Walnut Grove

Downtown Master Plan

2023

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INTRODUCTION

In the most recent comprehensive plan update (2022), the City of Walnut Grove identified a need to build a new town center for their community. This town center should serve a dual purpose of acting as an economic catalyst for the community by creating jobs and commercial activity while simultaneously preserving the community's small-town feel by concentrating employment and housing within the city's core. It should also provide community gathering space where residents and visitors can enjoy cultural and recreational activities.

The City has identified a 66-acre site south of the Walnut Grove City Hall and the Walnut Grove Library as the ideal location for a new downtown area. Its location near the intersection of Highway 81 and 138 ensures that it will be highly visible to Walnut Grove residents and visitors. This area is along the city's existing commercial corridor and has been designated "mixed-use" in the City's Future Land Use Map. Please see images 1 and 2 for the location and characteristics of the existing site.

The following master plan will help the City live up to its motto of being a "Crossroads to Tomorrow," and the proposed development will support the following goals and policies identified in the City's comprehensive plan:

- Develop a comprehensive town center master plan to facilitate commercial and residential growth
- Develop a comprehensive system of paths, trails, and public open space for safe, healthy walking, bicycling, golf cart use, and accessibility for all abilities and ages
- Preserve the community's small-town feel by traditionally concentrating employment within the central core of the city
- Meet resident needs and attract newcomers by providing quality housing, recreation, education, shopping, employment, and a strong sense of safety and code enforcement

Image 1. Downtown Walnut Grove site location

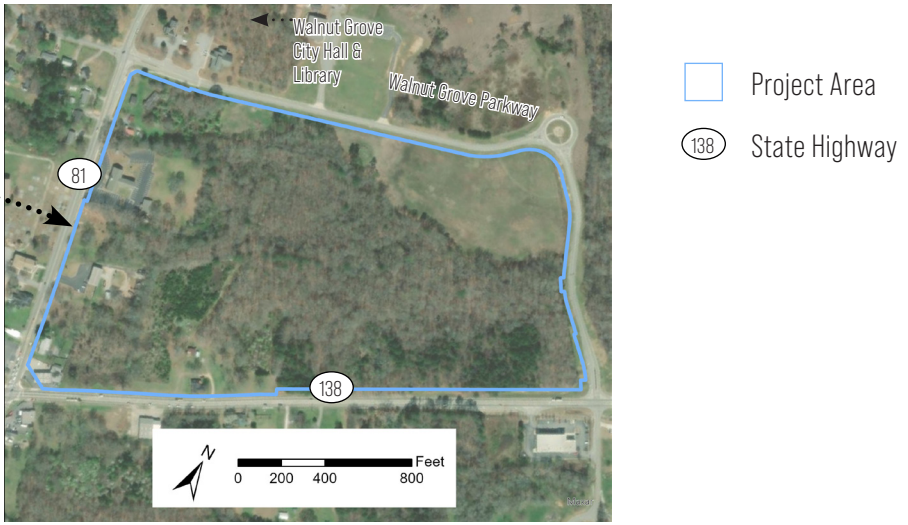


Image 2. Downtown Walnut Grove site aerial

SITE PLAN OVERVIEW

The proposed Downtown Walnut Grove will be a mixed-use town center that will serve as a new focal point for growth and community development. Developments will provide a mix of retail, commercial, office, and residential space. Retail and commercial businesses will provide necessities for Walnut Grove residents as well as a diverse array of unique businesses for residents and visitors to enjoy. Office space will attract new high-paying businesses into the area, and the proposed multi-family residential areas will supply the housing needed for the region's growing population. The surrounding streets and park areas will knit together the proposed buildings and provide a pleasant gathering place for community events, recreation, and relaxation.

The downtown area will be focused around a large park space with ample area to enjoy active and passive recreation. Users will enjoy preserved forested areas and streams and explore the trails that weave throughout. The park space will feature an outdoor amphitheater for hosting live events in Walnut Grove. The park area will also be enhanced by a pond that doubles as a stormwater basin for the project area. This pond will not only provide much of the project area's stormwater management needs, but it will also be a beautiful area to relax, and it will enhance the viewing vistas throughout the downtown. The park area's combined amenities will provide a place where the surrounding community can gather, enjoy events, and interact with nature.

The downtown area will be arranged with a street grid to maximize infrastructure efficiency and improve walkability. All buildings are suggested as mixed-use with commercial and retail on the ground floor and multi-family residential or office on the upper floors. Pedestrian safety and comfort will be prioritized throughout the downtown area with various traffic-calming elements and pedestrian-oriented infrastructure. Site elevation can be used to place higher buildings on lower elevations so that a gradual slope of building rooflines is achieved, and the building scale does not become imposing.

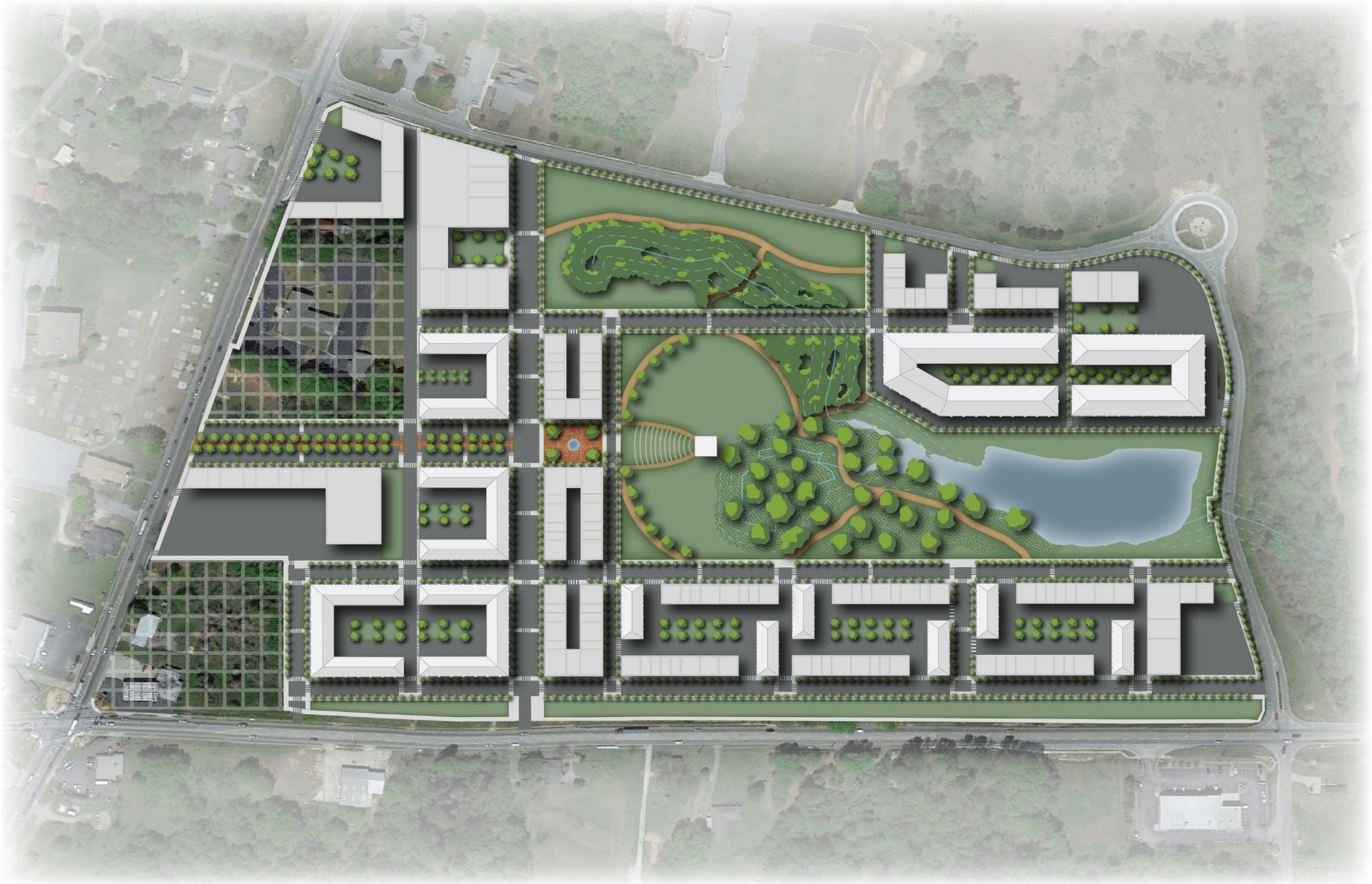


Image 3. Downtown Walnut Grove conceptual master plan

STREET NETWORK

Streets in the downtown area are intended to be pleasant, pedestrian-friendly spaces connecting residents and visitors. The gridded street network provides an efficient way for pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers to get around. The street design can also provide abundant street parking to promote access to businesses, homes, and public spaces. Street parking will seek to reduce the need for off-street parking required per block and maximize land use efficiency. Narrower streets will have parallel parking spaces while wider streets will have angled parking.

Pedestrian safety should be prioritized throughout the downtown by incorporating crosswalks, mid-block crossings, and other pedestrian-oriented design elements. Street trees, wide sidewalks, and zero setbacks from storefronts will provide pedestrians with a comfortable and interesting experience.

The street network, as designed, will provide a mixture of terminating vistas, overlooks of open spaces, pedestrian zones, and infrastructure service areas. Streets are intended to be lined with ornate, traditionally styled buildings.

Image 4. Intersection in Glenwood Park, Atlanta

Image 5. Rendering of a Downtown Walnut Grove streetscape

Street Parking Spaces	740 spaces
Total Right-of-way Area	17.35 acres
Total Right-of-way Length	2.35 miles

Table 1. Street Network Summary Statistics

STREET NETWORK (CONTINUED)

Circulation

Primary roads will provide the main entry and exit points for the downtown area. The primary and secondary streets act as collectors and are intended to handle most of the traffic flow. Streets with 60-foot and 80-foot rights-of-way will be predominantly bi-directional. East-to-west roads will be primarily two-way as well. The main boulevard will have one-way roads running in both directions with one travel lane and diagonal on-street parking. Service alleys are intended to be one-way due to their limited width. Inter-block service alleys will require an interior circulation strategy per block which can be assessed on a per block basis. A frontage road parallel to and north of State Route 138 is incorporated to provide separation from the main arterial and to provide access to the southernmost blocks.

Image 6. Street network circulation diagram

STREET NETWORK (CONTINUED)

Road Types

Boulevard

The Boulevard connects Highway 81 to the center of downtown. It is a divided two-way street with a 120' right-of-way. The median contains a pedestrian trail. The Boulevard right-of-way will have one travel lane per side, forward-angled street parking, planting strips, and sidewalks. Image 7 illustrates this right-of-way design.

Primary Streets

Primary streets would be the main roads in the downtown area. This includes a frontage street parallel to Highway 138, two streets parallel to the central park space, and a street connecting Walnut Grove Parkway, Highway 138, and the Boulevard. These streets have 60' or 80' right-of-way and are two-way roads with parallel parking on either side. They also have sidewalks and planting strips. Image 8 illustrates this right-of-way design.

Secondary Streets

Secondary streets are minor two-lane streets that would likely receive less car volume but provide for circulation. These streets have a 40' right-of-way, allowing for sidewalks and parking on one side of the road.

Service Alleys

Service alleys are between blocks and are primarily intended for utility service access, solid waste collection, access to off-street parking, and delivery services. The alleys have a 30' right-of-way with sidewalks on one side and no street parking.

Right-Of-Way Type	Length
30-foot-wide alleys	0.4 miles
40-foot one-way streets	0.4 miles
60-foot ROW one-way and two-way streets	1.15 miles
80-foot ROW two-way streets	0.25 miles
120-foot boulevard ROW two-way streets	0.15 miles
Total	**2.35 miles**

Table 2. Length of streets by type

Image 7. Diagram of a 120-foot right-of-way with interior boulevard

Image 8. Diagram of a 60-foot right-of-way with a two-way street

BLOCKS

Block sizes vary throughout the site, but the average block size, not including park spaces, is 1.93 acres, with the smallest block size being 0.47 acres and the largest being 2.81 acres. There are two distinct block types, perimeter blocks, and open blocks.

Perimeter Blocks

Perimeter blocks are found between the central park space and State Route 138. Buildings border the edges of the block, with the block's interior providing a dynamic space for parking or other shared uses. These interior spaces can also contain bioswales for on-site stormwater management.

Open Blocks

The open block buildings will have a "U-shape" or "L-shape" formation in varying styles. The "U-shape" blocks have buildings bordering three edges of the block and leave one side open to allow for access to a central courtyard. These blocks are found adjacent to the park areas along primary roads. The "L-shape" formation shows buildings boarding two adjacent block edges. The center of these blocks is primarily used for surface parking lots. These lots are found in the corners of the downtown site and are designed to accommodate mid-size commercial and retail spaces.

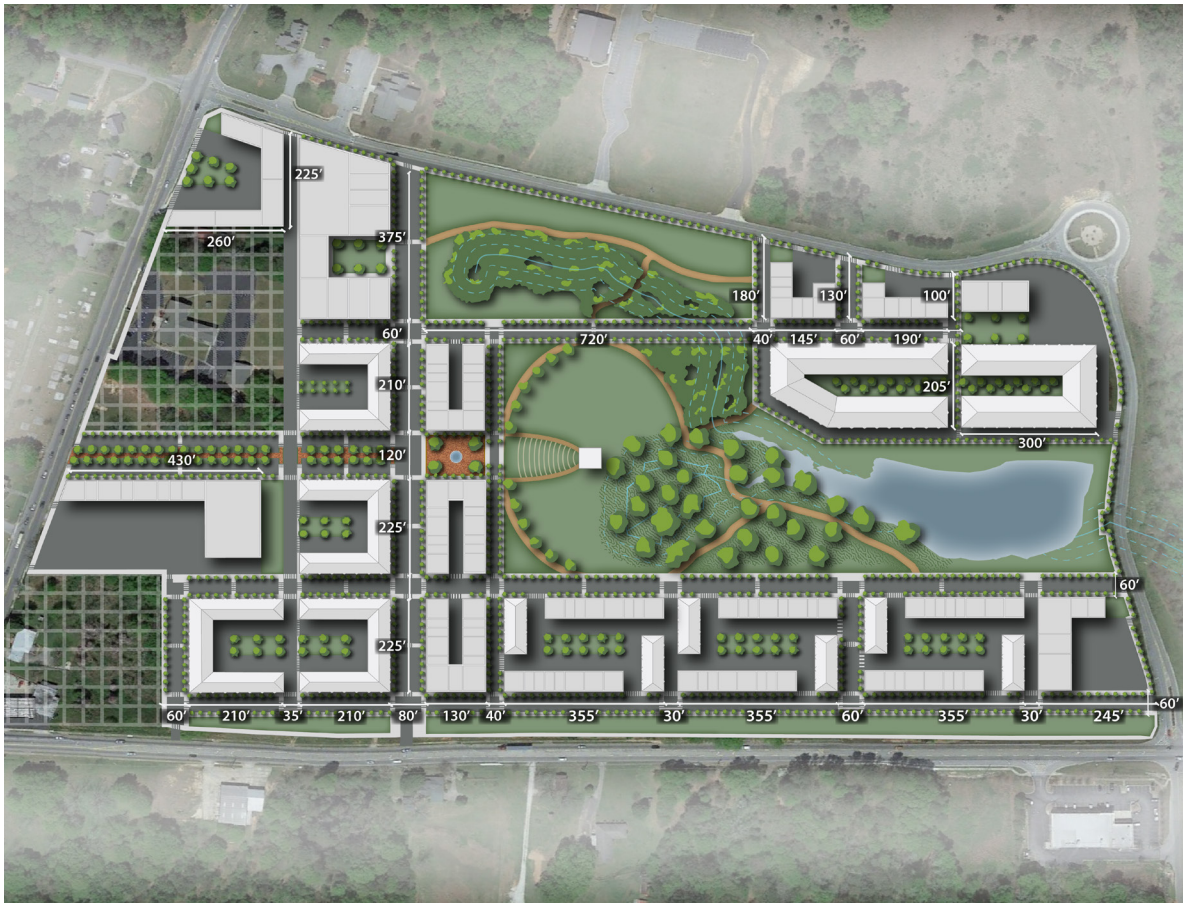


Image 9. Street and block dimension diagram

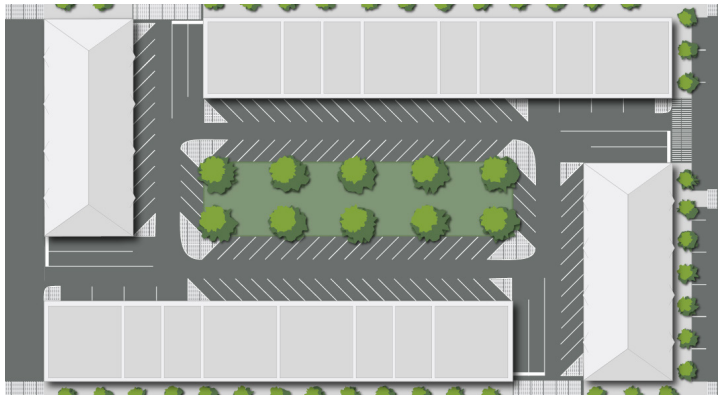


Image 10. Potential interior block parking lot

Image 11. Interior-block parking area of block shown in Figure 10 above

BUILDING PROJECTIONS

Building Design

Downtown Walnut Grove is intended to become an inviting place for residents and visitors by providing an interesting and cohesive environment. The buildings in the downtown area should be modeled after traditional downtown architectural styles and scales with decorative building façade elements, a mixture of building uses, and an activated streetscape. The buildings will host a mixture of retail, office, and multi-family residential spaces, with retail space at ground level and residential and office space at the upper levels. This mixture of building uses and amenities combined with open space will activate the surrounding streets and make walking the downtown area safe, comfortable, and engaging.

In Downtown Walnut Grove, residents and visitors should be encouraged to engage with the surrounding streets, as this will create more interesting street life and promote "eyes on the street," to improve safety in the area. Buildings will have no exterior setbacks from the right-of-way at ground level so pedestrians can have direct access to building entrances. Mixed-use and commercial buildings will be fronted with windows and have street furniture, as appropriate, which will invite pedestrians and passing motorists into the stores. Residential units on the upper floors will have windows and balconies facing the street. Blocks will be broken down into individual buildings with differing facades and heights to provide visual interest. However, no building will be sized or designed in a way that interferes with the consistent rhythm and proportions of buildings throughout the street. Image 12 stylizes what the downtown plaza area could look like, and image 13 shows a row of mixed-use buildings at Suwanee Town Center, an example of the desired building style.

While density is prioritized in this area, building heights will be at an appropriate scaling, with an average height of 3.5 and heights not exceeding five stories. Site elevation can be used to determine the placement of higher buildings on lower elevations so that a gradual slope of building rooflines is achieved, and the building scale does not become imposing.

Image 12. Rendering of the plaza in Downtown Walnut Grove

Image 13. Building facades at Suwanee Town Center

BUILDING PROJECTIONS (CONTINUED)

Building Statistics

Downtown Walnut Grove will have approximately 1,950,500 square feet of leasable space. 68% of this space (1,322,600 square feet) will be allocated to multi-family residential units located on the upper levels of most buildings. 25% of building space (494,300 square feet) will be allocated to retail space, which will occupy the ground level of most buildings. The remaining percentage of building space (+133,600 square feet) will be allocated to office space along the lower and upper levels of buildings facing the downtown exterior. The only building that will house exclusively office space is in the far northwest portion of the site, which is adjacent to the Walnut Grove City Hall. Image 14 displays the proposed distribution of building uses throughout the site.

The buildings in downtown Walnut Grove will range from two stories to five stories high. The tallest buildings will be located within the center of the downtown area around the plaza, and the lowest buildings will be located along the perimeter of downtown. The buildings will have an average height of approximately 3.5 stories.

Image 14. Building use distribution in Downtown Walnut Grove

Land Use Type	Square Feet
Multi-Family Residential	1,322,600
Retail	494,300
Office	+133,600
Total	**1,950,500**

Table 3. Leasable square footage by land use type

Multi-family Residential Units	1,090 residential units
Approximate area population	2,640 units
Population Density	45 people per acre

Table 4. Residential density in Downtown Walnut Grove

PARKS AND TRAILS

Green spaces and parks play an essential role in activating urban spaces and improving the health and well-being of surrounding residents. They provide active and passive recreation opportunities, create beautiful gathering spaces for residents, and act as magnets for attracting visitors. If designed correctly, green spaces can also provide essential ecological benefits such as absorbing stormwater, cleaning water, cooling urban areas, and improving people's mental health.

Downtown Walnut Grove will be well-served by parks and trails that serve multiple functions to residents and visitors. The downtown area will be anchored by a 17-acre park area that will highlight much of the natural aspects of the existing site. The park will provide ample green space for people to gather, relax, and play. The park will also feature a large pond, which will serve as a beautiful natural element within the park, as well as a stormwater management basin to serve the entire downtown area. In total, the proposed development would provide approximately 276 square feet of park space per resident, which is more than three times the minimum amount of green space per person recommended by the World Health Organization (97 square feet).

Walking trails will transverse the entire park area. These trails will meander through preserved forested and wetland areas onsite in which users can enjoy beautiful scenery and naturally landscaped areas. The walking trails will have many entry points throughout the downtown area, adding a valuable pedestrian transportation option for users. Image 15 displays a rendering of what the walking trails could look like in the park area.

Park Space	17 acres
Park Space per Resident	276 square feet per resident
Total Trails	0.6 miles
Pond Area	2.6 acres

Table 5. Park area summary statistics

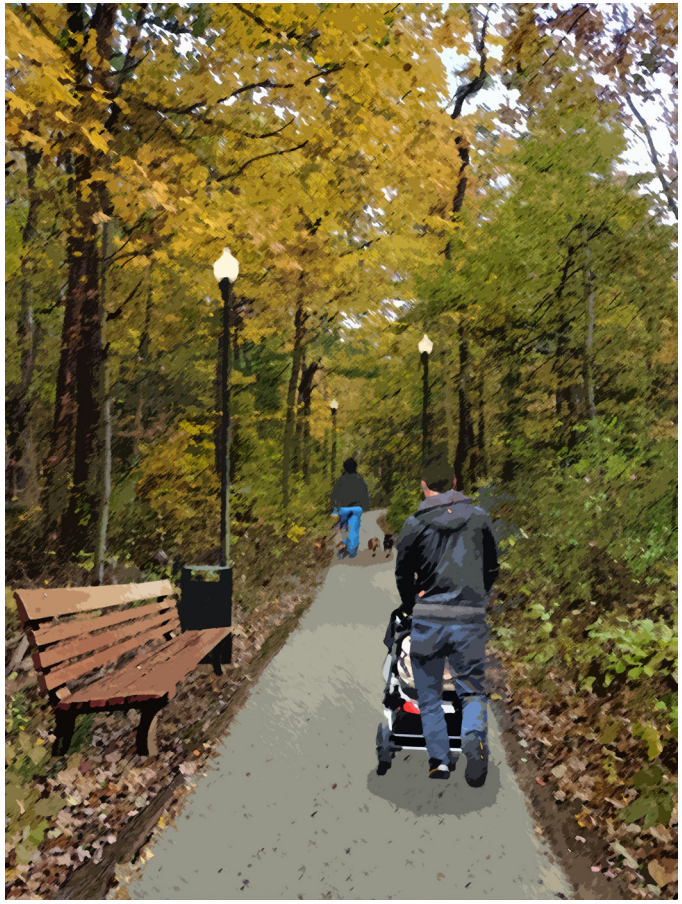


Image 15. Rendering of forested park trail area

PARKS AND TRAILS (CONTINUED)

Portions of the existing streams onsite will be preserved, and the tree canopy within fifty feet from the streams should either be preserved or replanted depending on site conditions and plant health. One of the streams will run through a culvert under a road, which is required due to the selected road network configuration. An existing wetland area on site will also be respected, and the area is intended to retain natural vegetation appropriate to the area. The pond area is located around the existing stream bed, which has a topography that will accommodate the needed capacity of the pond and minimize excavation.

In addition to the park's natural features, an outdoor amphitheater will be located adjacent to the downtown plaza. This amphitheater will allow the city and cultural groups to host musical and performing arts acts for surrounding residents and visitors to enjoy. The area selected for the amphitheater has a naturally sloping topography that will accommodate the amphitheater's seating. This amphitheater will be designed similarly to an outdoor theater at Suwanee Town Center, shown in image 16.

Beyond the large park area, residents and visitors can enjoy the benefits of smaller park areas interspersed throughout the downtown area. This includes a multi-use path in the center of the 120-foot right-of-way boulevard. The 20-foot-wide brick path will have a landscaped green buffer on both sides. Street furniture, such as benches and tables, will be placed along the path. This linear path will be modeled after a similar boulevard along 3rd Street in Macon, Georgia, shown in image 17.

Image 16. Suwanee Town Center outdoor amphitheatre

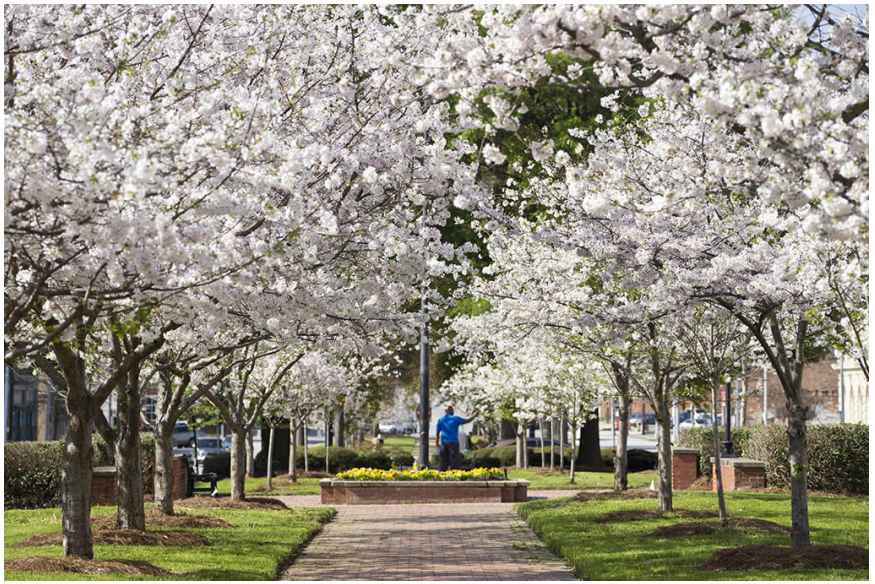


Image 17. Interior boulevard along 3rd Street in Macon, Georgia

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

To serve the proposed high-density downtown development, the city must invest and plan appropriately for infrastructure needs. Most notably, the area must be served by appropriate sewer, water, and stormwater infrastructure.

Storm Water Management

For stormwater infrastructure, instead of investing extensively in "grey infrastructure" such as pipes, ditches, swales, and culverts, the city has elected for much of its stormwater infrastructure to be in the form of "green infrastructure." Green infrastructure uses natural systems such as plants and soil systems to filter and absorb stormwater on-site, effectively preventing flooding and improving water quality. The large park area will be essential in absorbing stormwater, and the retention pond will hold excess stormwater from the downtown area.

Nearly all blocks have greenspace set aside to incorporate green infrastructure. For example, the blocks with internal parking have green space that can be used to create bioswales. These bioswales, which use vegetation or mulch to slow and filter stormwater, are shown in image 18.

Water & Sewer Infrastructure

Because of the high density of the downtown area, the site will need to be serviced by sewer infrastructure. Image 19 displays proposed sewer lines that would serve the site. The site naturally slopes downwards from west to east, and a creek is located outside the site along its eastern border. The site's natural topography can be utilized so that site sewage would flow eastward to an existing sewer main along the nearby creek.

Image 18. Bioswale located at the Los Angeles Zoo Parking Lot

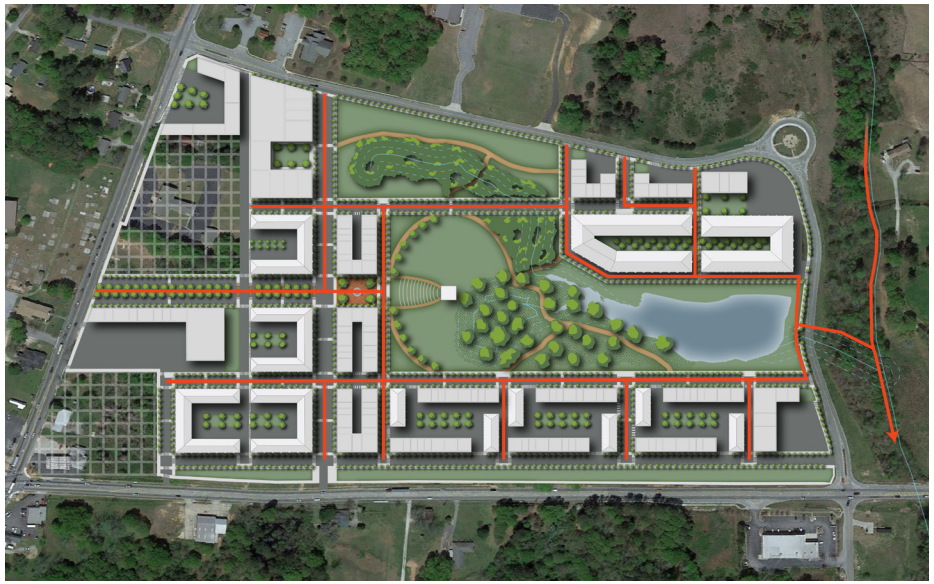


Image 19. Sewer plan for Downtown Walnut Grove

Alternative Building Layouts

The main objective of the master plan outlined above is to provide a guiding document for the city and developers to refer to when developing their downtown. The buildings and block designs seen above are an ideal layout for the downtown site based on the desires of the city and the proposed street network. However, amendments can be made to make the downtown area more or less dense. An alternative plan should be considered if it fits the street network and meets the city's needs and wants. Image 20 shows the original proposed layout and Image 21 illustrates an alternative layout.

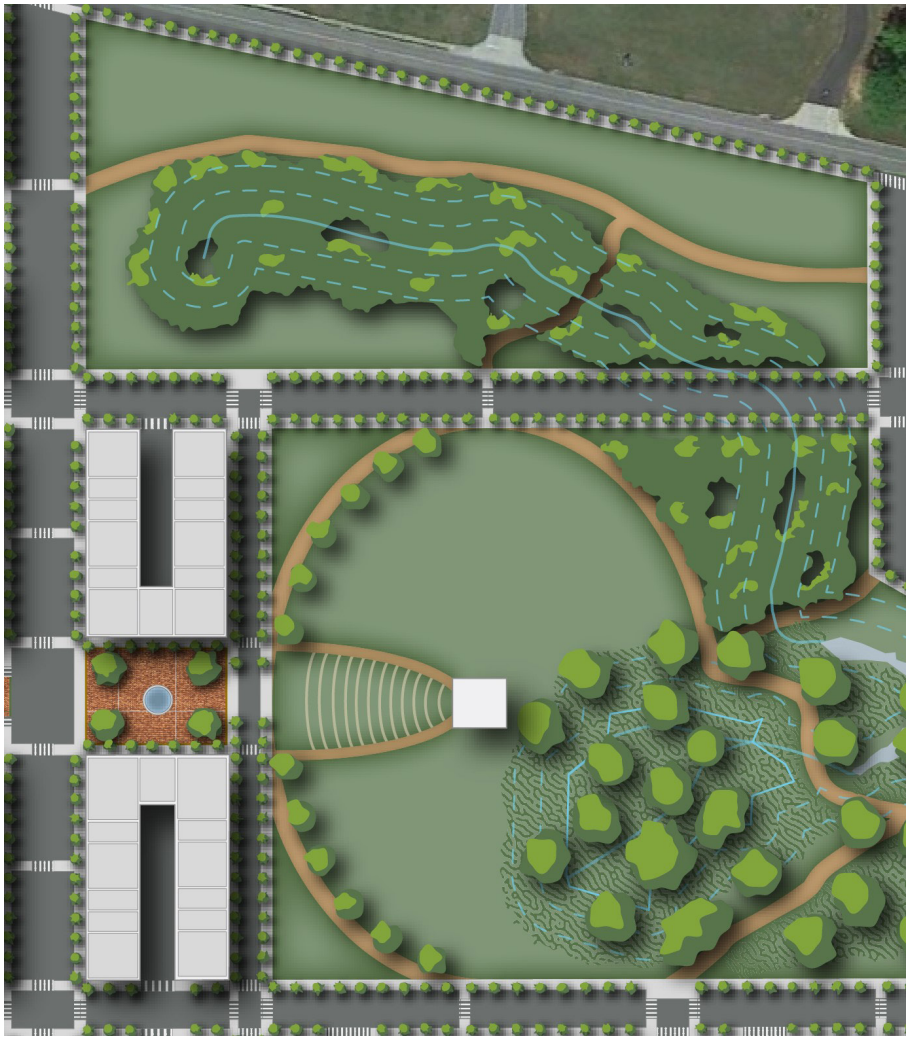


Image 20. Orginial Building Layout

Image 21. Alternative Building Layout

IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

Implementation of this master plan can occur in several ways and each provide a varying degree of benefit and flexibility. Regardless of which option is chosen, a dynamic relationship with City Council, existing property owners, and future developers will be required. The options below provide a brief summary of three recommended implantation strategies that City Council and the Walnut Grove Downtown Development Authority could pursue.

Option 1

City Council can adopt the concept plan through resolution and incorporate it into all future decision-making processes for the area as it develops. This is the most passive approach to implementation as it provides the most flexibility in the final outcome.

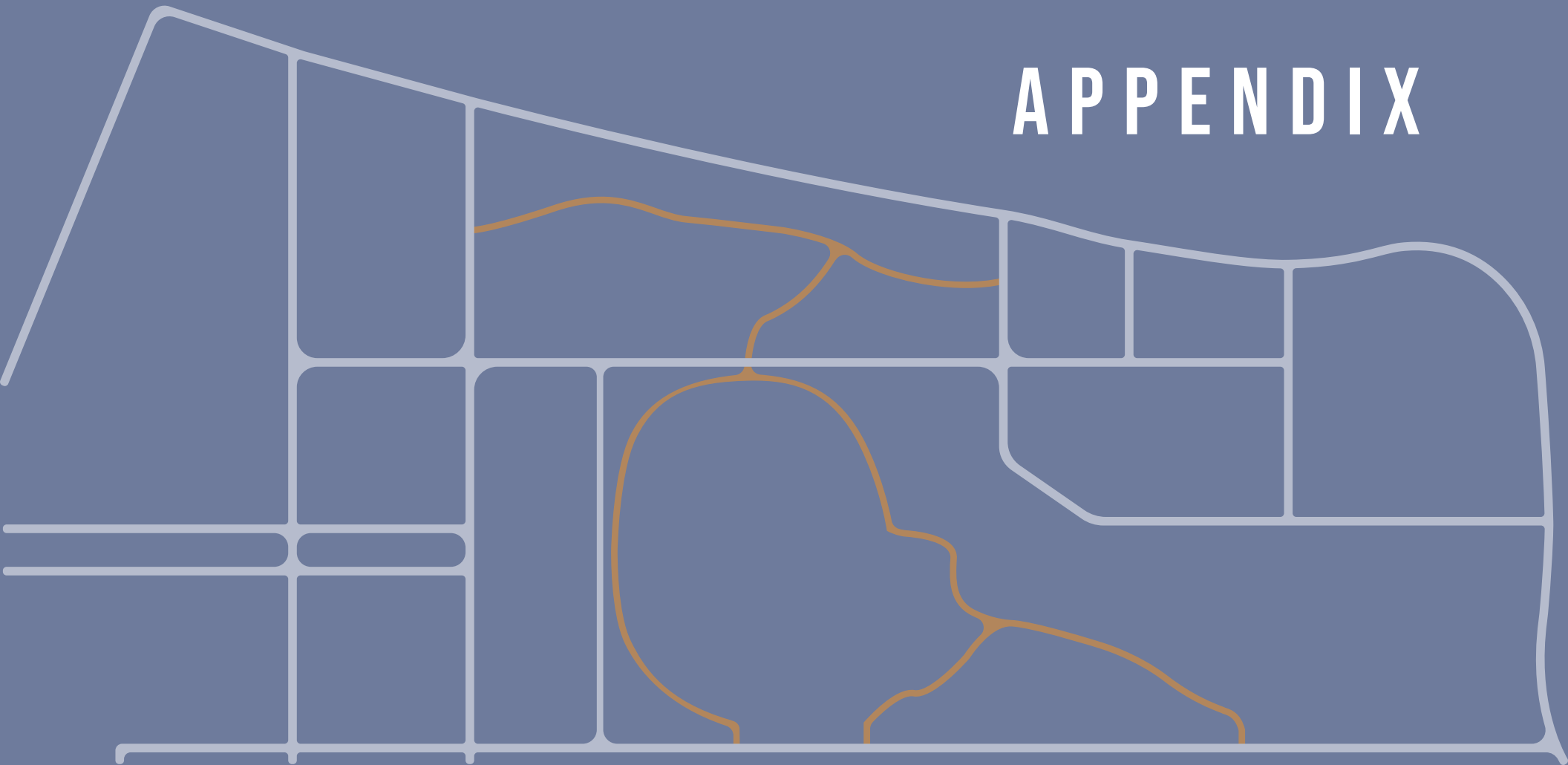
Option 2

City Council can work with the current landowners to subdivide the land as shown in the concept plan. This option will ensure the rights-of-way are secured and the street network would be predetermined for future sales and development proposals. There would be numerous benefits to this option while still providing flexibility to the final outcome of each block.

Option 3

City Council can adopt the concept plan through resolution and incorporate the plan into the existing overlay zoning ordinance for the area. This method would both ensure the street network is abided by and require developers to build to the orientation and scale shown in the master plan.

APPENDIX



APPENDIX: SURROUNDING PROPOSED DEVELOPMENTS

A developer has proposed a commercial development directly to the northwest of the existing roundabout along Walnut Grove Parkway. The street network proposed for Downtown Walnut Grove has been designed so that roads exiting onto Walnut Grove Parkway align with exits of the proposed development north of the downtown area.

Image 22. Proposed development north of Downtown Walnut Grove

APPENDIX: SURROUNDING PROPOSED DEVELOPMENTS (CONTINUED)

The Georgia Department of Transportation plans to construct a roundabout at the intersection of State Routes 138 and 81. This roundabout will have tapers that extend approximately 320 feet to the north on SR 81 and 480 feet east on SR 138. All entrances to Downtown Walnut Grove within these taper areas have been designed to be right in/right-out only to accommodate the roundabout.

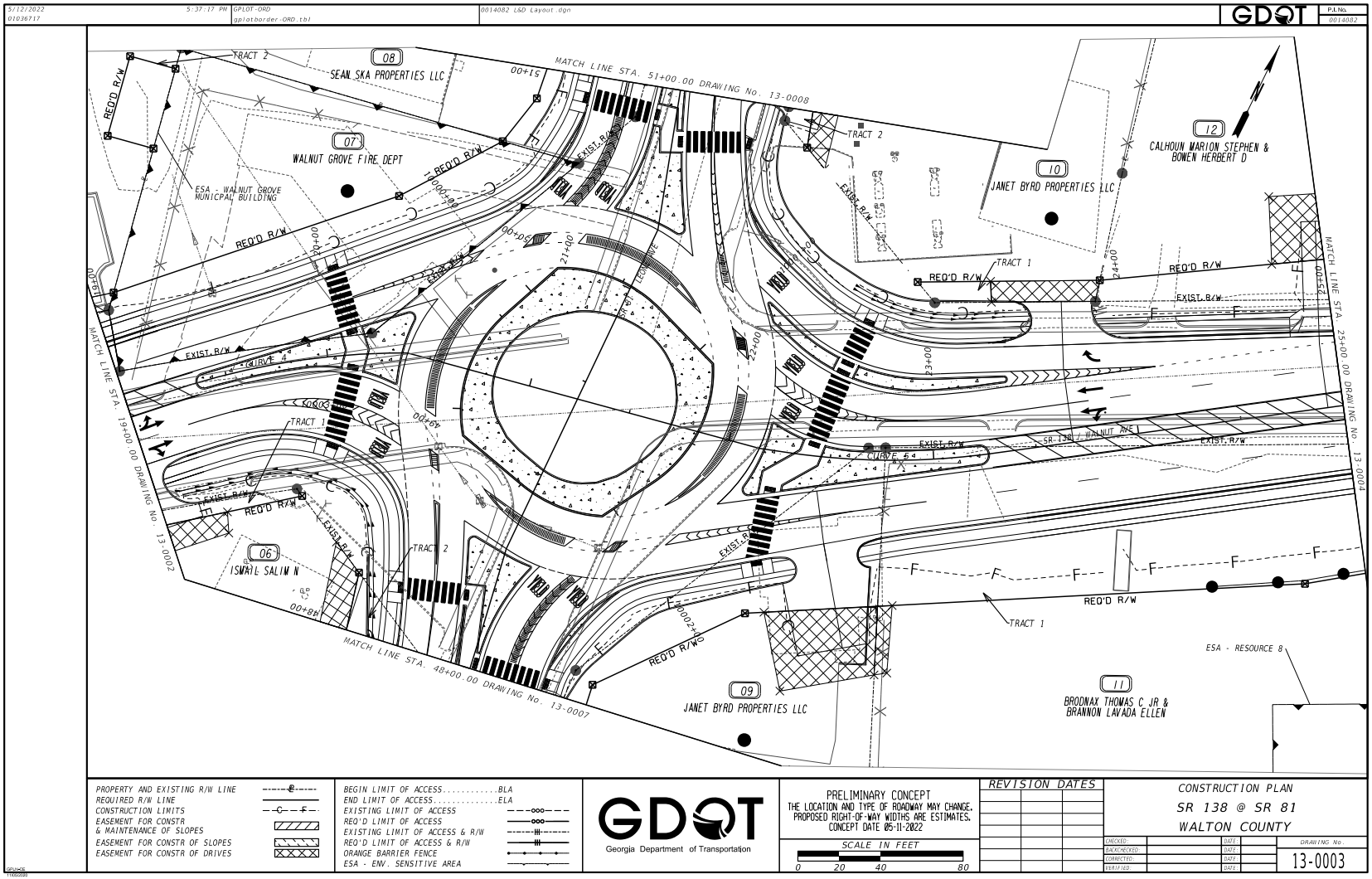
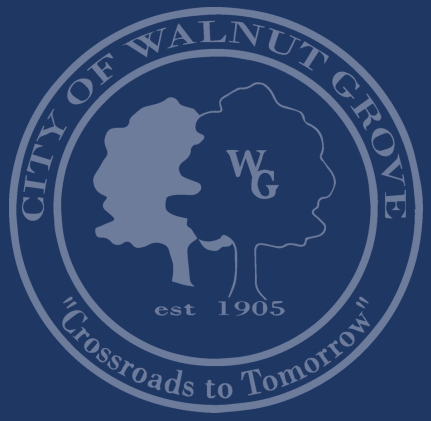


Image 23. Proposed roundabout at theintersection of SR 138 &SR 81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