

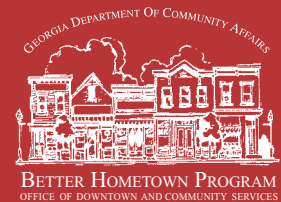


# WEST POINT

*C h a r r e t t e*



*Back to the Future*



WEST  
POINT

# Table of Contents

Charrette Participants .....	4
Introduction .....	5
Strengthening Community Identity .....	5
Building on Historic Assets .....	6
Historic Building Strategies .....	6
Nurturing Neighborhoods.....	10
Ten Commandments for Heritage Tourism and Cultural Marketing .....	16
Livable Streets and Public Spaces .....	17
Memorable Civic Gathering Spaces .....	22
Part II: Design Guidelines .....	26
Appendix .....	30
Projects and Funding .....	33



University of Georgia  
February 09-12, 2002  
College of Environment and Design



## Georgia Department of Community Affairs Better Hometown Program

### Coordinators:

Professor Pratt Cassity, Historic Preservation  
Professor Eleonora Machado, Landscape Architecture  
Martha Reimann, DCA Community Development Specialist

### Student Participants:

Eric Baugher, Master of Landscape Architecture, Cumberland, Maryland  
Hui Fang Chang, Master of Landscape Architecture, Taipei, Taiwan  
Kevin Chastine, Master of Historic Preservation, Greenville, South Carolina  
Barrie Collins, Master of Landscape Architecture, Atlanta, Georgia  
Micah Lipscomb, Master of Landscape Architecture, Manchester, Georgia  
Anne Riley, Master of Landscape Architecture, Washington, DC  
Maria Rodrigues, Bachelor of Landscape Architecture, Lisbon, Portugal  
Andrew Walter, Master of Landscape Architecture, Atlanta, Georgia

### Special Assistance from:

Phyllis Bishop, West Point Better Hometown Coordinator  
Corrine Blencoe, DCA Region 4 Regional Representative  
Christine Laughlin, UGA Community Services/Certified Local Government Coordinator  
Joel Wood, West Point City Administrator



Better Hometown Charrettes and final presentation reports are coordinated and produced by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs' Office of Downtown and Community Services and the Communications Group with the able assistance of the University of Georgia College of Environment and Design.

The electronic version of this publication (PDF) may be found online at:  
[www.betterhometown.org/design/westpoint.html](http://www.betterhometown.org/design/westpoint.html)

CDs are available upon request. Contact: Cindy Eidson • [ceidson@dca.state.ga.us](mailto:ceidson@dca.state.ga.us) • phone: 404.679.3101



## Introduction

In February of 2002, a design team sponsored by the University of Georgia's College of Environment and Design and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs came to spend a week in West Point. The team conducted a "charrette." A charrette is an intensive, focused design and visioning exercise, conducted with community input and intended to provide a fresh viewpoint on revitalization opportunities. The charrette resulted in some new ideas for reinvigorating West Point's historic core and improving its economic climate. This report reflects recommendations generated by the team and is illustrated with graphics produced during the visit.

Participating students, faculty and DCA staff wish to thank the community for its warm hospitality and are grateful for the opportunity to polish our urban design skills in a stimulating and historic setting.

## Strengthening Community Identity

The first morning of the charrette was spent interviewing local residents, elected officials and city staff. Residents identified many community assets and opportunities (See appendix). However, several factors combine to challenge West Point in maintaining a strong community identity. The city brushes up against the Alabama border, and the towns of Valley and Lanett compete successfully with downtown West Point for traditional downtown businesses like grocery stores and drugstores. The county lines and state legislative districts that divide the town have made it difficult to keep West Point's interests in the forefront of regional politics. Many public services have been moved to LaGrange. West Point no longer has its own high school, so students may not identify strongly with the city. Shifts away from local ownership of the city's textile mills to more impersonal corporate management have challenged the community's sense of identity and threatened traditional sources of philanthropic support. West Point Lake, which should be a strong source of local pride and a regional tourism attraction, has



been stigmatized (perhaps to an exaggerated degree) as being polluted by Atlanta's downstream run off.

On a physical level, West Point has wonderful scenic qualities, but also faces some design challenges:

- The neighboring towns are so close to downtown West Point that they seem to the casual outsider to run together. There are no architectural gateways or markers to let people know they are entering or leaving a special city.
- The city's urban fabric has been damaged over time by some insensitive highway design decisions. Traffic moves too rapidly along Highway 29 and is funneled straight into the sprawling strip development of east Alabama before most visitors get a chance to sample the historic charms of downtown West Point.
- The four-laning of Highway 29 and the removal of the 8<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge across the Chattahoochee River have separated the town center from some of its best neighborhoods and made life difficult for would-be pedestrians.
- Modern commercial development (in the form of a filling station) near City Hall and the Children's Library breaks the physical continuity between the government center of town and the rest of the business district.
- Past attempts at urban renewal have also backfired. In retrospect, the plaza and parking lot on 7<sup>th</sup> street were not a good trade for the block of historic storefronts lost in the name of revitalization.
- While the Chattahoochee River is a tremendous scenic asset to West Point, in the downtown area people are separated from the river by the levee and the steep grade changes. Currently, there is little recreational access to the waterfront.

Fortunately, the team's interviews with citizens provided reassurance that West Point recognizes and is beginning to actively address these challenges. The West Point 2020 Foundation, supported by progressive local business leaders, has done much to infuse the downtown with new life, and vacancy rates in the city are dropping. Designation as a Better Hometown has given the city an organizational structure around which to build citizen volunteerism. The physical tears in the fabric of the city are, in some ways, the easiest problems to address and a good place to start. By making tangible and attractive design improvements along with wise economic and leadership choices, West Point can attract new residents and provide, as in days past, a thriving workplace and a healthy community in which young people can build families.

## Building on Historic Assets

### A Brief History of Downtown West Point

West Point's downtown has been a center of thriving commercial activity for over 150 years. The two major factors which have played a part in the development are the railroad and the Chattahoochee River.

The Montgomery and West Point Railroad was constructed in 1851, followed by the Atlanta and LaGrange Railroad which was extended to West Point in 1854, completing the rail line between the two state capitals. However, Alabama and Georgia had tracks of different gauges until well after the Civil War, so all passengers and freight were transferred from one train to another at West Point. Several hotels, shops, saloons and other facilities prospered from the railroad passenger traffic. Many famous passengers, such as Jefferson Davis, passed through West Point, because they were forced to make a stopover when traveling.

In the closing days of the Civil War, downtown West Point was the scene of intense and dramatic activity. The battle of West Point was fought at Fort Tyler, on the hill overlooking the town, on Easter Sunday, April 16, 1865. Hospitals were set up in the town to care for the wounded soldiers, and the casualties were buried in the cemetery across the river.

In 1869, two cotton mills had begun production on the Chattahoochee River several miles below West Point, and the textile industry stimulated new growth and prosperity in the downtown area. West Point Manufacturing Company, chartered in 1880, has evolved into West Point Stevens, Inc., the town's leading industry and a nationally recognized name in the business world.

The downtown is somewhat larger than usual for a town this size, due to the fact that for years it served as the main commercial area for five mill towns just over the state line in Alabama. Most of the buildings date from the late 1800s and many have interesting architectural ornamentation and attractive brickwork. The downtown area is unique in two respects: 1) part of the area is built up on elevated foundations with sidewalks several feet above street level, a response to the frequent flooding of the Chattahoochee in past years, and 2) the state line actually cuts through

several buildings so that the front parts of the structures are in Georgia while the rears are in Alabama. One building is on the spot where it is said that the minister of the Presbyterian Church, on that site until 1920, stood in Alabama and the congregation sat in Georgia!

The downtown district has a good collection of early 20th century one and two-story attached commercial buildings. Significant architectural features include corbelled and stepped brick cornices, terra cotta ornamentation and other decorative brickwork. Most of the buildings have no academic style, although there are a few isolated examples of Art Deco and Mediterranean Revival styles. Several buildings are individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Currently, there is an effort to create National Register Historic Districts in addition to a locally designated commercial historic district.

The river and the railroad are still major features in West Point today. The Chattahoochee is no longer used for river transport and floods have been controlled by the creation of West Point Lake, however, the river is a mainstay in the identity of the city. Several trains still pass through the city daily, but it no longer necessary to switch trains to cross the state line!



### Historic Building Strategies

West Point should vigorously pursue the rehabilitation of the remaining architectural landmarks in town. Demolition has occurred at an alarming and very damaging rate. This community disfigurement should not happen again unless building deterioration can be documented and destruction is necessitated for safety reasons. The proposed local West Point downtown historic district runs north along the Georgia line and 5th Avenue to West 10th Street and East to the Chattahoochee River.

About 300 contributing buildings, both residential and commercial, currently remain in the historic core. Nothing is more important to West Point's future than preserving intact the glories of its past. This will require public

policies that discourage sprawl and protect historic commercial areas and neighborhoods from inappropriate incursions by modern buildings. There is a need for both rehabilitation of existing assets and appropriate infill development consistent with reasonable historic design guidelines. (See appendix).

The team believes that a current market study will be useful to economic development entities within the community in recruiting the right retail mix to sustain buildings and business. The city should take a very proactive stance in providing incentives to the private sector to move into its existing underutilized architectural treasures rather than wasting resources on new generic buildings. Below are the buildings the team considers the most immediate candidates for reuse and some ideas for possible functions.

### The West Point Wholesale Foods (Lakeview) Building

This signature building is one of the few remaining historic railroad buildings in the state with a curved masonry load-bearing wall. The building is striking in its design and fully functional in its setting. A new addition on the southeastern corner would provide locations for new and inviting small businesses. This would slow motorists down to encourage them to stay a while in West Point. The storefronts should be exciting, eye catching and colorful. The back portions of the building should be used for larger functions, such as studios for artists, rehearsal space, and offices or for housing governmental activities or community services.

One welcomed use would be a Troup County Courthouse Annex that would serve West Point and south Troup citizens. Depending on the desired uses, this project might qualify for Downtown Development Revolving Loan Funding through DCA that could then provide ongoing funds for future revitalization projects (See project funding list on page 33).

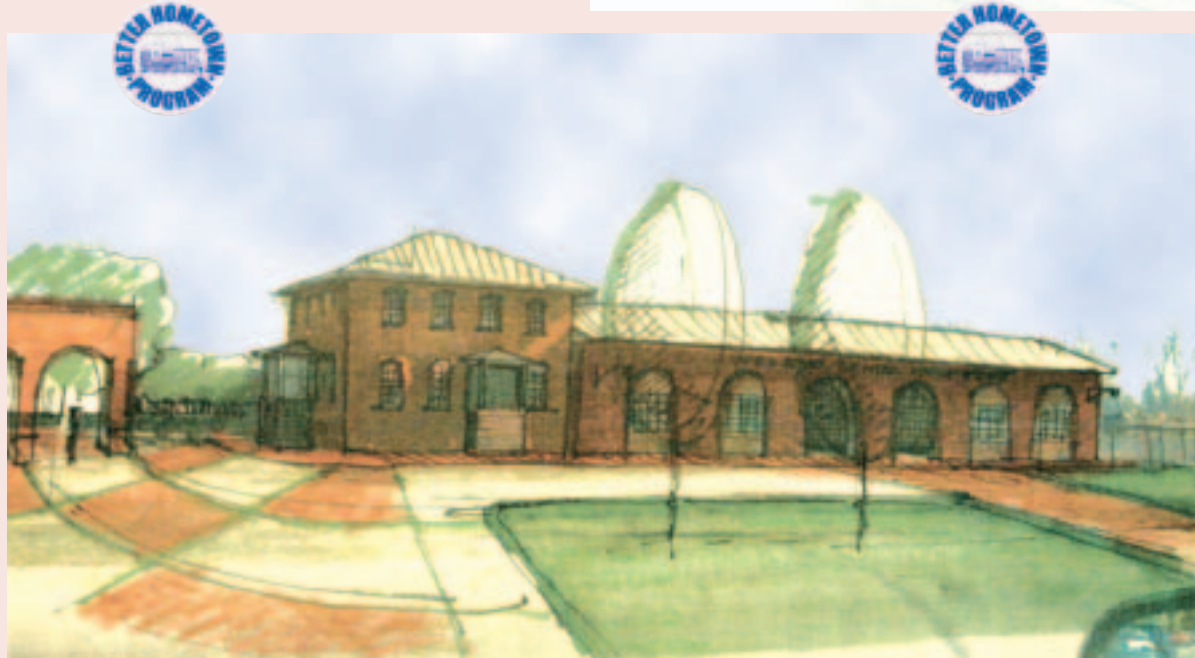
*The Lakeview building, properly renovated, would work in concert with the depot complex proposed across the street to create an architectural "gateway" to West Point.*





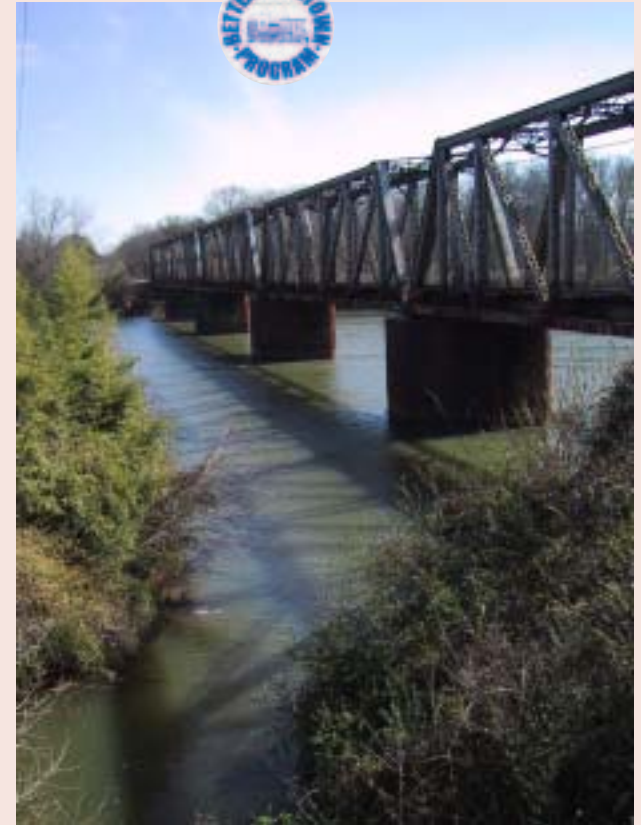
## The Depot

Few buildings related to West Point's railroad heritage are left. The abandoned building along Highway 29 must be saved. The new use should involve West Point's immediate need for a welcome center, a community room and museum functions related to railroad, telecommunications and textile history. The building could be tied visually to the former West Point Wholesale Foods (Lakeview) Building across the street with streetscape details, landscaping and the creation of outdoor public spaces using similar materials. Both buildings, anchoring both sides of Highway 29, could (with appropriate signage) create a welcoming gateway to West Point, to Georgia, and announce that visitors have entered a unique place committed to a higher design quality.



*These sketches illustrate how a series of arched openings and paving patterns could be used to unite the buildings and clearly demarcate the state line.*



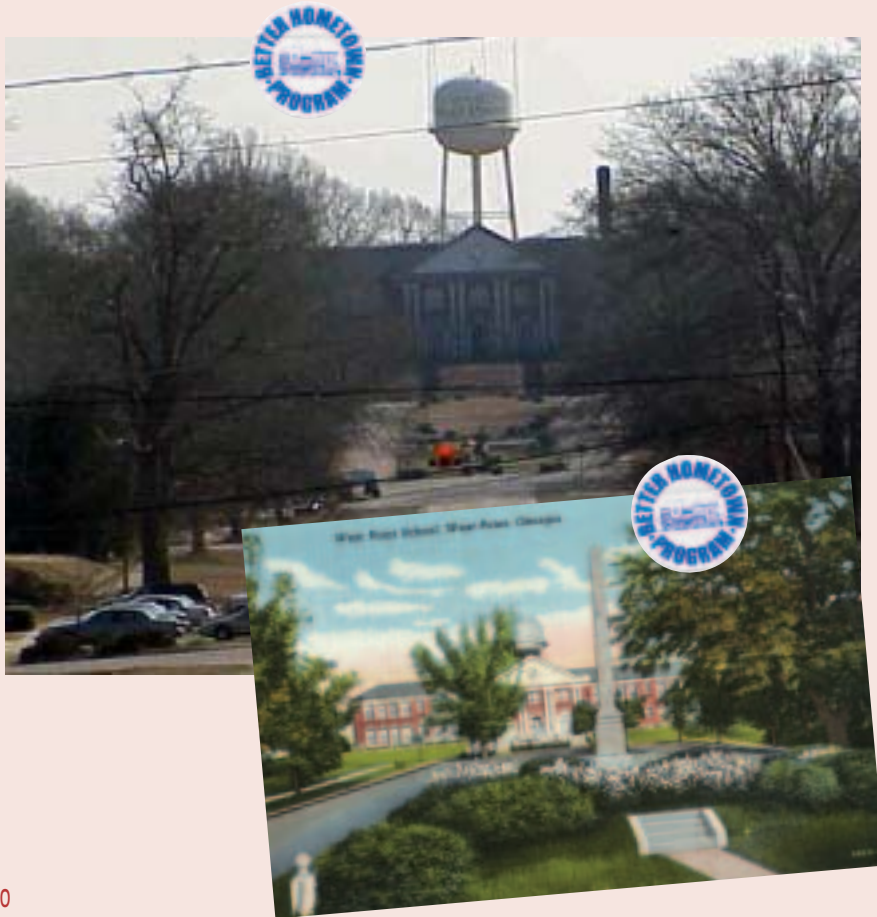


*This photo shows the relationship of the depot to the Lakeview Building (foreground). If both were redeveloped with coordinated outdoor amenities, they would create an attractive gateway for the city. (See site plan on page 7.)*

## The Old Primary School

No building in West Point has a more prominent location than this school. The current plans for utilizing the building as housing for persons on fixed incomes is excellent. The reuse of the auditorium space for performances and community meetings is equally laudable. Funding from state agencies and foundation support would augment the tax advantages that would be available to private developers who focus on historic building rehabilitation. This project could be an attractive public/private partnership to some investors because of the building's eligibility for historic and housing tax credits.

*This neoclassical school building was originally sited on a hill to crown the vista that lined up with downtown and the 8th street bridge. This vista should be reinforced as the city plans to restore its urban fabric.*



## The Foundry Building

This building is a well-maintained and handsome addition to downtown. Plans should be ready for reuse options if the building ever becomes vacant. Rehabilitation potential is excellent due to the good maintenance and stewardship of its current owners. The building would function well as an antique mall, an open plan market or even loft housing units.

*The Foundry Building is currently in use, but might one day be ideal for a more commercial function.*



## Nurturing Neighborhoods

### Residential Marketing

West Point is fortunate to have some of the most beautiful and intact intown neighborhoods in Georgia. They feature shady trees, landscaped yards, grand old churches and a unique range of architectural styles from Victorian and Craftsman to Bauhaus Modern. Most intown neighborhoods are relatively free from commercial intrusions and blight. Vacancies and dilapidated homes are the exception to the rule. Affordable home prices for architecturally stunning historic structures should be one of the city's key marketing points. West Point is a reasonable commute distance from



neighboring cities in Alabama as well as LaGrange. Efforts should be made by the Chamber and other marketing entities to spread the word to the rest of the region about affordable historic housing and quality of life opportunities in West Point.

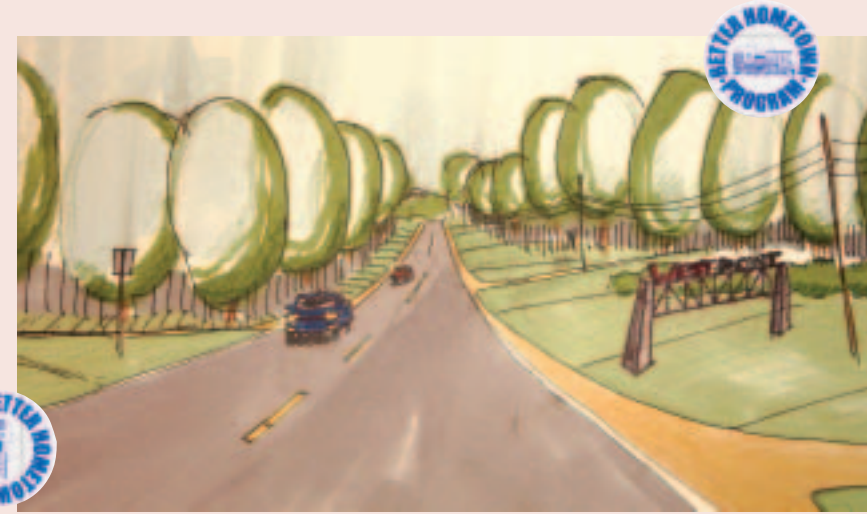
### Neighborhood Commercial Design Strategies

Neighborhood commercial businesses should be encouraged and upgraded. Inappropriately intense businesses such as auto repair shops and butler buildings should be offered incentives to relocate back downtown or on commercial corridors and new residential or office/professional infill uses should replace them. Special attention should be paid to commercial areas where the old bridge used to span the river. These neighborhood transitional areas should be densified and enhanced with outdoor river viewing areas. More casual restaurants, professional offices and service businesses that people could walk to would be the most appropriate uses in this area.

### Corridor Commercial Issues

Some viable neighborhood commercial clusters already exist along the entry corridor on Hwy 29. Local residents may not recognize the charm of these small businesses, but visitors will. As new commercial development moves down Highway 29 from the river toward downtown, it is important not to lose the lessons that these historic clusters teach us about scale and walkability. The city could do worse than to model new commercial on these older shopping areas, pulling buildings up to the street, minimizing parking and putting it in the rear, locating higher density residential near commercial and allowing living units above retail activities. As big retail establishments seek to locate along the Hwy 29 corridors, West Point should take care to differentiate

its new corridor development from the generic sprawl that characterizes Lanett. This could be done by working with the county to develop corridor character areas or an overlay zone requiring parking lot landscaping and clustering of smaller commercial buildings as opposed to megabox retail. If new commercial development could be encouraged to incorporate the neotraditional design elements, West Point could further define its identity, as the region's more upscale quality area for new investors. Ideally, corporate headquarters and high tech businesses would feel at home among commercial uses.



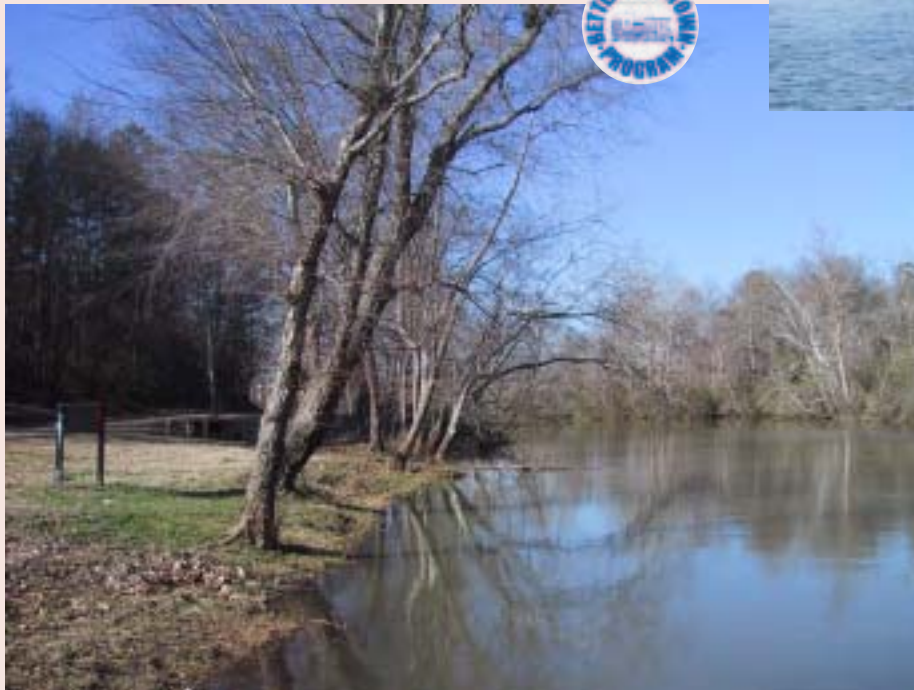
*Tree buffers along commercial corridors can help define West Point as a special place and set it apart from generic sprawl.*



## Recreation and Tourism

As environmental problems are addressed and the population of the region grows, West Point Lake will continue to come into its own as a tourism attraction. Unfortunately, the lake is just far enough from the town of West Point that without a concerted tourism strategy on the city's part, visitors may not automatically be drawn to drive over and experience downtown West Point. While many visitors may originally be drawn to the area in active recreation such as boating and fishing, they could be enticed to stay to explore the city's railroad and river heritage, spend money in high quality restaurants, and take advantage of a critical mass of good shopping opportunities (perhaps antiques, sporting goods or even bargains on locally produced textiles). The increasing success of new businesses such as the Tea Room, West Point Gallery and Villa Nova Restaurant provide real evidence for this assumption.

West Point's visual character has always been dramatically shaped by the Chattahoochee River, which creates dramatic lighting conditions, picturesque views and habitat for a wide range of birds and animals. The banks of the river provide an exceptional opportunity for bike and walking trails and the expansion of public recreation opportunities.

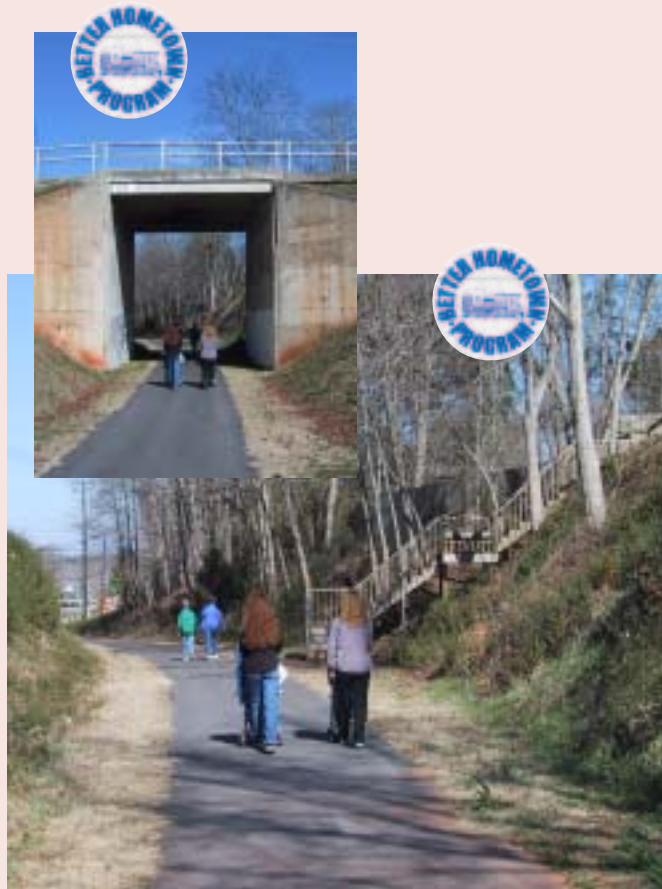


Trails of all types have become a major tool in attracting tourists to other regions of Georgia. For example, the Silver Comet Trail in Cobb, Paulding and Polk Counties draws over a million users a year. Bicyclers, equestrians and environmental tourists such as bird watchers look for trail opportunities just as they seek out campgrounds and fishing areas.

In the team's opinion, all trails should lead to West Point! Team members identified a loop route for a regional trail and bike path that could take residents and visitors over the West Point Lake dam, through the downtown and all the way to the DOT rest area on I-85. (See map on page 15.) Much of the trail route identified is already in public ownership or has a high likelihood of easement donations. Cooperation with Lanett and Valley could result in regional linkages to an already developed seven-mile trail system developed by the city of Valley.

While tourism benefits of trails have been stressed here, the most important outcome of an expanded and unified trail system would be the recreational and multi-modal travel opportunities provided to the current and future residents of the area. Collaboration with West Point's Alabama neighbors on trail linkages could also be a starting point for a broader economic development collaboration that could profit the entire urbanizing area.

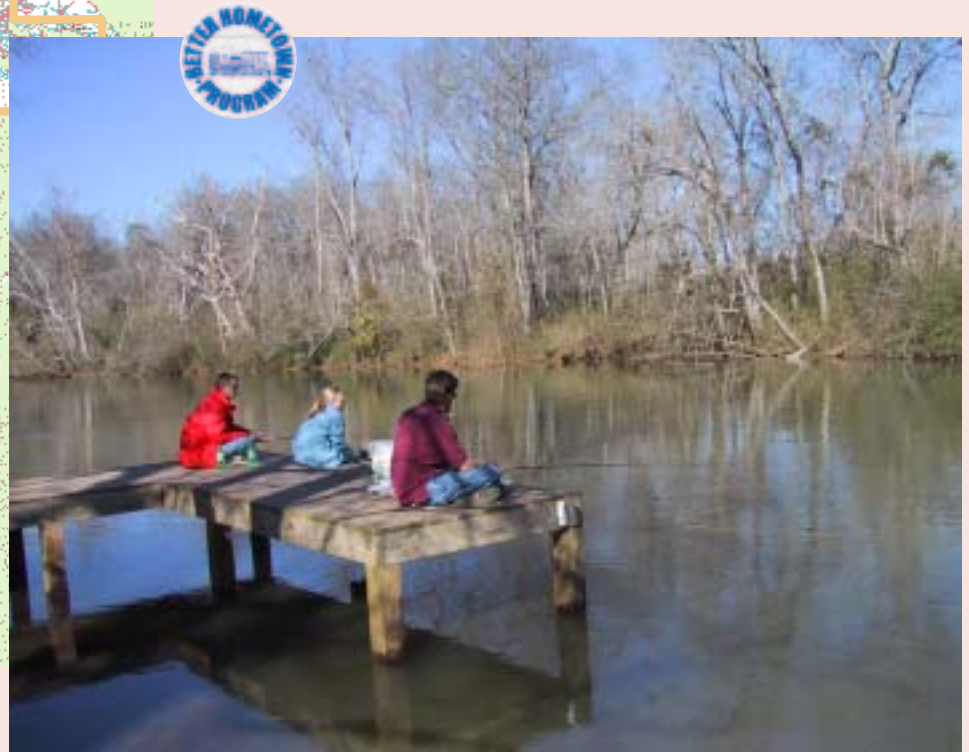
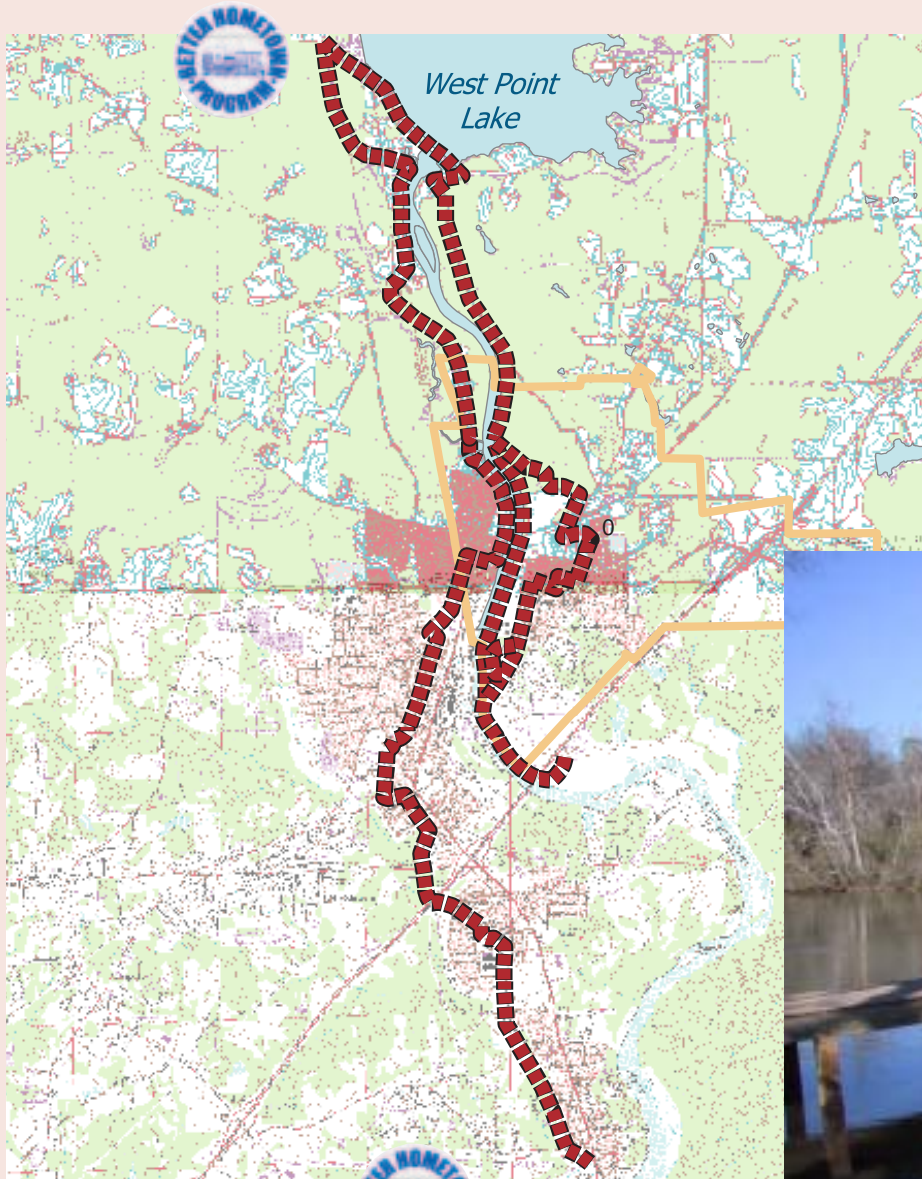
Neighborhoods can also benefit from bike trails. The team also identified on-street bike lanes that would lead users past the Old West Point School, the West Point Recreation Center complex, the historic cemetery and some of the city's most architecturally diverse and notable residences.











# West Point's Ten Commandments for Heritage Tourism and Cultural Marketing

- West Point needs an identity that the visitor can grasp, understand and carry away.
- The two states, three counties and seven cities phenomenon is unique and unusual. The successful communication of that oddity will form a lasting memory in the visitor's mind.
- While the Georgia Welcome Center on I-85 serves the Interstate traveler, there is little, if any, announcement that you are in Georgia and entering West Point on Highway 29. A visitor's center with orientation material and a gateway architectural element will forever create an identity for persons traveling east on Highway 29.
- New brochures, postcards and maps that reflect the evolving nature of West Point's streetscape, the mighty Chattahoochee, textile heritage and Civil War importance should be developed.
- New signage that has a uniform identity can direct out-of-towners to important sites and direct people to the downtown historic district and available parking. Care should be taken to carefully place new signs to avoid adding more visual clutter to an already complicated visual environment (i.e., garish old signs should be removed and not replaced!).
- Many people assume they are in Alabama when they cross the John C. Barrow Bridge. A monumental piece of public art at the west end of the bridge is needed to announce downtown West Point, GEORGIA.
- A new self-guided tour describing the mill heritage along the western banks of the Chattahoochee would enliven Georgia and Alabama tourists' experiences. A self-guided architectural walking tour of downtown buildings and the intown neighborhoods would bolster the tourist experience.
- Fort Tyler should be easier to find and the springtime events associated with the battle should be tied to simultaneous events downtown. This might include the revival and expansion of arts festivals and crafts shows. Lodging options would need to be available for visitors.
- New visitor activities along the Chattahoochee such as overlooks, river walks, informational plaques and environmental education material should be developed and promoted.
- Local and regional arts and crafts should be easy to find and widely promoted. Programs to nurture artists and ways to display and sell their work should be developed. Contact the Georgia Council for the Arts or the Georgia Association of Museums and Galleries for assistance.





## Livable Streets and Public Spaces

### Gateways and Entries

Gateways and entrances are key in making people realize they have entered into a new and distinctive place. They provide certainty and security for visitors, and instill civic pride in the minds of residents. Locations of primary gateways to West Point are on U.S. Highway 29 coming from Lanett, Alabama. Secondary gateways are located on Old Highway 29 near the High School, Highway 18 and Stateline Road.

### Signature Landscaping

A palette of distinctive, hardy street trees can be used to create a unique sense of place at city gateways and within the historic district. On the corners of Seventh, Eighth, and Ninth Streets with Third Avenue, Red Maples (*Acer rubrum*), Ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba*), and Willow Oaks (*Quercus phellos*) should be planted. Along the river and in areas with plenty of space and no overhead power lines, majestic Sycamore (*Plantanus Occidentalis*) could be used to give majestic scale and the visual punctuation of the tree's distinctive white bark in winter.

Smaller trees such as Redbuds (*Cercis canadensis*), Hophornbean (*Ostrya virginiana*), and Wax Myrtles (*Myrica cerifera*) will be planted closer to the buildings. These smaller trees will shade seating areas along the sidewalk.

### Signature Signage

Signage for the commercial historic district is essential in drawing people into the historic core of West Point. The team has designed a hierarchy of signage details that could work together to define the city's gateways and improve wayfinding in its historic core and neighborhoods.

New signage should be located on all streets located within the proposed local historic commercial district. The signage designed by the team was inspired by railroad signage, however, different colors were chosen to limit confusion between railroad signage and historic district signage. The signage should incorporate the words "West Point Historic District," the street name on which each sign is located and the current West Point City logo.

Due to the unique location of West Point, it is important to delineate the Stateline for visitors to provide them a unique experience. The Stateline will be located in Downtown West Point on all streets and sidewalks that it intersects. The design shown here incorporates the current West Point City logo.



*Stateline markers should incorporate the West Point logo.*



*The existing steel truss railroad bridge inspired the design of the gateways signs. Primary entrances are inspired by the frontal view of the bridge, while the secondary entrances are inspired by the side view of the bridge. All gateway signs should be constructed of steel.*





*Banners are another integral part of making people realize they are entering into a unique place. The designs of these banners are taken from artwork produced by 4th grade students at the elementary school. They depict West Point Back on Track, Art & Crafts Festival, Fishing Season and Fourth of July. The banners could be located on the John C. Barrow Bridge.*

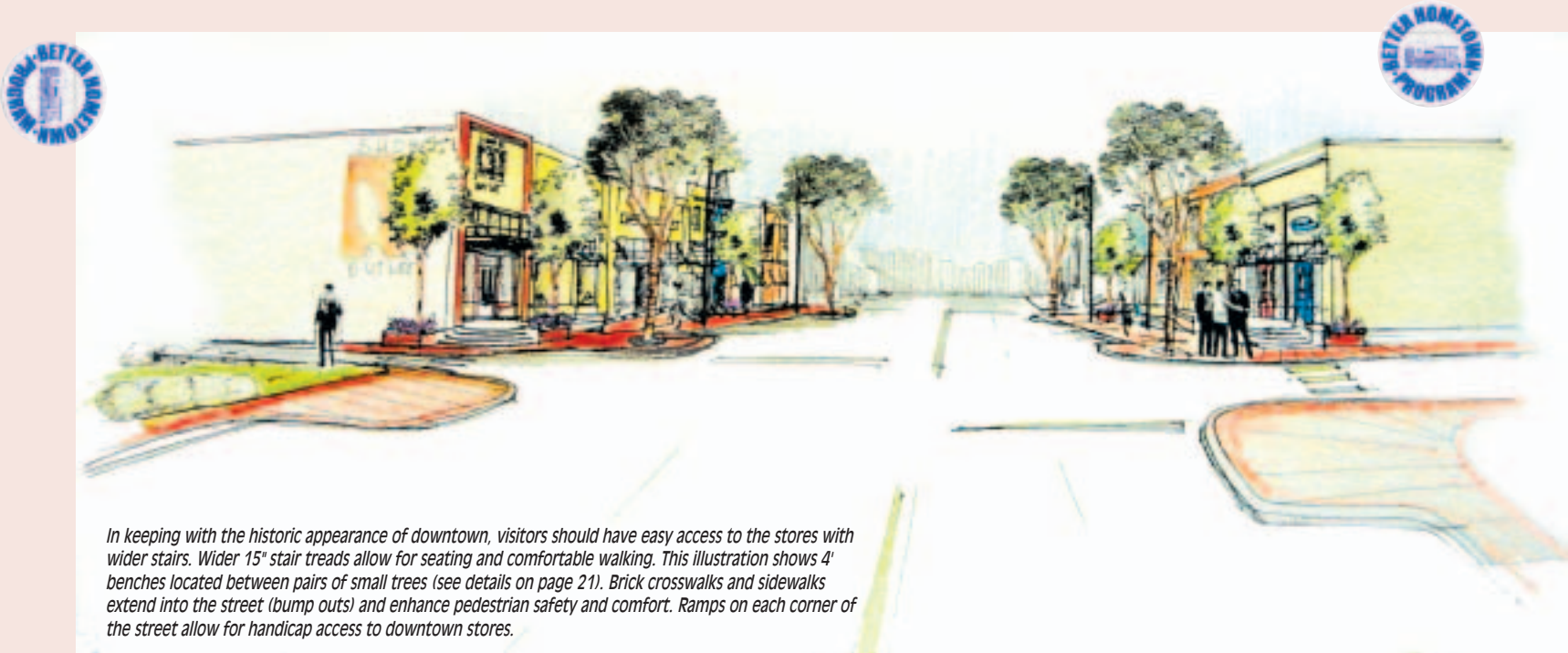
## Streets of Distinction

Streetscape design should have the goals of improving historic district appearance, enhancing pedestrian safety, facilitating handicap access and enhancing evening street activity and general pedestrian usage.

As stated earlier, West Point's multilevel sidewalks, designed to resist floods, add a unique historic character to the traditional streetscape. While this stepped character should be maintained and accented, creative design solutions will be needed to address handicap access and widen sidewalks to accommodate sidewalk dining and merchandising amenities. (See illustrations)

Where traffic lanes are now excessively wide, this space should be given back to the public as wider sidewalks with room for shade trees. Sidewalk dining and attractive outdoor merchandizing should be encouraged by the provision of an "amenities zone" close to the buildings. In some cases, railing or landscaping could be used to define these areas.

Existing pocket parks should be enhanced with seating and lighting. Bike lanes should be striped where possible. Traffic calming measures should be employed, especially in future design of major arterial roads.



*In keeping with the historic appearance of downtown, visitors should have easy access to the stores with wider stairs. Wider 15" stair treads allow for seating and comfortable walking. This illustration shows 4' benches located between pairs of small trees (see details on page 21). Brick crosswalks and sidewalks extend into the street (bump outs) and enhance pedestrian safety and comfort. Ramps on each corner of the street allow for handicap access to downtown stores.*

All parking lots should be screened from pedestrian view, taking their cue from the parking lot at the West Point Stevens corporate building or the new parking area behind the buildings on Third Avenue. They should be shaded with canopy trees, well maintained and attractive. Spaces should be clearly marked and adequate parking for disabled access should be provided.

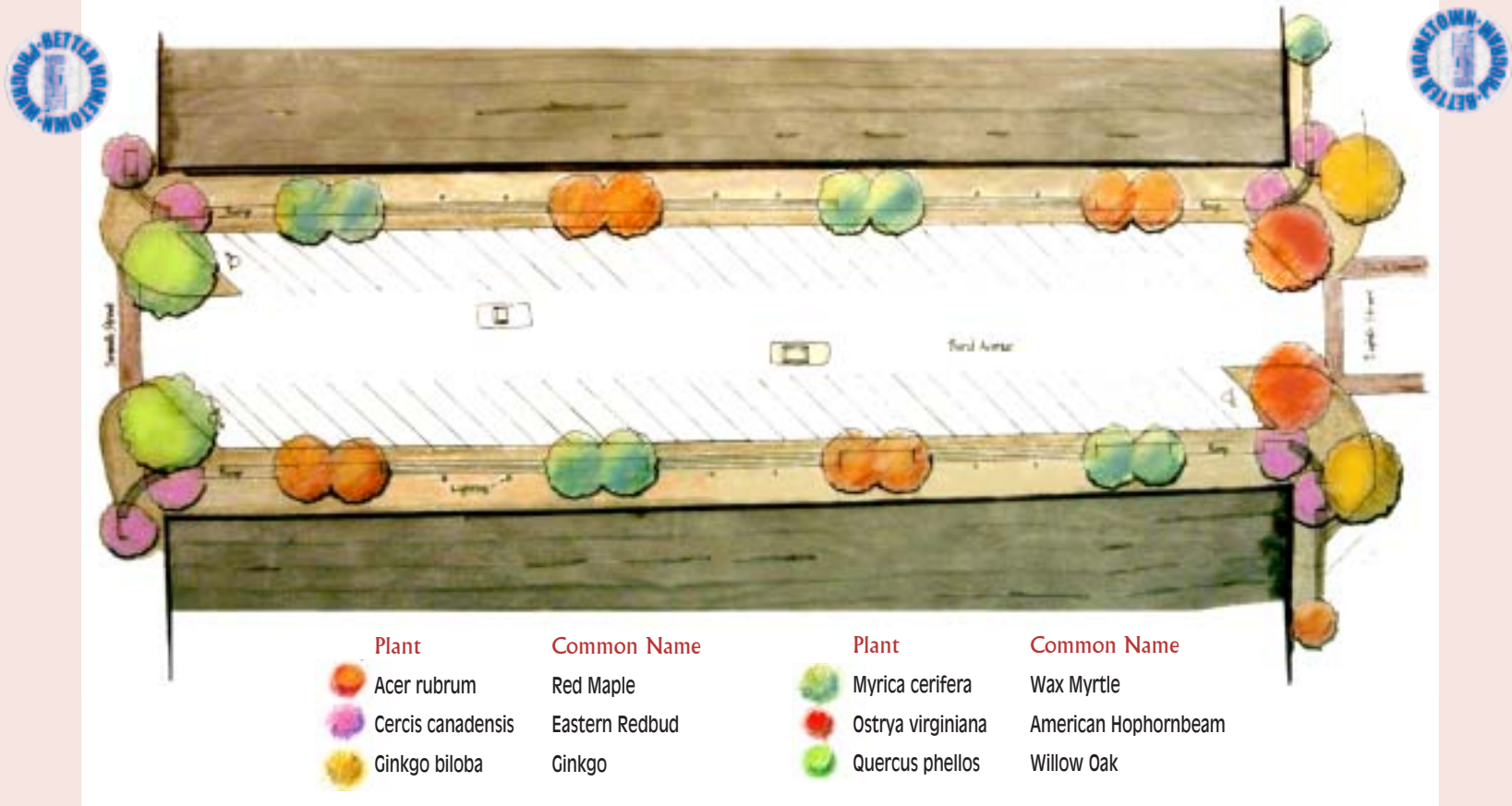
New streets like Highway 29's re-routed section should be defined with parallel columns of street trees to create a sense of enclosure and a softening effect for their foreign and inhospitable appearance. Turns into downtown from Hwy 29 should be emphasized.

The streetscape plans for Third Avenue presented here and for the former Eighth Street river crossing are key ingredients in knitting a fragmented town form back together. Speculative demolition, new incongruous commercial and institutional buildings, highway-sprawl architecture, and super-highway traffic management have

resulted in a frustrating and disjointed edge to downtown. Now is the time to tie the edges back to the center. Convenience stores, large asphalt parking lots, unused and uninviting park space, behemoth banks and shopping centers have no place in a human-scaled downtown. These elements should be replaced with more human-scaled design solutions.

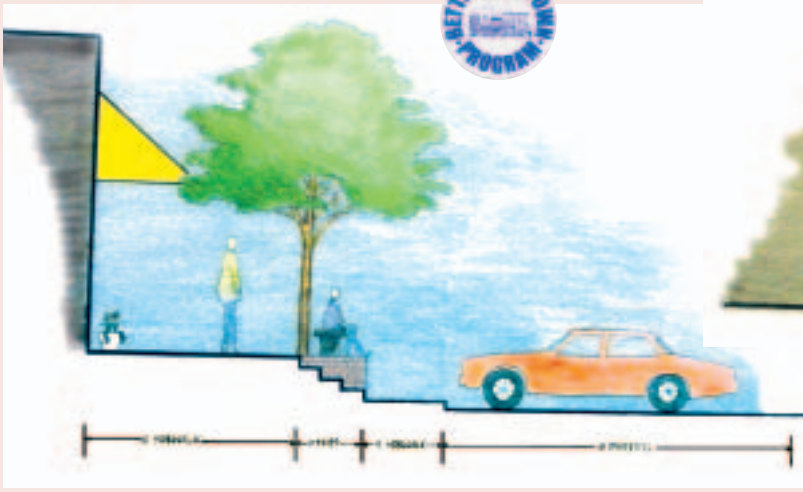
The areas along the US 29 corridor coming into town, while very attractive in some places, are beginning to show a sameness that is very apparent along US 29 through Alabama. This same highway sprawl should not spread into Georgia. Landscape buffers, clustered commercial buildings and median improvements would help curb the unsightly growth patterns that are creeping along the highway.

Special attention should be giving to the neglected and fragmented riverfront area (as detailed in the next section). Unsightly semi-temporary buildings and municipal or industrial clutter should be cleared or screened with vegetation.

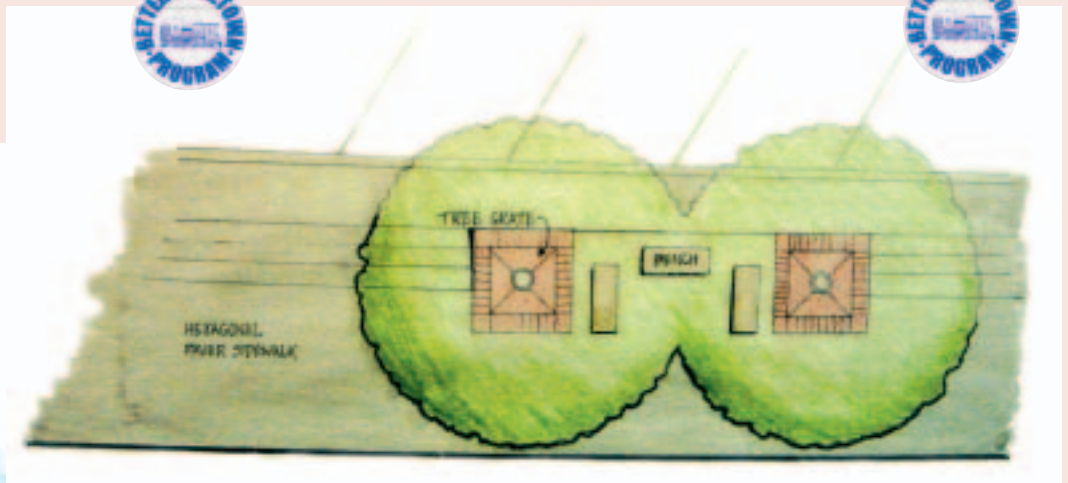








Streetscape elevation



Sidewalk seating area



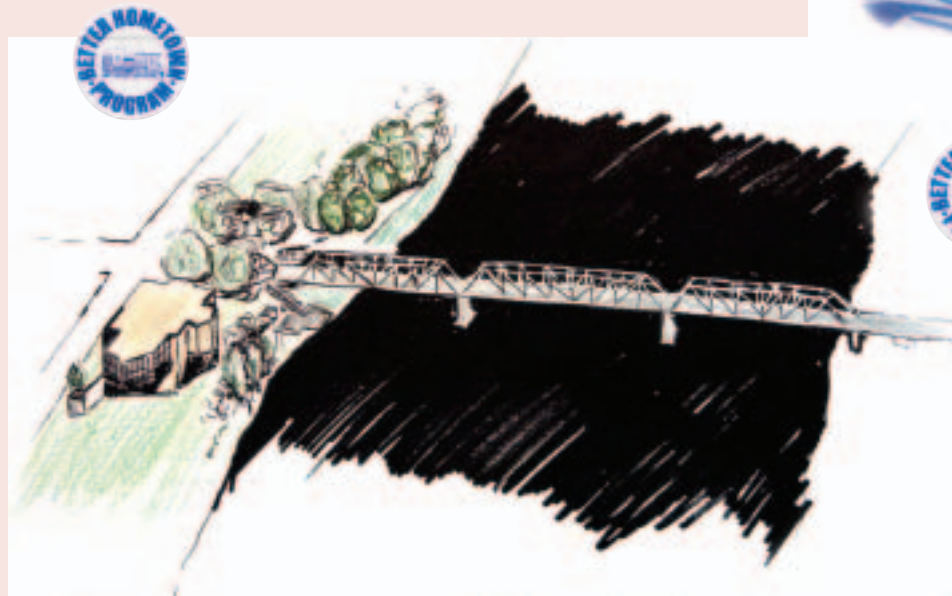


## Memorable Civic Gathering Spaces

Every community needs spaces where people can come together to enjoy the changing of the seasons and celebrate significant public events. While West Point has some public areas, these could be improved to give the city a more cared for and festive ambiance. The two areas below, already in public use, were the focus of the team's attention.

### Riverfront Civic Plaza

One centerpiece of the team's urban design recommendations is a civic plaza designed to create a pleasant gathering place to dignify the government center for the town of West Point. The team developed a concept plan for the area around City Hall, the Children's Library and Magnolia House. The design goal was to reconnect east and west sides of West Point and reconnect West Point with an overlooked asset: the Chattahoochee. Creating a civic gathering space celebrating the views of the Chattahoochee and perhaps restoring public access to the water itself could launch future "river walk" type development along both sides of the river.



*Asphalt paving would be removed and Sycamores planted to extend visual connection with downtown. The design features a central sidewalk with lawn on either side. Perennial beds would be added next to reduced and reconfigured parking on First Avenue. Continuation of street tree plantings of Sycamores lining Eighth Street on east bank of river would maintain a visual connection with downtown grid. Central hexagonal plaza would be paved with inlaid tile in the form of a compass as a reminder, like its name, of West Point's geographical significance. Two stairways beside bridge would lead to bottom level of the Riverfront Park approximately 12 feet below.*

The ideal solution would be to replace the historic 8th bridge that has been lost; however, this may not be financially feasible. Therefore, the team presents two alternatives:

**Strategy A:**

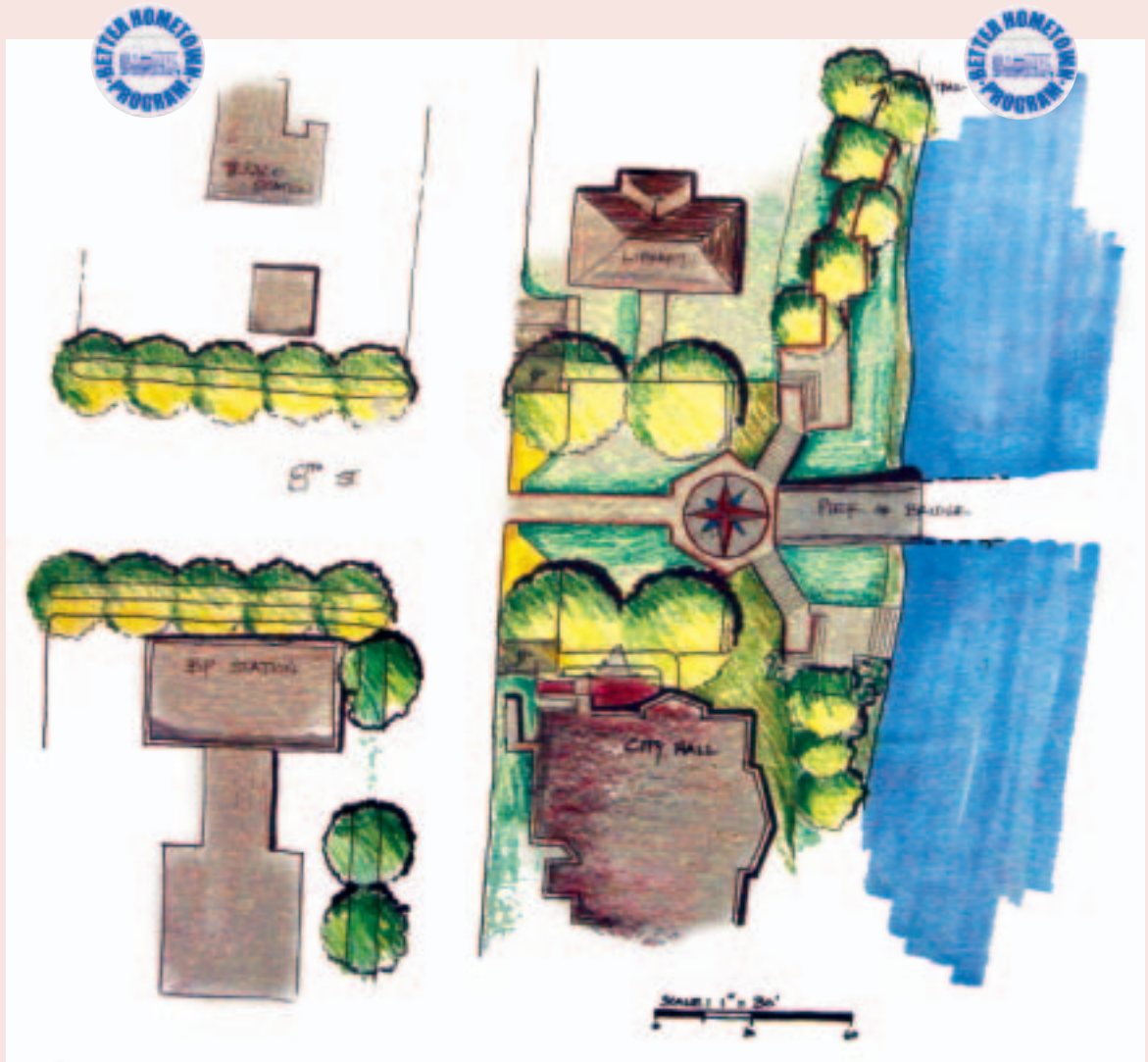
Reestablish a pedestrian connection with the east side of river through the rebuilding of the Eighth Street bridge across the Chattahoochee. This would restore a visual connection with the east side of town and strengthen a strong, though neglected, visual axis from downtown to the Old Primary School. This bridge would serve only pedestrians and bicycles, but should be similar in design to prior historic bridge.

**Strategy B:**

Build a public pier built on the west side of the old 8<sup>th</sup> Street bridge location. The pier should be built to resemble a section of prior historic bridge, supported by pilings, and extending just into the river.

**West Bank of Chattahoochee:** Long Term—Relocate Municipal buildings south of City Hall. Extend Riverfront Park. Short Term—Screen municipal sheds and storage (cars, equipment) from river with plantings. Clean up banks (remove trash, junk, non-native plant species).

**East Bank of Chattahoochee:** Obtain easements for a bike path from West Point Lake, if possible. Remove exotic plant species on bank and replant with native riverbank species.



*The lower portion of the park design capitalizes on the prominence of the Chattahoochee in West Point, and provides a seating and walking area on a terrace just above the river. Paved paths would connect stairs to small, shaded seating areas. The south end of the riverside level would rescreen with plantings to hide unsightly view of municipal facilities south of city hall. The space provides a launching place for the proposed bike trail at north end. All paving on both levels would be hexagonal cast concrete pavers with brick edging. Trees planted along river should include native, riparian species such as Musclewood (*Carpinus carolinana*), Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*), Sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*), and River Birch (*Betula nigra*)*



## 7<sup>th</sup> Street Plaza Retrofit

The current plaza and parking lot have a run down, desolate feeling created by 1970s design details and far too much unshaded hard surface. It lacks a sense of intimacy and seems like a place where cars take precedence over people. The team's retrofit concept would keep the existing fountain, the plaza's most attractive feature, while adding large expanses of grass and spreading shade trees around the perimeter to provide more of a sense of enclosure. A primary goal would be to recapture more of the space on the block for public gatherings. By redesigning the somewhat inefficient parking lot, about the same amount of cars could be accommodated in about half the space. The parking lot would be visually screened from the rest of the park by a large pergola with stone or brick columns and flowering vines. This area could serve as a scenic backdrop for weddings, parties or musical events.





*The 7<sup>th</sup> Street Plaza should be made more functional and attractive for public events and celebrations.*



## Part II: Design Guidelines

### West Point Downtown Historic District Design Guidelines (Proposed)

The proposed West Point Downtown Historic District encompasses the central business district and attempts to protect and preserve the historic and architectural integrity of the area. Property owners in the district must obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness from the historic preservation commission before making any material change in the appearance.

These guidelines are based on the Secretary of the Department of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. These standards and guidelines were developed specifically for this district and their application should be limited to such.

The history of West Point is evident in its architecture and design. Many unique features, such as raised foundations, are seen in West Point. These unique characteristics should be retained and preserved for the enjoyment of current and future generations.

### Doors & Windows

- Doors and windows define the rhythm of a building. When possible, historic material should be repaired and preserved in place.
- Doors and windows should be in traditional locations.
- Door and windows should fit existing openings.
- Use traditional materials when ever possible.
- The use of synthetic materials such as vinyl and aluminum is discouraged in both doors and windows.
- Avoid boarding up doors and windows. It is better to keep them in their traditional use. Window configuration should match historic patterns. For example, second story windows are usually double hung sash windows while storefront windows are large fixed panes.
- New buildings should maintain the rhythm of solids and voids within the district.
- The footprints of new buildings should be compatible with those of existing buildings.
- When making additions to existing buildings, do not "early-up" new features; new should be distinguishable from old.
- Generally, demolition should be avoided. When a building is demolished, it is lost forever and the landscape of the district is permanently altered.
- Demolition may be considered if a building is in a state of disrepair such that use is no longer viable.
- The commission will consider whether reasonable measures can be taken to save the building, structure, site or object from collapse.

### Demolition

- A new building should be constructed of materials that are compatible with the character of the district; the predominant building material is brick and new construction should follow this pattern.
- Traditional commercial setbacks should be followed; this usually means zero lot line.
- The roofline of a new building should be compatible with adjacent buildings.
- Infill should be of the same scale and massing as adjacent buildings.
- If it is determined by the historic preservation commission that a building, site, structure or object may be demolished, appropriate documentation should be provided. This includes photographs, renderings, architectural specifications and/or video documentation.
- When considering an application for demolition, the preservation commission will consider future plans for the site, supported by drawings, renderings and/or architectural specifications of the proposed project.



*Coordination of building color schemes and awning treatments, along with an active facade grant program, can do much to improve the appearance of downtown blocks.*







### Utilities Retrofit

- Historic buildings do not always meet current needs, nor are they outfitted with the conveniences of modern technologies. It is often necessary to retrofit buildings with modern HVAC systems.
- Equipment should be placed in discreet locations, usually at the rear of the property.
- Avoid placing utility systems in dangerous or conspicuous locations.
- Where necessary, utility units should be screened from public view.
- When retrofitting, use the least invasive methods of installation possible. Historic materials should not be sacrificed.

### Maintenance & Repair

- Maintenance and repair are key to preserving the unique architecture of West Point. Regular maintenance of buildings will prolong their lives and maintain the lively appearance of downtown West Point.
- All buildings should be kept in good repair.
- Brick should be cleaned using the gentlest means possible, using low-pressure (no more than 200 psi) water wash and detergent and natural bristle brushes where necessary.
- Sandblasting should be avoided.
- Do not apply caustic solutions or chemicals.
- Avoid covering brick with stucco, Dryvit, aluminum, vinyl or metal siding.
- Avoid painting previously unpainted brick
- Repaint previously painted brick as often as necessary; remove loose paint with a gentle water wash
- Repair and repoint mortar where necessary using an appropriate ratio of sand, lime, Portland cement and water; avoid using pure Portland cement.
- Architectural details should be retained and preserved; replacements should match the original.

### Infill/New Construction

New construction should be compatible with the character of the district, but should be identifiable as new. It is not necessary to replicate historic buildings.

## Signage

- Signage is very important in the central business district, informing and attracting pedestrian and vehicular traffic. Well-placed signs not only improve business, but also improve the character of the area. All signs must conform to the existing sign ordinance.
- Signage should be placed in traditional locations, such as signboards, awnings and windows.
- Signs should be in scale with their buildings; avoid signs that are too large or small for their purpose.
- Signage materials should be in keeping with the character of the district; avoid interior-lit signs.
- Freestanding signs should be avoided; temporary signs, such as sandwich boards may be permitted.
- Advertising painted on the surface of buildings should be designed to complement the character of the district.
- Signage should be illuminated with spot lighting.

- Signage should not detract from or obstruct architectural details.

## Awnings

- In addition to their aesthetic value, awnings provide protection from the elements and may help regulate interior climate.
- Awnings should be located in traditional locations.
- Awnings should be of the appropriate size and scale for each building; individual awnings should not span more than one facade.
- Traditional materials such as canvas should be used in the central business district.
- Metal, plastic and bubble awnings are not appropriate for the district.
- Avoid interior-lit awnings.
- Awnings should complement signage and paint color where appropriate.





## Appendix

### Community Input Session Results

On Saturday morning, community leaders and charrette participants were involved in a lively discussion of West Point assets, opportunities and hindrances to greatness. Nearly 40 people brainstormed for two and a half hours. The following information, collected from notes on flip charts, is presented for documentary purposes.

#### Assets

Race relations good

Chattahoochee River

Unique downtown setting

Columbus, LaGrange, Auburn very nearby

Lakes

Heritage/Eco-Tourism potential

West Point 2100 Foundation

ITC Holding and Lanier Family- still local and involved in community

Vacancies downtown decreasing

Native American Heritage

300 contributing buildings in historic core- historic houses are still very reasonable for purchase

Fort Tyler

Railroad Depot

Churches

Homes

New commercial enterprises:

Tea Room

West Point Gallery

Villa Nova Restaurant

Great bird watching location, especially for seasonal flyover- Christmas bird counts!

Slow pace of life

Two Bed and Breakfast Inns

Good tenants downtown

Town rich in history



#### Issues

3 counties and 2 states

State line problems

River walk stops at state line

Funding problems

Size of West Point has kept things down- when economies of all 4 towns unite: power. When separate they are competition to each other.

The town of Valley is a leader, is growing, and is ahead of the game; it has a Super Wal-Mart

River an asset or hindrance?

Changing role of leading industries: mills (traditional) and telecommunications (new age)

Health Care options are lacking; must travel outside West Point

Low African American participation in West Point revitalization efforts

Lack of local high school- affects entire town identity- needs youth activities

West Point has aging population...with little for that group to do except drive out of town to do something else. The same can be said for the youth.

Entrance to town from I-85 passes through rundown properties and large housing project

Highway 29 strip development not appealing

Opposition to local district from out-of-town property owners

Locals are not owners of property downtown and in other key locations

Alabama has lower property taxes- people live there and buy in Georgia

Georgia has the lottery

Large parking lots next to street and large paved expanses add to a negative character

Must travel outside of West Point for basic needs- West Point used to be the hub! No high-end grocery store, even photocopies must be made out of town!

County services must be obtained in LaGrange...tags, taxes, welfare services, etc.

Competition between Georgia and Alabama hurts both states

West Point lacks visibility

Owners of mills live in NYC- not connected to community, no longer a large part of the local identity, not the good neighbor they used to be.

Educating all schoolteachers about West Point is difficult due to state line issues and multiple counties

Off the path except by rail or if traveling Atlanta to Montgomery and you don't want to drive I-85



Attitudes are hard to change

Upstream pollution: reality vs. myth

Atlanta paying \$1000/day for pollution rather than clean it up

People are skeptical of the Army Corps of Engineers

LaGrange benefits from lake, even though the lake is named West Point

"Back water is the only place you can build"

Fire damage and demolition-by-neglect of important buildings

High school and old primary school vacant and needing new use...housing and community facility potential

Living downtown- is it coming, is it an attraction?

Old railroad depot: textile/telecommunication museum

Greyhound Bus station is in Lanett. It is more expensive to go to Atlanta from another state

Land availability is low due to high cost

What do outsiders see?  
Poor appearance of West Point

Demolished buildings

Just an exit at interstate

Downtown: worn out and shabby

Tired

High traffic counts

### Opportunities

Senior Citizen Center- rehab of old high school (1930), grant potential

Save West Point Wholesale Foods (Lakeview) Building

Downtown infrastructure improvements

Connection between cities, across the river, to the river, to the lake, to Pine Mountain

Downtown- much more held by local owners than 5 years ago

What is the pollution level of lake/river, is it real or is it perceived?

Places for people to stay when visiting for fishing tournaments, etc

Association of Governments between cities



Destination activities for visitors- dining, golf courses, outlet stores, shopping, drinking, restaurants other than fast food

Local residents need to know what is happening in West Point- local newspaper needs to be nurtured

Gateway improvements- Improved welcome to Georgia

Postcards needed for visitors

Improve walkability- need old bridge back (pedestrian friendly)

Safer road crossings

Walking trails and bike lanes

Parks and recreation improvements will be funded for SPLOST

Guardrails on bridge needed or old bridge should be "re-placed"

Cross signals needed

Facade improvement needed

Gaps between buildings should be filled

Disability access is very difficult

Traffic too fast for pedestrian comfort



## Projects and Funding

### Historic Building - Projects:

- Rehab remaining architectural landmarks in town
- Follow historic design guidelines when rehabbing existing assets and appropriate in-fill development
- Provide incentives to the private sector to move into its existing underutilized architectural buildings

### The Depot

- Save abandoned building along Highway 29 for a welcome center, a courthouse annex, a community room and/or museum function related to railroad, telecommunications and textile history
- Keep buildings anchoring both sides of Highway 29 could to create a welcoming gateway to West Point

### The Old Primary School

- Utilize the building as housing for persons on fixed incomes
- Re-use the auditorium space for performances and community meetings

### The Foundry Building

- Convert building to an antique mall or loft housing units

### Funding & Technical Assistance Sources:

- Rehabilitated State Property Tax Assessment Freeze
- Rehabilitation Investment Tax Credit (RITC)
- Downtown Development Revolving Loan Fund (DDRLF)
- Ga. Cities Foundation
- Office of Downtown Community Services (ODCS) Design Assistance

- DCA's Housing Division
- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)
- Certified Local Government Program (CLG)
- Chattahoochee Flint Regional Development Center (CFRDC)
- Department of Transportation Enhancement Program
- University of Georgia Business Outreach Services/Small Business Development Center (UGA BOS/SBDC)
- Local Development Fund (LDF)
- One Georgia Equity Fund
- Georgia Heritage Grants
- Preservation Services Fund
- United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)
- Georgia Association of Museums and Galleries (GAMG)
- Georgia Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism (GDITT)
- Department of Community Affairs' Office of Regional Services – Region 4
- Revolving Loan Fund
- UGA's College of Environment and Design's Design Guidelines Class
- Facade Grant Program
- Quality Growth Grant
- Urban/Community Forestry Assistance Program
- Cooperative Extensive Service
- Georgia Council for the Arts
- Local Facade Easement Program



### Nurturing Neighborhoods – Projects: Neighborhood Commercial Design Strategies

- Upgrade neighborhood commercial businesses
- Offer financial incentives to business owners to relocate back downtown or on commercial corridors and replace existing uses with new residential or office/professional. Enhance neighborhood transitional areas with outdoor river viewing areas
- Recruit more casual restaurants, professional offices and service businesses

### Corridor Commercial Issues

- Amend ordinance to pull buildings up to the street
- Minimize parking and locate it in the rear
- Locate higher density residential near commercial
- Allow living units above retail activities
- Differentiate its new corridor development from the generic sprawl that characterizes Lanett

### Nurturing Neighborhoods – Funding Sources:

- Local Facade Grant Program
- Quality Growth Grant
- DCA's Housing Division
- CDBG
- Department of Transportation Enhancement Program
- ODSC Design Services
- DCA's Office of Regional Services – Region 4
- UGA BOS/SBDC
- LDF
- Ga. Cities Foundation
- LDF
- Revolving Loan Program
- Facade Grant Program
- Facade Easement Program

## Recreation and Tourism

- Market to the Lake Lanier visitors about what's offered in Downtown West Point
- Add biking and walking trails along river
- Identify a loop route for a regional trail and bike path that could take residents and visitors over the West Point Lake dam, through the downtown and all the way to the DOT rest area on I-85
- Add on street bike lanes near the Old West Point School, the West Point Recreation Center complex, the historic cemetery and some of the city's most architecturally diverse and notable residences

## Recreation and Tourism – Funding Sources:

- UGA BOS/SBDC
- LDF
- DCA's Office of Regional Services – Region 4
- GDITT
- Department of Transportation's Enhancement Program

## West Point's Ten Commandments for Heritage Tourism and Cultural Marketing – Projects:

- Provide architectural element at gateway at Highway 29 announcing that you are in Georgia and entering West Point
- Establish a visitor's center
- Develop new marketing materials including new brochures, postcards and maps that reflect the evolving nature of West Point's streetscape
- Have an uniform design for signage
- Provide directional signage to historic district and available parking for out-of-towners
- Add another monumental piece of public art at the west end of the bridge announcing downtown West Point, Georgia.

- Develop a new self-guided driving tour brochure describing the mill heritage along the western banks of the Chattahoochee
- Develop a self-guided architectural walking tour of downtown buildings and the intown neighborhoods
- Add directional signage to Fort Tyler
- Develop overlooks, river walks, informational plaques and environmental education material for locals and visitors
- Develop programs to nurture artists and ways to display and sell their work

## West Point's Ten Commandments for Heritage Tourism and Cultural Marketing – Funding Sources:

- UGA BOS/SBDC
- DCA's Office of Regional Services – Region 4
- GDITT
- ODCS's Design Services
- LDF
- Ga. Cities Foundation

## Livable Streets and Public Spaces – Projects: Signature Landscaping

### Tree Plantings

- On the corners of Seventh, Eighth, and Ninth Streets with Third Avenue, Red Maples (*Acer rubrum*), Ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba*), and Willow Oaks (*Quercus phellos*) should be planted.
- Along the river and in areas with plenty of space and no overhead power lines, majestic Sycamore (*Plantanus Occidentalis*)
- Plant Smaller trees such as Redbuds (*Cercis canadensis*), Hophornbean (*Ostrya virginiana*), and Wax Myrtles (*Myrica cerifera*) closer to the buildings

## Signature Signage

- New signage should be located on all streets located within the proposed local historic commercial district
- Incorporate the words "West Point Historic District," the street name and the West Point City logo on each sign located within district.

## Streets of Distinction

### -Streetscape Design

- Improve historic district appearance
- Enhance pedestrian safety
- Facilitate handicap access
- Enhancing evening street activity and general pedestrian usage.
- Maintain and accent West Point's multilevel sidewalks, but address handicap access issue and widen sidewalks to accommodate sidewalk dining and merchandising amenities
- Reduce sized of traffic lanes that are excessively wide, this space can be use for wider sidewalks and shade trees
- Enhance existing pocket parks with seating and lighting
- Strip Bike lanes where possible
- Employ traffic calming measures
- Add new parking area behind the buildings on Third Avenue and shade with canopy trees. Spaces should be clearly marked and adequate parking for disabled access should be provided.
- Define new streets like Highway 29's re-routed section with parallel columns of street trees
- Use landscape buffers, clustered commercial buildings and median improvements
- Clear unsightly semi-temporary buildings and municipal or industrial clutter and screen riverfront area with vegetation

## Memorable Civic Gathering Spaces

### Riverfront Civic Plaza

- Create a civic plaza for a gathering place and to dignify the government center for the town of West Point
- Replace the historic 8th bridge that has been lost or construct a pier

### West Bank of Chattahoochee:

- Relocate Municipal buildings south of City Hall
- Extend Riverfront Park
- Screen municipal sheds and storage (cars, equipment) from river with plantings. Clean up banks (remove trash, junk, non-native plant species)

### East Bank of Chattahoochee:

- Obtain easement for bike path from West Point Lake
- Remove exotic plant species on bank and replant with native riverbank species

### 7<sup>th</sup> Street Plaza Retrofit

- Keep the existing fountain
- Add large expanses of grass and spreading shade trees around the perimeter
- Recapture more of the space on the block for public gatherings
- Screen parking lot from the rest of the park by a large pergola with stone or brick columns and flowering vines.

### Livable Streets and Public Spaces –

## Funding Sources:

- Urban/Community Forestry Assistance Program
- Cooperative Extension Service
- Local Development Fund
- ODCS's Design Services
- DCA's Office of Regional Services – Region 4
- Department of Transportation Enhancement Program
- Ga. Cities Foundation
- United States Department of Agriculture





This publication was produced by the DCA  
Office of Research and Communications  
using a Minolta CF 910 color copier/printer,  
and Hammermill 28 lb. Color Copy Paper.  
For alternate formats, see inside front cover.

5/2002



---

**The University of Georgia**  
College of Environment and Design  
Public Service and Outreach