

COLUMBIA PARK

Decatur, Georgia



TUNNELL-SPANGLER-WALSH & ASSOCIATES



In 2004 TSW was retained by the City of Decatur to prepare a master plan for the land adjacent to the Avondale MARTA station. The Columbia Park Station represented an unprecedented opportunity to set the standard for neighborhood-scaled transit-oriented development in the Atlanta region. As the first project following completion of the LCI study, this project was intended to set the character for the transformation of the area from a collection of disconnected industrial uses, into a mixed-use neighborhood.

TWS's approach built upon the inclusive LCI process to create Master Plan, schematic design, design development and streetscape construction documents that excel in design quality, while reflecting the needs of key users.

The key elements of the community-based project included a rail and bus transit intermodal facility with housing, retail and parking. This was achieved by dividing the site into a series of new urban

blocks. Pedestrian-oriented residential uses line these new streets and define the core of the site. Along College Avenue a continuous and cohesive retail core was created to capitalize on traffic and visibility.

By using a community-based process TSW developed a master plan that integrates a rail and bus inter-modal facility with housing, retail and parking. One of the key elements of this plan is breaking up the existing super-block through the introduction of new, tree-lined streets. New four-to-six story residential buildings line these streets, defining the public realm as a high-quality space and ensuring safety through sidewalk-orientated architecture. Along the existing perimeter streets the plan envisions upgraded streetscapes and a pedestrian-oriented scale, while retail uses are concentrated along College Avenue – the site's highest visibility face.

For the transit user, the plan significantly improves the riding experience. This is achieved by locating the bus loading area along Sam's Crossing, closest to the College Avenue retail area. This allows bus patrons to wait in dignity in a vibrant street environment and encourages them to patronize local business. For rail or bus commuters arriving by car or foot, the plan provides a rich street experience prior to accessing the transit facility. Most significantly, the plan places transit patron parking in a discreet, mid-block location so as to minimize the walking distance for no-drivers to access transit. Failure to do this could have significantly compromised the desire to locate active uses closest to transit.



top: Columbia Park Master Plan
bottom: Building elevations