

# PARADISE PARK PLANNING CHALETTE



November 26-29, 2018



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# Thank you to the Project Team

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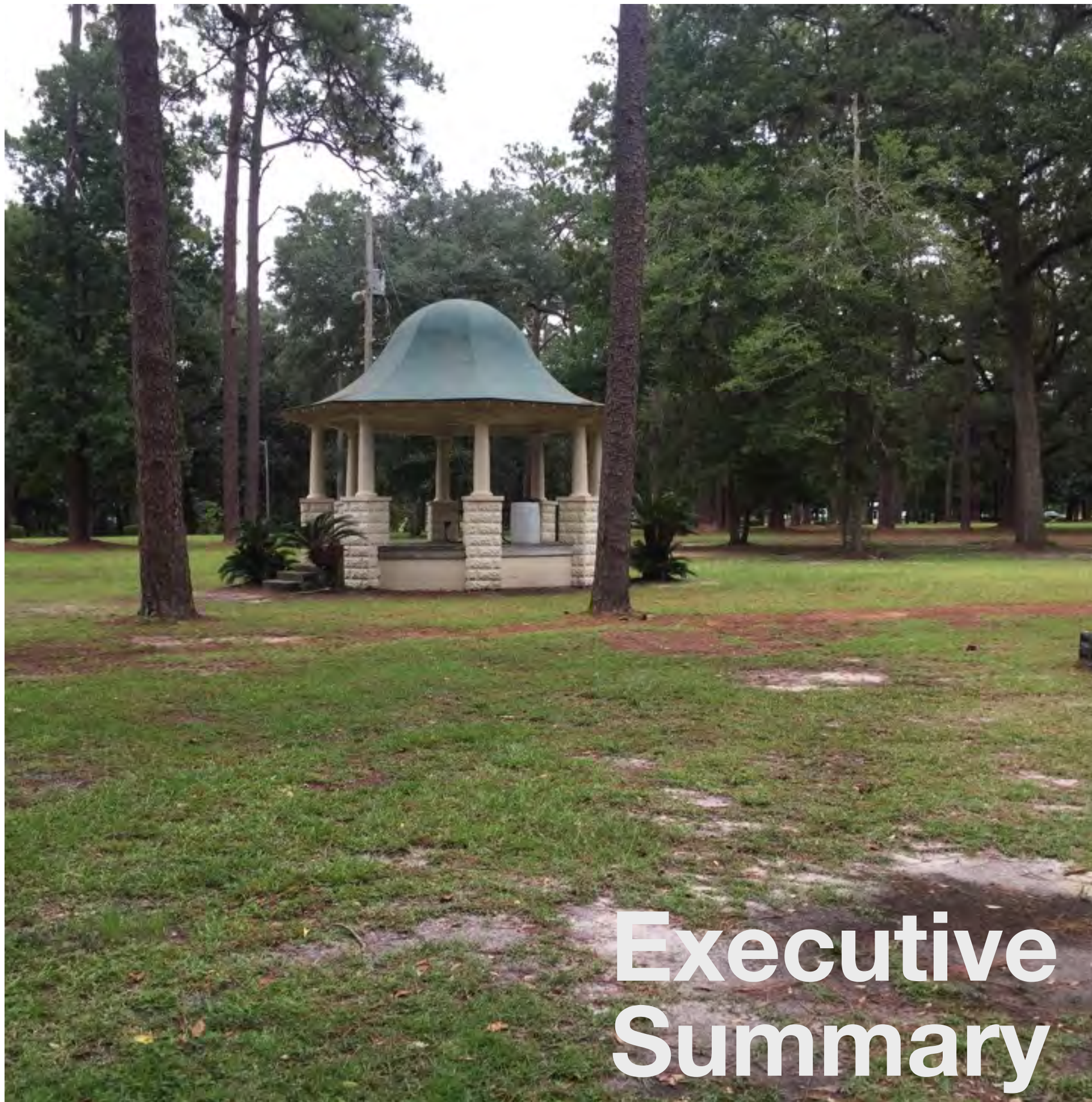
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## **Introduction: A 20-Year Vision**

Two seemingly opposing ideas can be true at the same time. Paradise Park is an incredible asset for the City of Thomasville, and it has also seen far better days. In 2018, the City of Thomasville decided it's time to create a vision for what the park can be, capitalize on its strengths and determine how to better connect it to its surrounding neighborhoods. The City contracted with K2 Urban Design to create this Plan.

The Plan for the park and its surroundings unfolded over the course of a week-long design charrette in November, 2018. This document summarizes the Plan and the process, and gives key recommendations for the future. It is organized into a high-level Executive Summary over the next six pages, followed by in-depth explanations of each of the Priorities, Process and Design Recommendations for the balance of the document.

The design team would like to thank the City and the entire Thomasville community for its excitement, ideas and participation during this process. We look forward to a successful implementation of these ideas.





#### Improving the park

The park has extensive mature trees, but the historic carriageways are mostly just lined with trimmed azaleas. Playground equipment is very basic, and users would prefer it all be closer together in order to make it easier to monitor small children.

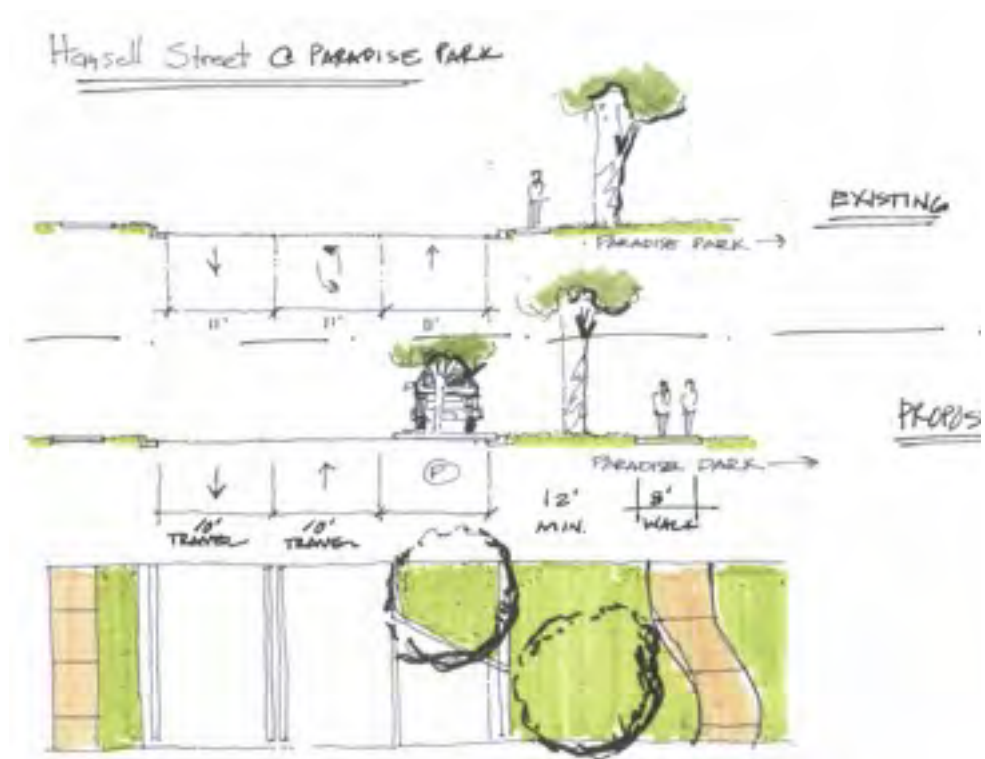
## A few key priorities were identified during the process

1. Make some simple improvements to the park as soon as funding is available
2. Plan for a multi-purpose, 18 acre park that welcomes everyone
3. Slow speeding traffic around the park
4. Activate vacant lots, buildings and other parcels around the park
5. Improve the walking experience between downtown and the park

## Priorities







**Process Examples**

The team worked together over several days to sketch out concepts and refine them. Both big-picture planning issues and detailed design options were explored.



Process

**Working in a transparent, inter-disciplinary, and efficient manner**

Over the course of a week, the consultant team worked with the community to narrow in on concepts and details. The week started with a blank sheet of paper, a walking tour and a report on previous public input. Step by step, the team whittled the options for the park from three to two to one, and added in a series of urban design and street design options as well.





**Design and public space that creates value**

Savannah’s public spaces are some of the best examples of how good design can create long-term value for a community. Forsyth Park, at 30 acres, illustrates how to accommodate a variety of different uses from passive to active.

**Creatively utilizing time-tested design principles**

When approaching this project, a few key, time-tested principles were utilized in the design process:

1. The best parks are multi-use, and allow space for people to program it themselves each day
2. Long-term sustainability includes both economic measures and environmental design
3. Quality public space and streets create value
4. Successful neighborhoods include a broad mix of housing

Principles



**Planning for a broad mix of types of housing**

Thomasville’s historic neighborhoods contain a healthy and vital mix of housing types, from single-family houses to inns to apartment buildings. Over the decades, cities have seen less and less of the small-scale apartment and mixed-use buildings that cities like Thomasville are blessed with. This “missing middle” housing is something that adds great value to a community, and must be planned for intentionally.





**1. Nature center and walk**  
 The northern portion of the park can accommodate a nature center and interpretive walk. The landscape design would utilize the natural slope and vegetation, while adding public facilities.



Park Design

**2. and 3. Simple, short-term improvements**  
 A walking loop through the park and an open lawn area along Broad Street can provide immediate opportunities for more active use for the park with very little disruption to the mature landscape.



Paradise Park has the opportunity to evolve in two, distinct phases as funding presents itself. The first phase adds a walking loop around the park, enhances the historic carriageways, opens up some lawn area and consolidates/improves the playground equipment. The second phase adds a potential nature center and interpretive walk, along with improved parking, restrooms and public facilities.





**Possible Improvements to Dawson Street**

As the park begins to improve and add more active use, the next step is to use design to create more value around the park and better connect it to downtown. A series of short and long-term ideas were drawn to illustrate some possible changes. These include everything from additional on-street parking to decorative signage to public art. Long-term, applying the form-based code overlay to the area will enhance flexibility for development and help to physically extend the city's thriving downtown.

Urban Design



**Short-Term Improvements to Broad Street**



**Long-Term Possibilities for Broad Street and More**



**New Decorative Signage over Broad Street**



Depending on your perspective, fifteen to twenty years either seems like a very long time or right around the corner. In the lifespan of a city, it is a blink of the eye. And yet, it's remarkable how much change can occur during a generation. Thomasville is no exception, which has seen substantial change in its economy downtown over the last twenty years. Change will continue; the question is always, change toward what end? Cities are never static, nor can every action be micro-managed. But smart planning and visioning can help guide current and future actions toward a goal. A detailed list of possible changes, both short and long-term is included toward the end of the next section on the Plan.

Plan for  
15-20 Years

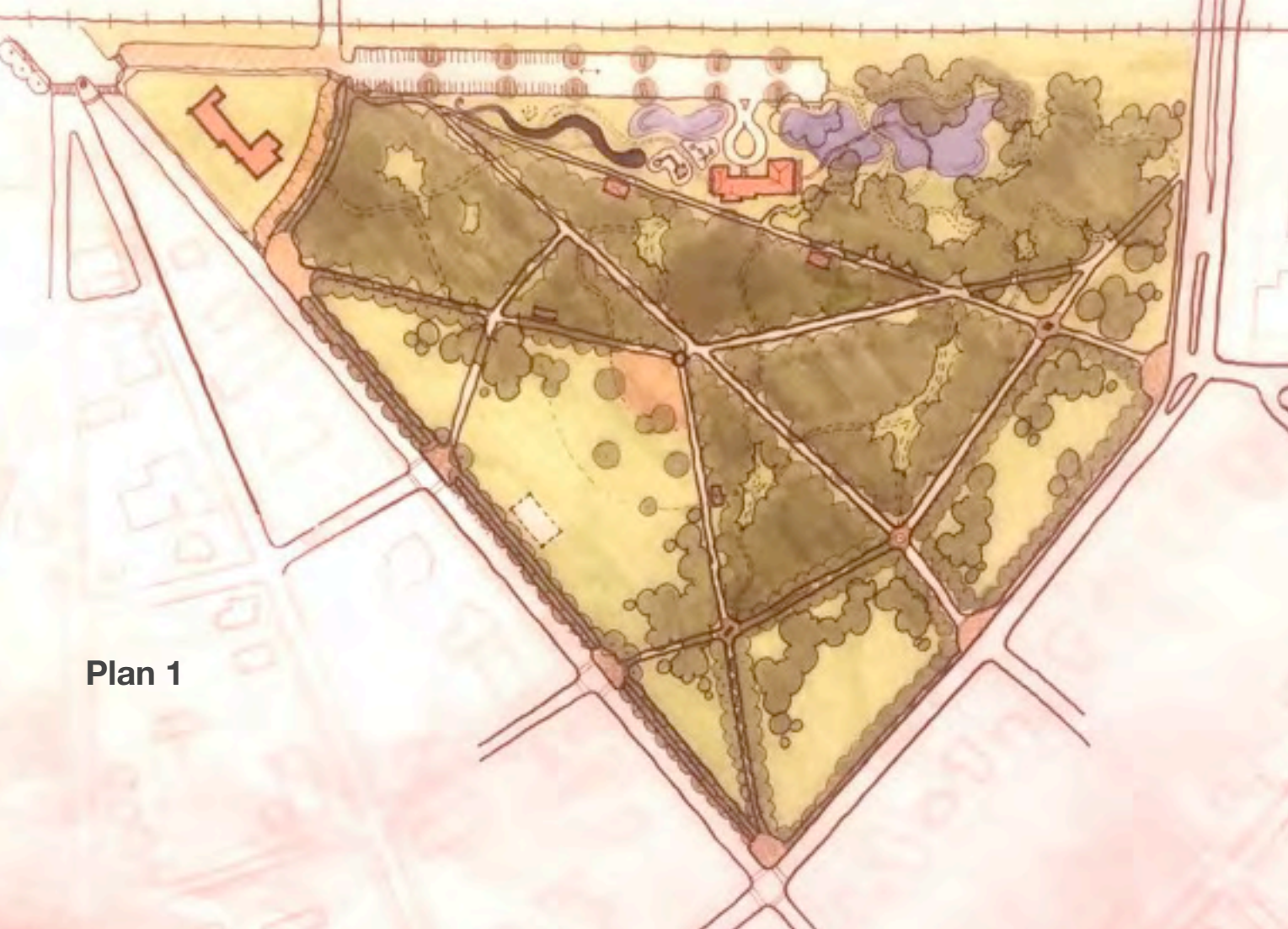




# THE PLAN







Plan 1



Plan 2



Plan 3

## Paradise Park Design Process

The charrette began by exploring three design concepts for the park. The first focused primarily on family and education-related activities, the second on large events, and a third on preserving much of the park as-is, with modest changes. Each plan explored a different approach to the historic carriageways, the provision of open area and the playground spaces. Plans 1 and 3 saw the most positive responses initially, though elements of Plan 2, such as the tie-in to the Chamber facility and location of the open area, were also found to be intriguing.

Day 1: Three Options





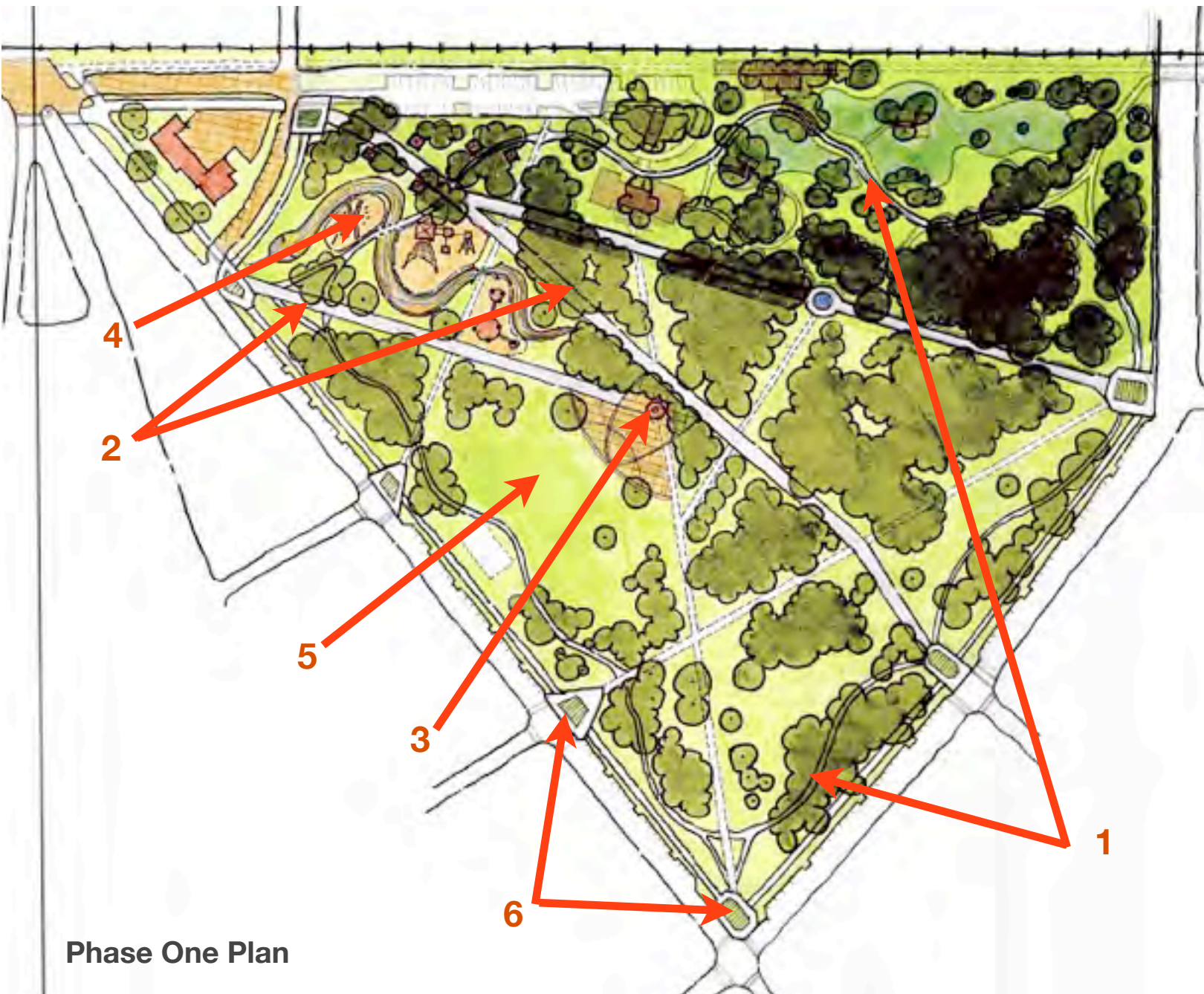


## Day 3: Preferred Plan

## Recommendation: Improving the park in two phases

Ultimately, the new Option B became the preferred plan, with an emphasis on family-related activity and educational possibilities. The long-term plan shows a possible nature center, with an interpretive walk, intentional storm-water facilities that become a designed amenity, improved parking and restrooms. A pedestrian/bicycle bridge over Hansell Street connecting to the community trail is also a long-term proposal.

In the first phase, however, a great deal of important improvements can be accomplished. While fundraising can proceed for the long-term ideas, these changes can be designed and built relatively easily. These include a walking loop around the park, better designed and landscaped carriageways, so that they are more obvious to park users, a rebuilt gazebo, and an improved and consolidated playground. The gazebo will also tie to a large lawn area that can be occasionally used for events, but primarily it's a flexible space that people can use as they see fit. New landscaping touches such as flower planters at the park entries are also opportunities for volunteer participation. Several of these key elements are detailed on the following pages.



Phase One Plan

1. Walking Loop around the park
2. Improved carriageways
3. Rebuilt gazebo
4. Improved and consolidated playground

5. Flexible lawn area
6. Landscaped entries



## Day 3: Preferred Plan

## Recommendation: Dream big for the long-term

As noted previously, the long-term plan expands what is possible with the park to make it a truly multi-use 18 acre space, while still retaining its flavor as a wooded retreat in the city.

The nature center can be a community-wide attraction, which ultimately creates the need for a larger parking area on the north. The interpretative walk adjacent to it can be an educational experience that relates the ecology and unique relationship to hunting and the outdoors in the region. The park's landscaping can be preserved and enhanced to accommodate these functions.

It's also possible in the long-term to re-route the community trail with a bicycle/pedestrian bridge over Hansell Street, adjacent to the railroad. This enables a "straight shot" from the east and brings people directly into the proposed nature center.

Finally, the streets around the Chamber of Commerce facility can be re-built with landscaped pavers and new landscaping and lighting to make people aware that they have entered a park-like space.



### Long-Term Vision

1. Expanded and improved parking
2. Nature center
3. Interpretative walkway
4. Bicycle/pedestrian bridge
5. Rebuilt streets with new pavers



# Key Design Elements

## 1. Walking Loop

A new walking loop is created around the entire park, providing a simple means of recreation and enjoyment of the park's unique landscape. A walking loop was the single most common request from participants.

## 2. Gazebo / Events Lawn

The gazebo is a fairly easy renovation, and provides a small stage for performances and events. A new lawn space to the west of it opens up the opportunity for seating and more visibility.

## 3. Following Page - Nature Center

A potential nature center can attract visitors from the entire community. The center can be used to highlight the area's history and ecology, as well as the unique culture of hunting. Play areas and improved walks can tie to the center.







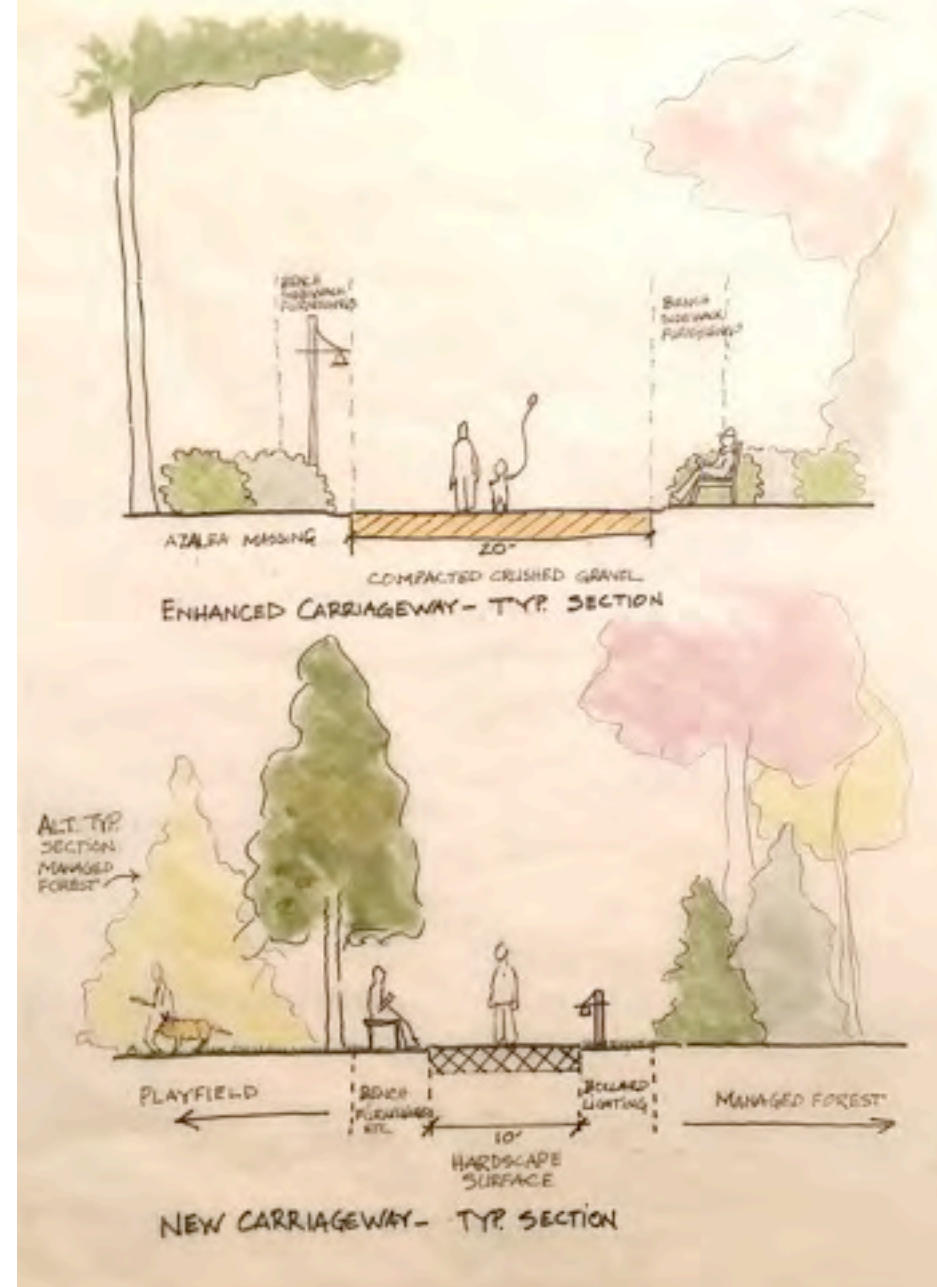
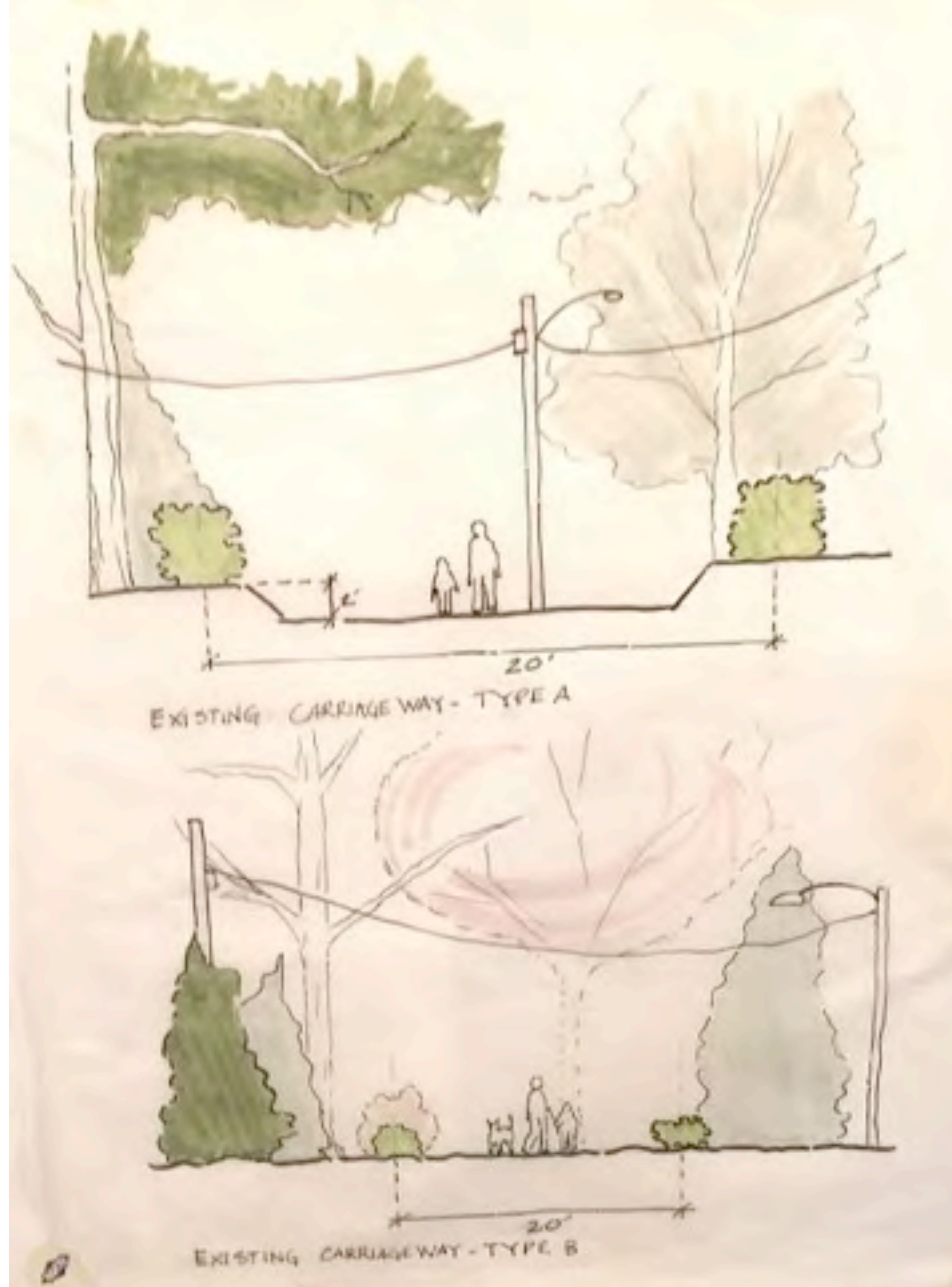


## Improving the Historic, Adding New Elements

Both new and historic walkways can be gradually and intentionally improved to enhance Paradise Park's character. The carriageways can be improved with either a wider section or a narrower one, while adding benches, pedestrian-scale lighting and additional landscaping.

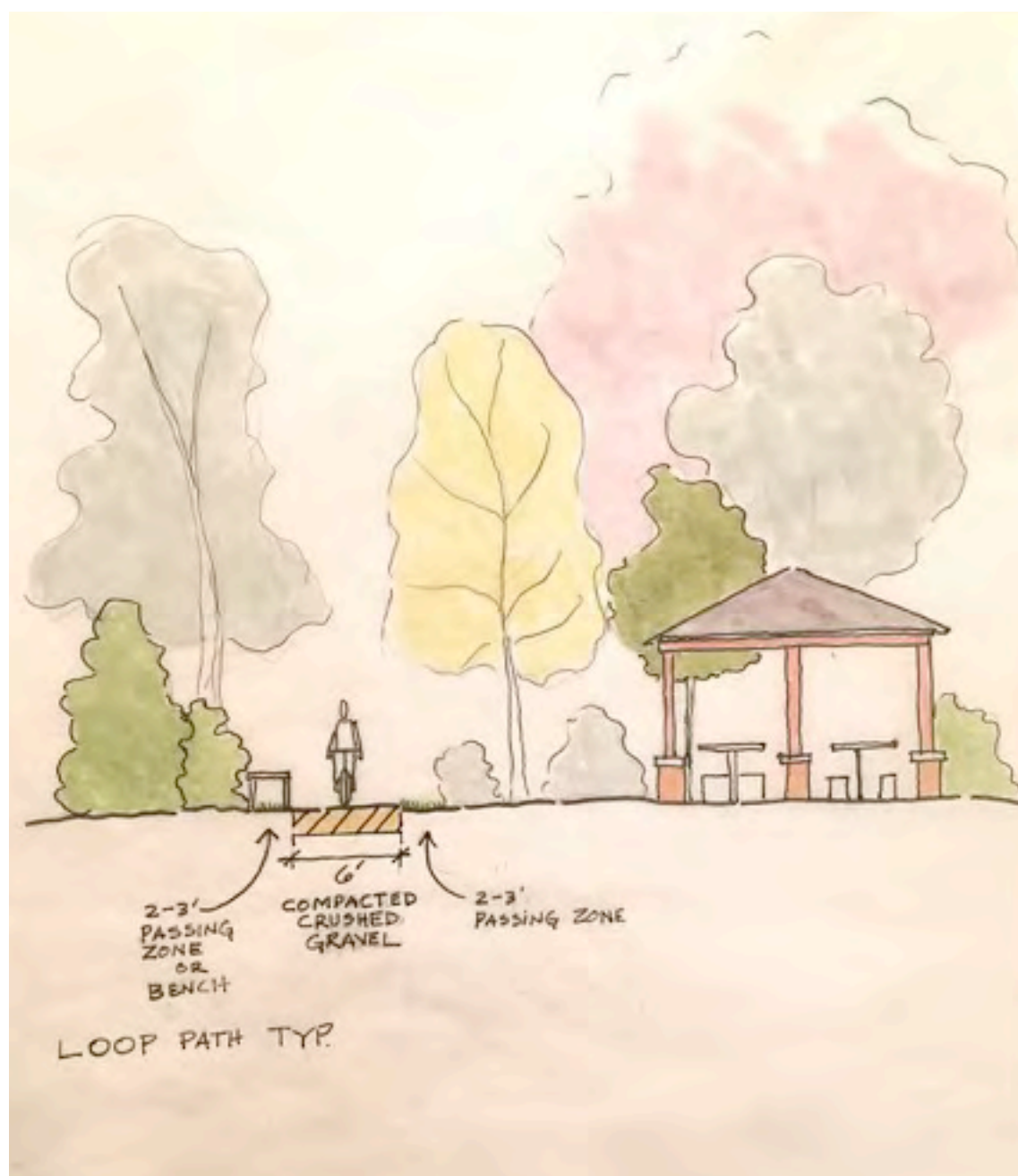
The only feature that currently demarcates the carriageways are the azaleas, which are not native nor necessarily original to the park design. And, they have been cut back and poorly shaped. While azaleas do provide for very attractive spring foliage, if they are to be used in the future they will need to be better maintained and shaped.

In any case, the carriageways could benefit from new surfaces, either crushed gravel or hardscape, and the furnishings noted. Using all features will enhance their importance in the park.



Walkways





The walking loop is suggested to be compacted, crushed gravel, except in sections where it connects to the community trail. In those areas, because of the key linkage the community trail provides, it will need to be a paved surface such as asphalt or concrete, as well as an accessible route.

**Existing Community Trail links**



The walking loop also provides the opportunity for benches, picnic areas, interpretative exhibits and even exercise stations if so desired. Given the size of Paradise Park, it's likely the walking loop would become an active community feature.





## Improving the Edges

Around the entire park, the new design calls for enhancing the connections to the neighborhoods. Along Broad Street, a large open area is envisioned for flexible use. New on-street parking is added, along with new street trees and landscaping. Flower beds are planned at the various park entries. Along Hansell, more on-street parking is added to slow speeding traffic and make crossing the street easier.

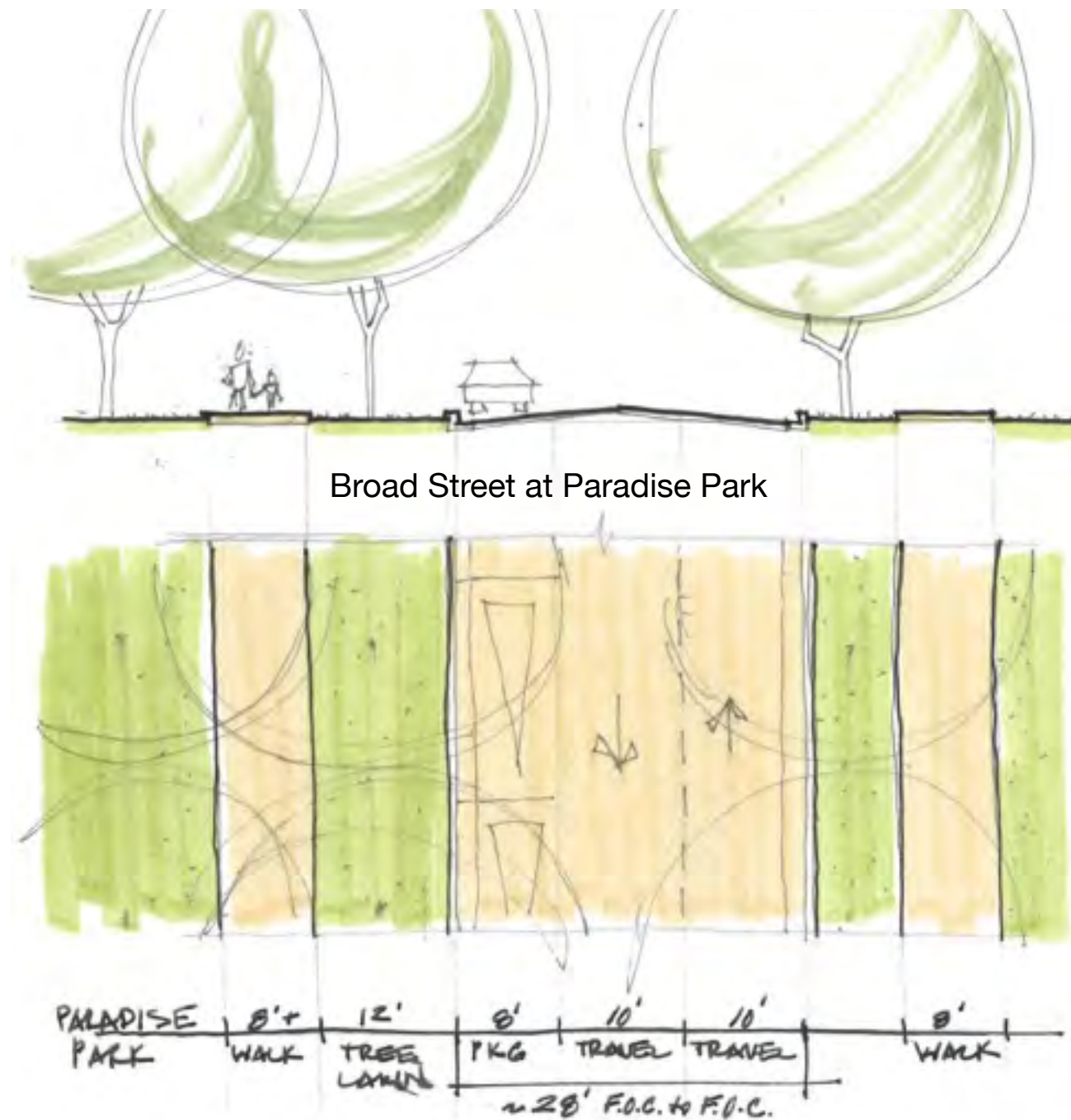


## Modifying street designs for safety and to create value

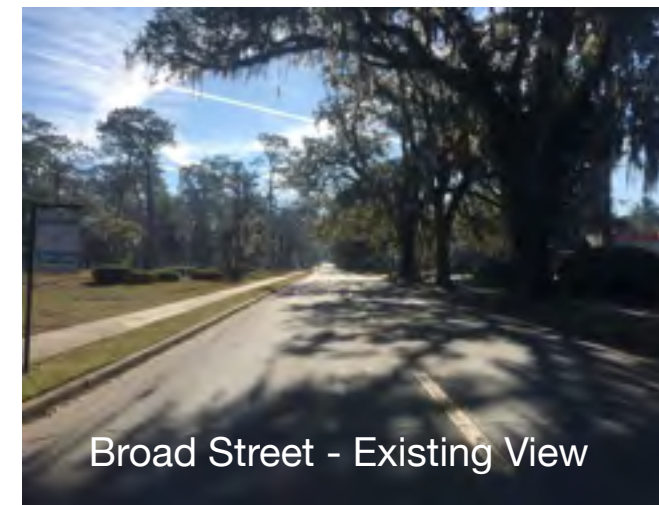
Both of the major streets that adjoin Paradise Park are in need of some modifications to slow speeding traffic and improve connections for pedestrians. Doing so not only improves safety for all, but will also have the upside of improving property value and desirability for all the properties near the park.

For Broad Street, the improvements proposed include striping a parking lane next to the park, and adding bump-outs for trees. The current paved width is 28 to 29 feet, between curb faces. Striping the street as two ten-foot travel lanes and one eight-foot parking lane will work within the existing dimension and require no changes to storm drainage. Later, as curb extensions are able to be added for trees, a gap can be left next to the existing curb to allow for water to drain to the inlets. Ten foot travel lanes are a standard practice recommended by NACTO, the National Association of City Transportation Officials, in their Urban Street Design Guide.

Street Design



Broad Street - Existing View



Broad Street - Existing View





Broad Street - Existing View

Street Design



Broad Street - Proposed View



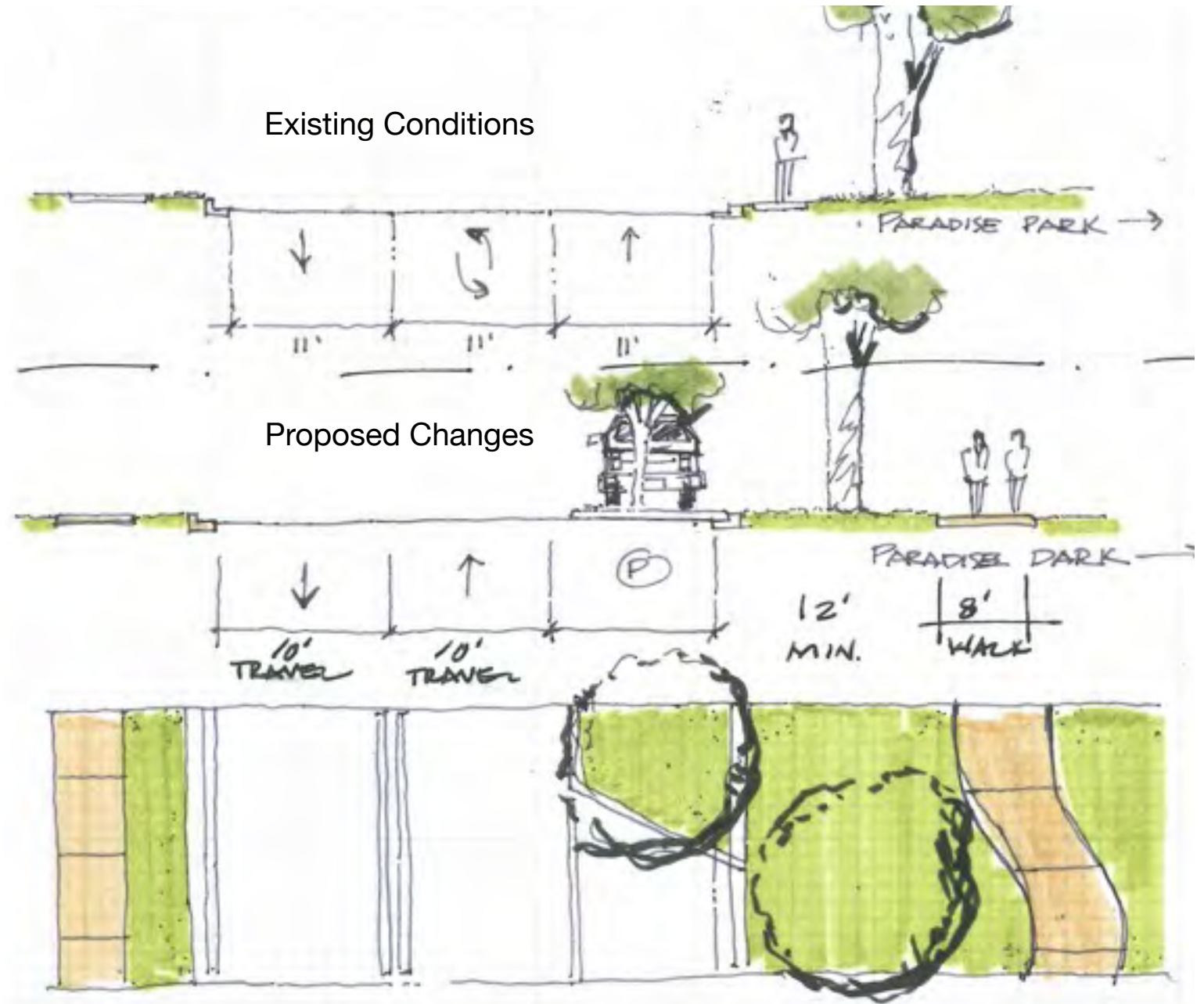
**Improvements to Broad Street**  
Broad Street can be improved at first with simply re-striping to allow for on-street parking (also desperately needed in the area), and ultimately by adding curb extensions for trees. Space can be left for water to drain as illustrated to the left.





Hansell Street - Existing View

Hansell Street can also be quite easily modified, without either great expense nor harming traffic flow. Hansell is a key artery for the city, since it has the underpass for the railroad. But it's design also encourages speeding in the stretch near the park, and is wider than it needs to be. The street is only two lanes both north and south of the park, but widens to three and four lanes in this section. The proposed design adds a lane of on-street parking next to the park, removes the unnecessary center-turn lane and adds street trees.



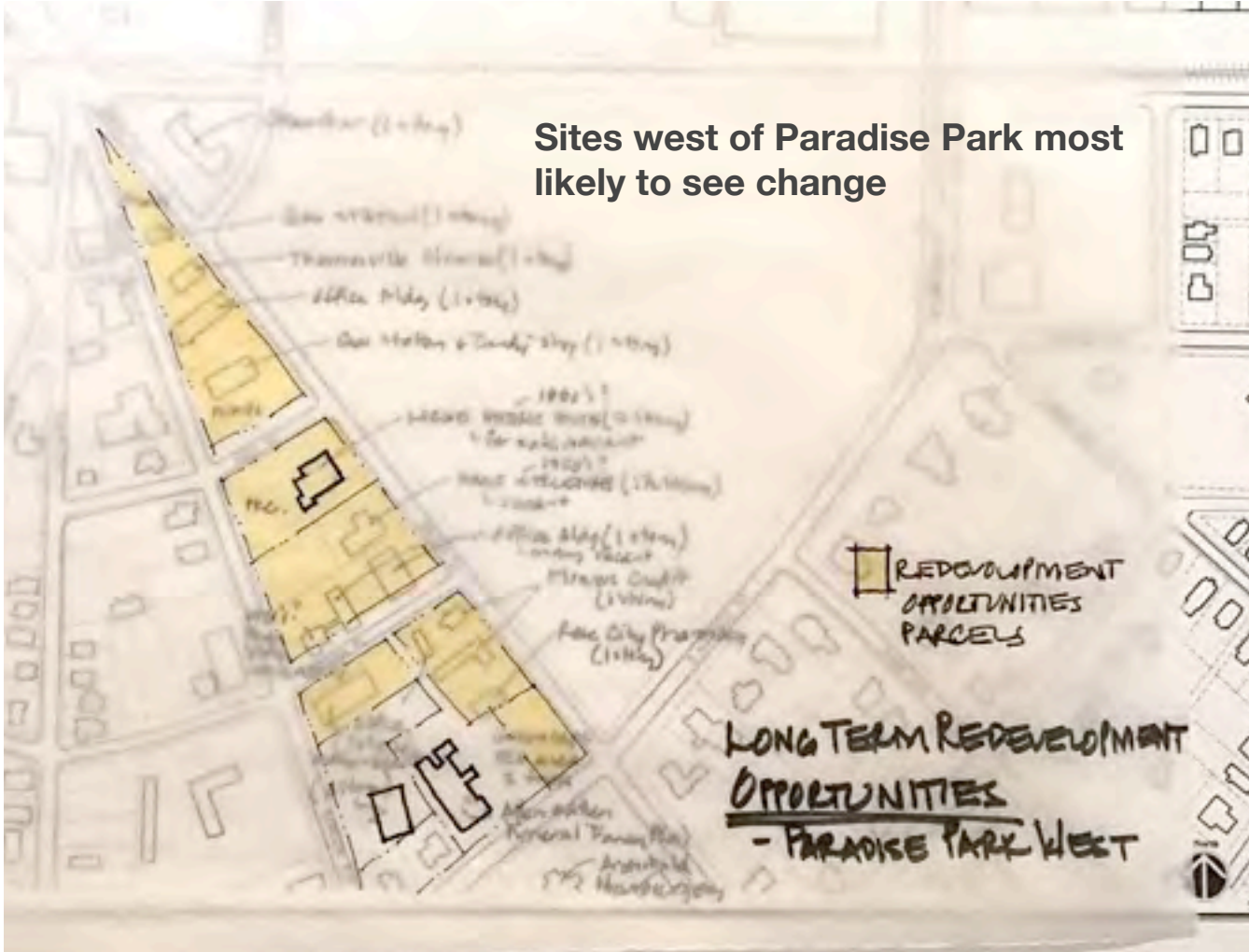
**Hansell Street at Paradise Park**



# Paradise Park West

**Redevelopment Scenarios**  
 Two blocks immediately west of the park were examined to see what future development might happen. In both cases, examples were illustrated that fit the historic scale and character of the neighborhood.

The neighborhood across Broad Street from the park is the area most likely to see change over the next fifteen to twenty years. Several properties are vacant today, and others are occupied by one-story structures. It's not difficult to imagine increased demand leading to a desire to redevelop some or all of what exists today. The design team sketched a variety of scenarios for the parcels immediately adjacent to the park, in order to establish what is feasible and to test the zoning. This analysis helps to "stress test" City policies to see if they are adequately prepared for future changes. The following page reviews the two designs and results.







**Mixed-Use Block**



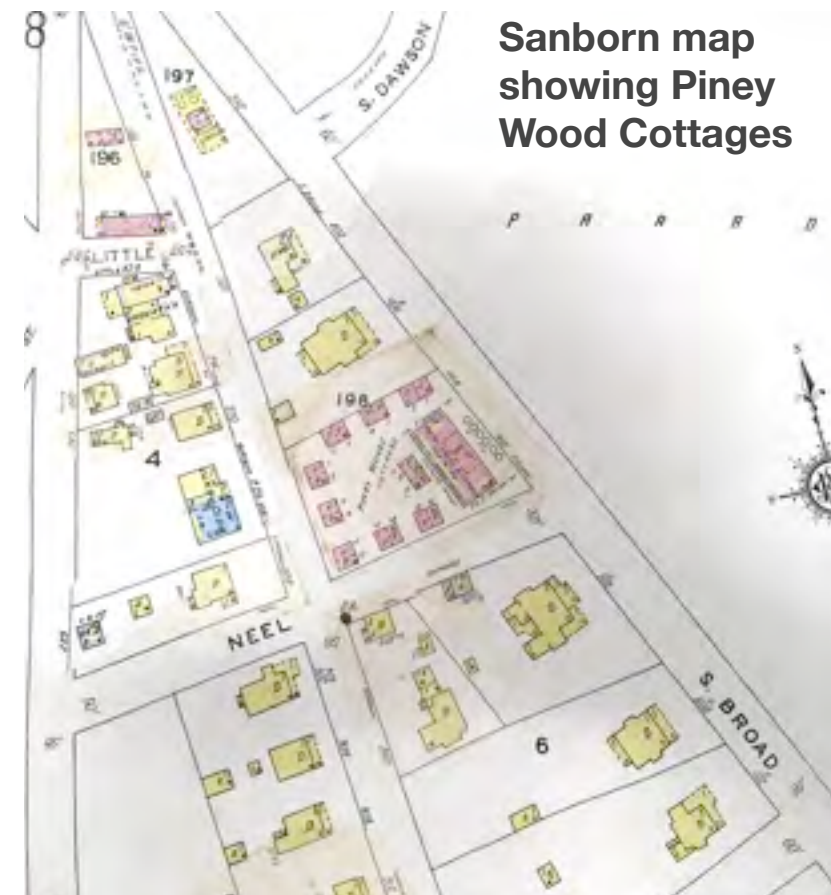
**Cottage Court**

Both sites studied west of the park show a mixture of residential and commercial uses, and buildings ranging from cottages to carriage houses to mixed-use buildings with apartments over shops. For these examples, key historic buildings were retained.

In one case, a design illustrates a cottage court with a mixed-use building facing Broad Street and the park. This design in fact mimics a historic cottage court that used to be on the site, associated with the former Piney Woods Hotel. The site is currently occupied by a gas station.

In both cases, the existing zoning was found to be a major hindrance to this scale and type of redevelopment. This is discussed further starting on page 28.

**Paradise Park West**



**Sanborn map showing Piney Wood Cottages**



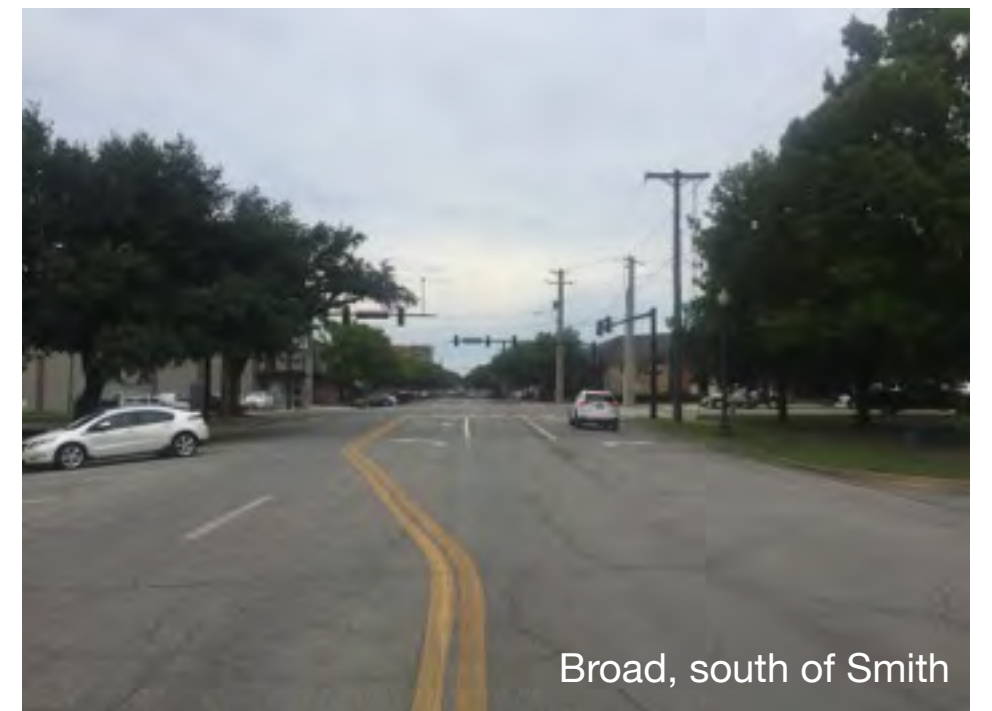
## How can we encourage people to walk between the park and downtown?

While there's much work to be done to improve the park experience itself for Paradise Park, it's also true the connections to Thomasville's thriving downtown are in need of upgrades. Broad Street is the main pedestrian artery in the area, but lacks much pedestrian interest south of Smith, which leads people to not walk toward the park. Though it's very close, the perception is the distance is far. The urban design team also looked at short and long-term opportunities to improve this connection and enhance value along Broad and adjoining streets. Those recommendations are broken into first steps, within five years and within twenty years.



### Connecting to Downtown

**Two versions of Broad Street**  
North of Smith, Broad Street is largely a welcoming, comfortable street to walk along. South of Smith, however, the experience degrades quickly with wide turn lanes, driveways, a lack of on-street parking and buildings set back from the street behind parking lots.





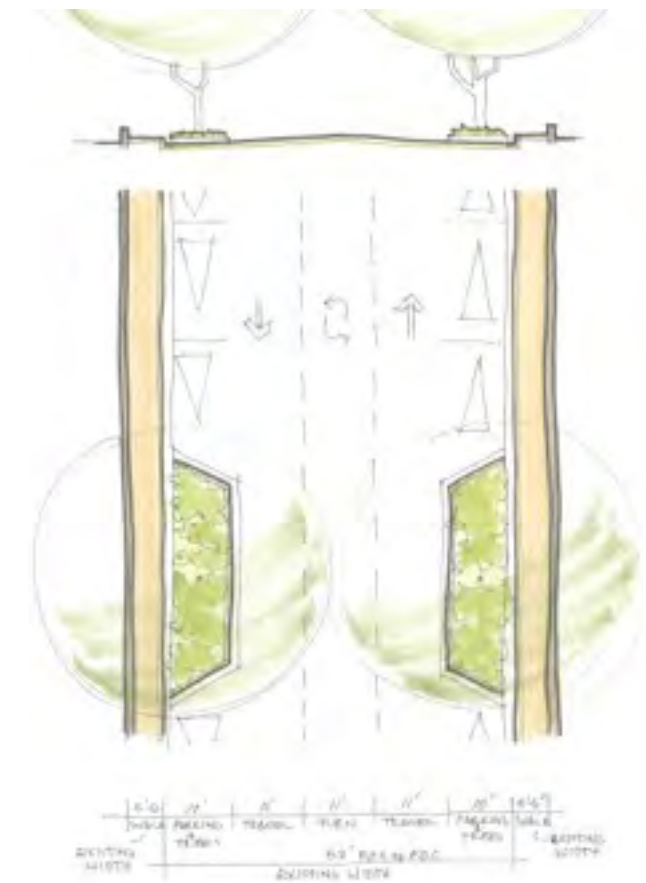
## EXISTING & IMMEDIATE:



Park in context of south Broad



Street tree & art opportunities



Smith, west of Broad

## First Steps

Once improvements to the park are underway, some initial steps can be undertaken to immediately improve the walk between downtown and the park. In the block south of Smith, it's suggested to close the northernmost driveway into the Rite-Aid site, and extend the angled parking further north. Rite-Aid will retain two entries into their lot. Street trees can also be added on Smith, west of Broad.

At the same time, public art projects can add some whimsy and encourage more walking. Installations at two corners of Smith and Broad are possible, as is a sign over Broad south of the railroad tracks.



Decorative Signage over Broad



**WITHIN 5 YEARS:**



**Street changes lead to small development changes**



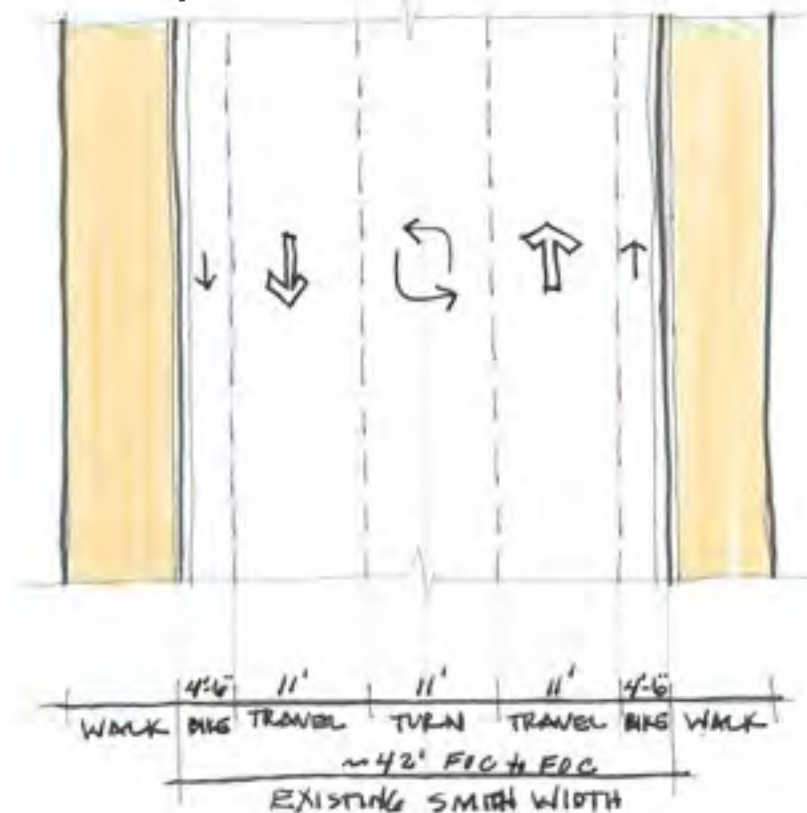
**Roundabout proposal**

**Extending the Success, Creating More Value**

Following the initial steps, it becomes important to look more broadly at this area as an extension of downtown. The comprehensive plan does an excellent job of identifying character areas, including this series of blocks.

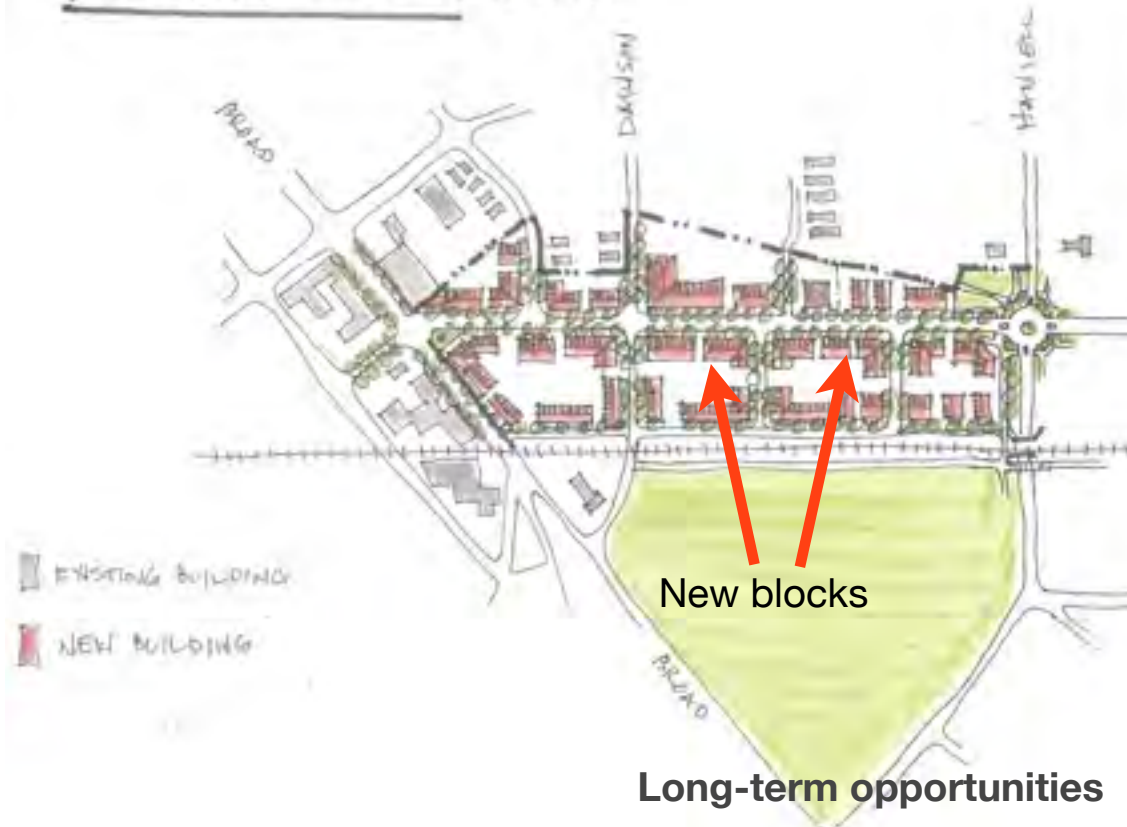
In order for this area to truly thrive, however, some changes to street design will need to occur. Smith, in particular is problematic west of Hansell. Adding a roundabout at Hansell and Smith allows for Smith to easily convert from a four-lane to a three-lane section while also providing a location to announce an “entry” into downtown Thomasville. The three-lane section is safer for all users, and allows easy property access. During this timeframe, properties may also begin to redevelop along Dawson.

**Smith Avenue, west of Hansell  
Proposed 3-lane conversion**





WITHIN 20 YEARS:



Straighten curve on Smith,  
reduce curb radii



## Long-Term Possibilities: More Connections and Opportunity

With the previous catalysts for change in place, the blocks between the park and downtown, and connecting to the Rose's site, can now be developed as one, seamless neighborhood. Using economic development tools, the City can encourage properties to upgrade over time. A series of new blocks can be created between Smith and the railroad tracks, in what is currently one, long block. Dawson Street can potentially connect through also, as it used to historically. With improvements to the park and the streets in this area, sufficient value will be created to enable Thomasville to build on its success.



## Phasing and Implementation:

A summary of design elements and recommended timelines

	Immediate	Within 5 Years	Long-Term	Page #
Walking loop in Park	X			11, 16
Improved playgrounds	X			11
Improved carriageways	X			11, 15
Rebuilt gazebo	X			11
New large lawn along Broad Street	X			11, 17
Landscaped park entries	X			11
New park pathways		X		12, 15, 16
Nature Center		X		12
Expanded parking area		X		12
Interpretative walkway		X		12
Bicycle/pedestrian bridge over Hansell Street			X	12
Rebuilt streets around Chamber building		X		12
Re-stripe Broad and Hansell for on-street parking	X			18-20
Tree planters in parking lanes on Broad and Hansell		X		18-20
Extend Victoria Place Overlay District around park	X			29
Improve Broad Street south of Smith	X			24
Add decorative signage over Broad near park		X		24
Add public art along Broad Street	X			24
Roundabout at Hansell and Smith, make Smith 3-lane		X		25
Redevelopment area north of tracks, including new zoning			X	26



# DEVELOPMENTS REGULATIONS



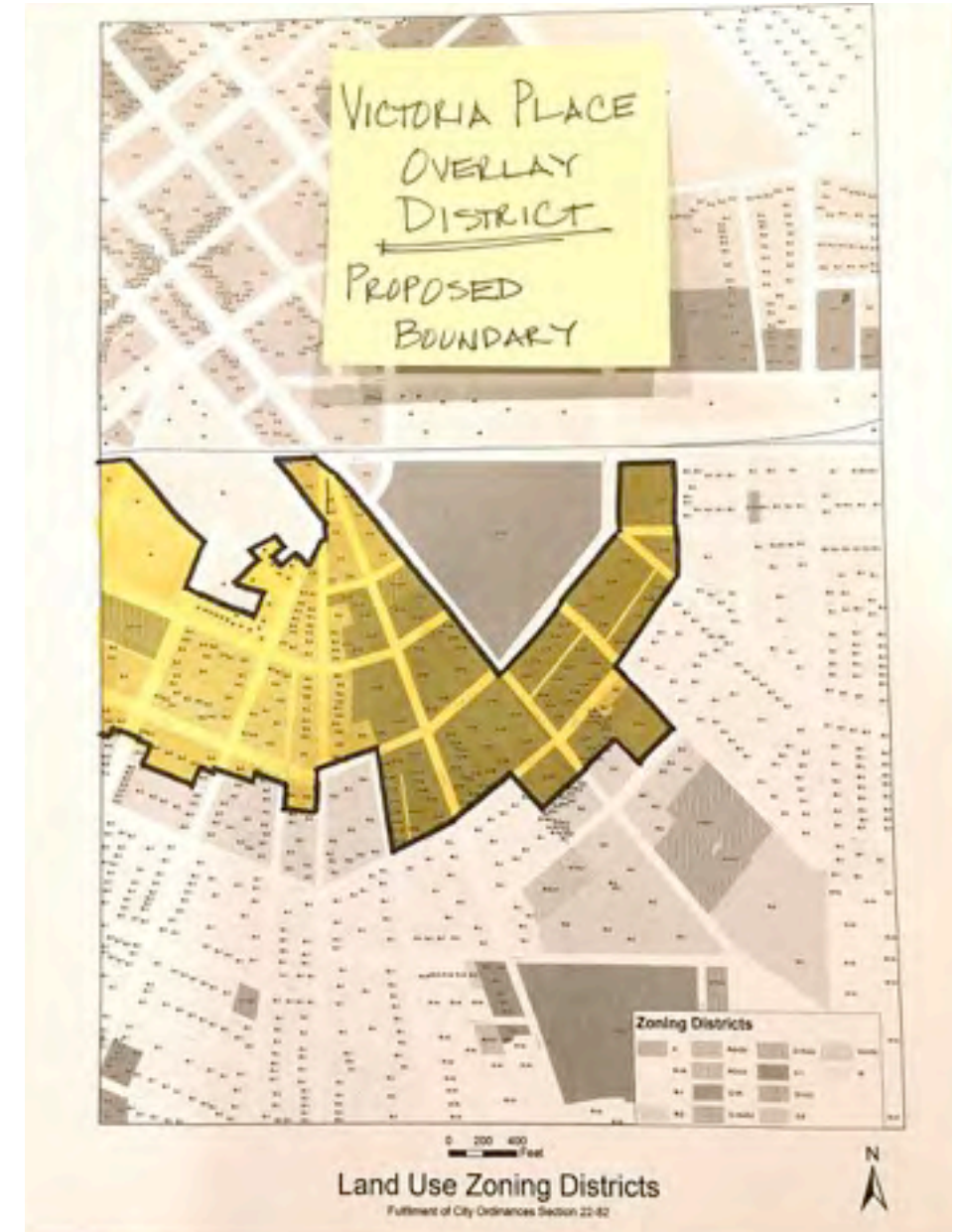


# Rethinking Zoning

## Enabling the historic development pattern

Like most of our cities, Thomasville has existing zoning rules in place that often work against their stated goals. In this case, the zoning surrounding Paradise Park is almost all commercial zoning, but with standards geared for suburban-style development. That particular type of development is not supportive of the historic, walkable character that exists in this part of the city.

When testing sites west of the park, the team found the existing zoning did not allow for what was illustrated. In order to encourage redevelopment in character with the historic pattern, the team recommends extending the Victoria Place Overlay around the park. This existing tool is well-suited for the parcels illustrated.



Test sites, see previous Chapter





# Specific zoning issues

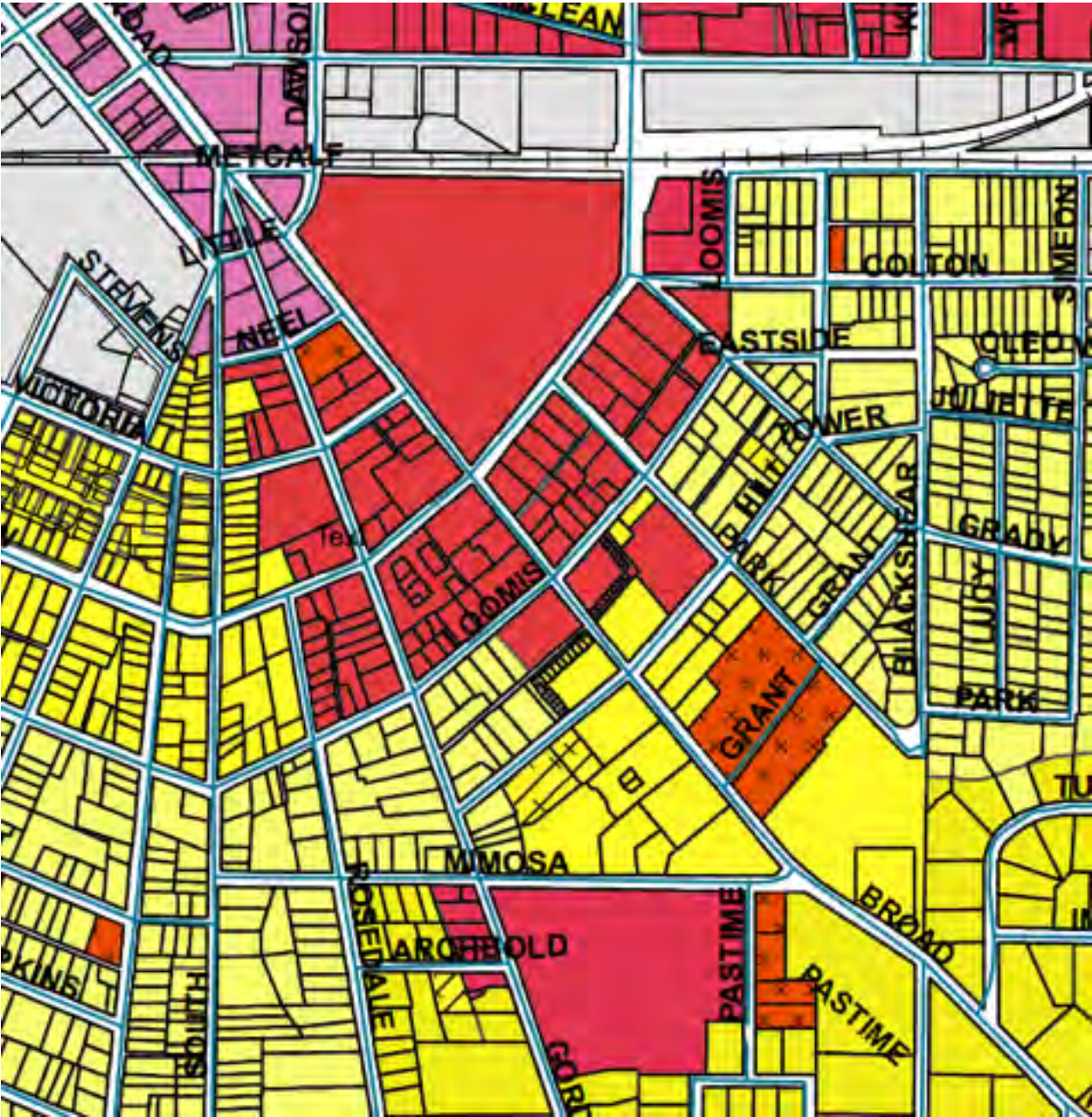
While the City has done extensive work on reviewing its current zoning code, and is looking to undertake a code rewrite, it's worth highlighting the issues created in just this one area.

Most of the zoning surrounding the park is a commercial zoning, designated C-1A. While in theory this zoning allows for residential and commercial uses, in practice the standards make such development infeasible. In fact, C-1A does not allow for the historic pattern to be built without significant variance requests. This is evidenced by the new construction that has taken place in the area, which is almost exclusively single-story commercial buildings with large parking lots.

Specific problems include:

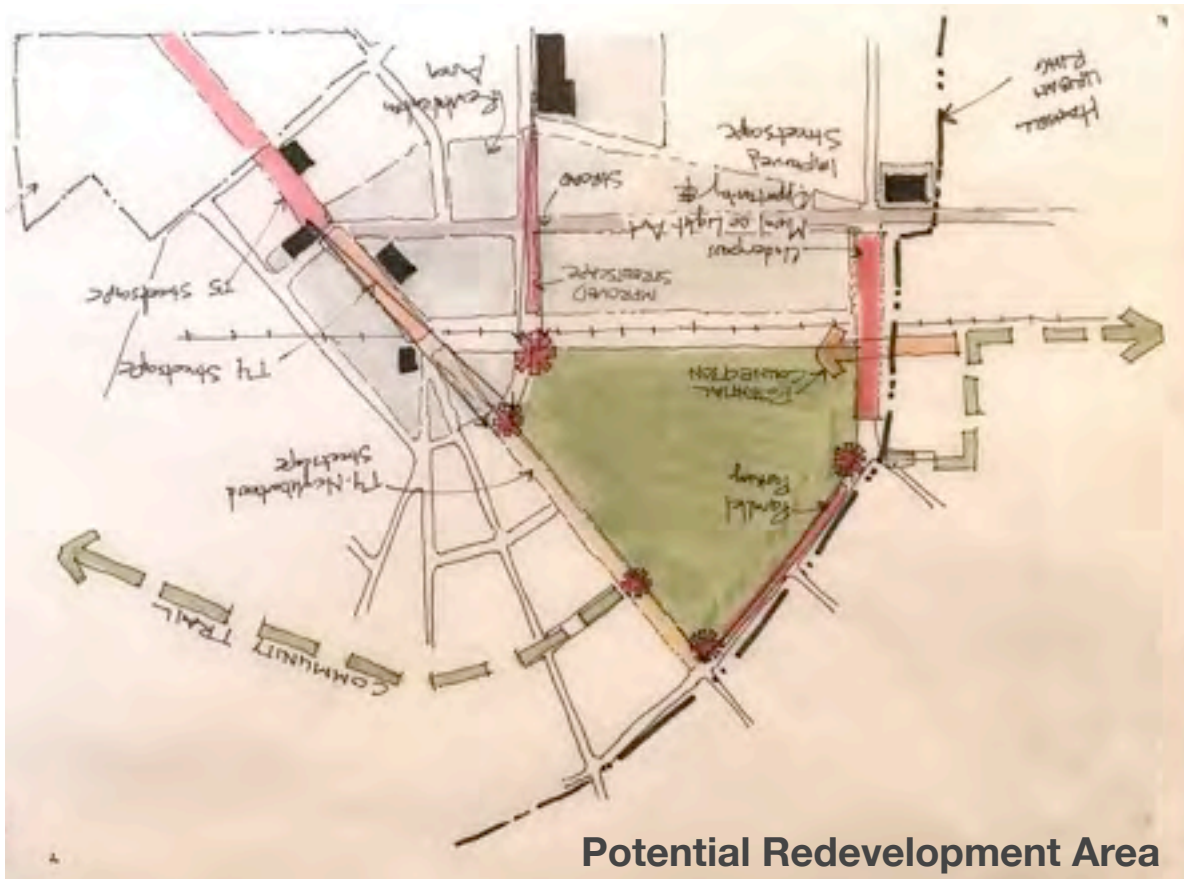
- A high lot coverage requirement
- Lot area per unit (density) limitation
- A high off-street parking requirement

Any one of those issues can prevent the historic, mixed-use pattern to be feasible, but the combination makes it impossible. As the City updates its code, this team suggests the easiest remedy is to extend the Victoria Place Overlay District to the land surrounding the park. The form-based overlay district has much better standards in all three areas noted above, and enables quality development to occur.



A map illustrating the current commercial zoning around the park





Potential Redevelopment Area



Long-term opportunities along Broad

## Thinking more broadly about redevelopment

Longer-term, if the City wishes to achieve redevelopment as illustrated north of the railroad tracks, additional tools will be needed. For example, the area could be designated as a redevelopment area, utilizing the City's economic development tools.

Secondly, the zoning will ultimately need to change as well. A version of the Victoria Place Overlay should be studied, since it is currently the best zoning the City has to offer for the type of walkable, urban development desired and illustrated.



Dawson Street at railroad tracks



# PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

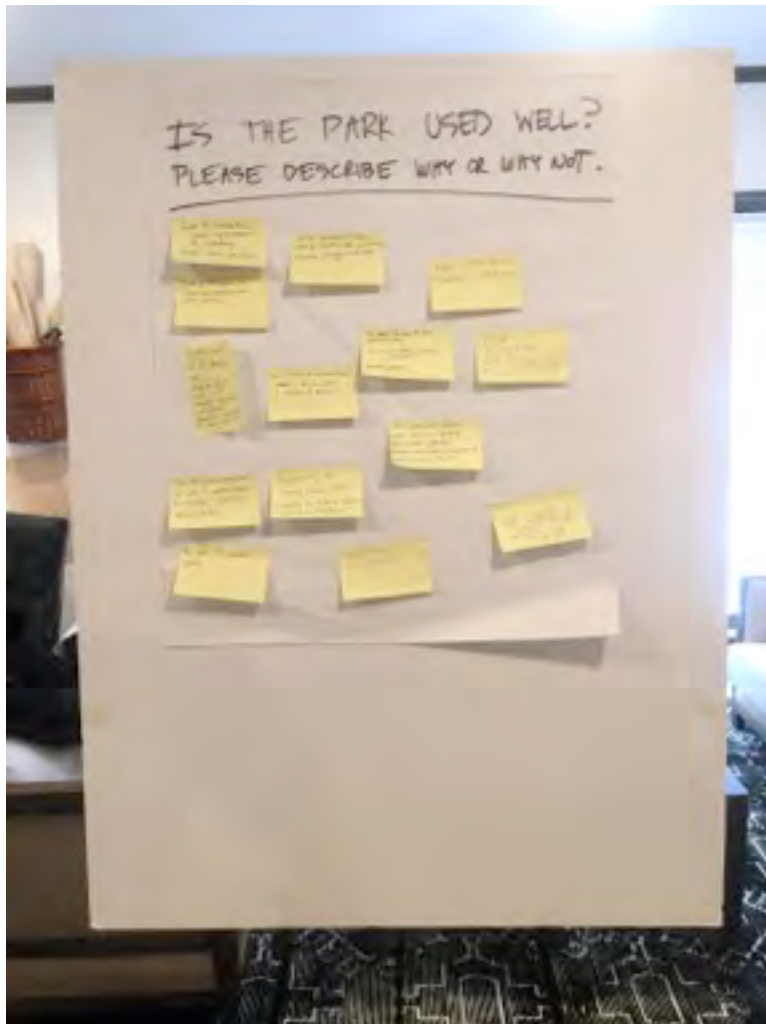




## Working collaboratively

Our team believes in working collaboratively, across disciplines and with the public. The three-day design charrette process allows for continuous engagement, along with some structured meetings. The process began with a joint walking tour of the park and the area, and culminated with a work-in-progress presentation at the end of day three.

Along the way, we invited the public in to the charrette space to talk with us, give us feedback and answer key questions.









## Public Comments, Listed

Is the park used well? Please describe why or why not

Good for activities. Needs improvement for walking. Needs more parking.

Great for family time but could use restrooms and better parking.

No. No connection to the rest of downtown and community. Random playground sets.

No - too many trees and shrubs.

Yes! Wooded escape in the center of town is very unique. Need to preserve this!

No. Untapped forest with minimal lighting and broken gazebo. Random playground equipment. Needs a lot of TLC.

No. Feels neglected.

No. Lots of unused space.

Apparently not very much. It's mostly a blank slate with no "invitation."

Can be used more if wheelchair and walker paths available.

Yes for events. No for daily use. What kind of park is it? Family? Green space? Just events? Attraction to make it more active?

No - lots of under-utilized space. But could be a center of activity.

It's great for kids to run around and play. Could use better parking (no dirt)

Poor accessibility for young families and oldies.

Do you use the park regularly? If yes, what do you do?

Art in the Park concerts

Used to walk there when lived nearby

Mostly just events

Usually just walk around the perimeter because the park is not inviting. Live nearby.

Yes. Family time and my kids like to study on spring days

Sometimes. Walk kids to playground.

I want to but in the early morning homeless are hanging out and approach me. I don't feel safe.

Art in Park and family time at playground

No - only 2-3 times per year with summer camp

No. If I do it's with kids, but definitely not the first park think of. Forget it's there.

Just during scheduled events

Never. My child is only 10 months old

No. Poor parking, no specific purpose for adults. Creepy after dark.

Yes! This is our neighborhood park. 2 school-aged children. We use the playground and we attend annual events. Keep some shade/trees please!

When grandkids come mostly and events. Now need wheelchair/walker accessibility.

Escape from office to get fresh air and exercise.

My local walk in nature

Yes! We love the natural space in town.



No. Live nearby but it's not clean. Don't enjoy festivals and it's not got restrooms.

What can be done to better connect the park to the adjacent neighborhoods and downtown?

Need attractive walkways from downtown. Cross over railroad??

Transform surrounding buildings and utilize the history of the buildings. Since the railroad has to stay, pull out its history and connect it to the gas station and keep the flavor going.

Signage. Parking. Lighting.

Better walkways with safety taken into consideration and more to point you in the right direction

Trails. Sidewalks. Parking. History.

Aesthetics. Lights. Safety. Trails.

Trails connecting into and through the park from Broad and Hansell

Extra ramp through curb on Hansell for bikes coming across from Park Ave.

Need handicapped accessibility and paved walkway for wheelchairs and walkers.

Teach community to value the only nature park in town. Enjoy the nature, the history, the bandstand, etc.

Crosswalks more inviting and obvious entrances.

A visual entrance and path into the park (as much as you can)

Bike paths. Walking trails.

Random ideas to share

Make the park feel more "Thomasville." Designed well and unique. Not the standard playground equipment.

Look at FL trails - city, county. Heart trails, body weight work out pavilions

Please save some dying trees/snags aka wildlife trees

Better and more parking

Create fun theme as at each park that is special to Thomasville.  
- Water-themed park; skate/bike theme; art theme

Should have its own "point of view" and reason for existing

City to purchase ship building and make more parking and nature center right next to this unique park!

Thank you for allowing our input! Please preserve bandstand; carriage paths with natural materials such as clay; replant lost trees; no buildings or structures; plazas, gardens, etc; Please keep this special patch of woods in town. Preserve what makes Thomasville unique!

Benches

More trash cans and recycle bins. History!

(Safe) Water feature

It's dirty. Minimal maintenance.

Thin trees and bushes

Where's the paradise in Paradise Park?

Hub for exercising and recreation. Parcourse through the park, etc - give the park a distinct personality.

Involve garden clubs and other clubs

Lighting. Exercise / walking trails



Food trucks. Activities for infants to adults.

Flower garden. Small water feature to provide habitat for swans and/or ducks

Bathrooms. More trash and recycling bins.

While considered linked to downtown, it also feels like a gateway for our medical community and surrounding homes. It just doesn't seem to have changed/adapted as the surroundings did.

Please save/protect all of the big wild cherry trees. Support wildlife

Special attention to hollies, post oak, cypress as well as long leaf pines, live oaks, etc.

I'm all for saving trees and creating open spaces

Splash pad!

## Pre-Charrette Briefing Memo

Prior to the charrette, K2 was retained by the City to perform an analysis of existing conditions and identify the project opportunities. That effort produced a report that is included herein.

# Paradise Park Memo



## Summary of Existing Conditions and Opportunities

August 13, 2018





## Charrette Opportunities

On July 31, Kevin visited with City of Thomasville staff and some community stakeholders, and also completed a walking tour of the area to provide some background analysis for the upcoming Paradise Park design charrette. Below is a summary, first, of Kevin's observations on the opportunities. Following the summary is a compendium of the notes taken on-site during the visit.

### Charrette Opportunities

Below are some of Kevin's impressions from the July 31 visit and previous visits to Thomasville. These are for the team to consider prior to the charrette. Beyond these notes, a variety of maps and historical information will be shared separately.

- a. The park itself has lacked any kind of real plan or program for a very long time. Some simple improvements, such as a circuitous walking/jumping trail, defined play areas, lighting and landscaping would make a noticeable improvement.
- b. We should explore a few, distinct programmatic concepts and have the public give us feedback. Those include:
  - a. An events facility in the park, which could handle weddings, receptions, major events, etc. We would need to think carefully about the parking impact of such a facility.
  - b. One direction would be to emphasize Paradise Park as an intentionally rustic park, which builds off of the theme of it as a wooded, forested retreat. That aligns with history and current conditions somewhat.
  - c. Another direction would be to take the park in a more active, civic direction with defined, programmed areas. Those might include children's play, a spray park and a larger open green that could be used for various activities. An amphitheater seems unwarranted given the City's investment in the amphitheater downtown. The park is very lightly used today given its location and size, so consideration for an entirely different program is warranted.
  - d. The historic pathways are a unique feature that needs to be captured and improved in some fashion.
  - e. The bandshell is in rather sad condition, and it is small. We should explore options on keeping it, improving it or replacing it with something else.
  - f. How can we make the railroad an asset to the park? Can there be a rail or train theme to improvements?
  - g. What are some simple, fun, programmatic elements that would encourage more families and kids to use the park?
- c. From an urban design standpoint, opportunities to explore include:
  - a. Street design around the park, including adding street parking and better tree lawns. Currently the sidewalks that border the park are actually not that pleasant for walking. Consideration should be given for redesigning the edges of the park. Hansell Street in particular effectively acts as an auto bypass of downtown (in part due to the fact that it doesn't have a rail crossing), and that has led to some speed-oriented street design. Rethinking this design, as well as making the underpasses much more inviting and attractive, could enable much better connections to the neighborhood across from the park. We should also look at options for an at-grade pedestrian crossing of the railroad tracks at Hansell Street.
  - b. The triangular intersection at the convergence of Broad, Gordon and South present a challenge and an opportunity for design. We discussed some possible combinations of parcels and street changes that would allow for a unique building site and something that visually draws people toward the park.
  - c. A key urban design element is studying possible improvements to the block of Broad between Smith and Metcalf, to encourage more people to walk toward the park. Some minor changes to the green space at the intersection of Smith and Broad, along with eliminating an entry to CVS could immediately make a positive change. What else can be done, including temporary markets and the like, in this block to make it feel more connected?
  - d. The team should brainstorm any ideas to improve the Chamber of Commerce building site, so that it feels more connected to Broad and the park.
  - e. Can the Dawson Street connection be improved, especially as development is contemplated on the Rose's site?
- f. Long-term, can the flavor of the Piney Woods Hotel be re-created to the north of the railroad tracks? What design strategies and policies would that involve?
- g. With so much vacant and under-used property facing the park, we should explore strategies including Missing Middle housing and apartment buildings on those properties. A more substantial amount of residential facing the park would dramatically aid in its active use, and encourage people from further away to use it as well. While Thomasville is a small community with modest growth, there certainly seems to be unmet demand for some more substantial uses in this key area.



The street design adjacent to the Chamber building is clearly to maximize parking for the facility. This should be re-examined.



The parking area and former street along the north side of the park presents an opportunity for improvement and access.



The park is heavily wooded, and provides excellent shade for Thomasville's hot summers. Beyond the shade, however, there are very few improvements in the park.



Remnants of the historic pathways still exist, and present a unique opportunity.





Typical edge conditions along the park. A narrow sidewalk, no trees in the tree lawn and no on-street parking to shield pedestrians.



The city's multi-modal path network ties into both ends of the park. It presents an excellent opportunity for design.



Current condition of the gazebo is not good. It seems to be failing structurally, and is also quite small.



There's a variety of playground equipment in the park, though much of it seems dated.



More of the historic pathways



More on the edge conditions



This shaded area at the corner of Smith and Broad has lovely trees, but does not have any active use. This seems like a design opportunity to encourage more people to cross Smith.



Broad Street is not overly wide south of Smith, but the presence of multiple turn lanes, driveways and the Rite-Aid discourages people from crossing and walking to the park.



This mobile clinic, while temporary, provides a presence of human activity in the Rite-Aid parking lot that makes walking along Broad more interesting.



Hansell Street appears to have a great deal of excess lanes and paved area, and could be improved quite easily with some simple landscaping and design techniques.



## Notes from discussions on Paradise Park background & issues

1. This is Thomasville's big park. Like Forsyth in Savannah to some degree. SPLOST supports park improvements. Need to be careful to involve the whole city, so that our efforts don't feel exclusionary and aren't targeted to only one demographic group.
2. Is there a Friends of the Park? NO. There used to be Paradise Park Conservancy. Garden clubs rotate to pick up litter along Broad.
3. There's interest in doing a ciclovia in concert w/ charrette, tied into the hospital and wellness activities.
4. Can we do something tactical at same time as charrette? Food trucks? Programming? Wednesday night market on Broad Street.
5. Events typically in the park – Rose Festival (Saturday is a big day) in the spring; makers fair (crafts) – in April. Some dog shows etc. Easter egg hunt by police; Howl-o-ween;
6. Need clarity on whether a building can be built in the park
7. Bathrooms are desperately needed
8. Used a lot for birthday parties, family reunions
9. Movie night in October
10. Fall extravaganza – geared towards police and kids
11. Area along tracks is good vendor and truck parking
12. Amphitheater now is a better place for concerts. They have a good setup, so one is not needed in Paradise Park.
13. Popular at lunch
14. Potential – art in the park regularly; farmer's markets, outdoor markets, spray fountain, kids cycling or walking trail, running loop (map 1 mile), shaded cycling trail
15. There's plenty of sports fields elsewhere in town. Anything in Paradise Park would need to be unique or creative – disc golf, etc.
16. Events Center – ballroom space that could be flexible. 30,000 SF? Shows, weddings, etc.
17. Perception is it's a dated park – especially playground equipment, landscaping
18. Use the railroad track as an attraction
19. Needs a historical marker
20. Historically had a resort theme – could it have a resort feel?
21. Continue city trail through the park (and around it?)
22. Program some outdoor group activities – yoga, exercise, etc. Can a group adopt it? Stroller moms, Zumba, etc.
23. Celebrate the magnolias and long leaf pines – education about trees, identify good specimens
24. Was also used for cross burnings historically, so be careful of the entire history
25. What is the one, defining element that will draw people to the park?
26. No activity around the periphery today
27. Zipline!

## Urban Design Background & Issues

1. How to connect it to the Rose's site? Talking w/ 3 potential developers now, will work with Planning Design Guidelines. Will likely have a new hotel plus other uses
2. Some large ownerships on Smith Ave that could transition over time
3. Charrettes are expected now by the public – staff education has changed the dynamic
4. There's a state farmer's market – wholesale & retail just northeast of park
5. Railroad – very active, several trains per day. Trains park for 45 minutes and block all the streets routinely. Blocks pedestrian connection to downtown.
6. Feel and perception is that it's a long ways from downtown, even though it's actually very close.
7. Wayfinding needed
8. Connect a park path/trail to shaded walk to downtown
9. "Hunt the lost quail" – game to encourage people to go there. Gamify it to make it fun for kids and families
10. Connection on Hansell Street – murals underneath; improve pedestrian connection; median in street
11. Very little immediate housing around it.
12. Opportunities for housing across street or at perimeter
13. On-street parking opportunities around the park (Broad, Hansell)
14. Boys & Girls Club is 3 blocks away – how can they use it?

## Politics

1. Thomasville has a fairly new City Council. One election issue is a feeling that there wasn't enough public input in recent years. Too many pet projects being pushed. 2 new council members – advocating for more transparency, watching budget more closely. Dissatisfaction with African-American neighborhoods w/ investment in downtown vs neighborhoods, etc. There's a desire to make sure that improvements and efforts are more balanced citywide.
2. Victoria Park – optics are the City is trying to gentrify the neighborhood, which causes some issues. The homes are not selling yet. Perception is that they are too small for the money in Thomasville. Developer is trying to tweak the price and market to get it right. This has implications for the property right around Paradise Park.
3. The Strong Towns message really resonated when Marohn came. People seemed to really understand the value and ss message. Renaissance grant program was a popular concept with the community.
4. The City recently completed a thorough Comprehensive Plan with Dover Kohl and Partners. Paradise Park was mostly left out of the plan, since this project was forthcoming. At a 30,000 foot level, the plan calls for better connections to the downtown, the neighborhoods and a more active use of the space.