

## VILLAGE MALL NODE: LAND USE AND DESIGN

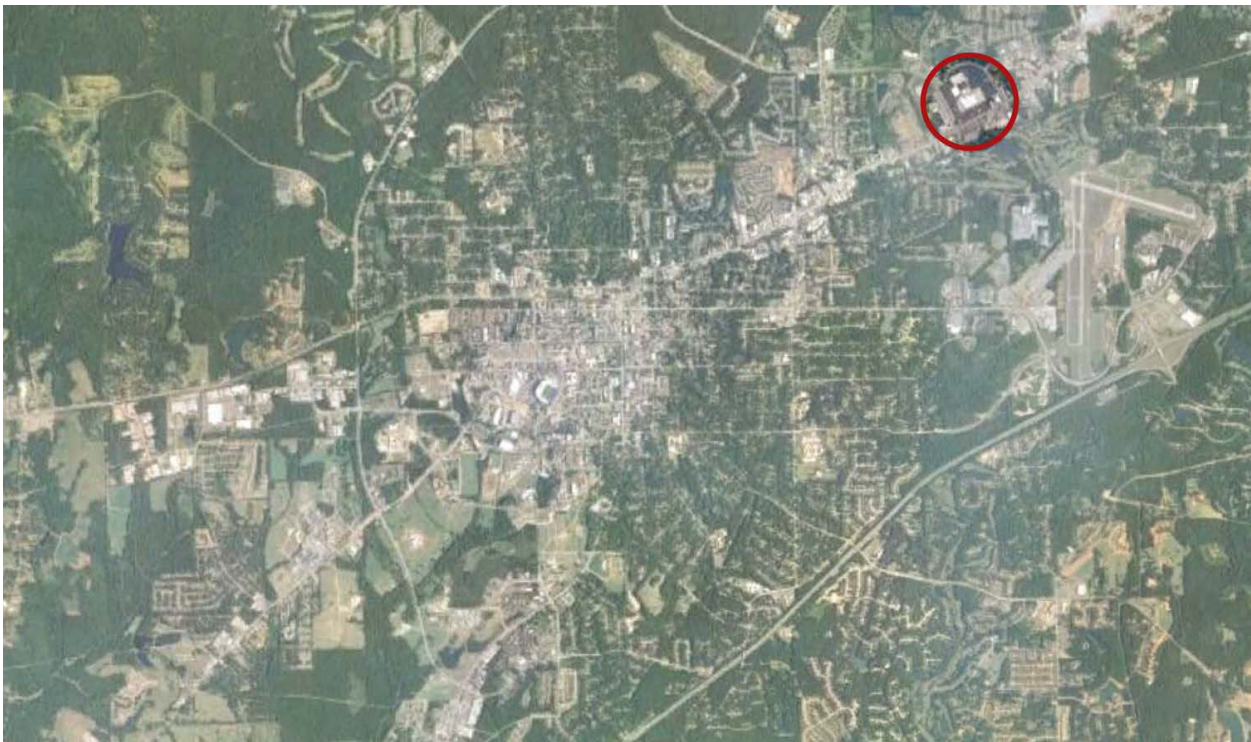


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## EXISTING CONDITIONS

### OVERVIEW:

The site is located at the intersection of Opelika Road and East University Drive in Auburn, Alabama. The intersection is a node, although an unsuccessful one. It is a node that is poorly designed in that it does not allow for a strong, healthy and social urban environment. Traffic is not accepted by any means other than the automobile. This has created an environment that is suburban in nature and destructive to potential growth and success in the area. Beyond the issues in traffic, of greater affect is the lack of density in the built form. An increase in density would allow for a more improved urban environment, therefore strengthening business and social interactions.



SITE PLAN



The site is located not far and to the East of the historic Auburn downtown and Auburn University. It is a suburban area that is almost exclusively commercial.



SITE PLAN



## CURRENT CONDITIONS



## PARCELS

The area around the intersection is divided into many parcels of various sizes and use. Some (marked by stars in the figure) play a larger role in the life and activity of the area compared to others. These include the two parcels containing the Village Mall, the Kmart parcel, the Carmike Cinema parcel and the Flints Crossing parcel. The four parcels engaging the intersection itself is the Village Mall parcel, the Kmart parcel, the CVS parcel and the Flints Crossing parcel.



KEY PARCELS





Flints Crossing Parcel



CVS Parcel





Kmart Parcel



Village Mall Parcel

## ZONING

### Zoning at the Site:

- Commercial and Entertainment uses: one (1) space for 250 sqft of gross floor area; for uses exceeding 100,000sqft, one (1) space for 300 sqft of gross floor area.
- Commercial/ recreational uses: one (1) space per 4 patrons to maximum design capacity of the facility.
- Banks: One (1) for every 300 sqft gross floor area, plus four (4) spaces off street waiting spaces per driven in lane.
- Restaurant standard: One (1) space for every four (4) patron seats or one (1) space for every 150 sqft gross floor (Shaikh and Salman).

The current zoning for the site is CC (Commercial Conservation District) in purple and CDD (Comprehensive Development District) in green:

According to section 304.03 of the City of Auburn Zoning Ordinance:

The CC is intended to preserve the general character of existing commercial areas, particularly existing shopping centers, and commercial developments under construction at the time of adoption of this ordinance. The CC is intended to prevent certain areas, in this case commercial areas, from becoming non-conforming under the terms of this Ordinance. This District is also intended to accommodate limited expansion, conversion, and infill of existing commercial areas.

The regulations for the CC District permit future development consistent with the existing character of commercial development. Such fixed and stable areas will be allowed to continue to exist and develop further under the general regulations governing their design, and construction of the actual site plan previously approved.

It is as important with the CC District as with the NC District to understand that this designation is not an unconditional decision by the City of Auburn that the uses and regulations of the District are ones that would have been prescribed had there not yet been significant development. As a result, no new CC Districts or expansion of existing CC areas shall be allowed following the adoption of this Ordinance. This District is not considered appropriate for major new development.

According to section 304.04 of the City of Auburn Zoning Ordinance:

The CDD is intended to accommodate most of the growth expected in the undeveloped areas of Auburn. It is to be provided with all public facilities (schools, sewers, water, and highways) and will allow most uses by right. It is intended to provide the zoning and capital improvements that

attract development. It consists of the areas where development should logically locate as a consequence of planned public facilities and associated capital expenditures. This District provides regulations that permit development of both urban and suburban character. It provides for low- to moderate-density residential development and for necessary commercial and institutional uses.

The CDD is designed to minimize the costs of extending or expanding public services. It is a planned, logical accommodation of growth and is intended to serve areas suitable for development and to avoid unsuitable areas. Uses that are so large as to be of regional importance are not permitted by right, because these uses require specialized and different evaluation and have special locational considerations, which may make a separate zoning district appropriate. Major uses, such as a regional shopping center, will be considered as conditional uses. Manufactured home parks, commercial support uses, and road service uses are permitted conditionally, and industrial uses are not permitted.

The CDD allows many and varied uses while placing the emphasis on minimizing or buffering any nuisances between uses. Segregation of uses has never provided adequate protection, especially at the boundaries of use districts. This Ordinance anticipates the likelihood – and desirability – of considerable mixing of land uses and imposes standards to resolve any possible problems and eliminate the negative impacts of juxtaposing unlike land uses.






## LAND USE

The majority of the site consists of mostly commercial uses. The category that uses the most land is Shopping Center/Mall. Followed by General Retail, Fast Food, and Banks. The whole site consists of mainly commercial land uses. There are no residential land uses in the area.



### LandUse

 <all other values>

### NAME

-  Bank
-  Clinics and Doctor's Offices
-  General Retail
-  Restaurants - Fast Food
-  Restaurants - Not Fast Food
-  Retail Goods
-  Shopping Center/Mall
-  Vacant





## ROAD HIERARCHY

Streets should never be solely designed strictly for vehicles or pedestrian. When either occurs the usefulness of the street declines. Streets are not meant to be divisive. They are supposed to be a common space accessible to all, as well as being used as a way for passage (Duany and Plater-Zyberk, 1994). Balance of traffic lanes will help with vehicle flow and assist in possible pedestrian crossing locations. This has been not been the case for the Village Mall area. In the Village Mall area streets have been designed to cater only to vehicular traffic. Making the area non-pedestrian friendly.

Also, Opelika Road is dominant over the other roads and streets in terms of traffic, businesses, attention and importance.





INTERSECTION WITH  
TRAFFIC LIGHT

## SIDEWALKS AND CROSSWALKS

Pedestrian access is important, and sidewalks play a vital role in making an area pedestrian friendly. Currently the site is not Pedestrian friendly due to its lack of sidewalks. The only sidewalks that exist at the site are sidewalks on the east side of East University Drive and the east side of Opelika Road up to the CVS coming from the direction of downtown Auburn. However, even these two sidewalks aren't completely continuous and suffer in quality.

Pedestrian safety is very important when managing street crossing. Currently it is very difficult for pedestrians to travel by foot between the four different zones of the Village Mall node. Currently there are only two crosswalks in the site area. One is at the intersection of Opelika Road and East University while the other crosses Opelika Road at Mall Parkway connecting to the strip mall on the other side of the road.





Sidewalks are not prevalent throughout and existing ones often end abruptly.



Example of lack of sidewalks and unfriendly pedestrian accessibility.



CROSSWALK



MINOR CROSSWALK







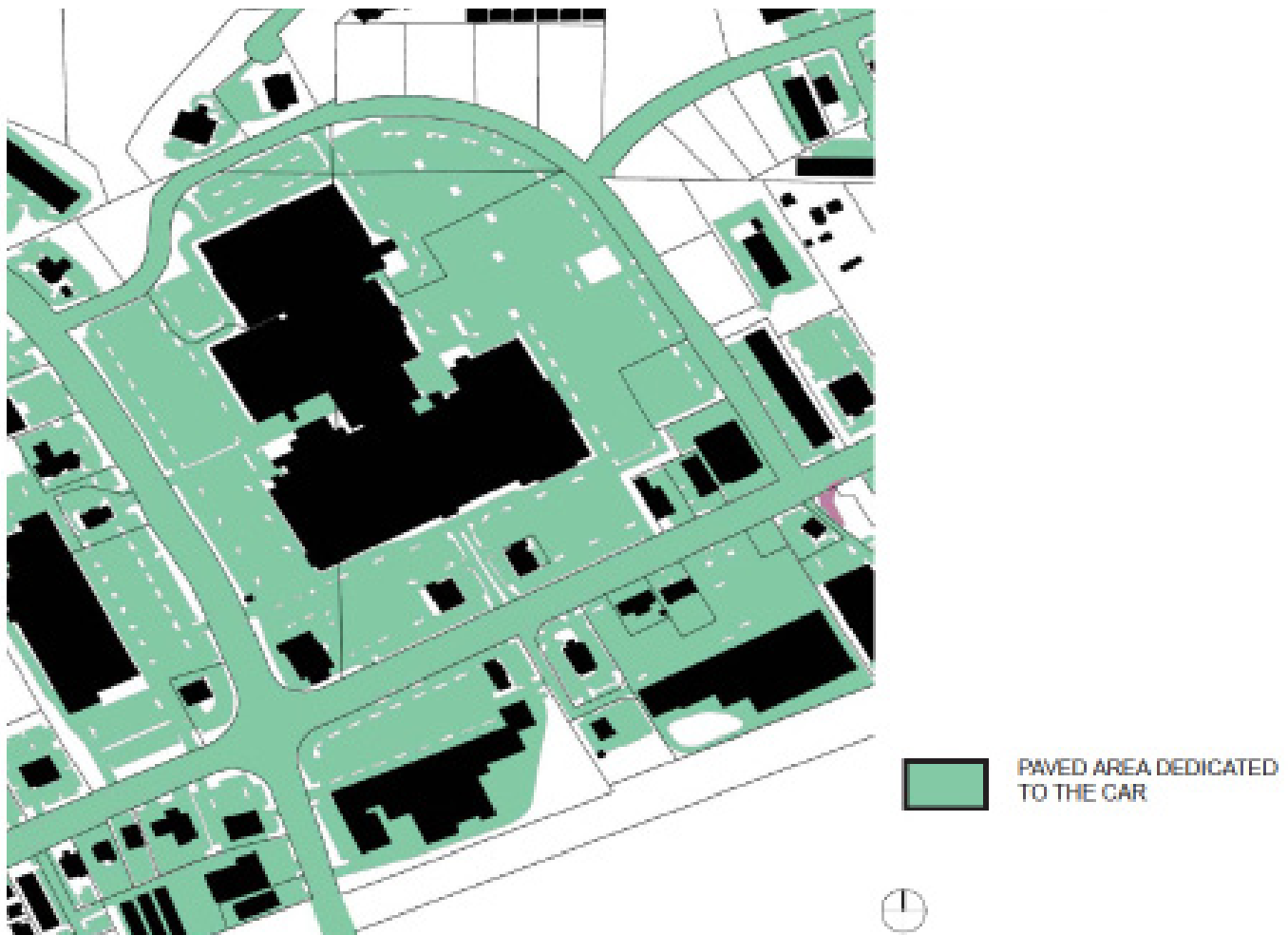
Crosswalk at intersection of Opelika Road and East University Drive.

## CAR USAGE AND DOMINANCE

The area is not friendly to any means of travel other than the automobile. Automobile usage is encouraged with high speed limits, many traffic lanes, and a vast over abundance of parking. This in turn disencourages other means of transportation such as bicycling, walking and transit.

### PARKING

Parking surfaces consist of most of the land on the site. According to the Parking Utilization Study (Shaikh and Salman) the existing suburban style parking plan at the node shows less than 30% occupancy at all times even at peak hours. The majority of the parking in the study area is provided in the surface parking lots at the store frontage. There are no on-street parking or parking garages. The parking does not comply with the zoning ordinance.







This parking lot at the Sears at the Village Mall is an example of one of the many large and underutilized parking lots that dominate the site area.

## TIGER TRANSIT

The area is currently served by one line of Auburn University's Tiger Transit with two stops at the site. Both are along Mall Parkway. The location of these transit stops are not ideal or logical for pedestrian travel.



[http://matchbin-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/public/sites/577/assets/4VUA\\_TIGER\\_TRANSIT.jpg](http://matchbin-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/public/sites/577/assets/4VUA_TIGER_TRANSIT.jpg)



## STREET FURNITURE

Currently the site has no street furniture that would enhance the aesthetics of the site and encourage pedestrian traffic. This includes benches, transit stops, trash cans, planters, street art and more. The site does have lighting, however it is not evenly spaced and it is meant to light the streets for automobile traffic. The lack of lighting for pedestrians is another factor that makes walking in the area unattractive.



## DENSITY

Perhaps the largest and most impacting drawback of the site is its lack of density. The area is suburban in nature. The large spans of space between buildings are the result of the massive parking lots. These distances make the area unattractive to walk in and is therefore the major contributing factor to the dominance of the automobile in the area. They also make trips within the site unattractive as people generally do not want to hop from parking spot to parking spot. The lack in density hinders the economic and social capabilities of the site.



Example of how the lack of density makes the area not walking friendly.



Great distance of Flints Crossing from the EDGE of the Village Mall Parking Lot.



# PROPOSAL

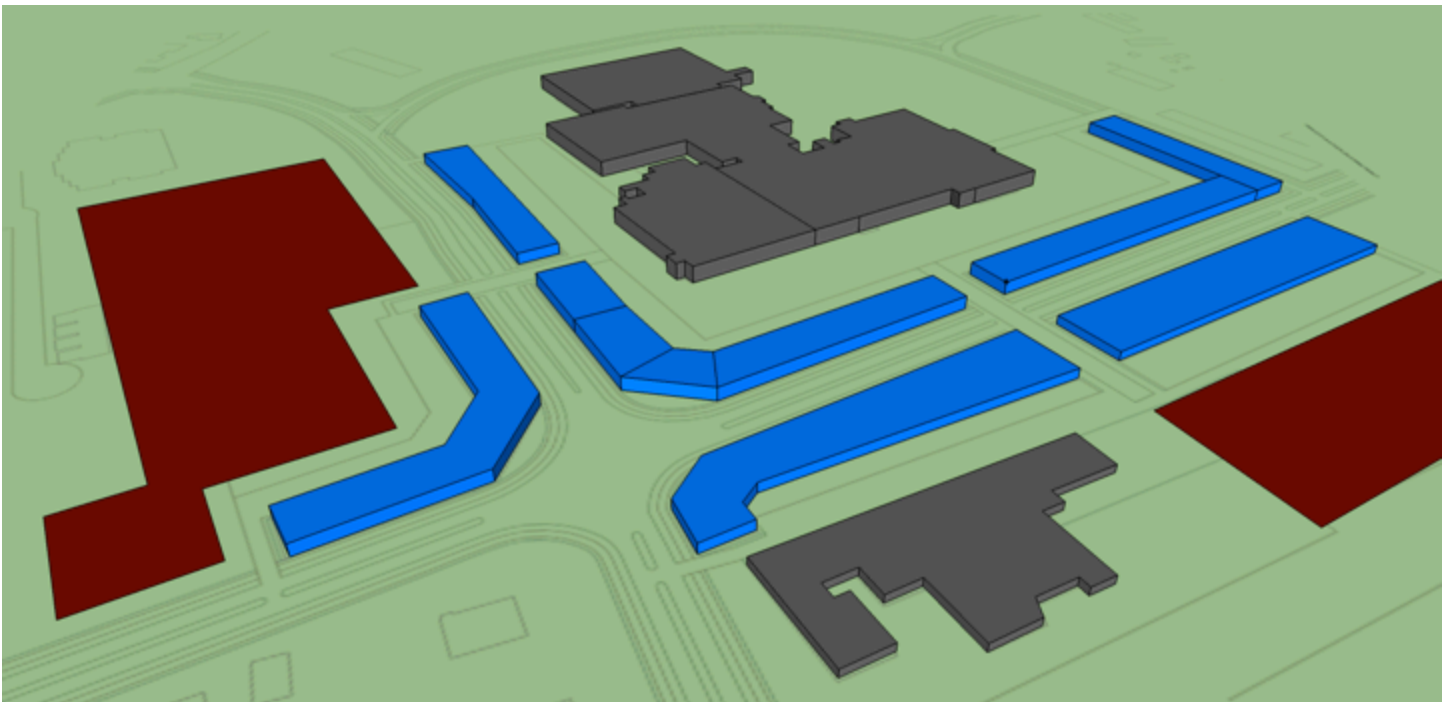
## SHORT TERM GOALS

(5-14 YEARS) - THE INITIAL PLAN AND SETTING THE STAGE FOR THE FUTURE.

1.) DEVELOP A FORM-BASED CODE - The form based code should be developed in a way that it is feasible for a city such as Auburn to support. The main thoroughfares of Opelika Road, Mall Parkway, and East University Drive should have no setback and be limited to 2-3 stories and in special cases 4 stories. The intensity should begin to drop off the further away from the intersections and back away from the main thoroughfares.

2.) OPEN UP DEVELOPMENT TO LINEAR BUILDINGS AS MIXED-USE (BLUE) - The main thoroughfares of Opelika Road, Mall Parkway, and Dean Road must have a consistent wall of building in order to promote walkability and a sense of place. The center of activities for the site must move away from the center of large blocks and instead be positioned along the streets. A suggestion would be to build the first phase of these buildings at the intersection on the side of the mall.

3.) AREAS IN RED ARE MOST VULNERABLE TO CHANGE (possible short-term parking) - These areas that are marked in red are the most vulnerable areas to change. The parcels are either underutilized or vacant. As the development of linear buildings begin to take the place of the parking lots and create a walking urban area along the streets, the areas in red can then address potential other needs.



## LONG-TERM GOALS

(15-30 YEARS) - REFINING THE MEGA\_BLOCKS AND LOOKING TO THE FUTURE.

1.) DISSECT THE BLOCKS INTO SMALLER, MORE WORKABLE BLOCKS - The short-term brought the site a walkable intersection (East University/Opelika) as well as the original mall functioning much as it did before, but behind the façade of linear buildings. Opelika, Mall Parkway, and East University Drive are pleasant to walk on and it is an improvement to the prior situation. However, the true fabric of the site isn't complete. There are still mega-blocks remaining. In order to make a complete site that can accommodate potential demand for street frontage is to dissect the mega block into smaller more manageable blocks. This may be a possibility, as the original mall structure may become a less desirable option for business as opposed to the walkable urban style options located in the new liner buildings. Parts of the mall could be strategically demolished to allow this.

2.) GRADUALLY INFILL THE SURFACE PARKING – In a perfect situation the demand for property on this site will increase. With demand increasing the price also increases. The idea is that the development will initially be concentrated at the center of the site and begin to extend outward as the short-term turns into the long-term. The red areas will then become open to development as soon as the land to the center has been used up by infill development. As the site gets denser and land rents are at a premium, only then could parking decks make sense financially to build as an option.



SITE PLAN



## NEW CONSTRUCTION

New structures are to be constructed along the major roadways up to the sidewalk to create an area that is more dense and pedestrian friendly. This will encourage economic and social interactions.

Businesses that were lost can relocate into these new structures along with new businesses.

These new structures will help frame the public and travel spaces around them.



NEW ADDITIONS TO THE URBAN FABRIC





BEFORE, THE LACK OF DENSITY PROHIBITED SUCCESS AS THE SITE WAS NOT WALKABLE NOR FRIENDLY TO PEDESTRIANS.



THE NEW ADDITIONS TO THE URBAN FABRIC ALLOW GREATER DENSITY WHICH ENCOURAGES PEDESTRIAN TRAFFIC THROUGH LESS DEPENDANCE ON THE AUTOMOBILE FOR TRAVEL WITHIN THE SITE.



## NEW GREEN AREAS

New green areas will be created according to the suggestions of the ecological team. New and expansive green and park areas will make up much of the northern portion of the site. Green areas can also be created between the new linear construction and the older already existing structure to provide pedestrians and travelers an attractive place to rest and contemplate between trips. Attractive green areas will attract more people to the area, particularly pedestrians and bicyclists.



NEW GREEN AREAS



## NEW ROAD CHANGES

Many of the new developments will be in the road landscape. These include medians, crosswalks, bike lanes, planted buffer zones, and more.



NEW ROAD LANDSCAPE





PEDESTRIAN



NEW PEDESTRIAN ZONES





## PLAZAS



<http://www.sc3.net/summer/Mallwkatpaul.jpg>



<http://www.sc3.net/summer/Mallwkatpaul.jpg>

Plazas and public squares, just like green areas, will provide pedestrians a space to rest and enjoy the outdoors within the site.



<http://www.sc3.net/summer/Mallwkatpaul.jpg>

They also serve as attractive travel routes between stops within the site.

Large plazas can accommodate public gatherings such as festivals, farmer's markets, and more.

## CROSSWALKS

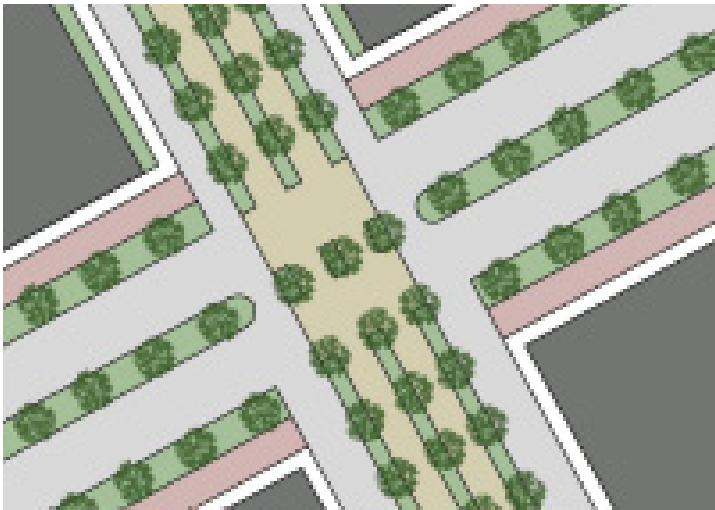
To increase the walkability of the area new sidewalks will be added along nodes sides of Opilika road, and East University Drive. Pedestrian safety is very important when managing street crossing. Currently it is very difficult for pedestrians to travel by foot between the four different zones of the Village Mall node. To remedy this cross walks will be added at every intersection. Three new large crosswalks will be added so that zones 1, 2, and 3 are easily accessible. This will greatly improve the flow of pedestrians between each area by foot.



NEW LARGE CROSSWALKS







PEDESTRIAN SAFETY IS PROVIDED IN SEVERAL WAYS :

- MATERIAL CHANGE BETWEEN THE ROAD AND CROSSWALKS WILL ALLOW PEDESTRIANS AND DRIVERS ALIKE TO RECOGNIZE THE CROSSWALKS.
- THE MEDIAN WILL SERVE AS A PEDESTRIAN REFUGE WHILE CROSSING THE ROAD.
- THE RAISED MEDIAN ALSO SERVES AS A TRAFFIC CALMING DEVICE TO SLOW DOWN AUTOMOBILE SPEEDS, THEREFORE DECREASING THE CHANCE OF FATALITIES SHOULD DISASTER STRIKE.



- THE CROSSWALKS ARE RAISED WHICH ALSO SERVES A TRAFFIC CALMING STRATEGY.
- PEDESTRIAN SIGNALS (OF WHICH THERE ARE CURRENTLY NONE) WILL BE INSTALLED ON BOTH ENDS OF EVERY CROSSWALK TO FURTHER ENSURE SAFETY WHILE CROSSING THE STREET.
- TREES AND PLANTED AREAS MAKE CROSSING THE ROAD TO BE A MORE ATTRACTIVE EXPERIENCE.

<http://www.google.com/imgres?q=crosswalk+signal&um=1&hl=en&safe=off&tbo=d&biw=1431&bih=750&tbm=isch&tbnid=cXt53vIHWSWihM:&imgrefurl=http://transportationnation.org/2011/09/29/nyc-getting-more-audible-crosswalk-signals-to-help-visually-impaired/&docid=KH6DC4DYmQCzrM&imgurl=http://transportationnation.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/accessible-pedestrian.jpg&w=500&h=333&ei=aXK2UJXpOYs8gTi1IC4Bw&zoom=1&iact=rc&dur=239&sig=111164529951990852701&page=1&tbnh=149&tbnw=224&start=0&ndsp=31&ved=1t:429,r:23,s:0,i:170&tx=168&ty=53>

## BIKE LANES

The site will also become friendly to bike riders. This will be done with the creation of bike lanes both sides of the streets in the site.



NEW BIKE LANES



Planted areas between drivers and the bike lanes will provide greater protection for both bicyclists and car drivers.

Different materiality of the bike lane allows for pedestrians to recognize and stay clear of the bike lane.

Bike lanes on both sides of the street will make traveling by bike safe and enjoyable.

