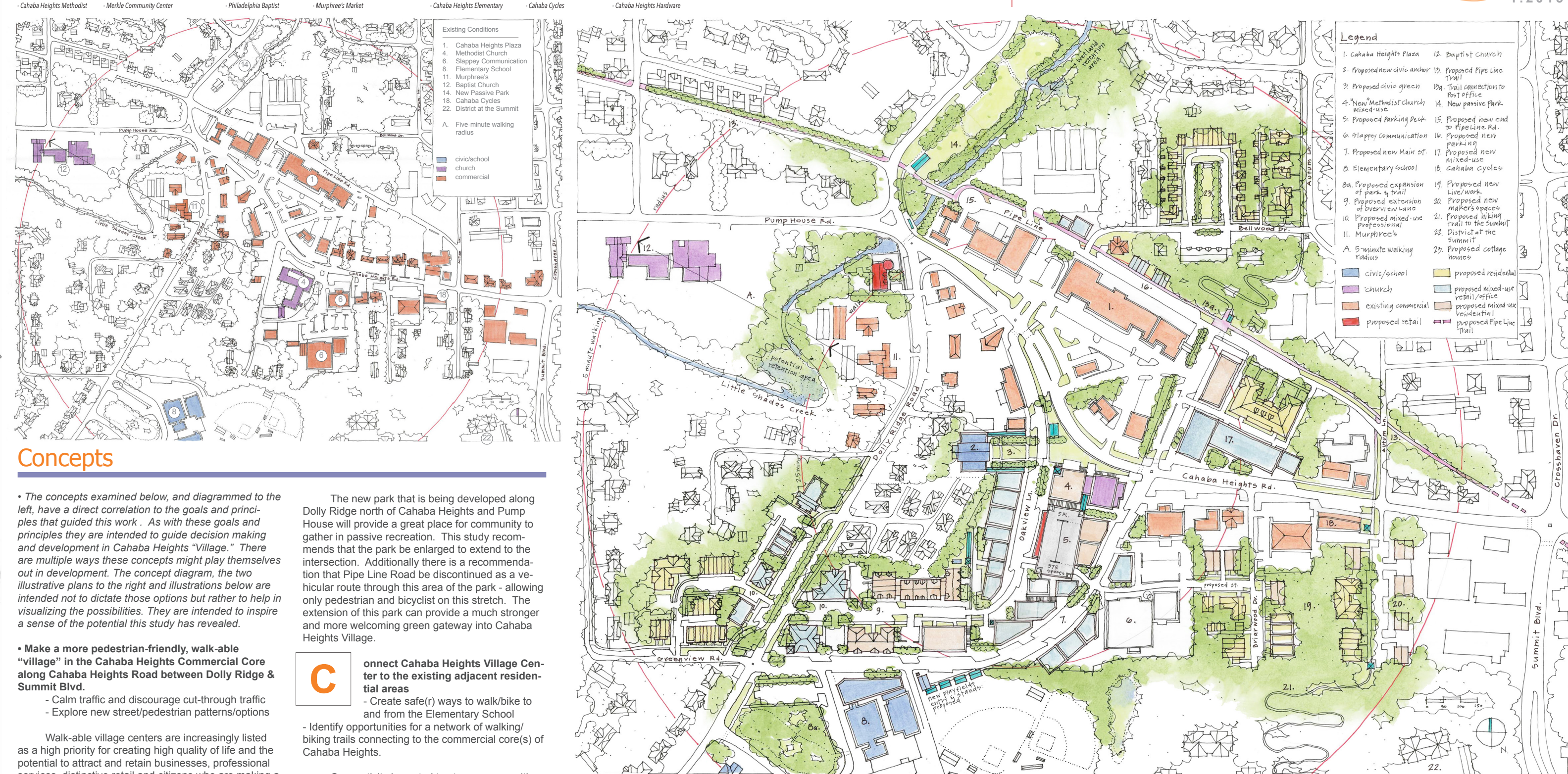


Cahaba Heights Village

Vestavia Hills | Alabama

1.2015



illustrative plan study one

Concepts

The new park that is being developed along Dolly Ridge north of Cahaba Heights and Pump House will provide a great place for community to gather in passive recreation. This study recommends that the park be enlarged to extend to the intersection. Additionally there is a recommendation that Pipe Line Road be discontinued as a vehicular route through this area of the park - allowing only pedestrian and bicyclist on this stretch. The extension of this park can provide a much stronger and more welcoming green gateway into Cahaba Heights Village.

Connect Cahaba Heights Village Center to the existing adjacent residential areas

- Create safe(r) ways to walk/bike to and from the Elementary School
- Identify opportunities for a network of walking/biking trails connecting to the commercial core(s) of Cahaba Heights.

Connectivity is central to strong communities. Providing safe and easy ways to move around the community - particularly on foot or bicycle - fosters a healthier community with more opportunities to get to know your neighbors.

One of the most exciting outcomes of this study was the realization that Pipe Line Road and its right-of-way could connect most of Cahaba Heights. The development of a biking/walking greenway along this right-of-way could provide an alternative route between many neighborhoods and the Cahaba Heights Village and Commercial Center. Additionally, the west end of a Pipe Line Trail would connect with Whole Foods on Highway 280 and the east end could connect to the Summit near the Cinemas. Cahaba Cycles, a regional rallying point for cyclists is located just to south of the proposed Trail. The new passive park along Dolly Ridge is an obvious trailhead, but effectively, the Village itself becomes Pipe Line Trail's interactive trailhead.

The connection of the Pipe Line Trail to the new "Main Street" provides a safe and convenient way of moving from many of the neighborhoods to the Elementary School and Pipe Line Road. This street would be designed with pedestrians as the priority and have the traditional characteristics of a "village" street with narrow traffic lanes, street parking, well lit sidewalks and shops that come to the sidewalk. Buildings along the street are mixed-use with street level retail and professional offices and/or residential above. This new street would provide a true alternative for safe and easy access between the school, new mixed-use and the existing commercial core. The illustrations to the right show two ways this street might be developed.

Identify new mixed-use opportunities - particularly in walking distance of the Village Center.

- Sites for new distinctive (local) retail, commercial and professional office.
- Sites for more restaurants, cafes, specialty food
- Sites for more residential options - townhouses, lots, and livework

The concept of mixed-use amplifies the ability of areas of your community to thrive throughout the day and on nights and weekends. A mix of uses maximizes the potential to leverage the investment of infrastructure and services provided by tax-payers dollars and a place that has more people activity at all times is safer and friendlier. Mixed-use was a strongly endorsed concept in the 2008 Plan and also can be a destination site as a goal for new businesses by encouraging citizens to spend more time in the retail core. A good civic facility provides space for meetings, celebrations - birthday parties, family reunions, weddings, educational activities, and community services.

This investigation imagines a civic anchor on a visual axis from the "crest" of Cahaba Heights Road. This location is currently under-utilized as storage and could provide a village focal point with its adjoining "civic" green. Adjacent parking - shared with the Methodist Church - supports high attendance activities without a loss of retail/commercial parking capacity. While this is a location that is literally in the heart of the Village, the concept of a community civic space is the critical concept here. Alternate sites might be adjacent to the new park at the end of Pipe Line Road or at the north end of the proposed new pedestrian-friendly "Main Street." The Methodist Church is - and has always been - a strong institutional anchor for this part of Cahaba Heights. Their current investment of redevelopment on their site has made many aspects of this study possible. They want their development to be a contributor to the potential of Cahaba Heights to really explore alternate destinations that are critical to either the explorations of a new Main Street. The program of activities they imagine in their new facility - meeting/worship, education, service and residential - is very Main Street friendly and is completely reinforcing of a mixed-use village center.

Explore options for food mitigation; sustainable infrastructure

An extension of the passive park along Dolly Ridge and proposed new development on the southwest corner of Dolly Ridge and Pump House provides some opportunity to re-develop this entire intersection and use creek side retention and permeable paving to help mitigate flooding.

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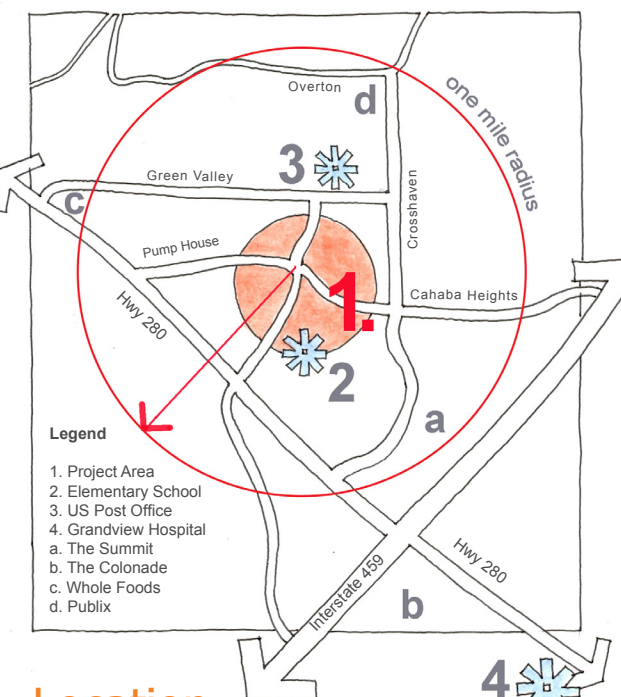
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Concept Diagram

Location

Cahaba Heights, a geographically distinct neighborhood of Vestavia Hills, AL, has exceptional location in the Birmingham region just to the north and west of the intersection of Interstate 459 and Highway 280. The commercial centers are adjacent the regional shopping destination - The Summit - and offer shoppers and diners a rich variety of local and boutique options in contrast to the Summit's national chains.

A new regional hospital - **Grady** - is scheduled to open in early 2016 just to the south of Interstate 459 and Highway 280 and many physicians, medical service providers and vendors are seeking locations for professional office space in the Cahaba Heights area.

Cahaba Heights serves as a "bedroom community" for those working along the I 459 corridor or in downtown Birmingham. The residents of this area have some of the highest spending power in the region.

History of this project

Cahaba Heights was annexed by the City of Vestavia Hills in 2002 following a referendum of the area residents and the City with the assistance of business owners, residents and other professionals developed a Community Plan in 2008 working with planners and the Birmingham-based KPS Group. There was extensive public engagement and input in the plan's evolution. As with all living-documents, it was always the intention that as opportunities presented themselves there would be additional investigations - in keeping with the principles and concepts of the 2008 Plan - to inform and guide new/developmental growth and development in Cahaba Heights.

In late 2014 the commercial and residential areas around the intersections of Pump House, Dolly Ridge and Cahaba Heights have near 100% occupancy, the preeminently single family residential areas flanking this commercial node offer little potential for the increasing demand for a variety of living choices in a walkable commercial "village" setting: lofts, townhouses, live-work, condos, etc.

The opportunity to investigate mixed-use development options as called for in the 2008 Plan seemed incredibly timely with numerous properties in-play and the anchor institution of this area - The Cahaba Heights United Methodist Church - also exploring a new facility.

In this context, a town hall meeting was convened to gather input from the community. Stakeholders graciously agreed to challenge a set of architects, planners and city staff to explore the potential allowed by the entire area could be considered "at once" rather than project-by-project. The two-day "charrette" of intensive work resulted in the concepts and recommendations described and illustrated in this document.

Goals | Principles

These goals and principles were developed in concert with the 2008 Plan and were informed by the December 2014 Cahaba Heights Public Meeting. They guided the work/investigations of the charrette.

- Make a more pedestrian-friendly, walk-able "village" in the Cahaba Heights Commercial Core along Cahaba Heights Road between Dolly Ridge & Summit Boulevard.
 - Calm traffic and discourage cut-through traffic
 - Explore new street/pedestrian patterns/options

- Create a civic identity/use in Cahaba Heights "Village" Center
 - Create community-gathering spaces in the heart

- Connect Cahaba Heights Village Center to the existing adjacent residential areas
 - Create safe(r) ways to walk/bike to and from the Elementary School
 - Identify opportunities for a network of walking/biking trails connecting to the commercial core(s)

- Identify new mixed-use opportunities - particularly in walking distance of the village center.
 - Sites for new distinctive (local) retail, commercial and professional office
 - Sites for new restaurants, cafes, and specialty food
 - Sites for more residential options - townhouses, lots, and livework

- Explore development scale and massing that provides appropriate transitions between residential zones and mixed-use corridors of development

- Explore options for food mitigation; sustainable infrastructure

Assets & Opportunities

- Good long-term planning starts by identifying the attributes of an area, particularly those things that make a place distinct. Development concepts that build on these assets have the most potential to maintain the characteristics and character that people love about a place while managing new growth and change so that it is compatible and contributing. Many of the assets reported here came directly from Cahaba Heights citizens who participated in the public meeting that set the stage for this planning work.

- "small town" feel - a real sense of community
- "has everything you need without getting on the highway"
- a place where you can live, work, shop and worship
- a local elementary school
- locally owned shops, vendors and service providers
- anchor retail shops that are regional draws: Cahaba Cycles, Murphree's and Cahaba Hardware
- "good food" - lots of variety of dining choices
- engaged local churches
- "great diversity of building styles" - not homogeneous looking
- "central location" - easy access
- "safe" - excellent and responsive police and fire departments
- "responsive and accessible" elected and civic leaders
- interest and demand for additional commercial space
- interest and demand for additional residential space/options
- appreciating property values

Acknowledgements

The City of Vestavia Hills would like to thank the many stakeholders who joined in this work effort with special thanks to Cahaba Heights Methodist Church for hosting our town hall meeting. We also thank the large group of interested Cahaba Heights citizens who supported this work by participating in the town hall meeting.

Architects and planners who contributed in this investigation - working under the leadership of Cheryl Morgan, FAIA included: Stephen Allen and Jared Fulton, Williams Blackstock Architects; David Blackmon, Blackmon Rogers Architects; Shawn Calma, Latham Associates; Gary Justice, Gary Justice Architect; Louis Nequette, Dungan Nequette Architects; and Chris Reebals, Christopher Architecture and Interiors. Darren Hamrick, Sain Associates, joined the charrette and also provided essential base material. City staff who played an integral role in the success of this project were: Jeff Downes, City Manager, Rebecca Leavings, City Clerk/Zoning Officer; Chris Brady, City Engineer, Conrad Garrison, City Planner; Greg Gilchrist, Fire Marshal; Lori Beth Kearley, Assistant City Engineer, and Melissa Hipp, Assistant to Jeff Downes.

Sketch view through "Main Street" & the Oakview Lane Extension looking east - plan study one



Bird's eye view looking into the proposed civic green at Cahaba Heights Road and the New Main Street.



Sketch view looking north on Dolly Ridge Road at the new Main Street