

Suffolk/Virginia

Whaleyville Village Initiatives Plan

Prepared by U R B A N D E S I G N A S S O C I A T E S

Prepared for
City of Suffolk, Virginia

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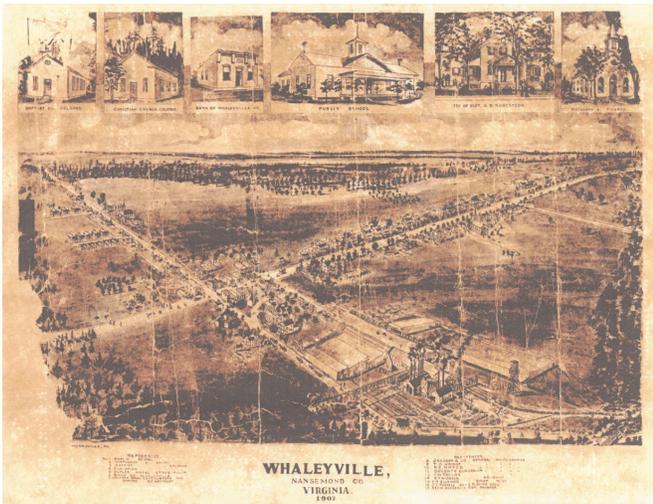
The Honorable Curtis R. Milteer
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I Introduction

The village of Whaleyville, located at the intersection of Whaleyville Boulevard and Mineral Spring Road, as it looked in 1907 and today.



THE INITIATIVES PLAN for the Village of Whaleyville is part of the City of Suffolk's ongoing Initiatives Planning Process. The process began in 1997 when Urban Design Associates (UDA) was hired by the City to create a plan for the historic Downtown area. Since that time, the process has expanded to include plans for other parts of the City including the East Washington neighborhoods, Hall Place, and more recently the outlying historic villages of Holland and Whaleyville.

The Neighborhood Planning Process

The physical plan for Whaleyville emerged from a two-phase process, both involving community participation.

The first phase consisted of documenting, analyzing, and understanding the existing conditions and historic structure of the village. The design team visited Whaleyville to gather data and take a walking tour guided by long-time residents. From the information collected, the design team drew base maps and generated a set of analysis drawings, called X-Rays. Each X-Ray focuses on one or two key pieces of information, such as streets or topography, helping the design team to understand the neighborhood patterns and make informed decisions during the design process.

The second phase, and the focus of the UDA planning process, was the design charrette – an intense, multi-day design workshop, held on site with the village residents, workers and property owners. The charrette enables the local community to create the plan with the design team there to facilitate the process and draw the ideas.

The Whaleyville design charrette was held January 30th through February 1st, 2001 at the Whaleyville Community Center. It began with a kick-off meeting, where the design team asked the participants three simple questions: what are Whaleyville's best assets, what are its problems or liabilities, and what are the hopes and dreams for the future? The design team used the answers to these questions to generate a list of design guidelines which acted as a checklist during the design process. Overall, the community agreed that Whaleyville should plan for some new growth while maintaining its small town character and image.

The hopes, dreams, and principles led to both short-term and long-term initiatives. Short-term initiatives are small-scale improvements that can be implemented over the next year or two from the City’s capital budget. Long term initiatives are larger in scale and look ahead 10, 20, or even 40 years. In order for most of the long term development initiatives to proceed, it will be necessary to construct a local sewage treatment facility as recommended in the 2018 Suffolk Comprehensive Plan. As one purpose of the plan is to help identify public service and infrastructure requirements, it is clear that Whaleyville will require some form of sewage treatment plant to accommodate the growth that the plan projects.

Assets, Liabilities, Hopes and Dreams

Assets/Good Things

- Small, quiet community
- Good people (long-time residents), welcoming of new people
- Historic houses, buildings, and churches
- Large residential lots
- Walkable scale
- Safe – low crime rate
- Robertson Community Elementary School
- Fire Department, Community/Seniors Center

Liabilities/Bad Things

- Trucks on Whaleyville Boulevard
- Speeding traffic on main roads
- Poor storm water drainage (no maintenance)
- Failing septic systems
- No sewer service
- Antiquated water service (2.5" Main)
- No streetlights, sidewalks missing or in poor condition

- Lack of stores (grocery, drug, dry cleaners, etc.)
- Lack of services (library, doctors, day care, police, post office, museum, municipal building.)
- Not much for children to do
- Empty buildings
- Mineral Spring Road too narrow

Hopes and Dreams: Short Term

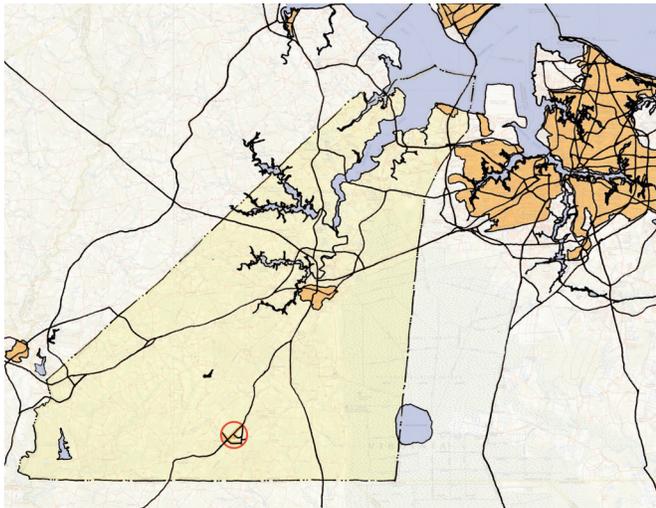
- Sidewalks
- Historic streetlights
- Clean and maintain drainage ditches
- Calm traffic on Whaleyville Blvd. and Mineral Spring; add traffic light at Whaleyville and Mineral Spring
- Mark village entrances
- Fix up older buildings
- Improve recreation center entrance
- Clean vacant lots and enforce codes

Long Term

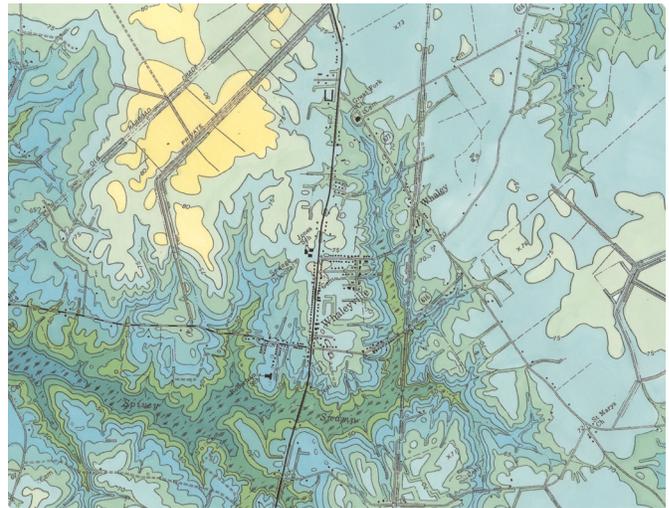
- Pursue growth /maintain small town feeling
- Truck by-pass (but maintain commercial core)
- Attract new small businesses (no franchises)
- Attract public services
- Police and rescue (enlarge fire station)
- Improve/enlarge park (ball parks, skating rink/skate park)
- Improve community center (adult learning classes, computer lab)
- Middle school
- Build new houses with historic character
- Seniors' retirement building
- Build a package sewage plant
- Improve storm drainage and add water service
- Provide space for large-scale businesses
- Commuter train from N.C. to Virginia Beach

Design Principles

- 1 Maintain and build upon Whaleyville's historic, small-town character.
- 2 Improve/revitalize the main commercial crossroads at Whaleyville Boulevard and Mineral Spring Road to attract new uses.
- 3 Divert truck traffic from Village Center.
- 4 Slow car traffic on Whaleyville Boulevard, Mineral Spring Road, and Great Fork Road.
- 5 Pursue moderate growth through the development of an improved water facility, a package sewage treatment plant and improved drainage.



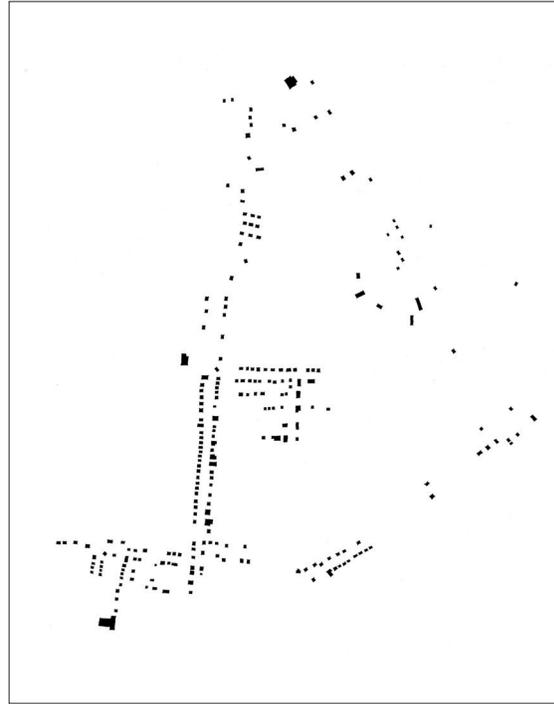
Location: The village of Whaleyville is located in the south of Suffolk in the Tidewater Region of Virginia, along State Route 13, a major north-south connector road.



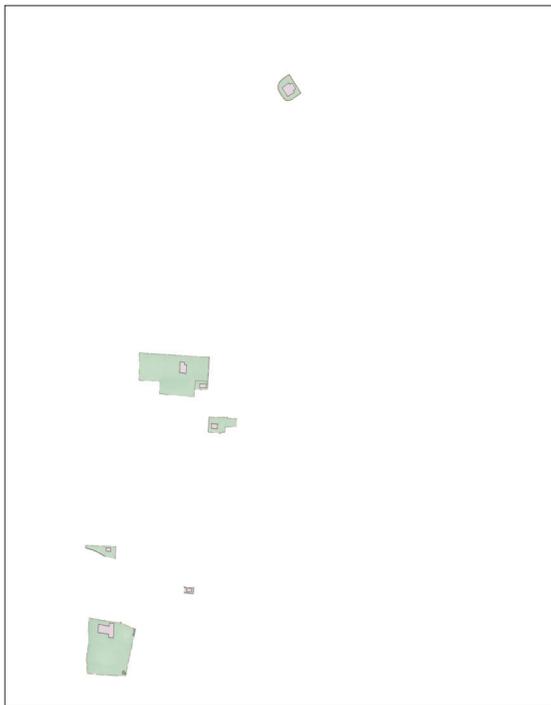
Railway & Topography: Both the railway line and the ravine act as barriers that make road connections difficult and restrict the amount of developable land around the village.



Streets & Highways: The intersection of Whaleyville Boulevard (Rte 13), Mineral Spring Road (616) and Great Fork Road outline a triangular form that roughly mark the boundaries of the village.



Figure/Ground: The building pattern is typical of rural villages with larger commercial and industrial buildings located at the main crossroads and at the edges, and residential scale buildings radiating out along the roads.



Parks, Institutions & Open Space: The village of Whaleyville has a large park at the community center, an elementary school, and four churches.



Existing Conditions Plan: The portrait shows agricultural land in light green, parks in medium green, institutions in purple, commercial buildings in pink, and residential buildings in yellow.

II Short Term Initiatives



Frameworks
 Diagram of short term initiatives showing streetscaping improvements along Whaleyville Boulevard and five-minute walking radii from the Village Center and major institutions

THE SHORT TERM INITIATIVES for Whaleyville consist of several straight-forward public improvements that can be undertaken immediately using the City's Capital plan funds (approximately \$50,000). From the list of short-term hopes and dreams, residents proposed a number of initiatives that could have an immediate impact on the community. The short-term initiatives focus mostly on the area between the Village Center and the Community Center, and include streetscaping improvements along Whaleyville Boulevard as well as gateways at the main entrances into town. The plan shows all proposed short term initiatives; as they are more than can be constructed under this year's budget, it will be necessary for the residents to prioritize the initiatives and implement them over time.



Short Term Initiatives

- 1 Gateways: Whaleyville Boulevard, Mineral Spring Road Entrances
- 2 Village Center Improvements
- 3 Community Park Improvements
- 4 Whaleyville Boulevard Streetscaping improvements



1 Gateways Gateways marking the entrances to Whaleyville on Whaleyville Boulevard and Mineral Spring Road will define the village boundaries, improve the image, and send a positive message to visitors. Gateways may include landscaping and signs that indicate to people passing through that they have arrived in historic Whaleyville. Gateways can also help to slow traffic on the main roads by making them feel less like high-speed thoroughfares and more like entrances to a village street.

2 Village Center Improvements Improvements to the Village Center will build on the historic character of the village and help to revitalize the commercial intersection at Whaleyville Boulevard and Mineral Spring Road. Short term initiatives include widened sidewalks, landscaped curb bumpouts to protect parked cars, and historic street light-

ing and furniture and the addition of banners to make the area more pedestrian-friendly and to attract new businesses (see commercial street section). Adding low walls and landscaping to the gas station site and parking areas and bringing new uses to the old buildings, such as adding a satellite city office to the water department building, can also help revitalize the area.

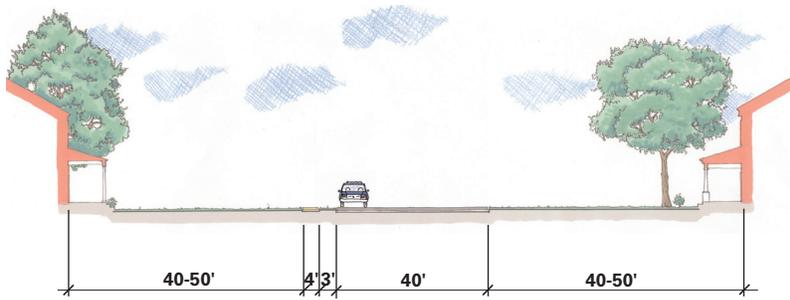
3 Park/Community Center Improvements The community park on the old Whaleyville School site is presently in poor condition. Short term improvements include landscaping the main entrance and parking area and resurfacing the basketball court. Funds have also been set aside in the park budget for more extensive improvements to both the park and the community center building, including space for a library and age appropriate sports facilities.

The Village Center as it exists today (above) and as proposed (below); short term park improvements (below right).

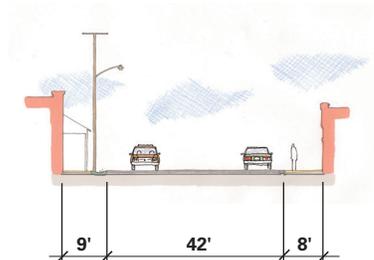


4 Whaleyville Boulevard Streetscape Improvements During the charrette, many residents voiced concerns over the state of Whaleyville Boulevard, including traffic congestion and noise, particularly from large trucks, the poor condition of the road and drainage ditches, and lack of sidewalks. The proposed short term initiatives therefore include streetscaping improvements along Whaleyville Boulevard, beginning with the Village Center and the resi-

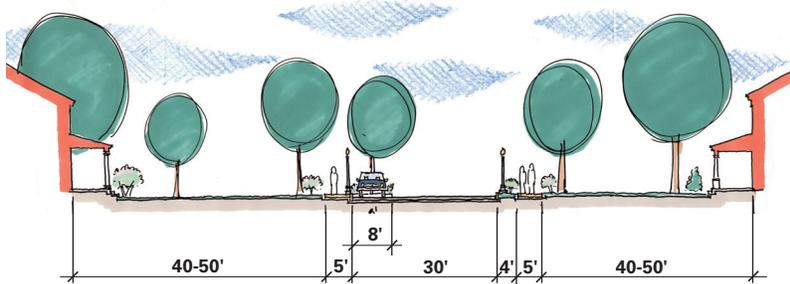
dential area up to the community center. Short term improvements would include cleanup and maintenance of existing drainage ditches, the addition of sidewalks on both sides of the street, and historic street lighting. To calm traffic, on-street parking can be designated with landscaped curb 'bulb-outs' or small medians can be placed at intervals. A traffic light would be added at the intersection of Mineral Spring and Whaleyville Boulevard.



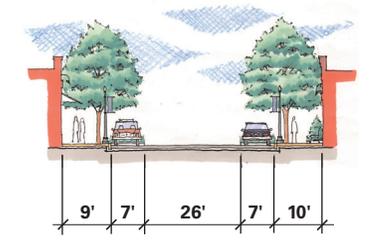
Whaleyville Boulevard Residential Existing



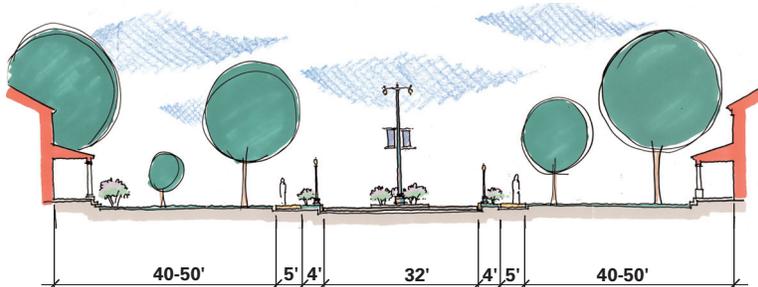
Whaleyville Boulevard Commercial Existing



Whaleyville Boulevard Residential Proposed: On-Street Parking Option



Whaleyville Boulevard Commercial Proposed



Whaleyville Boulevard Residential Proposed: Median Option

III Long Term Vision



Frameworks

Diagram of long term initiatives showing the major residential infill areas (yellow), the new parks and streetscapes (green), and improved commercial development (red). The dotted red circles indicate five-minute walking radii. Each neighborhood is centered around a park, and most are a 5 to 10 minute walk to the core.

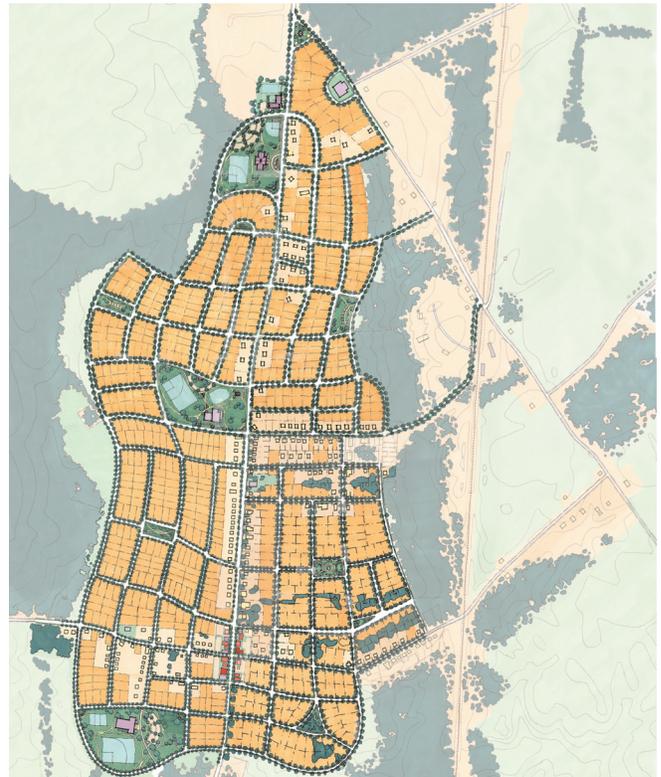


Typical New Residential Street

Charrette Plan

The long-term plan developed during the charrette, before it was revised to show less development.

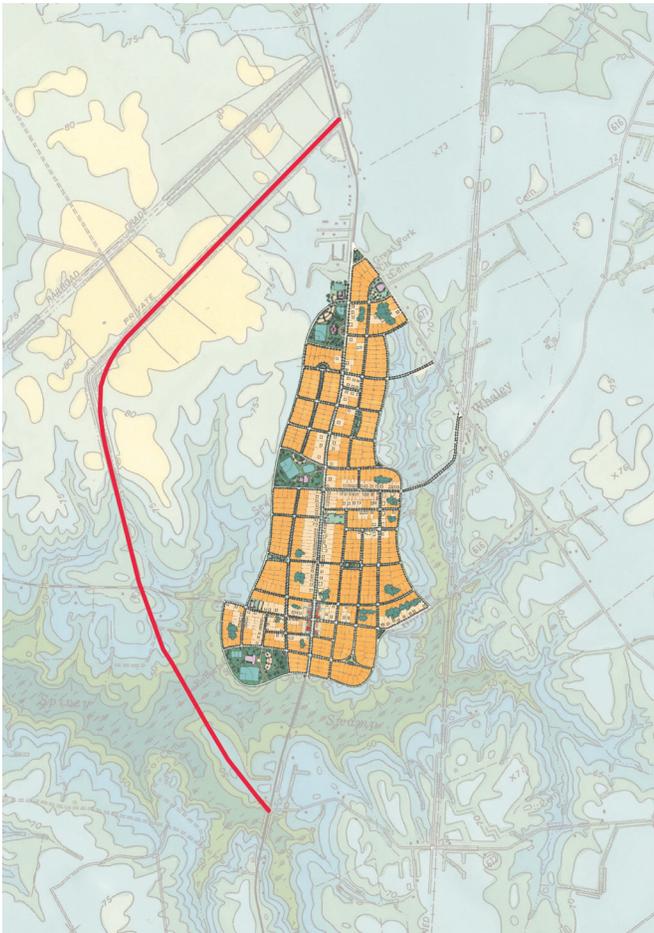
THE LONG TERM VISION provides for the development of new, traditional neighborhoods that will maintain Whaleyville’s historic small town character. It is a framework for development that may take place over 20 to 40 years. At the charrette wrap-up meeting, residents expressed concern over the amount of new development shown on the long-term plan. The plan that was revised after the charrette shows shows approximately 250-300 new residential lots, similar in size to existing lots, that together create complete and connected neighborhoods each centered on parks and within easy access of the village center. New houses will maintain the same character as the existing residential buildings, with elements such as front porches facing the streets. New streets will receive the same lighting, landscaping, and traffic calming as existing streets under the short term initiatives. Development should be phased to create complete neighborhoods. These initiatives are presented as a “shopping list” of ideas that can be prioritized and implemented over time. The scale of development shown will make the construction of a package sewage treatment facility feasible.



Proposed By-Pass Road

During the charrette, many residents complained about the amount of traffic, particularly truck traffic, on Whaleyville Boulevard. It was suggested that a by-pass road would divert trucks and commuter traffic around the center of the village, leaving Whaleyville Boulevard for local commercial and residential traffic. The calmer boulevard would be safer for pedestrians and more in keeping with its residential scale. The design team studied various locations for the by-pass road and, with the input of the residents, decided on an abandoned railroad right-of-way to the west of the vil-

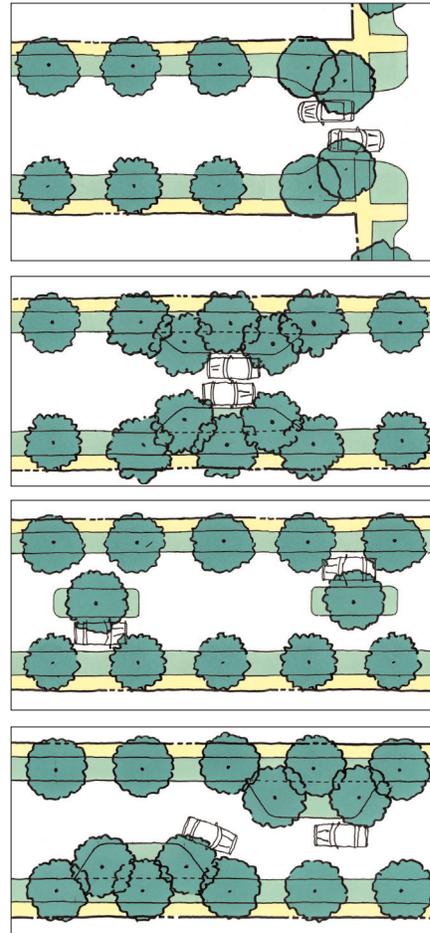
The long-term plan with the proposed by-pass location highlighted in red.



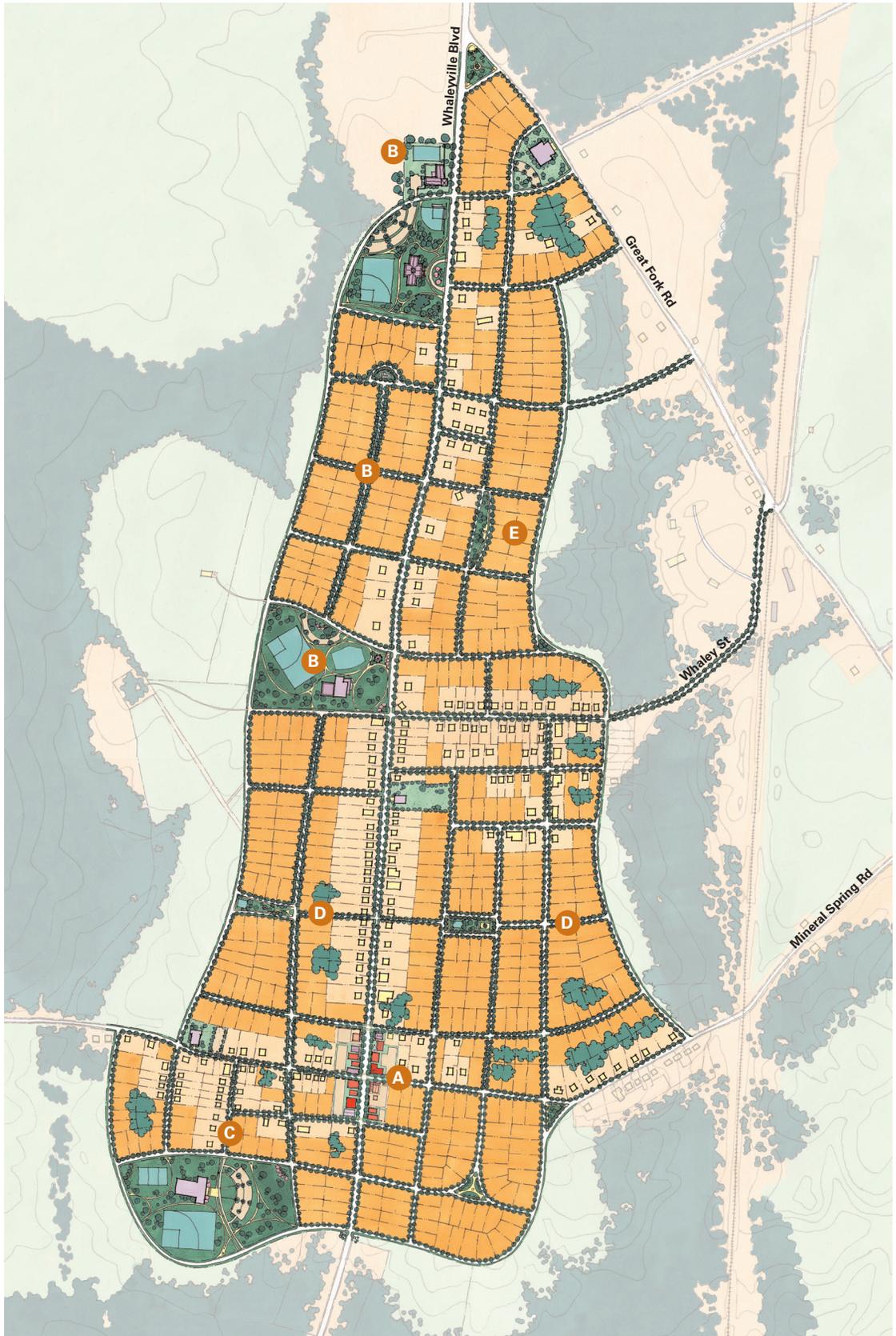
lage as illustrated in the diagram below. This location had the least number of road intersections and the smallest environmental impact.

Traffic Calming

Residents also complained about speeding traffic on other streets such as Mineral Spring Road and Great Fork Road. The plan therefore recommends various traffic calming devices, as illustrated below, to slow the traffic down to speeds appropriate for a residential village. Traffic calming improvements include: intersection bulb-outs, mid-block bulbouts, small medians, and alternating bulb-outs or chicanes.



Traffic Calming
From top, an intersection bulbout, a mid-block bulbout, short medians, and a chicane.



Revised Long Term Vision Plan

- A** Village Center
- B** Community Center and Fire Station Area
- C** Robertson School Area
- D** Whaley Street to Mill Lane
- E** Whaley Street to Great Fork



A. Village Center

The long-term initiatives for the Village Center build on the short-term initiatives described above. All initiatives revitalize the Village Center by building on its historic character.

- 1 Building Rehabilitation** The plan proposes restoring as many of the historic main street buildings as possible, including the old Whaleyville general store, the old Bank of Whaleyville/City Water building and the McAlister Masonic Lodge for use by small businesses. Services could also be improved by making the post office a full service location and incorporating satellite city functions into the existing water department.
- 2 New Mixed Use Building** The site of the old Forehand grocery store at the northeast corner of Whaleyville

Boulevard and Mineral Spring Road is an ideal location for a new building with retail on the ground floor and offices or apartments above.

- 3 Infill Commercial Buildings** New commercial buildings, with neighborhood retail such as a dry cleaner, an ice cream parlor, and services such as a restaurant or museum, could fill the gaps in the commercial area. New buildings should be designed with the historic character that exists in the village.
- 4 Coordinated Parking Plan** The plan calls for shared parking lots located behind the new and revitalized buildings in the village center. Parking lots should be shielded from side streets with low walls and landscaping.

The Village Center as it looks today (above) and as proposed in the long term vision (below).



Historic Building Rehabilitation

Residents suggested that the old general store (right) and the Whaleyville Bank/ water department could be renovated as a market and satellite city office.



Eye-level perspective

A view at the crossroads looking South down Whaleyville Boulevard, as it is today (above) and as proposed (right).



B. Community Center and Fire Station Area

1 Whaleyville Park Improvements

Residents requested improvements to the well-used but poorly maintained park. Initiatives include an open passive park space along Whaleyville Boulevard, new ball fields, tennis courts, and trails that can function as walking or jogging tracks. Additional space can be used for other resident requests such as a skate park or additional fields.

2 Whaleyville Community Center

Renovation of the existing building and a possible addition can accommodate seniors activities, classes, a library, and recreational activities such as aerobics rooms.

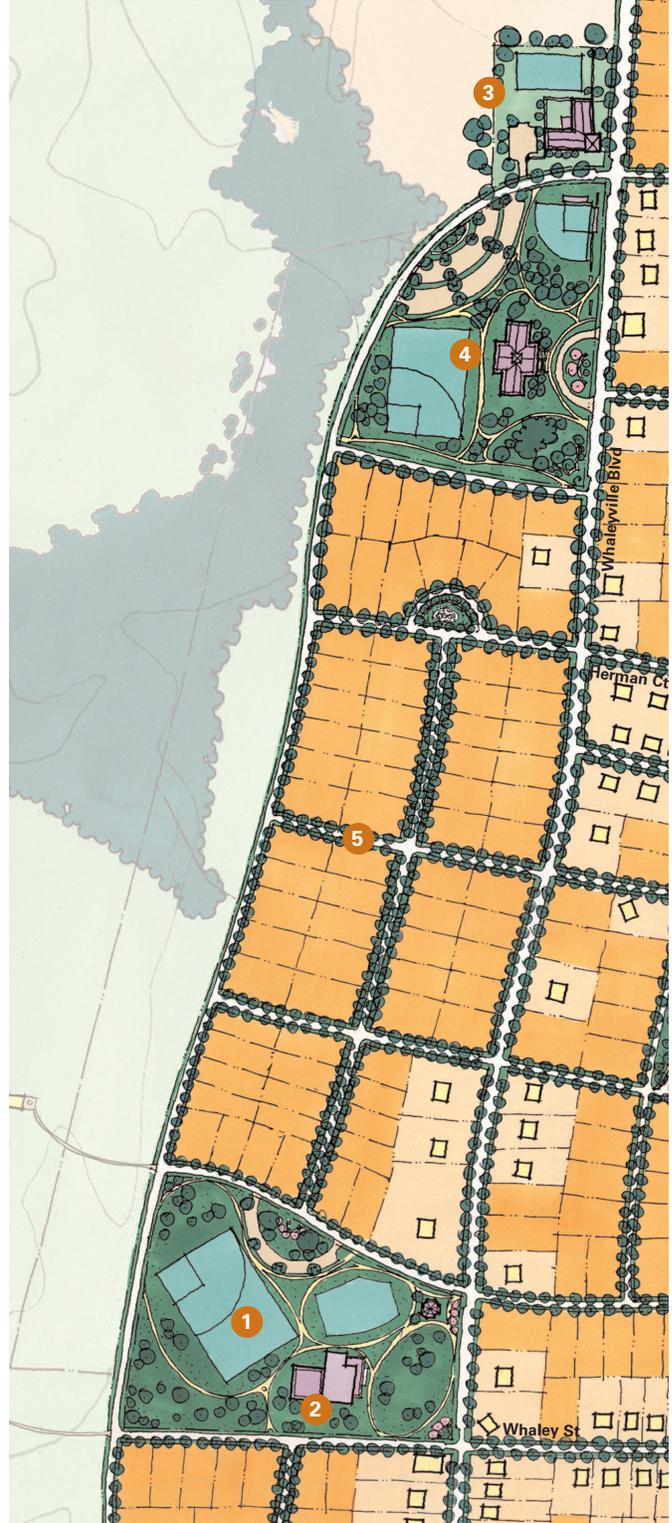
- 3 New Fire Station** During the charrette, the design team met with representatives from the fire department. Future plans call for the expansion of the fire station to make room for an additional fire truck as well as police and emergency response vehicles. The proposed location along Whaleyville Boulevard provides good access away from major intersections and room for expansion in the future.

- 4 Middle School** Adjacent to the new fire station would be an ideal location for a school in the future, as resources can be shared. This also creates more community recreation space.

- 5 Residential Development** New residential development fronts the improved community park and the proposed school site. An additional small parklet provides space for a tot lot and maybe a picnic area. New development would front the surrounding agricultural properties, giving them an address and allowing room for future expansion.



The Community Center area of Whaleyville as it looks today (above) and as proposed in the long term vision (right).





The Robertson School area in the south of Whaleyville as it exists (above) and as proposed in the long term vision (right).

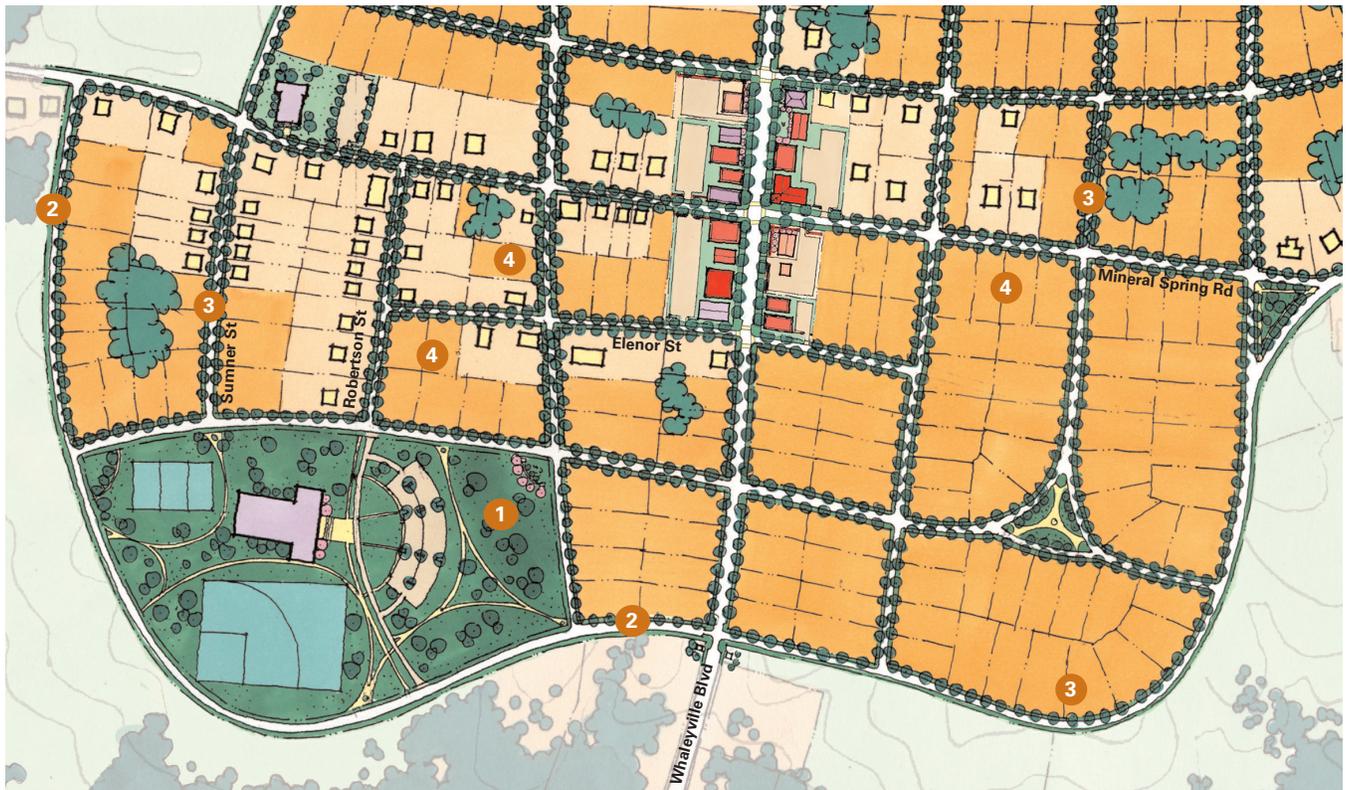
C. Robertson School Area

- 1 School Park Improvements** Renovation of the school grounds provides improved recreation areas for the school as well as the community. Fronting the school property with public park streets and facing the streets with houses on as many sides as possible provides surveillance for park functions and improved safety.
- 2 School Access Road Connections** Present access to Robertson school is difficult, especially for school buses. The plan provides new access roads from both Whaleyville Boulevard and Mineral Spring Road.
- 3 Completing the grid** The completion of the street grid west of Whaleyville Boulevard is aided by the lots and streets that have already been platted, making a connected street grid around the school.

- 4 Infill Housing** New housing can be developed as infill along existing streets as well as along proposed streets. New development would be similar in scale and character to the existing homes in Whaleyville.



Street section of Robertson Street as it exists (above left) and with proposed street improvements (left).



D. Whaley Street to Mill Lane

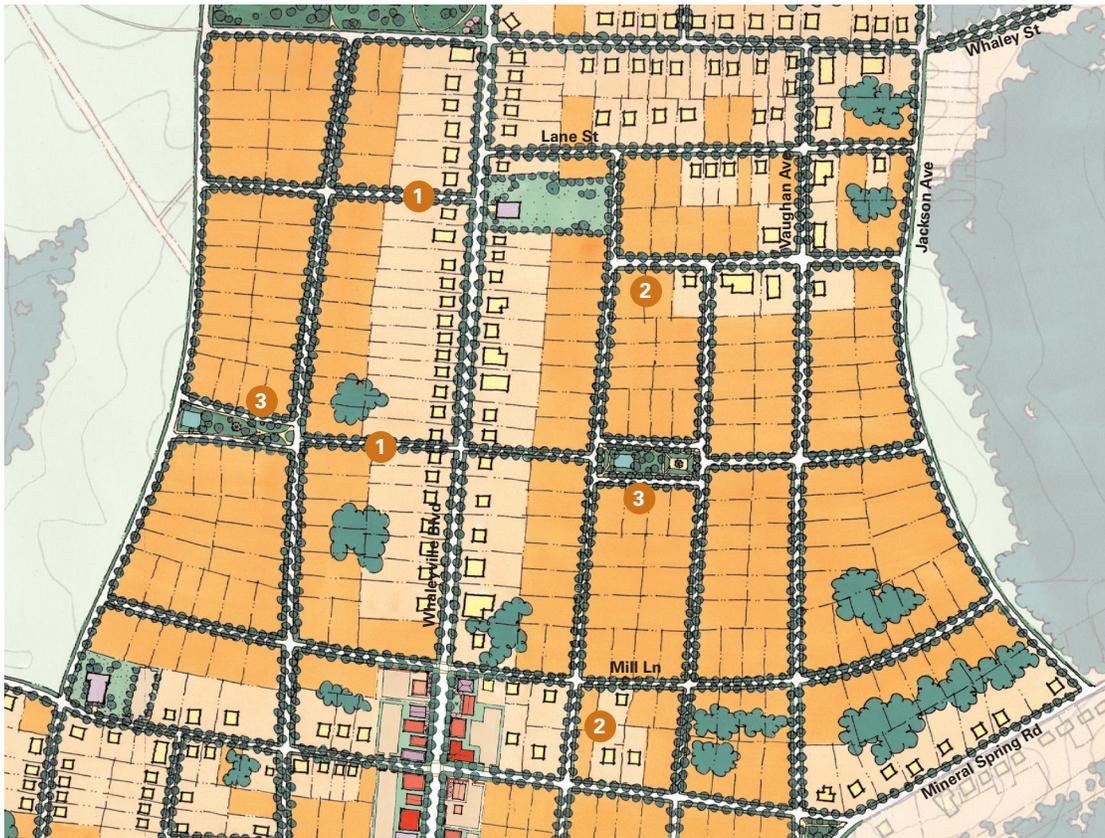


The Whaley Street/Mill Lane area of Whaleyville as it looks today (above) and as proposed in the long term vision (below).

1 Connecting the Street Grid Some residential development has started along Lane Street, Vaughan Avenue, and Jackson Avenue. Completing the street grid between Whaley Street and Mill Lane would connect these developments, allowing easier access to the Village Center and a walkable block size. West of Whaleyville Boulevard, the grid would connect the improved park and community center to Mineral Springs Road.

2 Infill Residential Development Infill housing can be developed along existing and new streets, of character similar to that of the existing village houses.

3 Neighborhood Parks Small parks provide space for tot lots and areas for children to play as a focus for each part of neighborhood, 3-5 minute walk from each house.





The northern area of Whaleyville as it looks today (above) and as proposed in the long term vision (right).

E. Whaley Street to Great Fork

- 1 Entrance Park** Building on the short term gateway initiative, a small park at the triangular space between Whaleyville Boulevard and Great Fork Road would provide a neighborhood amenity as well as a beautified entrance.
- 2 Residential Development** New walkable residential blocks can be developed between Whaleyville Boulevard and Great Fork Road, connecting existing residences to neighborhood amenities and providing residential frontage to the church.
- 3 Neighborhood Park** As a focal point for existing and new residential development, a small neighborhood park could have a children's play area, a monument, and picnic areas.
- 4 Connections** New connections from Whaleyville Boulevard to Great Fork Road as well as improvements to the only existing connection, Whaley Street, will make Whaleyville more accessible to the surrounding area and provide easier pedestrian access to parks and the Village Center.

