

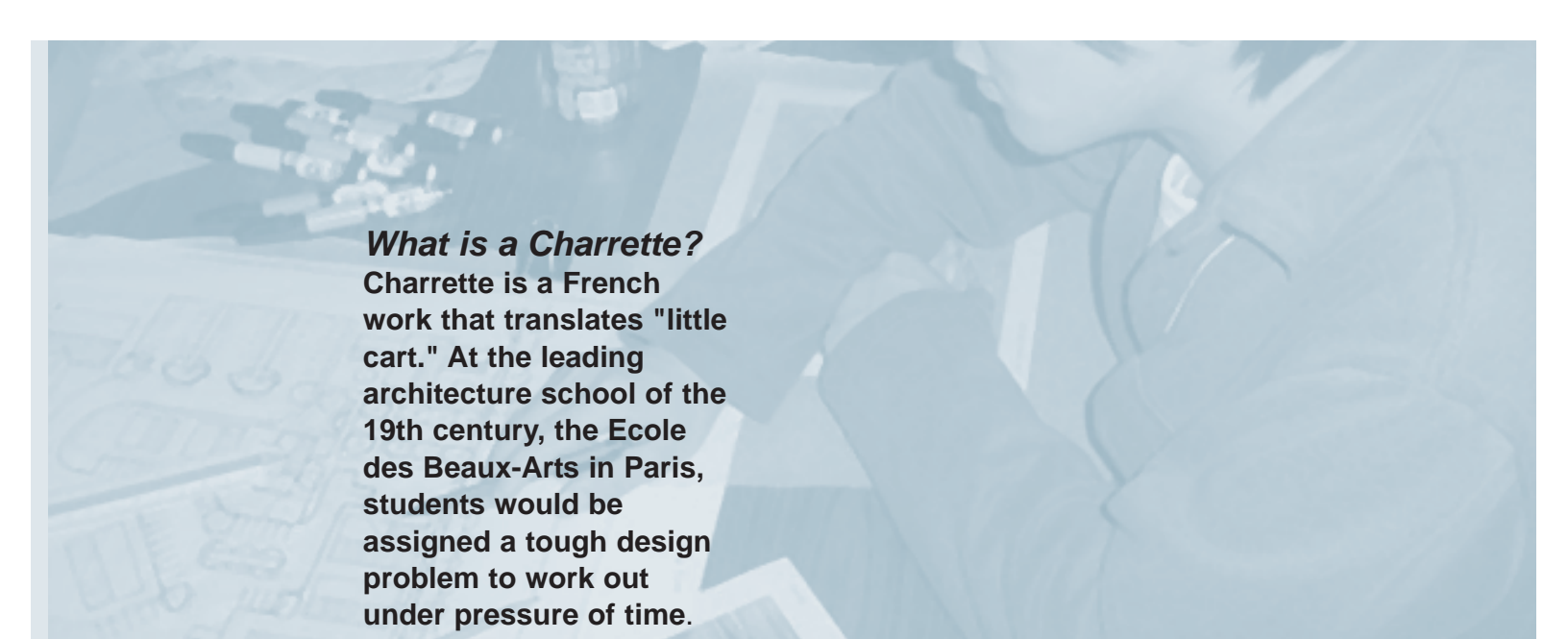


HIGH WAY

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

richmond hill

charrette
2001



What is a Charrette?
Charrette is a French work that translates "little cart." At the leading architecture school of the 19th century, the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, students would be assigned a tough design problem to work out under pressure of time.

The process of a charrette

They'd continue sketching as fast as they could, even as little carts (charrettes) carried their drawing boards away to be judged and graded. Today, "charrette" has come to describe the rapid, intensive, and creative work session, usually lasting a week or more, in which a design team focuses on a particular design problem and arrives at a collaborative solution. Charrettes are product-oriented. The public charrette is fast becoming a preferred way to face the planning challenges confronting American cities.
*by Jeff Schommer,
CharretteCenter*

A charrette is an intensive, multi-disciplinary planning process. It is designed to facilitate an open discussion between all of the stakeholders of a given development project, including architects, community groups, developers and neighbors. A charrette is usually a short process, from 3 days to 2 weeks long, resulting in a clear, detailed, realistic vision for development.

There are three main parts to a charrette:

- **Exploration and Issue Identification:** Stakeholders and design professionals meet to explore the area (e.g., building, site, neighborhood) and discuss issues that the stakeholders feel are important to the development.
- **Design:** Design professionals create a few different schematic images to represent numerous design solutions that take into consideration the issues that the stakeholders discussed in step one: building typology, design elements, green spaces, landscaping, parking, recreation, traffic, safety, sustainable development and water management, to name just a few.

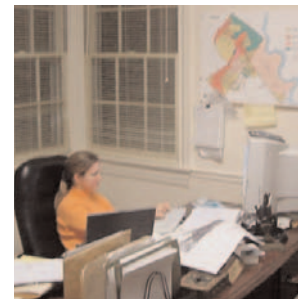
**Call to Action /
Implementation Plan:**

A development document summarizes the vision and is adopted by stakeholders as a guide for present and future developments. The process is based upon stakeholder participation and includes numerous options for stakeholders to offer their input and comment on designs and how the proposed designs address the community issues.



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The early days . . .

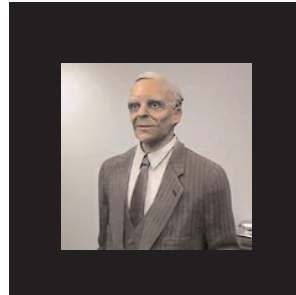
The early days of Richmond Hill rely to the "crossroadsness" of the city's location. That premise should guide growth today,

without obliterating some of the very nice features that brought growth to the region in the first place. Namely, the natural character and environmental quality of coastal Georgia, the association with Ford, a distinct building style and a very interesting story to tell.

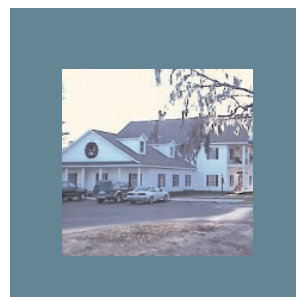
The charrette process developed several goals early in the intensive look at this community.

Those goals are:

- To establish Highway 17 as a historic corridor
- To recommend general design guidelines for the corridor and for Highway 144
- To encourage visitors to Richmond Hill from Highway 17
- To provide legible and attractive signage to guide visitors
- To define the character of the Richmond Hill city core.



The goals can be achieved through a new and updated physical planning process, a new policy related to aesthetics and a system of management practices that will make Richmond Hill unique rather than just another commercial strip along a Georgia four-lane. Component pieces of this improved land use and planning framework are explained as issues and recommendations.



this charrette

How *Richmond Hill* got to this point.....

Though not incorporated as a town until 1962, Richmond Hill traces its early beginnings as a crossroads to the days when it served as a meeting point for Native American trading paths. In the eighteenth century, rice production became the primary money crop for this area of the new colony. Rice cultivation was extremely advanced for eighteenth century engineering, with the building of embankments, culverts, and gates to control tidal flow. By the mid-eighteenth century, enough settlement had taken place that General James Oglethorpe saw the need to appoint surveyors in the area. By the early nineteenth century, the

R i c h m o n d H i l l

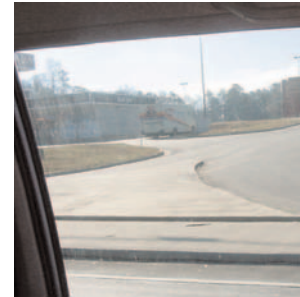
old Native American paths had evolved into Stage Road and Hencart Road, and a small settlement called Crossroads had been established at their point of intersection. The area became a rich agricultural region and by the mid-nineteenth century came to be called Way's Station in honor of plantation owner and train depot operator William Way. The train depot stood approximately at the site of the present Richmond Hill City Hall.

During the War Between the States, troops under the command of Brigadier General Justin Kilpatrick camped under the majestic oaks of the Crossroads, some of which still remain today. Following the war, Way's Station remained a railroad settlement. The town would not undergo significant change until 1925, when industrialist Henry Ford purchased approximately 85,000 acres. Ford built a home place and a working plantation, which he named Richmond Hill. He embarked on an enormous building project that consisted of nearly three hundred buildings. Among the Ford

building projects was "The Bottom" a residential development for Ford workers where each house had a detached garage. Ford also built a community house, kindergarten, and health clinic to serve the community of Ford employees. Ford suggested the need for a new name for the burgeoning community but did not want the town's name to include his own. In 1941, seven hundred residents signed a petition to change the name of the town to that of Ford's plantation, Richmond Hill.

Following the years of Henry Ford, the land of his former plantation was sold, and the property was transformed into a residential and golf course development. It is currently being developed as Ford Plantation, a 1,800-acre private residential community. Paralleling the development of Ford Plantation has been the phenomenal growth of Richmond Hill. The town has experienced a staggering growth rate of over 160% in the past two decades. Though several of the original Ford buildings remain, including the houses

and garages of The Bottom, the rapid growth poses a threat to the structures if protective guidelines are not implemented. The former Native American paths are now Highways 144 and 17. Their historic significance was recognized when the Georgia General Assembly officially named the intersection "The Crossroads" in 1979. A few of the majestic live oaks which once shaded Native American traders, Oglethorpe, and Union troops



today stand against a backdrop of fast food chains and convenience stores and face the threat of bustling traffic. It is with an appreciation of the history that the live oaks have witnessed and the role they play in the aesthetics of Richmond Hill, they can again be the focal point of the historic Crossroads.

The recent expansion and growth of Richmond Hill have brought new opportunities as well as new challenges with regard to creation of a strong sense of community. However, the development of the City Hall complex and J. L. Gregory Park demon-

strate an effort and a desire to create a vibrant city center. The blending of civic activities, recreation, residential, and commercial activities in this area form a foundation upon which Richmond Hill can build a community core. In conjunction with the physical elements of this area, it is critical that there be program elements to foster community identity development. One such area that can be pursued is expanded use of the city park for community events. Using the park for such events provides citizens with the opportunity to gain exposure to and develop an appreciation for the diverse range of talents and cultures that thrive in their community. As individuals come to appreciate their community center through attending these events, their sense of ownership in the park and pride in their community will increase.

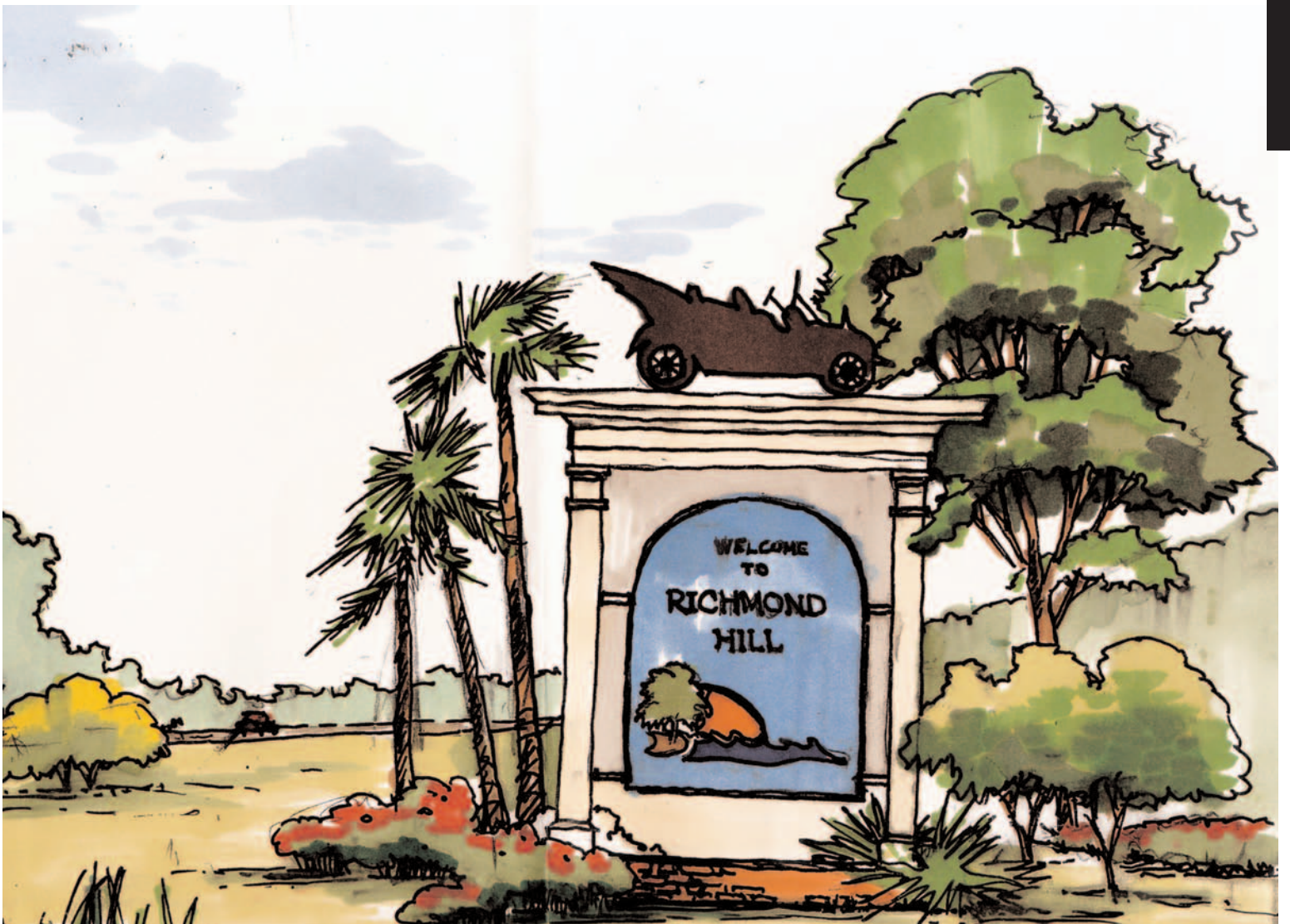
Both elected officials and private citizens have expressed an interest in creating a heart to their city. With the foundation that has already been laid, wisdom, and a willingness to engage in long-term planning, this goal can be achieved. A concerted effort to guide growth will result in a city that takes pride in its past and has hope in its future.

gateways

Issues and Recommendations

“SLOW DOWN!

This is a great place.”





s i g n s a t e n t r a n c e s

GATEWAYS

Richmond Hill has many wonderful things to offer the visitor and resident. Without a system to divert visitors into the town, these resources go unnoticed. **A system of innovative signs is needed to make the town known to those traveling Highways 17 and 144.** An announcement that **"you are there"** is necessary to grab the attention of the casual passerby. An even stronger element of "Slow Down! This is a great place" is needed for the person who are traveling through Richmond Hill to get somewhere else.

Signs at Entrances to town- An easily read image that reflects the character of the city is one of the most important pieces of the puzzle that visitors and locals must figure out to navigate and be informed. Placement of signs at the entrance points to the city on Highway 17 and Highway 144 will help with the identification of Richmond Hill as a distinct place. The signs will use the proposed logo consisting of the current emblem of the city, architectural elements from the Ford era, and a Ford convertible automobile.

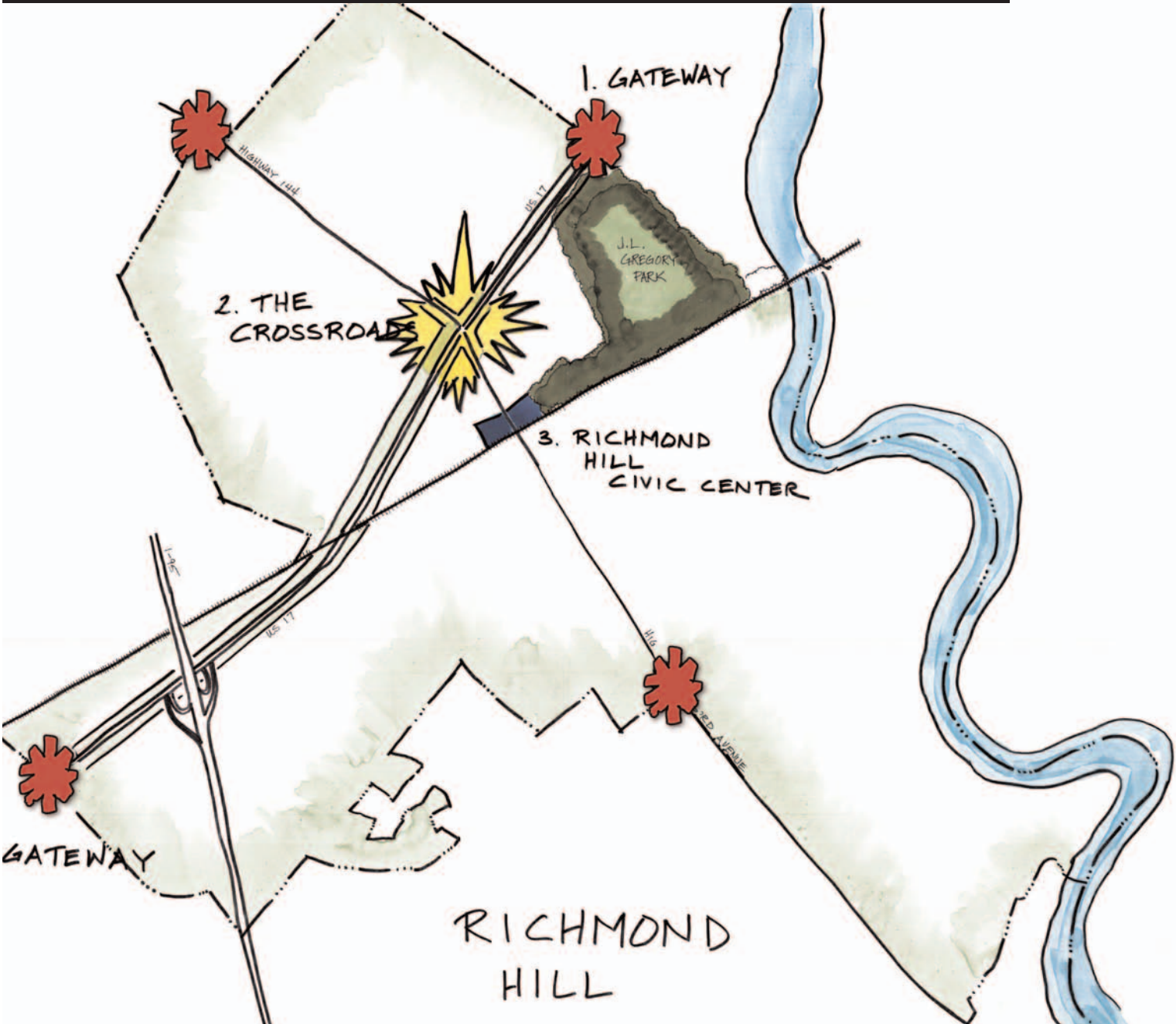


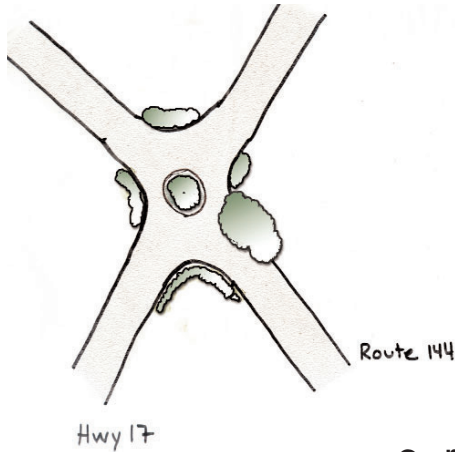
REVITALIZE "THE CROSSROADS"

The city must plan, manage and rebuild "The Crossroads"—
The intersection of 144 and 17.

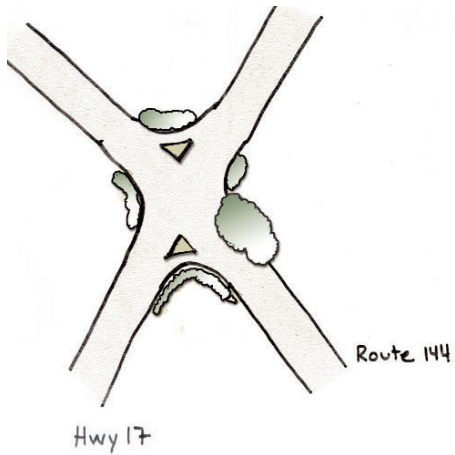
Using Richmond Hill's rich history as a foundation, a number of techniques, can make this happen.

Revitalize the "crossroads"





creating a landmark

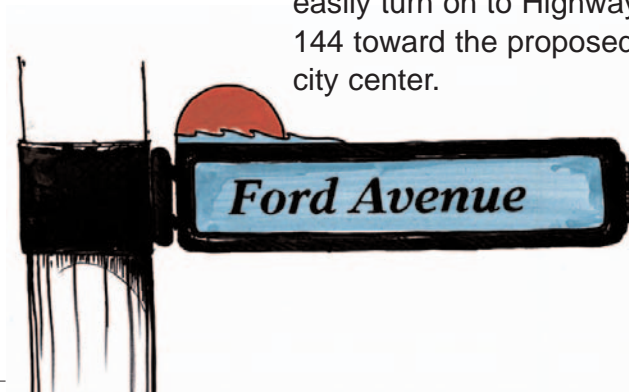
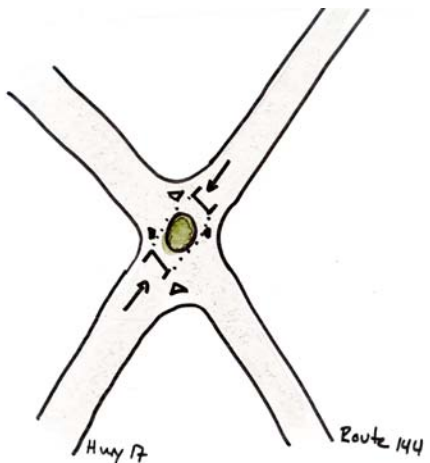


CREATE A LANDMARK

A new cultural landmark is needed in Richmond Hill to once again identify this intersection as an important site. The Crossroads could once again become the community's recognizable landmark. One solution for doing this is to replace the traffic lights at the intersection of Highways 17 and 144 and replace it with a traffic circle. The conversion of the intersection from one of traffic lights and highway

anonymity to that of a traffic circle with a new cache serves three functions:

- a. A traffic circle enhances the aesthetics of the intersection by creating a green space in its center. This visual change signals visitors that they have arrived in Richmond Hill.
- b. Traffic circles slow traffic and improve safety.
- c. Slowing traffic enables vehicles on Highway 17 to easily turn on to Highway 144 toward the proposed city center.



creating a landmark

Bury Utility Lines





u n i f y i n g t h e e n v i r o n m e n t

BURY UTILITY LINES

Moving the existing overhead utility lines underground is more visually unifying and creates a less disjointed, chaotic and confusing environment. No overhead utility lines allows for planting of additional trees without creating the future problem of interference from branches leading to poor pruning and unsightliness. The power lines did not appear overnight and their removal will not happen quickly either. It is a major coordinated effort on the part of city officials, the utilities, business persons, residents and property owners.

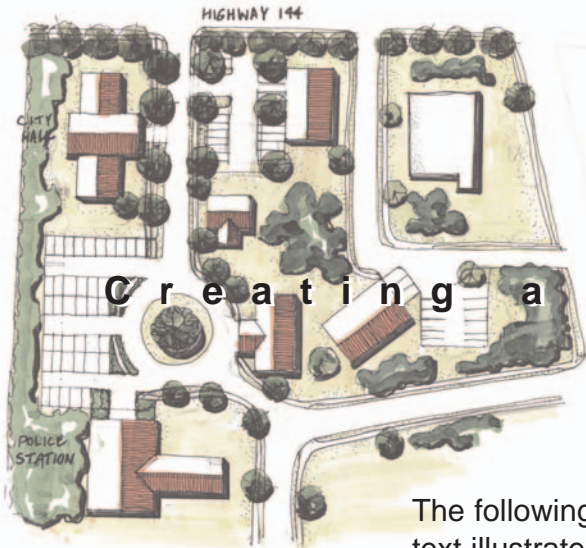
Information from the
American Planning
Association
<http://www.planning.org/>

and Scenic America
<http://www.scenic.org/>
can help you pursue
this task.

unifying the environment

The Village Green





Creating a Sense of Place

The following drawings and text illustrate a series of city sponsored projects that would jump start the much needed creation of identity and specialness in Richmond Hill:

THE VILLAGE GREEN

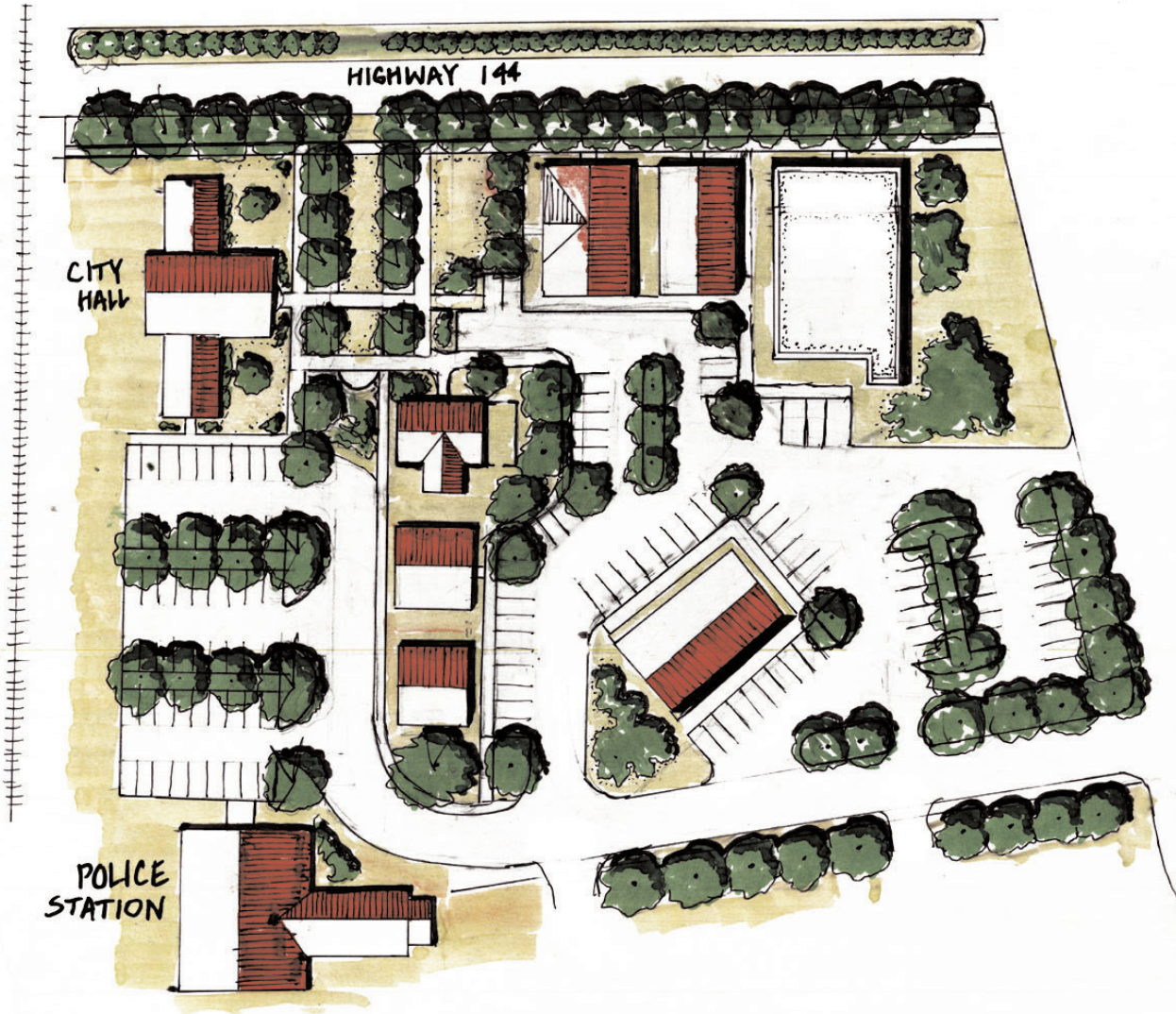
In the current City Hall complex, a green space created in the parking lot between City Hall and the Police Station will provide an area that encourages community interaction.

The charrette participants offer two solution for this new public green:

- 1) The first solution keeps the existing road, now with a roundabout as a terminal vista, and parking behind City Hall;
- 2) The second creates a village green with a terminal vista, uniform street building set-backs, and more parking at the rear of the buildings.



Mixed use





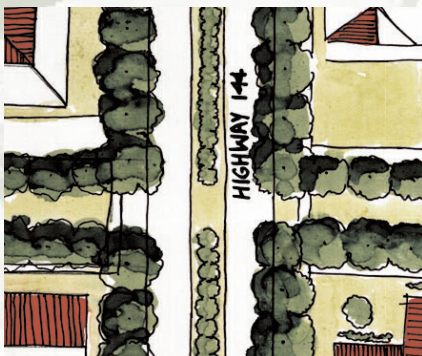
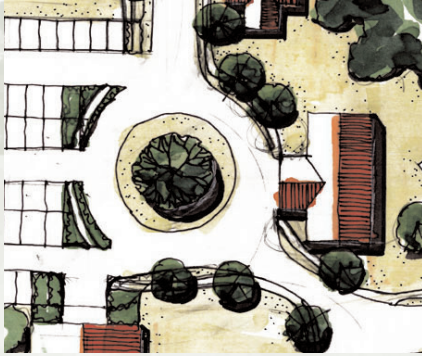
MIXED USE ACROSS FROM THE CITY COMPLEX

The area across Highway 144 from the City Hall complex provides the ideal location for a mixed-use development (commercial space - retail and office, public space and residential units). The architectural style of the City Hall complex provides a template for the new buildings. It should be compatible with the Ford-era buildings and follow the Richmond Hill design guidelines. As the town continues to grow, this development provides the ideal location for a new library and post office, when the demands of the population exceed the capabilities of the current facilities.

The village green concept proposed for the City Hall complex will be repeated in this area, with terminal vistas on opposing ends. In order to insure that this is a city center that appeals to residents, the buildings must be consistent with the visual character of Richmond Hill

Street Trees





STREET TREES

A standardized menu of landscape improvements along corridors from which owners, the city and developers can choose will begin to create a consistent appearance. The use of large canopy shade trees (like Live Oaks) along the streets will help to mitigate the negative effects from the wide expanse of roads by creating a sense of enclosure. Georgia Department of Transportation regulations require that a minimum 75% of all plant materials should be species native to the region.





Streetscape improvements

MEDIAN PLANTINGS

Establishing median strips on Highway 144 from the railroad tracks to Highway 17 will create a safe environment for drivers and provides additional space for vegetation such as palms and native grasses. The planting palette for this median strip should mimic that which is used at the gateway points and along the 17-corridor median strip. Repetition of design elements will insure that residents and visitors are able to identify the core of Richmond Hill. The median is also a safety factor for pedestrians and will remove the hazardous condition created by the "suicide lane"- the one lane turning area with two way traffic . The median improves pedestrian safety by providing a safe island as pedestrians cross the highway.



t r e e o r d i n a n c e

TREE ORDINANCE

A tree ordinance will help preserve the existing trees in Richmond Hill. Keeping good control on the removal of all large trees will avoid bad mistakes that take decades to rectify. The attentive management of vegetation, like trees, will insure that design goals are met. Maintenance and protection of the existing "heritage live oaks" at The Crossroads and the introduction of new trees will develop a distinctive beauty that is sadly missing from the roadways.



sense of place



Design Guidelines



If Richmond Hill implements a design review program, a clear, easy to follow and consistent set of design guidelines will be invaluable. Design guidelines, especially for new construction, will encourage compatibility, a unified appearance and a rebirth of the character that once was Richmond Hill. The changes will take place over time as buildings are introduced. The new "look" will be an alternative to typical sprawling development. A design review district should encompass all the areas that are visible from the roadway and that extend into newly developed land.

Typical Guidelines contain provisions for a wide variety of proposed changes. Richmond Hill's design review program should encompass the following changes at a minimum:

- a. NEW CONSTRUCTION**
- b. PARKING**
- c. SIGNS**
- d. LANDSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS**

a. NEW CONSTRUCTION

- New construction should complement the character of the both the built and natural environments
- New construction should be compatible with Ford era structures in terms of:
 - Materials
 - Setback
 - Height
 - Scale
 - Mass
 - Footprint

The following specific factors, using the Ford era buildings as a model, should be maintained when new buildings are introduced or existing buildings are updated.

1. Horizontal or vertical orientation with front gable and full pediment
2. Wood clapboard used as primary construction material
3. Brick and stucco used as secondary construction materials
4. Square or round pillars, often clustered
5. Pillars made of wood
6. Double-hung sash windows, with



six over six or eight over eight rectangular lites. Exceptions are made for commercial buildings, with store-front windows such as that in the Commissary.

7. Vertically oriented doors of wood, glass, or a combination. Doors may be single or double
8. Corner windows
9. Paired or tripled windows
10. Proper solid to void ratio (rhythm)
11. Roof height and pitch proportionate to size of building
12. Roofing material asphalt shingle or standing seam metal
13. Wide board window surrounds
14. Gable vent and/or double hung sash window in gable

b. PARKING

Sufficient parking is needed for all businesses in Richmond Hill.

- Parking should be confined to the rear of new businesses
- Surface parking lots (and any other large expanse of paved areas) should be screened with appropriate vegetation

c. SIGNS

Signage, like parking, is essential to any business. Signs attracts pedestrian and vehicular traffic and can add charm and character to streets.

- Signs should be monument style.
- Building and sign materials should be compatible.
- Neon or interior lit signs should be avoided.
- Avoid moveable or portable signs.
- Any kind or size of billboard should be strictly prohibited.

d. LANDSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS

Lack of greenery contributes much to the unattractive look of the area.

- Avoid disturbing existing trees, especially mature trees.
- Mature trees in the area should be protected..
- Native plants should be used (see plant selection pallet).

MARKETING

The approaches to improving Richmond Hill should all create a new or renewed sense of place. A good marketing plan will respect the needs of visitors and residents and promote the much sought sense of community identity and distinction. A marketing plan, similar to any marketing plan for a business - but this time for the city, might build on the success of the Seafood Festival. Suggested marketing concepts should address year-round activities that will appeal to both residents and tourists.

Components of a revised promotion plan should:

marketing

1. Utilize local and regional talent (artists, entertainers, craftsmen) to provide a showcase for Georgia talent.
2. Create regular organized community events, like clean-ups peppered with special activities to instill in citizens a sense of ownership of their town.
3. Enhance the celebration of Founder's Day which connects citizens with their past.
4. Pay attention to ecological resources to create an awareness of beauty and to perpetuate the community's long relationship with the land and water. It is critical that J. L. Gregory City Park be included in local school activities.
5. Visitor preferences should be listened to and changes made to the mix of retail and service industry.
6. Local desires and length of car trips will help the city entice new commercial activity to reduce the need to drive far away for services.
7. The city's website is a terrific way to get the leisure traveler to come and take a look at Richmond Hill. Special incentives and discounted specials can add even more to the internet's ability to attract visitors.
8. Include a well rounded sampling of the best things the community has to offer. That list might look something like this:
 - Founder's Day of Richmond Hill; school children re-enactment with picnic; educational opportunity
 - Park Clean-Up; community-wide volunteer effort
 - Memorial Day Picnic-in-the-Park
 - Nature Walk; education, history, and ecology of site
 - July 4/Historic Car Road Rally from Savannah; coordinate with Model A Club and Ford Plantation; Picnic and Fireworks in the park
 - Labor Day Picnic Festival
 - Seafood Festival
 - Park Clean up
 - Re-enactment festivities with Ft. McAllister
 - Christmas Parade and the annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count
 - First Night family New Year's Eve celebration
 - Weekends in the Park
 - Unique "outsider" music and art festivals

- Ford Ballroom dance contest and lessons.

The Chamber of Commerce, based on their success with the Seafood Festival, could perhaps coordinate events such as these.

Miscellaneous Issues

Richmond Hill is forward thinking in its desire to address the recreational needs.

Such features as the BMX track, bird-watching platform, and outdoor classroom demonstrate a commitment to education and recreation.

While one option under consideration by the city for the park is the development of a history village consisting of the Ford buildings scattered throughout town, it is preferable to keep the buildings in their current location. By doing so, the build-

ings maintain their eligibility for National Register listing. Once listed on the National Register, the structures will have a measure of protection from development and perhaps make them eligible for more funding sources. A driving tour of the Ford sites could then be developed. If this option is not feasible, then moving the structures to the park for the creation of a history village is recommended if this is deemed to best means of ensuring that the buildings are preserved.



marketting

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.

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