

# — VERDAE —

## Legacy Square Working Group Session 2

### Meeting Recap December 8, 2021

A vision for the future of Legacy Square is taking shape following the second meeting of the Legacy Square Working Group, comprised of Hollingsworth Park residents, Legacy Square business owners, city representatives, and stakeholders—facilitated by architects and planners from Beyer Blinder Belle, HR&A Advisors, and Kimley-Horn.

The workshop held on Wednesday, December 8 began with a recap of the discussion and conclusions from the first workshop in November, including strengths and challenges for Legacy Square, opportunities for the future, areas of consensus, and areas for further discussion.

Major areas of consensus included agreement about the importance of Legacy Park to residents, employees, and visitors, the need for a connection to the planned Swamp Rabbit Trail, Legacy Square's warm, family-friendly neighborly vibe, the value of branding to get the word out about retail offerings, and the importance of good planning that is both economically viable and meets community needs.

Areas identified for further discussion included balancing Legacy Square's role as a neighborhood center and as a destination for visitors, openness to residential use but questions about what kind and what it would look like, the need to protect single-family homes with appropriate transitions, and the need to maintain easy access and parking while growing retail and mixed-use offerings.

A review of the economic analysis supported what the group learned from Legacy Square's business owners, including the insight that businesses draw less than half their customer base from Hollingsworth Park residents and over half from visitors from around Greenville, and that a mix of customers from existing and future neighborhood residents, employees, park visitors, and visitors from the broader Greenville community will be important to attracting and supporting new businesses to open in Legacy Square.

A robust customer base is essential considering Legacy Square's challenges in terms of retail economics. Verdae's retail rents have dropped below the citywide, Downtown, and Woodruff Road averages. With ongoing changes in retail nationally, mixed-use upper-floor development is important to enable ground-floor retail uses. Mixed-use development is also considered good planning as seen in other town center examples, to support retail and provide other benefits including enhancing the sense of place, public space activity, and safety from "eyes on the street."

Ultimately, the vision for Legacy Square will need to align with both the community's vision and be market-supported. Recommended strategies to support existing and new business include investing in public amenities, supporting programming and events, growing the local customer base with residential and office uses, carefully curated retail to create a destination and differentiate from nearby competition, and marketing Legacy Square to visitors.

A milestone for the process was the synthesis of the group's work into a set of Draft Guiding Principles for the project that were based on the input of the working group members and residents at large. These five key draft principles, which will serve to guide ongoing planning and implementation, are:

1. **Legacy Park is the Anchor.** The Park is the “crown jewel,” drawing people to Legacy Square with great views, green space, programming and events, and enhanced wayfinding.
2. **A Destination and a Neighborhood Center.** A curated retail experience for food and shopping as well as neighborhood services, with ease of access and parking, and a warm neighborly vibe.
3. **Centrally Located but a Different World.** A sense of place to discover, with a continuing vision of good planning, attention to detail in architecture and open space, and connected to the Swamp Rabbit Trail.
4. **A Place to Live, Work, and Play.** A mix of uses supporting community, safety, and economic vibrancy for residents, employees, and visitors, with transitions to single-family homes.
5. **Branding to Get the Word Out!** A strong, unified identity, with marketing to improve wayfinding, support businesses, and promote events in both Square and Park.

Building on the agreement about the importance of branding, members of the Working Group proposed many exciting ideas for slogans and logos for marketing a future vision of Legacy Square, which were reviewed at the workshop.

The bulk of Wednesday’s meeting was centered around a highly interactive “design charrette” session in which Working Group members split into groups and created potential designs for Legacy Square.

The activity began by reviewing “mood boards” with a wide range of images of buildings, streetscapes, retail, and open spaces, and selecting favorite images to serve as inspiration for a future design of Legacy Square, as well as images that were less favored and should be avoided. Needless to say, this activity resulted in a wide range of opinions about aesthetics, but also a good amount of consensus.

This was followed by the design session, resembling an “arts and crafts night,” in which small groups collaborated to create new designs for the unbuilt portions of Legacy Square and ideas for how to connect these areas with the existing buildings, Legacy Park, and surrounding areas. The group used maps of the site, together with colored foam blocks, paper, miniature trees, and chips labeled with a wide range of retail uses and activities to create their designs.

In a little more than an hour, the Working Group came up with creative and visionary ideas for the future of Legacy Square. Among the many concepts explored, the group looked at ways to expand the footprint of retail beyond the existing businesses, fronting Legacy Park on Rocky Slope Road with expanded food and drink outlets such as a casual family restaurant, neighborhood pub or ice cream shop, with plazas and outdoor dining facing the park, and extending on some side streets to provide neighborhood services like a pharmacy, fashion outlet or wine shop.

Building on the wide-ranging retail concepts, the groups created designs for layering on mixed-use upper floors with both residential and office uses, and in one concept, a proposal for a boutique hotel with a ground floor restaurant and a connection to the Swamp Rabbit Trail. Of particular interest was the subtle gradation of density, with higher buildings on Rocky Slope Road, and various creative approaches to transition to nearby single-family homes, including the use of Brownstones modeled after those already built on the south side of Legacy Square, as well as landscaping and pedestrian walkways to create appropriate buffering of views and maintain a walkable neighborhood.

Finally, the groups explored the creation of improved open spaces, with many wonderful ideas from creating a new plaza that would “put the square in Legacy Square,” to adding fountains and sculpture as gateways within

the roundabouts on Rocky Slope Road, to redesigning Rocky Slope Road or Sedley Road with alternative paving so they can be used as a “shared street” with the ability to be closed occasionally for events like a farmers market or outdoor dining, to activating the underutilized corner of Legacy Park (between the street and the parking lot) with a gazebo, shade structure, or fountain as a gathering spot. Bike facilities were also included to support future users of the Swamp Rabbit Trail and reduce parking demand.

The outcome of the Working Group meeting was an exciting and highly productive co-creation process and collaborative team effort. It allowed group members to learn from each other, hear new ideas, and work together to craft a vision. The group’s work will not be the final design but served as an exploratory process that allowed Working Group members to personally experience both the challenges and the opportunities of planning Legacy Square, with robust discussion, debate, and generation of a wide variety of wonderful ideas.

“By working together, we came up with ideas that none of us could have imagined on our own,” said Neil Kittredge of Beyer Blinder Belle, one of the workshop facilitators.

The planning team will now collect and synthesize the many resulting ideas and designs, and over the next few weeks translate them into initial concept options for discussion in the third workshop, scheduled for January 26.

#### December 8<sup>th</sup> Engagement Photos:















