

# BRAINERD TOWN CENTER PLAN ASSESSMENT

July 2006

**Plan Update-** In 1998, the Brainerd Town Center planning process began for the former Eastgate Mall site, Brainerd Village, Osborne Office Park and a golf course bordering South Chickamauga Creek. The result was a plan and design illustrations that captures a vision for what can be created in this unique location. The main goal of the plan was to keep the mall site and its environs a retail and social center of the community.

After almost eight years, several new developments in the area including a Wal-Mart shopping center on the former golf course, two-story businesses fronting a public square, and a variety of other retail enterprises, have created an opportunity to revisit the plan. The general design fundamentals found in the plan still apply to the entire town center:

- A hierarchy of human-scaled streets, blocks, lots and public spaces.
- Streets that are framed on their sides by buildings, forming well-defined public spaces.
- A fine-grained mix of uses, vertically and horizontally, with everyday needs within a five to ten minute walk.
- Incrementally-built buildings of durable, reusable form, with wide architectural variety.
- Residents with a mix of income and ages.
- A variety of housing types and sizes to own and rent.
- A recognizable public plaza or square for each neighborhood, and a central common or green.
- Landscape use as a space-definer in public squares and plazas, as a greenbelt, and for shading and ornament.

For more information, contact the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Regional Planning Agency at (423) 757-5216.



*The Town Center is the physical place where many basic needs of citizens are conveniently and tightly focused: shopping, working, governance, being entertained, dwelling, and the arts.—Brainerd Town Center Plan*

# ACTIVITY REVIEW



*Façade improvements include varied styles*



*Buildings have shallow setbacks, parking to the side and rear*



*Two-story buildings, shelter for pedestrians along sidewalks*



*Pedestrian "cut through" between buildings*

One of the main assets of the original planning process was the interest that was created in the redevelopment of this area. After almost eight years, new developments have occurred in the plan study area including a Wal-Mart shopping center on the former golf course, and a variety of other retail enterprises at the former mall site and along Brainerd Road. Additionally, several properties have redeveloped with new uses or contain existing buildings that have undergone renovation.

Any development that meets the intent of the plan has been voluntary. The building and site design guidelines found in the plan were never codified, meaning that the regulatory ideas in the plan were never given the force of law.

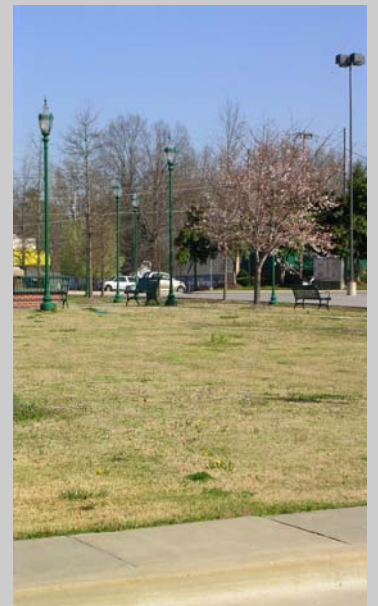
The former Eastgate Mall building placement remains largely as it was previous to the plan. However, as recommended in the plan, the mall has undergone architectural improvements that give variety in form rather than its previous conformity in style. Additionally, the town center now contains a mix of retail and office uses but, as yet, does not contain the residential component stressed in the plan.

New retail developments have occurred as outparcels in the large surface parking lot surrounding the town center. The developments that front on Brainerd Road have followed some of the guidelines of the plan. In particular, a two-story retail structure has sidewalks and shelters for pedestrians, a building façade that provides architectural variety, and parking lots to the side and rear of the building. A new bank and emissions testing station also provide valuable infill development.

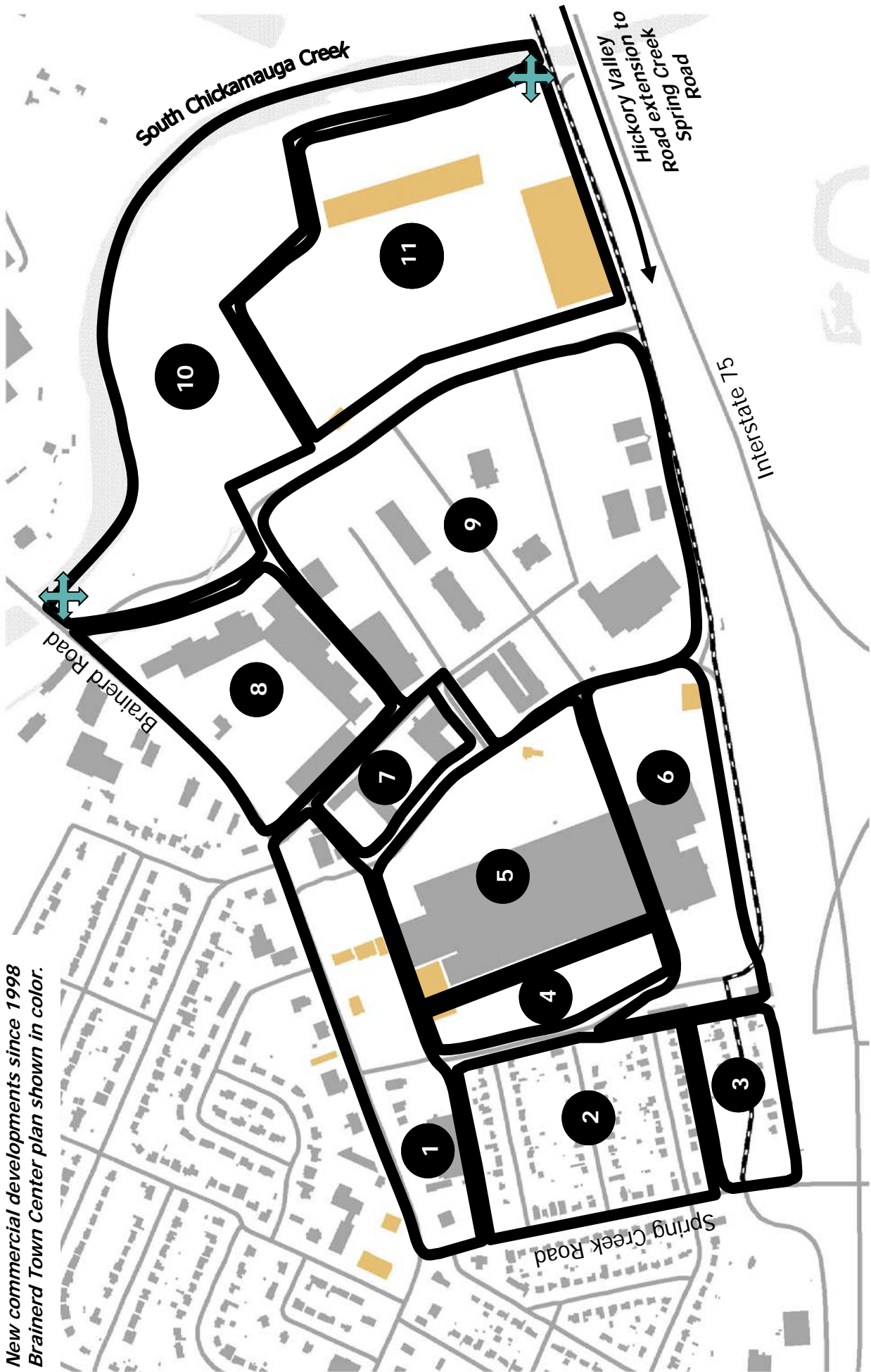
The City of Chattanooga does provide civic services at the town center through a senior center and a police precinct.

## Brainerd Town Square

Brainerd Square was developed at the time of the plan as the "physical center" of the area. It was intended to "serve as the heart of the community, the place for neighborhood festivals, holiday celebrations, art shows, and a place where friends or coworkers meet for lunch." The park does have landscaping, street furniture and is surrounded by on-street parking. Unfortunately, Brainerd Square has never seen much use and was never acquired by the City of Chattanooga, but rather remained under private ownership. Plans are in place for redevelopment at this site which will replace the park with retail uses. Refer to the Brainerd Mission section for further information on public space at Brainerd Town Center.




*Pedestrian "cut through" between buildings*



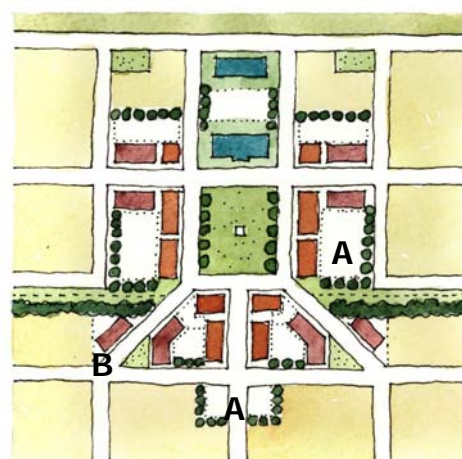
*New commercial developments since 1998  
Brainerd Town Center plan shown in color.*

New development/redevelopment in these areas is encouraged and should follow the Building and Site Design guidelines of the Town Center plan. This includes locating parking lots behind buildings with shared driveways and access to parking lots, multi-story buildings, and pedestrian amenities at these locations:

- 1 Commercial area fronting Brainerd Road
  - 5 Former Eastgate Mall structure maintained as a mixed-use space
  - 6 Commercial area facing Interstate 75
  - 8 Brainerd Village
  - 9 Osbourne Office Park
- 2 Woodlawn/Rosemont/Honeysuckle Policy Area: Currently, this area is not recommended for non-residential rezoning on a parcel by parcel basis.
  - 3 Miller Dr. rezoning study: As a result of this update, a zoning study was conducted for the residential properties on this street to explore alternatives to single-family residential development for this highly-traveled corridor.
  - 4 Medium to high-density residential development: An exciting opportunity exists at this location to incorporate higher-density housing and a wider variety of housing options than is currently available in Brainerd. Residential development at this location, possibly in the form of apartment housing, townhouses, or senior living, can provide a transition from the low-density residential development to the west to the higher-intensity town center.
  - 7 Brainerd Mission Park planning area: Refer to the back page of this document for an update on the Brainerd Mission.
  - 10 Open Space/Greenway: Opportunities exist for better connectivity to the South Chickamauga Greenway. One identified improvement is a well-marked trailhead near the greenway in close proximity to, and highly visible from, Brainerd Road. Another location is accessing the greenway behind the Wal-Mart site at the location of an existing gravel drive.
 



Proposed Greenway Trailhead
  - 11 Wal-Mart commercial development: Should this area redevelop, it is encouraged to follow recommendations for traditional neighborhood or improved suburban developments. Various features are identified below:



*Suburban commercial developments are encouraged to:*

- *Include greater integration of uses either through mixed-use or multi-use development*
- *Contain more public green space*
- *Have parking lots that don't dominate the site*
- *Provide attention to architectural details and landscaping*

*A (See above)- Parking should be predominately located to the rear and/or side of buildings.*

*B (See above)- Interconnected street grid or network of streets, alleys, sides, alleys, and paths facilitate walking, bicycling and driving.*

## RECOMMENDATION: MILLER DRIVE

Through the review process for the Brainerd Town Center plan, it was determined that there was a need to include the neighborhood to the west of the town center site in planning efforts. This area encompassed the four residentially-used and zoned streets: Woodlawn Dr., Rosemont Dr., Honeysuckle Dr. and Miller Dr. In May 2006, the Chattanooga City Council requested the Regional Planning Agency to conduct a rezoning study for Miller Drive and a land use study for the properties on the other three streets.

The three northern streets in this area access through Spring Creek Rd. to the west and dead-end at the town center ring road. Miller Drive however is not only adjacent to Interstate 24 but also provides a continuous thoroughfare from Spring Creek to the town center, the office park and now the new Wal-Mart commercial center. The result is that Miller Drive carries a high level of pass-through traffic and, upon a series of site visits, appears to have less investment in property maintenance and upkeep than the other residential properties in the area.

Currently, a property on Miller Drive operates as a small professional office. The rezoning study determined this type of use is appropriate for the rest of Miller Drive and gives the property owners several options for their property. The properties outlined in black below were rezoned in July 2006, to R-4 Special Zone with special conditions. These conditions include language that allows

single-family residential, two-family residential or office use only. Another condition is that only existing structures may be used unless all properties on either side of Miller Drive are consolidated to accommodate a single office development. These conditions, along with one limiting the size and amount of signage, will provide alternatives for property owners on this highly-traveled roadway while still maintaining the residential feel of Miller Drive for those residents who choose to continue to live at this location.

The area outlined in brown is to maintain a zoning designation that supports single-family detached residential development. The majority of dwellings on these streets are well-maintained and show reinvestment. If any redevelopment of this area were to occur, it would need to include the site in its entirety with special attention given to its interaction with Spring Creek Road and address access issues.



*Miller Drive, outlined in black, was rezoned to allow alternatives to single-family residential development.*

# BRAINERD MISSION PARK



Brainerd Mission was established in 1817 on behalf of the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions to educate and Christianize the Cherokee. Brainerd Mission functioned as a boarding school and mission for 21 years, enrolling more than 300 students during that time. At its height, the mission consisted of almost 40 buildings in 1835. Most of the former site is now occupied by parking lots and/or buildings. Only the cemetery, less than one acre in size, remains.

Brainerd Mission was designated as a certified interpretive site on the National Park Service Trail of Tears Route in 2003.

Conceptual site plans (including the one to the left) have been created by the Regional Planning Agency. They are not necessarily intended to reflect the final site plan, but to stimulate ideas or discussion. Any expansion of the site will necessitate the cooperation of adjacent property owners.



# HICKORY VALLEY ROAD

Currently, motorist traveling to the Brainerd Town Center from Interstate 75 must exit onto East Brainerd Road, turn left onto Brainerd Road/Lee Highway or exit at Moore Road, making several turns before accessing Spring Creek Road and turning east onto Miller Drive. A 1999 study examined the traffic impact associated with extending Hickory Valley Road. The proposed connection, running parallel to I-75, would extend Hickory Valley Road to the west, from its current terminus at East Brainerd Road, to a new connection at the existing Miller Drive near the Town Center. Recent commercial development at the East Brainerd Road/I-75 Interchange could make a direct extension of Hickory Valley Road more difficult. A new roadway will need to address the steep topography that exists between the new vehicle dealership and the neighboring residences.

