

DATE: November 29, 2017  
TO: City Council  
FROM: Planning Director  
SUBJECT: Hwy 20 Study Update

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#### SUGGESTED ACTION

**Adopt the market study, framework plans, framework narrative and zoning strategy as a short term guide for land use policy decisions and program development along the Highway 20 corridor.**

#### DISCUSSION

- The Highway 20 Corridor Study is nearing completion. Draft materials have been on the City's website for several months.
- Our final public involvement event was held the evening of Tuesday November 28<sup>th</sup> at city hall. It was an open house style meeting. We had several stations for participants to give input on the findings to date.
- We received mostly positive feedback and no major negative responses. The project team is working on compiling final public comments in order to present our draft recommendations to the city council for adoption.

## Framework Plan Narrative:

The SR20 corridor is envisioned as a parkway equally inviting to pedestrians and cyclists as to motorists. The parkway will be characterized by high quality landscapes and public spaces located strategically along its length, in addition to integrated mixed-use nodes of activity that are supported by the surrounding residential development.

One key element of the study is a recommendation to incorporate a comprehensive trail system. This includes a proposed north-south trail to connect to the proposed perimeter loop trail, as well as a possible enhanced trail route along the edge of the SR20 corridor. The new north-south trail system would intersect with the corridor at the proposed park and signalized street crossing at Sugar Ridge Drive. The study does not give specific recommendations for a path. Rather, it only identifies potential connecting points within the study area.

Another significant recommendation proposed by TSW is a 100 foot landscape enhancement zone to establish the desired parkway character and create a more pedestrian-friendly streetscape environment. This zone will also provide other enhancements such as street lighting and furniture as well as some of the right-of-way for a connected trail network. The trail and other improvements should be installed incrementally, to city standards, as parcels are developed. Where possible, this trail would be achieved by widening the existing GDOT sidewalk; however, the city may consider policies for dedication or in-lieu fees. The trail would follow the path of SR 20 to the extent feasible, meandering away from the highway as necessary with redevelopment to provide a continuous multi-use route between individual nodes along the highway as well as to any larger residential developments along the way.

There are four main nodes along the corridor (see node map), each having a slightly different character.

Node 1 is an area just east of the Chattahoochee River. The area closest to the river is predominantly undeveloped, and should remain largely as is with some limited development at the first median crossing to leverage the cultural, ecological and market value there. Suitability analysis should precede any development as a limited area will be useable for institutional, hospitality, residential, office, or outdoor recreation in a clustered conservation or low impact development configuration. This carefully regulated development will preserve relatively undisturbed areas, but still allow for context-sensitive development that respects the natural character of the area.

Node 2 occurs at the intersection with Suwannee Dam Road and represents the most commercial-intensive aspect of the corridor. A mix of uses, including higher-density housing options, are proposed around the existing shopping centers, to improve support for retail and allow for a transition from surrounding lower-density housing to a more walkable environment. In response to concerns expressed by residents that traffic is an issue, the proposed infill housing focuses more on senior oriented facilities, but that issue may need to be addressed further. It should be noted that compact

development can help mitigate traffic especially if common destinations are reachable by comfortable bike paths or sidewalks. This can remove some local automotive trips and increase quality of life at the same time.

Node 3 is near the intersection of Sugar Ridge Drive and the potential north-south trail connector. Sugar Ridge Drive is one of the few street connections to downtown Sugar Hill, and has the potential to evolve over time to have a more compact, walkable development pattern. The trail connection and park are potential drivers of growth and development interest in this area. Proposed development at this node is small scale and responsive to the park and potential trails, with a limited amount of mixed-use nearby to cater to visitors as well as residents.

Node 4 is the gateway area around downtown, which should feature an emphasis on higher density and walkability in order to support downtown's viability and to create more vibrant uses along its edges. Downtown is the main feature, but the corridor plan proposes to extend the mixed-use, livable fabric of downtown to the surrounding areas where it makes sense, which includes portions of SR20.

To extend the walkable zone around downtown, along both sides of the corridor, improved pedestrian crossings are suggested at several points along its length as noted on the Framework Plan. These crossings occur at the logical centers of nodes or at intersections of important roads. The Urban Design Map indicates where the previous trail master plan called for pedestrian bridges across the highway. The map notes "or Upgraded Crossing", recognizing that pedestrian bridges are quite costly, and that a satisfactory crossing may be achievable with upgraded pedestrian signalization and road design if the pedestrian bridges are not possible due to funding or regulatory issues.

### Land Use Descriptions:

The following proposed land use designations are proposed to help achieve a vibrant corridor with a mix of different uses along its length.

- **Low Density Residential** – detached single family homes on relatively larger lots (15,000 square foot lots or larger)
- **Medium Density Residential** – detached single family homes on medium lots (10,000 square foot lots or larger)
- **High Density Residential** – A mix of different smaller-scale housing types seen in historic in-town residential neighborhoods including detached single-family homes on 5,000 square foot lots, townhomes, duplexes, and cottage courts (small detached single family homes around a common court).
- **Multi-Family** –A mix of different housing types that include townhomes, duplexes, triplexes, multiplexes up to 8 units, courtyard apartments, cottage courts, live-work units, and multi-family buildings of 9 or more units. These are most suited for areas adjacent to commercial nodes where multiple transportation options are present or possible.

- **Low-density mixed use** - A mix of residential, retail, and office uses that is only 2-stories in height. It does not allow single-family detached, or multi-family buildings- but townhomes, duplexes, triplexes, cottage court, and live-work units are permitted. This is the beginning state of a walkable node.
- **Medium Density Mixed-use** – A slightly more intense mix of residential, retail, and office uses that can reach up to 3 stories in height. This includes most residential types, with the exception of single-family detached homes and multi-family buildings with 9 or more units (with the exception of senior multi-family buildings). These areas are an increment more vibrant than the ‘starter’ low-density mixed-use node and should have more visitors and business as a result.
- **High Density Mixed-use** - a robust mix of residential, retail, and office uses reaching a height of 3 stories, but permitting a special exception for taller construction. The special exception could be granted for context-sensitive mixed-use designs that would require additional stories to be economically viable. This is the most intense land use category proposed and includes all housing types except single-family detached. These areas will become the most intensive and vibrant nodes in the community.
- **Chattahoochee River District** – The area near the Chattahoochee River is intended for low impact context-sensitive development that respects the natural and cultural resources there. Development would be clustered in particular locations, such as near the highway or the golf course, and leave the remainder of the site available for conservation and appropriate recreation. The intent is for the development to be influenced and guided by the topography and existing surroundings and allow a peaceful coexistence of the conservation and other appropriate uses.

The market analysis for the corridor (excluding development along Broad Street downtown) performed by BAG in early 2017, projected demand for 880 owner-occupied residential units, 210 owner-occupied senior units, 600 units of rental residential units, 350 rental senior units, 100,000 sf of retail, and 125,000 sf of office over 5 years. These would be in addition to the existing development. How that development is implemented will depend on the site conditions, zoning and other regulatory restrictions, and market demand.

# Missing Middle Diagram

(Courtesy of Opticos Design)



DRAFT LAND USE CATEGORY TABLE

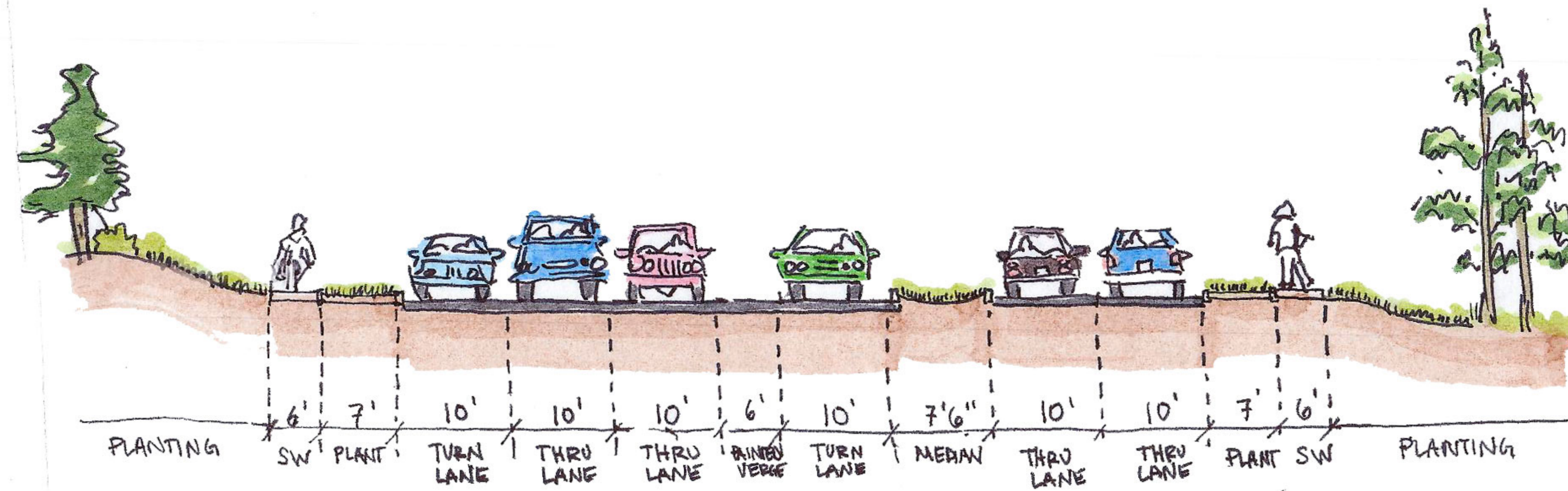
Land Use Categories	residential uses										other		characteristics		
	Single-family detached	Townhomes	Duplex	Triplex	Courtyard apartment	Cottage court	Multi-plex (up to 8 units)	Live-work	Multi Family (9+ units)	Senior (9+ units)	Retail	Office	Min lot size****	Density	Max Commercial Stories*
Low Density Residential	y	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	15,000	N/A	N/A
Medium Density Residential	y	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	10,000	N/A	N/A
High Density Residential	y	y	y	n	n	y	n	n	n	n	n	n	5,000	N/A	N/A
Multi Family	n	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	n	n	N/A	8 du/ac	N/A
Low Density Mixed-Use	n	y	y	y	n	y	n	y	n	n	y	y	N/A	8 du/ac	2 Story
Medium Density Mixed-Use	n	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	n	y	y	y	N/A	N/A***	3 Story
High Density Mixed-Use	n	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	N/A	N/A***	3 story**

\* Commercial stories would apply to non-single family residential product as well, except townhomes

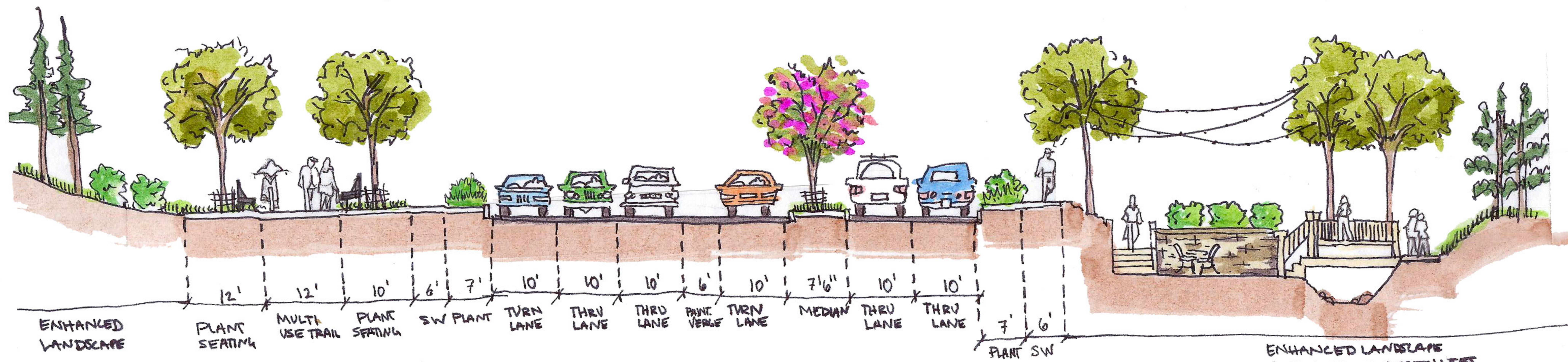
\*\* Additional stories possible by special exception

\*\*\* Density controlled by allowable building size

\*\*\*\* Minimum lot size does not apply to townhomes



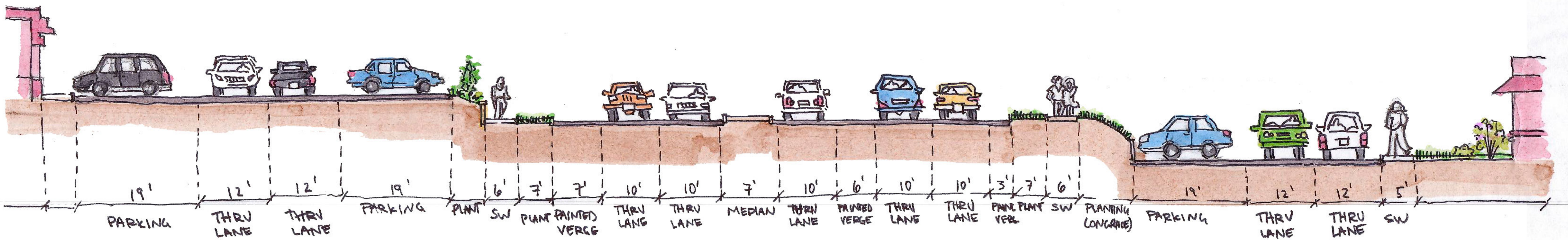
Existing Street Section



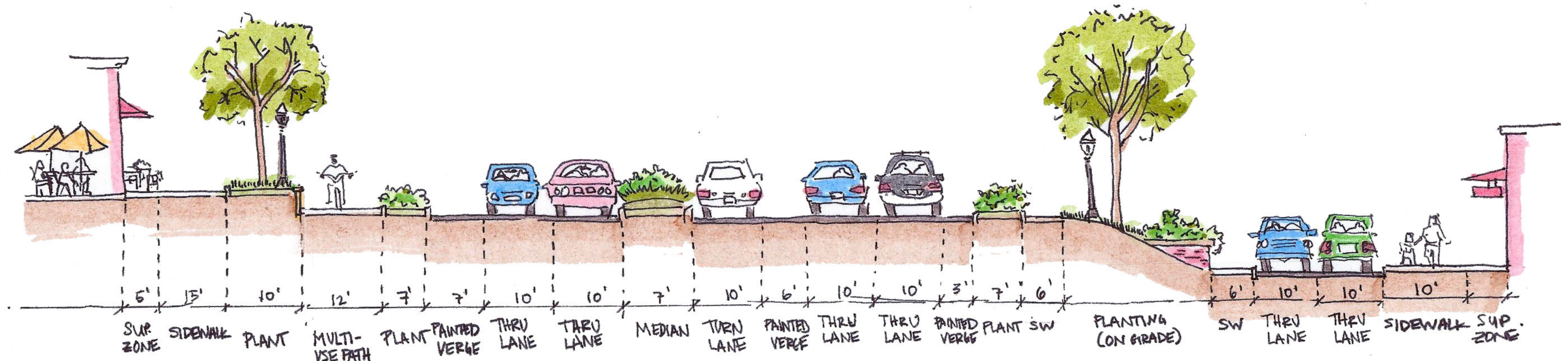
Proposed Street Section

ENHANCED LANDSCAPE AND OUTDOOR AMENITIES

SR20 - Illustrative Street Section - Outside of Nodes



Existing Street Section



Proposed Street Section

SR20 - Illustrative Street Sections - Within Nodes



# Sugar Hill State Route 20 Zoning Strategy

The purpose of this Zoning Strategy is to set a course for the implementation of the SR20 Framework Plan. It provides an outline of the material to be covered and details that are relevant to codifying the intent of the plan. It is intended to work together with the Framework Plan. Exact zoning amendments will be determined at a future date.

- Form and character of future development (see Framework Plan map and narrative for further details)
  - Within nodes: compact and walkable with a mix of uses appropriate for each node
  - Outside of nodes: greener connecting pieces with a parkway feel
- Land uses
  - Within nodes: compact mix of residential, retail, and office uses (see Framework Plan map and narrative for further details). Reduce or eliminate parking requirements to make walkable developments work. Consider shared parking and cross-access easements to increase walkability.
  - Outside of nodes: largely residential with park/recreational uses (see Framework Plan map and narrative for further details)
- Relation of building to street
  - Within nodes: building entrance should face the street, connect to sidewalks and enhanced landscaping, parking in rear or to side. Ensure clear path to entrance of building from parking and sidewalk.
  - Outside of nodes: wider enhanced landscaping area, parking in rear or to side if feasible
- Building form and height
  - Within nodes: 3+ stories, architecturally distinct floors, adequate windows, pedestrian-level detail
    - Proportions: building length restricted, height restricted based on land use
    - Windows: minimum percentage of glass at ground floor
    - Materials: preference for durable, timeless materials. Scrutinize modern materials for appropriateness.
  - Outside of nodes: height transitions to preserve views and light access, 1-2 stories generally, less regulated
- Public spaces
  - Within nodes: smaller parks or outdoor dining, bike lanes
  - Outside of nodes: linear parks, greenspace, multi-use trails, parking at some locations
- Unique design features
  - Trails, parks, landscaping – look into feasibility of transfer of open space from individual projects to a shared park.
  - Gateway – should not be part of zoning, should be implemented by the City or through a Public Private Partnership.

- Within nodes: fountains, small parks
- Outside of nodes: open space, un-programmed lawns, forest
- Uses
  - Evaluate uses for appropriateness within each node. Uses should be pedestrian-oriented and compatible with neighboring uses and scale.
  - Consider allowing new uses not in the zoning code that may be appropriate in a walkable environment. One approach would be to allow experimental uses for defined periods of time to evaluate their appropriateness. Group uses by type, clearly cite which other sections of the code may have other requirements.
  - Consider a fine grained approach to “missing middle” housing including duplex, triplex, quadplex, courtyard apartments, cottage courts, townhomes, mutli-plexes, and live-work units.
- Implementation
  - Overlay or New districts
    - Overlay can be used as quick fix, but new or modified districts will reduce confusion and administrative effort in the long term.
    - Collaborate with County: favors overlay in terms of ease of adoption and collaboration.
    - Overlay could control common items such as streetscape and landscape standards, while the new base zoning districts could handle uses, building form, and orientation.
  - Timing
    - In order to anticipate new development, the City may want to implement a basic overlay that implements some key goals, such as the enhanced landscape area. This overlay could later be supplemented.
    - Consider the timing of downtown development as well, to avoid competition with downtown. Nodes should be rezoned as development increases, perhaps over time.
  - Trail funding: Funding the trail could be done by In-lieu fees or requiring the developer to construct to City standards. In-lieu fees require review of pricing and administrative time, but are most flexible. Developer-installed trails are likely more cost-effective, but may result in friction with the developer.
  - Distinct mixed use districts allowing both residential and commercial uses needed in code (allowed in section 1003 only for 20+ acre developments)
  - Revisit existing Architectural and Design Standards
  - Avoid overlap: existing CBD and Town Center Overlays cover the same area and could be consolidated.
  - Downtown overlay has imprecise terms discussing architecture, may be difficult to enforce.
  - Funding for the zoning endeavor could come in part from a LCI Planning Grant, potentially in partnership with the County.