

Streetscape Design Theme and Character

One of the advantages to Scenario 3 is that it is adaptable to the various conditions that exist along the Corridor and allows for design interpretations that address the existing context. With a preferred street cross section identified, the Planning and Design Team was able to consider the overall aesthetics, theme and character of the Corridor. Creating the aesthetic direction early in the process allows the technical design to follow and support the overall theme. The design theme was influenced by the community's desire for an identifiable character for the corridor that elevated its sense of place. But like the street cross section, the design theme also needs to be context-sensitive and adaptable to the varied and evolving conditions along the corridor, all while maximizing multi-modality. The theme and concept that resulted is described as Urban Boulevard and Parkway Boulevard.

The Community values the existing landscape character and quality on portions of the Corridor. The areas between Windel Road and Northbrook Drive and north of Loft Lane where schools, churches and residential uses exist, the landscape is older, with a variety of mature canopy and understory trees, and large expanses of well-maintained lawn, ground covers and shrubs that knit the various uses together. The Community believes that this landscape image, at least in this portion of the project, should be retained. For diagrammatic purposes, the streetscape concept calls this the Parkway Boulevard Area.

The North Hills Area, however, is undergoing transition and is evolving towards a more urbanized landscape with lines of street trees, screening shrub materials and more paved surfaces extending to the street. The Millbrook area is a combination of the two, given that its developments are relatively older and organized less densely than what occurs at North Hills. As the Millbrook area evolves, it is expected that it will transition to a denser and urbanized pattern similar to North Hills and that more of the property will be occupied by buildings, streets, and parking lots. The property owners that provided input into the process believe that the landscape should continue to evolve into a more upscale and urbanized pattern in these two portions of the project. This was also supported by the Community. For diagrammatic purposes, the streetscape concept calls this the Urbanized Area.

Another aspect of the existing condition that has an impact on creating a streetscape concept for the Corridor includes the reality that many properties are not going to change or be redeveloped in the near term and there are many types of uses that all have their own architectural style, massing, site organization and relationship to the street. It is generally accepted that when properties do redevelop, that this variation will generally remain along the Corridor as well, so accepting this reality and planning for it in the design concept makes sense.

The existing overhead power lines create a challenge for the streetscape design since their easements occupy space within the Corridor, and regulations do not allow the planting of large trees under them. These constraints affect tree planting choices and the ability to place trees in an organized manner. Also affecting the ease of organizing streetscape elements is the various driveways that connect to Six Forks Road. These driveways and power lines interrupt the potential for long lines of regularly spaced canopy trees, which normally would be the preferred streetscape pattern.

Finally, Six Forks Road has many users. Residents that live in its adjacent neighborhoods consider this as their main street – it is the road that connects all the neighborhoods together. Commuters roll through Six Forks Road on their way to work downtown or along the Corridor to utilize various businesses. Shoppers from around the City travel to its successful shopping centers primarily anchored by North Hills. Every Sunday, folks come to church and during the week parents drop off their kids at school. People want to walk and bike along the Corridor in a pleasant and safe atmosphere. The design, therefore, needs to accommodate all of these various users, while also establishing a unique identity for this portion of Six Forks Road.

