



JEFFERSON

design charrette

REPORT

Produced by:
University of Georgia | College of Environment & Design | Center for Community Design & Preservation
Georgia Department of Community Affairs | Main Street Program and Georgia Trust
March 12-14, 2004

Part 1: Introduction

Part 2: Lee Street

Part 3: Gateways

Part 4: Parking & Paving

Part 5: Greenspace Plan

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Georgia Department of Community Affairs-Office of Downtown Development

Jefferson, GA
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What is a Charrette?

Charrette is a French word that translates as “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.



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 3 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 important to the development.
- **Design:** Design professionals create schematic images to represent numerous design solutions for the problems at hand. Issues discussed in the first step are taken into consideration: building typology, design elements, green spaces, landscaping, parking, recreation, traffic, safety, sustainable development, water management, to name a few.
- **Implementation Plan:** A document summarizes the vision and is adopted by stakeholders as a guide for present and future developments.



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Introduction

Rediscovering Downtown Jefferson



This historic photograph depicts the Harrison Hotel as it stood on the corner of Lee and Washington. Its stature helped to define one side of the downtown square.



Currently, there stands a one story building that houses various businesses on the corner of Lee and Washington. This building is too short and unimpressive to anchor the corner spatially or visually.

Our task has been one of containing historic urban form. *Urban* may seem like a surprising term when describing the small town feel of Jefferson, but it is a good one. Let us give you some examples. When describing your town, here are some words used to describe it:

“the beautiful Italian terraces of the cemetery”

“the vistas that frame the town with landmarks on promontories”

“linear realignment along the primary corridors”

“framed views along major site lines”

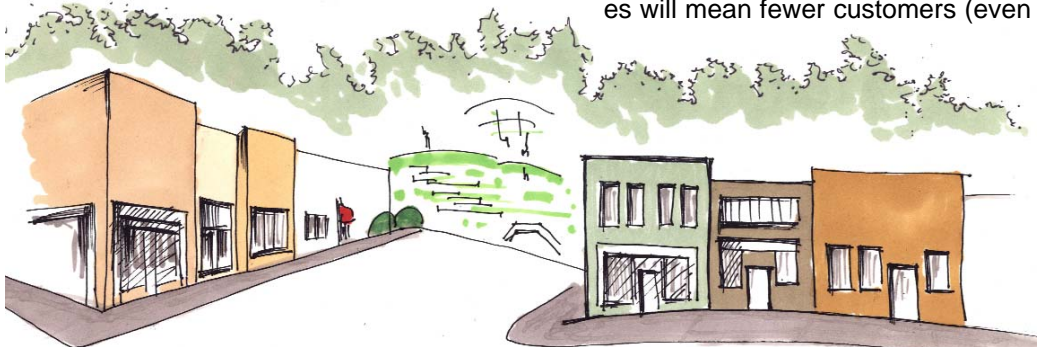
“a pedestrian-scaled community with no pedestrians”

“small town resources in the midst of big city growth.”

One end of town, at Sycamore Street, exhibits problems that can be solved with some rather simple planning techniques. We have been told that DOT will not approve the restitution of your historic, American icon, Georgia-defining town square (which here was an ellipse) and that local merchants feel that fewer parking spaces in front of their businesses will mean fewer customers (even

though we noticed that most of the parking spaces were occupied by cars that never moved during the day). This is unfortunate because every opinion poll, survey, planning study and public meeting revisits the issue and pines nostalgically for the round square. As suggested by your streetscape consultants, The Jaeger Company, the contemporary solution for downtown is a series of landscaped medians along Sycamore St. with regularly spaced trees along the perimeters of parking areas and roadways. This solution will enhance the appearance of the Sycamore end of downtown and will lead to a unified appearance of currently disparate pieces of the fractured urban form of Jefferson. The addition of traffic calming devices like bump outs, varied surfaced crosswalks and resignaling of the intersections will help make this portion of town a more pedestrian friendly place.

The appropriate rehabilitation of building facades in this part of town will further enhance downtown Jefferson. Our images can give you ideas about sensitive rehabilitation and business signage.



A primary tool to start the transition of lower density uses to a higher density is to redevelop the corner block at Lee and Washington. The drawing at left illustrates how buildings with sufficient **height** and **mass** can anchor the corner.

After



Facade / Streetscape Improvement

Facade improvements such as repaired windows and storefronts, new signs, and a mix of canopies and awnings will enhance the appearance of Downtown Jefferson. Street trees, crosswalks and benches will help to improve the pedestrian experience.

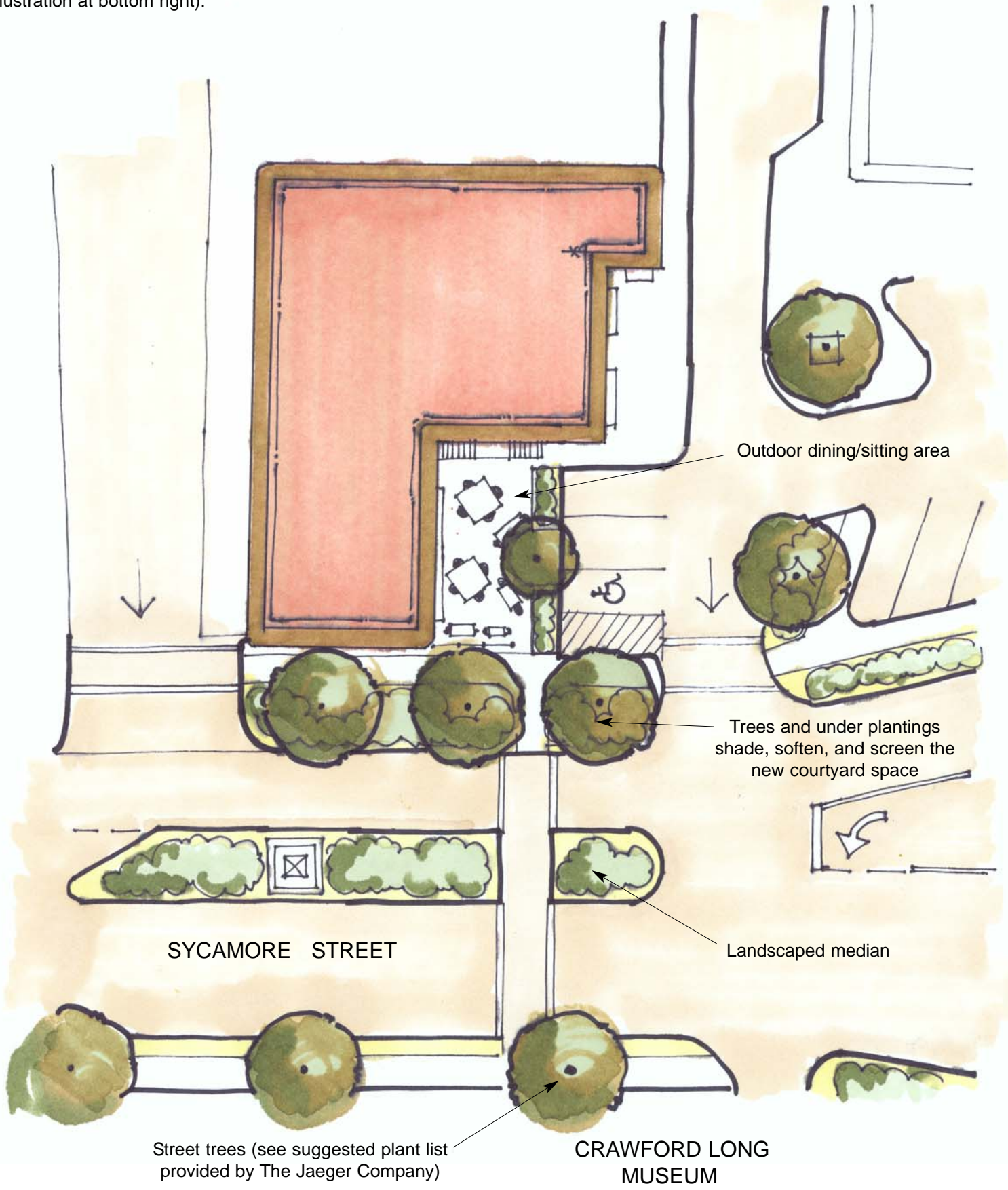
Before



Pedestrian Space SE of the Square

Plan View (not to scale)

The parking lot in the photograph at right can become a vibrant pedestrian space by creating an outdoor dining/sitting area (see plan view below and illustration at bottom right).



After



Before



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Lee Street

Sensitive Redevelopment



This corner can be redeveloped to create a grand park-like entrance to Woodbine Cemetery, or with a more attractive building for the existing businesses.

The Lee Street end of downtown is the portion of town where more disharmonic notes lead to visual chaos. In human terms, that means scary, ugly and auto oriented. We spent much of our time discussing this end of town and had great agreement on the problems and great disagreement on solutions. So we have arrived at a menu of urban solutions that emphasize some features and de-emphasize others.

We were in complete agreement that the Jackson County Courthouse is a regional symbol that says "Jefferson." The building should be illuminated at night. Lighting companies can provide professional services to help you get the most dramatic effects. We feel that whatever happens with this building in the future, it **MUST** retain a strong and public function. This building

can serve as a great meeting facility, performance space and rental facility for special events.

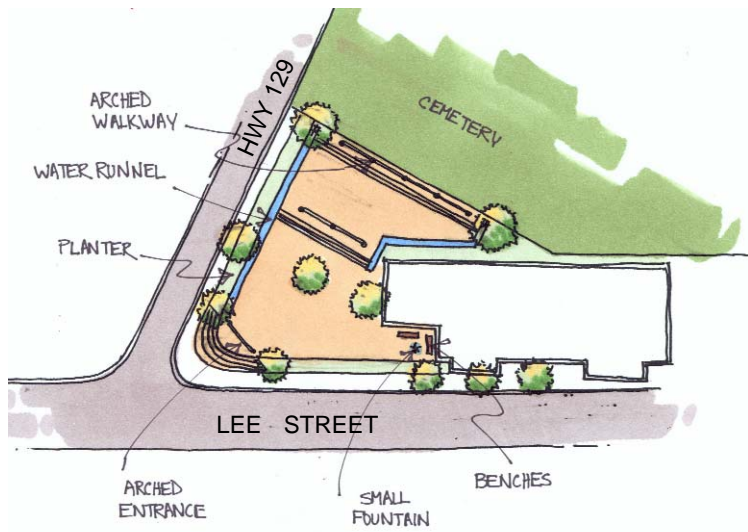
We also have made the assumption that the Ford dealership is growing out of downtown. Their success has made the small parcels difficult to contain current functions. This will provide a great opportunity to stitch retail functions into the existing buildings and for infill in other former Ford locations. It is also another chance to begin eliminating impervious (asphalt) surfaces. The amount of paving in Jefferson is excessive and contributes to many of the runoff and storm water problems that are evident around and behind most of the buildings downtown. We recommend that a specific process of analyzing and addressing storm water be part of the streetscape improvements planned.



Option A

Option A

As a park-like entrance to your very handsome, historic and well used cemetery. Woodbine Cemetery is so beautifully sited on this hillside it demands a more appropriate entrance.

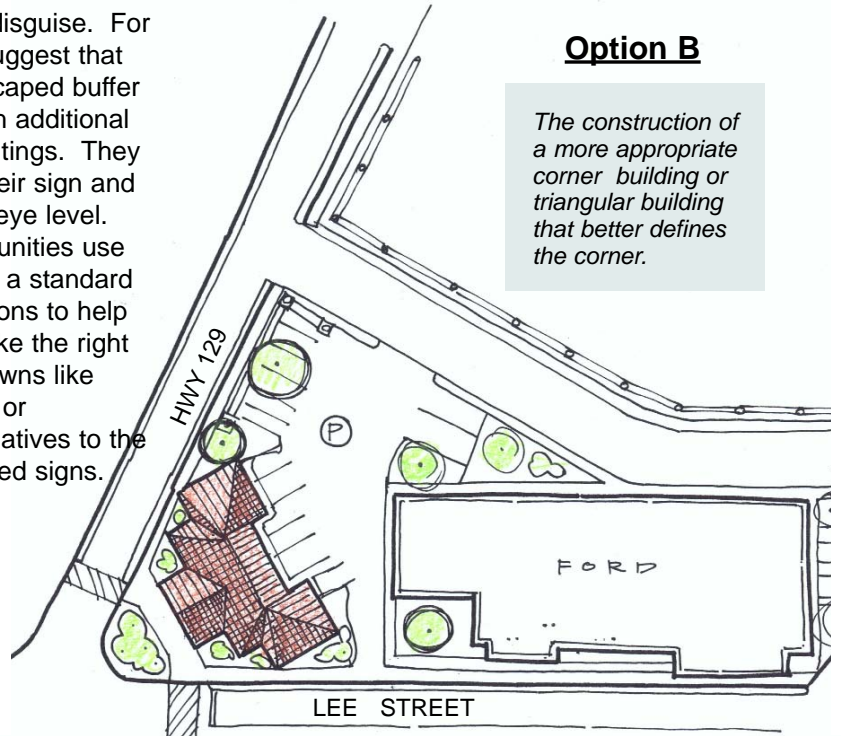


The biggest design dilemma for Lee Street, however, frames the intersection of Lee Street and Athens Street: the Chevron and the Radio Shack. Our team had many moments of agony about this corner. We arrived at a remedy and, sadly it involves a major shift in focus. Our solution for the Radio Shack site involves finding a better, more handsome and more functional location for the Cingular and Radio Shack businesses. Ideally this would be at the same rental rate that is now being paid. Then this site could be redeveloped in one of two ways: Option A or Option B, shown in the surrounding illustrations.

move, redesign, or disguise. For these reasons we suggest that the property's landscaped buffer be strengthened with additional well-maintained plantings. They should also lower their sign and other advertising to eye level. Many historic communities use sign ordinances and a standard palette of sign solutions to help property owners make the right decision. Look to towns like Madison, Monticello or Dahlonega for alternatives to the franchise standardized signs.

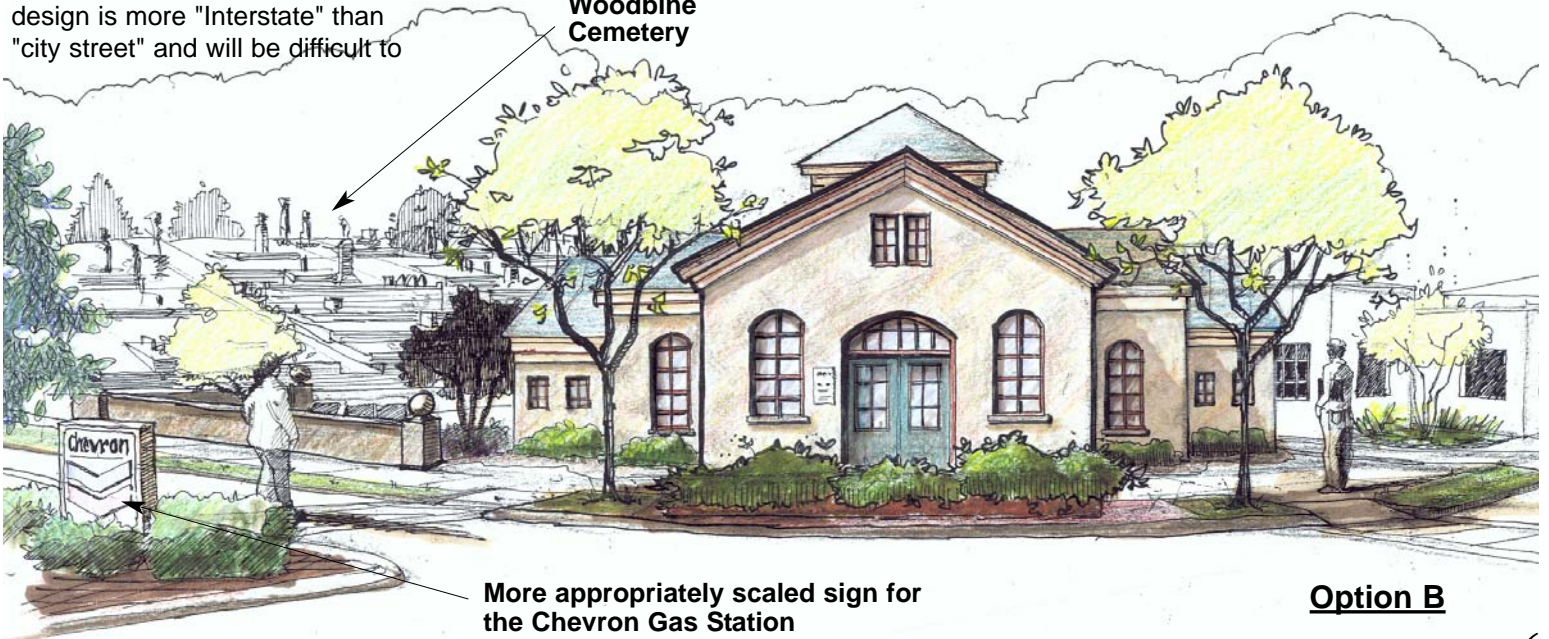
Option B

The construction of a more appropriate corner building or triangular building that better defines the corner.



The solution for Chevron is not as easy. The station's corporate design is more "Interstate" than "city street" and will be difficult to

Woodbine Cemetery



More appropriately scaled sign for the Chevron Gas Station

Option B

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Gateways

Approaching Downtown Jefferson



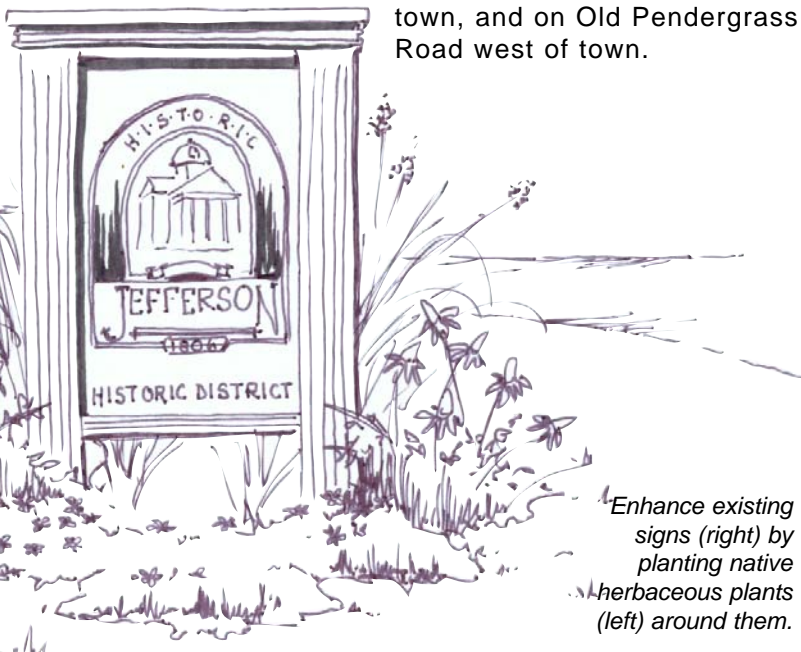
Directional signs (above) will be helpful in guiding visitors once they have arrived in downtown Jefferson.

Gateway features are particularly important because their function will clearly mark and identify Jefferson's city limits, historic districts, and important sites. Jefferson currently lacks signage at the entrances into the city. A cohesive, unified way of presenting downtown Jefferson to the public can be conveyed through signage of the same scale, color, and design.

The use of major and minor gateway signs will help orient motorists to downtown Jefferson. Major gateway signs should be located on the bypass and should be sufficiently sized to catch the attention of passing motorists. They should be located where the bypass intersects old 129, both north and south of town, and on Old Pendergrass Road west of town.

Minor gateway signs are smaller and located closer to town. They should be located on Hwy 129 north and south of downtown and on Lee St. west of town, and Sycamore St. east of downtown (see map at right). For consistency, Jefferson's minor gateway signs should be based on the existing historic district signs.

A third category, the directional sign should also be used to orient visitors once they have arrived downtown. Hanging directional placards may indicate the location of civic buildings, public parking lots, historic sites and businesses. These would be placed at prominent locations within downtown Jefferson.



Enhance existing signs (right) by planting native herbaceous plants (left) around them.





-  Downtown Jefferson (directional signs)
-  Major Gateway Sign
-  Minor Gateway Sign

Large monument-style signs of a natural material could be used to mark the major gateways into Jefferson.





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Parking & Paving

Recognizing/Remedying Problems



An underutilized parking lot adjacent to courthouse



Possible site for development that could reconnect this historic depot with Downtown Jefferson

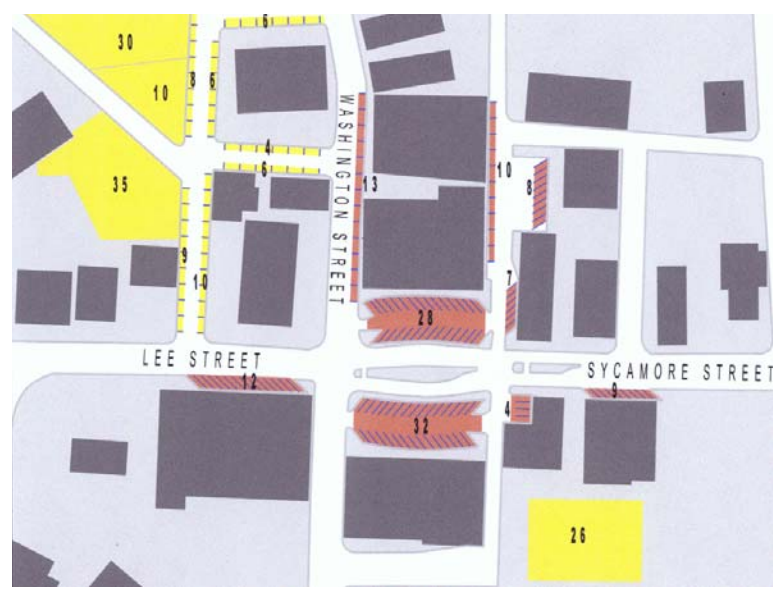
The lack of parking, more often a perceived problem and not a real one, is most often solved by better parking management. Here is a summary of the issues we identified as important:

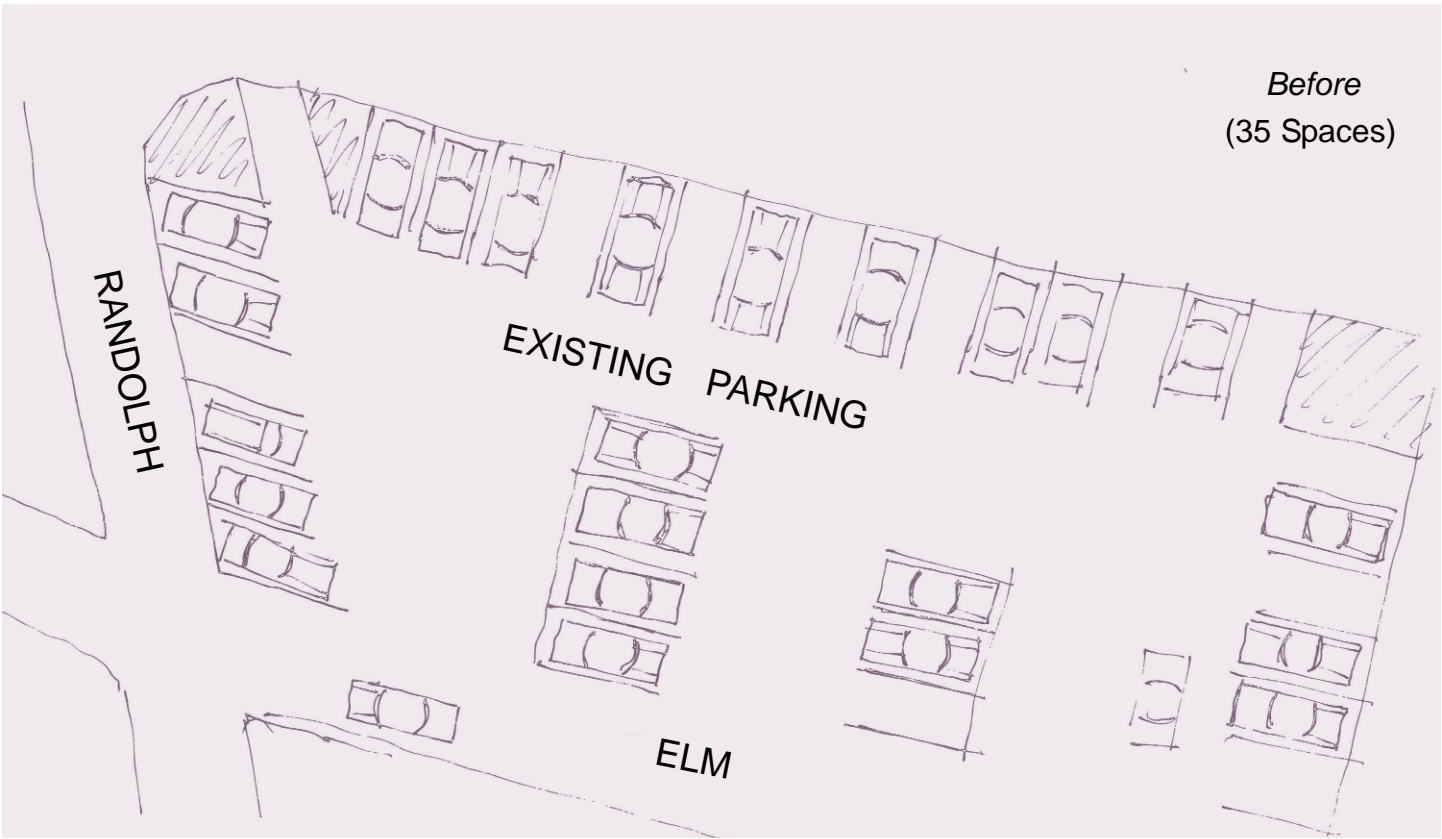
- Add and enforce time restrictions
- Add strategic, directional, and informative parking signs
- Mark on-street spaces
- Make parking areas as attractive as non parking areas (as indicated in the proposed land use management code by Jerry Weitz and Associates).

The open and underutilized space where a dense industrial railroad sector once stood is prime redevelopment space. It should be considered as a place for mass improvement and will reconnect the depot area with the commercial core. Our suggestion involves better parking utilization and lot improvements. There is much lost space in this region of town. The area around the depot and the remaining industrial buildings should be scheduled for rehabilitation and re-used to serve broad community goals. Appropriate uses for the larger buildings can be for day care or other child-related functions. The surrounding churches, social service agencies and groups, or civic organizations might see them as good multi-functional buildings for their outreach projects.

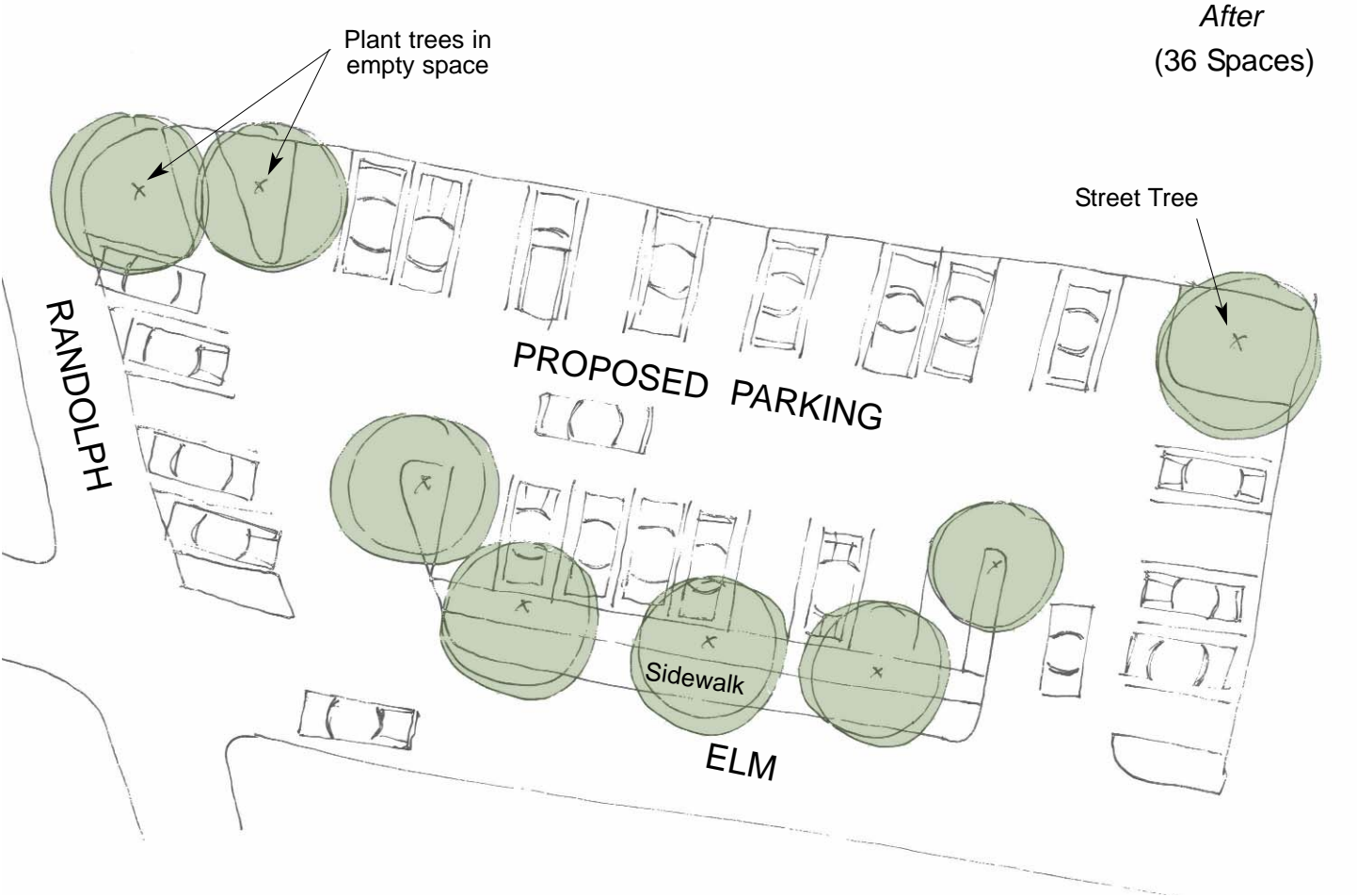
Parking Count

	PUBLIC PARKING- no time restrictions	150
	PUBLIC PARKING- two hour limit	123





Reconfiguring a Parking Lot



Parking Issues



This lot north of the square is marked as one-hour parking, but this limit is not currently enforced.



No markings on a vast expanse of asphalt makes for inefficient parking.



Markings on pavement help to direct drivers.

Many business owners and residents are concerned that there is currently a shortage of parking downtown. While this issue needs to be addressed, it is also important to not add more parking than needed because excess parking can erode the small town character of Jefferson and discourage pedestrians. On the other hand, too little parking will discourage people from coming downtown to patronize local businesses. In order to enhance the downtown and support businesses it is important that Jefferson finds the right mix of buildings and parking.

Current Conditions

While downtown Jefferson currently has many possibilities for public parking, the parking is not all located where demand is highest.

On-Square Lots and On-Street Parking

The highest demand for parking in downtown Jefferson is on and near the square between 11:00 AM and 2:00 PM on weekdays. There are currently forty-four spaces in public lots and roughly thirty-five on-street spaces less than half a block from the square. The lot on the north side of the square is marked as one-hour parking and the south side has a two-hour limit as does the first block and a half of the east side of US 129. Although these areas are posted as one and two hour parking, the regulations are not currently enforced. As a result, many long-term parkers such as employees and people who carpool are parking in these prime areas and the lack of open spaces may be discouraging people from patronizing downtown businesses.

Off-Square Public Lots

The City of Jefferson currently owns parking lots located to the southwest of the old courthouse. There are ten spaces available in the wedge-shaped lot on the north corner of Randolph Street and Depot Street and thirty spaces in the lot on the south corner of the same intersection. Although these lots are available for parking there are no signs indicating that the lots are public and no signage on main streets to make people aware of them. These lots are currently underutilized even during times of peak demand for parking.

Coming Changes

In the next few years an additional seventy-three parking spaces, both on and off the square, will likely be added to downtown Jefferson.

On-Square Parking

If the road reconfiguration suggested in the Master Plan is implemented there would be a net gain of thirteen parking spaces in the high-demand area around the square. Instead of the existing twenty-nine spaces on the south side there would be thirty-six and on the north side there would be twenty-eight instead of twenty-two.

Off-Square Public Parking Lots

A new public parking lot with twenty-six spaces is planned for behind the commercial buildings on the south side of the square. When the county government moves to the new courthouse complex the thirty-four spaces in that lot could also become public parking. These lots will be ideal places for long-term parkers such as employees and people who carpool.

Suggested Changes

Even though additional parking will be added in the near future some changes could be made to assure that enough parking is available where it is most needed, around the square.

Time Restrictions

In order to free up spaces for customers and clients in the areas most convenient to businesses, it is suggested that the two-hour parking restrictions be enforced and that additional areas be designated as two-hour parking. The lot on the south side of the square should remain designated as two hour parking and the north side lot be changed from one-hour to two-hour to avoid confusion and allow customers adequate time to complete their appointments or shopping. On-street parking should be designated as two-hour parking according to the map on page 9.

Signage

Signs should be added which mark public parking lots and point people towards them from US 129 and Lee/Sycamore Street. These lots are ideal for employee and carpool parking and also for special events. Increased utilization of these lots will free up spaces in the square and make it easier for customers to find parking close to their destinations.

On-street Parking Markings

In order to increase awareness of existing on-street parking, spaces should be marked with paint. Markings also encourage more efficient use of available space which further adds to the supply of convenient downtown parking without physically adding additional spaces.

Conclusions

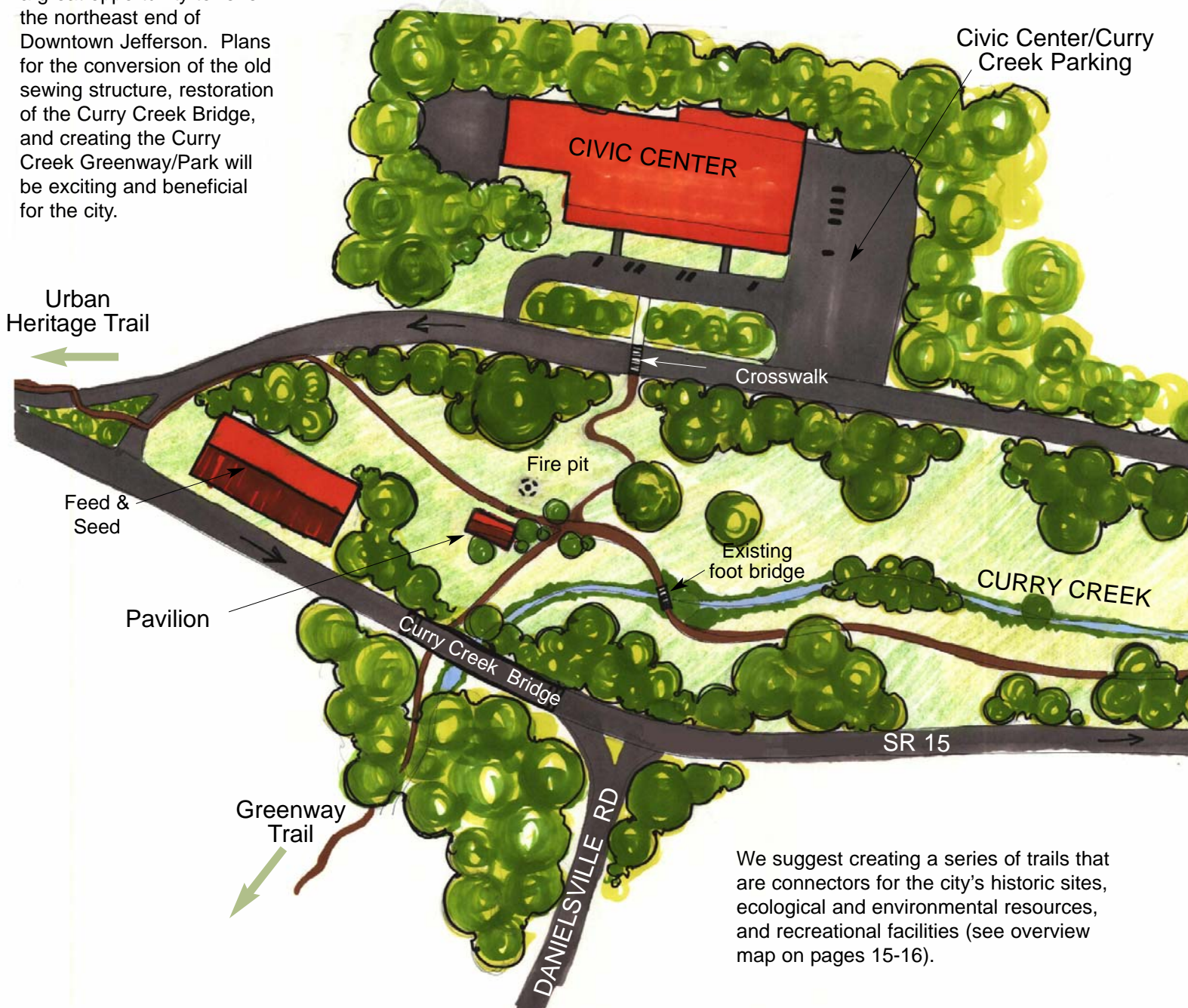
Much of Jefferson's parking problem can be solved by managing existing parking through designation and enforcement of two-hour time restrictions and adding signage and on-street parking markings. The proposed lot behind the commercial buildings on the south side of the square and the parking created by the redesign of the square will serve to further alleviate problems and provide adequate parking for any future retail establishments downtown. Following this parking plan will help protect the historic character of downtown Jefferson while providing sufficient parking to sustain the businesses which give the downtown its vitality.

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Greenspace Plan

Curry Creek Greenway

The new civic center offers a great opportunity to renew the northeast end of Downtown Jefferson. Plans for the conversion of the old sewing structure, restoration of the Curry Creek Bridge, and creating the Curry Creek Greenway/Park will be exciting and beneficial for the city.



We suggest creating a series of trails that are connectors for the city's historic sites, ecological and environmental resources, and recreational facilities (see overview map on pages 15-16).



Revegetating Curry Creek

- Minimum 3-5' meandering vegetated buffer along creek edge. Species include: River Birch, Sycamore, Blackgum, Possumhaw, Chokeberry, Buttonbush, Silky Dogwood, Elderberry.
- Upland species include: Red Maple, White Oak, Redbud, Winged Sumac
- See The Jaeger Company Plant List for additional species.



(These drawings are not to scale)

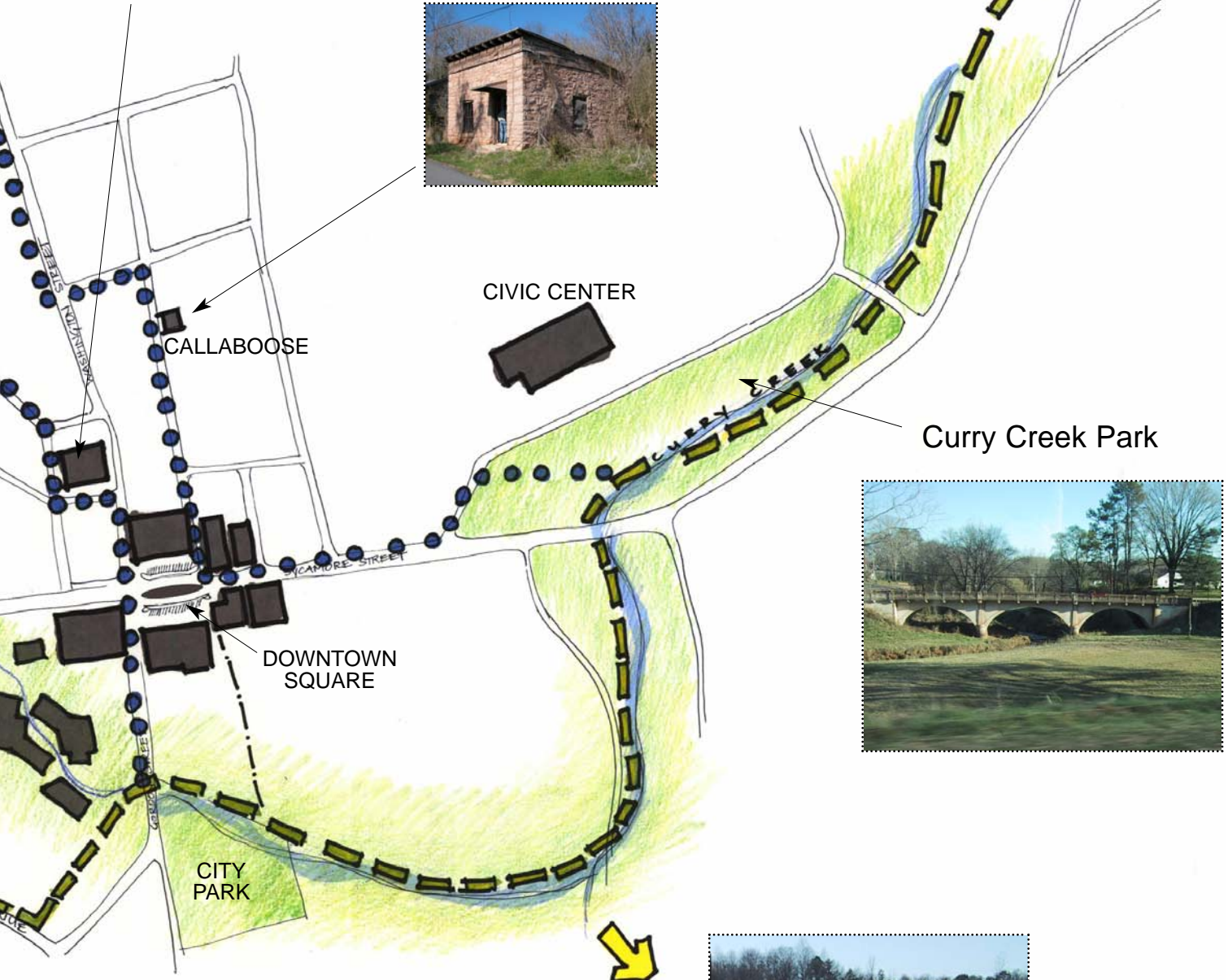




Urban Heritage & Greenspace Trails



Trail Continues to Reservoir, Wetlands, and New Courthouse Complex



Possible Link to Agricultural/Scenic Vistas



*Many thanks
to the following:*

The People of Jefferson
Better Hometown Program
Better Hometown Committee Members
Staff of the Crawford Long Museum
Mayor
City Manager
City Council



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