



Figure 10.1 Members of the design team need the help of the local police to cross Church Street, the six-lane highway that divides the Haynie-Sirrine community.



Figure 10.2 Urban decay in the Haynie-Sirrine neighborhood. Despite the depressing environment in some parts of the neighborhood, members of the community remained optimistic about the area's potential. This photograph illustrates the lack of care and maintenance by both the public and private sectors.

The crucial challenge was to stimulate new market rate development in parts of the neighborhood by capitalizing on its location while retaining affordable housing for the existing community elsewhere on site. Large portions of the study area were held by a few property owners who lived in the city, were the landlords for many residents and, significantly, were co-sponsors of the charrette. These individuals were

keen to take advantage of the increased demand for higher density living near the town center and to realize the development value of those parts of their properties most suitable for this kind of up-market development. At the same time, these property owners made a public commitment to the neighborhood and the city that they would strive to maintain affordable housing on the land within the community.

Site Analysis and Community Patterns

We analyzed the site under two main headings – ‘Centers, Streets and Edges’ and ‘Building Forms and Configurations.’

Centers, Streets and Edges

The intersection of Church Street with two east–west cross streets, Haynie and Pearl, forms the physical center of the neighborhood. From this point nearly all property is contained within a 1/4-mile radius (see Plate 39). However, from a community perspective, this location is not a center at all. Because of its extreme width and high-speed traffic, Church Street here presents a hostile barrier to pedestrians. Instead of being a place to gather, the center of the neighborhood had become a place to avoid. One positive attribute of this location is its high visibility to commuters, and because of this a Ramada Inn remains operational at this key intersection. Another factor in its favor is the position of this potential center in relation to its context: within one mile of the intersection of Haynie and Pearl with Church Street are a number of very stable neighborhoods, Greenville’s vibrant downtown core, and the beautiful Reedy River and its gateway parks.

There is only one other crossing point of this highway as it passes through the neighborhood, the Springer Street Tunnel, a dark, narrow divided passage under Church Street that connects Haynie on the west with Sirrine on the east. A minimal set of stairs leads up from the tunnel to Church Street. There is potential here for a convenient pedestrian connection across the neighborhood avoiding Church Street traffic, but as Figure 10.3 illustrates, the location does not feel safe. It is gloomy with hardly enough room for one car in each lane of the tunnel, let alone a car and a pedestrian. Additionally, there are few homes along adjacent streets, creating a feeling of isolation and potential menace. There are not enough ‘eyes on the street’ for a feeling of comfort and safety.



Figure 10.3 The Springer Street Tunnel. This is not a place you would like to walk through alone.



Figure 10.4 Neighborhood Street. While the houses need maintenance and the street needs sidewalks, several local streets like Chicora Drive (shown here) provide a potentially very decent environment.

The northern boundary of the community is a five-minute walk from the geographic center, and is marked by the University Ridge highway, so named in part for Furman University that was founded in that location in the late 1800s before moving to the suburbs, and for the ridge of land that forms the high point of the neighborhood. From this vantage point one gains extensive views northward over downtown Greenville and the river in its valley below. While the ugly sheds, large plastic signs and extensive surface parking lots render the University Ridge area unattractive in its current form (see Figure 10.15) the geography has great potential for high-density mixed-use development: it is only 3/4-mile from downtown with great views and immediate accessibility to the Reedy River park. At the northeastern boundary of the study area, a more pedestrian-friendly environment exists, with viable neighborhood retail activity. The setting would be more appealing if the shops actually lined the street instead of being set back behind parking, but the modest proportions and friendly character of the buildings help to offset that deficiency (see Figure 10.19).

Streets in the Haynie-Sirrine neighborhood are typically narrow and lined with beautiful, mature oak trees that help the neighborhood stay cool, even during the hottest days of August. The ecological advantage augments the aesthetic effect of these enormous specimens. Street widths serve as positive design elements, creating a ‘village feeling’ and contributing to the ‘front porch character’ of the neighborhood. The narrow width also serves as an effective traffic-calming measure (see Figure 10.4).

The western boundary of the neighborhood is formed by Augusta Street, a successful, yet congested commercial corridor that serves as the primary shopping district for the downtown area. The eastern boundary shares its edge with the McDaniel Avenue neighborhood, one of the most affluent neighborhoods in the city.

Building Forms and Configurations

As noted earlier, in its better areas, Haynie-Sirrine can be described as a ‘front-porch community’. Most of the homes in this neighborhood are placed close together and close to the street. During our summer study period, many neighbors spent time on their porches, creating a warm and welcome feeling of community (see Figure 10.5). There were other locations however, where people lurking on the street gave us cause for concern, and a brooding sense of menace and despair were evident in the most run-down areas.

The ‘shotgun house’ is a common housing type in the neighborhood, usually one-room wide and three-rooms deep, with a front porch and circulation that passes straight through the rooms (see Figure 10.6). Although many consider this traditional Southern housing type obsolete, its long and narrow configuration allows excellent cross ventilation for the local hot, humid summers. This form of energy efficiency should not be underestimated when planning affordable housing in this climate. The narrow width of these vernacular homes also allows a higher density, increasing affordability and contribute to a feeling of community. Unfortunately, conditions of severe