

# — VERDAE —

## Legacy Square Working Group Session 1

### Meeting Recap November 3, 2021

Understanding the existing conditions, strengths, and challenges as well as broader opportunities for completing the Legacy Square town center were the main areas of focus of the first meeting of the Legacy Square Working Group held on November 3.

Members of the group are City Councilman Wil Brasington, Assistant City Manager Shannon Lavrin, Taylor Davis, Dr. Happy Holliday, Julia Scholz, Dr. Rami Michael, Delroy Jones, Eric Van Beek, Jo Maypole, Robert Willms, Barry Nocks, Phil Retallick, Bob Bunchman, Kate Deveix, Ron Gooding, Lauren Jones, Claire Hall, Trish Hartung, Inge Flackett, Zach Romano, Steve Brandt, Chris Babcock, and Frederick Turner.

The meeting was facilitated by architects & planners from Beyer Blinder Belle (BBB) and HR&A Advisors and began with an overview of the process for updating the Verdae Master Plan, to respond to changing needs and priorities in Greenville since the original 2005 plan—including the GVL2040 comprehensive plan, the planned construction of the Swamp Rabbit Trail, city and county planning for Laurens Road, evolving needs of the community, and changes in economic and market conditions, particularly for retail uses.

The team also described the working process for the next few months, for how the Working Group will undertake a collaborative process to create a vision and planning recommendations for Legacy Square, providing guidance for integrating Verdae and Legacy Square with Greenville’s ongoing land use planning process, and for new development that will help implement the plan. The Working Group will also serve as an important link for communication with the broader community and help plan community surveys and activities to encourage broader involvement.

“We all are going to learn a lot from each other,” said Neil Kittredge, a Partner with BBB, to start the meeting. “The greater the participation, the better the resulting plan.”

As part of this highly interactive meeting, the workshop was organized around three activities:

**1. Secrets of Successful Town Squares:** Although no single other town square is a perfect parallel, there are useful lessons to be learned from other successful places. Case studies in Baxter Village near Charlotte, Downtown Alpharetta, Georgia, and Baldwin Park in Orlando, described what these master planned town centers can teach us about factors to consider in creating a vibrant and successful town center in Legacy Square. Some of the lessons learned are:

- **Create a walkable “Complete Community”**
- **Ensure visibility, access & convenience**

- **Apply an “All of The Above” strategy to maximize the retail customer base**
- **Integrate a diverse mix of uses**
- **Focus on architectural quality and variety**
- **Enhance the Sense of Place with streetscape & programming**
- **Create a strong brand for the town center as a destination**

Learning from the local Greenville economy, Erin Lonoff, Principal at HR&A showed how a mix of uses can generate a virtuous cycle and create the necessary momentum for a successful consumer base to support retail, and a vibrant sense of place with key amenities.

**2. Discussion of Key Planning Themes:** During this open discussion, the group engaged in a conversation about aspirations, benefits, opportunities, and challenges across key themes for planning Legacy Square. These themes included:

- **What is the role of Legacy Square in Greenville and in Verdae?**
- **What is the vision for town center retail environment?**
- **What mix of uses will support a vibrant town center?**
- **How can we create an enhanced sense of place with streetscape and architecture?**
- **How can Legacy Square complement Legacy Park and the SRT?**

Local business owners spoke about the factors that led them to locate their business in Legacy Square, the challenges in growing their business, as well as opportunities and challenges for future business owners considering locating in Legacy Square—such as the benefits of Legacy Park as an attraction for visitors, and the support and sense of community in Hollingsworth Park, as well as the challenges including the lack of visibility from outside the neighborhood and competition from suburban retail areas with lower costs.

The group also reviewed and referenced the robust responses to the Legacy Square “Trends and Desires” survey posted on [imagineverdae.com](http://imagineverdae.com).

Themes and questions for further discussion included the opportunity to define a comprehensive brand identity for Legacy Square as a destination; the role that Legacy Park plays as an anchor to the town center’s vitality and foot traffic; the use of public events and programming in drawing people to Legacy Square; the benefits of a mix of uses including retail, office, residential and community space to support a vibrant environment; the importance of quality architectural design and streetscape to enhance the sense of place, curating the mix of retail, dining and neighborhood services to serve the community and visitors; the importance of traffic calming and convenient parking, and the economics of completing the town square.

**3. Learning about the Site:** During this “interactive mapping” activity, the group used colorful dots, sticky notes, and markers to document the group’s experience of Legacy Square and Legacy Park as well as their understanding of how community members and visitors experience the space. The mapping activities captured valuable collective wisdom about how people use and perceive the area including:

- **Traveling to & around Hollingsworth Park**
- **Arriving in Legacy Square**
- **Walking to & around Legacy Square**
- **The Public Realm**
- **Favorite spaces and views**

“This is all part of a bigger picture,” said Rayna Erlich, a Principal at BBB “We want to work together to forge a vision to bring about the completion of Legacy Square in a way we can all be proud of.”

The second Legacy Square Working Group meeting is scheduled for December 8<sup>th</sup> during which the group will discuss and craft Guiding Principles and explore and co-create planning and land-use scenarios.

**November 3<sup>rd</sup> Engagement Photos:**



