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Plaza Revitalization



# 5.0 PLAZA REVITALIZATION



Figure 5.1a: The Lithonia Plaza

## 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The Lithonia Plaza, which is bounded by Max Cleland Boulevard, Main Street and Swift Street, is a business district located within the center of Lithonia. The Plaza is home to several retail stores, City Hall, a police station, and is anchored by Wayfield Foods grocery store. Refer to Figures 5.1a and 5.1b.

The Lithonia Plaza was once a bustling downtown center with a fire station, a church, a train depot, and active retail that provided food and goods to the entire community. The historic street grid of this area was a series of small, walkable blocks that connected to the surrounding residential streets seamlessly, allowing for patrons to easily walk to this city center. Buildings abutted the

sidewalk and on-street parking addressed most of the automobile needs. In the 1960s, however, this area was redeveloped as part of urban renewal and its character dramatically changed. Refer to Figure 5.1c for a view of downtown prior to redevelopment.

The urban renewal project for the Plaza reconfigured the existing block structure to create the super block that is now identified as the Lithonia Plaza, formed by Max Cleland Boulevard, Main Street and Swift Street. Historic buildings, including the Lithonia Baptist Church that is discussed in Section 4.7, were demolished to make way for two large strip-mall style structures, surrounded by expanses of asphalt parking lots. The majority of these buildings are vacant today, with the exception of Wayfield





Figure 5.1b: The Plaza Facing Max Cleland Boulevard

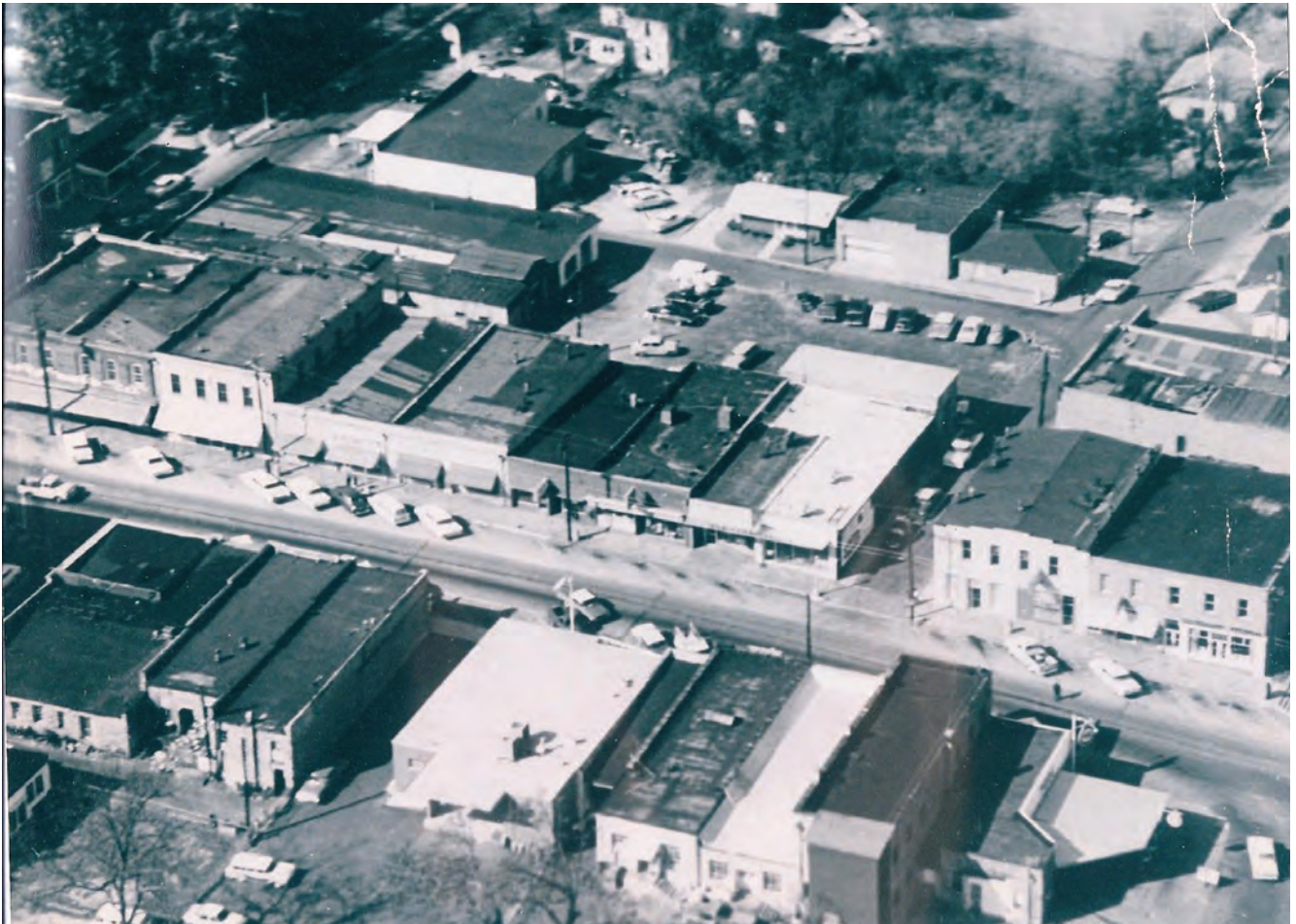


Figure 5.1c: Downtown Lithonia Prior to the Plaza Development





Figure 5.1d: The Plaza Development

Foods and a few retailers. A string of historic two-story stone and masonry structures were preserved, during this redevelopment, along Main Street on the south-east side of the Plaza. These are the only remnants that remain of the historic downtown. City Hall, a police station and several retailers occupy these spaces, although several remain vacant. Refer to Figures 5.1d to 5.1f for more images of the Plaza today. Refer to Figure 5.1g for a diagram of current vacancies in the Plaza.

A portion of the Plaza in the north-east corner, is currently owned by the City of Lithonia. The building that sits on this site is in a state of disrepair and will need to be demolished before any redevelopment can happen.

Once the heart of the Lithonia community, many residents no longer perceive a reason to come downtown to the Plaza. Other shopping venues with greater options can be found nearby in places like the Mall at Stonecrest, just south of the city. Places for public gathering and socializing are nonexistent in the Plaza, further discouraging residents from heading downtown.

The Plaza does, however, have a prime location and access to some of Lithonia's great assets. The Plaza is located within walking distance to the Stewart Amphitheater,



Figure 5.1e: The Plaza Development



Figure 5.1f: The Plaza Development



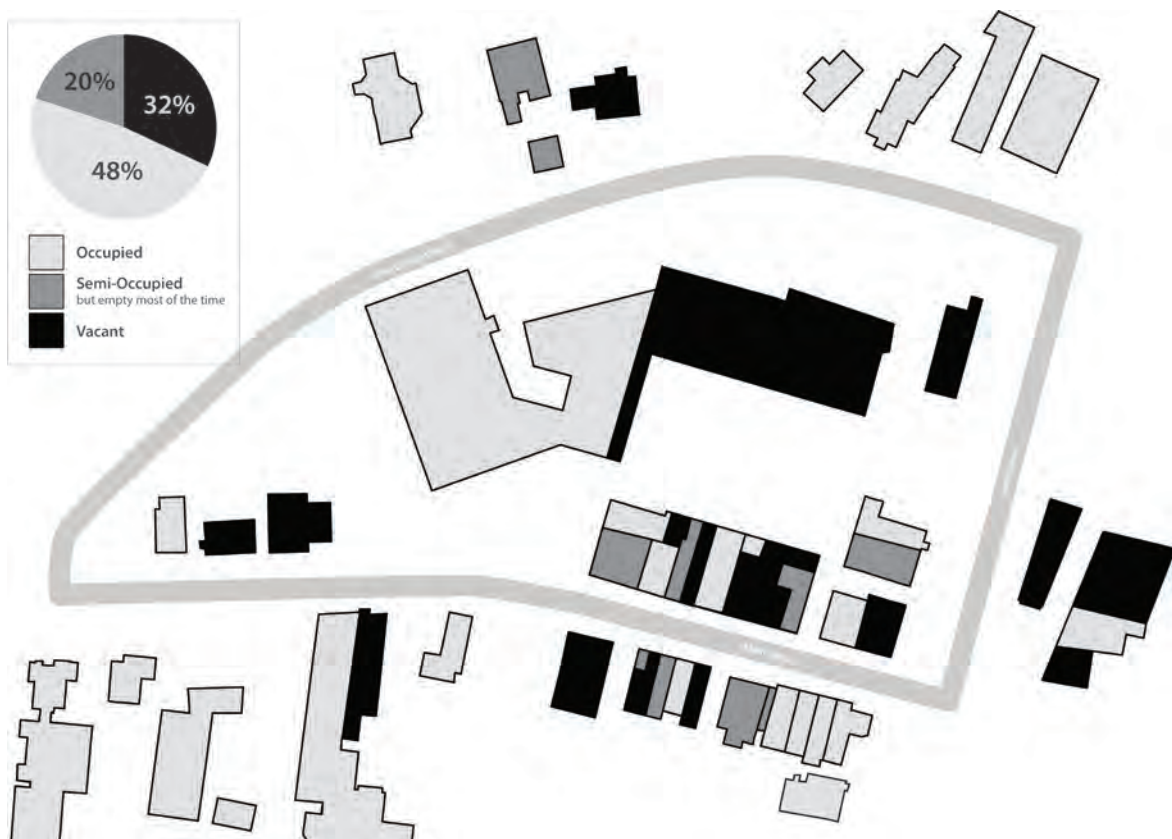


Figure 5.1g: Existing Vacancies

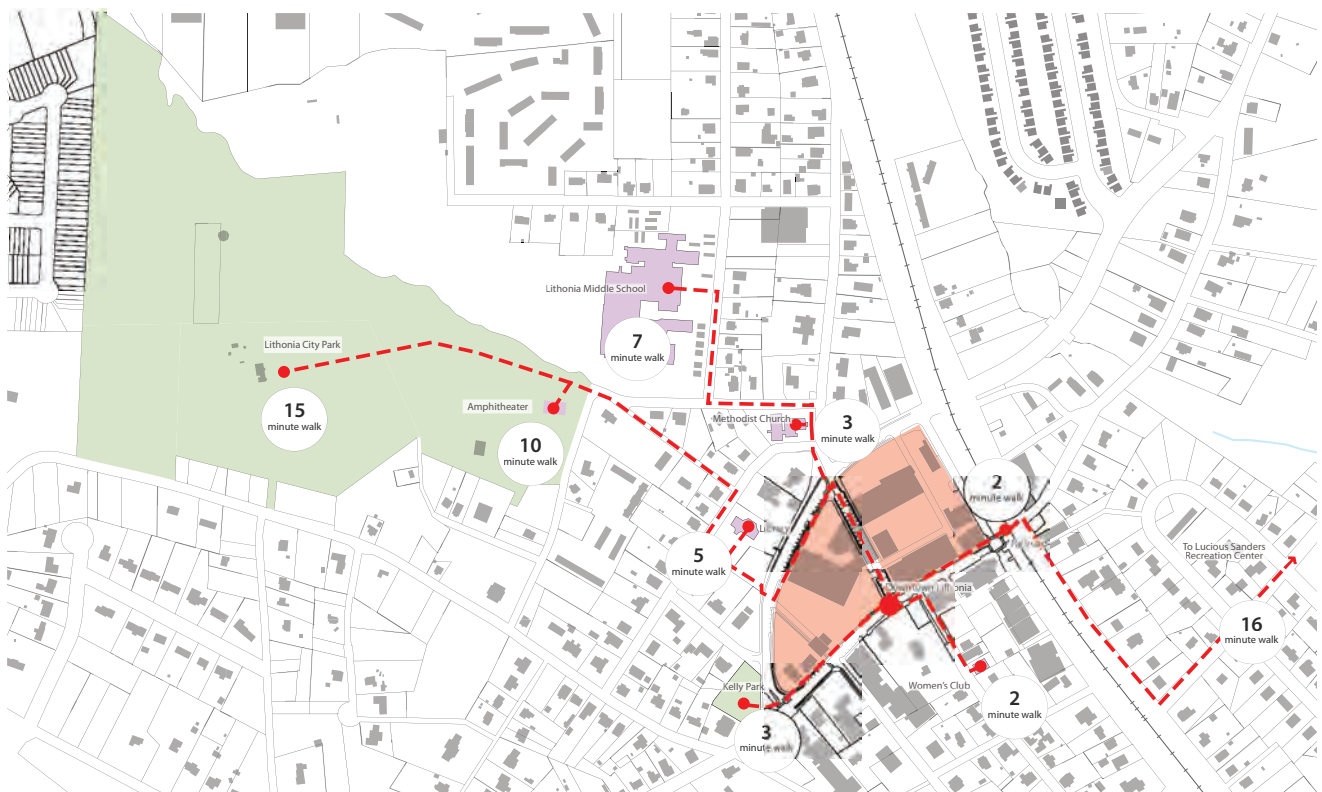


Figure 5.1h: Plaza in Relation to Community Assets



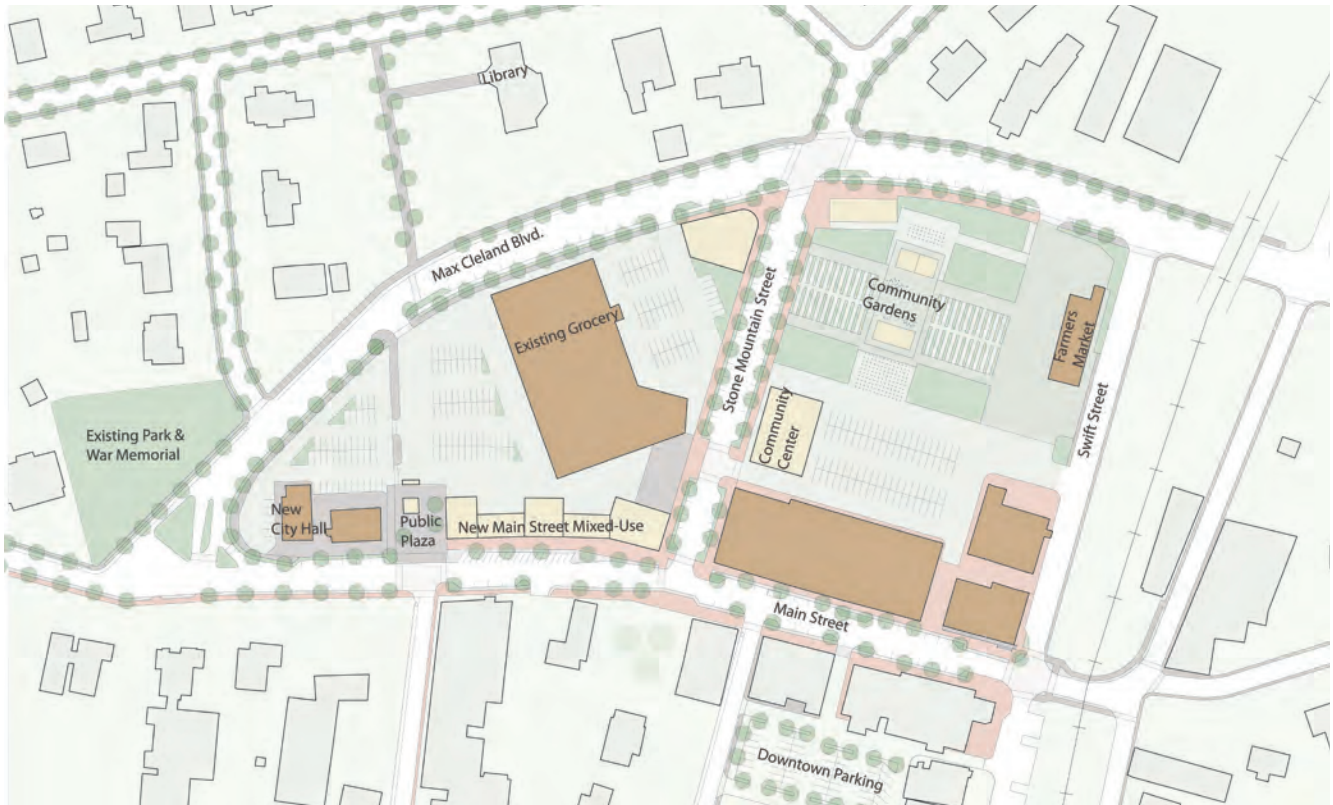


Figure 5.3a: Phase One Rendering

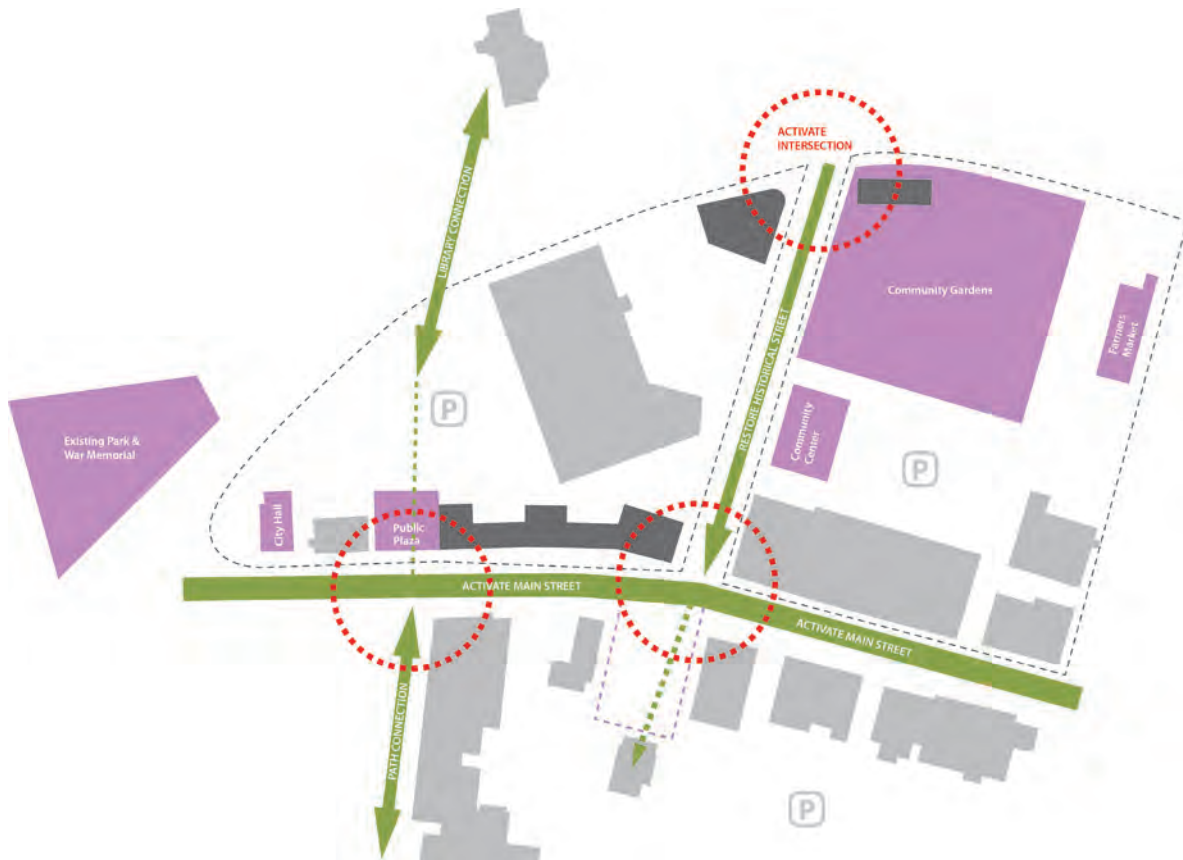


Figure 5.3b: Phase One Design Strategy Diagram



the Lithonia City Park, the Lithonia Middle School, the Lithonia Library, the Lucious Sanders Recreation Center, the Lithonia Woman's Club, and Kelly Memorial Park (refer to Figure 5.1h). The redevelopment of the Plaza has great potential to support these facilities, and perhaps increase use of them, by providing complimentary uses, such as restaurants and shopping for visitors to enjoy before and after an event at the Stewart Amphitheater.

To address these challenges and build on the assets of the Plaza, a two phased proposal is presented in the remainder of this chapter. This proposal aims to utilize the land that the City currently owns, to provide a structure that will encourage new businesses and allow for economic development, and suggests uses to fill this new framework that will draw people back into downtown.

## **5.2 LITHONIA PLAZA STRATEGIES**

Two phases of redevelopment are proposed to revitalize the Lithonia Plaza. Below is a brief description of the phases and the remainder of this chapter provides details of the design steps involved in each phase.

### **5.2.1 PHASE ONE**

The first phase focuses on utilizing the City-owned property for uses that will draw people into downtown, creating a new framework for a more walkable Plaza, providing public gathering and programmed spaces that will draw people to the area, connecting the PATH trail to downtown, and activating Main Street. This phase focuses on steps that will begin to draw more people into the Plaza and activate downtown.

The major actions include demolishing the city-owned portion of the Plaza, re-connecting Stone Mountain Street through the Plaza, creating a new community

garden at the site of the demolished building, creating a farmers' market to sell produce from the garden, building a community center, developing an outdoor plaza that connects to the PATH trail, and relocating City Hall to a more prominent and visible location. These ideas are further explained in Section 5.3

### **5.2.2 PHASE TWO**

The second phase builds from momentum and new activity generated by Phase One and attempts to provide more retail to the Plaza, to add residential uses that will generate more activity throughout the day and night, and to provide more public spaces and new uses that will draw even more people into downtown Lithonia.

The major steps of Phase Two include lining Max Cleland and Swift Street with new retail, providing housing options along Max Cleland Boulevard and Stone Mountain Street, building a new grocery store that better accommodates the needs of the community, and rebuilding City Hall. These ideas are further discussed in Section 5.4.

## **5.3 PHASE ONE**

There are eight steps in Phase One to begin the revitalization of downtown. These actions attempt to provide better connectivity to the Plaza and surrounding amenities and to provide programmed spaces and new retail that will draw people and businesses into downtown. Refer to Figures 5.3a and 5.3b for a diagram and rendering of Phase One. The remainder of this section identifies and describes each of the eight steps.

### **5.3.1 DEMOLISH THE CITY-OWNED BUILDING**

The first step in Phase One is to demolish the City-owned building that is in disrepair (refer to Figure 5.3e). This site provides a unique opportunity to begin redevelopment





Figure 5.3c: Paint Mural on Back of Wayfield Foods Rendering

of the Plaza as the power to change the site lies in the hands of the City. Any retailers that currently occupy this building should be relocated to empty storefronts on Main Street in order to increase activity on this important thoroughfare.

#### **PAINT MURAL ON THE BACK OF WAYFIELD FOODS**

Once the city-owned building is demolished, the back of Wayfield Foods grocery store will be exposed to the future community garden site and the future Stone Mountain Road reconnection (refer to Figure 5.3d). To beautify this site and make it more appealing until the Wayfield Foods building is redeveloped, it is recommended that a new city mural be painted on the back of the building and trees be planted within the parking lot adjacent to the mural. These small improvements could provide an inviting temporary public space extending from the future community garden for festivals and events. Food trucks, vendors, and other public amenities could be temporarily located at this prominent intersection. Refer to Figure 5.3c.



Figure 5.3d: Existing photo of the back of Wayfield Foods

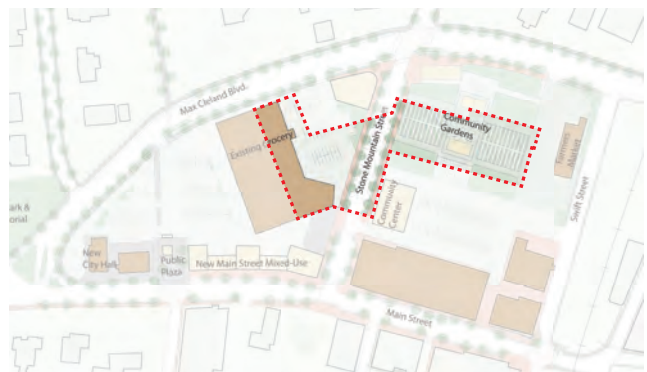


Figure 5.3e: Phase 1- Step 1 Study Area

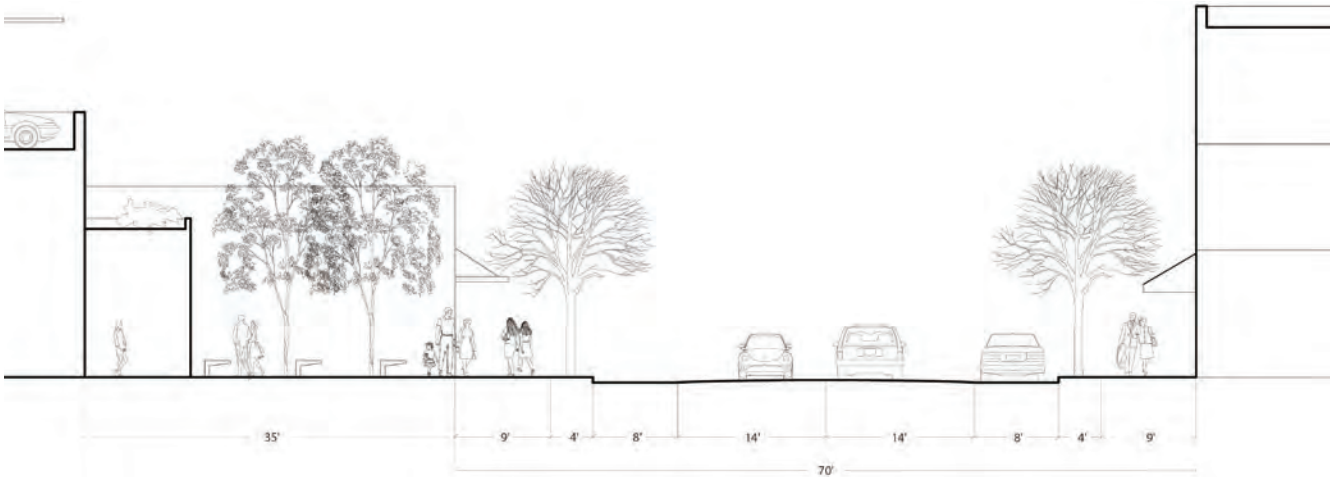


Figure 5.3f: Proposed Stone Mountain Street - Street Section

### 5.3.2 RE-CONNECT STONE MOUNTAIN STREET

The second action in Phase One is to extend and reestablish Stone Mountain Street from Max Cleland through the Plaza to connect with Main Street, which is possible once the city-owned building is demolished (refer to Figure 5.3h). Historically, this street existed and provided access for residents north of downtown to Main Street and from those south of Main Street to amenities to the north. During urban renewal this street was removed, making access throughout town more difficult.

This re-established street will, ultimately, make the Plaza more walkable and create better access to the surrounding amenities. (Refer to Figure 5.3g for a diagram of reduced walking times when new connections are made in the Plaza.) Stone Mountain Street will also provide new street frontages for new businesses that will occupy downtown in the future, providing them with visibility and access, key elements to a successful business.

The recommended street design of Stone Mountain is depicted in Figure 5.3f. The new street should accommodate all users - cars, bicyclists, and pedestrians. Parallel parking on both sides of the street should be provided to allow for easy access to future businesses.

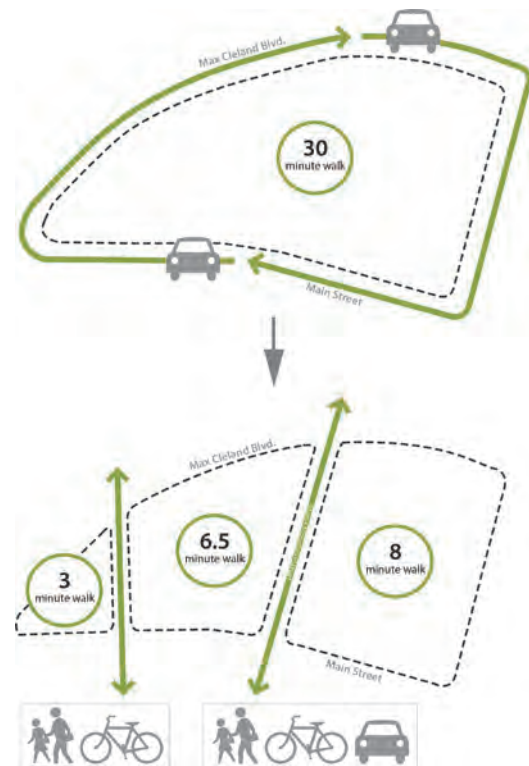


Figure 5.3g: Diagram of Reduced Walking Times

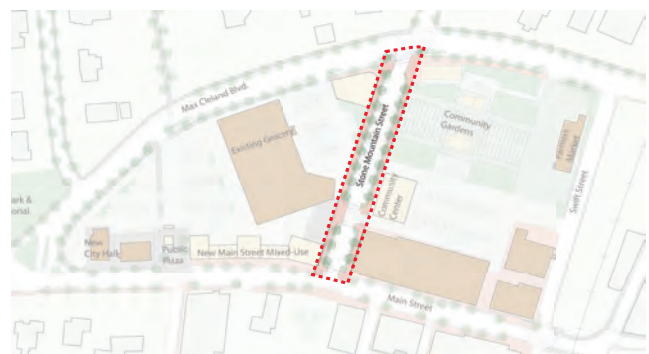


Figure 5.3h: Phase 1- Step 2 Study Area





Figure 5.3j: Community Garden Rendering

### 5.3.3 RE-OCCUPY THE CITY-OWNED PROPERTY WITH A COMMUNITY GARDEN

Once the existing plaza is demolished, a community garden is recommended to occupy this new open space (refer to Figure 5.3k). This community garden could help provide access to fresh, seasonal foods to Lithonia's residents.

The first step in creating the garden is to establish an organization that would take on management responsibilities of the garden and take on tasks such as raising funds necessary to build and maintain the garden, developing the garden, maintaining the garden, directing volunteers who help with maintenance, and to run or coordinate with a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program and/or a farmers' market to sell the produce to the community. The money raised from selling this produce can go back into the garden funds for continued maintenance. A CSA allows consumers to buy local, seasonal food directly from the farmer/community garden by paying a fee to receive weekly or monthly produce for an entire growing season.

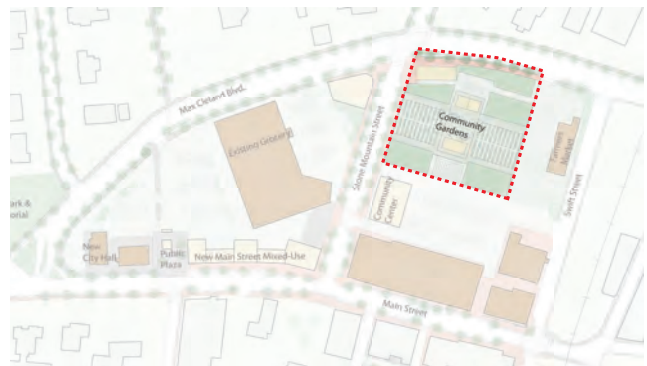


Figure 5.3k: Phase 1- Step 3 Study Area

The layout of the community garden could occupy the entire site of the city-owned property or just a portion with the rest dedicated to recreational uses such as a basketball court or soccer field (refer to Figures 5.3j and 5.3n). If the entire site is utilized, an option for dividing the site into plant beds is shown in Figures 5.3p and 5.3q, which corresponds with the rendering in Figure 5.3m. Utilizing the entire site has the potential to produce approximately 9,125 lbs of produce per season (refer to Figure 5.3p). According to average CSA numbers, this could provide 45 CSA orders each season.



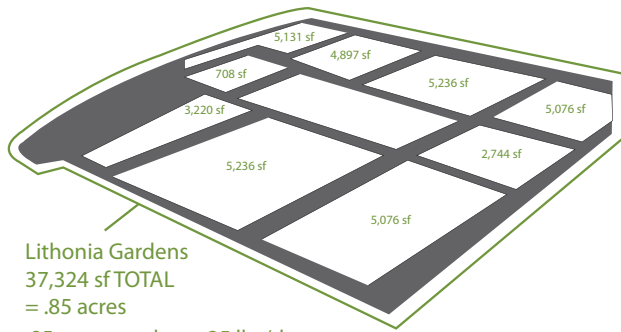


Figure 5.3m: Community Garden Rendering - Full Build-Out



Figure 5.3n: Community Garden Rendering - Partial Build-Out





Lithonia Gardens  
37,324 sf TOTAL  
= .85 acres

.85 acres produces 25 lbs/day  
avg. yield = 9,125 lbs  
the average person eats 4.7 lbs/day  
CSAs give out ~200 lbs an order/season  
= 45 possible CSA orders

Figure 5.3p: Yield Information

Averages for calculations courtesy of the [www.usda.gov/factbook/chapter1.htm](http://www.usda.gov/factbook/chapter1.htm) and [www.ces.ncsu.edu/chatham/ag/SustAg/csaguide.html](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/chatham/ag/SustAg/csaguide.html)

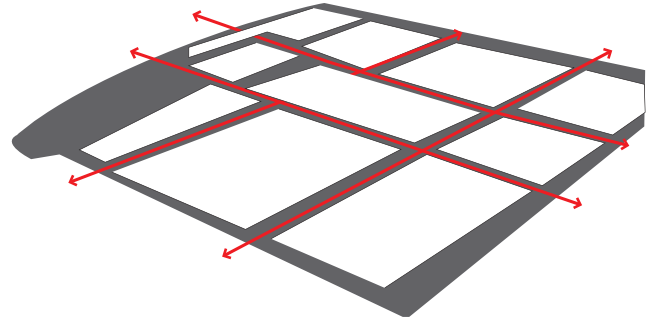
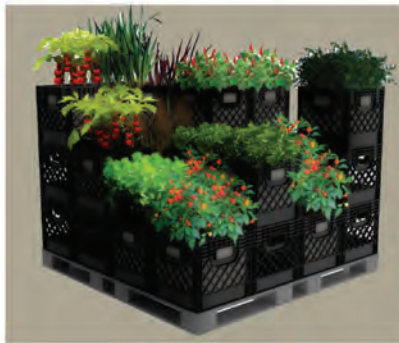


Figure 5.3q: Grid Scheme for Gardens



#### Lithonia Gardens Goals

- Provide job training and a learning environment
- Bring activity to downtown plaza
- Educate citizens on sustainable food growing practices
- Beautify asphalt parking lot
- Produce food



#### How To Garden on Asphalt



Figure 5.3r: Mobile Planters and On-Asphalt Garden Conditions

Creating some or all mobile planters as opposed to stationary in-ground planters is another design recommendation that should be considered. Mobile planters, as pictured in Figure 5.3r, would allow the plants to be moved around downtown to generate more enthusiasm, beautify the streetscape, and provide an opportunity to sell the produce to passersby (refer to Figures 5.3s to 5.3v). The mobile container could take the form of a sealed milk crate or any kind of small, moveable plant container (refer to Figure 5.3r).

If a mobile planter is undesirable, there are methods to layering soils and compost on top of asphalt to create a garden (refer to Figure 5.3r for more information). Since the site of the garden is largely asphalt, these methods will provide less site work and excavation (i.e. costs) prior to starting the garden.

Once the garden is in operation, it is recommended that workshops and events be hosted throughout the year to engage and educate the community.



Figure 5.3s: Mobile Garden at the Florists - Before and After

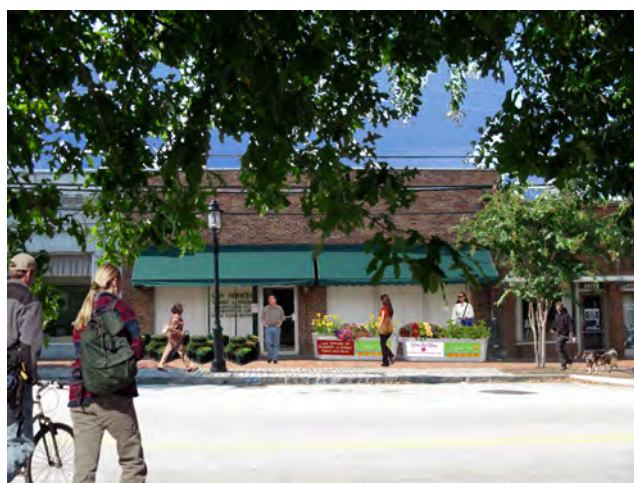


Figure 5.3t: Mobile Garden at the Law Office



Figure 5.3u: Mobile Garden on Main Street



Figure 5.3v: Mobile Garden at Wayfield Foods





Figure 5.3w: Rendering of Proposed Farmers' Market

#### 5.3.4 CREATE A FARMERS' MARKET TO SELL PRODUCE FROM THE COMMUNITY GARDEN

As discussed previously, working with a farmers' market to sell produce grown in the community garden can help financially support the maintenance and growth of the garden. Additionally, this market could provide space and/or booths for farmers from around the area to sell their produce and other goods. The farmers' market could become a place for the community to gather, learn about the locally grown produce, and buy fresh foods, ultimately, drawing more people into downtown Lithonia. Refer to Figure 5.3w.

The recommended site for the farmers' market is on the city-owned property at the corner of Swift Street and Max Cleland Boulevard, within the vacant furniture warehouse structure (refer to Figures 5.3x and 5.3y). This site is adjacent to the community garden site, making it easy to transport local goods, it is accessible to a MARTA bus stop,



Figure 5.3x: View of Proposed Farmers' Market Site/Location



Figure 5.3y: Phase 1- Step 4 Study Area

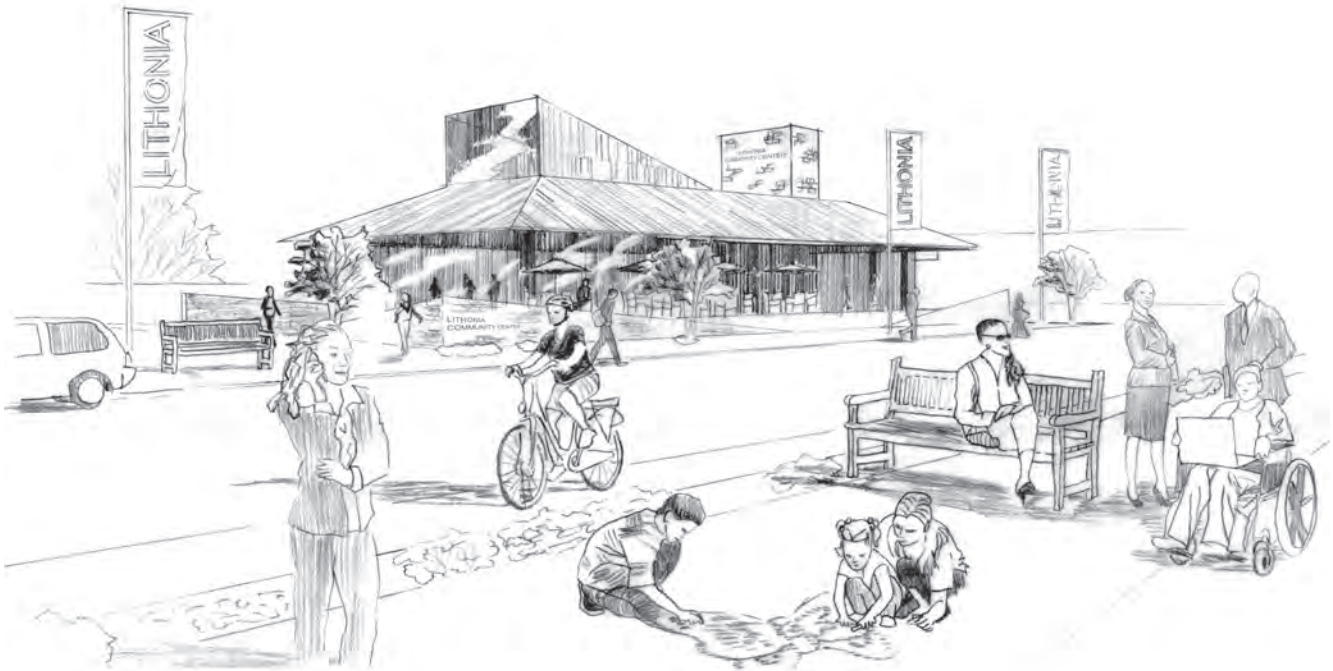


Figure 5.3z: Rendering of Community Center

and sits facing Swift Street, providing visibility and access for pedestrians, bicyclists, and automobiles.

In addition to selling produce and goods, this building could also provide incubator spaces for local entrepreneurs looking to test their small business ideas before moving to more expensive spaces along Main Street. Incubator spaces will help support the local economy and provide more activity within the downtown core.

Picnic tables and benches can also be placed through out the farmers' market site, to allow visitors to enjoy lunch or a snack purchased from the market.

At the time this report was written, a farmers' market did exist at the Mall at Stonecrest on Saturdays. Discussion between this farmers' market and the new Lithonia farmers' market should be a priority to coordinate schedules and events.

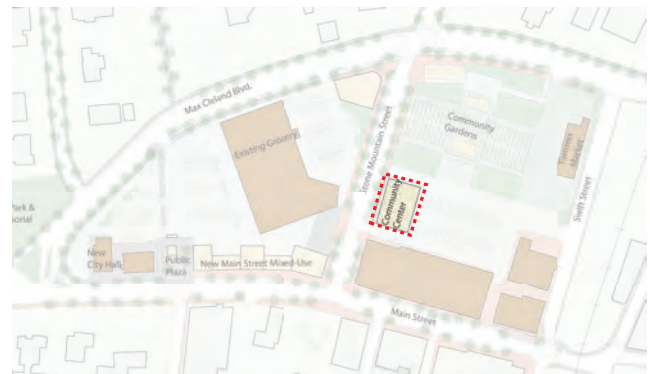


Figure 5.3aa: Phase 1- Step 5 Study Area

### 5.3.5 BUILD A COMMUNITY CENTER TO DRAW PEOPLE INTO DOWNTOWN

In an effort to draw community members and visitors into downtown Lithonia, as well as provide a public space for meetings, special events, classes and other community functions, it is recommended that the City invest in building a Community Center in the Plaza. Refer to Figure 5.3z.



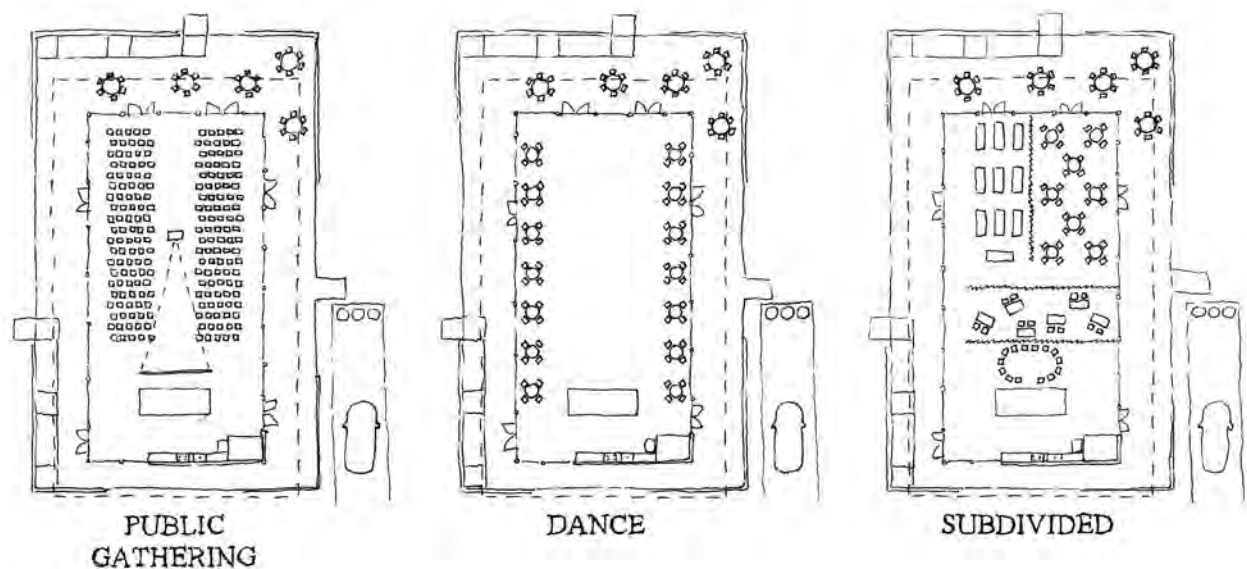


Figure 5.3bb: Community Center Interior Space Design and Programing

The proposed site for this Center is next to the community garden on the new Stone Mountain Street. Close proximity to the garden allows for these spill into one another and for programing to combine. Refer to Figure 5.3aa.

The design of the center should draw inspiration from Lithonia's architectural history to make it a place unique to its location. In the design shown in Figures 5.3z the building takes visual cues from the long-gone Lithonia train depot (refer to Figure 5.3cc) with a similar roof style and gives prominence to a granite chimney, a feature seen in the old Main Street Post Office. Signage announcing the building's purpose as Community Center could be mounted on the granite chimney and also on the wall along the street. Helvetica front is recommended to be used to reflect the use of Helvetica lettering on the now-defunct post office.



Figure 5.3cc: Train Depot c. 1965 demolished 1969

The building facade is suggested to be open with floor to ceiling windows and skylights are recommended for the roof, allowing for natural light to pour into the space and energy bills to be reduced.

The large overhang of the roof will allow for outdoor seating and event space to have ample shading and protection from the weather.



Figure 5.3dd: Main Street Extension Elevation View



Figure 5.3ee: View of New Storefronts Along Main Street

The interior design of this space should allow for multiple programming and activities. Movable partition walls will allow for the space to be subdivided into several classrooms or remain as one large room for community meetings, dance classes, or wedding receptions, accommodating up to 200 people. A small kitchen is included in the design of the Center to provide services for a variety of functions. Refer to Figure 5.3bb. Coordination will be necessary between this new center and the Lucious Sanders Recreation Center to make sure each center's uses and activities compliment each other.

The building's operational and maintenance costs could be offset by renting it out to local businesses for meetings, small churches for weekly services, or weddings and receptions. Time could be scheduled and shared between the public (mostly daytime) and private (mostly evening) functions.

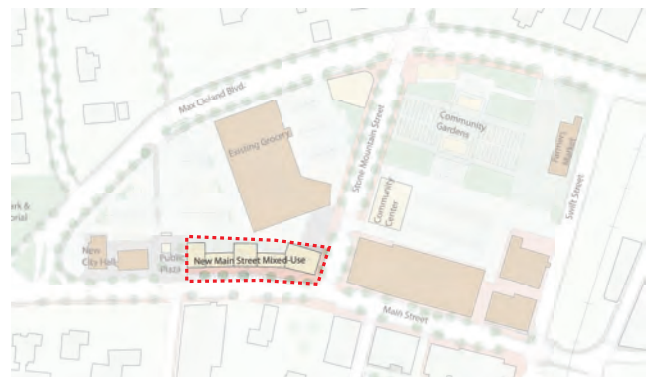


Figure 5.3ff: Phase 1- Step 6 Study Area

### 5.3.6 EXTEND RETAIL BUILDINGS ALONG MAIN STREET

As more activity is generated in the Plaza area due to the extension of Stone Mountain Street, the community garden, the farmers' market, and the community center, new businesses and retailers will begin looking for space in this active downtown. To accommodate the potential for this increased need for space, it is recommended that buildings be extended west along Main Street between Stone Mountain Street and Max Cleland Boulevard (refer



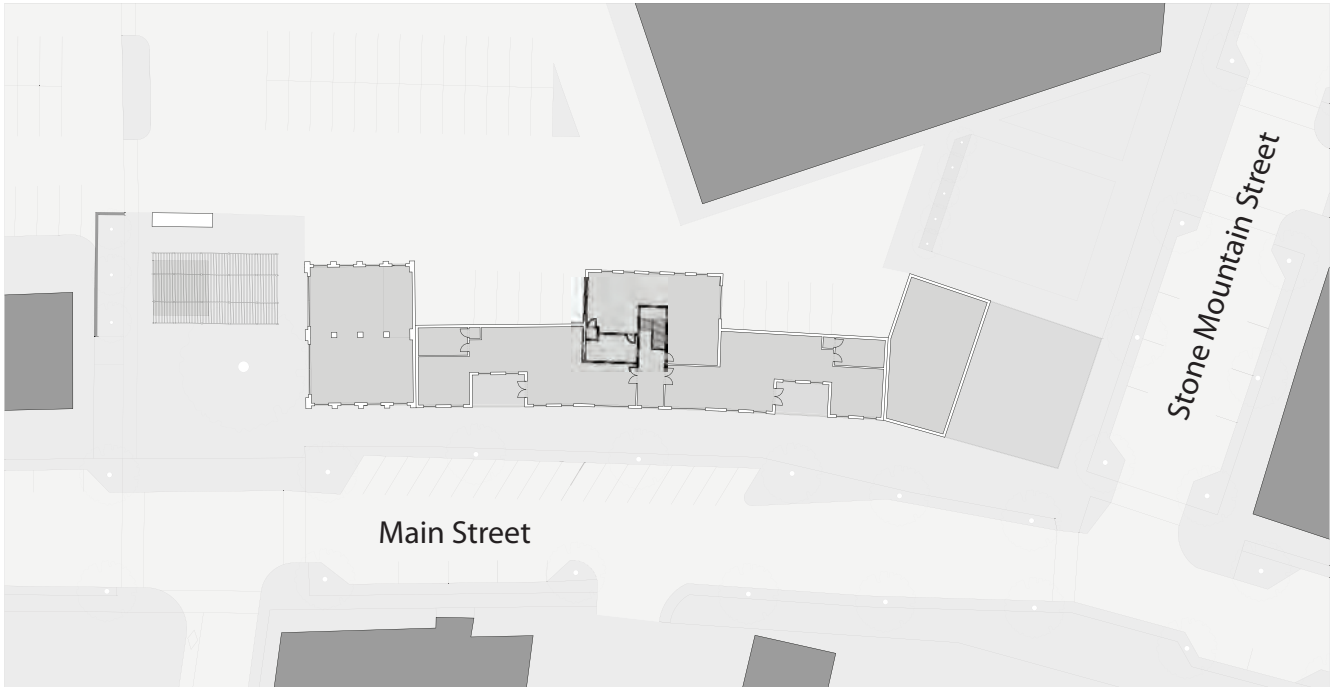


Figure 5.3gg: Proposed Main Street Retail - Second Floor Plan



Figure 5.3hh: Proposed Main Street Retail - First Floor Plan



Figure 5.3jj: Rendering of Outdoor Plaza - View from Street

to Figure 5.3ff). As these new buildings fill with retail, offices, housing and restaurants, downtown will become even more active and economically sustainable.

It is important for the new Main Street buildings to preserve the vernacular style of historic Main Street. Through a study of the existing building facades along Main Street, a pattern of symmetry, double store bays, and storefronts at three to five window bays wide was identified. Today's development standards for retail storefronts, however, call for a much wider storefront, generally double the size of Main Street's current storefront widths. While it is recommended that the new buildings agree with current development widths and standards, they should continue the pattern of window bays from historic Main Street to create the illusion of smaller scale structures that fit into the context and style of the existing structures. Refer to Figures 5.3dd and 5.3ee.

The recommended depth needed to develop these new structures is 70 feet from the back of the sidewalk. This

fits with current development standards and provides adequate space behind the new buildings for access and parking.

The proposed program for these new buildings could consist of retail on the first floor, except for the middle building which could contain two live-work apartments. At either end of the extension could be two anchors: a restaurant with a second floor patio, to the east, and a sports store retailer adjacent to an outdoor recreation plaza, to the west, further described in Section 5.3.7. On the second floor, there could be three contemporary lofts, all of which may be easily converted into live-work spaces. Kitchens, bathrooms, and electrical storage spaces could be stacked on both floors for efficiency of space and infrastructure. Refer to Figures 5.3gg and 5.3hh.

### 5.3.7 DEVELOP AN OUTDOOR PLAZA THAT CONNECTS THE PATH TRAIL TO DOWNTOWN

The outdoor plaza adjacent to the proposed sports store retailer can serve several purposes for the community.





Figure 5.3kk: Phase 1- Step 7 Study Area

It can provide a space for outdoor sports, such as rock climbing, associated with a sports store; it can provide a public space with tables and chairs for residents and visitors to sit and enjoy downtown; and it can provide a destination point to draw cyclists from the PATH trail into downtown Lithonia. Refer to Figures 5.3jj and 5.3kk.

Drawing the PATH trail to this plaza allows cyclists to restock on food, water and other sports goods, or take a break and enjoy downtown Lithonia's future retail and restaurants. Drawing these visitors into town can provide an even greater boost to the local economy.

### 5.3.8 RELOCATE CITY HALL TO A MORE PROMINENT LOCATION AT THE CORNER OF MAX CLELAND BOULEVARD AND MAIN STREET

While an attractive granite sign does currently exist (refer to Figure 5.3rr), a more prominent location and more signage would further identify that one has entered downtown Lithonia. To assist in this identification of downtown Lithonia, it is recommended to relocate City Hall from its current storefront along Main Street to the existing pawn shop building at the corner of Main Street and Max Cleland Boulevard. This relocation will provide a civic presence at one of the most prominent sites in



Figure 5.3mm: Phase 1- Step 8 Study Area

downtown and create a more formal entry into the City of Lithonia. Refer to Figures 5.3mm, 5.3nn, and 5.3qq.

With its tall granite wall and expanse of glass, this building has the potential to become a symbolic civic space, proudly displaying Lithonia's granite heritage. Signage is recommended to be installed on the granite wall announcing the presence of Lithonia City Hall (refer to Figure 5.3pp). Additional signage can be installed at this corner with text welcoming visitors to Lithonia, the "City of Stone", and signs that direct visitors to important local destinations like the Stewart Amphitheater, the Lithonia Middle School, the Lucious Sanders Recreation Center, the Lithonia Woman's Club, the Big Ledge Quarry, and the PATH trail, among many other important sites.



Figure 5.3nn: Rendering of the Proposed Location for City Hall

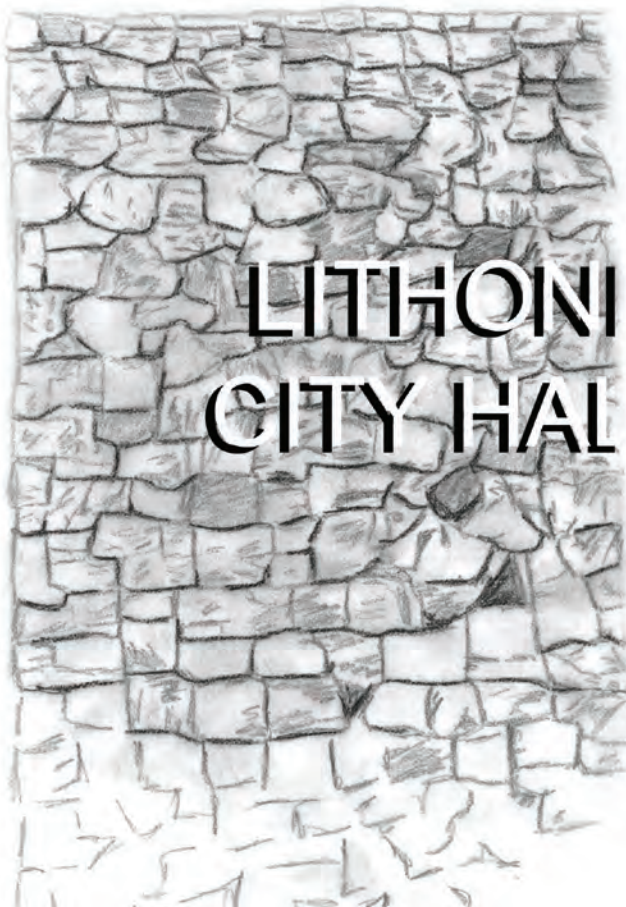


Figure 5.3pp: Proposed Signage on City Hall - Helvetica Font



Figure 5.3qq: View of Proposed Location for City Hall



Figure 5.3rr: Existing Welcome to Lithonia Sign



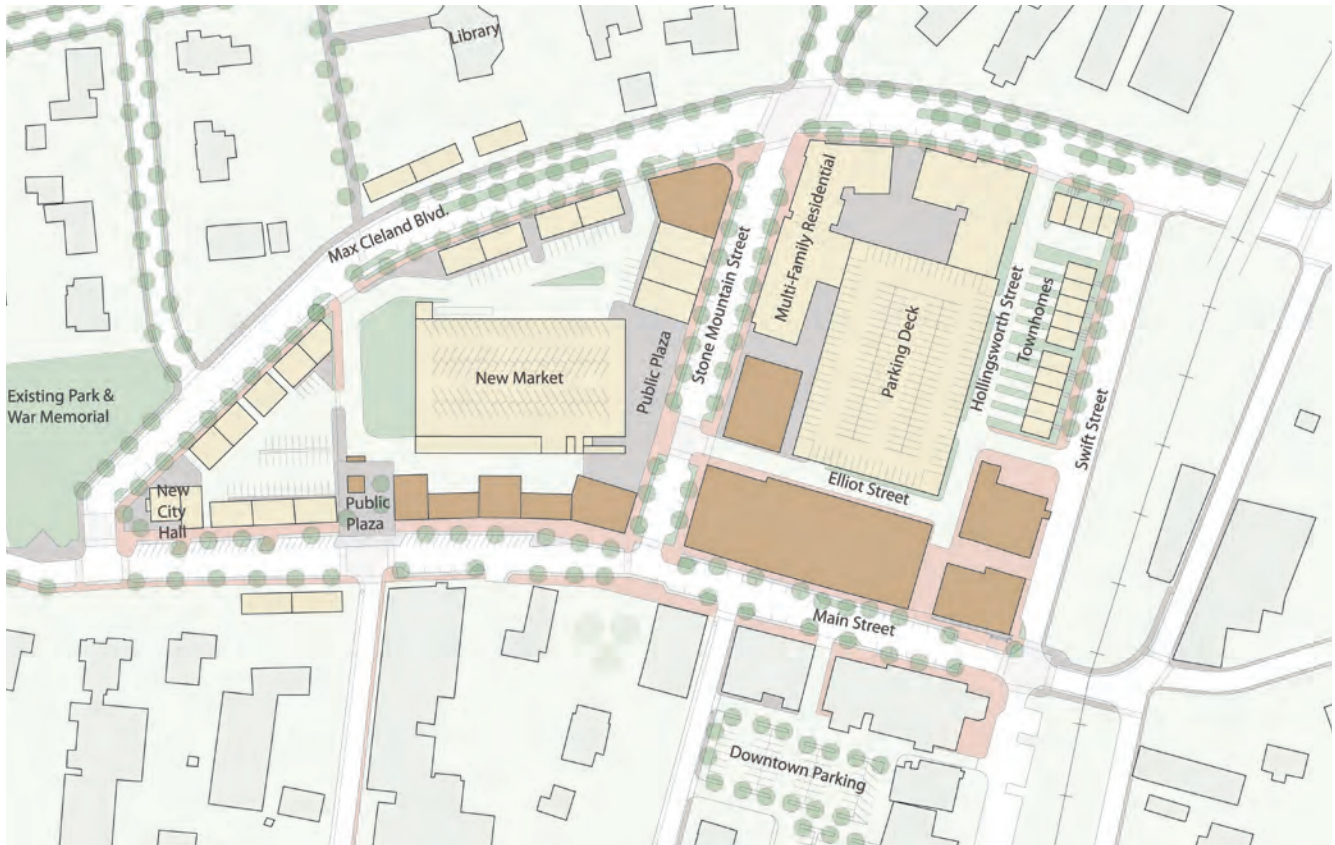


Figure 5.4a: Phase Two Rendering



Figure 5.4b: Phase Two Design Strategies Diagram

## 5.4 PHASE TWO

Phase Two of the Plaza revitalization effort builds on the momentum of Phase One and continues to create a physical framework in which economic development can occur, attempts to further draw people into the downtown core, and identifies strategies to enliven and reinvigorate the Max Cleland Boulevard and Swift Street streetscapes. As the demand increases for retail, office, restaurant, and residential space in the downtown core, Phase Two can be implemented. Refer to Figures 5.4a and 5.4b for a diagram and rendering of Phase Two.

There are five recommended strategies to complete the build-out of the Plaza. First, it is recommended that streetscape improvements be completed on Max Cleland Boulevard and Swift Street; second, housing should be built along Max Cleland Boulevard, Stone Mountain Street, and Swift Street; third, new retail, office, and restaurant space should be built along Max Cleland Boulevard and Stone Mountain Street; fourth, a new grocery store should replace the existing Wayfield Foods; and fifth, a new building should be constructed for City Hall at the corner of Main Street and Max Cleland Boulevard. These five recommendations are further described below.

### 5.4.1 STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS

The current pedestrian environment along Max Cleland Boulevard and Swift Street, near the Plaza, is unpleasant and unwelcoming. The automobile is the priority on both of these roadways with few pedestrian amenities. Refer to Figure 5.4c for a diagram of this study area.

Max Cleland Boulevard is home to two MARTA bus stops but only a short expanse of sidewalk exists on the south side of the street near the Plaza shopping center. This existing sidewalk is in poor shape with many uneven

and cracked portions. The remainder of Max Cleland Boulevard, with the exception of the intersection at Main Street, does not have any sidewalks. It is evident that this street is highly utilized by pedestrians though, because pedestrians have worn the grass down to reveal a desired pathway. Swift Street, similarly, has very few sidewalks and is home to another MARTA bus stop. Sidewalks only exist in front of the MARTA bus stop shelter, extending a couple feet on either side, at the intersection with Main Street, and for a portion of the street on the east side.

The poor pedestrian environment along these streets makes it difficult for residents to the north and east of the Plaza to access it and creates a divide between the Plaza and the many amenities nearby, such as the Lithonia Library, the Stewart Amphitheater, the Lithonia City Park, the Lithonia Middle School and nearby churches. By improving the streetscape and providing pedestrian amenities, such as sidewalks, street trees, street lights and safer pedestrian crossings, Max Cleland Boulevard and Swift Street can become more welcoming and more accessible to pedestrians, ultimately, making the Plaza easier to walk to and better connected to the surrounding community. This is an economic strategy, as well, because it provides yet more access to the buildings proposed here.



Figure 5.4c: Phase 2- Step 1 Study Area



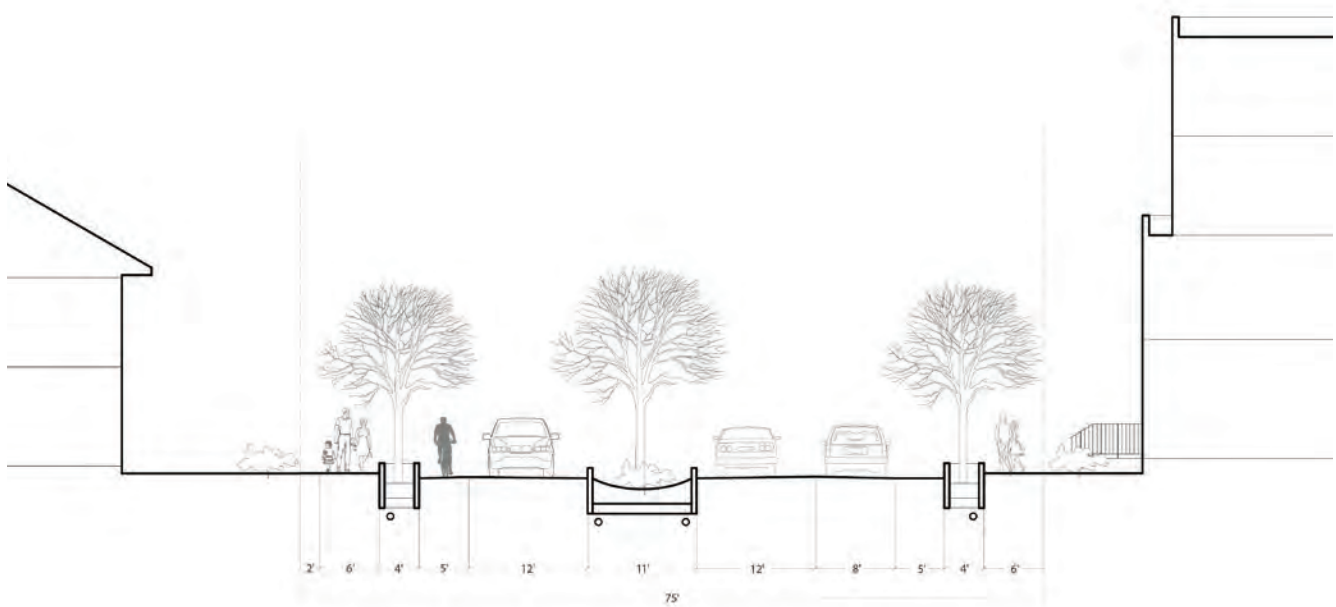


Figure 5.4d: Proposed Max Cleland Boulevard - Street Section

It is recommended that Max Cleland be converted into a two lane (one lane in each direction) boulevard with a grassy median filled with trees, new sidewalks on both sides of the street, a planting strip with trees between the street and the sidewalk to provide a buffer between pedestrians and cars, pedestrian-scale street lights, bike lanes on both sides of the street, street parking on the south side of the street in front of the Plaza, and a mid-block pedestrian crossing at the Library with signage to alert automobiles of this new pedestrian right-of-way. Refer to Figure 5.4d.

Swift Street, similarly, should be improved in include new sidewalks on either side of the street, a planted buffer between the street and pedestrians, and pedestrian-scale street lights.

While improvements to the pedestrian right-of-way adjacent to the Plaza is recommended, the sidewalks that lead up to the Plaza from the surrounding community will also need to be improved upon to draw people into this revitalized downtown core. A study of many of these

sidewalk conditions and prioritized recommendations for pedestrian improvements throughout the community will be provided to the City of Lithonia in a separate report in the Spring of 2012.

## 5.4.2 RESIDENTIAL

This second step in Phase Two recommends building residential units along the newly improved Max Cleland Boulevard, Stone Mountain Street, and Swift Street. Refer to Figures 5.4e to 5.4n. This action allows for more people to occupy and utilize the revitalized Plaza at all hours of the day, creating a livelier and safer environment where the community can watch out for each other and interact at all hours of the day. Additionally, this added population density in downtown will further support new businesses as potential customers will be living in walking distance to their storefronts.

The residential component is proposed to replace the community garden and farmers' market from Phase One, as discussed in Sections 5.3.3 and 5.3.4, with a more intense use appropriate for an increasingly vital



Figure 5.4e: Rendering of Proposed Residential Buildings

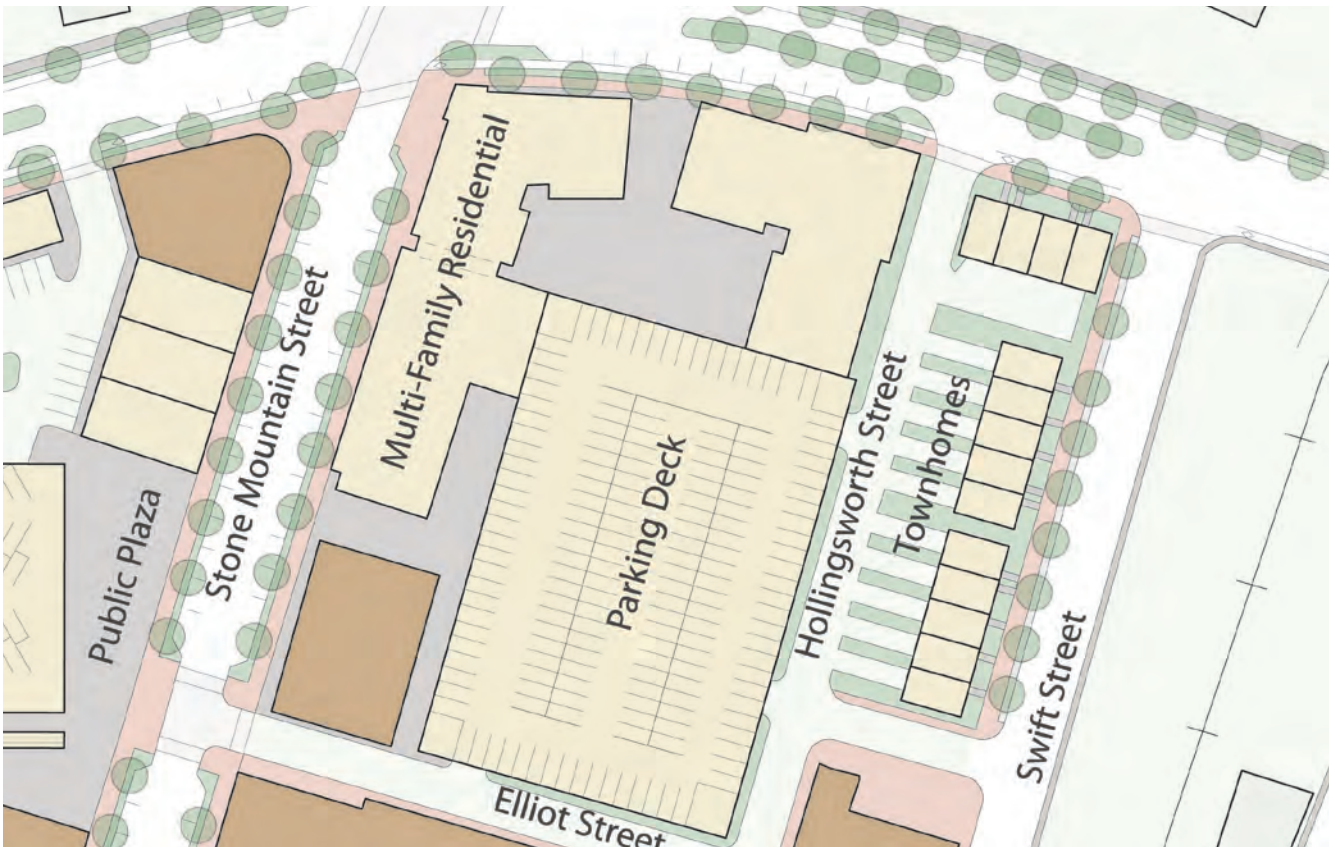


Figure 5.4f: Proposed Residential Buildings with Parking Deck





Figure 5.4g: Rendering of Townhomes Along Max Cleland Blvd at Swift Street

downtown area. As recommended in Section 5.3.3, the community garden planters may be mobile units, such as milk crates or pots, making it easy to relocate the plants to a new destinations, such as the rooftop of the residential units or to the roof of the new grocery store, discussed in Section 5.4.4, or to smaller locations spread throughout the community.

The advantage of utilizing this particular site for residential is its public ownership which allows greater control over the residential developer that is chosen to build this important piece of the downtown fabric.

The proposed residential concept consists of three multifamily buildings of three to five stories along Max Cleland Boulevard and Stone Mountain Street and fourteen three-floor townhomes along Max Cleland Boulevard and Swift Street. The buildings are designed to define the street edge while providing enough separation from the sidewalk level to ensure the privacy of ground floor residents, as seen in the small setbacks and porches



Figure 5.4h: Phase 2- Step 2 Study Area

in the townhomes along Swift Street. Refer to Figures 5.4f and 5.4g. Along Stone Mountain Street, the ground floor is dedicated to incubator office or retail space to support economic development by helping small businesses get established before they move to higher cost rental spaces along Main Street.

Two options have been proposed that deal with different levels of density. It is important that the number of units developed provides enough return for a developer to be interested in investing in the project, but not so many that it has a negative impact on the small town character



Figure 5.4j: Higher Density Residential Scenario 1

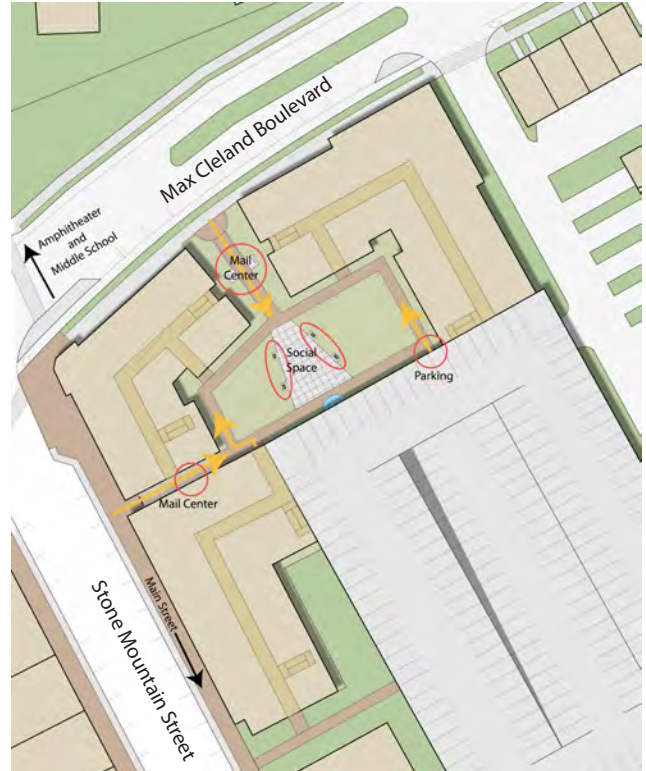


Figure 5.4k: Circulation and Public Space Diagram for Higher Density Scenario 1



Figure 5.4m: Lower Density Residential Scenario 2

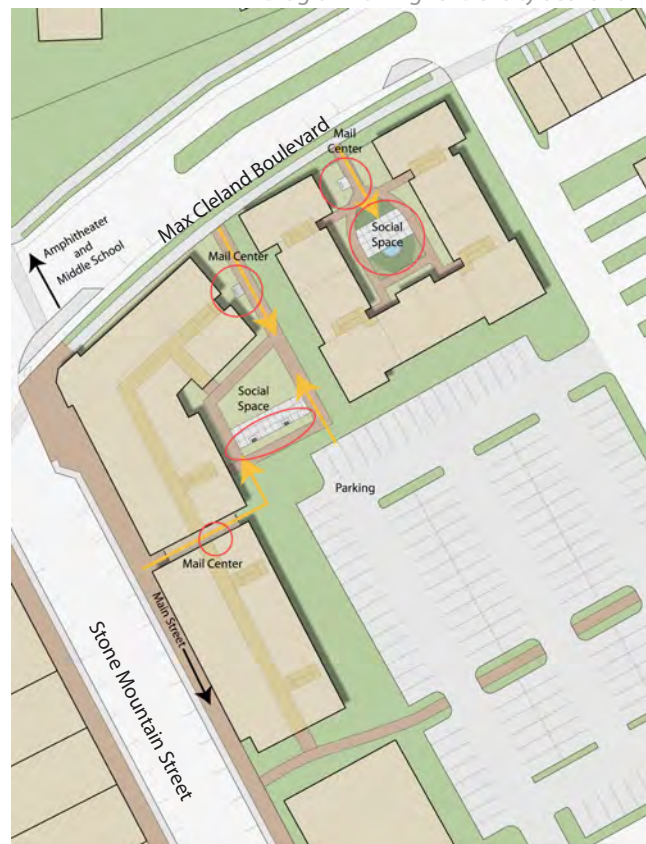


Figure 5.4n: Circulation and Public Space for Lower Density Scenario 2



that defines Lithonia. Both of the proposed scenarios are anticipated to allow a developer to gain a return on investment. The residential buildings in both proposals are designed to create visual interest along the street edge, maintain the relative scale of the small town community, and allow for the development to happen incrementally, if necessary. The plans propose three distinct buildings with varying heights and varying architectural expression.

### SCENARIO 1: HIGHER DENSITY

The higher density option anticipates the best-case outcome of the Main Street redevelopment. High levels of residential demand are created and more dense development is supported to accommodate this growth. This scenario includes one hundred twenty units in three buildings ranging from three to five floors plus fourteen townhomes. Parking is accommodated in a dedicated level of a municipal parking deck located behind the development. The courtyard space in between the buildings is designed to bring people together as they go about their daily routine: picking up the mail, walking to their car, coming back from the library or middle school, heading out for dinner on Main Street, or hosting a barbecue with friends. This social aspect is intended to create another incentive for living downtown in addition to the close proximity of the proposed grocery store, Main Street retail, and the many other amenities nearby, such as the Lithonia Library, the Stewart Amphitheater, the Lithonia City Park, the Lithonia Middle School, and the PATH Foundation trail. Refer to Figures 5.4j and 5.4k.

### SCENARIO 2: LOWER DENSITY

The second option is a lower density scenario that does not require a municipal parking deck. It includes sixty-two units in three buildings of three floors each in addition to the same number of townhomes, fourteen, as the higher

density scenario. Parking is provided in a shared surface lot behind the development. This scenario proposes a courtyard style apartment building. In this type of building, units have windows on at least two sides for cross-ventilation and all units share a common courtyard space. Multiple building entrances in the courtyard provide access to staircases that serve two units on each floor, eliminating the need for long internal hallways. This creates groupings of neighbors that may see each other more frequently in their shared space, again fostering a more communal element than is found in a typical garden-style apartment complex. Refer to Figures 5.4m and 5.4n.

### 5.4.3 NEW BUILDING FRONTAGES ALONG MAX CLELAND BOULEVARD AND STONE MOUNTAIN STREET

To continue to enliven and activate the downtown core, this third redevelopment step proposes extending retail, office, and restaurant spaces along Max Cleland Boulevard and Stone Mountain Street. These new buildings will provide a more pleasant environment for pedestrians using these streets and give people more of a reason to utilize the north side of the Plaza. Parking for retail throughout the Plaza can also be hidden behind these buildings, further beautifying the pedestrian experience. Refer to Figure 5.4p.

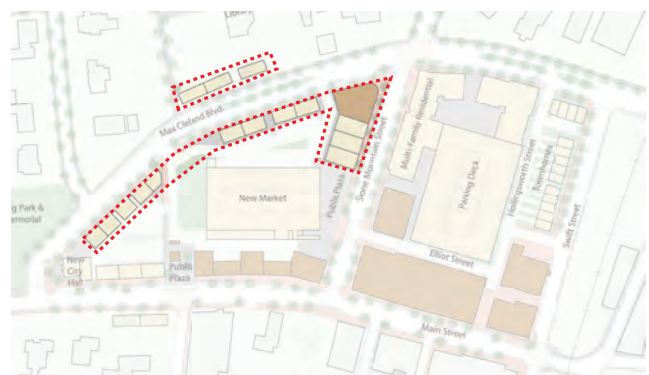


Figure 5.4p: Phase 2- Step 3 Study Area



Figure 5.4q: Entrance to the Lithonia Marketplace

#### 5.4.4 NEW GROCERY STORE: THE LITHONIA MARKETPLACE

The fourth major step in Phase Two is to replace the existing Wayfield Foods grocery store with a new more sustainable marketplace, the Lithonia Marketplace (refer to Figures 5.4q and 5.4r). This grocery store attempts to connect food grower, retailer, restaurant, and consumer in a 100-mile radius sustainable “food shed”. Fresh foods being sold in the market will be required to be obtained from a farm within this 100-mile radius, retail goods could mostly be locally made from within the 100-mile radius, and the marketplace will attempt to sell produce and goods to local consumers and restaurants within the 100-mile radius. Fresh food will be an important component to the marketplace and can utilize the local produce from Lithonia’s community garden and local farmers once the farmers’ market is removed to develop housing as discussed in Section 5.4.3.

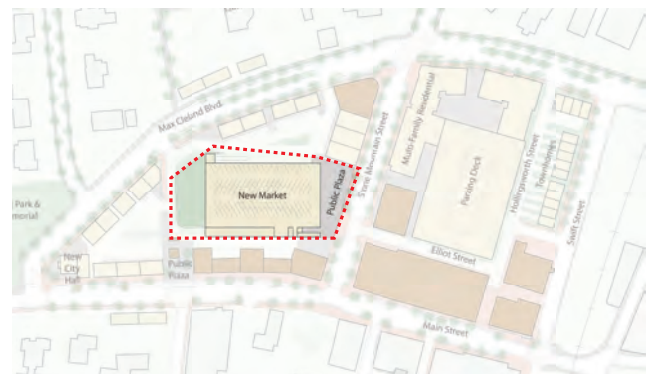


Figure 5.4r: Phase 2- Step 4 Study Area

This store is proposed to be different from most big box grocery stores in form and in purpose. Most grocery stores are designed to be housed in one large structure with an expanse of parking surrounding it. The Lithonia Marketplace proposes a parking lot on the roof of the store with solar panels shading the parking spaces and generating energy to power the building. The roof top can also be designed to direct stormwater runoff to a bio-swale and/or cistern at the rear of the building. Refer to Figures 5.4y to 5.4aa.



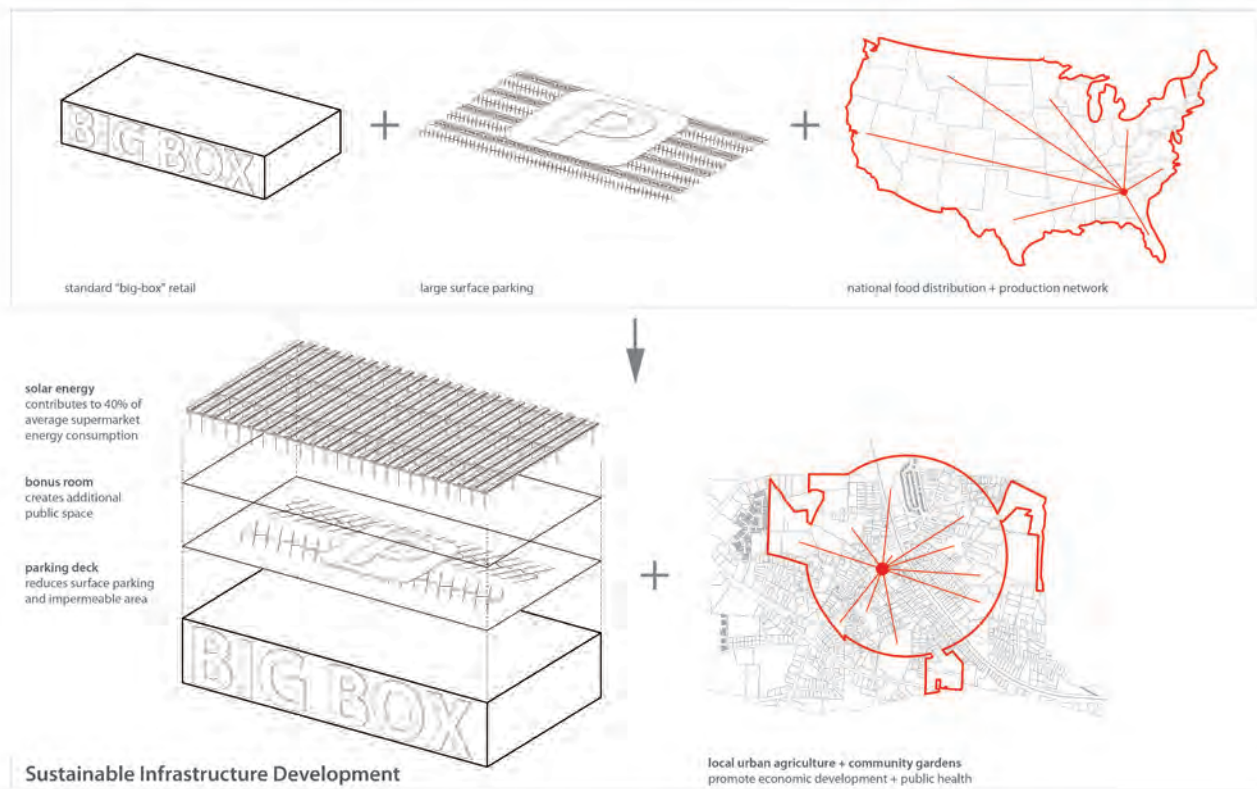


Figure 5.4s: Diagrams of Lithonia Marketplace's Sustainable Infrastructure Strategies

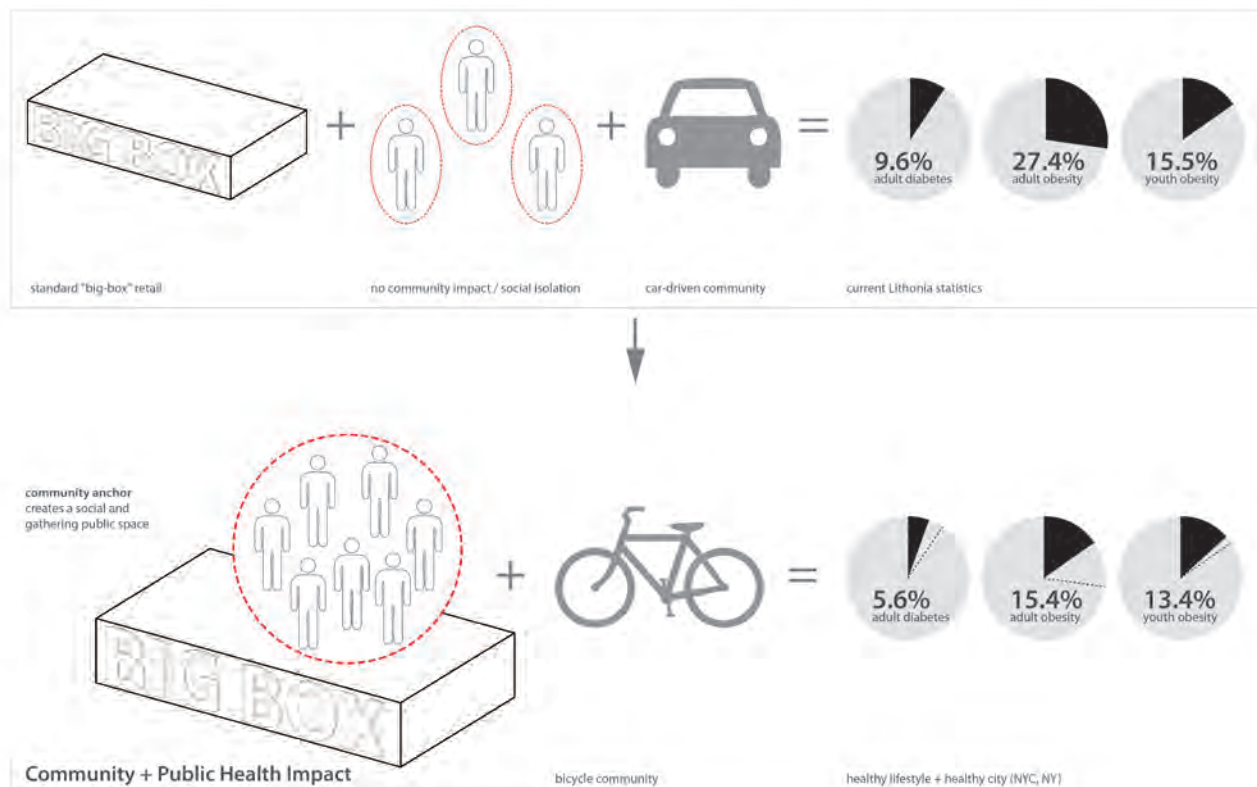


Figure 5.4t: Diagrams of Lithonia Marketplace's Sustainable Community Strategies



Figure 5.4u: Rendering of Lithonia Marketplace Plaza

Most big box grocery stores focus on supplying food to consumers in the most cost efficient manner, which generally means importing food from all over the country at the lowest cost and not necessarily the best quality. This method leaves consumers with lower quality produce, it does not recycle the cost of goods back into the local economy, and it leads to unsustainable methods of transporting produce to grocery stores across the country.

The purpose of the Lithonia Marketplace would be more than profit, this proposed marketplace attempts to provide solutions to public health, feed the local economy, and promote community engagement. Public health is addressed through the access to fresh foods and the walkable/bikable framework within which the grocery store is proposed to be built. The local economy is fed through the focus on selling produce within the 100-mile “food shed”. Community engagement is promoted within the design of the marketplace, with plazas and public

space that allow for gathering and engaging. Refer to Figures 5.4s and 5.4t.

The public gathering spaces within the marketplace include the public plaza in front of the building along Stone Mountain Street and the roof top parking which can be converted to public uses when not being used for parking. The plaza in front of the store can provide seating, tables, shading, and a coffee shop or small cafe for Lithonia residents and visitors to enjoy. Design details such as shading devices pictured in Figure 5.4w and benches shown in Figure 5.4x can make this space unique to Lithonia. The roof top can become a place for special events with its open space and shading provided by the solar array. Refer to Figures 5.4u to 5.4aa.

Ultimately, the marketplace serves as a center for the community, while still providing Lithonia with a big box retail space that can serve as an anchor to allow for the Plaza to remain economically viable.





Figure 5.4v: Lithonia Marketplace Public Plaza



Figure 5.4w: Lithonia Clouds Provide Shading for the Public Plaza and Provide a Unique Identity for the Space



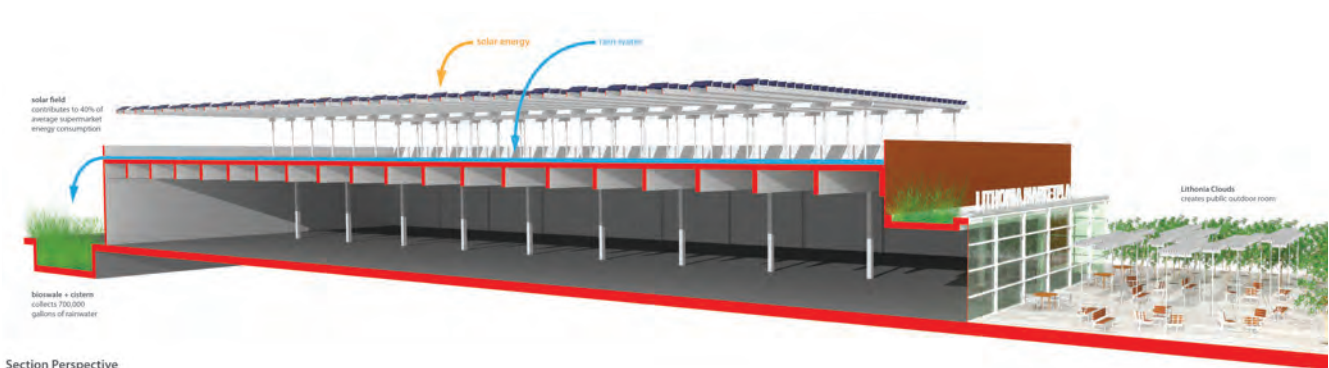
Figure 5.4x: Furniture in the Public Plaza is Made of Wood and Steel with Granite Accents to Make Them Unique to Lithonia



Figure 5.4y: Rendering of Lithonia Marketplace Roof



Figure 5.4z: Lithonia Marketplace Roof Top Parking Deck with Solar Panels and Public Plaza



Section Perspective

Figure 5.4aa: Lithonia Marketplace Roof Functions as a Solar Energy Field and Directs Rain Water to a Bio-swale at the Rear of the Site



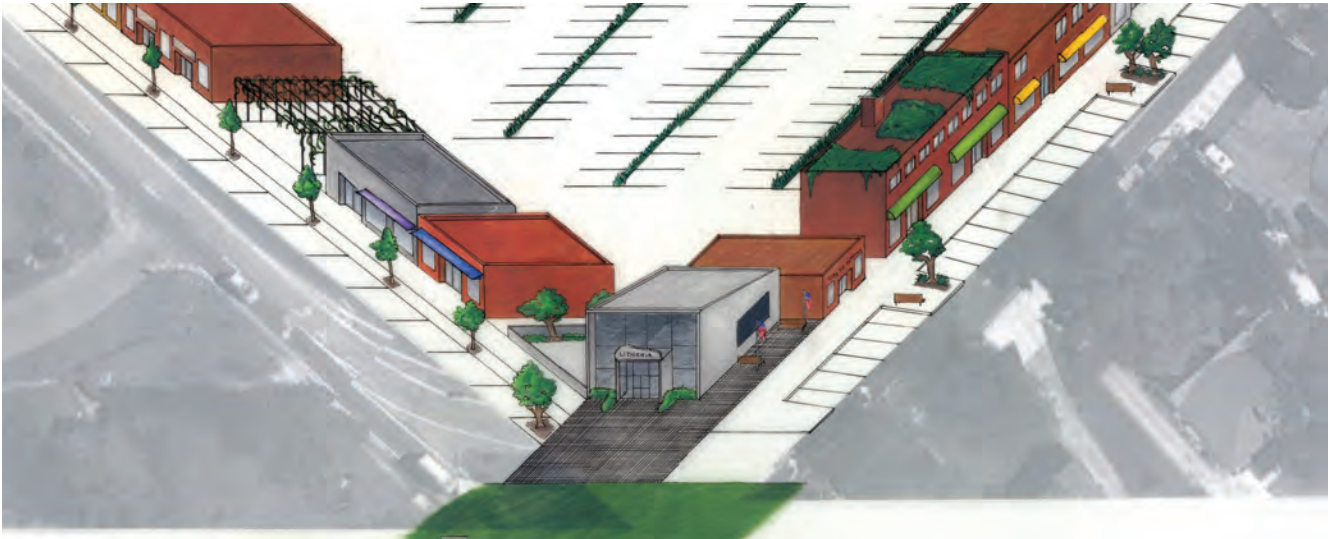


Figure 5.4bb: Rendering of Proposed City Hall

### 5.4.5 NEW CITY HALL

The fifth major step in Phase Two is to build a new structure to house City Hall at the corner of Main Street and Max Cleland Boulevard. A new building for City Hall will allow Lithonia to create a space that not only meets the needs of City Hall but also provides a prominent civic building that welcomes visitors and residents into Lithonia. Refer to Figures 5.4bb to 5.4ee.

The design of the building will need to be determined based on current and future needs of this growing city. Local granite should be a priority for building material, as granite is so important to Lithonia's history.

The site of the proposed new City Hall is at the corner of Main Street and Max Cleland Boulevard. This intersection is ideal as it is a prominent location and can welcome visitors and residents into downtown. This location is also just across Max Cleland Boulevard from Kelly Memorial Park, an important civic space in the community that recognizes Lithonia's veterans. The relationship between City Hall and this memorial park should be considered in the design of the building as both spaces are of civic importance to Lithonia.



Figure 5.4cc: Phase 2- Step 5 Study Area

In addition to building a new City Hall, it will be vital to improve the intersection where this new building will sit. The corner of Max Cleland Boulevard and Main Street should be realigned to slow traffic and make this civic building more visible to passersby. Refer to Figure 5.4dd. By slowing traffic at this intersection with realignment and increasing signage to announce arrival into Lithonia, people will become more aware that they are entering Lithonia, a unique place from Main Street to the west. A change in street paving, such as a different color, texture or pattern, can also help express to drivers and pedestrians that they are now entering a unique place, Downtown Lithonia.



Figure 5.4dd: Plan of the Proposed City Hall

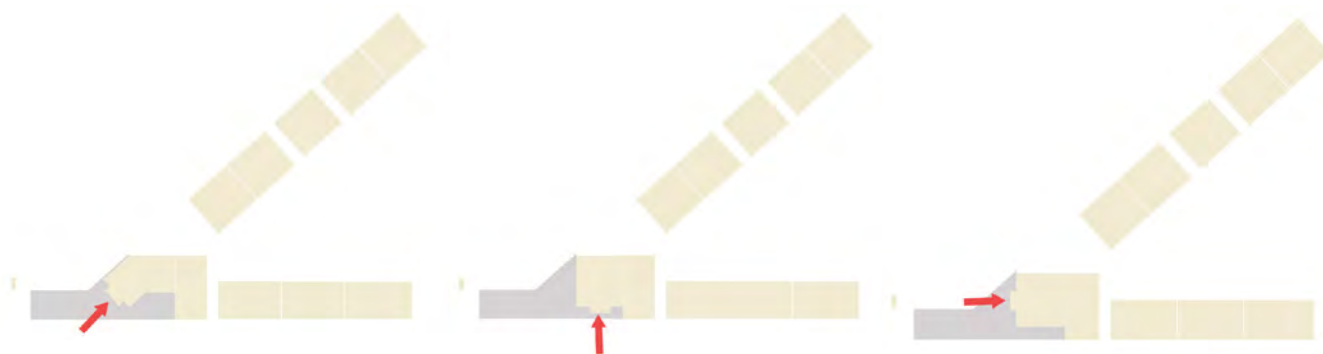


Figure 5.4ee: Alternative Orientations for City Hall Entrance