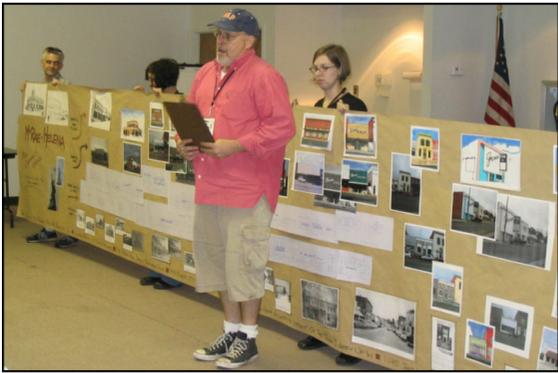


# McRae-Helena Charrette

Special Insert of the The Telfair Enterprise - October 27, 2004

## What is a Charrette?



Pratt Cassity presents the charrette results to McRae-Helena residents

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

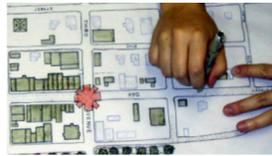
Today, "charrette" has come to describe the rapid, intensive, and creative work session, usually lasting a week or more, in which a design team focuses on a particular design problem and arrives at a collaborative solution. Charrettes are product-oriented. The public charrette is fast becoming a preferred way to face the planning challenges confronting American cities.

*Charrettes for New Urbanism,*  
Victor Dover



Charrette team from the University of Georgia -McRae June 2004 during 3-day charrette sponsored by Crossroads Cities, Inc, a non-profit organization.

Our charrettes are high energy, new vision, community improvement events! They result in concepts that leverage implementation funds. Nearly all of the communities where charrettes were done have gone on to receive grants or local funds to implement our recommendations. In short, Charrettes WORK!



What really comes out of a charrette are the ideas and dreams of residents, filtered through urban planning professionals who understand how to turn a design idea into a real community improvement.

The University of Georgia's Center for Community Design & Preservation at the College of Environment & Design has been using the charrette process to help communities for many decades. The process has many proponents and has gained special favor in a new era of contemporary town planning, new urbanism, neo-traditionalism and just plain, hometown, good old fashioned concern for where you live.



Commercial Buildings on Oak Street Downtown McRae, GA

## Focus on Downtown

By Julia Reed  
MLA Student

A team of designers and students from the University of Georgia (Athens) charged with developing practical solutions for revitalization of McRae and Helena's downtowns spent three days in Telfair county in June 2004. The group was brought to town by Crossroads Cities, Inc., a non-profit organization from McRae and Helena dedicated to revitalization of the downtowns.

The University of Georgia team held two public input sessions, each attended by more than 50 people at the beginning and close of their work. During those sessions, community members told the design team what is important to them about McRae and Helena, as well as what needs to be improved.

The team was led by Pratt Cassity, Director of the Center for Community Design & Preservation at the College of Environment & Design

from the University of Georgia. During their time in town, the students, professors and designers photographed, researched, drew and developed a vision for the road ahead for McRae and Helena.

This special section of the Telfair Enterprise describes the groups findings and recommendations.

The next step for McRae and Helena is to seek funding to move some of these design recommendations into action.

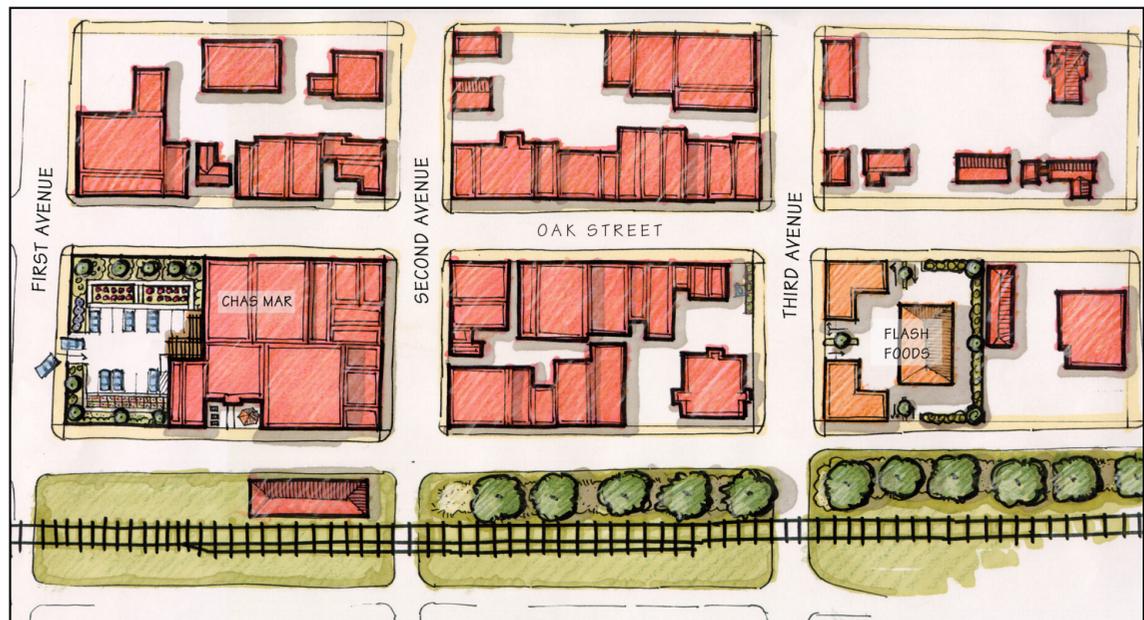


A renovated vision for commercial buildings on Oak Street downtown McRae, GA

## A Brighter Day Awaits Downtown

By Pratt Cassity  
Charrette Coordinator

There is a certain rhythm to shopping in a vibrant historic downtown. A casual stroll takes one past display windows that invite shoppers inside to explore potential offerings. Successful downtowns share similar characteristics. A regular spacing of building facades, similar scale buildings, and architectural continuity are all common features. Large buildings that overwhelm the surrounding structures and empty spaces all disrupt the patterns of urban shopping. Designers of suburban shopping malls have long realized the draw of main street shopping and have tried to duplicate it. Anchor stores that appear massive from the outside are reduced to a small entryway inside. Empty stores are quickly



The nearly intact row of commercial buildings downtown between Third Avenue and Second Avenue must become a priority for revitalization, reuse and new businesses.

replaced so that shoppers have uninterrupted shopping experience. For these reasons the nearly intact row of commercial buildings downtown between Third Avenue and Second Avenue must become a priority for revitalization, reuse and new businesses. The continuity of this block can offer the downtown rhythm that is needed to draw shoppers from storefront to storefront. This block has the fewest structural alterations, and can house many of the functions needed downtown. The central location of this block can serve as a visible reminder of the efforts downtown and can become the core of vibrant downtown.

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## Community Meeting

### Community Comments

- Hard to buy souvenirs in town - Put it on the map!
- Need ladies clothes shop
- Need coffee shop
- Need ice cream shop
- Film set
- Gene Theater - organization/promotion
- Love the Telfair Hotel (there's a Brown print at the Hotel)
- Open Air Theater @ park (theater groups)
- Youth activities to market to the creative class
- High Tech attractions
- Inclusion rather than exclusion
- Conservative "rules"
- Empty lots
- Plan for growth
- Centralized small town network-cyclers
- Retirement
- "Folks used to say McRae will never be more than a retirement town, but we're doing a poor job of even being a place for retired people."
- "Nothing but McDonalds open on Sundays when lots of \$\$ is coming through town from weekend travelers."
- McRae known as town with "highest gas prices in the state, but nowhere to eat."
- Ocmulgee State Park (librarian comment: good number of card carrying members living out of state who return every year to RV camp in the park).
- Real deal small GA town-shopping, historic district, Saturday night
- Auctions
- Statue of liberty
- "I like that McRae like the 50s. It's clean, it's neat. My family's here."
- "I want to make positive impact, a lasting impact in the town I grew up in."

### The McRae-Helena Charrette Team

University of Georgia  
College of Environment & Design  
Center for Community Design & Preservation (CCDP)  
The Charrette Connection  
<http://www.scd.uga.edu/ccdp>



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# Waiting for Hope

By Will Hart  
MLA Student

Illustration by J. Lewis



Driving the back roads and state highways of Georgia can be an adventure in time travel. A Sunday drive can take you back to a time when many small towns were flourishing and provided a haven for travelers. Before interstates, a small town space provided refuge for weary travelers. Grand hotels and other buildings were constructed to provide services and resting places. Many of these buildings adapted and continued to flourish in the interstate era. Others, such as the **Telfair Hotel**, have struggled to find their place. The pattern quickly becomes evident: A community icon with incredible beauty and intricate architectural details for some unknown reason sits idle.

Boarded up windows, peeling paint and knee-high grass are all too common.

These buildings linger in a state of limbo between two

**“A community icon returns and a piece of a community's history lives on.”**

possible fates. With continued neglect, they give in and slowly begin the process of self-destruction. The other possibility is that a visionary leader begins the process of restoring the building to its former grandeur. A community icon returns and a piece of a community's history lives on. This requires effort, vision, and dedication, but it is fully within the realm of

possibilities. The Telfair Hotel can follow this path. It would not be the first hotel to make a miraculous recovery.

In Bainbridge, Georgia, the **Bon Air Hotel** sat unused and decaying for years. It was at a point where citizens could more easily envision a parking lot than an occupied building. In 1999, city leaders, working with the Georgia Trust, preservation groups, and the owner had the vision and insight to make restoration possible. With the renovation, the Bon Air Hotel has adapted to changing times. Hotel rooms now combine with retail, restaurant, and residential space. This turnaround is possible for the Telfair Hotel; it's just waiting on a little hope.

## Building Renovation Tips for the Telfair Hotel



Ensure building is weather and water-tight while sitting vacant. Inspect roof and windows for leaking water and seal.

Retain all historic windows. Repair as needed and replace as a last resort with matching designs and materials.

List the Telfair Hotel on the National Register of Historic Places, which will make federal grants and preservation tax incentives available.



Contact the University of Georgia's Business Outreach Services for information on marketing the historic hotel. A market study would provide advice for a rehabilitated use for the hotel.

Restore retail storefronts, including reconstructing portion that has been bricked over. Historic photographs and postcards give clues as to its original appearance.

## Historic Hotels in Georgia



### Bon Air Hotel

Bainbridge, Georgia  
Built 1902, Renovated 2000  
Use: 39,000 sq. ft.: 5 first floor retail spaces, 8 second and third floor apartments  
Cost of Rehabilitation: \$1.4 million  
Funding Sources:  
\$80,000 OneGeorgia Authority for reconstruction of balcony  
\$250,000 Downtown Development Revolving Loan Fund, Dept of Community Affairs  
\$1.2 million Financing through owner's home bank

### Windsor Hotel

Americus, Georgia  
Built 1892, Renovated: 1990-91  
Use: Hotel, 53 Rooms and ground floor retail, Restaurant, Banquet Facilities  
Cost of Rehabilitation: \$5.8 million  
Funding Sources:  
\$31,537 Historic Preservation Fund Grant, Historic Preservation Division  
\$75,000 preservation study, Middle Flint Regional Development Center  
\$400,000 Community Development Block Grant, GA Dept of Community Affairs  
\$107,000 City of Americus General Fund  
\$400,000 donated inmate labor  
\$2 million in private citizen investment

### Fitzpatrick Hotel

Washington, Georgia  
Built 1899, Renovated 2004  
17 hotel rooms, conference room, restaurant  
Cost of Rehabilitation: \$2.2 million  
Funding Sources:?

### Tarrer Inn

Colquitt, Georgia  
Built 1905, Renovated 1994  
12 hotel rooms, restaurant, meeting facilities  
Funding Sources:?

For more information on hotel restorations check out these articles on the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation website

- A Public, Private and Nonprofit Partnership Saves Historic Hotel [www.georgiatrust.org/whatwedo/bon-news.html](http://www.georgiatrust.org/whatwedo/bon-news.html)
- Bringing Equity to Smaller Historic Tax Credit Projects [www.nationaltrust.org/community\\_partners/sdf.html](http://www.nationaltrust.org/community_partners/sdf.html)

## National Register Key to Success

National Register Key to Long Term Revitalization Efforts

By S. McDonald and E. Cristoph  
MHP Students

The National Register of Historic Places is a listing of America's cultural resources and can be a key to successful revitalization efforts. Unfortunately, its benefits are not widely known outside preservation circles and there are numerous myths about what it does and what it requires. In a nutshell, the National Register of Historic Places is an official list of the Nation's cultural resources worthy of preservation. Properties eligible for listing on the National Register fit into one of five categories - district, site, building, structure, or object - and can be recognized as contributing historically or culturally to the nation, state, or local community.

There are several advantages to having a property or district listed on the National Register. First, owners of properties listed in the National Register may be eligible for a 20% investment tax credit for approved rehabilitation of income-producing historic structures such as commercial, industrial, or

a community a better sense of connection to their past history and to their present day neighbors and friends. McRae-Helena has great potential for both commercial and residential National Register nominations. The commercial areas of both cities' downtowns, while having been neglected in some cases, are intact enough that they can still draw in investors willing to restore and repair rather than demolish and rebuild. Having

**“Owners of properties listed in the National Register may be eligible for a 20% investment tax credit.”**

these buildings on the National Register will only increase that draw by presenting more funding opportunities



Old College, McRae, Georgia

rental residential buildings. Additionally, National Register listing also brings heightened recognition and awareness of the community's resources and a feeling of community pride and prestige. Finally, nationally registered historic districts are protected from federally funded projects that have the potential to harm the district. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) provides oversight for this to prevent, minimize, or mitigate harm.

National Register properties are distinguished by having been documented and evaluated according to a uni-

ties to these investors. Members of the community

**Anyone can prepare a nomination for the National Register, with the help of their State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO).**

should look to their neighborhoods as guidance in how to treat the downtown commercial buildings. The community has obviously taken a lot of pride in caring for and keeping up their homes and yards, and this is evident.



Potential National Register Historic District

form standard, and the contributions of this distinction are numerous. Aside from the benefits already discussed, the National Register is simply an honorary recognition of the importance of a specific property to the history of its community, region or nation. Being included in the National Register does not place restrictions on the property owner, provided that there is no federal involvement. But having properties on the National Register can also simply give

The level of care the people of McRae-Helena have put into keeping their neighborhoods tidy and clean is equivalent to the level put into historically designated areas, and very few homes have undergone changes or alterations that would prevent them from inclusion on the National Register.

Anyone can prepare a nomination for the National Register, with the help of their State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). Surveys are conducted through the SHPO,

as well as the Federal Historic Preservation Officers (FHPO) in order to evaluate properties within their districts for National Register eligibility. The SHPO or FHPO will then prepare nominations of any eligible properties, and submit them for approval. At the state level, approval must be obtained through a governor-appointed review board before it is passed on for review by the National Register staff. After determination of eligibility by the National Register staff, recommendations for inclusions are passed on to the Keeper of the National Register.

In order to encourage National Register listing in McRae-Helena the Crossroads Cities, Inc. group and other interested citizens should seek funding for a county-wide survey of historic buildings. This survey would help identify districts and buildings for National Historic Register and/or local historic designation, and to raise community awareness of

McRae-Helena's wealth of historic

### For Further Information...

The National Register of Historic Places Website - (general information) [www.cr.nps.gov/nr/index.htm](http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/index.htm)

My Property's Important to America's Heritage, What Does That Mean: Answers to Questions for Owners of Historic Properties - by Beth L. Savage and Marilyn Harper (general information) [www.cr.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/myproperty/](http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/myproperty/)

Georgia Historic Preservation Division - (information on programs, grants, tax incentives, laws, planning and local assistance, etc. specific to Georgia) <http://hpd.dnr.state.ga.us/>

Georgia Register of Historic Places - (information specific to Georgia) [http://hpd.dnr.state.ga.us/assets/documents/ga\\_reg\\_fs.pdf](http://hpd.dnr.state.ga.us/assets/documents/ga_reg_fs.pdf)

The Georgia Trust - (information specific to preservation opportunities in Georgia) [www.georgiatrust.org/](http://www.georgiatrust.org/)

Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives - (information for Federal tax incentives programs, eligibility, and regulation) [www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tax/brochure1.htm](http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tax/brochure1.htm)

Martha Marcille, tax incentives coordinator [martha\\_marcille@dnr.state.ga.us](mailto:martha_marcille@dnr.state.ga.us), phone 404-651-5566, fax 404-651-8739

Kenneth Gibbs, survey coordinator - [kenneth\\_gibbs@dnr.state.ga.us](mailto:kenneth_gibbs@dnr.state.ga.us), phone 404-651-6432 fax 404-651-1040

Heart of Georgia-Altamaha Regional Development Center for details: Robin Nail [rbnail@hogardc.org](mailto:rbnail@hogardc.org); (912)-367-3648

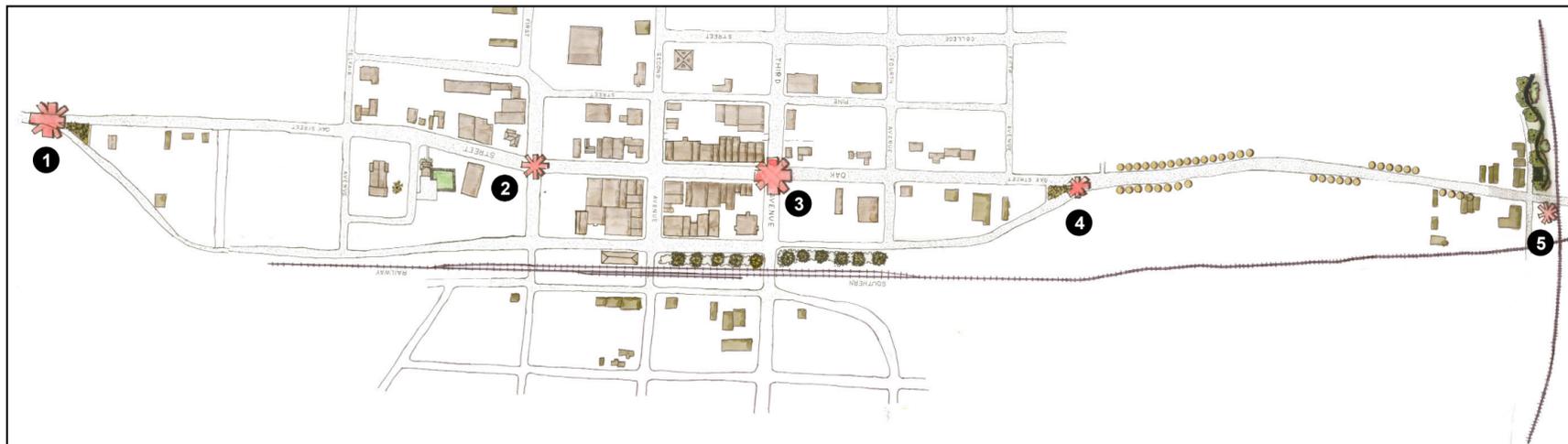
Gretchen Brock, National Register coordinator - [gretchen\\_brock@dnr.state.ga.us](mailto:gretchen_brock@dnr.state.ga.us), phone 404-651-6782, fax 404-651-8739

Holly Anderson, National Register historian [holly\\_anderson@dnr.state.ga.us](mailto:holly_anderson@dnr.state.ga.us), phone 404-651-6033, fax 404-651-8739



VISIT HISTORIC TARRER INN

## Location, Location, Location: When It Comes to Location Corners Count!



Map showing McRae and Helena's important corners. Corners 1, 4 and 5: points of decision for traffic - see Environmental Graphics article *A Lesson from Miss Liberty* on page 7; Corner 2 see article below *The Chas Mar Corner*; Corner 3 see articles below *Corner of Oak and Third Ave* and *Liberty Corner*; and Corner 5 see article below *Path to Nowhere Corner*.

By Jennifer Martin Lewis  
CLG Coordinator

Corners are the anchors of a street and are usually the first things that people see, forming visitors' first impressions of a place. They set an expectation of what one might see on the rest of the block. Economically speaking, they are a calling card for other businesses mid-block and have a stronger ability to attract customers traveling from different directions. Well-designed

buildings, intriguing shops and inviting spaces on corners can set the tone for a whole street and help breathe life back into struggling downtowns. On the other hand, when corner business buildings are dull, uninviting and dilapidated, they set the wrong tone even if what follows are truly enjoyable places. Blighted corners discourage visitors, shoppers and pedestrians from venturing further down a street. Empty buildings, vacant

land, and car lots send all the wrong signals. All of these places offer the impression that a town has nothing to offer. In the era of the automobile, small towns have just a split second to convince people to spend time there. This decision is made at a stoplight, when waiting for the car ahead to make its turn. The decision is made at the corners, and the corners must be exciting.

McRae and Helena are at a crossroads both literally and

figuratively. The convergence of US 441 and GA 341 mark a physical crossroad that brings high volumes of traffic into and through town. Each car carries possible visitors, shoppers or residents. Impressions count. Traffic along these streets can support the local economy or can merely add to congestion and traffic in town. It is hardly fair for a town to accept all the negative aspects of high volume roads without receiving any of the benefits.

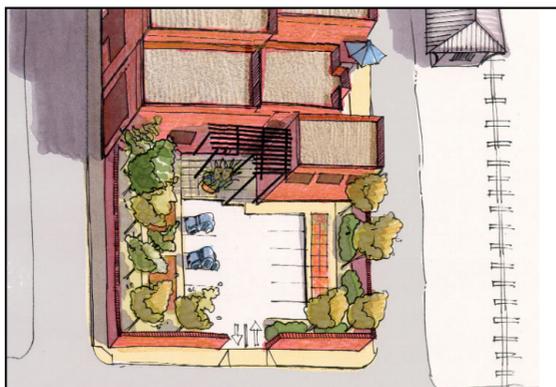
McRae and Helena must work to capture more of the income that is spent along these roads in order to revive the local economy. This effort must include the corners.

The growing interest in revitalization marks another crossroad for McRae and Helena. It is possible to set a new direction for the future of the crossroad cities. The charrette team experienced this enthusiasm firsthand and sees great opportunities. The

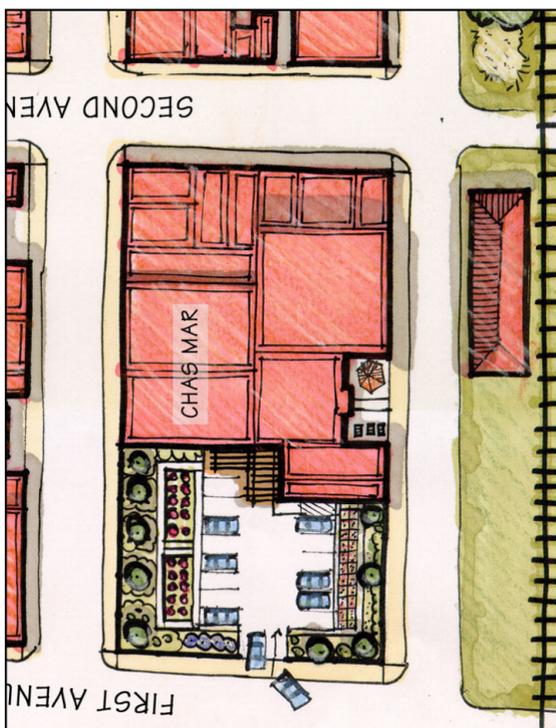
team saw potential improvements to the corners by the Chas Mar Home & Garden store, the proposed Flash Foods site, Liberty corner, and the corner by the depot. Improvements to these sites are needed and can help set a positive course for future developments.

*Recommendations for these sites summarized throughout this special edition of the Telfair Enterprise.*

### THE CHAS MAR CORNER



The Chas Mar Home & Garden store is one of the most successful and enduring businesses in Downtown McRae. The steady flow of customers and the physical expansion of the store into several contiguous buildings downtown are evidence of success. Meanwhile, the vacant lot on the corner of First and Oak Avenues, next to Chas Mar currently contributes very little to downtown, but it does have potential. The charrette team saw this site as a wonderful opportunity for the Home & Garden showplace to incorporate an outdoor nursery. A seasonal selection of trees, perennials, annuals, arbors and planters would tap into the popular home & garden improvement market (as evidenced by the beautiful homes and yards in McRae) and would immensely improve the appearance of the vacant, neglected lot. Parking could also be incorporated without detracting from the property by centering parking in the block. This would also provide a space for customers to load up their cars and trucks with plants and supplies. A medium-height brick wall would allow views of the nursery display while protecting the property.



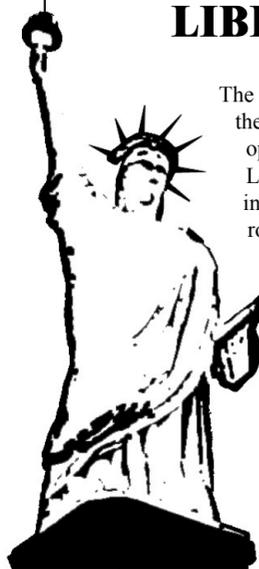
### CORNER OF OAK AND THIRD AVE

The corner on the east side of Oak St. and Third Ave provides an opportunity for a well-designed gasoline and convenience store to contribute to the revitalization efforts. In order to influence the design decision there must be an effort to target the decision-makers of the proposed new store at the corporate level to negotiate a "one of a kind" new look: propose the idea of a Country Store, complete with porches, rocking chairs, local charm, and old-fashioned windows, doors and roof. The co-location of other businesses would further enhance this site. For example, a local bakery/coffee shop or a Dunkin Donuts would provide a reason for a passersby to stop. A key characteristic of this new building is to include attractive landscape features such as locating gas pumps and parking to the rear of the building and pulling the placement of the building itself out to the sidewalk (zero lot line). This would give the new store a chance to become a leader in making their retail stores fit into local historic districts and become an asset rather than a visually detracting, generic highway building.



This prominent corner is most travelers' first impression of McRae, located directly past the railroad tracks and across from the famous Miss Liberty. It is essential that this corner be attractive, noteworthy, and enticing for visitors to make the decision to stop and see what the rest of the town has to offer. Development pressures may lead to the construction of a gas station and convenience store on this corner. Make it a one of a kind opportunity! Don't let the first impression of McRae be a large parking lot of asphalt and an overly bright gas pump canopy. As an alternative to conventional gas station designs is a proposal for two separate buildings, anchoring each corner, with a gas canopy in the back. The property can be easily accessed from three sides by car and at the sidewalk. Consider having the current owners of the Mexican restaurant as the convenience store's anchor food service, instead of displacing local businesses the site can incorporate then and share in their success. This provides an opportunity for a local owner to increase their business by tying their establishment in with the gas service, and vice versa. The buildings should be brick, set at the sidewalk (zero lot line) with a traditional arrangement of windows, doors and signage to compliment historic downtown McRae.

### LIBERTY CORNER



The intersection of US 441 and GA 341 poses one of the greatest challenges and one of the most exciting opportunities in McRae. The introduction of Liberty Park in the 1980s was a good idea that has in many ways placed McRae on the map of unique roadside attractions. It was, after all, this quirky curiosity that won McRae space in William Schemmell's 2001 Georgia, *Off the Beaten Path: A Guide to Unique Places*.

This attribute should be enhanced and expanded. Marketing of the uniqueness of McRae's Statue of Liberty should continue to be an attention grabber for visitors. The buildings, parking lots and signage surrounding the too-small park need improvement immediately. Currently, this area appears tired and provides the wrong impression. This corner needs improvement.

### PATH TO NOWHERE CORNER

The valiant effort to create a walking path at the Helena depot site is a good one. However, the path lacks connection to other nice places to walk. One wonders why a pedestrian would walk back and forth on the short ser-

pentine path rather than taking a stroll through downtown or in the beautiful neighborhoods. The path should connect to a broader system of identified and safe walking trails in town, especially trails that are connect-

ed to architectural and historical tours. This open space needs to be attractive to people and must include benches, beautiful plantings and shade trees. This place can be come a beautiful local landscape.

# Extreme Makeover

## Extreme Makeover: Recommendations for Downtown Buildings



By P. Trudeau and J. M. Lewis  
MHP student and CLG Coordinator

With the flood of reality television shows these days it is hard not to have seen a makeover show of some sorts. They are everywhere and range from plastic surgery to home makeovers that "redesign" small shacks into massive homes. Within the course of thirty minutes or an hour you can see transformation right before your eyes. A process that typically takes months is reduced to a few minutes. What makes these shows popular is that the transformation is instantaneous and rewarding. Unfortunately, the reality is that change takes time, ener-

gy, and vision. The good news for McRae-Helena is that the makeover it needs is NOT EXTREME.

Underneath tired facades and overgrown signs there is still a beautiful downtown. Many simple things such as paint schemes and signage can immediately reinvigorate downtown. Other renovations such as restoring historic window configurations and removing false facades will be more intensive, but will also be more rewarding.

There are more lessons to be learned from the reality shows - the sense of accomplishment people feel after the transformation, and the inspiration it provides to others. As one or two property

owners step up and rehabilitate their buildings downtown, the result will be praised and the desire for that praise will be contagious.

There are other benefits to renovating an old building well besides admiration and appreciation from your neighbors and customers - you can get money back! There are monetary incentives in the form of tax credits and freezes available to owners who rehabilitate historic buildings (generally at least 50 years old) according to national preservation standards. These owners have an opportunity to receive a credit towards their federal income taxes worth 20% of

their rehabilitation construction expenses. Owners can also reap a smaller percentage back on their state taxes and freeze the amount of property tax they pay for eight-and-a-half years. It is difficult to know where to start.

On TV property owners turn to professional designers because an outsider can often see the things that property owners can't. The designers on the McRae-Helena charrette team served the purpose. They assessed the existing conditions of downtown buildings and saw a vision for their future. This vision is depicted in the drawings and recommendations that follow.



For more information on historic tax incentives, contact the Tax Incentives Coordinator at the Historic Preservation Division at 404-656-2840 or visit [www.gashpo.org](http://www.gashpo.org)

## A HOME for the Boys and Girls Club



This building has virtually every window boarded up or blocked in. All of these openings should be returned to suitable window or door treatments (including the clerestory windows). The roof should be inspected and repaired as needed. A structural assessment should be performed for the rafter system. The concrete block masonry walls should be cleaned. If cleaning and/or stripping is to be performed, use a gentle water-based or chemical treatment, never sandblasting. Vegetation against the building should be removed or separated by two feet from the building.

## A Great Centerpiece for Community Events



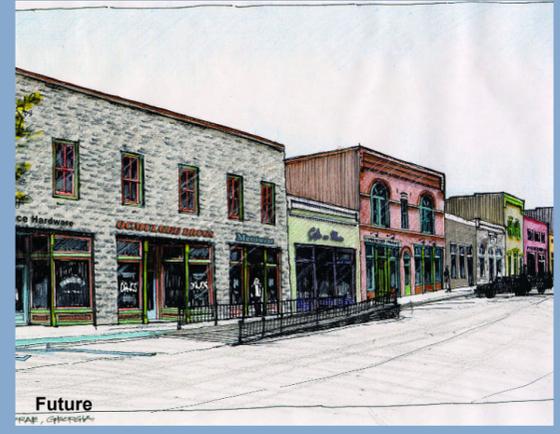
With its Miami-style Art Deco vibrancy, the Gene stands out as one of the most unique buildings in downtown McRae. Not many recommendations are needed - its exterior could use a fresh coat of paint and minor repairs, but overall we were very impressed with its condition. Perhaps the greatest accomplishment would be to run the city's power lines underground in order to remove the large utility pole that blocks the front facade. The Gene has the potential to be a great centerpiece for community events and even a popular tourist attraction.

## Row of Historic Buildings Gets a Face Lift with Minor Repairs



The facades of this beautiful row of historic buildings in Helena is in need of relatively little repair. The storefronts of the buildings are original and should be preserved and maintained. If cleaning and/or stripping is to be performed, use a gentle water-based or chemical treatment, never sandblasting. The design team recommends the reintroduction of diagonal parking and street trees in Helena's downtown district.

# Back to the Future, McRae Reinvents its Downtown



The building housing Ocmulgee Drugs and Wilcox Ace Hardware has undergone significant changes over the years that have obscured the original façade and present the building in a most unflattering light. Historic photographs show the building as a two-story commercial structure with a Graniteoid façade (historic concrete block formed to look like rusticated stone) with six 2-over-2 upper story windows and a three bay storefront on the ground floor. Many historic storefronts have undergone similar façade changes as property owners attempt to modernize the front of their store with the latest building trends. Often these remodellings were quick fix solutions that were applied right over the existing façade. Therefore, there is a good chance that the original two-story façade, including the original upper story windows, are still in tact behind the large asphalt awning. Removing this structure and the first story wood paneling on the storefront area would do much to improve the perception of this business and the street as a whole. But taking down these elements has a greater purpose - often these types of awning are structurally too heavy for the historic façade, and can cause stress fractures in the wall. Also, if not maintained, water can get trapped behind the awning and paneling, eroding the wall as it hides the damage. As the awning and paneling are showing signs of rot, there is a strong possibility that this is already occurring and should be addressed immediately. After removal of the later additions, the building façade should be gently cleaned and repainted if needed, the windows repaired or replaced to match the historic ones, and the storefronts reconstructed as shown.

## Brick Mansory Buildings Revisited



The buildings on this three-storefront block all have similar issues and can be addressed as a group. Storefronts that are original or appropriate to the structure should be inspected and repaired if necessary. Later storefront replacements (aluminum) should be removed and replaced with storefronts resembling the original character. Transom windows above storefronts and awnings should be inspected, repaired, and cleaned (paint stripped from panes). Inappropriate awnings should be removed. Brick masonry should be inspected and repaired or repointed as needed. If cleaning and/or stripping is to be performed, use a gentle water-based or chemical treatment, never sandblasting.

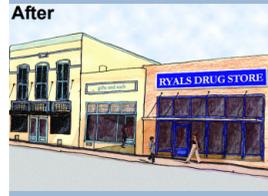
### Design Brings Businesses Back to McRae and Helena



Some of the issues for this block of four brick commercial buildings can be addressed collectively. The brick and mortar of each structure needs to be inspected and repaired or repointed as needed. All vegetation growing on or within two feet of the buildings should be removed. Boarded up or bricked in window or door openings should be returned to historical use. The roof and gutter systems of each building should also be inspected and repaired. The vegetation growing on the roof and visible mortar damage and the top of each façade are symptoms of inadequate rainwater management.



The Ryals Drug Store building and the two to the left of it each have separate preservation issues. Unless historic photographs of the Ryals Drug Store building exist showing the original storefront treatment, the aluminum replacement storefront should be left "as is". The adjacent one store building storefront and it should be retained. It should be inspected and maintained as needed. The two story corner building's windows shouldn't be hard to track down. Boarded or bricked up windows should be restored with historically appropriate ones. The central window on the second story should likewise be replaced with a historically appropriate window. The single awning should be removed and only replaced if signs of prior awnings are found. If cleaning and/or stripping is to be performed, use a gentle water-based or chemical treatment, never sandblasting.



## Gas Station

Compliments Historic Downtown McRae

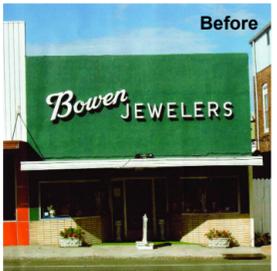


A gas station is proposed for the southern half of the block at Third and Oak Avenues. Currently, a restaurant and two two-story vacant buildings are on the site, and all are proposed for demolition. This prominent corner is most travelers' first impression of McRae, being located right past the RR tracks and across from the famous Miss Liberty. It is essential that this corner be attractive, noteworthy, and an enticement for visitors to make the decision to stop and see what the rest of the town has to offer. It is essential that the first impression of McRae not be a large parking lot of asphalt and an overly bright gas pump canopy.

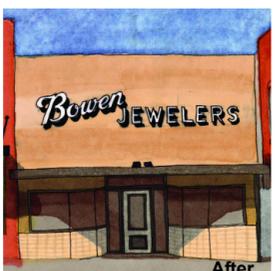
As an alternative to conventional gas station designs, this proposal is for two separate buildings, anchoring each corner, with a gas canopy in the back. The property can be easily accessed from three sides by car and at the sidewalk. Consider having the convenience store's anchor food service be the current owners of the Mexican restaurant, which will be displaced if their current location is demolished. This provides an opportunity for a local owner to increase their business by tying their establishment in with the gas service, and vice versa. The buildings should be brick, set at the sidewalk (zero lot line) with a traditional arrangement of windows, doors and signage to compliment historic downtown McRae.



With these two buildings, we have a classic case of "modernization" that likely occurred in the 1950s or 60s when more and more people were beginning to shop outside of historic central business districts. The "false front" we see covering a large portion of the building's front façade became a typical trend during these years, giving towns a more "modern" feel to compete with strip malls.  
Remove "false front" material covering main façade - walls underneath will hopefully be in good shape  
Restore transoms above storefront windows, doorways, and above awnings  
Remove imitation brick material and re-paint exterior walls



Bowen's is a great example of a building that has retained its historic character and feel. Removing the planters on the sidewalk would allow a full view of the main façade. Otherwise, the paint colors, storefront windows and signage all help to create a unique building style for downtown McRae

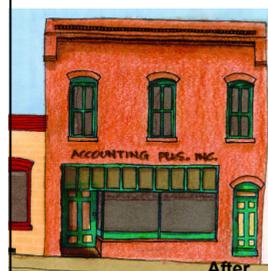


The left side of this double storefront has retained more integrity than the right side and should be used as an example for restoring the right half. The transom windows above the left storefront should be inspected, repaired, and cleaned (paint stripped from panes) as needed. The right half of this double storefront façade should be restored to approximate the historic character of the left side. The aluminum and glass storefront should be replaced with appropriate wooden doors, display windows, transom lights, and flat awning to mirror those on the adjacent storefront. The large corrugated aluminum panel should be removed from the right storefront. The downspout should be repaired to prevent future deterioration of the adjacent masonry. The entire structure should be checked for masonry failure and repaired or repointed as needed, particularly the central section adjacent to the downspout. Although one side of the structure is painted brick and the other is bare brick, a consistent treatment should be used for the entire façade to restore the historic character. If cleaning and stripping is to be performed, use a gentle water-based or chemical treatment, never sandblasting.



A great building with both commercial and residential capabilities - why not use it to its greatest potential? The upper façade boasts the elegant brickwork found on the cornices of many buildings in downtown McRae. Other parts could use a little TLC.

- Remove blue paint from lower façade to match brick on upper façade (or possibly paint upper façade to match lower)
- Fix boarded-up second floor window - a matching frame with 2 over 2 windows shouldn't be hard to track down
- Restore small, square transom window - Restore above store entrance and store - Return small door in boarded-up doorway, preferably one that matches door to lower floor. This door provides access to the 2nd floor!
- Replace missing bricks above square transom windows before considering new signage
- Re-paint 2nd floor windows frames, and all molding and trim around 1st floor windows



This brick on this commercial building needs to be inspected and repaired or repointed as needed. Boarded up windows in the second story should be returned to windows to maintain the rhythm of space to voids. The storefront is original to the building and therefore should be preserved and maintained. If cleaning and/or stripping is to be performed, use a gentle water-based or chemical treatment, never sandblasting.



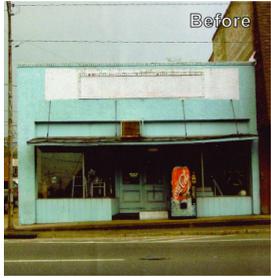
This abandoned storefront will require more new construction than rehabilitation of the existing structure. The brick wall of the front façade should be preserved and incorporated into the new building. The bricks and mortar of the wall should be examined for signs of deterioration and repaired or repointed, if necessary. The new storefront should have a scale and design common to other downtown buildings of the same size. A central entrance flanked by two display windows is a typical storefront design. A long transom window above the windows and door can also be found on existing examples. The painted façade should be left "as-is" unless repair work is necessary for the underlying masonry. If cleaning and stripping is to be performed, use a gentle water-based or chemical treatment, never sandblasting.



# New awnings, signs and a fresh coat of paint go a long way!

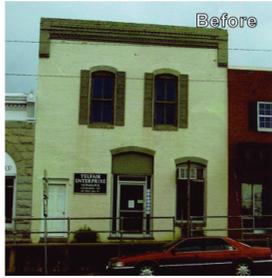
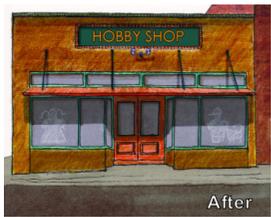


These small buildings along the main street in Helena offer a wonderful opportunity for a new business looking for space. Minor changes are all that is needed to revitalize the existing buildings, and a vacant spot in the block provides an opportunity to introduce a new building into the streetscape. New awnings, signs and a fresh coat of paint go a long way! Exterior changes also help to recruit new businesses for vacant buildings. The two properties at the left of the drawing have a stucco exterior finish that is in good shape and should be repainted if the owner desires a color change. The illustrations show a more appropriate awning design for the shape of the windows. Existing window trim should be painted a complimentary color. The building on the far right has a brick exterior and a newer storefront. The interior has had some changes and the roof should be checked to make sure it is watertight. The exterior should not be painted, but the storefront could be reframed in a more traditional manner with double wooden doors, as shown. The vacant lot provides an opportunity for an infill building that can add to the streetscape with an attractive facade and a new business for the community. It should match its neighbors in design: its height, materials, setback, and storefront should conform to the rest of the street. As there are brick and stucco buildings on the street, the new building could be either. The storefront is comprised of a central opening with double wooden doors and is flanked by a pair of display windows with smaller transom windows above them. If shade is desired, install shed-style awnings over each opening: one for the doorway and one each for each window.



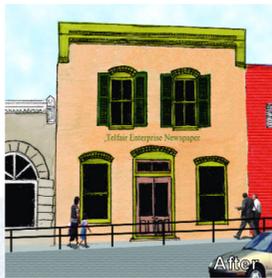
This is another building in downtown McRae that has great potential for commercial use with some moderate restoration. Its corner location is ideal, and many of its historic features (such as doors, storefront windows, awning, and bulkhead) still remain in fairly good shape.

- Remove Coca-Cola machine to allow full view of primary facade
- Remove air conditioning unit above entrance doors
- Return transom windows above awning
- Re-paint to cover up white portion on upper facade, and use rectangular brick pattern as outline for new signage



This building already uses a good blend of colors and is structurally sound. However, it lacks a few of its historic elements because of changes that have been made to its primary facade.

- Return first story window that has been replaced by a modern doorway
- Remove wood above front door and replace with original glass transom
- Bring back historic double-doors for front entrance



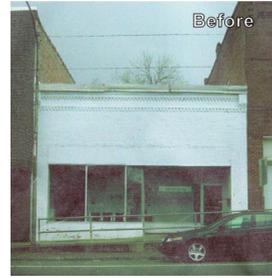
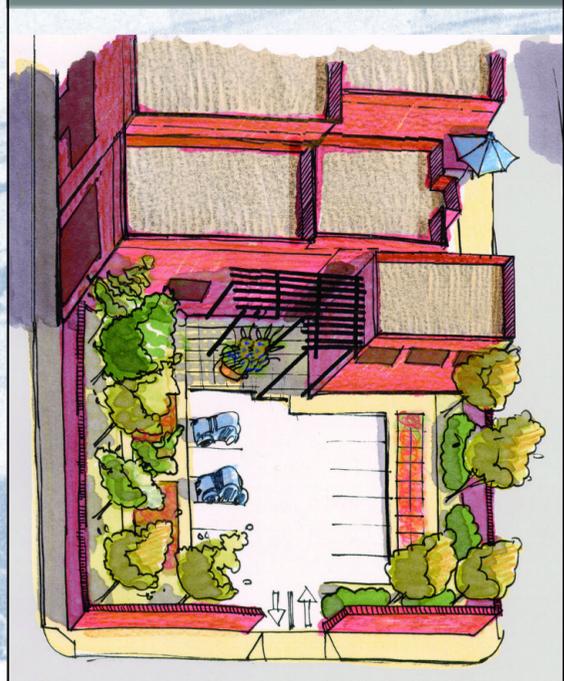
## Chas Mar - A Success Story in McRae

Chas Mar Home & Garden is one of the most successful businesses in Downtown McRae, as evidenced by the steady flow of customers and their expansion into several contiguous buildings downtown. The vacant lot on the corner of First and Oak Avenues, next to Chas Mar, provides a wonderful opportunity for the Home & Garden shop to incorporate an outdoor nursery. A seasonal selection of trees, perennials, annuals, arbors and planters would tap into the popular home & garden improvement mar-

ket (as evidenced by the beautifully well-kept homes and yards in McRae) and would immensely improve the appearance of the vacant, neglected lot. Parking could also be incorporated without detracting from the property by centering parking in the block, using a pervious paving surface such as gravel to prevent runoff. And accommodate customers loading up their cars and trucks with plants and supplies. A medium-height brick wall can allow views of the nursery display while protecting the property.

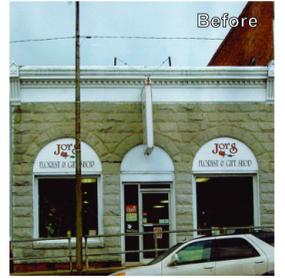


The storefront of the Chas Mar building is in pretty good condition. The brick structure should be inspected, and repaired or repointed if necessary. If cleaning and/or stripping is to be performed, use a gentle water-based or chemical treatment, never sandblasting.



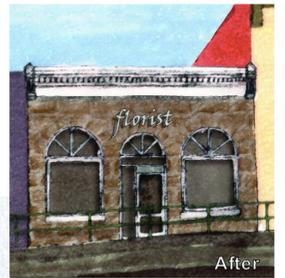
Another small building that has been altered drastically. With a little imagination it could easily be restored to its original state.

- Remove metal sheets along roofline to reveal all architectural details of facade
- Establish a central recessed entry to emphasize storefront windows and doorway
- Return transom windows and storefront cornice
- Use minimal signage on storefront windows and door



Another example of a building that has retained its historic character and could use just a few slight alterations.

- Reinstate arched fanlight transom windows over primary storefront windows and doorway
- Return small transom window above front door
- Limit signage to current sign or storefront windows



“There are monetary incentives in the form of tax credits and freezes available to owners who rehabilitate historic buildings according to national preservation standards.”

“Good news for McRae-Helena: the makeover you need is not extreme. Underneath most tired facades and overgrown signs there is still a beautiful downtown.”



The most glaring problem with this building is lack of maintenance and appropriate signage. It has great potential to serve as a successful commercial establishment with its large storefront windows and display areas.

- Remove small window, air conditioner, and wood paneling that covers historic storefront window
- Remove tiling along corners to re-introduce brick facade
- Treat rusting on awning and re-paint
- Use upper facade for new signage in area that was previously used, as well as on storefront windows



This large, 2-story corner building has the potential to serve as a productive commercial property for downtown McRae, given its location and size. Its upstairs space also allows the opportunity for apartments, studio space, or other options, which will help maximize its property value. Architecturally, another “face-lift” is needed.

- Un-board all first and second floor windows and doors
- Accent recessed storefront entrance with awnings and transoms
- Consider strategies for removing white paint from front and side facades to restore original brickwork and belt course - will also help re-connect all parts of the building that seem detached because of color, materials, etc.
- Remove second-floor metal awning
- Consider using large opening on side facade as entrance to rear parking lot for employees or customers
- Utilize storefront windows for displays and interior views by removing marquee signs
- Most of the building's exterior needs cleaning because of high traffic volume



This building has a unique variety of architectural styles and interesting proportions. Notice how the upper story windows are higher at one end of the building. This gives the sense of two separate buildings connected as one, which is perfect for having two businesses.

The building is in good shape structurally, but could use a “face lift” to enhance its architectural features:

- Remove corner signage to shift focus on the building's historic facades
- Limit new signage to storefront windows or small portions of front facade
- Use a darker paint color to highlight storefront windows and window arches



# Historic Preservation The Ultimate Recycling



*A town's unique identity is overwhelmingly influenced by its buildings and its architecture. For this reason the demolition of historic structures must STOP NOW! Once these treasured structures disappear the detailing and character cannot be recaptured.*

A town's historic buildings play a large part of what makes each community unique. Hotels like the Telfair are a rare species, and historic hotels are in huge demand among travelers who prefer unique, well-appointed lodging, such as bed and breakfasts. [See accompanying article *Waiting for Hope* on p.3] Several blocks of side-by-side brick buildings of varying heights, multiple windows and large inviting storefronts are the image of a downtown, a small town, the center of a community. There is a reason why strip malls across the country are updating the fronts of their stores to look like a string of 1 and 2 story buildings - it is an attempt to look like a "downtown". Downtowns like McRae are sought out for film shoots for their authenticity. What others are spending money to create from scratch, McRae and Helena already have. Look to the past to discover your future.

## HOW TO PROTECT THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Local Ordinances Best Way to Protect Historic Buildings

*Ashburn, Cordele, Douglas, Dublin, Fitzgerald, Hawkinsville, Vidalia ... what do these and 105 other Georgia communities have in common? In each one, a majority of its residents have decided they want to keep the look and feel of the place they call "home" by adopting a local preservation ordinance, then creating a local preservation commission to administer it. Local legislation is one of the best ways to protect the historic character of buildings, streetscapes, neighborhoods, and special landmarks from inappropriate alterations, new construction, and other poorly conceived work, as well as outright demolition.*

**Local historic districts protect the investments of owners and residents.** Buyers know that the aspects that make a particular area attractive will be protected over a period of time. Real estate agents in many cities use historic district status as a marketing tool to sell properties. **Local districts encourage better design.** It has been shown through comparative studies that there is a greater sense of relatedness, more innovative use of materials, and greater public appeal within historic districts than in areas without historic designations.

**Local historic districts help the environment.** Historic district revitalization can, and should, be part of a comprehensive environmental policy. **The educational benefits of creating local districts are the same as those derived from any historic preservation effort.** Districts help explain the development of a place,

and stable historic districts. They are a record of ourselves and our communities.

**A local district can result in a positive economic impact from tourism.** A historic district that is aesthetically cohesive and well promoted can be a community's most important attraction. The retention of historic areas as a way to attract tourist dollars makes good economic sense. Labor Commissioner Michael Thurmond recently noted that Savannah has been able to weather the nation's latest economic recession better than most Georgia cities, including Atlanta, due to its historic tourism industry.

**The protection of local historic districts can enhance business recruitment potential.** Companies continually re-locate to communities that offer their workers a higher quality of life, which is greatly enhanced by successful local preservation programs

and stable historic districts. **Local districts provide social and psychological benefits.** A sense of empowerment and confidence develops when community decisions are made through a structured participatory process rather than behind closed doors or without public comment.

### How does a local ordinance work?

01. Citizens Draft a Protective Ordinance
02. City Adopts the Ordinance
03. City Appoints Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) Members
04. HPC Adopts Rules of Procedure
05. HPC Surveys Historic Resources and Studies Potential Designations
06. Determine Boundaries for Designated Properties or Districts
07. Draft Designation Report
08. Hold Public Hearings and Designate Property/District.
09. Draft Design Guidelines
10. Residents Apply for Certificates of Appropriateness before making exterior alterations

## What it Means to Adopt a Historic Preservation Ordinance

### A PRESERVATION ORDINANCE DOES NOT:

- Require approval of paint color selection or permission to repaint
- Require that historic properties be open for tours
- Restrict the sale of the property
- Require improvements, changes, or restoration of the property
- Require approval of interior changes or alterations
- Prevent new construction within historic areas
- Require approval for ordinary repair or maintenance

### A PRESERVATION ORDINANCE DOES:

- Provide a municipal policy for the protection of historic properties
- Establish an objective and democratic process for designating historic properties
- Protect the integrity of designated historic properties within a design review requirement

Authorize design guidelines for new development within historic districts to ensure that it is not destructive to the area's historic character

Stabilize declining neighborhoods and protect and enhance property values

# A Lesson from Miss Liberty

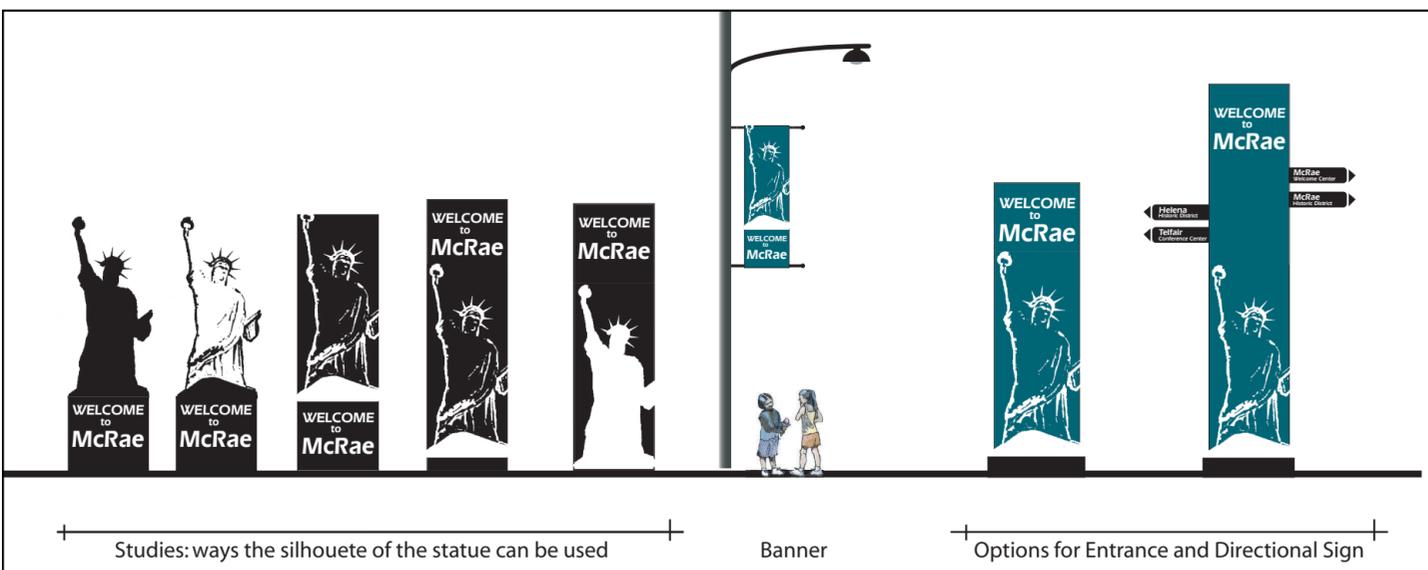
By Pratt Cassity  
Charrette Coordinator

The Statue of Liberty is one of the most prominent signature features of McRae. It is a cultural icon borrowed from the Big Apple, but its appearance in small town Georgia makes it a memorable sight. For this it should be promoted on gateway signs, which signal to visitors that they have arrived in town. Things like streets signs might be changed to black and white and include the silhouette of Miss Liberty.

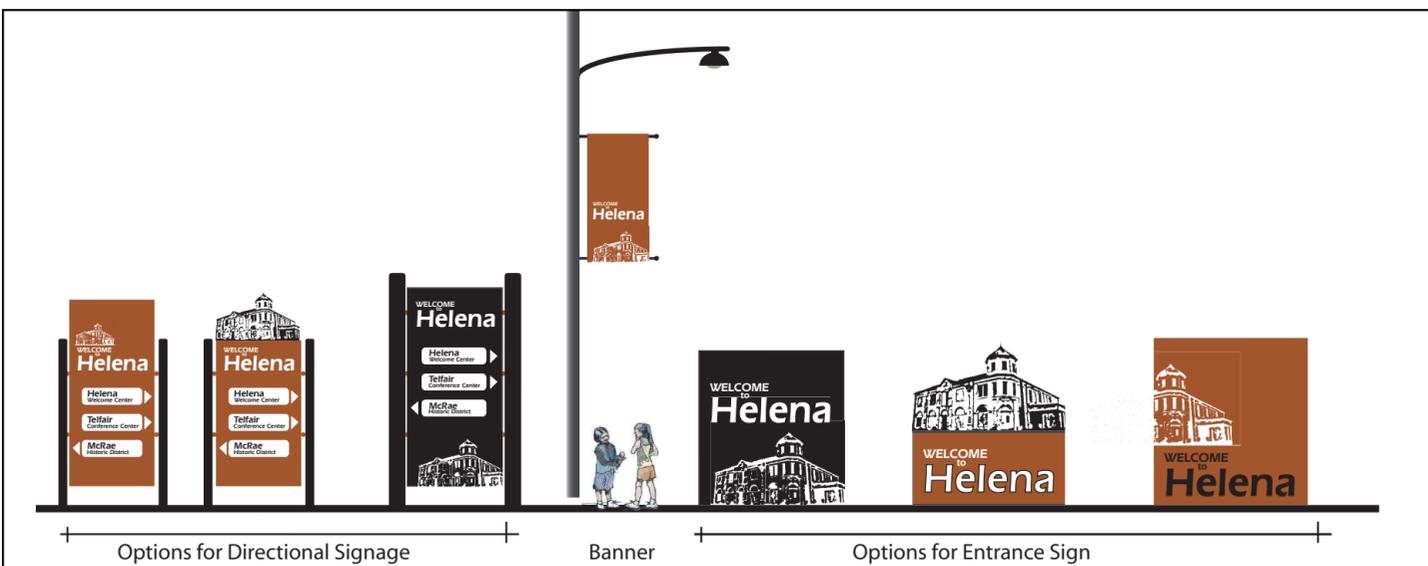
In addition to city signs with the statue's image there

are other opportunities to enhance local identity. Unique signs and local landmarks and are great ways of encouraging people to stop and explore. Likewise, landscape improvements can define local identity. Impressions of a city's cleanliness are made quickly and leave lasting impressions. In McRae, the beauty and pride demonstrated in the residential areas have not spread to downtown areas. Local efforts could include unique horticultural "branding" as a way of enhancing identity. Many cities have selected a

peculiarly local or showy plant to use throughout their landscape. This plant becomes the basis for themed promotions (Athens Golden Ginko Festival, Colbert's Canna Lillies), local history and festivals (Marshallville's Crape Myrtles and Camellias), slogans and logos (Thomasville's Roses), or plants related to the name of the town (Locust Grove, TyTy, Dewey Rose). McRae and Helena might consider creating a series of gardens that contain plants connected to a particular city legend, event or natural feature.



The signage system for McRae was inspired in the Statue of Liberty. Above are examples to show how a series of graphics can be implemented to create an identity for McRae and at the same time promote a town icon.



The signage system for Helena was inspired in the Telfair Hotel architecture. Above are examples to show how a series of graphics can be implemented to create an identity for Helena and at the same time promote a town landmark.

# TIPS for Historic Building Rehabilitation

Remove shingled awnings, paneling and false facades (often cheap materials and insensitively applied) from the front of buildings. Old photographs show what modern updates have removed or obscured.

Details that have deteriorated from years of neglect should be repaired, not removed. If portions can't be repaired, they should be replaced to match the original with quality materials.

Don't paint a brick wall that has never been painted. It obscures the true appearance and adds unnecessary maintenance.

Don't sandblast a brick wall, even to remove paint. If it would require sandblasting to remove it, then the paint is adhering as it should. Simply repaint the building if the owner wishes to change the color. The same rule goes for high pressure water washing. If the building is dirty, clean it as you would your car - gently so as not to damage the finish.

Design guidelines to help manage all new construction and ensures that the buildings that contribute to the identity of McRae and Helena are not compromised. Design guidelines can mean the difference between buildings that will seamlessly blend with town and those that detract.

# Zoning & Parking

## Zoning: Not a Four Letter Word

By Julia Reed and Will Hart  
MLA Students



Any grade school student could easily tell you that zoning is not a four letter word; it is a six -letter word, but speak of zoning in a room full of people and you are likely to get a range of reactions. Most vocally, of course, will be those people who have battled zoning regulations in an effort change what is acceptable. These spirited and often public debates are what most people think of when they think of zoning. Rather than being seen as negative aspect of zoning these debates need to be seen as democracy in action. Zoning defines a community vision for its future development. Variance requests allow flexibility in zoning regulations, but require public input. The inclusion of public input is there to ensure that creativity is permitted, but that varia-

tions to the codes are consistent with the goals and visions of the community. This is the type zoning that most people think of, but there is also a

“Zoning defines a community vision for its future development.”

quieter side to zoning that many people miss.

The silent side of zoning is often unseen, unspoken, and for the most part goes without praise. The reason for this is that when zoning is at work, it works silently. When a building goes up and blends flawlessly with the community then people simply say, "Oh

what a beautiful building." What you don't hear them say is, "Wow! Look at our zoning regulations at work."

Unfortunately, the need for good zoning regulations is often realized after an irreversible tragedy. When a community icon is destroyed and replaced with a generic building then people begin to think about zoning. When a pink elephant is built next to a town's diamond in the rough then communities become alarmed. Many times though, changes are subtle and gradual. A remodel here and a tweak there slowly alter look and feel of town. Eventually, your town looks like every other town. Long-time residents will recall a different town than the one that sits in its place. With the erosion of a community's identity visitors and residents see few reasons to stop or stay. However, good zoning regulations help ensure that as a community evolves and changes it does so under the guiding vision of the community members. Good zoning regulations don't just happen by themselves though. They take time, energy, and research to effectively protect the future of a community. The charrette team believes that there are opportunities where zoning regulations can be amended or added that will help guide future development in McRae-Helena.

## Here are some ways that zoning can help McRae-Helena:

### Off-street automobile parking provisions

Many communities have excessive off-street parking requirements that actually encourage sprawl development. McRae and Helena are no exception. Like most communities, McRae and Helena's off-street parking requirements are likely based on recommendations from the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) Trip Generation Manual. The recommendations from this manual are derived from a suburban model of trip generation, which over-projects the amount of parking needed for areas in a commercial setting where people may arrive at their location on foot, by bicycle, or may simply park one place and do a variety of errands by foot. McRae's code should allow for and encourage joint parking facilities as Helena's code already does.

### Gasoline Service Station Set Back Requirement

The smart-growth gas station prototype pictured in this report is illegal under current zoning regulations for McRae. We recommend that McRae's zoning set back requirement for Gasoline Service Station should be waived if a proposed gas station demonstrates best management practices for safety of building location and fueling facility.

(General Commercial District 6, McRae zoning code, section 604: C1)

### Allow residential dwellings in the General Commercial and Neighborhood Commercial Districts

One of the most important ingredients for a vibrant downtown is a mix of uses: diversity both in the type of business and hours of use. This means having some businesses with weekend and evening hours, like restaurants, as well as adding opportunities for living downtown. Upper-stories provide an excellent opportunity for apartments for singles, small families and seniors. The upper floors of historic downtown buildings often provide wonderful amenities: large windows, hardwood floors, plaster walls and beautiful fixtures.

(McRae Zoning Code section 604: C1 and 605: C2 prohibits residential uses in the downtown)

## Why Are Main Streets Important?

From the National Trust for Historic Preservation  
www.mainstreet.org

Main Street advocates are commonly asked by city governments and businesses, "Why should we invest in downtown?" In response, here are a few reasons why your downtown or neighborhood commercial district is an important and worthwhile investment in the economic health and quality of life in your community.

- Main Street is a symbol of community economic health, local quality of life, pride, and community history. These are all factors in industrial, commercial and professional recruitment.
- A vital Main Street retains and creates jobs, which also means a stronger tax base. Long-term revitalization establishes capable businesses that use public services and provide tax revenues for the community.
- Main Street is also a good incubator for new small businesses -- the building blocks of a healthy economy. Strip centers and malls are often too expensive for new entrepreneurs.
- A vital Main Street area reduces sprawl by concentrating retail in one area and uses community resources wisely, such as infrastructure, tax dollars and land.
- A healthy Main Street core protects property values in surrounding residential neighborhoods.

The traditional commercial district is an ideal location for independent businesses, which in turn:

- **Keep** profits in town. Chain businesses send profits out of town.
- **Supports** local families with family-owned businesses
- **Supports** local community projects, such as ball teams and schools
- **Provide** an extremely stable economic foundation, as opposed to a few large businesses and chains with no ties to stay in the community
- A revitalized Main Street increases the community's options for goods and services: whether for basic staples, like clothing, food and professional services or less traditional functions such as housing and entertainment.
- Main Street provides an important civic forum, where members of the community can congregate. Parades, special events and celebrations held there reinforce intangible sense of community. Private developments like malls can and do restrict free speech and access.
- Many Main Street districts become tourist attractions by virtue of the character of buildings, location, selection of unique businesses, and events held there.

## What Happened to America's Main Streets?

From the National Trust for Historic Preservation  
www.mainstreet.org

Before World War II, Main Street was the community's primary commercial hub. Downtown buildings usually had several tenants -- typically a ground-floor retailer and, frequently, several upper-floor offices or apartments; together, these tenants provided enough rent for property owners to keep their buildings in good condition. The presence of the post office, library, banks and local government offices added to the steady flow of people downtown. Not only was Main Street the center of the community's commercial life, it was also an important part of its social life; people dows-

shop. In the past 40 years, America's downtowns have changed drastically. The creation of the interstate highway system and subsequent growth of suburban communities transformed the ways in which Americans live, work and spend leisure time. With improved transportation routes, people found it easier to travel longer distances to work or shop. Roads that once connected neighborhoods to downtown now car-

ried residents to outlying shopping strips and regional malls. Throughout the nation, in town after town, the story repeated itself. Downtown businesses closed or moved to the mall, shoppers dwindled, property values and sales tax revenues dropped. Some downtowns sank under the weight of their own apathy. Neglected buildings, boarded-up storefronts and empty, trash-strewn streets gradually reinforced the public's perception that nothing was happening downtown, that nothing was worth saving there. People forgot how important their downtown and its historic commercial buildings were in reflecting their community's unique heritage.

In many communities downtown merchants and property owners, tried to halt this spiral of decline by imitating their competition -- the shopping mall. Their attempts to modernize downtown take the forms of pedestrian malls, covering traditional building fronts with aluminum slipcovers, and attaching huge, oversized signs on their buildings to

attract attention. These well-meaning but usually ineffective methods did not stabilize downtown's decline, mostly because they did not address the fundamental problem -- that businesses did not change when the market did, and that people did not see the downtown as a destination for shopping any more. With the economic boom of the 1980s, Main Street also saw increased development occurring outside traditional areas, and the issue of "sprawl" with its uncontrolled growth and cookie cutter architecture that reflected neither a sense of place nor a sense of pride, an became an issue that most communities contend with today.

Facing these issues, over 1,600 communities have adopted the Main Street approach in the past 21 years to look again at Main Street, their heart of the community, to save its historic buildings, to revive its commercial core, to strengthen business, to control community-eroding sprawl, and keep a sense of place and community life in America.



By Julia Reed  
MLA Student

The postcard above shows Oak St. in downtown McRae in 1957. It was a time when downtown businesses were booming, cars were parked at every store front. Economically speaking, times were good. It was also a time when traffic flowed on Oak St. in both directions, and diagonal parking was allowed and encouraged.

Diagonal parking is one of a variety of options referred to as traffic calming measures. Check it out for yourself. Diagonal parking, functions like speed bumps, but is more pleasant: it slows traffic down. Compare your speed in an area with no on-street parking to one with diagonal parking. Notice that you watch for the white

reverse lights to appear on cars in front of you. While drivers are slowed, they glance into shop windows, storefronts, signs, and may decide to pull in.

Hundreds of visitors pass through downtown every day. Some stop, but most don't. One of the main reasons for this is that it is hard to find a parking place and hard to get into them. Diagonal parking can help. The Charrette Team recommends that McRae work with the Georgia Department of Transportation to reintroduce diagonal parking in downtown. Initial steps for this improvement have already been made. McRae is fortunate to have Bill Deyo, as a leader in the community. He knows the terrain and can move citizen desires through the system.

## Can't We Get Our Diagonal Parking Back?

Cars park diagonally, jutting out from the curb, rather than parallel to it.



### The benefits:

- Simple and inexpensive
- Changes both the perception and the function of a street
- Makes it easy to pull into a parking space without obstructing traffic
- Oncoming drivers must be alert to the cars pulling out
- All of this added driver awareness creates more awareness of pedestrians
- Can add up to 40% more parking space than parallel parking