

Spring Hill Community Plan

Mobile, AL

PROJECT DETAILS

Project Area: 3 key intersections in Spring Hill
Client: The Village of Spring Hill, Inc.
Year Adopted: 2008
Website: thevillageofspringhill.com

For more information, visit doverkohl.com.



Existing

Existing conditions, southwest quadrant of Old Shell Road and McGregor Avenue



Proposed

Opportunities for public and private improvements unify the village center with street-oriented buildings and streetscape improvements.



A computer visualization shows what the intersection of Old Shell Road and McGregor Avenue will look like with the addition of a new public building, on-street parking, street trees and buildings that front the street.



Old Shell Road and McGregor Avenue

The Project

Located at the top of the highest hill overlooking Downtown Mobile, Spring Hill is treasured for its natural beauty, elegant residences, and its abundance of civic amenities. The main retail corridors and public infrastructure, however, are characterized by empty storefronts, buildings set back from the street, large asphalt parking lots, and discontinuous sidewalks. A volunteer non-profit organization called The Village of Spring Hill, Inc. was established to improve the pedestrian, aesthetic and commercial amenities of the area. Dover, Kohl & Partners, along with consultants Hall Planning & Engineering, Urban Advisors, and UrbanAdvantage, were hired to create a plan for the redevelopment of the main commercial areas.

The Process

During a seven-day charrette, 600 residents and stakeholders participated in the visioning process for three key intersections in Spring Hill – Old Shell Road and McGregor Avenue, Old Shell Road and Bit & Spur Road (including Lavretta Park), and Museum Drive and McGregor Avenue. The resulting Blueprint for Spring Hill demonstrates the power a community can have when it decides to take control of its future and work together.

Blueprint for Action

The Blueprint for Spring Hill is the culmination of the planning principles, master plan and visualizations, market analysis and the implementation strategies created through the charrette process. The Plan calls for the transformation of the existing strip commercial intersections into vibrant, mixed-use centers with comfortable sidewalks, street trees, on-street parking, and mixed-use, multi-story, street-oriented buildings. The Plan provides a unified vision and outlines necessary public improvements, while encouraging the coordinated redevelopment of private properties over time. A Traditional Center District Overlay Zoning Ordinance, a form-based code, was drafted by Dover-Kohl to reform the existing City of Mobile code to allow street-oriented development in Spring Hill as envisioned by the *Blueprint*.

Status

The *Blueprint for Spring Hill* and the Traditional Center District Overlay Zoning Ordinance were unanimously approved by the City of Mobile Planning Commission in August 2008. Since the approval, the first properties under the new Code are being reviewed by the city, a new public plaza at the intersection of Old Shell Road and McGregor Avenue is completed, and several properties are improving the streetscapes in front of their businesses in accordance with the recommended improvements.

Creating Vibrant Neighborhood Centers

Museum Drive and McGregor Avenue



The intersection of Museum Drive and McGregor Avenue serves as a gateway to Spring Hill and Joseph Langan Park, but the intersection is considered dangerous by residents. In order to enhance the safety of the intersection while continuing to handle traffic flow, two options for the redesign of this intersection were explored: a "T" intersection and a modern roundabout.

Additional redevelopment ideas for the area include: street improvements, new neighborhoods, a new hotel, and the repositioning of the fire station to create a formal civic presence.



A modern roundabout can manage traffic speeds and circulation.

Bit & Spur Road and Old Shell Road



Bit & Spur Road and Old Shell Road can be redeveloped with street-oriented buildings that front the street and define a new public green at the intersection. On-street parking supports retail and shields pedestrians from passing cars. A generous twelve-foot sidewalk can accommodate outdoor dining or sidewalk sales, and street trees will provide shade for pedestrians. As the neighborhood center transitions into the surrounding residential areas, smaller, detached buildings are recommended.

Down the street from the Bit & Spur intersection, Lavretta Park can be better defined as a community destination and a neighborhood entrance by fronting the park with mixed-use buildings and traditional townhomes.



Left: Mixed-use buildings and townhomes are added along the crescent of Lavretta Park to establish a neighborhood entrance.