

WILKES
county
CELEBRATING
people
places
things



Report with the results of the November 2009 Community Design Charrette in Wilkes Co. coordinated by the Center for Community Design and Preservation College of Environment & Design | University of Georgia

Charrettes are product-oriented and fast becoming a preferred method to solve planning challenges confronting American cities.



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INTRODUCTION

What is a Charrette? | Charrette Participants

WHAT IS A CHARRETTE?



Source: National Charrette Institute
www.charretteinstitute.org

Charrette is a French word that translates “little cart.” At the leading architecture school in the 19th century, the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, students were assigned tough design problems to complete under time pressure. They would continue sketching as fast as they could, even as the little carts (charrettes) carried their drawing boards away to be judged and graded.

Today the word “charrette” describes a rapid, intense, and creative work session, in which a design team focuses on a particular design problem and arrives at a collaborative solution.

The charrette process is a way of evaluating resources through new eyes. Fresh ideas are what help communities maintain and build their vitality. With the report and supporting materials, readers will experience the enthusiasm and commitment which comes from a broad-based group of students, faculty, practitioners, and the public.

Source: National Charrette Institute
<http://www.charretteinstitute.org>



During the University of Georgia’s Homecoming weekend, November 6-8, 2009, eight graduate students from UGA’s College of Environment and Design immersed themselves in a conceptual design for the gateways into Wilkes County, Georgia. Utilizing components of the Georgia Made/Georgia Grown, the students and their instructor Pratt Cassity incorporated the theme of “Celebrating People, Places and Things” by showcasing the native qualities that contribute to the County’s identity and visual character. Part of an ongoing effort by the City of Washington in partnership with Wilkes County, UGA’s involvement will contribute to the active promotion of heritage tourism and community pride.



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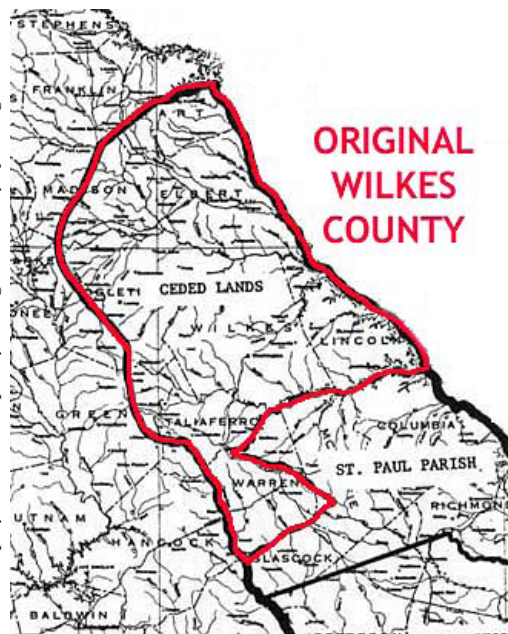
INTRODUCTION

History of Wilkes County



Credits: Georgia Department of Economic Development

Robert Toombs Historic Site in Washington



Credits: Map by Marion Hemperley © Digital Library of Georgia

1777 Map

Wilkes County has enjoyed a history of firsts, beginning with its designation as Georgia's first county established in 1777. Named for the United States' first president George Washington, Wilkes County also boasts of having hosted the Chief Executive on at least one occasion.

Washington-Wilkes County was home to some of Georgia's most notable residents, with eight governors having hailed from the area. The memory of its most notable resident, Robert Toombs, continues to pique the interest of history enthusiasts seeking to learn more of the man who served as both a United States Congressman and Senator, Secretary of State for the Confederate States of America, as well as a General in the Confederate Army.

Cotton was king in Wilkes County as entire family communities thrived on farms and plantations supporting the area's livelihood. Some of the more successful planters lived in grand homes in the county seat of Washington while their

rural operations supported the bustling agricultural communities their holdings created. According to the 1845 Census, Wilkes County 3,771 whites and 7,271 blacks composed the population of 11,042 persons reflecting the strong dependence upon slave labor to operate the large agricultural concerns.

Following the War Between the States, the Washington-Wilkes area continued to be predominantly agricultural as many of the newly-emancipated slaves chose to continue to work for their former owners while others moved into outlying areas of Washington, forming the communities of Brazil and Wyliesville.

The Twentieth Century dawned with Wilkes County reporting a 1900 Census population of 20,866. By 1920 the area boasted a century-high count of 24,210, but the Great Depression took its toll and Wilkes County's numbers began a steady decline.



Vanishing Georgia, Georgia Division of Archives and History, Office of Secretary of State.

Photograph of basket weaving, Wilkes County, Georgia, ca. 1902

INTRODUCTION

Washington-Wilkes County in the 21st Century



Downtown Clock, Washington

The memory of Wilkes County's historic agrarian society lives today in the rolling Piedmont that defines its landscape. With a character as rich in notable residents as is its inventory of antebellum and Victorian era mansions, the county seat of Washington is a 21st Century tourist destination. Seeking the gentle lifestyle and gracious hospitality exemplified by the representatives of plantation life that punctuate the county's topography, visitors to

Washington-Wilkes enter the community with heightened expectations.

Today, there are a reported 259 establishments doing business in Wilkes County, the largest employers being two manufacturing facilities and one health care provider, each listing 100 or more employees. The largest number of

businesses is in the retail industry with most employing fewer than five workers and the largest showing between 50 and 99 employees. In 2007, the most recent year for which population counts are available from the U.S. Census, the total population for Wilkes County stood at 10,566 with 5,818 white residents, 4,283 black residents, 304 Hispanic, and 161 of other races/ethnicities. Estimated population for 2008 was listed as 10,282 for Wilkes County.

The city of Washington, with its rich inventory of historic houses, boasts five National Register Historic Districts and 16 Historic Sites designated in the National Register of Historic Places, with five additional National Register listings in Wilkes County. Though most of the former farms and plantations lie dormant, the county's contains a few Nineteenth Century houses, with six of them listed in the National Register of Historic Places. An occasional barn, one silo and miles of fences stand as witness to the industry that once dominated the area: the cash crop - cotton. The city and its neighbors Rayle and Tignall, do not disappoint travelers returning for more of the Washington-Wilkes experience. Honoring this rich history became the primary goal for the Charrette Team during the design process.



Mary Willis Library, Washington

METHODOLOGY

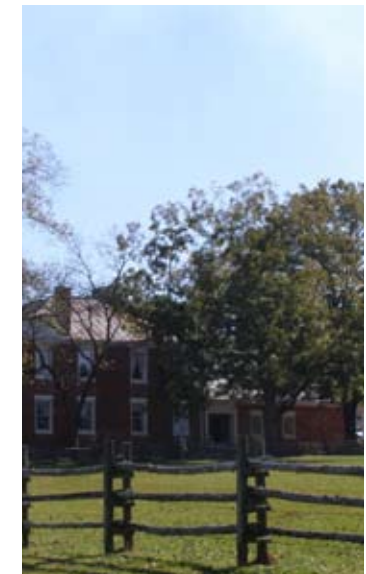
Project Overview

This project evaluates the existing gateways and entrances into the Washington-Wilkes area and defines their visual character. This helps to determine which features are complimentary and can be enhanced and those features that detract from Wilkes' County Character.

During the weekend, the students analyzed eight roadways - GA378 to Lincolnton, US78 east to Thomson, US78 west to Athens, US80 to Warrenton, GA47 to Crawfordville, GA44 west to Greensboro, GA44 east to Chennault, and US17 to Elberton.

Solutions emerged for protecting visual, scenic, historic and agricultural qualities. Creating sensitive and appropriate signage to direct travelers through the county was a final task. These solutions compliment the *Washington-Wilkes Comprehensive Plan* and the *Washington Multi-Use Trail Plan*.

The Charrette Team worked with David Jenkins, Mainstreet Manager for Wilkes County and Mayor Burns throughout the charrette weekend.



METHODOLOGY

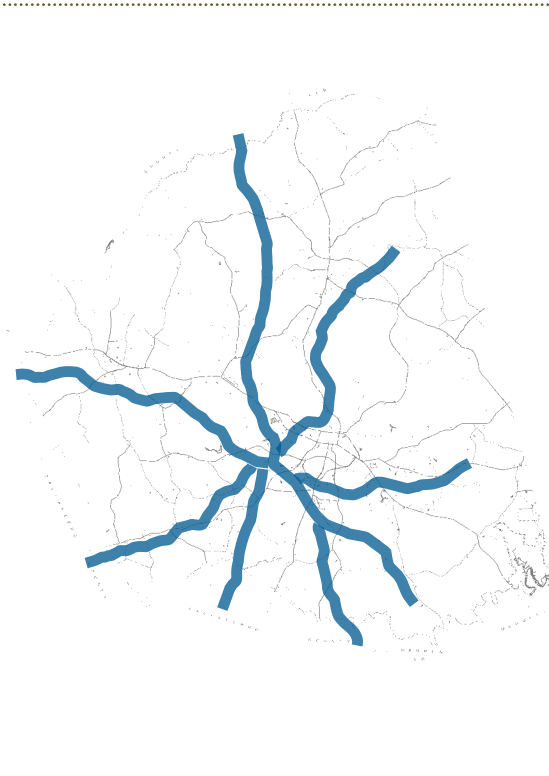
Flow Chart

1. ANALYSIS



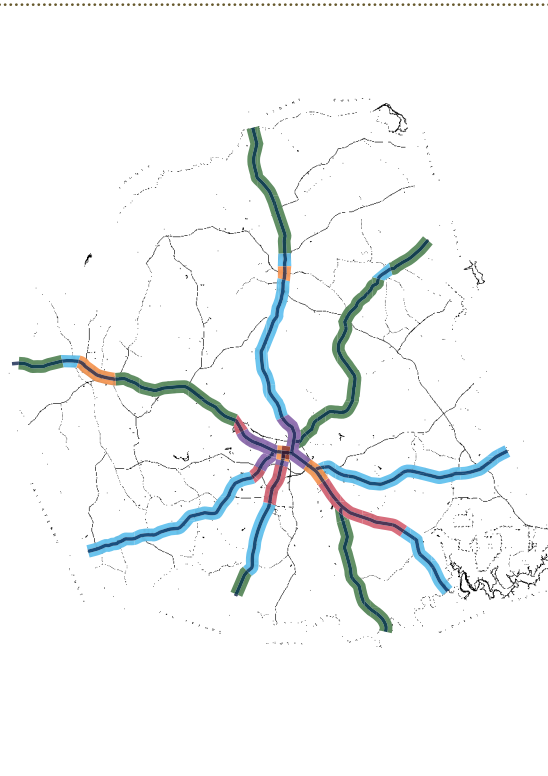
Wilkes County

2. IDENTIFICATION



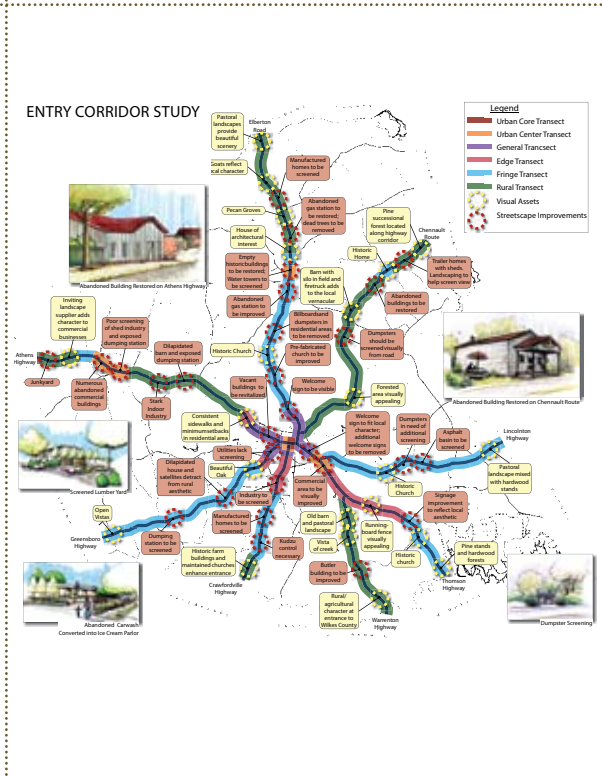
Eight Roadways

3. EVALUATION



Character Areas

4. PROTECTION

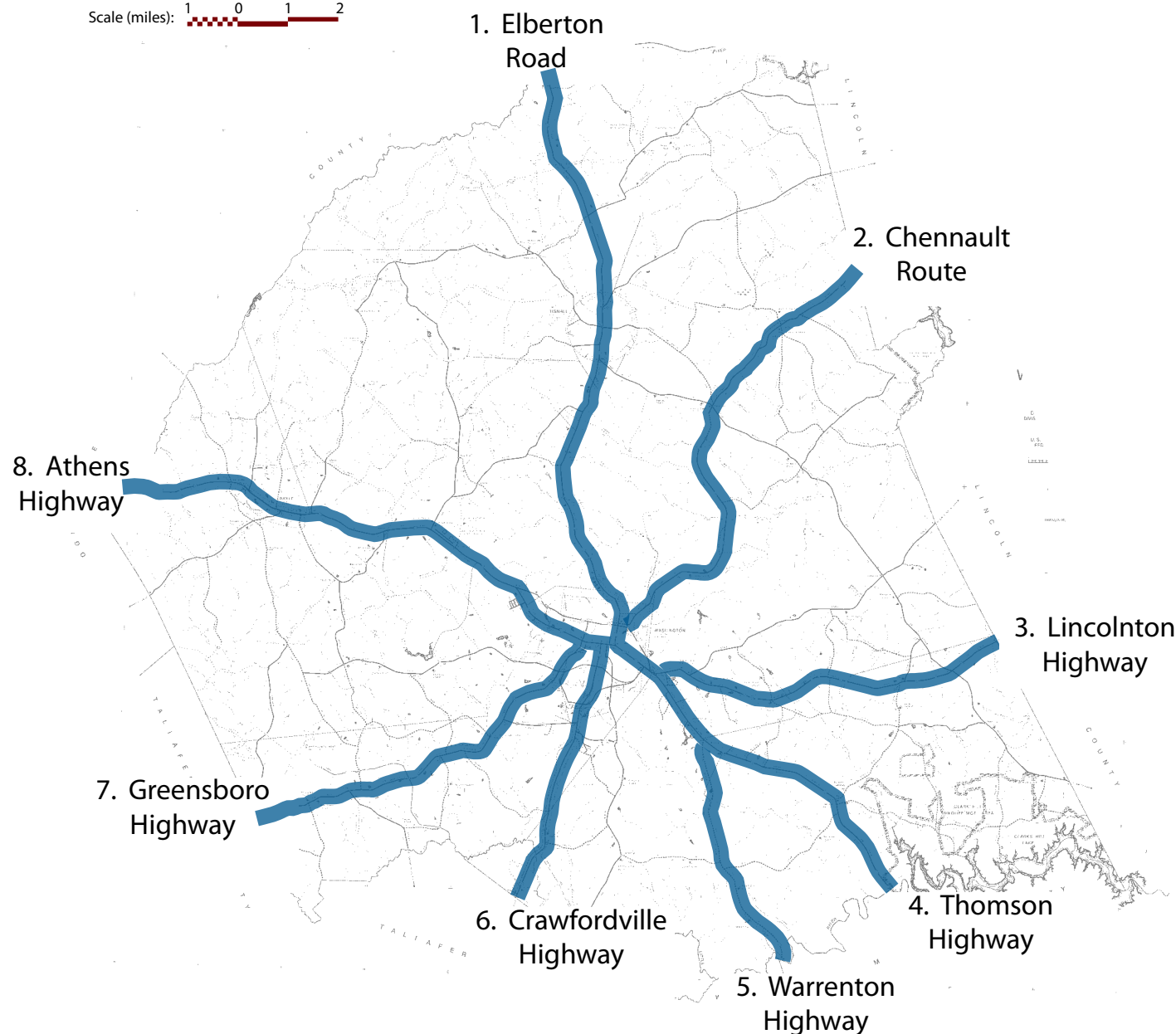


Desirables and Undesirables

IDENTIFICATION

The Gateway Corridors of Wilkes County

Scale (miles): 1 0 1 2



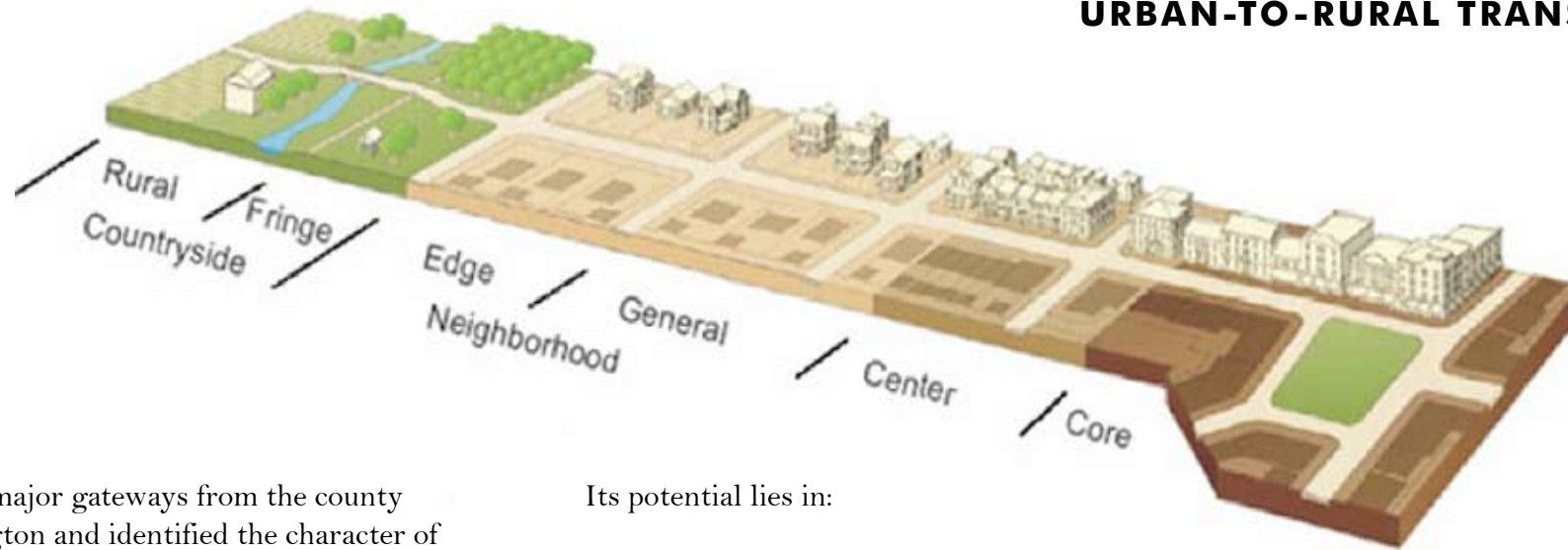
A gateway corridor represents a transition from one place to another. **Gateways signify a sense of arrival and importance.** They should be compatible with and enhance the natural and cultural significance of a place. They reflect the history and story of their surroundings and should mark key focal points for visitors and local residents alike. Wilkes County has eight major gateway corridors that were identified and evaluated during the charrette and later at campus:

- 1. Elberton Route
- 2. Chennault Route
- 3. Lincolnton Route
- 4. Thomson Route
- 5. Warrenton Route
- 6. Crawfordville Route
- 7. Greensboro Route
- 8. Athens Route

EVALUATION

Roadway Character Analysis

URBAN-TO-RURAL TRANSECT



The Roadways

Three groups traveled the eight major gateways from the county line back to the heart of Washington and identified the character of each road. All major intersections and nodes, shifts in vegetation, rights-of-way, and signage were noted on each route. The groups also marked the any assets, eyesores or features of importance.

The groups also employed the Congress for New Urbanism “transect model” for classifying the shifts in appearance as one travels from more rural portions of the county to the urban core. The Transect, a new model for planning, was developed by Andres Duany of Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company, www.dpz.com, is a categorization system that organizes all elements of the urban environment on a scale from rural to urban.

Its potential lies in:

1. **Education – It is easy to understand.**
2. **Coding – It can be directly translated into zoning categories.**
3. **It creates “immersive environments.”**

An immersive environment is one where all of the elements of human impacts work together to create something that is greater than the sum of its parts. The strength of Wilkes County is that it has so many interesting facets rich in diverse history. Although the main focus has concentrated on the history of Wilkes County, the natural resources and ecological beauty can bring additional visitors to the county.

EVALUATION: GATEWAYS

Character Areas of the Wilkes County Routes



Urban Core – Reserved only for Washington Square and main downtown Business District



Urban Center – Areas leading up to the downtown core or for smaller commercial nodes such as Rayle, Tignall and Dansburg



General – residential with some businesses



Edge – Commercial sprawl, hints of businesses and industry with residential



Fringe – Predominately pasture land with more regular residential









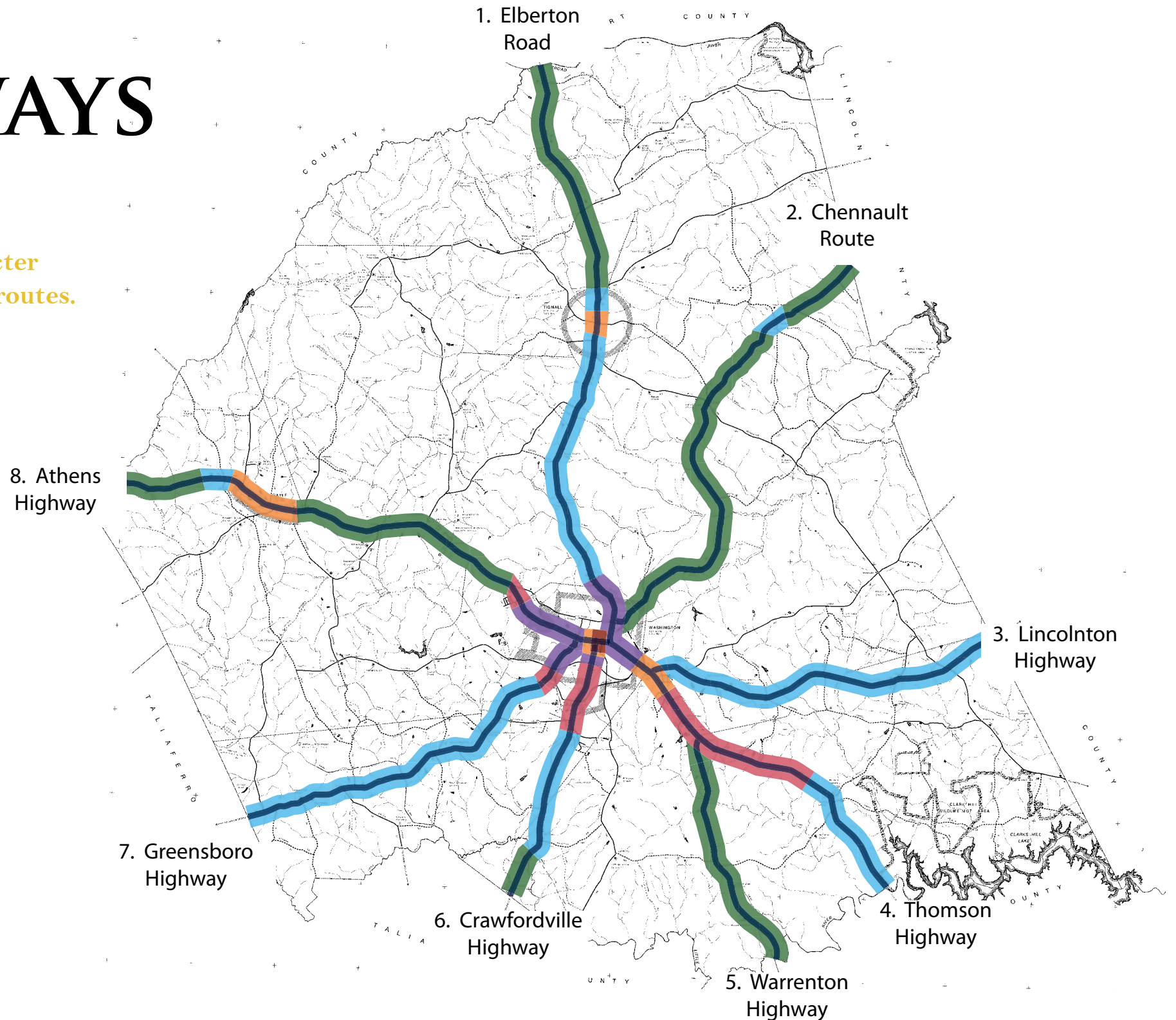
Rural – Open pasture land with sporadic residential intermixed or stretches of forested areas

GATEWAYS

This map of the County gateways shows the Character Areas along each of the 8 routes.



-  Church
-  Assets
-  Neutral
-  Needs Improvement
-  Schools
-  Registered Historic Site



GATEWAYS

Routes: Elberton | Chennault | Lincolnnton | Thomson | Warrenton | Crawfordville | Greensboro | Athens



View of the Broad River upon crossing into Wilkes County



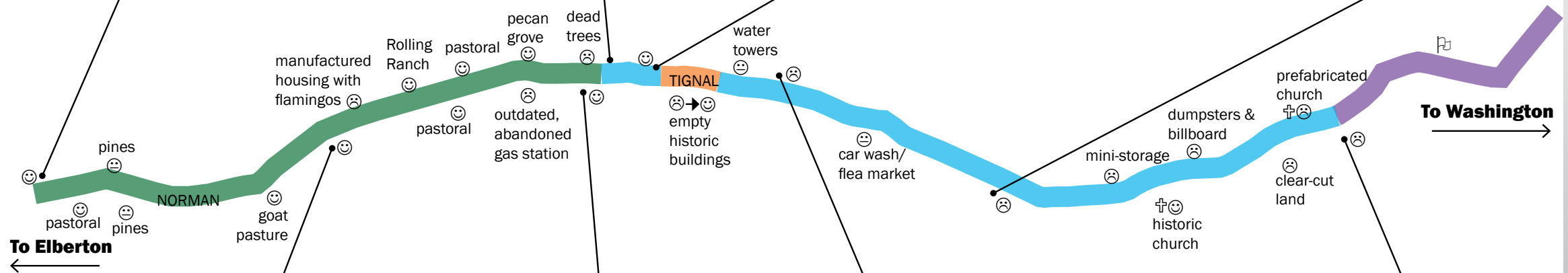
Derelict buildings of no architectural/historical significance



Pecan tree grove



Unattractive billboard in a residential area promoting a distant place



Pastoral landscapes (e.g. pasture/hay fields) occur frequently on this route



Well-maintained house of architectural interest (several in this area)



Abandoned gas station falling into disrepair



Washington's welcome sign blocked by signage from International Paper

GATEWAYS

Routes: Elberton | Chennault | Lincolnton | Thomson | Warrenton | Crawfordville | Greensboro | Athens



Pine successional forest located along highway corridor



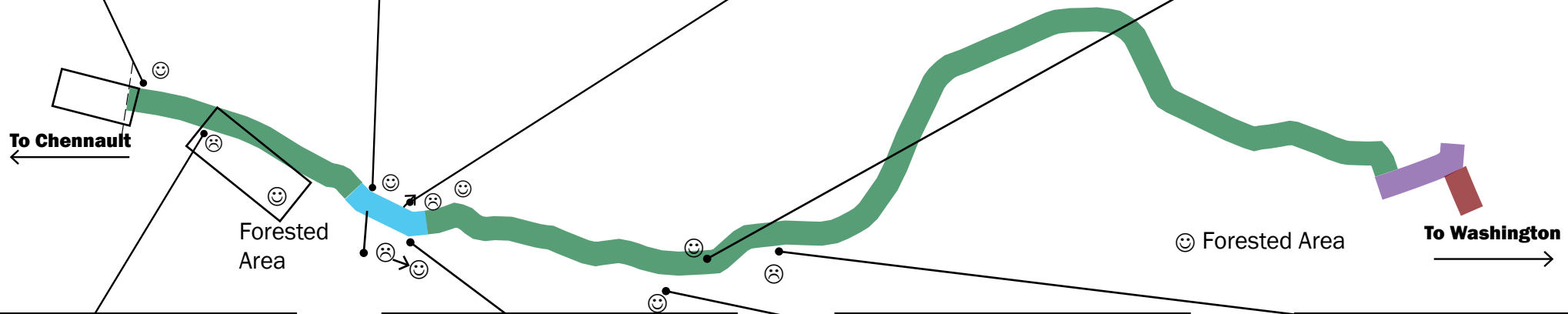
Historic Home



Abandoned Gas Station can be restored to become a historical asset.



Firetruck gives character to the landscape.



Trailer complex with car sheds. Landscaping can help to screen view.



Abandoned building to be restored.



Barn with silo in field adds to the rural vernacular.



Dumpsters should be screened visually from road.

GATEWAYS

Routes: **Elberton** | **Chennault** | **Lincolnton** | **Thomson** | **Warrenton** | **Crawfordville** | **Greensboro** | **Athens**



Dumpsters need more screening



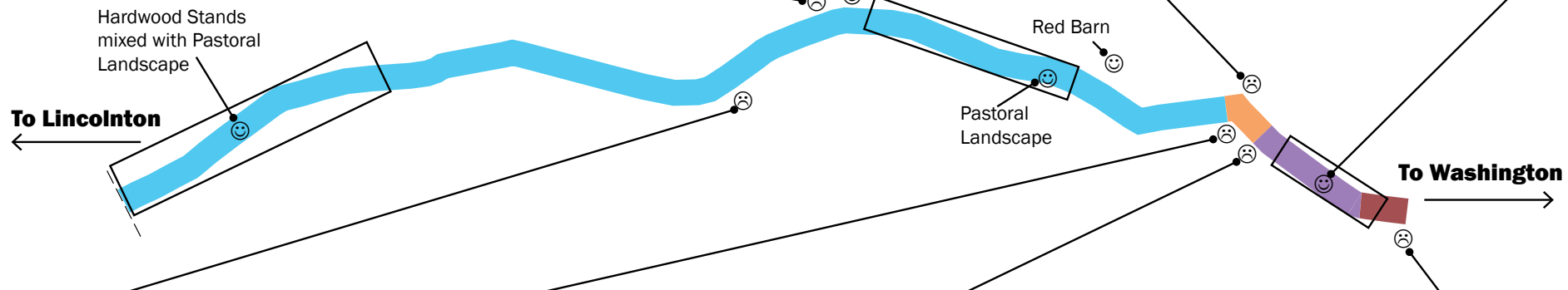
Smyrna church adds to regional flavor



Old building to be screened



Victorian houses provide nice gateway into downtown shopping area



Asphalt pond to be screened or landscaped



Welcome to Washington sign does not match the character of the town



Signs are illegible from passing cars and should be removed



PVC pipes cheapen the aesthetic of downtown Washington

GATEWAYS

Routes: Elberton | Chennault | Lincolnnton | Thomson | Warrenton | Crawfordville | Greensboro | Athens



In the south, bridges serve as the gateways into the county. Wooded views are welcoming.



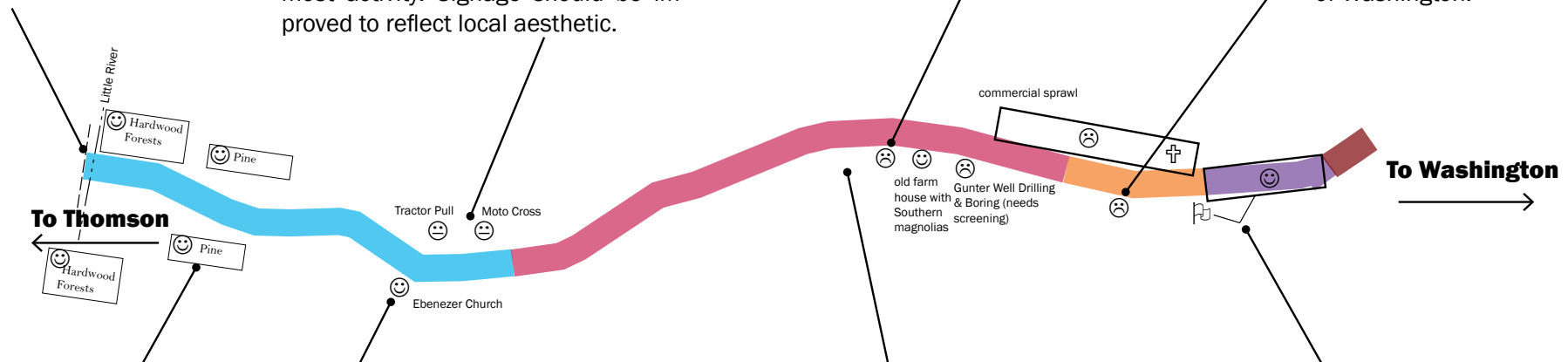
Recreation sites (Moto Cross & Tractor Pull show area culture while screening most activity. Signage should be improved to reflect local aesthetic.



Transition into 4-lane road at Highway 80 Intersection.



Large intersection lacking character directly at turn into fringe commercial of Washington.



Dense pine stands with few stand alone houses.



Ebenezer Church is a great looking church highly visible along the road.



Running board fence is a common site along the road and enhances area character.



Elementary school sits at transition between commercial sprawl and much nicer residential area of Washington which leads into downtown.

GATEWAYS

Routes: Elberton | Chennault | Lincoln | Thomson | Warrenton | Crawfordville | Greensboro | Athens



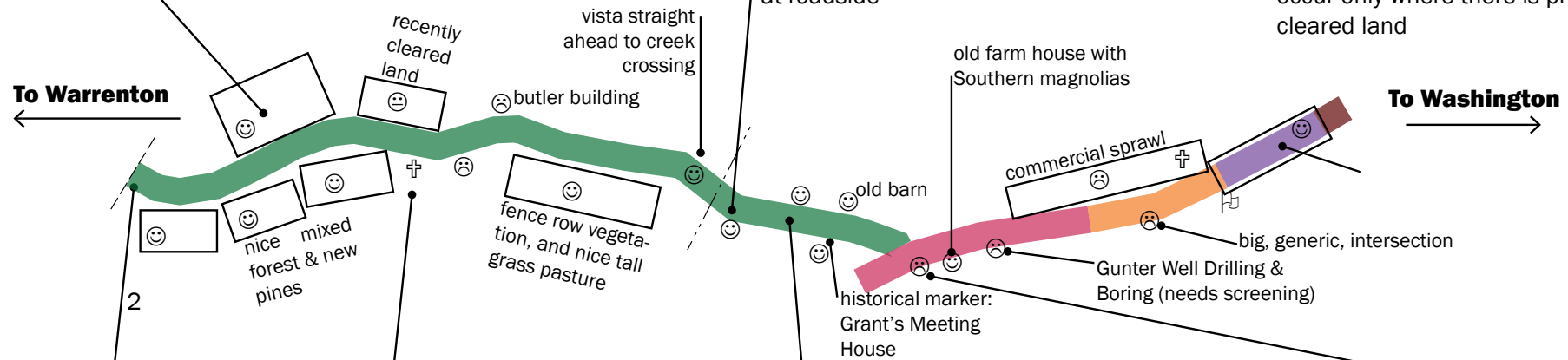
Large expanse of cleared (early successional) land with vista to forest beyond



Beautiful pasture with cows easily visible through fence row vegetation at roadside



Typical view ahead while driving on Warrenton Hwy (80), differing views occur only where there is previously cleared land



Rural/agricultural character at entrance to Wilkes County



Mt. Zion United Methodist Church and cemetery



Nice views of pecan groves on both sides of road and farm property with attractive running board fencing



Drastic change in views/character at the intersection with the 4-lane Thomson Hwy (78)

GATEWAYS

Routes: Elberton | Chennault | Lincoln | Thomson | Warrenton | Crawfordville | Greensboro | Athens



Historical farm outbuildings with patina, like this one at the county entrance, add visual interest and authenticity to the landscape.



Much of the railroad track is appealingly screened by hardwoods. Visible areas covered in kudzu should be restored.



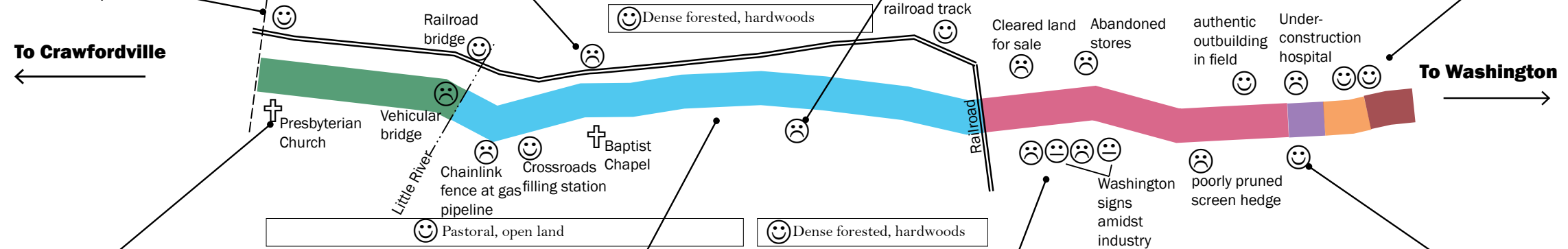
Manufactured homes, often with excessive clutter, lack vegetative screening and stand out against the local character.



An appealing entrance to downtown with a well-maintained historical structure and local character mural.

To Crawfordville ←

→ To Washington



A well-maintained church and grounds act as a gateway into the country and add to local character



Much of the Rural and Fringe character comes from open agricultural fields with sporadic housing or farm support buildings.



Large industry dominates the landscape at the current signed entrance to Washington.



General Transect residential character of well-maintained homes with large setbacks and good vegetative screening.

GATEWAYS

Routes: **Elberton** | **Chennault** | **Lincolnton** | **Thomson** | **Warrenton** | **Crawfordville** | **Greensboro** | **Athens**



As travelers enter the county, open vistas are to one side while successional pine forests lay to the other.



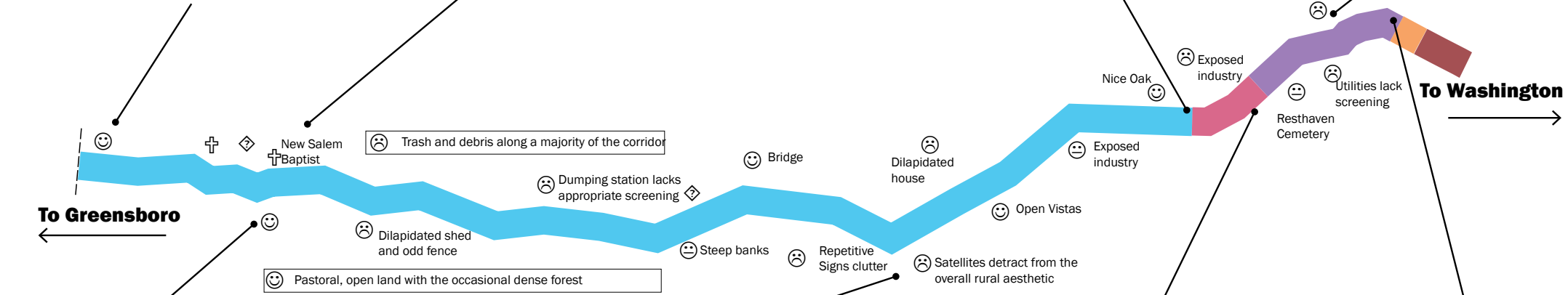
The Phillips Mill Church is a well kept, inviting asset along the corridor.



Upon the entry to city limits, Burt's Lumber and the oak tree are the main features.



This commercial section needs improvement for the local residents and the visitors of Wilkes County.



The vegetation occasionally restricts the view and creates mystery as to what lies around the bend.



This rural landscape has some residential with minor vista issues such as camouflaging the satellite dishes



This church frames the approach nicely between the edge and the general.



This barn is a well preserved remnant to Wilkes County's agricultural past.

GATEWAYS

Routes: Elberton | Chennault | Lincoln | Thomson | Warrenton | Crawfordville | Greensboro | Athens



Open fields with barbed wire and simple wooden post flank both sides of the road



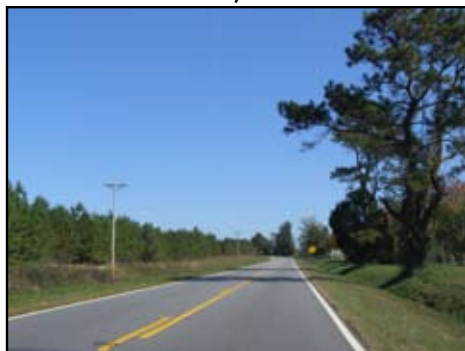
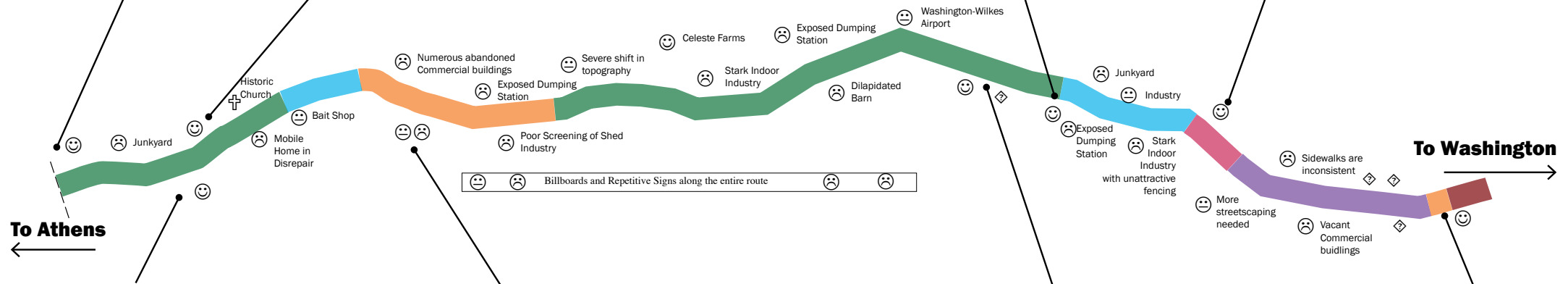
Post Oak Farms is a small landscape supplier with inviting grounds that is a surprise as you travel down the road.



Majority of the houses are well kept with medium to large setbacks in the more rural portions of the route.



A noticeable residential shift as sidewalks and minimum setbacks become the norm.



Successional Forest alternate between both sides of the road, with open fields intermixed.



The town of Rayle is a smaller commercial hub along the corridor.



Callaway Plantation is a great asset and resource for Wilkes County.



Street trees calm and slow drivers as they approach Washington.

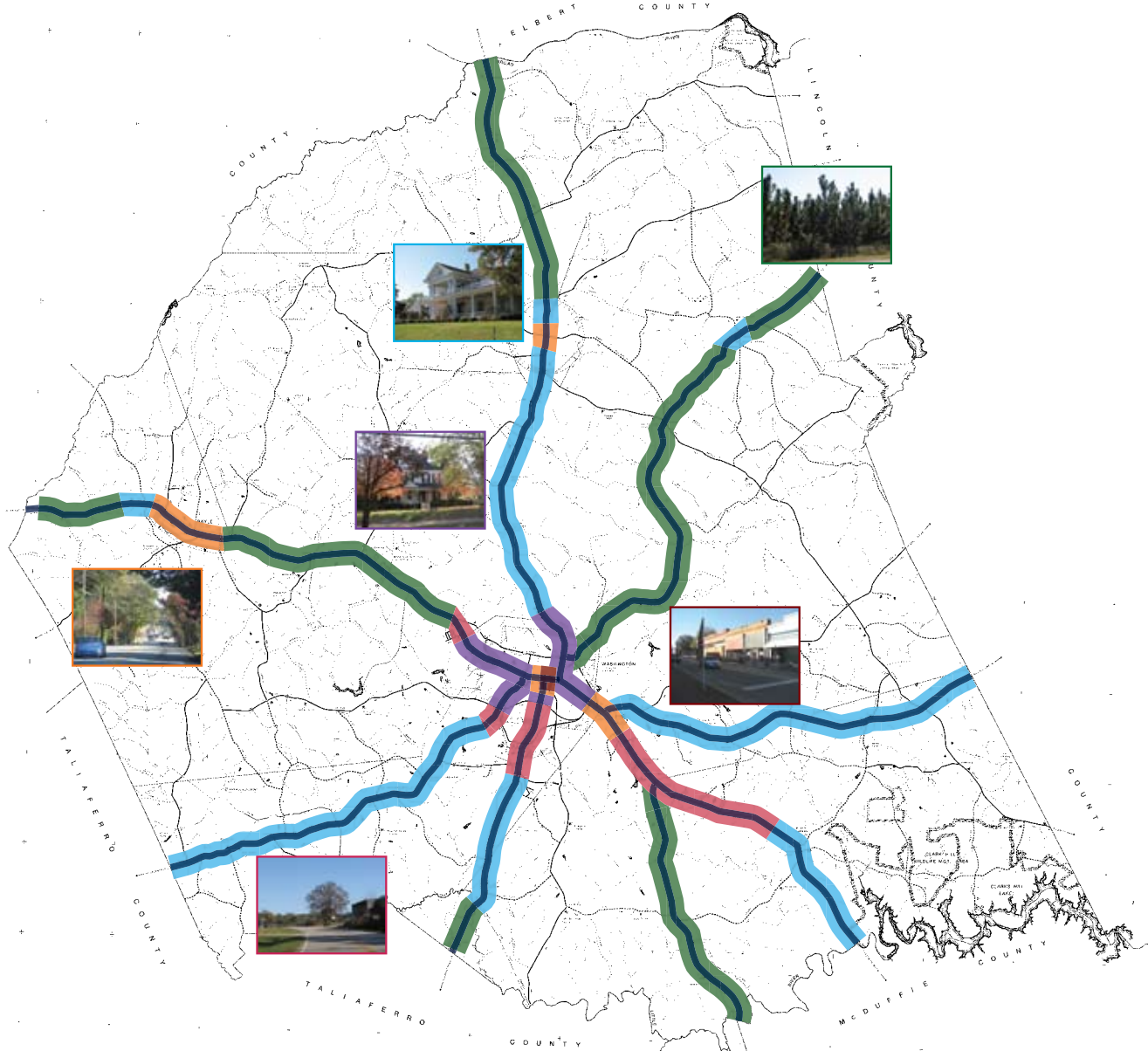


BRICK BUILDING
1850-1860

WELLS
WALSH
WELLS
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WELLS
WALSH

EVALUATION

Development Patterns



After applying the character areas along each of the roadways, the Charrette Team identified several distinct patterns of development within Wilkes County.

1. Agricultural Working Landscape

2. Forested/ Successional Landscapes

3. Industrial

4. Small Settlements

a) Crossroads

b) Towns

5. Sequential Residential Urban

a) Urban Edge

b) Urban Central

6. Sequential Commercial Urban

a) 20th century scattered

b) 20th century sprawl

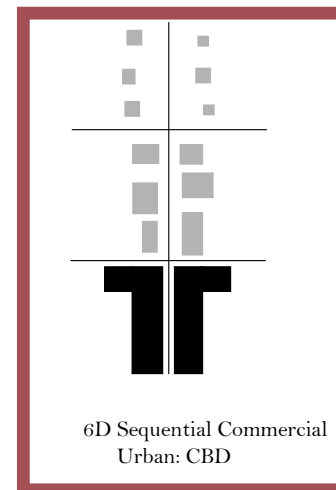
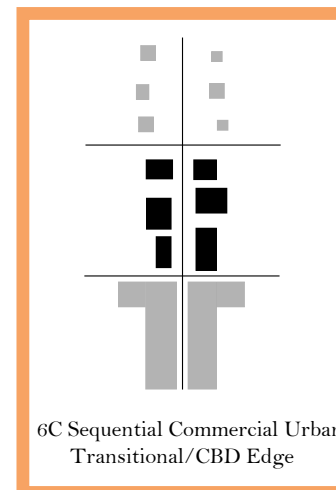
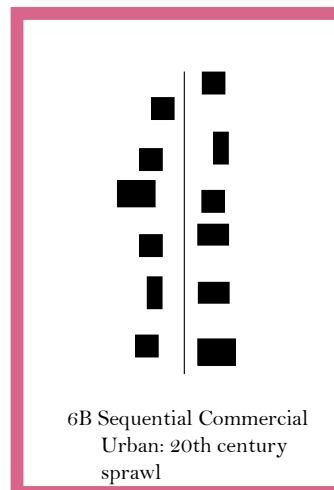
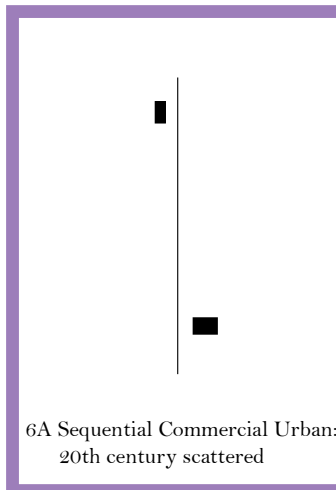
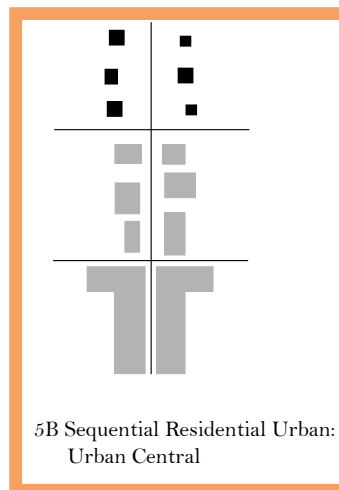
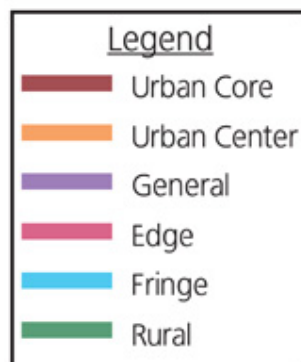
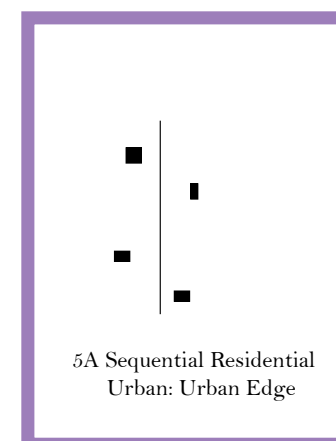
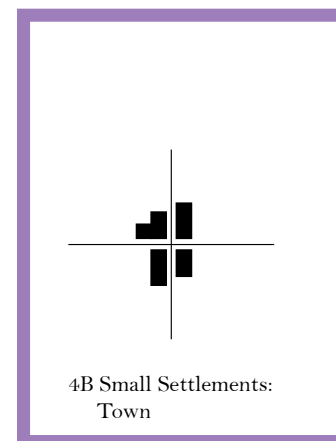
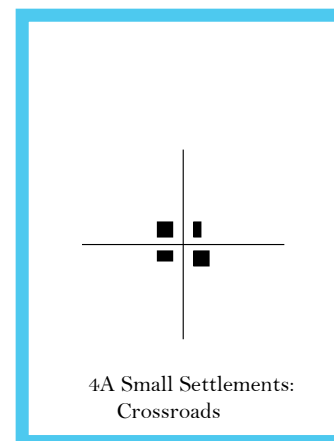
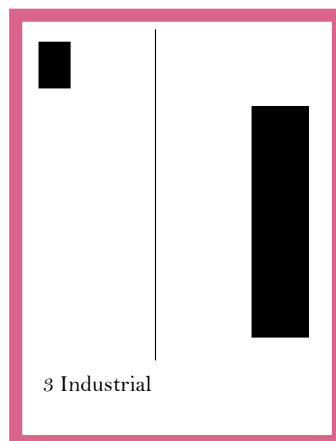
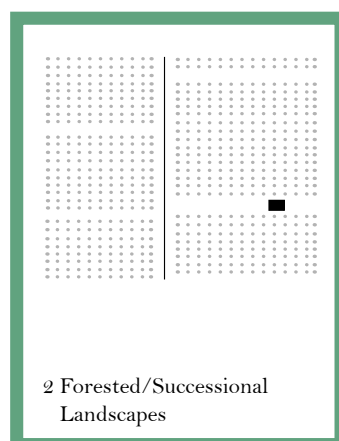
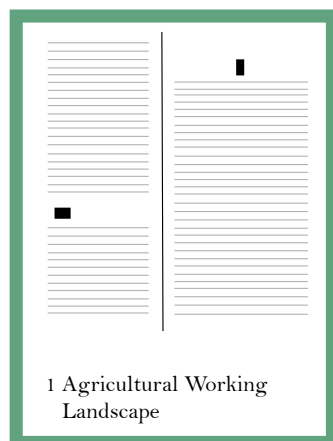
c) Transitional/CBD Edge

d) CBD

DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

Establishing a connection to the Visual Character Areas

The Charrette Team identified these eleven development patterns. Each pattern was then categorized according to their relationship with the Visual Character Areas. These are their general location but some anomalies occur. The development pattern categories are explained on the following pages.



DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

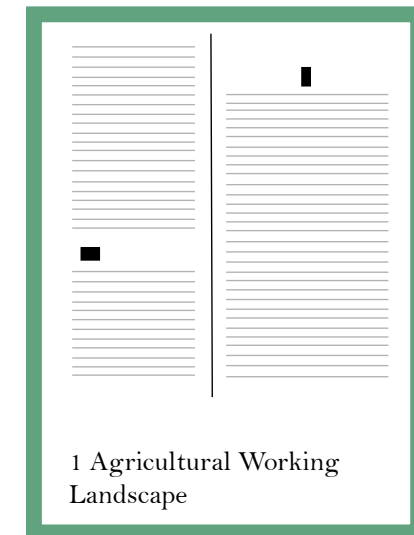


1. Agricultural Working Landscape

General Description:

The working landscape is a combination of rural agricultural land uses utilizing natural resources. These activities include, but are not limited to, livestock production and grazing, row cropping, growing hay and grain, and/or orchards of fruit and nut trees. Generally characterized by an open network of fields and pastures, the landscape is often vast and

expansive, and thus, visually dominant. Architecture within the working landscape usually consists of a house that is accompanied by a complex of utilitarian structures, including barns, silos, pump houses, equipment storage, and any other structure that facilitates the productive nature of the land. Individual properties within this landscape are often surrounded and subdivided by fencing.



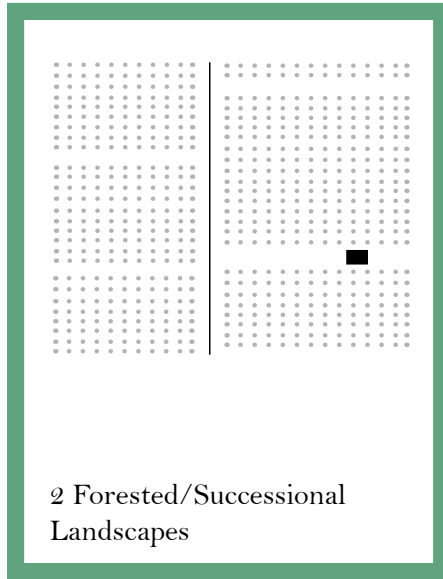
DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS



2. Forested and Successional Landscape

General Description:
Forested and the successional landscape consist of heavily vegetated undeveloped land OR tracts of land used for timbering. Given 90% of Georgia was cleared in the early 1900s for cotton production; a majority of the landscape is at various stages of succession. Typical plants include pine (*Pinus taeda*, *Pinus palustris*), oaks (Willow

Oak- *Quercus phellos*, Water Oak- *Quercus nigra*), Sweet Gum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*), Eastern Red Cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*), grasses (Big Bluestem- *Andropogon gerardii*). The structures in this landscape are few with occasional houses or functional architecture such as sheds and barns.



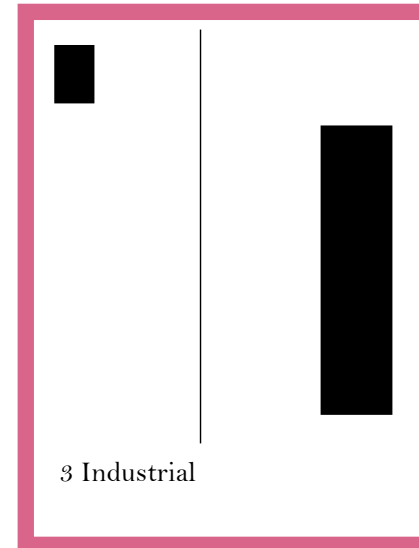
DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

3. Industrial Landscape

General Description:

There are two types of industrial landscapes present in Wilkes County, one where all the production occurs inside and those where industry occurs outside. For indoor industry these areas typically consist of a large industrial, nondescript buildings surrounded by a maintained,

plain landscape (mostly turf and a few evergreen shrubs) with at least one large sign with the name of the company. For outdoor occurring industry, these areas typically consist of a fenced-in area with equipment, processes and supplies visible from adjacent roads unless screened by tall, dense vegetation.



DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS



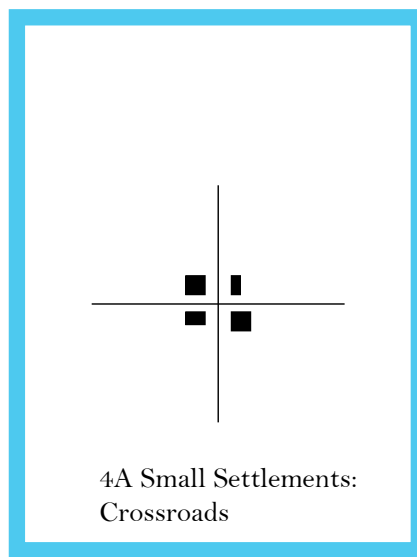
4A: Small Settlements: Crossroads

General Description:

These crossroads are the intersections of rural back roads traveled primarily by locals and easily identified by the simple four-way stop signs or flashing traffic signals.

There are no sidewalks or designed streetscapes along these roads.

Vehicles generally travel more slowly here. The intersections have minimal setbacks with clusters of detached buildings, primarily houses or commercial buildings such as a local general store or gas station.



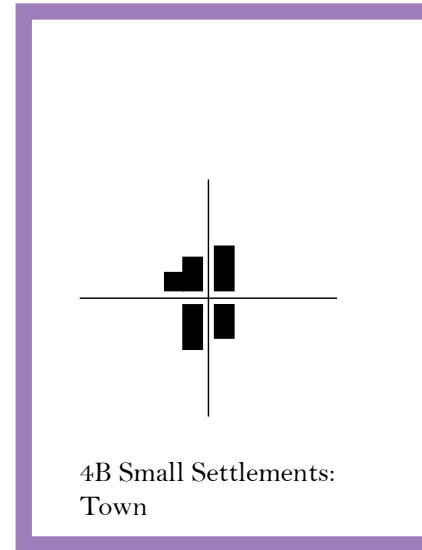
DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

4B: Small Settlements: Towns

General Description:

As you travel closer to the center of a town, there is a recognizable shift; the speed limit lowers, street trees are planted between the street edge and the buildings. Residences are more plentiful and are located on smaller lots, therefore closer to

their neighbors. The commercial architecture is larger mixed-use footprints separated by party walls. Unconsciously, travelers understand they are entering a more active environment and their senses are heightened, and speeds are reduced as one enters into town.



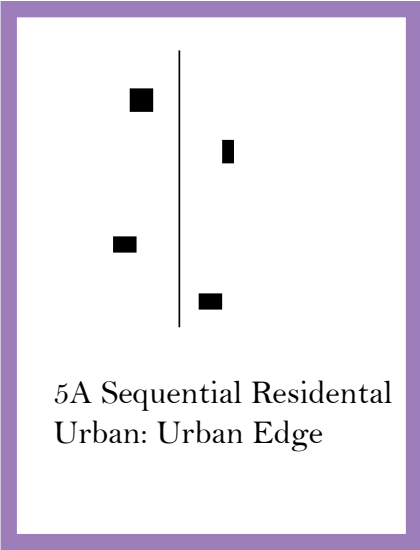
DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

5A: Sequential Residential Urban: Urban Edge

General Description:

This area is comprised mainly of detached single-family houses with occasional mixed-use development interwoven. The structures have medium to

large setbacks from the road and minimal landscaping beyond turf and ornamental shrubs. No sidewalks or uniform streetscapes are present, and often the roads allow for higher speeds.



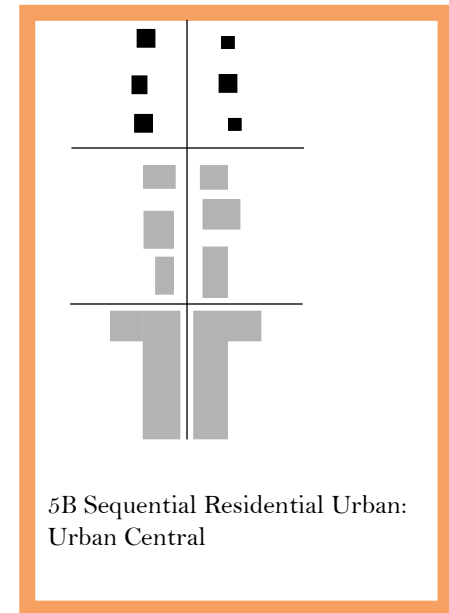
DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

5B: Sequential Residential Urban: Urban Central

General Description:

This residential area is recognizably different from the Urban Edge Residential because it has medium to far setbacks and spacing. The detached single family houses have generally larger

footprints with maintained landscapes, and sidewalks line roads with lower vehicular speeds. This is generally where more historic properties are found given their proximity to the town's center.



5B Sequential Residential Urban:
Urban Central

DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS



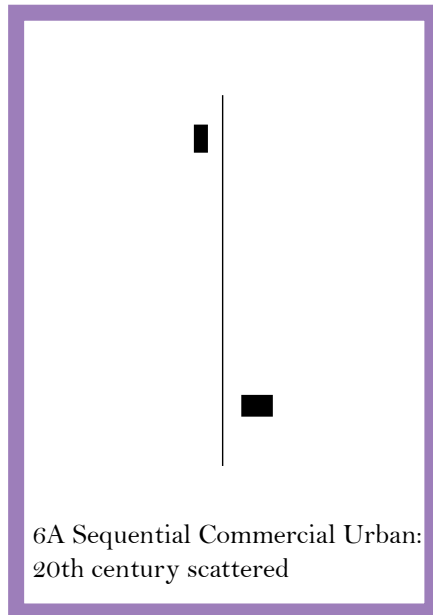
6A: Sequential Commercial Urban:

20th century scattered

General Description:

This commercial area has medium setbacks along roads with varied speed limits. The building footprints

are small to medium in size and tend to contain local businesses. There is no formal streetscape. Sidewalks and landscape plantings are minimal.



DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

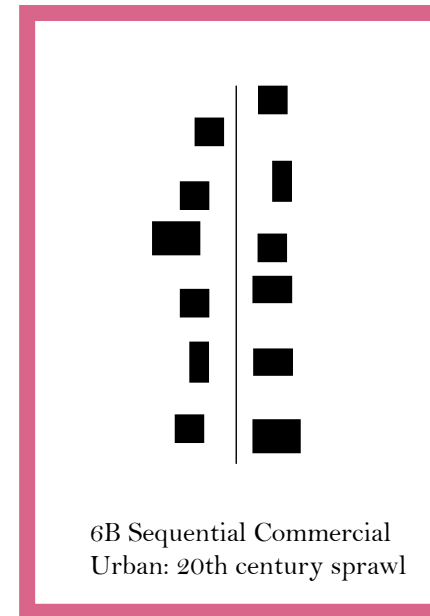
6B: Sequential Commercial Urban:

20th century sprawl

General Description:

This new style of commercial development is vehicle-dominated with substantial hardscape. The detached structures have larger footprints with a corporate franchise nature and

medium setbacks. There are sometimes sidewalks, but with limited landscape improvements and lower vehicular speeds. Advertising for the abundance of retail contributes to visual clutter along the roadways.



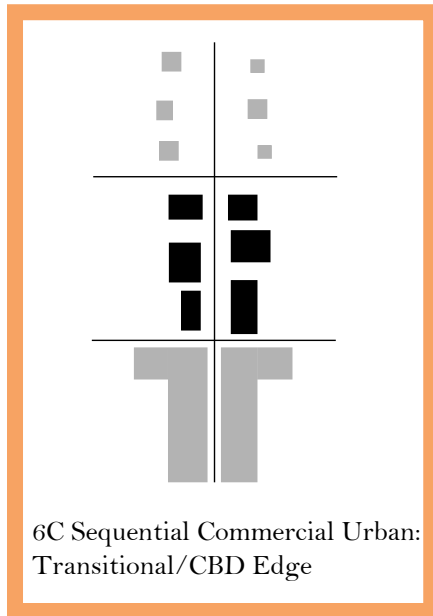
DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

6C: Sequential Commercial Urban: Transitional/CBD Edge

General Description:

This is the more historic commercial district generally located between the urban core and either residential or more scattered commercial zones. One-story detached buildings will have small to medium setbacks on

streets with sidewalks and minimal vehicular speeds allow for adequate pedestrian access. These areas have substantial hardscape and very limited planted landscapes, which can detract from the beauty of an area.



6C Sequential Commercial Urban:
Transitional/CBD Edge



DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

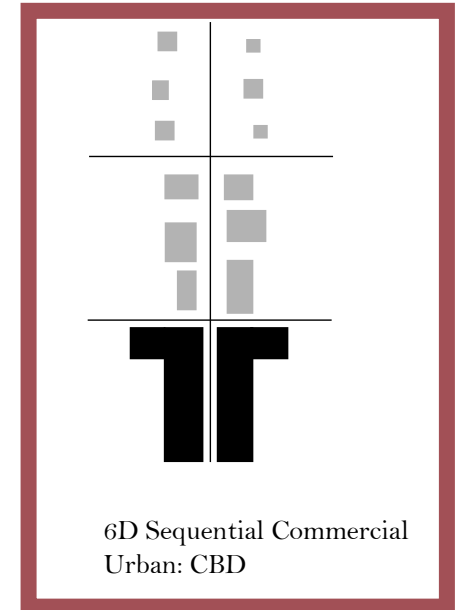
6D: Sequential Commercial Urban: CBD

General Description:

The Central Business District (CBD) is the community hub, permeated with historic commercial and institutional buildings, street trees and gathering spaces, allowing for multiple cultural activities to occur in a highly pedestrian area.

The Urban commercial core has minimal setbacks, often with the sidewalk meeting the building edge. The abundance of sidewalks emphasizes the pedestrian experience and provides space for street trees and furniture. The larger footprint commercial buildings are one- to two- stories tall and have detailed architectural features. They share party walls and generally offer retail on the ground floors and professional and residential spaces on the upper floors.

Schools, government buildings and religious institutions are scattered throughout the CBD as stand-alone buildings with a greater setback and unique building style. There is often a common space, such as a courthouse square or public park, that serves as a gathering spot.





PROTECTION

Solutions: Corridor Design Guidelines

An overlay district is used to establish alternative land development requirements within a specific area of a community that requires special attention. The overlay is usually superimposed over conventional zoning districts and generally consists of a physical area with mapped boundaries with specific text stating new requirements and regulations for the defined area. Overlays are frequently used as stand-alone regulations to manage development in particular areas of a community. The Washington Historic Preservation Commission is one of Georgia's 150 preservation commissions. Unincorporated Wilkes County would have to adopt similar legislation to protect its historic properties.

The most common overlay district is the design review ordinance and preservation commission that is used to designate local historic districts. These differ in function and often their boundaries from National Register listed properties because they carry the weight of local controls that can prevent demolition and regulate new development.

Overlay districts are becoming common because local governments realize they need higher standards in certain areas of the community. These overlays are intended to protect and enhance distinct resources that conventional zoning may not address. They are important because they acknowledge that certain standards may not be necessary or appropriate throughout the entire community.

A simple example of an overlay district might establish a different standard for routine matters such as front yard setbacks. For example, where an underlying district may require a minimum front yard setback of 40 feet from the right-of-way, a traditional neighborhood district

overlay may provide that all commercially zoned property maintain a uniform setback of 15 feet from the curb line.

The transect maps created for the Wilkes County's gateway corridors on page 12 offer insight into the varied sections of the routes and their specific characteristics. Distinct Visual Character Areas along corridors help identify the desirables and undesirables found there and can serve as a way to perpetuate and enhance "the good" and eliminate "the uglies." One of the main components of a Corridor Management Plan is identifying the intrinsic qualities of the corridors.

For more information on local and National Register historic districts visits the following websites:

Georgia Alliance of Preservation Commissions

<http://www.uga.edu/gapc/>

National Alliance of Preservation Commissions

<http://www.uga.edu/napc/>

Georgia Historic Preservation Division

<http://gashpo.org/>

ENTRY CORRIDOR STUDY

Wilkes County, Georgia

Scale (miles): 1 0 1 2

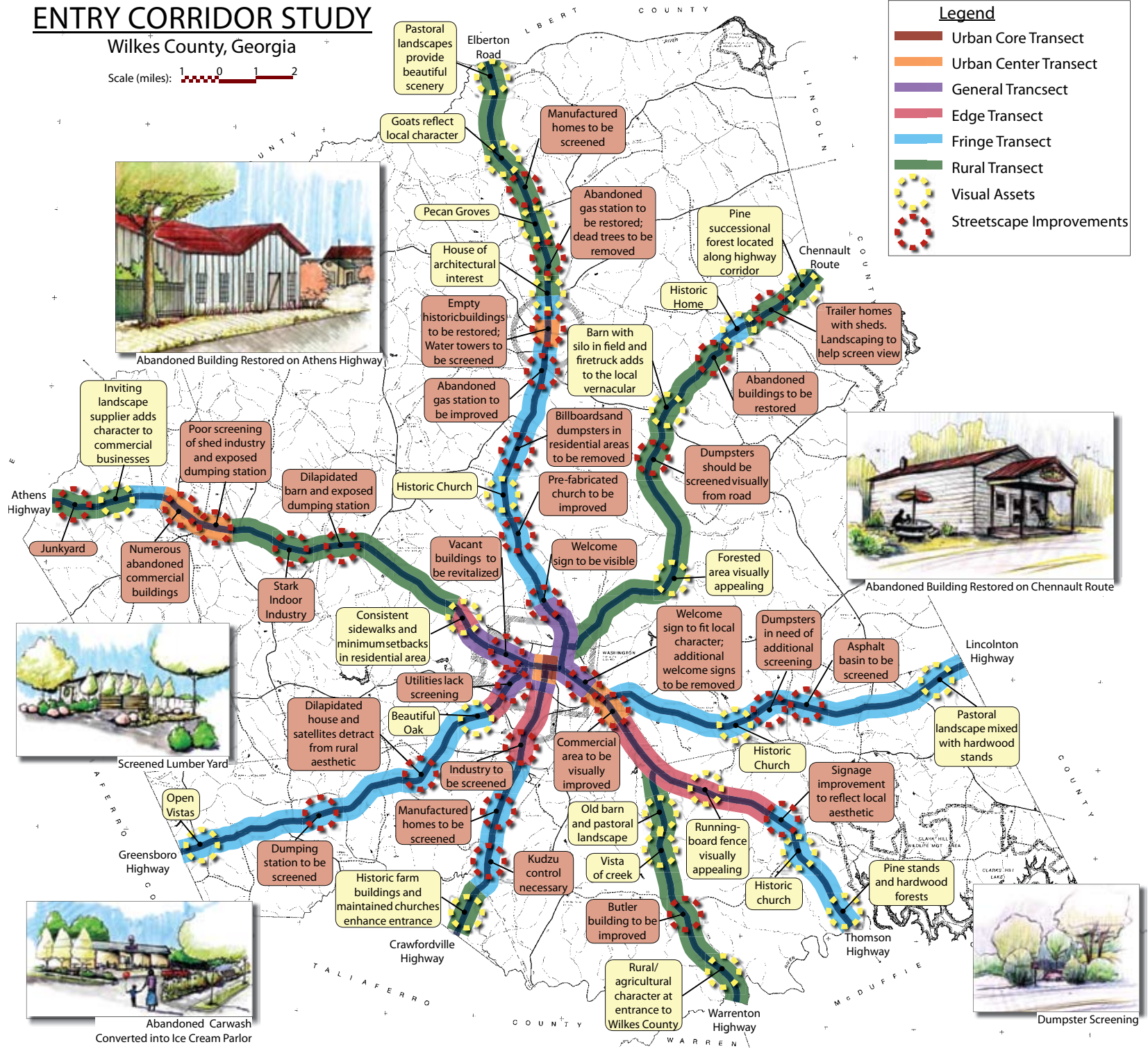
Legend

- Urban Core Transect
- Urban Center Transect
- General Transect
- Edge Transect
- Fringe Transect
- Rural Transect
- Visual Assets
- Streetscape Improvements



After evaluating and describing each of the 11 Development Patterns found along the roadways, the Charrette Team identified “desirable” and “undesirable” elements within each, highlighting what was a positive characteristic and what took away from a traveler’s experience of the area.

This analysis can serve as design guidance for future development based on knowing what characteristics should be promoted. The adjacent map highlights some of the Visual Assets (in yellow) and needed Streetscape Improvements (in orange) along each roadway. Subsequent pages outline the Team’s assessment of the “Desirables” and “Undesirables” in each of the 11 types of Development Patterns.



PROTECTION

Solutions: Corridor Design Guidelines

1. Agricultural Working Landscape

Desirables:



- Attractive fencing: running board or hog-wire and post. Allows livestock to graze next to road, so to enhance the viewer's experience
- Fence-row vegetation for permeable screen and wildlife habitat
- Structures set back from road to ensure the prominence of the landscape (viewer should perceive the land as the dominant feature and architecture should be an accenting component)
- Specimen trees or patches of trees within open expanses enhance visual complexity and depth
- Structures that are built with natural or distinctly rural materials



Undesirables:

- Overgrown understory vegetation on periphery fences that block views from the road
- Buildings located in foreground that obstruct landscape
- Eroded right-of-ways and fields
- Insensitive or inappropriate adjacent development (commercial, subdivisions, industrial, etc.)
- Visually intense roadways (extraneous signage, billboards, etc.)
- Orchards with overgrown or unkempt understory



2. Forested and Successional Landscape

Desirables:



- Serves as an educational tool for the public about native vegetation, successional forests and the lumbering industry
- Provides sense of enclosure and frames roadways while early successional portions provide great long distance vistas
- Screening of undesirable views (dilapidated buildings, etc.)
- Layers of vegetation provide wildlife habitat and four seasonal interest
- Undeveloped rural character promotes a relaxing environment
- Minimal advertising and directional signage

Undesirables:



- During the early stages of succession, the landscape may appear "unkept" to visitors
- Future development will require removal of vegetation altering the landscape's appearance
- Clear cutting in lumbering areas disrupts aesthetic and results in intensive land disturbance
- Lumbering increases truck traffic on road

PROTECTION

Solutions: Corridor Design Guidelines

3. Industrial Landscape

Desirables:

- The visibility of the products made or produced in Wilkes County
- Seeing a maintained/cared for landscape at the industrial sites at which activities occur inside a building
- Well maintained industrial sites built support and morale for local companies

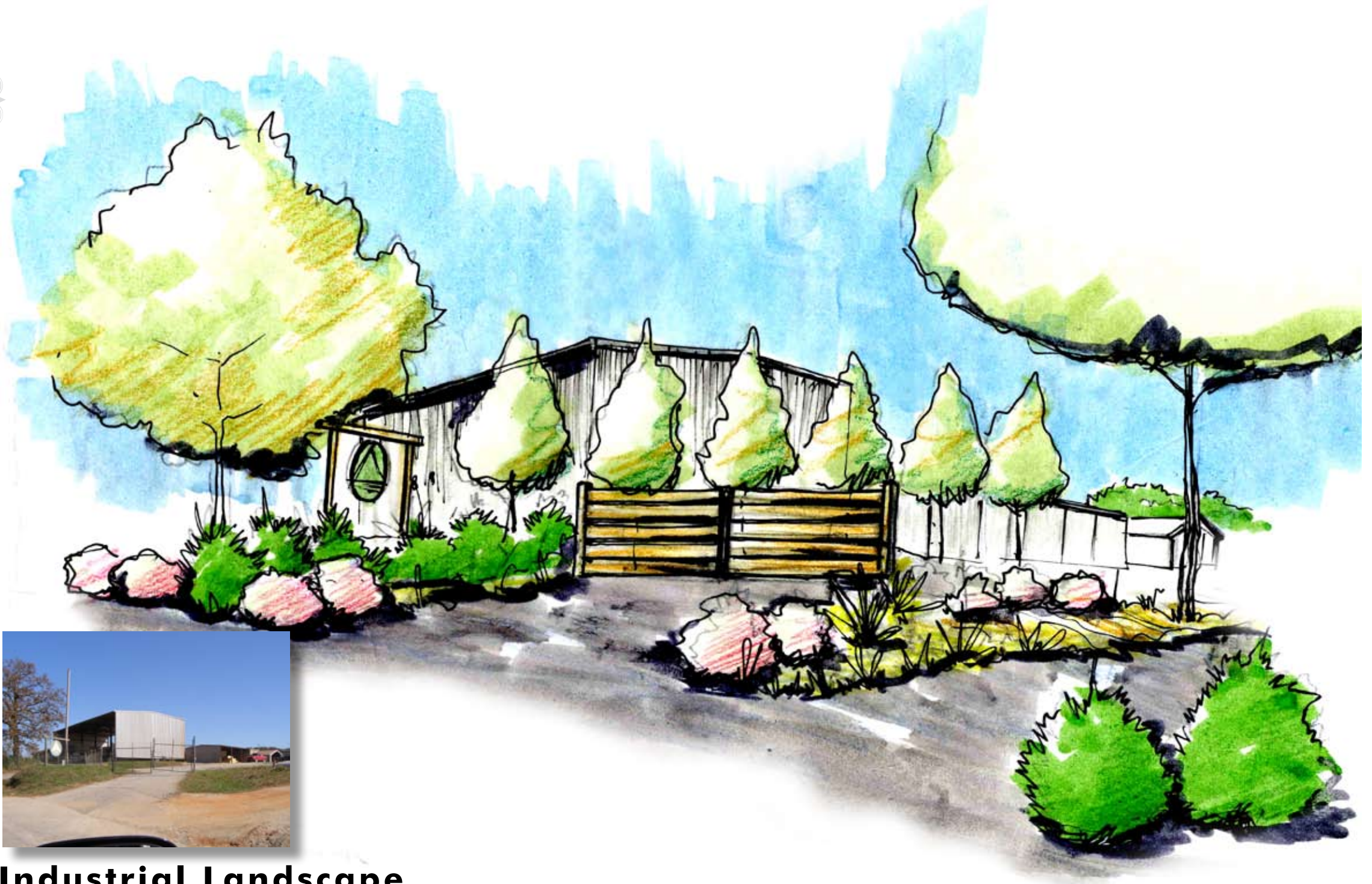
Undesirables:

- Outdoor industrial landscapes are more susceptible to “perceived junk/mess” from the road or adjacent properties
- Large expanses of monoculture turf are unappealing or uninteresting landscapes
- Do not want these industrial sites to be at or visible at the gateways into the county or city of Washington



Industrial Landscape

Before & After: Indoor Industry



Industrial Landscape

Before & After: Outdoor Industry

PROTECTION

Solutions: Corridor Design Guidelines



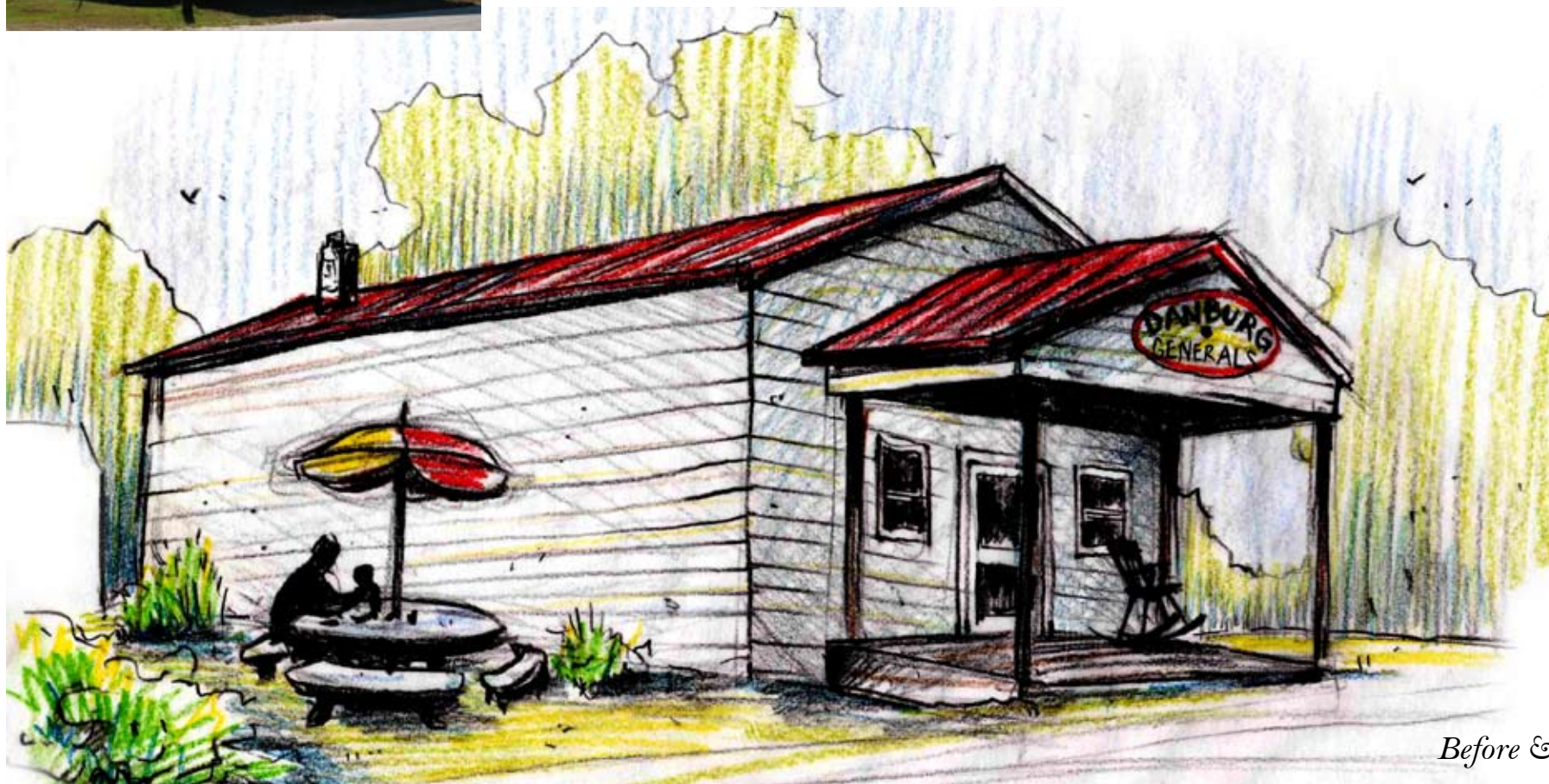
4A: Small Settlements: Crossroads

Desirables:

- Maintained historic buildings
- Slower vehicle speeds
- Clustered buildings at intersections
- Incentives that support local businesses
- Four-way stops and flashing caution lights, rather than stoplights

Undesirables:

- Avoid leaving existing structures in disrepair
- Sidewalks, streetlights (too urban)
- Wide roads, wide intersections, highway vehicular speeds



Danburg

Before & After: Crossroads

PROTECTION

Solutions: Corridor Design Guidelines

4B: Small Settlements: Towns



Desirables:

- The mixed-use (residential, commercial and institutional) element of these areas is retained
- Street trees to add seasonal interest, shade for pedestrians and serve as directional cues and speed deterrents
- Minimal setbacks to encourage pedestrian foot traffic and social interaction

Undesirables:

- Vacant store fronts or buildings in disrepair, creating a negative stigma from the public
- Large setbacks and lack of street trees, which contribute to higher vehicular speeds



5A: Sequential Residential Urban: Urban Edge



Desirables:

- Preserving viewscapes by allowing minimal plantings
- Appropriate screening of “untidy” spaces

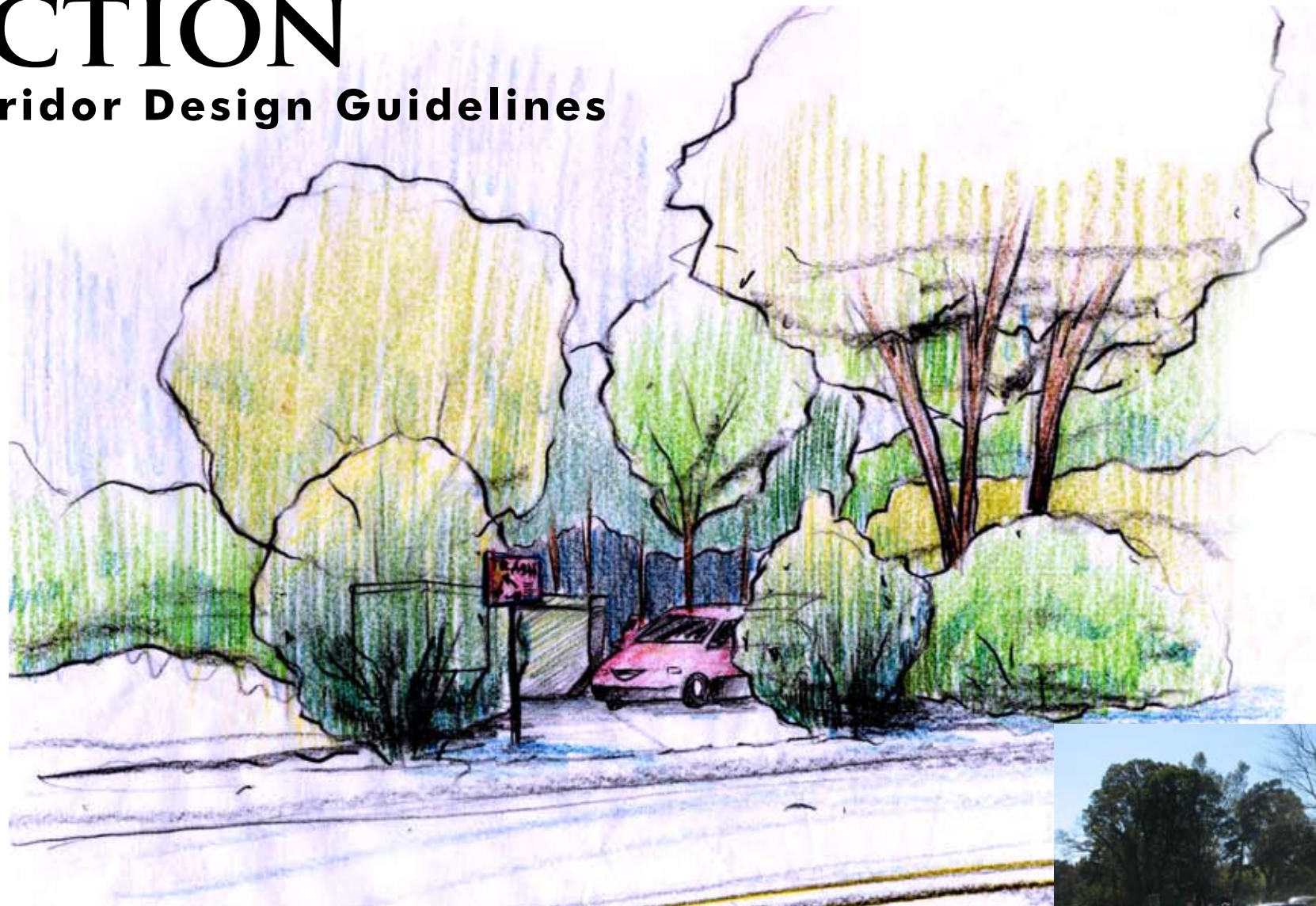
Undesirables:

- Properties that have fallen into disrepair due to vacancy or lack of expendable income
- Lack of overlays and regulation that contributes to a decline in maintenance of properties
- Inappropriate uses that result in unattractive places, creating an undesirable impression of a community



PROTECTION

Solutions: Corridor Design Guidelines



Dumpster
Before & After:

PROTECTION

Solutions: Corridor Design Guidelines

5B: Sequential Residential Urban: Urban Central

Desirables:

- Protected historic properties and landscapes
- Compatible infill that reflects the historic character of the area
- Maintained landscaping, creating a sense of pride throughout the community
- Sidewalks and low speed limits, which are safer for pedestrians
- Large street trees, with a planting plan to replace trees in kind as needed

Undesirables:

- Unmaintained land and features considered visually unattractive
- Lack of sidewalks
- Multiple travel lanes
- Higher speed limits



PROTECTION

Solutions: Corridor Design Guidelines

6A: Sequential Commercial Urban: 20th century scattered

Desirables:

- Scattered buildings offering good views of open space
- Single-story buildings that are commercial in design: masonry walls, large display windows, flat roof lines
- Appropriate screening, when necessary

Undesirables:

- Vacant buildings left in disrepair
- Commercial-use buildings with residential design treatments
- Multi-story buildings where none had existed



The stark commercial strip has been enhanced with plantings and additional sidewalks creating a more inviting neighborhood environment



Whitehall

Before & After: Urban Scattered



This abandoned car wash offers a unique reuse opportunity that can benefit the entire community by creating a neighborhood destination.

Car Wash

Before & After:

PROTECTION

Solutions: Corridor Design Guidelines

6B: Sequential Commercial Urban: 20th century sprawl



Desirables:

- Rehabilitated buildings offering unique business and retail opportunities
- Increased use of safe pedestrian and vehicular access and circulation
- Improved landscaping and the use of vegetation to screen unattractive features (e.g., dumpsters)



Undesirables:

- Unmaintained structures, which can be unattractive to visitors and locals
- Substantial hardscapes that are not pedestrian-friendly
- Limited landscaping that accentuates any negative visual clutter

6C: Sequential Commercial Urban: Transitional/CBD Edge

Desirables:

- Increased safe pedestrian and vehicular circulation
- Improved landscaping and the use of vegetation to screen unattractive features (e.g., dumpsters)



Undesirables:

- Substantially impervious surfaces that impede infiltration of stormwater
- New developments that are distasteful and contribute to visual clutter
- An outward migration of non-pedestrian friendly development with limited landscaping



PROTECTION

Solutions: Corridor Design Guidelines

6D: Sequential Commercial Urban: CBD



Desirables.

- The preservation, rehabilitation and protection of historic buildings, street trees and open spaces
- New construction that fits the character of historic areas in building heights, footprints, setbacks, materials, and roof shapes

Undesirables.

- Demolition of historic buildings, especially for parking lots and unplanned uses
- Removal of large street trees; no replanting plan for damaged or diseased trees
- Vacant buildings that are left in a state of disrepair, contributing to a negative impression of the urban core
- The pvc flag poles should be replaced with more permanent and authentic design features
- Low quality materials used for public places (e.g., PVC flag poles)



PROTECTION

Solutions: Wayfinding & Branding

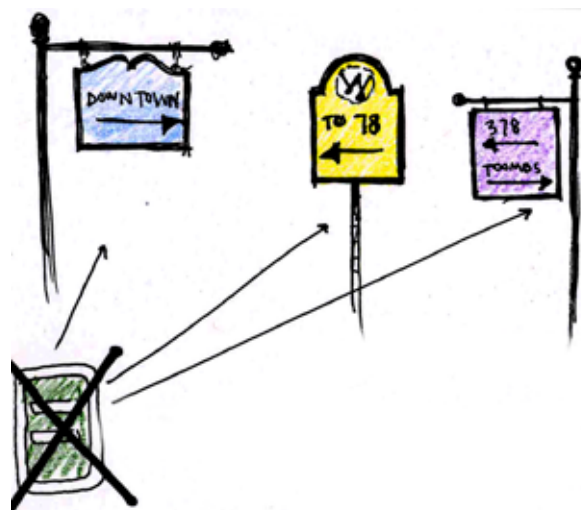
Tag Lines

- **Come for the history, stay for the fun.**
- **Wilkes: A place of War and Peace**
- **High style but laid back**
- **Y'all come!**
- **State of Grace**

Signs are like weeds that grow without intention. A whole new batch of visual clutter springs up each time a roadway changes, development or redevelopment happens, new businesses move in or new institutions and organizations are formed. This overpopulation of visual clutter can be

well-meaning but often achieves the exact opposite of what people want. Human ability to comprehend the information is taxed by too much information in too many varieties. Most importantly, when there is too much text and signs are too large the motorist or pedestrian is encouraged

to either ignore the signs or ignore the objects and setting around them. This is dramatically illustrated in the increase in accidents and traffic after the placement of electrical, animated or complex advertising near busy intersections.



Incorporate signage into the existing historical fabric with simple yet iconic, bold forms. A simple color coding hierarchy could be implemented to direct visitors throughout the county. In this series, blue indicates historic sites that are attractions for people to follow. Yellow represents directional information for people entering or exiting the county while purple indicates city services.



PROTECTION

Solutions: Wayfinding & Branding

Tag Lines

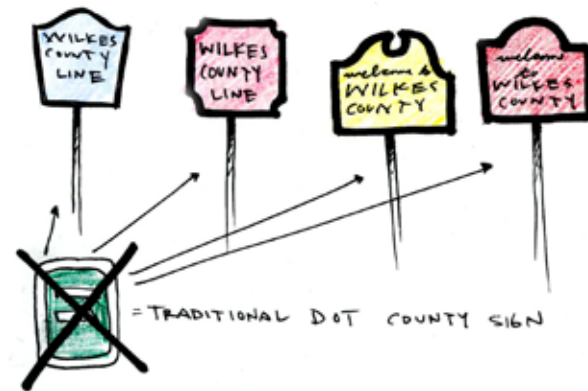
- Stay awhile
- The Classic Southern City
- The Classic South
- Elegant. Eclectic. Exciting
- Feel the History

Wayfinding is how people orient themselves and navigate from place to place. Wayfinding involves the combination of directional signs, iconic features in the landscape, buildings and street layout, and topographical features to produce a sensible path to destinations. While

it is important to develop a simple, yet informative system, wayfinding can also reflect the community's personality and history.

A countywide system of sign design, sign management, and thematic emblems representing local character

will gradually form an attractive and uncluttered pathway that will create a memorable and positive experience for visitors. This solution addresses both wayfinding and creating a new "brand" for Wilkes County.



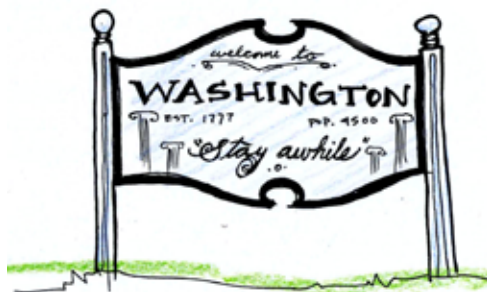
The traditional Department of Transportation county signs are bland and do not resonate about the uniqueness of Wilkes County.



Create immediate aesthetic effect upon arrival in Historic Wilkes County.

PROTECTION

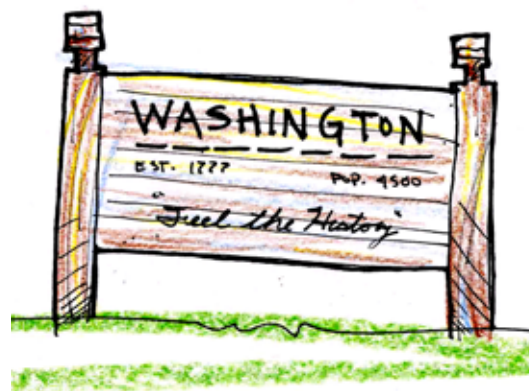
Solutions: Wayfinding & Branding



These variations are painted white with black trim reflective of Wilkes County's history and its antebellum elegance



Constructed of an I-Beam and steel, this sign reflects the industrial nature of portions of Wilkes County.



A portion of the Wilkes County is forested and linked to the timbering industry. These signs are rustic and reference wooden fencing flanking the rural portions of the gateway corridors.



Whether fence running board inspired imagery or the miles of row crops or pasture land, the rural aesthetic of Wilkes County is memorable and should be reflected in signs.

CASE STUDY: Brunswick and the Golden Isles



In December 2008, the Center for Community Design and Preservation conducted a design charrette in Glynn County addressing similar issues such as gateways and wayfinding. Currently there is a distinction between the individual islands, Brunswick, and Glynn County. One of the design solutions for how to bridge this gap was introducing new signage. This solution celebrates the individuality of each component that forms Glynn County, while understanding that their true strength is when acting as one. The branding of “Brunswick and the Golden Isles” is used frequently and should be expanded upon. These images could easily be transferred to websites, stationary and other marketing tools. Creating a new sign system like this is one way Wilkes County can create a unique and unifying statement.



PROTECTION

Solutions: Billboards



Billboards in the county are rarely necessary and are often considered visual blight. Their effectiveness on larger road systems like Interstates is greater than on county roads. The team's analysis of billboards in Wilkes County showed that very little economic development was happening due to their presence. Many of them advertise out-of-

county (and some out-of-state) events and places, while others are just public service messages and political statements. These may be appreciated by some but do very little to promote economic development in Wilkes County. Sign ordinances and incentive programs are effective in slowing down the proliferation of billboards

(referred to as "litter on a stick" by Scenic America) and can even help with removal of grandfathered non-conforming signs. For more information about sign control visit DCA's website at www.dca.state.ga.us/planning/ModelCode/3-7Signs.doc



PROTECTION

Solutions: Innovative Ideas



Geocaching

Washington-Wilkes is a forward thinking community that is constantly striving to stay on the cutting edge of technology. Throughout the world, interactive models are being developed to engage with visitors in innovative ways. Geocaching is a high-tech treasure hunting game played throughout the world by adventure seekers equipped with GPS devices. The basic idea is to locate hidden containers, called geocaches, outdoors and then share your experiences online. Geocaching is enjoyed by people from all age groups, with a strong sense of community and support for the environment. This is an excellent way to bring new types of visitors to Wilkes County and educate them about its history.

For more information visit <http://www.geocaching.com>

Wiki-esque

Another interactive component quickly gaining popularity are **Wiki-esque** information systems similar to those seen at the *Georgia Aquarium*, where the public can directly add to their experience of a place. These particular systems have numbers that visitors can call using their cell phones to gain more information about the exhibits.

For the Washington-Wilkes scenario, once a visitor has reached the downtown core, or another specific attraction, audio components can be implemented on site. Whether as a free-standing sign or a speaker embedded into a wall plaque, an audio narrative can give detailed information about the significance of the place. Personal stories and experiences can be uploaded by residents or visitors at these same sites. In doing so, the database of historical and cultural narratives unique to Washington-Wilkes County continue to grow and evolve, creating a living and breathing record of your community.

CASE STUDY: ECHO ATLANTA

Echo Atlanta is neighbors sharing stories about the places we all know and live in. The idea is simple: you're walking down the street, you see an Echo sign, you call a number and hear a story about that place. And then maybe you leave one of your own. Some of the stories are big and historic, some are small and personal, all of them are about Atlantans and the places where we live.



To share a story, Dial 1-888-ECHO-ATL to tell your own tale. Just keep it 2 minutes or less or follow all things Echo on the iHeartEcho blog.

PROTECTION

Solutions: Innovative Ideas



More than ever, savvy travelers are looking towards technology to plan and enhance their journey. Podcasts and web-based interactive maps help visitors learn more about a new place at their own pace without the need for a local tour provider.

Using these readily-available information technologies, spoken-word or visual narratives can be created to inform and educate visitors about significant places along the corridors.

Each narrative should highlight unique features of a particular corridor and could vary in length depending on the subject matter, or choreographed according to estimated driving times from county line to the downtown core. Because they are corridor specific, the narratives should consist of both informational and directional components.

APPLICATIONS

Low-Tech: AM Radio: Geographically Synched Broadcast

Signage placed at the county gateways of each corridor can direct visitors to an AM frequency that broadcasts the corresponding historical-cultural narrative for that unique place. Attractions along that corridor can be described by the audio component while directional signage can lead the visitor to the places describes.

High-Tech: GPS: Interactive maps can be made available upon entering the county that will guide and narrate the visitor's experience.

PROTECTION

Programs

Georgia Made, Georgia Grown



Capitalizing on the national interest in heritage tourism, the State is sponsoring a variety of programs designed to encourage local producers of goods, services, and entertainment to present more reasons for residents and visitors to explore, experience and capture for themselves a piece of Georgia's legacy. The spotlight is on authentic Georgia Made Georgia Grown products thanks to a State of Georgia Creative Economies initiative. The people of Georgia, long known for their creativity and industrious nature, produce a broad range of products grown or otherwise produced within the state's boundaries. Through the Georgia Made Georgia Grown program, authentic local products

by craftmakers, artists, authors, food producers, and farms are partnering with Georgia theaters, festivals, galleries, and creative minds to present the local color of the state through its people, places, and products.

Through campaigns such as Agritourism and Georgia Grown, the State Department of Agriculture is assisting rural communities that otherwise have not been able to create a heritage tourism initiative. By collaborating with other communities in their regions, counties and municipalities are inspired to offer a package of enticements to potential visitors and prospective residents and businesses.

Washington-Wilkes County enjoys the distinction of already being a travel destination. By incorporating Georgia Made Georgia Grown into current marketing strategies, the visitor who comes for the county's traditional elegance and gracious hospitality will find other eclectic treasures too.

Visit Georgia Made Georgia Grown at www.gamadegagrown.org

Corridor Management Programs



The National Scenic Byways (NSB) Program was established under the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991, and reauthorized in 1998 under the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century. Under the program, the U.S. Secretary of Transportation recognizes certain roads as "National Scenic Byways" or "All-American Roads" based on their archaeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and scenic qualities. There are 151 such designated Byways in 46 states. The Federal Highway Administration promotes the collection as the America's Byways.

America's Byways is founded upon the strength of the local leaders of individual corridors. It is a voluntary, grassroots program. It recognizes and supports outstanding roads, by providing resources to help manage the intrinsic qualities within the broader Byway corridor to be treasured and shared.

A Corridor Management Plan (CMP) is a written plan developed by the communities along a scenic byway that outlines how to protect and enhance the byways's intrinsic qualities and character that define the corridor. These plans are community-based, flexible documents that outline the goals, strategies and responsibilities for preserving and promoting the byway. All CMPs must comply with the Federal Highways Administration's "14-point plan" of the National Scenic Byways Program.

PROTECTION

Combining Programs



There are similarities between an economic development strategy such as Georgia Made Georgia Grown and scenic byway programs which should guide the decision-making process for the gateways of Wilkes County. The Scenic America tagline says it all: “Change is inevitable. Ugliness is not.” Georgia Made Georgia Grown promotes authentic products while Scenic Byways showcases native vegetation and historic places throughout the corridor. The collaboration between the two programs can also be economically viable for local land owners along the gateway routes. The farmers along the corridor may be eligible for tax incentives for maintaining their property adjacent to the road. In turn, their farm could be showcased with Georgia Made, Georgia Grown, increasing their sales.



PROTECTION

Policy Recommendations: Additional Resources

As the arena for historic resource management grows, Washington will want to consider a four-point approach targeting the wealth of historic residential properties. Creating a neighborhood approach, as well as a city/county-wide methodology will result in stronger neighborhood communities, solidifying Washington-Wilkes' reputation as a destination for hospitality and gracious living. Washington-Wilkes can obtain assistance from the following resources to facilitate the management of non-traditional historic resources and landscapes.



American Farmland Trust

<http://www.farmland.org/>

The mission of American Farmland Trust (AFL) is to help farmers and ranchers protect their land, produce a healthier environment and build successful communities. They have information for Georgia farmers on how they can sell the development rights for their land, permanently protecting it.



Land Trust Alliance

<http://www.landtrustalliance.org/>

The Land Trust Alliance believes that if we focus our combined efforts to increase the pace, quality and permanence of conservation, we can turn the tide and ultimately change the way that land development takes place in America. They offer information for how local individuals can preserve their land and valued resources.



Scenic America

<http://www.scenic.org/>

Scenic America is the only national nonprofit organization dedicated solely to preserving and enhancing the visual character of America's communities and countryside. They offer national advocacy efforts and technical assistance services, local and national projects, and the support of our state affiliates.



Scenic Byways

<http://www.byways.org/>

The National Scenic Byways Program seeks to provide resources to the byway community in creating a unique travel experience and enhanced local quality of life through efforts to preserve, protect, interpret, and promote the intrinsic qualities of designated byways.

PROTECTION

Policy Recommendations: Additional Resources



Georgia Centennial Farm Program

<http://gashpo.org/content/displaycontent.asp?txtDocument=119>

Georgia's Centennial Farm Program distinguishes farms and farm families who have contributed to preserving Georgia's agricultural resources and to encourage the continued use of these farms for future generations. They promote agricultural awareness but to gain a deeper understanding of our state's unique agricultural heritage.



Barn Again! – a program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation

<http://www.preservationnation.org/issues/rural-heritage/barn-again/>

The National Trust for Historic Preservation and *Successful Farming* magazine launched BARN AGAIN! in 1987 to preserve historic barns. Through demonstration projects, case studies, publications, technical assistance, and an awards program, BARN AGAIN!, has been chipping away at the widely accepted premise that new is better.



Partners for Sacred Places

<http://www.sacredplaces.org/>

Partners for Sacred Places is the only national, non-sectarian, non-profit organization dedicated to the sound stewardship and active community use of America's older religious properties. Partners provides assistance to the people who care for sacred places while promoting a new understanding of how these places sustain communities.

CASE STUDIES

HandMade in America and the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area



Based in the Blue Ridge Mountains, HandMade in America was founded in 1993 with a belief that economic revitalization wasn't necessarily tied to luring "modern" industry to the region but in making known the hidden heritage and craftspeople that

are so vitally a part of Western North Carolina. Today, HandMade is a nationally recognized, multidimensional institution that has sparked initiatives and creative collaborations in education, small town revitalization and community development, economic development, environmentally sustainable strategies and enhanced opportunities for makers of the handmade object, heritage tourism, and incorporating crafts into building design and furnishing.

In 2003 Congress designated 25 counties in Western North Carolina as the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area. A National Heritage Area is a region in which residents,

businesses, and local governments have joined together to conserve and celebrate heritage and special landscapes. Projects and programs in tourism, education, and economic development will be focused around the region's distinctive agri-heritage, craft, music, and Cherokee culture.

In 2002 Heritage Area legislation was introduced in The U.S. House and Senate. The Bill was in June 2002 by representatives of HandMade in America and Advantage West, a regional economic development agency. Passage of H.B. 1759 in November 2003 gave designation to The Blue Ridge National Heritage Area and provision of \$500,000 for first year funding.

For more information about these two organizations, visit:

HandMade in America
www.handmadeinamerica.org

Blue Ridge National Heritage Area
www.blueridgeheritage.com

ECOVAST and Heritage Trails



ECOVAST, the European Council for the Village and Small Town, was set up in 1984 to foster the economic, social and cultural vitality

with market strategies for rural communities throughout Europe. The organization is dedicated to safeguarding their rural heritage by promoting sensitive and imaginative renewal identities for the communities' built and natural environments assets.

Many European regions are rich in "heritage" sites - such as castles, churches, historic villages, natural caves, viewpoints, museums and art galleries - which could be used for tourism. But the challenge is to bring them into such use in a way which truly benefits the people and the economy of the area; and which is sustainable, so that the tourism does not damage the heritage sites. The Heritage Trails project was designed to address that challenge. The project team defined a Heritage Trail as a regional network

of natural and cultural heritage sites created within a well-defined product identity and could support an interesting and varied tourist visit of up to one week. The team studied a range of heritage sites and worked closely with the landowners and with local people to decide whether the sites had the capacity to receive visitors. Each trail underwent a detailed marketing study to establish which kinds of visitors might be attracted to the region.

The team then conducted intensive consultation with local authorities and others to complete an agreed Trail and established a Heritage Trail Association. This Association is responsible for the setting up and marketing of the Trail. The project team gave detailed advice on standards and product quality to the hotels and other enterprises who will service the Trail and the initiative has spread throughout Europe.

For more information visit:
www.ecovast.org

PROTECTION

Policy Recommendations: Historic Preservation

Washington-Wilkes County’s marketing approach has been to identify the area as having the largest number of antebellum houses in the state of Georgia. This reputation is confirmed with a simple driving tour of the county seat, and further enhanced as the lush rural landscape is traversed.

A vigilant approach is needed to promote Washington-Wilkes’ rich heritage for the burgeoning heritage tourism industry. Immediately, several concerns can be addressed as the economy begins its recovery and a population weary of staying at home begins to venture out to explore

the countryside.

A number of National Register-designated or eligible properties need more aggressive management through local regulation and incentives for rehabilitation, preservation, and/or restoration. Deferred maintenance is often the most detrimental to historic properties. If addressed soon, costly repairs can be avoided and these properties can resume their place as the crown jewels of the Washington landscape.

Joining forces with the county to create a Washington-Wilkes Historic Preservation

Commission (HPC) to oversee historic resources countywide will allow for uniform regulation and management of character-defining features and cultural landscapes. Enabling legislation from the State of Georgia allows for the creation of a countywide HPC to include communities/municipalities and unincorporated areas. Given the size and population of the county and the predominance of the City of Washington’s historic resources, it is our recommendation that a joint HPC strongly be considered

Historic Resource Survey

The last Historic Resources Survey for the City of Washington was completed in 1998. Based on that survey, National Register-eligible properties (i.e. constructed in 1948 or before) should be targeted for National Register nominations to be completed as soon as possible. Additionally, all designated or eligible National Register properties should be considered for local designation, for while National Register designation is a great honor and offers federal and state tax incentives, the local design review process can best protect valuable historic assets.

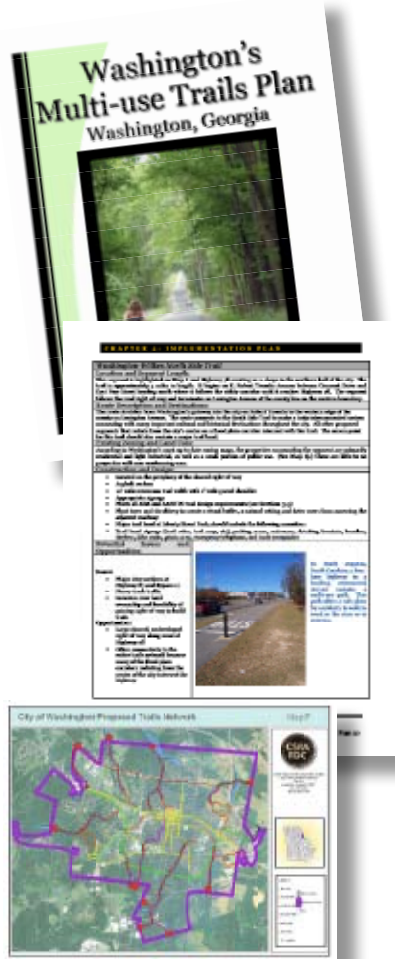
FindIt!

FindIt! is a cultural resource survey program at the University of Georgia Center for Community Design & Preservation and is sponsored by the Georgia Transmission Corporation (GTC). FindIt! was created to help preserve and document cultural resources throughout the state. Through the FindIt! Program, Wilkes County is currently benefiting from a survey identifying every National Register-eligible property within the unincorporated county. It is time for the City of Washington to update its existing survey. Mid-

Twentieth Century buildings – including those of the International architectural style, ranch houses, roadside gas stations and restaurants, as well as hotels and the associated signs and mascots reminiscent of auto travel from the 1950s onward – are elements of the cultural landscape that will disappear if not addressed soon.

PROTECTION

Trails Plan 2008



According to the **2008 Multi-use Trails Plan**, all new trails within the city of Washington are to be located along floodplain and utility corridors including power line and sewer easements. The proposed network will increase non-motorized access to various parts of the city and provide alternative routes and recreation opportunities for both locals and tourists traveling within Wilkes County.

One section of the proposed network is slated to parallel four-lane Highway 78 in the form of a 10-foot wide trail bounded on either side by a 2-foot wide vegetated buffer. This is part of the city's policy to adopt a "Complete Streets Policy" intended to accommodate the transportation needs of all users. The design implications

of this policy require raised crosswalks at all points where trails intersect with major roads, reduced speed limits, and flashing lights on high-traffic roads to alert motorists about pedestrian crossing zones.

The report also mentions at least one below-grade crossing that will intersect a major roadway along hwy 78 via an underground tunnel which could potentially alter viewsheds from the roadway above.

A major emphasis of the plan is the introduction of educational and wayfinding signage throughout the entire trail network. The Charrette Team, as shown has several recommendations for signage that will support the existing Trail Plan goals.

NATIVE GEORGIA SMALL TREES AND SHRUBS

by The Georgia Native Plant Society



TREES

Sourwood	<i>Oxydendrum arboreum</i>
Anise Tree	<i>Illicium sp.</i>
Winterberry	<i>Ilex verticillata</i>
Possumhaw	<i>Ilex deidua</i>
Fringetree	<i>Chionanthus virginicus</i>
Wild Olive	<i>Osmanthus americanus</i>

SHRUBS

Bottonbush	<i>Cephalantus occidentalis</i>
Sweetshrub	<i>Calycanthus floridus</i>
Azalea	<i>Rhododendron sp.</i>
Southern Wax Myrtle	<i>Morella cerifera</i>
Witch Hazel	<i>Hamamelis vernalis</i>

For a complete list visit: www.gnps.org

Our state is fortunate to offer a wide variety of trees, shrubs, and perennials that will create four-seasonal interest. A unique planting scheme for Wilkes County could be created by consulting with local horticulturists and community members.

WAYFINDING & BRANDING

Washington-Wilkes Joint Comprehensive Plan 2009-2010



The comprehensive plan outlines goals to protect watersheds, river corridors, plant and animal habitats, scenic areas, and prime agricultural and forested lands within the county. The plan encourages land uses and future development that respects these goals.

Many of the gateways into Wilkes County are located in close proximity to wetlands and flood prone areas that are designated in the comprehensive plan as preservation areas. This provides an ideal opportunity for new regulation that can guarantee protection of the rural character of the major gateways. There is a prevailing concern throughout the plan

about the possibility of future development affecting the existing agricultural aesthetic and quality of land. The Washington-Wilkes Joint Comprehensive Plan 2009-2010 cites, "Land development regulations in Wilkes County are minimal and do not offer the type of standards necessary to preserve rural areas or focus growth into smaller portions of the county which have access to public infrastructure". Overlays will be an important tool in addressing this issue.

In keeping with this notion of regulating development, the plan outlines several character areas that seek to categorize portions of the city that are residential,

industrial, commercial, etc. These existing categories were taken into consideration when devising a framework for overlays on the major routes by the Charrette Team. One aspect not fully addressed in the comprehensive plan is the issue of signage standards. The plan calls for uniformity in signage but has no clear design standards and recommendations.



WASHINGTON

12 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

1780

1895

HISTORIC
WASHINGTON

CONCLUSION

Wilkes Co. Community Design Charrette

Georgia Made; Georgia Grown. The concept is an easy one to understand at first glance; the difficulty comes in applying the idea to a rural historic landscape and associated transportation corridors that lead to one of the State’s preeminent small towns. But that was the task of the charrette. The results of the work during the weekend in Washington and subsequent analysis back on campus are presented in this report and speak to careful integration of corridor management techniques with tourist marketing concepts while maintaining or increasing resident quality of life indicators.

To begin the process residents and local leaders must adopt the strategy of “losing no

ground.” Past land use mistakes (LULUs – locally unwanted land uses) or eyesores that already exist are just that - in the past. Future decisions must avoid repeating those mistakes. The inventory of positive and negative attributes along the corridors, the segmentation of the roadways into “transects” or visual character zones and the use of overlay districting to visually protect the important resources is the key to starting the process of healing the landscape and perpetuating beautiful communities and rural areas.

The transect-based planning model is one that is drawn from ecology. It is a progression through a sequence of habitats. The rural to urban transect and the anomalies found in Wilkes

County’s small settlements and crossroads communities, which are described in this report, show the sequencing of human habitats from simple to more complex. The rule to follow in using transect- based planning is not whether the transition between the zones is made gradually or abruptly but that the details of change within the transect zone are internally consistent and mutually supportive. Simply put, growth and change must be good neighbors to existing visual character... no matter what that may be.

Wilkes County and the Washington urban core will do well to follow many of the case studies presented in this report. There is no reason to reinvent the wheel. If a concept or idea has been tested somewhere else and has worked, then it is an idea that should be considered for future plan implementation for Washington-Wilkes.

And lastly, this report is a jumping off point - a place to begin to make changes. It is a document for visioning. It is a document to help unravel the complexities of visual character and how what one sees relates to place, identity and home.

Thank you for allowing the University of Georgia to help you begin this process.



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