



UPTOWN CLEMSON FRAMEWORK BOOK

Prepared for
THE CITY OF CLEMSON

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DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES®





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Introduction

This Framework Plan for Uptown builds on strategic planning for development citywide. By resolving opportunities and challenges in this district, the community can advance its priorities both for this site and in other important areas.

Why UptownNEXT?

UptownNEXT is a planning process to envision the future of an area located in the very heart of Clemson, with the potential to be something truly special. This Framework Book illustrates the development vision for this area, highlighting priority community benefits while also incorporating elements needed for economically viable development.

Background: ClemsonNEXT

In response to growing pressures of student housing development and traffic, the City commissioned ClemsonNEXT: a citywide strategic planning process focused on development. The plan, which was completed at the end of 2020, includes recommendations about where development could be allowed in the future, and how it can best be aligned with community priorities.

Strategic recommendations spanned a wide variety of issues:

1. Invest in Transit

2. Expand Bike & Pedestrian Infrastructure
3. Enhance the Small Business Ecosystem
4. Support the Creation of Affordable Housing
5. Invest in Neighborhood Preservation & Enhancement in Key Areas
6. Facilitate Student and Non-Student Housing
7. Create Overlays
8. Cultivate Development of the Catalyst Areas (shown on next page)
9. Expand Capacity & Foster Collaboration

The ClemsonNEXT Strategic Plan highlighted the area near the intersection of College Avenue and Tiger Boulevard, as well as Abernathy Park, as a district for special community focus. This area—which the plan refers to as Uptown—is in the center of the community, sits next to Lake Hartwell, and holds the opportunity to be the heart of the city.

That plan identified the opportunity to cultivate a vibrant destination for the entire community, create a gateway to Downtown Clemson, and reinforce the storefront environment along College Avenue while enhancing lake access. That plan also recognized the importance of creating inviting public spaces, including expanding

Abernathy Park to establish it as a focal point of activity in the City.

Places like Uptown are a once-in-a-generation opportunity—such an opportunity can't be left to chance. This document is the result of the Clemson community's desire to proactively determine its fate, and to make something truly special through partnership.

UptownNEXT Development Framework

As a follow-on to the ClemsonNEXT Strategic Plan, UptownNEXT worked with the community to create a development vision for the Uptown district. Uptown is one of few remaining areas near Clemson's core which can accommodate significant development of any kind. While development pressure has been strongest for student-oriented housing, the City seeks to leverage this market to advance development that meets the needs of the entire community. As this Framework Book will explore, community-supported development here would include a mix of student-oriented housing, non-student-oriented uses, and signature open spaces that create a destination for a broad diversity of Clemson residents and visitors.

What is this Framework Book?

This Framework Book summarizes the development vision for Uptown, details key principles for development here, and focuses

attention on specific opportunities and priorities for the area.

This framework document presents a practical path forward for the community, city hall, and developers to create a district, rather than a collection of unrelated developments, and provide a number benefits to the community in the process.

It realistically integrates principles of economic and market feasibility and key community priorities into an economically-viable development. This framework provides a strong, foundational indication of what the City expects to see from specific development proposals, and an ongoing reference point as the community examines opportunities in light of changing circumstances.

It is anticipated that future development proposals and development plans will differ somewhat from what is illustrated in this document because circumstances affecting development in Uptown are certain to change. However, this Book communicates the goals and priorities which future development must substantially achieve, and sends a clear message to development partners about community priorities, and proves what can be accomplished through coordinated development.



Current Conditions

Many properties in Uptown are significantly underutilized relative to what is possible in this high-value location. Development has the potential to significantly improve walkability and access to the area's assets—most notably Abernathy Park and Lake Hartwell.

Uptown today is composed primarily of single-story commercial uses, vacant or converted single-family residential buildings, and surface parking lots serving each property. Many commercial uses—particularly those on Tiger Boulevard West of College Avenue—are auto-oriented, meaning they are most accessible to people using cars by virtue of street-facing parking, drive throughs, and uncomfortable sidewalk infrastructure. Most commercial buildings are occupied. Many provide valuable services to the immediate area (e.g., pharmacy, food options, counseling services, etc.), and could be accommodated in future development. Others could be relocated to more appropriate areas within Clemson.

The area has dynamic topography—particularly west of College Avenue and south of Tiger Boulevard—with a downward slope away from Tiger Boulevard and west toward Abernathy Park and Lake Hartwell. Several properties at the bottom of this slope and immediately adjacent to Lake Hartwell are

controlled by the Army Corps of Engineers, and are not suitable for development. There are also creeks which run under and through the district. Uptown's topography creates opportunities to ease the impact of height and density in future development on surrounding areas, but also creates real constraints on the location of new streets for internal circulation.

Abernathy Park and the associated boardwalk system are hidden gems, offering peaceful walking paths and stunning views of Lake Hartwell. The park is only accessible via Keowee Trail (which is not safe or comfortable for pedestrians), Jaycee Park (though the entry to the boardwalk system is somewhat hidden), and a hidden set of connections through properties on Wall Street.

The area does not have adequate internal circulation, which exacerbates traffic on Tiger Boulevard and College Avenue. Properties west of College Avenue rely on a combined 45 curb cuts for vehicular access; these curb cuts significantly interfere with the comfort and safety of pedestrian infrastructure. Sidewalks are also rather narrow, and separated from traffic by little to no tree lawn. Long blocks inhibit internal access and contribute to an uninviting pedestrian experience and, accordingly, car dependence for even visitors in walking distance.



view of Lake Hartwell from Abernathy Park boardwalk



narrow sidewalks



view south on College Avenue from Tiger Boulevard



surface parking in front of the Post Office



Jaycee Park - entrance to boardwalk system



curb cuts



aerial map - current conditions

About the Process

Too often, planning processes arrive at a vision that may be beautiful, but not truly possible. UptownNEXT sought to do something different: explore both what is desirable and what is achievable. The resulting vision offers a framework for change that can advance community priorities within the real constraints of development economics.

The UptownNEXT planning process blended community workshops, stakeholder engagement, and detailed analysis to develop the framework. This collaborative process was designed to arrive at a vision that is both fundable (i.e., economically viable) and approvable (i.e., supported by a majority of community members). This section summarizes the key points of community engagement that shaped the approach.

First Workshop

To kick off the project, the planning team held a community workshop designed to gather resident input on priorities for the area. The team held two workshop sessions, each at a different time of day to maximize opportunities for participation. The planning team also circulated a survey to expand the reach of the conversation. Over 100 community members joined for the workshops, and the survey had more than 320 responses.

Participants provided feedback on ideas and priorities across five major themes:

- **Livability:** How to balance different types of housing.
- **Natural Systems:** How parks, plazas, and other improvements in the public realm can better connect people to Lake Hartwell and other natural features.
- **Vibrancy:** How commercial uses can bring new life to the area and create an attractive destination for a diverse community of residents and visitors.
- **Shared Space:** How gathering spaces and civic uses can create a welcome environment for the entire community.
- **Walkability & Connectivity:** How pedestrian, cyclist, transit, and car infrastructure can maximize accessibility, convenience, and safety in the district.

The planning team used this community feedback—along with detailed market and economic analysis—to shape the creation of three land use and development alternatives.

Second Workshop

At the second workshop, the planning team presented three development alternatives in the context of both community feedback and various feasibility considerations. In other words, how can the district leverage the area's unique opportunities and pressures to best advance community priorities?

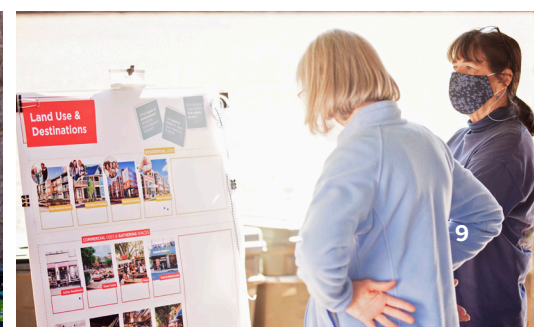
As with the first workshop, the planning team provided two opportunities for in-person participation at different times of the day, and also circulated a survey in order to maximize the scope of participation.

Community members were asked to provide feedback on the development alternatives: What aligns with their vision? What doesn't? What are the priorities among all possible community benefits?

Refining the Framework with Staff and Council

In the months following the community workshops, the planning team worked to refine the preferred development alternative to best align with the community's vision. The team held three workshops with Council and many work sessions with City staff to work through key issues, resolve challenges, and explore implementation considerations. These sessions also incorporated detailed feasibility analysis to ensure the development vision illustrated by the framework would realistically be achievable, if land use policy is aligned to support it.

Following these sessions, the team drafted a Request for Proposals (RFP). The RFP was designed to very clearly communicate to prospective development partners the key goals, principles, and priorities for development in Uptown.



Overview of Feasibility

In addition to engaging with the City of Clemson community to understand priorities for placemaking and policy, this development framework has a foundation of market and economic analysis to ensure that the vision presented can be realized.

The decisions that led to this plan are part of a careful balancing act that maximizes community benefits within the very real constraints of what is economically possible in a public/private partnership.

Realizing the development of a great, community-supported vision requires careful study not just of public needs for place and good policy, but also private sector needs. Acknowledgement of this reality translates into the difference between a successfully built district that has lasting community value, and a plan that sits on a shelf—that is, a document with beautifully illustrated pictures and lofty goals, but no foundation of practical development considerations.

In order to create an economically-supported community vision, Uptown was studied through different lenses; these include site capacity, market analysis, economic viability, and political support. The vetting of development scenarios through these different lenses is often referred to as feasibility testing, including site feasibility, market feasibility, economic feasibility, and political/policy feasibility.

Site Feasibility

Site feasibility tests how much development product (typically expressed in housing units or commercial square footage) can reasonably fit onto a site.

Market Feasibility

Market Feasibility determines the likely revenues (expressed in rents, lease rates, and sale prices) and depth of demand that exists for different development products. Market analysis was undertaken in Fall 2021 to inform the market feasibility of different development opportunities, including student-oriented housing, non-student oriented housing, retail, and office.

Economic Feasibility

Economic, or financial, feasibility analysis tests the financial viability of potential development by determining its prospective development value and weighing it against the costs of development (i.e., construction, acquisition, etc.) and operational costs. Where development value is equal to or exceeds development costs, a project is likely to be viable and attractive to private investment. Where development value is less than development cost, a financial “gap” will exist and public or institutional funds will be needed to make a project feasible.

Political and Policy Feasibility

Political and policy feasibility evaluates whether a project is legally permissible, and also gauges level of public support and assesses whether it accomplishes good policy goals.

A development concept vetted through each of these four lenses has the potential to actually be realized—those that do not are likely to remain on a shelf.

The vision for Uptown presented in this document is grounded in each of these concepts of feasibility.



Development Goals & Principles

Key principles and ideas should shape future development in Uptown to ensure projects align with community goals

As explained in the introduction to the Framework Book, this document summarizes a development vision for Uptown, including key principles for shaping development.

This section details goals and principles which apply across Uptown to inform future development proposals. Specifically, this section provides guidelines that illustrate the type and character of new development that is appropriate for Uptown, including concepts related to land use, public realm and open space, connectivity and mobility, and design.

Land Uses

A fundamental priority is that Uptown serves as an inclusive community destination that is inviting to residents and visitors alike, and provides not only amenities but also a sense of place. This will be achieved by the incorporation of public open space, destination uses (i.e., retail, recreation, institutional), unique landscaping and streetscape elements, natural systems, public art reflective of the City's unique character, and pedestrian- and cyclist-friendly infrastructure.

UptownNEXT envisions a mixed-use district with amenities that serve and attract residents and non-residents alike. Residential uses may include student-oriented housing and non-student-oriented housing, with emphasis on non-student uses being a vital part of the overall mix of housing and commercial uses.

The inclusion of commercial space is intended to bring vitality to the district; successfully positioning these spaces is critical to their success. Ground-floor commercial uses should be located only in strategic locations. Spaces for small businesses could be complemented with one or more anchor uses (such as a grocery or general merchandise store) that draw interest from the broader community while serving the day-to-day needs of new residents in Uptown.

Public Realm & Open Space

Development in Uptown should create meaningful open spaces, each with its own specific character. This should include:

- Significant expansion of Abernathy Park, including program elements that attract a broad diversity of users to this lakefront park (e.g., outdoor dining, natural playscapes, kayak rental, performance areas, food truck areas, etc.).

- A public plaza at the corner of Tiger Boulevard and College Avenue that serves as a gateway to Uptown and Downtown Clemson.
- An open space oriented around a daylight creek that celebrates the reintroduction of natural systems while enhancing pedestrian access to Abernathy Park.

These open space concepts, and how they relate to surrounding development, are explored in detail in the following section.

Connectivity & Mobility

Future development should establish a cohesive, coherent internal circulation network.

Particular consideration should be made for pedestrian and bicycle access within and around the Project Area. Specifically, development could include pedestrian and bicycle connections from College Avenue and Tiger Boulevard to Abernathy Park, and should complement the City's Downtown Corridor Plan which will establish a protected bicycle path on College Avenue. Pedestrian-oriented building forms, appropriately located and screened structured parking, and the removal of existing curb cuts will all help to strengthen pedestrian comfort and walkability in Uptown.

The potential of vacating a segment of Keowee Trail as part of a strategy to expand Abernathy Park is an especially exciting and transformative idea that emerged from the UptownNEXT process. The new internal circulation network would replace the connection to College Avenue previously created by Keowee Trail, and improve park access.

Development must incorporate and purposefully locate adequate parking, while also including strategies to reduce parking needs of student-oriented housing by integrating development with transit and with bicycle and pedestrian networks.

Design Preferences

Development must be sensitive to the orientation, massing, and location of new uses—particularly the treatment of density and the character of buildings that interact with new open spaces.

Non-residential, commercial uses should be focused on College Avenue and Abernathy Park to enhance both environments as inclusive community spaces. Particular attention should be paid to establishing Abernathy Park as a vibrant community destination.

Density should be focused within the core of Uptown, with relatively less building height and density facing Abernathy Park and College Avenue. Building setbacks and stepbacks can help establish a human-scaled public realm throughout the Project Area and support variation within the building envelope.

Development could help to establish high-quality streetscape along both new and existing streets by using high quality materials, generous tree lawns and landscaped areas, best practices for stormwater, public art, and quality street furniture.

The next section provides an overview of how these concepts could form an over-arching development approach, focusing on specific opportunity areas within the district and illustrating how the district-wide principles could shape an approach in those specific areas.

Goals for Uptown

Establish a welcoming gateway to Downtown Clemson at the corner of Tiger Boulevard and College Avenue.

Celebrate and improve access to Clemson's natural assets—particularly Lake Hartwell.

Create dynamic gathering spaces that attract a broad diversity of users.

Activate the lakefront with commercial uses and distinctive programming.

Establish safe and comfortable bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.

Create commercial spaces that are consistently occupied with uses that draw a variety of visitors, showcase Clemson's diverse small business community, and serve Uptown's residential population.

Establish parking that makes visiting the district convenient, while encouraging visitors to park once and explore by foot.

Framework Overview

Uptown is envisioned as a vibrant, walkable, inclusive community destination that celebrates Clemson's unique character and natural assets.

Quality development in the district will connect College Avenue with Lake Hartwell through new walkable and bikeable infrastructure and through inviting commercial uses and gathering spaces next to and within an expanded Abernathy Park.

Anchor commercial uses on College Avenue can extend Downtown's walkable Main Street environment to the north while strengthening the potential for small businesses to succeed.

High quality streetscape will be established throughout the district, contributing to a comfortable, human-scaled environment throughout the district while encouraging walkability.

The development framework shown on the following page integrates an economically-viable mix of uses with new gathering spaces

that would advance this vision. This approach focuses student-oriented residential density west of College Avenue, where it can be leveraged to support significant infrastructure and open space improvements as part of a holistic development in the area roughly bounded by Tiger Boulevard to the north, Lake Hartwell to west, and College Avenue.

The inclusion of non-student residential housing is a priority for the community, and can be included east of College Avenue and adjacent to signature open spaces west of College Avenue in support of creating a welcoming environment for a multi-generational community of residents and visitors.

Commercial uses—such as a hotel and small business incubator and/coworking space—can complement the residential and commercial uses and help further activate the district with daytime and early-evening visitors.

Three key spaces within this district are illustrated in greater detail on the pages that follow:

1. The Tiger & College Retail Plaza
2. The Daylit Creek, Plaza & Boardwalk
3. The Lakefront Park Expansion

In the area west of College Avenue, the development framework shown includes:

- 90 hotel beds
- 57,000 square feet of retail
- 35,000 square feet of office and innovation/coworking space
- 2.7 acres of green space
- a mile of new, high quality streetscape internal to the development
- 1,330 parking spaces
- up to 1,800 student-oriented beds

There is also potential to integrate non-student-oriented housing in this area of Uptown alongside new value-creating amenities. Efforts to maximize housing oriented to non-students are strongly supported by the community.

- Student Housing
- Non-Student Housing
- Existing Green Space
- New Green Space
- Bike Path/Trail
- New Boardwalk
- Plaza
- Improved Sidewalk
- New Streets
- Daylit Creek
- Retail
- Office
- Hotel
- Parking



overall development framework for Uptown

Corner of Tiger & College

The corner of Tiger Boulevard and College Avenue is the gateway to Uptown and Downtown Clemson beyond.

This corner is one of Clemson's major opportunities to make a first impression for visitors. As people turn the corner down College Avenue toward Clemson University or Downtown, what will they see? Will they see people and active businesses? Will they be eager to stay and explore?

Current Conditions

The corner of Tiger Boulevard and College Avenue is one of the most highly-visible sites in all of Uptown. There is significant east-west traffic on Tiger that brings drivers past the corner. Because College Avenue is the main connection between the neighborhoods north of Tiger and the University, this corner is what greets many residents—by car, foot, and bicycle—as they travel to work or class.

Today, visitors are met with conventional auto-oriented development: many curb cuts interrupt the sidewalk to connect to a drive through; parking is sited out front of buildings; and only a narrow sidewalk and modest strip of landscaping separate the parking lot from the street.

Pedestrian and bicycle connections are tenuous, with long crossings at the

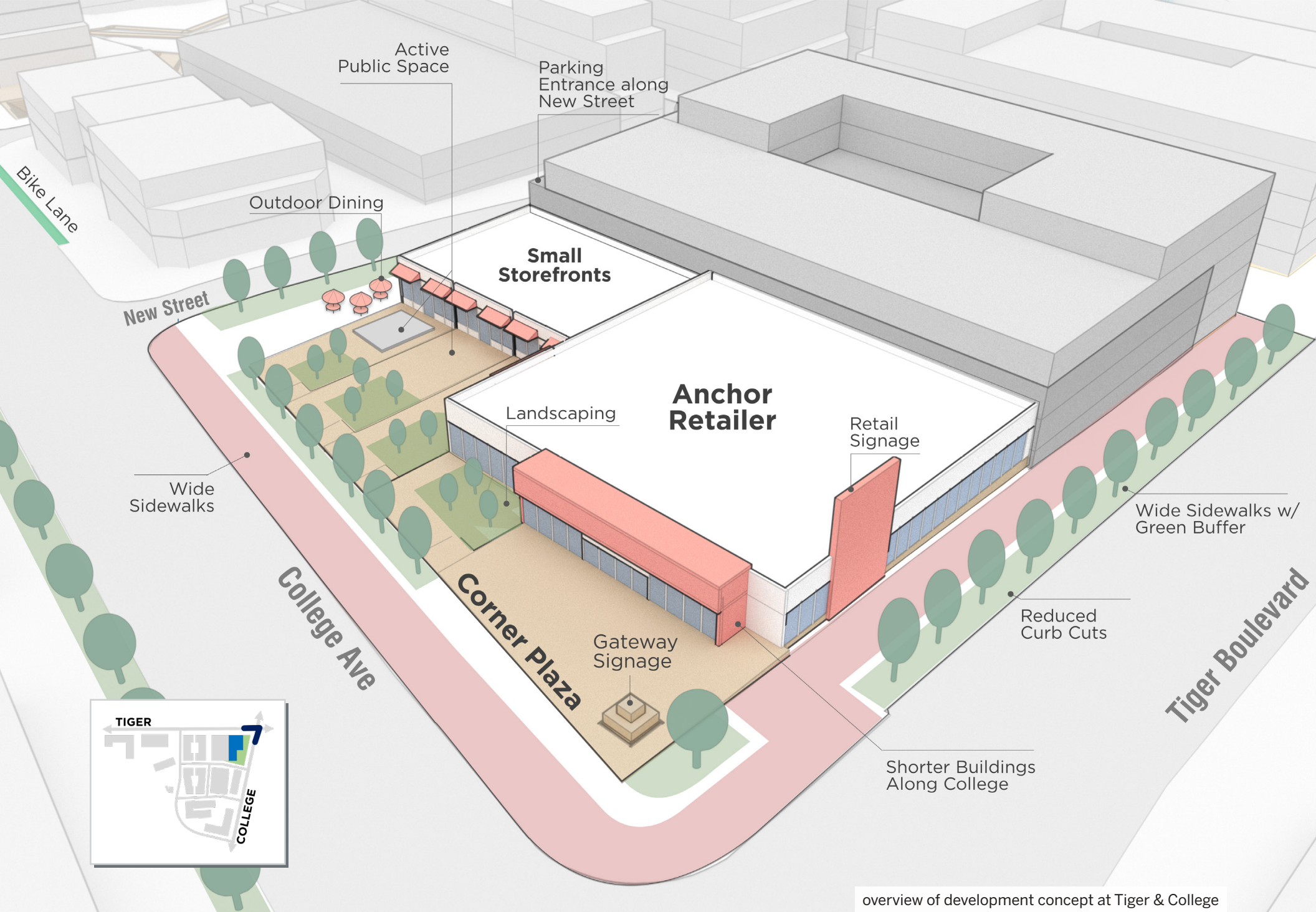


current conditions, looking south and west from the intersection of College Ave and Tiger Blvd

intersection served by limited bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, and with very modest sidewalks on College. However, this intersection is the northern terminus of the planned Downtown Corridor plan which will introduce separated bicycle and pedestrian paths that offer safe, convenient connections for pedestrians and cyclists traveling south toward Clemson University or Downtown.

The Vision

UptownNEXT envisions that this corner could be reimagined as a vibrant, welcoming, and unique gateway to the city's walkable, historic core. Improvements at this corner can establish a much stronger sense of place, create a more comfortable environment for pedestrians and cyclists, and create an "anchor" commercial use that draws visitors into the rest of the district.



Active Public Space

Parking Entrance along New Street

Outdoor Dining

Small Storefronts

Anchor Retailer

Landscaping

Retail Signage

Wide Sidewalks

Wide Sidewalks w/ Green Buffer

Reduced Curb Cuts

Gateway Signage

Shorter Buildings Along College

College Ave

Corner Plaza

Tiger Boulevard



overview of development concept at Tiger & College



current conditions



retail anchor



gateway signage



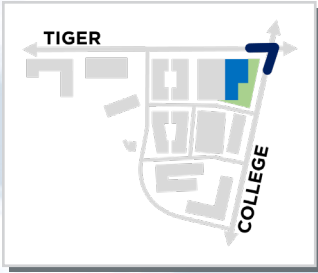
large public plaza

Land Uses

Development fronting College Avenue could blend a larger anchor retailer—such as an urban-format grocery or general merchandise store—with smaller storefronts for local businesses that showcase the community’s unique offerings. The anchor retailer (sited on the corner) would leverage the site’s visibility to draw visitors to the district, clear wayfinding would guide visitors to park in the structured parking serving

the block, and inviting plazas would create a comfortable environment in which visitors can explore and enjoy offerings of small businesses, including outdoor dining.

Residential uses with public podium parking (i.e., where structured parking comprises most of the ground-floor of a building) could sit behind the commercial uses on College Avenue. Given the site’s topography, these taller buildings would actually be only somewhat visible from the corner itself.



ground-level perspective of concept



outdoor dining and wide sidewalks



active public space



public art



small storefronts



Public Realm & Open Space

Gateway signage or public art at the corner of College Avenue and Tiger Boulevard could signal visitors' arrival to the district or to Downtown Clemson, while also establishing a distinctive visual character or brand for the area. A plaza on the corner and a larger plaza down the block could integrate outdoor seating, landscape elements, and shade features to create comfortable, human-

scaled gathering areas for outdoor dining, relaxation, or even outdoor games. These plazas are also opportunities to connect people to bicycle parking and other features that make it maximally convenient to bike to the area.

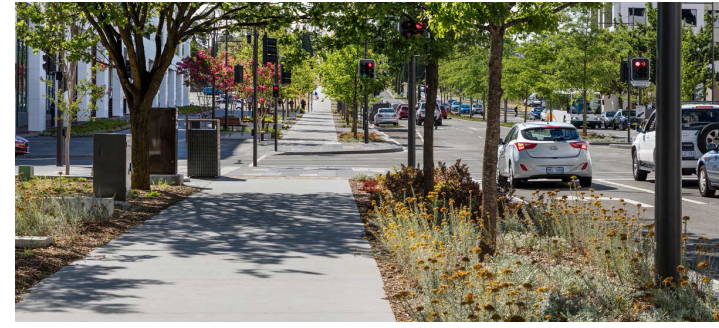
New sidewalks could be very wide—20 feet or more—and protected from the traffic on Tiger Boulevard with generous planted buffers that both improve pedestrian comfort and help to capture stormwater for return to the aquifer.



ground-level perspective of concept

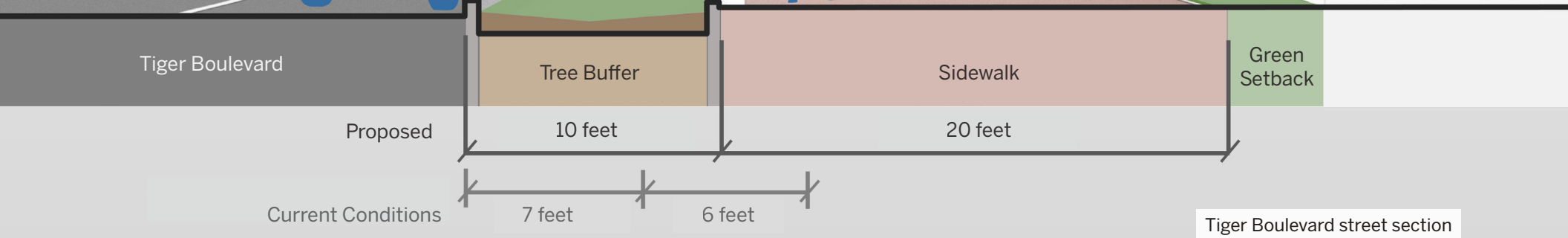
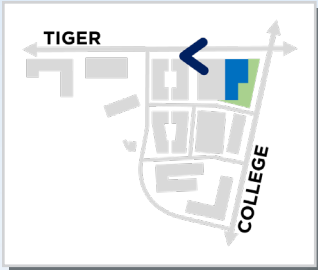


current conditions



Connectivity & Mobility

Development here should dovetail with the [Downtown Corridor Plan](#), and establish this key segment of the separated bicycle path. Wide, comfortable sidewalks within Uptown should also connect to an improved crossing in the intersection itself.



Tiger Boulevard street section

Daylit Creek & Plaza

This segment of Uptown will make a crucial link between College Avenue and Abernathy Park—one that is inviting, verdant, and unique.

There are great opportunities to create a distinctive, beautiful place in this section of Uptown—perhaps more than meets the eye. Between its topography, hidden natural features, and position within the overall district, this segment of the framework plan can create an inviting connection to Abernathy Park and Lake Hartwell beyond, and a highly attractive amenity in its own right.

Current Conditions

The properties immediately northwest of the intersection of College Avenue and Keowee Trail are today a collection of low-density auto-oriented commercial uses—including a Circle K and Papa Johns—and re-purposed single-family residential structures. A creek flows underground, feeding into the area which rests below the existing Abernathy Park Boardwalk, which flows on into Lake Hartwell. Due to this environmental connection to Lake Hartwell, the Army Corps of Engineers owns properties in a portion

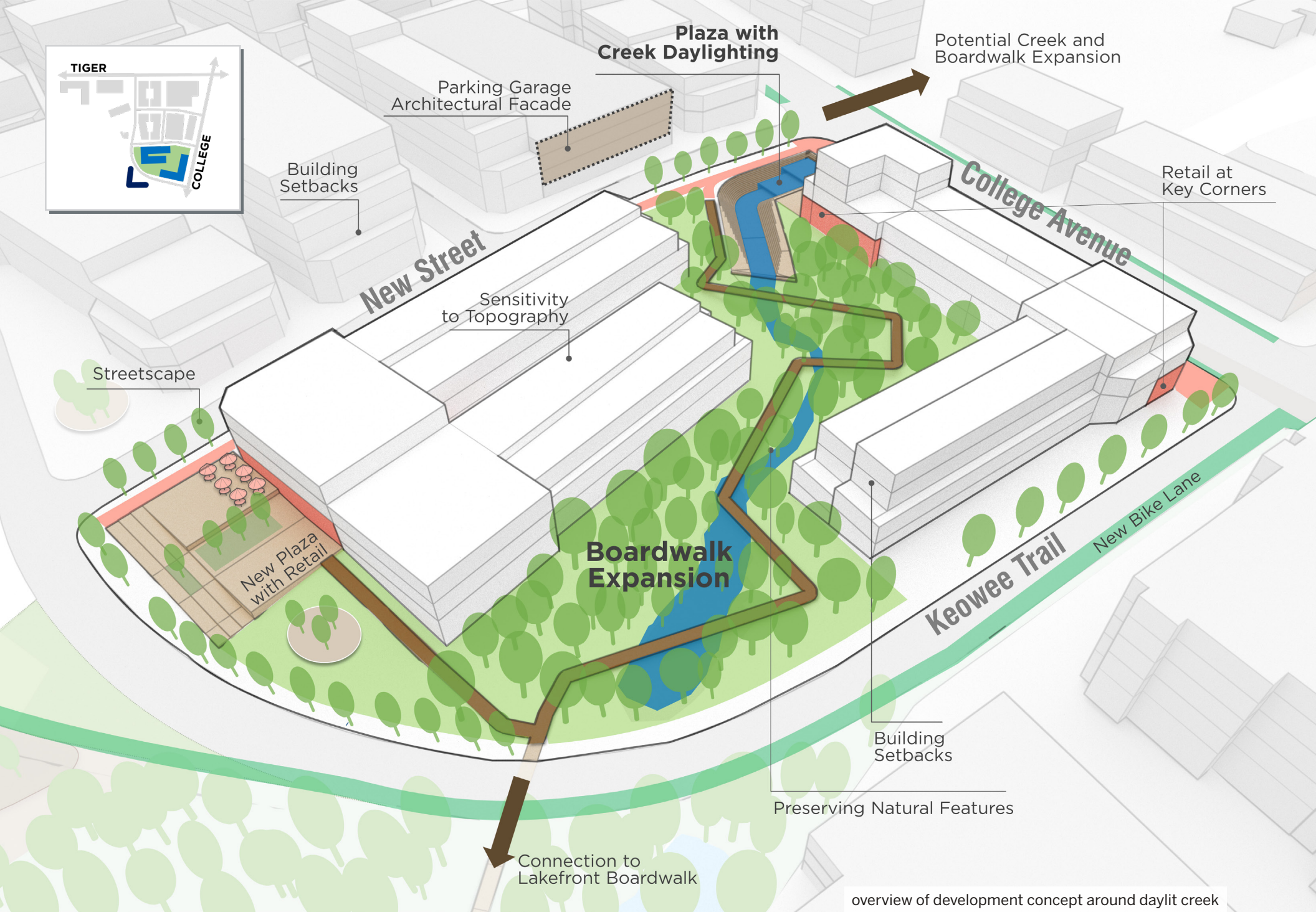


current conditions, looking north and east from Keowee Trail

of this area, which restricts the potential for development on those properties. There is also a flood easement that may impact development on other properties.

The Bixby on College mixed-use student housing development now sits on the corner immediately to the south (the southwest intersection of Keowee Trail and College

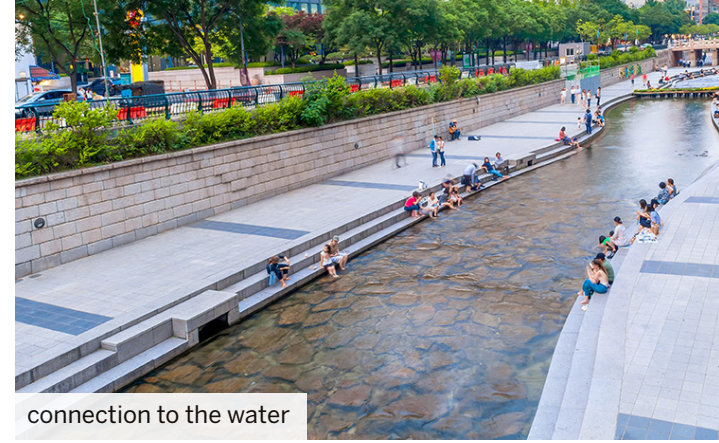
Avenue). With six stories at the corner, this development provides a significantly more urban context for future development north of Keowee Trail. Its ground-floor setbacks, third-story step-backs, and subtle architectural and material variation are an early demonstration of the City's new architectural standards for the area.



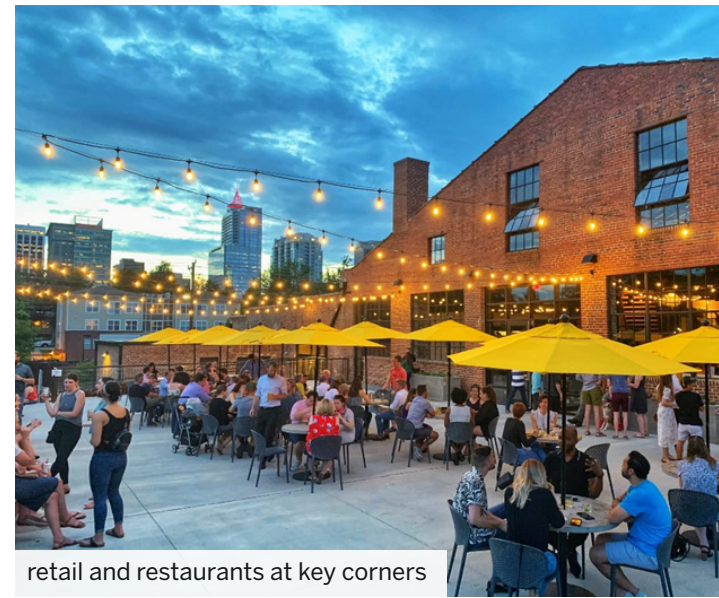
overview of development concept around daylight creek



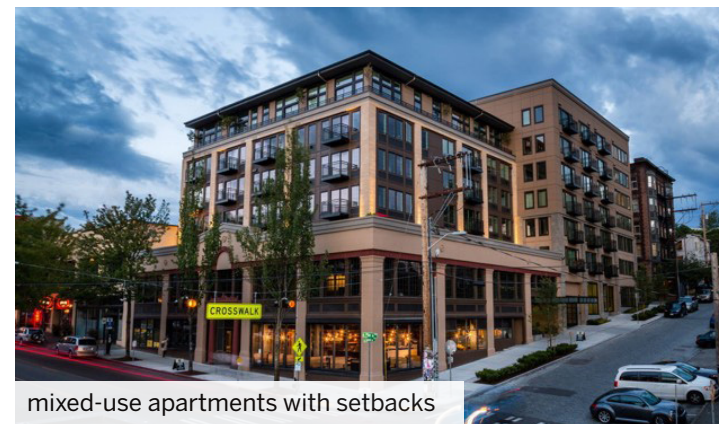
current conditions



connection to the water



retail and restaurants at key corners



mixed-use apartments with setbacks

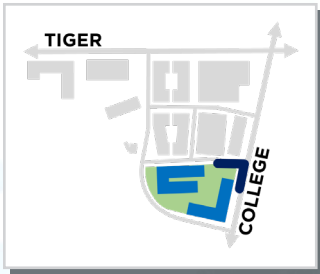
The Vision

UptownNEXT envisions that this area becomes an inviting link between College Avenue and Abernathy Park by daylighting the underground creek, extending the Abernathy Park Boardwalk to College Avenue through the block, and framing that new walking path with verdant landscaping and new, high-quality development.

Land Uses

Development in this area would be primarily residential, integrating significant open space and active storefront retail at key corners on College Avenue and fronting

Abernathy Park. New housing could be oriented either to students or non-students; non-student housing, in the near-term, likely needs some form of incentive or support. Market-rate housing oriented to non-students, such as young professionals working at the University, would be made most viable through creation of uniquely attractive amenities such as the proposed boardwalk and daylit creek, and Abernathy Park improvements. Workforce housing (i.e., affordable to households with incomes between 80 and 120 percent of the area median income) would need much deeper support to be economically viable.





dedicated bike lanes connected to College Avenue



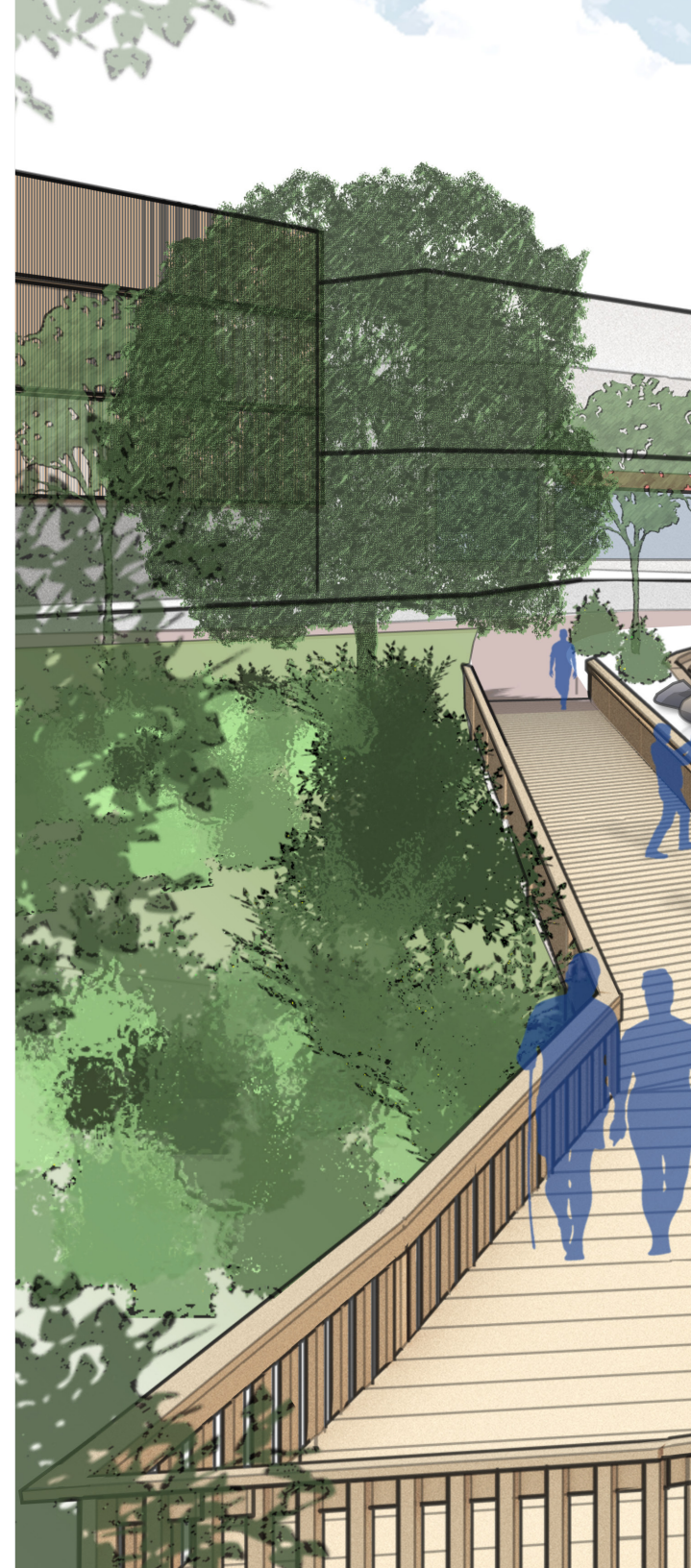
creek daylighting



creek daylighting



boardwalk expansion



Public Realm & Open Space

The vision for this area includes the creation of three distinct gathering spaces—a small plaza at the corner of College Avenue (and at the beginning of the daylit segment of the creek); a large, verdant landscaped space within the block that surrounds the expanded boardwalk system; and a plaza facing Abernathy Park. The plazas—especially the plaza facing Abernathy Park—could accommodate outdoor dining and landscape and shade features to maximize comfort throughout the year.

The daylit creek could have either a more structured or relatively more naturalized

character. In either case, a pumping system may be used to encourage water movement and to increase waterflow over what is sourced naturally by runoff upstream.

Connectivity & Mobility

As with other areas of the development, internal streets—including the remaining segment of Keowee Trail and a new street framing this block—should have high-quality streetscape, with generous tree lawns, wide sidewalks, and street furniture and bike parking at key locations to maximize walkability and utilization of the future bicycle path on College Avenue (i.e., as illustrated by the Downtown Corridor Plan).



ground-level perspective of concept

Lakefront Park Expansion



current conditions



lakefront recreation



food, retail, & tourism



improved & expanded infrastructure

The expansion and improvement of Abernathy Park is vital to the success of Uptown.

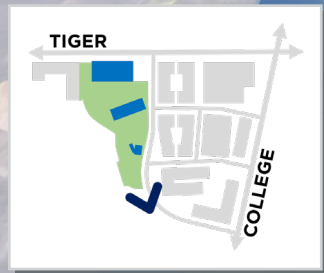
This space has incredible potential to serve as a signature destination for all of Clemson. Actualizing this potential will involve the creation of amenities, commercial uses, and comfortable gathering spaces that attract a broad diversity of residents and visitors—spanning life stage, background, and age.

Current Conditions

Larry W. Abernathy Park is already an important asset for Clemson. The park and the attached boardwalk system connect

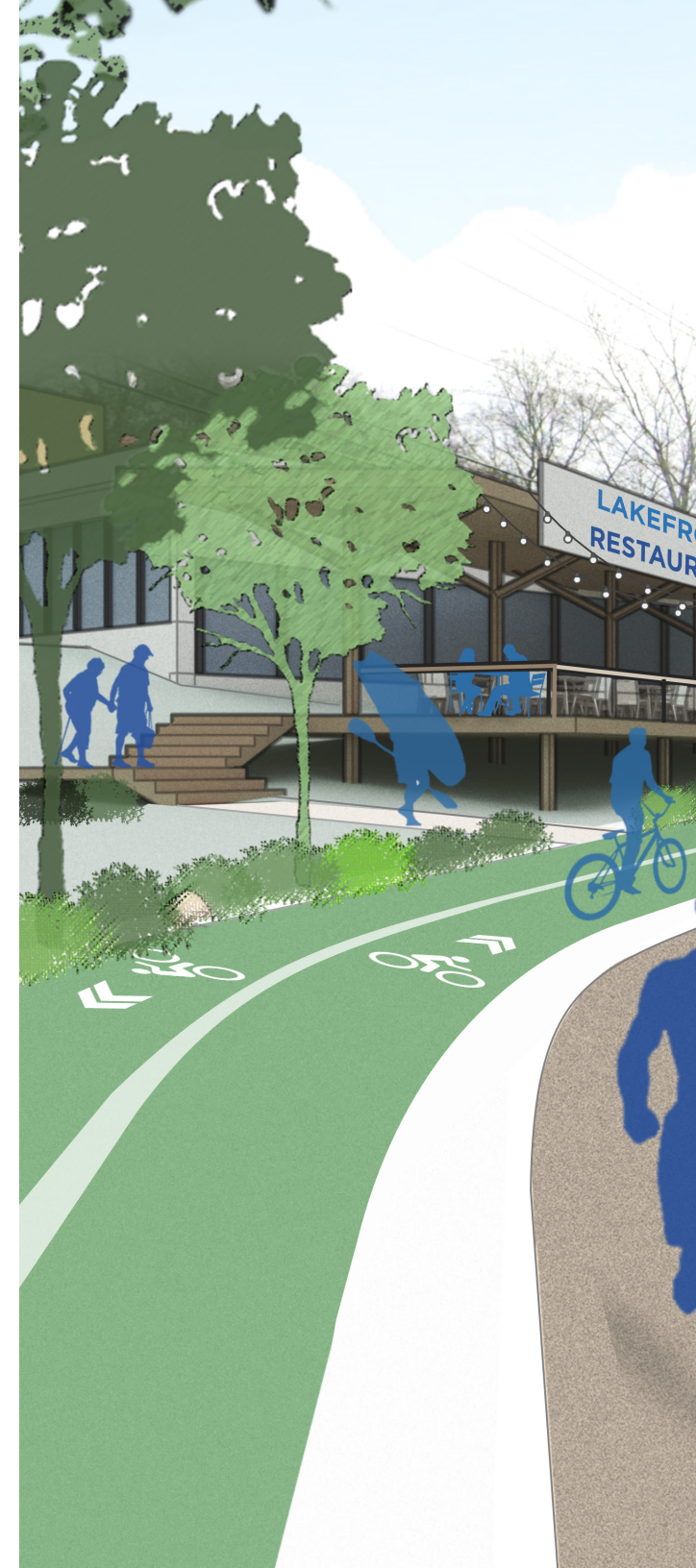
visitors to Lake Hartwell, offer peaceful walking paths through a verdant landscape, and provide beautiful, serene views. However, the park's size and design do not easily accommodate many users, and the position of plantings block views from most locations outside of the boardwalk. Keowee Trail also cuts off the park from surrounding uses, and is not safe or comfortable for pedestrian use.

In the past, water levels near Abernathy Park were periodically lowered, creating a more marsh-like environment. Since then, the Army Corps of Engineers adopted new operational rules for the lake such that water levels should be consistent unless Clemson enters an extended period of drought.





current conditions



The Vision

Land Uses

The uses surrounding and within the expanded park must actively draw visitors to the area throughout the day, week, and year. Outdoor dining, hospitality uses, recreation uses, and other destinations should be complemented by diverse programming and events.

Public Realm & Open Space

The park itself should include many types of recreative spaces, as shown on the following pages. A future master plan for the area

should explore these concepts in detail, and resolve how best to combine the type and style of spaces into a unified landscape.

Connectivity & Mobility

Vacating the segment of Keowee Trail which abuts the park and removing the surface parking currently in the park will both significantly expand the park's footprint. Walkways and bicycle paths within the park itself should take care to connect to surrounding bicycle and pedestrian paths. Structured parking within the broader development will allow visitors to park once and visit the park on foot.



ground-level perspective of concept



splash pads



passive green space



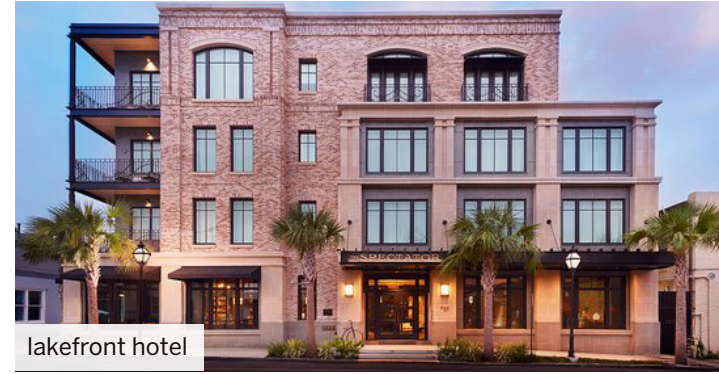
nature playscape



structured play area



Lakefront Recreation



lakefront hotel



kayak rental



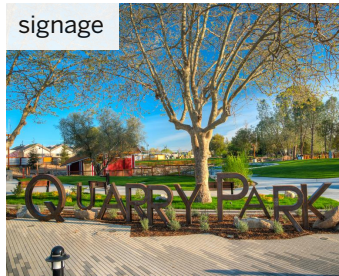
outdoor dining



Food, Retail,
& Tourism



lighting & seating



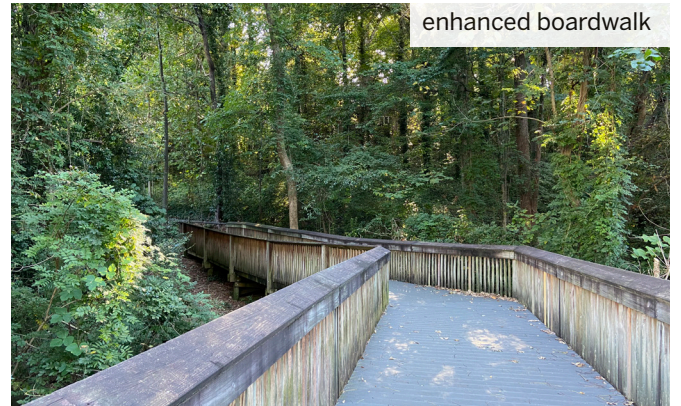
signage



public art



expanded bike trail



enhanced boardwalk



food truck access



shaded areas

Improved
Infrastructure

Implementation

Development of a unified, coordinated district is a complex, long-term endeavor. The UptownNEXT planning process has set the table for this work, but is only the first phase of effort toward bringing the vision to fruition.

A public-private development partnership typically proceeds through several phases, each with critical milestones required for successful implementation.

Bridge Phase

The bridge phase is often the linchpin of a development partnership. It is the point at which the City sets the terms of partnership with a developer, and clearly communicates its goals.

During this phase, a public partner—in this case, the City of Clemson—establishes a regulatory framework supportive of its vision by rezoning the district, often through an overlay.

In the case of Uptown, the overlay is envisioned to:

- Require assembly or consolidated site control of parcels in the district to ensure that future development is holistic and coordinated;

- Allow a higher baseline density and residential uses;
- Require establishment and expansion of significant open spaces at key locations in Uptown;
- Support creation of a well-connected internal circulation network;
- Reinforce architectural and development design standards, to address elements including setbacks at ground level to accommodate high-quality public realm, building height and massing, and setbacks of upper stories; and
- Require projects to utilize the City's Planned Development process, arriving at a Planned Development agreement through an approved Master Plan.

The public partner also issues a Request for Proposals (RFP) during this phase to invite proposals from prospective development partners. This RFP is the City's opportunity to clearly communicate its priorities for the district.

With the RFP in hand, prospective development partners evaluate the opportunity and respond to the RFP. The framework for Uptown provides clear guidance on the opportunities that developers should pursue. Potential developers conduct due diligence (e.g., environmental testing), hold initial

conversations with lenders and potential investors, and create a strategy for assembling property.

Predevelopment

Predevelopment is an extended period in which the public partner and private developer refine the vision, structure their partnership, finalize approvals and funding commitments, and assemble the complete development team before commencing construction. It can be understood in three phases:

Vision Alignment

After receiving responses to the RFP, the city evaluates proposals and conducts preliminary fiscal assessments before selecting a preferred partner.

That selected development partner then proceeds to create a Master Plan—this plan addresses issues of architecture, urban design, landscape architecture, and civil engineering in great detail. The Master Plan process is a dialogue with the City, and should include communication to and engagement with community members in order to ensure the Master Plan meets community objectives related to program, tenancing, open space, scale, and design. Community feedback helps development partners refine the Master Plan before it is approved by the City.

In this case, the City's framework for Uptown offers detailed guidance on concepts to flesh out in a Master Plan.

Deal Structuring / Agreement

After the Master Plan is approved, the City and development partner both proceed with elements needed prior to finalization of a Planned Development agreement. Specifically, the development partner outlines commitments from equity investors and lenders in order to finalize budgets for design and construction.

At the same time, the City outlines commitments it is making to ensure that the project successfully meets community objectives. This may include:

- Capital improvements that align with and support development;
- Incentives;
- Operations and maintenance of infrastructure; and
- Assisting with programming and maintenance of open space improvements.

The City also continues to review zoning changes and facilitate community engagement and outreach around the project. Ongoing communication with the public is critical to ensure that all stakeholders are made aware of project progress and have the opportunity to provide feedback on any needed changes to the plan.

Predevelopment

The pre-development phase immediately preceding development involves finalization of plans and approvals by both public-sector and private-sector partners.

On the developer side, civil and traffic engineering is finalized, additional environmental impact studies are conducted if needed, construction documents are developed, phasing plans are refined, tenants and operators are selected, lending agreements are finalized, and permits and entitlements (i.e., final zoning approvals, building permits) are acquired.

On the City's side, detailed fiscal modeling is conducted, and any plans for incentives and capital improvements are revised and finalized alongside final zoning and building permit review.

Development

The development phase is when shovels begin to go in the ground. Construction begins, and the master developer continues coordination with its investors, lenders, sub-contractors, development partners, and future tenants and operators. The developer will also begin marketing to prospective residents and other tenants. Upon close out of construction, the developer will convert their construction financing to permanent financing.

The City continues to play a critical role during development. Continued communication with the community is critical, as is adaptation to changing circumstances that will certainly impact the development and development timelines.

Taken together, these phases of a public-private partnership reflect the inherent complexity of a large-scale, coordinated, holistic development. Yet the rewards of this proactive, collaborative process for development far exceed the investment of time, communication, engagement and patience. In the end, only a partnership of this kind has the potential actualize the opportunities in a special place like Uptown.

