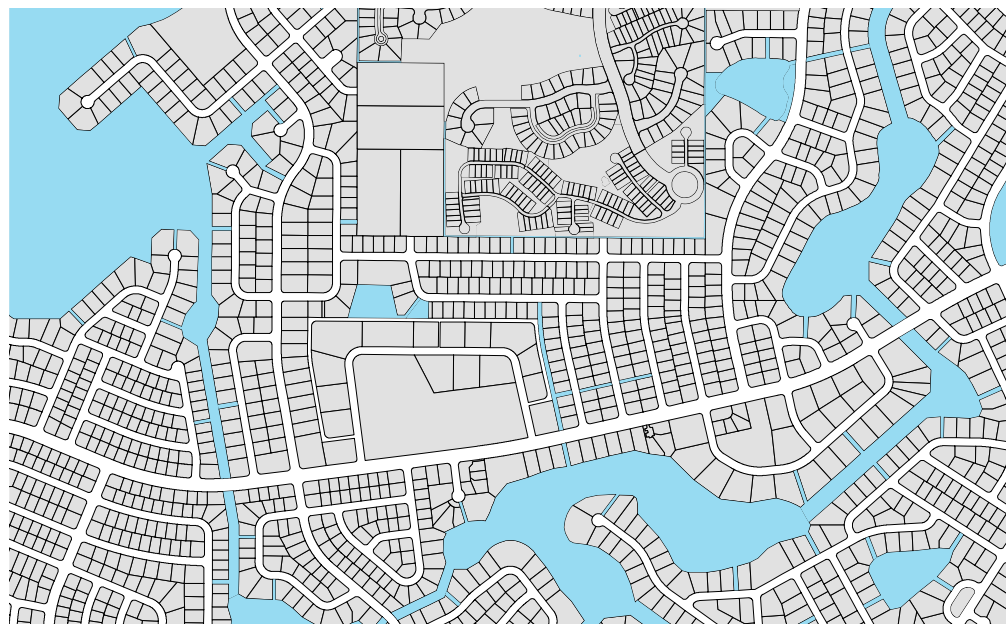
The effects of several trends are evident along this street. Signs of aging and decline of physical conditions are visible on approach to the commercial area. The sparsely landscaped median and the lack other streetscape indicate little attention to this part of the area’s public realm. The presence of only a few trees in the median gives the street a minimalist and unfinished appearance. The shoulder on the south street lacks any landscape features and appears to be used for on-street parking for the adjacent residences. Most of the houses along this side of the street are unsightly and lack proper maintenance. In many instances, front yards are used for parking vehicles. In addition to detracting from the general character of Spring Hill Drive, many of these conditions do not appear to be in compliance with building code standards and other ordinances. Another visible characteristic of Spring Hill Drive is the lack of definition of the pedestrian realm. Aside from a few mark cross walks at

Figure 7:



intersections and sidewalks along the south side of the street, the street lacks any other amenities or features for accommodating pedestrians or bicyclists.

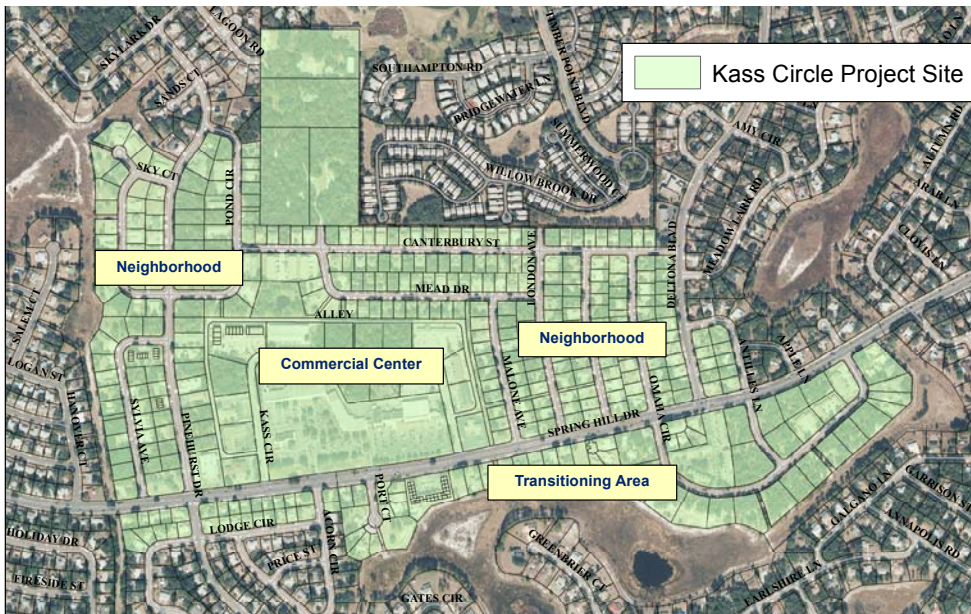
The physical condition of the Spring Hill Shopping Plaza, which is at the geographic center of the project focus area, is also visible evidence of decline in the commercial area. The shopping plaza itself sits behind several large dry retention ponds along Spring Hill Drive. These ponds are unimproved and representative of the type of swales typically seen along rural roadways. The large frontage parking lot for the shopping plaza appears desolate and rarely used. The image of this parking lot reinforces the negative connotation of the shopping center set in “... a vast sea of asphalt”. Buildings in the shopping center have an outdated appearance and are in need of a facelift or more extensive renovation. The number of vacancies in the shopping plaza is also having an effect on the image of this facility as a viable commercial complex. Even with the limited activity generated by patrons of the existing retailers and other tenants, the facility appears to be gradually advancing towards complete vacancy.

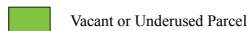
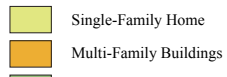
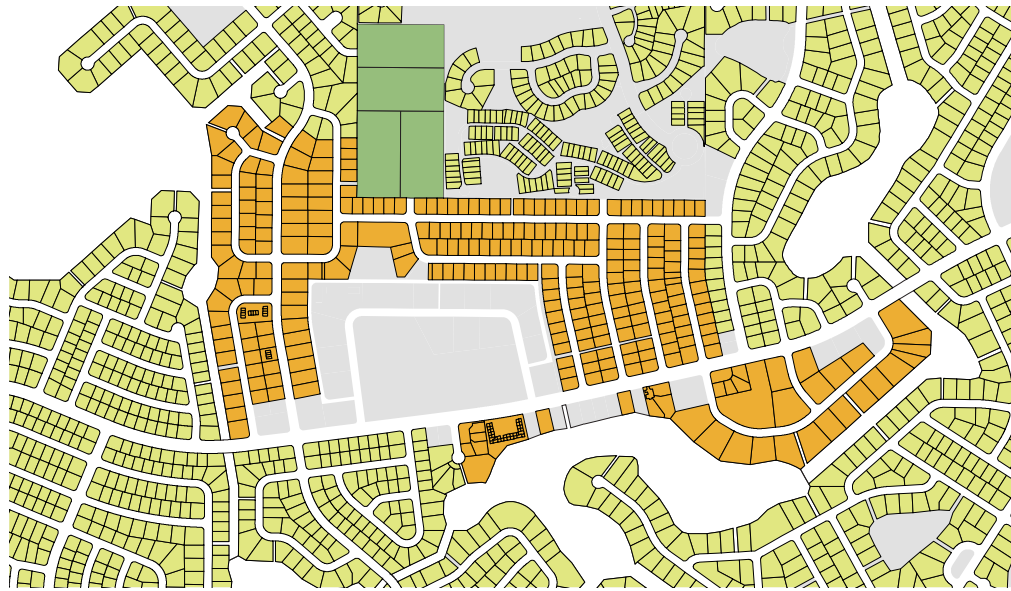


Kass Circle, the street that circles the shopping plaza on three sides, appears to function as a “secondary” commercial street. It has a number of “service retail” uses on both the eastern and western sides of the shopping plaza. Relative to typical suburban commercial area development patterns, this street seem to be an anomaly. Businesses along this street have an “out of the way” presence and lack any significant commercial presence. Several buildings along Kass Circle could also benefit from façade renovations. Several of these buildings are also showing signs of aging and appear to be experiencing the same conditions as the shopping plaza.

EXISTING COMMERCIAL AREA PARKING

- Surface Parking
- Existing Buildings





The residential neighborhoods immediately adjacent to the commercial area are primarily comprised of rental duplex apartments. These areas have a density of approximately eight to ten dwelling units per acre. While most of the structures in these neighborhoods appear structurally sound, they all tend to have a nondescript appearance. A noticeable condition here is the lack of “curb appeal” and landscaping in the front yards of these properties. This condition gives these areas an unappealing appearance and conveys a lack investment and a lack of established aesthetic standards. Also noticeably missing along streets in these areas are sidewalks, street trees and ample street lighting. Although residential streets in adjacent single-family neighborhoods have sidewalks, none the streets with duplexes have this basic public real feature. The infrequent placement of streetlights and the dearth of landscaping along the streets also detract from the visual character of the area. These neighborhoods also seem to have a significant number of vacant parcels distributed along these streets – most with overgrown vegetation. These parcels appear to be buildable and can accommodate additional infill housing as a way to increase the residential and population density in the area.



VIEW OF SPRING HILL SHOPPING PLAZA



VIEW OF SPRING HILL SHOPPING PLAZA SURFACE PARKING LOT

The project focus area also suffers from a lack of definition and utility of its public realm. Residents have indicated that the area has no center or public space that accommodates gatherings and community events. While the shopping center has become the “de facto” center of this area for more than fifty years, it’s not a place that promotes civic identity and pride in the community. Further discussions with neighborhood residents suggest that some type of public space should be a central component of efforts to revitalize the area. Like most streets in suburban communities, those in the Kass Circle area tend to be used exclusively for vehicles. Walking and biking conditions along some neighborhood streets as a form of mobility is hampered by a partial or complete absence of sidewalks.

The drainage easements that course through the residential areas are essential components of the area’s stormwater management system. However, most are swales and ponds that are dry most of the time. These features have a major presence in the community, but are out of sight and not obvious to many local residents. They should be considered assets that can better integrated into the area’s public realm to that serve both primary and secondary functions.



VIEW OF EAST KASS CIRCLE LOOKING SOUTH



VIEW OF NORTH KASS CIRCLE LOOKING WEST



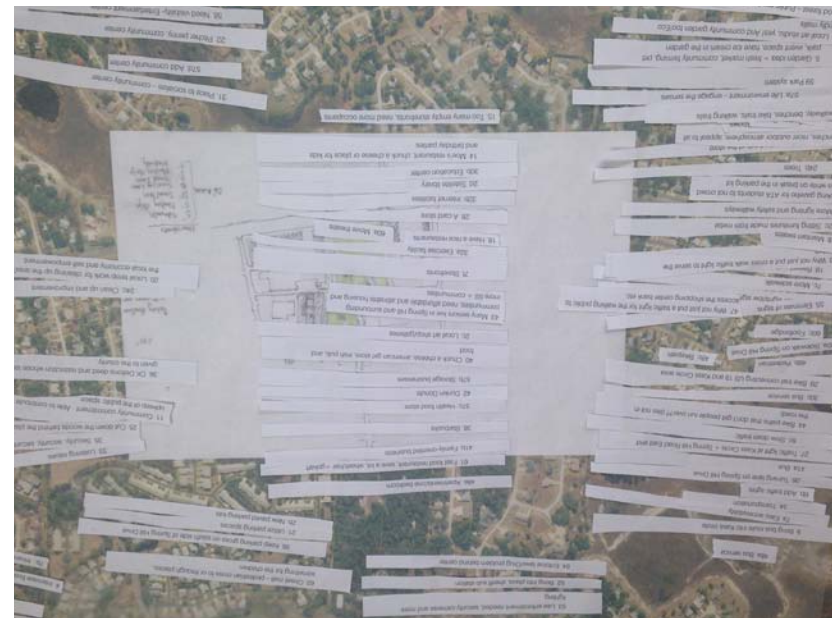
VIEW OF TYPICAL RESIDENTIAL STREET



VIEW OF TYPICAL RESIDENTIAL STREET WITH VACANT LOTS

CHAPTER 4

COMMUNITY DESIGN PROCESS





COMMUNITY DESIGN PROCESS ENGAGING LOCAL RESIDENTS

The community design process for this effort involved initial discussions with staff from the Hernando County Planning Department, business and property owners and local residents. These discussions helped to clarify a number of objectives and established a clear direction for community design process.

After this, the Project Team conducted several “on the street” interviews with local residents, documented physical conditions and analyzed data provided by the Planning Department. This information was then synthesized and presented as part of the first workshop.

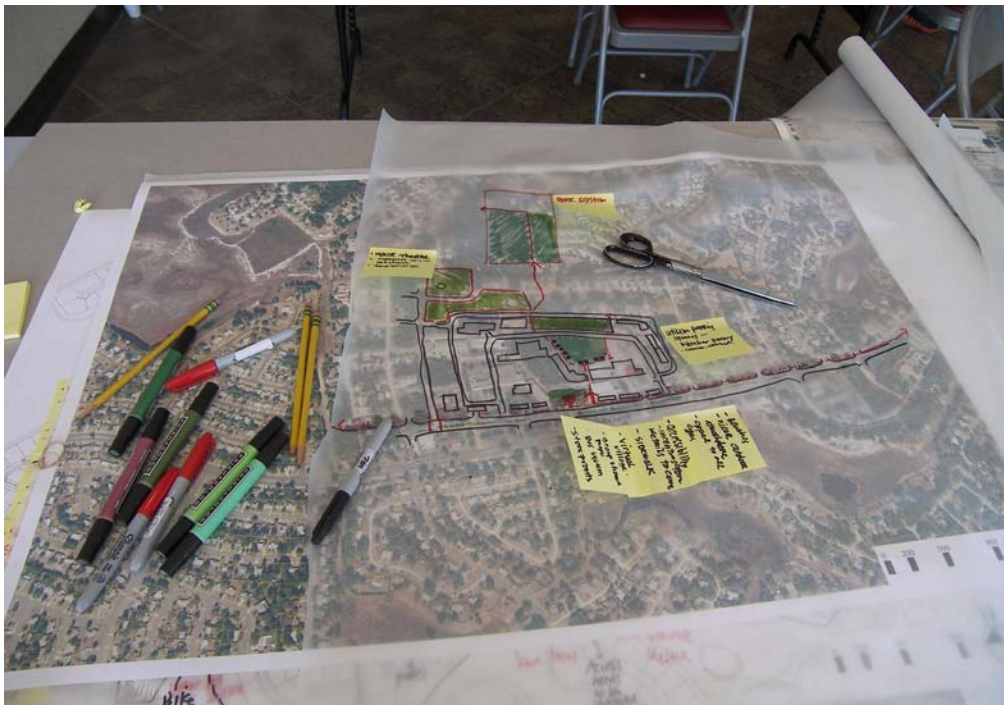
To further engage residents in the community design process, the first participatory workshop was conducted on Saturday, February 15, 2014 in one of the vacant tenant spaces in the Spring Hill Shopping Plaza. The workshop was a full day event and attracted over fifty people. Much of the input reflected concerns about declining physical conditions in the area and a desire to see ideas from this effort put into action. During the workshop the Project Team worked with different groups to explore a number of preliminary design concepts that related to: creating a central gathering place in or near the shopping center; opportunities for new development that would include a wider choice of retail, service and medical uses; improving pedestrian access; public safety enhancements along Spring Hill Drive; and enhancing the general character and image of the area. These “brain-storming” and idea generation exercises clearly identified a number of major priorities for the Project Team. From this input a number of plausible concepts were identified for the vision plan.





Many of the ideas, suggestions and concepts from the workshop were then synthesized and integrated into a preliminary master plan. This draft plan was subsequently presented and discussed at a follow-up workshop held at the Spring Hill Branch Library on Wednesday, April 23, 2014. Input from this workshop was then used to make final modifications and refinements to the plan.

In addition to their direct involvement in defining the parameters of the master plan and recognizing the revitalization possibilities within the Kass Circle area, this process has helped a number of local residents better understand the critical role they will play in the ongoing efforts to revitalize their community. The participatory planning process and resulting master plan have generated considerable excitement and enthusiasm among residents about the future potentials of the area. So much so, some residents have launched initial efforts to create a neighborhood organization to garner greater support for the plan's adoption and implementation.

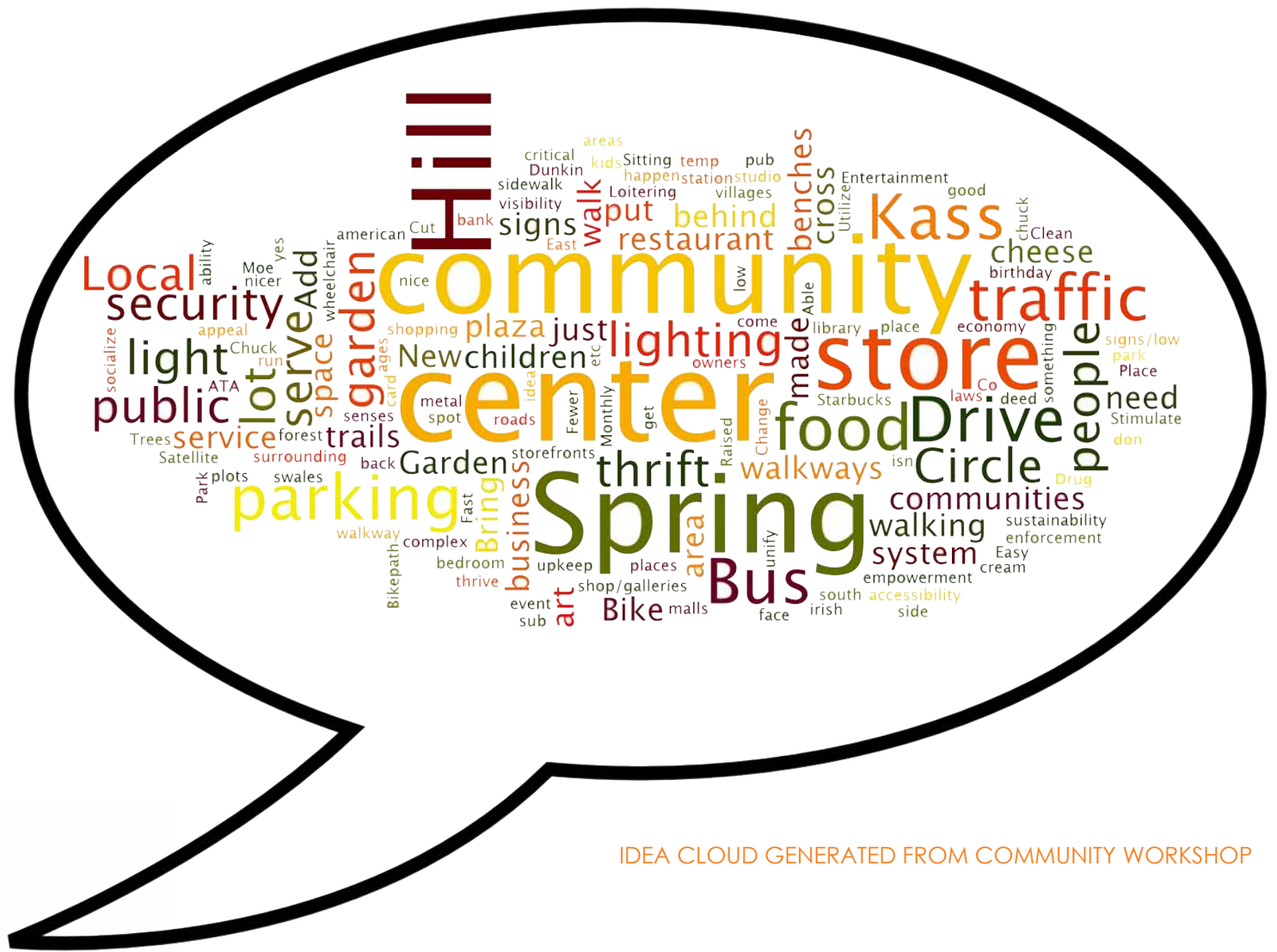




SUGGESTION BOARD FROM COMMUNITY WORKSHOP



INTEGRATED PRIORITIES FROM COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

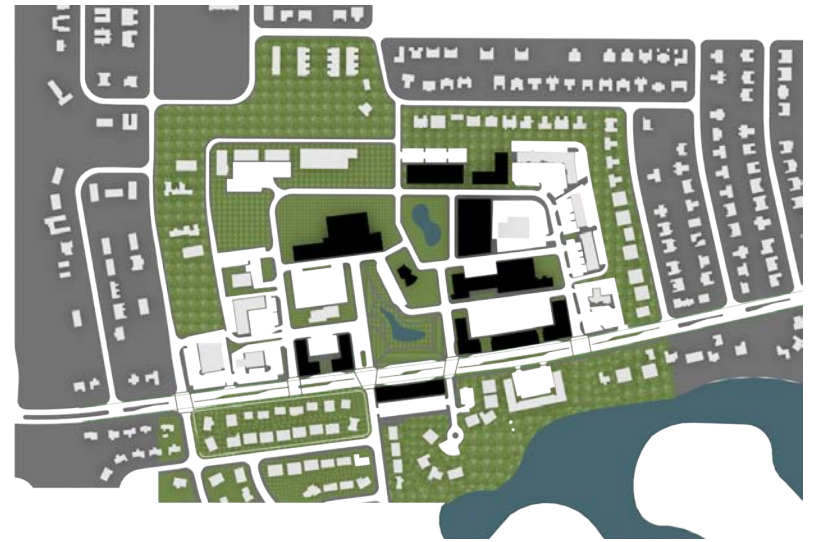




IDEA CLOUD GENERATED FROM COMMUNITY WORKSHOP



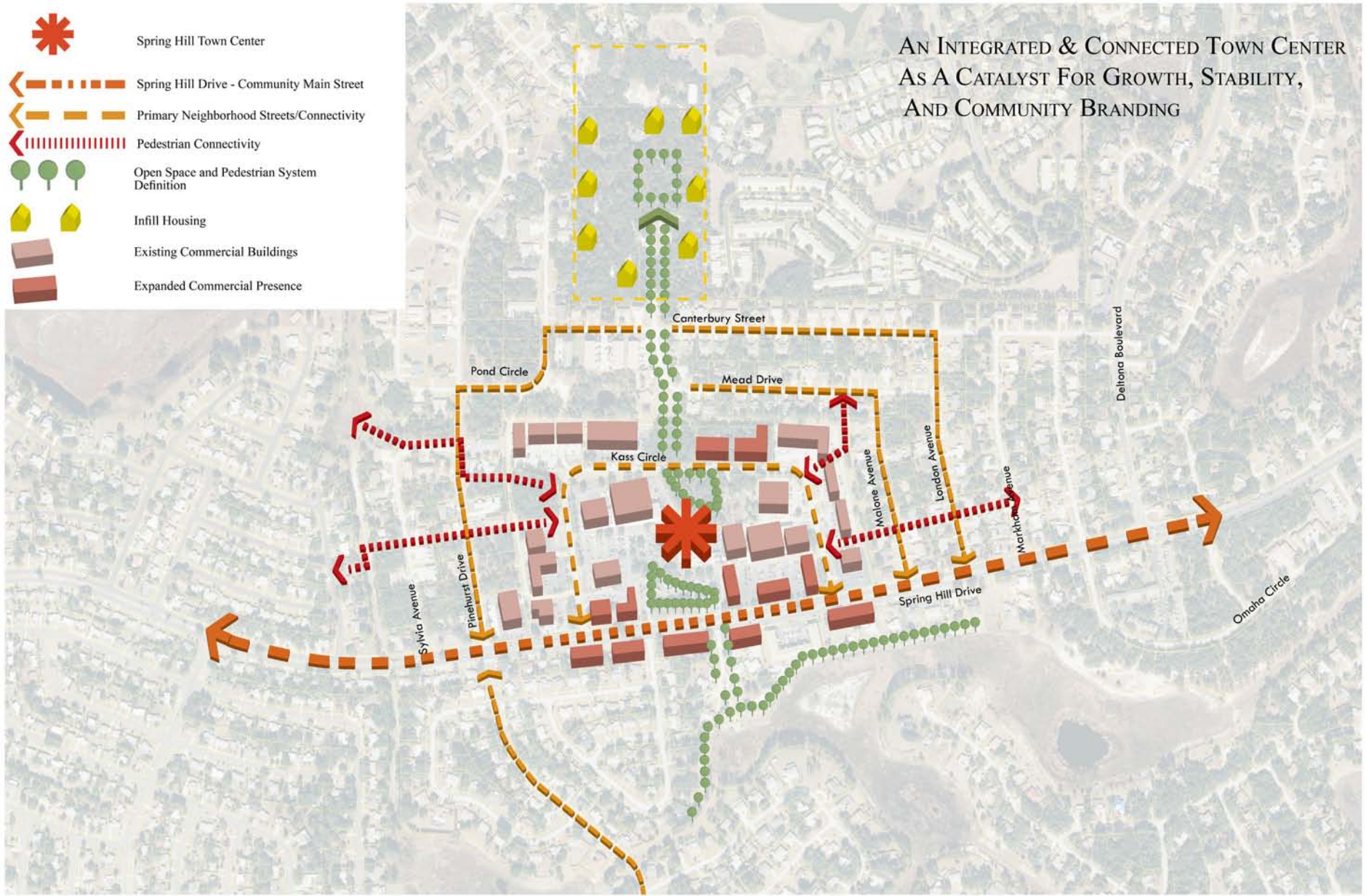
CHAPTER 5

COMMUNITY DESIGN CONCEPTS AND STRATEGIES



-  Spring Hill Town Center
-  Spring Hill Drive - Community Main Street
-  Primary Neighborhood Streets/Connectivity
-  Pedestrian Connectivity
-  Open Space and Pedestrian System Definition
-  Infill Housing
-  Existing Commercial Buildings
-  Expanded Commercial Presence

AN INTEGRATED & CONNECTED TOWN CENTER
AS A CATALYST FOR GROWTH, STABILITY,
AND COMMUNITY BRANDING



COMMUNITY DESIGN CONCEPTS



COMMUNITY WORKSHOP DESIGN PROCESS



COMMUNITY WORKSHOP DESIGN PROCESS

MASTER PLAN CONCEPT AND INITIAL COMMUNITY DESIGN STRATEGY

The concept for this master plan is based on a feasible strategy for revitalizing the Kass Circle area and a number of ideas suggested by residents throughout the project's duration. The purpose of this community design concept is to define a major focus for the master plan and provide a framework for integrating number of other supporting ideas. The concept that was identified to define this focus is based on the familiar "market tested" urban design model of a traditional Town Center at the heart of the community. This approach holds greater potential for a long-term revitalization effort and best reflects the desires of local residents. This approach embodies the objective of transforming the commercial area into a more vibrant, mixed-use business center and will help bring to fruition the following conditions:

- A re-defined commercial area that offers more choices for shopping and other neighborhood-serving uses
- A public space in the heart of the community where local residents and their families can gather for leisure and special events
- Safe pedestrian connections to the commercial area from the adjacent neighborhoods
- An integrated Spring Hill Drive with new character-defining enhancements

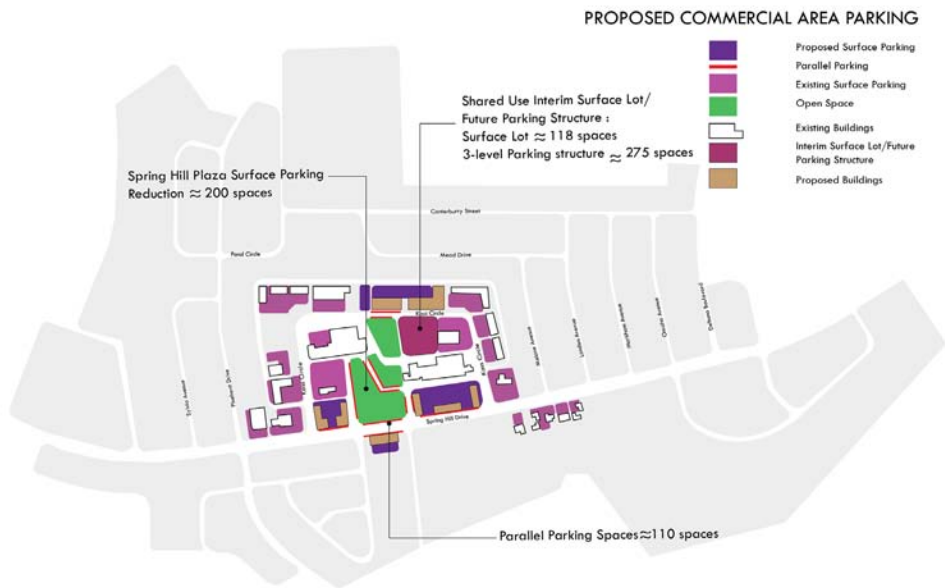
CHAPTER 6
MASTER PLAN
VISION





- 1 Single-Family Residential Area
- 2 Scattered Site Infill evelopment
- 3 Shared Parking Structure
- 4 Existing Shopping Center
- 5 Community Center
- 6 Mixed-Use Frontage Buildings
- 7 Pedestrian Friendly Spring Hill Drive
- 8 Bus Transfer Station
- 9 Nature walking trails

- Existing Residential
- Proposed Commercial and Residential Development
- Existing Commercial
- Vacant Property
- New Town Center and Neighborhood Open Spaes



MASTER PLAN VISION

The master plan vision for the Kass Circle area is a long-term, comprehensive strategy for revitalizing the Kass Circle area over a fifteen to twenty year timeframe. It reflects the aspirations of local residents and seeks to create a market-driven solution to redefining the area as the vibrant center of the area. The plan proposes conditions that are consistent with the Hernando County Comprehensive plan (OBJECTIVE 1.01M, Policies 1, 2, 5, etc.) and the Hernando 2040 visioning process. The plan is intended as a sustainable guide for growth in the area and proposes a coordinated and phased approach to revitalization.

While the master plan is represents a holistic vision for the future of the area, it is essentially comprised of the following five major components:

- Town Center Commercial Area
- Spring Hill Drive
- Residential Infill
- Public Realm Conditions, Infrastructure and Special features



Each of these components defines a set of conditions that is critical to the master plan and should be viewed as integral with each other. Together, these proposed conditions constitute an effective approach for realizing the revitalization objectives for the Kass Circle area.



VIEW OF TOWN CENTER COMMONS AND COMMERCIAL AREA
AT SPRING HILL DRIVE

The plan has been informed by research, analysis, community input, public policy and an understanding the local economy and market potential for this part of the larger Spring Hill community. Conceived as way to foster a rebirth and new growth, the plan also addresses a number of urban and community design dimensions that are critical to the revitalization process, such as:

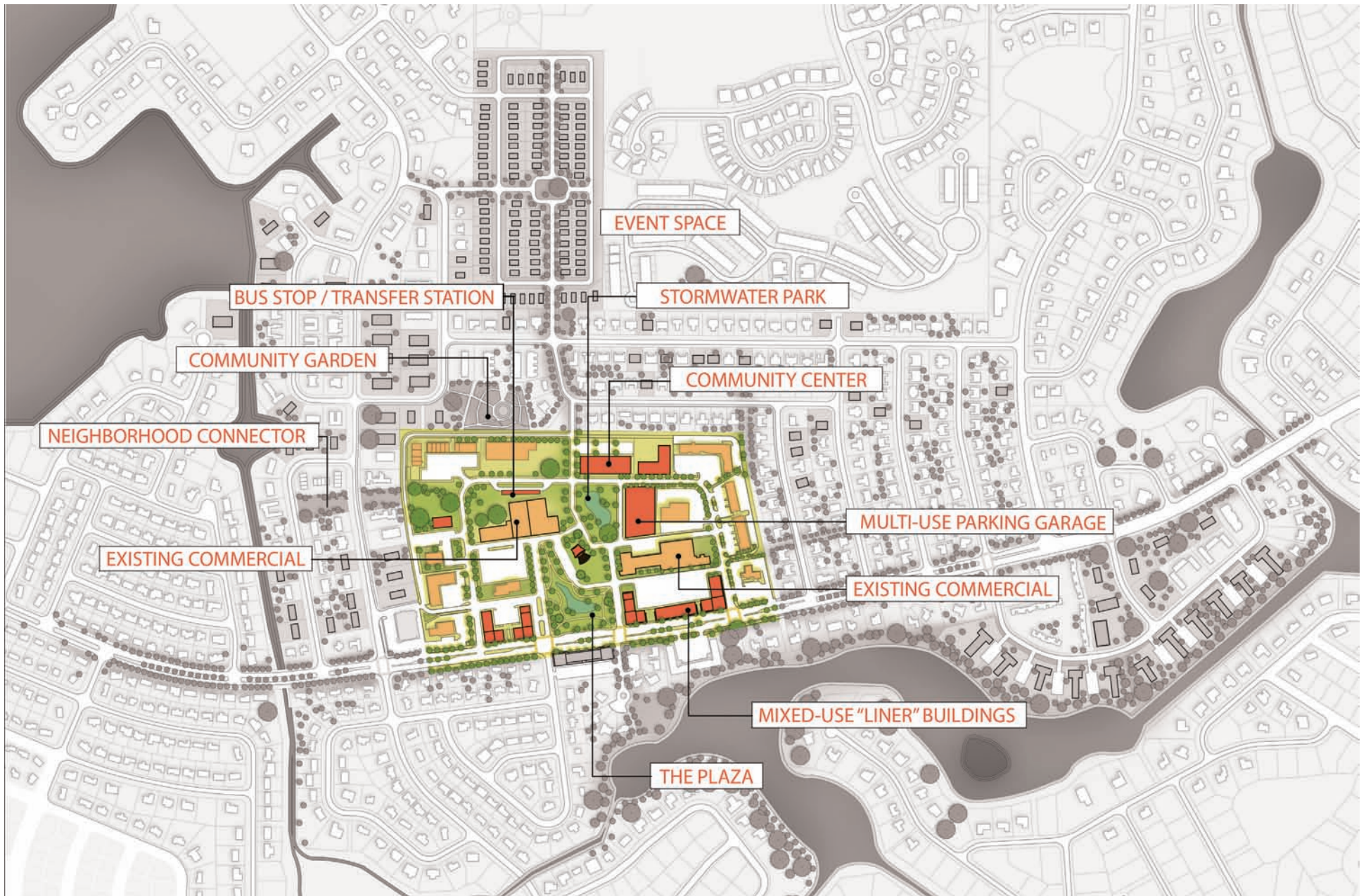
- Physical form (three-dimensional configuration and spatial dimension (two-dimensional layout and development patterns) of the area
- Functional dimension (various modes of mobility)
- Visual dimension (general character and identity)
- Social dimension (usage, activities and livability)
- Economic dimension (market diversity and vitality)
- Environmental dimension (natural conditions and sustainable measures)

Enhancing these dimensions will help reverse the current trend of decline in the area, foster cohesiveness and ensure the long-term stability and diversity in the Kass Circle community.

CHAPTER 7
TOWN CENTER
COMMERCIAL AREA

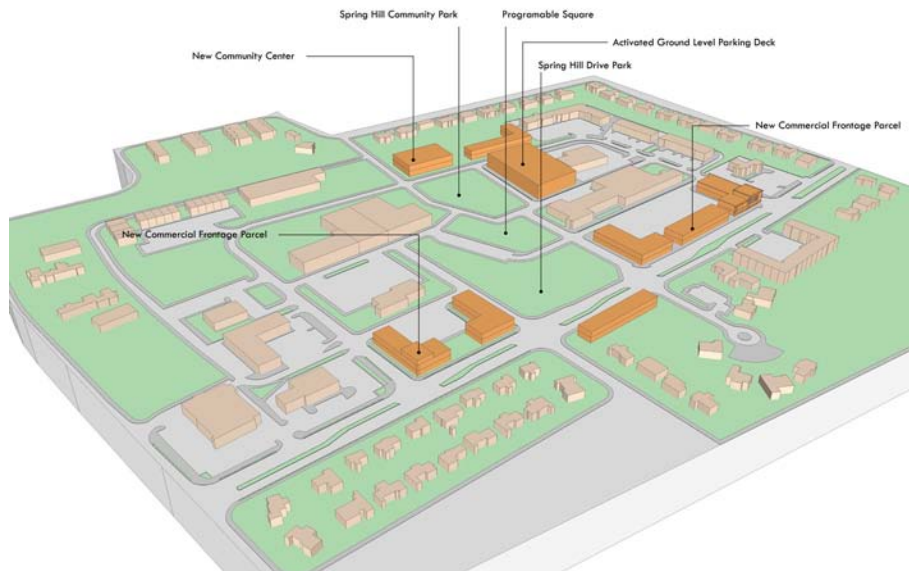


VIEW OF TOWN CENTER COMMERCIAL AREA FRONTAGE
ALONG SPRING HILL DRIVE

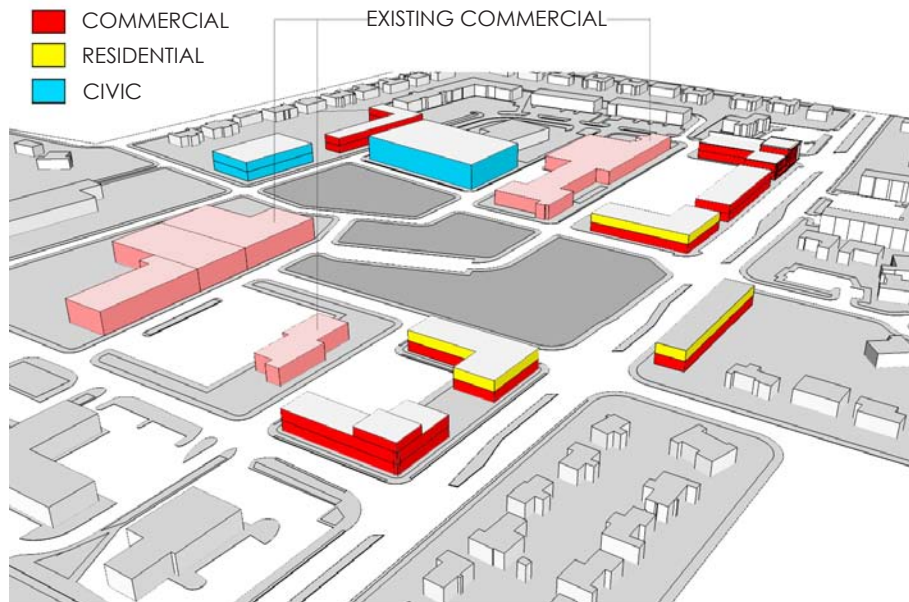


TOWN CENTER COMMERCIAL AREA

TOWN CENTER COMMERCIAL AREA



MAJOR COMPONENT : TOWN CENTER COMMERCIAL AREA



TOWN CENTER USAGE PROGRAM - NEW DEVELOPMENT

The primary component of the master plan is the proposed Town Center and a re-configured commercial area. Given the decline of the existing Spring Hill Shopping Plaza and its dated look, the master plan proposes re-positioning this property in the Spring Hill commercial market. The plan identifies a viable strategy for injecting new life into what appears to be a dying strip shopping center. The Town Center is comprised of a reconfigured shopping, a number of new mixed-use buildings, complemented by a series of public open space features. This scenario envisions the retention of several existing commercial uses and the addition of new ones, such as neighborhood-serving retail, service use, medical-related uses, entertainment and professional offices. In addition to these, the master plan envisions a small residential component in the Town Center as well.

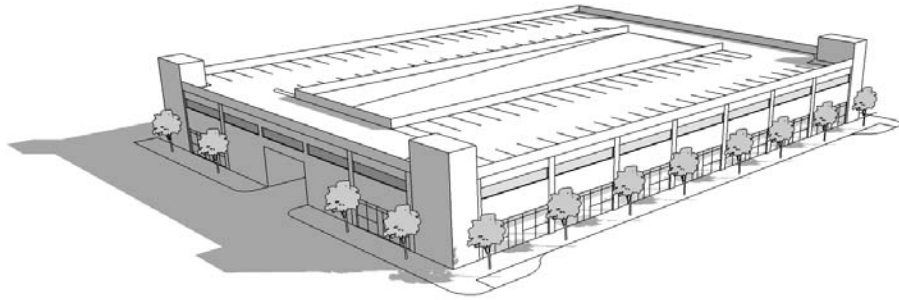
The redevelopment strategy for the shopping plaza retains the businesses on the east and western ends and removes the mid-section to allow for open space continuity from Spring Hill Drive to the northern portion of Kass Circle. New structures would occupy much of the shopping plaza's parking lot frontage and create a discernible "streetwall" along Spring Hill Drive. Portions of these structures would help frame the open spaces. The ground floor of these structures would have uses that contribute to level of activity on the sidewalks along Spring Hill Drive and the adjacent open spaces. Positioned right up to the property line along this street, the plan foresees these infill buildings as contributing to a new type of experience and visual encounter for pedestrians and passing motorists. With two and three-story masses, these buildings would add up to 180,000 square feet of new commercial and residential in six new structures fronting on to Spring Hill Drive.



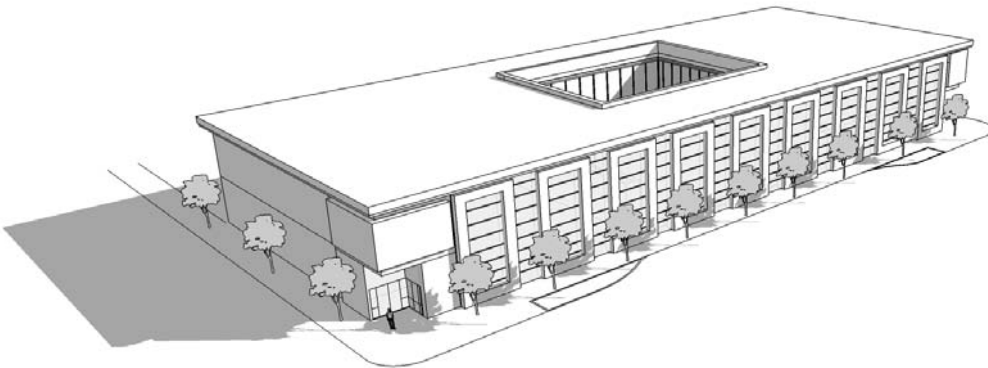
VIEW OF EXISTING COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS WITH RENOVATED FACADES



VIEW OF TOWN COMMONS PARK



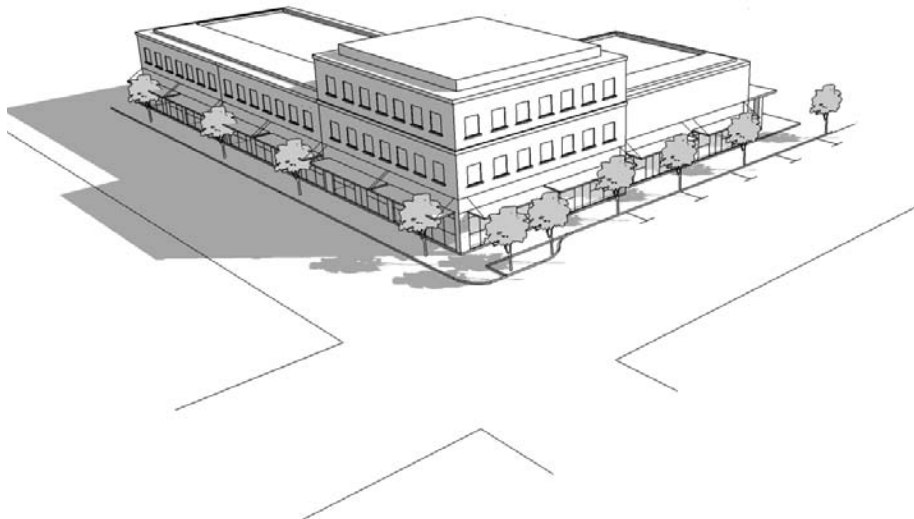
PROPOSED BUILDING TYPE : MIXED-USE GARAGE



PROPOSED BUILDING TYPE : COMMUNITY CENTER

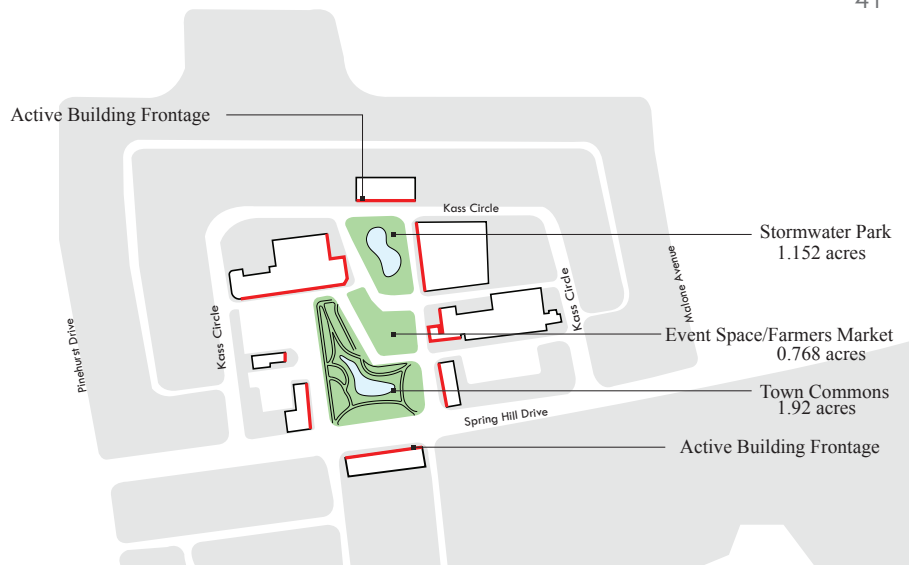
The proposed open spaces are critical to realizing the Town Center concept. They are intended to function as a series of “outdoor rooms” that complement the commercial area and serve as the public heart of the larger Spring Hill community. These open space features would provide gathering places for local residents and visitors, and contribute to the civic life of the area. In addition to this, these spaces would contribute to a sense of place and establish a new identity for the commercial district. The largest of these spaces, the Town Commons would anchor the southern end of the commercial area and front on to Spring Hill Drive. At 1.8 acres, this space would include a dense canopy of shade trees, walking paths, seating, public art and one of two central stormwater ponds. Bordered by new buildings on three sides, it would be the primary civic space that accommodates everyday casual and leisure activities in the commercial area.

The middle open space feature in the Town Center” is envisioned as a multi-purpose event space. At .7 acres in size, it is proposed as a type of “convertible” space that can be reconfigured for various types of family and community gatherings, as well as special events. This space could accommodate such activities as outdoor concerts, movies on the lawn, festivals and farmers markets.



PROPOSED BUILDING TYPE : MIXED-USE COMMERCIAL / RESIDENTIAL

41



TOWN CENTER OPEN SPACES AND ACTIVE BUILDING FRONTAGES

The northern open space in the Town Center area is envisioned as a passive stormwater park. This space is .9 acres in size and would be framed by a new parking structure along its eastern edge and a new community center across Kass Circle on the north. As a stormwater park, this space would be closer to residents north of the commercial area and provide an additional central stormwater management feature the area. This park would serve as foreground to the community center and would be enhanced with native vegetation, lawn areas, shade trees, a dog park and other pedestrian amenities.

The proposed parking structure in the Town Center is envisioned as a “joint-use”, central parking facility. As such, it would be a public parking facility that serves the commercial area, the community center and the proposed bus transfer station on the eastern side of the stormwater park. It would serve as replacement parking for the loss of some of the surface parking in the existing Spring Hill Shopping Plaza. With three levels, this structure would have leasable space in its ground floor facing the park and along Kass Circle. The upper two levels of the garage could accommodate up to 230 parking spaces.



VIEW OF PROPOSED BUS STATION ALONG KASS CIRCLE

The envisioned community center along the northern portion of Kass Circle would introduce a civic use in the Town Center. With a varied program aimed at attracting all age segments of the larger community, this facility would generate additional pedestrian activity along Kass Circle and frame the northern end of the Town Center's central open space complex. The community center is envisioned as a type of "third place" for local residents and would complement both existing and proposed uses.

Given the envisioned level of activity throughout the Town Center, the master plan proposes a central transportation facility along the northern edge of Kass Circle. This facility would function as a bus transfer station for existing and future bus routes in this part of Hernando County. If needed, this bus stop could work in conjunction with the proposed parking structure and function as a park and ride facility.



VIEW OF PROPOSED COMMUNITY CENTER AT KASS CIRCLE

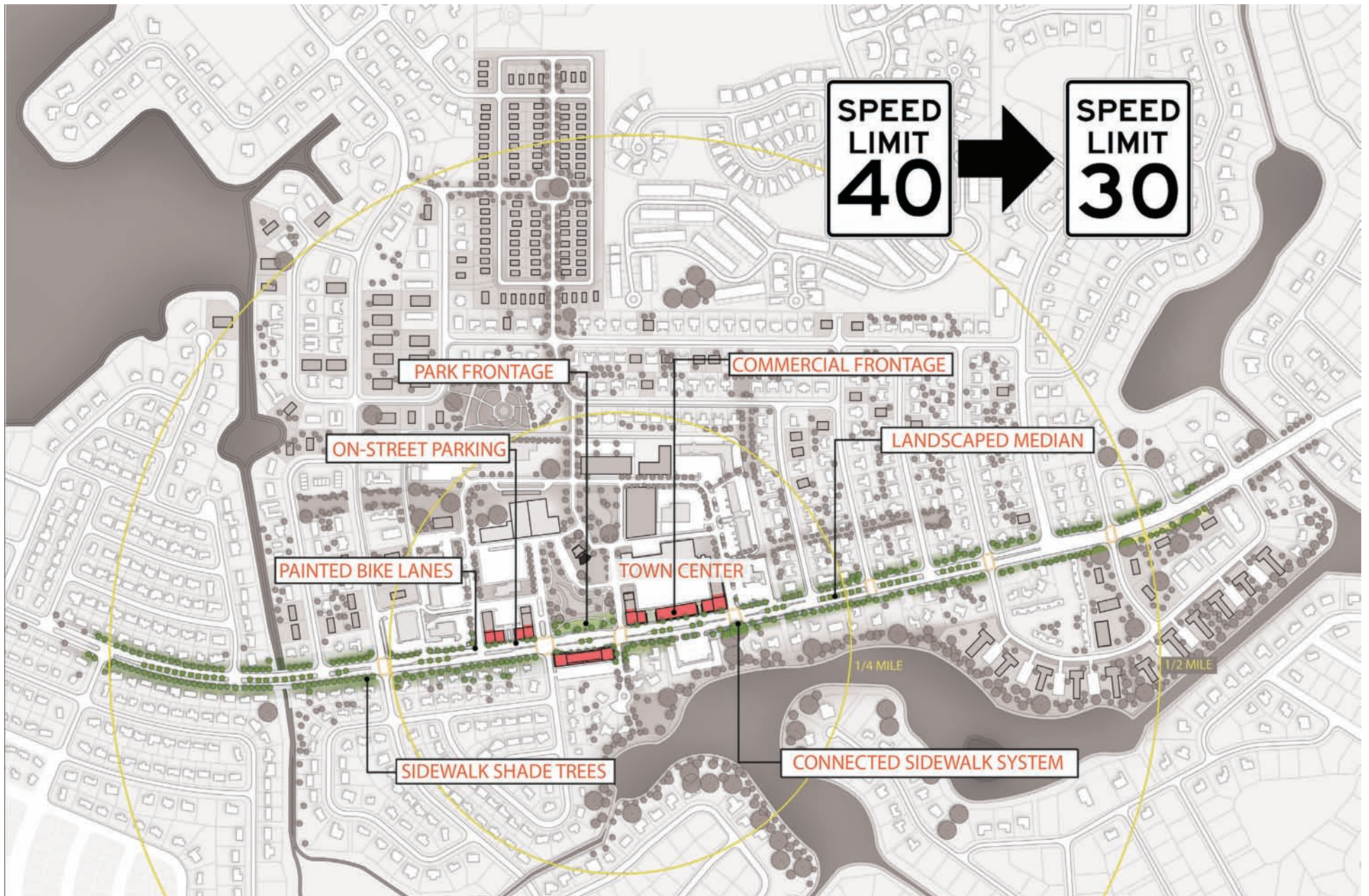


VIEW OF STORMWATER PARK AT KASS CIRCLE

CHAPTER 8
SPRING HILL
DRIVE



VIEW OF SPRING HILL DRIVE AT TOWN COMMONS PARK



PROPOSED ENHANCEMENTS ALONG SPRING HILL DRIVE

SPRING HILL DRIVE

As a regional transportation corridor, Spring Hill Drive carries a high volume of east-west traffic through the Kass Circle area. As such, vehicles on this roadway typically travel at a higher rate of speed making it a challenge for pedestrian crossings at some locations. It has also resulted in higher accident rates and more frequent pedestrian-vehicle conflicts.

For motorists, Spring Hill Drive also provides a “windshield viewpoint” on the visual character and identity of the Kass Circle neighborhood. This vantage point has a major influence on individual opinions and whether or not passing motorists are likely to stop and patronize local businesses. Whether walking or driving along this roadway, its shortcomings are readily apparent.



SPRING HILL DRIVE CROSS SECTION AT WEST KASS CIRCLE



SPRING HILL DRIVE CROSS SECTION AT TOWN COMMONS PARK



SPRING HILL DRIVE CROSS SECTION AT MIXED-USE COMMERCIAL BUILDING

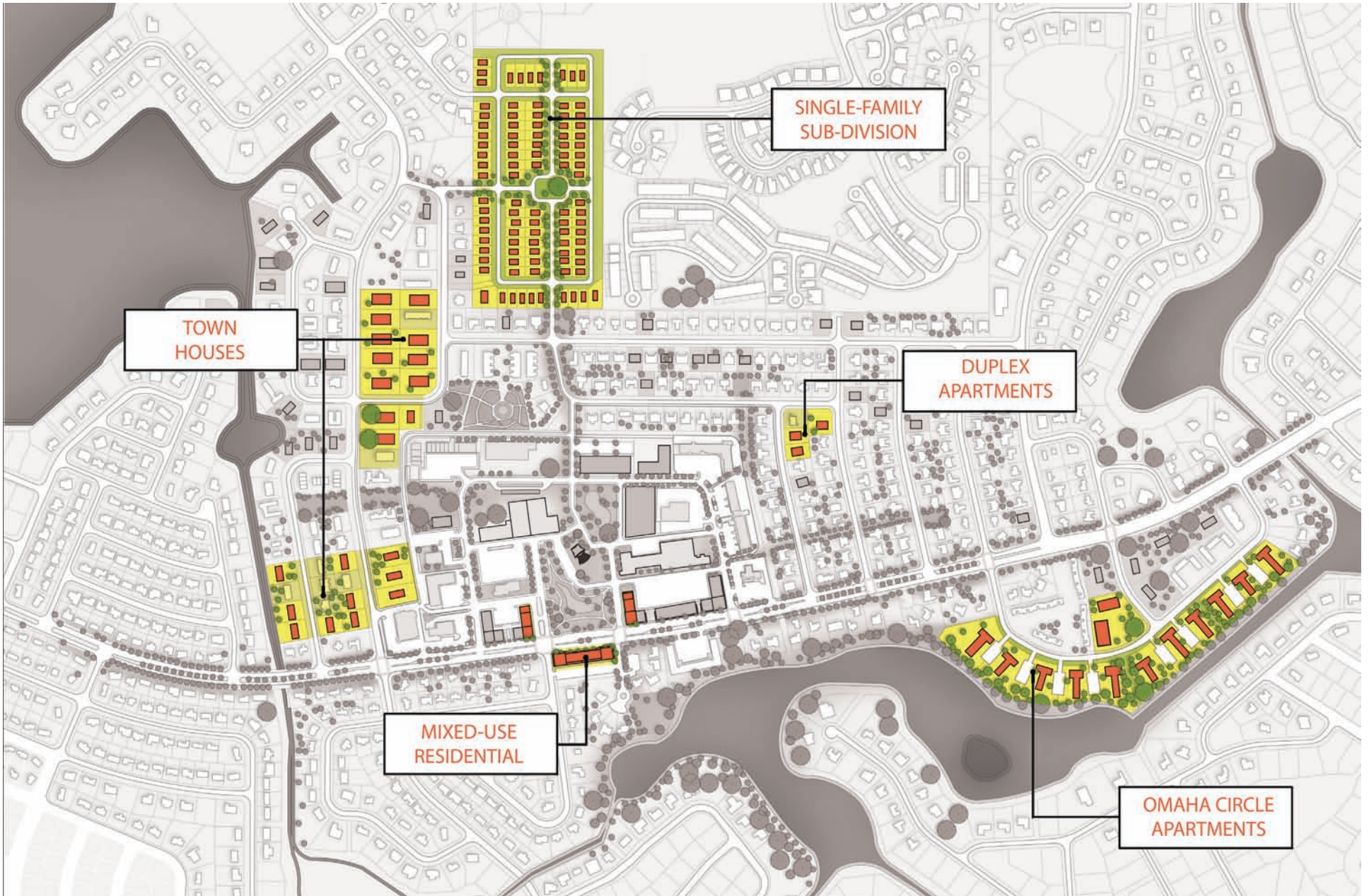
The master plan envisions the one-mile segment of Spring Hill Drive in the project focus area as being modified into a suburban boulevard that is more integrated with local conditions and incorporating a number of new public realm enhancements. These enhancements would be visible from Cobblestone Drive at the eastern end of the project focus area to Deltona Boulevard at the western end and reflect a number of “complete street” conditions. Within the existing one-hundred foot right of way, the street would include traffic calming measures (e.g. narrower travel lanes, a lowering of the posted speed limit from 40 miles per hour to 30 miles per hour, additional signalized intersections, etc.), sidewalks along the commercial frontage, intersection enhancements, market crosswalks, painted bike lanes, and other modifications that ensure public safety and promote shared usage by different modes of mobility.

The plan also envisions a number of streetscape and other small-scale features aimed at enhancing the general character and image of the Town Center commercial area. Along with a complete and connected sidewalk system, the plan envisions the addition of five new painted crosswalks at intersections along the one-mile portion of Spring Hill Drive within the project focus area. In addition to these, the plan proposes a landscaped median and trees that provide over the sidewalks along both sides of the street. Additional roadway and pedestrian lighting is also proposed to ensure proper levels of illumination for motorists, pedestrians and cyclists.

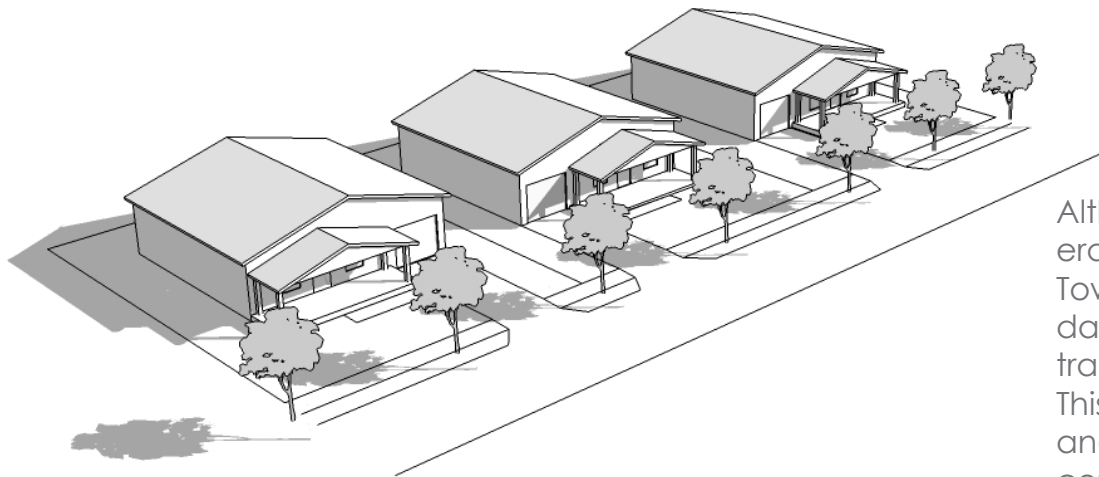
CHAPTER 9
RESIDENTIAL
INFILL



VIEW OF INFILL CONDITIONS ALONG NEIGHBORHOOD STREET

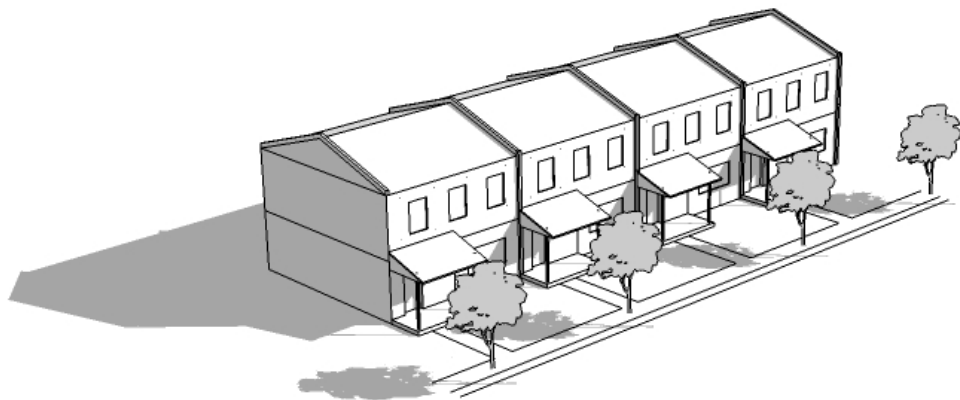


RESIDENTIAL INFILL



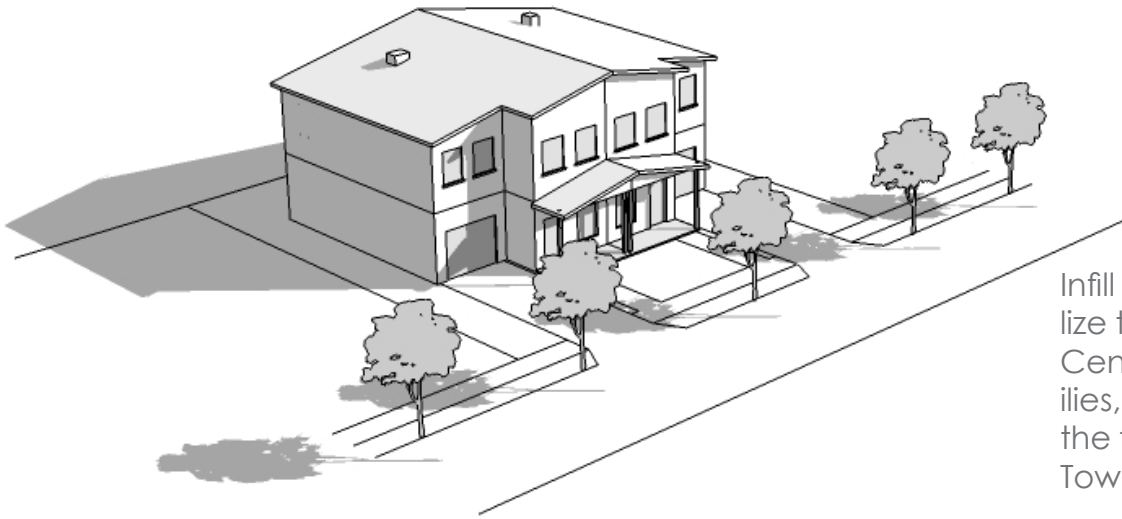
PROPOSED BUILDING TYPE : SINGLE-FAMILY HOUSES

Although the project focus area is largely built out, several neighborhood streets to the west and north of the Town Center area have vacant lots that can accommodate infill development. These lots are mostly concentrated in areas zoned primarily for multi-family dwellings. This inventory of vacant property is all privately owned and includes mid-block “missing-tooth” parcels, some corner lots and some large area parcels. All of this property lends itself to a multi-phased, multi-faceted infill development program that would involve for-profit and non-profit builders, as well as the public-sector.



PROPOSED BUILDING TYPE : TOWN HOUSES

The master plan recognizes these conditions and proposes an approach to infill development that adds a number of new “rooftops” to the Kass Circle neighborhood. Development on these parcels will increase the overall residential density of the project focus area and repair the voids in the built fabric of the adjacent neighborhoods. In addition to the existing residential population, infill development will contribute to the critical mass of people needed to activate the Town Center, enhance prospects for new commercial development and strengthen the patronage base needed to support a range of new commercial uses.



PROPOSED BUILDING TYPE : DUPLEX

Infill development in the project area will also help stabilize the different multi-family areas adjacent to the Town Center and provide a range of housing options for families, seniors, couples and individuals. The plan proposes the following strategies for infill development around the Town Center commercial area:

- A multi-parcel, “scattered-site” infill approach on smaller lots dispersed northeast of the commercial area
- A concentrated “block rebuilding” approach on parcels west of the commercial area
- A single-family subdivision strategy for large vacant parcels directly north of the commercial area
- An individual lot, maximum density development approach on the large area parcels southeast of the commercial area

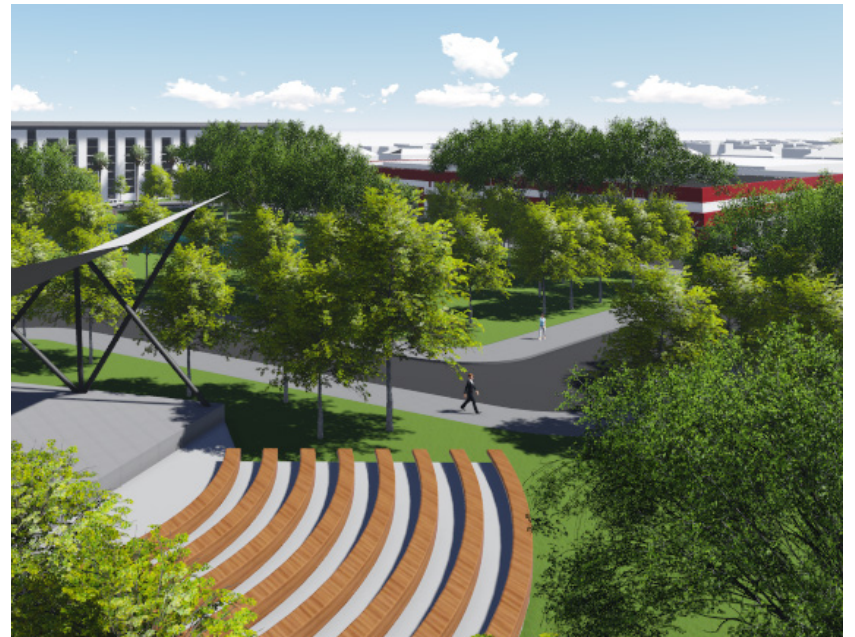
In each of these areas, there already exists a precedent for residential building types. The plan proposes new infill structures that are sensitive to the established scale, character and site conditions of existing neighborhoods. Altogether, the Kass Circle area can accommodate over eight-hundred seventy new dwelling units.

**KASS CIRCLE AREA
RESIDENTIAL INFILL/NEW HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES**

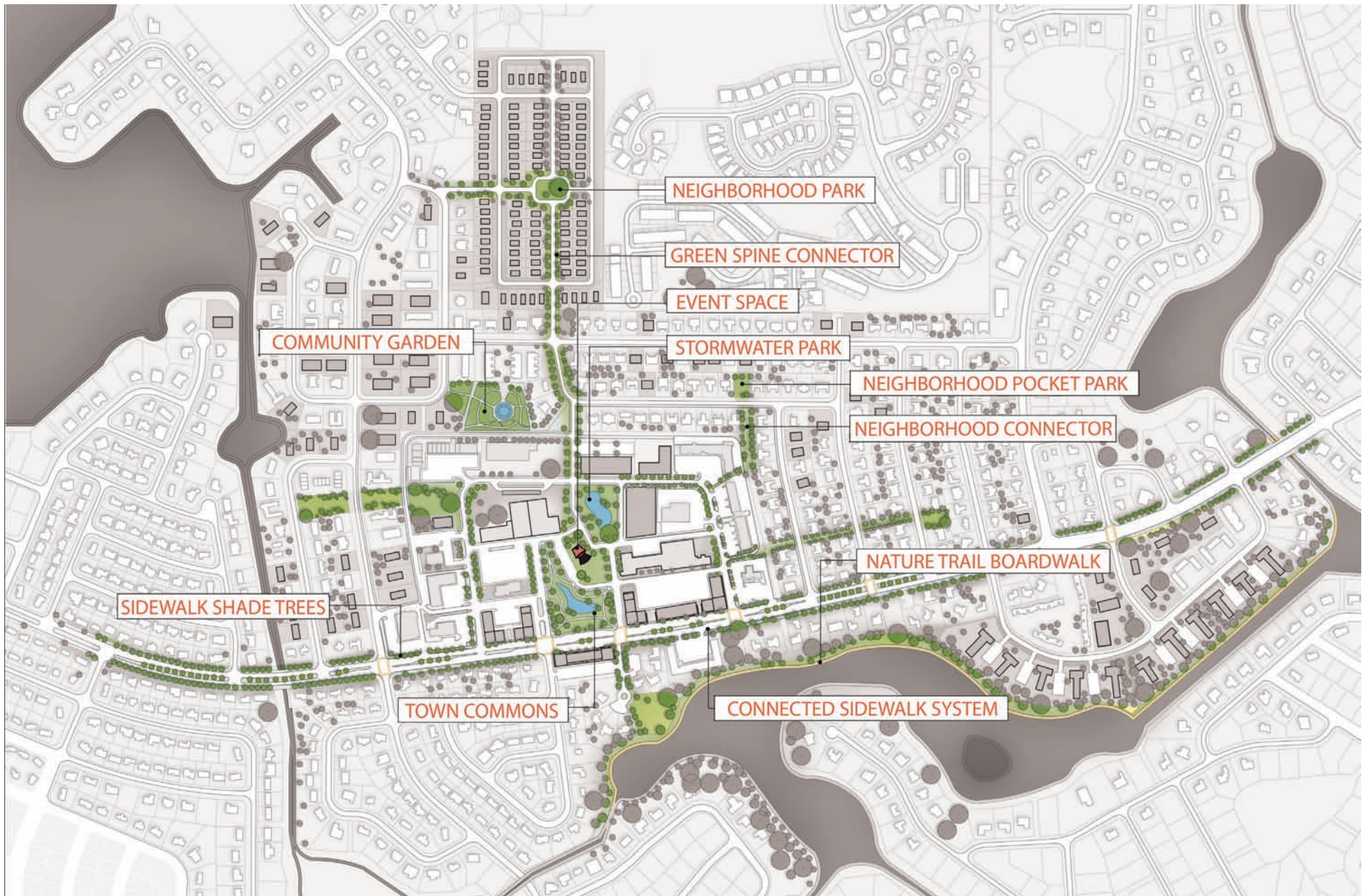
SCATTERED SITE INFILL (northeast of the commercial area)	NORTHERN, LARGE PARCEL ASSEMBLAGE (north of the commercial area)	OMAHA CIRCLE MID-SIZE VACANT LOTS (southeast of the commercial area)	PINEHURST DRIVE AREA (west of the commercial area)
MULTI-FAMILY DUPLEX UNITS	SINGLE-FAMILY HOUSES	MULTI-STORY APARTMENT BUILDINGS	QUADRAPLEXES TO 10- UNIT APARTMENT BULIDINGS
42 + DUPLEX APARTMENT UNITS	100 + SINGLE-FAMILY DWELLING UNITS	446 + APARTMENT UNITS	288 + APARTMENT UNITS

In addition to these, the master plan envisions a residential component for several buildings in the Town Center area. Certain mixed-use buildings with frontages on Spring Hill Drive and the Town Commons Park are programmed with upper-floor apartments. These buildings could accommodate an additional sixty dwelling units and provide an ongoing presence of local residents in the Town Center area.

PUBLIC REALM CONDITIONS INFRASTRUCTURE AND SPECIAL FEATURES

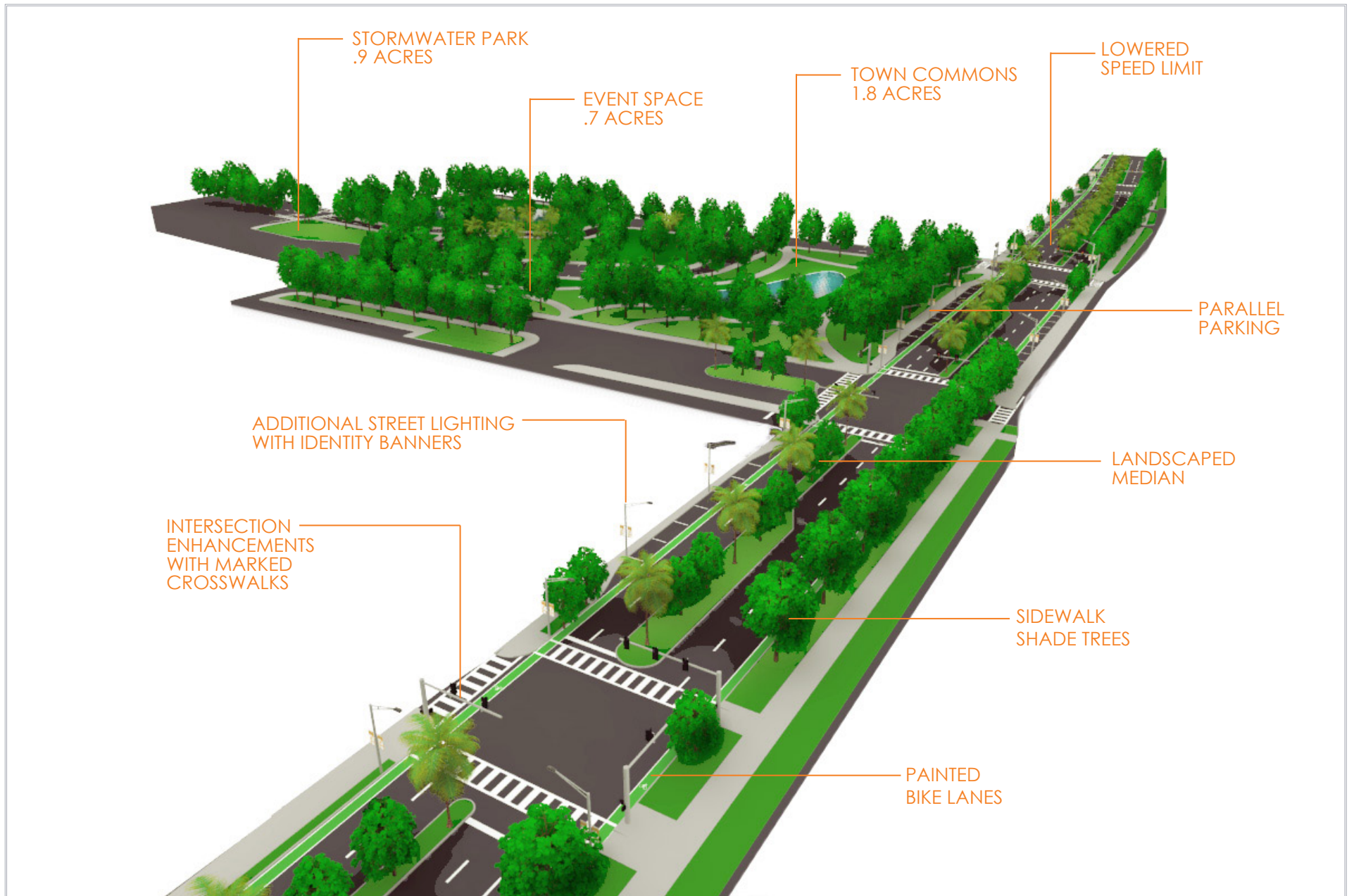


VIEW OF PROPOSED EVENT SPACE



PUBLIC REALM CONDITIONS, INFRASTRUCTURE AND SPECIAL FEATURES

SPRING HILL DRIVE AND TOWN CENTER PUBLIC REALM DEFINITION



Public realm conditions in the project focus area are typical of mid to late-20th century suburban developments throughout the state of Florida. When Spring Hill was initially planned, the primary emphasis of the public realm was on roads to facilitate unrestricted vehicular movement. Since then, streets have seen little if any change relative to public realm enhancements for pedestrians and bicyclists. Although the roadways continue to function as planned, none of the streets in the project focus area reflect current-day trends that allow for shared usage, or accommodating other modes of mobility. Many of the area's residential streets are lacking some of the typical neighborhood features that define a complete public realm. These include a lack of sidewalks, street trees and ample street lighting. Throughout the commercial area, little attention has been paid to the public realm conditions of its streets. Most lack the same features as the adjacent neighborhoods. While all of the properties that make up the commercial area are privately-owned, public realm conditions are defined only by the requisite surface parking lots.

The master plan proposes a range of public realm enhancements throughout the project focus area. These improvements can be initiated in the near term future and implemented over a longer period of time. The most important of these enhancements are the proposed open spaces envisioned as part of the Town Center. These three adjacent open spaces are integral to the composition of the Town Center commercial area and are envisioned as the heart of this part of the larger Spring Hill community. These open spaces would become part of the public domain and extend from Spring Hill Drive to the northern portion of Kass Circle. Each of these spaces has a major programmatic function and is intended to create an outdoor environment that complements both existing and proposed commercial activity, establish public spaces for individual usage, community gatherings and special events.



VIEW ALONG SPRING HILL DRIVE



VIEW OF STORMWATER PARK AT PARKING GARAGE



VIEW OF KASS CIRCLE NORTH AT COMMUNITY CENTER

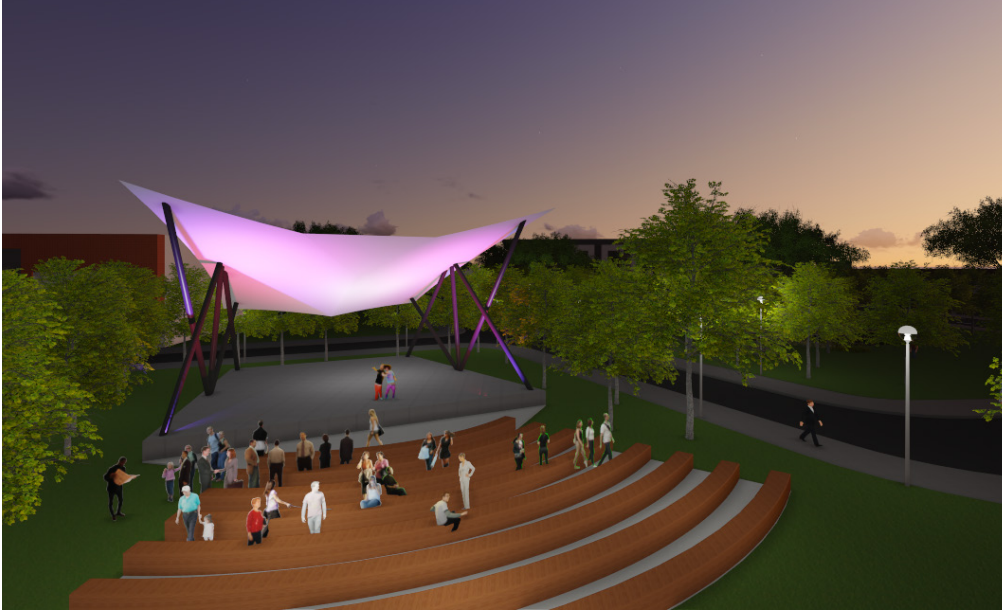
The largest of these spaces would anchor the southern end of the commercial area and front on to Spring Hill Drive. This space would be bordered by new buildings on three sides. Referred to as “Town Commons”, this open space would be the primary civic space that accommodates everyday life in the commercial area. Walkways, shade trees, seating areas, public art and landscaped gardens would be included in this open space, as well as a new (relocated) stormwater retention pond with aerator fountains.

The middle open space in the Town Center is envisioned as a multi-use space that can be converted or re-configured to accommodate different types of public gatherings throughout the week, on week-ends and on special occasions. Envisioned as a more active public space, it is intended to accommodate events such as family-friendly activities, a farmers market, festivals, outdoor music concerts and evening movies on the lawn.

The northern open space in the Town Center area borders on north Kass Circle. It is envisioned as a passive stormwater park. This space would be framed by a new multi-use parking structure on its eastern edge and a new community center across Kass Circle to the north. As a stormwater park, this space would provide usable open space in close proximity to the planned community center. This park would have public art, native vegetation and other pedestrian amenities such as lawn areas, shade trees, seating and a dog park.



ENVISIONED EVENT SPACE ACTIVITIES DURING THE DAY



ENVISIONED EVENT SPACE ACTIVITIES AT NIGHT

Public realm conditions in the project focus area are typical of mid to late-20th century suburban developments throughout the state of Florida. When Spring Hill was initially planned, the primary emphasis of the public realm was on roads to facilitate unrestricted vehicular movement. Since then, streets have seen little if any change relative to public realm enhancements for pedestrians and bicyclists. Although the roadways continue to function as planned, none of the streets in the project focus area reflect current-day trends that allow for shared usage, or accommodating other modes of mobility. Many of the area's residential streets are lacking some of the typical neighborhood features that define a complete public realm. These include a lack of sidewalks, street trees and ample street lighting. Throughout the commercial area, little attention has been paid to the public realm conditions of its streets. Most lack the same features as the adjacent neighborhoods. While all of the properties that make up the commercial area are privately-owned, public realm conditions are defined only by the requisite surface parking lots.

Almost completely disregarded as a public realm condition in the Kass Circle area are the many drainage easements and pond areas that course through the different neighborhoods. These areas are publicly-owned and were part of the initial plan for area. They were installed as an alternative method of stormwater management. This was an economical system that eliminated the need for the more typical curb, gutter and piped stormwater management methods used elsewhere. The master plan envisions reclaiming these features as public realm assets that can contribute to the visual character of the area and facilitate new opportunities for pedestrian mobility.



VIEW OF NATURE TRAIL AT GREENBRIAR LAKE DRAINAGE EASEMENT



Because the drainage easements that are integrated through residential blocks are dry most of the year, the plan envisions these as pedestrian paths and connections to the commercial area. At the ends of these paths, “parkettes” or “pocket parks” are proposed as areas for neighborhood open spaces such as tot lots, community gardens and other small-scale neighborhood enhancements. The retention pond areas, initially planned small “community lakes” would have a boardwalk or nature trail along much of its edges and provide a pedestrian and bicycle path between different residential areas.

Another public real feature envisioned in the master plan is the proposed bus stop and transfer station located along Kass Circle. This facility would accommodate all existing and future bus routes through the area. Along with the proposed parking garage, this could also serve as a park & ride facility.

The existing County-owned sinkhole and adjacent property north of Kass Circle provides another opportunity to turn an eyesore into a neighborhood asset. At more than one acre in size, this property has been dormant since the sinkhole and the land around it was stabilized. The master plan proposes a community garden on this land as a way to bolster community pride. This use would also complement activities at the nearby community center, foster activism and provide a source of local food production among interested residents.

CHAPTER 11
VISUAL CHARACTER
AND IDENTITY





Currently, much of the Kass Circle area suffers from a dated character. The lack of investment in the area has left a number of commercial properties in need of renovation or a “makeover”. Visual character will play an important role in revitalizing this area and rebuilding a substantial patronage base for existing and proposed businesses. Reversing certain undesirable or unattractive trends with new enhancements will prove to be a value-added measure in attracting private investment to the area.



Spring Hill Drive, with its inconsistent and incomplete character, currently suffers from a lack of upgrades that affords the street any visual quality. The condition of some of the residential properties on the south side of the street is a major detractor from its general character. The absence of landscape and streetscape elements also diminishes the image of this street. To address these issues, the master plan proposes a number of enhancements that are intended to “re-brand” the one-mile segment through the project focus area these enhancements will create boulevard-like conditions for this segment with a consistent row of street trees on both sides of the road and a landscaped median. Coordinated secondary elements and graphics will also contribute to the street’s visual character.

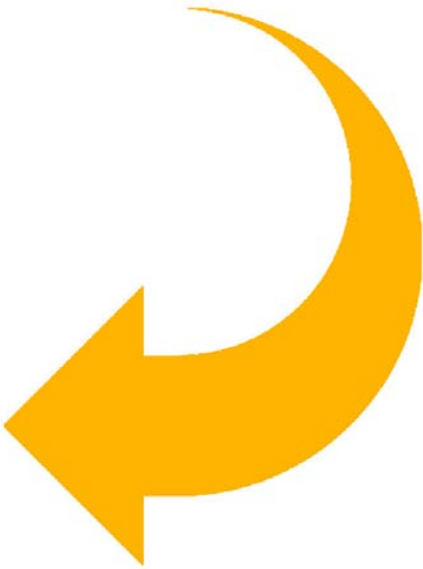


The proposed mixed-use buildings in the Town Center will introduce a fresh, new look to the area. These structures exhibit a modern architectural style that will be noticeable to both pedestrians and motorists traveling along Spring Hill Drive. Situated right up to the street, they will introduce an urban condition rarely seen in suburban contexts. Although only a few blocks in length, this “streetwall” condition will create a sense of definition along this portion of Spring Hill Drive and will help redefine the image of the entire commercial area. With active ground-floor uses, these structures will also convey a sense of vibrancy and contribute to the overall level of activity in the Town Center. In addition to these buildings, the master plan proposes a façade renovation for the eastern and western portions of the shopping plaza. This facelift would include a number of architectural and signage enhancements that are intended to restore the commercial appeal of these buildings.



The open spaces in the Town Center will also play a major role in shaping the visual identity of the area. Rather than the vast surface parking lot that currently exists, these park spaces suggest an inviting environment that accommodates a variety of pedestrian activities. The combination of landmark clock tower, shade trees, a water feature, walking paths and other pedestrian amenities will demonstrate how important it is to integrate public realm conditions into suburban commercial areas in order to reinvigorate them.

EXISTING CHARACTER OF NEIGHBORHOOD PUBLIC REALM



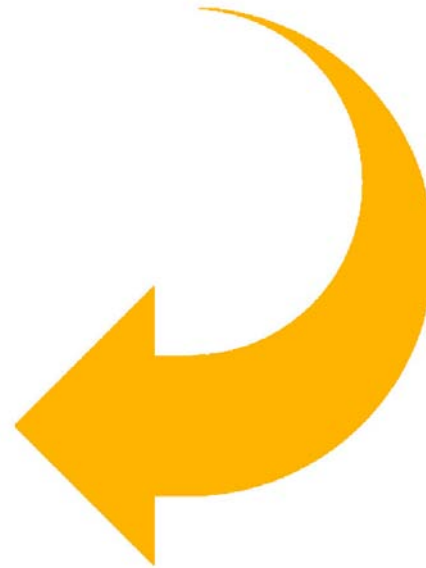
ENVISIONED CHARACTER OF NEIGHBORHOOD PUBLIC REALM



EXISTING CHARACTER OF NEIGHBORHOOD PUBLIC REALM



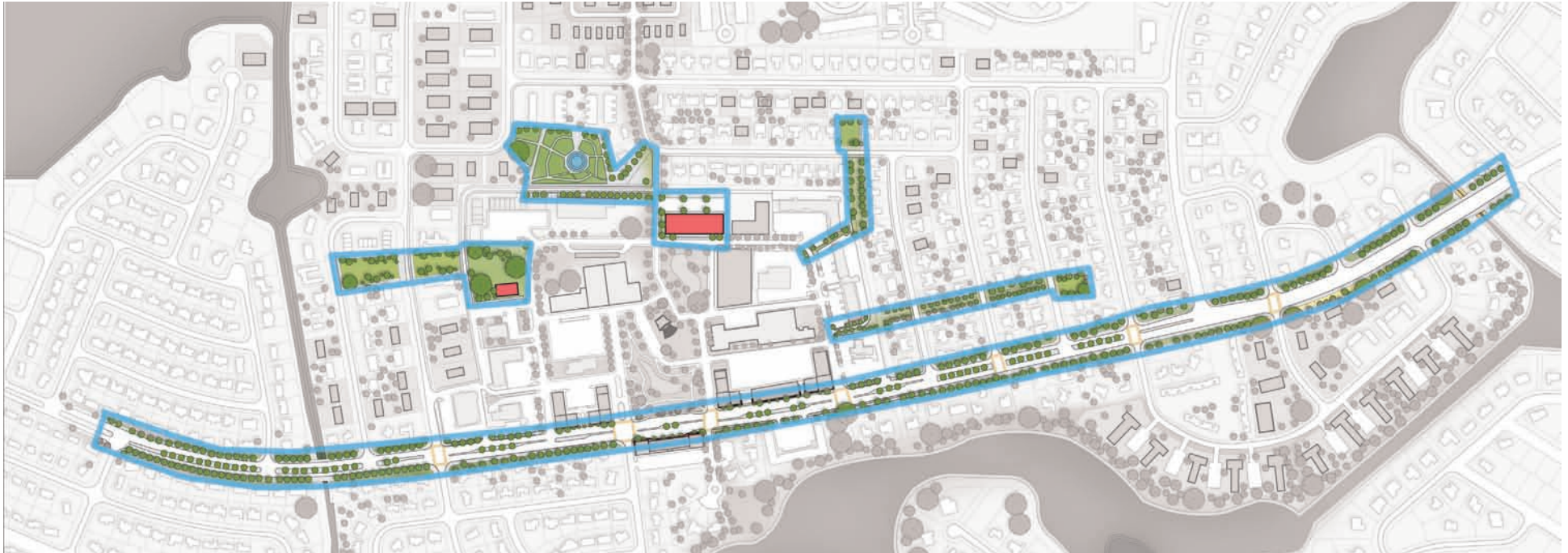
ENVISIONED CHARACTER OF NEIGHBORHOOD PUBLIC REALM



CHAPTER 12

PHASING AND IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

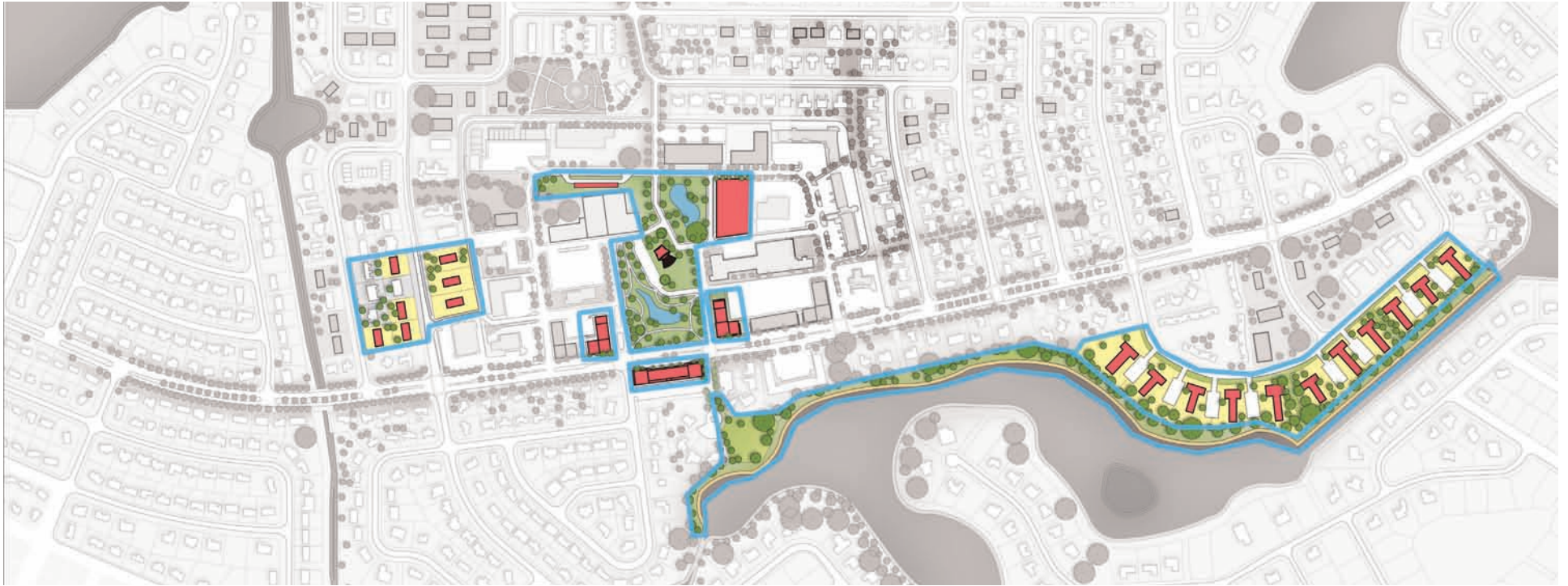
The master plan vision for revitalizing the Kass Circle area anticipates a fifteen to twenty year timeframe for realization. In order to implement this revitalization process in a coordinated and feasible manner, the plan identifies three distinct, yet overlapping phases for achieving many of the proposed conditions. While all of the following are general recommendations, they are intended to involve private-sector developers and investors and Hernando County government and the local community. Many of these recommendations assume that a number of public-private partnerships will be formed and a number of Requests for Proposals (RFP) will be issued to achieve the plan's objectives.



PHASE 1 (1-4 YEARS)

This phase will focus on efforts that can best be described as early accomplishments. This phase should include the following activities:

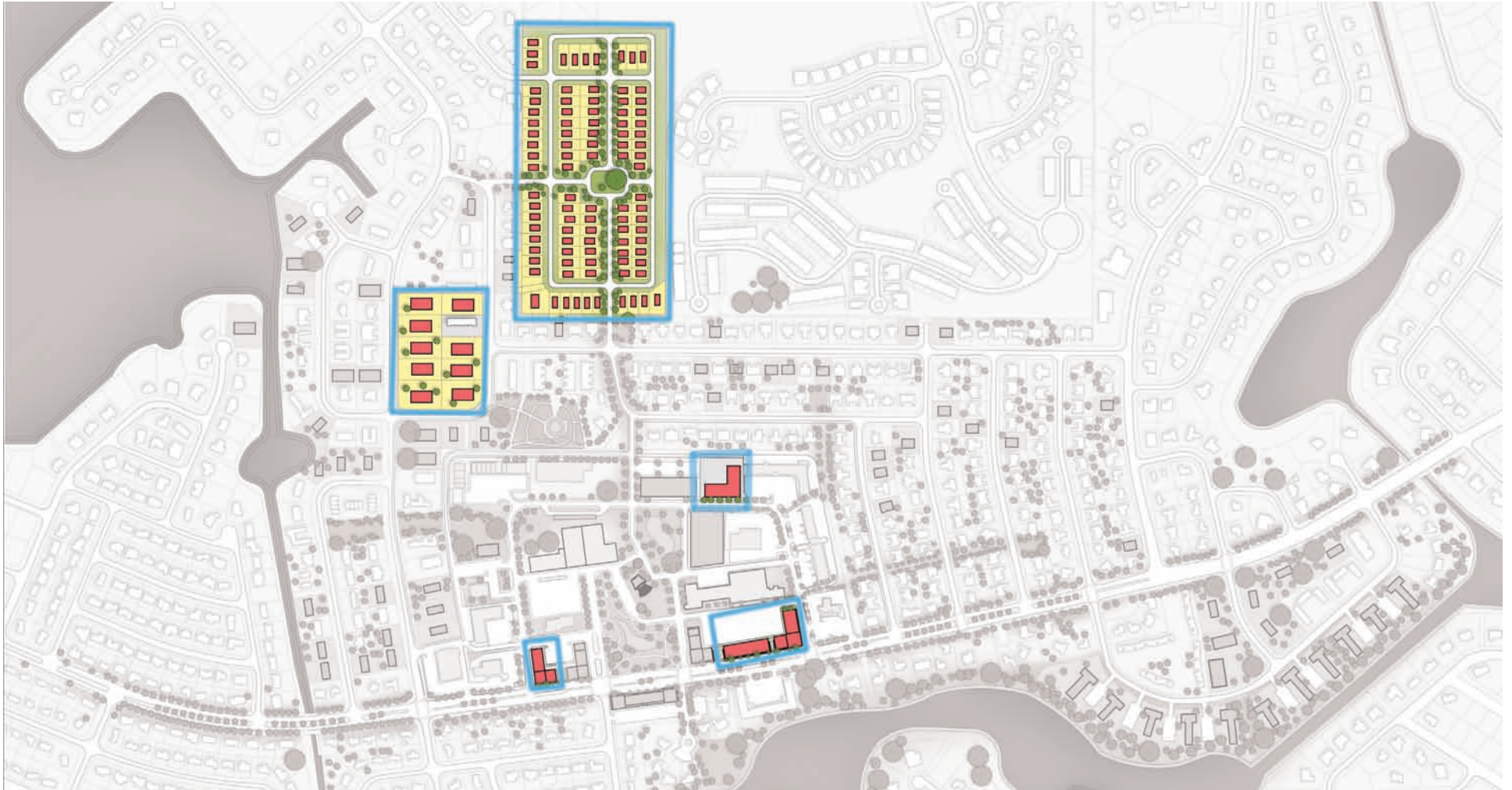
- Adopt master plan vision as the official redevelopment plan for the Kass Circle area
- Public safety enhancements along Spring Hill Drive
- Landscape improvements along Spring Hill Drive (median and street edges)
- Speed limit reduction along Spring Hill Drive
- Transforming drainage easements in the neighborhoods into pedestrian paths and connections to the Town Center area
- Identify priorities, property acquisition and assemblage of vacant lots, establish a list of qualified builders for initial stages of infill housing program
- Negotiations and property acquisition for Stormwater Park and Community Center
- Construction of Community Center and Stormwater Park
- Initiate process for establishing a Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) for the Kass Circle project area
- Identify opportunities for establishing public/private partnerships for new development occurring in subsequent phases
- Initiate discussions with owners of the Spring Hill Shopping Plaza property for possible acquisition or participation in the revitalization process
- Conduct needed engineering studies for the Stormwater Park and relocation of existing stormwater features along Spring Hill Drive
- Initiate community garden project
- Identify initial sources of funding for construction in subsequent phases
- Develop specific design standards for future development
- Initiate needed regulatory revisions



PHASE 2 (5-10 YEARS)

This phase will involve initial development in and around the Town Center area. It will establish several of the critical conditions necessary for realizing the Town Center concept. This phase should include the following activities:

- Implement CRA designation and establish Tax Increment Finance (TIF) District
- Construction of Stormwater Park
- Acquisition of the Spring Hill Plaza property or partnership with private sector entity to acquire it
- Ongoing property acquisition and construction of infill housing
- Parcel acquisition and assemblage of south side of Spring Hill Drive frontage
- Construct mixed-use residential buildings along Spring Hill Drive
- Construct Town Commons and Event Space Parks
- Construct multi-use parking garage
- Complete drainage easement pedestrian paths and connectors
- Construct of boardwalk nature trails
- Construct bus stop/transfer station
- Implement ongoing public realm enhancements



PHASE 3 (10-15 YEARS)

The final phase of the revitalization plan will include efforts to complete the remaining development components in the Town Center area. It should involve the following activities:

- Ongoing property acquisition and construction of infill housing and northern subdivision
- Ongoing construction of remaining mixed use buildings on Spring Hill Drive and other commercial projects adjacent to the Town Center
- Implement ongoing public realm enhancements

