



*A Vision for Change:*



*Rusher Street Target Area*  
WASHINGTON, GEORGIA



# Charrette Participants



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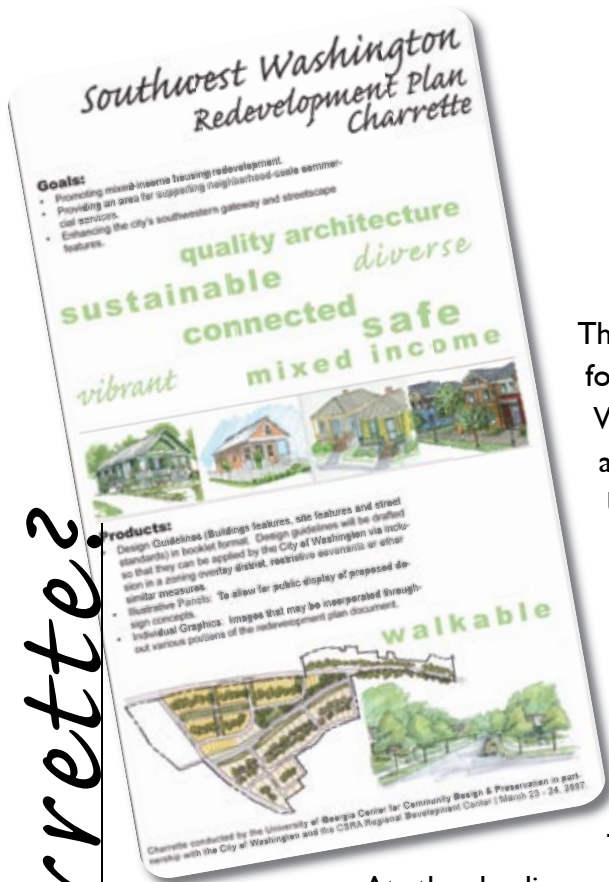
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# What is a Charrette?



The University of Georgia conducted a design charrette for the Southwest Washington Redevelopment Area of Washington, Georgia March 23 – 24, 2007. The project and this report are a collaborative effort between the University of Georgia, the City of Washington, and the Central Savannah River Area Regional Development Center (CSRA RDC). The project resulted in a set of design guidelines for the Rusher Street Target Area within the City of Washington. The guidelines should be used to sustainability redevelop the area into a safe, livable, and affordable, mixed income neighborhood.

The word charrette means “little cart” in French.

At the leading architecture school in the 19th century, the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, students were assigned tough design problems to complete under time pressure. They would continue sketching as fast as they could, even as the little carts (charrettes) carried their drawing boards away to be judged and graded.

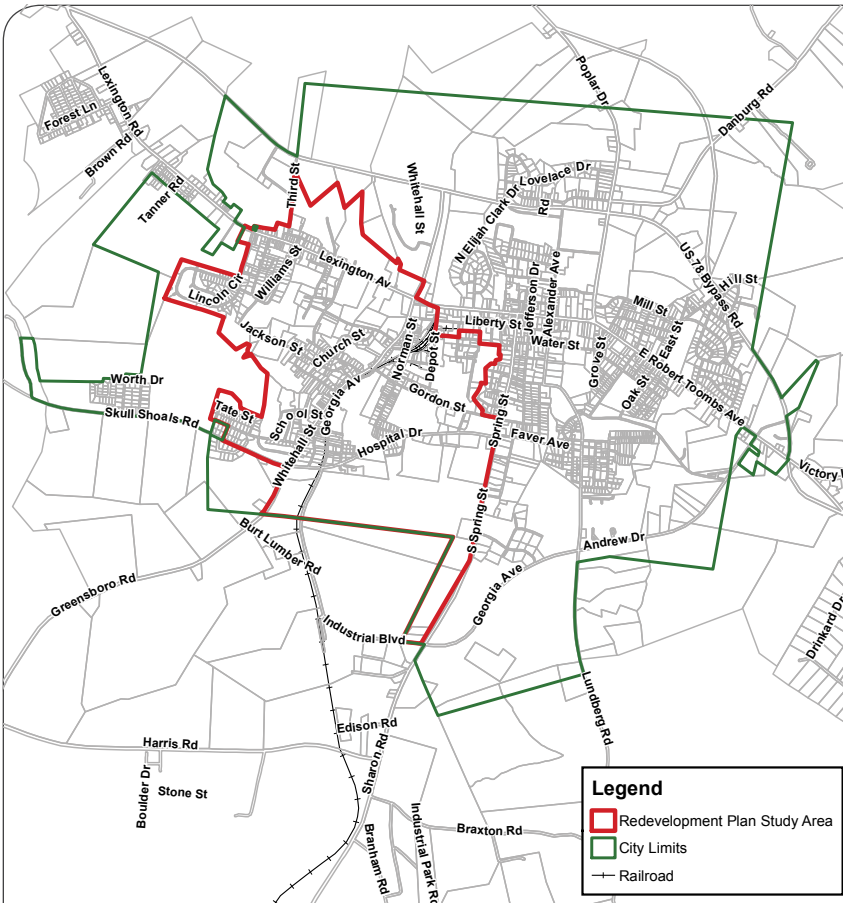
Today the word “charrette” describes a rapid, intense, and creative work session, in which a design team focuses on a particular design problem and arrives at a collaborative solution. Charrettes are product oriented and are fast becoming a preferred method to solve planning challenges confronting American cities.



The charrette process is a way of evaluating resources through new eyes. Fresh ideas are what help communities maintain and build their vitality. Through this report and supporting materials, readers will experience the enthusiasm which comes from a broad group of students, faculty, practitioners, and the public.



# Project Background



Using the Georgia Urban Redevelopment Act (O.C.G.A. 36-61), the City of Washington has courageously undertaken a project that will unite two sections of the town historically divided by race, income and quality of life. Uniting these sections of town will result in improvements in economic conditions, aesthetic appeal and permanence.

This project will involve the redevelopment of blighted areas, which many residents call “eyesores.” It will accentuate the positive, hopefully begin to eliminate the negative, and breathe new life into a disenfranchised community. To demonstrate how the process will and should work, the City of Washington and the Central Savannah River Area Regional Development Center, enlisted the assistance of the Center for Community Design, Planning and Preservation, School of Environmental Design, at the University of Georgia to demonstrate, in a preselected area, the goals of urban redevelopment and neighborhood rebuilding.

The study area is bounded by Hospital Drive and Whitehall Street and includes the main arteries of Rusher Street, Georgia Avenue and Center Street. The area contains a high percentage of deteriorated and dilapidated housing, challenging social factors, and a high percentage of vacant land. Additionally, the study area is bisected by the Georgia Woodland Railroad. Prominent features of the district include the Rest Haven Cemetery and religious buildings in the area. These structures are permanent anchors that are sacred and untouchable.

# Existing Conditions



The Rusher Street neighborhood has experienced decline and neglect in recent years. Concerned citizens, residents, city staff and elected officials have committed their efforts to revitalizing and regenerating a strong, diverse and sustainable neighborhood. This effort is bold, forward thinking and will make a permanent impact on the future of southwest Washington.

Current conditions warrant action at this time. The successful combination of the Georgia Urban Redevelopment Act, creative public and private partnerships, and dedicated leadership will prove that a new vision can become reality.

This report illustrates the transformation of the Rusher Street Target Area into a safe, dignified, mixed income neighborhood with quality, affordable buildings.





## Southwest Washington Redevelopment Plan Public Open House – Thursday, March 15, 2007 Redevelopment Plan Fact Sheet



*Project Fact Sheet*

### Section I. Background.

- CSRA Regional Development Center (RDC) and City of Washington preparing a redevelopment plan for southwest portion of the city (**See map on back**).
- Redevelopment plan to: promote housing redevelopment, clean-up properties; and, promote economic development/job creation.
- Redevelopment plan to be prepared according to the Georgia Urban Redevelopment Act.
- CSRA RDC provides City Council with an overview of the planning process on March 17, 2006.

### Section II. Georgia Urban Redevelopment Act.

- Requires a community to declare areas "blighted."
- Redevelopment Plan components required by the Act:
  - Clear boundaries of redevelopment area.
  - Explanation of negative conditions causing blight (Findings of Necessity).
  - Land use objectives.
  - Property to be acquired and demolition/rehabilitation activity (If applicable).
  - Plan to leverage private resources.
  - Resident relocation (If applicable).
  - Utility improvements.

### Section III. Findings of Necessity.

- Introductory chapter of the Southwest Washington Redevelopment Plan.
- Lists conditions causing slum and blight.
- Does not suggest that all properties are blighted.
- Five (5) preliminary recommendations:
  - Promote mixed-income housing development.
  - Improve street utilities.
  - Eliminate nuisances (abandoned buildings, trash, overgrown property, etc.)
  - Promote neighborhood commercial development.
  - Provide resident education associated with personal finances, credit counseling and home ownership.
- Findings of Necessity report presented to City Council on January 29, 2007.

### Section IV. Preliminary Strategies.

- Preliminary strategies in the redevelopment area (See attached map):
  - City code amendments to address property maintenance and public nuisances such as: public indecency, drugs, assault, loitering, etc.
  - Establish housing rehabilitation loan program for owner-occupied homes (subject to income limits)
  - Abate and/or demolish vacant and dilapidated/major deteriorated buildings ("dilapidated" means the building is structurally unsound and can not be occupied).
  - City acquisition of dilapidated/major deteriorated property on Rusher Street for new housing development and new utilities.
  - Clean-up commercial property through federal "brownfields" grants.
  - Promote job creation activities in the study area by designating it an "Opportunity Zone."
  - Provide access to credit counseling and home ownership courses.

### Section VI. Upcoming Tasks and Events.

- Design workshop for redevelopment activities (City Hall Annex). Stop by anytime on Friday, March 23, or Saturday, March 24.
- Revision of strategies and identification of possible funding sources.
- Schedule of plan implementation.
- Presentation of final plan document to City council by July, 2007.

### Section VII. Resources

Documents associated with the Southwest Washington Redevelopment Plan will be posted on the CSRA Regional Development Center's website as they become available. To access redevelopment plan documents visit: [www.csrardc.org/csra/planning/planning\\_review.asp](http://www.csrardc.org/csra/planning/planning_review.asp).

*"The best plans are made  
by many hands."*

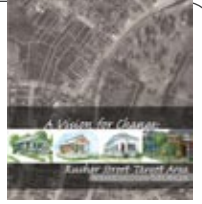
*- Author unknown*

The city of Washington and the CSRA RDC developed a survey for residents and stakeholders in the southwest Washington redevelopment area. The survey was completed by 45 participants at a public open house held on March 15, 2007. The survey resulted in several noteworthy and significant findings, reinforcing the efforts of the redevelopment process.

- 68% of those surveyed said there was a lack of safe, clean, and affordable housing in the redevelopment area.
- 40% said that crime was a problem and reported not feeling safe in the neighborhood.
- 53% indicated that the city should acquire or demolish vacant properties and buildings that were not well maintained.
- 46% said that many properties in southwest Washington were nuisances.
- 57% agreed that housing development in southwest Washington should include a mix of single family, duplex, and multifamily.
- 46% said that the focus of housing development in southwest Washington should include the rehabilitation of existing structures.
- 51% said that the focus of housing development in southwest Washington should include construction of new residential units.
- 68% said new housing in southwest Washington should be targeted to low-to-moderate income families.
- 73% preferred new housing with basic design features such as front porches and rear garages.

## *Survey Findings*





# Goals & Guiding Principles

- Improve the visual qualities of the southwest Washington redevelopment area.
- Create a safe, attractive and welcoming area for Washington's southern gateway to town.
- Improve the quality of life for people currently living on and around Rusher Street.
- Create a mixed income, walkable neighborhood that is inclusive, traditional and marketable.
- Relate design recommendations to existing Washington ordinances, codes and planning regulations.
- Protect significant tree canopy, wetlands, historic properties and significant open space.
- Communicate the look and feel of Washington–Wilkes County in all proposed changes.



Whitehall Street with additional sidewalks & street trees, creating a pleasant pedestrian environment.

## Connectivity is Key

Providing transportation choices is essential. The Rusher Street Target Area must have clear and easy access for pedestrians and motorists. Connectivity is achieved through a variety of linkages, designed for pedestrians, cyclists, and automobiles.

While the urban redevelopment area ends at Skull Shoals Road, the visitor's impression of entering or leaving Washington does not. Future planning projects should emphasize a corridor overlay district and improvement project to address the bucolic and rural aesthetic one feels when entering beautiful Wilkes County. In fact, a dominant reminder of this character is very close to the study area limits: the wooden barn on south Whitehall Street. This agricultural icon reminds travelers of Washington and Wilkes County's past. It would be an ideal location for a multi-use building; to serve as a community center, agricultural museum, antique mall and/or church.

The presence of canopy trees and understory flowering trees are part of the Wilkes County legacy. Tree replacement, protection and enhancement programs must be in place, either through ordinance or policy.



Whitehall Street, existing conditions.

*Connectivity is Key*

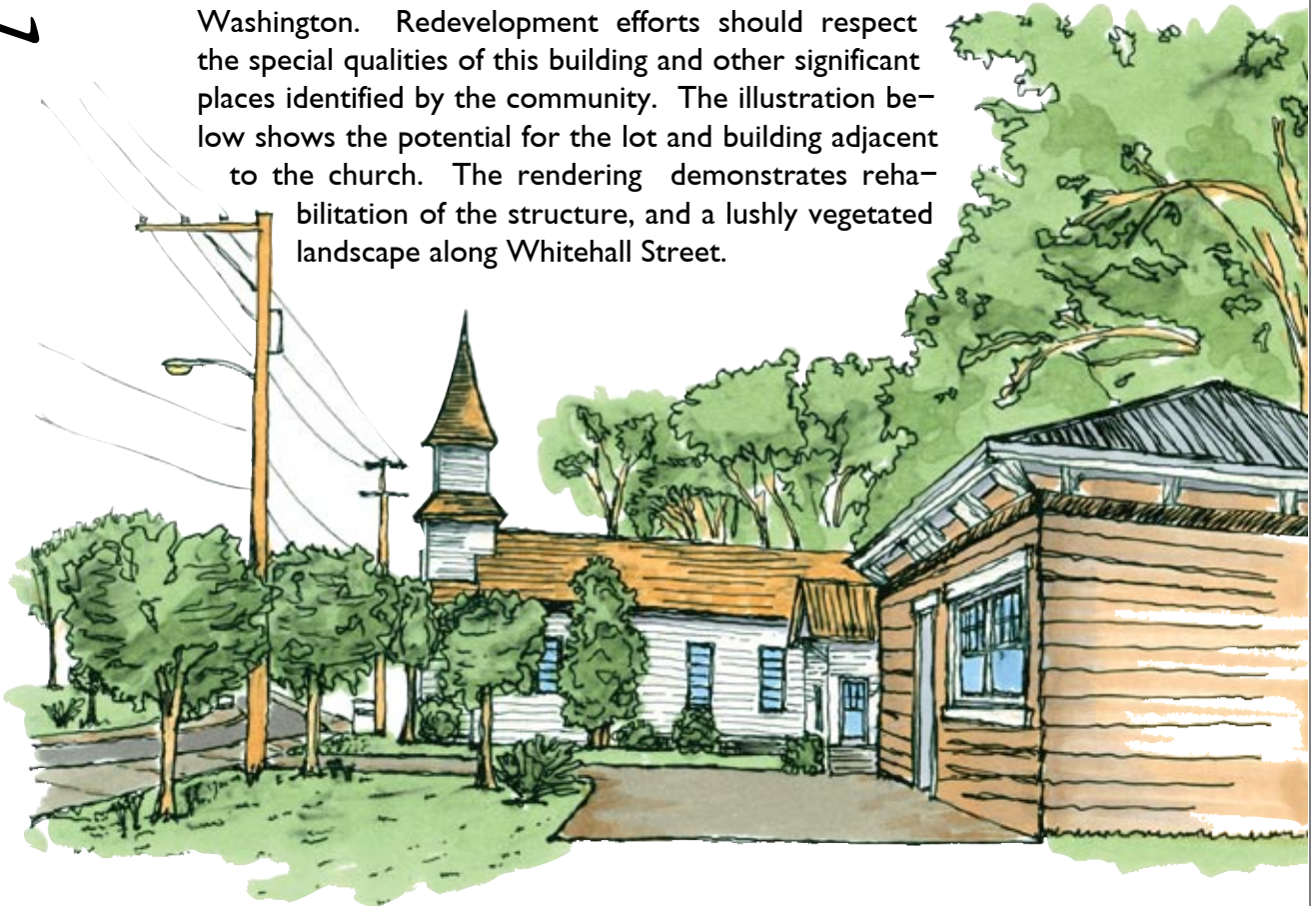


Walkways and pedestrian connections should be encouraged throughout the redevelopment area.

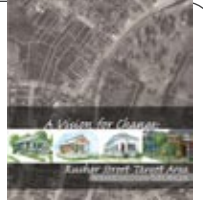
# Protect Special Places



The Jackson Chapel AME Church is an architectural icon of southwest Washington. Redevelopment efforts should respect the special qualities of this building and other significant places identified by the community. The illustration below shows the potential for the lot and building adjacent to the church. The rendering demonstrates rehabilitation of the structure, and a lushly vegetated landscape along Whitehall Street.



# PROTECT SPECIAL PLACES



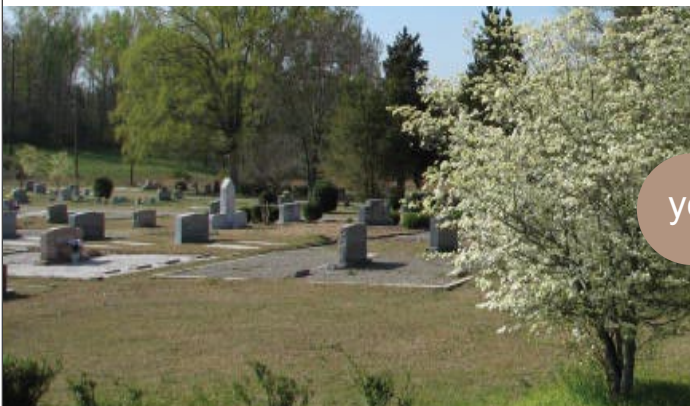
## *Protect Special Places*



yes



yes



yes

Washington has had great success with preservation of historic resources in the downtown and surrounding neighborhoods. This ethic of care and protection should be extended to several resources in southwest Washington, including iconic buildings such as the old barn south of Hospital Drive on Whitehall Street. The grounds of the Rest Haven cemetery are also an important feature of Washington's history, deserving protection.

Multifamily housing can look like beautiful, single family homes.



# Form and Scale

Conventional zoning practices emphasize separation of uses. This practice was originally intended to protect people from the harmful effects of industry and manufacturing. Time has demonstrated that the separation of land uses is impractical, inefficient, and results in decreases in quality of life. In the redevelopment area, building should be encouraged to support multiple uses. Buildings should front the street with street trees, sidewalks and on street parking, giving form and enclosure to the street.



**PARKING IN THE REAR**

Multifamily housing does not need to carry the stigma of subsidized housing. Multifamily housing can look like a large house which is subdivided internally. Or, buildings which look like houses can serve commercial and retail functions.



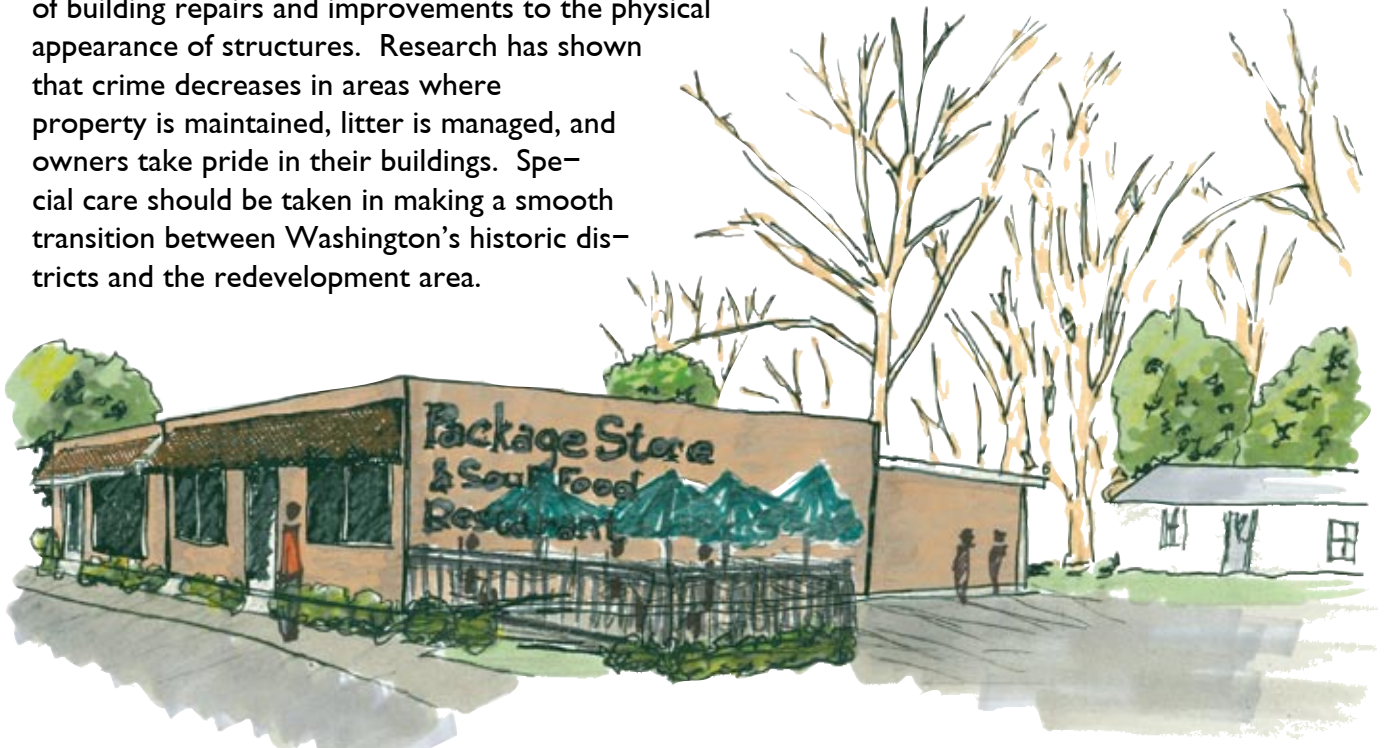


Proposed neighborhood scale, mixed use buildings for Whitehall Street.

# Whitehall Street

In order to support a viable, livable community, ordinary activities of daily living should occur within walking distance of where people live. Residents of southwest Washington are fortunate that in many ways, this is already possible: convenient stores, a day care facility and several other retail establishments exist within walking distance of the neighborhood.

The presence of liquor stores is an important retail function in the neighborhood, but these stores are often the scene of negative social behavior. Add balance by diluting the impact of the liquor store with additional retail options. Crime may be curbed as a result of building repairs and improvements to the physical appearance of structures. Research has shown that crime decreases in areas where property is maintained, litter is managed, and owners take pride in their buildings. Special care should be taken in making a smooth transition between Washington's historic districts and the redevelopment area.



**THE REDEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES** put forth here should provide two visions for appropriate change and traditional neighborhood buildings. The new Rusher Street Target Area will have tree-lined streets, pedestrian friendly public areas, safe and diverse housing, and a unique identity.

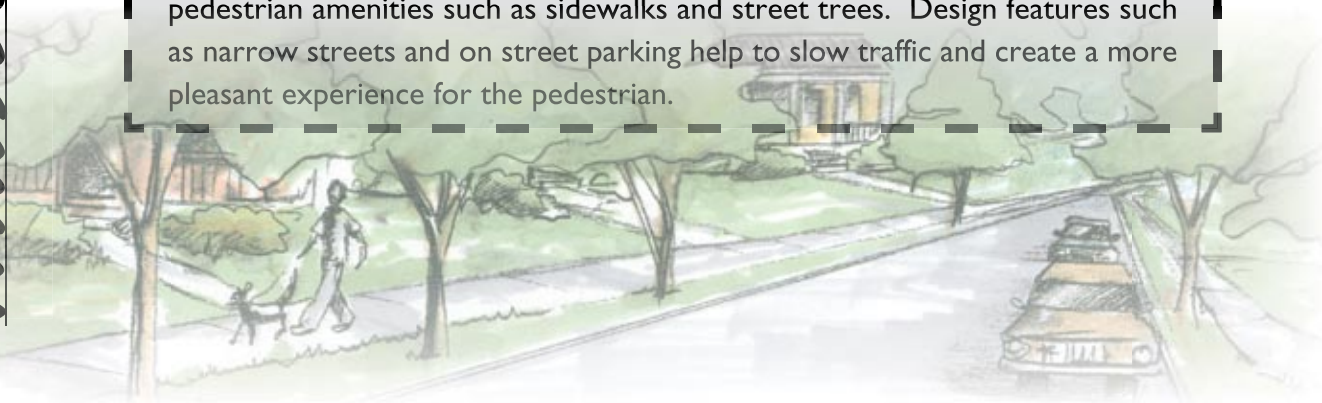
In developing neighborhoods with these characteristics, three main issues arise:

- 1 Circulation** – how people and automobiles will move around.
- 2 Architectural Character** – what will the buildings look like.
- 3 Conventional land use restrictions** – what are the lot sizes and setbacks, permitted functions, and health and safety issues.

The goal of the neighborhood should be to “feed into” the existing community fabric and context. Therefore, typical suburban features like the cul-de-sac, large lots, large houses, and excessively wide streets should be avoided.

This district specifically should have an architectural look and feel that is more traditional and follows an American “hometown” look rather than a modern metropolitan subdivision. Construction should reflect natural materials like wood and masonry rather than steel and plastic.

The district must accommodate the automobile but should also emphasize pedestrian amenities such as sidewalks and street trees. Design features such as narrow streets and on street parking help to slow traffic and create a more pleasant experience for the pedestrian.





# Rusher Street Target Area



*Master Plan Concept*

**DO THIS**

# Master Plan Concept



- A community garden to provide an inviting gathering space.
- Lots typically do not exceed 1/4 acre to 1/2 acre, adding a variety of housing options and allowing room for recreational and open space.
- Blocks are short with no more than 12 houses consecutively.
- The railroad was taken into consideration when determining lot boundaries.
- Streets are lined with a pedestrian green space.
- There is an 80 ft. green pedestrian corridor that runs along Georgia Avenue.
- Rusher Street is reshaped into a smooth curve and additional roads were added in order to enable rear entry for parking, service vehicles and utilities.
- Many of the existing properties on Whitehall are allowed to remain with this design layout.

## PLAN ELEMENTS

This is the preferred option for new development based on community input expressed in returned surveys and based on existing historic precedents. Adoption of an overlay, planned development or similar zoning district; or, application of restrictive covenants, will be necessary for the enforcement of design guidelines.

Plan elements include:

- A central green where children can safely play.



**NOT THIS**



*Master Plan Concept*



Multifamily not integrated into neighborhood.

This is a lost opportunity for street connectivity between blocks.

The stigmatized building typology of government housing should become a thing of the past for Washington. Attractive, affordable housing can be integrated into neighborhoods in creative ways to promote inclusivity and economic empowerment.





# Master Plan Concept

**Making great streets** is not easy. Taking measures to insure that new streets are “great streets” is a priority for successful new development.

Streets allow people to be outside and travel from one area to another. Streets are places of social and commercial encounter and exchange.

Streets in southwest Washington’s redevelopment area, especially the Rusher Street Target Area, should be informal and as narrow as possible to perpetuate the intimate neighborhood character currently existing. When possible, streets should be lushly landscaped with native drought-resistant trees and shrubs. They should also be functionally “green” where possible. (See page 18 for a diagram on how to make streets function in a more ecological way.)

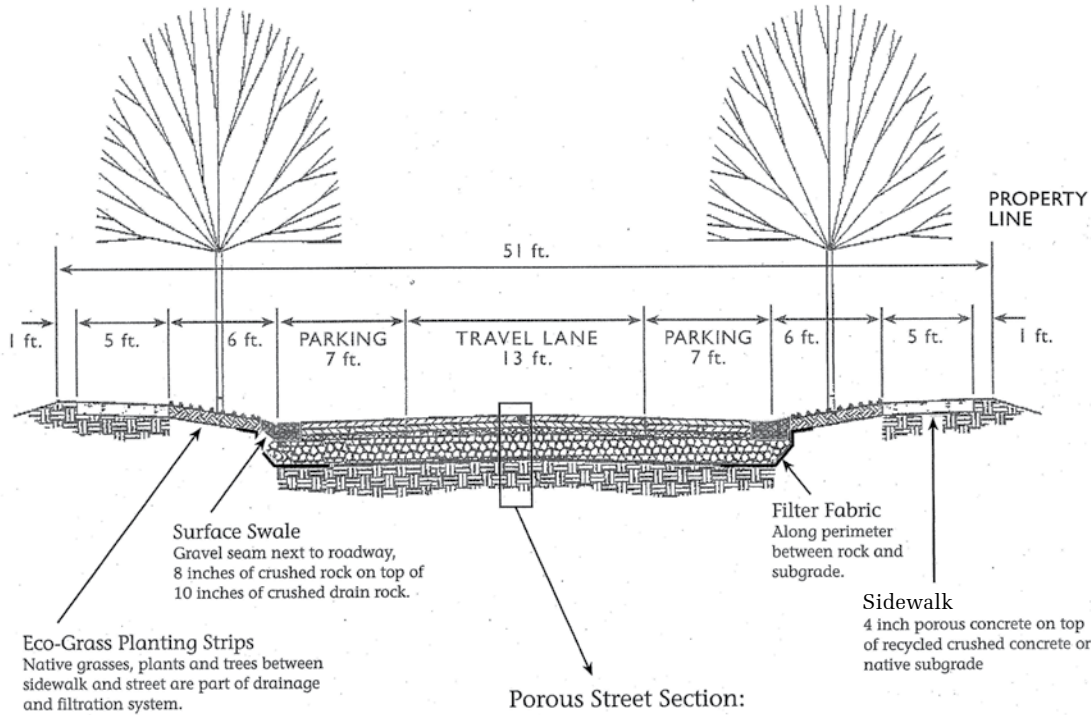
For a guide as to how great streets are made, one need only look to the web site: [streetsections.com](http://streetsections.com) which provides characteristics in photograph and cross sections of many of the great streets of the world.



Vision for Georgia Avenue

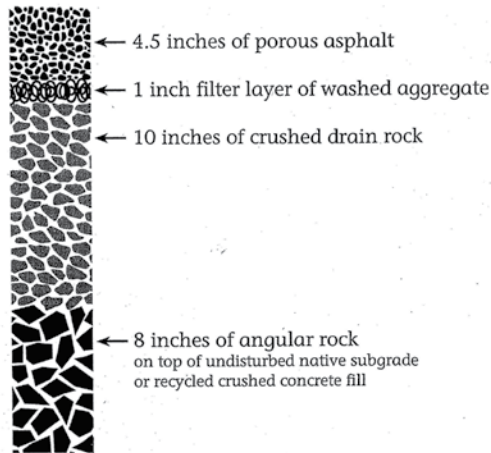


## WHAT IS A GREEN STREET?



### BENEFITS OF GREEN STREETS:

- Green Streets are narrower than conventional streets, using less materials to build. Narrow streets also help slow automobile traffic, creating pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods.
- Green Streets have no curbs. This reduces construction costs and allows bio-filtration verges to capture, absorb and clean stormwater run-off.
- The Green Streets at Pringle Creek are part of an integrated water infiltration system that captures, absorbs and filters stormwater instead of sending it downstream in pipes. If the first one inch of every rainfall is captured and absorbed, 90% of rainwater is prevented from entering stormwater pipes.



A Sustainable Living Community in Salem, Oregon | [www.pringlecreek.com](http://www.pringlecreek.com)

*Master Plan Concept*

# Design Guidelines



The purpose of these guidelines is to provide property owners, elected officials, city staff, real estate developers and residents a uniform process for determining appropriate new construction in the Rusher Street Target Area. The area embodies the redevelopment goals of the city and intends to improve the quality of life, visual integrity and building conditions for residents.

Housing is the primary focus for the area. However, not just any house will work. They must be safe, easily maintained and simple structures that will stand the test of time. Compatible infill can fill the gaps in the streetscape left by houses that were lost to demolition.

## I. Residential Building Footprint

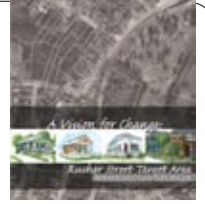
### Standard

Footprints of new buildings should follow historic foundation patterns existing in the redevelopment area.

### Guidelines

- A. New buildings should be constructed on piers raised at least three feet above the ground.
- B. Construction on a concrete slab is never appropriate.
- C. Building footprints can be irregularly shaped, but not excessively complex or extremely linear in any one direction
- D. Footprints should have a consistent set-back with a minimum distance of 10 feet from the sidewalk.





# Design Guidelines

## II. Roof Shape

### Standard

Roof pitch, complexity and materials should reflect historic construction techniques and be compatible with homes in the redevelopment area.

### Guidelines

- A. Pitched roofs shall be symmetrically sloped no less than 6:12, except porches and attached sheds, which are 2:12.
- B. Roofing materials should be of standing seam metal, dark-colored asphalt shingles or pressed metal shingles.
- C. Roof projections such as chimneys and dormers should be functional and in proportion with the roof size.



## III. Exterior Envelope

### Standard

All new buildings should be no larger or no smaller than existing historic buildings in the area.

### Guidelines

- A. Buildings should be of similar size, massing and scale. They may be slightly larger or smaller than nearby neighbors.
- B. Some buildings, such as churches, commercial buildings and municipal buildings may be larger and more prominent than their residential counterparts.

## IV. Exterior Materials

### Standard

Buildings will be clad in natural materials, predominantly wood. This satisfies environmental and green building concerns.

### Guidelines

- A. Wood substitutes such as hardiplank and other cementitious materials are allowed; however aluminum or vinyl siding is discouraged.
- B. Exterior features such as window surrounds, soffits and eaves, vents, doors and columns should also be made of natural materials.

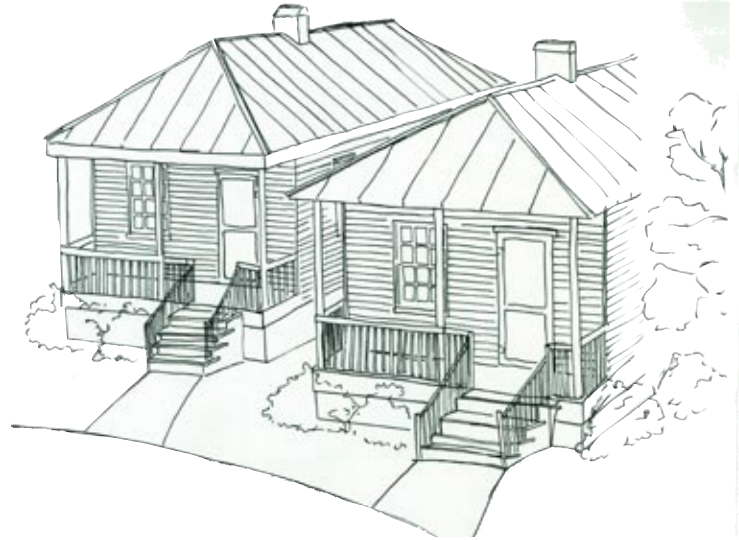


**Standard**

The established pattern of windows and doors within buildings creates a rhythm which must be perpetuated.

**Guidelines**

- A. Window size, shape and placement should vary only slightly from building to building.
- B. Primary doorways should be placed on front facade of buildings.
- C. The relationship of solids (siding) and voids (openings) should maintain a measurable relationship. To stray from this pattern causes visual chaos and should be avoided.
- D. Doors and windows that operate as sliders are prohibited along frontages.
- E. Double hung windows are preferred.



Established rhythm of windows and doors

**VI. Landscape Elements**

**Standard**

The tradition of neatly landscaped lawns, vegetable gardens and ornamental gardens is prevalent and a trademark of the city. In the Rusher Street Target Area this trademark should be perpetuated.

**Guidelines**

- A. The informal and personalized landscape of individual houses should not be discouraged.
- B. Driveways and other impervious surfaces must be kept at a minimum by sharing driveways or by pervious paving systems.
- C. While personal creativity is encouraged, individual yards should remain simple, neat and uncluttered.
- D. Large outdoor sculpture and works of art are discouraged.
- E. Fences should be made of wood and no taller than four feet in front yards and six feet in rear yards. (Rear yard fences may be chain link)



Landscape elements



- F. Front yard fences should be transparent, meaning that there should be at least as much space between pickets as the picket itself.

## VIII. Guidelines Specifically for Commercial Buildings

### Standard

Community buildings should be differentiated from residential buildings to the extent possible.

### Guidelines

- A. Retail frontage requires that a building provide a shop at sidewalk level along the entire length of the frontage. The shop front should be no less than 70% glazed in clear glass.
- B. Parking should be located at the rear of new commercial buildings.
- C. To the extent possible, parking surfaces should be permeable. Use of porous pavers and/or pervious asphalt is encouraged.
- D. Flat roofs shall be enclosed by parapets at least 42 inches high in order to conceal mechanical equipment.



Parking in the rear of buildings



Sidewalks in front of retail buildings

## IX. Signs, External Illumination & Personal Expression

### Standard

The character of the Rusher Street Target Area should remain simple, uncluttered and free of distractions.

### Guidelines

- A. All signs should be kept to a minimum
- B. Signs, to the extent possible, should be externally illuminated and made of natural materials.
- C. Individuality and artistic expression is encouraged and not limited by the provisions of these guidelines.

*Design Guidelines*



## X. Additional Guidelines

- A. There is great potential in the centrally located Rest Haven Cemetery because of its open space, park-like setting. In this light, we recommend an intensive master planning project for the cemetery.
- B. Special care should be taken in making a smooth transition between Washington's historic districts and the southwest Washington redevelopment area.
- C. Street Trees: The presence of canopy trees and understory flowering trees are part of the Wilkes County legacy. Tree replacement, protection and enhancement programs must be in place, either by ordinance or policy.
- D. Rail Line: Cities throughout Georgia have learned to embrace and celebrate their railroad heritage by building railroad observation platforms, railroad-related museums and railroad-related rehabilitation of buildings. Washington should be no different in this regard.



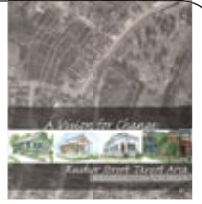
Rest Haven Cemetery



Museum concept



Georgia Woodland Railroad and Whitehall Street



# Conclusions



While physical solutions alone will not single-handedly solve the social and economic problems of the Rusher Street Target Area, neither can economic stability and safety be sustained without a supportive physical framework.

This charrette report illustrates a recommended, supportive physical framework for the redevelopment of the Rusher Street Target Area. The concept was developed based on proven methods, professional experience, and community input. The recommendations described in the report represent the community's vision for a thriving, healthy, mixed income, safe neighborhood.

Continued community and political support and public education are essential as this project moves forward. The city of Washington realizes the importance of these factors and the relationship of southwest Washington to the continued success of the city. We congratulate you on the community involvement and planning steps that have already been taken and encourage the city to continue work creatively and collaboratively toward the implementation of the southwest Washington redevelopment plan.



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## The University of Georgia

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