

Final Report ▲ Rogers Road Small Area Plan Task Force

Recommendations for The Rogers Road Small Area Plan

**Based by the work of the
Rogers Road Task Force**

October 30, 2008

**Prepared by the
Rogers Road Urban Design Assistance Team**



Final Report ▲ Rogers Road Small Area Plan Task Force

The Study Area

The Rogers Road community which is the subject of this report is an area of approximately 330 acres.

It is bounded by the Norfolk and Southern Railroad to the east, the existing residential neighborhood of Billabong Road and Homestead Place to the south, Rogers Road to the west and the Orange County Land fill to the north.

Almost half of the study area (164 acres) consists of the Greene Tract. Approximately 60 acres of the Greene Tract is owned by Orange County and 104 acres is jointly owned by Orange County, the Town of Chapel Hill and the Town of Carrboro.

A concept plan prepared by a Greene Tract Workgroup was approved by the joint owners in late 2002. The concept plan identifies that 18.1 acres of the jointly owned portion will be developed for housing and the remaining acres of the jointly owned portion will be preserved and managed as open space.

See maps and aerial photographs of the area in the Appendices to this report.

Final Report ▲ Rogers Road Small Area Plan Task Force

The Rogers Road Small Area Plan Task Force

The Rogers Road Small Area Task Force was formed in early 2007. It was convened to take a detailed look at bringing additional public services to the Rogers Road community, especially the extension of sanitary sewer service, and to examine the potential impact of locating an affordable housing development on the Greene Tract.

The task force consists of fourteen members including residents of Rogers Road, elected officials, and other interested stakeholders.

The task force published an interim report in July of 2007. Shortly afterwards, the team approached the Durham Area Designers to facilitate a public design workshop to explore components to include in a small area plan for the Roger Road area.

This report summarizes the results of the task force design workshop and the subsequent development of a consensus plan by the task force.

Final Report ▲ Rogers Road Small Area Plan Task Force

In its interim report of June 2007, the task force established these guidelines for development of a small area plan:

- Provide alternate road access into and out of the neighborhood**
- Improve transportation access for all modes (vehicle, bike and pedestrian, transit)**
- Manage existing and through traffic**
- Maintain affordable living for current residents**
- Maintain the environmental and cultural heritage of the study area**
- Foster a sense of community amongst the residents**
- Encourage rehabilitation of declining residential properties**
- Encourage a full range of services for existing and future residents**
- Don't leave existing residents behind**
- Provide utilities to meet community needs**
- Encourage well-built, affordable, smaller homes**
- Improve the standards of facilities for the community**

Final Report ▲ Rogers Road Small Area Plan Task Force

An objective of the Rogers Road workshop was to find a community consensus for components of the proposed small area plan.

Components of a small area plan include:

- Land use guidelines**
- Appearance guidelines**
- An expanded multi-modal transportation network**
- Infrastructure improvements**
- Community development strategies**



Final Report ▲ Rogers Road Small Area Plan Task Force

The community design workshop occurred on Saturday, June 7, 2008. A list of attendees is found in the appendices.

The workshop began with a presentation that described the community and introduced tools and concepts for use during the workshop.



Attendees divided into three teams which were designated A, B, and C. Two members of the Urban Design Assistance Team were at each team table to facilitate the work and provide design assistance for visualizing the team members' ideas.

Final Report ▲ Rogers Road Small Area Plan Task Force



Team A



Team C



Team B

Final Report ▲ Rogers Road Small Area Plan Task Force

In the first team sessions, participants shared stories/histories of the Rogers Road community. The teams then brainstormed ideas which were then shared with the other teams.



The heart of the workshop were two design sessions in which each team developed ideas for community development. The ideas included a new road and trail network, suggestions for type of development in specific areas of the community, and plans for preservation of Rogers Road's unique cultural heritage.

Final Report ▲ Rogers Road Small Area Plan Task Force

Stories/Histories

Land along Rogers Road area became the property of freed blacks after the Civil War.

A number of family have figured prominently in the history of the neighborhood—the Hogans, the Nunns, the Rogers, the Purefoys, and the Walkers.

Livelihood in the community came both from without and from within. At various times, there was agriculture, a saw mill, and interneighborhood sales of milk and eggs.

Vegetable gardens, cows, and chickens provided food for residents, and the surpluses were shared.

Two significant houses the Lloyd–Rogers house dating from c. 1850 and the log house built in the 1930s remain in the study area.

Final Report ▲ Rogers Road Small Area Plan Task Force

After each of the design sessions, each team shared its ideas with the group. This process allowed good ideas to become the property of each team as it moulded its conceptual plan of future development in the Rogers Road community.



Final Report ▲ Rogers Road Small Area Plan Task Force

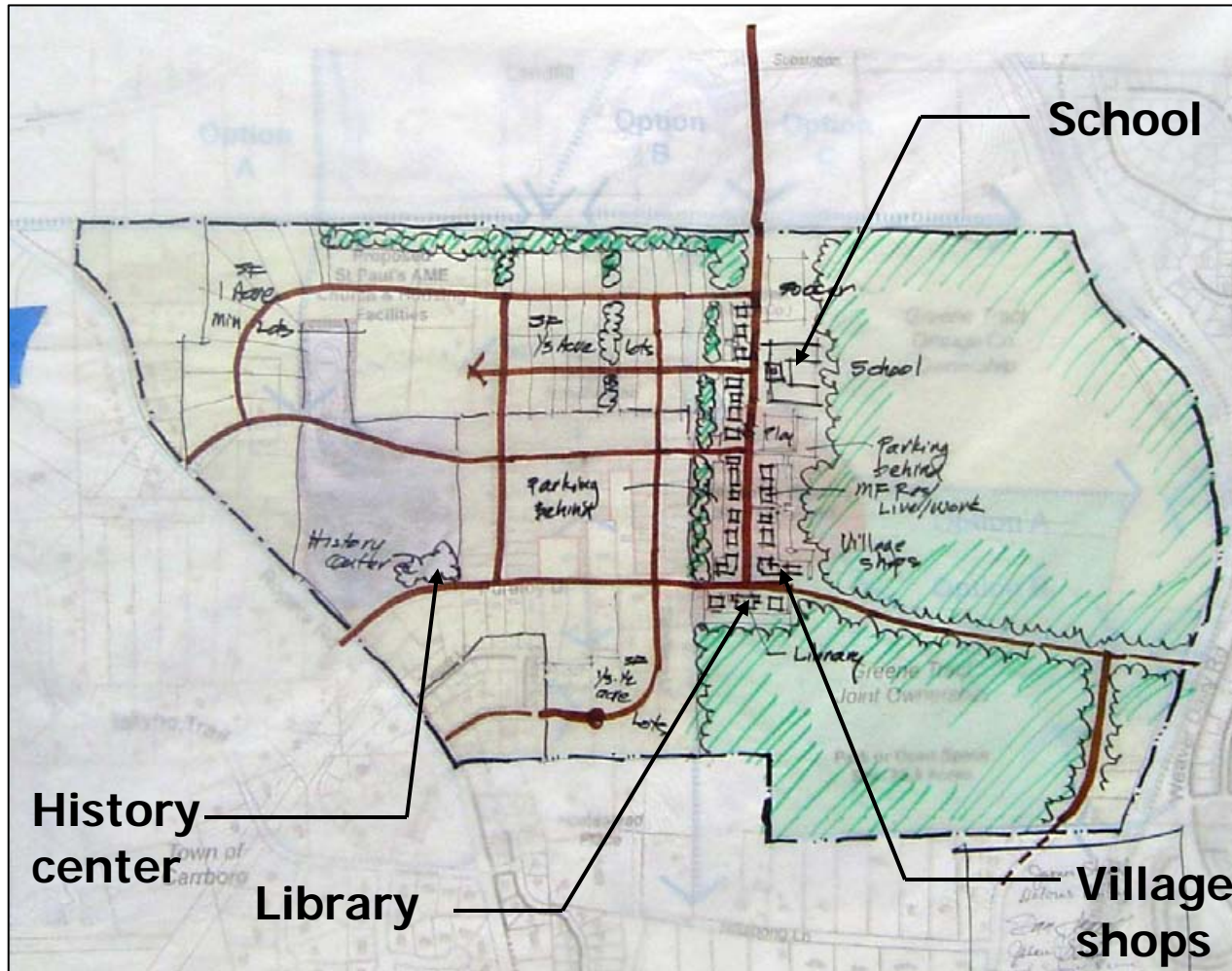


The plans of each team are shown on subsequent pages, followed by a summary of the main points of each plan.

At the end of the design workshop, the team discussed the next steps in refining and implementing the Rogers Road Small Area Plan.



Final Report ▲ Rogers Road Small Area Plan Task Force



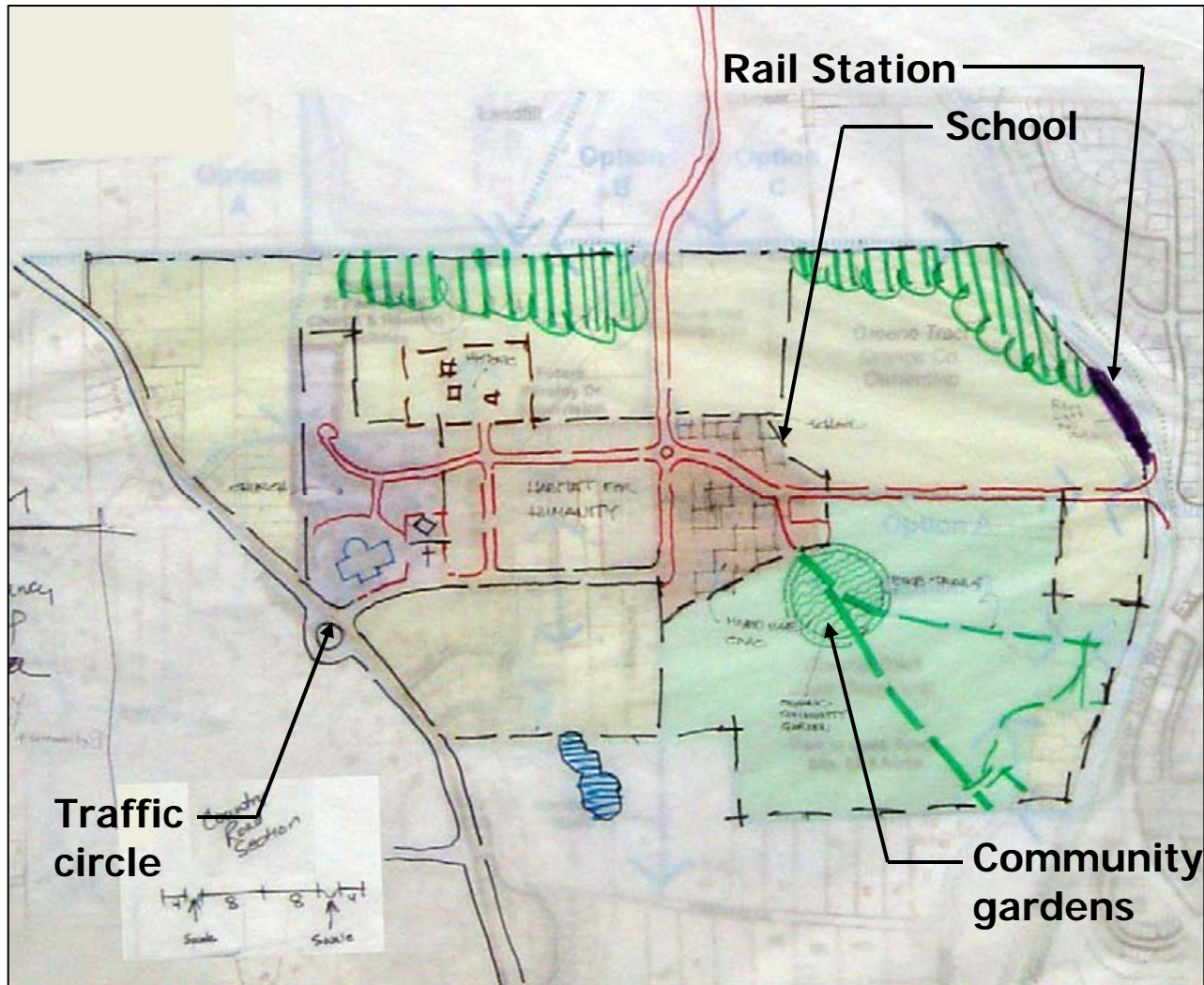
Team A Plan

Final Report ▲ Rogers Road Small Area Plan Task Force

- Create five new connections to neighboring roads
- Create a neighborhood commercial center
- A variety of housing types with density varying from 1 unit per acre at edge to town house density at commercial center
- Build-to lines to create a front-porch community
- Use development potential to leverage funding for desired infrastructure
- Create a community center using old house and incorporate public art to honor cultural heritage
- Buffer to north



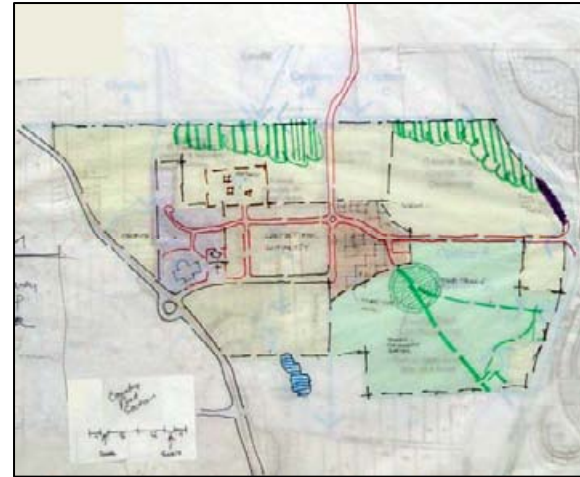
Final Report ▲ Rogers Road Small Area Plan Task Force



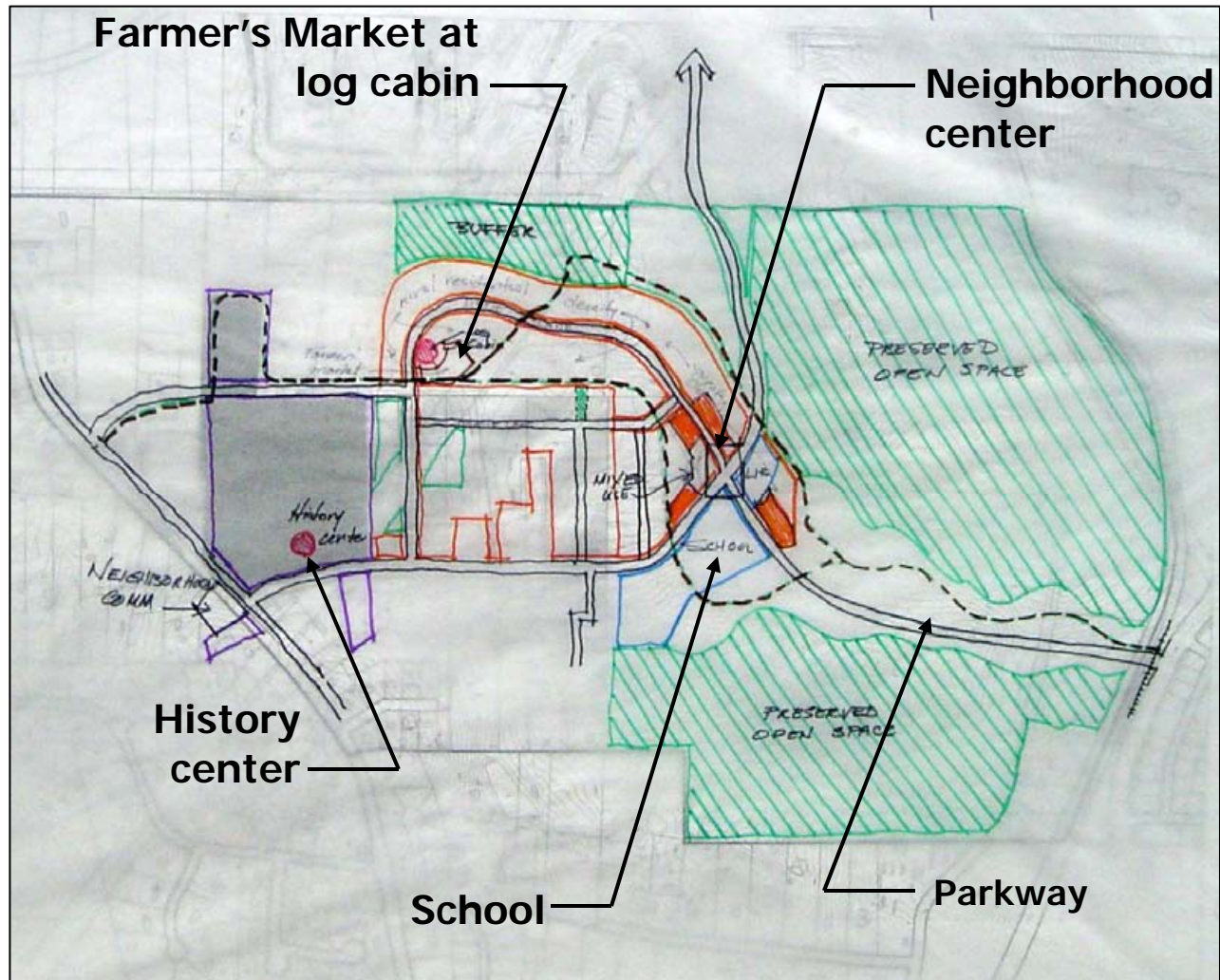
Team B Plan

Final Report ▲ Rogers Road Small Area Plan Task Force

- Create two connections to neighboring roads
- Create traffic circle at Rogers and Purefoy Roads
- Incorporate development that is sensitive to historic fabric
- Preserve the 1700's house and the log cabin
- Bike trails into the Greene tract
- Ask new church to incorporate the existing cemetery into their proposed cemetery



Final Report ▲ Rogers Road Small Area Plan Task Force



Team C Plan

Final Report ▲ Rogers Road Small Area Plan Task Force

- Create two new connections to neighboring roads
- Create a neighborhood center around a square with library, school, community center, and shops
- Create neighborhood commercial at intersection of Purefoy Drive and Rogers Roads
- Create history center at the 1700's house
- Preserve log cabin and create a small park that can incorporate a farmers' market
- Create a parkway with walking and biking trails through Greene tract



Final Report ▲ Rogers Road Small Area Plan Task Force

The Roger Road Urban Design Assistance Team meet after the workshop to analyze the three plans for ideas which they held in common as well as for area of disagreement or unique ideas.

That analysis is presented on the following pages. From the analysis, the team prepared a master plan for land use and for open space.

Analysis of Design Schemes

Areas of Commonality

- **Connection north to Umstead Road**
- **Connection across the railroad track on Weaver Dairy Extension using Purefoy Drive**
- **Two plans and possibly the third show an east-west road to the north of Purefoy, connecting to Rogers Road**
- **Cross-roads at the center of the area to become a community center with mixed use development; might include a community center/library**
- **School near the center of the area**
- **Buffer on the north side of study area to shield the area from the landfill site**

Areas of Commonality (cont.)

- **The historic house is retained in all plans and made part of the proposed Church complex; Church suggested making a history center; other uses included making it part of the Senior Housing in the Church program, or part of a community center.**
- **Greater density of development to lessen the individual cost of sewer; at the same time, areas near Rogers Road and along the north side of area seen as less dense to retain the current feel of the area**
- **Farmers' market and community gardens**
- **The community needs to write a cultural history and create a plan to preserve its cultural heritage**

Final Report ▲ Rogers Road Small Area Plan Task Force

Differences between the schemes and unique ideas

- **Team A proposed to extend Sandberg Lane and connect to Rusch Road to provide an additional point of access to the community**
- **Team A also proposed to extend Purefoy Drive across the Greene Tract to Weaver Dairy Road and to extend Merin Road north to connect with this new section of Purefoy Drive**
- **The Harris tract is gridded in Team A's plan while Team C showed a rural pattern with less density to west becoming more dense toward the cross-roads**
- **Team A wanted a retail site or two at the crossroads; hence, the school was placed on the Neville tract. But the school could be located at the cross-roads without compromising the concept**

Final Report ▲ Rogers Road Small Area Plan Task Force

Differences between the schemes and unique ideas (cont.)

- **Team B and C located proposed school on a portion of the 18 acres; Team C suggested**
- **Team C proposed a branch library that would support community center activities**
- **Team A said that new residential construction should be front-porch style, close to street.**
- **Team C saw potential for neighborhood commercial use located at Rogers Road and Purefoy Drive**
- **Rail station on Team B's plan anticipates commuter rail**

Validation of the Small Area Plan Proposal

From the analysis of the different schemes developed at the design workshop, the Rogers Road Urban Design Assistance Team proposed a land use plan for both land use and open space as well as written recommendations. This work was presented to the task force and workshop attendees at a meeting on July 31, 2008, at which time the findings and the proposed land use plan were presented for discussion and approval.

As a result of those discussions, the final plan and recommendations are presented on the following pages.

Final Report ▲ Rogers Road Small Area Plan Task Force

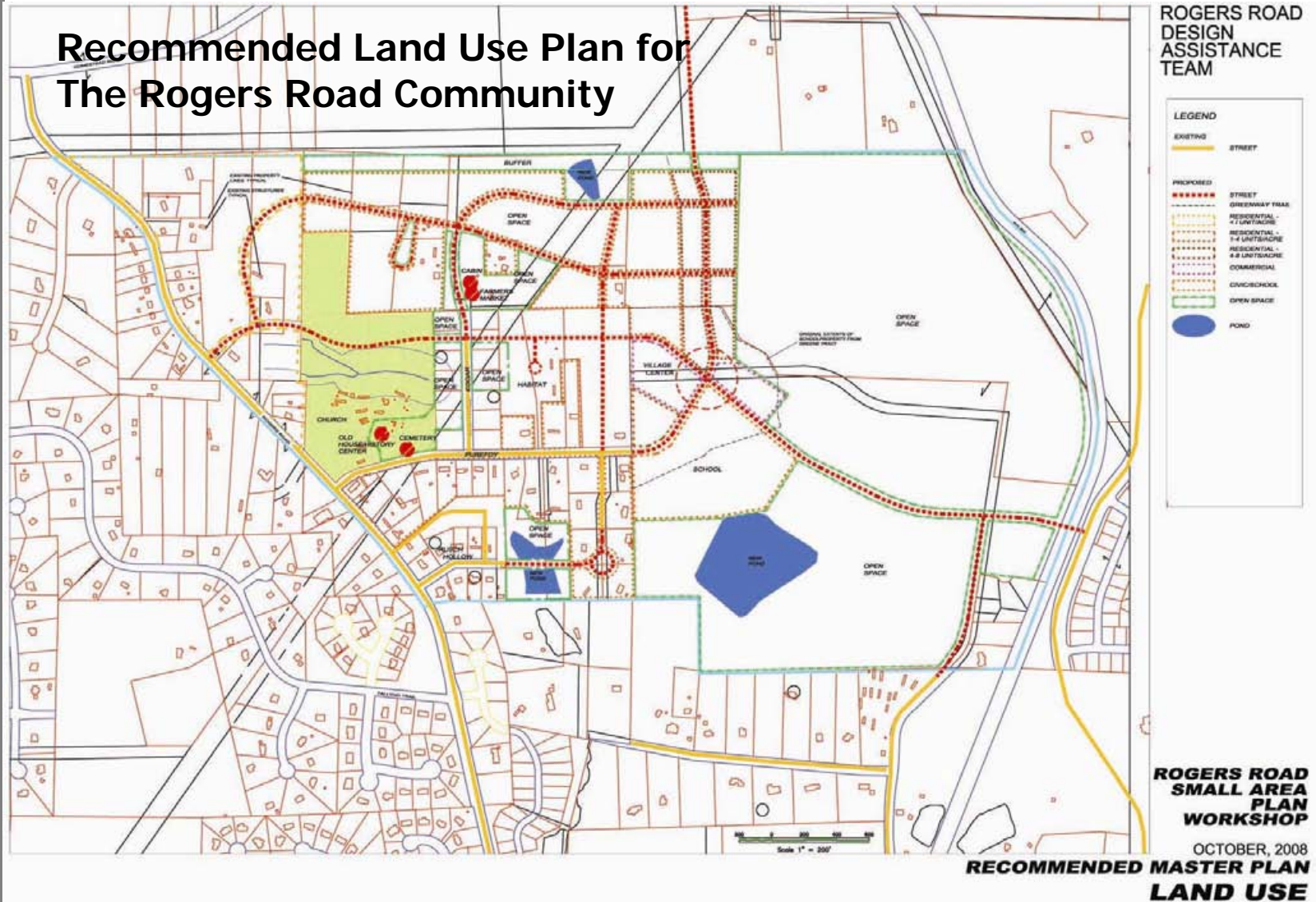
Recommendations for Small Area Plan

A detailed summary task findings is located in the Appendix. In general, the findings fell in five categories:

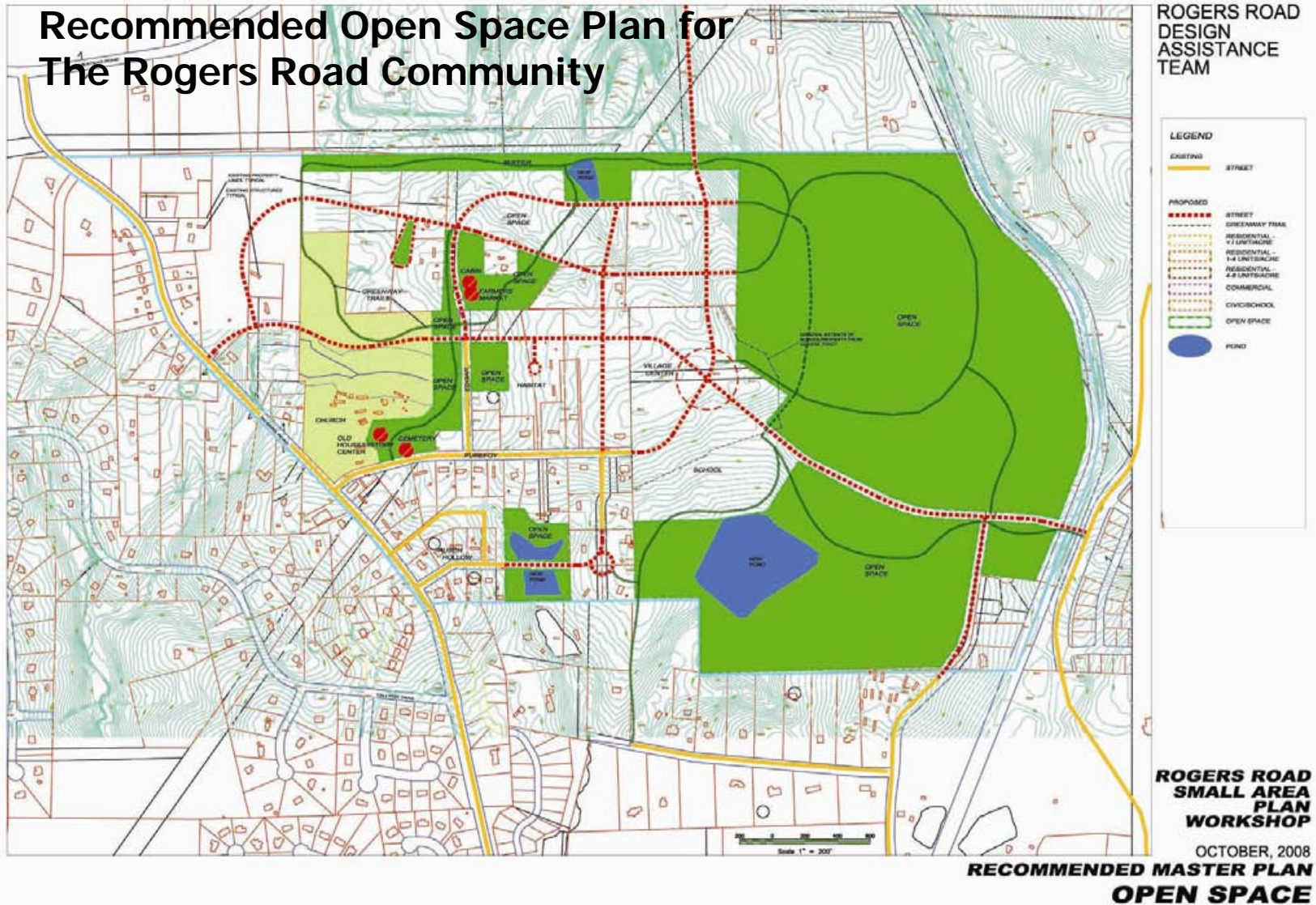
- Transportation**
- Cultural Heritage**
- Infrastructure Improvements**
- Green Space**
- Strategies for Community Preservation as well as Development**

The task force's recommendations and master plan spring from these findings and are presented on following pages.

Recommended Land Use Plan for The Rogers Road Community



Recommended Open Space Plan for The Rogers Road Community



Task Force Consensus Recommendations

- **The masterplan should become the basis for a future land use plan amendment for the Rogers Road area.**
- **The community offered support for a neighborhood core that includes a school, neighborhood commercial, and varied housing types from individual residence to town house. This should be supported in the Small Area Plan.**
- **The community also expressed a desire to maintain current densities on the peripheries of the area Rogers Road Community**

Consensus Recommendations

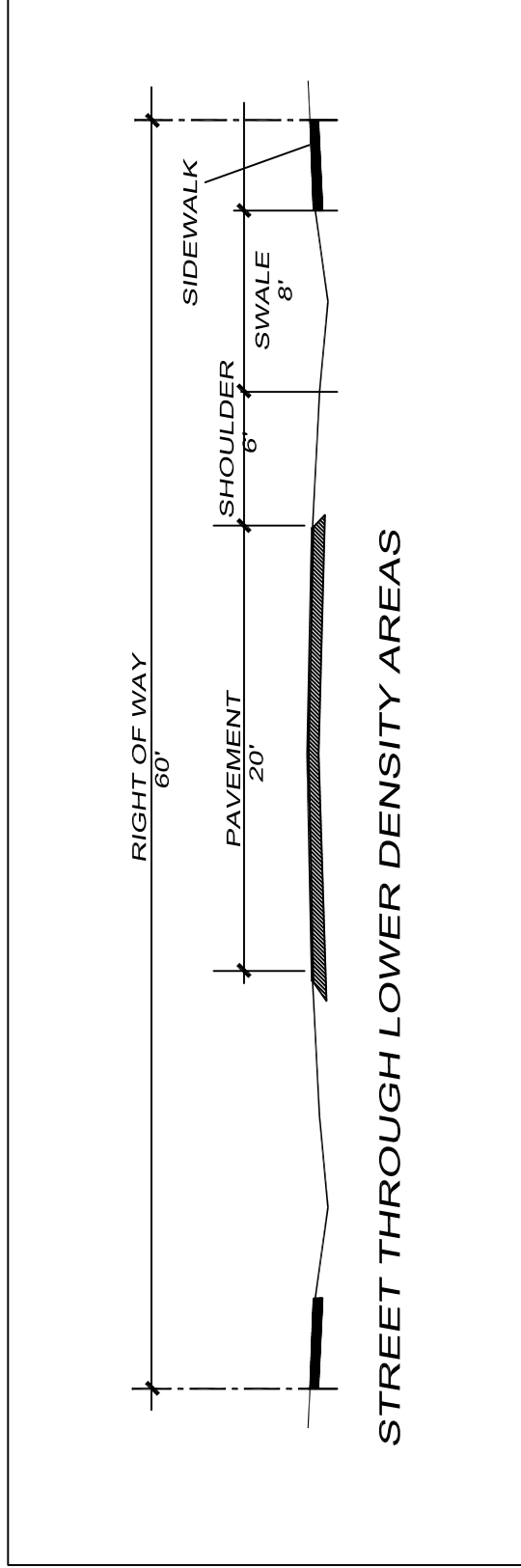
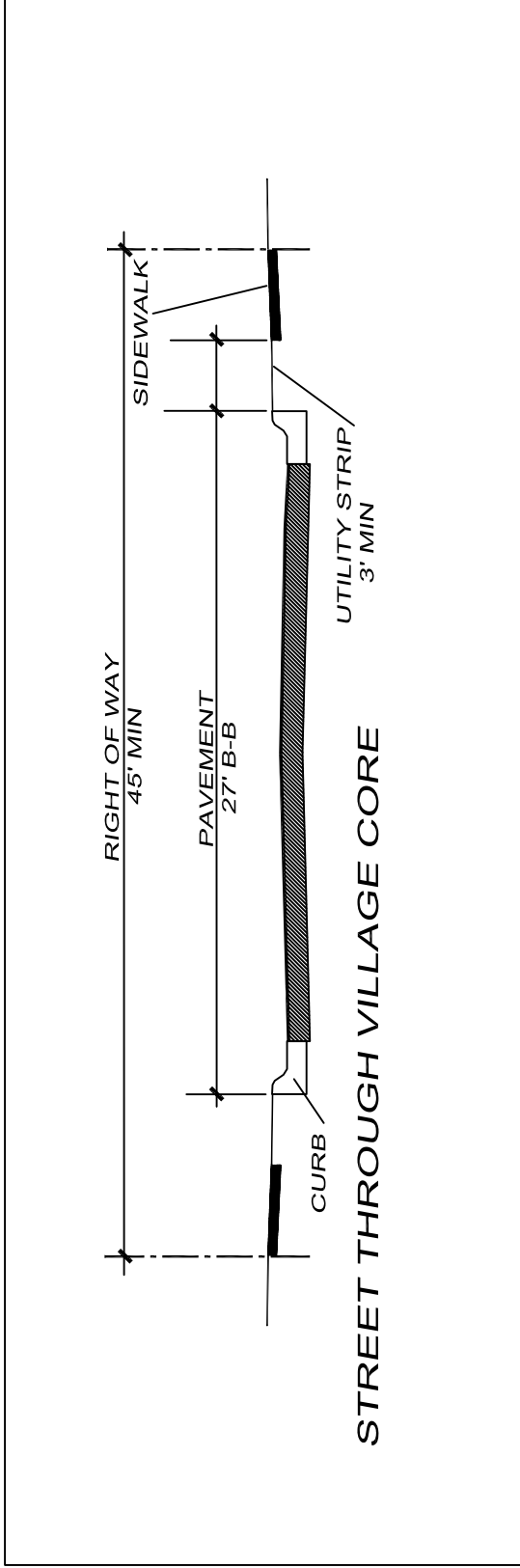
Design

- The community did not actively speak about design, perhaps because the various buildings in the area are rather diverse; however, it was clear that there were form issues about which they did have opinions.
- The Small Area Plan for Rogers Road should include density requirements that reflect the community's vision.
- It should also address height limitations. The community does not want excessive height. A 45' maximum height would be in keeping with the character of the area.
- The community also expressed a desire for a so-called front porch community, where houses are built to a line close to sidewalks.
- There were not strong sentiments for design guidelines; more frequently, we heard a desire for small scale, affordable development.

Consensus Recommendations

Design (cont.)

- The expressed desire for less density at the periphery suggest that the Small Area Plan should both address minimum lot size as well as lot coverage requirements.
- Street design standards were important to the community. The community wanted to maintain the rural feel of the community at its edges. Streets and roads in this area would not have curb and gutter; in areas where there is greater density, the streets would have a more urban character with curb and gutter. Both street profiles would include sidewalks and street tree planting strips.
- Suggested street profiles for these streets are shown on the following page. The profiles also show the location of houses relative to the street, a location which illustrates the front-porch community concept.



Consensus Recommendations

Cultural Heritage Plan

It can never be too often to remark on the fact that the Rogers Road community is unique and significant. The Rogers Road area was one of first local areas with significant land and home ownership by African-Americans in the early post-Civil War period and into the 20th Century. It is emblematic of a unique historical story of African-Americans in Chapel Hill.

- As such, it should be engaged in a process of creating a cultural heritage preservation plan.**
- The Small Area Plan should include a formal project to write the history of the region. The school system would be a good partner as the history can become a part of a curriculum on the history of the Town.**
- The most significant physical artifacts which carry this history are the 1700's house, adjacent graveyard, and the log cabin.**

Consensus Recommendations

Cultural Heritage Plan



Consensus Recommendations

Cultural Heritage Plan

- There is a proposed development plan for St. Paul's AME Church. The indication from the church has been that it may not be able to renovate and preserve the 1700's house. If such is the case, it is very important to find other means to preserve the house. Although it is historically preferable to have it remain where it was built, it would be acceptable to move it to avoid its demolition. It could become part of a community center.
- The graveyard poses a similar problem, and while State law allows remains to be moved, the preference is that the cemetery remain where it is and be protected.

Consensus Recommendations

Open Space Plan

To the east of the Rogers Road community, an area has been identified by the town as preserved open space, the so-called Greene tract; there were discussions about the character of this space.

- Should the Greene tract remain a passive natural area, or should there be plans for more active recreation?
- The team feels that the Greene tract can remain largely passive open space, much of it preserved as typical landscape of the Piedmont.
- However, it seems appropriate to create trails and a parkway across the tract.

Consensus Recommendations

Open Space Plan (cont.)

- **There was also a discussion of how fixed the boundaries of the open space should be. There was some sentiment to borrow some of the land for the proposed school and other community uses in order not to take away land area from the 18 acres designated for affordable housing.**
- **Part of the Greene Tract near the school should be developed for more active recreation.**
- **The area around the log cabin should be set aside for community gardens and for a small farmers' market.**

Consensus Recommendations

Transportation

- The task force recommends that the Town secure dedication of rights-of-way that will allow the development of a street grid with multiple access points to the community.
- Streets should be designed to a “country road” standard at the peripheries of the community.
- A bike and pedestrian trail system should be developed; the trails should be separated from the road system and all trails should lead eventually to the proposed school location.
- The bike and pedestrian trails should be integrated into the plan for the broader greenway systems.
- As a neighborhood center develops around the school and other community facilities, the Chapel Hill Transit System should bring buses into the center.

Consensus Recommendations

Transportation (cont.)

- With the introduction of roads that pass through the community, traffic calming methods should be used in the design of the streets and crosswalks.
- We also recommend consideration of a roundabout at the intersection of Rogers Road and Purefoy Drive. In addition to improving safety at the intersection, it would serve as a traffic calming device.
- The task forces recommends that the Town negotiate with N.C. Railroads to secure permission to have an at-grade crossing where Purefoy Drive is proposed to be extended to Weaver Dairy Road.

Recommendations

Infrastructure

- **From the very start of the task force’s work, one of the most important issues was to bring OWASA sewer and water to the properties in the Rogers Road community.**
- **The major impediments to implementation are the initial sewer assessment and the fear that sewer and water service will cause an increase in property values and taxes.**
- **We do recommend that extension of sewer and water to all properties in this community. The proposal to bring a school and other community facilities and greater residential concentrations at the center of the community will not be possible without the extension.**
- **In the following section, we make recommendations which are aimed at reducing the negative economic effects that might result from extending sewer and water to Rogers Road.**

Consensus Recommendations

Community Preservation and Redevelopment

- We recommend that the Small Area Plan incorporate mechanisms which will educate the community on development in order to empower it to develop its assets.
- Town and county should explore options similar to a homestead property valuation system which keeps taxes low on a property that is not being redeveloped even if neighboring properties are increasing in value because of redevelopment.
- Such plan may incorporate a requirement for payment of a set number of years of back taxes if the property is redeveloped to capitalize on the value created by adjacent development.
- The Town of Chapel Hill should initiate a discussion about annexation as part of the future dialogue on providing services to the Rogers Road community.

Consensus Recommendations

Our final recommendation is that the Town and the Rogers Road community maintain the type of dialogue which was made possible both by the efforts of the task force and by the work the community did together during the design workshop. This grassroots democracy in action can only strengthen Chapel Hill and its varied communities.