



**Bureau of Public Development
City of Savannah
March 26, 2009**

Savannah Gardens Neighborhood Redevelopment Plan

The City of Savannah is given its urban redevelopment powers through O.C.C.G. Title 36, Chapter 61 of the Code of Georgia, as amended, known as the Urban Redevelopment Law. The Urban Redevelopment Law provides local governmental units with broad authority to plan and implement improvements to areas within their jurisdiction “which constitute a serious and growing menace, injurious to the public health, safety, morals, welfare of the residents...”

The Savannah Gardens Neighborhood Redevelopment Plan boundaries can be seen on Map 1. The Savannah Gardens neighborhood is generally bounded on the north by Elgin Street and Capital Street; on the west by Pennsylvania Avenue, Vinson Avenue and Greenville Street; on the South by Gwinnett Street; and on the east by Long Avenue. The primary focus of the Plan is the redevelopment of the Strathmore Estates Apartments and two adjoining parking lots between Strathmore Estates Apartments and Gwinnett Street.

The proposed Savannah Gardens Neighborhood Redevelopment Plan consists of a Conditions Plan and a Land Use Plan. The Conditions Report is a compilation of data illustrating conditions in the Savannah Gardens neighborhood warranting designation of the neighborhood as an Urban Redevelopment Area. The Land Use Plan is a detailed plan identifying property that will be redeveloped as part of the Savannah Gardens Neighborhood Redevelopment Plan. The enclosed Master Plan serves as the Land Use Plan for the Savannah Gardens Neighborhood Redevelopment Plan.

In order for the City of Savannah to adopt and implement the Savannah Gardens Neighborhood Redevelopment Plan the Mayor and Aldermen must take the following actions:

- Adopt a resolution designating the Savannah Gardens neighborhood as an Urban Redevelopment Area.
- Adopt a resolution authorizing the use of eminent domain for redevelopment purposes.

The need to use eminent domain in the Savannah Gardens neighborhood is unlikely because the property slated for redevelopment is owned by CHSA Development, Inc. CHSA Development, Inc. supports adoption and implantation of the Savannah Gardens Neighborhood Redevelopment Plan.

In order to adopt the Savannah Gardens Neighborhood Redevelopment Plan and Land Use Plan, these plans must:

- Be consistent with the community’s Comprehensive Plan

- Provide maximum opportunity for the rehabilitation or redevelopment of Urban Redevelopment Area property by private enterprise
- Identify a feasible method for the relocation of households who will be displaced from the Urban Redevelopment Area

The Savannah Gardens Neighborhood Redevelopment Plan and Land Use Plan are consistent with the community's Comprehensive Plan. Further, private enterprise, including existing property owners, non-profits and private developers, will be called upon to redevelop property identified in the Land Use Plan. The largest private property owner in the Savannah Gardens neighborhood is the non-profit owner of the Strathmore Estates Apartments--CHSA Development, Inc. It supports passage and implementation of the Savannah Garden Neighborhood Redevelopment Plan. Lastly, the Savannah Gardens Neighborhood Redevelopment Plan will follow relocation provisions set forth in the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act. This includes giving Strathmore Estates Apartment residents who are in compliance with their lease and pay their rents on time an opportunity to live in new housing developed as a result of this Plan in the Savannah Gardens neighborhood.

Adoption of the Savannah Gardens Neighborhood Redevelopment Plan by the Mayor and Aldermen of the City of Savannah will help ensure the redevelopment of the Strathmore Estates Apartment community and two adjoining vacant parking lots on Gwinnett Street with new housing, mixed-use, commercial, public infrastructure and public green space. The Conceptual Land Design plan included herein shows, in more detail, how the Strathmore Estates Apartment site is expected to be redeveloped.

Adoption of the Savannah Gardens Neighborhood Redevelopment Plan is expected to help:

- Developers compete for the Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC), Neighborhood Stabilization Program and other resources necessary to finance the construction of new affordable rental housing.
- Developers compete for other housing financing, including financing for senior rental housing and for single family ownership housing.
- Developers compete for financing for mixed-use and neighborhood benefiting retail along Pennsylvania Avenue and Gwinnett Street.
- Stabilize and revitalize adjoining neighborhoods.

In support of the Savannah Gardens Neighborhood Redevelopment Plan and to facilitate these redevelopment activities, the City of Savannah will continue to offer redevelopment financing and funding for housing, infrastructure and green space. Housing and property maintenance codes will be enforced as necessary to ensure that property is being well maintained.

CONDITIONS REPORT

Introduction

The Savannah Gardens neighborhood is located on the East side of Savannah. It is generally bounded on the north by Elgin Street and Capital Street; on the west by Pennsylvania Avenue, Vinson Avenue and Greenville Street; on the South by Gwinnett Street; and on the east by Long Avenue. The boundaries of the neighborhood can be seen on the neighborhood a map included herein and marked “Urban Redevelopment Area”.

Savannah Gardens primarily consists of two major land functions and owners. The Chatham County Board of Education’s Savannah High School occupies about one half of the neighborhood and the Strathmore Estates Apartments occupies roughly the other half of the neighborhood. The neighborhood also includes three small commercial properties located along Gwinnett Street. A City of Savannah fire station is also located in the Savannah Garden neighborhoods behind the Savannah High School on Capital Street.

With City support, a local non-profit housing development organization, CHSA Development, Inc., purchased the dilapidated Strathmore Estates Apartments on November 16, 2007. Strathmore Estates is a 44+ acre site containing the only housing in the Savannah Gardens neighborhood. The Savannah High School adjoins Strathmore Estates Apartments to the northeast. Three small Savannah Gardens commercial properties adjoin the property to the south. Two of these parcels are parking lots for an abandoned commercial property south of Gwinnett Street that was purchased by CHSA Development, Inc. on October 27, 2008. The Strathmore Estates Apartments and the abandoned commercial property are blighted properties that have had a negative impact on Savannah Gardens and surrounding neighborhoods for several years.

History

The 80+ acres of land that makes up the Savannah High School and Strathmore Estates Apartments sites was originally developed as Josiah Tattnall Homes in January of 1943. The original 750 apartments were built as public housing for World War II shipyard workers who were building Liberty Ships for the war effort. The federal government and local housing authority initially envisioned this as temporary, “dismountable” housing that would be dismantled following the war. Instead of being dismantled following the war, the housing was sold to a succession of private property owners who, overtime, invested very little in its upkeep and modernization. In the 1990s, the Chatham County Board of Education purchased about one half of the site, demolished about 370 units of housing, and constructed the new Savannah High School. As time passed, the Strathmore Estates Apartments became increasingly blighted and presented a series of challenges for renters, surrounding neighborhoods, the police department and other City departments.

Existing Conditions

This section of the plan addresses the existing conditions in the neighborhood. All demographic information is from the United States Census (1990 and 2000), unless otherwise noted.

Population

The Savannah Gardens neighborhood lost a great deal of population between the 1990 and 2000 Census. The population declined by 54% in this decade. The large population decline can be attributed to the construction of the new Savannah High School that is now adjacent to the community and to the poor condition of the property. Table 1 shows the amount of the decline.

Table 1: Population				
Population	1990	2000	Change	Pct. Change
Savannah Gardens	1350	877	-473	53.9%

Race and Ethnicity

The 2000 Census reflected a shift in the racial makeup of the neighborhood to a predominately African-American community. There was a major population loss in the number of white households that lived in the neighborhood between the 1990 and 2000 Census.

Table 2: Race and Ethnicity				
	1990	2000	Change	Pct. Change
White	725	197	-528	-72.8%
African American	502	646	144	28.7%
Other	122	13	-109	-89.3%
Hispanic	12	22	10	83.3%

Discrepancies in the table above can be attributed to the 2000 Census being the first to allow people the option of being multi-racial. The Hispanic community is likely larger than the number above because of the recent growth in the Hispanic community and undocumented immigration.

Single Parent Households

The 2000 Census reports that there are 304 households in the neighborhood, of which 103 (or 34%) are single parent households. Thirty-two (10.5%) are male single parents and 71 (23.3%) are female headed households. The City of Savannah has 4% single male householders and 21% single female households. Savannah Gardens has a higher rate of single parent households than the City as a whole. There is a significant difference in the number of single male households within the neighborhood and city-wide figures.

Income and Poverty

Table 3 below shows the household income for Savannah Gardens. The 1999 income statistics are the most accurate income figures available at this time.

Table 3: Household Income 1999			
Amount	Savannah Gardens	Savannah Gardens %	City of Savannah %
Less than \$20,000	152	50.0%	34.9%
\$20,000 to \$34,999	53	17.4%	22.2%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	53	17.4%	16.2%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	22	7.2%	14.0%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	7	2.3%	6.6%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	8	2.6%	3.2%
\$150,000 or more	10	3.2%	2.5%

Savannah Gardens has more households earning under \$20,000 than the City as a whole. An overwhelming majority of the population earns under \$50,000. The neighborhood's average household income is \$46,326, and it has a median household income of \$19,989. The City of Savannah has an average household income of \$42,352 and a median household income of \$29,108. The poverty rate of 22.2% for the neighborhood is above the City average of 21.8%. More than 51% of the residents have incomes at or below 120% of the median income.

Housing Affordability

According to the 2000 Census, the average rent was \$510, and 39.8% were paying more than 30% of their income toward rent. In the City of Savannah as a whole, the average rent was \$576, and 44.7% were paying over 30% of their income toward rent.

Housing Conditions

The neighborhood of Savannah Gardens is exclusively rental, with residents living in the Strathmore Estates Apartments. The Strathmore Estates complex represents the only housing in the neighborhood. This housing was built with the intent of being demolished after World War II. As stated earlier, Strathmore Estates was cut in half by the construction of the new Savannah High School in the early 1990's. The 2000 Census stated there were 40 vacant units in the neighborhood.

The Strathmore Estates property is in poor condition and largely vacant. Of 380 housing units, only 140 were occupied as of February 2009. Of the remaining 240 units, 30 units have been demolished and 210 units are vacant. Most of these vacant units are expected to be demolished in 2009. The City's Property Maintenance Department has been working with the new owners, CHSA Development, Inc. to ensure that vacant structures are boarded and/or demolished.

The vacant property at Strathmore Estates is blighted. Blighted, as described in the International Property Maintenance Code and adopted by the City of Savannah, is:

Any structure or premises, which by reason of dilapidation, overcrowding, lack of ventilation, light or sanitary facilities, or any combination of these factors is detrimental to safety, health and morals.

This is the definition of blight used by the City of Savannah for its Neighborhood Stabilization Program. This vacant property also meets the definition of blighted property as described by the State of Georgia in O.C.G.A. 22-1-1 and used by the State of Georgia in its Neighborhood Stabilization Program, as the property contains uninhabitable, unsafe structures, has been the subject of repeated illegal activity, is maintained at a level that does not meet municipal codes and is conducive to ill health, transmission of disease, infant mortality or crime in the immediate vicinity.

Crime Statistics

The Savannah-Chatham County Metro Police Department has identified Strathmore Estates Apartments as the major center for crime east of the Truman Parkway. Its dilapidated conditions and poor management have contributed to crime within the apartment community and in the surrounding neighborhoods.

In an October 19, 2007 letter, Police Chief Michael Berkow wrote to the Strathmore Estates Apartment owners that the “apartment community has become one of the most serious crime centers in the City.” This crime remains of great concern to neighborhood residents and local law enforcement. The crime rate increased in 2006, and remained steady in 2007. There was a 33% increase in the amount of crime between 2007 and 2008. Table 4 below shows the breakdown in crime for the neighborhood from 2005-2008.

Table 4: Savannah Gardens Crime Statistics				
Offense	2005	2006	2007	2008
Homicide	0	0	0	0
Rape	0	0	0	0
Robbery	2	7	7	20
Aggravated Assault	7	4	5	2
Burglary	17	36	37	46
Larceny	32	27	26	31
Auto Theft	8	5	5	7
Total	66	79	80	106

The biggest difference in the crime total is due to of the large increase in burglaries in the neighborhood. Many of the burglaries were break-ins to the units. As table 4 clearly demonstrates, most crime within this neighborhood is theft. Between 2007 and 2008, there was a large increase in the amount of robberies that occurred in the neighborhood. Arsons are believed to have burned two apartment buildings in 2008.

Zoning and Future Land Use

Review of the zoning GIS file, shows the following districts were within the boundaries of the Urban Redevelopment Plan boundaries; R-4, P-R-B-1, P-B-C, and R-6. Below are definitions from the City of Savannah Zoning Ordinance.

R-4 four family residential. The purpose of this district shall be to maintain dwelling unit density to not more than 12 dwelling units per acre of residential land in order to protect

the property in this district from the depreciating effects of more densely developed residential uses. (City of Savannah Zoning Ordinance, Section 8-3021, 3)

R-6 one family residential. The purpose of this district shall be to maintain single-family dwelling unit density to not more than 6 dwelling units per acre of residential land in order to protect the property in this district from the depreciating effects of more densely developed residential uses. (City of Savannah Zoning Ordinance, Section 8-3021, 2)

The remaining districts are planned districts which the Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC) defines as “districts that shall provide areas within which comprehensive development plans shall be prepared for review by the MPC or MPC staff in order to secure an orderly development pattern. Such districts are considered ‘overlay’ districts and the uses permitted in such districts are those permitted in the zoning district they overlay.” (City of Savannah Zoning Ordinance, Section 8-3021, 7) The other districts use the regular definition of a zoning classification but have an overlay aspect to them.

R-B-1 residential business. The purpose of this district shall be to create an area in which certain types of convenience-shopping-retail sales and service uses can be established at the same time prevent nuisances or hazards created by vehicular movement, noise or fume generation or high-intensity use detrimental to adjacent residential development. (City of Savannah Zoning Ordinance, Section 8-3021, 7)

B-C community business. The purpose of this district shall be to provide community shopping facilities consisting of a wide variety of sales and service facilities at locations that will be accessible to a market-area containing from 35,000 to 70,000 people. (City of Savannah Zoning Ordinance, Section 8-3021, 6)

The MPC is currently working on a new Unified Zoning Ordinance for Savannah and Chatham County. This work is scheduled to be done in the next couple of years.

MPC completed the Tricentennial Plan in 2006; as part of this process they compiled a future land use map for the community. Three categories of future land use were identified in the Savannah Gardens neighborhood; General Residential, Civic/Institutional, and Commercial/Regional. The Strathmore Estates site was listed as General Residential. The properties owned by the Chatham County Board of Education were identified as the Civic/Institutional uses and the properties along Gwinnett Street were Commercial/Regional.

On February 17, 2009, CHSA Development, Inc. was successful in obtaining MPC’s recommendation that the Strathmore Estate Apartments property be rezoned as the Savannah Gardens Planned Unit Development. On March 12, 2009, the Mayor and Aldermen of the City of Savannah approved the Savannah Gardens Planned Unit Development and Master Plan. This zoning designation was sought after more than a year of planning including two community design charrettes and the establishment of a Savannah Gardens Citizen Advisory Committee. The Committee consists of four

Strathmore Estates residents and neighborhood representatives from six adjoining and/or nearby neighborhoods.

LAND USE PLAN

Included in the Savannah Gardens Neighborhood Redevelopment Plan are three maps that show the proposed Urban Redevelopment Area, Current Land Uses and the Land Use Plan for the area.

The map entitled “Urban Redevelopment Area” shows the boundaries of the entire neighborhood and includes the targeted Savannah Gardens Neighborhood Redevelopment Plan area. As demonstrated in the preceding conditions report the neighborhood continues to be challenged by population loss, concentrated poverty, low real estate values, crime and substandard structures. Designation as an Urban Redevelopment Area would facilitate the revitalization of the neighborhood and surrounding neighborhoods.

The “Current Land Use” map depicts the current land uses in the targeted Savannah Gardens Neighborhood Redevelopment Plan area according to the Chatham County Tax Assessor records. The current uses are typical for an inner city neighborhood with the dominant use being single-family residential. All development pursued as part of the Savannah Gardens Neighborhood Redevelopment Plan will complement the uses and character existing in the neighborhood and surrounding neighborhoods.

The third map, “Land Use Plan”, represents a development plan targeting the Savannah Gardens neighborhood. It identifies parcels within the Savannah Gardens Neighborhood Redevelopment Plan slated for development and, if necessary, acquisition. The Savannah Gardens Neighborhood Redevelopment Plan generally targets vacant lots and dilapidated structures. Recombination of parcels may be required to obtain building lots with street frontages and areas conducive to the construction of infill housing, mixed-use structures, infrastructure and green space. Severely dilapidated and vacant structures will be demolished and replaced with infill houses and mixed-use structures. Substandard and inadequate infrastructure will also be replaced.

Accompanying the Land Use Plan is a proposed Master Plan and Conceptual Land Design Plan for the Strathmore Estates Apartment community that demonstrates more specifically how this 44+ acre tract of land will be used and redeveloped. The owner and Master Developer for the Strathmore Estates Apartment site and the two parking lots on Gwinnett Street is CHSA Development, Inc. CHSA Development, Inc. has selected Mercy Housing Southeast, Inc. to be its partner in the development of new rental housing and mixed-use structures on the Strathmore Estates Apartment site.

The Savannah Gardens Neighborhood Redevelopment Plan encourages the use of pedestrian friendly, smart growth, new urbanism and EarthCraft or LEED community design principals.

Land Use Plan Strategies

The Land Use Plan identifies properties within the Savannah Gardens Neighborhood Redevelopment Plan area. The development of these properties with compatible, quality,

development is an essential Savannah Gardens Neighborhood Redevelopment Plan strategy that is vital to the revitalization of the Savannah Gardens neighborhood.

Five potential categories of development include:

- Single Family Infill Housing Development
- Multi Family Infill Housing Development
- Mixed-Use Development
- Commercial Development
- Infrastructure and Green Space Development

Single Family Infill Housing Development

The owner and Master Developer of Strathmore Estates intends to demolish all but one structure on this 44+ acre site. It plans to develop and/or cause the development of between 125 and 140 single family detached houses on lots that will be platted as part of the redevelopment. These houses ring the perimeter of the Strathmore Estates site and will serve as a transition between new multi family housing planned for the center of the site and adjoining single family house neighborhoods of Twickenham and East Savannah.

If developers of these new single family houses receive financial assistance from the City of Savannah for the development of the houses, the houses must be sold to and/or be occupied by a qualifying homeowner or tenant with household income limits that do not exceed funding source requirements. Households occupying housing developed as part of this plan may have incomes above 80% of median income, adjusted for household size, (HUD HOME/CDBG Income Limits) providing no HOME and/or CDBG funds are used to develop the property. Households occupying housing developed with HUD Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) funds must be rented or sold to households making no more than 120% of the area median income as specified in the NSP regulations.

Multi Family Infill Housing Development

The owner and Master Developer of Strathmore Estates intends to develop and/or cause the development of between 400 and 460 multi family dwellings and/or townhouses on parcels or lots that will be platted as part of the redevelopment. This housing will be located along Pennsylvania Avenue and within Crescent Drive on the interior of the Strathmore Estates site. Most of these housing units are expected to be affordable rental units developed with low income housing tax credits or other available financing.

If developers of this new multi family housing receive financial assistance from the City of Savannah for the development of the housing, the housing must be rented and/or sold to a qualifying homeowner or tenant with household income limits that do not exceed funding source requirements. Households occupying housing developed as part of this plan may have incomes above 80% of median income, adjusted for household size, (HUD HOME/CDBG Income Limits) providing no HOME and/or CDBG funds are used to develop the property. Households occupying housing developed with HUD Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) funds must be rented or sold to households

making no more than 120% of the area median income as specified in the NSP regulations. Furthermore, multi family housing developed with both NSP funds and Low Income Housing Tax Credits will restrict at least 40% of the units to households earning no more than 50% of median income and for a period of at least 20 years.

Mixed Use Development

The Savannah Gardens Neighborhood Redevelopment Plan encourages mixed use development that includes retail/commercial mixed with housing within the same structure or within the same parcel of land. Land eligible for this type of development is shown on the Master Plan and Conceptual Land Design Plan for the Strathmore Estates site. Additionally, two vacant parking lots that adjoin the Strathmore Estates site and Gwinnett Street are also desirable locations for mixed use or commercial development.

If developers of new mixed structures or parcels receive financial assistance from the City of Savannah for development, the housing must be rented and/or sold to a qualifying homeowner or tenant with household income limits that do not exceed funding source requirements. Households occupying housing developed as part of this plan may have incomes above 80% of median income, adjusted for household size, (HUD HOME/CDBG Income Limits) providing no HOME and/or CDBG funds are used to develop the property. Households occupying housing developed with HUD Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) funds must be rented or sold to households making no more than 120% of the area median income as specified in the NSP regulations unless otherwise permitted by HUD.

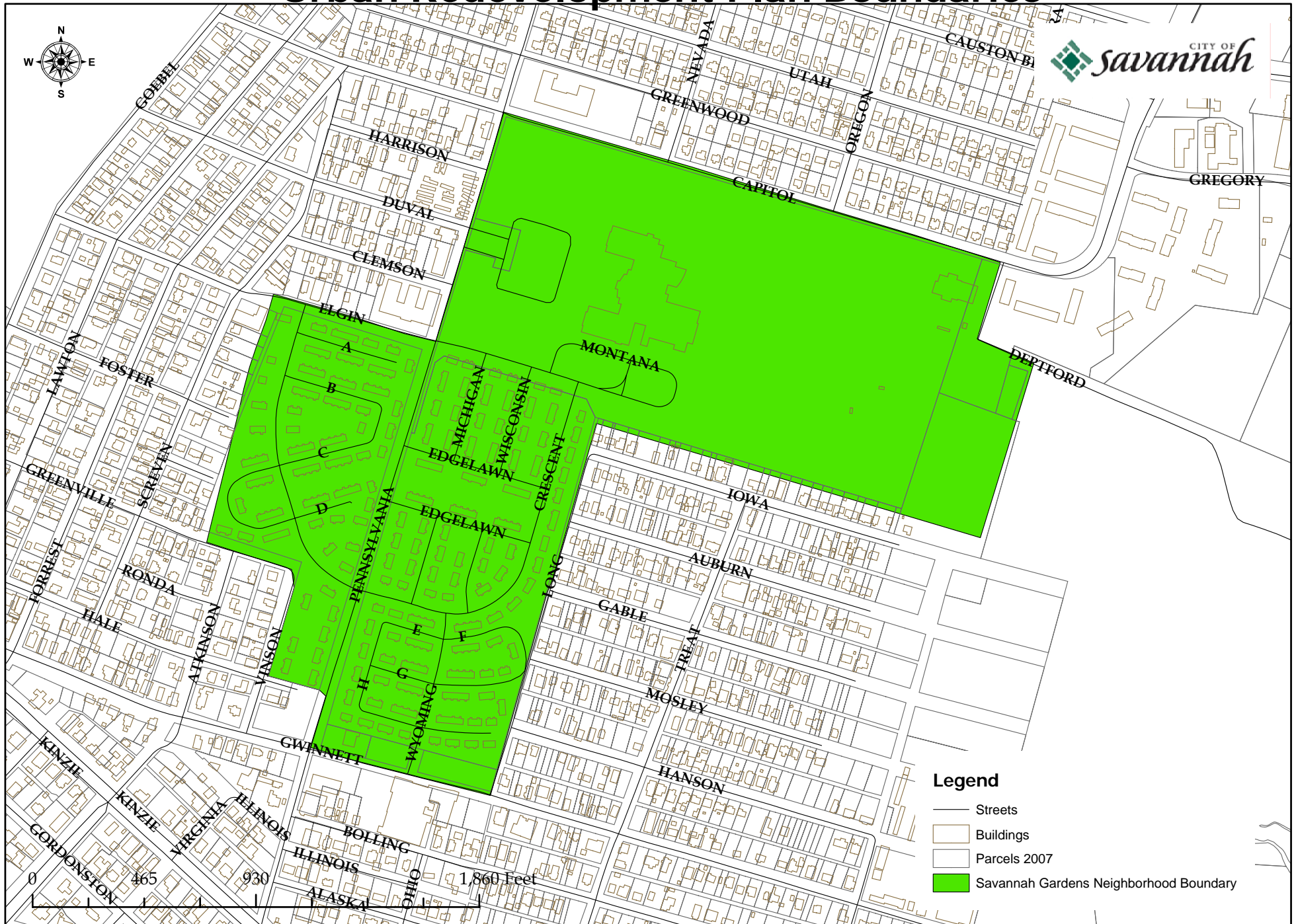
Commercial Development

The Savannah Gardens Neighborhood Redevelopment Plan encourages neighborhood friendly commercial development along Gwinnett Street. This includes two vacant parking lots that adjoin the Strathmore Estate site and Gwinnett Street.

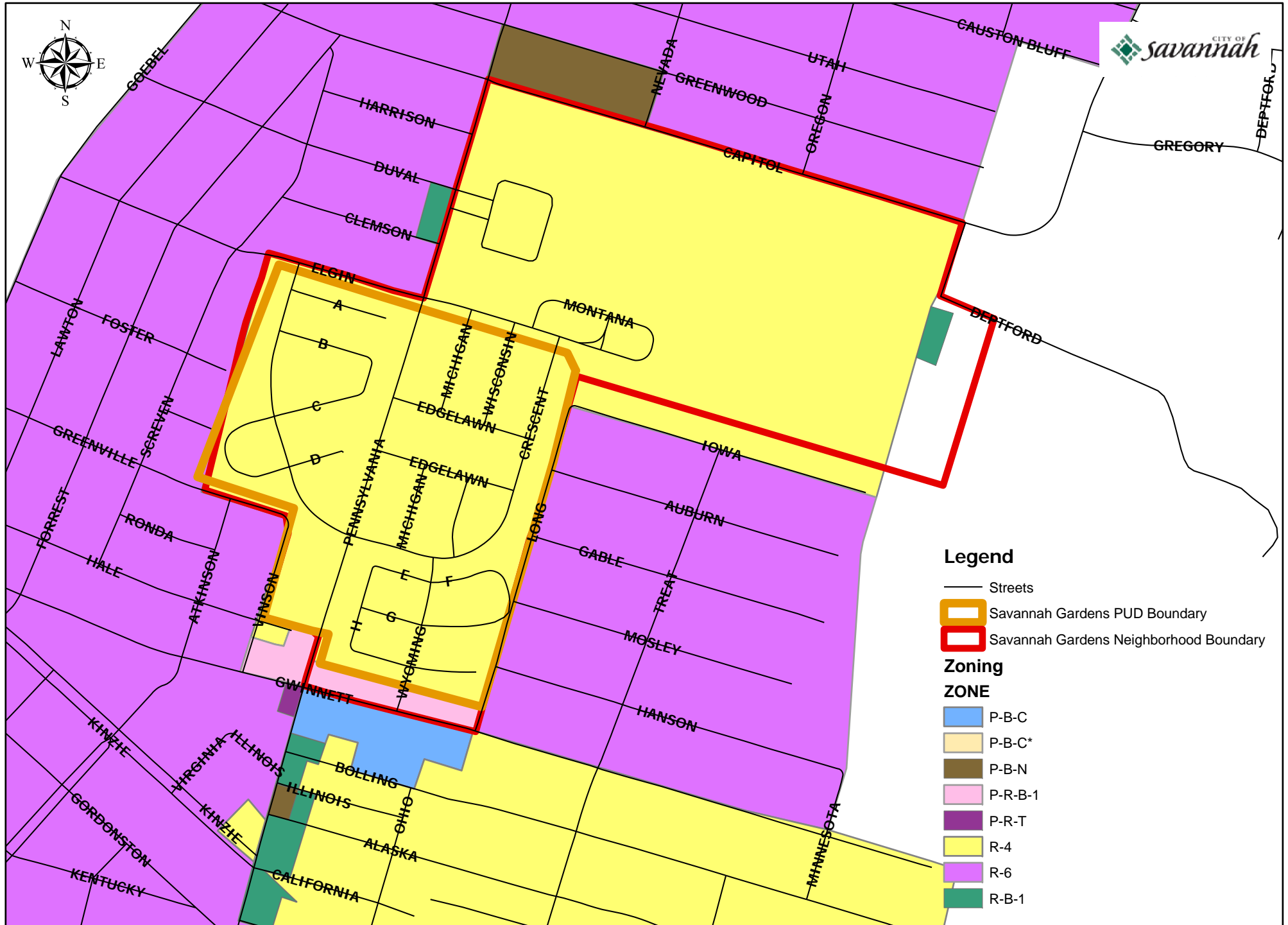
Infrastructure and Green Space Development

The Savannah Gardens Neighborhood Redevelopment Plan encourages the upgrading and/or installation of new infrastructure to serve the Strathmore Estates Apartment site and the two adjoining vacant parking lots located on Gwinnett Street. The Savannah Gardens Neighborhood Redevelopment Plan also encourages the development of new public green space on the Strathmore Estates Apartment site. Further, the Savannah Gardens Neighborhood Redevelopment Plan encourages vehicular and pedestrian connections of the redeveloped site with adjoining neighborhoods.

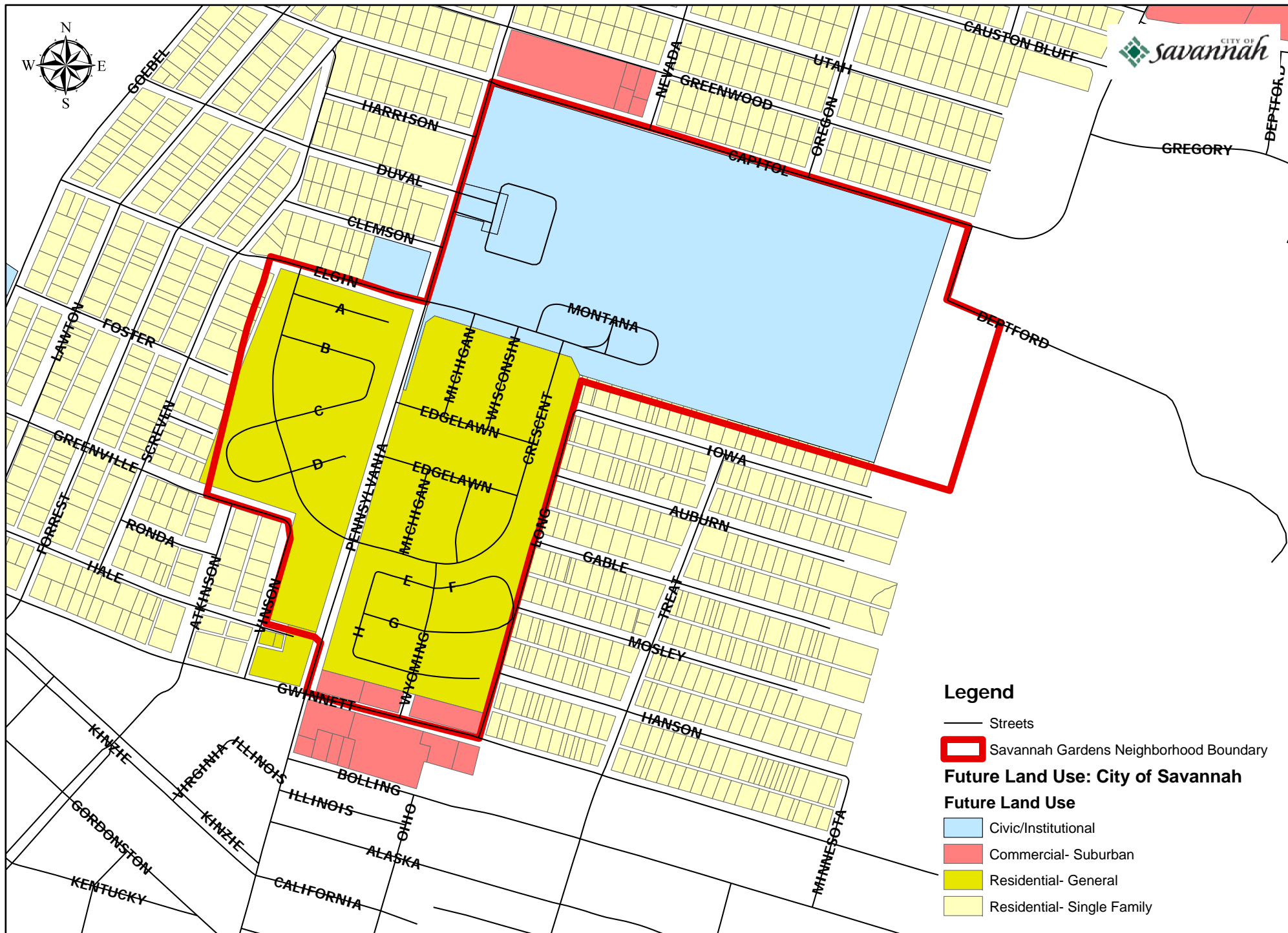
Map 1: Savannah Gardens Urban Redevelopment Plan Boundaries

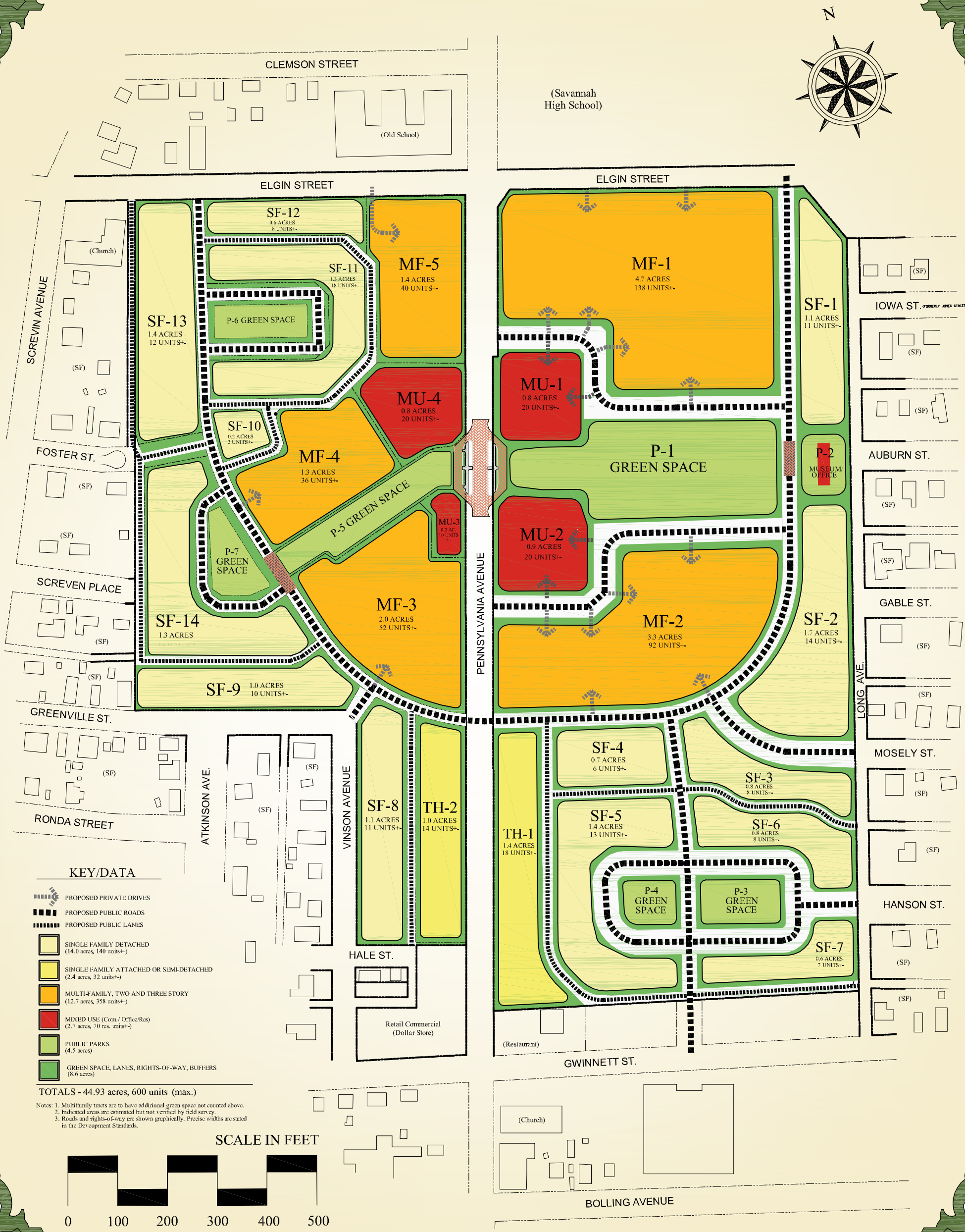


Map 2: Zoning Savannah Gardens URP



Map 3: Future Land Use Savannah Gardens URP



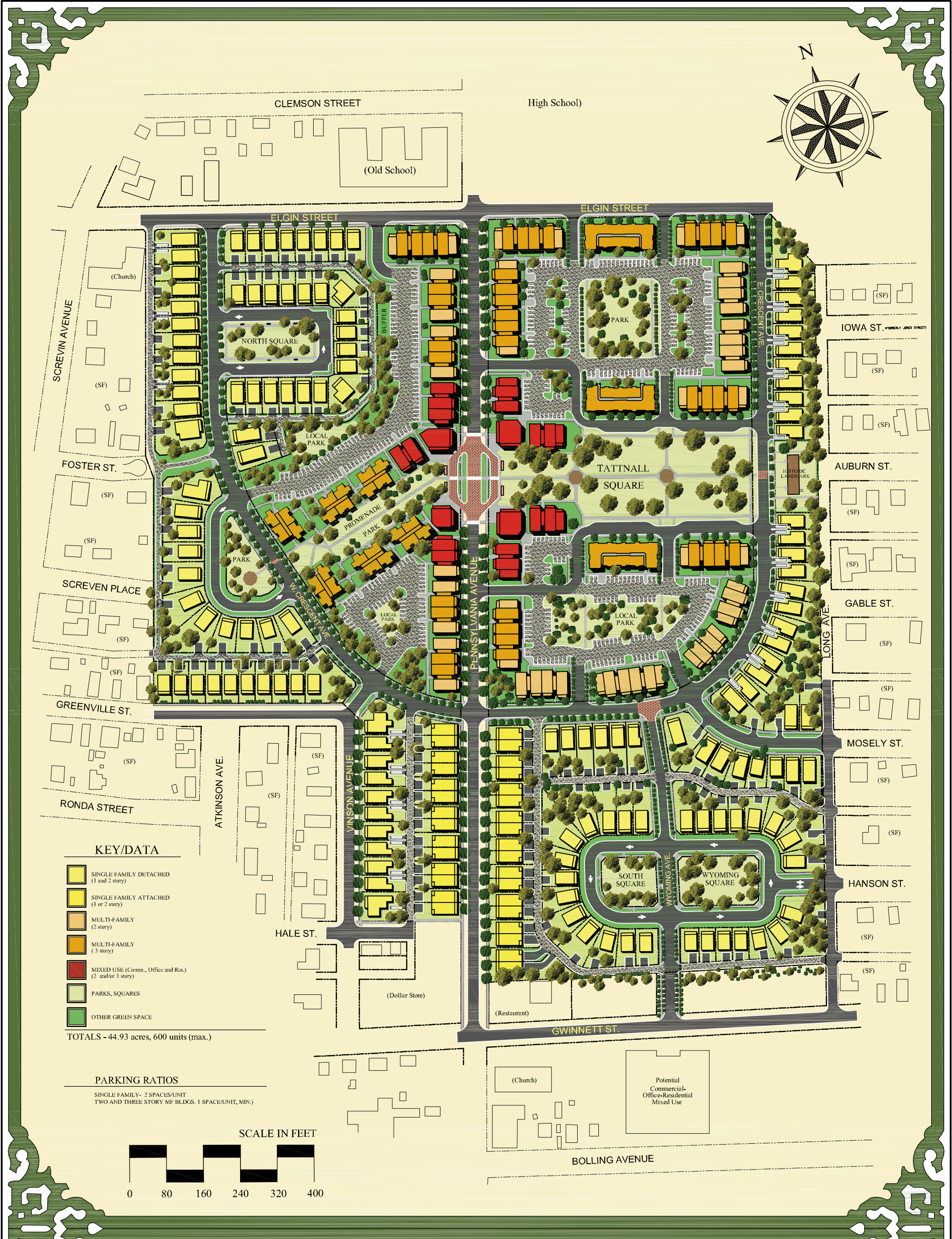


MASTER PLAN "B" for the Planned Unit Development of

SAVANNAH GARDENS

SAVANNAH, GEORGIA

for CHSA Development, Inc. by Dempsey Land Design



CONCEPTUAL LAND DESIGN "B" for the Planned Unit Development of

SAVANNAH GARDENS

SAVANNAH, GEORGIA

for CHSA Development, Inc. by Dempsey Land Design