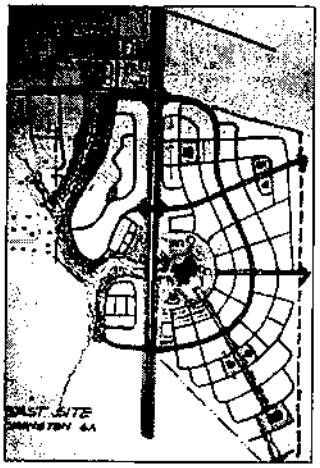
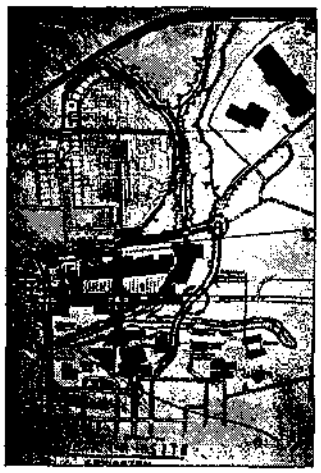
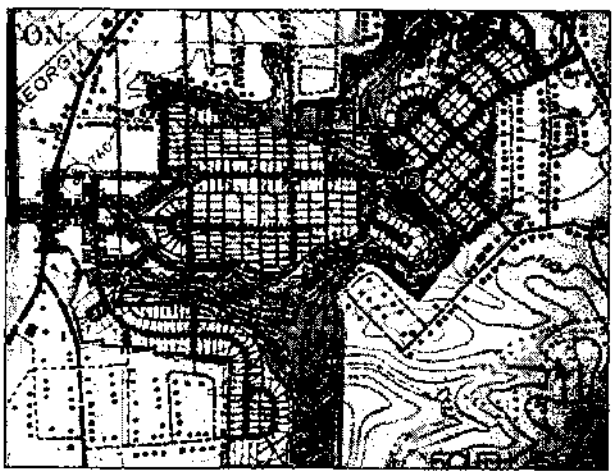


# Workshop 1 Covington

## Blueprints for successful communities





# The Covington Community Design Workshop

**results of a community design workshop for Covington, Georgia**

**A component of the Blueprints for Successful Communities Initiative of The Georgia Conservancy**

**Workshop Partners:**

**The Georgia Conservancy**
**The Georgia Tech Urban Design Workshop**
**The Interprofessional Community Design Collaborative**

**November 1997**

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## The Blueprints Initiative

Over the last decade, growth and development have diversified and strengthened Georgia's economy, but at a significant risk to Georgia's environment. The good news for Georgia is that all across the state builders, developers, bankers, environmentalists and government officials are realizing that the way we have treated and used land over the last century cannot sustain our region in the coming century. For that reason, in 1995, The Georgia Conservancy formed a unique partnership comprised of the Urban Land Institute, the Greater Atlanta Home Builders Association, Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation, American Institute of Architects, and American Society of Landscape Architects to foster public education and facilitate a process for creating successful communities in Georgia.

To further this effort the Successful Communities Partners have joined with the Urban Design Workshop of the Georgia Tech College of Architecture and the Interprofessional Community Design Collaborative to conduct a series of workshops in selected communities in the Atlanta region to address specific development issues in those communities which may be prototypical for the region in general. The workshops also serve to integrate the Successful Communities Principles which have been established as a result of this initiative.

The Covington-Newton County Community Design Workshop is the first of several workshops planned. Two additional workshops will be conducted in early 1998. It is the hope of The Georgia Conservancy and its partners that this effort, combined with continued public education, will result in communities across Georgia which are economically strong, environmentally sound and socially progressive.

## The Successful Communities Principles

Successful Communities:

- work together to produce a high quality of life that they want to sustain;
- work to create regional strategies for transportation, land use and economic growth;
- understand that sustainable community design is based on the effect of the built environment on the natural environment, aesthetics, scale, history and culture;
- promote efficient use of existing infrastructure, energy, water and land;
- incorporate compact integrated land uses which bring people closer to work, to school and shopping and safeguard undeveloped lands for agriculture, greenspace and recreation;
- provide transportation options so that each member of the community has access to goods, services and recreation; and
- are designed to be safe, healthy, economically strong, environmentally sound and inclusive.

## Preparing for Covington's Future

The anticipated growth projected for Covington and Newton County is expected to substantially and permanently alter the community's present physical appearance and conditions as well as the lifestyle of its citizens. Steering committee members discussed whether this change would result in a loss of important attributes which are now enjoyed and valued, including:

**Quality of Life:** Close neighborly relationships, intellectual environment, quality education, strong community identity, small town feeling, good human scale, and sidewalks and bike paths.

Physical and Natural Excellence: historic character, pastoral views, image of downtown, and freedom from traffic.

**Economic Opportunities:** Good access to jobs, easy accessibility to Atlanta's benefits, employment opportunities, and a good industrial base, one complementary with the community. Two questions were raised: first, can these huge anticipated changes occur and the community still retain those qualities which are so widely

admired? and second, what is the nature of the expected changes and what are some options which the community could pursue to retain its deeply cherished values? Fundamental changes can be expected in the following areas:

**Changes in the Economy:** The recent manufacturing strategy has been successful due primarily to the abundance of cheap land, easy access to large and growing markets, and offers of tax benefits. These advantages will begin to diminish due to more competition, rising land costs, and other conditions. The community can anticipate an increase of jobs in other sectors, however, including:

- Professional services (real estate, banking, law, engineering, insurance, etc.)
- Health services (hospitals, doctors, clinics, home nursing, personal care, etc.)
- Government (local and state, schools and colleges, technical and job training, etc.)
- Retail and services (retail shops, repair and business services, etc.)

These changes will bring a demand for more office buildings a wider range of housing types, and more employment for local residents, reducing the high rate of commuting. New development can be used to shape the future city and county, to:

- Strengthen the downtown (higher density housing, new retail shops)
- Disperse economic groups
- Bring greater variety in shops, goods and services.

**Changes in Transportation:** The addition of 20,000 more households in Newton County will also add 25,000-to-30,000 more vehicles to the streets and highways. Policies which should guide transportation planning should include:

- Retention of the workforce within the boundaries of Covington and Newton County
- Reduction in the large number of short trips, which consumes large amounts of street capacity
- Investments in lower-cost improvements in the area's streets and highways (improved traffic signs, access spacing)
- Investments in travel alternatives (bike paths and walkways)

Covington is slated for a station in the state's proposed commuter rail system. Commuter rail will allow Covington and Newton County citizens quicker and better access to:

- Job opportunities
- Business trips (government offices, banking and legal services, etc.)
- Sports and entertainment (arts, theater, concerts, restaurants, etc.)
- Educational opportunities (formal and informal)

Commuter rail will also bring visitors to Covington and Newton County for many purposes, bringing new opportunities to local inhabitants.

**Changes in the Population:** Many newcomers will come to call this area home, adding diversity both culturally, economically and generationally. Such diversity will enrich Covington and provide opportunities to enhance the community's many assets by integrating the history, culture and varying age groups of its growing population by:

- Establishing more places for socializing and association (parks and trails, strengthening of the Town Square)
- Designing developments with a mixture of ages, incomes and races
- Bringing the community closer together physically (open space linkages, better movement connections)
- Creating institutions and events which would draw people together, preferably in the central areas (museums, churches, festivals, art shows).

## The Workshop Sites

To accommodate the projected growth in Covington over the next 20 years, the Community Design Workshop identified five major undeveloped areas within the current city limits for consideration.

- **The North Site:** (The "Hercules" site)
  Situated between the Hercules plant and the old Covington neighborhood, the site contains 174 acres. The southern edge abuts the rail line and the proposed commuter rail station.

- **The East Site:** (The "Quarry" site)
  At the eastern growth edges of the city, the site contains 410 acres and is bisected by the new SR 81 bypass.

- **The Southern Site:** (The "Indian Creek" site)
  Largely defined by the Indian Creek and its tributaries, this site contains 280 acres.

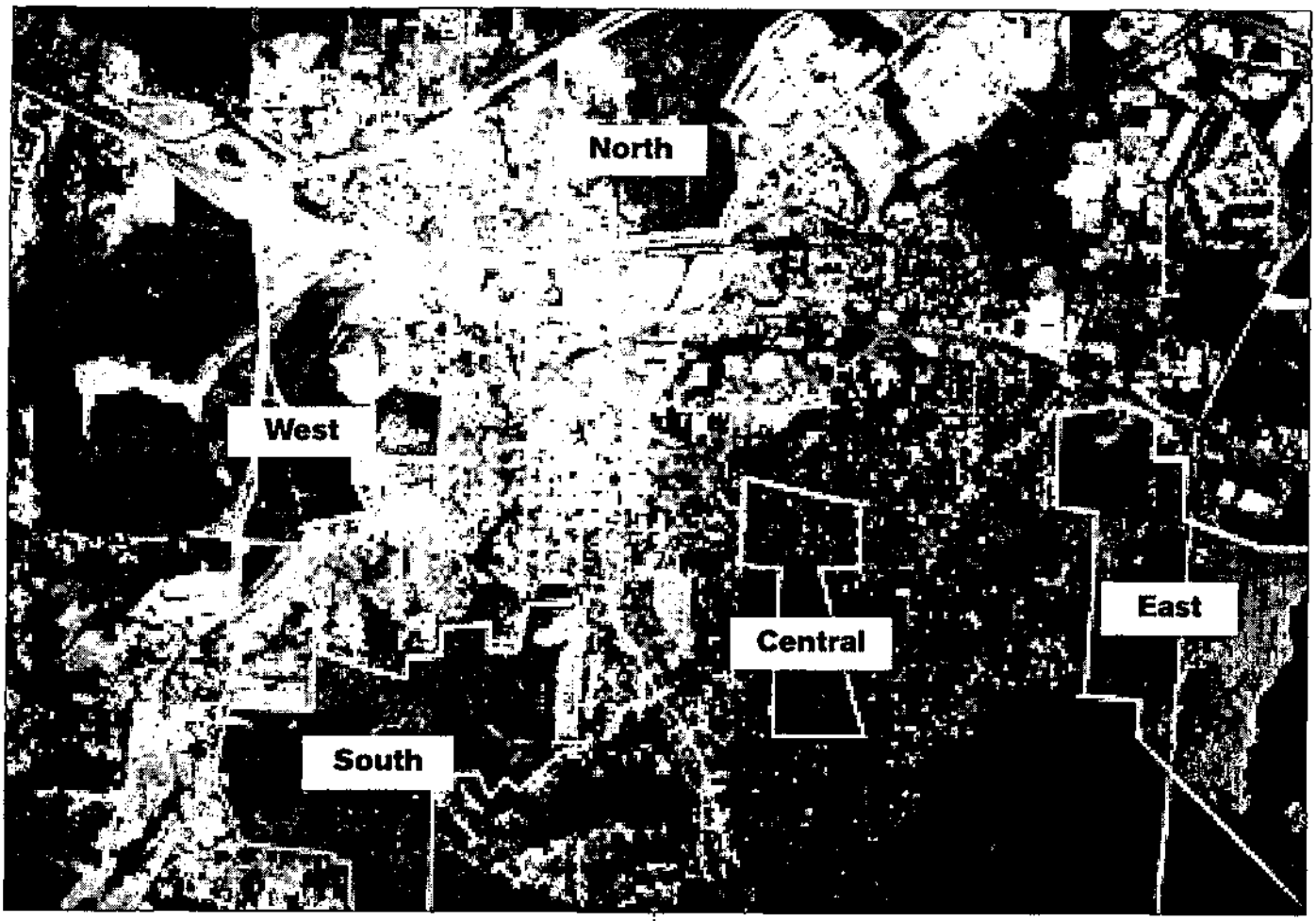
- **The West Site:** (The "Fowler" site)
  Divided into quadrants by Clark Street and a seldom used rail line, this site consists of 145 acres.

- **The Central Site:** (The "Ginn" site)
  This site consists of 60 acres in the ownership of one family near the center of the city.

These sites have remained undeveloped due to varying degrees of environmental problems, inaccessibility or the circumstances of their ownership history. Together they constitute over 1000 acres of undeveloped land within the city and close to the courthouse square. The design workshop has assessed the development suitability and proposed a conceptual development plan for the four largest sites while attempting to satisfy the Conservancy's principles for successful communities and Covington's goals for growth management.

Properly designed and managed, development in these areas would have the following benefits:

- It directs development into areas with existing physical and social infrastructure.
- It stabilizes the historic courthouse square retail area and places new development within walking distance or a short drive of the square.
- It places more new development near the proposed commuter rail station reducing vehicle miles traveled and encouraging more rail use.
- It results in a more pedestrian oriented city with fewer local vehicle trips made and fewer miles driven.
- It increases city tax base to fund and maintain a high quality of life.
- It provides more diverse residential neighborhoods which contribute to long term neighborhood and city sustainability.
- At this level of growth new neighborhoods in Covington would resemble the existing historic city in residential scale, character and density.




Workshop study sites

## Population Projections

| | 2015 Projections in 1997 County Plan | | | 1995 Statistics | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Population | Total Housing Units[1] | New Housing Units 1995-2015 | Population | Housing Units |
| Newton County [2] | 130,980 | 47,285 | 29,000 | 50,644 | 18,283 |
| Covington | 22,842 | 8,246 | 4,000 | 11,763 | 4,246 |

1. Based on an average of 2.77 persons per unit as projected in the 1993 Newton County Comprehensive Plan.
2. Newton County data includes Convington.

# NORTH SITE

## Existing Conditions

Boundaries of property

- Bounded to the north by Hwy. I-20
- Bounded to the east by Alcovy Rd.
- Bounded to the west by Hwy. 81
- Bounded to the south by Herring St.

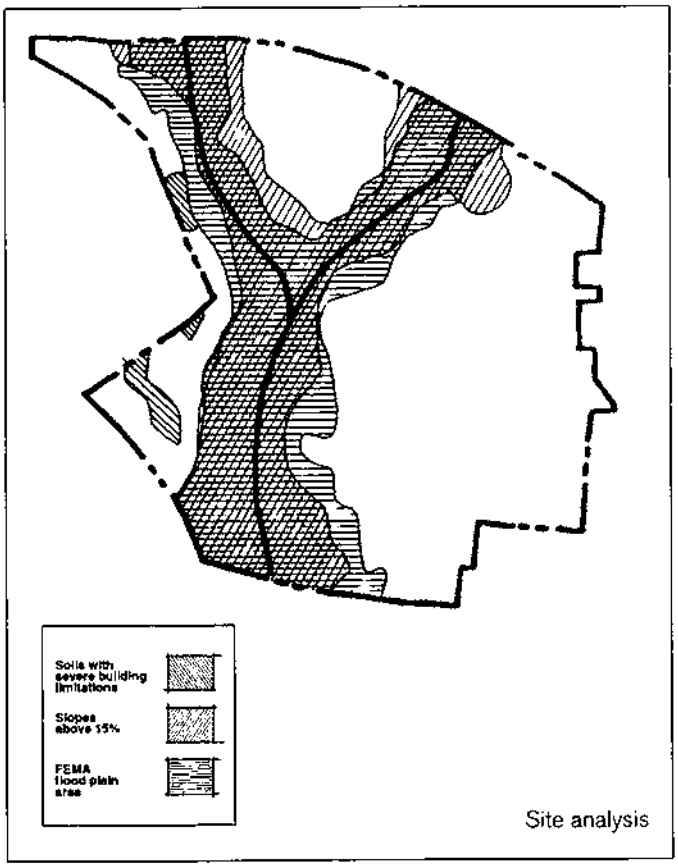
Adjacent Land Uses

- Hwy. I-20 ROW along the northern boundary
- Industrial plant along eastern boundary
- Railroad line along southern boundary
- Single family residential along the western boundary

Natural Features

- Dry Indian Creek bisects tract north to south
- Floodplain associated with creek
- Overhead electrical lines bisect tract north to south and east to west
- Poor soils within the floodplain
- Dense hardwood stands in floodplain and selected upland areas
- Steep slopes along eastern creek bank

Existing conditions

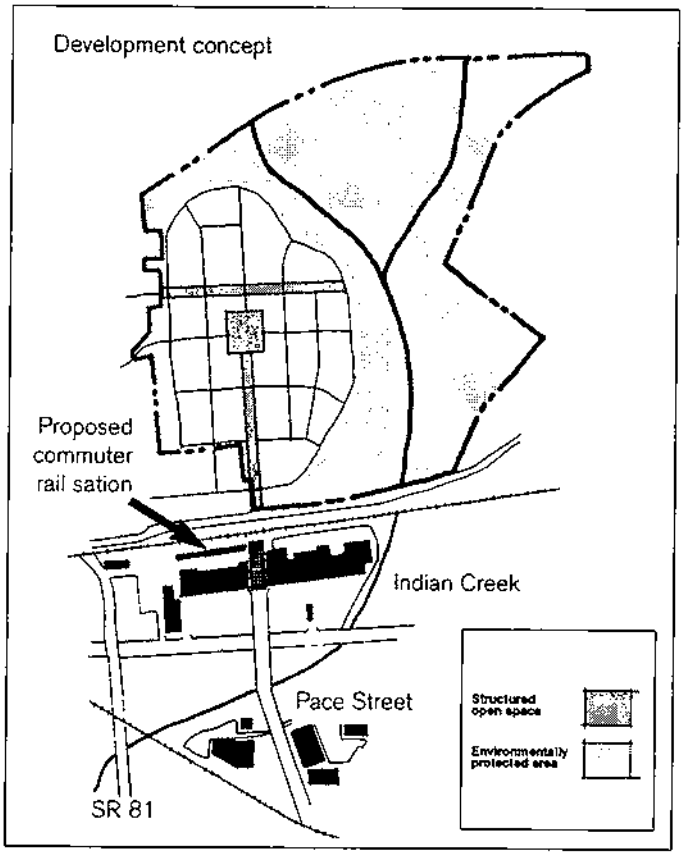



Site analysis

# NORTH SITE

## Development Concepts

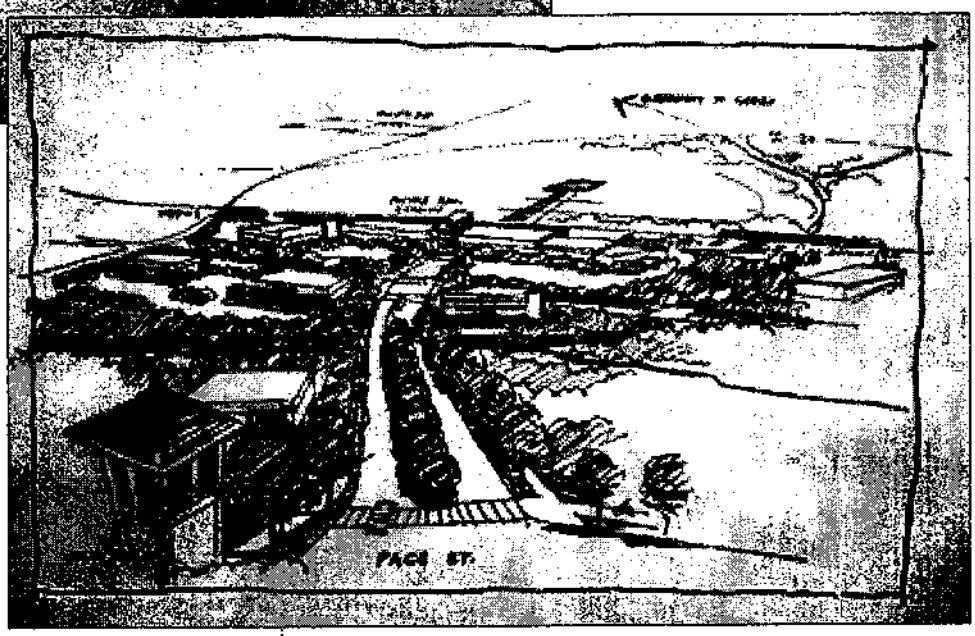
- Develop on upland area west of creek.
- Maintain existing densities in adjacent and intown neighborhoods.
- Maintain the same density as the adjacent historic neighborhood along west side of developable area.
- Employ grid system comprised of blocks and lots.
- Allow for connection to future rail station.
- Provide limited parking for rail users.
- Include a mix of densities targeted to first-time and move-up home buyers.
- Site highest density (townhouses) along main boulevard.
- Incorporate green spaces as a means to connect surrounding neighborhoods to potential park area along creek.
- Preserve floodplain area as a passive park.



North team leader Peter Drey

# NORTH SITE

View east along Herring Road and rail line

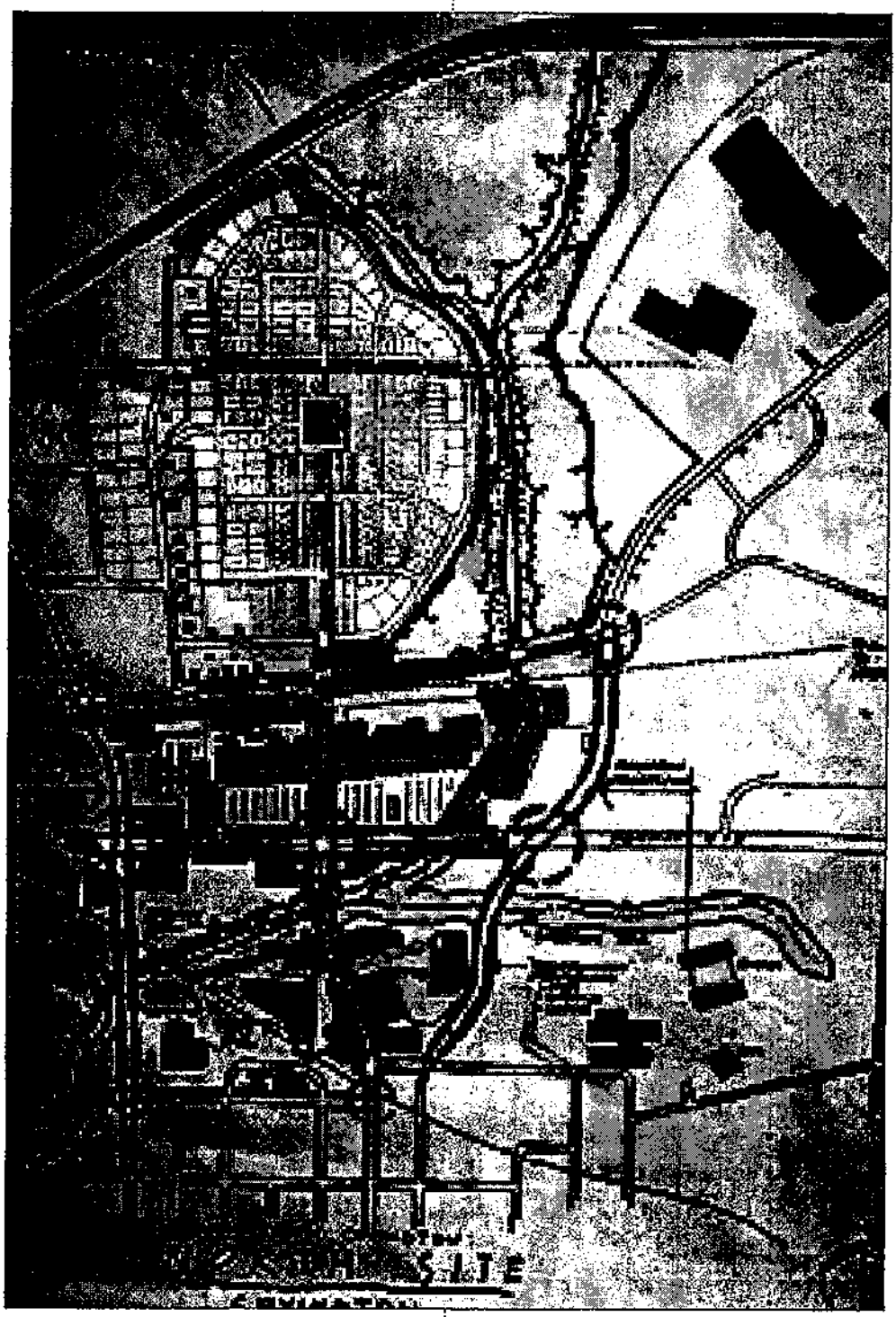



View north from Old Jail along Pace Street to US 278

## North Site Program

| TOTAL ACRES | ACRES TO BE PROTECTED | ACRES OF STRUCTURED PUBLIC OPEN SPACE | ACRES OF NON-RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT | ACRES OF SINGLE FAMILY ESTATE LOT < 1/2 ACRE | ACRES OF SINGLE FAMILY SMALL LOT > 1/2 ACRE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 174 | 105/60% | 5 | 0 | 10 | 45 |

| ACRES OF SINGLE FAMILY ATTACHED | ACRES OF MULTI-FAMILY AND MULTI-USE | SUB TOTAL RESIDENTIAL ACRES | TOTAL DWELLING UNITS | GROSS RESIDENTIAL DENSITY (UNITS/ACRE) | NET RESIDENTIAL DENSITY (UNITS/ACRE) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9 | 0 | 64 | 300 | 1.7 | 4.7 |



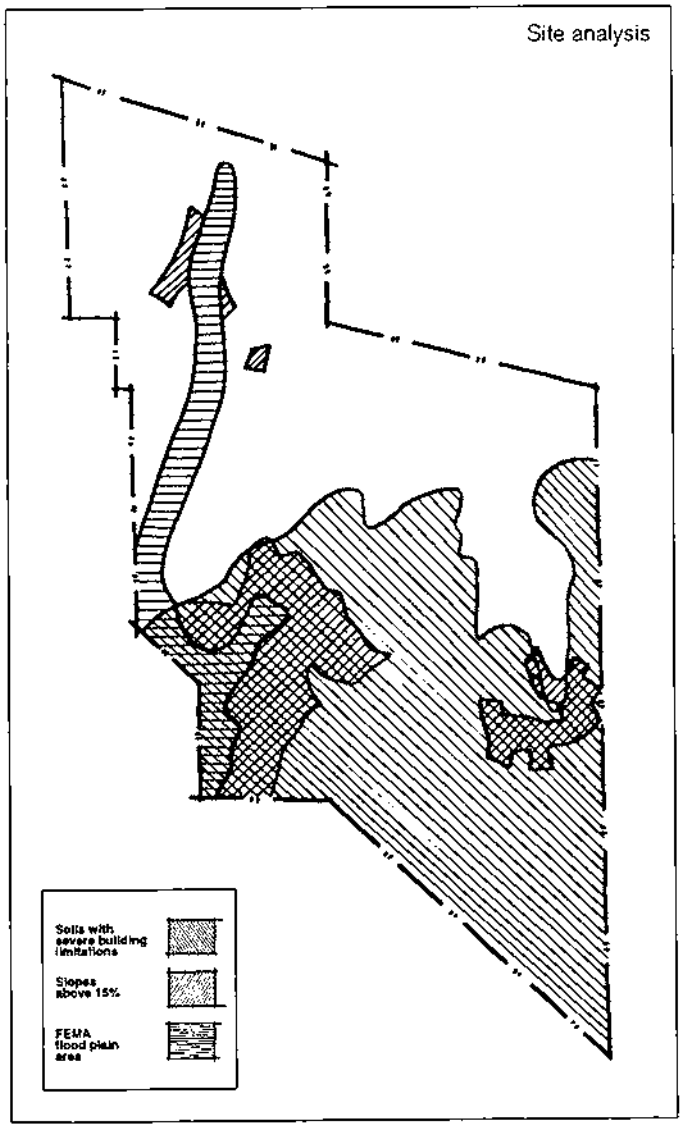

North site plan

# EAST SITE

## Existing Conditions

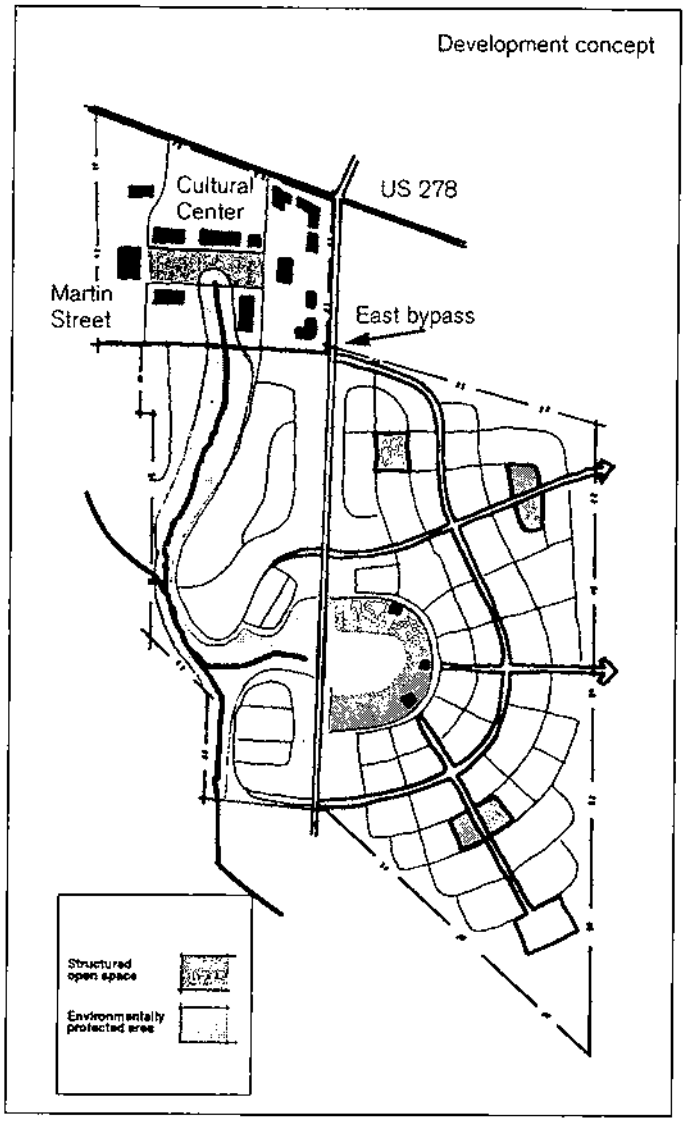
- Approximately 400 undeveloped acres in eastern Covington
- Abandoned rock quarry at the southeastern edge along the eastern side of CR 873
- New city/county library planned for site.
- Adjacent development:
  - Wal-mart and Ingles grocery store strip mall
  - church
  - high school
  - golf course subdivision of Covington Plantation
  - contour slopes greater than 15% existing only in the southern end of the property and accounting for approximately 10%-15% of total land
- Watershed areas shoulder existing north-south creeks on the property's west side
- Soils moderate to slight in suitability for the northern half while the soil-types in the southern half moderate and occasionally severe in their suitability
- Vegetation covering approximately 35% of the land with the majority in the southern half

Existing conditions



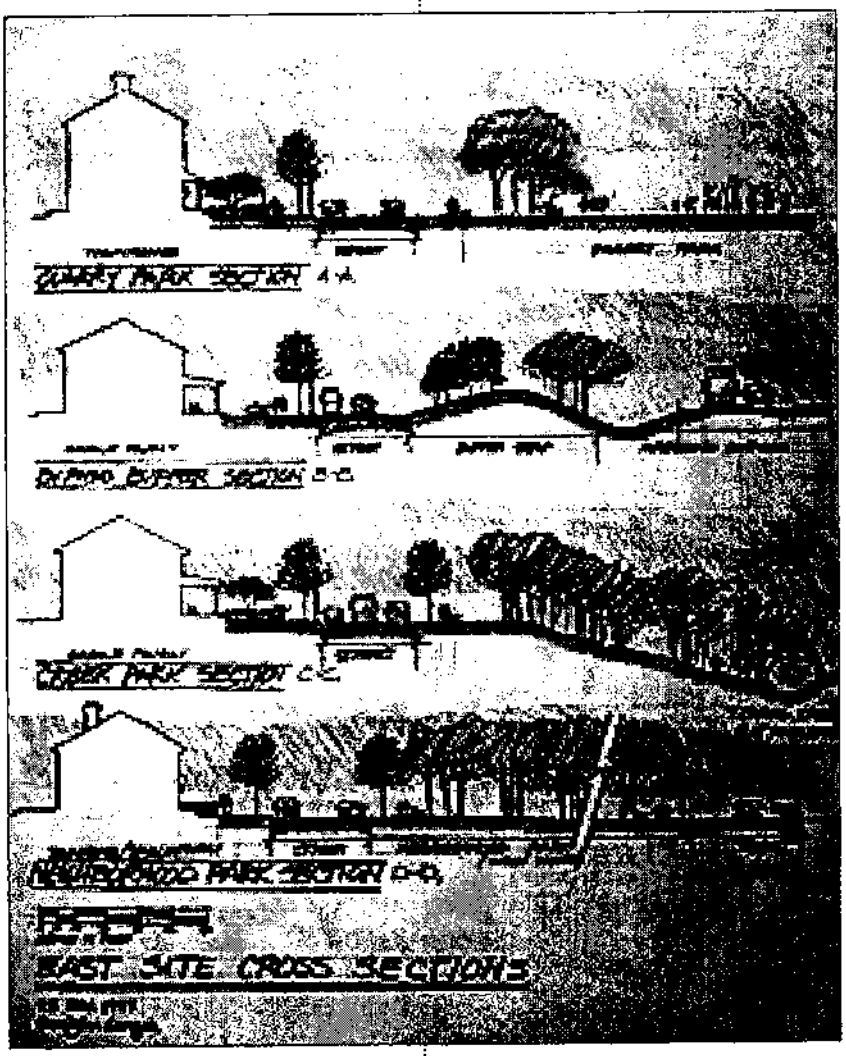
## Development Concepts

- The property divided into three separate pieces:
  - -public/institutional,
  - -residential,
  - -public and greenspace.
- Two-lane bypass becoming 5-lane parkway with a turning lane.
- Public/institutional uses devoted to the northwest corner of the property where the library is located.
- Martin Street extending eastward making a connection to the new development.
- Residential development made up of the following different "neighborhoods":
  - -open space-oriented neighborhoods which will allow for townhouse;
  - -traditional Covington estate lots neighborhoods; and
  - -smaller lot, higher density neighborhoods.
- Public/greenspace consisting of
  - -park and park-related facilities built around the quarry;
  - -creeks and shouldering watersheds turned into expanded greenways connecting the public/institutional area with the quarry park; and
  - -several blocks of "pocket parks" sprinkled throughout the various neighborhoods.
- Selected streets becoming greenways and parkways making pedestrian and vehicular connections to other parts of the area.



East team leader Don Hildebrandt

# EAST SITE

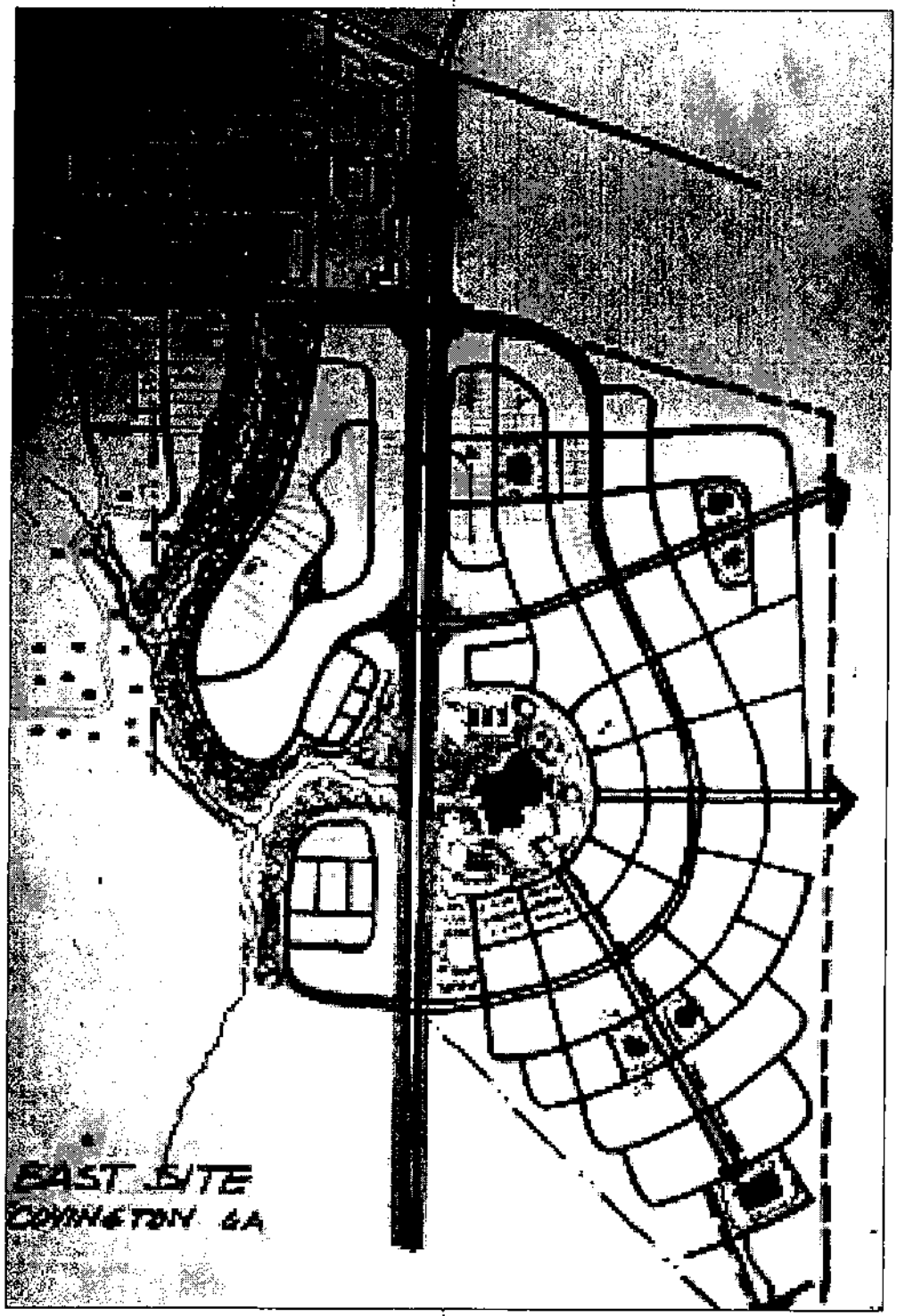



Sections through East Site

## East Site Program

| TOTAL ACRES | ACRES TO BE PROTECTED | ACRES OF STRUCTURED PUBLIC OPEN SPACE | ACRES OF NON-RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT | ACRES OF SINGLE FAMILY ESTATE LOT < 1/2 ACRE | ACRES OF SINGLE FAMILY SMALL LOT > 1/2 ACRE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 410 | 125/30% | 12 | 25 | 45 | 173 |

| ACRES OF SINGLE FAMILY ATTACHED | ACRES OF MULTI-FAMILY AND MULTI-USE | SUB TOTAL RESIDENTIAL ACRES | TOTAL DWELLING UNITS | GROSS RESIDENTIAL DENSITY (UNITS/ACRE) | NET RESIDENTIAL DENSITY (UNITS/ACRE) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 25 | 5 | 148 | 1000 | 2.4 | 6.8 |

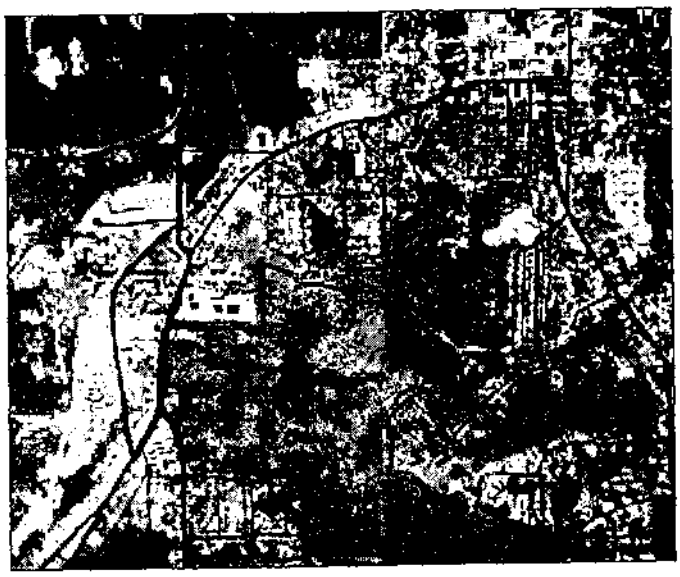



East side plan

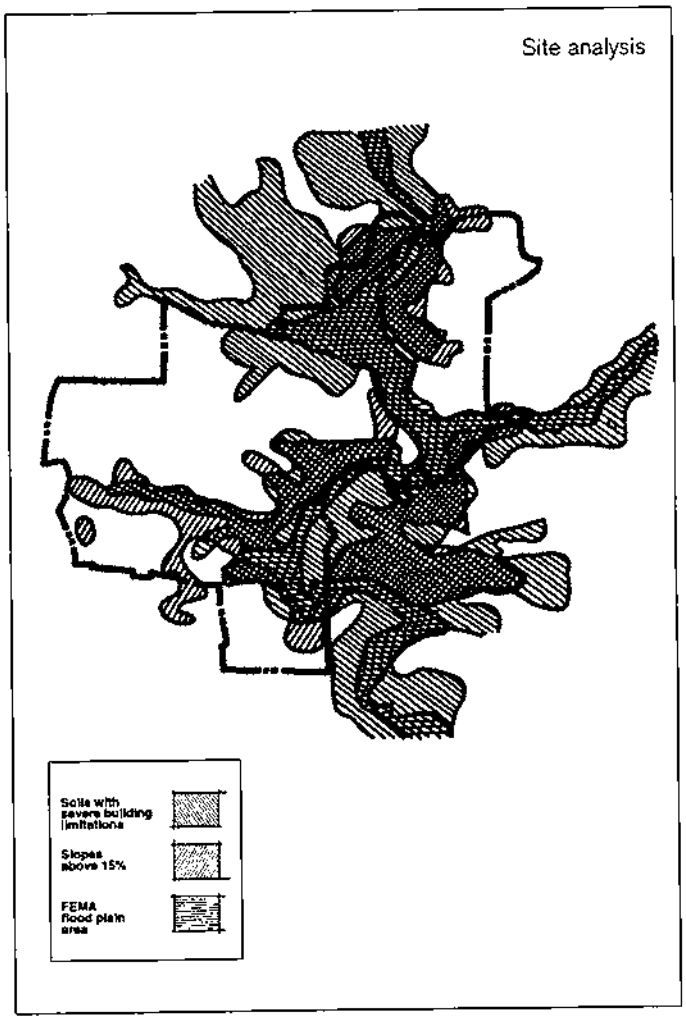
# SOUTH SITE

## Existing conditions:

- Site between SR 81 and SR 36 providing good access to edges of site
- Streams surrounded by poor soil conditions and steep slopes cut through site
- Site near the traditional grid of the city
- Property adjacent to SR 81 zoned industrial/commercial

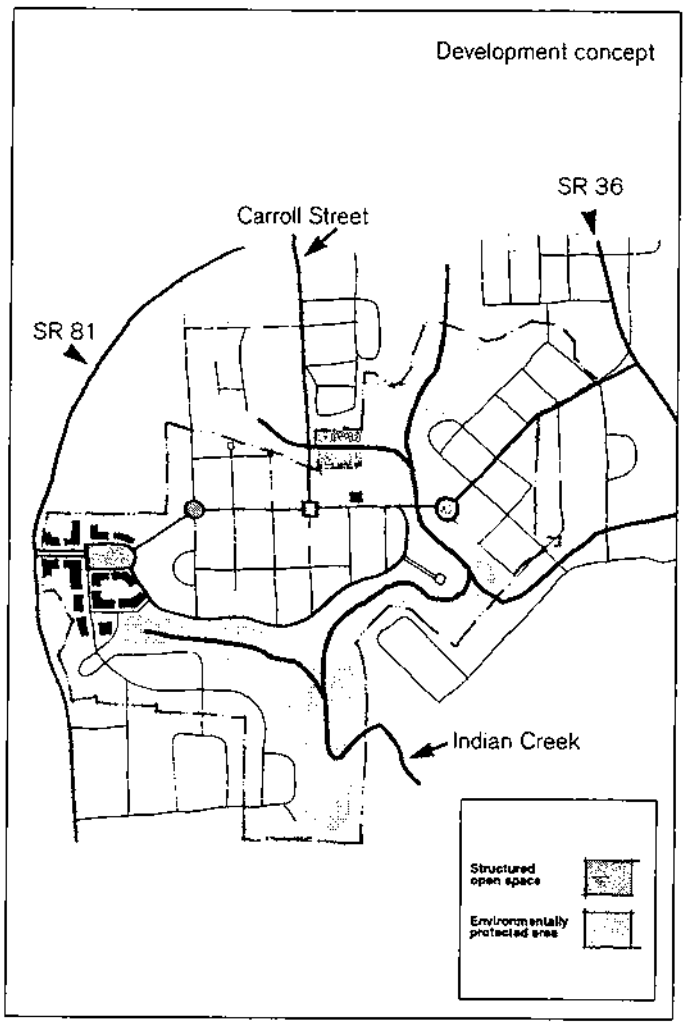


Existing conditions



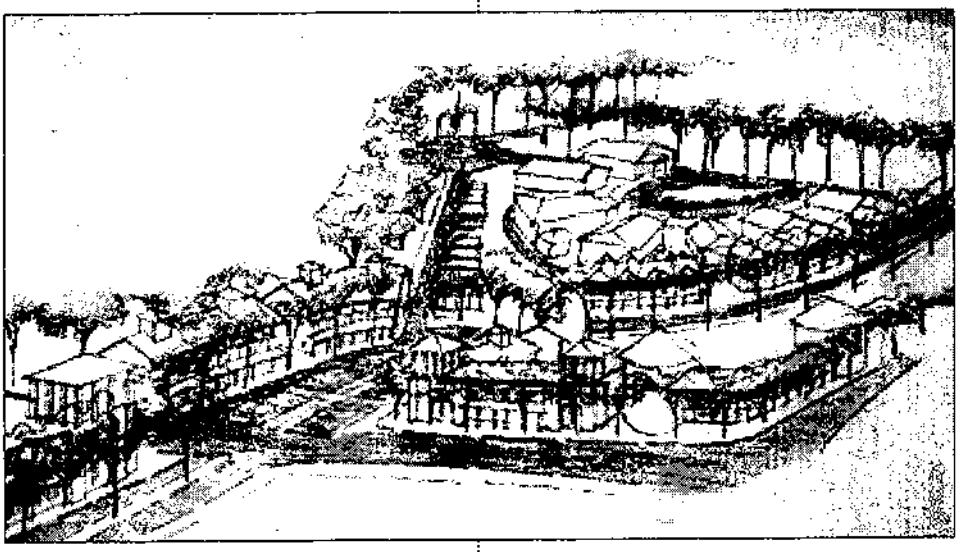
## Development Concepts:

- Areas adjacent to the creek remain protected nature zone with pedestrian trails and recreation facilities
- Grid extended into site providing connections to other neighborhoods and main town square
- Connection made between the highways but traffic slowed with squares, roundabouts, and a small park
- Parkway along northern edge of natural area
- "Village Center" retail bordering SR 81 but oriented to the community and adjacent neighborhoods
- Higher density housing located closer to retail
- Parkway lined by townhouses
- Single family homes located throughout the site and are more sparsely situated in the east responding to nearby conditions
- Density of growth greatest next to highway SR 81 decreasing towards interior
- Mix of traditional grid with curved site conditions creating unique neighborhoods within 10-15 minute walking distance

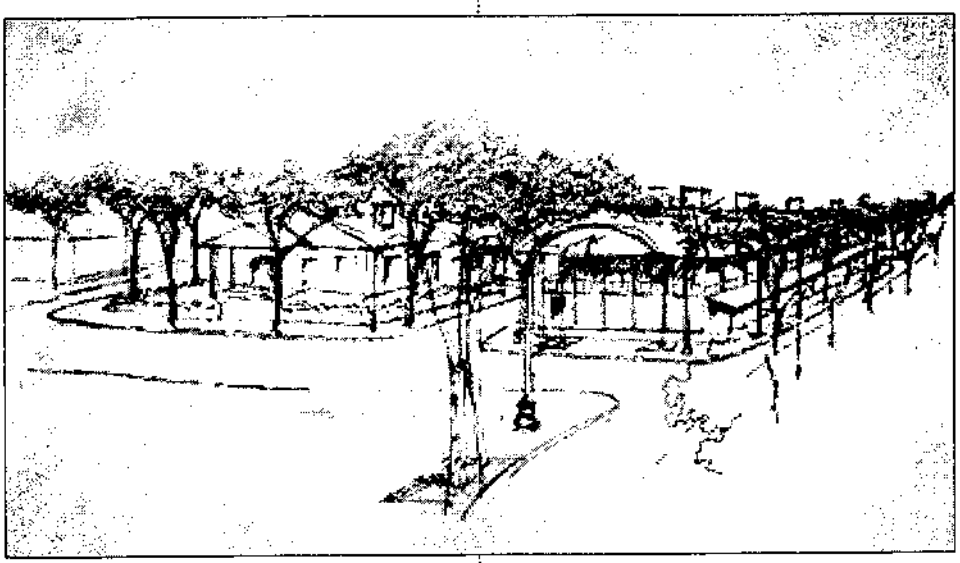


South team at work under team leader Ray Strychalski

# SOUTH SITE



View from village center looking east



View of mixed housing types

## South Site Program

| TOTAL ACRES | ACRES TO BE PROTECTED | ACRES OF STRUCTURED PUBLIC OPEN SPACE | ACRES OF NON-RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT | ACRES OF SINGLE FAMILY ESTATE LOT < 1/2 ACRE | ACRES OF SINGLE FAMILY SMALL LOT > 1/2 ACRE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 280 | 135/48% | 12 | 15 | 0 | 68 |
| **ACRES OF SINGLE FAMILY ATTACHED** | **ACRES OF MULTI-FAMILY AND MULTI-USE** | **SUB TOTAL RESIDENTIAL ACRES** | **TOTAL DWELLING UNITS** | **GROSS RESIDENTIAL DENSITY (UNITS/ACRE)** | **NET RESIDENTIAL DENSITY (UNITS/ACRE)** |
| 30 | 20 | 118 | 800 | 2.9 | 6.8 |

South site plan

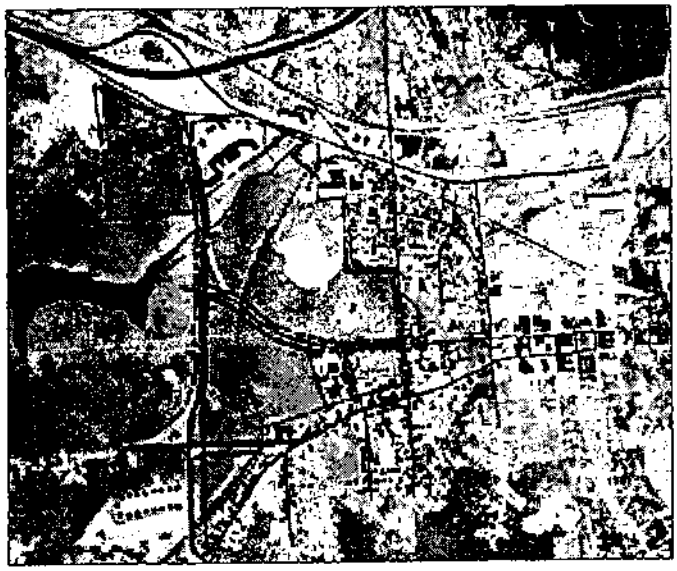
# WEST SITE

## Existing Conditions

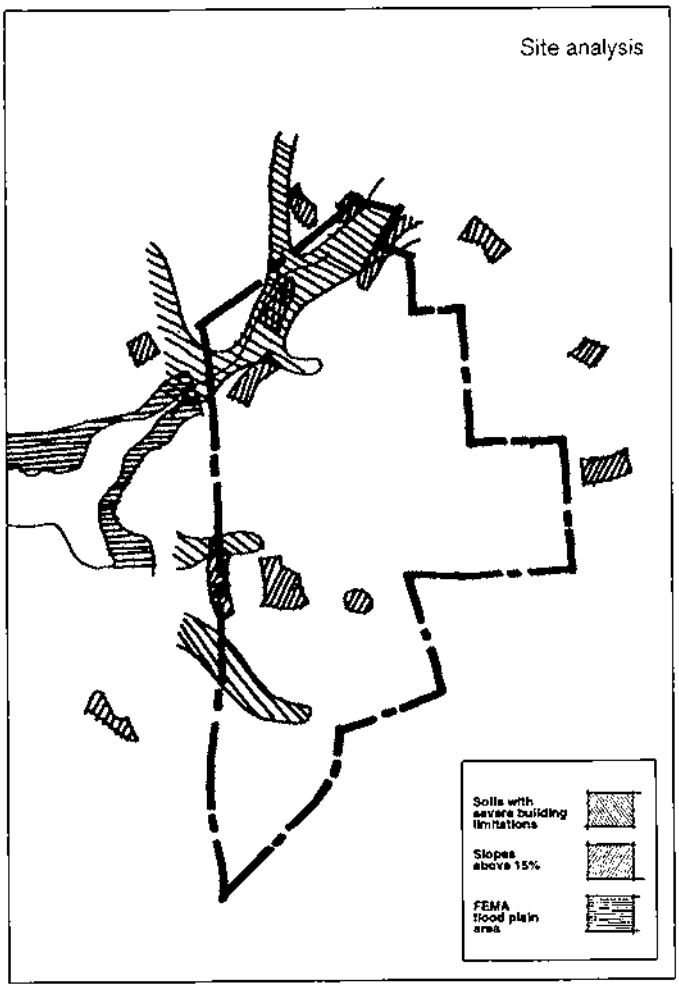
- Bounded by:
  -US 278 on the north
  -West Street and its neighborhood on the east
  -Clark Street from west to east at its center
  -The existing railroad in a curving path from north to south
  -Southern entrance by Washington Street
  -On th west by Turner Lake Road and Turner Lake Park

- Severe soils located:
  -Along the west side at the north end of the site along Wild Puppy Dog Creek
  -Along the west side of the site at approximately its center (again an extension of Turner Lake)
  -Along the west side of the site near its south end.

- Steep slopes:
  -Flanking the railroad in the area between Clark St. and Brown Bridge Road
  -At the north side of the site near the severe soils area mentioned above

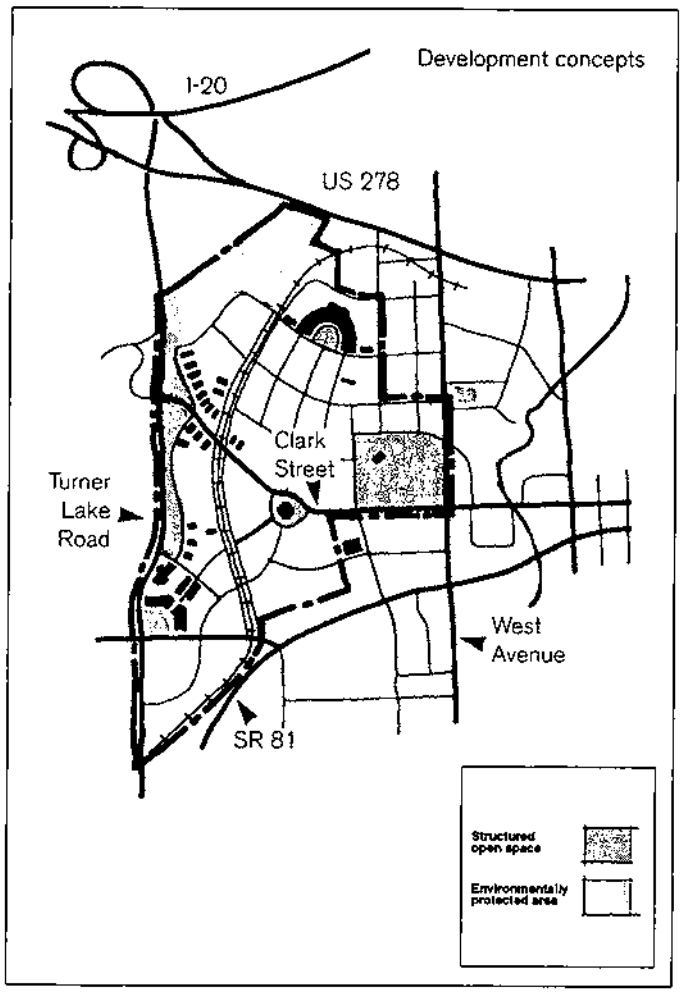


Existing conditions



## Development Concept

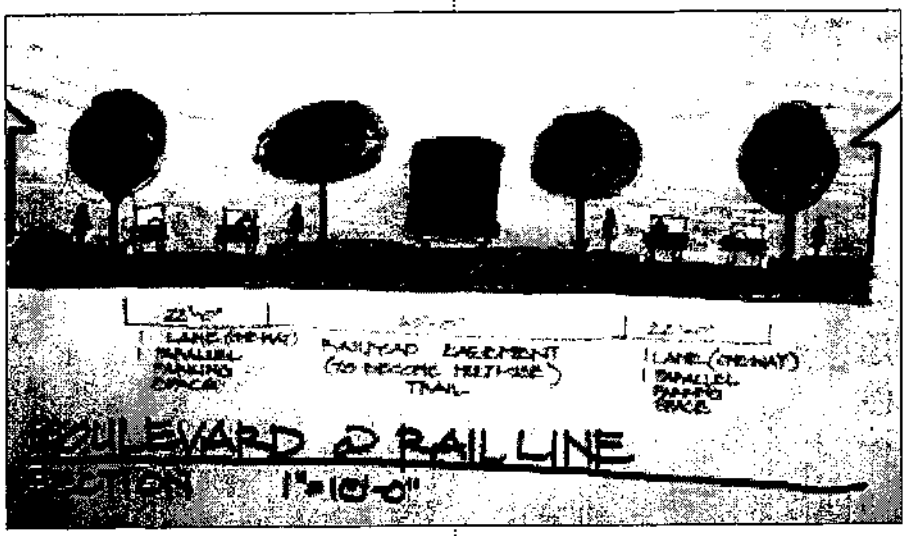
- An assisted living center for senior citizens as well as non-assisted, small square footage single family homes
- Small square footage office space that will present the visual appeal of a row of estate homes along the entrance corridor to downtown Covington
- Railroad Boulevard is a green space buffer that provides for a future rails-to-trails conversion provided the railroad is abandoned
- Multi-use trail connecting downtown Covington to Turner Lake Park and providing for safe crossing with a tunnel. The trails continue northward along Turner Lake Road on either side to provide a safe pedestrian/bike route to the US 278 retail corridor
- Non-denominational chapel at the high point of the site with a vista toward downtown Covington, as well as a ring road for landscaped parking
- The neighborhoods are within walking distance of the retail hub at the intersection of Brown Bridge Road and Turner Lake Road
- The Fowler House converted to public use as an arts center and park
- Landscaped buffer provided along Turner Lake Road separating major thoroughfare from slower traffic carriage road running parallel to it



West team leader Randy Vinson with students

# WEST SITE

Section of Clark Street multi-use corridor

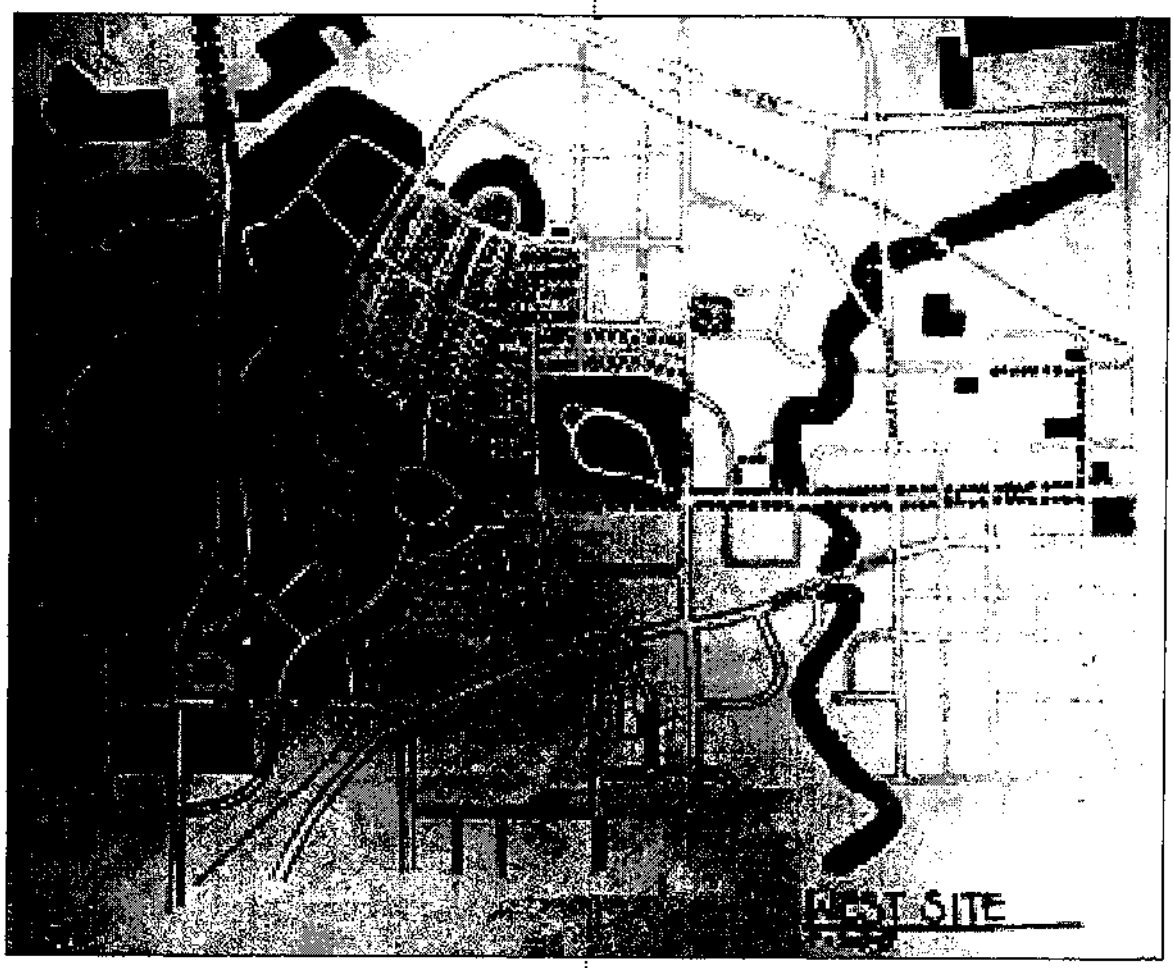



Section of Rail Line Boulevard

## West Site Program

| TOTAL ACRES | ACRES TO BE PROTECTED | ACRES OF STRUCTURED PUBLIC OPEN SPACE | ACRES OF NON-RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT | ACRES OF SINGLE FAMILY ESTATE LOT < 1/2 ACRE | ACRES OF SINGLE FAMILY SMALL LOT > 1/2 ACRE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 145 | 33/23% | 3 | 28 | 0 | 42 |
| **ACRES OF SINGLE FAMILY ATTACHED** | **ACRES OF MULTI-FAMILY AND MULTI-USE** | **SUB TOTAL RESIDENTIAL ACRES** | **TOTAL DWELLING UNITS** | **GROSS RESIDENTIAL DENSITY (UNITS/ACRE)** | **NET RESIDENTIAL DENSITY (UNITS/ACRE)** |
| 20 | 19* | 81 | 700* | 4.8 | 8.6 |

*includes a 200 unit assisted living project




West site plan

# ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## Urban design/pedestrianization

- Establish and implement city-wide bike and walking trail system
  -On street - facility corridors (Conyers, Newton and Carroll Streets)
  -Off street - creeks (sewer right of way) abandoned rail line (rails to trails)

- Expand design and streetscape network downtown to include all of central grid

- Seek adaptive reuse and public use of key city monuments: such as the library and jail

- Control and upgrade all major entry corridors (traffic and aesthetic control)
  -Clark, Alcovy, Pace, and SR 81, and SR 36
  -Improve the SR 81 bypass as a parkway

- Institute ordinances and staff for:
  -Design review of 5 study sites and downtown
  -Conditional zoning (site plan review)

## Transportation

- Traffic congestion is not a problem now;
- Growth projections will cause significant congestion;
- Future congestion can be minimized with good land use planning; and
- Impact fees are essential to help fund transportation improvements

Short-term transportation action items:

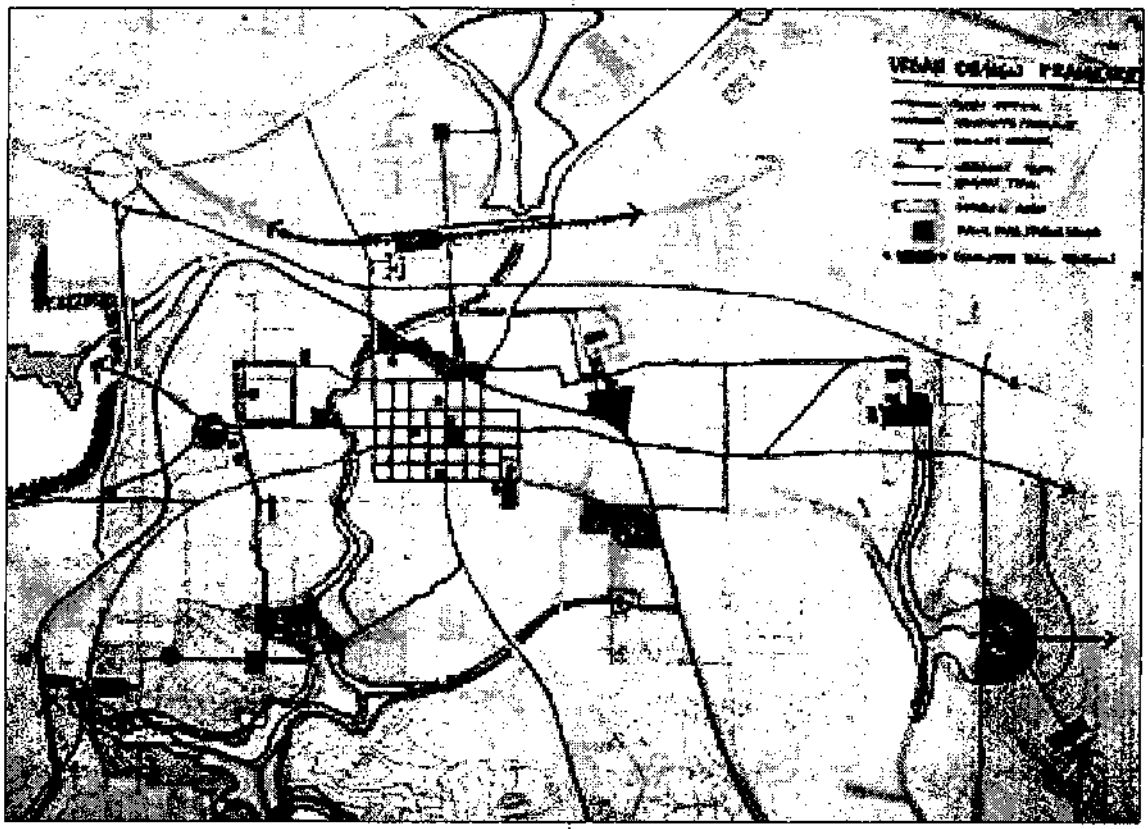
- Prepare for transportation funding diversion from Atlanta;
- Add medians, sidewalks and pedestrian signals on U.S. 278;
- Complete NW section of perimeter highway; and
- Re designate SR 81.

Long-term transportation issues:

- Access controls;
- Make Pace Street improvements;
- Make Clark Street improvements;
- Widen Turner Lake Road;
- Establish on-demand transit.

Indian Creek at SR 81

Indian Creek sewer easement--south site



Transportation and urban design framework plan

# ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## Housing

- As part of the Community Design Workshop a visual preference survey was conducted. The results of the survey mirrored the outcome of the hundreds of visual preference surveys which have been conducted across the United States.

- Preferred community elements include shopping and workplaces close together, sidewalks, street design, housing mix, transportation options, common areas and ample greenspace. In Covington and Newton County, people like pedestrian-scale development, sidewalks and shade trees. Many people will accept mixed-use development and higher densities if designed properly.

- The City of Covington and in particular the downtown square and adjoining historic district represent the healthy mix of housing styles and types which the community would like to see maintained within the city. The chart below indicates the variety of lot sizes and densities which can be accommodated on the four study sites. The community's vision and design for the four sites shows that Covington can easily provide the diversity of housing types which is so important for a successful community.

## Housing Diversity

| Type | Estate SFD | Move-up SFD | Cluster or Starter SFD | Condominium and Townhouse | Rental Apartment |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lot Size/Density | 8,000-20,000 | 12,000-15,000 Lots (S.F.) | 7,000-12,000 Lots (S.F) | 8-16 Dwellings AC | 9-32 Dwellings AC |
| Market Audience | Affluent Couples and Families | Families and Couples "Moving Up" | Young Couples, Families "Empty-Nesters," and Retiree's | Young Singles Young Couples, Small Families, "Empty-Nesters," and retiree's | Young Singles, Couples, Small Families, and retiree's |
| North | x | xxxx | xxx | xx | |
| South | | xxx | xxxx | xxx | xx |
| West | | xx | xxx | xxxx | xxx |
| East | xxxx | xxx | | x | |
| Price Range | $180,000-$250,000 | $125,000-$155,000 | $90,000-$115,000 | Under $90,000 | Market Rate |
| | Lower Density | | | | Higher Density |

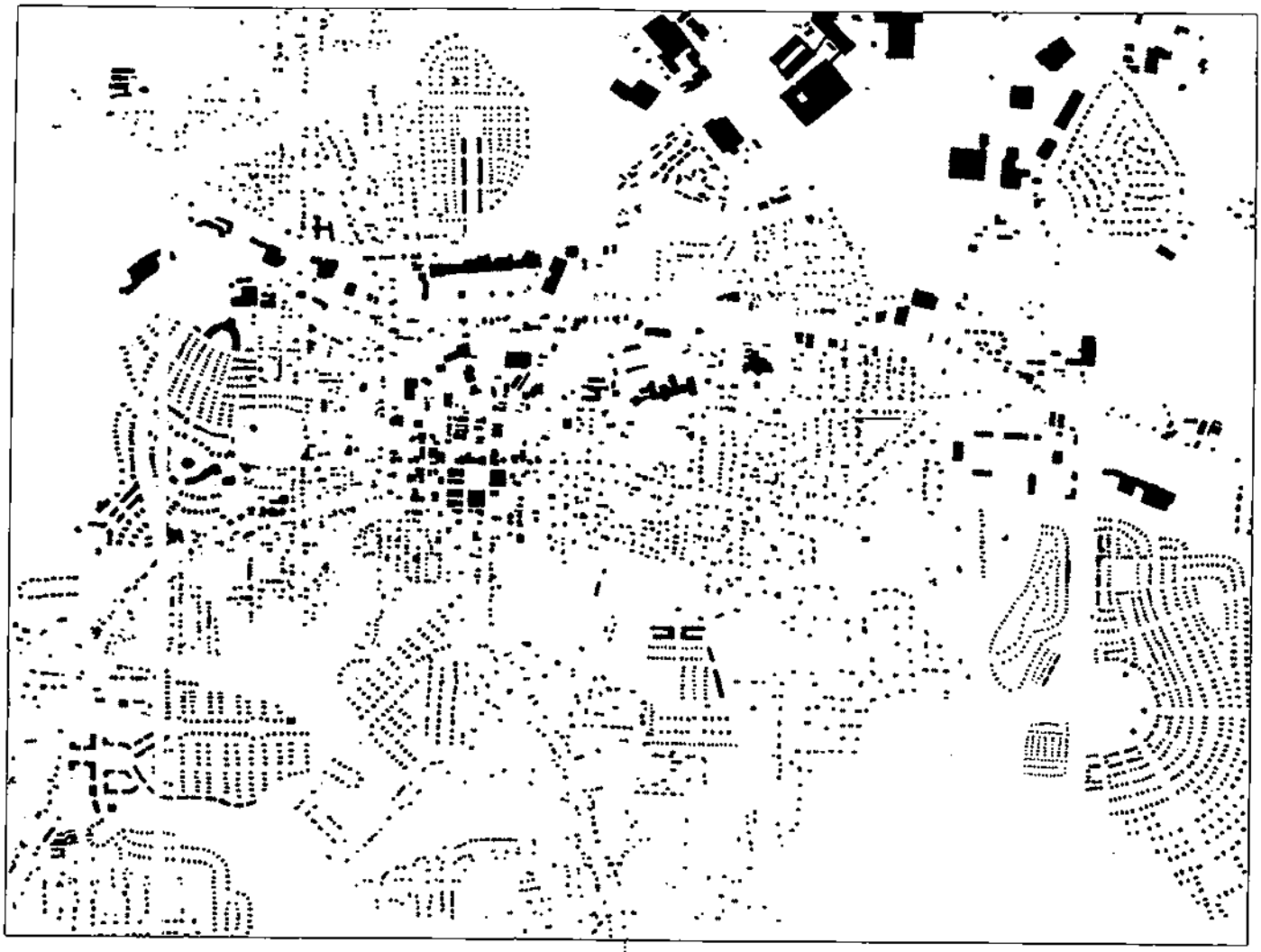


Figure ground with proposed development

## Program Summary

| SITE | TOTAL ACRES | ACRES TO BE PROTECTED | TOTAL DWELLING UNITS | GROSS RESIDENTIAL DENSITY (UNITS/ACRE) | NET RESIDENTIAL DENSITY (UNITS/ACRE) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| North | 174 | 105 | 300 | 1.7 | 4.7 |
| East | 410 | 125 | 1000 | 2.4 | 7.8 |
| South | 280 | 135 | 800 | 2.9 | 6.8 |
| West | 145 | 33 | 700 | 4.8 | 8.6 |
| Central | 60 | 12 | 200 | 3.3 | 4.1 |
| Total | 1069 | 410 | 3000 | 2.8 | 6.5 |

# ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## Environmental Quality

Air

Reduce the number of vehicle miles traveled by:

- Increasing pedestrian opportunities
- Linking land uses
- Promoting commuter rail
- Promoting teleworking
- Establishing city/county transit
- Promoting compact, integrated land uses

Water

Protect water quality by encouraging:

- Compact, integrated development
- Greenway system
- Continuation of land application as part of sewage treatment system
- Strict enforcement of Best Management Practices for development
- Use of pervious paving
- Adoption of conservation zoning

Natural areas protection

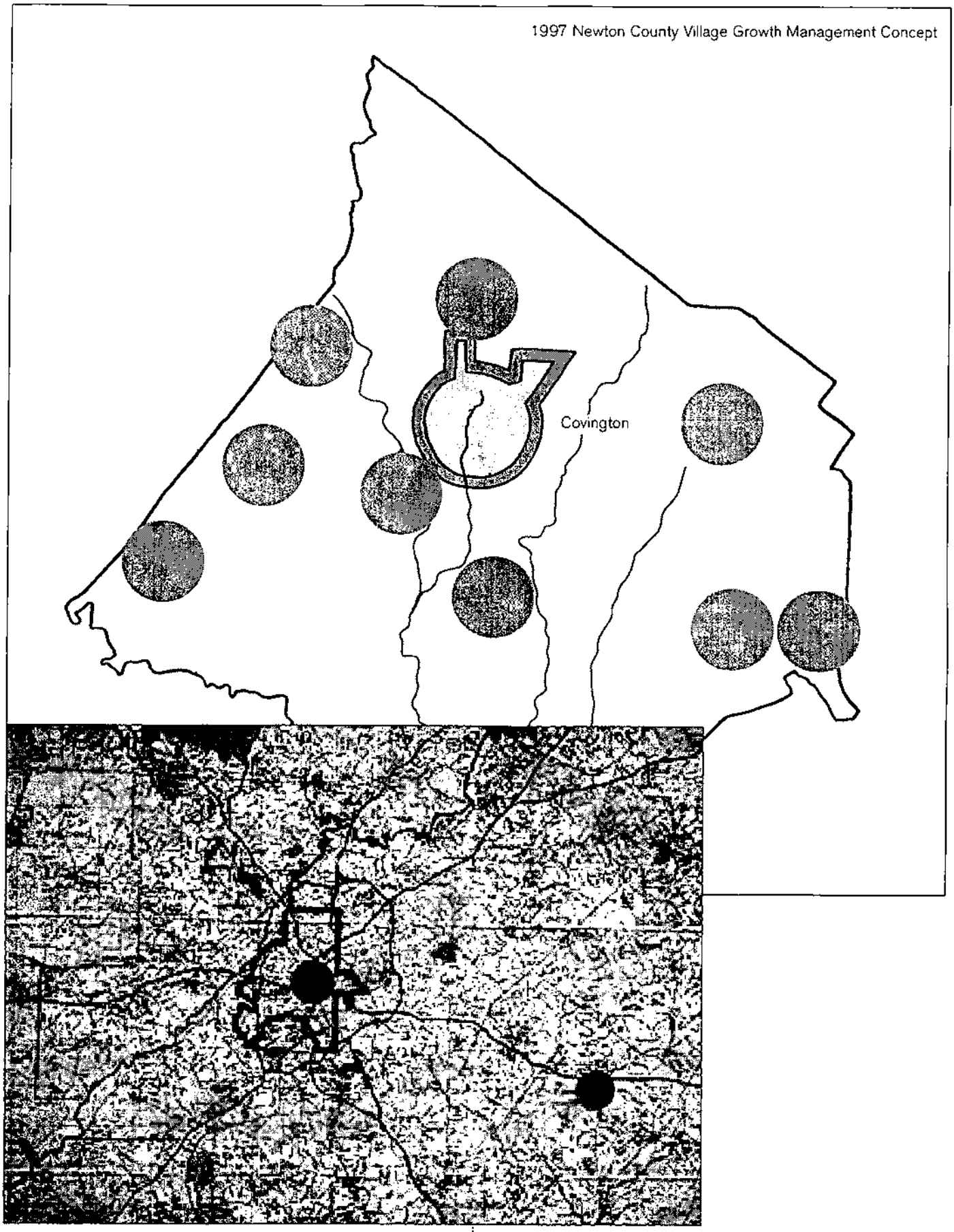
Protect natural areas by establishing:

- Land trusts
- Conservation zoning
- Conservation easements & transfer of development rights
- Greenway system

Incentives/disincentives for conservation design and pedestrian-oriented development and redevelopment

## Growth Management

- Coordinate with Newton County to institute township zoning (see Cherokee County, GA).
- Pursue public acquisitions of environmentally sensitive areas in county such as Alcovy River Basin.
- Institute impact fees programs in Covington to help fund public improvements.
- Institute transfer of development rights program to achieve desired densities and protect environmentally sensitive areas.
- Investigate use of tax increment financing to fund public improvements in new development areas
- Institute a strong comprehensive community plan and planning process.
- Investigate use of regulatory devices to help shape development outcomes such as:
  - -overlay zoning
  - -conservation easements
  - -mixed use incentives
- Establish a non profit community development corporation with substantial line of credit from financial institutions to purchase, hold, and sell property to facilitate proper phasing of new development.




Covington in the Atlanta region

# PARTICIPANTS

Coordinators:
- Ellen Keys, The Georgia Conservancy
- Randal Roark, AIA, AICP, Georgia Tech Urban Design Workshop
- Randy Vinson, Newton County

Professional Panel:
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- Gregg Logan
- Peter Drey, AIA, ASLA
- Raymond Strychalski, ASLA
- Ed Ellis, ITE
- Donal Hilderbrandt, ASLA

Georgia Tech Students:
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- Jonas Bronk
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- Dorita Herd
- Preston Johnson
- Ajay Nambiar
- Kelly Oboyle
- Elizabeth Raife
- Ronald Timblin

Covington Steering Committee:
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- John Byce
- Ray Geiger
- Bill Fisher
- Ron Dimery
- Kip Purvis
- Rob Fowler
- Ed Hutter
- Theresa Johnson
- Cynthia Marvel

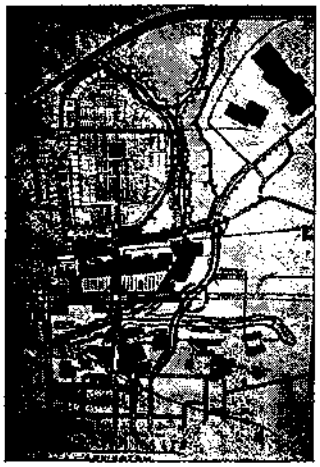
Successful Community Partners:
- Urban Land Institute
- Greater Atlanta Home Builders Association
- Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation
- American Institute of Architects
- American Society of Landscape Architects

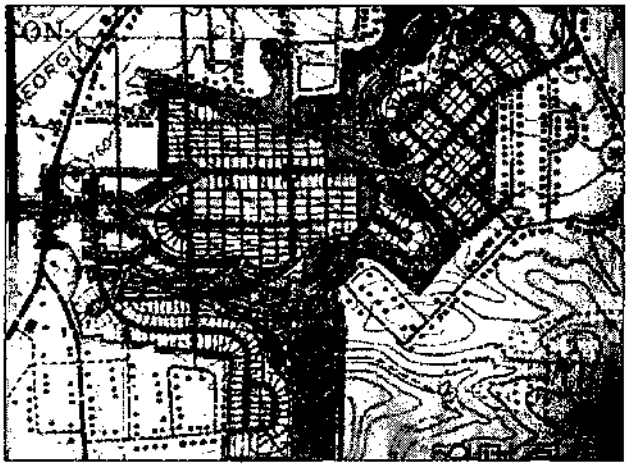
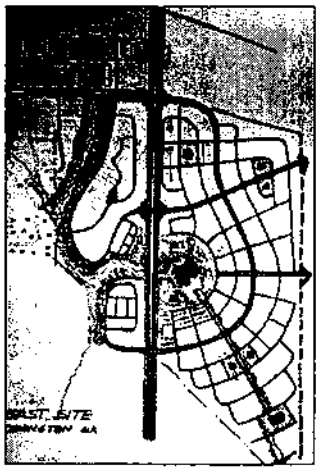
Sponsors:
- Deen Day Smith
- Georgia Power Company
- John and Wihelmina D. Harland Charitable Foundation
- Amoco
- Florida Ellis
- The Arnold Foundation

Historic homes along SR 36

Historic train depot–north site

# Workshop 1
# Covington





**Blueprints for successful communities**