DISCOVERING AND PLANNING YOUR COMMUNITY CHARACTER

A GUIDEBOOK FOR CITIZENS AND LOCAL PLANNERS

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WHO SHOULD USE THIS GUIDEBOOK?

Anyone involved in preparing, implementing, or using comprehensive plans in Georgia can benefit from this guidebook. However, the guidebook is designed to be most useful to citizen planners, local government staff and officials with little specific training in comprehensive planning, and planners in small cities and towns or rural counties. Larger local governments will more likely have several professional planners to provide planning services that meet local needs for administering programs on a daily basis, conducting studies, and preparing comprehensive plans. It is the first situation where more help is needed. Many of Georgia's local governments are small and depend on a city or county clerk, city or county manager, building official, or citizen volunteers to prepare comprehensive plans.

WHAT KIND OF INFORMATION IS IN THE GUIDEBOOK?

This guidebook describes character areas, provides tools and techniques for identifying character areas, and discusses the processes for visioning in your community. It includes examples of character areas and the characteristics that distinguish one area from another. There are many ways to "see" character areas; no one way is the right or only approach. In addition, there are many useful tools for envisioning your community and the character areas that lie within it. These tools will help you discover your vision, discover the character areas, and begin to develop plans to implement your vision.

The appendix identifies some additional resources for background reading or details on what other communities have done.

THE CHARACTER OF YOUR COMMUNITY

The major component of most plans – at least until recently – has been land use. That means that a primary part of the community's comprehensive plan is the identification of what use may be made of any parcel of land. Traditionally, planning has focused on the issues of physical forms of development as described by the types and locations of individual land uses. Often, a community focuses on land use as a way of addressing other issues, such as compatibility and the adequacy of public infrastructure. However, this focus has often resulted in a lack of attention to the overall pattern of development. An emerging trend, reflected in some of the Smart Growth concepts and New Urbanism concepts, is the focus on pattern of development, rather than individual land uses. The patterns of development throughout a community create individual areas that have an identifiable character. In Georgia, such areas are called "character areas."

WHAT EXACTLY IS A CHARACTER AREA?

No matter what name we use to label a part of our community – district, zone, neighborhood, sector, or area – most people recognize that a community is made up of several distinct areas, each with a specific character. The character of an area can best be understood or described by identifying the characteristics that make a particular development unique. The following descriptions should help explain character areas as defined in the "local planning requirements" from the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. Character areas are defined as specific geographic areas that meet the following criteria:

- Have unique or special characteristics;

- Have potential to evolve into a unique area when provided specific and intentional guidance; or

- Require special attention due to unique development issues.

The character of developed areas can be explained by looking at several typical characteristics. Consider the following characteristics to identify areas within developed parts of the community:

- Site and configuration of lots;

- Site design features, such as degree and location of landscaping, parking, driveways, accessory structures, stormwater facilities, and other features;

- Street design;

- Intensity of development;

- Building location, dimensions, and orientation;

- Types and quantities of natural features;

- Location, extent, and type of civic buildings and public spaces; and

- Interactions among uses within the area.

Many of these characteristics exist regardless of the activity which occurs within the buildings in the area (offices, homes, shops, and so on). Thus, the characteristics are based on form and pattern, not individual use. Form and pattern describes how buildings, lots, site features, and streets are physically arranged. Most communities are familiar with defining areas based on character, even if the areas are not labeled as "character areas." Downtowns and historic districts are often identified because of the form, pattern, and character of the area, rather than the array of individual land uses.

In addition to examining existing characteristics, you can identify future development patterns desired and expressed by the vision for the area using these same ideas. Further, it is important to consider whether there are any redevelopment needs for the area. The vision may identify the need to create new character for the area. In these cases, an area should be identified based on both existing and future development characteristics.

Another way to identify character areas is based on environmental characteristics. Your community most likely has identified significant natural features for protection. These features form an important part of the overall character of the community and give shape to the community. The character of environmental areas is based primarily on the natural resources that are present and shape the area:

- Greenways or green corridors;

- Bodies of water, such as lakes, rivers, streams, and seas;

- Wetlands;

- Floodplains and floodways;

- Habitats;

- Aquifer recharge areas;

- Karst terrain; and

- Mountains or areas with steep slopes.

Open spaces are an important feature in your community. This leads to a third type of character areas, especially if you are planning for a county. There may be areas that are vacant or sparsely settled, but are not environmental areas or developed (partially or wholly) character areas. While not all vacant land should ultimately be developed, some will be needed to accommodate future growth. Such open space areas will most likely fall into three categories:

- Agricultural production;

- Open space; and

- Future development areas.

Future development areas should be identified based on development potential. When considering characteristics of these areas, future development characteristics as envisioned in the comprehensive plan will guide decisions. There are no existing characteristics to preserve or redevelop, so such areas are really a "blank slate" as character areas. This situation is the opposite situation to the developed areas planned for preservation or redevelopment.

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IT ALL STARTS WITH A VISION

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> We must stop talking about the American dream and
> start listening to the dreams of Americans.
> - Reubin Askew, former Governor of Florida

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ENVISIONING THE WHOLE COMMUNITY

Creating a useful comprehensive plan begins with identifying the commonly held vision for the future of the community. Preparing a plan for the future of the city requires an understanding of what the city will be or become. Visioning – the identification of a vision – is a process to find out what the citizens in a community want for the future. A vision is the overall image – in both words and illustrations – of what the community wants to be and how it wants to look at some point in the future. It is the starting point for creating a plan and actions to implement the plan.

Visioning should take place early in the planning process, involve the people of the community, and guide the preparation of the community plan.

The visioning process should consider both the community as a whole and the character areas within the community. The overall vision is likely to be a statement describing the preferred future, possibly accompanied by a general map that depicts the vision in broad, conceptual terms. Visioning for the character areas should be more detailed, providing a written and graphic statement about the future of each

character area. These statements will guide the preparation of strategies that direct future development in each area.

A combination of visioning techniques will likely be needed in order to address effectively the overall vision for the community as a whole and the vision for character areas that make up the community.

A successful visioning process is built upon an understanding of the community derived through analysis of existing development patterns, identification of character areas, and identification of the issues and opportunities that are present in the community. The visioning process is a time for the people of the community to dream about and imagine their future. However, it is often hard to imagine the future without some idea about where the community is now.

Tools and techniques to help you with the visioning process are described in Part 3 of this guidebook. You should also consult the Planning for Community Involvement guidebook for discussion of organizing and carrying out citizen involvement programs, including visioning.

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VISIONING FOR CHARACTER AREAS

To begin the process of identifying character areas the planning team will need to assemble data about the community, including maps that describe the community, statistical information that quantifies various aspects of the community, and narrative descriptions of features in the community. With the data that is collected, the team is best able to make a preliminary determination of the location and types of character areas in the community. The steps in the process are:

- Determining the location of physical boundaries for a potential character area;

- Identifying the vision for the future of the area;

- Formulating objectives for the area in order to achieve the vision; and

- Preparing development regulations or guidelines to implement the objectives.

Maps are helpful to show a lot of information in a concise and useful way. Information on maps will depict:

- Natural features throughout the community, such as bodies of water, environmental features, floodplains, areas with high aquifer recharge potential, areas with good or poor soils, and locations of natural resources.

- Existing development, showing the types and location of land uses, transportation systems, and similar information.

- Areas with special needs, such as historic areas, archaeological areas, cultural features, or declining areas in need of redevelopment.

Later, the preparation of a Character Area Map will include the boundaries of the character areas as adjusted and finalized during the visioning process. The final delineation of a character area should flow from the visioning process, not from a predetermined list of character areas.

However, before you can discover your vision for the character areas, the various character areas in your community must be identified.

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IDENTIFYING CHARACTER AREAS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

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The fundamental question is how to identify the character areas in your community. While the planning team makes the first determination, the discussion in this section will help you understand the process and help you make your own determination. There will be several ways to begin this process of identification. Remember that a character area meets several conditions:

- It is a specific geographic area.

- It is unique and can be distinguished from other areas due to its unique characteristics.

- It requires specific attention to ensure that development is consistent with the characteristics that distinguish the area from other areas.

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ENVIRONMENTAL AND HERITAGE CHARACTER AREAS

In order to determine the types and locations of character areas in your community, consider a two-fold approach: first identify character areas centered on specific environmental, historical, cultural, or archaeological features; and then identify character areas based on the form and pattern of development.

Start with the environmental character areas:

1. Locate areas with significant natural resources and environmental features. It will be relatively easy to study maps of natural resources and environmental features and identify those areas which require protection. It may be more difficult to delineate the boundaries, especially where some development has occurred in and near areas with significant environmental features and resources. Start with delineation of wetlands and floodplains. The boundaries of these features are often already established. Likewise, areas with significant groundwater resources are likely to be mapped for your community. Rivers, streams, and protected corridors are also known. In

addition, consider whether you should identify as a character area those areas with poor soils for development, steep slopes, or other natural features.

You may wish to label all character areas with natural and environmental features as "environmental character areas" or "conservation character areas" or another name that is descriptive of the environmental characteristics that distinguish these areas.

2. Determine other important resources that you wish to protect in your community. Examples are historic resources and districts, important landmarks, cultural resources, or archaeological sites. Locate these resources and determine where a boundary should be placed to encompass the resource.

These character areas will probably have a common label, such as "heritage areas" based on the traditional and cultural characteristics that distinguish these areas.

These two types of character areas will be easy to identify because of the presence of specific features. The remainder of your community will require some additional analysis to determine what kinds of character areas you have based on development patterns, and where the boundaries should be placed.

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CHARACTER AREAS IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

You are already familiar with a character area that is found in most cities and towns – the downtown district. It is unique and easily distinguishable from other areas. What are the characteristics that most often set downtown apart as a character area? Compact development, with buildings close to or at the property line, parking on the street or in central lots, high degree of pedestrian access, taller buildings, a high degree of mixed uses, and a predominance of civic and cultural buildings and spaces are typical characteristics. Downtown is the ceremonial heart of the community.

Using some of the methods described below, you can identify other character areas in your community.

1. Examine maps that show street patterns. Character areas typically have one predominant street layout, such as a grid pattern, radial pattern, or curving and circle streets.

2. Examine aerial maps to identify patterns of lot configuration and building placement. Urban neighborhoods will have small, regularly shaped lots, with small or very small front yards, and often with alleys to provide access to garages at the rear of the house. Suburban neighborhoods more often have larger lots, deeper setbacks at the front of the house, garages that face or take access from the street, and more open space throughout the neighborhood. Shops in urban areas tend to be scattered throughout the neighborhood, often at corners, and in buildings that are similar in scale to

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the residential development on the same street. In suburban areas, commercial development is mostly in shopping centers, malls, or large discount centers. All of these features are readily observable on aerial maps and photos.

3. Drive through the city, observing patterns of streets, lots, and building placement. You are looking at forms and shapes, not individual uses. An example may help you focus on form rather than use. In many cities, warehouse and industrial districts that once housed storage, distribution, or assembly centers, have been remodeled into buildings filled with art galleries, modern shops, restaurants, and loft apartments on upper levels. The form of the buildings and surrounding streets has remained fairly constant, while the uses have changed.

4. Ask people – in workshops or through surveys – to identify places in the community by name and characteristics. In workshops, people can draw simple maps of their own neighborhoods, identifying the features and boundaries that set it apart from other areas. Consider a photo essay project to help identify specific areas. These results of these projects can be used during visioning programs to confirm the locations of character areas and identify what should be preserved and what should be changed – which will in turn help in preparing the plan for the area.

SUGGESTIONS FOR TYPES OF CHARACTER AREAS

Every community is different. However, in examining character areas in several communities throughout Georgia and the United States, it appears that character areas typically fit into one of the following categories:

- Conservation, Preserves, Reserves, Environmental, or areas named for specific features, such as mountains, rivers, or lakes

- Greenways or Greenway Corridors

- Agriculture

- Rural, Rural/Agricultural, or Rural Residential

- Rural Village, Hamlet, Crossroads Community, or Rural Center

- Suburban, Suburban Residential, or Suburban Neighborhood

- Traditional Neighborhood

- Urban Village or Town Center

- Commerce Center, Marketplace, Marketplace Center, Regional Center, Regional Marketplace, or Interchange Center

- Employment Centers, Industrial Centers, or Marketplace Production

- Corridor or Highway Corridor (could be in town, scenic, or major highway corridors)

- Downtown

- Historic, Cultural, or Civic, or other special purpose areas

- Special Purpose Areas, such as Redevelopment Districts or Redevelopment Neighborhoods

- Single Purpose Areas, such as Industrial, Hospitals, Airports, "Big Box" Buildings, and similar situations

There are several predominant characteristics for the character areas in each group. The following table may be helpful as you begin to identify the character areas in your community.

Character Areas	Predominant Characteristics (existing or future characteristics)
Conservation, Preserves, Reserves, Environmental	Very high degree of open space Significant natural features Views of natural features Low accessibility by vehicle due to few roads Primarily undeveloped natural lands and environmentally sensitive areas not suitable for development
Greenway Corridors	Primarily protected open space in a linear pattern, typically following natural features such as stream corridors
Rural, Rural/Agricultural, or Rural Residential	Low degree of pedestrian access No transit Very large lots High degree of open space Very large amounts of separation between buildings Pastoral views Predominantly rural, undeveloped land likely to develop for rural/residential and agricultural or land that is primarily rural/residential or residential and agriculture

Rural Village, Hamlet, Crossroads Community, or Rural Center	Low pedestrian orientation and access, except within the center itself Little or no transit Distinct edge for the village or center Clustering of buildings within the village or center, but high open space surrounding the center Mixture of uses to serve rural and agricultural areas
Suburban, Suburban Residential, or Suburban Neighborhood	Low pedestrian orientation Little or no transit High degree of open space, often focused on golf courses or large recreation amenity High to moderate degree of building separation Predominantly residential with scattered civic buildings Varied street patterns, often curvilinear, cul-de-sacs, or loop roads
Traditional Neighborhood	High pedestrian orientation Moderate or high transit, including transit stops and shelters Sidewalks, street trees, and street furniture On-street parking Small, regular lots Limited open space Buildings close to or at the front property line Predominance of alleys Low degree of building separation Neighborhood-scale businesses scattered throughout the area
Urban Village or Town Center	Often contains a community focal point High degree of pedestrian orientation High degree of transit, including transit stops and shelters Typically has sidewalks, street trees, street furniture On-street parking or central lots Limited open space Buildings at front property line Predominance of alleys Buildings are close together Mixed uses within buildings, with residential on upper floors

Commerce Center, Marketplace, Marketplace Center, Regional Center, Regional Marketplace, or Interchange Center	Often focused on regionally marketed commercial and other nonresidential development High degree of access by vehicular traffic High degree of pedestrian use High degree of transit, including transit stops, shelters, and transfer points On-site parking Low amount of open space Tall or high-rise buildings Large tracts of land, campus or unified development
Employment Centers, Industrial Centers, or Marketplace Production	High degree of access by vehicular traffic High degree of transit, including transit stops, shelters, and transfer points On-site parking Low amount of open space Mid-rise buildings Large tracts of land, campus or unified development
Corridor or Highway Corridor (could be in town, scenic, or major highway corridors)	Orientation of buildings to highway High transit, including transit stops and shelters On-site parking Large set-backs for buildings Focus on streetscape features
Downtown	Recognizes as the traditional central business district High degree of accessibility High degree of pedestrian use High degree of transit use Tall or high-rise buildings Maximum building coverage of lots Parking predominantly in lots and on-street High degree of public space High degree of mixed uses

It is useful to recognize that there is more than one way to identify and characterize unique areas within your community. However, you will also see that there are similarities among the various approaches to identifying and labeling character areas. This means that your way, which may not follow exactly any of these lists, will not be wrong, just different.

Now that you have identified character areas in your community it is time to discover the vision you hold for the community and its character areas. Once you have discovered the vision, it will guide you in refining the character areas, creating detailed maps, and developing strategies for achieving the vision.

TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES FOR ENVISIONING THE FUTURE OF YOUR COMMUNITY

> If you can dream it, you can do it.
> …Walt Disney

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DISCOVERING AND IMPLEMENTING YOUR VISION

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We have always imagined the future and dreamed about the possibilities. In comprehensive planning, visioning is being used as a process to engage citizens in imagining the future of their communities. How does this happen? There is no single way to "do visioning." There are many tools and techniques that help shape the process and lead to formulating an answer to the question "What do you want?" There are many aspects to that question in the planning process.

- What do you want your community to become?

- What do you want your neighborhood to become?

- What future development do you want in your community?

- What strategies to do you want to implement your plan?

Whatever the specific question, the tools and techniques suggested here will help you formulate a visioning process that meets your budget, time, and human resources for planning.

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TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

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There are many ways to identify and plan for character areas. Consider the tools and techniques described here. Also consider the toolkit described in the Planning for Community Involvement Guidebook, which describes tools for engaging citizens in planning. Some are similar to the ones listed below. All are excellent ways to work together to identify character areas and discover your vision for the future of each area.

SWOT ANALYSIS

SWOT is an acronym for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats to an area identified in the comprehensive plan. Typically conducted as a brainstorming activity, one large or several small groups identify the various conditions and situations in the community that fit into the categories of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. All ideas are listed – some may actually fit more than one category. For example, strong leadership may be seen as a strength, but may also overpower citizens who want to participate.

The purpose of the analysis is to identify strengths followed by identifying ways to preserve and capitalize on the strengths. Weaknesses are identified following by brainstorming ways to overcome, reduce, and eliminate the weaknesses. There should be strategies to take advantage of opportunities and not to let them slip away. Finally, the group should brainstorm ways to eliminate, reduce, or overcome threats.

A SWOT analysis is a good companion to other activities in the overall visioning process; however, SWOT itself is not visioning. It is particularly helpful in identifying strategies and actions to implement the vision.

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DESIGN CHARRETTES

Typically, a design charrette is used to solve design problems in a neighborhood or specific area. However, through a charrette process, citizens can come together and identify the characteristics of their neighborhood or several neighborhoods in the community. Using drawings, maps, and photographs, citizens can not only identify the characteristics that make an area one with a unique character, but can also identify what they want the area to become in the future.

The charrette should probably be conducted over several days. This allows the team to help guide the participants through several steps of

- identifying, mapping, and describing the character areas as they are today,

- brainstorming about the characteristics that are desirable to keep, enhance, and strengthen,

- brainstorming about ways to redesign aspects of the area that need redevelopment or improvement, and

- finally, producing maps and descriptions of their vision for the future of the character areas.

There is additional discussion about the use of design charettes along with preference surveys to engage citizens in planning and visioning the community in the guidebook on [Planning for Community Involvement](#).

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FOCUS GROUPS

Focus groups are called "focus" groups because the group consists of members with a specific interest. The focus may be geographic, economic, environmental, cultural, historic, or any specific aspect of the community. These focus groups can carry out any number of visioning or small group processes to identify character areas or plan for the future of character areas that have already been identified. A focus group, for example, might be engaged in a SWOT analysis or brainstorming activity to identify problems and ways to solve them. A focus group that is based on geographic areas could engage in design charettes to identify character areas and envision their future.

Refer to the guidebook on [Planning for Community Involvement](#) and the discussion of consensus building in small groups for further discussion of the use of focus groups.

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COGNITIVE MAPPING

An excellent way to identify character areas is to engage citizens in a mapping exercise. Providing blank paper and drawing materials, ask citizens to draw their neighborhood and the features that make it a special place. They can work individually or in groups. The composite results of this exercise will identify specific and unique areas and the characteristics that make the area unique.

This mapping exercise can also be expanded as described in the [Planning for Community Involvement](#) to build a community map useful in envisioning the future of the community as well as the character areas.

Cognitive mapping can be used with focus groups or as a beginning activity in a design charrette. People know their own neighborhoods well and can quickly define the location, boundaries, and characteristics. This is a useful double-check for work by the planning team to identify character areas and to revise the character areas with citizen direction.

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DESIGNING AND VISIONING WITH BOXES AND BLOCKS

One technique that helps people "see" their community is the use of small boxes representing houses and businesses to depict a neighborhood, special area, or the whole community. The boxes can be decorated to depict houses, stores, shopping centers, offices, or any part of the community. They can be arranged in

neighborhoods, shopping districts, campuses, or any configuration to depict what is and what they want.

If small boxes are too large to allow participants to build an entire area or community, consider using something like Legos™ or other building blocks to represent houses, stores, and other buildings. Base maps with streets and natural features are helpful in guiding this activity.

Building a "box city" is a good technique to use in a festival setting, both to identify character areas and envision how the areas should be in the future. A useful web site for "box city" is www.cubekc.org. This web site has excellent resources for festivals and for engaging students at any grade level in similar planning activities.

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PHOTOGRAPHS TELL THE STORY

What better way to identify a specific area than through photographs? Through photographs people can see the characteristics and better understand how the parts of an area fit together to form a character area. Photographs can be used in several ways:

- The planning team can assemble photographs for use in a design charrette, focus group meeting, or planning festival. These photographs should depict likely character areas and the components that make it unique. Citizens can engage in a SWOT analysis or other brainstorming activity to verify the character area location and characteristics as well as to envision how the area should be in the future.

- Citizens can be asked to identify neighborhoods or special areas through photographs. They bring the photographs to a meeting, festival, or other event and work together to create a tapestry of photos that depict each character area. Once assembled, the planning team can engage the citizens in other activities to create a narrative of the characteristics and envision the future.

- The planning team and/or the citizens can identify design features and neighborhood characteristics that they prefer and want to see in the future. This is an excellent way to begin or continue the process of envisioning the future for the community as whole or individual character areas. Some of these photographs may be part of a preference survey during focus group meetings or other events that are part of the visioning process.

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SCENARIO BUILDING

An excellent way to engage citizens in visioning is through creating different scenarios, evaluating each scenario, and choosing one (or combining several) scenario that represents the preferred future. What is a scenario?

A scenario is a description of the future condition or situation for the community or a character area. By condition or situation, we mean the economic, physical, social, demographic, and cultural characteristics that describe the area. It describes how the area is viewed not only by the people who live and work there, but also by others who travel through or visit.

In visioning, citizens are developing answers to several questions:

- What do you want the area to become?

- What kind of reputation do you want the area to have?

- What values and beliefs should be represented in the area?

- How should the area function within the community?

Each scenario should represent a different future. For example, it is useful to create one scenario based on continuing exactly as you are now – preserving the status quo. Other scenarios should focus on changing in specific ways – growing into a different kind of area, improving in a particular way, or other future condition.

For each scenario, the group answers some specific questions.

- What are the implications of achieving this scenario? What does it mean to residents? To business people? To visitors?

- What are the financial implications of achieving this scenario? What funds are needed and where will they come from?

- How does this scenario fit into the entire community, socially, culturally, economically, and other ways.

The answers to these questions will help participants determine which scenario is best for the area, or to merge parts of two or more scenarios.

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IMPLEMENTING CHARACTER AREAS

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Now that you have identified character areas and discovered your vision for the areas, how do you achieve the development that you want? How do you implement a plan for the character areas?

As described in earlier portions of this guidebook, the planning process begins with the preliminary identification of character areas and the establishment of a vision. The next steps are:

- Formulation of objectives for the area to achieve the vision, and

- Creation of development recommendations, design guidelines and/or standards and regulations to implement the objectives of the area.

Just as the discovery of the vision is highly interactive with citizen participation, these steps in formulating objectives and guidelines for development to implement the vision also requires citizen participation.

Answer the following questions to help craft the objectives for each area:

1. What is the primary outcome you want to achieve? Do you want to preserve the current characteristics that identify the area? As an alternative, do you want to achieve a specific new or different type of character?

2. What kinds of activities should be permissible in the character area? An answer to this question will most likely be in the form of a list of land uses.

3. What steps or programs will be needed to achieve the primary outcome? Do you need code enforcement for a declining area? Do you need architectural review procedures for a special purpose district? Do you need an airport overlay district to protect the airport from encroachment of incompatible uses? This about each area and the activities that you should describe to achieve the vision or outcome.

4. What kinds of design standards will be needed to achieve the primary outcome? Design standards may include zoning standards, such as setbacks, or may have performance-based standards to allow flexibility in design. Performance standards are often expressed as a ratio rather than a prescribed outcome. For example, the amount of coverage of a lot can be expressed as "impervious surface ratio" which mans how much of the lot can be covered with buildings and pavement. This provides more flexibility than requiring a specific front, side, and rear yard that dictates exactly where a building must be placed. Consider the standards in the following list:

   - Minimum parcel or building site area

   - Minimum or maximum lot coverage

   - Height

   - Setbacks

   - Building separation (if relevant)

   - Encroachments permitted

   - Densities permitted (if applicable)

- Landscape easements, and public or private open space required

- Building design, massing and height

- Parking ratios/standards, location and orientation

- Entrances, access and on-site circulation

- Orientation of structures (massing, elevation treatment)

- Site coverage

- Grading (as applicable)

- Streetscapes

- Buffers and separations

- Parking areas

- Landscape palette recommendations

- Hardscape elements:

- Paving

- Walls and Fences

- Street furniture

- Focal points, fountains, water features, sculptures, shade structures, courtyards

- Architectural Features

- Overall character (historical context or theme and relationship to area entries, transitions, destinations, edges)

- Positive and negative architectural design features

- Lighting

- Signage

- Architectural elements (roofs, elevations, colors, decorative elements, materials, windows, screening, building service areas)