



## Livable Communities Coalition

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### **Livable Communities Coalition creates region's first comprehensive scorecard for smart growth**

*Recommends approval for redevelopment of Hidden Forest Subdivision near Town Center Mall in Cobb County*

The Livable Communities Coalition, metro Atlanta's smart growth catalyst, has begun scoring development projects on smart growth criteria and has recommended approval of its first project, a mixed-use development in Cobb County.

Approval was given to the proposed redevelopment of Hidden Forest Subdivision. Hidden Forest is just north of Town Center Mall near Kennesaw.

Hidden Forest scored an overall 3.1 on a scale of 0-4 points. Factors that led to approval included:

- A mix of land uses and increased densities in an appropriate location.
- A layout that connects streets efficiently, giving drivers a choice of routes and minimizing the potential for traffic bottlenecks.
- A layout and design that should result in a very walkable environment.

"Giving people a choice of housing, a walkable environment, and a good network of streets is a formula for a higher quality of life. We believe Cobb County is promoting the right kind of growth for the future when it approves projects like this one," said Jim Durrett, executive director of the Livable Communities Coalition.

Hidden Forest is the planned redevelopment of 55 acres. The Hidden Forest neighborhood currently includes more than 50 single-family houses and Grace Church at Town Center. Plans for the new development call for a total of nearly 1,700 housing units, 134,600 square feet of retail space, and 144,600 square feet of office space. As part of the project, Grace Church will be relocated into a new 31,200-square-foot building. Developers for the project are Pacific 2, LLC, and Marthasville Development. Their proposal is before the Cobb County Commission today for approval.

Hidden Forest is the first project reviewed by the Livable Communities Coalition as part of its new Smart Growth Scorecard program. The Coalition is an independent nonprofit created to promote smart growth – compact, walkable developments that designed to decrease car traffic and build strong communities.

The Coalition's Smart Growth Scorecard uses teams of volunteer experts to rate proposed developments from poor to excellent on as many as 50 separate criteria in



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eight categories: location and availability of basic services; density and compactness; diverse mix of land uses; housing choice; accessibility, mobility, and connectivity; pedestrian safety, streetscapes, and parking; environmental protection; and community needs.

Points are assigned for each criterion, and the score for all criteria are then averaged. Projects must earn an average score of 3.0 points, or very good, to win recommendation for approval.

"People are more and more aware that we've got to build a future Atlanta region that is different from the one we built over the past 40 years. More and more citizens are also aware of the principles of good quality growth. It's time now to start measuring proposed developments and supporting the ones that live up to those growth principles," said Durrett.

Smart growth principles typically emphasize compact, dense development, walkable neighborhoods, and mixed uses. They also place a high premium on linking development and transportation spending in ways that reduce the overall number of automobile trips. They do that by putting housing close to shops and offices and providing networks of sidewalks, bicycle lanes, and easy access to transit.

Work on the Livable Communities Coalition Smart Growth Scorecard began last fall. The resulting scorecard was patterned after one developed by the Smart Growth Leadership Institute, an affiliate of Smart Growth America, which promotes smart growth nationwide.

Because the Coalition supports higher density development in regional centers and transportation corridors, where development and transportation investment can be effectively linked, the Coalition's Smart Growth Scorecard considers only developments that fall in areas designated for higher density. Hidden Forest, for example, falls well within the area designated for higher density development at Town Center.

Formed in 2005, the Livable Communities Coalition is the metro Atlanta region's smart growth catalyst. It unites 42 organizations working to change the way metro Atlanta grows by focusing on land use, transportation, housing, and conservation of open green space and natural resources. Member organizations include regional leaders in the areas of aging, building and development, business, urban and landscape design, government, housing, planning, sustainable development, the environment, and transit and transportation alternatives.

The Coalition assists local governments in planning for high-quality growth, leads public planning efforts, reviews and scores proposed developments, advocates public policies that promote smart growth, and educates and assists citizen groups. For more information on the Coalition, please visit its Web site at [www.livablecommunitiescoalition.org](http://www.livablecommunitiescoalition.org).