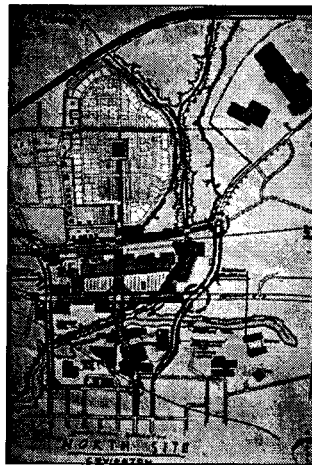


Workshop **1** Covington

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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**

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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

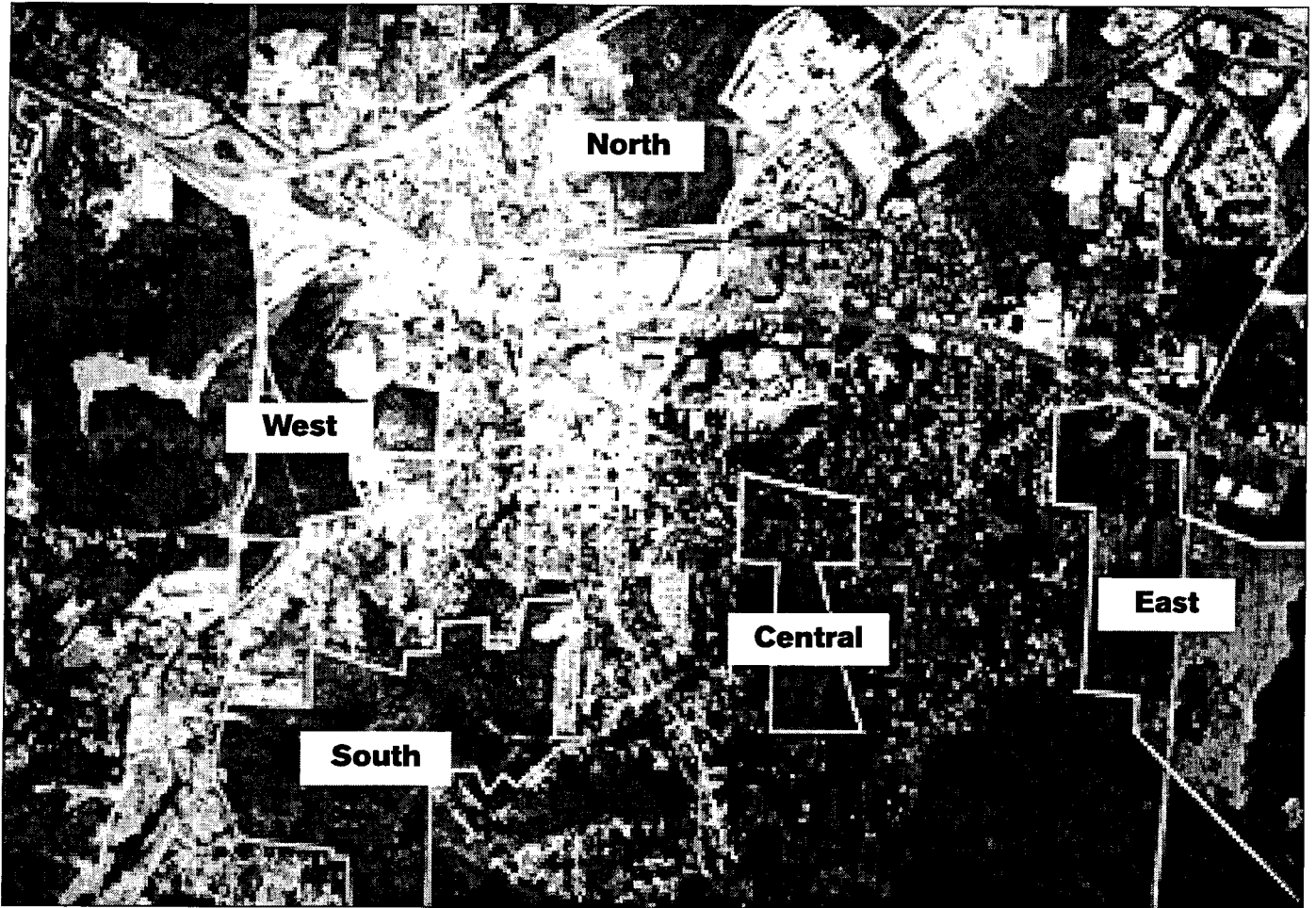
To accommodate the projected growth in Covington over the next 20 years, the Community Design Workshop identified five major undeveloped areas within the current city limits for consideration.

- **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 County²	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 Covington.

NORTH SITE

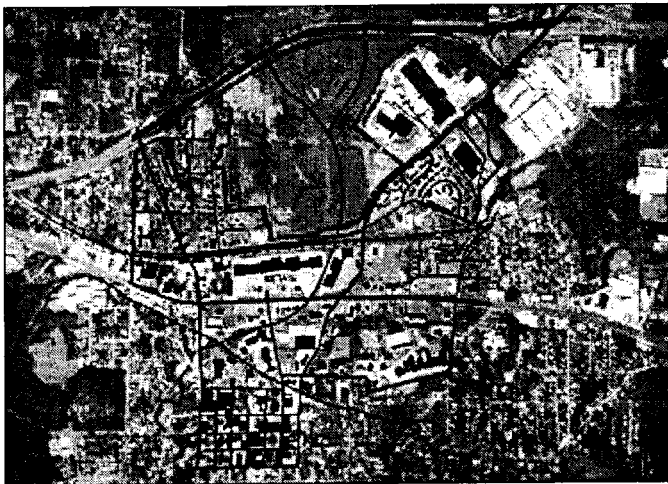
Existing Conditions

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

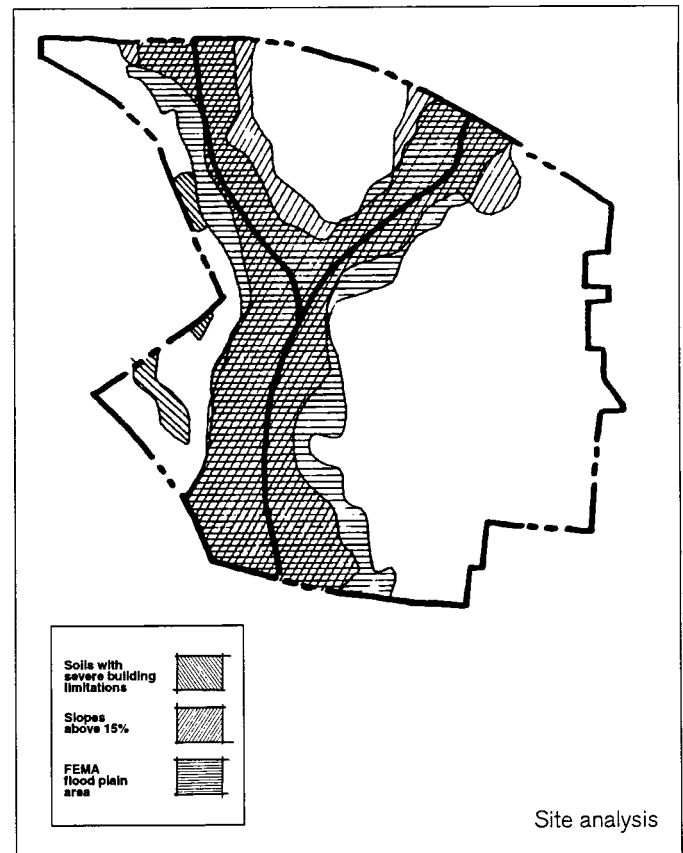
- Hwy. I-20 ROW along the northern boundary
- Industrial plant along eastern boundary
- Railroad line along southern boundary
- Single family residential along the western boundary



Existing conditions

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



Site analysis