

ILLUSTRATIVE DESIGN GUIDELINE FOR GATEWAYS AND CORRIDORS

The purpose of this guide is to provide a helpful illustration of the objectives and action strategies contained in the Comprehensive Plan Update concerning the promotion of a high-quality visual environment for County gateways. This guide does not preclude any authority of the Zoning Ordinance, the Design and Construction Standards Manual or the Uniform Building Code. Should there be any questions, please contact the Planning Department at (703) 792-6830.

Introduction

The Community Design Plan chapter was added to the Comprehensive Plan with adoption of the 1998 Plan. The intent of this chapter is to foster “quality development and a quality visual environment throughout Prince William County.” The goals, objectives, and action strategies of this chapter are used in the evaluation of various development proposals and the building architecture, landscape, signage, and lighting plans that are provided with the proposals.

One of the Community Design Plan policies is the upgrade of the visual quality of County gateways and major travel corridors. The policy is implemented by a series of action strategies. Two of these action strategies are as follows:

1. Create landscape treatments and install appropriate gateway signage and lighting at each of the County’s major gateways.
2. Prepare, in cooperation with Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and the private sector, landscape plans to improve the scenic quality of highly visible areas along interstate and regional highways and major County thoroughfares, including County-designated Highway Corridor Overlay Districts (HCODs).

The Board of County Supervisors and Planning Commission, in selecting the issues to be studied with the update of the 1998 Comprehensive Plan, were concerned that these action strategies be implemented.

Selected Gateways and Corridors

Staff selected five major County gateways for detailed study and recommendations. These gateways include the following:

- Route 28 (Centerville Road), from the Fairfax County boundary to the Orchard Bridge project.
- Route 29, from the Fauquier County boundary to Route 15.
- Interstate 66 West, from the Fauquier County boundary to the Route 15 bridge.
- Prince William Parkway and I-95, from the I-95 off-ramp to Telegraph Road.
- Occoquan River/Gordon Boulevard from the I-95 off-ramp to Old Bridge Road.

These gateways were selected because of the opportunities available for re-design of the gateway and corridor areas and the importance of each gateway within the regional or County-wide context.

Each of these gateways and corridors serves thousands of cars, trucks, buses, and other vehicles daily. Everyone driving or riding in these vehicles forms his or her own opinion of Prince William County from what can be seen along these corridors. Whether that impression is positive or negative, that impression stays with the viewer. It is within the scope of the Comprehensive Plan to actively foster the best image possible, through both public and private improvements.

Each of the gateway/corridor designs contains common element for both public and private improvements:

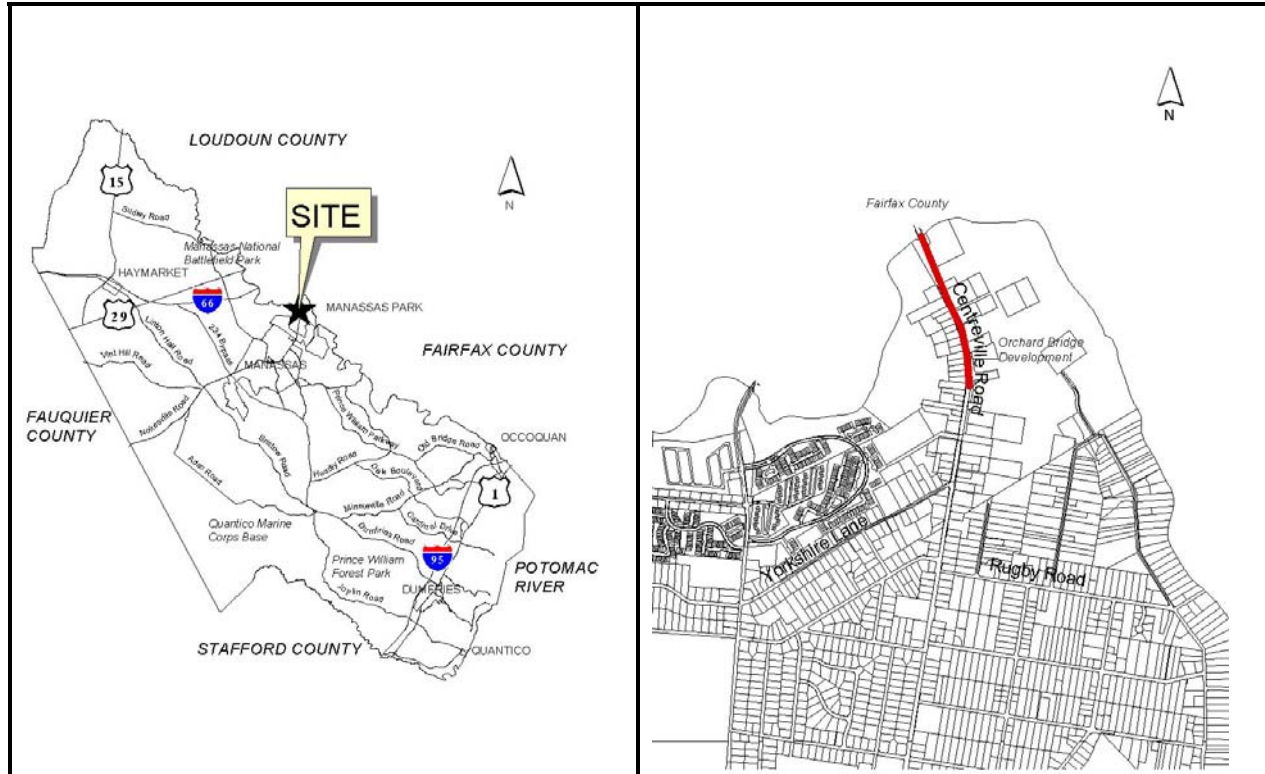
- The need for attractive, informative signage.
- The need for extensive landscaped buffers and roadway medians.
- The need for new or additional pedestrian walkways or trails.
- The need to buffer or eliminate visual blight.
- The need for new, additional, or replacement lighting.
- The opportunity to create, through community design, a “sense of place” for the gateway, the corridor, and Prince William County in general.

The visions and implementation strategies provided for five significant gateways into Prince William County provide an exciting, bold approach to community design. Funding for these strategies could occur through grants, private development districts, public bonds, rezoning proffers, and/or private funding. Adding new design objectives and action strategies to the Comprehensive Plan signals the County’s desire to upgrade its highway corridors. The various design elements should be incorporated into new or revised Highway Corridor Overlay Districts (HCODs) and should be presented to VDOT for implementation in upcoming highway construction projects.

GATEWAY 1: Route 28

Fairfax County boundary to Orchard Bridge

Existing Conditions



Location Map Gateway 1: Route 28

The entrance into Prince William County from the Fairfax boundary along Route 28 / Centreville Road does not currently utilize the many opportunities available to create a ‘sense of place’ for both residents and visitors. The corridor is entered via a concrete-faced bridge, half in Fairfax and half in Prince William. Two large billboards now delineate this County entrance. The roadway is a four-lane, undivided corridor, with turn lanes but no sidewalks or other streetscape treatments. Landscaping is limited to several small, decorative shrubs in front of the gas station and patches of grass along the shoulder. Small businesses, including several antique stores, line the gateway. Automobiles and trucks are routinely parked in front yards along the corridor, with little to no buffers provided. Cobra overhead light fixtures hung from utility poles provide lighting for the roadway. Depending on the time of day, vehicles obtain speeds ranging from 25-50 mph.



*View from Fairfax County at Bull Run bridge,
looking south*



Route 28, looking south toward Manassas

With the lack of streetscape, the high-speeds of vehicles, and the lack of public open space, the street is not pedestrian-friendly and not as enticing as it could be to County visitors and residents frequenting local businesses. Historic Civil War embankments and forts line the riverbed just west of the roadway. Only a small, hidden sign on the Fairfax County side mentions the historic significance of these forts. Located just east of Centreville Road, the Orchard Bridge development – a 750-unit, low-rise apartment complex under construction – is the most significant residential development in the gateway area.

Vision

The vision for the Route 28 gateway into Prince William County from Fairfax County is to create a “village core.” This vision would be achieved through various action strategies that strengthen the existing small village character of the corridor. Opportunities for the creation of a Main Street community complete with historic trails, a walkable and safe, pedestrian-friendly streetscape, new landscape treatments and buffers for uses that create negative visual impact, a public gathering space for visitors and residents, and vibrant retail businesses will be realized.

Implementation

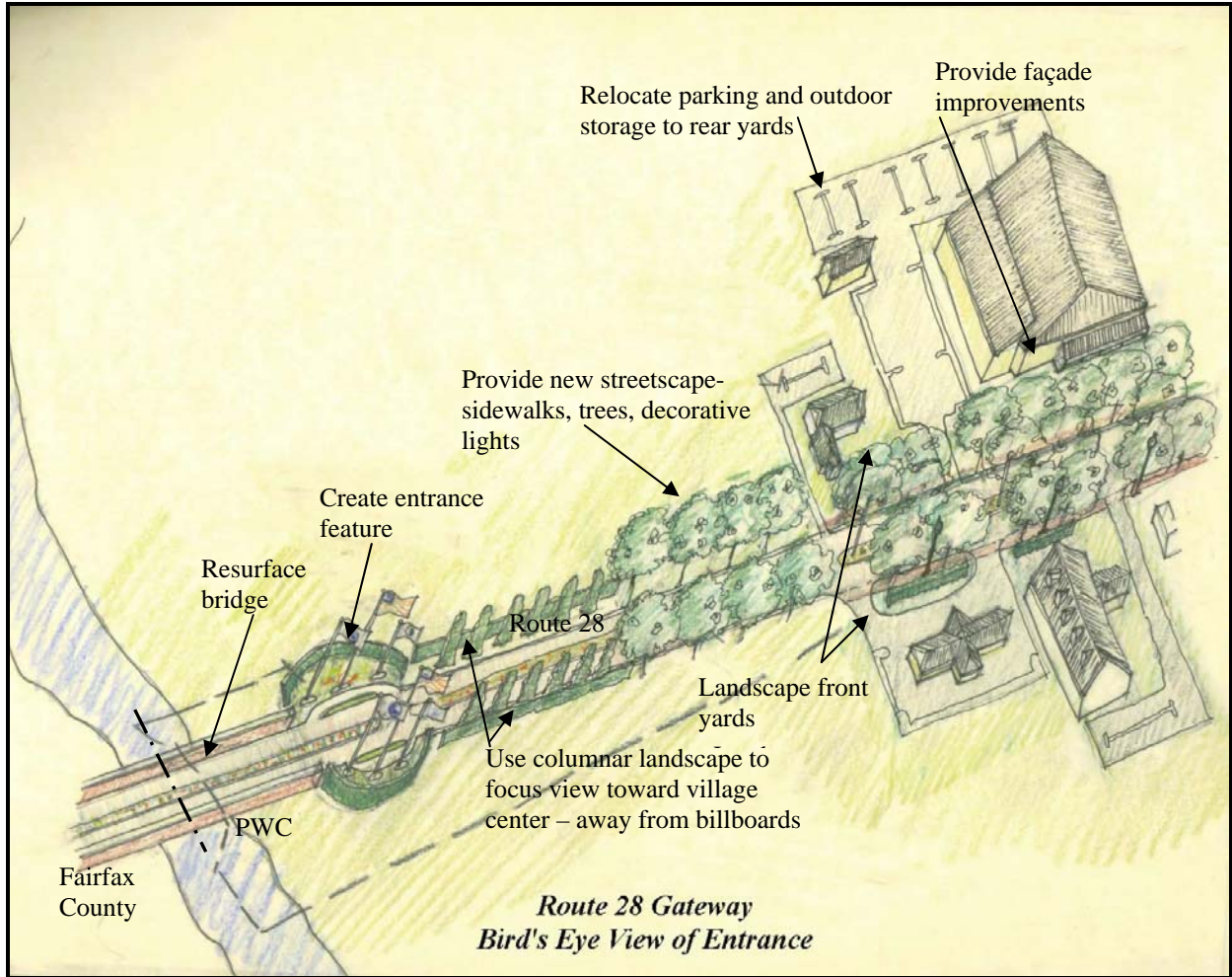
The existing Bull Run Bridge should be improved to provide a more attractive Prince William County entrance feature at this gateway. Resurfacing the bridge or cladding the bridge in a stone or brick material, as well as engraving new welcome signage in the bridge walls, would alert visitors that they are entering a unique place. A park area at the entrance to the village, complete with historic trail markers detailing the importance of the local region and a way-finding directory of local businesses, would help to direct residents and County visitors to local attractions. Decorative flags in this park area would attract the visitors’ eye down and away from the billboards looming above and announce the entrance to a special and unique village.

A streetscape program – complete with new sidewalks, street trees and decorative pedestrian-scale light fixtures – would help to attract consumers to the local businesses. Roadside landscaping, a planted median, and a series of columnar trees planted at the gateway entrance would serve several purposes. First, the median would break down the scale of the roadway,

making it more pedestrian-friendly. Second, these landscape treatments would alert vehicles that they are entering a pedestrian environment and should proceed cautiously, reducing speed as necessary. Lastly, the columnar planting at the entrance would divert the visitors' eye from the billboards down the street to the new improvements and the businesses. Pedestrian crossings or safe islands would be located in the median so that pedestrians can safely cross the roadway.

Parking and storage for local businesses should be relocated to the rear or side of the buildings. Opportunities for common or shared parking areas should be investigated. This would involve working with local business owners and enforcing front yard parking and outdoor storage violations. Removing parking from front yards provides the opportunity for front yard landscaping, thus introducing more green space into a sea of asphalt, concrete, and dirt parking.

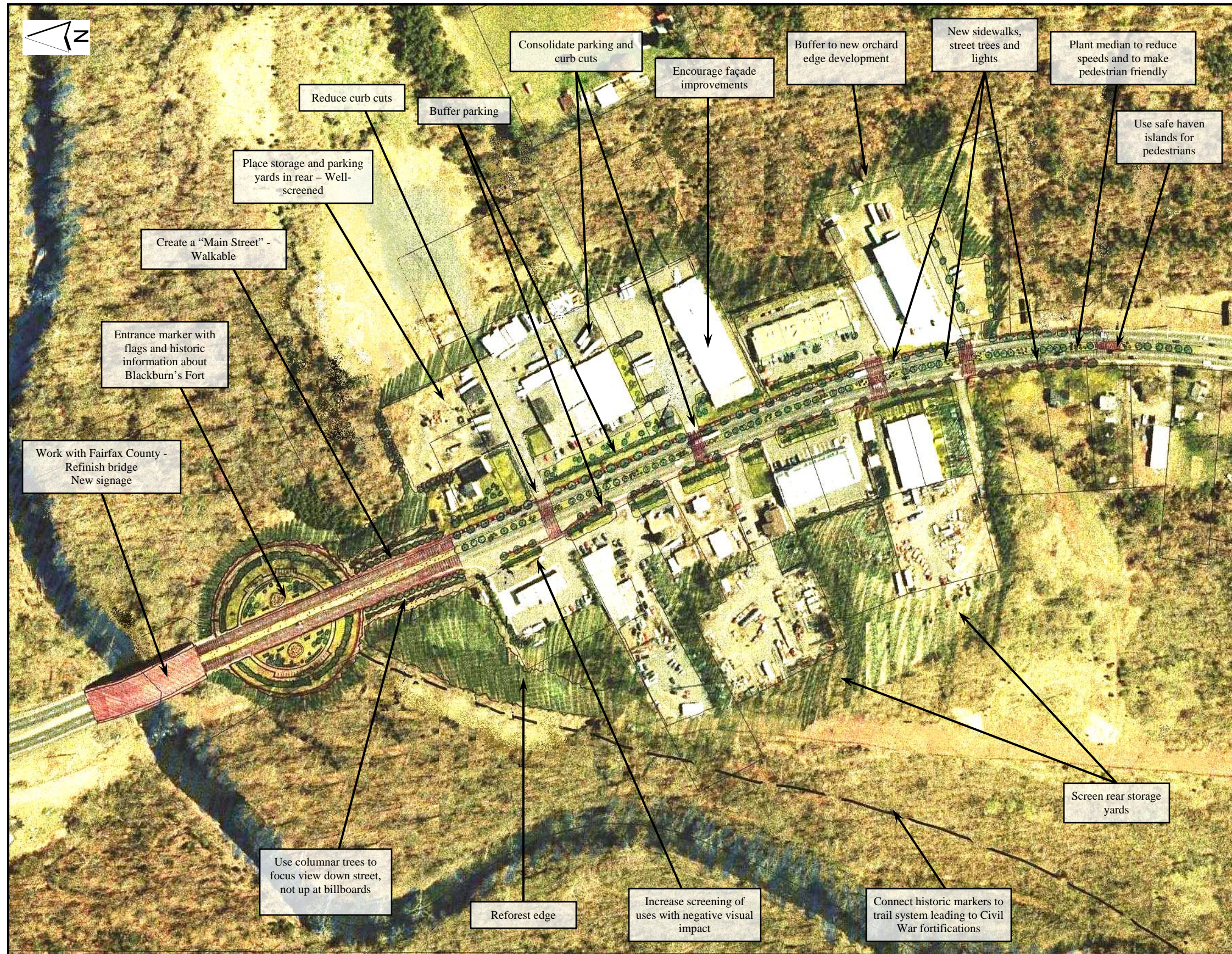
The Orchard Bridge multi-family development will bring new residents to the area requiring local personal services and thus creating new demands for local businesses and shops. The development of a work group composed of local residents and businesses owners, as well as County officials, might be pursued in order to help implement improvements on private property. Since public improvements only serve to create a portion of a gateway image, private improvements are needed to complete the revitalized gateway appearance. To complement the investment in public improvements, a façade improvement program should be begun to help owners better maintain and improve private properties. The development of design guidelines is also key to maintaining the image of the village.



Gateway 1: Route 28 Gateway Improvements

Gateway 1 - Route 28 Aerial View Illustrating Improvements

From the Piedmont to the Potomac



Gateway Objectives & Strategies for the Route 28 Gateway

Objective: To better define the Route 28 gateway as an entrance into a village core exemplary of a Main Street community.

ACTION STRATEGIES:

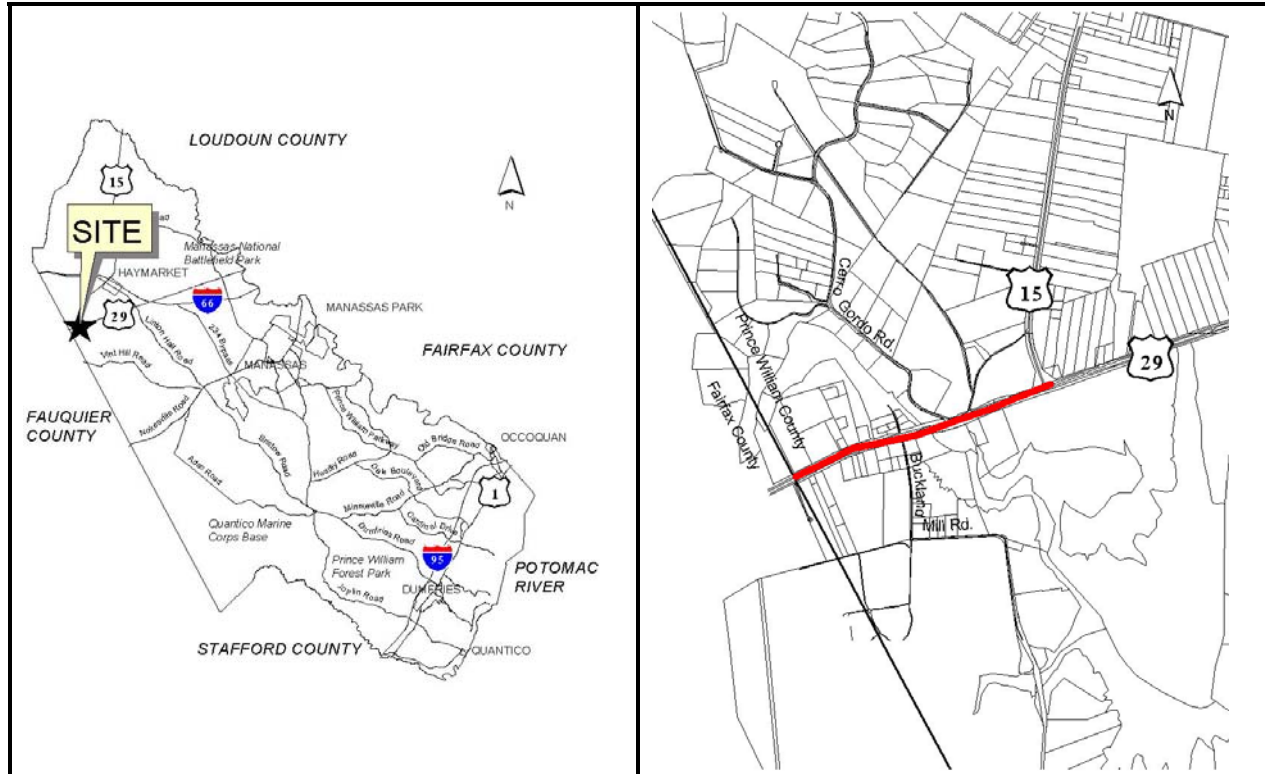
1. Provide streetscape improvements that emulate a traditional village environment. These improvements would include decorative light fixtures, walkable sidewalks, and shade trees. A planted median and seasonal plantings in existing medians should be added where possible in order to help to visually break down the scale of the roadway and to add to the traditional boulevard or Main Street appearance.
2. Provide additional buffers for uses that contribute to negative visual impact including surface parking, automobile repair uses, automobile storage yards, telecommunications equipment, outdoor mechanical equipment, etc. These buffers should completely screen the areas through the use of a manicured evergreen hedgerow, masonry wall such as brick, or a combination of durable fence material and evergreen plantings. Shade trees and landscape islands should be added to surface parking areas.
3. Develop design guidelines that regulate setbacks, land use, site design, signage, etc. These guidelines should include the following principles:
 - a. Use several smaller scale buildings instead of fewer larger ones in order to reinforce the character of a small village town, not a suburban strip.
 - b. Use a rural architecture including gable roofs, earth-tone materials and porches, wood shingles, etc.; and landscape that works with the natural character of the land, etc.
 - c. Site buildings so that they create opportunities for defined usable open spaces such as courtyards and greens.
 - d. Encourage business signage that resembles the traditional storefront signage rather than suburban monument style signage.
4. Provide improved gateway signage welcoming visitors to the area and way-finding (directional) signage to the local attractions. This signage should complement a unique entrance feature that serves to distract the visitors' eyes away from the existing billboards and focuses the view down the road to the village businesses. The entrance feature should provide a pull-off area with information on the local historic areas such as Blackburn's Ford. Create a designated trail system from the way-finding (directional) signage located at the entrance feature to the Ford area.
5. Work with all applicable public agencies, as well as private entities, such as local neighborhood/business associations, to develop maintenance plans prior to implementation of the proposed improvements. Ensure that the necessary maintenance

- for all of the improvements is provided, including but not limited to seasonal landscaping where applicable, regular litter collection, street cleaning, and general landscaping and lighting maintenance. Work with private property owners to improve the maintenance of private properties in order to enhance the overall appearance of the gateway.
6. Work with Fairfax County and the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), as well as any other applicable governmental agencies to make improvements to the Bull Run Bridge. These improvements should include resurfacing the bridge walls and resurfacing the road with paving materials that would slow vehicles down as they enter the village area.
 7. Restrict future land uses that require outdoor storage of vehicles or other types of equipment. Create and enforce zoning laws to not allow front yard storage of vehicles. Encourage screening of parking areas and 20% interior lot landscaping. Encourage the relocation of parking areas to the rear of properties so that parking is not visible from the street and so that a better landscaped front yard area can be created along the entire Main Street corridor.
 8. Encourage small town village uses such as retail shops providing local services and products. These uses may include a small market, drycleaners, bakery, florist, coffee shop, or sit-down restaurant.
 9. Encourage shared parking in order to reduce curb cuts and enhance the pedestrian environment.
 10. Provide incentives for improvements to existing private properties. This may include developing a façade improvement matching grant program.
 11. Investigate the need to expand the width of the commercial area in order to increase development opportunities for rehabilitation/expansion of existing businesses or new businesses.
 12. Before design development begins, investigate the historical plans of the early Yorkshire settlement as well as any Civil War sites in the gateway. Incorporate this information with the proposed gateway improvements in order to develop a more comprehensive village plan that is based upon historical precedents and one that better highlights important historical sites.
 13. Investigate the possibility of placing overhead utilities underground or relocating them to the rears of properties in order to eliminate visual clutter along the roadway.
 14. The County shall work with a local community and/or citizen association prior to the design development phase of the project in order to develop project details and to confirm a shared vision for the gateway.

GATEWAY 2: Route 29

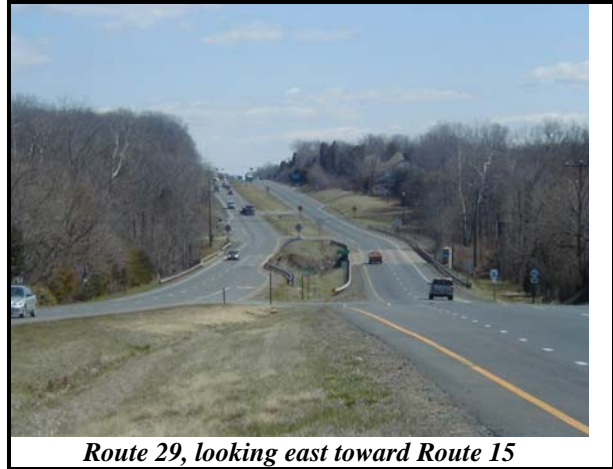
Fauquier County boundary to Route 15

Existing Conditions



Location Map

The Route 29 corridor is composed of local businesses catering to the agricultural market and the rural population living in the immediate area. Antique shops, a market, a gas station, and several other businesses compose the small business district. An existing HCOD does little to regulate the overabundance of signage. The existing four-lane undivided roadway is slated to become a six-lane divided corridor. Very little formal landscaping is present and only a standard green VDOT sign identifies the entrance into Prince William County. Likewise, there is no recognition of the Buckland Historic District – the most significant site feature of the gateway – other than a small sign at the entrance to the district itself. Another unrecognized natural site feature, a stream bed, part of Broad Run, runs through the gateway but has no trail system for formal public access.

*Route 29, looking east at entrance**Route 29, looking east toward Route 15*

Several high-end residential projects, located east of Route 15, have been developed. There is also a mixed-use, moderate-density project in the REC area along the eastern side of the Route 29/Route 15 intersection. Together these moderate- to high-density projects provide an interesting juxtaposition with the Rural Area at the entrance to the gateway.

Vision

The vision for the Route 29 entrance into Prince William County is to build upon the existing historic community of Buckland, accentuating the small town, rural nature of the corridor while at the same time demonstrating a high-quality design example and ‘sense of place’ for the future residential and commercial projects developing east of Route 15.

Implementation

As an initial step in improving the corridor, the Route 29 HCOD standards should be revised in order to include a set of design guidelines that illustrate how to preserve the better qualities of the corridor which add to its rural character. These include mature tree stands, open fields, stream valleys, and natural earthworks. In addition, these standards should illustrate how the Development Area east of the gateway should recall the architectural integrity of the Buckland Historic District through both building architecture and the siting of newly built structures. The existing HCOD standards regarding the regulation of signage should be better enforced and updated, in order to eliminate the negative visual clutter the existing signage creates throughout the gateway.

In addition to strengthening and enforcing the HCOD standards, streetscape improvements should be installed when the road is widened to six lanes. The proposed road widening plan calls for a divided roadway; however, there is enough room to leave a planted median which would act to break down the large scale of the roadway. Typically, six-lane divided roadways are reserved for roadways with the scale and speed of a highway. The use of a planted median would maintain the rural nature of the corridor rather than creating a high-speed highway corridor. New decorative light fixtures, sidewalks, and a double row of street trees at the curbside should be utilized to make the roadway more pedestrian-friendly and to again reduce the scale of the pavement. Landscaping along the roadside – in the median and on private

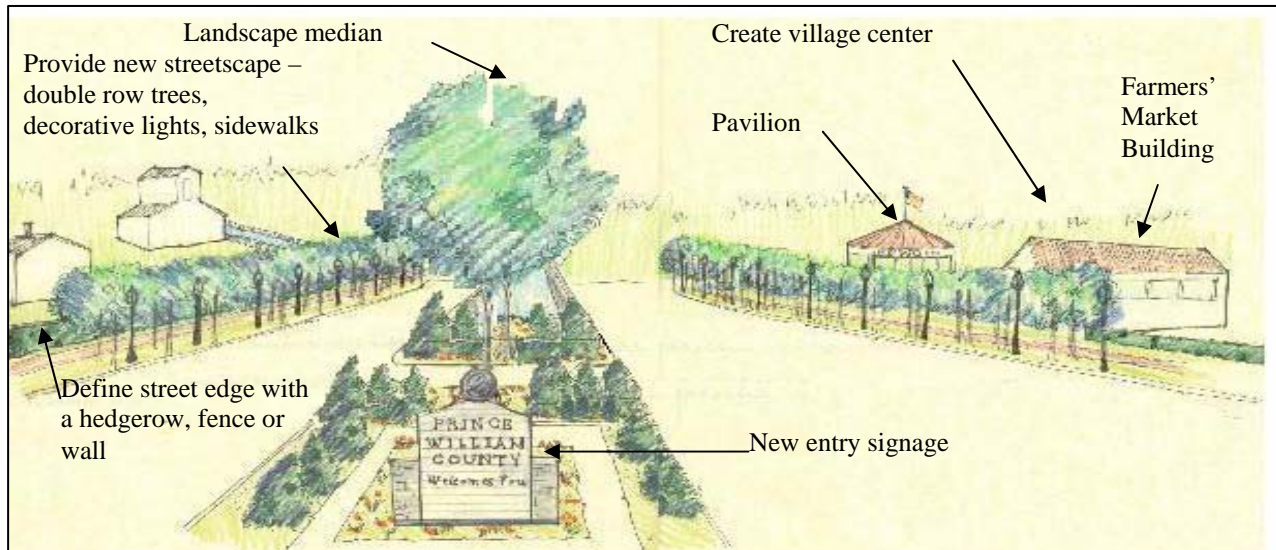
property – should be incorporated as part of the roadway improvement plan. Bicycle and equestrian trails should be created as possible, particularly along the streambed. A unique entrance feature, including new entry signage, should be created in the median area that complements the Buckland Historic District architecture as well as the high-quality residential projects farther east along Route 29.

At the time the roadway is widened, a better functioning interchange at the Route 29 and Route 15 intersection should be developed. A pull-off area could be incorporated here, including way-finding (directional) signage to guide visitors to local attractions and historic markers that illustrate the cultural importance of the Buckland Historic District to the history of the County.

Since the area just east of the gateway is quickly becoming populated with new high-end residential developments, this gateway area can become the hub of commercial and civic activity. Thought should be given to creating an outdoor public gathering space – such as a farmer’s market complete with an open-air plaza to accommodate fairs, equestrian shows, or theatrical performances. Locating this community space near the stream bed and including a trail system with riverwalk and pavilions, would help both visitors and residents to appreciate the varied natural features of this western gateway.

In addition to the public improvements noted above, the County should work with local property owners to revitalize private property. This may entail developing a façade improvement or landscape enhancement program for existing businesses. These enhancements might be provided by the private property owner in exchange for a matching grant or partial property tax relief. Design guidelines should be developed in order to maintain consistency of design throughout the corridor, a rural architectural vocabulary and high-quality building and site design that complement Buckland.

The County should also encourage the development of small, local businesses in the CEC area at Route 29 and Route 15, such as restaurants, small general food or gourmet stores, or specialty stores such as tack shops that provide needed services and goods for the nearby residential, farming, and equestrian communities. Large-scale “big box” retailers should be discouraged since they are not appropriate given the scale of the historic Buckland community, nor do they complement the rural nature of the gateway. This development should not be the typical suburban-strip but rather should utilize a series of smaller structures arranged on the site to create defined usable greens or courtyards. Businesses along the corridor that require outdoor storage of vehicles should be discouraged or at the least mandated to buffer or screen these outdoor areas and locate them to the rear of the property.



Gateway 2: Route 29 View from Entrance Looking East

Gateway Objectives & Strategies for the Route 29 West Gateway

Objective: *To create a gateway in a historic community that complements the rural village of the Buckland Historic District while at the same time provides an entrance to the developing equestrian and high-quality residential and commercial projects in the Development Area along the corridor.*

ACTION STRATEGIES:

1. Upgrade the Route 29 HCOD standards. These standards should include design guidelines for new developments in the Development Area that will lead to the construction of buildings that preserve the agricultural integrity of the existing landscape. The following principles should be incorporated with the HCOD standards:
 - a. Use several smaller scale buildings that are sited to preserve the better qualities of the land including mature tree groves, earthworks and water forms.
 - b. Use rural/equestrian architecture, including gable roofs, and earth-tone materials that work with the natural landscape, etc.
 - c. Design new buildings that emulate the architectural integrity of local historic structures including most importantly the Buckland Historic District.
 - d. Site buildings so that they create opportunities for defined usable open spaces, such as courtyards and greens, as well as trails for walking, biking, and riding horses.

- e. Restrict future commercial signage that adds to the visual clutter along the corridor and create a commercial signage program that works with existing businesses to enhance the design character of the corridor.
 - f. Since rears of buildings facing Route 29 will distract from the proposed public improvements, ensure that only front facades face the roadway.
 - g. Provide frontage roads as needed for the Development Area that will allow buildings to front Route 29 without the need for direct access to the roadway.
 - h. Provide a sidewalk to better define the street environment by maintaining a consistent front yard building line of 50 feet. A consistent pedestrian edge should be created by buildings, a hedgerow, tree line, fence or other wall type.
 - i. Encourage the development of rural village land uses in the REC area, such as retail shops providing local services and products. These businesses may include a bakery, coffee house, florist, dry cleaners, gourmet market as well as other equestrian related businesses such as a tack and feed shops. "Big box" retailers and strip shopping centers should be avoided in this gateway area.
2. Provide incentives for improvements to existing private properties. This may include developing a façade improvement matching grant program.
3. Provide streetscape improvements to present a cohesive site design for existing and proposed developments. These improvements should serve to create a traditional village atmosphere by including new decorative light fixtures, street trees, walkable sidewalks, safe pedestrian street crossings, and bicycle and equestrian trails.
4. Encourage the relocation of front yard parking and vehicle/equipment storage areas to the rear of properties. Outdoor storage and parking should be well screened with landscaping such that it is not visible from the street. Use restrictions should prohibit outdoor storage of vehicles or other equipment.
5. Encourage the consolidation of commercial parking areas in order to reduce curb cuts and enhance the pedestrian environment.
6. Provide a unique entrance feature that complements the Buckland Historic District as well as the proposed high-quality residential and commercial projects further east along the Route 29 corridor. This entrance feature should include 'welcome' signage and way-finding (directional) signage to local attractions.
7. Provide for an outdoor public facility which demonstrates to the visitor the character of the western, rural part of the County. This facility may include an open-air plaza for a public farmer's market, equestrian shows, craft fairs, etc. A bandstand pavilion may also be located in this community space to allow for outdoor performances.

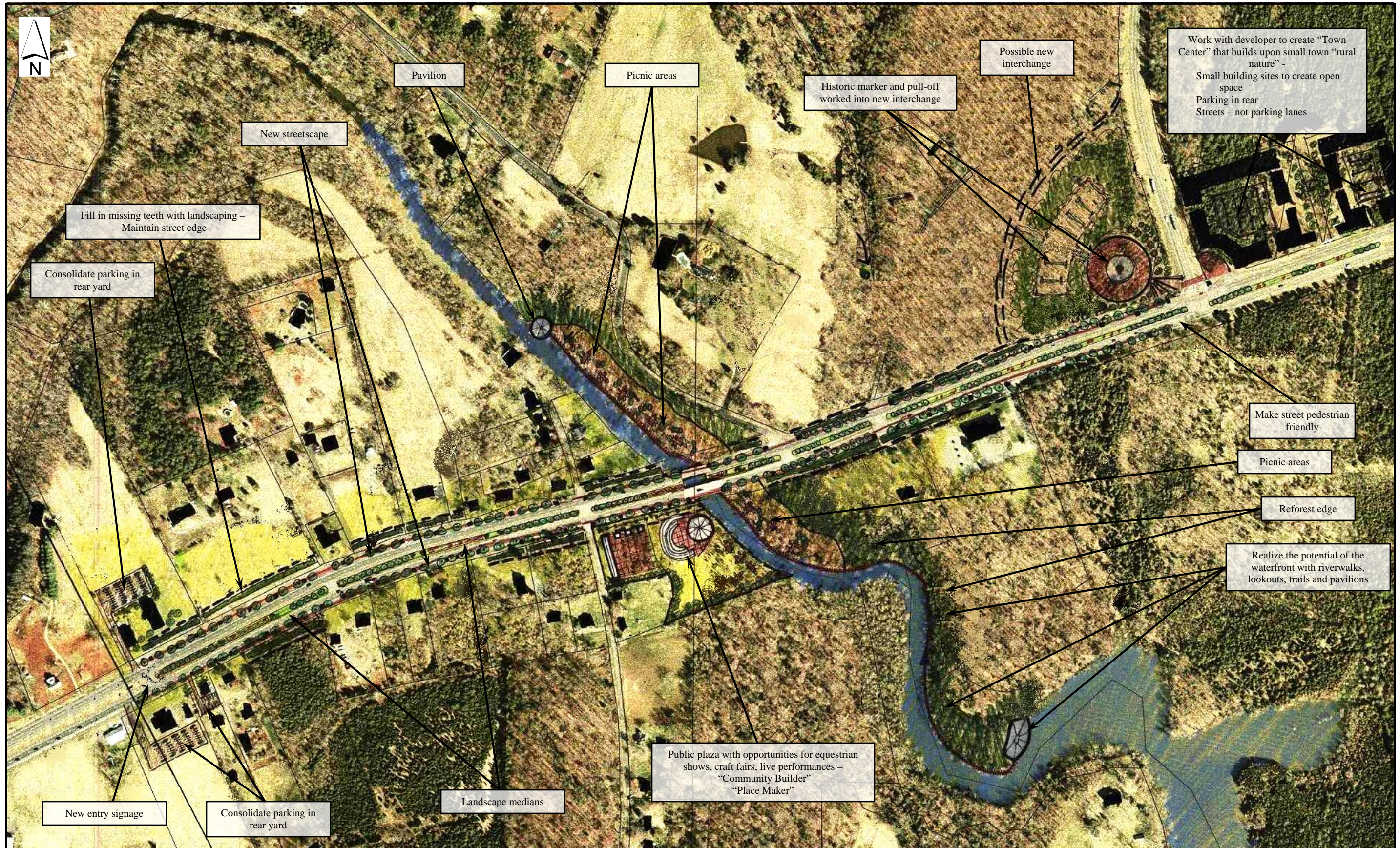
8. Provide improvements to the bridge spanning the Lake Manassas tributary in order to make it more attractive, including resurfacing in local quarry stone and engraved signage or artwork.
9. Work with all applicable public agencies, as well as private entities, such as local neighborhood/business associations, to develop maintenance plans prior to implementation of the proposed improvements. Ensure that the necessary maintenance for all of the improvements is provided, including but not limited to seasonal landscaping where applicable, regular litter collection, street cleaning, and general landscaping and lighting maintenance. Work with private property owners to improve the maintenance of private properties in order to enhance the overall appearance of the gateway.
10. Plant the median in order to help break down the scale of the roadway. The plantings should be planted informally at the western end of the gateway and gradually be placed in more formal planting arrangements as you approach the Development Area further heightening the idea of a transition from the Rural to the Development Area. Develop a landscape plan for the median areas as well as the roadsides that complements the existing vegetation.
11. Work with landowners in the Development Area with property directly abutting Route 29 to provide enhanced architecture and siting of buildings as well as a cohesive development on the northern and southern sides of the road, to include similar landscaping and building materials and design.
12. Develop a better functioning interchange at the Route 29 and Route 15 intersection. Public lands that are a part of the intersection should be well landscaped. Consider a pull-off area and monument detailing the historic nature of the surrounding development and its importance to the history of Prince William County. Way-finding (directional) signage should be included as a part of this monument area so that visitors can locate the local historic sites and attractions.
13. Utilize existing site features, including the Broad Run stream bed to create opportunities to enjoy the rural scenery and reasons for visitors to come to the area. This may entail building equestrian and bike trails, as well as pedestrian walks and pavilions along the stream bed.
14. Investigate the historical plans of the early Buckland settlement as well as any Civil War sites in the gateway before design development begins. Incorporate this information with the proposed gateway improvements, to develop a more comprehensive village plan that is based upon historical precedents and one that better highlights important historical sites.
15. Investigate the possibility of placing overhead utilities underground or relocating them to the rears of properties in order to eliminate visual clutter along the roadway.

16. The County shall work with a local community and/or citizen association prior to the design development phase of the project in order to develop project details and to confirm a shared vision for the gateway.

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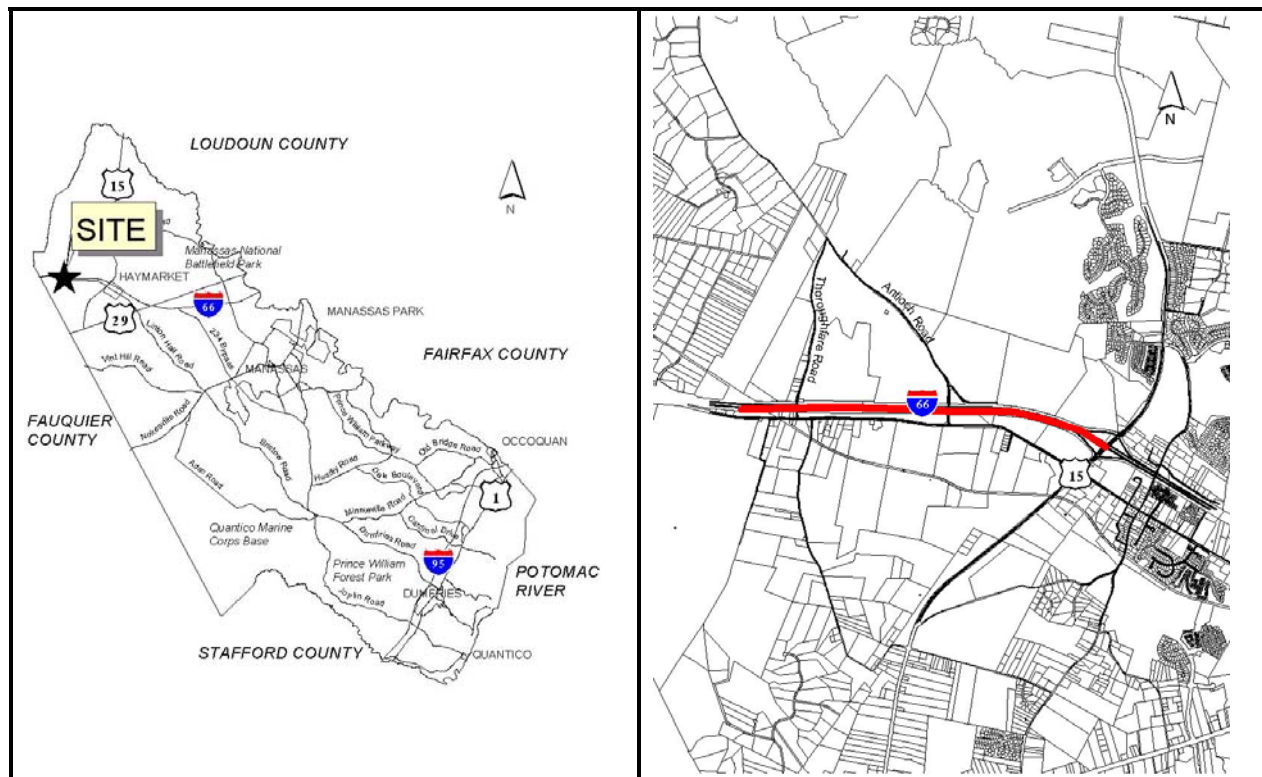
Gateway 2 - Route 29 Aerial View Illustrating Improvements

From the Piedmont to the Potomac



GATEWAY 3: Interstate 66 West

Existing Conditions



Location Map

The gateway as it exists today is limited to a small green VDOT sign that lets the visitor know he has left Fauquier County and has entered Prince William County. The corridor is very rural in nature, with farms to either side of the roadway. The historic Beverley Mill sits at the gateway entrance, holding the possibility for a unique historic entrance feature; however, there is no signage indicating its significance or the future work envisioned for the property. Several concrete and steel bridges cross Interstate 66. A large unplanted median is located in the center of the four lane roadway along with an approximate 100 foot buffer along both sides of the roadway. This stretch of Interstate 66 is not at this time planned for widening. The Development Area begins just before the Route 15 interchange. Several moderate density mixed-use projects are planned to flank the roadway at this intersection.



I-66 west, looking east toward Development Area



View at entrance, Beverley Mill

Vision

The challenge for the Interstate 66 West gateway is to create a corridor that illustrates both the rich agricultural history of the western portion of the County and yet demonstrates the transition to the high-quality mixed-use projects being developed at the Route 15 intersection.

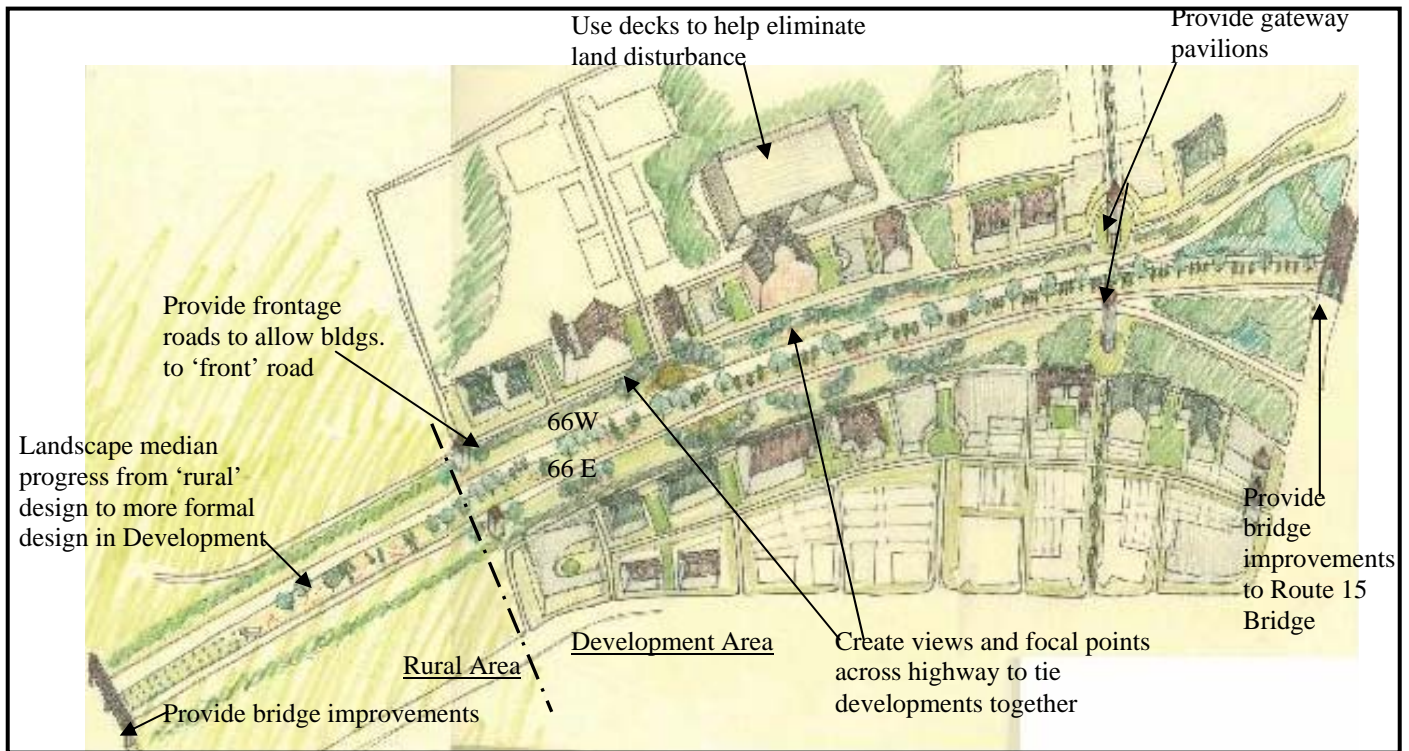
Implementation

The entire gateway should provide a transition from the Rural Area to the Development Area. This transition is perhaps illustrated best through the use of landscaping. A minimum 100-foot buffer should be maintained along both sides of the roadway. Plantings in this buffer should be informal at the western part of the gateway – to reflect Community Design Plan strategies for the Rural Area – and should progressively be planted in a more formal fashion as one approaches the Development Area. Varied plantings can be used to illustrate this progression. Reforestation of bare spots in mature tree stands should be utilized to reinforce the existing character of the land. Planting the median will help break down the scale of the roadway. Since the medians are so large, they also provide an opportunity for public artwork and way-finding (directional) signage directing visitors to local attractions and businesses.

As important as the use of landscaping is to the visual improvement of this gateway, the building siting and architecture of the projects surrounding the Route 15 intersection are equally if not more important. Since rears of buildings with outdoor mechanical equipment and trash receptacles facing Interstate 66 will detract from the proposed public improvements, frontage roads should be utilized parallel to Interstate 66 that will allow buildings to present a front façade to Interstate 66 without the need for direct access from the roadway. Design guidelines should be developed for these new developments that will help regulate building architecture and siting. Building architecture should emulate the traditional, rural nature of existing structures in the area including the historic Beverley Mill. The siting of buildings is equally important. Parking should not face Interstate 66, and parking decks or shared parking arrangements should be provided. Among other benefits to less surface parking, existing mature tree stands can remain, helping to preserve the natural, rural character of the land. The new developments to the north and south of the road should be coordinated, so that entry features on both sides of Interstate 66

can be provided and so that both appear as a unified project. The high-quality office design guidelines, prepared for another section of the Comprehensive Plan update, are an example of the type of guidelines that should be created for this corridor.

A unique feature of this gateway corridor is the three concrete and steel, blue-painted bridges at the major intersections. These bridges provide an opportunity to enhance the gateway since they act as major thresholds into the County. A bold move – such as resurfacing these bridges in the traditional stone found in the area similar to Beverley Mill – will aid in illustrating the strength, integrity, and character of the corridor. These bridges can then be engraved with welcome signage, artwork, and/or the County logo/seal.



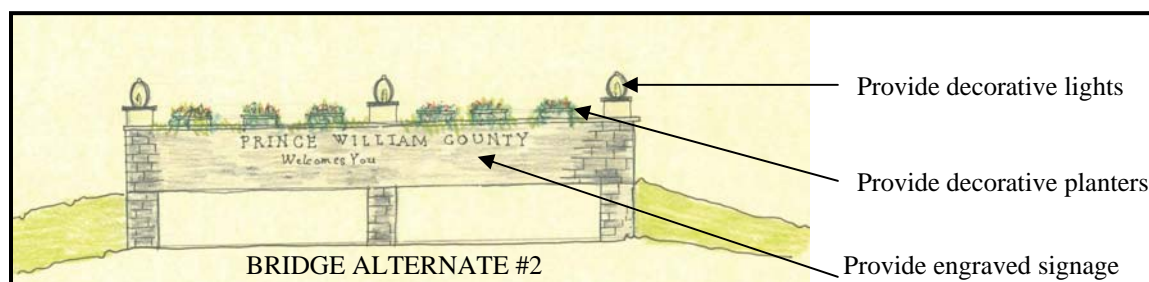
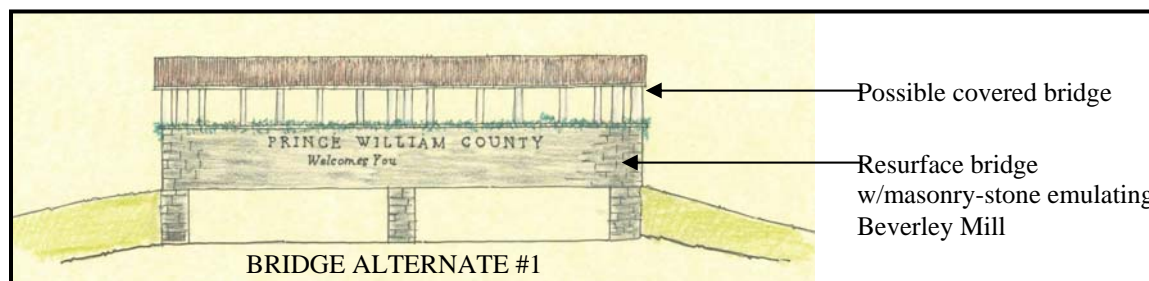
Gateway 3: Interstate 66 West Bird's Eye View

Gateway Objectives & Strategies for the Interstate 66 West Gateway

Objective: *To provide a transition from the Rural Area to the Development Area that illustrates both the rich agricultural history of the region along with the new proposed and approved mixed-use projects.*

ACTION STRATEGIES:

1. Given the close proximity to the Rural Area, create design guidelines for new developments in the Development Area that help preserve the agricultural integrity of the existing landscape. These guidelines should include the following objectives:
 - a. Use several smaller-scale buildings – in the Development Area along Interstate 66 – that are sited to preserve the scenic qualities of the land, including mature tree groves, earthworks and water forms.
 - b. Use rural architecture, including gable roofs, earth-tone materials, etc. that work with the natural landscape.
 - c. Design new buildings that emulate the architectural integrity of local historic structures including most importantly Beverley Mill.
 - d. Site buildings so that they create opportunities for defined usable open spaces such as courtyards, greens and trails.
 - e. Employ the High-Quality Office Guidelines in the Development Area at the Interstate 66/Route 15 intersection to ensure better building and site design.
2. Maintain a 100-foot buffer on both sides of Interstate 66. Reforest bare spots in existing mature tree stands on the northern side of the roadway and provide new evergreen tree stands of similar species on the southern side of the roadway. Develop a landscape plan for the median areas as well as the roadsides that complement the existing vegetation.
3. Provide bridge improvements to the existing three bridges in the gateway corridor in order to make them more attractive including resurfacing in local quarry stone, replacing any guard rails with more decorative screening, and engraved signage or artwork.



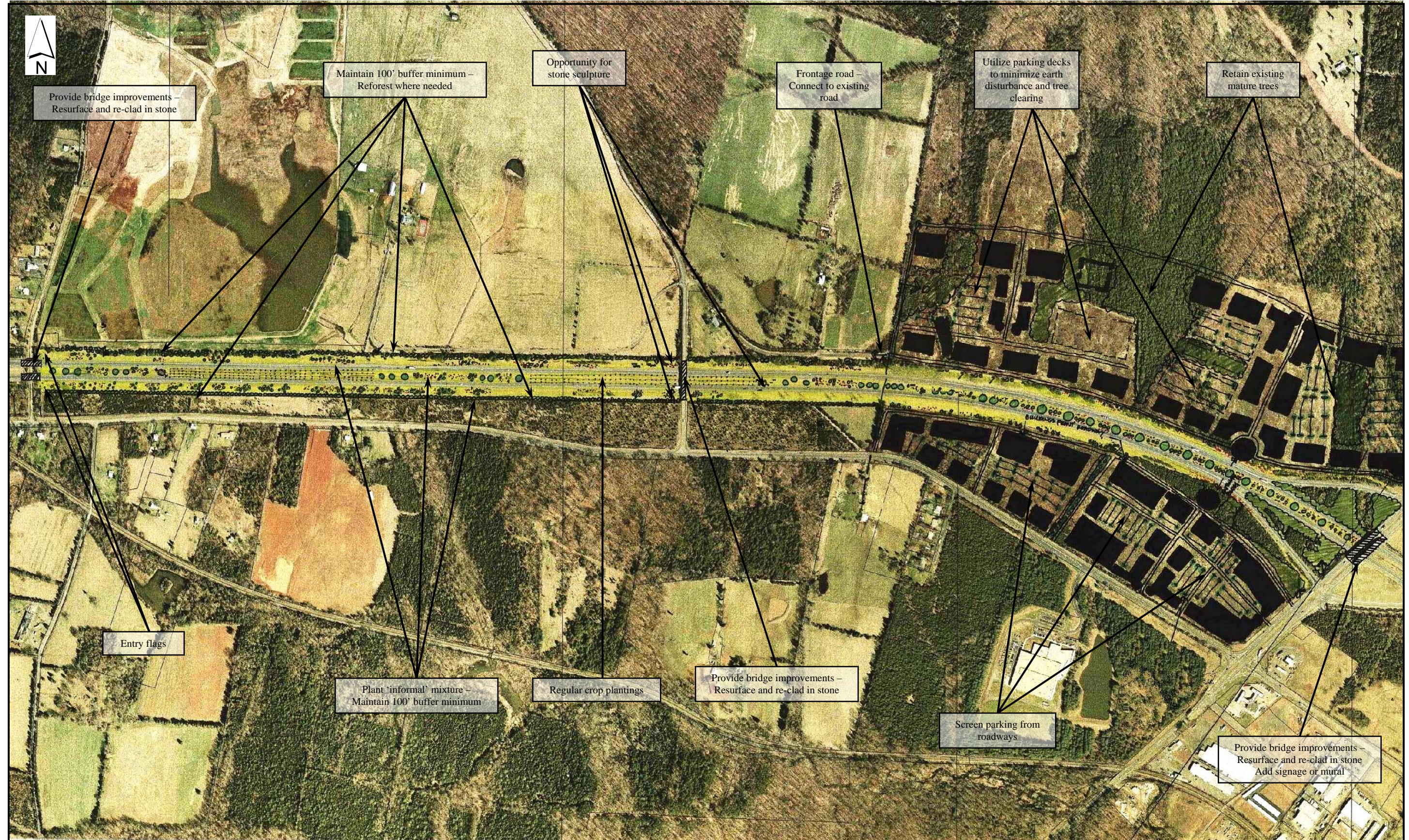
Gateway 3: Interstate 66 West Options for Bridge Improvements

4. Work with all applicable public agencies, as well as private entities, such as local neighborhood/business associations, to develop maintenance plans prior to implementation of the proposed improvements. Ensure that the necessary maintenance for all of the improvements is provided, including but not limited to seasonal landscaping where applicable, regular litter collection, street cleaning, and general landscaping and lighting maintenance. Work with private property owners to improve the maintenance of private properties in order to enhance the overall appearance of the gateway.
5. Plant the median in order to help break down the scale of the roadway. The plantings should be planted informally at the western end of the gateway and gradually be placed in more formal planting arrangements as you approach the Development Area further heightening the idea of a transition from the Rural to the Development Area.
6. Work with landowners in the Development Area with property directly abutting Interstate 66 in order to provide enhanced architecture and siting of buildings as well as a cohesive development on the northern and southern sides of the road. This cohesive development should include similar landscaping and building materials and design as well as gateway pavilions on both sides of Interstate 66.
7. Since rears of buildings facing Interstate 66 will distract from the proposed public improvements, provide frontage roads for the Development Area that will allow buildings to front Interstate 66 without the need for direct access to the roadway.
8. Screen all parking areas from the view of Interstate 66 either with buildings, heavily planted landscape screens, berms or other earthworks, or a quarry stone wall reminiscent of Beverley Mill.

9. Utilize parking decks or underground parking in conjunction with shared parking arrangements in order to avoid large amounts of earth disturbance and damage to mature stands of trees. Where parking decks cannot be used, heavily landscape surface parking areas at a minimum of 20% in order minimize their impact on the rural landscape.
10. The County shall work with a local community and/or citizen association prior to the design development phase of the project in order to develop project details and to confirm a shared vision for the gateway.

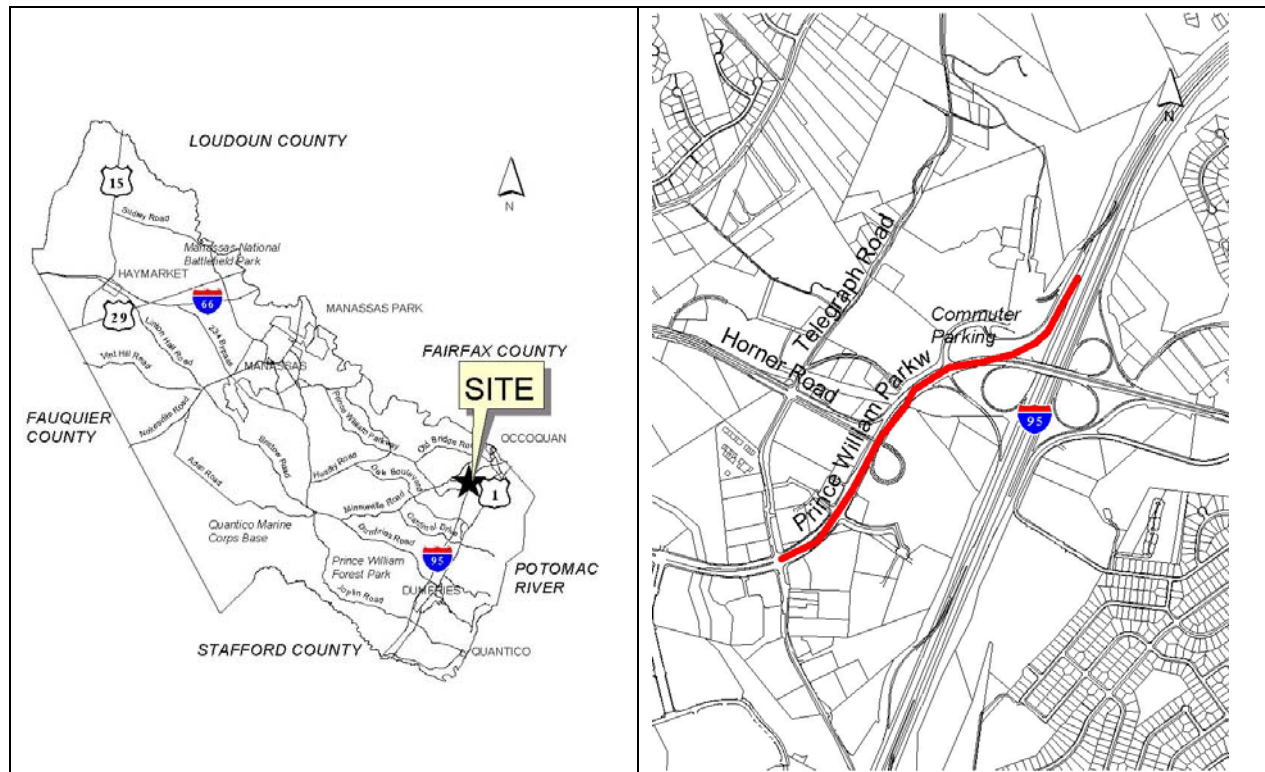
Gateway 3 - Interstate 66 West Aerial View Illustrating Improvements

From the Piedmont to the Potomac



GATEWAY 4: Prince William Parkway – Interstate 95

Existing Conditions



Location Map

The entrance to Prince William County from I-95 is the most traveled gateway in the County and, as such, is perhaps the most important in portraying a positive, attractive County image. Potomac Mills is the County's most visited tourist attraction and has often been cited as the top tourist attraction in Virginia. Because of its popularity, smaller retailers have grown around the mall, including several fast food and sit-down restaurant chains, to serve the customer base. Immediately exiting I-95, the visitor encounters a large surface parking area, the park-and-ride commuter lot. No landscaping or perimeter buffering is provided. The lot has been expanded. Next is the Horner Road Bridge, with a small brick welcome sign and seasonal plantings flanking the right side of the bridge. Medians are under-planted and there is little to no roadside planting in the public areas along the curbside. Immediately south of the Horner Road Bridge, several big box retailers and restaurant franchises frame the roadway, along with a gas station. Varied roadside plantings are provided in front of the retail and restaurant areas, as well as a berm to help to screen parking; however, there is no consistent streetscape or landscape design for the gateway. An asphalt trail is provided on the western side of the Parkway. There is no pedestrian connection from the park-and-ride lot to the large surface parking area of the retailers north of the Parkway; missing an opportunity for shared parking and the reduction in asphalt paving at the gateway entrance.



*Prince William Parkway, looking west toward
Horner Road Bridge*



*Prince William Parkway, looking west toward
Potomac Mills*

Vision

Since Potomac Mills is a major visitor attraction for the County, improvements to the entrance from I-95 along Prince William Parkway are one of the major keys to improving the County's image. Because of the retail nature of the corridor, this gateway can perhaps handle bolder architectural gestures and landscaping. By the same token, this gateway must make a strong statement communicating the variety of experiences the County has to offer all types of visitors - a day at the ball park, a shopping extravaganza, a variety of restaurant experiences, and a step back in time to visit a historic battlefield, among others.

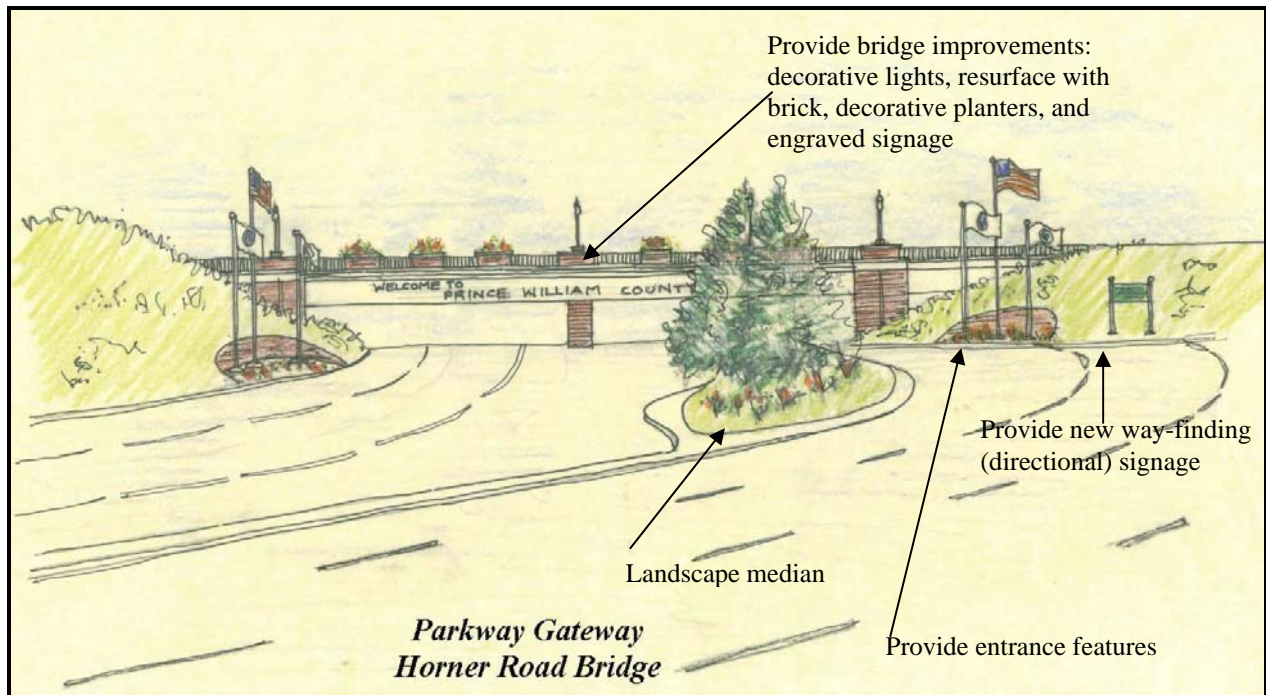
Implementation

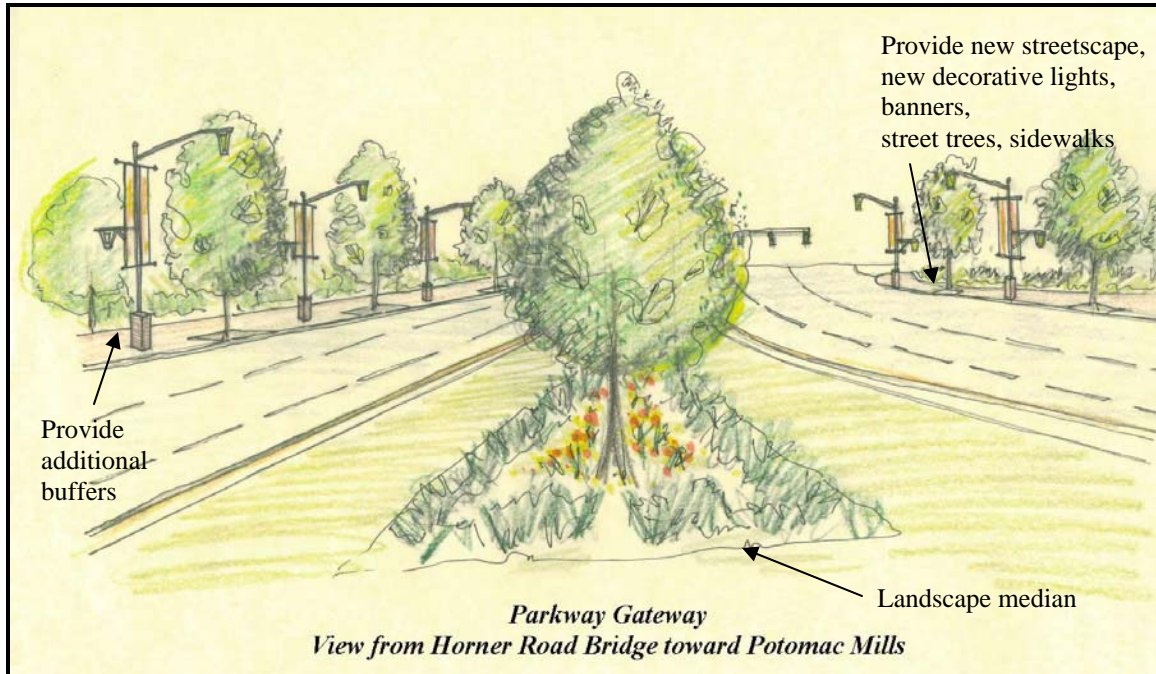
The boldest move in the redesign of the Parkway gateway would be to upgrade the Horner Road Bridge. The bridge is a literal portal into the County and should be treated in a grand manner. The first step would be to resurface the bridge in brick or other high-quality masonry material and to place decorative elements on the bridge, including new light fixtures, engraved welcome signage, and planters. The existing sign to the right of the bridge is not grand enough and should be replaced with two unique monuments and flags flanking both sides of the bridge, in order to better announce the entrance into the corridor.

As important as the variety of retail experiences is to the visitor and the Potomac Mills Mall, the variety of building designs, signage, and landscaping does little to express integrity and high-caliber of design. Stricter design controls regarding building setbacks, site design, and signage control need to be added to a set of district guidelines in order to establish some level of consistency and high-quality retail design for future developments in the gateway. Streetscape improvements are another tool to providing consistency throughout the gateway. New sidewalks, street trees at the curbside in addition to those on public property, new decorative street and pedestrian-scale light fixtures with decorative banners and planters, and improved median plantings are the first steps in creating a sense of place in the public realm by tying the existing varied architecture and landscaping together.

Way-finding (directional) signage locating local tourist attractions is missing from the Parkway streetscape. This directory of activities is important to let visitors know where they can find what they need and more importantly, there is more to experience in the County.

Buffering of parking areas and uses that create a negative visual image – such as warehouse delivery areas and gas stations – is crucial to supporting the proposed public improvements. The key area to buffer is the commuter parking lot since this is the very first area visitors see upon exiting the highway. Increased interior lot landscaping will help to set an important standard for other private parking lots in the gateway area. Future restriction of land uses that require large amounts of truck and vehicular parking or storage at the roadside should be considered.





Gateway Objectives & Strategies for the Prince William Parkway Gateway

Objective: To provide an enhanced gateway into the Woodbridge community, including the Potomac Mills retail area.

ACTION STRATEGIES:

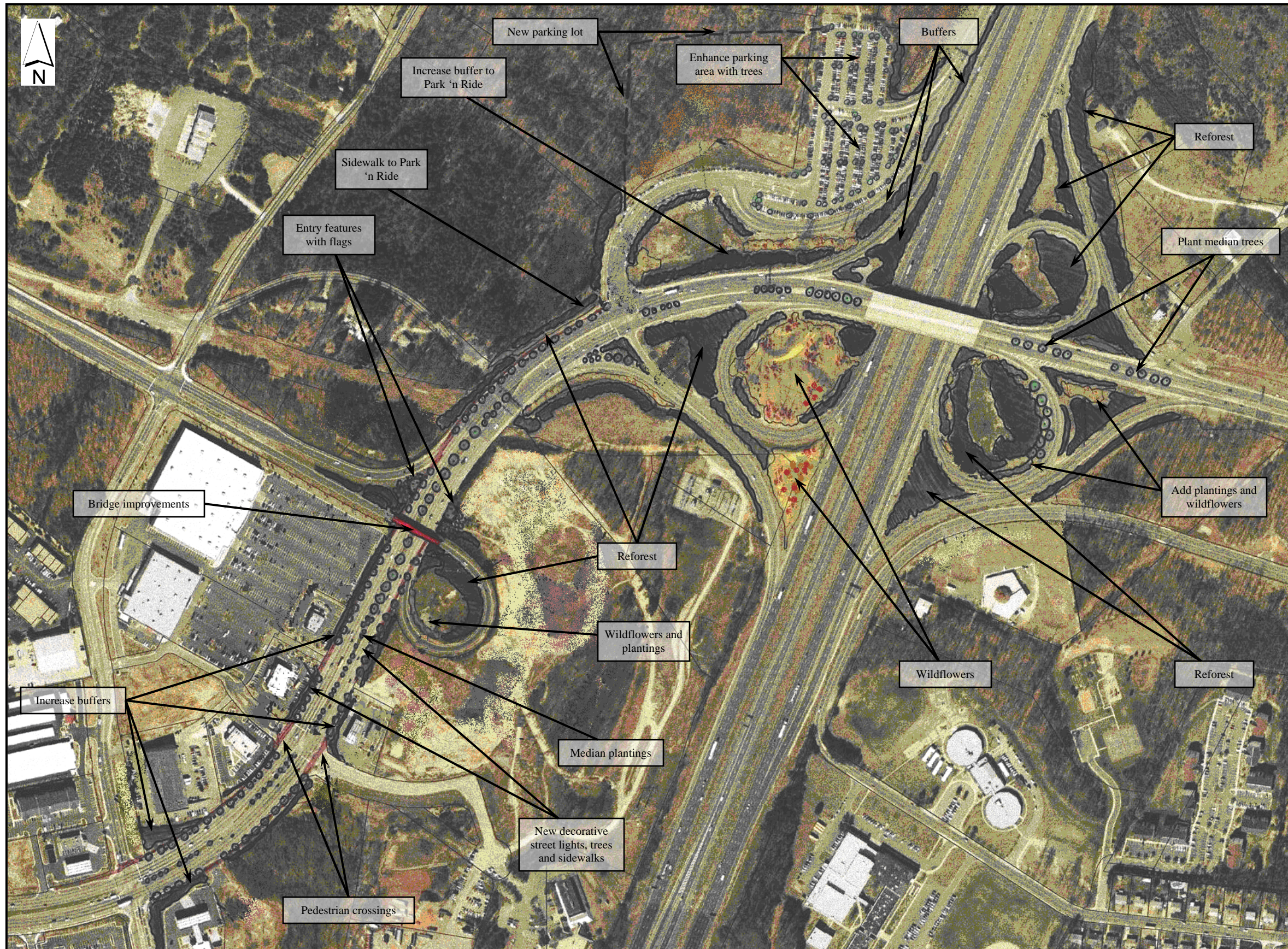
1. Add stricter design controls to the Parkway Overlay District that regulate setbacks, land use, site design, signage, etc. in order to foster better design of both buildings and open spaces.
2. Provide streetscape improvements to create a traditional urban atmosphere including new sidewalks, street trees, and decorative light fixtures. These improvements should serve to unify the varied landscape and architecture of the corridor as well as reinforce the retail nature of the gateway and surrounding neighborhood.
3. Provide enhanced landscape in medians, jug-handles and along the roadside, as well as increased buffers for automobile-oriented uses and large areas of surface parking that front the Parkway. Reforest roadside areas as needed.
4. Make aesthetic improvements to the Horner Road Bridge. These improvements should include resurfacing the bridge walls with brick and providing new engraved "welcome" signage on the bridge walls, new decorative light fixtures and planters.
5. Provide unique monuments and flags at both sides of the bridge to better announce the entrance into the corridor.

6. Restrict future land uses that require outdoor storage of vehicles or other types of equipment.
7. Work with VDOT and PRTC to provide better buffering of the existing commuter parking lot as well as interior lot landscaping and way-finding (directional) signage. Connect to the existing sidewalk coming from Telegraph Road to the commuter parking area in order to enhance pedestrian safety along the Parkway. Encourage shared parking arrangements for weekday commuters.
8. Provide way-finding (directional) signage that helps to locate visitor attractions, County offices, and the park and ride lot.
9. Work with all applicable public agencies, as well as private entities, such as local neighborhood/business associations, to develop maintenance plans prior to implementation of the proposed improvements. Ensure that the necessary maintenance for all of the improvements is provided, including but not limited to seasonal landscaping where applicable, regular litter collection, street cleaning, and general landscaping and lighting maintenance. Work with private property owners to improve the maintenance of private properties in order to enhance the overall appearance of the gateway.
10. Work with landowners with property directly abutting the Parkway to provide enhanced architecture and siting of buildings as well as a cohesive development on the eastern and western sides of the roadway, including similar landscaping and building materials.
11. The County shall work with a local community and/or citizen association prior to the design development phase of the project in order to develop project details and to confirm a shared vision for the gateway.

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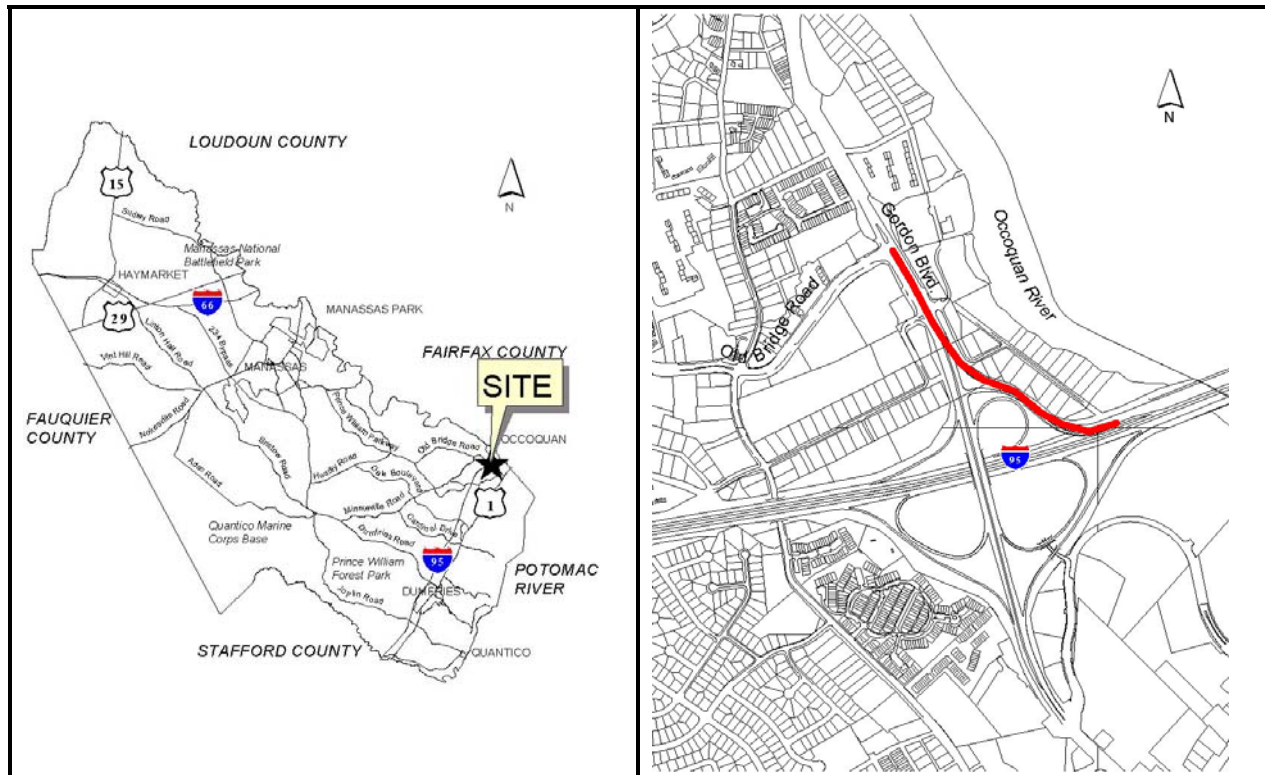
Gateway 4 - Prince William Parkway – Interstate 95 Aerial View Illustrating Improvements

From the Piedmont to the Potomac



GATEWAY 5: Occoquan River at Interstate 95 – Old Bridge Road

Existing Conditions



Location Map

This gateway is the smallest of all investigated in the Comprehensive Plan Update, but is also one of the most heavily traveled in the County. Upon exiting the off-ramp from I-95, two gas stations and a fast-food restaurant frame the view toward Old Bridge Road. The commuter parking lot located at the intersection of Gordon Boulevard and Old Bridge Road is not screened and contains no interior lot landscaping. The large surface parking area thus becomes a visual blight on the streetscape. With no formal streetscape plan for the roadway, no planted medians, and no real pedestrian access for commuters utilizing the public parking lot, Gordon Boulevard is not a boulevard in the traditional sense. The roadway does not contain any way-finding (directional) signage for visitors. Most importantly the one key design feature missing is that there is no physical or symbolic connection to the most prominent site feature of the gateway, the Occoquan River.



Gordon Boulevard, looking north from I-95 Bridge



Gordon Boulevard, looking north toward Town of Occoquan

Vision

Improvements to the Occoquan gateway would be designed to communicate the importance of the Occoquan River to the region and how it has and continues to impact local heritage and culture. The gateway would illustrate the rich maritime heritage of the area by figuratively incorporating a piece of the river into the streetscape.

Implementation

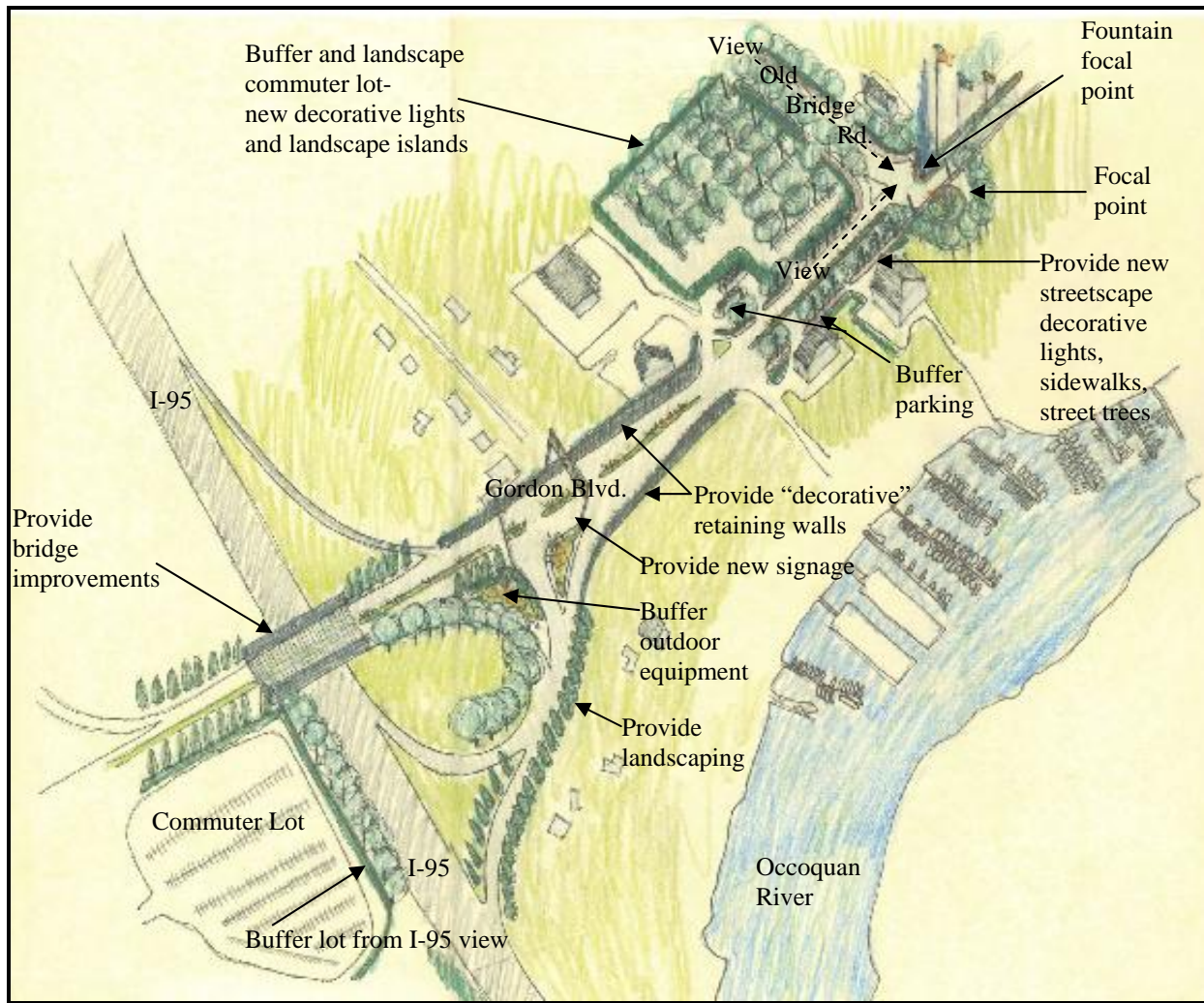
Streetscape is important in creating a traditional boulevard. Streetscape improvements would include new decorative light fixtures, sidewalks, and landscaping in medians and along the roadway. These elements should recall the streetscape features of the local area, including those of the Town of Occoquan. The light fixtures and the landscaping should convey a maritime design theme, in order to strengthen the relationship and proximity the corridor has to the Occoquan River.

Equally important is the buffering of uses that contribute to a negative visual impact – the commuter parking area, automobile repair and fueling stations, outdoor mechanical equipment including telecommunications stations, and vehicle or boat storage yards. Buffers should completely screen these areas through the use of masonry walls, manicured hedgerows, or a combination thereof. The commuter parking lot on the corner of Old Bridge Road and Gordon Boulevard is an underutilized site; however, if the lot is to remain in place, in addition to screening the perimeter of the parking area, landscape islands and decorative light fixtures should be added to the interior of the lot in order to improve its appearance.

The existing overhead traffic light structure located at the off-ramp can be used to hang new welcome and directory signage. As it stands today, the structure presents a blank face to the visitor traveling in an easterly direction and is therefore a missed opportunity for attractive, informative signage. The use of way-finding or directional signage is crucial to letting the visitor know where local attractions can be found and also the multitude of activities the County has to offer. Currently there is no directory or way-finding signage of any significance located at the entrance to the gateway.

There is the need for a focal point for the gateway in order to draw the visitors' eye down the roadway, past the gas stations, fast-food restaurant, and the commuter lot. In order to focus the viewer's eye toward this new site feature, a new wall, opposite the existing retaining wall located on the northern side of the roadway, should be built. These walls can be surfaced with a material that again carries the maritime theme, such as wooden piers.

Perhaps the grandest of the Occoquan gateway improvements, the focal point to be created at the intersection of Old Bridge and Gordon will make a lasting impression on the visitor. An ideal focal point would be a fountain, soaring high into the air, recalling the maritime heritage of the area and figuratively bringing a piece of the river up to the gateway. Decorative flags and seasonal landscaping would add to this unique feature. This feature can be created within the boundaries of the existing median. In addition to this focal point area, another point of interest can be created across from Old Bridge Road. The inclusion of a historic marker detailing the importance of the river to the early development of the community and its continuing importance would make for an interesting lookout area for those seeking a view down to the river. Way-finding (directional) signage in these areas should also be considered in order to help the visitor locate local attractions.



Gateway 5: Occoquan Bird's Eye View of Entrance

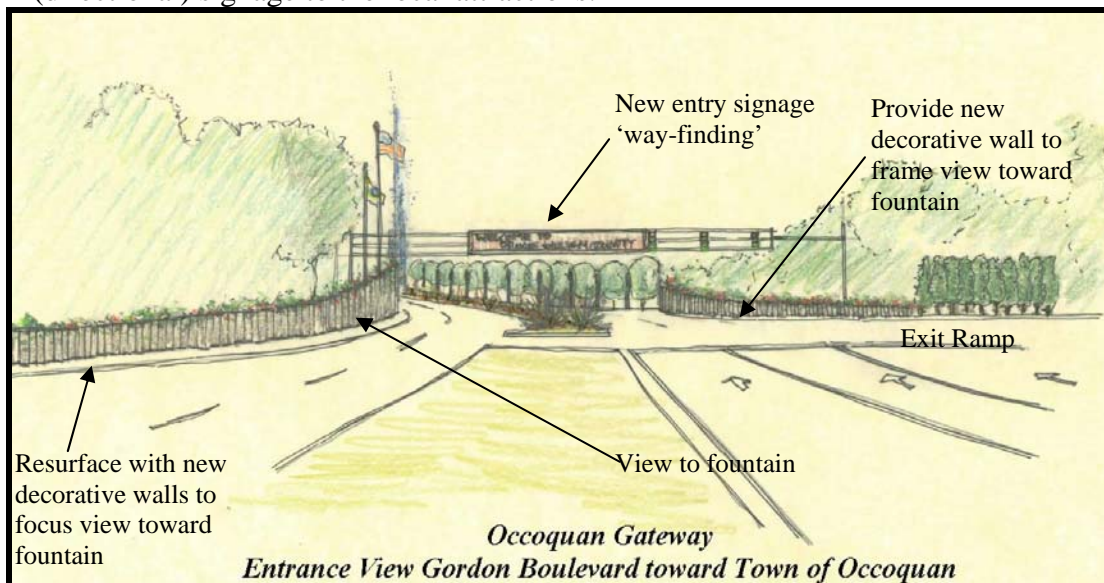
Gateway Objectives & Strategies

Occoquan Gateway

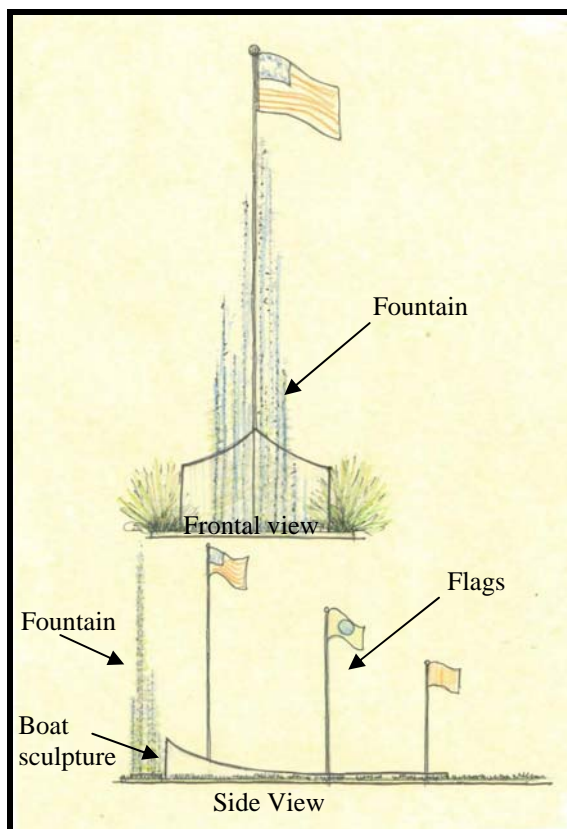
Objective: To build upon the maritime theme developed from the Occoquan River in order to illustrate to visitors the rich heritage of the local area.

ACTION STRATEGIES:

1. Provide streetscape improvements that emulate a traditional “town” environment found in neighboring historic communities such as Occoquan. These improvements would include replacing the existing cobra head street lights with decorative street light fixtures, walkable sidewalks, and shade trees. Coordinate the new light fixtures with those already existing in the commuter parking area, including providing more decorative poles and fixtures for the existing lamps in the parking area. Consider driver safety along the roadway when choosing the new light fixtures. A planted median and seasonal plantings in existing medians should be added where possible in order to help to visually reduce the scale of the roadway, adding to a traditional boulevard or Main Street appearance.
2. Provide additional buffers for uses and/or properties that contribute to negative visual impact including surface parking, automobile repair uses, automobile and/or boat storage yards, telecommunications equipment, outdoor mechanical equipment, etc. These buffers should completely screen the areas through the use of a manicured evergreen hedgerow, masonry wall such as brick, or a combination of durable fence material and evergreen plantings. Buffers that enhance the maritime theme while providing the necessary screening are preferred. Shade trees and landscape islands should be added to surface parking areas.
3. Utilize the existing overhead signage/traffic light structure at the I-95 exit ramp to provide improved gateway signage welcoming visitors to the area and way-finding (directional) signage to the local attractions.



4. Provide a focal point at the intersection of Gordon Boulevard and Old Bridge Road that will act to concentrate the view from the entrance of the gateway to the exit of the gateway. This focal point should illustrate the maritime theme of the local area and may include a fountain, abstract features of a boat, including sails, masts and flags as well as seasonal plantings. Sculpture can also be used to communicate the theme. The focal point should be grand enough to be able to draw the visitors' eyes from the entrance of the gateway down Gordon Boulevard to the local attractions.



Gateway 5: Ocoquan Fountain Detail

5. Work with all applicable public agencies, as well as private entities, such as local neighborhood/business associations, to develop maintenance plans prior to implementation of the proposed improvements. Ensure that the necessary maintenance for all of the improvements is provided, including but not limited to seasonal landscaping where applicable, regular litter collection, street cleaning, and general landscaping and lighting maintenance. Work with private property owners to improve the maintenance of private properties in order to enhance the overall appearance of the gateway.

6. Provide an attractive focal point and or historic marker at the termination of Old Bridge Road. This area may provide enough room for visitors to pull off the roadway in order to read the marker and to gain a view down to the Ocoquan River.
7. Provide improvements to the I-95 bridge in order to make it more attractive, including resurfacing the bridge walls, replacing the standard screening with a more decorative screen, and resurfacing the road with paving materials that would act to slow vehicles down as they enter the gateway.
8. Provide a decorative wall surface on the existing retaining wall and add a new wall opposite the existing on the north side of Gordon Boulevard. This wall should act to focus views down to the focal point at the intersection of Gordon and Old Bridge and to provide the necessary screening from the rears of properties that face Gordon Boulevard. During design development investigate how to best graffiti-proof both walls including

- not only the materials to be used but how landscaping and other defensive design techniques may be applied to deter defacing of the wall surface.
9. Investigate the possibility of placing overhead utilities underground or relocating them to the rears of properties in order to eliminate visual clutter along the roadway.
 10. The County shall work with a local community and/or citizen association prior to the design development phase of the project in order to develop project details and to confirm a shared vision for the gateway.

Gateway 5 – Occoquan River at Interstate 95 – Old Bridge Road Aerial View Illustrating Improvements

From the Piedmont to the Potomac

