Downtown Gainesville, GA

A FRESH Approach

An Instructive Guide to Downtown Infill
Acknowledgements

The FRESH method of encouraging compatibility between new and old structures was originally developed by Pratt Cassity, Director, Public Service and Outreach at UGA’s College of Environment + Design and is adapted as a training tool for the National Alliance of Preservation Commission and the Georgia Alliance of Preservation Commission. This compilation of research, done by Elizabeth Lawandales, was inspired by his work. It has been applied to fit the needs of Downtown Gainesville.

**Georgia Municipal Association**
Created in 1933, GMA is a voluntary, non-profit organization that provides leadership, tools and services to assist local governments become more innovative, effective and responsive.

**Georgia Cities Foundation**
Established in 1999, GCF is a non-profit organization that assists cities in their efforts to revitalize and enhance downtown areas by serving as a partner and facilitator in funding capital projects through a revolving loan fund.

**Carl Vinson Institute of Government**
Danny Bivins, Renaissance Fellows Supervisor
The Institute works with public officials throughout Georgia and around the world to improve governance and people’s lives. The Institute has helped government leaders navigate change and forge strong directions for a better Georgia.

**The College of Environment + Design**
Elizabeth Lawandales, Renaissance Fellow
The college hosts various degree programs, including Landscape Architecture, Historic Preservation, and Environmental Planning and Design as well as a specialized Certificate Program in Environmental Ethics.

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Figure 1: Aerial view, map of the existing Downtown Gainesville. Green designates the downtown district while orange shows the areas adjacent to downtown.
New Infill Considerations

Citizens feel that the heart of Downtown Gainesville is The Square, but when designing for the whole urban environment, it is important to give attention to the outlying area of the downtown district as well.

The roads radiating out from The Square are Main Street, Washington Street, Bradford Street and Spring Street, and most of the downtown commercial district is connected to these roads. The edges of Downtown Gainesville are defined by the intersections of four roads: Jesse Jewell Parkway, E.E. Butler Parkway, Academy Street and West Academy Street.

The outlying properties are the blocks that are found on either side of the above-mentioned perimeter roads. In order to have a cohesive and unified downtown both sides of the road should be addressed with buildings, green space and activity. Downtown Gainesville offers much opportunity for infill in these areas. As seen in Figure 1, the areas shaded orange are on the fringe of downtown and are appropriate places for new infill. By building in these areas the perimeter roads will feel less like a means for bypassing the city and drivers will get the sense that they are passing through part of the downtown, expanding the heart of Gainesville. Currently, the perimeter roads are acting as an asphalt moat around the central downtown district, channeling people around instead of through the downtown. Effective new infill could help decrease this moat effect and make for a more viable and dynamic downtown district.

As seen in Figure 1, the percent of undeveloped land is greater than the percent of developed land and new infill projects will inevitably spring up in these areas. It is important that the City of Gainesville has an expectation for the style of new infill buildings for they will drastically change the downtown's look feel and function.
Introduction to The FRESH Method

Infill is an encouraged building and development technique for vacant lots in downtown. Infill development should reflect current trends and contemporary ornamentation and should avoid any attempt to reproduce a previous style. However, new development should be compatible with the adjacent buildings.

The purpose of The FRESH Method is to help determine the compatibility of new infill with existing structures. New buildings can drastically alter the cohesion of a downtown, for better or worse. This document is intended for the City of Gainesville to use as an instructive tool. FRESH is an acronym that addresses five key components of infill design:

- Footprint
- Roof Shape
- Envelope
- Skin
- Holes
FRESH PRINCIPLES CAN...
1. Allow for innovative design to fit in with the historic and visual character of the district.
2. Improve the visual quality of growth and development.
3. Protect a property owner’s investment by preventing undesirable changes nearby.
4. Provide an objective basis for design review along with other more specific standards and guidelines.
5. Serve as an educational tool for property owners, contractors, and designers.

FRESH PRINCIPLES CAN’T...
1. Limit change or growth. They can only address the visual aspects of growth.
2. Control how space is used within a building. These principles only address the publicly visible portion of a building.
3. Restrict. They can only instruct and educate.
FOOTPRINT:
The outline of a building on a lot looking down on it from above

The footprint and foundation of new structures should be similar to the ones surrounding the new structure. Giant footprints can easily dwarf nearby buildings (Figure 2). New buildings should respect the established setback line. A footprint that is inappropriately large when others around it are small is incompatible.

*Figure 2: Images below display how a giant footprint is out of scale and dwarfs nearby buildings.*
Figure 3:

A. Plan view of a new building aligned with existing buildings.
B. A portion of a new building is recessed with the building line of the block maintained by a vertical structure such as a row of columns that go to the upper floor or a partitioned outdoor café space.
C. A new building on the same lot as a historic building, set back to accentuate the historic building. Make sure that the setback line is still maintained by a vertical element or by a pavement differentiation.
D. New building protrudes out from existing setback line. *Not an appropriate option

Footprint of new building correctly maintains existing setback line.
This building has faux front facade with the main building set further back to create a courtyard dining space. This design allows for the block’s edge to be maintained.
Infill plaza is set back to keep emphasis on the historic buildings, but setback line is maintained with gateway.
Footprint of new building is incorrect and detracts from the existing buildings on the block.
ROOF SHAPE:
The profile of or silhouette made by a roof or series of roofs

The new roof shape should be consistent with the existing roof pitch, complexity and orientation of surrounding buildings. The addition of a parapet wall (Figure 4) can screen roofline and mechanical equipment. Downtown commercial areas are mostly made up of flat-roofed buildings (Figure 5), thus, in many cases flat roofed infill is the best solution. Cool roofs, green roofs, and rooftop terraces as noted in Figure 6 offer variety and often times a more efficient enhancement to a typical flat roof.

Figure 4:
New Infill off Caroline St. NE, Atlanta, GA

Roofline consistent in complexity in Rome, GA
NOTEWORTHY:
Cool Roofs are more energy efficient because they deliver high solar reflectance. They are usually made with a white or light-colored material. In the case of Green Roofs, roofs are covered with a waterproof membrane and vegetation.

As long as the roof can bear the load of furniture, foot traffic and vegetation flat top roofs have the option of becoming a rooftop terrace.

Figure 5: Aerial view of Gainesville displays flat-roofed buildings.
New infill buildings can visually fit in by having a similar envelope to nearby buildings. If the envelope is too large, the infill building becomes the “monster truck” of the block and stands out. Conversely, avoid placing a low one-story building in a block that is made up of buildings with multiple stories. New buildings and additions should be of similar width to other buildings on the block. Consider a series of bays, if the infill area is significantly wide (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Series of bays are appropriate for this space compared to one large building.
NOTEWORTHY:
Pay close attention to the envelope of new infill on corner lots. The corner provides a great opportunity to create a landmark structure for the downtown. The intersection alongside the corner lot is prone to experience significantly more traffic. Figure 7 shows a new infill building that successfully addresses the corner.
SKIN:
Materials used on a building

New structures should be clad in a visually and physically similar material, or skin. Inappropriate skin can make a big difference even when other FRESH elements are similar. New infill façade construction should be of similar materials and colors.

Brick is the primary building material in Downtown Gainesville and its use is recommended for future infill. It is important that new designs incorporate similar colors that do not clash with the existing brick shades and tones.

Figure 9:

New Infill off Dresden Drive, Brookhaven, GA, shows the use of brick as a modern skin.

New Infill in Glenwood Park, Atlanta, GA, shows the use of multiple skins that speak to the modern era while incorporating traditional design elements.
Figure 10: Use building materials that have a texture, pattern and scale similar to those in the district.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>APPROPRIATE MATERIAL</th>
<th>INAPPROPRIATE MATERIAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Brick and stone masonry</td>
<td>• Coarsely finished rustic ornamentation, such as wood shake, shingles, barn board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Wood details such as windows and doors</td>
<td>• Indoor-outdoor carpeting or fake grass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Clear glass</td>
<td>• Stucco surfaces that are highly textured such as those sometimes associated with Mediterranean styles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Brick, clay and concrete pavers</td>
<td>• Imitation wood siding or stone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Embossed metal or corrugated metal</td>
<td>• Reflective glass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Concrete and stone as lintels and wood or concrete columns</td>
<td>• Tinted glass</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTEWORTHY:**
The future will bring better technology and more sustainable materials which should be considered and used where possible.
HOLES:  
Doors, windows, and other openings

Holes should be similar to the pattern of openings in surrounding structures. A very important factor is the size and proportion of the holes. Holes should maintain the rhythm established by the surrounding buildings (Figure 11). Windows do not have to be an exact match (Figure 12).

Figure 11: Windows and storefronts on a block should have a consistent pattern.
Figure 12: The wall to window or “mass-void” ratio on the new infill is similar to the surrounding buildings, but the openings do not have to match exactly.

Figure 13: This is an acceptable example because it clearly distinguishes between upper and lower floors, while maintaining existing rhythm.
Glossary

form- The shape and structure of something as distinguished from its substance or material.

mass- The physical volume or bulk of a solid body. A building’s walls are representative of its mass.

orientation- The relative physical position or direction of something. New development should be oriented to align with existing structures.

parapet wall- A barrier which is an extension of the wall at the edge of a roof, terrace, balcony, or other structure.

proportion- The comparative, proper, or harmonious relation of one part to another or to the whole with respect to magnitude, quantity, or degree. The relationship between mass and void space should be proportional and consistent with existing structures.

rhythm- Movement characterized by a patterned repetition or alternation of formal elements or motifs in the same or a modified form. New development should try to achieve a regular repetition of elements to create a sense of visual pattern and movement within each block.

scale- A proportion determining the relationship of a representation to that which it represents. Also, a certain proportionate size, extent or degree, usually judged in relation to some standard or point of reference. New buildings should be of a similar scale to those existing on the block.

texture- The feel, appearance, or consistency of a surface or a substance. The surface of a building should be consistent with the look and feel of other structures.

void- An empty space contained within or bounded by mass. A building’s windows are representative of its void space.
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