



HIGH WAY

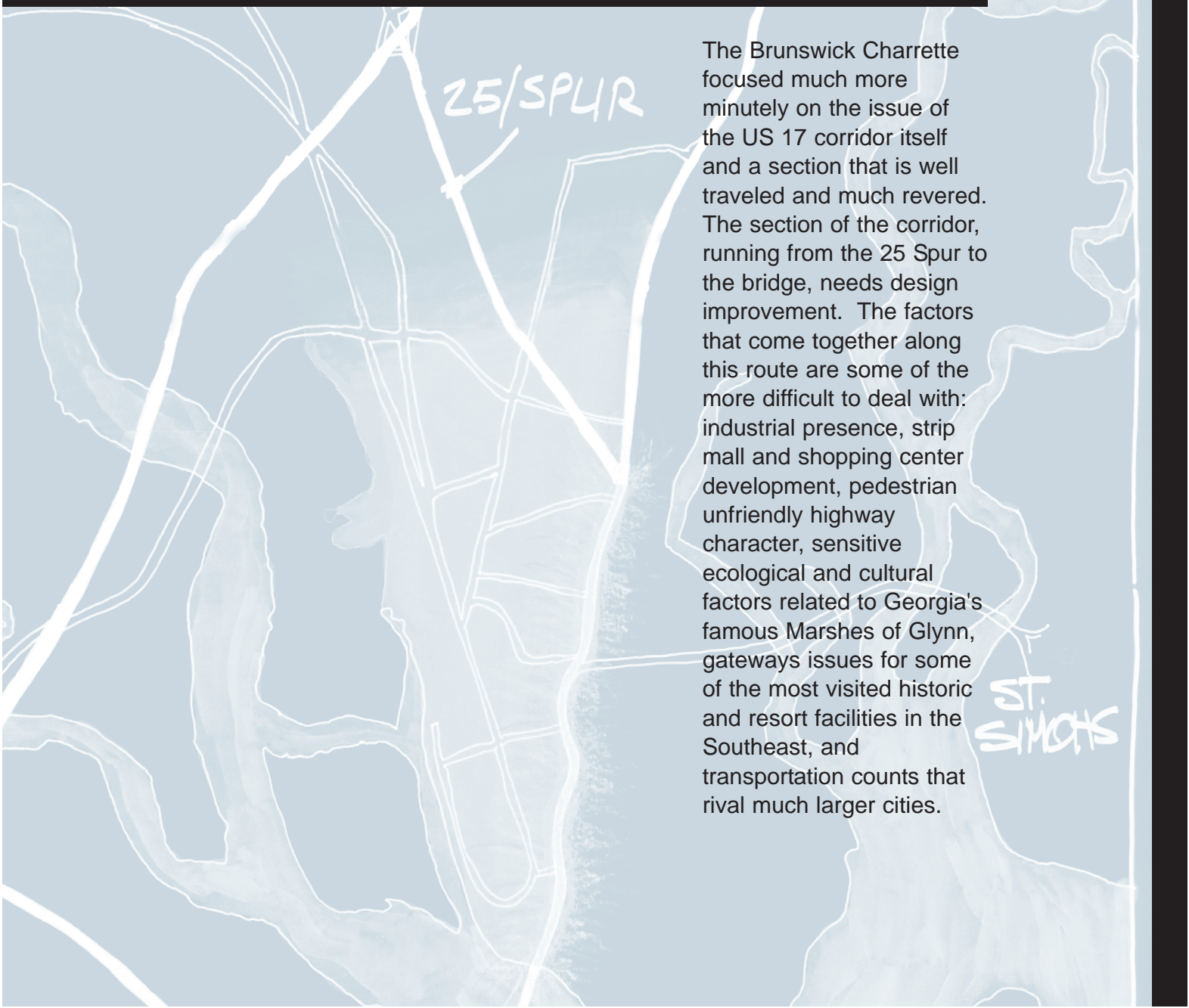
University of Georgia school of environmental design and alliance for quality growth

brunswick

charrette
2001



Introduction



The Brunswick Charrette focused much more minutely on the issue of the US 17 corridor itself and a section that is well traveled and much revered. The section of the corridor, running from the 25 Spur to the bridge, needs design improvement. The factors that come together along this route are some of the more difficult to deal with: industrial presence, strip mall and shopping center development, pedestrian unfriendly highway character, sensitive ecological and cultural factors related to Georgia's famous Marshes of Glynn, gateways issues for some of the most visited historic and resort facilities in the Southeast, and transportation counts that rival much larger cities.

The charrette team became obsessed with the richness that is Brunswick. The disjointed connection between a very old and beautiful city and its striking waterfronts was their challenge. A suitable visual and functional solution was their desired product. After many hours of analysis, the charrette team produced a very exact prescription for improvement along the route.



Henry Parker,
Adjunct Professor
Landscape
Architecture and
Historic Preservation

Eleonora Machado,
Public Service and
Outreach Design
Specialist/Adjunct
Professor

Nancy Aten, MLA
Amy Moore, MLA
Melanie Rees, MLA
Chad Pruitt, BLA



B



Laid out in 1771 on the Oglethorpe Plan, Brunswick has the same strong grid pattern as its better-known sister city, Savannah, the Brunswick has always had much to offer. Attracted by the trade from the port, a long list of diverse individuals has made Brunswick their home.

B r u n s w i c k

Among its numerous assets, Brunswick boasts the second largest concentration of documented historic structures in Georgia. The nearby Golden Isles of St. Simons and Jekyll lure visitors with the promise of beaches, resorts and historic sites. Brunswick has long been touted only as a gateway to these islands. Although the Golden Isles offer visitors one experience, Brunswick has unique and beautiful resources to offer the visitor. Highway 17, which is the largest circulation route, runs along the eastern Marshes of Glynn. These marshes offer stunning views.

AVE

GLOUCESTER

G

NORWICH



The bustling waterfront is home to private and commercial vessels from all over the world, a marina, and endless activity. Historic Downtown Brunswick, featuring Victorian commercial buildings, offers visitors and residents alike a unique experience with limitless shopping, dining, and cultural activities. Protecting views of the marshlands along this corridor as well as beautifying the business area here should be a first priority; making a tangible connection between the town and the marshlands for travelers is also important.

Despite the great charm of downtown Brunswick and its historic architecture, nothing presently along the heritage corridor invites the traveler to deviate from a trip to the islands to venture into town.



Improvement plans for Highway 17 are underway; this includes widening the route to a six-lane divided highway near Brunswick. Now is the time for Brunswick to protect their natural and cultural resources for the benefit of residents and visitors alike.



For Brunswick to capitalize on its location next to Highway 17 and to compete with the nearby islands, it must establish iconographic gateways from the heritage highway into town. An easily read system of signage is one of the most important things any town can do, both for locals and out-of-towners. Colors, symbols, and

shapes, used consistently, can impart information and easily guide travelers and inform locals. Signage should reflect the character of its surrounding landscape. A comprehensive signage system should be employed along the length of Highway 17; in Brunswick there are three intersections on the heritage corridor that are important:

see page 7 for details

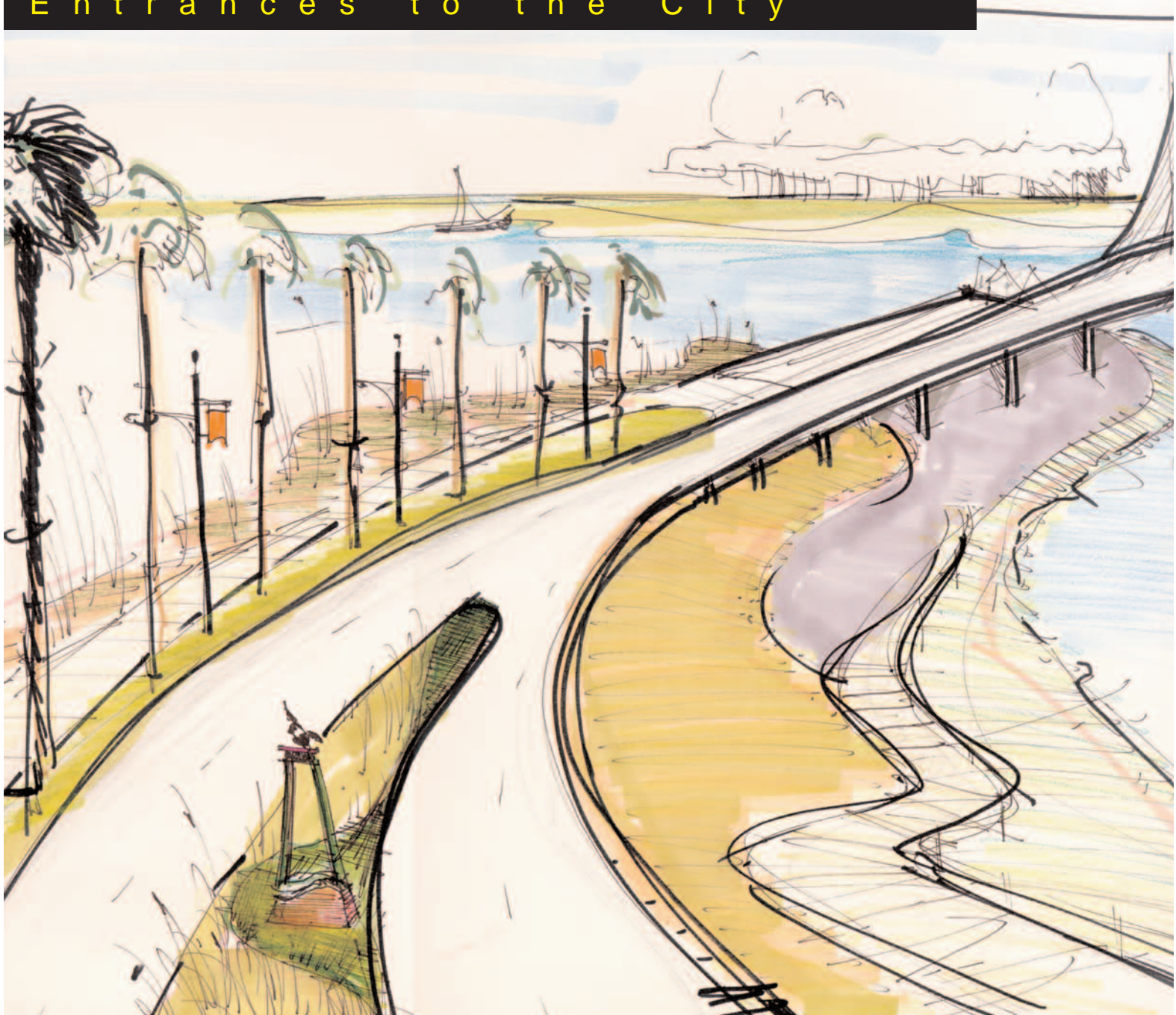
Highway 17

and Gloucester

and St. Simon's Causeway

and 4th Street

Entrances to the City

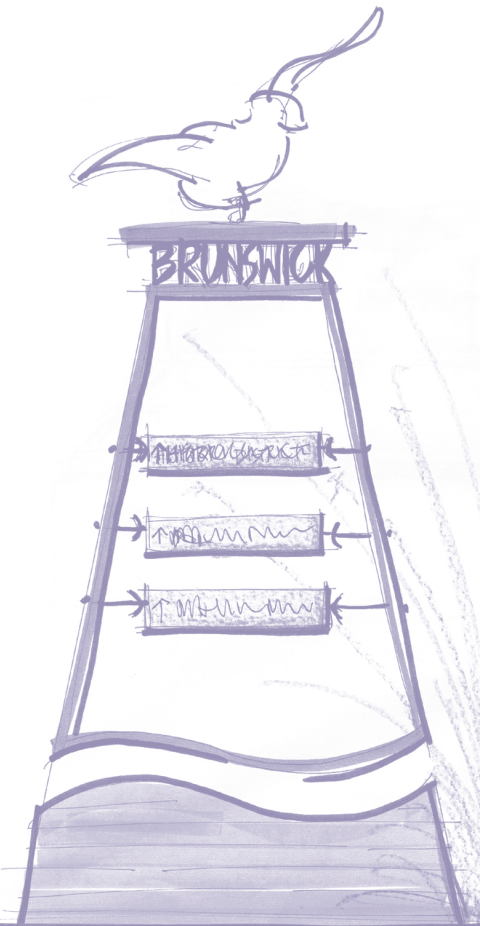


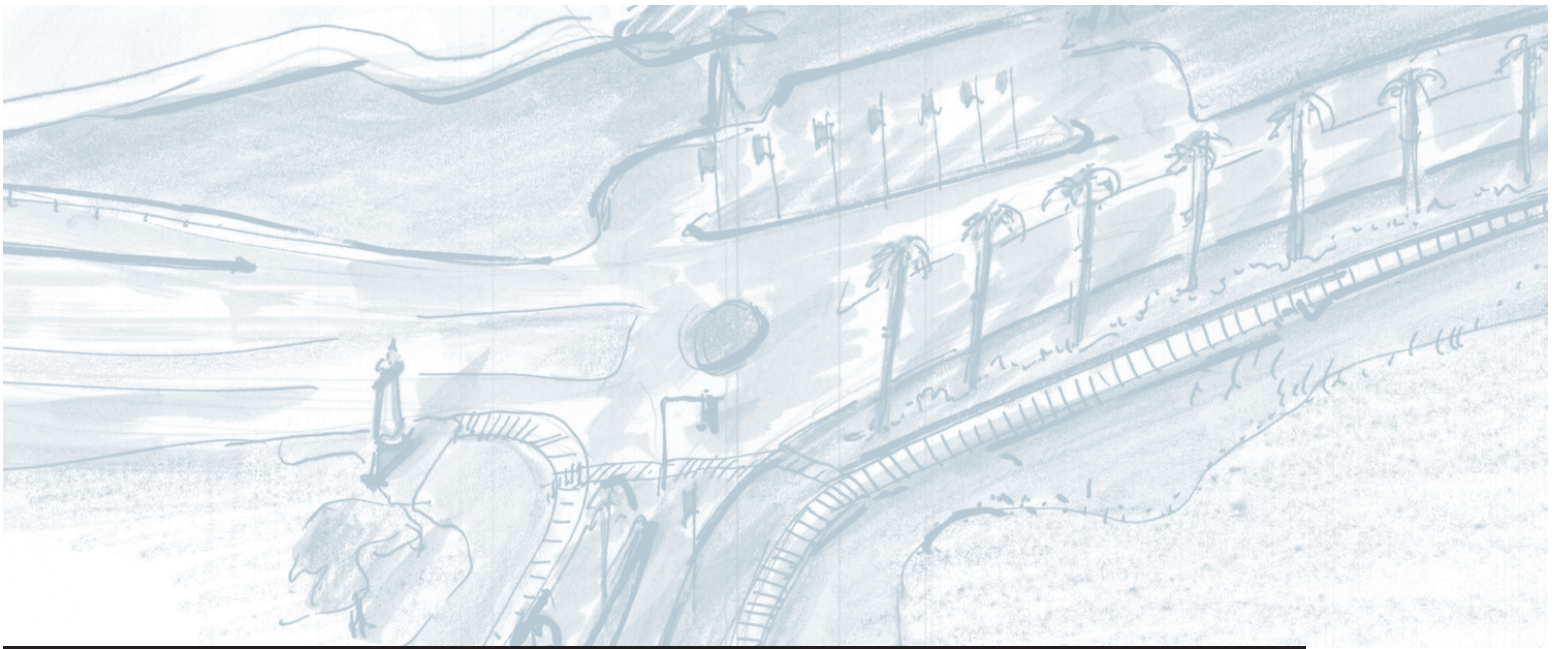


Brunswick needs to clean up its act!

Attractive signage showing an alternative route into Brunswick is badly needed. Signage should be minimal, easily read, attractive and systematic. Large billboards here should be disposed of and future ones prohibited. Landscaping is imperative. This connection is scheduled for upgrades, including a new intersection and other improvements at L Street and Highway 17.

Signage should be clear and easy to read and follow. Signs and landscaping should follow the design guidelines outlined for Highway 17. Native plantings should be used appropriately. The trees planted should be similar to the overall tree-planting patterns in town. Landscaping around signage should be of a size to compliment the area and not obstruct the signs. Directional signs and markers should be placed in locations that facilitate use and reduce confusion. Welcome signs marking the entrances to Brunswick should be placed along Highway 17.





Streetscape improvements



Highway 17 and GLOUCESTER

Local events information (blood drive results, theatre info, etc.) on various boards or banners in the green island at this intersection adds to the visual clutter. No board at all would be best here, but if the community does not want to give up this area to distribute information, it should be limited to one board. The Howard Coffin Park in existence across the street with a terrific view of the marsh is a good tie-in to proposed boardwalk. New signage should be placed at the park to direct visitors to the boardwalk.



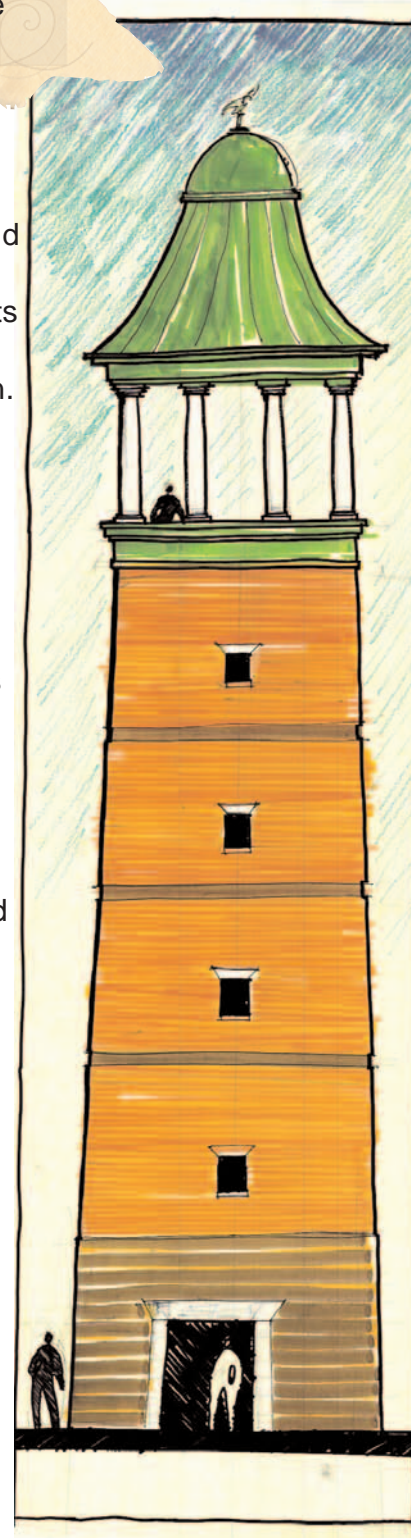
Highway 17 and 4th Street

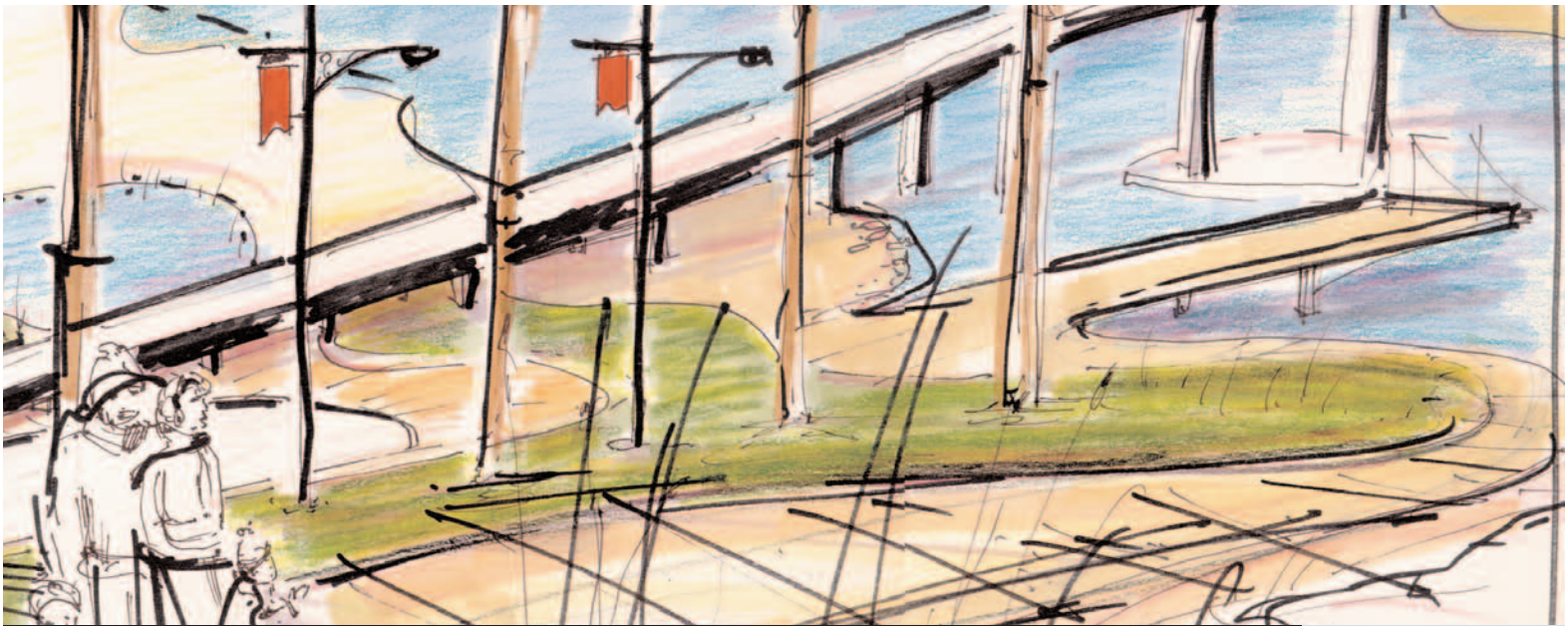
4th Street is a major connection between the port area and Highway 17. Probably the intersection needing the least improvement; largely unobstructed views; any signage directing motorists into town needs to be attractive, consistent and easily read. Any landscape improvements should enhance but not obstruct the intersection.



Highway 17 and ST. SIMON'S CAUSEWAY

The visual clutter at this intersection is overwhelming. Unfortunately, the only appealing cue here is signage and a visitor's center for St. Simon and Jekyll Islands. Consider the appropriate signage here for the Brunswick Welcome Center.





P o e t r y W a l k

POETRY WALK

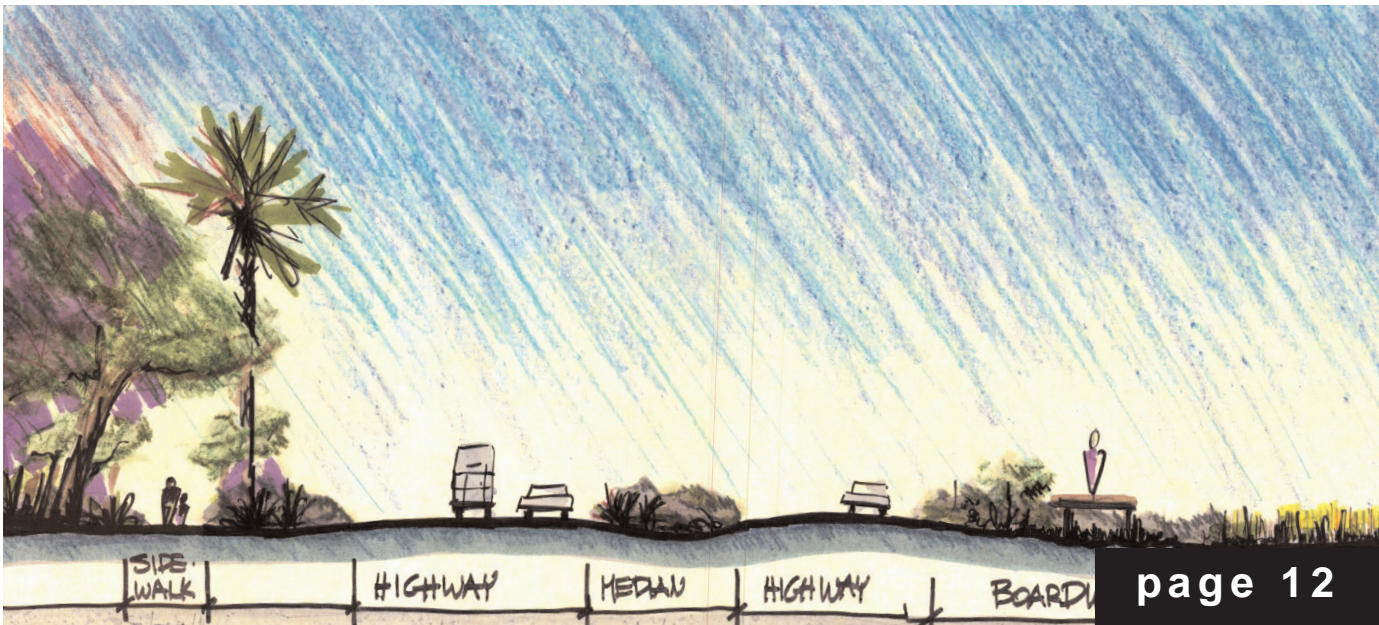
One way both to heighten the appeal of the heritage highway and educate travelers is to construct a boardwalk extending along US 17 and tying into existing pedestrian paths and bike lanes. This boardwalk would run roughly parallel to the highway and into the marsh with platforms and nature stands interspersed for quiet observation. The rich natural history of the Brunswick marshes is extolled by Southern laureate Sidney Lanier. The venerable oak tree he wrote under is still in existence across from the marshes. The boardwalk could easily become a poetry walk, allowing locals and travelers deeper insight into their surroundings, both naturally and poetically. Information about local flora and fauna could be dotted along the walk.

Streetscape Funding

Sources:

See Funding Tools and
Incentives for Details

- Certified Local Government Program
- Historic Landscape and Gardens Grant
- Local Development Fund
- OneGeorgia Equity Fund
- Transportation Enhancement (TE) Funds
- Preservation Services Fund
- Rural Business Enterprise Grants
- Urban and Community Forestry Assistance Program





Heritage Corridor

Establish Highway 17 as a Heritage Corridor

Encourage compatible development along the heritage corridor.
Market new uses along the corridor such as a poetry walk and eco-tourism destinations.
Promote coordination between the Downtown Development Authority, the Historic Preservation Board, the Chamber of Commerce, and the community.



Golf Links

GLUCESTER

ST.

P.O.

ST.

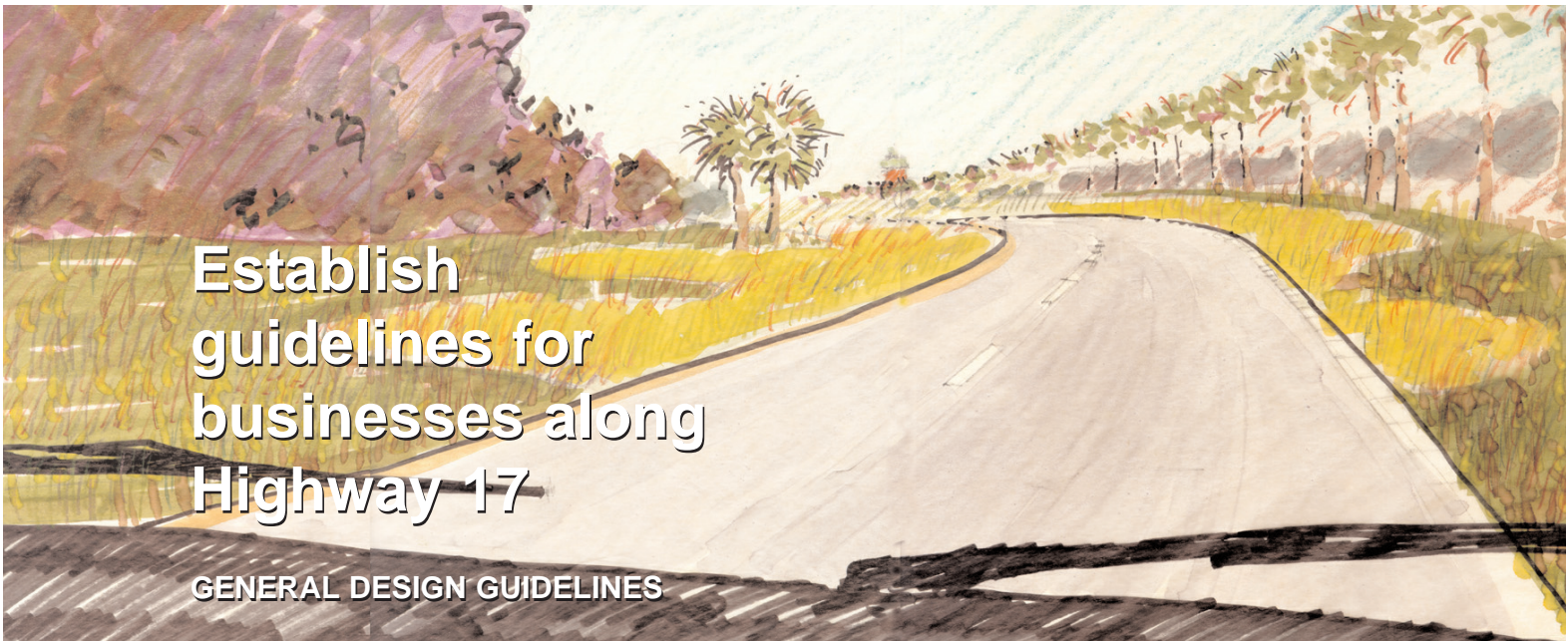
B



- Increase the visibility of Brunswick to those traveling on Highway 17 through a system of signs and brochures, books and newsletters at the visitor's centers
- Take advantage of Brunswick potential for heritage tourism by capturing Highway 17 and Golden Isles visitors (those who might otherwise pass Brunswick by). Encourage eco-tourism by coordinating environmental efforts, such as the green space plan and the Marshes of Glynn plans and by marketing low-impact outdoor sports such as fishing, walking tours, kayaking, and canoeing.

Bruswick Visitor's Center






Establish guidelines for businesses along Highway 17

GENERAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

Guidelines for Highway 17



Existing businesses along the corridor are the traveler's first introduction to Brunswick; the flavor they impart will determine to a large degree whether the casual traveler will be interested enough to turn into town or continue along Highway 17. Preventing the Highway 17 corridor from the type of development occurring along Interstate 95 will improve the experiences of tourists, visitors, and residents alike. An overlay district, which encompasses the highway corridor, should be created and design guidelines adopted for new development in this district. The current lack of guidelines has resulted in inappropriate and incompatible development leading to a visually cluttered and confusing corridor with little landscaping, and no regard to existing assets in the environment. New guidelines will guide development in consistent and environmentally sensitive manner.

"Public perception of a community is based largely on what can be seen from an automobile"

—Rural By Design



VIEWES

Maintaining unobstructed views to the marshes is crucial; without them, the marshes may as well not exist.

- Take advantage of opportunities to preserve and frame views of the marshes.
- New construction and signage should be placed with consideration of the viewsheds

NEW CONSTRUCTION

A consistent built environment will help to create a cohesive business area for the corridor.

- New construction should compliment the character of the both the built and natural environments
- New construction should be discernable as new; it is not necessary to replicate historic buildings.
- New construction should be compatible with existing structures in terms of:

Materials Setback Height

Scale Mass Envelope

Footprint

PARKING

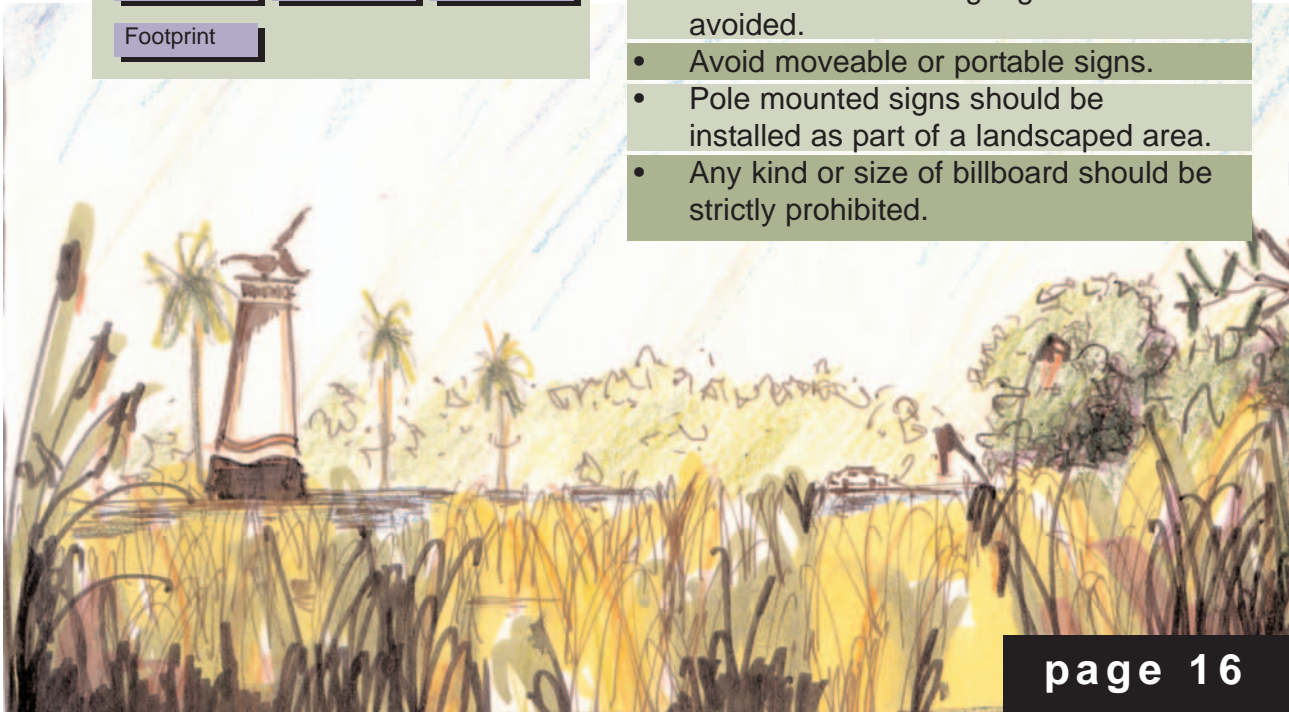
Sufficient parking is essential to the success of the businesses in Brunswick. The overpowering visual clutter of the area is added to by street front parking.

- Parking should be confined to the rear of new businesses
- Surface parking lots should be screened with appropriate landscaping

SIGNAGE

Signage, like parking, is essential to any business. Signage attracts pedestrian and vehicular traffic and can add to the charm and character of the streetscape.

- Signs should be monument style.
- Building and signage materials should be compatible.
- Neon or interior lit signage should be avoided.
- Avoid moveable or portable signs.
- Pole mounted signs should be installed as part of a landscaped area.
- Any kind or size of billboard should be strictly prohibited.





Landscape guidelines

LANDSCAPE Plant Schedule

Fingers of marsh vegetation crossing the highway reflect a natural undulating coastline and act as a deliberate counterpoint to the alee. Where feasible, remnant estuary inlets may be restored on the inland side allowing water flow under the highway at high tide.



Baccharis halimifolia 1



Spartina alterniflora 4

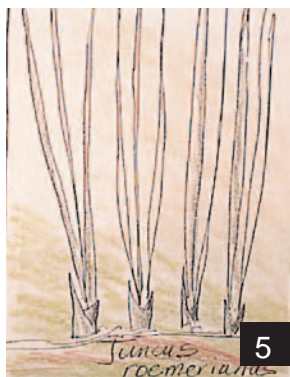


Serenoa repens 3



Iva frutescens 2

1. *Baccharis halimifolia*
2. *Iva frutescens*
3. *Serenoa repens*
4. *Spartina alterniflora*
5. *Juncus roemerianus*
6. *Limonium carolinianum*



Juncus roemerianus 5



Limonium carolinianum 6

december 2001

Lack of greenery contributes much to the unattractive look of the businesses on Highway 17. The beautiful oaks in this area should be protected; their impact is invaluable.

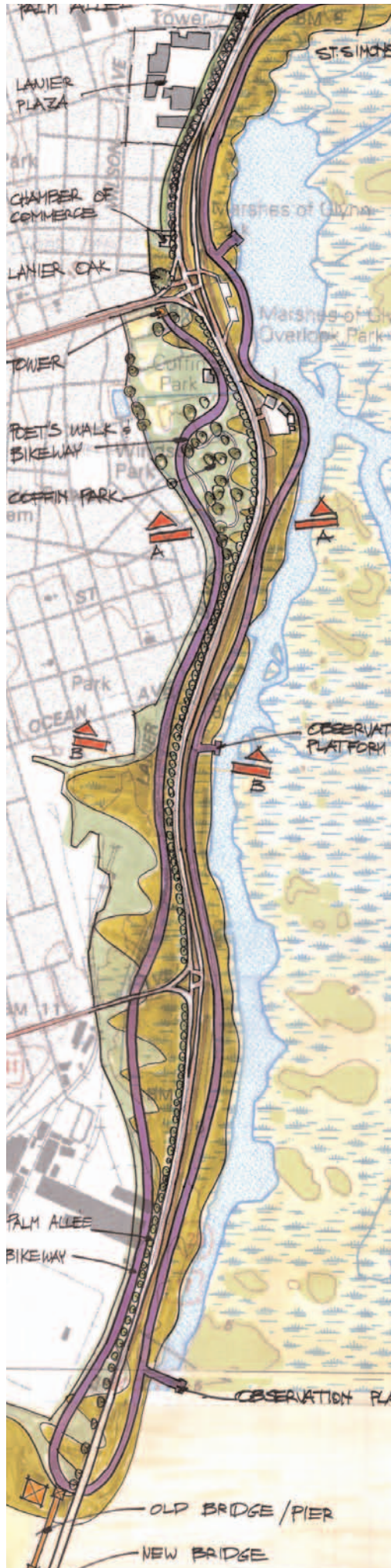
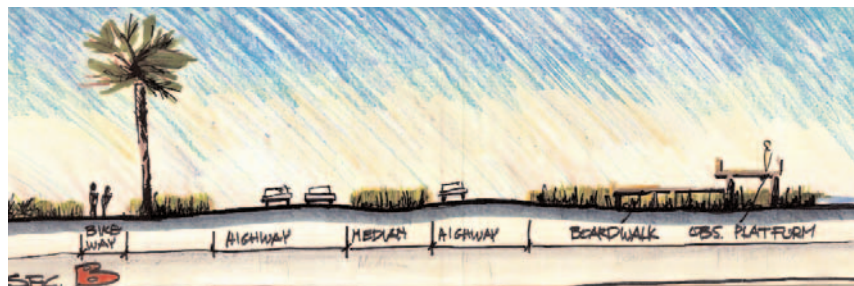
f o r H i g h w a y 1 7

Where this is not feasible, the vegetation will visually mimic the same pattern. Marsh grasses will soften the sharp boundary between water and land as you first drive through them, then a stretch of maritime forest edge, then grasses again. The marsh fingers are planted with bands of salt cordgrass (*Spartina alternifolia*) or borders of needle rush (*Juncus roemerianus*) where tides cannot reach. Maritime forest transitions, reaching east across the highway, move from inland live oaks (*Quercus virginiana*) and saw palmetto (*Serenoa repens*) to wax myrtle, gourdnel tree, and marsh elder, all as part of native plant communities

Planting the medians will soften their effect and improve the overall streetscape.

- Avoid disturbing existing trees, especially mature trees.
- Native plants should be used (see plant selection palette).

While new businesses will adhere to these design guidelines, it will take some time for existing businesses to come into compliance; this will happen gradually as repairs, alterations, and additions take place.



landscapes on 17



Marketing Ideas:

Heritage Tourism

- Brunswick Local and National Register Historic Districts
- Port History
- Connection to the Golden Isles



EcoTourism

- Marshes of Glynn walking tour
- Kayaking and canoeing
- Bird watching
- Fishing and shrimping industry tours

Marketing Brunswick

Shopping/Retail

- Possible Outlet shopping
- Local antique and specialty shops and galleries

Beyond the Gateway: *Brunswick as a Destination*

- Party in the Park
- Seafood Festival
- Brunswick Stewbilee
- First Saturday Bazaar
- Our Lady of Fatima Processional
- Blessing of the Fleet
- July Fourth Festival
- Coastal Heritage Festival
- Farmers Market at Mary Ross Waterfront Park

Potential Marketing Projects:

- Independent Brunswick Welcome Center at an appropriate location
- Develop a marketing plan for Downtown Brunswick
- Signage along the Heritage Corridor



december 2001



Brunswick has so much to offer to make the most of the heritage highway. The beginning and ending issues all involve marketing and the successful development of a marketing and promotion plan.

Existing organizations should help with work loads. There is no reason to reinvent the wheel.



marketing

The University of Georgia's School of Environmental Design has been using the charrette process to help communities for many decades. Through interaction between our vigorous, fresh and highly capable students, the spirit of place that exudes from Georgia towns and the gentle guidance and experience from committed faculty, we have been able to produce a vision for communities. The process has many proponents and has gained special favor in a new era of contemporary town planning, new urbanism, neo-traditionalism and just plain, hometown, good old fashioned concern for where you live.

The charrette is one of the tools communities use to improve their fate. When accidental failure is the norm, many places have discovered that the charrette is a way to plan for success. Many organizations now have guides for planning charrettes for everything , from ecological restoration to neighborhood revitalization. It is easy to see that the charrette is applicable to corridor planning. In fact, it may be one of the most effective tools for making roadways more attractive and more responsive to the needs of the cities and counties they go through.

US 17 and the special places it connects is a perfect fit for charrette planning. The three charrettes that were conducted in February 2002 in Woodbine, Brunswick and Richmond Hill, Georgia and the charrette that was conducted in the previous year in Darien prove that point. The following instructions for conducting charrettes, determining community needs and finding the right team should help when it is time for other communities to host their own charrette.

The Public Service and Outreach Office, the staff and students of the School of Environmental Design and the Georgia Alliance for Quality Growth stand committed to helping US 17 become the pipeline of success it once was, without losing the character that makes it a Drive through Georgia's Past.

Pratt Cassity
Public Service & Outreach Director
School of Environmental Design
College of Environment and Design at UGA



This publication was produced by the Public Service and Outreach,
School of Environmental Design, University of Georgia.
For electronic version of this publication on PDF, contact us at
(706) 542.4731 Brunswick_04_2002.pdf