



Legacy Square Working Group Session 3

Meeting Recap January 26, 2022

Legacy Square plans taking shape

The Legacy Square Working Group moved a step closer to defining a conceptual framework for the future vision of Legacy Square at the heart of the Verdae community.

The third of four planned sessions, the Working Group meeting was facilitated by Planning Team members from Beyer Blinder Belle (architecture and planning), HR&A Advisors (economics), and Kimley-Horn (traffic and transportation).

The meeting began with a presentation of the results of “Mood Board” polling that was conducted both within the Working Group and online with the wider community. The polling attracted great participation with more than 90 community members participating in the online poll. The Mood Board results highlighted preferences, likes, and dislikes of the community for potential design approaches to architecture, retail storefronts, and public spaces at Legacy Square. The results will help the Planning Team understand both general preferences as well as specific desirable strategies. A slide show summarizing the results can be viewed on the [Legacy Square Planning Page](#).

The Working Group reached consensus on five “Guiding Principles” for the future of Legacy Square. The principles provide a foundation for planning and will serve as a guide for the development team moving forward into implementation.

Legacy Square Guiding Principles:

- 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 the Square and Park.

Building on the Guiding Principles and the group’s work in prior meetings, the Working Group discussed key planning themes and concepts for the development of Legacy Square’s remaining parcels, including the mix of uses, the potential for a boutique hotel, and considerations for the housing program, parking concepts, and public open spaces.

- **Mix of Uses:** Building on prior meetings, the group reviewed goals to achieve the vitality and vibrancy that a mix of uses can create, how a blend of retail, office, residential, and community uses can catalyze development, support retail businesses with a diverse customer base, and maintain long-term economic viability, while allowing for flexibility in the program mix at this early stage of development.
- **Boutique Hotel:** The concept of a boutique hotel fronting Legacy Park emerged from the Working Group’s December meeting. Based on economic analysis by HR&A, a hotel would support local businesses and add to the vibrancy of Legacy Square. However, the current saturation of the Greenville hotel market means it may be a challenge to achieve in the short-term and projecting future hotel demand is difficult due to the pandemic. With both enthusiasm for the potential of a hotel but also uncertainty of its feasibility, the plan can include it as a possibility while also maintaining flexibility for other options.
- **Varied Housing Program:** The group continued its conversation about the potential housing program for Legacy Square. The Planning Team presented research that a varied housing program can meet the needs of residents at different life stages, from young couples to growing families to seniors, enabling empty nesters and retirees to downsize and stay in the community. National organizations such as the Congress for the New Urbanism and the AARP have noted changing household demographics, with people over 65, households without children, and single-person households outpacing other types in the next 15 years, which has also been seen in the Greenville market. These organizations recommend a variety of housing choices, including ownership and rental, as good planning practice for neighborhoods. The architectural design and quality of housing is paramount, as shown by the Mood Board polling. The “Missing Middle Housing” approach proposes buildings designed to fit into single-family areas, such as brownstones, live/work units, and residences above shops and restaurants, enabling existing residents to “age in place,” and new residents to get to know the area before buying a house. The recommendation for flexibility in housing types, allowing for a mix of ownership and rental (not all one or the other) in architecturally distinctive buildings, was discussed at length by the group, with a range of views expressed regarding both concerns and benefits of this strategy.
- **Parking Design:** Parking planning will build on concepts of demand, functionality, technology, sustainability, and accessibility. The Planning Team presented the opportunity to build parking into the natural slope at Legacy Square, allowing an additional layer of parking that accommodates future needs without being visually prominent. Traffic and circulation impacts, as well as phasing to avoid loss of parking during construction for existing businesses, were raised as important points for further study.
- **Public Realm:** Key ideas that emerged from the group’s December meeting included the creation of a Community Plaza as a flexible space that could support neighborhood events such as the annual Oyster Roast or Food Truck Festival, as well as the concept of a “shared street” with special paving that could be closed to traffic on occasion to host a larger event (similar to a recently completed example in downtown Greer).

In the second half of the meeting, the Working Group reviewed two possible design scenarios for Legacy Square – using 3D models built out of foam blocks and colorful, illustrated drawings. The two scenarios were developed by combining the best ideas from three design models created by Working Group members at their previous meeting in December.

“We took all of the great ideas from the last meeting and synthesized them into two scenarios that are tools for further discussion as a way of hearing and understanding issues,” said Neil Kittredge, a Partner with Beyer Blinder Belle (BBB).

Discussion was organized around both common elements and differentiators between the two scenarios related to several themes: public realm and open space; building massing; scale and views; vehicular circulation and parking; and the mixed use and retail program. Using the two scenarios as a discussion tool enabled the group to compare, contrast, and reveal the pros and cons of different strategies.

Some highlights discussed included:

- Potential locations and design of a community plaza with outdoor seating, greenery, and public art.
- Creating a “main street” feeling on Rocky Slope Road facing Legacy Park, with retail, outdoor dining, and convenient street parking.
- Locating taller mixed-use buildings on Rocky Slope Road but limited in height to the existing height of the Keith Building tower.
- Stepping heights down to transition appropriately to single-family residences, with smaller scale “Brownstones” located on Cheddington Drive and Darden Way.
- Providing green spaces, buffer landscaping, and pocket parks to balance new buildings and create varied community open spaces.
- Ensuring that parking and “back of house” functions are fully hidden from surrounding streets and residences.
- Studying traffic impacts carefully on Rocky Slope Road and supporting the City’s planned improvements to Salters Road, which will draw through traffic away from Rocky Slope.
- Activating the underutilized corner of Legacy Park (inside the parking loop), to complement Legacy Square retail activity.
- Leveraging the planned connector to the Swamp Rabbit Trail to support Legacy Square retail uses and community connections.

The next step is for the Planning Team take these recommendations and combine the best ideas from the two scenarios into one consensus vision that will be presented and discussed at the Working Group’s February meeting and shared with the wider community this Spring.

This vision will be used to guide and support the implementation process and coordinate with the City of Greenville. As Verdae Development Inc. moves into implementation and considers potential development partners to realize Legacy Square, a new community advisory group will be drawn from the Legacy Square Working Group and other participants to provide ongoing input into the process.

