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OAKWOOD UNVEILS 'SHAPE OF LIFE TO COME' IN SOUTH HALL MASTER PLAN FOR DOWNTOWN, COMMERCIAL AREA CREATES NEW IDENTITY

OAKWOOD, Ga. (Oct. 7, 2008) – The City of Oakwood today unveiled the “shape of life to come” – an ambitious master plan that reinvents an entire community in the south end of Hall County.

The city’s official announcement was made at the Oakwood City Hall during a breakfast meeting of the South Hall Business Coalition. A high-tech slide and video presentation of the city’s master plan was delivered by City Manager Stan Brown, who praised the vision and leadership of the Oakwood City Council.

“This master plan creates something we’ve never had before in Oakwood – a true destination community,” said longtime Mayor Lamar Scroggs. “This is our legacy. We’re designing a place that fosters a green and healthy lifestyle, and we’re protecting a small-town way of life for our children and many generations to come.”

Oakwood’s master plan focuses on two primary areas: the current downtown and an all-new Commercial Center alongside Interstate 985 billed as the next “Satellite Boulevard,” referring to Gwinnett County’s prosperous stretch of highway between Duluth and Buford.

In all, the master plan covers approximately 253 acres, much of which is either vacant or undeveloped lots.

“The large amount of open space makes our job much easier,” said Brown, the city manager. “We’re not faced with an urban renewal project.”

OAKWOOD 2030

Oakwood's long-term master plan is part of the city's much larger Oakwood 2030 program, which encompasses a long list of forward-thinking projects such as its recent in-fill annexation program and strategic sewer line expansion along Highway 53.

Oakwood 2030 borrows its name and focus from Hall County's Vision 2030 program, a citizen-led effort that outlines a wish list for the entire county. In fact, Oakwood's master plan directly supports four of the "15 Big Ideas" from Hall's Vision 2030 – creating a culture of wellness; preserving a "community of towns"; setting aside more green space; and developing high-speed rail.

"We want our goals for Oakwood to be in line with the overall goals of Vision 2030 and to benefit all of Hall County," said Brown, "and we believe we have accomplished that."

SEVEN 'PEOPLE-CONNECTED' DISTRICTS

The Downtown and Commercial Center Master Plan is divided into seven distinct development districts. While each area has its own personality and focus, they are all connected through a series of trails, greenways, tree-lined streets, and even a central traffic roundabout.

Government Town Center and Town Commons: At the top, or northwestern section of the master plan, will be the city's future central business district, which is divided into the Government Town Center and Town Commons. A new multi-story City Hall will anchor the Government Town Center, while the Town Commons area features an open-air amphitheatre, lakes and two large town greens. The City plans to jump-start development of these two districts within the next five years, Brown said.

Main Street Village: The small Oakwood neighborhood between Allen and Main streets will become part of Main Street Village, which preserves the area's historical identity while adding retail shops and a new Public Safety facility converted from the existing City Hall building. Construction of a rail transit station on the existing Norfolk Southern tracks will set the stage for future high-speed rail to Atlanta. A small pedestrian bridge will cross over the tracks, providing easy access to the other districts.

Historic Neighborhood: Oakwood's largest neighborhood area will be redeveloped over time with more Craftsman-style homes, small "pocket" parks, and alley-access garages to remove cars off main streets and create a more pedestrian-friendly area.

Neighborhood Village: At the crossroads of Oakwood Road and the future extension of Thurmon Tanner Parkway, this district embodies the master plan's wellness theme with a proposed medical office center and a large green space corridor. A small grocer-anchored retail shopping center is also planned.

Commercial Center: This district will run alongside I-985, where the Thurmon Tanner Parkway eventually will connect Mundy Mill Road to Spout Springs Road in Flowery Branch. It will provide highly visible office sites for future corporate, technology and R&D facilities. In keeping with the master plan's wellness theme, a community recreational center is also proposed here.

Green Space Corridors: Over three miles of connecting trails, parks and green space are such an integral facet of the Oakwood Master Plan that they are designated as their own district. These trails will also connect to the Central Hall Multi-Use Trail System.

FUNDING

Funding for Oakwood's Master Plan is projected to come primarily from developers. Private investment is estimated to range between \$150 million to \$250 million through the year 2030. For its part, the City plans to invest up to \$50 million over the next two decades in land and infrastructure improvements.

Oakwood already has established a TAD, or Tax Allocation District, to help cover about 40 percent of infrastructure costs. Additional funding is projected to come from federal and state grants, general obligation bonds, sales taxes, and private donations. The City also has received authorization to form a Community Improvement District (CID) to lend additional financial support as needed.

To date, Brown said, the City of Oakwood has allocated close to \$1 million to fund initial land planning and engineering work related to its master plan.

"We have assembled a team of consultants to get the ball rolling with what we aspire to be a statewide model for public-private partnerships in the development of our city's master plan goals," Brown said.

For more information about Oakwood 2030 and the Oakwood Master Plan, log onto www.Oakwood2030.com or the city website at www.CityofOakwood.net.

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