

A Vision for Change

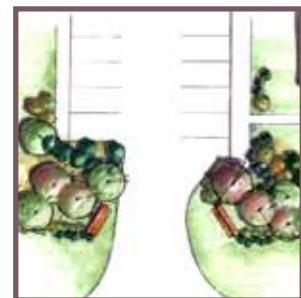
Riverwood Townhouses



produced by the University of Georgia | Center for Community Design and Preservation | Spring 2004

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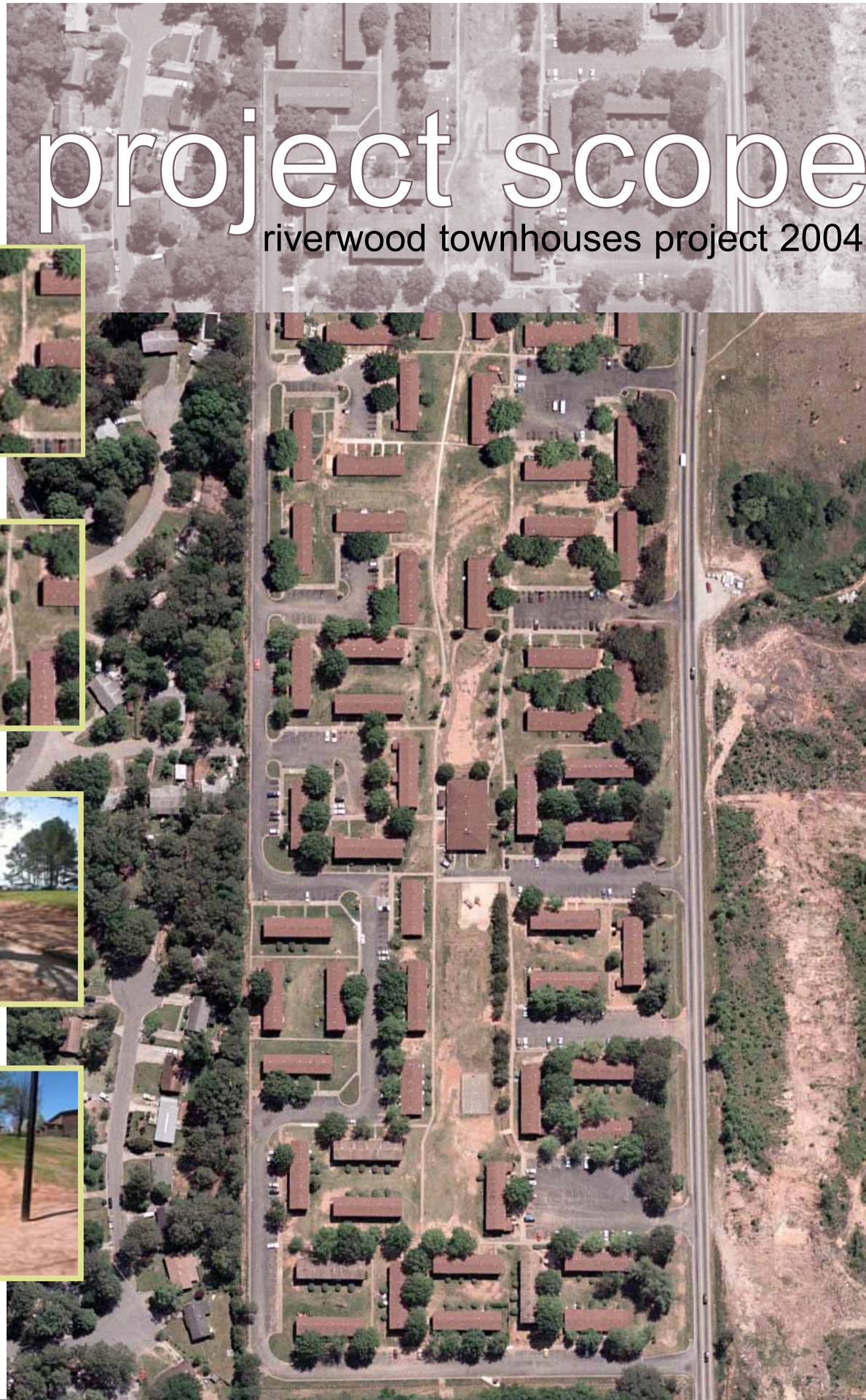
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outline

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project scope

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1. Project Scope

- Hire a registered landscape architect to complete plans and specifications for installation

1. Heal the land
2. Provide comfort and security for residents
3. Address visual detractions
4. Create beauty
5. Maintain and improve circulation
6. Accommodate outdoor recreation
7. Phased economical improvements over time
8. Improve social interaction and environmentalism (engender a new eco-friendly ethic)

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design methodology

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2. The Design Process

• Community Meeting

On a very windy and chilly day our design team met with a hardy group of Riverwood residents and staff. Many of the comments they made clearly reaffirmed the intent of management. However some interesting demographic and recreational needs guided our team to make some site specific alterations. We were also impressed with the pride that had developed after recent improvements were made and how much safer people felt about living at Riverwood.

• Ground Truthing

Our team took maps and recoded observations throughout the complex. Plants were documented, high erosion and traffic areas pinpointed and places where things were working were also noted.

• On-site Concept Development

While at the Riverwood site the team collected data, conducted interviews and became aware of how the complex functioned. Our team produced an initial concept that addressed most of the problems identified

• Development of Concept at the UGA Studios

This project demanded some indepth research on price considerations, clay soil types and their compaction, erosion and plant availability. We spent many hours reworking the initial design concept and eventually produced the product you see before you today.

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existing conditions

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The Riverwood project solutions are grouped into four broad categories

Central | Edge | Neighborhood | Specific Problems

- 1• **Central** - Green belt and vegetation
- 2• **Edge** - Vehicular circulation
- 3• **Neighborhood**
 - Security and pride of place
 - Recreation and outdoor gathering
 - Surrounding vistas and adjoining property
- 4• **Specific Problems**
 - Stormwater management
 - Gutters
 - Erosion
 - Bare Earth
 - Deteriorated Drainage system
 - Dumpsters
 - Environmental Education Program

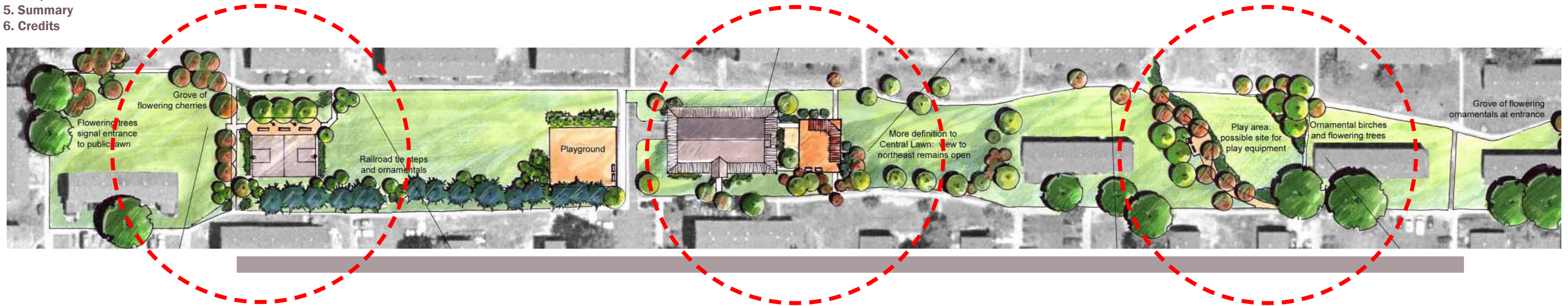
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central greenbelt

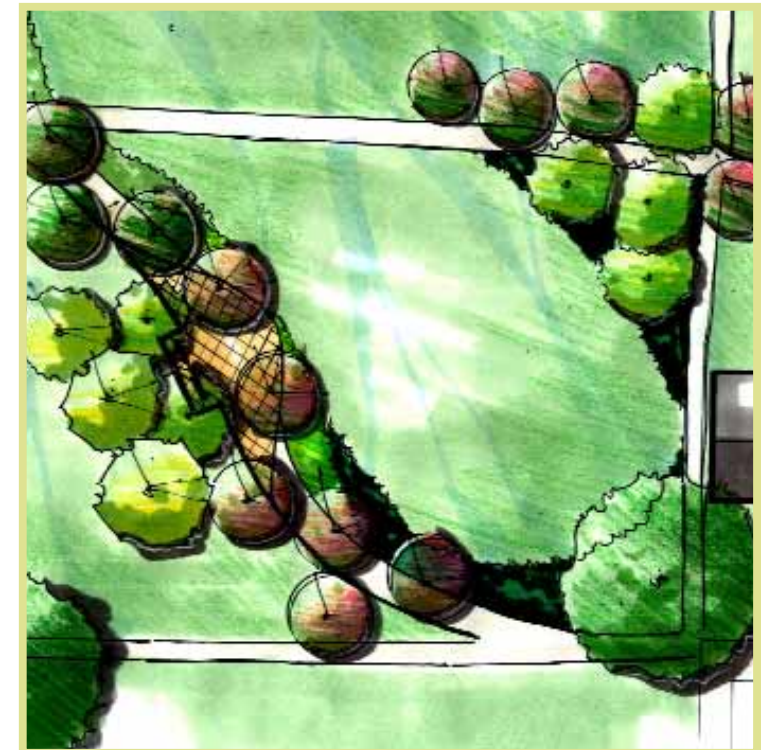
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- Vegetate to solve erosion problems,
- Improve recreation facilities,
- Community Terrace,
- Overlook Area



The Central Area's projects:

Recreation Area | Social Area | Overlook area



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recreation area

Riverwood has great potential to be a garden environment. It should be a place of beauty and one that affords residents with a chance to recreate. Currently, due to stormwater problems (erosion, drainage issues and infrastructure failure), the complex has a difficult time making improvements last. Creating a natural and pleasant environment is impossible once soil becomes compacted, sidewalks become too narrow to accommodate pedestrian traffic and plants become so large that they must be heavily pruned to stay manageable. The additions that have been made (perimeter fencing, better dumpster management, police patrols, a new clubhouse) have all added to livability at Riverwood. However, it is now time to address the visual environment. Lush vegetation and attractive seating and walkways, as well as recreation equipment upgrades, will make Riverwood more agreeable for residents and visitors.



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recreation area

- Paved plaza eliminates persistent problems with soil compaction to the north and west of the court and creates an attractive environment for gathering
- Permeable pavers allow water to infiltrate the soil, contributing to the improvement of soil conditions
- Chain-link fences are dramatically reduced, transforming cage-like environment to a more humane place
- New North-South sidewalk establishes a much-needed link where desire-lines indicate
- Ornamental trees and shrubs provide shade and seasonal color but do not create hidden areas

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social area

The loss of the clubhouse due to fire and its subsequent replacement offers management a chance to make some positive improvements around it. On both sides, recreation to the west and social gathering to the east, the residents of Riverwood can have a chance to relax and converse while people-watching, observing nature and relaxing without going very far from their apartment.



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social area

- Provides attractive outdoor gathering area for community picnics, cookouts, and other functions
- Trellis and berm creates "permeable barrier" affording protected views and providing limited access to greenspace beyond.
- Establishes a necessary North-South link in highly-trafficked area
- Hardy ornamentals provide color through several seasons
- Layout responds to proposed architecture

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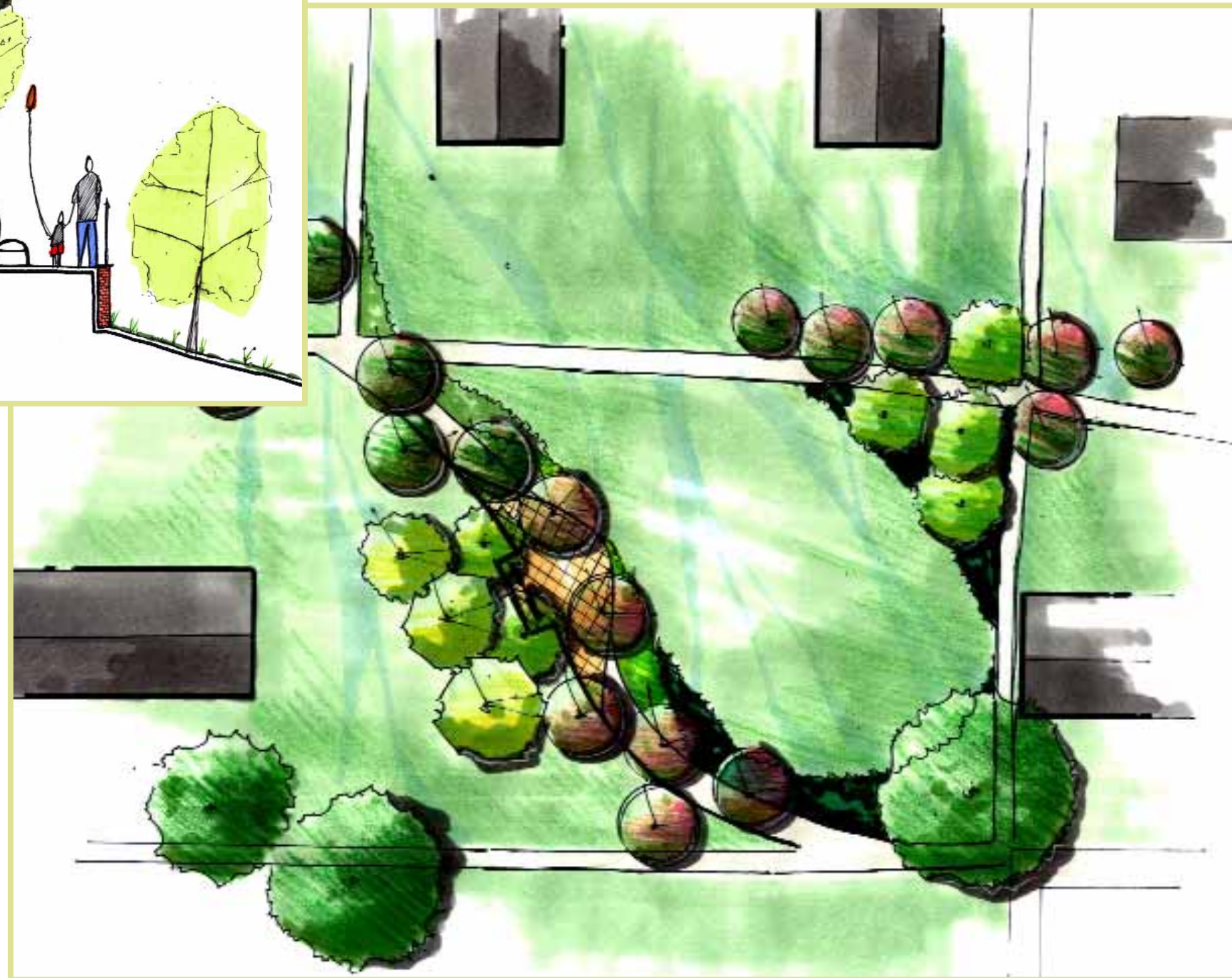


This portion of Riverwood is one of the most highly used and neglected portions of the property. It serves as a primary path for crossing the complex and has the problem of significant grade change. This sets up a situation that encourages erosion. However, these same conditions make it one of the most prominent and potentially attractive portions of the property. Solving the elevation change problems with a planted seating area, widened paved walkway and retaining wall system will be one of the most significant physical changes for Riverwood.



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overlook area

- Heavily-eroded terraced slope is transformed, providing scenic value and functional benefits.
- Gracefully curving path provides essential link where heavy foot traffic contributes to severe soil problems
- Nearly level area becomes a suitable place for unstructured play, while terraced overlook becomes a shaded vantage point for watching children
- From the east, this area will appear as horizontal bands of color during certain seasons

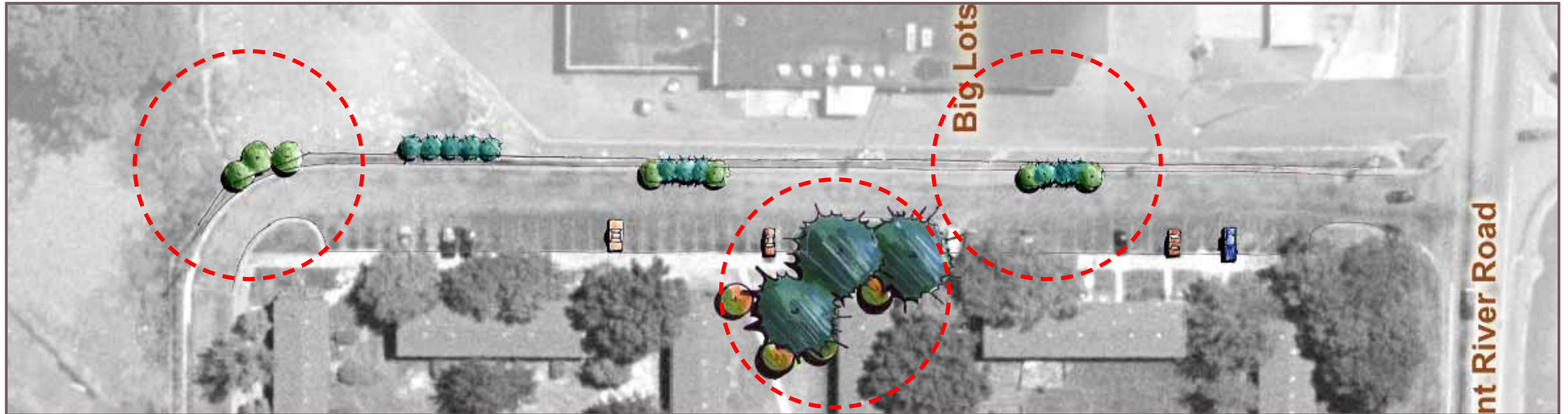
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edges

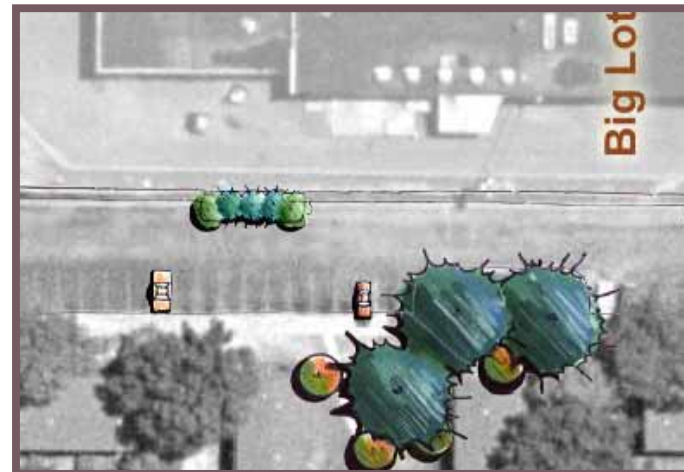
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- Vehicular Circulation
- Dumpsters
- Vistas
- Vegetation
- Runoff



edges' projects:

main entrance | screening unpleasant vistas | northeast corner | fences & ornamental vines



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main entrance

Any residential entrance should provide information and be inviting. Due to highway construction this might be a time that significant improvements can be made to the entrances at Riverwood. Depending on the amount of signage destruction and plant removal, the entrance features can accommodate almost any level of change. We have proposed a new planting plan, If new entrance signs are needed, those can follow the cues from other suggested new signs for the complex.

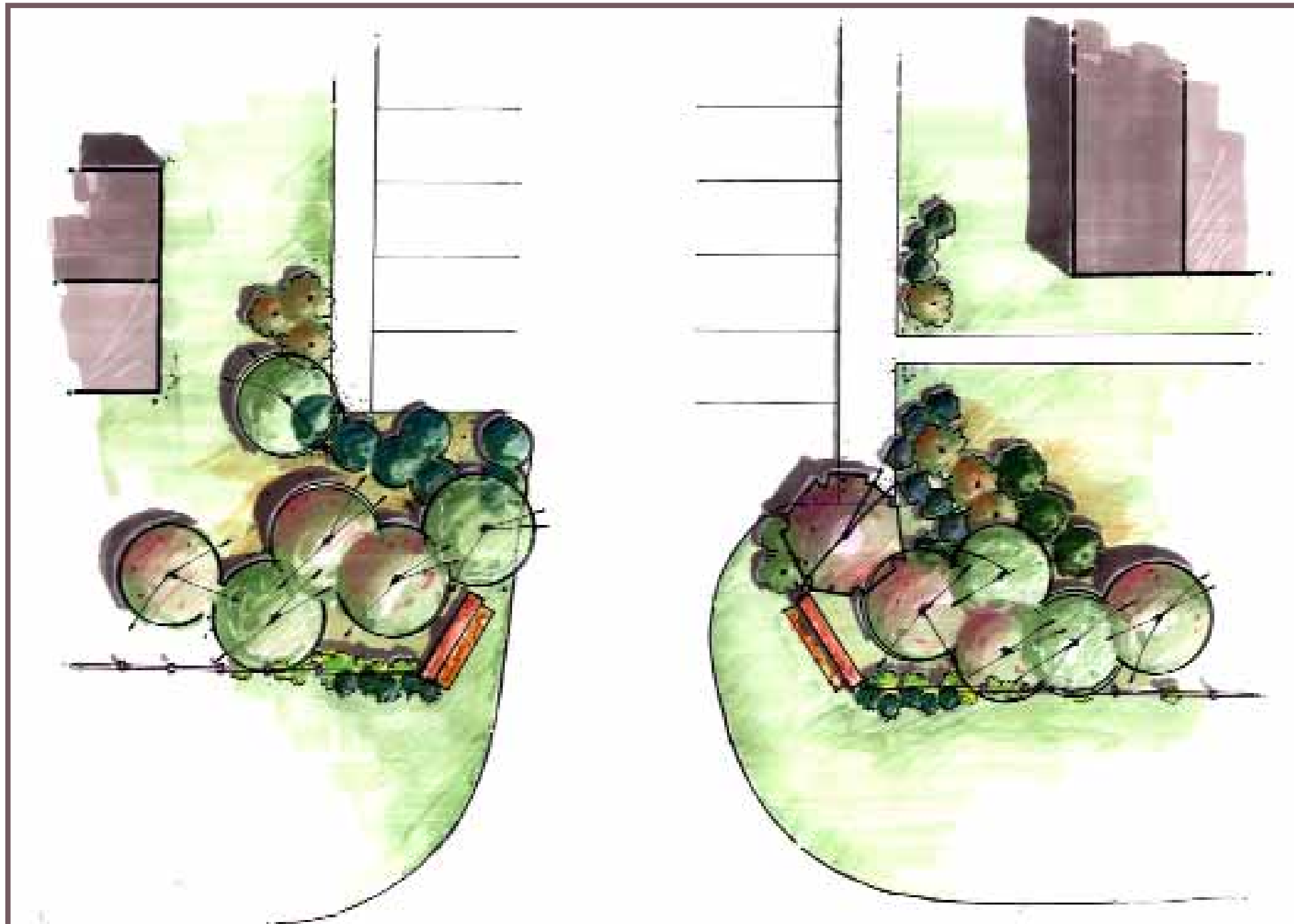


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main entrance



- Main entrance must be highly visible from Flint River Road and be inviting to visitors.
- Native flowering dogwoods and redbuds thrive in the filtered light of the pine woodland, while ornamental shrubs provide additional seasonal color.
- Redbuds and dogwoods can be planted behind fence all along the southern perimeter of the site.
- Existing iron fence and brick entrance sign are softened by the lush foliage that surrounds them.
- Right-of-way is kept clear; only a thin strip of holly shrubs is planted outside the fence, and it may be easily removed.

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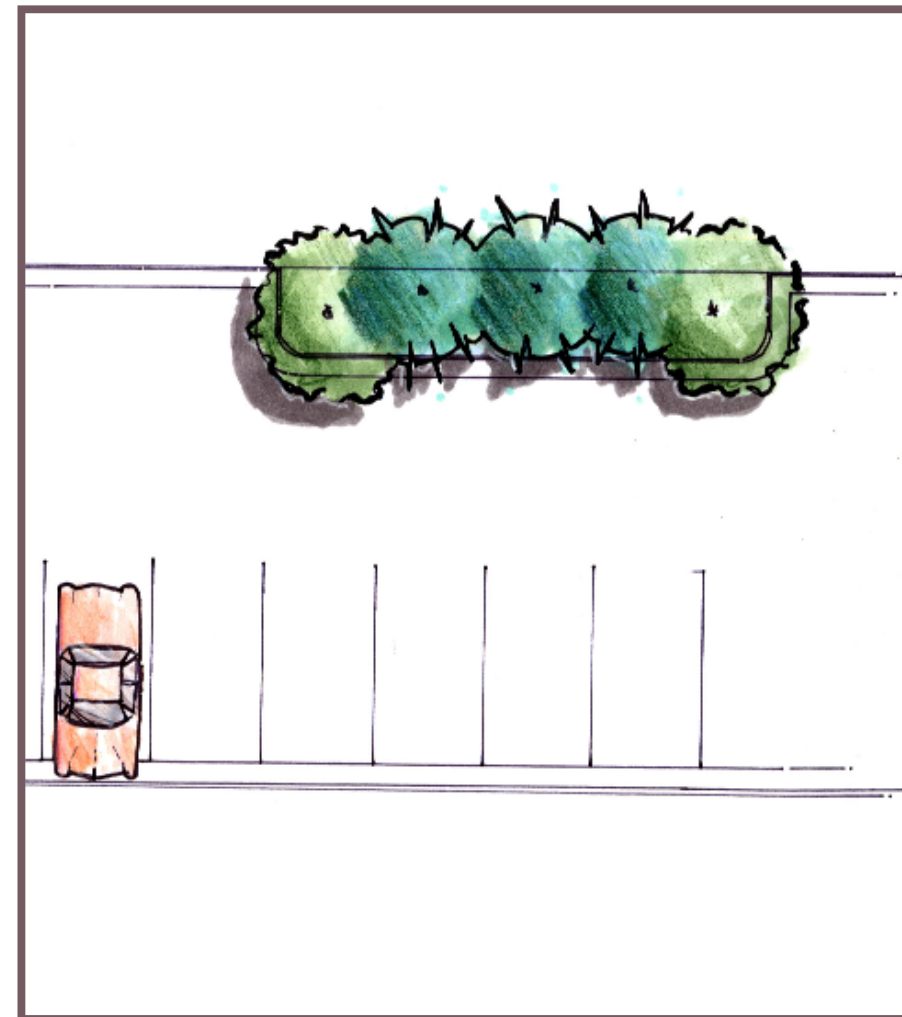
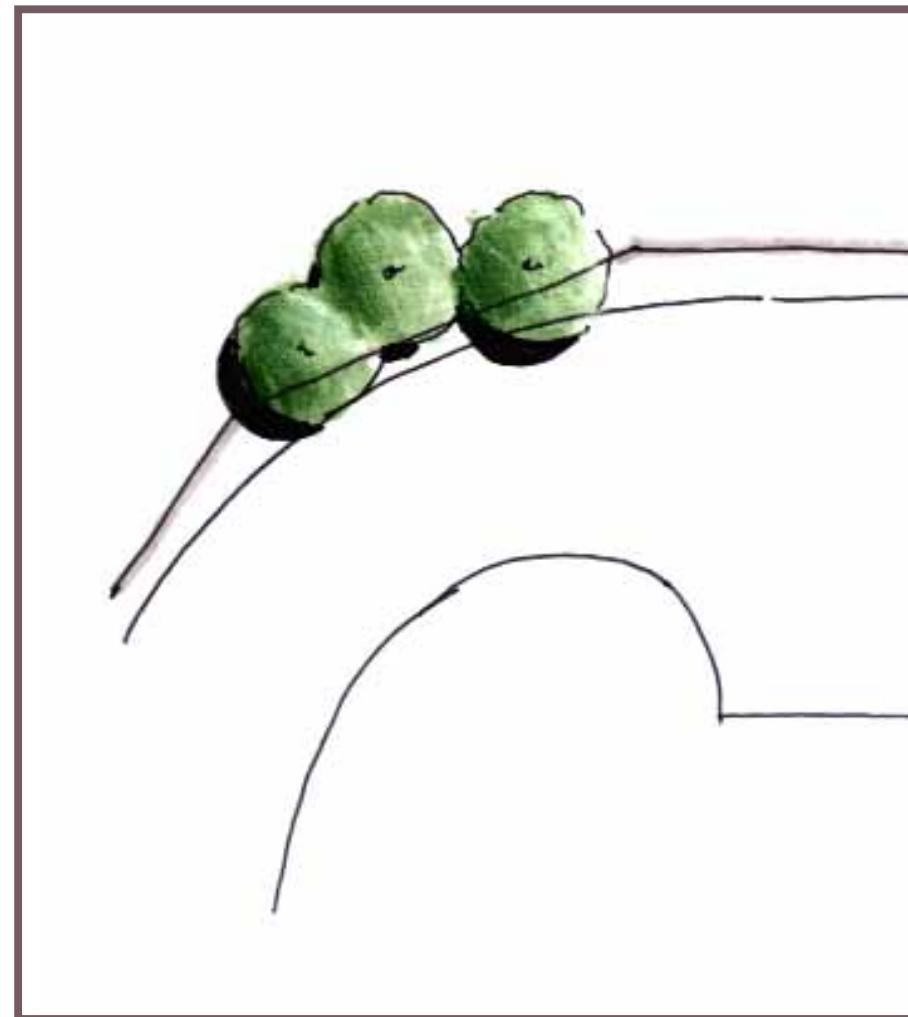
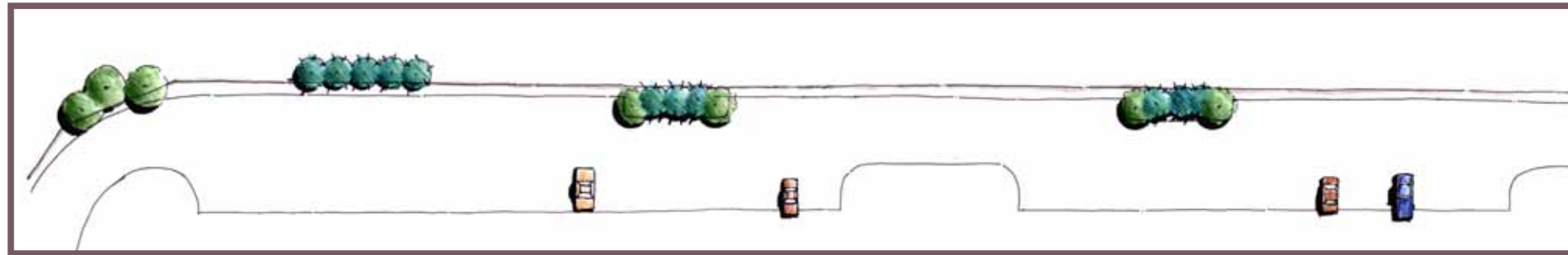
unpleasant vistas

At Riverwood many sight lines or vistas are terminated by attractive plantings or residential buildings. However some are not as nice to view. This includes the back side of the Riverwood complex where an existing chain link fence is about 4 feet from the newer aluminum fence. This creates a “dead zone” that is impossible to clean and becomes more and more unattractive. The other negative image is the rear facade of the Big Lots store. This view can be softened by plant materials or as a creative approach might be the “canvas” for a mural project. Additional areas of concern as eyesores are around each dumpster. Eventual consolidation of the dumpsters into one or two compactors is preferable.



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unpleasant vistas

- Narrow "bump-outs" are established, creating opportunities for screening the expansive strip mall rear facade.
- *Cryptomeria* is a tall, fast-growing evergreen. River birches will complement this dark, tight screen.
- Because the bumpouts are narrow strips, they will not interfere with traffic or create hidden areas
- If space permits inside the property line, this line of *Cryptomeria* should be planted.
- Northeast corner: If space permits, river birches, *Betula nigra*, should be established behind the wall. They will grow above the fence. Flowering evergreen groundcover climbs over the existing stone retaining wall, turning it into a scenic element.

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Ornamental vines enhance fence & screen out unattractive views

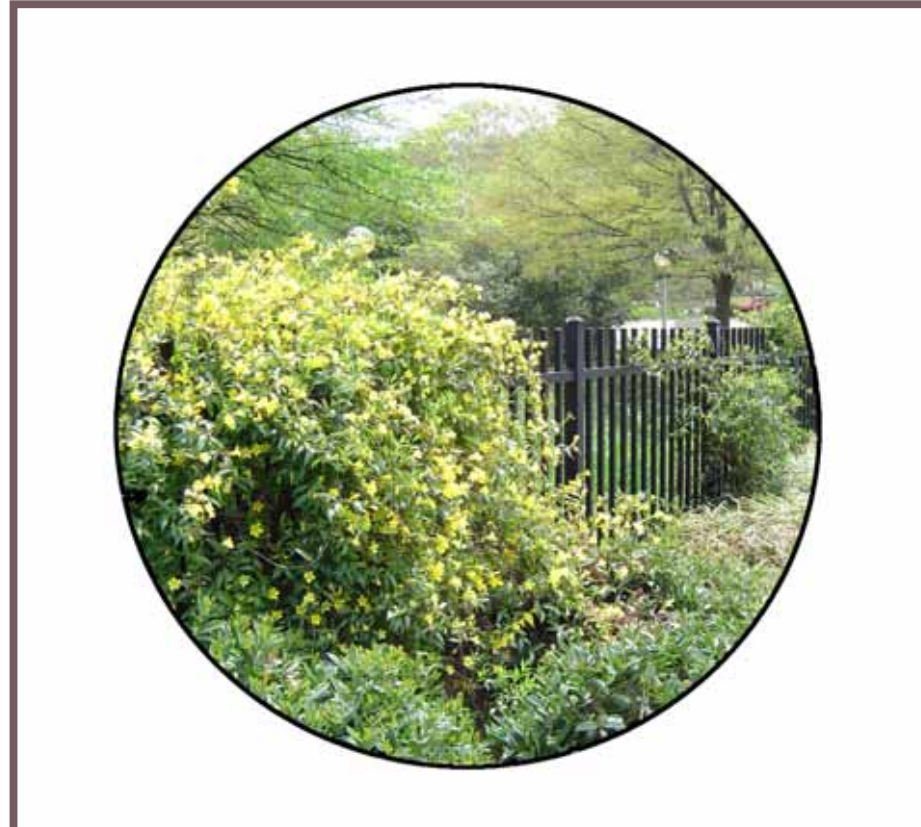
ornamental vines

• *Akebia quinata*

Akebia is a very vigorous vine that is appropriate for the fence only in certain places, such as along the north property line, to mask a dead zone between two fences that is filled with trash and debris. *Akebia* requires little maintenance after it is established, except for occasional pruning, to prevent its becoming too invasive. Colorful blossoms and bluish-green foliage soften and complement the hard black fence.

• *Gelsemium sempervirens*


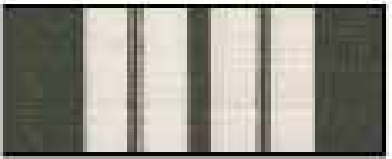

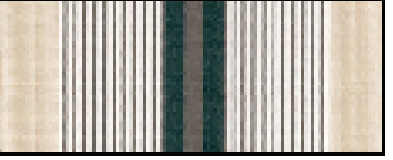

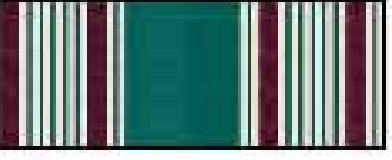

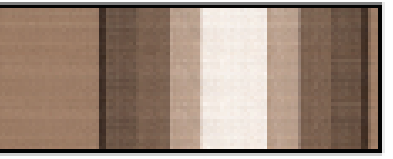

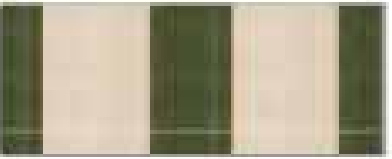

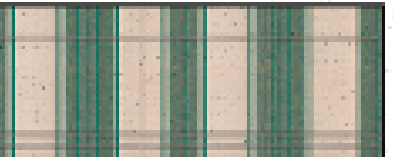



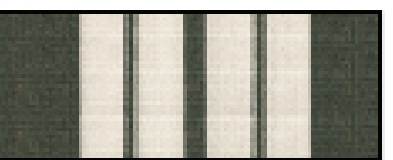



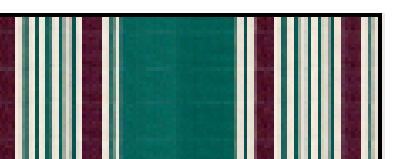


Carolina jessamine is a fast-growing and dense native vine that can be easily trained to grow on the fence. Spectacular yellow blossoms provide much-needed color to the perimeter during the early spring. Evergreen foliage of the jessamine works as an effective year-round screen. Where enough space exists, especially along the highway, low holly shrubs can be planted at the foot of the fence.



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Sense of Neighborhood & Pride of Place

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| Neighborhood | Plants | Awning Fabric | | | |
|---|--|---|---|---|---|
| | | |  | Prunus cerasifera Betula nigra 'Heritage' |  |
|  | Cornus florida Cercis canadensis |  |  | Pinus strobus Cercis canadensis |  |
|  | Aesculus hippocastanum Aesculus parviflora |  |  | Cercis canadensis 'Forest Pansy' Betula nigra 'Heritage' |  |
|  | Magnolia grandiflora Magnolia x soulangiana |  |  | Malus 'Centurion' Hydrangea quercifolia |  |
|  | Prunus cerasifera Betula nigra 'Heritage' |  |  | Koelreuteria paniculata Betula nigra 'Heritage' |  |
|  | Pinus strobus Cercis canadensis |  |  | Liriodendron tulipifera |  |



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neighborhoods

A design intent of the 1960s and 1970s was to create sameness - multiple buildings without definition or unique elements. While the effect may be sculptural and look good on a blueprint, it does very little to help people locate addresses or residents who are trying to create a sense of identity and self expression. It creates a world of anonymous - anywhere USA - villages without pizzazz. Our project attempts to ameliorate the problem at Riverwood by creating a system of new names and new identifying characteristics for each of the residential "pods." By no means does this have to be the final solution you accept, but it will give an idea of a way to begin to create identity and a more personalized sense of place.



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naming

- The names for each of the residential “pods” corresponds to the plants recommended for that area.
- They are based on native Georgia plants which will require less water and are better suited for our climate.
- The different sections of Riverwood would be identified by low signage, monument type, and have an easy to understand numbering system to make it easier for visitors and emergency vehicles to locate individual units.



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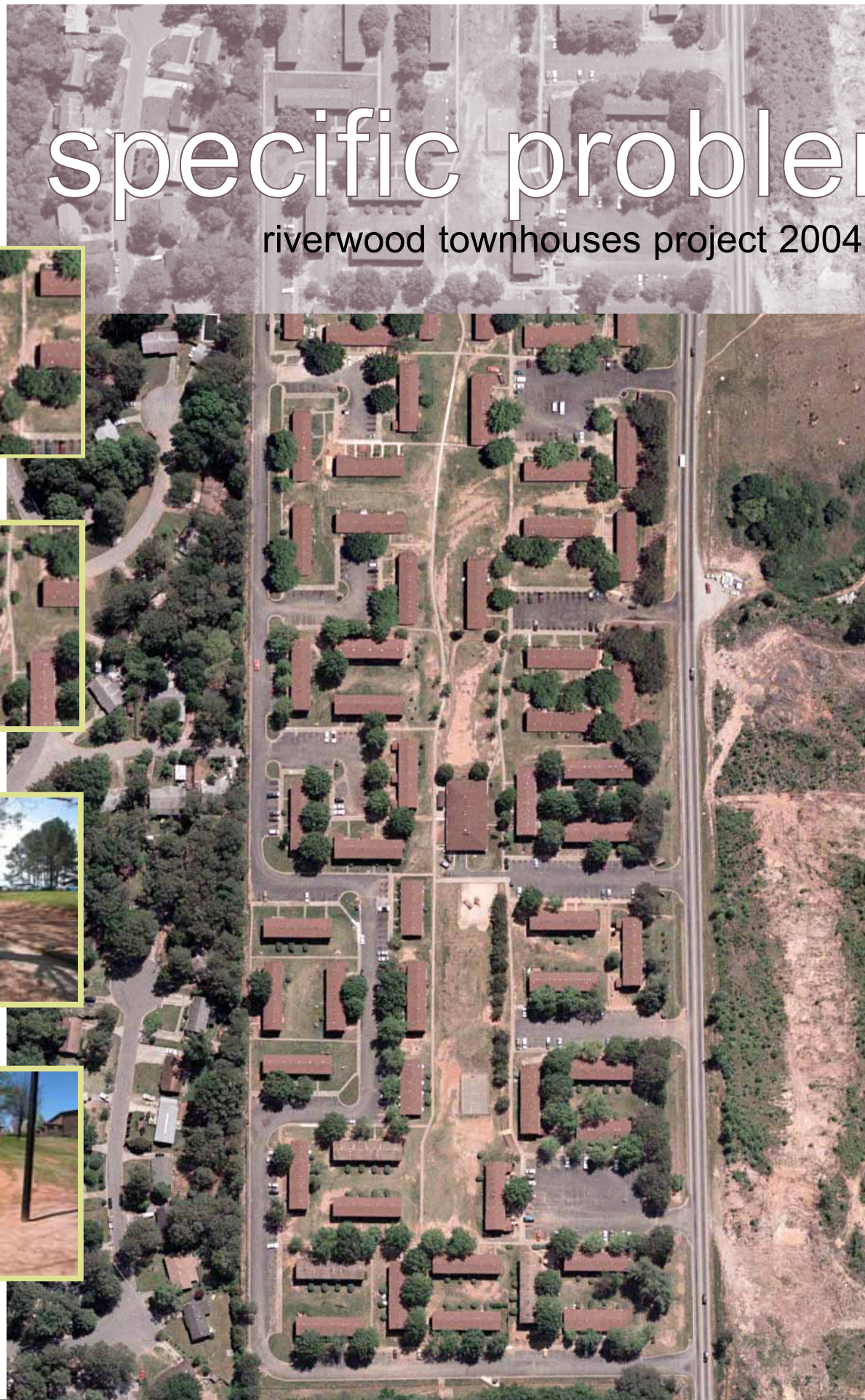
sense of place

- In addition to identification by name, we propose that a system of door and matching awnings be developed.
- Each of the “pods” would have a palette of similar awnings and consistent door colors to distinguish them from other parts of the complex.
- This system might be expanded to better demarcate the primary door from secondary entrances.
- A problem with the design of buildings at Riverwood is that the “front” door is often not the primary entrance. This creates confusion and mistakes by visitors.



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specific problems @ riverwood

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Specific Problems

A. Stormwater Management

1. Gutters
2. Erosion
3. Bare earth
4. Deteriorated original drainage system

B. Dumpsters

C. Environmental Education Program

1. Compost & Mulch
2. Community Gardens
3. Volunteer Clean up and Pruning Crews

outline

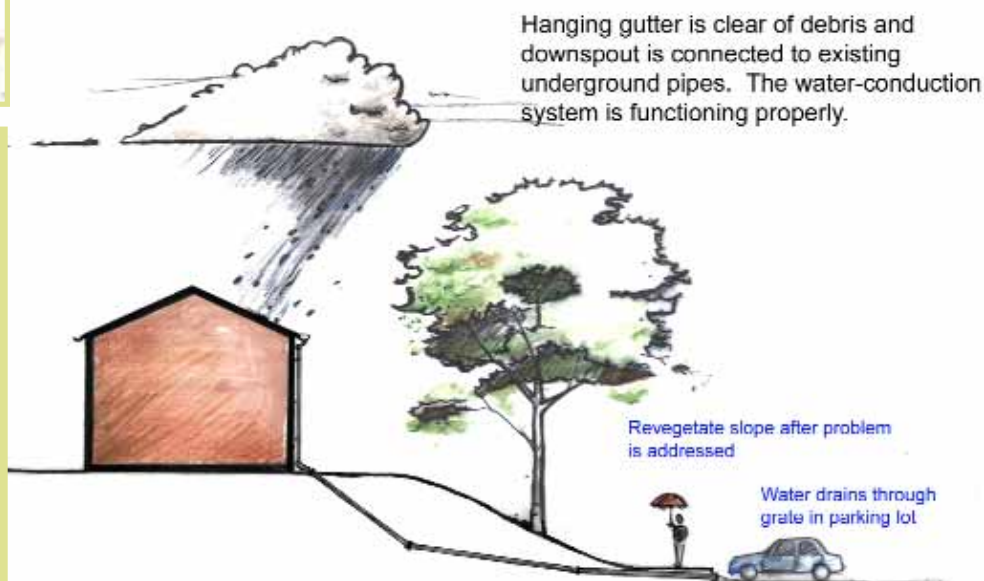
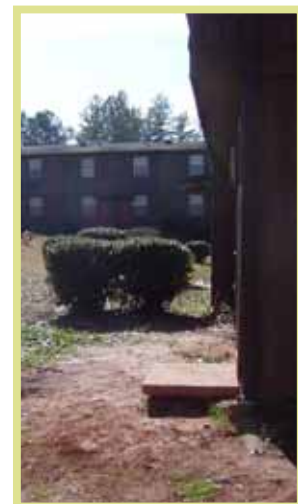
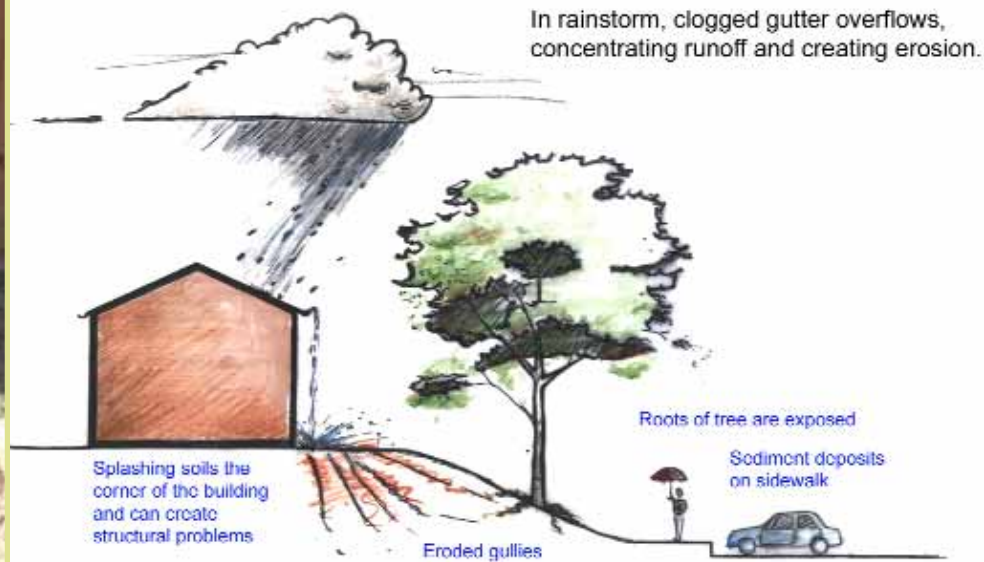
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stormwater management

Specific Problems

A. Stormwater Management



1. Gutters- clogged gutters and proper downspouts are necessary to move as much water as possible away from the foundations of the buildings. A positive slope away from the buildings is key. Where that is not possible, a below ground system of sturdy drains should take rain water away from buildings without it streaming across bare soil.

2. Erosion - is generally caused by three factors:

- a. Run off
- b. Lack of vegetated cover
- c. Compacted soil

Almost all three causes can be solved by the proper introduction of plant materials and the proper management of stormwater. Your landscape contractor will be an important player in determining how to implement the most successful remedies to erosion. You should also obtain free assistance from the USDA's Soil Conservation Service and the Cooperative Extension Agent for your area.

3. Bare earth - The word allelopathic means the effect of one plant species from nature on another, be it in a harmful or in a beneficial way. There is evidence that the ground below pine trees contains a high level of acid, for example, which inhibits the growth of grass and other vegetation. The high level of acidity is likely related to some of the chemical compounds that can be found in pine needles. Many tree species have this effect, so one must be careful when underplanting. In fact, some trees should only be mulched due to the inability to grow plants beneath them. Shade producing trees can be much more helpful to Riverwood than a hearty stand of groundcover. Therefore, some areas will remain bare and should be heavily mulched.

4. Deteriorated original drainage system - the original system of PVC drain pipes from gutter downspouts has deteriorated. In some cases it is the clogged drains that contribute to the erosion problems at Riverwood. While it will be an expense, the replacement of the drain system will greatly improve the other landscape problems experienced at the complex.

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Specific Problems

B. Dumpsters

- The proper disposal of trash is always a problem in multi-family residential areas. The most efficient way to handle solid waste in these areas is to begin a program of recycling. The program should be resident enforced and should involve school age children to ensure success.
- A system for composting kitchen waste can become part of the landscape beautification program. Families can become involved in creating a rich planting medium for beds and community gardens. (See the following recommendations in part C)
- For the material that cannot be recycled, larger compactors that can be emptied less often and placed in less obvious places have worked well.
- Cleanliness around existing dumpsters should be a high priority.



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environmental education program

Specific Problems

C. Environmental Education Program

1. **Compost & Mulch** - landscape debris and kitchen wastes are valuable for replacing eroded topsoil at Riverwood. An integrated program of composting and afterschool education can make restoring the degraded landscape of the complex a learning process. It also creates a system for resident buy-in and ownership of the land surrounding their homes.
2. **Community Gardens** - Many ad hoc gardens have sprung up at the complex. This practice is a good one and should be encouraged in designated areas. A large tract can be devoted to creating a well managed garden with cooperative growing of vegetables, flowering plants and herbs.
3. **Volunteer Clean up and Pruning Crews** - along with organizing residents to create their own soil and grow their own vegetables, a program of weekly volunteer clean up and pruning crews could be started. This process can help reduce costs and create pride for Riverwood residents.



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estimates

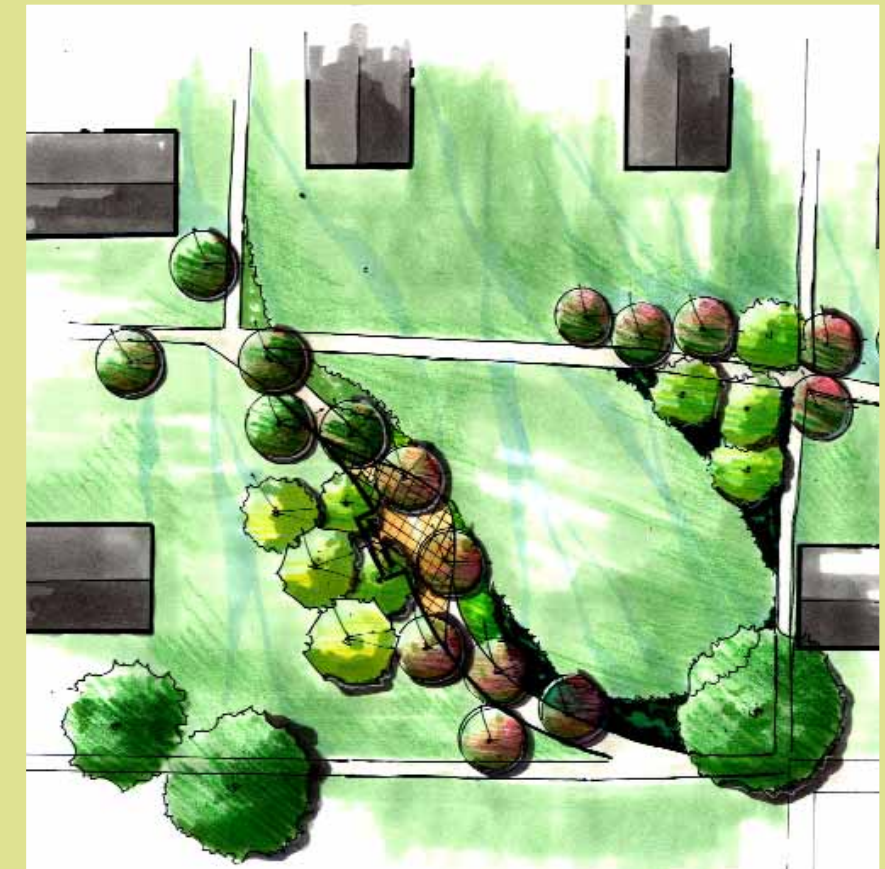
estimates for Central Greenbelt



\$9,664.50



\$14,421.00



\$9,272.00

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S U M M A R Y

A Vision for Change



Riverwood's health has improved. Now it is time to get a new hair-do and manicure. The landscape was designed for immediate success in the 1970s. 30 years later it is time for a facelift. Soil compaction issues, compounded by erosion dominate the landscape problems at Riverwood. Some of the misguided plant selections, such as *Eleagnus pungens*, made by the original designers and builders don't help the situation. They were poorly located considering their size and shape at maturity.

So now begins an incremental process to heal the land and bring a sense of immediate beauty back into the lives of residents.

Plants and landscape design do that. They address Riverwood's problems in many ways, including:

- a. Absorbing urban noise
- b. Adding color, interest and excitement
- c. Slowing runoff and stemming soil erosion
- d. Providing healthy environments and cooling urban heat pockets
- e. Defining personal space and creating a sense of privacy often missing in apartment complexes
- f. Screening unattractive areas and unpleasant views.

The problems at Riverwood did not happen overnight, nor will the solutions to those problems. The improvements must begin quickly but can progress at a phased and measured pace. All solutions should not occur at once. The advice of a licensed landscape contractor, engineer, architect or landscape architect will provide decision makers with a schedule for phasing changes over time.

This report allows Riverwood to avoid costly design time and move directly toward implementation. However, it must be stressed that this report and these plans should not be used as construction documents. The bidding process and the contractor selection is critical in protecting investment, protecting the landscape and avoiding mistakes.

outline

1. Project Scope
2. Design Methodology
3. Vision for the Central Greenbelt
4. Vision for the Edges
5. Vision for the Neighborhood
6. Specific Issues
7. Ballpark Estimates
5. Summary
6. Credits

uga team credits

University of Georgia - UGA
College of Environment and Design - CED
School of Environmental Design - SED
Center for Community Design and Preservation - CCDP



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