

City of Charleston
DESIGN DIVISION
REPORT 08
AVONDALE



FALL 2018

AVONDALE

Fall 2018

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WELCOME

This report proposes urban design, transportation and parking solutions to complete the special shopfront character of Avondale, increasing its safety, accessibility and vibrancy.

CITY OF CHARLESTON

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A Safe, Accessible, and Walkable Neighborhood Center

The Avondale business district is a unique, eclectic grouping of buildings located in the heart of West Ashley. It is a walkable place with small shopfronts lining the sidewalks, murals, and streetscape. During the Plan West Ashley public input process in 2017, Avondale was held as the standard for urban scale and walkability to which other areas should aspire.

The local businesses, on-street parking, and small block sizes make Avondale a good urban place and a popular destination; however, these assets also present challenges when coupled with Savannah Highway, a regional thoroughfare carrying 40,000 cars per day. Parking, pedestrian-bicycle safety and regional traffic flow are Avondale's greatest challenges.

Seeking to implement Plan West Ashley recommendations, the Design Division has undertaken a study to determine if a parking garage is feasible. Upon initial analysis, we determined the project to be about more than parking – public spaces, intersections, parking lots, and other features of the district are in need of closer evaluation and retrofitting. The Design Division engaged property owners, neighborhood leaders, transportation officials, and other key stakeholders to develop urban design strategies for the district. This report presents parking and site analysis, examples of Avondale-type places in other cities, opportunities for improvement, and urban design strategies developed in partnership with key stakeholders.

The primary strategy involves repair and realignment of two major intersections of Savannah Highway: one at Magnolia Road and the other at Avondale Avenue. Physical adjustments at these two locations accomplish the following: 1) creation of two complete intersections to improve pedestrian and bicycle connectivity, 2) creation of a single development parcel large enough for a parking garage lined with shops, and 3) development of small public spaces reclaimed from unsafe driveways and parking areas.

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CASE STUDIES

Similar outlying urban centers in other southeast American cities

Studies show existing shopfront environments with arts-based revitalization surrounded by walkable residential neighborhoods. Infill development has occurred within and around these areas.

LITTLE FIVE POINTS

Atlanta, GA

A popular district outside of Downtown Atlanta, this area is full of funky, single-story shops, restaurants and bars. Dense infill development has occurred a few blocks away along the Atlanta Beltline.



INFILL DEVELOPMENT

MILLS 50 DISTRICT

Orlando, FL

A more automobile-oriented commercial strip with some walkability, the Mills 50 area has mural-covered commercial buildings, pole banners and on-street parking along a highway. Apartments are being built in the area.



INFILL DEVELOPMENT

Image Credits, Clockwise from Bottom

1. Google Earth, 2018
2. Pawel Lej, Flickr, 2009
3. Jon Bilous, Shutterstock, 2014
4. Google Earth, 2018
5. Google Earth, 2018

FIVE POINTS

Athens, GA

A small urban node composed of local shops and restaurants. Buildings are a mix of single story commercial and vertical mixed use (apartments above retail). A new infill project is a 2-story fire station with a clock tower.



INFILL DEVELOPMENT

FIVE POINTS

Nashville, TN

Located in East Nashville, the confluence of several streets in a mostly single-story retail and restaurant node is an extremely popular destination. It consists of local businesses, small blocks and some public art. Infill development is occurring within the commercial node in the form of small buildings as well as mid-rise apartments a few blocks away.



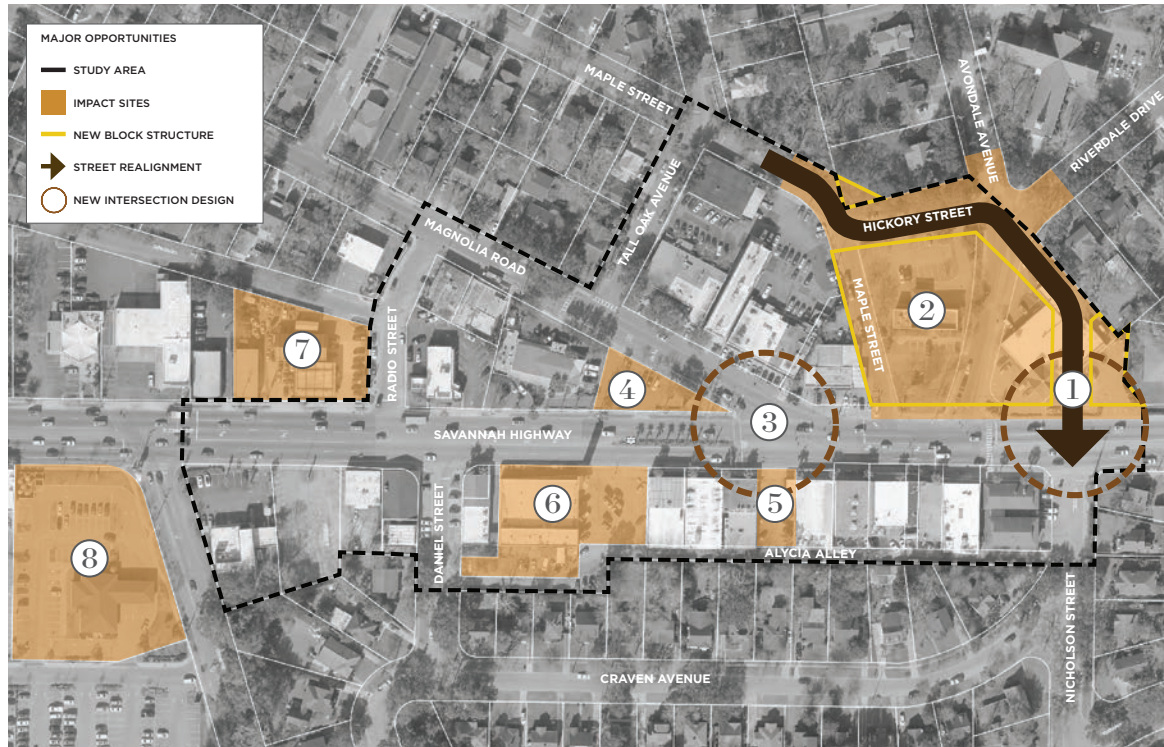
INFILL DEVELOPMENT

Image Credits, Top to Bottom

1. Full Circle Real Estate, 2014
2. Michelle DeRepentigny, 2017
3. Google Earth, 2018
4. NashvilleGuru.com, 2019

MAJOR OPPORTUNITIES

Using site analysis, property owner and neighborhood stakeholder input, and previous studies, we have identified several major urban design opportunities. Each has a relevant strategy for improving or completing Avondale so that it can be safer and more accessible for all modes of transportation. Many of these strategies create a more walkable urban environment than exists today.



OPPORTUNITIES MAP

The map illustrates several major opportunities to improve the district, reclaiming it from automobile oriented landscapes in favor of a safer, vibrant public realm. Many of these opportunities depend on a district wide parking garage to reduce pressure on specific parking spaces and neighboring residential streets, allowing for higher and better uses of sites and more pedestrian friendly configuration of public space. All of these benefit the district as a whole.

- 1 Realignment of Avondale Avenue and Hickory Street to meet Nicholson Street
- 2 Combination of parcels to create a large redevelopment site
- 3 Alignment of Magnolia Road for intersection improvements, signature public space
- 4 Rotate parking bay to create a gateway pocket park
- 5 Mixed-use infill development
- 6 Re-purpose with smaller scale retail, enhance alley and parking circulation for public benefit
- 7 Redevelopment opportunity to expand the walkable district
- 8 Opportunity for a second parking garage, with ground floor retail, serving the walkable district



INTERSECTION ALIGNMENT

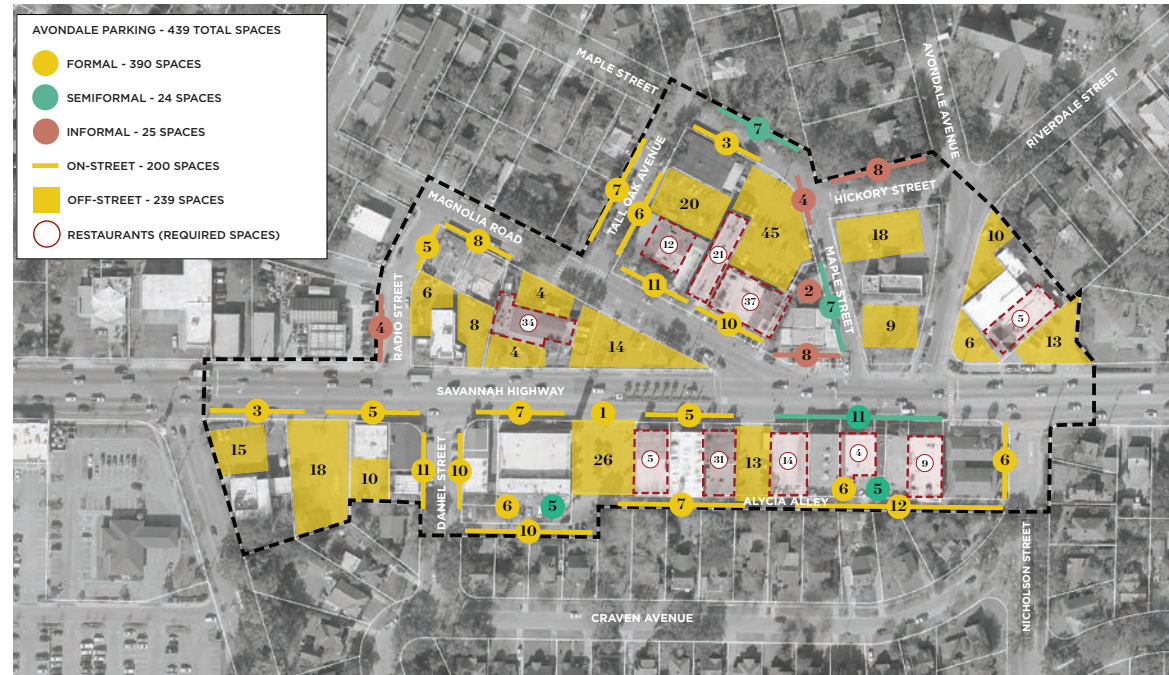
The most important strategy proposal is the realignment of Avondale Avenue to connect with Nicholson Street. The alignment would improve traffic flow by increasing intersection spacing from Magnolia Road, also proposed for slight realignment.

A new, complete intersection would be created, making it safer to cross Savannah Highway by foot or by bike. A new 1-acre block would be created, with a size and shape ideal for a parking garage.

PARKING & ACCESS

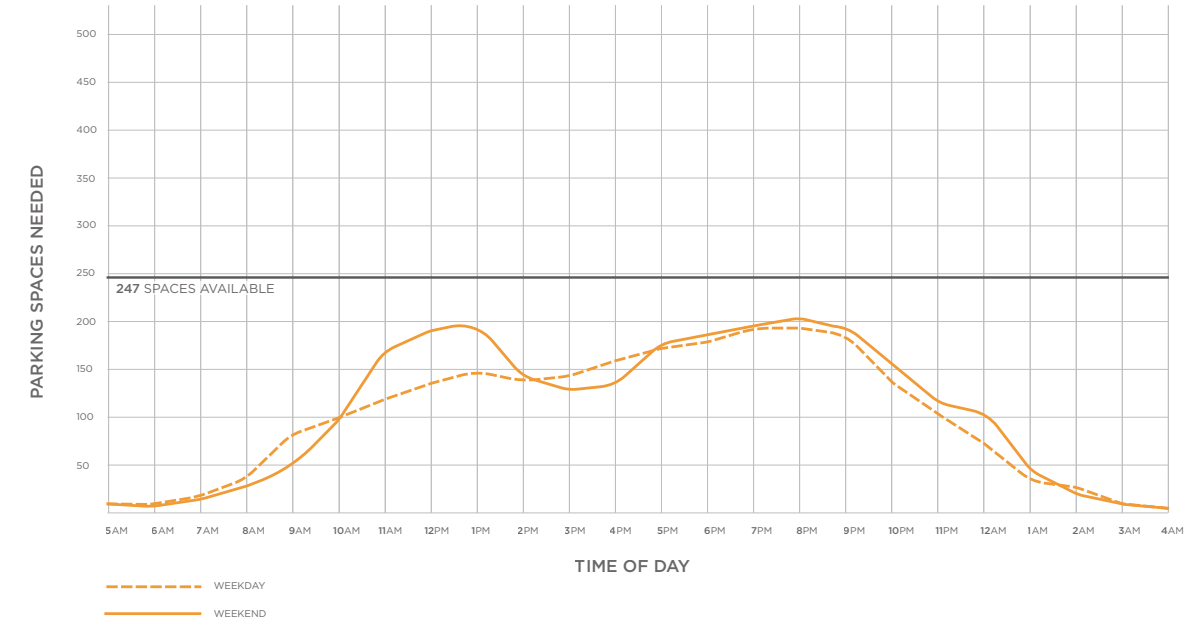
Working with property owners and field verification, we have documented the available and allocated parking in the district. We used Google activity data to determine the volume of occupancy for each site, when and how busy a particular place may be, on an aggregation of weekdays and weekend days over a 24-hour period. The charts illustrate the supply (439 spaces) and demand of parking in the district.

DISTRICT PARKING SUPPLY & ALLOCATION

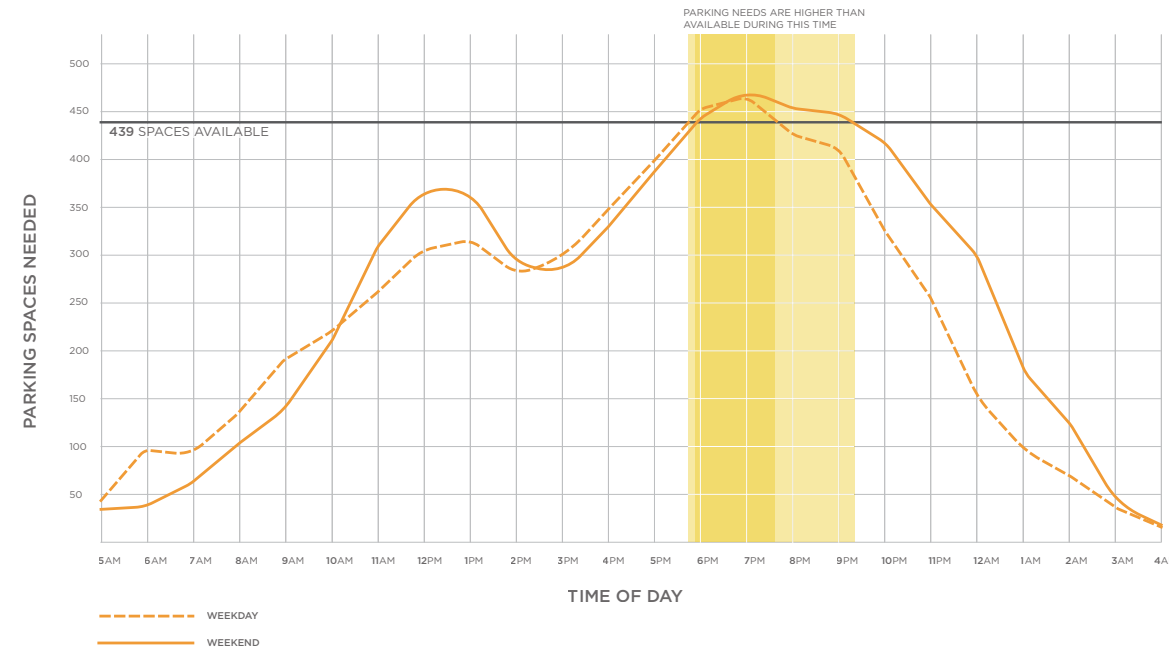


The parking analysis reveals a large difference in supply-demand equilibrium between the north and south side of Savannah Highway over the 24-hour period for both weekdays and weekend days. There is more demand on the south side of the street, and more parking available on the north side of the street. This indicates a problem of access, where easier and safer crossing of the highway might improve parking.

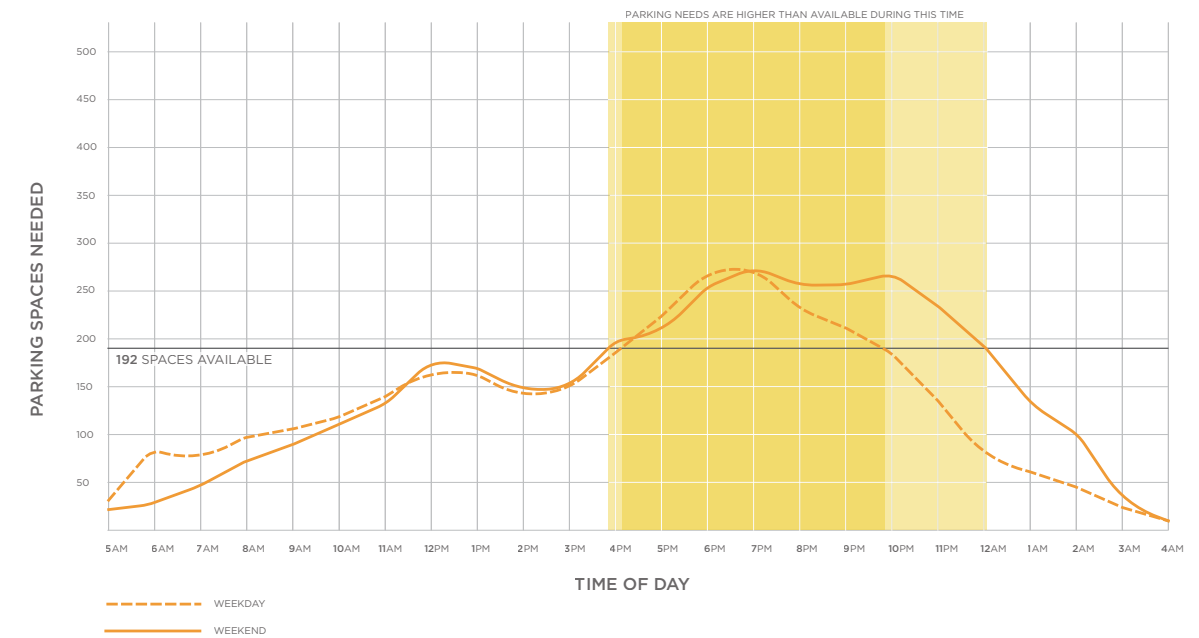
PARKING DEMAND - NORTH OF SAVANNAH HIGHWAY



DISTRICT PARKING DEMAND



PARKING DEMAND - SOUTH OF SAVANNAH HIGHWAY





WALKABLE MIXED-USE PLACE

The rendering shows a mixed-use parking garage developed on a newly-created city block. There are two new intersection alignments with crosswalks on all streets. Some additional infill development and public space opportunities are created by moving parking into the garage, such as the plazas at Magnolia Road and micro-cafes at the new Avondale Avenue.

DEVELOPMENT & DESIGN OPTIONS

The proposed new alignment of Avondale Avenue creates a 1.143 acre block for new development. This footprint allows for a wide range of configurations; however, we have chosen two optimal arrangements of building and parking. One uses small retail or mixed-use buildings and a surface parking lot, while the other illustrates how a parking garage lined with a mixed-use building could fit well on the new site.



① RETAIL WITH SURFACE PARKING

This configuration would continue the shopfront pattern of Avondale by placing new retail buildings along Savannah Highway. The buildings are similar in scale to those located across the street. A small surface parking lot is located behind the buildings, which would mainly serve the buildings on the new block. Parking is accessed from Maple Street, Hickory Street and the newly aligned Avondale Avenue. Buildings could be 1-2 stories depending on available parking.

TRADE-OFF MATRIX	1	2
SAFER PEDESTRIAN CROSSING AND ENVIRONMENT	YES	YES
BUILDINGS BEST REFLECT SCALE OF DISTRICT	YES	NO
PUBLIC PARKING FOR DISTRICT	NO	YES



② PARKING GARAGE LINED WITH OFFICE AND RETAIL

The new block is just large enough for a parking garage (note the depth of the garage along Maple Street). A parking garage would be lined with habitable space such as ground floor retail, offices, lobbies and an event space. The garage would be accessed by automobiles from Maple Street, while pedestrian access points would be along Savannah Highway. Of the two schemes, this is a large-scale development, but provides the most public parking.



CONCEPT PLAN

- 1** Parking Lot re-configuration and new corner park
- 2** "T" Intersection of Magnolia Road and Savannah Highway
- 3** Improved sidewalk streetscape and Open Public Space
- 4** New infill building in place of surface parking
- 5** Streetscape improvements around Gerald's Tires
- 6** Parking deck wrapped with office, event space and retail
- 7** Upper level event space with retail at street level
- 8** New roadway configuration of Avondale Avenue
- 9** Small scale cafes and outdoor eating space
- 10** New signalized intersection with pedestrian & bicycle crossing
- 11** Parking garage access for pedestrians





COMPLETE INTERSECTIONS

The intersection of Magnolia Road and Savannah Highway needs to be improved to include crosswalks at all streets. This could result in a signature public space and curb extensions to make crossing safer.



SIGNATURE PUBLIC SPACES

A slight realignment of Magnolia Road at Savannah Highway would result in two small public spaces in place of existing head-in parking. The parking would be relocated to a nearby garage. The small spaces could provide shaded outdoor seating for existing restaurants.



AVONDALE AVENUE REALIGNMENT

The realignment of Avondale Avenue to align with Nicholson Street would remove the building currently at the corner of Avondale Avenue. The new intersection could provide safe bicycle and pedestrian facilities to get across Savannah Highway. A new development can be created that would continue the vibrant shopfront environment of Avondale.



EXPANDED SHOPFRONT AREA

Redevelopment of some surface parking lots could result in new buildings with ground floor retail and a parking garage access from the sidewalk. Landscaping in front of Gerald's would better connect this new development with the rest of Avondale.



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