

Lorna Road Area Report: Current Conditions and Comparative Analysis

By Julianna Greene

Focus Area: Lorna Road at Patton Chapel and Rocky Ridge

1. Introduction

- How to address the impending development of the area.
- How to take into consideration the diversity that is so prominent while also taking into account the fact that this area would lead to a successful redevelopment.
- Since Lorna Road and particularly the section around Patton Chapel/Rocky Ridge Road reflects excellent redevelopment potential, maintaining a balance of conserving the cultural diversity that is appealing while also redeveloping spaces of decline is necessary and important. This case study will offer insights from particular successful examples of how the specific Lorna Road area can achieve a balanced redevelopment.

Basic relevant information concerning Hoover:

Income and Property Values of Hoover:

Median Household Income:

\$77,146

Median Property Value:

\$264,200

(Cited from Data USA)

Estimated median household income in 2016:

79,004 (it was \$61,982 in 2000)

Hoover: -----\$79,004

Alabama: -----\$46,257

Estimated per capita income in 2016:

\$43,410 (it was \$33,361 in 2000)

Estimated median house or condo value in 2016:

\$278,600 (it was \$176,400 in 2000)

Hoover-----278,600

Alabama-----136,200

Mean prices in 2016:

All housing units: \$319,838;

Detached houses: \$330,674;

Townhouses or other attached units: \$184,634;

In 2-unit structures: \$255,329;

In 3-to-4-unit structures: \$59,001;

In 5-or-more-unit structures: \$125,990

Mobile homes: \$42,257

Median gross rent in 2016: \$1,021

(Cited from City-Data)

2. Background

Case Study Examples

- Alpharetta, Georgia, and Avalon, Georgia, provide great comparisons for Lorna Road.
 - Alpharetta is similar to Hoover in a way because they are both suburbs of Atlanta and Birmingham, respectively.
- ★ “The City [of Alpharetta] purchased the property surrounding its existing City Hall, and redeveloped the downtown area into what is there currently: the new City Hall of Alpharetta, the library, a park, Green Space, parking deck, and ground parking spots. The City then proposed a mixed-use project in downtown.”

- Alpharetta, Georgia, reflects a well executed redevelopment meant to uplift the area and provide an appealing hub for shopping, living, eating, and working.
- Alpharetta focused in on a specific area near its City Hall to plan for a mixed-use development.
- This region was made up primarily of trees and parking lots, but now it is being transformed into a “dynamic retail and restaurant district that will become the heart and marketplace of Alpharetta” (www.citycentralalpharetta.com)
- Buford Highway in Northeast Atlanta also serves as a prime illustration of an area known for its ethnic diversity.
 - Buford Highway is confronting the issue of development much like Hoover is. However, residents and government entities alike are not wishing to do away with the ethnic charm of this area.
 - The proposed development near this area is set away from Buford Highway’s uniqueness. Assembly Yards is a “progressive, adaptive reuse community” that promotes the sought-after “Live Work Play” ideology. This mixed use development will play a huge role in bringing employers, residents, and tourists to this area.
- ➔ Buford Highway is dealing with the balance of maintaining the ethnic attractions while addressing Atlanta’s sprawl. Buford Highway represents one of the few spots in Atlanta where cheaper land exists for developers to purchase.
- ➔ The following quotation expands on the struggle: “Now many are concerned that the panaderias, hair salons and ethnic markets could be muscled out by the Starbucks, Whole Foods and mixed-use developments.”
- ➔ Others, like salon owner Deidre Bell, are not “too worried about the threat of development, as long as government agencies implement policies to protect small businesses. ‘I think what it’s going to do to make my business grow,’ she said. ‘It’s only going to bring more people.’”

- Alpharetta provides an excellent example of a layout similar to Hoover’s current one at Lorna Road and Patton Chapel/Rocky Ridge.
- The following two images shows the contrast of the difference before and after development.

Alpharetta Before



Alpharetta After



Lorna Road Report

→ Lorna Road ←

Focus Area: Patton Chapel / Rocky Ridge

Positives: Walmart is in not too bad of shape. Lorna Place looks decent. What about the insurance and music buildings? Seems that the fact that there are cultural components can be maximized if the storefronts are maintained. A little further down the Soiree Event Gallery serves as a marker of attraction in terms of having events there.

Areas of Improvement:

-Parking lot expanse. The gigantic parking garage seems to be an eye-sore and unnecessary. The Lorna Village Shopping Center could use an update. Would a paint job be appropriate? The strip with Little Caesar's, GEICO, etc. could balance between hosting ethnically diverse restaurants and stores as well as upgrading the quality of tenant. What could pull investors into this area?

Furthermore, how can this area foster the sense of community the City of Hoover would like to uplift?

Walmart parking lot even appears to be kept in better shape. I like the slanted spots and patches of grass at ends of the rows. Even if the Lorna Village Shopping Center adopted a fresher approach to give that parking lot a facelift or decrease some spaces that could be positive.

How to maximize and take advantage of the cultural components of this area?:

Variation of Ethnic/Cultural Options:

- Pollo Lucas
- Dominican Hair Style and Barber Shop
- Little Caesars Pizza

Continuation of Ethnic Variations

- Taste of Thailand
- Silver Coin Indian Grill
- Formosa Chinese
- Costas' Mediterranean Cafe

An importance should be placed on preserving cultural elements while also balancing goal and necessity for development/redevelopment

-AMC Classic Theater- major work on parking lot!

*Looks to be in pretty bad shape!

There is even such a stark contrast between that lot and Premier Gym's lot

Observation of **Lorna Road** @ Patton Chapel and Rocky Ridge

First of all, commercial strip area should be addressed immediately.

-The massive parking lot at Lorna Village should be revamped.

-Maybe the answer is knocking the main big building down and keeping smaller one where Metro PCS is?

-The main big building really does require a paint job of some sort- needs an upgrade

-Smaller building with Subway, Pollo Lucas, Little Caesars also needs a little attention

-Main problem seems to be expanse of the parking lot

*Retail shop, bank, restaurant

Referencing Beaver Run Village in Lilburn, Georgia, "Instead, the owners opted for a redevelopment strategy, with the following goals in mind: maintain the existing credit tenant base; expand the existing credit tenant square footage requirements when possible; reposition the center toward convenience-oriented tenants...; and create a retail center with more character and energy. Ultimately, the idea was to incorporate these goals into a plan to reposition the property and return it to a Class A neighborhood retail center."

Information from Community Builders

"A recent Urban Land Institute Study titled, "America in 2013" also evaluated citizens' attitudes about community choices. Of those surveyed, 62 percent of those planning to move in the next five years stated they would prefer to settle in mixed-use communities."

"Numerous Advantages for the Developer"

- ❑ Mixed-use developments cannot be easily replicated and are unique in composition and structure. This allows them to potentially increase in value over time. Such unique qualities may draw residents and commercial tenants who are looking for something out of the ordinary. In the right location, mixed-use developments can be more successful from a leasing perspective than single-use due to the creation of an experience not available elsewhere.”

“Demand will continue to rise for mixed-use developments and walkable neighborhoods, and there will be a movement away from single-use neighborhoods and stand-alone commercial centers...”

“Hoover has plans to add lighting, benches, and swings to Star Lake. It also plans to add more parking and space for food trucks... At Star Lake, the City plans to present its master plan to the community in the next four to six weeks. Community feedback will dictate the timeline on construction.”

How will this work? What will it look like to the community? What are the predictions on how the reaction(s) will be from the community in terms of their feedback?

Reconstructing the Commercial Strip Orchestrating Community Participation

“The planning process must be open to everyone in the community. This openness is critical to a plan’s success, as community members will enthusiastically support only plans that they understand and believe in. Public workshops must blend education with meaningful participation in shaping the plan. (page 41). *Great that Hoover has done/is doing this!

3.3 The “Form-Based” Development Code

“The approach to strip corridor revitalization that is described throughout this publication relies on the transformation of the physical structure of the corridor from monolithic strip to a pattern of centers and segments.”

“Corridor restructuring should align with national and local retail industry types and ‘behaviors,’ as well as with consumer demand for housing types and industry preferences for workplace types. The development pattern of the corridor should be organized into a pattern of centers and segments that is sustainable in terms of economics, community activity, and resource use, while respecting the character of surrounding neighborhoods and long-term viability of existing businesses. The restructured corridor will have as its backbone a new kind of arterial-- a boulevard configured for multimodal movement and ‘context-sensitive’ design so that the right-of-way makes proper settings for development on abutting properties. To achieve success, the corridor plan and its development codes should establish specific guidelines to create predictability for investment.”

- This notion could be something Hoover refers to and possibly model their plan for Lorna Road after.

Cultural Amenities and the Arts

Cultural vitality is important to any city, large or small.

*The importance of the arts in local communities has been recognized for decades; however there has been a renewed interest in recent years to integrate cultural amenities into the core of the city as part of a larger economic development scheme (page 16).

- Hoover is aware of the appeal behind incorporating cultural experiences and venues. Knowing that Hoover would like to have the Arts represented more is a huge indicator that Hoover is wanting to provide enriching, beneficial spheres whereby people can both display their talents and witness others' creativity.

Main Points of Lorna Road

- **Revamp shopping center(s) by painting them OR knocking down existing shopping center(s) (Especially Lorna Village Shopping Center) and installing possible mixed-use development(s) that would attract millennials and young professionals with Live-Work-Play element as well as an appeal of cultural components such as restaurants and some shops.**
- **Do away with large parking lots- either expand centers out or add more to them.**
- **Make area more compact, welcoming to walkers, and greener**
- **Somehow direct traffic and cars away from main shopping area so that pedestrians who live, work, play around that area will be and feel safe.**

March 6, 2018

It is the idea to be more compact that could appeal to an area of Hoover.

Pros and Cons of Mixed-Use Buildings

“There are several factors that make mixed-use investment properties attractive. The increased vertical density means land, which is often expensive, is used in the most efficient manner possible. Reduced energy costs and maintenance expenses due to the diversification of the facility also saves investors money.”

Possible Upgrades to Lorna Road @ Patton Chapel/Rocky Ridge Area- More detailed

- Improve condition of Lorna Village Shopping Center (either with paint job or demolition)
- Consider incorporating a mixed-use development that would keep the diversity in tenants but also attract millennials and young professionals
- Address expanse of Lorna Village parking lot and ones in front of the AMC Classic and Bumpers (maybe the solution is to redo and pave parking lots or place another building or two there, making area look more appealing and compact.)
- The side where the Walmart Neighborhood Market, Lorna Place, The Place at Galleria, Extra Space Storage appears to be decent looking compared to the other side's more distressed look.
- Keep the cultural charm of this part of **Lorna Road** as it presents a variety of ethnic restaurants
- Create the community feel with some sort of business or activity hub that would bring people in
- Install art/creative venues where people can come out to support local artists that choose to display their talent → *Makerspaces

- This space should offer a unique product in terms of a business/retail unity
- Shopping center strip should align with most recent look(s) of attractive strip malls

The following Random Quotation applies to previous points: “Eradicate the Ugliness: Enhance the physical design of strips to attract new and repeat customers.”

Case Study Greyfield Redevelopment for Community Revitalization: An Exploration of Applications

“Based on this case study analysis, communities should consider the following when planning for greyfield redevelopment: investing in community and civic uses; integrating a variety of retail; using regional architecture; fostering a sense of place; recognizing residents’ concerns; establishing connections to the surrounding environment; and remaining flexible and creative throughout the redevelopment process. Further, this study concludes that greyfield’s redevelopment provides planners with an effective tool for community revitalization.”

**”The declining or abandoned shopping center has come to be known as a ‘greyfield,’ a comment on the bleak color and vast empty space of parking lots that often surround the once vibrant, now moribund center.”*

“Although greyfield redevelopment comes in many forms, the most common strategy is to redevelop an aged shopping center as a mixed-use community village.”

This proposal seems to be entirely doable for the focus area of Lorna Road @ Patton Chapel and Rocky Ridge.

“Proposal for the Crestwood Plaza Redevelopment Area”

City of Crestwood, MO

March 16, 2015

- UrbanStreet Group, LLC (the “Developer”)
- Redevelopment area is about 48 acres of land with 1.1 million square feet of vacant retail space (the “Property”)
- “Developer is proposing a mixed-use project that will include a range of potential uses as described herein (the “Project”)
- “With the property marking the ‘front door’ of the City of Crestwood, it is imperative to move quickly and in conjunction with the City to realize the full potential of this site.” - page 2 *at the top
- “Drawing on our current experience in developing walkable, urban, infill mixed-use developments, we have developed a project plan that will support the goals of the City of Crestwood and its current and future residents.”
- → “A true mixed-use development provides the greatest benefit to the overall community and reduces the financial exposures associated with a single use or themed development.”
- The project includes 43.8% of paving coverage, 9.3% of building coverage, and 46.9% of open space.”
- Page 15 is helpful for visual examples

- I like how they install “social spaces,” leading to the concept of “placemaking”

(Cited from

<https://go.lindberghschools.ws/cms/lib/MO01920486/Centricity/Domain/2020/Crestwood%20Mall%20RFP.pdf>)

Alpharetta Master Plan of downtown.

Box on page 39 = important

Page 42: “Downtown Alpharetta’s keys to success.”

- *“Find ways to maintain and offer a unique product*

One that can tap into the very strong demographic base of Alpharetta and its large number of commuting employees looking for options closer to where they work.”

- *“Create a place for Millennials*

Downtown is the logical place in Alpharetta where Millennials would want to live, work, and play- they should be the key target market for this area.”

(Goal for **Lorna Road** → to be able to attract Millennials, among other age groups)

- Page 48- something Hoover wants to include
- Page 50 seems like a great idea!! → Consider incorporating something similar in Hoover’s Comprehensive Plan

Eventually at **Lorna Road**: A “[r]egularly occurring public event that showcases downtown merchants, music, and food.”

*Something to draw people in.

Mayor Brocato:

“We focused a great deal on changing the mentality of the way our city was developed,” he said. “We had to change that mentality not only inside City Hall, but also from the builders and developers in our city... What we’ve talked about for a year is how we wanted the city to emerge (going into) the next 50 years.”

What that looks like:

Discussions happened involving the topics of sidewalks, green spaces, and making Hoover more walkable. Developments having sidewalks. “If there were any commercial developments, (we made sure) that they also had more of a village-type of appeal, rather than the old-style shopping center.”

- Mayor Brocato is an advocate for the implementation of designed new developments that differ from “traditional outparcels,” meaning they have a focus on pedestrian access.
- Mayor Brocato “said the city has been working diligently to identify a downtown area for Hoover-- another part of his village-type vision for the city.”

Lorna Road

Lorna Road @ Patton Chapel and Rocky Ridge highlights once more

-Major attention on the shopping center on corner of Rocky Ridge Road and Lorna. Just as equal attention on shopping center of Lorna Village Shopping Center. Should those two centers have similar looks? Is the solution to demolish those two buildings or give them each a facelift making them similar? The parking lot serves as a huge issue as well. What would it look like to transform this area into a mixed-use development? How about the idea of extending buildings out closer to the road and placing parking lot elsewhere? What about creating “social spaces” much like the Crest did in St. Louis that helps to provide, among other features, opportunities for people to socialize together as well as creating that concept of “placemaking”? It seems this would be a great draw for an area like this-- to help bring the community together in unity. Lorna Road @ Patton Chapel and Rocky Ridge should be known for ethnically diverse food but also appealing shops and leisure options. The redevelopment of this strip will most likely spur others around to do something similar.

The Balance of Planning: Dealing with transit and the difference of walkers and drivers. “How do you weigh potential development like a walkable mixed-use building against existing strip mall businesses like auto garages or a drive-through fast-food place?... Developers and business owners will recognize the benefits that come from attracting people on bikes, walking and taking transit... Until the transit arrives, it’s going to be difficult to change much along the sidewalks or the street.” (Minn Post)

Feedback Following Lorna Road Presentation on Thursday 3/22/18

- What about the ethnic restaurants that are appealing and provide good food on Lorna Road. How about addressing those and making sure those can still be kept there.
- After the question was posed about how to address the ethnic restaurants at the Lorna Road/Patton Chapel area, someone mentioned installing a concept similar to the Pizitz Food Hall. What about incorporating something similar to that vision? Only problem is, Pizitz brought in ethnic restaurants to occupy that space. What about the ethnic restaurants on Lorna... Would those have to be displaced to be incorporated within a food hall of sorts?
- *We have to consider a [particular] model that could work.
- Another great question that arose from the discussing that followed the presentation was could the design of the storefronts be altered in a more positive, appealing way? (Something I have wondered for a while as well.)
- Back to something similar to Pizitz Food Hall... Ponce City Market = great example of this sort of vision
- What about phasing development for Lorna Road? Would that help to alleviate strain on ethnic restaurants and work on including them within a space similar to Pizitz a little bit at a time?
- All this to say is, it can be done- look for Alpharetta/Roswell example.
- Another example- Battery Park City in Manhattan

Other discussion points at the Charrette Thursday 3/22/18

- Hoover does not have a zip code
- [Hoover] need[s] an identity
- Seeing Hoover “grow up”- desire for skyscrapers *High-rise
- Hoover emblem
- From a marketable perspective
- Generate
- ***Adequate walkability to Lorna Road**
- *Interconnect so people can come and go
- *Trying to be very holistic when looking at all these locations. (Jason Fondren) said that statement in regard to the topic of considering schools, green space, environmental components, etc.
- Art or cultural center
- Makerspace- Artisans to come out- cultivate that
- Keep all the residential community together
- Galleria is our starting point
- Revision of zoning
- Patton Chapel and Lorna Road

3. Alternatives

- Get rid of all ethnically diverse restaurants and retail options and instead focus all attention, energy, and funds on solely mixed-use development.
- This alternative should be rejected as a proposal since it limits the overall quality of life by all in Hoover. The idea should be to maintain a consistent sense of community that fosters economic wellbeing and success, yes, but also cultural sustainability.

4. Proposed Solution

- Restructure the shopping strip at Lorna Road and Patton Chapel/Rocky Ridge area to allow for mixed-use development while also incorporating same ethnic restaurants that draw people to enjoy their food.
- This solution was chosen so that the sense of community Hoover residents desire can be maintained and increased. This solution would align more with Mayor Brocato’s vision for a village-town feel as well as a walkable Hoover.
- This mixed-use development idea seems well supported as a viable option as demonstrated by Alpharetta/Avalon especially.
- Mixed-use developments are on the rise and have proven to be successful in many ways because of the economic increase and diversification of tenants available. Therefore, this mixed-use development option seems that it would be both profitable for investors and the overall Hoover economic as well as appealing to Hoover residents for the community feel element.

- Incorporate green space into this concept of mixed-use development so that there is an environmental awareness.
- Planning.org site stated while explaining a session on “Back to Basics: Walkable Suburbanism,” how some people are “converting aging strip malls and areas of excessive parking into walkable nodes”
([https://www.planning.org/events/nationalconferenceactivity/9140438/.](https://www.planning.org/events/nationalconferenceactivity/9140438/))
- This concept is something that would be great for Hoover. I think knowing that this area of Lorna Road/Patton Chapel and Rocky Ridge is in a great location and is conducive to creating the ability to walk around is quite an appeal.

5. Recommendations

- ❖ The City of Hoover’s Planning team should come together as they have already done so that they can discuss ways in which this plan to redevelop the Lorna Road area can be accomplished. The vision is definitely there but the execution will eventually come.
- ❖ Continue to accept feedback from the public on what they would like to see take place.
- ❖ Make sure that everything comes back to Hoover being a successful, diverse, community focused place to live.

Next Steps (for me):

- Look into + include planning research methods to help enlighten and inform this report. I want to make sure this report has a planning outlook associated with the content. As recommended by Mr. Mac Martin, I think adding that layer will help enhance this report even further.
- Continue with qualitative analysis of this focus area. (I am going to travel to the focus area Friday April 25 to scope out the happenings within this place. I know that experiencing the sight and taking photographic evidence will allow for everything to come to light.)
- Experience the sight and take pictures so that I can see for myself all that goes on in this area *Will allow the focus area to come to life.

Final Summary of Lorna Road/Patton Chapel and Rocky Ridge Focus area:

This focus area certainly holds redevelopment potential that will enable Hoover to reach the next level of positive development in accordance with the city’s needs and desires for growth. Additionally, an area such as this one is unique in its diverse food and retail options. Since this focus area already has a huge appeal with its ethnic diversity, there is a push for maintaining that appreciated and treasured charm. At the same time, since this region does present excellent redevelopment potential, it is wise to foster that as well. Providing a mixed-use proposal for this area seems to be the best solution. A mix of quality tenants with the ethnicity already here would be the best of both worlds. Furthermore, making sure that this area of Lorna Road meets Mayor Brocato’s wish of a more walkable, greener space is also important. This area could be ideal for

incorporating Mayor Brocato's favor of 'village-type' commercial developments. Much like the City of Alpharetta did, Hoover could potentially purchase surrounding businesses and optimize the location by involving a mix of uses. This mixed-use development(s) would profit Hoover quite well over the years. This development would allow for a variety of tenants, both high and middle ends, while also including ethnic storefronts that have long been beloved in this area.

In order for the vision of Lorna Road and Patton Chapel/Rocky Ridge area to be a reality, the redevelopment could take place in phases rather than all at once. This would ensure that the ethnic restaurants are not removed for a long period of time or at all so that they will still be visited and financially supported. However, those stores that occupy a larger amount of space would be demolished to make way for new development.

Photographic Evidence of Lorna Road area of Patton Chapel/Rocky Ridge Road













Observations from Lorna Road and Patton Chapel/Rocky Ridge First person/Firsthand Experience:

This area seems to attract walkers and bikers who come to do some quick shopping. Additionally, I noticed that the parking lot, parking spot lines, posts, and poles are not very well maintained in this area. The actual building structure does not seem as well-kept. In addition, a paint job and roof update would be necessary soon in order to provide a good image of this shopping center. Articles of trash are also seen in the lot. If this shopping center and surrounding space are truly on the decline, this might be a good time to maximize a most likely welcome mixed-use development. Although people might be discouraged and upset for a bit that places such as Bargain Hunt and others will be replaced, they can take comfort in knowing that the mixed-use development would be more beneficial in the long-run. The proposed mixed use development could still appeal to the walkers and bikers of the community as it would offer ethnic shops and restaurants, retail suites, community outlets, artist spaces, and possibly middle-end thrift stores and residential spots. This mixed-use development is intended to attract a greater number of people with varying background, socioeconomic statuses, and interests. While having a village-type appeal, this mixed-use development would foster walkability as well as easy car access if that option is desired. The overarching theme and benefit of this mixed-use development of Lorna Road at Patton Chapel/Rocky Ridge will be a sense of community. This element is what is going to draw people in, allow visitors to enjoy their time here, and cause those people to leave feeling proud to have such a place in Hoover. Much like in Alpharetta, this area of Lorna Road will be much appreciated because of its location and many assets. Therefore, a mixed-use development should be accepted by the citizens of the community. The areas of Alpharetta and Avalon seem to thrive with people not only from the community but visitors from other cities as well. Thus, with the mixed use development at Lorna Road and Patton Chapel/Rocky Ridge Road, an increased number of people would be inclined to shop, live, and work here, increasing traffic and revenue for the City of Hoover.